International Symposium on Mullâ Khusraw, 18-20 November 2011, organized by the Faculty of Theology, Uludağ University & Bursa Metropolitan Municipality, Bursa-Turkey

Mullâ Khusraw (d. 885/1480), one of the earliest prominent Ottoman scholars, was the theme of the international symposium held in Bursa, Turkey, on 18-20 November 2011. In addition to thirty five Turkish participants from different Turkish universities, five foreign researchers represented Hungary, Italy, the United States and Canada. The purpose of the twenty two papers presented at the conference was to bespeak attention to the personality, the works, and the influence of Mullâ Khusraw. It is regrettable that neither the Index Islamicus nor the Arabic Union Catalogue contains a single publication on Mullâ Khusraw. To provide an accessible scholarly work on his scholarship, the organizers intend to publish the proceedings during the year. In particular, Ottomanists and Islamicists would welcome this publication.

The scope of the conference was introductory, holistic and descriptive. The reason of such an approach is justified, on the one side, by the scarcity of scholarly insights in Mullâ Khusraw’s writings. On the other, most of his works are still unedited. As a starting point, the papers of this conference will be a necessary reference for any research on Mullâ Khusraw as well as on early Ottoman intellectual history. At any rate, the conference claims legitimately an impact on how the role of Mullâ Khusraw was perceived in the formative period of Ottoman culture.

The scholarly presentations covered five major topics: the biography of Mullâ Khusraw, his contributions to science, law, spirituality, and literature. The first topic was addressed by four speakers. A general outlook of the Ottoman culture and society was presented by Remzi Demir. Vejdi Bilgin tackled the issue of fasâd al-zamân (corruption of time) as a recurrent motif in Sunnî beliefs and traditions whereas Tevfik Yücedoğru offered an insight on the meaning of Abl al-sunna in the interpretation of Mullâ Khusraw. A great deal of information on Mullâ Khusraw himself was provided by Ferhat Koca while Mefail Hızlı elucidated Mullâ Khusraw’s teaching activity at the madrasa of Bursa.
The impact of Mullâ Khusraw on the Ottoman scientific thought in his time is evident. In this regard, Mullâ Khusraw’s *Risâla fi l-mushkilât al-mashbûra fi ‘ilm al-bay’a* on astronomy was assessed by İhsan Fazlıoğlu. As for his famous treatise *al-Muḥâkamat*, which reveals his keen propensity for argument, it was examined from different perspectives by three speakers. İbrahim Halil Üçer discussed some logical problems of definition in relation to metaphysics as seen by Mullâ Khusraw. The realistic argumentation of Mullâ Khusraw was emphasized by Jonathan A. C. Brown. Further, A. Belhaj explored the dialectical structure of Mullâ Khusraw’s book, which combines logical coherence and ethical concerns.

Mullâ Khusraw’s contribution to law was by far the most important field discussed in the conference. Indeed, twelve presentations addressed Mullâ Khusraw’s legal scholarship. Most presentations disclosed theoretical questions of *usûl al-fiqh* as seen by Mullâ Khusraw. Recep Cici inspected his place in Ottoman legal thought. The theory of *ijtihād* according to Mullâ Khusraw was framed by H. Yunus Apaydın. Aisha Y. Musa canvassed the relationship of reason and transmission in Mullâ Khusraw’s conception of *Sunna*. Abdurrahim Kozalı examined Mullâ Khusraw’s *Sbarḫ usûl al-Bazdawī*. M. Salih Kumaş reiterated the meaning of *ijtihād*, *taqlîd*, and *madhab* bigotry in Mullâ Khusraw’s writings. *Fiqh* matters provided opportunities to observe Mullâ Khusraw’s work as a mufti. In this respect, Nicola Melis studied *Kitâb al-jîbâd* from Mullâ Khusraw’s *Durar wa-Ghurar*. The legal opinion of Mullâ Khusraw on the issue of patronage, *walâ‘*, was analyzed by Şükür Özen. Finally, Eugenia Kermeli inquired into Mullâ Khusraw’s view of the legal status of non-Muslims.

In addition to Hanâfî law, an Ottoman scholar would be required to have predilection for Sufism and kalâm. It is of importance then to show Mullâ Khusraw’s Sufi connections. This task was carried out by Abdurrezak Tek. Conversely, kalâm seems to be neglected by Mullâ Khusraw. However, Orhan Şener Koloğlu investigated an aspect of his theology through the study of his understanding of *husn-qubh* problem, which is closely related to legal theory as well. Walid A. Saleh displayed Mullâ Khusraw’s craft as a commentator on the Qur’ān while his gloss on *al-Muţawwal* was shown by Musa Alak to be a noteworthy work in Arabic rhetoric. İsmail Güler demonstrated the literary skill of Mullâ Khusraw through a “parallel” poem (*naẓîra*). Be that as it may, none of the speakers claimed Mullâ
Khusraw to have transformed the mentioned disciplines. Yet it is instructive and interesting that they highlighted the interdisciplinary of Mullā Khusraw’s scholarship, his interest in the culture of his time and his open-mindedness.

Research results were sometimes fascinating as several participants provided cases where Mullā Khusraw was practicing *ijtihād*. Nevertheless, most speakers agreed that he did not try to go beyond the Ottoman cultural system. As Tevfik Yücedoğru puts it, since there was no fire in the Ottoman system at the moment, Mullā Khusraw did not proceed to extinguish it. Probably, what the Ottomans needed most was an effective legal apparatus. Therefore, Mullā Khusraw directed his efforts to legal scholarship. With this in mind, the conference was informative inasmuch as it introduces us to the Ottoman intellectual processes in the 15th century.

Several speakers suggested continuing further reflection and study of Mullā Khusraw. On the one hand, a pressing necessity to edit his manuscripts was frequently expressed. Sometimes speakers were limited in their conclusions in the lack of an established corpus of Mullā Khusraw. On the other, the research trend shows that law was at the heart of the Ottoman society and its culture. For that reason, a more comprehensive study of practical questions of *fiqh* is anticipated to be of utmost significance.

Finally, refreshing ideas were emerged at the conference, mainly the idea of a co-inclusive study of religious and historical aspects of Ottoman culture. Thus, the conference itself was a successful example of the probing of a decisive period in the Ottoman intellectual history. A close reading of religious and literary texts of Mullā Khusraw is likely to help historians understand better the perception of Ottoman realities by an outstanding member of the Ottoman intellectual elite.

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