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## Genres of Power: Constructing a Discourse of Decline in Ottoman *Nasihatname*\*

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Linda Darling, in a critical reassessment of Mediterranean political discourse at the turn of the sixteenth century, argues that the transformative emergence of stable, centralizing states such as the Mughals, Safavids, and Ottomans corresponded with an outpouring of advice manuals devoted to questions of proper governance and the nature of just rule.<sup>1</sup> This is a groundbreaking article for several reasons: Darling defines a shared, Eurasian experience of early modernity characterized by the consolidation of rule over various itinerant forces such as warlords and nomads; she

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\* This article was reshaped from a chapter of my unpublished doctoral dissertation, “The Circle of Justice as Genre, Practice, and Objectification: A Discursive Re-Mapping of the Early Modern Ottoman Empire,” (University of California, Berkeley, 2009). It is quite appropriate that this re-writing took place at the Başbakanlık Arşivleri with the support of a postdoctoral fellowship from the ‘Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies at Stanford University, for I spent many painstaking research hours amidst its records while building a documentary core for my dissertation. I also would like to take this opportunity to thank Baki Tezcan for his generous editing and guidance through the revision process. Although this publication would not have been possible without him, all mistakes of both a technical and philosophical nature are of course my own.

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1 Linda Darling, “Political Change and Political Discourse in the Early Modern Mediterranean World,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 38 (2008): 505-531.

achieves this with comparative literary references, most notably drawing on Machiavelli; and she sets up a theoretical relationship between discourse and historical change that stands as a rare feat in the field of Ottoman studies. My main focus here will be on this relationship, and on the efforts of three other scholars to posit the necessity of just such a move in the context of “decline literature.”<sup>2</sup> Each of these argue, in their own fashion, that our understanding of sixteenth and seventeenth century Ottoman dynamics will remain shackled to former biases unless the nature of discursive production can be taken seriously and framed as a constitutive aspect of shaping the past. More profoundly, perhaps, this move invites us to recognize that the play between events and their interpretation, between past acts and their formulation or reformulation in narrative, produces what we call ‘history’ and that the traces of this play must constitute our object of inquiry.<sup>3</sup>

Darling sets a clear agenda for interdisciplinary research attentive to both the literary and historical aspects of textual production. Her specific argument, that a concatenation of political treatises employing the Circle of Justice (*dâ’iretü’l-’adl*) to counsel rulers marks the emergence of early modern states in the Mediterranean world, hinges on the idea that writing such a treatise is a political, and hence a historical, act “functioning both to interpret, and to produce changes in actual political organization.”<sup>4</sup> The production of these treatises is not solely an intellectual or philosophical

2 Pál Fodor, “State and Society, Crisis and Reform, in 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Mirror for Princes,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 40 (1986): 217-240; Douglas A. Howard, “Ottoman Historiography and the Literature of ‘Decline’ of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” *Journal of Asian History* 22 (1988): 52-77; and Rifa’at ‘Ali Abou-El-Haj, “The *nasihatname* as a Discourse over Morality,” in Abdeljelil Temimi (ed.), *Mélanges Professeur Robert Mantran* (Zaghouan: Publications du Centre d’Etudes et de Recherches Ottomanes, Morisques, de Documentation et d’Information, 1988), 17-30.

3 I do not mean by this that “history” is solely a literary or textualized domain—far from it, as scholars of the material world in the form of art or artifacts have clearly shown that the built environment constitutes a meaningful and layered record of the past heretofore underexplored. Still, I aim to show in this article that in order to satisfactorily investigate a literary obsession with ‘decline’ in the seventeenth-century Ottoman world, we should pay attention to both the materials and the ideological context of the authors’ constructions (and thus to their discursive production of what we now call ‘decline literature.’)

4 Darling, 506.

exercise and so should not be reduced to a mere survey in the history of ideas. The latter approach typifies scholarship on “Islamic Mirrors for Princes,” as A. K. S. Lambton’s foundational work characterized them, and leads to a compartmentalized and thus ahistorical treatment of various literary genres. This is not to say that Lambton’s efforts to distinguish three ‘formulations’ that emerged within an evolving body of Islamic political ideas—those of the jurists in their works of *fiqh*, and especially those that dealt with *al-aḥkām al-sultāniyya* or ruling prescriptions; those of the philosophers in their elaborations of the virtuous polity; and those of a less clearly defined group, often secretaries or administrators, in their works of counsel and manuals of conduct for rulers and governors—do not serve as useful guidelines for our excursion into the literary genealogy of Ottoman treatises on decline.<sup>5</sup> Rather, what Darling’s approach seeks to remedy, is the assumption that by locating ‘mirrors for princes’ within this third formulation we have satisfactorily interpreted their historical meaningfulness.<sup>6</sup>

Pál Fodor’s article functions as a bridge between Lambton and Darling and serves to highlight features of both the Ottoman treatises assessing crisis and the methodological problems they pose for present-day scholars. Fodor firmly situates Ottoman literary responses to the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century crises within the tradition of ‘Islamic’ mirrors for princes and the political practice of counseling and restraining the forces of power that sprung from the collapse of the Umayyad Empire. Incorporating Persian concepts of sovereignty and government with their absolutist theories of rule, the mirrors were ‘Islamic’ in the sense that they functioned to legitimize, even as they critiqued, the emergence of temporal states in a post-caliphal universe (i.e., one in which the Muslim community was no longer led by God’s viceregent and Muhammad’s

5 A. K. S. Lambton, “The Theory of Kingship in the Naṣīḥat ul-mulūk of Ghazālī,” *Islamic Quarterly* 1 (1954): 47-8; Lambton, “Justice in the Medieval Persian Theory of Kingship,” *Studia Islamica* 17 (1962): 91-119; Lambton, “Islamic Mirrors for Princes,” *La Persia nel Medioevo* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1971), 419–22; Lambton, “Islamic Political Thought,” in J. Schacht and C. E. Bosworth (eds.), *The Legacy of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 404–5.

6 See for example A. K. S. Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), xvi–xvii; cf. Lambton, “Islamic Mirrors for Princes,” 419–20; “Justice in the Medieval Persian Theory,” 95.

caliph recognized and ratified by the community).<sup>7</sup> Fodor suggests that the translation and gradual incorporation of early Islamic mirror literature into Ottoman political culture took place during the late fourteenth century and marked its transition from representing local dynastic allegiances to that of embodying a global empire.

Fodor draws our attention to Ottoman authors' consciousness of an established literary tradition, in relation to which, usually without explicit acknowledgement, they situated their compositions. Suggestive of such a consciousness is the recurrence of certain topics (justice and injustice, the virtues of patience and clemency, the importance of consultation, the need to refrain from hasty judgments), and materials (particular maxims, quotations, anecdotes) across a broad spectrum of treatises written during this period. While functioning within this tradition, Ottoman authors particularized, accommodated, modified, and sometimes departed from the expectations of the genre. And yet, Fodor remains convinced that Ottoman mirrors reproduce an essentially conservative ideology of a 'just' despotism and advocate the reassertion of a social structure approximating this ideal.<sup>8</sup> They thus, according to him, continue to follow "1000-year old recipes" even in the eighteenth century when the necessity for substantial reform was undeniable and potentially catastrophic. He concludes "that by 1683 it became as clear as daylight that the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire was an irreversible process which numbered among its many causes the inadequate appraisal of crisis and reform, and the incapability of spiritual, or, to put it in modern terms, 'ideological' revival."<sup>9</sup>

It is here that Fodor and I part company. We agree that there is a relationship between literary and political events and that this relationship seems to be a foundational component of the mirror tradition. We also agree that Ottoman authors functioned within a rich heritage, one feature of which was an ideology of just rule. But the Ottoman invocation of this paradigm constitutes a historical act, as Darling suggested, and

7 This is perhaps one of the more acceptable rationales for using the adjective 'Islamic' despite its essentializing tendencies and pedagogic problems. At least Fodor proposes that 'Islamic' means addressing a particular problematic (the nature of temporal rule within a religiously-conceived community) rather than a civilizational monolith.

8 Fodor, 239.

9 Ibid., 240.

the particular “ingredients” of the time, clearly delineated by the authors, changed both the recipe’s formula and the flavor of its ultimate product: it was not 1,000 years old, it was peculiarly Ottoman. Furthermore, that these authors thought in terms of decline cannot be causally read as leading to an actual, “irreversible” imperial demise. To the contrary, as I will argue in this essay, the narrative construction of decline served as a discursive reform mechanism that successfully sustained the Ottoman Empire through several centuries of global upheavals. What, then, was ‘Ottoman’ about these particular treatises and, within their pages, how did ‘decline’ emerge as a mode of political commentary?

Douglas Howard addresses the first of these issues in two articles unique in the field for directly assessing issues of genre and the implications of such an approach for scholarly depictions of the seventeenth century Ottoman Empire.<sup>10</sup> Unflinching in his criticism of a pre-Edward Saidian unreflective incorporation of Ottoman literary constructs into twentieth-century assumptions of decline, (“Scholars often used these treatises as they would archival documents, with no awareness of their essentially literary character”) Howard turns to genre theory to historicize a particular moment in the evolution of political thought.<sup>11</sup> He also argues persuasively for the Ottomanization of tropes common to the advice for kings tradition. His suggestion, that the Ottoman authors’ use of bureaucratic forms such as the *telhis* (memorandum), the *defter* (cadastral record), and the *kanun-name* (law book) to articulate their particular understandings of crisis and urgings for reform constitutes the primary basis for my exploration here. Unlike Howard, however, who situates genre within a mythic landscape, and hence within deep, transhistorical and universal human concerns, I argue that these strategies of writing emerge from a particular historical context (commercialization and the formation of an early modern state) that precisely challenged a structure of knowledge based on personal sovereignty and the Circle of Justice.

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10 Douglas A. Howard, “Ottoman Historiography and the Literature of ‘Decline’ of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” *Journal of Asian History* 22 (1988): 52-77; and “Genre and Myth in the Ottoman Advice for Kings Literature,” in Virginia Aksan and Daniel Goffman (eds.), *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 137-166.

11 Howard, “Ottoman Historiography,” 76.

I am led in this argument by the insights of Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, whose compelling, if scattered, work on the early modern Ottoman state specifically attends to issues of commercialization and specialization and was the first to explore the *nasihatname* from within this framework. He suggests, in a fascinating review of the usual suspects, that the Ottoman authors developed a “fictive” construct in the virtuous *sipahi* against which all their observations of present reality were drawn. According to Abou-El-Haj, then, the creation of this past ideal, situated within the Süleymanic era, and characterized simultaneously by self-autonomy and incorruptible loyalty to the imperial system as a whole, is artificial and thus ahistorical. This insistence on the ‘fictive,’ I believe, undermines the power of his argument and belies the evidence that he himself so adeptly presents. Yes, the *sipahi* and his *timar* were constructs deployed by the Ottoman authors to express a deep ambivalence in the face of change. Yet, representing a rhetorical strategy drawing on past traditions of knowledge as they dealt with present circumstances, it bears its own historical weight. Combining the insights of Howard and Abou-El-Haj allows us to explore how the construction of decline in Ottoman *nasihatname* constitutes a discursive practice that both adheres to deep structures and is historically realized. Furthermore, in constructing ideal models so as to better diagnose contemporary structures and problems, the authors of the *nasihatname* participated in an analytic act that resembles our own interpretive labor as scholars of the Ottoman past. It is this analytic mode that I am interested in here and that I deem representative of a clear transition out of the “mirror for kings” genre and toward, even if forced by crisis and not fully internalized, a political culture of early modernity.

### **Genre in a Comparative Axis**

Approaching *nasihatname* from both a literary (attentive to genre, tropes, and style) and sociohistorical (analyzing diachronic processes of change in a comparative context) mode of engagement puts the issue of “decline” in its proper place; namely, as a discourse of governance concentrated on elucidating, sometimes remedying, and often bemoaning, turbulent transformations that challenged the very structure of knowledge. This structure, visible in the authors’ adoption of the advice manual to begin with, and in their use of paradigmatic expressions throughout, is yet unable

to contain the chaos (or *fitne*) that they set out to define. The gaps between the structures deployed and the events/situations witnessed and the authors' struggles to fit these together into a comprehensible framework of action embodies a process whereby the idealization of past glories, policies, and virtues constituted, unbeknownst to them, a key moment in the formation of a modern state. With their main emphasis on increased social mobility, resulting from commercialization and changing technologies of interstate competition, the advice writers contend with a phenomenon at the core of this transition to a modern state: the collapse of hierarchical relations grounded, quite literally, in land *cum* property and legitimized by a distributive vision of social order (as in the circle of justice), and the replacement of stable agricultural property by monetary systems of credit yielding increased social interdependencies and specializations. What emerges here is a story of internal conflict, wherein organic changes led to an increased Ottoman bureaucratization but the conceptual framework deployed to assess these changes, manifesting disquiet and producing a belief in decline, could only see them as problematic and inefficient.

Apprehensions of decline from the Renaissance onwards were not peculiar to the Ottomans but rather constituted a pan-European phenomenon. The discourse of an imperial lifecycle pervaded the political consciousness and the Ottoman case proved instrumental in its elaboration. Jan de Vries, in his now classic assessment of the seventeenth-century economic crisis, clearly points to a corresponding literary phenomenon wherein "a whole school of economic reformers, the *arbitristas*, wrote mountains of tracts pleading for new measures."<sup>12</sup> He reminds us that, as it so happens, "the seventeenth century was particularly rich in declining economies" and "set in motion the pens of reformers, schemers, and crackpots, and it activated governments to initiate measures, chiefly defensive, that we today call mercantilism."<sup>13</sup> The Ottomans, then, were not alone in their quest for order and stability, did not have a sole purchase on "decline," and par-

12 Jan de Vries, *The Economy of Europe in an Age of Crisis, 1600-1750* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 28.

13 *Ibid.*, 26 and 29. Just an interesting side note here that I think the article as a whole bears out: Michel Foucault has argued quite persuasively that mercantilism, and the ideological productions accompanying it, is the first dynamic world process that is "post-Machiavellian." In other words, embodying the defining shift from sovereignty (power over death) to governmentality (power over life); see Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*,



anticipated in a seeming chorus of voices whose primary interpretive device was a negative evaluation of the present. Casting “decline” as a historical process with comparative indices removes us from a blame game retrospectively attributing the superiority of the modern European nation states to Ottoman intransigence in the face of change.

One of the more sophisticated theorists of European disenchantment viewed as a potentially transformative intellectual practice in the face of commercialization is J.G.A Pocock, who reveals a world deeply ambivalent about the nature of governance.<sup>14</sup> Pocock, unlike most researchers of this process, argues that the seventeenth and early eighteenth-century challenge to tyranny (or illegitimate government) had classical roots and thus did not represent a discourse provoked by proto-bourgeois agitants. Why is this important for recasting Ottoman historical trajectories? Primarily for his belief that the gradual commercialization of society and increasing autonomy of market forces was interpreted by “civic humanists” or elites with something to lose, as corruption or moral decline. Interdependencies threatened notions of authority (or the exercise of political virtue) grounded in the kind of autonomy afforded by stable agricultural property. The virtuous citizen, Pocock surmises, must always guard against the infiltration of dependencies and specializations from the realm of a private, household economy, into the public realm of intercommunication and action. The great irony is that this idealization of republican autonomy, essentially a critique of tyranny and empire, has always had the potential to become part of a princely (Machiavellian) or imperial (Khalidunian) consciousness. Thus the Ottoman experience captivated other European audiences and a developing discourse on a perceived Ottoman decline perfectly suited their internal critique of political change.

Pocock’s rather provocative approach helps us to articulate the parameters of a Greater European linguistic and conceptual horizon that sought to understand strength and authority in relation to virtue and actions that

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eds. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 87-104.

14 J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); and *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

constantly guarded against the dangers of corruption. As I will argue below, this “corruption,” was historical, not individual, and related to the emergence of a market economy rather than to a loss of governmental legitimacy. The Ottoman seventeenth-century advice writers—as they decried the dispersion of sultanic authority, the infiltration of the *re’aya* into the elites, the sale of offices, women’s political influence increasingly exerted from the *harem*, the diversion of *timar* resources to support those other than cavalry officers, and the immiseration of cultivators through oppressive taxation—naturalized characteristics prevalent in a commercialized social setting as fundamentally human, and thus moral. Hence, the political solutions they derived in response to perceived chaos actually precluded awareness of commercialization itself as an ongoing historical process/shift threatening to irreversibly (and potentially disastrously) upend social and political life.<sup>15</sup> There were rhetorical changes, however, and these encourage us to ask not whether the Ottomans did or didn’t decline, but rather to trace their specific objectification of a historical process that would have global consequences.

While the argument developed here constitutes a clear departure from traditional approaches to Ottoman apprehensions of decline, it is not a complete rupture and builds on a solid scholarly foundation. The contribution of researchers whose attention to questions of genre and the literary nature of advice manuals made the necessary first step toward problematizing the relationship between textual production and historical processes must not be underestimated. This becomes explicit in relation to the generative impact of so-called ‘mirror for princes’ literatures in Southwestern Asia and North Africa that offer advice to rulers or high-ranking administrators and within whose tradition the seventeenth-century Ottomans clearly situated themselves. Early scholarship on this literature predominantly located ‘mirrors’ within the history of ideas and focused on expressions of the ideal ruler or other representations of ‘political thought.’ More recent publications, on the other hand, work to ground individual productions in specific

<sup>15</sup> I use the argumentative phrase “potentially disastrously” precisely because unless commerce as the new paradigm for all social relations could be brought into historical view, Ottoman reforms would only provide partial solutions to novel problems. The issue here may indeed be why a field/conceptualization of political economy did not emerge within the Ottoman intellectual universe as a counterpoint to the moralization of commercial processes.

historical contexts thus highlighting the flexibility of the genre. My approach, which will become clear through the review that follows, uses recent linguistic theories concerning the relationship between language and practice to collapse obstructive disciplinary distinctions in historical research between intellectual and social analytic modes. The benefit for the specific field of Ottoman studies, as I argue below, is to bring new questions to the fore by assessing decline narratives as discursive productions that are both aligned with and yet, in significant and historically meaningful ways differ from, earlier traditions of advice-giving found in the mirror for kings genre and from other Eurasian responses to the “crisis” of an emerging commercial society.

### “Mirrors for Kings” as Discursive Structures

The terms *naṣīḥat al-mulūk* (Arabic, ‘counsel for kings’), *pandnāmeḥ* and *andarznāmeḥ* (Persian, ‘book of advice’), and *nasihatname* (Turkish/Ottoman, ‘book of counsel’) were used by early authors, readers, and librarians to designate a type of literature intended for the communication of advice; occasionally these designations appear in the titles of books as well. In many cases, this literature took the form of independent books organized topically into chapters or sections, in each of which the author illustrated his points with reference to Qur’anic verses, Prophetic *ḥadīth*, lines of poetry, aphorisms, proverbs, anecdotes, and (sometimes) historical narratives. Such books were often, although not invariably, dedicated to specific rulers. Other designations that appear both in titles and as generic descriptions include *adab al-mulūk* (‘the manners of kings’) and *siyar al-mulūk* (‘conduct of kings’), categories that constituted variants of *naṣīḥāt al-mulūk*. They emerged during the eleventh to fifteenth centuries as part of a widespread Eurasian genre attentive primarily to the issues and concerns of monarchical rule and most promulgated the Circle of Justice as the ideal model for the proper ordering of the world.<sup>16</sup>

16 Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship: Power and the Sacred in Muslim, Christian, and Pagan Polities* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997). On European mirrors for princes see Wolfgang Weber, “What a Good Ruler Should Not Do: Theoretical Limits of Royal Power in European Theories of Absolutism, 1500-1700,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 26 (1995): 897-915.

It is difficult to work out with any precision the influences on an Ottoman genre of advice-giving that clearly accompanied late sixteenth and early seventeenth century transformations in the polity. A number of scholars, among them Cornell Fleischer and Muzaffar Alam, have differentiated between mirrors for princes and works of political philosophy and ethics (*akhlāq*), both of which are often presented as works of advice for rulers, but which in many cases differ markedly not only in their content and intellectual outlook but also in their literary form and style.<sup>17</sup> The former category is frequently described as a branch of *adab*, characterized by the assembling of a variety of literary materials (maxims, proverbs, verses of poetry, anecdotes) organized according to a particular theme or topic. The latter category often follows the arrangement of the three-fold Aristotelian division of practical philosophy adopted by many philosophers who wrote in Arabic and Persian, and in Latin and the European vernacular languages: governance of the self, the household, and the polity. But we should be careful even here to avoid reifying or naturalizing such organizational structures and pay close attention to the relationship drawn between their parts by individual authors. Baki Tezcan makes a compelling argument for such close analysis in his article on Kinalzade's (1510-1572) *Ahlak-ı Ala'i*, wherein he demonstrates that the presentation of these three fields were not always consistent across works of practical philosophy.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the relationship drawn between the three can reveal a particular political commentary on contemporary concerns and should be read carefully so as to understand how social structures are legitimized and reproduced. Tezcan concludes that Kinalzade's work, although carrying the title *Sublime Ethics*, "far from being a work on ethics, lays down the theoretical foundations of the compartmentalized social order used by the Ottoman *nasihatname* authors."<sup>19</sup>

17 Cornell H. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541–1600)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 99–100; Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam: India 1200–1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 11.

18 I thank Baki Tezcan for drawing my attention to this article as it creatively and succinctly makes some of the points I have been laboring toward: "Ethics as a Domain to Discuss the Political: Kinalzâde Ali Efendi's *Ahlâk-ı Alâî*," in Ali Çaksu, ed. *International Congress on Learning and Education in the Ottoman World, Proceedings* (Istanbul: IRCICA, 2001), 109-120. I will return to the central argument of this essay several times in the following pages.

19 *Ibid.*, 110.

Thus, drawing a clear line between these literary traditions tends to obscure more than it reveals as works of counsel for rulers frequently take up a range of topics, not all of which are directly or obviously related to governance or governed by literary convention; and the thematically arranged book-length structure was sufficiently flexible to allow for innumerable individual treatments.<sup>20</sup> These individual treatments and arrangements themselves played a purposeful and active role in shaping political discourse. Furthermore, even if the boundaries of the advice genre were clear, authors particularized their use of commonly expected elements, and accommodated, modified, and sometimes departed from their audiences' expectations. Advice literature was also amenable to multiple purposes: the combined aims of moral instruction and aesthetic enjoyment so prevalent in other forms of *adab* are often unmistakable, and the authorial stance of offering counsel frequently concealed more personal objectives, such as the consolidation of ties between the writer and the addressee or professional advancement.<sup>21</sup> But if we attend to the social-political contexts in

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20 Mirror-hybrids abound: Julie Scott Meisami has explored the intersection of advisory and moralizing literature with other established genres, including historiography, panegyric poetry, and epic; and Geert Jan van Gelder has studied an example in which advisory writing intersects with the classification of the sciences; see Julie Scott Meisami, "Dynastic History and Ideals of Kingship in Bayhaqi's *Tarikh-i Mas'udi*," in *Edebiyat* 3 (1989): 57–77; Meisami, "Ghaznavid Panegyrics: Some Political Implications," *Iran* 28 (1990): 31–44; Meisami, *The Sea of Precious Virtues* (Baḥr al-favā'id) (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1991); Meisami, "Rāvandī's Rāḥat al-ṣudūr: History or Hybrid?" *Edebiyat* 5 (1994): 181–215; Meisami, "The Shāh-nāme as Mirror for Princes: A Study in Surveying Recent Literature on the Arabic and Persian Mirrors for Princes Genre Reception," in Ch. Balay et al. (eds.), *Pand-o sokhan* (Tehran: Institut français de recherche en Iran, 1995), 265–73; Meisami, "Exemplary Lives, Exemplary Deaths: The Execution of Hasanak," *Actas, XVI Congreso UEAI* (Salamanca: Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional & Union Européenne d'Arabisants et d'Islamisants, 1995), 357–64; Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999); and finally, Geert Jan van Gelder explores hybridity and the popularization of the advice genre in "Mirror for Princes or Vizor for Viziers: The Twelfth-century Arabic Popular Encyclopedia Mufīd al-'ulūm and Its Relationship with the Anonymous Persian Baḥr al-fawā'id," *BSOAS* 64 (2001): 313–38.

21 A recent essay has demonstrated how the author of an early fourteenth-century Arabic work chose a well established literary form and shaped it to promote his professional relationship with the vizier to whom the book was dedicated: L.

which authors of mirrors wrote their works one common feature emerges: the precariousness of their position vis-à-vis the rulers whom they ostensibly sought to advise. Writing within such a nexus of power meant that proffering suggestions for royal improvement involved a real risk of offense and the possibility of provoking punishment. Also clear, is that these authors felt a pressing need to speak out despite a very present danger, thus careful attention to moments, like the Ottoman case defined here, when this form of literary production dominated the scene remains an essential task.

Adhering to an established literary genre offered the author a form of protection and spared its recipient from the obligation of censuring him. The rules of the genre, then, exercised its own form of censorship, but at the same time provided a channel for the articulation of at least a modicum of political commentary. Thus authors strove to balance, within single texts, elements of praise with elements of counsel and critique. A more complex level of censorship (or camouflage) within the mirror genre was in its characteristic deployment of quotations from figures of authority, often from the remote past, and of stories set in locations distant in time and place from the present political context. Arabic and Persian mirrors from an early date are characterized by an interweaving of multiple authorial perspectives, in which the principal narrative is punctuated with materials involving several additional voices: the Qur'anic voice, the Prophetic voice as recorded in *hadīth*, the voices of a variety of historical and sometimes semi-legendary figures all with their own tenors and complexes of associations, the voices of poets whose verses are cited, and sometimes the author's own voice transposed from one language into another or from prose into verse. This technique of negotiating multiple layers of authority and speaking through other writers, far from representing an act of plagiarism, allowed the author to distance himself from the advice he was conveying to his royal recipient.

Turning now to the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century Ottoman landscape, I hope to explore this process of encoding and decoding

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Marlow, "The Way of Viziers and the Lamp of Commanders (*Minhāj al-wuzāra' wa-sirāj al-umarā'*) of Ahmad al-Isfahbadhī and the Literary and Political Culture of Early Fourteenth-Century Iran," in B. Gruendler and L. Marlow (eds.), *Writers and Rulers: Perspectives on Their Relationship from Abbasid to Safavid Times* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2004), 169–93.



as various members of the elite intervene in, and seek to transform, what they perceive to be an unraveling of the natural order. It is not my intent here to provide a genealogical demonstration of how the mirror tradition became part of, and was in turn shaped by, the Ottoman literary imagination, though this is of course a meaningful exercise and we do know that such key examples of the mirror literature as the *Qābūs-nāme* of Kaykāvus ibn Iskandar ibn Qābūs, the *Siyaru'l-mulūk* of Nizāmu'l-mulk, and the *Naṣīhatu'l-mulūk* of al-Ghazālī were available in Ottoman Turkish translations.<sup>22</sup> Neither is this essay meant to be an exhaustive survey of the “literature of decline” as scholars beginning with Bernard Lewis and including the recent work of Douglas Howard, have amassed and presented such details before.<sup>23</sup> Instead, I will argue that Ottoman authors increasingly, albeit in piecemeal fashion, adopted literary genres produced by the imperial apparatus itself to frame their compositions of counsel. These literary genres, preeminently the *kanunname*, the *mühimme*, and the *defter* (cadastral record) once deployed in reform-minded treatises archived a process of state formation. While the trope of a mirror—reflecting the world back on itself and using distortion as a shield for the proffering of advice in an often dangerous political environment—remains operative in these treatises, they also become more transparent in their critique and more assertive in their consultation. In sum, they move from advice to analysis, and in so

22 See the introduction of Robert Dankoff to Yūsuf Khāṣṣ Ḥāḥib, *Wisdom of Royal Glory (Kutadgu Bilig): A Turko-Islamic Mirror for Princes*, trans. Dankoff (Chicago: University of Chicago Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 1983), 3-9, for his assessment of 1082 for the completion of the first ‘Persian’ mirror, the *Qābūs-nāme*. Eleazar Birnbaum published a facsimile edition of the earliest extant Ottoman translation, dated approximately to the fourth quarter of the fourteenth century, see Birnbaum, *The Book of Advice by King Kay Ka’us ibn Iskander: The Earliest Old Ottoman Turkish Version of his Kabusname* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981). A manuscript of an Ottoman translation of the *Siyaru'l-mulūk* of Nizāmu'l-mulk is preserved in the Istanbul University Library, no. T6952, see Ağāh Sırrı Levend, “Siyasetnameler,” *Türk Dili Araştırmaları Yıllığı Belleten* (1962): 167-94, fn. 47. An Ottoman translation of al-Ghazālī’s *Naṣīhatu'l-mulūk* dating from the reign of Mehmed II (1451-1581) is in the Topkapı Palace Library (Istanbul), Hazine 368, see Ağāh Sırrı Levend, “Ümmet Çağında Ahlāk Kitaplarımız,” *Türk Dili Araştırmaları Yıllığı Belleten* (1963): 89-115 for full references.

23 See the following for a critical summary of twentieth-century reflections on the literature of decline: Cemal Kafadar, “The Question of Ottoman Decline,” *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 4 (1997-98) 30-75.

doing “mirror” (punning fully intended) the specialization and bureaucratization attendant to state formation even as they decry its effects in the world around them.

### **From Advice to Analysis in Ottoman Reform Treatises**

This move, from traditions of advice to components of analysis, is best illustrated in the highly emotive relationships drawn over and over again by Ottoman treatise writers between a particular conception of justice, a revenue system based on the *timar*, and a naturalized social hierarchy that together maintained the order of the world as they understood it. These relationships also constituted the basis of such key imperial documentary genres as the *kanunname* and *mühimme*, and all operationalized the Circle of Justice thereby transforming a rhetorical trope into an administrative strategy. The central category of each treatise, adhering more or less closely to the mirror genre, with its variable incorporation of jurisprudential, historical, lyrical, and spiritual modes of thought and writing, and attendant propensity to collapse together seemingly contradictory authorial structures of legitimacy and cultures of provenance (with the typical jumble of Qur’anic verses, quotations from *hadith*, maxims, stories, proverbs, anecdotes) was a theory or concept of justice. ‘Justice’ was the bridge between spiritual and temporal power, expressed repeatedly and in tandem as *din ü devlet* (in Ottoman Turkish), and constituted the foundation for both the material and metaphorical elaboration of the state. Its metaphorical form, expressed via the Circle of Justice, remained a prominent feature of the literature even as the material evidence morphed due to varying political and historical circumstances.

Increased tension in the relationship between the metaphorical and the material (or the increasing challenge to render the world intelligible through accustomed explanatory modes) proved destabilizing for a structure of knowledge and interpretation based on the Circle of Justice and forced authors of Ottoman reform treatises to resort to new strategies of writing and presentation. These new strategies, primary among them the incorporation of administrative genres of documentation, and comparative evaluations of lists, gave historical weight to the already pragmatic concerns of the writers. Evolving out of this was the notion of an archive: of an imperial past with a before and after through which present actions



were evaluated. It is in this context that ubiquitous references to the reign of Sultan Süleyman (1520-1566) can best be understood for it constituted a watershed, representing in turn both the embodiment and inversion of an ideal moment in Ottoman imperial glory. The period of his reign functions on two levels; first, as a trope of perfection of the old days, when the order of the world was true, intelligible, and just. And second, as the pinnacle of achievement, which, in true Ibn Khaldunian fashion, contained the signs, and symptoms of its degeneration. The authors' intentional reference to the corruptibility of an ideal bespeaks of an effort to interpret and analyze history and, as such, to risk composing critical rather than congratulatory treatises.

It is not without irony that one of the key harbingers of crisis was Lutfi Pasha, former grand vizier of Süleyman, who wrote the *Asafname* from retirement, sometime between 1541 and 1563:

The kingdom of this mortal world is fleet in its passing and full of death. It is better to find leisure but not unmindful repose in the enjoyment of gardens and meadows. May God, from whom we seek aid, and in whom we trust, secure the laws and foundations of the house of Osman from the fear and peril of fate and the evil eye of the enemy.<sup>24</sup>

Clearly outlined in pages supposedly devoted to articulating the duties and qualities incumbent upon a vizier is a critical appraisal of reality and the listing of various corruptions of an ideal that would become standard in later compositions: the spread of bribery, excessive swelling of a mercenary army, infiltration of the *re'aya* into the military class, vacant *timars*, and the Sultan's retreat from the daily administration of affairs. The "laws and foundations," according to the vision inscribed in the *Asafname*, were ensconced in the Circle of Justice: "The sultanate stands on its treasury. The treasury stands by good management. By injustice (*zulm*) it falls."<sup>25</sup> Justice, then, is not purely (and not even notably) a philosophical concept or a religious standard but rather an administrative tactic with a political content.

24 Rudolf Tschudi (ed.), *Das Asafnâme des Lutfi Pascha* (Leipzig: W. Drugulin, 1910), 6.

25 Lutfi/Tschudi, 35.

This is true in part for the mirror tradition as a whole, as manifested in the principles of the Circle and the oft-quoted phrasing of Nizāmu'l-mulk that “kingship remains with faithlessness, but not with injustice:” in other words, a ruler must follow a plan of pragmatic administration not one of theological counsel. But what precisely constituted a state of injustice changed over time and across circumstances and it is the particular Ottoman conjuncture that I am interested in here. In earlier literature the state remained equated with the personhood of the ruler, and counselors directly charged him with ensuring the right ordering of the world. Hence, chapters were devoted to his individual life choices, habits, even manner of dress, generally moralizing his demeanor and, through him, the mechanisms of rulership as a whole. Injustice resulted from improper action, and was redressed through reform of character. Yet within the Ottoman treatises there is a gradual abstraction of the Sultan, and a corresponding move from private/personal to public/bureaucratic assessments of rule. In fact, “rulership” itself morphs into visions of statecraft, with its attendant notions of management and practice. Here, injustice occurs through dis-ordering of social relations, which must be restored to their rightful place for the state to regain its healthy balance.

Certainly, the Sultan retains a highly visible presence in the treatises, and is charged with the ultimate responsibility to restore order as asserted by Lutfi Pasha: “My Padishah. I have unburdened myself for I have told you the truth. On the day of resurrection it is you who will have to answer.”<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, authors continued to assert the primacy of personal responsibility (as in the matter of appointments) in the face of a burgeoning state apparatus even as they cautioned against favoritism: “The confusion in the whole world...comes from the Padishah appointing the wrong grand vizier.”<sup>27</sup> Still, while a Sultan in retreat from the daily administration of imperial affairs remained at the forefront of many authors’ complaints and lists of general ills, he had also largely retreated from their conceptions of justice and the social reality it tendered. This ambiguity—between viewing justice as a personal quality emanating from the ruler or as generalizable marker of the *status quo*, representing stability via social

26 Lutfi/Tschudi, 22.

27 Yaşar Yücel (ed.), *Osmanlı Devlet Düzenine Ait Metinler – I: Kitāb-i müstetāb* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Yayınları, 1974), 31 and 30.

hierarchy—constitutes one of the primary characteristics of the Ottoman literature.

### Time, Legality, and Innovation

In another context I have explored what it meant to be an “Ottoman official” and showed that an often ambiguous, but always maintained, threshold between loyalty and rebellion constituted the core of what it meant to be a servant to the Sultan, and thus able to be called on to act in the interest of the Empire.<sup>28</sup> It also became clear that a *timar*, while ostensibly representing a bond negotiated between the Sultan and a provincial leader capable of mustering military aid (a *sipahi*) and cemented in land, was in actuality often mobile property and thus a relationship of power subject to dispute between contending parties of varied social provenance. In light of these insights, it might seem odd that authors of Ottoman reform treatises assumed that all order would be restored if the bonds of loyalty between *sipahi* and Sultan were assured, or that this bond was primarily one concerning land. But rather than assume that these authors lived and worked within a frame of outright denial, we should explore how, once a specific idealization of past “foundations and laws” emerged, any departure or innovation from it became cause for fear and blamed for the rampant disorder surrounding them. Disorder, according to the anonymous author of the *Kitab-i müstetab* (The Beautiful Book) written during the tumultuous reign of Osman II (1618-1622), looked like the following:

The laws of the Ottoman sultanate violated;...the treasury possessing a deficit; the governors torn apart by infighting; the *kadis* receptive to bribery; the opportunity to tackle the enemy [missed]; among those close to the [sultan] treason; among the theologians a lust for gold and inanity; among the *re'aya* futile labor and fear; in brief: innovations and all sorts of grievance everywhere.<sup>29</sup>

Innovation (*bid'a*, Ar.; *bid'at*, Tr.) was an all-important domain in philosophical formulations of crisis and represents a firm belief in the

<sup>28</sup> I dealt with these points in an expanded format within the context of my dissertation, “The Circle of Justice as Genre, Practice, and Objectification,” Chapters Two and Three.

<sup>29</sup> Yücel (ed.), 33.

potentially catastrophic, both spiritually and socially, impact of changing established modes of conduct. Part of a long theological and jurisprudential debate concerning how best to extend Qur'anic principles to the daily maintenance of a healthy Muslim community, innovation was a loaded term. It represented a fear that change or departure from established traditions necessarily meant a departure from the foundations of the *Dār al-Islām* (Abode of Islam) and thus a contravention of divine intent. Within an Ottoman administrative context, this aversion can also be detected in a privileging of custom, which is also true in both the *kanunname* and the *mühimme* where the *kanun-ı kadim* held sway (regardless of its actual temporal provenance, which was often of recent origin) unless the Sultan stepped in to specifically countermand it. Interestingly, it was not unlikely that allegations of *bid'at* served to legitimate such cases of intervention and implied that the Sultan's decree actually restored a purer, and thus more ancient, ordering of affairs. The tendency to link purity with a distant past draws on the scientific practice of *ḥadīth* compilations (stories of the prophet, the early Muslim community, and his immediate followers) where the chain of transmission (*isnād*) gained soundness as it approached the "truth-telling" of eyewitnesses.

The importance of custom as a standard of legality and a basis for all ethical and juridical rules derives in part from notions of the *sunna*.<sup>30</sup> The *sunna*, an Arab criterion for determining propriety and lawfulness in terms of its conformity to ancestral norms and usage, was drawn into the foundations of Islam and reshaped to represent the standards of action embodied in the sayings and doings of the Prophet and his immediate companions. Passed down to later generations through the *ḥadīth*, departure from these models of truth and lawfulness constituted *bid'a*—something that could not be attested among the views and practices of the early community—whether it had to do with belief or with the most trivial aspects of daily life.

30 For an in depth discussion of these issues see; Wael B. Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), esp. Ch. 1; Aziz al-Azmeh, "Islamic Legal Theory and the Appropriation of Reality," in Aziz al-Azmeh (ed.), *Islamic Law: Social and Historical Contexts* (London: Routledge, 1988), 250-65; and Baber Johansen, "Legal Literature and the Problem of Change: The Case of the Land Rent," in Chibli Mallat (ed.), *Islam and Public Law* (London: Graham and Trotman, 1993), 29-47. On Ottoman law in the tradition of Islam see Colin Imber, *Ebu 's-su'ud: The Islamic Legal Tradition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997).

Yet, while jurists and administrators alike rarely questioned the theory and invariability of *sunna*, the evolution of society, formation of various ruling contingents, and encounter with others challenged any rigid conception of truth and justice (in other words, the unfolding of time). Thus, fine distinctions were made that could invest certain innovations with legitimacy and bring them into the pale of adherence to the *sunna*. Theories were devised for the circumstances in which a *bid'a* might be considered acceptable, or even as good and praiseworthy. Ingenuity became an integral component in fitting new political and economic institutions to foundational impulses contained in the *sunna*.

Here, the concept of *ijmā'* (consensus) proved a balancing element in the tug-of-war between *bid'a* and *sunna*. Consensus was a communal notion, formed out of the recognition that ultimately the intent of the law and its foundations was to ensure social welfare. At its core was an assumption that the community as a whole (although primarily referring to the community of religio-legal scholars) would never consent to a practice ultimately harmful to its well-being or departing from the principles of the Qur'an. Accordingly, there might be a change or innovation that was for the good, and hence should be embraced and encouraged rather than denounced. Once again, the relationship between time and legality comes into play as a newly adopted custom or practice might be condemned, but once established, tolerated and sanctioned by *ijmā'*.<sup>31</sup> We see this enacted over and again in Ottoman administrative genres; consider the *kanunname* for Bilad al-Sham that incorporated regional customs into its governing apparatus and, through this process of incorporation, came to construct an imperial vision of stability and standardization against which later contestations were judged, or the case of the *mühimme defterleri* wherein the *beylerbeyi* (as one of the main protagonists in this genre) is explicitly called on to ignore precedent and follow instead "my [the Sultan's] present order" in the matter of granting the rights and duties associated with a particular *timar*.

31 I must pay my due here to the important Hungarian scholar Ignaz Goldziher and his account of the legal traditions inspired by Islam and the historical permutations that resulted in its relationship to various state formations. Although I part ways from him in his decided belief that the Sharia was primarily a utilitarian function of these states and so never became the basis for positive law, his scholarship informed much of the preceding section; see Ignaz Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Law and Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 230-246.

A thornier, and much contested, demonstration of this tension corresponds directly with our period of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century during which time Ottoman intellectual elites (jurists, *ulema* of various standing, court officials, scribes, and litterateurs) honed in on the relationship between Sharia and *kanun*. Mistakenly translated, and expostulated, as an opposition between religious and secular law, it is perhaps better understood within the context I am building in this article, as a bundle of concerns over the relationship between foundational laws—springing from the heart of Muslim practice and sanctioned by the passage of time—and the regulation of daily life by commanding authorities tending to the necessities of a state. In a moment where there existed a general fear that the very foundations of the Ottoman system were at risk, intellectuals and administrators (often one and the same) tended to seek balance in divine laws. For example, Tezcan argues that Kınalızade sought to sanction the compartmentalization of Ottoman society by prioritizing the Sharia and understanding it as a divinely ordered system of equity that only a just (and thus divinely inspired) ruler could implement.<sup>32</sup> Once again, we should be wary of reifying categories to the detriment of observing administrative practice, ideological transformations and the relationship between the two, which, I argue, constitutes a process of discursive production. Thus, the categories of Sharia and *kanun* were actively and uniquely constructed in particular historical moments and, as I will argue below, came to be re-visited within Ottoman attempts to understand the mechanisms of state formation.

What I propose in this article is that, given the dramatic nature of changing regional and global dynamics in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, in combination with a deep structure of reservation concerning innovation (a human condition certainly, but born out of its specific rationalization by scholars of Islam), it is not surprising that writers of the period cried out in consternation. Nor is it particularly remarkable that their cries tended to moralize historical processes as a consequence of such an ambivalence to change—this is a discernable pattern in the Eurasian context writ large. And yet, despite these conflicts, and through emerging techniques of observation and analysis, these authors worked toward descriptive paradigms that archived the early modern state and thus aided in elaborating an actionable imperial language of reform.

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32 Tezcan, “Ethics as a Domain to Discuss the Political,” 118-20.

### Moralizing Change

It is now easier to understand why authors of Ottoman reform treatises were transfixed by the issue of innovation and tended to moralize change within a worldview governed by the principles of good and evil.

It is a long time since the many-chambered household of the high sultanate (may it remain always under the protection of eternal grace) was served by solicitous, well-intentioned, worthy *ulema* and by obedient, humble, willing servants. Today, considering the state of affairs has changed, and evil, disorder, agitation and discord have passed all bounds, I have sought the means to observe the causes and reasons of these transformations, and to bring them to the imperial and august ear.<sup>33</sup>

These are the words of Koçu Bey, intimate adviser to Sultan Murad IV (1623-1640) and product of the *devşirme*, whose 1631 memorandum represents a significant intertwining of the stylized features of the mirror tradition with a new kind of policy-oriented writing. He communicated with a purpose, to indicate problems and their solutions in a form that could lead to direct administrative action and implementation, and so broke out of the formulaic nature of the mirror for princes genre.<sup>34</sup> Yet even while

33 Kemal Aksüt (ed.), *Koçi Bey Risalesi* (Istanbul: Vakit, 1939), 18.

34 The variant spellings of his name reflects a longstanding debate amongst Ottoman linguists as to the best phonetic transcription for a language containing such a diverse heritage (Turkish, Persian, Arabic, Uyghur, etc.) and little indication as to its enunciatory practice in daily life. Following modern Turkish precedent, and its principles of vowel harmony, I have chosen to abide by the “u” following an earlier “o” and so do not use the spelling “Koçi” despite Aksüt’s decision to render it thusly. There is also some confusion as to whether a second treatise dedicated to Sultan Ibrahim in 1640 should indeed be attributed to Koçu Bey or represents yet another anonymous contribution to the debate. See Çağatay Uluçaç’s summary, “Koçi Bey’in Sultan İbrahim’e takdim ettiği Risale ve Arzları,” in *Zeki Velidi Toğan’a Armağan* (Istanbul: Maarif, 1950-55), 177-199. The debate concerning authorship extends to various fragments of reform proposals as explored in Rhoads Murphey, “The Veliyyuddin Telhis: Notes on the Sources and Interrelations Between Koçi Bey and Contemporary Writers of Advice to Kings,” in *Belleten* 43 (1979): 547-571. Three variant manuscripts exist in Istanbul, one at the Millet Kütüphanesi (no. 474), one in the Nuruosmaniye Library (no. 4950), and, as speculated by Uluçaç, the Revan 1323 (Mükerrer) manuscript in the Topkapı Palace Library may be an early copy



stylistically innovative, his overarching vision of the state of affairs was conservative. He attributed the “causes and reasons” for the general disarray in the empire to corruption at the top—withdrawal of the Sultan from direct management, appointment of personal favorites even to the highest post of Grand Vizier, and the resulting “contamination” of administrative, military, and religious domains by interlopers and outsiders: the imperial household overrun by “Turks, Gypsies, Jews, people without religion or faith, cutpurses and city riff-raff” and the Janissary core with interlopers such as “townsmen, Turks, Gypsies, Tats, Lazes, muleteers and camel-drivers, porters, footpads, and cutpurses.”<sup>35</sup>

Koçu Bey’s use of regional and racial slurs, along with a fierce dismay over the emergence of the harem as yet another powerful interest group competing over imperial resources, are far from unique in the treatises explored here. Outsiders and women, in fact, so dominate the literature and its characterization of contemporary ‘disease’ that it seems important to recognize it as yet another component of the mirror for princes genre. Earlier mirrors, especially those clustered around moments of political and social upheaval, inscribe similar accusations. Here again, rather than read the sources transparently or explain them via socioeconomic models, genre criticism reminds us to trace how discursive structures were deployed to render events intelligible. In a moment of crisis, traditionally marginal social elements bear the brunt of the blame and serve as scapegoats both literally and figuratively. Yet mixed within the ‘traditional’ were new social elements; Koçu Bey’s list, by juxtaposition, hearkens to the increased diversity of Istanbul’s urban milieu. Commercialization meant that the urban/rural relationship intensified, as former cultivators became ‘city riff-raff’ and ‘camel-drivers’ shared the same space as ‘cutpurses.’ Boundaries of all sorts were challenged, giving rise to fears of social contamination and imperial disease. Still, it is important to remember that the hardening of hierarchical relationships was a response to perceived catastrophe, and did not necessarily reflect the ebb and flow of material and social interaction.

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made by the author himself. For further references consult Uluçağ, “Koçi Bey,” *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. VI, 832-835, and Colin Imber, “Koçi Bey,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition*, vol. V, 248-250. The most recent edition of the manuscript, which I have not yet consulted, is by Yılmaz Kurt (ed.), *Koçibey Risalesi* (Ankara: Burak, 1998).

35 Aksüt (ed.), 32 and 45.



Rural/urban relationships were already intricately intertwined through patterns of exchange and distribution and divisions between *re'aya* and *sipahi* (which I address next), like the property they laid various claims to, were often fuzzy.

At first glance, what was at stake for Koçu Bey and others, were the very foundations of the House of Osman: the supposed weakening of sultanic absolutism, the resulting seepage of 'foreign' elements into a system based on strict social hierarchies, and the deleterious effects of these on the treasury and thus on the ability of the empire to outfit itself for campaigns of offense or defense. This 'corruption' from earlier imperial moments when the Circle of Justice prevailed and prosperity abounded, however, only brushed the surface of subterranean fears concerning issues of loyalty and the fate of the Ottomans on the world stage if personal bonds of virtue could no longer be assured. Veysi Efendi, for instance, in his *Habname* (Dream-book) written in 1608 has the Sultan ask: "If the *kul*, my *kul*, refuses to obey me, how am I to protect the *re'aya* with the sword of justice and equity, and lead and govern the country?"<sup>36</sup> How, in other words, could the sanctity of the circle be maintained in the face of a burgeoning state apparatus? Or, more troubling, in a situation where no one was staying put, physically or categorically, as *re'aya* turned up in the cities and representatives of vizierial households assumed land grants formerly reserved for the *sipahi*, what constituted justice? With these pressing issues in mind, Ottoman authors scrabbled to reassert the primacy of personal relationships and urged the Sultan to reconstitute, through the direct management of appointments, the model of loyal servant that once ensured the Circle's reproduction.

### **Categorical Limits Betrayed: 'Upstarts' and the Fundamentals of Legitimacy**

Like the anonymous author quoted above, the innovation of utmost concern was the monetization of relations –in particular the marketing of official posts and the entrenchment of tax-farming– and the slackening of social boundaries that occurred as a consequence. Once again, Koçu Bey and other treatise writers understood this transformation as a corruption of

36 Veysi [Üveys ibn Mehmed], *Hâbnâme-i Veysi* (Istanbul: Şeyh Yahya Efendi Matbaası, 1876), 24.

an ideal, one that we now recognize as a construct, generated to interpret and comprehend change. For example, Koçu Bey lamented that while in previous times the link between *timars* and members of the military was assured, and that “outsiders and persons of ignoble origin did not enter their ranks,” currently the ranks were filled by:

those who were upstarts, those who said ‘there is profit here,’ who could not distinguish between good and evil, those who had no legitimate connection, those who by origin or status were not possessors of *dirliks*, some of them city boys and some of them *re’aya*, a bunch of commoners, not useful for anything.<sup>37</sup>

As a consequence “if the world were ruined, they took no notice, and, God protect us, if the enemy overran the world, they would not even know what the war was about...concern for the faith has never entered their thoughts.”<sup>38</sup> Here, strikingly expressed, is the bundle of issues we have sought to clarify: the insertion of money into bonds of loyalty; the confusion of social boundaries that resulted, allowing city dwellers and cultivators to compete with traditionally sanctioned authorities; the disarray this caused to the foundations of state, threatening the ruination of the world as they knew it; and the moralization of these changes with accusations that the “upstarts” were ignorant and could not defend “the faith” because they “could not distinguish between good and evil.” Tezcan’s insights concerning Kınalızade remind us that ethics and politics are, and were, deeply intertwined and especially came together in authors’ references to justice. Here, the genres of the *nasihatname* overlap as the divisions of practical philosophy, *adab*’s messages of cultivated action and thought, and the posture of counsel all crystallize around a particular conception of disciplinary order that posits a just ruler even as it bears witness to a process of bureaucratic specialization.

“Good and evil” and “the faith”, while drawing on religious principles and theological formulations such as I outlined for *bid’a*, function here as social commentary and might best be transposed as “order and disorder” and “the integrity of the community as a whole.” Still, the implicit interpositions of “the faith” with “the state” is important, and recalls the

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37 Aksüt (ed.), 12.

38 Ibid.

linkages constantly made throughout the documentary and literary genres referenced here between religion and governance (*din ve mülk*). In the *mühimme*, for example, the Sultan consistently called for his officials to adhere to his commands and therein abide by the Sharia. The two, *ferman* and Sharia, reinforced each other in the context of an authoritative proclamation. I find it unhelpful to interpret this linkage in light of anachronistic debates concerning secular vs. religious authority, which assumes that any intermingling of the two disabled ‘progress.’ Reminiscent of the *kanun*/Sharia tension, both arguments tend to equate modernity with the desacralization of rulership and law and suggest that this process was a uniquely European one, premised on the Reformation’s principles of privatization (originally spiritual, but progressively also material). The Ottoman ruler was not a theocrat, though at various moments he called on religion to buttress his legitimacy. But neither was he simply a utilitarian, employing religion to suit his purpose, for the Sharia (conceptualized more loosely) embodied a way of life that informed a vision of imperial stability and order.

Represented here, in the constructions of Ottoman treatises, is a fear that this way of life, and the very fundamentals inscribed in it, was under threat. These fundamentals, informed by religious assumptions and aimed at maintaining the welfare of the community as a whole, were primarily those that had been streamlined into the ideology of the Circle of Justice, wherein the measure of order and disorder was also that of good and evil and further, expressed as conditions of justice and injustice, the measure of the Sultan’s legitimacy. Legitimacy, whether we like to admit it or not, whether we are post-Reformation Europeans, seventeenth-century Ottomans, present-day academics, or not, rests on moral principles. It is therefore always partly an unknown, why one leader and not another commands public recognition and adulation. And yet it *is* possible to identify limits, threshold principles, moments of violation, at which point a given leader or system loses this acknowledgement. For the Ottomans, the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century crisis was just such a threshold moment constituting a crisis in morals and in a system of legitimacy premised on the Circle of Justice. Where previously the measure of justice in the realm, and hence of the Sultan’s legitimacy, was the condition of the *re’aya* —“The treasure of rulers is their subjects (*re’aya*); the need of the subjects is for

care and protection (*ri'ayet*) and safeguarding from injustice”—<sup>39</sup> then what should the principles of governance and authority be when the category of the *re'aya* itself was no longer certain?

Confusion over the status of the *re'aya*, therefore, plagues the authors as they seek to both describe and amend the disarray they perceive around them. More often than not in the literature they are sacrosanct and the Sultan is duty bound to protect them. In fact, an inability to do so provokes intensely critical assessments of dynastic representatives within a genre that, as argued above, favors camouflage and a certain amount of condescension. Even Koçu Bey, who seems generally able to sustain a belief in the ultimate revitalization of the Empire, pauses to assert:

The like of the present oppression and maltreatment burdening the *re'aya* has never happened in any time, clime, or ruler's domain before. If, in any of the lands of Islam one iota of injustice is done to any one individual, then on the Day of Judgment not ministers, but rulers will be asked for a reckoning, and it will be poor excuse for them to say to the Lord of the Worlds, 'I delegated this duty.'<sup>40</sup>

Note the slippage here between a specific time and condition (“present oppression”) and a general statement of principle (“in any of the lands of Islam one iota of injustice”), for this slippage constitutes the precise moment where discursive structure and temporal event collapse into and inform each other. The prophetic nature of this moment, one of “reckoning” upon the “Day of Judgment,” further underscores its import and telescopes our eyes toward the issue at stake in the proclamation—oppression of the *re'aya*. Note too, the author's refusal to accept the delegation of authority as an excuse, and his assumption that it is the Sultan's personal responsibility to remedy the situation. To do so, however, he would have to quell the tides of mobilization and diversification that were well under way in the Ottoman realm. And yet, as we shall see, this is precisely what the authors charge him with.

But while the *re'aya* customarily lie at the heart of the Circle and thus of the treatises explored here, they increasingly become troublesome

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39 This is Koçu Bey's concise re-formulation of the circle of justice as merely one example of a constant refrain, Aksüt (ed.), 105.

40 Aksüt (ed.), 48.

indicators of general social disarray. Included in Koçu Bey's list of 'upstarts' they began to climb out from their rightful place behind a garden hedge. To be fair, the categorical definition of the *re'aya* was never fully assured. Euphemistically read as the "flock"/populace tended to by the "shepherd"/ruler, it administratively referenced the status of cultivators and the various tax burdens assessed on them. Thus, while an artisan or merchant also numbered amongst the sultan's flock, when references to injustice and oppression against the *re'aya* were made in documents such as the *mühimme* the geographic locale was usually rural or in association with village clusters. That they now appeared alongside "city riff-raff" as nuisances signifies a novel moment in the literary productions of the Ottoman Empire and attests to the general changes afoot.

Moreover, and in keeping with a moralizing response to social upheaval and specifically, in this case, to urban migration, a hint of condemnation emerges concerning the *re'aya*'s tendency toward ignorance, commonness, and self-interest. This is certainly the case for Veysi, who uses historical references to create a general vision of the *re'aya* as profligate members of society, consistently working against social order: "all the woes and disaster described in these pages were made inevitable by the wicked intentions of the *re'aya* throughout time; the kings have had nothing whatsoever to do with it."<sup>41</sup> While Veysi's position is an extreme one, it does portend a general cultural movement toward judgment rather than approbation during this period. Interestingly, Veysi also removes sole blame from the Sultan, due in large part to his apprehension of reality as a social organism, interdependent in nature and thus subject to its own laws (a position more pronounced in the later seventeenth century). This leads him to explicitly reference the Sharia as a necessary antidote to social forces: "If the foundations of the exalted threshold are [based on] the sacred [Sharia], it will suffer no shortage or imperfection until the Day of Judgment."<sup>42</sup> That Veysi moved outside the foundations inscribed in the Circle of Justice, and opted instead for sacred ground, is a significant indicator that the Circle's explanatory power was faltering. His stance is a direct reminder of Kınalızade's, however, and so suggests that we scrutinize a little closer what "justice" came to constitute in these turbulent times.

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41 Veysi, 38.

42 Ibid., 46.

### Activating an Ottoman Archive: Land, Loyalty, and Justice

This ideological faltering led Ottoman authors of the period increasingly outside the margins of the mirror for princes genre and toward a reform-minded language intent on provoking regulatory actions. There is, however, no clean break but rather an escalating tension between the writers' stated desire to restore and seek refuge in "established laws" (*kanun-ı mukarrer*) and their strict appraisal of reality that seemingly renders such a return impractical if not impossible. Forming the bridge between these two positions, return to the past versus reformative action in the present, were Ottoman documentary productions and administrative genres that provided treatise writers with new stylistic tools even if they also retained the structural formulations of the Circle. Although Koçu Bey, who constructs his entire treatise through the presentation of various *telhisat* (an Ottoman mode of communication between the grand vizier and the sultan), is the most famous example of this gradual departure from mirror conventions, it is possible to detect a general movement toward a new mode of literary intervention based on a narrative structure of *before* and *after*. These authors were intent on discovering what worked before, what happened, the state of affairs now, and what needed to be done to redeem the empire's fortunes. In the process, they activated an Ottoman archive and, through the juxtaposition of lists, cadastral reports, mock *fermans* and references to the *kanunname*, shifted from a paradigm of advice to one of analysis.

One of the main products of this process (tacking back and forth between idealistic visions and administrative models) was the *timar* system, wherein everyone held their proper place, functioned according to the dictates of the Circle, and benefitted from a prosperous treasury. This is a critical point, and lies at the heart of my attempt to trace shifting discursive productions of the early modern Ottoman Empire. While later scholars in the field have simply numbered the "*timar* system" amongst the foundational institutions of the empire, I argue that only within the context of sixteenth and seventeenth-century reform-minded treatises did the *timar* assume its systematized and hallowed shape. It came to embody a social universe based on land and loyalty that no longer existed, and, indeed, may never have done so, at least in the form imagined by either early modern Ottomans or present-day Ottomanists. That the *sipahi* performed as one of

the characters or agents of administrative control in the *kanunname* is clear, and that the *timar*, as representing a bundle of revenue rights and military duties, is a definite feature of both the *kanunname* and the *mühimme*, can also be demonstrated. But the systematization of the two through the explicit use of imperial documentary tendencies awaited a moment of crisis and change.

As a result, treatise writers constructed the system in the negative, regretting what was supposedly lost, and through this regret constructing something that wasn't ever fully there. This is, yet again, a natural human tendency as philosophers and social critics of "absence" from Freud to Agamben via Lacan and Derrida have, with painstaking prose, imparted. Oddly enough, however, it is easy to forget the humanity of the past, especially in one such as the Ottoman, so belabored by assumptions of "otherness." It is also strange that even as contemporary, practicing historians become ever more aware, and wary, of their own constructions, they forget to trace a similar tendency in the documents themselves. Here, however, with our *nasihat* writers, we see documents wielded as persuasive tools in an argument intended to explain and rectify present realities via past constructs and, through this process, the transformation of documentary genres into an archive of the state.

Of utmost concern to Ottoman narrative constructions of the *timar* system are two features that should now be familiar: boundaries and corruption via the monetarization of social relations. Lutfi Pasha clearly enunciated the concern over boundary transgression: "we must insist that none from the *re'aya* be made *sipahis*, that none be made *sipahis* except those who are sons of *sipahis*, whose fathers and ancestors were *sipahis*."<sup>43</sup> The tenacity of this boundary, if not its total creation, was made by conveniently suppressing that the *sipahi* originally emerged from the *re'aya* and were simply distinguished hierarchically from them by an ability to amass the resources necessary to participate in sultanic military campaigns. The tendency toward heredity, however, gradually concretized this difference and led to the kind of statement above. For Lutfi Pasha and others, problems emerged when the basis of transactions became money rather than land; the intended domain of the *sipahi* was *miri* or state-held land, granted to the individual in return for loyal service and entrusted with economic,

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43 Lutfi/Tschudi, 24.



social, and political functions of protecting and administering his “property.” While certainly not a system of outright ownership (he collected revenue in the form of taxes and services), his function within the imperial governing apparatus was firmly grounded in the land itself. Increasing demands for cash to support new military specialists, along with the more rapid and diverse circulation of currency, escalated trends toward tax-farming and thus prompted the transformation of *miri* lands into mobile property.

With money came not only specialization but also the dispersion of authority, as assuming the position of a *sipahi* and gaining control of a *timar* became a profit-generating venture. This constituted in the eyes of the treatise writers the grievous issue of corruption, as *intisab* (or personal favor and influence) became more pronounced in the granting of official positions. As the anonymous author of the *Kitab-i müstetab* phrased it:

*Timars* have become the prerogative of the viziers, that when using a tenakçe scribe, they name the slave girls in their households, their beardless youths and slave boys, even their cats and dogs, every one of them being designated by a separate name, and they are awarded a diploma for a *zi'amet* or *timar*.<sup>44</sup>

Mustafa Âli claimed that *timars* were “all reserved for the mercenaries (*levend*) and for the slaves of the great (*ekâbir kulları*),”<sup>45</sup> and Lutfî Pasha summarized the state of affairs with the cry: “For officers of the state, corruption is a disease without remedy...; beware, beware of corruption; O God, save us from it.”<sup>46</sup> The writers made a direct link between “corruption” in the realm of appointments and exorbitant taxation and oppression of the *re'aya*, who once again emerge as feeble victims in need of protection. With the accumulation of wealth an end in itself, and the use of trickery to attain status (naming cats and dogs as able-bodied *timar* holders), the true and rightful *timar*-holder was eclipsed by money-grabbers inattentive to the needs of the cultivator thereby disrupting the circle of Sultan-land-

44 Yücel (ed.), 26.

45 Mustafa Âli, *Mustafa Âli's Counsel for Sultans of 1581*, ed., trans. Andreas Tietze, 2 vols. (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1979-1982), vol. I, 85.

46 Lutfî/Tschudi, 12-13.



treasury-justice that assured prosperity; the empire as a whole was morally and financially bankrupt. Thus an increasingly fatalistic vision of affairs dominated the literature. When Katib Çelebi crafted his *Düstûrî'l- 'amel li-islâhî'l-halel*, or the *Guiding Principles for the Rectification of Defects* in 1653, he concluded by implying that the forces at work were out of any reformers' hands, and that they may need to just run their course:

So that, if the tyrannical excess of taxation and the toxic sale of offices are not abandoned; if we are not able to recover what was lost by a penitent act and a return to justice; then it is certain that the curse of disobedience to the law and the oppression of injustice and brutality will ruin the empire. 'From God we come and to Him we return.'<sup>47</sup>

But if the mood was fatalistic, the actions of the authors were interventionist and pragmatic. Ayn Ali Efendi, for example, drew on his experience as a career administrator and scribe in various financial departments to compile a portrait of land tenure for Sultan Ahmed I (1603-1617) and Grand Vizier Kuyucu Murad Pasha.<sup>48</sup> Using cadastral surveys and law books, he inventoried the number of timar estates in each province, the revenue accruing to the military commanders and governors, and the number of troops supported by each district. He then suggested that the core of each *timar*, its *kılıç* (literally meaning 'sword'), and thus the direct correspondence between military valor and the land, was in grave jeopardy due both to the diversification of these revenues to unworthy recipients and to the

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47 Katib Çelebi's *Düstûr* was published along with two works of Ayn Ali, *Kavânîn-i âl-i 'Osmân der hülâsa-ı mezâmîn-i defter-i dîvân* (The Laws of the Ottoman Dynasty, Comprising a Summary of the Contents of the Council Registers) and *Risâle-i vazîfe-horân ve merâtib-i bendegân-ı âl-i 'Osmân* (Treatise on the Salaried Personnel and the Ranks of the Servants of the Ottoman Dynasty) in *Kavânîn Risâlesi* (Istanbul: Tasvîr-i Efkâr, 1280/1863), 129. Qur'anic citation from Chapter II, verse 151.

48 Douglas Howard's work on this manuscript and insights concerning the incorporation of bureaucratic models into the *nasihatname* tradition proved enormously suggestive for the arguments presented here; see "The Historical Development of the Ottoman Imperial Registry (Defter-i hakani): Mid-Fifteenth to Mid-Seventeenth Centuries," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 11 (1986) 213-230; "Genre and Myth in the Ottoman Advice for Kings Literature;" and "From Manual to Literature: Two Texts on the Ottoman Timar System," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungarica* 61 (2008) 87-99.

impropriety in record keeping within the imperial registry itself. Despite the formulaic nature of these critiques, he effectively mapped out the terrain of the Empire in a new way and created a vision of its potential that later authors continually returned to.<sup>49</sup> He turned lists and registers into actionable models of reform, and in effect displayed the Empire to itself (pushing the mirror genre to a new limit). That the “sources” he used were most probably recorded twenty or even forty years before the time of his writing is not really the point, unless one is looking for “accuracy” or “reality.” Rather, the historical meaningfulness of his act is that it signified a literary and political intervention: he established a model of analysis that represented a new kind of abstraction and objectification of the past.

Another example of an author deploying administrative sources to build an argument for reform can be found in the *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân* (Laws of the Janissaries), an anonymous work also dated to the reign of Sultan Ahmed I (1603-1617). Again, he used earlier regulatory codes as points of comparison proving present disorder.<sup>50</sup> More significantly, he adopted the administrative model of the *kanunname* to present his own systematization of the laws, codes, and proprietary rules that he believed constituted the generative power of the military corps: their willingness to sacrifice body and soul for the sultan. This system of loyalty, once again threatened in the author’s eyes by the sale of status for money and other deviations from time-tested norms, must be restored for the House of Osman to retain both internal order and glory in the eyes of external beholders. This refrain is by now familiar, but the formalistic innovation belies its conservatism: once again we see an author convulsed by the problems of *bid’at* and resistant to change even as he fully embodied it.

With Aziz Efendi’s *Kanunname-i Sultani*, delivered to Sultan Murad IV in 1632, the productive tension between advice and analysis is fully realized.<sup>51</sup> While presenting the now customary vision of imperial corrup-

49 His lists were reproduced by Koçu Bey, Katib Çelebi, and included in the ambassadorial report of Paul Rycault printed as *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (1668), (Westmead: Gregg International, 1972).

50 Extant manuscripts in Istanbul: Topkapı Palace Library, Revan 1319-1320; Istanbul University Library, T 3293; Süleymaniye Library, Esad Efendi 2068; and Nuruosmaniye Library 4095.

51 Commentary, notes, translation and a facsimile edition published by Rhoads Murphey, *Kānūn-nāme-i Sultānī li ‘Azīz Efendi: Aziz Efendi’s Book of Sultanīc*

tion and calling for the restoration of fundamental institutions and principles, Aziz Efendi uniquely included draft versions and outlines for royal proclamations (*hatt-i hümayun*) that, if approved by the sultan, would be released and circulated. These imperial rescripts, or *fermans*, constituted the basis of the *mühimme* collections and represented an active terrain of negotiation between the governing apparatus and regional agents of various sorts. This argument is further substantiated by the primary context in which Aziz Efendi presented his drafts and recommended direct sultanic intervention: providing Kurdish *bey*s in border areas with material incentives so as to garner their support against future Safavid incursions. He specifically referenced the policy of *isti'malat* ("documents of inducement" / *isti'malatname* should be sent to all the Kurdish chiefs accompanied by ceremonial robes of honor, and to their relatives land grants and benefices") and encouraged its implementation despite anti-Shiite polemics that were then rampant in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>52</sup>

Notably, the other context in which Aziz Efendi labored over drafts of sultanic proclamations concerned the granting of *timar* certificates to rightful claimants and the necessary weeding out of profiteers and palace favorites. Once again, he invoked a model of negotiated rule in recommending that provincial governors play a role in determining the recipients of grants that were either "unassigned or wrongfully assigned to servants of the notables." A claimant was "rightful" if he represented "old military families of the area who are capable of war and combat and fighting and conflict." This was knowledge, presumably, that only a regional administrator could hold or at least possess the means to confirm. Thus, "after the district commanders have submitted their recommendations, the designated candidates shall be put in possession of their *timars*, and a list of these newly-assigned certificate-holders shall be made and submitted by the district commander to the Porte for final approval."<sup>53</sup> While Aziz Efendi supported absolutist notions of rule, he also urged the reinforcement of the provincial governor/*beylerbeyi*'s position as a counterweight to the proliferation of vizierial households, and the increasingly top-heavy

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*Laws and Regulations: An Agenda for Reform by a Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Statesman* (Cambridge: Harvard University Office of the University Publisher, 1985).

52 Murphey/Aziz Efendi, 16.

53 *Ibid.*, 21.

nature of the Istanbul-centered court. This issue, the role of the province in an imperial dynamic of power, becomes explicit during the seventeenth century and is increasingly played out as a major part of the eighteenth-century Ottoman political culture. For now, it is sufficient to note that Aziz Efendi called on all possible resources to countermand the “negligence and carelessness” of state ministers and reform the pillars of the sultanate so that it could once again stand as the envy of all the world.<sup>54</sup>

The drafting of sultanic proclamations was clearly one of these resources, and, while policy-oriented suggestions were common to the period as a whole, and represented a uniquely Ottoman adaptation of the advice genre (or move outside its boundaries), their presentation by Aziz Efendi, in a bureaucratic and linguistic formulation intended for direct implementation, constituted an important break. Yet, he still cloaked the *Kanunname-i Sultani* within the guise of the mirror genre and adopted a view of reform that emphasized restoring the fundamentals of the past. He humbly casts himself at the feet of the Sultan, and embraces retirement as protection against the ambiguous outcome of speaking candidly:

I would rather sacrifice my own life than compromise the ideas in my head. I am an old and loyally devoted veteran the stock of whose life has now reached its limit and who is no longer capable of useful service...In sum, I am an aged servant who has shown his readiness to give not only a dram of his blood, but his whole body and soul for the protection of the reputation and good name of the Sultanate, and for the safeguarding of religion and the state.<sup>55</sup>

He plays on the issue of “concealment” throughout the text, employing the typical “may it not be hidden or concealed from the world-adorning knowledge of your prosperous and great majesty, shadow of God on earth that...”<sup>56</sup> to legitimize the temerity of his project. And ultimately, he entrusts these “secrets concerning the origin of our distress” to the Sultan and advises concealment of the rationale behind reform measures so they may “be brought into being and quickly realized without any interference,”<sup>57</sup>

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54 Ibid., 24.

55 Ibid., 24.

56 Ibid., 4.

57 Ibid., 24.

thus referencing the tradition of consultation that maintained an honest tension between the precepts of religion and state and privileged tradition as a guide to present action.

Mixing elements of innovation and convention, Aziz Efendi's text dramatically captures the ideological crisis at the heart of late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Ottoman advice manuals. The authors feared decline, sought redemption in the fundamentals of the circle of justice, and made restoration of the past the primary vehicle of reform. Yet in producing this ideal vision, they systematized the workings of state, and objectified former practices as institutional foundations. Their literary style partly embraced the mirror genre's art of reflection and concealment, yet also generated cracks in the surface by deploying administrative genres and activating an archival history of the Empire. In so doing, their work embodied a shift from statecraft premised on the character and actions of the Sultan toward an abstracted and bureaucratized vision of government that best describes the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century.