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POLITICS OF SUFISM IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS*

OSMANLI İMPARATORLUĞU'NDA TASAVVUFUN SİYASETİ: KARŞILAŞTIRMALI BİR ANALİZ

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ABSTRACT

Sufi orders and brotherhoods have extensively contributed the reproduction and transformation of the social and political formation in the Ottoman Empire besides their significance in cultural and intellectual life. Contrary to the previous scholarship which identifies Sufi orders as unchanged and timeless religious movements during the medieval times, and one of the causes of political decline and social decay in early modern era when the Empire underwent profound social and political transformations; revisionist studies underscore the importance of historicizing Sufi orders and recognizing the transformations in their internal dynamics and their changing destinies in the course of history. In this paper, I am going to analyze three books on Sufi movements in the Ottoman Empire—namely, *A Culture of Sufism: Naqshbandis in the Ottoman World, 1450-1700*, by Dina Le Gall (2005); *The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought in the Ottoman Empire: The Rise of the Halveti Order, 1350-1650*, by John J. Curry (2010); and *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200-1550*, by Ahmet T. Karamustafa (1994). I argue that an adequate understanding of the history of Sufi orders requires taking the political conditions and the relationship between Sufi groups and political authorities into account. Not only the personal relations of political actors with Sufi lodges and masters, the broad political framework and social conditions as well should be addressed by the historian to account for any change and/or persistence in the internal dynamics as well as the social recognition of the analyzed Sufi order.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sufism, Ottoman history, early modern era, tariqa, historiography

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ÖZ

Tasavvufi hareketler ve tarikatlar, kültürel ve entelektüel hayattaki önemlerinin yanı sıra, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki sosyal ve siyasi oluşumun yeniden üretilmesine ve dönüştürülmesine büyük katkı sağlamıştır. Tarikatları Orta çağ boyunca durağan/değişmeyen dini hareketler olarak tanımlayan ve İmparatorluğun derin sosyal ve siyasi dönüşümler geçirdiği erken modern çağda siyasi gerilemenin ve sosyal çürümenin nedenlerinden biri olarak tanımlayan önceki araştırmaların aksine; revizyonist çalışmalar, tarikatları tarihselleştirmenin, iç dinamiklerindeki dönüşümleri ve tarihin akışı içinde değişen pozisyonlarını anlamanın önemini vurgulamaktadır. Bu makalede, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki tasavvuf hareketleriyle ilgili üç kitabı analiz edeceğim: Dina Le Gall'in 2005 tarihli kitabı *A Culture of Sufism: Naqshbandis in the Ottoman World, 1450-1700* (Bir Tasavvuf Kültürü: Osmanlı Dünyasında Nakşibendiler, 1450-1700); John J. Curry'nin 2010 tarihli kitabı *The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought in the Ottoman Empire: The Rise of the Halveti Order, 1350-1650* (Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Müslüman Tasavvufi Düşüncenin Dönüşümü: Halveti Tarikatı'nın Yükselişi, 1350-1650); ve Ahmet T. Karamustafa'nın 1994 tarihli kitabı *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200-1550* (Tanrı'nın Kuraltanımaz Dostları: İslam Dünyasında Derviş Toplulukları, 1200-1550). Makale, tarikatların tarihinin yeterli bir şekilde anlaşılmasının, siyasi koşulları ve tarikatlar ile siyasi otoriteler arasındaki ilişkiyi hesaba katmayı gerektirdiğini savunuyor. İslami ve tasavvufi hareketlerin iç dinamiklerindeki değişimleri ve süreklilikleri, bunların toplumsal konumlarını ve siyasallaşmalarını açıklamak için yalnızca siyasi aktörlerle tasavvuf zaviyeleri ve şeyhlerinin kişisel ilişkilerini değil, aynı zamanda bu ilişkileri dönüştüren geniş siyasi çerçeve ve sosyal koşullar da tarihçi tarafından ele alınmalıdır.

Keywords: Tasavvuf, Osmanlı tarihi, erken modern dönem, tarikatlar, tarih-yazımı

INTRODUCTION

The place of religion within the general political and social structure of the Ottoman Empire displays continuities with the tradition of Islamic Near Eastern empires of the medieval times. However, the social and political impact of religion was in a constant transformation in the Ottoman Empire whose geographical enormity as well as historical longevity outdistanced not only the previous Islamic empires but also most of its contemporary counterparts in the East and in the West. Thus, it would evidently be a misrecognition to imagine social and political formation of the Empire as static and frozen, and to represent the role of religion and religious movements unchanged. Sufi orders and brotherhoods are among those religious movements which were central to the history of the Ottoman Empire. They contributed extensively to the reproduction and transformation of the social and political formation of the Empire besides their place in the cultural and intellectual life. In their relationship with the social structures and political power-centers of the Empire, however, religious movements themselves have also transformed in the course of history. Moreover, transformation of a diverse body of orders and brotherhoods differed to a great extent in relation to, and depending on, the changing political and social conditions of the Empire. Hence, while certain religious groups became closer to the center, politically more legitimate and socially more established, others were disregarded by the center, marginalized by the cultural elite, and became dissident subjects of the Empire.

Thus, studies of Sufi orders and brotherhoods, like any other phenomenon, demand heavy consideration of broad social and political frameworks. Notable scholarly works on this subject contributed immensely to our understanding of religious life in early Turkish-Islamic states.[1] As valuable as their contribution are, this early scholarship have not been followed by

[1] See for instance, Mehmed Fuad Köprülü, *Türk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavvıflar*, Akçağ: İstanbul, 2013; Mehmed Fuad Köprülü, *Anadolu'da İslamiyet*, Alfa: İstanbul, 2017; Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *İslam Felsefesi*, Selçuk Yayınları: Ankara, 1967; Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Türk Tefekkürü Tarihi*, Yapı Kredi Yayınları: İstanbul, 2004; Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Anadolu Kültürü Üzerine Makaleler*, Doğu-Batı: Ankara, 2021; Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, *100 Soruda Tasavvuf*, Gerçek Yayınları: İstanbul, 1969; Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, *Mevlanadan Sonra Mevlevilik*, İnkılap: İstanbul, 1983; Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, *Melâmîlik ve Melâmîler*, Gri Yayınları: İstanbul, 1992; Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Türk Sufiliğine Bakışlar*, İletişim: İstanbul, 2016; Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Zındıklar ve Mülhidler*, Timaş: İstanbul, 2020; and Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Kalenderiler: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Marjinal Sufilik*, Timaş: İstanbul, 2017.

studies with historical methodological approaches of contemporary schools in social and cultural history. Thus, Sufi orders and brotherhoods in the history of the Ottoman Empire have faced the risk of being identified as unchanged and timeless religious movements during the medieval times, and one of the causes of political decline and social decay in the early modern times when the Empire underwent profound social and political transformations due to external and internal historical developments. Contrarily, revisionist history studies underscore the importance of historicizing the Sufi orders and recognizing the transformations in their internal dynamics and their changing destinies in the course of history. One of the most important aspects of the history of Sufi orders, in this dynamic picture, is their relations with the political center of the Empire. Center's approach to the Sufi orders was subject to change in accordance with political priorities and the cultural/intellectual taste of the elites and political authorities. Quite naturally, this had a decisive impact on the organization and social recognition of different Sufi groups. Therefore, this paper argues that an adequate understanding of the history of Sufi orders requires taking the political conditions and the relationship between Sufi groups and political authorities into account. Not only the personal relations of political actors with Sufi lodges and masters but also the broad political framework and social conditions should be addressed by historians in order to account for any change and/or persistence in the internal dynamics as well as the social recognition of the analyzed Sufi order.

This paper is going to analyze Dina Le Gall's *A Culture of Sufism: Naqshbandis in the Ottoman World, 1450-1700*, John J. Curry's *The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought in the Ottoman Empire: The Rise of the Halveti Order, 1350-1650* and Ahmet T. Karamustafa's *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200-1550* in relation to the argument above. Le Gall and Curry focus on two different Sufi orders; Naqshbandis and Halvetis respectively.[2] Yet one common point of these two Sufi groups is that they have been closer to the tenets of orthodox Islam, and they were regarded as relatively legitimate by the cultural elite and religious authorities. These two books cover almost the same historical periods in which growth of the Ottomans culminated in the imperial state formation in the late 15th and early 16th century, and their rivalry with Shiite Safavids played a significant role in center's approach to religion in general and Sufi orders in particular. Karamustafa, on the other hand, focuses on dissident dervish groups, still within the framework of Sufism but rather a marginal one from the perspective of orthodox Islam. Furthermore, his study covers an earlier period. Nevertheless, it corresponds to a significant era in the history of Ottoman Empire as the latter has become a complex and fully fledged world-empire and the political priorities of the center, accordingly, had been changing against the favor of heterodox mystical dervishes. Another important factor is the beginning of Sunni-Shiite clash already in the late 1400s. Thus, despite the discrepancies in timeframe with the other books, *God's Unruly Friends*, too, sheds light on the relationship between political authorities and Sufi groups, yet from another perspective that of the dissident, marginal dervishes. The paper will first discuss Le Gall's book through providing a brief summary, elaborating on main points and making a historiographical critique in relation to my argument. The same logic will be followed for *The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought in the Ottoman Empire* and *God's Unruly Friends* respectively. Finally, a comparative analysis of these three books will be presented.

[2] Naqshbandiyya is a Sufi order (tariqa) originated in Transoxiana in the 14th century. It is by now the most dominant Sufi order in Turkey (and probably the whole Muslim World), known with its members' strict adherence to Sunni orthodoxy. For detailed information, see Hamid Algar, "Nakşibendiyye", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/naksibendiyye#1 (24.12.2022). Halvetiyya is originated also in the 14th century in the region south to the Caspian Sea. It found opportunity to expand into Anatolia, Balkans and Africa during the Ottoman expansion. For Halvetiyya, see Süleyman Uludağ, "Halvetiyye", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/halvetiyye (24.12.2022).

1. A Culture of Sufism: Naqshbandis in the Ottoman World, 1450-1700

Dina Le Gall's *A Culture of Sufism* analyzes the Naqshbandi Sufi order first from the order's emergence in Transoxiana to its diffusion through Ottoman lands and, second from the order's building up a religious orthodoxy in relation to the politics of the Empire. Le Gall's main contention is to present Naqshbandi order as a historical phenomenon with its social and cultural aspects which affected and were shaped by the dynamic historical conditions. Analysis of these hitherto neglected features of the order in an unexplored period of the Naqshbandi history enlightens our understanding of Sufism in the early modern period as well as the organization of Naqshbandis in that period. Le Gall argues that the reason of this negligence was the scholarly bias of focusing on politics of the two branches of the order—Mujaddidiyya and Khalidiyya—in the 19th century mostly because of an intellectual conformism and orientalist/colonialist mind-set. Rather, by focusing on ritualistic and teaching practices, patterns of communication and building networks, patronage, intellectual preferences, and so on and by relying on "mundane sources ranging from devotional manuals to spiritual genealogies, treatises, biographical and hagiographical literature, chronicles, travel accounts, city histories and geographies, surveys of Sufi lodges, and record of charitable endowments", Le Gall tries to understand Naqshbandis in their relation to social and cultural life of Ottoman Empire and the working of tariqas from 1450 to 1700.[3]

The first part of the book begins with an investigation on the nature of Naqshbandi diffusion from Transoxiana to the Ottoman Empire. We can speculate that the reason is evident as the shifting political power-center through Istanbul as the Ottomans rose as the most powerful Islamic empire; nevertheless, the picture is more complicated. Le Gall points out the importance of Ubeydullah Ahrar and the activities of his khalifas who conveyed his doctrines throughout the Islamic world with a missionary vision.[4] Another important factor is the rise of Safavids in Iran and consequently the persecution of Naqshbandis in this part of the world. Most probably this broke the linkage between Transoxiana and Anatolia, and eventually led the autonomous development of the tariqa in Ottoman lands, centering Istanbul. Already after the conquest of the city, Mehmed II invited prominent Naqshbandi masters from Transoxiana and Khorasan. Following historical figures like Abdullah İlahi and Ahmed Bukhari, Naqshbandis settled in Istanbul towards the end of the 15th century. By comparing their strength with that of Mevlevis and especially Halvetis, Le Gall maintains that Naqshbandis were not the most favored order in the bloom of Sufi orders in the Empire in the late 15th and 16th centuries.

Nevertheless, they could diffuse into the cultural elite and became influential among *ulama* circles thanks to their reference to Ibn Arabi, an important mystic for the Ottoman dynasty, and their mastery over Persian literature, respected among Ottoman elite circles. Outside the capital, however, Naqshbandis remained relatively ineffective in Anatolia and the Balkans except Bursa and Kurdish-populated regions. In Ottoman's campaign against Christianity and heterodoxy within Muslim lands, especially in the Balkans, Halvetis and other orders were more instrumental for the Sunnification policies of the Empire. Moreover, historically Naqshbandis' organizational structure facilitated their establishment in urban centers rather than rural areas. Finally, in Arab lands, like in the Balkans and Anatolia, Naqshbandi diffusion was insignificant until more popular Mujaddidiyya movement. For one thing, strong Hanafi overtone in their creed did not attract Shafi Arab audience. Their reputation

[3] Dina Le Gall, *A Culture of Sufism: Naqshbandis in the Ottoman World, 1450-1700*, State University of New York Press, New York, 2005, pp. 2-3.

[4] For more information on Ahrar, see Necdet Tosun, "Ubeydullah Ahrâr", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/ubeydullah-ahrar (25.12.2022).

in Persian literature and orientation towards Persian culture might be another alienating factor. More importantly, Le Gall speculates on Arab perception of the order as an Ottoman projection which account for their cultural and political suspicion for Naqshbandis.

After the analysis of geographic expansion of Naqshbandi tariqa, Le Gall discusses main line of Naqshbandi teachings and devotional practices in relation to the Ottoman social and political realities. The most prominent feature of Naqshbandi doctrine is their adherence to the Sharia and Sunna which attracted the attention of Ottoman religious authorities and explains their inclination towards the tariqa. While they follow the mystical teachings of their great master Ibn Arabi and did not refrain from ascetic, inner-worldly devotional practices, Naqshbandis shaped their behaviors within the framework of the community-based interpretation of Sharia. Their mysticism and asceticism, unlike the other Sufi groups, did not prescribe seclusion from society. Le Gall states that

> especially the last refrain was more than simply a rejection of either ritual seclusion in a cell or the more general ascetic withdrawal from society. Rather, it went to the very heart of the unique Naqshbandi way of seeking God—what the manuals called, after 'Abd al- Khaliq Ghujduvani, khalvat dar anjuman, that is, "solitude within society" or seeking God while immersed in society.[5]

This idea of seeking individual/spiritual purity within society accounts for their popularity among urbanites as it allows its members to carry on their worldly activities in their social and family lives. Another difference from other Sufi orders, highlighted by Le Gall, is Naqshbandis' unique *silsila* which begins with the first caliph Abu Bakr rather than prophet's cousin and son-in-law Ali. Their *silsila* marked their Sunni identity especially during the culmination of Sunni-Shiite clash with the rise of the Safavids in Iran. However, notwithstanding the established arguments, Le Gall's sources show that the role of Naqshbandis in cleansing the Kizilbash elements of Anatolia and the battles over orthodoxy was rather insignificant. Nevertheless, their strict obedience to the Sharia prevented their persecution during the puritanical Kadizadeli movement against mystical Sufi orders.

Dina Le Gall's main aim is to revise and offer alternatives for the retrospective readings of Naqshbandi history under the impact of the vigorous 19th century branches, Mujaddidiyya and Khalidiyya. She successfully carries out this task in several grounds. First of all, Naqshbandis establishment and strong presence in Ottoman Empire predates the penetration of Indian-origin Mujaddidiyya. Historical contingencies facilitated their organization in the Empire. Through patronage relations and thanks to their command over Persian literature and abidance to Sunni orthodoxy they could secure a solid position. More importantly,

> The Naqshbandi identity that was inculcated in disciples during our period had tit its heart not simply rigorous Fidelity to the shari'a but rather a more complex regimen. It combined devotional sobriety and shari'a-abidance along with the shunning of common Sufi practices that Naqshbandis cast as ostentatious or inferior, a call for adepts to engage in their Sufi discipline while leading lives fully immersed in society, a claim to superior mystical journeying, and a vision of an irshadi Sufism in which shaykhs were intimate guides of individual mystical seekers along a path of spiritual transformation.[6]

Hence, they were able to disseminate their teachings at the societal level with their successful reconciliation of "devotional sobriety and sharia abidance". Second, despite the intense Sunni overtone of their doctrine, they did not actively participate in the Sunnification of Anatolia and the Balkans, especially during the campaign against the Kizilbash, unlike what the previous scholarship—which identifies Naqshbandis with strong political activism in favor of protecting Sharia-based Sunni Islam, argues. Third, Naqshbandis' relation with the political authorities, in comparison with that of Halvetis for instance, was not as profound as it was

[5] Le Gall, *A Culture of Sufism*, p. 119.
[6] Le Gall, *A Culture of Sufism*, p. 180.

assumed in other studies. Lastly, Le Gall depicts the Sufi expansion and their internal organization as rather loose, unstructured, and depending on historical contingencies. Unlike the Mujaddidi-influenced Naqshbandiyya of the 19th century, in the 16th and 17th centuries "we meet a remarkable looseness and an array of independent and institutionally unconnected circles based primarily in personal and vertical *silsila* bonds."[7] Her contribution to the understanding of the Naqshbandiyya, based on these four grounds, is closely related to her way of looking at the developments in the course of the order's history, in their own terms and within the historical realities of the time. Hence, in doing so, she adequately historicizes Naqshbandiyya's dissemination through Ottoman lands and establishment of the order henceforth.

Le Gall's account for the strength of Naqshbandis within Ottoman society is, I think, one of the most striking parts of her argument. Le Gall underscores the Naqshbandi adherence to mystical Sufi tradition through their ritualistic practices like *dhikr*, *muraqaba* and *rabıta*, while embracing the community-based Sharia. In this way, they did not encounter with the suspicion of orthodox religious authorities because of their mystical practices, and they allowed their members to perform devotional practices while carrying out their daily activities within social life. Their strength in dissemination comes partly from this balance of attractive mystical outlook and affirmation of the society. Second reason, Le Gall highlights, is the loose structure of Naqshbandi organization, foremost their non-hereditary mode of succession which enabled them to remain dynamic and to diffuse different parts of the Empire more effectively than the other Sufi tariqas.

As we clearly see, Naqshbandis relation with the Ottoman political elite is of secondary or tertiary importance in their successful establishment. Le Gall's comparison of Halvetis and Naqshbandis in this respect is very useful. Accordingly, "[i]n terms of access to the Ottoman court, *tekkes* founded, endowments, and other material support, it is the Khalwatiyya rather than Naqshbandiyya that was favored by the Ottoman governing elite of our period, perhaps … because Khalwatis, or at least some Khalwati branches, were more politically useful to the Ottomans."[8] One possible reason of this Halveti superiority is the strict abidance of Naqshbandis to legal-base Islam and stronger heterodox elements among Halvetis which made them more instrumental. Nevertheless, Naqshbandis, too, found ways to obtain strong relations with the political elite even with Ottoman sultans. Aforementioned invitation of Mehmed II for Transoxanian Naqshbandis is but one example. Sultan Murad III's close relations with prominent figures of the tariqa such as Ahmed Sadiq Tashkandi and Şa'ban Efendi, Grand vizier Rüstem Paşa's patronage for Naqshbandi disciple and poet Rızai and Paşa's building projects in favor of the order are striking in this sense. "When Ahmed Sadiq died in the plague of 994/1586", for example "the sultan is said to have suspended the work of the Imperial Council for three days."[9] Naqshbandis' interaction with the political and cultural elite is not restricted to the personal affinities and their patronage relations. As stated above, they obtained a prestigious status among the *ulama* and men of religion in general thanks to their association with the Persian literature, especially to their reading of Mathnavi of Rumi.

Despite Le Gall's adequate explanations for the Naqshbandis' appeal to the taste of Ottoman religious authorities and cultural elite, she does not give an historical account of the increasing number of men of religion who joined the tariqa during the end of her period of study. Following the imperial formation efforts through establishment of madrasas and other institutions to supply state's need of personnel, we know that increasing number of people sought for career in Ottoman education system or in bureaucratic machinery. Yet, not all were able to be recruited as madrasa masters or state officials. This might have an impact on the

[7] Le Gall, *A Culture of Sufism*, p. 181.
[8] Le Gall, *A Culture of Sufism*, p. 149.
[9] Le Gall, *A Culture of Sufism*, p. 139.

increasing popularity of Naqshbandis among literate people. The reason for this popularity can be that young graduates sought ways to establish patronage relations for which they might think Naqshbandi affiliation would be helpful; or that they sought ways to continue their lives within the tariqa since they could not find other career opportunities.

Thus, Le Gall does not provide us with inferential or speculative interpretations of the social context. Although she argues for the adaptability of Naqshbandis to the Ottoman context, she does not give concrete historical examples sufficiently to strengthen her argument. In addition to this, there are minor deficiencies in the book such as the obscurity of order's popularity in Kurdish-populated regions and the little space she allocates for the essential teaching and devotional practices of the order. For the former, she refers to the special location of Kurdish-populated regions as a natural destination in Naqshbandis' long-distance travels from Central Asia to Asia Minor, the Balkans and Hejaz; it may not suffice to account for its strength in this locale. Compared to her very well argumentation for the failure of the order in Arabia, this part remains weak for Le Gall's account. For the latter, it is only in the last chapter that she elaborates on the philosophical/ideal elements in Naqshbandi teaching and their daily, mundane practices as well as other cultural aspects related to the order.

To sum up, Dina Le Gall introduces a new perspective to the study of Sufi orders in early modern Ottoman history through which we understand how historical and geographical specificities shape the organization of Naqshbandiyya. Her main accomplishment is to look at the orders' diffuse into Ottoman society in a prospective way starting from the initial point of this historical development, and to deconstruct the biased generalizations on the basis of 19th century Mujaddidi and Khalidi practices. This is very important in that it retrieves us from teleological reading of this history. One of the reasons of the strength as well as novelty of her historiographical position is the sources she uses. The number of primary sources and more importantly the way she utilizes them are points worth mentioning. Benefitting from the richness of Naqshbandi tradition in this respect, Le Gall relies heavily on their own sources to have insight into Naqshbandis' own view of themselves and of other contemporary religious communities. This gives us a more accurate and perhaps unbiased idea about Naqshbandi doctrines and practices and the context within which they perform those. Among these sources she extensively cites, there are various books by Sadiqi, Qazwini and Uthmani. Had she situated the connection between the knowledge she derives from these sources with more concrete examples of social context, she could have built a very strong narrative around her arguments. Nevertheless, her study is one of the recent revisionist studies and broadens our insight into Naqshbandis in the Ottoman Empire, their relations with the authority as well as social and cultural life in different locales.

2. The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought in the Ottoman Empire: The Rise of the Halveti Order, 1350-1650

The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Though in the Ottoman Empire discusses the genesis of Halveti Sufi order during and after the Mongol invasion in Azerbaijan and Northern Iran, and the birth and evolution of one of its sub-branches, Şa'baniye, in Kastamonu. John Curry's main focus is on the Halvetis' ability to adapt changing social and political conditions both before and after their incorporation to Ottoman Empire. Heretofore, the broad social appeal of the order has been explained through either Halvetis' penetration to the regions that were neglected by Ottomans or their co-operation with the state in Sunnification campaigns in the Balkans and Anatolia. Curry's main contribution is to show Halveti-Ottoman relations were much more complicated and specific to socio-historical context in which Halvetis found themselves. To do so, he combines the strength of the so-called anthropological studies of mysticism which focus on specific, small groups of Sufis and macro studies that analyze

historical development of intellectual aspects of mystical orders. Thus, on the one hand the book provides an outlook for the development of this broad-based Sufi order and its dissemination in the Ottoman Empire; and on the other, it brings Şa'baniye sub-branch under scholarly scrutiny to analyze the impact of socio-political changes on the order with concrete examples.

The book begins with the investigation o Halveti *silsila* which starts with Ali Ibn Abi Talib and continues with some prominent figures of Shiite belief system. Yet, what is evident, for him, is that these early parts of Halveti *silsila* were constructed during the formation of the order in the 12th and 13th centuries. Curry maintains that this does not suggest an interplay between Shiism and Sufism, or Halvetis as a crypto-Shiite group. Interestingly, Shiite incorporation of such figures in their *imam* lineage did not withhold Halvetis from embracing them as saints. Perhaps this is one the reasons of Halvetis' instrumentality Le Gall refers in the Ottomans' campaign against the Kizilbash. However, the Safavid hostilities towards the order in the late 15th century which led them move westward from their place of origin prove that these common elements did not suffice to bring Halvetis and Shia closer. Hence, in this period Halvetis detached from Azerbaijan, Herat and Şirvan and sought ways to penetrate Ottoman domain. Curry reports that even in the end of the 16th century, Halvetis were depicted as "strange and alien in comparison with groups in the political center of the Empire" by Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, perhaps because of their earlier affiliation with Mamluk dynasty.[10] Thus, influential and well established as they were in the 17th century, Halvetis' initial dissemination in the Ottoman realm was by no means smooth and painless. Yet, as the order spread throughout the empire and consolidated confidence and sympathy of the political elite, its destiny went hand in hand with the growth of Ottoman power and influence.

Second part of the book concerns the life of Şa'ban-ı Veli and the foundation of Şa'baniye sub-branch following his legacy. The only source Curry relies on for the life of Şa'ban-ı Veli is the hagiography of Ömer El-Fuadi whom Curry discusses in the last part of the book as one of the successors of Şa'ban-ı Veli. Since Şa'ban-ı Veli was not born in a prominent family which is usually the case for important religious figures of the time; the information about his early life is very little. Curry informs us that he lost his parents at an early age, and he was raised by a wealthy woman in Taşköprü who enabled him to continue with his early education and helped him to go to Istanbul for a scholarly career. This information is highly important in that it shows the role of pious women and their social status in the early modern Ottoman context. That being said, Şa'ban-ı Veli was not satisfied with the training he received in Istanbul and joined the orbits of mystical orders. We do not know whether he failed to obtain a position among *ulama* or within bureaucracy, but he decided to turn back to Kastamonu. On his way back, he converted to Sufism after a visit he paid to a Sufi hospice near Bolu. Following his conversion Şa'ban-ı Veli continued his career as a preacher in a mosque in his town while he was disseminating Halveti teachings as a master. This double mission was unusual for Sufi masters of pre-17th century since they were unwilling to maintain a public position, especially Halvetis. Curry points out that linking mystical identity with public positions in society became an important strategy for Sufi masters during Selim I's campaign against Safavids and heterodox elements in Anatolia in order to survive Selim's persecution. Thus, the evolution of the position of Sufi masters in public, as Curry shows, had taken place following the changing socio-political conditions of post-Selim I era.

Unlike the hagiographical profiles of other Sufi masters, Şa'ban-ı Veli is not depicted as a faultless, charismatic figure by Ömer El-Fuadi. His biography is marked by failures like

[10] John. J. Curry, *The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought in the Ottoman Empire: The Rise of the Halveti Order, 1350-1650*. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, p. 65.

his inability to take root in Istanbul. Similarly, the most striking aspect of Şa'ban-ı Veli's success in Kastamonu was not his personality but the network he built around himself.[11] In this network, we see prominent religious figures of the region and members of other Sufi groups, most notably Mevlevis. Close interaction between different Sufi orders is a rarely seen phenomenon, though Mevlevis like Mehmed Urganicizade was a companion of Şa'ban-ı Veli in his personal network. It is important to note that, unlike their marked separation in the imperial center, this example shows in provincial areas different Sufi groups might come to be linked and/or co-operated. More interestingly, Şa'ban-ı Veli was able to connect with members of ulema who were otherwise skeptical towards mystical conducts of Sufi orders. In maintaining these connections, the ability of Şa'ban-ı Veli to balance sharia-based knowledge and Sufi mysticism was quite effective. As Curry points out

> Şa'ban upheld exoteric aspects of Muslim sacred law, and did not tend toward the wilder extremes of ecstatic mysticism. He reported that Şa'ban expressed this to his followers in a simple analogy about the relationship between exoteric law (şeriʿat) and the mystical path (tarikat). The şeriʿat represented the outer shell of an almond or the skin of a piece of fruit, and the tarikat represented the tasty inner core desired by the seeker.[12]

Eventually, through his ability to disseminate his mysticism to the public and the diverse network he manages to build, Şa'ban-ı Veli established his lodge in Kastamonu and founded Şa'baniye sub-branch of Halvetiyye in the mid-16th century.

Bearing in mind that it might be the projection Ömer El-Fuadi himself, the resemblance between him and Şa'ban-ı Veli is obvious. Similar to the latter, the former sought for a scholarly career in the early years of his life. But, as Curry suggests, even for prominent figures like Mustafa Ali, a secure career was very difficult to sustain in the late 16th century Ottoman Empire. I believe this is one of the decisive factors explaining the bloom of Sufi orders and their popularity among educated people in the 17th century. In this manner, Curry successfully relates the implications of imperial formation and expansion -which allowed increasing number of people to receive scholarly and professional training but could not provide all with scholar and bureaucratic positions, with the rise of Sufi orders like Halvetis and Naqshbandis. Hence, without finding what he sought for, Fuadi, too, turned his attention to Sufism, and converted to Halvetiyye because of his family's relation with Şaban-I Veli and his popularity in the town. At the time he rose to the leadership of the order in 1604, Fuadi found the order in a shaky state due to disappearing legacy of Şa'ban-ı Veli as the number of people directly trained by him diminished over the years. Therefore, he had to develop strategies to maintain the coherence of his order; and I believe his hagiography served as an important instrument for this purpose.

Another parallelism between the two figures is that they both experienced anti-heterodox movements that challenged the legitimacy of the order. The strategy of Şa'ban-ı Veli to avoid Selim I's persecution of Halvetis was reinforcement of his mystic identity with a public position and being active in a peripheral region rather than staying in the imperial center. Fuadi, to counter the Kadizadeli challenge to mystical Sufi orders, took a more public approach through his writings. He is foremost known by his didactic text, *Risaletü'l-Müsellemat* presented to the sultan Osman II through which he sought opportunities to strengthen the position of his order before the political authorities. Another important text in which he defended Halveti practices, notably *dhikr* and *halvet* is the *Makale-i ferdiye ve risale-i virdiye*. In the last years of his life, Fuadi had to counter such criticisms raised by Kadizadeli movement. The most interesting part of this is the fact that Fuadi wrote the defense of his order in Turkish, although these subjects hitherto remained as intellectual debates and penned in Arabic. Accordingly, "[b]oth Fuadi and his contemporaries recognized the urgency of providing

[11] Curry, *The Transformation of Muslim*, p. 124.
[12] Curry, *The Transformation of Muslim*, p. 128.

instruction to a wider Ottoman public in their own language in order to defend Sufi practice."[13] We do not exactly know whether it is related to the increasing rate of literacy, considering also that Kastamonu was a small provincial town. Yet, it is clear that Fuadi did not only address people in the order's vicinity and his treatises aimed at reaching the broad public. Was this a trend and did Turkish replace Arabic in scholarly debates thereafter? Curry does not answer such questions but touches upon a point worthy of further inquiry.

The main accomplishment of John Curry is to go beyond the monolithic narratives and state-centric approaches to Halveti Sufi order and its sub-branches. First of all, his example of Mustafa Ali's account regarding the suspicion towards the order in the 16th century illustrates that Halvetis and the state did not always get on together. The affinity of Bayezid II with the Halveti masters and his endowments for the order became reversed during the reign of his son, Selim I, in his campaign against Shia and the so-called heterodox elements in Anatolia. Halvetis gained imperial favor in the era of Murad III through latter's close relations with Şüca who was among the companions of Şa'ban-ı Veli. All these prove that state-Halveti relations were never fixed and should be interpreted in accordance with the historical specificities. These historical fluctuations also account for the differences between Şa'ban-ı Veli and his fifth-generation successor, Ömer El-Fuadi, in terms of their doctrinal outlook and practices. Social and political realities of the 16th century forced one to take refuge in a remoter area and prevented him from disseminating his teachings to the public. In the same vein, in the 17th century the other felt necessary to appeal to a broader audience with a language accessible to literate people of lower social strata. In fact, this change is the transformation in mystical thought John Curry named his book after. In the mid-17th Ottoman society, Sufi orders exponentially grew and enlarged their basis with similar strategies, allowed by the social structure, to that of Fuadi.

Curry deconstructs another established narrative which poses Sufi orders in opposition to *ulama* and cultural elite of the Empire. As we clearly see, most prominent Sufi figures began their career within *ulama* or at worst they initially sought such a career. Dina Le Gall too points out this interplay between *ulama* members and Sufi orders, but Curry contextualizes it with a more concrete premise by reminding us of the growing number of educated people parallel to the imperial expansion. One important reason of adequacy of Curry's account is his reliance on primary sources and his way of connecting different contemporary primary sources to make reasonable inferences. Especially for the second part of the book, Curry extensively uses the hagiography written by Ömer El-Fuadi since it is the only way to access to the direct knowledge about Şa'ban-ı Veli, the genesis of Şa'baniye and Fuadi's own life. For one thing, the reference in this part is almost exclusively to Fuadi's hagiography; and I believe reliance too much on a single source posed a threat to weaken Curry's argument and it does not enrich our understanding of Halveti order sufficiently. However, Curry approaches the text in a favorably critical manner and does not represent the information we get from it at its face value. Through reasonable inferences with the help of his knowledge in early modern Ottoman history, he utilizes the text very effectively. Nevertheless, while he conveys the historical and intellectual details from the texts, he does not provide the reader with mystical, religious as well as mundane practices of these people. He prefers to give a short outlook for Halveti order in general concerning these in the beginning of the book. Yet it prevents the reader to see probable uniqueness of Şa'baniye in these matters. Thus, although we know a great deal about the genesis and historical development of the order, we do not sufficiently know about the rituals and everyday practices of its members. Another deficiency is the lack of analysis of patronage relations and its impact on the rise of Halvetis which was favored more than any other Sufi

[13] Curry, *The Transformation of Muslim*, p. 270.

group within this period. Although he touches upon Ottoman Sultan's affinities to Halvetis, we do not see the status of Halvetis in the Ottoman court in a more comprehensive way.

In the last analysis, *The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought in the Ottoman Empire* thoroughly historicizes the Halveti order in Ottoman realm. Curry uses contextual information to interpret his primary sources and uses his sources to derive broader conclusions regarding the social context. This dialectical method owes its success to Curry's adequate reconciliation of social history and cultural history as well as macro and micro perspectives. It is fascinating to see the implication of social and political conditions on the functioning of the order at this very small scale. Hence, by narrowing down his focus to Şa'baniye sub-branch, Curry shows the overlapping between socio-political and religio-cultural developments in Ottoman history with concrete examples. Moreover, the multi-layered scope of the study allows us to see the interaction between social structures and individual agency in history.

3. God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200-1550

In *God's Unruly Friends* Karamustafa's main contention is to trace the historical origins of dissident dervish groups and to designate them within the Sufi tradition. In doing so, he rejects the previous studies in the literature which approach dissident groups as part of the so-called popular religion and breaks the "two-tiered model" based on a dichotomy of "high, normative and official religion" on the one hand, and "low, antinomian and popular religion" on the other. Karamustafa calls for an historical account of anarchist and antinomian dervish groups which allows understanding the historical and geographical specificities of these groups and their change over time; hence he aims to replace the static two-tiered model. His challenge to the established discourse is based on the idea that dissident dervish as a distinct religious phenomenon that is radically different from other popular religious movements such as millenarianism and messianism.

The most distinct feature of this movement is their frontal attack to the organization of society and social conformism which did not appeal merely to lower social strata. Karamustafa emphasizes the fact that these dissident ideas attracted people from middle and upper classes and members of cultural elite also joined among antinomian dervish groups. Thus, their sudden growth in the 13th and 14th centuries is left unexplained by the early scholarship and Karamustafa suggests the idea that antinomianism was built around pre-Islamic beliefs and traditions that survived among popular masses cannot adequately explain their attraction to upper classes and their sudden growth. Hence, the emergence and growth as well as ideas and practices of antinomian dervishes, for him, must be analyzed within Islamic piety as they were re-configurations of the earlier Sufi doctrines.

At the core of the dervish piety was the "renunciation of society through outrageous social deviance."[14] Dervishes were not after an alternative social order, they rejected social and cultural norms altogether. Their renunciation of social order was based on a radical asceticism manifested through extreme poverty, mendicancy, itinerancy, celibacy and self-inflicted pain. Karamustafa argues that

> Dervish piety, however, had as its core an uncompromising rejection of society. For the anarchist dervish, asceticism was only a tool, albeit indispensable, in the struggle to shatter the shackles that social life placed on true religiosity. The religious perils of human interaction could not be avoided through an ascetic flight from society. The dervish did not abandon his social station in order to

[14] Ahmet. T. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200-1550*. University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, 1994, p. 13.

> lead the life of a recluse. Only an active nihilism targeted directly at human society could sever him from his social past and lead him to the proximity of salvation.[15]

In other words, these practices, for dervishes, were the true application of Sufi doctrines emerged out of a new thesis of two Sufi tenets: asceticism and individual anarchism.[16] Historically, dervish piety is a rather radical derivation of the world-rejecting attitude in Islam against the world-embracing one; both can be justified by Quran and Sunna.

With the expansion of Islamic Empire and growing necessity to preserve the social order, especially to sustain economic activity and material accumulation, world-embracing interpretation of Islam became integral to the working of the Empire. It was under these social conditions that renunciatory, antinomian and mystical orders emerged and immediately came under strict scrutiny of the authorities. As the other Sufi orders reconciliated the individual renunciation and community-based legalism in their doctrines, dissident dervishes took the Sufi principles of individualism and the annihilation of the self through passing away into God to the extremes. Karamustafa supports his argument with references from Persian and Sufi literature which represented dervish groups like Qalandars within the Sufi tradition.

After the first three chapters where Karamustafa discusses the nature of renunciatory dervish piety he goes onto the emergence and spread of the important dervish groups. First, he provides biographical information for Jamal al-Din Savi, Qutb al-Din Haydar and Otman Baba; patron saints of Qalandars, Haydaris and the Abdals of Rum respectively.[17] One common point in lives of these three people is their connection with Sufism. Jamal al-Din and Qutb al-Din began their careers as Sufi disciples and later became renunciatory dervishes who rejected social life altogether. Otman Baba, on the other hand, differed from the two as for he coupled his renunciation with social activism. "[H]is rejectionist agenda" was "against institutions, primarily Sufi operations, but also those of political and non-Sufi religious elite."[18] Following these prominent figures, renunciatory dervish piety spread throughout the Islamic world. Since Jamal al-Din was active in Damascus and later in Damietta, Qalandars, in Syria and Egypt, emerged stronger. The ethnic origins of Jamal al-Din and Qutb al-Din perhaps facilitated their penetration to Iran. The spread of these two movements to India made them serious religious alternatives for Indian Muslims and they survived for a long time among Indian Muslim society. In Anatolia, the influential figure was Otman Baba whose legacy inspired the deviant renunciators like Barak Baba, Kaygusuz Abdal and Sultan Şüca.

In the sixth chapter Karamustafa provides a survey of renunciatory dervish groups in Ottoman Empire from 1450 to 1550. Relying mainly on contemporary Western travelers and historians he discusses Qalandars, Haydaris, the Abdals of Rum, Bektaşis, Jamis and Shams-i Tabrizis. He maintains that through the end of this period pressure by the political authorities on these deviant groups had increased and many of them like Qalandars, Haydaris and Jamis "ceased to exist as independent social collectivities, while the Bektaşi group transformed in a full-fledged Sufi order that continued to uphold the legacy of deviant renunciation."[19] The strong links between Bektaşis with Janissary corps secured their legitimate position within the society, and therefore political elites respected, or at least had to put up with Bektaşis. Soon, Qalandars, Haydaris and the Abdals of Rum were incorporated into Bektaşi order. Shams-i Tabrizi, on the other hand, took refuge to Mevlevi Sufi order.

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[15] Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, p. 17.
[16] Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, p. 25.
[17] For Qalandars, see Nihat Azamat, "Kalenderiyye", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/kalenderiyye (26.12.2022). For Haydaris, see Tahsin Yazıcı, "Haydariyye", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/haydariyye--tarikat (26.12.2022).
[18] Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, p. 49.
[19] Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, p. 84.

In the last chapter before his conclusion Karamustafa returns to his original contention and discusses the connections of the Sufi tradition with renunciatory dervish groups. As mentioned above, social deviance and renunciation emerged as a reaction to the declining vigor of world-rejecting religious attitude, the Sufis' links with political authorities and their involvement into material/economic activities. Karamustafa characterizes the conflict between the two as a relationship between "'socially conformist' parents and their 'rebellious' offspring". In his words,

> although the dervishes vociferously rejected the main features of institutional Sufism, in the final analysis they could not help but retain essentially Sufi beliefs and practices. The tariqah determined the general pattern and shape of its shadow counterpart, the dervish group. The latter was a mirror image, in its negation, of the former.[20]

The previously high social status and cultural/intellectual competency of the eponymous leaders of these dervish movements, the similarities between the organization of Sufi orders and deviant dervishes and sympathies of prominent Sufi figures toward them suggest they are historically within the Sufi tradition. Karamustafa also argues that dervish groups did not abandon social life completely; they sought social recognition to a certain degree, attracted members of cultural elite as well as political authorities evident from Ottoman Sultan Murad II's admiration to Sultan Şüca for example.

Consequently, the relations of antinomian dervish groups with political authorities are ambiguous; and Karamustafa, although provides clues regarding this point at different parts of the book, does not thoroughly illuminate our understanding. For one thing, from the beginning of their appearance in history, deviant dervish groups have been hostile to political institutions as part of their frontal attack on social and cultural norms. As Karamustafa suggests the growing political complexity and volume of commercial activity within Islamic societies marginalized the extreme asceticism and anarchist individualism. This individualism, indifference and hostility towards social institutions seem to prevent an organized upheaval of antinomian dervish groups against the political authorities. Yet we do not know about the immediate reaction of political authorities to the ground-gaining doctrines of for example Jamal al-Din and Qutb al-Din. Since this period (12^{th}-13^{th} c.) is relatively obscure for historical inquiry, and more importantly, due to scarcity of primary sources which might otherwise inform us about Qalandars, Haydaris and other dervish groups from their perspective precludes any reasonable inference regarding their relations with authority. Thus, Karamustafa's account demands improvement with possible new sources. Nevertheless, instances like interest and generosity of Ayyubid ruler Al-Zahir to Muhammad al-Balkhi, the leader of Qalandars, Otman Baba's relationship with Mehmed II and latter's great respect to the former, aforementioned example of Sultan Şüca and Murad II suggest that pre-emptive speculations about the hostility of political authorities against deviant dervishes might not be confirmed by historical realities.[21] Nevertheless, we do not have any evidence regarding direct patronage relations for these groups although expectedly dervishes would not involve in such relations considering their ascetic and anarchic teachings.

Concerning the politics of dissident groups, the reader is not given any account for the impact of rising Sunni-Shiite clash culminated after the Safavids consolidated power in Iran which corresponds to the later period frame of Karamustafa's study. Given their strong allegiance with other non-Sunni groups of Anatolia, one wonders if the Abdals of Rum participated in the Kizilbash movement during the Ottoman-Safavid struggle. If they were involved, how significant were they, and in turn, how was the reaction of Ottomans to these

[20] Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, p. 91.
[21] Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, p. 48.

groups? Karamustafa explains fading away of other groups into notably Bektaşis, but he does not pay enough attention to the Kizilbash of Anatolia and their relations with dissident groups.

Hence, the most significant deficiency in Karamustafa's analysis is the neglect of these broad social and political conditions which certainly affected the emergence, development, and extinction of the renunciatory dervish tradition. As stated earlier, his main attempt is to historicize this tradition. Beginning with the origins of these movements and focusing on the founding fathers of each group are remarkable methodological instruments, especially given the publication date of the book (1994). Karamustafa does not perpetuate the retrospective and ahistorical accounts of the earlier studies for sure. But tracing the origins and reading the history of deviant dervishes building on their origin is only one of the two aspects of historicization of the phenomenon. The other aspect, which Karamustafa largely fails in incorporating into his study, is to discuss each development and event in its specific historical conditions. I do not think that he ignores the variations in practices of renunciatory dervish tradition within different contexts, but he does not provide any insight concerning this either. Therefore, while he accomplishes breaking the two-tiered model in religion studies and while he discusses the renunciatory dervish tradition in its own terms, he cannot fully account for its sudden boom after the Mongol invasion of Muslim lands and the movement's variation across time and space.

Another weak point in Karamustafa's book is his strong reliance on biased contemporary sources like writings of Western travelers whose descriptions exhibit an orientalist notion and of Ottoman historians like Vahidi who is openly hostile to the dervish groups. Thus, studies of antinomian dervishes need searching for new sources and more extensive use of primary sources. Despite these negative remarks, *God's Unruly Friends* offers a more historical reading of the history of renunciatory dervish groups. Karamustafa, by challenging the established arguments based on teleological biases and binary oppositions, opens a different and more illuminating perspective, and raises important questions regarding the historical conditions which influenced the dissident dervish groups. In the last analysis, it is a seminal book which can pave the way for further studies on this subject.

A Comparative Evaluation and Conclusion

As stated in the introduction part, each of three books that have been analyzed above investigates different Sufi traditions not only in terms of their Islamic teachings and devotional practices but with respect to their relations with authorities as well. However, based on this review, to draw general conclusions regarding the relationships of Ottoman state and Naqshbandis, Halvetis and antinomian dervish groups respectively would not be reasonable. It is all the more evident that the monolithic and universal narratives around Sufi groups suffer from ignoring historical and geographical specificities and are far from representing their histories accurately. Thus, although my initial aim was to compare and contrast Naqshbandis, Halvetis and antinomian dervishes in their relations with authority, such arguments as 'Naqshbandis have been very active in politics of the Ottoman Empire' or 'Halvetis enjoyed a prestigious position in the Ottoman court' or 'antinomian dervishes were always persecuted by the political authorities' are not meaningful.

Nevertheless, if we are to draw a more general framework based on these three books, it can be said that Naqshbandis managed to diffuse, due to their unique features discussed above, among urbanites and cultural elite more effectively which enabled them to settle into the Ottoman society in a more stable manner. This explains the later strength and activism of the order in the 19th century Ottoman Empire and 20th century Turkey. The destiny of Halvetis, on the other hand, depended much on the political conditions and preferences of the elite. While they enjoyed patronage in the court time to time, they suffered from religious orthodoxy transpired with the imperial state formation and Ottoman-Safavid rivalry. Finally, antinomian

dervish groups shared a similar destiny with Halvetis. After especially Selim I's campaign against non-Sunni groups in Anatolia they extinct and faded away into notably Bektaşis which survived as a strong Sufi order thanks to its affiliation with the Janissary corps.

Hence, the most important contribution of the books that I analyzed in this paper is their attack on monolithic and universal narratives and the complex and vibrant picture they propose instead of them. As Jacques Revel asks, "Why make things simple when one can make them complicated?"[22] (Levi, 2001), Le Gall, Curry and Karamustafa complicates the history of Sunni groups they discuss by illustrating them as historical phenomena in their own terms. Although each focus on different Sufi groups at different levels and different historical periods, and despite the differences in their units of analyses, all three prefer, not coincidentally, to begin with the historical origins of each tradition. Then they arrive at their periods of analyses after discussions on the transformation each Sufi tradition underwent. Finally, each author relies mainly on primary sources and contemporary accounts to avoid retrospective and teleological biases and to understand their subjects in their own terms.

Yet, quite naturally, they follow different methodological routes in their accounts. For one thing, scopes of each study are different. Le Gall discusses Naqshbandis in the Ottoman Empire in general; therefore, her study encompasses all the branches of the order in all over the Ottoman world. Curry concentrates on the Şa'baniye sub-branch of Halveti order in Kastamonu and narrows his focus than that of Le Gall. However, he does not miss Halvetis in the Ottoman Empire out; instead, he makes a two-layered analysis while he keeps the intensity on the Şa'baniye sub-branch. Karamustafa, on the other hand, analyzes all the major antinomian groups within Sufi tradition in all over the Muslim world. Thus, his study covers a much diverse geographical space and prioritizes breadth rather than depth in the analysis of antinomian dervish groups.

Second, their uses of sources differ in accordance with the characteristics of the groups each author studies. Le Gall enjoys wide range of available primary sources within the Naqshbandi literary tradition. Thus, her book is the richest one in this respect. Curry relies heavily on writings of Ömer El-Fuadi, especially his hagiography. As mentioned before, intense use of a single source has merits as well as drawbacks. Curry, by critically engaging his source and by relating it with historical realities of the time and other contemporary accounts, cultivates El-Fuadi's hagiography in a very effective way. Karamustafa uses hagiographies as well, yet he suffers from the scarcity of primary sources left by dervish groups he analyzes. Therefore, he mainly relies on other contemporary sources like Persian and Sufi poems, Ottoman and Western historians of the time whose accounts may be biased for the reasons discussed in the paper.

Consequently, in order to contextualize the way a Sufi group organized and disseminate its doctrines, and to account for any change in these features as well as its relations with political authorities and society in general we must try to understand the group in its own historical development and through the most vicinal primary sources to the group. In this sense, all three authors successfully historicize their subject at different degrees. Since Karamustafa's analysis covers a wide range of antinomian dervish groups in a very broad geography within a rather short study it lacks deeper and more concrete examples concerning the relations of the antinomian dervishes with the authority and their strategies to cope with the changing political and social conditions. Le Gall's book suffers from a similar problem too, yet she manages to illustrate historical and geographical specificities with which Naqshbandis had to face after their dissemination into the Ottoman Empire. As for Curry admirably reconciles intellectual

[22] Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory." in (Ed.) P. Burke, N*ew Perspectives on Historical Writing*. The Pennsylvania State University Press, Pennsylvania, 2001, pp. 93-112.

historical method which looks from a macro perspective and anthropological method which narrows its focus to a smaller group to observe the impact of social and political conditions on the group more clearly. Thus, his study shines through with its historical examples and inferences regarding the strategies developed by the Halveti masters in their relationship with the political authorities as well as the society that surround their tariqa.

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