

Zeynep Yürekli,

Architecture and Hagiography in the Ottoman Empire: The Politics of Bektashi Shrines in the Classical Age,

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In her work, *Architecture, and Hagiography in the Ottoman Empire*, Zeynep Yürekli contextualizes the early modern Ottoman socio-political and religious landscape. Adopting interdisciplinary methods and exploiting not only building and inscription but also archival documents and hagiographies, she tries to show us the dynamic relationships between the state and the ghazis/Bektashi groups.

At the beginning of her book, Yürekli clearly explains that based on two significant Bektashi shrines in Anatolia, she aims to put the three different parameters: “hagiography, shrine construction, the socio-political context,” into conversations to crystalize our picture of early modern Ottoman world (p. 2). She talks about how Sufi communities came to be institutionalized and politicized during the early modern period, even if some of those orders viewed themselves fundamentally “renunciatory” of all mundane interests. As a part of this process, Sufi groups attempted to construct their holy places and write down hagiographies. Yürekli claims that hagiographies had a particular function within the Ottoman context because they defended and disseminated dervish communities’ legitimacy against anti-Sufi rhetoric and attracted powerful men for Sufi architectural patronage. Hagiographies played essential roles in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when orthodoxy was defined and imposed by the Ottoman State and Sufi convents were mainly targeted and attacked by Sunni ulama (p. 3-4).

She points out that after the conquest of Istanbul in 1453 by Mehmed II, the Ottomans transformed from “a religiously tolerant and politically fragmented frontier principality into an orthodox and centralized empire” (p. 8). This transformation deeply disturbed and threatened the status of the ghazis and the *abdals*. Contemporary historical accounts show the tension between those semi-independent groups and centralizing Ottoman State in the second half of the fifteenth century. Quoting from Cemal Kafadar, she argues that parallel to a new genre of historical chronicles written for the Ottoman Sultan, Bayezid II, Dervish groups also attempted to compose their version of history through hagiographies. Even though the Ottoman Dynasty and the Bektashi order kept in relative harmony in the second half of the fifteenth century, they became “two opposing poles” in the Ottoman political and religious landscape in the sixteenth century (p. 8).

Giving some historical background for this matter, Yürekli states that after the Mongol invasion of the Middle East in the thirteenth century, the eastern Islamic world witnessed mausolea's proliferation of various Sufi saints. Mainly, saintly shrines and imperial tombs acquired "sacred status" in the Turco-Mongol culture (p. 16). For example, early Ottoman Sultans constructed the tombs of important Sunni religious figures such as the prophet's companion, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari (d. 674), and the famous Sufi, İbn Arabi (d. 1240), and the Qadiri Shaykh, Abd al-Kadir Gilani (d. 1166).

As an alternative way to the imperial projects for Sunni Sufi shrines' construction, the ghazi warriors in the periphery architecturally patronized the Bektashi shrines (p. 19). For ghazi commanders and antinomian dervishes, the shrines of Seyyid Gazi and Hacı Bektaş became "centers of resistance" against Ottoman centralization and Sunnism (p. 21). Also, the alliances between ghazis and dervishes manifested in new rituals and ceremonies dedicated to those shrines. The shrine of Hacı Bektaş held the festival for the commemoration of Karbala during the first decade of Muharram. The shrine of Seyyid Gazi organized a festival (mahya) identified with the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca in Dhu al-Hijjah. The festivals identified with unorthodox activities such as dance, music, intoxication, and the dissemination of legends, in which ghazis/abdals re-defined their identity and re-positioned themselves against the Ottoman exclusionary religious policies. As a result, Hacı Bektaş and Seyyid Gazi's shrines came to be a significant location, in which ghazis and dervishes got together and exchanged with each other under the umbrella of "the Bektashi network" (p. 19-20).

It seems that Yürekli bases her argument on the dichotomy of Orthodoxy-Heterodoxy. However, the transformation of the Ottoman religious landscape after the sixteenth century was a multi-faceted and complex process. There were various non-Sunni groups, such as Qalandaris, Haydaris, and Qizilbashs, marginalized and persecuted by the Ottomans, whereas the Bektashi order was officially recognized by the Ottomans and financially supported by religious endowments. Thus, I wonder how these particular points fit or contradict her dichotomic schema.

Besides, Yürekli focuses on the shrines of Hacı Bektaş and Seyyid Gazi. Yet, Abdal Musa's shrine in Elmalı in the southwestern part of Anatolia and Kızıl Deli (Seyyid Ali Sultan)'s shrine in Dimetoka in the Balkan region also played significant roles in the history of the Bektashi order. Thus, I would like to see how she would deal with these shrines in her argument.

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Moreover, Yürekli shapes her political analysis with the binary oposition of center and periphery. She emphasizes the inner dynamics of the Ottoman centralization project against peripheral ghazi groups. Looking at a broader picture, I wonder how the Ottoman political and religious rivalry with the Safavids and the Habsburgs in the sixteenth century would interact with her perspective.

Overall, Yürekli's book successfully uses interdisciplinary methods, exploits different source materials, and illuminates the political and religious transformation of the Ottoman Empire during the early modern period.

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