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Christian-Muslim Relations 1500 - 1900

Papasnâme

(721 words)

Bir papas îmâna gelüb bunı te'lif eylemişdür; Mükâşefe-i Şeyh Abdurrahman; Kitâb-ı mükâşefe; Bahrî'l-mükâşefe

'The priest's book' 'A priest came to faith and penned this'; 'Vision of Şeyh Abdurrahman'; 'The book of unveiling'; 'The ocean of unveiling'

Derviş Mehmed

Date: Possibly 1597-8

Original Language: Ottoman Turkish

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Description

This vision narrative, which foretells the future of the Ottoman dynasty and the events of the end time, exists in seven manuscripts with various titles, and is most commonly known as *Papasnâme* ('The priest's book'). It takes up 30 folios in the Kütahya manuscript (1671), and includes Derviş Mehmed's conversion narrative. The text mentions the Prophet Muḥammad as having 'come to the world a thousand and six years ago' (MS Kütahya, fol. 7v), which leads to the assumption that the work was originally composed in 1546/7. However, it has recently been argued that the calculation was in fact from the *hijra*, making the date of the original 1597/8 (see e.g. OTTPOL, 'Papasnâme'). The narrative features two main characters in conversation, Derviş Mehmed himself, and his Şeyh, Abdurrahman. Mehmed addresses Şeyh Abdurrahman as 'father', and the Şeyh addresses Mehmed as 'son'.

The work consists of two main parts. The first takes the form of a dialogue (more precisely, questions and answers) between Mehmed and the Şeyh. It focuses on knowledge of the unknown, the significance of authentic dream visions, the characteristics of real scholars, and apocalyptic expectations. Throughout, the Şeyh tries to persuade Mehmed to write down and convey the vision of the future of the Ottoman dynasty with which he has entrusted him. The second part lists the names of 70 future Ottoman sultans, noting the main events that are to occur during their reign (it includes names such as Yusuf, Ali, Ömer, Hasan and Hüseyin, which are not the names of any historical rulers). The work ends with biographical data about Mehmed's Şeyh.

The book is very rich in apocalyptic detail. According to the Şeyh, the end time is not imminent, since Islam has not yet reached all corners of the world. He says that 70 Ottoman sultans will rule before the second coming of Jesus, and the last sultan will be called Ali. Then Jesus will kill the Antichrist and defeat his entire army, and Islam will rule throughout the world. After Jesus, the earth will ultimately crumble. There is no mention of a Mahdî, and Jesus appears as the leading figure of the end time.

Significance

By recording Şeyh Abdurrahman's vision of the glorious future of the Ottoman dynasty and the future victory of Islam, the author, a Christian convert to Islam, aimed to prove the truth of the Prophet Muḥammad and Islam over against Christianity.

In addition, the author refers to the *Kızıl Elma* ('Red Apple'; presumably a reference to Rome) as a city of 'infidels' 700 years before Jesus. In contrast, the Ottoman dynasty believes in God and the Prophet Muḥammad. Moreover, the Ottomans build mosques after demolishing churches and 'idols'. He sees them as superior in piety to his former Christian coreligionists.

The author emphasises Jesus as the single leading protagonist of the end times. Although, according to the apocalyptic Hadiths, both the figure of the Mahdī and Jesus will be participants in the events of the end time, there is no mention of a Mahdī alongside Jesus in the text. This portrayal of Jesus as a figure in the Muslim tradition emphasises the author's repudiation of his Christian past.

Publications

MS Vienna, Austrian National Library – Mixt 689 (1652; entitled *Bir papas imāna gelüb bunu te'lif eylemiştir*, 'A priest came to faith and penned this')

MS Kütahya, Vahid Pasha Library – 1545, 30 fols (1671; entitled *Papasnâme*, 'The priest's book')

MS Istanbul, Hacı Selim Ağa Library – Kemankeş 430, fols 46v-74r (1684/5; entitled *Bahrü'l-mükâşefe*, 'The ocean of unveiling')

MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library – Saliha Hatun 112/2, fols 88r-114v (1685/6; entitled *Mükâşefe-i Şeyh Abdurrahman*, 'Vision of Şeyh Abdurrahman')

MS Paris, BNF – Supplement turc 879 (1734; entitled *Bahrü'l-mükâşefe*, 'The ocean of unveiling' - together with a French trans. by Roboly, *Bahr el moukiacheffe ou Mer de la connaissance*)

MS Istanbul, Marmara University – Faculty of Theology Library 449, pp. 1-27 (date unknown; entitled *Kitâb-ı mükâşefe*, 'The book of unveiling')

MS Tunisia, National Library – 1459, fols 39v-69r (date unknown)

Derviş Mehmed, *Papasnâme*, ed. G. Börekçi and T. Krstić, forthcoming

Studies

Krstić, *Contested conversions*, pp. 116-20

Krstić, 'Narrating conversions to Islam', pp. 221-33

OTTPOL, 'Papasnâme'; <http://ottpol.ims.forth.gr/?q=content/papasn%C3%A2me-priests-book>

Keywords

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