**Sacred sites, severed heads and prophetic visions**

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Employing Dagenais’ performative model of textual production and his notion of ethical reading, this article analyses how scribal re-inscription and intertextual references to *kesik-baş* (severed head) and *menakibname* (accounts of heroic and miraculous deeds) effectively foreground or elide the prophetic dreams and miraculous saint-like powers of an Ottoman commander in a corpus of early modern Ottoman *gazavatname* (campaign) manuscripts. In doing so, they demarcate very different spiritual and political geographies, and reflect a tension between a hero who reflects a more imperial state-centred vision of loyalty and one who appeals to audiences who geographically, politically or religiously are positioned on the periphery. To this end, the depiction of the prophetic and miraculous powers of the commander can be read as a commentary on the post sixteenth-century process of bureaucratization and confessionalization that took place in the Ottoman Empire.

Keywords: Ottoman Empire, historical narratives, military campaigns, literary practices, identity, miraculous events, severed heads

**Introduction**

In 1600 an Ottoman army captured the Habsburg-held fortress of Nagykanizsa, located just south of Lake Balaton in what is today Hungary. The following year the small Ottoman force garrisoned in the castle under the command of Tiryaki Hasan Pasha,[[1]](#endnote-1) successfully withstood a retaliatory Habsburg-led siege and routed the numerically superior besiegers.

Numerous Ottoman accounts of this dramatic victory of the few over the many were composed in government correspondence, letters sent to foreign rulers and provincial governors, official histories, and also in a genre of writing known as *gazavatname* – narratives of military expeditions. *Gazavatnames* are generally relatively accurate Ottoman narratives of specific military campaigns and victories, which can contain more or less imaginative or rhetorical sections depending on the author.[[2]](#endnote-2) The fact that such manuscripts are often also described and rubricated as *hikaye* (stories), *tarih* (histories) or *menakibname* (accounts of heroic and miraculous deeds) does suggest a degree of generic instability or fluidity. That is to say, different audiences have conceived of such texts as serving various, distinct socio-narrative functions and as occupying different spaces along the fact-fiction spectrum.

There are twenty-five extant *gazavatname* accounts of the defence of Nagykanizsa castle, dating from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century, and they provide the most detailed Ottoman descriptions of the 1601 retaliatory siege.[[3]](#endnote-3) There exist small, but significant, differences in rubrication, framing and narrative description between these manuscripts. They are not, however, sufficiently different to be classified as distinct ‘original’ works, but neither can the variations be adequately explained as arising from scribal ignorance or oral transmission, and consequently disregarded. Rather, these small differences are of considerable importance. Trying to categorize and analyse these manuscripts within a typographic model, with its concomitant assumptions of authorial originality, textual stability and the figuring of the scribe as a vital printing press, is not particularly useful. Following Machan and Dagenais, I find it useful instead to use a performative model to explicate certain instances of Ottoman textual production and reception.[[4]](#endnote-4) That is to say, the variations between the extant manuscripts in this corpus can best be explained if they are thought of as re-inscriptions, or performances, by scribe-authors who read, interpreted and re-wrote the manuscripts within a more fluid discourse, one where the stability of the text was not of fundamental importance.[[5]](#endnote-5) Therefore, I approach the extant manuscripts as a corpus of inter-related, but essentially unique, manuscripts; where each manuscript represents a re-inscription or re-performance of the narrative by a scribe-author, which was read, interpreted and re-written so as to account for, and reflect, alternative religious and political perspectives, and different textual functions. Despite their differences, the manuscripts essentially narrate the same events: a brief description of the first siege in 1600, which resulted in the Ottoman capture of Nagykanizsa castle, followed by a longer description of the various tricks and stratagems employed by the Ottoman commander Hasan Pasha to defend the castle and defeat the Habsburg-led besiegers the following year.

 There is much of interest that can be said about this corpus of manuscripts, but in this article I want to explore how in different manuscript re-inscriptions, a foregrounding or elision of Hasan Pasha’s prophetic dreams and his miraculous saint-like powers demarcate very different spiritual and political geographies, and reflect a tension between a hero who reflects a more imperial state-centred vision of loyalty, and one who appeals to audiences who geographically, politically or religiously are positioned on the periphery, outside of the Ottoman military-administrative elite. Although my discussion will initially, and in general terms, refer to the whole corpus of manuscripts, I will specifically discuss three of them in more depth: O.R.12961, O.R.700 and O.216.[[6]](#endnote-6) These have been selected because through narrative re-inscription, the use of different vocabulary choices, naming and rubrication practices, and in the addition of alternative introductory and concluding sections, they exemplify two radically different imaginaries of what constitutes the ideal behaviour and characteristics of an Ottoman commander, and thus reflect a degree of societal tension with the post-sixteenth century process of bureaucratization and confessionalization that took place in the Ottoman Empire.

In general terms, according to the Nagykanizsa *gazavatnames*, while en route to take up command of Nagykanizsa castle, Hasan Pasha and his men camp at a place called Görösgál (a few miles from Szigetvár castle), the grave site of a Muslim soldier who was martyred some years previously. Here Hasan Pasha experiences a strange natural phenomenon and a prophetic vision: on two separate occasions, a multitude of birds appear fighting and screaming with each other, they circle the tents before flying off in the direction of Nagykanizsa (A.E.Tar.187:5a–b).[[7]](#endnote-7) Hasan Pasha interprets this as providing divinatory knowledge of a future Habsburg attack on Nagykanizsa castle, which will end in defeat for the Habsburgs. In most manuscripts, the first group of birds consist of rooks (or carrion crows) and kites, whereas the second group of birds are black-faced eagles. The three types of bird could be interpreted as foretelling the three main groups who will subsequently besiege Nagykanizsa castle: the Habsburgs, and their Hungarian and Croatian allies. This interpretation is reinforced by the fact that the eagle was commonly associated with the Habsburgs, and featured on their standard.

Hasan Pasha’s extraordinary insight or perceptiveness is also foregrounded at other points in the text, through references to his ability to locate previously unknown fords across impassable rivers, and his power to discern an individual’s true intent, particularly in the context of individuals who wish to convert to Islam: he can differentiate between enemy soldiers who wish to genuinely embrace Islam and those who are feigning spiritual enlightenment as a means of gaining entry into the castle for the purposes of espionage or sabotage (A.E.Tar.187:2a–b, 42a–b; see also O.R.700 90a–b). Nagykanizsa castle is also the site of a prophetic dream experienced by the narrator of events. During the siege, while resting on his sword in the presence of Hasan Pasha, the narrator has a dream in which soldiers reciting the *tekbir* (‘God is great’) come from the direction of the castle and address him, saying that victory and triumph will be theirs. This is followed by an appearance of the four choice friends,[[8]](#endnote-8) who erect standards by each of the four towers of the castle (A.E.Tar.187:40a–b). This congruence of spiritually significant external spaces and inner prophetic visions helps to create a cultural and spiritual map that figures Hasan Pasha as a spiritually powerful mystic with supernatural powers akin to those possessed by some dervish saints.

**Severed heads, sacred sites and ethical reading**

Hasan Pasha experiences his prophetic vision at Görösgál, the site of an earlier martyrdom of a Muslim soldier that occurred just before the Ottoman capture of Szigetvár castle in 1566. Ottoman historian Ibrahim Peçevi describes this martyrdom, saying that he took his account directly from that written by the *kadı* (judge) who witnessed, it although he is likely to have heard a variation of this popular tale while serving in the Ottoman army in Hungary.[[9]](#endnote-9) In summary, the Ottoman commander of Görösgál castle, having captured the small fort of Kopoşvar, decides to go in the direction of Buda, leaving only a handful of men to defend the castle. The enemy commander of Szigetvár, recognizing an opportunity to capture Görösgál, besieged it with his superior forces. Although the soldiers in Görösgál castle were offered favourable surrender terms, under the leadership of the *kadı*, they refused and prepared to make a sortie. That day was a Friday, and also the eve of *Kurban Bayramı* (the festival of sacrifice). Having spent time praying for victory, the gates were opened and they all rushed out. Among the soldiers were two brave young warriors, Deli Mehmed and Deli Hüsrev. The Ottoman soldiers fought well, and with the arrival of reinforcements they were victorious. The *kadı* then tells of a strange event he witnessed during the battle: an enemy horseman cuts off Deli Mehmed’s head and rides away with it. Deli Hüsrev shouts ‘you gave your life, but don’t give your head’, at which point the headless Deli Mehmed leaps up, attacks the horseman and retrieves his head. The *kadı,* who witnesses this, is astounded, but events are to become even more miraculous. After the battle, the Ottoman soldiers bury their dead including Deli Mehmed, who was astonishingly found with his head at his side. Everyone returns to the castle except the *kadı*, who remains in vigil by the grave, where he experiences a miraculous vision: the inside of the tomb begins to emanate light and the *kadı* can see houris congratulating Deli Mehmed for his courage.[[10]](#endnote-10) The shock is too much for the *kadı*, and he faints and has to be taken back to the castle. Deli Husrev, who had seen the same sight from the castle, warns him that if he wants to see it again he should not mention it to anyone. However, the *kadı* could not contain himself, and starts to explain it: consequently he never witnesses the event again. Subsequently, Deli Husrev interprets the vision and explains that it means that the *kadı* will die a martyr in the near future. The tale finishes here, with the *kadı* emphasizing that he has related only that which he had seen with his own eyes, and that the events happened just as he narrated them.

This tale includes a good example of the *kesik-baş* (severed head) motif, which was popular in both Christian and Muslim, Balkan and Anatolian folktales and narratives for many centuries. Ocak (1989:16) notes that while the *kesik-baş* motif is not encountered in any pre-Islamic Turkic texts, it may have originated with the first conquests in Anatolia of the Turks in the eleventh century or have earlier antecedents in tales told about the Arab heroes who captured towns in south-eastern Anatolia before the arrival of the Turks. However, during the period of Ottoman conquest between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, *kesik-baş* stories spread amongst the people and the soldiers on the Rumeli (Balkan) frontier (ibid.:20). Such tales regained popularity in these regions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the Ottomans began to fight defensive rather than offensive wars (ibid.:22). The *kesik-baş* motif is most commonly found in stories or histories that narrate heroic exploits occurring during periods of conflict that are loosely based on real events.

Notwithstanding the obvious miraculous ability of Deli Mehmed’s headless body to give chase and retrieve the head, the Görösgál tale does seem, at times, to be somewhat incoherent from the perspective of linear narrative. Why, for example, does Deli Husrev tell the *kadı* that if he wants to see the vision again he must not tell anyone about it? Why would the *kadı* want to see the grave vision again and again? Rather than dismiss such narrative ‘incoherencies’ as symptomatic of poor literacy, scribal error, residual orality or poor storytelling, we could re-evaluate them as evidence of different literacy practices. The reading practices of twentieth-century academics generally favour linear narratives which move the narrative forward and encourage reading strategies that privilege the unravelling of the meaning of the work. However, these are not necessarily those used by other communities and audiences. Dagenais, working in the context of medieval, western European manuscripts, has suggested that texts were not simply understood as signifying, or saying, a particular thing; instead, they were seen as engaging the reader in a series of personal ethical choices or meditations (Dagenais 1994:xvii).[[11]](#endnote-11) Medieval audiences did not expect to reduce texts to a single ‘coherent’ reading, but sought to engage a text rhetorically and to elicit or construct a system or network of values or ethical models from texts (ibid.:62). As Huot describes, meditative reading is an expansive reading process or strategy, in which the reader dwells on a familiar text, repeating it and each time casting an ever wider net of associations, until they are led to the contemplation of many varied points (Huot 1996:129). In other words, one does not read to extract the meaning from the text, but rather to inspire personal meditations, a process Dagenais terms ethical reading (Dagenais 1994:62).[[12]](#endnote-12) Read ethically, this *kesik-baş* story foregrounds the importance of having courage and faith in what seems a desperate, hopeless situation; the inexplicable, incommunicable nature of miracles; and the idea that it is through miracles and visions that God communes with, and rewards those who are devout and steadfast in their faith.[[13]](#endnote-13)

The fact that Hasan Pasha experiences his prophetic vision while encamped at Görösgál is not coincidental. The spirits of slain *gazis* were thought to be capable of performing miracles, so their graves often became sites of pilgrimage and sacred spaces, where the miraculous could, and did, occur (Gokyay 1993:420). However, the indirect reference to Görösgál in the Nagykanizsa *gazavatnames* performs a number of specific functions. Firstly, the siege of Görösgál can be read as a metaphor for, or parallel to, the siege of Nagykanizsa: a small number of men are left in an important castle while the main force is elsewhere. Moreover, the soldiers of Görösgál, like Hasan Pasha and his men, prefer a last desperate assault to surrender, and their bravery and faith are rewarded through their ultimate victory. Perhaps most importantly, though, the citation of key places such as Szigetvár and Görösgál not only constructs a physical cartography, but also, and primarily, maps a spiritual and cultural world and aids the imagination of a specific geography of communal memory. In particular, references to sites of important battles aid mythification and create a specific territorial symbolism. Szigetvár and Görösgál are not mentioned in order that the audience can locate Nagykanizsa on a physical map, rather they locate the siege of Nagykanizsa on a cultural map of famous sieges, desperate last sorties, and Ottoman and Hungarian heroes. The Ottoman siege of Szigetvár in 1566 is particularly resonant, as it was the site of a significant Ottoman victory and the place where Sultan Süleyman died. Szigetvár was also, and still is, of cultural significance for Hungarian audiences, as it was where the Hungarian hero Miklós Zrínyi achieved mythical status for courageously leading a last desperate charge from the castle during the 1566 Ottoman siege – providing another parallel for Hasan Pasha’s courageous, but rather desperate, defence of the castle. Narratives of Ottoman victories in the Balkans, particularly those in the *gazavatname* genre, do not always unproblematically glorify Ottoman warriors and demonize or ‘otherize’ local, enemy commanders and soldiers. Instead, the heterodox, ethno-cultural and religiously diverse nature of the Ottoman-Habsburg borderlands sometimes led to a limited celebration of the qualities and bravery of the enemy other, and a more inclusive imagination of identities of self. Miklós Zrínyi is recalled in the Nagykanizsa *gazavatnames* not only through references to Szigetvár castle,but also in the naming of György Zrínyi, the Hungarian captain-general of the Habsburg border fortresses at the end of the sixteenth century, as Zirinoğlu or son of Zrínyi.[[14]](#endnote-14)

Hasan Pasha’s interpretation of the strange bird phenomenon at Görösgál similarly contributes to the mapping of a heterodox spiritual cartography, in that it reminds the audience of the *kesik-baş*, or severed-head event described above, and consequently creates a parallel between the prophetic vision of Hasan Pasha and the miraculous deed of Deli Mehmed. It also creates an intertextual link to the whole genre of *kesik-baş* literature and concomitant assumptions about the spiritual powers and abilities of key protagonists in these tales. This, in turn, increases the mystical nature of the tale and the spiritual standing of the eponymous hero, as well as situating it firmly in the context of famous military exploits on the Rumeli border.

**Prophetic visions and *menakibname* warrior saints**

The very fact that Hasan Pasha experienced his prophetic vision at a grave shrine that was previously the site of miraculous events and visions frames him as a warrior saint, and marks him as being able to commune with God, and as possessing mystical powers and abilities. This is further developed in some of the *gazavatname* accounts through the employment of key vocabulary choices and additional mnemonic frameworks of definition, namely intertextual references to *menakibname* literature. As noted in the introduction above, although in all the manuscripts Hasan Pasha has the ability to discern an individual’s true intent, particularly in the context of their desire to convert to Islam, in two manuscripts, Oct.3442 (1616) and O.R.700 (1773–4), the mystical nature of his ability is emphasized, because he is described as entering into a pious meditation (*murakaba vardı*) before assessing the intent of the individuals. This term carries the connotation of a meditative state or sleep (after a prayer session), in which one hopes to receive guidance or a dream vision from God. Thus it emphasizes Hasan Pasha’s ability to commune with God, and thus his *veli* (saint) status (Oct.3442:17a and O.R.700:90a–b). The scribe of O.R.700 also re-ascribes the dream vision of the four choice friends that predicted the Ottomans would be successful in their defence of the castle to Hasan Pasha, thereby further emphasizing his mystical and sacred powers (O.R.700:99a–b).

In the context of this article, however, perhaps the most interesting manuscript re-inscription is O.R.12961 (1789), *Hikaye-i Tiryaki Gazi Hasan Pașa* [The story of Tiryaki Gazi Hasan Pasha]. This is the longest and possibly the most distinct of the *gazavatname* corpus. Not only does it include an additional and apparently unique thirty folio narrative of Hasan Pasha’s exploits in the region prior to his famous defence of Nagykanizsa, but differences in vocabulary, narrative and the manner in which the text is framed by the introductory and concluding sections, all intersect to present a different ideological position; a much more heterodox, earthy and politically liminal perspective. This suggests that the politico-cultural cartography of the scribe and intended audience was very different to that, for example, of another manuscript from the same corpus, O.216 (1716), which presents a far more orthodox perspective, and constructs Hasan Pasha as a devout Muslim and exemplary military-administrative commander. Of interest in the context of prophetic visions and their interplay with the imagination of Hasan Pasha as a warrior saint, is O.R.12961’s inclusion of not only nearly all the references to the miraculous abilities of Hasan Pasha discussed above, but also some additional events.[[15]](#endnote-15) Before the siege of Nagykanizsa, Hasan Pasha is involved with, or responsible for, three miracles: he locates a route through the mountains unknown to the knowledgeable local guide, and thus turns a four-day arduous journey into a leisurely one requiring less than three days; when he and his men assume their positions around an enemy settlement in readiness for an attack, fire suddenly appears on three sides, aiding them in their assault; and lastly, despite his soldiers’ fears that they will not be able to move all their captured booty and slaves back to Buda, Hasan Pasha again locates a route, previously unknown, so comfortable that none of the wagons loaded with booty are damaged, and none of the animals are hurt (O.R.12961:16b, 17b and 19a, respectively).

Hasan Pasha’s mystical abilities are further highlighted with his being named as a *cadu* (sorcerer) by the enemy. This word also has, in Turkic folk literature, the connotation of a shamanistic rainmaker or weather-monger.[[16]](#endnote-16) This latter reference is invoked with the causal conjunction in the narrative of Hasan Pasha praying and weeping, in a state of mystical ecstasy, all one night, and the concomitant appearance of a severe snowstorm that decimates the enemy and contributes to the raising of the siege, thereby implying that the prayers of Hasan Pasha, the weather-monger, resulted in the storm. His ability to control the weather is also commented upon by the enemy soldiers. Prior to the siege of Nagykanizsa castle, while fleeing ahead of Hasan Pasha, these soldiers cross the Danube and burn the bridge behind them. As noted in the introduction, while all the manuscripts mention that Hasan Pasha locates a previously undiscovered ford, thereby enabling his men to cross the river, in O.R.12961, when the enemy witness this they believe that Hasan Pasha cast a spell and froze the river, so enabling him and his men to cross (O.R.12961:32b).

In O.R.12961 Hasan Pasha is essentially depicted as possessing the miraculous skills and abilities of *menakibname* warrior saints: not only does he predict the future from natural omens, but he can discern an individual’s true intent, control the weather, cross impassable rivers by locating fords known to no one but God, and find his way with ease and speed through uncharted mountains.[[17]](#endnote-17) However, unlike the genre of *menakibname* literature, the *gazavatname* manuscripts are largely constrained by their more realistic genre conventions, thus these powers are not always explicitly depicted as supernatural, but are either indirectly alluded to, or presented as the result of divine intervention. Such intertextual references, however, work to emphasize the portrayal of Hasan Pasha as a *menakibname* saint, and thus position him as spiritually powerful. Moreover, as *menakibname* literature was frequently associated with the Bektashi Sufi Order of Dervishes, such an association also aligns him with a more mystical, non-orthopraxic interpretation of Islam.[[18]](#endnote-18) Through the Bektashi association with the Janissary corps of Ottoman soldiers, and through the prevalence of the order in the European Ottoman Balkan provinces, the link between Hasan Pasha and earlier Balkan march communities, including *gazi* (warrior, often a frontier warrior) and more heteropraxic Islamic communities, is reinforced.[[19]](#endnote-19) This locates Hasan Pasha and his actions geographically on the European frontier, but also temporally in a ‘golden’ age of Ottoman European border warfare and expansion.

This link to an earlier age of *gaza* (military expedition) is further reinforced through intertextual references in this manuscript to the *Gazavat-i Sultan Murad b. Mehemmed Han,* a different *gazavatname* text that describes the battles and heroic deeds of Sultan Murad in the fifteenth century in the Balkans (Inalcık and Oğuz 1978).[[20]](#endnote-20) While there are some echoes of this work in the other Nagykanizsa *gazavatname* manuscripts in terms of shared vocabulary, the intertextuality is more pronounced in O.R.12961, as there is a greater element of shared vocabulary that may have therefore occasioned audiences to recall the earlier work.[[21]](#endnote-21)

# Constructions of identity: Hasan Pasha, a contested hero

Hasan Pasha is the hero of this tale. In many ways he is the ideal Ottoman commander: religious, just, competent, wise and considerate of his men. He is very devout, and prays at every opportunity: at the five prayer times, when meeting the sultan, when dispatching his men on missions, and before engaging the enemy. He is a warrior saint, a doer of exemplary or miraculous deeds in the *menakibname* tradition: he communes and intercedes with God and the Prophet on behalf of his men, performs miracles and is portrayed as the epitome of a Janissaries’ Bektashi saint. From his prophetic vision, the narrator’s dream and the indirect references to *kesik-baş* and *menakibname* literature, it is enticing to conceive of Hasan Pasha as occupying a religiously liminal space, as embodying a heteropraxic interpretation of Islam. The mention of Szigetvár, Görösgál and the previously uncrossed ford, while also helping to construct a physical cartography, primarily map a communal spiritual or cultural world creating a territorial symbolism, which depicts Hasan Pasha as spiritually powerful.

Both O.R.12961 and O.R.700, discussed above, depict Hasan Pasha as inhabiting liminal spaces: geographically, on the Ottoman-Habsburg border; spiritually, in the heteropraxic world of dervishes; and politically, as distanced from networks of power and authority, and not subject to the command of the sultan. This latter point is demonstrated in a number of ways: by Hasan Pasha’s reluctance to accept rewards for his actions from the sultan (be it robes of honour, ceremonial swords, honorific titles or land grants); by his preference for rewarding his men from his own resources rather than requesting positions for them from the imperial centre; by his investing the Hungarian commander Zirinoğlu as the King of Hungary; and by his refusal to accept positions given to him by the sultan – he instead chooses his own (Norton 2005b:205–7). Hasan Pasha is positioned on the periphery, distanced from the corruption, elitism, conservatism and nepotism of the imperial centre; his religion is not the orthopraxic Islam officially endorsed and promulgated by the Ottoman state, the imperial mosques and religious colleges. It is instead the religion of the heroic border dervishes, of brave *gazis*, and warrior saints who commune with God through prayer and dreams. The prophetic vision that Hasan Pasha experiences at the shrine of the martyred Ottoman soldier, in conjunction with allusions to his other miraculous abilities, imbue him with a degree of heteropraxic, spiritual power and authority that is absent from other versions of events. This rewriting authorizes him as a hero for audiences who perhaps have connections to the Ottoman marches or the Bektashi Sufi order. Indeed, the unusual expressions, references to Christianity, extensive military and local border knowledge, together with intertextual references to *kesik-baş* and *menakibname* literature, and a fluid and inclusive imagining of self which does not exclude Christians and indigenous inhabitants of the Balkans, all suggest that the scribes of O.R.12961 and O.R.700 rewrote their texts for audiences whose cartographies of conflict were less mapped in terms of Christian-Muslim, Ottoman-Habsburg dichotomies, than situated in a more general border culture and complex network of alliances and allegiances.

Some audiences therefore wanted their heroes to have supernatural powers and to experience prophetic visions. In contrast, a number of the other *gazavatname* re-inscriptions, as well as subsequent incorporations of these accounts into more mainstream Ottoman histories, position the narrative so as to offer potential readings that in effect re-incorporate Hasan Pasha into the religious and political centre.[[22]](#endnote-22) For example, O.216 (1716) includes an introductory section and conclusion that through the use of particular Qur’anic quotations and a discussion of the duties of a good Muslim, the importance of obedience to religious and political authorities above considerations of justice, and the perceived inherent value of waging war on infidels, frames the text in religiously more conservative or orthopraxic terms. It also interpretatively names Hasan Pasha in a politically more orthodox manner as a *divan efendisi* (official of the imperial council) rather than a *gazi*,thereby presenting him as a member of the bureaucratic elite rather than a frontier commander. For the implied audiences of this re-inscription, a hero who experienced prophetic visions and possessed miraculous powers was not appropriate.[[23]](#endnote-23) However, the intertextual references to his saintly powers and the reading implied by Hasan Pasha’s prophetic vision are not completely erased, they are simply overwritten by a framing that is more religiously and politically orthodox. Görösgál, as the site of a sacred shrine where prophetic visions happened, would have had a resonance with some audiences, but would have lacked meaning for others. There are plural semiotic systems at work in the text, but the religiously more orthopraxic reading is dominant. This is something that is attested to by the presence of marginalia in another of the more ‘orthodox’ re-inscriptions. The presence of intertextual marginal notes to works on hadith and Qur’anic commentary thereby demonstrate that at least some readers read within a more religiously orthopraxic frame.[[24]](#endnote-24) While it is impossible to conclusively determine, it is reasonable to hypothesize that the scribe of O.216 and H.O.71d rewrote the narrative for a more elite, educated audience located ideologically in the religious and political centre of the Ottoman empire: an audience who preferred their account of the sieges to be framed more in accordance with the genre expectations associated with historical discourse, and who expected their heroes to more typically represent loyal members of the Ottoman imperial military-administrative establishment than miracle-working frontier fighters.

To conclude, these re-inscriptions provide us with evidence of the literacy practices and conceptual frameworks of different audiences. Through a practice of scribal re-inscription the prophetic dreams and associated miraculous abilities of Hasan Pasha are variously foregrounded or elided in the different manuscripts. I do not believe that it is an accident that the two manuscripts (O.R.12961 and O.R.700) that are politically the most subversive and contest the political dominance of a central imperial military-administrative elite are also those which are religiously the most heterodox. Starting in the sixteenth century, the fashioning of Ottoman imperial identities became increasingly sacralized as part of a broader process of confessionalization. This theologization of political discourse accorded religion a more prominent role in enhancing the authority of the state (Krstic 2009:52). Sunnism was therefore gradually re-imagined as *the* state religion, and was articulated and policed through a combination of religio-legal law codes, architecture and a centralized bureaucratic infrastructure, all of which explicitly worked to negotiate and reinforce the boundaries of belief and orthodoxy.[[25]](#endnote-25) This politicization of religious discourse resulted in the state implementing a greater control over religious practices, and rites that resulted in the development of a religio-political orthodoxy: an official, state-sanctioned version of Islam that supplanted an earlier more ecumenical approach to religious practice and belief (Krstic 2009:47). The depiction of Hasan Pasha in manuscripts O.R.12961 and O.R.700 contests the increasingly hegemonic alignment of a state-controlled piety and political loyalty to a centralized, imperial bureaucratic-military structure inherent in this process of confessionalization. The depiction of Hasan Pasha as a Sufi warrior saint achieved through his prophetic visions, miraculous abilities and ability to commune with God, combined with his positioning outside of the central imperial military-administrative system and its hierarchical structures of dependency, reflect the implied audience’s preference for a hero who was not a devoted servant of the imperial centre, but a man with loyalties to communities on the religious and political periphery. In contrast, in O.216, H.O.71d and Katib Celebi’s account, Hasan Pasha is reimagined for audiences who identified with the projection of the imperial, confessional identities outlined above: the heteropraxic warrior saint with local loyalties is re-written as a competent administrator and commander, a pious orthopraxic Muslim whose loyalty is unquestioningly given to the central bureaucratic, imperial power.

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Manisa: İl Halk Kütüphanesi, No.5070, *Hatha Menakib-i Tiryaki Hasan Paşa,* [These are the heroic deeds of Tiryaki Hasan Pasha] fos. 22a–68b (ah 1170/1757 ce).

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Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, Sup.Turc.170, *Muharebe-i Tiryaki Hasan Paşa,* [The Battle of Tiryaki Hasan Pasha] fos. 1a–62a (ah 1174/1760 ce).

Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, Sup.Turc.873, Untitled fos. 1b–54a (ah 1143/1731 ce).

Vienna: National-bibliothek, A.F.234, Untitled fos. 2a–36b (ah 1133/1720 ce).

Vienna: National-bibliothek, H.O.71a, Untitled, fos. 1a–25a.

Vienna: National-bibliothek, H.O.71b, *Hatha Kitab-i Gazavat-i Tiryaki Gazi Hasan Paşa*,[This is the Book of *Gazavat* of Tiryaki Gazi Hasan Pasha], fos. 1b–149b.

Vienna: National-bibliothek, H.O.71c, Untitled fos. 1b–43a (ah 1082/1671 ce).

Vienna: National-bibliothek, H.O.71d, *Menakib-i Tiryaki Hasan Paşa (rahmetullahi aleyhi),* [The heroic deeds of Tiryaki Hasan Pasha, (the mercy of Allah be upon him], fos. 22a–67b (ah 1168/1754 ce).

Vienna: Staatsarchiv, Nr.508, *Gazavat-i Tiryaki Gazi Ahmed Paşa*, [The *Gazavat* of Tiryaki Gazi Ahmed Pasha],fos. 1a–8b

1. Henceforth referred to as Hasan Pasha. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Levend (1956) offers an excellent introduction to Ottoman *gazavatnames* and a reasonably comprehensive list of the main texts. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. For a list of the *gazavatname* accounts see the bibliography at the end of the article [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. See Dagenais 1991 and 1994, Machan 1991 and Norton 2008. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. A number of the manuscripts in this corpus, however, appear to have been inscribed and transmitted within a more authoritative, fixed discourse, for example Manisa: İl Halk Kütüphanesi 5070 (1757), Munich: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, O.R.393 (undated), Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, Nr.525 (undated), Vienna: National-bibliothek, H.O.71d (1754). [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. London: British Library, O.R.12961, *Hikaye-i Tiryaki Gazi Hasan Paşa,* [The Story of Tiryaki Gazi Hasan Pasha] fos. 1b–95a (ah 1203/1789 ce) was inscribed by Salih Ağa Divitdar on 21 March 1789. I have been unable to find out anything more about the inscriber. Cambridge: University Library, O.R.700, *Tarihi-i Tiryaki Hasan Paşa,* [The History of Tiryaki Hasan Pasha] fos. 76b–107b (ah 1187/1773–4 ce) was also inscribed towards the end of the eighteenth century, nothing is known about the scribe of this work. Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akademia Konyvtara, O.216, *Hatha Risale-i Divan Efendisi ya Tiru Gazi Hasan Paşa,* [This is the Treatise of the Court Officialor Tiru Gazi Hasan Pasha]fos. 2b–71b (ah 1128/1716 ce) was inscribed early in the eighteenth century and nothing is known about the scribe. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. In the interests of space, where an event is described in all or most manuscripts I will only provide a citation to the one manuscript, Istanbul: Millet Kütüphanesi A.E.Tar.187 (undated). [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. The four choice friends refer to the first four Sunni Caliphs: Abu-Bakr, ‘Umar, Uthman and Ali. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Peçevi (1866–7) 355. Peçevi writes this part of his narrative in rhymed couplets with the *kadi* as the narrator and gives it the title, *ve min kerâmâti’l-guzât.* Ocak (1989:25–6) provides a summary in Turkish of the event. Woodhead (1993) discusses Peçevi’s narration of the event in the context of a discussion of the psychology of men under fire in extreme combat situations, as represented in *gazanames* (campaign narratives). She then discusses Ömer Seyfettin (1917) and his retelling of the tale in a short story during Ottoman involvement in World War One. Gökyay (1993), in a wider discussion of how the ideal of fighting for God was represented in early modern Ottoman literature, briefly mentions Peçevi’s recounting of the tale and includes a brief transcribed extract with English translation (ibid.:418–20). [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. The motif of a light emerging from a grave site or place where a *gazi* fell is relatively common in Ottoman literature, see the example of the ‘*kandilli*’ pine tree, which grew on the spot where Osman Gazi’s brother Saruyatı fell and which intermittently emitted a flickering light, Gökyay (1993:420). [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. For example, Benson (2000:27–8) discusses the marginal notes in *Piers Plowman* manuscripts as evidence of different communities’ diverse reading practices, and argues that marginalia demonstrate that the concerns of medieval audiences do not always concur with those of modern readers. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. This is akin to a process, which might be labelled *ethical viewing,* described by Rosenstone (1995:141, 156 and 177), where he discusses how some films provide opportunities for non-linear readings of the past. Such films neither pretend to describe the literal reality of past events, look for documentary or factual truths, emphasize a linear sense of time, nor provide naturalistic explanations for why things occur. Rather, they focus on symbolizing personal traits and virtues, people’s perceptions of power, authority and morality, and on conveying different kinds of truths – narrative, emotional, psychological or symbolic truths. In this aspect they prefer morality to chronology and attempt to present different ways of understanding ourselves and the world. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. I discuss ethical reading in the context of the *gazavatnames* in more detail in Norton 2005b and 2008. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Although Zirinoğlu is an enemy commander, he is depicted in a positive manner and is shown respect in the *gazavatnames* manuscripts. In MS O.R.700:107a he is further incorporated into the Ottoman world, as he is described as being crowned King of Hungary by Hasan Pasha (Norton 2005a:76). [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. This work does not, however, include the dream sequence by the narrator. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. See Chadwick and Zhirmunsky 1969:163. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. The abilities and skills of *menakibname* warrior saints are described in the third section of Ocak 1992:70–95. See also Ocak 1983 and 1989. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. See Terzioğlu 2013 for the term orthopraxy. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. See Ocak 1983 and 1992. Birge (1937:74) references the traditionally close links between the Bektashi Order and the janissaries. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. It describes the exploits and adventures of Sultan Murad in Europe. At the end there is a fragment of the *Mahmud Paşa Menakibnamesi* that is also found bound with three of the *Gazavat-i Tiryaki Hasan Paşa* manuscripts: No.5070, H.O.71d and A.F.234. There is an English translation of this work in Imber (2006). [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. O.R.12961 and the *Gazavat-i Sultan Murad* both use the phrase *ez-in-canib* to spatially and semantically organize and manage the work; repeatedly analogize the enemy as swine; describe the enemy king is the ‘king of bad deeds’; use the phrase ‘Hands, feet, noses, and ears poured out on the battle field like carpenter’s chips from a pocket.’ to describe the effects of battles; describe the enemy as laughing like a donkey; use the simile of the hungry wolf entering a flock of sheep; and that of the enemy falling like autumn leaves. In both works, the enemies decide to destroy mosques,hang large bells from the minarets and light candles; the enemies also regularly swear and ‘talk shit’; both works offer the definition that, ‘those of us who kill will be *gazi*s and those of us who die will be martyrs’, c.f. Inalcık and Oğuz 1978:2, 8, 10, 12, 17, 23, 24, 33, 52 and 65 and O.R.12961:8a, 8b, 11b, 17b, 21b, 33a, 34a, 35a, 45b, 48b, 49a, 50a, 50b, 51b, 61b, 64a, 67b, 70a, 73a, 73b, 74a, 80a, 81a, 85b and 95a, [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. See, for example, Katib Çelebi’s incorporation of a thus far unidentified *gazavatname* account into his more general history of the Ottomans *Fezleke-i Katib Çelebi*. For more on how he ‘othodoxes’ the text see Norton 2006. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. For more in depth discussion see Norton 2005b:chapter 4. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. See. for example, H.O.71d:76b and a marginal comment that provides a gloss on the Arabic prayer in the main body of the text. Moreover, through its rather oblique reference to *Sahib-i Keşşaf*, the marginal comment creates an intertextual link to Ottoman scholar of hadith and Qur’anic commentary Hayreddin Hızır Atufi’s *Keşfü’l-Meşarık,* whichwas an explanation of the *Meşariku’l-envari’n-nebeviyye* – itself a collection of hadith found in the *Sahih-i Buhari*. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. See Krstic (2009) for a general discussion of this process, Terzioglu (2013) for the intersection of confessionalization and *ilm-i hal* literature, and Necipoğlu(2005:29, 47–59) for mosque building and religious surveillance. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)