Encounter after the Conquest: 
Scholarly Gatherings in 16th-Century Ottoman Damascus

Helen Pfeifer 
University of Cambridge

Abstract: This article examines the extensive intellectual and social exchange that resulted from the Ottoman incorporation of Arab lands in the 16th century. In the years immediately after the 1516-7 conquest of the Mamluk Sultanate that brought Egypt, Greater Syria and the Hijaz under Ottoman rule, Turkish-speaking Ottomans from the central lands (Rumis) found that their political power was not matched by religious and cultural prestige. As the case of Damascus shows, scholarly gatherings called majālis (sing. majlis) were key spaces where this initial asymmetry was both acutely felt and gradually overcome. As arenas for discussion among scholars on the move, literary salons facilitated the circulation of books and ideas and the establishment of a shared intellectual tradition. As occasions where stories were told and history was made, they supported the formation of a common past. In informal gatherings and in the biographical dictionaries that described them, Rumis and Arabs came together to forge an empire-wide learned culture as binding as any political or administrative ingredient of the Ottoman imperial glue.

The Ottomans were no strangers to conquest when they first entered the gates of Damascus in 1516. Just two years prior, they had defeated the Safavid army at Chaldiran and temporarily occupied Tabriz; six decades earlier, they had put an end to the Byzantine Empire and taken their bite of the Red Apple; and for the century and a half before Constantinople, they had been riding fur-clad and victorious into cities and towns across Anatolia and the Balkans. But the conquest of the Mamluk Empire in 1516-7 was different. This was no piecemeal occupation of a shrubby frontier, no subjection of an upstart Anatolian beylicate, no capture of a former Christian capital. This was an almost instantaneous incorporation of an entire empire, one that stretched from Cairo across the ancient and holy cities of Damascus, Aleppo, Mecca and Medina, one that claimed inheritance to the caliphate and to the centuries-old scholarly and religious traditions of Islam, and one whose inhabitants had often looked down on the Ottomans from their perch up in the lap of Cairo, “the mother of the earth.”

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For viewed from the Mamluk Sultanate (1250-1517), the Ottomans were the newcomers of the Eurasian Islamic elite. At least until the conquest of Constantinople, the lands of Rûm, as the former territories of the Eastern Roman Empire continued to be called, were seen by many Muslims elsewhere as a backwater, marginal to the history and development of Islamic high culture. Indeed, for the predominantly Turkish-speaking “Rumis” that inhabited these territories, Islam was only one of several sources of cultural inspiration, political legitimacy and social cohesion. Well into the 15th century, Ottomans and the rulers of other Anatolian principalities were still just setting up an Islamic-inspired institutional framework and high cultural canon, often upon Byzantine foundations. This article examines elite social gatherings in the half-century after the Ottoman conquest of Arab lands to document the persistence of perceived Arab scholarly preeminence over Rumis, and the mechanisms by which this asymmetry was eventually overcome.

The expansion of 1516-7 precipitated one of the greatest instances of knowledge transmission and cultural encounter in the history of the Ottoman Empire. Yet, whereas the reorganization of provincial bureaucracies was orchestrated from the imperial center, in non-state scholarly gatherings called majālis (sing. majlis) ideas often traveled against the grain of political domination. In the first decades after the Ottoman conquest, the prestige of Arabic and of late Mamluk scholarship meant that Rumis serving in the new provinces often struggled to meet the intellectual standards of the local Arab scholars over whom they presided. By the second half of the 16th century, this had begun to change. Elite social gatherings were key arenas where the cultural scales were recalibrated, as the interactions between Kinalizade ʿAli, the Rumi chief judge of Damascus from 1562 to 1566, and Badr al-Din al-Ghazi, the esteemed Shafʿi mufti of the same city, illustrate. By offering open-ended but regulated spaces of intellectual encounter,
literary salons encouraged the development of pan-Ottoman learned debates and a shared scholarly canon. As such, they played a key role in the integration of new territories.

In focusing on the intellectual dynamics of imperial incorporation, this article responds to a growing interest in social and cultural aspects of empire-building. Increasingly, studies of the Arab provinces have shown how Ottoman administrative, legal, and military institutions relied on the “soft” underbelly of households, histories and architecture. Social gatherings suggest that even in the 16th century, when the Ottoman bureaucracy was at its finest, the success of the imperial project depended on personal networks and on a shared elite culture. By examining the production and circulation of Ottoman books, this article also contributes to the budding field of Ottoman intellectual history, joining a chorus of voices challenging the longstanding assumption that Islamic thought stagnated in the postclassical period. Finally, the study connects to a broader historiographical conversation on cultural exchange, which, rich as it is, has rarely viewed the conquest as an encounter of significance because it did not traverse the lines of religion. The European Age of Exploration has sometimes been contrasted with an inward-looking Ottoman Empire uninterested in other geographies. Recovering the tensions of the Rumi-Arab encounter shows that 16th-century inhabitants of the eastern Mediterranean were in the midst of their own engagement with new intellectual traditions, one that left the region deeply changed.

I. Cultural Asymmetries

Ottoman officials were subject to considerable scrutiny when they first arrived in Arab-dominated cities like Damascus in the 16th century. Only rarely did the educated provincial elite call the political legitimacy of Ottoman appointees into question; their intellectual credentials, on
the other hand, were another matter. Although the Rumi chief judges (qāḍī al-quḍāt) of major urban centers were usually drawn from the best-educated men in the empire, the respect they enjoyed in the lands of Rūm was not always echoed in the Arab provinces. In cities like Damascus, scholarly gatherings put a premium on eloquent Arabic and on the Arab-Islamic scholarly tradition, domains where Turkish-speaking Rumis were often at a disadvantage.

Long before the rise of coffeehouses—and long after—exclusive social gatherings often called majālis constituted the main spaces for social and intellectual exchange across much of the Islamicate world. Derived from the Arabic root j-l-s, “to sit” and widely used in both Arabic and Ottoman Turkish (meclis, mecālis), majlis literally means, “sitting” or “place where one sits.” As such, from Andalusia to Persia, it was a broad term that could refer (with or without a modifier) both to various gatherings of people (meetings, receptions, assemblies) and to the halls where such gatherings occurred.

As heirs to this medieval tradition, elite men across the Middle East held and attended social gatherings in the 15th and 16th centuries. The character of these occasions varied considerably depending on their location and aim: the range of permissible behaviors, language of exchange and intellectual focus differed in Tahtakale and in the Topkapı Palace; in Sofia and in Alexandria; in the majlis al-‘ilm (the scholarly gathering) and meclis-i üns (friendly, intimate gathering) (see fig. 1). For the most part, though, majālis can be thought of as by-invitation-only gatherings of well-to-do Muslim men for the purpose of social and intellectual exchange. The importance of majālis to the social and cultural world of the 16th century is indicated by their ubiquity in the written record: they took center stage in poems, travel narratives, miniatures, etiquette manuals and, as we will see, biographical dictionaries in both Arabic and Turkish.
While usually formed around a core group of people living in the same city, literary salons were an integral part of elite travel. One of the first things that Ottoman learned men did when they came to a new city was join such gatherings. As a result, *majālis* functioned as a key venue in which men from different parts of the empire encountered one another. This was never more true than in the wake of the Ottoman incorporation of Arab lands in 1516-7.

When Rumi and Arab scholars met in social gatherings in the decades following the conquest, theirs was not a first encounter. Since the late Middle Ages, Anatolia was increasingly embedded in a network of scholarship and patronage that stretched from Khorasan to Cairo. Given the inchoate nature of the Ottoman madrasa system of higher education in the 14th and 15th centuries, many local scholars pursued their advanced studies in Persian and Arab lands. In cities like Damascus and Cairo, Rumi students would sit alongside Arabs in *majālis dars*, as lessons for instruction were often called. Other Rumis profited from the Turkish language leanings that the Ottomans shared with the ruling Mamluk elite, finding in the latter willing patrons of their work. These men were present in the *majālis* of the imperial court in Cairo, advising, entertaining or translating for the Mamluk sultan and his associates. Finally, over the course of their travels across Arab lands, Rumis joined the domestically held *majālis* of leading local scholars.

Yet Arab-Rumi encounters were not evenly distributed across the region. Prior to the conquest, Arabs rarely attended gatherings in Ottoman lands. Although by the 15th century, Ottoman elites had become increasingly powerful patrons of arts and letters, scholarship was still fledgling compared to the venerable tradition of Mamluk Cairo and Damascus. Ottoman madrasas may have been growing in number and in productivity, but the scholars that defined the
cutting edge of Islamic scholarship mostly operated outside of the Ottoman lands. As a result, only few Arab scholars traveled to Rūm in the late Mamluk period.

With the Ottoman conquest, the nature, direction and volume of regional travel changed. For the first time, learned Arabs encountered Ottomans in significant numbers as patrons and power-holders. With the incorporation of Arab lands into the Ottoman legal and administrative system, two elite groups especially began to travel back and forth between the new provinces and the imperial center: Arab scholars and Rumi chief judges. Where the former had once gone to Cairo for patronage and protection, they now attended the majālis of high-ranking Rumis in Istanbul, demonstrating their worthiness for office through their knowledge and etiquette. Salons also played a key role for Rumis serving as chief judges in the Arab provinces. On the one hand, gatherings allowed them to meet local elites upon whom the success of their tenures relied. But they also produced high-pressure situations in which judges themselves were judged, both on their intellectual prowess and on their ability to engage in polite conversation.

When Kńalızade ČAli arrived in Damascus as chief judge in 1562, only two men did not rush to meet him: ČAla’ al-Din ibn ČImad al-Din al-Shafi’i, who was dying, and Badr al-Din al-Ghazzi, who “abstained from frequent visitations of qadis and others.” Instead Kńalızade himself sought out the two men—first al-Ghazzi, and only thereafter the sick man, who died six days later. The fact that both Sharaf al-Din Ibn Ayyub al-Ansari (d. 1592), al-Ghazzi’s student, and Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi (d. 1651), his son, mentioned this incident in their biographies of Kńalızade ČAli suggests just how significant the politics of visiting were. Paying respect to incoming qadis upon their arrival in the city was the custom of the Damascene elite, and the tally of who did and did not do so offered a measure of the qadi’s stature. From the perspective of local scholars and deputy judges (nā’ibs), on the other hand, such receptions could determine
professional careers. As the head of the provincial justice system, the chief judge could appoint and remove his own deputies. Moreover, because many chief judges of Damascus later went on to serve as military judge (kāzī ʿasker) of Anatolia, a role with oversight of madrasa appointments in Anatolia and the Arab provinces, establishing good relations was a professional investment. Al-Ghazzi’s decision to abstain from visiting Kinalızade was an unequivocal sign of his independence, and bordered on an affront.  

By the time of Kinalızade’s arrival, Badr al-Din Muhammad b. Radi al-Din Muhammad al-Ghazzi al-Amiri al-Dimashqi (d. 1577) was in no need of favors from the Rumi elite. Born into a distinguished Damascene family of scholars in 1499, by the age of twelve al-Ghazzi was studying in Cairo with the star scholars of the waning Mamluk Empire (he received ijāzas from Zakariyya al-Ansari (d. 1520) and, probably through al-Ghazzi’s father, Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (d. 1505)). At fifteen he was issuing his own judicial opinions (fatāwa); by seventeen, back in Damascus, he attracted his first students. At age thirty, just a few years after the Ottoman conquest, he traveled to Istanbul to advance his career. Advance it did, and by the time of Kinalızade’s arrival in Damascus, contemporaries considered al-Ghazzi to be the al-Suyuti or Ibn Hajar of his age (two leading scholars of the late Mamluk period) and “the showpiece of religious scholars in Damascus, indeed, in the entire world.” Eventually, though, the scholarly spotlight became too harsh. “Generation after generation benefitted from him and traveled to him from far away places,” his son explained, “necessitating his withdrawal from people in the middle of his life.” Al-Ghazzi’s self-imposed seclusion explained his neglect of arriving qadis like Kinalızade ʿAli, yet his stature meant that they visited him instead. Indeed, as chief Shafiʿi mufti, imam of the Umayyad mosque and instructor at several major madrasas, al-Ghazzi could be considered the foremost intellectual figure of his generation of Damascenes.
Nevertheless, al-Ghazi had something of an equal in Kinalızade ـ Ali. For Kinalızade was no small fish in the Ottoman pond. Rather, when he arrived in the city to take up the position as chief judge, he already had a distinguished teaching career behind him. Sent from his hometown of Isparta to Istanbul as a young boy, Kinalızade, like all of his fellow Rumi ـ ulama، was educated from a young age in Arabic and the Islamic sciences.\textsuperscript{37} After completing his education, he made the rounds of Rûm, teaching in Edirne, Bursa and Kütahya before returning to Istanbul to become instructor first at one of Mehmed II’s Eight Madrasas, and finally, in 1559, at one of the madrasas of the just-finished Süleymaniye mosque—two of the most prestigious institutions of higher learning in the empire.\textsuperscript{38} In all of these places, Kinalızade consistently found himself in the company of the most educated and powerful men of his time.\textsuperscript{39} In Istanbul he had been a frequent host to literary mecałis, and he could recite poetry and extemporize effortlessly in Arabic as well as in Persian and Turkish.\textsuperscript{40}

In spite of his towering political and intellectual standing, when Kinalızade ـ Ali first met with Badr al-Din al-Ghazi and other local scholars, he had to prove himself. For when Kinalızade sat in a room full of Damascenes, he did so as a representative of the Ottoman state, and as a Rumi, and neither inspired immediate confidence. On the one hand, many scholars had a healthy mistrust of state functionaries. Al-Ghazi’s decision to retreat from the world of social gatherings was not just that of a tired, overworked scholar, but of a man wary of politics and power. Spending too much time with representatives of the state, al-Ghazi’s student and biographer Hasan al-Burini (d. 1615) explained, could compromise one’s independence and integrity.\textsuperscript{41} Though qadis were devoted to learning in a way that governors were usually not, their intellectual merits could not be taken for granted, as Sharaf al-Din Ibn Ayyub noted in his biographical compilation of the chief qadis of Damascus. Silence was a polite way of expressing
reservation, but in extreme cases Ibn Ayyub did not mince his words: Ahmed Çelebi, appointed in 1550, “was called Ahmad with [the letter] qāf because of the harshness of his disposition, his stupidity and his abuse of his adversaries. So he was called Ahmad with a qāf, that is, ahmaq [‘stupid’].”

Supplementing this general suspicion of state functionaries was Arab scholars’ persistent feeling of their own preeminence in matters of learning. Though a formidable and ever-growing Ottoman tradition of scholarship and belles-lettres flourished, the portions of it in Turkish and in Persian remained inaccessible to most Arabs in the first decades after the conquest. In any case, what mattered in the Arab lands was one’s ability to excel in the Arabic-language Islamic sciences, a requisite for the learned regardless of linguistic or ethnic background. Yet this arena had been dominated in the century or two leading up to the conquest by scholars of the Mamluk realms, and it showed in the first decades that followed it.

While many Arab scholars were known in the lands of Rûm, Arabs were less familiar with the lives and works of their Rumi contemporaries. The Islamic biographical tradition enjoyed immense popularity under the Mamluks, boosting the reputations of contemporary scholars and encouraging the canonization of their predecessors. Though often universal in intent, in practice these compilations profiled only few scholars outside of Mamluk territories; scholars educated or working in Ottoman lands were all but absent. In the Ottoman Empire, in contrast, there was no Arabic-language biographical dictionary of Rumi scholars that curious Arab scholars could consult until 1558, when the Istanbul-based scholar Taşköprüzade completed Al-Shaqa’iq al-Nu‘maniyya fi ‘Ulama’ al-Dawlat al-‘Uthmaniyya. In his introduction, Taşköprüzade lamented,
while historians have recorded the great deeds of the ‘ulama’ and the a‘yan…none of them attended to the compilation of the news of the ‘ulama’ of these lands. Hence their names and their image barely remain on the tongues of all those present and passed away [hādir wa bād].

Indeed, in the first decades following the conquest, scholars famous in Rūm need not have been known in Damascus.

The circulation of books exhibited an equal asymmetry. While there is no evidence of Arab scholars acquiring books on a large scale in Istanbul, Rumis ploughed ravenously through the intellectual riches of the Arab lands. Kınalızade ʿAli commissioned Ibn Ayyub to prepare a copy of the medieval scholar Ibn Khallikan’s (d. 1282) famed biographical dictionary. He also acquired the works of contemporary Arab scholars, including a work by one of his teachers in Damascus. Some contemporaries claimed that Kınalızade ʿAli brought no less than five thousand books from the Arab lands back with him to Istanbul.

Patterns of instruction reflected the initial reservations that Arab scholars felt about Rumis as well. Many Rumi chief judges continued their studies upon their arrival in the Arab lands, despite being full-fledged professors in their own right. A list of Badr al-Din al-Ghaazzi’s Rumi students includes some of the most powerful figures of 16th-century Ottoman jurisprudence, including Çivizade Mehmed Efendi (d. 1587) and Mehmed Bostanzade (d. 1598), both of whom would go on to serve the Porte first as military judge and then as şeyhülislām; Fevri Efendi (d. 1571), a famous poet and one-time companion of Sultan Süleyman; and finally, Kınalızade ʿAli himself. The reverse was much more rare in the early period, although Arab scholars also continued their studies at a ripe age while traveling. When al-Ghaazzi traveled to Istanbul in 1530, for example, he wrote extensively about all that he taught his Rumi contacts, but was silent.
on what they had taught him—although he met with many scholars more senior than himself (including Ebu’s-Su’ud Efendi, who later became Sultan Süleyman’s trusted şeyhüislam).52

For much of the 16th century, Arab scholars rarely articulated these reservations openly. In part, this was because they often relied on Rumi’s for their positions, as the statements of the Meccan scholar Qutb al-Din al-Nahrawali (d. 1582) suggest. Passing through Damascus in 1557 on his way to Istanbul, he wrote a praise poem for Muhyiddin Mehmed Çelebi (d. 1564), the son of Ebu’s-Su’ud and the chief judge of the city at the time. In it, al-Nahrawali called Mehmed “the incomparable one of his age […] whose virtue hath spread/a protective shading o’er the parting of days and o’er nations.” It was only after “nothing of consequence came my way from this ode” that al-Nahrawali editorialized that the poem, “didn’t particularly delight him [Mehmed], because of his inadequate sophistication in literature and lack of experience with diction among eloquent Arabs.”53

In the early decades after the expansion, there was often a disparity in how scholars were evaluated in Damascus and in Istanbul. The Skopje-born Ishak Çelebi (d. 1537), for example, was rewarded by two Ottoman sultans for his poetry, scholarship and pleasant company.54 In a Turkish-language biography of Ishak written just a year or so after his death, the biographer Sehi Bey (d. 1548) explained,

he was distinguished amongst the paragons of the time and the virtuous of the age, and was respected amongst the people of learning [ehr-i ‘ilm] for all sorts of virtues. He gave so much care and attention to fluidity of language, firmness of speech and matters of meaning that it is impossible to describe.55
Damascene historians were more reserved in their praise. Muhammad Ibn Tulun probably met Ishak when the latter served as chief judge in Damascus from 1536-7. Although he recognized Ishak’s skill in Persian poetry, his evaluation was otherwise tepid:

he had a great interest in reading *Al-Hidāya* [that is, *Al-Hidāya fī al-Furūʿ*, the compendium of Hanafi law by Burhan al-Din al-Marghinani] to his students but he was not able to. He was linked to learning but had little skill in jurisprudence [*durbat al-qadāʾ*]. For that reason he often stayed in his house.56

Ishak’s eloquence, learning and wit did not translate well to the Arabic-language context—little wonder that he withdrew from Damascene high society.

II. Intellectual Exchange

Scholarly gatherings may have initially worked to the disadvantage of Rumi’s, but in time they worked to moderate the intellectual imbalance between political center and province. As some of the main spaces where mature scholars could exchange ideas, salons helped to integrate the written and social worlds of the Arab and Anatolian lands. More and more, men like Kinalzade ʿAli held their own against their Arab interlocutors.

Around 1563 or 1564, Kinalzade ʿAli attended the *majlis al-khatm* (closing session, or literally, sealing), held by al-Ghazi in honor of his versified Qurʾan commentary *Al-Tafsir al-Manzum* (The Versified Qurʾan Commentary).57 *Majlis khatms* were common in early modern Damascus, and could have the character of either a graduation ceremony or a book release party. Al-Ghazi’s son Najm al-Din reported, “if he [Badr al-Din] finished teaching or writing a book, he held a banquet and made its completion festive. He invited the important people and the poor [*fuqarāʾ*]. He hosted them and was equally hospitable to the poor as to the amirs.”58 In this case,
al-Ghazzi celebrated the completion of the teaching of the commentary to a group of students (he had finished it almost a decade earlier, in 1555).\(^{59}\)

However inclusive the attendant banquets may have been, the intellectual heart of these gatherings was more exclusive and serious. Composed of a group of invited senior scholars and the students whose coursework was being celebrated, *khatms* gave young men the opportunity to watch mature scholars in action. Although it is unclear who was present at the particular gathering that Kinalizade attended, it would have been the city’s intellectual heavyweights.\(^{60}\) The setting for the event lent it additional gravity; while most Damascene scholars hosted gatherings in their homes and gardens, al-Ghazzi held his at the holiest sites of the city, namely the shrine of Yahya ibn Zakariyya (John the Baptist) in the prayer hall of the Umayyad mosque.\(^{61}\) Al-Ghazzi presided, with the participants gathered around him in a semi-circle. Far from haphazard, the seating arrangement would have mapped out a hierarchy onto the floor of the mosque.\(^{62}\)

Attendees would have waded through a wide sea of scholarly topics, debating and relating poems in turn. Al-Ghazzi may have discussed his commentary, and intrepid listeners would have offered responses. Perhaps in this way, Kinalizade became entangled in a disagreement with al-Ghazzi over a debate between the late medieval grammarian Abu Hayyan al-Garnati (d. 1344) and his student, Al-Samin al-Halabi (d. 1355), regarding the *iʿrāb*, or inflectional endings, of certain words in the Qurʾan. Abu Hayyan had criticized a number of the *iʿrāb* in the widely read Qurʾan commentary by Abu al-Qasim al-Zamakhshari (d. 1144). Al-Samin, disagreeing with his teacher, had defended al-Zamakhshari.\(^{63}\) In the debate’s 16th-century continuation in the Umayyad mosque, al-Ghazzi took the side of Abu Hayyan against al-Zamakhshari; Kinalizade sided with al-Samin against the criticisms of Abu Hayyan.\(^{64}\)
After the debate was cut short in the *majlis*, Kinalızade went home to his library and found that both al-Suyuti and Ibn Hajar al-\(^{c}\)Asqalani (d. 1449) had, like him (and al-Samin), found the criticisms of Abu Hayyan groundless.\(^{65}\) So Kinalızade composed some verses in which he presented his findings to al-Ghazzi and challenged him to respond. Wrapping al-Ghazzi in illustrious garments of praise, punning on his name, Kinalızade wrote, “oh, my sayyid, whose mastery of learning is famous …[whose] superiority over other scholars towers as the full moon [\(\text{badr}\)] towers over the rest of the shining stars…” Al-Ghazzi’s response adopted Kinalızade rhyme and formulated his praise in equally absolute terms: “oh Sayyid, rising above the people of the age without exception/well-known in every science to a great extent/Oh imam, high above the heads in your height…”\(^{66}\) Several more exchanges ensued, and, as each was unable to convince the other, each eventually penned a treatise outlining the points in defense of his position.\(^{67}\)

The debate remained public as the scholars of Damascus weighed in on who they thought had prevailed. While Badr al-Din’s son Najm al-Din was silent on this point in his biographical dictionary, according to both Kinalızade’s son Hasan Çelebi and the Egyptian biographer Taqi al-Din al-Tamimi, the majority of Damascene scholars favored the arguments of Kinalızade \(^{c}\)Ali.\(^{68}\) The fact that both sons of the men involved in the debate included it in their biographical compilations suggests just how important the encounter was to the two families (although Najm al-Din mentions it only in his biography of \(^{c}\)Ali, not in that of his own father). For the Kinalızade family, the gathering demonstrated \(^{c}\)Ali’s learning, especially in the context of Arab skepticism regarding Rumi intellectual achievements. Hasan Çelebi summed up his father’s time in Damascus: “in gatherings and parties [\(\text{mecālis-ü mehāfılte}\)] the grandees and people of rank recited most solemn assurances of praise and encomium, each of them testifying [here he
switched to Arabic] ‘indeed he is a sign of the wonders of God.’”\textsuperscript{69} The fact that scholars not present that day recorded the dispute suggests the weight that others likewise gave such occasions.\textsuperscript{70}

Period accounts of the incident indicate the tension contemporaries sometimes felt between the universal Islamic tradition on the one hand and particular ethnic communities on the other. Usually scholars formulated their praise in absolute terms: the language of al-Ghazi and Kınalızade’s letter exchange implied a single group of Islamic scholars, scholars who were in competition, to be sure, but who measured themselves by the same standards. Yet Hasan Çelebi formulated his father’s victory as one not only over al-Ghazi personally, but over Arab scholars generally: “because the Arab ‘ulama’ did not have these sorts of particulars, they were vanquished and dispirited in the arena of discussion and argument, and all of them agreed with the virtue of Ali and said [again, switching to Arabic], ‘he is the one that did that which those before him were unable to do.’”\textsuperscript{71} Hasan Çelebi’s explanation suggests the particularist logic that coexisted with Islamic unity: a particular scholar’s performance within the Islamic tradition did reflect at least in part upon the virtue of his ethnic or linguistic community.

Nevertheless, gatherings like al-Ghazi’s helped to weave the intellectual fabric of the Turkish- and Arabic-speaking worlds more closely together. The two treatises that resulted from the Ghazzi-Kınalızade debate were included, usually side by side, in several Ottoman scholarly anthologies, making them inseparable to readers for generations to come.\textsuperscript{72} In these collections, the exchange sat alongside the works of individuals at the very pinnacle of 16th-century Rumi scholarship, like Ebu’s-Su‘ud and Kemalpaşazade Ahmed Çelebi (d. 1534). They thus secured al-Ghazi’s place, however modest, in the body of authors and works that were read and copied in the central Ottoman lands.\textsuperscript{73} Nearly a century later, the Istanbul-based scholar Katib Çelebi
would record the debate twice in his bibliographical dictionary *Kashf al-Zunun ‘an Asami al-Kutub wa-l-Funun*, including particulars like the location of the *khatm* and, of course, who ultimately was said to have won the debate (i.e., Kinalzade).\(^{74}\) Such works helped to focus scholarly attention across the empire on a common set of texts and issues.

III. Book Circulation

Informal gatherings encouraged the post-conquest integration of the Ottoman scholarly tradition by aiding the circulation and reception of books. Salons helped to spread not only the reputations of certain works, but primed audiences for their reception, sparking debate or encouraging consensus around their meaning. Indeed, al-Ghazzi’s gathering left its mark on Ottoman learned circles in other ways as well: the book it celebrated, *Al-Tafsir al-Manzum*, itself occasioned an empire-wide controversy. The commentary’s composition in verse offended many. The Qur’an, after all, was emphatically *not* poetry, but superior to it: “we have not taught him [Muhammad] poetry; it is not seemly for him.”\(^{75}\) Many argued that al-Ghazzi had not only made the word of God poetry by quoting phrases of the Qur’an in poetic meter (in order to gloss them). By adding an *alif* at the end of a Qur’anic verse, he had committed the far more serious offense of altering the verses of the Qur’an.\(^{76}\) The book polarized the scholars of Cairo as “some of them permitted it, others denied its permissibility, others rejected it, others recognized it and praised it.”\(^{77}\) Qutb al-Din al-Nahrawali, whom al-Ghazzi hosted during his time in Damascus, mentioned the scandal in his short profile of al-Ghazzi.\(^{78}\)

Likely through men such as al-Nahrawali, who carried the news of such books as he traveled, the controversy finally reached the very top of the imperial learned hierarchy: the ṣeyhülislām Ebu’ṣ-Su’ud and, according to some accounts, even Sultan Süleyman himself.
According to the much later biography of Yemeni scholar Muhammad al-Shawkani (d. 1834), discussions of the *tafsīr* were so vehement that Süleyman eventually convoked a meeting of the city’s ‘ulama’ to evaluate it—likely under the direction of Ebu’s-Su‘ud. The *ṣeyhülislām* himself was no stranger to Badr al-Din. The two had met in Istanbul in 1530, when Ebu’s-Su‘ud was an instructor at one of Mehmed II’s Eight Madrasas. They had gotten along well at the time, and had entered into animated discussion about the nature of the food served in hell. It is thus likely that Ebu’s-Su‘ud would have received the reports of al-Ghazzi’s irreverence with skepticism, having witnessed his piety and learning firsthand. Nevertheless, Ebu’s-Su‘ud cautiously condemned the book, probably under public pressure, when he heard of its premise. Yet when the commission convened, it found nothing wrong with the work, and rewarded al-Ghazzi with money and great honor. Though al-Shawkani’s account may well be exaggerated, period sources do report that Ebu’s-Su‘ud himself eventually reviewed and accepted the work.

Nevertheless, the book remained so infamous that Rumi passing through the city would question al-Ghazzi about it. “I did not versify the Qur’an, and I did not change anything in its expressions. I just quoted them in verse; I *did not versify them,*” al-Ghazzi would retort angrily. Al-Burini regretted that the book was composed in verse, because people avoided it for that reason, whereas if it had been in prose “there would have been plenty of people who would have spread it around the land.” Others were of the opinion that the controversy was merely the result of jealousy and resentment. Nevertheless, if it was not read, the book was at least discussed, as al-Burini said, by all “the ‘ulama’ of his age.” Al-Ghazzi’s commentary provoked one of a growing number of empire-wide intellectual controversies following the 1516-7 conquest.

The attention bestowed upon *Al-Tafsir al-Manzum* resulted in no small part from the gatherings that publicized the book. Whether or not al-Ghazzi had anticipated the criticism he
would receive, he himself in fact contributed to his work’s notoriety through the multiple *khatms*
he held for it. Given al-Ghazzi’s prestige and his mass of contacts all across the Ottoman lands, it is easy to understand how the work was sealed into the minds and memories of so many scholars.

But if these assemblies encouraged the conflagration of the scandal, they were equally important in resolving it. Scholarly gatherings offered al-Ghazzi an opportunity to promote his own interpretation of his work to potential readers. Yet more broadly, the trust al-Ghazzi had won in his face-to-face encounters with influential Rumi scholars, not least Ebu’s-Su’ud, surely contributed to their begrudging acceptance of his controversial project by convincing them of his integrity and goodwill. It has long been recognized that the Islamic tradition privileged the personal authorization of works over the transmission of knowledge in writing. In the Ottoman Empire, in Istanbul as much as in Damascus, this process extended beyond the teacher-student relationship. Learned men used gatherings to influence the reception of books among mature colleagues.

This meant that, when Ottoman scholars wrote, they often did so for an audience that was very immediate and real. Mustafa ˚Ali (d. 1600) boasted that his *Kava‘idü’l-Mecalis* (“The Etiquette of Salons”) “became quite well known at gatherings of all educated people, grandees who are persons of refinement, eloquent persons, and poets.” The Arab scholar Muhibb al-Din al-Hamawi (d. 1608) not only presented his travel account to a circle of friends in Damascus, he incorporated their comments into its final pages. As men traveled through the empire’s cultural centers attending scholarly gatherings, they learned not only of the existence of certain books, but of their reception by various learned communities. As they traveled onwards, they took the news of these books and their reception by contemporaries along with them. Al-Ghazzi’s
sixteenth-century commentarial controversy suggests that in the dense and well-connected
Ottoman scholarly community, books rarely traveled without a reputation in tow.

Literary salons thus reveal a very dynamic process of Ottoman canon formation. A
number of historians have seen the development of a more self-aware imperial culture in the
literary, artistic and scholarly domains during the 16th century. In 1565, when Kinalızade was
still in Damascus, Sultan Süleyman issued a firman, or imperial rescript, laying out a curriculum
for Ottoman imperial madrasas. Surely this was an unprecedented show of educational
centralization, as Shahab Ahmad and Nenad Filipovic rightly argue. And yet, as the two note, the
document contains evidence of considerable openness, including the incorporation of the work of
Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti: “the fact that al-Suyuti died only sixty years before the present syllabus
was drawn up is expressive not only of how swiftly he became recognized as a scholar of historic
standing, but also of the receptiveness of the Ottoman canon to new works.”

Majālis go a long way in explaining this flexibility. Al-Suyuti was known among Rumi
scholars before the 1516-7 conquest, and indeed, Kinalızade Ğali adduced him as an authority in
his debate with al-Ghazzi. Nonetheless, because of al-Suyuti’s importance in late Mamluk
scholarship, traveling Rumi like Kinalızade Ğali probably encountered his works to a far greater
extent in Arab lands than they had at home. In our example, Badr al-Din al-Ghazzi was the
holder of an ijāza from al-Suyuti, and was fancied by some the al-Suyuti of his age. The 1565
ferman also included Ibn Hajar’s commentary on al-Bukhari—the same Ibn Hajar who had
taught al-Ghazzi’s teacher, to whom al-Ghazzi was compared, and whom Kinalızade cited in his
dispute with al-Ghazzi. In including people like al-Suyuti and Ibn Hajar, the firman likely
responded to an ongoing conversation within the empire, not only in madrasas but in a host of
other scholarly gatherings. Seen in this light, its curriculum seems less of an order than a
reaffirmation. It was part of a process of canon formation guided not by the Sultan and his advisers alone, but by a greater number of scholars all across the Ottoman Empire.

IV. History Writing

In addition to acting as spaces of learned debate, social gatherings were opportunities for gossip, story-telling and autobiography. They thus helped to generate a repertoire of stories, and eventually written histories, that became common to members of the learned elite across Ottoman lands. The dispute between al-Ghazzi and Kinalızade was recorded in biographical dictionaries produced not just in Damascus, but in Istanbul and Cairo, by people who were not present that day themselves. Some of these heard the story second-hand from men who had participated in the event (especially Kinalızade himself).96

Informal gatherings were a serious source of information for 16th-century historians, Rumi and Arab alike. One of the prerequisites for being a good biographer was the cultivation of a healthy social network. When historians set out to profile the great men of the past, they relied mostly on written evidence evaluated through careful textual criticism. When they profiled their contemporaries, however, they often had no recourse to such written data. Rather, anecdotes gathered as men traveled across the empire’s majālis provided much of the meat for biographical entries of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This is why men like Hasan al-Burini were well-poised to compile such works. Al-Burini was widely appreciated for his ability to captivate salon audiences with his eloquence: “he was never at a scholarly majlis [majlis ‘ilm] without being its nightingale.”97 He hosted gatherings in his own garden and often spent nights in the homes of statesmen.98 These occasions allowed him to cultivate close relations with Arabs and Rumis alike, whether they were state officials, military men or scholars.99 Indeed, al-Burini’s
biographical dictionary *Tarajim al-‘yan min Abna’ al-Zaman* (1601-15) featured many men the biographer had met personally in Damascus gatherings. This included local scholars, of course, but also Rumis who had passed through the city on one pretext or another. From al-Burini’s perspective, what gave unity to the disparate men treated in the dictionary was a common location, firstly in Damascus, and more specifically, within a particular set of social gatherings (and hence, social circles).

Al-Burini’s dictionary was not exceptional in relying on *majālīs* for information—so did his fellow biographers in the Arab and Rumi lands. As we have seen, many of the occurrences cited in Hasan Çelebi Kinalızade’s biographical dictionary of poets were based on the gatherings that his father had attended. In Damascus, Ibn Ayyub’s *Al-Rawd al-‘Atir fi ma Tayassara min Akhbar Ahl al-Qarn al-Sabi* ila Khitam al-Qarn al-‘Ashir* (1590) and Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi’s *Al-Kawakib al-Sa’ira bi A‘yan al-Mi’a al-‘Ashira* (1624) both relied heavily on salons, as spaces where history was made, as sources of information on historical actors, and for the very identification of those actors. Although Ibn Ayyub’s *Al-Rawd al-‘Atir* featured many scholars of centuries past, the biographies of his contemporaries contained frequent mentions of gatherings he had attended. His detailed biography of Kinalızade’s Ali was possible because Ibn Ayyub had “visited him [Ali] frequently” during his time in Damascus.100 The title of one of Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi’s biographical dictionaries reflects the deep reliance on such gatherings in the genre: *Lutf al-Samar wa Qatif al-Thamar min Tarajim A‘yan al-Tabaqat al-Ula min al-Qarn al-Hadi ‘Ashar*, or, “The Sweetness of Nightly Conversation and the Fruitful Harvest of the Biographies of Notables of the First Class of the Eleventh Century.” Reading about great men was a fruitful conversation, the title suggested, but the book itself also emerged from such conversations, as the text itself revealed repeatedly. As skeptical as Arabs may have initially been of the intellectual
merits of some of their Rumi visitors, by memorializing their lives and binding them together with those of reputable Arabs, they helped to build a single learned community that spanned the Ottoman lands.

V. Conclusion: Imperial Integration

The 1516-7 Ottoman conquest of the Mamluk Empire propelled enormous social and intellectual exchange across the Middle East. Although connections between Anatolia and the Arab lands had already existed prior to the conquest, the integration of the two regions into a single empire prompted a sharp acceleration of contact between their learned populations. Informal scholarly gatherings were central to this process. By permitting gatherings less narrowly circumscribed than those held in madrasas, majālis facilitated exchange amongst the more mature Ottoman ʿulamaʾ. As arenas welcoming to scholars on the move, salons aided the creation of pan-Ottoman scholarly networks; as venues for discussion and debate, they facilitated the circulation of ideas, books and written histories. The result was something akin to an Eastern Mediterranean ‘republic of letters’—an intellectual community that self-consciously cut across political or ethnic divisions. Scholarly gatherings were the physical foundations of interpretative communities that linked men to one another long after they set off for the next city.

The meetings of mature scholars shaped many different phases of the social lives of books, from their creation, to their presentation, to their evaluation. Nowhere in their twin treatises did al-Ghazzi and Kınalızade mention the encounter from which their disagreement arose. Recovering the personal exchanges that preceded their writings suggests that even some of the most recondite works of the Ottoman period emerged from specific disputes held in specific moments. Not only was early modern Islamic learning dominated by a delight for debate,
Ottoman writing was the product of live gatherings and responded to particular controversies. We often focus on formal instruction in the madrasa in order to understand knowledge transmission. However, in the early modern period, a wide range of other occasions allowed mature scholars to meet and exchange ideas.

The intensity of communication within the learned community meant that books often traveled preceded by a reputation. Writers used social gatherings to furnish written work with an oral gloss, thus preparing the ground for a favorable reception. But these same gatherings militated against such control, offering platforms for opponents to delegitimize particular works or disseminate alternate readings of them. The fact that biographical dictionaries frequently documented scholarly opinion meant that a book’s reputation often outlived its writer. Later generations, too, would understand ideas within their social and intellectual contexts, as Kinalızade Ali did when he consulted Ibn Hajar’s biographical compilation. Abstract treatises were not read then and should not be read now as divorced from particular social worlds.

The post-conquest convergence of Rumi and Arab scholarly communities depended upon a shared culture of scholarly sociability. Al-Ghazzi’s debate with Kinalızade and the treatises it generated helped to secure al-Ghazzi’s place in the expanded academic sphere of the 16th century: although he spent only a year or two in Rûm over the course of his life, his face-to-face interactions with Rumis passing through Damascus established his reputation in the new imperial center. The same is true for the biographical accounts of Kinalızade ʿAli: were it not for his time in Damascus and his skilled participation in its social circles, he might have never found his place in the Arabic-language biographical compilations of the era—and certainly not such an honorable place as he did find. Although the ʿilmiyye had expanded considerably from its modest
beginnings in Anatolia and the Balkans, a shared culture of social gatherings meant that the community remained grounded in the physical, face-to-face interactions of individuals.

In all of these ways, informal social gatherings acted as a key motor in the engine of imperial integration. Qadis, as the case of Kinalizador Ali has shown, were central not only in the dispensation of (Hanafi) justice in accordance with the standards set by the Porte, but for the circulation of knowledge as well.\textsuperscript{102} When judges returned to Istanbul after serving in the provinces, books were only the most tangible of the things that they brought back with them: their ideas and contacts formed a durable web that tied them to the places they had visited. Even in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century, when Ottoman bureaucracy was at its finest, timars and taxes alone did not ensure imperial cohesion. Of equal importance was an empire-wide salon culture that aided the integration of individuals upon their arrival in a new city.

Viewed from the perspective of informal, non-state gatherings, imperial incorporation emerges as a process driven as much from the bottom-up as from the top-down. In the realm of law and bureaucracy, policy was undoubtedly directed from the center. In matters of intellectual culture, power was more dispersed. Arabs did much of the hard work of constructing a single, pan-Ottoman community of scholars through their acceptance of Rumis into local scholarly circles and their compilation of biographical dictionaries based on these circles. This process was not matched by the Rumi biographical tradition, Turcophone and Persianate as it was in its orientation.\textsuperscript{103} By writing Rumis into their histories, Damascene authors made Ottoman sovereignty locally legible.\textsuperscript{104} This may have parallels in other parts of the empire, including the Grecophone lands conquered by the Ottomans in earlier centuries.\textsuperscript{105} If so, the willingness with which local cultural elites integrated the Ottomans into their local literary traditions, and the Ottoman support of this project, was one of the keys to the empire’s legitimacy.
Nevertheless, the competitive nature of salons cautions us against indiscriminate celebrations of exchange. The experiences of Rumi chief judges in Damascus point to the laborious and often contentious aspects of the transmission of knowledge. However flexible and porous informational networks might have been, they were embedded in deeply-felt hierarchies. While Rumis like Kinalzade were invited to Damascus majālis, and in some debates, achieved the upper hand, they participated on the terms of local Arabs, in discussions in Arabic on Arabic-language writings. Because Arabs did not feel the same affinity for Rumi traditions that Rumis felt for the Arabic literary corpus, knowledge traveled primarily in one direction, at least initially.

In the decades following the Ottoman conquest of the Arab lands, the Porte’s Rumi representatives made little effort to export a centrally developed literary or linguistic culture, as we have come to expect from many modern nation-states, including Turkey. Rather, the servants of the sultan strove to excel in a shared Islamicate and Arabic culture, one in which conquered territories were often initially perceived to be dominant. This required considerable exertion from even the most learned Rumi scholars, but it also had a significant payoff, namely the rapid influx of texts and traditions from the Arab lands to Rūm. The explosion of intellectual activity in the 16th-century Ottoman capital and the experimentation with new genres was in no small part indebted to the movement of ideas from the Arab lands northwards. These ideas were carried in large part not by infiltrating Arabs, but by Rumis themselves. From a modern perspective, the Ottoman incorporation of Arab lands has often been viewed as an end—an end to religious openness, an end to intellectual fervor and, for Arabs, an end to political autonomy. From the point of view of Islamic literary culture, it was a new beginning.
Figure 1. Left: Literary Gathering at the Palace, Sultan Selim I, *Divan*, 1515-1520 (detail). Image courtesy of Istanbul University Library, F. 1330, fol. 28a. Right: The Ruler Visits an Immoral Judge, Sa’di, *Gulistan*, 1565. Image courtesy of the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, F. 1949.2, fol. 110a. The two images illustrate the varying character of 16th-century social gatherings. The first depicts the young sultan reading a book with two companions. The second, which accompanies a fictional story of a judge fallen in love with a boy, features elements common on less restrained occasions, including wine and courtship.

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2 Seljuk Anatolia was marginal in histories and geographies written in the heartlands of the late medieval Islamic world, and was viewed as a sort of “Wild West.” Andrew Peacock and Sara Nur Yıldız, “Introduction,” in *The Seljuks of Anatolia: Court and Society in the Medieval Middle East*, eds. Andrew Peacock and Sara Nur Yıldız (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 2-3.


Female poets only very rarely took part in Istanbul mecālis. For an exception, see Latifi, Teykire-i Latifi (Istanbul: İkdam Matbaası, 1896-7), 321. Much earlier, al-Ghazzali discouraged scholars from attending the majālis of not only kings but also commoners, suggesting that non-elite groups held them as well. Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, “Preface,” in The Majlis, ed. Lazarus-Yafeh et al, 11.


This was true in the medieval period as well. Sarah Stroumsa, “Ibn al-Rāwandi’s sūr adab al-mujādala: the Role of Bad Manners in Medieval Disputations,” in The Majlis, ed. Lazarus-Yafeh et al., p. 70; Benjamin Kedar, “The Multilateral Disputation at the Court of the Grand Qan Möngke, 1254,” in idem, 162-183.

İlker Evrim Binbaş, “A Damascene Eyewitness to the Battle of Nicopolis: Shams al-Din Ibn al-Jazarı (d. 833/1429),” Contact and Conflict in Frankish Greece and the Aegean, 1204-1453, Nikolaos Chrissis and Mike Carr, eds., (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 153-175; Francis

17 Of 115 scholars employed in Ottoman madrasas between the 14th and 16th centuries, about 43% had been educated in Iran, 23% in Egypt, 15% in Anatolia, 9% in Transoxiana, 8% in Syria, and 2% in Iraq. İhsanoğlu, “Institutions,” 372. See also Ertuğrul Ökten, “Scholars and Mobility: A Preliminary Assessment from the Perspective of Al-Shaqāyiq Al-Nuʿmāniyya,” Osmanlı Araştırmaları 41 (2013): 55-70, p. 62; Yıldız, “From Cairo to Ayasuluk” and İsmail Erünsal, “Ottoman Libraries: A Survey of the History, Development and Organization of Ottoman Foundation Libraries,” Sources of Oriental Languages and Literatures 84 (Cambridge: The Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literatures, Harvard University, 2008), pp. 9-10.


24 According to Petry, only about three percent of Egyptian scholars and bureaucrats traveling in the 14th century made trips to Rûm. Petry, “Travel Patterns,” 81, 86.
Some scholars of Rumi origins did move to Cairo in the 15th century and remained there as revered scholars and teachers. Petry, “Travel Patterns,” 74-5.

Other social and professional groups were mobile as well, of course. See Suraiya Faroqhi, *Travel and Artisans in the Ottoman Empire: Employment and Mobility in the Early Modern Era* (Istanbul: I.B. Tauris, 2014).


41 Al-Burini, *Tarajim* II, 94.


43 For example, Damascene biographers ignored Kınalızade’s Turkish-language *Ahlak-i ‘Alai*, despite the fact that it was written in Damascus and is considered one of Kınalızade’s most important works to this day. Instead, they often mentioned two Arabic-language works, that were


46 Ibn Ayyub explained of Çivizade Muhyiddin Mehmed Efendi, “he was one of the *mawläs* that was famous in those lands [around Istanbul].” Ibn Ayyub, *Al-Rawd*, 259b.


50 Kinalizade studied Qur’an commentary and recitation, hadith and rhetoric while in Damascus. Ibid, 204b; al-Ghazzi, *Al-Kawakib* III, 6, 187.

51 One early exception was Ibn Hilal al-Hanafi, a scholar from Homs who studied with Kinalizade ṢAli. Ibn Ayyub, *Al-Rawd*, 270b.
52 Al-Ghazzi, Al-Matali c al-Badriyya, 263-275.

53 Al-Nahrawali, Journey to the Sublime Porte, 37-40.

54 Hamdi Savaş, “İshak Çelebi, Kılıççizâde,” TDVİA XXII, 527-528.


56 Ibn Tulun, Qudat Dimashq, 319.

57 Katib Çelebi, Kashf al-Zunun 'an Asami al-Kutub wa-l-Funun (Beirut: Dar Ihya’ al-Turath al- cArabî), 730-1. Al-Ghazzi wrote two versions of this book, one full and one abbreviated.

58 Al-Ghazzi, Al-Kawakib III, 5-6. Another prominent Damascene held a khatm each year at his home for Sahih al-Bukhari. Ibn Ayyub, Al-Rawd, 45b.

59 Taqi al-Din Al-Tamimi, Kitab Ṭabaqat Taqi al-Din, Süleymaniye, MS Ayasofya 3295, 239a.

60 In another khatm, the men first discussed and then ate together with al-Ghazzi. This session had featured the influential Damascene scholars Abu al-Fath al-Maliki, Shihab al-Din al-Tibi the elder and Ismaîl al-Nabulusi (the great-grandfather of c Abd al-Ghani) as well as the Rumis scholars Fevri Efendi and Çivizade Mehmed Efendi. Ibid, 95-97; idem, Tarajim I, 11-2.


63 Ibn Hajar al-c Asqalani, Al-Durar al-Kamina fi A`yan al-Mi`a al-Thamina I-IV (Hyderabad: Da`irat al-Ma`arif al-‘Uthmaniyya, 1929-31) 1:339; Claude Gilliot, “Kontinuität und Wandel in

64 For a detailed summary of their debate, copied from Kınalızade’s own notes, see al-Tamimi, MS Ayasofya 3295, fol. 239a

65 Kınalızade, Tezkiyetü’-Şu’ara, 669; al-Ghazzi, Al-Kawakib III, 188; al-Tamimi, MS Ayasofya 3295, fol. 239a; Ibn Hajar, Al-Durar I, 339-340.

66 Al-Ghazzi, Al-Kawakib III, 188.

67 Ibid., 189.

68 Kınalızade, Tezkiyetü’-Şu’ara, 669-670; al-Tamimi, MS Ayasofya 3295, fol. 239a; Katib Çelebi, Kashf al-Zunun, 730-1.

69 Kınalızade, Tezkiyetü’-Şu’ara, 670.

70 The debate was also recorded in 1571 by a certain al-Faridi, who did not attend the majlis but met Kınalızade later. Al-Faridi, “Nukat ʿala Ma Waqʿa bayn al-Qadi ʿAli Çelebi wa Ibn al-Shaykh Radi al-Din,” Library of the Escorial, MS Escorial 1318, fols. 14b-33a.

71 Ibid.

72 Extant copies of the two treatises include Süleymaniye Library, MS Esad Efendi 3556, fols. 1-29; Süleymaniye Library, MS Mihrisah Sultan 39, fols. 45b-70b; Princeton University Library, MS Garrett 3817Y, fols 93b-106b; Leiden University, MS Leiden 1666.

73 Süleymaniye Library, MS Mihrisah Sultan 39.

74 Katib Çelebi, Kashf al-Zunun I, 122-3, 730-1.

75 Ya Sin 36:69.

76 Al-Burini, Tarajim II, 94-5; Katib Çelebi, Kashf al-Zunun I, 454.

77 Al-Burini, Tarajim II, 94.

Al-Shawkani’s account is not entirely reliable. He claims that al-Ghazzi was in Istanbul when the manuscript was reviewed, although no other contemporary account corroborates this. There is an autograph of *Al-Tafsir al-Manzum* in the Süleymaniye library dated 1554-5 (962). Muhammad al-Shawkani, *Al-Badr al-Tali c bi-Mahasin Man Ba’da al-Qarn al-Sabi c* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Sa’ada, 1929-30), vol. 2, p. 252; MS Hüsnü Paşa 11, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi.


This was the opinion of c Abd al-Latif al-Shafi’i (a student of Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi) in the 1630s. See MS Süleymaniye Library, Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 1390, fol. iia. For a similar opinion, see MS Süleymaniye Library, Kemankeş 240, fols. 70a-b.

Al-Burini, *Tarajim* II, 94.


90 Süleymaniye Library, MS Ragıp Paşa 1474, fol. 190b ff.


94 Al-Ghazzi, Al-Kawakib III, 4, 7.


96 Al-Tamimi, MS Ayasofya 3295, fol. 239a.

97 Al-Ghazzi, Lutf al-Samar, 359.

98 Al-Burini, Tarajim I, 17, 21; Tarajim II, 103; Al-Ghazzi, Lutf al-Samar, 358.

99 Cf, Ibn Ayyub, Al-Rawd, 113a; Al-Burini, Tarajim I, 73


Scholars and poets of Arab descent are rare in tezkires like Hasan Çelebi’s or in Taşköprüzade’s Al-Shaqa’iq al-Nu‘maniyya. Even Kinalızade ĞAli’s 1566 Al-Tabaqat al-Hanafiyya, which constructed a single scholarly lineage from Abu Hanifa to Kemalpaşazade, included no contemporary Arab scholars.

Sometimes this meant a literal translation. Al-Burini’s biography of a danişmend contained a detailed review of the meaning, pronunciation and etymology of that word. Tarajim I, 77.