

A Safavid Bureaucrat in the Ottoman World: Mirza Makhdum Sharifi Shirazi and the Quest for Upward Mobility in the *İlmiye* Hierarchy

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Osmanlı Dünyasında Bir Safavi Bürokrati: Mirza Mahdum Şerifi Şirazi ve İlmiye Hiyerarşisinde Yükseliş Arayışı

Öz ■ Bu çalışma Mirza Mahdum Şerifi'nin (1540-87) Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki hayatı ve kariyerini incelemektedir. Mirza Mahdum Safavilerde yüksek rütbeli bir Şii bürokrattı, ancak Osmanlılara sığındıktan sonra Sünni olup Diyarbekir, Bilad-ı Şam ve Haremeyn'de geçen bir kadılık kariyerine başladı. Bu makalede onun ilmiyeye alınışı ve ilmiye rütbelerinde ilerleyişi vurgulanmaktadır. İlmiye bir yandan (dışarıdan gelenlere) açık bir yandan da ideolojik ve kurumsal sınırların olduğu bir ortam olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Mirza Mahdum'un yatay seyreden ilmiye kariyerini 16. yüzyıl Osmanlı bürokrasisinde istihdam edilen İranlıların kariyerlerinde yükselmelerinin nüans ve incelikleri anlamaya yarayan bir pencere olarak kullanmaktayım.

Anahtar kelimeler: Mirza Mahdum Şerifi Şirazi, Bürokrasi, *ilmiye*, kariyer hareketliliği, Murad III, Safaviler, İran.

Introduction

Mu'in al-Din Ashraf Sharifi Shirazi (d. 1587), better known as Mirza Makhdum, enjoyed a rather short bureaucratic career in Safavid Iran in the 1570s. The few accomplishments of his most successful years he owed to Shah Tahmasp's (r. 1524–76) son and successor Isma'il II (r. 1576–77), under whom Mirza Makhdum was elevated from royal tutor to court astrologer to *sadr*, or head of religious affairs and endowments. These were positions that gave him a free hand in planning and executing, with approval and backing from the Safavid ruler, a series of pro-Sunni policies. Yet in the weeks leading up to Isma'il II's assassination

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(13 Ramadan 985/24 November 1577), when tensions at court flared into factional squabbles, Mirza Makhdum fell from favor and was imprisoned. On the eve of Muhammad Khudabanda's (r. 1578–87) accession to the throne in Qazvin (3 Dhu l-hijja 985/21 February 1578), he was set free from prison and shortly afterwards fled for his life to the Ottoman Empire.¹

In exile, Mirza Makhdum abandoned Twelver Shiism and started a new career as a Sunni judge. In the meantime, during his brief stays in Istanbul awaiting job renewal, he entered the entourage of Murad III (r. 1574–95) and tried to curry favor with a number of Ottoman court officials. These included the queen mother (*vâlide sultan*) Afife Nûr Banû (d. 1583), the *şeyhülislâm*, or head of the *ilmiye* (professorial/judicial sector of the Ottoman bureaucracy), Çivizade Muhyiddin Mehmed Efendi (d. 1587), and, more importantly, the influential royal tutor (*hâce-i sultanî*) and Çivizade's successor, Hoca Sâdeddin Efendi (d. 1599). The support and patronage provided by these officials helped Mirza Makhdum secure employment in the *ilmiye*. After about a decade of serving short rotational judicial postings in Diyarbakir, Bilad al-Sham, and Baghdad, he quit his *ilmiye* job in the mid-1580s to assume the post of *nakibü'l-eşraf*, or head of the *sayyid* (descendants of the prophet) notables, in Mecca. This position put him under the patronage of the local ruler of Mecca Sharif Hasan (d. 1601), the father-in-law of his only daughter. Mirza Makhdum died in Mecca, aged forty-eight, in the late fall of 1587.²

1 On Isma'îl II's pro-Sunnism, see Jean Aubin, "La politique religieuse des Safavides," in *Le Shi'isme imâmite: Colloque de Strasbourg (6–9 mai 1968)*, ed. Toufic Fahd and Robert Brunschwig (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970), 239–40; Michel M. Mazzaoui, "The Religious Policy of Safavid Shah Isma'îl II," in *Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson*, ed. Michel M. Mazzaoui and Vera B. Moreen (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), 47–56; Manuchihr Parsadust, *Shah Isma'îl duvum va Shah Muhammad*, 2 vols. in 1 (Tehran: Shirkat-i Sahami-i intishar, 2002), 1: 106–25; Colin P. Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran: Power, Religion and Rhetoric* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 145–58; Kioumars Ghereghlou, "Esma'îl II," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/esmail-02>. For remarks on Isma'îl II's pro-Sunni policies in a dated essay by a Nazi scholar of early Safavid history, see Walther Hinz, "Schah Esma'îl II. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Safaviden," *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen an der Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin* 36 (1933): 77–81. On the date of Muhammad Khudabanda's coronation mentioned above, see Iskandar Beg Munshi Turkman, *Tarikh-i 'alam-ara-yi 'abbasi*, ed. Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1956), 225; trans. Roger M. Savory as *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1978–86), 337.

2 For brief accounts of Mirza Makhdum's life and career, see Muhammad Qazvini, "Sharh-i

The centralization of the *ilmiye* shaped the development of Mirza Makhdum's career in the Ottoman Empire. The centralizing process, which gained momentum by the end of the century precipitating institutionalization of the culture of nepotism and cronyism prevalent among *ulema*, entailed the introduction of rotation system,³ a practice in full development around the time Mirza Makhdum landed employment as a judge. The rotation system was a dilatory mechanism intended to shorten tenures of early career judges and professors so that only a small fraction of them could reach to the top. Particularly, it was detrimental for those *ilmiye* recruits without close family or pupillage ties to high-ranking, Istanbul-based judges and professors, making their professional advancement slow-paced and eventually horizontal. So far as Mirza Makhdum is concerned, his early appointment to judge, however remarkable a feat it may seem for a non-native *ilmiye* employee at first glance, never evolved into a promising, tenured career enabling him to go up on the rungs of the *ilmiye* ladder beyond the rank of provincial judge. With a closed caste of learned aristocrats and the extended networks of their interconnected families, pupils, and cronies in Istanbul and beyond in control of the *ilmiye*, steady upward mobility for rootless scholars and bureaucrats such as Mirza Makhdum was no longer easily achievable.

In this present article, I examine Mirza Makhdum's life and career with emphasis being placed on his years in service of the *ilmiye*, a milieu that was open on the one hand, but maintained ideological and institutional limitations on the other. I take the horizontality of his career as a lens through which to explore nuances and complexities of professional advancement among the Iranian recruits of the Ottoman bureaucracy during the 16th century.

ahval-i Mirza Makhdum Sharifi," *Farhang-i Iran Zamin* 1 (1953): 57–69; and Kioumars Ghereghlou, "Makhdum Šarifi Širazi," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/makhdum-shirazi>. On Sayyid Hasan's career as *sharif* and "lord" (*sahib*) of Mecca, see Qutb al-Din al-Nahrawali, *Kitab al-i'lam bi-a'lam bayt-allah al-haram*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Leipzig, 1857), 343–49 and 417.

- 3 On rotation system and scheduling of tenures, see Karen Barkey, "In Different Times: Scheduling and Social Control in the Ottoman Empire, 1550 to 1650," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38, no. 3 (1996): 460–83. For remarks on mobility among the Ottoman *ulema* in the 16th century, see Suraiya Faroqhi, "Social Mobility among the Ottoman 'Ulema in the Late Sixteenth Century," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4, no. 2 (1973): 204–18. For an outline of the *ilmiye* hierarchy, see Halil İnalcık, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Klâsik Çağ (1300–1600)*, trans. Ruşen Sezer (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1995), 174. On Sâdeddin Efendi's life and career, see Şerafettin Turan, "Hoca Sâdeddin Efendi," *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/hoca-sadeddin-efendi>.

Mirza Makhdum's works are our main source of information on his life and career in Iran and abroad.⁴ Keen on casting himself as a productive Sunni scholar of unrivaled erudition and orthodoxy of faith, Mirza Makhdum wrote two books during his early years in the Ottoman Empire. Still unpublished, these two volumes are *al-Nawaqid li-bunyan al-rawafid* and the hitherto unexplored *Dhakhirat al-'uqba fi dhamm al-dunya*. While the former book is a harsh polemic against the ideological tenets of Twelver Shiism as practiced in Safavid Iran, the latter is a collected volume consisting of nine short scholarly essays on ethics and mysticism. It closes with an autobiographical chapter outlining Mirza Makhdum's life, family background, education, travels, and career in Iran and the Ottoman Empire. Dedicated to Murad III and written at the end of an interval of temporary discharge from the *ilmiye*, the *Dhakhirat al-'uqba*, despite what its title was originally meant to suggest (i.e. an asset for inducing God's mercy in the afterlife), was in fact a direct plea for employment and upward mobility with the sultan. The epilogue to this volume clearly reflects the insecurity Mirza Makhdum felt in the extremely unpredictable *ilmiye* job market, where corruption in the form of institutionalized cronyism and nepotism soared amid an influx of new recruits from the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire.⁵ In any rate, both books, unusually for the genre, contain important, albeit fragmentary, historical tidbits that, if contextualized and placed in dialogue with other sources, could offer us a deeper understanding of events and trends in Safavid Iran as well as aspects of bureaucratic life in the Ottoman Empire during the closing quarter of the 16th century.

4 On Mirza Makhdum's polemical writings, see Elke Eberhard, *Osmanische Polemik gegen die Safawiden im 16. Jahrhundert nach arabischen Handschriften* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Klaus Schwarz, 1970), 56–60; 'Ali Yazdi, "Naguftaha'i az *Masa'ib al-nawasib*," *Kitab-i Mah-i Din* 114–16 (2007): 50–55; cf. Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Emile Felber, 1898–1902), 2: 442. I have used the autographed copy of *Dhakhirat al-'uqba* at Nuruosmaniye Library; see *Nuruosmaniye Kütüphanesinde mahfuz kütüb-ü mevucudenin defteri* [Istanbul, n.d.], 135; cf. Mustafa b. 'Abdallah Kâtip Çelebi, *Kashf al-zunun 'an asami al-kutub wa l-funun*, ed. Şerefettin M. Yaltkaya and Kilisli Rifat Bilge, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1941–43), 1: col. 823; Brockelmann, *Geschichte*, 2: 443. I would like to thank Mohammad Kazem Rahmati for kindly sharing a copy of this unpublished manuscript.

5 On nepotism and cronyism in the *ilmiye*, see Abdurrahman Atçıl, "The Route to the Top in the Ottoman *İlmiye* Hierarchy of the Sixteenth Century," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 73, no. 3 (2009): 493–512; idem, *Scholars and Sultans in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 216.

Preacher and *Sadr* in Safavid Iran

Born in the early part of 1540,⁶ Mirza Makhdum came of the Sharifi *sayyids*, a family of landed and learned notables based in Shiraz. When the Safavids rose to power, his paternal grandfather, Sharif al-Din ‘Ali, joined Shah Isma‘il I (r. 1501–24) and helped the Safavids capture his native Shiraz from the Aqquyunlu Turkmens. As a reward for his collaboration with the Safavids, he held office as *sadr* twice, first between 1508–10 and then from 1512 until his murder on Ottomans’ hand during the Battle of Chaldiran in the summer of 1514.⁷ Mirza Makhdum’s mother was a granddaughter of Qazi Jahan Sayfi (d. 1553), scion of an influential family of Sunni notables in Qazvin with a long history of bureaucratic service datable back to the early years of the 14th century.⁸ Early in the reign of Tahmasp, Qazi Jahan was made a provincial vizier and posted to the shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala charged with supervising the dredging and revamping of two silted Ilkhanid-era irrigation canals diverted from the Euphrates, a project

6 On the date of his birth, see Mu‘in al-Din Ashraf Sharifi Shirazi, *Dhakhirat al-‘uqba fi dhamm al-dunya* (Ar. Ms. Nuruosmaniye Library 2328), 222b. Elsewhere, his birth is assigned to circa 1544, which is incorrect; see Stanfield, “Mirza Makhdum,” 32.

7 Ghiyath al-Din Kh‘andamir, *Tarikh-i habib al-siyar fi akhbar-i afrad-i bashar*, ed. Muhammad Dabir-Siyaqi, 4 vols. (Tehran: Kitabfurushi-i Khayyam, 1954): 4: 500, 534, and 547. Mirza Makhdum once refers to his paternal grandfather (Sharifi Shirazi, *Dhakhirat*, 222b), but is silent about his being killed by the Ottomans in 1514.

8 The eponymous ancestor of the family, Mir Sayf al-Din Muhammad, held office as a judge under the Mongol Ilkhan Öljeitü (r. 1304–16); see Hamd-Allah Mustawfi Qazvini, *Tarikh-i guzida*, ed. Edward G. Browne, 2 vols. (London: Gibb Memorial Trust, 1910), 1: 843; cf. Jean Aubin, “Šah Isma‘il et les notables de l’Iraq persan (Etudes safavides. I.),” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 2, no. 1 (1959): 74. During the civil war that broke out in Azerbaijan and Persian Iraq (‘Iraq-i ‘Ajam) following the death of the Aqquyunlu Sultan Ya‘qub (r. 1478–90), the Sayfi *sayyids* of Qazvin, who claimed descent from Zayd b. Hasan, a grandson of the Shiite imam ‘Ali, sided with the Shiite Kar-Kia dynasty of Lahijan and helped the teenage Isma‘il take refuge in Lahijan. For details of the Sayfis’ *sayyid* lineage, see Ahmad Kia Gilani, *Siraj al-ansab*, ed. Mahdi Raja‘i (Qum: Kitabkhana-yi Mar‘ashi, 1989), 41; cf. Zamin Husayni Qumi, *Tubfat al-azhar va zulal al-anhar fi nasab abna‘ al-‘immat al-athar*, ed. Kamil Salman al-Juburi, 3 vols. (Tehran: Mirath-i Maktub, 1999), 1: 154–55. On their confrontations in the 1490s with pro-Aqquyunlu Turkmen nomads on the maraud in ‘Iraq-i ‘Ajam and Daylaman, see Shams al-Din ‘Ali Lahiji, *Tarikh-i khani*, ed. Manuchihr Sutuda (Tehran: Bunyad-i Farhang-i Iran, 1973), 34–41; cf. Hasan Rumlu, *Absan al-tavarikh*, ed. ‘Abd al-Husayn Nava‘i (Tehran: Asatir, 2005), 893. On their role in persuading the Kar-Kia ruler, Mirza ‘Ali (r. 1478–1505), to grant Isma‘il asylum in Lahijan, see Yahya Sayfi Qazvini, *Lubb al-tavarikh*, ed. Hashim Muhaddith (Tehran: Anjuman-i Athar va Mafakhir-i Farhangi 2007), 275.

originally funded and initiated by the Aqquyunlu Uzun Hasan (r. 1452–78). Later on, Qazi Jahan was made grand vizier and remained in this post for more than a decade until shortly before his death in 1553.⁹ Early in the reign of Tahmasp, Mirza Makhdum's father, Mir Sharif Shirazi, acted as *kalantar*, or ombudsman, in his native Shiraz. Subsequently, he was made judge, vizier, and grand vizier.¹⁰ The Sharifis had close ties to the Safavid royal family: one of Mirza Makhdum's paternal uncles had married a sister of Tahmasp's with whom he had a daughter.¹¹

Mirza Makhdum did his elementary and advanced studies in Shiraz and Kashan. In Shiraz, he studied the basics of Neo-Platonic philosophy, mathematics, and natural sciences with Mir Taqi al-Din Muhammad Farsi (fl. 1550), a locally prominent physician, astronomer, and mathematician.¹² Mirza Makhdum's paternal uncle, Mir Murtaza Sharifi (d. 1567), started him off on theology, *hadith* (study of prophetic traditions), and Arabic grammar and syntax. Later on, he went to Kashan to study Twelver Shiite jurisprudence (*fiqh*) with 'Abd al-'Ali Karaki (d. 1585), an émigré Arab scholar from Bilad al-Sham. Years later, writing from exile, Mirza Makhdum praised Karaki for his offering to take him under his wing in the face of growing hostility on the part of bigoted Shiite scholars and bureaucrats who suspected him of being a Sunni.¹³

Towards the end of the reign of Tahmasp, Mirza Makhdum became a close protégé of Pari-Khan (Pari-Jan/Pari-Jahan?) Khanim (d. 1578), the oldest of the

9 'Ala' al-Dawla Kami Qazvini, *Tadhkira-yi Nafā'is al-ma'athir*, ed. Sa'id Shafi'iyun (Tehran: Kitabkhana-yi Majlis, 2016), 297; Ahmad Husayni Qumi, *Khulasat al-tavarikh*, ed. Ihsan Ishraqi (Tehran: Intisharat-i Danishgah-i Tihiran, 2004), 363–66; Rumlu, *Ahsan*, 1368–370.

10 Sharifi Shirazi, *Dhakhirat*, 223b; idem, *Al-Nawaqid li-bunyan al-rawafid* (Ar. Ms. British Library Or. 7991), 99a; Husayni Qumi, *Khulasat*, 409, 455.

11 Sharifi Shirazi, *Nawaqid*, 117b.

12 Sharifi Shirazi, *Dhakhirat*, 221b. For more on his teacher, Farsi, whose works include a medical handbook titled *Anis al-atibba' fi l-tib*, see Muhammad 'Ali Mudarris Tabrizi, *Rayhanat al-adab fi tarajim al-ma'rufin bi'l-kunya wa'l-laqab*, 8 vols. (Tehran: Intisharat-i Khayyam, 1995), 1: 344; cf. Haji Khalifa, *Kashf al-zunun*, 1: col. 197. See also Farid Qasimlu, "Taqi al-Din Farsi," *Danishnama-yi Jahan-i Islam* 6 (2000): 880–82.

13 Sharifi Shirazi, *Nawaqid*, 94b–95a. Expanding on his debates with Mirza Makhdum on the issue of imamate, Karaki is reported to have compiled a volume to prove 'Ali's right as Muhammad's sole legitimate successor; see 'Abd-Allah Afandi Isfahani, *Riyad al-'ulama wa hiyyad al-fudala'*, ed. Ahmad al-Husyani, 7 vols. (Qum: Kitabkhana-yi Mar'ashi, 1981–94), 3: 134. For more on Karaki, who at the time was widely considered the most learned of jurists in Safavid Iran, see Munshi Turkman, *Alam-ara*, 154; trans., 244–45; Husayni Qumi, *Khulasat*, 773.

Safavid ruler's daughters and one of the most influential members of the royal family in court politics in the years immediately preceding Isma'īl II's succession. In the winter of 976/1569, Pari-Khan Khanim helped Mirza Makhdum gain appointment to judge in Shiraz, but internal family feuds in his native Fars forced him to step down and return to Qazvin in the same year.¹⁴ Shortly afterwards, he started preaching in Qazvin and before long, achieved popularity and fame as a gifted preacher. In the spring of 984/1576, Pari-Khan Khanim asked Mirza Makhdum to officiate at Tahmasp's funeral at a local Shiite shrine outside Qazvin.¹⁵

Within a few weeks of his enthronment (27 Jumada I 984/1 September 1576), Isma'īl II hired Mirza Makhdum as his tutor and then appointed him to court astrologer. The Safavid ruler is alleged to have been in the know, since the final years of his confinement at Qahqaha Castle in Qarajadagh, about Mirza Makhdum's pro-Sunni inclinations.¹⁶ Yet the truth is that Mirza Makhdum's success arose primarily from his closeness to the Safavid princess Pari-Khan, the real kingmaker, whose political maneuverings in the heat of the bloody clashes that broke out at court immediately after the death of Tahmasp, paved the way for Isma'īl II's ascent to the throne.¹⁷ Nine months after Isma'īl II's rise to the throne, on 26 Rabi' I 985/23 June 1577, Mirza Makhdum was made *sadr* sharing this post with the incumbent military judge (*qazi-i mu'askar*) Mir 'Inayat-Allah Mir-Miran (Shah-Shahani) Isfahani, who at the same time acted as *naqib al-ashraf*, or head of *sayyid* notables.¹⁸

14 Sharifi Shirazi, *Nawaqid*, 99a; idem, *Dhakhirat*, 224b.

15 Sharifi Shirazi, *Nawaqid*, 99b–100b, 124a. Cf. Mir Taqi al-Din Muhammad Kashani, *Khulasat al-ash'ar va zubdat al-afkar (bakhsh-i Shiraz va navahi-i an)*, ed. Nafisa Irani (Tehran: Miras-i Maktub, 2013), 382.

16 For his appointment to royal tutor and court astrologer, see Husayni Qumi, *Khulasat*, 663; cf. Jalal al-Din Muhammad Munajjim Yazdi, *Tarikh-i 'Abbasi*, ed. Sayf-Allah Vahidnia (Tehran: Vahid, 1987), 34–35. On the claim that Isma'īl II had long been in the known about Mirza Makhdum's pro-Sunnism, see Sharifi Shirazi, *Nawaqid*, 79a, 117b.

17 Her close involvement in bloody skirmishes in Qazvin that broke out immediately after Tahmasp's death is detailed in a letter she wrote to Isma'īl II around the summer of 985/1577, when she fell from favor and put under house arrest; for which, see *Jung* (Pers. Ms. Majlis Library 2457), 88a–b.

18 Munshi Turkman, *Alam-ara*, 148–49, 207; trans., 237–38, 308. For the date of his appointment to *sadr*, see Husayni Qumi, *Khulasat*, 648. Mir 'Inayat-Allah's close relatives were affiliated with the Nurbakhshi Sufi order and Isma'īl I put a group of them to the sword for supporting Muhammad Kurra, a Nurbakhshi claimant to Mahdship in Yazd. See Qasim Beg Hayati Tabrizi, *Tarikh* (Pers. Ms. National Library of Iran 15776), 187a; cf. Kioumars Ghereghlou, "Chronicling a Dynasty on the Make: New Light on the Early

During his tenure as *sadr*, Mirza Makhdum was instrumental in enforcing a ban on the practice of *tabarra*, or ritual cursing of a long list of notable Sunni caliphs, imams, Sufis, poets, and religious scholars. He also pressed criminal charges against high-ranking Shiite clerics involved in the anti-Sunni excesses committed under Tahmasp. One of their victims was Mirza Makhdum's own grandfather, Mir Sharaf Jahan Sayfi (d. 1561), an accomplished poet and literary scholar. When Tahmasp decided to transfer his capital from Tabriz to Qazvin, Mir Sharaf Jahan and his cousin Mir Yahya Sayfi (d. 1555), the renowned chronicler, came under persecution. They both were forced to leave their native Qazvin during the anti-Sunni pogrom that preceded immediately the relocation of the Safavid royal court from Tabriz to Qazvin: the former to rural suburbs of Sultaniyya and the latter to Isfahan.¹⁹ More than two decades later, Mirza Makhdum retaliated. In his capacity as *sadr*, he brought to punishment Mir Hasan Karaki (d. 1593) and his cousin 'Ali, two of the most bigoted Shiite jurists under Tahmasp. As the result, both clerics were stripped of their privileges, one being put under house arrest and the other one being forced to flee for his life to Arab Iraq.²⁰

The ban on *tabarra*, the removal of the names of the Shiite imams from the face of newly minted coins, and the disbursement of generous amounts of cash among Sunni worthies of Qazvin and Shiraz occasioned a series of anti-Sunni mob outbreaks in Qazvin. It is reported that Amir Khan Mawsillu, an influential Turkmen warlord and the Safavid ruler's maternal uncle, who at the time held office as the shah's deputy (*vakil*), was behind the riots that erupted in Qazvin in 1577. As the pressures mounted on Isma'il II, he caved in and began to make a series of concessions. First and foremost, he dismissed Mirza Makhdum and shortly thereafter ordered his arrest and imprisonment.²¹

Safavids in Hayati Tabrizi's *Tarikh* (961/1554)," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 137, no. 4 (2017): 829.

19 On Sharaf Jahan's life and career, see Kami Qazvini, *Nafā'is*, 296–305; cf. Husayni Qumi, *Khulasat*, 421. Sharaf Jahan was a founding father of the *vuqu'*, or hypotyposis, style of Persian poetry (for his collected poems, see *Majmu'a-yi sih divan* [Pers. Ms. Majlis Library 437], 1b–34a). On Mir Yahya Sayfi, see Kami Qazvini, *Nafā'is*, 623–28; cf. Kioumars Ghereghlou, "Sayfi Qazvini," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sayfi-qazvini>.

20 Sharifi Shirazi, *Nawaqid*, 79a, 107a, 125b–126a; cf. Munshi Turkman, *Alam-ara*, 213–15; trans. 317–19; Munajjim Yazdi, *Tarikh*, 34–35, 40–41; Mitchell, *Practice of Politics*, 145–46.

21 Mirza Beg Junabadi, *Rawzat al-Safawiyya*, ed. Ghulam Riza Tabataba'i-Majd (Tehran: Bunyad-i mawqafat-i Afshar, 1999), 546, 586; Asaf Khan Qazvini and Ahmad Tatavi,

In the chaos that ensued following the assassination of Isma‘il II, Pari-Khan Khanim intervened to let Mirza Makhdum out of Istakhr Castle in Fars, where he spent his prison time. He soon returned to Qazvin, but in the winter of 1578, a group of religious zealots, whom Mirza Makhdum believed to have been paid by the newly appointed grand vizier Mirza Salman Jabiri Isfahani (d. 1583), stormed his house. The attackers destroyed his library and murdered a paternal cousin of his. Following this incident, Mirza Makhdum left Qazvin for Shahr-i Zur in Arab Iraq and eventually made it to Diyarbakir, where he put himself under Ottoman protection.²²

Opinions on the Iranian Recruits of the Ottoman Bureaucracy

New arrivals from Iran in the Ottoman emerge in secondary literature as a group of elite bureaucrats distinguished for their smooth integration and remarkable success in attaining quick visibility and decisive upward mobility in the receiving society.²³ While this might have been the case for a select group of late 15th- and early 16th-century Iranian recruits of the Ottoman bureaucracy, by the end of the 16th century finding employment and then settling into a career promising professional advancement was by no means an easy task for émigré bureaucrats and scholars from Iran. If, in the early years of the 16th century, fluency in scribal prose skills and basics of Sunni scholarship was assumed enough to open doors for professional success in the Ottoman Empire, by the time Mirza Makhdum made it there, job market in the *ilmiye* and *kalemiye* sectors had become extremely tight and fiercely competitive.

Fears of foreign elements' taking advantage of opportunities and resources in the Ottoman bureaucracy constituted the background against which Mirza

Tarikh-i alfi, ed. ‘Ali Al-i Davud and Ghulam Riza Tabataba‘i-Majd, 8 vols. (Tehran: Intisharat-i ‘ilmi va farhangi, 2003), 8: 5924–928; Munshi Turkman, *‘Alam-ara*, 217; trans., 322. In the hindsight, Mirza Makhdum blamed his downfall on Isma‘il II’s ineptitude and cowardice; see Sharifi Shirazi, *Nawaqid*, 5a.

22 Sharifi Shirazi, *Nawaqid*, 5b–6a, 144b. See also Hasan Burini, *Tarajim al-a‘yan min abna‘ al-zaman*, ed. Salah al-Din al-Munjid, 2 vols. (Damascus: Majma‘ al-‘ilmi al-‘arabi, 1959–63), 2: 53. At the time a certain Mahmud Pasha was reportedly governor of Shahr-i Zur; see Nev‘izâde Atâi, *Hada‘iq al-haq‘iq fi takmilat al-shaq‘iq*, ed. Abdülkadir Özcan (Istanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 1989), 299.

23 Cornell H. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Âli (1541–1600)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 156–59.

Makhdum started his employment in the *ilmiye*. These fears found their expression in the *nasihat-nâme* literature, which, within the temporal scope of the latter part of the 16th century, focused on the political pathology of the bureaucratic stasis and decline that engulfed the Ottoman Empire under Kanunî Sultan Süleyman's (r. 1520–66) immediate successors.²⁴ Officials in charge of bureaucracy were target of veiled but harsh attacks. They were chided for their dispensing with merit-based vetting and recruitment of bureaucratic staff, a move that, according to late 16th- and early 17th-century *nasihat-nâme* writers, had resulted in an unprecedented increase in the number of social climbers without education and proper background employed by the Ottoman bureaucracy.²⁵

The most outspoken of this cohort of late 16th- and early 17th-century political commentators was Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli (d. 1600), the celebrated bureaucrat and chronicler. Writing diagnostically about the internal crises eroding the foundations of the Ottoman sultanate at the turn of the 16th century, he singled out outsiders for the weakening of the empire's central authority. Âli railed against those "unqualified" and "inexperienced" (*acemî*) outsiders (*ecnebi*) who

24 For more on this, see Linda T. Darling, "The Sultan's Advisors and Their Opinions on the Identity of the Ottoman Elite, 1580–1653," in *Living in the Ottoman Realm: Empire and Identity, 13th to 20th Centuries*, ed. Christine Isom-Verhaaren and Kent F. Schull (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 171–81. For a brief study of debates in primary sources about "strangers" reaping rewards from the Ottoman military *timar* system in the 16th century, see Julius Kaldy-Nagy, "The Strangers (*Ecnebiler*) in the 16th Century Ottoman Military Organization," in *Between the Danube and the Caucasus: A Collection of Papers Concerning the Oriental Sources on the History of the Peoples of Central and South-Eastern Europe*, ed. György Kara (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1987), 165–69.

25 For comments on bureaucratic decline of the empire in the works of 16th-century *nasihat-nâme* writers, see Lütfi Paşa, "Lütfi Paşa Âsafnâmesi," in *Prof. Dr. Bekir Kütükoğlu'na Armağan*, ed. Mubahat S. Kütükoğlu (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1991), 91; Koçi Bey, *Risâle* (Istanbul, 1885), 40, 43–44; Selânikî Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Selânikî*, ed. Mehmed İpşirli (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1999), 478; Rhoades Murphey, "The Veliyuddin Telhis: Notes on the Sources and Interrelations between Koçi Bey and Contemporary Writers of Advice for Kings," *Belleter* XLIII/171 (1979): 560–61. On the polemical nature of the *nasihat-nâme* genre, see Douglas A. Howard, "Genre and Myth in the Ottoman Advice for Kings Literature," in *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire*, ed. Virginia H. Aksan and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 149–52; cf. Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 24–28.

had taken over positions of political trust and administrative privilege.²⁶ In particular, he despised new hires from Iran and eastern Anatolia, whom he lumped together as “a bunch of ne’er-do-wells” (*her ne kadar nekbet*). Âli held the view that the Iranian aspirants for bureaucratic career lines had been provided with gainful employment and easy promotion in the Ottoman Empire so that native *medrese*-trained bureaucrats of Âli’s ilk could be easily thwarted in their quest and ambition for upward mobility.²⁷ Âli warned that:

Those who come from the outside have to be honored to the extent that they would not regret having come and be sorry, and as to appointments to offices and positions that much obligingness should be shown that they would not die of joy because it were more than they can digest.²⁸

In the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, too, scholars and bureaucrats from Iran were often treated with suspicion and contempt in the *ilmiye* and *kale-miye* milieus. In Bilad al-Sham, where Mirza Makhdum spent an important part of his tenure as a judge, Arab jurists and *hadith* scholars looked down at their “eastern,” i.e. Iranian and east Anatolian, counterparts, branding them as mere dabblers in Islamic scholarship, if not opportunist charlatans.²⁹ This stemmed mainly from the fact that the Iranian recruits of the *ilmiye* rarely had proper education and background in *fiqh* and *hadith*, the two fields of academic expertise that in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire had long been recognized as definitive prerequisites for any appointment and promotion not only in the judiciary, but also in professorial positions. From dozens biographical entries given in the works of late 16th- and early 17th-century local historians of Aleppo and Damascus, it can be argued that only a small fraction of the Iranian employees of the *ilmiye* posted by the Ottomans to Bilad al-Sham had proper education in *fiqh* and

26 Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli, *Nushat üs-Selâtim: Counsel for the Sultans of 1581*, ed. and tr. Andreas Tietze, 2 vols. (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1979–82), 1:62.

27 Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli, *Künhü’l-abbâr: Dördüncü Rükün Osmanlı Tarihi*, facsimile edition of Turkish Ms. Türk Tarih Kurumu Kütüphanesi Y-546, 2 vols. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2009–14), 1: 570a.

28 Âli, *Counsel*, 1: 63.

29 For a discussion of this issue, see Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 13–59; idem, “Opening the Gate of Verification: The Forgotten Arab-Islamic Florescence of the 17th Century,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38 (2006): 264–68.

hadith. It was under these circumstances that several Aleppo- and Damascus-based Iranian scholars and bureaucrats achieved notoriety as Twelver Shiite turncoats embezzling public funds and tax revenues.³⁰ These trends and events informed Mirza Makhdum's unrelenting efforts to picture himself as an established scholar of *fiqh* and *hadith*. Not surprisingly, much of his autobiographical writings pivot on careerist themes such as academic excellence and noble descent.

The Art and Pitfalls of Self-Promotion

After Mirza Makhdum's arrival in Diyarbakir, local authorities, nonplussed by the escape of such a high-ranking bureaucrat and scholar from Safavid Iran, detained and interviewed him. His own account of the early weeks of his presence in the Ottoman Empire is laconic and garbled, but from his fragmentary comments, it is obvious that his arrival had aroused immediate interest among the Ottoman authorities in Istanbul. Murad III's mentor, Hoca Sâdeddin, who hailed from immigrant parents from Safavid Iran, intervened and ordered local authorities in Diyarbakir to make Mirza Makhdum compose a detailed account of his life and career as well as the circumstances under which he had escaped to the Ottoman Empire. The result was *al-Yusr ba'd al-'Usr* (The Comfort after the Misery), a short autobiographical treatise dedicated to Hoca Sâdeddin, which is yet to be found.³¹

Drafted in the early 1580s, i.e. approximately three years after his escape from Iran, the epilogue to Mirza Makhdum's *Dhakhirat al-'uqba* is in fact an updated version of his vita, previously filed in the form of the treatise *al-Yusr ba'd al-'Usr* with the Ottoman authorities in Diyarbakir and Istanbul. This epilogue focuses on not only Mirza Makhdum's life and career but also on his ancestry. His ancestors claimed descent from the Prophet Muhammad through blood relatives of the famous Timurid-era Sunni scholar Mir Sharif al-Din 'Ali b. Muhammad Jurjani (d. 1413). Jurjani, in turn, traced his ancestry back to the medieval Zaydi ruler of Mazandaran, Abu Muhammad Hasan b. Qasim (d.

30 For a preliminary study of the Iranian recruits of the Ottoman bureaucracy in early Ottoman Bilad al-Sham, see my "Jama'at-i Irani-i Sham dar sada-yi dahum-i hijri/shanzdahum-i miladi: Shavahid-i manabi'-i 'arabi," *Pazhubishha-yi 'ulum-i tarikhi* 3, no. 2 (2011): 61–96. For more on the importance of *fiqh* and *hadith* in judicial and professorial career paths in Bilad al-Sham under the later Mamluks and afterwards, see Irmeli Perho, "Climbing the Ladder: Social Mobility in the Mamluk Period," *Mamluk Studies Review* 15 (2011): 21–22.

31 Sharifi Shirazi, *Nawaqid*, 5a, 112a–b, 175a.

915–28), also known as *Da'i al-Saghir*. There are references in Mirza Makhdum's account to several high-profile marriages, all intended to build up his claim to noble descent as a *sayyid* and a *sharif*. On the patrilineal side of his family, an ancestor of his is said to have married daughter of a Mar'ashi ruler of Mazandaran. Mirza Makhdum's other ancestor is reported to have wed a daughter of the storied Ilkhanid-era bureaucrat and polymath, Rashid al-Din Fazl-Allah Hamadani (d. 1318). The last Sarbidarid ruler of Khurasan, Kh'aja 'Ali Mu'ayyad (d. 1386), is also listed among his ancestors on the matrilineal side of the family. In later generations, Mirza Makhdum mentions Mir 'Abd al-Baqi Kirmani (d. 1514), who under Isma'il I held office as grand vizier and *vakil* while presiding over the Ni'mat-Allahi Sufi order, and Mir Fakhr al-Din Dashtaki, who came from a prominent Shiraz-based family of *sayyid* notables, as two of his great-grandparents.³² Mirza Makhdum's mention of the Dashtakis among his blood relatives is important as in the latter part of the 16th century the Dashtaki grandees were of good reputation among the *ilmiye* elites in the Ottoman Empire as promoters of Sunni scholarship in the fields of dialectic theology and Neo-Platonic philosophy in Safavid Iran. Relatedly, as we shall see later in this article, during Mirza Makhdum's years in the Ottoman Empire a number of Ghiyas al-Din Mansur Dashtaki's (d. 1541) pupils held well-paid professorial positions in Istanbul, Diyarbakir, and Damascus.

In his biographical writings, Mirza Makhdum emphasizes exceedingly his *sayyid* background. By doing so, he sought to establish his entitlement to the same privileges the educated *sayyids* benefited from in the Ottoman Empire. In those years, the *sayyid* recruits of the *ilmiye* were granted occasional cash gifts and tax exemptions. Even in case of committing felony, they were brought to special courts presided over by *nakibül-esrâf*, one of their own.³³ Accordingly, during the years Mirza Makhdum worked for the *ilmiye* there had been an unprecedented increase in the number of *müteseyyids*, or false claimants to *sayyid* status.³⁴ In his polemical writings, Mirza Makhdum admits encountering several

32 Sharifi Shirazi, *Dhakhirat*, 220a; idem, *Nawaqid*, 170b, 191a. 'Abd al-Baqi Kirmani is cited here as maternal grandfather of Mirza Makhdum's father.

33 İsmail H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin İlmiye Teşkilâtı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1965), 164, 167–68.

34 See Hülya Canbakal, "The Ottoman State and Descendants of the Prophet in Anatolia and the Balkans (c. 1500-1700)," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 52, no. 3 (2009): 547–50.

müteseyyid impostors of *acemî* background in the Ottoman Empire.³⁵ He warned his readers in the Ottoman Empire that even the Tabataba'i "saiyyid" households, who largely lived in Iran and Arab Iraq and claimed uninterrupted descent from the prophet on both patrilineal and matrilineal sides of their families, were in fact a bunch of thieving and swindler commoners. By pushing their false claims to *saiyyid*ship, Mirza Makhdum states, the Tabataba'is had managed to dupe the Ottoman authorities in Baghdad and the shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala into providing them with a steady stream of cash gifts and tax immunities. He then added that many claimants to *saiyyid*ship in Iran were in fact descendants of the medieval prostitutes and concubines impregnated by Arab drifters and tricksters who had managed to deceive Persians into venerating them as true descendants of the prophet.³⁶ Skepticism of claimants to *saiyyid* descent was widespread in 16th century Iran. It bears noting here that early in the 16th-century, when the Sunni Uzbeks brought Khurasan under their control, Muhammad Khan Shibani (d. 1510) urged his bureaucratic underlings in Herat and Mashhad to systematically investigate the pedigree of all "saiyyid" families and purge *müteseyyids* so that they could not strain the new regime's financial resources to the limit.³⁷ Under Shah Tahmasp, the Nurbakhshis of Rayy and Tehran and the Musha'sha'is of Huvayzah, who ranked among major families of landed notables in Safavid Iran, were widely known to have been false claimants to *saiyyid*ship.³⁸

In the Ottoman Empire, the imperial *nakibül-eshrâf* was charged with implementing systematic surveillance of claims to *saiyyid* status based on registers

35 Sharifi Shirazi, *Nawaqid*, 111b. In the 16th- and 17th-century Ottoman biographical writing the moniker *acemî* applied invariably to new arrivals from Turkistan, India, Central Asia, and Iran; see Ali Arslan, "Osmanlılar'da Coğrafi Terim Olarak 'Acem' Kelimesinin Mânâsı ve Osmanlı-Türkistan Bağlantısındaki Önemi (XV-XVIII Yüzyıllar)," *Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi* 8 (1997): 83–87.

36 Sharifi Shirazi, *Nawaqid*, 111b.

37 This is based on an unpublished *nishan*, or official appointment letter, dated 22 Rabi' II 913/10 September 1507 and issued by Muhammad Khan Shibani (d. 1510) in the name of Mir Nizam al-Din 'Abd al-Qadir Mashhadi, the Uzbek judge in Tus. The contents of this *nishan* suggest a rise in the number of false claims to *saiyyid* status in Khurasan during the interregnum that ensued following the death of Sultan Husayn Bayqara in the spring of 1506; see Muhammad Sharifi Nasafi, *Safina* (Pers. Ms. National Library of Iran 1194423), 147b–149b; cf. Kioumars Ghereghlou, "Muhammad Khan Shibani in Tus (915/1509)," *Manuscripta Orientalia* 22, no. 2 (2016): 56–57.

38 Kami Qazvini, *Nafâ'is*, 329.

of imperial deeds.³⁹ Understandably, Mirza Makhdum's interest in the post of *nakîbü'l-eşraf* in Istanbul and Bilad al-Sham, a honorary position at the time normally assigned to low-ranking bureaucrats of *sayyid* ancestry,⁴⁰ helped him define and promote his profile as a true descendant of the prophet. To be considered a true *sayyid* in the Ottoman Empire, one had to provide the office of incumbent *nakîbü'l-eşraf* with the certificate issued by former *nakîbü'l-eşraf* or an affidavit signed and sealed by a group of local notables who personally knew and could confirm the *sayyid* background of the claimant's family on patrilineal side. If the name of claimant's any other patrilineal relations had already been recorded in official registers as *sayyid* then these two conditions were waived, and he could automatically be granted the *sayyid* status.⁴¹

In Safavid Iran, it was widely known that, irrespective of their country of origin, the Sunni worthies of *sayyid* descent enjoyed elite status in the Ottoman Empire and benefited from the Ottoman authorities' generous patronage. The Sunni poet and scholar Kamal al-Din Husayn Abivardi (fl. 1492), who visited Istanbul and provincial centers of the Ottoman Empire under Bayezid II (1481–1512), praised the Ottomans for their unwavering support of émigré Sunni scholars, especially those descended from the prophet Muhammad. For instance, he brings up a certain Ahmed Paşa, "a native of Hormuz" possibly of *sayyid* descent with a history of bureaucratic service in India, who under Bayezid II was ranked among bureaucratic elites in Tokat and Amasya.⁴² Interestingly, later Persian writers took up the same roseate view of the Ottoman patronage of *sayyids* and Sunni *ulema*.

39 Hülya Canbakal, "On the 'Nobility' of Provincial Notables," in *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire: Halcyon Days in Crete V (A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 10–12 January 2003)*, ed. Antonis Anastasopoulos (Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2005), 41–42.

40 Uzunçarşılı, *İlmiye Teşkilâtı*, 166.

41 Rüya Kılıç, *Osmanlıda Seyyidler ve Şerifler* (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2005), 62–63; cf. Uzunçarşılı, *İlmiye Teşkilâtı*, 171–72.

42 Kamal al-Din Husayn Abivardi, "Du athar az Husayn Abivardi: Char-takht wa Anis al-'Ashiqin (ed. Iraj Afshar)," *Farhang-i Iran Zamin* 15 (1968): 12–13. Abivardi is reticent about Ahmed Paşa's background. Yet his reference to Hormuz on the one hand, and that the renowned late 16th-century Ottoman chronicler and jurist Cenâbî Mustafa Efendi (d. 1590) came from an Amasya-based family of *sayyid* bureaucrats originally from southern Iran (from Ganava or Janaba, a small port town on the Persian Gulf coast some 250 miles west of Shiraz) on the other, can be taken to suggest that the person whose professional success in the Ottoman Empire is highlighted in Abivardi's account was in fact a Cenâbî *sayyid*. Cenâbî has given the name of his paternal grandfather as Ahmad. On Cenâbî's life and work, see Mehmet Canatar, "Mustafa Cenabi," *Osmanlı Tarihçileri*, ed. Cemal Kafadar,

Writing from the Deccan in the early 1560s, an Iranian chronicler of Isma‘ili background praised the Ottomans for their support of Sunni scholars and descendants of the prophet, claiming that they awarded all *sayyid* notables with cash gifts and generous stipends.⁴³ In the same vein, the Herat-based chronicler Ghiyas al-Din Kh^vandamir (d. 1535) represented the Ottoman bureaucracy as a milieu rich in opportunities of professional success and material gain for Sunni scholars in general and those with *sayyid* descent in particular. Focusing on the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire and playing his topographical knowledge into a scenario of anti-Safavid political double-entendre, Kh^vandamir described Aleppo as the site of “a spring the water of which is known to heal those bitten at by rabid dogs in less than forty days.” He also called Damascus “one of the four paradises on earth,” where Sunni Muslims could attain “wealth and prosperity.”⁴⁴ Likewise, Mirza Makhdum admired the Ottomans for their unswerving support of scholars and bureaucrats putting them in stark contrast with the Safavids, who, according to him, never cared about the well-being of religious scholars and learned notables. He believed that the privation and maltreatment suffered by scholars and learned notables under the Safavids was a clear sign that the downfall of the Safavid regime of tyranny and injustice in Iran is impending.⁴⁵

During Mirza Makhdum’s time in the *ilmiye*, a handful of *müteseyyids* of Iranian background risen up to the rank of vizier in the Ottoman Empire. Evidence for this comes from Âli’s *Künhü’l-abbâr*, who singles out two impostors. One of them became court registrar in 1589 under the patronage of the Ottoman grand vizier Farhad Pasha, a position that put him in charge of tutoring a group of *devşirme* recruits. Âli adds that before landing a job with the Ottoman bureaucracy, this Iranian *müteseyyid* made his living as a cook and itinerant storyteller, or *kıssa-hân*, in eastern Anatolia. He started his career in Mardin as a *çavuş*, or military adjutant. This post brought him enough cash to purchase a shop in the local bazaar and help his relatives move from Iran to the Ottoman Empire, where they were to live a prosperous life under the patronage of high-ranking court bureaucrats.

Hakan Karateke, and Cornell H. Fleischer, <https://ottomanhistorians.uchicago.edu/sites/ottomanhistorians.uchicago.edu/files/cenabi.pdf>.

43 Khurshah b. Qubad Husayni, *Tarikh-i ilchi-i Nizam-Shah*, ed. Muhammad R. Nasiri (Tehran: Anjuman-i Athar va Mafakhir-i Farhangi, 2001), 266.

44 Kh^vandamir, *Habib al-siyar*, 4: 631–32. By “rabid dogs” he obviously meant the Safavids and their supporters.

45 Sharifi Shirazi, *Nawaqid*, 115b–116a.

Another Iranian *müteseyyid*, whose name Âli omits, held office as vizier of Egypt, a job Âli deemed suitable only for the experienced Ottoman bureaucrats, thanks to the Ottoman authorities' ineptitude and lack of professionalism. According to Âli, while Selim I and Süleyman recruited talents such as Idris Bitlisi (d. 1520) and Muslih al-Din Lari (d. 1572), under their successors, the high standards of bureaucratic erudition and scholarly excellence were readily flouted. As the result, "every Iranian, Arab, Kurd, and Daylami villager ... and cook" including those of dubious *sayyid* descent was able to occupy gainful and important positions of provincial vizier and registrar (*defterdar*).⁴⁶

The non-native *sayyid* recruits of the Ottoman bureaucracy, broadly speaking, faced mistrust and suspicion among their peers. For instance, Ahmad Sa'idi (d. 1559), a Sunni jurist and high-ranking Naqshbandi Sufi from Qazvin who was not a *sayyid* but claimed descent from Sa'id b. Zayd, a companion of the prophet Muhammad, is reported to have been interviewed regarding his noble lineage by the Ottoman registrar of Aleppo Iskender Paşa.⁴⁷ Similarly, it was de rigueur for Muhammad Husayni (d. 1555), scion of a family of notable *sayyids* in Tabriz who had been posted as a Shafi'i judge to Aleppo in 1543, to prove, based on evidence from genealogical, or *ansab*, manuals, the truth of his *sayyid* descent for a group of Aleppine learned notables.⁴⁸ Likewise, Mirza Makhdum faced widespread suspicion regarding his claim to *sayyid* descent. This seems to have been the case particularly in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. From a Palestinian chronicler, who knew Mirza Makhdum in person, we know that during his time in Bilad al-Sham and the Hijaz, he had the names of all his ancestors embroidered in white and gold all over his black turban. This way his peers in those parts of the Ottoman Empire could know of his noble descent without further ado.⁴⁹

That Mirza Makhdum's family and relatives had close ties to the Safavids had the potential to tarnish his hardly won reputation as a trustworthy Sunni fugitive in the Ottoman Empire. In the sixteenth century, some fugitives from Iran were

46 Âli, *Künhü'l-abbâr*, 570b–571b.

47 Radi al-Din Muhammad b. Ibrahim Halabi also known as Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-habab fi tarikh a'yan Halab*, ed. Muhammad H. Fakhuri and Yahya Z. 'Abbara, 2 vols. in 4 (Damascus: Wizarat al-irshad wa l-thaqafa, 1972–74), 1, pt. 1: 275. Sa'id b. Zayd was one of the ten companions of the prophet who had had been promised paradise (*al-'asharat al-mubashshira*) in the Qur'an.

48 Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-habab*, 2, pt. 1: 224–25.

49 Burini, *Tarajim al-a'yan*, 2: 56.

either marginalized or mistreated in the Ottoman Empire given their family's alleged involvement in supporting the Safavids. A case in point is Zahir al-Din Ardabili, a Shafi'i Sunni scholar and bureaucrat from Ardabil, who after being first employed by the *ilmiye* as a college lecturer on a daily stipend of eighty *akçes*, was elevated, early in the 1520s, to vizier of Cairo under Hain Ahmed Paşa (d. 1529), Süleyman's pick as governor of Egypt. When Ahmed Paşa's revolt in Egypt was quelled, the Ottoman authorities accused Ardabili, whose family in Iran affiliated with the Safaviyya Sufi order, of plotting to put Ahmed Paşa in contact with Shah Isma'il. Ardabili was beheaded early in March 1530 as a Safavid agent and propagandist.⁵⁰ Another Iranian fugitive, whose family's pro-Safavid tendencies seems to have worked against him in the Ottoman Empire, was 'Abd al-Rahim Amidi (d. 1556). A Khalvati Sufi and bureaucrat from Diyarbakir, Amidi came from a family of local bureaucrats and his father, 'Abd al-Karim, held office as provincial vizier under Shah Isma'il. Yet, shortly thereafter, he fell from favor and was executed. Amidi, the son, escaped from Safavid Iran on the eve of the Ottoman annexation of Bilad al-Sham and ended up in Aleppo. The Ottomans never employed Amidi notwithstanding his background as the son of a locally prominent bureaucrat in Diyarbakir. Instead, he started a small business as a silk and fabrics merchant in Aleppo, where he at the same time acted as head of the Khalvatiyya cloister.⁵¹

There is little in Mirza Makhdum's autobiographical writings to reveal his family's close links to the Safavid regime. He is vague in his description of his paternal grandfather, Sharif al-Din 'Ali's bureaucratic service under the Safavids. He only reminds his readers that while Sharif al-Din 'Ali was always unwilling to work for the Safavids "the sword and coercion" finally forced him to cooperate. Mirza Makhdum then prays to God that his services to the Ottoman throne may absolve the sins his grandfather might have committed under the Safavids.⁵² Elsewhere, Mirza Makhdum points to his success in prevailing on Isma'il II to massacre all his brothers and cousins, representing his role in this incident as a redress for his forefathers' wrongdoings under the Safavids. He further tells us that

50 On Ardabili's arrival in the Ottoman Empire in 1514, see İbrahim Peçevi, *Tarih*, 2 vols. (Istanbul, 1866), 1: 50. On his downfall and execution, see Najm al-Din Muhammad al-Ghazzi, *al-Kawakib al-sa'ira bi-a'yan al-mi'at al-'ashira*, ed. J. S. Jabbur, 3 vols. (Beirut: Jami'at Bayrut al-Amrikiyya, 1945-48): 1: 156-59, 216; Taşköprüzade Ahmed Efendi, *al-Shaqā'iq al-nu'maniyya fi 'ulama' al-'uthmaniyya*, ed. Ahmet S. Furat (Istanbul: Jami'at Istanbul, 1985), 456.

51 Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-habab*, 1, pt. 2: 774-76.

52 Sharifi Shirazi, *Dakhirat*, 217b; cf. idem, *Nawaqid*, 170b.

he had authorized these murders based on the victims' being born out of short-term marriage (*nikah al-mut'a*), a Twelver Shiite practice, which for mainstream Sunni jurists was (and is) tantamount to adultery.⁵³

Instead, Mirza Makhdum cast his relations and grandparents as victims of Safavid oppression knowing that this might make his Ottoman patrons readily sympathize with him. Contextualizing Mirza Makhdum's emphasis on the "hardships" his relatives suffered under the Safavids was the Ottoman authorities' tendency to provide special help and support for those Sunni immigrants whose opposition to the Safavids had been proven beyond any doubt. There is evidence to suggest that in the 16th century, the Ottoman officials suspected of the true motives of the "Sunni" fugitives from Safavid Iran. In the mid-16th century, when Burhan-'Ali Sultan, a descendant of Sunni rulers of Sharvan, wrote to the Ottoman authorities in Istanbul to ask for their assistance against the Safavids, Kanunî Sultan Süleyman urged his underlings to make sure whether these anti-Safavid rebels are firm in their Sunnism before offering them any cash and logistic support.⁵⁴ Relatedly, spying for the Safavids was another concern that made Ottoman authorities mistrust immigrants and fugitives from Safavid Iran. For instance, Âli warned Ottoman authorities that should they deem the hiring of new arrivals from Iran necessary, "the offices granted to them should be on the very opposite side in relation to the border they have quitted so that for some time they may not exchange news with their people."⁵⁵

Mirza Makhdum omits his grandfather Sharif al-Din 'Ali's involvement in anti-Sunni politics in early Safavid Iran. Sharaf al-Din 'Ali is cited in contemporary sources as a relentless harasser of Sunni Muslims under Isma'il I. An early 16th-century Istanbul-based Sunni physician and *tazkira* writer from Qazvin noted that Sharif al-Din 'Ali's violent death, which took place in the Battle of Chaldiran, was a divine punishment for his crimes against Sunni Muslims in Iran.⁵⁶ Further misleading his readers, Mirza Makhum writes of his father, Sayyid

53 Sharifi Shirazi, *Nawaqid*, 107a.

54 See document no. 451 in *Topkapı Sarayı Arşivi H. 951–952 Tarihli ve E-12321 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri*, ed. Halil Sahillioğlu (Istanbul: IRCICA, 2002), 327.

55 Âli, *Counsel*, 1: 62.

56 Mir Nizam al-Din 'Ali-Shir Nava'i and Shah-Muhammad Qazvini, *Majalis al-nafa'is va lata'if-nama*, ed. 'Ali Asghar Hikmat (Tehran: Chapkhana-yi Bank-i Milli, 1946), 384–85. For references to his anti-Sunnism, see also Amin Ahmad Razi, *Hafi Iqlim* (Pers. Ms. Majlis Library 9059), 56b.

Sharif, as a distinguished and respected Sunni scholar. Nonetheless, there is evidence that he was regarded by his contemporaries more as a second-rate poet than a religious scholar. The Safavid prince Sam Mirza (d. 1567), who knew Mirza Makhdum's father in person, points with a hint of sarcasm to his lack of expertise in "the sciences passed on to him by his ancestors," attributing it to his quest for administrative power and material gain in the Safavid bureaucracy.⁵⁷ Even after becoming grand vizier, Mirza Makhdum's father was still notorious for his crave for power and wealth, which led him to mastermind a series of court intrigues to ruin the lives and careers of his rivals and detractors. Even on his deathbed, he is reported to have been plotting against his enemies at court.⁵⁸

What is more, Mirza Makhdum tries to confuse and obfuscate his Ottoman readers regarding his father's zealotry as a Twelver Shiite. This is important, as by Mirza Makhdum's own testimony, we know that Sayyid Sharif was so firm in his devotion to Shiite imams that after his death, Tahmasp ordered the deceased vizier's widow and brother, Mir Murtaza, to bury his remains inside the shrine of imam Husayn in Karbala. Mirza Makhdum's account of this incident, as laid out in *Dhakhirat al-'uqba*, is rather vague. He just tells that he had once travelled to Karbala "charged by the shah with transferring the remains of the man who had shouldered the weight of his vizierate."⁵⁹ A similar tendency to hide and distort facts regarding his family's beliefs and actions under the Safavids is also detectable in Mirza Makhdum's account of his paternal uncle Mir Murtaza's life and career, whom he portrays as a respected Sunni jurist victimized as a result of anti-Sunni persecution in Safavid Iran. Yet the fact is that Mir Murtaza held office as *sadr* in Khurasan taking over this post from the Lebanese émigré Shiite jurist, Husayn b. 'Abd al-Samad Harithi (d. 1576) in circa 1553. Later on, Mir Murtaza was appointed to military judge by Tahmasp. He remained close to the Safavids thereafter and was posted to Fars as a judge towards the end of his life.⁶⁰ Mirza Makhdum's account contains none of these details.

57 Sam Mirza Safavi, *Tazkira-yi tuhfa-yi Sami*, ed. Muhammad Hasan Vahid-Dastgirdi (Tehran: Armaghan, 1936), 29: Mir Sharif al-Din 'Ali "strives hard in studying the sciences passed on to him by his forefathers; yet he finds no time to focus on his studies as without him the administrative affairs of a major provincial capital like Shiraz can never be put in order."

58 Husayni Qumi, *Khulasat*, 455–56.

59 Sharifi Shirazi, *Dhakhirat*, 223b.

60 Razi, *Haft Iqlim*, 57b; Kami Qazvini, *Nafa'is*, 514–15; Mahmud Ibn Kh'andamir, *Dhayl-i Habib al-siyar*, ed. Muhammad 'Ali Jarrahi (Tehran: Nashr-i Gustara, 1992), 190. Mir

As to his own education, Mirza Makhdum plays up his studies with some of the most distinguished Sunni scholars and jurists in Safavid Iran and the Ottoman world. Ghiyas al-Din Mansur Dashtaki, a renowned professor and scholar of Neo-Platonic philosophy, Islamic ethics, and mathematics in Safavid Iran, emerges as a main figure in Mirza Makhdum's educational pedigree. The inclusion of Dashtaki's name in Mirza Makhdum's vita was intended to impress his Ottoman superiors. Eminent among Dashtaki's former pupils recruited by the *ilmiye* was Muslih al-Din Lari, who had a stint of service in Mughal India, where he worked as emperor Humayun's (r. 1530–40, 1555–56) private tutor. After his arrival in the Ottoman Empire from India, Lari was primarily made a professor at the Hüsrev Paşa College in Diyarbakir. He soon risen up the ranks thanks mainly to the grand vizier Rustam Paşa's (d. 1561) support, taking over a highly-paid teaching post in Istanbul as professor at one of the eight imperial colleges, or *sahn-ı semân*. Later on, Lari was appointed to professor and superintendent of religious endowments, or *awqaf*, in Damascus.⁶¹ Another scholar with close pupillage ties to Dashtaki who ended up in the Ottoman Empire was Abu Sa'id Kuzakunani (d. 1572), whose family in Iran led the Naqshbandi Sufi order in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan at the close of the 15th century. Forced to leave Iran in the early 1540s, Kuzakunani was eventually elevated to professor at one of the eight imperial colleges in Istanbul on a daily stipend of one hundred *akçes*. During his years in Istanbul, Kuzakunani ranked among Kanunî Sultan Süleyman's boon companions.⁶²

Murtaza died in Agra on his way from the Hijaz to Iran in 1567. His remains were then transferred to Safavid Iran and buried inside the shrine of imam 'Ali al-Riza in Mashhad.

61 Nev'izâde Atâi, *Hada'iq*, 169–71; Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, 3: 60–61; Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-habab*, 2, pt. 1: 414–18. Cf. Muhammad Muti' al-Hafiz and Nizar Ibada, *'Ulama' Dimashq wa a'yanuha fi'l-qarn al-hadi 'ashar al-hijri*, 2 vols. (Damascus: Dar al-fikr, 2000), 1: 204–205.

62 Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-habab*, 2, pt. 1: 447; Atâi, *Hada'iq*, 445; 'Ali b. Bali al-Aydini, *Al-'Iqd al-manzum fi dhikr afazil al-Rum*, ed. Muhammad T. Bihbahani (Tehran: Kitabkhana-yi Majlis, 2010), 100–103; Khvandamir, *Habib al-siyar*, 4: 609. For more on Kuzakunani's activities as a high-ranking Naqshbandi mystic in early Safavid Iran, see Hamid Algar, "Naqshbandis and Safavids: A Contribution to the History of Safavid Iran and Her Neighbors," in *Safavid Iran and Her Neighbors*, ed. Michel M. Mazzaoui (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2003), 13–15. On Dashtaki's downfall, see 'Abdi Beg Qavami Shirazi, *Takmilat al-akbbar*, ed. 'Abd al-Husayn Nava'i (Tehran: Nashr-i Nay, 1990), 72; Husayni Qumi, *Khulasat*, 218 and 286; Rumlu, *Ahsan*, 320; Nurallah Shushtari, *Majalis al-mu'minin*, 2 vols. (Tehran: Kitabfurushi-i islamiyya, 1986), 2: 230–33. See also Caroline J. Beeson, "The Origins of Conflict in the Safawi Religious Institution" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1982), 36–41.

Mirza Makhdum's autobiographical writings contain several references to his studies in the Ottoman Empire. In 1566–67, he claims, he had studied parts of the Six Compendiums of Sunni *hadith* with the Mecca-based Egyptian jurist and *hadith* expert Shihab al-Din Abu l-'Abbas al-Haytami (d. 1566), also known as Ibn Hajar. A bigoted enemy of Twelver Shiite Muslims, Ibn Hajar owed his fame almost exclusively to having written, in 1543, an anti-Shiite polemic.⁶³ Mirza Makhdum tells us that Ibn Hajar had issued a certificate of transmission, or *ijaza*, in his name, but it was destroyed together with his books shortly before his escape to the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁴ There is also a terse reference in Mirza Makhdum's autobiographical writings to his being educated in the field of Sunni *fīqh* in Safavid Iran as part of a group of scholars studying "in underground circles" (*fi duwayrat taht al-'ard*).⁶⁵ This was meant to imply his early conversion to Sunnism, which in turn can be taken to suggest several years of study in the Sunni *fīqh*. Nevertheless, there is evidence that as late as 1570 Mirza Makhdum was still a staunch Shiite Muslim. This is corroborated by a short treatise he penned on the principle of imamate for his younger brother, Mir Nur al-Huda Sharifi. Dated 10 Muharram 978/24 June 1570, this treatise concludes with disparaging comments on the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs. Quoting from the Sunni imam al-Shafī'i (d. 820), Mirza Makhdum berated anti-Shiite caliphs for hiring and supporting successive generations of Sunni jurists and scholars to forge *hadiths* and attribute these false statements to Twelver Shiite sources in order to discredit Twelver Shiite imams and scholars.⁶⁶ [Fig. 1]

63 See Ahmad b. Hajar al-Haytami, *al-Sawa'iq al-mubriqa fi l-radd 'ala ahl al-bid' wa l-zandaqa*, ed. 'Abd al-Wahhab 'Abd al-Latif (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qahira, 1965). For the date of its composition, see 'Abd al-Husayn Khatunabadi, *Waqayi' al-sinin va l-a'wam*, ed. Muhammad Baqir Bihdudi (Tehran: Kitabfurushi Islamiyya, 1973), 469.

64 For Mirza Makhdum's references to Ibn Hajar as his mentor "in Mecca," see Sharifi Shirazi, *Dhakhirat*, 221b–222a; idem, *Nawaqid*, 172a. For the date of Ibn Hajar's death, see Shihab al-Din 'Abd al-Hayy b. Ahmad al-'Akari also known as Ibn al-'Imad al-Dimashqi, *Shadharat al-dhahab fi akhbar man dhahab*, ed. 'Abd al-Qadir al-Arnawut and Mahmud al-Arnawut, 10 vols. (Damascus: Dar Ibn Kathir, 1988–93), 10: 541.

65 Sharifi Shirazi, *Dhakhirat*, 222a.

66 *Majmu'a* (Ar. Ms. Markaz-i Ihyā' Miras-i Islami 2560), 52a. In the colophon to this short treatise on imamate, Mirza Makhdum clarifies that he had written it by request of his brother. Elsewhere, it is stated the he had one brother named Nur al-Huda, who late in the reign of Tahmasp held office as a judge in Shiraz (see Kami Qazvini, *Nafā'is*, 404). Once again, my thanks go to Mohammad Kazem Rahmati for sharing a copy of this unpublished manuscript.



Fig. 1. Mirza Makhdum's short treatise in defense of the imamate.

Mirza Makhdum's account of his studies with Ibn Hajar, mentioned above, is chronologically flawed. It bears noting here that his paternal uncle, Mir Murtaza Sharifi, who late in the reign of Tahmasp traveled to Mughal India, had mentioned Ibn Hajar's name as the authority with whom he had studied *hadith*.⁶⁷ From Mirza Makhdum's account, we know that he and Mir Murtaza left Safavid Iran in Ramadan 973/April 1566 charged with burying the remains of Mirza Makhdum's father in Karbala. That Ibn Hajar died in Mecca in Rajab 973/February 1566, i.e. two months before the Sharifis' arrival in the Ottoman Empire, makes the claims regarding their being taught by Ibn Hajar in the spring or summer of 1566 quite implausible. Mirza Makhdum further claims that in the same year he had studied with the Shafi'i judge of Sana'a 'Abd al-Rahman b. Ziyad al-Zubaydi (d. 1567), contradicting his own statement elsewhere that he had spent several months in Baghdad in 973–74/1566–67 as a guest of honor with the Ottoman governor of

67 Kami Qazvini, *Nafa'is*, 515. Mir 'Ala' al-Dawla Kami Qazvini (fl. 1589) was a cousin of Mirza Makhdum's mother and as such, knew the Sharifis well.

the province, Çerkez İskender Paşa (d. 1571). Mirza Makhdum's trip from Arab Iraq to the Hijaz, which seems to have started no later than late in the spring of 1566, was seaborne. The ship they boarded at Basra set sail first to Gujarat and thence to the port city of Mocha in Yemen. It was while sailing through the Gulf of Aden that the ship broke down and Mirza Makhdum had to have a stopover in coastal Ethiopia before making it to Yemen.⁶⁸

Mirza Makhdum's claim that he had been asked by the Ottoman governor of Baghdad İskender Paşa to stay longer than originally planned in Baghdad can be ruled out as falsehood. He states that considering Mirza Makhdum's anti-Safavid views, İskender Paşa feared for his life in Safavid Iran. That being the case, the Ottoman governor of Baghdad is said to have expressed his willingness to grant him asylum in Baghdad. Mirza Makhdum adds that during a meeting convened in the presence of İskender Paşa, he had fearlessly attacked a group of Twelver Shiite notables of Baghdad for their deviation from the path of true, Sunni Islam.⁶⁹ It is safe to assume Mirza Makhdum's account of his closeness to İskender Paşa doubtful—given the simple fact that the latter had been posted to Baghdad in Muharram 975/July-August 1567, i.e. almost two years after Mirza Makhdum's arrival in Arab Iraq. That İskender Paşa was no longer alive at the time Mirza Makhdum wrote *Dhakhirat al-'uqba* enabled him to face no ill consequences for feeding his Ottoman hosts with these fabrications.⁷⁰

Mirza Makhdum converted to Hanafi Sunnism upon his escape to the Ottoman Empire in 1578. He tells us that it took him about two months to master the Hanafi *fiqh* as good as expected from a judge and a mufti.⁷¹ He represents his conversion as being driven by internal pursuit of religious orthodoxy. To brush aside any doubts about non-opportunistic nature of his conversion to Hanafi

68 Sharifi Shirazi, *Nawaqid*, 172a. For more on al-Zubaydi's life and career, see Ibn al-'Imad, *Shadharat*, 10: 552–53. The approximate date for their departure from Basra can be inferred from Kami Qazvini's account. According to Kami, Mirza Makhdum's uncle arrived in Gujarat shortly after his hajj pilgrimage in 973/1566 (he died in Agra on 21 Jumada II 974/13 January 1567); see Kami Qazvini, *Naf'is*, 515. On İskender Paşa's life and career, see Âli, *Kümbül-ahbâr*, 1: 367a; cf. Abdülkadir Özcan, "İskender Paşa," *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/iskender-pasa>.

69 Sharifi Shirazi, *Dhakhirat*, 223b.

70 On the date of İskender Paşa's appointment to governor-general of Baghdad, see Kâtip Çelebi, *Tuhfetül-kibar fî esfari'l-bihar (Deniz savaşları hakkında büyüklere armağan)*, ed. Orhan Şaik Gökyay (Istanbul: Millî Eğitim Basımevi, 1973), 123.

71 Sharifi Shirazi, *Dhakhirat*, 222a.

Sunnism, Mirza Makhdum linked this incident to his celebrated ancestor, Sayyid Sharif Jurjani, a Shafi'i Sunni, who, more than three centuries earlier, had prophesied the conversion of one of his descendants to Hanafi Sunnism.⁷²

Conversion to Hanafi Sunnism was not uncommon among Iranian exiles in the Ottoman Empire, most of them being originally of Shafi'i background. For Iranians recruited by the *ilmiye* converting to Hanafi Sunnism was normally conducive to professional success. A case in point is Muhammad Husayni Tabrizi, an accomplished Shafi'i *hadith* scholar and notable jurist with short stints of teaching service in various institutions of higher education in Istanbul and the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Tabrizi was made judge in Aleppo and Damascus immediately after converting to Hanafi Sunnism.⁷³ Husayni Tabrizi's appointment to Hanafi judge in predominantly Shafi'i-populated cities like Aleppo and Damascus made him a close, trustworthy ally of the Ottomans vis-à-vis the local *ulema*. Likewise, Ahmad al-Iji (d. 1653), a native of Ij in Fars, is reported to have been promoted to in-absentia chief judge (*qadi al-rikab*) in Damascus upon his embracing Hanafi Sunnism.⁷⁴

Mirza Makhdum's conversion to Hanafi Sunnism took place in the presence of *şeyhülislâm* Çivizâde, who had reportedly tested Mirza Makhdum's expertise in Hanafi *fiqh*. To this purpose, the Ottoman scholar commissioned Mirza Makhdum to write commentaries on the basics of Hanafi Sunnism based on the fatwas issued by Ebüssuûd Efendi. The result was a short treatise titled *al-Unmudhaj al-Muradiyya*, which Mirza Makhdum dedicated to Murad III.⁷⁵ Implicit in Çivizâde's asking Mirza Makhdum to sit for a test on the basics of Hanafi *fiqh* was the Ottoman authorities' skepticism and distrust of the Iranian exiles' expertise

72 Sharifi Shirazi, *Nawaqid*, 145a.

73 Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, 2: 39; Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-habab*, 2, pt. 1: 221.

74 Muhammad al-Amin al-Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-athar fi a'yan al-qarn al-hadi 'ashar*, ed. Muhammad Hasan Isma'il, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 2006), 1: 362; cf. Hafiz and Ibada, '*Ulama*' *Dimashq*, 2: 123–24; 'Abd al-Qadir al-Arnawut, *Takmilat shadharat al-dhahab fi akhbar man dhahab, al-juz' al-awwal: Tarajim al-a'lam fi l-qarn al-hadi 'ashar al-hijri fi l-a'lam al-islami* (Damascus: Dar al-tiba'a wa l-nashr wa l-tawzi', 1991), 158.

75 Sharifi Shirazi, *Nawaqid*, 6b–7a. Nev'izâde Atâi (*Hada'iq*, 297–98) claims that Mirza Makhdum met Çivizâde first time in 952/1546–47, which is not correct. Çivizâde held office as *kazasker* of Rumeli twice in 1577 and 1581; see Richard C. Repp, *The Müfti of Istanbul: A Study in the Development of the Ottoman Learned Hierarchy* (Oxford: Ithaca Press, 1986), 244–56; Mehmet İpsirli, "Çivizâde Mehmed Efendi," *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* 8 (1993): 347–48.

in Sunni scholarship. Incompetence and eccentric behavior of a number of the Iranian recruits of the *ilmiye* had already caused scandal and outrage among local *ulema* in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. These Arab jurists and scholars were mostly followers of Shafi'i Sunnism and as such readily accused the Hanafi Ottomans and their bureaucratic cronies of ineptitude and ideological corruption. One scandal in Aleppo involved an Iranian bureaucrat called Ruh-Allah b. 'Abd-Allah Qazvini (d. 1541). Local notables in Aleppo loathed Qazvini for his lack of proficiency in the basics of Sunni *fiqh* and *hadith*. A fugitive from the Safavids, Qazvini was notorious for bribing *ilmiye* authorities into appointing him to judge in Aleppo. Instead of focusing his research on jurisprudence and *hadith* scholarship, Qazvini is reported to have spent his time in Aleppo writing two polemical volumes against Ibn al-'Arabi (d. 1240) and Nur al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman Jami (d. 1429), the two Sunni mystics widely favored by local scholars and bureaucrats in Bilad al-Sham.⁷⁶ This tendency to bribe one's way into the *ilmiye* is also visible in Mirza Makhdum. Shortly after his arrival in the Ottoman Empire, he started presenting officials in charge of the Ottoman bureaucracy with gifts. The most expensive of his gifts, a beautiful hand-made prayer rug, was offered to Murad III.⁷⁷ [Fig. 2]

At least two other 16th-century Iranian recruits of the *ilmiye* are known to have widely been criticized not only for their lack of academic expertise in the fields of *fiqh* and *hadith*, but also for their pro-Shiism. Ahmad Lala Tabrizi (d. 1530), who held office as superintendent of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus under Selim I and Kanuni Sultan Süleyman, is reported to have been a source of disgrace for his Ottoman superiors as several locally prominent Sunni notables

76 Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-habab*, 1, pt. 2: 641-43; Qazvini had composed a chronicle in verse of the reign of Selim I. In the opening part of the 16th century, the reign of Selim I was the subject of several Persian chronicles. İdris Bitlisi (d. 1520) refers to them as a major source of inspiration for his chronicle of the reign of Selim I (see İdris Bitlisi, *Salim-Shahnama* [Pers. Ms. Topkapı Palace Museum 1432], 21b).

77 Approximately 163 by 110 cm, the prayer mat Mirza Makhdum presented to Murad III was put up for sale in Istanbul in the 18th century and was eventually purchased by Rudolf Martin (1864–1925), a Zurich-born professor of physical anthropology at the University of Munich and the founder of *Anthropologischer Anzeiger* (for more on him, see Bruno Oettinger, "Rudolf Martin," *American Anthropologist*, 28, no. 2 [1926]: 414–17). The same prayer mat was auctioned off on 7 October 2009 at Sotheby's in London for £ 2,729,250 (US\$ 4,334M), a price that given the mat's tiny size makes Mirza Makhdum's gift to Murad III one of the most expensive pieces of oriental rug ever sold; see <http://www.alaintruong.com/archives/2009/10/08/15360515.html> (accessed 26 July 2018).



Fig. 2. The prayer rug Mirza Makhdum presented to Murad III.

accused him of being a Shiite heretic.⁷⁸ Similarly, Muhammad b. Zayn al-Din al-Nakhjavani (d. 1646), who served the Ottomans as judge in Damascus and Erzurum, was rumored to be a Twelver Shiite.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Ghazzi, *Kawakib*: 2: 108–9.

⁷⁹ Muhibbī, *Khulāṣat*: 3: 449–50. According to Muhibbī, the Sunni scholar who had spread the rumor that Nakhjavani was a *rafīdī* was arrested and executed by the Ottomans.

There are references in Mirza Makhdum's autobiographical writings to his close relatives' affiliation with the Naqshbandiyya, a major Sufi order with strong following among Sunni learned notables in Iran, Central Asia, and the Ottoman Empire. The Naqshbandiyya, unlike almost all other major Sufi *tariqas* in the central lands of the Islamic world, who claimed spiritual descent from the first Shi'i imam 'Ali, considered the first Sunni caliph Abu Bakr as their first mentor. The Sunni background of the *tariqa* made its followers, including Mirza Makhdum's family and relatives in Qazvin, an easy target for persecution and harassment under the Safavids. While the Naqshbandiyya notables were persecuted in Safavid Iran under the first two Safavid rulers, their counterparts in the Ottoman world and Central Asia benefited from state patronage and support. Sayyid Sharif Jurjani, the eponymous ancestor of the family, is claimed to have been a Naqshbandi Sufi.⁸⁰ Even though Mirza Makhdum is reticent about them, we know from other sources that in the early part of the 16th century the Sayfi *sayyid* notables of Qazvin, from whom his mother hailed, were actively involved in the Naqshbandi propaganda and Sufi indoctrination activities in Iraq-i 'Ajam and Azerbaijan. The renowned Persian historian, Mir Yahya Sayfi had been initiated into the Naqshbandiyya under the tutelage of Mir 'Ali 'Ammadi (d. 1518), a Naqshbandi mystic from Kurdistan who supervised the *tariqa*'s affairs in Azerbaijan. Furthermore, under Tahmasp, the Khalidis, another household with close ties to Mirza Makhdum's mother and her relatives, led the Naqshbandiyya in Qazvin. In the early 1550s, the Sayfi and Khalidi notables of Qazvin were persecuted for their Naqshbandi leanings.⁸¹

Mirza Makhdum's allusion to his family's Naqshbandi background and inclinations was aimed to help him get closer to Murad III, a pro-Sufi sultan who

80 Sharifi Shirazi, *Dhakhirat*, 218b, 221a.

81 Muhammad b. Husayn b. 'Abdallah Qazvini, *Silsila-nama-yi khvajagan-i Naqshbandi* (Pers. Ms. Süleymaniye Library Laleli 1381), 11b. On Qutb al-Din Abu Sa'id Khalidi (d. 1562), a cousin of Mirza Makhdum's mother and the last known leader of the Naqshbandiyya in Qazvin under the Safavids, see *ibid.*, 13b; and Kami, *Nafa'is*, 199. On Mir Yahya Sayfi see Kami, *Nafa'is*, 623–28. Under Tahmasp, many of the Khalidi notables of Qazvin, who claimed descent from the Umayyad emir Khalid b. al-Walid (d. 642) and since the latter part of the fourteenth century controlled the judicial system in Qazvin, were rounded up and put to the sword together with their families. For more on the Naqshbandiyya in Qazvin under the Safavids, see Algar, "Naqshbandis and the Safavids," 21–22; Dina Le Gall, *A Culture of Sufism: Naqshbandis in the Ottoman World, 1450–1700* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 26.

all his reign looked to Naqshbandi and Khalvati mystics for inspiration and guidance.⁸² Under Murad III, a number of Naqshbandis and their sympathizers held positions of administrative trust and political privilege in Istanbul and provincial capitals across the Ottoman Empire. What is more, in Safavid Iran, the general impression among local scholars and learned notables was that being a Naqshbandi meant easy access to state patronage in the Ottoman Empire. Around the time Mirza Makhdum escaped from Iran, according to a chronicler close to Shah Tahmasp, it was widely rumored in Qazvin that the Ottoman sultan not only had funded the establishment of a stately Naqshbandi Sufi convent in Bukhara, but also distributed generous amounts of cash gifts among followers of the *tariqa* in the Ottomans Empire itself.⁸³ Expectedly, those aspirants for bureaucratic career lines who had a Naqshbandi background had a better chance to get recruited and promoted in the *ilmiye*.

Employment and Career Mobility in the *İlmiye*

Scholarly literature has shown that during Mirza Makhdum's years in the Ottoman Empire the *ilmiye* sector underwent depersonalization and centralization of career mobility among its recruits.⁸⁴ Mirza Makhum's account of the *ilmiye* has nonetheless an upbeat tone highlighting the privileges bureaucrats and

82 On Murad III's mystical predilections, see Özgen Felek (ed.), *Kitābū'l Menāmāt: Sultan III. Murad'ın Rūya Mektupları* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2014). She has been translating these letters into English as well. The first 100 letters were published digitally under the title, "The Sultan's Dreams Project," Newbook Digital Texts Project, HYPERLINK "<http://depts.washington.edu/ndtwp/sultansdreams/>"<http://d>.

83 Sharaf Khan Bidlisi, *Sharafnama*, ed. Vladimir Véliaminof-Zernof, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1860-62), 2: 154. Sharaf Khan was a maternal cousin of Tahmasp and Isma'il II (see *ibid.*, 1: 448).

84 On centralization and depersonalization of bureaucratic career paths in the latter part of the 16th century, see Cornell H. Fleischer, "Preliminaries to the Study of the Ottoman Bureaucracy," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 10 (1986): 140–41; *idem*, "Between the Lines: Realities of Scribal Life in the Sixteenth Century," in *Studies in Ottoman History in Honour of Professor V. L. Ménage*, ed. Colin Heywood and Colin Imber (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1994), 59–61. On the horizontality of career mobility in the *ilmiye*, see Richard C. Repp, "Some Observations on the Development of the Ottoman Learned Hierarchy," in *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions in the Middle East since 1500*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 21–23; *idem*, *Müfti of Istanbul*, 27ff.; İlk A. Mansurnoor, "Religious Scholars and State: Patterns of Recruitment among the Ottoman 'Ulema,'" *Islamic Studies* 31, no. 1 (1992): 40–49.

scholars in the Ottoman Empire benefited from compared to their counterparts in Safavid Iran. He praises the Ottomans for their generous support of the *ilmiye* employees ascribing the longevity and legitimacy of the Ottoman dynasty to the well-being of its servants from Sunni jurists and professors to bureaucratic elites to the descendants of the prophet. As a case in point, he makes mention of Şeyh Şücâ, Murad III's Khalvati mentor, who, according to Mirza Makhdum, had once been paid 20,000 *akçes*, an amount equal to 1,500 *tümens* in Safavid currency - ten times the stipend Mirza Makhdum received as *sadr* under Isma'îl II. The salary of the grand vizier in Safavid Iran, Mirza Makhdum points out, equaled a quarter of the monthly earnings of a judge in the Ottoman Empire, which at the time amounted to 500 *akçes*. He also admired the leadership of the Ottoman bureaucracy for their professionalism and efficiency relative to those at the helm of the Safavid bureaucracy. Relatedly, he admits that while all state employees in Safavid Iran were constantly at risk of abuse and disgrace, tenured bureaucrats in the Ottoman Empire by and large enjoyed career stability and were favored with the sultan's generous patronage.⁸⁵

It took Mirza Makhdum less than a year to get employment in the *ilmiye*. He was first offered a judicial position, his name being put on payroll as a 60-*akçe* recruit replacing Ahmad b. 'Abd al-Awwal Qazvini, who had just retired.⁸⁶ In 1578, he was made judge in Diyarbakir succeeding Molla Bâlî b. Şemsi al-Aydinî (d. 1582). This appointment seems to have been arranged locally with the recommendation and approval of the Ottoman governor of Amid, Derviş Paşa.⁸⁷ His time in Diyarbakir was cut short in the same year as authorities in charge of the *ilmiye* decided to post Mirza Makhdum as judge to Tripoli in Bilad al-Sham.⁸⁸ It was the same Derviş Paşa who arranged for Mirza Makhdum to have a meeting with Hoca Sâdeddin Efendi in Istanbul. In this meeting, Mirza Makhdum gave a detailed account of his life and career in Safavid Iran as well as the circumstances under which he managed to escape from Qazvin to Diyarbakir in the early winter of 1578. Shortly afterwards, Mirza Makhdum drafted a written account of his life and career titled *al-Yusr ba'd al-'usr* and submitted it to the office of *şeyhülislâm*. Based on his vita (and Hoca Sâdeddin's recommendation), the *ilmiye* officials

85 Sharifi Shirazi, *Nawaqid*, 117b. On Şeyh Şücâ's being Murad's Sufi mentor, see Bekir Kütükoğlu, "Murad III," *İslâm Ansiklopedisi* 8 (1979): 624.

86 Nev'îzâde Atâî, *Hada'iq*, 298.

87 Burini, *Tarajim*, 2: 53.

88 Nev'îzâde Atâî, *Hada'iq*, 270.

decided to recruit Mirza Makhdum. He then traveled to Istanbul, where he was admitted to the Ottoman court for further interviews and eventually granted an appointment degree sealed by Murad III.⁸⁹

According to the Damascus-based Palestinian historian Hasan b. Muhammad Burini (d. 1615), who knew Mirza Makhdum in person, the latter's tenure as judge in Tripoli lasted two years at the end of which he returned to Istanbul to become a *mülâzım* waiting for a job offer. After a while he was made *nakibül-eshraf*, a not so important position that until the end of the 17th century was normally held by low-ranking religious scholars.⁹⁰ It happened that Mirza Makhdum's stay in Istanbul coincided with the outbreak of drought in the city. One day Murad III decided to appoint Mirza Makhdum as prayer imam to lead the *salat al-istiqa'*, or prayer for rain, held in the Ottoman capital. Within a few days of the prayer led by him, it started raining and the drought season thus came to an end. This incident brought Mirza Makhdum popularity at the Ottoman court prompting the sultan and his underlings to present him cash and various gifts.⁹¹ During his time as *nakibül-eshraf* in Istanbul, Mirza Makhdum began preaching at a local mosque, but it is alleged that his bad Turkish forced him to discontinue his sermons.⁹² In the spring of 989/1581, he was eventually reinstated as judge and posted to Baghdad. He immortalized his reinstatement in the *ilmiye* in 1581 on the margins of the last folio of a medieval manuscript of *Nahj al-balagha*, a collection of articulate sermons attributed to imam 'Ali selected and edited by the renowned Shiite scholar al-Sharif al-Radi (d. 1015), which he had purchased on 15 Rabi' II 989/29 May 1581 on his way from Istanbul to Baghdad as judge in Arab Iraq.⁹³

Nev'izâde Atâi states that Mirza Makhdum had been made chief judge of Baghdad in Rajab 987/September 1579, adding that the appointment was withdrawn within a few days and a certain Martoloszâde Efendi was posted to Baghdad

89 Sharifi Shirazi, *Nawaqid*, 11b.

90 See Uzunçarşılı, *İlmiye Teşkilâtı*, 166.

91 Burini, *Tarajim*, 2: 53; Nev'izâde Atâi, *Hada'iq*, 299.

92 Burini, *Tarajim*, 2: 55.

93 Abu l-Hasan Muhammad al-Sharif al-Radi, *Nahj al-balagha* (Ar. Ms. Majlis Library 4152), 507b. On this manuscript, which is scribed by the famous Ilkhanid-era calligrapher Ahmad Suhrawardi (d. 1342), see Qazvini, "Ahval-i Mirza Makhdum," 68; cf. 'Abd al-Husayn Ha'iri, *Fibrîst-i nuskhaha-yi Kitabkhana-yi Majlis-i Shawra-yi Milli* (Tehran: Kitabkhana-yi Majlis, 1967), 7: 5349–350.

in his stead.⁹⁴ In Shawwal 988/November-December 1580 Mirza Makhdum left Istanbul for the Hijaz, apparently to serve as chief judge in Medina.⁹⁵ Burini clarifies that Mirza Makhdum traveled from Istanbul to the Hijaz via Egypt and Red Sea and that he remained in the same post for three years.⁹⁶ This is, however, contradicted by Mirza Makhdum's own account, mentioned above, that he started working as chief judge of Baghdad late in the spring of 989/1581. It is plausible that he held office as chief judge of the holy cities of the Hijaz only for a few months. Shortly after his arrival in Medina, Mirza Makhdum took over as Hanafi chief judge of Mecca. Nev'izâde Atâi assigns this appointment to Rabi' I 991/April 1583, adding that within a year he was made *nakîbü'l-eshraf* of Mecca, a post that helped him forge close ties with the Sharif of the city.⁹⁷ In 1585, Mirza Makhdum was summoned to Istanbul and appointed to chief judge of Istanbul, while acting as the city's *nakîbü'l-eshraf*. Some eight months later, he was promoted to the post of military judge of Rumeli. This marked the apogee of Mirza Makhdum's career in the *ilmiye*.

Yet the appointment to military judge of Rumeli was revoked within a few weeks, leaving him unemployed for a while. The cancelation of his appointment to military judge of Rumeli put an end to Mirza Makhdum's *ilmiye* career. Late in 993/1585, he traveled to Mecca, where he assumed the post of *nakîbü'l-eshraf*. The news of Mirza Makhdum's death reached Istanbul less than two years later, on 30 Du'l-hajja 995/1 December 1587. Around the same time a certain Sayyid Yahya Efendi was made *nakîbü'l-eshraf* of Mecca.⁹⁸ Back in Safavid Iran, it was rumored that after his relocation to Mecca Mirza Makhdum had converted to Twelver Shi'ism and was deeply remorseful for his collaboration with the Ottomans.⁹⁹ One daughter is known to have survived Mirza Makhdum. She reportedly wed a son of Sayyid Hasan, the Sharif of Mecca and Mirza Makhdum's patron in the Hijaz.¹⁰⁰

Mirza Makhdum's hectic, though not unsuccessful, career in the *ilmiye* was not an isolated case. Rather, it epitomized the increasing centralization of bureaucratic career paths and the institutionalization of rotation system under Murad

94 Nev'izâde Atâi, *Hada'iq*, 270, 413.

95 Nev'izâde Atâi, *Hada'iq*, 298.

96 Burini, *Tarajim*, 2:54.

97 Nev'izâde Atâi, *Hada'iq*, 282, 298.

98 Nev'izâde Atâi, *Hada'iq*, 271, 282, 288, 291, 298–99, 417, 431, 436.

99 Munshi Turkman, *Alam-ara-yi Abbasi*, 221; trans., 330.

100 Burini, *Tarajim*, 2: 54.

III. In the closing quarter of the 16th century and even later, there were several new arrivals from Iran who like Mirza Makhdum ended up working on tenures that were rotational and brief. Muhammad Amin Abhari (d. 1608), who claimed descent from imam 'Ali's brother, Ja'far Tayyar and came from a family of bureaucrats in Safavid Iran, arrived in the Ottoman Empire in 1575, i.e. two years before Mirza Makhdum's escape from Iran. An accomplished scribe and poet in Persian and Arabic, Abhari landed a *kalemiye* job in Istanbul as superintendent of Sultan Bayezid II's endowments. Like Mirza Makhdum, Abhari was a protégé of Hoca Sâdeddin Efendi, who himself came from a family of Iranian descent. Abhari worked in Istanbul for a few years, but in the winter of 1582 was transferred to Damascus, where he lost his employment shortly thereafter. After attending two more brief stints of bureaucratic service in provinces, Abhari eventually retired from the *ilmiye* in the spring of 1591.¹⁰¹

Anecdotal evidence indicates that around the time of Mirza Makhdum's retirement to Mecca, in the *ilmiye* milieu too professional instability had exacerbated, making career mobility among an increasing number of professors and judges take a horizontal turn. Muhammad b. Sulayman Lahiji (d. 1617), who had studied for several years with Muslih al-Din Lari, started his *ilmiye* career under Selim II as a teaching assistant to prince Murad's (later Murad III) private tutor, Molla İbrahim. It was this minor teaching position at court that enabled Lahiji to eventually land a professorial job at the newly founded Osmân Paşa College in Istanbul in 1589. His influential contacts at court later helped him switch easily to a judicial career.¹⁰²

Like Lahiji and Mirza Makhdum, there were a few Iranian religious scholars whose closeness to the *ilmiye* elites in Istanbul helped them achieve upward advancement. A case in point is Tevfikîzâde Molla Ahmed (d. 1641), a Zaydi Shiite fugitive from Gilan who had married a granddaughter of Hoca Sâdeddin Efendi and converted to Hanafi Sunnism. Tevfikîzâde completed his studies with his father, Mulla Tawfiq (d. 1601), a Zaydi Shi'i religious scholar from Rasht, who had converted to Hanafi Sunni Islam upon his arrival in the Ottoman Empire in the closing decades of the 16th century, and in due course became a boon companion

101 Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-athar*, 4: 285–59; Najm al-Din Muhammad al-Ghazzi, *Lutf al-samar wa qitf al-thamar min tarajim a'yan al-tabaqat al-ula min al-qarn al-hadi 'ashar*, ed. Mahmud al-Shaykh, 2 vols. (Damascus: Manshurat Wizarat al-thaqafa wa'l-irshad al-qawmi, 1981–82): 1: 197–98; cf. Muti' and Ibada, '*Ulama' Dimashq*': 1: 248–53.

102 Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-athar*, 3: 457–58.

of Mehmed Efendi, Hoca Sâdeddin Efendi's son. Mulla Tawfiq, who had formerly studied with Muslih al-Din Lari, held office as private tutor of Hoca Sâdeddin Efendi's children.¹⁰³ The private tutorship of Sâdeddin's children seems to have been instrumental in his promotion to professorship at various colleges in Istanbul, including Dar al-Hadith at the Sulaymaniyya, one of the most prestigious institutions of higher education in the Ottoman Empire. His son, Tevfikîzâde started his *ilmiye* career as chief judge of Thessaloniki in Greece and was later held the same position in Damascus, Cairo, and Edirne.¹⁰⁴

Mulla Tawfiq's background and connections and the upward trajectory of his *ilmiye* career bring into clearer focus the impact of the unprecedented centralization of career mobility in this sector toward the end of the 16th century, when limited access to the sultan and court officials left very few opportunities for decisive upward career mobility in the *ilmiye*.¹⁰⁵ From the horizontality of Tevfikîzâde's career mobility in the *ilmiye*, it is clear as well that during Mirza Makhdum's years in the *ilmiye*, upward mobility in judicial career lines, even for the most influential recruits of the sector such as Mirza Makhdum, was no longer easily possible. Writing in the early 1580s, the Bijapur-based Mir Taqi al-Din Muhammad Kashani (fl. 1613), who knew Mirza Makhdum in person, refers to him as an "unfulfilled" (*nakam*) careerist. Pointing disparagingly to Mirza Makhdum's collaboration with the Ottomans, Kashani claims that soon after his escape to the Ottoman Empire, Mirza Makhdum found out that going to the top in the *ilmiye* was by no means as easy as he expected at the outset. As the result, he always regretted his entering the service of the Ottomans, and shortly after his retirement in Mecca, he reconverted to Twelver Shiism and was ready to return to Iran as early as possible.¹⁰⁶

103 On Mulla Tawfiq, see Burini, *Tarajim*, 2: 118–19; Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-athar*, 1:529; Nev'îzâde Atâi, *Hada'iq*, 451.

104 Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-athar*, 1:208; Abi'l-Wafa b. 'Umar al-'Urdu, *Ma'adin al-dhahab fi'l-a'yan al-mushrifâ bi-him Halab*, ed. 'Abd-Allah al-Ghazzali (Kuwait: Maktabat al-'uruba li'l-nashr wa'l-tawzi', 1987), 100.

105 Atçıl, "Route to the Top," 510.

106 Kashani, *Khulasat*, 383–84. We were unable to corroborate Kashani's account.

Conclusion

In his autobiographical writings in the Ottoman Empire, Mirza Makhdum portrays himself as a *sayyid* and high-ranking Sunni jurist best fitted for a leading position in the *ilmiye*. He managed to find employment as a judge, but his career mobility was slow-paced and never took a decisively upward turn. During Mirza Makhdum's years in the Ottoman Empire the *ilmiye* witnessed an unprecedented increase in the number of false claimants to *sayyid*ship, making it difficult for *sayyid* recruits such as Mirza Makhdum to easily benefit from the privileges the native *sayyid* notables in the Ottoman Empire enjoyed. Mirza Makhdum never achieved full acceptance in the Ottoman Empire as a true *sayyid*. In the Ottoman Empire, Mirza Makhdum converted to Hanafi Sunnism, a decision that helped him land employment in the *ilmiye*.

Mirza Makhdum was successful in achieving recognition in the Ottoman Empire as a devout Sunni Muslim and unforgiving enemy of the Safavids and their Twelver Shiite followers. Yet his autobiographical writings contain a series of unfounded claims about his education, religion, family background, and career in Safavid Iran. There is no reference in Mirza Makhdum's autobiographical writings to his family's close ties to the Safavid regime. Nor does he tell his readers in the Ottoman Empire about the part played by his close relatives in the persecution of Sunni Muslims in early Safavid Iran. Remarkably, Mirza Makhdum's statements about his education in Safavid Iran and abroad are flawed. However distorted and inconsistent, Mirza Makhdum's attempt at self-promotion was fruitful, enabling him to become close to Ottoman authorities in Istanbul and provinces. Even so, the realities of bureaucratic life in the Ottoman Empire in the closing decades of the 16th century worked against him. Mirza Makhdum's career as a judge was rotational and non-tenured, forcing him to serve short stints of service in various provincial centers. His upward mobility in the *ilmiye* being thus frustrated, Mirza Makhdum sought patronage of the local ruler of Mecca Sharif Hasan shortly before his death.

A Safavid Bureaucrat in the Ottoman World: Mirza Makhdum Sharifi Shirazi and the Quest for Upward Mobility in the İlmiye Hierarchy

Abstract ■ This present article examines Mirza Makhdum Sharifi Shirazi's (1540–87) life and career in the Ottoman Empire. Mirza Makhdum was a high-ranking Twelver Shiite bureaucrat in Safavid Iran, but after taking refuge with the Ottomans, he converted to Sunnism and started a new career as a judge in Diyarbakir, Bilad al-Sham, Baghdad, and the holy cities of the Hijaz. In this article, emphasis has been on his employment and professional advancement in the *ilmiye*, a milieu that was open on the one hand, but maintained ideological and institutional limitations on the other. I take the horizontality of his *ilmiye* career as a lens through which to explore nuances and complexities of professional advancement among the Iranian recruits of the Ottoman bureaucracy during the 16th century.

Keywords: Mirza Makhdum Sharifi Shirazi, Bureaucracy, *ilmiye*, career mobility, Murad III, Safavids, Iran.

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