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## Christian-Muslim Relations 1500 - 1900

### Atinalu Kapucî[nin] Habîbullâh'ın Evsâfın Tevrît'te ve İncîl ve Zebûr'da Görûb İmâna Geldüğüdür

(598 words)

Risâle-i Garîbedir ki Ahbâr-ı Nasârâ'dan Biri İslâm Şerefi ile Müşerref Olub İncîl ve Tevrît ve Zebûr'da Hazret-i Risâlet'in Hakkında Vâki' Olan Füsûsu Cem' Eyleyüb Tercüme Etmîşdir, Hristiyanlık'dan Müslümanlığa

'How the gatekeeper from Athens became a Muslim after recognizing the attributes of the beloved of God in the Torah, the Gospel and the Psalms' A curious treatise by a former priest glorified by the glory of Islam. Collection and translation of the ringstones about the noble Messenger found in the Gospel, Torah and the Psalms'; 'From Christianity to Islam'

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**Mehmed of Athens, the convert**

Date: 1625 or earlier

Original Language: Ottoman Turkish

#### Description

*Atinalu Kapucî[nin] Habîbullâh'ın Evsâfın Tevrît'te ve İncîl ve Zebûr'da Görûb İmâna Geldüğüdür* is a short polemical treatise against Christianity written by the former Christian whose name is given as Atinalı Mühtedi Mehmed, 'Mehmed of Athens, the convert' (MS Giresun, fol. 46r). The narrative contains long phrases enriched with poetry and snippets of Persian. Tijana Krstić suggests that the work is closely associated with the *Tuhfat al-arib fi l-radd 'alâ ahl al-şalīb* by Anselm Turmeda, who as a convert became 'Abdallāh al-Tarjumān, and calls it 'the second most copied Ottoman conversion narrative' after the *Tuhfa* (Krstić, *Contested conversions*, pp. 110, 112). The work covers folios 46r-51v in MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library – Giresun 171/3.

One odd feature worth noting is that, while in two of the Istanbul manuscripts (Reisülküttap and Ali Nihat Tarlan) the author is named 'Mehmed' within the text, at the end of both manuscripts his signature appears as Maḥmūd ibn Ḥasan al-Qāḍī. It would be unusual for a convert to have a father with a Muslim name, and there is no mention of a judge (*qāḍī*) of this name in such Ottoman biographical dictionaries as Taşköprülüzâde's *Şakāyık-i nümāniye* or Mehmed Süreyya's *Sicill-i osmanî*.

Mehmed was evidently well versed in the Bible and Christian theology, and in his polemic he cites a succession of verses from the Torah, Psalms and Gospels. He identifies how Jacob's address to his sons, Moses' address to the children of Israel, God's address to David and references in the Gospels of John and Matthew all indicate the coming of Muḥammad. These are misinterpreted by Christians, he declares, who read them as referring to Jesus.

Mehmed says that, although he was convinced these verses referred to Muḥammad, he did not immediately have the courage to convert to Islam. Instead, he travelled around the 'lands of Rum' (the Ottoman Balkans) with the aim of discussing their meaning with knowledgeable priests, and finally came to Rome, known as *Kızıl Elma* (Red Apple), where he remained for four years.

During this time, he noticed that everyone misinterpreted these verses, but eventually he received confirmation from a Christian (possibly a monk), who confessed that Christians misinterpreted them and also warned Mehmed that if he were to convert to Islam in these lands he would be killed. Thus, having found the truth, he travelled to Istanbul, the 'centre of the polar circle of Islam and the seat of the caliphate', where he became a Muslim.

## Significance

This work is significant for the detail it includes about the author's conversion and for the citations of biblical predictions of Muḥammad that are intermingled with the biographical account.

## Publications

MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library - Reisülküttap 800, fols 153v-159v (1625)

MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library - Ali Nihat Tarlan 144/4, fols 57v-60r (1626)

MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library - Giresun 171/3, fols 46r-51v (date unknown)

MS Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek – N.F. 380, fols 227v-231r (date unknown; ALo0636280 digitalised version available through Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <http://data.onb.ac.at/rec/AL00636882>)

## Studies

Krstić, *Contested conversions*, pp. 110-13, 119-20

## Keywords

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