

Derviş Ali Nakşibendî

İncilî; Ali ibn el-Yunânî

DATE OF BIRTH	Unknown
PLACE OF BIRTH	Unknown
DATE OF DEATH	Unknown, presumably early-mid 18 th century
PLACE OF DEATH	Unknown

BIOGRAPHY

The familiarity of Derviş Ali Nakşibendî, also known as İncilî and Ali ibn el-Yunânî (MS Fatih 30, fol. 22v), with the Bible – as he often quotes from it in Greek – indicates that he was a Christian convert to Islam. Likewise, his name and expertise in Sufi psychology depict him as a Sufi of the Naqshbandi order. He notes that he studied Arabic, the Gospel, Torah and the Psalms and found the name and the description of the Prophet Muḥammad, which he then translated into Arabic (MS Nuruosmaniye 51/2, fol 34v).

Among his teachers appear to have been Jalāl al-Dīn Awjī (Avcı), Muḥammad al-Birkawī (Birgivi), al-Thānī l-Qādirī and Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Sayyid Muḥammad al-Samarqandī l-Naqshbandī (MS Fatih 31, fol 3r-3v). In addition to the *Na’t al-Nabī Muḥammad ‘alayhi l-salām fi l-Injil*, he authored two works in Ottoman Turkish, *Sultan Ahmed ibn Muhammed’e dair istihrâc risâlesi* (MS Istanbul, Nuruosmaniye 51/2, fols 33v-40v) and *Risale-i Tertib-i Zikr-i Nakşibendiyye* (MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye – Yazma Bağışlar, 1086, 1v-4r).

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Primary

MS Istanbul, Nuruosmaniye – 51/2, fols 33v-40v

MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye – Fatih 30, 22 fols

MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye – Fatih 31, 27 fols

Secondary —

WORKS ON CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

Na't al-Nabī Muḥammad 'alayhi l-salām fī l-Injīl,
'Eulogy/Description of the Prophet Muḥammad,
peace be upon him, in the Gospel'

Risāla fī bayān taḥrīf al-Yahūd wa-l-Naşārā,
'Treatise in explanation of the alteration by the
Jews and the Christians'

Kitāb tafsīr āyāt Injīl wa-Tawrāt, 'Commentary on
the verses of the Gospel and Torah'

Fī bayān ba'd āyāt al-Injīl, 'On explanation of some
Gospel verses'

Tafsīr ba'd āyāt al-Injīl, 'Commentary on some
Gospel verses'

*Risāla fī na't Muḥammad (ṣaw) fī l-Tawrāt
wa-l-Zabūr wa-l-Injīl*, 'Treatise on the description
of Muḥammad (pbuh) in the Torah, Psalms and
the Gospel'

*Tarjamat āyāt Injīl wa-l-Zabūr wa-Tawrāt li-dalā'il
al-nubuwwa 'alayhi l-salām*, 'Translation of the
verses of the Gospel, Psalms and Torah in reference
to proving the prophethood, peace be upon him'

DATE Early 18th century

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE Arabic

DESCRIPTION

This is a Muslim polemical treatise against Christianity from the early 18th century. In respect to its aim, Derviş Ali tells us that he composed the work in order to explain ambiguous expressions in the Gospel and to add Sufi terminology in it. He notes that he studied the Gospel, Torah and Psalms, and noticed that most of the ambiguous and symbolic expressions were not falsified textually but only in respect to their meaning. As he also notes, together with some other scholars, he used to argue that the scriptures were textually falsified, and wrote a shorter treatise

on this matter. Later he changed his views, and he now believes that the Jews and Christians did not alter the text of the scripture, but they did falsify its meaning with their misinterpretations. Christian identification of the Paraclete with the Holy Spirit is one such example. This, he argues in line with many Muslim polemicists, he argues that Paraclete refers to the Prophet Muḥammad. He argues that the holy scriptures – including the Qur'an – and particularly the Gospel are filled with figurative passages. Accordingly, he notes that he found the name of the Prophet Muḥammad in the Torah, Psalms and Gospel. Furthermore, he argues that the Gospel is the Word of God, not the words of the Apostles; it was revealed to Jesus all at once, in contrast to the revelation of the Qur'an.

At the end of the work, Derviş Ali incorporates certain Sufi views in his interpretation of some biblical and qur'anic passages.

SIGNIFICANCE

This is a classic polemical work in the long tradition of Muslim polemics against Christians and Jews. The author tries to derive predictions of the Prophet Muḥammad from the Bible, particularly the Gospel. But unlike the prevailing Islamic tradition on the issue of falsification of the scriptures, he argues that they are not corrupted textually (*tahrîf al-alfâz*) but falsified in their meaning (*tahrîf al-ma'ânî*) due to Jewish and Christian misinterpretations. He argues that his is the opinion of the majority of scholars of his day. However, in line with prevailing Muslim polemics, he dates the corruption of Christianity to the time after the Apostles. In addition, in contrast to other polemicists, Derviş Ali incorporates Sufi views into his interpretations of some biblical and qur'anic passages, figures and events.

PUBLICATIONS

- MS Istanbul, Nuruosmaniye – 51/2, fols 33v-40v, Derviş Ali Nakşibendî, *Sultan Ahmed ibn Muhammed'e dair istihrac risâlesi* (date unknown)
- MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye – Fatih 30, 22 fols, Derviş Ali Nakşibendî, *Na'î al-Nabî Muḥammad 'alayhi l-salâm fî l-Injil* (7 Dhû l-Hijja, Saturday, year unknown)
- MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye – Fatih 31, 27 fols, Derviş Ali Nakşibendî, *Risâla fî bayân tahrîf al-Yahūd wa-l-Naşârâ* (date unknown)
- MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye – Laleli 20M, 20 fols, *Fî bayân ba'd âyât al-Injil* (1r), *Kitâb Tafsîr âyât Injil wa-Tawrât* (20v) (date unknown)
- MS Istanbul, Nuruosmaniye - 51/1, fols 1r-32v, *Tafsîr ba'd âyât al-Injil* (date unknown)

- MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı – Revan 2043, fols 11-15r (1716-17; *Tarjamat âyât İnjil wa-l-Zabûr wa-Tawrât li-dalâ'il al-nubuwwa 'alayhi l-salâm*)
- MS Istanbul, Köprülü Library – Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 105/3, fols 163v-178r (1748; *Risâla fî na't Muḥammad (şaw) fî l-Tawrât wa-l-Zabûr wa-l-İnjil*)
- MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek – Wetzstein II 1753, fols 27v-38v (1722-3)
- MS Munich, Staatsbibliothek – Cod. Arab. 886, fols 33v-41v or 49v-57v (1768)
- MS Göttingen, Niedersächsische Staats-und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen – Asch 75, fols 87v-105r (date unknown)
- MS Çorum, Çorum Hasan Paşa İl Halk Library 795, 26 fols, Derviş Ali bin Abdurrahman Nakşibendî İncili, *Şerhu âyât-i İncil elletî fihâ ism-i Muhammed* (Ottoman Turkish trans.)
- H. Cevahir, 'Derviş Ali en-Nakşibendî el-İncilî ve *Na'tü'n-Nebî fî'l-İncil* isimli eserin tahkik ve tercümesi', Sakarya, 2008 (MA Diss., Sakarya Üniversitesi) 37-102 (critical edition and modern Turkish trans.)
- M. Hasenmüller, 'Die Beschreibung Muḥammads im Evangelium. Eine muslimische Polemik gegen die Christen aus dem osmanischen Reich (Anfang 18. Jhdt.)', in C. Adang and S. Schmidtke (eds), *Contacts and controversies between Muslims, Jews and Christians in the Ottoman Empire and pre-modern Iran*, Würzburg, 2010, 83-295, pp. 11-89 (critical edition)

STUDIES

- Hasenmüller, 'Die Beschreibung Muḥammads im Evangelium'
Cevahir, 'Derviş Ali en-Nakşibendî el-İncilî'

Betül Avcı