MORE THAN MERE POLEMIC:

THE ADVENTURE OF THE *RISĀLAH-I ḤUSNIYAH* IN THE SAFAVID, OTTOMAN AND INDIAN LANDS

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Yusuf Ünal, certify that

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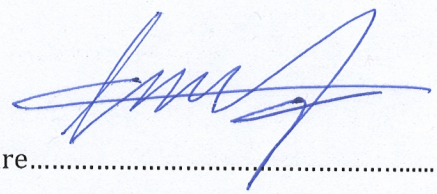

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ABSTRACT

More Than Mere Polemic:

The Adventure of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in the Safavid, Ottoman and Indian Lands

This thesis explores the historical adventure of a Shīʻī polemical work, *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah,* which appeared in Persian in Safavid Iran probably in the sixteenth century when the conversion of Iranian populace from Sunnīsm to Shīʻī Islam was in full swing. It seeks to analyze how this anti-Sunnī polemical work played a role in popularizing Shīʻī theological principles and consolidating a distinctive Shīʻī identity among its audience in Iran and beyond. Next, it studies the translations and circulation of the *Risālah* into Ottoman Turkish and Urdu in the late Ottoman Empire and India. In connection with this, the censorship policies of the political authority of the time and religious rebuttals written by the Sunnī Ottoman scholars against the *Risālah* are of particular interest for this study. Last but not least, by making brief inroads into the adventure of Ḥusniyah in modern Turkey, this study demonstrates that the *Risālah* is one of the significant components of the Alevi literary corpus and popular religion after all the censorship policies and religious resistance against it in the late Ottoman Empire and early republic. One of the important contributions of this study is that it demonstrates that confessional polemical texts might have very colorful biographies, the exploration of which would provide important vistas and insights into the time in which they 'live', therefore their journey, reception, circulation, and translation warrant detailed historical investigation.

ÖZET

Bir Polemikten Daha Fazlası:

Risale-i Hüsniye'nin Safevi, Osmanlı ve Hindistan Diyarlarındaki Sergüzeşti

Bu çalışma, Safeviler döneminde muhtemelen 16. yüzyılda, İran'ın Sünnilikten Şiiliğe doğru mezhepsel dönüşümü tecrübe ettiği bir dönemde, Farsça olarak kaleme alınmış, *Risale-i Hüsniye* adıyla meşhur bir Şii polemik eserin tarihsel sergüzeştini konu edinmektedir. Sünni İslama reddiye mahiyetinde yazılmış bu eserin, Şii İslamın temel inanç esaslarının geniş halk kitlesi arasında yaygınlık kazanmasında ve yeni bir Şii kimliğinin inşasında oynadığı rolün incelenmesi mevcut çalışmanın başlıca hedefleri arasında yer almaktadır. Ayrıca risalenin sergüzeştinde önemli bir aşamayı temsil eden 19.yüzyılda Osmanlı Türkçesi ve Urducaya çevrilmesi ve bu dillerde Osmanlı'nın muhtelif vilayetlerinde ve Hindistan'da tedavül etmesi hususuna da bu çalışmada geniş yer verilmekte olup bilhassa Osmanlının son döneminde risalenin halk arasında yayılmasına karşı gösterilen siyasi ve dini tepkiye etraflıca değinilmektedir.

Son olarak, *Risale-i Hüsniye*'nin, modern Türkiye tarihindeki hikayesine yer verilmekte ve bu Şii polemik eserin Osmanlı son döneminde maruz kaldığı onca sansür ve kovuşturmaya rağmen günümüzde Alevi yazılı kaynakları arasında önemli bir yere sahip olduğu ve Alevi kimliğinin ve popüler inancının önemli bir parçası haline geldiği savunulmaktadır. Tüm bunlarla birlikte, dini polemik metinlerin, tıpkı bireylerde olduğu gibi, kendilerine has birer serüvenlerinin ve biyografilerinin olduğu ve muhtevaları kadar sergüzeştlerinin de tarihsel araştırmayı hakettiği, çoğu zaman kendini tekrarlayan

muhtevalarına rağmen farklı tarihsel zaman ve zeminde te'lif, tercüme ve tedavül edişlerinin dönemlerin değişen dini ve politik atmosferlerini anlamımızda önemli katkı sağlayabileceğine olan vurgu ve bunun *Risale-i Hüsniye* üzerinden tatbiki bu çalışmanın başlıca katkıları arasında sayılabilir.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This work is the biography of a work of anti-Sunni polemic that first appeared in Persian in the Safavid Empire in the sixteenth century and which was subsequently translated into other languages and which traveled into new cultural geographies. The text, titled *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah,* emerged as a part of Shī'ī apologetical and polemical literature and aimed to popularize Shī'ī theological principles in a simple and appealing manner. It covers major controversial issues between Sunnī and Shī'ī Islam and utilizes a scathing language and harsh invectives against its Sunnī opponents. Following its production, the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was reproduced first in manuscript and later, in the nineteenth century, also in printed form. In the nineteenth century, the text was also translated into Turkish and Urdu, and after the 1970s, into English and Malay.

The present study holds that texts, like human beings, might have very colorful biographies, the exploration of which would provide important vistas and insights into the time in which they 'live'. In this regard, their journey, reception, circulation and translation warrant detailed research as much as their content. Taking this as a point of departure, this work suggests that Sunnī-Shī'ī apologetical and polemical works, notwithstanding their repetitive nature, might be quite helpful in analyzing the historical context and religio-political currents of a certain period for a historical investigation. In connection with the significance of apologetical and polemical works for historical studies, Sabine Schmidtke and Camila Adang have advocated that 'the statements with

which the author preface or justify their works, the multiplication of polemical and apologetical tracts and the proliferation of manuscript copies of these same tracts allow us to draw some conclusions concerning the socio-historical contexts in which these texts were written, received and subsequently reproduced.'[1]

With this point in mind, this work explores the biography of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* which straddles the early modern and modern periods. Because the text in question was closely connected to the Shiitization efforts in Iran and beyond, this study also aims to shed some fresh light on both the religious developments and polemical culture in Safavid Iran and Sunnī-Shī'ī relations in the Ottoman Empire and North India in the nineteenth century. Last but not least, this study also examines the adventure of the text among the Alevi-Bektashi communities in the late Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey. It should be stressed from the very outset that the biography of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* introduced here is by no means a complete one, because writing a biography of a text is analogous to writing that of a living person whose story has yet to come to an end.

The *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* appeared in Safavid Iran in 958AH/ 1551CE, five decades after the adoption of Shī'ī Islam as an official religion by the Safavids, and when the conversion of Iranian populace from Sunnīsm to Shī'ī Islam was in full swing. Therefore, Chapter II explores the Safavid context in order to demonstrate the religious, cultural, and political atmosphere in which the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* flourished and also to show how this polemical work played an instrumental role in disseminating Shī'ī Islam

[1] Schmidtke and Adang, eds., *Contacts and Controversies between Muslims, Jews and Christians in the Ottoman Empire and Pre-Modern Iran*, 11.

and fostering Shī‘ī identity among its audience. It is argued that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was a product of a process of heightened "confessionalization" as well as of a growing religious literature during the Safavid period, which marked the consolidation of Shī‘ī Orthodoxy and the parameters of the Shī‘ī jurisprudential law in collaboration between the Shī‘ī scholars and the Safavid political authority. It also contextualizes the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* within the fictitious conversion narratives introduced as anti-Sunnī polemics and within the Shī‘ī popular literature that demonized Sunnī Islam and vilified its prominent figures and symbols, and hence, consolidated the theological ground for the public vilification rituals in Safavid Iran that reinforced hostility against Sunnī Islam.

The *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was widely circulated and well-received by the audience from different geographical and cultural backgrounds over a number of centuries. This is, for the most part, because of its appealing narrative form and simple language that made the 'tiresome' and 'hard-to-understand' theological topics more interesting and accessible to a popular audience unlike the majority of Shī‘ī apologetical and polemical works, which hardly addressed beyond the precincts of narrow scholarly circles. Chapter III examines the authorship, audience and content of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* with special emphasis on its dramatic structure, which entailed a fictional debate between the main heroine of the text, Ḥusniyah, and her Sunnī opponents in the presence of the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd and hundreds of spectactors. The debate revolved around well-trodden issues that had long stirred disagreement between Sunnīs and Shī‘īs such as succession to the Prophet, the traumatic incidents that occurred after the Prophet, predestination, the attributes of God etc. Ḥusniyah, introduced as a 'beautiful, erudite and well-articulated slave girl, advocated the superiority of Shī‘īsm to Sunnī Islam and defeated her

opponents in the discussion, and eventually her victory won the minds and hearts of four hundred spectactors who, convinced by the arguments of Ḥusniyah, decided to convert to Shī'ī Islam.' The third chapter also demonstrates how the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was built on a stock of themes and a very popular frame story, the story of Tawaddud that had been in circulation before the production of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah.* Moreover, it also explores how the fictitious and literary figure, Ḥusniyah, has been represented and portrayed by the Shī'ī bio-bibliographical sources and encyclopedias composed in modern Iran and demonstrates the evolution of Husniyah from a literary figure to a real persona in parallel with its growing popularity and circulation in Iran.

The nineteenth century represented a significant phase in the career of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah,* because its translation into Urdu and Ottoman Turkish paved the way for circulation of the text among Muslims living in the Ottoman Empire and North India in the second half of the nineteenth century. Chapter IV examines the ecology of the translations by analyzing the religio-political dynamics of the nineteenth century with particular emphasis on the revival of Shī'īsm, its increasing missionary zeal in the Ottoman provinces and North India, growing importance of public spaces and sectarian performances, and the unprecedented impact of printing press on Sunnī-Shī'ī polemical culture and literature. Inspired by Maria Tymoczko's approach to translation as a political and ideological activity rather than a mechanical literary practice,[2] this chapter suggests that the translations were products of the heightened confessional awareness in the nineteenth century, which Olaf Blaschke has termed as the "age of second confessionalization" in which confessional identities gained renewed significance and

[2] Tymoczko, "Translation: Ethics, Ideology, Action," 442-46.

confessional divisions were buttressed by polemical disagreements.[3] In line with Blasckhe's suggestion, Rebecca A. Bennette has argued that territorial revolution and industrialization in Germany in the nineteenth century dislocated different confessional groups that used to have insular lives and forced them to live in confessionally-mixed cities in which confessional and polemical sensibilities increased in contrary to what modernization theory has suggested that modernity trivialized the confessional identities.[4] Although the contention of Blaschke and Bennette is pertinent to a different region and religio-cultural set-up, in my opinion, it is also useful in explaining the context in which the translations were conducted in the Ottoman Empire and India.

Chapter V is chiefly concerned with the individuals and groups that were responsible for the translations, their motivations and intentions, and the targeted audience of the subsequent publications. Since the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in Turkish was published by Bektashi groups and Iranian-Azeri diaspora community in Valide Hani in Istanbul, this chapter investigates the relationship between the Bektashi groups and Iranian-Azeri Shī'ī community and points out to the Shī'ī propaganda among the Alevi-Bektashi communities.

Chapter VI forms a sizeable place in this work and studies, first, the political reactions to the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* and measures taken against its circulation by the

[3] Eijnatten, *Preaching, Sermon and Cultural Change in the Long Eighteenth Century*, 304; Joppke, *The Secular State Under Siege: Religion and Politics in Europe and America*, 77.

[4] Bennette, "Confessional Mixing and Religious Differentiation in Nineteenth-Century Germany," 2. By the same token, Cristopher Bayly suggests that the nineteenth century saw the triumphal reemergence and expansion of religion in the sense in which we now use the term and this was seen in "all world religions" during the period. His argument also runs against the conventional assumption that has long seen the nineteenth century as an age when science and secular thought eroded religious belief or began to push it to the margins of social life. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparison*, 325-265.

Ottoman government in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Moreover, it examines the reaction of the Sunnī scholars against the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* and, in connection with this, it discusses four rebuttals written by the Ottoman scholars. Furthermore, it explores the adventure of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in the modern republic of Turkey where it was adapted from Ottoman Turkish into modern Turkish and which has been reproduced multiple times from 1957 down to our time. This chapter demonstrates how the increasing popularity of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was considered as a threat to religious and political legitimacy and ideology of the Hamidian period (1876-1908) in which intense Sunnitization policies were implemented. The political authorities and Sunnī scholars strived to thwart the influence of Shī'ī propaganda and Christian missionary activities on the subjects, especially on the Alevi-Bektashi communities during this period. Finally, it shows how the modern republic, despite its espousal of rigid secularism and substantial ideological differences from the Ottoman Empire, labored to keep the Alevi community in the fold of state-sanctioned religion and censored the Shī'ī publication for fear that they would influence the Alevi people and harm the social and religious harmony between Sunnī and Alevi peoples.

Writing the biography of a text that has travelled over time and space necessitates going through a good number of primary and secondary sources, and combing through a host of archival materials in order to track down the traces of the text and to shed light on its uncharted adventure. Therefore, this work has tapped into sources in multiple languages. Particularly the major Shī'ī bio-biographical works in Arabic and Persian and the archival materials concerning the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in the state archives of Turkey have been of great significance for the present study. Having

said that, it would be more than disingenuous to claim that the present work is planted on barren soil. There are several studies that provided brief information about the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*. Sir John Malcolm (d.1833), who was sent to Iran at the turn of the nineteenth century as a British diplomat and wrote the earliest full-length history of Iran in English, *The History of Persia* (c. 1815), mentioned the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* as one of the most important Shīʻī polemical works and rendered its partial translation into English.[5] The Iranian scholars Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh and Ali Riḍā Qarāgozlū introduced *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* briefly in their bibliographical and encyclopedic entries in Persian and summarized the frame story of the text in comparison with the prior frame stories like the story of Tawaddud.[6] The most comprehensive study about the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* belongs to Murat Han Aksoy who examined the theological topics discussed in the text in his master thesis written in Turkish, however his work does not provide us with the exposition of the historical adventure of the text.[7] Therefore, it would not be off the mark to say that this work would be the first attempt to address the exciting adventure of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* extensively by following its traces in different regions and contexts.

[5] Lambton, "Major-General Sir John Malcolm (1769-1833) and 'The History of Persia'," 97-109; Malcolm, *The History of Persia: from the Most Early Period to the Present Time*, 365-376.

[6] Dānishpazhūh, "Fihrist-i nuskha-hā-yi khattī-yi kitābkhānah-i dānishkadah-i adabiyāt," 208-210; Qarāgozlū, *Mājara dar mājara: sayr-i ʻaql wa naql dar pānzdah qarn-i hijrī,* 443-55.

[7] Aksoy, "Şii paradigmanın oluşum sürecinde Hüsniye'nin yeri ve önemi / Hüsniye's place and importance in the process of formation of Shiite paradigm" (MA Thesis, Çukurova Üniversitesi, 2010).

CHAPTER 2

THE ECOLOGY OF THE TEXT:

THE SAFAVIDS IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY AND CONVERSION TO SHĪ‘Ī ISLAM IN THE AGE OF CONFESSIONALIZATION

This chapter explores the religio-political context of the sixteenth century in which the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* appeared. Towards this end, it addresses the adoption of Shī‘ī Islam as an official religion by the Safavids and the conversion process in Safavid Iran. In connection with this, it briefly examines the migration of Shī‘ī scholars to Safavid Iran, their impact on the conversion process and the formation of the legal parameters of the Safavid government. This chapter also attempts to investigate the different aspects of the popularization of Shī‘īsm among the Iranian populace, which had formerly been predominantly Sunnī Muslim. Given that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was produced during the reign of Shah Ṭahmasb (r. 1524 – 1576), the religious, cultural and literary developments of his period are of particular significance for this study. In this regard, this chapter concentrates on the piety movement, social disciplining, popular religious literature, conversion narratives, translation movement, and public anti-Sunnī rituals of Tahmasb's period in order to contextualize the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* within the religious currents of the time.

2.1 Reframing the Safavids within a broader context in the early modern period: Conversion in the age of confessionalization

The sixteenth century witnessed the advent of the Safavid dynasty on the Iranian plateau and the Safavid adoption of Shī'īsm as their official religion. This represented the transformation of Shī'īsm from a religion of a community to that of the Iranian state. At the same time, the rise of the Safavid state and the following developments were also part of a larger early modern context, which saw the rise of not one but three empires in the larger Islamicate world; the Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals. These three empires created large territorial powers and developed strong state systems that fostered trade and promoted the spread of the Islamic faith.[8] The eminent Islamicist Marshall Hodgson highlighted the commonalities between these three empires by labeling them "gunpowder empires."[9]

Recently, two Ottomanists, Tijana Krstic and Derin Terzioğlu, have proposed to reframe the Ottoman religious landscape in the early modern period through the concept of "confessionalization". Confessionalization is a term coined by two historians of early modern Germany, Heinz Schilling and Wolfgang Reinhard in the late 1970s. It refers primarily to an alliance between the religious and political authorities to produce more docile subjects through religious indoctrination and "social disciplining". The emergence of the central governments and formation of confessional churches brought about more efficient state-church institutions that were expected to police society in

[8] Parker, *Global Interactions in the Early Modern Age, 1400-1800*, 52.

[9] For two important monographs comparing the three Muslim empires; see Douglas E. Streusand, *Islamic Gunpowder Empires: Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals* and S. F. Dale, *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals*.

order to procure greater social coherence by creating confessional identities through a closer examination of ritual and ceremonies.[10]

Although the term was developed exclusively with reference to early modern Christian Europe, Krstic and Terzioglu highlighted the analytical potential for early modern Ottoman history and suggested that the Ottomans were a part Mediterranean-wide age of empire building, confessional polarization and inter-imperial rivalry. Inter-imperial competition between the Habsburg, Ottoman and Safavid empires gave rise to the phenomena of confessional polarization and Sunnitization in the Ottoman Empire. In the face of the religious and ideological challenges posed by the Shī'ī Safavid Empire which made a bid for political hegemony in the Eastern Anatolia and Iraq, the Ottomans strived to represent themselves as protectors of Sunni Islam. Towards this end, different processes of social disciplining were employed such as the promulgation of a new criminal law code that policed the boundaries of orthodoxy and public morality, the promotion of mosque worship through the imposition of new fines for irregular attendance, and the construction of an unprecedented number of mosques in order to stabilize mosque congregations and monitor them more easily.[11]

Krstic also suggests that a similar process unfolded in the Safavid Empire as well. The conversion of Iran to Shī'ī Islam was initiated by Shah Ismail who championed messianic and chiliastic devotional Shī'īsm in the very beginning of the

[10] Headley et al., *Confessionalization in Europe: 1555-1700*, xvii-xxvii; Terpstra, *Religious Refugees in the Early Modern World: An Alternative History of the Reformation*, 1-17.

[11] Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*, 107; Terzioğlu, "How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization: A Historiographical Discussion," 301–38.; idem, "Where *'Ilm-i Ḥāl* Meets Catechism," 79-114.

sixteenth century. Yet, this extremist Shī'īsm was tamed concomitant with the centralization of power and institutionalization of orthodoxy by the Shī'ī *'ulamā* who migrated to Iran in the ensuing decades. Also, Krstic compares two peace treaties, Amasya and Augsburg, signed in the same year, in 1555. The Peace of Augsburg ended Charles V's struggle with the Lutheran princes and recognized the religio-political divisions within the Holy Roman Empire on the principle of *cuius regia, eius religio* or 'whose realm, his religion'. In the same year, Suleyman the Magnificent and Shah Tahmasp signed the Treaty of Amasya -the first signed peace treaty between the Ottomans and Safavids-in which they recognized each other's legitimacy within their respective domains, set the boundary between the two empires, and agreed to peace for a duration of twenty years. So, as the Pearce of Augsburg territorialized the Catholic – Protestant divide within Christendom, the Peace of Amasya territorialized the Sunni-Shiite divide within Islamdom.[12]

In my opinion, the reframing of Safavid history within the broader paradigm of confessionalization and within the Mediterranean-wide age of empire building is very valuable in that it enables us to see the connections between phenomena previously studied in isolation. In that regard, many aspects of the Safavid history such as conversion, institutionalization of religious orthodoxy, conversion narratives, polemical sensibilities, religious migrations and social disciplining can be studied within this broader context. In what follows, I shall briefly discuss some of these aspects of Safavid history within the paradigm of confessionalization.

[12] Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 168.

2.2 Migration of the ʻĀmili scholars, formation of Shīʻī orthodoxy, and social disciplining

The Sufi order of the *Ṣafawiyya* metamorphosed into a political power in the sixteenth century under the leadership of Shah Ismail, who claimed descent from the family of the Prophet. His charismatic leadership, and messianic expectations appealed to the nomadic Turkish tribes that predominantly lived in Eastern and Sothern Anatolia who were disgruntled by the implementation of heavy taxes and regulations for the settlement of the nomads by the newly bureaucratized and centralized Ottoman Empire in the wake of the conquest of Constantinople in 1453.[13] The successful recruitment of massive tribal forces full of exuberant synergy and Alid devotion secured several military accomplishments in Iran, Central Asia, Eastern Anatolia and Iraq. Shah Ismail did not clinch his power over the majority of Iran until the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514, when the Ottomans dealt him a severe blow and disenchanted his devoted followers which were appalled by the heavy artillery of the Ottomans.

Moreover, the war was being waged on different fronts, that is to say, apart from the Ottomans' sophisticated weaponry, the Safavids also needed to grapple with the ideological war waged by the Ottoman Sunni scholars, unflinchingly adamant to undermine the legitimacy of the nascent Shīʻī political power. The Ottoman Sunnī *ʻulamā*, whose religious convictions converged with the Ottomans' ambitious imperial vision, declared a *jihad* or war against the 'heretical' Safavids and laid the legal ground

[13] Yıldırım, "Turkomans between two Empires: The Origins of the Qizilbash identity in Anatolia (1447-1514)," 34-57; Dressler, "Inventing Orthodoxy," 151-152.

that sanctioned the killing of the Qizilbashs[14] as a highly meritorious act. In the face of this ideological threat, posed not only by the Ottomans but also by another Sunnī rival power, the Uzbeks, the Safavids deployed a vigorous conversion policy, which aimed to forge a distinctive Shīʻī identity by converting the predominantly Sunnī populace to Shīʻī Islam. However, the nascent Safavid authority was bereft of an established Shīʻī clerical body that would shore up Safavid ideology against its rivals and assist in the implementation of a new religious order, as well as in the proselytizing of Shīʻī Islam. Besides this problem, the majority of the Shīʻī scholars, dwelling in the shrine cities of Iraq, were reluctant to collaborate with the Safavid polity which they considered as "temporal authority", lacking legitimacy in the absence of the imam who was divinely given the right to lead people both spiritually and politically.[15]

Nonetheless, there were other Shīʻī scholarly circles that gave a favorable response to the imperial vision and conversion policies of the Safavids. A host of Shīʻī scholars from the Jabal ʻĀmil (South Lebanon) expressed their willingness to associate with the Safavid political authority and promote its legitimacy. They were also eager to transform Shīʻīsm from a marginal sect to a more assertive faith by wedding Twelver Shīʻīsm to the increasingly vigorous Safavid state.[16] Accordingly, a number of Shīʻī scholars decided to cast their lot with the Safavids, and migrated to Iran in increasing numbers throughout the sixteenth century. As Devin Stewart suggested, 'the main impetus for ʻĀmilī scholars to leave their native region and seek their fortunes in Iran

[14] This term is used for the Turcoman followers of Shah Ismail. They were called as Qizilbash or literally 'Red Heads' for the distinctive red turbans they wore.

[15] Newman, "The Myth of the Clerical Migration to Safawid Iran: Arab Shiite Opposition to ʿAlī Al-Karakī and Safawid Shiism," 66–112.

[16] Abisaab, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire*, 9.

was a combination of Ottoman pressure on the centers of Shi'i learning in Jabal ʻĀmil and Safavid promises of patronage and opportunities'.[17] On the part of the Safavids, there were some practical reasons behind their interest in ʻĀmilī scholars. First, the ʻĀmilī scholars proposed some modification in the political theory of the Shīʻīsm in order to make it more accommodating towards political power. In this connection, they emphasized the utilization of *ijtihād*, rational inference of legal precepts, through which they expanded their area of jurisdiction by entertaining new interpretations of Tradition, and advancing new approaches toward secular government and Shi'ite political authority. This stood in marked contrast to the leading Shi'ite scholars of Iraq, Persia, Bahrain and Qatif, who abstained from associating with any political power, and from using ijtihād.[18] Secondly, ʻĀmilī scholars' long experience in living and studying with Sunnis, their familiarity with Sunni religious tradition and their skill in debate with Sunni opponents on polemical topics made these scholars particular attractive to the Safavid Shahs.[19] Their experience would work for ʻĀmilī scholars in conducting ideological warfare against the Ottomans and Uzbeks. Third, as Rula J. Abisaab maintained 'the Safavids also saw political expediency in retaining foreign *'ulamā* with a steadfast Shi'ite faith but no entrenched ties to any of Persia's contending ethnic or political groups and who thus offered little threat even in the highest religious ranks.'[20]

[17] Stewart, "Notes on the Migration of ʿĀmilī Scholars to Safavid Iran," 81.

[18] Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 11.

[19] Stewart, "Three Polemic Exchanges at the Safavid Court," in *Le Shi'isme Imamite Quarante Ans Après: Hommage à Etan Kohlberg*, ed. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi et al., 397-415; Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 10-12.

[20] Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 10.

Muhaqqiq al-Karakī was the first influential ʻĀmilī scholar who enjoyed a close relationship with Shah Ismail (r. 1502 -1524) and he stayed in Iran for four years between 916/1510 and 920/1514 in his first visit.[21] However, the influx of the ʻĀmilī scholars accelerated during the reign of Shah Tahmasb (r. 1524-1576). Especially, the execution of Zayn al-Din al-ʻĀmilī, known as al-Shahīd al-Thāni (the second martyr) (d. 966/1558) impacted the migration process by increasing anti-Ottoman sentiments among the ʻĀmilī scholar, and concurrently, their loyalty to the Safavid dynasty.[22]

ʻĀmilī scholars were instrumental in the formation of Shīʻī orthodoxy and the articulation of Shīʻī dogma in Safavid Iran. In this regard, the establishment of the position of *shaykh al-islām* in Qazvin in 1555/56 with the appointment of Shaykh Husayn b. ʻAbd al-Ṣamad al-Hārithī al-ʻĀmilī (d. 1576) marked the institutionalization of the clerical body and also an attempt on the part of the shahs to normalize the relationship between the state and the growing class of trained Shīʻī jurists in the empire. After the territorialization of confessions with the treaty of Amasya between the Safavids and the Ottomans in 1555, as Stewart has pointed out, Shah Tahmasb probably wanted to rival the Ottomans on an ideological level by promoting an office nearly parallel to that of the Ottoman *shaykh al-islām*. The new *shaykh al-islām* would function as scholarly spokesman to oppose the influential Ottoman jurist Ebu's-suʻud Efendi (d.982/1574), who held the office of *shaykh al-islām* of Istanbul from 952/1545 until 982/ 1574 and who had issued a number of fatwās denouncing the Safavids and the

[21] Ḥassūn, *Ḥayāt al-Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī wa-āthāruhū,* 1: 194-199.

[22] Stewart, "The Ottoman Execution of Zayn Al-Dīn Al-'Āmilī," 289–347; Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 13.

Qizilbash, in particular.[23] For instance, in 968 (1561/62), Shaykh Husayn wrote a letter to Sultan Sulaymān (r. 1520-1566) on the behalf of Shah Tahmasb. The letter was designed as anti-Sunni polemic reviling those who usurped the right of ʻAlī to lead the community, i.e. the first three caliphs and their followers. The letter also boasted about the so-called noble pedigree of the Safavids, which went back to the *ahl al-bayt,* as an obvious indication of the superiority of the Safavids to their rivals.[24]

2.3 Social disciplining and the pietism during the reign of Shah Tahmasb

The cooperation of the Shīʻī scholars with the Safavid shahs not only brought about the formation of the legal structure of the state and facilitated a more powerful ideological warfare against the Ottomans, but also under the influence of the scholars and with their assistance, a process of "social disciplining"[25] and movement of piety were spurred in order to produce more obedient and pious subjects for the shahs by a variety of means. The Shīʻī scholars spearheaded the confessional acculturation of society by preaching, writing polemical works, encouraging Shīʻī rituals, composing religious manuals and catechetical works, rendering Persian translations of a large body of Shīʻī corpus in Arabic in order to make it accessible for the broader segments of society.

The confessions and repentance of Shah Tahmasb, renowned for his piety among the Safavid Shahs along with Shah Husayn (r. 1694-1722), represented a significant

[23] Stewart, "The First Shaykh Al-Islām of the Safavid Capital Qazvin," 405.

[24] Stewart, "Three Polemic Exchanges," 398-401.

[25] For the concept; see R. Po-chia Hsia, *Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe, 1550- 1750, Christianity and Society in the Modern World*.

phase of the confessionalization in Safavid Iran. His piety was applauded by a host of Safavid chronicles, among which the *Aḥsan al-tawārīkh* (The Best of the Histories) (c. 1578) and *the Tārīkh-i ʻālam-ārā-yi Shāh Abbāsī* (History of Shah Abbas, the World Embellisher) (c.1629) are worthy of particular mention. Ḥasan Rūmlū, in his account of the events of the year 939/1532-33, recounts that 'the Shah forbade all breaches of Islamic law, and stopped fermented drink and music, and did away with taverns and gambling dens and brothels'.[26] By the same token, Iskandar Beg Munshi, praises Shah Tahmasb for giving currency to the religious law, honoring the scholars, and giving luster to holy shrines, building and maintaining mosques and *madrasa*s. Munshī also states that in 939/1532-33, when Tahmasb had been on the throne for nine years, 'he paid heed to the word of God, "Turn to God in sincere repentance", and from the bottom of his heart, repented of all forbidden acts'.[27] The repentance of Tahmasb was followed by the *amīr*s and chiefs of the Qizilbash tribes. In this connection, Rūmlū notes that 'this year (963/ 1555-56) the chiefs repented of all their sins'.[28] In the same manner, Munsī reports that 'in 963/1555-56, the great emirs and the court attendants made a public act of repentance; this was followed throughout the country by the population as a whole. The chronogram for this event is "sincere repentance."'[29]

As Munshī noted, the movement of piety and act of repentance trickled down to the larger segments of society in Safavid Iran. In this process, a series of steps and

[26] Ḥasan Rūmlū, *A Chronicle of the Early Ṣafawīs: Being the Aḥsanu't-Tawārīkh of Ḥasan-I-Rūmlū,* trans. by C.N. Seddon, 113.

[27] Munshī, *The History of Shah 'Abbas the Great: Tārīk̲h-e 'ālamārā-ye 'Abbāsī*, 203.

[28] Rūmlū, *A Chronicle of the Early Ṣafawīs,* 173.

[29] Munshī, *The History of Shah 'Abbas the Great,* 203.

measure were taken in order to yield favorable results by the Safavid authority. Towards this end, Shah Tahmasb, and then his successors, issued a number of decrees and orders regarding new standards of public morality and piety, and edicts were dispatched to the local administrators, chiefs and *sayhk al-islāms,* commissioning them to carry out religious ceremonies and rituals on holy nights, to encourage people to perform their daily prayers and obey the rules (*Targhīb wa taḥriḍ khalāyīq bah ṭā'āt*), to command right and forbid wrong, to enlarge and repair the mosques, madrasas, lodges and tomb-sanctuaries, and to ban things forbidden by religion. In this connection, drinking alcohol, gambling, adultery, and shaving one's beard (*rīsh tirashīdan*) were forbidden.[30]

Even though we do not know to what extent these orders and decrees were enforced among the population, the responsibilities and duties of the local governors and security forces cited in the administration manuals, composed during the Safavid period, indicate that local governors were commissioned to watch the neighborhood in order to elicit religious conformity and discipline. For example, in *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* (c.1725), an administration manual written at the end of the Safavid period, mentions that one of the responsibilities of the *Kalāntar,* governor, was to improve the condition of *ra'iyyat* (subjects) in order to secure their prayers for the sacred person [of the King]. It also notes that Dārūgha, the sheriff, 'prohibits whatever is against the *sharī'at,* such as courtesans, wine, gambling, etc., in order that no one acquire such habits. But [if somebody commits these faults], the Dārūgha punishes him, prevents him from continuing and exacts for the guilty fines proportionate to their offences.' The Dārūgha was also working with some subunits, such as Qūrchis, Ghulāms, Āqāyāns who were

[30] Ja'fariyān, "Amr bah ma'rūf wa nahy az munkar dar dawrah-i Safawī," 66-96.

commissioned to watch the city day and night 'in order that no one should commit any act of oppression, or an outrage or anything contrary to the Sharī'at.[31]

Tahmasb's public proclamation of his repentance in 939/1532-33 coincided with the time when Muhaqqiq al-Karakī was riding the crest of his power and influence in Safavid Iran. Therefore, it stands to reason that the repentance of the Shah must have occurred under the influence of al-Karaki apart from other combination of political circumstances.[32] During this period, al-Karakī's opinions became authoritative and binding even in remote parts of the empire. Shah Tahmasb decreed to all provincial governors to adopt the religious directives of al-Karaki, whom he described as 'the deputy of the Imam'. Al-Karakī provided the governors with a manual (*dustūr al-'amal*) instructing them on various socio-economic matters, particularly the collection and administration of land tax. He set the legal punishments (*hudūd*) and encouraged the performance of Friday prayer.[33]

In addition to their close association and cooperation with the central power, the 'Āmilī scholars stewarded the conversion processes, and strived for confessional acculturation in Safavid Iran. They broadened their network through their students and by travelling across the country to promulgate and preach the Twelver Shī'īsm. For

[31] Minorsky, *Tadhkirat al-Muluk, A Manual of Safavid Administration, (c. 1137/ 1725)*, 82; Yūsufī-far and Bakhtiyārī, "Manṣib-i dārūgha dar dawrah-i Ṣafawiyyah," 97-119.

[32] Ja'fariyān, "Amr bah ma'rūf wa nahy az munkar," 71; Newman, *Safavid Iran : Rebirth of a Persian Empire*, 31. Adrew Newman argues that Tahmasp's first repentance in 939 came during the civil war, as he rushed back from engaging the Uzbeks in Khurasan to face the Ottomans and in the aftermath of the Shamlu plot to poison him and to put his half-brother Sam Mirza on the throne, because the repentance projected a superior image of the shah as defender of the faith, thus reinforced his spiritual legitimacy and authority in such politically and militarily troubling times.

[33] Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 28.

instance, al- Karaki traveled considerably within the empire and relied on a network of Persian students and agents to transport his rulings to numerous towns and cities. He visited Herat, Kashan and Tabriz mostly for the purpose of disseminating the Shi'ite creed and ensuring conformity with the Shi'ite school of law.[34]

2.4 Religious literature, translation movement and conversion narrative

Another significant part of the conversion process was translation. Throughout Safavid history, especially during the reigns of Shah Tahmasb, Shah Abbas and Sultan Husayn, an extensive body of major Arabic works of Twelver Shī'īsm from previous generations were translated into Persian. Concurrently, a host of works written in Arabic by the Safavid scholars were also rendered into Persian. This translation movement was encouraged by the Safavid scholars and patronized by the shahs, royal family members, and local governors.[35] With this movement, a wide variety of works from different subjects such as Islamic theology (*kalām), hadith*, Quranic exegesis, Islamic law, eulogy for the imams, political theory, history, prayers and supplications etc. were translated.[36]

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[34] Ḥassūn, *Ḥayāt al-Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī,* 1: 209; Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 28.

[35] Arjomand, "Religion and Statecraft in Pre-Modern Iran," 5-8.

[36] For instance, al-Karakī's as *Nafaḥāt al-lāhūt* was translated into Persian by one of his students, Amīr Muḥammad b. Abī Ṭalib Astarābādī during the reign of Shah Tahmasb and this translation was dedicated to Shah Tahmasb, see; Musṭafā Dirāyatī, *Fihristwārah-i dast-nawashthā-yi Irān,* 12 vols (Tehran: Kitābkhānah, Mūzah va Markaz-i Asnād-i Majlis-i Shūrā-yi Islāmī, 2010), 10: 760. Another student of al-Karakī, 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan al-Zawaraī translated a number of major Shī'ī works with the commission of his teacher. To name some of his translations: *al-Ihtijāj* by al-Fāḍil b. Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsi (d. 548AH/1153CE), *al-I'tiqād* by Ibn Babuya al-Qummi (d. 381AH/991CE), and *Tafsīr al-Qur'an*, attributed to Imam Ḥasan al- 'Askarī, and *Sharh al-Arba'īn Hadithan* by al-Shahid. In addition to them, Fatḥullah b. Shukrullah (d. 988), Shaykh Bahāī (d. 1030), 'Alī b. Muḥāmmad Iṣfahānī (d. 1045AH), Hādī b. Ṣalih Māzandarānī, Aqā Jamal al-Dīn al-Khwansārī (d.1125AH) were among the most well-known translators of the Safavid period. For more detail about the translation movement in Safavid Iran see; Muḥammad Riḍā Ḥusaynī, "Nohżat-i tarjumah-i bah fārisī dar 'aṣr-i Ṣafawī," *Muṭāla'āt-i Tarjuma* 45 (1393/2014): 31-45; Sayid

The translation movement played a very instrumental role in popularizing the Shīʻī religious writings by carrying the legal-political debates from the exclusive circles of theologians to a vast community of low-ranking scholars, political figures, merchants, artisans and common people. Also, the translation movement aimed to encourage further conversions among the populace by making Shīʻī apologetical works, conversion narratives, catechetical works and other religious manuals more accessible to a broader audience. In that sense, by echoing Ronit Ricci, who explored the relationship between conversion and translation in a different context, one can suggest that there is an inextricable, mutually energizing link between translation and conversion, namely that, ‘conversion brings about large translation projects while widely disseminated translated texts encourage further conversion.’[37]

As M. T. Danishpazhuh noted, Safavid social policy of this nature became especially notable during Tahmasb's reign in which the shah and his powerful daughter Pari Khan Khanum patronized a large translation project that would popularize Shi'ite religious writings.[38] In addition to popularizing the Shīʻī writings and encouraging conversions, the translation movement must have also helped promote the legitimacy of the Safavid shahs and royal family. Furthermore, on the part of the scholars, translations popularized their works among the Persian-speaking audience, and concomitantly

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ʻAbbās Mīrī, “Rūykard-i *ʻulamā* bah Farisī-nigārī dar ʻaṣr-i Ṣafawīyyah” *Ḥawzah* (1377/1998): 370-414; Muḥsin Nājī Naṣrābādī, “Sayr-i tarjuma dar Irān wa muʻarrifī-yi kitābhā-yi fārisī fhoda-i chāpī” *Āyinah-i Pazhuhash* 68 (1380/2001): 104-111.

[37] Ricci, *Islam Translated: Literature, Conversion, and the Arabic Cosmopolis of South and Southeast Asia*, 12.

[38] Dānishpazhūh, “Yak parda az zendegāni-yi Shāh Tahmāsb-i Safawī,” 975-82.

enabled them to increase their reputation, authority, and the number of pupils and followers.

The reign of Shah Tahmasb also witnessed the rise of religious tales which became an important part of the conversion process in Safavid Iran. These works played a significant role in popularizing the main tenets of Shī'ī theology such as *imamat* and the occultation of the twelfth imam, and also the main controversial issues between Sunnī and Shī'ī Islam, by presenting them within a story frame. Although most of these works were first produced during the reign of Shah Tahmasb, they were introduced as Persian translations of earlier works, originally written in Arabic by some famous Shī'ī scholars who lived before the Safavids. These works were copied many times and circulated across the country during the Safavid period and subsequent centuries. Moreover, some of these works traveled to other parts of Islamdom and were translated into multiple languages. The *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* appeared as a part of this literary current in order to advocate Shī'īsm against Sunni Islam with its fictitious frame story adapted from an earlier age-old story, as it will be further explored in detail in the following chapter. Apart from the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*, another popular text was *Jazīrah -i Khadrā'* (The Green Island)[39] that narrated an Iraqī scholar's travel to the Green Island, which was allegedly in the Mediterranean, near Gibraltar, and where a

[39] For a brief story of this story see; Rasūl Ja'fariyān, "Hikāyat-i Jazīrah-i Khadrā'", *Khabar Anlayn*, accessed, May 30, 2016, http://khabaronline.ir/detail/279918/weblog/jafarian; Dānishpazhūh, Yak parda az zendegāni-yi Shāh Tahmāsb-i Safawī, 981-82; Dirāyatī, *Fihristwārah-i dast-nawashthā-yi Irān,* 3: 641-42. Shūshtarī, N. b. S. (1377). *Majālis al-Mu'minīn*, 2 vols, Tehran: Islāmiyyah, 1: 78-79. Shūshtarī also claims that this story was also reported by Zayn al-Dīn al-'Āmilī, known as al-Shahīd al-Thānī. Also see for another source that echoed the accounts given by Shūshtarī; 'Abdullāh b. 'Īsā Beg Efendī, *Riyād al-'ulamā' wa hiyāḍ al-fuḍalā'*, 2:386; 4:175. In addition to the *Jazīrah -i Khadrā',* another work, called as *Iqbāl-nāmah,* appeared in Persian in the time of Shah Tahmasb. As Dānishpazhūh and Ja'fariyān noted, this work was presented to Shah Tahmasb by Shams al-Dīn Asadullāh Shustarī. Like *Jazīrah -i Khadrā',* this work is also set to prove the imamah and the occultation. Dānishpazhūh, ibid, 982; Ja'fariyān, Hikāyat-i Jazīrah-i Khadrā'; Dirāyatī, *Fihristwārah,* 2:77.

Shīʻī community was living freely according to the principles of Shīʻī Islam without having any fear or oppression.[40]

In addition to these religious stories, some fictitious conversion narratives appeared during the reign of Shah Tahmasb. These narratives generally feature a non-Muslim (*dhimmī*) who converts to Shīʻī Islam after a long search for "truth". During his quest for truth, the *dhimmī* decides to explore Islam, but learns that Islam was splintered into various sects, and Sunnīsm and Shīʻīsm form the majority of all these sects. Then he sets out to learn these two sects closely by interacting with a host of Sunnī and Shīʻī scholars and engaging them in discussion about a wide variety of topics, which predominantly constituted the main contentious issues between Sunnī and Shīʻī Islam. Following his critical engagement with the scholars and appraisal of their arguments, he debunks the Sunnī scholars and refutes their "weak" and "contradictory" arguments, whereas he accepts Shīʻī Islam as the true version of Islam with its uncorrupted divine knowledge, transmitted through the chains of impeccable imams, consequently, he converts to Shīʻī Islam.

[40] According to the story, some of the family members of the twelfth imam live on this island and, at times, the imam manifests himself to his deputy and some of his followers. Also, the islanders observe the Friday prayer led by the deputy of the imam and pay the khums. 32 It is important to note that the story reflects the traces of the time it appeared. The discussions on the licitness of collecting khums and observing the Friday prayer in the absence of the imam were still ongoing during the time of Shah Tahmasb. So, this fictitious story, by holding that the Friday prayer and khums need to be observed under the leadership of deputy of the imam dovetailed with the arguments of those scholars, like al-Karakī, who argued the incumbency of the Friday prayer and the khums in Safavid Iran. Therefore it is not surprising that this story was printed by an Indian Shīʻī community by attributing the story to al-Karakī who allegedly wrote this work in Arabic and presented to Shah Tahmasb. Moreover, Nūrullāh Shūshtarī, in his famous biographical work, Majālis al-muʼminīn, mentions this story as an authentic story which proves the existence of the imam and dispels all doubts that ignorant people have about him. Ibrahim Amini, "Al-imam al-Mahdī: The Just Leader of Humanity", translated by Abdulaziz Sachedina, accessed, May 20, 2016), http://www.al-ijtihād .com/library/ahlul- bait(as)/Imam%20Mahdi.pdf.

The fictitious conversion narratives, with the foregoing story frame, must have aimed to increase the appeal of the anti-Sunnī polemic by introducing them through an imagined *dhimmī* whose judgement about the Sunnī-Shī'ī disagreement, as a third and "impartial" party, would sound particularly interesting. One of the earliest examples of this kind was *al-Ṭarā'if fī ma'rifat madhāhib al-ṭawā'if,* written in Arabic by a famous Shī'ī scholar, Radī al-Dīn ibn Ṭāwūs (664AH/1266CE). The work tells the conversion story of 'Abd al-Maḥmūd al-Dhimmī and his polemics with a number of Sunnī and Shī'ī scholars. This conversion-cum-polemic was translated into Persian in Safavid Iran in the sixteenth century and dedicated to Shah Tahmasb.[41] In addition to the *al-Ṭarā'if*, another fictitious conversion narrative, titled the *Risālah-i Yuhannā al-Dhimmī,* was produced in Persian during the reign of Shah Tahmasb. Like *al-Ṭarā'if,* it also tells the story of a non-Muslim man who converted to Shī'ī Islam. The *Risālah-i Yuhannā,* like *Risālah Ḥusniyah,* was attributed to Abū Futūḥ al-Rāzī, although there is not the slightest record or bio-bibliographical note supporting this claim. One can suggest that the producers of these fictitious works may have aimed to increase the reliability and value of the works in the sight of their audience by attributing them to a famous Shī'ī scholar who lived before the advent of the Safavids.[42] Like *al-Ṭarā'if* and *Yuhannā,* he *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* also might be considered as a part of the fictitious conversion narrative,

[41] Radī al-Dīn ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Ṭarā'if fī ma'rifat madhāhib al-ṭawā'if,* 333-38; Kohlberg, "Alī B. Mūsā ibn Ṭāwūs and his Polemic against Sunnism," *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter*, ed. Bernard Lewis and Friedrich Niewöhner, 325-350.

[42] *Risālah-i Yuhannā* and *Ḥusniyah* were edited and published together in Iran in 1975. See M. Muḥammadī, *Difā' az ḥarīm-i tashaiyu'* (Qum: Intishārāt-i Kitābkhānah-i Qur'ān 'Itrat, 1354/1975). For information about the extant manuscript copies; see Dirāyatī. *Fihristwārah,* 10: 1244.

because it narrates that four hundred people converted to Shī‘ī Islam, persuaded by Husniyah's arguments against the Sunnī scholars.

Apart from these fictitious conversion narratives, there were a considerable number of conversion narratives written by Christian and Jewish converts in the Safavid period. These conversion narratives mostly appeared in the seventeenth century when Muslim – non-Muslim interactions and encounters in Safavid Iran increased in an unprecedented manner with the establishment of new settlements for Christians (primarily for Armenians and Georgians) and Jews mainly in the suburbs of Isfahan, and with the growing diplomatic and economic ties with European countries, as well as with the increasing missionary activities of European missionaries in Safavid Iran. The conversion narratives written by the Christian and Jewish converts, *Jadīd al-Islām* or New Muslims, leveled critiques against the previous religions of their authors, so they functioned as polemical works against Christianity and Judaism, at the same time, with the espousal of Shī‘ī Islam and they also served as anti-Sunnī polemics. Concurrently, the conversion narratives aimed to encourage further conversions among the Christian and Jewish audiences and to respond to the attacks and critiques of European missionaries against Islam. In an era in which coercion was used to elicit conversions among religious minorities, the conversion narratives played their part as instruments of propaganda and persuasion. The conversion narratives were accompanied by a number of polemical works that the Safavid *'ulamā* mounted against the Christian missionaries and their polemical works against Islam. [43]

[43] Manṣūr Ṣifatgul, "Jadīd al-Islām dar Īrān-i 'aṣr-i Safawī," 13-54; 'Aẓīmzādah, "Darāmadī bar raddiyah-nawīsī-yi dīnī dar 'asr-i Safawiyyah wa dawrān-i nukhustīn-i Qājariyah," 61, 173-198; Ḥairī, *Nukhustīn rūyarūyīhā-yi andīshagirān-i Īrān bā du ru'ya-i tamaddun-i būrjūwāzī-yi gharb*; Ja'fariyān, "Adabiyāt-i

Both fictitious and actual conversion narratives, which have been hitherto insufficiently studied, formed an important part of the confessionalization process in Safavid Iran, therefore they warrant detailed research.[44] Also, in my opinion, these conversion-cum-polemical works need to be contextualized in a broader context of confessionalization in the early modern period. In this regard, the frame that Krstic has offered in the context of the conversion narratives that appeared in the early modern Ottoman Empire might be helpful in reframing the Safavid conversion narratives within the confessionalization paradigm. Krstic has suggested that long-term inter-confessional contact in the Mediterranean led to similar polemical and textual sensibilities. In this connection, polemical autobiographical narratives of conversion from one Christian denomination to another were utilized as a staple of the propaganda wars that swept across Christendom. Similarly, the Ottomans also used this sort of text in their propaganda wars against the Safavids and Habsburgs, who posed ideological and political challenges to the Ottomans.[45] In the same vein, the conversion narratives played a similar role in Safavid Iran in the face of ideological threats by both the Ottomans and Christian missionaries.

ḍidd-i masīḥī dar dawrah-i Safawī," 211-257; Moreen,"The Problems of Conversion among Iranian Jews in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," 215–28; Gregorian, "Minorities of Isfahan: The Armenian Community of Isfahan 1587-1722," 652–80.

[44] I have been working on the conversion narratives in Safavid Iran as a part of my doctoral project.

[45] Krstic, *Contested Conversion*, 3-16; 98-103.

2.5 Public religious rituals and the vilification of the Sunnī symbols

In addition, religious public rituals also played an instrumental role in the conversion process and in consolidating confessional identity in Safavid Iran. In this regard, the t*abarra'* ("dissociation" or "disavowal") movement, which was institutionalized by the Safavids, is of particular importance. The *tabarra'iyān* ("dissociaters," or "disavowers'") were 'a group that became known for their roles as promoters and guardians of the ritual curse in Iranian society'. They dissociated themselves from the first three caliphs and the majority of the Companions of the Prophet and vilified the caliphs and some of the wives of the Prophet, 'Āisha and Hafsa, along with four Sunnite imams, Abū Hanīfa, Mālik, al-Shāfi'i and ibn Ḥanbal. When Shah Ismail came to hold the reins of power in Iran, he demanded that the practices of the Sunnītes immediately be discontinued and Muslims throughout the realm were required to publicly renounce, by cursing and vilifying the first three caliphs. [46]

The cursing ritual represented the vociferous manifestation of Safavid power and popular Shī'īte identity.[47] A royal decree ordering the abandoning of *taqiyya* in favor of the public enunciation of the *tabarra* was issued by Shah Ismail. This decree was also tacitly declaring that the Shī'īs living in the Safavid realm were safe enough to express

[46] Stanfield-Johnson, "The Tabarra'iyan and the Early Safavids," 48; Stanfield-Johnson, "Sunni Survival in Safavid Iran: Anti-Sunni Activities during the Reign of Tahmasp I," 123-133.

[47] Although the cursing rituals of the Companions was louder and more institutionalized in Safavid Iran, it was also utilized as a political and ideological maneuver whenever the Shī'īs reached the position of power. For instance, Shī'īs took advantage of the propitious circumstances to proclaim their views of the Companions during the Buwayhid period (334AH/945CE - 403AH/1012CE) and they used to write graffiti in which the Companions were condemned. In addition to this, in Fatimid Egypt, the caliph al-Hakim (r. 996-1021) is reported to have ordered in the year 395/1005 that all mosques, walls and archways should be adorned with imprecations against Abu Bakr. Umar, Uthman, Muawiya and other companions as well as against the Abbasid caliphs, see Kohlberg, E. (1984). Some Imamī Shī'ī views on the Ṣahāba, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam 5*: 143-175.; ibid, Bara'a in Shi'i Doctrine: 139-174.

their deep indignation and enmity against the caliphs and other Companions without having any compunction and fear of oppression. The popularization of the vilification of the Sunnī symbols served for the formation of a sense of "self" and identification of "other" or enemy. This public expression of enmity and cursing of the Companions were also sanctioned and encouraged by the Safavid scholars. For instance, Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī wrote an important work in which he introduced the cursing of the first three caliphs along with many other Companions as a permissible, and even highly-rewarded and required religious practice. His work, entitled *Nafahāt al-lāhut fī la'n al-Jibt wa'l-Ṭāghūt* (Breath of Divinity in Cursing Magic and Idolatry) (c. In 917AH/1511CE), laid important theological ground for the public cursing practice in the nascent Safavid polity.[48]

The *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* bears the traces of the *tabarra'* movement and contains very harsh invectives against the Companions and the prominent scholars of the Sunnī schools of Islam, such as Abū Ḥanīfa and Imam Shāfi'ī. Echoing *Nafahāt al-lāhut,* the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* explicitly apostatizes the first two caliphs, Abū Bakr and 'Umar. In short, the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was shaped by the foregoing religious and literary currents of its time and carried overtones of the Sunnī hostility of the Safavid context. It emerged as an anti-Sunnī polemic with an age-old earlier story that was transformed and recast in tune with the changing religio-political make-up of the Safavids. The following chapter moves from the context to the text and aims to examine the production and content of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah.*

[48] Al-Karakī, *Nafahāt al-lāhut fī la'n al-Jibt wa'l-Ṭāghūt*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥassūn, Qum, Īrān: Manshūrāt al-Iḥtijāj.

CHAPTER 3

THE ANATOMY OF THE TEXT:

AUTHORSHIP, THEME, TOPICS, AND REPRESENTATION

This chapter explores the authorship, dedication, and mis/attribution of the text in the sixteenth century. It also addresses the narrative of Ḥusniyah as a transadaptation of an earlier narrative that appeared in between the ninth and twelfth century and traveled across continents in multiple languages. In this connection, it discusses the resemblances and differences between the two narratives and demonstrates how an earlier narrative was recast in the Safavid context and acquired a Shī‘ī color in the heightened atmosphere of the conversion period in Iran. In the second place, it outlines the main topics debated between Ḥusniyah and her discussants in a fictitious *majlis* or gathering of discussion that allegedly took place in the presence of Hārūn. It also discusses how the actors were portrayed and represented throughout the text and what kind of literary elements were used in the description of this theatral polemic. In this regard, the representation of Ḥusniyah, as a female figure and main actor of the story, is of particular interest. Equally interesting is how this literary figure, Ḥusniyah, has been represented and portrayed by the Shī‘ī in today's Iran. Last but not least, this chapter also explores the evolution of Husniyah from a literary figure to a real persona in parallel with its growing popularity and circulation in Iran.

3.1 Authorship, dedication and misattribution

The information regarding the authorship of the text was provided by the preface of the "translator", which was included by a number of manuscripts.[49] The preface introduces Ibrāhīm Walīyullāh Astarābādī as the translator of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*, who rendered it into Persian allegedly from an Arabic copy. As Astarābādī tells in his preface, he visited Makkah for the pilgrimage in 958AH/ 1551CE, and on his way back to Iran he stopped by Damascus in order to visit some important Shī'ī sites. During his stay, the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was introduced to him by a Shī'ī community. Following his careful examination of the text, he became fascinated by the eloquence of the work and its articulation of the Shī'ī position against that of the Sunnī one, therefore, he set his pen to paper to copy the text in order to bring it to Iran himself. Upon his arrival in Iran, he informed people about the content of the work, which amazes them with its thrilling story. The news about the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* spread among the Iranian populace quickly and a host of people requested Astarābādī to translate the story of Ḥusniyah into Persian for the benefit of those who cannot understand Arabic. Submitting to the deluge of requests, Astarābādī translated the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* into Persian, deliberately choosing a simple language and style in order to make it accessible for both commoners and elites. Soon after its translation to Persian, "with the grace of the Commander of the Believers and pious imams", The *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* becomes very popular among people, and its popularity attracts attention of a notable high official of the Safavids, who brings it to the attention of Shah Tahsmasb. Intrigued by the story of Ḥusniyah, the

[49] For the preface of the the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*, I have used the Persin manuscprits available in the Istanbul University Rare Collections and British Museum Library. For the latter copy, I am very grateful to Prof. Rosemary Stanfield-Johnson who generously shared this copy with me. Ibrahīm Walīyullah Astarābādī, *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* (Istanbul Library, 1239/1824), Collection F 554; for the copy in British Museum see; Oriental Manuscprits and Printed Books Department, Egerton 1020.

Shah summons Astarābādī to ask him how he acquired it. After Astarābādī tells the whole story about the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* and his translation, the Shah commands Astarābādī to embellish the translated work with his noble name. Accordingly, Astarābādī dedicates his translation to Shah Tahmasb with a eulogy including many honorific titles for the Shah. In addition to this, the preface also states that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was written by a famous Shī'ī scholar and the Qur'an commentator, Abū al-Futūḥ Rāzī, in the twelfth century.[50]

The attribution of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* to Abū al-Futūḥ was echoed by numerous Shī'ī bio-bibliographical works written after the seventeenth century. However, the earlier Shī'ī sources and bio-bibliographical works do not provide us with any information confirming the foregoing claims. For instance, neither Muntajib al-Din nor Shahr Āshūb mentioned the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in their works where they cited the works of their teacher, Abū al-Futūh.[51] Therefore, some Iranian scholars doubted the claim that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was authored by Abū al-Futūh, rather they maintained that it was produced in order to promulgate and popularize Shī'īte theology among the Iranian populace in the Safavid period.[52] Moreover, the lack of any extant so-called Arabic copy also casts doubt on the claim that it was produced in Arabic. At this point, one might ask why it was attributed to Abū al-Futūh despite the fact that it appeared long after his time. It seems safe to suggest that the producer of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* might have intended to make the fictitious debate sound more authentic to his audience

[50] Astarābādī, *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* (Istanbul Library, 1239/1824), 2-6.

[51] Muntajib al-Dīn, 'A. 'U. (1366). *al-Fihrist*, Qum: Kitābkhānah-i 'Ūmūmī Āyatullāh Mara'shī.

[52] Qarāgozlū, *Mājara dar mājara: sayr-i 'aql wa naql dar pānzdah qarn-i hijrī*, 443-55; Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh, Fihrist-i nuskha-hā-yi khattī-yi kitābkhānah-i dānishkadah-i adabiyāt, 208-210.

by attributing it to Abū al-Futūh, as a respected Shī'ī scholar whose period was much closer to the time of Hārūn al-Rashīd, when the fictitious discussion allegedly took place in the presence of the caliph. Also one may suggest that the producer could have aimed to increase the value of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* by attributing it to a well-known commentator whose Qur'an commentary, *Rawḍ al-jinan wa rawh al-janan,* had been one of the most famous and well-received Shī'ī commentaries since the twelfth century.[53]

Given all these, Ibrāhīm Walīyullāh Astarābādī might have been the one who composed the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in Safavid Iran. Yet, due to the lack of sufficient information about the scholarly career and biographical account of Astarābādī, it can be hardly elaborated on his authorship of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* by drawing on the contemporary sources. Yet, on a separate note, Astarābādī wrote several works on hadith, such as *Akhbār, Ahādith* and *al-Adab wa'l sunan,* apart from his "translation" of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*.[54]

3.2 The story of Ḥusniyah: A Shī'ī slave girl in the court of the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd

The preface of Astarābādī is followed by the story of Ḥusniyah which goes as follows: 'A wealthy merchant, who was one of the best known personalities of Baghdad at the time of the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd and noted for his devotional attachment to the *ahl al-bayt*, was spending most of his time in the company of the Shī'ī imams, Mūsā Kāẓim

[53] Dirāyatī, *Fihristwārah,* 5:983; M. J. McDermott, Abu'l-Fotūḥ Rāzī, *Encyclopedia Iranica,* http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abul-fotuh-razi-jamal-al-din-hosayn, accessed, 20 May, 2016

[54] Dirāyatī, *Fihristwārah,* 1:63, 1:302, 1:409, 4:653; also see *Mawsū'at mu'allifī al-'imāmiyya*, 8 vols (Qum, 1428), 306.

and Ja‘far al-Sādiq. When Mūsā Kāẓim was killed, this merchant lost everything he possessed as a result of the religious animosities that followed, so much so that he faced virtual starvation. In these woeful circumstances, he had nothing left except a slave-girl whom he had purchased when she was five years old. After some basic education and training, she was introduced into the harem of Ja‘far al-Sādiq at the age of ten; and from then on till the ripe age of twenty, she devoted herself to acquiring the religious sciences. Endowed with a matchless beauty and charm, she was named Ḥusniyah. Under the pressure of his miserable situation, the merchant unburdened himself to Ḥusniyah and asked her advice by trusting in her wisdom and erudition. Saddened by the woeful situation of her master, she requested her master to present her to the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd and offer him to buy her. “When he asks you about my price”, Ḥusniyah said to her master, “tell him it would be one thousand dinars. When the Caliph enquires as to what special qualities I possess in me, tell him that I am capable of winning over all the reputed scholars of his empire put together against me in a debate over religious matters. Challenge him that I cannot be defeated in such a public discussion.” Complied with Ḥusniyah’s advice, the merchant contacted Yaḥyā Barmakī, the vizier of the Caliph, and discussed Ḥusniyah’s offer of challenge with him. Interested in this unique and unusual proposal, the vizier asked the merchant to bring the girl before him. As the merchant introduced her to him, the sheer beauty of her face, coupled with a noble demeanor and her masterly eloquence of speech were enough to surprise the vizier who rushed to the caliph and related to him the whole matter. Subsequently, the Caliph ordered that the slave-girl be brought before him and accordingly Ḥusniyah was presented to his royal presence. Ḥusniyah, fully veiled, stepped forth before the caliph and saluted him in a courtly manner. Then she unveiled her face at the command of the Caliph who was

deeply impressed by the radiating splendor of her beauty. The Caliph immediately summoned her master and asked him her price. The master asked a thousand dinar in exchange for her slave-girl. Surprised by the high price that the master asked, the caliph enquired "Why do you ask for such a high price? What is so unique about her?" "The unique thing about this girl", explained the master "is that if all the contemporary religious scholars of your time are together matched against her in a debate on religious issues, she will still be the winner." At last, Hārūn al-Rashīd accepted this challenge and called for the scholars of Bagdad to debate with Ḥusniyah. Accordingly, the two prominent scholars of Bagdad, Abū Yūsuf, the student of Abū Hanīfa, and Imam Shāfiʻī gathered in the presence of the Caliph to debate with Ḥusniyah and the assembly of discussion was surrounded by a crowd of spectators. Then they debated on eighty topics, during which Husniyah expounded her arguments against the scholars who founded themselves dumb-founded in the face her erudition and eloquence.[55] When the Caliph realized that none of these scholars could face the excellence of the slave-girl's superiority of knowledge, he called for Ibrāhīm b. Khālid, who was a reputed scholar from Basra. With the arrival of Ibrāhīm bin Khālid in Baghdad, Hārūn al-Rashīd summoned a session of all the local scholars. Government officials, dignitaries of the state, and monarchs from outside were all invited to the royal court to watch and listen to the proceedings of the ensuing debate under the chairmanship of Ibrāhīm bin Khālid, who was seated in a chair covered all over with gold foil.'

[55] For an unfathomable reason the story does not provide any clue as to what those eighty topics were about.

In the rest of the story, Ḥusniyah and Ibrāhīm debate on a wide range of topics, and 'she deals a severe scholarly blow to Ibrāhīm. The latter lowers his head in great humiliation and leaves the assembly amid jeers and taunts of the spectators. On the other hand, the kings, peers and dignitaries who attended the debate from distant places rise to their feet as a mark of respect and appreciation for Ḥusniyah's victory against the Sunnī scholars. Every one of them praises her and prays for her well-being. Hārūn al-Rashīd and his vizier, Yaḥyā Barmakī, deeply moved by Ḥusniyah's performance during the debate, appreciate her victory, and the caliph orders a robe of honor to be presented to Ḥusniyah. Moreover, as many as four hundred people among the spectators convert to Shī'ī Islam following Husniyah's victory against her Sunnī rivals. Eventually, the caliph grants a thousand dinars to the master and lets Husniyah live with him. Then he calls Ḥusniyah endearingly to his side; and secretly whispers into her ears that in her own interest she should leave Baghdad and move over to some other place, for he worries that the defeated and belittled elements may try to harm her. Accordingly, Ḥusniyah and her master kiss the feet of the Caliph, and leave Bagdad for Madinah where they dedicate themselves to the cause of the Shī'ī imams and the descendants of the *ahl al-bayt* and live happily thereafter.'

This very vivid theatrical narrative marked the opening episode of the Shī'ī polemic in which Ḥusniyah expounded her arguments against her Sunnī rivals and scored victory against them. Its theatrical nature enabled the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* to introduce a brisk presentation of the main Shī'ī doctrines to its audience. In this regard, it differed from the theological polemics that addressed narrow scholarly circles and were generally less appealing and accessible to a broader audience with their formal

language and tiresome content. However, the frame of Ḥusniyah's story was by no means a novel invention of its time, rather it was an adaptation of an earlier frame story, called Tawaddud. Therefore, in what follows, I shall examine the Tawaddud story in comparison with that of Ḥusniyah in order to demonstrate how the latter was adapted and recast in the Safavid context.

3.3 The story of Tawaddud: A source of inspiration

Tawaddud is an Arabic tale based on a well-known theme; the superiority of a simple female person over the scholars of her time. A series of scholars from different disciplines query her on her understanding of Islamic theology, law, Qur'an, medicine, astrology, astronomy, logic, and philosophy. In every discipline she proves to be exceptionally well informed and emerges victorious. Also, she beats the champions of chess and backgammon and shows her ability to play the lute. The story is relatively long but can be summarized as follows: After the death of a rich merchant, his son squanders all his inheritance until nothing is left except a slave girl named as Tawaddud, who had no equal in wisdom, beauty, loveliness, brightness and liveliness. Tawaddud tells him to bring her to the king to sell for the outrageous sum of 10,000 gold pieces. He does as she suggests, and the king calls for all of the wise men in the land to come investigate Tawaddud's claim of knowledge. A host of scholars from different disciplines query her on the aforementioned subjects. Each exchange between Tawaddud and a scholar ends with her then questioning the knowledge of a scholar. If they cannot answer, they must strip nude before the court. Every scholar, in turn, leaves the court and proclaims: "O Commander of the Faithful, bear witness against me that this damsel

is more learned than I in medicine and what else and that I cannot cope with her." The final examiner, Ibrāhīm, offers the maiden 10.000 gold coins to allow him to remain in his undergarments. She accepts his offer, and he remains partly clad. In the end, the king buys Tawaddud and asks her to request what she will of him. Her sole desire is to return to her master, and they live happily ever after.[56]

This frame-story has attracted substantial research attention over the past decades, and the genealogy of the Tawaddud story along with its diffusion have been examined in great detail. In this connection, Margaret R. Parker's seminal work, *The Story of a Story Across Cultures,* is of special mention. Parker investigated the origins of the story and explored its long history in three areas: The Middle East, the Iberian Peninsula, and Brazil. She links the story to Greek examples of similar stories, such as the *Story of Qaytar* and the *Story of Saint Catherine of Alexandria,* or other texts, such as *Secundus the Silent Philosopher,* of which an Arabic version existed. Concerning the production of the Tawaddud story, Parker suggested that it was composed in Baghdad and reworked in Egypt sometime between the tenth and thirteenth centuries. It circulated independently in Spain long before the publication of the collected Nights.[57] However, in connection with the origin of the tale, Andre Miquel maintained that 'the story originated in Egypt sometime during the 12th/13th centuries of the common era, during

[56] Marzolph et al., *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, 408-9.

[57] Parker, *The Story of a Story Across Cultures*, 103-14; Ulrich Marzolph et al., *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, 408-9.

a crucial time for Muslims as they witnessed the onslaught of Turk, Mongol, and Crusader invasions'.[58]

With regard to the adventure of the Tawaddud story in the Iberian Peninsula, Isidro J. Rivera and Donna M. Rogers observed that the Tawaddud story was translated into Castilian in the thirteenth century by the commission of Alfonso X, el Sabio, whose desire to appropriate Arabic culture reached its zenith in this century and who encouraged an active program of translating Arabic materials into the vernacular. Alfonso's commissions made accessible scientific texts, philosophical tracts, and literary works. According to Rivera and Rogers, the translation of the Tawaddud story belongs to this period of cultural florescence and marks an intersection of Arabic literary culture with the emerging culture of Christian Iberia.[59] The emerging culture of Christian Iberia shifted markedly the content of the story in its translation; nevertheless, the narrative sequence of the original story was not altered. Tawaddud becomes Teodor, and she is converted to Christianity in order to better suit the new audience and meet the demands of the new religious context in which the translation took place. Concomitantly, rather than being queried on her knowledge of Islamic law, theology or Qur'an, Teodor is queried on her knowledge of the Bible and Christian culture, as well as her understanding of medicine, astrology, philosophy, and logic. In other words, 'the translation filters elements that are religiously problematic, and subsequently the tale of Tawaddud loses its Islamic identity and becomes aligned with the Christian West

[58] Miquel, *Sept contes des Mille et Une Nuits,* 36.

[59] Rivera, *Historia de la Donzella Teodor: Edition and Study*, v-xxx.

through the skillful manipulation of the original source'.[60] Apart from the elimination of the references to Islamic practices and religious tenets, in the Castilian translation, the number of examiners decreases from seven to three with the result that the examinations only cover the areas of cosmogony, natural science, and philosophy. Moreover, the Castilian version prunes episodes related to Tawaddud's skills at games as well as her musical talents. The scientific and medical information found in the Arabic version in some cases undergoes a recasting, in order to accord with a Christian perspective.[61]

Parker notes that in numerous printed editions dating from the beginning of the sixteenth century, the story is retold in a way that enhances its appeal considerably and assures its survival into the present century. Furthermore, she examines the adventure of the story in Europe and its outreach to the distant lands, and in this connection, she mentions that the story of Teodor made its way to New Spain during the colonial era and was transadapted into Mayan. In her detailed investigation, Parker reasons that the story owes its popularity to its flexible and mutable frame that can easily be loaded with different subjects in accordance with the context to which it was transadapted. [62]

Although the foregoing studies have explored the adventure of the Tawaddud story that manifested itself with different identities in different contexts, they have not explored the travel of the story in the Safavid land. Only some brief, at times misleading, mentions have been made regarding the similarities between the frame story of

[60] Hirons, "The Discourse of Translation in Culture Contact: 'The Story of Suhuy Teodora', 36; Rivera and Rogers, *Historia de la Donzella Teodor,* v-xxx.

[61] Rivera and Rogers, *Historia de la Donzella Teodor,* x.

[62] Parker, *The Story of a Story*, 1-2, 137; Hirons, "The Discourse of Translation," 46.

Tawaddud and Ḥusniyah. For instance, Parker, quite contrary to what has been suggested in this study, claims that the story of Hussunneah (sic.) or Husniyah was inspired by the aforementioned Greek antecedents, *Qaytar* and *Catherine of Alexandria*, and then it influenced the "subsequent" stories, Tawaddud and Teodor. In this regard, she echoes Albert Wesselski who claimed that Tawaddud represents a Sunnite response to the Shi'ite Ḥasaniyā (sic.) or Ḥusniyah story in his article published in German in 1937.[63] Both Wesselski and Parker maintain that the story of Ḥusniyah preceded that of Tawaddud and Teodor most probably by relying on the assumption that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was written by Abū Futūḥ in the twelfth century. However, as it was discussed earlier, the story of Ḥusniyah was a transadaptation of the Tawaddud story in a Shī'ī context in the Safavid period. Concurring with this, Ali Riḍā Dhakāwatī Qarāgozlū, too, argued, in his Persian work entitled, *Mājara dar mājar,* that the story of Ḥusniyah was modeled on the frame story of Tawaddud, not the other way around.[64] However, he does not discuss how the story of Tawaddud was recast in the Safavid lands and what kind of alterations were made in the frame story of Tawaddud so as to make it better suited for the Shī'ī audience in the Safavid world. Therefore, in the following, the transformation of the story in the Safavid context will be discussed by highlighting the differences and similarities between the two stories.

[63] Parker, *The Story of a Story*, 18; Wesselski, "Die gelehrten Sklavinnen des Islams und ihre byzantinischen Vorbilder," 353-378.

[64] Qarāgozlū, *Mājara dar mājara,* 443-55.

3.4 From Tawaddud to Ḥusniyah: Converting the Heroine to Shīʻī Islam

As it was seen in the example of the creation of the Teodor story, even though the story remained loyal to the main structure and sequence of the frame story of Tawaddud, the identity and motifs subjected to marked alterations in accordance with the change of the religio-political context. In other words, the shift in the context entailed the conversion of the heroine, now invested with a new religious identity and representation. In the case of Teodor, it was Christianity that the heroine represented and according to which the roles were reshuffled and the content was reworked, at the end of which the Islamic elements were removed in favor of the former religion. In the case of Ḥusniyah it was Shīʻī Islam that she defended and represented. In other words, Tawaddud was converted to Shīʻī Islam or incarnated in the figurative body of a Shīʻī slave girl, Ḥusniyah, in the Safavid period when the zealous proselytization of the Iranian populace to Shīʻī Islam was in full swing. Now, the eloquence, erudition, wisdom, and feminine beauty embodied by Ḥusniyah served to champion Shīʻī Islam against her Sunnī rivals.

Just before the theatrical performance is begun on the fictitious stage, set in the court of the Caliph Hārūn, the creator of Ḥusniyah makes some change in the plot of the story in which Ḥusniyah emerges as the savior of the master, as Tawaddud and Teodor did. Yet, this time the merchant loses his wealth and falls into a woeful economic condition because of his devotion and commitment to the Shīʻī imams and *ahl al-bayt.* Unlike the master in the Tawaddud story, who went into bankruptcy, because he squandered all his wealth inherited from his rich father, the master of Ḥusniyah was introduced as a downtrodden, pious man, whose wealth was taken away by the oppressors and enemies of the Shīʻītes. This change in the plot of the Ḥusniyah tallies

with the major Shī‘ī narrative that the minority Shī‘ī groups have always been oppressed by hostile Sunnī powers.

Changed is not only the character of the master, but also that of the savior, Ḥusniyah. Like her antecedents, Tawaddud and Teodor, she is introduced as beautiful, wise, a polymath, but with a notable difference though; the source of her knowledge and wisdom comes from Ja‘far al-Sādiq, the sixth *imām* of the Twelver Shī‘īsm. Thereby, Ḥusniyah is endowed with "epistemological superiority" against her rivals, since knowledge was transmitted to her from "an impeccable and uninterrupted source", the *imām*. Hence, one can see Husniyah as an embodiment of the Shī‘ī view that holds that even though Shī‘ī communities form the minority among the Muslim population, they enjoy the authentic knowledge and genuine religious leadership of the *imam*s that they believe the other schools of Islam are missing. Therefore, it is not surprising that the pejorative term, ‘*ulamā-yi ‘āmma,* or the scholars of commoners or generality, was used in the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* for the Sunnī scholars, as it has been used by many Shī‘ī texts throughout the history. Being downtrodden and oppressed minority, yet having the "privilege" of being the follower of an elite school under the divine guidance of the *imams* are the main two themes of the Shī‘ī narrative. Endowed with "elite knowledge" and "divine support of the *ahl-i bayt* and the *imams",* Ḥusniyah outstrips her Sunnī rivals.

Like in the story of Teodor, the number of discussants was reduced from seven to three in the story of Ḥusniyah. The three discussants of Husniyah were Abū Yūsuf, al-Shafī‘ī and Ibrāhīm b. Khālid. Since Abū Yūsuf and al-Shafī‘ī failed to respond to the challenges of Ḥusniyah, Ibrāhīm b. Khālid was summoned from Basra to defeat her.

Ibrāhīm bears the brunt of Ḥusniyah's attacks during the discussion. Summoning Ibrahīm to the court is one the common themes in Tawaddud and Husniyah. Yet, while in the Tawaddud story it was Ibrāhīm al-Naẓẓām (d. c. 845), a renowned Mu'tazilite theologian, the *Risālah-i Husniyah* introduced the actor as a Sunnī scholar by changing his name as Ibrāhīm b. Khālid, about whom there is no biographical data in the contemporary sources regarding.

The exchange of questions and answers mostly take place between Husniyah and Ibrāhīm, whereas Abū Yūsuf and al-Shafī'ī are given a passive role during the discussion. Abū Yūsuf and al-Shafī'ī were the eminent scholars of the Hanafī and Shafī'ī schools of Islam, which was predominantly followed by the Sunnī populace in Iran before it was largely converted to Shī'ī Islam in the Safavid period. In this sense, one can say that the creator of the Husniyah story must have aimed to humiliate and degrade these schools in the sight of the audience by featuring them as discussants, who were silenced and defeated by Husniyah at the very beginning of the discussion.

The story of Husniyah pruned episodes related to Tawaddud's skills at games as well as her musical talents, as the Teodor story did. Moreover, unlike Tawaddud who was described as well versed in medicine, astrology, astronomy, logic, and philosophy apart from having deep knowledge of religious subjects, Husniyah's expertise was reduced merely to religious issues, constituted mostly by the theological fault lines between Sunnī and Shī'ī Islam, in line with the pressing expediencies of the Safavid context. *Risālah-i Husniyah* emerged as an anti-Sunnī polemical work, and accordingly filtered the Sunnī content of the Tawaddud story. For instance, Tawaddud mentions the first caliph, Abū Bakr as "the Truth-teller", whereas Husniyah declares him an

unbeliever and curses him in tune with the Safavid context in which the first three caliphs were vociferously cursed and vilified.

What is more to the point is that the story of Husniyah adds an important episode to the sequence of the story; the conversion of the spectators. Following her victory against her Sunnī rivals, four hundred people from among the spectators convert to Shī'ī Islam. This conversion episode comes as the last curtain after the long theological discussion in this fictitious theatral performance, and in my opinion, it is very telling as to how the Safavid context impacted the frame of the story. Given that the persuasion was an important part of the conversion process in Safavid Iran, this episode must have been added to elicit further persuasion and encourage new conversions among the audience.

The foregoing alterations in the frame story, as noted before, were the products of the Safavid context. In addition to the changes in the frame, the whole course and content of the discussion were also changed in accordance with Shī'ī theology. Yet, all the aforementioned stories, including Husniyah, and many other derivative stories in religious apologetical literature persistently used the "*majlis* theme" or the theme of gathering in the court of the caliph for discussion with a question-answer format. So, one may wonder the reason behind the popularity of this theme. In this regard, Sidney H. Griffith suggests that the *majlis* theme evolved as a literary fiction and 'has been appreciated as much for their entertainment value, as for their didactic potential'.[65] By the same token, Adi Talmon points out to the functionality of this theme and suggests

[65] Griffith, "The Monk in the Emir's Majlis: Reflections on a Popular Genre of Christian Literary Apologetics in Arabic in the Early Islamic Period," 13-65.

that it is no more than an excuse to put together brisk lesson in the wisdom of the time. He also observes that the main body of the story deals with the competition itself and resembles a miniaturized encyclopedia, embracing various fields of knowledge of the time.[66] Concurring with this, Rivera and Rogers maintain that the question-answer format of this theme intended to impart knowledge and provide amusement for a much broader audience.[67]

Last but not least, Griffith notes that the *majlis* theme was also used by the Christian apologetical works written by the Christian minorities that lived under Muslim rule and 'the social institution of the *majlis* became something of a paradigm for the development of a literary form of apologetics among Christian writers in Arabic'. He adds that these anti-Islam apologetical works that used this theme popularized Christian polemics, served as catechetical works for Christians living in the world of Islam, and aimed at dissuading conversion to Islam among Christians.[68]

The fictitious *Majlis* was gathered once again in the presence of the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashid, and this time Husniyah appeared on stage to debate with her Sunnī rivals. As well as the notable changes in the members of this *Majlis*, the content and course of discussion were also altered in accordance with the Shī'ī theological doctrines. The following part outlines briefly the topics discussed in The *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* and examines the literary elements and motifs used in the exposition of this theatrical polemic.

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[66] Talmon, "Tawaddud - The Story of a Majlis," 121.

[67] Rivera and Rogers, *Historia de la Donzella Teodor,* ix-x.

[68] Griffith, "The Monk in the Emir's Majlis," 14, 42.

3.5 The *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* as a Shī‘ī polemic

As a Shī‘ī polemical work, *Risalah-i Husniyah* is primarily concerned with the matter of succession to the prophet, which forms a sizeable place throughout the discussion. The matter of the succession to the prophet has always been a major issue in Sunnī-Shī‘ī polemical and apologetical literature in which different historiographical narratives have conflicted on the matter of leadership to the Muslim community after the death of the Prophet. Almost all other theological disagreements between Twelver Shī‘īsm and Sunnīsm have emerged as concomitant derivations of this rather political and historiographical contention. The Shī‘ī narrative holds that the successor to the prophet was divinely determined and the progeny of ‘Alī was declared as leaders of the Muslim community by the Prophet, however, despite this “divine designation”, the first three caliphs hijacked the right of ‘Alī after the death of the Prophet. On the other hand, according to the Sunnī narrative, the Prophet did not appoint any successor in his life, rather he left the issue to the decision of the Muslim community.[69]

The *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* echoes this well-trodden issue at the beginning of the discussion, which is triggered by the question of Ibrāhīm Khālid regarding the first rightful successor to the prophet. Husniyah answers that the one who accepted and embraced Islam (*sābiq dar Islām)* before anyone else had the right to lead the community and it was Ali who converted to Islam first among the Companions of the Prophet. In response to this argument, Ibrāhīm suggests that Abū Bakr was the first convert as opposed to Husniyah’s claim and dismissed the precedence of ‘Alī in

[69] Lucas, “The Arts of Hadith Compilation and Criticism: A Study of the Emergence of Sunnism in the Third/ninth Century,” 259; Momen, *An Introduction to Shi‘i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi‘ism*, 1-11.

converting to Islam on the ground that ‘Alī was still a kid then; and the convictions and conduct of a minor cannot be reckoned as valid or reliable. Husniyah, in objection to this, states that a child is entitled to be reckoned as cognizable for reward or retribution by referring to the boy killed by Khiḍr in the story of Moses and Khiḍr in the Qur’an. Also, in order to prove the validity of Ali’s conversion, she mentions that Jesus started talking to his mother when he was three days old; likewise, Ali talked with the Prophet soon after his birth and recited all the sacred books revealed to the previous prophets, when he was in the arms of the Prophet.[70] Ḥusniyah also defends the superiority of Ali and his virtues; in this regard, she mentions a hadith attributed to the Prophet. The hadith reads as follows:

> Oh my companions, know it for certain that Allah created me and Ali out of one and the same divine splendor. And even as the unborn offsprings of Adam, we used to chant the praise of the Lord till eventually He transmitted us as Adam’s offspring via pure seeds and pure wombs; and the praises of the Lord which we used to recite throughout all the phases of our physical manifestation in the wombs of our mothers were distinctly audible to the ears of the fathers and mothers who generated us through the ages. This process of transmission continued till our divine light split into two channels from the seed of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, one half being shared by ‘Abdullah, and the other half by Abū Ṭālib. The grandeur of ‘being’ would radiate from both these sources when they used to be among other common people. And finally we were conceived by our respective mothers.[71]

By referring to the foregoing alleged hadith, Husniyah maintained that Muḥammad and ‘Alī were part of the same divine light, which split into two and became embodied in Muhammad as prophet and in ‘Ali, as *imam* or the Prophet’s successor. To her, their divine lights were supplementary, just as the

[70] *Mukālamāt-i Ḥusniyah,* 27-33*; Husniyah,* 17-23.

[71] *Mukālamāt-i Ḥusniyah,* 34; *Husniyah*: 22.

prophethood of Muhammad was supplemented by the imamate of ʻAlī and his progeny.

The issue of the succession to the prophet is followed by another significant topic of Islamic theology; predestination and free volition of human being. Ibrāhīm b. Khālid is introduced to argue that all human acts, good or evil, beneficial or harmful, are in conformity with what has been predestined by God for individuals. In a sense, the *Risālah-i Husniyah* has Ibrahīm voice the arguments of the Jabriyyah school as if they were espoused by all the Sunnī schools of Islam. Then Husniyah levels very scathing critiques at Sunnīsm on the ground that it followed the Jabriyyah school, which regarded every event and action as having been determined by fate and advocated an absolute determinism and fatalism which provided no possibility for man to act as a free being.[72] In this regard, one can say that the *Risālah-i Husniyah* resorts to a very common strategy that has been frequently used by apologetical and polemical works, which is presenting the views of the opponent in a rather skewed and distorted way. The caricatured and oversimplified views of an opponent, ripped out of their original context, serve as useful objects of ridicule for the polemicist. For example, Husniyah charges Abū Ḥanīfa with fatalism and says that even a donkey is wiser than Abū Hanīfa in terms of using its discretion, because if a donkey is taken to a stream and whipped in order to make it cross the stream, its first reaction will that be of refusal. But, if whipped again, he will cross it. But if a donkey is taken to a wide river, which the animal is physically incapable of crossing, he will on no account step into the river; not even if he is beaten

[72] Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, 1-25; Nasr, *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, 156.

to death.[73] Delighted by this "humorous argumentation" of Husniyah, the caliph and his vizier, Yaḥyā, as well as the state officials burst out into laughter while Ibrahīm, feeling mortified, wants to die at that moment.[74]

Moreover, Husniyah goes further to claim that Jabriyyah was the sect of the people of Quraysh before the advent of Islam, and suggested that although it became extinct with the spread of Islam, the Jabriyyah emerged once again soon after the death of the Prophet and ʻAlī, by the promotion and propaganda of the Umayyads in order to barter religion for the sake of worldly gains. She adds that the Umayyads resorted to fabricating such innovations as predestination, stipulating that man is not the doer of his own actions, in order to escape from the public condemnation of their cruel and abominable policies, and with a view to conceal the debased nature of the conduct of the *Shaykhayn* or two *shaykh*s, i.e. Abū Bakr and ʻUmar, also of the rest of the caliphs from the Umayyad clan.[75]

Husniyah also states that the Umayyads and their followers acted in a tyrannical and un-Islamic manner. 'They were ignorant of religious matters and lacked miserably in the understanding of Quranic injunctions. They led congregational prayers in a state of drunkenness. There have been frequent instances when these men, leading the morning prayers in an intoxicated state, confused the *rak'at*s or prescribed movements of prays'. Therefore, she reasons that like the Prophet, the imam or leader of the

[73] *Mukālamāt-i Ḥusniyah*, 56*; Husniyah:* 47-48.

[74] *Mukālamāt-i Ḥusniyah*, 56; *Husniyah:* 48. *"Chūn Ḥusniyah īn ba-goft, Hārūn wa Yahyā Barmakī wa arkān-i dawlat ba yak-bār ba-khandīd wa Ibrahīm az khajālat ba mordan-i khod rādī shoda būd".*

[75] *Mukālamāt-i Ḥusniyah*, 56, 59-60*; Husniyah:* 46, 55.

community must be infallible like the Prophet himself, suprassing all others in knowledge and wisdom, in piety, in virtuous conduct, in generosity, in courage - both moral and physical. In short, he must tower above the rest of human creation.[76]

Husniyah contends that it was incumbent upon the Prophet to appoint an impeccable successor so that people could follow and seek guidance from him. In this connection, she echoes one of the most famous Shī'ī assertions that the Prophet had left instructions that Ali should succeed him following his death. One typical example is said to have occurred at a place called Ghadir Khum on the way from Mecca to Medina, following the Prophet's farewell pilgrimage to Mecca, a few months before his death.[77]

Husniyah charges the first three caliphs of usurping the divinely designated leadership of 'Alī in breaching the divine appointment. Moreover, she also accuses them of running counter to religion and violating some of the Islamic practices and rules. For instance, she argues that the first caliph, Abū Bakr confiscated the *Fadak,* the land allocated entirely to the Prophet as his personal property and bequeathed to the Prophet's family, according to her, Abu Bakr also declined the claim of Fāṭima, the daughter of the Prophet, for the land out of enmity towards the Prophet's family by fabricating a hadith attributed to the Prophet, who reportedly said that "we are from among the class of prophets. For us there is no inheritance; and whatever we leave behind, is an endowment for charity'. As another example of a "violation", Husniyah asserts that the *Mut'a* or

[76] *Mukālamāt-i Ḥusniyah*, 61-66*; Husniyah:* 60-68.

[77] Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, 15; Aghaie, The Origins of the Sunnite--Shiʿite Divide and the Emergence of the Taʿziyeh Tradition, 43.

temporary marriage was revoked by ‘Umar’s abrupt decision, despite the fact that its validity and legality had been established by the Prophet and the Qur’an itself.[78]

Husniyah, after reiterating these accusations churned out by the Shī‘ī apologetical works over the centuries, increases the polemical pitch and declared the first two caliphs, Abū Bakr and ‘Umar as unbelievers in unequivocal words, and she goes on to say that the curses of the angels, prophets and God befell them, along with the wrath of Allah because of their aforementioned “aggressions and violations”.[79] Furthermore, Husniyah fulminates against her opponent, Imam Shāfī‘ī and brands him as *murtadd* or apostate on the grounds that even though ‘he used be a sympathizer of the *ahl al-bayt* and opponent of Abū Ḥanīfa, then he veered into Abū Ḥanīfa’s path and method as he turned his back on the *ahl al-bayt* just for the sake of personal pomp and temporary material gains’.[80] One can say that these harsh invectives, cursing, and apostatizing the caliphs along with the eminent scholars of Islamic law, such as Abū Ḥanīfa and Iman Shāfī‘ī dovetailed with the *tabarra‘* movement in the Safavid Empire and with the theological writings of al-Karakī on the cursing of the Companions as was discussed in the previous chapter.

Furthermore, Husniyah also refers to a famous hadith, attributed to the Prophet and frequently invoked by the Muslim heresiographers. This ominous hadith presaged that the future Muslim community would splinter into 73 sects and only one would be

[78] *Mukālamāt-i Ḥusniyah*, 131-141*; Husniyah:* 146-155.

[79] *Mukālamāt-i Ḥusniyah*, 95, 151*; Husniyah:* 108-9, 164*. “Pas bilā shubhah Abī Bakr wa ‘Umar wa atba‘-i īshān kāfir wa ẓālim būda-and wa la‘nat khodā wa rasūl wa malāikah wa ghaḍab-i ilāhī mutawajjih īshān ast”; “Shaykhayn fājirayn fāsiqayn ṭāghiyayn, bāghiyayn kāfirayn mal‘ūnayn mardūḍayn makhdhūlayn”.*

[80] *Mukālamāt-i Ḥusniyah*, 109*; Husniyah:* 95.

saved, while the rest would end up in hell. This hadith has been cranked out numerous times by multiple sects and used against one another to label the other as damned heretics.[81] Husniyah, in the same manner, utilizes this hadith and asserts that as well as Mu'tazilīs, the four schools of Sunnī Islam; Ḥanafī, Shāfi'ī, Mālikī, Hanbalī were among the condemned sects on the ground that they were all invented after the death of the Prophet. Not surprisingly she advocates that the *firqah-i nājiyah* or the saved sect is the sect of *ahl al-bayt* or Shī'ī Islam. In order to substantiate her argument, she refers to another hadith in which the Prophet reportedly analogizes the Noah's Ark with *ahl al-bayt* and states that whoever enters it will be saved and whoever refuses to enter it will suffer perdition.[82] It might be worth noting that the four Sunnī schools of Islam were canonized later than the time that this discussion allegedly took place; in this sense, it was anachronistic to mention these schools as if they had been well established madhabs or sects of the time.[83]

While the abovementioned topics take up an important part of the *Risalah-i Husniyah,* some other theological topics such as the attributes of God, the createdness of the Qur'an and whether the vision can perceive God were also among the debated topics as well as other minor subjects. Yet, for fear of overloading the present study, the details of these topics are left out of its purview. Nevertheless, it might be interesting to note that Husniyah, more often than not, echoes the Mu'tazilī views on these topics even though she curses and vilifies the Mu'tazilī school as heretical along with the Sunnī

[81] Lewinstein, "Studies in Islamic Heresiography: The Khawarij in Two Firaq Traditions," 25.

[82] *Mukālamāt-i Ḥusniyah,* 65-66. "*Badān ay Ibrāhīm…. aṣḥāb-i rasūl nah Mu'tazilī budand nah Ḥanafī nah Shāfi'ī nah Mālikī nah Hanbalī"*

[83] Dānishpazhūh, *Fihrist-i nuskha-hā-yi khattī,* 210.

schools. For instance, with respect to the createdness of the Qur'an, Husniyah, in line with the Mutazilī school, espouses that the Quran is created speech of God rather than a co-eternal being with God.[84]

As it is clear by now, these debated topics were by no means a novelty given that the Shī'ī apologetical literature prior to Husniyah was brimmed with more or less the same topics, because Sunnī-Shī'ī polemical works constantly recycled similar debates and peddled them over the centuries. That being said, Husniyah's vilification of the Companions, especially the first two caliphs, and the eminent scholars of Sunnī Islam seems to have been more vehement and vociferous than its antecedents; therefore, it should have to do with the new religio-political context procured by the Safavids.

Last but not least, the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* taps into some literary motifs so as to make the above-outlined theological discussion more interesting and appealing for its audience. Towards this end, the course of the discussion is peppered with humor, mocking, ridicule, and with dramatic scenes in which Husniyah and the Sunnī scholars are depicted as being at each other's throats. Husniyah scores victory at the end of each and every single debate, whereas her Sunni rivals are left speechless and mortified following their defeat in the argument. For instance, the following descriptive sentences, scattered through the text, mark the end of the topic or sub-topic and hailed the victory of Husniyah: "Ibrāhīm could only blink and bow down his head in silence. He was

[84] *Mukālamāt-i Ḥusniyah*, 81-83*; Husniyah:* 88-90. For the detail of this discussion; see J. P Turner, "Inquisition and the Definition of Identity in Early Abbasid History" (Ph.D., University of Michigan; 2001); N. M. Nader, "The Memory of the Mihna in a Haunted Time: Dogmatic Theology, Neo-Mu'tazilism and Islamic Legal Reform" (Ph.D., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2011). For the relationship between Mu'tazilīsm and Shī'īsm; see the recent study; H. Ansari and S. Schmidtke, "The Shī'ī reception of Mu'tazilism (II): Twelver Shī'īsm," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

clearly beaten by the logic of her analogy"[85]; "Ibrāhīm bin Khalid - the great Scholar sat tongue-tied, noticing his hopeless silence"[86]; "Ibrāhīm bin Khalid was completely flabbergasted by the force and excellence of Husniyah's masterly dissertation"[87]; "Ibrāhīm sat silently brooding and speculating about the consequences of his defeat at the hand of this extraordinary slave-girl. The entire audience was now convinced that Ibrāhīm, the learned Scholar, stood utterly beaten by Husniyah".[88] In some instances, the audiences taunt the Sunnī scholars and make fun of them when Husniyah defeats her rivals.[89] In other instances, the caliph and his vizier rebuke the Sunni scholars when they were "outstripped" by Husniyah. Even in one case Harun al-Rashid scorns Ibrāhīm and asks him to come down from his seat and convert to Husniyah's religious beliefs, and adds "that would be an honorable way of accepting defeat!".[90] To conclude with a more dramatic scene: after Husniyah makes her case for the apostasy of the first two caliphs and declares them to be tyrants, Abū Yūsuf, Shāfi'ī, and Ibrāhīm, angered and agitated by her scathing attack on Sunnī symbols, spring upon her in an attempt to kill her on the spot. The girl, taken aback by the suddenness of their assault on her, defends herself by catching hold of Ibrāhīm's flowing beard. When verbal violence turns into physical violence, a new actor, the Caliph's nephew, a follower of the *ahl al-bayt*, appears on the stage and breaks up the fight by threatening the Sunnī scholars with his unsheathed

[85] *Mukālamāt-i Ḥusniyah,* 30-31*; Husniyah,*19.

[86] *Mukālamāt-i Ḥusniyah,* 36*; Husniyah,* 24.

[87] *Mukālamāt-i Ḥusniyah,* 39*; Husniyah,* 26.

[88] *Mukālamāt-i Ḥusniyah,* 42*; Husniyah,* 31.

[89] *Mukālamāt-i Ḥusniyah,* 56, 59*; Husniyah,* 48, 55.

[90] *Mukālamāt-i Ḥusniyah,* 63-64*; Husniyah,* 62.

sword. Taking the ferocious hint, the scholars return to their seats. Thereupon, Hārūn al-Rashīd reprimands the scholars derisively and the jeering audiences burst into laughing.[91]

At the end of this fictitious discussion Husniyah clinches her victory against the Sunnī scholars and is praised by Hārūn al-Rashīd who grants her a thousand gold coins and lets her go with her master. Her victory against the Sunnī scholars allegedly leads to the conversion of four hundred people among the audience 'persuaded by the rational argumentation of Husniyah'. Then, Husniyah and her master head for Medina with the intention to serve the imam of the time. The following part traces the journey of Husniyah in the Shī'ī sources and concentrates on how Husniyah was represented by the Shī'ī biographical works and how she has been received in Iran over the last centuries.

3.6 Husniyah: Persianization and personification of a literary figure

Husniyah was introduced as a beautiful slave-girl who was captivated at the age of five and brought to Bagdad where she adopted Islam and received education from Ja'far al-Sādiq. Throughout the *Risālah-i Husniyah,* her identity as a slave girl is stressed emphatically. For instance, her subordinate status becomes an issue when Ibrahīm b. Khalid comes to Bagdad to discuss with her by the command of Hārūn al-Rashīd. Ibrāhīm declines to discuss with the slave girl on the ground that it would ill behoove the dignity of a scholar. However, he is convinced to do so, as Yaḥyā Barmakī, the vizier of the caliph, urges him to pay attention what is being said rather than the person who says

[91] *Mukālamāt-i Ḥusniyah,* 151-52*; Husniyah,* 165.

it.[92] Elsewhere in the book, Husniyah brings up her subordinate status in order to insult her Sunnī opponent, Ibrāhīm, by saying that "Oh Ibrāhīm, you are the most outstanding scholar of the present age; and I am a mere slave-girl".[93]

Other than the RH, the first work to mention Husniyah and her discussion with Sunnī scholars was the famous Shī'ī biographical work entitled *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā wa-ḥiyaḍ al-fuḍalā* (c. 1106BC/1694-95CE), written by an eminent Shī'ī scholar, Mīrzā 'Abdullāh Iṣfahānī Afandī (d. cir. 1717 -1727).[94] Under the entry of Husniyah, Afandī's remarks read as follows:

> She was a slave girl who had been taken captive and had adopted Islam in the of Hārūn al-Rashīd. She was learned in the literary arts and the religious sciences, an exacting scholar who had insight into hadith reports. The Persian treatise compiled by al-Shaykh Abū al-Futūḥ al-Rāzī, the author of the famous Persian commentary on the Qur'an, that treats the story of her debate over the Imamate in the assembly of Hārūn al-Rashīd is famous. In this treatise, the very high level of learning and most exalted standing of Ḥusniyah is evident, to such an extent that it crossed the mind (*yakhtalij)* that this treatise which was recorded by the above-mentioned Shayk Abū al-Futūh, and made and recorded by him, but that he attributed it to Ḥusniyah in order to make the doctrines of the Sunnis look bad, and thereby to vituperate against the scandal of their creed, as his peer Ibn Tāwūs, the author of al-Iqbal, did in the well-known *Kitāb al-Tarā'if,* for he said in it: "I am a man of the people of the Pact," and debated and discussed with the proponents of the people of the four *madhhabs* until he completed the proof against them and proved the doctrines of the Shiites, and then states that he converted to Islam. On account of the lack of knowledge about this, the situation has confused a group of learned men, even the great stallions among the scholars, and they have reckoned that *Kitāb al-Ṭarā'if* was written by 'Abd al-Maḥmūḍ the Dhimmī, when [Ibn Ṭāwūs] is actually the one who introduced the

[92] *Mukālamāt-i Ḥusniyah,* 28*; Husniyah,* 16.

[93] *Mukālamāt-i Ḥusniyah,* 85*; Husniyah,* 92-93.

[94] Stewart, "Women's Biographies in Islamic Societies: Mīrzā 'Abd Allāh Iṣfahānī's *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā'*," 114

> book with him as a *tawriya.* But God knows best the true nature of things.[95]

Afandī's account covers several important points. First, although the preface of the *Risalah-i Husniyah* suggested that the *Risālah* was originally written in Arabic by Abū Futūḥ and then translated into Persian by Astarābādī, Afandī claims that the *Risālah* was written by Abū Futūḥ in Persian. Secondly and more importantly, Afandī maintains that Husniyah was only a literary figure through which Abū Futūḥ expounded her anti-Sunnī polemic. In this regard, he makes an analogy between the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* and *Kitāb al-Tarā'if* written by another prominent scholar, Ibn Tāwūs, who also utilized a literary figure in his fictitious conversion narrative-cum- anti-Sunnī polemic. Afandī also reasons that a slave-girl figure was used in order to insult and inveigh against the Sunnī scholars.[96]

Another important Shī'ī source, providing information about the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah,* was the *Rawḍāt al-jannāt fī ahwāl al-''ulamā wa'l-sādāt,* written by Muḥammad Bāqir Khwansārī (d.1895). In his biographical work, Khwansārī echoed Afandī's account and identified the *Risālah* as one of Abū Futūḥ's important Persian works.[97] However, Muḥsin al-Amīn (d.1952), in his *A'yān al-shī'a*, contrary to Afandī and Khwansārī, claimed that the *Risalah-i Ḥusniyah* was originally written in Arabic and

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[95] Mīrzā 'Abd Allāh Iṣfahānī's *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā' wa-ḥiyaḍ al-fuḍalā',* 6 vols. Ed. al-Sayyid Aḥmad Ḥusaynī (Qum: Maktabat Āyat Allāh al-Mara'shī al-'Āmma, 1981), the English translation was quoted from Stewart, "Women's Biographies in Islamic Societies," 131-32.

[96] Kohlberg, "Alī B. Mūsā ibn Ṭāwūs and his Polemic," 325-350.

[97] Khwansārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt fī ahwāl al-''ulamā' wa'l-sādāt,* 2: 317.

translated into Persian by Astarābādi. Moreover, he also stated that the disputation between Ḥusniyah and the Sunnī scholars was fabricated by Abu Futūḥ.[98]

The foregoing biographical accounts concurred in the view that Husniyah was a literary figure created by the author in order to mount his polemic against Sunnī Islam and impugn its symbols. However, as opposed to these accounts about Husniyah, a host of Shī'ī encyclopedias and other sources introduced Husniyah as a real person rather than a literary creation. For instance, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Rūhānī, in his entry about Husniyah in the *Dāirat al-Ma'ārif Tashayyu'*, a famous encyclopedia of Shi'ism, Ḥusniyah was introduced as Shī'ī female scholar with a great eloquence and erudition. Rūhānī says that Husniyah was well versed in theology, religious polemic, tradition and four schools of Sunnī Islām. Moreover, he expands on the biography of Husniyah and provides new details about her identity and argued that Husniyah was originally from Iran and she was captivated by the Muslims who had conquered Iran, and was brought to Iraq where she was trained in the Islamic sciences by Ja'far al-Ṣādiq.[99] Although, neither the *Risālah-i Husniyah* nor the earliest bibliographical account by Afandī introduces Husniyah as hailing from Iran, Rūhānī forges a connection between Husniyah and Iran, in this way, the victorious heroine and defender of Shī'ī Islam, Husniyah, is Persianized. By the same token, Muḥammad Ḥasan Rajabī, in his work in which he brings together the life stories of famous Iranian women, introduces Husniyah as one of the most famous Iranian learned women with great eloquence.[100]

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[98] Amīn, *Ayān al-Shī'a,* 24: 409.

[99] Rūhānī, "Ḥusniyah," *Dāirat al-ma'ārif tashayyu',* 6: 323.

[100] Rajabī, *Mashāhīr-i zanān-i Īrān wa parsī-gūyī,* 75.

These biographical accounts provide important insights into how Husniyah has been received among modern Shī'ī Muslims and demonstrate the evolution of Husniyah from a literary figure to a real persona in the course of time. The Persianization of the heroine was carried out with the forged link between Husniyah and Iran by the above-mentioned accounts. Moreover, it is important to note that Husniyah was believed to return to Iran after her stay in Madina for some time and to die in Iran where she had allegedly been born and lived before being captured by the Muslim troops. It was also believed that she was buried in the shrine complex in the *Haydariyya*, located in the southern part of Mashhad where the Iranian Muslim community commonly congregate to pray and conduct religious ceremonies. Called as the *Ḥaram-i Husniyah* or "the sanctuary of Husniyah", it hosts many Shi'ite worshippers, especially during important religious occasions like Ramaḍan nights or the holy days of 'Ashūrā. Having said that, because of the paucity of information concerning the sanctuary of Husniyah, one can hardly elaborate on when and by whom this sanctuary was erected.[101] Nevertheless, it is safe to say that this must have to do with the popularity of Husniyah and positive reception of her anti-Sunnī polemic in Iran.

With regard to the popularity of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*, one can say that the number of manuscript copies attests to the popularity of the text during the early modern period. As a famous Persian manuscript catalogue, *Fihristwārah*, has indicated, more than a hundred manuscript copies were produced across Iran during the early modern period.[102] Yet, the popularity and circulation of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* accelerated, after

[101] Khosrawī, *Jughrāfyā-yi tārīkh-i wilāyat-i zāwah*, 364.

[102] Dirāyatī, *Fihristwārah*, 4: 653-56.

it was appended to the *Hilyat al-muttaqīn* written by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1111/1699), a leading figure in Isfahan and eventually *shaykh al-Islam* of the capital. The *Hilyat al-muttaqīn* covers fundamental aspects of Shī'ī jurisprudence, religious observances, rituals and prayers with an aim to instruct the common audience about the basics of Shī'ī Islam. [103] According to the prolific Iranian scholar, Sa'īd Nafīsī (d. 1966), Bāqir al-Majlisī translated the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* from Arabic to Persian and appended it to the end of his work.[104] Yet, Nafisī does not expand on why al-Majlisī felt the need to translate the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* when the Persian text had been already in circulation. Apparently Nafīsī's remarks seem unsubstantiated and simply wrong, given the fact that al-Majlisī does not mention Husniyah in his work, *Hilyat al-muttaqīn,* neither does he say anything with regard to his alleged initiation of binding together the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* with his work. Also, his prominent student, Iṣfahānī Afandī did not provide any information confirming his teacher's alleged translation or appending the *Risālah-* to the end of his work. Therefore, it stands to reason to suggest that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* must have been appended to the *Hilyat al-muttaqīn* by someone else in order to facilitate the spread of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* and also present the Shī'ī theology along with Shī'ī jurisprudence for a broader audience.

With the arrival of the printing press in Iran in the nineteenth century, the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* started to be reproduced industriously and a number of new editions have been published up until today. Hence, the popularity and circulation of this polemical work increased in the Qajar period (1785-1925) and subsequent decades. In

[103] M. B. Majlisī, *Ḥilyat al-muttaqīn*, ed. Muḥammad Shāfi'ī ibn Muḥammad Sālih (Tehran: Ṭahirī, 1362).

[104] Nafīsī, *Sarchashma-i tasavvuf dar Irān*, 15-16.

connection with the popularity of the the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in the Qajar period, the account of Sir John Malcolm (d.1833), who was sent to Iran at the turn of the nineteenth century as a British diplomat and who wrote the earliest full-length history of Iran in English, is very telling.[105] In his *The History of Persia* (c. 1815), Malcolm explores the ancient and contemporary history of Persia and dedicates a sizeable place to the formation of Shī'ī Islam, disagreements between Sunnīsm and Shī'īsm and Sunnī-Shī'ī polemics. Concerning anti-Sunnī Shī'ī polemical literare, he makes special mention of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* as an important polemical work and translates the majority of it into English.[106] In my opinion, his particular mention of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* among a deluge of other Shī'ī polemical works, is one of important indications of its popularity in that period.

The popularity of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* crossed the borders of Iran and travelled across Islamdom with its translation into multiple languages. In the nineteenth century, it was translated into Ottoman Turkish and Urdu, and circulated widely thanks to typographic publications. The following chapters explore the adventure of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in the contexts of the Ottoman and Indian lands in the nineteenth century.

[105] Lambton, "Major-General Sir John Malcolm (1769-1833) and 'The History of Persia," 97-109.

[106] Malcolm, *The History of Persia,* 2:365-376.

CHAPTER 4

THE ECOLOGY OF THE TRANSLATIONS: THE RELIGIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND NORTH INDIA

The *Risālah- i Ḥusniyah* appeared in the sixteenth century when confessional polarization was on the rise because of the rivalry between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires. It was also during a time of increased sectarian tensions between Sunnīs and Shī'īs some three hundred years later, that the text was translated from Persian into Ottoman Turkish and Urdu. The Turkish translation was completed in 1857/58, but was not published until the 1870s. The Urdu translation soon followed; it was published in1878.

This study argues that these translations were the products of similar religio-political dynamics. Contrary to the view proposed by the conventional modernization and secularization theory, the nineteenth century was a time of growing confessional identities and religious revivals.[107] As Engin D. Akarlı noted, 'religious fervor was becoming an increasingly conspicuous aspect of internal and international politics in the age of high imperialism with rapid industrialization and its concomitant social problems'.[108]

[107] Bennette, "Confessional Mixing and Religious Differentiation in Nineteenth-Century Germany," 2.

[108] Akarlı, "The Tangled Ends of an Empire: Ottoman Encounters with the West and Problems of Westernization—an Overview," 360.

The policies of settlement of nomadic tribes and mass migration to the cities along with various territorial and administrative reforms dislocated people who once had led relatively insular lives. This process led to the emergence of confessionally-mixed societies and diaspora communities within confessionally diverse majorities. Concomitantly, this confessional mixing brought about new concerns and problems such as social and religious processions, mixed marriages, confessionally specific cemeteries, religious polemics and so forth. All these re-enforced the confessional identities and fueled oppositional identity formation. Increasing social mobility, and the expansion of public spaces also contributed to the consolidation of religious identities. In short, contrary to the conventional argument, modernity and modern instruments did not trivialize confessional identities; on the contrary, these identities and their expressions became more pronounced, rather than withering away.[109]

No less importantly, the nineteenth centur saw the intensification of missionary activities of different religions and sects. Moreover, there was also increased Shī'īte and Christian missionary activity both in the Ottoman provinces and in Northern India. This missionary fervor ignited the conflicting culture among the distinct religious groups in the respective societies, and transformed print into the propaganda machinery whereby it became the main medium of the transmission of religious knowledge and debates to a much wider audience. This transformation, at the same time, hailed the age of the

[109] Bennette, 1-43; The modernization theory was subjected to the important critique by Bennette's study. She, very convincingly, shows the increasing importance of the confessional identities in the confessionally-mixed cities of Germany in the nineteenth century. I think this framework, provided by Bennette, is very applicable to the Ottoman and North Indian contexts, no doubt albeit with their own peculiarities and specialties.

'pamphlet wars' in which a large number of pamphlets were produced as weaponry of this war.[110]

This chapter attempts to deal with the above-mentioned constituents of the religio political atmosphere of the nineteenth century to lay the ground for a better analysis of the Turkish and Urdu translations of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in the second half of the century.

4.1 The revival of Shī'īsm and the Shī'ī missionary activities in the Ottoman Empire and North India in the nineteenth century

One of the important factors in the heightening confessional awareness was the missionary activities. Apart from the Christian missions, Shī'ī missionary activities became the predominant theme and concerns in the Sunnī polemical works against Shī'īsm in the nineteenth century. Concurrently, the same concerns and complaints also echoed in the reports and documents of the time, which were dispatched mainly from Ottoman Iraq to the Ottoman political authorities in Istanbul.

There is a growing literature dedicated to Shī'īsm both in the Ottoman Empire and North India in the nineteenth century.[111] One of the common conclusions of these

[110] Robinson, "Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print," 229-251, 246.

[111] Just to name a few of them; M. Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq, The 'ulamā of Najaf and Karbala* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Y. Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, Princeton: Princeton University, 1994), idem, "The Conversion of Iraq's Tribes to Shī'īsm," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 26/3, 443-463; G. Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq, 1890-1908* (New York: Routledge, 2006); F. Yaslıçimen, "Sunnīsm vs Shi'ism? Rise of the Shi'i Politics and the Ottoman Apprehension in Late Nineteenth Century Iraq" (MA Thesis, Bilkent University, 2008); S. Deringil, "The Struggle against Shī'īsm in Hamidian Iraq: A Study in Ottoman Counter-Propaganda," 45-62.

studies is that the Shī‘īte activities and their political effectiveness increased immensely throughout the century. The fall of the Safavids and subsequently Nadir Shah's hostile attitudes towards the Shī‘ī *'ulamā* caused the migration of the *'ulamā* from Iran to the shrine cities of Ottoman Iraq and North India.[112] Najaf and Karbala especially emerged as the most important Shī‘ī learning centers. In Meir Litvak's words; they became "the Shī‘ī universals" of the century attracting the students and visitors from all parts of the Shi'i world.[113] The shrine cities and their *'ulamā* cultivated a considerable amount of revenues from the religious visitations and donations from Iran and India.[114] For instance, as Gökhan Çetinsaya noted, 'every year an important number of people, fluctuating between 30,000 to 100,000, from Iran, and India visited the shrine cities of Iraq, and brought the remains of their deceased relatives to bury at the Atabat'.[115]

This prosperity procured a congenial atmosphere for Shī‘ī education in both Ottoman Iraq and North India. According to Justin Jones, the exclusively Shī‘īte organizations and *madrasa*s increased the activity and effectiveness of Shī‘ī *'ulamā* in the region. For instance, this sort of institutions and organizations were founded in the towns of United Provinces such as Deoband, Saharanpur, Aligarh, and Bareilly during this period. Additionally, a striking number of Shī‘ī *madrasa*s were also established

[112] Nakash, "The Conversion of Iraq's Tribes to Shī‘īsm," 443-463, 445.

[113] Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq*, 1-2.

[114] Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, 101; Nakash, "The Conversion of Iraq's Tribes to Shī‘īsm," 450; Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq*, 118.

[115] Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, 100. The corpse traffic from Iran was a practice of Shī‘ī believers to transport their dead for burial in cemeteries in the shrine cities. Nakash, "The Conversion of Iraq's Tribes to Shī‘īsm," 446-47.

especially in Lucknow, from 1889 onwards. The formation of *madrasa*s was an important aspect of the religious renewal in North India.[116]

According to Yitzhak Nakash, the shrine cities were not only the centers for religious educations and visitations or pilgrimage but also were the radiating economical and agricultural centers of Iraq. Therefore, these cities were attacked and sacked by the Wahhabis several times in the early nineteenth century. Yet, these forays reinforced Shī'ī identity and motivated the Shī'ī *'ulamā* for proselytizing the tribes into Shī'ī Islam 'because their conversion may have been regarded by the Shi'i *'ulamā* as an opportunity to increase the number of potential believers, contributors, and pilgrims.'[117]

As noted above, the nineteenth century witnessed numerous reforms in the administrative and territorial realms of the Empire. Throughout this century the Ottoman state spent much of its effort for the settlement of the tribes. According to Nakash, this sedentarization policy brought about an unintended consequence. The displacement and settlement of the nomadic tribes, which used to have a more insular and mobile lifestyle, exposed them to confessionally mixed society. Moreover, the weakness of the central power and the disadvantageous position of the Sunnī *'ulamā* and their insufficient revenues compared to their Shī'ī counterparts made the Shī'ī *'ulamā* more influential on the settled tribes. This created a suitable atmosphere for the Shī'ī emissaries to propagate their message freely near the shrine cities among the newly-settled tribes. Also, the

[116] Jones, "The Shia Muslims of the United Provinces of India c. 1890 – 1940," 35.

[117] Nakash, "The Conversion of Iraq's Tribes to Shī'īsm," 446-47.

economical and agricultural superiority of the shrine cities attracted the tribal people, thereby increasing their interaction with Shī'ī *'ulamā*.[118]

Here it should be noted that the revival of Usuli Shī'īsm in the nineteenth century increased the political activity of the *'ulamā* and their effectiveness on their constituencies in both Iraq and North India.[119] Throughout this century, the flow of the Shī'ī scholars from Awadh to Iraq increased, whereby a direct connection was forged between the *'ulamā* of the Shī'īte heartland and India.[120] The constant interaction between the *'ulamā* of the shrine cities, Iran and North India accelerated the ascendancy of Usuli Shī'īsm in these respective societies. This enabled the dominance of 'the Usuli interpretation of Shī'īsm at the expense of the Akhbari interpretation, reshaping, accelerating, and giving a great impetus to Shī'ī political activism.'[121] For instance, Mawlānā Sayyid Dildār (d. 1820), known as Ghufrān-maāb (he who has taken refuge in divine forgiveness), was the most important religious scholar in the growth and establishment of Shī'ī Islam in Awadh.[122] Though he had been attracted to Akhbarism, Dildār became the champion of the Usuli Shī'ī School in North India following his visit to the shrine cities in Iraq. He argued the incumbency of the Friday congregational

[118] Nakash, "The Conversion of Iraq's Tribes to Shī'īsm," 449; Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq*, 130.

[119] Howarth, *The Twelver Shia as a Muslim Minority in India*, 13; J. R. I. Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq*, 35; Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, 99.

[120] Trived, *The Making of the Awadh Culture*, 46.

[121] Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, 99.

[122] Dabit, Naqsh-i 'ulamā-yı muhājir-i Iranī dar tarwīj-i Tashayyu' dar Lakhnawi-yi Hind, 102-113; also see Sayyid Haydar Zaydi, "Naqsh-i Dīldār 'Alī Naqwī dar girāyash-i Shī'īyān-i shibh-i qārrah-i Hind bā-maslak-i usūl," 208-225.

prayer upon the community, thereby aiming to make the Shī‘ī community more united.[123]

This growing political activism of the Shī‘ī *‘ulamā* fueled their missionary zeal. Especially in Iraq, the wandering Shī‘ī scholars, *akhund*s or *mu’mins* paid great attention to the proselytization of the Shī‘ī tribes. As noted by the contemporary sources, this endeavor yielded an important success especially among the newly-settled tribesmen. As Nakash maintained, the new Shī‘ī identity replaced the disentangled tribal bonds, and became a new binding factor among the tribal people.[124] However, as Faruk Yaslıçimen noted, this should not be taken as a substantial or rapid conversion, because though the Shī‘ī missionary activities yielded some conversions among the tribesmen, it, rather, served for strengthening the communal identity of Shī‘īs and increased their social visibility along with political efficacy.[125]

As mentioned above, the increasing Shī‘ī awareness and its growing activities made Shī‘īsm more visible and influential in the different realms of socio-political life. This also empowered distinctive communal identities, and they manifested themselves in the different spheres of life. In the following pages, the re-formation of the Muḥarram processions as a main manifestation of the distinctiveness between Sunnīs and Shī‘īs in the Ottoman Empire and North India will be briefly presented.

[123] Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism,* 63-65.

[124] Nakash, “The Conversion of Iraq's Tribes to Shī‘īsm,” 457.

[125] Yaslıçimen, “Sunnīsm vs Shi'ism,” 40-61.

4.2 Muḥarram performances: The formation of the divided public space

The slaughter of Imam Ḥusayn, as a traumatic incident, left an indelible mark in the collective memories of the Muslim people. Throughout the centuries, this incident had been commemorated by Muslims regardless of their confessional backgrounds. However, in the course of time, it started to carry various confessionally specific features and became a major medium of conveying conflicting visions. Especially in the nineteenth century, as religious processions, the Muḥarram performances presented an opportunity to consolidate the communal solidarity among the Shī'īs and strengthened the sectarian distinctions between the Sunnīs and Shī'īs. As J. R. Cole states, these public rituals served as 'the matrix of community formation' and raised the religious identity and social networks within the Shī'ī societies.[126]

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, the Mamlūk governors of Iraq banned the Muḥarram processions notwithstanding, the Shī'ī community continued to observe the Muḥarram rites clandestinely. Yet, after the Ottomans resumed direct control of Iraq in 1831, the Ottoman governor of Iraq lifted the ban and paved the way for the public proceedings in the month of Muḥarram. Nakash asserts that the Ottomans might have permitted the processions with an intention 'to placate the Shī'īs in Iraq in the face of the expansionist policies of Muḥammad Ali of Egypt'. [127] However, this explanation does not seem convincing enough given the fact that the Ottoman authorities never prohibited these processions even in the heartland of their empire, even when the mentioned threat went away. For example, the Iranian/Azarī Shī'īte community in

[126] Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism,* 82.

[127] Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq,* 143.

Istanbul held their annual Muḥarram commemorations in a rather public manner. This is not to say that these processions never aroused any antagonistic feelings among the Ottoman authorities and Sunnī ‘*ulamā*. On the contrary, disturbed by these processions, various Ottoman officials and scholars urged the central authority to put a ban on these processions. In this regard, the Ottoman governor Midhat Pasha attempted to restrict the passion plays staged during the Muḥarram month on account of the fact that they provoked and had an adverse effect on the Sunnī people. By the same token, Alūsizāda Aḥmad Shākir, an important member of a Sunnī *‘ulamā* family in Iraq, asked the state to prevent the Shī‘ī community from staging these public processions; he reasoned that these processions heightened the excitement of the population, and thereby procured a congenial atmosphere for the Shī‘ī *‘ulamā*’s conversion efforts.[128]

The Muḥarram processions were also widespread among the Indian Muslim communities. Yet, until the fall of the Mughal Empire, Sunnīs and Shī‘īs were attending the ceremonies together in North India. In other words, ‘in the Mughal period, and especially under Awrangzîb, Shias had no public rituals separate from Sunnīs’.[129] Following the fall of the Mughals, the Shī‘ī rulers of Awadh held sway over the provinces in Awadh between 1722 and 1856. In this time period, ‘Shī‘ī rituals were again encouraged and sponsored by the state, often lavishly’.[130] Especially, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Muḥarram processions became one of the definitive manifestations of Shī‘ī-Sunnī religious differentiation. As Justin Jones noted

[128] Kern, “The Prohibition of Sunnī-Shi'i Marriages in the Ottoman Empire: A Study of Ideologies,” 102-119.

[129] Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism*, 92.

[130] Howarth, *The Twelver Shia*, 12.

‘during the colonial period the application of this organizational character increasingly shifted away from the encouragement of broad cross-communal participation and towards the propagation of uniform, standardized demonstrations of sectarian homogeneity.’[131] ‘Muḥarram rituals served as an organizing factor and the prime source from which the sectarian integrity and solidarity could be kindled.’[132]

Once a cross-confessional procession, Muḥarram rituals started to be performed separately by Sunnīs and Shī‘īs. This separation led to the incorporation of identifying particularities on both sides. For instance, on the Sunnī side, the *chahār-yāri* (“four companions”, denoting the names of the first four Caliphs) were inscribed on the corners of *tā‘ziya* place, and the recitation of *madḥ-i ṣaḥāba*, (eulogy for the Companions of the Prophet) served as a marker of distance from Shī‘īsm. During the processions, ‘a new and innovative genre of Sunnī elegiac poetries in praise of the Caliphs emerged and was 'published, sold, distributed, read and recited publicly everywhere.’[133] In addition to that, a series of new meetings including *Bazm-i Ṣiddīqī,*[134] *Bazm-i-Fārūqī,*[135] and *Bazm-i-‘Uthmānī*[136], in honour of the Caliphs and Companions of the Prophet and seemingly self-conscious opposites to the more traditional Shia *majalis*, were established and convened during Muḥarram, and publicly advertised. On the Shī‘ī side, numerous leaflets condemning the first three caliphs were published and disseminated during the

[131] Jones, “The Shia Muslims of the United Provinces of India,” 107.

[132] Jones, “The Shia Muslims of the United Provinces of India,”107.

[133] Jones, “The Shia Muslims of the United Provinces of India,”112-13.

[134] *Al- Ṣiddīq,* or ‘the most truthful’ is used for the first caliph Abū Bakr.

[135] *Al-Fārūq*, or ‘the one who distinguishes between right and wrong’ is used for the second caliph ‘Umar.

[136] *Uthmānī* denotes the third caliph, ‘Uthmān.

processions. While the Sunnī followers were gathering in *Bazm-i-Fārūqī,* Shī'īs were celebrating the death of 'Umar. Also, they were burning his effigies during the processions.[137]

In short, the public processions relying on the distinctive motifs, slogans, symbols, recitations etc. became an important venue for oppositional identity formation, and the confession-specific particularities of the Muḥarram processions contributed to sectarian homogeneity. As mentioned above, *tabarra* or public cursing of the three caliphs was a major component of the Shī'ī processions. Therefore, one can say that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah'*s acrimonious arguments against the first three caliphs and its disparaging invectives launched against Abu Hanifa, the founding father of the Hanafi School of Islamic jurisprudence must have been one of the important reasons behind its re-appropriation by the Shī'ī oppositional community in the confessionally-divided societies of the Ottoman Empire and North India in the nineteenth century.

4.3 *Munāẓara* (religious disputation)*:* A space for conflicting visions

Munāẓara or disputation has a long tradition in the Islamic learned tradition. Its very systematized methodology was formed along with the different disciplines and sciences that flourished in Islamic societies. '*Ilm-i munāẓara* (science of disputation) sets as its objective to reveal the truth in a scholarly debate by refuting the arguments of one's disputant providing that each side must adhere to the precepts of logic and sound reasoning. Muslim scholars made much of this science not only in order to be able to

[137] Jones, "The Shia Muslims of the United Provinces of India," 112-13.

elicit the arguments of their schools or *madhhab*s but also to be armed against their non-Muslim opponents.[138] As mentioned before, the nineteenth century witnessed the increasing involvement of Christian missionaries in the Muslim world. The frequent encounter with the non-Muslims in the form of *munāẓara* made 'the conflictive traditions indigenized and internalized, evolving from Christian – Muslim disputations and ultimately contributing to debates among Muslims themselves.'[139]

In the nineteenth century, with the emergence of the public space, the *munāẓara* metamorphosed from an intra-scholar debate to the public forum attracting a large audience from among the lay people of society. For instance, in North India, Sunnī and Shī'ī scholars debated with each other very frequently, and these debates usually took place in the form of a *munāẓara*, generally held in small towns and cities across North India. A few thousand onlookers of the lay public attended the debates, cheering on their religious leaders. In time, as *munāẓara* developed and became widespread, it increasingly took on the character of overt theatre and civic spectacle.[140]

This transformation in the nature of the *munāẓara* concomitantly brought about the vernacularization of the debates. Since hundreds or thousands of commoners from the different walks of society attended these debates, discussants were obliged to talk with more simple words, yet at the same time much more eloquently and fluently in Urdu. As Jones noted, in the eyes of the proponents, scholarly learning or acquaintance

[138] Karabela, "The Development of Dialectic and Argumentation Theory in Post-Classical Islamic Intellectual History," 1-22.

[139] Jones, "The Shia Muslims of the United Provinces of India," 101.

[140] Zaidi, "Contested Identities and the Muslim Qaum in northern India: c. 1860-1900," 3; Jones, "The Shia Muslims of the United Provinces of India," 103-4.

with the classical languages was perhaps less significant than the disputants' fluent and dramatic Hindustani oratory and their foothold in the Urdu sphere of popular writing and speech.[141]

Concurrently, the *munāẓara* was also an important venue for the debate between Sunnī and Shī'ī scholars of Iraq. Ottoman authorities assigned numerous scholars in Iraq to struggle with the missionary activities of the Shī'ī *'ulamā*. Ottoman authorities were careful in selecting Sunnī *'ulamā* who would be sent or assigned to Iraq. 'They principally preferred those who had proficiency in scholarly discussions and who had "religiously and politically important and necessary" knowledge of religious sciences such as the exegesis of the Qur'an, the hadith of the prophet, and the Islamic theology (*kalām).*'[142] The emphasis on proficiency in *munāẓara*, and in *kalām* as a criterion for selecting *'ulamā* attests to the growing importance of the m*unāẓara* in this century. As Litvak noted, Shī'ī *'ulamā* in Iraq also resorted to the *munāẓara* and often engaged their Sunnī counterparts and non-Muslims like Jewish rabbis in polemical disputations in order to prove the superiority of their sect.[143]

Sometimes the *munāẓara*s were recorded by scribes for the benefit of the broader public; therefore, the disputants were requested to speak in a clear and stylized manner. Not surprisingly, these records invariably narrated the victory of their own side against the opponent discussant. The effective use of print led the mass production of these recorded *Munāẓara*s or pamphlets in the *munāẓara* format. In short, the *munāẓara* was

[141] Jones, "The Shia Muslims of the United Provinces of India," 106-7.

[142] Yaslıçimen, "Sunnīsm vs Shi'ism," 119.

[143] Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq*, 132.

transformed from an intellectual pursuit among the literate *ashrāf* (elites) into a populist altercation in the public street. Hence, it widened the public knowledge of the Shī'ī-Sunnī differences among the masses by drawing the lay people into heightened and moving debates. In this regard, the *munāẓara* was an important marker of identity between the Sunnī and Shī'ī communities.[144]

Last but not least, the theatrical tone of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*, and its presentation of the arguments in an imaginary format which presents the fictitious *munāẓara* between a slave girl, Ḥusniyah, and her Sunnī opponent, the *'ulamā*, in front of hundreds of onlookers, must have been another important factor behind its translation in the context in which public Shī'ī-Sunnī debates or *munāẓara* s became the norm of the conflicting culture.

4.4 Printing Press: Propaganda machinery in the age of pamphlet wars

Print is one of the magical inventions of human history, which had an unprecedented impact on the transmissions of knowledge. Though print played a major role in early modern Europe,[145] it was not established in the Islamic world until the eighteenth

[144] Jones, "The Shia Muslims of the United Provinces of India," 103-5.

[145] Here it must be noted, as Rebecca Bennette showed in her notable study, though Europe discovered the power of print long before the Islamic world, the growing separatism fueled by confessional mixing increased the importance of print among the different confessional groups. In that regards she says: "Religious polemics increased sharply during the Kulturkampf. The Catholic press mushroomed during the 1870s, in the form of newspapers, periodicals, and pamphlets. The Evangelischer Bund was started in 1886, disseminating acerbic Protestant propaganda with the defense of Germany against Ultramontanism as one of its goals. Associational life intensified in the 1890s, organized mainly along confessional lines, and communities usually had separate Catholic and Protestant organizations to fulfill parallel roles", Bennette, "Confessional Mixing," 2.

century. Even, for its widespread utilization, one would wait for the second half of the nineteenth century.[146] The reasons behind the late arrival of printing press in the Muslim world has been discussed by numerous scholars, yet, this discussion is outside the purview of this study. It, rather, concentrates on the impact of the advent of the printing press on the inter-sectarian relations and polemical exchange between Sunnī and Shī'ī communities in the nineteenth century.

The introduction of lithographic printing unprecedentedly facilitated the mass and cheap production of books and other written materials. Concomitantly, it widened the reach of books by making them more affordable for a broader audience. This made print one of the most cherished instruments for the different religious groups. In the time when missionary activities, religious polemics and processions were on the rise, printing press started to function as a significant component of these heightened sectarian activities. As Francis Robinson put it, the transformation of print into the propaganda machinery led to the rapid florescence of sectarianism.[147]

In the Ottoman Empire, the first serious attempt for the establishment of printing press came in 1720s from Ibrāhīm Müteferriḳa, a pioneering figure in the history of the Turkish press. In 1726, he wrote a small tract, *Wasīlat al-ṭibā'a (*The Usefulness of

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By the same token, in another place she states: "As increased physical proximity spurred socio-cultural differentiation, this separate quality of life that most nineteenth-century Germans longed for was realized not least in the print cultures of the period. In addition to separate great books and authors to fill their respective literary canons**,** the two confessions had separate sets of polemical literature directed against the other." Bennette, 32.

[146] Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims,* 231.

[147] Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims,* 246.

Printing)[148], and there enumerated the benefits of print in justification of his attempt to establish a printing house. Mütefferrika states that "this beneficial and innovative art is a clear explainer of the source and wellspring of all the sources, and is an answer to the needs of the people for Islamic books." "When a book is printed", he continues, "there are several thousand exactly identical copies, and printing is a means of producing many clear, excellent, perfect books in a short time. Therefore, books become inexpensive, and students both rich and poor can obtain books and acquire a proper education in the desirable sciences and diplomas in religious studies."[149] He also maintains that as the price of books decrease, every single person can possess books, and furthermore, the widespread dissemination of books in town and country serves as a means of reducing ignorance.[150] So he sees print as the cure of ignorance, and main medium for widening the audience of the books. Moreover, he also remarks that the Muslims, all around the world, are in need of books, hence founding a printing house will contribute to meeting this need, and it would augment the glory and majesty of the Ottoman state.[151] As seen in Müteferriḳa's statements, the capacity and power of print was recognized at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Yet, one would wait one century and a half for the utilization of printing press in a way that Müteferriḳa had envisioned.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, printing press became a significant medium for the promulgation of books and tracts as an indispensable part of missionary

[148] İbrahim Müteferriḳa, *Vesilet'ül Tıba'a* (The Usefulness of Printing), trans. Christopher M. Murphy, *The Book in the Islamic World*, 286-92.

[149] Müteferriḳa, *Vesilet'ül Tıba'a*, 289-90.

[150] Müteferriḳa, *Vesilet'ül Tıba'a*, 290.

[151] Müteferriḳa, *Vesilet'ül Tıba'a*, 292.

activities. For instance, as noticed in numerous reports sent to the Porte from such provinces as Iraq, the prevailing complaint was the increasing promulgation of Shī'ī books and pamphlets along with other 'mischievous' publications of the different religious groups or orders like the Bektāshīs. As explored in the chapter to come, the authors of the rebuttals against the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* also pointed to the same issue, namely the outnumbering of the 'mischievous' tracts in the various places of the Ottoman Empire.

Apart from being a crucial component of the missionary activities, printing press started to be used efficiently by the state for bureaucratic and religious purposes.[152] In an age when the Ottoman authorities saw education as a panacea for all ills, books and tracts were regarded as the main conduit for the dissemination of the state-sanctioned religion and a vehicle to fight against "heretical" beliefs and dispelling of ignorance, as expressed by Müteferriḳa a century earlier. Moreover, Sufi orders also tapped into the printing press more efficiently from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards. Even, some Sufi lodges functioned like a printing house.[153] For instance, Özbekler Tekkesi (Uzbeks Lodge) in Üskudar which hosted many visitors and pilgrims from different parts of the world, included the printing activities under the control of Shaykh Suleymān Efendi. In addition to this, Karyağdı Tekkesi, a Bektāshī lodge in Eyüp, functioned like a printing house under Necip Baba, also known as Matbaacı Baba (Printer Baba/Father) due to his interest in printing. The Bektāshīs had been subjected to strict surveillance and sporadic execution since the abolition of the Janissaries in 1826,

[152] Güldane Çolak, "Osmanlı Matbaacılığında Takvimhane-i Amire'nin Yeri ve Önemi" (MA Thesis, Istanbul University, 2011).

[153] Varol, "19. Yüzyıl İstanbulu'nda Bazı Tekkelerin Matbaacılık Faaliyetleri," 317-347.

but in the 1870s when the state relaxed its grip over them, the Bektāshīs found an opportunity to promulgate their ideas among the people once again. For instance, Necip Baba printed *Cāvidān,* a celebrated book in the Bektāshī tradition, and put it into the market for a cheap price, with an intention to revive the order after some inauspicious years.[154] On the other hand, in contrast to Necip Baba's endeavors to print and spread *Cāvidān,* Shaykh Yaḥyā Efendi, a Naqshbandi Shaykh, was printing the book of İshāḳ Efendi, the *Kāşif'ül-esrār*, a rebuttal to the *Cāvidān* and the Bektāshī order. Varol attributes this publication to the entrenched hostility of Naqshbandīs toward the Bektāshī order.[155] In short, print served for the 'inter' and "intra" religious polemics between the different religious groups in the late Ottoman Empire. Likewise, Sunnī-Shī'ī polemics, directed against each other, followed one another and intensified the war of pamphlets in this period. The rebuttals against *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*, which will be explored in the following chapter, must be seen as part of this war of the pen.

The emergence of print coincided with the growth of the Shī'ī centers in North India. In this process the publishing houses mushroomed in the regions. Their primary aim was to disseminate Shia works across the cities. Especially Lucknow, Moradabad, Meerut and Jaunpur became important hubs for such publications. These publications played a major role in the fostering the religious consciousness among the Shī'ī

[154] Varol, 328; Hür Mahmud Yücer, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Tasavvuf (19. Yüzyıl)*, 499. In connection with this endeavor, it is reported that he tried to sell this book in the holy month of Ramadan in the yards of Bayazid and Fatih mosques. See Ahmet Safi, *Sefinet'üs Safi,* Vol. 3, p. 322, also see the articles published online by Müfid Yüksel, "Eyüp-Karyağdı Baba Bektâşî Tekkesi (Hâfız Baba Dergâhı) I-II-III" http://mufidyuksel.com/eyup-karyagdi-baba-bektasi-tekkesi-hafiz-baba-dergahi-1-mufid-yuksel.html, last updated in 5.11.2015

[155] Varol, "19. Yüzyıl İstanbulu'nda Bazı Tekkelerin Matbaacılık Faaliyetleri," 336.

communities.[156] More often than not, the majority of the printed works were primarily devoted to polemical or apologetical matters that served to widen the growing rift between Sunnīs and Shīʻīs. In connection with this, Jones states that:

> A large number of newly emergent tracts were controversial sectarian writings, in popular Urdu literature at least, most of which attacked the Sunnī Caliphs. Religious histories were merged with polemical literature to the extent that the genres were little distinguishable. In this way, religious knowledge was fused inextricably with sectarian polemic… The differences between various Muḥammadan sects, as for example, between Shi'as and Sunnīs, accounted as always for a certain number. 'It can be seen how the emergence of the printing press in the cities of United Provinces created new possibilities for the emergence of sectarianism in colonial India.[157]

As seen in the *munāẓara* culture, Urdu started to become the chief medium of political, intellectual and religious expressions. As vernacularization took hold over the written word, by the last decades of the century, most of the printed books came out in Urdu.[158] At the end of this process, the Persian language was overshadowed by the dominance of Urdu in the domain of literary culture.[159]

According to Francis Robinson, one of the reasons why this explosion in the Urdu print world took place was because the Muslim religious leaders, the *ʻulamā*, became bereft of political power in the colonial period, and therefore, they used the new technology of the printing press to ‘compensate for the loss of political power' and to

[156] Jones, “The Shia Muslims of the United Provinces of India,” 88.

[157] Jones, “The Shia Muslims of the United Provinces of India,” 90-91.

[158] About the venture of Persian and the dominance of the Urdu in the nineteenth century see Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims,* 77; Muʻīn al-Dīn Āqīl, “Inḥiṭāṭ-i chāp-i Fārisī,” 40-47.

[159] Raḥmān, “Urdu and the Muslim Identity: Standardization of Urdu in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries,” 83-107.

widen their audience in order to strengthen their authority in the religio-political domains.[160] In addition to this, the challenge of modernity posed by the colonial administration and the Christian missionary activities, along with the Sunnī-Shī'ī conflicts and Muslim-Hindu strife had a significant impact on the explosion in print. This brought about the proliferation of polemical and apologetical works that have been exchanged to refute each other.[161]

To give an example, the Sunnī rebuttal against the Shī'a, *Tuḥfah-i ithnā 'ashariyyah,* was written by the prominent Sunnī scholar, 'Abd al-'Azīz Dahlawī, who descended from an important Sunnī *'ulamā* family.[162] It was written in the last decade of the eighteenth century, and was printed in Calcutta in 1800. At the beginning of his book, he complains about the spread of Shī'īsm in India and levels his critiques at the various aspects of Shī'ī Islam in the twelve chapters.[163] The publication of the book stirred a long-lasted controversy between the Sunnī and Shī'ī scholars. Sayyid Dildār 'Alī, a famous Usūlī Shī'ī scholar, penned the rebuttal, *Ṣawārīm al-hay'a,* against

[160] Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims,* 245; Mu'īn al-Dīn 'Āqīl, "Commencement of Printing in the Muslim World: a View of Impact on *'ulamā* at Early Phase of Islamic Moderate Trends," 16.

[161] Jones, "The Shia Muslims of the United Provinces of India," 91-92.

[162] He was son of Shah Walī al-Allāh Dahlawī, a prominent Sunnī revivalist scholar lived in eighteenth century.

[163] Abdulaziz Dahlawi, in the preface of his book, explains the reason of writing (*sabab-i ta'lif) Tuḥfah* as follows: "*Gharaz-i taswīd-i īyn risālah wa-taḥrīr-i īyn māqālah ān ast ki dar īyn bilād ki mā sākīn ānīm wa-dar īyn zamān ki mā dar ānīm rawāj-i madhab-i ithnā 'ashariyyah wa-shuyū'-i ān bah-ḥaddī ittifāq uftādah ki kam khānah bah-ān madhab mutamadhhab nah bāshand wa-rāghib bah īyn 'aqīdah nah-shawand…"*
'The need for writing this book arose due to the problem of the popularity of `Isna 'Ashariyyah faith in the time and place in which we live in among Muslims. Sunnīs are being influenced by the faith of 'Isna 'Asharis and not a single house was left where one or two Sunnīs would not have accepted the `Isna 'Ashari faith or taken influence from it.", Abd al-Aziz Dahlawi, *Tuḥfah-i īthnā 'ashariyyah / Nasīhat'ul mu'minīn wa-fadīyhāt al-shayāṭīn,* 4. The *Tuḥfah* was written in Persian, then it was translated into Arabic by al-Shaykh Muhy al-Dīn ibn 'Umar al-Aslamī in 1812. Here it should be noted that the venture of the *Tuḥfah* was not confined to North India, its Arabic translation was abridged by Sayyid Mahmud Shukri al-Alûsi, a prominent member of the very famous *'ulamā* family of Iraq in 1883.

Tuḥfah's fifth chapter in 1803. *Ḥusām al-islām* (the sword of Islam) followed the former as a refutation of the sixth chapter of the *Tuḥfah.* Other polemical tracts involved in the polemic throughout the nineteenth century included *Jawāhīr-i 'abqariyyah fî radd-i tuḥfah-i ithnā 'asharyyah* by Muftī Mīr 'Abbās Laknawī in 1841, and *Radd-i ghaybah* which was directed against the seventh chapter came in 1850. *Taqlīb al-makāid* was written against the second chapter of *Tuḥfaf* and published in Urdu by Akhbar-i Dehli in 1846. In addition to them, *al-Bawārīq al-mubriqa / al-Suyūf al-muḥriqa* and *Dhū'l-fiqār* continued the polemic in the 1860s. However, the most famous rebuttal against the *Tuḥfah* was written by Ḥāmid Ḥusayn Mūsawī Laknawī Hindī, *'Abaqāt al-anwār fī imāmat al-a'immah al-aṭhār* was published in 1856 in Lucknow.[164]

The heightened tension between the Sunnīs and Shī'īs led to the proliferation of polemical works as seen in the above mentioned example. The rebuttals against the Sunnī polemical book, the *Tuḥfa,* followed one another throughout the nineteenth century. It should be noted that even the titles of the above-mentioned polemical works attest to the vehemence of the combative nature of the Sunnī-Shī'ī relations in that time. The words used in the titles of the rebuttals such as '*sawārīm', 'ḥusām', 'suyūf', 'dhū'l-fiqār'* are all synonyms of 'sword' in English. In a sense, one can say that in the age of the 'pamphlet wars' the scholars sparred with each other with their sword-like pens. With regard to these polemical exchanges, Jones suggests that 'the sectarian writings so frequently produced during the period were less individual pieces and more a part of an ongoing literary dialogue taking place through the lithographic presses of individual

[164] Ḥāmid Ḥusayn Mūsawī, *'Abaqāt al-anwār fī imāmat al-a'immah al-aṭhār* (Iṣfahān: Mu'assasah-i Nashr-i Nafā'is-Makhṭūṭāt-i Iṣfahān, 1338/1959). For detail about the above-mentioned polemical works see Mehrdād Ramaḍāniya, "Jaygāh-i zebān wa-chāp-i mutūn-ı Farsī dar qarn-i nozdohom-i shibh-i qārrah-i Hind: khiyzash-i Urdu," 81-82.

towns'. He also maintains that this was a dialogue with two effects: First, it widened the reach of religious knowledge, acquainted new sections of the public with religious doctrine, at the same time, it systematized and sharpened the differences between traditions. Moreover, he also observes that the conversations conducted through these polemical writings were 'marked by hostility and insularity, rather than communication or any attempted exchange of ideas.'[165] By the same token, Zaidi has suggested that the polemical and apologetical works 'were read perhaps more by their own supporters than their adversaries who were usually the target of the attacks', in other words, the main function of the polemical works was to consolidate the confessional identities of its own audience rather than to convince their opponents.[166]

In short, print had a significant impact on the polemical writings and the growing sectarian awareness. It was utilized as propaganda machinery and intensified the promulgation of the printed materials as part of missionary activities. Though Arabic and Persian were predominantly used in the polemical literature in the early modern times, the nineteenth century witnessed the vernacularization of polemical literature. That's why especially in North India a plethora of classical works were translated into Urdu and the *munāẓara*s along with the written polemics were conducted in Urdu.[167] Likewise, as will be discussed in the following chapter, the authors of the rebuttals against the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in the late Ottoman Empire noted that they wrote their

[165] Jones, "The Shia Muslims of the United Provinces of India," 92-93.

[166] Zaidi, "Contested Identities and the Muslim," 137.

[167] Robinson points out the vernacularization process, and in this regard, states that; 'The printing press was a crucial means to this end. It worked side by side, moreover, with a great programme of translation of the Islamic classics from Arabic and Persian into the vernacular. Many of the more important works of the Islamic educational curriculum were translated into Urdu in the nineteenth century', Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims*, 241, By the same token, Jones assert that

rebuttals in Turkish so that common people who lacked of the knowledge of Arabic and Persian could read and benefit from what had been written in their rebuttals.

To conclude, Ottoman Turkish and Urdu translations of the *Risālah-i Husniyah* were rendered from Persian in the period of the 'second confessionalization' in which the growing missionary zeal and propaganda, the distinguishing or discriminating social and religious processions like the Muḥarram rituals, and the scathing polemical exchanges in the vernacular languages were at play. In the following chapter I shall take a closer look at the translation of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in Urdu and Ottoman Turkish.

CHAPTER 5

TRANSLATION:

THE STORY OF ḤUSNIYAH IN OTTOMAN TURKISH AND URDU

This chapter is chiefly concerned with the individuals and groups that were responsible for the translations, their motivations and intentions, and the targeted audience of the subsequent publications. At the very outset, it should be noted that both this and subsequent chapters shall concentrate more on the Turkish translation and the reactions elicited by it. This is partly because of the limitations of my expertise and paucity of the sources in Urdu regarding the translation of *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*; and partly because of the disproportionately greater number of sources that I have been able to find about the Ottoman translations and their audience.[168]

5.1 Turkish translation of *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*

In the preface of the Turkish translation of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*, it was stated that the translation was completed in 1274/1857-58. So, the Turkish translation appeared almost three centuries after the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was originally produced in Persian in the Safavid Empire. At this point, one might wonder whether the Persian text had been

[168] I am very grateful to ʻĀrif Nawshāhī, a prominent Pakistani scholar and the author of numerous manuscript catalogues, for his very generous helps while writing this chapter. He brought some Persian and Urdu sources to my attention and translated some parts of the Urdu version into English for me. Also, I thank my dear friends, Yakoob Ahmad and Abdulbasit Adeel, who helped me while reading the Urdu version of the text. Also my thanks go to Professor Justin Jones, at Oxford University, S. Akbar Zaidi, at Columbia University, Margrit Pernau, at Max Planck Institute, who kindly replied to my questions concerning the Urdu version of the *Risālah*.

known to the Alevi-Qizilbash communities before its Persian was rendered into Turkish in the nineteenth century. It seems safe to say that it is highly likely that those who could read Persian among the Qizilbash groups might have been aware of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in Persian, given that these groups had encounters with the Safavids from the early sixteenth century onwards. Having said this, to my best of knowledge, there is only one extant Persian copy registered in the Rare Collections Library of Istanbul University, yet this is not to say that this is the only available copy in Turkey. Further research on the personal collections belonging to Alevi families in various corners of Turkey might turn up new copies and provide new insights into the popularity of the Persian text among the Qizilbash groups before it was translated into Turkish. All we know for sure is that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* started to be read and circulated widely among the Alevis and Bektāshīs only following its translation into Turkish and its multiple lithographic publications.

Meḥmed Rānā, the Turkish translator of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*, begins his translation with a preface in which he explains the reason for the translation following the eulogy of God and the Prophet Muḥammad along with his family (*ahl al-bayt)*. The short preface reads as follows:

> This brief pamphlet was translated from Arabic to Persian in 958/1551, and after that, it had circulated in these two languages, Arabic and Persian, until the year 1274/1857-58. The believers and sympathizers of (the *ahl al-bayt*) had benefited from reading this book. Yet, since people of different ranks vary in their comprehension of Arabic and Persian, some brethren implored this simple man, Mehmed Rānā, to translate it into Turkish. By heeding this fervent demand, I undertook its translation from Persian to Turkish. Though some would be pleased with this translation, some others would be disturbed and worried upon reading this book. Therefore, some would remember this humble man with gratitude, whereas others would vituperate him. The people of

> comprehension know that grace comes only from God and slander from the group of immoral and debauched people as illustrated by the proverb 'every container leaks what it contains,' and God is enough for me; and how excellent a guardian is He![169]

Meḥmed Rānā, by echoing Astarābādi, states that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was authored in Arabic and then rendered into Persian during the period of Shah Tahmasb in Safavid Iran. In tune with the vernacularization of the religious polemic in the nineteenth century, Rānā translates it with an intention to make it more accessible to a broader Turkish-speaking audience. The preface introduces Meḥmed Rānā as the translator of the text, however one can hardly elaborate further details about him, because contemporary bio/bibliographical sources and archival documents do not provide any record or entry regarding Meḥmed Rānā's life or his career. Neither did the Ottoman Sunnī scholars who wrote rebuttals against the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in Turkish, such as Hoca İshāḳ Efendī (d.1892) and Ḥasan Ḥilmī (d.1914) provide info concerning Mehmed Rānā, rather they noted that they had not heard of the name of the translator. Therefore, it stands to reason that Meḥmed Rānā may have been a pseudonym used by the translator to conceal his real identity to avoid harassment and punitive action by

[169] "'*Ammā ba'ż işbu risāle-i muhtaṣara ki hicret-i nebeviyyenin dokuz yüz elli sekiz senesinde lisān-ı 'Arabīden lisān-ı Fārisīye tebdīl olub sene bin iki yüz yetmiş dört tarihine gelinceye değin bu iki lisān-ı mezkūr üzre ḳalub beyne'l mü'minīn ve'l muhibbīn mütedāvil olarak mütāla'asından mahẕūẕ ve hisse-yāb olmuşlardır. Velāki'n-nās 'alā merātībihim 'Arabî ve Fārisî lisānlarını teſhīm ve idrākda teſāvüt üzre bulundukları içün bu ḥuṣūṣa mebnī ba'ż muḥibbān işbū risāle-i mezkūrenin lisān-ı Fārisīden Türkīye tercüme olunmasını bū haḳīr-i pür-taḳsīrden ya'ni Mehmed Rānā bendelerinden mültemis oldukları hasebiyle bū haḳīr dahi muḥibbānın iltimaslarına mebnī risāle-i mezkūrenin lisān-ı Fārisīden Türkīye tercüme olunmasına mübāşeret idüb işbū risāleyi mütâla'a idenlerin kimi memnûn ve kimi mağmūm u mahzūn olacaklardır. Buna mebnī mütercim bendeleri ba'ż kimesnelerden ṭa'n ve ta'rīze vāşıl olacağı muhaḳaḳtır ve ba'ż muhibbânın dahi kesb-i raḥmete nâ'il ve müşerref ve maẕhār olub bu bende-yi pür-taḳsīri yād ideceklerdir. Bu bābda aṣḥāb-ı idrāk olan zātlara pekālā ma'lūmdur ki raḥmet ancak Cenâb-ı Haḳdan olub ve ṭa'n u teşnī' ise be-ḥasebi fıṭrīyye zümre-yi münāfiḳān ve gürūh-i fāsıḳāndan ẓuhûr ve ṣudūr ider olduğu ā'yândır ki buyurmuşlardır: 'kullī inā'in yatarrash bimā fīhi' tevekkelu ale'llâh ve hüve ḥasbī*"

the Ottomans. Nevertheless, Hoca İshāḳ Efendi noted that, judging by the dialect of the translation, the 'unknown' translator could not have been an *Acem* (Persian), rather, he could have been an Ottoman scribe whose ancestors had been followers of Sunnī Islam but who himself had gone astray due to his proclivity towards the Persians.[170] In the same manner, Ḥasan Ḥilmī also claimed that the translator had hidden his identity lest he be persecuted. In his rebuttal, Ḥilmī queries the translator before his readers, and in an imagined dialogue with the translator, he asks; "Since you translated the arguments of the slave girl, Ḥusniyah, as if they were right, and since you claimed to be a follower of the *ahl al-bayt,* why did you not openly inform us about your *madhhab* (sect), belief, name and the place where you live". In response to this question, Ḥilmī has the translator reply: "if I revealed this information, *Ahl-i shar' (*People of *Sharī'a*) would kill me. It is because of this fear that I hid my identity". 'In that case we say', continues Ḥilmī, 'Oh fake lover of (the Alids)! Why do you not rush to join the martyr of Karbala, if you really desire to do so?' If he responds by saying 'life is so nice and precious, and as a poor man, I cannot withstand such hardship', then we say: 'Oh the lover of Yezid, you do not even dare to shave your mustache, let alone sacrificing your life for the sake of the martyr of Karbala!'[171]

[170] "*Mezkūr Risāle-i Hüsniye'nin şīve-i taḥrīriyesine naẓaran mütercimi Acem olmayub belki ābā an ced ehl-i sünnet ve'l cemaatten olduğu halde Aceme intima ile İstanbul'da gomgeşte-i rāh-ı hidāyet olmuş küttāb-ı Osmānīyye'den bir yadkārın eser-i ḳalemi olduğu anlaşılmakta olduğundan gerek pişrev ve gavāyet-i imlāya şu mütercim-i nā-şināsi ve gerek bu risāleye ḳapılan sāir eḥad-ı nāsı dūçār oldukları helāk-i ma'neviyeden müstei'nen billāh-i teā'lā ḳurtarmak üzere işbu Tezkiye-i Ehl-i Beyt nām reddiyenin taḥrīrine ibtidār olundu*." The *Tezkiye-i Ehl-i Beyt,* pp. 2b-3a.

[171] Ḥasan Ḥilmī, *Miftāḥ'ül Arifin,* 306

One might wonder why Ḥilmī makes 'not shaving the mustache' a particular mention in the foregoing ficititious dialogue. It seems that it is just a way of ridiculing and mocking the opponent in Ḥilmī's polemical take on against the translation of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah.* However, given that Ḥilmī addressed the inappropriateness of growing a mustache elsewhere in his book and stated that 'not shaving the mustache' was an innovation of Shah Ismail to mark the distinctiveness between Sunnīs and Shī'īs, one can suggest that Ḥilmī could have alluded that the translator of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was a Shī'ī or Alevi.[172]

Thanks to the printing press, the publication of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in Turkish was conducted multiple times in the late nineteenth century. Since such 'harmful' publications were strictly prohibited by the Ottoman authorities, the Turkish translation was published secretly without providing any technical details regarding the publisher, date or place. Therefore, the printed copies available in the various libraries of Turkey do not include such details. Nevertheless, a number of the Ottoman archival documents provide us with important clues about the spread of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*. For instance, a report dated 1294/1877 stated that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was printed by Bektāshī groups (*zümre-i Bektāşiyye tarafından).*[173] In the same year, a notification sent to the custom gates asked the officials to confiscate the copies of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* and not to let them be smuggled to the provinces. The same notification also noted that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was printed in Valide Hanı in

[172] "*Bıyık kesmemeyi iḥdās eden Şi'a şeyhi İsmā'īl Erdebilī'dir ve Acem Kızılbaşlarındandır. Sünnī ile Şi'a beynini tefriḳ etmek için hudud-i seyyie addeylemiştir*." Ḥilmī, 143

[173] BOA, MF.MKT. 47-22 (22 RA 1294)

Istanbul.[174] One of the largest khans in the empire, Valide Hanı was an economic and cultural hub that hosted mostly merchants and foreign visitors, and was swamped with Iranian/Azerī merchants in the second half of the nineteenth century.[175] Another report sent to the police department of Istanbul (*Żaptiye Neẓāreti)* in 1879 made this connection even more explicit, reporting that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah,* which contains inappropriate statements about the first three caliphs and Sunnī creed, was published by the Iranian community in Valide Hanı. The report also mentions that twelve thousand copies of the *Risālah* were secretly printed by this community.[176]

As seen in the above-mentioned reports, the Bektāshīs and Iranian/Azari Shī'ī community were held to be responsible for publishing the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*. Therefore, one must look more closely at the activities of these groups in the second half of the nineteenth century to show the interaction between the two communities. Though these communities have been studied separately by a host of researchers, the interaction between them still awaits a detailed investigation. In what follows, the interaction between the two communities shall be briefly examined in the context of the printing and promulgation the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in Istanbul.

[174] *Mevadd-ı Mühimme*, vol. III, 103

[175] Eyice, "Büyük Valide Hanı," 516-17.

[176] BOA, MF. MKT. 50-138 (7 ş 1294), "*Şeyheyn-i mua'ẓẓameyn ve zunnūreyn efendilerimiz ḥażerātı ḥaḳlarında ta'birāt-ı ghayr-i lāyiḳayı ve i'tiḳādāt-ı ehl-i sünnete münāfī bir ṭakım ibārāt-ı şeni'ayı müteżammın…"*

5.2 Iranian Shīʻī community in Istanbul in the late Ottoman Empire

The nineteenth century saw the establishment of the Iranian community in Istanbul. In the 1880s, more than sixteen thousand Iranian/Azari people were living in Istanbul. In addition to that, as stated in the memoirs of Khan Mālik Sasanī, the Iranian ambassador to Istanbul, there were more than ten thousand Iranian people living in various cities in Anatolia.[177]

The population of the Iranian community in Istanbul reached twenty thousand people at the turn of the century, consisting mostly of merchants, many of whom resided in the Valide Hanı.[178] This khan served as the center of the Iranian Shīʻī community not only in an economic but also in cultural, intellectual and religious senses. From the 1860s onwards, the Valide Hanı also became the center of the Muḥarram processions and commemorations.[179] As Erika Glassen discusses in her study based on eyewitness accounts and travelogues, the Muḥarram processions were very loud and spectacular, especially in the later decades of the nineteenth century.[180] One of the most important observers of these processions was Khān Mālik Sasani. He describes the processions in his memoir written in 1930:

> The participants start the procession by pitching a huge tent in the Valide Hanı on the first day of Muḥarram and did the *rawḍa-khānī* at nights, while the groups and *sīna-zanan* (breast-beaters) made their

[177] Khan Malik-i Sasani, *Yādbūdhā-yı Sefāret-i Istanbul,* (Tehran: 1345), 97-98. For the Turkish translation see *Payitahtın Son Yıllarında Bir Sefir,* trans. Hakkı Uygur (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2006).

[178] Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution 1906-1911,* 231.

[179] Glassen, "Muḥarram-Ceremonies ('Azâdâri) in Istanbul at the End of the XIXth Century," 1993), 119.

[180] Glassen, 113-129.

> processions with flags and torches, and in the night of Ashura near sunset they put on their *kafans* (grave-cloth) and beat their heads with a *qama* (sword).[181]

Generally, the crowds started their procession from the Vālide Hānı and marched through the streets of Istanbul. These processions, which featured awe-inspiring performances, attracted up to 8000 onlookers on some nights.[182]

The Iranian merchants, apart from the carpet trade, also dealt in the book trade and paper production.[183] More importantly, this community ran several publishing houses in the Vālide Hānı. For instance, one of these publishing houses printed the well-known newspaper, *Akhtar*, until its suspension by the Ottoman Government in 1895.[184] Also, *Shirkat-i Saḥḥāfiye-i Īrāniyye* operated in the same place as one of the important publishing houses that belonged to the community.[185] Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was also published by this community in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

The targeted audience of the Turkish translation must have been constituted predominantly by Alevi and Bektāshī groups. At the same time, the translation might also have been intended for Azaris, who formed the majority of the Iranian community in Istanbul. Given that this community was surrounded by

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[181] Khan Malik-i Sasani, *Yādbūdhā-yı Sefāret*, 108.

[182] Eyice, "Büyük Valide Hanı," 516-7.

[183] Dığıroğlu, "İstanbul-Tebriz Ticaret Hattinda Validehan (Xix-Xx. Yüzyil)," 69-112.

[184] Lawrence, "Akhtar: A Discussion on a Persian Language Newspaper Published in The Ottoman Capital (1876-1896)" (MA Thesis, Bogazici University, 2012). This study was recently published see *Akhtar: A Persian Language Newspaper Published in Istanbul and the Iranian Community of the Ottoman Empire in the Late Nineteenth Century* (İstanbul: Libra Yay., 2015).

[185] Dığıroğlu, "İstanbul-Tebriz Ticaret Hattinda Validehan (Xix-Xx. Yüzyil)," 90.

a Sunnī majority in Istanbul, they might have needed such publications to preserve their Shī'ī identities in an assimilating environment.

Here one might ask why the Bektāshīs formed the majority of the clients for this edition, which was laden with Shī'ī imamate theology and *tabarra* and *tavalla* doctrines. The answer must be sought in the general outlook and setup of the Bektāshī order in the nineteenth century. Therefore, the following section aims to briefly discuss the answer to this question.

5.3 The Bektāshī order in the nineteenth century

The Bektāshī order had been recognized as one of the legitimate orders that forged strong connections with various strata of society until the state gave them its cold shoulder, accusing them of being a main collaborator of the Janissary corps. The lodges belonging to the order were widespread throughout the Ottoman provinces in the beginning of the nineteenth century, to the extent that there were more than two hundred active lodges throughout Anatolia, as well as many others in the Balkans and Arab provinces like Iraq and Egypt. The lodges were subjected to strict surveillance following the abolishment of Janissary corps in 1826.[186]

In order to ostracize the order, which enjoyed extensive political connection and popular support, the state resorted to anti-Bektāshī propaganda and applied to the Sunnī *'ulamā* who directed various charges against the order.

[186] Maden, "Bektaşi Tekkelerinin Kapatılması (1826) ve Bektaşiliğin Yasakli Yillari," 35, 172, 294.

Among the various allegations directed at the Bektāshīs were ‘reviling the first three caliphs’, ‘trivializing religious obligations like the Friday prayer and flouting religious prohibitions by drinking alcohol’, and by ‘praying with music’. The Bektāshīs were even charged with having collaborated with the Greeks in the rebellion of Morea in 1821, and with having been at Iran’s beck and call to act against Sunnī Muslims on the eve of war with Iran.[187] These accusations were launched virulently in *Uss-i ẓafer,* written by Es‘ad Efendi in the aftermath of the destruction of the Janissary corps.[188] The accusations were also echoed in various official decrees where the Bektāshīs were referred to, not by their name, but by such derogatory formulations as ‘*gurūh-ı mekrūha’* (“hateful faction”), *‘gurūh-ı melāḥide*’ (“faction of apostates”), ‘*erbāb-ı rafż ve ilḥād*’ (“heretic and apostate people”).

During this process, some of the Bektāshī lodges were closed down and their properties were confiscated by the state. Moreover, some of the Bektāshī *baba*s were exiled to cities that were strongholds of the Sunnī *‘ulamā*.[189] The state favored the other Sufi orders such as Naqshībansdīs and Mawlavis over the Bektāshīs. In this vein, Naqshbandi and Mawlawī shaykhs were appointed to the Bektāshī lodges. As Butrus Manneh maintains, both the abolishment of the Janissary corps and the replacement of the Bektāshī order with the Khālidī branch of the Naqshbandī order were the concomitant consequences of the

[187] Maden, “Bektaşi Tekkelerinin Kapatılması,” 59-60.

[188] Kern, “The Prohibition of Sunnī-Shi'i Marriages”, 106.

[189] Öztürk, "The Effects of the Abolition on the Bektāshī Order," 16-18. Maden maintains that the Bektāshī dervishes were exiled to strongholds of the Sunnī *‘ulamā* to pacify and to bring them under the Sunnī fold. Maden, 170.

Sunnīfication of socio-political life in the nineteenth century. According to him, the Ottoman Empire during the early nineteenth century came under the impact of a new Sunnī orthodoxy that had spread from India into the Ottoman lands of Western Asia and Istanbul.[190]

Yet as of the 1850s, the pressures on the Bektāshī order gradually decreased, and especially in the reign of sultan Abdulaziz (r. 1861-1876), the order started to recuperate under the auspices of the queen mother, Pertevniyal Valide Sultan.[191] Moreover, the power of printing press must have also played a significant role in the revival of the Bektāshī order in the second half of the century. Print, as a propaganda machine, enabled them to survive in the atmosphere of heightened contestation among the different Sufi orders of the century.[192] Bektāshīs operated their own publishing houses, though secretly, in order to print the pamphlets and books that advocated the Bektāshī tradition. In that regard, it is not surprising that the Turkish translation and publication of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* appeared in this period.

At the same time, it could be argued that the disapproval of the order by the state and their exclusion from the circle of the state-sanctioned Sufi orders sharpened the opposition of the order to the state-sponsored Sunnī Islam. The

[190] Butrus Abu-Manneh, "Shaykh Ahmad Ziya'uddin el-Gümüşhanevi and Ziya'i-Khalidi Sub-order" in *Studies on Islam and the Ottoman Empire in the 19th Century (1826-1876),* 59, 69.

[191] Birge, *The Bektāshī Order of Dervishes*, 81.

[192] The printing press also impacted immensely on the inner contestation of the order in the later decades of the century. Numerous polemical exchanges between the two fractions of the order prevailed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The polemical exchanges between *Babagan* and *Çelebi*s dragged on till the first decades of the twentieth century. Both were bidding to attain more power and increase their revenues, and while doing so, they re-defined the real Bektāshīsm. Öztürk, "The Effects of the Abolition," 30-46.

same might have also made them more susceptible to Shī'ī influences in a time of increased Shī'ī missionary activity. In this context, the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*, which launched acrimonious attacks against Sunnī Islam and its prominent figures like Abū Hanīfa and Imam Shāfi'ī, was well set to receive an enthusiastic reception from the Bektāshī groups and soon became widely popular among them.

The reports available in the Ottoman archives confirm the linkage between the Shī'īs and the Bektāshī order. For instance, a report dated 1294/1877 states that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was printed by both the Bektāshī and the Iranian community in Valide Hanı to promulgate Shī'īsm among the Sunnī Muslims.[193] Furthermore, a report presented to Sultan Abdulhamid II by Hoca İshāḳ Efendi in 1885, warned that Shī'ī propaganda was increasing day by day in Istanbul. He stated that a number of *Acem* missionaries proselytized Sunnī subjects into Shī'īsm under the cloak of Bektāshī dervishes (*bektaşi babası kıyafetinde biçok acemler…).*[194]

In addition to the publication of the *Risālah Ḥusniyah* secretly by both the Iranian community and the Bektāshī lodges in Istanbul as of 1294/1877, it was also published in Cairo in 1298/1881.[195] As in the case of the of the Turkish translation of the *Risālah Ḥusniyah*, there is a paucity of the information as to

[193] BOA, MF.MKT. 47-22 (22 RA 1294), another document dating to the 1900 reiterates the same issue, see: MF.MKT, 491-18 (7 ZA 1317)

[194] BOA, I.DH, 958 -75763 (27 L 1302)

[195] *Risāle-i Hüsniye,* [1298, Cairo] in the National Library of Turkey [06 Mil EHT A 36274]. Additionally, copies printed in Egypt are available in numerous libraries. It is also downloadable from the ISAM library's database for the Ottoman Tracts from the following link; http://isamveri.org/pdfrisaleosm/RE14184.pdf

who was responsible for the publication of the text in Egypt. Nevertheless, it seems safe to suggest that this publication could have been sponsored by the Bektāshī community in Egypt, given that the Bektāshī community in Egypt enjoyed a favorable atmosphere under the auspices of Khedive Ismail Pasha from 1282/1866 onwards, and this congenial conditions allowed the Bektāshī communities to conduct religious and cultural activities in Egypt.[196]

5.4 *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in the subcontinent and its Urdu translation

Though the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was translated into Urdu in 1297/1879, the story of Ḥusniyah in Persian was known in the subcontinent for almost two centuries. *Fihrist-i mushtarak nuskhahā-yi Fārisī-yi Pākistān* records twelve manuscript copies of the Persian work, the earliest of which was copied in Akbarâbad (today's Agra) in 1119/1707.[197] In addition to its circulation in manuscript form, the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was also printed multiple times in Persian at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. For instance, as recorded in *Kitabshinasi-yi āsār-i Fārisī-yī chāp-shodah dar shibh-i qārrah,* the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was printed in 1207/1793 in Calcutta, and another publication followed it in 1266/1849.[198]

[196] Köprülü, "Mısır'da Bektaşilik," 13-29, 28. For another detailed monographic study see Salih Çift, *Mısır'da Bektaşilik* (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2013).

[197] Monzavi, *Fihrist-i mushtarak nuskhaha-yı khaṭṭi-i Fārisī Pākistān,* 2:1087-89.

[198] Nawshāhī, *Kitabshinasi-yi āsar-i Farisi-yi chāp-shodah dar shibh-i qārrah* (Tehran: Mīrath-i Maktūb).

Even though the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* had been in circulation in Persian in the subcontinent before it was translated into Urdu, clearly a new need was felt for it to be translated into Urdu. As was the case in the Ottoman context, the Urdu translation of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* appeared against the backdrop of the Shī'ī missionary zeal, heightened Sunnī-Shī'ī polemics, and vernacularization in the world of print in the second half of the nineteenth century.

According to Akhter Rahi's *Tarjumahā-yi mutūn-i Fārsī bah zabanhā-yi Pākistānī* (Texts Translated from Persian into Urdu), the Urdu translation was made by 'Ināyat Husayn. Unfortunately, Rahi does not give any further information concerning the date of translation or the translator.[199] In his bio/bibliographical work, *Tadhkirah-i 'ulamā-yi imāmiyyah-i Pākistān,* Sayyid Ḥusayn 'Ārif Naqwī, mentions that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was translated by Mawlānā Zīshān Haydar Khān (b. 1957) under the title *Munāẓara -yı yak bānū-yı shi'a*.[200] However, Naqwī does not provide any information with regard to the date of translation or the motive behind Haydar Khan's translation of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* whereas its Urdu translation was already rendered by 'Ināyat Ḥusayn in 1297/1879. In another work, Naqwī asserts that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was translated by Sayyid Bunyād 'Alī under the title of *Fayḍ-i 'ām* and it was printed in 1903 by Ithnā-'ashari Press in Lucknow.[201]

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[199] Rāhī, *Tarjumahā-yi mutūn-i Fārsī bah zabanhā-yi Pākistānī*, 34.

[200] Ḥusayn 'Ārif Naqwī, *Tadhkirah-i 'ulamā-yi imāmiyyah-i Pākistān,* translated from Urdu into Persian by Muḥammad Hāshim, 100.

[201] Ḥusayn 'Ārif Naqwī, *Bar-e Sagheer Ke Imamiyah Musanifeen Ki Matbooah Tasaneef Aur Tarajim,*.350. I really thank Professor Arif Naushahi for bringing me this information to my attention, and for very generously sharing the sources with me.

5.5 The Urdu translation by ‘Ināyat Husayn

The preface of this translation provides with important information regarding its translator and the reason for the translation.[202] The preface indicates that, ‘Ināyat Husayn was originally from Phersar (پھرسر), yet as of 1276/1860 he started to reside in Dhaulpur (دھول پور) where he forged a close relationship with the head of the state as his tutor. He also owned a publishing housing named Mustaqīm.[203]

Husayn writes that he first came across the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in 1295/1878 during the *Baba Shuja‘* celebration.[204] His comrades brought the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* to his attention during the celebration, and upon reading the *Risālah* he was captivated by its arguments and style. Especially, with the encouragement of one of his close friends, Sayyid Abid Ali, he took on the translation of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*. Finally, he finished his translation in 1297/1880 and titled it *Fayḍ-i ‘ām* or (for) the benefit of all.[205] The re-naming of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* as *Fayḍ-i ‘ām* was in tune with the general trend of vernacularization and the rise and widening of the public sphere. Husayn says

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[202] *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah (Urdu),* (Matbba-yı Yusufi Dehli, 1900); this edition is available and downloadable at the following website; http://islamicblessings.com/books_language/Find_Books_view.asp?ID=5826 I found the text after time-consuming research, because the text was recorded as *Risala e Hussainiya* but under the category of Islamic Medicine. Then I found out that the same edition is also available at the following website, http://www.dli.ernet.in/ (Digital Library of India, it was recorded under the title *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah-i Urdu y‘ani Risālah-i Fayḍ-i ‘ām.* This online library has digitalized thousands of books and tracts in Arabic, Persian, Urdu - Hindi and English available in the subcontinent. Yet, the Latinization of the titles has been made unsystematically, rendering it difficult to locate a given work

[203] *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah (Urdu),* 1-2.

[204] *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah (Urdu),* 3; this occasion has been held on 9 Rabi al-Avval of the Islamic calendar to celebrate the death of the second caliph Umar. For the historical origin of this celebration in the Safavid Empire; see Abisaab, 46-47. On a separate note, *Bazm-i-Firūzī* meetings were held in celebration of the death of Umar, taking the name of his murderer, and advertised publicly in the North India; see Jones, "The Shia Muslims of the United Provinces," 113.

[205] *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah (Urdu),* 4.

that he translated it into Urdu in order to make it accessible for a wider audience who could not understand Persian. He also states that he avoided bombastic language and pompous phrasing for the sake of the benefit of all or common people, be it woman or man.[206]

'Ināyat also states that he translated the work from the beginning to end without any addition or alteration. It seems that 'Ināyat's Urdu translation is more exact compared to the Turkish translation, because while the Turkish translation omits Astarābādi's preface to the Persian text, 'Ināyat renders Urdu translation of this preface as well. 'Ināyat's translation was published several times. Its third edition was published in 1900 as indicated on the cover. It was also indicated that one thousand copies were printed in the third edition. Moreover, at the end of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*, a warning was added by the publisher for the Sunnī audience, which notes that 'this works was published specifically for the followers of the Imāmī *madhhab.* I request the followers of *ahl-i sunnat wa'l-jamā'at* not to read this book.'[207] As was noted earlier, this kind of warning appeared in various polemical writings of the time. With regard to these warnings Jones maintains that the polemical 'conversations conducted through these writings were marked by hostility and insularity, rather than communication or any attempted exchange of ideas.' Therefore, Shia writings were often marked with warnings that they should not be read by Sunnīs.[208]

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[206] *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah (Urdu),* 3.

[207] *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah (Urdu),* 120. *"Yeh kitāb khas araba-i madhhab-i imāmiyah ki liye chāpi gayi hai. Khidmat mein haḍrat-i ahl-i sunnat wa'l-jamā'at ki guzārish-hā-yi ki koi ṣāḥib is kitāb ko mulāhaza na farmayen*."

[208] Jones, "The Shia Muslims of the United Provinces," 92.

Alternatively, these warnings might have also been a sort of tactic that the publisher used in order to attract or provoke the curiosity of the Sunnī audience.

In addition to Urdu translation and its multiple publications, the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was also translated into English and published by Peer Mahomed Ebrahim Trust, a Shī'ī propaganda and publishing center, in 1977 in Karachi, Pakistan. Later it was also printed in Mumbai, India by the Ja'fari Propagation Centre.[209] Moreover, it is important to note that the former publisher, Peer Mahomed Ebrahim Trust, translated the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* into Malay in 1994. The preface of the Malay translation states that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was translated from Arabic into Persian then into Urdu, English and finally into Malay. It states that the Malay translation was rendered by relying on the Urdu and English translations and maintained the original format of the text.[210] This clearly attests to the growing popularity of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in the subcontinent and beyond, and also demonstrates how it has been used as a Shī'ī propaganda work over the last decades.

Because of its limitation and scarcity of the sources, the present study can hardly expand on the adventure of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in Southeast and East Asia. This warrants new detailed studies that would explore the travel of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in these regions in different languages. The further research on the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* would shed new lights on the Shī'ī activities and Sunnī-Shī'ī relations in the subcontinent and in the Indo-Malay Archipelago.

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[209] *Husniyah: A Slave-Girl and Haroon-ur-Rasheed* (Karachi: Peermahomed Ebrahim Trust, 1973).

[210] *Husniyah: Suatu Polemik Pemkiran Islam* (Karachi: Peermahomed Ebrahim Trust, 1994). I am very grateful to my friend, Siti Sarah Muwahidah, who translated the introduction of the Malay text for me.

In contrast to the paucity of the sources concerning the adventures of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in Urdu and Malay and reactions that they might have elicited among the Sunnī communities in those respective regions, there is a great deal of archival materials and polemical works in Ottoman Turkish that allow us to follow the journey of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* through the Ottoman lands and Modern Turkey and to investigate the reactions of the political authorities and Sunnī scholars to the translation and circulation of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah.* The following chapter explores the reception and popularity of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in Turkish and the reactions to it by tapping into a number of sources.

CHAPTER 6

POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS REACTION TO THE *RİSALAH-I ḤUSNIYAH* IN THE LATE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

As discussed in the previous chapters, thanks to the lithographic press, the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was printed in large numbers and circulated across the Ottoman Empire following its translation into Turkish. The increasing popularity of the text elicited a strong reaction from the Ottoman authorities. This chapter first explores the political reactions to the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* and measures taken against its circulation by the political authorities. Secondly, it examines the reaction of the Sunnī scholars against the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* and, toward this end, it discusses four rebuttals written by the Ottoman scholars. Last but not least, it explores the adventure of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in the modern republic, as it was adapted from Ottoman Turkish into modern Turkish and then reproduced multiple times after 1957.

6.1 Contextualizing the Ottoman reaction to the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*

One of the main features of the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II (r. 1876-1909) was the intense centralization policies that aimed at the creation of a more efficient administration and the integration of peripheral communities into the state edifice. As Stephen Duguid noted, in the Hamidian era, centralization, like reform, was subordinate

to unity and survival.[211] At this juncture, religion came to the fore as a distinctive aspect of the Hamidian period in contradistinction to the preceding Tanzimat era. Policies of Islamification/Sunnīfication were pursued both to achieve a more integrated society and to bolster the legitimacy of the political authority in the face of internal and external pressures.[212] With this aim in mind, the sultan tried to bring his subjects together under the banner of Sunnī Islam with a heightened consciousness of *Sharī'a* and piety in order to procure religious, social and political unity and to ensure his legitimacy.[213]

Religious indoctrination intensified during this period to produce more loyal, docile, disciplined as well as pious subjects/citizens. To this end, the state initiated a campaign to construct mosques and schools across the empire, including in Alevi and Kurdish villages. As well, religious pamphlets about the creed of Islam (*aqāid)* and Sunnī catechisms *('ilm-i ḥāl)* were disseminated with the aid of the printing press to inculcate the standardized Sunnī-Hanafi Islam among the people.[214] Religious education, with an emphasis on loyalty to the sultan, played a pivotal role in 'social disciplining'

[211] Duguid, "The Politics of Unity: Hamidian Policy in Eastern Anatolia," 139.

[212] Chowdhury, "Pan-Islamism and Modernization During the Reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II, 1876-1909," 268. During the reign of the Sultan Abdülhamid, things came to passv, because the Ottoman Empire realized that it no longer had military allies among the Great Powers. At the same time, the threats to its territorial integrity and its very existence were mounting. The Ottomans lost many of their Balkan territories to the Russians' Slavic allies in the 1870s, followed by Cyprus to Britain in the 1870s, and Tunisia and Egypt to the French and British in the 1880s. Italy was slavering over the territory that lay between Egypt and Tunisia. Thus, the territory in the western parts of the Ottoman Empire, whether in Europe or Africa, was either lost or under threat of being lost. While there was no immediate prospect of winning back the lost territories, Abdülhamid was determined to ensure that further losses did not occur.

[213] Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1909*, 14.

[214] Deringil, 49, 82; Arpaguş, "Bir Telif Türü Olarak İlmihal Tarihî Geçmişi ve Fonksiyonu," 36.

and conveying the power of the sultan/caliph to the people along with other symbols and rituals.[215]

Sultan Abdulhamid II utilized Pan-Islamist policies to establish universal legitimacy in the Muslim world and to support his programs of strong central authority over eastern Anatolia and the southern provinces of the Empire.[216] As Karen Kern stated, 'his intention was also to re-establish a loyalty to Sunnī Islam and to the Ottoman dynasty among Muslims who had become alienated as the result of the Tanzimat reforms and those who now resided in the former Ottoman territories.'[217] By the same token the sultan assiduously endeavored to assimilate heterodox Muslim communities in this regard; the Ottoman interest in Sunnītizing the Alevis became more pronounced under Abdülhamid II.[218] That was partially a response to the missionary interest in the Alevis. In the later decades of the nineteenth century, Protestant missionaries were showing great interest in the conversion of Alevis and promoted fictive links between them and Christianity. Alevis were regarded as syncretic, crypto-Christian communities of Anatolia who were open to accepting Christianity as echoed in the letters of missionaries.[219]

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[215] Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908, Islamization, Autocracy and Discipline,* 5.

[216] Duguid, "The Politics of Unity," 139-40.

[217] Kern, "The Prohibition of Sunnī-Shi'i Marriages," 119.

[218] Dressler, *Writing Religion: The Making of Turkish Alevi Islam,* 41-3.

[219] Karakaya-Stump, "The Emergence of the Kızılbaş in Western Thought: Missionary Accounts and Their Aftermath." In *Archaeology, Anthropology, and Heritage in the Balkans and Anatolia: The Life and Times of F. W. Hasluck, 1878– 1920,* vol 1, ed. David Shankland (Istanbul: ISIS, 2004),329-353. Karakaya maintains that the letters which were sent to the journal of Missionary Herald must have over-emphasized the readiness of Alevis to convert to Christianity in order to cultivate more financial support

In addition to this, the Ottoman authorities saw Shī‘ī missionary activities as another significant threat for their subjects. It is true that Ottoman pan-lslamic policy was of particular importance for Ottoman-Iranian relations and that Sultan Abdulhamid favored a new rapprochement towards Iran, believing Sunnī-Shī‘īte unity to be the only long-term solution for the Shi‘i problem.[220] However, this favorable perspective never overshadowed Abdulhamid's enforcement of the Hanafi *madhhab* and his opposition to publications that propagated Shī‘īsm.[221]

The Ottoman authorities considered all publications and activities that attacked the pillars of Sunnī-Hanafi Islam, or questioned the legitimacy of the Ottoman sultan, as harmful (*mużırr)*. Therefore, such publications were subjected to strict regulations and surveillance by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the police services. When the political authorities came across these sorts of publications, which were deemed harmful, they generally counter-acted in two ways: i) they confiscated all the available copies and punished those who were responsible for their publication and circulation; ii) they encouraged the *'ulamā'* to pen rebuttals against "harmful" works of this nature. By doing so, they aimed to shield common people from the harmful influence of such works, otherwise fearing simple-minded people would easily slide into a snare of error espoused by these "seditious" works.

In this religio-political atmosphere, the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* posed two significant threats for the Ottoman Empire. First, it directed scathing critiques towards the precepts

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and to encourage the potential candidates for missionary activities. Karakaya, "The Emergence of the Kızılbaş," 338.

[220] Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration,* 245-6.

[221] Kern, "The Prohibition of Sunnī-Shi'i Marriages," 18-9.

of Sunnī Islam and its prominent figures, including the first three caliphs and the "founder" of the Ḥanafī legal school, Abū Ḥanīfa. Given that during the Hamidian period Hanafism was re-stressed and that the state strongly promoted Sunnī orthodoxy based on the Hanafi *madhhab*,[222] one can easily understand why the Ottomans considered the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* so harmful and subjected it to censor. Second, the *Risālah*, laden with Shī'īte theology and dogma, had the potential to pull the Alevi and Bektāshī communities closer to the Shī'ī persuasion; however, the Sunnī state would never consent to casting the Alevis' lot either with Christianity or with Shī'īsm. Therefore, the Ottomans took great pains to forestall the reproduction and circulation of *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*.

6.2 Political reaction: *Żabṭiyye* (Ottoman police) in search of the *Ḥusniyah*

When did Ottoman political authorities become aware of the circulation of the *Risālah*, and how did they react to it? This question was addressed briefly by Gökhan Çetinsaya in his book on the Ottoman administration in Iraq. He contextualizes the *Risālah* within the Shī'ī missionary activities in Iraq and Istanbul, and suggests that though the growth of Shi'ism among the tribal population was known to the Porte before Abdulhamid's period (1876-1909), it was not regarded with the same seriousness as it would be later. He continues as follow:

> One of the main motives behind the appointment of Midhat Paşa as Vali of Baghdad in 1869 was the Porte's concern at the expanding Shi'i presence in the region. During the Iranian Shah's visit to the Atabat, in December 1870–January 1871, the extent of the problem was clearly seen, provoking serious concern on the part of the Ottoman authorities. It appears that this concern soon subsided,

[222] Deringil, *The Well Protected Domains,* 44-68.

> however, and for about 15 years the Ottoman government paid little attention to the issue; it is, for example, noteworthy that few of the reports on Iraqi affairs submitted to Abdülhamid before 1885 mention the Shi'i problem. From 1885 onwards, the attitude changed, and reports persistently emphasized the growth of Shi'ism in the region. The first signs of this reviving concern at Shi'i growth in Iraq appeared in 1885, and were provoked by a pamphlet called *Hüseyniye Risalesi*, which sought to encourage Shi'ism, and which began to circulate in Istanbul. Ottoman officials became aware of the pamphlet in August 1885, when Shaikh Gümüvhânevî AḥmedZiyâüddin Efendi, a famous Naqshbandi-Khalidi shaikh, forwarded a copy of it to the Palace. As soon as he received the copy, the Sultan consulted Hoca İshāḳ Efendi, the author of several books on heretical beliefs in Islam, and asked him to prepare a report. It was through this report that, for the first time, as far as is known, the attention of the Palace was drawn to the Shi'i problem in Iraq.[223]

Çetinsaya sees the appearance of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* as a watershed in the state's reaction to the Shī'ī missionary activities in Iraq after the issue had been neglected for almost fifteen years. He claimed that the state became aware of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* only after it was presented by Gümüşhanevi to the sultan in 1885. Though the same date has been repeated by a host of recent studies,[224] it contradicts other available archival documents regarding the issue. Since Çetinsaya only considered the documents recorded under the title of *Ḥüseyniye***,** he misguidedly dated the official Ottoman discovery of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* to 1885. However, as the documents recorded under the title of *Ḥüsniye* demonstrate, the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was already known to the political authorities as of 1294AH/1877CE.

A series of correspondences between the police department of Istanbul (*Żabṭiyye Nezareti)* and the Education Ministry (*Ma'ārif Neẓāreti*) on 10, 11 and 22 Rabī' al-Awwal 1294/ March 1877 mention that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was printed by

[223] Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration,* 101.

[224] Kern, "The Prohibition of Sunnī-Shi'i Marriages,'" 111-2; Çetinsaya's assertion was also reiterated by another study: Faruk Yaslıçimen, "Sunnīsm vs Shi'ism?" 76.

Iranians (*ba'ż İranlılar ṭarafından)* and Bektāshī groups in Valide Hanı. Since this seditious work was perturbing the minds (*teşvīş-i ezhān)* of people with its harmful content, the available copies of the *Risālah* were to be confiscated and those who were responsible for its publication had to be subjected to punitive measures.[225] These correspondences demonstrate that the political authorities were well aware of the circulation of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* and endeavored assiduously to prevent its circulation as of 1877.

As a part of these endeavors, notifications were sent to the custom gates of the Empire about the *Risālah Ḥusniyah* on 27 Rabī' al-Awwal 1294 / 30 March 1294. It was ordered not to allow this harmful *Risālah* to pass through the border, and the customs personnel were asked to send copies that were seized at the gates to the relevant authorities in the imperial capital. The notification also gave a description of the *Risālah Ḥusniyah*, as including inappropriate statements about the first three caliphs and Sunnī Islam, and reported that twelve thousand copies of the *Risālah Ḥusniyah* had been printed in Vālide Hanı.[226] Accordingly, some copies of the

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[225] BOA-Maarif Ayniyat Defteri, Nu. 1073, (10 RA 1294 /25 March 1877), 93. Quoted from Ali Birinci,"Osmanlı Devletinde Matbuat ve Neşriyat Yasakları Tarihine Medhal," *Talid*, 4/7 (2006):291-349, 316; BOA, MF.MKT. 47-22 (22 RA 1294/ 6 April 1877).

[226] Mevadd-ı Mühimme, c. III, s. 103; ("*Şeyheyn ve Zinnūreyn rażiyallahu anhüm efendimiz hażerātı haḳlarında tābirāt- ı ghayr-ı lāyıḳayı ve i'tiḳādāt-ı ehl-i sünnete münāfī sāir bir taḳım ibārātı hāvī olan* ***Hüsniye*** *nām kitaptan Vālide hanında on iki bin nüsha tab' olunduğu bu kere Ma'ārif Nezāret-i celilesinden iş'ar olunmuş ve bunların men'-i intişārı lāzımeden bulunmuş olmakla nusakh-ı mezkūrenin hiçbir taḳrīb ve vāsıta ile Memālik- i Şāhāne'nin bir ṭarafına ihrāç ve irsāl olunamaması ve gümrüğe vürūdu hālinde tevkīf edilmesi esbābının istikmāli şeref-vārid olan 29 numaralı ve fi 21 Rebiulevvel sene 94 tarihli tezkere-i sāmiye-i cenāb-ı ṣadāret-penāhīde irade buyurulmuş olmasıyla cānib-i mu'āvenete lede'l-ḥavāle zikr olunan Ḥüsniye nâm kitabın gümrüklere gelecek olur ise bi't-tevḳīf bu ṭarafa izbārı żımnında keyfiyetin ta'mīmen…*"), the transliteration was quoted from Birinci's article, p. 317. Though the title of the *Risālah* was written mistakenly as *Hüseyniyye* (حسينيه) in the *Mevād-ı Mühimme* records (c. III, s. 103), it was transliterated with its correct title by Birinci as *Hüsniye* in above-quoted transliteration. The pronunciation of the title is a headache for the researchers, because it was read and recorded differently and has caused confusion or misdating as seen in the case of Çetinsaya.

Risālah Ḥusniyah were confiscated at the borders and sent to the capital in line with the order issued by the capital. For instance, a report dated 16 August 1877 informs that a copy of the *Risālah Ḥusniyah* was confiscated by a border official in Crete and sent to the Sublime Porte. The report also notes that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* had even succeeded in creeping into Crete and spreading through the island, so measures should be tightened to prevent its circulation by the police department.[227] It should be noted that the time when the *Risālah* was being smuggled through the ports of Crete coincides with the heyday of the Bektāshī communities under the spiritual leadership of Horasani Derviş Ali Baba on the island.[228] Presumably, copies of the *Risālah Ḥusniyah* had been shipped to the island to propagate Shi'ite theology among the Bektāshī community in the island.

In 1302/1885, the *Risālah Ḥusniyah* was re-brought to the attention of the officials by Gümüşhanevi, as he forwarded a copy of it.[229] Upon receiving the copy of the

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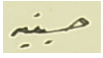
While some archival documents use the correct title, *Hüsniye*  [BOA, MF.MKT. 50-138 (7 ş 1294)] others mistakenly write it as *Hüseyniyye*  [BOA, MF.MKT. 47-22 (22 RA 1294)]. This confusion in the documents might have stemmed from the lack of knowledge of the scribes about the pamphlet or from the availability of the other various famous books that used the word of *Hüseyniyy* (such as the book called, *er-Risâletü'l-Hüseynîye fî Fenni'l-Adâb* written by al-Antaki (d.1718) was a very celebrated book which attracted many gloss writers (I'm personally unfamiliar with this term ' gloss writers') in eighteenth and nineteenth century).

[227] BOA, MF.MKT. 50-138 (7 Sha'ban 1294 / 16 August 1877); ("*Gerek bu Ḥüsniye ve gerek Cāvidān ve emsāli kütüb ve resāilin men'-i intişāri vecībeden olup bunun Girid'e kadar münteşir olması cālib-i diḳḳat bulunmasıyla żabıta ma'rifetiyle her türlü taḥarriyāt bi'l-icrā ele geçirilecek nüshaların...*").

[228] O. Fuat Köprülü, "Ustazâde Yunus Bey'in Meçhul Kalmış bir Makalesi: Bektaşîliğin Girid'de İntişârı", *Güneydoğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi,* 8-9 (1980): 37-86; 54. Selami Şimşek, "Doğu Akdeniz'de Tahrip Olan Bir Kültür Mirasi: Girit'te Tarîkatlar ve Tekkeler," *A. Ü. Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 32 (2007): 215-244, 220.

[229] BOA, Y.A.HUS. 182-67 (27 Shawwal 1302 /1885) The first line of the document reads that: "*İslāmiyeti tezyīf ve Şi'iyyeti tervīc yolunda ḳaleme alunub bu kere Bāb-i 'Āli civarında Fātıma Sulṭān Cāmi'i Şerifi mu'ezzin odasında beytūtet iden şeyh Aḥmed Ziyā'üd-dīn ...*" As also understood from the

Risālah, the sultan consulted with İshāḳ Efendi, who had already written a rebuttal against the *Risālah Ḥusniyah* in 1878, which will be examined in detail in the following pages. Commissioned by the sultan, İshāḳ Efendi wrote a report about the *Risālah Ḥusniyah* and the Shī'ī missionary activities in both Iraq and Istanbul and recapitulated the main arguments which he had expounded in his rebuttal. The report waved the flag of caution, warning that the threat of growing Shī'ī activities in Anatolia and Istanbul needed to be handled urgently and that numerous *Acem* in the guise of Sufi dervishes were perverting the "weak minds of the common people" (*a'vāmın efkār-ı żaīfelerine)* and converting them to their heretical faction.[230] İshāḳ Efendi's report along with a copy of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was sent to Gümüşhanevi for him to pen a new refutation against it.[231] Moreover, in accordance with the report, it was asked to send notifications to the Sufi orders in order to warn them about the infiltration of Shī'īs under the cloak of Sufi dervishes. Concurrently the Ministry of Education was cautioned to deal with the situation with great care in order to forestall the spread of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*, since lack of due attention from the Ministry was considered as one of the main reasons for its circulation.[232]

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phrase *bu kere* (this time), the *Risālah* was already presented to the officials before Gümüşhanevi forwarded it, in contrary to what Çetinsaya claimed by using the same document.

[230] BOA, İ.DH. 958 -75763 (27 Shawwal 1302 /1885).

[231] Yet we do not have any clue about a new refutation written by Gümüşhanevi in line with the Sultan's order. The subsequent archival documents do no mention such a refutation. Nor did Gümüşhanevi's successor Ḥasan Ḥilmī refer to such a refutation in his rebuttal to the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah,* which will be examined in the following pages. Besides, I also checked the books of Gümüşhanevi written after this date, but to my knowledge, they did not include any part allocated to a refutation to the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* either.

[232] BOA, İ.DH. 958 -75763 (27 Shawwal 1302 /1885); ("*Bu makûle kütüb-i mużırrranın tab' ve intişārı dāire-i ma'ārifçe layıḳıyla taḳayyüdāt-ı lāzime īfā edilmemekte olmasından neş'et etmesiyle…").*

Moreover, a number of documents dating to 1317AH/1900CE have noted that the police officers started an investigation regarding the harmful *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* that 'aims to propagate Shī'īsm (*mezheb-i şiayı tervic yolunda)*,' upon receiving the report that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was circulating in the shops and lodges of İzmir. However, for all the investigation and inquiries carried out by the police officers, no copy of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was detected by the police forces in İzmir, yet it was stressed that further investigations would continue unabated. Furthermore, the documents also pointed out Vālide Hanı in Istanbul as a notorious place in which the copies of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* were produced and emphasized that further necessary steps should be taken for investigation there and the shops in its environs.[233]

Two years later, in 1902, the police service of Istanbul searched the printing house which belonged to Hacı Hüseyin Efendi,[234] a prominent book publisher and seller of the Iranian community in Istanbul. As the police busted his storehouse in the Hakkaklar Çarşısı (today's Sahaflar Çarşısı), adjacent to Beyazıt Mosque, they found the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* along with several other "harmful" books. The police immediately confiscated the books and informed the respective departments about it.[235]

[233] BOA, MF.MKT 491-18 (7 ZA 1317/ 9 March 1900).

[234] For a biographical detail and printing activities of Hacı Hüseyin Ağa see Filiz Dığıroğlu, *Dersaadet'te Bir Acem Kitapçı: Kitapfüruş Hacı Hüseyin Ağa* (İstanbul: Turkuaz Yayınları, 2014).

[235] BOA, MF.MKT, 647 -6 (15 Temmuz 1318/ 28 Temmuz 1902) quoted from Dığıroğlu, 27, 94.

The last report which I shall address here dates to 6 Rabi al-Awwal 1323 / 11 May 1905.[236] This report is very important as it demonstrates how seriously the Ottoman authorities dealt with the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* and how severely they punished whomever they found responsible for its spread and reproduction. As the report recounts in detail, the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah,* which has been 'poisoning the minds of the ignorant people in a very ingenious and devilish way,'[237] had crept into the Mecīdīye Barracks (Mecīdīye Kışlası) furtively. It was uncovered when Lieutenant Cemāl Efendi was caught copying the *Risālah* by Captain Kadri Efendi who seized the original text along with the uncompleted copy and brought them to the attention of the commandry in the barracks. Thereupon, the senior captain of the third troop in the sixth regiment, Kāmil Efendi informed Sultan Abdulhamid II about the situation with a telegram. In reply to this, a decree was issued by the sultan for an investigation of the matter *in extenso* in accordance with the martial court. Accordingly, Cemāl Efendi was held for interrogation during which he claimed to be innocent by stating that the content of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was unknown to him. However, his statements fell far short of convincing the officials in that he was asked how on earth he could be unaware of the content given that he had already copied twenty-two pages from this "book of delusion" (*hezeyān-nāme)* in which scathing invectives and inappropriate words were used for the caliphs. Thereupon Cemāl Efendi passed

[236] BOA, DH.MKT, 961-47 (22 Rabi al-Awwal 1323 / 27 May 1905).

[237] The report describes the *Risālah* as follow: *"Risāle-i Ḥüsniye nāmı altında ve hülāsa'ül hülāsa ghayet ustalıklı ve iblisāne bir ṣurette fikr-i bāṭıl-ı melānetkārānesini ortaya koyarak zāt-ı şevḳet-simāt ḥażret-i hilāfetpenāh-i e'ẓamı haḳ-aḳdes-i hümāyunlarında cühelā-yı nāsın efkārını tesmīm ve bu ṣuretle 'aẓīm ve haternāk bir fikr-i fesād uyandırıp ḥatta bu bābda bir ṭakım āyāt-ı kerīme ve ahādis-i şerīfeye yanlış ma'nālar ve teviller gösterilerek ghāyet şeyṭānetkārāne ve iblīs-i fırīb-bāz bir tarīḳ-i saḳīm ta'kib ve hāṣā sümme hāṣā Çehār-yār-i Güzīn efendilerimiz ḥaḳlarında dahī erāzīl-i eşḥās ta'bīrlerini isti'māle kadar cür'et ve her bir müslimīn tüylerini ürperdecek derecede mel'anet ve ḥiyānet ile memlū bir kitāb".*

blame to the senior captain of his troop, Kabil Efendi, by claiming that the captain had ordered him to copy the book. Thereupon the inquiry was extended to include Kabil Efendi, who also defended himself hopelessly by stating his lack of knowledge about the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah,* which he had purchased from an *Acem* in return for forty liras. Yet, following a cross-examination along with other observations, it was understood that Kabil Efendi received the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* from a shaykh called Ferid Efendi, who resided somewhere around the Çayırbağı police station in Üsküdar.

Following a thorough investigation and examination, Kabil Efendi, who smuggled a copy of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* and reproduced it, was discharged from his military position and stripped of all the medals that had been given to him. Furthermore, he was sentenced to a five-year imprisonment (*kalebendlik)*[238] in Sinop in accordance with the criminal code, Law No. 55. Moreover, Shaykh Ferid Efendi, who had provided the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* to Kabil Efendi, was also punished and banished from Istanbul to Rhodes. The other perpetrators, Cemāl Efendi and Cerrāḥ Mustafa, were banished to Bagdad due to their involvement in this illegal activity. As for Ḳadrī Efendi, who had caught Cemāl Efendi while he was copying the *Risālah,* and the senior captain Kamil Efendi, who had informed the sultan about the situation, both were honored with the third rank gold medal, *Nişan-i imtiyāz*, along with thirty liras for each. Moreover, they were also awarded with a promotion to a higher

[238] *Kalebendlik* was a special imprisonment of a person in a citadel. This punishment generally was inflicted on the prisoners of conscience or on those who were charged with misconduct in office. This punishment was resorted to frequently during the reign of the Sultan Abdulhamid II for the constitutionalists. For the details of this punishment see; Güler Bayraktar, "Osmanlı Devletinde Kale-Bend cezası: 5 Numaralı Kale-Bend Defteri-1150-B." (MA Thesis, Gaziosmanpaşa Üniversitesi, 2003); Neşe Erim, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Kalebendlik Cezası ve Suçlarının Sınıflandırılması Üzerine Bir Deneme" in *Osmanlı Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 4 (1984): 79-88.

position in return for their loyal services.[239] Lastly, the police service of Istanbul was asked to be highly vigilant about this kind of "harmful" book, the number of which had increased in the imperial capital.[240]

The above-mentioned documents clearly demonstrate that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was considered an ideological and religious threat for both state-sponsored Sunnī-Hanafī ideology and for the subjects of the empire, who were considered as vulnerable to this kind of harmful work that propagated heretical ideas and beliefs. Therefore, the political authorities went to great lengths to stop circulation of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* by taking several measures such as censor, confiscation, investigation and inspections to find out the whereabouts of the copies and the responsible parties for the publication of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II.

6.3 Religious reaction: Rebuttals to the Turkish translation of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*

The political authorities were not alone in the war waged against the 'heretical' publications. The Sunnī *'ulamā'* who dedicated themselves to the defense of Sunnī Islam were also a sparring faction of this war with their sword-like pens against the publications which were considered inimical to the basis of imperial legitimacy and

[239] "*Kāmil ve yüzbaşı Ḳadri efendilerin hıdemāt-ı ṣādıḳānelerine mebnī bir derece ber vech-i arż üçüncü rütbeden nişān-ı 'ālī-yi Osmāni ī'ṭası ile beraber rütbelerinin birer derece terfi'i emr ü fermān-ı hümāyun-ı hilāfetpenāhī iḳtiża-yi 'ālīsinden bulunmuş ve kendilerine iḥsān buyrulan altun imtiyāz madalyası otuzar lira mūmā ileyhimāya verilmek üzere"*

[240] *"Ma'a't-te'essüf emsāli tekessür bulunduğu taḥaḳḳuḳ eden bu gibi āsār-ı mużırrranın dersa'ādetçe neşrine meydān verilmemesi için żabṭiyye nezāretince fevḳa'l-'āde müteyyeḳıẓāne davranılması husūsunun neẓāret-i müşārun ileyhāya suret-i münāsibede iş'ārına ḳarar verildiğine"*

harmful for common people. In what follows, the rebuttals written against the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* by the Ottoman Sunni scholars shall be explored.

6.3.1 Harputlu Hoca İshāḳ Efendi and the *Tezkiye-i ehl-i beyt*

İshāḳ Efendi was one of the most active and prolific scholars of the nineteenth century in the Ottoman Empire. At the beginning of his scholarly career, he taught in the Fatih Mosque and then he was appointed as a mentor of the Ottoman princes in the palace. He also worked as a member of *Maclis-i Ma'ārif* ("the Ministry of Education") and Inspector of Foundations (*evḳāf müfettişi).* Moreover, he attended the *Huzur Dersleri* at the palace between 1853-1868 and served as *qadi* in Isparta and Medina.[241] He devoted much of his scholarly work to fighting against all that he conceived to be a threat to Sunnī Islam, and used his pen to defend it assiduously. Towards this end, he wrote a number of polemical works against Christianity, Shī'īsm, Bektāshīsm, Hurufism, Atheism and so forth.[242]

According to İshāḳ Efendi, it is a religious imperative for Muslim scholars to be well-versed in '*ilm-i münāẓara* and '*ilm-i kalām* to defend Sunnī Islam against its adversaries and to dispel the doubts sowed among the common/ignorant people (*cehele-i nās*) in order to keep them within the fold of Islam. He also suggested that it is incumbent on the Sultan to commission scholars who are well-versed in Islamic

[241] Mehmet Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmani*, 3:805; Bursali Mehmed Tâhir Efendi*, Osmanlı Müellifleri*, 1: 364; Kara, "İshāḳ Efendi, Harputlu," 531-32.

[242] Just to name some of them; *Şemsu'l-Hakîka* was written against Christianity, *Kâşifu'l-esrār ve dāfiu'l-eşrār* was a polemic against the Bektāshīsm. *Ziyâu'l-qulûb* was also a refutation to Christianity.

theology in order to safeguard the faith of Muslims.[243] Perhaps paying heed of this call, Sultan Abdulhamid consulted him about Shī'ī activities and the circulation of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in Istanbul, and granted him all necessary permissions to print his books.

One of İshāḳ Efendi's well-known polemical works, *Kāşif'ü'l-esrār,* directed vitriolic criticisms and severe invectives against the Bektāshīs, whom he considered to be worse than infidels. Here, İshāḳ Efendi calls upon Sunnī scholars and the authorities to take action in order to instill the tenets and creed of (Sunnī) Islam among the common people in the face of the growing number of Bektāshī publications and activities. It is worth quoting this passage to gain a sense of his fervid tone:

> How on earth can we condone and keep silent when we witness that most of our brethren abandoned their ancestors' religion and slid into the path of error, leading to an eternal life in Hell. (In such case) does silence befit the dignity of Muslims? The reason d'être of the state, with all its power and magnificence, is to safeguard the religion, sovereignty (*mülk)* and honor. Corruption in *mulk* is nothing compared to corruption in religion. And yet while there are already a significant number of soldiers, the governors are still striving to increase the number of them. So how come one could consider the number of scholars, which is already very few, too much although they, like this simple man, have strained to fight against the corruption of the religion.[244]

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[243] "A*kaid-i müslimini hıfz içün ilm-i kelama muttali' bir alim-i kamil nasb itmek padişah-ı İslam-eyyidehüllah ila yevmi'l kıyam- hazretlerinin üzerine vacip olması ğani an'il beyandır".* İshāḳ Efendi, *Esile-i Hikemi,* (İstanbul: Ceride-i Askeriyye Matbaası, 1301), p. 2 (it is available and downloadable at the website of IBB Ataturk Library, No: HCE_Osm_00231/01)

[244] "*Bir çok mümin biraderlerimizin ekserisinin âbâ u ecdâdı ehibbâmızdan olduğu halde âbâ ve ecdadının dinini terk eyleyüb müebbed cehennemde kalacak bir tarîk-i dalâlete sâlik olduklarını gördüğümüz vakitte nasıl sabr ve sükut olunabilir, bu sükut müslümanlığın şanına düşer mi? ve 'ale'l-husus devlet ve hey'et ve bu debdebe-i saltanatdan garaz din ve mülk ve 'ırzı muhafazadan ibaretdir. Fesad-ı dine nisbet ile fesad-ı mülk hiç mesabesinde kalur. Ve muhafaza-i mülk içün elhamdulillah teâla üç beşyüz bin mu'allem asakirimiz mevcud olduğu halde hala evliya-yı umûr hazerâtı deha ziyade ikmâline say' ve gayret etmekte oldukları gani an beyandır. Ve fesad-ı dini def' içün acizleri gibi bir kaç hoca efendiler sa'y eylemesini istiksār iden hamiyetsiz bulunur mu?* İshāḳ Efendi, *Kâşif'ül esrār ve dāfi'ül esrār* (İstanbul, 1291/1874), 173-4.

İshāḳ Efendi stressed the responsibility of the *'ulamā'* to safeguard people from sliding into snares of heretical beliefs in order to keep them in the fold of Islam and to defend "true" Islam from corruption. Moreover, he complained about the lack of the state's interest or zeal on the religious front in the fight against this religious disorder or corruption. İshāḳ Efendi stated that as custodians of Islam, *'ulamā'* need to be promoted much more than soldiers, who are the guards of the worldly dominion. Furthermore, he also criticized the state's tolerance towards the Bektāshī publications 'the number of which has increased recently'. Given the fact that the Bektāshī order enjoyed a relatively favorable atmosphere during the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz and some of the Bektāshī publications flourished under the auspices of Pertevniyal Vālide Sultan, the foregoing critiques of the *Kaşif'ül-esrār* might be considered as İshāḳ Efendi's reaction to the Sultan's 'too lenient' policy toward the Bektāshī order.[245]

During the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II, İshāḳ Efendi wrote another famous rebuttal, *Tezkiye-i ehl-i beyt,* in 1295/1878.[246] Before getting into the main arguments of this polemical work, it should be noted that the *Tezkiye* has been attributed to Osman Selahaddin Dede Efendi, a well-known grand shaykh of the Yenikapı Mawlawī lodge,

[245]The following anecdote which Ebu'l Ala Mardin reported, also shows the signs of the disagreement between the Sultan Abdülaziz and İshāḳ Efendi. According to this anecdote İshāḳ Efendi joins the meeting held in the palace at the Night of Qadr in the month of Ramadan. He gives a speech in the place, yet the Sultan pays no heed to his speech. Hence, İshāḳ Efendi warns the sultan, but again the sultan pays no mind. Thereupon, disturbed by the Sultan's attitude, İshāḳ Efendi walks out off the palace in anger. However, this uncourteous behavior costs him too much and he was sent into exile to Bursa. Yet a few days later he returns to Istanbul as the sultan pardons him. Ebu'l-âla Mardin, *Huzur Dersleri,* 790 On a separate note that Aḥmed Rifat Efendi, a Bektāshī dervish, wrote *Mir'at'ül makāsıd* as a response to *Kāşif'ül esrār* in 1876. What he defined as 'true Bektāshīsm sounded like Sunnī Islam, therefore Rifat Efendi's book stirred a new controversy on the definition of the true Bektāshīsm among the different fractions of the order. As Birge reported the expenses were covered by the mother of the sultan, Pertevniyal Valide Sultan. Birge, *The Bektāshī Order of Dervishes*, 81.

[246]Harputlu İshāḳ Efendi, *Tezkiye-i Ehl-i Beyt,* (Istanbul: 1295/1878), I used the manuscript available in Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi of Istanbul University (Manuscript No: T2182).

by a host of Turkish scholars.[247] However, this attribution is simply wrong and misleading, because as stated clearly in the archival documents, the *Tezkiye* was written by İshāḳ Efendi, and presented to Abdülhamid in 1885 along with a report informing about the activities of Shī'īs and Bektāshīs in Istanbul. Moreover, the biographical and hagiographical sources do not confirm that Osman Selahaddin authored the *Tezkiye*, although they listed all the works written by him.[248] And yet, it is true that a Mevlevi shaykh wrote a fifteen-page-long rebuttal against the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*, titled *Rāfi'üş şikāk*, which will be explored in the pages to come; however, the author was Ḥüseyin 'Azmī Dede, not Osman Selahaddin Dede.

In the preface of his rebuttal, İshāḳ Efendi pointed out the increasing Shī'ī activities in Iraq and in other Ottoman provinces, and claimed that the Shī'ī missionaries have been traveling through the villages to promulgate their "poisonous and harmful" faiths and works. He also complained that a host of harmful works, including the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah,* have been in circulation in Istanbul for some time. After acquiring a copy of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* and examining it, he said he came to think that it is a spurious pamphlet fabricated with preposterous and illusory ideas, hence even Muslims with an average intellectual capacity and a smattering of general religious knowledge would not take the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* seriously. Nonetheless, he said he felt compelled to write a refutation against it for the fear that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*, by exploiting

[247] Aksoy, "Şii Paradigmanın Oluşum Sürecinde 'Hüsniye'nin Yeri ve Önemi," 6; Usluer and Demirsöz, "Risale-i Hüsniye," 69; Yıldız, "Hüsniye'de Mezhebî Motifler," 5-30.

[248] See for the detailed biographical information about Osman Selahaddin Dede; İhtifalci Mehmet Ziya Bey (d.1930) *Merakiz-i Mühimme-i Mevleviyyeden Yeni Kapı Mevlevihanesi* (İstanbul 1329/1930), 160-193; Hasiri-zâde Mehmed Elif Efendi, *Tenşitü'l Muhibbin bi-Menakıbı Hace Hüsameddin* (İstanbul 1342/1943), 37-44.

people's affection for the *ahl al-bayt,* could nevertheless attract some simple-minded people who are short-sighted (*kūtāh-bīn ʿāvām),* ignorant (*cehele-i nās)* and gullible (*sade-dilân).*[249] The way in which İshāḳ Efendi identified some of his audience as simple-minded, gullible and ignorant who are very susceptible to the seditious ideas and snares of the heretical groups dovetailed with the discourse of the official correspondences and other religious polemic of the time.

After his preliminary observations and concerns with regard to the contemporary developments in Iraq and Istanbul, İshāḳ Efendi sets out to refute the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah.* Before getting into a theological discussion, he takes issue with the frame-story of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah,* in which Husniyya was introduced as a slave girl who had been purchased by a Bagdadi merchant and presented to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq at the age of ten, and who had subsequently devoted herself to acquiring religious knowledge until the age of twenty. With regard to this, İshāḳ Efendi remonstrated how a "chaste" woman could live with an unrelated man (*nâ-mahrem),* and how a noble scholar like al-Ṣādiq could let her stay with him in seclusion under the pretext of teaching her, despite the fact that staring at an unrelated woman (*zinā al-ʿayn)* was prohibited not only by Islamic law but also by the previous divine books like the Bible.[250] He also asked why al-Ṣādiq would keep such an allegedly brilliant and eloquent girl in slavery while he was able to liberate her. Furthermore, İshāḳ Efendi reproached that "despite the fact that the Islamic

[249] *Tezkiye,* 2b.

[250]*Tezkiye,* 3b-4a; *"Bu cāriye tüccara āid iken ve bir şaḥṣın imre'e-i cemīle ile tek ve tenhā bir ḫānede bulunması tüm mezheplere göre ḥaram ve te'dib-i şeriyye gerektirirken ve göz zināsı da aynı zinā gibi olduğu İncilde dahī muḥarrer olarak imām-ı müşār'ün ileyh efżal'üs-şüleḥā-i ümmetten evra' ve etḳa zāt-ı fażilet intimā olduḳları müsellem bulunduğuna bināen mezbūreyi yiğirmi yaşına ḳadar dāire-i ḳurbiyyet ve tedrīsine ḳabūl itmek gibi bir ḥareket-i nā-meşruʿada bulunmaları ʿulv-i şānına ne büyük nāḳışa olacağından…*"

law forbids the voice of a woman to be heard by unrelated men, how come Ḥusniyah spoke to a group of men in the court of Hārūn al-Rāshīd, while she had an alternative option; exchanging her polemic with the Sunnī scholars in a written form? If Ḥusniyah really engaged with the Sunnī scholars verbally in the presence of other men, then her chastity would come under question."[251] By the same token, İshāḳ Efendi inveighed against Ḥusniyah on the ground that she would be so low as to advocate the concept of *Mut'a* (temporary) marriage in the presence of the caliph and many other spectators. In connection with this İshāḳ Efendi states that

> Even a fallen woman (*aşüftegan)*, let alone a highly virtuous one, could not be so shameless as to talk about this matter amidst thousands of men; it is an abominable slander to allege that a mature, chaste, young and very pretty woman educated by Imam Ja'far al-Sâdiq…[252]

It is important to note that according to classical Islamic jurisprudence slave girls have a special status with regard to their visibility in public places. They were not obliged to veil themselves while going out and even in the time of the second caliph 'Umar, they were required to keep their hair uncovered in order to distinguish themselves from free women.[253] That is to say, from the point of Islamic jurisprudence there was nothing

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[251] *Tezkiye,* 4a-b; "*Sâniyen tâfe-i nisanın sadası dahi şer'an muharrematdan olub irad edeceği esileyi tahriren beyan itmek mümkün iken hilâf-ı şer'-i şerif olarak mezburenin bir kaç bin âdem mahzarında kürsiye çıkıp ref'-i savt ile hitabet eylemesi caiz olmayacağından bu hal vaki' ise mezburenin iffet ve ismetinde iştibah hasıl olmağla o kadar ittika-yı ümmet-i muhammediyye ihtiyar-ı fısk ve fezahat eylemiş olur ki buna da ihtimal yoktur."*

[252] *Tezkiye,* 6a; "*Mut'a zemān-ı feth-i Mekke'de mensūḫ olmuştur nikāḥ-ı mezkūr bir mer'anın müddet-i mu'ayyene için istediği şaḥṣa varabilmek üzere bir aḳd dimek olub, muḥadderātın değil aşuftegānın bile öyle bir mecma'un-nās ve meclis-i kübrāda tefevvühden ictināb edeceği böyle bir sözü Haẓreti Cafer'in terbiye-kerdesi ve ḥüsn ve cemāline inżimām eden kemāliyle berāber ḳuvve-i ḳudsiye ṣāḥibesi olmak lāzım gelen mezbūrenin 'alenen beyān ve ifādeye cür'et eylemesi rivāyet edilen ismet ve faẓiletle mütenāsib olmayacak bir ḥāl olmağla bunda bir buhtān-ı fāhiş olması lāzım gelir."*

[253] Apaydın, "Tesettür," 541.

wrong with a slave girl for being visible in public, or expressing her thoughts openly and loudly. Despite this widely known jurisprudential precept, İshāḳ Efendi used this line of argumentation to discredit his opponents in sight of his own audience.

Apart from questioning the place of Ḥusniyah in such a public debate, İshāḳ Efendi also doubted the authenticity of the debate between Ḥusniyah and the Sunnī scholars. In this regard, he suggested that Ibrāhīm Khālid, who was introduced to be one of the three Sunnī contenders of Ḥusniyah, was a fabricated figure, because no historical source has confirmed that a Sunnī scholar with such a name lived in the history.[254]

İshāḳ Efendi asserted that Ḥusniyah only echoed the views of the *Mu ʿtazili* school of Islam in her fictitious discussion with the Sunnī scholars and all the Mutazili arguments have been already refuted by a great number of Sunnī scholars. Therefore, he said that he did not trouble himself to devote much space for refutation of each topic espoused by the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah.* Rather he sufficed to refer to a Sunnī polemical work, *Tuḥfe-i ithna ʿāsh ʿariyyah,* as a detailed refutation of the *Mu ʿtazilī* and Shī'ī arguments.[255] İshāḳ Efendi used the terms "Shī'a" and "Mu'tazila" interchangeably throughout his rebuttal. For instance, the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* noted that at the end of the discussion between Ḥusniyah and Sunnī scholars, hundreds of spectators converted to Shī'ī Islam. İshāḳ Efendi gainsaid this claim and stated that neither the caliph nor his subjects ever showed interest in or tendency to the *Mu ʿtazila* school, furthermore he said

[254] *Tezkiye,* 4b*; "Başra cihetinde İbrāhīm Halid nāmında öyle bir 'ālim ve fākih hiç bir tarih ve kitapta görülmediği cihetle ism-i mezkūrun dahī ekāzib-i ṣarīḥa arasında mevhūmāt-ı hayāliyyeden olduğuna şek ve iştibāh kalmayacağı derkardır."*

[255] *Tezkiye,* 5b, 6a.

that this could not attract followers until the advent of the Safavids who espoused and advocated for it and Shī'īsm in Iran.[256]

In response to the vilification of the Companions by the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*, İshāḳ Efendi advocated the collective probity of them and recounted hadith and hagiographical accounts with regard to the virtues of the Companions. Moreover, he suggested that excessive love of Ali and a confusion of the sacred office of the caliphate with the temporal office of the sultanate led the Shī'a to become hostile against the Companions and especially the first three caliphs. In this regard, he remarks:

> When due attention is paid, it will be seen that they think of the caliphate as a means for worldly pomp. Having read about the historical stratagems and intrigues carried on and the murders perpetrated by fathers and sons against one another in their endeavors for sovereignty and leadership, they compare the rightly-guided caliphs to them. However, histories give a detailed account of how the caliphs served humanity.[257]

İshāḳ Efendi marked the difference between the caliphate and the sultanate. He said 'while the caliphs were rightly guided and immune to the mundane affection for power and worldly pomp, sultans were embroiled in bloody fights for throne and heinous intrigues. Accordingly, the caliphs only endeavored to serve people, lived a humble life, and considered the political leadership as a grave responsibility that must be fulfilled meticulously in the service of people rather than a tempting position for worldly gains and desires.' In connection with this, İshāḳ Efendi tapped into many hagiographical accounts telling the virtues of the caliphs and the ways they lived in

[256] *Tezkiye*, 6a.

[257] *Tezkiye*, 9a-9b.

great austerity and simplicity,[258] and reviled Abdullah ibn Saba as the first perpetrator who concocted the fractions and confusions among the Muslim community. In this sense, he follows the anti-Shi'ite polemical tradition in which Ibn Saba has been invariably reviled as the first to regard Ali as the sole successor to and inheritor of Muḥammad's prophetic legacy, the first to curse Ali's three caliphal predecessors as usurpers, and the first to claim that Ali possessed a unique, even esoteric, knowledge of the Qur'an. Moreover, İshāḳ Efendi also introduces ibn Saba as a crypto-Jew who outwardly converted to Islam in order to infiltrate and destroy the Muslim community from within in accord with the wide-spread allegation frequently made in the anti-Shī'ī polemical writings[259]

Additionally, İshāḳ Efendi went further to make some analogies between Shī'īsm and Judaism by reiterating the *Ghunyat al-ṭālibīn* (Wealth for the Seekers) written by 'Abdulqādir al-Gīlānī, a twelfth-century Sufi scholar.[260] For instance, he says that the

[258] Especially about the life of the second caliph Umar, he relates various historical anecdotes that allegedly took place between the caliph and non-Muslim envoys. Upon the conquest of Quds by the caliph Umar, the Roman emperor sends his envoy the caliph, and the envoy becomes shocked when he saw the simple and plain life of the caliph, then he spoke well of the caliph while reporting to the emperor what he had observed. Interestingly, İshāḳ Efendi asserts that the observations about the virtues of the caliph Umar were also recorded by the 'Western' histories (*Avrupa tarihlerinde muharrer). Tezkiye,* 9b-10a

[259] Tezkiye, p. 13b, 16a; for the general portrait of Ibn Saba in the polemical literature see; Sean W. Anthony, *The Caliph and the Heretic, Ibn Saba' and the Origins of Shī'īsm*, (Brill, 2012). According to Anthony, 'accounts such as these undeniably exhibit an anti-Semitism akin to the form that pervaded the Greco-Roman world since Antiquity, and it is perhaps no suprise, therefore, that these feature most prominently in those modern accounts of Ibn Saba's origination of Shī'īsm that are the most unabashedly anti-semitic.' " This type of rhetoric has become all the more heightened in the recent context of the meteoric rise of Shī'īsm's importance for the geopolitics of the Middle East, but the alleged Jewishness of Ibn Saba and many of the doctrines attributed to him had an altogether different significance in the medieval context of Abbasid inter-secterian polemical literature." Anthony, *The Caliph and the Heretic*, 314-16.

[260] *Al-Ghunya* was written in the twelfth century as a manual book including compact information about the daily prayers, *ādab*s and *'itikād* etc. In this book al-Gīlānī directs a ferocious attack against the Shia in contrast to his tolerant tone about god's creatures in his other works. *Al-Gunya*, as a consequence of the religio-political context of the nineteenth century, which has been discussed throughout the previous chapters, was translated into Persian (1865), Urdu (1902) and Ottoman Turkish (1885). It was translated

Jews restricted the leadership (*imāmah)* of their community to the house of the prophet David; likewise the Shī'īs claimed that *imāmah* only belongs to the house of the prophet, *ahl-i bayt.* Jews do not see *jihad as* permissible until the appearance of Antichrist; similarly Shī'īs believe that *jihad* is allowable only after the reappearance of the Mahdi as the redeemer of the Muslim community. The list of similarities expands to the distortion of the Torah and Quran, enmity to the angel Gabriel, and daily prayers.[261]

Apart from *Ghunyat, Tuhfa-i ithnā 'asha'riyya* is one of the few sources to which İshāḳ Efendi directly referred throughout his rebuttal. *Tuhfa* was one of the well-known anti-Shī'ī polemical books written by Abdula'ziz al-Dahlawī in the beginning of the nineteenth century. It seems that the polemical writings of Indian Sunnī scholars had a significant impact on this Ottoman scholar and his arguments. In that regard, the influence of Indian scholars on his writings can be observed not only in *Tezkiye* but also in his other polemical works.[262]

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by Süleyman Hasbi in 1303/1885 by command of the Sultan Abdulhamid II, and printed in Istanbul with its new title, '*Umdetü's ṣālihīn fī tercemeti ghunyat al-ṭālibīn*. It is interesting to note that *al-Ghunya* includes some critiques directed to Abū Hanīfa, and even his madhhab was excluded from *ahl-i sunna* due to its affiliation to *Murcie* by al-Gilani. Not surprisingly, the translator omits these parts in his translation. It seems to me that its translations into Urdu and Turkish in the regions in which Abu Hanifa was revered and his madhhab was dominant might be explained with its strong anti-Shī'ī content. Uludağ, "el-Gunye," 14: 196-97.

[261] *Tezkiye*, 23b, Abdulqādir al- Gīlānī, '*Umdetü's ṣālihīn fī tercemeti al-gunyat al-ṭālibin,* translated by Süleyman Hasbi (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Osmaniye, 1303), 1:136-37.

[262] For instance, *Iẓhār al-Ḥaqq* written by Raḥmetullāh al-Hindī al-Dahlawī (1818-1891) as a rebuttal against the Christianity influenced İshāḳ Efendi to a great extent in his polemical work*, Żiyā'ül ḳulūb* against Protestants. See Puse, "Harputlu İshāḳ Efendi ve *Żiyā'ül ḳulūb,"* 28.

6.3.2 Aḥmed Feyżī Çorumi and the Feyż -i rabbānī fī redd-i bāṭıl-i Īrānī

Çorumi was born into an *'ulamā'* family in Çorum in 1839, one that enjoyed high ranks in the judiciary. For instance, his father and grandfather held the office of *muftī* in the same city. He received his preliminary education from his family and then from the famous scholars of the time such as Arapzāde Meḥmed 'Ārif Efendi (d. 1826).[263] He held several teaching positions in various *madrasa*s in Çorum where he also served at intervals as *qadi* and *muftī* between 1851-1884. Several documents in the Ottoman archives have showed that Aḥmed Feyżī was dismissed from his position in different stages of his career as a result of some complaints from people and the mayor of Çorum. Concurring with this, the court records of Çorum (*şer'iyye sicilleri)* have indicated that Aḥmed Feyżī was discharged because of his 'misconduct' (*sū-i ḥāl),* yet they do not provide further details as to what these 'misconducts' were. Neither does the *Meşīhat* archive, including the correspondences and appointments of the '*ilmiyye* members, provide any information that would shed light on Çorumi's checkered career.[264]

Notwithstanding the scarcity of sources regarding the life and career of Aḥmed Feyżī, M. İhsan Sabuncuoğlu comes up with an account allegedly reported from the contemporaries of Aḥmed Feyżī. According to this account, 'no sooner was the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* presented to the attention of the Sultan Abdulhamid than he commissioned some scholars to write rebuttals against this pamphlet. However, since the scholars were afraid of the Alevis in Istanbul, they shied away from writing refutations against the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*. Thereupon, Yedi Sekiz Ḥasan Pasha, a bureaucrat from Çorum,

[263] İpşirli, "Arapzâde Mehmed Arif Efendi," 331.

[264] HR. MKT., 17-27, (14 S 1263); Corum Court Records, no: 2, Document 64, 15 Receb 1271; quoted from Gündoğdu, "Çorum'un 2 Numaralı Şeriyye Sicili," 120.

proposed that Aḥmed Feyżī, also known as *Deli müftī,*[265] could write a rebuttal against the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah.* The sultan liked the idea and Aḥmed Feyżī was summoned to Istanbul by an official invitation. There Feyżī accepted to write a rebuttal provided that he would be allowed to use any work he might need from the libraries in Istanbul. Eventually, he completed his polemical work and it was presented to the sultan. However, the sultan flew into rage when he noticed that Aḥmed Feyżī espoused the idea of *meşveret* (consultative council) in his work. Enraged and shocked by the audacity of Aḥmed Feyżī, the sultan turned to Ḥasan Pasha and said: "your *deli mufti* was afraid of neither me nor you!" Following this, Ḥasan Pasha for the fear that Aḥmed Feyżī would be punished by the sultan, sent a message to Aḥmed Feyżī advising him to leave the country immediately. As soon as Aḥmed Feyżī received the message, he escaped to Filibe (today's Plovdiv), although after a while the anger of the sultan calmed down and he returned to his hometown.'[266]

The foregoing account is rather questionable and somewhat incompatible with the historical realities. To begin with, there is not any archival document or biographical notice confirming that Aḥmed Feyżī was commissioned by the sultan to write a rebuttal against the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* or escaped to Filibe. Second, it is simply not true that Aḥmed Feyżī advocated the consultative parliament in his work or questioned the legitimacy of the sultan; on the contrary, he eulogized Sultan Abdulhamid II and his predecessors as the true followers of the Prophet and 'rightly-guided' caliphs. Third, there was no mob-like Alevi community in Istanbul posing a threat to the Sunnī scholars

[265] The word *deli* in Turkish means mad or insane, yet it can also denote intrepidity and dauntlessness.

[266]M. İ. Sabuncuoğlu, *Çorum tarihine ait derlemelerim I-II & Maarif hayatimiz* (Çorum: Çorum Belediyesi Yayınları, 2008).

who allegedly avoided writing rebuttals against the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* out of fear from this community. It seems to me that this last idea might have been fabricated in order to introduce Aḥmed Feyżī as an intrepid scholar in defending Sunnī Islam regardless of the possible threats or hostilities.

That being said, it should be noted that Aḥmed Feyżī suggested that the leader or caliph of the Muslim community must be a descent of the Quraysh tribe, of which the Prophet was a member. This could have caused some trouble for Aḥmed Feyżī, even though he echoed the majority of Sunnī sources that reiterated the same precondition for the caliphate until the nineteenth century. This issue became very sensitive when the British politicians purposefully brought it up in order to make Ottoman sovereignty questionable among its subjects and in the eyes of Muslim peoples under the British colonial administration.[267]

Unlike İshāḳ Efendi who attacked Husniyah's arguments without presenting them to his audience, Aḥmed Feyżī introduced the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* quote by quote in red ink in his polemical work, before he set out to refute them. In this regard, he followed the method of Ibn Taymiyyah's well-known book, *Minhāj al-sunnah,* an anti-Shī'ī polemical work against *Minhāj al-karāmah* written by the famous Shī'ī scholar,

[267] Ardic, *Islam and the Politics of Secularism: The Caliphate and Middle Eastern Modernization in the Early 20th Century*, 139. In the face of this ideological challenge, during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid this precondition was excluded from the Sunnī books in their new printed editions. Moreover, the Ottomans highlighted the views of ibn Khaldun who argued that this precondition was only particular to the period of the Prophet and the first four caliphs and it was no longer applicable under the new circumstances. Ibn Khaldun maintained that the prophet stipulated this precondition based on the *asabiyyah* (tribal solidarity) of the time and other power dynamics; however, since the power of asabiyyah no longer belongs to the Quraysh tribe, being a Qurayshi descent cannot be seen as a prerequisite for the caliphate. For the detail, see Ardıç, "Genealogy or Asabiyya? Ibn Khaldun between Arab Nationalism and the Ottoman Caliphate," 315-324, 315-16.

Mutaḥḥar al-Ḥillī.[268] It should be noted that the mentioned polemical works of Ibn Taymiyyah and al-Hillī were the paradigmatic works in the Sunnī-Shī'ī polemical literature. Their arguments were repeated by the followers of each side, Sunnīs and Shī'īs, for centuries. The *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* and its rebuttals in the Ottoman Empire, especially Aḥmed Feyżī's rebuttal, can be seen as good examples of this. That is to say, on the one hand the vitriolic critiques of al-Hilli against the Sunnīs echoed throughout *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*, while on the other hand Ibn Taymiyyah's acrimonious attacks were re-utilized by the *Feyż-i rabbānī.* Therefore, it is hardly surprising that, while refuting the arguments of *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*, Aḥmed Feyżī directly levels some of his critiques at al-Hilli as the owner of the argument, rather than Ḥusniyah.[269] In addition to the *Minhāj al-sunnah,* Aḥmed Feyżī frequently refers to the *Nawāqid fī al-radd 'ala'l-rawāfid* of Mīrzā Makhdūm al-Sharīfī (d. 995/1587) and *Sawāiq al-Muḥriqa* of ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 974/1566-67).

After referring to the well-known anti-Shī'ī polemical works, Aḥmed Feyżī explains why he needed to write a new polemical work against Shī'ī Islam. In this regard, he states that since the majority of these polemical works have been written in Arabic, those who do not know this language could not benefit from these works. Therefore, he says, he wrote this polemical work in Turkish for the benefit of a broader Turkish-speaking audience.[270] Moreover, Aḥmed Feyżī suggests that the major anti-Shī'ī

[268] al-Jamil, "Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Mutahhar al-Hilli: Shi'i Polemics and the Struggle for Religious Authority in Medieval Islam" in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times,* eds. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed (Oxford University Press, 2010): 229-42.

[269] *Feyż-i rabbānī,* 184.

[270] *Feyż-i rabbānī,* 37-38; "*intifa'-ı umūmī kasdıyla ol risale-i mużırrranın ecvibe-i reddiyesine lisan-ı Arabiyyü'l-beyan-ı Türki ile ibtidar kılınmıştır."*

polemical works had appeared before the production of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*, which came up with novel delusions and falsifications (*hezeyān ve türrehāt*). Therefore, a new polemical work that would respond to the arguments of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was needed. Furthermore, he maintained that the silence and negligence of the Sunnī scholars over the last decades encouraged those who disseminated the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in the Ottoman provinces and left the simple-minded (*ezẖān-ı żaife-i ʻāvām*), ignorant (*cehele-i enām*) people vulnerable to these harmful publications and snares of the Devil. He said that he authored his polemical work to defend Islam and people against the heretical works and then dedicated his work to Sultan Abdulhamid II, eulogizing him as the owner of the mighty caliphate and the exalted sultanate and also as the guardian of ʻ*ulamā*.[271]

Aḥmed Feyżī questioned the authenticity of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* frame-story in which the fictitious debate was staged and suggested that such a debate never took place in the presence of the caliph and neither did a female scholar, called Ḥusniyah, live in reality.[272] In connection with this, he also noted that as opposed to what the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* has claimed, Imam Shāfiʻi and Abū Yūsuf never came together in the presence of the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd and neither did a scholar called Ibrāhim Khālid live in that time.[273] Moreover, Aḥmed Feyżī discredited the claim that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was written by Ibrahīm Astarabadi. Rather, he asserted that the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* must

[271] *Feyż-i rabbānī,* 38.

[272] *Feyż-i rabbānī,* 69; "*...haḳīḳat-ı halde Ḥüsniye nāmında ʻālime bir cāriye ḥuzur-ı Hārūn'da mübāhase etmek üzere mevcūde olmuş olsaydı, elbette kütüb-i tevārihin birisinde la-cerem mestūr ve muṣarraḥ olması lüzūmu maʻruf-ı ʻurefā ve maʻlum-ı ʻulemādır."*

[273] *Feyż-i rabbānī,* 60.

have been ‘fabricated by a group that aimed to sow doubt and discord among the Muslim community.’[274]

After questioning the historicity of the disputation between Ḥusniyah and the Sunnī ‘*ulamā,* Aḥmed Feyżī frowns upon the visibility of a female figure addressing her speech loudly in front of men, unrelated to her by blood or marriage, on the ground that Islam forbids women to raise their voice in the presence of men. Also, Aḥmed Feyżī argued that a slave-girl figure was created by the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in order to insult the Sunnī scholars who allegedly fell short of defeating even a poor slave girl, let alone the prominent Shī‘ī scholars.[275]

It is important to note that after rejecting the historicity of the Ḥusniyah’s story, Aḥmed Feyżī suggested that the factual discussion was held between a ‘Sunnī slave girl’, Tawaddud and a host of scholars with various expertise in different sciences and arts in the court of the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd. According to Aḥmed Feyżī, the story of Tawaddud was related to later generations as a sound report that does not include any anti-Sunnī content as was seen in Ḥusniyah’s story.[276] Although he lambasted the

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[274] *Feyż-i rabbānī,* 61-62; *"İşbu reddine teşaddī ḳılınan ve bālāsı Ḥüsniye nāmıyla tevessüm ve Ehl-i sünnet ‘aleyhinde tersīm ḳılarak meydān-ı intişāra vaż‘ olunan risāle-i mużırrra diyār-ı Acem'de mütemekkin gulāt-ı Şī‘a ve Revāfiżdan bir şahṣın tercüme olaraḳ tertip ve telif eylendiğinin ṣıhhati teslim olunamayub, belki heman bir īḳad-ı fitne ve fesād için teşkil olunan bir cemiyet-i mefsedet-i itiyad taraflarından taṣni‘ ve taṣvīr olunduğu vārid-i hāṭır-ı fātir-i mütebāhirdir."*

[275] *Feyż-i rabbānī,* 61-62; “*Ḥüsniye nāmıyla bālāsı tevsīm olunan risāleyi cem‘ ve tertīb eden mü’ellif ismini ihtifa ederek taṣvīr eylemelerinin sebebi zu‘umlarınca Ehli Sünnet ‘ulemāsı kendi mezheplerinde olan ricāl-i Revāfiż ile mübāhaseye ḳādir olmamakla, belki bir cāriye parçasıyla bile mübāhase etseler anınla dahi habṭ ve ilzām olunurlar deyü kendilerini kemāl derece i‘ẓām etmeleriyle kibir ve tefāhur ve iẓhār-ı faẓl ve hüner eylemek gharaż-ı nā-merżilerine mebnī."*

[276] *Feyż-i rabbānī,* 61; “*Fi’l ḥaḳīḳa bazı mertebede iẓhār-ı faẓl ve kemāl żımmında Bağdat eşrāfından bir zāt-ı sütūde-simātın tertīp gerdesi olan bir cāriye-i belīgha ṭarafından zamān-ı hilāfet-i Hārūn'da bir risāle-i makbūle tertīb ve te’lif olunaraḳ enẓār-ı enāma vaż‘ olunduğu görülmüş ise de ol cāriyenin ismi Teveddüd olduğu halde, hāvi olduğu mesāili dahi Ehli Sünnet ‘aleyhinde olmadığı …*”

visibility of Ḥusniyah in the court of the caliph and her disputation with the scholars in the presence of many unrelated men, contradictorily, he introduced Tawaddud as a modest and erudite scholar. Furthermore, Aḥmed Feyżī contended that if the eminent *'Rāfiżī* scholars' debated with the Sunnī learned women of the Abbasid period, including Tawaddud, let alone with the distinguished Sunnī scholars like Abū Yūsuf and Imam Shāfi'ī, they would be debunked by these women on the spot and would be dissolved, like salt dissolving in water, in the face of the caustic and fierce eloquence of these women – women such as Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya, who Aḥmed Feyżī mentioned as the quintessential example of a pious and learned woman. With regard to this, he said that Rābi'a enjoyed companionship with Sufyān al-Sawrī, a contemporary scholar, and spoke to him of religious issues, though with a curtain separating them. So, clearly he did not make an issue of the voice of woman in the case of Rābi'a, as he did in the case of Ḥusniyah.

In my opinion, this contradictory approach to the visibility of woman in the public space, expounded by both Ishak Enfendi and Aḥmed Feyżī, reflect, above all, the rhetorical nature of the religious polemics that go to great lengths to disparage the opponent and, more often than not, fall back on inconsistent and incoherent arguments along with calumniation, distortion and caricaturization that would possibly serve the purpose. Therefore, it might be misleading to take these rhetorical remarks as a point of departure to look at the gender relations of the time or to unpack the general approach of scholars to the visibility of woman in the public space in the nineteenth century.

Aḥmed Feyżī was also concerned with the issue of the succession to the prophet, which constituted a sizeable place in his polemic against the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* that

advocated that the imamate was the right of Ali and vilified the first three Caliphs on the ground that they hijacked the right of Ali. In response to this, Aḥmed Feyżī argued that Abū Bakr was the first person who converted to Islam and the precedence in becoming Muslim does not necessarily secure the right of succession to the Prophet and to lead the community. Moreover, he said that if the precedence was a condition for leadership, then the slaves and women among the first converts would be eligible for that position, whereas the imamate was confined only to Ali and his male heirs in Shi'ite theology.[277] With regard to the leadership after the four 'rightly-guided' caliphs, Aḥmed Feyżī mentioned a hadith, presaging that the caliphate would last thirty years, and then it would be replaced by the period of a sultanate and maintained that the Umayyad and the ensuing dynasties were the embodiment of this prophecy, and therefore, their legitimacy should not be questioned. Accordingly, Aḥmed Feyżī warned his audience not to vilify the founder of the Umayyad dysnasty, because 'Mu'āwiya's bid for power against Ali was because of his own *ijtihād* (legal reasoning).' Nevertheless, he disapproved of some relentless policies of the Umayyad sultans. For instance, he mentioned Yazid, 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwan, Yazid II and Valid II as cruel sultans of the dynasty. However, he noted that all their cruelty and tyranny notwithstanding, one cannot declare them as apostates, and yet, when it comes to Yazid, the son of Mu'āwiya, Aḥmed Feyżī cursed him and quoted a number of views sanctioning to declare Yazid an apostate.[278] Moreover, he vilified and cursed Yazid in his numerous poems in his work and emphatically expressed that affection for the House of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt)* is

[277] *Feyż-i rabbānī*, 86-87.

[278] *Feyż-i rabbānī*, 530; "*Yezīd müsteḥaḳḳ-ı lanet ve 'aẕāb-ı şedīd olmasıyla..."*

necessary for all Muslims provided that they avoid going too far to vilify the first three caliphs and to restrict the caliphate to Ali and his progeny. Apart from the Umayyads, Aḥmed Feyżī mentioned the Abbasids and the Ottomans as legitimate dynasties and especially praised the Ottoman sultans as the devout followers of the 'rightly-guided' caliphs and as those who embraced the Sunnī school and implemented the *sharī'a* in their domains, hence due to their commitment to the *sharī'a* and Sunnī Islam, they had merit to rule.[279]

Aḥmed Feyżī rejected the charges that appeared in the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* that accused Sunnī Muslims of innovating new sects after the death of the Prophet and imitating their leaders blindly, and also of dividing the Muslim community into the multiple fractions. In response to this, Aḥmed Feyżī contended that even though the truth is only one, the ways to reach it could be many, therefore, different *madhhab*s should be seen as the ways leading to the truth. Moreover, he argued that given the fact that not all Muslims have been endowed with the competence for legal reasoning, they always need to follow the previous *mujtahid*s. Also, he suggested that the denial of *taqlid* (imitation) by the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* does not fall in line with the Shī'ī theology that has introduced the Shī'ī *mujtahid*s as sources of imitation. Furthermore, Aḥmed Feyżī asserted that the imitation of the previous *mujtahid*s is necessary more than ever in his time, because there are no longer living *mujtahid*s, since the gate of *ijtihād* was closed a long time ago. He even noted that whomsoever comes with the claim of *ijtihād* needs be rejected, therefore, all Muslims are bound to imitate their own *madhhab*s

[279] *Feyż-i rabbānī*, 250; "*Hulefā-i Osmāniyye ebbedehümullāhü te'ālā bi't-te'yidāt-ı ilāhiyye hażerātının ahvāl-ı salṭanatları sūret-i hulefā-yı Rāşidīn üzere mü'esses bulunduğu cihetle cümlesi hālis ehl-i sünnet ve pīşeleri hemīşe gaza ve mücāhedet ve icrā-yı ahkām-ı şeri'at olmaḳla hilāfet vaşfına aḥrā ve elyāḳ olmuşlardır.*"

among the four schools of Sunnī Islam, i.e., Ḥanafī, Shāfi'ī, Mālikī and Ḥanbalī.[280] It is interesting to note that Aḥmed Feyżī's remarks on the *ijtihād* and imitation echoed the contemporary Damascene scholar and jurist, ibn 'Ābidīn (d.1836), who similarly advocated that the gate of *ijtihād* was already closed. According to Wael Hallaq, these remarks elicited a significant reaction among those who advocated reform in Islam in the nineteenth century and stressed the importance of *ijtihād* for the renewal in the Muslim countries.[281]

As was explored in the third chapter, the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was presented as a theatrical polemic against Sunnī Islam, which was peppered with a number of scenes in which the Sunnī scholars were displayed to be 'flabbergasted, utterly beaten, rendered speechless by the eloquence and erudition of Ḥusniyah.' They were also ridiculed, mocked and taunted by the Caliph and other audience. Infuriated by these, Aḥmed Feyżī stated that ridiculing or mocking an *'ālim* is tantamount to apostasy, even if one says *'uleym*[282] or poor '*ālim*, instead of '*ālim* with an intention to contempt or insult a scholar. He repeated this time and again throughout his work.[283]

[280] *Feyż-i rabbānī*, 204, 287, 259; "*emr-i ictihād zāten su'ūbetli olaraḳ aṣr-ı tābi'īnden sonra rütbe-i ictihāda varılamaz olduğundan artıḳ bāb-ı ictihād mesdūd olmasıyla bu 'aṣırda da'vā-yı ictihād eden merdūd ve taḳlīdi maṭrūd olduğu cihetle"*

[281] Hallaq, "Was the Gate of Ijtihād Closed?" 32.

[282] '*Uleym* is a diminutive form of '*ālim* in Arabic. The diminutive can be used both with positive and negative connotations.

[283] *Feyż-i rabbānī*, 52.

6.3.3 Ḥüseyin ‘Azmī Dede (1815-1893) and the *Rāfi‘ü’ş- şiḳāḳ*

Hüseyin ‘Azmī Dede was born in 1815 in Gallipoli into a Sufi family.[284] His father was the shaykh of the Mawlawi lodge there. Following his father’s death in 1824, ‘Azmī Dede became shaykh at the same lodge at the tender age of nine and stayed in this post for forty-one years. During his tenure, he was honored by the visits of Sultan Maḥmūd II (d. 1839) and Abdulmecīd (d. 1861). Aḥmed Celaleddīn Dede (d. 1946), the son of ‘Azmī Dede, mentioned that both sultans visited the lodge twice and Sultan Abdülmecīd restored the lodge whose gates were embellished with his *tuğra* (sultan’s signature).[285] In addition to the Sultans’ visits, the lodge attracted a great number of visitors from different walks of life and from various places of the Muslim world. One of the most prominent visitors of Hüseyin ‘Azmī Dede was the shaykh of the Mawlawi lodge in Cairo, Muṣṭafā Naḳşī Dede (d. 1854), who stayed in Gelibolu for some time and led the Mawlawi rites.[286]

In 1865, Hüseyin ‘Azmī Dede went on a pilgrimage to Mecca and on his way to Mecca, he stopped by Cairo where he met Khidive İsmail Pasha (d. 1895). After performing his pilgrimage, he returned to Cairo and became the shaykh of the Cairo

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[284] The most detailed biographical account of ‘Azmī Dede was written by Aḥmed Celaleddin Dede, the son of ‘Azmī Dede and the last shaykh of Kulekapısı (Galata), see Aḥmed Celaleddīn Dede, *Şiir Defteri,* ed. by Gülgün Yazıcı, (Çanakkale, 2009). Also see Fatin Efendi, *Tezkire-i Hatimetü’l Eş‘ar,* (İstanbul: 1870), 293-4; Bursalı Mehmed Tahir, *Osmanlı Müellifleri,* 1: 135-36; Saadettin Nüzhet Ergun, *Türk Şairleri,* 2 vols (Istanbul: Bozkurt Basimevi, 1936), 2: 640-44; Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, *Mevlana’dan Sonra Mevlevilik* (İstanbul: İstanbul Matbaası, 1953); Gülgün Yazıcı, *Gelibolu Mevlevihanesi ve Gelibolu’da Mevlevilik,* (Çanakkale, 2009), 54-66; Gülgün Yazıcı, “Gelibolu-Kahire-İstanbul Üçgeninde Bir Mevlevi Şeyhi ve Oğulları: Hüseyin Azmi Dede, Mehmed Bahaeddin Dede, AḥmedCelaleddin Dede”, *Divan Edebiyatı Araştırmaları Dergisi,* 2 (2009): 207-22; for a more recent monography about Hüseyin Azmi Dede, which includes most of his transcribed works see; Safi Arpaguş, *Gelibolu’dan Kahire’ye Bir Ömür, Hüseyin Azmi Dede: Hal Tercümesi ve Risaleleri,* (İstanbul: İFAV, 2014).

[285] Ergun, *Türk Şairleri,* 641-43; Arpaguş, *Gelibolu’dan Kahire’ye,* 15-18.

[286] Yazıcı, “Gelibolu-Kahire-İstanbul Üçgeninde”, 212; Arpaguş, *Gelibolu’dan Kahire’ye,* 26-35.

lodge for twenty-four years.[287] He wrote most of his works during his stay in Cairo. For instance, he wrote *Mīzanü'l edyān* against Christianity when the public activities of the Coptic Church increased in Egypt and his *Mühimmü'l beyān* against the Freemasons and Bektāshīs.[288]

It is important to note that although the works that 'Azmī Dede authored in Gallipoli focused on Sufi poetry and music, the majority of his works written in Cairo consisted of religious polemics.[289] As a part of these polemical works, he wrote his fifteen-page-long rebuttal, *Rafiü'ş-şiķāķ,* against the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in the last decade of the nineteenth century.[290] It is unknown, though, where and when 'Azmī Dede came across the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah.* Yet it stands to reason that he became aware of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* after it was published in 1298 AH/1881CE in Cairo, where the Bektāshīs flourished under the auspices of the khidives.

'Azmī Dede, in the first place, discusses the reasons behind the Sunnī - Shī'ī division which he considered to have originated from conflicting historiographical visions. To him, the disagreement and hostility between the two sects have been compounded and exacerbated by some of the historical accounts which are fraught with

[287] Yazıcı, "Gelibolu-Kahire-İstanbul Üçgeninde," 212.

[288] Arpaguş, *Gelibolu'dan Kahire'ye,* 42.

[289] Yazıcı, "Gelibolu-Kahire-İstanbul Üçgeninde," 213.

[290] To the best of my knowledge, there are only three extant manuscripts of this work in the following libraries; the National Library in Ankara [06 Mil Yz FB 119/2]; Konya Mevlana Museum Library and at the special collection of Professor Safi Arpaguş who authored a monograph about the life and works of Hüseyin Azmi Dede. I am very grateful to him for sharing a copy of the manuscript and its transcription into Latin alphabet with me. I used this copy in this study.

distortions, falsification and misinterpretations. Therefore, he observed, Muslim communities need to approach these accounts critically without partiality and bias.[291]

According to Hüseyin ‘Azmī Dede, in order for Sunnīs and Shī‘īs to put an end to the growing sense of division and enmity and to procure rapprochement between them, two things must be fulfilled; first, one must always be aware of the fact that different historiographical interpretations of the incidents that occurred among the nascent Muslim community are natural and the difference in the interpretation should not lead one to brand the other with apostasy. Second, they must avoid insulting and cursing one another and stop vilifying the Companions of the Prophet. In line with this, the two political authorities, i.e., the Ottoman Empire and Iran, should issue an order banning the exchange of hostile and deriding statements in their respective societies.[292]

Following these introductory remarks, ‘Azmī Dede primarily concentrated on the issue of the succession of the Prophet and argued against the widespread accusation that the right of Ali was usurped by the first three caliphs. In response to this, he suggested that ‘if Ali was really appointed by God and the Prophet, then it would be a religious incumbency on him to fight to take over the caliphate from the first three caliphs and, for that matter, would never succumb to any *fait accompli* in the leadership of the community. Otherwise, the accusation of the usurpation would denote that Ali was so powerless and impotent that he submitted to the *fait accompli* and the violation of God’s

[291] *Rafi’üş-Şiḳāḳ*, 28; *“Vekâyi-i mâziyyenin zamanında bulunmayanlar için tevârihe mürâcaat iktizâ eder ise de kütüb ve tevârihin bazılarında sehv ve galat ve sıdk ve kizb ve ziyâde ve noksan ve ketm ve saht ve te’vîl mahlût bulunduğundan yalnız bir müverrihin kitabına mürâcaat kifâyet etmeyip kütüp ve tevârihin vekâyi’a ihtilâfâtını muhâkemeye tevakkuf ettiğinden hakkı kabule taassup hâil olmadıkça vekâyii şürûta tatbîkan muhâkemede zâhir olan hakka râzı oldukta tarafeyn i’tirazdan vâreste kalır.”*

[292] *Rafi’üş-Şiḳāḳ*, 28-29.

order, however, Ali was not such an impotent man to give in any alleged imposition or violation of the divine decree.'[293]

Moreover, 'Azmī Dede argued that the first three caliphs took the office with the consensus and consultation, which was a far cry from the accusation of usurpation. He recounted that 'the majority of the Companions of the Prophet assembled immediately after the death of the Prophet, in one of their meeting-places, called Saqifa bani Sa'ida, in order to decide who to be the successor of the Prophet. The Companions gathered in this *maḥall-i intihāb* or place of election to express their opinions on this crucial matter, and they did so without receiving any invitation. However, since Ali was so sorrowful and busy with the funeral of the Prophet he could not attend this meeting in which the rest of the Companions chose Abū Bakr as the successor to the Prophet.' 'Azmī Dede also noted that it would be better if the Companions could consult with Ali and his uncle, Abbas, before they finalized their decision; however, since the political leadership was a very pressing issue for the Muslim community that was about to be divided over this political issue, Abū Bakr and 'Umar had to settle that without any delay.[294] 'Azmī Dede stressed that the discussion about the succession of the Prophet was a matter of the bygone generation; therefore, it should not be a point of disagreement for contemporary Muslims anymore. However, he argued, 'Iranian Shī'īs peddled the same accusations against Sunnīs and vilified the first three caliphs out of their enmity and disappointment. 'Azmī Dede suggested that they were disappointed, because if Ali was appointed as the first caliph, his heirs would continue the caliphate, and since Husayn, the son of Ali, was

[293] *Rafi'üş-Şiḳāḳ,* 29.

[294] *Rafi'üş-Şiḳāḳ,* 30-31.

married to the captivated daughter of the Sassanian king Yazdegerd, the caliphate would pass to the Iranian people. According to him, all the rancor and revilements about the first three caliphs originated from this disappointment rather than from their affection for the house of the Prophet.[295] Furthermore, ‘Azmī Dede asserted that the Prophet never appointed a successor to himself, but if he wished to appoint one from his own family, this person would not be Ali, because his uncle, Abbas, was still alive as a senior member of the family.[296]

In addition to this, ‘Azmī Dede further claimed that if Ali was elected as the first caliph, the Muslim community would be divided and lose all its power in a short period of time because of his inept administration and misgovernment. He argued that Ali was incapable of handling the political issues and problems, as his brief tenure in office proved to be a failure. Moreover, ‘Azmī Dede asserted that if Ali was the first caliph, Islam would not be able to reach to Iran, because he could not show any military success during his tenure, despite the fact that he enjoyed more military power than the second caliph Umar did and that he was known for his chivalry and bravery.[297]

In connection with the ‘incompetence’ and ‘misgovernment’ of Ali, ‘Azmī Dede referred to several traumatic incidents that occurred during the office of Ali. In this regard, he said that Ali attempted to dismiss Mu‘āwiya, the mayor of Damascus then, and this elicited strong opposition from Mu‘āwiya and his followers, which eventually

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[295] *Rafi’üş-Şiḳāḳ,* 31.

[296] *Rafi’üş-Şiḳāḳ,* 32; *“Resûl-i Ekrem’in hükümet-i İslâmiyye teşkîli akrabâ için olmadığından hilâfete kimseyi ta’yîn etmeyip velev ki ırs-i makûlesinden olaydı amm-i Resûl mevcûd iken ibn-i amm vâris olamazdı.”*

[297] *Rafi’üş-Şiḳāḳ,* 31- 32.

led to bloody battles. Therefore, Azmī Dede argued that Ali was also responsible for the battles of Camel in 656CE and Ṣiffīn in 657CE, because of his mishandling the situation and not taking the political dynamics of the time into consideration. He also contended that Mu'āwiya should not be blamed for his competition with Ali for power, during which the former was able to recruit a lot of supporters and fighters, thanks to his personal virtues and military genius.[298]

Moreover, 'Azmī Dede discussed why the Prophet's wife, Aisha, took sides against Ali with Muawiya. According to him, the main reason behind her participation in Muawiya's army was psychological. He reminds his readers of the Incident of Slander (*Ifq*)[299], and Ali's remarks upon the incident. Aisha was blamed after the incident and ostracized from society until a Quranic revelation acquitted Aisha from the slander. Before her acquittal, the Prophet consulted with his close companions about the incident. When time came for Ali to speak, he said that 'women are numerous' implying that the Prophet can divorce Aisha and marry another woman. To 'Azmī Dede, Aisha took umbrage at his remarks and never forgot, and this played an instrumental role in Aisha's decision to take the side of Muawiya against Ali.[300]

In short, 'Azmī Dede identified the fourth caliph, Ali, as a leader who lacked necessary leadership, and therefore, failed before Muawiya's political acuteness and the intrigues masterminded by him. In a sense, one can say that 'Azmī Dede legitimized

[298] *Rafi'üş-Şiḳāḳ,* 36.

[299] This incident reported in the hadith *al-ifk*, "the affair of the lie" is the account of the accusation of adultery made against Aisha in A.D. 628, and her vindication by a divine revelation recorded in the Quran. See for the detail; Spelberg, *Polilitics, Gender, and the Islamic Past: The Legacy of Aisha Bint Abi Bakr,* 61-99.

[300] *Rafi'üş-Şiḳāḳ,* 35-36.

Muawiya's bid for power and considered his cunning political maneuvers as a necessary requirement for good management in the political arena. Because of these statements, Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı defines 'Azmī Dede as a Sunnī bigot who would be applauded by those who attach to Muawiyah and keep silent about Yazid. Gölpınarlı in his book, *Mevlana'dan Sonra Mevlevilik* (1953) sees 'Azmī Dede as the polar opposite of the Mawlawi shaykhs who went so far as to claim that Ali is God.[301]

6.3.4 Ḥasan Ḥilmī Efendi (1824 – 1911) and *Miftāḥü'l Arifin*

Ḥasan Ḥilmī studied in the madrasa of Mahmud Pasha where he met with Ahmad Ziyauddin Gümüşhanevi (d. 1893), a prominent Naqshbandī-Khalidī shaykh of the nineteenth century.[302] Ḥilmī became the follower of Abd al-Fattah al-Akri (d.1864), a successor of Shaykh Khālid, dispatched to Istanbul.[303] Following the death of al-Akri, he pledged allegiance to Gümüşhanevi and received an *ijazah* from him in hadith. Then he took the place of Gümüshanevi in the lodge after Gümüşhanevi passed away. Both Gümüşhanevi and his successor Ḥilmī gave much importance to the study of hadith and their lodge functioned like a *dar'ül hadis,* and numerous students received training in the *hadith* circles of Gümüşhanevi and Ḥilmī.[304]

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[301] Gölpınarlı, *Mevlana'dan Sonra Mevlevilik*, 240-41.

[302] Abu-Manneh, "Shaykh Ahmad Ziya'uddin el-Gümüşhanevi and Ziya'i-Khalidi Sub-order," 153-4.

[303]Kevseri , *Al-Taḥrīr al-wajīz fī mā yabtaghihi al-mustajiz*, 33-34.

[304] Gümüşhanevi compiled a collection of hadith called *Ramuz'ül Ahadis,* published in two wolumes in 1858. This book has been read out by both Gümüşhanevi and his successors. Ḥilmī recited this collection twice in a year in his circles. It has continued to be read out by the followers up to this very day, and it was translated from Arabic into Turkish in 1982.

The lodge was not only the locus for spiritual purification and scholarly training. The physical proximity of the lodge to the Sublime Porte –it was located directly opposite the Porte - procured a close relation with some bureaucrats. In addition to this, Sultan Abdulhamid also had good relations with the lodge, because he believed that 'through the loyal sufi shaikhs he was able to open up channels of communication to his people'.[305] Therefore, it is hardly surprising that some of the emissaries sent to various regions by the sultan to propagate Pan-Islamist ideology were appointed from among the successors of Gümüşhanevi.[306]

Ḥilmī wrote his *Miftāḥ'ül 'ārifīn*, in 1910, a year before he passed away.[307] He organized the *Miftāḥ* as a manual in which he conveyed the key principles and practices of Nakshbandi-Khalidism for his followers. It includes a variety of subjects such as the different stations (*maqām*) of the *sharī'a* and *ṭarīqah* (Sufi path), the multiple levels or grades of the soul (*marātib al-nafs)*, the daily observations and prayers of the Muslims etc. In addition to these, it was also peppered with a number hagiographical accounts and many digressions about daily.

It should be noted that the *Miftāḥ* was written under the shadow of the political upheavals of the late Ottoman Empire. The constitutional revolution of 1908 and

[305] Abu-Manneh, "Shaykh Ahmad Ziya'uddin el-Gümüşhanevi and Ziya'i-Khalidi Sub-order," 156.

[306] Yücer, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Tasavvuf (19. Yüzyıl),* 326-7.

[307] *Miftāḥ* was published in 1981 with Latin alphabet by Şelale Yayınları, İstanbul, Turkey. In the preface of the transliteration, İrfan Gündüz states that the date of birth and death of Ḥasan Ḥilmī are not known precisely. Yet, he presumes that Ḥilmī was born in 1864, and died in 1914. He also dates the completion of *Miftāḥ* to 1912. Unfortunately all dates given by Irfan Gündüz are incorrect. In fact, we have almost the exact dates of birth, death and the completion of the book. His prominent student, Kevseri gives the dates of birth and death of his teacher in his Arabic biographical book. According to Kevseri, Ḥilmī was born in 1240 (1824) and died in 23 Safar 1329 (23 February 1911). Kevseri, *Al-Tahrir al- Veciz,* p. 34. As far as the date of Miftāḥ is concerned, at the end of the book there is record of the author, which states that the book was completed on the first day of *Rabi' al-Awwal 1328* (13 March 1910).

subsequent events like the 31 March Incident culminated in the restoration of the constitutional system and the replacement of Sultan Abdulhamid II by his younger brother Mehmed Reşad V. During this period, Ḥilmī inculcated in his followers loyalty to the Ottoman sultans, whom he saw as the custodians of Sunnī Islam, the protectors of the Ḥanafī *madhhab*, and pious leaders who followed the true path of the rightly-guided caliphs. He frequently emphasized the duty to obey the Sultans and their virtuous reigns. He considered them to be under the auspices of divine power, which according to him always comes to the help of the Empire in case of need.

Ḥilmī eulogizes Sultan Abdulhamid II briefly in the first pages of the book.[308] Yet, in the pages following he hails the leaders of the Young Turks, Enver Pasha and Niyazi (Resneli), as those who were sent by "divine will" to save the Empire from material and moral bankruptcy.[309] He also praises Mahmud Şevket Pasha for having suppressed the 31 March Incident and Sultan Mehmed Reşad, who ascended the throne after Sultan Abdulhamid II was ousted.[310] Though Abu-Manneh asserted that the Gümüşhanevi lodge 'suffered after the rise of the Young Turks, due to the fact that they supported the Sultan, Ḥilmī's expressions of support for the Young Turks show the lodge's willingness to get along with the new authority rather than insisting on invoking the memory of the previous authority.

Aside from the political reflections in the book, Ḥilmī allocates a great bulk of the work to warning his followers against harmful things for their body and faith. For

[308] *Miftāḥ*, 162.

[309] *Miftāḥ*, 369.

[310] *Miftāḥ*, 371.

example, he talks about the harmfulness of smoking and its prohibition by the Islamic law.[311] Then he warns his readers of a harmful work, titled *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*. At the beginning of the refutation, Ḥilmī states that a heretic from among the 'Shī'ī – Rāfidī' scholars translated the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* into Turkish in order to disrespect Sunnī Islam and to deviate Muslims from the true path. Moreover, he complains that some Shī'ī scholars, in the guise of Sufi dervishes, promulgated their heretical writings in various Sufi lodges. However, Sunnī '*ulamā',* as heirs of the Prophet and custodians of true belief, have always defended Sunnī Islam and struggled against heretical faiths and groups.[312]

Last but not least, unlike İshāḳ Efendi and Aḥmed Feyzī, Ḥilmī does not attack Ḥusniyah because of her gender or her visibility in the discussion. Rather he introduces her as a real figure with some interesting elaborations about her life. He claims that Ḥusniyah was captured from a non-Muslim scholar who had debated with Abū Hanīfa on various theological matters and was defeated by Abū Ḥanīfa, who was just seven years old then. Ḥilmī further tells that when Ḥusniyah grew young she challenged Abū Ḥanīfa along with other Sunnī scholars in the court of the Caliph to take the revenge of his father and then fabricated her pamphlet.[313] So, despite the fact that Abū Hanīfa was not introduced as an opponent of Husniyah in the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah,* Ḥilmī presented him as though he attended the discussion in the court of the Caliph probably in order to further denigrate her in the sight of his audience.

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[311] *Miftāḥ*, 267-81.

[312] *Miftāḥ*, 282.

[313] "*İşte bu cariye-i Hüsniye ol kafirden esir alınıp, babasının intikamına bedel bir alay sual-i kazibeler ile mezahib-i erbaadan küfür fetvasını aldı.*" *Miftāḥ*, 292.

6.4 The survival of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in the modern republic

For all the political measures and the Sunnī *'ulamā*'s reaction, the legacy of Ḥusniyah has survived in modern Turkey. The adventure of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in the secular state provides important insights about how the modern Alevis received it and the relations between the republican state and Alevi communities.

As was discussed earlier, the Protestant and Shī'ī missionary activities contributed to the Ottoman interest in integrating the Qizilbash – Alevi communities into the Sunnī fold and pulling them more closely to the Ottoman authority. 'The state-sponsored Sunnīfication of the Qizilbash - Alevi populations began in the 1890s and became more systematic in the early republic.'[314] In that sense, while the Republic adopted secularism, it chose from the outset not to withdraw from regulating the field of religion entirely.[315] Accordingly, the state surveyed the religious publications very closely and censored Shī'ī publications in line with the new press code.

Even though the modern republic diverged from the Ottoman Empire with its strict secularist policies, it continued the anti-Shī'ī stance, which was prevailed during the Hamidian era. In other words, the secular policies of the architect of the modern Turkish republic, Mustafa Kemal, did not revoke the previous policies of Sultan

[314] Dressler, *Writing Religion*, 76-77; Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 82.

[315] Shakland, *The Alevis in Turkey: The Emergence of Secular Islamic Tradition*, 14.

Abdulhamid II against the Shī'ī publications. As a number of the documents in the State Archives in Ankara indicate, the state continued to censor religious books that were considered to have Shī'ī content in the first half of the twentieth century. For instance, the document, issued by Mustafa Kemal in 1937, prohibited the entrance of the pamphlets, which were published in Buenos Aires by the publisher, *al-Jāmi'a al-Islāmiyya al-Aleviyya* due to their 'harmful Shī'ī contents.'[316] Another report sent to the prime ministry Directorate General of Press (*Basın ve Yayın Umum Müdürlüğü*) in 1944 required a ban on a pamphlet, titled *Namaz Surelerinin ve Fatiha Şerifenin Manası* (The meaning of the *surah*s of prayer and the holy *surah* of Fatiha). The pamphlet which was published by Şemseddin Yeşil was banned on the grounds that it advocated Shī'ī doctrines.[317] In the same year, according to another report sent to Directorate General of Press by the Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA), the Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Reisliği*) asked the ban of another book, called *Türkçe Kasideler ve Mevlüdü Şerif Duası* (The Turkish Encomiums and the Holy Pray of Mawlid) on the ground that 'the author propagated Shī'īsm in his work along with other "superstitious" beliefs.'[318]

In the second half of the twentieth century, Turkey made a transition from a one-party system to multi-party democracy, and during the 1950s, when the Democrat Party was in power, Alevis began to publish their sources in order to instruct an increasingly

[316] Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivleri (State Archives), Dosya:68-1341210; Fon Kodu: 30.18.1.2 Yer No: 269. 54..4. (27 January 1937) ("*Boenos Ayres'te teşekkül eden Elcamiatül İslamiyetül Aleviye tarafından basdırılan risalelerin zararlı yazıları taşıdığı anlaşıldığından Matbuat Kanunun 51 inci maddesi mucibince memlekete sokulmasının yasak edilmesi…).*

[317] Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivleri, Dosya: 8672 Fon Kodu: 30.10.0.0 Yer No: 86. 570.3 (16 February 1944) ("*Bazı yerlerinde Şii propogandasına alet olduğu anlaşılan eserin");* ("*Hele Kevser suresini anlatırken, Kevser'den murat Fatıma'dır, sahife: 30, demesi eser sahibinin Şii propagandasına aldandığını gösteren bir cehalettir.)*

[318] Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivleri, Dosya :8676 Fon Kodu: 30.10.0.0 Yer No: 86.570..8 (28 March 1944)

urbanized population and hence gradually transforming and dissolving Alevi communities. The majority of the Alevi publications of the multi-party period were composed from the written versions of the legends, stories and teachings of Ali, which used to be orally transmitted from generation to generation, while others were historical studies on the emergence of Alevism.[319] As a part of these publications, a modern Turkish adaptation of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* was published in 1957 by an Alevi publisher, Sefer Aytekin, who introduced the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* as one of the main sources about Alevism and Bektāshīsm in the preface of the book.[320] Upon its publication in modern Turkish, the DRA published a declaration in 1958 and condemned the publication of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah*. The declaration stated that the book lacked any scholarly value and aimed to lead the Alevi citizens astray, and asked religious officials to warn the Muslims about the contents of the book using a "suitable language."[321]

Like the Ottoman Empire that strived to integrate Alevi-Bektashi groups and keep them away from the influence of Shī'ī publications, the nascent Turkish republic also endeavored to further integrate Alevis into the republic. In the same manner, the DRA played an instrumental role in this process, for example, as a document issued by the DRA demonstrated, the author of a book titled "*İman ve İslam Rehberi"* (The Guide for Faith and Islam) was asked to remove the parts in which he argued that consuming

[319] Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey: Kemalism, Religion and the Nation State*, 151.

[320] Aytekin, *Hüsnüye*, 28.

[321] Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, Fon Kodu: 51..0.0.0, Yer No**:** 4.32..38 (20 March 1958); ("*Anamur Müftülüğüne: Ankara Emek basım-yayınevi yayınlarından <HÜSNİYE> adlı kitap muhteviyatı asılsız ve esassız mübahase ve münazaradan ibarettir. Müslüman Alevi vatandaşları sapıtmak gayesiyle yazılmış ilmi kıymetten mahrumdur. Kitabın mahiyeti münasip lisanla cemaati müslime anlatılarak ikaz edilmeleri hususunun alakalılara tebliğini tamimen rica ederim"*].

the meat of animals slaughtered by Alevi Qizilbash is forbidden by the Sunnī jurisprudence. The document also stated that branding the members of non-Sunnī sects or 'Alevi people who just espoused the superiority of Ali' is forbidden by Islam. Therefore, since this book unnecessarily caused polarization and disunity (*ikilik ve tefrika)* and misunderstanding (*sū-i tefehhüm*) among the Muslim citizens, the author must be warned to exclude the mentioned parts from the book.[322] By the same token, upon receiving some complaints about the *imam*s who rejected to carry out the funeral service of Alevi citizens in the mosques, the DRA issued a decree in 1953 with regard to this issue and stressed that *imam*s, or those who lead the prayer, must always cater for the funerals of Alevis and other citizens without any discrimination. It also emphasized that it is a grave sin to charge the members of others sects with heresy or apostasy, which would disturb the societal harmony and unity among the citizens.[323]

The documents utilize a language that minimizes the differences between Sunnīsm and Alevism, and by doing so, aim to integrate Alevis to Turkey on the basis of Turkish nationality and equal citizenship. It can be concluded that while the state has continued its anti-Shī'ī stance during the republican era, it has also endeavored to incorporate the Alevi community by using a more inclusive language with a special emphasis on equal citizenship and secularism. Also, like the futile attempts of the Ottoman Empire to curb the popularity of the *Risālah* and its spread among the Alevi

[322] Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi; Fon Kodu: 51, Yer No: 4.37.12. (10 October 1953), "*Ehl-i Sünnete muhalif mezhepler saliklerinin tekfîr olunamayacakları İslam fukahasınca kabul edilmiş olduğuna gore, yalnız Hazreti Ali'nin tafdiline kail olan vatandaşlarımızın kestiklerinin yenmeyeceği şeklinde düşüncelere sahip olmak ve bilhassa bu neşir suretiyle beyan ve ilan etmek İslam ulemasının bu hususstaki görüş ve beyanlarına tamamen aykırı, yersiz ve icapsız bir harekettir."*

[323] Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi; Fon Kodu: 51. 0.0.0; Yer No: 4.33..7. (18 April 1959)

and Bektāshī communities, the declarations of the DRA to forestall the spread of *Ḥusniyah* did not yield any result. On the contrary, the *Risālah* in modern Turkish continued to be published up until the present time. After Aytekin's edition in 1957, various editions have followed it in 1970[324], 1979[325], 1995[326] and 1997[327]. The 1995 edition by the prominent Alevi publisher, Can Yayınları, was published under the title of *Tam Hüsniye* (Complete *Ḥusniyah)* more than ten times.[328]

These publications attest to the fact that all the political measures and religious reactions that emerged in the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey fell short of preventing the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* from circulating among the Alevi-Bektashi. On the contrary, the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* continued to circulate so much so that it became one of the most widely-read books of the Alevi canon. As Ali Aktaş demonstrated in his sociological study on the urbanized Alevi groups by drawing on the survey results, the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* took second place (following the *Buyruk*s) in the list of works that have been read by Alevis.[329]

One might wonder about the reasons for the popularity of the *Ḥusniyah* not only among 'traditional' but also among 'modern' Alevis who have been subjected to the

[324] Ḥasan Ayyıldız, ed., *Tam Hakiki Hüsniye* (İstanbul, 1970).

[325] Nazmi Tuğrul, ed., *Alevi İnançları ve Hüsniye'nin Öyküsü* (İstanbul, 1979).

[326] Ali Adil Atalay (Vaktidolu), ed., *Tam Hüsniye* (İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 1995).

[327] Ali Toprak, ed., *Hüsniye* (İstanbul: Ant Yayınları, 1997).

[328] Can Yayınları has printed it 12 times between 1995 and 2010.

[329] Aktaş, "Kent Ortamında Alevilerin Kendilerini Tanımlama Biçimleri ve İnanç Ritüellerini Uygulama Sıklıklarının Sosyolojik Açıdan Değerlendirilmesi," 463.

challenges of modernity and rapid urbanization since the 1960s.[330] In the first place, the *Ḥusniyah,* as one of the best–selling books among the modern Alevis, has been instrumental in the formation of the modern Alevi identity. According to Rıza Yıldırım, modern Alevism replaced 'piety' with 'identity', and defined modern Alevi identity in opposition to that of the Sunnī majority.[331] In this sense, the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah's* oppositional language and content might have been instrumental in the formation of a distinctive modern Alevi identity.

In addition to this, the fact that the primary protagonist of the Risālah is a female figure who defeats her male counterparts might also have helped make the text more popular in the eyes of modern Alevis. According to Aykan Erdemir, Alevi women have enjoyed a superior position in their community compared to Sunnī women. The equality of men and women can be expressed in Alevi sources and the maxims of Hacı Bektaş Veli such as, "a female lion is also a lion". Besides the teachings of Haci Bektaş Veli, Erdemir mentions mythico-historical examples as indicators of equality between man and woman. In this regard, he mentions the "Assembly of the Forty" (*Kırklar Meclisi*) as a mythical assembly and the archetype of the Alevi congregational

[330] Rıza Yıldırım separates the history of Alevism mainly into three periods which are the formation period (11th -15th centuries), the Safavid (Kızılbaş) period (16-19th centuries) and the period of Modern Alevism (since the second half of the 20th century). Yıldırım, compares the differences between the traditional and modern Alevism by pointing out to the dissolving values and norms of the traditional Alevism under the pressures of the cosmopolitan life. Since Alevis used to live in the closed communities mostly in rural areas in which the peculiar set of values formed throughout the ages, it turned out very challenging in the modern cosmopolites to keep the traditional values and norms which were predominantly applicable only to the condition of rural life. Yıldırım also argues the possibility of forming a framework for the reference books of the traditional Alevism, and in this way he mentions a few number of the canonic texts of the traditional Alevism. In this regard he considers the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* as the component of this traditional canon. For the details of the discussion of the traditional and modern Alevism see; Yıldırım, "Geleneksel Alevilikten Modern Aleviliğe: Tarihsel Bir Dönüşümün Ana Eksenleri," 135-162.

[331] Yıldırım, "Geleneksel Alevilikten Modern Aleviliğe," 141.

ceremonies (*cem*) with the participation of twenty-two men and seventeen women whom the Prophet Muḥammad came across on his return from his ascent to heaven (*mi'raj*). It is believed that the participants performed the first ritual dance (*semah*) in this gathering, men and women together. In addition to this, Erdemir mentions *Ḥusniyah* as another mythico-historical story which has been held in esteem by the Alevis and frequently read in the evenings.[332] Therefore, Ḥusniyah has been introduced as a prototype of an Alevi woman, whose example should be emulated by other Alevi women.[333] In that sense, like the modern Iranian Muslims who frequented the tomb of Ḥusniyah, whom they revere as a historical persona, the Alevi communities today also see Ḥusniyah as a saintly figure and source of pride due to her victory over the Sunnī *'ulamā'*.

Last but not least, it should be noted that Ḥusniyah was pictured on the cover of the modern editions[334] as an unveiled beautiful lady who sits before Sunnī *'ulamā'* in the presence of the caliph. While she was defined as a veiled woman in many places of the text both in Persian and Ottoman Turkish versions, her new image must have been introduced to the modern readers in accordance with the image of the modern Alevi woman. In addition to Ḥusniyah's changing image as reflected on the covers of the modern editions, some Turkish translations of the *Ḥusniyah* omit the part on *mut'a* (temporary marriage) which is central to Twelver Shi'ism. This part was excluded, for instance, in the edition published by Ant Publishing House. The publisher states that

[332] Erdemir, "Incorporating Alevis; The Transformation of Governance and Faith-Based Collective Action in Turkey," 102-3.

[333] H. Ş. Sağlam, "Alevi-Bektaşi Kültüründe Kadın" (MA Thesis, Fatih University, 2007). Bahadır, *Alevi ve Sünni Tekkelerinde Kadın Dervişler,* 138-39.

[334] Can Yayınları has reflected the unveiled Ḥusniyah on its all editions of Ḥusniyah, in the last editions (2007 and 2010) Ḥusniyah was pictured with a radiant circle on her head.

> In this edition of Ḥusniyah we did not include the section entitled Mut'a Marriage which exists in previous versions. This practice is foreign to the understanding of Alevi and Bektāshīs of Anatolia. It is a different culture added to some editions of the book.[335]

This was not the only case. Nazmi Ertuğrul also excluded the section on *mut ʿa* without giving any explanation in his edition in 1979.[336] So, one can say that Ḥusniyah is still undergoing changes (along with her changing image and some alterations in her discussion) in line with the new religio-cultural environment in modern Turkey.

[335] Quoted in Toprak, A. (1997). *Hüsniye*, İstanbul: Ant Yayınları.; Erdemir, "Incorporating Alevis", 103.

[336] Tuğrul, N. (1979). Alevi İnançlari ve Hüsniye'nin Öyküsü, İstanbul: Er-Tu Matbaası.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the biography of a fictional polemical work can be quite helpful for a historical investigation. The present study has enabled us to explore historical contexts diachronically by unravelling the knots of a literary network formed by a narrative through the investigation of its curious appearance, circulation, translation and reproduction. The study of the historical adventure of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* across different cultural geographies has provided us with important insights and vistas into the early modern and modern popularization of Shī‘ism as well as to the resistance of it. By making brief but nontheless at times detailed inroads into the religio-political and cultural contexts, this study first discussed the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* as it appeared amidst the Shī‘ītization processes of Safavid Irān in the sixteenth century. It then contextualized it within the popular Shī‘ī polemical literature that popularized Shī‘ī theology and demonized the symbols of Sunnī Islam.

In addition to exploring the adventure and legacy of a particular polemical work, the present work has also examined how this polemical work was produced by tapping into a stock of themes, topics and frame story It showed that the Shī‘ī apologetical and polemical literatures, for the most part, have recycled earlier Shī‘ī arguments expounded in the Shī‘ī paradigmatic works, and peddled more or less the same stereotypes and accusations against Sunnī Islam. By the same token, the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* hinged on major Shī‘ī arguments in a more appealing manner in order to popularize controversial

theological issues and inculcate in its audience a distinctive Shī‘ī identity. The critical engagement with the content and frame story of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* has indicated that the narrative drew on an age-old frame story which recounted, in a word, the superiority of a slave girl to her male opponents in a debate conducted in the presence of the caliph. The heroine of this story, like ‘the hero with a thousand faces’, manifested itself in different cloaks in different religious and cultural contexts as it was seen in the story of Tawaddud and Teodor. The producer of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah,* instead of creating a new narrative, adopted a theme that had lingered in the collective memories of people in the Islamicate world and introduced it with a new identity, i.e., as a defender of Shī‘ī Islam. In parallel with the popularity of this polemical work in Iran and beyond, the literary figure, Ḥusniyah, metamorphosed into a real persona in the minds of people and has been regarded as a real scholar by the Shī‘ī biographical works, and subsequently, she was endowed with Persian identity by the Shī‘ī encyclopedic and biographical works of the twentieth century.

The present study contextualized the production of the *Risālah-i Ḥusniyah* in the early modern age of confessionalization. In the same manner, it also suggested that the translation, transmission and reproduction of this polemical text throughout the Islamicate world were mostly a concomitant result of growing significance of the confessional identities in the nineteenth century. In that sense, this study has contended that the confessionalization paradigm should not be restricted to the early modern period because this paradigm is as valuable and helpful in unpacking the dynamics of the nineteenth century as it has been in several studies noted earlier in this study. Accordingly, it argued that the Ottoman Turkish and Urdu translations of the *Risālah-i*

Husniyah were rendered from Persian in the period of the 'second confessionalization' in which growing missionary zeal and propaganda, an increase in discriminating social and religious processions, such as the Muḥarram rituals, and the scathing polemical exchanges in the vernacular languages were not only at play, but on the rise. In this period, the printing press ushered an age of 'pamphlet wars' and the polemical pitch was heightened more than ever.

The adventure of the *Risālah-i Husniyah* in the Ottoman lands and the reaction it elicited demonstrates how the Ottoman authorities and Sunnī scholars reacted to the circulation and popularity of this Shī'ī polemic. The Ottoman authorities and Sunnī scholars considered the *Risālah-i Husniyah* to be harmful on the grounds that it attacked the pillars of Sunnī-Hanafi Islam and denigrated the legitimacy of the Ottoman sultan as the custodian of Sunnī Islam. Therefore, the *Risālah-i Husniyah* needed to be subjected to strict regulations and surveillance and censor in the late Ottoman period, the most critical period in which the Sunnī scholars took sides with the sulṭān and waged war against it, and strained to refute its arguments.

This study has also argued that although Sunnī-Shī'ī polemical literature, for the most part, recycled the standardized arguments and echoed the medieval paradigmatic works, it might be considered to be a good indicator of changing political and social dynamics of the time in which it appears, and is worthy of serious study. More to the point, despite their very stagnant and repetitive nature, Sunnī-Shī'ī polemics were used instrumentally to provoke change by procuring cohesion among the audience and mobilizing them against 'the other'. The consistency in the content of this recycled polemical literature, from the polemical invective of the medieval and early modern

periods to the outpouring of the same in the pamphlet warfare of the modern day, is conspicuous. The vast body of Sunnī-Shī'ī polemical works accumulated over time is, in my opinion, muddling the prospects of a rapprochement between Sunnīs and Shī'īs by reproducing stereotypes and hostilities and by stoking the fire of memories of early traumatic incidents and making them resistant to being forgotten.

The rebuttals written against the *Risālah-i Husniyah* in the Ottoman Empire were comprised of very strong and hostile language. The Sunnī authors considered their polemical works as weapons to be wielded against the increasing Shī'ī influence and propaganda of their time. In this warfare, these polemicists emerged as warriors sparring with their pen against the 'wicked other' in order to defend Sunnī Islam. As such, they willingly assumed the responsibility of keeping their audience within the fold of Sunnī Islam and protecting the people against the 'evil characters', 'heretics' and 'heretical' thoughts that threatened to corrupt Sunnīs by spreading Shī'īte 'seditious and harmful faiths'. These polemics conceived their own audience as made up of defenseless, gullible common folks who are very susceptible to the seditious ideas and snares of the Devil, and so they explained their purpose to undeceive and warn the common people who are short-sighted (*kūtāh-bīn 'āwām),* ignorant (*jahala-i nās)* and gullible (*sāda-dīlān),* and hence, very susceptible to harmful heretical beliefs.

Last but not least, this work also explored the adventure of the *Risālah-i Husniyah* in modern Turkey and demonstrated that how the *Risālah-i Husniyah* has survived censor and rebuttal, and has been well received by the Alevi communities in Turkey. It is, now, one of the most popular sources of today's Alevis in Turkey. Moreover, this study showed that the reaction of the republic to the *Risālah-i Husniyah*

indicated that although the Republic defined itself within the rigid parameters of secularism, it was reluctant to avoid regulating the field of religion entirely.

The adventure of the *Risālah-i Husniyah* continues, therefore, its biography has yet to be completed. Further research would shed lights on its travel in different lands, especially, in South and Southeast Asia as well as in the Indonesian-Malay Archipelago. The exploration of the Malay translation of the *Risālah-i Husniyah* and its circulation in the Archipelago would provide insights into the chequered relations between Sunnī majority and Shī'ī minority in that region. All in all, the study of the transmission of this tale will continue to reveal links of an itterrelated Sunnī-Shī'ī social and intellectual world over time.

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