

İbrahim Efendi (d. 1697), an Ottoman Scribe Turned Dominican Monk, and His Library between Constantinople and Venice

Tijana Krstić

A few years ago while browsing through Stephan Roman's *The Development of Islamic Library Collections in Western Europe and North America*, an interesting detail caught my attention in a chapter on Italian manuscript collections. Explaining the provenance of the Arabic, Turkish and Persian manuscripts in the Marciana library in Venice, Roman states (unfortunately, without further references) that they in part stemmed from the personal collection of a certain Ibrahim of Pera – an Ottoman official and secret Christian who defected to Venice in 1690, and subsequently helped Venetians develop a study of “oriental languages” before he died in 1697.¹

This information intrigued me for two reasons. First, despite the well-documented Ottoman-Venetian relations and ubiquity of the Ottoman-issued documents in the Venetian archives, we still know next to nothing about Ottoman manuscripts that ended up in the Serenissima and the use to which they were put.² Second, there is a growing body of scholarship on Eastern Christians from the Ottoman Empire, especially Maronites, who for various reasons travelled to Rome and other European centers of learning and became members of the Republic of Letters by teaching Arabic, Syriac, and other languages in demand by European humanists and missionaries in the sixteenth

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- 1 Stephan Roman, *The Development of Islamic Library Collections in Western Europe and North America* (London: Mansell, 1990), 159. Other “oriental” manuscripts in Marciana come mostly from the much larger collection of Giacomo Nani (1725–1797), Venetian admiral and art collector. On that collection see Simone Assemani, *Catalogo de' codici manoscritti orientali della Biblioteca Naniiana compilato dall'abate Simone Assemani professore di lingue orientali nel Seminario e socio dell'Accademia delle Scienze Belle Lettere ed Arti di Padova. Vi s'aggiunge l'illustrazione delle monete cufiche del Museo Naniiano*, 2 vols. (Padova: Stamperia del Seminario, 1787–1792).
 - 2 See Maria Pia Pedani, *I “Documenti Turchi” dell'Archivio di Stato di Venezia* (Roma: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1994). For a study of provenance of a manuscript produced in the Ottoman Empire, but now housed in Venice, see Ella Natalie Rothman, *The Dragoman Renaissance. Diplomatic Interpreters and the Routes of Orientalism* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 2021), 113–39.

and, especially, seventeenth centuries.³ However, the studies we have of learned Muslims who travelled to Europe and took part, as either Muslims or converts, in the humanist, polemical, missionary and/or other projects underway among European literati in the confessional age are few, and even fewer are the examples of such literati coming from Ottoman domains.⁴ Claudia Römer brought to light the story of one such individual – İbrahim Derviş, an enslaved Turkish-speaking Muslim who helped Sebastian Tengnagel (d. 1636), the librarian of the Habsburg Imperial Library in Vienna, copy Abū l-Fidā's *Taqwīm al-buldān* in 1610.⁵ But, as Römer shows, İbrahim Derviş was not a highly educated scholar who would have been able to advance in a substantial way European scholars' growing curiosity about the Arabic, Persian and Turkish languages, the Qur'an, and Islamic learning in general.⁶ In contrast, Ibrahim of Pera allegedly put his learnedness and his private library in the service of the Venetian Republic and its study of the "Orient."

Recent research has come to appreciate the importance of early modern Istanbul and other Ottoman urban centers, their diplomatic scene, as well as the role of Ottoman Muslim, Christian and Jewish intellectuals – both itinerant and home-bound – in the genealogy of early modern Orientalism.⁷ As

3 See, for instance, Bernard Heyberger, ed., *Orientalisme, science et controverse: Abraham Ecchellensis (1605–1664)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010); Aurelien A. Girard, "Teaching and Learning Arabic in Early Modern Rome: Shaping a Missionary Language," in *The Teaching and Learning of Arabic in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Jan Loop et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 189–212; John-Paul Ghobrial, "The Life and Hard Times of Solomon Negri: An Arabic Teacher in Early Modern Europe," in *ibid.*, 310–33, etc.

4 Well-known stories are those of Leo Africanus (formerly Ḥasan al-Wazzān) at the Papal court in Rome, masterfully reconstructed by Natalie Zemon Davis in her *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), and of Aḥmad ibn Qāsim al-Hajarī (d. after 1640) and his interactions with the scholars in France and Netherlands, studied by Gerard A. Wiegers in his *A Learned Muslim Acquaintance of Erpenius and Golius: Ahmad b. Kāsim al-Andalusī and Arabic Studies in the Netherlands* (Leiden: Dokumentatiebureau Islam-Christendom, 1988). Other examples include the Moroccan captive Aḥmad ibn 'Alī who copied the Qur'an for Heinrich Hottinger and Persian convert Haqvirdi who taught Jacobus Golius Persian in Leiden. See Jan Loop, *Johann Heinrich Hottinger. Arabic and Islamic Studies in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 154–56.

5 Claudia Römer, "An Ottoman Copyist Working for Sebastian Tengnagel, Librarian at the Vienna Hofbibliothek, 1608–1636," *Archiv orientální* LXVI (1988): 331–350.

6 On this effort see in particular Alexander Bevilacqua, *The Republic of Arabic Letters* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018) and the ongoing ERC project entitled *The European Qur'an* (EuQu; <https://euqu.eu/>).

7 See especially John-Paul Ghobrial, "The Archive of Orientalism and Its Keepers: Reimagining the Histories of Arabic Manuscripts in Early Modern Europe," *Past & Present* 230, issue suppl. 11 (2016): 90–111, John-Paul Ghobrial, "Migration from Within and Without: In the Footsteps

Natalie Rothman argues, Orientalist epistemologies were neither produced exclusively in the “West,” nor were they solely the outcome of the European Enlightenment. Rather, they had more complex routes that connected sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ottoman literati and European diplomatic and missionary corps in Ottoman domains in complex processes of exchange and commensuration.⁸ Piecing together the stories of individuals from the Ottoman Empire who contributed to what John-Paul Ghobrial has dubbed the “archive of Orientalism” are of particular interest in this respect, as they highlight the routes and contacts through which texts, objects, ideas, and their interpretation found their place in this archive. What kind of expertise could Ibrahim of Pera – or rather, İbrahim Efendi, as he would have been known to his Ottoman peers – make available to his Venetian interlocutors? What kind of manuscripts did he bring with him and why? How did he fashion himself to the Venetian authorities and how did they perceive him? What kind of Muslim was he and why did he convert to Christianity?

In what follows, I explore the routes İbrahim took – both physical and spiritual – and the people and texts he interacted with on the way, especially prior to his arrival in Venice, to get into the position of contributing to the Venetian study of the “Orient.” I first reconstruct his education and career as an Ottoman official, the circumstances of his conversion to Christianity, arrival in Venice, as well as his subsequent trajectory based on available sources and contextual evidence. This reconstruction is based mostly on his own story and the reports of various Venetian officials because, despite searching for İbrahim across various genres of Ottoman sources, from appointment registers to contemporary chronicles, his trail proved surprisingly elusive for an official of his rank. After considering the details of his career, I juxtapose them to the contents of the manuscript collection he brought with him, in search of further clues to his professional formation, intellectual outlook, and spiritual peregrinations within and between Islam and Christianity.

As I argue, İbrahim Efendi’s “dossier” is, on the one hand, revealing of personal aspects of Ottoman elite learning, reading and belief, as well as how they were made sense of by Venetian elites simultaneously engaged in their own project of studying Ottoman culture, language and religion. On the other, various first- and third-person narratives of İbrahim’s conversion, together with

of Eastern Christians in the Early Modern World,” *Transactions of the RHS* 27 (2017): 153–73; Paul Babinski, “Ottoman Philology and the Origins of Persian Studies in Western Europe: The *Gulistan’s* Orientalist Reader,” *Lias* 46,2 (2019): 233–315 and Ella Natalie Rothman, *The Dragoman Renaissance*.

8 Rothman, *The Dragoman Renaissance*, 11–12.

his personal library, tell a complex story of his journey from Islam to Catholic Christianity via Eastern Orthodoxy. These narratives, besides exposing the complex connections between the Ottoman, Habsburg and Venetian officials as well as various types of Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim religious specialists, also highlight the contextual and situational aspects of confessional belonging, underscoring the relationship between mobility in the age of confessional polarization and local processes of identification.⁹

1 From İbrahim b. Ahmed to Paolo Antonino via Abraham Albanese

As it turns out, although he does not feature in Ottomanist scholarship, İbrahim Efendi is not entirely unknown to the scholars who have studied production of knowledge about the “Orient” in Venice. Italian scholars Bartolommeo Cecchetti and, more than a century later, Francesca Lucchetta, a prominent Arabist, introduced İbrahim to scholarship by publishing two key documents: his own petition to the Venetian Doge on April 15, 1692 in which he was seeking appointment as instructor of Arabic, Persian and Turkish “languages and sciences” in the school for Venetian dragomans,¹⁰ and the Senate’s decision from May 3, 1692 to approve his petition and appoint him in this capacity.¹¹ These two documents containing biographical details are principal sources on İbrahim’s life story, along with the information drawn from his obituary that is cited in the catalogue (published in 1779) of the library of the Dominican convent of Saints John and Paul (Santi Giovanni e Paolo), to which he had originally bequeathed his manuscripts.¹² In the two documents from 1692, he is referred to as “*Abramo Albanese cristiano, già (formerly) Ibrahim Dachmet turco*” and “*Ibraim Achemet Turco hora Abraham Albanese*,” respectively, which suggests that his birth name was İbrāhīm b. Aḥmed, and that he was of Albanian origin,

9 On the relationship between global processes of movement and local processes of identification see John-Paul Ghobrial, “Moving Stories and What They Tell Us: Early Modern Mobility between Microhistory and Global History,” *Past & Present* (2019): Supplement 14: 243–80.

10 Francesca Lucchetta, “Lo studio delle lingue orientali nella scuola per dragomanni di Venezia alla fine del XVII secolo,” *Quaderni de Studi Arabi* 5–6 (1987–1988): 479–98, with petition on 497–98.

11 Bartolommeo Cecchetti, “L’insegnamento del turco e dell’arabo in Venezia,” *Rivista orientale* 1 (1867–1868): 1126–31, with the decision on 1126–28.

12 Domenico Maria Berardelli, “Codicum omnium graecorum, arabicorum aliarumque linguarum orientalium qui manuscripti in bibliotheca Sanctorum Joannis et Pauli Venetiarum ordinis Praedicatorum asservantur catalogus,” *Nuova raccolta d’opuscoli scientifici e filologici* xx (1779): 161–240; with biographical details on 168–71 [hereafter: Berardelli].

while he assumed the name of Abraham upon arrival in Venice. In the obituary it is mentioned that he was born in Pera, in Constantinople, to Muslim parents, and that he died in Venice on November 12, 1697, at the age of 56, which would put his birth to some time around 1641–1642.¹³ We also find out that he was confirmed and anointed with chrism in the church of Saint John the Baptist of Catechumens in Venice in April 1691, and that in January 1693 he joined the Dominican order, taking the monastic name of Paolo Antonino.¹⁴

Reconstructing the details of İbrahim's Ottoman career, however, is a bit more challenging task. In the petition to the Doge from April 15, 1692, İbrahim – now Abraham – styles himself in the following terms:

I was raised in the rank of *efendi*, that is man of letters, in Constantinople. I served that [i.e. Ottoman] empire in multiple notable positions, as is known by some representatives and many foremost servants of Your Serenity and those who serve the Serenissima as dragomans. My humble name is also not unknown to the supreme magistrate of this glorious and most peaceful domain. I do not dare tire Your Excellency with the story of my existence. I will only say reverently that illuminated by God with curiosity to read about the things related to the holy faith and the sacred Gospel of Christ, I became convinced of its truth and the fallaciousness of the Qur'an. So about twenty years ago in Belgrade, while I served there as the tax collector (*esattore*) for the Porte, I received the water of sacrosant baptism from Don Luca, chaplain of the imperial resident. I thought of immediately seeking refuge in Christendom, but engaged tirelessly in various tasks outside of Constantinople, in Europe, Asia and Egypt as secretary and tax collector of the Porte, I never had the time to carry out my wish. But eventually, having become aware that some hints about my change of religion reached the ears of the Imperial Council, I abandoned all my fortunes and with little money in my hand I arrived in Serenissima two years ago and decided to end my days here. I would have immediately submitted myself to the sublime presence of Your Serenity to offer the vassalage of my unworthy person, but first I wanted to gain some knowledge of this language and make myself known as a true Christian indoctrinated in Catholic faith. At present, Most Serene Prince, I satisfy my ancient desire and prostrate myself at your feet reverently. I beg you to admit me among your humble subjects, having nothing but little money and not insignificant knowledge of Arabic, Persian and

13 Ibid., 168; 171.

14 Ibid., 169–70.

Turkish languages and sciences, which I offer entirely to Your Serenity, my beloved and revered Supreme Prince.¹⁵

Several key details of İbrahim's career may be discerned from this biographical sketch. First of all, his insistence on being a "man of letters" (*efendi*) who attained considerable knowledge of Turkish, Arabic and Persian languages and "sciences" deserves some consideration. *Efendi* was an Ottoman title of Greek origin used since the fifteenth century in Turkish and Greek to refer to various dignitaries. By the seventeenth century it was increasingly common as a designation for the members of the scribal (*kalemîye*) and judicial/scholarly (*ilmîye*), as opposed to the military class (*seyfiye*).¹⁶ Given that he worked as a tax collector and secretary, İbrahim's career as an Ottoman official did not follow the judicial and scholarly track but that of the scribal and financial services. Over the sixteenth century, Ottoman Empire underwent a process of bureaucratization that resulted in increasing differentiation and professionalization of various branches of bureaucracy, propelling the scribal class to a new prominence.¹⁷ During the seventeenth century, the growing presence of European traders and diplomats in Ottoman cities, as well as intense military activities, especially from the 1640s onwards, forced the Ottoman government to develop a more efficient system of communication with foreign powers, which further empowered the Ottoman scribal class, especially the office of the Chief Chancellor (*reisülküttap*).¹⁸ The ongoing changes and growing complexity in the revenue-raising system similarly led to the growing need for scribes and tax officers.¹⁹

15 Luchetta, "Lo studio," 497 [my translation from Italian].

16 See Bernard Lewis, "Efendi," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition (1960–2007), doi: 10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_2170 (accessed on 30 April 2021).

17 On this trajectory see, for instance, Cornell H. Fleischer, "Preliminaries to the Study of Ottoman Bureaucracy," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 10 (1986): 135–41; Cornell H. Fleischer, "Between the Lines: Realities of Scribal life in the Sixteenth Century," in *Studies in Ottoman History in Honor of Professor V.L. Ménage*, eds. Colin Heywood and Colin Imber (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1994), 45–62; Christine Woodhead, "Scribe to Litterateur: The Career of a Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Katib," *Bulletin of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies* 9,1 (1982): 55–74; Linda Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy. Tax Collection & Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire, 1560–1660* (Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 1996), etc.

18 Damien Janos, "Panaiotis Nicousios and Alexander Mavrocordatos: The Rise of the Phanariots and the Office of Grand Dragoman in the Ottoman Administration in the second half of the Seventeenth Century," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 23 (2005/2006): 177–96, here 185.

19 Darling, *Revenue-Raising*.

In the late sixteenth century, it was still common – although not a *sine qua non* – for the scribes (*katip*) to have a *medrese* education.²⁰ However, by the early 1650s, when İbrahim likely started his education, fewer candidates for the jobs in the scribal and financial services were *medrese* graduates, with the paths of *ilmîye* and *kalemîye* separating more decisively. Instead, it became common to receive a thorough on-the-job training that often began while scribe apprentices were attached to a household of a particular high-ranking dignitary.²¹ This practical knowledge and skills in a wide variety of disciplines would have been combined with training in traditional Islamic sciences, often taught by private tutors with *medrese* credentials rather than acquired through formal attendance of *medrese*, although completing several levels of the *medrese* curriculum was also common.²² By the second half of the seventeenth century, the scribes and secretaries from the Ottoman chancery did not lag behind the *ulema* in learnedness and came to see themselves as intellectual pillars of the Ottoman state.²³ Judging by the prolific literary output of the bureaucrats (i.e. of the imperial scribal class) of this period, especially histories and advice literature, many of them had an encyclopedic knowledge of administrative procedures, types of documents and correspondence issued by various departments of imperial bureaucracy, familiarity with aspects of theology, law, rules of moral conduct, history, geography, language and literature (in both Arabic and Persian), astronomy, mathematics and traditional Islamic sciences.²⁴

20 See Woodhead, “Scribe to Litterateur.”

21 See Erhan Afyoncu and Recep Ahsalı, “Katip” (Osmanlı Dönemi), in *TDVİA*, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/katip#2-osmanli-donemi> (accessed on 24 April 2021); Ekin Emine Tusalp Atiyas, “Political Literacy and the Politics of Eloquence: Ottoman Scribal Community in the Seventeenth Century,” (PhD diss., Harvard University, Boston 2013), 192–216. However, as Tusalp Atiyas shows, there were still examples of people alternating between legal and administrative bureaucracies, as well as many instances of *medrese* graduates entering bureaucracy. See for instance, 173. Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha was himself a *medrese* graduate who went into bureaucracy. See M. Tayyib Gökbilgin and R.C. Repp, “Köprülü,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition (1960–2007), doi: 10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0530 (accessed on 24 April 2021).

22 Despite the overlap in education and reliance of the scribal class on tutors with *medrese* backgrounds, by the mid seventeenth century the rift and competition between the *ulema* and the bureaucrats, who criticized both the level of former’s knowledge and their social entitlements, was in full swing. See Tusalp Atiyas, *Political Literacy*; Harun Küçük, *Science without Leisure. Practical Naturalism in Istanbul, 1660–1732* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020), 94–102, 132.

23 See Tusalp Atiyas, *Political Literacy*, 134; Henning Sievert, “Eavesdropping on the Pasha’s Salon: Usual and Unusual Readings of an Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Bureaucrat,” *Osmanlı Araştırmaları / The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, xli (2013): 159–95, here 163.

24 For instance, see Tusalp Atiyas, *Political Literacy*, 132–61; Küçük, *Science without Leisure*, 131–38.

It is interesting, therefore, that Abraham's obituary, composed by his Dominican brethren, suggests that upon his studies he had joined the scholarly (*ulema*) ranks.²⁵ Furthermore, in the letter accompanying and endorsing Abraham's petition to the Doge, former Venetian bailo to Constantinople, Giovanni Battista Donà (bailo 1681–1684) confirms that Abraham was indeed an *efendi*, and that, moreover, he supervised the *teftardari* (Tr. *defterdar*; chief financial officer) and could have attained the post of a *cadilischier* (Tr. *kazasker*; chief military judge) or even the *mufti* (Tr. *müftü*; chief jurist).²⁶ This would imply not only that İbrahim completed the highest level of the *medrese* studies but also that he was at some point formally accepted into the hierarchical service envisioned for scholars (*mülazım*), at the top of which were the posts of the chief military judge and chief jurist.²⁷ A closer look at Donà's work from 1688, entitled *Della letteratura de' Turchi* (about which more below), reveals that his own understanding of the term *efendi* was informed by the interactions he had during his tenure as a bailo in Constantinople with a retired Ottoman official who held a string of judicial posts, a certain 'Abdullah Efendi. Upon introducing 'Abdullah Efendi, whose library he apparently had access to, Donà explains that *efendis* were men who applied themselves to the study of law, implying that only those in the *ilmiye* track were entitled to call themselves by this title, and that they represented the intellectual elite of the empire.²⁸ This discrepancy between what can be surmised of İbrahim's career from his own petition and from the way bailo Donà sought to present him is interesting and we will return to it when we take a closer look at his book collection.

The obituary suggests that İbrahim served as a secretary and tax collector in Buda, Belgrade, Crete, Egypt and Constantinople.²⁹ We do not learn either from the obituary or from İbrahim himself what kind of taxes he was collecting, but given his extensive contacts with Christians in various places where he served (as will be discussed below), it is possible that at least at some point he collected taxes from non-Muslim subjects (such as *cizye* or *avarız*) or dealt

25 "Adolescens linguis Arabicae, ac Persicae addiscendis magna contentione animum applicuit, quo in studio tantum profecit, ut brevi inter ejus Sectae Doctores, reique sacre administros cooptatus fuerit." See Berardelli, 168.

26 Luchetta, "Lo studio," 496. She refers to ASV, Senato terra, filza 1149, April 18 1692. Donà does not reveal the source of this information.

27 See Abdurrahman Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 72.

28 Giovanni Battista Donado, *Della letteratura de' Turchi* (Venezia: Andrea Poletti, 1688), 3–4. "... tra Sudditi de' Turchi viene impiegato al presente un gran numero, che si dicono Effendi, quali sono gli huomini applicati, come dicono loro, alla Legge."

29 See Berardelli, 169.

with customs dues.³⁰ In light of the frequent changes in place of deployment, İbrahim was likely not a member of provincial bureaucracy, which often controlled local tax collection, but rather an official who was sent from the capital, possibly along with a more illustrious patron.³¹ While he does not speak about any specific patron, the fact that he was of Albanian origin and worked in the financial services in the period between the 1660s and 1690 points to the possibility of his being part of the wider Köprülü patronage network.³² Indeed, greater part of İbrahim's career coincides with the long tenure of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha as Grand Vizier (1661–1676), which was characterized by a sustained effort to curb the influence of the provincial administrators and their households, and centralize the resources and collection of taxes in the hands of the central administration controlled by the Köprülü clan.³³ Specific places where İbrahim served as a tax collector fall within the foci of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's and later Köprülü viziers' fiscal reform efforts, especially Egypt and Crete.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to precisely reconstruct the order in which İbrahim held his posts. Based on his life story as laid out in the petition to the Doge, we can tentatively locate him in Belgrade in the early 1670s, where he says he was secretly baptized by a certain Don Luca, the chaplain of the Habsburg ambassador (*residente cesareo*).³⁴ While I was not able to find any reference to this particular chaplain, reports to the Propaganda Fide from the Catholic bishops and clergy posted in Belgrade and its environs suggest that

30 Linda Darling mentions that by the mid 1650s the majority of *avarız* collectors came from the palace or the retinues of great men of state. See Darling, *Revenue-Raising*, 174.

31 I am grateful to Linda Darling for pointing this out. Unfortunately, a targeted search (based on projected years of service) in appointment (*tevziat*) registers of *cizye* and *avarız* collectors did not result in any clues on either İbrahim or his patronage network (*intisap*). I thank Günhan Börekçi for his kind assistance in research into this issue.

32 On the importance of “ethnic-regional solidarity” (*cins*), such as Albanian, Bosnian, or Circassian, for elite networking in the seventeenth century see Metin Kunt, “Ethnic-Regional (Cins) Solidarity in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5, 3 (1974): 233–39; on the role of Albanian *cins* in the Köprülü network building and patronage see Cumhur Bekar, “The rise of the Köprülü family: the reconfiguration of vizierial power in the seventeenth century” (PhD diss., Leiden University, Leiden 2019), 179.

33 On aspects of Köprülü reforms see Gökbilgin, “Köprülü”; Jane Hathaway and Karl Barbir, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule, 1516–1800* (London, New York: Routledge, 2008), 76–78; Fehmi Yılmaz, “The Life of Köprülü zâde Fazıl Muştafâ Pasha and his Reforms (1637–1691),” *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 20 (2000): 165–221.

34 The diplomat in question could have been either Giambattista Casanova, the Habsburg ambassador to the Porte between 1665 and December 1672, or his successor Johann Christoph von Kindsperg (1672–1678). On both see Yasir Yılmaz, “The Road to Vienna: Habsburg and Ottoman Statecraft during the Time of Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa Paşa” (PhD diss., Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 2015), 143–44.

İbrahim's experience would not have been unusual. For instance, a letter sent to Rome by the vicar of the Belgrade bishop in Sirmium on March 4, 1675 asks for permission to administer sacraments to an unnamed secret Christian in Ottoman service who for his own security had to continue to serve in that capacity.³⁵

Interestingly, İbrahim/Abraham/Paolo Antonino's obituary suggests that this turn of duty in Belgrade was preceded by service in Egypt, where he read "day and night" Christian sermons in Arabic, which led him to realize, "with the assistance of the Holy Spirit," the truth of the Gospel and the deception of the "Muhameddan superstition."³⁶ This experience, according to the obituary, prepared İbrahim to embrace Christian religion. He may have gone to Egypt as a member of the retinue of Kara İbrahim Pasha, the personal lieutenant of Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha, who was the governor of Egypt from June 1670 to September 1673, tasked with stopping the embezzlement of the revenues by local beys.³⁷ Indeed, the chronicle of Mehmed ibn Yusuf el-Hallak mentions in the section on Kara İbrahim Pasha's governorship an incident from July 1673 involving the "scribe for the miscellaneous expenses (*müteferrika*) and arrears collection (*havale*) bureaus, İbrahim Efendi," who beat up a janissary of *Ruznameci Efendi* (Chief of the Daily Ledger; treasury official issuing receipts for payment), which led to his dismissal from both scribal posts.³⁸ Could this pugnacious scribe be "our" İbrahim, who then got posted to Belgrade? Unfortunately, although Mehmed ibn Yusuf el-Hallak as well as other contemporary chroniclers mention various İbrahim Efendis for the period between the 1660s and 1680s, only the above-mentioned case seems to correspond to our İbrahim's profile.³⁹

35 Antun Dević, ed., *Dakovačka i Srijemska biskupija. Spisi generalnih sjednica Kongregacije za Širenje Vjere, 17. Stoljeće* (Zagreb: Hrvatski državni arhiv, 2000), 643. I thank Emese Muntan for sharing this source with me.

36 Berardelli, 168. "In Egypto vero, quo Quastor aerarius missus fuerat, diurna, nocturnaue manu libros Arabici sermonis assidue versans, in sacrosanctum Jesu Christi Evangelium forte incidit, ex cuius lectione adeo, Spiritu Sancto asstante, illustratus fuit, ut Mahumetanam superstitionem, & Alcorani deliria detestatus, Christiane Fidei, ac Religionis vehementissimo ardore flagrare cæperit."

37 On Kara İbrahim Pasha's reforms see Jane Hathaway, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 148–50.

38 Mehmed ibn Yusuf el-Hallak, *Tarih-i Mısır*, İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi, TY 628, 206a. He dates the incident to "1084 Rebiü'l-sâni on dördüncü günü," which is July 29, 1673. I thank Günhan Börekçi for sharing his copy of this manuscript with me.

39 Besides Mehmed ibn Yusuf el-Hallak, *Tarih-i Mısır*, I also consulted [Defterdar] Sarı Mehmed Pasha, *Zübde-yi Vekayât: Tahlil ve Metin (1066–1116 /1656–1704)*, Abdülkadir Özcan, ed. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1995); Ramazan Aktemur, Anonim Osmanlı Vekayinamesi (H. 1058–1106/M. 1648–1694) (Metin ve Değerlendirme), (MA thesis, İstanbul

Chronicles do not reveal any clues about his post in Crete, where İbrahim seems to have served some time between the mid-1670s and mid-1680s. Here too, among the many İbrahim Efendis mentioned in the sources, it is hard to find anyone who would fit our protagonist's description. The victory in the Cretan War with Venice (1645–1669), and the subsequent incorporation of the island into the Ottoman land and fiscal system, was the crown achievement of Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's career and a great boon for his patronage network.⁴⁰ The administrators sent from Constantinople to survey, tax, and administer the new domains were key to this enterprise, and İbrahim seems to have been one of them.

What we know is that on March 13, 1690 İbrahim fled Constantinople and arrived in Venice on October 16 that year, via unknown route. In his petition to the Venetian Doge he suggests that it was the rumors about his secret change of religion and the possibility of their reaching the ears of the Imperial Council that prompted him to take the decisive step that he had delayed for twenty years. Interestingly, İbrahim would not have been the only example of an Ottoman *kâtip* turning Christian in Constantinople around this time. The case of Patburnuzade Mehmed Efendi, a high-ranking clerk of the Office of the Daily Ledger (*ruzname-i evvel*),⁴¹ is particularly infamous because he is known both as a heretic (*zındık*) and as a Greek Orthodox neomartyr.⁴² According to the Ottoman sources, Patburnuzade Mehmed Efendi blasphemed against the Prophet, was tried, and executed in front of the sultan in Kağıthane in 1681, despite denying the charges.⁴³ However, Christian sources, one of which refers to Patburnuzade by the name of *Ahmetes polites onomazomenos pazpurunes* ("Ahmed, Stanbouliot, surnamed Pazpurun") allege that he had converted to Orthodox Christianity with the help of his Russian concubine and was executed as an apostate.⁴⁴ While it is by no means certain that both Ottoman and

University, İstanbul 2019); Abdülkadir Özcan, ed., *Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi (1099–116/1688–1704)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2000); and Abdurrahman Abdi Pasha, *Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa Vekâyi-nâmesi (Osmanlı Tarihi 1648–1682): Tahlil ve Metin Tenkidi*, Fahri Ç. Derin, ed. (İstanbul: Çamlıca, 2008).

40 See Molly Greene, *A Shared World – Christians and Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Princeton, 2000), 18–39.

41 Erhan Afyoncu, "Rûznâmeçe." *TDVİA*, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/ruzname> (accessed on 25 April 2021).

42 The case is studied from the perspective of both Ottoman and Greek sources by Marinos Sariyannis, "Aspects of 'Neomartyrdom': Religious Contacts, 'Blasphemy' and 'Calumny' in 17th Century Istanbul," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 23 (2005/2006): 249–63, esp. 252–59.

43 For a study of this case based on Ottoman sources see Ömer Menekşe, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Zındıklık. Patburnuzade Örneğinde Bir İnceleme* (İstanbul: Çağaloğlu, 2019).

44 Sariyannis, "Aspects of 'Neomartyrdom,'" 255.

Greek sources are actually speaking about the same person, it is intriguing that both suggest that Patburnuzāde was a victim of gossip of his colleagues in the financial department.⁴⁵ This echoes İbrahim's fears that his secret conversion would be outed and reach the ears of the grand vizier, especially given his high rank and the competitive environment in the financial bureau.

Even more intriguing is the information found in a Greek chronicle of a Phanariot clerk Demetrios Ramadanes (fl. c.1730), reported by Marinus Sariyannis, according to which a decade after Patburnuzade's alleged conversion, another *kâtip* from *reisülküttap*'s department converted to Christianity.⁴⁶ His name was Mustafa Efendi, he was a Muslim of Albanian origin who was always on good terms with Christians, and had a very good knowledge of Arabic. Ramadanes states that this Mustafa Efendi then escaped to Venice where he was baptized as Stephanus and entered the Franciscan order.⁴⁷ As it happens, the detailed reports of the Venetian bailos from Constantinople, which would normally be an invaluable source on such a case, do not exist for the period between 1684 and 1699 due to Venice's taking part in the Holy League against the Ottomans.⁴⁸ But the similarity of Mustafa's story with İbrahim's is striking – is it possible that two clerks from the Ottoman financial bureau fled Constantinople at roughly the same time, both joining a monastic order in Venice? Or did the Greek chronicler perhaps get his names wrong? We will return to this question when we look more closely at İbrahim's manuscripts.

It appears that upon arriving in Venice in October 1690 and becoming a catechumen in 1691, Abraham at some point headed to Rome to prostrate himself at the feet of the pope, who encouraged him to stay in Rome and continue deepening his commitment to the Christian faith. However, Abraham preferred Venice, where he promptly returned. He reports in his petition to the Doge that his teaching services were here sought by Marc 'Antonio Mamuca, the chief dragoman of the emperor, for his nephew, and by Tomaso Tarsia, the first dragoman of Venice, for the language instruction of his son. Abraham petitioned the Doge to support him in opening a school and academy for the education of

45 Ibid., 253, 256.

46 On the identity of the chronicler see Sariyannis, "Aspects of 'Neomartyrdom,'" 256. Johann Strauss mentions the same case, although he attributes the chronicle in question to Kaisaros Dapontes (1712–1784). See Johann Strauss, "Ottoman Rule Experienced and Remembered: Remarks on Some Local Greek Chronicles of the Tourkokratia," in *The Ottomans and the Balkans – A Discussion of Historiography*, eds. F. Adanır and S. Faroqhi (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2002), 193–221, 205–6, n. 55.

47 Sariyannis, "Aspects of 'Neomartyrdom,'" 259, especially n. 38.

48 See Maria Pia Pedani, "Elenco degli inviati diplomatici veneziani presso i sovrani ottomani," *EJOS* 5,4 (2002): 1–54, esp. 46–47.

the *giovani di lingua*, i.e. Venetian dragomans in training, who were otherwise trained in Constantinople by a *hoca* (teacher) who did not teach them other than simple reading and writing. Abraham offers to undertake the instruction for whatever pay the Senate might find fit, since he has no other ambition than to live constant in Catholic faith and fidelity to the Venetian Republic.⁴⁹

As already mentioned, in this endeavor he had the wholehearted support of the former Venetian bailo to Constantinople, Giovanni Battista Donà. Donà was keenly aware of the imperfections in the dragomans' training in Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, and Persian, considering it a matter of utmost importance to the Republic.⁵⁰ Already before embarking on his service in the Ottoman capital, Donà started to learn Turkish and was the first bailo in over a century to do so. His teacher in Venice was an Armenian Dominican missionary by the name of Yovhannes Konstandnupōlsec'i (Giovanni Agop), who was Istanbul-born but trained by the Jesuits in Rome.⁵¹ Upon his return to Venice, in 1688 Donà published two books, *Della letteratura de' Turchi* (On the Literature of the Turks) and *Raccolta curiosissima d'adaggi turcheschi* (A Most Curious Collection of Turkish Sayings). As Natalie Rothman points out, the former especially "radically challenged contemporary European understanding of Ottoman culture (or lack thereof)," putting forward the argument that, contrary to the perception of the Ottomans, they had "literature" and a sophisticated linguistic register in which to articulate it. *Delle letteratura de' Turchi* thus surveyed Ottoman achievements in the fields of "grammar, poetry, logic, mathematics, geometry, optics, music, medicine, herbal alchemy, chemistry, history, politics, geography, and devotion," along with excerpts from the sources translated by the Venetian dragoman Rinaldo Carli.⁵²

However, Donà was also very much aware that without training in Arabic and Persian, Venetian dragomans would not be able to master the highest register of Ottoman Turkish that was essential to statecraft and operations of various imperial offices, from the Imperial Council, to the courts of law, and the notarial and secretarial bureaus. In his *Della letteratura*, he writes:

The Turkish language is ... adorned with Persian, like we do with the Tuscan ... In the same way one also finds the Arabic among the Turks, as the Latin is among us; as the Qur'an is written in that language, the Arabic

49 Lucchetta, "Lo studio," 498.

50 Ibid. On Venetian problems with the training of dragomans see E. Natalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 2012), especially 165–88.

51 Rothman, *The Dragoman Renaissance*, 141.

52 Ibid., 216.

is necessary to them, as to us is the language in which Sacred Scripture is to be found. Arabic styles, words, and terms are used entirely for ornamentation, for elocution, and for decorum, especially in the affairs, the commandments, and other orders of major business and negotiations; in letters of the Prince, Ministers, Pašas, and in orders of the Imperial will.⁵³

He continues by stating that the most erudite among the Ottomans, that is, the men of law, “parish priests and other clerics,” but also distinguished men in notarial, secretarial and chancery services, all speak and write Arabic.⁵⁴ Presumably combining both the *medrese* education and the experience in Ottoman bureaucracy, İbrahim/Abraham must have appeared to Donà like a perfect man to teach the dragoman apprentices.⁵⁵

Furthermore, it appears that Abraham’s arrival in Venice and hiring by the Venetian Senate stirred excitement also among the Catholic scholars working on the printing of the Qur’an in Padua with the support of Cardinal Gregorio Barbarigo. The text that was eventually printed in Padua in 1698 was the *Alcorani Textus Universus*. It was the first time that the publication of the Qur’an in Europe was accompanied by the full translation, critical notes, and polemical refutation, all of which was the deed of Lodovico Maracci, a Catholic clergyman who also served as a confessor to Pope Innocent XI.⁵⁶ For Maracci and many other members of what Alexander Bevilacqua has termed the “Republic of Arabic Letters” in Europe, the translation and refutation of the Qur’an was a prospective means of evangelization but also a polemical instrument in the struggle with both Islam and other rivaling Christian denominations whose teachings could be “exposed” as akin to Islam. However, it was also undeniably a scholarly endeavor in which Maracci used a variety of Islamic religious works, including Qur’an commentaries and hadith, to explain the meaning of the text.⁵⁷

53 Donado, *Della letteratura*, 6–8, translated and cited in *ibid.*, 169–70.

54 Rothman, *The Dragoman Renaissance*, 170.

55 It is not clear whether İbrahim became acquainted with Donà and various Venetian officials, to whom he refers in his petition to the Doge, already during his time as an Ottoman official or only after his arrival in Venice. Donà’s regular dispatches from Constantinople to Venice during his bailate, from 1681 to 1684, suggest that the Venetians interacted often with the Defterdar himself and his retinue, chiefly over the issue of customs, but I did not come across a mention of İbrahim. For Donà’s dispatches see ASVe, Senato Dispacci Costantinopoli, f. 162 (on interactions with the Defterdar see for instance, a dispatch from May 1682, 78r–85v).

56 Bevilacqua, *The Republic of Arabic Letters*, 44; 59.

57 *Ibid.*, 54.

In the process of preparation for printing, in December 1692, a problem emerged because Maracci sent to Padua his translation and the critical notes and refutation, but not the text of the Qur'an itself. However, there was apparently no text of the Qur'an to be found in Padua, which underscores relative lack of access to the Muslim holy book even in the European centers of learning invested in the study of it. Furthermore, there was a need for someone who would correct the printed pages in Arabic. The man who was originally hired for the job was Timoteo Agnellini (Humayli b. Da'fi Karnush), a Syriac Orthodox Christian from Diyarbakır who converted to Catholicism in the early 1670s. Agnellini was invited to Padua around 1688 to teach Oriental languages and help the publishing endeavor in Arabic, but for unknown reasons left in 1693, leaving Cardinal Barbarigo without a proof reader. In June 1695 Barbarigo wrote that he had the Qur'an in press and was in urgent need of a corrector, mentioning that he had heard of an Ottoman renegade in Venice who was well acquainted with Arabic language and might be persuaded to come to Padua for a fair price.⁵⁸

This was most likely Abraham, or Paolo Antonino, who was at that time already initiated in the Dominican order and working as a teacher of Oriental languages in the Venetian school for the dragomans. Donà's own Armenian teacher of Turkish, Giovanni Agop, himself a Dominican, belonged to the circle of Catholic scholars in Padua, so it is likely that they were aware of Donà's protegee. Moreover, given that Donà's brother Andrea worked in the Pia Casa dei Catecumeni, where Agop was helping him catechize the Turkish-speaking neophytes,⁵⁹ it is possible that this was the route by which Abraham became known to Donà in the first place. This connection would appear to be substantiated by a breviary in Armenian language produced by the Dominican order, which was later found among Abraham/Paolo Antonino's manuscripts.⁶⁰ As a newcomer from the Ottoman lands who claimed to have already been baptized, Abraham likely passed through the Casa dei Catecumeni upon his arrival in Venice, as this was the route by which converts were both catechized and integrated into the local networks of patronage.⁶¹ Abraham certainly did not lack patrons among the Venetian clergy, as his obituary emphasizes that he received his monastic robe from the Grand Master of the Dominican order himself, Fr. Antonino Cloche, in a public ceremony attended by many people

58 Ibid., 61.

59 Rothman, *The Dragoman Renaissance*, 141.

60 Bererdelli, 232, Cod. xcvi; Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana [hereafter: BNM] Or. 50.

61 On this institution see Rothman, *Brokering Empire*, 122–62.

on January 5 1693.⁶² It would appear, based on this, that Abraham was the focus of great expectations in Venetian clerical and diplomatic circles.

Besides being busy with teaching *giovani di lingua*, it is possible that the reason why Abraham aka Paolo Antonino could not undertake the task of proofreading the Qur'an in Padua was that by mid 1695 he was already afflicted by the disease and vehement rheumatism that apparently plagued him towards the end of his life, which ended rather early, at the age of 56, on 12 November, 1697.⁶³ His Venetian career was thus cut short, raising more expectations than it apparently fulfilled. His teaching post was supposed to be taken over in 1705 by Solomon Negri (d. 1727), one of several Eastern Christians (in this case, a Melkite from Damascus) who left an indelible mark on the development of early modern Oriental studies in Europe. However, Negri's relationship with the Venetians ended in 1708, after which the school for the dragomans in Venice appears to have ceased functioning, at least until 1747.⁶⁴ İbrahim/Abraham/Paolo Antonino thus became only a curious footnote in the history of the Venetian school for *giovani di lingua*, the story of his rich Ottoman career and spiritual vagaries only partially and strategically revealed in a couple of petitions and the obituary his fellow Dominicans composed upon his death. But do the books he left behind help us add further nuance to his elusive biography?

2 İbrahim Efendi's Library

The "oriental" manuscripts of the Marciana Library have been enumerated in two unpublished inventories,⁶⁵ separate published catalogues of the original

62 Abraham's monastic name, in fact, combined that of St. Paul (himself a convert formerly known as Saul) and the name of the master of the order, Antonino. See Berardelli, 170.

63 Ibid., 171.

64 See Cecchetti, "L'insegnamento," 1129–30. For a detailed study of Negri's negotiations with the Venetians see Francesca Lucchetta, "Un progetto per una scuola di lingue orientali a Venezia nel settecento," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 1 (1983): 1–28 and Ghobrial, "The Life and Hard Times of Solomon Negri," 320–23. On the school for dragomans in Venice after 1708 see Maria Pia Pedani and Antonio Fabris, "L'ultimo atto della Scuola Veneziana dei giovani di lingua a Constantinopoli," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 11 (2016): 51–60, here 52.

65 Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, *Codices Arabici, Turcici, Persici, et Sinenses, Coptici et Armeniaci, Hebraici Indici ac Syriaci*, etcaet. 1795– (in manuscript); G. Veludo, *Codices orientales Bibliothecae ad D. Marci Venetiarum*, 1877 (unpublished inventory of the manuscripts). Scanned images of both of these inventories can be found on the website of the Nuova Biblioteca Manoscritta (<http://www.nuovabibliotecamanoscritta.it/catalogo.html>).

collections that make the bulk of today's holdings – of the Dominican convent of Sts. John and Paul, and of the Venetian admiral Giacomo Nani, respectively –,⁶⁶ as well as more recent publications dedicated to the Persian and Turkish manuscripts in the collection.⁶⁷ Although a modern comprehensive and analytical catalogue of the entire collection has still not been published, significant progress has been made since 2012 by Erica Ianiro and Sara Fani on identifying the contents of each codex and providing relevant codicological and bibliographic information, which can be accessed through the online catalogue.⁶⁸ Despite all these research tools, an unsuspecting researcher might be forgiven if while browsing the “oriental” manuscript holdings of the Marciana Library they do not realize that a particular manuscript once belonged to İbrahim Efendi. That information is available only in a footnote of Berardelli's catalogue from 1779, which is in Latin, while most of the other catalogues, including the online one, do not specifically mention it.⁶⁹

The best insight into the extent of İbrahim Efendi's library is thus provided by Berardelli, who states that the Arabic, Persian and Turkish manuscripts in the library of the monastery of Saints John and Paul once belonged to Brother Paolo Antonino, and after his death entered the communal library.⁷⁰ Since Berardelli does not specify any other origin of the “oriental” manuscripts in the monastic library, we might assume that all of the 66 codices he lists once belonged to Paolo Antonino. However, a comparison between Berardelli's and Marciana's online catalogue reveals that only 47 of those codices eventually found their way into the Marciana collection. This happened around 1810, after the suppression of the monastic orders during the Napoleonic rule in Venice, and systematic removal, transfer, and consequent damage to the art and various objects of cultural value once housed in the Venetian monasteries and

66 See Berardelli, and Assemani, *Catalogo de' codici manoscritti orientali*.

67 Angelo M. Piemontese, “Elenco dei manoscritti persiani nella Biblioteca Marciana di Venezia,” in *Annali della Facoltà di Lingue e letterature straniere di Ca' Foscari* XIV, 3, Serie Orientale 6 (1975): 299–309; Angelo M. Piemontese, *Catalogo dei manoscritti persiani conservati nelle Biblioteche d'Italia* (Roma: Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1989); Kudret Altun, “Venedik Marciana Kütüphanesindeki Türkçe Yazma Eserler,” *Türk Dili Dergisi* 574 (1999): 892–903.

68 Nuova Biblioteca Manoscritta (<http://www.nuovabibliotecamanoscritta.it/catalogo.html>).

69 Exception is Piemontese, *Catalogo dei manoscritti persiani*, 319.

70 For the inventory see Berardelli, 231–40. On the provenance of the books see 168–70: “*Orientalum vero linguarum Codices, Turcicae, Arabicae, Persicae, usui quondam fuere Fratris Pauli Antonini Affendi Albanensis, Turcae prius religione, & origine Christiani deinde nominis, ac Praedicatorii Instituti professoris, eoque vita functo, in communem Bibliothecam repositi sunt, ipsique plene addicti.*”

confraternities.⁷¹ In what follows, I consider the contents of İbrahim Efendi's library based on Berardelli's description of all the codices, recent cataloguing information on those codices that ended up in Marciana, as well as my own observations on the select manuscripts I had a chance to consult.

So, what kind of books did İbrahim/Abraham bring with him to Venice? Can we assume that he collected these books over time and read them himself? In which way does the content of his library correspond to or contradict the biographical sketch that he provides in his petition to the Venetian Doge? Does it confirm the perception of him by contemporaries like Donà, especially with respect to the claim that he was a *medrese*-educated scholar who could have gone on to become the chief military judge or even the chief jurist? And what of the claim we find in his obituary that his conversion to Christianity followed feverish reading of Arabic Christian books while he was a tax collector in Egypt? Unlike some of his peers in Ottoman chancery who were more literarily inclined, İbrahim does not seem to have left any written work or a personally compiled miscellany that could give us a better insight into his intellectual and spiritual outlook.⁷² However, his collection makes it possible to explore the questions posed above.

First of all, with sixty-six volumes this was a substantial collection for late seventeenth-century standards: a recent study of book collecting and reading in seventeenth-century Istanbul classifies those who owned between 50 and 90 titles as "bibliophiles," one category below the "mega owners" at the top.⁷³ Based on figures from probate registers, İbrahim's library was comparable to those of many high-ranking bureaucrats.⁷⁴ Although we cannot dismiss the possibility that he simply bought books from somebody's estate after their death, given the cost that would entail as well as the content of the library, we have every indication that this was a collection put together over time by a man with particular intellectual horizons, professional needs, and spiritual outlook that echo İbrahim's trajectory as reconstructed in the first part of the paper.

71 Nora Gietz, "The Effects of Revolutionary and Napoleonic Policy on the Artistic Patrimony of Venice (1797 and 1806–1814)" (PhD diss., University of Warwick, Coventry 2013).

72 See, for instance, the case of Ragıb Mehmed Pasha (d. 1763), the bureaucrat and later Grand Vizier, who compiled a personal miscellany containing references to his interests and works held in his own personal library. See Sievert, "Eavesdropping on the Pasha's Salon."

73 See Meredith Moss Quin, "Books and Their Readers in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul" (unpublished PhD diss., Harvard University, 2016), 87.

74 See Henning Sievert, "Verlorene Schätze – Bücher von Bürokraten in den *Muhallefât*-Registern," in *Buchkultur in Nahen Osten des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*, eds. Tobias Heinzmann and Henning Sievert (Bern: Peter Land AG, 2010), 234.

The thing that strikes one upon a closer look at the contents of the codices from İbrahim's collection is a near complete⁷⁵ absence of texts related to Islamic theology (Ar. *kalām*) and law (Ar. *fiqh*) – subjects key to any Muslim scholar's training, especially at the higher levels of *medrese* education.⁷⁶ Except for the short exegesis of *surat al-fātiha* in one of the codices,⁷⁷ absent are also the disciplines of Qur'anic commentary (Ar. *tafsīr*) and the study of the Prophetic tradition (Ar. *ḥadīth*). This, combined with the fact that it included only a volume containing parts of the Qur'an rather than the entire text,⁷⁸ would have made İbrahim's collection of little use to scholars like Maracci seeking to understand Islamic sciences and scholarly apparatus, although it should be remembered that even such scholarly centers like Padua did not have access to a copy of the Qur'an or its excerpts at the time. Did İbrahim perhaps intentionally leave the books on Islamic law and theology behind because he was afraid that they could potentially compromise him at his destination? This appears unlikely: after all, some of the other books he brought along that contained religious texts could have been equally compromising. One could speculate that he left such books behind in anticipation of teaching "Oriental" languages, but if he had any information on what was expected or needed from such a teacher in Europe at the time, he would have known that a knowledge of both Arabic and Qur'anic sciences were in great demand by European literati seeking services of scholars coming from the Ottoman domains.⁷⁹ If, however, we take into consideration the fact that he was a financial clerk, omission of particular subjects from his collection becomes less surprising. Probate registers of eighteenth-century Ottoman bureaucrats suggest that, unlike the *ulema*, the bureaucrats generally preferred books for personal refinement, intellectual edification, worldly

75 I say "near complete" because several codices that may have contained texts that are related to some aspects of these subjects – judging from Berardelli's cursory description of contents – have gone missing since he published his catalogue. For instance, Cod. cx (Berardelli, 235) may have been a *fetva* collection.

76 Ottoman *medreses* were ranked according to the payment their instructors were receiving, ranging from twenty *akçe* for the lowest to fifty *akçe* for the highest level of the so called "outer" system. After completing these stages of learning, a student moved to the "inner" system that was the equivalent of the "graduate education," pursued in the institutions established by the sultans (*medāris-i ḥākāniye*). See Ahmet Tunç Şen, "The Sultan's Syllabus Revisited: Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Madrasa Libraries and the Question of Canonization," *Studies Islamica* 116 (2021): 198–235, 206–7. For a discussion of the Ottoman *medrese* rankings and their curricula see Cāhid Baltacı, *xvi. Asırlar Osmanlı Medreseleri* (Istanbul: İrfan Matbaası, 1976), 35–45; Cevat İzgi, *Osmanlı Medreselerinde İlim*, Vol. 1 (Istanbul, 1997), 36–38; 61–107.

77 Berardelli, 234, Cod. CVII; Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana [hereafter BNM] Or. 37.

78 Ibid., Cod. CVI; BNM Or. 15.

79 See Girard, "Teaching and Learning Arabic"; Bevilacqua, *The Republic of Arabic Letters*.

wisdom and moral comportment (encompassed by the concept of *ādāb*) over traditional Islamic sciences, so in this respect the absence of books on *kalām*, *fiqh*, *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth* in İbrahim's collection fits his professional profile.⁸⁰ However, it does raise the question of whether İbrahim had indeed completed higher levels of *medrese* education and attained the *ulema* rank, as Donà and İbrahim's obituary suggest.

That is not to say that the books taught in Ottoman *medreses* were entirely absent from his collection. Based on the available studies of Ottoman educational curricula, it appears that İbrahim's collection included all the key books taught at the elementary school (*sıbyan mektebi*) and lower level *medreses* in terms of Arabic syntax (*naḥw*) and morphology (*şarf*). Thus, it included morphology primers such as *Taşrīf al-‘izzī* by ‘Izz al-Dīn ibn İbrāhīm al-Zanjānī,⁸¹ *Mirāḥ al-arwāḥ* by Aḥmad b. ‘Alī Ibn Mas‘ūd,⁸² and *Kitāb al-mirāḥ fī sharḥ mirāḥ al-arwāḥ* (a commentary on Ibn Mas‘ūd's work),⁸³ which were taught to students just starting their education.⁸⁴ There was also *al-Maqşūd fī ‘ilm al-taşrīf*, a text on morphology ascribed to Abū Ḥanīfa, which was taught at middle levels of *medrese* education.⁸⁵ In terms of syntax, the collection featured staples such as *Al-Kāfiya* of Ibn al-Ḥājib, al-Jurjānī's *al-Awāmil al-mī‘a*, al-Muṭarrizī's *al-Mişbāḥ*, as well as Ya‘qūb b. ‘Alī al-Bursevī's *Sharḥ i‘rāb dibācat al-Mişbāḥ* (a commentary on al-Muṭarrizī's *I‘rāb dibācat al-Mişbāḥ*).⁸⁶ There were also more advanced texts on syntax, some of which were taught at the higher levels of *medrese* education, like ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (Molla Cami)'s *al-Fawā'id al-diyā'iyya fī sharḥ al-Kāfiyya*, a commentary on Ibn al-Ḥājib's *al-Kāfiya*.⁸⁷ His collection also included other commentaries on *al-Kāfiya*, such as that of ‘Alī al-Qārī (d. 1605), entitled *al-Faṭḥ al-rabbānī fī sharḥ al-Zanjānī*⁸⁸

80 See Sievert, "Verlorene Schätze," 221; Sievert, "Eavesdropping," 167–68.

81 Berardelli, 238, Cod. CXLV; BNM Or. 11, 41v–56r (another copy is contained in Cod. CXLVI; BNM Or. 12).

82 Ibid., Cod. CXLV; BNM Or. 11, 1v–39v.

83 Ibid., Cod. CXLI; BNM Or. 29.

84 For instance, famous Ottoman scholar Taşköprüzade (d. 1561) lists these *şarf* books (and the *naḥw* books mentioned further in the paragraph) as the ones with which he began his studies under the watchful eyes of first his father and then tutor, before starting *medrese* education. See Betül Can, "Fatih Döneminden Tanzimat'a Kadar Osmanlı Medreselerinde Arapça Öğretimi" (PhD diss., Gazi Üniversitesi, Ankara 2009), 99.

85 Berardelli, 238, Cod. CXLV; BNM Or. 11, 56v–79v. On its usage in *medrese* education see Can, Fatih Döneminden, 156.

86 Berardelli, 236, Cod. CXXV; BNM Or. 17.

87 Ibid., Cod. CXXVI; BNM Or. 18. This text is listed as taught in *medreses* by İbrahim's contemporary, İshak b. Hasan al-Tokadi (d. 1689) in his *Naẓmu'l-‘ulūm*. See Can, Fatih Döneminden, 117.

88 Berardelli, 238, Cod. CXLII; BNM Or. 9, 3v–43v.

and by another unidentified commentator.⁸⁹ Furthermore, İbrahim also brought several Arabic dictionaries, like Fîrûzâbâdî's *Al-Qāmûs*⁹⁰ and İsmâ'il b. Hammâd al-Jawharî's *al-Şihâh fî al-lughat*,⁹¹ as well as Ahterî's Arabic-Turkish dictionary (completed in 1545),⁹² all of which were used at the highest levels of *medrese* education.⁹³

In light of this, one might argue that İbrahim's collection was superbly equipped for training anyone who aspired to acquiring the basics of Arabic language. However, the collection did not seem to include any classical texts on rhetoric (Ar. *ilm al-balāgha*),⁹⁴ the mastery of which was central to the social capital of the increasingly prominent and politically ambitious Ottoman scribal class in the second half of the seventeenth century.⁹⁵ This absence is interesting both in light of İbrahim's own career as a scribe of central Ottoman bureaucracy and his aspiration to improve *giovani di lingua*'s facility with higher registers of Ottoman Turkish, but it is likely reflective of his specialization as a financial rather than chancery clerk. Besides having at his disposal one unidentified *inshā'* (epistolary and prose writing) manual, which has been lost,⁹⁶ it would appear that İbrahim could teach Ottoman *belāğat* (rhetoric) and *feşāhat* (eloquence) through classical texts in Ottoman Turkish, such as Hoca Sa'deddin's history entitled *Tāci'ü't-Tevārîh*⁹⁷ and Ali Çelebi's *Hümâyün-nāme* (Turkish translation of *Anwār-i Suhaylî* of Ḥusayn Wā'iz Kāshifi)⁹⁸ – both of which were well loved and frequently owned by Ottoman bureaucrats⁹⁹ – as well as a compilation of stories about wonders of the Creation (*'acā'ib ve*

89 Ibid., 236, Cod. CXXVII; BNM Or. 19.

90 Ibid., 238, Cod. CXLVIII, which did not make it into the Marciana collection.

91 Ibid., Cod. CXL; BNM Or. 16.

92 Berardelli, 239, Cod. CXLIX; BNM Or. 21.

93 See Shahab Ahmed and Nenad Filipovic, "The Sultan's Syllabus: A Curriculum for the Ottoman Imperial *medreses* Prescribed in a fermān of Qānūnī I Süleymān, Dated 973 (1565)," *Studia Islamica* 98/99 (2004), 183–218, 204–5, and Can, Fatih Döneminden, 115, 132. For a re-evaluation of Ahmed and Filipovic' arguments and a more complete picture of subjects and books studied at imperial *medreses* see Şen, "Sultan's Syllabus Revisited".

94 These were, for instance, al-Qazwīnī's (d. 1338) *Talkhīs al-Miftāḥ*; the commentary on it by al-Taftazānī (d. 1390), entitled *Al-Mutawwal*, and the abridgement of the latter work, also by al-Taftazānī, *Al-Mukhtaṣar*. See Christopher Ferrard, "Ottoman contributions to Islamic rhetoric" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh 1979).

95 Tusalp Atiyas, *Political Literacy*, 132–91.

96 Berardelli, 237, Cod. CXXXIII.

97 Ibid., 235, Cod. CXIV; BNM Or. 30.

98 Ibid., Cod. CXV; BNM Or. 31.

99 See Sievert, "Verlorene Schätze," 238–39.

ġarā'ib),¹⁰⁰ Lamii Çelebi's *İbretnâme*,¹⁰¹ and two texts by Kemalpaşazade, *Risāle-i yā'īya* (on the meaning of Persian ending *-ī*) and *Dağ'āyik al-ħakā'yik* (on explanation of 400 Persian words).¹⁰²

Another way of helping Venetian *giovani di lingua* master the eloquence of Ottoman Turkish was to also teach them Persian, the vocabulary, grammar, and literary rhetoric of which were integral to Ottoman *belāġat* and *feṣāħat*.¹⁰³ For this task Abraham could rely on several Persian-Turkish dictionaries in his collection, such as *Baħr al-ġharā'ib* of Luṭf Allāh b. Abi Yūsuf Ḥalīmī¹⁰⁴ and *Lughat-i Ni'mat Allah*,¹⁰⁵ as well as 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Angūrī's (fl. 1356) prosodic Arabic-Persian dictionary, entitled *Silk al-javāhir*, with interlinear Ottoman Turkish glosses.¹⁰⁶ He also had at his disposal a versified primer of Arabic metric in Persian with interlinear Turkish glosses (Farāhī's *Niṣāb al-ṣibyān*) as well as other similar texts featuring *elsine-i selāse*, or the three literary languages of the Ottoman Muslims.¹⁰⁷ Many of these texts were used in Ottoman *medreses* in the late 17th and 18th centuries.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, İbrahim's collection included some Persian classics that were very popular with Ottoman bureaucrats, such as the *Pandnāma* of Aṭṭār¹⁰⁹ and Sa'dī's *Gulistān*,¹¹⁰ as well as the famous *inshā'* collection of 'Abd al-Raḥman Jāmī (*Munshaāt-i Jāmī*).¹¹¹

In addition to these, İbrahim/Abraham brought with him a variety of texts that he would have used in his career as a financial scribe. Thus, there is a volume on mathematical calculations (Ar. *ħisāb*) containing unspecified texts

100 Berardelli, Cod. CXI; BNM Or. 32.

101 Ibid., 237, Cod. CXXXII; BNM Or. 44.

102 Ibid., 237, Cod. CXXXI; BNM Or. 25. In the online catalogue of Nuova Biblioteca Manoscritti this manuscript is mistakenly identified with Cod. CXXXVII in Berardelli's catalogue, which is in fact BNM Or. 197.

103 On Persian manuscripts in İbrahim's collection see items number 381, 383, 389, 396, 397, 400, 402, and 403 in Piemontese, *Catalogo dei manoscritti persiani*, 335–48. For a recent discussion of knowledge of Persian and Persia in Venice see Giorgio Rota, *Under Two Lions: On the Knowledge of Persia in the Republic of Venice (ca. 1450–1797)* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009), who also reflects on İbrahim's role in the transmission of this knowledge (43). I thank Giorgio Rota for making a copy of the Piemontese catalogue available to me.

104 Berardelli, 237, Cod. CXXXVII; BNM Or. 197.

105 Ibid., 238, Cod. CXLIII; BNM Or. 35.

106 Ibid., 239, Cod. CLII; BNM Or. 47.

107 Ibid., 239, Cod. CLIII; BNM Or. 42.

108 See Can, Fatih Döneminden, 124 (under the rubric of "Furs").

109 Berardelli, 237, Cod. CXXX; BNM Or. 38.

110 Ibid., 240, Cod. CLV; BNM Or. 46. See also Sievert, "Verlorene Schätze," 238.

111 Berardelli, 237, Cod. CXXXIX; BNM Or. 45. See also Sievert, "Verlorene Schätze," 238.

in Persian and Ottoman Turkish,¹¹² a volume on lunar calendar,¹¹³ and two unidentified and lost volumes that Berardelli described as “expense book” (*liber expensarum*), which may have been actual tax registers of some kind.¹¹⁴ Although training in *hesap* was part and parcel of the *medrese* curriculum, here we have a selection of texts that befitted more an Ottoman tax collector. For instance, the five practitioners of astrology that Grand Vizier Fazıl Ahmed Köprülü took on the campaign to Belgrade in 1663 were all also tax collectors, one of whom, Tezkireci İbrahim, partially translated Noel Duret’s *Nouvelle theorie de planets* into Ottoman Turkish.¹¹⁵ Many of these tax collectors were also subsequently involved in the reform of the Ottoman calendar in 1677 that was supposed to lead to more just taxation practices.¹¹⁶ An indispensable tool for a tax collector also would have been ‘Ayn ‘Alī’s *Ḳavānin-i āl-i Osmān*, a treatise from 1607 on the Ottoman Empire’s *timar* system and its revenues, which İbrahim also brought with him to Venice.¹¹⁷ The encyclopedic character of his collection is rounded off by several unidentified and now lost books on logic (Ar. *manṭiq*) in Persian and Arabic,¹¹⁸ as well as two lost volumes in Arabic that Berardelli describes as *summulae* and *quaedam ad summulas spectantia*¹¹⁹ – most likely referring to works on dialectic method (Ar. *ādāb al-baḥṭh*) and disputation (Ar. *jadal*), which were experiencing resurgence in the 17th-century Islamic world.¹²⁰

The profile that emerges of İbrahim as a collector is that of a learned man who possibly completed lower to middle levels of *medrese* curriculum but pursued mainly the scribal profession and had wide-ranging interests reflective of scribal elite culture. But what picture do we get of İbrahim as a spiritual man? What kind of Muslim was he and do we get any insight into his turn towards Christianity?

112 Ibid., 236, Cod. CXVI; BNM Or. 22. The text in Persian may actually be ‘Alī Kuşçu’s *Risāle der ‘ilm-i ḥisāb*. See Cevat İzgi, “Osmanlı medreselerinde aritmetik ve cebik eğitimi ve okutulana kitaplar,” *Osmanlı Bilimi Araştırmaları* 1 (1995): 137–38.

113 Berardelli, 236, Cod. CXVII; BNM Or. 39.

114 Ibid., Cod. CXVIII and Cod. CXIX.

115 Küçük, *Science without Leisure*, 109; 119.

116 Ibid., 109; 132–35.

117 Berardelli, 235, Cod. CXIII; BNM Or. 36, copied in 1619.

118 Ibid., 236, Cod. CXX; Cod. CXXI, and Cod. CXXII.

119 Ibid., Cod. CXXIII and Cod. CXXIV.

120 Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 60–96. The description in Latin probably derives from *Summulae logicales*, the title of the standard textbook on logic by Peter of Spain (13th c.). See <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/peter-spain/> (accessed on 26 April 2021).

The books that İbrahim brought give an elusive sense of what kind of Muslim he might have been. On the one hand, his library contained several texts that point to mainstream Sunni sensibility, such as the famous poem in praise of the Prophet, *Qaṣīda al-Burda* by the Mamluk-era poet al-Būṣīrī (d. c.1294),¹²¹ and a miscellany containing the most popular Ottoman Sunni Hanafi catechetical texts, such as Birgivi Mehmed's (d. 1573) *Vaṣīyetnâme*, Kadızade Mehmed's (d. 1635) *Risāle-yi şalāt*, and the anonymous *Cevāhirü'l-islām* (c.1540).¹²² Interestingly, İbrahim seems to have acquired this miscellany from someone named Mehmed Ayyub only in 1679 – which would have been *after* his conversion to Christianity, if his own testimony to the Doge is to be believed. His collection seems to have contained other devotional texts, including what was likely a book of sermons¹²³ and a book on “divine love” (possibly a Sufi treatise?),¹²⁴ but they were lost in the meantime.

What did survive, however, are three interesting volumes of Sufi poetry: two copies (one partial) of the *divan* of the (in)famous Hurufi poet İmaduddin Nesimi (d. c.1417) and one volume of devotional poems (*ilahî*) by various Sufi authors of the Halveti and Celveti *silsiles*. One of the codices containing Nesimi's poems is a miscellany that has an inscription stating: “This is the miscellany of the true 12 saintly men” (*Yā maǧmū'a al-ṣadīqī ithna 'ashara rijālan*), presumably referring to the 12 imams (venerated by the Twelver Shi'ites). In addition to Nesimi's poems, the miscellany contains various other texts, including epistolary models and some records of commercial transactions, and can be dated to c.1668–1670.¹²⁵ The other codex contains only Nesimi's *divan* in Turkish and was copied by a certain Dervīş Şāliḥ Pīr al-'Abbār (?) in 1621.¹²⁶ The miscellany with the Halveti and Celveti Sufis' *ilahîs*, on the other hand, contains the *Ṭarīkatnâme* and devotional poems by Mahmud Hüdaiyî (d. 1628), the famous Celveti Sufi, followed by the poems of Küçük Mahmud Efendi (?), Zakirzade 'Abdullah Efendi (also a Celveti, d. 1657), Eşrefzade

121 Berardelli, 237, Cod. CXXXVIII; BNM Or. 10.

122 Ibid., 234, Cod. CVII; BNM Or. 37. On these catechisms see Tijana Krstić, “From *Shahāda* to *Aqida*: Conversion to Islam, Catechization, and Sunnitization in Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Rumeli,” in *Islamisation: Comparative Perspectives from History*, ed. Andrew C.S. Peacock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 296–314; Tijana Krstić, “State and Religion, ‘Sunnitization’ and ‘Confessionalism’ in Süleyman's time,” in *The Battle for Central Europe: The Siege of Szigetvar and the Death of Suleyman the Magnificent and Miklos Zrinyi (1566)*, ed. Pál Fodor (Budapest, Leiden: Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Brill, 2019), 65–91.

123 Berardelli, 234, Cod. CVIII (“Turcarum Orationes & Devotiones”).

124 Ibid., 235, Cod. CIX (“De Amore Dei juxta opinionem Turcarum”).

125 Berardelli, 237, Cod. CXXXV; BNM Or. 23.

126 Ibid., Cod. CXXXVI; BNM Or. 43.

(possibly Eşrefzade Rumi, d. 1469), Ömer Fuadi (a Halveti, d. 1636), and ‘Abd al-Ahad Nuri Sivasi (a Halveti, d. 1651).¹²⁷

It is difficult to surmise from this whether İbrahim had inclinations towards a particular Sufi order, let alone an affiliation with one. Even though Nesimi was one of the central poetic voices of Alevi Islam and a model for the Safavid Shah Ismail’s own poetry,¹²⁸ he also inspired many Ottoman Sufis of different *silsiles*, such as Halveti master Niyazi-i Mısrî, and was generally considered a talent who, as an Ottoman biographer put it in his *Tezkire*, was “first to make a name for himself through poetry in the Turkic tongue.”¹²⁹ Also, unlike Shah Ismail’s poetry, Nesimi’s was much more complex in language and content, suggesting that he envisioned as his audience intellectual elites, possibly of more urban background.¹³⁰ Indeed, that is exactly what the Ottoman scribal class professed itself to be, especially in the second half of the seventeenth century, and being steeped in Sufi ethos and poetic language was characteristic of the scribes as a “sociotextual” community.¹³¹ As several scholars have recently pointed out, most notably Derin Terzioğlu in her work on confessional ambiguity, the notion that the enlightened elites (Ar. *khawāṣṣ*) were permitted to engage with the “most controversial strands of peripatetic philosophy and intellectual Sufism,” as long as they did so in intimate gatherings rather than in the presence of commoners (Ar. *‘awāmm*) in public spaces, was well established in Ottoman culture, even during the “age of confession-building” and Sunnitization.¹³² Philo-Alidism, or non-sectarian veneration of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and the Prophetic Household (*ahl al-beyt*), which included the Twelve Imams issuing from the line of ‘Alī, was part and parcel of both Ottoman Sufi ethos and the elite intellectual culture it informed, although the level of

127 Ibid., Cod. CXXXIV; BNM Or. 26.

128 On overlaps between the two, see Ferenc Csirkés, “Messianic Oeuvres in Interaction: Misattributed Poems by Shah Esmā‘il and Nesimi,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 8 (2015): 155–94.

129 Ottoman poet Latifi (d. 1582), quoted in Kathleen R.F. Burrill, *The Quatrains of Nesimi, Fouteenth-Century Turkic Hurufti* (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1972), 24. On Niyazi-i Mısrî’s reading of Nesimi see Derin Terzioğlu, “Mecmū‘a-i Şeyh Mısrî: On yedinci yüzyıl ortalarında Anadolu’da bir derviş sülükunu tamalarken neler okuyup yazdı?,” in *Mecmua: Osmanlı edebiyatının kırkambarı*, eds. Hatice Aynur et al., (Istanbul: Turkuaz, 2021), 291–321.

130 Csirkés, “Messianic Oeuvres,” 157.

131 This is Tusalp Atiyas’ term, which she borrows from Sheldon Pollock. See Tusalp Atiyas, *Political Literacy*, 38.

132 See Derin Terzioğlu, “Confessional Ambiguity in the Age of Confession-Building: Philo-Alidism, Sufism and Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, 1400–1700,” in *Entangled Confessionalizations?*, eds. Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu (Picataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2022), 563–624, 593–594.

tolerance for it fluctuated over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹³³ Thus, having two volumes that contain Nesimi's poetry, one of which makes a respectful reference to the 12 imams, does not automatically make İbrahim an Alevi, Bektashi or a Shi'ite, but rather situates him within this milieu of the Ottoman elite culture open to the search for higher spiritual truth, in which various Sufi luminaries, past and present, as well as 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and his descendants, were considered eminent guides.¹³⁴

So, İbrahim's manuscripts containing Muslim devotional and catechetical texts do not necessarily depart from the profile of him as representative of the Ottoman scribal class. Where his collection does go beyond typical is when we get to his collection of Christian texts in Arabic and Turkish. He owned copies of the Old Testament,¹³⁵ Psalms of David,¹³⁶ the New Testament,¹³⁷ Acts of the Apostles,¹³⁸ the Apocalypse¹³⁹ and a lost volume of *psalmi poenitentiales*,¹⁴⁰ all in Arabic. There was also a book on Jesus' miracles and the Vita of St. Mary of Egypt in Arabic, now lost,¹⁴¹ as well as a volume on canonical hours according to the Coptic rite, in Coptic.¹⁴² These last few items suggest that İbrahim obtained a number of his Christian manuscripts in Egypt, seemingly corroborating the story found in his obituary that it was here that he read "day and night" Christian sermons in Arabic, which led him to realize the truth of the Gospel and the deception of the "Muhameddan superstition."¹⁴³ In Egypt (or from Egypt) he obtained another interesting manuscript, Abū al-Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī's (d. 1048) *Kitāb al-āthār al-bāqiya 'an al-qurūn al-khāliya (Vestiges of the Past)* (c.1000), a work by a Muslim who, just like İbrahim, was keenly interested in the history and culture of different peoples, including various

133 Ibid. Terzioğlu argues that in the second half of the seventeenth century, following the normalization of Sunni-Shi'i relations after the Treaty of Zuhab in 1639, non-sectarian Philo-Alidism was given more leeway, especially towards the very end of the century, which witnesses a sort of "societal pushback to decades of Sunni revivalist ascendancy in the Ottoman imperial center". Ibid, 604.

134 On Ottoman bureaucrats' interest in mysticism see also Sievert, "Eavesdropping," 174, 177; Sievert, "Verlorene Schätze," 220. That being said, Sievert does not record any other instance of a bureaucrat owning Nesimi's divan.

135 Berardelli, 231, Cod. XC; BNM Or. 1.

136 Ibid., Cod. XCI; BNM Or. 2.

137 Ibid., 232, Cod. XCIII; BNM Or. 3.

138 Ibid., Cod. XCIV; BNM Or. 4.

139 Ibid., Cod. XCV; BNM Or. 5.

140 Ibid., Cod. XCII.

141 Ibid., 234, Cod. CIII and Cod. CIV.

142 Ibid., 233, Cod. XCVIII; BNM Or. 48.

143 Ibid., 168.

denominations of Christians living in Islamic domains.¹⁴⁴ The work is essentially a comparative study of calendars, but included other information on mathematics, astronomy, and history that would have been of interest to İbrahim as a financial clerk. It also included the earliest known reference in an Arabic source to *Risāla al-Kindī* (*Apology of al-Kindī*), the well-known polemical tract by ‘Abd al-Masīh b. Iṣḥāq al-Kindī (late 8th/early 9th c.), an Arab Christian, in defense of Christianity against Islam.¹⁴⁵

In addition to these, İbrahim obtained several volumes containing treatises of Eastern Christian authors in Arabic. One, copied in Lebanon c.1529,¹⁴⁶ contained the writings of Athanasius of Alexandria (Athanasīyūs al-Iskandarī) (d. 373); Paul of Antioch (Būlus al-Rāhib al-Anṭākī), the bishop of Sidon (early 13th c.);¹⁴⁷ Elias of Nisbis (Iliyya ibn Shina or Bar Shinaya) (d. 1046), a “Nestorian” author with great reputation in the Islamic world;¹⁴⁸ and Sophronius “The Sophist,” Archbishop of Jerusalem (d. 638).¹⁴⁹ Another volume contained the writings of St. John Chrisostom, St. Basil and John of Damascus.¹⁵⁰

However, it is the third volume, also containing a work of John of Damascus, that suddenly reveals clues to İbrahim’s life and career prior to arrival in Venice, which are not mentioned in heretofore known and published documents.¹⁵¹ The online catalogue entry by Sara Fani identifies the copyist of this manuscript as Ghrīghūr al-Ḥājī b. Ḥājī ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥūrī al-Manṣūr, nicknamed Ibn Yūsuf al-Najjār al-Ḥalabī, an Orthodox prelate from Aleppo who completed the manuscript in Constantinople, on 25 May 1689/Shahān AH 1100.¹⁵² Here we must return to the chronicle of Demetrios Ramadanes, the Phanariot clerk (*megalos spathares*) whose work covers the period of 1648–1704. He reports on

144 See the English translation of al-Biruni’s work by Edward Sachau, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations* (London: William H. Allen, 1879).

145 Berardelli, 234, Cod. CI; BNM Or. 14. In fact, the title of the entry in Berardelli’s catalogue is “Dialogus de rebus Fidei Christianum inter, & Mahumetanum.” The manuscript is copied in Egypt in AH 1092/1681 (in Coptic year 1397). On al-Kindī’s *Apology* and its growing popularity among Syriac Christians in the seventeenth century see P.S. van Koningsveld, “The Apology of al-Kindī,” in *Religious Polemics in Context*, eds. Theo L. Hettema et al. (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2004), 69–92.

146 Ibid., 232, Cod. xcvi; BNM Or. 6.

147 David Thomas, “Paul of Antioch,” *Christian-Muslim Relations 600–1500*, doi: 10.1163/1877-8054_cmri_COM_25473 (accessed on 29 April 2021).

148 Juan Pedro Monferrer Sala, “Elias of Nisibis,” *Christian-Muslim Relations 600–1500*, doi: 10.1163/1877-8054_cmri_COM_23350 (accessed on 29 April 2021).

149 Daniel J. Sahas, “Sophronius, ‘the Sophist,’” *Christian-Muslim Relations 600–1500*, doi: 10.1163/1877-8054_cmri_COM_23441 (accessed on 29 April 2021).

150 Berardelli, 233, Cod. xcix; BNM Or. 7.

151 Ibid., 234, Cod. C; BNM Or. 8.

152 <https://nbm.regione.veneto.it/StampaManoscritto.html?codice=49546> (27 April 2021).

the events from c.1690 concerning “a certain Mustafa effendi, a scribe at the *kalem* [bureau] of the Reis Effendi [i.e. Head of the Chancery], of Albanian origin, his parents Turks by birth [meaning born Muslims]”:

This man, being learned, with good knowledge of the Arabic language, and always on good terms with Christians, liked our customs, and one day he trusted a certain Hadji Grigoris from Aleppo, very erudite in the Arabic language, and asked him about the dogmas of the Orthodox faith. And Hadji Grigoris instructed him on all our dogmas. Then he went to Moses, metropolitan of Sylebria [Selymbria; Silivri], an Arab, and asked him for a Gospel in Arabic. And after he read it and understood all the advice of Christ, he was deeply moved and felt devoutness, so that he immediately decided to become a Christian. And first, he went and disclosed his aim to Tzelebi Yannakis and to the patriarch kyr Kallinikos [Kallinikos 11], being his friend, and then he went to Galata to the Capuchin friars and told them his purpose. And they too instructed him accordingly. But he told them: “Just one thing troubles me. I notice many differences among Christians, with some called Easterners, other Catholics, and yet others by other names.” And the friars replied to him: “All these are Christians. Whether Easterner or Catholic, they are the same.” So, he believed and left Istanbul and went to Venice, and after he was baptized as Stepahnos, he became a Franciscan friar.¹⁵³

Since it would be exceedingly unlikely that two clerks from the Ottoman chancery, both of Albanian origin and learned in Arabic letters, socialized at the same time with a certain Hadji Grigoris of Aleppo and approached him for information on Christian religion, subsequently converting to Christianity and escaping to Venice where they entered a monastic order, we have to wonder whether Mustafa Efendi from Ramadan's chronicle was actually our İbrahim. The identification of Mustafa Efendi with İbrahim is also supported by the contents of the manuscript Hadji Grigoris copied for İbrahim, which is the work of John of Damascus known as *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* (the title in Arabic in the manuscript is *al-Mī'ah maqālah fī al-imān al-urthūdhukī*),¹⁵⁴ and thus directly corresponds to the purpose of instruction in faith that bound the two men according to Ramadan. It is not clear why Ramadan would

153 Konstantinos N. Sathas, *Mesaioniki Vivliothiki*, vol. 3 (Venice: Tipis tou Hronou, 1872), 42–43. I am grateful to Nikolas Pissis for translating this passage from Greek.

154 <https://nbm.regione.veneto.it/StampaManoscritto.html?codice=49546> (accessed on 30 April 2021).

substitute the names (both Muslim and baptized) of the Ottoman clerk, but it is possible that he had reasons to protect İbrahim's identity. Interestingly, he openly mentions the names of the Christian prelates involved in this incident of conversion, which included men from the very center of the Orthodox Christian establishment in the Ottoman Empire, such as the thrice-patriarch Kallinikos II (1688, 1689–1693, 1694–1704), an ally of Dositheos II, Patriarch of Jerusalem (1669–1707), and by extension, of Grand Dragoman Alexandros Mavrocordatos (in office 1673–1709).¹⁵⁵

Our İbrahim Efendi thus emerges as an epitome of what Sir Paul Rycaut dubbed – no doubt tendentiously – *chupmessahi* (presumably from *hubmessihi*) or “good followers of messiah” sect, by which he referred to views held by “the young scholars in the Grand Signiors Court” who maintained that Christ was God and Redeemer of the World. Rycaut claimed that there were many wearers of the white turban in Constantinople who secretly professed these views and were ready to openly confess to it and even suffer martyrdom.¹⁵⁶ While it is unlikely that there existed a “crypto-Christian” clique among the Ottoman scribes, it appears that frequent contacts with various Christian dignitaries, both Ottoman and foreign, helped İbrahim Efendi – and possibly other Ottoman bureaucrats – access, explore, and discuss more freely Christian writings and beliefs under the guise of everyday business of governance.

3 Conclusion

Based on his petition to the Doge, his book collection, as well as various circumstantial evidence, it appears that İbrahim's spiritual journey to Christianity was a long process that may have lasted for almost three decades, from the late 1660s to the early 1690s, and unfolded in several stages. The first and longest part of that journey appears to have started in Egypt and entailed a gradual acceptance of general Christian beliefs and doctrines, most of which İbrahim encountered through the writings of Eastern Christian authors, in Arabic. If we accept Ramadanes' story, once İbrahim came to view Christian beliefs and doctrines as true, he was confronted with the multiplicity of Christian denominations, which in the era of confessional polarization must have presented a

155 On the common causes of these three men see Nikolas Pissis, *Russland in den politischen Vorstellungen der griechischen Kulturwelt 1645–1725* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlage, 2020).

156 Paul Rycaut, *The History of the Present State of the Otoman Empire* (London: R. Clavell, J. Robinson and A. Churchill, 1686), 244–45. See also Sariyannis, “Aspects of ‘Neomartyrdom,’” 258.

particular challenge to any intellectually inclined Muslim or Jew contemplating conversion to Christianity. Upon his arrival in Venice, this journey continued within the more specific framework of post-Tridentine Catholicism.

Interestingly, İbrahim's petition to the Doge tells a different story, one that possibly attempts to "Catholicize" his trajectory and cover up the long and intensive exposure to what could have appeared to the Venetian Catholic establishment as "schismatic" influences.¹⁵⁷ So rather than dating his conversion to late-1680s Constantinople and acknowledging the help of various Orthodox clergy who were apparently involved in the process, İbrahim back-projects it to the 1670s and credits a Catholic chaplain of the Habsburg envoy to the Ottomans as the person through whom he received the sacrament of baptism. We might therefore read the petition to the Doge as evidence of İbrahim's – or rather Abraham's – newly acquired confessional and political insight. This insight he may have acquired during the time he spent in Rome, some time in 1691–1692, where he went to "perfect" his understanding of faith, and where he likely encountered many other converts to Catholicism and learned how to tell his story in a way that elicits a positive response from Catholic authorities.¹⁵⁸ Unlike many Ottoman converts to Catholicism in Venice, whose stories Natalie Rothman analyzed based on the records of the Casa di Catechumeni, in his petition to the Doge Abraham did not simply present his conversion in terms of a change in personal circumstance and spatial transition (Istanbul to Venice), but highlighted individual choice to become Christian and Catholic while being an Ottoman official, and the process of inner transformation

157 Although the Greek Orthodox establishment in Venice at this time, represented by the Metropolitans of Philadelphia Gerasimos Vlachos (d. 1685) and Meletios Typaldos (d. 1713), was moving closer towards a rapprochement with Catholicism and practice of "interconfessional tolerance," precisely the opposite was true of the Orthodox ecclesiastical circles in Constantinople who sought to curb Catholic missionary influence and conversions to Catholicism while articulating Orthodox confession. On Venice see Dimitris Paradoukalis, "Coexistence and conciliation between Greek Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism in Venice – The case of Gerasimos Vlachos (1607–1685), Cretan Metropolitan of Philadelphia" (PhD diss., Universität Hamburg, Hamburg, 2021); on Constantinople, especially on the activities of Dositheos of Jerusalem, see Norman Russell, "From the 'Shield of Orthodoxy' to the 'Tome of Joy': The Anti-Western Stance of Dositheos II of Jerusalem (1641–1707)," in *Orthodox Constructions of the West*, eds. George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 71–82.

158 See Cesare Santus, "Wandering Lives – Eastern Christian Pilgrims, Alms-Collectors and 'Refugees' in Early Modern Rome," in *A Companion to Religious Minorities in Early Modern Rome*, eds. Emily Michelson and Matthew Coneys Wainwright (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 237–71.

that it was premised on.¹⁵⁹ This drama of inner transformation is elaborated even further in his obituary, which details his intense engagement with the Christian Scriptures while serving in Egypt, although it is impossible to know whether this was flourish added *post mortem* by his Dominican brethren or a reflection of Abraham's own evolving sensibility about how to narrate his conversion. The dossier of İbrahim's conversion was clearly composite, with multiple authors and locations that affected the details of the narrative.

Part of this process of learning how to present himself may have entailed making changes to his *curriculum vitae* to accentuate his academic credentials in Islamic sciences. As we saw, İbrahim's collection did not contain any volumes in Islamic law, theology, or Prophetic traditions, all of which were mainstays of *medrese* education, especially at the higher levels, making it doubtful that he at any point embarked on the formal hierarchical scholarly/judicial (*ilmiye*) path. Rather, for the most part, he appears to have been a reference library befitting of a bureaucrat working in the financial services, who may have completed lower to mid-levels of *medrese* curriculum. While *ulema's* reputation as epitomes of learning was challenged in the Ottoman Empire at this very time by the ascending scribal class adept in a variety of epistemic fields, in Venice, being a "doctor" of Islamic sciences rather than "only" a bureaucrat would have likely enhanced the value of İbrahim's conversion in the eyes of the authorities and his job prospects at the time of increasing demand for Christians learned in "Oriental" languages. Bailo Donà suggested that much by choosing to emphasize İbrahim's supposed *ulema* credentials, and the Dominicans' obituary reflects pride in the fact that a converted Muslim "doctor" joined their order.¹⁶⁰ We might read this "framing" of İbrahim by the Venetian diplomatic and religious officials as well as his own presentation of his background as part of the negotiation and calibration of the Ottoman and Venetian understandings of what "elite" meant in the Ottoman context.

Despite the known documentary evidence featuring Abraham's own words, it is, thus, his manuscript collection that turns out to be his most important autobiographical "statement" and key to understanding the complexity of the routes that brought him to Venice and poised him to contribute to the study of Ottoman culture as well as "oriental" languages and sciences in Serenissima. Looking at his collection as a unit provides fascinating insights into both

159 On narratives by Ottoman converts from Islam to Catholicism in Venice see Rothman, *Brokering Empire*, 87–121.

160 Donà's understanding of the hierarchical order of Ottoman society is also expressed in his *Della letteratura*, 17–18, where he speaks "della precedenza delli Dottori" over all other social groups other than the royal family.

his educational and spiritual horizons, allowing us to trace his explorations between different registers of elite learning, as well as within and between Islamic and Christian traditions. Viewing it only in terms of “Turkish,” “Persian” or “Arabic” manuscripts it contained, or blending it without indication into the larger collection of the “oriental” manuscripts in Marciana, facilitates what Rothman has dubbed as “amnesia” of Orientalism’s genesis, and impedes the study of the “specific communicative circuits and institutionalized genres of knowledge” that it was premised on.¹⁶¹

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¹⁶¹ Rothman, *The Dragoman Renaissance*, 11.

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