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Pietas Ottomanica

The House of ʿOṣmān and the Prophet Muḥammad

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The Ottoman chronicler Muṣṭafā Selānīkī (d. after 1008/1600) reports under the date of Rabīʿ al-Awwal 996 (1588) that Sultan Murād III issued the following decree:

> Tuesday the twelfth of this month is the night when his Excellence the leader of all living beings and pride of all existence – peace be upon him – was born and honoured with his visit and enlightened the courtyard of this world. It behoves us to honour him and show our reverence, so let all the minarets be illuminated, and let *mevlid*s be recited in the mosques, and the nation of sinners cry and wail and ask for his intercession, and let them occupy themselves with the recitation of blessings, praises, and benedictions. Just as in the Nights of Reġāʾib and Berāʾat let the illumination of the minarets be customary.[1]

With this decree, the birthday of the Prophet which had already been celebrated at the communal level in the Ottoman lands became established as an official holiday of the Ottoman Empire, with a public celebration in one of the imperial mosques. The report constitutes one of the few firm chronological stepping stones in a complex religious-cultural-political manifestation of a distinct relationship between the House of ʿOṣmān and the Prophet of Islam. Of course, other dynasties can claim a connection the Ottomans cannot: the current royal family of Morocco, as well as their predecessors, the Saʿdī sultans, are direct descendants of the Prophet, as are the Hashemites of Jordan. The

1 Ve sene 996 rebīʿu l-evvelinde saʿādetlü Pādişāh-ı ʿālem-penāh ḥaẕretlerinden teẕkire-i hümāyūn çıqub, "On ikinci gice işneyn gicesi, ki Server-i kāʾināt ve mefḫar-ı mevcūdāt – ṣallā llāhu ʿaleyhi ve-sellem – ḥaẕretleri dünyāya gelüb arṣa-i ṣaḥn-ı cihānı teşrīf idüb, nūrānī qıldıġı gicedür, taʿẓīm u iḥtirām eylemek vācibdür, cümle minārelerde qanādil yanub ve cevāmiʿ ve mesācidde mevlidler oqunub, günāhkār ümmet yanub yaqılub, şefāʿat ṭaleb eyleyüb, ṣalavāt ve teslīmāt ile tesbīḥ ü tehlīle iştiġāl göstersünler ve şehr-i recebde Reġāʾib gicesi ve şehr-i şaʿbānda Berāt gicesi gibi, mināreler qanādil ile münevver olmaq ʿādet olsun" diyü fermān olundı. Quoted in Karaduman, "The Royal Mawlid Ceremonies", 18.

Fāṭimids of Egypt, too, derived their claim to the caliphate from their descent from Muḥammad. What we see in the case of the Ottomans, by contrast, is a multifaceted dynamic of beliefs and practices that establish a special spiritual relationship that distinguishes them from all other dynasties, and ultimately – if implicitly – claims the Prophet as protector and symbolic overlord, a kind of dynastic patron saint. This relationship, I will argue, is distinct enough to be given its own label: *pietas Ottomanica*.

The term "*pietas Ottomanica*" is patterned on the title of a seminal study by the Austrian historian Anna Coreth, *Pietas Austriaca*, first published in 1959. Coreth identified certain theological ideas and devotional practices of the Catholic baroque as constituting a form of Catholicism that served the exaltation and legitimation of the House of Habsburg.[2] By postulating an analogous *pietas Ottomanica*, and one specifically centred on the Prophet Muḥammad, I do not intend to raise the question of connectivity, let alone influence between the two phenomena, although the chronological proximity is intriguing. Instead, I follow her in identifying a specific form of piety or religiosity that is oriented towards an imperial dynasty, in a specific historical conjuncture. Different from Coreth's material much of what I will explicate is manifested in rituals but not theorised in theological writing. My argument is, however, that such a concept of dynastic devotional culture can be helpful for an understanding of Ottoman Islam as an intellectual project, mindful of Moin's approach to the "performative aspect of Muslim kingship".[3] I conceptualise *pietas Ottomanica* as a subset of a larger complex that one might call "Ottoman Islam", and will take up the question of how it relates to those practices in the last part of this chapter.

The goal of this study is twofold: to gather evidence of this and related beliefs and practices of Prophet-centred devotions under the auspices of the House of Osman, and to contextualise them historically and socially; and to contribute further to the historicisation of Ottoman Islam with the help of a more analytical vocabulary that pays attention not only to social function, but to philosophical and theological ideas expressed, embedded, implied, or embodied in the texts and practices. Islamic studies have adopted many categorical notions from within the Islamic tradition itself, or have applied categorisations from other religious traditions. Still, researchers seeking to isolate and describe

2 The English translation appeared only recently: Coreth, *Pietas Austriaca*.

3 Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 6. Too frequently Ottoman historians have taken the legitimising function of Islamic practices and norms for granted, and abstained from further analysis (Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*, 150, points to the caliphate; Gruber, *The Praiseworthy One*, 269, speaks of the sultans in the Prophet's footsteps). See, for a more extensive argument, Karateke, "Opium for the Subjects?".

a specific phenomenon often find themselves at a loss for useful terminology. Seeming dichotomies like Sunnī–Shīʿī can overlap more often than scholars like to admit;[4] the opposite of "Sufi" has turned out to be impossible to define;[5] terms like heterodox have been rightly rejected together with distinctions of high vs "low" Islam in all its variants.[6] Alternatively, students of religion have resorted to applying concepts that emerged in Christian contexts and explored parallel or comparable phenomena: thus we hear about Islamic Protestantism, Iranian messianism, or Ottoman confessionalisation.[7] The heuristic value of such comparisons and analogies should not be questioned here. Rather, they illustrate my point that the study of Islam continues to search for an abstract yet precise language with which nuances can be described that define historically specific versions of Islam. Shahab Ahmed's critique of academic and internal discourses about Islam has recently articulated this problem in poignant form. Yet, where he is primarily concerned with the "outer boundaries", with "what is Islam?", and hence also "what is not Islam?", my question here primarily is: what kind, what form, what hue, or tone of Islam? Or: which kinds of "religiosities" within Islam? I propose that we need to understand and conceptualise better the contrasts and differences not between remote poles (such as Geertz's case studies of Morocco and Indonesia),[8] but between adjacent and at times intersecting forms of Islam. Ahmed speaks of "ideas and practices … such as *exploration, ambiguity, ambivalence, wonder, aestheticization, diffusion, differentiation, polyvalence, relativism,* and *contradiction*. These component elements, trajectories, and values must be accounted for alongside their counter-components of *prescription, restriction, homogenization, monovalency, orthodoxy*, and *agreement*."[9] Several of these concepts apply directly to our specific case. The challenge is to describe the specifics of the how and why, and to articulate the implicit theology that makes these practices meaningful within Islam. Necessarily, this first attempt will be selective in terms of material included, and tentative in terms of its interpretations and conclusions.

4 Hagen, "Salvation and Suffering".

5 Strikingly: Radtke, "Warum ist der Sufi orthodox"; see also Knysh, *Sufism*.

6 Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 7; Waardenburg, "Official and Popular Religion"; Shoshan, *Popular Culture*. See also Dressler's warning against binaries in religious studies in general: Dressler, *Writing Religion*, 220–38.

7 Stremmelaar, "The Islamic Ethic"; Loimeier, "Is There Something like 'Protestant Islam'?"; Terzioğlu, "Where ʿIlm-i Hāl Meets Catechism".

8 Geertz, *Islam Observed*.

9 Ahmed, *What Is Islam*?, 303.

1.1 A Record of Ottoman Dynastic Devotions

Let me begin with a phenomenological overview of Ottoman dynastic devotions centred on the Prophet Muḥammad.[10] As noted above, the celebration of the Prophet's birthday (*mevlid*) was officially mandated by Sultan Murād III. His grandson Aḥmed I included the celebration in the foundation deed for his mosque in 1613, and it seems to have been held there ever since the completion of the mosque in 1617.[11] The exact form the celebration took is not known, although it is safe to assume that a performance of the canonical *mevlid* poem by Süleymān Çelebi, *Vesīletü n-necāt* (Means to redemption), was central to it. Written in the early fifteenth century, and transmitted in hundreds of variants and thousands of copies, this poem in charming accessible Turkish, but informed by a long tradition of theology and mysticism, is still extolled today.[12] The first more detailed description of an imperial *mevlid* celebration is only furnished by d'Ohsson at the beginning of the nineteenth century, yet historians have usually assumed continuity of the main framework.[13] D'Ohsson remarks that unlike other rituals he observed as specific to Ottoman religious culture this one was performed by and for the imperial family. He describes a seating arrangement of sultan, palace servants, and *'ulamā'* which makes the assembly a mirror of the empire qua imperial household. The ceremony is interrupted several times by the presentation of sweets and sherbet.[14] As a piece of imperial business a letter from the *sharīf* of Mecca about the state of the Holy Sites and the pilgrimage was, according to d'Ohsson, presented in the course of the ceremony.

Süleymān Çelebi's *mevlid* poem was not the only literary representation patronised by the imperial dynasty in that period. Translations of *sīra* literature proliferated in the sixteenth century, as did poetry in his praise, culminating in a poetic masterpiece like Fuẓūlī's "Water *Qaṣīda*" (*ṣu qaṣīdesi*) and devotional

10 Since I started on this project, the richly documented work by Christiane Gruber has appeared, which contains a chapter on Ottoman devotions: Gruber, *The Praiseworthy One*. I thank her for making this important work available to me.

11 Rüstem, "The Spectacle of Legitimacy", 268; see Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 516.

12 There is a vast literature, some of it in itself devotional, on this work (Hagen, "Mawlid, Ottoman").

13 d'Ohsson, *Tableau général*, 2:358ff.

14 Selānīkī recorded severe criticism that the funds of the mosque's endowment were being spent on luxuries to host the imperial elite, leading to the suspension of the *mevlid* in 1599; once reintroduced with the foundation of the Sultan Aḥmed Mosque, the hospitality extended to all those attending (Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 516).

icons like Khāqānī's versified rendering of the Prophet's beauty, *ḥilye*.[15] Lavishly illustrated works on dynastic history and Islamic and Prophetic history captivated the attention of imperial patrons.[16] Murād III commissioned an illustrated copy of a *sīra* for his son, the future Meḥmed III, apparently building on the same artistic tradition and talent. He chose Muṣṭafā Ḍarīr's late fourteenth-century work, which at that time must have had a distinctly archaic ring to it and resonated with its epic heroic and hagiographic themes. In six volumes with 814 miniatures, it was probably the most spectacular project of Ottoman bookmaking of the time.[17]

At the time of the establishment of the imperial *mevlid* celebration, the House of ʿOs̱mān already owned an impressive collection of objects connected to the person of the Prophet, several of them with supreme symbolic and ritual value, and the dynasty continued to add to it in the course of the following centuries.[18] Unfortunately, the acquisition of many objects is not documented, or only in spurious and contradictory ways. It is often assumed in the secondary literature that at least the most important ones were seized in the context of the Ottoman conquest of Cairo in 1517, but the reality is more complicated.[19] An early document suggests that a Qurʾān copied by the caliph ʿUthmān (r. 644–56) was gifted by the Mamluks in the fifteenth century, while another appears to have been sent by the viceroy of Egypt, Meḥmed ʿAlī, in 1226/1811; other acquisitions date even later.[20] Here, we will focus on those objects that became the centre of specific rituals and obtained political significance starting in the late sixteenth century.

Awarding a cloak or mantle of honor (*khilʿa*) is an old gesture in the moral economy of patronage in the Middle East. The recipient acknowledges the dominance of the donor, but is also elevated by his favour. A late legend (clearly etiological in character) explains that the poet Kaʿb b. Zuhayr (d. 645 or 647) expressed his submission to the Prophet, whom he had previously satirised, in

15 Yeniterzi, *Dîvan şiirinde naʿt*; Gruber, *The Praiseworthy One*, 253–54; *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (TDVİA), s.v. "Hâkānī". A periodisation of Ottoman literature on the prophet is proposed in Hagen, "*Sira*, Ottoman Turkish".

16 Fetvacı, *Picturing History*.

17 Three of the original volumes are still housed in the Topkapı Palace (Tanındı, *Siyer-i nebî*).

18 See Öz, *Hırka-i Saadet Dairesi*, for an early description of the collection.

19 That later historians attributed more of the collection to the early days of Selīm I's conquest of Egypt in itself reflects a tendency towards a certain kind of religiosity. It is telling that besides d'Ohsson the two authors most actively promoting the veneration of these objects are the traveller and prolific mythograph Evliyā Çelebi, and the historian Fındıqlılı Silaḥdār Meḥmed Aġa, who due to his office appears to have been in charge of the chamber of relics in his day.

20 Gruber, *The Praiseworthy One*, 273; Aydın, *Hırka-i Saadet Dairesi*, 91.

an ode (*qaṣīda*) as a poetic gift; the act was acknowledged with a counter-gift, a mantle from the Prophet, which was later acquired by the Umayyad caliphs and passed on through the ʿAbbāsids.[21] It was this mantle that the Ottomans claimed to have seized in the course of the conquest of Egypt in 1517.[22] It accompanied Meḥmed III on his campaign against Eger in 1596; some sources attribute the miraculous turnaround of the battle to the sultan's prayer in front of the mantle, or even to the sultan putting the mantle on.[23] In the seventeenth century prospective sultans went to pray in front of the mantle before their accession to the throne.[24] Several had the mantle, in an elaborate case, carried with them at all times. Muṣṭafā II held on to it as a kind of imperial talisman until his deposition, when he surrendered it to his brother Aḥmed III, expressing his wish that it be a blessing.[25] Elaborate rituals of visiting the mantle under the full moon of Ramadan evolved since Aḥmed III, turning it into a contact relic to be touched (kissed) directly or indirectly, with a kerchief or water that was then distributed.[26] Ceremonial regulations from the nineteenth century as well as d'Ohsson describe these rites in much detail.[27]

While the mantle may in fact have come into Ottoman possession as early as 1517, the most plausible historical account states that the banner of the Prophet, named ʿUqāb, was brought from Damascus to be taken on campaign against Hungary for the first time in 1593; prior to that, it had accompanied the Syrian pilgrimage caravan to Mecca on a regular basis. In the hands of the Ottomans, however, it assumed a distinctly military symbolism. In 1595, the banner was not returned to Damascus, but kept in Istanbul.[28] Its display in the palace yard marked the call for a new military campaign. As it was carried on campaign, being paraded through the streets of Istanbul by the army leaving for, or returning from, the front made it the only relic visible to the populace. On campaign often descendants of the Prophet were gathered around

21 The legend appears outside of the historical tradition proper, as Stetkevych, *The Mantle Odes*, has pointed out.

22 There are contradictory reports if the mantle had been kept in Cairo or was brought from Mecca at that time (*TDVİA*, s.v. "Hırka-i Sa'adet").

23 These are examples cited by Schmidt, "The Egri Campaign". One other account speaks of the Prophet's sword in this way, but none mentions the banner. A double-page miniature in Taʿlīqī-zāde's *Egri Fetḥi Taʾrīkhi* shows the sultan on his way to the battle, with servant carrying the case with the mantle close behind him (Aydın, *Hırka-i Saadet Dairesi*, 56–57).

24 It is noteworthy that this visit did not involve actually donning the mantle.

25 Vatin and Veinstein, *Le Sérail ébranlé*, 295.

26 Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*, 151.

27 Sketches of those ceremonies are shown in Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*; Karateke, *An Ottoman Protocol Register*.

28 Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanli devletinin saray teşkilatı*, 248–49.

it. The original banner was disintegrating when it came into Ottoman hands, and pieces of it were sewn into three different banners, only one of which was carried on campaign, while the others remained behind in Istanbul, a fact that shows that the inherent blessing of the object was more important than an antiquarian notion of historical integrity.[29] More than any other object, the banner became a symbol of government and legitimacy. In several instances, the banner was deliberately displayed to quell unrest among unruly troops. In 1826, it was shown on the pulpit of Sultan Aḥmed Mosque immediately before the loyal troops moved to crush the janissaries. This was the last time the banner was shown in public.[30]

The banner highlighted the importance of the tomb of Ebū Eyyūb Khālid el-Anṣārī, the standard bearer of the Prophet, near the Golden Horn.[31] Eyyūb, as the Turks simply called him, had allegedly died during one of the first Muslim sieges in front of the walls of Constantinople in the seventh century, and had been buried in secrecy. His tomb was "discovered" by the spiritual advisor of Meḥmed II on the eve of the Ottoman conquest in 1453, an important element in the myth of Muslim Constantinople. A pilgrimage to this tomb, in the course of which the sultan was girded with a sword, was added to the complex of rituals of accession to the Ottoman throne with Selīm II in 1566. From Eyyūb's shrine the sultan returned to the city on horseback and was greeted by the janissaries with a reference to the mythical "Golden Apple" as the site of eschatological conquest. A sword attributed to the Prophet was presented to Sultan Murād III shortly after his accession to the throne in 1574, but it is only with Muṣṭafā II, a century later, that the sword used in the ritual at Eyyūb is identified as that of the Prophet, strengthening the references to early Islam in the making of an Ottoman sultan.[32]

Mantle, banner, and sword are frequently referred to as "relics" in modern scholarship, but Gruber's term "vestiges" (translating Arabic *āthār*) appears more appropriate, leaving the term "relics" to denote bodily relics, such as hair and teeth, and other parts of clothing, such as the Prophet's sandals. In comparison with the vestiges mentioned above, the ritual significance of the latter did not go beyond demonstrations of reverence in handling and storing

29 Aydın, *Hırka-i Saadet Dairesi*, 74–85.

30 Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanli devletinin saray teşkilatı*, 259–60.

31 Bozkurt, "Mukaddes Emanetlerin Tarihi", 17, claims that rather than in the palace it was kept in the tomb of Ebū Eyyūb el-Anṣārī until 1730.

32 Vatin and Veinstein, *Le Sérail ébranlé*, 313–15; the source in this case is the Silāḥdār, who, as noted, was per his office involved in the keeping of the imperial relics. In a later period, a sword attributed to the eponym of the dynasty, ʿOsmān I, was used instead, indicating the malleability of these rituals.

them. Nor were such relics exclusive to the dynasty, as many members of the elite appeared to have owned such items.[33] The exception were footprints of the Prophet: an impression in the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem marks the earthly starting point for the ascension to heaven (*miʿrāj*). A replica of that impression is found in the collection of the palace.[34] Late legends state that the Prophet's foot used to sink into rock surfaces like mud, explaining the existence of many more footprints.[35] In fact, several more were acquired by the Ottomans, suggesting that they were not all considered equal. Aḥmed I paid a substantial sum for the impression that had been kept in the mausoleum of Sultan Qā'itbāy in Cairo, to be placed in his own mosque after its completion. A dream, however, compelled him to return it, but before he did so he had an aigrette (*sorguç*) made in its shape, with the verses:

> Why should I not wear on my head like a crown/the image of the foot the Shah of the Prophets//He is the rose in the rose garden of felicity –/O Aḥmed, always rub your face at the feet of this rose.[36]

Wearing this aigrette with its representation of the Prophet's footprint on certain holidays and receptions, Aḥmed added not quite a new rite, but certainly a distinct statement about his and his dynasty's special relationship to the Prophet. The poem serves as a commentary on the practice, highlighting its expression of piety and humility.

1.2 Representation: Images and Vestiges

After this survey of Prophet-centred devotions, we can now turn to a number of intersecting structural elements, attitudes, values, and patterns that are shared by these devotions and constitute the characteristics of *pietas Ottomanica*. The observations in this and the following parts depend on detailed documentation of practices, since there is no exegetical discourse surrounding them that could provide direct access to contemporary theorisations, perceptions, or emotions involved.

33 Aydın, *Hırka-i Saadet Dairesi*, 106.
34 Aydın, *Hırka-i Saadet Dairesi*, 115.
35 Arnold and Burton-Page, "ḳadam sharīf".
36 Aydın, *Hırka-i Saadet Dairesi*, 118. The last distich can also be understood as "always pay homage to this rose's pre-eminence".

The assembly of vestiges in the hands of the Ottomans all by itself must have created a powerful sense of the Prophet's immediate and physical presence, which is I argue a pervasive feature of *pietas Ottomanica*. Summarising an argument by Henry Corbin, Carl Ernst has pointed out how a rigorous doctrine of divine transcendence creates a need in the community for a more approachable, palpable intermediary figure, and shown how this place in the systematic logic was in Islam frequently assigned to the Prophet.[37] Especially Ibn ʿArabī's school of mysticism has, by proclaiming Muḥammad the "Perfect Man", made him, in Schimmel's words, "the suture between the Divine and the created world", and "the barzakh, the isthmus between the Necessary and contingent existence".[38] It is this "intermediate principle" (Schimmel), in its visual and palpable form, to which *pietas Ottomanica* is latching on. The re-presentation of the Prophet – in the sense of "bringing into the present" – first and foremost creates an aura of protection and blessing (*baraka*). We have seen how prayer in the presence of vestiges becomes more efficacious, and how they act as talismans for those carrying them or taking care of them.

We see, however, that the framing of the object at times matters significantly. The palace collection includes a key to the Kaʿba, which according to an enclosed letter was sent to Murād IV by the *sharīf* of Mecca, as a means to ensure victory when Murād IV set out to recapture Baghdad from the Safavids in 1635. Despite the promising symbolism, enhanced by the etymological connection between conquest (*fatḥ*) and key (*miftāḥ*), it appears that this talisman failed to gain the sustained veneration afforded to the other vestiges. While it is said that Murād IV did in fact take it on campaign, it seems to have been separated from the others and recovered only in the nineteenth century.[39] If it was the lack of a direct connection to the Prophet, or the unabashed request for a position for the emissary from Mecca, that undercut the attempt to create a new vestige is impossible to decide.

In other instances, the framing involved additional elements which complicate the idea of representation. The Ottoman framing of the Holy Mantle is a case in point: to the degree that it is discussed at all the origin of the mantle is linked to the legend of Kaʿb b. Zuhayr and the physical object presented to him by the Prophet, but Kaʿb's poem, an icon of classical Arabic poetry, is nowhere present. Instead, the presentation in the Topkapı Palace quotes a different

37 Ernst, "Muḥammad as the Pole of Existence", 132.

38 Schimmel, *And Muhammad Is His Messenger*, 134.

39 According to a second document kept with the key today it was recovered from a mansion in Edirne. One wonders if the neglect on behalf of the Ottomans might not result from unspoken doubts about the authenticity of the object and the story (Aydın, *Hırka-i Saadet Dairesi*, 162–67).

ode associated with a mantle narrative, that is, the *Qaṣīdat al-burda* of Būṣīrī (d. 1296?). This praise poem for the Prophet in highly complex *badīʿ* style does not mention a mantle at all, but an extraneous legend says that Būṣīrī had been paralysed by a stroke, and woke up restored to health after the Prophet in a dream gave him a mantle. Both the framing narrative and the poem itself can be considered mystical calques on Kaʿb's story, shifting the essential motive of repentance and the offer of protection from the political to the spiritual realm. As Stetkevych has argued, Kaʿb's legend produced a "relic" (or vestige) as material object, but Būṣīrī's first and foremost created a miracle, and a poem as talisman that could effectuate not only spiritual but physical healing.[40] However, when the Ottomans decorated the chamber where the Holy Mantle was kept with the opening lines of Būṣīrī's *Burda*, they connected this poetic talisman back to a material object, initially unrelated, and created a new myth that combined the piety at the core of Būṣīrī's mysticism with the political significance of the mantle associated with the caliphate.[41] It is remarkable that the interpretive narratives of Kaʿb and Būṣīrī are nowhere quoted, but without their help the entire assembly lacks a coherent meaning.

Representation through objects needs to be juxtaposed with other forms and media, specifically, with imagery, on the one hand, and ritual, on the other. The immediacy that is inherent in a physical vestige sacralized by its place in the actions of the Prophet finds its counterpart in the lively imagination with which the illustrators of Ḍarīr's *Siyer-i Nebī* grounded the Prophet in realities of everyday life. Sacred aura literally intersects with physical reality in a painting of newborn Muḥammad, shown with a veiled face, being breastfed by his nurse Ḥalīma. Others show little Muḥammad in school, or in a brawl with a rival gang of Meccan youngsters.[42] Later on in the chronology, examples abound of Muḥammad with his daughter and grandchildren in scenes of intimate family life. The Muḥammad of the text is the manifestation of cosmic substance, the *Ḥaqīqa Muḥammadiyya*, but in the pictures, he is also fully human, and directly relatable, in a kind of intimacy and an emotional, one might say sentimental, bond.

The Muḥammad of the *mevlid* initially seems to be very different from that of Ḍarīr's *Siyer*: the *mevlid* text contains almost no references to the worldly life, but focuses on the advent and initiation of the Prophet, his birth and the ascension (*miʿrāj*).[43] But it is doubtful that Murād III and his contemporaries

40 Stetkevych, "From Text to Talisman".

41 Vatin and Veinstein, *Le Sérail ébranlé*, 294–96; more on the caliphate below.

42 Examples in Tanındı, *Siyer-i nebî*.

43 I take the term "initiation" from Birkeland, *The Legend*.

would have perceived this difference, and would not simply emphasise one or the other aspect depending on context and spiritual need, and would be perfectly capable of thinking those contrasts together, as Shahab Ahmed suggested.[44] The *mevlid* is of interest here because the ceremony included another instance of re-presentation, in that, according to d'Ohsson, all those present rose when the narrative reached the moment of Muḥammad's birth, thus ritually welcoming the redeemer in their presence, turning what had been a passive reception of a textual performance into a dramatic enactment of the salvific moment of Muḥammad's manifestation on earth and in time.[45] Many manuscript versions insert at this point a passage that has become known as the "Welcome Chorus" (*Merḥabā bölümü*), with which the worshippers literally greet the arriving Prophet. The passage is certainly not by Süleymān Çelebi, but exactly the fact that this redaction is so persistent shows the ritual importance of creating the sacred time-space of the Prophet's presence.[46]

The modes of re-presenting the Prophet were not static after the crystallisation of *pietas Ottomanica* in the late sixteenth century. The immediacy and intimacy of the illustrations of the *Siyer* was not replicated in later decades or centuries. Instead, more abstract forms took over. On the one hand, we find depictions of items of daily use associated with the Prophet, like a floor mat, prayer rug, and vessels for washing, depicted in works of pious literature.[47] As such, they appear to continue the notion of the Prophet's human character, and the simplicity of his daily life, but these are not depictions of extant vestiges but imagined objects. In this way, they put more distance between the pious viewer and the object of his devotion than earlier images, or the actual vestiges safeguarded in the palace. On the other hand, a new form of calligraphy emerged at the end of the seventeenth century, adding new dimensions to the question of representing the Prophet. The calligrapher Hāfiẓ ʿOsmān (1642–98) is credited with the creation of calligraphic panels that contain as their main text a *ḥadīth* with a description of the Prophet's physical appearance, framed

44 Note that the *mevlid* section in Ḍarīr shows many similarities to Süleymān Çelebi, and may even have been a source of inspiration (Egüz, "Erzurumlu Mustafa Darîr'in Sîretü'n-Nebî'sindeki Türkçe Manzumeler (İnceleme-Metin)", 41–50).

45 d'Ohsson, *Tableau général*, 2:365.

46 Many supposedly scholarly editions of Çelebi's work (e.g. by Necla Pekolcay or Faruk Timurtaş) include this passage, although Ateş, whose edition still sets the standard, has shown that it derives from another *mevlid* work (Ateş, ed., *Süleyman Çelebi*). The parallels with Christian celebrations of Christmas are hard to overlook (Dedes, "Süleyman Çelebi's Mevlid"). Modern performances in Turkey, especially among women, included yet other ways of conjuring the bodily experience of Ḥalīma and the presence of the Prophet (Tapper and Tapper, "The Birth of the Prophet").

47 Gruber, *The Praiseworthy One*, 271.

by other *ḥadīth* and frequently the names of the *rāshidūn* caliphs.[48] The *ḥilye*, as the text and also the genre is called, visualises the Prophet no longer directly, as a (more or less) veristic image, but through a text, and thus again creates an additional step of abstraction. On the other hand, while images like the illustrations to Ḍarīr were contained in book, and not easily accessible, the *ḥilye* could be made into a tableau and hung on the wall for constant visibility, so that the greater abstraction was accompanied by a much greater presence of the image.

1.3 Representation: Place

To create a presence of the Prophet through image, vestige, or ritual raises the question of space. Does the mythical space-time of the Prophet's presence take the devotee to a "*tempus illud*", as Eliade would call it, and also a "*locus ille*"? The collection of sacred objects in the Ottoman palace includes a number of items distinctly linked to locality, and to the Kaʿba in particular, in addition to the key mentioned above, but it is hard to tell if anything like a ritual location of Mecca or the sacred district crystallised around it. There is no record of any ceremonies linked to these objects that would parallel those involving the vestiges mentioned before.[49] By contrast, their location within the spatial configuration of Ottoman power carries a great deal of symbolic significance in the late sixteenth century. Succeeding Murād III, one of the great mythopoets and mystagogues of *pietas Ottomanica*, his son Meḥmed III created a veritable shrine for these objects when he placed them in a suite at the end of the third courtyard of the Topkapı Palace. In the architectural structure of the palace, as demonstrated by Necipoğlu, there is a progression through gates and courtyards to realms of ever higher privacy, secrecy, and sanctity. The suite in question thus is at the very heart, a kind of sanctum sanctorum, originally designated as the sultan's sleeping chamber. This sacred space, resting place of the charismatic person of the sultan (more on that below), now was turned into a kind of chapel for the mantle in particular, decorated with Būṣīrī's *Burda* around the walls and Q 48 in the dome. Necipoğlu may well be right when she speculates that this transformation occurred in response to the

48 Taşkale and Gündüz, *Hilye-i Şerife*.

49 The question of why no Ottoman sultan ever made the pilgrimage to Mecca has puzzled historians (Karateke, "Opium for the Subjects?"), with the aborted plan by ʿOṣmān II (r. 1622–24) as the possible exception. Without going further into this matter, I suggest that any answer has to take into account the shifting attitudes towards piety and sanctity of the sultans outlined here.

miraculous victory at Haçova in 1596.[50] The physical vestiges of the Prophet thus took over the space at the centre of the palace, of the imperial government. They claimed the true power of the empire and relegated the sultan, who moved into the harem, to a metaphorical role of vicegerency in the name of the Prophet. Metaphorically speaking, the Prophet at the centre of the palace also eclipsed two earlier sacred figures that served basically as dynastic patron saints, first Shaykh Edebali, father-in-law and source of blessing to ʿOs̱mān I, and then Eyyūb himself, as the previous link of Constantinople to the Prophet.

1.4 Charisma and Emotion

A second prominent feature of *pietas Ottomanica* besides these types of representation was a validation of charisma, by which I mean, following Max Weber, a (perceived) gift of leadership, power, magic, and heroism, which elevates those who possess it above the common people and legitimates disruptive and revolutionary action.[51] In Sunnī Islam, the Prophet's charisma was routinised, again in Weber's terms, through traditionalisation, with the "authority of precedent" created by the leader's "charismatic creativity in law and administration".[52] In Sunnī Islam, strictly speaking, the resulting systematisation has not left much space for charisma as such, but Ottomans were familiar with other manifestations in addition. Like many Turkic dynasties, the Ottomans, too, were believed by their followers to possess a hereditary royal charisma that enabled them to rule, and, while never articulated explicitly, manifests itself in political ritual, prominently in the process of death and accession of sultans.[53] On the other hand, a routinisation of Prophetic charisma through Muḥammad's descendants was not limited to Shīʿī Islam, but was widely accepted among many Ottomans, evident in the veneration of the *ehl-i beyt*, the family of the Prophet, and in theories that saw a continuation of the sainthood of the Imams through the Sufi orders.[54] However, there are more specific ways in which charisma was

50 Doubts remain because the miracle itself is missing in so many contemporary sources, so that it is not clear where and when this legend originated (Schmidt, "The Egri Campaign"). Nevertheless, in the exegetical tradition, Q 48 is often connected to the crisis at Ḥudaybiyya, in the sixth year of the hijra, as an example of victory after apparent defeat (Hagen, "Hudaybiyya").

51 Weber, "Three Types"; Feuchtwang, *Anthropology*, chapter 7, 107–25.

52 Weber, "Three Types", 9.

53 Vatin and Veinstein, *Le Sérail ébranlé*.

54 Bashir, "Muḥammad in Ṣūfī Eyes", shows this for Central Asian early modern hagiographies; some of the same texts were very popular among Ottomans (Hagen, "*Sira*, Ottoman Turkish").

an essential part of *pietas Ottomanica*. First, the vestiges discussed above can be understood as vessels through which some of the Prophet's charisma was transferred to later holders. As the earlier transmission of Kaʿb's mantle to the ʿAbbāsid caliphs shows, it directly functions as imperial insignia indicating a claim to the right to rule. Blessing obtained to the regular visitor of the mantle, but the miracle of a victorious battle brought about by it is more, and could only obtain to a leader who is a charismatic figure himself. But the Ottoman sultans did not limit their charismatic claims to succession to the ʿAbbāsids. As Cornell Fleischer has shown, especially Süleymān I was considered by an inner circle in the palace as a messianic figure, based on esoteric knowledge of divine gifts and the cycles of salvation history.[55] Süleymān I's grandson Murād III likewise, in his mysterious dream accounts he sent to his spiritual advisor Shaykh Şucāʿ, on many occasions expresses ideas of a messianic identity for himself. Just as much, if not more explicitly, Murād III identified in his dreams, in various ways, with the Prophet. He saw Muḥammad's light transferred to himself, with all his miracles except for prophethood, and he found himself equally beloved by God. In other dreams he was told that he would be a prophet if it were not for Muḥammad being the Seal of Prophethood, and that "God created the world for Muḥammad's sake, Muḥammad for Murād's sake, and Murād for his [God's] sake."[56] That is to say, Murād III experienced himself as culmination of a cosmic order that had previously manifested itself in Muḥammad. Of course, only the most intimate spiritual confidantes of Süleymān I and Murād III would have been aware of these claims at the time, which were not publicly declared, and would have been unintelligible and even heretic to the uninitiated masses. Yet this tradition of a sacred kingship linked to the Prophet is likely to have continued in some form in subsequent generations.

It is one of the essential features of charisma that it does not bear rules, and Markus Dressler has aptly drawn a distinction between charisma-loyal and scripture-loyal religiosity, which provides a useful analytical lens for us.[57] *Pietas Ottomanica* in fact displays a striking ambivalence towards the law – as the epitome of scripture-loyalty – that was based on the praxis of the Prophet. The associations with the Prophet examined here all centre on his heroic and spiritual persona rather than the medium of the revelation of the Qurʾān, and even less so the centre of a polity and the source of a legal and social order. The

55 Fleischer, "Seer to the Sultan"; Fleischer, "Ancient Wisdom".

56 Cf. dreams 178, 216, 544, 656, 778, 783, 965, 1427, and others, in Felek, ed., *Kitābü'l-menāmāt*.

57 Dressler, *Die alevitische Religion*, 17–20; it bears mentioning that this distinction is different from older conceptualisations as high vs popular religion, which do not fit the social realities. For a link of Ḍarīr's *Siyer* to "popular religion", see Shoshan, *Popular Culture*.

essential moments that hold the promise of salvation are his birth, his entry into the world, and the ascension to heaven (*miʿrāj*), which culminated in the encounter with God. It is here that the Prophet received that ultimate gift from God, the right of intercession on the Day of Judgement (*şefāʿat*). The hope for intercession is the crucial takeaway from the *mevlid* celebrations; just as the text almost immediately transitions from the narrative of the *miʿrāj* to the Prophet's death, so the *mevlid* becomes an element in rituals of mourning. The Prophet's intercession, however, is not won through punctilious observation of the law. While the law cannot be ignored, its perfect observation is deemed impossible, and every human remains a sinner in need of forgiveness, that is, intercession: this is the meaning encapsulated in the poem's title, "Means to redemption". *Şefāʿat* therefore, as based in the Prophet's sacred status, his charisma, appears to sidestep the rational logic of accounting for deeds, and the measuring of reward and punishment inherent in the law. The only way to attain it is the embrace of the sacred persona of the Prophet in love, and to express this love in personal devotion, in the celebration of the Prophet's beauty, and in gratefulness for his role as redeemer.

The expression of love for the Prophet in the most profound, emotional, fervent ways and the hope for salvation feed on each other, and account for the effusive emotionality of *pietas Ottomanica*, which is another characteristic feature.[58] It is already present in the Shīʿī martyrologies of the sixteenth century, for instance in Fuẓūlī's *Garden of the Felicitous*, or the same author's *qaṣīda* in praise of the Prophet, which uses every trope in the book to express the desire for the beloved. It speaks from the sentimental dimension of the illustrations of the *Siyer*, which often juxtapose familial intimacy with high drama, and it suffuses the poetic and narrative works on the Prophet of the time.[59] My point here is that emotion appears to be the one appropriate response to the display of charisma; more specifically, it is love, desire, as the central emotion of *pietas Ottomanica*, and – as Walter Andrews has shown – of Ottoman Sufism and Ottoman lyrical poetry more generally.

1.5 First Conclusion: The Political Implications of *Pietas Ottomanica*

This is, then, the moment to ask what *pietas Ottomanica* means in the interaction and mutual perception between the sultan, his servants, and his subjects.

58 A comparison with the emotional registers of baroque Christian religiosity, both Catholic and Protestant, is beyond the scope of this chapter, but would be very interesting.

59 Hagen, "Salvation and Suffering".

We are in a position to add nuance and complexity to a replication of the Marxian "opium for the people".[60] In fact, the sultans appear in complicated and partly contradictory roles in mediating between the community, on the one hand, and prophetic power and blessing, on the other. Here we find the different intellectual moves that in their multilayered contradictions for Shahab Ahmed together constitute the idea of Islam. Süleymān I's messianism and Murād III's claims to a quasi-prophetic, post-prophetic, or meta-prophetic status in a sacred hierarchy separate them entirely from the community of believers; they share in an esoteric mystery that is utterly inaccessible to regular Muslims, who therefore are taught a different, exoteric faith.[61] This polarity between the inspired sultan close to the Divine, and the masses, however, collapses when the sultan himself showcases his humility before the Prophet as the Pride of Creation, expressed so poignantly in Aḥmed I's aigrette with the Prophet's footprint. Humility in the veneration of the Prophet thus includes an egalitarian dimension (if we neglect the pitfall of humble pride). The mantle and the sword clearly resonate with familiar insignia of political power, and have thus been interpreted as symbols of the Ottoman claim to the caliphate as the succession of the Prophet's leadership of the community. Yet, as we have seen, the devotions centred on the Prophet did not typically reference governance and law, *siyāsa* and *şarʿ*, that would be enacted by the sultan. As I have shown elsewhere, political decision-making, especially where it included consultation of jurisconsults and legal opinions, only in exceptional cases drew directly on political or military actions of the Prophet as guiding example.[62] Imperial legitimacy, in other words, to the degree that it was at stake in *pietas Ottomanica*, did not highlight the sultan as divinely sanctioned successor-caliph of Muḥammad, and enforcer of his law, although these aspects clearly mattered in other contexts. Instead, legitimacy here accrued because the sultan modelled pious behaviour vis-à-vis the Prophetic vestiges, and the successes of his rule, manifested in victories on the battlefield, were divine affirmations of his personal piety. At one level, this sultanic piety of humble veneration and love for the Prophet modelled a type of religiosity for more general consumption. Aḥmed I's order to publicly celebrate the *mevlid* spoke of the duty of the population to do penitence, yet it is hard to see the ritual as a tool for social disciplining as which religion is so frequently interpreted. Aḥmed I did not link penitence to a call for action or reform of mores and attitudes, so it is actually

60 Karateke, "Opium for the Subjects?".

61 This distinction was captured by early modern Europeans as religio duplex: Assmann, *Religio Duplex*.

62 Hagen, "Hudaybiyya".

deprived of its mobilising potential. Instead, the ruler here helps to facilitate a path to salvation through devotion, turning penitence into quietism. Other paths, however, are blocked for the general population, as the sultan did not assume the role of an impresario for the Prophetic vestiges for the general population, but only shared the privileged access to them with members of his own household. The cult of the mantle remained a ritual of very limited visibility, involving only the innermost circle of the imperial household. Different, for instance, from the *Heiltumsweisungen* of German emperors in the late Middle Ages, ordinary believers would never see the sacred object itself, or even be aware of the ritual that took place.[63] Again, however, to the degree that these practices registered outside, they would contribute to the image of personal piety, if not sanctity of the ruling sultans. This piety extended beyond death, as the body of the deceased sultan was washed on a bier outside the shrine of the Holy Mantle, and ʿAbdülḥamīd II was buried with one of the kerchiefs that had been used to clean the mantle.[64] Thus, when considering the public message emerging from *pietas Ottomanica*, the personal dimension should not be underestimated.[65]

1.6 Second Conclusion: *Pietas Ottomanica* in Context

In bringing devotional practices and beliefs centred on the Prophet together in an assumed complex that I termed *pietas Ottomanica* I have naturally been selective, since this specific type of religiosity obviously does not comprise all of Ottoman Islam. I therefore conclude by placing it in that larger context, and highlight some of the tensions and dynamics, and the interpretive possibilities that emerge from them. Given the limitations of space, and the obvious need for further research, all these conclusions have to be considered tentative.

First and foremost, *pietas Ottomanica* needs to be juxtaposed with a rigidly orthopractic religiosity – modelled on the Prophet per his *sunna* – that emerged and was promulgated frequently by men in the milieu of the Naqshbandī Sufi order, but not as a matter of Sufism proper. Its foundational document is Birgivī Meḥmed's *al-Ṭarīqa al-Muḥammadiyya* together with its

63 A recent and exhaustive study is Bauch, *Divina favente clemencia*.

64 Aydın, *Hırka-i Saadet Dairesi*, 40–49, contains an eyewitness account of the ceremony by the historian Aḥmed Refīq.

65 Many questions as to the main agents of *pietas Ottomanica* remain to be explored: besides the sultans themselves, servants of the sacred vestiges, like Silaḥdār Meḥmed Aġa, and spiritual advisors, like Hüdāʾī, Şucāʿ, or in later periods Feyẓullāh Efendi, need to be considered.

Turkish abridgement, both of which became vehicles for critique of the state and state-condoned practices, and later also for radical activism with the so-called Kadizadeli movement, which Marc Baer labelled a new pietism. The title of Birgivī's catechism invokes the Prophet, but in a way very different from *pietas Ottomanica*, lacking any sense of charisma and representation; one might argue that the catechetic approach precisely negates the mediator with the transcendent, and leaves the individual believer alone with God at the reckoning. How Kadizadeli religiosity, to the degree that there is a coherent type like that, influenced and transformed aspects of *pietas Ottomanica* remains to be studied.[66] Certainly, subsequent manifestations until the early eighteenth century had a profound impact on Ottoman Islam. The abstraction of the *ḥilye*, discussed above, was certainly much more palatable to this religiosity than the imagery of the *Siyer*. The increasing military importance of the Holy Mantle and the Banner in the course of the century might also to some degree be influenced by a more sombre and orthopractic tendency.

Rigid Sunnī orthodoxy, however, did not begin with Birgivī. The sixteenth century saw a sustained state campaign against the Shīʿī Qızılbaş, concomitant with other efforts to impose certain Sunnī standards on the Muslim population, such as regular mosque attendance, and to inculcate a minimum of knowledge about doctrine. Recent scholarship has conceptualised these efforts within a framework of Sunnitisation as confession-building, driven by the newly empowered *'ulamā'* hierarchy. The question thus arises as to how *pietas Ottomanica* fits with this distinctly scripture-loyal and confession-conscious religiosity. Much remains to be studied here, but it should be stated very clearly that despite *structural* affinities with Shīʿī Islam due to the central role of charisma, *pietas Ottomanica* would have been perceived by all those involved in it as a distinctly Sunnī enterprise, in fact one that contributed to Ottoman superiority over their Safavid (Shīʿī) rivals. Throughout the practices examined here, there is no explicit reference to ʿAlī. The intriguing category of metadoxy, which Kafadar once introduced to capture the confessional ambiguities of the frontier religiosity of the early Ottoman period, clearly does not apply at the sectarian level, although arguably it might point to clearly heterodox practices of praying in front of relics and vestiges, which would certainly have been condemned if applied to any other sacred person.[67]

We should also notice that the motive of personal piety and the *pietas Ottomanica* in the religious legitimation of Ottoman rule in general competed

66 There is a rich literature about them, but not much in terms of their religious or pious politics proper.

67 Terzioğlu, "How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization".

and intersected with other legitimating discourses. Most prominently, an ancient tradition that foregrounded the maintenance of justice as the essence of rulership directly rejected attempts to enact religious norms on the Muslim population, culminating in the motto "The world will not be destroyed by disbelief, but by injustice."[68] For adherents of this political understanding, personal piety of the sultan could easily be perceived as distraction at best; counterproductive at worst. On the other hand, *pietas Ottomanica* seems to align well with the broader concept of an Ottoman exceptionalism, which permeated certain strains of political thought over centuries. The exploration of this political theology has begun only recently.[69]

Pietas Ottomanica builds on a notion of an omnitemporal Prophet outside of historical time, which facilitated the identification of sacred objects, or allowed "actual" vestiges of the Prophet and their representations function in similar ritual and talismanic ways. However, Ottomans were quite obviously cognisant of a historical Prophet, whose life and deeds on earth were recorded in books of history, and whose place in the chronology of history was precisely determined. There is another tension here, then, between the sacred persona of the Prophet and the historical figure who was, at least in some sense, limited by the conditions of earthly existence. The use or non-use of his political-military career in the canon of historical memory as political exemplar is one example of this tension playing out.[70] Another manifests itself in the bitter arguments whether the parents of the Prophet were infidels or not. While the proposition may appear logical, even inescapable from a strictly historical point of view, it was fiercely condemned by others who foregrounded the sacrality of his persona and the primordial character of his creation.[71] The emergence of an all-encompassing sense of historicity was identified by Koselleck as a hallmark of modernity, yet, the tension between a historical and a sacralized Muḥammad certainly continued. The question is if it was ever resolved or even acknowledged in the course of the Ottoman path to modernity. Did Sultan ʿAbdülmecīd acquire the letter from the Prophet to the Muqawqis, the ruler of Egypt, that surfaced in Egypt in 1850 as a historical document, or as a sacred vestige/relic?[72] The ambiguity continues to this day in the presentation of the shrine of the Holy Mantle in the Topkapı Palace Museum operated by a secular state, with

68 Hagen, "World Order and Legitimacy".

69 Menchinger, "Free Will"; see also Menchinger, "Dreams of Destiny".

70 Hagen, "Hudaybiyya".

71 Dreher, "Une polémique à Istanbul au XVII^{e} siècle".

72 Belin, "Lettre a M. Reinaud"; Mirza, "Oral Tradition ", 189–93, 209–13; Aydın, *Hırka-i Saadet Dairesi*, 96–97.

the tension between the historical truth claim and the religious significance shifting back and forth, more recently towards the latter.

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