

# Two 15<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Sufi Mysteries – An Historiographical Essay

## Part II: The Case of Ümmi Kemal\*

Bill Hickman\*\*

*XV. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Sufiliğinde İki Esrarlı Nokta – Tarih Yazıcılığı Açısından Bir Deneme  
Bölüm II: Ümmi Kemal Örneği*

Öz ■ Onbeşinci yüzyıl Anadolu tekke edebiyatında Ümmi Kemal iyi bilinen bir şairdir. Ancak *Divan*'nda geçen isimler haricinde hayatı hakkında pek az bilgi vardır. Pek detaylı olmasa da *Divan*'ndan Safevi tarikatı mensuplarıyla olan ilgisi anlaşılır. Kemal'in yaşadığı devire yakın menkıbevi kaynaktaki bir hikaye onun katledildiğini ima eder ve sonraki biyografilere temel oluşturur. Bu menkıbevi kaynak yeterince incelenmemiştir. 2008'de Hayati Yavuzer, Kemal'in hayatı ve *Divan* hakkında uzun yıllar boyu bu konudaki esas anlatı olarak kalacak kapsamlı bir kitap yayımlamıştır. Yine de Kemal'in hayatının sonu hakkındaki belirsizlik devam etmektedir. Bu yazıda, makalenin birinci kısmında olduğu gibi (Birinci Kısım, "Eşrefoğlu'nun Sonu Ne Oldu?") birincil kaynakların pek de ipucu vermeyen dilinin ötesine geçip bir şair olarak Kemal'in ününün yaygınlığına rağmen neden tarihi bir şahsiyet olarak karanlıkta kaldığını incelemeyi hedefliyorum. Bir 15. yy. eseri olan *Anonim Velayetname*, Ümmi Kemal'i yine ünlü ama karanlıkta kalmış bir başka şahsiyet olan Sultan Şücaüddin'le ilişkilendirir. Makalenin sonundaki ekte *Anonim Velayetname*'nin bu kısmının İngilizce çevirisi ve açıklamalar verilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ümmi Kemal, Sultan Şücaüddin, Hayati Yavuzer, Osmanlı mutasavvif şairler, menâkıbnâmeler

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\* The following essay was originally intended as a chapter of a book, tentatively titled and prematurely announced as "Two Tekke Poets". That project did not come to fruition. Despite the lapse of time this essay benefitted from the comments of V. L. Menage and the late Andreas Tietze, both of whom read a draft of that chapter. And thanks to Gary Leiser and Ralph Jaekel for their comments on this current version. Remaining errors are my own.

\*\* Formerly Associate Professor of Turkish Language and Literature of the University of California (Berkeley)

{In the first part of this essay I examined the life of the 15th century Anatolian Turkish poet-sheikh, Eşrefoğlu Rumi.<sup>1</sup> I argued there that the account of his life, a work of hagiography first substantially sketched in the early 17th century and now often repeated, does not hold up under serious historical analysis and cannot be taken at face value throughout. In particular, the end of Eşrefoğlu's life is a mystery; sinister stories from more than one source, although persuasive, have not yet been adequately explained. If, as seems likely, Eşrefoğlu's life ended violently, that explanation is probably to be found in his extravagant expressions of spiritual ecstasy. And the "chill" of the next century, dating from the start of the Ottoman-Safavid struggle and deepened by a strident domestic reactionary movement, may help explain what was, in effect, a "cover-up" by biographers and hagiographers, beginning in the 16th century. Traces of that cover up have persisted into modern times.}

Now in Part II, I suggest that a similar situation may well obtain in the case of Ümmi Kemal, one of Eşrefoğlu's close contemporaries. Almost nothing is known about Kemal's life beyond names found in his poetry. A single hagiographic anecdote from a near contemporary source points to a violent death and informs the earliest accounts. That source has never been fully utilized, however. Other questions about the poet's life remain unanswered. In 2008 Hayati Yavuzer published the results of his comprehensive research, a massive volume including a definitive examination of Kemal's life and an edition of his *divan*, as well as an analytical and descriptive catalogue of the poetry.<sup>2</sup> Yavuzer's well-documented book should remain the "standard account" for a very long time. However, as in Part I, through this historiographic re-examination of the life of a major figure of the landscape of 15th century Anatolian Turkish sufi culture, I try to shift the emphasis away from the establishment of facts to an understanding of how and why an admittedly very skeletal "biography" developed as it did.

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1 See my "Two 15th Century Ottoman Sufi Mysteries; An Historiographical Essay. Part I. What happened to Eşrefoğlu?" Published in *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, vol. 46 (2015), pp. 1-42.

2 Hayati Yavuzer, *Kemal Ümmi Divanı (İnceleme-Metin)*, Bolu: Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi, 2008. The book does not appear to be widely available in the United States and I have seen no reviews of it. See also my [William C. Hickman], "Who Was Ummi Kemal?," *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Dergisi [Beşeri Bilimler]* v. 4-5 (1976-77), 57-82. The article is unfortunately marred by numerous misprints. I saw the late Muzaffer Akkuş's *Kemal Ümmi Divanı* (Niğde, 2007) too late to comment on it here. However, he has little to add to the discussion of the poet's life.

### The Earliest Accounts

There is a curious irony at the heart of the story of the life of Ümme Kemal<sup>3</sup>, an irony that persists in the telling of it through the centuries. His inclusion in one of the oldest Ottoman collections of poets' lives acknowledged his stature as one of the most creative figures associated with the *tekke* culture of 15th century Anatolia. Yet soon thereafter, Kemal's name disappeared, for centuries, from later works of the same genre--and apparently from the historical record altogether. At the same time, in the world of popular religious culture he emerged with the reputation of a respected sheikh with a number of his own followers. "Rediscovered" as a major poet only in the early 20th century<sup>4</sup>, Kemal has now, with Yavuzer's book, been restored to the place of distinction which he has all along deserved. Still, Kemal is nearly unique among Ottoman poets, for reasons not properly acknowledged, as I will try to show. But how to explain these vagaries of his reputation?

Before answering that question--and substantiating my claims--a review of the very little that is known of Kemal's life is in order.

In fact, Kemal's achievements as a poet were never entirely forgotten. Many copies of his collected verse output (*divan*) are known--attesting to popularity throughout the centuries.<sup>5</sup> Some of his poems were also anthologized by urbane readers--in collective volumes (*mecmu'a*) today highly regarded by scholars for their reflection of literary standards and taste long-ago. These miscellanies are a further sign of his appeal.<sup>6</sup> Finally, Kemal is perhaps the only contemporary of

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3 His given name seems to have been Ismail.

4 Mehmet Fuat Köprülü described Kemal as "one of the most remarkable mystical poets of this period [15th century]" in his contribution on "Ottoman Turkish Literature" in *EL*, v. 4, pp. 938-59. That essay was based on his "Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Tekamülüne Umumi bir Bakış", *Yeni Türk Mecmuası*, v. 1, no. 4 and no. 5 (1933), pp. 277-92 and 375-94. (For Kemal see p. 382.) Those articles were subsequently appended to the re-edition of Köprülü's *Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi* (Istanbul, 1980). Köprülü reiterated that assessment of Kemal in *Eski Şairlerimiz* (Istanbul: 1931). For a poem by Kemal in English see my [William Hickman], "An Allegorical Poem of a Tekke Poet", Raymond Lifchez (ed.), *The Dervish Lodge* (Berkeley: University of California, 1992), p. 202-208.

5 Yavuzer identified 42 manuscript copies. See also my earlier [William C. Hickman], "On the Manuscripts of the Divan of Ümme Kemal", *Journal of Turkish Studies* v. 3 (1979), 197-207.

6 See Yavuzer, p. 88, for six such manuscripts. The second oldest of these anthologies is dated 1534/940H; for it see Muharrem Ergin, "Cami-ul Meani'deki Türkçe Şiirler," *Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Dergisi* v.3/ iii-iv (1949), pp. 539-69. Kemal's poems are among the most numerous found in the volume.

Eşrefoğlu whose name is found in the latter's *Müzekki'n-nüfus*.<sup>7</sup>

Still, Kemal's *Divan* was never printed in Ottoman times, an indication that perceived readership was insufficient in the 19th (or 20th) century to justify the expense of mechanical reproduction.<sup>8</sup>

The oldest source for Kemal's life from a writer who may be identified with the Ottoman elite is the *Tezkiretü's-şuara* of the poet-biographer Latifi, the first recension of which was completed in 1546.<sup>9</sup> Latifi's "facts", however, are meager in the extreme: Kemal was from Larende in the province of Karaman.<sup>10</sup> Latifi concluded his account with a sampling of five lines from a (much longer) poem.<sup>11</sup> What makes Latifi's notice intriguing, though, is an anecdote which he says he "heard from the *dedes*", evidence that it derived from circles outside the elite, perhaps the Bektashis. Latifi wrote:

7 Eşrefoğlu's *Müzekki'n-nüfus* is a book intended for would-be sufis. See Abdullah Uçman's edition (İstanbul: İnsan, 2007), p. 440. In a section titled "An explanation of *tevbe*, *telkin*, *varidat*, *halvet* and *çile*", Eşrefoğlu quoted a single couplet of Kemal's poetry. For the full poem: Yavuzer, no.122, pp. 726-27. Could Eşrefoğlu have known Kemal? Had their paths crossed somewhere? Had he seen a copy of Kemal's poetry? Might he actually have owned the book?

8 The assertion that Kemal's *Divan* was published in Bukhara has not been substantiated. M.F. Köprülü, without providing more detail, stated that Kemal's poems spread to the Kazan Turks, by way of Crimea, and from there reached the Bashkurts and Özbeks. A. Zeki Velidi Togan had written that Kemal's poems, like the works of the Yazıcıoğlu brothers, had spread to Turkish Central Asia by the early 19th century. See his *Bugünkü Türkili (Türkistan) ve Yakın Tarihi* (İstanbul, 1942/47), p. 488. It seems likely that Köprülü must have based his information on his contemporary, Togan. Contrary to Yavuzer (p. 69, n. 269), and some earlier writers, Togan does **not** state that Kemal's poetry was published in Bukhara in 1870.

9 For the Ottoman edition: Ahmet Cevdet (ed.), *Tezkire-i Latifi* (İstanbul, 1314), pp. 286-87. For a modern Turkish version: Mustafa İsen, *Latifi Tezkiresi* (Ankara: TC Kültür Bakanlığı, 1990), 270-71. Latifi's notice likely prompted E.J.W. Gibb (and von Hammer before him) to include Kemal in his *History of Ottoman Poetry*, vol. 1 (London, 1900), pp. 413-14. Latifi's comments on Kemal did not change through several recensions of his work. (My thanks to Walter Andrews for providing a scan of the relevant passage from the earliest manuscript copy of Latifi's text.)

10 Larende: now the city of Karaman, on the northern slope of the Taurus Mountains about 80 miles southwest of Konya. Latifi's entry is under the name "Kemal (-i) Ümmi". Clearly the poet was **not** "illiterate"; the word *ümmi* should be understood only as a reflection of modesty. For a discussion of the issue, in the case of Yunus Emre, see Emine Gürsoy-Naskali, "Yunus Emre ve Edebiyat Tarihçileri", *Yunus Emre Sempozyumu. Bildiriler* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi, 1992), pp. 41-46.

11 For the text of the entire poem see Yavuzer, pp. 733-36 #127. (For Gibb's translation see *HOP* v. 1, pp. 413-4. The *beyts* quoted by Latifi diverge slightly from the text given by Yavuzer.

“The said Kemal-i Ümmi went with Nesimi to the *tekke* of Sultan Şüca and sacrificed a useless ram belonging to the sheikh. Greatly angered by their act, Baba Sultan [Şüca] put a razor in front of Nesimi and a noose in front of the aforementioned [Kemal], thus indicating [the manner] of their passage from this world.”<sup>12</sup>

Dryly and without comment, Latifi added: “In fact, they flayed Nesimi and they hanged [Kemal].”

A few decades later the historian Mustafa Ālī (d. 1600) included in his account of the Ottomans, among the poets of the reign of Murad II (1421-51), a short notice on Kemal. Without mentioning names, Ālī wrote that Kemal “travelled to Iran and served several sufi masters”. He added: “And **some say** [Kemal] too was executed for revealing [forbidden] secrets.” He ended his notice by quoting from the same poem that Latifi had excerpted.<sup>13</sup>

A century and more after the prime of Kemal’s life, then, the man was well known--and his poetry respected well enough.<sup>14</sup> Yet his name had sinister associations, not clearly explained. Kemal later disappeared from the historical record until well into the 18th century. A hint, only, of Latifi’s anecdote then re-emerged in the early 20th century, in the work of Bursalı Tahir Bey. He concluded his brief biographical narrative with the line: “It is written in the *Tezkire* of Latifi that he had a friendship with Nesimi.”<sup>15</sup> But he did not elaborate.

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12 For Sultan Şüca see below, n. 17. The Hurufi poet Nesimi was executed in Aleppo, most likely in 1417. Despite his extreme views Nesimi remained highly regarded as a poet for centuries. He has his own place in Latifi’s *Tezkire* where the biographer was more forthcoming about his life than he was about Kemal’s. (See Isen, 331-32; in Cevdet’s edition, 332-33.) For the salient biographical details see: Kathleen R.F. Burrill, *The Quatrains of Nesimi Fourteenth-Century Turkic Hurufi* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972).

13 See Ālī’s *Künh al-Ahbar*, vol. 4/2 (Istanbul, 1869), 243 [emphasis added]. See also below, n. 45.

14 That Latifi included Kemal at all is noteworthy: he excluded from his collection many other poets identified with the same *tekke* culture, Eşrefoğlu among them, for example. For more on the popularity of Kemal’s *Divan* see my “Toward editing Ottoman *tekke* poetry” (forthcoming in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*).

15 For Tahir Bey’s notice on Kemal see his *Osmanlı Müellifleri* (Istanbul, 1333 [1914]) v. 1, 152-53. Cf. the modern Turkish edition by A. Fikri Yavuz and İsmail Özen, v. 1 (Istanbul: Meral 1971), p. 141-42.

### Latifi's Anecdote

Orhan Köprülü many years ago revealed the probable source of Latifi's anecdote: an anonymous hagiographic collection of tales, *Vilayetname-i Sultan Şücaüddin* ("Legends of Sultan Şücaüddin").<sup>16</sup> Like all works of its sort, the *Vilayetname* aims to elevate its subject above all others.<sup>17</sup> Much longer than Latifi's lines suggest, the story of Kemal and Nesimi in the *Vilayetname* is meant to cast those two in a decidedly negative light in comparison to the sheikh of the book's title.<sup>18</sup> Nesimi is described as arrogant and self centered. Kemal is cast in an only slightly more ambiguous role: after the disrespectful slaughtering of the sheikh's ram, Kemal exhibited remorse and desired to become a follower of Şücaüddin. But the latter rebuffed him. In the account in the *Vilayetname* the guilty pair are joined by Kaygusuz Abdal who opposed the other men's killing of the ram. One of the best known figures of the movement of "deviant renunciation", the Abdal's favorable portrayal in this story is entirely in keeping with the *Vilayetname's* origin in the culture of that diverse community. By the end of the anecdote, the separate, violent deaths of both Nesimi and Kemal are recorded, although the explanations

16 Köprülü discussed the text in his "Vilayet-name-i Sultan Şücaüddin", *Türkiyat Mecmuası* 17 (1972), 177-84, largely unchanged from a chapter of his unpublished 1951 Istanbul University thesis. His discussion was based on a manuscript in his own library, and included a truncated transcription of the text of the anecdote: p. 178, footnote 3. Köprülü did not actually identify the *Vilayetname* as the source of Latifi's anecdote.

17 For a survey of the genre see A(hmet) Yaşar Ocak, *Türk Halk İnançlarında ve Edebiyatında Evliya Menkabeleri* (Ankara, 1984); reprinted as *Kültür Tarihi Kaynağı olarak Menakibnameler* (Ankara: TTK, 2010). The "hero" of the book is known by various names: Sultan Şücaüddin, Şücaeddin Baba or Sultan Varlığı, a man who died sometime in the first half of the 15th century. For him see Haşim Şahin, "Şücaeddin Veli" in *TDVİA* v. 39, pp. 247-8. A complex of buildings erected in his name survives near the town of Seyyitgazi. A handsome türbe, dating only from 1515-6, has been restored. For the buildings see Zeynep Yürekli, *Architecture and Hagiography in the Ottoman Empire* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), esp. pp. 126-28. Neither she nor other recent writers (including Şahin) have explained the assertions (with photographs) of Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi of material remains (including a tombstone) ascribed to "Şeyh Şüca' Karamani" in Edirne. See his (*Osmanlı Mimarisinde*) *Çelebi ve II. Sultan Murad Devri 806-55 [1403-51] II.* (İstanbul, 1972), p. 421. These remains support the statements by Mecdi that Sultan Murad II. had a *zaviye* and *mescid* (later converted into a *cami* by Suleyman) built in that city, structures known in that writer's time. (See his *Hada'ikuş-Şaka'ik* [Constantinople, 1853], p. 94-5.) Taşköprüzade himself had said only that Şeyh Şücaüddin Karamani was among those in the circle of Şeyh Hamid (on whom see below). Evliya Çelebi mentions, in passing only, a "Şeyh Şüca zaviyesi" in Edirne, without further identifying the sheikh. See Seyit Ali Kahraman & Yücel Dağlı (ed.), *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi, 1999), p. 268.

18 For a translation of the entire anecdote see the Addendum.

offered are, in each case unrelated to the incident involving the ram.

Whether the anecdote depicts an actual meeting of the four men or is purely apocryphal is irrelevant here.<sup>19</sup> It is well-established fact that Nesimi was executed on account of views unacceptable to the religious leadership [*ulema*] of his time and place (early 15th century Aleppo/Cairo). Kemal's death, however, has not been mentioned elsewhere--except in Ottoman sources apparently drawing upon this hagiographic tale. Why the *Vilayetname* narrative would suggest a bad ending for Kemal's life, if he did not in fact meet up with it, is inexplicable to me. I see no reason therefore to disavow the ending to the story. (Latifi affirmed it, after all, and Ālī probably also.) Yet Fuad Köprülü, in his enthusiastic, early discussion of Kemal, omitted altogether any reference to his death. And literary historians since then have paid surprisingly little attention to Latifi's remark; the anecdote from the *Vilayetname* has gone largely unexamined.<sup>20</sup>

Yavuzer scrutinized every relevant source, narrative and archival (more than those I have just reviewed) in his painstaking efforts to sketch Kemal's life. But he ends his discussion of the poet-sheikh's death without expressing an opinion as to the validity of the anecdote.

### The *Vilayetname*-i Sultan Şücaüddin

The prose *Vilayetname*, which celebrates the spiritual prowess of Şücaüddin, survives in at least six manuscript copies. Besides the one owned by Orhan

19 The historicity of the story is sometimes questioned, presuming a death date for our poet of 1475 (see below), on the grounds that Kemal would have been very young at the time of his associating with Nesimi. Given the uncertainty of that date, the objection seems moot. (See also Yavuzer's comment on the matter, pp. 21-22.)

20 Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı omitted any reference to the anecdote in his *Divan Şiiri. XV-XVI. Yüzyıllar* (Varlık, 1954), p. 11. In their semi-scholarly histories of Turkish literature, Banarlı, Güzel, Karaalioglu and Kocatürk made no reference either to Latifi's anecdote or to a violent death. Bombaci ignored Kemal altogether, both in his *Storia della Letteratura turca* and in Irene Melikoff's French translation of a revised text of his book. The unidentified author of the entry on Kemal in *Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Ansiklopedisi* [Istanbul: Dergah, 1982] quoted Latifi's story without comment, as did Abdullah Uçman in *Büyük Türk Klasikleri* v. 3 [Istanbul: Ötügen, 1986]. Among several authors who mention Kemal in the recent scholarly and comprehensive *Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, edited by the late Talat Halman, only Ocak makes reference to a possible violent death ([Istanbul: T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2006], vol. 1, p. 600). The sole author who has embraced the story without question is Cemil Çiftçi, *Maktul Şairler* (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 1997), 55-61.



Köprülü, a copy in the Hacı Bektaş Library served as the basis for a transcription published in 1984 by Şükrü Elçin, scholar of Turkish folk literature.<sup>21</sup> A copy in the Ankara İl Halk Kütüphanesi was paraphrased by the amateur historian D. Ali Gülcan in 1987 (That was the version used by Yavuzer).<sup>22</sup> Nejat Birdoğan published another paraphrase of the text in 1996, apparently following a copy in his own possession<sup>23</sup>. Ayşe Yıldız, published a more careful transcription in 2006 following yet another copy.<sup>24</sup> Lastly, a copy in the Kastamonu İl Halk Kütüphanesi is cited by Haşim Şahin in his article, “Şücaüddin Veli” in *TDVIA*.<sup>25</sup> The above writers’ descriptions of the manuscripts they used are inadequate, however, and it is not certain that some are not simply recent copies of others. Despite the repeated publication of this work, no facsimile has appeared. Some readings remain uncertain<sup>26</sup>, and the identity of the author of the *Vilayetname* remains unknown.<sup>27</sup>

Early on in his story of Nesimi, Kaygusuz Abdal and Kemal, the author of the *Vilayetname* wrote that Kemal had a particular “skill” [*hüner*]: whenever he

21 See his “Bir Şeyh Şücaüddin Baba Velayetnamesi”, *Türk Kültürü Araştırmaları* [= Necati Akdar Armağanı], v. 22 (1984), 199-218. Elçin’s transcription was the first complete publication of the text.

22 In his (self-published) *Karaman Velilerinden Şeyh Ali-yüs Semerkandi ve Kemal Ümmi* (Bolu, 1987), pp. 51-55.

23 See his *Alevi Kaynakları-1* (İstanbul: Kaynak, 1996), 142-45.

24 Yıldız’s transcription appeared in her “Şücaaddin Baba Vilayetnamesi”, *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi* no. 37 (Ankara, 2006), 49-97. The transcription is based on a 1938 (!) copy of an older manuscript, not well described, and of uncertain location. Her text is very close (but not identical) to the one published by Elçin. While her version of the text is the best currently available, Yıldız nonetheless was apparently unaware of the work of either Birdoğan or Gülcan and did not make use of either in her reading of problematic passages.

25 *TDVIA*, v. 39 [2010], pp. 247-48. No transcription of it has been published.

26 In his 1984 survey of the *menakıb* genre, Ocak noted Köprülü’s manuscript and the one in the Hacı Bektaş Library--but made no reference to Elçin’s publication.

27 Orhan Köprülü stated (p. 177) that the author of the *Vilayetname* was unknown, based on the text in his possession. Elçin concurred in that opinion. Ocak, despite using the same manuscript as Elçin, claims (p. 50) the *Vilayetname* was written by one “Esiri”, on the basis of a name found at the end of one of the verse *bikayes* which follow the prose text. Elçin apparently did not consider the verses to be part of the original work. Gülcan made no mention of an author. For the verse passages see Birdoğan, 149-72 (Esiri’s name appears on p. 156). I have not seen any of the manuscript copies but, like Elçin, believe the earliest text of the *Vilayetname* was in prose, the verse passages having been added at a later date, perhaps by several different individuals, the earliest being “Esiri”.



came upon a city he would raid it [*basardı*] and thus find food and drink to last him a week. He also behaved [badly] as if he were the master [*beg*] of the place. After seven days, so the story goes, neither city nor bazaar remained (presumably because of his depredations). The narrator added, offhandedly, “(And) Kemal used to say ‘I am God’.”<sup>28</sup>

Echoing Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj, these Turkish words would almost certainly have caused Kemal serious problems, if not cost him his life. Kemal’s poetry, however, hardly bears out the *Vilayetname*’s assertion (“[he] used to say”). In his exhaustive cataloging of Kemal’s *Divan*, Yavuzer found only two couplets with explicit reference to Hallaj. And only one of them includes the Arabic sentence, there put into the mouth of the Baghdad martyr himself, so not literally the Turkish poet’s own assertion.<sup>29</sup>

In his *Tezkire*, Latifi had introduced Kemal’s verses with the words: “He was the author of couplets about the transitoriness of the world in the spirit of the *babas*; he was the source of words in the dervish-style.”<sup>30</sup> With his Turkish rhyming prose sentence was Latifi only aiming at stylistic affect, or with his reference to “the *babas*” was Latifi hinting that Kemal had uttered words “beyond the pale”? If nothing else, the biographer was hinting at poetic inspiration from other than Establishment sources.

In the *Vilayetname* text, Kemal’s words (“I am God.”) are not presented as the cause of his execution. They do, however, provide a reference for the sheikh’s sarcastic comment to his followers, shortly before the arrival on the scene of Kemal, Nesimi and Kaygusuz: “the Gods are coming.”<sup>31</sup>

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28 The text reads “Ben tanrırım.” However those Turkish words would have resonated with the reader of the *Vilayetname* centuries ago, today they immediately recall the (Arabic) words, *ana’l-haqq*, spoken by the mystic Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj, executed in Baghdad in 309/922. The sentence has been suppressed in Elçin’s transcription where “...” fills the space between the preceding and following sentences. Nor does it appear in the rendering of the text by Gülcan. (It is therefore absent from the summary given by Yavuzer who relied on Gülcan and who was apparently unaware of Elçin’s transcription.) Birdoğan’s paraphrase includes the words, as does Yıldız’s transcription, but neither writer offers any comment.

29 Yavuzer, p. 382.

30 *Fenaya müteallik babayane abyatı ve dervişane kelimatı vardır* [emphasis added].

31 Further on in the *Vilayetname*’s narration, Nesimi is directed to Aleppo by the sheikh. His behavior, on arriving in that city, is again described as haughty: he told the people who met him to “Take God’s horse.”

### Later Sources

Yavuzer found a single, previously overlooked source from the 18th century which pointed to the same outcome for Kemal: *Silku'l-Le'ali* by Ahmed Hasib Efendi ("Mü'minzade"), a minor member of the 18th century *ulema*. His poem about the era of Mehmed II drew heavily on works by major Establishment figures like Ali and Taşköprüzade. But in a brief passage devoted to Kemal, Mü'minzade stated that some of the poet's words were contrary to the sharia and that he had a fate like that of Hallaj.<sup>32</sup> Without quoting Kemal, Mü'minzade's verses reinforce the insinuation of the *Vilayetname*.

After Latifi's *Tezkere* and Āli's *Künh al-Akhbar*, (and Mü'minzade's *Silk*), Kemal's name turns up in no non-hagiographic source until later in the 18th century, by which time it is safe to assume that writers based their comments on hearsay or local traditions of questionable reliability. Principal among such writers are Hüseyin "Ayvansarayı" (d.1201/1787) and Süleyman Sadeddin "Müstakimzade" (d. 1202/1788). They wrote, respectively:

"The sheikh Kemal Ümmi, his name is İsmail. He is a Karamani. He was a *tarikât* brother [*pirdaş*] of Sheikh Cemal-i Halveti. According to the chronogram "*şefkat*" ("compassion") he died in the year 880 (1475). He is buried in his dervish lodge in Karaman, his native land [*vatani*]."<sup>33</sup>

And,

"Kemal Ümmi, the sheikh İsmail, buried in Mudurnu, a follower of the sheikh 'Ali the Halveti."<sup>34</sup>

Apart from the discrepancy about Kemal's final resting place, these two writers oddly now describe him as a follower of the Khalveti order and refer to him as a sheikh, with no reference to his poetry. Latifi had made no reference to a *tarikât*,

32 See Yavuzer, 50. On Mü'minzade see Günay Kut's entry in *DIA*: "Ahmed Hasib Efendi" v.2, pp. 87-88. Mü'minzade's *Silk* remains unpublished; I have not seen it.

33 See Ramazan Ekinci and Adem Ceyhan (ed.) Hafız Hüseyin Ayvansarayı, *Vefayat-i Ayvansarayı* (İstanbul: Buhara, 2013), 163. For the Khalveti Cemal (d. 1484), see Mehmed Taysi, "Cemal-i Halveti", *TDVIA* v. 7, p. 302-3. No earlier source links him with Kemal. Ayvansarayı added to his brief notice two linked couplets supposedly from Kemal's poetry--verses which are not found today in copies of his *Divan*.

34 *Mecellet al-nisab*, Süleymaniye Library, Halet Ef. 628, f. 371b. The further identification of "Ali the Halveti" is unknown--unless Müstakimzade here intended **Hoca** Ali.

and the inclusion of Kemal in his *Tezkire* would have been based on an assessment of the poet's artistry, not on any tarikat affiliation. Furthermore, the anecdote which he summarized portrayed Kemal, not as a follower of what would become one of the most respected sufi orders of the Ottoman state, but rather as a fellow traveller of a man executed for his extreme views.<sup>35</sup>

### Kemal's Tarikat

Nearly a century ago, Fuad Köprülü identified the two men whom Kemal had written about in his poetry: "Sheikh Hamid" and "Hoca Ali". In his *Divan*, Kemal had devoted a *mersiye* (elegy) to the former, and both a *mersiye* and a *medhiye* (eulogy) to the latter.<sup>36</sup> Pivotal figures in Kemal's spiritual development, these two men are well known: Ali was the third sheikh in the (family-based) leadership line of the Safavid tarikat (named for Ali's grandfather Sheikh Safiyüddin), the prominent sufi movement dating to the turn of the 14th century and still centered in Ardabil in the 15th. Hamid, sometimes known by "Hamidüddin" but more widely by the nickname "Somuncu Baba", was one of the Hoca's best known Anatolian followers, and himself mentor of Hacı Bayram.<sup>37</sup>

Köprülü, curiously, had referred to Kemal as "bu halvati derviş". Whether he intended to identify the widely ramified order of the late 15th century and after or only to suggest a preoccupation with the practice of solitary meditation [*halvet*], the characterization seems misplaced. Köprülü was perhaps merely echoing those later writers like Ayvansarayi who used the same term of affiliation. Most historians of Turkish literature have followed this lead.<sup>38</sup>

35 Latifi's notice on Ümmi Kemal is preceded immediately by another, devoted to a "Kemal-i Halveti", a man who reportedly had links to Hacı Bayram. Might this sequence of entries in Latifi's *Tezkire* have contributed to confusion in later years about Kemal's tarikat association?

36 For the texts of the poems see Yavuzer, pp. 515-22, 524-28 (nos. 24, 25 and 27). The subject of a third elegy (Yavuzer, 525-26, no.26) is unclear. For a partial translation of the eulogy of Hoca Ali see my "Who Was Ümmi Kemal?" p. 64-65.

37 For Sheikh Hamid see Haşim Şahin, "Somuncu Baba" in *TDVİA* v. 37, pp. 377-78. The poems in Hoca Ali's name lend weight to Âli's assertion that Kemal had "travelled to Iran and served several sufi masters."

38 When literary historians have mentioned Kemal's tarikat affiliation at all they have consistently called him a Khalveti. So for example A. Yaşar Ocak, *Türk Halk İnançlarında ve Edebiyatında Evliya Menkabeleri* (Ankara, 1984), p. 52. Kemal has, mistakenly, also been described as the author of a *Menakıb-i Gilani* [about Abdülkadir]. See Ahmet Kartal in Halman, *Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi* v. 1, p. 501 (relying on N. Külekçi).

Yavuzer devoted 10 pages to the question of Kemal's *tarikât*. and in the end found a kind of middle ground, writing: "Kendisi üzerinde etkili olan şeyhlerinden Şeyh Hamid'in Hoca Ali'ye bağlı olmakla birlikte Halveti olduğunu... Kemal Ümmi'nin, Halvetilik ile Şeyh Cüneyd öncesi Safeviliği istikametinde, Halvetiliğe daha yakın "Kemallü" şubesinin kurucusu olduğunu şimdilik kaydıyla kabul etmekteyiz."<sup>39</sup>

In this opinion Yavuzer was likely also influenced also by the long verse *Menakıb-i Kemal Ümmi*, by the otherwise unknown "Dervish Ahmed". Early in his poem Ahmed stated: "[Kemal] was outstanding in the **khalveti** way / His wonders were manifest; they were extraordinary."<sup>40</sup> That statement sounds unambiguous, but in the immediately preceding line Ahmed had also written: "They say [Kemal] received permission [to initiate novices] from Safi Sultan." [f. 1b, l. 9b] Perhaps the name Safi Sultan had no real significance for Ahmed. In any event, his direct linking of Kemal and Safiyüddin reveals the chronological unreliability of his account. The trouble with details found in his *Menakıb*--and there is little else strictly factual about Kemal in it--is that we have no idea when the Dervish composed his poem and, so, how to interpret what he says. But the poet's *Divan* is an unimpeachable source and speaks for itself: Kemal's teachers were of a clearly Safavid, not Khalveti, orientation.

While the Safavid *tarikât* was, in its beginnings, a nominally sunni, quietist sufi movement, at some later time it was transformed into a shiite enterprise. How the transformation from sunni *tarikât* to a shi'i state came about, over the course of the mid-to-late 15th century, is still mostly unclear. And whether Hoca Ali, who died in 1429, had any role in it is debated. The later Safavids rewrote their own history, obscuring the true nature of earlier events.<sup>41</sup> But as the 15th century turned into the 16th the leadership of the Safavid *tarikât* in Iran had long since become thoroughly politicized. Historians conveniently date that moment to 1501 when Hoca Ali's great grandson Ismail became the head of the "House"

39 Yavuzer, pp. 45-46.

40 For Ahmed's *Menakıb* see Millet Kütüphanesi, Ali Emiri manzum, 1323. The quote here is from f. 1b, line 10 (emphasis added). I agree with S.N. Ergun that the hagiography and the collection of short poems which follow it in the manuscript, and which have the mahlas Aşık Ahmed, were likely the work of the same man. See his *Türk Şairleri*, vol. 1 (Istanbul, 1935), p. 302. Yavuzer (p. 5) judged them to be by different authors. For our purpose the matter is of little real significance.

41 For early Safavid history see R. M. Savory's contribution to the article "Safavids" in *EI2*, v. 8, pp. 765-71; for a more expansive account see H. R. Roemer, "The Safavid Period" (Chapter 5) in *The Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 189-350 and esp. 189-232.

of Safi, had himself recognized as “shah”, and then moved his capitol to Tabriz.

Although Safiyuddin’s name came to be reviled in the late 15th century, he was still widely respected, long after his death, in many parts of Anatolia. Turkish tribesmen may have been drawn to the Safavid banner, may have taken the red headgear which identified them, and may have followed thoroughly unorthodox beliefs and practices which Ottoman rulers and theologians found anathema, but the teachings of the sheikh who gave his name to that movement--and of his followers--continued to be inspiring to many others--including the well educated, former scholar from İznik and the accomplished poet from Karaman. One thing can be said for certain: there is nothing in Kemal’s *divan* nor, more specifically, in the poems about Hoca Ali and Hamid to suggest sympathies which could later be branded shiite.<sup>42</sup>

As is well known, the transformation of the Safavid organization in Iran quickly led to open warfare between the Ottoman and Safavid states, conflict which dragged on for over a century. Safavid followers were intermittently pursued and prosecuted by Ottoman sultans from the time of Selim I onward. Whether the frequently mentioned number of “40,000” killed in a widespread and long-lasting purge is a vast overstatement or not, it was exceedingly dangerous to have any affiliation with the Safavid movement, or be seen to have any sympathy for it.<sup>43</sup> Ottoman writers (especially in the 16th and early 17th centuries) must have had difficulty writing about anyone with perceived sympathies toward Safavid sheikhs (in however distant a past), and especially if that person had also been guilty of flagrant disrespect for propriety with regard to the expression of ecstatic sufi exclamation.<sup>44</sup> And biographers--like Latifi and Ālī--may themselves have found such behavior (including the direct quotation of Hallaj) distasteful, if not downright heretical.<sup>45</sup>

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42 Kemal does, however, several times refer to the *dā’va*, a call or appeal to action. The word was especially used by shiite polemicists. Whatever religious-political overtones the word had for Kemal cannot be said. For examples from his poetry see my “Who Was Ümmi Kemal?”, pp. 67-68.

43 For this figure, frequently mentioned, see Halil İnalcık, p. 42.

44 For one view of Ottoman writing in the period, see J.R. Walsh, “The Historiography of Ottoman-Safavid Relations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries” in Bernard Lewis and P.M. Holt (ed.) *Historians of the Middle East* (London: Oxford, 1962), 197-211.

45 The historian Ālī’s remark, “And **some say** [Kemal] too was executed for revealing [forbidden] secrets,” may not be so much skepticism, as Yavuzer seemed to think (“Ālī, bu asılarak öldürülme hadisesine pek de inanmış görünmemekte...” p. 50), as judicious caution in writing about a

The assignment later, in the 18th century, of Kemal's *tarikāt* affiliation to the Khalvetis was most likely due to ignorance. The men by whom Kemal had actually been inspired were by then too remote in time, more than 300 years later, to be of interest. Perhaps confusion, intended or unintended, is due to the fact that Khalveti *tarikāt* branches sometimes trace their own genealogies also back through Zahid al-Gilani, father-in-law and spiritual mentor to Safiyuddin.<sup>46</sup>

I belabor this issue, not to split hairs over what might seem a highly esoteric matter, but because understanding Kemal's actual *tarikāt* affiliation may help explain the circumstances surrounding his death.<sup>47</sup> Is it possible that already in the reign of Mehmed II (during which time, according to Ayyansarayi, Kemal died) people with known links to the Ardabil-based order were being sought out as likely fifth column dissidents or, worse--heretics?

Latifi began his notice by stating that Kemal was "from Larende in the province of Karaman". This is in keeping with the biographer's narrative style: initially identifying his subject's homeland. In Kemal's case it also highlights a geographical locus of particular significance. The territory of Karaman had long been a thorn in the side of Ottoman rulers. Held by a rival family, it had never been securely conquered and annexed by the Ottomans until Mehmed's final military action (1471-2) against the rival *beylik*. Even then, events in Karaman continued to vex the sultan, and later his son and successor, Bayezid II. Immediately after Fatih's death, Karaman was identified politically with Cem (Bayezid's rival for the throne); and it remained a seat of rebellion against its new Ottoman overlords for some time.<sup>48</sup>

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sensitive subject. "The Historian" used exactly the same distancing phrase [*ba'zılar kavlnca*] when writing about Eşrefoğlu: "Some say that he came into possession of the elixir." (See Part I, n. 16; emphasis added in both quotes.) I suggest that Âli knew more about the circumstances of the two men's deaths, but feigned doubt as a form of discretion.

46 On Sheikh Zahid see Roemer, "The Safavid Period", esp. 191-93; cf. Mustafa Bahadıroğlu, "İbrahim Zahid-i Gilani" in *TDVİA* v. 21, pp. 359-60. The latter author writes, aptly, " (İbrahim Zahid-i Gilani'ye nisbet edilen Zahidiyye'yi bir tarikattan ziyade çeşitli devirlerden farklı isim ve yorumlarla ortaya çıkan ve günümüze kadar etkilerini sürdüren bir meşrep olarak görmek daha doğrudur, p. 360.)

47 It is because of Kemal's unambiguous and open declarations of loyalty to figures from the Safavid movement that I call him nearly unique among Ottoman poets. For another Anatolian Safavid poet see Fatih Bayram, "A Karamanid Shaykh between the Safavid Order and the Ottoman Polity: Baba Yusuf of Aksaray", *Archivum Ottomanicum* 26 (2009), 253-98. Baba Yusuf ("Hakiki") was the son of Sheikh Hamid and a contemporary of Kemal's. He is absent from Latifi's work.

48 For the general background see Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, translated by Ralph Manheim and edited by William C. Hickman (Princeton: Princeton University, 1978),

At this point, three reasons may be suggested for Kemal's vulnerability and probably violent death: his self-identification with the extravagant words first uttered by Hallaj (as seemingly suggested by the *Vilayetname*); his association with the Safavid network of sufis; and his apparent connections with the troublesome province of Karaman and its nomadic tribesmen, never receptive to sedentary rulers and inclined toward heterodox beliefs.<sup>49</sup> Perhaps all three reasons played into Kemal's execution.

### Kemal's Grave

Dervish Ahmed's *Menakıb* demonstrates what cannot be shown from other written sources: that Kemal had spiritual followers of his own (whom Ahmed called "Kemallü"), perhaps the reason why Ayvansarayi and Müstakimzade refer to Kemal as a sheikh? Besides Kemal's sons, the dervish author names another follower: Sarı Müderris, an otherwise unknown figure, copies of whose *divan*, however, Yavuzer managed to find.<sup>50</sup> The Müderris's poetry, together with Ahmed's *Menakıb*, firmly situate Kemal's story--and his grave--in the Bolu mountains, a region mentioned by no other source. These details bring us back, full circle, to our starting point. While Latifi and Ali, identified Kemal as **from** Karaman, Ayvansarayi had stated, for the first time, that he was also buried there.

In the last century writers have mentioned other places--notably Niğde and Manisa, but no material or epigraphic evidence has been produced to support those claims.<sup>51</sup> Müstakimzade claimed Kemal's grave was in Mudurnu which

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299-300; cf. Halil İnalçık, *The Ottoman Empire*, translated by Norman Itzkowitz and Colin Imber (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1973), pp. 27-29 and 116. See also Fatih Bayram, "A Karamanid Shaykh," especially pp. 254-56.

49 It is interesting that the oldest surviving copy of Kemal's *Divan*, dated 1517, was copied at a *yaylak*. See my "On the manuscripts", 197.

50 See Yavuzer, p. 22.

51 Manisa is mentioned by Bursalı Tahir Bey, *Osmanlı Müellifleri I*, 152-53. (In the transcribed 1971 edition see volume i, 141-42.) Çağatay Uluçay and İbrahim Gökçen, following his lead, claim that Kemal was buried in a neighborhood of Manisa now covered over by buildings. They state that a tombstone connected with the site is now in the Manisa museum, but the inscription is too worn to be read. See their *Manisa Tarihi* (Istanbul: Manisa Halk Evi, 1939), p. 126. (See also below, n. 70) For Niğde see M. Zeki Oral, "(Kemal Ümmi)'nin bir Ağıtı." *Akpınar [=Niğde Halkevi Dergisi]* yıl 1, #12 (Şubat 1936), p. 12; and again in the same journal: yıl 5, #54/61 (Mayıs-I. Kanun 1941), p. 16. Gölpinarlı has also suggested Muğla. See his *Divan Şiiri. XV.- ve XVI. Yüzyıllar* (İstanbul: Varlık, 1954), p. 11. See also Yavuzer, p. 52. Evliya Çelebi,



points to the general area of the Bolu mountains. It is unlikely that Istanbul writer had close knowledge of villages in that region, but in fact Kemal's name is firmly associated with a saint's tomb there. For an uncertain length of time his *türbe* in the village of Işıklar has been the site of annual visitation, drawing throngs from neighboring settlements seeking the poet-sheikh's blessings, from beyond the grave.<sup>52</sup>

Rival claims for a "saint's" grave are hardly uncommon. In the Turkish case one thinks of Yunus Emre, for example, and the many locations claimed as the site of his grave.<sup>53</sup> Still, it is curious that Kemal, who had never been a "popular" poet, should have become the object of competing claims for afterlife veneration and the focus of an annual pilgrimage in a relatively remote area. I suggest the explanation for that has to do with Kemal's death: execution would have left him a martyr, at least in the hearts of some.<sup>54</sup> What would have taken him--or after his death, his name--to the Bolu mountains, however, remains a mystery.

If I am right, Kemal's association with prominent figures in the Safavid movement, together with his Hallajian identification, brought unwanted attention from religio-legal authorities and eventually a death warrant. The notoriety of Safavid partisans soon after led to a virtual blackout in establishment sources in the form of silence.

### Overall Conclusion

In this linked pair of essays I have argued for a more exacting examination of available sources in trying to piece together the sparse details of the lives of two major figures of the cultural life of 15th century Ottoman Turkey. That both men likely fell afoul of religious authorities and were executed for the expression of their beliefs can be safely, if not unequivocally, asserted. Eşrefoğlu Rumi and Ümmi Kemal are linked not only by their probable common fate, but also by common inspirational sources: the Baghdad martyr-mystic Hallaj and the

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in his discussion of a purported tomb of Sheikh Hamid in Aksaray, mentions also a türbe of one "Kemal Sultan". But he does not further identify the man.

52 The first to document the tradition was Ali Vahit: "Kemal Ümmi Hakkında", *Halk Bilgisi Haberleri*, yıl 3, no. 30 (15 ikinci Teşrin 1933), pp. 212-15. For my own account: "Ümmi Kemal in Anatolian Tradition", *Turcica* 14 (1982), pp. 155-67.

53 For a recent discussion see Mustafa Tatcı, *Yunus Emre Külliyyatı I. Yunus Emre Divanı. İnceleme.* (İstanbul: H Yayınları, 2008), pp. 54-68.

54 Neither Dervish Ahmed nor Sarı Müderris (according to Yavuzer) speak of Kemal's death.

Ardabil sufi teacher Safiyuddin.<sup>55</sup> I hope I have shown that the lives of figures such as Eşrefoğlu and Kemal, until now the provenance exclusively of students of Ottoman literature and tarikats, can illuminate the broader cultural history of the Ottoman state during a still formative, even tumultuous period. Hopefully other such case studies will bring out more clearly, and with finer definition, the contours of the Ottoman religious-political landscape of that time.

### Addendum

In manuscript copies, the text of the entire work has been given the title, “Der beyan-i Kutb-ul Arifin Sultan Şücaüddin Baba'nın Vilayetnamesidir.” Şücaüddin is one of the major figures from the alternative religious culture of “dervish piety”, characterized by Ahmet Karamustafa for its “renunciation of society through outrageous social deviance,” a movement which was widespread in Anatolia in the 14th and 15th centuries.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, very little is known about this Baba. Halil İnalçık located “Sheikh Shuja” chronologically between Hajji Bektash and Otman Baba, one of the dominant “poles” (kutb; pl. aktab)--as the full title of the *Vilayetname* asserts--in the hierarchy of *evliya* of his time.<sup>57</sup> Such figures were believed to have nearly divine powers over ordinary events.

Although the *Vilayetname* has been known for over 60 years, and while other copies have come to light in that time, there is still no adequate edition. Nor is there any serious study of this important work. In particular, we have no examination of the point of view of the author, especially toward the secondary characters. Only one of 13 discrete stories, the anecdote [*bikaye*] describing the encounter of Sultan Kemal, Seyyid Nesimi and Baba Kaygusuz with Sultan Şüca[üddin] is the longest in the *Vilayetname* and takes up nearly 20 percent of the entire prose text. First alluded to by Latifi (and referred to several times above) the anecdote is a particularly good example of the nuanced views of a source which, however deep its roots in that socially deviant culture, nevertheless hewed to the sharia of Muhammad. It is notable that the two executed men are presented in such disparaging light by the “hero” of this tale, who is portrayed as a staunch defender of sunni orthodoxy.

55 In his *Müzekki'n-nüfus*, Eşrefoğlu also cited, a number of times, Sheikh Safiyüddin of Ardabil.

56 Ahmet Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends* (Oxford: One World, 2006 [reprint of the 1994 University of Utah Press first edition]), p. 13.

57 Halil İnalçık, “Dervish and Sultan: An Analysis of the Otman Baba Vilayetnamesi,” *Manifestations of Sainthood*, Grace Martin Smith and Carl W. Ernst (ed.), (Istanbul: İsis, 1993), 209-23; see especially 211.

What follows is an annotated translation of the *hikaye* relating that encounter. In the main I have followed the text given by Yıldız (see above, note 24) but here and there have preferred the readings of Elçin (note 21). Where uncertainty remains, in a small handful of places, I have marked my omission by [. . .]. None of these passages is more than a few words. For his help in elucidating the text at several points my thanks go to Bob Dankoff. I am, however, solely responsible for any remaining errors.

### “Hikaye”

At a time when Seyyid Nesimi went to Anatolia [Rum], he and Baba Kaygusuz<sup>58</sup> and Sultan Kemal, all three together, met up in Larende.

They said, “We need a man who has reached spiritual perfection, “a true man.”<sup>59</sup>

Kaygusuz Baba said, “There is such a man.”

“Who?” the others asked.

He replied, “Sultan Şüca.”

They said, “Come, then, take us to him.”

Kaygusuz said, “I’ll take you.”

So they went on to Rum. Sultan Kemal had this talent: wherever he went he would raid the bazaar of that city. He would eat and drink for seven days. He would make himself like a tribal chief [*beg*]. Then after seven days he would say, “There is no more city, no more bazaar here.” He used to say, “I am God.”

Seyyid Nesimi (God’s mercy upon him) said, “My dede<sup>60</sup> came; he established an order [*nizam*]. If there is no respect [for that] I will establish the order.” So he used to proclaim.

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58 Baba Kaygusuz: Legendary figure from the world of Anatolian *abdals*. See “Kaygusuz Baba” in *TDVIA*, v. 25, 74-76 (Nihat Azamat). See now also Zeynep Oktay, *Mesnevi-i Baba Kaygusuz* (Cambridge, MA 2013) esp. p. 5-10.

59 I use “true man” to translate the text’s *er kişi* (as here [Elçin’s transcription, p. 209]) and *gerçek er* (or simply *er*), below. Note also the plural form, *erenler*, used later in the story.

60 “My dede” [*dedem*]: presumably Nesimi here refers to his own mentor, Fazlullah (executed 1394), who principally elaborated the ideas of the Hurufi sect, for which Nesimi was also executed.

Eventually they came to Seyyitgazi<sup>61</sup>. They asked around and learned of Sultan [Şüca]’s whereabouts. They sent after him. Then as they were coming, Sultan [Şüca] said [to his own followers], “Children<sup>62</sup>, [the people who call themselves] God and prophets are coming.” He arose and hastened off.

The three men reached that place but did not find Sultan. They said, “If he were a ‘true man’ he would be here. He has fled from us.”

Sultan had a ram. They called it “the ram with the golden horns”. Sultan would recite incantations over it. He would hunt and skin young deer and rabbits out in the open. If Sultan was not in his place he would leave the ram in his stead. If a guest arrived he would understand. Sultan had so many guests.

Seyyid Nesimi and Kemal found the ram instead of Sultan. They said, “What sort of ram is this?”

[Sultan’s] dervishes said, “He belongs to our Sultan.”

Seyyid Nesimi said, “What is Sultan doing with a ram? A sultan should be free of all attachments. What does he need a ram for? This ram is his idol. Let’s sacrifice the ram. In doing so, we’ll free him of his idol.”

Kaygusuz Baba said, “Let’s not behave in a way that a “real man” would think indecent.

Sultan Kemal and Seyyid Nesimi paid no attention to his words; they slaughtered the ram. Kemal hung the carcass up; Seyyid Nesimi skinned it. They put the animal in a cauldron but no matter how hard they tried they could not bring the pot to a boil.

At that moment Sultan appeared, naked, with his felt garment on his stick.<sup>63</sup>

When Sultan saw them they were tongue-tied.

Sultan sat down and recited a litany. Then he got up and quickly started off, barefoot, toward Çambahçe. The three men, also barefoot, followed after

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61 Seyyitgazi: a small settlement in west central Anatolia, approximately half way between Istanbul and Konya. In the text the place name is followed by the word “padishah”, presumably intended as an honorific for “Seyyid Battal Gazi”, legendary Arab warrior of the 8th century after whom the place was named.

62 “Children”: (Literally, “my child”) Şücaüddin addresses his followers with the word, *köçğüm*, which he uses throughout, whether addressing them, or Kemal or Nesimi. It contrasts sharply with the word *er*.

63 Şücaüddin’s stick or club is commonly associated with the *baba*.

him. The place was full of burdock. Nesimi's and Kemal's feet were quickly covered with burrs. They stopped and sat down. Sultan looked back at them and said, "Children, you make claims of divinity and prophethood; don't you have any power over these little stickers?"

Kemal had 40 followers--each of them was a somebody [kişizade]. They spread out felt mats under Kemal's feet.

Sultan sat down with his back to a pine tree. The others came into his view. When they got closer Sultan Baba spread out a mat by his side. He called out to Kemal, "Come, my child, the *friends of God* bring the likes of you into the world. Let them be hidden; you be visible."<sup>64</sup>

Then and there Kemal wished to go and surrender himself to Sultan. Kemal had a chosen successor [*halife*] named Kuşçuoğlu. He was the son of a judge.<sup>65</sup> He said [to Kemal], "Until now you behaved like another god; now you just want to follow someone else."

With that Kemal was quiet.

Sultan looked into Nesimi's face and said, "My child, the friends of God have given us something to eat. Let the period of rest be over. Sit down where I can see you."

Seyyid Nesimi then recited the following verse:

Two worlds are squeezed inside me. But I cannot be contained by this here and now.

Since I am beyond all space, the entire universe is not big enough to hold me.<sup>66</sup>

Sultan Varlığı laughed and said, "My child, you speak wrongly. Muhammad's shari'a will squeeze you to bits."<sup>67</sup>

64 Sultan Şüca's language sharply distinguishes between those near the pinnacle of the hierarchy of "friends of God" [*pirler*] and those (like Nesimi and Kemal) who are, at best, pretentious seekers. Here, contrasting the hidden men [*batın*] with the visible [*zahir*], Şücaüddin's language suggests the *gayb erenler* of other texts.

65 "judge": Birdoğan reads the word *gazi*, not *kadı*. "Kuşçuoğlu" is named as a follower of Kemal in no text known to me.

66 (*Bende sığar iki cihan ben bu cihana sığmazam / Çün la-mekan benem kevn ü mekana sığmazam*) For the text of the entire poem see Hüseyin Ayan, *Nesimi. Hayatı, Edebi Kişiliği, Eserleri ve Türkçe Divanının Tenkidli Metni* (Ankara: TDK Yayınları, 2002), v. 2, p. 518, #270.

67 "to bits": Literally, "inside the husk of a walnut". Sultan Şüca seeks to put Nesimi in his place,

Sultan got up from where he had been and sat down again a little further off. The others followed to where he could see them.

Kemal said, "Bravo, my Sultan!"

Sultan Varlığı said, "Hu ha," and turned away.

Kemal approached again and said, "My Sultan, we are wearing human's clothes, yet you make us out to be animals."<sup>68</sup>

Sultan said, "My child, you are worse than an animal that does not know its master. [. . .] The friends of God are all you need."

From the pine tree next to Seyyid Nesimi, Sultan took an apple with his blessed hand and put it in front of the Seyyid with a knife. He said, "They want you in Aleppo; now, go!"<sup>69</sup>

The Seyyid arose and went off.

Then the Sultan broke off a pear; he attached a twisted string to its stem and put it in front of Kemal.

He said, "My child, they're waiting for you in Manisa, with a decree<sup>70</sup> in hand."

Then he put out his hand again and broke off a red rose from a branch of that pine tree.<sup>71</sup> He gave it to Baba Kaygusuz and said, "My child, may your hearth cool down." The reason he said "May your hearth cool down" was the following:

For 30 years Kaygusuz carried wood for Abdal Musa Padishah.<sup>72</sup> Not one

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using a form of the same verb [*sığmak*] on which the poet had based his rhyme in the preceding couplet.

68 Kemal's reply here is prompted by Sultan's words (in the previous line) which suggested those of one tending animals.

69 Aleppo: the city where Nesimi was executed.

70 The text here appears to be corrupt in most copies. I follow Gülcan in reading Manisa'da. Others have read "*ma'nada*" and Masnada, neither of which makes sense to me. I follow Elçin in reading *ber'at* where others have imagined *mir'at*.

71 Sultan's plucking an apple, a pear and a rose from the pine tree suggests the first line of a poem attributed to Yunus Emre: *Çıkdum erik dalına anda yedüm üzümü*. See Mustafa Tatçı, *Yunus Emre Külliyyati* (Istanbul: H Yayınları, 2008), v. 2, p. 428-30.

72 A semi-legendary figure, Abdal Musa is known in the hagiographic literature as the teacher of Kaygusuz. See "Abdal Musa", *TDVIA*, v. 1, 64-65 (Orhan Köprülü). In the *Vilayetname* written

day did he bring a crooked stick. <sup>73</sup>But one day when Kaygusuz was unloading the wood, . . . he complained . . . Abdal Musa Padishah interrupted his conversation and said, “Let everyone who loves me [lit., “us”] give Kaygusuz a single blow.”

There were 150 abdals in his company; each one gave Kaygusuz a single blow. Kaygusuz Baba said, “One hundred and fifty blows is a sign of the enlightened mystic [*arif*].”

Abdal Musa replied, “He is a denier. Don’t let him stay; put him out.” Abdal Musa’s followers put Kaygusuz Baba out. [. . .] Kaygusuz said, “If we’re shown the door on the way out, let’s come back down the chimney.” So he let himself back down the chimney; he landed face down in the fire.

Abdal Musa was still in conversation. He said, “Hey, Kaygusuz, you’ve really upset us. May your hearth not cool down.” They took him by the hand and put him out [again].

Later Kaygusuz Baba travelled the whole world. He established a *tekke* everywhere he went.<sup>74</sup> No ash settled on his hearth. Later when he went to Sultan, Abdal Musa (?) said, “May your hearth cool off. [. . .]” In the end he came to the land of Rumeli; he settled in Karacadağ.<sup>75</sup> His hearth cooled down. It smelled good.

As for Nesimi, he pressed on. He reached the city of Aleppo. As soon as he entered the city he said [to the people who met him], “Take God’s horse!”

The people of Aleppo were up in arms over that, hearing blasphemy in Nesimi’s words. It was a Friday. There was nearly a riot as the people reached the mosque. [. . .] Nesimi ruined their ritual prayers; he made unbelievers of them.

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in his name a tale is told of Kaygusuz’s shooting of a deer belonging to Abdal Musa--a striking parallel with the incident involving the slaughter of Şücaüddin’s ram.

73 Yunus Emre is also said to have carried wood for his master, Tapduk Emre--for 40 years without bringing a green or crooked stick. See Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, *Yunus Emre ve Tasavvuf* (İstanbul: Remzi, 1961), p. 52.

74 Kaygusuz is said to have founded several tekkes, most notably one in Egypt.

75 Karacadağ: While there are several mountains of this name in former Ottoman territory (especially in Anatolia) none is close to the locus of this story.



After Nesimi left, the people of Aleppo said, “What kind of a situation is this! We’ve let a man turn our prayers into those of infidels.”

They set out and caught up with him at a distance of a parasang [three and a half miles] and brought him back to the city. They threw him into prison and sent a man to the sultan in Egypt<sup>76</sup> with [Nesimi’s] *divan*. They said, “A man came; he spoke blasphemously. What is your command in this affair?”

The courier reached Egypt. They showed the Seyyid’s *Divan* to the sultan. [. . .]

The Sultan of Egypt said, “Send that man to me.” He sent a camel (to bring Nesimi to Egypt).

Before the camel arrived from Egypt the people of Aleppo flayed Nesimi. When they reached his belly he said “Ah, ah.” Then he gave up the ghost. “We belong to God and to Him we shall return.”<sup>77</sup>

They sent the camel back with the message, “We flayed him.” When the camel arrived, the Sultan of Egypt was furious: “Why did you kill that saintly man [*aziz*] without telling me?”<sup>78</sup>

So the sultan had the judges of the four [legal] schools flayed. And he imposed a tax of 30,000 akçe on all the judges. Since that time it has been a custom. They still levy it today.

As for Kemal, he too pushed on. He reached Manisa.

Sultan Murad [II] had a son. They called him Sultan Alaeddin. When the prince laid eyes on Kemal he took him as master [*baba*]. He had great affection for Kemal. When he went hunting he had Kemal mount his own horse; he went ahead himself on foot. But he didn’t take the people with him.

They complained to the padishah: “A man has come. He has led your son astray. He mounts him on his own horse and goes ahead on foot.

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76 In Nesimi’s time Aleppo was ruled by the Mamluk sultan Muayyad Sayf al-din.

77 Quran ii, 156.

78 The Mamluk ruler alluded to here must be, not Muayyad Sayf al-din, but rather Qansuh Ghawri (reg. 1501-16), said to have been an admirer of Nesimi. See Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallaj*, translated by Herbert Mason (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1982), v. 2, 249-54. In that case the *Vilayetname* could not have been written before the early 16th century.

The padishah said, “Find out about this man; what sort of skills has he?”

When Sultan Murad got answers to his questions he said, “I won’t intervene. You know the situation. Do what you wish.”

His viziers issued their ruling: “What are you doing?” they said. “Kill him.” They didn’t waste a minute. They did not destroy his *divan*.<sup>79</sup> They hanged Kemal from a poplar tree.

[As he was being executed] Kemal said, “We are not offended by your actions. This is our fate, the hidden saints [*erenler*] have deemed it.”

As soon as Kemal was hanged they saw a pigeon come out of his mouth and fly away. One of the pigeons flew to the land of the Franks [Europe]; one flew to Istanbul. In Manisa there was a place called Kanluca.<sup>80</sup> A man there had knowledge of the mysteries of the *erenler*. Thinking he could catch it, that man went after the pigeon which had flown to Karaburun.<sup>81</sup> At a place in Karaburun he saw two oxen. A boy was there lying down near them. The pigeon flew right into the boy’s mouth. The man gave the boy a kick. “My luck ran out,” he said.

Later the boy’s name became Samut [“Speechless”] Baba. And that’s the end.<sup>82</sup>

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79 Presumably this means the *ulema* could have (but did not) call for the destruction of his poetry. Despite the apparent intimation that the destruction of books containing blasphemous material was a common practice, there is little evidence for that. Carl F. Petry relates a “rare incident in which a jurist brought posthumous *kufri* charges against a famous mystic (Ibn ‘Arabi).” See his *The Criminal Underworld in a Medieval Islamic Society* (Chicago: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 2012), p. 178. In the instance related, in 1483 Mamluk Egypt, the call for the burning of a book was ultimately denied by a higher jurist. (My thanks also to Th. Emil Homerin and Colin Imber for their comments on this matter.)

80 Kanluca: While there is a Bosphorus (Asiatic) “suburb” of Istanbul with this name, I am unaware of such a place in the Manisa region.

81 Karaburun: The name of the peninsula west of Izmir which juts north into the Mediterranean.

82 Trimmed to its essentials, the *hikaye* has been taken over and transformed into a Nasreddin Hoca story full of anachronism: Kemal is replaced by Hallaj himself while the role of Kaygusuz Abdal is taken by the Hoca. Nesimi and Baba Sultan [Şüca] retain their original roles. See Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, *Nasreddin Hoca* (Istanbul, 1961), p. 9.

Two 15th Century Ottoman Sufi Mysteries - An Historiographical Essay

Part II: The Case of Ümmi Kemal

Abstract ■ The name Ümmi Kemal is prominent in the history of 15th century Anatolian literature, especially in the tekke environment. However, almost nothing is known about the poet's life beyond names found in his Divan. His tarikat connection with the Safavids is clear if little understood. A single hagiographic anecdote based on a near contemporary source points to a violent death and informs the earliest biographical accounts. That source remains inadequately examined. In 2008 Hayati Yavuzer published a comprehensive study of Kemal's life and an edition of his Divan, a book which will remain the "standard account" for many years. In this article, as in Part I ("What Happened to Esrefoglu?") I attempt to get past the opaque language of the scant primary sources to understand better why Kemal remained obscure despite his popularity as a poet. I append an annotated translation of a section of the anonymous 15th (?) century Velayetname which connects Kemal to the prominent but obscure Sultan Şücaüddin.

Keywords: Ümmi Kemal, Sultan Şücaüddin, Hayati Yavuzer, Ottoman Mystic poets, Islamic hagiography

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