Goldsmiths Research Online

Goldsmiths Research Online (GRO)
is the institutional research repository for
Goldsmiths, University of London

Citation

De Nicola, Bruno. 2018. Letters from Mongol Anatolia: Professional, Political and Intellectual Connections among Members of a Persianised Elite. Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies, 56(1), pp. 77-90. ISSN 0578-6967 [Article]

Persistent URL

https://research.gold.ac.uk/id/eprint/22864/

Versions

The version presented here may differ from the published, performed or presented work. Please go to the persistent GRO record above for more information.

If you believe that any material held in the repository infringes copyright law, please contact the Repository Team at Goldsmiths, University of London via the following email address: gro@gold.ac.uk.

The item will be removed from the repository while any claim is being investigated. For more information, please contact the GRO team: gro@gold.ac.uk

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Letters from Mongol Anatolia: professional, political and intellectual connections among members of a Persianised elite[1]

Bruno De Nicola

Goldsmiths, University of London / Austrian Academy of Sciences

1. Introduction

Since the defeat of the Byzantine troops at the hands of the Seljuq Turks at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, the Anatolian peninsula underwent a slow but steady process of Islamisation and cultural transformation.[2] By the time the Mongols entered the peninsula in the 1240s, the local Seljuq dynasty of Rum was ruling over a multifaith, multiethnic and multicultural society where different conceptions of Islam (Hanafi, Shafiʿi and Sufi) and Christianity (mainly Greek Orthodox and Armenian but also inivisual Catholics) cohabited with the semi-nomadic Turkmen military elite. In addition, a prominent urban Persianised bourgeoisie that promoted Persian literature and Iranian culture was becoming increasingly influential, especially in urban centres such as Konya, Sivas, Malatya and Kayseri, to the point that some saw a rural–urban antagonism forming within Anatolian society.[3]

The cultural diversity and political complexity of the period have made Anatolia a topic of increasing research interest in modern academia.[4] Scholars have described Anatolia as the "Far West" of the medieval Islamic world, a borderland that served as a refuge for some and a land of opportunities for others. We now know that the Sultanate of Rum attracted scholars, religious leaders and fortune seekers from all over the Islamic world, with personalities such as Ibn ʿArabi, Jalal al-Din Rumi and Qutb al-Din Shirazi contributing to a burst in cultural activity in the region during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[5] Extensive literary evidence

[1] The preparation of this article was made during a period as Visiting Fellow at the Institut für Iranistik, Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna, Austria. The material used in the preparation of this article was collected thanks to the support of the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP/2007–2013) / ERC Grant Agreement No. 208476, "The Islamisation of Anatolia, c. 1100–1500."

[2] On the Battle of Manzikert, see Cheynet, "Manzikert - un désastre militaire?," 410–38; Hillenbrand, *Turkish Myth and Muslim Symbol*, 7–10; Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 66–72.

[3] Vryonis, *Decline of Medieval Hellenism*, 384. For an up-to-date overview on the Islamisation of Anatolia, see Peacock, "Islamisation of Medieval Anatolia," 134–55.

[4] See an overview of the scholarly debate on the topic in Peacock, De Nicola and Yildiz, "Introduction," 4–7.

[5] Khanbaghi, "Champions of the Persian Language," 179–98. The same phenomenon occurred also in the city of Tabriz during the Ilkhanid period. See the different articles in Pfeiffer, "From Baghdad to Marāgah," 1–14.

in manuscript form written in Persian, Arabic and Turkish has survived from the period, but only limited research on many of these texts has been done so far.[6]

The historiography of medieval Anatolia has mainly been based on the major Byzantine and Persian chronicles of the period.[7] However, despite providing basic narratives for understanding the period, their main focus is political history and they do not often provide much insight into the lives of people outside the court. Further, these narrative sources offer an unbalanced description of the different regions of the peninsula, with central and eastern Anatolia attracting most of the documental attention. This leaves us with little information for the northern and especially western parts of the peninsula. We know, however, that by the end of the thirteenth century local Turkmen dynasties such as the Chobanids of Kastamonu (Çobanoğulları, r.c. 1211–1308) had consolidated as regional powers in north-western Anatolia, playing a prominent role in the border areas between Byzantium and the Seljuqs of Rum.[8] Apart from their main military role in keeping these areas under control, some of these local rulers made a consistent effort in promoting and financing the composition, production and distribution of several works in a variety of literary genres.[9]

To this day, a large number of sources for this period remain unexplored, written in manuscript form and available in different public libraries in Turkey and Europe.[10] In many cases, these handwritten documents provide a rich alternative source of information to the more traditional chronicle narratives widely used by historians. Among the documents that have survived from this period is a unique copy, made in the early fourteenth century, of a collection of Persian letters which has received very limited attention to date.[11] This collection of letters (*munsha'at*) has mostly been ignored by Turkish and Western academia since Osman Turan included a brief description of its contents in a chapter of his book published in the middle of the twentieth century.[12] This work is preserved in a single manuscript (Ms. Fatih 5604) at the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul; its letters are written mainly by a single individual of possibly Iranian or

[6] See the recently launched database of the ERC funded project "IslamAnatolia" containing detailed information on Anatolian literary production from 1100 to 1500: https://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/anatolia/data/

[7] The main chronicles of the period that have been edited are Ibn Bibi, *al-Avamir al-ʿalaʾiyah fi al-umur al-ʿalaʾiyah*; Aqsaraʾi, *Musamarat al-akhbar va musayarat al-akhyar*; Anonymous, *Tarikh-i Al-i Saljuq dar Anatuli*; and some Byzantine sources such as George Akropolites, *George Akropolites: The History* and Georges Pachymères, *Relations historiques*.

[8] Clifford E. Bosworth included a short reference to the Chobanids of Kastamonu. See his *New Islamic Dynasties*, entry 123. For more extensive works on this local dynasty, see Yücel, *Anadolu Beylikleri*, vol. 1; Korobeinikov, "Revolt of Kastamonu," 87–118.

[9] De Nicola, "The *Fusṭāṭ al-ʿadāla*," 49–72; idem, "On the Outskirts of the Ilkhanate."

[10] Efforts have been made to bring these documents to the knowledge of researchers with projects such as "IslamAnatolia" (www.islam-anatolia.ac.uk), but a large number of manuscripts from the period held in Iran and Central Asia remain unmapped.

[11] Ms. Fatih 5604, Süleymaniye Yasma Eseler Kutuphanesi, Istanbul.

[12] Turan, *Türkiye Selçuklulari*, 156–71.

Iraqi origin living in northern Anatolia during the middle of the thirteenth century. His correspondence includes not only some unique descriptions of the cities and landscapes he had visited, but also provides a very distinctive insight into the intellectual life of medieval Anatolia, the composition of society and aspects of daily life that can hardly be found in the traditional sources of the period.

This article offers an overview of the historical and literary contexts in which the only surviving copy of this text was produced in order to help us better situate its circulation in thirteenth-century Anatolia. In addition, it outlines some of the political and professional connections that the author developed as they appear in the text, networks not as evident in other historical sources. Finally, by exploring some of the author's personal interactions as reflected in the letters, we can explore some of the intellectual and apparently mystical interests of a Persianised Anatolian elite that remains elusive in our understanding of the intellectual life of the period. Although this short essay does not aim to offer a definitive view of the role of this social group in medieval Anatolia, we still argue that these letters offer a rare window into the professional, intellectual and spiritual life of members of this little-known Persianised elite that played a fundamental role in the development of medieval Anatolia.

2. The historical and literary contexts of northern Anatolia in the thirteenth century

As part of the unstoppable military expansion westward that Chinggis Khan began in the early thirteenth century, the Mongols invaded Anatolia in the 1240s, facing the Seljuqs of Rum in open battle at Köse Dağ in 1243.[13] The army of Sultan Kaykhusraw II (d. 1246) was defeated by the Mongols, who captured different cities in eastern Anatolia such as Sivas and Kayseri but left Konya, the Seljuq capital, mostly untouched.[14] This allowed the Seljuqs to survive as a dynasty, but weakened their political supremacy in Anatolia until internal divisions and the influence of the newly established Ilkhanate of Iran in the 1260s demoted the Seljuq Turks to a subject dynasty under the overlordship of the Mongols of Iran. During the reigns of Hülegü (d. 1265) and then Abaqa (d. 1282) in Ilkhanid Iran, the Sultanate of Rum saw the increasing influence of Mongol officials and fiscal pressure. The increasing involvement of the Mongols in Anatolian politics became even more evident when Arghun took control of the Ilkhanate in 1284, sending his brother Gaikhatu (d. 1294) to be governor of the region to secure control over the Sultanate.[15] The declining Seljuq control over the peninsula and the Mongol pressure

[13] Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 137–38; Melville, "Anatolia under the Mongols," 53–54.
[14] On the city of Konya after the Mongols, see Blessing, *Rebuilding Anatolia after the Mongol Conquest,* ch. 1.
[15] Melville, "Anatolia under the Mongols," 73–81.

during the second half of the thirteenth century allowed the emergence of different local principalities (*beylik*s) across Anatolia that would consolidate in the fourteenth century.[16] These political entities were poorly defined in terms of territorial, ethnic or religious affiliation but they were generally members of different semi-nomadic Turkmen tribes aligned behind a local leader that enjoyed a certain degree of political, economic and military autonomy from the court (whether Seljuq or Ilkhanid).[17]

An example of this phenomenon occurred especially in the north-western parts of the peninsula, where control from either the Seljuq capital in Konya or the Mongol strongholds in eastern Anatolia was more difficult. One of these principalities began to take shape in the region of Kastamonu, the former Byzantine province of Paphlagonia which was conquered by Seljuq and Turkmen forces in the second half of the twelfth century.[18] Its geographical distance from the battlefront between Mongols and Seljuqs in eastern Anatolia in the 1240s, along with a clever diplomatic strategy on the part of its rulers, appears to have spared the region of the Mongol conquest while also keeping a certain degree of autonomy from the Seljuq sultans based in Konya. Since 1211, a line of Turkmen warlords known as the Chobanids (Çobanoğulları) had taken control over this part of the peninsula, allying themselves to different Sultans of Rum and apparently recognising Mongol overlordship (not without conflict) until the 1280s.[19] During that decade, a new Chobanid ruler, Muzzafar al-Din Alp Yurak (d. c. 1293), made a step forward in trying to gain legitimacy for his claim over Kastamonu. He personally travelled to the Ilkhanid court in Tabriz, asking Tegüder Ahmad (r. 1282–4) first and Arghun Ilkhan (r. 1284–91) later to recognise him as the amir of Kastamonu. The Mongols of Iran accepted and Muzzafar al-Din returned to his homeland allied to the Mongols and to the new Sultan of Rum, Mesud II.[20] Under his rule, Kastamonu underwent an unprecedented cultural transformation in which the Chobanids tried to convert their role as military guardians of the region into becoming active rulers over the territory. To do so Muzzafar al-Din not only sought Mongol and Seljuq political support, but also played an active

[16] For research on the *beylik* period, see among others Yücel, *Anadolu Beylikleri*; Paul, "Mongol Aristocrats and Beyliks," 105–58; Pfeiffer, "Protecting Private Property," 147–65; Togan, "Beylikler Devri Anadolu," 704–20.
[17] Peacock, *Early Seljuq History*, 84; De Nicola, "On the Outskirts of the Ilkhanate."
[18] Peacock, *Early Seljuq History*, 160.
[19] Yücel, *Anadolu Beylikleri*, 1:40–42; Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 234–35; Korobeinikov, "Revolt of Kastamonu," 94–96; Peacock, "Saljūq Campaign against the Crimea," 133–49.
[20] Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, pp. 294-5; Yücel, *Anadolu Beylikleri*, 1: pp. 44-6.

role in financing the construction of religious and secular buildings, as well as acting as a patron of literary works in the Persian language.[21]

Being on the fringes of the Islamic world, having a shared border with Byzantium and having a considerable Christian population in their territories, the Chobanid rulers saw, like other Turkmen local rulers in medieval Eurasia, the possibility to present themselves as Muslim rulers over a Persianised urban population that respected them for their military skills but often saw itself as culturally superior to these semi-nomadic warlords. Up to five different works written in Persian containing dedications to rulers of Kastamonu have survived to the modern day, including authors such as Qutb al-Din Shirazi (d. 1311) and Husam al-Din Khuʾi (d. c. 1308), and also some anonymous ones such as the unique *Fustat al-ʿadala*.[22] In addition, another five compositions can be connected to the Chobanid court despite the fact that the versions that have survived contain no specific mention of any Kastamonu ruler.[23] The *munsha'at* analysed in this contribution are among this last group of works. It includes a total of twenty-four letters copied one after the other and compiled as a single work that, together with another four, form the five texts of the Fatih 5604 manuscript in the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul.

As far as I am aware, this is the only surviving copy of this compendium. The colophon of the manuscripts mentions that the copying of all the letters into one compilation was finished in the month of Jumada Avval 709 of the Hegira (October 1309 CE).[24] However, references in some of the letters to events happening in previous years point to the composition of the letters in the mid-thirteenth century. For example, in one of the letters, the author is responding to a previous correspondence (now lost) he had received from a certain Husam al-Din, in which the latter complained about not receiving news for some time. The author justifies his silence by claiming that he had sent previous letters to him before the time when the Mongol official Muʿin al-Din Süleyman Parvaneh (d. 1277) attacked the city of Sinop.[25] Therefore, the letters that did not arrive at their destination must have been written before 1262–63 CE, when Parvaneh reconquered Sinop from the Emperor of Trebizond.[26] Hence, the author is telling us

---

[21] For an overview of the patronage of buildings and literature in Chobanid Kastamonu, see De Nicola, *Persian Literature for Turkish Rulers*, chapter 3; Yücel, *Anadolu Beylikleri*, 1: pp. 152-3.
[22] Qutb al-Din Shirazi dedicated his *Ikhtiyarat-i muzaffari* (Selections for Muzaffar) in such a way; see Niazi, "A Comparative Study." For editions of all works by Husam al-Din Khuʾi, see Khuʾi's *Majmuʿah*. On the anonymous *Fustat al-ʿadala*, see De Nicola, "The *Fusṭāṭ al-ʿadāla*," 49–72.
[23] De Nicola, "On the Outskirts of the Ilkhanate."
[24] Ms. Fatih 5604, f. 131a.
[25] *Az ank amir kamran marvaneh [parvaneh] aʿzam ba jamʿiyat-i lashkar-ha bar valiyat-i Sinup majum avard* (Ms. Fatih 5406, f. 110a).
[26] Although most scholars such as Turan date the conquest of Sinop to 1265, Peacock has demonstrated that the fall of the city should have occurred in 1262–63. See Peacock, "Sinop: A Frontier City," 105–6.

that he is writing the present letter in the second half of the 1260s but that he had been in the area since at least the time when the Greeks of Trebzon dominated the city of Sinop in northern Anatolia.

The majority of the letters seem to have been written by Saʿd al-Din al-Haqq, a medical doctor who was appointed to a new post in the region of Kastamonu and Zalifre.[27] While the former city is clearly the capital of the Chobanids mentioned above, the latter has been identified as the modern town of Safranbolu, which at the time might have been a small fortress in constant dispute between the Chobanids and the Byzantine Empire.[28] There is evidence in the letters that he visited other Anatolian cities such as Sinop or Samsun and the region of Canik, leaving some interesting descriptions of his travels.[29] In the initial lines of the work, the author is described as a healer of kings and sultans (*mudawa-yi al-muluk va al-salatin)*, suggesting from the very beginning a close connection to the Seljuq court that will become more evident later on in the text. He is also described as master (maulana) and considered a teacher, knowledgeable of the world (ustazna ʿallām al-ʿalam), about whom unfortunately no further writing has come to us.[30] Although it seems clear when and where the letters were composed and the year of the copy of the manuscript appears in the colophon, we do not know the identity of the person responsible for collecting, arranging and grouping the letters together as it is not mentioned in the text.[31] However, by the way in which Saʿd al-Din al-Haqq is described, it seems fair to suggest that the compiler might have been either a disciple or a follower from within the same Persianised intellectual elite that considered his letters to be of such relevance that they were worthy of being preserved. Notwithstanding, it is also worth considering the possibility that the *munsha'at* of Saʿd al-Din al-Haqq were copied as part of an editorial effort to produce a manuscript of multiple works in which these letters were part of a model collection of correspondence, what is generally known as *inshaʾ*, a literary genre that pays special attention to the art of letter writing.[32] This particular literary genre was especially popular under the rule of the Chobanids of Kastamonu and some representative works of this style can also be found accompanying the present collection of

[27] Ms. Fatih 5406, f. 99b. See the reference to Zalifre (in the text as *zālīfrah*) in Ms. Fatih 5406, f. 101b.
[28] Turan, *Türkiye Selçuklulari*, p. 157.
[29] We have decided not to include an analysis of this trip in this article due to the limitations in the paper length. An initial analysis can be found in Turan, *Türkiye Selçuklulari*, pp. 159–66.
[30] Ms. Fatih 5406, f. 99b.
[31] For a short overview of the authorship of different letters in this work see Turan, *Türkiye Selçuklulari*, pp. 156–71.
[32] On the genre *inshaʾ*, see Paul, “Enšāʾ,” 455–57.

letters in Ms. Fatih 5406.[33] Consequently, it cannot be ruled out that the aim of the copyist and compiler of the manuscript was to collect and transmit these letters to serve as a model for letter writing to dignitaries, officials and the lettered classes of society. Nonetheless, in doing so he also transmitted aspects of the personal life of the author that contain some relevant, and sometimes unique, information on daily life in the region.

3. Professional and political networks in medieval northern Anatolia

It is well documented that court literature and the role of a cultured elite in the administration became prominent in Anatolia during the fourteenth century, when different principalities (*beylik*s) shared land and confronted each other for the domination of the region.[34] These urban and intellectual elites were well established by the fourteenth century, to the extent that many of them had formed self-sustained scholarly systems by the fifteenth century.[35] However, apart from some illustrious examples of prolific authors like Qutb al-Din Shirazi, we know little about the period of formation of these intellectual elites and their connections to the ruling classes. I contend that the compilation of Saʿd al-Din al-Haqq's personal correspondence gives evidence of an embryonic network that included professionally and intellectually trained individuals while suggesting close connections with the Anatolian court(s). The letters include references to different people who either appear as addressees or are mentioned in Saʿd al-Din al-Haqq's writings as belonging to the Seljuq-Ilkhanid political, intellectual and religious circles. Although it is difficult to identify with any certainty most of the people mentioned in the correspondence, some of them appear more clearly. A look at these personalities reveals that Saʿd al-Din al-Haqq belonged to an inner network of political, professional and intellectual elites that existed across Anatolia in the mid-thirteenth century.

The first two letters in this compendium are addressed to a certain Sharaf al-Din, who is described as a friend and master of the author. Saʿd al-Din al-Haqq mentions that he is writing from Kastamonu, where he has arrived safely presumably to assume his position as a medical doctor in the region.[36] This is the earliest point in the author's life that we can trace with certainty, but we cannot be precise about his origin because he offers limited information. Nonetheless, in addressing his master, Sharaf al-Din, in one of these initial communications,

[33] The manuscript includes the earliest known copies of the *Nuzhat al-kuttab wa tuhfat al-ahbab* (ff. 33–58), the *Qawaʿid al-rasaʾil wa faraʾid al-fazaʾil* (ff. 59–71) and the *Ghunyat al-talib wa munyat al-katib* (ff. 72–98), all authored works by Husam al-Din Khuʾi, an official at the court of the Chobanids of Kastamonu.
[34] Yildiz, "Aydinid Court Literature"; Yücel, *Anadolu Beylikleri*; Paul, "Mongol Aristocrats and Beyliks," 105–58.
[35] See Atçıl, "Mobility of Scholars," 315–32.
[36] Ms. Fatih 5406, f. 100a.

he not only sends his greetings but regrets the fact of not being able to be with him in Baghdad.[37] The reference to the Iraqi capital suggests that the addressee was in that city at the time and a certain degree of nostalgia expressed by Saʿd al-Din al-Haqq in the letter perhaps reveals that the author had spent some time in Baghdad Iraq in the past. The tone of the letter is somehow melancholic, suggesting that Saʿd al-Din al-Haqq is not necessarily happy in his new destination and missed the company of his master and lord (Sharaf al-Din). He mentions immediately that he is ready to leave for Tabriz as soon as possible to join "his majesty".[38] Osman Turan has suggested that the person to whom the letter is addressed is Sharaf al-Din Yaqub, a medical doctor in the service of Rukn al-Din Kılıç Arslan and Ilkhan Abaqa (d. 1282).[39] We have no reason to doubt, at this point, the identification made by Turan, or his suggestion that in this case "his majesty" would refer to the Mongol Ilkhan based in Tabriz. If so, Saʿd al-Din al-Haqq could have been an apprentice to Sharaf al-Din Yaqub, proving a connection between the author of the letters and the Ilkhanid court in Tabriz, and with the community of physicians at the Mongol court.

This connection to a chief doctor in the Ilkhanid court does not seem to be an isolated case. In fact, another letter included in this collection makes a passing reference to another famous physician contemporary to Saʿd al-Din. Between folios 125a–b, there is an untitled letter in which Saʿd al-Din asks an unnamed sultan (possibly Rukn al-Din) permission to join his convoy and accompany him on his journey, hoping to meet a certain Akmal al-Mulla va al-Din, further described as, "Bahat al-Islam Razi al-Muluk … Zahir al-Sultan al-Salatin."[40] Given these general titles applied to different personalities in medieval Anatolia and the Islamic world, the identification of this person can only be the subject of conjecture. Nevertheless, Osman Turan has suggested he may be the famous Akmal al-Din Tabib Nakhjavani, a family doctor closely connected to the Seljuq court and a follower of Jalal al-Din Rumi.[41] His interaction with Rumi is recorded in different sources, with Aflaki's *Manaqib al-ʿarifin* notably containing vivid descriptions of this relationship.[42] Closely connected to the Mongol governor of Anatolia, Muhin al-Din Parvane, Akmal al-Din is a clear example of the close relationship between political leaders and Sufis in medieval Anatolia.[43] The famous physician was also closely connected to the Seljuq Sultan Rukn al-Din Kılıç Arslan (r. 1248–65), who consulted

[37] Ms. Fatih 5406, f. 100b.
[38] Ms. Fatih 5406, f. 100a.
[39] Turan, *Türkiye Selçuklulari*, 157.
[40] Ms. Fatih 5406, f. 125b.
[41] A letter from Rumi to Akmal al-Din appears in Rumi's discourses. See Rumi, *Mirror of the Unseen*, 345–47.
[42] See Aflaki, *Manaqib al-ʿarifin*, 1: pp. 122-4 / *Feats of the Knowers of God*, 87–88.
[43] On this see Peacock, "Sufis and the Seljuk Court," 206–26.

him on matters of health and asked him to prepare remedies for him.[44] His proximity to the sultan and the Mongol governor of Anatolia makes us believe that, as Turan has suggested, the Akmal al-Din mentioned in the letters is the same Akmal al-Din that we find in the *Manaqib al-ʿarifin*. The chronology in this case is also consistent. Saʿd al-Din was contemporary to these personalities and the letters suggest he was trying to meet a renowned colleague of his profession such as Akmal al-Din.

These letters suggest that members of the same profession, such as medical doctors, maintained close ties to one another. For example, a different group of letters belonging to Abu Bakr ibn al-Zaki al-Qunawi (d. circa 690/1291 or 694/1294–95) has also been handed down to us.[45] Originally from Konya, he became an important intellectual trained in both Arabic and Persian, whose main works dealt with rhetoric, instructions for correspondence (*tarassul*) and poetry.[46] From his letters we learn that he was well connected to the political circles of the Seljuq court and that he occasionally referred to himself as "al-Mutatabbib".[47] This suggests that he might have been a physician or at least received some instruction in medicine at some point in his life. More interesting is the fact that three of his letters are addressed to the same Akmal al-Din Tabib Nakhjavani, the famous doctor mentioned above, in which Zaki describes himself as an "old apprentice" (*chakar-i qadim*).[48] Consequently, both Zaki and Saʿd al-Din sent letters to Akmal al-Din and saw him as a reference figure in their medical profession. These letters, therefore, also point towards an articulated network of medical doctors across Anatolia operating in the thirteenth century, where Sharaf al-Din Yaʿqub, Saʿd al-Din al-Haqq and Abu Bakr ibn al-Zaki appear to have deemed Akmal al-Din Nakhjavani as referential.

In the case of Abu Bakr al-Zaki and Akmal al-Din Nakhjavani, clearly attested are not only the contacts made between members of the medical profession but the close connection that existed between physicians and the officials of the Seljuq court.[49] Similarly, the letters of Saʿd al-Din al-Haqq reveal the proximity of these doctors to the Anatolian political elite, although this attachment is less evident. In a letter written to a friend, Saʿd al-Din al-Haqq finishes the correspondence by asking him to pass on to Amir Sharaf al-Din Mahmud that he will continue

[44] See Aflaki, *Manaqib al-ʿarifin*, 1: pp. 337 / *Feats of the Knowers of God*, 233–34.
[45] The letters can be found in manuscript or. 3173 held at present at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin in Germany. The letters have also been published in Turkey as al-Zaki, *Rawzat al-kuttab*. On the debate about his date of death, see Ashraf and Banuazizi, "Classes In Medieval Islamic Persia," 658–67; al-Zaki, *Rawzat al-kuttab*, 7.
[46] Al-Zaki's work should be seen also in the context of *inshaʾ* literature developed in Anatolia in the thirteenth century, which found continuity into the Ottoman period. See Sevim, "Anadolu Selçuklularına," 388–418; Darling, "Ottoman Turkish," 176–77.
[47] Al-Zaki, *Rawzat al-kuttab*, 3.
[48] Al-Zaki, *Rawzat al-kuttab*, letters 4, 29 and 30.
[49] Al-Zaki, *Rawzat al-kuttab*, 4–5; Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, p. 122.

to be at his service (*khidmat*).[50] Although the identity of this amir is, in my view, uncertain, Osman Turan has pointed out that it is possible that the letters are referring to the governor of the region of Erzincan, Sharaf al-Din Mahmud (d. c. 1246), who was closely connected to the early reign of Sultan Kaykavus II (r. 1246–57, d. 1280).[51] However, there seems to be a problem with the chronology of events in Turan's identification. As we have seen, Saʿd al-Din was writing his letter during the 1260s and according to Ibn Bibi, Sharaf al-Din Mahmud was removed as amir of Erzincan in 1246 and executed that same year during a period of internal turmoil that occurred in the Sultanate of Rum after the Mongol invasion of Anatolia.[52] The letters reflect a continuity and a contemporaneity in the style that makes the possibility that this letter was written twenty years before the others in the compilation unlikely. So either the identification is wrong or Saʿd al-Din's declaration of loyalty to the dead amir might reflect some inner political tensions among a Seljuq elite under Mongol rule that is not evident in the letters at first sight.

I suggest that the historical context of the Mongol–Seljuq relationship in which Saʿd al-Din lived may be relevant to understanding this reference to a person that had been executed twenty years previous, rather than the letters' apparent date of composition. Sultan Kaykavus II reigned from 1246 until 1257, when he was forced by the Mongols of Iran to leave Anatolia, seeking refuge first in Byzantium and eventually asylum at the court of the Mongols of the Golden Horde, who granted him refuge in the Crimean Peninsula.[53] Although his brother Rukn al-Din Kılıç Arslan remained Sultan of Rum, he was eventually executed by the Mongol governor Muʿin al-Din Parvaneh, who installed Kaykhusraw III as his puppet sultan in 1265. It was in this political context, defined by exile, assassinations and puppet sultans of Rum, that Saʿd al-Din al-Haqq composed these letters. Consequently, we suggest that mentioning his loyalty to the amir Sharaf al-Din Mahmud should be read as a way to express to his friend that he remained loyal to the sultan in exile and to his family in Anatolia. By mentioning the former governor of Erzincan, where his friend most possibly lived, Saʿd al-Din al-Haqq reveals his political loyalties without risking being openly exposed to the powerful Mongol governor of the peninsula, Muʿin al-Din Parvaneh.[54]

That this medical doctor had a close relationship with members of the Seljuq–Mongol political arena is also reflected in the fact that the author's political connections extended widely across

---

[50] Ms. Fatih, f. 113a.
[51] Turan, *Türkiye Selçuklulari*, 158.
[52] Ibn Bibi, *al-Avamir al-ʿalaʾiyah*, 496; for an account of the Anatolian political situation during these years, see Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 269–79.
[53] Cahen, "Questions d'histoire," 152; Melville, "Anatolia under the Mongols," 68.
[54] There is a further reference to Erzincan in the text when Saʿd al-Din also mentions, briefly in the context of explaining a trip in another letter, that he once met the present governor of Erzincan, Amir Majd al-Din, who

Anatolia in the thirteenth century. Although on occasion these people cannot be clearly identified, the descriptions left by Saʿd al-Din and the titles he uses to address them offer some insight into his interaction with different ranks of the Seljuq administration. One example of this is the letter titled "On Chiding" (*dar ʿitab*) addressed to Ali Bey Pasha.[55] Osman Turan has suggested that this person could be the same Shaykh Pasha that appears in a little-known manuscript containing edicts of Anatolia dating to the Mongol period.[56] However, he also connects this person to a certain Shaykh Pasha mentioned by Aflaki in the *Manaqib al-ʿarifin*, who is portrayed as a wretched person "immersed in a sea of hypocrisy [and with] no disposition to belief."[57]

I am reluctant to share Turan's identification of this person for two main reasons. First, Aflaki mentions Shaykh Pasha in an episode with ʻAbid Chalabi (d. 1338), Jalal al-Din Rumi's grandson, who assumed control of the Mevlevi order only after his elder brother, Arif Chalabi, died in 1316.[58] Consequently, these events should have occurred – if they did – during the second or third decade of the fourteenth century, and therefore half a century after the letters were composed or even after this manuscript was copied.[59] This would mean that Shaykh Pasha was rather old at the time of Aflaki's anecdote, something that the hagiographer surprisingly does not mention. Second, from Saʿd al-Din's letters it is evident that Ali Bey Pasha occupied a prominent position in the Seljuq political structure. It has been suggested that the use of "Bey" in a name is a Turkish honorific title of possible Byzantine origin, and held mainly military attributions used by Turkmen leaders in medieval Anatolia.[60] Similarly, the use of the word "Pasha" might refer to the dignitary title used for a military governor as it was later used in the Ottoman Empire. Yet this term is rather uncommon for the thirteenth century and its presence might represent one of the earliest documented examples of the usage of this title in Anatolia.[61] Further, he is addressed with flamboyant titles such as "Protector of the state and religion" (*Mujir al-dawla va al-din*), "Defender of the helpers of the Muslims" (*Nasir-i ansar al-*

---

invited him to go to his city to work for him. He was tempted to accept the offer but eventually declined. See Ms. Fatih 5406, f. 119b.

[55] Ms. Fatih 5406, ff. 122a–123a.

[56] Turan, *Türkiye Selçuklulari*, 168. On the edicts, see Ms. or. oct. 3173, Statbibliothek zu Berlin.

[57] Aflaki, *Manaqib al-ʿarifin*, 2: pp. 986-8/ *Feats of the Knowers of God*, 691–93.

[58] His full name was Chalabi Shams al-Din Amir ʻAbid

[59] On the dates of death for Arif and Arid Chalabi, see Yazıcı, "Ahmed Eflâkî," 62.

[60] Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 228–29; Yücel, *Anadolu Beylikleri*, 36.

[61] Turan, *Türkiye Selçuklulari*, p. 168.

Muslimin) and "Loved by kings and sultans" (*ʿAziz al-muluk wa al-salatin*), suggesting that he occupied a high position, possibly as a local amir or ruler.[62]

With this information, it is unlikely that Saʿd al-Din would have written a letter to a person, as suggested by Turan, who would later virtually be described as dishonourable by Aflaki decades after the letter had been composed. In my view, a more sensitive identification might be Ali Bey ibn Mehmet (r. 1262–77), the father of the founder of the Inanjids principality, whose capital was Ladik/Denizli in south-western Anatolia.[63] The letter is constructed as a polite complaint addressed to Ali Bey Pasha by Saʿd al-Din for not replying to his numerous letters in which he offered his services to him, a common practice among members of the Persianised elite in thirteenth-century Anatolia who presented their skills (literary, administrative or religious) to local Turkmen rulers in exchange for monetary compensation.[64] However, the identification of this person is by no means definitive, in the same manner that some other personalities mentioned in the letters are even more difficult to track down. For example, in a letter that carries no addressee and is titled only as "On Consolation" (*fi al-taʿziya*), Saʿd al-Din dedicates a paragraph offering his condolences to an unnamed man on the passing of his wife.[65] Although the letter mentions the name of the woman as Malik(a) Khatun, this was a fairly common name in medieval Anatolia, with women related to court officials, Sufi masters and even some Mongol Ilkhans being documented as carrying this name.[66] It is also possible that instead of the name of a particular lady, the name should be read as "lady of the king" (*malik-i khatun*), meaning a generic reference to the wife of an unnamed king. If this is the case, the identification of this woman is impossible from the text in question.[67]

The personal information we are able to extract from these *munsha'at* reveals that, although it is presented in a sketchy and fragmentary manner, a person such as Saʿd al-Din al-Haqq was not only a trained physician but a well-connected one. The references to high-ranking professional and political personalities in the Seljuq court denote an active pursuit of

[62] Ms. Fatih, f. 122b.
[63] For an overview on this dynasty, see Baykara, "İnançoğulları," 263–64; Ali Bey was initially an ally of the Mongol Ilkhan Hülegü (r. 1260–65) against his own father when the latter rebelled and was eventually executed in 1277 for failing to support a new Mongol offensive in Anatolia. See Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 280 and 292.
[64] See the examples of Qutb al-Din Shirazi or Husam al-Din Khuʾi and their connection to the Turkmen dynasty of the Chobanids of Kastamonu in De Nicola, "On the Outskirts of the Ilkhanate," forthcoming. For other examples of local rulers financing literary production in medieval Anatolia, see Yildiz, "Aydinid Court Literature," pp. 197-8; Yücel, *Anadolu Beylikleri*, 1: 24-7.
[65] Ms. Fatih, ff. 127a.
[66] De Nicola, "Ladies of Rūm," 144. Abaqa had a daughter called Malika from his wife Bulughan Khatun Buzurg, on which see Rashid al-Din, *Jamiʿ al-tavarikh*, 2:1057 / *Compendium of Chronicles*, 516. Another Malika Khatun, wife of the Atabeg Saʿd of Shiraz, was politically active in the early thirteenth century in Iran and apparently resided for a short while in Anatolia; see Juvayni, *Genghis Khan*, 459, fn. 33.

[67] The term *malika* is also frequent in inscriptions of the period to relate to the royal position of a particular woman. See Redford, "Paper, Stone, Scissors," 153.

establishing influential relationships that could have helped him climb the social ladder having arrived in a new milieu. He was in contact with sultans, amirs, high-ranking officials and perhaps even a Mongol Ilkhan in search for patronage and economic support. He also belonged to a network of doctors that seemed to function across Anatolia, depositing some of them, such as Saʿd al-Din, in remote places such as Kastamonu and Zalifre. This is a reconstruction of an individual case, but it might serve to illustrate the way in which some of these educated men of Persian origin developed their professional activities by seeking and achieving support from political actors in the region.

4. Literary interests and spiritual concerns among a persinised elite.

In addition to shedding light on an existing network of medical doctors and a close connection with the Seljuq court, this compendium of letters also reflects other aspects of the interaction of these Persian-speaking intellectuals in medieval Anatolia with their social peer group. Even though we do not know Saʿd al-Din al-Haqq's place of birth, like many other members of the Seljuq upper classes, he himself (or his family) could have migrated from eastern parts of the Islamic world such as Iran or even Central Asia.[68] As we have seen above, it is possible that he lived in Baghdad, a place where it would have been possible for him to receive his medical instruction. His anxiety to go to the city of Tabriz and the difficulties he had adapting to his new post in the rather rural north-western Anatolian region defines the cultural environments that Saʿd al-Din al-Haqq might have been used to before accepting this post. He describes Kastamonu as an unpopulated place (*ʿadim al-rijal*), not many skilful (*majal*) men or opportunities (*marafiq*), and as a location lacking suitable friends or companions (*jalis*). In his view, this was a place (*mauzaʿ*) deprived of any kind of professional guild (*asnaf*) or charitable foundation (*khairat*), which in his view made it a rather desolate place (*mautin-i nuzul*).[69] This rather negative view of provincial cities such as Kastamonu and Zalifre suggests that he might have spent most of his life in larger and more culturally challenging urban centres either in Azerbaijan, where the Mongol court generally resided, or in Konya, capital of the Seljuqs of Rum.

This longing for a more urban and cultured environment is present across many of the letters that Saʿd al-Din had written to his distant friends and companions. One of these individuals is the aforementioned Husam al-Din, a poet and literatus that has not yet been connected to any

---

[68] On the migration from Iran of the family of a Persian-speaking official who lived in Kastamonu in this period, see Özergin, "Selçuklu sanatçisi," 219–29.

[69] Ms. Fatih 5406, ff. 101b–102a.

other work surviving from medieval Anatolia.[70] Unfortunately, we have only some letters that Saʿd al-Din wrote in response to previous correspondence with Husam al-Din, but not Husam al-Din's original letters. However, Saʿd al-Din refers to Husam al-Din as *al-shaʿir* (the poet) or even as *Malik al-shuʿara* (King of Poets), denoting his attempts to highlight the importance of his friend.[71] The group of letters sent by Saʿd al-Din to Husam al-Din deal mainly with literary discussions and commentary on some classical Persian and Islamic literature. They seem to be examples of common correspondence between cultured personalities that used them to exchange knowledge and literary skills and to comment on each other's work. At the same time, these exchanges provide us with some documental evidence of the circulation of literary works and the cultural profile of the consumers of this literature across Anatolia, which is in accordance with the large amount of manuscripts that have survived from the period.[72]

For example, in one of the letters Saʿd al-Din thanks his poet friend for sending him a commentary (*sharh*), written in prose by Husam al-Din, on the *Marzbannama,* a work originally written in the eleventh century by Marzuban ibn Rustam of which no copies survive.[73] We are not told in the letters if the commentary written by Husam al-Din was based on a copy of the original version or if he used one of the two adaptations that we know were in circulation in the Islamic world in the thirteenth century.[74] However, since the original work was written in the dialect of Tabaristan, it is more likely that Husam al-Din used either the Persian translation done by Saʿd-al-Din Varavini between 1217 and 1225 or the *Rawzat al-ʿuqul*, an adapted and expanded version of the original composed in Konya in 598/1201 by Muhammad b. Ghazi Malatyawi (d. early thirteenth century) for the Seljuq Sultan Rukn al-Din Sulayman II (r. 1196–1204).[75] It is interesting that only a few decades after these two authors produced versions of the original *Marzbannama*, the work was being commentated on by Husam al-Din and also that these comments were circulating among this group of intellectuals in medieval Anatolia. In his response to his friend's commentary, Saʿd al-Din composed a letter in the form of a long poem in which he praised the eloquence, writing style and wisdom of

[70] Turan, *Türkiye Selçuklulari*, 157–58.
[71] Ms. Fatih 5406, ff. 103a, 108a.
[72] See some newly developed online manuscript databases such as IslamAnatolia (https://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/anatolia/data/) or Fihrist (www.fihrist.org.uk).
[73] Ms. Fatih 5406, ff. 108a–b. On this work, see Houtsma, "Eine unbekannte Bearbeitung des Marzban-nameh," 359–92, 366–67.
[74] The two versions of the work made in the thirteenth century were authored by Saʿd-al-Din Varavini and Muhammad b. Ghazi Malatyawi in his *Rawdat al-ʿUqul*.
[75] Born in Malatya, Malatyawi was forced into exile in Harran when he lost the grace of his patron, Sultan ʿIzz al-Din Kaykaus I (r. 1211–1220). He is among one of the early representatives of Anatolian authors attempting to create elaborate courtly literature in the Seljuq court. A thirteenth-century copy of the work survives in the library of the University of Leiden (Oriental collection n. 539). See Peacock, "Advice for the Sultans of Rum," 278–83; Yazıcı, "Muhammed b. Gazi," 531. This work has been edited as Muhammad b. Ghazi Malatyawi, Rawdat al-ʿUqul, edited by Jalil Nazari (Tehran: Vahid-i Gachsaran, 1384); and translated into French as Le Jardin des Esprits, edited and translated by Henri Masse (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1938).

Husam al-Din's work. Not much information is offered on his friend's commentary nor any critical comment on the original work. But, in another letter, he mentions that in the past he has sent some letters back to Husam al-Din quoting the *Marzbannama* as well.[76] This suggests that Saʿd al-Din was also versed in the text and that there had been an intensive conversation of correspondence between the two friends, exchanging comments on this classical Persian text and probably on others as well.

In a letter addressed to a certain Nasrallah, apparently the son of Husam al-Din, the sender mentions that he has read the poem titled "The Controversy of the Gardener and the Shepherd" (*Munazarah-ye baghaban va shaban*) that he had previously sent him.[77] Unfortunately, a copy of the poem is not included in the compendium since it might have been sent in a previous letter from Nasrallah to Saʿd al-Din. However, this short reference highlights not only that literary composition was a family affair practised both by father and son but also that among these intellectual elites there was active reading of, commenting on and composing of literary activity. The same interest is shown in Saʿd al-Din's responses. Even if none of the letters include specific references to a full or partial work written by the sender, there is a clear interest by the author in showing literary knowledge and writing skills in different parts of the collection. For example, there is a constant mixing of prose and verse, the simultaneous use of Persian and Arabic language as well as references to classical Islamic literature in all of the correspondence. Even though the main language of the work is Persian, Arabic verses play a key role in closing and/or opening many of the letters. This is a common trend in some Anatolian writings of the period, in which Arabic is used to insert verses of the Quran or classical Arabic poetry.[78]

A reference to the masterful use of these quotations is mentioned by Saʿd al-Din in his letter praising Husam al-Din's commentary. He eulogises the use that the poet makes of verses (*abyat*) from the Quran, the Prophet's sayings (*hadith*), stories (*hikayat*) and proverbs (*amsal*).[79] However, the letters also reflect that Saʿd al-Din al-Haqq was himself an eloquent writer and someone able to communicate poetically in both Arabic and Persian with a good knowledge of Islamic and Persian traditions. For example, he inserts different Quranic verses into the text, making a selection of different surahs and extracts from hadiths that serve to

[76] Ms. Fatih 5406, ff. 109b.
[77] Ms. Fatih 5406, ff. 112a.
[78] Similar examples can be observed in other texts of the period such as the *Fustat al-ʿadala* or the *inshaʾ* literature of Husam al-Din Khuʾi. On both of these, see De Nicola, "The *Fusṭāṭ al-ʿadāla*"; on Khuʾi, see the introduction in Khuʾi's *Majmuʿah*.
[79] Ms. Fatih 5406, f 108b.

illustrate or reinforce an idea expressed in the Persian text.[80] Similarly, references to Judeo-Christian prophets are also used as elements of comparison – for example, the miraculous deeds of Moses and Jesus of Nazareth – to sublimate the impact that the writings of his friend Husam al-Din had on him.[81] But references to religious texts in Arabic and to biblical characters are not the only source of intertextuality in the letters. Classical Persian literature, as we have seen, is also mentioned and references to pre-Islamic Persian kings are also used to glorify the addressee of the letters.[82]

While there is an open interest in these letters to show a professional pedigree as well as the political connections and literary capabilities of the author, aspects of his spiritual life and concerns are less evident. A large proportion of these letters pivot around the topic of "separation" (*firaq*) and describe how the author undergoes the pain and sorrow that distance from his companions produces in him. "Separation" was a subject relatively common in the Sufi literature of medieval Anatolia. The longing is often presented by sets of opposites generally referred to as *wisal* (union) and *firaq* (separation) between the Sufi and the Beloved (God). As Chittick explains, these terms are relative:

> In practice this means that there are an infinite number of degrees of each. One station may be considered "union" in relation to what has come before, but "separation" in relation to a higher station. Moreover, until the traveller reaches the very highest stages of sanctity, the station of union will be temporary, followed by at least a relative separation.[83]

The allegory of *firaq*/*wisal* was used by medieval Sufis such as Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273) as a way to explain the relative position of a person vis-à-vis Allah during their spiritual journey on the Sufi path until a final "union" occurs with the divine to achieve "subsistence" in God.[84]

Similarly, the concept of *firaq* became widely used among Anatolian Sufi circles to describe the relationship and love between the master and disciple or spiritual peers and the sorrow resulting from their separation from each other. An iconic example for this type of love and separation in thirteenth-century Anatolia is the story of Jalal al-Din Rumi and the separation

[80] There are several examples of this in the text; see for example Ms. Fatih 5406, f. 100b, 101b, Surat al-Fajr, verses 19–20 in f. 102a.
[81] For references to Moses and Jesus, see Ms. Fatih 5406, f. 108a.
[82] For example, there are references to the poem "Khusraw and Shirin" and the "Crown of Jamshid" in reference to the mythical Iranian king mentioned in Zoroastrian literature and in the *Shahname* of Firdawsi. See Ms. Fatih, f. 125a.
[83] Chittick, *Sufi Path of Love*, 232.
[84] Chittick, *Sufi Path of Love*, 232–33.

he endured after the departure of his master and companion Shams-i Tabrizi (d. 1240).[85] Rumi's son Sultan Valad mentions the sorrow and grief that his father felt after the separation: "The Shaykh [Rumi] grew mad in separation from him [Shams]."[86] *Firaq* became a popular literary topic in fourteenth-century Iraq, at the court of the post-Mongol dynasty of the Jalayirds. For example, the court poet Salman Savaji (d. 1376) was famous for dedicating *qasida*s to the Jalayird Sultan Shaykh Hasan (d. 1356) and his wife Dilshad Khatun, widow of the last Ilkhan of Iran, Abu Said (d. 1335), and granddaughter of the famous Ilkhanid vizier Amir Chupan (d. 1323?). He prospered under the patronage of the royal couple and when the sultan died, Savaji continued in the favour of his son and heir Shaykh Uvays (d. 1374), who like his father had tried to connect the legitimacy of his dynasty to the Mongol Ilkhans, although he added a closer and more open connection to Sufism than their Mongol predecessors. During his reign, the second sultan of the Jalayirds had a *nadim* (beloved companion and confident) named Bayramshah, who at some point, offended after a drinking gathering in Tabriz, decided to abandon the court and move to Baghdad. The sense of longing and the unbearable pain of separation felt by the sultan moved Shaykh Uvays to instruct his court poet Salman Savaji to write a work in order to describe this feeling. The poet composed a *masnavi* poem of about one thousand verses called the *Firaqnama* (Book of Separation) in 770/1368–69, where the love between the two men and the sorrow endured by the sultan after their separation appears as the central topic of the work.

Most of the correspondence included in these *munsha'at* makes clear reference to the notion of *firaq*. For example, one of the initial letters titled "On Separation" (*dar firaq*) was addressed to the already mentioned Husam al-Din and includes a short poem in Arabic followed by a prose text in Persian.[87] Similarly, this feeling of *firaq* is stressed in a letter written to a certain Imad al-Din (on him, see below) expressing his sorrow for having been deployed away from him and including a poem in which both the terms *firaq* and *wisal* are being used to express the longing the author feels from being away from his kind master (*khodavand-i mushfiq)*) but also friend (*dust*) and beloved companion (*dustdar*).[88] Further, a short letter equally titled "On Separation" is included later in the compendium as part of a sub-group of letters (ff. 121a–125a) directed to a group of individuals in which sorrow for separation and fraternal love are again the key elements. As we have previously seen, it appears that Saʿd al-Din considered himself a disciple (or belonging to the same professional network) of Akmal al-Din

[85] A good overview of the relationship between Rumi and Shams-i Tabrizi and the disappearance of the later is given in Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, pp. 181-202.
[86] See the translation of the poem in Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, p. 173.
[87] Ms. Fatih 5406, f. 103a.
[88] Ms. Fatih 5406, f. 118b–119a.

Nakhjavani, who apart from being closely connected to the Seljuqs is mentioned on several occasions as a follower of Jalal al-Din Rumi by hagiographers of the Sufi leader such as Faridun Sipahsalar (d. c. 1312) and Shams al-Din Aflaki (d. 1360).[89] The letters do not mention Jalal al-Din Rumi or other known members of the Mevlevi Sufi order. Nonetheless, we should bear in mind that these letters were written in the 1260s, a period when Rumi was alive and, more importantly, we can hardly speak of a Sufi order in the organised and structured fashion that would consolidate in the fourteenth century.[90]

References to Sufi terminology among these Persianised intellectuals denote a circulation of mystical ideas within the group that occurred, perhaps, without the personal attachment to an organised Sufi order in the way that would later materialise in fourteenth-century Anatolia. The names of other Anatolian individuals of the thirteenth century are revealed in these groups of letters, which suggests the author's awareness of these mystical ideas. For example, in a correspondence titled "Dar shauq" (On Longing / Love), Saʿd al-Din refers to a certain Mahmud, an unidentified individual addressed as "my brother" (*akhi*).[91] The letter is charged with references to how much the author misses the presence of his brother and describes how this feeling of separation (*firaq*) is becoming unbearable and that he is only searching for ways to reunite (*wisal*) with him again.[92] Similarly, the use of this Sufi terminology could suggest that the fraternal relationship between Saʿd al-Din and Mahmud indicates some sense of belonging to a Sufi group or guild fraternity that were beginning to take shape in thirteenth-century Anatolia. Only a few lines later the author mentions to his companion that he has been unable to undertake a trip to Sinop to meet him because that winter he has been at the service (*khidmat*) of a certain Mawlana Zayn al-Din.[93] While the letter addresses Mahmud as a peer, the relationship marked between Saʿd al-Din and Zayn al-Din is less equidistant. The reading of the letter suggests that perhaps Saʿd al-Din and Mahmud were somehow connected to Zayn al-Din, who is presented as somehow holding a higher position than them.

Another group of three letters in the same collection are addressed to a certain Imad al-Din and were written during a period of time in which the author visited different cities of northern Anatolia such as Sinop, Niksar, Samsun or Amasya.[94] No further personal information about him is given in the letters except that at the end of one of them he is credited for offering a job to Saʿd al-Din al-Haqq as *fiqahat* (expert in jurisprudence) in the office of the Head of Religious

[89] Sipahsalar, *Risalah*, 70, 97–98; Aflaki, *Manaqib al-ʿarifin*, 1: p. 337 / *Feats of the Knowers of God*, 233–34.
[90] Karamustafa, "Early Sufism in Eastern Anatolia," 176.
[91] Ms. Fatih 5406, f. 121a.
[92] Ms. Fatih 5406, f. 121b.
[93] These two individuals have not been identified by Turan either. See Turan, *Türkiye Selçuklulari*, 163.
[94] Ms. Fatih 5406, f. 115b.

Endowments (*Daftar-i divan-i awqaf*).[95] We are told that Saʿd al-Din rejected the position for economic reasons but the appointment has been seen by Osman Turan as an indication that the identity of this person was Imad al-Din Zanjani (d. 1281–82).[96] Although this possibility cannot be ruled out, Turan's suggestion that he was the Head of Religious Endowments during the first reign of Giyath al-Din Masud II (r. 1283–98) does not totally coincide either with the time in which the letters were composed or with Imad al-Din Zanjani's date of death.[97] Despite this, it is possible that Saʿd al-Din was in touch with the Head of Religious Endowments before the time of Mesud II and that the correspondence that we have is between these two men during the 1260s or 1270s, a period when Imad al-Din Zanjani might have held the same office for a previous sultan. If this was the case, we would need to assign a different date to this group of letters in the *munsha'at* to a later period, possibly in the early 1280s.[98] But beyond the problematic chronology of these three letters, we have included them in this section because the tone of these letters addressed to Imad al-Din is not as formal as those in which Saʿd al-Din addresses political and professional colleagues, but rather shows more personal contact in similar terms to those addressing Mahmud and Zayn al-Din.

As in the case of the other two companions, the letters describe the sadness, grief and sorrow of the author for being separated from his beloved friend (*yar mushfiq*). He equally addresses Imad al-Din in these three letters as the reference for *firaq* and *wisal*. The main topic of the first two letters is a description of the city of Sinop, arguably one of the most important port cities in northern Anatolia with an important commercial activity with Byzantium and Crimea.[99] The first of them is written in a combination of verse and prose gives a quick description of the city but focuses on the variety of pleasures that the city has to offer.[100] Yet intertwined with the description of the city, personal references to Imad al-Din are mentioned that suggest that in this case the relationship between the writer and the addressee was of a more spiritual nature than a political or personal one. For example, Saʿd al-Din implores Imad al-Din to write about his whereabouts for him to be able to visit him, adding that he can count on him for friendship, but crucially referring to Imad al-Din by using terminology

[95] Ms. Fatih 5406, f. 120a.
[96] Turan, *Türkiye Selçuklulari*, 163. Claude Cahen mentions that Imad al-Din Zanjani held the office of *mushrif* in the Seljuq court; see Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 344.
[97] The post of Imad al-Din is mentioned by Aqsaraʾi, *Musamarat al-akhbar*, 140.
[98] The late dating for these groups of letters is suggested by Turan. There seems to be some confusion regarding the life of Imad al-Din Zanjani. On the one hand, Cahen gives his date of death as 680 AH (1281–82 CE) but others suggest he might have held this position as *mushrif* since the time of Izz al-Din Kayqavus I (d. 1211) ; see Küçükaşcı, "Müşrif," 168; Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 344.
[99] On Sinop during the Seljuq period, see in particular Redford, "Sinop in the Summer of 1215," 125–49; Peacock, "Sinop: A Frontier City," 103–24.
[100] Among the places and enchantments of the city, Saʿd al-Din is especially interested in the brothels and the beauty of the boys and girls of the city.

associated with Sufi circles such as “our master” (mawlana), “my brother” (barudari) and mentioning him among his friends (dustan)..[101] More importantly, the second letter includes a paragraph in which, after emphasising the agony of separation once again in a short poem, Saʿd al-Din describes his companion as a noble lord (*mushfiq-i sid*) and affirmer of God’s virtues (*al-masdur bi haqq afzal*).[102] Finally, the third letter is fully dedicated to the concept of separation (*firaq*) and the longing that Saʿd al-Din has to endure for being away from his beloved friend and not being able to see his graceful face (*liqa-yi dil-pazir*).

Although the detailed information about these individuals is limited and it can be confusing when ones tries to identify them as historical characters, these unique letters allow us to uncover a close relationship of brotherhood among these people. In all of them the author expresses the sorrow he is enduring from being separated (*firaq*) and a wish to be reunited (*wisal*). These concepts share a parallelism with those ideas mentioned by Jalal al-Din Rumi himself in some of his discourses. Written in close geographic proximity with the centre of Mevlevi thought in Konya during Jalal al-Din Rumi’s lifetime and sharing personal connections with at least one of Rumi’s disciples, these letters are evidence of how the circulation of Sufi ideas across the Persianised elites in thirteenth-century Anatolia expanded, in a period prior to the consolidation of the Sufi orders in the region. In the cases of Mahmud, Zayn al-Din and Imad al-Din in particular, it is possible that they were part of an pseudo-brotherhood to which the author of the letters (Saʿd al-Din al-Haqq) may have belonged and which he was forced to leave when moving to Kastamonu for professional reasons. The close interaction of the author with political actors in the Seljuq court, the proven direct contact with Rumi and his followers such as Akmal al-Din Nakhjanjani or İnanç Bey (r. 1292–1336), son of Ali Bey of Ladik, point in the direction of the author’s close proximity with the proto-Sufi order of the Mevlevis that was being formed around the personality of Jalal al-Din Rumi.[103]

5. Conclusions

While traditional narrative sources for medieval Anatolia are generally vague with regard to peripheral areas of the peninsula, the use of unpublished sources still surviving in manuscript form can offer significant new information on the cultural life of the region. In addition, when these sources are letters written in the first person by a member of an otherwise little-known Persianised cultural elite, then this source can be a useful complement to the major source

[101] Ms. Fatih 5406, f. 117a.
[102] Ms. Fatih 5604, f. 117b.
[103] İnanç Bey is mentioned as being a follower of Arif Chalabi, Jalal al-Din Rumi’s grandson, by the hagiographer Aflaki. See Aflaki, *Manaqib al-ʿarifin*, 2: pp. 864-5, 939-40 / *Feats of the Knowers of God*, 604, 657.

material of the region. Specifically, this group of letters portrays a social class that was repopulating areas of the peninsula controlled by semi-nomadic Turkmen and possibly inhabited still largely by Christian-Greek populations. Considering the links demonstrated above between the author of the letters, Saʿd al-Din al-Haqq, and personalities closely connected to the Seljuq court of Sultan Rukn al-Din Kılıç Arslan, such as Akmal al-Din Nakhjavani or Sharaf al-Din Yaqub, and the potential link to local Turkmen rulers both in Kastamonu and Denizli, these *munsha'at* offer a unique description in the first person of how members of a Persianised elite interacted with political actors in medieval Anatolia. These letters tell us a personal story of a learned man, with professional capabilities, literary skills and spiritual concerns who belonged to a network of individuals not clearly defined but with prestigious positions in society and a close connection to political powers. But simultaneously, the *munsha'at* provide new evidence of the existence of loosely organised Sufi activity and the formation of a relational fraternity that can be read as a signal to a Sufi order (possibly Mevlevi) in embryonic from.

It is uncertain why a compendium of letters such as this was copied and kept as part of a collection of works in the surviving manuscript. There is a possibility that the copyist was a disciple or a friend of the author, but we do not have any indication of this in the text beyond the short reference to the nobility of the author expressed at the beginning of the text. Perhaps the preservation of the letters makes more sense in the literary context of the period, when there was an interest in *inshaʾ* literature and a need for works that offered models of letter writing to inexperienced officials in the newly expanding local principalities (*beylik*s) of fourteenth-century Anatolia. But in doing so it preserved a unique narration of the life experience of a network of intellectuals that formed a Persianised Anatolian elite in the thirteenth century, an

elite with professional skills, political connections, literary interests and spiritual needs that remains little understood among scholars in the field.

Bibliography

Akropolites, George. *George Akropolites: The History*. Translated by Ruth Juliana Macrides. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Aflaki, Shams al-Din Ahmad. *Manaqib al-ʿarifin*, 2 vols. Edited by T. Yazıcı. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1959–61.

Aflaki, Shams al-Din Ahmad. *The Feats of the Knowers of God: Manaqeb al-ʿArefin*. Translated by J. O'Kane. Leiden: Brill, 2002.

Anonymous. *Tarikh-i Al-i Saljuq dar Anatuli*. Edited by Nadirah Jalali. Tehran: Daftar-i Nashr-i Miras-i Maktub, Ayinah-'i Miras, 1999.

Aqsaraʾi, Karim al-Din Mahmud ibn Muhammad. *Musamarat al-akhbar va musayarat al-akhyar*. Edited by Osman Turan. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1944.

Ashraf, Ahmad, and Ali Banuazizi. "Class System iv: Classes in Medieval Islamic Persia." In *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 5, no. 6, pp. 658–67.

Atçıl, Abdurrahman. "Mobility of Scholars and Formation of a Self-Sustaining Scholarly System in the Lands of Rūm during the Fifteenth Century." In *Islamic Literature and*

Intellectual Life in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century Anatolia, edited by Andrew Peacock and Sara Nur Yildiz, 315–32. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2016.

Baykara, Tuncer. "İnançoğulları." In *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfi İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 22, pp. 263–64.

Blessing, Patricia. *Rebuilding Anatolia after the Mongol Conquest: Islamic Architecture in the Lands of Rum, 1240–1330*. London: Routledge, 2016.

Bosworth, Clifford E. *The New Islamic Dynasties: A Chronological and Genealogical Manual*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004.

Cahen, Claude. "Questions d'histoire de la province de Kastamonu au XIIIe siècle." *Selçuklu Araştırmaları Dergisi* 3 (1971): 146–58.
Cahen, Claude. *Pre-Ottoman Turkey: A General Survey of the Material and Spiritual Culture and History c. 1071-1330.* New York: American Council of Learned Societies, 2010.

Cheynet, Jean-Claude. "Manzikert - un désastre militaire?." *Byzantion* 50 (1980): 410–38.

Chittick, William C. *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*. SUNY Series in Islam. New York: SUNY Press, 1983.

Darling, Linda T. "Ottoman Turkish: Written Language and Scribal Practice." In *Literacy in the Persianate World*, edited by Brian Spooner and William M. Hanaway, 171–95. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.

De Nicola, Bruno. "The Ladies of Rūm: A Hagiographic View of Women in Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-Century Anatolia." *Journal of Sufi Studies* 3/2 (2014): pp. 132–56.

De Nicola, Bruno. "The *Fusṭāṭ al-ʿadāla*: A Unique Manuscript on the Religious Landscape of Medieval Anatolia." In *Literature and Intellectual Life in Islamic Anatolia in the 14th-15th*

Centuries: Historical, Social and Political Perspectives, edited by A.C.S. Peacock and S. N. Yildiz, 49–72. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2016.

De Nicola, Bruno. "On the Outskirts of the Ilkhanate: The Mongols' Relationship with the Province of Kastamonu in the Second Half of the 13th Century." *Journal of Ankara Studies* (forthcoming).

De Nicola, Bruno. *Persian Literature for Turkish Rulers in 13th-Century Anatolia: Politics, Patronage and Religion between Byzantium and the Mongols.* London: Routledge, forthcoming.

Hillenbrand, Carole. *Turkish Myth and Muslim Symbol: The Battle of Manzikert*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007.

Houtsma, M. T. "Eine unbekannte Bearbeitung des Marzban-nameh." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 52 (1898): 359–92; 366–67.

Ibn Bibi. *Al-Avamir al-ʿalaʾiyah fi al-umur al-ʿalaʾiyah*. Tehran: Pizhuhishgah-i ʿUlum-i Insani va Mutalaʿat-i Farhangi, 2011.

Juvayni, Ata Malik. *Genghis Khan: The History of the World Conqueror*, vol. 2. Translated by J. A. Boyle. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958.

Karamustafa, Ahmet T. "Early Sufism in Eastern Anatolia." In *Classical Persian Sufism: From its Origins to Rumi*, edited by Leonard Lewisohn, 175–98. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999.

Khanbaghi, Aptin. "Champions of the Persian Language: The Mongols or the Turks?." In *The Mongols' Middle East: Continuity and Transformation in Ilkhanid Iran*, edited by Bruno De Nicola and Charles Melville, 179–98. Leiden: Brill, 2016.

Khuʾi, Husam al-Din. *Majmuʿah-'i asar-i Hisam al-Din Khuyi*. Edited by S. ʿAbbas'zadah. Tehran: Miras-i Maktub, 2000.

Korobeinikov, Dimitri. "The Revolt of Kastamonu, c. 1291–1293." *Byzantinische Forschungen* 28 (2004): 87–118.

Küçükaşcı, Mustafa Sabri. "Müşrif." In *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfi İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 32, pp. 167–69.

Lewis, Franklin D. *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West; The Life, Teachings, and Poetry of Jalâl al-Din Rumi*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2001.

Malatyawi, Muhammad b. Ghazi. *Rawdat al-ʿUqul*. Edited by Jalil Nazari. Tehran: Vahid-i Gachsaran, 1384.

Malatyawi, Muhammad b. Ghazi. *Le Jardin des Esprits*. Edited and translated by Henri Masse. Paris: Maisonneuve, 1938.

Melville, Charles. “Anatolia under the Mongols.” In *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. 1, edited by Kate Fleet, 51–101. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Ms. Fatih 5604, Süleymaniye Yasma Eseler Kutuphanesi, Istanbul.

Ms. or. oct. 3173, Statbibliothek zu Berlin.

Niazi, Kaveh Farzad. “A Comparative Study of Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī’s Texts and Models on the Configuration of the Heavens.” PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2011.

Özergin, Kemal. “Selçuklu sanatçisi nakkas Abdülmü’min el-Hoyî hakkinda.” *Belleten* 34/134 (1970): 219–29.

Pachymères, Georges. *Relations historiques*, 4 vols. Translated by Albert Failler. Paris: Belles Lettres, 1984–2000.

Paul, Jürgen. “Enšāʾ.” In *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 8, no. 5, pp. 455–57.

Paul, Jürgen. “Mongol Aristocrats and Beyliks in Anatolia: A Study of Astarābādī’s *Bazm va Razm*.” *Eurasian Studies* 9/1–2 (2011): 105–58.

Peacock, Andrew. “The Saljūq Campaign against the Crimea and the Expansionist Policy of the Early Reign of ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Kayqubād.” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 16/2 (2006): 133–49.

Peacock, Andrew. “Sinop: A Frontier City in Seljuq and Mongol Anatolia.” *Ancient Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia* 16/1 (2010): 103–24.

Peacock, Andrew. *Early Seljuq History: A New Interpretation*. London: Routledge, 2013.

Peacock, Andrew. “Sufis and the Seljuk Court in Mongol Anatolia: Politics and Patronage in the Works of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and Sulṭān Walad.” In *The Seljuks of Anatolia: Court and Society in the Medieval Middle East*, edited by Andrew Peacock and Sara Nur Yildiz, 206–26. London: I.B. Tauris, 2015.

Peacock, Andrew. “The Islamisation of Medieval Anatolia.” In *Islamisation: Comparative Perspectives on History*, edited by Andrew Peacock, 134–55. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017.

Peacock, Andrew, Bruno De Nicola and Sara Nur Yildiz. “Introduction.” In *Islam and Christianity in Medieval Anatolia*, edited by Andrew Peacock, Bruno De Nicola and Sara Nur Yildiz, 1–20. Farnham: Ashgate, 2015.

Pfeiffer, Judith. “From Baghdad to Marāgah, Tabriz and Beyond: Tabriz and the Multi-Cephalous Cultural, Religious and Intellectual Landscape of the 13th- to 15th-Century Nile–Oxus Region.” In *Politics, Patronage and the Transmission of Knowledge in 13th–15th Century Tabriz*, edited by Judith Pfeiffer, 1–14. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

Pfeiffer, Judith. “Protecting Private Property vs. Negotiating Political Authority: Nur al-Din b. Jaja and his Endowments in Thirteenth-Century Anatolia.” In *Ferdowsi, the Mongols and the*

History of Iran: Art, Literature and Culture from Early Islam to Qajar Persia, edited by Robert Hillenbrand, A. C. S. Peacock and Firuza Abdullaeva, 147–65. London: I.B. Tauris, 2013.

Rashid al-Din. *Jamiʿ al-tavarikh*, 4 vols. Tehran: Miras-i Maktub, 2006.

Rashid al-Din. *Rashiduddin Fazlullah's "Jamiʿü't-Tawarikh: Compendium of Chronicles": A History of the Mongols*, vol. 2. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Dept. of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 1998.

Redford, Scott. "Sinop in the Summer of 1215: The Beginning of Anatolian Seljuk Architecture." *Ancient Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia* 16/1 (2010): 125–49.

Redford, Scott. "Paper, Stone, Scissors: ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Kayqubād, ʿIṣmat al-Dunyā wa'l-Dīn, and the Writing of Seljuk History." In *The Seljuks of Anatolia: Court and Society in the Medieval Middle East*, edited by Andrew Peacock and Sara Nur Yildiz, pp. 151-170. London: I.B. Tauris, 2015.

Rumi, Jalal al-Din. *Mirror of the Unseen: The Complete Discourses of Jalal al-Din Rumi*. Translated by Louis Rogers. San Jose, CA: Writers Club Press, 2002.

Sevim, Ali. "Anadolu Selçuklularına Ait Bir Eser: Ravzatü'l -Küttab ve Hadikatü'l -Elbab." *Tarih Vesikaları* 1/3 (18) (1961): 388–418.

Sipahsalar, Faridun b. Ahmad. *Risalah dar manaqib-i Khudavandgar*. Edited by Muhammad Afshin Vafa'i. Tehran: Sukhan, 1385/2006–7.

Togan, İsenbike. "Beylikler Devri Anadolu Tarihinde Yöntem Sorunları: Germiyan'dan Örnekler." In *Uygurlardan Osmanlıya. Şinasi Tekin'in Anısına*, edited by Günay Kut and Fatma Büyükkarcı, 704–20. Istanbul: Simurg, 2005.

Turan, Osman. *Türkiye Selçuklulari hakkında resmî vesikalar: metin, tercüme ve araştırmalar*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1958.

Vryonis, Speros, Jr. *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971.

Yazıcı, Tahsin. "Ahmed Eflâkî." In *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol 2, p. 62.
Yazıcı, Tahsin. "Muhammed b. Gazi." In *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 22, p. 531.

Yildiz, Sara Nur. "Aydinid Court Literature in the Formation of an Islamic Identity in Fourteenth-Century Western Anatolia.". In *Literature and Intellectual Life in Islamic Anatolia in the 14th-15th Centuries: Historical, Social and Political Perspectives*, edited by A.C.S. Peacock and S. N. Yildiz, pp. 197-241. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2016.

Yücel, Yaşar. *Anadolu Beylikleri Hakkında Araştırmalar*, 2 vols. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1991.

Zaki, Abu Bakr ibn Sadr al-. *Rawzat al-kuttab va hadiqat al-albab*. Edited by Ali Sevim. Ankara, 2011.