A Study of the Modern-Day Scholarship and Primary Sources on Ibrâhîm-i Gulshanî and The Khalwatî-Gulshanî Order of Dervishes

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Historical Background of the Gulshanîs

As an offshoot of the well-known late medieval Khalwatîyya order in Iran and Azerbaijan, the followers/disciples of Ibrâhîm-i Gulshanî (d. 940/1534), a

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1 The ideas presented in this section were discussed in depth in Side Emre’s Ibrâhîm-i Gulshanî and the Khalwatî-Gulshanî Order: Power Brokers in Ottoman Egypt (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017) (hereafter Emre, Power Brokers).

2 Modern-day scholarship examines the status of the Khalwatîyya as a popular order emerging in Azerbaijan and spreading their influence in Anatolia, Arab lands, and the Balkans where their members gained popularity among Turkish-speaking communities establishing one of the common denominators of their cultural, social, and religious heritage. In Anatolia, Shirvani’s ordained successors established various sub-branches in Adrianople, Istanbul or Kastamanonu in approximately two generations following his death. I would like to thank one of my readers for clarifying the spreading of the Khalwattî sub-branches in Anatolia. For details see, John J. Curry, The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought in the Ottoman Empire: The Rise of the Halveti Order, 1350-1650, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010 (Curry, Transformation); Mustafa Aşkar, “Bir Türk Tarikatı Olarak Halvetiyye’nin Tarihi Gelişimi ve Halvetiyye Sılsilesinin Tahlili,” Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyet Fakültesi Dergisi 39 (1999); for the transmission of Khalwatiyya to the Ottoman lands, please see Hasan Karataş, “The Ottomanization of the Halvetiye Sufi Order: A Political Story Revisited” Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association. 1:1-2, (November 2014); and “A Shaykh, a Prince and a Sack of Corn: An Anatolian Sufi becomes Ottoman” Living in the Ottoman Realm: Creating, Contesting, and Resisting Ottoman Identity from the 13-20th Century, edited by Christine Isom-Verhaaren and Kent F. Schull. Indiana University Press, 2016. The order ✵
charismatic Turcoman Sufi born in Aqquyunlu ruled Diyarbakır in c. 1440, traveled
to the broader Islamicate Near Eastern political zone from Iran, and into territo-
ries contested among the Ottomans, Safavids, Dulkadirlioglu, and the Mamluks.
Following their escape from Iran, and relocation in Anatolia, prompted by the c.
1500 overthrow of the Sunni Aqquyunlus by the Safavids, the Shaykh Ibrāhīm-i Gulshanī
(followers of Ibrāhīm-i Gulshanī) navigated the conflict-ridden geography that saw
major societal disruptions due to the competing regional polities. During a decade
long stay in Anatolia (c. 1500-1507/10), Ibrāhīm-i Gulshanī grew to exert local
influence in provincial courtly circles and showed support for different political
factions, establishing local networks of power that gave promises of a legacy well
beyond the confines of provincial Sufi communities. Sometime after the arrival,
and settlement in Mamluk Cairo c. 1507-10, the Shaykh Ibrāhīm-i Gulshanī began building
a lodge in Cairo and, in time, adopted the name of Gulshanīs. The years leading
up to the Ottoman conquest of Mamluk Egypt in 1517 placed the Gulshanīs at
the historical cusp of what Ottomanist scholars view as a watershed moment for
the empire. The conquest hailed the Ottoman sultan’s claim to caliphal titela-
ture—granting the religious right to rule over all Muslim populations in the Arab
lands—and endorsed the sultan’s status as the servitor and protector of the holy
cities of Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem, all formerly under the dominion of the
Mamluk Sultanate. In addition, between 1453-c.1600, as Ottoman imperial ambitions
turned to include frontiers in the Balkans, Anatolia, Iran, and the Arab
lands, the character of the Ottoman state underwent a transformation—from a
military-conquest state to a bureaucratic state committed to preserving territorial
integrity and defining its religious identity through Sunnism. In the provinces, the
relations between the state and society were constantly tested and negotiated as
regional customs and laws were absorbed and incorporated into existing Otto-
man practices in local governance. This dialogue was driven and negotiated by
protagonists from the imperial center interacting with local power brokers, holy
men, popular Sufis who also acted as mediators. The Khalwatī-Gulshanīs, in the
decades after the Ottoman conquest of Egypt, were active participants in this
complex process under the leadership of their saintly and charismatic founder
Ibrāhīm-i Gulshanī.

originated in the Anatolian fraternities of the eighth/fourteenth century. While ‘Umar al-
Ḥalveti (d. 800/1397) of Gilân in Iran was considered the original founder or master (pîr),
Sayyid Yaḥyā Shirvānī in Baku in Azerbaijan was regarded as the second master (pîr-i sâni)
Curry, Transformation, 55–59). Shirvānī’s followers and officially ordained successors
(Jalâlîs) founded numerous sub-branches of the Khalwâtîyya in Arab lands, the Balkans, and
Anatolia, and particularly in centers like Cairo, Aleppo, Adrianople, Kastomunu, Istanbul,
Sivas, and Diyarbakır. Among Shirvānī’s disciples was Dede ʿÖmer Rûşenī (d. 892/1487) who
was Gulshanī’s spiritual master.
As political/administrative rule in Egypt transitioned from the Mamluks to the Ottomans, İbrahîm-i Gulshanî and his dervishes did not serve as socially aloof and private spiritual guides that we find in portrayals of Sufis in contemporaneous chronicles on Egypt. Instead, they acted as forces of socio-political action and ambition, seeking to influence public opinion, exerting their reach and guidance to members of local Ottoman administrative/military clientele through their vibrant weekly rituals in their lodge. They actively sought to initiate members of the Ottoman military and administrative personnel into their path. They were intricately involved with the politics and social networks in Ottoman Egypt and the wider Ottoman realms. Their cultural outreach, which also relied on the transmission of the founder’s literary works penned in Anatolian Turkish, Persian, and Arabic, communicated their *adab* to interested audiences. Following a similar pattern with the order’s success during Gulshanî’s lifetime, in the post-founder years, the connections, interactions, and dialogues of the Gulshaniis extended to a wide range of individuals as the chronicles and narrative sources of the period (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) demonstrate: Ottoman commanders, sultans, intellectuals, *literati*, courtly elites, and laymen; Mamluk sultans and soldiers; Arab judges and scholars; itinerant Iranian and Anatolian mystics, pilgrims became affiliates, followers, friends, or members of the order. Additionally, the Gulshâniyya networks included members of other Sufi paths ranging from the Naqshbandis to the Malāmis, their Egyptian neighbors and the “people of Egypt”. These sources show that, they sought patronage and protection from ruling and military elites—like many of their Khalwatî peers in different regions of the Islamicate World. In return, they bestowed *baraka*, provided moral support, and counsel, for those who sought it. Their Cairo lodge served as a refuge to those who needed it. At times some Gulshaniyya members ran afoul with the Ottoman ruling establishment because of public actions and speech considered controversial or blasphemous against what came to be defined later in scholarship as a “mainstream Sunnism”. Queries about their status were responded by a number of *fatwas* drawn by leading Ottoman jurists. In the end, the Gulshanîs, while having built a controversial reputation, which at times found criticism because it was thought to be “outside the circle of Sunna,” prevailed. The Gulshaniyya literary corpus, beginning with the works of/attributed to the founder and including those penned by the prolific Gulshaniyya dervishes/poets in subsequent decades after the founder’s death in 1534, gave shape to the order’s *Miṣrî* Khalwati discursive mystical culture. This literature was diverse in content, i.e.: it drew from a number of medieval mystical traditions, prominent mystics, and textual inspirations, and it was also a complex product of its changing socio-political environment in Egypt and the Ottoman realms.

Dervishes in residence at the Cairo lodge produced early Gulshaniyya mystical literature while Gulshanî composed works mainly in Anatolian Turkish and Persian,
referring to himself as an ‘Acemî, a non-Arabic speaker from Persia. Gulshanî was mainly influenced by the late medieval Anatolian frontier literary lore as well as by his spiritual mentor Rûshanî’s works. These inspirations were influential in forming the order’s literature, reflecting social messages that emphasized the inclusive meşreb (natural disposition) and an open-mindedness regarding the practices of other mystical paths after his death. A distinctive Gulshanîyya mystical culture developed alongside the order’s literature, with a flexible and expansive inspirational and devotional palette. This literature reflects different doctrines, beliefs, rituals, practices, teachings, and discourses of various mystical orders, with no categorical boundaries in piety or confessional affiliations. For instance, the order’s culture included a distinctive melâmi (“path of [self] blame”) orientation, which can be observed in its literature and in the behaviors of some of its members. The reputation of some dervishes as ecstatically oriented and potentially dangerous to the established social order and the Prophet’s Sunna is based on this component. However, other sources of spiritual influence were also prominent for the Gulshanîyya culture and literature. Among these influences works of Celaleddîn-i Rûmî and Ibn al-‘Arabî deserve special mention. Some pieces of the Gulshanîyya corpus were copied under the supervision of Gulshanî and became popular throughout the sixteenth century in Egypt and the Ottoman domains. They include Turkish and Persian diwân collections, an Arabic diwân, and the Ma‘nevî, a Persian verse-book penned as a naźîr—literary imitation—of Rûmî’s Masnawî-i ma‘nawî, to name a few. Numerous manuscript versions and redactions of poetry collections scattered in libraries across Turkey and Egypt attest to the diversity of the order’s audiences.³

The Gulshanîyya literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was not a replica of the doctrines or teachings of the order’s founder. The discursive shifts in the corpus over time give clues about the Gulshanîs’ efforts in forming an enduring cultural legacy informed both by practical and literary priorities in Egypt and outside of Egypt. Most importantly, the diversity of literary inspirations in the Khalwaṭî-Gulshanî literature, beginning with the mystical thought and piety of Ibrâhîm-i Gulshanî, as the saintly founder of the order, and the trajectory of the subsequent Gulshani literary production after his death, demonstrates how the Gulshanîyya not only secured a social niche for itself in Ottoman Egypt but also established an enduring cultural legacy as a popular Sufi institution of the communities identifying as Misrî, Rûmî, and Acemî. By the latter half of the sixteenth century, the Gulshanîyya grew into a more widely accepted Khalwaṭî offshoot within the Ottoman-Sufi milieu with a network of lodges expanded throughout

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³ Different versions of Gulshanî’s poetry collections can be found in manuscript libraries in Istanbul. Gulshanî, Anatolian Turkish Divân, Istanbul, Millet Library, Ali Emiri Manzum Eserler, no. 37 and Istanbul Üniversitesi Nadir Eserler Manuscript Library, T890; Gulshanî, Persian Divân, Istanbul Süleymaniye Manuscript Library, Fatih 3866.
the Ottoman realms, including the Balkans and provincial centers in Anatolia, from Egypt to Syria, Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem.

Modern-day Scholarship on the Gulshanīs

The existing scholarship on the Gulshanīs is extensive. In this section, I will provide an overview of the major and ground breaking scholarly works on the Khalwatī-Gulshanīs, their history and literature for the purpose of contextualizing the trajectory of modern-day research on the founder, Ibrāhīm-i Gulshani, and the prolific Gulshanīs.4

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I. Foundational Biographical Literature

The earliest biographical publication on Gulshani was by Kasım Kufralı (“Gülşeni,” in İslâm Ansiklopedisi: İslâm âlemi coğrafya, etnoğrafya ve biyografiya lügati, 1st ed., ed. M. Th. Houtsma et.al. (İstanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1940-1986: 835-836). After Kufralı’s contribution, Tahsin Yazıcı is reputed as the first scholar to study Gulshani extensively. His initial contribution was “İbrahim-i Gülşenî ve Tarikatı,” Türkoloji Zümresi Mezuniyet Travayı, no. 194 (Lisans tezi, İstanbul Üniversitesi Küütphanesi Türküyat Enstitüsü, 1945). A version of this thesis was edited and expanded for his doctoral studies: “Şeyh İbrahim-i Gülşenî: Hayatı, Eserleri, Tarikatı” (Doktora tezi, Ankara Üniversitesi Dil Tarih ve Coğrafya Fakültesi, 1951). His well-known edited volume, Muḥiy-ı Gülşenî, Menâkıb-i İbrahîm-i Gülşenî ve Şemlelizâde Ahmed Efendi Şive-i Taṣâvîva-i Gûlsêniye, edited Tahsin Yazıcı (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1982) is his third study on the Gulshaniyya founder and represents an updated version of his earlier research. In the lengthy introduction to the Menâkıb-i İbrahîm-i Gülşenî, Yazıcı provides basic biographical information on the political, administrative, and religious actors that Gulshani, his family, and the members of this order, interacted with over the years in a vast geography including the Aqquyunlus, Safavids, Mamluks, and the Ottomans. In an extended article on Gulshani in the Encyclopedia of Islam's second edition, Yazıcı edits his conclusions previously published in the introduction to the Menâkıb. For a thorough content comparison of biographical entries on İbrahim-i Gulshani, consult Tahsin Yazıcı’s “Gulshani,” in Encyclopedia of Islam, 2nd ed. (E. J. Brill) and Kasım Kufralı’s article titled “Gülşeni” in İslam Ansiklopedisi, 1st ed., vol. 4, 1948. Nihat Azamat’s article “İbrahim-i Gülşeni” in Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, cilt 21, 2000: 301-304) also gives the chronology of Gulshani’s life as well as a list of his known works with reference to a wide array of primary and secondary historical, narrative, and literary sources. All of these above mentioned encyclopedia entries must be evaluated alongside Mustafa Kara’s “Gülşeniye” entry in the Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi (İstanbul: Türkçe Diyanet Vakfı, cilt 14, 1996: 256-259) as well as Doris Behrens-Abouseif’s “İbrahim Gulseni Kulliyesi” entry in the Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi (İstanbul: Türkçe Diyanet Vakfı, cilt 21, 2000, 304-305).

II. Single-Authored and Scholarly Monographs

In the category of single-authored and scholarly monographs, Himmet Konur’s İbrahim Gûlsêni: Hayatı, Eserleri, Tarikatı (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2000) is the

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**Notes:**
- Expansive volumes of collective essays such as Türkiye’de Tarikatlar: Tarih ve Kültür, editör: Semih Ceyhan, İstanbul: ISAM Yayınları, 2015 and Osmanlı Toplumunda Tasavvuf ve Sufiler, hazırlayan: Ahmet Yaşar Oçak, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014 also include brief entries and information on the Gulshans.
first in-depth work on Gulshani’s life and order in Turkish. Konur provides an analysis beginning with a discussion of comparative origins of *tasawwuf* and mysticism, Islamic mysticism, the nature of *tasawwuf*, its progressive stages of historical development, and the conversion of Central Asian Turks into Islam in c. 700. In his analysis, Konur says that the unofficial critical/adversarial nature of Sufi orders/mystics against the wrongs they observed in the “Ottoman establishment” mostly surfaced around individuals who strapped themselves around the “charisma of an order.” He argues that such attitudes caused the essentially non-political and non-adversarial nature of Sufi ṭariqa to become adversarial against political authority. In his perception, during the rule of the Ottomans (chronology unidentified) this antagonism/opposition (T. “muhalefet”) against the state was done in a manner, which can be described as bitter/sweet (T. “tatlı sert”) and mostly by Sufis who stood by the side of political authority. He further argues that the “Ottoman state” (under which sultan’s rule remains unidentified) took the criticism voiced by Sufis seriously and listened to their advice, aiming to correct/rectify the mistakes being done. In this section, the author does not provide specific examples to showcase these claims. Konur’s perceptions of the “Ottoman Empire”, “Ottoman state”, and the state’s interactions with Sufi ṭariqas represent a conceptual loop hole that assumes the Ottoman state and society as timeless and unchanging monolithic phenomena or entities. Such an understanding of the empire, state, and its administration, as well as interactions of its ruling and religious hierarchies with its populations presents the reader with problems. In his later discussion on persecution of Sufis under Sultan Süleyman’s rule, he contrarily argues that mystics who were executed by the state during Süleyman’s rule suffered such fates because of the state’s fears of unrest and rebellion, without outlining the larger historical events/political context(s) in question. Thus he contradicts his earlier claim that the interactions of Sufis and saints were bitter/sweet with Sufis siding with political authority. In fact, as he later concludes, also in contradiction to his earlier discussion, there is no straightforward/clear cut answer(s) or absolute category(ies) as to why “some” Sufis suffer persecution/execution in one given period, while others, who might have taken similar positions in another period, do not.

In laying out the political, social, and cultural background of Gulshani’s lifetime, Konur presents a concise historical overview with segments of Gulshani’s biography, including the Aqquyunlu and Mamluk periods, highlighting in separate sub-sections topics such as “*Tasawwuf* in Egypt,” and “Corruption/

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6 Konur, 13-25.
7 Ibid., 75-76.
misbehaviors among ṭarīqa members." Before passing onto the detailed biography of Gulshānī, he provides information on Egypt under Ottoman rule, “tasawwuf under the Ottomans,” “ʿulema/meṣayih relations” which special reference to Kemalpashazade and Gulshānī’s interactions, “padişah/meṣayih interactions” focusing on Sultan Selīm and Sultan Süleymān.⁸ In the chapter where Konur details Gulshānī’s biography, he begins his account with a summary analysis of the available narrative/biographical/hagiographical sources on Gulshānī beginning with sixteenth-century texts and ending with twentieth-century works.⁹ Konur relates the miracles attributed to Gulshānī in detail as well as the contours of the shaykh’s historical life relying mainly on Muḥyī-i Gulshānī’s Menākıb, as well as other authors including Ata’i, Mecdi, Latifi, Salahuddin el-Mevlevi, and Hulvi.¹⁰ Konur depicts a pro-Ottoman and establishment-friendly understanding of Gulshānī, relying mainly, and without questioning, on the data found in pro-Gulshānī hagiographical/biographical sources. His evaluation does not include the available Arabic historical sources but includes a select number of narrative and biographical sources in Arabic that has information on Gulshānī.¹¹ Konur’s last chapter is an evaluation of Gulshānī’s personality and ideas, which represents a more nuanced conceptualized section of the book.¹²

In this chapter, Konur sheds light on Gulshānī’s identity as a mutasawwif, Gulshānī’s spiritual education, and the influence of Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 637/1240), Ibn al-Fārīḍ (d. 632/1235), and Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273) on the shaykh’s ideas and works. His narrative includes separate short sections on the Gulshānīyya order, the order’s zikr and evrād, Gulshānīyya tāc, the order’s silsile, Gulshānī’s successors, tekkes, literary personality, and works, as well as an analysis of the shaykh’s political identity—which presents methodological issues. Konur’s evaluations and discussions of Gulshānī’s understanding on the following themes and concepts including those on “varlık”, aşık, akl, kalender, melamet, rind, Sūfī, talīb, and kabz-bast are in-depth and represents the author’s nuanced thinking on how Gulshānī formed his own spiritual path.

Drawing a conceptual and methodological contrast to Konur’s portrayal of Gulshānī and his order, Side Emre’s recent book, Ibrāhīm-i Gulshānī and the Khalwatı-Gulshānī Order: Power Brokers in Ottoman Egypt, (Leiden, Boston:

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⁸ Ibid., 57-86.
⁹ Ibid., 87-92.
¹⁰ Ibid., 92-104; 104-146.
¹¹ Ibid., 79-80 and the corresponding footnotes 51-74.
¹² Ibid., 147-231. See pages 181-187 for Konur’s discussion of the political identity of Gulshānī. This section relies almost exclusively on Muḥyī’s Menākıb. Konur takes the information provided by Muḥyī at face value and without critical evaluation and this posits a methodological issue.
Brill, 2017) provides a revisionist and critical evaluation of Gulshani’s life (in a geography surrounding eastern Anatolia, Iran, and Egypt) and the history of the Gulshaniyya order in Egypt and the Ottoman realms. The conceptual background of the book proposes that throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the Muslim world became a cradle in which Sufi brotherhoods/tariqas abounded as powerful models of religious and social organization. Mystics and holy men became sources of spiritual counsel and provided venues of legitimization, via their claims of true knowledge of God, for those who sought to accumulate and safeguard political power. Expectations that the mahdi, the savior, would appear to restore godly justice and order under a single universal leadership with one religion manifested itself in the diffusion of an apocalyptic and messianic discourse. In this setting, the book proposes that Gulshani played a socially and politically mobile role, established himself as a holy man, and took advantage of the conflict-ridden environment of plural doctrines and clashing pieties becoming a regional power broker. The book deconstructs the opinions given in primary hagiographical sources on Gulshani that have been appropriated and interpreted such that the shaykh was depicted as a kutb-mahdi (pole-messiah, axis or pole of the time, the hidden sovereign of the spiritual hierarchy) who had survived the trial and persecution of the central Ottoman government in Istanbul. Accordingly, one of the points made in this book highlights the idea that Gulshani, while considered outside the conceptual boundaries of ehli-i sünnet (people of the Prophet’s Sunna) and hence violating the basic tenets of Ottoman official religious ideology during the first half of the Ottoman Sultan Süleyman’s reign (r. 926–74/1520–66), nevertheless survived repetitive accusations of heresy and political dissent during his lifetime. The possible reasons and the mentalities that created them are also investigated in a separate chapter.

Emre investigates Gulshani’s life and career deploying both a chronological and thematic narrative (c. 1440s-c. 1600) and critical analysis of hagiographical, biographical, narrative, literary, archival, and historical sources in Ottoman Turkish and Arabic to formulate a story outside the narrative parameters limited to the ‘life and deeds’ of the ‘eponymous founder.’ To understand how the Gulshaniyyas impacted state and society over time, the book emphasizes the scope of the Khalwati-Gulshaniyyas’ transformation in the sixteenth century, as they became a popular and established Sufi institution in Egypt by the seventeenth century. By examining this Sufi order’s history as political rule transitioned from the Mamluks to the Ottomans, this study questions the conception of a “provincial

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14 For a discussion of this concept see Ocak, Zındıklar ve Mühlidler, 313-318.

15 Emre, Power Brokers, 209-248.
periphery—Egypt” that was ruled strictly and unilaterally from an “imperial center—Istanbul.” The book’s focus on Islamic polities (Akkoyunlu, Safavids, Mamluks, and Ottomans) in which Gulshani lived in gives an understanding of the complex political dynamics of Gulshani’s time as he actively interacted with the day-to-day politics of his immediate social milieu.

Throughout the book Emre maintains that what made Gulshani an intriguing and yet challenging topic of study lay in the fact that he was—and remains—characterized by many warring descriptions. For some, he was a religiously controversial Sufi shaykh whose heretical and blasphemous practices caused the persecution of his followers and members of the Gulshaniyya even after his death while the specifics of his controversial character, as well as his piety and public behaviors, remained debated topics during his lifetime. For others, he was the spiritual pole of his time, quṭb al-zaman, the saint of all saints. His spiritual legacy was legitimized not only through a genealogy from the Khalwati chain by way of his mentor Dede ’Umar Rūshānī (d. c. 891/1486), but also through Gulshaniyya genealogies connecting him on his mother’s side to Prophet Muhammad. Thus far in modern scholarship, despite the numerous accounts and varying opinions of him that surface in an extensive array of published/unpublished primary sources, little of who he was, what he tried to achieve, and how he succeeded in impacting the larger political and social scene in Anatolia and Egypt has been understood and investigated.

Emre argues that realm of influence in Gulshani’s long career reached into the spiritual and temporal realms; he was known as the Shah/ruler of Egypt, as his biographers depict, especially after the 1517 Ottoman conquest of Mamluk Egypt. She concludes that Gulshani was at times a dissident figure and a charismatic Sufi pīr who was representative of a larger constituency of divergent populations in Anatolia, Iran, Egypt, and Arab lands who defined themselves by their anti-Ottoman sentiments. Gulshani, from the very beginning of his political-religious career, avoided living in the Ottoman realms. Indeed he settled down in Egypt when the region was under Mamluk rule. During his Mamluk/Ottoman Egypt years, he portrayed himself in a privileged position as an alternative center of saintly authority, relying on his spiritual authority and receiving legitimacy for social action in an environment imbued with messianic expectations. In the end, Gulshani was the product of the larger socio-political and religious environment—scarred by the emergence of the Shi’ite Safavids in Iran and Anatolia—that was comprised of discontented Turkmen populations who held shifting loyalties and Alid sympathies, and who reacted against Ottoman territorial expansion. Gulshani’s political and religious careers bloomed during the period when Ottoman imperial ambition in Anatolia and the Arab lands was contested.
Emre demonstrates that towards the end of his life, following his interrogation in the Ottoman capital by Sultan Süleymān’s ruling/religious elites, Gulshanī was incorporated into the mainstream hagiographical discourse and was depicted in later hagiographical literature as the loyal Ottoman saint of Cairo. However, during his lifetime, the controversial practices that he promoted had grown popular in Cairo and were regarded by some as verging on dissidence; at this time, Cairo was an unstable social and political setting in which Ottoman “Sunnism”—or its presentation as we have it in the literature—was still in the making. In Istanbul, any extant views of Gulshanī as a “heretical Sufi” or political dissident who challenged the Suleymanic regime and Ottoman imperial power in Cairo after Ahmed Pasha’s rebellion in 1524 were put to rest. Contrary to what was has been accepted in modern scholarship thus far, neither a categorically defined Ottoman “Sunnism” nor a clearly defined Ottoman religious ideology of the Suleymanic regime existed at the time of Gulshanī’s interactions and problems with political authorities. It concludes that during Gulshanī’s lifetime, the issues of heresy, accusations of heresy, and controversiality remained flexible and debated topics among the members of the ʿulamā, as several famous heresy trials, or interrogations that took place in the Ottoman Empire of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries depicted.16

III. Recent Articles on Gulshanī’s Corpus

As a third category, and moving from a historical/political narrative of the Gulshanīs, several recent articles on Gulshanī’s literary inspirations and corpus deserves mention. These works showcase the enduring legacy of the Gulshanīyya literature. Muhsin Macit’s article titled “Osmanlı Kültür Sanatında Ibrāhīm-i Gülşeni’nin İşlevi” (Kutadgu Bilig, sayı: 60, 2012: 193-214) focuses on Gulshanī’s literary corpus and contextualizes it in the larger cultural milieu of Ottoman “mystical” belles-lettres. The author also provides a summary evaluation of Gulshanī’s literary inspirations, followers, successors, dervish poets/musicians, family members, and Ottoman administrative/religious elites who knew and/or wrote about Gulshanī up until, and including, the nineteenth century. His analysis of the “Gulshanī geography” highlights the scope and reach of the Gulshani adab in Ottoman realms while making a convincing case for its solid impact in Ottoman arts of the early modern period. In that same category, Side Emre’s article “Crafting Piety for Success: Gülşenîye Literature and Culture in the Sixteenth Century” (Journal of Sufi Studies, 1.1 (2012): 31-75) problematizes scholarship on Islamic mysticism that mostly prioritizes the poetry and mystical teachings of famous Sufi masters but overlooks to historically contextualize them. She explores the mystical thought and piety of Gulshanī, and the order’s literary

production through the poetry and biographies of dervish-authors, and observes that Gulshani’s inspirations formed the contours of the order’s early literature and culture. Arguing that the Gulshaniyya culture was an evolving product of its changing socio-political environment, and not a replica of the doctrines of the order’s founder, she depicts the shifts in the Gulshaniyya literature, unveiling the order’s changing practical priorities, which provided its members with foresight to secure a stable niche for itself in Ottoman Egypt in the sixteenth century.

The same author’s second article “A Preliminary Investigation of Ibn ‘Arabi’s Influence Reflected in the Corpus of Ibrahim-i Gulsheni (d.1534) and the Halveti-Gulsheni Order of Dervishes in Egypt” (Journal of the Muhhyuddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society 56 (2014): 67-113) details the impact of the Akbarian school of thought on Gulshani’s select works. One of the goals of this article is to uncover and examine select concepts and ideas of Ibn ‘Arabi’s school of thought that found reflections in the Gulshaniyya corpus, expanding our current knowledge about Ibn ‘Arabi’s influence on Turkish- and Persian-speaking Sufis and ʿturuq in the early modern Islamicate lands. As a precursor to this effort, Erik S. Ohlander’s “He Was Crude of Speech”: Turks and Arabs in the Hagiographical Imagination of Early Ottoman Egypt (The Arab Lands in the Ottoman Era: Essays in Honor of Professor Caesar Farah. Minneapolis: for Early Modern History, University of Minnesota, 2009, 111–135) investigates the intra-communal intersections among the members of the Egyptian Khalwatiyya and challenges our conceptions of Cairene Sufism as political rule transitioned from Mamluks to the Ottomans. Ohlander focuses on the process of how Egyptian Arabs encountered the Ottoman “Turk” in public spaces by examining the interactions of the famed Egyptian Sufi master and author ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Sha’rānī (d. 972/1565) and Ibrāhīm-i Gulshanī, a Khalwati Sufi and émigré to the Cairene social milieu. His analysis focuses on three overlapping themes: the personal marker of language, the political/economic marker of patronage, and the socio-religious marker of mystical praxis. His conclusions depict that tensions and rivalries between Egyptian and non-Egyptian Sufis relied mostly on issues surrounding patronage, use of public spaces in urban settings, such as Cairo, and who would, and should, get to respond to the spiritual welfare of Muslims communities living side by side in this vibrant and culturally diverse city.

In other article-length studies such as, John J. Curry’s “Home is Where the Shaykh Is: The Concept of Exile in the Hagiography of İbrahim-i Gülşeni,” (Al-Masaq 17, no. 1, March 2005: 47-60), we see deconstruction of hagiographical tropes, such as the “concept of exile”. Curry, in his study of Muhyî-i Gulshani’s hagiographical narrative of Ibrahim-i Gulshanî, argues that as shaykhs of Sunni mystical orders, such as the Khalwanîyya off-shoot Gulshaniyya, were pushed to escape political violence, and settle down in regions that provided solace from the chaos instigated by the rise of the Twelver Shi’a Safavids, their later narratives, such as Muhyî’s, detailed, among other topics, the concept of exile in two senses:
physical and metaphorical. Curry argues that Muhyi’s idea of exile reflected a separation or estrangement from one’s mystical and spiritual guide as it was utilized as a narrative strategy to foster the readers’ devotion to the Gulshanîyya while also providing comfort to communities who were forced to relocate to new geographies. A similar hagiographical trope, a theme that highlighted persecution and banishment was also studied by Side Emre in “A Subversive Story of Banishment, Persecution, and Incarceration on the Eve of the Ottoman Conquest of Egypt: Ibrâhîm-i Gûlsheni’s Mamluk Years 1507/10–1517” (in Sufism and Society: Arrangements of the Mystical in the Muslim World, 1200–1800 C.E., ed. John J. Curry and Erik S. Ohlander, London and New York: Routledge, 2011: 201–222). Here the author’s aim is to reevaluate Gulshanî’s Mamluk years and the modern-day scholarly perceptions that the relationship between Gulshanî and the Mamluks were harmonious. This perception leads to a misleading view of Gulshanî’s subsequent attitude toward the Ottomans. Modern scholars mostly regard Gulshanî as an influential pîr who provided spiritual guidance to the local Ottoman military constituency, thereby aiding the post-1517 Ottomanization of Egypt. His depiction as a loyal ally of the Ottoman sultans relies on the belief that he was an ascetic-minded Sufi whose primary concern was to engage in reclusive worship, emerging only periodically to form amiable but distant relationships with figures invested with political authority. In that sense, he was seen as a consistently pro-establishment figure under both Mamluk and Ottoman rules, with a biased focus in favor of the latter. This book chapter points out to the agendas of Gulshanî’s biographers, ones that are mostly omitted in the complex storylines of the hagiographies and provides a reassessment of his activities under the Mamluks to depict that his relations with the last Mamluk rulers, Qânsaw al-Ghawrî (r. 906–22/1501–16) and Tûmân Bây (r. 922–3/1516–17) were tense and even confrontational at times.

Complementing aforementioned studies that focus on the literary tropes found in the Gulshanîyya literature is Rûya Kılıç’s article titled as “Osmanlı Devleti’nde Gûlsheni Tarikati: Genel Bir Yaklaşım Denemesi” (http://dergiler.ankara.edu.tr/dergiler/19/1272/14648.pdf). In this study, Kılıç gives the reader an overview of the history of the Gulshanîs including the activities of the Gulshanîyya members that branched out outside Istanbul in the seventeenth and early twentieth centuries. This concise study introduces relevant archival and literary primary sources for the post-sixteenth century history of the order.

In the final part of this section, I would like to briefly examine Muhyî-i Gulshanî and the most important modern day scholar of Muhyî, Mustafa Koç. Muhyî (d. ca. 1603/4) was the single most productive author and archivist of the Gulshanîs. He is known in today’s Ottoman Sufism and historical scholarship mainly as the meticulous hagiographer of Ibrâhîm-i Gulshanî. Muhyî lived most of his adult life in the Cairo lodge-complex with his spiritual mentor, Gulshanî’s son, and
successor Ahmed-i Hayali. Being part of an extensive Gulshaniiyya network, he traveled regularly in the wider Ottoman geography meeting with other members of the order while his master was alive. After Hayali’s death, Muhyi reached an important position in the Cairo lodge. Subsequently he began establishing intimate connections with select members of the Ottoman ruling elite in Istanbul—such as Sultan Murad III (r. 982-1003/1574-95). His copious literary production played a significant role in Muhyi’s popularity at court. Indeed, Muhyi was a prolific writer who authored over two hundred texts spanning from works on ethics, grammar, hagiography, counsel for sultans, and mystical poetry. Baleybelen—the Esperanto-type language—and the dictionary he formulated are being examined today as the first practical product of *lingua sacra*—the first and purest language God was said to have taught to Adam. He was also a self-proclaimed “Fuṣusi”, a dedicated reader, defender, and commentator of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s metaphysical writings, especially one of al-‘Arabi’s main works, the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (“The Bezels of Wisdom”).

While Muhyi’s overall intellectual contribution to early modern Ottoman letters and culture of Sufism still needs attention, Mustafa Koç’s meticulous scholarship and content rich publications on Muhyi and his literary output reflect the importance of Muhyi in Gulshani studies. Koç’s foreword in the *inceleme-metin* (translated and transliterated publication) of the *Reşehât-i Muhîyi* is an important contribution to Sufism studies in general as it reflects the scope and inclusivity of Muhyi’s Sufi networks which spanned those of the Gulshans and Aharis in the early modern period. The author’s other studies on Muhyi mainly focus on the linguistic and literary contributions of Muhyi to the Gulshaniyya mystical discourse and early modern Ottoman Sufism. Complementing Koç’s scholarship, a recent book chapter by Kristof D’hulster titled “A Sufi Performing Empire: Reading Two Unpublished Works of Muhyi-i Gülşenî (d. 1604-05)” addresses the clash between the Ottomans and a group of Bedouins in the 1590s as seen from the eyes of a Gulshani dervish, Muhyi. D’hulster argues that Muhyi’s two different versions of the ‘Azâle-Nâmes—one written in prose and the other

in verse—depict a particular vision of the Ottoman Empire as well as Muhyī’s own identity as a Gulshanī and a Hanaﬁ Sunni.18

IV. Sources on Khalwatīs, and their sub-branches, from the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Later narrative sources in the tabaqāt and tezkire genres provide information on the Khalwatī order between eighteenth and twentieth centuries. Ahmed Hilmi Efendi’s (d. 1331/1913) Ziyaret-i Evliya (published in 1327/1909) has entries on the Khalwatīs and Shabanīs, especially ones who were buried in or around Istanbul. In addition, Hüseyin Vassaf’s (d. 1347/1929) Sefine-i Evliyâ and the Tezkire-i Mesciyyih-i Amida also have entries on the Gulshanīs19. The latter includes descendants reaching to the twentieth century in Diyarbakir. Research on the order’s history in nineteenth and twentieth century Turkey and Egypt is scanty. Frederick De Jong attributes the diminishing popularity of the Gulshanīyya in Egypt in the second half of the nineteenth century to decline of the Turkish population in the region and he adds that their Turkish/Persian liturgy might explain their continued influence in the central Ottoman Lands. De Jong reviews the existing scholarship on the history of the Khalwatīyya in Egypt and his research constitutes a valuable starting point for the history of Sufism in Post-Ottoman Egypt (including numerous Khalwatī offshoots) as well as the nineteenth century Sufi institutions in Egypt. Indeed the post-seventeenth century cultural and political history of the order remains virtually unstudied today and constitutes a rich path for the Gulshanīyya researcher.20

Manuscript Sources on Ibrāhīm-i Gulshānī and the Gulshanīs21

One of the main sources for the history of the order is Muhyī-i Gulshanī’s (b. 934/1528-d. c.1014/1606) hagiography, Menāqib-i Ibrāhīm-i Gūlṣenī. Muhyī began the Menāḳib in 976/1569, after serving as the türbedâr (overseer of a tomb or mausoleum) the Cairo lodge for almost twelve years.22 He gathered information

21 The primary source documents written about the Gulshans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is extensive. In this section I will summarize the main hagiographical, biographical, and historical sources. Also see Emre, Power Brokers, 30-41.
orally from his pîr, Aḥmed-i Hayalī—Gulshanī’s son and successor to the order’s leadership—as well as other fellow Gulshanīyya members, sympathizers, and affiliates of the order. He probably rewrote his text once before finishing the composition in c. 1012/1604, almost seventy years after Gulshanī died and nearly thirty-five years after his master Hayalī’s passing. Muḥyī’s narrative draws the outlines of the founder’s connection and descend from Oghuz Ata and the Qayi tribe emphasizing the prestige and power Gulshanī inherited with that specific designation. Writing for Ottoman audiences in the sixteenth century and at times embellishing his account to glorify the founder, Muḥyī informs his audiences that Gulshanī was endowed with the “power to rule.” The Menākıb, in addition to being a hagiography of the Gulshanīyya’s founder, also depicts the historical-cultural, political and religious background of the late fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Islamic lands, connecting the early modern courts of the Aqquyunlus, Ottomans, and Mamluks. Another important source for Gulshanī’s life—which remains today in scholarly margins—is penned by ‘Ubūdī-yi Gulshanī—a fellow Gulshanīyya member and a contemporary of Muḥyī. His version appears alongside his Ottoman Turkish translation of an Arabic pilgrimage (ziyāra) text, Murshid al Žuwwar ila Qubûr al-abrâr, by a thirteenth-century writer, Muwaffaq al-Din Abd al-Rahman Ibn al-Faqih ‘Uthman (d. 614/5-1218/19).23 The original was intended primarily as a guide for the pilgrims to al-Jabal al-Muqattam and to the tombs and graves of the holy dead in Egypt. ‘Ubūdī’s translation appends a lengthy section on Gulshanī, itself mostly abridged and altered from Muḥyī’s work, to the second section of Ibn ‘Uthman’s original text. ‘Ubūdī’s text further departs from its sources in its dedication to a high-ranking member of the seventeenth century Ottoman military elite, Ahmed I’s (r. 1011/1603-1025/1617) former vezîr (minister in the imperial council) and kapûdân pasha (captain or commander in the Ottoman navy) Öküz Mehmed Pasha (d. 1029/1620).24 It is likely that ‘Ubūdī hoped for patronage from Mehmed Pasha; Muḥyī, on the other hand, produced his hagiography exclusively for the Gulshanīyya dervishes, future novices, and posterity, and omitted any such dedication to political figures. ‘Ubūdī began his composition while serving at the lodge between 1005/1597 and 1023/1615, completing it sometime in the late 1590s, before the death of Shaykh Seyyid Hasan Ali Efendi (d.1023/1615), the fourth successor to Gulshanī. The first version of


'Ubūdī’s text, dating from the 1590s, reveals a pro-Ottoman agenda that further enhanced Muḥyī’s image of the founder as the famous Ottoman saint of Egypt of the sixteenth century. 'Ubūdī’s version found wide circulation later on when it was printed as the Menāqīb-ı Evliyā-ı Miṣr.25

The third most important source on the Gulshanī and the Gulshanīyya is Mahmud Cemaleddin Ḥulvī’s (d.1064/1654) Lemezät-ı Hulviyye ez Lemaat-ı ‘Ulviyye, also referred to as Kitāb-ı Lemezāt.26 The Lemezät remains today as the earliest and most detailed biographical narrative on the different Khalwatiyya branches. It was composed at a later date than Muḥyī and 'Ubūdī’s hagiographies. Ḥulvī started composing the Lemezät in 1018/1609 and finished it after his stay at the Cairo Gulshanīyya lodge in 1030/1621. Ḥulvī compiled stories of every Khalwati silsile and extended his narrative to encompass events and details until 1022/1614, preserving valuable information from earlier sources. In 1028/1619, Ḥulvī, like other well-known Khalwatiyya biographers, traveled to Cairo after a pilgrimage, but this was some fifteen years after Muḥyī had passed away and, at that point, Ḥulvī had already been initiated into another Khalwati sub-branch—the Sunbuliyya. He thus presumably had less motivation than Muḥyī or 'Ubūdī to enhance Gulshanī’s prestige in his relation of events. The Lemezät is a compendium, a detailed biographical dictionary of many stories related to the Shayhs of the Khalwatiyya and its many branches, including Rūshānīyya, Gulshanīyya, Demirdaşhīyya, and Sunbuliyya. Ḥulvī, like Muḥyī and 'Ubūdī, provides supernatural stories illustrating the saintliness of the shayks.

Another important hagio-biographical source that has extended sections on the Gulshanīs was written in the late seventeenth century and is titled the Tuhfetü’l-Mücāhidin ve Behçeti’z-Żakirîn.27 The Tuhfet is comprised of entries on Khalwati and Gulshanī Shayhs. Its author, Ḥacı ‘Alî Efendi (d.1075/1665), based his work on Nev’izâde ‘Ata’î (d. 1043/1634). In the Tuhfet, Hacı ‘Alî Efendi gives an extensive account of the entire Khalwatiyya, including the Rūshānīyya-Gulshanīyya sub-branch. Within that section, he devotes a large section to the Gulshanīyya silsile. He also includes detailed information about the shayhs who were affiliated with the Gulshanīyya under each successive post-=nil in the der-kenâr sections. His list includes: İbrahim-i Gulshanı, Ḥasan-i Zarifi, Sâdik ‘Alî Dede, Ashik Musâ Dede Edirnevî, Emîr Aḥmed-i Hayalî, Ferhâd Dede, Ebu’l-Kâsim Mahmûd, ‘Alî Sa’veti ibn Emîr Aḥmed-i Khiyalî, Amedî Ḥasan Dede, Yûsuf Mezheb, Mecnûn

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Shemlelizāde Ahmed Efendi’s (d. 1088/1678) Shiâve-i Tariqat-i Gulshaniyya28 is the last exclusively Gulshani source examined here.29 Shemlelizâde probably joined the order in Cairo during the tenure of the sixth successor to the order, Shaykh Ahmed, and returned to Bursa during the reign of Mehmed IV (r. 1057-1098/1648-1687). The Shiâve is the only known text that explicates the rules, regulations, and rituals of the Gulshaniyya. The second part of Shemlelizâde’s account depicts the interior dynamics of the lodge. The author also provides fragments of Gulshani’s biography, with a focus on his relations with his pîr Rûshani, Gulshani’s works, and a list of lodges located in the Ottoman lands. Shemlelizâde makes a significant point for the sanctity and saintliness of the founder and the legacy of the Gulshaniyya, which, according to earlier hagiographical sources such as Muḥyî, had initially found voice in Rûmî’s poetry. Shemlelizâde interprets Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî’s (d. 672/1273) announcement of Gulshani in his Mesnevî, some two hundred years prior to the latter’s birth, as a powerful point of spiritual legitimization of the order for the descendants of the Gulshaniyya and its offshoots.

The Shiâve also deserves mention as the first text to depart from an exclusive focus on the deeds of the order’s founder and to depict the Gulshaniyya as a Sufi institution. Completed in the mid-seventeenth century, it excludes references to Gulshani’s Oghuz Ata lineage or to any of the controversial and eclectic meshrebs of its founder, while providing a detailed esoteric genealogy of the order. Shemlelizâde focuses on the impersonal details of the organization’s daily workings, refraining from commentary on political or social issues or on the personalities involved. Such an approach is a distinctive shift from the hagio-biographical genre of the sixteenth century that dominates modern day Gulshani scholarship.

These and other sixteenth- and seventeenth-century hagiographies and ỉTabaqāt literature vary in their coverage of the Khalwâtiyya biographies and ỉSilkîles. Thus information in different sources on the Gulshaniyya does not necessary convey similar viewpoints, historical timelines, or information. Their authors prioritize different ỉSilkîles and sub-branches of the Khalwâtî according to their knowledge, sympathies, and personal connections with the order. Most of these authors have more than one Sufi affiliation. Muḥyî and ‘Ubûdî penned sixteenth-century hagiographical narratives while serving actively as Gulshaniyya dervishes in the Cairo lodge. Hülvî and Häcî ‘Ali Efendi wrote their biographical/hagiographical

29 Ibid.
narratives in the seventeenth century, much later than Muḥyī and ’Ubūdī. While Ḥulvī was a Gulshānīyya dervish and deputy who died in Istanbul, Ḥacı ’Āli Efendi served at the Ottoman court in various capacities. He was affiliated, in varying degrees, with a number of orders. He relied heavily on Ḥulvī and ’Aṭā’ī for his work. Additionally, to name a few other Ottoman authors with some or limited level of affiliation with the Gulshānīyya who commented on the order, its origins, founder, and network in their biographical dictionaries/histories include Aşık Çelebi (d. 978/1571), Latīf (d. 989/1582), Nev’īzāde ’Aṭā’ī (d. 1043/1634).

A number of Arabic and Ottoman Turkish historical chronicles also provide valuable information on Gulshānī and his order. The two most important of these chronicles are Abī Barakat Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭanafī’s, famously known as Ibn Iyās’s (d. 930/1524) Badāʾī’ al-Zuhūr fī Waqāʾī’ al-Duḥūr30 and the two manuscript versions of ’Abdū’ṣ-Ṣāmed bīn Seyyīdī ’Āli ed-Diyārbeḵī’s (d. 948/1542) Nevādīrī’-t-Tevārīḥ,31 Both sources are key to understanding the socio-political and religious dynamics of the region’s history under the Mamluks and its transition into the Ottomans’ reign. The inclusion of Gulshānī and his participation in the historical events surfacing in the chronicles of the period prove that he, and his order, had not only been visible in the public sphere but also played distinctive roles in state and society.

**Conclusion**

Perhaps the most daunting task facing medieval and early modern Sufism scholars is establishing a historical context for their subject matter, be it a holy individual, Sufi ṭarīqa, network, community, and/or a Sufi institution. Typically early modern historical sources do not provide detailed information on holy men, mystics, or Sufi ṭarīqas unless they cross paths with military/ruling or administrative elites. Sufis, in early modern historical sources, find commentary in histories or chronicles mainly when they interact, or clash, with religious/ruling of administrative elites. Therefore in order to establish a nuanced historical context for the activities, and career, of a holy man/a Sufi institution, the researcher needs to compare and contrast a variety of primary sources in different genres. Comparing information found in literary, archival, epigraphic,
architectural, narrative, historical, biographical etc. sources with those found in hagiographies is essential to reach a balanced analysis of the subject matter. To wit, revelatory pieces of information about Sufis, and their careers, can also be found in the most unexpected texts—and not necessarily in those that were written contemporaneously either. To search for these unexpected texts and to be willing to rethink established notions on how to write a historical narrative on Sufism related topics requires, among others, an early modern type of sensibility on part of the researcher. Being sure of what constitutes “historical” material when mapping a holy man’s historical life is never as straightforward or clear cut as one might like it to be. And this gray zone is what, I argue, rattles most historians who prioritize establishing “absolute” past realities as “historical facts”. For those historians, who underline the scarcity of “historically reliable and verifiable” data in hagiographical sources, approach these texts with suspicion. Presumed “unreliability” of hagiographical, or otherwise prose-narrative and biographical type data on Sufism related subject-matter result in dismissal of such materials in most modern day historical analyses and scholarship. For some historians, “fictional”, “supernatural”, or “esoteric” content of hagiographies also constitute red flags that researchers should avoid. Another commonly phrased blame against texts with mystical/supernatural subject matter is the issue of “authorial biases”. Hagiographers are often blamed for writing heavily biased texts that cover, alter, and sanitize the actions of their holy protagonists. While the goal of the dervish author is primarily to eulogize the piety of a ṣūfī’s saintly founder, to demonstrate their supernatural deeds, and to lay out the societal scope of their saintly influence, hagiographies also contain important historical information about the socio-political context on their protagonists. Biased or not biased, these texts provide troves of evidence that supplement data found in biographical or chronicle type sources. Besides, and not to state the obvious, “authorial bias” is a prevalent and ever-present aspect of all writing. Instead of demonizing “bias” in hagiographical texts and use it as an excuse to dismiss them as reliable sources, one should embrace evidence of bias and try to understand the factors that created the circumstances of its production and seek to analyze/contextualize bias to further enrich one’s research. Thus predominant and assumed perceptions on “inferior” versus “superior” literary/narrative sources on Sufism must not deter our quest to utilize them to broaden historical understanding.

Where do scholarly studies of the Khalwatī-Gulshanīs fall in the spectrum of Sufism studies today? In trying to answer this question, here I examined the modern day scholarship on the Khalwatī-Gulshanīs as well as the most important primary sources on the founder and the order. As luck would have it, a number of contemporaneous historical and biographical sources (Arabic and Ottoman Turkish) give information on Gulshanī and the activities of the Gulshanīs for the sixteenth century. Therefore, while establishing a historical context for the
activities of the Khalwatī Miṣrī-Gulshanīs, situating Gulshanī’s activities alongside the socio-political dynamics of multiple neighboring and competing early modern polities—the Aqquyunlu, Ottomans, Safavids, Dulkadirlioglus, and Mamluks—the Gulshanī/Gulshanīyya scholar does not have to rely solely on hagiographical material. Comparison between different genres provides opportunities for a richer and more nuanced historical scholarship on the Gulshanīs—which will also provide a reliable methodological basis for future studies of the order in the seventeenth century and beyond.

Gulshanī, and members of his following/order, moved into the regions where the above-mentioned polities ruled and they interacted with ruling and religious elites in the mid-fifteenth and sixteenth century—which can roughly be described as the period of the order during the founder’s lifetime. In the post-founder era, between c. 1534-1600s, the Gulshanīs gradually fostered their Miṣrī identity distinct from the many established practices and traditions of Anatolia-based Khalwatī offshoots. They secured a definitive cultural and social niche in the vibrant urban Sufi communities of Cairo alongside ṭarīqa native to Egypt. During this latter period, the order’s leadership passed onto Gulshanī’s descendants who maintained their connections and networks within the Ottoman ruling and religious establishment in the empire’s wide cultural zone in Egypt and Istanbul. In short, the Gulshanīs became influential social, political, and cultural actors both during the lifetime of the founder, and following his death. This particular aspect of the Gulshanīs is well worth emphasis since the role of Sufis as influential societal and political actors still remains a controversial conceptual terrain in historical studies of pre-modern Muslim societies.

While a number of historical sources provide some context on how the Gulshanīs operated, their literary corpus, including Gulshanī’s works, biographical dictionaries, as well as the posthumously written hagiographies, give valuable and abundant information on the adab and meşreb, of the order, their networks, as well as the activities of their members and affiliates. The corpus of Gulshani and the dervish authors depict numerous literary inspirations from famed medieval Arab and Iranian Sufis, philosophers, and poets. Tracing the exact origins and the scope of influence of these muses is a difficult task. As modern scholars of the order studying the rich Gulshanīyya corpus and mystical culture, and determining the inspirations of dervish poets present us with a long series of scholarly challenges.33

33 For an analysis of the order’s literature and the inspirations of the Gulshanī dervish poet/authors, see Emre, “Crafting Piety”, 31-75.
The internal organizational transformation that the Gulshanīyya order went through as a Sufi institution was extensive. During Gulshanī’s lifetime, the teachings and doctrinal foundations of the Gulshanīyya were slowly transformed from the holy founder’s individualistic asceticism to a community-based piety, which also heralded the transition from a cult-type following surrounding Gulshanī towards the formation of a pious Sufi community that established themselves in a prestigious lodge in one of the most vibrant neighborhoods of Cairo. This factor alone can be cited as one of the main reasons of their success as an enduring Sufi institution in Egypt, and elsewhere in the wider Ottoman ruled lands.

Hagiographies of Gulshanī, such as those written by Muhyī and ‘Ubūdi that were discussed in the above pages, were written after the founder’s death. These authors revised and edited questionable, or controversial, contents of Gulshanī’s poetry, teachings, and socio-political events that surrounded the founder and the order in the sixteenth century. Most of the information found in these sources was told to hagiographers by fellow dervishes, or close affiliates of the Cairene-Gulshanīs. As these authors were writing, they preserved the memories, or recollections, of people who knew Gulshanī personally, or had direct interactions with him. During the composition of these hagiographies, the events that transpired during the lifetime of the founder were still within living memory and the memories of these events were circulating in Egypt, as well as in other Sufi networks in the empire, where Gulshanī dervishes travelled. Reading these texts and analyzing their content, as was outlined in the above pages, can be a challenge for the Gulshanīyya scholar. However, widening the scope of research into other genres prove beneficial in the long run, especially for the purposes of establishing the historical significance of this important Sufi institution within the context of the early modern history of the Ottoman Empire.
Abstract
The Khalwati-Gulshani order and its historical projection yield invaluable insights into Mamluk/Ottoman Egypt’s socio-political and cultural history in the early modern period. This study introduces and examines modern-day Gulshaniyya scholarship as well as a diversified range of unpublished/published primary sources (in Ottoman Turkish and Arabic) written by Gulshaniys and others. The majority of the Gulshaniyya corpus still remains in unpublished manuscript condition today. The evaluation of the historical chronicles of the period, as well as contemporaneous hagiographies, biographical dictionaries, and poetry that make up the vast body of literature created by the founder Ibrahim-i Gulshani and the prolific Gulshaniys demonstrate that the Gulshaniys held considerable socio-political influence in Egypt and the wider Ottoman landscape in the decades following the region’s Ottoman conquest in 1517. By studying and historically contextualizing texts such as hagiographies—usually, and erroneously, dismissed by some as fantastical and unreliable in historical studies—I make the case as to how such sources reveal complex political, social, and cultural insights about Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. Throughout this article, the importance of employing an eclectic methodology, one which unites Sufism related subject-matter and historical contextualization, has been emphasized with the intention to propose a new theoretical framework for understanding the history of Egypt and the Ottoman Empire via the lens of one particular Sufi community and institution.

Keywords: Khalwati-Gulshani Order, Gulshaniyya, Ibrahim-i Gulshani, Gulshaniyya literature.
A Study of the Modern-Day Scholarship and Primary Sources on Ibrāhīm-i Gulshanī and The Khalwatī-Gulshanī Order of Dervishes

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