

Ilahiyat Studies

A Journal on Islamic and Religious Studies

ISSN: 1309-1786

Volume 17 Number 1 Winter/Spring 2026



Bursa İlahiyat
Foundation

İLAHIYAT STUDIES
A Journal on Islamic and Religious Studies
www.ilahiyatstudies.org
Volume 17, Number 1, Winter/Spring 2026

Publisher	: Bursa İlahiyat Foundation
Editors-in-Chief	: Ulvi Murat Kılavuz, <i>Bursa Uludağ University, Türkiye</i> Seda Ensarioğlu, <i>Bursa Uludağ University, Türkiye</i>
Editors	: Kevser Demir Bektaş, <i>Bursa Uludağ University, Türkiye</i> Merve Yavuz, <i>Bursa Uludağ University, Türkiye</i> Zeynep Sena Kaynamazoğlu, <i>Bursa Uludağ University, Türkiye</i> Zeynep Yücedoğru, <i>Bursa Uludağ University, Türkiye</i>
Associate Editors	: Büşra Tamaç İrgüren, <i>Bursa Uludağ University, Türkiye</i> Muhammed Eren Karadağ, <i>Bursa Uludağ University, Türkiye</i> Veysel Cuşkun, <i>Bursa Uludağ University, Türkiye</i>
Field Editors	: Fatma Kızıl, <i>Yalova University, Türkiye</i> Güllü Yıldız, <i>Marmara University, Türkiye</i> Kasım Küçükalkp, <i>Bursa Uludağ University, Türkiye</i> Kemal Ataman, <i>Marmara University, Türkiye</i> Mehmet Angay, <i>Bursa Uludağ University, Türkiye</i> Samed Yazar, <i>Bursa Uludağ University, Türkiye</i>
Book Review Editor	: Recep Erkmen, <i>Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University, Türkiye</i>

EDITORIAL BOARD

Abdulkader I. Tayob, <i>University of Cape Town, South Africa</i>	Jules Louis Janssens, <i>KU Leuven, Belgium</i>
Afnan H. Fatani, <i>King Abdul-Aziz University, Saudi Arabia</i>	L.W. C. van Lit, <i>Yale University, USA</i>
Asma Afsaruddin, <i>Indiana University, USA</i>	Maribel Fierro, <i>Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales, Spain</i>
Ayman Shihadeh, <i>University of London, UK</i>	Omid Safi, <i>Duke University, USA</i>
Bülent Uçar, <i>Universität Osnabrück, Germany</i>	Sabine Schmidtke, <i>Freie Universität Berlin, Germany</i>
Carl W. Ernst, <i>University of North Carolina, USA</i>	Wael Hallaq, <i>Columbia University, USA</i>
David Thomas, <i>University of Birmingham, UK</i>	Walid Saleh, <i>University of Toronto, Canada</i>
Ercan Alkan, <i>Marmara University, Türkiye</i>	Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, <i>University of Technology Malaysia, Malaysia</i>
Frank Griffel, <i>Yale University, USA</i>	William Chittick, <i>Stony Brook University, USA</i>
Gabriel S. Reynolds, <i>University of Notre Dame, USA</i>	
James W. Morris, <i>Boston College, USA</i>	

Ilahiyat Studies is published online (e-ISSN: 1309-1719) biannually by Bursa İlahiyat Foundation, Bağlarbaşı Mh. 3. Elif Sk. No: 12, Osmangazi, Bursa-Türkiye.

Aims and Scope: *Ilahiyat Studies* is an international, open access, peer-reviewed multidisciplinary journal dedicated to publishing scholarly articles on all aspects of Islam and the Muslim peoples and on religious studies. Available online and published twice a year, the journal aims to become one of the leading platforms in the world for new findings and discussions of all fields of Islamic and religious studies.

Abstracting & Indexing: *Ilahiyat Studies* is currently indexed in and abstracted by *Atlas PLUS*, *Emerging Sources Citation Index (Web of Science)*, *Humanities International Index*, *Humanities Source Ultimate*, *Index Islamicus*, *Religious and Theological Abstracts*, and *Scopus*.

Disclaimer: The publisher and Editors can not be held responsible for errors or any consequences arising from the use of information contained in this journal; the views and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the editors and publisher.

Copyright © All articles published by Bursa İlahiyat Foundation in this journal are licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4)

İLAHİYAT STUDIES

Volume 17, Number 1, Winter/Spring 2026

CONTENTS

Seda Ensarioğlu	From the Editor	iii
ARTICLES		
Orhan Musahanlı	An Overshadowed Akbarī Sufi in Fourteenth-Century Anatolia: Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī and His Intellectual Legacy	3
Nevfel Akyar	Peripheral Fire: Once Upon a Time in Daskyleion and Western Anatolia	43
Davut Eşit	Multilingualism in Family Law According to Shāfiʿī Madhhab	89
Esra İrk, Ümran Erkorkmaz Çoban, Elif Çağlayan & Armin Jasarevic	Contemplation in Two Muslim Countries: A Comparative Qualitative Study in Türkiye and Bosnia- Herzegovina	125
Sebiha Yıldız & Ali Ayten	Cyberspirituality: A New Form of Spiritual Practice and Existential Presence in the Digital Realm	165

Ahmet Dağ & Ahamadou Sylla	Transhumanism: A Religious Movement Opposing Religion in the Digi Age	195
Kadir Gömbeyaz & Fatma Aygün	Cosmic Destruction and the Eschatological Threshold: A Comparative Analysis of the Apocalypse Motif in the Qur'ân, Mythology, and Turkish Folk Narratives	213

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear readers,

Welcome back to the new issue of *Ilahiyat Studies*. Firstly, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to Prof. Dr. Muhammet Tarakçı, who is stepping down from his role as Editor-in-Chief — where he shoulder-borne the immense responsibility of our journal— and will continue to support us as Publisher Director. We are also delighted to welcome Asst. Prof. Recep Erkmen and Res. Asst. Büşra Tamaç as they join us as associate editors beginning with this issue, their contributions will strengthen our journal even further.

This issue of *IS* features seven research articles. In the first article, “An Overshadowed Akbarī Sufi in Fourteenth-Century Anatolia: Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī and His Intellectual Legacy”, Orhan Musahanlı offers a critical analysis that clarifies the persistent identity dilemma involving the two scholars from the same period who lived in the 14th century: Badr al-Dīn al-Tustarī and Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī. Although the first scholar was widely studied, the latter has been little known owing to the mixing of manuscripts. Using a highly detailed comparative approach, the author manages to distinguish the scholars’ identities and create a portrait of Shams al-Dīn as a thinker. According to the findings, he represents a Sufi from Anatolia living in Konya and serving as the Mamlūk rulers and Eşrefoğlu family’s patron, whose contribution lies in his unique combination of Peripatetic philosophy and Akbarī Sufism.

In the second article, “Peripheral Fire: Once Upon a Time in Daskyleion and Western Anatolia”, Nevfel Akyar analyzes the existence and development of the Iranian religions like Zoroastrianism in the Western Anatolia under the reign of the Achaemenids, with particular attention to Daskyleion and Sardis. Using archaeological,

epigraphic, and textual sources, this work will look at the ways how key Zoroastrian beliefs and practices have survived as a result of their adaptation in the region rather than enforcement by the state. The author emphasizes the flexibility and plurality of the imperial environment where the overall tolerance of Persians has helped local cults develop alongside Iranian ones.

In the article “Multilingualism in Family Law According to Shāfi‘ī Madhhab”, Davut Eşit offers an extensive examination of the use of languages other than Arabic in family laws belonging to the Shāfi‘ī madhhab. Through analyzing disputes regarding the languages used in matters such as marriage (*nikāḥ*), divorce (*ṭalāq*), and imprecation (*li‘ān*), the author explores the way in which the jurists managed to reconcile the sanctity of Arabic with practical considerations arising from the social diversity of language use. Even though there was a group of scholars who stressed adherence to the principles of *naşş*, the main trend within the school was that of multilingualism – acceptance of the usage of the native tongue even by those familiar with Arabic.

The article, “Contemplation in Two Muslim Countries: A Comparative Qualitative Study in Türkiye and Bosnia-Herzegovina”, by Esra İrk, Ümran Erkorkmaz Çoban, Elif Çağlayan, and Armin Jasarevic, investigates the perception of contemplation (*tafakkur*) among Muslims in Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The study makes use of a semi-structured interview approach and content analysis and the results reveal that contemplation in both cultures is a multifaceted activity that adds to the psychological well-being and spiritual life of individuals. In addition, there are some unique cultural differences whereby the Turkish respondents consider contemplation associated with nature and positive feelings whereas the Bosnian respondents take part in metaphysical reflection regarding historical events and experience both positive and negative feelings.

The article entitled “Cyberspirituality: A New Way of Practicing Spirituality and Being in the Digital World” by Ali Ayten and Sebiha Yıldız has introduced a novel concept by presenting cyberspirituality as a way of explaining the conceptual uncertainties associated with religion and spirituality in the digital world. Using the literature review method, the research presents cyberspirituality as an independent sub-category of spirituality mediated through technology, which is different from both the conventional religions and the digital religion.

This research illustrates the way this emerging category helps include a wide range of spiritualities practiced by individuals as they make sense out of themselves through a number of processes carried out digitally.

In their article, “Transhumanism: A Religious Movement Opposing Religion in the Digi Age”, Ahmet Dağ and Ahamadou Sylla criticize transhumanism with regard to its scientific assumptions and theological essence. As a secular idea focused on physical improvement of people (Human 2.0), transhumanism demonstrates similarities with religious attempts of achieving eternal life. There is an interesting comparison of religion’s pursuit of spiritual ascension with the transhumanist pursuit of material perfection. Being based on statistics that demonstrate the connection between automation and weakening of religious beliefs, the paper discusses the way digitalization negatively impacts religious identities. In the end, the researchers provide a deep analysis of the way transhumanism challenges modern religions.

In the last article of this issue, “Cosmic Destruction and the Eschatological Threshold: A Comparative Analysis of the Apocalypse Motif in the Qur’ān, Mythology, and Turkish Folk Narratives”, by Kadir Gömbeyaz and Fatma Aygün, a comparative perspective of apocalyptic and cosmic destruction tales is given with the help of an anthropological approach to the idea of liminality. With the use of the Qur’ānic verses, classical myths, and Turkish tales, the author claims that such stories serve as the structure of transition between chaos and order, as opposed to just being accounts of destruction. This research shows that different concepts of time exist in various cultures: the Qur’ān suggests a linear irreversibility of the event with the divine intervention; mythological ideas imply a cyclic nature moving towards cosmic regeneration; Turkish folktales combine these two notions within their collective memory.

We, the editorial team, express gratitude to our authors, reviewers, and readers for their continued support and look forward to being with you in the next issues of *Ilabiyat Studies*.

Seda Ensarioğlu

Bursa Uludağ University, Bursa-Türkiye
sedaensari@uludag.edu.tr
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2928-9595>

ARTICLES

*An Overshadowed Akbarī Sufi in Fourteenth-Century Anatolia:
Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī and His Intellectual Legacy*

Orhan Musahanlı



*Peripheral Fire: Once Upon a Time in Daskyleion and Western
Anatolia*

Nevfel Akyar



Multilingualism in Family Law According to Shāfiʿī Madhhab

Davut Eşit



*Contemplation in Two Muslim Countries: A Comparative Qualitative
Study in Türkiye and Bosnia-Herzegovina*

Esra İrk, Ümran Erkorkmaz Çoban, Elif Çağlayan & Armin Jasarevic



*Discussions on Cyberspirituality: A New Form of Spiritual Practice
and Existential Presence in the Digital Realm*

Sebiha Yıldız & Ali Ayten



*Transhumanism: A Religious Movement Opposing Religion in the
Digi Age*

Ahmet Dağ & Ahamadou Sylla



*Cosmic Destruction and the Eschatological Threshold: A Comparative
Analysis of the Apocalypse Motif in the Qur'ān, Mythology, and
Turkish Folk Narratives*

Kadir Gömbeyaz & Fatma Aygün



AN OVERSHADOWED AKBARĪ SUFĪ IN FOURTEENTH-CENTURY ANATOLIA: SHAMS AL-DĪN MUḤAMMAD AL-TUSTARĪ AND HIS INTELLECTUAL LEGACY

Orhan Musahanlı

Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi, Afyonkarahisar-Türkiye

orhan.musahanli@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9081-3771>

Abstract

This study addresses a long-standing case of identity confusion in Islamic intellectual history between two contemporaneous 8th/14th-century scholars known as al-Tustarī: Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī and Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī (d. 732/1332). While Badr al-Dīn al-Tustarī, a prominent theologian and philosopher, has been well documented, Shams al-Dīn's life and intellectual legacy have remained largely in obscurity. Using a comparative methodology that examines paratextual elements of their works –such as introductions, conclusions, titles, dedications, and places of composition– this research clearly distinguishes the two figures. It then reconstructs

Ilahiyat Studies

e-ISSN: 1309-1719

Volume 17 Number 1 Winter/Spring 2026

DOI: 10.12730/is.1892274

Article Type: Research Article

Received: February 18, 2026 | *Accepted:* May 7, 2026 | *Published:* June 30, 2026

To cite this article: Musahanlı, Orhan. "An Overshadowed Akbarī Sufi in Fourteenth-Century Anatolia: Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī and His Intellectual Legacy". *Ilahiyat Studies* 17/1 (2026), 3-42.
<https://doi.org/10.12730/is.1892274>

This work is licensed under *Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International*.

Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī's intellectual profile through an analysis of his authenticated works. The findings indicate that Shams al-Dīn was a 14th-century Anatolian Sufi active in Konya, who was active within the political sphere of the Eşrefoğlu principality and enjoyed Mamlūk patronage. His intellectual outlook reflects an original synthesis of Avicennan philosophy and Akbarī Sufism. By resolving this confusion, the study restores Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī's rightful place in Islamic intellectual history and sheds light on the sophistication of Anatolian Sufi thought. Since the extant and identifiable works by Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī are largely limited to texts attributed to Badr al-Dīn al-Tustarī, particular care has been taken to distinguish between the two figures. In addition, several works belonging to Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī that were not attributed to Badr al-Dīn al-Tustarī have been identified and are examined separately in this article. In light of the available evidence, it appears that Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī has not, to date, been the subject of an independent biography in either classical biographical literature or modern academic scholarship.

Key Words: Tasawwuf, 14th-century Anatolia, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, akbarism, Eşrefoğlu principality, Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī

Introduction*

In the history of Islamic thought, the confusion of scholars who lived in the same period and who bore similar names constitutes a significant research problem.¹ In this context, the identity confusion between two scholars bearing the *nisbah* al-Tustarī who lived in the 8th/14th century –Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī (d. after 727/1327) and Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī (d. 732/1332)– is clearly observable both in classical biographical sources and in

* I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the anonymous reviewer, who drew my attention to the works authored and copied by the Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī in the Reisülkütab and Fatih collections, thereby helping to guide the arguments of this study on a sound footing; who also pointed out the attribution to Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī in Muḥammad ibn Maṣṣūr al-Maqdisī's (d. after 795/1393) commentary on *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*; and whose numerous valuable suggestions and corrections have been instrumental in bringing this article to its present form.

¹ Yasin Apaydın, "Timurlu Dönemi Herat'ında Bir Müderris: Mesud Şirvânî'nin (ö. 905/1500) Entelektüel Biyografisine Doğru", *İslam Tetkikleri Dergisi* 13/2 (September 2023), 507-509; Mustafa Yasin Akbaş, "Mesâbîhu's-Sünne Şerhlerinden *Miftâbu'l-Fütûb*'un Eşref el-Fukkâî'ye Aidiyeti Meselesi", *Şırnak Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 27 (December 2021), 208-233.

modern academic studies. The personality of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī has been lost, remaining in the shadow of his contemporary Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, who became famous as a student of al-Bayḍāwī (d. 685/1286) and a commentator on his works; he authored works that comparatively deal with the commentaries on *al-Ishārāt* by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) and Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274), who are commentators on Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037).² The subject of this article, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, has remained overshadowed by Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, a situation that has made it difficult to reconstruct his biography and intellectual legacy. This gap in the literature necessitates a systematic examination of the differences between the lives, works, and intellectual frameworks of the two scholars.

First, while our study addresses the issue of the relative obscurity of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī's scholarly identity, it takes as its central point of departure the problem of name confusion with Badr al-Dīn al-Tustarī as one of the main underlying causes. Nevertheless, it is clear that explaining the matter solely on the basis of this similarity is insufficient. Notably, a scholar who lived in Anatolia and whose works circulated within the region, some of them even entering palace libraries, is not mentioned by a figure such as Kātib Chalabī (d. 1067/1657), who authored comprehensive bibliographical works. In particular, the absence of any reference to Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī's commentary on *Manāzil al-sā'irīn* in contexts where numerous commentaries on this work are listed suggests that his scholarly legacy may have been overlooked.

In this respect, rather than attributing Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī's limited recognition solely to name confusion, it may be argued that additional factors played a determining role, such as the restricted circulation of his works, their omission from the

² Zeynep Tslıgkır, *Bedreddin et-Tüsterî'nin* (ö. 732/1332) el-Muhâkemât beyne Şerhayî'l-Işârât *Adh Eserinin Tabkik ve İncelemesi* (İstanbul: Marmara University, Institute of Social Sciences, Master's Thesis, 2017); Abū 'Abd Allāh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn As'ad al-Tustarī, *Majma' al-durar fî sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar: wa-buwa sharḥ Mukhtaṣar Ibn al-Hājib fî uṣūl al-fiqḥ wa-aḥad al-shurūḥ al-sab'ah al-sayyārah*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ghāzī Khaṣīfān - Ismā'īl al-Ḥājj - 'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Rasīnī (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2018); Abū 'Abd Allāh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn As'ad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ Minbāj al-wuṣūl ilā 'ilm al-uṣūl*, ed. Ibrāhīm ibn Ṣamāyil al-Sulamī (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2019).

bibliographical sources of the period, and the absence of an independent biographical transmission (for instance, by his students or later generations) that could have rendered him more visible within the scholarly tradition. Taken together, these considerations indicate that Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī's marginal presence in the literature is the result of multiple interrelated causes.

In addition to these points, this study aims to identify the causes of the attributional confusion between the two al-Tustarīs and to elucidate the biography, works, and intellectual world of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī in light of the criteria that distinguish him from Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī. To help resolve this problem, this research comparatively analyzes the prefaces and colophons of the works of both scholars, the epithets and titles they employed, the individuals to whom they dedicated their works, and the places where these works were composed. In addition, a content analysis of the works identified as belonging to Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī is conducted to examine his intellectual system. This approach will not only help eliminate the existing confusion in the literature but also contribute to a better understanding of the intellectual tradition of Anatolia, the geographical context in which Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī lived.

In line with this objective, we first comparatively analyze the aspects in which the biographies of the two scholars differ, such as *nisbabs*, titles, geographical affiliations, and scholarly networks; we then introduce the works that we have definitively identified as belonging to Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, namely, *al-Fuṣūl al-Ashrafiyyah*, *Juhd al-muqill*, *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, *Sharḥ al-aḥādith al-arbaʿīn*, *Risālat al-qadā' wa-l-qadar*, *Kāshifat asrār al-ḥaqā'iq*, and *al-Risālah al-mughbniyah*. In the content analysis of these works, where appropriate, we seek to highlight the points of intersection between Peripatetic philosophy and Akbarī Sufi thought in his intellectual system. This approach facilitates a sound presentation of the intellectual world of the true author of the aforementioned works.

In distinguishing between Badr al-Dīn al-Tustarī and Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, a comparative analysis –presented in tabular form– of the style and expressions found in the manuscript copies of the works attributed to both scholars, as well as their epithets and titles, and the

dedication and colophon records, is used to elucidate the differences between them. Subsequently, the works belonging to Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī are introduced and subjected to a brief content analysis, through which a framework of his intellectual world is outlined. In the final stage, the work attempts to demonstrate the position and significance of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī within the context of the intellectual history of the period.

1. Between Two Figures Named al-Tustarī: Establishing the Identity of Shams al-Dīn

The figure of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī has been largely eclipsed by his contemporary, famous scholar Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī.³ This situation is observable in both classical and modern sources. Many studies have tended to present these two distinct thinkers as a single figure, attributing their works to one another and conflating details of their lives.⁴ Within this historical context, reconstructing the biography of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī necessarily requires, first and foremost, an effort to distinguish him from Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī. To ensure a reliable differentiation, it is necessary to briefly address the life and works of

³ Abū Muḥammad Jamāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ibn al-Ḥasan al-Isnawī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyyah*, ed. ‘Abd Allāh al-Jubūrī (Baghdad: Ri‘āsat Dīwān al-Awqāf, 1390-1391/1970-1971), 1/319-320.

⁴ The issue of Kamāl al-Dīn Ibn Abī Sharīf (d. 906/1500) attributing Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī’s *Risālat al-qaḍā’ wa-l-qadar* to Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī in his work *al-Musāmaraḥ sharḥ al-Musāyarah* is addressed separately when the aforementioned treatise is introduced. See Kamāl al-Dīn Ibn Abī Sharīf, *al-Musāmaraḥ sharḥ al-Musāyarah*, ed. Kamāl al-Dīn Qārī - ‘Izz al-Dīn Ma‘maysh (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-‘Aṣriyyah, 2004), 138-139. Indeed, an examination of the studies conducted on Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī shows that his works have at times been confused with those of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī. As an example of this situation, one may cite a modern study focusing on Badr al-Dīn al-Tustarī’s (d. 732/1332) *al-Muḥākamāt bayna Sharḥay al-Ishārāt*. See Zeynep Tslılgır, *Bedreddin et-Tüsterî’nin (ö. 732/1332) el-Muhâkemât beyne Şerhayîl-İşârât Adlı Eserinin Tabkik ve İncelemesi*, 12-16. For studies that attribute Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī’s *Risālat al-qaḍā’ wa-l-qadar* to Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, see Yadullāh Ghulāmī, “Badr al-Dīn Tustarī”, *Dā’irat al-Ma‘ārif-i Buzurg-i Islāmī* (Tehran: Markaz-i Dā’irat al-Ma‘ārif-i Buzurg-i Islāmī, 1381 HS), 11/544-545; ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Khaṣīfān, “Muqaddimah”, *Majma‘ al-durar fī sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, auth. Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2018), 1/75; Ibrāhīm ibn Ṣamāyil al-Sulamī, “Muqaddimah”, *Sharḥ Minḥāj al-wuṣūl ilā ‘ilm al-uṣūl*, auth. Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2019), 1/59.

Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, as highlighted in historical sources, and subsequently to demonstrate that Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī refers to a distinct identity from that of Badr al-Dīn al-Tustarī.

Most of the information we possess about Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Asʿad al-Tustarī is based on the accounts transmitted by the renowned Shāfiʿī jurist and legal theorist al-Isnawī (d. 772/1370).⁵ Al-Isnawī relates that Badr al-Dīn al-Tustarī, to whom he refers as “our shaykh,” taught in Qazvin for approximately twenty years, traveled to Egypt at the beginning of 727 AH and remained there for several months, during which he attended his lessons, and that al-Tustarī subsequently moved on to Iraq. He further states that until his death in Hamadān in the 730s AH, al-Tustarī spent the summer months in Hamadān and the winter months in Baghdād because of its warmer climate.⁶

Owing to al-Isnawī’s close acquaintance with him and his status as his student, the relatively detailed information he provides constitutes a primary source. Indeed, this circumstance resulted in al-Isnawī serving as the main source for most of what was later reported about the aforementioned al-Tustarī.⁷

In addition to the circumstances of his life, al-Isnawī also discusses in detail his teacher’s works. According to his account, Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī was a versatile scholar who composed commentaries on Ibn al-Ḥājjib’s (d. 646/1249) *Mukhtaṣar* in uṣūl al-fiqh; Sirāj al-Dīn al-Urmawī’s (d. 682/1283) *Maṭālīʿ al-anwār* in logic and philosophy; al-Bayḍāwī’s *Ṭawālīʿ* in kalām, *Minhāj* in uṣūl al-fiqh, and *al-Ghāyah al-quswā* in furūʿ al-fiqh. Indeed, al-Isnawī characterizes his teacher as “the imām of his age in kalām, uṣūl al-fiqh, logic, and philosophy, a scholar who was both a *muḥaqqiq* and a *mudaqqiq*,” thereby highlighting his scholarly stature.⁸

In light of the information provided by al-Isnawī, it is noteworthy

⁵ Al-Isnawī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyyah*, 1/319-321.

⁶ Al-Isnawī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyyah*, 1/320.

⁷ Abū l-Faḍl Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *al-Durar al-kāminah fī aʿyān al-miʿab al-thāminah*, ed. Hāshim al-Nadwī et al. (Hyderabad, Dakkan: Maṭbaʿat Majlis Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyyah, 1392/1972), 5/119; Abū l-Falāh ʿAbd al-Ḥayy Ibn al-ʿImād al-Ṣāliḥī, *Shadharāt al-dhabab fī akbbār man dhabab*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Arnāʾūt - Maḥmūd al-Arnāʾūt (Beirut - Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1406-1414/1986-1993), 8/179-180.

⁸ Al-Isnawī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyyah*, 1/320.

that Anatolia is not mentioned among the regions visited by his teacher Badr al-Dīn al-Tustarī. Moreover, although he showed interest in many fields and authored works, it is also noteworthy that his student al-Isnawī did not include any connection between him and Sufism.

One of the principal reasons why Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī has frequently been confused with Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī⁹ is that, in the prefaces and colophon records of his works, he identifies himself simply as “Muḥammad al-Tustarī”. The attribution of the title “Shams al-Dīn” to him is possible not directly but rather through indirect indications, such as references found on the flyleaf pages of his works or expressions within the text, such as “the Sun of Tustar” (*Shams Tustar*).¹⁰ In contrast, Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī explicitly includes the *laqab* “Badr al-Dīn” in the introductions and colophon records of his works. The most important evidence for distinguishing between Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī and Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī lies in the modes of naming they employ in the title pages and colophon records of their works. The following two tables compare these differences.

Table I: Title Records Attributed to Badr al-Dīn al-Tustarī and Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī

Name Records Attributed to Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī	Name Records Attributed to Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī
أما بعد فيقول العبد الفقير المحتاج إلى عفو ربّه القدير محمّد بن أسعد اليمني المدعوّ بيدر التستري ... Thus, says Muḥammad ibn As‘ad al-Yamanī, the poor servant in need	تأليف الفقير إلى الله تعالى محمّد التستري عفا الله عنه ووفقه للصواب. The book of Muḥammad al- Tustarī, the servant in need of God Most High. May God forgive him

⁹ A. C. S. Peacock’s statement –based on *Kashf al-zunūn*– that Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī maintained a friendship with the Ilkhanid ruler Öljeytū is incorrect. See A. C. S. Peacock, *Islam, Literature and Society in Mongol Anatolia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 57. The passages in *Kashf al-zunūn* clearly indicate that it was Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī who was on friendly terms with Öljeytū. The relevant statement reads: “*Muḥammad ibn As‘ad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Tustarī ... min shu‘arā’ Sulṭān Muḥammad Khudābanda*”/Muḥammad ibn As‘ad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Tustarī was among the poets of Öljeytū.” See Ḥājī Khalīfah Muṣṭafā ibn ‘Abd Allāh Kātib Chalabī, *Kashf al-zunūn ‘an asāmi l-kutub wa-l-funūn*, ed. M. Şerefettin Yaltkaya - Kilisli Rifat Bilge (İstanbul: Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1971), 1/540.

¹⁰ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Risālat al-qaḍā’ wa-l-qadar* (İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya, 1006), 69b.

of the forgiveness of his Omnipotent Lord, who is called Badr al-Tustarī ... ¹¹	and grant him success in what is right ... ¹²
أَمَّا بَعْدُ فَيَقُولُ الْعَبْدُ الْحَقِيرُ الْفَقِيرُ إِلَى عَفْوِ رَبِّهِ الْكَبِيرِ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ أَسْعَدَ الْيَمَنِيِّ الْمَلَقَّبُ بِبَدْرِ التُّسْتَرِيِّ ... Thus, says Muḥammad ibn As‘ad al-Yamanī, known by the laqab Badr al-Tustarī, the humble servant in need of the forgiveness of his Great Lord ...¹³	وَبَعْدُ فَإِنَّ الْفَقِيرَ إِلَى الْغَنِيِّ مُحَمَّدًا التُّسْتَرِيَّ يَقُولُ ... Thus, says Muḥammad al-Tustarī, the servant in need of God Most High ...¹⁴
وَبَعْدُ فَإِنَّ أَفْقَرَ خَلْقِ اللَّهِ إِلَى رَحْمَةِ رَبِّهِ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ أَسْعَدَ الْيَمَنِيِّ ثُمَّ التُّسْتَرِيَّ ... Thus, [says] Muḥammad ibn As‘ad al-Yamanī, then [known as] al-Tustarī, the one among His creation most in need of the mercy of his Lord ...¹⁵	وَبَعْدُ فَإِنَّ الْفَقِيرَ إِلَى الْغَنِيِّ مُحَمَّدًا التُّسْتَرِيَّ يَقُولُ ... Thus, says Muḥammad al-Tustarī, the servant in need of God ...¹⁶
وَبَعْدُ يَقُولُ ... مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ أَسْعَدَ الْيَمَنِيِّ الْمَعْرُوفُ بِالتُّسْتَرِيِّ ... Thus, says Muḥammad ibn As‘ad al-Yamanī, known as al-Tustarī ...¹⁷	وَبَعْدُ فَإِنَّ الْفَقِيرَ إِلَى اللَّهِ مُحَمَّدًا التُّسْتَرِيَّ يَقُولُ ... Thus, says Muḥammad al-Tustarī, the servant in need of God ...¹⁸

¹¹ Abū ‘Abd Allāh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn As‘ad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ Maṭālī‘ al-anwār* (İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Ragıp Paşa, 781), 2a.

¹² Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah fī l-uṣūl al-burhāniyyah wa-l-kashfiyyah* (İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya, 2445), front flyleaf (*ḡabriyyah*).

¹³ Abū ‘Abd Allāh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn As‘ad al-Tustarī, *Kāshif al-asrār ‘an ma‘ānī Tawālī‘ al-anwār* (İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Paşa, 831), 2a.

¹⁴ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā‘irīn* (Samsun: Samsun İl Halk Kütüphanesi, 55 HK 1132), 1b.

¹⁵ Abū ‘Abd Allāh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn As‘ad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ al-Tajrīd* (Dublin: Chester Beatty Library, 3690), 1b.

¹⁶ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ al-aḫādīth al-arba‘in* (İstanbul: Millet Kütüphanesi, Feyzullah Efendi, 2163), 154b.

¹⁷ Abū ‘Abd Allāh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn As‘ad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ al-Taḥṣīl* (İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Carullah, 515), 1b.

¹⁸ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Risālat al-qaḍā’ wa-l-qadar* (Ayasofya, 1006), 69b.

أما بعد يقول ... محمد بن أسعد اليمني المشهور بالتستري ... Thus, says Muḥammad ibn Asʿad al-Yamanī, known as al-Tustarī ...¹⁹	وبعد فإن الفقير إلى الله محمدًا التستري يقول ... Thus, says Muḥammad al-Tustarī, the servant in need of God ...²⁰
وبعد يقول ... بدر الحق والدين محمد بن أسعد بن محمد اليمني ثم التستري ... Thus, says Badr al-Ḥaqq wa-l-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Asʿad ibn Muḥammad al-Yamānī, then [known as] al-Tustarī ...²¹	وبعد فإن أضعف عباد الله محمدًا التستري يقول ... Thus, says Muḥammad al-Tustarī, the weakest of God's servants ...²²

Table II: Colophon Records Attributed to Badr al-Dīn al-Tustarī and Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī

Colophon Records Attributed to Badr al-Dīn al-Tustarī	Colophon Records Attributed to Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī
حزّره مؤلّفه محمد بن أسعد اليمني الملقّب ببدر التستري في شهور سنة ثلاث وسبعمئة بمدينة تبريز صانها الله تعالى عن الآفات. The author of this work, Muḥammad ibn Asʿad al-Yamanī, known by the <i>laqab</i> Badr al-Tustarī, composed it in the city of Tabriz in the months of the year 703 [AH] – may God Most High protect him	وقد فرغ من تبويضه مؤلّفه الفقير إلى الله محمد التستري أحسن الله شأنه وصانه عما شأنه أواسط ذي القعدة من سنة عشر وسبعمئة بمدينة قونية. The fair copy of this work was completed by its author, Muḥammad al-Tustarī, the servant in need of God –may God Most High elevate his state and protect him from all that would diminish his honor– in the city of Konya in the middle of the month of Dhū l-

¹⁹ Abū ʿAbd Allāh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Asʿad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ Minbāj al-wuṣūl ilā ʿilm al-uṣūl* (İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Kadızade Mehmed, 110), 1b.

²⁰ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Risāla fī taḥqīq qawlibi taʿālā* “*Qul a-innakum la-takfurūna ...*” (İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya, 1006), 69a.

²¹ Abū ʿAbd Allāh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Asʿad al-Tustarī, *al-Muḥākamāt bayna Sharḥay al-Isbārāt wa-l-tanbībāt* (İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Fazıl Ahmed Paşa, 898), 1b.

²² Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Jubd al-muqill* (İstanbul: Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, III. Ahmed, 2112/1), 1b.

from afflictions. ²³	qa'dah in the year 710 [AH]. ²⁴
كتبه مؤلفه بدر التستري عفا الله عنه في شهور سنة سبع وسبعمئة بمدينة تبريز صانه الله عن العاهات. This work was composed by its author, Badr al-Tustarī –may God forgive him– in the city of Tabriz in the months of the year 707 [AH]; may God protect him from every affliction.²⁵	وقد فرغ من تبييضه مؤلفه الفقير إلى الله محمد التستري أوسط نهار الاثنين لأربع عشرة خلت من جمادى الآخرة من سنة 727 بمدينة قونية في المدرسة المسماة بدار الحديث الصاحبى، رحم الله بانيها. الحمد لله رب العالمين، وصلى الله على سيدنا محمد وآله وصحبه أجمعين، وحسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل. انتهى ذلك. والحمد لله وسلام على عباده. The fair copy of this work was completed by its author, Muḥammad al-Tustarī, the servant in need of God, on Monday, the fourteenth day of the month of Jumādā l-ākhirah in the year 727 [AH], at midday, in the city of Konya, in the madrasah known as Šāḥib's [Šāḥib Ātā] Dār al-Ḥadīth. May God have mercy upon its founder. Praise belongs to God, the Lord of the worlds. Blessings be upon God's Messenger Muḥammad, upon his family, and upon all his Companions. God is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs. The matter has been completed here. Praise be to God, and peace be upon His servants.²⁶

²³ Abū 'Abd Allāh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn As'ad al-Tustarī, *Kāshif al-asrār 'an ma'ānī Tawālī' al-anwār* (İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Paşa, 831), 142a.

²⁴ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah* (Ayasofya, 2445), 56b.

²⁵ Abū 'Abd Allāh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn As'ad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ Maṭālī' al-anwār* (İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Ragıp Paşa, 781), 229a.

²⁶ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā'irīn* (Samsun İl Halk Kütüphanesi, 55 HK 1132), 126a.

2. A Ḥakīm-Sufi under the Patronage of Mubārīz al-Dīn Meḥmed, the Bey of Eşrefoğlu: Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī

Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī is known to have composed works in the fields of fiqh and kalām in Tabriz, particularly in 703 and 707 AH.²⁷ In contrast, as can be understood from certain flyleaf notes and the prefaces of his works, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī authored works dealing with wisdom (*ḥikmah*) and Sufism in Konya in 710 and 727 AH. Moreover, the fact that Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī also wrote a two-volume medical treatise²⁸ clearly demonstrates that he was a distinct figure from Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī.²⁹

For instance, his work entitled *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah fī l-uṣūl al-burbāniyyah wa-l-kashfiyyah*, composed in Konya in 710 AH, was dedicated to Mubārīz al-Dīn Meḥmed Bey, the second ruler of the Eşrefoğulları Beylik. Following the death of his patron in 720 AH,³⁰ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī appears to have redirected his intellectual affiliations; thus, his *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, completed in 727 AH, was dedicated to the Mamlūk Sultan Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn.³¹ This pattern of patronage is closely tied to the geographical trajectory of his scholarly activity. He composed *Kāshifat asrār al-ḥaqā'iq* in 711 at the Nizāmiyyah Madrasah in Konya³² and *al-Risālah al-mughniyah* in 722 in Sulaymānshahr.³³ In addition to his authorial works, he was also active as a scribe: he copied Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī's (d.

²⁷ Abū 'Abd Allāh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn As'ad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ Maṭālī' al-anwār* (İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Ragıp Paşa, 781), 229a.

²⁸ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Jubd al-muqill* (İstanbul: Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, III. Ahmed, 2112/1-2).

²⁹ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah* (Ayasofya, 2445), 56b; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā'irīn* (Samsun İl Halk Kütüphanesi, 55 HK 1132), 126a; Sait Kofoğlu, "Eşrefoğulları", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1995), 11/484-485.

³⁰ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah* (Ayasofya, 2445), 1b-2a; Kofoğlu, "Eşrefoğulları", 485.

³¹ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā'irīn* (Samsun İl Halk Kütüphanesi, 55 HK 1132), 1b.

³² Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Kāshifat asrār al-ḥaqā'iq fī umūr al-dunyā wa-l-ākbarah* (İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Reîsülküttab, 1197), 140b-147b.

³³ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *al-Risālah al-mughniyah* (İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Fatih, 5302), 168b-209b.

early first quarter of the 5th/11th century) *al-Dharī‘ah* in 711 at the same Nizāmiyyah Madrasah in Konya³⁴ and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shirāzī’s (d. 710/1311) *Ikhtiyārāt-i Muẓaffarī* in 722 in Antalya.³⁵ Taken together, these data clearly demonstrate that he carried out his scholarly production predominantly within the Anatolian region over an extended period.

Further supporting the attribution of these works is a note found on the flyleaf of a manuscript copy, which reads “*Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā‘irīn* li-Mawlānā Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī” (“The Commentary on *Manāzil al-sā‘irīn* by our master Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī”).³⁶ Such evidence is particularly significant given that a number of works attributed in the manuscript tradition to Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī have frequently been misattributed to Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī. Moreover, the corpus of works belonging to Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī is not limited to the titles mentioned here. This issue is examined in greater detail in the section entitled “The Works He Authored in Arabic”.

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī offers no information about his life or teachers in the six works whose manuscripts we have been able to identify. Similarly, no record concerning him is found in biographical sources dealing with his period, such as *al-Walad al-shafi‘ wa-l-ḥafid al-khalīq* by Qāḍī Aḥmad of Niğde (d. after 734/1333), *Masālik al-absār fī mamālik al-amṣār* by Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-‘Umārī (d. 749/1349), or *al-Durar al-kāminah fī a‘yān al-mi‘ab al-thāminah* by Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1449). Nevertheless, when details such as his composition of *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā‘irīn* at the Şāhib Ātā Dār al-Ḥadīth in Konya, his invocation of blessings upon its founder, and his authorship of a commentary on forty ḥadīths are considered, it is plausible that he held a position at the Şāhib Ātā Dār al-Ḥadīth in Konya during those years. It is also understood that he received patronage from prominent political figures of Anatolia, such as Mubārīz al-Dīn Meḥmed Bey of the Eşrefoğlu dynasty, and that he dedicated some of his works to Mamlūk sultans. Indeed, in the

³⁴ Abū l-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Rāghib al-Işfahānī, *al-Dharī‘ah* (İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Reisülküttab, 1197), 79b-130b.

³⁵ Quṭb al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Mas‘ūd al-Shirāzī, *Ikhtiyārāt-i Muẓaffarī* (İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Fatih, 5302), 2a-164b.

³⁶ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā‘irīn* (Samsun İl Halk Kütüphanesi, 55 HK 1132), front flyleaf (*ẓabriyyah*).

introduction to his two-volume medical work entitled *Jubd al-muqill*, he employed expressions similar to those used when dedicating *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah* to Mubārīz al-Dīn Meḥmed Bey, although in this instance, he left the name in the dedication formula blank. These differences in language, titles, and dedication styles observed in the flyleaf notes and colophon records of the works attributed to each of the two scholars allow for a clear and definitive distinction between their respective identities.

3. The Scholarly, Medical, and Sufi Legacy of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī

3.1. The Works He Authored in Arabic

3.1.1. The Encounter of Peripateticism with Akbarī Metaphysics: *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah fī l-uṣūl al-burbāniyyah wa-l-kashfiyyah*

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī composed this work, which contains philosophical and Sufi content, in Konya in the year 710 AH. In the introduction, he dedicated it to Mubārīz al-Dīn Meḥmed Bey, the second ruler of the Eşrefoğlu dynasty, and concluded the work with a prayer asking God to grant him success.³⁷ This dedication clearly demonstrates that Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī was under the patronage of Mubārīz al-Dīn Meḥmed Bey. The expression *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah* in the title of the work, in addition to meaning “the most noble chapters”, also alludes to the Eşrefoğlu dynasty.

The only known copy of the work today was transcribed with the author’s colophon and is preserved in the Süleymaniye Library, Ayasofya Collection (no. 2445, fols. 1b-56a). On the guardleaf (*wiqāyah*) of the manuscript, there is a *waqf* inscription recorded by Shaykhzādah Aḥmed Efendī, inspector of the Awqāf-i Haramayn, stating that Sultan Maḥmūd I endowed this manuscript. On the page following the guardleaf, within the title panel, the title of the work, its author, and the person to whom it was dedicated are recorded together with the following expressions:

كتاب [ال]فصول الأشرفية في الأصول البرهانية والكشفية، تأليف الفقير إلى الله تعالى محمد التستري عفا الله عنه ووفقه للصواب، [كتبه ل]خزانة المولى المعظم، مالك أزمنة الأمراء الأعظم، حامي الأطراف والأماكن، كهف الورى ... [محمد

³⁷ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah* (Ayasofya, 2445), front flyleaf (*ṣabḥiyyah*), 1b, 56a-b.

بن سليمان ...

The book *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah fī l-uṣūl al-burbāniyyah wa-l-kashfiyyah*, composition of Muḥammad al-Tustarī, the servant in need of God Most High. May God forgive him and grant him success in what is right. [This work was written for] the library of the exalted lord, the great amīr who holds the reins of the eminent rulers, the protector of lands and regions, the refuge of the people ... [Meḥmed ibn] Sulaymān ...³⁸

The author states in the introduction that he entitled the work *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah fī l-uṣūl al-burbāniyyah wa-l-kashfiyyah*. Nevertheless, on the flyleaf of the manuscript, there appears an additional title, *Kitāb al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah fī l-ḥikmah al-falsafiyyah*, which reflects the content of the work. This secondary designation was most likely recorded by Khayr al-Dīn al-Aṭūfī (d. 948/1541), the compiler of the catalog of Sultan Bayezid II's library, as an indication of the work's disciplinary affiliation; the presence of Sultan Bayezid II's seal at the end of the manuscript supports this assumption. It is known that al-Aṭūfī, while classifying the works in the library, employed similar field-designating expressions, and comparable examples can be found in many manuscripts in the Ayasofya collection. Therefore, the phrase "fī l-ḥikmah al-falsafiyyah" should not be regarded as a second title of the work.³⁹

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī presents this work as a treatise devoted to the science of *mabda'* and *ma'ād*,⁴⁰ which he regards as the most exalted of the sciences and as the ultimate aim of those who seek true knowledge and aspire to attain the stations of veracity (*ṣiddiqiyyah*).⁴¹ According to him, the work synthesizes the propositions of the divine philosophers (*ḥukamā' ilābiyyūn*) with the

³⁸ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah* (Ayasofya, 2445), front flyleaf (*ḡabriyyah*).

³⁹ Himmet Taşkömür - Hesna Ergun Taşkömür, "Transliteration and Facsimile 'Register of Books' (*Kitāb al-Kutub*), Ms Török F. 59", *Treasures of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3–1503/4)*, ed. Gülrü Necipoğlu - Cemal Kafadar - Cornell H. Fleischer (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 2/233.

⁴⁰ As noted in the section on Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī's Persian works, the author composed an independent treatise entitled "A Treatise on Creation, Resurrection, and the Afterlife (*Kāshifāt asrār al-ḥaqā'iq fī umūr al-dunyā wa-l-ākhirah*)", devoted to the themes of origin (*mabda'*) and return (*ma'ād*).

⁴¹ Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah* (Ayasofya, 2445), 2a.

subtle insights of the practicing scholars (*‘ulamā’ ‘āmilūn*). The term *burhānī* in the title refers to the divine philosophers, whereas *kashfī* points to practicing scholars.

Although the work consists of nine chapters, its *burhānī* (philosophical) section appears to be more extensive than its *kashfī* (Sufi) section. This difference likely explains why, on the flyleaf of the manuscript, the expression “*fi l-ḥikmah al-falsafiyyah*” –which I take to have been recorded by al-Aṭūfī, the cataloguer of the work– was preferred in place of “*fi l-uṣūl al-burhāniyyah wa-l-kashfiyyah*”, a phrase that conveys both the philosophical and Sufi dimensions in the title. This preference may be understood as reflecting the predominance of the philosophical aspect of the work over its Sufi dimension.

The first chapter of the work is devoted to the Necessary Being and His attributes;⁴² the second to the immaterial intellects;⁴³ the third to the celestial souls;⁴⁴ the fourth to the sublime beings;⁴⁵ and the fifth to the sublunary bodies.⁴⁶ The sixth chapter examines form and matter (*ṣūrah* and *bayūlā*);⁴⁷ the seventh addresses elements that come into being through change without composition;⁴⁸ and the eighth investigates elements that arise through change and composition.⁴⁹ The final chapter is devoted to the rational soul (*al-naḥs al-nāṭiqah*) and its faculties.⁵⁰ While the first and sixth chapters are each examined in four sections, the most comprehensive chapter –the ninth– is treated in five sections. That in this work, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī demonstrates not only his mastery of Peripatetic philosophy but also his command of the Akbarī tradition is evident from the following statements:

Know that when a human being repents to God, abandons [worldly] attachments and the pursuit of caprice, and begins the spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*) by the command of a skilled

⁴² Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah* (Ayasofya, 2445), 4b-9a.

⁴³ Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah* (Ayasofya, 2445), 9b-11b.

⁴⁴ Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah* (Ayasofya, 2445), 11b-13a.

⁴⁵ Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah* (Ayasofya, 2445), 13a-15b.

⁴⁶ Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah* (Ayasofya, 2445), 15b-19a.

⁴⁷ Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah* (Ayasofya, 2445), 19a-23a.

⁴⁸ Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah* (Ayasofya, 2445), 23a-25b.

⁴⁹ Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah* (Ayasofya, 2445), 25b-35a.

⁵⁰ Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah* (Ayasofya, 2445), 35a-55b.

guide [the perfected spiritual master], the animal, human, and angelic attributes are removed from him. The Noble Messenger relates from God Most High: “My servant continues to draw near to Me through supererogatory acts until I love him. When I love him, I become his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his tongue with which he speaks, his hand with which he grasps, and his foot with which he walks”.⁵¹ Thus, this servant beholds the sustaining lordship (*qayyūmiyyah*) of God Most High, becomes His vicegerent, and a locus for His overpowering might and His grace. This is the station of being David, for “the scholars are the heirs of the prophets”.⁵² The servant then again becomes worthy of the prostration of the angels – this is the station of being Adam. By his form he is on earth, and by his meaning he is in the true paradise, which is the realm of “Be!” (*kun*), for “what God wills comes to be, and what He does not will does not come to be”.⁵³ Thereafter, he acquires the capacity to receive the essential self-disclosures [of God]. Through these essential self-disclosures he becomes annihilated from his selfhood and can no longer contemplate his own ego – how, then, could he contemplate other determinations pertaining to the loci of manifestation? Being occupied with God and rejoicing in His lights, he is cut off from all that is other than God. Then he is also freed from the thought that he is cut off from what is other than God. After that, I am unable to express what he becomes.⁵⁴

The Sufi dimension of *al-Fuṣūl al-Ashrafiyyah* extends beyond the passage cited above. The author grounds the exalted status of the science of *mabdaʿ* and *maʿād*, which constitutes the purpose of the work’s composition, in a statement frequently transmitted by Sufis as a ḥadīth: “I was a hidden treasure and desired to be known; therefore, I created creation so that I might be known”.⁵⁵ The work introduced here in broad outline deserves comprehensive study and evaluation. In

⁵¹ Al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, “Kitāb al-riqāʿ”, 38.

⁵² Al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, “Kitāb al-ʿilm”, 10.

⁵³ Abū Dāwūd, *al-Sunan*, “Kitāb al-ādāb”, 101.

⁵⁴ Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *al-Fuṣūl al-Ashrafiyyah* (Ayasofya, 2445), 38a-b.

⁵⁵ Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *al-Fuṣūl al-Ashrafiyyah* (Ayasofya, 2445), 2a.

particular, this treatise –through which al-Tustarī’s Akbarī approach to metaphysics and natural philosophy is manifested– possesses special significance as it was composed in accordance with the synthetic (*mazj*) character of the postclassical (*muta’akkbirūn*) period.

With the exception of Brockelmann,⁵⁶ the work has been erroneously attributed in the literature to Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī.⁵⁷

3.1.2. Between the Theoretical and Practical Horizons of Medicine: *Jubd al-muqill* or *al-Shāmil li-naḥībī l-mutanāwil*

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī entitled his two-volume medical work *Jubd al-muqill*; the only known manuscript copy has been identified in the Topkapı Palace Library, III. Ahmed Collection (nos. 2112/1 and 2112/3). One piece of evidence supporting the attribution of the work to Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī is the presence, in the introduction of *Jubd al-muqill*, of dedication expressions similar in style to those he used when dedicating *al-Fuṣūl al-Ashrafiyyah* to Mubārīz al-Dīn Meḥmed Bey. However, although these dedication formulas are present in the sole manuscript currently accessible, the sections in which the name of the dedicatee would normally be recorded have been left blank. Therefore, it is not possible, on the basis of the available evidence, to determine with certainty whether this omission was deliberately made by Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī himself or resulted from the negligence or preference of the copyist.

Once again, in the introduction to the work, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī introduces himself –consistent with the expressions found in all his other works– by stating: “*fa-inna aḍ’afa ‘ibād Allāh Muḥammad al-Tustarī yaqūl ...*”/Thus, says Muḥammad al-Tustarī, the weakest of God’s servants ...” This statement constitutes another indication demonstrating that the author of *Jubd al-muqill* is Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī and not a different Muḥammad al-Tustarī. To illustrate the striking similarity between the dedication in *Jubd al-muqill* and that found in *al-Fuṣūl al-Ashrafiyyah*, we

⁵⁶ Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur: Erster Supplementband* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1937), 1/774.

⁵⁷ Tsılıgkır, *Bedreddin et-Tüsterî’nin* (ö. 732/1332) el-Muhâkemât beyne Şerhayî’l-İşârât Adlı Eserinin Tabkik ve İncelemesi, 11, 13.

reproduce here the relevant passages from both works.

i. (Dedication statements in *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah*)

وأخدم بها خزانة مَنْ حاز قصب السبق في حلبة المآثر والمفاخر، وفاز من تحقيق الفضائل ... مبارز الدنيا والدين سيف الله في الإسلام والمسلمين، سليمان الزمان، محمد بن سليمان.

And I place it in the service of the library of the one who has seized the banner of precedence in the arena of noble deeds and glories, and who has triumphed in the realization of virtues ... the champion of the world and the religion, the Sword of God in Islam and among the Muslims, the Solomon of the age, Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān.

ii. (Dedication statements in *Jubd al-muqill*)

وخدمتُ به خزانةَ كُتُب مَنْ فاز من بين الأنام بالعدل والحقّ أفضل في الغرب والشرق الدنيا والدين الإسلام والمسلمين، رفع الله في الدارين قدره ومجّله، ولا بلغ هديّ عمره مجّله.

And with it, I have served the library of the one who, among all people, has attained preeminence through justice and truth – the most excellent in the West and the East, [the champion of] the world and the religion, of Islam and the Muslims. May God exalt his rank and station in both abodes and may the guidance of his life never fail to reach its proper place.

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī states that, although he possessed limited knowledge, he compiled his concise medical treatise from the works of physicians, and he implores God Most High to grant that this work be complete with respect to medical matters and comprehensive within its field. While the author names his work *Jubd al-muqill* in the introduction, the records found on the flyleaves of both volumes indicate that the work was also titled *al-Shāmil li-naḥḥibī l-mutanāwil*.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ The first volume of *Jubd al-muqill* –also referred to as *al-Shāmil li-naḥḥibī l-mutanāwil*– is described as “the first volume of the book *Jubd al-muqill*, entitled *al-Shāmil li-naḥḥibī l-mutanāwil*”. See Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Jubd al-muqill* (İstanbul: Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, III. Ahmed, 2112/1), front flyleaf (*ḡabriyyab*). The second volume of *Jubd al-muqill* –also known as *al-Shāmil li-naḥḥibī l-mutanāwil*– is described as “the second volume of the book *Jubd al-muqill*, entitled *al-Shāmil li-naḥḥibī l-mutanāwil*”. See Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad

Although the author characterizes his work as *Jubd al-muqill* (“the utmost effort of one of limited means”) and describes it as a concise treatise, he nevertheless prays that it be complete in its medical aspects and exhaustive within its domain. It is therefore possible that, in accordance with the author’s supplication, the work came to be described in later periods as *al-Shāmil li-naḥḥihī l-mutanāwil* (“the work whose benefit is all-encompassing in every respect”).

This work, which includes the views of Greek physicians such as Hippocrates (d. ca. 375 BCE [?]),⁵⁹ Galen (d. ca. 200 BCE [?]),⁶⁰ and Dioscorides Pedanius (d. 1st century CE),⁶¹ as well as those of Muslim physicians such as Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037),⁶² Ibn al-Bayṭār (d. 646/1248),⁶³ and Ibn al-Nafīs (d. 687/1288),⁶⁴ consists of two parts and two volumes. The first volume comprises the theoretical and practical aspects of medicine. Each volume is organized under a single *maqālah*, the *maqālahs* being divided into chapters (*bābs*), and the chapters into sections (*faṣls*).

The first chapter of the first volume –namely, of the first *maqālah*– is devoted to *umūr ṭabī‘iyyah* (natural philosophy) and consists of sections dealing with the elements, temperament, humors, organs, anatomy, spirits, actions, and certain principles that some scholars also subsume under *umūr ṭabī‘iyyah*.⁶⁵ The second chapter of the same *maqālah* is entirely devoted to diseases; the sections of this chapter examine both general issues related to diseases and the causes leading to illness.⁶⁶

The second volume, which contains the pharmacological material, functions as the second *maqālah* and is divided into two chapters. The first chapter addresses the powers of drugs and their general principles. In the opening sections of this chapter, the routes by which drugs enter the body and their classifications are discussed; the subsequent sections establish the types of drugs and the fundamental

al-Tustarī, *Jubd al-muqill* (İstanbul: Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, III. Ahmed, 2112/2), front flyleaf (*ṣabriyyah*).

⁵⁹ Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *Jubd al-muqill* (III. Ahmed, 2112/2), 95a.

⁶⁰ Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *Jubd al-muqill* (III. Ahmed, 2112/2), 31b-546b.

⁶¹ Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *Jubd al-muqill* (III. Ahmed, 2112/2), 42a.

⁶² Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *Jubd al-muqill* (III. Ahmed, 2112/2), 37a.

⁶³ Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *Jubd al-muqill* (III. Ahmed, 2112/2), 31b-546b.

⁶⁴ Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *Jubd al-muqill* (III. Ahmed, 2112/2), 115b.

⁶⁵ Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *Jubd al-muqill* (III. Ahmed, 2112/1), 58b-225a.

⁶⁶ Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *Jubd al-muqill* (III. Ahmed, 2112/1), 2a-48a.

rules pertaining to them. In the remaining sections, the actions of drugs and the related rules are explained in detail.⁶⁷ The second chapter of the second volume is devoted entirely to an alphabetical classification of the names of drugs.⁶⁸

As implied by the alternative title of *Jubd al-muqill* (i.e., *al-Shāmil*), and as our content summary also demonstrates, the work brings together medical topics in a comprehensive and holistic manner. Nevertheless, determining the work's precise place in the history of medicine requires thorough evaluation by historians of medicine.

3.1.3. A Counterpart to 'Afif al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī's *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā'irīn*: *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā'irīn*

Having apparently lost his patronage following the death of his benefactor Mubārīz al-Dīn Meḥmed Bey in 720/1320,⁶⁹ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī dedicated his *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, which he composed in Konya in 727/1327, together with his *Sharḥ 'Ilal al-maqāmāt*, to the Mamlūk Sultan Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn.⁷⁰ According to his own statement, he completed the fair copy of *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā'irīn* on Monday at midday, after the fourteenth of Jumādā l-ākhirah in the year 727, in Konya, at the madrasah known as Şāhib Ātā Dār al-Ḥadīth. In addition to the copy containing the author's colophon (Samsun Provincial Public Library, no. 55 Hk 1132, ff. 1b-126a), another manuscript is preserved in the Süleymaniye Library, Fatih Collection (no. 2707, ff. 1b-141). The scribe named Muḥammad al-Fukkā'ī, who copied the Fatih manuscript in 761/1360, gives the name of the author of the work as Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī in the colophon. On the page following the colophon of the Fatih manuscript, there is a note by Zayn al-Dīn al-Khwāfī (d. 838/1435), one of the commentators on *Manāzil* and the founder of the Zayniyyah order.⁷¹ This note indicates that Zayn al-Dīn al-Khwāfī saw this manuscript.

⁶⁷ Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *Jubd al-muqill* (III. Ahmed, 2112/2), 23b-30a.

⁶⁸ Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *Jubd al-muqill* (III. Ahmed, 2112/2), 31b-546b.

⁶⁹ Kofoğlu, "Eşrefoğulları", 11/484-485.

⁷⁰ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā'irīn* (Samsun İl Halk Kütüphanesi, 55 HK 1132), 1b; Nedim Tan, *Abdullah Ensârî Herevî'nin Tasavvuf Târihindeki Yeri ve Sad Meydân'ı* (İstanbul: Marmara University, Institute of Social Sciences, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2013), 85.

⁷¹ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā'irīn* (İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Fatih, 2707), 140b, 141b.

In the introduction to his commentary on Khwājah ‘Abd Allāh al-Harawī’s (d. 481/1089) *Manāzil*, al-Tustarī describes the work with the following striking phrase: “Just as kings stand in relation to slaves, so does *Manāzil* stand among the books of the folk” (*wa-kānat nisbat kutub al-qawm ilayh nisbat al-sūqab ilā l-mulūk*).⁷² He then relates that, although the scholars of his time showed great interest in *Manāzil*, they had difficulty understanding its subtle expressions, and that despite their engagement with reading and critical examination, there existed no commentary that truly brought solace to the heart. At this point, he notes that some friends belonging to the Sufi path requested that he write a commentary on the work. During the lessons he delivered on *Manāzil*, he wrote down what occurred to his heart, and later, upon the encouragement of his companions, he compiled these notes into a commentary.⁷³

In this commentary, al-Tustarī engages directly with the commentary of ‘Afīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291).⁷⁴ Some authors, however, consider al-Tustarī’s work less successful than al-Tilimsānī’s in establishing connections between the chapters and in reflecting the internal coherence of the *Manāzil* text.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, al-Tustarī’s commentary influenced later commentators of *Manāzil*, such as Zayn al-Dīn al-Khwāfī and Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Maṣṣūr ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Maqdisī.⁷⁶ Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Maṣṣūr ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Maqdisī, in his commentary on *Manāzil*, while listing the commentaries written prior to his own, also included the commentary of Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī and cited it in his work. In this commentary, which al-Maqdisī composed

⁷² Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā’irīn* (Samsun İl Halk Kütüphanesi, 55 HK 1132), 1b; This statement by Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī parallels al-Tilimsānī’s characterization of al-Harawī, namely: “al-Harawī is among those who speak most correctly concerning the truth and who show the path of the *ṭarīqab* in the clearest manner”. See Abū l-Rabī‘ ‘Afīf al-Dīn Sulaymān ibn Shams al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī, *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā’irīn*, ed. Muḥsin Bīdārfar (Qom: Intishārāt-i Bīdār, 1432 AH), 1/25.

⁷³ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā’irīn* (Samsun İl Halk Kütüphanesi, 55 HK 1132), 1b-2a; Abdurrezzak Tek, “Giriş”, *Menâzilü’s-sâirîn: Tasavvufa Yüz Basamak*, auth. Khwājah ‘Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī al-Harawī (Bursa: Emin Yayınları, 2008), 43-45.

⁷⁴ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā’irīn* (Samsun İl Halk Kütüphanesi, 55 HK 1132), 21b-22a, 25a, 29b, 97a, 106b, 107a, 112a, 113a.

⁷⁵ Tan, *Abdullah Ensârî Herevî’nin Tasavvuf Târibindeki Yeri*, 85.

⁷⁶ Tan, *Abdullah Ensârî Herevî’nin Tasavvuf Târibindeki Yeri*, 90-93.

in 795/1393, his attribution of the work to Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī is a probable reason why the text was also ascribed to Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī in later periods.⁷⁷ That al-Tustarī, despite having examined al-Tilimsānī's commentary, states in the introduction to his own work that "among the existing commentaries there is none that brings relief to the hearts"⁷⁸ may be seen as another motive for his engagement and polemic in this field.

To illustrate the method and discursive style adopted by al-Tustarī in his commentary on *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, it is appropriate to cite here his explanations of the second degree of the "station of reverence" (*ḥurmah*), as expounded by 'Abd Allāh al-Harawī. Of this degree, al-Harawī maintains that the scriptural texts (*nuṣūṣ*) should be accepted according to their apparent meanings, that no alternative meanings should be imposed upon them through interpretation (*ta'wīl*), and that their outward expressions should not be construed in representational or metaphorical terms. These statements in *Manāzil* may be read as a reflection of what al-Harawī expressed in his work *Dhamm al-kalām*.⁷⁹

While commenting on this passage, al-Tustarī relates the concept of *khbar* mentioned in the text to the so-called *khbarī* attributes of God, that is, those attributes concerning the divine essence mentioned in the Qur'ān and the Prophetic Sunnah. His interpretation in this regard broadly accords with Ibn al-'Arabī's (d. 638/1240) approach to truth and divine unity, which brings together transcendence (*tanzīb*) and similitude (*tashbīb*).⁸⁰ At the same time, al-Tustarī's exposition bears an original character through its distinctive style and noteworthy

⁷⁷ For al-Maqdisī's references, see Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Maṣṣūr ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Maqdisī, *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā'irīn* (İstanbul: Beyazıt Kütüphanesi, Veliyyüddin Efendi, 1734), 184a, 312a. See the passage where al-Maqdisī's reference to "Badr al-Dīn" in fact pertains to Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī: Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā'irīn* (Samsun İl Halk Kütüphanesi, 55 HK 1132), 54b.

⁷⁸ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā'irīn* (Samsun İl Halk Kütüphanesi, 55 HK 1132), 1b.

⁷⁹ For detailed information on al-Harawī's *Dhamm al-kalām*, see Tan, *Abdullah Ensârî Herevî'nin Tasavvuf Târihindeki Yeri*, 114-118; İsa Koç, *Hanbelî Literatürünün İslam Mezhepleri Tarihi Kaynakları Geleneğindeki Yeri* (Ankara: Araştırma Yayınları, 2024), 185-188.

⁸⁰ For detailed information on Ibn al-'Arabī's thought reconciling *tanzīb* (divine transcendence) and *tashbīb* (divine immanence), see Ekrem Demirli, "İbnü'l-'Arabî ve Takipçilerinin Tanrı Anlayışı: Tenzih ve Teşbih Hükümlerinin Birleştirilmesi", *İslam Araştırmaları Dergisi* 19 (2008), 25-44.

emphases.

According to al-Tustarī, the stance of the pious forebears (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*) on this issue consisted of accepting these scriptural texts according to their outward sense, believing in their meanings, yet consigning their true modality to God (*tafwīḍ*). This approach, he argues, is both a requirement of divine unity and an expression of complete submission. Al-Tustarī stresses that this Salafī understanding of *tafwīḍ* protects those who lack knowledge of ultimate reality from falling into doctrinal deviation when they engage in rational speculation about such texts.

He holds that such deviations arise in two directions. First, some people ascribe these attributes to God in their literal sense, thereby inclining toward anthropomorphism (*tasbbīb*). When one considers that certain Hanbalī circles—who identified themselves with adherence to the pious forebears—were historically associated with the Mujassimah,⁸¹ the motivation behind al-Tustarī’s position becomes clear. Second, another group rejects the outward meanings of these texts altogether, declaring them null and void, which ultimately leads to the denial of the rulings of the Sharī‘ah. Al-Tustarī explicitly states that both tendencies are false.

At the same time, al-Tustarī notes that theologians—especially the Mu‘tazilīs and Ash‘arīs—sought to interpret such texts in accordance with their own rational and methodological principles. He illustrates, with examples, how they explained these expressions through figurative representations, a typical instance being the interpretation of “hand” as power or bounty.

Among these two approaches—namely, the method of *tafwīḍ*

⁸¹ As an example of Hanbalīs accused of *tajsim* (anthropomorphism), one can cite al-Harawī himself: “Al-Harawī was accused by the Ash‘arī scholars of Herat of being a *mujassim* and of exceeding the limits of the Sharī‘ah, and they complained about him to Sultan Mas‘ūd of Ghaznah. However, when al-Harawī appeared before the Sultan, he reassured him with explanatory statements, and he lived a comfortable life without facing any punitive measures. ... According to the report, Sultan Mas‘ūd summoned al-Harawī because of circulating rumors and asked, ‘Do you say that God will place His foot upon Hell?’ Al-Harawī replied, ‘God does not suffer harm from the fire, nor can the fire cause Him any damage. The Prophet does not make false statements about Him, and the scholars of this community do not add anything to what they narrate from the Prophet; they attribute it as it is to the Prophet’. This answer pleased Sultan Mas‘ūd, who rewarded al-Harawī for his response”. See Tan, *Abdullah Ensârî Herevî’nin Tasavvuf Târihindeki Yeri*, 67.

attributed to the Salaf and the theological method of *ta'wīl*– al-Tustarī maintains that the people of truth (*ahl al-ḥaqīqah*) adopted a third path. According to this view, such texts are believed in, and their realities are accepted with complete submission. When the Salafī position is associated with the outward sense and the theologians' interpretations with the inward sense, this third path sometimes coincides with the Salafī approach and at other times with interpretation; however, by uniting and reconciling both, it transcends them and arrives at a deeper realization of the truth (*taḥqīq*).⁸² The essence of al-Tustarī's view corresponds exactly to the well-known verses in which Ibn al-ʿArabī succinctly expresses this synthesis in *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*:

If you affirm transcendence alone, you restrict the Real

If you affirm similitude alone, you limit Him.

If you affirm both together, you are rightly guided

You become the leader of the knowers and the
guide of the people of truth⁸³

Following his commentary on al-Harawī's *Manāzil al-sāʿirīn*, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī appended a commentary on al-Harawī's *ʿIlal al-maqāmāt*, a treatise written as a complement to the same work.⁸⁴

Although *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sāʿirīn* has generally been attributed to Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, Īraj Afshār considered this attribution doubtful and suggested that the work might belong to Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Yamanī.⁸⁵ However, given that the *nisbah* “al-Yamanī” does not appear in the manuscripts of al-Tustarī's commentary on *Manāzil*, it becomes clear that Afshār was unable to properly distinguish between Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī and Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, which led him to this erroneous assessment. Brockelmann, by contrast, attributed *Sharḥ Manāzil al-*

⁸² Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sāʿirīn* (Samsun İl Halk Kütüphanesi, 55 HK 1132), 40a-b.

⁸³ Muḥyī al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. Abrār Aḥmad Shāhī - ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb (Cairo: Sharikat al-Quds, 2016), 72.

⁸⁴ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ ʿIlal al-maqāmāt* (Samsun: Samsun İl Halk Kütüphanesi, 55 HK 1132), 121a-126a.

⁸⁵ Ghulāmī, “Badr al-Dīn al-Tustarī”, 11/544-545; Tan, *Abdullah Ensârî Herevî'nin Tasavvuf Târibindeki Yeri*, 85.

sā'irīn –as he did *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah*– to Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī.⁸⁶

Finally, *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā'irīn* has been published in a careless manner, simply attributed to Muḥammad al-Tustarī without specifying the manuscript on which the edition is based.⁸⁷

3.1.4. The Ishārī/Akbarian Interpretation of Ḥadīths: *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-arba'in*

The sole known manuscript of this work is preserved in a composite codex in the Feyzullah Efendi Collection of the Millet Library (no. 2163, ff. 154b-168a). In the introduction, the author identifies himself as *al-faqīr ilā l-Ghanī Muḥammad Tustarī* (“Muḥammad al-Tustarī, the servant in need of the Self-Sufficient [God]”). The manuscript contains no record concerning the date of copying or the identity of the copyist. At the end of the codex, however, the following statement appears: “These are what we have written –without altering the wording or leaving anything out– apart from the marginal notes. May God have mercy on the one who copied this manuscript in an orderly fashion [observing the numerical sequence of the ḥadīths]”.⁸⁸

In this work, the author emphasizes that the number forty has been associated with numerous virtues and praiseworthy qualities, and he cites several examples to illustrate this point: the completion of Adam’s body in forty days; Moses’ withdrawal for forty days in preparation to receive revelation; the Sufi practice of subjecting disciples to a forty-day retreat (*khalwah*); and the tradition among ḥadīth scholars of compiling and commenting on forty ḥadīths. All of these, he notes, attest to the spiritual significance of this number. Proceeding from this understanding, al-Tustarī states that he composed the work out of a

⁸⁶ Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur: Erster Supplementband*, 1/774.

⁸⁷ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā'irīn ilā llāh ta'ālā*, ed. ‘Āṣim Ibrāhīm al-Kayyālī (Beirut: Dār Midād li-l-Ṭibā‘ah wa-l-Nashr, 2017). Due to editorial carelessness in this edition, the references in this study are based on the authorial manuscript held at the Samsun İl Halk Kütüphanesi (MS 55 HK 1132). The information provided by ‘Āṣim al-Kayyālī regarding the dedicatee of the commentary does not correspond with the content of the work itself and may therefore mislead the reader. See ‘Āṣim Ibrāhīm al-Kayyālī, “Muqaddimah”, *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā'irīn ilā llāh ta'ālā*, auth. Muḥammad al-Tustarī (Beirut: Dār Midād li-l-Ṭibā‘ah wa-l-Nashr, 2017), 8.

⁸⁸ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-arba'in* (İstanbul: Millet Kütüphanesi, Feyzullah Efendi, 2163), 168a.

desire to collect and expound forty ḥadīths.⁸⁹

In his commentary, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī draws upon both the ideas of Ibn al-ʿArabī and the poetry of Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235). Rather than confining himself to the outward meanings of the texts, he foregrounds their Sufi and philosophical dimensions.⁹⁰ Indeed, *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-arbaʿin* bears the clear imprint of Akbarian Sufi thought. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the intellectual framework al-Tustarī established in *al-Fuṣūl al-Ashrafiyyah* is consistently maintained in his shorter works as well.

3.1.5. A Response to a Jew's Objections to Ahl al-sunnah's Interpretation of Predestination: *Risālat al-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar*

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī did not assign a title to this treatise, and in the two manuscripts examined, the work is not explicitly named. The copy preserved in the Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Paşa Collection (no. 1630, ff. 119a-b) is cataloged as *Risālat al-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar*, while the copy in the Ayasofya Collection (no. 1006, f. 69b) appears under the title *al-Asʿilab wa-l-ajwibab*. Both titles accurately reflect the content; however, since the treatise deals directly with the issues of divine decree (*qaḍāʾ*) and predestination (*qadar*), and because similar works are commonly known under the title *Risālat al-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar*, this designation is preferred here.

In the introduction, al-Tustarī explains his motive for composing the treatise: a Jew had composed verses raising questions concerning *qaḍāʾ* and *qadar* and asked Muslim scholars to respond to them.⁹¹ Al-Tustarī states that, according to his own words, he attempted to answer these questions “to the extent of his weak understanding and limited intellect”. The author responds to the questions posed by the Jew both in verse and in prose. In one of his poetic replies, he refers to himself as “the Sun of Tustar (*Shams Tustar*)”, thereby alluding explicitly to his name.⁹²

⁸⁹ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-arbaʿin* (Feyzullah Efendi, 2163), 154b.

⁹⁰ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-arbaʿin* (Feyzullah Efendi, 2163), 155b, 159a-160a.

⁹¹ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Risālat al-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar* (İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya, 1006), 69b.

⁹² Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Risālat al-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar* (Ayasofya, 1006), 69b.

In this treatise, unlike in his other works, a kalām-based idiom and style predominate over a Peripatetic or Akbarian one. Nevertheless, al-Tustarī relates the issue to *istiʿdād* (disposition or preparedness), one of the central concepts of the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. According to him, although God's decree rests upon His eternal knowledge and power, it does not negate the servant's will and acquisition (*kasb*), which are grounded in human *istiʿdād*. *Qaḍāʾ* and *qadar*, while manifestations of God's absolute will and omnipotence, simultaneously affirm human responsibility for choice. By emphasizing the distinctions between command (*amr*) and will (*irādah*), decree (*ḥukm*) and good pleasure (*riḍā*), and decree and choice (*ikhtiyār*), al-Tustarī safeguards human freedom and moral accountability. In both his prose and poetic responses, he stresses that God is pleased only with perfection and is not pleased with deficiency.⁹³

Ibn al-Humām (d. 861/1457) encountered this treatise on predestination, examined its contents, and cited it in his work *al-Musāyarah*, recording the author's name simply as "al-Tustarī". In contrast, his student Kamāl al-Dīn Ibn Abī Sharīf –who appears not to have seen the text itself– identified this figure, to whom his teacher had referred merely as al-Tustarī, as "Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Asʿad al-Tustarī" in his commentary *al-Musāmarah* on *al-Musāyarah*.⁹⁴ Had Ibn Abī Sharīf examined the original treatise, however, he would easily have seen that the author explicitly identifies himself, as noted above, as "Shams Tustar". Consequently, attributing this treatise to Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī is incorrect. Moreover, it would be highly unusual for a single individual to use two honorifics, "Badr al-Dīn" and "Shams al-Dīn", for himself simultaneously. As previously indicated, unlike Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī consistently refers to himself in his works by the name "Badr al-Dīn" and clearly prefers this *laqab*.

⁹³ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Risālat al-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar* (Ayasofya, 1006), 69b.

⁹⁴ Kamāl al-Dīn ibn Abī Sharīf, *al-Musāmarah sharḥ al-Musāyarah*, 139. *Risālat al-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar* will be critically edited and subjected to a detailed analysis in a separate, dedicated article by the present author.

3.1.6. Treatise on the Esoteric Interpretation of Qur'ān, Sūrat Fuṣṣilat, Verses 9-11: *Risālah fī taḥqīq qawlibī ta'ālā "Qul a-innakum la-takfurūna..."*

The single manuscript of this treatise, located in the Süleymaniye Library, Ayasofya Collection (no. 1006, f. 69a), begins with the author introducing himself, as in his other works, as "*al-faqīr ilā l-Ghanī Muḥammad al-Tustarī*/Allah's needy servant, Muḥammad al-Tustarī". The author explains that he composed this treatise in response to a friend who, considering agreement with himself as agreement with his own person and disagreement as opposition to him, asked for an exegesis of verses 9-11 of Sūrat Fuṣṣilat. Al-Tustarī emphasizes that he interprets these verses not according to the classical exegesis methodology but within an esoteric (*ishārī*) framework.⁹⁵

3.1.7. A Lost Work on the Wisdom of Worship: *Asrār al-ʿibādāt*

This work has been identified on the basis of internal references found in the author's other writings. In his *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-arbaʿin*, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī comments on the tradition, "One of the matters contributing to a person's happiness is having a sparse beard",⁹⁶ noting that "a thick and large beard causes difficulty in washing, combing, and similar tasks; this leads to wasted time, engagement in useless activities, and prevents one from attending to more important matters such as acquiring knowledge and performing righteous deeds".⁹⁷ He further mentions that he discusses this topic in his work *Asrār al-ʿibādāt*. However, no manuscript of this particular work has been located to date.

Since no manuscript copy of *Asrār al-ʿibādāt* has been identified, it is not possible to determine with certainty whether the work was composed in Arabic or Persian. However, given that the author refers to this work in his Arabic treatise *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-arbaʿin* and does not note that it was written in Persian, *Asrār al-ʿibādāt* has been classified among his Arabic works.

⁹⁵ Shams al-Dīn al-Tustarī, *Risālah fī taḥqīq qawlibī ta'ālā* (Ayasofya, 1006), 69a.

⁹⁶ Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad Ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī, *Kitāb al-Majrūḥīn min al-muḥaddithīn wa-l-ḍuʿafāʾ wa-l-matrūkīn*, ed. Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm Zāyid (Aleppo: Dār al-Waʿy, 1396/1976), 1/360.

⁹⁷ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-arbaʿin* (Feyzullah Efendi, 2163), 158a.

3.2. The Works He Authored in Persian

3.2.1. A Treatise on Creation, Resurrection, and the Afterlife:

Kāshifat asrār al-ḥaqā'iq fī umūr al-dunyā wa-l-ākhirah

A Persian treatise is preserved in the Süleymaniye Library, within the Reisülküttâb collection, in the codex numbered 1197, spanning folios 140a-147a. At the beginning, it is entitled *Risālah fī aḥwāl al-qiyyāmab wa-l-jannab wa-l-safar wa-ghayrihim*, and at the end, *Kāshifat asrār al-ḥaqā'iq fī umūr al-dunyā wa-l-ākhirah*. As both titles indicate, the work deals with the subjects of the beginning and the return (*mabda'* and *ma'ād*), generally in the light of Qur'ānic verses, in twenty chapters.

In the introduction, the name of Muḥammad al-Tustarī is not explicitly mentioned as it is in the prefaces of his Arabic works. Nevertheless, the statements contained in the colophon leave no room for doubt that the treatise belongs to Muḥammad al-Tustarī and that it was written in his own hand. In this context, I present below the expressions that demonstrate both its attribution to Muḥammad al-Tustarī and that it is directly from his pen:

تم الكتاب ... المسماة كاشفة أسرار الحقائق في أمور الدنيا والآخرة. ووقع الفراغ من تحريره على يد الفقير إلى الله تعالى محمد التستري أحسن الله خاتمته غرة ذي القعدة سنة عشر وسبعمائة بمدينة قونية بالمدرسة النظامية رحمه الله منشئها.

The book entitled *Kāshifat asrār al-ḥaqā'iq fī umūr al-dunyā wa-l-ākhirah* has been completed. The fair copy was finished at the hands of the one in need of God Most High, Muḥammad al-Tustarī –may God grant him a good end– on the first day of Dhū l-qa'dah in the year seven hundred and ten, in the city of Konya, in the Nizāmiyyah madrasah – may God have mercy on its founder.⁹⁸

The codex containing *Kāshifat asrār al-ḥaqā'iq* also includes a copy of al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī's *al-Dharī'ah*,⁹⁹ transcribed in the hand of Muḥammad al-Tustarī. Notably, in his scribal note for this copy, Muḥammad al-Tustarī employs the expression “waqa'a min naskhihi” in the colophon of *al-Dharī'ah*,¹⁰⁰ rather than “waqa'a min taḥrīrihi”, as found in the colophon of *Kāshifat asrār al-ḥaqā'iq*. This distinction

⁹⁸ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Kāshifat asrār al-ḥaqā'iq* (Reisülküttâb, 1197), 147b.

⁹⁹ Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Dharī'ah* (Reisülküttâb, 1197), 130b.

¹⁰⁰ Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Dharī'ah* (Reisülküttâb, 1197), 165b.

clearly demonstrates that the latter work is an original composition authored by him.

3.2.2. A Concise Work on Astronomy and Cosmology: *al-Risālah al-Mughniyah*

Like the Reîsülküttab miscellany introduced above, the manuscript numbered 5302 in the Fatih collection of the Süleymaniye Library contains important records that shed light on the scholarly activities of Muhammad al-Tustarî. This miscellany shows that Muḥammad al-Tustarî copied (*istinsāk*) Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī's Persian treatise on astronomy, *Ikhtiyārāt-i Muẓaffarī*, which had been dedicated to the Chobanid ruler Muẓaffar al-Dīn Yawlaq Arslān.¹⁰¹ It also includes a work authored by al-Tustarî himself, entitled *al-Risālah al-mughniyah*.

In the introduction to *al-Risālah al-mughniyah*, the author clearly sets out the nature of his work. The treatise is described as a concise composition written within the framework of the science of *bay'ah* (astronomy/cosmology), dealing with the structures of celestial and terrestrial bodies. Al-Tustarî states that he has limited the scope of the work to a succinct presentation of topics such as the dimensions, volumes, and physical properties of these bodies. He further explains that the treatise was composed at the request of certain friends and under conditions of haste, which led to its being named *al-Risālah al-mughniyah*.¹⁰²

A comparison between the colophon (*farāgh* record) of *al-Risālah al-mughniyah* and that of al-Shīrāzī's *Ikhtiyārāt-i Muẓaffarī* demonstrates that *al-Risālah al-mughniyah* is an original composition authored by al-Tustarî himself. This comparison strongly indicates that the work is not a product of scribal transmission but rather an autograph text that emerged directly from the author's own pen.

i. Colophon indicating that he copied *Ikhtiyārāt-i Muẓaffarī*:

وقد وقع الفراغ من نسخه على يدي الفقير محمد التستري أحسن الله إليه ضحوة
نهار الأربعاء ... من محرم سنة 722 بمدينة أنطالية في الخانقاه الجلالية، رحم
الله منسئها.

The copying of this work was completed by the hand of the
humble servant Muḥammad al-Tustarî –may God show him

¹⁰¹ Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, *Ikhtiyārāt-i Muẓaffarī* (Fatih 5302), 2a.

¹⁰² Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarî, *al-Risālah al-mughniyah* (Fatih 5302), 168b.

kindness— on the forenoon of Wednesday, ... of Muḥarram 722 [AH], in the city of Antalya, in the Jalāliyyah khānqāh. May God have mercy on its founder.¹⁰³

ii. Colophon indicating that he authored *al-Risālah al-mughbniyah*:

وقد وقع فراغ من تسويده الفقير إلى الله محمد التستري أحسن الله إليه في صفر 722 بمحرسة سليمان شهر من أعمال الروم.

The drafting (composition) of this work was completed by the one in need of God, Muḥammad al-Tustarī –may God show him kindness— in the month of Ṣafar 722 [AH], in the protected city of Sulaymānshahr, in the lands of Rūm.¹⁰⁴

The terminology employed by Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī in his manuscripts provides important clues for distinguishing between his authorial and scribal activities. Notably, the term *naskh*, which he uses while copying al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī's *al-Dharī'ah*, also appears in his transcription of Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī's *Ikhtiyārāt-i Muẓaffarī*. In contrast, in his own authored work *Kāshifāt asrār al-ḥaqā'iq*, he employs the term *taḥrīr*, whereas in *al-Risālah al-mughbniyah*, he uses the expression *taswīd*. Furthermore, in the colophons of his works *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā'irīn* and *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah*, the term *tabyīḍ* is consistently preferred.

On the basis of these terminological preferences, it appears that al-Tustarī used terms such as *taswīd* and *taḥrīr* to denote his authorial activity, whereas he reserved the term *naskh* exclusively for manuscripts he copied. Accordingly, this evidence demonstrates that *Kāshifāt asrār al-ḥaqā'iq* and *al-Risālah al-mughbniyah* are original compositions that have come down to us directly from the author's own pen.

4. Traces of Akbarī Thought in al-Tustarī: The Esoteric Commentary on the Ḥadīth “Allah Created Adam in His Own Image”

One of the traditions on which Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī comments in his *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-arba'in* is the ḥadīth “Allah created Adam in His own image”.¹⁰⁵ Al-Tustarī's interpretation of this ḥadīth is highly emblematic of his intellectual worldview, and this

¹⁰³ Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, *Ikhtiyārāt-i Muẓaffarī* (Fatih, 5302), 164b.

¹⁰⁴ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *al-Risālah al-mughbniyah* (Fatih, 5302), 209b.

¹⁰⁵ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-arba'in* (Feyzullah Efendi, 2163), 156a-b.

commentary is thus presented here as an exemplary text. Historically, scholars have had some difficulty in discussing and interpreting this ḥadīth. Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889) described it as “a tradition whose interpretation is challenging for people”,¹⁰⁶ while Ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015) affirmed that there was no dispute among scholars regarding its authenticity. However, when the version “Allah created Adam in the image of the Merciful (al-Raḥmān)” is considered, differing approaches emerge: some scholars interpret it esoterically, whereas the majority reject such readings as incorrect.¹⁰⁷ The ḥadīth has therefore been interpreted differently by ḥadīth scholars, theologians, and Akbarī Sufis. In particular, Ibn al-ʿArabī used this tradition as a foundational proof in his doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, linking it with Qurʾānic verses such as “I will create a vicegerent on earth”¹⁰⁸ and “Allah taught Adam all the names”,¹⁰⁹ as well as the ḥadīth, together with the ḥadīths “Allah created Adam in His own image”¹¹⁰ and “I am his hearing, his sight, his tongue, his hand, and his foot”,¹¹¹ explicitly understanding the pronoun *huwa* as referring to God.¹¹²

Al-Tustarī's commentary adopts a more inclusive approach. He presents the possibilities that the pronoun *huwa* may refer to Adam, to God, or to a third entity, without explicitly privileging any single interpretation. Nevertheless, his broader discussion of the interpretation in which the pronoun refers to God suggests that he implicitly favors and values this view. Notably, this method allows the simultaneous presentation of both exoteric scholars' perspectives and Akbarī Sufi views.

Al-Tustarī presents several interpretations for the pronoun when

¹⁰⁶ Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muslim Ibn Qutaybah al-Dīnawarī, *Taʾwīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyi al-Dīn al-Aṣḥar (Beirut - Doha: al-Maktab al-Islāmī - Muʾassasat al-Ishrāq, 1419/1999), 318.

¹⁰⁷ Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan Ibn Fūrak, *Mushkil al-ḥadīth wa-bayānub*, ed. Mūsā Muḥammad ʿAlī (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1985), 45-46; Şaban Çiftçi, “Allah Âdem’i Kendi Sûretinde Yaratmıştır” Hadisinin Tahrir ve Değerlendirmesi”, *Pamukkale Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 1/1 (March 2014), 8-14.

¹⁰⁸ Q 2:30.

¹⁰⁹ Q 2:31.

¹¹⁰ Al-Bukhārī, *al-Şaḥīḥ*, “Kitāb al-istiʿdhān”, 1.

¹¹¹ Al-Bukhārī, *al-Şaḥīḥ*, “Kitāb al-riqāq”, 38.

¹¹² Orkhan Musakhanov, *Tilimsânî'nin İlâhî İsimler Nazariyesi* (İstanbul: Litera Yayıncılık, 2018), 299-309; Orkhan Musakhanov, “İlâhî İsimler Teorisi”, *İslâm Düşüncesinde Teoriler: Metafizik*, ed. Ömer Türker (İstanbul: Ketebe Yayınları, 2021), 2 (*Varlık Düşüncesi ve Sıfatlar*)/1125.

understood as referring to Adam. One view holds that Adam was created in the state of his death, meaning he was brought into existence in full perfection, bypassing the usual stages of human development such as the nutfah, ‘alaqah, mudghah, childhood, youth, and old age. Another interpretation suggests that Adam was created in his paradisiacal form, descending to earth without any diminution in stature or luminosity.¹¹³ A further perspective considers Adam as created in a composite form containing opposites so that he embodies dualities such as error and guidance, sin and repentance, or knowledge and ignorance. In contrast, angels are created solely for obedience, Satan solely for disobedience, and animals solely for service; their natures are singular.¹¹⁴ This last view resonates with the Akbarī conception of humans as *kawn-i jāmi‘*, integrating opposites within themselves,¹¹⁵ yet the pronoun’s reference to Adam rather than to God distinguishes it from a fully Akbarī approach.

In interpreting the pronoun as attributed to a third entity, al-Tustarī draws on exoteric scholarship, citing the Prophetic saying “Do not say, ‘May Allah spoil his face’, or strike it, because Allah created Adam in His image”. Here, the “face” refers to the person receiving the censure or blow, reflecting honor and dignity toward Adam and humanity in general.¹¹⁶ Again, the pronoun referring to Adam rather than God differentiates this view from the Akbarī-centered interpretation.

If one adopts the Akbarī preference of the pronoun referring to God, the ḥadīth aligns with the version “Allah created Adam in the image of the Merciful”, implying that Adam was created according to a divine archetype. Al-Tustarī interprets *ṣūrah* (image) not physically but spiritually. According to him, *ṣūrah* refers not only to external forms but also to the arrangement of meanings, as in expressions such as “the

¹¹³ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-arba‘in* (Feyzullah Efendi, 2163), 156a; For the source of these comments, see Çiftçi, “Allah Âdem’i Kendi Sûretinde Yaratmıştır” Hadisinin Tahric ve Değerlendirmesi”, 9-11.

¹¹⁴ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-arba‘in* (Feyzullah Efendi, 2163), 156a.

¹¹⁵ For detailed information on the concept of *kawn-i jāmi‘* (the comprehensive/collective nature of human beings), see Abdullah Kartal, *İlâhî İsimler Teorisi: Allah-İnsan İlişkisi* (İstanbul: Hayykitap, 2009), 179-181.

¹¹⁶ Ibn Qutaybah, *Ta’wīl mukbtalif al-ḥadīth*, 319; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-arba‘in* (Feyzullah Efendi, 2163), 156a.

image of a matter” or “the form of a poem”.¹¹⁷

In this context, al-Tustarī states that the form in which Adam was created resembles the Divine (*Raḥmānī*) form in essence, attributes, and actions.

i. Similarity in essence: The human soul is considered an entity possessing existence in itself; it is neither matter nor a physical body, nor is it a substance localized or incarnated in a place. The soul is neither confined by space nor dependent on direction.¹¹⁸ These qualities, in a certain sense, correspond to the attributes ascribed to God’s essence. In this respect, al-Tustarī’s approach differs from that of early theologians, who regarded the soul as a subtle physical substance, and aligns with the perspective adopted by the Peripatetic philosophers, further developed by thinkers such as al-Ghazālī, and ultimately embraced by Akbarī Sufis.¹¹⁹

ii. Similarity in attributes (*ṣifāt*): The soul is endowed with attributes such as life (*ḥayy*), knowledge (*‘ālim*), power (*qādir*), will (*murīd*), hearing (*samī‘*), sight (*baṣīr*), and speech (*mutakallim*), which reflect divine qualities. Upon perfection, humans may be described with most

¹¹⁷ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-arba‘in* (Feyzullah Efendi, 2163), 156b.

¹¹⁸ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-arba‘in* (Feyzullah Efendi, 2163), 156a.

¹¹⁹ ‘Alīm Allāh Lāhūrī presents the early views of theologians (*kalām*) and Sufis regarding the soul and contrasts them with his own perspective: “Some theologians and Sufis claimed that souls are ‘subtle and luminous bodies’, grounding this view in the report that the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) saw Ādam, Mūsā, Yūsuf, Ibrāhīm, and other prophets (peace be upon them) in the heavens during the Night Journey (*Isrā’*). However, it is known that the bodies of these prophets are buried beneath the earth. Therefore, what was seen above must have been the souls. In our view –following al-Ghazālī, the majority of Sufis [especially Akbarīs], and some theologians– the soul is, by its essence, a substance abstracted from matter and form. Consequently, it can neither be perceived by the senses nor divided into parts. The event of the Prophet seeing the prophets during the Night Journey actually consists of the observation of the souls in forms adapted to perception (*ru‘yat al-arwāḥ fī ṣuwar al-tamaththul*). For this reason, the Divine command, ‘Say: The soul is from the command of my Lord’ [Q 17:85], indicates that the soul belongs not to the realm of creation but to the realm of divine command. Indeed, God further clarifies this reality by stating, ‘Know that both the creation and the command belong to Him. Exalted is Allah, Lord of the worlds!’ [Q 7:54]”. ‘Alīm Allāh Lāhūrī, *Taqdīs al-Raḥmān bi-l-taqyīd ‘an al-zamān wa-l-makān* (İstanbul: Beyazıt Kütüphanesi, Veliyyüddin Efendi, 1562), 40a. For information on ‘Alīm Allāh Lāhūrī, see Orhan Musabanlı, “Lahor, Şam ve İstanbul Hattında Ekberî-Müceddidî Sûfî: Alîmullah Lâhûrî ve Eserleri”, *Kocatepe İslami İlimler Dergisi* 6/1 (June 2023), 203-225.

divine attributes established by the Sharī‘ah. The Prophet’s ḥadīth “Adopt the character of Allah” and the philosophical principle that wisdom is “to resemble God as far as possible” support this notion.¹²⁰

iii. Similarity in acts (*af‘āl*): Human acts are analogized to divine acts. For example, writing begins with will in the heart and is transmitted via the animal soul to the brain, nerves, muscles, and, finally, the fingers, producing letters on paper. The motions of the pen move the ink, creating written text. This process mirrors divine actions at a microcosmic level. Al-Tustarī further maps the human heart to the Throne (‘*Arsh*), the brain to the Chair (*Kursī*), the senses to angels, nerves and organs to the heavens, the finger to nature, the pen to elements, the ink to the cosmic order, and the imagination to the Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawḥ al-maḥfūz*). One grasping these correspondences is said to understand the secret of the Prophetic saying “He who knows himself knows his Lord”.

This layered interpretation demonstrates al-Tustarī’s Akbarī-influenced yet original esoteric reading of the ḥadīth, integrating metaphysics, human perfection, and the correspondence between divine and human realities.¹²¹

Conclusion

The most significant finding of this study is the need to clearly distinguish between two 8th/14th-century scholars bearing the Tustarī *nisbah*: Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī and Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī. The evidence demonstrates that Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, a prominent commentator on Avicenna, was a scholar engaged in kalām, jurisprudence, logic, and philosophy, who studied the *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt* tradition comparatively and was active in major intellectual centers such as Tabriz, Hamadān, Baghdād, and Cairo.

In contrast, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī emerges as a distinct intellectual figure operating within the scholarly milieu of Anatolia, particularly in regions such as Konya, Sulaymānshahr, and Antalya. The analysis shows that his relative obscurity in comparison

¹²⁰ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-arba‘in* (Feyzullah Efendi, 2163), 156b.

¹²¹ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī, *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-arba‘in* (Feyzullah Efendi, 2163), 156a-b.

to his contemporary largely stems from the conflation of their identities in the manuscript tradition. A systematic examination of prefaces, colophons, titlature, patronage networks, and places of composition confirms that the works attributed to Shams al-Dīn belong to a separate intellectual trajectory rooted in Anatolian scholarly and cultural contexts.

The content analysis further reveals that Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī developed a coherent intellectual system characterized by the integration of multiple disciplines. His works indicate an engagement with philosophical and mystical traditions, suggesting a synthesis that reflects the intellectual climate of 14th-century Anatolia. This synthesis becomes particularly visible in his treatment of key theological and philosophical concepts, where interpretive methods point to a layered reading of texts that combines rational inquiry with spiritual insight.

The most evident finding of this research is the necessity of distinguishing between these two al-Tustarī-*nisbah* scholars. Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī was a *muḥaddith* and jurist who was engaged in kalām, jurisprudence, logic, and philosophy and was active in the major scholarly centers of Tabriz, Baghdād, and Hamadān. In contrast, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī was a Sufi operating within the Konya-centered intellectual and cultural milieu, notable for producing works on medicine, philosophy, and Sufism. It is evident that Shams al-Dīn enjoyed the support of important Anatolian political figures, such as Eşrefoğlu Mubārız al-Dīn Mehmed Bey, and that he also dedicated some of his works to Mamlūk sultans.

With respect to Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī's intellectual identity, his *al-Fusūl al-Asbrafiyyah* reflects a distinctive synthesis of Akbarī Sufism and Peripatetic philosophy. This synthesis is apparent both in its conceptual framework and in the method of textual interpretation. His commentary on the ḥadīth "Allah created Adam in His own form" demonstrates the clearest example of his connection to the Akbarī tradition. He interprets the term *ṣūrah* not as a material form but as a spiritual reality, emphasizes that the pronoun refers to God, and presents humanity as the locus of divine truths in essence, attributes, and actions. This approach firmly places his thought within the Akbarī lineage. In his commentary on al-Harawī's *Manāzil*, al-Tustarī structures his system around the Akbarī balance that unites

tanzīb (divine transcendence) and *tashbīb* (divine immanence), adopting Ibn al-‘Arabī’s approach, which transcends both the traditionalist *tafwīd* of the salaf and the kalāmī interpretative methods by integrating apparent and hidden meanings. A content analysis of his works shows a clear intersection between Peripatetic philosophical thought and Akbarī Sufi doctrine in his intellectual system.

In conclusion, this study aims to restore Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī to his rightful place in the history of Islamic thought and to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intellectual richness of 14th-century Anatolia. This reconstruction of his thought lays the groundwork for future research to further illuminate Shams al-Dīn’s overlooked intellectual legacy. Moreover, this methodological approach may serve as a model for investigating other historical figures whose identities have been similarly conflated.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

FUNDING

The author received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abū Dāwūd, Sulaymān ibn al-Ash‘ath al-Sijistānī. *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*. ed. ‘Ādil Muḥammad - ‘Ammār ‘Abbās. 8 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Ta’şil, 1436/2015.
- Akbaş, Mustafa Yasin. “Mesâbîhu’s-Sünne Şerhlerinden *Miftâbu’l-Fütûh*’un Eşref el-Fukkâî’ye Aidiyeti Meselesi”. *Şırnak Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 27 (December 2021), 208-233. <https://doi.org/10.35415/sirnakifd.999347>
- Apaydın, Yasin. “Timurlu Dönemi Herat’ında Bir Müderris: Mesud Şirvânî’nin (ö. 905/1500) Entelektüel Biyografisine Doğru”. *İslam Tetkikleri Dergisi* 13/2 (September 2023), 507-509. <https://doi.org/10.26650/iuitd.2023.1296135>
- Brockelmann, Carl. *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur: Erster Supplementband*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1937.
- al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘il. *al-Jāmi‘ al-şāḥiḥ*. ed. Muḥammad Zuhayr ibn Nāşir al-Nāşir. 8 vols. Beirut: Dār Ṭawq al-Najāh, 2nd edition, 1422/2001.

- Çiftçi, Şaban. “Allah Âdem’i Kendi Sûretinde Yaratmıştır” Hadisinin Tahric ve Değerlendirmesi”. *Pamukkale Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 1/1 (March 2014), 8-14.
- Demirli, Ekrem. “İbnü’l-Arabî ve Takipçilerinin Tanrı Anlayışı: Tenzih ve Teşbih Hükümlerinin Birleştirilmesi”. *İslam Araştırmaları Dergisi* 19 (2008), 25-44.
- Ghulâmî, Yadullâh. “Badr al-Dîn Tustarî”. *Dâ’irat al-Ma’ârif-i Buzurg-i Islâmî*. 11/544-545. Tehran: Markaz-i Dâ’irat al-Ma’ârif-i Buzurg-i Islâmî, 1381 HS.
- Ibn Abî Sharîf, Kamâl al-Dîn. *al-Musâmarab sharh al-Musâyarab*. ed. Kamâl al-Dîn Qârî - ‘Izz al-Dîn Ma’maysh. Beirut: al-Maktabah al-‘Ashriyyah, 2004.
- Ibn al-‘Arabî, Muhyî al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alî. *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. ed. Abrâr Aḥmad Shāhî - ‘Abd al-‘Azîz Sulṭân al-Manṣûb. Cairo: Sharikat al-Quds, 2016.
- Ibn Fûrak, Abû Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan. *Mushkil al-ḥadîth wa-bayânub*. ed. Mûsâ Muḥammad ‘Alî. Beirut: ‘Âlam al-Kutub, 1985.
- Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalânî, Abû l-Faḥl Shihâb al-Dîn Aḥmad ibn ‘Alî. *al-Durar al-kâminab fi a’yân al-mi’ab al-thâminab*. ed. Hâshim al-Nadwî et al. 6 vols. Hyderabad, Dakkan: Maṭba‘at Majlis Dâ’irat al-Ma’ârif al-‘Uthmâniyyah, 2nd edition, 1972-1976.
- Ibn Hıbbân, Abû Hâtîm Muḥammad al-Bustî. *Kitâb al-Majrûḥîn min al-muḥaddithîn wa-l-ḥu‘afâ’ wa-l-matrûkîn*. ed. Maḥmûd İbrâhîm Zâyid. 3 vols. Aleppo: Dâr al-Wa‘y, 1396/1976.
- Ibn al-‘Imâd, Abû l-Falâh ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Şâlihî. *Shadbarât al-dhabab fi akbbâr man dhabab*. ed. ‘Abd al-Qâdir al-Arnâ’ût - Maḥmûd al-Arnâ’ût. 10 vols. Beirut - Damascus: Dâr Ibn Kathîr, 1406-1414/1986-1993.
- Ibn Qutaybah, Abû Muḥammad ‘Abd Allâh ibn Muslim al-Dînawarî. *Ta’wîl mukhtalîf al-ḥadîth*. ed. Muḥammad Muhyî al-Dîn al-Aşfar. Beirut - Doha: al-Maktab al-Islâmî - Mu’assasat al-İshrâq, 2nd edition, 1419/1999.
- al-İşfahânî, Abû l-Qâsim al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Râghib. *al-Dbarî‘ab*. İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Reîsülküttab, 1197, 79b-130b.
- al-İsnawî, Abû Muḥammad Jamâl al-Dîn ‘Abd al-Raḥîm ibn al-Ḥasan. *Ṭabaqât al-Shâfi‘iyyab*. ed. ‘Abd Allâh al-Jubûrî. 2 vols. Baghdad: Ri‘âsat Diwân al-Awqâf, 1390-1391/1970-1971.
- Kartal, Abdullah. *İlâhî İsimler Teorisi: Allah-İnsan İlişkisi*. İstanbul: Hayykitap, 2009.
- Kâtib Chalabî, Hâjî Khalîfah Muştafâ ibn ‘Abd Allâh. *Kashf al-zunûn ‘an asâmi l-kutub wa-l-funûn*. ed. M. Şerefettin Yaltkaya - Kilisli Rifat Bilge. İstanbul: Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2nd edition, 1971.
- al-Kayyâlî, ‘Âşim İbrâhîm. “Muqaddimah”. *Sbarḥ Manâzil al-sâ’irîn ilâ’llâh ta’âlâ*. auth. Muḥammad al-Tustarî. 8. Beirut: Dâr Midâd li-l-Ṭibâ‘ah wa-l-Nashr, 2017.
- Khaşîfân, ‘Abd al-Raḥmân ibn Ghâzî. “Muqaddimah”. *Majma‘ al-durar fi sbarḥ al-Mukhtaşar*. auth. Badr al-Dîn Muḥammad al-Tustarî. 1/49-83. Beirut: Dâr Ibn Hâzm, 2018.
- Koç, İsa. *Hanbelî Literatürün İslam Mezhepleri Tarihi Kaynakları Gelenekindeki Yeri*. Ankara: Araştırma Yayınları, 2024.

- Kofoğlu, Sait. "Eşrefoğulları". *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*. 11/484-485. İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1995.
- Lâhūrî, 'Alim Allâh. *Taqdīs al-Raḥmân bi-l-taqyid 'an al-zamân wa-l-makân*. İstanbul: Beyazıt Kütüphanesi, Veliyyüddin Efendi, 1562, 1b-60b.
- al-Maqdisî, Abū 'Abd Allâh Muḥammad ibn Maṣṣūr ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrâhîm. *Sbarḥ Manâzil al-sâ'irîn*. İstanbul: Beyazıt Kütüphanesi, Veliyyüddin Efendi, 1734, 182a-321a.
- Musahanlı, Orhan. "Lahor, Şam ve İstanbul Hattında Ekberî-Müceddidî Sûfi: Alîmullah Lâhûrî ve Eserleri". *Kocatepe İslami İlimler Dergisi* 6/1 (June 2023), 203-225. <https://doi.org/10.52637/kiid.1272768>
- Musakhanov, Orkhan. "İlâhî İsimler Teorisi". *İslâm Düşüncesinde Teoriler: Metafizik*. ed. Ömer Türker. 2 (*Varlık Düşüncesi ve Sıfatlar*)/1120-1135. İstanbul: Ketebe Yayınları, 2021.
- Musakhanov, Orkhan. *Tilimsânî'nin İlâhî İsimler Nazariyesi*. İstanbul: Litera Yayıncılık, 2018.
- Peacock, A. C. S. *Islam, Literature and Society in Mongol Anatolia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- al-Shirâzî, Quṭb al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Maṣ'ūd, *İkhtiyârât-i Muṣaffarî*. İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Fatih, 5302, 1b-164b.
- al-Sulamî, Ibrâhîm ibn Şamâyil. "Muqaddimah". *Sbarḥ Minbâj al-wuṣûl ilâ 'ilm al-uṣûl*. auth. Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarî. 1/49-72. Beirut: Dâr Ibn Ḥazm, 2019.
- Tan, Nedim. *Abdullah Ensârî Herevî'nin Tasavvuf Târibindeki Yeri ve Sad Meydân'ı*. İstanbul: Marmara University, Institute of Social Sciences, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2013.
- Tek, Abdurrezzak. "Giriş". *Menâzilü's-sâirîn Tasavvufta Yüz Basamak*. auth. 'Abd Allâh al-Anşârî al-Harawî [as Hâce Abdullah el-Ensârî el-Herevî]. 7-80. Bursa: Emin Yayınları, 2008.
- Taşkömür, Himmet - Taşkömür, Hesna Ergun. "Transliteration and Facsimile 'Register of Books' (Kitâb al-Kutub), Ms Török F. 59". *Treasures of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3-1503/4)*. ed. Gülru Necipoğlu - Cemal Kafadar - Cornell H. Fleischer. 2/1-239. Leiden: Brill, 2019.
- al-Tilimsânî, Abū l-Rabî' 'Afîf al-Dīn Sulaymân ibn Shams al-Dīn. *Sbarḥ Manâzil al-sâ'irîn*. ed. Muḥsin Bîdârfar. Qom: Intishârât-i Bîdâr, 1432 AH.
- Tsılıgkır, Zeynep. *Bedreddin et-Tüsterî'nin (ö. 732/1332) el-Muhâkemât beyne Şerhayî'l-İşârât Adlı Eserinin Tabkik ve İncelemesi*. İstanbul: Marmara University, Institute of Social Sciences, Master's Thesis, 2017.
- al-Tustarî, Abū 'Abd Allâh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn As'ad. *Kāshif al-asrâr 'an ma'ânî Ṭawālî' al-anwâr*. İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Köprülü Fazl Ahmed Paşa, 831, 1b-143a.
- al-Tustarî, Abū 'Abd Allâh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn As'ad. *Majma' al-durar fî sbarḥ al-Mukhtaṣar: wa-huwa sbarḥ Mukhtaṣar Ibn al-Ḥâjib fî uṣûl al-fiqh*

- wa-aḥad al-sburūḥ al-sab‘ah al-sayyārah*. ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ghāzī Khaṣīfān - Ismā‘īl al-Ḥājj - ‘Abd al-Waḥhāb ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Rasīnī. 4 vols. Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2018.
- al-Tustarī, Abū ‘Abd Allāh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn As‘ad. *al-Muḥākamāt bayna Sharḥay al-Isbārāt wa-l-tanbihāt*. İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Fazl Ahmed Paşa, 898, 1b-123a.
- al-Tustarī, Abū ‘Abd Allāh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn As‘ad. *Sharḥ Maṭālī‘ al-anwār*. İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Ragıp Paşa, 781, 1b-229a.
- al-Tustarī, Abū ‘Abd Allāh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn As‘ad. *Sharḥ Minbāj al-wuṣūl ilā ‘ilm al-uṣūl*. ed. Ibrāhīm ibn Şamāyil al-Sulamī. 2 vols. Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2019.
- al-Tustarī, Abū ‘Abd Allāh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn As‘ad. *Sharḥ Minbāj al-wuṣūl ilā ‘ilm al-uṣūl*. İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Kadızade Mehmed, 110, 1b-100a.
- al-Tustarī, Abū ‘Abd Allāh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn As‘ad. *Sharḥ al-Taḥṣīl*. İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Carullah, 515, 1b-183b.
- al-Tustarī, Abū ‘Abd Allāh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn As‘ad. *Sharḥ al-Tajrīd*. Dublin: Chester Beatty Library, 3690, 1b-137b.
- al-Tustarī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad. *al-Fuṣūl al-Asbrafiyyah fī l-uṣūl al-burbāniyyah wa-l-kashfiyyah*. İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya, 2445, 1b-56b.
- al-Tustarī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad. *Jubd al-muqill [al-shāmīl li-naf‘ibī l-mutanāwīl]*. İstanbul: Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, III. Ahmed, 2112/1, 1b-225a.
- al-Tustarī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad. *Jubd al-muqill (al-Shāmīl li-naf‘ibī l-mutanāwīl)*. İstanbul: Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, III. Ahmed, 2112/2, 1b-546b.
- al-Tustarī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad. *Kāshifat asrār al-ḥaqā‘iq fī umūr al-dunyā wa-l-ākbarah*. İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Reisülküttab, 1197, 140b-147b.
- al-Tustarī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad. *Risālah fī taḥqīq qawlibī ta‘ālā: “Qul a-innakum la-takfurūna...”*. İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya, 1006, 68a.
- al-Tustarī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad. *al-Risālah al-mughniyyah*. İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Fatih, 5302, 165b-209b.
- al-Tustarī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad. *Risālat al-qadā’ wa-l-qadar*. İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya, 1006, 69b.
- al-Tustarī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad. *Sharḥ al-aḥādith al-arba‘in*. İstanbul: Millet Kütüphanesi, Feyzullah Efendi, 2163, 154b-168a.
- al-Tustarī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad. *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā‘irīn*. İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Fatih, 2707, 1b-141a.
- al-Tustarī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad. *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sā‘irīn*. Samsun: Samsun İl Halk Kütüphanesi, 55 HK 1132, 1b-126a.

PERIPHERAL FIRE: ONCE UPON A TIME IN DASKYLEION AND WESTERN ANATOLIA

Nevfel Akyar

Manisa Celal Bayar University, Manisa-Türkiye

nevfelakyar@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2712-7576>

Abstract

This article investigates the presence and transformation of Iranian religious practices –particularly those associated with Zoroastrianism– in Western Anatolia during the Achaemenid period, with a specific focus on Daskyleion and the Hellespontine Phrygia. By drawing on archaeological, epigraphic, and textual evidence, this study explores how Persian religious traditions were preserved, adapted, and reinterpreted outside the Iranian plateau. The findings reveal a nuanced picture of religious hybridity in which core Zoroastrian concepts such as dualism, fire worship, and clerical purity persisted alongside local Anatolian and Hellenic influences. Special attention is given to material culture that reflects both imperial ideology and regional reinterpretation. Ultimately, Daskyleion serves as a valuable case study for understanding how imperial religions evolved on the periphery and were shaped by negotiation, adaptation, and cultural

İlahiyat Studies

e-ISSN: 1309-1719

Volume 17 Number 1 Winter/Spring 2026

DOI: 10.12730/is.1762705

Article Type: Research Article

Received: August 12, 2025 | *Accepted:* June 21, 2026 | *Published:* June 30, 2026

To cite this article: Akyar, Nevfel, “Peripheral Fire: Once Upon a Time in Daskyleion and Western Anatolia”. *İlahiyat Studies* 17/1 (2026), 43-87.

<https://doi.org/10.12730/is.1762705>

This work is licensed under *Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International*.

exchange. This article contributes to broader debates on Achaemenid religious policy, the localization of Zoroastrian elements, and the dynamics of identity and belief in the ancient Near East.

Key Words: Western Anatolia, Iran, Persia, Zoroastrianism, Daskyleion, Sardes

Introduction*

Daskyleion constitutes a crucial site for understanding the mechanisms through which the Achaemenids established and maintained their authority in Western Anatolia and how this process intersected with religious transformation. Situated at the crossroads of Iranian imperial governance and local Anatolian traditions, the city provides valuable archaeological and epigraphic evidence for examining the ways that Persian religious practices—particularly those associated with Zoroastrianism—were introduced, adapted, or reinterpreted beyond the Iranian plateau. Unlike Sardis, whose cultural and physical stratigraphy was later obscured by intense Hellenistic and Roman influences, Daskyleion's comparatively uninterrupted Achaemenid horizon allows for a more direct assessment of how imperial power and religious ideology interacted in shaping local belief systems.

This research investigates whether the material culture and ritual indicators from Daskyleion represent a distinct and localized manifestation of Zoroastrianism or rather, a more fluid form of "Iranian religiosity" that evolved through the interaction with indigenous Anatolian beliefs. By examining funerary architecture, iconography, archaeological remains, and classic testimonies, the study situates the region's religious practices within the broader framework of Achaemenid religious pluralism and imperial administration. Particular attention is given to how dualistic cosmology, fire veneration, and the institutional presence of religious specialists—possibly Magi—were maintained or redefined under Persian rule. By highlighting the

* I would like to express my sincere gratitude to İsmail Supçin for his invaluable assistance and contributions during my investigations in the region authorized by the İzmir No. II Regional Board for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage, conducted as part of the field and archival research of this study.

processes of religious hybridity and negotiation, this work argues that Western Anatolian expressions of Zoroastrianism should be understood not as derivative imitations but as adaptive forms shaped by both imperial ideology and local cultural agency.

Key sources for this study include *Herodotus' Histories*, the *Persepolis Fortification Tablets*, which record the administrative provisions of the Magi (Old Persian: *maguš*) and reveal the institutional framework of Achaemenid religious practice, and *Xenophon's Anabasis*, which offers valuable observations on Persian ritual customs in Asia Minor. Complementing these textual testimonies, excavation reports from Daskyleion provide crucial material evidence for ritual spaces, iconographic programs, and possible fire-related structures. Together, these literary and archaeological materials are employed not only as descriptive data but also as interpretive tools for reassessing how imperial religious ideology was localized, adapted, and expressed on the western periphery of the Achaemenid world.

Arguably, Daskyleion's limited settlement after the Achaemenid period preserved a relatively intact archaeological record that protected it from extensive construction during the Hellenistic, Roman, Parthian, and Sasanian periods. This stratigraphic clarity allows for a more direct examination of Persian-period contexts, particularly those associated with ritual and funerary activity. Architectural fragments, stelae, bullae, and potential hearth structures from the site provide an invaluable perspective on the local expressions of Persian religious practice. However, their interpretation demands a careful comparative approach –by juxtaposing the Anatolian data with contemporaneous material from Iran, Lydia, and other satrapal centers– to establish both the parallels and divergences in ritual form. Accordingly, this study analyzes Daskyleion's religious evidence with particular attention to Zoroastrian features, and it integrates classic testimonies and epigraphic data to assess how imperial religious concepts were materialized and reinterpreted in the western provinces. Among the most informative religious artifacts unearthed at Daskyleion are bullae and stelae adorned with Persian-Anatolian iconography associated with funerary and ritual contexts.¹ Although these objects clearly

¹ See Margret Nollé, *Denkmäler vom Satrapensitz Daskyleion: Studien zur Graeco-Persischen Kunst* (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1992); Şehrazat Karagöz, *Kleinasiatisch-Gräko-Persische Kunstwerke im Archäologischen*

display Iranian stylistic traits, they were most likely crafted by local Anatolian artisans, reflecting a process of cultural translation rather than simple imitation. Dated between the sixth and fourth centuries BCE, such materials attest to the pervasive influence of Persian artistic and religious symbolism in Western Anatolia.² However, scholarly debate continues regarding the extent to which local communities comprehended and internalized Persian religious imagery and ritual practices. Although offering invaluable testimonies, classic writers such as Herodotus nonetheless filtered Persian religion through the lens of local cultural assumptions and limited linguistic access.³

Archaeological evidence underscores the pivotal role of Western Anatolia within the Achaemenid imperial framework, as the region hosted at least two major satrapal centers, namely, Sardis and Daskyleion.⁴ Located at Hisartepe, near present-day Bandırma, Daskyleion functioned as the administrative and military capital of the Satrapy of Hellespontine Phrygia, which linked the Persian heartland to the Aegean frontier (Figure 1).⁵ First identified in 1958 by Kurt Bittel,⁶ the site has since been systematically excavated by Ekrem Akurgal,⁷

Museum von Istanbul (Tübingen: Wasmuth Verlag, 2013); Deniz Kaptan, *The Daskyleion Bullae: Seal Images from the Western Achaemenid Empire* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor Het Nabije Oosten, 2002).

² Margaret C. Miller, "Greco-Persian Cultural Relations", *Encyclopædia Iranica* (Accessed 3 July 2024).

³ Miller, "Greco-Persian Cultural Relations"; M. Weiskopf, "Asia Minor", *Encyclopædia Iranica* (Accessed 8 December 2024).

⁴ Nicholas Victor Sekunda, "Achaemenid Colonization in Lydia", *Revue des Études Anciennes* 87/1-2 (1985), 7-30; Miller, "Greco-Persian Cultural Relations".

⁵ Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. George Rawlinson (Idaho: Roman Roads Media, 2013), 381-382 (6.33); Thierry Petit, *Satrapes et Satrapies dans l'empire Achéménide de Cyrus le Grand à Xerxès Ier* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1990), 181; M. J. Osborne, "The Satrapy of Mysia", *Grazer Beiträge* 3 (1975), 291-315.

⁶ See K. Bittel, "Zur Lage von Daskyleion", *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 68 (1953), 1-16; Tomris Bakır, *Balıkesir'in Eski Çağlardaki Valilik Merkezi Daskyleion* (Balıkesir: Balıkesir Valiliği, 2011), 17.

⁷ See Ekrem Akurgal, "Zur Datierung der Grabstelen aus Daskyleion", *Mansel'e Armağan / Mélanges Mansel II*, ed. Ekrem Akurgal - U. Bahadır Alkım (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1974); Ekrem Akurgal, "Kyzikos ve Ergili Arastırmaları", *Anatolia* 1 (1956), 43-51; Ekrem Akurgal, "Griechisch-Persische Reliefs aus Daskyleion", *Iranica Antiqua* 6 (1966), 147-156; Ekrem Akurgal, "Recherches Faites a Cyzique et a Ergili", *Anatolia* 1 (1956), 15-24; Ekrem Akurgal, *Ancient Civilizations and Ruins of Turkey* (İstanbul: Phoenix, 2025).

Tomris Bakır,⁸ and more recently, Kaan İren,⁹ whose ongoing work continues to illuminate its Achaemenid layers.

Figure 1: Map of Anatolia (c. 600-400 BC) (created with AI)



- ⁸ See Tomris Bakır, “Daskyleion”, *Höyük 1* (1988), 75-84; Tomris Bakır, “Anadolu Pers Sanatı ve Daskyleion Satraplığı”, *1993 Yılı Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi Konferansları 3* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 1994); Tomris Bakır, “Archäologische Beobachtungen Tiber die Residenz in Daskyleion”, *Dans les pas des Dix-Mille, Peuples et Pays du Proche-Orient vus par Un Grec, Actes de la Table Ronde Internationale Toulouse 3-4 Février 1995*, ed. Pierre Briant (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 1995), 269-285; Bakır, *Bahkesir'in Eski Çağlardaki Valilik Merkezi Daskyleion*; Tomris Bakır, “Die Satrapie in Daskyleion”, *Achaemenid Anatolia: Proceedings of the First International Symposium on Anatolia in the Achaemenid Period, Bandirma, 15-18 August 1997*, ed. Tomris Bakır - Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2001), 169-180.
- ⁹ See Kaan İren, “Daskyleion”, *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History* (Accessed 22 December 2025); Kaan İren - Handan Yıldızhan, “Daskyleion 2013 Yılı Kazı Çalışmaları”, *36. Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı* (Gaziantep: T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2014), 577-600; Atalay Karatak et al., “Daskyleion Arkeolojik Alanı Metal Buluntuları Üzerine Arkeometrik Ön Çalışmalar”, *32. Arkeometri Sonuçları Toplantısı* (Edirne: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2017), 149-166; Kameray Özdemir et al., “Koru Tümülsü İskeletlerinin Osteobiyografilerinin Element Analizi ile İncelenmesi”, *Gaziantep Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 17/3 (2018), 740-760; Özgün Kasar - Kaan İren, “Leaded Bronze Arrowheads at Daskyleion”, *Adalya* 23 (2020), 175-204; Kaan İren - Özgün Kasar, “Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Işığında Daskyleion’da Yeni Bulgular”, *Bitig Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 4/7 (2024), 145-160; Kaan İren et al. (eds), *Persler – Anadolu’da Kudret ve Görkem / The Persians – Power and Glory in Anatolia* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2017).

1. Persians in Western Anatolia and Daskyleion

Herodotus recounted that the oracles warned Croesus, the Lydian king, that if he waged war against the Persians, then he would bring about the fall of a great empire. Misinterpreting this prophecy, Croesus launched a military campaign that ultimately resulted in the destruction of his own kingdom.¹⁰ Beneath this mythical narrative, however, lies the historical reality that the Persians, following the conquest of Lydia, established dominance over western Anatolia for nearly two centuries.

There were four Achaemenid satrapies in Anatolia, two of which were in the west (Figure 1).¹¹ Within this framework, Daskyleion, which was located approximately thirty kilometers inland from the Sea of Marmara, emerged as one of the principal satrapal centers in Western Anatolia.¹² Xenophon noted that the city assumed this administrative role during the early years of Achaemenid rule.¹³

Although the satrapies of Daskyleion and Sardis came under Persian rule, their populations were likely predominantly local. During this period, Iranian authorities allowed Hellenic cities within the satrapy to maintain a degree of civic autonomy while simultaneously supporting the presence and settlement of Persian elites.¹⁴

Under Achaemenid rule, Daskyleion transformed into an institutionalized urban center.¹⁵ Tomris Bakır, who led excavations in the region in 1988, noted that the reliefs and stelae discovered at and around the site displayed stronger affinities with local artistic traditions than with Greek styles. Based on these observations, she proposed the term “Anatolian-Persian” rather than “Greco-Persian” to describe the hybrid material culture of Daskyleion, highlighting the interplay between imperial Achaemenid influences and enduring local artistic

¹⁰ Herodotos, *The Histories*, 21 (1.53), 31 (1.71), 32 (1.73).

¹¹ Bakır, “Daskyleion”, 76; Takuji Abe, “Dascylium: An Overview of the Achaemenid Satrapal City”, *The Kyoto Journal of Ancient History* 12 (2012), 2; Petit, *Satrapes et Satrapies dans l’empire Achéménide de Cyrus le Grand à Xerxès Ler*.

¹² Abe, “Dascylium”, 1.

¹³ Xenophon, *The Cyropaedia of Xenophon*, trans. C. W. Gleason (New York: American Book Company, 1897), 196 (8.6.7).

¹⁴ Simon Hornblower, *Greco-Persian Cultural Relations* (London - New York: Routledge, 1983), 71; Mehmet Ali Kaya, “Anadolu’da Pers Satraplıkları: Kuruluş, Yönetim ve Etnik Yapı”, *Cedrus* 6 (2018), 176-177.

¹⁵ Abe, “Dascylium”, 3-4; Weiskopf, “Asia Minor”.

expressions.¹⁶

Despite the establishment of Persian rule, archaeological evidence indicates that Western Anatolia retained strong Lydian cultural features while progressively assimilating elements of the Achaemenid administrative and religious model.¹⁷ The coexistence of Lydian and Persian personal names within the same families points to a gradual process of cultural integration likely facilitated by intermarriage and social mobility within the satrapal administration.¹⁸ The linguistic diversity of the inscriptions further reflects this cultural convergence: owing to its cosmopolitan nature and its status as a prominent Persian satrapal seat, Daskyleion served as a center where numerous languages and cultures –including Old Persian, Late Babylonian (Akkadian), Aramaic, Lydian, Hellenic (Greek), and Phrygian–coexisted.¹⁹ Inscriptions found on monumental stelae, seal impressions (bullae), and ceramics unearthed during excavations attest to this multilingualism. This linguistic plurality demonstrates not only administrative pragmatism but also the permeability of religious and cultural boundaries among local communities.²⁰

2. Achaemenid Religion

Two centuries of Persian rule in Western Anatolia likely fostered a hybrid cultural landscape in which Persian and indigenous traditions were intertwined. However, contextualizing the transformation of Iranian religious practices within this milieu requires an understanding

¹⁶ Bakır, “Daskyleion”; Bakır, “Die Satrapie in Daskyleion”; Miller, “Greco-Persian Cultural Relations”; Gürcan Polat, *Anadolu Akbaemenid Dönemi Plastik Eserleri* (İzmir: Ege University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1998), 8.

¹⁷ See Elspeth R. M. Dusinberre, *Aspect of Empire in Achaemenid Sardis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Elspeth R. M. Dusinberre, *Satrapal Sardis: Aspects of Empire in an Achaemenid Capital* (Michigan: University of Michigan, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1997).

¹⁸ Bartomeu Obrador-Cursach, “The Closing Formula of the Old Phrygian Epitaph B-07 in the Light of the Aramaic KAI 318: A Case of Textual Convergence in Daskyleion”, *Anatolian Studies* 71 (2021), 47-58.

¹⁹ See Bakır, “Die Satrapie in Daskyleion”, 173.

²⁰ Miller, “Greco-Persian Cultural Relations”; Elspeth R. M. Dusinberre, *Empire, Authority, and Autonomy in Achaemenid Anatolia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 253; Bakır, “Die Satrapie in Daskyleion”; F. N. Köseoğlu, Interview, September 2024; One of the new findings I saw during this interview, a brick fragment written in the Phrygian alphabet belonging to a Persian named Megabazos, constitutes good evidence for this claim.

of their foundational forms in the Iranian heartland. A significant challenge remains the scarcity of primary evidence regarding Achaemenid-era doctrinal structures and ritual variations. Consequently, despite their inherent biases and external perspectives, accounts by ancient authors offer a comparatively richer, albeit problematic, framework for examining Persian religious life in Anatolia.

There is no conclusive evidence that orthodox Zoroastrianism prevailed in Iran during the Achaemenid period.²¹ Nevertheless, it is particularly noteworthy that some prominent figures found in Zoroastrian mythology –such as Aršāma (Arsames), Vištāspa (Hystaspes), and Hutaosā (Atossa)– also appear within the Achaemenid lineage.²² The name Ahura Mazdā is mentioned repeatedly in Darius’s Old Persian inscriptions. Although no other god names are mentioned in these inscriptions, the phrase “other gods” is present.²³ Thus, although there are indications that the Achaemenids might have been Zoroastrian, there is also evidence that points in the opposite direction. Examples include the excessive reverence shown toward the gods of non-Iranians in the Cyrus Cylinder²⁴ and the fact that Achaemenid kings were mummified and placed in tombs,²⁵ which are practices that are at odds with Zoroastrian funerary customs. Furthermore, the two traditions curiously do not acknowledge one another. The names Cyrus and Darius do not occur in the Zoroastrian tradition, while the name Zoroaster is absent from Achaemenid

²¹ Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism II* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), xi.

²² F. Spiegel, *Ērānische Alterthumskunde I* (Leipzig: Verlag von Wilhelm Engelmann, 1871), 700 (n. 2); Herman Lommel, *Die Religion Zarathustras, nach dem Awesta dargestellt* (Tübingen: Druck von H. Laupp jr, 1930), 16; M. Mayrhofer, *Zum Namengut des Avesta* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1977), 10; Mary Boyce, “Achaemenid Religion”, *Encyclopædia Iranica* (Accessed 12 December 2024).

²³ See Rudiger Schmitt, *The Bisitun Inscriptions of Darius the Great: Old Persian Text* (London: Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, 1991), 70-71.

²⁴ Antoine Simonin, “The Cyrus Cylinder”, *Ancient History Encyclopedia* (Accessed 12 December 2024).

²⁵ Boyce, *Zoroastrianism II*, 57-60 The practice of placing the body in stone sarcophagi without it touching the ground is not contrary to Zoroastrian principles of purity. Furthermore, a plausible explanation could be that the king and his family were granted special privileges by God.

inscriptions.²⁶ The insufficiency of the evidence makes it difficult to determine whether the Achaemenids adhered to a clearly defined Zoroastrian faith rather than simply following broader ancient Iranian religious traditions. However, it can be suggested that Ahura Mazdā was regarded as the supreme deity and that even if not in the modern sense, certain beliefs associated with Zoroastrianism were indeed present.²⁷

Some later evidence from the early Sasanian period suggests that Zoroastrianism had spread in Anatolia. Kartīr (Kirdir), the influential high priest and royal ideologue of the empire, declared in his inscription at the Ka'ba-ye Zartosht, "I travelled through many parts of Anatolia and found Zoroastrian heretics and punished and reformed them".²⁸ This statement suggests that by the third century CE, Zoroastrian communities in Anatolia had developed heterodox or regionally distinct practices. However, notably, the pre-Sasanian Iranian religion itself was far from monolithic. The westward spread of Persian religious traditions was shaped not only by theological evolution but also by Persian administrative structures, military movements, and local processes of cultural accommodation.

Archaeological findings from central and western Anatolia provide important, although often ambiguous, evidence for the diffusion of Persian religious concepts. Examples include the fire altar with Magi figures discovered in Kayseri-Bünyan,²⁹ the kline reliefs depicting

²⁶ For discussions and writings on this topic, see below. Boyce, *Zoroastrianism II*, 68-69; James Hope Moulton, *Early Zoroastrianism* (London: The Hibbert Lectures, 1926); Henrik S. Nyberg, *Die Religionen des Alten Iran* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs Verlag, 1938); Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, *The Western Response to Zoroaster* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958); Geo Widengren, *Die Religionen Irans* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1965); Boyce, "Achaemenid Religion"; Albert de Jong, "The Religion of the Achaemenid Rulers", *Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World*, ed. Bruno Jacobs - Robert Rollinger (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2021), 1199-1209; Avram R. Shannon, "The Achaemenid Kings and the Worship of Ahura Mazda: Proto-Zoroastrianism in the Persian Empire", *Studia Antiqua* 5/2 (2007), 79-85; Boyce, "Achaemenid Religion".

²⁷ See "By the favour of Auramazda...", "Auramazda brought me aid..." Schmitt, *The Bisitun Inscriptions*, 49-76.

²⁸ Kartīr, "Kartir Inscription on the Kabah of Zartusht", trans. Neil MacKenzie (Accessed 15 April 2023); Mary Boyce - Frantz Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism III* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 254-255.

²⁹ K. Bittel, "Ein Persischer Freueraltar aus Kappadokien", *Satura: Fru Chte aus der Antiken Welt, Festschrift für Otto Weinreich* (Baden: Verlag für Kunst und Wissenschaft, 1952), 18-29; K. Bittel, "Kadadokyada Bulunan Bir Ateş Sunağı",

Magian officiants in Kastamonu's Tosya district,³⁰ and the fire-related structures at Oluz Höyük. These materials exhibit iconographic parallels with Achaemenid religious art,³¹ but their association with formal Zoroastrian ritual remains tentative. In Western Anatolia, particularly around Sardis and Daskyleion, such artifacts appear within hybrid cultural layers, reflecting both Persian imperial influence and local religious adaptation.

Similarly, traditional sources imply that the Achaemenid authorities adopted a policy of religious tolerance rather than of proselytism.³² If systematic conversion efforts had taken place, then ancient authors – otherwise attentive to Persian customs – would likely have provided more detailed descriptions of such practices. Instead, their accounts remain fragmentary and impressionistic and offer glimpses of ritual gestures and ethical concepts instead of liturgical or doctrinal content.

Mary Boyce argued that Iranian religious traditions did not spread into western Anatolia through autonomous migration movements; rather, Zoroastrian clergy generally remained embedded within established Iranian communities and did not relocate to areas without a Persian presence.³³ This pattern is consistent with the broader tendency of Iranian priests to avoid proselytizing among non-Iranians. Accordingly, the appearance of Iranian religious elements in Anatolia is best understood as a response to the ritual and ideological needs of Persian administrators, military personnel, and settlers who accompanied Achaemenid expansion into the region rather than as the result of organized missionary activity.

3. Iranian Gods

In the Iranian heartland, figural representations of Ahura Mazdā appear to have been uncommon, although the available evidence does not permit a definitive statement about strict aniconism. Achaemenid

Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi 6/2 (1956), 35-42; Murat Tosun, "Pers/Akhaemenid Dönemi'nde Anadolu: Bölgeler Arası Karşılaştırmalı Bir Değerlendirme", *OANNES* 4/2 (2022), 393.

³⁰ Polat, *Anadolu Akhaemenid Dönemi Plastik Eserleri*, 183-190; Tosun, "Pers/Akhaemenid Dönemi'nde Anadolu", 193.

³¹ See Boyce, *Zoroastrianism II*, 113.

³² Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of Persian Empire*, trans. Peter T. Daniels (Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 77.

³³ Boyce, *Zoroastrianism II*, 230-231.

royal iconography, including the winged-disk motif at Persepolis, demonstrates a symbolic representation of divine authority instead of a cult statue; however, this should not be misinterpreted as a universal doctrinal prohibition against depictions of gods. In regions where Iranian communities interacted closely with Anatolian artistic traditions, the local adoption of cult statues is more securely described.³⁴ The sporadic evidence for images of Anāhitā in pre-Sasanian contexts similarly underscores that attitudes toward divine representation varied regionally.³⁵ Thus, rather than assuming a monolithic “aniconic” Iranian religious culture, the archaeological and textual record indicates flexible practices shaped by local artistic and ritual environments.

The most substantial primary evidence for Persian religious influence in Anatolia derives from epigraphic sources. The appearance of the name Ahuramazda (“whrmzd”) in the Cappadocia-Arebsun inscription of the 4th-5th century BCE³⁶ refers to Mithraic elements in the Farasha bilingual inscription, and a mention of Anāhitā in a text from Aksaray collectively attests to the westward diffusion of Iranian religious vocabulary.³⁷ The name “Zeus Baradates” appears in the Sardis inscription that dates from 365 BC,³⁸ and Boyce interpreted this as the Greek equivalent of Ahura Mazdā; however, in the absence of the original text, this interpretation remains speculative.³⁹ Similarly, the formula “Zeus Megistos,” which was widely demonstrated in western Anatolia during the Roman period,⁴⁰ has been associated with the prestige of a supreme deity analogous to Ahura Mazdā, but such correlations must be approached with caution, as local reinterpretations, localizing tendencies, and administrative conventions likely shaped the terminology. Overall, the epigraphic record indicates a heterogeneous reception of Iranian religious

³⁴ For detail information see Albert de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 350-351.

³⁵ Pierre Briant, *A History of Persian Empire*, 264-265.

³⁶ Boyce, *Zoroastrianism II*, 274-275.

³⁷ Dusinberre, *Achaemenid Anatolia*, 237-238; Muhammet Yücel, “Dinî Bir Zümreden Politik Bir Nesneye: Akamenidlerden Sasanilere Kapadokya Zerdüştileri”, *Mukaddime* 13/2 (2022), 417-418.

³⁸ Briant, *A History of Persian Empire*, 677-678.

³⁹ Boyce, *Zoroastrianism II*, 255.

⁴⁰ Şengül Dilek Ful, *Yazıtlar Işığında Mysia Bölgesi Kültürleri* (Erzurum: Atatürk University, Social Science Institute, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2008), 61-62.

concepts instead of a uniform Persian imposition.⁴¹

The reference to Zeus Baradates in the aforementioned inscription⁴² (Figure 2) concerns a series of regulations addressed to temple officials regarding the maintenance of a cult statue. As the original Aramaic version is lost and the surviving text is mediated through Greek, the precise identification of the deity remains uncertain. The instructions concerning purity restrictions likely reflect Iranian ritual norms, but their application within a Greek-inscribed administrative context complicates a straightforward interpretation. Although Boyce's proposal that the underlying deity may have been Ahura Mazdā is plausible,⁴³ alternative explanations –including a fully localized divine title– cannot be ruled out. The inscription therefore illustrates not a standardized Persian model of image worship but a localized intersection of Iranian purity concepts with Anatolian cultic practices.

Figure 2: Inscription of Zeus Baradates, (367–366 BC) IN74.001,

<https://sardisexpedition.org/en/artifacts/r2-273>



⁴¹ Boyce, *Zoroastrianism II*, 250.

⁴² See G. M. A. Hanfmann, "Restoration and Excavations at Sardis- 1973", *Archaeology* 27 (1973), 138; Briant, *A History of Persian Empire*, 677-678.

⁴³ Boyce, *Zoroastrianism II*, 256.

Epigraphic evidence does indicate that from the reign of Darius onward, Persians acknowledged Ahura Mazdā as their highest deity.⁴⁴ Although the cult of Anāhitā held prominence in parts of Iran – particularly Azerbaijan – she is absent from the inscriptions of Darius I and Xerxes,⁴⁵ indicating possible regional variation within Iranian religious practice. The earliest explicit royal references to Anāhitā appear only under Artaxerxes II.⁴⁶ Ancient authors identified her with Aphrodite or at times, with Athena;⁴⁷ however, modern scholarship largely considers her closest Greek analog to be Artemis.⁴⁸ These associations demonstrate that Greek descriptions of the Persian religion were often filtered through Hellenic interpretive frameworks, which reinforces the need to avoid the assumption of doctrinal uniformity or direct equivalence between Iranian and Anatolian manifestations of the cult.

As Persian influence in Anatolia increased, the cult of Anāhitā appears to have become more visible in the region. Literary sources suggest that the introduction of this cult may date to the reign of Darius I, with its prominence growing under Darius II and especially Artaxerxes II.⁴⁹ Anāhitā's attributes overlapped with those of Artemis – particularly in relation to purity, fertility, and water – resulting in a degree of syncretic identification.⁵⁰ Evidence for Anāhitā worship is attested to in several regions, including Cappadocia, Pontus, Phrygia, and Lydia.⁵¹ Pausanias' later testimony indicates that even after the end

⁴⁴ See Schmitt, *The Bisitun Inscriptions*, 70; Esko Naskali, "Iran", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2000), 22/394-395.

⁴⁵ Mary Boyce, "Anahid", *Encyclopædia Iranica* (Accessed 11 September 2024).

⁴⁶ Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives: XI Aratus, Artaxerxes, Galba, Otho*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), Artaxerxes 3.

⁴⁷ Herodotos, *The Histories*, 61 (1.131-132).

⁴⁸ Boyce, "Anahid".

⁴⁹ Marijana Riel, "The Cult of the Iranian Goddess Anahita in Anatolia Before and After Alexander", *Živa Antika* 52 (2002), 197-210; A. T. Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), 479; Serap Özkan Kılıç, *Pers Hakimiyeti Altında Batı Anadolu* (İstanbul: İstanbul University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2011), 137.

⁵⁰ Boyce, *Zoroastrianism II*, 29-30; Boyce - Grenet, *Zoroastrianism III*, 262; Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, "Zoroastrian Religion", *The Cambridge History of Iran: The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 873-874; Yücel, "Kapadokya Zerdüştileri", 415.

⁵¹ See Riel, "Iranian Goddess Anahita".

of Persian rule, Lydians continued to venerate Anāhitā at Hypaipa and Hierokaisareia and performed hymns reportedly in the Persian language.⁵² The goddess's strong visual and cultic presence –as expressed through temples, statues, and ritual performances– may have contributed to the durability of her worship in local contexts. In contrast, local sources provide only limited information regarding Ahura Mazdā in Anatolia, a gap that likely reflects the interpretive constraints of local authors rather than the actual religious priorities of Persian communities.

Evidence indicates that Anāhitā worship particularly occurred in Lydia and western Anatolia, with Sardis serving as a key center.⁵³ However, documentation from Lycia and Pamphylia remains limited. Established sources, although sometimes indirect or anecdotal, provide additional testimony: Tacitus reported that Cyrus the Younger constructed sanctuaries dedicated to Anāhitā at Hieria Kome, and Xenophon mentioned reports of Anāhitā worship at Sardis.⁵⁴ According to Xenophon, the Persians assigned considerable importance to the cult of Artemis-Anāhitā.⁵⁵ Plutarch provided similar observations regarding Ephesus, and Pausanias noted the existence of a shared Artemis-Anāhitā sanctuary (hieron) in Lydia.⁵⁶ These accounts suggest widespread veneration, but the precise nature and local variations of Anāhitā worship remain difficult to reconstruct because of the interpretive limitations of the sources.

Archaeological evidence in Western Anatolia attests to the veneration of Anāhitā through inscriptions, votive altars, tombstones,

⁵² Pausanias, *Pausanias' Description of Greece*, trans. Arthur Richard Shilleto (London: George Bell and Sons, 1886), 1/357-358 (5.27.5-7); Özkan Kılıç, *Pers Hakimiyeti Altında Batı Anadolu*, 134.

⁵³ Pierre Debord, "La Survie des Cultes Iranien en Anatolie. L'exemple d'Anaïtis en Lydie", *Les Grandes Figures Religieuses: Fonctionnement Pratique et Symbolique Dans l'Antiquité. Actes du Colloque International (Besançon, 25-26 Avril 1984) (Annales Littéraires de l'Université de Besançon, 329)* (Besançon: Université de Franche-Comté, 1986), 85-92.

⁵⁴ Tacitus, *Annals*, trans. John Jackson (London: William Heinemann, 1931), 621 (3.62).

⁵⁵ Xenophon, *Anabasis*, trans. Carleton L. Brownson (London: Harvard University Press, 1980), 59 (1.6.7); Özkan Kılıç, *Pers Hakimiyeti Altında Batı Anadolu*, 134.

⁵⁶ Plutarch, *Lives*, Lysander 3.2; Özkan Kılıç, *Pers Hakimiyeti Altında Batı Anadolu*, 134; Pausanias, *Pausanias' Description of Greece*, 1/201 (3.16.8-9).

and honorary stelae.⁵⁷ Xenophon additionally reported an altar dedicated to Artemis at Sardis, where Persians performed acts of confession.⁵⁸ He identified the high priest of this sanctuary as a Persian cleric named Megabyxus (Bagavazdā or Bagabāzu in Persian).⁵⁹ This evidence may indicate a degree of syncretism or transformation in cult practice, where rituals originally associated with Artemis in the 5th century BCE were adapted to Anāhitā worship by the 3rd century BCE by incorporating notable modifications.⁶⁰ Although the continuity of ritual forms suggests cultural persistence, the precise nature of these adaptations remains difficult to reconstruct as a result of the interpretive constraints of the sources.

4. Temple and Ritual

Zoroastrian worship is traditionally performed in the ancient Iranian language, and since antiquity, it has included the recitation of the Gathas and the Yasna Haptanghaiti as hymns.⁶¹ Zoroastrian clergy were expected to memorize and orally recite these texts, even without a full comprehension of their meanings. Pausanias, writing in the second century CE, reported that the Magi recited hymns from a book during rituals, but the content was largely unintelligible to him.⁶² This demonstrates the enduring continuity of Persian religious practices. A similar observation was made in a poem of Diogenes quoted by Athenaeus, which describes ritual worship accompanied by music and hymns in regions influenced by Persian culture. These testimonies, despite their chronological distance, provide valuable insights for understanding the transmission and adaptation of Iranian ritual traditions in peripheral regions, including western Anatolia.

And now I hear women in turbans,
The followers of Asiatic Cybele,

⁵⁷ Anders Hultgård, "Invoking Anāhitā – from Iran to Asia Minor", *Achaemenid Anatolia: Persian Presence and Impact in the Western Satrapies 546–330 BC*, ed. Ashk Dahlén (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2020), 175.

⁵⁸ Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 57–61 (1.6).

⁵⁹ Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 371 (5.3.6–7).

⁶⁰ Stephen Mitchell, "Iranian Names and the Presence of Persians in the Religious Sanctuaries of Asia Minor", *Old and New Worlds in Greek Onomastic*, ed. Elaine Matthews (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 164; Yücel, "Kapadokya Zerdüştleri", 416–417.

⁶¹ Almut Hintze, "Who Are the Zoroastrians?", *The British Academy* 28 (2016), 14.

⁶² Pausanias, *Pausanias' Description of Greece*, 1/357–358 (5.27.5–6).

The daughters of the rich Phrygians
 Drums, roaring and clanging bronze
 With cymbals, banging hands in unison,
 They pour out a wise and healing hymn to the gods.
 Likewise, Lydian and Bactrian girls
 Those who live beside the Halys,
 They worship the Tmolian goddess Artemis loudly,
 Loving the laurel shade of the thick-leaved grove,
 The one that shoots the three-cornered pectis,
 Raising melodies that respond to Magadis,
 Persian flutes accompany the choir.⁶³

The passage suggests that women from Lydia, Phrygia, and Bactria participated in the worship of Artemis using musical instruments and Persian flutes, indicating syncretic rituals shaped by Persian liturgical practices.⁶⁴ Such evidence highlights the permeability of religious boundaries in Anatolia and demonstrates how local and imperial elements could merge, reflecting the hybridization of ritual forms under Achaemenid influence.

One of the most distinctive features of the Persian religion is the fire ritual, which the Persians introduced to Anatolia upon their arrival. Herodotus reported that Persians offered sacrifices to fire alongside other deities,⁶⁵ while Strabo later documented the presence of perpetual fires in Anatolian fire temples and noted that priests performed fire worship daily at fixed hours.⁶⁶ Pausanias corroborated Strabo's observations.⁶⁷ Fire worship appears to have expanded further into Anatolia following the Persian victory over the Sakas near Zela (Zile/Tokat).⁶⁸ A temple dedicated to Anāhitā was constructed in Zela, and the cult spread southward to Cappadocia and Cilicia, where Magi—the guardians of the sacred fire—recited prayers at designated times.⁶⁹ This evidence illustrates not only the diffusion of Persian religious

⁶³ Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists or Banquet of the Learned of Athenaeus*, trans. C. D. Yonge (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854), 1/131 (3.14.636 A/B).

⁶⁴ Sekunda, "Achaemenid Colonization in Lydia", 8.

⁶⁵ Herodotus, *The Histories*, 61 (1.131), 182-183 (3.16).

⁶⁶ Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, trans. Duane W. Roller (London: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 685-686 (15.3.15).

⁶⁷ Pausanias, *Pausanias' Description of Greece*, 1/357-358 (5.27.5-6).

⁶⁸ Strabo, *The Geography*, 493 (11.8.4).

⁶⁹ Strabo, *The Geography*, 685-686 (15.3.15).

practices but also their adaptation within local Anatolian contexts.

In ancient Iran, the sacred fire was kindled in elaborate ceremonies that constituted the central focus of societal spiritual practices. Initially, this form of worship did not involve temples; rather, fire temples appear to have emerged later in the evolution of Iranian religious practice.⁷⁰ No references to fire temples exist in Assyrian sources from the Median period, suggesting that such structures were absent before the Achaemenid era.⁷¹ Evidence of fire temples in the Avesta and early Achaemenid periods remains inconclusive, and it is generally assumed that they developed in the second half of the Achaemenid period.⁷² The Bisitun Inscriptions mention “houses of the gods” and “place of worship” (ayadana), which likely refer to sanctuaries where ritual activities were conducted.⁷³ Herodotus reported that the Persians initially performed rituals in the open air, without temples, images, or statuary.⁷⁴ Dino of Colophon and Clement of Alexandria verified that sacrifices were conducted outdoors,⁷⁵ and Xenophon mentioned Cyrus as offering sacrifices on a hill without referring to temples.⁷⁶ Collectively, this evidence indicates that early Zoroastrian feasts and sacrifices were performed at elevated sites, such as mountains and hills.⁷⁷ In later periods, however, ritual practices evolved to include both open-air and covered ceremonial spaces.⁷⁸

At the excavation site of Oluz Höyük in Cappadocia, adjacent to the so-called “Persian Road”, there are remains identified as an *ātaškada*

⁷⁰ Mary Boyce, “On the Zoroastrian Temple Cult of Fire”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95/3 (1975), 454-465; de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi*, 344; See also Jamsheed K. Choksy, “Reassessing the Material Contexts of Ritual Fires in Ancient Iran”, *Iranica Antiqua* 42 (2007), 229-269; Matthew P. Canepa, “Persian Religion and Achaemenid Sacred Spaces”, *Iranian Expanse: Transforming Royal Identity Through Architecture, Landscape, and the Built Environment, 550 BCE-642 CE* (Oakland: California Scholarship Online, 2018), 149-169.

⁷¹ Boyce, *Zoroastrianism II*, 21.

⁷² Choksy, “Reassessing the Material Contexts of Ritual Fires in Ancient Iran”; Mary Boyce, “Ātaškada”, *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (Accessed 15 September 2024).

⁷³ Schmitt, *The Bisitun Inscriptions*, 53.

⁷⁴ Herodotos, *The Histories*, 61 (1.131); Boyce, *Zoroastrianism II*, 21.

⁷⁵ Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Heathen: (Protrepticus)* (New Jersey: Beloved Publishing, 2016), 5.65.1.

⁷⁶ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, 198-199 (8.7.3); de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi*, 345.

⁷⁷ Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London - Boston - Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 46.

⁷⁸ Nevfel Akyar, *Eski İran'da Rabipler* (İstanbul: Kabalcı Yayınevi, 2023), 162-163.

(fire pit) dated to 450 BC (Figure 3a).⁷⁹ The location of the remains makes it possible to conclude that there was a channel for the blood of the victims south of the fire pit and to the east and northeast, a masonry “Sacred Area” (temenos) with platforms (Figure 3a).⁸⁰ The sacred fire pit is believed to be situated on one of the two stone-paved roads that were utilized for ritualistic purposes. A cult road of a similar nature to that found at Oluz Höyük has also been identified at Daskyleion (Figure 3b). The road, which terminates at a dead end in the south of Akro-Daskyleion, features paving stones very similar to those observed at Oluz Höyük. It is hypothesized that this road forms part of a sacred area that was associated with religious rituals.⁸¹ To the south of this road at Daskyleion lies a complex of buildings, presumed to be two-story, which are now recognized as the “Three Chambered Building”. Excavations in 2007 uncovered appliqué ornaments in this area believed to have been worn by Persian priests.⁸² The cult path, the pavement, and the Three Chambered Building may constitute components of a religious site.

When the photographs of the paved paths at Oluz Höyük and Daskyleion are examined side-by-side, the two structures appear to have been built for a similar purpose. The Three Chambered Structure at Daskyleion may have been used for the same purpose as the “sacred area” at Oluz Höyük. Perhaps it is a more advanced version of it. To date, no structure of this kind has been identified in Iran. If they were indeed built for a religious purpose, then one may reasonably conclude that they reflect an Anatolian-Persian architectural style. These findings may represent early forms of Mazdeism’s transition from open-air spaces to enclosed worship spaces. Of course, future discoveries and further research may revise this interpretation.

⁷⁹ Mona Saba, *Oluz Höyük Geç Demir Çağı Bulguları Işığında: Zerdüştîliğin Anadolu’daki Yayılımı* (İstanbul: Kabalcı Yayınevi, 2022), 5.

⁸⁰ Şevket Dönmez, “Amasya-Oluz Höyük Ateşgedesi ve Erken Zerdüşt Dini Kutsal Alanı”, *TÜBA-AR Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi Arkeoloji Dergisi* 22 (2018), 152-153; Şevket Dönmez - Mona Saba, “Demir Çağı Kappadokia’sında İlk Tapınak: Oluz Höyük İbadethane ve Ateşgedesi”, *Höyük* 12 (2023), 59-60.

⁸¹ Bakır, *Balıkesir’in Eski Çağlardaki Valilik Merkezi Daskyleion*, 81-85; İren - Kasar, “Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Işığında Daskyleion’da Yeni Bulgular”, 149.

⁸² İren - Kasar, “Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Işığında Daskyleion’da Yeni Bulgular”, 149.

Figure 2: Cult roads unearthed in (a) Oluz Höyük (Oluzhoyuk Instagram page) and (b) Daskyleion (Daskyleion Excavation House)



In addition to the previously discussed examples, a Persian temple dedicated to Artemis at Sardis is supported by epigraphic texts that date to the 4th century BCE and a passage in Xenophon.⁸³ An Achaemenid inscription found near the temple contains the Persian word “Mitradastas”.⁸⁴ Apparently, this Persian was influential in the construction of the temple. This may be unclear evidence that identifies Artemis in Sardis with Anāhitā. Pausanias and Strabo also recorded a temple specifically dedicated to Artemis Persica.⁸⁵ Briant explained that the worship of Artemis Persica in Sardis would be

⁸³ Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 59 (1.6.7).

⁸⁴ Roberto Gusmani, *Lydisches Wörterbuch: Mit Grammatischer Skizze und Inschriftensammlung* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1964), 47.

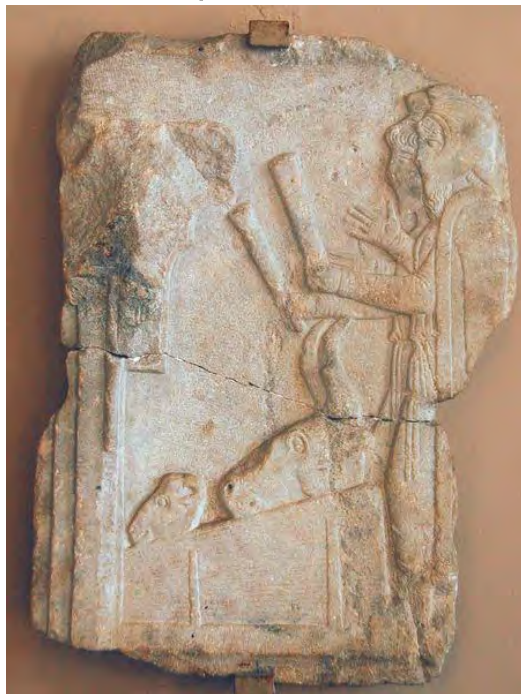
⁸⁵ Pausanias, *Pausanias' Description of Greece*, 2/12-13 (7.6.6); Strabo, *The Geography*, 360-361 (8.4.5).

influenced by the presence of the Maibozenoi community, which was of Iranian origin and had come from Cappadocia;⁸⁶ this suggests a potential connection between this temple and Anāhitā. Furthermore, Strabo reported that the Persians constructed a temple on a hill at Zela that included communal areas dedicated to Anaitis, Omanos, and Anadatos.⁸⁷

5. Clergy

Within ancient Iranian tradition, clothing functioned as a visible marker of social hierarchy, and color played a significant role in distinguishing social groups. Warriors wore red and similar garments, while priests wore white. It can be argued that these priestly garments, which were borrowed from the Median tradition, have relatively preserved their form to this day.⁸⁸

Figure 4: Funerary stele unearthed at Daskyleion that depicts two Magians during a ritual, Istanbul Archaeological Museum/Env. 2361 (c. 430-330 BCE)



⁸⁶ Briant, *A History of Persian Empire*, 703-704.

⁸⁷ Strabo, *The Geography*, 493 (11.8.4).

⁸⁸ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. R. D. Hicks (London: William Heinemann, 1925), 1/9 (1.6-8); Boyce, *Zoroastrianism II*, 21.

According to literary and iconographic evidence, this outfit consisted of white cavalry-style trousers, a fitted tunic, and a mantle known in ancient sources as the *kandys*. Iranian clerics in western regions during the 6th century BCE likewise used this attire, albeit with minor regional variations (Figure 4). The most distinctive feature of Iranian priestly dress was their specialized headgear. Felt hoods, called *tiara*, had side flaps that could be drawn forward to cover the mouth and nose during ritual acts – particularly to prevent the pollution of the sacred fire by human breath.⁸⁹ The clearest and most explicit description of this ritual function appears in Strabo’s account of Persian priests in Anatolia, which confirms both the practical and symbolic significance of this headgear within Achaemenid religious practice:

In Kappadokia –where the clan of the Magoi (who are also called the Pyraithians) is numerous and there are many sanctuaries to the Persian gods– ... There are also the Pyraitheia, certain notable enclosures, with an altar in the middle of them, in which there are many ashes and an inextinguishable fire that the Magoi guard. They go in each day and make incantations for about an hour, holding the bundle of wands before the fire, having felt tiaras wrapped around them that come down their cheeks on either side far enough to cover their lips.⁹⁰

The bundles of wands held by the priests represent *barsom* (Av. *barəsmān*), the ritual twigs used in Zoroastrian ceremonies.⁹¹ The cloth that covered their mouths and cheeks corresponded to the *padam* (*paīti-danā*, *padān*), which was worn to prevent the ritual pollution caused by human breath – an impurity explicitly mentioned in several Avestan and Pahlavi passages.⁹²

⁸⁹ J. D. Beazley, *The Lewes House Collection of Ancient Gems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), 82-84; Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism I* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 306-309; Boyce, *Zoroastrianism II*, 20.

⁹⁰ Strabo, *The Geography*, 685-686 (15.3.15).

⁹¹ “Vendidad (Vidēvdād) or Laws Against the Demons Avesta”, trans. James Darmesteter, *The Sacred Books of the East 4* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895), 19.18-19; Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees*, ed. Joseph H. Peterson (Bombay: Jehangir B. Karani’s Sons, 1937), 219-222.

⁹² Just as everything that comes from a human being is unclean, so the breath contaminates everything it touches; therefore priests, while on duty, and even laymen, must wear a mouth covering called a paitidana when praying or eating.

A comparable depiction occurs on a stele discovered near ancient Daskyleion (Figure 4), which shows priests conducting a ritual with veils extending from their *tiaras* to cover the mouth area. Both priests wear tunics with embroidered sleeves and a protective girdle identifiable as the *kusti*.⁹³ The two ends of the *kusti* hang visibly from the waist to approximately the knee level, which is consistent with parallels from Achaemenid iconography. This stele housed in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum is examined in detail in the following sections.⁹⁴

Although certain material aspects have changed over time, the essential components of Zoroastrian priestly vestments remain recognizably continuous from the Achaemenid period to the present. Modern *barsom* bundles are typically made of metal and are shorter than those represented in the reliefs; the *padam* is worn independently of the headdress, and the *kusti* continues to be tied as part of the ritual outfit. Crucially, the priestly garments remain white, which maintains the traditional association of purity with ritual attire.

Another grave stele, also discovered at Daskyleion and dated to the 5th century BCE, depicts a male figure whose head is partially damaged, although part of his beard remains visible (Figure 5). The individual is shown wearing a reddish Median-style costume and holding a *barsom* bundle in his right hand and a staff in his left hand (Figure 5). His attire corresponds to the typical Median ensemble: a long-sleeved tunic that extends below the knees and a *kandys* –a longer outer garment– draped over the back. The relief appears to have originally been painted; traces of pigment survive on the *kandys*, the shoes, and parts of the tunic's front, while the collar edges remain uncolored.

Vendidad 14.8, 18.1; Martin Haugh, *Essays on the Sacred Language, Writings and Religion of the Parsis*, ed. E. W. West (London: Trübner & Co., Ludgate Hill., 1878), 243 (n. 1); Modi, *The Religious Ceremonies*, 136.

⁹³ See Vendidad 18.53-54; Yasna 9.26; "The Zend-Avesta Part III", trans. L. H. Mills, *The Sacred Books of the East 31* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887), 1-400.

⁹⁴ Env. 2361; Şevket Dönmez, "Kapadokya'da Ateş Kültü", *Türk Dünyası İnanç Merkezi Kongresi Bildirileri: 23-27 Eylül 2002 Mersin* (Ankara: Türksev, 2004), 477 (n. 17); Karagöz, *Kleinasiatisch-Gräko-Persische Kunstwerke im Archäologischen Museum von Istanbul*, 72; Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis, "Ancient Iranian Motifs and Zoroastrian Iconography", *The Zoroastrian Flame: Exploring Religion, History and Tradition*, ed. A. V. Williams et al. (London - New York: I. B. Tauris, 2016), 179-181; Akyar, *Eski İran'da Rabipler*, 440-448.

Figure 3: A relief that depicts a Persian during worship at Daskyleion, Istanbul Archaeological Museum/5391 Env. (c. 430-330 BCE)



Dönmez suggested that the figure may represent a cleric.⁹⁵ However, red clothing is commonly used in Achaemenid visual culture as an indicator of aristocratic or military status. Consequently, the

⁹⁵ Dönmez, "Kapadokya'da Ateş Kültü", 478 (n. 18).

figure is more plausibly understood as a nobleman engaged in an act of worship rather than as a member of the priesthood.⁹⁶

The object positioned opposite the figure has been interpreted either as a fire altar⁹⁷ or as a doorway,⁹⁸ both of which suggest a ritual context. If the scene indeed depicts a ritual performed before a fire altar, then one might expect the presence of a *padam* covering the mouth and nose. However, since only the lower portion of the figure's beard is preserved, the available evidence does not allow for a definitive conclusion. *Barsom* was not exclusive to clerics and could be employed in various ritual contexts.⁹⁹ Thus, the stele may well portray a nobleman performing an act of worship – possibly even the deceased individual interred within the tomb.

6. Sacrifice and Libation

Although some scholars argue that the Gathas of Zarathustra opposed bloody sacrifice on the grounds that such acts caused suffering to cattle,¹⁰⁰ others regard this interpretation as anachronistic.¹⁰¹ Classic sources describe bloody sacrifices as one of the most significant forms of worship among Persians. Moreover, *Yasna Haptan̄hāiti* –the text closest in date to the Gathas– presents sacrifice as an integral part of ritual activity.¹⁰²

Given this framework, it is plausible that the Persians who invaded Anatolia conducted numerous bloody sacrifices, both to procure food and to secure divine favor. Herodotus recounted that the Persians

⁹⁶ Boyce, *Zoroastrianism II*, 146-147.

⁹⁷ Saba, *Zerdiştîlîğîn Anadolu'daki Yayılımı*, 66; Karagöz, *Kleinasiatisch-Gräko-Persische Kunstwerke*, 72.

⁹⁸ Gürçan Polat, "Bir Anadolu-Akhaemenid Dönemi Ölü Kültü Geleneği: Tümüls Önünde Steller ve Seremoni Alanları", *OLBA* 11 (2005), 14.

⁹⁹ Herodotos, *The Histories*, 61 (1.132); In *Shābnāmāh*, the final Sasanid Shah Yazdegerd requests that Barsom engage in worship from the miller to whom he had sought refuge. See Abolqasem Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh*, trans. Dick Davis (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 848.

¹⁰⁰ Yasna 44.20, 32.12; Moulton, *Early Zoroastrianism*, 395; Gherardo Gnoli, *Zoroaster's Time and Homeland: A Study on the Origins of Mazdeism and Related Problems* (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1980), 33; de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi*, 357.

¹⁰¹ Boyce, *Zoroastrianism I*, 215; Touraj Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia the Rise and Fall of an Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009).

¹⁰² Yasna 41.6.

could not perform a sacrifice without the presence of a magus.¹⁰³ This testimony suggests that members of the clergy accompanied the army and that a ritual procedure –although its full liturgical structure remains uncertain– was enacted during sacrificial ceremonies.

According to Herodotus, the Persians dedicated their sacrifices to Ahura Mazdā –whom he identified with Zeus– and performed these rites in open fields. They also offered sacrifices to the sun, moon, earth, fire, water, and wind, all of which were regarded as sacred elements.¹⁰⁴ Herodotus further stated that sacrificial rites did not require an altar or fire; instead, it was sufficient for the person making the sacrifice to slaughter the victim in a clean place, wear a crown of myrtle, and invoke the name of the deity. Following the sacrifice, the Magi divided the meat and recited a series of prayers.¹⁰⁵ In contrast, Xenophon emphasized the pre-battle sacrifices performed by the Persians and confirmed the involvement of clergy in these rituals.¹⁰⁶ His account complements that of Herodotus by illustrating the military-ritual context in which sacrificial practices could occur.

Xenophon noted that sacrificial rites were performed on elevated ground.¹⁰⁷ However, his description of the burning of animals –including horses and bulls– stands in sharp contrast to established Iranian religious norms in which fire was regarded as sacred and corpses as inherently polluting.¹⁰⁸ Although such cremation practices were observed among the local peoples, they never gained acceptance within the Iranian cultural and religious milieu.¹⁰⁹ Arguably, during their prolonged presence in Anatolia, the Achaemenids may have adopted hybrid practices by incorporating local ritual elements.

The choice of animals offered in sacrifice appears to have varied according to the specific ceremony and ritual context. Herodotus explicitly conveyed that the Magi did not kill dogs or humans, a prohibition similarly confirmed in the Vendīdād, where the killing of a dog is regarded as a grave sin.¹¹⁰ Archaeological evidence supports

¹⁰³ Herodotos, *The Histories*, 61 (1.132).

¹⁰⁴ Herodotos, *The Histories*, 61 (1.131).

¹⁰⁵ Herodotos, *The Histories*, 61 (1.132).

¹⁰⁶ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, 104 (4.5.14), 110 (4.5.51), 114 (4.6.11), 120 (5.3.4).

¹⁰⁷ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, 198-199 (8.7.3).

¹⁰⁸ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, 185-186 (8.3.24).

¹⁰⁹ Boyce, *Zoroastrianism II*, 215; de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi*, 361.

¹¹⁰ Vendīdād 3.36-38; 13.1-19.

these textual accounts: the relief from Daskyleion (Figure 4) and the findings from Oluz Höyük attest to a range of animal sacrifices, but none involved dogs.¹¹¹ In this context, there is no evidence to suggest that the Persians in Anatolia failed to adhere to Iranian religious law.

Strabo related that a priestly class known as the Pyraithēia in Cappadocia performed sacrificial rituals in which the victims were killed not with a sword but with a type of club.¹¹² Accordingly, Dönmez and Saba proposed that the barsom sticks held by the Magi in the Daskyleion relief (Figure 4) might represent clubs used in sacrificial rites.¹¹³ Although it cannot be entirely ruled out that Persian priests may have used clubs in certain ritual contexts, the object in the relief is more plausibly a barsom bundle, a ritual implement integral to Zoroastrian ceremonies, rather than a weapon because barsom is an ancient and fundamental part of the sacrificial ritual.¹¹⁴

Within the broader framework of Indo-Iranian religious traditions, libation (the ritual pouring of liquid offerings) emerged as a distinctive component of the sacrificial rite and played a prominent role in Zoroastrian ritual practices.¹¹⁵ Although Herodotus claimed that the Persians were unfamiliar with libations (a claim that may reflect Greek interpretative bias instead of factual absence),¹¹⁶ he nevertheless described a libation ceremony performed by the Persian army under King Xerxes near the River Scamander (modern Karamenderes) in the Çanakkale region.¹¹⁷ Notably, however, the rituals reported by the Persians before crossing the Dardanelles differed markedly from known Iranian practices. According to Herodotus, the Persians burned incense on the bridges at sunrise and adorned the roads with myrtle branches. At sunrise, Xerxes poured a libation from a golden vessel into the sea and offered prayers while facing the sun.¹¹⁸ These actions may signal Hellenic interpretations or localized adaptations instead of strictly Iranian ritual forms. Nevertheless, the timing of the ceremony – at sunrise – and the orientation toward the sun are consistent with

¹¹¹ Dönmez - Saba, "Oluz Höyük İbadethane ve Ateşgedesi", 62.

¹¹² Strabo, *The Geography*, 685-686 (15.3.15).

¹¹³ Dönmez - Saba, "Oluz Höyük İbadethane ve Ateşgedesi", 62.

¹¹⁴ See Yasna 24.12; Yasna 62; Visperad 11.2; Yasht 10.91.

¹¹⁵ de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi*, 353.

¹¹⁶ Herodotus, *The Histories*, 61 (1.132).

¹¹⁷ Herodotus, *The Histories*, 447 (7.43).

¹¹⁸ Herodotus, *The Histories*, 451-452 (7.54).

Persian religious norms.¹¹⁹ Xenophon provided a comparable description of Cyrus's morning worship.¹²⁰ Ancient authors may have imposed their own religious frameworks on Persian practices, but it is plausible that Persians in Anatolia selectively adapted their rituals in response to local traditions or pragmatic concerns, exhibiting a hybridization of ceremonial forms.

The Persepolis Fortification Documents refer to a ritual practiced during the Achaemenid period that involved wheat, beer, and wine, which was known as the Lan Lirira (or Lan) ritual, a ceremonial libation possibly tied to agricultural and religious observances.¹²¹ Ashk Dahlén suggested a potential connection between the record of the magus Hatarbanuš receiving 300 liters of wine for the Lan ritual in a single year and Herodotus's description of Xerxes pouring wine into the Hellespont from a golden goblet, although this association remains tentative.¹²² The exact nature of the Lan Rite remains debated, as the Avesta does not provide any direct references to this ritual or to the use of wine, which highlights the difficulties in reconstructing its meaning and function. Nonetheless, it is conceivable that the Lan Rite represents a form of libation ritual adapted by Persians in Western Anatolia – potentially indicating a syncretism between Iranian ceremonial practices and local or Hellenic influences, which may explain Herodotus's account.

7. Funeral and Cemetery

Zoroastrian funeral rites are deeply shaped by a dualistic cosmology unique to Iranian religious thought, which posits a constant struggle between Ahura Mazdā, the god of good, and Angra Mainyu, the embodiment of evil.¹²³ Human and canine corpses, which were believed to be immediately inhabited by malevolent spirits upon

¹¹⁹ De Jong, *Traditions of the Magi*, 366; Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, 32-33.

¹²⁰ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, 172 (8.1.23).

¹²¹ Richard T. Hallock, *Persepolis Fortification Tablets* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), 753-755, 757, 768, 2036.

¹²² Hallock, *Persepolis Fortification Tablets*, 759; Herodotus, *The Histories*, 451-452 (7.54); Ashk Dahlén, "Living the Iranian Dolce Vita: Herodotus on Wine Drinking and Luxury among the Persians", *Achaemenid Anatolia: Persian Presence and Impact in the Western Satrapies 546-330 BC*, ed. Ashk Dahlén (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2020), 103.

¹²³ Nevfel Akyar - Süleyman Sayar, "Zerdüşti Cenaze Geleneklerinde Düalizm", *Bahkesir Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 4/2 (2018), 55-80.

death, are regarded as inherently impure.¹²⁴ Fire, earth, water, and air are classified as pure elements, and it is considered a grave sin to contaminate these elements through contact with impure substances. As a result, the most appropriate funerary practice in Zoroastrian orthodoxy involved exposing the corpse on a rock under the sun and allowing it to be consumed by scavenging animals.¹²⁵ However, it is reasonable to hypothesize that funerary customs during the Achaemenid era were characterized by a greater diversity and regional variation that signified local traditions and administrative influences.

Figure 4: The Pyramid Tomb in Sardis, the Persian Tomb (Stone Tower) in Phocaea and the Tomb of Cyrus in Pasargardae, respectively



¹²⁴ Vendīdād 6.44-46.

¹²⁵ Akyar - Sayar, "Zerdüşti Cenaze Geleneklerinde Düalizm".

Figure 5: Üçpınar Tumulus: A Persian buried in dorsal position on a marble kline in a tumulus in Balıkesir, Bursa Archaeological Museum (a reconstruction of the original tomb)



Despite the limited data concerning the funerary customs of the general populace, Achaemenid elite funerary architecture clearly exhibited a diversity of forms, including rock-cut tombs carved into steep cliffs, platform tombs, and mausolea that resembled pyramid-shaped structures. In contrast, Western Anatolia housed not only rock-cut tombs but also the emergence of distinct funerary practices, such as tumuli, the use of funerary stelae, Lycian-style sarcophagi, and columned tombs – funerary elements largely absent from core Iranian traditions.¹²⁶ These practices were adopted or adapted by Achaemenid nobles who incorporated Ionian and Attic cultural elements into their iconography, especially in the design of stelae.¹²⁷ These methods

¹²⁶ Carl Nylander, *Ionians in Pasargadae: Studies in Old Persian Architecture* (Uppsala: Academiae Ubsaliensis, 1970), 93.

¹²⁷ O. P. V. L'vov-Basirov, "Achaemenian Funerary Practices in Western Asia Minor", *Achaemenid Anatolia: Proceedings of the First International Symposium on Anatolia in the Achaemenid Period, Bandirma, 15-18 August 1997*, ed. Tomris Bakır - Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2001), 101.

indicate a selective process of cultural assimilation in which Persians accommodated local funerary customs while maintaining adherence to fundamental Zoroastrian principles. However, there is no evidence of cremation and burial practices that are explicitly opposed to dualistic theology.¹²⁸ Although burial on marble klinai within chamber tombs does not necessarily contradict Zoroastrian dualism, it remains uncertain whether Persian elites consistently observed orthodox Zoroastrian funerary rites.

One of the most magnificent Persian monumental tombs in Western Anatolia is the Taş Kule Mausoleum at Phocaea (modern Foça), which is dated to the second half of the 6th century BCE. Architecturally, it bears a resemblance to the tomb of Cyrus at Pasargadae and the so-called Pyramid Tomb at Sardis. The latter, although it is now largely in ruins with only a few steps of its staircase remaining, has been frequently compared to Cyrus's mausoleum, but this analogy remains debated among scholars (Figure 6).¹²⁹ Among these three tombs, all dated to the 6th century BCE, Taş Kule stands out as being carved directly from rock. Importantly, the presence of human remains or bones preserved within stone sarcophagi in these tombs does not necessarily contravene Zoroastrian religious prescriptions, as the practices may represent adaptations to local funerary traditions while maintaining essential doctrinal principles.

The construction of tumuli, sarcophagi, and tomb stelae predates Persian rule, with the most notable examples found in Lydia and Daskyleion. These monumental tombs are typically composed of earth mounds erected over a burial chamber of cut stone.¹³⁰ Although they

¹²⁸ See Vendīdād, 1.15; 3.35-36; 5.11-14; 6.44-51; 7.25 and 49-51.

¹²⁹ Howard Crosby Butler, *Sardis: The Excavations Part I 1910-1914* (Leiden: Brill, 1922), 1/154, 166-170; Nicholas Cahill, "Taş Kule: A Persian Period Tomb near Phokaia", *American Journal of Archaeology* 92/4 (1988), 490; Tosun, "Pers/Akhaemenid Dönemi'nde Anadolu", 387; Farzad Abedi, "Saridis Mezar Tipleri", *Amisos* 3/5 (2018), 305-321; Andrew Ramage et al., "Lydian Excavation Sectors", *Sardis from Prehistoric to Roman Times: Results of Archaeological Explorations of Sardis 1958-1975*, ed. George M. A. Hanfmann (Cambridge, MA - London: Harvard University Press, 1983), 42; Lucia Nováková, "People, Tombs, and Religious Practices in Achaemenid Anatolia", *Nunc Decet Caput Impedire Myrto Studies Dedicated to Professor Piotr Dyczek on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* (Warsaw: The Center for Research on the Antiquity of Southeastern Europe, 2021), 121-122; also see Miller, "Greco-Persian Cultural Relations".

¹³⁰ Sevgi Sarıkaya, *Anadolu'da Persler: Daskyleion Satraplığı* (İstanbul: Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları, 2018), 17.

share certain architectural traits with Iranian models, these tombs retain local characteristics that set them apart from other contemporary monuments. Notably, some of these tombs display Zoroastrian-inspired iconography, which displays the cultural and religious influence of the Achaemenid period.¹³¹

Stone, wooden, or bronze klinai were placed within tumulus burial chambers to accommodate the deceased. In the Achaemenid period, the tumuli surrounding Daskyleion suggest that the bodies were laid in a dorsal position on the stone or marble klinai.¹³² A notable example of this practice is shown in the reconstruction of the Üçpınar Tumulus (Figure 7).¹³³ According to Zoroastrian doctrine, a corpse—considered ritually impure—should not be placed on a wooden kline, as wood was deemed a ritually clean material. Furthermore, any contact between a corpse and wooden grave furnishings was considered ritually inappropriate.¹³⁴ The shift from wood to stone in tomb construction across Anatolia—from the 6th century BCE, when the Persians began their incursions, to the 4th century BCE—supports the view that this was an adoption of Persian beliefs.¹³⁵ Similarly, the cessation of cremation practices in Lycia during the Achaemenid period, despite earlier archaeological evidence from the 7th and 6th centuries BCE, exhibits the growing influence of Zoroastrian religious principles.¹³⁶

Zoroastrian funerary rites involved placing the corpse on a stone-built platform known as a dakma (tower of silence), where it would be

¹³¹ L'vov-Basirov, "Achaemenian Funerary Practices in Western Asia Minor", 102; Dusinberre, *Achaemenid Anatolia*, 145.

¹³² F. N. Köseoğlu, Interview, September 2024.

¹³³ In the burial chamber of the tumulus, which was unearthed during a rescue excavation and had been looted in antiquity, a kline—intended for the deposition of the deceased—was found instead of a sarcophagus. See Polat, *Anadolu Akbaemenid Dönemi Plastik Eserleri*, 223.

¹³⁴ The Vendīdād's rulings on this issue are unambiguous. This has been the case from the past to the present. Among today's Zoroastrians, it is strictly forbidden to put a body in a wooden coffin or to carry it in a wooden coffin. See Modi, *The Religious Ceremonies*, 51.

¹³⁵ See Olivier Henry, "Wood Reflections on Stone Tombs in Southwest Asia Minor", *Tatarlı: The Return of Colours*, ed. L. Summerer - A. von Kienlin (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2010), 296-298.

¹³⁶ Sven Ahrens, "Whether by Decay or Fire Consumed: Cremation in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor", *Death and Changing Rituals: Function and Meaning in Ancient Funerary Practices*, ed. J. Rasmus Brandt et al. (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2015), 188-189; Nováková, "People, Tombs, and Religious Practices in Achaemenid Anatolia", 123-124.

consumed by birds of prey (and occasionally dogs), after which the remaining bones were collected and deposited into an ossuary called an *astōdān* (*uz-dāna*). Oval-shaped stone structures referred to as *dakma* were constructed for this purpose. However, it can be argued that these formal architectural structures did not exist in pre-Islamic Iran, where corpses were instead placed on natural rocky outcrops located in remote, uninhabited areas. This view is corroborated by the account of Agathias, a 6th-century CE historian who wrote during the final period of the Sasanian Empire and described the burial of a Persian named Mihr-Mihroe in the following manner:

The servants of Mihr-Mihroe took his body and carried it out of the city, and, in accordance with the custom of their ancestors, left it out in the open and unattended to be eaten by dogs and foul birds that feed on carrion. Persian funeral customs are regularly of this kind. Thus the flesh is torn off and the bones are scattered on the plains and left to rot. It is strictly forbidden to put their dead in any kind of grave or coffin, or to cover them with earth.¹³⁷

The origins of these funerary rituals can be traced to Zoroastrian principles of ritual purity and the sacredness of cleanliness. The *Vendīdād* section of the *Avesta* provides important insights into these practices, but it also contains internal inconsistencies and ambiguities concerning funerary conduct.

... Where shall we bring, where shall we put the bodies of the dead? ... To the highest peaks, where they know there are always corpse-eating dogs and corpse-eating birds, ... let them tie the corpse there by its feet and hair with irons, stones or clay, so that the corpse-eating dogs and corpse-eating birds do not carry the bones to the water and the trees.¹³⁸

... The worshipers of Mazda shall lay the dead body down on the ground (in *Dakma*) with its eyes toward the sun.¹³⁹

If a dog or a man or a goat ... dies, what shall the worshipers of Mazda do? Ahura Mazda answered: Let them seek a

¹³⁷ Agathias, *The Histories*, trans. Joseph D. Frendo (Berlin - New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1975), 55-56 (2:22.6-23.1).

¹³⁸ *Vendīdād* 6.44-46.

¹³⁹ *Vendīdād* 5.13.

Dakma. Let them seek a Dakma throughout the surrounding area.¹⁴⁰

Some information on Persian funerary practices can be derived from ancient authors of antiquity. For instance, both Herodotus and Strabo, although far apart in time, suggested that the bodies of Persian nobles were preserved intact, but the corpses of the Magi were exposed to scavenging birds and dogs.

...It is said that the body of a male Persian is never buried, until it has been torn either by a dog or a bird of prey. That the Magi have this custom is beyond a doubt, for they practise it without any concealment...¹⁴¹

They bury the bodies of the dead plastered with wax, yet do not bury the Magoi –who by ancestral custom have intercourse with their mothers– but leave them to be eaten by birds.¹⁴²

Numerous tumuli have been identified in the southern sector of Daskyleion.¹⁴³ Achaemenid elites were typically interred in stone sarcophagi or placed on marble klinai within tumuli. Some scholars argue that this reliance on stone may represent a compromise to accommodate Persian religious beliefs; because stone was considered an impermeable barrier according to Zoroastrian purity laws, its use would have served to prevent the corpse from ritually contaminating the sacred earth.¹⁴⁴ Given the high cost of such funerary practices, it is likely that ordinary individuals, including soldiers and clergy, either buried their dead in simpler graves or left them exposed to scavenging animals.¹⁴⁵ The lack of a designated necropolis for commoners in Daskyleion further supports this interpretation.

¹⁴⁰ Vendidad 8.1-2.

¹⁴¹ Herodotos, *The Histories*, 61 (1.140).

¹⁴² Strabo, *The Geography*, 687 (15.3.20).

¹⁴³ F. N. Köseoglu, Interview, September 2024.

¹⁴⁴ Boyce, *Zoroastrianism II*, 56; L'vov-Basirov, "Achaemenian Funerary Practices in Western Asia Minor", 104.

¹⁴⁵ Shapur Shahbazi, "Astōdān", *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (Accessed 26 August 2023); Boyce, *Zoroastrianism I*, 111; Mary Boyce, "Arsacids iv. Arsacid Religion", *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (Accessed 1 March 2024).

Figure 6: Area near Gelenbe thought to be suitable for Zoroastrian funeral practices



To date, no rocky or desolate areas suitable for the exposure of bodies have been identified within the boundaries of Daskyleion.¹⁴⁶ However, the rocky terrain located in the area of Gelenbe Town, Hamitli Village, and Bostancı Village (Figure 1) could have functioned

¹⁴⁶ F. N. Köseoğlu, Interview, September 2024.

as a dakma. L'vov-Basirov further suggested that similar rocky sites might have existed on the island of İncir, which is opposite Phocaea and near the ancient city of Amyzon in northern Caria.¹⁴⁷

The rock-cut features at the Gelenbe site correspond with the funerary practices outlined in the Vendidad. L'vov-Basirov compared the collapsed cist of one rock-cut tomb at the site to analogous structures at Qizqapan in Iraq, observing that the cist is smaller than an adult human corpse. This indicates that it may have functioned as an astōdān, a structure for the secondary deposition of bones after the body was consumed by scavenging animals, as similarly identified at Qizqapan.¹⁴⁸ Given the limitations of existing photographs in conveying the layout and characteristics of the area, I conducted an onsite inspection in 2024 to obtain additional visual documentation and evaluate its potential function as a dakma. Despite extensive damage from illegal excavations, several features remain discernible, including rock-cut tombs, stairways, potential corpse-laying platforms, circular depressions for bones, rectangular grooves or basins suitable for corpses, niches resembling astōdān, cavities potentially intended for scavenger birds, ritual and observation areas, fire pits, and traces of burning or ash (Figure 8).

Returning to the relief that depicts two priests at Daskyleion (Figure 4),¹⁴⁹ based on the testimonies of Herodotus and Strabo, Macridy-Bey assumed that the relief represents a sacrificial ritual. This interpretation is further elaborated by Şevket Dönmez.¹⁵⁰ The presence of two priests corresponds to an ancient Zoroastrian funerary practice in which the ritual was required to be performed in pairs.¹⁵¹ Boyce noted that this ritual (offering the heads of animals sacrificed to the yazata Haoma for the soul of a deceased nobleman) continued among Zoroastrians until

¹⁴⁷ L'vov-Basirov, "Achaemenian Funerary Practices in Western Asia Minor", 106; Nováková, "People, Tombs, and Religious Practices in Achaemenid Anatolia", 123.

¹⁴⁸ L'vov-Basirov, "Achaemenian Funerary Practices in Western Asia Minor", 106.

¹⁴⁹ Gustave Mendel, *Catalogue des Sculptures Grecques, Romanes et Byzantines* (Istanbul: En Vente au Musée Impérial, 1914), 2/570-572; Karagöz, *Kleinasiatisch-Gräko-Persische Kunstwerke*, 72.

¹⁵⁰ Herodotos, *The Histories*, 61 (1.131-132); Strabo, *The Geography*, 685-686 (15.3.15); Theodore Macridy Bey, "Reliefs Gréco-Perses de la Région de Dascylion", *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 37 (1913), 348-352; Dönmez, "Kapadokya'da Ateş Kültü", 477 (n. 17).

¹⁵¹ Modi, *The Religious Ceremonies*, 43; A. V. Williams Jackson, *Persia Past and Present* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1906), 387.

the twentieth century.¹⁵²

The presence of charcoal layers on the ceiling beams of certain tumuli in Western Anatolia –including smaller tumuli from the Lydian and Achaemenid periods– has been documented by researchers. This observation suggests that rather than cremation, a fire ritual may have been performed within the burial chamber. It is hypothesized that such rituals, possibly of local origin, could have evolved into forms incorporated into Persian funerary practice. This hypothesis gains nuance when considered alongside the Vendīdād, which explicitly states that the presence of fire in proximity to a corpse is ritually inappropriate.¹⁵³ Although fire plays an essential role in Zoroastrian post-mortem rites, these ceremonies are typically conducted at a safe distance from the body or in a separate space altogether.¹⁵⁴ If it is assumed that Persian priests indeed performed fire rituals within tumuli, then it may be surmised that these rituals served apotropaic functions –such as expelling demons– or were performed to ritually purify or bless the chamber prior to the deposition of the body.

The 2013 excavations conducted under the direction of Kaan İren provided concrete evidence regarding this phenomenon. Notably, a burnt layer had already been identified in 2010 at the Koru Tumulus, which is situated to the south of Daskyleion and provisionally dated to the Achaemenid period.¹⁵⁵ Subsequent analysis of the 2013 excavation confirmed that this burnt stratum extended throughout the dromos and into the vicinity of the tomb chamber. Several significant findings were documented, including fragmented ceramic vessels, bones, and a large animal jawbone. Importantly, it was determined that the tomb structure had been erected directly atop the sacred area where the ritual activity took place. The assemblage –particularly the ceramic sherds and faunal remains– indicates the occurrence of a funerary banquet or a ritual in which vessels were deliberately placed into the fire and broken.¹⁵⁶ The architectural elements of the Koru Tumulus, including the dromos, traces of burning, and the fragment of a large

¹⁵² Boyce, *Zoroastrianism II*, 117-118.

¹⁵³ B. K. McLauchlin, *Lydian Graves and Burial Customs* (California: University of California at Berkeley, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1985), 156-158; Dusinberre, *Achaemenid Anatolia*, 145.

¹⁵⁴ Vendīdād 3:15-17, 5:39-40 etc.

¹⁵⁵ İren - Yıldızhan, “Daskyleion 2013 Yılı Kazı Çalışmaları”, 2/583.

¹⁵⁶ İren - Yıldızhan, “Daskyleion 2013 Yılı Kazı Çalışmaları”, 2/589-590.

animal skull, align with the iconographic features depicted on the Daskyleion stele (Figure 4). Collectively, these features may constitute parts of a complex funerary ritual that involved sacrificial offerings, feasting, and fire-based ceremonies.

The proposition that the door-like motifs on the two Daskyleion stele represent the tomb entrances within tumuli is corroborated by the analysis of eroded reliefs found on a rock-cut tomb in Ravansar.¹⁵⁷ These reliefs depict a comparable ritual scene wherein an actual doorway is present, as opposed to the symbolic door motif featured on the steles. Such imagery may represent Persian funerary rituals performed at the threshold of the tomb that involved sacrificial offerings and facilitated the soul's ascent to the afterlife.¹⁵⁸ This interpretation implies the existence of designated ritual areas in front of tumulus entrances. Arrian, citing Aristobulus, recorded that a similar ritual was performed at the tomb of Cyrus the Great in Pasargadae.¹⁵⁹ According to his account, Cambyses and his successors provided priests with a sheep for daily sacrifices and a horse for monthly offerings.¹⁶⁰ Xenophon also attested to the sacrifice of cattle and smaller animals at the entrance of a nobleman's tomb in the Pactolus River (Sart River), paralleling rituals performed at Cyrus' tomb.¹⁶¹ The decorative false doors of the Phocaeen Monumental Tomb –dated to 546 BCE– closely resemble those of Cyrus' tomb at Pasargadae, the symbolic entrances of the Zendān-e Solaymān and the Naqš-e Rostam reliefs. According to Özyiğit, the Phocaeen tomb predates all of these structures and likely served as their architectural prototype.¹⁶² These accounts support the notion that although Persian religious practices were shaped by local traditions, they also transmitted certain ritual elements and architectural motifs from Western Anatolia to Iran.

The arrival of the Persians in Anatolia during the mid-sixth century BCE is widely considered a pivotal moment in the regional

¹⁵⁷ P. Calmeyer, "Das Grabrelief von Ravansar", *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 11 (1978), 73-85.

¹⁵⁸ Polat, "Bir Anadolu-Akhaemenid Dönemi Ölü Kültü Geleneği", 12-15.

¹⁵⁹ Arrian, *The Annabasis of Alexander*, trans. E. J. Chinnock (London: The Selwood Printing Works, 1884), 365-367 (6/29.4-11).

¹⁶⁰ Boyce, *Zoroastrianism II*, 70-71.

¹⁶¹ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, 162 (7.3.6-7).

¹⁶² Ömer Özyiğit, "Phokaia'da Akurgal'ın Kazıları Işığında Son Dönem Çalışmaları", *Anadolu* 25 (2003), 106.

development of Zoroastrianism. Scholars have attributed several significant transformations in ritual and funerary practices to this Persian presence. Key indicators of this transformation include the replacement of wooden grave materials with stone, the introduction of fire and sacrificial rituals, the discontinuation of corpse cremation, and the presence of two officiating priests during funerary ceremonies. Collectively, these practices serve as strong evidence for the integration of core Zoroastrian theological principles and their influence on Anatolian ritual practices.

Conclusion

The presence of Persians in Western Anatolia –particularly in Daskyleion and Sardis– did not merely transplant Iranian religious traditions into Anatolia but also contributed to the development of regionally adapted religious forms. The available evidence suggests that although fundamental tenets of Zoroastrianism, such as dualism, fire rituals, and clerical purity, were largely preserved, they were also modified through interactions with local cultic practices and local cultural contexts. This dynamic process reflects the broader patterns of religious accommodation and transformation typical of the Achaemenid imperial milieu.

Importantly, Zoroastrianism in Anatolia appears not to have been enforced as a state religion but was practiced selectively among Persian settlers, nobility, and clergy. The absence of formal missionary initiatives and the broad cultural tolerance of the Achaemenids allowed for the preservation of local Anatolian religious traditions while facilitating selective adaptation. The persistence of Iranian funerary elements, fire worship structures, and Zoroastrian iconography in Western Anatolia well beyond the fall of the Achaemenids points to a lasting cultural and religious imprint. These findings suggest that religious identity under Persian rule was negotiated, flexible, and pluralistic and that Anatolia served not only as a recipient of imperial religion but also as a contributor to its dynamic evolution.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

FUNDING

The author received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abe, Takuji. "Dascylium: An Overview of the Achaemenid Satrapal City". *The Kyoto Journal of Ancient History* 12 (2012), 1-17.
- Abedi, Farzad. "Sardeis Mezar Tipleri". *Amisos* 3/5 (2018), 305-321.
- Agathias. *The Histories*. trans. Joseph D. Frendo. Berlin - New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1975.
- Ahrens, Sven. "Whether by Decay or Fire Consumed: Cremation in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor". *Death and Changing Rituals. Function and Meaning in Ancient Funerary Practices*. ed. J. Rasmus Brandt - Håkon Roland - Marina Prusac. 185-222. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2015.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvh1dtm6.11>
- Akurgal, Ekrem. *Ancient Civilizations and Ruins of Turkey*. İstanbul: Phoenix, 2025.
- Akurgal, Ekrem. "Griechisch-Persische Reliefs aus Daskyleion". *Iranica Antiqua* 6 (1966), 147-156.
- Akurgal, Ekrem. "Kyzikos ve Ergili Arastirmalari". *Anatolia* 1 (1956), 43-51.
- Akurgal, Ekrem. "Recherches Faites à Cyzique et à Ergili". *Anatolia* 1 (1956), 15-24.
- Akurgal, Ekrem. "Zur Datierung der Grabstelen aus Daskyleion". *Mansel'e Armağan / Mélanges Mansel II*. ed. Ekrem Akurgal - U. Bahadır Alkım. 967-970. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1974.
- Akyar, Nevfel. *Eski İran'da Rabipler*. İstanbul: Kabalcı Yayınevi, 2023.
- Akyar, Nevfel - Sayar, Süleyman. "Zerdüşî Cenaze Geleneklerinde Düalizm". *Balıkesir Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 4/2 (2018), 55-80.
- Arrian. *The Annabasis of Alexander*. trans. E. J. Chinnock. London: The Selwood Printing Works, 1884.
- Athenaeus. *The Deipnosophists or Banquet of the Learned of Athenaeus*. trans. C. D. Yonge. London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854.
- Bakır, Tomris. "Anadolu Pers Sanatı ve Daskyleion Satraplığı". *1993 Yılı Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi Konferansları 3*. Ankara: T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 1994.
- Bakır, Tomris. "Archäologische Beobachtungen Tiber die Residenz in Daskyleion". *Dans les Pas des Dix-Mille, Peuples et Pays du Proche-Orient Vus par un Grec*,

- Actes de la Table Ronde Internationale Toulouse 3-4 Février 1995*. ed. Pierre Briant. 269-285. Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 1995.
- Bakır, Tomris. *Balıkesir'in Eski Çağlardaki Valilik Merkezi Daskyleion*. Balıkesir: Balıkesir Valiliği, 2011.
- Bakır, Tomris. "Daskyleion". *Höyük* 1 (1988), 75-84.
- Bakır, Tomris. "Die Satrapie in Daskyleion". *Achaemenid Anatolia: Proceedings of the First International Symposium on Anatolia in the Achaemenid Period, Bandirma, 15-18 August 1997*. ed. Tomris Bakır - Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg. 169-180. Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2001.
- Beazley, J. D. *The Lewes House Collection of Ancient Gems*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920.
- Bittel, K. "Ein Persischer Freueraltar aus Kappadokien". *Satura: Fru Chte aus der Antiken Welt, Festschrift für Otto Weinreich*. 18-29. Baden: Verlag für Kunst und Wissenschaft, 1952.
- Bittel, K. "Kappadokyada Bulunan Bir Ateş Sunağı". *Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi* 6/2 (1956), 35-42.
- Bittel, K. "Zur Lage von Daskyleion". *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 68 (1953), 1-16.
- Boyce, Mary. *A History of Zoroastrianism I*. Leiden: Brill, 1975.
- Boyce, Mary. *A History of Zoroastrianism II*. Leiden: Brill, 1982.
- Boyce, Mary. "Achaemenid Religion". *Encyclopædia Iranica*. Accessed 12 December 2024. <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/achaemenid-religion>
- Boyce, Mary. "Anahid". *Encyclopædia Iranica*. Accessed 11 September 2024. <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/anahid>
- Boyce, Mary. "Arsacids iv. Arsacid Religion". *Encyclopædia Iranica*. Accessed 1 March 2024. <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/arsacids-iv#:~:text=Since%2C%20moreover%2C%20it%20is%20politically,the%20length%20of%20their%20rule.>
- Boyce, Mary. "Ātaškada". *Encyclopædia Iranica*. Accessed 15 September 2024. <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/ataskada-new-persian-house-of-fire-mid>
- Boyce, Mary. "On the Zoroastrian Temple Cult of Fire". *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95/3 (1975), 454-465.
- Boyce, Mary. *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*. London - Boston - Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979.
- Boyce, Mary - Grenet, Frantz. *A History of Zoroastrianism III*. Leiden: Brill, 1982.
- Briant, Pierre. *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of Persian Empire*. trans. Peter T. Daniels. Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2002.
- Butler, Howard Crosby. *Sardis: The Excavations Part I 1910-1914*. Leiden: Brill, 1922.
- Cahill, Nicholas. "Taş Kule: A Persian Period Tomb near Phokaia". *American Journal of Archaeology* 92/4 (1988), 481-501.
- Calmeyer, P. "Das Grabrelief von Ravansar". *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 11 (1978), 73-85.

- Canepa, Matthew P. "Persian Religion and Achaemenid Sacred Spaces". *Iranian Expanse: Transforming Royal Identity through Architecture, Landscape, and the Built Environment, 550 BCE-642 CE*. 149-169. Oakland: California Scholarship Online, 2018.
- Choksy, Jamsheed K. "Reassessing the Material Contexts of Ritual Fires in Ancient Iran". *Iranica Antiqua* 42 (2007), 229-269.
- Clement of Alexandria. *Exhortation to the Heathen: (Protrepticus)*. New Jersey: Beloved Publishing, 2016.
- Curtis, Vesta Sarkhosh. "Ancient Iranian Motifs and Zoroastrian Iconography". *The Zoroastrian Flame: Exploring Religion, History and Tradition*. ed. A. V. Williams - Sarah Stewart - Almut Hintze. 179-204. London - New York: I. B. Tauris, 2016.
- Dahlén, Ashk. "Living the Iranian Dolce Vita: Herodotus on Wine Drinking and Luxury among the Persians". *Achaemenid Anatolia: Persian Presence and Impact in the Western Satrapies 546-330 BC*. ed. Ashk Dahlén. 99-126. Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2020.
- Daryaei, Touraj. *Sasanian Persia: the Rise and Fall of an Empire*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2009.
- de Jong, Albert. "The Religion of the Achaemenid Rulers". *Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World*. ed. Bruno Jacobs - Robert Rollinger. 1199-1209. New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2021.
- de Jong, Albert. *Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature*. ed. R. Van Den Borek et al. Leiden: Brill, 1997.
- Debord, Pierre. "La Survie des Cultes Iraniens en Anatolie. L'exemple d'Anaitis en Lydie". *Les Grandes Figures Religieuses: Fonctionnement Pratique et Symbolique Dans l'Antiquité. Actes du Colloque International (Besançon, 25-26 Avril 1984) (Annales Littéraires de l'Université de Besançon, 329)*. 85-92. Besançon: Université de Franche-Comté, 1986.
- Diogenes Laertius. *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* trans. R. D. Hicks. London: William Heinemann, 1925.
- Dönmez, Şevket. "Amasya-Oluz Höyük Ateşgedesi ve Erken Zerdüş Dini Kutsal Alanı". *TÜBA-AR Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi Arkeoloji Dergisi* 22 (2018), 145-160.
- Dönmez, Şevket. "Kapadokya'da Ateş Kültü". *Türk Dünyası İnanç Merkezi Kongresi Bildirileri: 23-27 Eylül 2002 Mersin*. 473-487. Ankara: Türksev, 2004.
- Dönmez, Şevket - Saba, Mona. "Demir Çağı Kappadokia'sında İlk Tapınak: Oluz Höyük İbadethane ve Ateşgedesi". *Höyük* 12 (2023), 57-78.
- Duchesne-Guillemin, Jacques. *The Western Response to Zoroaster*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958.
- Duchesne-Guillemin, Jacques. "Zoroastrian Religion". *The Cambridge History of Iran: The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods*. ed. Ehsan Yarshater. 866-908. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

- Dusinberre, Elspeth R. M. *Aspect of Empire in Achaemenid Sardis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Dusinberre, Elspeth R. M. *Empire, Authority, and Autonomy in Achaemenid Anatolia*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Dusinberre, Elspeth R. M. *Satrapal Sardis: Aspects of Empire in an Achaemenid Capital*. Michigan: University of Michigan, PhD Dissertation, 1997.
- Ferdowsi, Abolqasem. *Shabnameh*. trans. Dick Davis. New York: Penguin Books, 2006.
- Ful, Şengül Dilek. *Yazıtlar Işığında Mysia Bölgesi Kültürleri*. Erzurum: Atatürk University, Social Science Institute, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2008.
- Gnoli, Gherardo. *Zoroaster's Time and Homeland: A Study on the Origins of Mazdeism and Related Problems*. Naples: Stituto Universitario Orientale, 1980.
- Gusmani, Roberto. *Lydisches Wörterbuch: Mit Grammatischer Skizze und Inschriftensammlung*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1964.
- Hallock, Richard T. *Persepolis Fortification Tablets*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969.
- Hanfmann, G. M. A. "Restoration and Excavations at Sardis-1973". *Archaeology* 27 (1973), 138.
- Haugh, Martin. *Essays on the Sacred Language, Writings and Religion of the Parsis*. ed. E. W. West. London: Trübner & Co., Ludgate Hill., 1878.
- Henry, Olivier. "Wood Reflections on Stone Tombs in Southwest Asia Minor". *Tatarlı: The Return of Colours*. ed. L. Summerer - A. von Kienlin. 296-315. İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2010.
- Herodotos. *The Histories*. trans. George Rawlinson. Idaho: Roman Roads Media, 2013.
- Hintze, Almut. "Who Are the Zoroastrians?" *The British Academy* 28 (2016), 13-15.
- Hornblower, Simon. *Greco-Persian Cultural Relations*. London - New York: Routledge, 1983.
- Hultgård, Anders. "Invoking Anāhitā – from Iran to Asia Minor". *Achaemenid Anatolia: Persian Presence and Impact in the Western Satrapies 546–330 BC*. ed. Ashk Dahlén. 161-182. Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2020.
- İren, Kaan. "Daskyleion". *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*. Accessed 22 December 2025.
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah14080>
- İren, Kaan - Karaöz, Çiçek - Kasar, Özgün (eds). *Persler – Anadolu'da Kudret ve Görkem / The Persians – Power and Glory in Anatolia*. İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2017.
- İren, Kaan - Kasar, Özgün. "Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Işığında Daskyleion'da Yeni Bulgular". *Bitig Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 4/7 (2024), 145-160.
- İren, Kaan - Yıldızhan, Handan. "Daskyleion 2013 Yılı Kazı Çalışmaları". 36. *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı*. 2/577-600. Gaziantep: T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2014.

- Jackson, A. V. Williams. *Persia Past and Present*. London: The Macmillan Company, 1906.
- Kaptan, Deniz. *The Daskyleion Bullae: Seal Images from the Western Achaemenid Empire*. Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor Het Nabije Oosten, 2002.
- Karagöz, Şehrazat. *Kleinasiatisch-Gräko-Persische Kunstwerke im Archäologischen Museum von Istanbul*. Tübingen: Wasmuth Verlag, 2013.
- Karatak, Atalay - Akyol, Ali Akın - İren, Kaan. "Daskyleion Arkeolojik Alanı Metal Buluntuları Üzerine Arkeometrik Ön Çalışmalar". 32. *Arkeometri Sonuçları Toplantısı*. 149-166. Edirne: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2017.
- Kartir. "Kartir Inscription on the Kabah of Zartusht". trans. Neil MacKenzie. Accessed 15 April 2023. <http://www.avesta.org/mp/kz.html>
- Kasar, Özgün - İren, Kaan. "Leaded Bronze Arrowheads at Daskyleion". *Adalya* 23 (2020), 175-204.
- Kaya, Mehmet Ali. "Anadolu'da Pers Satraplıkları: Kuruluş, Yönetim ve Etnik Yapı". *Cedrus* 6 (2018), 159-179. <https://doi.org/10.13113/CEDRUS.201807>
- Lommel, Herman. *Die Religion Zarathustras, nach dem Awesta dargestellt*. Tübingen: Druck von H. Laupp jr, 1930.
- L'vov-Basirov, O. P. V. "Achaemenian Funerary Practices in Western Asia Minor". *Achaemenid Anatolia: Proceedings of the First International Symposium on Anatolia in the Achaemenid Period, Bandirma, 15-18 August 1997*. ed. Tomris Bakır - Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg. 101-107. Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2001.
- Macridy Bey, Theodore. "Reliefs Gréco-Perses de la Région de Dascylion". *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 37 (1913), 340-358.
- Mayrhofer, M. *Zum Namengut des Avesta*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1977.
- McLauchlin, B. K. *Lydian Graves and Burial Customs*. California: University of California at Berkeley, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1985.
- Mendel, Gustave. *Catalogue des Sculptures Grecques, Romanes et Byzantines*. İstanbul: En Vente au Musée Impérial, 1914.
- Miller, Margaret C. "Greco-Persian Cultural Relations". *Encyclopædia Iranica*. Accessed 3 July 2024. <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/greece-ii>
- Mitchell, Stephen. "Iranian Names and the Presence of Persians in the Religious Sanctuaries of Asia Minor". *Old and New Worlds in Greek Onomastic*. ed. Elaine Matthews. 151-172. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Modi, Jivanji Jamshedji. *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees*. ed. Joseph H. Peterson. Bombay: Jehangir B. Karani's Sons, 1937.
- Moulton, James Hope. *Early Zoroastrianism*. London: The Hibbert Lectures, 1926.
- Naskali, Esko. "İran". *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*. 22/394-395. Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2000.
- Nollé, Margret. *Denkmäler Vom Satrapensitz Daskyleion: Studien Zur Graeco-Persischen Kunst*. Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1992.

- Nováková, Lucia. "People, Tombs, and Religious Practices in Achaemenid Anatolia". *Nunc Decet Caput Impedire Myrto Studies Dedicated to Professor Piotr Dyczek on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*. 115-127. Warsaw: the Center for Research on the Antiquity of Southeastern Europe, 2021.
- Nyberg, Henrik S. *Die Religionen des Alten Iran*. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs Verlag, 1938.
- Nylander, Carl. *Ionians in Pasargadae: Studies in Old Persian Architecture*. Uppsala: Academiae Ubsaliensis, 1970.
- Obrador-Cursach, Bartomeu. "The Closing Formula of the Old Phrygian Epitaph B-07 in the Light of the Aramaic KAI 318: A Case of Textual Convergence in Daskyleion". *Anatolian Studies* 71 (2021), 47-58.
- Olmstead, A.T. *History of The Persian Empire*. London: The University of Chicago Press, 1948.
- Osborne, M. J. "The Satrapy of Mysia". *Grazer Beiträge* 3 (1975), 291-315.
- Özdemir, Kameray - Akyol, Ali Akın - İren, Kaan - Erdal, Yılmaz Selim. "Koru Tümülsü İskeletlerinin Osteobiyografilerinin Element Analizi ile İncelenmesi". *Gaziantep Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 17/3 (2018), 740-760.
- Özkan Kılıç, Serap. *Pers Hakimiyeti Altında Batı Anadolu*. İstanbul: İstanbul University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2011.
- Özyiğit, Ömer. "Phokaia'da Akurgal'ın Kazıları Işığında Son Dönem Çalışmaları". *Anadolu* 25 (2003), 97-107. https://doi.org/10.1501/andl_0000000302
- Pausanias. *Pausanias' Description of Greece*. trans. Arthur Richard Shilleto. London: George Bell and Sons, 1886.
- Petit, Thierry. *Satrapes et Satrapies Dans l'empire Achéménide de Cyrus le Grand à Xerxès Ier*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1990.
- Plutarch. *Plutarch's Lives: XI Aratus, Artaxerxes, Galba, Otho*. trans. Bernadotte Perrin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962.
- Polat, Gürcan. *Anadolu Akhaemenid Dönemi Plastik Eserleri*. İzmir: Ege University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1998.
- Polat, Gürcan. "Bir Anadolu-Akhaemenid Dönemi Ölü Kültü Geleneği: Tümülsü Önünde Steller ve Seremoni Alanları". *OLBA* 11 (2005), 1-23.
- Ramage, Andrew - Goldstein, Sidney M. - Mierse, William E. "Lydian Excavation Sectors". *Sardis from Prehistoric to Roman Times: Results of Archaeological Explorations of Sardis 1958-1975*. ed. George M. A. Hanfmann. 26-54. Cambridge, MA - London: Harvard University Press, 1983.
- Riel, Marijana. "The Cult of the Iranian Goddess Anahita in Anatolia Before and After Alexander". *Živa Antika* 52 (2002), 197-210.
- Saba, Mona. *Oluz Höyük Geç Demir Çağı Bulguları Işığında: Zerdüşîliğin Anadolu'daki Yayılımı*. İstanbul: Kabalcı Yayınevi, 2022.
- Sarıkaya, Sevgi. *Anadolu'da Persler: Daskyleion Satraplığı*. İstanbul: Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları, 2018.
- Schmitt, Rudiger. *The Bisitun Inscriptions of Darius the Great: Old Persian Text*. London: Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, 1991.

- Sekunda, Nicholas Victor. "Achaemenid Colonization in Lydia". *Revue des Études Anciennes* 87/1-2 (1985), 7-30.
- Shahbazi, Shapur. "Astōdān". *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. Accessed 26 August 2023. <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/astodan-ossuary/>
- Shannon, Avram R. "The Achaemenid Kings and the Worship of Ahura Mazda: Proto-Zoroastrianism in the Persian Empire". *Studia Antiqua* 5/2 (2007), 79-85.
- Simonin, Antoine. "The Cyrus Cylinder". *Ancient History Encyclopedia*. Accessed 12 December 2024. <https://www.ancient.eu/article/166/the-cyrus-cylinder/>
- Spiegel, F. *Ērânische Alterthumskunde I*. Leipzig: Verlag von Wilhelm Engelmann, 1871.
- Strabo. *The Geography of Strabo*. trans. Duane W. Roller. London: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Tacitus. *Annals*. trans. John Jackson. London: William Heinemann, 1931.
- "The Zend-Avesta Part III". trans. L. H. Mills. *The Sacred Books of the East* 31. 1-400. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887.
- Tosun, Murat. "Pers/Akhaemenid Dönemi'nde Anadolu: Bölgeler Arası Karşılaştırmalı Bir Değerlendirme". *OANNES* 4/2 (2022), 379-416.
- "Vendidad (Vidēvdād) or Laws Against the Demons Avesta". trans. James Darmesteter. *The Sacred Books of the East* 4. 1-236. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895.
- Weiskopf, M. "Asia Minor". *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. Accessed 8 December 2024. <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/asia-minor-irano-anatolian-relations>
- Widengren, Geo. *Die Religionen Irans*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1965.
- Xenophon. *Anabasis*. trans. Carleton L. Brownson. London: Harvard University Press, 1980.
- Xenophon. *The Cyropaedia of Xenophon*. trans. C. W. Gleason. New York: American Book Company, 1897.
- Yücel, Muhammet. "Dinî Bir Zümreden Politik Bir Nesneye: Akamenidlerden Sasanilere Kapadokya Zerdüştileri". *Mukaddime* 13/2 (2022), 408-433. <https://doi.org/10.19059/mukaddime.1145614>

MULTILINGUALISM IN FAMILY LAW ACCORDING TO SHĀFĪ MADHHAB

Davut Eşit

Van Yüzüncü Yıl University, Van-Türkiye

davutesit@yyu.edu.tr

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1366-4650>

Abstract

Several factors have made Arabic an important language for Muslims. From an Islamic law perspective, in addition to being the language of worship, Arabic has long been the established language of instruction in *madrasabs* (colleges) for the teaching of Islamic legal sciences. It is also the language of works written in the field of Islamic law and the language that a *mujtabid* (independent jurist) who will engage in jurisprudential (*fiqh*) activity, a *qāḍī* (judge) who will adjudicate, or a *muftī* (Islamic jurisconsult) who will issue *fatwās* (legal opinions) must know. In fact, some Islamic jurists have described Arabic as the language of Shari‘ah (Islamic law). Since the early periods, many communities of different races and languages have embraced Islam. This situation has led to debates regarding the use of non-Arabic languages in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). The aim of this study is to present these discussions specifically within the Shāfi‘ī madhhab (school of *fiqh*). The limitation of the research to family law is due to the fact that after the issues related to worship, the discussions on the

Ilahiyat Studies

e-ISSN: 1309-1719

Volume 17 Number 1 Winter/Spring 2026

DOI: 10.12730/is.1736306

Article Type: Research Article

Received: July 7, 2025 | *Accepted:* May 14, 2026 | *Published:* June 30, 2026

To cite this article: Eşit, Davut. "Multilingualism in Family Law According to Shāfi‘ī Madhhab". *Ilahiyat Studies* 17/1 (2026), 89-124.

<https://doi.org/10.12730/is.1736306>

This work is licensed under *Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International*.

use of languages other than Arabic in Islamic jurisprudence are mostly concentrated in this field. The reason for limiting the study to the Shāfiʿī madhhab, in addition to its focus on family law, lies in the fact that al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) is known for insisting that every Muslim should possess a level of Arabic sufficient to perform basic acts of worship and he strongly emphasizes the importance of Arabic for understanding the *naşş* (textual proof). Owing to these views, he has been accused of Arab nationalism and literalism. From this perspective, identifying the views of al-Shāfiʿī and the Shāfiʿī madhhab on the use of non-Arabic languages in the context of family law is of particular importance. This study demonstrates that the Shāfiʿī madhhab adopts a pluralistic approach in family law that balances adherence to the *naşş* with the practical and functional requirements of the law and highlights its flexible attitude in recognizing the validity of legal expressions formulated in foreign languages for individuals who do not know Arabic.

Key Words: Islamic jurisprudence, Shāfiʿī madhhab, Family law, Arabic, Multilingualism

Introduction

According to the theory of *ijtihād* (independent reasoning) in Islamic jurisprudence, a *mujtabids* knowledge of Arabic is a prerequisite since the textual proofs are in Arabic.¹ In al-Shāfiʿī's thought, the relationship of non-*mujtabid* Muslims with the Arabic language is limited to a level sufficient for them to perform their basic religious duties.² Therefore, while both *mujtabids* and *muqallids* (imitators) are required to know Arabic, the scope of this obligation differs between them. However, from the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence, it is not an exaggeration to state that within the Shāfiʿī madhhab, Arabic is conceived not only as a language that *mujtabids* or lay Muslims must know to a certain extent but also as the language of the Islamic jurisprudence system itself. Indeed, the fact that classical

¹ Abū l-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr fī fiqh madhhab al-Imām al-Shāfiʿī wa-buwa sharḥ Mukhtaşar al-Muzanī*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad Muʿawwaḍ - ʿĀdil Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Mawjūd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1999), 16/51; Abū Zakariyyā al-Nawawī, *Rawḍat al-ṭālibīn wa-ʿumdat al-muṭīn*, ed. Zuhayr al-Shāwīsh (Beirut - Damascus - Amman: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1991), 11/95.

² Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī, *al-Risālah*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Maktabat Dār al-Turāth, 2005), 132-135.

Shāfiʿī *fiqh* texts depict Arabic as “the language of the Sharīʿah”³ or “the language through which the Sharīʿah was revealed”⁴ indicates that Arabic plays a foundational role in the Islamic jurisprudence system. This situation has given rise to many debates concerning the place of individuals who do not know Arabic in the functioning of Islamic jurisprudence. The requirement to use Arabic expressions in their literal sense in legal operations clearly poses challenges for legal systems that encompass multilingual and multinational elements. For this reason, while Arabic fulfills an essential function in jurisprudence, the question of whether other languages can be used within the system has preoccupied the minds of Shāfiʿī jurists. One possible reason for the emergence of this issue is that matrimonial (*nikāḥ*) rulings possess an aspect of worship (*ʿibādah*) in addition to being part of transactional law (*muʿāmalāt*). It should be noted that Shāfiʿīs generally consider marriage to be a separate matter from both worship and transactions.⁵ As Aybakan notes, some Shāfiʿī jurists regarded the devotional aspect of the marriage contract as predominant; therefore, they did not permit the use of the terms *inkāḥ* and *tazwīj* (marriage-concluding formulae) in languages other than Arabic when they concluded a marriage contract.⁶ According to this interpretation, if the original language of acts of worship is Arabic, then, by analogy, when the devotional dimension of matrimonial matters is taken into account, the language used in such contracts should likewise be Arabic. As will be discussed later, the Shāfiʿīs have generally based the determination of terms used in family law on the vocabulary used in the Qurʾān for matters relating to family law. From this perspective, the use of a language other than Arabic in family law is related to the use of translations of the Qurʾān in *fiqh*. The most common discussion on this issue in *fiqh* concerns the use of Qurʾānic translations in the performance of *ṣalāḥ* (prayer). The Shāfiʿīs hold a clear position on

³ Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 9/155.

⁴ Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 11/95.

⁵ For the approach of the Shāfiʿī *madhhab* on this matter, see Abū Bakr ʿUthmān ibn Muḥammad al-Bakrī, *Iʿānat al-ṭālibīn ʿalā ḥall al-fāz Fath al-Muʿīn*, ed. Yāsir al-Sayyid ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīz (Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 2021), 4/2179.

⁶ Bilal Aybakan, “Fürüʿ Fıkıh Sistematiği Üzerine”, *Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 31 (2006/2), 15.

this matter and do not accept the use of a Qurʾān translation in prayer.⁷ Once the prohibition of using a translation of the Qurʾān in prayer is accepted, the central question becomes whether this ruling also applies to the translations of Qurʾānic terms employed in family law. It should be noted that views on this issue may vary depending on the underlying assumption about whether the devotional or the transactional dimension of family law is considered predominant. In addition, the fact that some Shāfiʿī jurists consider the rulings on marriage (*nikāḥ*) to be of a *taʿabbudī* nature⁸ must have opened the door to debates regarding the use of Arabic-derived expressions in the establishment of the marriage contract. If the terms *inkāḥ* and *tazwīj* (marriage) used in marriage are *taʿabbudī* in nature and determined by the *sharʿ* (divine revelation), even the use of alternative Arabic expressions –despite being Arabic– has been a matter of debate. Consequently, this debate has extended to the possibility of using translations of Arabic expressions that are accepted as prescribed by the *sharʿ*. The aim of this study is to examine the theories of Shāfiʿī scholars regarding the use of different languages within the *fiqh* system, specifically in the context of family law.

Contemporary research on al-Shāfiʿī's relationship with Arabic has generally progressed in several directions. The first concerns al-Shāfiʿī's mastery of the Arabic language.⁹ The second focuses on the great importance he attached to Arabic in his works.¹⁰ The third concerns research into how he applied Arabic language rules when

⁷ Oğuzhan Tan, "Translating the Sacred: Islamic Law, Ottoman Readership, and Two Examples of a Transitional Genre", *Ilabiyat Studies* 15/2 (December 2024), 210.

⁸ Al-Bakrī, *Iʿānat al-ṭālibīn*, 4/2223. *Taʿabbudī* refers to a legal ruling derived from the *naṣṣ* that must be accepted as it is, without being subjected to rational reinterpretation. See Ismail Keri, "The Concept of Taʿabbudi and Taʿaqquli in Islamic Law", *al-Bayyinah* 5/2 (December 2021), 216, 220.

⁹ Najihah Abd Wahid - Anas Mohd Yunus - Nor Hafizah Abdullah, "The Contributions of Imam Shafi'i in Arabic Language and Literature", *The Social Sciences* 11/5 (2016), 547-550.

¹⁰ Hülya Afacan - Osman Güman, "er-Risāle'de Şāfi'î'ye Göre Kur'ân'ın Arabîliği", *Sakarya Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 24/46 (2022), 485-503; Metin Yiğit, "İmam Şāfi'î'de Arapça Vurgusu ve Lafız-Mana Dengesi", *Uluslararası İmam Şāfi'î Sempozyumu*, ed. Mehmet Bilen (İstanbul: Kent Işıkları, 2012), 803-835.

deriving legal rulings.¹¹ Apart from these theoretical studies, there are numerous academic studies on the use of languages other than Arabic in acts of worship, particularly in prayer.¹² Nevertheless, contemporary studies have investigated the use of non-Arabic languages in Islamic legal practice. These studies have generally examined how language constitutes a barrier to access to courts for non-Arabic-speaking populations alongside the expansion of Islam and the theories developed by Islamic jurists to overcome this barrier. This type of research addresses the role played by interpreters and their legal status in cases where one of the parties to the case, a witness, or a document serving as evidence is in a language that the judge does not understand.¹³ The point of convergence between these studies and the present research lies in the issue of *liʿān*.¹⁴ In *liʿān*, the parties are

¹¹ Joseph E. Lowry, “The Legal Hermeneutics of al-Shāfiʿī and Ibn Qutayba: A Reconsideration”, *Islamic Law and Society* 11/1 (2004), 9-10; Joseph E. Lowry, *Early Islamic Legal Theory: The Risāla of Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī* (Leiden - Boston: Brill, 2007), 69-78, 364-366.

¹² Ahmet Keleş, “Anadilde İbadet”, *Sosyal Bilimler Araştırma Dergisi* 1/1 (March 2003), 87-113; Kâşif Hamdi Okur, “Yesevî Muhibbi Bir Hanefî Fakîh: Sıḡnâkî’nin İbadet Dili Anlayışı”, *Geçmişten Geleceğe Hoca Ahmed Yesevî Uluslararası Sempozyumu*, ed. Ömer Kul et al. (İstanbul: Şenyıldız Yayıncılık, 2016), 2/700-707; Kâşif Hamdi Okur, “Temel Fıkıh Kaynaklarına Göre İbadetin Dili”, *Dinî Araştırmalar* 1/3 (1999), 171-203; Kâşif Hamdi Okur, “Serahsî’nin Referans Kaynağı Olarak Kurʿân’a Bakışı ve İbadet Dili Anlayışı”, *Hitit Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 11/22 (2012), 211-227; Fatma Nur Bedir, “Native or Liturgical Language in Prayers: A Field Research on This Debate”, *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi* 10/3 (2020), 2494-2514.

¹³ For examples of research on this topic, see Mahmood Kooria, “Words of ‘ajam in the World of Arab: Translation and Translator in Early Islamic Judicial Procedure”, *Justice and Leadership in Early Islamic Courts*, ed. Intisar A. Rabb - Abigail Krasner Balbale (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 71-90; ‘Abd al-Riḍā Loṭfî - ‘Alî Moṭahharî Fard, “Mâhiyyat-i Fiqhî wa-Ḥuqûqî-yi Tarjumah dar Umûr-i Qaḍâʾ”. *Guftimân-i Ḥuqûq-i Islâmî-yi Muʿâşir* 2/3 (2024), 149-172; Kemal Çiçek, “Interpreters of the Court in the Ottoman Empire as Seen from the Sharia Court Records of Cyprus”, *Islamic Law and Society* 9/1 (2002), 1-15.

¹⁴ *Liʿān* refers to the mutual cursing between a husband and wife in situations where the husband accuses his wife of adultery but is unable to prove the accusation. For detailed information on *liʿān*, see Andi Syamsul Bahri, “Legal Status of the Liʿan Children Recognition: Comparison of the Mazhab Malikiyah and the Compilation of Islamic Law”, *Jurnal Mabkamab: Kajian Ilmu Hukum dan Hukum Islam* 7/1 (2022), 67-78.

required to perform it in the presence of the *qāḍī* (judge). If one of the parties does not know Arabic, that party will perform *li'ān* in his or her own language. In such a case, if the judge does not understand the language in which *li'ān* is performed, the court must employ an interpreter for the non-Arabic-speaking party. Within the Shāfi'i *madhhab*, the main point of debate in *li'ān* concerns the legal status of interpreters. The debate on this issue revolves around whether translation should be regarded as testimony (*shahādah*) or as transmission (*khabar*).¹⁵ This is closely tied to the broader question of the status of interpreters in Shāfi'i judicial practice and cannot be considered independent of it. Consequently, since the legal status of interpreters in *li'ān* runs parallel to the findings of existing research on the legal status of interpreters in courts more generally, this study does not address the issue separately. To the best of our knowledge, no standalone study has specifically examined the role of non-Arabic languages in the Shāfi'i *madhhab* within the context of family law. From this perspective, we hope that the present study will open up space for further research not only in family law but also in other areas of Islamic jurisprudence concerning the use of languages other than Arabic.

In the *fiqh* literature of the Shāfi'i *madhhab*, the terms *ʿajam* or *aʿjamī* are used for those who speak a non-Arabic language. While the term *ʿajam* initially had a specific meaning in reference to non-Arabic speakers, particularly those whose native language was Persian, over time, it became a general term encompassing all non-Arab people.¹⁶ Indeed, the Shāfi'i jurist Abū l-Maḥāsīn al-Rūyānī (d. 502/1108) noted that the term *aʿjamī* was not exclusive to Persians, Rūm, or Nabateans but rather was used for anyone unable to speak Arabic correctly.¹⁷ Al-Khāṭib al-Shirbīnī (ö. 977/1570) emphasized that, in explaining the

¹⁵ Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥawāṭi l-kabīr*, 11/71-72; Kooria, "Words of ʿajam in the World of Arab", 81.

¹⁶ Adnan Karaismailoğlu, "Acem", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1988), 1/321.

¹⁷ ʿAbd al-Wāḥid ibn Ismāʿīl al-Rūyānī, *Baḥr al-madhhab fī furūʿ madhhab al-Shāfiʿī*, ed. Ṭāriq Faṭḥī al-Sayyid (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2009), 10/269-270.

term *aʿjamī*, what is meant is all languages other than Arabic.¹⁸ Therefore, the use of the term *ʿajam* in the classical *fiqh* texts examined in this study should not be interpreted as limiting the debate over non-Arabic languages solely to Persian. The issue of using languages other than Arabic is not specific to Persian, nor does Persian have any particular distinction in this regard. In some cases, Persian is mentioned as an example in the relevant texts, but this does not mean that the discussion is confined to Persian. Rather, Persian is cited only as an illustrative example.¹⁹

This research will be conducted using document analysis, a qualitative research method commonly employed in the social sciences. Document analysis is a method based on the detailed and systematic examination of written materials.²⁰ The subject will be addressed within the framework of issues identified in the Shāfiʿī *fiqh* literature, particularly in areas of family law such as *nikāḥ* and *ṭalāq* (divorce).²¹

1. Nikāḥ

Al-Shāfiʿī determines which expressions must be used in *nikāḥ* by referring to the words used in the Qurʾān regarding marriage. He concludes that the Qurʾān uses the terms *nikāḥ* and *tazwīj* for the

¹⁸ Al-Khaṭīb al-Shirbīnī, *Mughnī l-muḥtāj ilā maʿrifat maʿānī alfāz al-Minhāj*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad Muʿawwaḍ - ʿĀdil Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Mawjūd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1994), 4/229.

¹⁹ Kâşif Hamdi Okur, “Yesevî Muhibbi Bir Hanefî Fakîh”, 2/703.

²⁰ Bilgen Kırıl, “Nitel Bir Veri Analizi Yöntemi Olarak Doküman Analizi”, *Siirt Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 8/15 (2020), 173.

²¹ The reason why discussions concerning the use of non-Arabic expressions in family law have concentrated particularly on matters of *nikāḥ* and *ṭalāq* is that these two areas constitute the most fundamental components of family law, and the meanings, scope, and legal implications of the expressions used in these procedures require detailed examination. Additionally, from a practical standpoint, the issues most frequently encountered in society in relation to family law concern marriage and divorce; therefore, it can be said that these matters occupy the attention of Shāfiʿī jurists more than others. Nevertheless, it should be noted that debates regarding the use of non-Arabic expressions are not limited to marriage and divorce; they are also addressed with considerable intensity in other areas of family law.

institution of marriage.²² According to him, it is not permissible to conclude a valid marriage using any expressions other than these two, even if the intention is to marry. This is because, prior to the conclusion of the marriage, a woman is unlawful (*ḥarām*) for a man, and for the *nikāḥ* to make her lawful (*ḥalāl*), it must be concluded using the expressions mentioned by God. According to al-Shāfiʿī, these expressions are *nikāḥ* and *tazwīj*, as designated by divine terminology.²³

The theory formulated by al-Shāfiʿī regarding the specific terminology to be used in *nikāḥ* is a widely accepted view within the Shāfiʿī madhhab. In fact, Abū l-Ḥasan al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058)²⁴ supported this view of al-Shāfiʿī, stating that the *nikāḥ* can only be concluded using *ṣarīḥ* (explicit) expressions. According to him, the only explicit expressions valid for marriage are *nikāḥ* and *tazwīj*; it is not permissible to conclude the marriage contract (*ʿaqd al-nikāḥ*) using other terms, even if the intent is marriage. Al-Māwardī also cited the view of Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767), who permits the use of terms such as *bayʿ* (sale), *hibab* (donation)²⁵, or *tamlīk* (ownership) in a

²² Al-Shāfiʿī, *al-Umm*, ed. Muḥammad Zuhri al-Najjār (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 1990), 5/40; Among the verses that al-Shāfiʿī mentions on this issue are the following: فَلَمَّا قَضَىٰ زَيْدٌ مِنْهَا وَطَرًا زَوَّجْنَاكَهَا “When Zayd no longer wanted her, We gave her to you in marriage” (Q 33:37); وَلَكُمْ نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ أَزْوَاجُكُمْ “You inherit half of what your wives leave” (Q 4:12); وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ أَزْوَاجَهُمْ “As for those who accuse their own wives of adultery” (Q 24:6); فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا تَحِلُّ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ حَتَّىٰ تَنْكِحَ زَوْجًا غَيْرَهُ “If a husband divorces his wife after the second divorce, she will not be lawful for him until she has taken another husband” (Q 2:230); إِذَا نَكَحْتُمُ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ثُمَّ طَلَقْتُمُوهُنَّ “Believers,... when you marry believing women and then divorce...” (Q 33:49); وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا مَا نَكَحَ آبَاؤُكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ “Do not marry women that your fathers married” (Q 4:22). For the translation of the verses, see *The Qurʾan*, trans. M. A. S. Abdelhaleem (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

²³ Al-Shāfiʿī, *al-Umm*, 5/40; al-Shirbīnī emphasizes that marriage is valid with words derived from *inkāḥ* and *tazwīj* as well. See al-Shirbīnī, *Mughnī l-muḥtāj*, 4/227.

²⁴ To the best of our knowledge, the scholars in the classical Shāfiʿī *fiqh* literature who addressed the issue of using languages other than Arabic in family law in a comprehensive and systematic manner are al-Māwardī and Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī. For this reason, their views will be referred to frequently throughout this article.

²⁵ *Hibab* is “gift inter vivos, transfers the ownership of a thing during the lifetime of the donor, and with no consideration payable by the donee”. See Y. Linant de

marriage.²⁶ The Ḥanafī madhhab validates a marriage contract using these terms. Because these terms share the semantic meaning of *milk* (ownership), they can be metaphorically borrowed (*istiʿārah*) to establish the legal aim of marriage, which is *milk al-mutʿah* (a type of ownership referring to lawful cohabitation). This metaphorical application is necessary because all individual words used in the marriage contract must be part of the *milk* semantic basin to be valid.²⁷ Therefore, according to the Ḥanafīs, marriage cannot be contracted using terms such as *ibāḥah* (permissibility), *iḥlāl* (lawfulness), and *iʿārah* (loan for use), which do not convey ownership, nor with the term *ijārah* (lease), a temporary contract that denotes not ownership but merely the right of temporary use.²⁸

Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), who used a similar approach to al-Māwardī, stated that according to the Shāfiʿī madhhab, marriage is valid only if the expressions *inkāḥ* and *tazwīj* are used. He argued that these two terms have universally established meanings across all languages, serving as the most well-known and explicit terms for marriage. Al-Juwaynī further maintained that the *nikāḥ* cannot be concluded using other terms, even if they express a clear meaning, as only *inkāḥ* and *tazwīj* qualify as valid explicit terms. He also rejected the use of metaphorical or indirect (*kināyah*) expressions in marriage, reasoning that since the *ʿaqd al-nikāḥ* (marriage contract) requires witness testimony, it is not possible for witnesses to ascertain the parties' intent when indirect language is used. Hence, the foundational position of the Shāfiʿī madhhab, according to al-Juwaynī, is that only

Bellefonds, "Hiba", *Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition Online* (EI-2 English) (Accessed 4 July 2025).

²⁶ Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 9/152.

²⁷ Hakime Reyhan Yaşar, "ʿAqd al-Nikāḥ: Explaining the Nexus Between Marriage and Contract in Islamic Law", *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 63/1 (May 2022), 173-177; See also, Mehmet Selim Aslan, *İslâm Aile Hukuku* (Bursa: Emin Yayınları, 2017), 83-84.

²⁸ According to al-Māwardī, differing opinions are attributed to Abū Ḥanīfah regarding whether a marriage may be contracted using the term *ijārah*. Al-Kāsānī, however, reported that the majority of Ḥanafī authorities (*mashāyikh*) hold the view that contracting marriage with the wording of *ijārah* is not permissible. See al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 9/152; ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Abū Bakr ibn Maṣʿūd al-Kāsānī, *Badāʾiʿ al-ṣanāʾiʿ fī tartīb al-sharāʾiʿ*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad Muʿawwaḍ - ʿĀdil Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Mawjūd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2003), 3/317-319.

explicit expressions in Arabic are valid.²⁹ This foundational view is also endorsed by Abū Zakariyyā al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277), who affirmed that the marriage contract cannot be concluded using terms other than *tazwīj* and *inkāḥ*.³⁰

Al-Rāfiʿī (d. 623/1226) argued that the terms used in marriage should be limited to *inkāḥ* and *tazwīj*, referring to the devotional (*ʿibādāt*) aspect of marriage. According to him, the ruling on marriage is *mandūb* (recommended); therefore, marriage bears a quality that approximates acts of worship. The expressions employed in acts of worship are determined solely by the Sharīʿah texts. In this regard, the Qurʾān uses only the terms *inkāḥ* and *tazwīj* and makes no reference to any other expressions.³¹ Al-Bakrī (d. 1310/1892), however, approached the subject from a different angle. According to him, the marriage contract cannot be concluded with words other than *tazwīj* and *inkāḥ* because marriage is a type of *taʿabbudī*. Therefore, *qiyās* (legal analogy) cannot be applied in this context. Consequently, terms such as *ibāḥah*, *tamlīk*, or *hibah* cannot, by analogy, be rendered valid for contracting a marriage.³²

Al-Shāfiʿī's view that the marriage contract can only be validly concluded using the Qurʾānic terms *nikāḥ* and *tazwīj*—and that a contract formed with any other wording is invalid—has led, within the madhhab, to the question of whether marriage may be concluded in another language through translations of these terms. Since God used the Arabic expressions *nikāḥ* and *tazwīj* in the Qurʾān for the marriage contract and since marriage possesses a quasidevotional character, Shāfiʿī scholars have wondered the following: if the Qurʾān must be recited in its original Arabic in acts of worship, must the marriage contract likewise adhere to its Qurʾānic Arabic formula? Furthermore, if the wording used in *nikāḥ*—which is a type of *taʿabbudī*—has been

²⁹ Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī, *Nibāyat al-maṭlab fī dirāyat al-madhbhab*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīm Maḥmūd al-Dīb (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2007), 12/170; see also for similar discussions; Aḥmad Salāmah al-Qalyūbī, *Ḥāshiyatā Qalyūbī wa-l-ʿUmayrah* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995), 2/212.

³⁰ Al-Nawawī, *Rauḍat al-tālibīn*, 7/36.

³¹ ʿAbd al-Karīm ibn Muḥammad al-Rāfiʿī al-Qazwīnī, *al-ʿAzīz sharḥ al-Wajīz (al-Sharḥ al-kabīr)*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad Muʿawwad - ʿĀdil Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Mawjūd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1997), 7/492.

³² Al-Bakrī, *Iʿānat al-tālibīn*, 4/2223.

prescribed by the Sharīʿah, can its translations take the place of the original? This issue –namely, the validity of the marriage contract in a language other than Arabic– has been one of the debated questions within the Shāfiʿī madhhab. This question has produced a significant legal debate within the Shāfiʿī madhhab, and three primary views have emerged:

a. The first view holds that it is impermissible to conclude a marriage contract using translations of *nikāḥ* and *tazwīj* into another language. According to Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī (d. 476/1083), this view is based on the ḥadīth: “You have made women lawful for yourselves with the word of God”.³³ This “word of God” is Arabic, and just as the Qurʾān cannot be substituted with its translation, neither can these divine expressions be replaced with translations.³⁴ Al-Rūyānī established that the core rationale behind this view is the argument that the Qurʾān’s *iʿjāz* (inimitability) lies in both its wording and meaning and that this quality is lost when it is translated into another language.³⁵ Al-Rāfiʿī noted that those who defend this view base their reasoning on an analogy with the recitation of al-Fātiḥah in prayer. Just as a person who does not know Arabic may not recite a translation of al-Fātiḥah during the prayer, likewise, a marriage contract cannot be concluded by using a translation of the Arabic formulae in the Qurʾān related to the marriage contract.³⁶ Thus, if God used *nikāḥ* and *tazwīj* in Arabic, using their translations would not be permissible. According to the commentaries of al-Māwardī,³⁷ al-Rūyānī,³⁸ and Abū l-Ḥusayn al-ʿImrānī³⁹ (d. 558/1163), this view is attributed to the Shāfiʿī jurist Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 406/1016). However, this view attributed to Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāyīnī has not been supported by other jurists within the Shāfiʿī madhhab. In a sense, Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāyīnī remains the sole

³³ Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān ibn al-Ashʿath al-Azdī al-Sijistānī, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, ed. Shuʿayb al-ʿArnaʿūṭ - Muḥammad Kāmil Qarah Ballī (Beirut: Dār al-Risālah al-ʿĀlamiyyah, 2009), “Kitāb al-Manāsik”, 56 (No. 1095).

³⁴ Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī, *al-Mubadhab fī fiqh al-Imām al-Shāfiʿī*, ed. Zakariyyā ʿUmayrāt (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1995), 2/438.

³⁵ Al-Rūyānī, *Baḥr al-madhab*, 9/153.

³⁶ Al-Rāfiʿī, *al-ʿAzīz sharḥ al-Wajīz*, 7/493.

³⁷ Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 9/155.

³⁸ Al-Rūyānī, *Baḥr al-madhab*, 9/153.

³⁹ Yaḥyá ibn Abī l-Khayr al-ʿImrānī, *al-Bayān fī madhab al-Imām al-Shāfiʿī*, ed. Qāsim Muḥammad al-Nūrī (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2000), 9/235-236.

proponent of this view within the madhhab.

Taking this view into account, a marriage contract cannot be concluded in a non-Arabic language. Whether the person making the marriage contract knows Arabic does not change this ruling.⁴⁰ Although this view is attributed to Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāyīnī, al-Juwaynī attributed it to Abū Saʿīd al-Iṣṭakhrī (d. 328/940). According to al-Juwaynī, if the person who uses the literal meanings of the Arabic words *tazwīj* and *nikāḥ* in his own language does not know Arabic well and it is not possible for him to learn it, and if the addressee understands this, then, according to the opinion of the *imāms* of the madhhab, the marriage is valid with the words used by the person in his own language. Al-Juwaynī identified al-Iṣṭakhrī as the only one who disagreed with this view. Al-Iṣṭakhrī is of the opinion that the marriage is valid only with the Arabic word and that the person who does not know Arabic should either be patient until he learns it or give a proxy to someone who knows Arabic.⁴¹ On the basis of these findings, the proponents of the first view are debated within the Shāfiʿī madhhab. According to al-Juwaynī, the only scholar who advocated this view in the school was al-Iṣṭakhrī. However, according to al-Māwardī, al-Rūyānī, and al-ʿImrānī, the sole proponent of this view within the school was Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāyīnī. According to al-Māwardī, if the first view is taken into consideration, it follows that if the marriage contract is performed in a language other than Arabic, it is invalid regardless of whether the person knows Arabic or not. In this case, if the person does not know Arabic, he has two options: he can either ask an Arab to perform the contract on his behalf (give a proxy) or he can learn Arabic and perform the contract himself.⁴²

b. The second view permits the use of non-Arabic languages for the marriage contract only if the contracting parties do not know Arabic. If they do know Arabic, then a non-Arabic contract is invalid. While al-Juwaynī attributed the first view to al-Iṣṭakhrī, al-Māwardī,⁴³ al-

⁴⁰ Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 9/155.

⁴¹ Al-Juwaynī, *Nibāyat al-maṭlab*, 12/171.

⁴² Al-Māwardī, without indicating whether he prefers this opinion, merely stated the legal consequences that would arise if this view was considered. For these views, see al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 9/155.

⁴³ Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 9/155.

Shīrāzī,⁴⁴ and al-Rūyānī⁴⁵ attributed this second view to himself.⁴⁶ The rationale is that, unlike the Qurʾān, the marriage contract does not possess inimitable linguistic qualities; hence, it can be rendered in other languages if necessary. This view draws an analogy with the *takbīr al-iḥrām* (saying *Allāh akbar* at the start of *ṣalah*) in prayer, which can be said in another language by someone who does not know Arabic.⁴⁷

Considering the second view, al-Māwardī stated that there may be three scenarios:⁴⁸

1. Both parties are Arabic speakers: the *nikāḥ* is valid only in Arabic.
2. Both parties are non-Arabic speakers: the *nikāḥ* is valid in their own language.
3. One party speaks Arabic, and the other does not: the contract is invalid in both languages unless one of two solutions is implemented:
 - A bilingual representative acts as a proxy.
 - The non-Arabic speaker may learn Arabic and conclude the contract in Arabic. However, the Arabic-speaking party is not required to learn another language to perform the marriage contract.⁴⁹

c. The third view holds that the marriage contract is valid in any language, regardless of whether the parties know Arabic. Of course, the words being translated here must be those designated by the *sharʿ* for the marriage contract, namely, the terms *nikāḥ* and *tazwīj*.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Al-Shīrāzī, *al-Mubadbdhab*, 2/438.

⁴⁵ Al-Rūyānī, *Baḥr al-madhdhab*, 9/153.

⁴⁶ Al-Rāfiʿī stated that the view attributed to al-Iṣṭakhrī is disputed; some maintain that he held the first opinion (absolute prohibition), whereas others contend that he adopted the second opinion, which takes into account whether someone knows Arabic. See for these evaluations al-Rāfiʿī, *al-ʿAzīz sharḥ al-Wajīz*, 7/493.

⁴⁷ Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 9/156; al-Shīrāzī, *al-Mubadbdhab*, 2/438; al-Rāfiʿī, *al-ʿAzīz sharḥ al-Wajīz*, 7/493; For the current debate on worship in the native tongue, see Tijani Boulaouali, “Quran Translation: A Historical-Theological Exploration”, *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 19 (2021), 127-130; Tan, “Translating the Sacred”, 209-211.

⁴⁸ Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 9/156.

⁴⁹ Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 9/156.

⁵⁰ Al-Bakrī, *Iʿānat al-ṭālibīn*, 4/2224.

According to al-Shīrāzī, the non-Arabic equivalents of *nikāḥ* and *tazwīj* can fulfill the same legal function. He rejected the analogy between Qurʾānic translation and the translation of contract terms, arguing that the Qurʾān is inimitable because of its miraculous composition, which is not the case with contractual expressions. Similarly, he opposed comparing the necessity of Arabic in prayer (e.g., the *takbīr*) with the marriage contract, noting that prayer is an act of worship, whereas marriage is a legal agreement whose objective can be achieved in any comprehensible language. Al-Shīrāzī asserted that the third view is both valid and preferable.⁵¹ Al-Māwardī also emphasized that this is the most widely accepted and authoritative view in the madhhab.⁵² Al-Nawawī affirmed that the most authentic opinion (*aṣaḥḥ*)⁵³ is that the marriage contract is valid in a foreign language, regardless of Arabic proficiency.⁵⁴

According to al-Māwardī, if this view is accepted, then the *nikāḥ* is valid in a non-Arabic language regardless of whether the speaker knows Arabic. However, since Arabic is the language of the Sharīʿah, using Arabic is preferable if one is able. Nevertheless, the marriage contract must be understood by the witnesses. If it is performed in Arabic and the witnesses do not understand Arabic or vice versa, it is invalid. Witnesses must understand the language used to avoid ambiguity.⁵⁵

Al-ʿImrānī also noted that if one party speaks only Arabic and the other only a foreign language (non-Arabic), the marriage contract is valid in the foreign language, provided that both understand each other. Similarly, if the contract is performed in Arabic before two non-

⁵¹ Al-Shīrāzī, *al-Muḥadhdhab*, 2/438.

⁵² In our assessment, al-Māwardī appears to have adopted this view. This is because he described it as a well-known view defended by the majority of the *madhhab*. While presenting the first and second views without criticism or approval, he clearly identified the third view as a widespread and established view, indicating his preference for it. For these views, see al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 9/155.

⁵³ “In cases where two or more *wujūb* are supported by strong evidence, the one considered to be based on the strongest evidence is labeled *aṣaḥḥ*, while the others are termed *ṣaḥīḥ*”. See Bilal Aybakan, “Şâfiî Mezhebi”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2010), 38/242.

⁵⁴ Al-Nawawī, *Rawḍat al-ṭālibīn*, 7/36; see also for similar discussions, al-Shīrbīnī, *Mughnī l-muḥtāj*, 4/229-430.

⁵⁵ Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 9/155.

Arabic-speaking witnesses or in a foreign language before two Arabic-speaking witnesses, it is valid only if the witnesses understand the contract's intent, as the primary function of witnessing is to confirm the occurrence of the act.⁵⁶

2. Ṭalāq

Al-Shāfiʿī applied a framework to *ṭalāq* (divorce) that is similar to the one he set out for *nikāḥ*. According to him, God mentions three specific terms in the Qurʾān in relation to divorce: *al-ṭalāq* (الطَّلَاق), *al-firāq* (الْفُرَاق), and *al-sarāḥ* (السَّرَاح).⁵⁷

Al-Shāfiʿī identified *ṭalāq*, *firāq*, and *sarāḥ* as divinely sanctioned expressions for divorce, just as *nikāḥ* and *tazwīj* are for marriage. This framework underscores his approach to legal formulations, where only the terminology used in the Qurʾān is deemed valid for initiating legal effects such as marriage or divorce. In the Shāfiʿī madhhab, divorce is effected only through verbal expressions (*lafẓs*), that is, through spoken words (*qawṭs*).⁵⁸ Without such verbal expression, intention alone has no legal weight in enacting a divorce.⁵⁹ According to al-Shāfiʿī, when divorce is pronounced using the terms *ṭalāq*, *firāq*, or *sarāḥ*, it is considered valid regardless of the husband's intention. This is because al-Shāfiʿī regarded these terms as *ṣarīḥ* expressions for divorce, which inherently convey the legal act without requiring supporting intent. In fact, al-Juwaynī, when citing al-Shāfiʿī's position, stated that the expressions used in marriage and divorce are categorized into two types: *ṣarīḥ* and *kināyah*. He further specified that only the terms *ṭalāq*, *firāq*, and *sarāḥ* qualify as *ṣarīḥ* in the

⁵⁶ Al-ʿImrānī, *al-Bayān*, 9/236; for similar opinions see al-Nawawī, *Rawḍat al-ṭālibīn*, 7/36.

⁵⁷ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَطَلِّقُوهُنَّ لِعَدَّتِهِنَّ “Prophet, when any of you intend to divorce women, do so at a time when their prescribed waiting period...” (Q 65:1); فَإِذَا بَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ فَارِقُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ “When they have completed their appointed term, either keep them honourably, or part with them honourably...” (Q 65:2); فَيَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِأَزْوَاجِكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُرِيدُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا فَتَعَالَيْنَ أُمَتِّعْكُنَّ وَأَسْرِخْكُنَّ “Prophet, say to your wives, ‘If your desire is for the present life and its finery, then come, I will make provision for you and release you with kindness’.” (Q 33:28); al-Shāfiʿī, *al-Umm*, 5/276.

⁵⁸ Al-Rūyānī, *Baḥr al-madhhab*, 10/37.

⁵⁹ Al-Shāfiʿī, *al-Umm*, 5/276.

context of divorce.⁶⁰

Al-Juwaynī states that divorce by words derived from the word *ṭalāq*, whether in the verb tense or in the noun tense, is explicit. Thus, if a husband addresses his wife using phrases such as the following:

أنت طالق / *anti ṭāliq* (you are divorced)

طلقتك / *ṭallaqtuki* (I divorced you)

أنت مطلقة / *anti muṭallaqah* (you are divorced), the divorce is considered valid. According to al-Juwaynī's view, which he considered to be the most authentic (*aṣaḥḥ*), the terms *sarāḥ* and *firāq* are also categorized as *ṣariḥ* expressions of divorce. Taking this view into account, as a verb modal, if

فارقتك / *fāraqtuki* (I left you)

سرحتك / *saraḥtuki* (I released you) are used, divorce takes place explicitly (*ṣariḥ*).

According to al-Juwaynī, the words derived from these two

⁶⁰ According to al-Rūyānī's account, these three terms are the recognized explicit expressions for divorce within the Shāfi'ī *madhhab*. These expressions do not require any underlying intention to effectuate divorce. That is, if a husband uses any wording derived from these three root terms, divorce takes effect automatically, regardless of whether he intended it or not. Al-Juwaynī stated that among the *ṣariḥ* expressions of divorce, the most well-known and manifest is the term *ṭalāq*. He noted that this term has been used both in the pre-Islamic (Jāhiliyyah) and Islamic periods, and that there is no scholarly disagreement over its being an *ṣariḥ* expression for divorce. Al-Juwaynī attributed the view that *ṭalāq* is the only term that qualifies as *ṣariḥ* in divorce to Abū Ḥanīfah. He also reported that the Shāfi'īs of Iraq transmitted a view ascribed to al-Shāfi'ī's *al-qawl al-qadīm* (his earlier opinion), which aligns with the opinion of Abū Ḥanīfah. According to this earlier opinion, the only term considered explicitly valid for divorce was *ṭalāq*, while *sarāḥ* and *firāq* were classified as *kināyah*. However, when examining al-Shāfi'ī's later works, particularly *al-Umm*, which represents his *al-qawl al-jadīd* (later opinion), it is evident that he included *sarāḥ* and *firāq* among the *ṣariḥ* expressions of divorce. Al-Nawawī reported this as the generally accepted position among Shāfi'ī scholars. That is the Shāfi'īs hold that there are three *ṣariḥ* expressions for divorce: *ṭalāq*, *sarāḥ*, and *firāq*. In a *ṭalāq* pronounced with *ṣariḥ* expressions, the divorce takes effect without the need for an intention, whereas with *kināyah* expressions, it takes effect only depending on the intention. For these views, al-Juwaynī, *Nihāyat al-maḥlab*, 14/58; al-Rūyānī, *Baḥr al-madhhab*, 10/38; al-Rāfi'ī, *al-'Azīz sbarḥ al-Wajīz*, 8/507-508; al-Nawawī, *Rawḍat al-ṭālibin*, 8/25; al-Shirbinī, *Mughnī l-muḥtāj*, 4/457-458; Taqī al-Dīn al-Ḥiṣnī, *Kifāyat al-akhyār fī ḥall Ghāyat al-ikhtisār*, ed. 'Alī 'Abd al-Ḥamid Balṭajī - Muḥammad Wahbī Sulaymān (Damascus: Dār al-Khayr, 1994), 388-390.

concepts and used as noun modals are as follows:

أنت مفارقة / *anti mufāraqah* (you were abandoned)

أنت مسرحة / *anti musarraḥah* (you have been released); when these words are used, there are two *wujūh* (opinions)⁶¹ about whether a divorce has taken place here:

- According to the first *wajh*, these words are *ṣarīḥ*, as is the case with the words أنت مطلقة (you are divorced).⁶²
- According to the second *wajh*, these words are *kināyah*. Because the words *sarāḥ* and *firāq* are not *ṣarīḥ* and famous like the word *ṭalāq*. Al-Shāfiʿī classifies the words *sarāḥ* and *firāq* as *ṣarīḥ* because they are mentioned in the Qurʾān. In the Qurʾān, these words are mentioned only in the verb tense. This concept is not mentioned in the Qurʾān in the form of *al-mufāraqah* (المفارقة) and *al-musarraḥah* (المسرحة); in contrast, although the word *ṭalāq* is very famous, the word *al-muṭallaqah* (المطلقة) is mentioned in the Qurʾān.⁶³

Al-Juwaynī addressed the issue of using *ṣarīḥ* expressions for divorce in languages other than Arabic. According to him, Shāfiʿī scholars hold the view that the meaning of the term *ṭalāq* in non-Arabic languages is likewise considered *ṣarīḥ*, just as it is in Arabic.⁶⁴ Al-Juwaynī noted that some authors have attributed to al-Iṣṭakhrī the opinion that a divorce expressed in a language other than Arabic cannot be considered *ṣarīḥ*. However, he regarded this attribution as unusual (*gharīb*) and lacking any sound basis. In his view, the disagreement reported from al-Iṣṭakhrī primarily pertains to the issue of *nikāḥ*, not divorce.⁶⁵

According to al-Juwaynī's account, Shāfiʿī scholars have argued that

⁶¹ "The term *wajh* (plural: *wujūh*) denotes the legal interpretations and reasoned extrapolations (*takhrījāt*) developed by later Shāfiʿī jurists in line with al-Shāfiʿī's methodological principles". See Aybakan, "Şāfiī Mezhebi", 38/242.

⁶² Al-Juwaynī, *Nibāyat al-maṭlab*, 14/58.

⁶³ Al-Juwaynī, *Nibāyat al-maṭlab*, 14/59.

⁶⁴ See also for similar discussions, al-Shirbīnī, *Mughnī l-muḥtāj*, 4/458.

⁶⁵ Al-Juwaynī, *Nibāyat al-maṭlab*, 14/60; Despite al-Juwaynī's observation, al-Rāfiʿī stated that the view that divorce formulae expressed in a language other than Arabic are not *ṣarīḥ* terms of divorce is attributed to al-Iṣṭakhrī. For these evaluations, see al-Rāfiʿī, *al-ʿAzīz sharḥ al-Wajīz*, 8/511.

the *şarīḥ* equivalent of the term *ṭalāq* in non-Arabic languages is the expression *tū hashte'ī* (تو هشته ای), meaning “you are divorced”. Al-Juwaynī transmits the opinion of his teacher and father, Abū Muḥammad al-Juwaynī (d. 438/1047), who held that the meanings of expressions considered *şarīḥ* in Arabic are likewise *şarīḥ* in other languages. For example, saying *anti ṭāliq* (you are divorced) in Arabic corresponds to *tū hashte'ī* in Persian. Similarly, *ṭallaqtuki* (I have divorced you) corresponds to *dasht bāzdāshtam* (دشت بازداشتم),⁶⁶ *fāraqtuki* (I have separated from you) corresponds to *az tu judā kardam* (از تو جدا کردم), and *sarraḥtuki* (I have released you) corresponds to *tu rā gusīl kardam* (ترا کسیل کردم).⁶⁷ Al-Juwaynī also referred to the opposing opinion of al-Qāḍī Ḥusayn al-Marwarrūdhī (d. 462/1069), who argued that only *tu hashte'ī* should be considered an *şarīḥ* expression of divorce, whereas *dastat bāzdāshtam* does not qualify as *şarīḥ*.⁶⁸ Al-Juwaynī, however, criticizes this view. He argued that uttering *dasht bāzdāshtam* effectively interprets the expression *ṭallaqtuki* (I divorced you). Thus, if *tu hashte'ī* is accepted as the equivalent of *anti ṭāliq* (you are divorced) and is thus *şarīḥ*, then *dasht bāzdāshtam* should likewise be considered *şarīḥ*, since it conveys the same meaning as *ṭallaqtuki*. Al-Juwaynī therefore found al-Qāḍī Ḥusayn's critique unconvincing.⁶⁹ Furthermore, al-Juwaynī also

⁶⁶ This expression appears in al-Juwaynī's text both in the form *dasht bāzdāshtam* and *dastat bāzdāshtam*. However, the correct usage should be the second form. Indeed, al-Rāfi'ī's use of the word “dast” rather than “dasht” in this context indicates this. For comparison, see al-Juwaynī, *Nihāyat al-maṭlab*, 14/60; al-Rāfi'ī, *al-ʿAzīz sharḥ al-Wajīz*, 8/511.

⁶⁷ Although in al-Juwaynī's Arabic text it is written with the letter “kāf” (ك), the correct pronunciation of the word should be *Gusīl* (كسیل), not *Kusīl* (كسیل). Indeed, al-Rāfi'ī also writes this word as *Gusīl*. For comparison, see al-Juwaynī, *Nihāyat al-maṭlab*, 14/60; al-Rāfi'ī, *al-ʿAzīz sharḥ al-Wajīz*, 8/511.

⁶⁸ For the opinion of al-Qāḍī Ḥusayn al-Marwarrūdhī, see also al-Rāfi'ī, *al-ʿAzīz sharḥ al-Wajīz*, 8/511.

⁶⁹ In classical works of Islamic jurisprudence, discussions concerning the use of a non-Arabic language in legal matters have often employed the expressions “the language of the *ʿajam*” or “Persian”. The examples cited in these debates are likewise frequently drawn from Persian. However, as previously noted, al-Rūyānī explicitly stated that the term *ʿajamī* is not restricted to Persians, Byzantines, or Nabataeans; rather, it applies to anyone who cannot articulate Arabic properly. Similarly, although al-Māwardī centered much of his discussion on the use of Persian in ritual worship performed in a language other than Arabic, he did not

disagreed with his father's view regarding the expressions derived from *sarāḥ* and *firāq* in non-Arabic languages. Contrary to his father, he held that the meanings of *fāraqtuki* and *sarraḥtuki* in other languages are not *ṣarīḥ*. In his assessment, there is uncertainty even regarding the Arabic nominal forms *al-mufāraqah* and *al-musarraḥah* as to whether they are *ṣarīḥ* expressions of divorce. As previously mentioned, al-Juwaynī acknowledged that while the verbal forms of *sarāḥ* and *firāq* are subject to scholarly disagreement, the most authentic (*aṣaḥḥ*) is that they are *ṣarīḥ*. However, their nominal forms (*al-mufāraqah* and *al-musarraḥah*) are disputed. Therefore, if even their Arabic forms are subject to disagreement regarding their explicitness, then the controversy over their meanings in other languages is even more pronounced and significant.⁷⁰

Al-Mawardī evaluated the use of *ṭalāq* in languages other than Arabic through the lens of an Arabic speaker using a non-Arabic language. He probably started from the implicit assumption that it is permissible for a non-Arab to file for divorce in his native language. According to him, when an Arab uses a non-Arabic language and utters expressions that are considered *ṣarīḥ* in that language, three scenarios can arise:⁷¹

confine the debate to Persian alone. Instead, he broadened the scope to include other languages such as Syriac, Turkish, and Indian languages. Al-Rāfiʿī also discussed the possibility of concluding the marriage contract in languages other than Arabic, such as the *ʿajamī* language (Persian) or other tongues. Although he presented his examples in Persian, he treated Persian and all other non-Arabic languages as equivalent in this regard. This indicates that the predominance of Persian examples in classical texts should not be understood as implying that the debate itself was limited to Persian. The specific prominence of Persian in these discussions is likely due to practical reasons: many authors who wrote in Arabic were also proficient in Persian; the largest non-Arab Muslim population living alongside Arabs at the time consisted of Persians; certain Arab jurists—such as al-Juwaynī—lived in Persian territories; and a number of Persian-born jurists authored works in Arabic. These factors together help explain why Persian receives particular emphasis in the classical legal literature, even though the underlying debate concerns non-Arabic languages more broadly. For these views, see al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 2/96; al-Rūyānī, *Baḥr al-madhhab*, 10/269-270; al-Juwaynī, *Nibāyat al-maṭlab*, 14/60; al-Rāfiʿī, *al-ʿAzīz sharḥ al-Wajīz*, 7/493, 8/512-514.

⁷⁰ Al-Juwaynī, *Nibāyat al-maṭlab*, 14/60.

⁷¹ Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 10/227.

a. If he knows the non-Arabic meaning of the wording he uses, whether he intends to divorce or not, the divorce will take place regardless of his intention.⁷²

b. If he does not know the non-Arabic meaning of the wording he uses and does not intend the meaning that the wording requires in his language, namely, divorce, then the divorce will not take place.⁷³

c. If he does not know the meaning of the wording he uses but intends the meaning required by the wording in his language, namely, divorce, then according to the view that Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfārāyīnī conveyed from some Shāfi'īs, the divorce does not take place because the person does not know the meaning of the wording he uses. However, al-Māwardī opposed this view and held the view that even if he does not know the meaning, the divorce takes place in this case because he intends to divorce. According to him, if it is claimed that the divorce did not take place because of the wording used by the person in the third position, then there is no difference between the person who does not know the meaning and does not intend to divorce and the person who intends to divorce, both of which are in an equal position in terms of the ruling. However, there is a difference between intending to divorce and not intending to divorce, and the two are not equal.⁷⁴

Al-Māwardī also stated that if an Arab uses a non-Arabic *ṣarīḥ* expression for divorce and the wife claims to know the meaning of the expression used by her husband, then the husband's statement is taken into account, provided that he swears that he does not know the meaning of the expression.⁷⁵ Thus, al-Māwardī accepted the validity of a divorce granted in a non-Arabic language. If a divorce granted by an Arab in a language other than his mother tongue is valid, then a fortiori (*awlā*) should be valid for a non-Arab in his own language.

Concerning the use of expressions for divorce in non-Arabic languages, al-Nawawī summarized the basic view of the Shāfi'ī madhhab. According to him, there are two main views: The first view holds that translations of *ṭalāq* into other languages are also expressions for *ṣarīḥ* but that these terms are generally and

⁷² Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 10/227.

⁷³ Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 10/227.

⁷⁴ Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 10/227.

⁷⁵ Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 10/227.

traditionally used to mean divorce in the context of that language. This is similar to how such terms are explicitly understood among Arabs. The second view considers the translation of *ṭalāq* into a non-Arabic language as *kināyah*.⁷⁶ Al-Nawawī stated that there is scholarly disagreement regarding the translations of *sarāḥ* and *firāq*. However, according to the most authentic (*aṣaḥḥ*) view, their translations are considered *kināyah*. Al-Juwaynī also argued that the translated forms of *sarāḥ* and *firāk* cannot be considered explicit expressions in the sense of divorce.⁷⁷

3. Rijʿah

In Islamic jurisprudence, *rijʿah* refers to the right of a man who has issued a revocable divorce (*al-ṭalāq al-rajʿī*) to return to his wife before the completion of her waiting period (*ʿiddah*) without the need for a new *nikāḥ*.⁷⁸ According to the Shāfiʿī madhhab, *rijʿah*, like *nikāḥ*, can be effected only through verbal expression (*qawḥ*). On the basis of this opinion, actions such as engaging in sexual intercourse with the wife, kissing her, or touching her do not constitute valid *rijʿah* in the absence of a verbal statement expressing the intent.⁷⁹ According to the Shāfiʿīs, just as the marriage contract should be made in word and not in deed, so *rijʿah* should be made in word and not in deed. There is a dispute in the Shāfiʿī madhhab as to which words can be used for *rijʿah*. There is scholarly debate concerning which specific

⁷⁶ According to al-Kāsānī, the view taken into account in *fatwā* within the Ḥanafī madhhab concerning divorce pronounced in Persian is as follows: If a Persian expression used for divorce is one that is employed exclusively for the purpose of divorce in Persian, then it is considered a *ṣarīḥ* expression, and when directed toward the wife, divorce takes effect without regard to intention. However, expressions in Persian that are used both for divorce and for other meanings are regarded as Persian *kināyah* expressions, and their legal status corresponds to that of *kināyah* expressions in Arabic. See al-Kāsānī, *Badāʿiʿ al-ṣanāʿiʿ*, 4/224.

⁷⁷ Al-Nawawī, *Rawḍat al-ṭālibīn*, 10/25; al-Shirbīnī also held that the translations of the terms *firāq* and *sarāḥ* constitute *kināyah*. He based this view on the disagreement over whether *sarāḥ* and *firāq* are considered *ṣarīḥ* divorce expressions in Arabic. That is, if there is disagreement in the Arabic original, then their translations should be regarded not as *ṣarīḥ* but as *kināyah*. Al-Shirbīnī, *Mughnī l-muḥtāj*, 4/458.

⁷⁸ İsmail Narin - Haşim Özdaş, "Talâkta Ricʿat Bağlamında Kurʿân-ı Kerimʼde Belirtilen İlkeler", *Tokat İlmiyat Dergisi* 8/2 (December 2020), 685.

⁷⁹ Al-Rüyānī, *Baḥr al-madhhab*, 10/247; al-Shirbīnī, *Mughnī l-muḥtāj*, 5/4-5.

expressions are valid for effecting *rij'ah*. Similarly, whether reconciliation can be effected through translations of Arabic expressions is also subject to discussion.⁸⁰

Al-Rāfi'ī stated that in *rij'ah*, there are both *ṣarīḥ* and *kināyah* expressions, and he emphasized that the following expressions are *ṣarīḥ* in relation to *rij'ah*: “*raja'tuki*/رَجَعْتُكَ” (I have taken you back), “*rāja'tuki*/رَاجَعْتُكَ” (I have made *rij'ah* to you), and “*irtaja'tuki*/ارْتَجَعْتُكَ” (I have taken you back again). According to him, these expressions are *ṣarīḥ* formulae for *rij'ah* because they have been instituted by the Sharī'ah and are found in transmitted *ḥadīths* and *āthār*.⁸¹ Al-Rāfi'ī also referred to many other types of expressions and formulations whose status as *ṣarīḥ* is a matter of dispute.⁸² Al-Rāfi'ī reported three different opinions regarding the permissibility of using translations of the Arabic *ṣarīḥ rij'ah* formulae. The view he adopted and characterized as *ṣaḥīḥ* is that a *rij'ah* pronounced in Persian is valid.⁸³ Like al-Rāfi'ī, al-Nawawī also stated that there is a view in the *madhhab* that *rij'ah* is not valid in a language other than Arabic. Another view differs on the basis of the individual's Arabic proficiency: if one is proficient in Arabic, *rij'ah* in a non-Arabic language is invalid; however, if one does not know Arabic well, *rij'ah* in another language is valid. A third opinion conveyed by al-Nawawī holds that *rij'ah* in an ‘*ajamī*’ language is valid regardless of the individual's knowledge of Arabic. According to him, this is the *ṣaḥīḥ* opinion.⁸⁴

4. *Khul'*

Khul' is a legal term in Islamic jurisprudence and refers to a woman's request for divorce in exchange for a financial compensation paid to her husband, thereby persuading him to terminate the *nikāḥ*. When both the husband and wife mutually agree to dissolve the marriage on this basis, the process is referred to as *mukhbāla'ah*.⁸⁵ According to the Shāfi'ī *madhhab*, *mukhbāla'ah* may be concluded

⁸⁰ Al-Shīrāzī, *al-Mubadhdhab*, 3/47.

⁸¹ Al-Rāfi'ī, *al-‘Azīz sharḥ al-Wajīz*, 9/170.

⁸² Al-Rāfi'ī, *al-‘Azīz sharḥ al-Wajīz*, 9/171-173.

⁸³ Al-Rāfi'ī, *al-‘Azīz sharḥ al-Wajīz*, 9/173.

⁸⁴ Al-Nawawī, *Rauḍat al-tālibīn*, 8/216.

⁸⁵ Fahrettin Atar, “Muhālea”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: TDV Yayınları, 2020), 30/397.

using either *ṣarīḥ* expressions such as *kbulʿ* and *ṭalāq*,⁸⁶ or using *kināyah* expressions such as *bayʿ* (sale), *shirāʾ* (purchase), and *faskh* (annulment).⁸⁷ Al-Rāfiʿī cited numerous Persian expressions used for *kbulʿ* and stated that these formulations are valid. He also did not transmit any opinion, requiring that *mukhbālaʿah* be conducted exclusively in Arabic.⁸⁸ According to al-Nawawī, expressions for *kbulʿ* in other languages are to be regarded as fully equivalent to their Arabic counterparts. That is, just as a *mukhbālaʿah* concluded that the term *kbulʿ* in Arabic is valid, it should likewise be valid when conducted using its translation in another language. Al-Nawawī also observed that the disputes that exist regarding which expressions may be used in the marriage contract do not apply in the case of *mukhbālaʿah*.⁸⁹

5. Qadhf

Qadhf in Islamic jurisprudence refers to the act of accusing a chastity (*muḥṣan*) individual of committing *zinā* (unlawful sexual intercourse) or denying their legitimate lineage.⁹⁰ The punishment for *qadhf* is clearly stated in the Qurʾān as follows:

As for those who accuse chaste women of fornication, and then fail to provide four witnesses, strike them eighty times, and reject their testimony ever afterwards: they are the lawbreakers. (Q 24:4)

Although there is no specific or fixed formula for the expression of *qadhf*, there is scholarly debate regarding which utterances fall within its legal definition.⁹¹ Additionally, the question arises whether an accusation made in a language other than Arabic can constitute *qadhf*. Al-Māwardī maintained that if *qadhf* is committed in a non-Arabic language, it still requires the implementation of the *ḥadd* punishment, just as it would if expressed in Arabic.⁹²

⁸⁶ Al-Shīrāzī, *al-Mubadbdhab*, 2/490; al-Rāfiʿī, *al-ʿAzīz sharḥ al-Wajīz*, 8/401-406.

⁸⁷ Al-Rāfiʿī, *al-ʿAzīz sharḥ al-Wajīz*, 9/173; Atar, “Muhālea”, 30/399.

⁸⁸ Al-Rāfiʿī, *al-ʿAzīz sharḥ al-Wajīz*, 8/402.

⁸⁹ Al-Nawawī, *Rawḍat al-ṭālibīn*, 7/377; al-Shirbinī, likewise reports that a *mukhbālaʿah* is valid when the term *kbulʿ* is expressed in translation. Al-Shirbinī, *Mughnī l-muḥtāj*, 4/440.

⁹⁰ Hamza Aktan, “Kazf”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: TDV Yayınları, 2022), 25/148.

⁹¹ Al-Rāfiʿī, *al-ʿAzīz sharḥ al-Wajīz*, 9/335.

⁹² Al-Nawawī, *Rawḍat al-ṭālibīn*, 11/71.

Al-Rūyānī discussed a related issue concerning testimony in *qadhf* cases. He stated that if one of two witnesses claims that the accusation was made in Arabic, while the other asserts that it was made in Persian, then the crime of *qadhf* cannot be legally established. From this, it may be inferred that al-Rūyānī considered *qadhf* committed in a non-Arabic language to be legally valid, just like in Arabic, provided that there is clarity and agreement in the testimony.⁹³ Al-Rāfi‘ī also cited numerous instances of *qadhf* expressed in Persian. This finding indicates that a *qadhf* uttered in a language other than Arabic has legal consequences.⁹⁴

6. Li‘ān

Li‘ān refers to the mutual oath-taking between a husband and wife when the wife is accused of *zinā* by her husband. In Islamic jurisprudence, a person who accuses another of *zinā* must substantiate the claim with the testimony of four witnesses. Otherwise, the accuser is deemed guilty of *qadhf*. However, if the accuser is the husband and he cannot produce four witnesses to support his allegation, he may avert the *ḥadd* punishment for *qadhf* by swearing four times before a judge that his wife has committed adultery. Similarly, if the accused wife denies the allegation and swears four times before the judge that she did not commit adultery, she is also exempt from the *ḥadd* punishment for *zinā*.⁹⁵ The Qur’ān outlines the procedure of *li‘ān* in the following verses:

As for those who accuse their own wives of adultery, but have no other witnesses, let each one four times call God to witness that he is telling the truth, and, the fifth time, call God to reject him if he is lying; punishment shall be averted from his wife if she in turn four times calls God to witness that her husband is lying and, the fifth time, calls God to reject her if he is telling the truth. (Q 24:6-9)

The fact that these specific formulations of *li‘ān* oaths are mentioned in the Qur’ān has given rise to debate regarding whether they must be uttered in Arabic, as they appear in the scripture, or

⁹³ Al-Rūyānī, *Baḥr al-madbbab*, 11/240.

⁹⁴ Al-Rāfi‘ī, *al-‘Azīz sharḥ al-Wajīz*, 9/339-340.

⁹⁵ Mehmet Âkif Aydın, “Li‘ān”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: TDV Yayınları, 2003), 27/172.

whether they may also be expressed in other languages.⁹⁶

Al-Shāfiʿī held that if either of the spouses involved in the *liʿān* procedure is non-Arabic speaking, they may perform *liʿān* in their own language.⁹⁷ For *liʿān* performed in a non-Arabic language to be valid, al-Shāfiʿī requires the presence of two upright witnesses who understand the language of the person making the declaration. However, he noted that the presence of four such just witnesses is preferable.⁹⁸ Al-Shīrāzī noted that if the individual performing *liʿān* does not know Arabic, the declaration can be made in their own language. He argued that the legal weight of the phrases used in *liʿān* is no greater than that of the *adbkār* recited in prayer. Just as a person who does not know Arabic may recite the necessary phrases of prayer in their own language, so too may someone perform *liʿān* in their native tongue if they are not proficient in Arabic.⁹⁹

Similarly, al-Nawawī affirmed that a person who does not know Arabic may conduct *liʿān* in their own language. However, he emphasized that careful attention must be given to the translation of the terms testimony, curse (*laʿnab*), and wrath (*ghaḍab*) used in the *liʿān* formula.¹⁰⁰

After quoting al-Shāfiʿī's view that non-Arabic speakers can make *liʿān* in their own language, al-Māwardī detailed whether it is permissible to make *liʿān* in a non-Arabic language. He treated the situation of Arabic-speaking individuals differently. Al-Māwardī argued that when evaluating an individual who speaks Arabic, attention should be given to his mother tongue and general language practice. According to him, if the person who performs *liʿān* is Arab by origin and habitually speaks Arabic, he should perform *liʿān* only in Arabic, even if he speaks a foreign language.¹⁰¹ He offered two main justifications for this position:

a. *Liʿān* must be in accordance with the Qurʾānic expressions. Since these expressions are in Arabic, a native Arabic speaker should perform the *liʿān* in Arabic in accordance with the linguistic

⁹⁶ Al-ʿImrānī, *al-Bayān*, 10/449.

⁹⁷ Al-Shāfiʿī, *al-Umm*, 5/309.

⁹⁸ Al-Shāfiʿī, *al-Umm*, 5/309.

⁹⁹ Al-Shīrāzī, *al-Mubadhdhab*, 3/87; al-ʿImrānī, *al-Bayān*, 10/449.

¹⁰⁰ Al-Nawawī, *Rauḍat al-ṭālibīn*, 8/353; al-Shirbīnī, *Mughnī l-muḥtāj*, 5/66.

¹⁰¹ Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 11/71.

formulation of the Qurʾān.¹⁰²

b. If an Arab uses a language other than his own, this may cast doubt on the seriousness or truthfulness of the statement. This would undermine the seriousness and integrity of the *liʿān* procedure.¹⁰³

Therefore, the basis of al-Māwardī's view is to ensure that the language of *liʿān* is compatible with the language of the Qurʾān, i.e. Arabic, and to avoid any doubt that might arise if a person deliberately uses a language other than his own, especially in a matter of such legal and moral weight.

Al-Māwardī stated that there are two different views in the Shāfiʿī *madhhab* of thought on whether a person whose mother tongue is not Arabic but who speaks Arabic fluently can perform *liʿān* in a language other than Arabic:

a. The first view is attributed to Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāyīnī. According to this view, it is not permissible for a non-Arab who knows Arabic to perform *liʿān* in a language other than Arabic. This is because *liʿān* should be based on the statements in the Qurʾān, and therefore, the declaration should be made only in Arabic.¹⁰⁴ Al-Shīrāzī also cited this view. According to him, those who accept this view say that Sharīʿah commands that *liʿān* be performed in Arabic. Therefore, if one can perform *liʿān* in Arabic, it is not permissible to do so in any other language – just as the prayers (*adhkār*) in prayer cannot be recited in a language other than Arabic.¹⁰⁵ Al-ʿImrānī stated that this view, as reported by al-Shīrāzī, is attributed only to Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāyīnī and Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh (d. 477/1084) and is not widely held. According to him, those who adopt this view believe that the words used in the Qurʾān actually exist in the Qurʾān itself. Therefore, anyone who can use the Arabic words of the Qurʾān should do so, and it is not valid for them to perform *liʿān* in another language.¹⁰⁶

b. The second view is that a foreigner (non-Arab) who knows Arabic can make *liʿān* in his own language. This is because the use of one's own language removes any doubt as to whether the *liʿān* is truly *liʿān*, and it is done in accordance with one's own language habits that

¹⁰² Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 11/71.

¹⁰³ Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 11/71.

¹⁰⁴ Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 11/71.

¹⁰⁵ Al-Shīrāzī, *al-Mubadhab*, 3/87; al-ʿImrānī, *al-Bayān*, 10/449.

¹⁰⁶ Al-ʿImrānī, *al-Bayān*, 10/449.

he uses in his daily life.¹⁰⁷ Al-Shīrāzī also cited the view that it is permissible to make *liʿān* in one's own language. According to him, this view is based on the fact that *liʿān* is an oath (*yamīn*) and that oaths can be made in Arabic or any other language.¹⁰⁸

Al-Māwardī argued for the second view. According to him, if a person performing *liʿān* is non-Arab but has a good command of Arabic, it is nonetheless permissible for them to perform *liʿān* in their own language. He explained that *liʿān* functions either as an oath or as a testimony (*shahādah*), both of which may validly be expressed in a non-Arabic language.¹⁰⁹ Al-Rūyānī also reported that some Shāfiʿī jurists hold the view that even if the individuals involved in *liʿān* know Arabic, they may still perform it in a non-Arabic language just as is the case in the *nikāḥ*. He further noted that this view is more consistent with *qiyās*.¹¹⁰ Al-Nawawī also remarked that there is scholarly disagreement as to whether *liʿān* must be performed in Arabic when the person involved knows Arabic. He maintained that the authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) view is that the individual may perform *liʿān* in whichever language they choose.¹¹¹ From these citations, it can be concluded that the Shāfiʿī madhhab generally accepts the permissibility of a non-Arabic-speaking individual performing *liʿān* in their own language, regardless of whether or not they know Arabic.

Al-Shāfiʿī stated that the presence of two fair witnesses who understand the language of the declarant is sufficient for the *liʿān* performed by a non-Arab to be valid, but the presence of four such witnesses is preferable.¹¹² Al-Māwardī also stated that if the *liʿān* is made in a language other than Arabic and the judge does not

¹⁰⁷ Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 11/71.

¹⁰⁸ Al-Shīrāzī, *al-Mubadhdhab*, 10/449.

¹⁰⁹ Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 11/71.

¹¹⁰ Al-Rūyānī, *Baḥr al-madhdhab*, 10/349-350.

¹¹¹ Al-Nawawī, *Rauḍat al-ṭālibīn*, 8/353; Commenting on al-Nawawī's views on this matter, al-Shirbīnī stated that even if a person knows Arabic, they can perform *liʿān* in a language other than Arabic. He based this view on the fact that *liʿān* means oath or testimony, and that all languages are equal in this regard. Al-Shirbīnī also reported another view (*wajb*) within the madhhab. According to this view, a person who knows Arabic cannot perform *liʿān* in any language other than Arabic, because *al-sharʿ* came in this language, and a person who can use this language has no right to resort to another language. See al-Shirbīnī, *Mughnī l-muḥtāj*, 5/66.

¹¹² Al-Shāfiʿī, *al-Umm*, 5/309.

understand this language, the presence of two fair interpreters who understand the statements made is the view accepted by the Shāfiʿī madhhab. He also suggested two possible interpretations of al-Shāfiʿī's view on the necessity of four just persons when the *li'ān* is performed in a foreign (non-Arabic) language:¹¹³

- The other interpretation is that the expression “four persons” is interpreted as the persons to be present in the assembly for the *li'ān*, apart from the witnesses of the interpreter.
- The expression “four people” can be understood not as witnesses but as those who should be present at the *li'ān* assembly.

Al-Shīrāzī, after stating that the judge should have an interpreter to translate what is spoken in case the lianters do not speak the language, stated that the number of interpreters depends on the opinion of Shāfiʿī madhhab on the number of witnesses required for the denial of adultery; according to one opinion, four interpreters are sufficient, and according to another opinion, two interpreters are sufficient. Al-Shīrāzī did not state his preference on this issue.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, al-Nawawī reported that al-Shīrāzī accepted the view that two interpreters are sufficient.¹¹⁵

7. *Īlā'*

Linguistically, *ilā'* refers to taking an oath. In Islamic legal terminology, it denotes a husband's declaration through an oath, vow, or conditional statement that he will abstain from sexual relations with his wife.¹¹⁶ The ruling on *ilā'* is expressed in the Qur'ān as follows:

For those who swear that they will not approach their wives, there shall be a waiting period of four months if they go back, remember God will be most forgiving and merciful, but if they are determined to divorce, remember that God hears and knows all. (Q 2:226-227)

Al-Shāfiʿī addresses the legal status of *ilā'* when it is made in Arabic

¹¹³ Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 11/72.

¹¹⁴ Al-Shīrāzī, *al-Mubadhab*, 3/82.

¹¹⁵ Al-Nawawī, *Rawḍat al-tālibīn*, 8/353.

¹¹⁶ Hamdi Döndüren, “İlâ”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2000), 22/61.

as well as in non-Arabic languages. According to him, if a non-Arab makes an *ilāʾ* declaration in his own language, he is to be regarded as a *mūlī* (a husband who has taken an oath not to have sexual intercourse with his wife); in other words, *ilāʾ* expressed in a non-Arabic language is valid.¹¹⁷

However, if the individual uses a phrase in his own language that could plausibly be interpreted either as *ilāʾ* or something else and if this dual meaning remains linguistically ambiguous, then this is treated similarly to a case in Arabic where the expression is likewise ambiguous. In such cases, al-Shāfiʿī rules that the speaker's intention must be investigated. If the husband states that he intended to perform *ilāʾ*, then he is legally considered a *mūlī*. If he claims that he did not intend *ilāʾ*, his statement is accepted upon oath, if requested by the judge.¹¹⁸

According to al-Shāfiʿī, if a person who knows both Arabic and another language performs *ilāʾ* in any of the languages other than Arabic, the *ilāʾ* will be valid regardless of the language used. However, if the person later claims, "I did not intend to do *ilāʾ*", al-Shāfiʿī argued that such a statement is a matter between the person and God and has no legal value in a court of law. Another case al-Shāfiʿī discusses concerns a person who is an Arab and does not understand a non-Arabic language but nevertheless utters a non-Arabic sentence related to *ilāʾ*. If he later claims, "I did not know what I said and I did not mean *ilāʾ*", his statement will be accepted, provided that he swears to that effect. This is not the same as the case of a person who is known to speak and understand a non-Arabic language. Similarly, if a non-Arabic speaker uses an Arabic expression *ilāʾ* and is known to understand Arabic, his claim of "I did not mean *ilāʾ*" will not be accepted in court. However, the situation is different between this person and God; he is responsible in the eyes of God for what he intends in his heart.¹¹⁹

After reporting al-Shāfiʿī's opinion, al-Māwardī supported his view and elaborates on how the case of an Arab making an *ilāʾ* declaration in an *ʿajamī* language should be categorized into three scenarios:¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Al-Shāfiʿī, *al-Umm*, 5/292.

¹¹⁸ Al-Shāfiʿī, *al-Umm*, 5/291-292.

¹¹⁹ Al-Shāfiʿī, *al-Umm*, 5/292.

¹²⁰ Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 10/406.

1. If the Arab individual knows and speaks the foreign language and then makes an *ilā'* declaration in that language, it is deemed equivalent to making the declaration in Arabic. This is because *ilā'* is not specific to any language, and everything other than the Qur'ān may be expressed in languages other than Arabic. However, if this individual claims, "I did not intend *ilā'* by using that foreign expression", it is treated the same as if he had made the same claim after using the Arabic term. Therefore, such a statement is not accepted *ẓāhir^{an}* (legally in court), i.e., in the court's judgment, and the person remains religiously accountable for what he has uttered.

2. If the Arab individual knows the foreign language but does not normally speak it and yet makes an *ilā'* statement in that language, he is still considered to have made a valid *ilā'*. However, if he claims, "I did not intend *ilā'* by that expression", this statement is also not accepted *ẓāhir^{an}*. Nonetheless, it may be accepted *bāṭin^{an}* (in a religious sense), since the fact that he does not habitually speak the language introduces the possibility that he is telling the truth. Thus, his statement may be religiously credible.

3. If the Arab individual does not understand the foreign language and makes an *ilā'* statement in that language, he is asked whether he intended *ilā'* by that statement. If he replies, "Yes, I intended *ilā'* with that expression", then the *ilā'* ruling is established by this confession. However, if he says, "No, I do not know what I said and I did not intend *ilā'*", then his claim is accepted only if supported by an oath. This is because, *ẓāhir^{an}*, he appears to be telling the truth, although the possibility of lying still exists, necessitating an oath. In this case, the individual is not considered liable for *ilā'* – neither legally (*ẓāhir^{an}*) nor religiously (*bāṭin^{an}*). If he refuses to swear the oath, the obligation passes to the wife. If the wife swears, the ruling of *ilā'* is established. If she too refuses, then no *ilā'* ruling is confirmed. Al-Māwardī notes that when a non-Arab performs *ilā'* in Arabic, the evaluation follows the same three scenarios mentioned above, as in the case of an Arab using a foreign language.¹²¹

After reporting al-Shāfi'ī's statements on the matter, al-Juwaynī added that if a non-Arab who has a good command of Arabic performs *ilā'* using the Arabic language, he is to be evaluated in the same way

¹²¹ Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr*, 10/406.

as an Arab. However, if the non-Arab individual claims not to have understood the meaning of the word he uttered and the contextual evidence indicates that he is lying, he is to be regarded as dishonest, and his claim is legally dismissed. On the other hand, if there is doubt as to whether he understood the word he used, then his statement is considered provided that it is accompanied by an oath. Similarly, if an Arab uses a non-Arabic language, the same rulings apply as previously mentioned. This principle is applicable in all cases where a person speaks in a language other than his own.¹²²

Conclusion

This study examined the use of non-Arabic languages in family law within the Shāfiʿī madhhab and explored the validity of legal acts carried out in such languages. Legal debates, especially regarding the permissibility of using non-Arabic languages in *nikāḥ* and *ṭalāq*, underscore the central role of Arabic as the foundational language of Islamic jurisprudence in the Shāfiʿī madhhab. The characterization of Arabic as the “language of the Sharīʿah” within the Shāfiʿī madhhab necessitates a deeper inquiry into the role of other languages in legal processes.

The discussion concerning which language may be used in family law is also closely connected to wider debates on the use of Qurʾānic translations in legal reasoning. In particular, the question of whether it is permissible to use a translation of the Qurʾān during prayer constitutes an important background to this issue. Since the Shāfiʿīs categorically reject the use of Qurʾānic translations in *ṣalāḥ*, some jurists have raised the question of whether this approach should likewise apply to Qurʾānic expressions used in the marriage contract. Thus, another key point in the debate concerns whether the principle that prohibits the use of translations in acts of worship should also be extended to the terminology employed in family law. This issue is fundamentally rooted in the view that, within matters of family law, the *ʿibādāt* dimension prevails over the *muʿāmalāt* dimension. Some Shāfiʿī jurists, considering the *ʿibādāt* aspect of the marriage contract to be predominant, required that Qurʾān-derived terms such as *inkāḥ* and *tazwīj* be expressed exclusively in Arabic. This stance parallels the

¹²² Al-Juwaynī, *Nibāyat al-maṭlab*, 14/462.

broader assumption that the original language of acts of worship is Arabic.

The classification of marriage-related rulings as *ta'abbudī* entails the adoption of the wording prescribed by the *sharʿ* exactly as it stands. The fact that these prescribed formulae are in Arabic has given rise to the problem of whether their translations may be used. The Shāfiʿīs, asserting that the expressions employed in marriage contracts are determined by the *sharʿ* and that no alternative wording—even if in Arabic—may be substituted, have, in effect, opted to adhere to the ritualistic dimension of matrimonial matters. At this point, they have prioritized strict adherence to the *naṣṣ* to which they refer. However, the majority within the school accepted that translations of the Arabic expressions specified by the texts could also be used, thereby overcoming what could otherwise be viewed as a legal deadlock. Nevertheless, the broader Shāfiʿī madhhab reveals a generally more flexible stance toward the use of non-Arabic languages in family law. In light of this, it is reasonable to conclude that Shāfiʿī jurists tend to regard the *muʿāmalāt* dimension of *nikāḥ* as more dominant than its *ʿibādāt* dimension. In this way, despite the privileged status of Arabic—the language of the *naṣṣ* in legal discourse—the Shāfiʿīs have doctrinally endorsed the principle of multilingualism in family law by considering the practical and functional requirements of legal practice. Moreover, al-Shāfiʿī's reliance on Qurʾānic terminology in determining valid formulae for *nikāḥ* and *ṭalāq* suggests that he regarded the Qurʾān not only as a source of legal rulings but also as a reference in the application of law. Given that Arabic is the language of the Qurʾān, it thus assumes a functional role in the implementation of legal acts. Consequently, debates concerning the permissibility of using languages other than Arabic in family law arise, particularly regarding the formulae required for *nikāḥ* and *ṭalāq*.

Three principal positions emerge within the Shāfiʿī madhhab in this context: (1) that *nikāḥ* and *ṭalāq* are only valid when expressed in Arabic using explicit formulae; (2) that Arabic must be used by those who are capable of speaking it, but non-Arabic languages are permissible for those who are not; and (3) that legal formulae are valid in other languages, regardless of one's knowledge of Arabic. These divergent views reveal both rigid literalist and flexible approaches within the Shāfiʿī madhhab. However, the third view appears to be the

predominant and authoritative position, indicating a general acceptance of multilingualism in matters of *nikāḥ* and *ṭalāq*.

This principle of multilingualism also manifests in other areas of family law, such as *rijʿah*, *khulʿ*, *qadhf*, and *ilāʾ*. A further critical area is *liʿān*, which arises when a husband accuses his wife of adultery. Since the Qurʾān specifies the exact wording to be used in *liʿān*, debates have emerged regarding whether non-Arabic formulations are acceptable. While some argue that Arabs should only perform *liʿān* in Arabic and that non-Arabs proficient in Arabic should also do so, the dominant opinion affirms that non-Arabs may perform *liʿān* in their native language, regardless of their Arabic proficiency.

The fact that expressions used by non-Arabs in legal transactions such as *nikāḥ*, *ṭalāq*, and *ilāʾ* are treated as translations of the Arabic equivalents underscores the privileged status of Arabic within the legal discourse. Nevertheless, the operational effectiveness of the law necessitates the inclusion of multiple linguistic realities. Accordingly, the Shāfiʿī madhhab recognizes the principle of multilingualism in family law as a matter of legal doctrine. This recognition reveals a rich body of juristic reasoning that seeks to balance the central role of Arabic in Islamic jurisprudence with the linguistic and social diversity of Muslim communities.

In conclusion, al-Shāfiʿī's flexible stance –accepting the performance of family law transactions by non-Arabs in their native languages– challenges the characterization of him as a rigid literalist or Arab nationalist and calls for a more nuanced understanding of his legal thought.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

FUNDING

The author received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abd Wahid, Najihah - Yunus, Anas Mohd - Abdullah, Nor Hafizah. "The Contributions of Imam Shafi'i in Arabic Language and Literature". *The Social Sciences* 11/5 (2016), 547-550.
- Abū Dāwūd, Sulaymān ibn al-Ash'ath al-Azdī al-Sijistānī. *Sunan Abi Dāwūd*. ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūṭ - Muḥammad Kāmil Qarah Balli. 7 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Risālah al-ʿĀlamiyyah, 2009.
- Afacan, Hülya - Güman, Osman. "er-Risāle'de Şāfi'ye Göre Kur'ân'ın Arabîliği". *Sakarya Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 24/46 (2022), 485-503. <https://doi.org/10.17335/sakaifd.1153858>
- Aslan, Mehmet Selim. *İslâm Aile Hukuku*. Bursa: Emin Yayınları, 2017.
- Aktan, Hamza. "Kazf". *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*. 25/148-149. Ankara: TDV Yayınları, 2022.
- Atar, Fahrettin. "Muhālea". *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*. 30/397-401. Ankara: TDV Yayınları, 2020.
- Aybakan, Bilal. "Şāfi Mezhebi". *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*. 38/233-247. İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2010.
- Aybakan, Bilal. "Fürü' Fıkıh Sistematiği Üzerine". *Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 31 (2006/2), 5-32. <https://doi.org/10.15370/muifd.48746>
- Aydın, Mehmet Âkif. "Liân". *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*. 27/172-173. Ankara: TDV Yayınları, 2003.
- al-Bakrī, Abū Bakr 'Uthmān ibn Muḥammad. *I'ānat al-ṭālibin 'alā ḥall alfāz Fath al-Mu'ın*. ed. Yāsir al-Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azīz. 5 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 2021.
- Bahri, Andi Syamsul. "Legal Status of the Li'an Children Recognition: Comparison of The Mazhab Malikiyah and the Compilation of Islamic Law". *Jurnal Mabkamab: Kajian Ilmu Hukum dan Hukum Islam* 7/1 (2022), 67-78. <https://doi.org/10.25217/jm.v7i1.2381>
- Bellefonds, Y. Linant de. "Hiba". *Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition Online (EI-2 English)*. Date Accessed 4 July 2025. <https://referenceworks.brill.com/display/entries/EIEO/COM-0283.xml>
- Bedir, Fatma Nur. "Native or Liturgical Language in Prayers: A Field Research on This Debate". *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi* 10/3 (2020), 2494-2514. <https://doi.org/10.15869/itobiad.916748>
- Boulaouali, Tijani. "Quran Translation: A Historical-Theological Exploration". *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 19 (2021), 120-132. <https://doi.org/10.24035/ijit.19.2021.202>
- Çiçek, Kemal. "Interpreters of the Court in the Ottoman Empire as seen from the Sharia Court Records of Cyprus". *Islamic Law and Society* 9/1 (2002), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156851902753649252>
- Loṭfī, 'Abd al-Riḍā - Fard, 'Alī Moṭāḥhari. "Māhiyyat-i Fiqhī wa-Ḥuqūqī-yi Tarjumah dar Umūr-i Qaḍā'ī". *Guftimān-i Ḥuqūq-i Islāmī-yi Mu'āşir* 2/3 (2024), 149-172.

- Döndüren, Hamdi. “Îlâ”. *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*. 22/61-62. İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2000.
- al-Ḥiṣnī, Taqī al-Dīn. *Kifāyat al-akhyār fī ḥall Ghāyat al-ikbtisār*. ed. ‘Alī ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Balṭajī - Muḥammad Wahbī Sulaymān. Damascus: Dār al-Khayr, 1994.
- al-‘Imrānī, Yaḥyā ibn Abī l-Khayr. *al-Bayān fī madbbab al-Imām al-Shāfiʿī*. ed. Qāsim Muḥammad al-Nūrī. 13 vols. Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2000.
- al-Juwaynī, Imām al-Ḥaramayn. *Nibāyat al-maṭlab fī dirāyat al-madbbab*. ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīm Maḥmūd al-Dīb. 20 vols. Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2007.
- al-Kāsānī, ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Abū Bakr ibn Mas‘ūd. *Badā’i’ al-ṣanā’i’ fī tartīb al-sharā’i’*. ed. ‘Alī Muḥammad Mu‘awwaḍ - ‘Ādil Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Mawjūd. 10 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2003.
- Kooria, Mahmood. “Words of ‘ajam in the World of Arab: Translation and Translator in Early Islamic Judicial Procedure”. *Justice and Leadership in Early Islamic Courts*. ed. Intisar A. Rabb - Abigail Krasner Balbale. 71-90. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018.
- Karaismailoğlu, Adnan. “Acem”. *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*. 1/321. İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1988.
- Keleş, Ahmet. “Anadilde İbadet”. *Sosyal Bilimler Araştırma Dergisi* 1/1 (March 2003), 87-113.
- Keri, Ismail. “The Concept of Ta’abbudi and Ta’aqquli in Islamic Law”. *al-Bayyinah* 5/2 (December 2021), 214-226.
<https://doi.org/10.35673/al-bayyinah.v5i2.1992>
- Kıral, Bilgen. “Nitel Bir Veri Analizi Yöntemi Olarak Doküman Analizi”. *Siirt Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 8/15 (2020), 170-189.
- al-Qalyūbī, Aḥmad Salāmah. *Ḥāshiyatā Qalyūbī wa-l-‘Umayrah*. 4 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995.
- Lowry, Joseph E. “The Legal Hermeneutics of al-Shāfiʿī and Ibn Qutayba: A Reconsideration”. *Islamic Law and Society* 11/1 (2004), 1-41.
- Lowry, Joseph E. *Early Islamic Legal Theory: The Risāla of Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2007.
- al-Māwardī, Abū l-Ḥasan. *al-Ḥāwī l-kabīr fī fiqh madbbab al-Imām al-Shāfiʿī wa-buwa sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Muzanī*. ed. ‘Alī Muḥammad Mu‘awwaḍ - ‘Ādil Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Mawjūd. 19 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1999.
- Narin, İsmail - Özdaş, Haşim. “Talâkta Ric’at Bağlamında Kur’ân-ı Kerim’de Belirtilen İlkeler”. *Tokat İlmîyat Dergisi* 8/2 (December 2020), 681-706.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4399268>
- al-Nawawī, Abū Zakariyyā. *Rawḍat al-tālibīn wa-‘umdat al-muṭtīn*. ed. Zuhayr al-Shāwīsh. 12 vols. Beirut - Damascus - Amman: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1991.
- Okur, Kâşif Hamdi. “Yesevî Muhibbi Bir Hanefî Fakîh: Sıgnâkî’nin İbadet Dili Anlayışı”. *Geçmişten Geleceğe Hoca Ahmed Yesevî Uluslararası Sempozyumu*. ed. Ömer Kul et al. 2/700-707. İstanbul: Şenyıldız Yayıncılık, 2016.

- Okur, Kâşif Hamdi. "Serahsî'nin Referans Kaynağı Olarak Kur'ân'a Bakışı ve İbadet Dili Anlayışı". *Hitit Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 11/22 (2012), 211-227. <https://doi.org/10.14395/jdiv38>
- Okur, Kâşif Hamdi. "Temel Fıkıh Kaynaklarına Göre İbadetin Dili". *Dinî Araştırmalar* 1/3 (1999), 171-203.
- al-Râfi'î, 'Abd al-Karîm ibn Muḥammad al-Qazwînî. *al-'Azîz sharḥ al-Wajîz (al-Sharḥ al-kabîr)*. ed. 'Alî Muḥammad Mu'awwaḍ - 'Ādil Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawjūd. 13 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1997.
- al-Rüyânî, 'Abd al-Wāḥid ibn Ismā'îl. *Baḥr al-madbbab fî furû' madbbab al-Shāfi'î*. ed. Tāriq Fathî al-Sayyid. 14 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2009.
- al-Shāfi'î, Muḥammad ibn Idrîs. *al-Risālah*. ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir. Cairo: Maktabat Dār al-Turāth, 2005.
- al-Shāfi'î, Muḥammad ibn Idrîs. *al-Umm*. ed. Muḥammad Zuhri al-Najjār. 8 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1990.
- al-Shirāzî, Abū Ishāq. *al-Muḥadḍab fî fiqh al-Imām al-Shāfi'î*. ed. Zakariyyā 'Umayrāt. 3 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1995.
- al-Shirbînî, al-Khaṭīb. *Mughnî l-muḥtāj ilā ma'rifat ma'ānî alfāz al-Minbāj*. ed. 'Alî Muḥammad Mu'awwaḍ - 'Ādil Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawjūd. 7 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1994.
- Tan, Oğuzhan. "Translating The Sacred: Islamic Law, Ottoman Readership, and Two Examples of a Transitional Genre". *İlahiyat Studies* 15/2 (December 2024), 201-231. <https://doi.org/10.12730/is.1458921>
- The Qur'an*. trans. M. A. S. Abdelhaleem. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Yaşar, Hakime Reyyan. "*Aqd al-Nikāḥ*: Explaining the Nexus Between Marriage and Contract in Islamic Law". *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 63/1 (May 2022), 157-184. <https://doi.org/10.33227/auifd.975753>
- Yiğit, Metin. "İmam Şafii'de Arapça Vurgusu ve Lafız-Mana Dengesi". *Uluslararası İmam Şafii Sempozyumu*. ed. Mehmet Bilen. 803-835. İstanbul: Kent Işıkları, 2012.

CONTEMPLATION IN TWO MUSLIM COUNTRIES: A COMPARATIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY IN TÜRKİYE AND BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Esra İrk

Pamukkale University,

Denizli-Türkiye

eirk@pau.edu.tr

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0607-9210>

&

Ümran Erkorkmaz Çoban

Ministry of National Education

Afyonkarahisar-Türkiye

umranerkorkmaz81@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2980-8180>

Elif Çağlayan

Bursa-Türkiye

elifcaglayan5@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-0379-773X>

&

Armin Jasarevic

Elci Ibrahim Pasina Medresa,

Travnik, Bosnia-Herzegovina

jasarevic.armin@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0387-0001-1500-7032>

Abstract

This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of the perceptions of contemplation among Muslim participants in Türkiye and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this study, which employed a basic qualitative research design, the semi-structured interview technique was used. The obtained data were analyzed through content analysis using the

İlahiyat Studies

e-ISSN: 1309-1719

Volume 17 Number 1 Winter/Spring 2026

DOI: 10.12730/is.1750805

Article Type: Research Article

Received: July 25, 2025 | *Accepted:* June 22, 2026 | *Published:* June 30, 2026

To cite this article: İrk, Esra - Erkorkmaz Çoban, Ümran - Çağlayan, Elif - Jasarevic, Armin. "Contemplation in Two Muslim Countries: A Comparative Qualitative Study in Türkiye and Bosnia-Herzegovina". *İlahiyat Studies* 17/1 (2026), 125-164.
<https://doi.org/10.12730/is.1750805>

This work is licensed under *Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International*.

NVivo 15 software. The study included a total of 26 participants –15 women and 11 men– aged between 25 and 40 years, living in Türkiye and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The participants were selected using the criterion sampling technique, one of the purposeful sampling methods. The findings indicate that in both countries, contemplation (*tafakkur*) is perceived not only as a mental activity but also as a multilayered process encompassing existential and religious dimensions. While Turkish participants predominantly associated contemplation with positive emotions, those from Bosnia and Herzegovina reported experiencing both positive and negative emotions simultaneously during the process. It was determined that in both cultures, contemplation increased individual awareness, strengthened psychological resilience, and contributed to meaning-making processes. Furthermore, it was understood that this thinking practice supports spiritual well-being and is viewed as an important part of religious life. The research findings reveal that despite cultural differences, contemplation essentially has a constructive and transformative function.

Key Words: Psychology of religion, contemplation, well-being, Türkiye, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Introduction

Thinking, as one of humankind's most fundamental and essential activities, is considered a process of transition from darkness to light, enabling one to penetrate the truth of things. Thinking is not limited to numerical or methodical techniques; in contrast, it refers to the effort to grasp beings along with their essential properties, interrelationships, and dimensions of meaning. In this context, contemplation and imagination, thinking and dreaming, and conception and remembrance become intertwined; in other words, the process of thinking presents a multilayered integrity with its cognitive, intuitive, and spiritual aspects.¹

Deeply rooted in various religious and philosophical traditions, contemplation refers to a conscious and deliberate process of introspection that allows an individual to delve into the depths of their thoughts and experiences.² This process contributes to a person's

¹ İbrahim Kalın, *Açık Ufuk - İyi, Doğru ve Güzel Düşünmek Üzerine* (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2024), 34-36.

² Khusnul Khotimah et al., "Tafakkur on Malik Badri's View", *Tasfiyah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 7/2 (2023), 321-322.

ability to make sense of their existence, guide their life, and gain the strength to cope with the challenges.³ It supports the individual in being endowed with good intentions and developing the will to put these intentions into practice at the behavioral level.⁴ This allows the individual to build a more meaningful and conscious relationship with themselves, their environment, and the transcendent being.

The Qurʾān encourages the individual to think and points out that thinking is an important human effort in reaching the truth.⁵ Indeed, the notion of contemplation, along with its synonyms, appears directly or indirectly in approximately five hundred verses. This frequency of the use of the word “contemplate” reveals that almost one in ten Qurʾānic verses refers to the act of thinking and that this act can be considered a form of servitude and worship.⁶ However, contemplation and contemplative practices have become a subject of research that has attracted the interest of different disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, neuroscience, and physics.⁷ Therefore, the dimensions of contemplation that intersect with these disciplines necessitate addressing it at the individual and societal levels. Accordingly, it can be argued that contemplation research conducted through interdisciplinary approaches has considerable potential to contribute to both theoretical and applied fields.

A systematic examination of the concept of contemplation allows for the development of more holistic approaches to the religious/spiritual and psychological needs of the individual. However, a review of the existing literature reveals that field research on contemplation is quite limited.⁸ While contemplation is considered

³ Hümeýra Nazlı Tan - Mualla Yıldız, “Manevi İyi Oluş Kavramının Ortaya Çıkışı ve Tanımlanması”, *Dini Araştırmalar* 25/63 (2022), 471.

⁴ Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb fī muʿāmalat al-mahbūb wa-waṣfīyati al-murīd ilā maqām al-tawhīd* (Cairo: Maktabat Dār al-Turāth, 2001), 1/39.

⁵ İbrahim Sağlam, “Hadislerde Hz. Peygamber’in Yalnızlık Tecrübesi ve Hakikat Arayışı”, *Amasya İlahiyat Dergisi* 20 (2023), 195.

⁶ Nihat Keklik, *Türk-İslam Felsefesi Açısından Felsefenin Temel İlkeleri* (Ankara: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1996), 189.

⁷ William van Gordon et al., “Contemplative Psychology: History, Key Assumptions, and Future Directions”, *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 17/1 (2022), 99.

⁸ See Gülvade Köroğlu, *Tefekkürün Manevi İyi Oluşla İlişkisi (Yetişkinler Üzerine Bir Araştırma)* (Ankara: Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University, Social Sciences Institute, Master's Thesis, 2024); Nisanur Akkaya Efe, *Hümeze Sûresi Bağlamında Tüketim Çılgınlığıyla Başa Çıkma Ölümlü Tefekkürünün Etkisi* (Kocaeli: Kocaeli University, Social Sciences Institute, Master's Thesis, 2024); Mustafa Taha Şen,

with various variables in the Western literature, it can be argued that this concept has received insufficient attention in the domestic literature. This study aims to examine how individuals from two different cultures perceive the concept of contemplation and to explore the religious and psychological implications of these perceptions from a cross-cultural perspective. It can be claimed that this study has a unique value, as it is one of the few studies examining the perception of contemplation at a cross-cultural level.

1. The Concept of Contemplation

Originating from the Arabic root *f-k-r*, the term idea means “a faculty that directs knowledge toward the known”. The concept of contemplation, on the other hand, is the movement of this faculty in accordance with an intellectual perspective.⁹ To put it differently, while thought/ideation is a state of intellectual imagination inherent in every human being, the notion of contemplation is the movement of this power among the things that pass through the mind in accordance with the commands of the mind.¹⁰ The mental process that begins with stimulation from the external world continues to take shape in the individual’s internal world through the activity of neurons. In this context, there is a two-way and dynamic interaction between the external and internal worlds of a person. One mechanism that facilitates this interaction is the act of contemplation. The concept of contemplation is the process of processing the stimuli an individual experiences in the external world and making sense of them in their internal world. The meaning generated in this process creates cognitive power for the individual’s emotions and behaviors.¹¹

The notion of contemplation, often supported by symbolic objects or verbal content, involves high-level cognitive processes such as deep thinking, detailed analysis, the effort to reach the truth,¹² generating new ideas, questioning existing ones, comparing these ideas to

Tefekkür Etme Eğilimi ile Akademik Başarı Arasındaki İlişki (İstanbul: İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, Social Sciences Institute, Master’s Thesis, 2024).

⁹ Abū l-Qāsim al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Mufradāt fī gharīb al-Qur’ān*, ed. Muḥammad Khalil ‘Itānī (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifah, 2010), 386.

¹⁰ Abū l-Qāsim al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Dbārī‘ah ilā makārim al-sharī‘ah*, ed. Abū l-Yazīd Abū Zayd al-‘Ajmī (Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 2007), 150.

¹¹ Koroğlu, *Tefekkürün Manevi İyi Oluşla İlişkisi*, 3.

¹² Halil Apaydın, *Din Psikolojisi Terimler Sözlüğü* (İstanbul: Bilimkent Yayınları, 2016), 188.

construct new ones, and critically evaluating the validity of newly formed ideas.¹³ Taken together, these findings suggest that contemplation is a dynamic process that enables individuals to form mental representations, establish meaningful connections between existing information, and reach new conclusions through these connections.

2. Contemplation in the Islamic Tradition

In religious terminology, the concept of contemplation is defined as the process of trying to understand texts containing divine commands, transferring these meanings to the individual's inner world, and integrating them in his life.¹⁴ In the Qur'ān, it is used to refer to reasoning about God's word, objects, events, and occurrences, reaching a conclusion, learning a lesson, and striving to grasp the truth beyond appearances.¹⁵ Verses¹⁶ related to the notion of contemplation emphasize the deep connection between thought and worship and the awareness of servitude. These verses express the ability of a person to strengthen their faith by using their ability to think and the ability to give depth and meaning to their thoughts through faith.¹⁷ In philosophical traditions, contemplation as a concept is generally regarded as a reason-centered process; in Islamic literature, it is considered heart centered.¹⁸

Although contemplation appears as a mental act in the present moment, it is in fact a process that transcends time, encompassing the past, present, and future. The future-oriented dimension of this process is explained by the concept of *tadabbur*, which refers to the

¹³ Faruk Karaca, "Günümüzde Dinî Tefekkürün Yüzleştiği Temel Problemler", *Diyanet İlmî Dergi* 54/4 (2018), 108.

¹⁴ Apaydın, *Din Psikolojisi Terimler Sözlüğü*, 189.

¹⁵ Öznur Özdoğan, "İnsana Manevi-Psikolojik Yaklaşım", *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 49/2 (2008), 89.

¹⁶ The Qur'ānic verses concerning contemplation are as follows: Q 2/44; Q 3/190-193; Q 51/20-21; Q 47/24; Q 38/29; Q 50/36-37.

¹⁷ Kalın, *Açık Ufuk*, 132.

¹⁸ İbrahim Akgün, "Kur'an Perspektifinde Tefekkür ve Vasıtaları", *İğdır Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 1 (2013), 58; 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-Ta'rifāt*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī (Cairo: Dār al-Rayyān li-l-Turāth, 1983), 88; Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī al-Ṭūsī, *Kīmīyā-yi Sa'adat*, ed. Ḥusayn Khidīw Jam (Tehran: Sharikat-i Intishārāt-i 'Ilmī wa-Farhangī, 1961), 1/269. Süleyman Uludağ, *Tasavvuf Terimleri Sözlüğü* (İstanbul: Marifet Yayınları, 1991), 476.

individual's capacity for foresight and precaution, whereas the past-oriented dimension is explained by the concept of *tadbakkur*, which includes the individual's functions of remembering, commemorating, and learning lessons.¹⁹ Contemplation is also directly related to the concept of *dhikr*, which holds a central place in religious tradition. *Dhikr*, meaning advice and recommendation, is considered a form of contemplation.²⁰

Khwājah Yūsuf al-Hamadānī (d. 535/1140) explains the relationship between these two concepts using the metaphors of a tree and water and a tree and fruit. *Dhikr* is like the water that enables the tree to grow and develop; contemplation is like the ripe fruit that emerges at the end of this process.²¹ Another concept related to contemplation, *the naẓar*, means to look, but it refers not to a passive action but to an active process of perception.²² As such, these concepts, which serve as extensions or complements of contemplation, illuminate the complex interconnections and multidimensional nature of contemplative practice.

From a religious perspective, the fundamental subjects of contemplation are the relationships between God and the universe, the universe and humanity, and God and humanity.²³ While contemplation is praised in the ḥadīths, it is also stated that this act has certain limits. This limit is contemplating the essence of God. For the limited human mind cannot comprehend the essence of God. Therefore, it has been stated that one should refrain from contemplating in this area.²⁴

In the Islamic intellectual tradition, contemplation is examined within the framework of the relationship between existence, knowledge, and responsibility. Through contemplation, an individual's effort to comprehend the relationship between God, the universe, and humanity on a cognitive level lays the groundwork for

¹⁹ Karaca, "Günümüzde Dinî Tefekkürün Yüzleştiği Temel Problemler", 108.

²⁰ Yaşar Yiğit, "Var Oluşu Anlama ve Anlamlandırma Zemini: Tefekkür", *Diyanet Aylık Dergi* 241 (2011), 11.

²¹ Khwājah Yūsuf al-Hamadānī, *Rutbat al-bayāh*, ed. Muḥammad Amīn Riyāhī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Ṭūs, 1983), 49.

²² Kalın, *Açık Ufuk*, 34.

²³ İlhan Kutluer, "Düşünme", *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 1994), 10/53.

²⁴ Ethem Cebecioğlu, "Her Hayrın Anahtarı Tefekkür", *Diyanet Aylık Dergi* 241 (2011), 6.

understanding their existential purpose. This process of understanding both deepens the individual's search for meaning in their own existence and the universe and imposes moral and religious responsibilities upon them. In this respect, contemplation serves as a tool of awareness that shapes an individual's behavior and motivates them to fulfill the obligations of human existence.²⁵

The intricate placement of verses in the Qur'ān that invite contemplation and verses that exhort behavior according to moral principles is a reflection of the deep connection between thought and action.²⁶ Indeed, the ḥadīth, "A moment of contemplation is better than a year of worship",²⁷ emphasizes that contemplation is a process that restrains the individual from evil and leads them to goodness, contentment, piety, and truth (guidance).²⁸ From a Sufi perspective, the concept of contemplation is more than just a process of deep thinking; it is a practice aimed at the transformation of the self. Through the influence of contemplation, the individual's will and orientation lead to transformation.²⁹

The concept of contemplation is an inner process of enlightenment that enables an individual to make moral judgments, discerning right from wrong and benefit from harm.³⁰ This process prepares the ground for the individual to internalize the intentions, attitudes, and behaviors necessary for a virtuous life.³¹ Thus, it facilitates controlling the channels that weaken moral values. While Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 751/1350) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) viewed contemplation as a process leading to *ma'rifat Allāh* (knowledge of God),³² Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) stated that knowledge is

²⁵ Kemal Sözen, "Din-Tefekkür İlişkisi", *Diyanet İlmi Dergi* 54/4 (2018), 88.

²⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 2001), 103.

²⁷ Abū Bakr 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad Ibn Abī Shaybah, *al-Kitāb al-muṣannaf fī l-aḥādīth wa-l-āthār*, ed. Kamāl Yūsuf al-Ḥūt (Beirut: Dār al-Tāj, 1989), 7/190 (no. 35223).

²⁸ Abū l-ʿAlāʾ al-ʿAfīfī, *al-Taṣawwuf: al-Thawrah al-rūḥiyyah fī l-Islām* (Cairo: Muʾassasat al-Hindāwī, 2020), 225.

²⁹ Ayten - Düzgüner, *Tasavvuf Psikolojisine Giriş*, 95.

³⁰ Al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-Taʿrifāt*, 88; Sözen, "Din-Tefekkür İlişkisi", 92.

³¹ Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1/40.

³² Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *al-Fawāʾid*, ed. ʿIṣām al-Dīn al-Ṣabābiṭī (Cairo: Dār al-Aḥādīth, 1994), 251-252; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Fakhr al-Rāzī al-musammā bi-l-Tafsīr al-kabīr aw Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), 2/95.

a natural result of contemplation. According to al-Ghazālī, contemplation is similar to the sparks produced by the striking of stone and iron. These sparks generate an illumination in the heart, guiding the individual away from worldly desires and toward transcendent realities.³³

Contemplation, as a subjective experience, can be considered a practice that deepens an individual's faith, supports their pursuit of truth, and strengthens their moral consistency. By enhancing spiritual awareness, contemplation facilitates a transition toward a goal-oriented and value-centered life. It serves as a powerful religious and spiritual mobilizing force against moral weaknesses. Thus, it contributes to guiding individuals toward a responsible and conscious life, both internally and socially.

3. The Psychological Dimension of Contemplation

The concept of contemplation and related practices are regarded as applications that enhance an individual's awareness, support well-being, and alleviate suffering.³⁴ From a philosophical perspective, the notion of contemplation is viewed not merely as a method of acquiring knowledge but also as a therapeutic process with the potential to alleviate an individual's existential suffering. In this respect, contemplation is considered an effective method that facilitates the attainment of inner peace.³⁵ Contemplation contributes to the individual's structuring and transformation of the meaning of their life in both micro (personal) and macro (cosmic-existential) dimensions.³⁶ By enabling lessons to be drawn from negative experiences, it guides the individual on which attitudes to adopt, which behaviors to avoid, and how to take precautions against adverse situations. In this way, the individual gains the ability to mobilize both internal resources and

³³ Al-Ghazālī, *Kīmīyā-yi Sa'ādat*, 2/505.

³⁴ Sebastian Medeiros et al., "Contemplation of Nature to Promote Mental Health and Prevent Depression in Youth", *Prevention and Early Treatment of Depression Through the Life Course*, ed. Vania Martínez - Claudia Miranda Castillo (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2023), 76.

³⁵ Jason Costanzo, "On the Therapeutic Value of Contemplation", *International Journal of Philosophical Practice* 7/1 (2021), 86.

³⁶ Garnik V. Akopov, "Contemplation: The Ratio of Conscious and Unconscious", *Psychological Applications and Trends*, ed. Clara Pracana - Michael Wang (Lisboa: Science Press, 2021), 50.

external assets.³⁷ Contemplation also contributes to the development of a better understanding and patient personality. For example, individuals who previously had an indecisive and anxious disposition can achieve a calmer and more peaceful state of mind through these practices, whereas individuals with stubborn and rigid attitudes can develop a more open-minded and empathetic personality.³⁸

Contemplation produces two primary categorical outcomes at the emotional and cognitive levels. At the emotional level, it elicits strong emotional responses such as wonder, amazement, helplessness, fear, admiration, respect, and love. At the cognitive level, it enables the individual to perceive previously overlooked aspects concerning both the self and the surrounding environment. Thus, contemplation deepens feelings of admiration, love, and devotion toward God while simultaneously increasing cognitive awareness of the self and relational and environmental contexts.³⁹ Individuals who remain distant from contemplative practice may experience a gradual weakening of emotions such as love, compassion, and mercy. In contrast, those who consistently engage in contemplation live in a state of continuous gratitude toward God and perceive the environment as a divine trust and gift. This perspective fosters a more sensitive, protective, and responsible attitude toward nature. Consequently, contemplation can also be regarded as a powerful practice that directs individuals toward ecological awareness.⁴⁰

An individual who develops their rational capacity through contemplation gains the opportunity to strengthen their willpower and maintain emotional balance.⁴¹ This is because contemplation and *dhikr* function similarly to the immune system in regulating evil thoughts by maintaining mental and spiritual balance.⁴² It also contributes to the

³⁷ Malik Badri, *Contemplation: An Islamic Psychospiritual Study* (London: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2018), 28, 34.

³⁸ A. Fatoni - Deni Lesmana, "The Concept of Zikr and Tafakkur-Based Education in Improving the Morality of the Nation", *Journal of Islamic Education* 3/1 (2021), 36.

³⁹ Karaca, "Günümüzde Dinî Tefekkürün Yüzleştiği Temel Problemler", 110.

⁴⁰ Mat Akhir, Noor Shakirah - Sabjan, Muhammad Azizana, "Tafakkur as the Spiritual Mechanism for Environment Conservation", *Journal of Religious & Theological Information* 14/1-2 (2015), 11.

⁴¹ Turgay Şirin, *Manevi Danışmanlıkta İhsan Modeli* (İstanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları, 2018), 179.

⁴² Badri, *Contemplation*, 28.

development of stress-coping skills.⁴³ Throughout this process, competencies such as awareness acquisition, cognitive control, self-regulation, and self-management are reinforced, which may facilitate the individual's cognitive change processes.⁴⁴

The process of contemplation can be considered a form of self-therapy that occurs spontaneously. This process, which works through the individual's internal resources without external intervention or a structured therapeutic environment, is a natural healing process.⁴⁵ The inner maturation observed in psychotherapy processes can occur simultaneously with contemplation. Especially in mood disorders, the development of contemplative capacity after the resolution of acute symptoms can play a significant role in helping an individual gain insight, which, consequently, reduces the frequency of seizures.⁴⁶ Contemplation also plays an important role in spiritual counseling. Within this therapeutic process, attention is given to the individual's existing resources, previous coping patterns, and the universal nature of problems, especially when the individual is experiencing hopelessness, helplessness, and pessimism. Nonfunctional thought patterns are taught to be replaced by more functional ones. In this respect, contemplation is similar to cognitive-behavioral therapeutic approaches. Through contemplative thinking, negative thought patterns with religious content can be replaced with positive ones.⁴⁷ This process allows individuals to gain holistic awareness and develop a more resilient attitude toward stressful life events.

4. Method

4.1. Purpose of the Research

The aim of this study is to examine individuals' perceptions of contemplation in Türkiye and Bosnia and Herzegovina and to present a comparative analysis of participants' contemplative experiences in both countries.

⁴³ Muharrem Aka, "Zihinsel Yankıların İki Yüzü: Tefekkür ve Ruminasyon Arasındaki Çizgi", *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi* 13/5 (2024), 2229.

⁴⁴ Orhan Gürsu, "Nöropsikoloji, Din ve Psikolojik İyi Oluş", *Journal of International Social Research* 10/53 (2017), 508.

⁴⁵ Akopov, "Contemplation", 50.

⁴⁶ Mustafa Merter, *Psikolojinin Üçüncü Boyutu: Nefis Psikolojisi ve Rüyalarmın Dili* (İstanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları, 2014), 238.

⁴⁷ Şirin, *Manevi Danışmanlıkta İhsan Modeli*, 182.

The research questions are as follows:

1. How do participants in both countries explain the concept of contemplation?
2. What are the subjects of contemplation in each country?
3. What emotions emerge as a result of the contemplation experience in both countries?
4. According to participants in both countries, what functions does contemplation serve?

4.2. Research Model

This study is based on a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research refers to studies in which perceptions and phenomena are examined in their natural settings in a realistic and holistic manner.⁴⁸ Basic qualitative research is among the most common types of qualitative inquiry, aiming to understand how individuals make meaning of their lived experiences.⁴⁹ This approach aims to reveal how individuals conceptualize their experiences, the meaning frameworks through which they construct their lived worlds, and the meanings they attribute to these experiences.⁵⁰ Accordingly, the study was designed within the framework of a basic qualitative research design.

4.3. Participant Selection

This research was conducted with participants living in Türkiye and Bosnia and Herzegovina who shared their experiences related to contemplation. The inclusion of participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina was based on the rationale that while the two countries share certain religious and cultural similarities, they differ in terms of their sociocultural and historical contexts. This distinction is expected to provide a comparative perspective on how contemplation is interpreted across two different cultural settings. In this study, participants were selected using criterion sampling, which is a purposive sampling method. The criteria determined in criterion sampling enable access to the most relevant responses to the research

⁴⁸ Ali Yıldırım - Hasan Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri* (Ankara: Seçkin Yayıncılık, 2021), 37.

⁴⁹ Sharan B. Merriam - Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc Pub, 2016), 42.

⁵⁰ Merriam - Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 24.

questions.⁵¹ In addition, care was taken to include individuals from both countries, who represented diverse educational levels, professions, and age groups. The inclusion criteria for participation were defined as follows: (1) familiarity with the concept of contemplation; (2) being between 25 and 40 years of age; (3) being willing to articulate personal experiences related to contemplation; and (4) having lived continuously in the respective country from the past to the present. Individuals who reported having no experience with contemplation were not included in the study.

The study group consists of a total of 26 participants, including 14 from Türkiye and 12 from Bosnia and Herzegovina, all of whom identify themselves as Muslims. Adults between the ages of 25 and 40 were included in the study on the basis of the assumption that this age group possesses the necessary maturity to experience and interpret contemplative practice. During this period, individuals typically encounter various responsibilities, such as professional life, marriage, family formation, and child-rearing. Moreover, increasing age and life experiences enable individuals to engage in self-reflection, conduct a broader evaluation of life, and attain greater depth in their spiritual lives.⁵² Therefore, it is believed that this age group can adequately reflect the concept of contemplation on the basis of both their personal and social experiences. The demographic characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Participants.

Category	Participants from Türkiye		Participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina	
	F	%	F	%
Sex				
Female	8	57,2	7	58,3
Male	6	42,8	5	41,7
Age				
25-34	8	57,2	1	8,3
35-40	6	42,8	11	91,7
Education level				
High school	-	-	2	16,7

⁵¹ Ahmet Saban - Ali Ersoy, *Eğitimde Nitel Araştırma Desenleri* (Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık, 2017), 109.

⁵² Hayati Hökelekli, *Din Psikolojisi* (Ankara: TDV Yayınları, 2008), 283.

Undergraduate	9	64,3	9	75,0
Graduate	5	35,7	1	8,3
Occupation				
Education sector	3	21,4	5	41,7
Healthcare sector	3	21,4	1	8,3
Religious services	1	7,2	1	8,3
Office and administrative services	2	14,3	2	16,7
Engineering and technical fields	3	21,4	-	-
Service sector	2	14,3	2	25,0

4.4. Data Collection

The data collection process for this study was conducted upon the completion of necessary planning procedures and the receipt of ethical approval. This approval was obtained from the Uludağ University Social and Humanities Research and Publication Ethics Committee (Decision No: 57). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted face-to-face, online, and via telephone between February and April 2025. During the development of the interview questions, the opinions of three academics –two specialists in the psychology of religion and one in Islamic philosophy– were consulted. Attention was given to ensure that the questions were clear, comprehensible, and aligned with the research objectives. To obtain more in-depth data from the participants, in addition to the preprepared main questions, follow-up questions were posed on the basis of the participants' responses. Prior to finalizing the interview questions, pilot interviews were conducted with two participants from Türkiye and two from Bosnia and Herzegovina who met the predetermined criteria. On the basis of the data obtained from these pilot interviews, necessary adjustments and modifications were made to the questions.

During the interviews, the participants were asked a total of 10 questions, including 4 closed-ended demographic questions and 6 open-ended research questions. The interviews lasted approximately 30-35 minutes in Türkiye and 25-30 minutes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the data collection process, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and participation was

entirely voluntary. The semistructured interview form included questions aimed at determining demographic characteristics such as age, education level, and occupation, as well as the following questions designed to explore participants' experiences of contemplation:

1. What does contemplation mean to you?
2. How often do you engage in contemplation?
3. Which emotions do you experience while contemplating?
4. What topics do you usually reflect on during contemplation?
5. What are the effects of contemplation on your daily life? Could you explain both positive and negative effects?
6. Is contemplation important in your life? If so, could you explain why it is important?

The interviews were conducted face-to-face, by telephone, or via online platforms in both countries. This variety provided flexibility in the data collection process while being carefully planned so as not to compromise the reliability of the data. To ensure data protection and analysis, interviews were recorded with participants' permission. Participants' names were not disclosed; when presenting direct quotations, each participant was identified by a sequential number, sex (Female: F, Male: M), and country abbreviation (Türkiye: T, Bosnia and Herzegovina: BH). When presenting the codes in the tables, the frequency (f) was considered.

4.5. Data Analysis

In a basic qualitative research design, a purposive sampling approach is typically employed. The data are collected through interviews and documents. The analysis process is conducted using inductive and comparative logic. The findings are presented in the form of themes and categories, accompanied by detailed descriptions.⁵³ Accordingly, the data obtained through the interviews were analyzed using the content analysis method. The primary aim of content analysis is to reveal implicit meanings that may not be immediately apparent.⁵⁴ To enable a systematic analysis of the data,

⁵³ Merriam-Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 42.

⁵⁴ Osman Metin - Şükriye Ünal, "İçerik Analizi Tekniği: İletişim Bilimlerinde ve Sosyolojide Doktora Tezlerinde Kullanımı", *Anadolu Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 22/Özel Sayı 2 (2022), 276.

the stages of content analysis were conducted comprehensively and in detail.

First, the interview form was linguistically and culturally adapted for the Bosnia and Herzegovina participant group by a Bosniak researcher.⁵⁵ The form was subsequently back-translated into Turkish. With respect to the Bosnian equivalent of the concept of contemplation, expert opinion was obtained from an academic specializing in theology, and alternative expressions with high comprehensibility for the general public were identified. Since there is no single word in Bosnia and Herzegovina that fully corresponds to the concept of contemplation, the expression most appropriate for the context was chosen from options conveying meanings such as “deep thinking”, “internal reflection”, or “mental focus on a subject”.

Three criteria guided this selection: conceptual closeness, cultural comprehensibility, and natural usage of the term. Additionally, before starting the interviews, the definition of contemplation was provided to participants in a way that did not lead or influence their responses. This preliminary information aimed to prevent conceptual misunderstandings and to establish a common understanding, allowing participants to express their views freely. After the interviews were completed in both countries, the audio recordings were fully transcribed. Interviews that were brief, inconsistent, or unsuitable for analysis were excluded from evaluation.

The entire analysis process was conducted using Turkish texts. During the translation of Bosnian data into Turkish, particular attention was given to preserving semantic integrity. This approach allowed the coding process to be carried out in a single language, thereby aiming to enhance coherence between themes and the reliability of the analysis.

In the next stage, all the data were imported into NVivo 15 for analysis. NVivo 15 facilitated the coding of data, the development of preliminary themes through hierarchical relationships among codes, the finalization of themes, and the verification and updating of code-theme alignment. After the data were imported into NVivo 15, the texts

⁵⁵ The researcher is proficient in both Turkish and Bosnian and completed undergraduate and graduate education in Türkiye. This expertise enhanced the reliability of the translation and cultural adaptation process.

were carefully and repeatedly read, and participants' statements were coded according to their content similarities and differences. The resulting codes were then classified under themes and subthemes, taking semantic integrity into account.

4.6. Validity and Reliability

The researchers validated the interpretation of the data with participants during the interviews and obtained their confirmation.⁵⁶ To ensure credibility (internal validity), data were collected by two researchers, while all stages of the research process were continuously and critically reviewed by the entire research team. Data analysis was conducted carefully through ongoing exchanges of perspectives. Additionally, the codes, themes, and findings obtained were shared with experts in the field of the psychology of religion, and necessary revisions were made accordingly.⁵⁷ In this study, detailed information about the participants and the research process is provided to ensure transferability (external validity).⁵⁸ Furthermore, to ensure confirmability (external reliability), all the data related to the research process were retained.⁵⁹

To increase the reliability of the analysis process, approximately four weeks later, the same data were recoded by the coder, who was blinded to the initial coding, and the resulting codes were compared with the initial codes. Following the comparison, necessary revisions were made with the approval of all the researchers, thereby ensuring the consistency of the data analysis. To determine coding reliability, all the data were simultaneously and independently coded by a second researcher with expertise in the psychology of religion.

In the literature, the repetition of codes and the emergence of sufficient codes and themes are considered key indicators of data saturation.⁶⁰ In this study, it was observed that the generation of new codes decreased from the eleventh interview in the Türkiye group and from the tenth interview in the Bosnia and Herzegovina groups during the data analysis process. It was determined that the codes generated after this stage were insufficient to form a distinct theme.

⁵⁶ Saban - Ersoy, *Eğitimde Nitel Araştırma Desenleri*, 125.

⁵⁷ Yıldırım - Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*, 282.

⁵⁸ Yıldırım - Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*, 283.

⁵⁹ Yıldırım - Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*, 285-286.

⁶⁰ Sinan Akçay - Esra Koca, "Nitel Araştırmalarda Veri Doygunluğu", *Anadolu Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 24/3 (2024), 841.

5. Findings

This study, on the basis of the views of participants residing in Türkiye and Bosnia and Herzegovina, identified six subthemes under the overarching theme of “Conceptual Foundations and Experiential Manifestations of Contemplation”. The resulting codes and themes are shared in the tables below. To capture the essence of the themes and enhance understanding, participant statements from both countries that exemplify each theme are presented below each table.

Table 2. Participant Statements on the Frequency of Contemplation

Frequency of Contemplation	Türkiye (f/%)	Bosnia and Herzegovina (f/%)
Several times a week	3 (21,4%)	4 (33,3%)
Every day	8 (57,2%)	8 (66,7%)
Occasionally	3 (21,4%)	-

The frequency of contemplation was coded as “several times a week”, “every day”, and “occasionally”. Participants’ statements were generally brief phrases. Those who engaged in contemplation several times a week typically preferred to practice on specific days or during their leisure time. A large proportion of participants in Türkiye reported engaging in daily contemplation, and daily practice was similarly common among participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina. These findings suggest that contemplation remains a vibrant and sustained practice in both societies.

Theme	Code	Working Groups	
		Türkiye (f/%)	Bosnia and Herzegovina (f/%)
Definition of the Concept of Contemplation	Going beyond the visible and attaining divine consciousness	3 (21,4%)	3 (25,0%)
	The effort to understand	2 (14,2%)	7 (58,3%)
	Deep thinking	3 (21,4%)	5 (41,6%)
	Wonder-inspired thinking	1 (7,1%)	-
	Reflection through awareness of God's power	5 (35,8%)	2 (16,6%)

Table 3. Codes Related to the Theme of Defining the Concept of Contemplation

This theme is derived from participants' perspectives on how they make sense of contemplation. Table 3 demonstrates that the meanings ascribed to contemplation are constructed within psychological and religious frameworks.

Exemplar statements related to this theme from the Türkiye group are presented below: One participant emphasized the pursuit of divine consciousness and the effort to attain truth, stating the following:

Contemplation involves striving to perceive the inner meaning behind reality –not merely what is visible but the latent significance beneath it. It is an attempt to understand by lifting the veil of appearances and reaching toward the essence and truth of existence; this, I believe, constitutes the foundation of contemplation. (T-F2)

Contemplation was described as a state in which emotion and a sense of admiration are intertwined. One participant articulated how this process begins with wonder and emotional intensity:

We refer to contemplation as thinking, but in my view, it is more about astonishment and wonder. When encountering something magnificent –even something seemingly small– it involves feeling admiration in response to its beauty, grandeur, and sublimity. This can occur during moments of great happiness as well as during times of sorrow. In fact, during sorrowful moments, when the heart becomes more tender, it is about fully opening oneself to God and asking, “What am I meant to learn from this?” (T-F8)

Within the Türkiye group, contemplation was articulated as a process of moving from the material to the spiritual, pointing toward divine awareness:

I believe contemplation is the direction of thought toward God. That is, by reflecting on something material –whether it be a mountain, a stream, or contemplating death in a cemetery– it becomes a process of moving from matter to meaning. I think of it more as a leap from the physical to the metaphysical. (T-M14)

In the Bosnia and Herzegovina group, contemplation was mostly defined as a mental and conscious process:

Contemplation is an intensely focused effort and cognitive process aimed at understanding the deeper meaning and

truth of something. It goes far beyond superficial thinking, seeking to penetrate the essence of things and uncover their genuine meaning. Contemplation is a process that helps individuals attain inner clarity, connect with higher purposes, and develop genuine awareness of their thoughts and actions. (BH-M7)

A participant from Bosnia and Herzegovina stated that contemplation is closely intertwined with an existential quest and religious awareness:

Contemplation involves reflecting on the purpose of life. It is about maintaining a continuous connection with God. This represents one dimension of contemplation: the individual considers the purpose of their life and the reason for their existence, asking, "Why am I here?" You are here to serve God, and subsequently, your duties in this world follow. All of this is considered part of the contemplative process. (BH-F8)

Another notable emphasis within the Bosnia and Herzegovina group is the perception of contemplation as a circular journey, one without a clear beginning or end:

Contemplation is an ongoing state of analysis. It involves continuously revisiting the past, scrutinizing experiences, and searching for their underlying reasons. Subsequently, thoughts turn toward God, existence, and the unseen, intuited, and ineffable metaphysical reality. Altogether, it resembles a journey-one without a beginning or an end. It is as if we are silently and profoundly moving within the same circle, endlessly revolving. (BH-F3)

Overall, participants in both groups described contemplation not only as a cognitive process but also as an inner search and a state of spiritual awareness. In the Türkiye group, the code "Reflecting Through Awareness of God's Power" was more prominent, whereas in the Bosnia and Herzegovina group, the codes "Deep Reflection" and "Effort to Understand" were emphasized more strongly. In both groups, contemplation was defined as an effort by the individual to move beyond the superficial and establish contact with truth and divine consciousness.

Table 4. Codes Related to the Theme of Topics of Contemplation

Theme	Code	Working groups	
		Türkiye (f/%)	Bosnia and Herzegovina (f/%)
Topics of Contemplation	The relationship between natural phenomena and divine justice	1 (7,1%)	-
	Natural beauty	4 (28,5%)	-
	The lives of the Prophet and the Companions	1 (7,1%)	-
	Challenging life events and the search for solutions	5 (35,7%)	1 (8,3%)
	Underlying wisdom of events	4 (28,5%)	1 (8,3%)
	Death	1 (7,1%)	2 (16,6%)
	Creation	-	1 (8,3%)
	The afterlife	-	5 (41,6%)
	Self-enquiry	-	10 (83,3%)
	The purpose of existence	-	1 (8,3%)

The codes that make up the theme of contemplated topics are shown in Table 4. These codes reveal the themes that participants focused on during the contemplative process. A participant from Türkiye expressed this situation as follows:

When I experience negative events, I engage in contemplation. That is, I think about the reasons and causes behind them. Contemplation allows individuals to perceive events from different perspectives. However, when positive events occur, I am also concerned with their underlying truth – particularly their dimension related to the afterlife. (T-F13)

Moreover, although limited in number, it is observed that participants in the Türkiye group also tended to contemplate issues such as death, natural phenomena, and divine justice:

Death and the blessings bestowed by God come to my mind. (T-M10)

In the Bosnia and Herzegovina group, existential themes such as death, the afterlife, and creation were more frequently contemplated during the process of contemplation. In addition, self-enquiry emerged as the most frequently expressed code within this group. Statements from several participants clearly illustrate this situation:

In my opinion, something needs to happen in order to trigger such deep contemplation. For example, the war in Gaza right now. I cannot say that I am angry with myself, but this sense of helplessness is very exhausting. Then, I start to think: What is the meaning of all this? Do I deserve this? After all, I am also a Muslim, just like them. How is it possible that I can possess all the blessings of this world? Because, personally, that is how I feel—we are alive, we are healthy, and we are together. When events like this occur, such as what is happening in Gaza, they lead me into deep contemplation. Then, I begin to analyze the situation more thoroughly. (BH-F6)

What a person thinks about most is this: ‘Have I done enough of the right things?’ That is, could what you have done become a form of salvation in the future, could it hold meaning? Did you come into this world with a purpose, or are you merely someone moving from point A to point B? Every day, at the end of the day, one asks oneself: What did I do today? Why am I here? And when you think that you did not do something well, there is a gnawing feeling of regret – “I wish I had done it differently”. One feels an inner urge to say, “I wish I could correct this; it should not have been this way.” (BH-M5)

Similarly, another participant addressed creation, the afterlife, and self-enquiry together:

In general, I contemplate God’s creative power the most. After that, I contemplate how prepared I am for the next life. I contemplate why I am doing this work and the meaning behind it. (...) Many times, I have asked myself questions about my job – whether it is the right work, whether I should continue, or whether I should go to work at all. Even today, I continue to ask myself these questions. (BH-F2)

On the basis of these statements, fundamental concepts such as purpose, wisdom, cause, and meaning –embedded in questions of “why” and “for what reason”– can be considered integral components of the process of contemplation. On the other hand, it is observed that the concept of the afterlife shapes everyday preferences and decision-making:

Of course, a person first thinks about daily tasks and life itself, but then the thoughts shift toward deeper issues. While we are occupied with worldly affairs and difficulties, questions about the ultimate purpose of our existence and the meaning of life remain in the background. What awaits us after death? How should we understand life, blessings, and our purpose of creation in this world? Contemplation helps us not to forget these fundamental realities and questions, as it reminds us that the ultimate purpose of life is far greater than mere daily concerns. (BH-M7)

Overall, the findings indicate that participants in the Türkiye group tended to contemplate primarily natural beauty, challenging life events, and the search for meaning, whereas participants in the Bosnia and Herzegovina group focused more on self-enquiry and metaphysical issues. This suggests that the content of contemplation varies according to cultural and socioreligious contexts.

Table 5. Codes Related to the Theme Emotions Elicited by Contemplation

Theme	Code	Working groups	
		Türkiye (f/%)	Bosnia and Herzegovina (f/%)
Emotions Elicited by Contemplation	Sense of limitation	4 (28,5%)	-
	Fear	1 (7,1%)	4 (33,3%)
	Embarrassment	1 (7,1%)	1 (8,3%)
	Feeling of divine nearness	6 (42,8%)	5 (41,6%)
	Trust and surrender	2 (14,2%)	2 (16,6%)
	Hope	2 (14,2%)	8 (66,6%)
	Peace and relaxation	7 (50%)	10 (83,3%)
	Humility and reverence	1 (7,1%)	-
	Mental confusion	-	2 (16,6%)
	Anxiety and restlessness	-	4 (33,3%)
	Regrets	-	1 (8,3%)

As a result of the analysis of participants' responses from both societies, the theme "Emotions Elicited by Contemplation" emerged. Under this theme, the emotions expressed were largely positive, although some negative emotions were also reported. The statements of participants from Türkiye indicate that contemplation generally

reinforces feelings of peace, relaxation, and a sense of divine closeness. However, some participants also reported experiencing emotions such as a sense of limitation, deficiency, and embarrassment during contemplation.

Some statements of the Turkish participants related to this theme are as follows:

Fear-whatever the reason-leads a person toward gratitude. By this fear, I do not mean the fear of death. This fear refers to the fear of losing what one has, the fear of losing a loved one. (T- M10)

Most of all, I feel incomplete; I feel that I am limited. (T-F7)
Generally, there is a sense of relief along with sadness. This trust, the effort a person makes to maintain their connection with the Creator, also makes me happy in a way. It feels like not entirely distancing oneself from the situation, still being able to do something, still striving for something. Because when a person ignores or fails to contemplate a situation, they may drift further away from it. Contemplation leads to the strengthening and sustaining of one's connection with God. (T-F5)

I feel very happy when I contemplate. This is not because of reaching God, but because I am able to comprehend Him, to perceive Him in that moment. One feels peaceful, and of course, there is a sense of satisfaction from having drawn closer to God. (T-F11)

Among participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, mental confusion, and regret were expressed. However, these emotions emerged alongside a strong sense of hope and peace. In this respect, hope functions as a coping resource and a spiritual lens for the individual during the process of contemplation.

Sometimes this causes stress, sometimes restlessness, sometimes peace, sometimes morale-depending on the situation. If I experience something positive, I usually have positive emotions. However, when I do something wrong, I start to question myself and sometimes feel fear. The thought of God's mercy and the awareness that I am a believer comforts me. (BH-F11)

During the process of contemplation, the feeling of gratitude predominates. I am thankful to God for everything I have in my life, but sometimes I also feel a sense of fear, wondering whether my gratitude is sufficient. Afterward, I feel love – the love for God the Creator. This process purifies the heart and strengthens one's devotion to the Lord. (BH-F9)

For example, hope is a state of expectation. It is not just that. Sometimes joy is also involved. When you sincerely wish for something, you carry hope along with that wish, and a bit of joy comes with that hope. But, overall, I can say that the dominant emotions are expectation and some mental confusion. (BH-F3)

One of the positive effects is that I feel better after contemplating the purpose and meaning of life. However, sometimes I also feel a bit weak or deficient, thinking “I missed this, I neglected that”. These thoughts affect me. (BH-M8)

In light of these statements, it can be suggested that in Türkiye participants, contemplation primarily fosters balancing and soothing emotions such as peace, hope, and trust and a sense of divine closeness. Among Bosnian participants, although some negative emotions are present, these emotions appear to be internally regulated and balanced through hope and a sense of peace. This difference may be related to the distinct cultural and historical backgrounds of the two Muslim communities.

Table 6. Subthemes and Their Corresponding Codes Related to the Theme “The Effects of Contemplation”

Theme	Sub-themes	Working Groups	
The Effects of Contemplation	Psychological Effects	Türkiye (f/%)	Bosnia and Herzegovina (f/%)
		Opportunity to make sense of experiences	3 (21,4%) 2 (16,6%)
		Increasing psychological resilience	1 (7,1%) 3 (25,0%)
		Strengthening the inclination towards correct behaviors	5 (35,7%) 10 (83,3%)
		Developing positive problem-solving strategies	2 (14,2%) 1 (8,3%)
		Mental tranquility	1 (7,1%) 2 (16,6%)
		Hope for the transience of difficulties	1 (7,1%) 2 (16,6%)
		Distancing oneself from feelings of loneliness	3 (21,4%) -
		World devaluation	3 (21,4%) -
		Mental fatigue	- 1 (8,3%)
		Perceived as absent-minded and thoughtful	2 (14,2%) -
	Religious Effects	The maintenance of spiritual awareness	4 (28,5%) 6 (50%)
		Feeling God's power and support	1 (7,14%) 2 (16,6%)

The theme of the effects of contemplation examines the impact of contemplation on individuals' mental, emotional, and spiritual processes within the framework of two subthemes: “Psychological Effects” and “Religious Effects”. The findings obtained from participants in Türkiye and Bosnia and Herzegovina are presented in Table 6.

Within the theme “Psychological Effects”, contemplation is observed to provide individuals with various psychological benefits while occasionally also giving rise to certain negative experiences. A comparison of the data from Türkiye and Bosnia and Herzegovina

reveals that, in both countries, contemplation prominently serves functions such as making sense of experiences, enhancing psychological resilience, and strengthening orientation toward appropriate behavior. In particular, the code related to orientation toward appropriate behavior was strongly emphasized in both groups. In this respect, contemplation can be described as a factor that nurtures individuals' self-control and moral self-evaluation processes. Among the findings specific to the Türkiye group, codes such as distancing oneself from feelings of loneliness, developing positive coping strategies, and devaluing the world stand out.

The participants' statements reflected this situation as follows:

I do not think contemplation has any negative effects. Its positive effect is that it gives individuals the opportunity to think and to evaluate events more effectively. (T-F1)

Through contemplation, a person re-educates themselves and learns from their mistakes. If someone comes up to you and says, "What you did was great, keep it up" this motivates you and helps you become even better. But, if you have done something wrong, contemplation makes you reflect and directs you toward change. You learn to look at events from a different perspective, and then you say to yourself, "I should not do this anymore". (BH-M1)

At the end of the day, I sometimes feel anxious about the things I have done. Questions such as "Could I have done better?" come to my mind. However, I then tell myself, "Okay, God is merciful". With this thought, I try to develop a positive perspective toward every situation I experience. (BH-F2)

I think I cannot live without contemplation because I would feel very lonely. That's why-I mean, as I said, I cannot imagine myself without contemplation. Whenever I am alone, I engage in contemplation. (T-M12)

One participant stated that contemplation may lead to mental fatigue, while another noted that during contemplation, an individual's distracted and inner-looking appearance may be misinterpreted within the social environment, describing this as a potential negative outcome.

In my opinion, the negative effect of contemplation is that it puts a person into an overly thoughtful state. This can be misunderstood by others. For example, they may think, "They are thinking too much; are they ill-intentioned or are they thinking something bad about me?" Whereas you are actually thinking about something entirely different. This could be considered a negative effect. On the positive side, because contemplation encourages thinking, it helps a person find a rational solution. God has given human beings reason, and through this reason –that is, through contemplation– a person can find the right way out. (T-M4)

The effects of contemplation on daily life can be both positive and negative. On the positive side, it enables individuals to constantly question themselves, to evaluate how good or lacking they are, and to strive to become a better person. This provides inner development and awareness. However, when this self-questioning becomes excessive, it can lead to mental exhaustion. Continuously occupying oneself with questions such as "Did I do the right thing?" or "Did I say something wrong?" can make it difficult to relax and to live in the present moment. (BH-F10)

If contemplation leads to a way of thinking that excessively neglects this world, it may result in a person failing to take their share of worldly life. If it gives too much space to notions of nothingness or the meaninglessness of the world, this could be considered a negative aspect. However, this is not directly related to contemplation itself; rather, it stems from an incorrect attitude adopted in the process of contemplation. (T-M14)

According to the participants' statements, contemplation contributes to individuals' ability to make sense of negative experiences in their lives; however, when this process is interpreted incorrectly, it may weaken individuals' ties to worldly responsibilities and expectations. This situation indicates that a certain balance is required for the practice of contemplation to be sustained in a healthy manner. Accordingly, the code "Devaluation of the World" included in the analysis is addressed as a reflection of potential negative outcomes

that may arise from individual orientations within the process of contemplation.

Within the theme “Religious Effects”, of contemplation, the codes “Maintenance of Spiritual Awareness” and “Feeling God’s Power and Support” are included. Participants from both countries indicated that contemplation plays a renewing and sustaining role in spiritual awareness. In particular, among the Bosnia and Herzegovina group, spiritual awareness was associated with contemplation in a more continuous and broader context. Participant statements related to this theme are presented below:

Whenever you start thinking deeply about something, your consciousness begins to take you somewhere. For example, you tell yourself: “You were born, then you died, then you will be resurrected, and then you will never die again”. Thoughts like these come up; sometimes they may seem absurd, but they make you reflect. Someone must have created this entire order. (...) You wonder: “How did this happen? Where did it come from? Where are we going?” These thoughts are generally positive. (BH-M5)

The existence of God comforts me. Why? Because in every situation, I feel that I am with Him, that I am together with Him. I believe that, ultimately, God will provide me with a way out. In fact, you should not trust yourself too much; you should trust God. When you rely on yourself, you can make mistakes. Let me put it this way: I see this as a grace from God. (T-M12)

When the findings are considered holistically, contemplation appears to be experienced both as an awareness practice that supports psychological well-being and as a state of consciousness that reinforces spiritual orientation. Participants’ evaluations of everyday life events and reflections on existential questions indicate that contemplation is a multidimensional process that reconstructs individuals’ personal and religious meaning frameworks.

Table 7. Codes Related to the Theme the Importance of Contemplation

Theme	Code	Working groups	
		Türkiye (f/%)	Bosnia and Herzegovina (f/%)
Importance of Contemplation	Key to understanding experiences	3 (21,4%)	3 (25,0%)
	Basis for self-evaluation	2 (14,2%)	7 (58,3%)
	Supporting life satisfaction	2 (14,2%)	1 (8,3%)
	Strengthening the connection with God	6 (42,2%)	4 (33,3%)
	Essence of religion	9 (64,2%)	8 (66,6%)
	Finding life purpose	-	2 (16,6%)

This theme reflects participants' views on why contemplation is considered important in both societies. Rather than focusing on the specific benefits they gain, participants sought to explain why this practice is valuable and indispensable. In both societies, contemplation was perceived as the essence of religion and evaluated as a central element. However, the distribution of codes reveals differences between the societies. For example, the perception of contemplation as a basis for self-evaluation was more prominently emphasized by participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, whereas the strengthening of the connection with God was mentioned more frequently by participants from Türkiye. Additionally, statements regarding contemplation's function in finding life purpose were reported only by participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina. In both societies, contemplation was observed to play an important role in making sense of experiences and was directly linked to life satisfaction. The participants' statements clearly support this meaning:

In my life, contemplation probably encompasses all the small steps I take toward self-knowledge – the things I read, see, and learn, often through trial and error. The most important matter is that a person must first know themselves, and the greatest way to achieve this is through contemplation. I can say that contemplation holds a significant place in my life. (T-M9)

I believe that contemplation should not only be considered important, but it should be obligatory for every believer.

When you contemplate, you understand your essence and the truth, and when you relate it to God's signs, you grow closer to your Lord. Contemplation leads a person to understand themselves, grasp their essence, and perceive reality. But, to live without contemplation is like being a robot; the days just pass, but none of it has meaning. In this way, a person becomes trapped in a constant routine. Within that routine, the ability to grow closer to and understand God is lost. (BH-F9)

Contemplation helps us understand ourselves and our surroundings, make correct decisions, and live more consciously. Becoming aware of ourselves, questioning the meaning of our actions, and approaching others with empathy enables us to take better steps in life. (...) In short, contemplation is an important tool both for my personal development and for being able to exhibit a more conscious and respectful attitude toward others. (BH-F10)

Conclusion

In this study, six subthemes were identified under the overarching theme "Conceptual Foundations and Experiential Manifestations of Contemplation", which are examined in detail below.

The research findings revealed that participants in both Türkiye and Bosnia and Herzegovina define contemplation beyond a purely cognitive process within a multilayered field of meaning encompassing existential and religious dimensions. In both countries, contemplation is fundamentally regarded as a practice of deep thinking, with the perception of meaning beyond the apparent being central to the process. However, some differences in emphasis between the two countries are notable. Participants from Türkiye primarily define contemplation in terms of recognizing and wondering about God's power, whereas participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina approach it as a journey associated with inner deepening and existential inquiry. In this context, the tendency of participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina to perceive contemplation on a more existential plane can be considered a distinguishing characteristic.

The existing literature also supports this multidimensional approach. A significant portion of participants in Read's study defined

contemplation as deep thinking – a serious and prolonged cognitive engagement;⁶¹ Akopov's research associated contemplation with the concepts of "immersion in oneself" ("in their own world", "withdrawal into oneself", "being in your world", "experiencing in yourself", etc. 42%), "a state of calm" ("humility", "pleasure", "unity with the world", etc. 46%), and "pensiveness" (12%).⁶² In the study by Mamat and colleagues, contemplation was found to be a practice that enables individuals to perceive the wisdom behind events and to move away from superficial thinking.⁶³ From this perspective, the present study demonstrates that contemplation is a multidimensional concept both as a process of meaning-making and as a form of spiritual awareness. Consistent with the literature, the findings highlight the ontological and cognitive dimensions of contemplation. Moreover, cultural differences between the Türkiye and Bosnia and Herzegovina groups are reflected in the ways in which the concept is understood. In this sense, contemplation can be considered an experience shaped by cultural context but essentially performs similar functions across different societies.

The data indicate that contemplation differs thematically between the two countries. In the Türkiye group, contemplation was primarily directed toward nature, natural beauty, and external events and was shaped through concrete experiences. This aligns with the Qur'ānic calls to "contemplate the creation of the heavens and the earth", which appear repeatedly, reflecting the place of nature-focused contemplation in religious texts.⁶⁴ In the Bosnia and Herzegovina group, contemplation was approached primarily within the framework of metaphysical aspects, inner inquiry, and belief in the afterlife. This orientation can be linked culturally and historically to experiences of war and to Sufi heritage. Nevertheless, these areas of contemplation do not appear to lead Bosnian participants toward pessimism; in contrast, they seem to foster awareness and processes of inner transformation.

⁶¹ Dan R. Read, *Thinking Deeply in College: An Inquiry into Contemplation Amongst Undergraduate Students* (Indiana: Taylor University, Master of Arts in Higher Education (MAHE) Theses, 2019), 20.

⁶² Akopov, "Contemplation", 48.

⁶³ Akila Mamat et al., "Literature Review on Concept of Tafakkur in Islamic Mysticism", *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 9/4 (2019), 52.

⁶⁴ Q 3/190-191; Q 10/5; Q 11/7; Q 44/29.

This approach parallels the function of death awareness highlighted in various studies, which is understood to deepen and enrich life.⁶⁵

In the Sufi tradition, the phenomenon of death has also been employed as a systematic and effective method for advancing religious and spiritual development. In particular, practices such as remembrance of death (*tadhakkur al-mawt*) and contemplation of death (*tafakkur al-mawt*) play integral roles in the training of the self (*nafs*). The search for meaning is likewise considered one of the fundamental drives in human life.⁶⁶ The search for answers to these questions involves individuals facing the religious and spiritual domains, influenced both by personal discovery and by enculturation and social learning. Even as a purely cognitive activity, the effort to uncover the meaning of life requires a high level of concentration. From this perspective, the endeavor to make sense of life –a strong religious motivation– can be considered an important process that elevates the level of awareness necessary for human development.⁶⁷

One notable finding of the study is that the emotions experienced during the process of contemplation vary culturally. In the Türkiye group, contemplation was predominantly associated with positive emotions such as divine closeness, relaxation, and hope. In contrast, participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina expressed contemplation in terms of negative emotions, including fear, anxiety, restlessness, regret, and mental confusion. However, these negative emotions appeared to be balanced by positive feelings such as hope and peace. Compared with the Turkish participants, the more intense expression of negative emotions among the Bosnian participants is a particularly striking finding of the study. Indeed, Read noted that contemplation can give rise to emotions such as fear, anxiety, and restlessness, as excessive thinking and analytical tendencies may transform contemplation into a negative experience.⁶⁸ This difference can be explained by the fact that contemplation involves confronting the

⁶⁵ Robert Frager, *Heart, Self, & Soul: The Sufi Psychology of Growth, Balance, and Harmony* (Wheaton, Ill.: Theosophical Publishing House, 1999), 248; Irvin D. Yalom, *Existential Psychotherapy* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 30; Erol Göka, *Psikoloji Varoluş Maneviyat* (İstanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2021), 136.

⁶⁶ Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1992), 105.

⁶⁷ Faruk Karaca, *Dini Gelişim Psikolojisi* (Trabzon: Eser Ofset Matbaacılık, 2016), 167.

⁶⁸ Read, *Thinking Deeply in College*, 33.

unknown and engaging in existential inquiry. Thought processes that focus on metaphysical themes such as death, meaning, and the afterlife may generate emotional tension in some individuals.

On the other hand, the concept of awe, which emerges as a notable finding in our study, highlights the emotional richness of the contemplation process. Awe can be considered a fundamental religious emotion that reflects the emotional depth of contemplation, encompassing both admiration and a sense of unease.⁶⁹ According to Stebbins, awe and enthrallment are emotional experiences that emerge as a result of processes related to contemplation and spirituality.⁷⁰ On this basis, it can be argued that contemplation generally allows constructive emotions to expand and deepen while diminishing the influence of destructive emotions.

The findings of the study indicate that contemplation leads to changes in areas such as awareness, emotional balance, meaning-making, and well-being for both Turkish and Bosnian participants. Indeed, findings that contemplative practices reduce stress levels,⁷¹ enhance mindfulness as well as subjective and psychological well-being,⁷² support the development of posttraumatic growth and psychological resilience,⁷³ and decrease negative emotions⁷⁴ are consistent with the results of this study. On the other hand, Özkul and Alpaslan reported that the primary source of motivation significantly affecting life satisfaction is the need to think and understand and that this motivation has a positive effect on life satisfaction.⁷⁵ These findings

⁶⁹ Esra İrk, "Huşû Deneyiminin Duygusal ve Psikolojik Boyutları", *Eskişehir Osmangazi Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 12/1 (2025), 266-270.

⁷⁰ Robert A. Stebbins, *Leisure and Positive Psychology: Linking Activities with Positiveness* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 71.

⁷¹ Tessa McGarrigle - Christine A. Walsh, "Mindfulness, Self-Care, and Wellness in Social Work: Effects of Contemplative Training", *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought* 30/3 (2011), 227-228.

⁷² Adam Hanley et al., "Associations Between Mindfulness, Psychological Well-Being, and Subjective Well-Being with Respect to Contemplative Practice", *Journal of Happiness Studies* 16/6 (2015), 1423-1436.

⁷³ Angelika Zuber-Aguirre, *The Lived Experience of Contemplating Purpose and Meaning in Life* (Minneapolis: Capella University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2016), 133.

⁷⁴ Jennifer M. Bach - Tharina Guse, "The Effect of Contemplation and Meditation on 'Great Compassion' on the Psychological Well-Being of Adolescents", *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 10/4 (2015), 363-365.

⁷⁵ Ahmet Sait Özkul - Ali Murat Alparslan, "Yaşam Doyumunu Artıran Motivasyon Kaynağı: Düşünme-Anlama İhtiyacı", *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi* 8/4 (2019), 3282.

support the meaning-making function of contemplation identified in the present study. However, in this research, cognitive gains such as increased concentration, attention regulation, focus, and mental clarity were not prominently emphasized. This may be explained by participants' tendency to associate contemplation more with emotional and psychological content.

In both countries, contemplation was described as a state of awareness that preserved spiritual vitality, fostered a connection with God, and deepened religious orientation. In K ro lu's study, positive and significant relationships were found between the level of contemplation and the subdimensions of spiritual well-being, whereas a negative relationship was observed between contemplation and the level of anomie.⁷⁶ These findings indicate that contemplation supports social adaptation and psychological balance. Alhabshi noted that the balanced practice of contemplation and action-based spiritual exercises during prolonged periods of crisis contributes to individuals' spiritual well-being and inner resilience.⁷⁷ Tamin noted that Qur'anic contemplation in counseling is effective in developing patience;⁷⁸ however, Thomas and Ibrahim emphasized that contemplation of the conceptual metaphors in the Qur'an is an effective therapeutic method that supports both psychological and spiritual well-being.⁷⁹

In Islamic spiritual counseling, contemplation is also considered an important technique that can enhance a client's ability to cope with difficulties.⁸⁰ Within  irin's religious counseling model, practices such as contemplation, repentance, and prayer were found to reduce students' levels of anxiety.⁸¹ Similarly, in Karakaş's model of inner

⁷⁶ K ro lu, *Tefekk r in Manevi İyi Olu la İli kisi*, 103-109.

⁷⁷ Sakinah Mohamad Alhabshi, *Spiritual Wellbeing and Resilience During a Prolonged Crisis: An Analysis and Integration of Contemplation-Based and Action-Based Practices from an Islamic Perspective* (California: Berkeley University, Degree of Master of Arts, 2022), 36-38.

⁷⁸ Daris Tamin, "Applying Qur'anic Contemplation in Counseling", *The International Journal of Counseling and Education* 1/1 (2016), 5-6.

⁷⁹ Nur Sakinah Thomas - Nur Jehaada Ibrahim, "The Effectiveness of Contemplation on Conceptual Metaphor in Cognitive Spiritual Therapy", *Revelation and Science* 12/1 (2022), 61-63.

⁸⁰ Muhammet  erif Keskin  lu - Halil Ek i, "Islamic Spiritual Counseling Techniques", *Spiritual Psychology and Counseling* 4/3 (2019), 345.

⁸¹ Turgay  irin, *Bili sel Davranı çı Psikoterapi Yakla ımıyla B t nle tirilmi  Dini Danı manlık Modeli* (Sakarya: Sakarya University, Institute of Social Sciences, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2013), 249.

peace, contemplation of death was found to enhance an individual's level of spirituality and facilitate coping with obsessive-compulsive disorder.⁸² These findings indicate that contemplation can be used as an effective technique in psychological counseling, in coping with crises, and in various therapeutic processes.

When all the findings are considered together, contemplation appears to be an experience that supports both psychological and spiritual well-being. Overall, contemplation has a predominantly positive character, strengthening an individual's self-awareness while also enhancing the ability to evaluate surrounding beings and events from multiple perspectives. In this way, it provides new directions for thought and serves as a protective framework against challenges experienced on different levels. In other words, contemplation facilitates renewal not only on a cognitive axis but also on a practical, action-oriented axis.

It is evident that participants in both societies placed strong emphasis on the importance of contemplation. The tendency to regard contemplation as a central component of religion was prominently expressed in both countries. This suggests that participants are aware of the place of contemplation in religious texts and recognize it as one of the key concepts in the Qur'ān.

This study highlights the perception of contemplation in two different cultures and its religious and psychological implications. However, the research has certain limitations. To increase the diversity of the findings, future studies should include samples from different age groups and individuals with diverse sociodemographic characteristics. Additionally, incorporating contemplation-based approaches into psychological counseling, spiritual counseling, and certain educational programs is expected to strengthen individuals' psychological resilience. Finally, studies could be conducted to examine the effects of recent war experiences on individuals' patterns of contemplation and emotional processes.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

⁸² Ahmet Canan Karakaş, "Manevi Danışmanlıkta İç Huzur Modelinin Obsesif Kompulsif Bozukluğa Etkisi (Vaka Örnekli)", *Birey, Toplum ve Din*, ed. Nevzat Gencer - Muammer Cengil (İstanbul: Çamlıca Yayınları, 2021), 127-128.

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

FUNDING

The author received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ‘Afifî, Abû l-‘Alâ’. *al-Taşawwuf: al-Thawrah al-rûhiyyah fî l-Islâm*. Cairo: Mu’assasat al-Hindâwî, 2020.
- Aka, Muharrem. “Zihinsel Yankıların İki Yüzü: Tefekkür ve Ruminasyon Arasındaki Çizgi”. *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi* 13/5 (2024), 2214-2236. <https://doi.org/10.15869/itobiad.1558869>
- Akçay, Sinan - Koca, Esra. “Nitel Araştırmalarda Veri Doygunluğu”. *Anadolu Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 24/3 (2024), 829-848. <https://doi.org/10.18037/ausbd.1423415>
- Akgün, İbrahim. “Kur’an Perspektifinde Tefekkür ve Vasıtaları”. *İğdır Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 1 (2013), 55-80.
- Akkaya Efe, Nisanur. *Hümeze Süresi Bağlamında Tüketim Çılgınlığıyla Başa Çıkma Ölümleri Tefekkürünün Etkisi*. Kocaeli: Kocaeli University, Social Sciences Institute, Master’s Thesis, 2024.
- Akopov, Garnik V. “Contemplation: The Ratio of Conscious and Unconscious”. *Psychological Applications and Trends*. ed. Clara Pracana - Michael Wang. 47-51. Lisboa: Science Press, 2021.
- Alhabshi, Sakinah Mohamad. *Spiritual Wellbeing and Resilience During a Prolonged Crisis: An Analysis and Integration of Contemplation-Based and Action-Based Practices from an Islamic Perspective*. California: Berkeley University, Degree of Master of Arts, 2022.
- Apaydın, Halil. *Din Psikolojisi Terimler Sözlüğü*. İstanbul: Bilimkent Yayınları, 2016.
- Ayten, Ali - Düzgüner, Sevede. *Tasavvuf Psikolojisine Giriş: Bireysel Arınma ve Güzel Ahlak*. İstanbul: Sufi Kitap, 2017.
- Bach, Jennifer M. - Guse, Tharina. “The Effect of Contemplation and Meditation on ‘Great Compassion’ on the Psychological Well-Being of Adolescents”. *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 10/4 (2015), 359-369. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2014.965268>
- Badri, Malik. *Contemplation: An Islamic Psychospiritual Study*. London: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2018.
- Cebecioğlu, Ethem. “Her Hayrın Anahtarı Tefekkür”. *Diyanet Aylık Dergi* 241 (2011), 4-7.

- Costanzo, Jason. "On the Therapeutic Value of Contemplation". *International Journal of Philosophical Practice* 7/1 (2021), 79-88.
<https://doi.org/10.5840/ijpp2021716>
- Fatoni, A. - Lesmana, Deni. "The Concept of Zikr and Tafakkur-Based Education in Improving the Morality of the Nation". *Journal of Islamic Education* 3/1 (2021), 31-38.
- Fager, Robert. *Hearth, Self and Soul: The Sufi Psychology of Growth, Balance, and Harmony*. Wheaton, Ill.: Theosophical Publishing House, 1999.
- Frankl, Viktor E. *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*. Boston: MA: Beacon Press, 4. edition, 1992.
- al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad. *Kīmīyā-yi Sa'ādat*. ed. Ḥusayn Khidīw Jam. 2 vols. Tehran: Sharikat-i Intishārāt-i 'Ilmī wa-Farhangī, 9th edition, 1961.
- Göka, Erol. *Psikoloji Varoluş Maneviyat*. İstanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2021.
- Gürsu, Orhan. "Nöropsikoloji, Din ve Psikolojik İyi Oluş". *Journal of International Social Research* 10/53 (2017), 502-512.
- Hanley, Adam - Warner, Alia - Garland, Eric. "Associations Between Mindfulness, Psychological Well-Being, and Subjective Well-Being with Respect to Contemplative Practice". *Journal of Happiness Studies* 16/6 (2015), 1423-1436.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-014-9569-5>.
- al-Hamadānī, Khwājah Yūsuf. *Rutbat al-hayāt*. ed. Muḥammad Amīn Riyāḥī. Tehran: Intishārāt-i Tūs, 1983.
- Hökelekli, Hayati. *Din Psikolojisi*. Ankara: TDV Yayınları, 7th edition, 2008.
- Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. *al-Fawā'id*. ed. 'Iṣām al-Dīn al-Ṣabābiṭī. Cairo: Dār al-Aḥādīth, 2nd edition, 1994.
- al-Iṣfahānī, Abū l-Qāsim al-Rāghib. *Kitāb al-Dharī'ah ilā makārim al-sharī'ah*. ed. Abū l-Yazīd Abū Zayd al-'Ajmī. Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 2007.
- al-Iṣfahānī, Abū l-Qāsim al-Rāghib. *al-Mufradāt fī gharīb al-Qur'ān*. ed. Muḥammad Khalīl 'Itānī. Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 6th edition, 2010.
- İrk, Esra. "Huşû Deneyiminin Duygusal ve Psikolojik Boyutları". *Eskişehir Osmangazi Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 12/1 (2025), 262-284.
<https://doi.org/10.51702/esoguifd.1565827>
- al-Jurjānī, 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Sayyid al-Sharīf. *Kitāb al-Ta'rīfāt*. ed. Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī. Cairo: Dār al-Rayyān li-l-Turāth, 1983.
- Kalın, İbrahim. *Açık Ufuk - İyi, Doğru ve Güzel Düşünmek Üzerine*. İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2nd edition, 2024.
- Karaca, Faruk. *Dini Gelişim Psikolojisi*. Trabzon: Eser Ofset Matbaacılık, 2016.
- Karaca, Faruk. "Günümüzde Dinî Tefekkürün Yüzleştiği Temel Problemler". *Diyanet İlmî Dergi* 54/4 (2018), 107-116. <https://doi.org/10.61304/did.506910>
- Karakaş, Ahmet Canan. "Manevi Danışmanlıkta İç Huzur Modelinin Obsesif Kompulsif Bozukluğa Etkisi (Vaka Örnekli)". *Birey, Toplum ve Din*. ed. Nevzat Gencer - Muammer Cengil. 111-132. İstanbul: Çamlıca Yayınları, 2021.

- Keklik, Nihat. *Türk-İslam Felsefesi Açısından Felsefenin Temel İlkeleri*. Ankara: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1996.
- Keskinoğlu, Muhammet Şerif - Ekşi, Halil. "Islamic Spiritual Counseling Techniques". *Spiritual Psychology and Counseling* 4/3 (2019), 333-350.
- Khotimah, Khusnul - Alat Taqwa, Ussisa - Hanim, Shofiyyah. "Tafakkur on Malik Badri's View". *Tasfiyah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 7/2 (2023), 317-338.
<https://doi.org/10.21111/tasfiyah.v7i2.10495>
- Merriam, Sharan B. - Tisdell, Elizabeth J. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc Pub, 4th edition, 2016.
- Köroğlu, Gülvade. *Tefekkürün Manevi İyi Oluşla İlişkisi (Yetişkinler Üzerine Bir Araştırma)*. Ankara: Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University, Social Sciences Institute, Master's Thesis, 2024.
- Kutluer, İlhan. "Düşünme". *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*. 10/53-57. İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 1994.
- Mamat, Akila - Ali, Mohd Safri - Syed Omar, Syed Hadzrullathfi - Abidin, Zaida - Basir, Aminudin - Yabi, Shumsudin. "Literature Review on Concept of Tafakkur in Islamic Mysticism". *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 9/4 (2019), 44-53.
- Mat Akhir, Noor Shakirah - Sabjan, Muhammad Azizan. "Tafakkur as the Spiritual Mechanism for Environment Conservation". *Journal of Religious & Theological Information* 14/1-2 (2015), 1-12.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10477845.2015.1035195>
- McGarrigle, Tessa - Walsh, Christine A. "Mindfulness, Self-Care, and Wellness in Social Work: Effects of Contemplative Training". *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought* 30/3 (2011), 212-233.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15426432.2011.587384>
- Medeiros, Sebastian - Langer, Alvaro - Stolzenbach, Sandra. "Contemplation of Nature to Promote Mental Health and Prevent Depression in Youth". *Prevention and Early Treatment of Depression Through the Life Course*. ed. Vania Martínez - Claudia Miranda Castillo. 75-95. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2023.
- al-Makkī, Abū Ṭālib. *Qūt al-qulūb fī mu‘āmalat al-maḥbūb wa-waṣf tariq al-murīd ilā maqām al-tawḥīd*. 4 vols. Cairo: Maktabat Dār al-Turāth, 2001.
- Merter, Mustafa. *Psikolojinin Üçüncü Boyutu: Nefis Psikolojisi ve Rüyaların Dili*. İstanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları, 2014.
- Merton, Thomas. *New Seeds of Contemplation*. New York: New Directions, 2007.
- Metin, Osman - Ünal, Şükriye. "İçerik Analizi Tekniği: İletişim Bilimlerinde ve Sosyolojide Doktora Tezlerinde Kullanımı". *Anadolu Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 22/Özel Sayı 2 (2022), 273-294.
<https://doi.org/10.18037/ausbd.1227356>
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*. Chicago: Kazi Publications, 2001.

- Özdoğan, Öznur. "İnsana Manevi-Psikolojik Yaklaşım". *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 49/2 (2008), 77-102.
https://doi.org/10.1501/İlhFak_0000000970
- Özkul, Ahmet Sait - Alparslan, Ali Murat. "Yaşam Doyumunu Artıran Motivasyon Kaynağı: Düşünme-Anlama İhtiyacı". *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi* 8/4 (2019), 3272-3288. <https://doi.org/10.15869/itobiad.615902>
- al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn. *Tafsīr al-Fakhr al Rāzī al-musammā bi-l-Tafsīr al-kabīr aw Mafātīh al ghayb*. 32 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981.
- Read, Dan R. *Thinking Deeply in College: An Inquiry into Contemplation Amongst Undergraduate Students*. Indiana: Taylor University, Master of Arts in Higher Education (MAHE) Theses, 2019.
- Saban, Ahmet - Ersoy, Ali. *Eğitimde Nitel Araştırma Desenleri*. Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık, 2017.
- Sağlam, İbrahim. "Hadislerde Hz. Peygamber'in Yalnızlık Tecrübesi ve Hakikat Arayışı". *Amasya İlahiyat Dergisi* 20 (2023), 171-201.
<https://doi.org/10.18498/amailad.1238351>
- Sözen, Kemal. "Din-Tefekkür İlişkisi". *Diyanet İlmi Dergi* 54/4 (2018), 87-106.
- Stebbins, Robert A. *Leisure and Positive Psychology: Linking Activities with Positiveness*. Houndmills. UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- Şen, Mustafa Taha. *Tefekkür Etme Eğilimi ile Akademik Başarı Arasındaki İlişki*. İstanbul: İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, Social Sciences Institute, Master's Thesis, 2024.
- Şirin, Turgay. *Bilişsel Davranışçı Psikoterapi Yaklaşımıyla Bütünleştirilmiş Dini Danışmanlık Modeli*. Sakarya: Sakarya University, Social Sciences Institutes, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2013.
- Şirin, Turgay. *Manevi Danışmanlıkta İhsan Modeli*. İstanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları, 2018.
- Tamin, Daris. "Applying Qur'anic Contemplation in Counseling". *The International Journal of Counseling and Education* 1/1 (2016), 1-9.
<https://doi.org/10.23916/1-9.0016.11-i3b>
- Tan, Hümeysra Nazlı - Yıldız, Mualla. "'Manevi İyi Oluş' Kavramının Ortaya Çıkışı ve Tanımlanması". *Dini Araştırmalar* 25/63 (2022), 447-476.
<https://doi.org/10.15745/da.1175149>
- Thomas, Nur Sakinah - Ibrahim, Nur Jehaada. "The Effectiveness of Contemplation on Conceptual Metaphor in Cognitive Spiritual Therapy". *Revelation and Science* 12/1 (2022), 59-65. <https://doi.org/10.31436/revival.v12i1.302>
- Uludağ, Süleyman. *Tasavvuf Terimleri Sözlüğü*. İstanbul: Marifet Yayınları, 1991.
- van Gordon, William - Sapthiang, Supakyada - Shonin, Edo. "Contemplative Psychology: History, Key Assumptions, and Future Directions". *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 17/1 (2022), 99-107.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691620984479>
- Yalom, Irvin. *Existential Psychotherapy*. New York: Basic Books, 1980.

-
- Yıldırım, Ali - Şimşek, Hasan. *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*. Ankara: Seçkin Yayıncılık, 12th edition, 2021.
- Yiğit, Yaşar. "Var Oluşu Anlama ve Anlamlandırma Zemini: Tefekkür". *Diyanet Aylık Dergi* 241 (2011), 8-11.
- Zuber-Aguirre, Angelika. *The Lived Experience of Contemplating Purpose and Meaning in Life*. Minneapolis: Capella University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2016.

CYBERSPIRITUALITY: A NEW FORM OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE AND EXISTENTIAL PRESENCE IN THE DIGITAL REALM

Sebiha Yıldız

&

Ali Ayten

*Ondokuz Mayıs University,
Samsun-Türkiye*

*Marmara University,
İstanbul-Türkiye*

Sebiha.zembilci@omu.edu.tr
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3233-4358>

aliayten@marmara.edu.tr
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2787-2429>

Abstract

The intensified use of technology has enabled religion and spirituality to establish a presence in the digital sphere through shifting the location of their enactment. Both religion and spirituality have undergone rapid transformations, particularly in the digital world. Religion and spirituality, which have sometimes been used interchangeably but were also occasionally treated as opposites before the advent of the digital world, have diverged from each other under the influence of postmodernism, globalization, secularization, new forms of belief, new religious trends, and New Age movements. With the introduction of social media applications, artificial intelligence, the metaverse, and transhumanism into our lives, the conceptual confusion between religion and spirituality has become more visible in the digital world. Religion and spirituality appear on the internet with concepts such as digital religion, virtual religion, e-religion, cyber religion,

İlahiyat Studies

e-ISSN: 1309-1719

Volume 17 Number 1 Winter/Spring 2026

DOI: 10.12730/is.1647299

Article Type: Research Article

Received: February 26, 2025 | *Accepted:* February 3, 2026 | *Published:* June 30, 2026

To cite this article: Yıldız, Sebiha - Ayten, Ali. "Cyberspirituality: A New Form of Spiritual Practice and Existential Presence in the Digital Realm". *İlahiyat Studies* 17/1 (2026), 165-193. <https://doi.org/10.12730/is.1647299>

This work is licensed under *Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International*.

techno religion, digital spirituality, techno spirituality, cyberspirituality, cyberspace spirituality, and virtual spirituality. This study investigates whether the concept of cyberspirituality can be regarded as an independent category that clarifies the conceptual overlap between religion and spirituality within digital environments. Through a literature-based conceptual analysis, the definition of cyberspirituality, its relationship with spirituality, and its presence in digital religion research are explored in this article. It argues that cyberspirituality may serve as an alternative form of spirituality, specifically tailored to online contexts, and evaluates its distinct features in comparison with traditional understandings of spirituality.

Key Words: Psychology of religion, spirituality, internet, cyberspirituality, digital religion

Introduction

Due to globalization, secularization, and postmodernism, the scope of concepts related to religiosity and spirituality in the literature has undergone significant changes. The concepts of religiosity and spirituality, which we examined as encompassing and inclusive of each other, have become separated because of these effects. This separation process has led to the renaming of the psychology of religion to psychology of religion and spirituality by the American Psychological Association (Pargament, 1999, 3-16; Köse - Ayten, 2012, 107). In the 1980s and afterward, new forms of belief, religious tendencies, and New Age movements also opened a new field for spirituality. The increasing number of publications centered on the concept of spirituality has increased interest in this concept within the field of the psychology of religion (Emmons - Paloutzian, 2003, 377-402; Düzgüner, 2021, 25-75).

Alternative forms of spirituality have become increasingly visible in various aspects of life. The concept of spirituality, which was first considered an alternative form of spiritual care, spiritual counseling, etc., in the field of health by associating it with well-being and spiritual coping (Koenig, 2016, 15-29), later gained visibility with alternative forms in many different fields, such as business, education, and technology. Spiritual care, spiritual guidance, and counseling practices have been studied in hospitals, prisons, nursery schools, and nursing homes (Altaş, 1999; Ağılkaya Şahin, 2016; Ayten, 2020). Moreover, spirituality in the workplace in the field of business economy

(Giacalone - Jurkiewicz, 2003; Seyyar, 2009; Çakır Berzah - Çakır, 2015; Karagöz, 2023) and spiritual intelligence as a type of intelligence in the field of education (Emmons, 2000; Amram, 2007; Ronel - Gan, 2008; Şengül, 2025) are examples of alternative forms of using spirituality in such studies. This study examines an alternative form of spirituality that has emerged within the realm of technology. Specifically, the research explores cyberspirituality, a distinct mode of spiritual practice and experience that has developed in the digital environment.

The aim of this research is to introduce the concept of cyberspirituality into the Turkish language through a terminological and conceptual analysis of cyberspirituality. Through a review of the literature, this study examines the role of the concept of cyberspirituality in the literature and explores its similarities and differences with traditional spirituality. A nomenclature is proposed for the relationship between technology and spirituality.

1. Cyberspirituality: A Conceptual Analysis

In English literature, concepts such as cyber, online, digital, virtual, and techno articulate the nexus between the internet and spirituality. Among these concepts, the term “online” is the sole exception, as it does not serve as a direct nomenclature when the literature is searched using the phrase “internet and spirituality”. Although the concept of online is not a direct nomenclature, it is used in this context in almost every work on the relationship between the internet and spirituality. The concepts of cyberspirituality (George, 2003; Tobin, 2004; Campbell, 2005; Jackelen, 2005; McDonald, 2006; Hackett, 2006; Yust et al., 2010; Bertolotti - Cinerari, 2012; Zugermayr, 2013; Sokolow, 2014; Gálik, 2015; Servais, 2015; Eresso, 2015; Atalay et al., 2023; Magerstädt, 2024), digital spirituality (Lee, 2006), virtual spirituality (Dangwal - Singh, 2012; Ryan, 2012), and techno-spirituality (Garner, 2003) are the terms employed to describe this relationship.

In the Turkish literature, no study has examined the relationship between internet and spirituality in a conceptual dimension, and no such translation exists (*siber maneviyat*). By reviewing the studies in the literature, it was deemed preferable to translate the concept of cyberspirituality into Turkish to express the relationship between the internet and spirituality. The most commonly used concept to describe the relationship in question is cyberspirituality. This method has been

followed to preserve the terminological expression and prevent a narrowing of meaning. Other concepts can also be used in place of the term “cyber”, but the fact that cyberspirituality is the most commonly used term in Western literature has led to a preference for it. The reason for not preferring the concept of virtual, which is more widely used in our language instead of cyber, is the idea that the part of the definition of virtual that emphasizes “not existing in reality” narrows the boundaries of the relationship between the internet and spirituality. The reason for this is that people may not believe that the spirituality experienced or practiced on the internet is limited to online spaces. In his study on religion in cyberspace, Dereli notes that the concept of virtual was initially employed in early studies. Nevertheless, it was gradually replaced by the concepts of cyber and digital (2018, 111-113). Therefore, when the forms of spirituality emerging in the virtual world are referred to, it seems appropriate to use the term cyberspirituality for conceptual continuity and consistency with the literature.

Cyberspirituality refers to the relationship between computer culture and spirituality. Studies on cyberspirituality have revealed that not all have included a definition of what cyberspirituality is. However, the concept of cyberspirituality was mentioned in all the studies. Definitions were provided by those who offered them, and an effort was made to understand what cyberspirituality meant on the basis of the content of other studies. Before moving on to the definitions of cyberspirituality, it is important to clarify the boundaries of how spirituality is defined in these studies. In the context of cyberspirituality, spirituality encompasses both religion and religiosity, as well as nonreligious or secular spirituality. This concept can include both traditional belief systems and a perception of spirituality that is entirely outside of belief systems. A belief, object, phenomenon, or concept that is sacred or ascribed sacredness in the eyes of the individual and society can be included within the spiritual boundaries of cyberspirituality.

Having defined the considerations of spirituality, it becomes feasible to discuss the concept of cyberspirituality. There are very few studies on cyberspirituality that offer a definitional framework. To view the definitions together, since there is no existing study in the field, all the definitions in question have been compiled in a table that includes

definitions taken from studies where the concept of cyberspirituality is mentioned in the title and content below. Although the idea of cyberspirituality is mentioned, studies that do not provide a definition have been evaluated using a content analysis approach, and the results have been added to the definition table.

Table 1: Meanings Given to Cyberspirituality in the Literature

YEAR	MEANINGS GIVEN TO CYBERSPIRITUALITY IN THE LITERATURE
2003	The Relationship between technology (internet) and spirituality (search) (George)
2004	A spirituality based on Christian spirituality experienced on the internet as an escape from the institution (Tobin)
2005	The perception of sacred space created on the internet (Campbell, H.) The presence of all religions on the internet, spirituality as techno-secularization (Jackelen)
2006	Spirituality on the internet through Christian spirituality (McDonald) The dimension of religion experienced on the internet (Hackett)
2010	The sense of connectedness, having a connection, is a kind of spirituality. (Yust, K. M. et. al.)
2012	The idea that 'I am cyber spiritual but not religious' (Bertolotti - Cinerari)
2013	The feeling of connectedness, of having a connection, is a kind of spirituality. (Zugermayr)
2014	A spirituality far from religion in the nonphysical world (Sokolow)
2015	The presence of spirituality in media (Gálik) Religion on social media and the internet (Eresso) Hidden religion and virtual worship on the internet (Servais)
2023	The use of technology in a spiritual context, with opportunities for spiritual experience within the framework of risks that may jeopardize digital security (Atalay et. al.)
2024	The mix of old beliefs about life after death and new technology is explored through science fiction stories that question what it means to be human, our consciousness, and the quest for eternal life in the digital world. (Magerstädt)

The earliest study where we encounter a definition of cyberspirituality was Ronan Tobin's research published in 2004. In his study, Tobin (2004, 591) defines cyberspirituality as "spirituality in which new media technologies, especially the internet, are used for religious or spiritual purposes". Tobin (2004, 593) states that cyberspace is the realm between human and digital information; rather than a digital source where all kinds of information are collected, it is a social space that develops over time, where knowledge is derived from experience, including tradition and culture. In line with the meaning he gives to cyberspace, Tobin addresses cyberspirituality by grounding it in Christian spirituality, a kind of religious spirituality.

Yust and colleagues (2010, 291-293) explored the concept of cyberspirituality, highlighting the idea of cyberspirituality through the perceptions of spirituality held by children and young people. According to them, technological developments shape the spiritual lives of young people. The time spent on Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms suggests that a form of spirituality is experienced there, allowing users to feel a sense of connectedness with other like-minded seekers. Such an idea was prompted by other studies in which children were asked to define spirituality, and some of them replied, "having a connection, feeling how other people feel when you have a connection, understanding their feelings and thoughts". Based on this research, the Centre for Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence identified connection and belonging as a key theme for spiritual development. This paved the way for the concept of cyberspirituality. Researchers emphasize that "the sense of connectedness that children or adolescents experience on the internet and what they experience while being active on the internet may be a kind of spirituality", which can be expressed as cyberspirituality.

Sokolow (2014, 146) describes cyberspirituality as "spirituality experienced as a concept without religion by creating inauthentic religious, spiritual communities rather than a community engaged in physical, spiritual exercises". According to him, institutional Christianity has declined in the West with the rise of modern thought and technology. Nevertheless, this decline does not imply secularization or the loss of the sacred in society. At this point, the internet, as an unknown technological structure for religion, has given rise to the idea that the modern world is devoid of the sacred. The use

of the internet for religious purposes and the idea that the modern world can be desacralized by utilizing it have led to the view that cyber religious and spiritual communities and worship are not more real or less real than traditional religious and spiritual worship in physical communities are. However, members of cyber-religious and spiritual websites view their cyber communities as just as real and, in some cases, even more real than physical-world religious communities do.

The most recent study conducted by Gálík (2015, 6-7) addresses cyberspirituality as the presence of spirituality in the virtual world of digital media or the phenomenon of spirituality/experiencing spirituality in the media. According to Gálík (2015, 5), cyberspirituality exists in a different form than religion does. Even if cyberspirituality cannot reach the level of traditional spirituality, it will still be able to meet the spiritual needs of hypermodern people, even if it is not yet fully understood as a distinct new type of religion. Cyberspirituality is likened to mental immersion in the virtual world, offering an experience of a new, magical, and attractive world.

When the definitions of cyberspirituality are examined, two key commonalities emerge. First, the virtual realm of the internet serves as the primary channel through which cyberspirituality manifests. Second, cyberspirituality –whether religious or nonreligious– entails a sense of the sacred. Furthermore, it can be argued that cyberspirituality is predominantly expressed through online activities. Notably, Yust and colleagues' (2010) definition of spirituality as “commitment and belonging” underscores that cyberspirituality is often experienced more profoundly within the context of online engagement. This is attributed to the immersive nature of the cyber world, where involvement is fostered through time spent online.

Campbell (2005, 118), who looks at various aspects of the internet, defines it as a sacred space but does not distinguish between religion and spirituality. This definition highlights two common points in definitions of cyberspirituality. According to Campbell, using the internet as a sacred space reshapes one's online activities and experiences as part of one's spiritual life, whether for individual, communal, or informational purposes. Many religious traditions actively use the internet as a sacred space in personal, organizational, and community contexts. While this may appear to be a religious use of the internet, the idea that the internet is changing religious practices

that are transferred online also suggests a form of cyberspirituality. In modern society, some individuals often feel separated and disconnected. In such a process, for people who experience spiritual experiences and feelings online, the internet provides an otherworldly space that allows them to reconnect with spirituality.

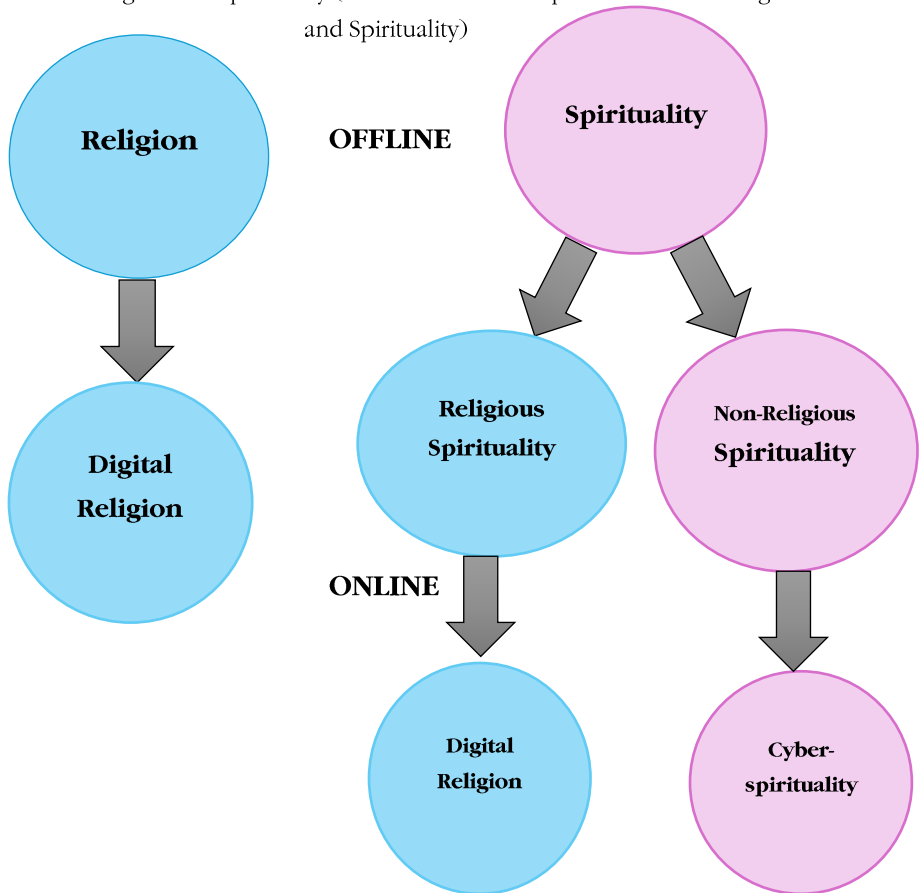
On the basis of definitions and analyses in the literature, this study redefines the concept of cyberspirituality as follows: cyberspirituality is an autonomous subcategory of digital religion that differs from traditional religions; draws on pluralistic understandings; and encompasses SBNR (Spiritual but Not Religious), nonreligious, or secular forms of spirituality; new forms of sacredness; the search for personal meaning, feelings of identity and belonging; and technology-centered experiential spirituality. In this sense, cyberspirituality refers not only to “religion on the internet” but also to technology-mediated spiritual orientations and practices that can be institutionally traditional, hybrid and multireligious, or entirely beyond tradition and secular. What unites these different tendencies is that the spiritual experience is structurally coproduced by digital infrastructures, such as platforms, algorithms, avatars, and virtual environments, as well as by the activities of meaning-making and belonging of individuals and communities.

On the basis of the definition of the concept of cyberspirituality, models addressing the relationship between digital religion and cyberspirituality have been developed (Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4). These models aim to clarify the boundaries and scope of cyberspirituality. This study develops its models on the basis of definitions of religion and spirituality in the psychology of religion literature, as well as classifications related to these concepts (see Düzgüner, 2021, 63-75). By taking the relational positions of religion and spirituality as a starting point, the study theoretically structures the place of cyberspirituality within this framework and clarifies its relationship with digital religion. By using these models, the study emphasizes that the manifestations of religion and spirituality in the virtual/digital realm take different forms depending on their theoretical positions, which allows their boundaries to become more visible. In this regard, the study argues that the term cyber distinctions.

Figure 1 was developed on the basis of an approach in the psychology of religion literature that treats religion and spirituality as

separate concepts. According to this model, religion and spirituality are evaluated analytically as independent of each other. Religion represents traditional and institutional religious structures, whereas spirituality is divided into two subcategories on the basis of the perception of the sacred: religious spirituality and nonreligious spirituality.

Figure 1: Classification of Cyberspirituality and Digital Religion According to the Position of Religion and Spirituality (Main Model: As A Separate Domains Religion and Spirituality)



Religious spirituality focuses on the spiritual experiences of individuals who belong to a traditional and/or institutional religion. The experience of this type of spirituality in virtual and online environments is evaluated under the heading of digital religion within the scope of the model. Nonreligious spirituality, on the other hand, refers to a spiritual understanding that develops outside the traditional

and institutional understanding of the sacred; it emerges in a secular, SBNR (Spiritual but Not Religious) context and encompasses new searches for sacredness, personal meaning, and a sense of belonging.

According to Figure 1, the experience and practice of nonreligious spirituality in technology-based digital environments should be addressed within the scope of cyberspirituality. The main reason for designing this model as the primary model is that this classification, which is based on the treatment of religion and spirituality as separate concepts in the field of psychology of religion, makes conceptual confusion in the field more visible and understandable. Furthermore, in the face of the conceptual uncertainty created by technology-based religious and spiritual experiences, the spiritual quests positioned in the nonreligious sphere are expressed through the concept of cyberspirituality to prevent the boundaries of the concept of religion from becoming blurred and its content from being emptied.

Figure 2: Classification of Cyberspirituality and Digital Religion Where Religion and Spirituality Intersect

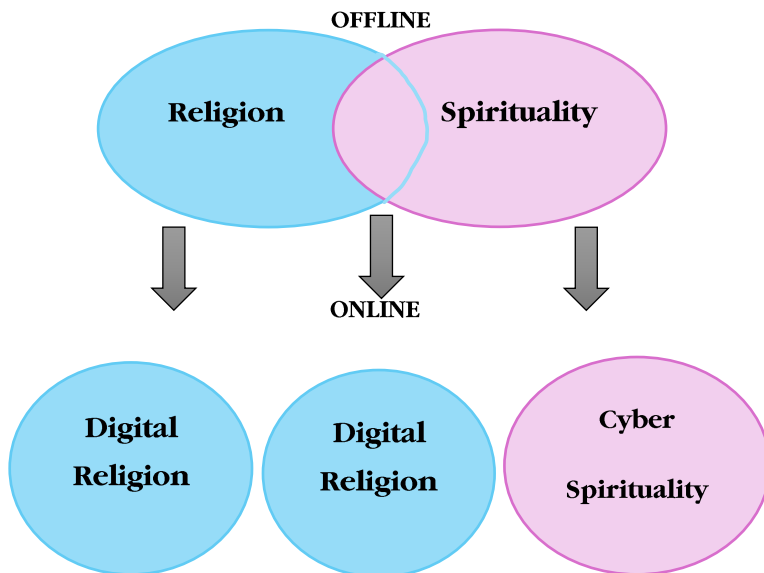
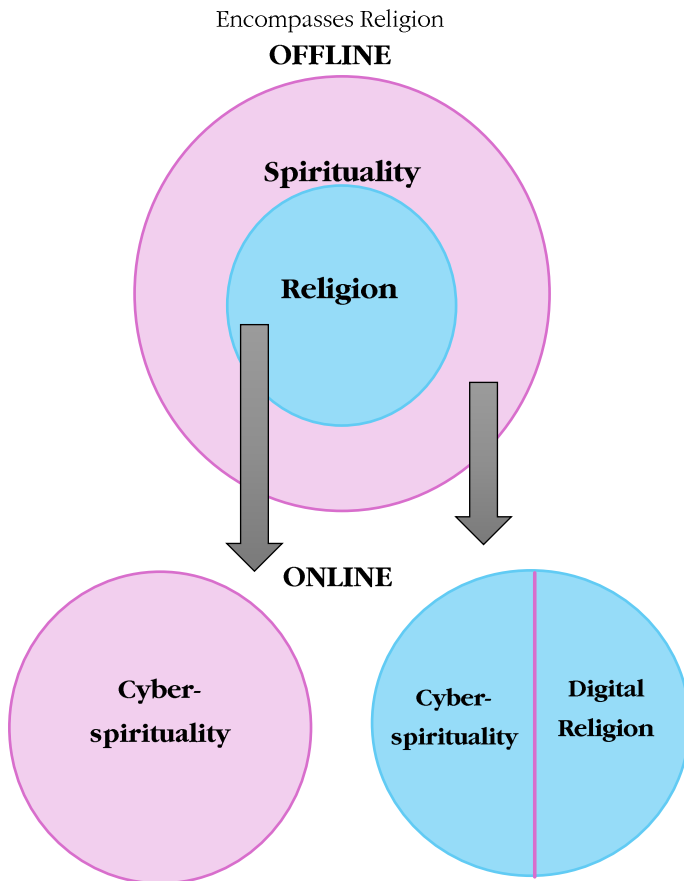


Figure 2 builds on the idea that religion and spirituality, while distinct, share overlapping areas. The model identifies two scenarios within this intersection. First, when individuals experience spirituality as part of or as a reflection of religion, the study treats this experience

as a form of digital religion in the virtual realm. Second, when individuals draw spirituality from a religious structure or tradition without adopting a religious belief as such, the study still evaluates this experience within the scope of digital religion when it occurs in virtual environments. This distinction is visually represented in Figure 2. In contrast, when individuals experience spirituality independently of religion in the virtual realm, this experience is classified under the concept of cyberspirituality.

Figure 3: Classification of Cyberspirituality and Digital Religion When Spirituality



How spirituality manifests in the virtual world in cases where it encompasses religion is shown in Figure 3. Within this framework, the concept of cyberspirituality over digital religion is preferred to describe forms of spirituality that do not originate from religion but adopt a

pluralistic approach and include the search for meaning, a perception of the sacred independent of religion, and expectations of belonging when these forms appear in virtual or digital environments.

In the model, the concept of digital religion refers to individuals without religious affiliation engaging in specific religions in a virtual environment for the purpose of having a spiritual experience. Therefore, even individuals without religious affiliation can be considered within the scope of the digital religion field if they experience a sacred experience in a virtual environment through a religion of their own choosing.

Figure 4: Classification of Cyberspirituality and Digital Religion When Religion Encompasses Spirituality

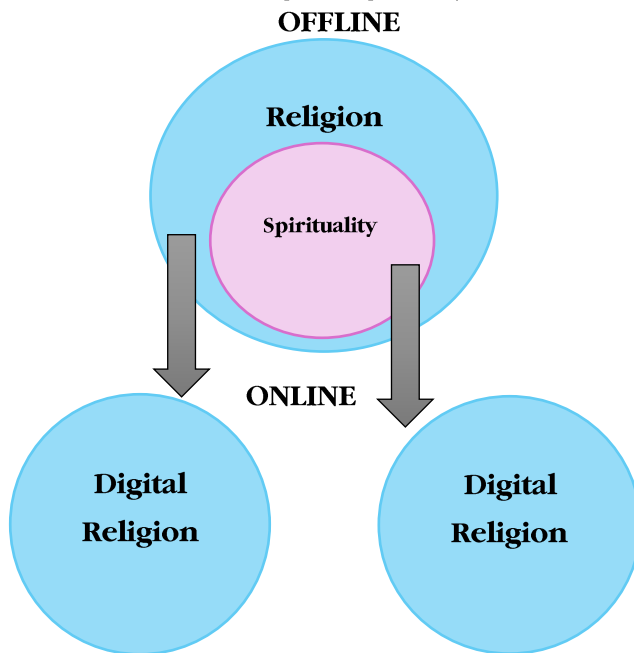


Figure 4 shows how the model developed in the psychology of religion literature –which conceptualizes religion as encompassing spirituality– translates into the virtual/digital world. In this context, the figure addresses an understanding of the spirituality that individuals experience within a named, institutional, and traditional religion or within a new religious movement and that derives its meaning from these structures. In accordance with this classification, the study evaluates the manifestations of this form of spirituality in virtual or

digital environments under the concept of digital religion, since it draws its source directly from religion.

Cyberspirituality is encountered in VR-based worship and ritual environments, digital games and virtual worlds, social media and algorithmic spirituality, meditation and mindfulness practices, AI-mediated spirituality, and digital mourning and remembrance rituals. In games such as *World of Warcraft*, *Second Life*, *Sky: Children of Light*, and *Journey*, avatars visit virtual places of worship and participate in rituals such as kneeling, lighting candles, praying, group prayer, gathering light, rescuing souls, and attending funeral ceremonies. VR places of worship in the metaverse, virtual worship and rituals (VR Hajj, symbolic communion, etc.) demonstrate that spiritual, symbolic, and emotional experiences occur in the digital realm. Furthermore, prayer chains, intention rituals, and affirmation activities on social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter show that users attribute a kind of spirituality to these platforms. Internet-based meditation and mindfulness applications are also considered individualized cyber-spiritual rituals that incorporate traditional meditation practices. AI-based chat applications, astrology, and tarot bots can also be categorized under the heading of cyberspirituality, as they serve as providers of spiritual support to their users.

Campbell (2004, 114) uses the term “Net Generation” to describe the young generation that uses the internet the most in the context of cyberspirituality, stating that the Net Generation are experiential spiritual seekers. Klenke (2007, 234-268) explores the role of spirituality and emotions in cyberspace and notes that spiritual seekers search for soul mates and spiritual dialog partners online. For this purpose, they form spiritual partnerships and build cyber communities, cyber churches, and virtual temples. The internet provides a new home for individuals seeking a higher purpose in their lives, offering them access to diverse spiritual communities that cater to their spiritual searches and aspirations. The idea that the internet creates a new sense of home for spiritual seekers is one of the points Campbell emphasizes (Yust, 2014, 134).

Two approaches, positive and negative, have been identified in studies dealing with cyberspirituality. According to the positive perspective, spirituality and spiritual feelings on the internet, whether

religious or nonreligious, whether they reflect the spirituality experienced in reality or whether it is a kind of spiritual orientation utterly different from the spirituality experienced in reality and even created on the internet, are considered to be positive tools that enable individuals to turn to spirituality and have spiritual experiences. Kinast (2000, 222-232) suggested that computer technology cannot replace traditional spiritual life but can be a valuable aid in preparing and creating authentic/real spiritual experiences. According to him, the virtual reality of cyberspace can be an awakening to a new value for man and the spiritual reality of sacred space. Another positive aspect is that the speed of technology can instantly provide a rich source and guide for spiritual seekers.

According to those who take a negative view of cyberspirituality, it carries risks. According to Klenke (2007, 259), spirituality and technology have a dark side that triggers negative emotions such as fear and anxiety. Therefore, cyberspirituality does not always evoke positive emotions among people. In addition, spirituality experienced on the internet can sometimes turn out to be a form of pseudospirituality, masquerading as authentic spirituality, which is harmful. Yust and colleagues (2010, 292) examined Facebook in the context of cyberspirituality from this perspective. They reported that children who define spirituality as “connecting and belonging” and use Facebook in this way can sometimes put themselves in dangerous situations by interacting with strangers to have spiritual feelings and experiences. This is a kind of pseudospirituality. In addition, according to some scholars, cyberspirituality distances society from the sacred and reduces individuals’ sociability (Sokolow, 2014, 19).

The characterization of cyberspirituality as either positive or negative is derived from a comparative analysis of spirituality and cyberspirituality. To gain a more nuanced understanding of cyberspirituality, it is essential to examine the differences between these two concepts. This comparison enables a more precise evaluation of the potential implications and effects of cyberspirituality in contemporary contexts.

2. Cyberspirituality and Spirituality: Differences and Similarities

Questions such as “Are cyberspirituality and spirituality similar or

different, and if different, does cyberspirituality replace real spirituality, or is cyberspirituality real?" are asked in almost every study (Cobb, 1999, 393; Yust et al., 2010, 291-293; Gálik, 2015, 6). Since it exists in a virtual environment, it is a matter of curiosity whether cyberspirituality is genuine or whether it can replace authentic spirituality.

Since cyberspirituality is emerging as an alternative form of spirituality, it is not entirely accurate to say that it is entirely different from spirituality. Studies on the subject have clearly shown that some differences exist between the spirituality experienced in cyberspace and the spirituality experienced (Cobb, 1999, 393-407; Jacobs, 2007, 1103-1121; Gálik, 2015, 9-11). When discussing these differences, it is emphasized that cyberspirituality is unique. This uniqueness comes from the nature of the cyber spiritual realm and the environment of cyberspace. This uniqueness emphasizes that cyberspirituality is experienced through technological tools with internet capability and takes place in the cybernetic world of the internet, which is far from reality. Tobin (2004, 593), discussing cyberspirituality in religious use, notes that the loss of traditionally valued institutionalization along denominational boundary lines within the unregulated environment of cyberspace gives cyberspirituality a unique characteristic. There is no institutional structure or boundary for spirituality experienced in cyberspace. An example of this uniqueness can be found in Christian cyberspirituality, as seen on the guided prayer website (www.sacredspace.ie). It has an Orthodox structure but an expanded understanding of denomination. There is two-way communication based on dialogue. There are no time or space limitations. Spirituality is brought into the work environment. There is a spiritual space where identity can be kept private. Participants are active, not passive (Tobin, 2004, 593-594).

In discussing the differences between cyberspirituality, Gálik (2015, 9-11) notes that it differs from spirituality in two ways. First, the existence and limitations of the human body are the main differences between it and spirituality. This is because the human body keeps humans in reality and provides time-space coordination. Through their bodies, human beings experience emotions and sensations, such as pain and relaxation, which they cannot reach in cyberspace. In contrast to cyberspace, traditional religions and spiritualities, which are grounded in reality, view the human body as a component that keeps

the human being rooted in reality and provides opportunities for a broad range of spiritual experiences, including direct communication with others. Additionally, traditional spirituality involves physical contact with the body and auric emanation. These elements are absent in online communication. There is no use of human body language in the virtual world. This is because the human body is also represented virtually. Therefore, cyberspirituality differs from traditional spirituality.

In this context, Cobb (1999, 393-407) argues that the body cannot participate in cyberspace but functions as a tool separate from the body. For him, cyberspace has given us hope by separating the mind and body in our desire to escape the mortal side of the body. However, at the same time, it also brings fear in the sense that it takes us step by step away from the world we were born into. Rather than seeing cyberspace as a veil for the experience of the disembodied mind/spirit, seeing it as part of a more extensive, integrated sacred experience of the world can expand and enrich our latent spirituality.

The second difference between cyberspirituality and spirituality is related to individuals' spiritual development. The sense of spiritual growth in cyberspace is not random but somewhat shaped by the examples of spirituality that are set. It is an artificial and calibrated experience. That is why it is different from spirituality. In addition, in traditional religions, it is argued that spiritual development occurs through self-knowledge. In cyberspirituality, especially within gaming, this development is achieved through structured images and stories. This is another difference. Despite these differences, Vallikatt (2014) states that there is no significant difference between traditional spirituality and cyberspirituality on the basis of his studies and interviews with gamers.

According to Jacobs (2007, 1103-1121), who discussed the similarities and differences between cyberspirituality and spirituality by analyzing two websites, the design of sacred spaces and the practice of rituals are transferred from offline to online, yet cyberspirituality and spirituality are not entirely similar. He focused on participation in virtual prayer services at a virtual Christian church and a virtual Hindu temple. He suggested that such individual participation in cyberspace can be a private spiritual experience for people who are unable to participate in collective worship. Both the church and the temple in

cyberspace largely reflect tradition and reality, but it is also emphasized that there is no substitute for the real. Therefore, spirituality and cyberspirituality are not entirely similar. According to Baudrillard (1994, 1-6), the simulacrum is "the appearance that wants to be perceived as reality." Simulation is "the artificial reproduction of a tool, a machine, a system, a way of functioning specific to a phenomenon through a model or a computer program to be studied, shown or explained". Thus, spirituality in the virtual world of the internet can be considered a form of simulation because it encompasses spirituality and spiritual practices that are generally experienced.

Baudrillard's (1994) classification of the simulacrum order comprises three categories:

1. Natural, naturalistic simulacra grounded in imagery, imitation, and replication, aiming to emulate the harmonious, optimistic, and ideal nature conceived by God.
2. Simulacra aiming at worldwide human development, with a constant tendency to expand and liberate unlimited amounts of energy,
3. Simulation simulacra consisting of information, models, and cybernetic games, aiming for purely transactional, hyperreal, and absolute control.

Cyberspirituality can be evaluated through the lens of Baudrillard's theoretical framework. An analysis of spiritual practices within cyberspace reveals three distinct patterns manifested in religious and spiritual websites and games. The idea that people find and practice spirituality on the internet as closely as they experience reality can be interpreted as a naturalistic simulacrum. The tendency of individuals to congregate with like-minded others online to form specialized groups and websites can be seen as a form of second-order simulation akin to the concept of simulacra. Furthermore, the spiritual experiences offered by games, which construct a virtual and modified order, can be regarded as a third type of simulation. Similarly, Campbell (2005, 119) discussed spiritual attitudes toward computer networks in three distinct ways:

1. The God Project: Technology as a crude proxy for spiritual forces
2. Technology as empowerment in the search for the True *Machine God*.
3. Sacramental Cyberspace: Technology that sees the internet as a

digital environment that offers the spiritual life activities of traditional religions.

On the basis of what people mean by spirituality and on the perspective from which they evaluate the internet, we can classify all kinds of virtual activities we study under the concept of cyberspirituality in different ways. The reality of spiritual life or virtual experiences can be questioned by examining individuals who have first-hand experiences and analyzing the data they collect. Among recent studies, Demirtaş's (2024, 77) qualitative research on digital games and gamers in the context of cyberspirituality revealed that gamers, regardless of their religious beliefs or how they define themselves spiritually, believe that there is a kind of spirituality in the internet environment and that this spirituality meets the needs of the individual.

In summary, cyberspirituality differs from spirituality because it occurs in a virtual environment, independent of the human body, in an artificially structured virtual longitude away from fundamental time-space elements. Therefore, whether cyberspirituality can satisfy the needs of traditional spirituality should be investigated through necessary studies on the experiences of people who engage in cyberspirituality.

Since cyberspirituality emerged as an alternative form of spirituality, it would not be correct to consider it as a phenomenon completely different from spirituality. Studies in the literature reveal that there are similarities and differences between cyberspirituality and traditional spirituality (Cobb, 1999, 393-407; Jacobs, 2007, 1103-1121; Gálík, 2015, 9-11). In this context, the first similarity between them is that cyberspirituality, like spirituality, is related to the individual's search for existential meaning, inner orientation, and need for spiritual fulfillment. Given the subjective nature of spiritual experience, both traditional spirituality and cyberspirituality can be perceived as meaningful and authentic experiences for individuals (Vallikatt, 2014).

Vallikatt (2014), on the basis of spiritual experiences primarily through games and interviews with players, states that there is no meaningful experiential difference between cyberspirituality and traditional spirituality. Similarly, in his analysis of examples of virtual Christian churches and virtual Hindu temples, Jacobs (2007, 1103-1121) shows that sacred space designs and ritual practices have been

transferred from offline contexts to online environments. Although these practices carried out in virtual environments do not replace reality, it is accepted that they offer individuals special and meaningful spiritual experiences.

Second, on the basis of Baudrillard's theory of simulation, cyberspirituality resembles traditional spirituality in terms of content and origin. The source of cyberspirituality is actually lived spirituality. Although cyberspirituality has emerged as an alternative form of spirituality, it is not considered a completely new phenomenon that is entirely disconnected from spirituality.

When evaluated within this framework, the relationship between cyberspirituality and spirituality cannot be reduced to simple similarity or absolute difference. Cyberspirituality shares common ground with spirituality in terms of the search for meaning, the claim to sacred experience, and the function of producing subjective spiritual experiences; however, it differs from it in terms of the body, space, time, and the way experience is structured (Cobb, 1999; Gálik, 2015; Jacobs, 2007). This situation shows that cyberspirituality is neither a phenomenon that completely replaces spirituality nor an experience that is entirely detached from it. In contrast, cyberspirituality can be considered a specific spiritual experience that draws on the content and origins of traditional spirituality but is reshaped within the unique structural conditions of the digital environment.

3. The Concept of Cyberspirituality as a Nomenclature Proposal

Technology is expected to surround religion and transform it from traditional to digital. In addition to the positive effects of religion in terms of technology and taking shape in our lives in the form of digital religion, side effects arise. Side effects such as the weakening of religious authority, the destruction of the sacred, the distortion of religious knowledge, and the shifting of the meaning of certain religious concepts can be mentioned (Işıklı - Gölbayrak, 2021, 105-145). The distinction or unity between religion and spirituality, which was mentioned before the digitalization of religion, is believed to mitigate the side effects of digitalization on religion. Shaping the meanings attributed to the concepts of religion and spirituality according to the unity or distinction between them will help mitigate

these side effects. The boundaries and scope of religion in the digital world can be determined by the concepts and terminologies that are reformulated in response to the digitalization of religion. Cyberspirituality is one concept that can be used to define the boundaries of digitalized religion in the context of the dilemma between religion and spirituality.

The relationships between religion and spirituality and technology, digital religion, virtual religion, e-religion, cyber religion, techno-religion, cyberspirituality, cyberspace spirituality, virtual spirituality, etc., are studied in the literature under different names (George, 2003; Tobin, 2004; Campbell, 2005; Jackelen, 2005; Hojsgaard, 2005; McDonald, 2006; Hackett, 2006; Lee, 2006; Bertolotti - Cinerari, 2012; Campbell, 2012; Ryan, 2012; Zugermayr, 2013; Sokolow, 2014; Gálík, 2015; Servais, 2015; Eresso, 2015). The intertwined and, at the same time, contradictory situation of the concepts of religion and spirituality is often mentioned in the Turkish and foreign literature. When the relationships between religion/spirituality and the internet, virtual world, digital world, artificial intelligence, metaverse, etc., are added to this dilemma with the supertitle of technology, it is necessary to create a nomenclature to express these relationships so that the studies can proceed in a healthier way.

The new concept of spirituality created by postmodernism is differentiated from religiosity in cyberspace in a way that supports “all kinds of individualistic orientations, private sources of pleasure, tools for material satisfaction, and even the search for resources in harmony and self-development in spiritual relaxation” (Alıcı, 2018, 15). Therefore, it is recommended that forms of spirituality that cannot be included within the boundaries of traditional religion, which we refer to as digital religion because of their existence in cyberspace, be incorporated into a new nomenclature.

First, the definitions of religion and spirituality should be clarified in studies that address the relationship between technology and religion/spirituality. To this end, researchers should seek answers to the following questions:

1. Does the definition in the study include religion or spirituality?
2. Does it refer to an institutionalized religion in the context of any religion?
3. If it is spirituality, is it religious spirituality or nonreligious

spirituality?

4. If it is religious spirituality, is it a spirituality formed from a mixture of religions in the context of religious pluralism or a spirituality belonging to a single religion?

5. If it is nonreligious spirituality, what is the sacredness attributed to it?

Suppose we are discussing a particular religion and its associated spirituality. In that case, using the definition of religion may be preferable. However, when a nonreligious perspective on spirituality or spirituality within the context of religious pluralism is considered, it is more appropriate to use a definition of spirituality tailored to this framework. Correctly applying the definitions of religion and spirituality in relation to technology will facilitate the studies conducted in this area. The results of this research revealed that nonreligious spirituality, spirituality in the context of religious pluralism, and spirituality experienced through things, objects, events, and situations, which are the means of a spiritual quest by attributing sacredness, were evaluated within the definition of cyberspirituality. In line with the definitions, cyberspirituality can be preferred as a subtitle to express the relationship between technology and spirituality.

In a study by Kızılgeçit and colleagues (2023, 164-165), an artificial intelligence (AI) robot was asked questions about belief and nonbelief. In these questions, the robot mentioned the distinction between religion and spirituality. It also stated that the sacred can be found through a secular search outside of religion, that belief is a useful tool, and that other beliefs should be explored. The robot also suggested that institutional religions will be replaced by individual beliefs in the future and that this will provide an opportunity for atheism. The answers provided by the AI robot indicated that it would be more accurate to use the title spirituality in the context of technology rather than cyberspirituality.

An understanding of the sacred that moves away from religion and toward spirituality embraces religious pluralism by recommending that multiple beliefs be tried simultaneously or separately, and individual knowledge of spirituality and atheism may emerge as different forms or pursuits of cyberspirituality (Kızılgeçit et al., 2023, 164-165). If the AI in question operates within such an infrastructure, it would be more

appropriate to use the term “spirituality” rather than “religion” for these issues in this digital space. It is believed that the nomenclature of cyberspirituality effectively captures the boundaries and scope of the subject.

It is considered more appropriate to include studies that clearly define religion, examine the principles of belief and worship within that religion, discuss the practice or life of that religion, and explore the spirituality experienced within that religion under the title of “religion” within a nomenclature such as “digital religion”. The term “cyberspirituality” also avoids confusion, especially in cases where religion and spirituality are seen as opposing concepts. Using the nomenclature of cyberspirituality, which views religion and spirituality as inclusive and intertwined, will facilitate classification in the context of religion and technology, as well as the relationship between spirituality and technology.

All types of spirituality that we can include in the spiritual but not religious (SBNR) group fall under the nomenclature of cyberspirituality. It seems more appropriate to consider spiritual orientations such as experiencing a kind of spirituality by receiving spiritual benefits from a specific religion without belonging to any religion, experiencing spirituality from more than one religion at the same time, and experiencing a kind of spirituality by perceiving the sacred from another religion while belonging to a religion or without any religious structure in the context of spirituality rather than religion. Cyberspirituality may be preferred for those who experience spirituality in the virtual world of the internet.

Digital spaces offer individuals the opportunity to live their spirituality independently of religious structures. In many countries, actual religious structures are being used less and less by people (Kaewkitipong et al., 2023, 5). Gálik and Gálikova Tolnaiová (2023) argue that new digital media and audio-visual technologies cannot provide authentic personal spirituality but can, at best, support genuine spirituality and its development. According to them, the digital ecosystem, by its nature and character, interrupts quiet, focused spirituality and access to the mystical depths of spirituality to some extent. Therefore, nontraditional spirituality cannot be fully equivalent to traditional offline spirituality. With the shift in the cultural paradigm toward digital media, nontraditional online spirituality is gaining

traction. In contrast, traditional spirituality appears to be slowing down. This can be seen as a challenge for conventional religions (Gálik - Gálikova Tolnaiová, 2023, 357). For the above reasons, to avoid confusion in the field, it may be preferable to use the concept of cyberspirituality as an autonomous part of digital religion rather than as a subset of digital religion. The interaction between human behavior and technology will trigger significant changes in how spiritual experiences occur and in how they will be understood by future generations (Kaewkitipong et al., 2023, 5). Therefore, the boundaries of religion and spirituality in cyberspace must be clearly defined.

In academic studies, cyberspirituality was first explored through social media tools, including Facebook and Twitter, as well as online forums, blogs, and computer games. The introduction of the concept into the literature has been achieved through research in these areas. Given the breadth of meanings attributed to spirituality, these areas provide valuable data for contemporary studies of cyberspirituality. In addition, the concepts of artificial intelligence (AI), metaverse and transhumanism, which have recently entered our social and individual lives, have also taken their place among those that need to be evaluated in the context of cyberspirituality (see Alıcı, 2022; Seppälä, 2023; Acar, 2023; Yamaç, 2023; Cambroner, 2023; Puzio, 2023; Yılmaz, 2023; Bingaman, 2023; Kızılgeçit et al., 2023). Religion and spirituality are increasingly present on the aforementioned platforms. In this context, it has also gained a place in theoretical and applied academic studies. In the hope that a more systematic and comprehensible classification will contribute to the literature, the study data were evaluated to determine whether the concept of cyberspirituality can be used in conjunction with the idea of digital religion

Conclusion

This study aimed to introduce the concept of cyberspirituality into the Turkish literature, particularly in the field of the psychology of religion, as a proposed solution to the complexity arising from the transfer of religious and spiritual concepts into the digital environment. Cyberspirituality, which we consider an autonomous subform of spirituality in the distinction between religion and spirituality, is a technology-centered, experiential form of spirituality that differs from

traditional religions; it is nourished by pluralism, encompasses nonreligious/secular and new forms of sacredness, and aims to find personal meaning, identity, and a sense of belonging. From the perspective of the psychology of religion, cyberspirituality represents a new experiential domain in which meaning-making, sacred perception, and spiritual coping are structurally mediated by digital environments. Rather than evaluating spiritual experiences produced, shaped, and sustained in the digital environment within offline religion or digital religion, the terminological and conceptual framework has been discussed to understand the nature of these spiritual experiences.

This study has two original contributions. The first step is to introduce the concept of cyberspirituality into the Turkish literature systematically. The second goal is to propose a new autonomous naming and classification system to clarify the complexity surrounding the positioning of concepts related to religion and spirituality in the digital environment. This framework clarifies the conditions under which the idea of cyberspirituality can be used, providing a more precise conceptual boundary for future empirical and theoretical studies. The proposed approach emphasizes that the concept of cyberspirituality cannot be entirely subsumed under the idea of digital religion. On the basis of a model that treats religion and spirituality as separate concepts, it is argued that cyberspirituality represents an alternative form of spirituality experienced in the digital world, encompassing not only the experiences of traditional religions but also nonreligious, innovative, and secular beliefs and lifestyles. In this respect, cyberspirituality is not merely a matter of technological innovation; it is an emerging field of study that requires methodological, theoretical, and interdisciplinary research.

A systematic examination of religious and spiritual experiences mediated by technology, whether individual or communal, is necessary to clarify the theoretical framework of cyberspirituality. It is believed that the concept of cyberspirituality, which we have attempted to examine at a conceptual and theoretical level, will provide a foundation for future studies. Many research questions and topics can be built upon the foundation presented in this article:

- It is essential to reflect the concept we address from the perspective of the psychology of religion on individuals in scientific studies. In this context, VR-based places of worship, virtual rituals,

digital games, social media applications, and artificial intelligence-supported applications, as mentioned in the study, should be explored in practical and experimental dimensions through user participation.

- A scale development study can be conducted for cyberspirituality.
- Studies can be conducted on the concept of cyberspirituality in laboratories offering virtual reality experiences.
- Comparative studies can be conducted to examine how different religious traditions, cultural contexts, and technological ecosystems prepare the ground for cyberspirituality.

These research suggestions aim to determine the role of cyberspirituality in the psychology of religion and to understand the spiritual experiences that arise in technological environments more systematically.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

FUNDING

The author received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Acar, Ali Kemal. "Din ve Teknoloji Etkileşiminde Yapay Zeka ve Transhümanizm'e Yaklaşımlar". *Pamukkale Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 10/1 (2023), 380-406. <https://doi.org/10.17859/pauifd.1267034>
- Ağılkaya-Şahin, Zuhul. "Hristiyan Gelenekte Manevi Bakımın Teorik Temelleri". *Spiritual Psychology and Counseling* 1/1 (2016), 47-77. <http://dx.doi.org/10.12738/spc.2016.1.0002>
- Alıcı, Mustafa. "Metafizik Kutsallıktan Sanal Gerçekliğe: Dijital Din". *AKRA Kültür Sanat ve Edebiyat Dergisi* 10/27 (2022), 253-278. <https://doi.org/10.31126/akrajournal.1052248>
- Alıcı, Mustafa. "Dindar Değil Maneviyatçıyım: Postmodern Din Bilimlerinde Maneviyat-Dindarlık Tartışmaları". *AKRA Kültür Sanat ve Edebiyat Dergisi* 6/16 (2018), 11-20. <https://doi.org/10.31126/akrajournal.454620>

- Altaş, Nurullah. "Hastanelerde Dini Danışmanlık Hizmetleri: Türkiye Uygulaması Üzerine DeneySEL Bir Araştırma". *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 39 (1999), 599-659.
- Amram, Yosi. "What is Spiritual Intelligence? An Ecumenical, Grounded Theory". Palo Alto, CA: Institute of Transpersonal Psychology Working Paper 2007, 1-31. https://intelligensi.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/what_is_SI_Amram_wrkg_paper.pdf
- Atalay, Mustafa Özgün - Tunç, Yusuf Erdem - Erkengel, Hazel Ceren. "Cyber-Spirituality in the Workplace". *Spirituality Management in the Workplace*. ed. Fahri Özsungur - Fevziye Bekar. 359-382. Leeds: Emerald Publishing, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-83753-450-020231016>
- Ayten, Ali. *Din ve Sağlık: Kavram, Kuram ve Araştırma*. İstanbul: Marmara Akademi Yayınları, 2020.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994.
- Bertolotti, Tommasa - Cinerari, Carolina. "The Gospel According to Google: The Future of Religious Niches and Technological Spirituality". *European Journal of Science and Theology* 9/1 (2012), 41-53.
- Bingaman, Kirk A. "Religion in the Digital Age: An Irreversible Process". *Religions* 14/1 (2023), 108. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14010108>
- Cambroner, Marcelo López. "Metaverse, Religions, and Metahumans: A Window to a Hypercontrolled Post-pandemic World". *Scientia et Fides* 11/1 (2023), 121-135. <https://doi.org/10.12775/SetF.2023.010>
- Campbell, Heidi (ed.). *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*. London: Routledge, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203084861>
- Campbell, Heidi. "Considering Spiritual Dimensions Within Computer-Mediated Communication Studies". *New Media & Society* 7/1 (2005), 110-134. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1461444805049147>
- Campbell, Heidi. "This is My Church: Seeing the Internet and Club Culture as Spiritual Spaces". *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*. ed. Douglas E. Cowan - Lorne L. Dawson. 107-122. New York - London: Routledge, 2004.
- Cobb, Jennifer J. "A Spiritual Experience of Cyberspace". *Technology in Society* 21 (1999), 393-407. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-791X\(99\)00019-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-791X(99)00019-6)
- Çakır Berzah, Meral - Çakır, Mustafa. "İş Hayatında Maneviyat Yaklaşımı Ne Vaad Ediyor?". *Yönetim Bilimleri Dergisi* 13/26 (2015), 135-149.
- Dangwal, Kiran Lata - Singh, Shireesh Pal. "Enhancing Spiritualism in Virtual World". *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education* 13/2 (2012), 76-83.
- Demirtaş, Kübra. *Siber Maneviyat Bağlamında Dijital Oyun ve Oyuncular Üzerine Nitel bir Araştırma*. İstanbul: Marmara University, Social Sciences Institute, Master's Thesis, 2024.

- Dereli, Mustafa Derviş. *Dini Kimliklerin Sosyal Medyada Akışkanlaşması: Siber-Etnografik Bir Araştırma*. Kayseri: Erciyes University, Social Sciences Institute, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2018.
- Düzgüner, Sevede. *Maneviyat Algısı ve Yansımaları*. İstanbul: Çamlıca Yayınları, 2021.
- Emmons, Robert A. "Is Spirituality an Intelligence?: Motivation, Cognition, and the Psychology of Ultimate Concern". *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 10/3 (2000), 3-26. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327582IJPR1001_2
- Emmons, Robert A. - Paloutzian, Raymond F. "The Psychology of Religion". *Annual Review of Psychology* 54 (2003), 377-402. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.54.101601.145024>
- Eresso, Meron. "Sacralising Cyberspace: Online Religious Activism in Ethiopia". *Modern Africa: Politics, History and Society* 3/2 (2015), 127-154.
- Gálik, Slavomir - Gáliková Tolnaiová, Sabina. "Possibilities and Risks of Traditional and Non-Traditional Spirituality in Cyberspace". *Studia Elbląskie* 24 (2023), 349-361.
- Gálik, Slavomir. "Cyber-Spirituality as a New Form of Religion?". *European Journal of Science and Theology* 11/6 (2015), 5-14.
- Garner, Stephen. "Techno-spirituality". *Greenflame*. Accessed 30 December 2025. <http://www.greenflame.org>
- George, Sam. "Emerging Youth Cultures in the Era of Globalization: Technoculture and Terrorculture". *One World or Many? The Impact of Globalization on Mission*. ed. Richard Tiplady. 33-53. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2003.
- Giacolone, Robert A. - Jurkiewicz, Carole L. (ed.). *Handbook of Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Performance*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2003.
- Hackett, Rosalind I. J. "Religion and the Internet". *Diogenes* 211 (2006), 67-76. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0392192106069015>
- Hojsgaard, Morten T. "Cyber-religion: On the cutting edge between the virtual and the real". *Religion and Cyberspace*. ed. Morten Hojsgaard - Margit Warburg. 50-63. London: Routledge, 2005.
- Işıklı, Şevki - Gökbayrak, Hilal. "Dijital Din Teorisi: Dijital Din Geleneksel Dine Karşı". *Yapay Zekâ, Transhümanizm ve Din*. ed. Muhammed Özdemir. 105-145. Ankara: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 2021.
- Jackelen, Antje. "What is 'Secular'? Techno-Secularism and Spirituality". *Zygon* 40/4 (2005), 863-874. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9744.2005.00713.x>
- Jacobs, Stephen. "Virtually Sacred: The Performance of Asynchronous Cyber-Rituals in Online Spaces". *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 12 (2007), 1103-1121. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00365.x>
- Kaewkitipong, Laddawan - Beaunoyer, Elisabeth - Ractham, Peter - Guitton, Matthieu J. "Augmented Spirituality: Renewing Human Spirituality in a Technology-Driven World?". *Computers in Human Behavior* 148 (2023), 107904. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2023.107904>

- Karagöz, Sema. *İşyeri Maneviyatı: Akademisyenlerle Nitel Bir Araştırma*. Ankara: İlahiyat Yayınları, 2023.
- Kinast, Robert. "Sacred Space and Time in the Computer Age". *The Way @Cyberspirituality* 40/3 (2000), 222-232.
- Kızılgeçit, Muhammed - Çinici, Murat - Okan, Nesrullah. "Yapay Zekâ Sohbet Robotu CHATGPT ile İnanç-İnançsızlık, Doğal Afet ve Ölüm Konuları Üzerine Nitel Bir Araştırma: Din ve Maneviyatın Psikolojik Sağlığa Etkileri". *Ağrı İbrahim Çeçen Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 9/1 (2023), 137-172. <https://doi.org/10.31463/aicusbcd.1275061>
- Klenke, Karin. "E-Spirituality: Spirituality at the Confluence of Affect and Technology". *Journal of Management, Religion & Spirituality* 4/2 (2007), 234-268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766080709518659>
- Koenig, Harold. "The Framework of Religious-Spiritual Counselling: Religion, Spirituality, and Health: Research, Clinical Applications, and Resources". *Religious-Spiritual Counselling & Care*. ed. Ali Ayten - Mustafa Koç - Nuri Tınaz - Mehmet Ali Doğan. 15-32. İstanbul: DEM Yayınları, 2016.
- Köse, Ali - Ayten, Ali. *Din Psikolojisi*. İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2012.
- Lee, Joon Seong. *Digital Spirituality and Governmentality: Contextualizing Cyber Memorial Zones in Korea*. Ohio: The College of Communication, Ohio University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2006.
- Magerstädt, Sylvie. "Upload, Cyber-Spirituality and the Quest for Immortality in Contemporary Science-Fiction Film and Television". *Religions* 15/1 (2024), 109. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15010109>
- McDonald, D. *Playground. TV: An Online Experiential Prayer Exercise*. Portland: George Fox University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2006.
- Pargament, Kenneth I. "The Psychology of Religion and Spirituality? Yes and No". *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 9/1 (1999), 3-16. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327582ijpr0901_2
- Puzio, Anna. "Theology Meets AI: Examining Perspectives, Tasks, and Theses on the Intersection of Technology and Religion". *Theologie und Künstliche Intelligenz* 1 (2023), 29-44.
- Ronel, Natti - Gan, Ramat I. "The Experience of Spiritual Intelligence". *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 40/1 (2008), 100-119.
- Ryan, Tamlyn. *Virtual Spirituality: The Negotiation and (Re)-Presentation of Psychic-Spiritual Identity on the Internet*. York: University of York, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2012.
- Şengül, Fatma. "Does Imitation Preserve the Original?: Exploring Spiritual Intelligence in the Interplay between Human and Artificial Intelligence". *Spiritual Psychology and Counseling* 10/1 (2025), 101-125. <https://doi.org/10.37898/spiritualpc.1579029>
- Seppälä, Serafim. "A Sacred Cyberspace? Towards the Ontology of Virtual Worship". *Review of Ecumenical Studies* 15/1 (2023), 105-122.

- Servais, Olivier. "Funerals in the World of Warcraft: Religion, Polemic and Styles of Play in Videogame Universe". *Social Compass* 62/3 (2015), 362-378. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0037768615587840>
- Seyyar, Ali. "Çalışma Hayatında ve İşyerinde Maneviyat". *Kamuda Sosyal Politika* 11/3 (2009), 42-52.
- Sokolow, Alexandr Kirby. *Cyberspirituality: Constructing Religion through the Internet*. Connecticut: Wesleyan University, The Honors College, Master's Thesis, 2014.
- Tobin, Ronan. "A Hitchhiker's Guide to Cyberspirituality". *The Furrow* 55/11 (2004), 591-597.
- Vallikatt, Jose. *Virtually Religious: Myth, Ritual, and Community in World of Warcraft*. Melbourne: RMIT University, School of Media and Communication College of Design and Social Context, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2014.
- Yamaç, Muhammed. "Metaverse'te Dinî ve Toplumsal Tezahürler". *Dinbilimleri Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 23/1 (2023), 29-57. <https://doi.org/10.33415/daad.1210422>
- Yılmaz, Mert Can. *Divine Alignment: A Survey-Based Study on How Religion Influences Expectations for AI Alignment*. Sweden: Uppsala University, Department of Theology, Master's Thesis, 2023.
- Yust, Karen Marie - Hyde, Brendan - Ota, Cathy. "Cyber Spirituality: Facebook, Twitter and the Adolescent Quest for Connection". *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 15/4 (2010), 291-293. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1364436X.2010.539007>
- Yust, Karen Marie. "Digital Power: Exploring the Effects of Social Media on Children's Spirituality". *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 19/2 (2014), 133-143. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1364436X.2014.924908>
- Zugermayr, Sari L. *The Influence of Relationships, Spirituality, and Technology on Female Adolescent Identity Development in 21st Century America*. New York: State University of New York, Empire State College, Master's Thesis, 2013.

TRANSHUMANISM: A RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT OPPOSING RELIGION IN THE DIGI AGE

Ahmet Dağ

Bursa Uludağ University,

Bursa-Türkiye

ahmetdag@uludag.edu.tr

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6173-9966>

&

Ahamadou Sylla

Bursa-Türkiye

ahamadou_sylla@yahoo.fr

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7919-7392>

Abstract

Transhumanism is a philosophical, scientific, technological, cultural, and ideological movement holding that human beings can be significantly improved mentally, physically, and biologically through current and future technologies. It is an influential movement with a mental, religious, and scientific structure that is considered to be able to transform human beings and their lives. Transhumanism, which is also based on information technology, is not only related to philosophy and science but also to religious or theological roots. The similarity between religion and transhumanism, which has mystical, Gnostic, and theological roots, is not limited to the promise of heaven; it also includes the pursuit of immortality and the ideal of the enhanced, God-like human. In addition to its theological origins, transhumanism, which has similarities and differences with theological approaches,

Ilahiyat Studies

e-ISSN: 1309-1719

Volume 17 Number 1 Winter/Spring 2026

DOI: 10.12730/is.1661932

Article Type: Research Article

Received: March 20, 2025 | *Accepted:* June 20, 2026 | *Published:* June 30, 2026.

To cite this article: Dağ, Ahmet - Sylla, Ahamadou, "Transhumanism: A Religious Movement Opposing Religion in the Digi Age". *Ilahiyat Studies* 17/1 (2026), 195-211. <https://doi.org/10.12730/is.1661932>

This work is licensed under *Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International*.

seems to have positive and negative implications for life. Its positive and negative implications for human life will cause religious beliefs to face threats or change the way religions view life. Although transhumanism has a secular and scientific structure, it has a religious character in terms of its origins and goals. In this paper, the religious origins of transhumanism, with its claims of secularization, worldliness, scientificization, etc., a new type of humanism, its similarities and differences with religion, and its impact on the digital world, are discussed.

Key Words: Transhumanism, religion, technology, digitalization

Introduction

Transhumanism is a movement associated with the cultural and theological roots of Western thought. Although transhumanism is seen as a rational, scientific, and technologically based, naturalistic, evolutionary, and atheistic movement, it is a culture and ideology inspired by religions (especially Christianity and Buddhism, etc.), mythologies (Sumerian, Greek, Norse) and gnostic (Hermeticism) movements. Transhumanism aims for both eternity and augmented humanity, in other words, the ideal of “eternal life” and “deified human beings”; this is an indication that it is a “religious” movement. Movements such as transhumanism, envision a technological evolution in which homo-sapiens will transform into homo-cybernetekus or techno-sapiens through digital, cybernetic, genetic, and biomedical technologies. They see current and possible future technologies as tools and possibilities for the next stage of humanity. Transhumanism is seen as a new religious movement with charismatic leaders, sanctified myths, eschatologies of human perfection and theosis (Hans - Theophil, 2024, 2).

Although it has a secular, scientific, cultural, and ideological structure, transhumanism, which is a technology-based movement, has a religious character in terms of its inspirations, origins, and goals. Considering the claims of transhumanism, which is an effort to play God and is quite distant from traditional religions, it is difficult to claim that it is not a religious movement. Transhumanism has a religious nature not only in terms of its aims or promises but also in terms of its beliefs. Unlike traditional beliefs, transhumanism, which has the characteristics of a belief system, aims not to be supernatural but to become a divine being in nature, above human capacity (Alici, 2023,

6). This divine being it aims for is the human being, augmented or empowered by the possibilities of technology.

The relation of the origins and goals of transhumanism to religion (Christianity) reveals the relationship that exists between theology and technology. Because of the relationship between theology and technology, transhumanism is also a techno-theological movement. It is wrong to consider that technology has no theological roots or relationships. As the largest and most influential technoscientific and philosophical movement of the 21st century, transhumanism's relationship with religion needs to be revealed. While it makes secular claims, transhumanism has religious roots. It has a relationship with religion in terms of goals or promises it seeks to achieve and the cultural codes it carries and thus with the theological roots of Western thought.

1. Technological Version of the New Age: Transhumanism, a Religious Movement

Although Bostrom says that the roots of the transhumanism movement can be traced back to the Epic of Gilgamesh (Samuelson, 2005, 55), this only extends to the similarity of this myth with the narrative of the quest for immortality only. The concept of the transhuman is reminiscent of the concept of transhumanism, first used in 1957. This concept, similar to one used by Dante Alighieri (1265 - 1321), is difficult to define. For instance, Dante states that the concept of *trasumanar*, which is difficult to characterize, can only mean "going beyond man or transcending him" (Cole-Turner, 2022, 33). In his article "Christian Transhumanism", R. Cole-Turner argues that the term *trasumanar*, as used by Dante, expresses the transformation experienced by Christians as they ascend into the presence of God. Referring to biblical themes Cole-Turner, who argues that transhumanism has Christian roots, cites the following passage from, John 3-2: "Dear brothers and sisters, we are already children of God, but we have not yet been shown what we will be. But we know that when Christ appears, we will be like Him. For we shall see Him as He is." Cole-Turner claims that some statements prompt discussions on human development (Mercer - Trothen, 2021, 51).

The Christian theologian Philip Hefner has proposed the interesting idea that human beings are cocreators with God. Garner points out that

human beings have something in common with God: creation (Garner, 2015, 232). Created in God's image/imago Dei, humans are biblically designated as stewards of the created order. Humans are responsible for caring for the "garden" (the world) by keeping it beautiful and developing it. Man works together with God to recreate as a cocreator using his God-given talents. The concept of created cocreators is the theological basis for the idea that one can partner with God to bring about good through powerful technologies. Technology can be a blessing, like the hands of the traditional doctor. The concept of the cocreator is reminiscent of the Jewish concept of 'tikkun olam', which means repairing the world (Mercer - Trothen, 2021, 65-66). In this context, new technologies are tools that also have religious endeavors. As a matter of fact, Yeşilyurt states that there is a techno-theological process and that techno-theological content is seen primarily in biotechnology and digital technologies and it is also emphasized ideas of artificial intelligence, ecology, and social justice, cyborg motifs, ecclesiology, incarnation, and evolutionary theory (Yeşilyurt, 2020, 3630).

Max More, a pioneer of extropianism, is a proponent of transhumanism, which takes a clear stance against normative religions in the name of science. Many authors find it significant that "many people find it surprising and frustrating that religion persists despite enormous advances in scientific understanding", and they argue that this is unreasonable and out of sync with current reality (Ferrando, 2022, 37). Moreover, in his Extropian principles, he defines transhumanism as the functional equivalent of religion, whereas Gregory Jordan, who claims that transhumanism, a religion without dogma and with an active attitude, provides religious functions, calls for Humanity+3 to become a religious movement. While Laurent Alexandre dreams of Religion 2.0, Abdenmour Bidar, who sees spiritual transhumanism as a way out, claims that religions allow him to realize his long-prepared project (the deification of man) (Damour, 2019, 16). Foyer, who views transhumanism as an example of a religious phenomenon rather than a type of scientific approach, claims that transhumanism is a religion and that its symbolic dimension is expanding today (Foyer, 2019, 79). On the other hand, More says that transhumanism can function like a religion without being one and

questions whether it is truly incompatible with religion (More, 1990, 8-9).

Transhumanism, which claims that traditional religions are inadequate for developing an understanding of the world and lack a new proposal for the new world, has a religious structure in terms of the common goal of immortalizing and augmenting/deifying human beings. Because this movement has a structure that challenges traditional religions (turning human beings into super beings, eliminating old age, achieving immortality, etc.), it is possible that it will transform religious life and the religious. Authors such as Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and R. Geraci, who describe transhumanism as a combination of religious and secular motifs, say that transhumanism is an atheist ideology, but in its functions, it is a religious movement (Damour, 2017, 55; Tirosh-Samuelson, 2012, 718). Sharing several functions of traditional religions, transhumanism involves a progressive vision of history and a concern for transcendence; a concern to heal society by eliminating suffering, poverty, disease, etc.; and a quest for perfection. The difference between religion and transhumanism, which is similar to religion in its eschatological impulses, concerns the means. Transhumanism substitutes technology for prayer, ritual and even moral discipline (Damour, 2019, 16).

At the origins of transhumanism, whose religious aspect should not be ignored, there is the impatience to escape the human condition (weakness and death). As an ideological construct, the promises of transhumanism have a metaphysical or religious character. Unlike religions, transhumanism makes the unprecedented or unthinkable claim that salvation through technology is imminent (Ferry - Jousset-Couturier, 2016, 99). Inspired by the liberation and restoration of the human condition before the Fall, transhumanism seeks to save humanity from the "lottery of nature" by overcoming immortality and transcending bodily limits (Damour, 2017, 57-58). Rescued from this lottery, human beings are intended to evolve from a biological process to a cybernetic process. Human beings, who are "orga" in terms of their biological structure, are intended to be designed as a kind of "mecha" being. This is because transhumanism takes human beings and life from a perspective based on a material-based ontology and aims for technological evolution.

Transhumanism, which can propose a new grand narrative adapted to technological transformations and aims for an evolution accelerated by technologies, is a new form of religion that seeks to reformulate the definition and destiny of man. In fact, Julian Huxley, who first used the term transhumanism, in 1957, includes this in his definition. Huxley, a scientist and philosopher, saw transhumanism, a new ideology, as “evolutionary humanism” and “religion without revelation”, defining himself as a midwife on a mission to give birth to this “religion”. Huxley, who is a pantheist rather than a theist, who encourages people to reach the most perfect level with an evolutionary understanding, that is, to reach their original place in the universe, that is, to take “responsibility for their evolution”, has a mission that considers the “God hypothesis” unnecessary. In the 1980s, this mission was taken up by William Sim Bainbridge, who propagated Transhumanist theses. Bainbridge, who sees transhumanism as a new religious experience that will theoretically end all religions and practically as a “means of salvation”, argues that a form of religion must be invented in accordance with the development of technologies and proposes technology-adaptive religious engineering (transhumanism) (Damour, 2019, 15-16).

Transhumanism is also an accepted movement among Christian religious groups (Mormon Transhumanism, Russian Transhumanist Movement, Terasem etc.) (Yeşilyurt, 2021, 840). Christian theology, which tries to mediate between man and God to avoid extremes, does not allow the substitution of man for God, nor does it allow the perception of an “inert, irresponsible” man. In other words, while it does not find it right to play God, it also rejects efforts to empower/enhance man. According to proponents of this theology, the Church cannot use Christian teachings as a justification for excluding technologies. For example, there is no text in the Bible that says that God cannot reveal himself to the human soul when the body is frozen (Ferry - Jousset-Couturier, 2016, 103).

Finding that industrialized countries have a sullen population seeking to eliminate gods and priests, Terence claims that science expects this population to overcome the “human condition” by establishing its own transcendence, making reference to Montaigne. According to him, there is a “Christian Christ” theme in the transhumanism movement. Transhumanism seeks to develop an

unborn creature (a perfect conception), that is, a creature conceived outside of natural processes, just as God created a being in his own likeness in Jesus. Such an endeavor is an attempt to simulate the second coming of Christ (parousia). It is an endeavor that finds the salvation of humanity in the search for a heavenly Jerusalem, even if it contradicts earthly reality. The narrative of a promised land has become a synthetic body, a promised meat, liberated from all the contingencies of animal history (Terence, 2016, 10). Indeed, the artificial uterus and designer babies are the projection of these efforts.

Man is not only a being of thought but also a being of faith. Being a being of thought corresponds to his philosophical aspect, and being a being of belief corresponds to his religious aspect. Man's philosophical perspective and religious beliefs also affect the way he perceives himself and nature. It has also shaped technology on this plane. In fact, it was the developments in the field of technology that encouraged the imagination of the promised world/heaven in this world and the effort to overcome death. Virtual or digital spaces are seen as a possibility, offering an alternative world in which to escape the problems of the factual world. Proponents of digitization argue that God should bless the computer because the ability to build and maintain online relationships is similar to the ability to build and maintain a meaningful relationship with God (Brasher, 2001, 40). Benedict's interpretation of cyberspace highlights the link between virtual reality and Christian salvation. In cyberspace, it is hoped that there will be a better life, one of equality, the fulfillment of needs, happiness and better sex lives. In the hoped-for world, there will be robots to fulfill the requirements of biological life, learning will accelerate with singularity, and there will be a return from biological to mechanical life. The mechanical age of such a transformation offers more promises similar to traditional apocalypticism than to a god who will allow the new kingdom to be established (Delio, 2012, 149).

Again, Michael Benedikt argues that cyberspace is an extension of the religious desire to escape from earthly existence. The image of the city of paradise is a religious vision offered by cyberspace. The pursuit of a cybernetic paradise implies the realization of this desire that we can overcome paradise. Overcoming the body's limitations and its pain and death also means preparing for an artificial eschatological paradise. Artificial intelligence Transhumanists, who aim to give up the

human body for artificial environments, see giving up their bodies to prepare for the Heavenly City (just like a new species) as a positive step in the evolution of techno sapiens (Delio, 2012, 158).

As one of the attractive forces of transhumanism, artificial intelligence is seen not only as a technological application but also as one that has theological implications. Indeed, Daniel Crevier claims that artificial intelligence is compatible with the Christian belief in “resurrection” and “immortality”. In this respect, AI has an apocalyptic aspect. The apocalyptic world of artificial intelligence is transcendently other, transcending and replacing the human. The virtual kingdom, a transcendent plane of cyberspace, is seen as the place where history ends, suffering disappears and a truly meaningful life begins (Delio, 2012, 152). According to Crevier, who says that the replacement of the mortal suffering body with the material mechanical body comes from religion as the weaving of the mind, Jesus will be resurrected with a new body, and why not the machine? For Antje Jackele, who sees the development toward techno-sapiens as a step toward the kingdom of God, the goals of making the lame walk, the blind see, the deaf hear and healing the sick are in perfect harmony with the goals of scripture and technical development. Technology enables the new creation of Christ by continuing evolution. Most Transhumanists anticipate a postbiological future in which biological limitations such as disease, old age and death will be overcome, even becoming supracognitive beings in which sin can be overcome (Delio, 2012, 158, 163).

Transhumanism is based on nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology, and cognitive science technologies. These technologies and scientific studies are seen as possibilities that can realize efforts to empower human beings, delay their old age and ultimately make them immortal. Related to both religious sciences and philosophy, transhumanism is a movement with religious or theological roots. Operating at the intersection of philosophy, religion, and science, transhumanism functions as a multidimensional movement that aims to fundamentally transform the human condition and biological limitations through emerging technologies. These theological origins have led to similarities with the theological origins. There are differences as well as similarities. To understand the

similarities and differences of transhumanism in relation to religion or religion, it is necessary to make use of theological knowledge.

2. Transhumanism and Religion in terms of Similarities and Differences

Since transhumanism is a type of humanism, it is a scientific, cultural, technological, and ideological movement with claims such as secularization, profanation, and scientification. Its origins are mythological, gnostic, and cultural. Indeed, Nick Bostrom thinks of transhumanism as a movement based on myths or legends (Bostrom, 2005, 1). The Transhumanist movement, a religious or theological project, involves the use of genetic, nanotechnological and robotic applications to empower man and eliminate death in the name of a God-like being, Homo-Deus (Falk, 2017). Transhumanism, which appears as a utopian and futuristic design, aims to perfect human nature through technological means to increase its capacity to a desirable level and to grant human beings individual autonomy (Roden, 2015, 9).

The Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a 20th century prelate who advocated a vision of human evolution accelerated by technology, claimed that the human augmented by technology coincides with the concept of “God”. Transhumanism is, for some Transhumanists, a postsecular religion, even if it is misrecognized (Cannon, 2022, 59-60). Movements such as Buddhist and Mormon Transhumanism see similarities between the promises of religion and transhumanism. According to Michael LaTorra, who thinks that techno-science can increase people’s spiritual discipline, Buddhist Transhumanism, like traditional Buddhism, may aim to reduce suffering and achieve awakening, but it will do so through scientific knowledge and technological tools, not through asceticism or rituals (Ferrando, 2022, 41).

The religious roots of transhumanism cause it to both challenge the tenets of traditional and divine religions and be seen as a religious movement. As a product of postsecular society, transhumanism challenges the dichotomy between religion and science, religious and secular, and transcendent and immanent. This challenge is also seen as a possibility. Indeed, Tirosch-Samuelsen sees transhumanism’s self-definition as religion not as a problem but as a possibility (Tirosch-

Samuelson, 2022, 203). Given the state of religion in the public sphere today, he sees the existence of a religion such as transhumanism as useful for competition. How to meet the spirituality provided by religion is unclear. This is because transhumanism has a materialist and naturalist-based understanding of ontology. Indeed, Mercer argues that transhumanism, although it has religious, mythical, and gnostic foundations, also has a materialistic and mechanistic character. According to him, owing to this characteristic, transhumanism sees the human body as a machine that needs to be repaired and developed, while religion sees the human body as an element that will ultimately end (Mercer - Trothen, 2021, 73). In transhumanism, the human body is a matter that can be designed and empowered, whereas in religion, it is a mortal element that will decay.

The themes of Posthumanism, which is seen as the upper stage of transhumanism, include the reevaluation of traditional humanistic myths, the decentralization of the human, the human connection to other life forms and the planet, human enhancement, artificial intelligence, the ethics of technological development, and the blurring of human constructions in the contemporary world (Hans - Theophil, 2024, 5). Advocates of transhumanism claim that it is noble and glorious for humans to make nature “better”, a similar claim to religion. This claim has led to the discussion of who is the determinant and provider of the good. (Labrecque, 2017, 148). Transhumanism, which is an extension and intensification of the humanistic and anthropomorphist perspective, claims that religion’s discourses of immortality, eternal life, and the perfect human being are only promising. Rather than being a promise, it sees itself as a techno-theological movement offering the means to realize these aspirations. High technologies are the means by which expressions of perfection “beyond” are realized in this world. Visions of advanced technologies and proposals for the human race to improve the existing cosmic order reflect a contemplative understanding of the perfection of the natural world (Alici, 2023, 6).

Transhumanism is seen as a philosophy of life that fulfills some of the same functions as religion without resorting to belief in a higher power, a supernatural being. There are deep connections between transhumanism and religion in the context of the human desire to eliminate everything that limits the human being (Keleş, 2023, 49, 51).

There are those who emphasize that the intellectual origins of transhumanism stem from Christian beliefs in immortality, resurrection, and heaven (Keleş, 2023, 53). Indeed, R. G. Ingersoll wrote in 1875, “Our hope of immortality does not come from any religion, but almost all religions come from this hope”. (Ingersoll, 1902, 34). Transhumanism, whose religious character can be said to lie here, argues that biotechnological utopias are more possible than faith-related utopia. It is easier for the Westerner, whose spell Weber identifies as broken, to imagine the resurrection of his body than to envision his immortality (Terence, 2016, 10). The disenchantment of the world was caused by the reduction in physical, biological, and even psychological causality. It was thought that in this way, hegemony, control, and transformation could be brought about over the physical universe and even over human beings. The causality that gave rise to the mechanical process has been preserved in the cybernetic process.

Humanism, as a movement that emerged with the decline of religion, replaced God with the rational subject. The removal of God from the world stage led to the placement of man at the center. Humanism, with its promises of happiness, freedom, and equality, did not strive for immortality and heightened humanity. Transhumanism repeats the promises of humanism but also promises to immortalize man and make life eternal. In an effort to fill the void left by the “Death of God” declared by Nietzsche, transhumanism tries to fill this void by using current and future technologies. The contention that “the death of God is like the death of man” can also be seen as a symbolic sacrament of reduction to a discourse. From a posthumanist point of view, it can be argued that there is no external end to individual evolution, which is not related to any violent killing or transfer (Ferrando, 2022, 43).

Whereas theists claim that suffering is inevitable, Transhumanists reject biological inevitability and the natural human condition, believing and working toward the goal of human transcendence through technology (Keleş, 2023, 61). Transhumanism promises to fulfill human desires for long life, a youthful body, and excellent health and mental abilities. Christian theology tells man to give up his desires (Keleş, 2023, 71). The aim of transhumanism is to strengthen (increase or improve) human beings on a material basis, both mentally and

physically, whereas religion seeks to develop (perfect) human beings on a spiritual level.

While transhumanism's means of accessing transcendence are technology, religion's means are worship or rituals. Although the means and manners in which transhumanism and religion access transcendence differ, they are similar in terms of the goal of accessing transcendence. Indeed, Jousset-Couturier argues that although transhumanism and Christianity are seen as two seemingly opposing understandings and that although transhumanism has not emerged solely with the support of religion, they both have common goals in terms of promising transcendence. According to him, while Christianity promises transcendence through God through spiritual purification/salvation, transhumanism promises salvation from death through technological means by empowering or augmenting the human being (Ferry - Jousset- Couturier, 2016, 120).

Transhumanism is a process that we encounter with practical applications that are visible in our daily lives. Transhumanism, which is present in every part of life in the fields of health, education, economy, service, and the military, increases its impact with the contributions of high technology, cyber technology and artificial intelligence. The Transhumanist process is a process that will differentiate human life in the 21st century. This process has both weaknesses and opportunities. Considering Western thought, science and the technology it has created, there is the reality of the influence of the philosophical on religion or the opposition of the philosophical to religion. Transhumanism will change the perspectives of traditional religions with the possibilities of science, infinity/space, human cloning, genetic transformation, and information technology (Alici, 2023, 9). According to Transhumanists, traditional religions abuse the space of faith, which is nourished by superstitions that people do not question and accept, whereas transhumanism is the only activity that harmonizes, designs and gives meaning to the future (Alici, 2023, 15; see Jordan, 2006, 58-59).

The fact that transhumanism, a technological based movement aimed at immortal human beings and eternal life, is based on technology does not prevent it from being a cultural and religious movement. The fact that it sees technological tools as a possibility does not mean that transhumanism is a purely technical issue.

Transhumanism is a philosophical, cultural, ideological, and religious movement in terms of its discourses and aims. Transhumanists state that human beings were created in a half-baked form before they were fully matured (by nature, God or spontaneously etc.). A Transhumanist idea, the idea of fundamentally altering our creation to eliminate the possibility of making mistakes, cannot easily find a place in Islamic thought. The responsibility for improving one's own behavior lies entirely with the individual. Ultimately, it is the individual himself who will choose his own actions and be responsible for those actions. Islamic scholars or researchers need to address questions about the permissibility of intervention at a genetic level to encourage an individual to act in a "better" way (Dağ, 2021, 67)

The greatest problem facing humanity today is not the East-West clash of civilization but the transformation of traditional human species through transhumanism. Because a species (*Homo sapiens*) is to be transformed by the means of technology. Transhumanists claim that imperfect *Homo sapiens* has reached its retirement age and that its god is near his day of retirement (Harari, 2016, 387). By intervening in human biology, psychology, and physiology from outside, transhumanism seems to lead to a process of unpredictable consequences. The attempt to transcend the human is a narrative found in religions, especially Christianity. The justified dominance of the voluntary realization of the Christian dogma of the accidental transcendence of man, combined with science and technology, has led to ecological consequences that have spiraled out of control (Labrecque, 2017, 140).

Conclusion

Transhumanism seeks to realize its seductive promises of increasing human intelligence and physiology, prolonging life, achieving immortality, or perfecting and eternalizing world life with the power and possibilities of modern science and technology, as well as with the capabilities of science and technology that will increase in the future, through human efforts rather than a transcendent divine being. Far from the narrative of sublimation and a transcendent deity, transhumanism, which aims to increase the human through science and technology, positions itself as a secular project in place of religion. Transhumanism, which has goals such as Human 2.0, Life 2.0 and

Religion 3.0, aims for a technological evolution on the nature-human-life plane.

Processes such as rationalization, industrialization/mechanization, virtualization, or digitalization have created new societies and ways of life. Digitalization, which changes the understanding of value, is likely to change the content of religion and the way the religious believe and act. In the cyber-digital age, although the data on the viability of religion have increased, the change in and differentiation of traditional religious forms has been a natural process. This process has more destructive effects, especially in societies that are consumers of technology. The interaction between religion and robotics-virtuality not only reduces religiosity and erodes religious identities but also causes religion to lose its authenticity and experience the risk of virtualization. In fact, a study conducted in 68 countries between 2006 and 2009 on the link between robotics-automation applications and religion revealed that in countries where industrial robots or artificial intelligence applications are widely used, there is a rapid decrease in the rate of faith or religiosity compared to countries where these systems are not used (Jackson, 2023).

In the Transhumanist process, which is based on the development of technology and its tools, both the influence of traditional religions may diminish, and the rate of religiosity may further decline, and secularization may increase. Because transhumanism aims to develop human beings on the material plane, religions want to develop them on the spiritual spiritual perfection (known as *kemālāt* in Islamic discourse). In this respect, it also claims to be an alternative to religion. Transhumanists and advocates of new technologies claim that traditional religions are obstacles in the technological and cybernetic process and that they do not have a solution(s) to offer. According to them, religions do not have much to offer to this age and the people of this age. They see no harm in transforming or eliminating religions that are seen as obstacles.

While religions perceive human beings as spirit beings, transhumanism perceives human beings as mind or intelligence beings. While religion desires human beings to evolve in the spiritual plane and prepare them for eternal life, transhumanism wants to make this world a paradise by empowering humans in the material/body plane and gaining power in this world. Transhumanism, which aims to

do on the material plane what religion wants to do on the spiritual plane, aims to strengthen the human body and to improve human intelligence through singularization or chips and psychopharmacological drugs. Transhumanism has perceived human beings through a post-Cartesian understanding of matter and mind being. Transhumanism and posthumanism perceive life in accordance with their own conceptions of man and their understanding of being. Transhumanists seek ways to reach and surpass a certain perfection only in terms of human, scientific, and technical sources. Religion, on the other hand, unlike transhumanism, is for believers only and is based on the spiritual development of the human being (through the synergy of human will and effort) and hopes for technologies that will allow it to be perfected and enhanced.

Technology reduces the functional space of religion by extending the limits of human control. The greatest indicator of increased human control is virtualization or digitalization. This is because digital or online promises boundlessness. In the online space, social and religious identity has been transformed, thus reshaping religious life and human spirituality. Digitalization, which changes the understanding of values, also changes the content of religion and the religious. In the process of transhumanism, which sees digitalization/information technologies and artificial intelligence as important elements and possibilities of itself, it seems that the way religion is perceived, that is, the conception of religion, will change, as well as reduce the influence of religions in the world and change the figure of the religious.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND FUNDING

This study was supported by Bursa Uludağ University Research Projects Coordination Office under the Grant Number 1264. The authors thank to BUU BAP Unit for their supports

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alici, Mustafa. "Dinler Tarihi Perspektifinde Transhuman Din". *Dinler ve Transhümanizm*. ed. M. Yeşilyurt. 1-18. Ankara: Sonçağ Yayınları, 2023.

- Bostrom, Nick. "A History of Transhumanist Thought". *Journal of Evolution and Technology* 14/1 (Nisan 2005), 1-25.
- Brasher, Brande E. *Give Me That Online Religion*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001.
- Cannon, Lincoln. "Mormon Transhumanism". *Religious Transhumanism and Its Critics*. ed. Arvin Gouw - Brian Patrick Green - Ted Peters. 53-74. Lanham: Lexington Press, 2022.
- Cole-Turner, Ronald. "Eschatology and The Technologies of Human Enhancement". *Interpretation* 70/1 (2016), 21-33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020964315603683>
- Cole-Turner, Ronald. "Steps toward a Theology of Christian Transhumanism". *Religious Transhumanism and Its Critics*. ed. Arvin Gouw - Brian Patrick Green - Ted Peters. 129-142. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022.
- Dağ, Ahmet. "Dijital ve Transhümanist Dünyada Din ve Dindarın Durumu". *Dijitalleşme, Değerler ve Din Sempozyumu Bildiriler Kitabı*. ed. Esra Aslan - Emine Gönen Bayram - Abdussamet Kaya et al. 49-72. Diyarbakır: Dicle Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 2021.
- Damour, Franck. "Le Transhumanisme est-il Soluble Dans la Religion?". *Revue d'éthique et de Théologie Morale* 302/2 (2019), 11-27.
- Damour, Franck. "Transhumanism, a Christian Idea Gone Mad?". trans. Cadenza Academic Translations. *Etudes* 7 (2017), 51- 62.
- Delio, Ilia. "Transhumanism or Ultrahumanism? Teilhard de Chardin on Technology, Religion and Evolution". *Theology and Science* 10/2 (2012), 153-166. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2012.669948>
- Falk, Dan. "Godlike 'Homo Deus' Could Replace Humans as Tech Evolves". *NBC News*. Accessed 12 May 2025. <https://www.nbcnews.com/mach/technology/godlike-homo-deus-could-replace-humans-tech-evolves-n757971>
- Ferrando, Francesca. *Philosophical Posthumanism*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022.
- Ferry, L. - Jousset-Couturier, Beatrice. *Le transhumanisme: Faut-il Avoir Peur de l'Avenir?*. Paris: Eyrolles, 2016.
- Foyer, D. "Le Transhumanisme: Une Religion en émergence?". *Revue D'éthique et de Théologie Morale* 302/2 (2019), 73-86. <https://doi.org/10.3917/retn.303.0073>
- Garner, Stephen. "Christian Theology and Transhumanism: The 'Created co-creator' and Bioethical Principles". *Religion and Transhumanism: The Unknown Future of Human Enhancement*. ed. Calvin R. Mercer - Tracy J. Thothén. 229-244. Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2015.
- Hans, V. Basil - Theophil, Sandeep. "Religion in the Post Humanism World". *SSRN Electronic Journal* (2024), 1-17. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4808511>
- Harari, Yuval Noah. *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*. London: Harvill Secker, 2016.
- Ingersoll, Robert G. *The Works of Robert G. Ingersoll V. 12*. New York: The Dresden Publishing Co., 1902.

- Jackson, Joshua Conrad - Yam, Kai Chi - Tang, Pok Man - Sibley, Chris G. - Waytz, Adam. "Exposure to Automation Explains Religious Declines". *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 120/34 (2023), 1-11.
<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2304748120>
- Jordan, Gregory. "Apologia for Transhumanist Religion". *Journal of Evolution and Technology* 15/1 (2006), 55-72.
- Keleş, H. "Hristiyanlık ve Transhümanizm". *Dinler ve Transhümanizm*. ed. M. Yeşilyurt. 45-82. Ankara: Sonçağ Yayınları, 2023.
- Labrecque, Cory Andrew. "Genesis 2.0: Transhumanism, Catholicism, and the Future of Creation". *Religion and Human Enhancement: Death, Values, and Morality*. ed. T. Trothen - C. Mercer. 139-156. Cham: Palgrave, 2017.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-62488-4_9
- Mercer, Calvin - Trothen, Tracey. *Religion and the Technological Future: An Introduction to Biobacking, Artificial Intelligence, and Transhumanism*. Cham: Palgrave, 2021.
- More, Max. "Transhumanism: Toward a Futurist Philosophy." *Extropy* 6 (1990), 6-12.
- Roden, David. *Posthuman Life: Philosophy at the Edge of the Human*. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Terence, Mathieu. *Le transhumanisme est un intégrisme*. Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 2016.
- Tirosh-Samuelson, Hava., "Transhumanism as a Secularist Faith". *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 47/4 (2012), 710-734.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9744.2012.01288.x>
- Tirosh-Samuelson, Hava. "The Transhumanist Pied Pipers, A Jewish Caution Against False Messianism". *Religious Transhumanism and Its Critics*. ed. Arvin Gouw - Brian Patrick Green - Ted Peters. 183-214. Lanham: Lexington Press, 2022.
- Yeşilyurt, Muhammet. "Hristiyan Transhümanizmi: Hristiyanlığın Tekno-Eskatolojik Yeni Yorumu". *Dinbilimleri Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 21/2 (2021), 815-845.
<https://doi.org/10.33415/daad.938435>
- Yeşilyurt, Muhammet. "Hristiyanlığın 'Imago Dei' Öğretisinin Transhümanizmle Uzlaştırılmasının İmkânı". *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi* 9/5 (2020), 3624-3650. <https://doi.org/10.15869/itobiad.797477>

COSMIC DESTRUCTION AND THE ESCHATOLOGICAL THRESHOLD: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE APOCALYPSE MOTIF IN THE QUR'ĀN, MYTHOLOGY, AND TURKISH FOLK NARRATIVES

Kadir Gömbeyaz

Kocaeli University,

Kocaeli-Türkiye

kadir.gombeyaz@kocaeli.edu.tr

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5204-5564>

&

Fatma Aygün Erdem

İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim

University,

İstanbul-Türkiye

fatmaygun19@hotmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8220-0046>

Abstract

Since ancient times, images of the apocalypse, deluge, cosmic cataclysm, and divine punishment have provided the basis for narrative patterns that reveal the relation between man and time, ethics, and religion. According to many apocalyptic narratives, the dissolution of cosmos in the process of divine punishment is not an absolute destruction but a threshold beyond which new forms of order come into being. This study proposes that apocalyptic and cosmic destruction narratives, despite their various cosmological and theological assumptions, possess a common liminal structure that acts

İlahiyat Studies

e-ISSN: 1309-1719

Volume 17 Number 1 Winter/Spring 2026

DOI: 10.12730/is.1903328

Article Type: Research Article

Received: March 5, 2026 | *Accepted:* June 29, 2026 | *Published:* June 30, 2026.

To cite this article: Gömbeyaz, Kadir - Aygün Erdem, Fatma. "Cosmic Destruction and the Eschatological Threshold: A Comparative Analysis of the Apocalypse Motif in the Qur'ān, Mythology, and Turkish Folk Narratives". *İlahiyat Studies* 17/1 (2026), 213- 237. <https://doi.org/10.12730/is.1903328>

This work is licensed under *Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International*.

as a threshold between destruction and regeneration, chaos and order, mortality and transcendence.

Patterns of apocalyptic and cosmic destruction will be explored through a comparative analysis of Qur'ānic narratives, classical myths, and Turkish folklore narratives. Comparative textual analysis will be conducted as the primary methodology of the research, and the concept of liminality, borrowed from anthropology and narrative theory, will be the main framework of the research. Previous scholarly approaches have examined those traditions separately or have focused on thematic similarities among those traditions, while a holistic view of their liminal function has not been elaborated yet. Liminality in the current study is conceived as a transitional period when old structures are dismantled, transformed, and rearranged into the new one. The originality of the study consists in showing how different traditions use apocalyptic narratives as liminal structures by which cosmic transformation, moral reconstruction, and existential rebirth are narrativized.

The research results show that according to the Qur'ān, the apocalyptic cataclysm is an irreversible threshold in the linear understanding of time when the manifestation of divine power and absolute justice takes place through resurrection, judgment, and the hereafter. At the same time, mythological stories usually depict cosmic destruction within the cyclic understanding of time and renewal. The Turkish folk narratives combine features of both linear and cyclic time schemes. Thus, the apocalyptic narrative appears to be not only a narrative about the end but a multi-dimensional symbolic structure through which the human interpretation of finitude, sacred order, and existence occurs.

Key Words: Eschatology, apocalypse, cosmic destruction, liminality, the Qur'ān, mythology, Turkish folk narratives

Introduction

Eschatology, to the extent that it deals with concepts of the end of the universe, afterlife, and the future destiny of the cosmic order at the end, has been of paramount importance not only in sacred narratives but also in myths, memory and folklore. The concept of the “end” has been fictionalized through various means such as floods, cosmical disasters, divine wars and apocalypses; consequently, such narrative genres have created symbols which make sense of human relation to time, being, and the sacred.¹ Therefore, stories of apocalyptic visions

¹ Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York & Evanston: Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated, 1963), 54-77; Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and*

and cosmic doom cannot be seen as simple accounts of disaster; rather, they should be viewed as multiple threshold narratives, filled with metaphysical, moral, and ontological meanings.²

In the general context provided above, the central question posed by the present research paper is as follows: although the motifs of apocalyptic visions and cosmic destruction in Qur'ānic stories, mythologies, and Turkish folktales have been analyzed in terms of thematic commonalities before, still there exists a gap in providing a holistic and comparative understanding of their "liminal" role. However, the motif is important not only because it provides the construction of the notion of "the end", but also because it produces meanings in terms of moral responsibility, time conception, and existential beliefs. Using the concept of liminality proposed by Victor Turner, the apocalyptic motif can no longer be studied as a theological/mythological topic.³

The review of the relevant literature shows that in the general scope of Islamic philosophy and eschatology studies this theme has been approached mostly from the viewpoint of theology with the focus on the Qur'ān. These studies have considered in great detail topics such as the day of judgment, resurrection, and God's reckoning. The symbolic and doctrinal aspects of the Qur'ānic apocalyptic images have been thoroughly discussed. However, in these studies

History: The Myth of the Eternal Return, translated by Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 60, 73, 106, 107, 111, 124-125, 141-145; Sebastian Günther, "Eschatology", *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, ed. Muhammad Abdel Haleem - Mustafa Shah (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 472-487; Nida Tabassum Khan, "Eschatology: An Introduction", *Journal of Bio Innovation* 14/3 (2025), 530-535.

² This conceptualization applies the theoretical framework of "rites of passage" developed by Arnold van Gennep; see esp. Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom - Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 10-11. While van Gennep focuses on the transitions of individuals within a social structure through the concept of the "liminal" (threshold), this study extends this framework, later systematized as the "liminal phase" in broader social theory, to the macro-level of cosmic destruction, treating the apocalypse as a transitional threshold between two distinct existential orders.

³ This approach draws upon the concept of "anti-structure" (or *communitas*) as developed by Turner; see Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 94-97. Turner defines "anti-structure/*communitas*" as a liminal phase where social hierarchies and categories are suspended, creating a space for existential and sacred transformation, a framework that this study applies to the cosmic dissolution of the apocalypse.

mythological stories and Turkish folklore have been discussed indirectly and in the framework of rather vague comparisons.

The study of mythologies and folklore shows that the narratives about cosmic destruction have been analyzed in terms of cyclical time. Thus, in such frameworks, floods, the end of the world catastrophes, and wars of gods have been studied within the dialectic of order, chaos, and re-order. Ragnarök in Norse mythology, deluge in Mesopotamian mythology, and cosmic catastrophes in Greek mythology have been viewed as symbolic representations of the concept of the universal destruction. However, these studies have remained far from the systematic comparison with the concept of apocalypse in the Qurʾān; they have found it difficult to combine the revelation-based linear eschatology and the mythological cyclical view of time within one approach. In many mythological concepts of cyclical time, the concept of apocalypse is an attempt to cleanse time from its profane aspects and get back to the beginning.⁴ From this perspective, one can see that both linear and cyclic models of time can be considered the same human response to concerns about finiteness, meaning, and cosmic order.

But this model cannot be equated with the idea of the apocalypse from the Qurʾān. In the teachings of kalām, the *qiyāmah* does not imply purification of the existing world in view of its further transformation into new historic cycles. *Qiyāmah* means the end of this world and the entrance into an eternal state of justice and retribution. Consequently, while in mythology the end of the world usually serves as a prelude to a new cycle of history, it is placed in the context of linear sacred history according to the principles of Qurʾānic eschatology.

The research on Turkish folk narratives has mainly concentrated on the search for traces of pre-Islamic myths in folklore or peculiarities of Turkish oral folklore tradition. Such apocalyptic motifs like piercing the heavens, splitting the earth, cataclysms, and other extraordinary signs have been analyzed as symbolic phenomena of the oral tradition,

⁴ This perspective draws upon Mircea Eliade's conceptualization of the "myth of the eternal return". Eliade argues that archaic and religious man seeks to abolish "historical" or "profane" time through rituals and narratives of cosmic destruction, thereby recovering a primordial, sacred state of being. See Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History*, 51-92.

but the connection between those narratives, Qur'anic eschatology, and mythological cosmogonies has not been considered from a comparative perspective. The study of Cengiz Batuk⁵ provides important evidence that the idea of “the end of history” is a consistent mode of thinking in religious and mythological traditions. Nevertheless, the study does not consider the role of apocalyptic motifs as liminal signs nor conducts a comparative analysis of narratives from Qur'anic, mythological, and folkloric traditions.

Just like that, the study by Muharrem Kaya titled *Mitolojiden Efsaneye*,⁶ highlights the presence of Turkish mythology in folktales, but it lacks a comparative study with Qur'anic narratives or the use of Turner's notion of “liminality” and therefore falls short of being comparative structural.

In this context, the main deficiency in the literature is that there is not enough research about the structure of apocalyptic and catastrophic symbols as a kind of “threshold” ontologically and symbolically in the Qur'ân, myths, and Turkish folk narratives. Past studies⁷ have mostly analyzed these realms of narratives independently of each other, without investigating their structural continuity, transformation, and discontinuities through one unified conceptual frame of reference.⁸

This paper attempts to bridge the mentioned gap by analyzing the concepts of apocalypses and cosmic destruction as an ontological and symbolic boundary from the perspective of comparative narrative analysis of the Qur'ân, classical mythological narratives, and Turkish folktales. The contribution of this paper is primarily based on the

⁵ Cengiz Batuk, *Taribin Sonunu Beklemek* (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2003).

⁶ Muharrem Kaya, *Mitolojiden Efsaneye: Türk Mitolojisinin Türkiye'deki Efsanelerde İzleri* (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2011).

⁷ Yavuz Gözen, *Metinlerarasılık Bağlamında Eskatoloji Mitleri ve Dini Literatürde Kıyamet Tasvirleri* (Ankara: Ankara University, The Institute of Social Sciences, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2023); Nurdane Güler, “Kur'ân'da Kozmik Kıyamet ile Hesap Gününün İç İçeliği ve Yoruma Etkisi”, *Cumhuriyet İlahiyat Dergisi* 24/3 (2020), 1475-1496; Kader Hocaoglu Alagöz - Nagihan Baysal Yurdakul, “Eskatoloji Mitlerinden Kıyametnâmelere Geleneksel Türk Dünya Görüşünde Kıyamet Olgusu: Dâsitân-ı Mahşer-nâme Örneği”, *Korkut Ata Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* 11 (June 2023), 563-586; Onur Alp Kayabaşı, “Türk Mitolojisinde Eskatoloji Mitleri”, *Folklor/Edebiyat* 22/86 (2016), 167-180.

⁸ As Victor Turner emphasizes, such liminal moments are zones where social and cosmic structures dissolve, thereby allowing the human condition to emerge in its purest form. See Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 200.

understanding of the apocalypse not as a mere story of “the end”, but as a meaning-forming boundary situated between order and chaos, this life and the afterlife, and the past and the future.

With this aim, this study utilizes comparative narrative analysis, symbolic analysis, and thematic reading as its key methodological tools. Textual materials used in this research include selected parts of the Qurʾān devoted to the concepts of apocalypses and cosmic destruction, namely al-Takwīr, al-Infiṭār, al-Inshiqāq, al-Qāriʿah, and al-Zilzāl; mythological narratives such as the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Deucalion and Pyrrha story, Ragnarök, Pralaya, and the Osiris-Seth narrative; and Turkish folk narratives devoted to apocalyptic signs, cosmic disaster, petrification, ‘remaining with the wolf’ motif, and other end-of-time themes recorded in Anatolian and Turkic folk traditions. It needs to be highlighted that the comparative approach applied in this study does not assume any equivalence of ontological nature of the Qurʾān, mythological narratives, and Turkish folk narratives. While the Qurʾān is viewed as a revealed text in Islamic theology, mythological and folkloric narratives are analyzed as cultural discourses transmitted via literature and oral tradition. Therefore, the comparison undertaken in this study is restricted only to the symbolism, narrativity, and liminality of apocalyptic motifs represented in the analyzed narratives.

The article is structured in two main sections. In the first one, the relationship between cosmogonic and eschatological concepts is considered at the theoretical level in terms of cosmological destruction as a boundary. In the second part of this study, the motifs of apocalypses and cosmic destruction are analyzed comparatively in the framework of three subsections. The first subsection deals with the apocalyptic images in the Qurʾān in terms of the concepts of divine justice, individual accountability, and linear time. The second subsection discusses the motif of cosmic destruction in mythological narratives in terms of cyclical time. The third subsection deals with the apocalyptic and cosmic destruction motifs in Turkish folk narratives within the syncretic boundary framework of Islamic eschatological motifs and pre-Islamic mythological legacy.

1. The Apocalyptic Motif as a Liminal Threshold between Cosmogony and Eschatology

The term “threshold” used in the present study is based on the theory of liminality proposed by Victor Turner. On the basis of the

concept of rites of passage developed by Arnold van Gennep, Turner defines liminality as a transitional phase where old structures are put on hold while new ones may emerge.⁹ In this context, a threshold is impossible to interpret as an endpoint – it is a transitional phase between one state of being and another. As regards the apocalypse, the idea of liminality could be considered a useful concept in the interpretation of the destruction of the world as a transition to another order of things.

In the development of the history of religious thinking, there has always existed an attitude to regard eschatology and cosmogony as associated notions. It is believed that stories of the end of the world have been usually linked to problems of regeneration and creation of a new world order. In other words, eschatology does represent not only the teaching on the end of the world but also the teaching on its renewal.¹⁰

Such a correlation is best evidenced when considering the eschatology of the ancient civilizations. There have been many cases where the destruction of the cosmos does not necessarily imply the destruction of everything, for this means that the old system is being wiped out. In many stories where there are floods, fire, earthquakes, and even wars among the celestial objects, there has always been a resulting creation of the cosmos.¹¹

Whether they occur in the form of sacred writings, myths, or folklore, it is typical for apocalyptic themes to serve as symbolic indicators of great change. Apocalyptic symbols include disasters like floods, disruptions in the cosmos, flames, darkness, and other disruptions to nature that symbolize periods of instability within the current structure where great changes can occur. Liminal theory can provide an interpretation of these apocalyptic symbols as symbolic transitions rather than catastrophes.¹²

In Islamic belief, the archetypal imagery is conveyed by the idea of *qiyāmah*. The apocalyptic vision of the end of the world in the Qurʾān conveys images of cosmic destruction within the context of God's

⁹ Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 20.

¹⁰ Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 54-55.

¹¹ Batuk, *Taribin Sonunu Beklemek*, 43-45; Bilge Seyidoğlu, *Mitoloji Üzerine Araştırmalar: Metinler ve Tabliller* (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2017), 34-36.

¹² Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 54-55; Batuk, *Taribin Sonunu Beklemek*, 48-51.

judgment, moral reckoning, and resurrection. Thus, imagery of the tearing apart of the sky, the extinguishing of the stars, movement of the mountains, and turmoil of the oceans does not just convey the idea of the disintegration of the existing cosmic order but also highlights the aspect of divine justice being revealed and humans having to pay for their sins.¹³

However, a comparative study between Qur'ānic narratives, mythological narratives, and folktales shows that there are marked differences in the symbolism of cosmic destruction. Although in mythology destruction is always linked to cycles of renewal in the cosmos,¹⁴ the Qur'ānic understanding of destruction fits in a linear eschatology of judgement and resurrection.¹⁵ Folktales particularly in the Turkish-Islamic cultural framework incorporate elements of religious instruction together with themes that have been preserved in their story culture.¹⁶ Even though quite distinct in nature, all these tales make use of the image of disorder within the universe to provide answers to the most basic questions of order, morality, destiny, and the relationship between man and God. Apart from its cosmological and theological significance, apocalyptic writings could also serve the purpose of symbolic depiction of psychological transformation.¹⁷ Consequently, it might be suggested that the apocalyptic theme is a liminal archetype lying between cosmogony and eschatology. Besides being an indicator of the end of the world, it is also a way of explaining changes and continuities in the cosmos.

2. Apocalyptic (*Qiyāmah*) Imagery as a Threshold in the Qur'ān, Mythology, and Folk Narratives

Human beings' reflections about the end of the world have created an entire narrative universe where sacred, mythological, and folkloric tradition has approached the issues of cosmic order and its destruction and renewal. Despite the fact that each one of these traditions comes from a different epistemological system, their use of similar imagery of cosmic upheaval can be noted quite often.

¹³ Batuk, *Taribin Sonunu Beklemek*, 81, 188, 193, 203, 297, 320.

¹⁴ Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 46.

¹⁵ Günther, "Eschatology", *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, 472-487; Artem S. Dankanich, "Islamic Eschatology: Its Origins and Theological Interpretations", *VI Конгрес сходознавців* (Kyiv: Baltija Publishing, 2022), 132-135.

¹⁶ Kaya, *Mitolojiden Efsaneye*, 166-176.

¹⁷ Batuk, *Taribin Sonunu Beklemek*, 325.

In the Qurʾān, depictions of the apocalypse portray the collapse of the cosmic order through images such as the sky being torn apart¹⁸ or being ripped apart,¹⁹ the stars being dimmed²⁰ or scattered,²¹ the mountains being set in motion²² or vanishing like a mirage,²³ the seas boiling over,²⁴ and the seas burst forth.²⁵ Meccan *sūrah*s describe the Day of Judgment and the Hereafter in colorful detail. This type of verse allows us to contemplate humanity's existence and the mortality of our earthly reality.²⁶

Many mythological traditions share similar motifs. Tales of Ragnarök, great floods and challenges among the divine typically record the failure of a settled order and the rise of another.²⁷ Equally similar images are found in folklore where the earth cracks open, the sky shatters, and wondrous signs rise in the sky.²⁸ Influenced by Islamic eschatology and local cosmological traditions, these images of cosmic destruction are shared by many stories.

A comparison of these narratives shows a consistent pattern. Destruction of the world then often leads to the establishment of a new order. That is, the motif lies between two different understandings of time. Mythological stories tend to think about time as recurring in a series, while stories of revelation move towards a specific ending. The Qurʾān includes images of cosmic tumult associated with judgment and of the life to come. Typical mythical accounts generally consider events that fundamentally alter the relationship among the divine powers, the natural world, and humans. In folk tradition, elements of each approach are often fused together in different cultural contexts and applied to represent cultural aspects of things. The fact they are

¹⁸ Q 82/1. Unless otherwise stated, all English translations of Qurʾānic verses in this article are taken from M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qurʾan: A New Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹⁹ Q 84/1.

²⁰ Q 81/2.

²¹ Q 82/2.

²² Q 81/3.

²³ Q 78/20.

²⁴ Q 81/6.

²⁵ Q 82/3.

²⁶ Abū Maṣṣūr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Samarqandī al-Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt al-Qurʾān*, ed. Bekir Topaloğlu (İstanbul: Dār al-Mizān, 2007), 16/281-311; 17/85-110, 123-139, 177-186.

²⁷ Batuk, *Taribin Sonunu Beklemek*, 49-51; Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 60-61.

²⁸ Kaya, *Mitolojiden Efsaneye*, 168-176.

ubiquitous across so many different narrative traditions implies that questions of the future of our existence have been in human consideration for centuries. Facing this wider perspective, the next part looks at the Qur'ānic accounts of the annihilation of the cosmos and the specific position of those in a revelation-based perspective on the end of time.

2.1. The Motif of Cosmic Destruction as a Threshold in the Qur'ān

Although the Qur'ān is not comparable to mythology or folk narratives in terms of its nature and origin, its message has inevitably intersected with these traditions throughout history. The accusation of *asāṭīr al-awwālīn* (fables of the ancients)²⁹ made by the polytheists of the Jāhiliyyah period and the Qur'ān's direct rejection of this claim demonstrate that the distinction between revelation and mythological narratives was already recognized and debated in the earliest Islamic community. The fact that this accusation was raised particularly in connection with the denial of resurrection³⁰ also suggests that Arab society was familiar, albeit through altered forms, with narratives derived from earlier sacred accounts. In this context, the semantic structure of the relevant verses points to a revelatory metaphysical framework that distinguishes the Qur'ānic narrative from mythological traditions.³¹

The influence of revelation, which permeated nearly every sphere of life, became subject to diverse cultural interpretations under varying historical and social conditions. As these narratives circulated through oral tradition, they gradually gave rise to forms of storytelling in which mythological and folkloric elements became intertwined. Thus, while the Qur'ān cannot be equated with mythology, it nevertheless contributed indirectly to the formation of a rich and multilayered

²⁹ Q 6/25; Q 8/31; Q 16/24; Q 23/83; Q 25/5; Q 27/68; Q 46/17; Q 68/15; Q 83/13.

³⁰ Q 23/81-83; Q 27/68-69.

³¹ As Toshihiko Izutsu emphasizes in his semantic analyses, the Qur'ān adopted these ancient motifs and restructured them by integrating them into a radically new monotheistic ethical system. Through this process, traditional concepts were detached from their pre-Islamic tribal contexts and reoriented around a central framework of divine unity and moral accountability; see Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān* (Montreal & Kingston - London - Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 54.

narrative tradition within Islamic culture, particularly concerning conceptions of the end of the world and the afterlife.

Indeed, the scenes of cosmic destruction in the Qurʾān, which generally begin with the first blast of the Horn (*Ṣūr*), are presented through brief yet vivid descriptions. These portrayals are frequently linked, without any sense of discontinuity, to the narratives of resurrection and judgment that follow the second blast. This narrative structure demonstrates that the Qurʾān treats the cosmic end and the process of metaphysical reckoning within a unified framework of meaning.³² In examining the cosmic destruction associated with the first blast, it becomes clear that the Qurʾān's language and mode of expression regarding the end of the universe hold particular significance. The concepts employed to describe the end of the world refer not only to physical destruction but also to a theological, symbolic, and moral reckoning. In doing so, they perform a transformative function by calling human beings to assume responsibility in light of an awareness of the Hereafter. For this reason, the Qurʾān presents highly powerful and symbolic depictions of the end of the universe, portraying both the collapse of the established cosmic order and a transformation of universal proportions.

As the apocalyptic narratives were particularly concentrated in the Meccan *sūrah*s—in al-Takwīr, al-Infiṭār, al-Inshiqāq, al-Zilzāl, al-Ḥāqqah, al-Nabaʾ, and al-Qiyāmah—images of visual and aural intensity that were also designed to shock the beholder to the core were most striking. When these suras illustrate the fall of the foundations of the universal order, the breaking of the heavens, the scattering of the stars, the sweep of the mountains, the boiling of the seas; more than just annihilation, they refer to a metaphysical fracture through which the power of God's justice and absolute judgment is brought into effect. In the Qurʾān, however, these scenes are not only about destruction. They are closely linked to resurrection and the afterlife, where destruction is not the final end but is followed by renewal, re-creation, and resurrection, along with moral reckoning. In this way, Qurʾānic eschatology presents cosmic rupture as part of a larger process that also includes resurrection and divine judgment.

³² Güler, "Kurʾân'da Kozmik Kıyamet ile Hesap Gününün İç İçeliği ve Yoruma Etkisi", 1478-1479.

The narrative of the end of the universe, referred to in the Qurʾān as *al-sāʿab* (the Hour),³³ is expressed through images such as the sun being shrouded in darkness (*takwīr*), the sky being torn apart (*infītār*), and the sky being ripped apart (*inshiqāq*). These terms signify not only physical destruction but also the disruption of the fundamental balance of existence and the termination of the order recognized by nature. For instance, Sūrat al-Takwīr begins with the verses, “When the sun is shrouded in darkness, when the stars are dimmed, and when the mountains are set in motion...”,³⁴ presenting a scene where the universe ceases to be a cosmos and is transformed back into chaos. The expression “folded up” (*kuwwirat*) points to a metaphysical rupture through the meanings of both the cessation of light and the folding away of time. Similarly, Sūrat al-Infītār opens with the verse, “When the sky is torn apart.”³⁵ The expression “being torn apart” (*infatarat*) emphasizes the disruption of the heaven as a cosmic dome and the collapse of the order of the celestial realm.

In the Qurʾān, the occurrence of the apocalypse is generally portrayed as a cosmic upheaval in which the sky is torn apart, the stars are scattered, and the seas burst forth.³⁶ The earth is depicted as shaking violently in its final quaking, throwing out its burdens and revealing all that has taken place,³⁷ while the mountains will be like tufts of carded wool,³⁸ and will be blasted into dust and left as a level plain.³⁹ On that Day, the sun and the moon are brought together and the moon is eclipsed,⁴⁰ while the sky is ripped apart⁴¹ and the heavens are split apart with clouds, as the angels are sent down in streams.⁴²

The sun and the moon are joined together, and the heaven is shaken and rent asunder. In these narratives, cosmic elements such as

³³ The Qurʾān emphasizes the certainty of the coming of the Hour while simultaneously stating that its exact time remains hidden: “The Hour is coming – though I choose to keep it hidden– for each soul to be rewarded for its labour” see Q 20/15.

³⁴ Q 81/1-3.

³⁵ Q 82/1.

³⁶ Q 82/1-3.

³⁷ Q 99/1-4.

³⁸ Q 101/5.

³⁹ Q 20/105–107.

⁴⁰ Q 75/8-9.

⁴¹ Q 84/1.

⁴² Q 25/25.

the heaven, earth, mountains, stars, and seas appear on the stage as “witnesses” to the Day of Judgment. These are not merely natural elements but are also witnesses to the cosmic order. Therefore, their destruction signifies not only a physical end but also an ontological rupture through which the relationship between God and humanity is re-established and absolute justice is manifested. Following this destruction, the stages of resurrection (*ba‘th*), reckoning (*ḥisāb*), and punishment/reward (Hell/Paradise) begin. Thus, cosmic destruction is not just a catastrophe but a transition to a new reality.

According to this unique approach, the apocalyptic narrative signifies not merely an end but is understood as the opening of a new plane of existence where the absolute justice of God is manifested and His eternal judgment begins. In this regard, the narrative of cosmic destruction in the Qur’ān diverges epistemologically, theologically, and ontologically from the destruction-rebirth cycles found in mythological and folk narratives. Thus, with its conception of linear history and the idea of a unique end, Qur’ānic eschatology draws an original horizon in terms of both the perception of time and the order of existence. Islamic eschatology is positioned as a decisive force that shapes human behavior and encourages spiritual development, while also representing a significant intellectual discourse aimed at revealing metaphysical reflections on divine truth.⁴³

In the Qur’ān, cosmic upheaval is presented not merely as a terrifying and disruptive event but also as a moment of manifest clarity in which divine justice is fully revealed, all realities are brought to light, and the veils concealing the truth are removed. Therefore, Qur’ānic apocalyptic narratives represent both a process of rupture and a process of unveiling. Indeed, on that Day, humanity will be brought to judgement and none of its secrets will remain hidden.⁴⁴ In the apocalyptic scenes of the Qur’ān, the ideas of the “unveiling of truth” and “recreation” are particularly striking. In this regard, certain thematic parallels are observed between the Qur’ānic narratives and mythological accounts. However, a significant distinction emerges here: while Qur’ānic eschatology points to a “singular and definitive”

⁴³ Siti Humairoh et al., “The Concept of Eschatology in Islam: An Analysis of Fazlur Rahman’s Perspective and Al-Munir’s Exegesis on Surah Al-Infithar”, *Journal of Middle East and Islamic Studies* 11/1 (2024), 2.

⁴⁴ Q 69/18.

end within a linear understanding of time,⁴⁵ mythological narratives are generally cyclical and built upon continuously repeating cycles of destruction and rebirth.

The apocalyptic depictions in the Qur'ân are presented through powerful symbols that construct cosmic destruction as an irreversible threshold between worldly life and eschatological existence.

Consequently, cosmic catastrophe narratives within mythological systems offer powerful narrative patterns that symbolically interpret the relationships between humanity, the deities, nature, and time. In these accounts, apocalypse and destruction are envisioned not merely as an absolute end, but as a prerequisite for transition, transformation, and a new beginning. Qur'ânic eschatology, however, diverges from these mythological understandings by not viewing destruction as part of a recurring process of renewal. In the Qur'ân, the apocalypse is presented as a singular and irreversible threshold where the absolute justice of God is manifested and His eternal judgment begins. In this regard, the apocalyptic narrative signifies not only an end but also the opening of a new and ultimate plane of existence. At this point, it will be meaningful to examine how mythological narratives position cosmic destruction in contrast to revelation-based accounts.

2.2. The Imagery of Cosmic Destruction as a Threshold in Mythological Narratives

Myths can be viewed as one of the earliest forms of oral and written literature that describe existential issues like fear, hope, purification, and rebirth together with the efforts made by human beings to explain the universe. In most of these myths, apocalyptic issues about the destruction of the universe, gods' struggle, and disturbance of the order in the cosmos emerge. Destruction, within this context, should be viewed not only as a disaster in nature but also as a narrative pattern including moral degeneration, divine intervention, and rearrangement of the cosmos.

Mesopotamian mythology is characterized by the story of Gilgamesh, where the myth of the flood represents divine intervention into over-population and moral degradation in human world. As a

⁴⁵ İlhan Kutluer, "Zaman", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2013), 44/111-112.

result, Utnapishtim becomes the carrier of life among people.⁴⁶ The same concerns the Greek myth of Deukalion and Pyrrha, which represents purification of moral decay and creation of human race by means of divine intervention.⁴⁷ Thus, in both cultures cosmic destruction becomes an intermediate stage through which divine order is restored after moral decay.

On the contrary, cosmic destruction in the Norse mythology, namely the myth of Ragnarök, involves complete destruction of cosmos and even gods. However, destruction of the world is not the end of everything since, after this process, a new world, populated by gods, appears.⁴⁸ Cyclic nature of existence makes possible such view on cosmic destruction as cosmic rejuvenation. Cyclic nature of destruction is presented in Hinduism through the theory of Pralaya. This theory is based on the Vedas and Puranas and is cyclic.⁴⁹

In the Egyptian mythology, namely in the myth of Osiris and Seth, there appears another approach to cosmic destruction. It is due to the fact that in this mythology, disruption is not done by destroying everything but by disrupting cosmic harmony through the violation of Maat.⁵⁰ Disruption of the order represented by the fight between Horus and Seth is just restoration of cosmic balance, rather than creation of something completely new.⁵¹

Thus, in all the above-described religions and mythologies, destruction of the world represents intermediate stage between order and chaos, destruction and creation. Therefore, destruction is never

⁴⁶ Samuel Noah Kramer, "Myths and Epics from Mesopotamia", *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 40-75.

⁴⁷ There is a close connection between flood narratives and creation narratives; see M. Barnard, *The Mythmakers* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1966), 153. Furthermore, it would be more appropriate to state that the flood is a 're-creation' myth rather than a creation myth; see Alan Dundes, "The Flood as Male Myth of Creation", *The Flood Myth*, ed. Alan Dundes (Berkeley - Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 172.

⁴⁸ Joshua J. Mark, "Ten Norse Mythology Facts You Need to Know", *World History Encyclopedia* (Accessed July 19, 2025).

⁴⁹ As Eliade notes, this periodic dissolution serves to restore the primordial purity of the cosmos; see Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 60-62.

⁵⁰ Maulana Karenga, *Maat, the Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt: A Study in Classical African Ethics* (London: Routledge, 2003), 32.

⁵¹ Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas, Volume 1: From the Stone Age to the Eleusinian Mysteries*, translated by Willard R. Trask (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 54, 97-100.

presented as an absolute end but an intermediate stage leading to restructuring of the order of the cosmos. The structural aspect of myths allows claiming that myths, regardless of their cultural origin, have common structure, which is represented by destruction as an intermediate stage.

Mythological narratives that arise from different cultures indicate that the issue of destruction of the universe has similarities not only in terms of their subject matter, but also in the aspect of their structure in connection with this concept. Despite the presence of diverse theological and cosmological speculations in connection with these cultures, it becomes clear that all of them understand destruction of the universe in terms of recreation or restoration of the same. In this case, the idea of apocalypse turns into structural liminality.

2.3. The Motif of Cosmic Destruction as a Threshold in Turkish Folk Narratives

Oral folklore, as the carrier of oral culture, is not just a means of transmission which preserves the accumulation of the past but also the manifestation of the collective unconscious, fears, and patterns of beliefs on the narrative level. In this respect, the motifs of apocalyptic and cosmic destruction in the narratives of folklore have multiple-level character which combines traces of pre-Islamic cultural traditions along with the reflection of eschatological imagery based on revelations within the framework of folk memories. Taking into account the broad nature of the term “folk narratives”, the focus of this paper will be placed on the Turkish-Islamic folk narratives. The belief of the Turks in life after death is quite old and goes back to the ancient periods. In accordance with this belief, eternal life can only start with the end of the current system. In order to understand both the death of human and death of the world, people have created the belief of apocalypse; in accordance with this belief, they created various narratives over time.⁵²

As seen in legends, hagiographies, and folklore transmitted in oral culture of Turkish folk narratives, motifs of splitting of the earth, splitting of the sky, and falling of fire from the sky are specific instances of the theme of cosmic destruction. It has been created by borrowing

⁵² Hocaoglu Alagöz - Baysal Yurdakul, “Eskatoloji Mitlerinden Kıyametnâmelere Geleneksel Türk Dünya Görüşünde Kıyamet Olgusu”, 564-565.

elements from Islamic eschatology and Shamanic cosmogony, respectively; the theme of destruction is usually introduced as a natural result of certain factors including the disobedience of God by the individual and society, dishonor to sacredness, and imbalance between cosmos. Some of the popular beliefs like “three days of night”, “birth of the red-tailed comet” and “black smoke filling the sky” can be regarded as the symbols that apocalyptic signs assume in the folk memory.

In Turkish folk tradition, especially in many legends, hagiographies, epics, and folktales gathered in Anatolia, the motifs of apocalyptic and cosmic destruction draw attention. They must be analyzed not only as products of folkloric genre but also as expression of the eschatological world view created in the historical memory of people. Destruction and disasters in the stories are not only the interpretation of the apocalyptic images based on revelation in the local memory but also continue cosmogonies filtered from the pre-Islamic beliefs systems.

In the process of the transition of Turkish eschatological thought from mythological narratives to the Islamic conception of the apocalypse, it is observed that cosmic destruction in the Turkish-Islamic narrative tradition is mostly associated with natural events and portrayed as punitive disasters following moral dissolution and violations of sacred values. Through these narratives, moral norms, a sense of destiny, and the understanding of divine power are transmitted to society. Certain Anatolian folk narratives display symbolic correspondences with Qurʾānic depictions of the apocalypse; however, these similarities are better understood within the broader context of interaction between Islamic religious discourse and local oral traditions rather than as evidence of direct textual borrowing. Elements such as the splitting of the earth, the cracking of mountains, the darkening of the sky, fire raining from the heavens, petrification, black smoke, three days of night, and the receding of waters only to return as a deluge appear with similar symbols in both the Qurʾān and Anatolian folk narratives. Apocalyptic descriptions in the Qurʾān, such as *zilzāl*, *takwīr*, *infītār*, and *qāriʿah*, have integrated with more concrete and local elements in folk culture and have been translated into the language of oral aesthetics and collective memory.

Among the narratives widely known in the regions of Kayseri and Yozgat in Turkey, Azerbaijan, and the Khalkhāl district of Iran, the

“staying until the apocalypse with the wolf” story is noteworthy. In the Kayseri version, it is stated that “When the apocalypse is about to occur, an old woman and a Bozkurt (Grey Wolf) will remain; finally, the Bozkurt will eat the old woman, and then Azrael will take the soul of the Bozkurt”. In the Yozgat folk narrative, when adultery increases, women forget modesty, and people become incorrigible, Isrâfil will blow the Horn. Buildings will be torn like paper, and everyone will disappear into the ground. Only an old woman will remain, a wolf will eat her, and thus the end of humanity will come. In Azerbaijan, when the Horn is blown, all living things will die and mountains will be leveled. Amidst this destruction, a Bozkurt will struggle to stay upright against a terrible wind until the very last moment. In the vicinity of Khalkhâl, Iran, it is told that “Everyone created by God dies... This woman remains alone... One day, this old woman and the wolf wrestle. If the old woman defeats the wolf, the world will exist again and everyone will be resurrected. If the wolf defeats the woman, nothing will remain”.⁵³ These narratives position destruction not as an absolute end but as a necessary threshold for cosmic reconstruction. It should be noted that such narratives do not constitute components of orthodox Islamic doctrine and should not be understood as direct extensions of Qur’anic eschatology. Rather, they represent syncretic folkloric formations in which Islamic eschatological themes interact with pre-Islamic Turkic mythological motifs and local oral traditions. Their significance in the present study lies in their value as cultural expressions of collective perceptions regarding cosmic destruction and the end of time, reflecting processes of folkloric adaptation and cultural memory rather than authoritative theological teachings.

With this point in mind, the legends concerning the signs of apocalypse, which are prevalent in Anatolia, become significant. In this respect, it is said that the apocalypse takes place due to the decline in the cosmic and moral order in the world. The basic question at this point is whether these signs are perceived as signs indicating that the apocalypse is going to happen, or as causes triggering the event of apocalypse. Also, the basic question posed by these narratives is whether the apocalypse becomes a purification process for the world, or a divine act in the conflict of good and evil. Within this narrative

⁵³ Gülcan Kızılözen, “Metinlerarasılık Bağlamında Kurt ile Kıyamete Kalmak Anlatısının Dönüşümü”, *Folklor/Edebiyat* 26/104 (2020), 818-819.

framework, the apocalypse is generally portrayed as a process through which moral disorder is resolved, evil is eliminated, and justice is re-established. The process leading to the apocalypse is associated with the moral collapse of individuals and the disintegration of social order. Indeed, colloquial expressions such as “the world’s nail has come out” or “stones will rain upon our heads” used to express moral decline, point to this very perception.⁵⁴

Narratives such as the heavens descending to the earth, the collapsing and roaring of the ground, the darkening of the sun, earthquakes, the shattering of mountains, floods, trees being uprooted, droughts, and the emergence of a poisonous herb on the earth⁵⁵ reveal a local eschatological language that the people have constructed by drawing from both the Qur’ān and ancient cultural heritage. This narrative overlaps both with the theme of cosmic darkness in the Qur’ān and with Shamanistic-rooted myths regarding the darkening of the sun.⁵⁶ Here, darkness is utilized not merely as a physical state, but as a sign of a threshold time where cosmic balance is disrupted and universal order is broken.

In *Dede Korkut*, apocalyptic motifs are represented through signs such as the disappearance of love and respect between the young and the old, father and son, or mother and daughter; men resembling women; and engaging in gossip like women.⁵⁷ These motifs do not denote a literal eschatological end of the world in the Qur’ānic sense, but rather function as moral indicators of social and cosmic disorder within the narrative structure. It is observed that in folk narratives, cosmic destruction is predominantly staged within a framework of moral and divine punishment. Accordingly, societies that insult a sacred being, cease to pray, resort to rebellion, or tell lies are directly punished by the Creator. These punishments often take the form of natural disasters: stones rain from the sky, mountains are shattered, the earth cracks, and people are turned into stone. The motif of

⁵⁴ Gözen, *Metinlerarasılık Bağlamında Eskatoloji Mitleri*, 162.

⁵⁵ Gözen, *Metinlerarasılık Bağlamında Eskatoloji Mitleri*, 156; Kayabaşı, “Türk Mitolojisinde Eskatoloji Mitleri”, 173.

⁵⁶ Saadet Çağatay, “Altay Türklerinde Kıyamet Anlayışı”, *Türkoloji Dergisi* 7/1 (1977), 8.

⁵⁷ Gözen, *Metinlerarasılık Bağlamında Eskatoloji Mitleri*, 160.

“petrification”⁵⁸ is interpreted as the materialization of moral corruption and the manifestation of divine justice in physical form. In these narratives, individual guilt transforms into collective catastrophe; the disaster functions not only as punishment but also as moral warning and didactic lesson. Overall, these narratives construct a symbolic economy of disorder and retribution rather than a doctrinal eschatological system. A short excerpt from a longer narrative regarding the Altai Turks’ conception of apocalyptic destruction is as follows:

...The bottom of the iron stirrup is pierced, the eye of the needle is torn, the people are corrupted, the black insect sprouts wings, blood spreads to the black eye, the black water (water sources) flows mixed with blood, the earth rumbles, the mountain turns upside down, the mountain slopes collapse, the sky trembles, the sea churns, the earth is overturned and its surface goes down, the tree moss is torn away and only its dust remains, the sky quivers and its stitching is opened (torn), the sea churns and its bottom becomes visible...⁵⁹

Accordingly, Shamanistic and Tengrist beliefs, along with steppe cosmogonies originating from the pre-Islamic belief systems of the Turks, have permeated into folk narratives. In ancient Turkic beliefs, the “Sky Pillar”⁶⁰ or “World Tree”⁶¹ is a sacred structure that forms the axis of the universe. The collapse of this pillar signifies not merely a physical downfall, but an ontological apocalypse. Images in Anatolian narratives such as the “piercing of the sky”, the “toppling of the

⁵⁸ One of the many versions of petrification stories is as follows: “A shepherd whose wife has died has two children. This shepherd, disliked by the villagers, lives in his own house on a hill far from the village. Although treated very well by his mother and father, the shepherd is not respectful toward them at all. One day, his mother prays to Allah for him to be turned into stone. Her prayer is accepted, and the son turns into stone at the place called ‘Dedelik/Çoban (Shepherd) Stone’.” Today, locals frequently tell this legend to instill respect for family in their children; M. Öcal Oğuz - Petek Ersoy, *Türkiye’de 2006 Yılında Yaşayan Taş Kesilme Efsaneleri: Mekânlar ve Anlatılar* (Ankara: Gazi Üniversitesi Türk Halkbilimi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Yayınları, 2007), 19.

⁵⁹ Çağatay, “Altay Türklerinde Kıyamet Anlayışı”, 8.

⁶⁰ Bahaeddin Ögel, *Türk Mitolojisi II* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1995), 169-172.

⁶¹ Bahaeddin Ögel, *Türk Mitolojisi I* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1993), 90-92, 100-101.

heavens", or "fire emerging from beneath the earth" establish a bridge between this ancient thought and Islamic eschatology. The integration of motifs such as "the wrath of Ülgen"⁶² or "Erlik's emerging from the underworld"⁶³ into the Islamic conception of the apocalypse over time to produce a syncretic narrative demonstrates the permeability between beliefs and the cultural adaptation capability of folk culture.

These narratives have been found not just to be accounts of cosmic disasters but also to have the role of an instrument of education, a culture-based system, and also a means of social control. This kind of narrative is being passed down from one generation to another via traditional storytellers like *maddāhs* (traditional public storytellers), *ʿāshiqs* (minstrel-poets), village imāms, and older storytellers, thereby influencing the view that people have of God, time, the world, and afterlife. While the apocalyptic descriptions in the Qurʾān provide a more universal, and metaphysical framework, it is observed that these images become localized, personalized, and topographical in folk narratives. Mountains, villages, and people are named; the apocalypse is narrated as an event occurring in a specific "place" or to a specific "person". This indicates that the motif of the apocalypse is constructed on two levels in the folk mind: both cosmic and local.

Overall, the analysis of apocalyptic motifs in Turkish folk narratives demonstrates that cosmic destruction functions as a multilayered symbolic structure shaped by the interaction of Islamic eschatology, earlier mythological traditions, and local cultural memory. Rather than constituting a unified doctrinal system, these narratives reflect a culturally embedded understanding of order, morality, and divine authority. In this sense, the discussion of apocalyptic imagery leads naturally to a broader consideration of how different narrative traditions conceptualize the end of the world as a threshold between existence, meaning, and transcendence.

Conclusion

Rather than being explained solely through recurring themes shared across traditions, apocalypse and cosmic destruction narratives involve another layer that must also be taken into account. This layer can be described as a threshold, or liminal mode of structuring these

⁶² Çağatay, "Altay Türklerinde Kıyamet Anlayışı", 10.

⁶³ Çağatay, "Altay Türklerinde Kıyamet Anlayışı", 9.

narratives, which appears across different cultural settings. When revelation-based narratives, mythological systems, and Turkish folk stories are considered together, the differences between them do not lie primarily in how the apocalypse is represented. Instead, they are rooted in more fundamental assumptions about time, continuity, and moral order.

One of the main findings of this study is that the Qur'ānic understanding of the apocalypse differs clearly from mythological accounts of cyclical destruction. In the Qur'ān, cosmic destruction is positioned as an irreversible ontological break and a threshold of final accountability. This suggests that the Qur'ānic vision of the end times is not a symbolic story of rebirth. Instead, it forms a moral and metaphysical boundary where human actions take on their ultimate meaning. From this perspective, cosmic destruction does not mark the end of divine order. It marks the moment when divine judgment fully begins.

Mythological traditions approach cosmic destruction from a different angle. The destruction of the existing order does not bring history or the cosmos to a definitive close. Instead, it creates the conditions from which a new order can emerge. Apocalyptic episodes therefore belong to a larger cycle in which dissolution is followed by renewal. Within this pattern, the threshold is not the point at which moral judgment begins. It marks the passage from one cosmic order to the next and preserves the continuity of the cycle.

Turkish folk narratives reveal a space where Qur'ānic eschatological ideas and pre-Islamic mythological motifs come together and gradually blend into one another. Within these stories, cosmic destruction is no longer presented as an abstract metaphysical event. It is anchored in familiar places, recognizable figures, and local communities. As a result, the apocalypse becomes part of collective memory, serving both as a moral warning and as a way of defining the boundaries of the social order.

This study's comparative approach does not place revelation-based, mythological, and Turkish folk narratives on the same ontological or metaphysical level. It is not concerned with such an alignment. Instead, it examines how the motif of cosmic destruction is constructed and interpreted within each tradition's own symbolic and

cultural framework, with attention to narrative structure and the production of meaning.

In conclusion, this study does not treat the motif of apocalypse as a shared “end narrative” across different cultural and religious systems. What it highlights instead is a threshold model through which meaning is produced and takes shape in different contexts. From this point of view, apocalyptic narratives are not simply accounts of destruction or catastrophe. They also make visible human finitude, the limits of the sacred, and the ways moral order is thought at its edges. The notion of the “threshold” is used here as a way of reading these narratives rather than as a fixed analytical category.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

FUNDING

The author received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abdel Haleem, M. A. S. *The Qur'an: A New Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Barnard, M. *The Mythmakers*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1966.
- Batuk, Cengiz. *Taribin Sonunu Beklemek*. İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2003.
- Çağatay, Saadet. “Altay Türklerinde Kıyamet Anlayışı”. *Türkoloji Dergisi* 7/1 (1977), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1501/Trkol_0000000013
- Dankanich, Artem S. “Islamic Eschatology: Its Origins and Theological Interpretations”. *VI Конгрес сходовознавців*. 132-135. Kyiv: Baltija Publishing, 2022.
- Dundes, Alan. “The Flood as Male Myth of Creation”. *The Flood Myth*. ed. Alan Dundes. 167-182. Berkeley - Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1988.
- Eliade, Mircea. *A History of Religious Ideas, Volume 1: From the Stone Age to the Eleusinian Mysteries*. trans. Willard R. Trask. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978.
- Eliade, Mircea. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*. trans. Willard R. Trask. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959.
- Eliade, Mircea. *Myth and Reality*. trans. Willard R. Trask. New York & Evanston: Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated, 1963.

- Gözen, Yavuz. *Metinlerarasılık Bağlamında Eskatoloji Mitleri ve Dini Literatürde Kıyamet Tasvirleri*. Ankara: Ankara University, The Institute of Social Sciences, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2023.
- Güler, Nurdane. "Kur'an'da Kozmik Kıyamet ile Hesap Gününün İç İçeliği ve Yorumu Etkisi". *Cumhuriyet İlahiyat Dergisi* 24/3 (2020), 1475-1496.
<https://doi.org/10.18505/cuid.784013>
- Günther, Sebastian. "Eschatology". *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*. ed. Muhammad Abdel Haleem - Mustafa Shah. 472-487. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Hocaoğlu Alagöz, Kader - Baysal Yurdakul, Nagihan. "Eskatoloji Mitlerinden Kıyametnâmelere Geleneksel Türk Dünya Görüşünde Kıyamet Olgusu: Dâsitân-ı Mahşer-nâme Örneği". *Korkut Ata Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* 11 (June 2023), 563-586.
- Humairoh, Siti - Nurwahidin, Nurwahidin - Izdiyan, Mohammad - Wati, Maulida. "The Concept of Eschatology in Islam: An Analysis of Fazlur Rahman's Perspective and Al-Munir's Exegesis on Surah Al-Infithar". *Journal of Middle East and Islamic Studies* 11/1 (2024), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.7454/meis.v11i1.168>
- Izutsu, Toshihiko. *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ân*. Montreal & Kingston - London - Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002.
- Karenga, Maulana. *Maat, the Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt: A Study in Classical African Ethics*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Kaya, Muharrem. *Mitolojiden Efsaneye: Türk Mitolojisinin Türkiye'deki Efsanelerde İzleri*. İstanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2nd edition, 2011.
- Kayabaşı, Onur Alp. "Türk Mitolojisinde Eskatoloji Mitleri". *Folklor/Edebiyat* 22/86 (2016), 167-180.
- Kızılözen, Gülcan. "Metinlerarasılık Bağlamında Kurt ile Kıyamete Kalmak Anlatısının Dönüşümü". *Folklor/Edebiyat* 26/104 (2020), 813-825.
<https://doi.org/10.22559/folklor.1341>
- Kutluer, İlhan. "Zaman". *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*. İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2013. 44/111-114.
- Mark, Joshua J. "Ten Norse Mythology Facts You Need to Know". *World History Encyclopedia*. Accessed 19 July 2025.
<https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1836/ten-norse-mythology-facts-you-need-to-know/>
- al-Mâtürîdî, Abû Maşûr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Samarqandî. *Ta'wîlât al-Qur'ân*. ed. Bekir Topaloğlu. 17 vols. İstanbul: Dâr al-Mizân, 2005-2011.
- Oğuz, M. Öcal - Ersoy, Petek. *Türkiye'de 2006 Yılında Yaşayan Taş Kesilme Efsaneleri: Mekânlar ve Anlatılar*. Ankara: Gazi Üniversitesi Türk Halkbilimi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Yayınları, 2007.
- Ögel, Bahaeddin. *Türk Mitolojisi I*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2nd edition, 1993.
- Ögel, Bahaeddin. *Türk Mitolojisi II*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1995.

- Seyidoğlu, Bilge. *Mitoloji Üzerine Araştırmalar: Metinler ve Tabliller*. İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 8th edition, 2017.
- Khan, Nida Tabassum. "Eschatology: An Introduction". *Journal of Bio Innovation* 14/3 (2025), 530-535. <https://doi.org/10.46344/JBINO.2025.v14i03.16>
- Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 7th edition, 1991.
- van Gennep, Arnold. *The Rites of Passage*. trans. Monika B. Vizedom - Gabrielle L. Caffee. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960.

GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The paper submitted to *Ilahiyat Studies* should make some noticeable contribution to Islamic and religious studies. The paper will be held to imply that it contains original unpublished work and is not being submitted for publication elsewhere.

Since *Ilahiyat Studies* sends all papers for review, a copy should be submitted in a form suitable for sending anonymously to the reviewers. Manuscripts are evaluated by anonymous peer review; therefore, authors must remove all identifying information from their texts. Authors should refer to themselves in the text and citations in the third person. For example, instead of writing "I argue (Nasr 2007) ..." write "Nasr (1997) argues..."

All submissions are assessed by referees, but the Editorial board reserves the right to decide what articles will be published.

Unsolicited book reviews may not be published.

The full name(s) of the author(s) must be listed, along with university or professional affiliation, address, city, state, country, phone/fax number(s), and email address where you can be reached. Provide a two-sentence biography that we can use in your article. Current information only.

All papers must include an abstract of no more 150 words.

It is strongly advised that the length of the article should not exceed 12.000 words. Book reviews and conference reports must not exceed 1500 words. All pages should be numbered consecutively.

All papers should have an introductory section in which the objectives and methodology of the article are explained and a final section, which summarizes the main points, discussed and the conclusions reached.

Manuscripts should be typed double-spaced on one side of the A4 only. Tables, graphs and figures should be on separate pages. All submissions should be in MS-Word format. Leave margins of at least 4 cm on top, bottom, and sides.

Text and references must follow the format outlined in **İSNAD 2nd Edition**, available at

<https://www.isnadsistemi.org/en/guide/isnad2-2/>.

İSNAD 2nd Edition citation style is also ready for use with CSL-compliant citation managers such as Mendeley or Zotero.

A reference list must be included at the end of the manuscript in the following style:

Journal Article & Entry

Benevich, Fedor. "The Essence-Existence Distinction: Four Elements of the Post-Avicennian Metaphysical Dispute (11–13th Centuries)". *Oriens* 45/3-4 (2017), 203-258.

<https://doi.org/10.1163/18778372-04503004>

İnalçık, Halil. "Selim I". *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (New Edition). ed. C. E. Bosworth et al. 9/117-118. Leiden: Brill, 1997.

Book

al-Tūsī, Abū Ja'far Naṣīr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad. *Asās al-iqtibās fī l-manṭiq*. Translated by Mullā Khusraw. Edited by Ḥasan al-Shāfi'ī - Muḥammad Sa'īd Jamāl al-Dīn. Cairo: al-Majlis al-A'lā li-l-Thaqāfah, 2004.

Flügel, Gustav. *Die Grammatischen Schulen der Araber. Erste Abtheilung. Die Schulen von Basra und Kufa und die Gemischte Schule*. Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1862.

Book Chapter

Stein, Peter. "Literacy In Pre-Islamic Arabia: An Analysis of the Epigraphic Evidence". *The Qur'ān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'ānic Milieu*. Edited by Angelika Neuwirth - Nicolai Sinai - Michael Marx. 255-280. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009.

Page references to works referred to in the text should take the following form: (Touraine 1995, 9-10). The verses of the Qur'ān should be referred to as follows: Q 2:23; Q 17:108; the references from the Old and New Testament should carry chapter name and number, and verse number.

Arabic words should be transliterated according the style used by the the *İSNAD 2nd Edition*.



Ilahiyat Studies

A Journal on Islamic and Religious Studies

ISSN: 1309-1786

Volume 17 Number 1 Winter/Spring 2026

Contents

ARTICLES

Orhan Musahanlı An Overshadowed Akbarī Sufi in Fourteenth-Century
Anatolia: Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tustarī and
His Intellectual Legacy

Nevfel Akyar Peripheral Fire: Once Upon a Time in Daskyleion and
Western Anatolia

Davut Eşit Multilingualism in Family Law According to Shāfiʿī
Madhhab

Esra İrk

Ümran Erkorkmaz Çoban Contemplation in Two Muslim Countries: A Comparative
Elif Çağlayan Qualitative Study in Türkiye and Bosnia-Herzegovina

Armin Jasarevic

Ali Ayten Cyberspirituality: A New Form of Spiritual Practice and
Sebiha Yıldız Existential Presence in the Digital Realm

Ahmet Dağ Transhumanism: A Religious Movement Opposing
Ahamadou Sylla Religion in the Digi Age

Kadir Gömbeyaz Cosmic Destruction and the Eschatological Threshold: A
Fatma Aygün Comparative Analysis of the Apocalypse Motif in the
Qurʾān, Mythology, and Turkish Folk Narratives

e-ISSN:1309-1719



130917862021121