

Confessional polarization in the 17th century Ottoman Empire and Yūsuf İbn Ebī 'Abdü'd-Deyyān's *Kesfū'l-esrār fī ilzāmi'l-Yehūd ve'l-abbār*¹

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Introductory remarks

Due to the great number of documents that have survived from the Ottoman period, and thanks to an increasing scholarly interest in religious minorities over the past decades, the social, economic, and legal history of the Jewish communities in the pre-modern Ottoman Empire has been relatively well researched. By contrast, the religious and intellectual history of these groups has on the whole received less attention. Here, especially the 17th century still presents the largest lacuna in the area. To my knowledge, and despite the fact that conversion looms large in most studies on the 17th century Ottoman Empire, the text (or, for that matter, the kind of text) that the present article is concerned with has so far attracted less scholarly attention than it deserves.²

¹ I am indebted to Sabine Schmidtko who directed me to the relevant manuscripts; and to Tijana Krstić, who in 2008 made available to me a copy of the Sofia manuscript of İbn Ebī 'Abdü'd-Deyyān's treatise, which I had not seen up to that point. An earlier version of this paper, entitled "The View of an Insider: İbn Abī 'Abd al-Dayyān's *[Kitāb] Kashf al-asrār fī ilzām al-Yahūd wa al-abbār*" was presented at the European Science Foundation Workshop on "The Position of Religious Minorities in the Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Iran, as Reflected in Muslim Polemical and Apologetical Literature," German Oriental Institute, Istanbul, June 14-16, 2007. I am greatly indebted to İlker Evrim Binbaş for his help in interpreting difficult passages of the Ottoman text, and for saving me from several misinterpretations. Robert Dankoff, Adam Gacek, and Vera Moreen kindly responded to individual questions, and I am grateful for their suggestions. Any remaining errors are, of course, my own. – Research for this paper was made possible by the Gerda Henkel Stiftung and the John Fell Oxford University Press Research Fund, to both of whom I am grateful for their support.

² For some of the relevant literature, see the bibliographies in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society* 1-2, eds. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, New York 1982, vol. 2; Minna Rozen, *Jewish Identity and Society in the Seventeenth Century: Reflections on the Life and Work of Refael Mordekhai Malki*, Tübingen 1992; eadem, *A History of the Jewish Community in Istanbul. The Formative Years, 1453-1566*, Leiden 2002; Avigdor Levy (ed.), *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, Princeton, N.J. / Washington, D.C. 1994; Yaron Ben-Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans: Ottoman Jewish Society in the Seventeenth Century*, Tübingen 2008; Marc D. Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam: Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Europe*, New York / Oxford 2008. As far as I could see, none of these has made use of İbn Ebī 'Abdü'd-Deyyān's *Kesfū'l-esrār*.

The work in question is a polemical treatise against Judaism in Ottoman Turkish, which was composed in 1651. According to the lengthy introduction that is prefaced to it, the author was a Jewish convert to Islam by the name Yūsuf İbn Ebī ‘Abdū’-d-Deyyān. The contents of the treatise, which is entitled *Kesfī’l-esrār fī izāmīl-Yehūd ve’l-abbār* (‘Unveiling the secrets of compelling the Jews and the rabbis,’ viz. to accept the proofs of Islam),³ are by no means a novelty: addressing the abrogation of the law or religion of Moses, extolling the prophethood of Muhammad, and denouncing the corruption of the Torah by the Jews, it faithfully follows the general structure and contents of the Islamic polemical tradition.⁴ More than that, in its core it is largely based on a very similar treatise by the 16th century Ottoman polymath and biographer Taşköprü(lü)zade (d. 968/1561), entitled *Risāla fī l-radd ‘alā l-Yahūd*.⁵

Within the Ottoman context, these two texts are by no means an isolated phenomenon – similar treatises against both Judaism and Christianity from the 16th through 18th centuries survive in multiple copies, and seem to be a much more widespread phenomenon than was previously assumed. Given the state of manuscript catalogues of the collections pertaining to the Ottoman Empire, it is more than likely that further discoveries will be made.⁶

What is new is the specific historical and political context, and the fact that – for the first time in this tradition, as far as I am aware – this treatise uses arguments from inner-Jewish debates in a Muslim polemical text that are based on au-

³ MS Bağdatlı Vehbi Efendi 2022, f. 120 b.

⁴ The main motifs of Muslim polemics against Judaism have been analyzed by Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds. Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, Princeton 1992, and Camilla Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible. From Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm*, Leiden 1996. For an overview of similar works, see Moshe Perlmann’s “The Medieval Polemics Between Islam and Judaism” (in *Religion in a Religious Age*, ed. S.D. Goitein, Cambridge, MA 1974, pp. 136-38), which contains a chronological-bibliographical survey listing the primary and secondary Jewish-Islamic polemical literature from the 9th through the 15th centuries, with peaks in the 11th and 13th centuries.

⁵ Sabine Schmidtke and Camilla Adang, “Ahmad b. Muṣṭafā Ṭāshkubrizāde’s (d. 968/1561) Polemical Tract Against Judaism,” *Al-Qanṭara* 29 (2008), pp. 79-113, 537-38, with references on Taşköprüzade, *ibid.*, p. 80 n. 1.

⁶ For a selection of such texts, including the treatise under discussion, see Camilla Adang, İlker Erim Binbaş, Judith Pfeiffer, and Sabine Schmidtke, *Ottoman Intellectuals on Judaism: A Collection of Texts from the Early Modern Period* (in preparation). In addition, numerous autobiographical conversion narratives by Christians converting to Islam were produced in the Ottoman Empire during this period, of which the *Papāsnāme* (wr. 1062/1653) is chronologically closest to the *Kesfī’l-esrār*; see Tijana Krstić, “Illuminated by the Light of Islam and the Glory of the Ottoman Sultanate: Self-Narratives of Conversion to Islam in the Age of Confessionalization,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51 i (2009), pp. 59-60. I am grateful to the author for providing me with a copy of her paper prior to its publication. – I have not had access to Mehmet Aydin’s *Müslümanların Hristiyanlara Karşı Yazdığı Reddiyeler ve Tartışma Konuları*, Ankara 1998.

thorities that are not usually found in such treatises.⁷ The author also translated quotations from the Hebrew Bible into Ottoman Turkish in support of his argument, which appears to be one of the earliest such attempts, predating by several years the translation efforts of the Polish convert ‘Ali Ufkī (previously known as Albertus Bobovius, 1610-1675),⁸ and even the so far earliest known translation by the Istanbuliot Jew known as Hākī (fl. 1695).⁹ This possibly makes the passages translated by İbn Ebī ‘Abdü’d-Deyyān the currently earliest known (partial) translations of passages from the Hebrew Bible into Ottoman Turkish.

Apart from references in catalogues and hand-lists, the only publications to my knowledge that mention İbn Ebī ‘Abdü’d-Deyyān’s treatise (albeit briefly) are Eleazar Birnbaum’s 1984 bibliographical survey of uncatalogued Ottoman manu-

⁷ A close textual analysis based on all known manuscripts will reveal the extent of such quotations; for now, see n. 58 of this paper.

⁸ On him, see Cem Behar, *Ali Ufkī ve Mezmurlar*. Beşiktaş, İstanbul 1990, and ‘Ali Ufkī [Albertus Bobovius] (1610-1675). *Topkapi: Relation du sérail du Grand Seigneur*. Édition présentée et annotée par Annie Berthier et Stéphane Yerasimos, Arles 1999 (Introduction). The early 18th century editor of one of ‘Ali Ufkī’s epistles wrote in his introduction that “*about the year 1653. at the desire of Mr. Basire, [Ufkī] turn’d the English Church-Catechism into Turkish; and translated the whole Bible into the same Language for Levinus Warnerus, who transmitted it to Leyden, that it might be printed; and the Manuscript Copy is at present kept in the Library of that Place. I have the Psalms of David in Turkish, writ with his own Hand.*” *Four Treatises Concerning the Doctrine, Discipline and Worship of the Mahometans*, London [Printed by J. Darby for B. Lintott at the Cross-Keys, and E. Sanger at the Post-House in Fleetstreet] 1712, “Preface to the reader,” p. 106.

⁹ On Yahyā b. Ishāk Hākī, see H[annah] Neudecker, *The Turkish Bible Translation by Yahya Bin Ishak, also called Haki* (1659), Leiden 1994. Prior to Bobovius, and also at the behest of Warner, the less well known Hākī had completed his translation of the Pentateuch into Turkish in 1659 (ibid., p. 280). While carried out in very different contexts (Warner, in whose service both Hākī and Ufkī worked, pursued the conversion of Muslims to Christianity, whereas İbn Ebī ‘Abdü’d-Deyyān’s treatise deals with the conversion of Jews to Islam), the fact that the works of İbn Ebī ‘Abdü’d-Deyyān, Hākī, and Ufkī were completed within barely more than a decade is striking, and may have been more than a coincidence during this time of confessional polarization and international contacts: Just as clearly as İbn Ebī ‘Abdü’d-Deyyān expressed that his treatise was meant to be used as a conversion manual, so did the powerful mentors who asked Warner to translate (or rather have translated) into Turkish the Old and New Testament leave little doubt about their aims. Writing to Warner in 1663, his patron, the Bohemian Protestant reformer Comenius (d. 1670), expressed great satisfaction that by his act of translation Warner had finally moved on from busying himself with human affairs to “being used now for divine affairs as well. Is it not given to you, my dear Sir, to be a chosen vessel to carry the Name of the Lord in the sight of the Nations? to open their eyes and to convert them from the darkness to the light?” (ibid., p. 376 n. 65). Fostering Bible translations for potential (future) Muslim and Jewish converts, whose mass conversions to Protestantism were anticipated as one of the signs of the end of the world was one way in which Protestants with chiliastic expectations such as Comenius prepared for the future (ibid., p. 380, with references). – On the relationship between Warner, Hākī, and Ufkī, and the wider context of the intellectual circles of the 17th century Ottoman Empire and Ottoman-European relations, see Robert Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality. The World of Eviya Çelebi*. With an afterword by Gottfried Hagen, Leiden 2006, esp. p. 167, and Gottfried Hagen, “Afterword. Ottoman Understandings of the World in the Seventeenth Century,” in Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality*, esp. p. 251.

scripts in Turkey,¹⁰ and a 2009 article by Tijana Krstić on Ottoman conversion narratives in the seventeenth century.¹¹ The present author agrees with Krstić's observation that Ottoman 'confessionalization'¹² was closely related to fundamental societal changes as well as politics, and that by the 17th century, conversion to Islam in the Ottoman Empire, as well as to 'orthodoxy' within Islam, were effected from the bottom up,¹³ as opposed to a conversion process following primarily the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*, starting from the Sultan and his circles from the top down.¹⁴ In addition to the Ottoman context, Krstić's percep-

¹⁰ Eleazar Birnbaum, "Turkish Manuscripts: Cataloguing since 1960 and Manuscripts Still Uncatalogued. Part 5: Turkey and Cyprus." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 104 (1984), p. 492. Birnbaum states that this is "an interesting polemical work, *Kesf il-esrār fi il-zām il-Yehūd* by Yūsuf b. 'Abdullāh ed-Deyyān (Dayyān). The author, who had abandoned Judaism for Islam, declares that the purpose of the work is to provide the 'ulemā with information on Judaism, since he has personal knowledge of the Talmud and Jewish writings. The work, which contains many 'proof texts' from misinterpreted Jewish works, seeks to show Judaism's inferiority to Islam. The text is undated but probably 16th or 17th century."

¹¹ Krstić, "Illuminated by the Light of Islam," p. 57 n. 92 states "The earliest dated manuscript of Yusuf's account I was able to locate is MS #2050, 91a-107b, preserved in the Bulgarian National Library in Sofia, which suggests that the text must have been originally written in or before 1088 A.H. (1677/78)." Indeed, this assumption is confirmed by the colophon of MS Bağdatlı Vehbi Efendi 2022, which mentions 1651 (see below).

¹² For a definition of the term 'confessionalization,' which was "formulated in distinct opposition to the primacy of socio-economic forces [...] in German historiography of the 1970s," see Heinz Schilling, "Confessionalization: Historical and Scholarly Perspectives of a Comparative and Interdisciplinary Paradigm," in *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555-1700. Essays in Honor and Memory of Bodo Nischan*, eds. John M. Headley, Hans J. Hillerbrand, and Anthony J. Papalas, Aldershot 2004, p. 24. This is to be distinguished from the 'formation of confessions' ("Konfessionsbildung"), as it embraces, beyond the narrowly religious and ecclesiastical phenomena considered by the former, "a universal perspective that encompasses all of society. It understands the confessional element as the leading category of early modern socialization and thereby as the essential element in research on early modern society. [...] Thus it includes not only early modern church history but also political, social and legal history as well as cultural history in general and the history of literature and art in particular." To which extent similar forces were at work in the Ottoman Empire has yet to be investigated both in detail and on a large scale, for which treatises such as the one investigated here provide valuable insights and material.

¹³ Krstić has argued that whereas "in the sixteenth century confession building in the Ottoman Empire was a predominantly top-down process presided over by the sultan and his advisers, [...] the situation changed in the seventeenth century when new initiatives for religious reform and definition of 'orthodoxy' began to be articulated 'from below' in reaction to profound social, political, and economic transformations that the empire was undergoing," and that by the mid-seventeenth century, a "confessionalization from below" can be observed. Krstić, "Illuminated by the Light of Islam," pp. 40-41, 60. For a more detailed discussion of such changes in outlook, and the rise of 'middle class' intellectuals during the 17th century, see Hagen, "Afterword," esp. pp. 249-56.

¹⁴ The latter appears to be the paradigm suggested by, e.g., the recent study by Baer (*Honored by the Glory of Islam*), which focuses on the agency of Sultan Mehmed IV in his role as a "convert maker" during the second half of the 17th century. The author states that "rejecting any attempt to explain Ottoman Islamization in terms of the converts' motives, the book concentrates on the proselytizers" (abstract). The latter are found at the highest ech-

tive essay locates Ottoman conversion narratives largely in the inter-imperial (Ottoman-Hapsburg; Ottoman- Safavid) space, arguing that they were part of a larger process of confessionalizaton that included not only Europe, for which the phe-nomenon is well researched, but the Ottoman Empire as well, and that conversion narratives played an important part in inter-imperial confessionalization.

However, while Christian and Shi‘i converts to Sunni Islam are accommodated comfortably in such a geography and theoretical framework, those converts to Islam who lacked imperial ‘backing’ – such as former Jews – are more difficult to locate.¹⁵ Despite the rather lengthy conversion narrative that is prefaced to his treatise, İbn Ebi ‘Abdü’l-Deyyān’s work is therefore only tangentially touched upon in Krstić’s study, which focuses mostly on Christian conversions to Islam. While acknowledging the significance of the larger international context,¹⁶ the present article focuses primarily on conversion and conversion narratives *within* the context of Ottoman internal politics, which included the continuing conversion of Christians to Islam in the Balkans that reached an all-time high in the 17th

lons of society, notably Sultan Mehmed IV himself, his mother, his grand vizier, and the Kadızadelî preacher Vani Efendi, who “actively sought to establish his [Mehmed IV’s-JP] reputation as a convert-maker,” and who “considered themselves devoted Muslims returning society to the right path, from which it had deviated” (p. 245).

¹⁵ This lack of Jewish ‘imperial backing’ was already noticed by the 17th century Christian convert to Islam and keen observer of Ottoman society ‘Ali Ufki, who stated: “Les juifs [...] sont regardés en Turquie avec autant de mépris que dans les autres cantons de l’Europe où ils se sont retirés et qu’ils habitent en fugitifs et vagabonds sans aucune protection, *n’y ayant point de souverains sur la terre qui vivent dans leur croyance.*” (Emphasis added). Ali Ufki, *Topkapı: Relation du sérail du Grand Seigneur*, eds. Annie Berthier and Stéphane Yerasomis, Arles 1999, p. 47. – For a discussion of “the lack of a neutral place in early modern society” in the context of Jewish conversions to Christianity in early modern Europe, see Elisheva Carlebach, *Divided Souls—Converts from Judaism in Germany, 1500-1750*, New Haven / London 2001, p. 102.

¹⁶ Already Madeline C. Zilfi had stressed the importance of the international context for the religious history of the period, which was not only one of imperial competition, but was indeed ‘exported’ to Istanbul, where the “politicking of European ambassadors on behalf of their coreligionists and sympathizers was especially intensive in the first half of the seventeenth century [...] some of the Reformation seems to have been fought out in Istanbul, where the Protestant Dutch and English embassies tried to undermine the Catholic French and the latter’s helpmates, the Jesuits.” Madeline C. Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Postclassical Age (1600-1800)*, Minneapolis 1988, p. 178 n. 84. Part of the international context were also, of course, the military failures of the Ottomans during this period, which were often interpreted religiously, and thereby contributed to the confessional polarization within the Ottoman Empire in the 17th century (see below). To the east, this international context included, in the first half of the 17th century, Western European missionaries in major cities in Iran, as discussed in the contributions by Halft and particularly Matthee to this volume, as well as intensive conversion efforts by the Augustine, Cappucine, and other missionaries among the Mandaeans in the Persian Gulf on behalf of the Portuguese, who viewed this as part of their trade politics (with, in particular, the trade route to Goa in mind).

century,¹⁷ various individual conversions to Islam within the Ottoman Empire during the same period,¹⁸ and the Kadızadeli movement, which peaked several times across the 17th century,¹⁹ and notably in the period when the *Kesf* was composed.

Formerly Jewish authors of polemical literature, and İbn Ebî 'Abdü'd-Deyyân in particular, recognized and put to use standardized narrative *topoi*, and participated just as much in the 17th century confessional polarization as those converts who were initially represented by and then turned their back on an imperial polity representing their faith, such as, e.g., Bobovius/'Ali Ufkî vis-à-vis Christian Poland. This preliminary study of the *Kesfî'l-esrâr* is but a small, further contribution to filling the gap in our knowledge on the religious and intellectual history of this period, and in particular our knowledge about inter-religious debates during the 16th and 17th centuries, which are still much uncharted territory, despite the fact that a growing number of treatises dedicated to such debates have been surfacing over the past few years.²⁰ The treatise shows that Ottoman converts from Judaism to Islam, rather than being 'outsiders' to the inter-imperial competition because of the lack of an *imperial* backing for their confession, certainly had several Empires to convert *to*, including the Ottoman Empire.

The author and his historical context

The composition date of 1651 locates the *Kesfî'l-esrâr* right in the middle of the Kadizadeli movement, an activist, socio-economic-political pietistic movement that originated from the pulpits of popular preachers who incited the wider Muslim population of the Ottoman Empire to 'enjoin the right and forbid the wrong,'²¹ with the double aim and incentive of 'returning' to a pure, unadulter-

¹⁷ Eyal Ginio, "Childhood, mental capacity and conversion to Islam in the Ottoman state," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 25 (2001), p. 93; Anton Minkov, *Conversion to Islam in the Balkans. Kisve Bahasi Petitions and Ottoman Social Life, 1670-1730*, Leiden 2004, pp. 194-96; Krstić, "Illuminated by the Light of Islam," p. 43.

¹⁸ Famous converts during the second half of the 17th century include Sabbatai Svi (d. 1676) and the above mentioned Bobovius/'Ali Ufkî (d. 1675). On the former, see Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi, the mystical Messiah, 1626-1676*, trans. R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, Princeton, NJ 1973; on the latter, see n. 8 above. Among the less famous converts are such individuals as İbn Ebî 'Abdü'd-Deyyân, about whom we only know through their own writings. For similar cases, see also the contributions of Camilla Adang, Monika Hasenmüller and Sabine Schmidtkne to this volume.

¹⁹ Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*; Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, "XVII. Yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Dinde Tasfiye (Püritanizm) Teşebbüslerine Bir Bakış: Kadızâdeliler Hareketi," *Türk Kültürü Araştırmaları* 17-21 i-ii (1979-83), pp. 208-25.

²⁰ See Schmidtkne/Adang, "Ahmad b. Muştafa Tâshkubrîzâde's Polemical Tract," and the contributions of Adang, Hasenmüller and Schmidtkne to this volume.

²¹ Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, pp. 137-43. The central issue were "tensions between innovation and fundamentalism" which "in large part determined the character of politics in the seventeenth century." Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, p. 134. On the eponymous 'founder' of the

ated, original Islam, and prohibiting ‘innovations’ such as the consumption of coffee, tobacco, and opium; and practices of popular veneration that were perceived as ‘un-Islamic’ (such as the visiting of saints’ tombs, the attendance of Sufi ceremonies, and the pronunciation of blessings after mentioning the name of the prophet Muhammad),²² while at the same time trying to evict their Sufi practitioners-cum-*madrasa*-educated competitors from the highly prestigious and lucrative, and hence much coveted, pulpits of Istanbul’s major Friday mosques.²³ Such endeavors converged effortlessly with polemics against non-Muslims, as well as conversion efforts focusing on the latter.

As Madeline Zilfi has demonstrated, the overall picture was exceedingly complex. By and large, most of the Kadizadelis appear to have enjoyed only a basic education, and those who ever became preachers (*vâ’iz*, pl. *vî’âz*) at one of the Friday mosques of Istanbul in most cases did so by slowly working their way up through a number of positions at provincial and then lesser Friday mosques in Istanbul, and had to prove themselves in competition with others by attracting ever larger crowds. It was the sultans who appointed the *seyhüllislam*, the highest judiciary in the realm who was in most cases a product of the *madrasa* system, often close to Sufi circles, and in some cases, though not always, opposed to the Kadizadelis. A famous example of the latter is the notorious *seyhüllislam* Bahâ’î (d. 1654), who was a heavy smoker himself and issued a *fetvâ* that tobacco was licit, thus taking the opposite stance to the Kadizadelis.²⁴ However, this did not mean that the sultans were not pleased with some of the Kadizadelis’ preachings: the prohibition of coffee – and by extension coffee houses – and opium meant the closure of coffee houses – not only competition of the mosque, but also places where political unrest could brood.

The Kadizadeli movement was close to the people, engaging with them physically in the same space (the mosque), much more so than the generally moderate *madrasa*-educated and -educating religio-political *îlmiye* elites. It constituted a movement ‘from below,’ while also appealing, in its arguments, to the larger international politics of the empire by making deviant religion responsible for Ottoman military defeat, ever increasing during the 17th century and one of the main reasons why it has become known as a “troubled century” and “period of decline.”

movement, Birgeli Mehmed, see Kâtip Çelebi (1609-1657), *The Balance of Truth*, translated with an introd. and notes by G.L. Lewis, London [1957], pp. 128-31; Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, pp. 143-46. On his creed, the *Tarîqa Muhammadiyya*, see Bernd Radtke, “Birgiwîs *Tarîqa Muhammadiyya*. Einige Bemerkungen und Überlegungen,” *Journal of Turkish Studies* 26 (2002), pp. 159-74.

²² See Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, especially pp. 133-37.

²³ Madeline C. Zilfi, “The Kadizadelis: Discordant Revivalism in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 45 (1986), pp. 251-69, and eadem, *The Politics of Piety*, especially Chapter Four, “The Kadizadeli Challenge,” pp. 129-81.

²⁴ For more on Bahâ’î, see Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, pp. 142-43.

Religious interpretations of political, social, and military ‘failures’ were rampant during the 1650’s, when the Ottomans were losing ever more lands to enemy forces, with the capital being almost starved by the Venetians’ overpowering force in the Mediterranean Sea.²⁵ Conversely, conversion of non-Muslims to Islam could be seen as a ‘success.’ This is by no means a new phenomenon. Narratives of conversion and conquest often go hand in hand and long predate the Ottoman Empire in the Islamic context.²⁶ Increasingly, however, politics were interpreted religiously, and *vice versa*. For example, when, in 1655, the islands of Bozca and Limni fell to the Venetians, the Kadizadelis “blamed the loss of the islands on the fact that Grand Vizier Boynueğri Mehmed Pasha was a Sufi.”²⁷

Such polarization was exacerbated around 1661 with the rise to power of Sultan Mehmed’s (r. 1648-87) preceptor and spiritual counselor of the Grand Vizier Köprülüzade Fazıl Ahmed (r. 1661-1676),²⁸ the Kadizadelis leader Vani Mehmed Efendi (d. 1685).²⁹ During his era, even the welfare of the public became polarized when, against the Sultan’s original order, which was based on the past practice of joint prayers of the Christian and Muslim congregations of Istanbul for the communal good of the city’s inhabitants, Vani Mehmed argued that communal prayers against the plague should *not* be performed in an inter-confessional manner.³⁰ Against the current *seyhülislam*’s support of the practice of the past, Vani

²⁵ Rycart’s entry for the year 1651 is full of accounts of Ottoman military failures, and so are the entries for the previous years: almost the entirety of his report on Sultan İbrahim’s reign (1640-48) is devoted to military campaigns (and mostly Ottoman defeat). Sir Paul Rycart (1628-1700), *The history of the Turkish empire from the year 1623 to the year 1677. containing the reigns of the three last emperours, viz. Sultan Morat or Amurat IV. Sultan Ibrahim, and Sultan Mahomet IV. his son, the XIII. Emperour now reigning*, London 1680, pp. 1-35 (for Sultan Ibrahim’s reign), pp. 42-45 (for the year 1651).

²⁶ Judith Pfeiffer, *Conversion to Islam among the Ilkhans in Muslim Narrative Traditions: The Case of Ahmad Tegüder* [d. 682/1284], Ph.D. Thesis, The University of Chicago 2003, Introduction.

²⁷ Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam*, p. 71.

²⁸ On the career of this *ilmîye*-trained son of the Grand Vezir Köprülü Mehmed (d. 1661), see Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, pp. 84-85.

²⁹ On Mehmed ibn Bistâm of Van, “Vani” Mehmed Efendi, and his involvement in politics, including his incitement of a new wave of Kadizâdeli activities, see Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, pp. 146-59. Zilfi locates conversion efforts especially with Vani Mehmed (pp. 146, 149-50, 152-53), and points out the parallels between the measures taken by the Kadizâdelis against Sufis and non-Muslims. “With regard to non-Muslims, so visible in Istanbul [...], Muslim ‘deviation’ lay in the direction of over-indulgence of the infidel. There had been too much toleration, too much latitude. His [Vani Efendi’s—JP] policies toward them were not unlike those toward the Sufis. Both policies were inspired by a similar vision. He set out to curb the public access of both groups.” Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, p. 153. Among others, Vani was personally involved in the interrogation of Sabbatai Svi that led to the latter’s conversion to Islam (Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 673-86; Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, p. 154). Rycart described Vani Efendi as “as inveterate and malicious to the Christian Religion, as any Enthusiast or Fanatick is to the Rites of our Church and Religion.” *The history of the Turkish empire*, p. 105 (under the year 1662).

³⁰ Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, p. 157.

Mehmed argued successfully that the prayers should be performed in a segregated way, and that members of each faith should carry out their prayers separately. He took an even harsher position in interpreting the Great Fire of 1660. According to the contemporary observer Rycaut, Vani Mehmed attempted to push through his position by using confessional polarization as his main argument:

Vanni Effendi [...] perswaded the [Grand] Vezir [Fazıl Ahmed Köprülüzade, d. 1676] that the terrible Fires in *Constantinople* and *Galata* in the year 1660, and the last years unparalleled Pestilence, and the inconsiderable advance of the Turks on the Christians for some years, were so many parts of Divine Judgments thrown on the Mussulmen, or Believers, in vengeance of their too much Licence given to the Christian Religion [...] Wherefore a Command was issued, That no Wine should be henceforth sold within the Walls of the City [of Constantinople-JP]. And it was farther intended that Greeks and Armenians, and all other Christians, who had Dwellings or Possessions within the Walls of the City, shoudl within forty days sell those habitations, and depart; which otherwise should be confiscated to the Grand Signior.³¹

Rycaut also stated with relief that “God who supports the Faithful in Tryals of Persecution, moderated this Decree, and reserved still his Church in the midst of Infidels; not suffering this City to lose the Name nor Religion of that Holy Emperor, who both erected, and christened it,”³² and went on to report how Christian prisoners, men who had been incarcerated because of their insubordination to the initial decree – they had started re-building churches – were released through the special intervention of the Sultan mother Hatice Turhan Sultan (d. 1683) in order to help in the building of the Yeni Cami (Yeni Valide) mosque.

As Baer has demonstrated, the Jewish community was particularly badly affected by these events. During the Great Fire of 1660, entire quarters of Istanbul that had been largely Jewish had burned down. They were now ‘converted’ into purely Muslim quarters under the new Sultan mother Valide Hatice Turhan Sultan. The completion of the huge Yeni Cami mosque that still overlooks the entrance to the Golden Horn was the ‘flagship’ of this Islamization of urban space in Istanbul under the Valide, which was accompanied and partially made possible by the prohibition to sell properties to Jews in Eminönü, and the relocation of large numbers of Jews outside of the imperial space of old Constantinople (where many of them had been moved in the previous century and a half in the first place)³³ to other, already largely Jewish, parts of wider Istanbul, most noticeably Hasköy.³⁴

³¹ Rycaut, *The history of the Turkish empire*, p. 105 (for 1662).

³² Rycaut, *The history of the Turkish empire*, p. 105 (under the year 1662).

³³ Uriel Heyd, “The Jewish Communities of Istanbul in the Seventeenth Century,” *Oriens* 6 (1953), p. 304.

³⁴ Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam*, pp. 81-104, parts of which were published earlier as “The Great Fire of 1660 and the Islamization of Christian and Jewish Space in Istanbul,” *The International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36 (2004), pp. 159-81.

The Kadızadeli movement flared up in several large waves across the seventeenth century, with high points in the decades prior to the composition of the treatise under consideration here, including a famous debate between Kadızade Mehmed (1582-1635) and the Ḥalvetī *seyh* Sivāsī Efendi (d. 1639) which occurred in 1633 in the presence of Sultan Murād IV (r. 1623-40) and resulted in a royal decree for the immediate destruction of all taverns in Istanbul.³⁵ It was followed by a period of countless executions for smoking infractions between the years 1633-1638.³⁶ With the appointment of the Kadızadeli preacher Üstüvānī Mehmed (d. 1661) as both the palace preacher and *vā'iz* at Fatih (from 1655 onwards), a rare “official link between Kadızadeli pulpits and the palace” was forged.³⁷

While the movement was eventually suppressed, it was at its very height at the time when the treatise we are concerned with here was written: in 1651, the very same year in which it was composed,³⁸ the Kadızadelis under the leadership of Üstüvānī Mehmed incited the congregations to attack Sufis and indeed even mere visitors to Sufi lodges, and called for the leveling of the Ḥalvetī lodge at Demirkapı. Under immense Kadızadeli pressure, the Grand Vizier Melek Ahmed Paşa (d. 1662) issued an order for the destruction of the lodge, which was subsequently leveled.³⁹ How much this meant a ‘changing of the tides’ in favor of the Kadızadelis can be appreciated when we take into account that the previous dowager Kösem Mahpeyker (arguably the most powerful woman in Ottoman history, and not coincidentally also executed in 1651) was well known as a generous benefactress of the Ḥalvetī order.⁴⁰ By contrast, her successor Hatice Turhan Sultan was going to make the Kadızadeli preacher Vani Efendi the first *vā'iz* of her newly completed Yeni Cami mosque upon its completion⁴¹ – the same mosque whose construction was made possible by prohibiting the Jews to return to Eminönü after the Great Fire of 1660.

The second Ḥalvetī lodge that the Kadızadelis attempted to attack in the same year (1651), “was that of [the Ḥalvetī *seyh*-JP] Sivāsī Efendi’s cousin and disciple Mışrī Ömer (d. 1659), who had just been named Friday preacher at Süleyman-

³⁵ Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, p. 133. – See Appendix I for the main dates mentioned in this article.

³⁶ Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, p. 139.

³⁷ Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, p. 141.

³⁸ Some time between 1651 and 1654 was furthermore when Sabbatai Svi was expelled from his birthplace Izmir because of his messianic ambitions; Scholem, *Sabbatai Svi*, pp. 138-52. His fate was to be determined by the Kadızadeli movement a decade later; see below. For a recent interpretation in the context of Ottoman religious and intellectual history, see Gottfried Hagen, “Afterword. Ottoman Understandings of the World in the Seventeenth Century,” in Robert Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality*, Leiden 2006, pp. 215-56.

³⁹ Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, p. 142.

⁴⁰ Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, p. 139. As the mother of Sultans Murād IV (r. 1623-40) and İbrāhim (r. 1640-48), and grandmother of Sultan Mehmed IV (r. 1648-87), the Valide Sultan Kösem Mahpeyker was a powerful political player.

⁴¹ Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, p. 147.

iyye.”⁴² Consequently, Sufis were “given a chance to renounce unbelief by renewing their profession of the faith. If they refused, they would be killed. In any case, the lodges should be leveled without exception.”⁴³ Similarly, and only a decade and a half later, the Jewish claimant to messiahship Sabbatai Svi was given the same ‘chance’ to either renounce his faith or die. He elected to do the former, and famously converted to Islam in 1666.⁴⁴

It was in this atmosphere, in which religion was highly politicized, and confessional dissimilarities rather than similarities were stressed in order to highlight differences, that İbn Ebî ‘Abdü’l-Deyyân translated Taşköprüzade’s 16th century polemical treatise against Judaism from Arabic into Ottoman Turkish and infused it with further examples and an introduction-cum-conversion narrative.

While we supposedly know the author’s name,⁴⁵ it oscillates from manuscript to manuscript, and his historical identity remains elusive.⁴⁶ His name occurs as

⁴² Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, p. 142. Among the ca. 200 Friday mosques in Istanbul at the time, several of the first-rank (twenty or so) imperial mosques were occupied by Kadizadelis in the early 1650’s (*ibid.*, p. 141), including Aya Sofya, “the premier mosque of the Ottoman Empire and the summit of the vaiz career,” (p. 132). The position of Friday preacher at the Aya Sofia had previously been held by the Halveti ‘Abdülahad Nûri (d. 1651), the most important *seyh* of the time, who had been the successor to his maternal uncle Sivâsî Efendi, the already mentioned Halveti Şeyh who represented the Sufi position in opposition to Kadizâde Mehmed in 1633.

⁴³ Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, p. 142.

⁴⁴ Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 673-86; Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, p. 154. A similar case is reported for a mint director in Ottoman Cairo around 1696, who escaped being beaten to death and burned (as had happened to his predecessor) by converting to Islam. Jane Hathaway, “The Grand Vizier and the False Messiah: The Sabbatai Sevi Controversy and the Ottoman Reform in Egypt,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117 (1997), p. 670.

⁴⁵ The term Dey[y]ân may well refer to God (*al-Dayyân* – both forms occur in the manuscripts), ‘Abdü’l Deyyân thus being the equivalent of ‘servant of God,’ or ‘Abd Allâh, which is one of the most common names of converts to Islam, both in the early centuries of Islam, and in the Middle periods, when calques in other languages, such as *Khudâbanda* (Persian for ‘servant of God’), emerge. See, for instance, the Jewish convert to Islam ‘Abd al-Haqq al-Islâmi’s name, who authored the polemical treatise *al-Sayf al-mamûd fi l-radd ‘alâ ahhâr al-yâbûd*, ed. and trans. E. Alfonso, Madrid 1998, as well as the name of Nûh ibn Abdülmannân, an Italian convert to Islam; Hagen, “Afterword,” p. 251. Secondly, it may also refer, if only indirectly, to the position that either İbn Ebî ‘Abdü’l-Deyyân himself or his father may have held in the past within the Jewish community, namely as a Dayan, a rabbinic judge.

⁴⁶ Further research into the archival sources may reveal more about his identity, as conversions are frequently recorded by *kadîs*, and in his conversion narrative, İbn Ebî ‘Abdü’l-Deyyân alludes to his conversion having taken place in the presence of the Sultan (possibly as part of a larger group). On relevant Ottoman archival sources, see Halil İnalçık, “Ottoman Archival Materials on *Millets*,” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society* 1-2, eds. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, New York 1982, vol. 1, pp. 437-49. On public conversions in the presence of the Sultan, see Marc Baer, “The Conversion of Christian and Jewish Souls and Space during the ‘Anti-Dervish Movement of 1656-76,’” in David Shankland (ed.), *Archaeology, Anthropology and Heritage in the Balkans and Anatolia: The Life and Times of F.W. Hasluck, 1878-1920*. Istanbul 2004, vol. 2, pp. 183-200, here p. 192, fn. 2. Baer has located close to two hundred cases of converts

Yūsuf b./İbn Abī ‘Abd/‘Ubayd⁴⁷ ed-Dey(y)ān⁴⁸ in the introductions of the various manuscripts. In the colophon, his name also fluctuates considerably, between Yūsuf b. ‘Abdü'l-Melik⁴⁹ ad-Dey(y)ān, as represented by the lead manuscript (MS Bağdatlı Vehbi Efendi 2022) and its followers; Yūsuf b. Ebī ‘Abdü'd-Dey(y)ān;⁵⁰ and Yūsuf b. ‘Abdü'd-Deyyān.⁵¹ While the profession of his father (or one of his forefathers) is given as Kepenekçi ('iron door gate maker') or Kepenekçi (felt maker) in one of the manuscripts,⁵² I have so far not been able to establish his identity, or his social, occupational or family context from external sources, which would suggest that he may have been from those educated, though lower, echelons of society who often do not appear in historiographical or reference works until the modern period, if, of course, the author's 'name' is not a pseudonym in the first place.

On the other hand, the introduction suggests that İbn Ebī ‘Abdü'd-Deyyān had connections to the "gate to the refuge of happiness" (*ol südde-yi sa‘ādet-penâh*), a common epithet of the Sultan, and that he had been sheltered under the "bounteous patronage of the shadow of God on earth" (*zill Allâh fi arđimiy* – again, possibly referring to the Sultan), although this may mean much less than is suggested by the text.⁵³ The author's connections to the court – if not fictitious – suggest that he may have lived in or close to the capital at the time of the composition of the treatise. Furthermore, we also learn that İbn Ebī ‘Abdü'd-Deyyān appears to have been from a wealthy family (he is able to endow his inheritance) and that he originally worked in trade, but gave up much of his wealth in order to live in seclusion. The latter is expressed in a terminology that is well known from Sufi circles – the author says that he wanted to "seclude himself in the corner of renunciation."⁵⁴ On the other hand, he encourages his readers to contact him if they have any difficulties when engaged in a polemical argument with Jews (see

that are recorded in the Prime Ministry's Ottoman Archive in Istanbul for Mehmed IV's reign alone, and points out that "several hundred more" are found in documents in Sofia (ibid.).

⁴⁷ Two of the manuscripts (Bağdatlı Vehbi Efendi 2022, ff. 101b, Princeton, Garrett Islamic MS 1183H [Trk Uncatalogued], f. 71a) have "Ubayd," whereas the majority (and mostly later manuscripts Giresun 171/2, f. 30a; Giresun 102, f. 133b; Manisa 2986-8, f. 198b; Sofia, Bulgarian National Library 2050, f. 92a; Leiden Or. 25.756 Ar. 5836, f. 1b) have "Abd."

⁴⁸ The Leiden manuscript (Or. 25.756 [= Ar. 5836], f. 1b) vocalizes "al-Dayyān" with a *shadda* over the *yā*.

⁴⁹ The Manisa manuscript has 'Abd Allâh instead of 'Abd al-Malik.

⁵⁰ Sofia, Bulgarian National Library 2050.

⁵¹ Leiden Or. 25.756 (= Ar. 5836).

⁵² Sofia, Bulgarian National Library 2050, f. 92a, where the author is introduced as Kepenekçizâde/Kepenekçizâde.

⁵³ See Appendix II. However, mass conversions in the presence of the Sultan did apparently occur; see fn. 46.

⁵⁴ See Appendix II. Krstić ("Illuminated by the Light of Islam," p. 57) takes this to mean that "he eventually became a Sufi."

below, pp. 27–28). Such apparent inconsistencies do not make it easier to resolve the puzzle of the identity of the author. As no names are mentioned in the preface, a more specific contextualization is not possible from this passage.

Regarding the intentions and spiritual journey of İbn Ebī ‘Abdü’l-Deyyān, we learn from the introduction (Appendix II) that he was a Jewish convert to Islam who wrote this treatise to demonstrate the superiority of Islam over Judaism, and states that he uses his previous Jewish education in order to do so. Very similar claims had been made by earlier Jewish convert authors of anti-Jewish polemical treatises, such as, e.g., Samaw’al al-Maghribī (d. 570/1175).⁵⁵ How İbn Ebī ‘Abdü’l-Deyyān’s approach differs from these has yet to be investigated in detail. Most noticeably, the Arabic translations from the Hebrew Bible that are presented by Taşköprüzade are found almost verbatim in the *Kesfū'l-esrār*, and neither appears to be based on or related to other known early translations into Arabic of the Hebrew Bible, though this point also requires further investigation.⁵⁶

İbn Ebī ‘Abdü’l-Deyyān also states that he was quite advanced in his Jewish education when he converted. The treatise demonstrates that the author was indeed well versed in the rabbinical tradition, as is evidenced by the examples from inner-Jewish debates that he adduces, and which are not contained in Taşköprüzade’s treatise.⁵⁷ It is also supported by the fact that he is capable of providing Hebrew quotations in transliteration in the Arabic alphabet.⁵⁸ In the conclusion, the author reveals more about the reasons for composing the treatise:

Here ends the book *Kesfū'l-esrār fī ilzāmī'l-Yehūd ve'l-ahbār*, which Yūsuf b. ‘Abdü'l-Melik ed-Deyyān composed. He says that the purpose of presenting this treatise is not to attain virtue or fame, but rather [to help] those scholars (*‘ulamā’*) who want to debate with the Jews (*ol tā’ifah*), but give them the upper hand [in the debate] instead, as they are not informed about the conditions (*ahvāl*). [Hence] the zeal for the aim of revealing the

⁵⁵ Samaw’al had stated: “The ultimate purpose in writing this work [i.e., the *Ijhām al-Yahūd*–JP] is to refute that obstinate and stubborn [Jewish–JP] people, and to reveal with what corruption their tenets are beset. It is true that, before my time, leading authorities - may their reward be augmented - applied themselves to this matter and pursued several lines of polemics with the Jews, but the latter hardly understood most of the controversy, nor found it convincing. By using scriptural passages current among the Jews, this book clears the way to silencing them. God made the Jews blind when they tampered with the text; so that these same passages, possessed by the Jews, might thus serve as evidence against the Jews.” Samaw’al al-Maghribī, *Ijhām Al-Yahūd. Silencing the Jews*, ed. and introduction by Moshe Perlmann, *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 32 (1964), p. 33.

⁵⁶ In particular, future research should include comparisons with the 1559 translation of the Pentateuch by the Istanbuliot Jew known as Hākī (see Neudecker, *The Turkish Bible Translation*) and the Ottoman translation by ‘Ali Bey/‘Ali Ufki, the Polish convert to Islam who worked as chief translator at Mehmet IV’s court, though it appears as though Ufki’s efforts followed rather than preceded those of İbn Ebī ‘Abdü’l-Deyyān (see on him n. 8 above).

⁵⁷ Appendix III provides examples of this.

⁵⁸ It is particularly noteworthy that in his arguments the author makes frequent reference to the Hebrew Bible, the Talmud, and Jewish expositors such as Rashi, Abraham ibn Ezra and Nahmanides.

truth arose in this poor one, and those matters that I had studied from its experts, the details and methods of their commentaries (*tefsîr*) as well as their book known as the *Talmud* and its branches (*furû'*) and abridgments (*muhtasar*) were selected and written down as an instance of this, so that when they [the scholars] intend to study [these issues] and debate with a [Jewish] person, they would be knowledgeable about those abovementioned books. It is easy to debate with them (*anlaryı gibiler ile bahs asändir*), but it is difficult to convince the ignorant ones as they are exceedingly obstinate (*mu'âned-i mahz*). If those people (*ol tâ'ifâ*) ask questions and seek answers, let this poor one know. As long as I still have life to live in this world, let their doubts be eliminated.

This final paragraph, and especially the concluding sentence, places the treatise squarely into the field of interreligious polemics of the mid-17th century Ottoman Empire. It shows that interconfessional polemics was a highly relevant issue during this time, as it contains an invitation to contemporaries to consult the author if they needed guidance on how to conduct and win a polemical argument. This is what may indeed have happened to the treatise – at least this would explain why there are so many different versions in the surviving manuscripts, especially in the final chapter, representing entirely different recensions of the text: It may have been re-written and/or continued and supplemented with further examples and arguments after further questions were asked, i.e., after someone had 'tried' the treatise in a debate, and was faced with counter arguments, to which further responses and examples were then added.⁵⁹

While the introduction consists in large parts of a seemingly intimate conversion account, it contains several inconsistencies. The author claims to have composed the treatise, without acknowledging anywhere the older Arabic treatise by Taşköprüzade, to which it is deeply indebted. The latter is so clearly not only modeled on Taşköprüzade's Arabic treatise, but in fact constitutes an Ottoman translation of it, that by today's standards we would call it plagiarism. Additional confusion about the author's identity and the time he lived in arises from the main text itself: here, the author mentions that he met someone who had gone to see a certain *Şeybülislam* Sa'dî Efendi and engaged with him in a religious debate in his home.⁶⁰ Given the date, the name, and story, these appear to be a narrative interpolation.⁶¹ The only Ottoman *şeybülislam* with this name is the *şeybülislam* or *muftî* of Istanbul, Mollâ Sa'dullâh b. 'Isâ, known as Sa'dî Çelebî. Under Süleymân the

⁵⁹ A similar process explains the different recensions of Samaw'âl al-Maghribî's *Ijbâm Al-Yahûd*. See the introduction by Moshe Perlmann, p. 26; see also the editors' introduction to *Samaw'âl al-Maghribî's (d. 570/1175) Ijbâm al-yahûd. The Early Recension*, eds. Ibrahim Marazka, Reza Pourjavady, Sabine Schmidtke, Wiesbaden 2006. – Another example is provided by Monika Hasenmüller in this volume.

⁶⁰ For the full story, see Appendix III. The episode occurs in the answer to the sixth proof of the spuriousness of the arguments adduced by the Jews for the eternity of the religion of Moses. *Fâsl 1, Tâzyîf-i datîl-i sâdis, javâb*.

⁶¹ See Appendix I for the main dates mentioned in this article.

Magnificent (r. 1520-1566) he held office as *seyhülislam* for five years from 1533 until his death on 21 February 1538.⁶²

The life dates of the *seyhülislam* are more compatible with the lifetime of Taşköprüzade – except that his treatise, at least in the copies that have come down to us, does not mention this episode. However, Taşköprüzade mentions Sa‘dī Efendi in his *Shaqā‘iq al-Nūr māniyya*, which includes the following passage:

Mollā Sa‘dī Çelebī excelled over his contemporaries as a teacher. As a *qādī* he fulfilled this office in an irreproachable manner, and in his *fatwās* he always knew how to give an excellent answer. [...] His belief was pure, and he held fast onto the *sharī‘a*. He was one of those learned men who spent all their time studying. He also possessed a large library and had studied all kinds of curious things [emphasis added], of which he had memorized the important passages. He had an excellent memory and also knew by heart a good amount of the *manāqib* (hagiographies) and history works.⁶³

It is noteworthy that Taşköprüzade states that Mollā Sa‘dī “had studied all kinds of curious things, of which he had memorized the important passages.” This might be a hint that he was possibly interested in the kind of inter-religious debate discussed here, though this must remain speculation, as Taşköprüzade does not provide any details on what kinds of “strange books” Sa‘dī Efendi read.⁶⁴

Beyond these clues and references, the text reveals little about the author, and further speculation about his identity, including the possibility that the ‘Jewish convert’ is a fictitious *persona* invented to lend more credibility to the core text,⁶⁵ is not productive at this point. What we can be sure about, however, is the continued interest in the treatise as evidenced by the existence of several, mostly later, copies, and the apparent accretional ‘growth’ of the text over time.

⁶² Abdülkadir Altunsu. *Osmancı Şeyhülislamları*, Ankara 1972, p. 275, provides the exact dates of his office as 17 April 1533 to 21 February 1538.

⁶³ “Sa‘dullāh b. ‘Isā, known as Sa‘dī Çelebi;” Taşköprüzade, *al-Shaqā‘iq al-Nūr māniyya*, ed. Ahmed Subhi Furat, [n.p.] 1985, pp. 443-45; German trans. O. Rescher, Konstantinopel-Galata 1927, pp. 282-84.

⁶⁴ “Wa qad malaka kutuban kathīratān wa-ṭṭalā‘a ‘alā ‘ajā‘ib min al-kutub.” *al-Shaqā‘iq al-Nūr māniyya*, ed. Furat 1985, p. 444.

⁶⁵ A similar phenomenon can be observed in contemporary Europe, where 16th century Jewish conversions to Christianity were re-cast in conversion narratives that were stimulated by, if not modeled on, Luther’s ‘conversion narrative.’ “Eventually, the autobiographical narrative became such an integral feature of books written by converts, that when the converts did not provide their own narratives, their Christian editors or publishers would compensate by providing a biography of the convert-author to satisfy their readers.” One eighteenth century editor “worried that the absence of a ‘life’ of the author would diminish the value of his edition of a sixteenth-century convert classic.” Carlebach, *Divided Souls*, p. 93.

The text and its discursive context

While İbn Ebī ‘Abdü’d-Deyyān’s treatise and Taşköprüzade’s are very similar in title, contents, and structure, they also differ substantially. Notably, Taşköprüzade does not contain the introduction and conclusion (for obvious reasons – these pertain to İbn Ebī ‘Abdü’d-Deyyān as a real or invented convert author/compiler), but also does not contain the story about the *şeyhülislam* Sa‘dī Efendi, and other interpolations (see Appendix III).

It becomes easier to analyze this relationship if we think of the text as consisting of three components: (i.) The first component is the core text, which is the Arabic text provided by Taşköprüzade, which İbn Ebī ‘Abdü’d-Deyyān translated into Ottoman Turkish a century later. (ii.) The second component is the ‘frame narrative’ which was added later, consisting of the introduction/conversion narrative (Appendix II) and the conclusion/invitation to the readers to consult the author if they face difficulties in a real-life polemical debate (provided here on pp. 27-28). This ‘framing,’ in turn, also lent greater credibility to the treatise itself.⁶⁶ Both components rely heavily either on previous texts and/or on existing *topoi*.⁶⁷ In addition, the combination of a refutation of the Jews and an autobiographical conversion narrative is something of a *structural topos*, as the similar set-up of ‘Abd al-Haqq al-Islāmī’s and Samaw’al al-Maghribī’s works shows. (iii.) The third component are the many glosses, examples, names, and references that were added to the core text (i.) by İbn Ebī ‘Abdü’d-Deyyān and future scribes-*cum*-commentators, and which were, almost in a ‘zipper’ procedure, integrated with the main text.

(i.) The first component or ‘core narrative’ is so obvious and omnipresent that it does not need to be explained here further – a look at Appendix III, which is representative, demonstrates how much İbn Ebī ‘Abdü’d-Deyyān owes to Taşköprüzade.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Interestingly, converts appear to be more credible ‘witnesses’ than believers born into a religion. This is even the case for ‘apostates’ (from the narrator’s perspective). Thus, the early 18th century editor of a group of epistles that contains a treatise by ‘Ali Ufkī on *The liturgy of the Turks* commented: “What he has left in writing concerning the Rites of the Turks, must be acceptable to the curious Reader; because these things have not been so well describ’d by others, nor indeed could they be accurately describ’d by any Christian.” *Four Treatises Concerning the Doctrine, Discipline and Worship of the Mahometans*, p. 105.

⁶⁷ For examples of such *topoi*, see Perlmann “The Medieval Polemics Between Islam and Judaism.” Especially Iberian/Sephardic Jews, who eventually constituted the majority of Ottoman Jewish Istanbul, might well have been familiar with the works of Ibn Hazm of Cordoba and the refutation of his, or similar, polemical arguments by Ibn Adret, Judah ha-Levi, and Maimonides. – On the ‘sepharadization’ of the Jewish community of Istanbul, see Rozen *A History*, Chapter Seven, “Interethnic encounters,” pp. 87-99. On Ibn Hazm, see Adang, *Muslim Writers*.

⁶⁸ Furthermore, most, if not all, of the arguments contained in the text already occur in earlier polemical debates, such as in, e.g., Maimonides, *The Epistle to Yemen*, tr. and annotated by Abraham Halkin, in *Epistles of Maimonides. Crisis and Leadership*, Philadelphia / Jerusalem 1985, pp. 107-14. On the arguments used by Samaw’al al-Maghribī, e.g., as well as

(ii.) Turning to the second component or ‘frame narrative,’ this as well is heavily indebted to various precursors in the Islamic polemical tradition, mostly in the form of *topoi*. Despite the fact that it looks as though here one convert speaks with his own voice, and the deceptively personal style and ‘confessions’ in the introduction notwithstanding, many of the topics mentioned in the introduction are stock *topoi* of conversion narratives of Jews to Islam throughout the centuries and indeed pre-date the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁹ Even the seemingly specific purpose of the treatise and the instructions to the readers in the concluding paragraph, namely to provide arguments for “those scholars (*‘ulemā’*) who want to debate with the Jews,” are not new: for instance, ‘Abd al-Haqq al-Islāmī in his *al-Sayf al-mamdu’ fi l-radd ‘alā abhār al-Yahūd* had proposed exactly the same purpose of the composition of his treatise, which is why Esperanza Alfonso has dubbed it a “*manual de polémica*.⁷⁰

Perhaps surprisingly, such generic *topoi* did not undermine the credibility of the treatise: on the contrary, they rendered it true and believable precisely because it ‘ticked the right boxes.’⁷¹ Part of the ‘cognitive matrix’ of ‘true’ (credible and con-

other Jewish intellectuals who converted to Islam, see Sarah Stroumsa, “On Jewish Intellectuals Who Converted in the Early Middle Ages,” in *The Jews of Medieval Islam. Community, Society, and Identity*, ed. Daniel Frank, Leiden 1995, pp. 191-96. It should be pointed out that Ibn Ebi ‘Abdü’l-Deyyān’s treatise differs from Samaw’al’s in that he asserts the superiority of Islam (as opposed to Samaw’al, who asserted the equality of all religions; Stroumsa, “On Jewish Intellectuals,” pp. 195-96). See also Mercedes García-Arenal, “Dreams and reason: Autobiographies of converts in religious polemics.” In *Conversions Islamiques. Identités religieuses en islam méditerranéen = Islamic conversions: religious identities in Mediterranean Islam*, ed. Mercedes García-Arenal, Paris 2001, pp. 94-100.

⁶⁹ Several ‘precursor’ texts (both by converts and non-converts) which used similar arguments are listed in Schmidke/Adang, “Ahmad b. Muṣṭafā Ṭāshkubrīzāde’s Polemical Tract,” especially pp. 82-83 n. 9.

⁷⁰ “Su propósito explícito es dar argumentos que faciliten la polémica con los judíos; en este sentido, lo que trata de escribir no es un relato autobiográfico que transmita su experiencia de conversión, sino *un manual de polémica*.” ‘Abd al-Haqq al-Islāmī, *al-Sayf al-mamdu’*, p. 36. Alfonso also pointed out that in addition to earlier, similar, tracts written by Jewish converts to Islam (such as the *Iḥām al-Yahūd* by Samaw’al al-Maghribī or the *Kitāb Masālik al-Nazār* by Sa’id b. Ḥasan), very similar texts were also written by Muslims against Jews; see *ibid.*, p. 37. A case in point is the *Izbār* in Ibn Ḥazm’s *Kitāb al-Fiṣal*. On the latter, see especially Adang, *Muslim Writers*.

⁷¹ Using research on conversion narratives from such varied environments as Catholicism and Protestantism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Divine Light Mission, Nichiren Shoshu, Hare Krishna, and others, the social anthropologist Thomas Luckmann has distinguished between the substance of *conversions qua act*, and conversion as the *articulated experience* of conversion, and its inter-subjective reconstruction, as expressed in *conversion narratives*. His careful analysis has demonstrated that *conversion narratives* are part of the *conversion* itself, precisely because they are part of a known, recognizable, and expected cognitive matrix which makes conversion narratives believable, and hence, ‘true.’ Thomas Luckmann, “Kanon und Konversion,” in *Kanon und Zensur, Beiträge zur Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation II*, eds. Aleida and Jan Assmann, München 1987, p. 40. See also Carlebach, *Divided Souls*, p. 88, who (apparently unaware of Luckmann’s study) states that “Conversion

vincing) *conversion narratives*, cognates of polemical literature in Islam, is the *reliance on reason*, which Sarah Stroumsa has identified as “part of the Arabic polemical tradition.”⁷² This is precisely what the author of the *Kesfū'l-esrār* stresses in his introduction, where he juxtaposes the incomprehension and intuitive rejection with which he studied the Torah in his youth, with the maturity of his decision to convert to Islam as an adult, which, he claims, was entirely based on deliberate study and rational insight:

[...] Even as far back as the time of [my] youth when I was applying myself to the study [of] the Torah [...], I came across some words which would not please my heart, I could not understand them easily, and they were not agreeable to me because they contradicted common sense. However, I did not reject them because they were written down in the Torah. And because of my young age, I did not attempt to understand them. And whenever they were mentioned, the strength of the aversion in my heart increased and became stronger.

And now that I have reached maturity and have become aware of the temporality of the world, I have begun to think about and reflect upon the commands of my religion and the affairs of my future life [*ākibet*]. I did not benefit from the religious authorities [*abbār*] that I consulted [regarding] those matters of doubt. I did not find consolation [for] my mind [*tasallī-yi bātir*] in those answers that they provided. I saw complete disorder in the Jewish mode of conduct and perceived the beauty of order in the traditions of Islam. The love for the belief installed itself in my heart and desire for Islam impressed itself upon my soul.⁷³ Being thus affected, I devoted myself to the regular practice of the religious sciences and the study of Theology.⁷⁴

I set out on a journey in the path of exploring [the manifestation/existence of] God/the truth, and spent the major portion of my efforts in the quest of absolute truth. After a while, when this wretched one became able to read the exegetical works on the Torah, and to see his doubts in their own place, he began to comprehend the words of the experts. I exerted strong efforts and read many books and epistles, but naturally, I was not capable of convincing my heart to accept the matters against which I had an aversion. I even considered as acceptable and adequate the assumption that those parts of the copies of the Torah were the corruptions of copyists and alterations of scribes.

I was successful in finding in many other places proof and signs for the prophethood of the seal of prophets Muhammad Muṣṭafā – may the best of prayers and the most perfect greetings be upon him – and for the truth of the glorious Koran. I became aware of the misrepresentations and the zeal [*te'ennīf*] of the Jews (may God lead them to the straight path) with regard to the issue of the eternity [*ta'bīd*] of the religion of Moses (peace be

narratives figured prominently among the elements of successful conversions in many traditions.”

⁷² Stroumsa, “On Jewish Intellectuals,” p. 196. See also Moshe Perlmann’s reflections on Samaw’al al-Maghribi’s role as a “rationalist,” stating that “Again and again Samau’al harp[ed] on pure logic as the spring of his conversion.” Samau’al al-Maghribi. *Iḥfām Al-Yahūd: Silencing the Jews*, pp. 22-24. It should be pointed out that reliance on reason is part of *inner-Islamic* disputations as well (see Josef van Ess, “Disputationspraxis in der islamischen Theologie. Eine vorläufige Skizze,” *Revue des Etudes Islamiques* 44 (1976), pp. 23-60).

⁷³ *Muhabbet-i īmān göylümde yer ve rağbet-i islām cānimā teşir eyledi.*

⁷⁴ Note that this is not only a theological argument; see below.

upon him). Inevitably, the beliefs that I had inherited from my ancestors began to shake, and my religion that was based on the principle of [unquestioning] tradition (*iktilās idügüm i'tikādatm*) began to waver. The incitements of the harbingers of divine guidance triumphed [*tagħib kħib*] over my heart in various ways [*elvān-i shittā*], and I gradually severed my attachment to the society of my fellows and the company of my friends,⁷⁵ and turned the reins of self-control to the path of right guidance.

The *motif* of rational insight is a *topos* also frequently found in the conversion narratives of Jews converting to Christianity in early modern Europe,⁷⁶ as opposed to *dreams* which dominated the medieval and late medieval conversion narratives as factors explaining conversion.⁷⁷ It is beyond the scope and purpose of this article to investigate these parallels in the transition from the late medieval to the early modern in more detail, but they certainly deserve further study in the framework of a larger Mediterranean history that envisions the ‘connecting of the dots’ between areas that are geographically, culturally, and intellectually connected,⁷⁸ but are often perceived as distinct entities, precisely because religion divides them.

Conversion in either direction (*conversion to* or *apostasy from*), rather than ‘bridging the gap’ through the adherence of convert individuals to more than one confession across their life time, often fed, and continues to feed, the perception of a gap and distinction rather than similarities between confessions. Conversion in the late medieval and early modern periods was not (only) a matter of personal

⁷⁵ For a discussion of the notion of the ‘civil death’ that often occurs after a conversion, and examples supporting it, see Ginio, “Childhood,” pp. 95; 113. Part of this process of ‘wiping out’ the former persona is the re-naming after the conversion; on the latter, see Lewis R. Rambo and Charles E. Farhadian, “Converting: stages of religious change,” in *Religious Conversion—Contemporary Practices and Controversies*, eds. Christopher Lamb and M. Darrol Bryant, London 1999, p. 32.

⁷⁶ Autobiographical narratives of such converts often include “their experiences of Jewish education, worship, or ritual training.” Carlebach, *Divided Souls*, pp. 90, 95; for such a narrative, see especially p. 97.

⁷⁷ For a dream narrative that is pivotal in a Jewish convert to Christianity’s autobiographical conversion narrative (that of Hermannus Judaeus, 1107–1181), see Arnaldo Momigliano, “A Medieval Jewish Autobiography,” in *Settimo contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico*, Rome 1984, pp. 335–36. Notice, however, the ambivalence in the contemporary (likewise 12th century) Samaw’al al-Maghribī’s *Iṣḥām Al-Yahūd*, who stresses that his conversion occurred on the basis of reason, and yet feels that he has to ‘slip in’ a conversion-inducing dream as well, only to assert afterwards that it was not this dream, but reason (based on proof and demonstration) that made him convert: “The reader of these pages should now understand that it was not the dream that had induced me to abandon my first faith. A sensible man will not be deceived about his affairs by dreams and visions, without proof or demonstration.” Samau’al al-Maghribī, *Iṣḥām Al-Yahūd*, p. 87. For a further example of a reason-induced conversion, in this case of a Christian convert to Islam, see Krstić, “Illuminated by the Light of Islam,” p. 44. See also García-Arenal, “Dreams and reason.”

⁷⁸ On the concept of ‘connecting the dots,’ see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Connecting the Dots: Some Ways of Reframing South Asian History,” Keynote Address at the Annual South Asia Graduate Student Conference at The University of Chicago, April 17th and 18th, 2009, and *idem*, “Connected histories: notes towards a reconfiguration of early modern Eurasia,” *Modern Asian Studies* 31.3 (1997), pp. 735–762.

choice and conviction. It was also, and perhaps foremost, highly social, and hence, political.

Thus, while conversion narratives are based on literary *topoi* that have a long tradition in the Islamic polemical literature and beyond, and indeed in order to be convincing *have to* be based on *topoi* that are seemingly ‘timeless’ and disconnected from the specific historical context in which they are narrated, they are also intricably connected to this very historical context. In İbn Ebî ‘Abdü’l-Deyyân’s case and the context in which he wrote, his conversion narrative feeds into the confessional polarization that can be observed during this time on all fronts: within the Ottoman Empire, between the Kadîzadeli movement, several Sufi groups (above all the Halvetiyye and Mevleviyye), and various representatives of the state, who took different positions vis-à-vis these groups over time. In the international context, the (Twelver Shi‘î) Safavid and (Christian) Hapsburg Empires were the major sparring partners of the Ottoman Empire in the arena of religious polemics. Conversion narratives laid stress on the differences – as such, they are highly political, despite the seemingly apolitical, frozen, literary, topical, garb in which they are presented.

Moreover, conversion on the basis of reason constitutes not only a theological argument: It is of legal importance as well. As Eyal Ginio has shown for 18th century Ottoman Salonika (Thessaloniki), children under the age of seven were deemed lacking discernment, and conversions undertaken before this age were legally invalid, unless undertaken “following the parents” (*ebevynine teba’yyet ile*).⁷⁹ Discernment between good and evil was of particular importance for the legal confirmation of the validity of conversion.⁸⁰ That İbn Ebî ‘Abdü’l-Deyyân stresses here his advanced age and full rational grasp of his conversion also implicitly emphasizes its legal validity. Thus, the seemingly *topoi*-based, perhaps *topoi*-driven *conversion narrative* of İbn Ebî ‘Abdü’l-Deyyân is a speech act of the first order, and has strong legal, in addition to theological and political implications that should have resonated with several audiences.

(iii.) Turning to the third component, it is less obvious than the previous two and can only be extrapolated by a close textual analysis and comparison. There are two kinds of interpolations: Paragraph-long passages that are found in İbn Ebî ‘Abdü’l-Deyyân but not Taşköprüzade, and shorter supporting ‘footnotes’ and references that were inserted directly into the (translated) text instead of in the margins where supportive material and examples were required. The text in its

⁷⁹ Ginio, “Childhood,” pp. 92, 99-101, 109, 113. For children over the age of 10 it was assumed that they had reached the maturity necessary to understand what they were doing, though later re-conversion / apostasy was not punished in the same severe way as for adults. The problematic age group was the 7-10 year olds, who had to be personally interrogated by the *kadi*, who investigated whether they had sufficient discernment to undertake a legally valid conversion to Islam.

⁸⁰ Ginio, “Childhood,” p. 101.

present form, of course, may already be the product of a later scribe's copying efforts. It is not uncommon in the Islamic manuscript tradition that an original text and its commentary are 'merged' into one continuous text, though normally the text and its commentary would remain distinguishable through such devices as framing (*qāla* ...) and the use of different script or color to distinguish the text from the commentary or glosses.

The following passage is an example for the first, longer, type of interpolation. It is found right at the beginning of the first chapter of the main book, Part One, First Proof.

Part One on the refutation of the six strong and well-known reasons [adduced by] the Jews regarding the issue of the eternity [of the law of Moses]. The claim of the eternity [of the Law of Moses] is a recent invention. The modern authors have deceived the impious (*miitekebbir*) Jews. In their secluded activities they used and employed the uneducated (*ejlāf*) and base (*erāzil*) ones among them, and, protecting their property and children, together with them [and] with the aim of seeking help and assistance, they spent much effort in the matter of making permanent, as they were before, their places that they used to return to for reference. They took great pains, [and] among them they talked [great] nonsense (*bezeyān*). But if one were to investigate it thoroughly, they have altogether, and by communal agreement, abandoned like a thing forgotten, most of the rules of the Torah. For instance, according to the rules of the Torah, during the forty days after childbirth (*nefās*) or during [a woman's] period (*hayz*), if there is a [certain] amount of purulent matter (*midde*) apparent among them, the ritual purity of whatever they touch will be nullified (*nakż*), and there are many such examples. [...] And if there is found, on the oven or a plate or pot, a beetle or a fly, it becomes canonically unclean (*murdār*) and is no longer permissible for use and must be scorched. And if someone carries a dead body, they [must] wash all their clothes, and on that day they will not become pure [reach ritual purity again] until the evening. Currently, they have abandoned this and many similar [rules].⁸¹

Like the interpolation on the *seyhüllislam* Sa‘di Efendi, this is a typical example for the 'third component' in a lengthy, 'pure' form: The reflections on the violation of the purity laws related to menstruation and child-birth, and the touching of beetles and dead bodies are not found in Taşköprüzade's treatise. Even if we assume that some of this picture is tainted by the author's polemical intent, this account displays both a vivid disapproval and critique of deviations from the Law and current practice among some of the Jews (which, as our author does not miss to point out, demonstrates the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders, possibly serving apologetic purposes as well), while also inadvertently providing information on the existence of this usage during the author's life time.⁸²

⁸¹ MS Bağdatlı Vehbi Efendi 2022, ff. 103b-104b. Such accounts, if accurate, may also serve as examples of abrogation practised by the same Jews who deny its permissibility.

⁸² This confirms Suraiya Faroqhi's observation that "from about the second half of the seventeenth century [...] the beginnings of a cultural change [which manifested itself in] an increasing emphasis on everyday life and an interest in the experiences of 'ordinary' people" became evident, and that this can be observed particularly in autobiographical texts,

A different and more complex kind of example, representing the second and more common type of (short) interpolations, is the refutation of the sixth proof in the First Part of the treatise, which is rather representative of the entire treatise in terms of the similarities between the texts of Taşköprüzade and İbn Ebī 'Abdü'd-Deyyān. Because of its length it is quoted in full in Appendix III. The table juxtaposes parallel paragraphs from a sample passage from both treatises. The various degrees of quotations from Hebrew texts, scholarly Jewish arguments, and Muslim counter-arguments illustrate how closely these (the 'accretionary core' and the later text – almost an integrated text and commentary) are related, and give a sense and somewhat representative insight into the kind of debates that this text engages with.

This passage not only puts into context the Sa'di Efendi story, but it also demonstrates how (and how abundantly) İbn Ebī 'Abdü'd-Deyyān embedded Hebrew quotations in his arguments. Even though the core of this treatise is clearly an Ottoman rendering of Taşköprüzade's Arabic treatise, this makes the text an important key for understanding Taşköprüzade's work, as in many cases where Taşköprüzade simply quotes, İbn Ebī 'Abdü'd-Deyyān also provides the source. Thus İbn Ebī 'Abdü'd-Deyyān's treatment is not merely an appendix (*zeyl*) or an explanation or exegesis (*beyān* or *tefsīr/şerh*), but also an integrated effort to make Taşköprüzade's treatise more convincing and accessible in his own time. Together, these three elements beautifully demonstrate the intertextuality and workings of an accretional text in the Muslim polemical tradition, of which Taşköprüzade was apparently one of the first, if not *the* first, within the Ottoman context.

Manuscript witnesses and reception

As is evidenced from the copying dates of the manuscripts, İbn Ebī 'Abdü'd-Deyyān's treatise was popular for a period of two, if not three, centuries, and copies of it are today found in libraries as far apart as Giresun on the Black Sea (two copies, which are clearly not copies of one another); Manisa, in Western Anatolia, near the Aegean; Istanbul, represented by the Bağdatlı Vehbi Efendi manuscript, and Sofia in the Balkans. Two further manuscripts are today held in Princeton and Leiden.

The text under discussion consists of an introduction, four main parts or chapters of uneven length, and a conclusion.⁸³ Some of the main chapters are further divided into extensive sub-chapters. The parts presented in translation and discussed in this paper are the Introduction, Part 4.6 (Appendix III), and the Con-

including conversion narratives, of which many more were produced than is commonly believed. Suraiya Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan: Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire*, London / New York 2000, pp. 202–3.

⁸³ For an overview of the structure of the treatise, see Schmidtke/Adang, "Ahmad b. Muṣṭafā Ṭāshkubrizāde's Polemical Tract," p. 85.

clusion (above, pp. 27-28). The translation is based on the following four manuscripts:⁸⁴

- أ = A Giresun 171/2, ff. 30a-45b [15 foliis.], not dated
- ب = B Giresun 102, ff. 133b-164a [31 foliis.], copied Tuesday Dhū al-Qa‘da 1245/April-May 1830
- ج = C Bağdatlı Vehbi Efendi 2022, ff. 101b-120b [20 folios], copied 1177/beg. 12 July 1763; the colophon states that the book was completed in Safar 1061/beg. 24 January 1651.⁸⁵
- د = D Manisa 2986-8, ff. 198b-227a [30 folios], not dated.⁸⁶

The best copy of the text that has come down to us is MS Bağdatlı Vehbi Efendi 2022, where it covers 20 folios (folis. 101b-120b). It is both the oldest extant dated copy, and also the copy with the best documented history of the manuscript itself. The colophon states that the treatise was composed in the month of Safar of 1061, corresponding to January/February 1651: *hurrira⁸⁷ fi Ṣafar al-khayr li-sanat iḥdā wa-sittīn wa-alif*.⁸⁸ The specimen in question was copied about a century later, by a scribe with the name “Nedīmī”⁸⁹ in the year 1177/beg. July 1763.⁹⁰ Furthermore, the seals at the end of the epistle and in other places of the *majmū‘a* in which it is preserved show that the manuscript was endowed by a certain Ibn ‘Abd al-Mu‘id al-Dūrī⁹¹ yet another 150 years later, in 1331/1912.⁹² The manuscript also contains fewer scribal errors than some of the later manuscripts (especially Giresun 102). For these reasons, MS Bağdatlı Vehbi Efendi 2022 was taken as lead manuscript for the edition and translation.⁹³

⁸⁴ The manuscripts listed below are the four manuscripts that were used for the paper presented at the ESF workshop in 2007. The remaining three were discovered after this date, and will be included in the forthcoming critical edition and English translation of the text (in preparation).

⁸⁵ MS Bağdatlı Vehbi Efendi 2022, f. 120b.

⁸⁶ For an early mention and description of this manuscript, see Birnbaum, “Turkish Manuscripts: Cataloguing since 1960,” p. 492, who stated: “The text is undated but probably 16th or 17th century [...] It is bound together with other MSS dated 1023, 953 and 952/1615, 1546 and 1545.” Birnbaum identified this manuscript as “MS 2986/8, ff. 198-297. Author and title near the end, f. 226b (elsewhere Yūsuf b. Ebi ‘Ubeyd).”

⁸⁷ Adam Gacek, *The Arabic Manuscript Tradition: A Glossary of Technical Terms & Bibliography*, Leiden 2001, p. 30, where the third meaning given for *tahyīr* is ‘composition’.

⁸⁸ MS Bağdatlı Vehbi Efendi 2022, f. 120b.

⁸⁹ Future research, based on improved catalogues and a study of relevant colophons, may reveal more about the identity of this scribe.

⁹⁰ 1177/beg. 1 July 1763.

⁹¹ As in the case of the scribe, it is hoped that future research may reveal more about the identity of Ibn ‘Abdū'l-Mu‘id ed-Dūrī.

⁹² Here and on other folios (f. 1a, cover page of the volume, and f. 116b, in the middle of the treatise). The seal is visible in the clearest shape on folio 116b. It reads “أوْقَتْ هَذَا الْكِتَابَ أَبْنَى عَبْدَ الْمُجِيدَ الْمُورَى. وَهِيَ ١٣٣١ هِجْرَى” 1331 Hijrī began on 11 December 1912.

⁹³ In terms of accuracy, Bağdatlı Vehbi Efendi 2022 is followed by Manisa 2986-8 and Giresun 171/2. The much later Princeton manuscript shows the efforts of a discerning copyist

However, towards the end the manuscripts deviate substantially from each other, and we have to assume the existence of three, if not four, different recensions of the work, rather than mere textual variants in the same work.⁹⁴

The other dated copy (Giresun 102, ff. 133b-164a [31 folios]) is more recent, dating to a Tuesday in the month of Dhū al-Qa‘da of 1245, April-May 1830. Together with the already mentioned endowment seals in MS Bağdatlı Vehbi Efendi 2022, this is further evidence showing that the interest in the contents of the work did not abate for at least two, if not three centuries after its composition. This manuscript, however, is an often faulty, late copy by a scribe who was apparently not educated in Ottoman Turkish and did not know Arabic, as he repeatedly made mistakes where someone with an education in Arabic (or Ottoman Turkish, for that matter) would not have hesitated to place the correct form. Examples are the orthography of *zeyl* for *zeyl*,⁹⁵ and the consistently inaccurate rendering of Arabic long vowels, which suggests that the scribe may possibly have written ‘by ear’.⁹⁶

Future research will have to pursue the question of the reception of Taşköprüzade’s and İbn Ebī ‘Abdü’l-Deyyān’s treatises. A full critical edition and English translation of the text together with similar texts is currently in preparation.

who was trying to make sense of obscure passages, and is overall more accessible to the modern reader. However, this ‘cleaning up’ resulted at times in a rather strong tendency of ‘modernization’ and thus deviation from the older text, which appears best preserved in MS Bağdatlı Vehbi Efendi 2022.

⁹⁴ When this paper was presented in 2007, only two ‘versions’ of the narrative were known to the author, of which MS Giresun 102 deviated most substantially from the manuscript tradition following MS Bağdatlı Vehbi Efendi 2022. Since then, one or possibly two further recensions as represented by manuscripts that were discovered later have to be accounted for, though these could no longer be taken into consideration for the present paper.

⁹⁵ MS Giresun 102, f. 128b.

⁹⁶ Thus, we find for داھل (f. 130b), واصل for قادر (f. 130b), مصادف for قادر (f. 130b), اذغان for اذغان (f. 129a), مصارف for فاصل (f. 131a.), تلبیس for فاصلی (f. 131a.), تلبیس for تلبیس (f. 129a), اعتماد for مصادف (f. 129a), خرتن for خرتن (f. 130a), اعتماد for اعتماد (f. 131a), حیرتن for حیرتن (f. 130a), اسلوونک for اسلوونک (f. 130a), and many others. There are also cases where the scribe may have copied visually (i.e., from a manuscript) rather than aurally, as in the case where the manuscript has *sadīqa* for *hadīqa* (f. 130b), and the *h* was mis-read for a *ṣ*. The scribe had furthermore either little or no knowledge of Persian: MS Giresun 102 has روشنانی for روشنانی/روشناب (f. 130a). – Overall, however, it looks almost as though the work was dictated to the scribe, who wrote down what he heard – this is most probably also true for the Hebrew passages, that are transliterated in Arabic characters, where *alif* and *‘ayn* are used interchangeably, e.g., and so are *thā* and *tā*, *thā* and *sīn*, etc. – Similar observations have been made by Joseph Sadan with regard to *Risālat ilzām al-yahūd fi-mā za’amū fi l-tawrāt min qibāl ‘ilm al-kalām* by al-Salām ‘Abd al-‘Allām; see his “A Convert in the Service of Ottoman Scholars Writing a Polemic in the Fifteenth-Sixteenth Centuries” [Hebrew], *Pe’anim* 42 (winter 1990), 91-104, and idem, “Naïveté, verses of Holy Writ, and polemics. Phonemes and sounds as criteria: Biblical verses submitted to Muslim scholars by a converted Jew in the reign of Sultan Bāyazid (Beyazit) II (1481-1512),” in *O ye Gentlemen. Arabic Studies on Science and Literary Culture in Honour of Remke Kruk*, eds. Arnoud Vrolijk and Jan P. Hogendijk, Leiden 2007, pp. 495-510.

It is hoped that together, they will stimulate further investigation into this genre and its role in the confessionalization of the early modern Ottoman Empire.

Conclusions and Outlook

Polemical literature contributes to the shaping of communal identities. As such, the treatise investigated here contributed, even if indirectly, to the formulation of the early modern notion of the Ottoman plural society as one capable of accommodating a variety of faiths. The treatise presented in this paper sheds further light on conversion to Islam in the 17th century Ottoman Empire, and provides unique insights into the popular and semi-popular debates of the time. Predating the era of the mature Mehmed IV, which has recently been identified as one of active conversion efforts by the Sultan especially during the years following the Great Fire of 1660, it also puts into perspective such Sultanic efforts: it appears as though here, just as in the earlier case of the Mongol converts to Islam, the ruler, rather than *initiating* conversion, *reacted* to a movement that had started from the bottom up and made it his own.

Texts such as İbn Ebī 'Abdū'd-Deyyān's *Kesfī'l-esrār* also show that despite more integrative, 'melting pot' aspirations of the Ottoman ruling elite in the long run,⁹⁷ there were moments in history when this ideal was seriously challenged. Regardless whether they were written to facilitate 'a distinct kind of integration'⁹⁸ and possibly to serve apologetic purposes, or whether they were written with the aim to encourage future conversions, or both: texts such as the one presented here also fostered confessional polarization during the crisis of the mid-seventeenth century. Future appreciations of the period will have to take into account the existence and contents of treatises such as this when investigating its social, religious, and intellectual dynamics.

The date of the present treatise, its semi-popular and popular origins and reception and transmission, and the multitude of surviving copies of these and other polemical treatises from the 16th century onwards reflect a reality in which Muslims and non-Muslims lived side by side, and felt that they had to re-assert their identities not only in the courts and everyday life, but also in the spiritual realm – over and over again, despite the fact that most of the arguments they used were almost as old as the polemical traditions of Judaism and Islam themselves.

⁹⁷ On the view of the 16th century Ottoman intellectual Âli on this issue, see Cornell H. Fleischer, "Muslim and Ottoman. Âli's view of Rum," in idem, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire. The Historian Mustafa Âli (1541-1600)*, Princeton 1986, pp. 253-272.

⁹⁸ Ginio, "Childhood," p. 113.

Appendix I:
Overview of the most important events and persons mentioned in the paper

Sa‘dī Sa‘dullāh Çelebī Efendi, <i>seyhülislam</i> (in office):	1533-1538
Taşköprüzade	1495-1561
dictated <i>al-Shaqd̄iq al-Nu‘māniyya</i>	965/1558
<i>Risāla fi l-radd ‘alā l-Yahūd</i>	[undated]
Debate between Kadızade Mehmed and Sivāsī Efendi	1633
Kadızade Mehmed	1582-1635
Halvetī <i>seyh</i> Sivāsī Efendi	d. 1639
Countless executions for smoking infractions	1633-1638
Sultan Mehmed IV, ruled:	1648-1687
Execution of dowager Kösem Mahpeykar	1651
Bağdatlı Vehbi Efendi 2022, <i>hurrira fī</i>	1061/1651
The Great Fire of 1660	1660
Köprülü Mehmed, grand vizier	d. 1661
Üstüvānī Mehmed	d. 1661
Köprülüzade Fāzıl Ahmed, grand vizier	1661-1676
Sabbatai Svi, proclaims himself Messiah	1665
Sabbatai Svi, forced to convert to Islam	1666
Vani Mehmed	d. 1685
MS Bağdatlı Vehbi Efendi 2022, copied in	1177/1763
MS Bağdatlı Vehbi Efendi 2022, endowed in	1331/1912

Appendix II:

Introduction of İbn Ebī ‘Abdī’ d-Deyyān’s Keşfū'l-esrār fī ilzāmi'l-Yehūd v'el-ahbār

In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful; praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds, the Beneficent, the Merciful, the Lord of the Day of Judgment, it is You Whom we worship, and it is You Whom we ask for help. Prayer and greetings [be] upon our lord [sayyidinā] Muḥammad and over his entire family and closest kin ['alā sayyidinā Muḥammad wa ālibi wa 'ashiratilī ajma'in].

Now [let us] pass to our subject: This poor servant of the all-bounteous God [Melik-i mennān], and the most needy of the creatures of the One to Whom we have recourse, the lowly and submissive Yūsuf b. Abī ‘Ubayd ed-Deyyān⁹⁹ says that even as far back as the time of [my] youth when I was applying myself to the study [of] the Torah, in some of the stories of the prophets (peace and prayers be upon them), I came across some words which would not please my heart, I could not understand them easily, and they were not agreeable to me because they contradicted common sense. However, I did not reject them because they were written down in the Torah. And because of my young age, I did not attempt to understand them. And whenever they were mentioned, the strength of the aversion in my heart increased and became stronger.

And now that I have reached maturity and have become aware of the temporality of the world, I have begun to think about and reflect upon the commands of my religion and the affairs of my future life [ākibet]. I did not benefit from the religious authorities [ahbār] that I consulted [regarding] those matters of doubt. I did not find consolation [for] my mind [tasallī-yi hātr] in those answers that they provided. I saw complete disorder in the Jewish mode of conduct and perceived the beauty of order in the traditions of Islam. The love for the belief installed itself in my heart and desire for Islam impressed itself upon my soul. Being thus affected, I devoted myself to the regular practice of the religious sciences and the study of Theology.

I set out on a journey in the path of exploring [the manifestation/existence of] God/the truth, and spent the major portion of my efforts in the quest of absolute truth. After a while, when this wretched one became able to read the exegetical works on the Torah, and to see his doubts in their own place, he began to comprehend the words of the experts. I exerted strong efforts and read many books and epistles, but naturally, I was not capable of convincing my heart to accept the matters against which I had an aversion.

I even considered as acceptable and adequate the assumption that those parts of the copies of the Torah were the corruptions of copyists and alterations of scribes.

⁹⁹ On the importance of (re-)naming individuals as part of their conversion, see above n. 75.

I was successful in finding in many other places proof and signs for the prophethood of the seal of prophets Muḥammad Muṣṭafā – may the best of prayers and the most perfect greetings be upon him – and for the truth of the glorious Koran. I became aware of the misrepresentations and the zeal [*te'enniūf*] of the Jews (may God lead them to the straight path) with regard to the issue of the eternity [*te'bid*] of the religion of Moses (peace be upon him). Inevitably, the beliefs that I had inherited from my ancestors began to shake, and my religion that was based on the principle of [unquestioning] tradition (*ikṭibās itdīğüm iṭikādātum*) began to waver. The incitements of the harbingers of divine guidance triumphed [*tagħib kħib*] over my heart in various ways [*elvān-i shittā*], and I gradually severed my attachment to the society of my fellows and the company of my friends,¹⁰⁰ and turned the reins of self-control to the path of right guidance.

I was granted success [divine guidance] by the kind and compassionate God [who] saved the foundation of the [one who was] shunning belief and [was] estranged from religion and the community, from the atmosphere of confusion and the gulf of alienation and showed him the path to the plain of the unimpaired state of Islam.

He ornamented and adorned the stature of my integrity [*istikāmetimi*] through the state of the pronunciation of the Oneness of God and the permission to follow the Muḥmmadan *shari'ah*, and with the collyrium of the purity of the phrase “There is no god but God” and the pure collyrium and clean elixir of the phrase “Muḥammad is God’s Messenger” he polishes[d] and cleanses[d] my eyes [‘the sources of my sight’].

“Praise be to God Who has guided us to this. We could not truly have been led aright if God had not guided us.”¹⁰¹

Although there was neither pretension in my effort, nor necessity [compulsion?] in my inner self to attain this eternal fortune and to reach this eternal happiness, only He, the munificent and great Distributor of blessings, granted from His treasury of favors, and in accordance with the book of divine fore-ordination, by virtue of His eternal power [and] with the sign of His eternal will, He exalted this poor, wretched one with the blessing of faith and bestowed upon him the honors of Islam: “Such is the grace of God which He gives to whom He will. God is All-Embracing, All-Knowing.”¹⁰²

The reasons for composing¹⁰³ [these] words are the obvious ones [“reasons”] that are summarized at the beginning of the discourse, namely choosing the par-

¹⁰⁰ For a discussion of the notion of the ‘civil death’ that occurs after a conversion, and examples supporting it, see above n. 75.

¹⁰¹ Qur’ān 7:43. Here and in the following, the references to the Qur’ān are a modernized rendition of *The Meaning of The Glorious Qur'an*. Text and Explanatory Translation by Marmaduke Pickthall, Karachi / Lahore / Rawalpindi [1971].

¹⁰² Qur’ān 5:54.

¹⁰³ Literally, ‘the cause of the composition of...’

ticulars of the causes of the religious rules and precepts [*kavā'id*] in striving for the ultimate good in obtaining the attained result [namely that] belief without doubt may grow and expand in the garden of equanimity, “Like a good tree, its root set firm, and its branches reaching into heaven.”¹⁰⁴

Its fruit is that, out of the purity (*bulūş*) of my intentions, I have endowed my lawful property that I had acquired via trade and inheritance as a result of blessings, and I entrusted the affairs of the endowment to the specialists [*efkāfi evliyāsma tefvīz itdim*]. I withdrew from [*talifif idüb*] worldly affairs, and with the intention of spending the rest of my life in old age in obedience and prayer, I secluded myself in the corner of renunciation.

After performing my obligations, I made it my responsibility and special duty to pray for the prolongation of the bounteous patronage of the shadow of God on earth [*zill Allāh fī arzīnij*], [i.e., the Sultan] under whose wings I was sheltered. I was assiduous in making known that my conversion [(recently acquired) religion: *i'tikādim*] be known as being based on virtue and sincerity. That “gate to the refuge of happiness” [*ol südde-yi sa'ādet-penāb*: the Sultan] elevated [me] to the might and loftiness of the right course, and “God accomplishes what He wills”¹⁰⁵ and “He does command according to His Will and Plan.”¹⁰⁶ [...]

The details of the reasons for the guidance¹⁰⁷ are recorded in the[se following] four chapters. The first chapter is on the refutation of the proofs [*edille*] [adduced by] the Jews regarding the issue of [the] eternity [of the law or religion of Moses]; the second chapter is on the proofs for the Prophethood [of Muhammad] that are [found] in the books [*nusūş*] of the Torah; the third chapter is on incidents of corruption [in the Torah] and on putting forward the principles of doubt; the fourth chapter is on freeing from defect the circumstances of the Prophets [found in] the invectives of the Jews. God is All-Knowing; He is the Supreme Judge.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Qur'ān 14:24. The full verse is as follows: “Don't you see how God coins a similitude: a good saying, like a good tree, its root set firm, and its branches reaching into heaven.” Be-fittingly, the context of this verse both in the Qur'ān and in İbn Ebī 'Abdü'd-Deyyān's work is conversion: the attempts of those believing in God's signs to convince others to join them.

¹⁰⁵ Qur'ān 3:40.

¹⁰⁶ Qur'ān 5:1.

¹⁰⁷ Or conversion [*bidāyet*].

¹⁰⁸ See the translation of Taşköprüzade's treatise by Schmidtko/Adang, “Ahmad b. Muṣṭafā Ṭāshkubrizāde's Polemical Tract,” p. 97, and the subtitles of the sections in the same.

Appendix III:
Sample comparison

	İbn Ebî 'Abdü'd-Deyyân (108a-111b) Refutation of the sixth proof (<i>Tezyîf-i delîl-i sâdis</i>)	Taşköprü(lü)zade The sixth proof [of the Jews] [cf. Schmidtke/Adang, "Tâsh-kubrizâde's polemical text," pp. 89-92 (Arabic), 103-105 (English)]	Biblical references
1	They say that God Almighty has said in the Torah that	It is said in the Torah:	
2a	[in Hebrew]: "The Children of Israel shall observe the sabbath throughout their generations forever". (وَسَمِّرُوا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنْتَ هَسْبَتْ لَعْنَوْتَ أَنْتَ هَسْبَتْ الْمُزَرِّعَةَ شَرِّتْ عَوْنَوْمَ.)	./.	* Exod. 31:16
2b	meaning, [in Arabic]: "The Children of Israel shall observe the sabbath throughout their generations forever". (لِيَحْفَظَ بَنُو إِسْرَائِيلَ السَّبْتَ فِي دَهْرِهِمْ أَبِدًا)	"The Children of Israel shall observe the sabbath throughout their generations forever." (لِيَحْفَظَ بَنُو إِسْرَائِيلَ السَّبْتَ فِي دَهْرِهِمْ أَبِدًا)	
2c	(108b) [In Ottoman]: This verse indicates that God Almighty ordered the Children of Israel to observe the sabbath as long as the World stands. (بُو آیت دلّات ایدرکه الله تعالی بني اسرائیله سبّت کوئنی دنیا دور دچمه صاقلمق ایله امر ایقش او له)	./.	
3	Thus, if another law comes and prohibits the observance of the sabbath, this implies that God commanded the Children of Israel to both observe and abandon the sabbath. This itself is imposing the impossible (<i>teklīf-i mā lā yuṭāq</i>). To the law-giver (<i>sârīf</i>), imposing the im-	They say: If we would follow a law other than that of Moses (peace be upon him), this would require the non-observance of the sabbath, even though the observance of the sabbath is eternally binding on us. This then would imply that we observe the sab-	

	possible (the <i>teklīf-i mā lā yuṭāq</i>) is not permissible. Therefore Moses' law (<i>serīc at</i>) must be eternal.	bath and not observe it at the same time. This is imposing the impossible (<i>taklīf mā lā yuṭāq</i>), which is completely absurd.	
4a	Response: This ornamented analogy is a result of the wrongdoing of the original wrongdoing. The structure of their proofs, which constitute the basis of the claim of the eternity of the observation of sabbath in the Torah,	<u>The [Muslim] reply:</u> This	
4b	is a lie, because in the verse in question, the word ' <i>olam</i> ' is used. The commentators [of the Torah: <i>mişessirler</i>] agree that this word has the meaning of an extended sojourn (<i>meş-ibid</i>) in Hebrew. <u>Ayrahah b. Ezra</u> says in his commentary of this verse [in Hebrew]:	is an obvious lie, for "eternity" is not the sense in which the word ' <i>olam</i> ' which occurs in the Torah can be understood. Rather, it has the meaning of an extended sojourn in their language. <u>Ibn Ezra</u> has made this clear in his commentary on some verses	
5	قِيَمَتَهُ عَوْدٌ. عُورَى سَسْ سَسْ سَسْ [شَشْ شَحْمْ] يَعْبَدُ أَبَهُ سَبَعِيدُ يَصْنَعُهُ لَهُشْسِي خَمْ امْ بَقِيَّوْ تَابِعُو بَقِيَّوْ تَصَدَّهُ أَمْ بَأَغَلَ اسْهَهُ هُوَ وَنَصَّهُ اِيْسَتُو خَمْوَوْ وَامْ أَمْرِيْرُ مَهْرَهَا عَبْدُ اَهْنِيَّيِّي أَثَّ أَكْنِيَّيِّي أَثَّ اَبِيَّيِّي وَأَثَّ بَنَا لَوَاصِدَّ خَشْسِي وَهَنْشِسُو آَذْنَوْنَا وَ آلَ هَالَ وَهَمْ وَ هَنْيِسُوَالَّ هَلْلَتَ اُوَالَّ هَنْرُوَرَزَا وَرَصَعَ آَذْنَوْنَا وَأَثَّ أَذْنَوْ بَأَمِرَ ضَعْ وَعَيْلَيْنَ لَأَمِّ.	./.	Exod. 21:2-3, 5-6.
6a	(109a) [implying] that the word ' <i>olam</i> ' has the meaning of time in an absolute sense. He also quotes some books of the prophets to the effect that ' <i>olam</i> ' means absolute time.	and he corroborated this by what is found in the books of some of the prophets (peace be upon them), to the effect that [the word] occurs in the absolute sense of time,	
6b	He says that the phrase <i>haye lolamim</i> (חַיָּה לְעוֹלָמִים) [חייה לעולמיים] in the <u>Books of Solomon, son of David</u> (peace be upon both of them) has the meaning of "it was like that in the past time."	and he quotes what is found in the <u>Books of Solomon, son of David</u> (peace be upon both of them), where past time is indicated,	* Referring to Ecc. 1:10

6c	<p>The term found in the <u>Book of David</u> in the verse <i>vayashoshim ad 'olam</i> (وَيَسْتَوْ شَمْ عَدْ عُولَامْ) refers to a certain span of time.</p>	<p>and what is found in the <u>book of David</u> (peace be upon him), where the meaning of a certain span of time is intended.</p>	
6d	<p><u>Rabbi Shlomo Ishāki [Rashi]</u> said in his commentary on the abovementioned verse that [in Hebrew]: عُولَامْ لِعُولَامْ مُوسَلْ يَوْوَلْ where the 'olam is the 'olam of <i>yovel</i>. He says that the 'olam in this verse is a time, and its limit is the <i>yovel</i>, which is well known to the experts of the Torah and it happens in every fifty years, when all buying and selling transactions are annulled and slaves are set free.</p>	<p>Also, it is stated in the commentary on some verses of the Torah that 'olam is another expression for <i>yovel</i>, and that <i>yovel</i> stands for a [period of] time which is generally recognized among them and which occurs once every fifty years, when commercial transactions and all other agreements are annulled and slaves are set free.</p>	<p>* cf. Lev. 25:10-17</p>
6e	<p>In one of their authoritative books called <u><i>Mahalma</i></u> [<u><i>Mekhilta</i></u>], <u>Moshe b. Nahman</u> says that the limit of the 'olam is fifty years. Hence the term 'olam does not refer to eternity. It is obvious that these sorts of proofs fall short of proving their claims. (109b)</p>	<p><u>Moshe ben Nahman</u> reported that the maximum limit of 'olam is fifty years,</p>	
6f	<p>One day I met one of the prominent members of the Jews, who was coming from a meeting with the <u>Seyhüllislám Sa'dı Efendi</u>. He told me about a conversation in the house of the <u>Seyhüllislám</u> and said that <u>Sa'dı Efendi</u> had argued that the term 'olam in the abovementioned verse does refer to eternity. He asked for my opinion. I said: God said in the Torah that: "...it is the sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings."* [in Hebrew]: سَبْتَ هِيَ الْوَنَاتِي بَعْلَ مَسِيَّرَ تَحْمَمْ</p>	<p>whereas [another] one of them attested that with regard to the sabbath, it appears in the sense of eternity, also according to what is said in the Torah concerning the sabbath, where it says: "it is a sabbath for God in all your dwellings", that is, as long as you dwell in the land.*</p>	<p>* Lev. 23:3</p>

6g	<p>I showed the verse in Arabic translation to him. He said that he had said to them that it meant <i>Mā dumtum sākinīn fi l-ard</i>. I replied and asked: "Did you say that because they are not well informed about these issues, or is your understanding also that inadequate?" The signs of anger appeared in his face and he said: "O! Is there any other possibility?" I said:</p>	./.	
6h	<p>"Did you not know that some famous verses in the Torah refer to Jerusalem, some refer to other places, and some refer to both Jerusalem and other places in general? Therefore, since the meaning of this verse is that the observation of the sabbath is not particular to Jerusalem, it is obvious that it is applicable to wherever you dwell. While all the commentators agree in this explanation, and announce through a circular the <i>mīrāhele</i> and <i>mīnāzele</i>, where (110a) did you get this wrong meaning and from which words (or Scripture) did you learn it? When you ask whether, contrary to the rules of the Hebrew language, whole places necessitate whole times, I can cite many other examples like this from the Torah." He was bewildered and could not give any answer.</p>	<p><u>To this will be replied</u> that what is mentioned here [refers to] places in general, which does not require that time in general is meant. The principle underlying this is that some of the rulings of the Torah are specific for Jerusalem, some are specific for other places, and some are generally applicable to all places. The import of His saying "in <i>all</i> your dwellings" is that [keeping] the sabbath belongs to the third category.</p>	
7a	<p>Some other prominent members of the Jews dared to dispute and debate with me and said: "You say that the term <i>olam</i> refers to the meaning of extended sojourn. What about</p>	<p><u>It may be said</u>: The word <i>olam</i> is mentioned in connection with the Almighty, and cannot, therefore, refer to anything but eternity.</p>	

	the verse on God, which is also written with the term ‘olam? As there is nothing other than eternity itself.”		
7b	The proper response given to this question is: The meaning “eternity” comes from the word <i>vā’ez</i> , not from the word ‘olam. The word <i>vā’ez</i> means a “later time” not eternity. * This question and answer proves that they considered the meaning of time certain in [God’s] eye and received the answer.	<u>The reply to this</u> is that what is mentioned with regard to the Almighty is the word ‘olam together with a qualification, namely the expression <i>vā’ed</i> ,* and eternity is only to be understood from the expression <i>vā’ed</i> , not from the word ‘olam.	* cf. Exod. 15:18
8a	When they asked again: “What about the the word ‘olam, which occurs in the tenth part of the fifth book and refers to God without the word <i>vā’ez</i> ? What do you say about this?” *	<u>It has been objected</u> to this that the word ‘olam occurs in the tenth part of the fifth book without the qualification of the expression <i>vā’ed</i> , even though there it also refers to the Almighty.*	* Ref. to Deut. 32: 40-41
8b	I answered to this question by saying: “It is understood that you are not familiar with the [literature] of commentaries! The word ‘olam written in this instance means neither time nor extended sojourn, nor eternity.	<u>We reply</u> that the majority of commentators have stated in general that the word ‘olam in this passage has neither the meaning of time, nor of a lengthy sojourn, nor the meaning of eternity,	
8c	The meaning of that verse is that God promises and says that (110b) when I raise my hand and order to the Throne and the See (<i>arṣ ve kūrsī</i>) and say that Oh! For the sake of me, God of the Universe, when I whet my sword and grip the butt (<i>kalžā</i>) of subjugation, I take vengeance from the polytheists and seek justice from the enemies.	but rather means “universe”, for the word ‘olam is ambiguous, and there is nothing dishonest about this. But what is referred to in this place is that “God (exalted is He), shall say ‘In the time when I shall lift up my hand to the Throne and the See and shall speak of my being living and lasting <i>forever</i> ; in the time when I shall whet my sword and grip it in order to take vengeance, I shall take vengeance from the polytheists	* cf. Deut. 32: 40-41

		and demand justice from the enemies”.*	
8d	Then let me intoxicate (<i>mest edem</i>) my blades with drink (<i>dem</i> , i.e. by making them drinking blood), and let my sword eat the flesh.* Verses with this meaning are written [in the Torah]. Now, the word ‘olam here means the universe (‘alem). Thus, the conditions of the common meanings of the term ‘olam are discussed, and similarly the weak questions [of the Jews] are answered.	Thus the word ‘olam appears here in the sense of abstract time, and nothing else.	* cf. Deut. 32: 40-41.
9	[SUMMARY: Then, Deyyān says that the heart of the problem in the arguments of the Jews is their reluctance to accept abrogation (<i>nesh</i>). He goes on to discuss this issue in detail with specific examples of four different cases (<i>vedh</i>):]	Moreover, the Jewish sect rejects abrogation in the strongest terms, although it occurs in the [very] Torah in numerous places.	
10	The first case: In the law (<i>serī'at</i>) of the Prophet Adam, the consumption of meat was forbidden, but later, at the time of the Prophet Noah, it was permitted (<i>belāl oldu</i>).* God says in the Torah [in Hebrew]:	Thus, for example, the consumption of meat was forbidden according to the law of Adam (peace be upon him),* whereas in the time of Noah (peace be upon him), it was ordered.*	* cf. Gen 1:29; Gen 9:3
11	قول هرسس آشخفو هي لخم بيه ل خله قيرق عسب شفاني لخم آث قول	./.	Gen. 9:3
12	The meaning of this verse according to the agreement of all the commentators is that “Oh Noah! I made eating meat permissible while it was forbidden. So that I made eating vegetables and meat permissible to the human being before you.” It is known that the command regarding the (111a)	./.	

	impermissibility of eating meat was sent to Adam.		
13	The second case: The Children of Israel were obliged to get circumcised, but later it was forbidden in the Valley of Tih [at the foot of Mount Sinai]. While it was forbidden in the Valley of Tih, it was ordered again when they left the Valley of Tih.* God says in the book of the Prophets [in Hebrew]:	circumcision was first made incumbent upon the Children of Israel,* then its practice was forbidden in the desert, and subsequently they were ordered [to perform it] again after forty years;*	* cf. Gen 17:12; Joshua 5:2-7
14	وَيَوْمَ آذُنَتِي إِلَى يَسِّعَ عَشَّةَ لَعْنَ خَرْوَشَ خُوزِيمَ وَشَوْمُولَ تَبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ شَبَّثَ وَقَنْوَلَ نَيْشَعَ أَنْتَ إِسْرَائِيلَ تَغْوِيَتْ هَرَغَلَوْثَ كَيْ مَوْلَيمَ هَبِيْوَ هَاعَمَ هَبِيْوَصَ إِيمَ مَهْسِيرَمَ أَوْ تَصَامَ عَصَرِيمَ لَا مَلُوكَ أَرْبَعَمَ شَهَدَ هَاجَخُو تَبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ يَتَنَزَّهُ بَرَخَنَمَ قَلْ هَنَوَ انْشِيْهَ مَهْمَاجِهَ	./.	cf. Joshua 5:2-7
15	The meaning of this verse is that when Joshua left the Valley of Tih, God ordered him to reinstitute circumcision, which was also ordered to Moses before. Because, in the Valley of Tih, the rule of circumcision was abrogated and the Children of Israel were ordered to urinate (lit. <i>su sepmek</i> “scattering the water”) in a position like the Christians. Joshua was ordered to circumcise after forty years. This is also a clear abrogation.	./.	
16	The third case: In Jerusalem, daughters were not entitled to inherit, but sons were. However, the daughters of Zelophehad, Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirza came to the <i>beys</i> of the Children of Israel, Eleazar b. Aaaron, who was a <i>seyyid</i> at	at first, daughters were not entitled to inherit, but then it was ordered that they be made to inherit, and if there are no daughters, [the inheritance] should be given to their brothers;*	* cf. Numbers 27: 1-9

	<p>that time, and Moses, and said that (111b) our father died in the Valley of Tih and he had no sons. Why should the name of our father disappear from his relatives? Include our names with his inheritance together with his brothers so that our father's name may endure among his relatives." Moses brought their demand to God, and God gave their father's inheritance to them. And Moses ordered that if a deceased man has no male offspring, his inheritance should go to his daughters, and if he has no daughter, his inheritance should go to his brothers.* This is also a clear abrogation.</p>		
17	<p>The fourth case: At first Aaron was commanded to worship inside the dome/tabernacle (<i>kubbe</i>), later he was forbidden to enter the dome more than once in a year. This is mentioned in the Torah and famous and known to the experts.</p>	<p>Aaron (peace be upon him) was [at first] ordered to worship inside the tabernacle every day, while later on he was forbidden to enter it except once a year.*</p>	<p>*cf. Lev 23:1-8</p>
18	<p>These four cases demonstrate that abrogation is possible according to their religion. There are more examples for this, but since brevity was aimed at here, these examples should suffice.</p>	<p>./.</p>	

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