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Manzum Kroniklerde Çaldıran: Savaşın Estetiğe Bürünmesi

Çaldıran in Verse Chronicles: The Aestheticization of War

Öz: Edebiyat ve tarihin kesişim alanındaki türlerden biri olan manzum kronikler, Yavuz Sultan Selim (ö. 1520) ve Şah İsmail (ö. 1524) arasında cereyan eden Çaldıran Savaşı (1514)'ni tarihî çerçeve içerisinde edebî bir üslup ve hâkim Osmanlı ideolojisiyle resmetmişlerdir. Bu savaş tasvirler tarihî değerinin yanı sıra dil ve edebiyat bakımından da renkli bir manzara arz etmektedir. Tarihî hadiseler içerisinde sanatçıların dikkatini celp eden hususlardan biri de Çaldıran Savaşı'dır. Tarihî bir kurguya yaslanan edebî eserlerin her dönem cazibesini sürdürdüğü bir hakikattir. Yavuz Sultan Selim ve Şah İsmail gibi iki kahramanın tarihî şahsiyetlerinin edebiyatın dünyasında büründüğü yeni görünümün okur açısından oldukça ilgi çekici bir konu olmuştur. Realiteyi kendi gerçeklik anlayışıyla resmeden klasik Türk edebiyatı, Çaldıran Savaşı'nı kendi karakteristik vasıflarının süzgecinden geçirerek sunmuştur. Makale kapsamında incelenen manzum kroniklerde, Yavuz Sultan Selim ve ordusunu dinî ve mezhepsel bakımdan olumlanırken Şah İsmail ve askerleri olumsuz hatta yer yer aşağılayıcı ifadelerle anlatılmıştır. Benzer şekilde Yavuz Sultan Selim'in Şahsiyeti ve ordusunun güç ve kudreti maddî ve psikolojik bakımdan idealize edilirken Şah İsmail'in kişilik özellikleri ve ordusu maddî ve kişilik özellikleri bakımından küçümseyici ifadelerle betimlenmiştir. Manzum kroniklerde Çaldıran Savaşı kronolojisi aktarılırken metinler arasında kurgu ve sembol müşterekliğinin olduğu görülmüştür. Savaşın anlatımı ve edebî tasvirlerde şu müşterek noktalar tespit edilmiştir: Renk sembolizmi, işitsel unsurlar ve musiki öğeleri, hayvan sembolizmi, tabiat ve tabiatüstü varlıklar, mitolojik, astrolojik ve kozmik unsurlar, savaş aletleri ve sosyal hayat. Bu çalışmada Çaldıran Savaşı'nın Osmanlı manzum kroniklerindeki edebî anlatısının Osmanlı hâkim ideolojisiyle görüldüğü, metinlerarası ortak bir kurgunun ve sembolizmin var olduğu tespit edilmiş; tematik bir sınıflandırma değil konunun anlatımındaki edebî tasvirler üzerine odaklanılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Klasik Türk Edebiyatı, Manzum Kronikler, Yavuz Sultan Selim, Şah İsmail, Çaldıran Savaşı, Edebî Tasvir.

Abstract: Situated at the intersection of literature and history, verse chronicles portray the Battle of Çaldıran (1514), fought between Yavuz Sultan Selim (d. 1520) and Shah Ismail (d. 1524), within a historical frame yet through a literary idiom inflected by the prevailing Ottoman ideology. Beyond their historical value, these depictions offer a vivid panorama from the vantage point of language and literature. Among the historical events that drew the attention of men of letters, the Battle of Çaldıran occupies a notable place. It is a commonplace that literary works grounded in historical narrative have retained their appeal in every period. For readers, the refashioning of the historical personae of two heroes -Yavuz Sultan Selim and Shah Ismail- within the world of literature has proved especially compelling. Classical Turkish literature, which renders reality according to its own conception of the real, presents the Battle of Çaldıran after filtering it through its characteristic features. In the verse chronicles examined in this article, Yavuz Sultan Selim and his army are affirmed in religious and sectarian terms, whereas Shah Ismail and his soldiers are depicted negatively, at times in overtly pejorative language. Likewise, Selim's person and the strength and prowess of his army are idealized both materially and psychologically, while Ismail's personality and his forces are described in disparaging terms with respect to both material and characterological attributes. As the chronology of the battle is narrated across the verse chronicles, one observes a shared fabric of plot and symbolism among the texts. The narrative of the war and its literary descriptions converge around several common nodes: color symbolism; auditory elements and musical motifs; animal symbolism; nature and supernatural beings; mythological, astrological and cosmic elements; instruments of war; and facets of social life. This study argues that the literary narration of the Battle of

Çaldıran in Ottoman verse chronicles is articulated in concert with the dominant Ottoman ideology and that there exists an intertextual commonality of plot and symbolism; rather than proposing a thematic taxonomy, it focuses on the literary modes of depiction by which the event is rendered.

Keywords: Classical Turkish Literature, Verse Chronicles, Selim I, Shah Ismail, Battle of Çaldıran, Literary Description.

Introduction

The emergence of genres in classical Turkish literature was driven by its focus on particular subject matters. While these genres exhibit internal nuances, one may nonetheless speak of a set of overarching thematic frames. One such frame is the historical. Practitioners of classical Turkish literature felt an impulse shared across human history to contemplate the great events of the past or of their own present with artistic sensitivity and to render them enduring. Historians portrayed these events from the vantage point of the discipline of history, whereas the men of letters of the period, with an artist's attentiveness, depicted the same historical episodes with abundant psychological detail. In this vein, numerous literary forms found a place in classical Turkish literature, including *fetihnâmes* (conquest narratives), *gazavâtnâmes* (chronicle of wars) and *şehnâmes* (books of kings). Yavuz Sultan Selim and Shah Ismail have been regarded as two major, distinctive figures, both in their personal qualities and in their historical personae. Consequently, the Battle of Çaldıran where these two great historical personages confronted one another in terms of the values they embodied emerged as a subject of specific gravity to which the authors of classical Turkish literature devoted sustained attention.

Among the works that recount the lives of great commanders are the *İskendernâmes*, *Ebû Müslimnâmes*, *Battalnâmes*, the *cenk-nâmes* devoted to 'Alî, *Süleymannâmes* and *Selimnâmes*. In Ottoman history, there were periods when tensions between two leading figures reached their height. Encounters between rulers such as Bayezid I (Yıldırım) and Timur; Mehmed II (Fatih) and Uzun Hasan; Selim I (Yavuz Sultan Selim) and Shah Ismail; Selim I and Qansuh al-Ghawri and Tumanbay; and Süleyman I (Kanunî) and Charles V (Şarlken) and Shah Tahmasb were regarded as distinctive subject matter. Beyond their religious, political and sectarian embodiments, these figures were also furnished with literary portraits and invested with symbolic meanings in the world of letters. In literature, mythological, legendary and religious heroes function as bearers of value, becoming literary material within the frames of simile and metaphor. Within literary narratives and more specifically in verse chronicles Yavuz and Shah Ismail likewise assume comparable functions as emblems of national value. The narration of the Battle of Çaldıran, in terms of language and style, yields a literary tableau; at the same time, a symbolism of values is constructed around these personages. The choice to treat Yavuz and Shah Ismail in literary works owes much to the event's specific gravity and to the influence of the collective conscience, the popular imagination and belief. In Turkish-Islamic literature, major historical events have given rise to major historical figures; in epics and *menâkıbnâmes* these figures are transformed into heroes among them Battal Gazi, Danişmend Gazi, Hamza, Abû Muslim al-Khurasânî and Sarı Saltuk.

The impulse to record the past gave rise to chronicles; over time, this impulse exceeded individual endeavor and crystallized into a matter of state policy. At the Ottoman court, beginning in the sixteenth century, *şehnâme* writers court-appointed authors of *şehnâme*-style histories were charged with representing and reporting recent events in a deliberately literary register.¹ Aware that the sultans themselves were poets and possessed of refined literary taste, authors constructed their works with a deliberate commitment to literariness. Moreover, numerous historical events and personages appear in classical Turkish poetry not only in direct representation but also at the

¹ Saniye Simla Özçelik, "XVI. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Şehnâmecilerinden Seyyid Lokmân'ın *Şehinşâhnâme'si*," *Şarkiyat Mecmuası* 42 (2023): 339; Christine Woodhead, "Şehnâmecî," in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 38 (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2010), 456.

level of imagery.² These works amenable to treatment under the rubric of war literature are fashioned through literary devices such as plot, simile and hyperbole and it is evident that they at times also serve propagandistic ends.³ In these works one may encounter, beyond the constraints of history, episodes of hyperbole, panegyric, or sweeping denunciation. Language and narration do not convey historical reality as such; rather, they construct it, interweaving historical events with metaphor and plot. Within historical narrative, the figurative and multilayered texture of language at times produces meanings that exceed even the author's own intention.⁴ In the verse chronicles of the Battle of Çaldıran, events are not conveyed in their bare historical form. Rather, they are clothed in a literary guise: narrated through descriptions that deploy simile, metaphor, allusion and hyperbole. In an artist's mediation of a national-historical event, literary depictions may transgress the bounds of historical fact; they are also shaped by subjective factors. In the exaltation of Sultan Selim and the denigration of Shah Ismail and his soldiers at Çaldıran, one may adduce religious, political, cultural and personal causes among them confessional and cultural partisanship, the poet's deference to authority within a tradition of patronage and the author's own vantage point.

History like social life and nature is a rich reservoir of material and inspiration for the artist.⁵ Beyond language and style, the artist also captures the reader's attention through the choice of subject. Historical subject matter, in particular, ranks among the foremost themes that engage readers.⁶ The relationship between a literary work and history may be evaluated along two basic axes: bearing witness to history and incorporating historical subject matter. When a literary work treats historical events that occur within its own time that is, events it witnesses this is termed war literature. When, by contrast, a work produced later takes up an event from an earlier era, this is assessed as the work's historicity.⁷ In classical Turkish literature, certain genres stand in particularly close relation to history. Above all, the *tezkires* bio-bibliographical anthologies of poets are among the genres most strongly tied to it. Within the literature–history nexus, the composition of historical works in a literary idiom constitutes yet another dimension of their interrelation.⁸ It may be said that poetry holds an advantage over history in apprehending the psychological reality of a bygone age. Whereas history depicts an action, poetry discloses the inner psychological backdrop that gives rise to it.⁹ From this perspective, the relationship between history and poetry may be conceived in terms of accident and substance. When historical documentation is inadequate for understanding a given period, literary works can be fruitfully employed.¹⁰ Indeed, Ahmedî's *İskendernâme a mesnevî* is regarded as a historical narrative.¹¹

In the verse chronicles, the struggle between Yavuz Sultan Selim and Shah Ismail in the context of the Battle of Çaldıran is narrated through literary descriptions organized around analogous symbolic elements. Fashioned in a figurative idiom, the verse and prose works of classical Turkish literature produce powerful depictions by means of such rhetorical devices as simile (*teşbih*), personification (*teşhis*), metaphor (*istiare*), metonymy (*mecaz-ı mürsel*), allusive

² Ali İhsan Akçay, "Divanlardan Hareketle Edebiyat ve Tarih İlişkisi," *Social Sciences Studies Journal* 39 (2019): 3611.

³ Muhammed Emir Tulum, "Manzum Fetihnâmelerin Tarihî Kaynak Değeri," *Kadim* 5 (2023): 1–2.

⁴ Selim Tezcan, "Hayden White ve Tarih Anlatısı Sorunu," *Turkish History Education Journal* 7, no. 2 (2018): 651–52.

⁵ İnci Enginün, *Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Araştırmaları* (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1991), 445.

⁶ Mehmet Kaplan, "Mevlâna'yı Nasıl Anlamalı," in *Türk Edebiyatı Üzerine Araştırmalar* 2 (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1994), 9–24.

⁷ Erich Auerbach, "Edebiyat ve Harp," in *Üniversite Konferansları 1940–1941* (İstanbul: İstanbul University Press, 1941), 221–22.

⁸ Feridun M. Emecen, "Osmanlı Kronikleri ve Biyografi," *İslâm Araştırmaları Dergisi* 3 (1999): 84.

⁹ Walter G. Andrews, *Şiirin Sesi Toplumun Şarkısı*, trans. Tansel Güney (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000), 116.

¹⁰ Akçay, "Divanlardan Hareketle Edebiyat ve Tarih İlişkisi," 3609–20.

¹¹ Erhan Afyoncu, "Osmanlı Siyasî Tarihinin Ana Kaynakları: Kronikler," *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 1, no. 2 (2003): 102.

indirection (*kinaye*) and poetic causation (*hüsn-i ta'lîl*).¹² In battle depictions constructed in this manner, a host of shared features can be discerned.¹³

Methodology and Corpus

The analysis employs a qualitative textual approach to the close reading of couplets. The study is limited to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ottoman verse chronicles that deal directly with the Battle of Çaldıran; prose chronicles have not been included. Within this framework, the following verse chronicles were examined: *Selîmnâme* (Şükrî-i Bitlisî, 16th century), *Sa'âdet-nâme* (Fîrâkî, 16th century), *Tevârih-i Âl-i 'Osmân* (Hadîdî, 16th century), *Şehnâme* (Mahremî, 16th century), *Câmi 'ü'l-Meknûnât* (Mevlânâ İsâ, 16th century), *Selîm-nâme* (Cevrî, 17th century), and *Şâhâne-nâme* (Şîrî, 17th century).

In analysing the couplets, the study first identifies and classifies the main thematic and symbolic elements that shape the Çaldıran narratives in these verse chronicles. On this basis, colour symbolism, animal symbolism, cosmic and astrological motifs, descriptions of nature, images of social life, and auditory/musical elements are treated under separate analytical headings. These elements are then subjected to intertextual comparison across the different chronicles in order to bring out both convergences and divergences. In doing so, the study seeks to demonstrate how the descriptions of the Battle of Çaldıran coalesce on a shared ground of *architextuality*: the verse chronicles are read as texts that participate in a common set of generic and imagistic conventions governing the representation of war.

The analysis is guided by the following interrelated questions: (1) By means of which aesthetic and symbolic devices do the verse chronicles narrate the Battle of Çaldıran? (2) How do these symbols articulate the political and sectarian preferences of the dominant Ottoman ideology? (3) In what ways is the historical violence of Çaldıran transformed and mediated in literary form? The intertextual relations and thematic patterns examined around these questions serve to elucidate both the aesthetic logic of war representations in classical Turkish literature and the ideological vantage point from which Çaldıran is narrated in the verse chronicles.

More broadly, the article seeks to identify how these verse chronicles by virtue of their distinctive conception of reality present the Battle of Çaldıran to readers in a new guise and to delineate the focal points in a historical event's passage from "history" to "literariness." The findings suggest that the battle was regarded by men of letters as a subject of distinctive weight; that the topic was consistently handled through a partisan lens shaped by dominant Ottoman ideology; that authors, within the contours of this subject matter, constructed a specific war literature and idiom; that in aestheticizing this historical event they largely drew on rhetorical figures to forge a descriptive style; and that they strove to give marked prominence to colour and animal symbolism as well as to auditory and natural motifs.

1. Religious and Sectarian Expressions

In the verse chronicles, Yavuz Sultan Selim, Shah Ismail and their armies are narrated through a religious and sectarian lens. Selim and the Ottoman soldiery are cast in positive religious-sectarian terms and situated at the normative center, whereas Shah Ismail and the

¹²Muhittin Eliaçık, "Selçuknâme'de Edebî Savaş Tasvirleri," *Kırkkale Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 1, no. 1 (2011): 108–9; İsmail Durmuş, "Teşbih," in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 40 (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2011), 553; İsmail Durmuş, "Hüsn-i ta'lîl," in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 19 (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1999), 32–33; İsmail Durmuş, "Teşhis," in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 40 (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2011), 565–66.

¹³Kürşat Şamil Şahin, "Gazavât-nâmelerde Edebî Savaş Tasvirleri (15–16. yüzyıl)" (PhD diss., Kırkkale University, 2015), 3.

Safavid forces are positioned outside that center indeed, as heterodox and described in negative religious–sectarian terms.¹⁴

In the verse chronicles, Sultan Selim is characterized as a ruler who enjoyed God’s assistance. Within the *haqq/bâtil* (truth/falsehood) divide, this framing situates Selim and his army on the side of Truth. His capacity to govern is linked to a divine source, thereby placing his authority on a legitimate indeed sacral foundation. In the case of Yavuz’s reign in particular, the notion of the sacrality of the Ottoman sultans¹⁵ functions as the theological grounding of rule:

Înâyet eyledi islâma Allah

Getürdi taht-ı Rûm’a bir ulu şâh (Hadîdî/5577)

Şehün İstanbul’a bâ-avn-i Bârî

Budur evvel seferde yâdigârı (Hadîdî/5684)

Husrev-i gâzi Selîm-i dîn-penâh

Eyledi nusret sana Rabbü’l-ibâd (Cevrî/2201)

In classical Turkish poetry, the figure of Solomon (Hz. Süleyman) as a vehicle of comparison for both material and spiritual puissance enjoyed greater currency than Alexander (İskender), who chiefly represents the material.¹⁶ Within this framework, one of the formulations that legitimizes Yavuz Sultan Selim’s identity as a ruler in the verse chronicles is the assertion that he is “the sultan of Islam.” Selim is presented as the Ottoman Empire’s first caliphal sultan. The sultanate functions as an image in which temporal (material) power is concentrated. As the representative of the caliphate he embodies spiritual authority and as an Ottoman sultan he embodies temporal authority; accordingly, within this understanding, Yavuz Sultan Selim is defined as a “sultan of religion.”

Bilür terk itmediğin irtidâdı

İder sultân-ı dîn seyr-i cihâdı (Hadîdî/5581)

Urdular rahş-ı gül-endâmına zeyn

Bindi bismillâh ile ol şâh-ı dîn (Cevrî/1916)

İşbu niyyetle şeh-i zill-i Hudâ

Cem-i leşker kılmağa kıldı nidâ (Firâkî/120)

¹⁴ According to the *fetvâ* compilations, one who reviles the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs is deemed a “Kızılbaş (Qizilbash)”, and if killed while committing this act, the killer incurs no punishment. Kızılbaşlık is treated as a ‘sect’ (*mezhep*), and those who enter it are regarded as apostates (*mürted*). Within this framework, it is stated that a woman retains legal capacity to marry; yet if her apostasy is juridically established, her property/shares are not to be partitioned as spoils since she is not considered to be in *dâr al-harb*. Fighting the Kızılbaş is defined as *gazâ-yı ekber* (‘the greater holy war’), and dying in this cause as *şehâdet-i azîme* (‘a great martyrdom’), on the grounds that they are both rebels (*bâghî*) and, in several respects, to be treated as unbelievers. See Pehlül Düzenli, “Şeyhülislam Ebussuûd Efendi Fetvâları Işığında Osmanlı Sünniliği,” *Marife* 5, no. 3 (2005): 272.

¹⁵ In Ottoman official ideology, the sultan is the supreme authority who embodies, in his own person, the identity of state and religion. As head of state, he is the ultimate holder of political power; through the office of the Şeyhülislâm he also stands at the apex of the institutionalized religious order. Moreover, bearing the title of caliph-sultan, he is regarded as the protector of Islam and of the believers, and he occupies the highest station that unites all these prerogatives. See Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Zındıklar ve Mülhidler: 15–17. Yüzyıllar* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2013), 98.

¹⁶ Dora D’Istria, *Osmanlılarda Şiir*, trans. Semay Taneri (Istanbul: Havass Yayınları, 1982), 25; Dursun Ali Tökel, “Türk Cihan Hâkimiyeti İdealinin ve Sosyal Hayatın Önemli Bir Vesikası Olarak Kasideler,” *Millî Eğitim* 166 (2005): 9.

Yavuz Sultan Selim is described by a religiously inflected, metaphorical designation as the Mahdi of his age. The belief that the Mahdi will appear before the apocalypse and bring an end to all turmoil¹⁷ and evils above all the Antichrist (Dajjāl) and his tribulation has caused this figure to crystallize in the imagination as a redemptive image. Set against the Mahdi stands the Dajjāl,¹⁸ within this polarity, the Dajjāl is identified with Shah Ismail:

Hâzır ol şimden girü turma hemân

Geldi iclâl-ile mehdî-i zamân (Cevrî/2062)

In Islamic belief, the act of waging war is theologically legitimated within the framework of the concept of *dār al-harb*.¹⁹ Once thus legitimized, one of its strongest faith-based moral foundations is the notion of *ghazā/jihād*.²⁰ The perspective that places Yavuz Sultan Selim at the religious center likewise casts his struggle, under the rubric of *ghazā*, as aligned with al-Haqq (Truth):

Hem dahî ulu gazâdur bu gazâ

Cennet olıser size Hakdan sezâ (Firâkî/141)

Bu taraftan Hân Selîm-i nâmver

Şâh-ı gâzî sâhib-i feth ü zafer (Cevrî/2238-2239)

The positioning of Yavuz Sultan Selim within the conceptual frame of *ghazā* is extended to his army as well. Arrayed against the Ottoman troops endowed with the epithet *gâzî* stand the Safavid forces, construed as the *ahl al-kufî*²¹ (people of unbelief) against whom struggle is waged for the sake of religion:

Gâziyân-ı asker-i İslâmdur

Kâtîlân-ı hasm-ı küfr-encâmdur (Cevrî/1945)

İşleri dâim gazâdur şâh için

Hep fedâyîdür sebîlullâh için (Cevrî/2010)

Within the Islamic conception of *ghazā*, death is endowed with a theological meaning. Through the notion of martyrdom (*şehitlik*), death is no longer annihilation but a transition to an eternal, ideal mode of existence.²² Since *ghazā* is waged against unbelievers, Ottoman soldiers who fall while fighting Shah Ismail's army are, by definition, regarded as martyrs:

Fî-sebîlillâh oldılar şehîd

Malkoçoğulları ol iki ferîd (Cevrî/2170)

Ben bu dem yolunda cân virdüm sana

¹⁷ In Sunnî creed there is also a belief in the Mahdî; he will come before the end of time and revive religion. Hence the belief that Ottoman sultans were Mahdî-like prevailed. See İncinur Atik Gürbüz, "Osmanlı Metinlerinde Mehdi Tasavvurları," *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 89 (March 2019): 13.

¹⁸ "The 'Dajjāl' is the ruler who will appear before the Resurrection to lead people astray. In Classical Turkish poetry, wicked figures are likened to the Dajjāl and he also represents the carnal self; he is remembered for opposing everything good and beautiful and for enmity toward religion." See Ahmet Atilla Şentürk, *Osmanlı Şiiri Kılavuzu*, vol. 3 (Istanbul: OSEDAM Yayınları, 2016), 63–66.

¹⁹ Osman Turan, *Türk Cihân Hâkimiyeti Mefkûresi Tarihi* (Istanbul: Ötüken, 2010), 152–53; Hilmi Yavuz, *İslâm'ın Zihin Tarihi* (Istanbul: Timaş, 2009), 184.

²⁰ For Ottoman *ghazā* and *jihād* perception see Ocak, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Zındıklar ve Mülhidler*, 97.

²¹ Cemal Kafadar, "Gazâ," in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 13 (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1996), 428.

²² "Do not say of those slain in the path of God, 'They are dead.' Rather, they are alive, but you do not perceive." *Qur'ân*, al-Baqara 2:154.

Dîn tarîkında inân virdüm sana (Cevrî/2190)

In Islamic belief and art, ‘Alî functions as an emblem of strength, courage and valor a motif frequently employed in classical Turkish poetry. Owing to his bravery, he is referred to as Hâydar (lion) and he is known to have worn a green turban. The Ottoman army’s green banners are accordingly portrayed through the image of “Hâydar”²³ with a green turban:

Sebz idi bayrakları bu leşkerün

Sebz-gûn destârı gibi Hayder’ün (Cevrî/1954)

In Turkish–Islamic thought, the maxim that “everything subsists by its opposite” functions as a basic precept.²⁴ This understanding has found a capacious footing from Sufism to everyday life, from theory to practice. The definition and signification of the good, the beautiful and the true presuppose their contraries: the bad, the ugly and the false. In the verse chronicles, poets sharpen the portrait of Yavuz in religious and sectarian terms by counter-describing Shah Ismail through values construed as the opposites of those ideals. From this vantage, Shah Ismail is characterized in negative confessional terms. Foremost among the labels applied to him in the verse chronicles is Kızılbaşlık (Qizilbash identity). Kızılbaşlık is presented as representing Râfîdî affiliation and as lying outside the “true” (orthodox) *madhhab*.²⁵ In these chronicles, the epithet “Kızılbaş,” as applied to Shah Ismail and his soldiers, is associated with brigandage, error (*dalâlet*), deviance, treachery, vagrancy, enmity toward religion and hostility toward God, the Prophet and the Companions. This may be read as the manifestation within these attributions of the negative semantic horizon operating in Ottoman poets’ unconscious:

Kızılbaş Şeh İsmâil idi şâh

Mudill ü râfzî bî-dîn ü güm-râh (Hadîdî/5560)

Harâmî cümlesi kallâş ü evbâş

O kavme dir cihân halkı Kızılbaş (Hadîdî/5559)

Kapusı mulhidî, mürtede me’men

Adû Peygambere, Allah’a düşmen (Hadîdî/5561)

Bir neberd iddi Kızılbaş-ı şakî

Kim uvatdı gökde sancak sancakı (Şükrî/2757)

Bir neberd itdi Kızılbaş-ı şakî

Eyledi sancak şikeste sancakı (Cevrî/2195)

After the emphasis on *tawhîd* (divine unity), one of the most accentuated concepts in Islamic belief is the doctrine of prophethood. Within this doctrine, obedience to the Prophet is obedience to God; loving the Prophet is loving God. Loving the Prophet, in turn, entails loving his Companions,²⁶ among whom the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs occupy a preeminent place. In the verse chronicles, invectives attributed to Shah Ismail directed at Abū Bakr, ‘Umar and

²³ For Classical Turkish poetry on ‘Alî, see Ahmet Atilla Şentürk, *Osmanlı Şiiri Kılavuzu*, vol. 1 (Istanbul: OSEDAM, 2016), 265–68.

²⁴ On this idea see Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Türk Tefekkür Tarihi* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi, 2011), 29; Elias John Gibb, *Osmanlı Şiir Tarihi: I–IV*, trans. Ali Çavuşoğlu (Ankara: Akçağ, 1999), 35–36; Bilal Kemikli, *Süfi Şairin İzinde: Şiir ve İrfân* (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2011), 109.

²⁵ On fatwās and treatises against the Kızılbaş, see Muhammet Ali Özkan, “Fetvalar ve Belgeler Işığında Osmanlıda Kızılbaşlık Meselesi (16.–17. Yüzyıllar),” (Master’s thesis, Niğde University, Institute of Social Sciences, 2018).

²⁶ On prophethood see Mahmut Erol Kılıç, *Süfi ve Şiir* (Istanbul: İnsan, 2012), 177; Henri Corbin, *İslâm Felsefesi Tarihi: Başlangıçtan İbn Rüşd’ün Ölümüne*, vol. 1, trans. Hüseyin Hatemi (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007), 15.

‘Uthmān are foregrounded as points of censure. He is further represented not only as denying the Prophet but also as reviling the Companions:

Ne haddidür senün gibi gedânun
İnanmaya Resûline Hudâ'nun (Şîrî/vr.233a/11)
Kıurdu dâyimâ sebb-i sahâbe
Sığışmaz itdügi şirret hesâba (Şîrî/vr.232/3)
Adüsiyidi ashâb-ı kibârun
Ali'den gayrisinün çâr-yârun (Hadîdî/5564)

In the verse chronicles, reflecting the dominant Ottoman ideology especially after the caliphate passed to the Ottomans under Selim I Ottoman sultans are represented as having acquired a spiritual dimension and as positioning themselves at the center of all the Muslim realms.²⁷ Indeed, as this identification intensified, the sultans came to be regarded as walî Allāh that is, among the *awliyā' Allāh* (“friends of God,” saints).²⁸ Accordingly, the Ottomans construed any military or political activity mounted against them in the name of religion as *fitna* and an attempt to sow division. Within this framework, the verse chronicles portray Shah Ismail and his soldiers as acting from the lower self (*nafs*), engendering evil and *fitna* and thus present them under the image of the Dajjāl:

Nefs-i emmâre şeh-i İrân durur
Fitnesiyle mülk-i dîn vîrândurur (Fîrâkî/219)
Diyeydük fitnedür âhir zemâne
Ya deccâliidi seyr itdi cihâne (Hadîdî/5572)
Bize vâcibdür anı def kılmak
Cihândan şerr ü şûrun ref kılmak (Îsâ/2083)

In the verse chronicles, Shah Ismail is characterized as ill-omened, wretched, errant and deviant. These epithets reflect an Ottoman perspective that situates him within a heterodox framework:

Acem'de var-ıdı ol demde bir şâh
Katı şûm-ıdı vü bed-baht u gümrâh (Şîrî/vr. 231a/14)
Çü hetk-i perde-i İslâm kıldun
Ki her gümrâhı döndürem yolına (Îsâ/2103)
Başladılar cenge cünd-i şâh-ıla
Kıldılar âşûb ol güm-râh-ile (Cevrî/2161)
Acem hânı Şeh İsmâil-i güm-râh
Bu işden çün haberdâr oldu nâ-gâh (Mahremî/1280)

In the Ottoman self-definition, a religious perspective and vocabulary are foregrounded; correspondingly, opposing values are constructed through markers of irreligion. From this vantage, the struggle between Shah Ismail and Yavuz Sultan Selim is framed not as a contest

²⁷ Turan, *Türk Cihân Hâkimiyeti Mefkûresi Tarihi*, 302.

²⁸ Ocak, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Zındıklar ve Mülhidler*, 89.

between two Islamic polities, but as a confrontation between Islam and unbelief. Hence Shah Ismail is labeled *mülhid* (heretic), *müfsid* (sower of corruption), *dinsiz* (irreligious), *münâfik* (hypocrite), *Hâricî* (Kharijite), *bozuk mezhepli* (of a deviant sect) and even *şeytan* (diabolical).

Kızıl tâcı başında sûfi adı

*Müsilân şekli **kâfir** nihâdı* (Hadîdî/5558)

Hevâ-yı nefse görürler muvafik

*Uyar mezheblerine her **münâfik*** (Hadîdî/5570)

Olubdur perde-i İslâm'a hettâk

*Ki **mülhiddür** özi **bî-dîn ü nâ-pâk*** (Îsâ/2082)

*O **müfsidden** yayılup resm-i **ilhâd***

*Dimâğ-ı âlemi itmişdür **ifsâd*** (Mahremî/1139)

*Didi yâ bu **mülhidi** idem helâk*

Yâ beni ol bunda ide çâk çâk (Cevrî/2179)

*Adı şeyhidi ammâ gendü **şeytân***

*Ki sevmezdi anı **kâfir**, müsilân* (Hadîdî/5567)

Şüyûhi âlemün âlimleri heb

*Bilürler kim değülsin **pâk-mezheb*** (Îsâ/2101)

*İki yüz bin **Hâricî** hem-râh-ı Şâh*

Leşker-i İslâm'ı kılmağa tebâh (Firâkî/145)

Defined by creed- and sect-centered pejoratives, Shah Ismail is declared liable to obligatory killing (*katl-i wâjib*).²⁹ This formulation positions him unequivocally outside the bounds of Islam:

*Anun katli **helâldür** işde fetvâ*

Kitâblarda budur hem ilm-i takvâ (Îsâ/2086)

*Derilüb virdiler **katlüne fetvâ***

Seni katl eylemekdür kâr-ı uhrâ (Îsâ/2102)

2. Mythological References

Every literary text is constructed from the materials of its own age and the verse chronicles likewise carry the narrative components of their time. In every society, heroes are endowed with ideal attributes; mythology is a particularly fertile field for efficiently and persuasively idealizing a hero. In the verse chronicles, Yavuz Sultan Selim and his army cast as protagonists of the Battle of Çaldıran are idealized; mythic figures are mobilized as instruments of simile (*teşbih*) and allusion (*telmih*) to elevate Selim's portrait in terms of values and representation. Classical Turkish poetry frequently draws on Iranian/Persianate mythic heroes and the salient virtues of the panegyricized subject are likened to or measured against the defining qualities of those figures.³⁰

²⁹ On penalties concerning the Kızılbaş, see Özkan, "Fetvalar ve Belgeler Işığında Osmanlıda Kızılbaşlık Meselesi (16.-17. Yüzyıllar)" 159–63.

³⁰ Dursun Ali Tökel, *Divan Şiirinde Mitolojik Unsurlar: Şahıslar Mitolojisi* (İstanbul: FSMVÜ Yayınları, 2016), 85.

Among the Indians, the designation “Brahman/Brahmin” is applied to those who are wise, learned, experienced and heeded.³¹ Yavuz Sultan Selim is equated with a Brahmin in the soundness of his opinions and decisions; before his deliberations, even Hind’s own counsel falls silent:

Ne kim fikr eyledün fikr-i hasendür
Ne rây itdünse rây-i Berhemen’dür (Mahremî/1154)
İdüp hod-râlık ursa râyden dem
Katunda rây-ı Hind olurdu mülzem (Mahremî/1156)

Yavuz Sultan Selim’s sovereignty and the insignia of his rule, namely his crown, throne and splendor is narrated through allusions and similes to Alexander (İskender), Ferîdün, Dârâ (Darius) and Jam/Jamshid (Cem). His kingship is likened to that of Solomon;³² his crown to Alexander’s;³³ his magnificence to Ferîdün’s.³⁴ Indeed, together with his army, Yavuz Sultan Selim is portrayed as surpassing both Solomon and Alexander:

Süleymân-saltanat, İskender-efser
Cihân-dâr u Ferîdün-fer muzaffer (Hadîdî, 5578)
Süleymân u Sikender görmemişdür
Bu tertîbi birisi kurmamışdur (Hadîdî/5665)

Yavuz Sultan Selim and his army are depicted through similes and allusions to Solomon. In these comparisons, a central role is played by Selim’s image as one who concentrates both material and spiritual power in his person. He is at once a sultan and a caliph of Islam indeed, in a sense, the Solomon of his age. His command over his troops is likened to Solomon’s dominion over the jinn:

Yürüdi ol dem Ayas Ağa hemân
Dîve hükm itdi Süleymân-ı zamân (Cevrî/2208)
Kulları yürüdi sultân emrile
Dîve hükm itdi Süleymân emr-ile (Şükrî/2772)

Poets convey the material splendor of sovereignty, as embodied in Yavuz Sultan Selim, through the images of Jamshid (Cem) and Darius (Dârâ). Selim is envisioned as a Jamshid like a sun poised upon the lion’s back. He is endowed with Jam’s puissance,³⁵ and his crimson standard gleams like Jam’s cup (*jâm-i Jam*).³⁶

Gören üstinde şâhı sanki Cemşîd
Süvâr olmuş sanur aslana hürşîd (Mahremî/1270)

³¹ İskender Pala, *Ansiklopedik Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü* (Istanbul: L&M Yayınları, 2002), 78.

³² Prophet-King Solomon ruled over all creatures with his ring. Ahmet Talat Onay, *Eski Türk Edebiyatında Mazmunlar*, ed. Cemal Kurnaz (Ankara: H Yayınları, 2013), 378.

³³ The “Crown of Alexander” appears in narratives about Alexander as a symbol of power and magnificence. İsmail Avcı, “Mitoloji ve Arkeolojinin Kesiştiği Noktada Osmanlı Edebiyatı: Tac-ı İskender’in Peşinde,” in *Uluslararası Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Kongresi* (2013, Sarajevo), vol. 2 (Sarajevo, 2013), 465.

³⁴ On Ferîdün as a trope of justice, goodness, and longevity—e.g., the phrase *Feridun-fer* exalting the panegyric addressee’s splendor and power—see Tökel, *Divan Şiirinde Mitolojik Unsurlar*, 136.

³⁵ On the use of *Cem-iktidâr*, *Cem-kudret*, *Cem-haşmet* etc., see Tökel, *Divan Şiirinde Mitolojik Unsurlar*, 106.

³⁶ The cup of Jamshîd is likened to the sun and moon for its brilliance. See Rıdvan Canım, *Divan Edebiyatının Kaynakları* (Istanbul: Akıl Fikir, 2016), 76–77.

Didi Rûmî ey şeh-i Cem-iktidâr

Cümlesi Rûmî garîbdür âşikâr (Cevrî/1969)

Ol alemler içre bir a'lâ alem

Başı rahşende misâl-i câm-ı Cem (Şükrî/2458)

With rare exceptions, Ottoman sultans took the field at the head of their armies.³⁷ Accordingly, the image of the warrior–commander carries particular resonance within an Ottoman cultural world shaped between *bezm u rezm* (banquet and battle), especially on the side of *rezm*. Certain rulers including Selim came to prominence through a stern temperament and a martial cast. In the verse chronicles, Yavuz’s prowess in war is articulated by similes and allusions to Rustam and Dārā (Darius): he is a horseman of the battlefield like Rustam and in might and majesty in war he is the Darius of Anatolia.³⁸

Hod bu âyîn-ile şâh-ı ceng-cû

Rüstem-i meydân Selîm-i şîr-hû (Şükrî/2677)

Miyânında hamâyil tığ-i âteş

Süvâr olmuş çü Rüstem rahşa ser-keş (Mahremî/1256-1257)

Rumili beglerbegisidür o merd

Rüstem-i dâstân olur rûz-ı neberd (Cevrî/2014)

Şâh didi kim budur Dârû-yı Rûm

Şevket-ile geldi gösterdi hücum (Cevrî/2007)

In earlier times, sheer numbers were a crucial asset in war. The multitude of Ottoman and Safavid soldiers is idealized through allusion to Gog and Magog³⁹ (*Yecüc ve Mecüc*). The profusion of military equipment trailing the Ottoman host is likened to Sedd-i İskender Alexander’s Barrier.

Leşker-i Ye’cüc benzer bir gürûh

Oldılar âfet-resân-ı deşt ü kûh (Cevrî/2027)

Askerün ardında ađruk cümle bâr

Sedd-i İskender gibi itdi karâr (Cevrî/2121)

Ye’cüc Me’cüc’e benzer bir farîk

Od içinde hep semender tek garîk (Şükrî/2534)

Derüp Ye’cüc-veş maşrık çerisin

Cemî’isine geydürmişdi âhin (Hadîdî/5611)

To convey the magnitude of the Battle of Çaldıran, the idealizing comparisons to mythic heroes used for Yavuz Sultan Selim and the Ottoman host are extended to the Safavid soldiery as well. So much so that, were Qahramân⁴⁰ a hero of the *Shâhnâme* to witness the battle, he would pen encomia for both armies. It is a contest so momentous that even Alexander would stand

³⁷ On the breakdown of this tradition, see İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. 3 (Ankara: TTK, 1951), 124.

³⁸ On Dārā and Rustam as symbols of heroism, grandeur, might, and pomp, see Tökel, *Divan Şiirinde Mitolojik Unsurlar*, 122, 200.

³⁹ On Gog and Magog (*Yecüc ve Mecüc*) as symbols of evil and the barrier built to restrain them, see Canım, *Divan Edebiyatının Kaynakları*, 343.

⁴⁰ On *Kahraman* as a Persian-origin heroic figure, see Tökel, *Divan Şiirinde Mitolojik Unsurlar*, 163.

astonished before it; indeed, in the face of the Ottoman host, Shah Ismail's troops are likened to Noah's Flood:

Bir neberd oldı ki görse Kahramân
Anlara tahsîn iderdi bî-gümân (Cevrî/2140)
Gerçi İskender besî eyledi ceng
Nice İskender bu cengde oldı deng (Firâkî/180)
Sanasın Nûh Tûfânı belürdi
Ki kan deryâsı dehri seyle virdi (Şîrî/vr.239b/10)

3. The War's Cosmic and Astrological Narrative

One of the major reservoirs of imagery in classical Turkish poetry is cosmology and astrology. The planets Moon (*Ay*), Sun (*Güneş*), Mars (*Mirrîh*), Jupiter (*Müşterî*), Mercury (*Utârid*), Saturn (*Zühal/Keyvân*) and Venus (*Zühre*) are endowed with temperaments and even professions, for good or ill.⁴¹ The existence of the office of the *müneccimbaşı* (chief court astrologer) in the Ottoman realm attests to the importance accorded this domain.⁴² Verse chronicles draw on cosmological–astrological beliefs and assumptions to depict the war and its spirit. Yavuz Sultan Selim's qualities as a commander are idealized through the figurative meanings of such elements: he is described variously as a moon of Keyvân's degree (i.e., Saturnine rank), Saturnine in enmity,⁴³ Mercurial in intellect,⁴⁴ Martial in disposition⁴⁵, a fortunate sultan,⁴⁶ the sun itself,⁴⁷ born in the sign of exaltation,⁴⁸ a full moon,⁴⁹ and a moon rising from Aquarius.⁵⁰

Varup Tebriz'e ba-ferr u saâdet
Şerefle ol meh-i keyvân-rif'at (Şîrî/vr.241b/11)
Hemân ol subh sultân-ı zuhal-kîn
Utârid-ftnat u mirrîh-âyîn (Mahremî/1207)
Didiler ey Hüsrev-i sâhib-kırân
Eyledi sana îânet müsteân (Cevrî/2259)
Çü devletle o yirde kondı leşker

⁴¹ Onay, *Eski Türk Edebiyatında Mazmunlar*, 430–31.

⁴² Zekerîya Bülbül, *Osmanlı Müesseseleri ve Medeniyeti Tarihi* (Ankara: Nobel, 2000), 28.

⁴³ On "Zühal" (Saturn) producing a bad temperament; also called "Keyvân": see Pala, *Ansiklopedik Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü*, 507.

⁴⁴ On "Utârid" (Mercury) as "scribe of the heavens," conferring intelligence: Pala, *Ansiklopedik Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü*, 479.

⁴⁵ Bravery, anger, strength, warfare, and wrath are among the traits of those born under the influence of this planet (Mars). It is regarded as the commander-in-chief of the heavens. See Pala, *Ansiklopedik Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü*, 336.

⁴⁶ On *sâhib-qrân* ("born under the auspicious conjunction of Jupiter and Venus"), an epithet also applied to Ottoman sultans, see Pala, *Ansiklopedik Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü*, 399.

⁴⁷ In divan poetry, the sun—by its brilliance, heat, and light—is imagined as the sultan among celestial bodies. Pala, *Ansiklopedik Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü*, 187.

⁴⁸ In classical poetry, comparing the praised figure to the moon and sun signals elevated prestige. Ahmet Atilla Şentürk, *Osmanlı Şiiri Kılavuzu*, vol. 2 (Istanbul: OSEDAM Yayınları, 2017), 307.

⁴⁹ On the moon's brilliance in divan poetry, see Pala, *Ansiklopedik Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü*, 52.

⁵⁰ To express magnificence, likening Sultan Selim to a moon in Aquarius evokes the episode in which Joseph—likened to a moon for his beauty—is drawn up from the well onto Aquarius. See Şentürk, *Osmanlı Şiiri Kılavuzu*, vol. 2, 307, 451.

Birez dinlendi **şâh-ı ferruh-ahter** (Şîrî/vr.241b/9)

Gelüp **hursîd**-veş Sultân Selîm Han

O fülke girdi gûyâ **mâh-ı tâbân** (Şîrî/vr.235b/9)

Oturdu meh gibi **burc-ı şerefde**

Ya lü'lû gibi kim dürc-i sadefde (Şîrî/vr.235b/10)

Geçüp deryây[ı] keşîden çıkar şâh

Sanasın **Delv burcından doğar mâh** (Şîrî/vr.236a/1)

In the Battle of Çaldıran, the firearms cannon and muskets are likened, by virtue of the fire they unleashed, to the scorching sun and its resplendent rays:

Ana nisbet **hüsrev-i hâver** hemîn

Yanarız bu âteşe olsak karîn (Cevrî/2085)

Sad-hezârân **âfitâb** itdi zuhûr

Her silâhu kıldı bir rahşende nûr (Cevrî/1936)

Idealized through the similes of the sun and the crescent, the Ottoman army's helmets by virtue of their brilliance are likened to the sun that adorns the cosmos. The tip of the Ottoman standard is said to reach the highest point of the firmament; thus, the banner's crescent emblem is conceived as having taken shape from this celestial inspiration.

Urınmış miğfer-i zer çekmiş alay

Misâl-i **âfitâb-ı âlem-ârây** (Mahremî/1256)

Ser-i râyet irişdi tâ be-ayyûk

Hilâl oldı anun-çün ana mencûk (Mahremî/1214)

In the verse chronicles, as the Ottoman army is idealized through cosmological motifs, the Safavid troops are, within the same frame, cast in negative terms. The Ottomans, for their prowess in battle, are likened to Mars (*Merîh*), whereas the Safavid host, for its maleficence and ill-omen, is compared to Saturn (*Zühal/Keyvân*):

Pes andan cenge durdı iki leşker

Zuhâl san oldı **Merrîh'e** berâber (Îsâ/2130)

The conceit that the clangor of clashing swords “fills the crescent's ear” premised on the visual analogy between the crescent and an ear serves to articulate the magnitude and ferocity of the battle:

Tiğ tiğâ tokunup çıkdı sadâ

Eyledi gûşın **hilâl-i pür-nevâ** (Cevrî/2196)

4. Personality and Identity Traits

In literary works above all the *qaşîda* (*kaside*) the panegyricized subject (*memdûh*) is praised through conventional, formulaic attributes. Yet in classical Turkish poetry the *memdûh* is at times extolled by reference to genuine identity and character traits, or by other realist markers of praise. In the verse chronicles that treat the Battle of Çaldıran, Yavuz Sultan Selim and Shah Ismail are depicted partly in terms of actual qualities and partly within the frame the poet wished to project. Selim's personal traits are rendered in positive epithets: reason and intellect are counted among a

ruler's chief virtues and accordingly he is portrayed as intelligent, well-intentioned, distinguished and fortunate:

*Direr erkânı bir gün ol **hured-mend**
Şidâd ile virür anlara sevgend (Îsâ/2078)
Her ne denlû Rûm 'da var mîr ü sipâh
Cem kıldı cümlesin ol **nîk-hâh** (Fîrâkî/122)
Ak alem altında şâh-ı **ser-fîrâz**
Ferr ü şevketle durur mânend-i kûh (Şükrî/2584)
Çü devletle o yirde kondı leşker
Birez dinlendi şâh-ı **ferruh-ahter** (Şîrî/vr.241b/9)*

On the battlefield, courage ranks among a sovereign's most esteemed qualities. Yavuz Sultan Selim is a ruler renowned for his bravery. This trait is closely associated with his epithet "Yavuz," which connotes sternness, toughness and formidableness.⁵¹ In the verse chronicles, consonant with his name, he is emphasized as a heroic, courageous monarch and a warrior-commander.

*Gör ne hoş girmiş bu od deryâsına
Tekye itmişdür meger **esmâsına** (Şükrî/2541)
Çü vardı şehre ol şâh-ı **dilâver**
Niçe şeh gün gibi ferhunde-ahter (Şîrî/vr.234b/11)
Ol günün ikincisi ol **pür-sîfz**
İrdi Tebriz'e sekiz âdemle tîz (Cevrî/2238)*

Set against Sultan Selim's affirmative traits, Shah Ismail is depicted as possessed of a panoply of vices: malice, diabolism, enmity to the good and fomenting of disorder, ill-nature, vindictiveness, cowardice, arrogance, selfishness, guile, mendacity, tyranny, injustice, ignorance, wrathfulness, irascibility, quarrelsomeness and wretchedness. In the couplets cited below, he is identified with evil through epithets such as *tîre-rây* ("dark-minded"), *bed-hâh* ("ill-intentioned"), *bed-kâm* ("ill-desiring"), *bed-fi'l* ("doer of evil deeds"), *bed-hûy* ("ill-tempered"), *dîv* ("demon"), *kân-ı şer* ("fount of evil"), *ummü'l-mefâsid* ("mother of corruptions") and *kîne-hâh* ("vindictive"):

*Sağ u solın durdı çün ol **tîre-rây**
Çarha irişdi sadâ-yı kerre-nây (Cevrî/1923)
Yürüsün yiniçeriyle şâha bir
Âteş-efşân olsun ol **bed-hâha** bir (Şükrî/2764)
Yürüsün yeniçeri-yle bî-emân
Olsun ol **dîve** bu dem âteş-feşân (Cevrî/2204)
Yazub menşûrî evvel saldı kâsıd
Didi iy **kân-ı şer ümmü'l-mefâsid** (Îsâ/2097)*

⁵¹ In Ottoman documents he appears as "Selim Şah"; but already in his own time he was known as "Yavuz" on account of his stern temperament, courage, and boldness. Feridun M. Emecen, "Selim I," in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 36 (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2009), 407.

Şeh İsmâil'di halk içre ana nâm

Katı bed-hûy-ıdı bed-fi'l ü bed-kâm (Şîrî/vr.232b/1)

Çün hücum itdi silahdârâne şâh

Ya'nî şâh-ı sürhser ol kîne-hâh (Cevrî/2199)

In the verse chronicles, an episode is related in which Shah Ismail abandons the women and children on the battlefield and flees.⁵² According to these accounts, he left his consort Taçlı Begüm (d. 1540), in disguise (*tebdil-i kıyâfet*), in his own pavilion, after which she fell captive to the Ottomans.⁵³ Such episodes reinforce the negative traits ascribed to him: Shah Ismail is portrayed as a cowardly, arrogant, deceitful and self-serving sovereign. He is labeled “kalleş” (perfidious), while his army is derided as “evbaş” (rabble).

Taclu Hânın cümle eskâlyla şâh

Hâzır itdi düzdi bir âli-sipâh (Şükrî/2717)

Avrat-ıla kalbe koydı bir alem

K'anı sansunlar zihî meger Acem (Şükrî/2718)

Çaldıran'da ey müşîrân-ı habîr

Şâh-ı şârkun avratı olmuş esîr (Cevrî/2593)

Gurûr u ucible gûyâ ki şeytân

Gelüp dine kabûl itmedi îmân (Hadîdî/5580)

Tehlûke ka'rında görüp câyını

Baş kurtarmağa kaldı re'yini (Firâkî/190)

On iki İmâm'ı koyup ol hemân

Götürür ayak çü tîr-ender kemân (Firâkî/192)

Didi şimdi eylesem bundan gürîz

Mülk-i İrân'da kopar bin rüstahîz (Cevrî/2082)

Kaçanlar dutdılar sahrâ beyâbân

Kalur meydân içinde avret oğlan (Îsâ/2163)

Kodı yerinde raht ü bâr ü büngâh

Didi kuskuna kuvvet kaçdı bî-râh (Hadîdî/5671)

Husûsâ kim Şeh İsmâil-i kallâş

Yanına cem idüp bir nice evbâş (Mahremî/1137)

⁵² Mustafa Çetin Varlık, “Çaldıran Savaşı,” in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 8 (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1993), 194.

⁵³ For the episode see İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, “Şah İsmail'in Zevcesi Taçlı Hanımın Mücevheratı,” *Bellekten* 23, no. 92 (1959): 611–20; Tufan Gündüz, *Son Kızılbaş Şah İsmail* (Istanbul: Yeditepe, 2013), 132–41; Tufan Gündüz, “Şah İsmail'in Eşi Taçlı Begüm,” *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırmaları Dergisi* 51 (2009): 223–32; Minaham Tekleli Nuriyeva and Feride Aliyeva, “Taçlı Begüm'ün Hayatı Hakkında Yeni Olgular,” *Akademik Tarih ve Düşünce Dergisi* 1, no. 4 (2014): 1–13.

Shah Ismail is said to have intoxicated the Safavid troops before the battle to stiffen their courage and drive them onto the field.⁵⁴ Moreover, because he sought to motivate them with promises of booty and wealth, the verse chronicles accordingly characterize him with the epithets of intoxication, mendacity and chicanery:

Öz elimden tolu içsünler tamâm
Tâ ki olsun her biri **mest-i müdâm** (Cevrî/2094)
Eylesünler hem o keyfiyetle ceng
Yürüsünler her taraftan bî-direng (Cevrî/2096)
Hâb-ı gaftetinde kamuyu pâ vü dest
Giceden **hamr içüp olmuşdu cümle mest** (Firâkî/150)
Bize Rûm'dan getirür **çok genc ü mâl**
Olasız ol mâlile pîrûz-hâl (Firâkî/139)

Shah Ismail is portrayed as a sovereign who does not fear God unjust, ignorant, tyrannical and bloodthirsty, irascible and contentious. The chronicles also depict him as becoming markedly enraged⁵⁵ in his correspondence with Yavuz Sultan Selim:

O yanadan Şâh İsmâil-i **bî-dâd**
Görür kim irdi bir deryâ-yı pûlâd (Şîrî/vr.238a/15)
Tarıdan bî-bâk ü hûn-rîz ol ferîd
Leşkeri cümle fedâyî vü mürîd (Şükrî/2390)
Atan şeyh idi sen sultânlık itmek
Sezâsuz taht alub **nâdânlık** itmek (Îsâ/2099)
Kanı ol milkde olan efâdil
Helâk itdi kamu ol merd-i **câhil** (Şîrî/vr.232/9)
Diyüp bu resme nice söz o nâ-pâk
Hemâna hışm-ıla oldu **gazabnâk** (Şîrî/vr.234a/2)
Gazabdan bilmez oldu sağ u solın
İdüp el bir bir itdi iki kolun (Mahremî/1305)
Târumâr oldu o kavm-i **bed-maâş**
Anların ardınca germ oldu savaş (Cevrî/2216)

In the passages that depict Shah Ismail being wounded on the battlefield, falling from his horse and beginning to flee,⁵⁶ a pronounced emphasis on his ill-starred misfortune is conspicuous:

Yıkıldılar atından ol **bed-ahteri**
Düşdi başından yire tâc ü zeri (Cevrî/2225)

⁵⁴ For further details see Şahin Mustafayev, "Safevi Tarih Yazımında Osmanlılar (Şah İsmail ve Şah Tahmasb Devirleri)," *Türk Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 3, no. 1 (June 2018): 33.

⁵⁵ On the correspondence, see Gündüz, *Son Kızılbaş Şah İsmail*, 123–26.

⁵⁶ Varlık, "Çaldıran Savaşı," 194.

Yıkdılar atından ol *bed-ahteri*

Düşdi başından yine tâc-ı zeri (Şükrî/2788)

Uş bu hâl içinde şâh-ı *tîre-baht*

Yürüdi cem-i silah-dâr üzre saht (Şükrî/2756)

5. Animal Symbolism

Especially in the Indo-Iranian sphere, didactic works frequently deploy animal similes and personifications. Beydaba (1st c. BCE), in *Kalîla wa Dimna*, draws on animals' salient traits through the art of personification to articulate various values by means of animal symbolism. 'Atţâr (d. 618/1221), in *Manţiq al-Ṭayr* (*The Conference of the Birds*), concretizes the soul's ascent toward the Sîmurgh through the image of birds setting out under the hoopoe's guidance. Animal similes and exempla likewise appear in 'Atţâr's *Ilâhî-nâma* and *Asrâr-nâma*, in Mevlânâ's *Mesnevî* and in Molla Câmî's (d. 898/1492) *Bahâristân*.⁵⁷ In classical Turkish poetry, the beloved's qualities are idealized through comparisons to creatures such as the gazelle, 'anqâ (phoenix) and Sîmurgh; the lover is likened to the ever-lamenting nightingale, while the rival is compared to a crow, dog, donkey, or pig.⁵⁸ Standalone works devoted exclusively to animals were also composed, among them Şeyhî's (d. after 832/1429) *Harnâme*, Nef'î's (d. 1044/1635) *rahşiyyes* and Kara Fazlî's (d. 971/1564) *Gül ü Bülbül*. Poems bearing the rhyme-word (*redif*) "nightingale," "lamb," and "humâ" were likewise written.⁵⁹

With the adoption of Islam, plant symbolism came to the fore in classical Turkish poetry as a reflection of a refined aesthetic sensibility; indeed, the *ghazal* often presents a veritable mosaic of flora. By contrast, in pre-Islamic Turkish literature shaped by steppe culture the worldview of the human type was largely constructed through animal symbolism.⁶⁰ Among the Turks, a warrior people, the ideal commander was thought to possess the rooster's courage, the hen's chastity, the lion's boldness, the wild boar's aggressiveness, the fox's cunning, the dog's fortitude, the wolf's appetite for battle and the cow's soundness.⁶¹ With Islam, literary genres exhibit a turn from animal to vegetal symbolism. In the verse chronicles, however, the face of war grounded in power and domination brings animal symbolism to the fore, much as in steppe culture. In the sections devoted to the Battle of Çaldıran, this symbolism is employed frequently: at times animal comparisons register concrete, physical resemblance; at other times they convey a symbolic valence.

Lion

From antiquity to the present, the lion has figured as a symbolic value in world literature and in Turkish-Islamic literary texts, representing, within the collective conscience of Turkish culture, such emblematic virtues as strength, magnificence, valor, courage, nobility and sovereignty. From the beginnings of Turkish history it appears as a physical emblem on coinage, banners, thrones and in architectural works and as a symbolic motif in oral and written literature. Among the Huns, Göktürks, Uighurs, Qarakhanids (*Arslanhanlılar*), the Great Seljuks and the Anatolian Seljuks, "lion" served not only as a personal name for rulers but also, in its symbolic valence, as a royal title. In the Ottoman realm, where the lion was seen as a sign of power and splendor, lions were kept in special palace quarters known as *aslanhâne*. Historical sources record the presence of such dedicated spaces from the reign of Mehmed II (d. 1481) onward. Murad IV

⁵⁷ Yusuf Babür, "Sadî'nin Gülistan'ında Hayvan Teşbih ve Temsilleri," *Divan Edebiyatı Araştırmaları Dergisi* 24 (2020): 43–44.

⁵⁸ Canım, *Divan Edebiyatının Kaynakları*, 471.

⁵⁹ Önder Ertap, "Divan Şiirinde Hayvan Motifi" (Master's thesis, Balıkesir University, 1996), 6.

⁶⁰ Beşir Ayvazoğlu, *Güller Kitabı* (Istanbul: Ötüken, 1996), 22.

⁶¹ Jean-Paul Roux, *Türklerin ve Moğolların Eski Dini* (Istanbul: Dergâh, 2021), 204.

(d. 1640), Sultan Abdülaziz (d. 1876) and Sultan Abdülhamid II (d. 1918) are noted for their interest in lions: during Murad IV's reign lions were included in an official procession; Abdülaziz is said to have wrestled a lion; and Abdülhamid II maintained *aslanhânes* at Yıldız Palace concrete indications of Ottoman sultans' fascination with lions.⁶² As an emblem of courage, might and heroism, the lion is associated in mythic reports together with the sun with the authority and greatness of the Prophet Solomon; al-Ṭabarī relates that two columns in the form of lions stood at the feet of Solomon's throne.⁶³

In classical Turkish poetry, 'Alī is likened to the lion for his courage, strength and valor; likewise, the beloved's gaze, the lover who keeps watch for the beloved's path and even the beloved's tresses are compared to the lion.⁶⁴ In the verse chronicles, Yavuz Sultan Selim and his army are similarly figured as lions the emblem of power and sovereignty. The lion in these similes is roaring, brave and male; Yavuz and his host are leonine in temperament and fight like lions:

Cihân mülki tolup at u er-ile
Pür oldı bişeler şîr-i ner-ile (Hadîdî/5642)
Dahi sol cânibe durdı silahdâr
Ki her birisi bir şîr-i cigerdâr (Şîrî/vr.239a/4)
Her alem altında bir gurrende şîr
Hem mübâriz hem bahâdır hem dilîr (Şükrî/2473)
Merd-i gâzîdür o merd-i ceng-cû
Hem peleng-i rezmdür hem şîr-hû (Cevrî/1982)
Bu taraftan Hân Selîm-i şîr-ceng
Yürüdi semt-i adûya bî-direng (Cevrî/2209) Yavuz Sultan Selim

While Yavuz and his soldiers are likened to lions for their martial prowess and courage, certain couplets go further, portraying them as superior to the lion itself "casting the lion to the ground" or "hunting the lion"⁶⁵ through such images:

Kılıç, kalkan u gönderle müzeyyen
Piyâde nev-cüvân ü şîr-efgen (Hadîdî/5595)
İki yüz bin şîr-i ner ol şeh-süvâr
Cem ider her biri bir şîr-şikâr (Firâkî/124)

In numerous couplets of the verse chronicles, Yavuz and his army invoked as a simile for power and sovereignty through the image of the lion are set above Shah Ismail and his troops. Yet, to indicate that Shah Ismail's forces possessed a power not to be underestimated and to convey the battle's magnitude, Shah Ismail and his soldiers are also likened to lions:

Cevşen-i pûlâda gark oldı sipâh
Ceng için gördi yarak şîr-âne şâh (Şükrî/2391)

⁶² Şükrü Öztürk, "Türk Kültüründe Aslan," *Uluslararası Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Dergisi* 2, no. 2 (2019): 36.

⁶³ Nîmet Yıldırım, *Fars Mitolojisi Sözlüğü* (İstanbul: Kabalcı, 2008), 665.

⁶⁴ Emel Naçacıgil Çopur, "Divan Şiirinde Aslan Metaforu," *RumeliDE* 18 (2020): 300.

⁶⁵ Lion-hunting is likewise a symbol of power and sovereignty. See Yaşar Can Öztürk, "Rubens'in 'Kaplan ve Aslan Avı' Adlı Tablosuyla Güç Arzusu'na Bir Bakış," *İnsanat: Sanat Tasarım ve Mimarlık Araştırmaları Dergisi* 4, no. 1 (2024): 370.

Bilürsin kim bizüz şîrân-ı cengî

Denizde ürküdürüz biz nehengi (Şîrî/vr.234a/9)

Tiger

In the Twelve-Animal Turkic Calendar, the Year of the Tiger is regarded across Central Asian Turkic mythology as an auspicious year in which many heroes were born.⁶⁶ In the arts, the tiger functions as a symbol of the ruler's strength and valor. During the Buddhist period, the tiger skin signified royal power and authority.⁶⁷ This pre-Islamic image of the tiger persisted after the advent of Islam: wearing a tiger skin continued to emblemize might and kingship.⁶⁸ In classical Turkish poetry, the lover is envisioned as a tiger by virtue of his courage and of wounds on his body that recall the animal's markings while soldiers and heroes are compared to the tiger for their strength.⁶⁹ In the verse chronicles, the martial prowess of the Ottoman troops and of Yavuz Sultan Selim is rendered through tiger imagery lying in ambush, fierce anger, roaring and aggressiveness.

Bir kemînden çıkdı ol iki peleng

İtdiler Ustacaluoğlı-yla ceng (Cevrî/2139)

Hurûş u cûşu artup her pelengün

Olur bâzârı yine germ cengün (Mahremî/1342)

Ne leşker her biri bir bebr-i garrân

Çü şîr-i ner gurunbişle girivân (Mahremî/1245)

Gâzidür ol pehlevân-ı cengcû

Hem peleng-i rezmdür hem şîr-hû (Şükrî/2466)

Böyle fermân iddi ol gurrende bebr

Kim hemân yeniçeriyle ol hizebr (Şükrî/2669)

The tiger image employed for Yavuz and the Ottoman army is applied only rarely to Shah Ismail and the Safavid host. It is noted that Shah Ismail's troops entered the battlefield donning tiger skins, thereby invoking the tradition of wearing such pelts as emblems of power and sovereignty:

Her bedev bir şîr olup giydi peleng

Şâh için ister ide şîr-âne ceng (Şükrî/2395)

Dragon

In earlier periods, the **dragon** functioned as a symbol of fertility, prosperity, power and might; yet in folktales and epics it appears as a being associated with evil, drought and harm to humankind. Its meanings shift across time and cultural geography: among Turkic groups adjacent to China, the dragon was adopted following Chinese iconography as an emblem of beneficence, whereas with increasing remove from East Asia and especially moving from East to West, it tends to become a symbol of malice. Turkic societies did not invest the dragon, in terms of belief or veneration, with significance comparable to that of the Chinese. In Turkic mythology, heroes of

⁶⁶ Deniz Gezgin, *Hayvan Mitosları* (Istanbul: Sel, 2014), 107.

⁶⁷ Yaşar Çoruhlu, *Türk Mitolojisinin ABC'si* (Istanbul: Kabalıcı, 1999), 152.

⁶⁸ Aylin Özcan, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Deliler ile Lehistan Askerleri Hussarlar'ın Giyim-Kuşamlarının İncelenmesi," *Anthropology* 39 (2020): 117; Yaşar Çoruhlu, *Türk Mitolojisinin Ana Hatları* (Istanbul: Kabalıcı, 2000), 137–39.

⁶⁹ Mustafa Kılıç, "Klasik Türk Şiirinde Hayvanlar" (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2024), 849.

tales and epics battle dragons; at times dragons fight one another as symbolic embodiments of good and evil.⁷⁰ The dragon is imagined as a creature with a body covered in fish-like scales, crocodilian feet, wings, a tail and horns held, in myth, to be a serpent that has undergone transformation through great longevity. According to another belief, the dragon is born of a serpent's coupling with a wild buffalo or a gazelle.⁷¹ In folktales, the dragon guards sources of water, supplies the community's needs, is fed by the people with small livestock and is accorded respect. In legends and epic narratives, dragons dwell in caves, where they either hold certain holy figures captive or protect them from external threats. Traits such as having seven heads and breathing fire recur in narratives transmitted among the Turks.⁷² In the verse chronicles, red banners are likened by virtue of their color to a dragon imagined as breathing flame; the confrontation of the two armies at Çaldıran is cast as the clash of two dragons; and the Ottoman pashas are compared to dragons in respect of their courage.

Çözildi surh a'lâm ejdehâ-ves

Diyeydün alem içre düşdi âteş (Şîrî/239a/13)

Hurûş u cûş-ıla mânend-i Haydâr

İrüp oldı mukâbil iki ejder (Mahremî/1292)

Mîr-i mîrândur Sinân Paşa ana

Ana dirler ejder-i deşt-i vegâ (Cevrî/1981)

In the Battle of Çaldıran, the instruments of war are likened to dragons. Lances, by their very form, recall a dragon, while firearms such as cannon and muskets are conceived as dragons on account of the fire issuing from their "mouths."

Omuzda nîzeler gûyâ ki ejder

Çıkarmış dil uzatmış her yana ser (Mahremî/1247)

Oldı gûyâ ejdehâ-yı tûz-ser

Kuyruğı kıluridi zîr ü zeber (Fîrâkî/170)

Anların iki yanında toplar

Turup ejder gibi ağzın açdılar (Cevrî/2120)

Gürv itdi kamusı ejdehâ-ves

Dehanından kamusı saçdı âteş (Şîrî/vr.240b/4) Tüfek

Tüfek saçdukça od her sû çü ejder

Olurdi surh-serler çün semender (Mahremî/1376)

Salamander

According to legend, this fabulous creature secretes a substance that renders it impervious to fire; it was believed to live in the flames and to die when removed from them.⁷³ In classical Turkish poetry, the salamander is most frequently identified with the lover: the lover's burning in the fire of love is likened to a salamander dwelling within fire. Across a range of comparisons

⁷⁰ Harun Duman, "Türk Mitolojisinde Ejderha," *Uluslararası Beşeri Bilimler ve Eğitim Dergisi* 5, no. 11 (2019): 488–89.

⁷¹ Fuzuli Bayat, *Türk Mitolojik Sistemi* 2 (Istanbul: Ötüken, 2007), 255–56.

⁷² Pertev Naili Boratav, *Türk Mitolojisi: Oğuzların—Anadolu, Azerbaycan ve Türkmenistan Türklerinin Mitolojisi* (Ankara: Bilgesu, 2012), 66.

⁷³ Pala, *Ansiklopedik Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü*, 412.

involving fiery imagery, the salamander serves as the vehicle of the simile (*müşebbehün bih*). The Prophet Abraham, because he was not consumed by the flames, is mentioned together with the salamander; likewise, the sparks struck from the panegyricized patron's galloping horses are likened to salamanders amid the blaze.⁷⁴ In the verse chronicles, the intimate relation of weaponry to fire makes the salamander a powerful vehicle of comparison: as muskets, like dragons, spew fire in all directions, the Qizilbash are depicted as remaining in the flames like salamanders.

Tüfek saçdukça od her sū çü ejder

Olurdu surh-serler çün semender (Mahremî/1376)

Ye'cüc Me'cüc'e benzer bir farik

Od içinde hep semender tek garik (Şükrî/2534)

Snake

According to early lore, the serpent originally a beautiful, four-legged creature was rendered hideous because it helped Satan enter Paradise; for this offense it was sent down to earth together with Adam, Eve and Satan.⁷⁵ The staff of the Prophet Moses is famed for having turned into a serpent.⁷⁶ In antiquity, snakes were also believed to guard treasures.⁷⁷ In Iranian mythology, Dahhāk (Zahhāk) a terrifying figure synonymous with tyranny bears on his shoulders two fearsome serpents fed with children's brains.⁷⁸ Serpents that live a hundred years are thought to transform into dragons and begin to breathe fire.⁷⁹ The Şahmaran ("king of serpents"), known in myth as the ruler of snakes, likewise appears in classical Turkish poetry;⁸⁰ the beloved's tresses are also compared to a serpent in respect of their shape and color.⁸¹ In the verse chronicles, the serpent figures among the objects of comparison for weaponry. Both the spear and the musket are likened to snakes by virtue of their form and, figuratively, the terror they inspire in the enemy. The spear's injury to the lungs of Safavid soldiers is compared to the damage inflicted on the lungs by snake venom. The bullet at the musket's muzzle is likened to the small, bead-like protuberance green or blue in hue said to sit upon a serpent's head.⁸²

Yılan gibi dilin uzatdı nîze

Ciğerler oldı andan rîze rîze (Îsâ/2133)

Tüfengün her birisi mâr çehre

Dutar her birisi ağzında mühre (Şîrî/vr.239a/9)

Crocodile

In older cultural imaginaries, the crocodile figures as a salient emblem of power and warfare. Descriptions of Sultan Alp Arslan's struggle against Byzantine troops according to which he "plunged into them like a crocodile" and "hewed them in two with his sword" are similes that align martial strength and prowess with the crocodile.⁸³ An army marching to battle in armor and shedding blood, or a *memdûh* who inspires dread in his foes through majesty and wrath, is

⁷⁴ Kılıç, "Klasik Türk Şiirinde Hayvanlar", 1715–34.

⁷⁵ Pala, *Ansiklopedik Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü*, 5.

⁷⁶ Pala, *Ansiklopedik Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü*, 42.

⁷⁷ Pala, *Ansiklopedik Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü*, 119.

⁷⁸ Pala, *Ansiklopedik Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü*, 114; Tökel, *Divan Şiirinde Mitolojik Unsurlar*, 112.

⁷⁹ Pala, *Ansiklopedik Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü*, 146.

⁸⁰ Neşe Yıldırım, "Yakın Doğu Sembolizminde Akrep, Yılan; Akrep-Adam ve Şahmeran," *Folklor/Edebiyat* 7, no. 27 (2001): 8.

⁸¹ Ertap, "Divan Şiirinde Hayvan Motifi," 205.

⁸² Türk Dil Kurumu (TDK), *Türkçe Sözlük*, ed. İsmail Parlatır et al. (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 1998), 2:1604.

⁸³ Yaşar Çoruhlu, *Türk Sanatında Hayvan Sembolizmi* (Konya: Kömen, 2014), 194.

compared to a crocodile.⁸⁴ As a weapon of war, the sword is likened to a crocodile not only in shape and hue but also for the sweeping motion with which, in combat, it seizes its prey.⁸⁵ As a symbol of force and might, the crocodile is invoked in classical Turkish literature for its ability to move on land and in water, to overcome enemies and to devour humans;⁸⁶ owing to its savagery and ferocity it is associated with misfortune and calamity;⁸⁷ by shape and color it is compared to tresses, by its plunging and resurfacing in the “Nile of love” to the lover, by its outward ugliness to the rival, by its hypocrisy and guile to the ostentatiously pious zâhid, by its form to an armored soldier and to a boat, and by its swimming in the sea of words to the pen.⁸⁸

In the verse chronicles, the efficacy, bloodletting and ferocity of Ottoman soldiers and weaponry are rendered through the crocodile image. Each Ottoman horseman, deemed strong enough to vanquish even a crocodile, is imagined as a warlike crocodile on a battlefield that resembles a sea of blood:

Tekâver bahr-ı hûn içre şinâver

Neheng-i cengdür üstinde her er (Mahremî/1315)

O deryânun bahâdurlar nehengi

Sanasın her biri şîrân-ı cengî (Şîrî/vr.239a/6)

Yanında nice bin merdân-ı cengi

Ki her biri zebûn eyler nehengi (Şîrî/vr.238b/15)

Just as the Ottoman soldiers are envisioned as crocodiles in terms of courage and martial prowess, so too the cannon and muskets they wield are portrayed as crocodiles both in their form and in the force of their effect:

Toplar dem çekdi mânend-i neheng

Germ olup ol demde atıldı tüfeng (Cevrî/2127)

Dutarlar-ı ellerde tüfengi

Diyeyedük her biri derya nehengi (Şîrî/vr.239a/8)

Wolf

In Asian communities sustained by hunting and pastoralism, the wolf by virtue of its physical power has been both feared and respected as a being endowed with supernatural qualities.⁸⁹ Among the early Turks, the sacred wolf is the “Gök Börü / Gök Kurt.”⁹⁰ The wolf known as “Kurt-Ata” is accorded, in pre-Islamic epics, the dignity of being the ancestor both mother and father of the Turks and it becomes the emblem of Turkish vitality and the will to struggle.⁹¹ Alongside wolves deemed inauspicious or profane “Albörü,” “Kaskır,” and “Kaşkır,” identified as thieves and killers of livestock Anatolia also knows a type called “Yalınsak,” a wolf

⁸⁴ Ayşe Yıldız, “Klasik Türk Edebiyatında ‘Neheng’ Kelimesi Üzerine,” *Erdem* 56 (2010): 187–90 (argues some instances should be read as “whale”).

⁸⁵ Sani Gören, “17. Yüzyıl Şairlerinden Fehim-i Kadim, Âşık Ömer ve Karacaoğlan’ın Şiirlerinde Hayvanlar” (Master’s thesis, Istanbul University, 2010), 633.

⁸⁶ Mehmet Emin Ertan, “Fuzûlî Divânında Hayvanlar” (Master’s thesis, Marmara University, 1989), 114.

⁸⁷ M. Nejat Sefercioğlu, *Nev’î Divânı’nın Tahlili* (Ankara: Akçağ, 2001), 429.

⁸⁸ Kılıç, “Klasik Türk Şiirinde Hayvanlar,” 1918.

⁸⁹ Çoruhlu, *Türk Sanatında Hayvan Sembolizmi*, 68.

⁹⁰ Yaşar Kalafat, *Türk Halk İrfanında Kurt* (Ankara: Lalezar, 2007), 20.

⁹¹ Şerife Nilgün Yıldız, “Türk Halk Anlatılarında Hayvan Motifleri” (Master’s thesis, Fırat University, 2011), 148.

that wantonly slaughters a flock.⁹² In Islamic belief, no sanctity is ascribed to the wolf; in the Qur'ân it appears only in the story of Joseph, with reference to the possibility that he was torn by a wolf.⁹³ As a negative figure in classical Turkish poetry, the wolf is frequently identified with fate/the heavens (*felek*) and the world (*dünyâ*); the lover is likened to a lamb, whereas the rival is the wolf that preys upon the beloved;⁹⁴ it is mentioned in tandem with cruelty, death and the self (*nafs*). Alongside these negative traits, there are a few instances in which the wolf serves positively as a comparison for courage and might applied to the beloved, the lover and his heart and to soldiers.⁹⁵ In the sections that narrate the Battle of Çaldıran in the verse chronicles, the Ottoman fighting men are portrayed through the image of a predatory wolf that, upon entering a flock, tears off the head of every sheep it seizes an image that calls to mind the Anatolian “Yalinsak,” the wolf known for inflicting wanton harm on flocks.

Koyunun gelesini gördi san kurd

Ki itdi irdüginün kellesin hurd (Mahremî/1355)

Ram and Sheep

The **sheep** is among the emblems of the Twelve-Animal Turkic Calendar. Among the early Turks, sheep and white rams were offered in sacrifice to the Sky God (*Gök Tanrı*), while, in mourning rites, sheep and goats that were not white were offered to the earth deity. Sheep and rams were also sacrificed both for protection against evil spirits and as gifts to the spirits of the ancestors. In this symbolic economy, the sheep and the goat signify weakness and defeat, whereas the **ram** represents strength, power and heroic manliness. Together with the wild goat, the ram at times served as a dynastic badge.⁹⁶ In Turkish carpet and kilim weaving, the **ram's horn** motif associated in real life with masculinity figures as a sign of fertility, heroism, strength and virility.⁹⁷

Within Islamic tradition, the sheep and ram likewise bear specific symbolic roles. In the Qur'ân, when Abraham consented, as an act of obedience, to sacrifice his son Ishmael, a **ram** was sent in Ishmael's stead.⁹⁸ The **sheep**, as a symbol of devotedness and salvific power, also represents harmlessness,⁹⁹ innocence,¹⁰⁰ calm, tranquility, peace, abundance and prosperity; the **ram**, by contrast, signifies sovereignty, might, valor, sacrifice and death.¹⁰¹ In classical Turkish poetry, the lover is likened to a **ram** offered up for the beloved, while the beloved's eyebrows are compared by color to a **black ram**.¹⁰² The expression “**koçbaşı**” (ram's head) functions as a symbol of vigor, health and well-being.¹⁰³

Classical Turkish poetry, along with Islamic belief, draws heavily on elements of national culture. In the verse chronicles, the **ram** motif appears in battle imagery as a symbol of strength and masculinity distilled from Turkic culture. An original image rooted in this cultural reservoir casts the clash of the two armies at Çaldıran as the **head-butting of two rams** representing power and might. By the same token, the helplessness of the Safavid troops before the Ottoman army is

⁹² Yıldız, “Türk Halk Anlatılarında Hayvan Motifleri,” 143–44.

⁹³ Qur'ân, Yûsuf 12:13–14, 17.

⁹⁴ Ertap, “Divan Şiirinde Hayvan Motifi,” 161.

⁹⁵ Kılıç, “Klasik Türk Şiirinde Hayvanlar,” 1324.

⁹⁶ Yaşar Çoruhlu, *Türk Mitolojisinin Ana Hatları* (İstanbul: Kabalıcı, 2000), 150.

⁹⁷ Tülin Karadağ Eldener, *Yeni Dokunan Dekoratif Kilimler* (Eskişehir: Anadolu Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011), 38.

⁹⁸ Qur'ân, al-Şâffât 37:102–7.

⁹⁹ Ayşe Yılmaz, “Hayretî Divânî'nda Hayvanların Şiir Estetiğine Katkısı,” *Divan Edebiyatı Araştırmaları Dergisi* 31 (2023): 613–14.

¹⁰⁰ Yıldız, “Türk Halk Anlatılarında Hayvan Motifleri,” 121.

¹⁰¹ Çoruhlu, *Türk Mitolojisinin Ana Hatları*, 154.

¹⁰² Kılıç, “Klasik Türk Şiirinde Hayvanlar,” 1073–79.

¹⁰³ Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, vol. 2 (İstanbul: Millî Eğitim Basımevi, 1983), 286.

depicted through the contrast between the **sheep's** calm impotence and the **wolf's** ferocity and savagery.

Salup birbirine at iki leşger

İrüp koç gibi tokuşdı beraber (Hadîdî/5642)

Koyunun gelesini gördi san kurd

Ki itdi irdüğünün kellesin hurd (Mahremî/1355)

Pig (Boar)

In Hellenic mythology, the wild boar is portrayed as a powerful, wrathful and dangerous quarry; to slay it given its strength and formidable defense signals the hunter's or hero's superior prowess. In this vein, the boar functions as a metaphor for war's frenzied and ungovernable nature.¹⁰⁴ In Altai-Yakut mythology, Erlik, emulating Ülgen's creation of the sheep, creates the pig; accordingly, the pig bears a negative valence in mythic and religious contexts and its flesh is taboo. Such narratives are counted among the elements that shaped the ethical and religious values of Turkic mythology.¹⁰⁵

Islamic law, aiming to protect the human being from material and spiritual harm, lays down rules for nourishment as well. It forbids what is foul and injurious and permits what is clean, good and beneficial (al-Baqara 2:168, 172; al-A'râf 7:157; al-Mu'minûn 23:51). The pig (*khanzîr*) is explicitly classed among the impure and harmful and its flesh is declared unlawful: "God has only forbidden you carrion, blood, the flesh of swine and that over which any name other than God's has been invoked" (al-Baqara 2:173; al-Mâ'ida 5:3; al-An'âm 6:145; al-Nahl 16:115).¹⁰⁶

In classical Turkish poetry, "pig" is very largely a derogatory epithet applied to the **rival** (*rakîb*). The poet-lover freely marshals the harshest terms for the rival alongside "donkey," "dog/cur," and "devil," "pig" appears as both noun and epithet.¹⁰⁷ In depictions of the Battle of Çaldıran, the strongly negative associations of the pig deriving largely from confessional imaginaries are deployed as a pejorative device: the Safavid soldiery's massed, herd-like assaults and coordinated movement are cast through porcine imagery.

Üşerler her taraftan çok hanâzır

Şehîd oldu orada ol iki şîr (Hadîdî/5639)

Dog

In certain mythologies, the dog functions as a symbol of evil; in creation legends it appears as a creature corrupted by the devil's deceit.¹⁰⁸ Positively, the dog is associated with loyalty; negatively, with opportunism and faithlessness.¹⁰⁹ As a trope for a contemptible, ill-intentioned foe, the dog serves as a vehicle of simile and invective.¹¹⁰ By contrast, Qıtmîr renowned for his fidelity to the Companions of the Cave (Ashâb al-Kahf) is celebrated as an animal promised Paradise and emblematic of faith and loyalty.¹¹¹ In classical Turkish poetry, the lover, for his devotion, is cast as "the dog at the beloved's gate," whereas the zâhid (ascetic), the disciple, the

¹⁰⁴ Nuriye Külahlı and Hüseyin Üreten, "Hellen Mitolojisi ve Ritiüllerinde Domuz," *Cihannüma Tarih ve Coğrafya Araştırmaları Dergisi* 11, no. 1 (2025): 74.

¹⁰⁵ İbrahim Dilek, *Resimli Türk Mitoloji Sözlüğü: Altay/Yakut* (Ankara: Grafiker Yayınları, 2014), 94.

¹⁰⁶ Asaf Ataseven and Mehmet Şener, "Domuz," in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 9 (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1994), 507.

¹⁰⁷ Canım, *Divan Edebiyatının Kaynakları*, 485.

¹⁰⁸ Yıldız, "Türk Halk Anlatılarında Hayvan Motifleri," 132.

¹⁰⁹ Yılmaz, "Hayretî Divânı'nda Hayvanların Şiir Estetiğine Katkısı," 614.

¹¹⁰ Kılıç, "Klasik Türk Şiirinde Hayvanlar," 1177.

¹¹¹ Canım, *Divan Edebiyatının Kaynakları*, 244.

rival and the enemy are likened to a dog for various negative traits. In Sufi writings, the lower self (*nafs*) is likewise compared to a dog.¹¹² In accounts of the Battle of Çaldıran, Shah Ismail is denigrated in the harshest terms as a dog harmful to the Muslim populace.

Zarardur âmme-i İslâm'a ol kelb

Înâyet kılsa Hak nâmın kılâm selb (Îsâ/2084)

Bird

In the narratives of the Battle of Çaldıran, the **bird** functions as a metaphorical device for gauging the war's scale. The vast number and expanse of the Ottoman troops are expressed through the conceit that the "bird of thought" would require a thousand years to reach their bounds. Likewise, death is cast in avian tropes *the soul-bird flying from its cage, the bird of death* by which the stark realities of warfare are clothed in metaphor. The Ottomans' superiority over the Safavid forces and their deployment of weapons such as cannon and muskets are further articulated by allusion to the Qur'anic episode of the **Abâbil** birds pelting the elephants with stones.¹¹³

İrişmiş ser-had-i tûlına sad sâl

Uçarsa murg-ı fikr açup per ü bâl (Mahremî/1211)

Ser-i a'dâya çün tayr[en] ebâbil

Revân yağdırdılar ahcâr-ı siccîl (Mahremî/1372)

Helâk eyler birisi yüz Kızılbaş

İner fil üzre san siccîlden taş (Şîrî/vr.240b/7)

Kimi nîzeyle tenden bâb ider bâz

Kafesden kılmağa cân mürğü pervâz (Hadîdî/5645)

Perr ü bâl açdı hadeng-i cân-sitân

Sanki murgân-ı ecel oldı ayân (Cevrî/2129)

Vulture, Owl

From antiquity to the present, the vulture has been regarded as an ill-omened bird¹¹⁴ that portends death; in the *Dîvânü Lügati't-Türk*, a vulture's shriek directed at someone's face is taken as a harbinger of that person's demise.¹¹⁵ The vulture's negative valence is also encoded in idiom: the phrase "to swarm like vultures" connotes freeloading and greed.¹¹⁶ In classical Turkish poetry, the vulture typically figures with associations of carrion-eating, ill-omen, insatiability, opportunism and baseness. The world is likened to a carcass and to the vulture that feeds upon it while the lower self's (*nafs*) voracity is compared to the vulture's insatiable appetite for carrion. The image also marks, pejoratively, such figures as the aged and opportunistic shaykh, the pietist (*sofu*) and even "reason." In contrast to the exalted beloved often likened to the *humâ* the rival, for his lowness, is a worthless vulture.¹¹⁷

¹¹² Kılıç, "Klasik Türk Şiirinde Hayvanlar," 1153-1179.

¹¹³ Mustafa Çağrı, "Fil Süresi," in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 13 (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1996), 69–70.

¹¹⁴ Gezgin, *Hayvan Mitosları*, 12.

¹¹⁵ Kaşgarlı Mahmud, *Dîvânü Lügati't-Türk*, trans. Seçkin Erdi and Serap Tuğba Yurtsever (Istanbul: Kocabalı, 2005), 641.

¹¹⁶ Lütfullah Sami Akalın, *Türk Folklorunda Kuşlar* (Ankara: Ersa Matbaası, 1993), 71.

¹¹⁷ Kılıç, "Klasik Türk Şiirinde Hayvanlar," 47-51.

In the Çaldıran narratives of the verse chronicles, Shah Ismail is disparaged through the comparison to an ill-omened vulture lying in wait at the hunting ground, envisioned as ready at any moment to swoop upon carrion. The place he inhabits is likened to an owl's haunt, thereby reinforcing the connotation of ill-omen.¹¹⁸

Kılıban saydgâh ol kerkes-i şûm

İmâretgahın itdi menzil-i bûm (Şîrî/vr.232b/8)

Falcon/Hawk

The hawk holds significant symbolic value in Turkish history; the Bozok branch forebears of the Ottomans employed the hawk as an emblem.¹¹⁹ Falcons and hawks, birds used in royal hunting expeditions, symbolize the ruler's martial prowess and nobility.¹²⁰ In accounts of the Battle of Çaldıran, the Ottoman assault on the Safavid army is likened to a falcon plunging into a flock of geese and striking at the enemy's very heart. The Ottomans' rapid deployment across the field is likewise compared to a flight of falcons.

Veyâ alay-ı kaza bâz girdi

Adû kalbine çün şeh-bâz irdi (Mahremî/1355-1356)

Tolup şeh-bâz-ıla ol kişver ü bûm

Yasandı leşker-i şahinşeh-i Rûm (Mahremî/1296)

Peacock

Known in Turkish culture as the "Tanrı kuşu," alakuş, or "gelin kuşu," the peacock distinguished from other birds by its crest and the vivid colors of its wings and tail has been regarded, for its beauty, as a bird of Paradise. In divan poetry it functions as a symbol of chastity, color, ostentation, magnificence, prestige and pride.¹²¹ In the verse chronicles, the Safavid army is likened to the peacock, in allusion to the colorful attire and appearance it displayed at the Battle of Çaldıran.

Alayın düzdi gûyâ perr-i tâvus

Çalındı tabl u surnâ-y-ıla hem kûs (Şîrî/vr.238b/2)

Fox

Stealth, perfidy, duplicity, deceit, weakness and helplessness before the hunter are rendered through the symbol of the fox; persons displaying such traits are likened to it.¹²² Among the Altai and Yakut, the fox also appears as an ancestral emblem and in Turkic belief it is at times regarded as a protective spirit. In China the fox signifies good fortune, longevity and cunning; among the Turks it emblemizes guile and craftiness.¹²³ In classical Turkish poetry, deceitful and wily figures are compared to the fox; when the *memdûh* is likened to a lion, the enemy is cast as the fox that stands against him. The heavens/fate (felek) and the world (dünya), for their deceptiveness, are likewise likened to the fox, as are such negatively coded types as the *zâhid* (ascetic), the pietist and the rival.¹²⁴ In the Çaldıran narratives, Ustacalu (d. 1514) one of Shah Ismail's foremost

¹¹⁸ Since early Turkish times there has been a settled view that it is ill-omened; in some regions it is called 'the devil's bird'. Şentürk, *Osmanlı Şiiri Kılavuzu*, vol. 2, 121.

¹¹⁹ Nevzat Kösoğlu, *Türk Dünyası Tarihi* (Istanbul: Ötüken, 1991), 117.

¹²⁰ Çoruhlu, *Türk Sanatında Hayvan Sembolizmi*, 64.

¹²¹ Ömür Ceylan, "Tavus," in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 40 (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2011), 184.

¹²² Oğuz Duman, "Türk Dünyası Destanlarında Hayvan Sembolizmi" (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2024), 150.

¹²³ Çoruhlu, *Türk Mitolojisinin ABC'si*, 184.

¹²⁴ Kılıç, "Klasik Türk Şiirinde Hayvanlar," 1892.

commanders who enters the fray with the bearing of a lion, is depicted by the battle's end, before Sinan Pasha (d. 517), as reduced to the condition of a lame fox:

Egerçi kim girür şîrâne cenge
Velî âhir döner rubâh-ı leng (Şîrî/vr.240a/7)

Elephant

In classical Turkish poetry, the elephant functions befitting its physical traits as a symbol of majesty and power.¹²⁵ In the Qur'ân, it is recounted that Abrahah advanced with elephants to demolish the Ka'ba and that the Abâbîl birds defeated the elephants and Abrahah's army by pelting them with stones of sikkîl.¹²⁶ In earlier periods, within a warfare paradigm grounded in bodily force, the elephant served as a salient term of comparison on account of its size, weight and impact; above all, the sheer magnitude of its bulk, which rendered it virtually unassailable, signified overwhelming superiority before the enemy. Poets at times forge an allusive link between the elephants in Sûrat al-Fîl and the annihilation of Shah Ismail's army by the Ottomans: the Abâbîl stand for the Ottoman host, whereas the elephants are likened to Shah Ismail's troops. In the same vein, the maces employed in battle are compared to elephants by virtue of their heft:

Salup elde girân-ser gürz çün fil
Ururlar na'ra mânend-i Sirâfil (Mahremî/1249)
Helâk eyler birisi yüz Kızılbaş
İner fil üzre san siccîlden taş (Şîrî/vr.240b/7)

Locusts, Ants and Fish

In classical Turkish poetry, numerical multitude is often conveyed through the simile of the locust;¹²⁷ in battle scenes, soldiers are likened to locusts and conversely locusts are imagined as troops mustering for war.¹²⁸ The designation cündullâh (*junûd Allâh*, "hosts of God") is among the names applied to creatures that move in swarms, such as birds and locusts.¹²⁹ Ants, for their orderly mass movement, are likewise compared to soldiers.¹³⁰

Within older modes of warfare, large and well-ordered armies were a principal condition of superiority; sheer numbers inflicted both material and psychological damage on the foe. In the verse chronicles, the Ottomans' numerical preponderance and superiority of order over the Safavid forces at Çaldıran are rendered through the imagery of locusts, ants and fish:

Azabdan nice bin cünd-i piyâde
Sanasın leşker-i mûr u cerâde (Mahremî/1236)
Yüridi mûr u melâh tek leşkeri
Hâssa-i bî-hadd ü ad yeniçeri (Cevrî/2244)
Azabdan nice bin cünd-i piyâde
Sanasın leşker-i mûr u cerâde (Mahremî/1236)

¹²⁵ Ahmet Atilla Şentürk, *Osmanlı Şiiri Kılavuzu*, vol. 4 (Istanbul: OSEDAM, 2020), 451.

¹²⁶ Şentürk, *Osmanlı Şiiri Kılavuzu*, vol. 4, 5.

¹²⁷ Şentürk, *Osmanlı Şiiri Kılavuzu*, vol. 2, 491.

¹²⁸ Kılıç, "Klasik Türk Şiirinde Hayvanlar," 516.

¹²⁹ Süleyman Uludağ, "Cündullah," in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 8 (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1993), 118.

¹³⁰ Boria Sax, *The Mythical Zoo* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2001), quoted in Mustafa Kılıç, "Klasik Türk Şiirinde Hayvanlar," 913.

Subaşı, mîr-i alem sâir sipâhî

Sayılmaya sayile mûr u mâhî (Hadîdî/5597)

Moth

The moth, emblem of the sincere lover who surrenders his life in silence, is likened to the dervish who annihilates the self in divine love. The tale of the candle and the moth functions both as a conventional poetic conceit and as an independent subject in *Şem ü Pervâne* masnavis.¹³¹ In the Battle of Çaldıran, the self-immersion in the “fire of war” by Malkoçoğlu Tur Ali Bey and his brother Ali Bey, who served in the Ottoman vanguard, is likened to the moth burning itself in the candle’s flame:

Cüvân-ı nev bular dîvâne gibi

Düşerler âteşe pervâne gibi (Hadîdî/5632)

6. Auditory Imagery and Martial Music

Across ancient peoples, musical instruments were employed in warfare to intimidate the enemy. Aristotle (384–322 BCE), in the *Politics*, remarks on the adverse psychological effects that martial instruments can exert on opposing forces. The Greeks used trumpets and lutes; Alexander the Great deployed drums and loud-sounding trumpets; Indians and Parthians favored great drums; the Arabs, in the Jâhiliyya and thereafter at Badr and Uḥud, beat the daf to the accompaniment of martial verse; under the ‘Abbāsids and in al-Andalus, the military band took shape; the Fâtîmids used drums; and among the Turks, drums and the great kettledrum (kös) were integral to war. In the Anatolian Seljuk realm, alongside the diploma of rank and the banner, the drum was granted by sultans to princes (*melik*) and emirs as an emblem of sovereignty and delegated authority. This practice was widespread in all pre-Islamic Turkic states. The drum, inseparably paired with the flag, came to symbolize the state; beating the drum beneath the banner is an ancient Turkic custom. As an extension of this tradition, the Ottomans employed the mehter (janissary band) in war.¹³²

The kös which regulated the army’s movements, roused the troops, and, with a report likened to cannon fire, struck fear into the foe was among the insignia of kingship. In peacetime it was sounded at diplomatic receptions, at the birth, circumcision and marriage ceremonies of princes and on feast days and nights. The tradition continued under the Ottomans: the kös entered the mehter ensemble and, in wartime, was entrusted to commanders.¹³³ Also known as küvrüḡ,¹³⁴ kūs, köbürge and kūs-ı Hâkânî, the kös noted for demoralizing the enemy was the mehter’s most potent instrument in both effect and expression.¹³⁵ Drums bore different names according to context: the drum beaten at a fortress’s capture was the tabl-ı beşâret (“drum of glad tidings”); the drum sounded at night in wartime to keep the troops together was the tabl-ı ‘asâyîş (“drum of order”); the drum that commenced battle was the ceng tabl(ı) (“war drum”), also called the saf tablı (“rank drum”).¹³⁶ Among the mehter’s principal instruments, the “zurna” also called “surnā” or “surnāy”¹³⁷ was played with the drum and “nekäre”; its deeper-voiced form was the “kaba

¹³¹ Pala, *Ansiklopedik Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü*, 383.

¹³² For military music and instruments, see Nuri Özcan, “Mehter,” in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 28 (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2003), 545; Haşmet Altınölçek, “Askeri Müsiki Geleneği ve Mehterhânenin Bir Kurum Olarak Yerleşme Süreci,” in *Osmanlı Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 10 (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 1999), 751–52.

¹³³ Haydar Sanal, “Kös,” in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 26 (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2002), 271.

¹³⁴ For the physical characteristics of the kös (large kettledrum), see Yılmaz Yılmaz Öztuna, *Büyük Türk Musikisi Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1990), 464.

¹³⁵ Nejat Eralp, “Osmanlı’da Mehter,” in *Osmanlı Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 10 (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 1999), 745–47.

¹³⁶ Eralp, “Osmanlı’da Mehter,” 746–47.

¹³⁷ Eralp, “Osmanlı’da Mehter,” 745.

zurna” and its high-pitched, piercing form the “cura zurna”.¹³⁸ Owing to its sharp, powerful timbre, the zurna was used expressly to unnerve enemy soldiers.¹³⁹

The boru (trumpet) attested in older Turkish as borı and borgıy and in Arabic as nefır¹⁴⁰ was, according to tradition, invented by Alp Arslan and was known in the twelfth century as the nây-ı Türkî; it too had a place in the Ottoman mehter.¹⁴¹ The kürrenây/kerrenây, made from a bronze or silver tube and akin in timbre to a low zurna or clarinet, was said (by Evliyâ Çelebi in the *Seyahatnâme*) to resemble a donkey’s bray and to have been brought from Revan by Murad IV; it was sounded both in mehter-houses and Mevlevî lodges.¹⁴² With a bell curved like the end of a nefır, this instrument served to herald the sultan’s dominion, splendor and might.¹⁴³ The nefır itself essentially a simple, long trumpet was reportedly the longest of the wind instruments and, lacking finger holes, difficult to play. In Ottoman campaigns the nefır-i rihlet/irtihâl (the “departure trumpet”) was sounded; a hostile attack upon a town or a call to arms for men was publicly announced by the nefır. Itinerant dervishes carried “dervish trumpets” (also called yuf borusu) at their belts or on their chests, which they blew upon arriving at a lodging place or to ward off predatory animals on the road.¹⁴⁴

In Turkish music, a very old instrument called the derâ also referred to as çeng and zenç produces greater volume the more forcefully it is struck.¹⁴⁵ In scenes depicting the Battle of Çaldıran, sound is conspicuously foregrounded: soldiers’ cries, horses’ neighs, the clamor of weapons, shouts of assault and the groans and laments of the wounded constitute the natural soundscape of war. Alongside these natural sounds, martial instruments at Çaldıran served to initiate battle, sap the enemy’s morale and establish psychological superiority. The sounding of tabl, kûs, surnâ, kerrenây, nakır, nefır, boru and derây their noise filling East and West, rising to the heavens and “deafening the ear of the firmament” is invoked to underscore these functions of military music in the conduct of war:

Sadâya geldi tabl u kûs ol dem

Figâna geldi surnâ zîr ile bam (Şîrî/vr.238a/3)

Sanasın bahr idi her bir alayı

Çalarlardı kamusı kürrenâyı (Şîrî/vr.236a/9)

Arşa irdi savt-ı surnâ vü nakır

Tutdı dünyâyı sedâ-yı dâr u gîr (Cevrî/1920)

Ol gürûh içinde gûn-â-gûn alem

Savt-ı surnâ vü nefır ü zîr ü bem (Cevrî/1967)

Seherden kim çalındı kûs-i harbî

Sadâ-yı savtı tutdı şark u garbı (Hadîdî/2982, 5621)

Arşa irdi boru surnânın demi

¹³⁸ Ayşe Aysun Yalçır, “Askeri müzik topluluğu mehter, geleneksel kıyafet ve müzik enstrümanlarının plastik açıdan seramik sanat objelerine dönüşümü” (Master’s thesis, Dokuz Eylül University, 2009), 28.

¹³⁹ Erhan Tekin, “Zurna,” in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 44 (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2013), 514.

¹⁴⁰ Haydar Sanal, *Mehter Musikisi: Bestekâr Mehterler—Mehter Havaları* (Istanbul: MEB, 1964), 69.

¹⁴¹ Eralp, “Osmanlı’da Mehter,” 746.

¹⁴² Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, vol. 2, 243.

¹⁴³ Sevda Özden, “Şeyh Galip Divanı’nda Musiki,” in *Mevlevilik, Mevlânâ ve Şeyh Gâlib Üzerine İncelemeler*, ed. Mücahit Kaçar et al. (Istanbul: İstanbul University Press, 2022), 392.

¹⁴⁴ Fikret Karakaya, “Nefır,” in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 32 (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2006), 525–26.

¹⁴⁵ Eralp, “Osmanlı’da Mehter,” 747.

Kerre-nây âvâzı basdı âlemi (Şükrî/2375)

Sâğ u solın düzdi şâh-ı tîre-rây

Çarha çıkdı toz avâz-ı derây (Şükrî/2380)

The **ceng-i harbî** is a brisk **usûl** (rhythmic cycle) frequently employed in **mehter** music, especially in pieces performed during the charge.¹⁴⁶ That this *style* was also sounded at the Battle of Çaldıran is indicated by the following couplet:

Çalınup her taraftan çeng-i harbî

Sadâ-yı kûs tutdı şark u garbı (Mahremî/1295)

In the verse chronicles, the natural sounds of battle are idealized through the art of hyperbole. The din of combat is likened to Isrâfîl's trumpet and said to be as fierce as lightning; the doomsday-like peals of the cannon that batter the fortress walls, shaking earth and sky, are described as so thunderous as to deafen the very ear of thunder:

Tüfenk atıldı vü toplar turâkı

Ker itdi Şâm ile Mısr'ı Irâk'ı (Îsâ/2134)

Urdu gûyâ savt-ı İsrâfîl dem

Tutdı kûh u deşti gün-â-gün alem (Cevrî/1921)

Sadâsı kulağın ra'dun ider ker

Kıyâmetler kopar yir ü gök ditrer (Hadîdî/5669)

Sanasın ra'd idi savt-ı dilîrân

Veyâhud berkidi şimşîr-i şîrân (Hadîdî/5643)

Pür oldı tâs-ı gerdûn ol sadâdan

Felek gûşı ker oldı hûy u hûdan (Şîrî/vr.238a/4)

7. The Depiction of the War through Nature and Supernatural Beings

In the verse chronicles, the tableau-like staging of the Battle of Çaldıran within a martial narrative draws extensively on descriptions of nature. Like painters, the authors render the battle through terrestrial elements sea, flood, mountain, plain and flora as well as through celestial and meteorological phenomena such as hail, rain, cloud, lightning, thunder, the rainbow and the sun.

Sea, Ocean, Flood

In classical Turkish poetry, the sea used synonymously with *bahr*, *bihâr*, *Kulzüm*, *ummân*, *deryâ*, *yemm* and *muhît* is invoked with associations of magnitude, breadth, infinity, depth and plenitude. Endowed with the capacities to swell, overflow and annihilate, the sea is imagined, in its engulfing power, as boundless and shoreless.¹⁴⁷ In the verse chronicles, similes of the flood, sea and ocean are frequently mobilized along varied axes of comparison to convey the magnitude of the armies and the ferocity of the fighting. The armies' vastness appears as a "boundless sea" (*bahr-ı bî-kerân*); the terror of the host and of the battle as a "flood of tribulation" (*belâ seli*), a "flood of blood" (*seyl-i hûn*), a "sea of blood" (*bahr-ı hûn*, *kan deryâsı*) and "drowning in blood"

¹⁴⁶ İsmail Hakkı Özkan, "Ceng-i Harbî," in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 7 (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1993), 396.

¹⁴⁷ Pala, *Ansiklopedik Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü*, 121.

(*garka-i kan*); the cataclysm itself is likened to Noah's Flood; and the serried ranks of armed men are envisioned as a "sea of steel" (*deryâ-yı pûlâd*).

Cûşa geldi iki bahr-ı bî-kerân
Birbiriyle eylediler iktirân (Cevrî/2126)
Görüp ol hây u hûyî surh-serler
Gelürler cûşa çün deryâ-yı ahder (Mahremî/1337)
Bürîde dest ü sâid garka-i kan
Nite kim bahr-ı hûnda şâh-ı mercân (Mahremî/1331)
Sanasın Nûh Tûfânı belürdi
Ki kan deryâsı dehri seyle viridi (Şîrî/vr.239b/10)
Seyl-i hûnun her taraf oldu revân
Kana gark olmuşdı pîr ü cevân (Fîrâkî/178)
O yanadan Şâh İsmâîl-i bî-dâd
Görür kim irdi bir deryâ-yı pûlâd (Şîrî/vr.238a/15)

The army's maneuvers and assaults are rendered through the imagery of a wavy sea and flowing waters: the Ottoman host's advance upon the Safavid troops is likened to the surging of the sea and the current of a river:

Bulut gibi çeriler bağladı fevc
Urur deryâ gibi her yanadan mevc (Îsâ/2094)
Yüridi pes Acem şâhına karşı
Bile yiniçeri gûyâ akar su (Şîrî/vr.240a/13)

In some passages, the Ottoman host is likened to the Sea of Rûm (*deryâ-yı Rûm*), while the Safavid army is compared to the Red Sea (*Kulzüm*). By identifying "sea" with "army/soldier" and, further, by playing on the affinity between Kızılbaşlık ("Qizilbash" identity) and Kızıldeniz ("Red Sea"), poets fashion a vividly pictorial scene through deliberate wordplay:

Cûşa geldi iki deryâ lâ-muhâl
Kulzüm ü Ummân'a teng oldu mecâl (Şükrî/2687)
Biri Kulzüm birisi deryâ-yı Rûm
Belâ sili gibi yüksekden iner (Hadîdî/5623)
Sanasın cûş ider deryâ-yı ummân
Acem milkini gark itmeğe yeksân (Îsâ/2093)

Mountain

In classical Turkish poetry, the mountain associated with height, sublimity and magnitude¹⁴⁸ functions in the verse chronicles as a natural emblem of awe and grandeur in depictions of the Battle of Çaldıran. The majesty and sheer number of Sultan Selim and the armored Ottoman soldiers on horseback are likened to a mountain; the slain are envisioned as a mountain-like heap, underscoring the battle's ferocity. The cannonballs discharged by the

¹⁴⁸ Pala, *Ansiklopedik Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü*, 290.

Ottomans are compared to mountains for their size and crushing force. By the same token, it is imagined that even Iran's Alborz range could not withstand the blows of the maces wielded by Ottoman troops an image that accentuates their strength and might:

*Bu hemân bir **kûhdur** ben **berg-i kâh**
Ben gedâ-yı nâ-tüvân bu pâdişâh (Cevrî/2080)
Semend üzre yelân-ı âhenîn-ten
Turur san **kûh** üzre **kûh-ı âhen** (Hadîdî/5643)
İki **kûh-ı muazzam** iki deryâ
Karışup irdi şark u garba gavgâ (Mahremî/1311)
At u âdem ölüsinden rezm-gâh
Kûhlar olmuşdı bulunmazdı râh (Firâkî/177)
Tarkalardan pâre pâre düşdi **kûh**
Âleme odlar bırakdı ol gürûh (Şükrî/2528)
Kime kim Tur Ali Beg ursa bir **gürz**
Tağıdurdu eger olursa **Elbürz** (Hadîdî/5636)*

Plain

Synonymous with “deşt” and “şahrâ”, the plain functions in the verse chronicles as a natural element for articulating dominion and ferocity. Through hyperbolic imagery, the terror of war is rendered in scenes where the Ottoman army's sway is said to cover both mountain and plain, where the blood spilled in battle turns the plain rose-hued and where the fallen fill the plain:

*Tutdı **kûh** u **deşti** gûnâ-gûn alem
Sûra zâhir urdı İsrâfîl dem (Şükrî/2377)
Sarf-ı makdûr eyleyüp ceng itdiler
Kan-ıla **sahrâyı gül-reng** itdiler (Cevrî/2166)
Küştelerden püşteler oldı bedîd
Tutdı **sahrâyı** ser ü pâ-yı şehîd (Cevrî/2200)
Berk-i şemşîr itdi yer yer iştiâl
Döndi tûfângâha **sahrâ-yı kîtâl** (Cevrî/2128)*

Natural Phenomena

In depicting the Battle of Çaldıran and the weaponry employed therein, the verse chronicles draw on a wide array of analogies to natural forces. The pairings of tenor and vehicle include: hail : bullet; lightning and storm-cloud : musket; rainbow : bow; rain : arrows; spring cloud : battle-dust; lightning and the withering wind (*şarşar*) : the Ottoman army; autumn leaf : the Safavid army; rain : blood; cloud : death. To register the battle's intensity and impact, these comparisons mobilize the actual properties of nature the violence of hail, the searing of lightning, the abundance of rain, the occlusion of spring clouds, the lightness of autumn leaves, the destructiveness of the gale thereby summoning in the mind a terrifying, quasi-pastoral tableau of war.

*Adûya **mühre** yağdurur ser-â-ser*

- Sanâsın gökyüzünden tolu yağar* (Şîrî/vr.240b/6)
Sanasın gerd idi ebr-i bahârân
Ki ra'd idi tüfeng ü tîr bârân (Şîrî/vr.239b/12)
Yağdurur tüfek belâ tegeklerin
Dökeridi yire meydân erlerin (Fîrâkî/174)
Kâmet-i a'dâyı hâm kıldı kemân
Toldı san kavs-i kuzahla âsumân (Cevrî/2130)
Sordı Rûmî'den bu cem'i şâh-ı şark
Kim nedür bu ra'd u bu rahşende berk (Cevrî/1941)
Kızılbaş'ı kara topırağa döker
Ki san berg-i hazânı bâd-ı sarsar (Hadîdî/5664)
Subhdan tâ asr peygâr itdiler
Âdem için ebri hûn-bâr iddiler (Şükrî/2761)
Ecel ebri akıtmış âb-ı hûnîn
Revân olmuş akar seylâb-ı hûnîn (Mahremî/1324)
Tutulmuş gün sehâb-ı lâlegûndan
Tekergi âhen ü bârânı hûndan (Mahremî/1323)
Kılıçlar ellerinde gûyîyâ berk
Şuândan tolu hem garb u hem şark (Mahremî/1246)
Kazâ yağmurları ebr-i tüfekden
Olur seylâb iner gibi felekden (Mahremî/1373)
İşbu heybetden güneş tutdı nikâb
Önüme sedd itdi yir tozın hicâb (Fîrâkî/131)
Görünmez zerre denlü şems-i rahşân
Bulut gibi ki ideler tîr-bârân (Hadîdî/5596)

Plants and Flowers

In depictions of the Battle of Çaldıran, plants and flowers frequently serve as the vehicle of visual comparison. The principal pairings run as follows: tulip : Qizilbash, red boot, Shah Ismail, spearhead (*süngü*); tulip field (*lâlezâr*) : the Çaldıran plain; reed : spear (*mızrak*); spring : war; rose : arrow, blood, cap (*börk*); garden : body; willow, cypress, redbud (*erguvan*) : banner. In these similes, the tulip, by virtue of its red hue, is associated with blood, Qizilbash identity and elements of Ottoman martial attire. The Çaldıran plain dyed in blood is imagined as a tulip field. The spears cast across the field turn the battlefield into a reed-bed. War itself evokes spring, as bloodied spearheads summon visions of tulip beds. Arrows become rose saplings planted in the garden of the body. The azabs of the Ottoman host, with their crimson caps, are likened to a tulip garden. With their red headgear, Shah Ismail's troops render the Çaldıran plain a springtime tulip field. The Safavid banners are described through the green of willow and cypress and the crimson of the redbud. The blood spilled in battle turns everything the color of roses:

Lâle-i hamrâ bigi hep **sürh-pûş**
Sanasın deryâ-yı hündür itdi cûş (Cevrî/1966)
Nîzeden oldu **neyistân** ol fezâ
Ortaya girdi rızâ-y-içün kazâ (Şükrî/2389)
O heycâ benzer-idi **nev-bahâra**
Ki her kanlu sünüler **lâlezâra** (Şîrî/vr.239b/13)
Hadeng-i ceng irüp her derdmende
Nihâl-i gül diker bâğ-ı bedende (Mahremî/1320)
On iki bin Azeb itsen nazâra
Kızıl borkile **benzer lâle-zâra** (Hadîdî/5594)
Kırmızı tâc-ıla mânend-i **bahâr**
Çalduran sahrâsın itdi **lâlezâr** (Cevrî/1924)
Kırmızı tâc-ıla elvân-ı alem
Bîd ü serv ü ergavân idi behem (Şükrî/2383)
Çün kızıl tâcıyla çıkdı ata Şâh
Lâle dahı şâh için çekdi sipâh (Şükrî/2385)
Her dil-âver neng için ceng eyledi
Şâh önin kan-ıla **gül-reng** eyledi (Şükrî/2583)

Fire and Smoke

As a literal element of warfare, fire figures in numerous similes as a vehicle for representing devastation. In these descriptions, cannon and muskets rain down a flood of fire; spears flash like lightning; sparks spray from weapons; and the severed heads fixed to spearpoints, their bloodied teeth bared, stand like a fire with mouth agape atop a tree. Such images render the physical destructiveness and terror of battle through the trope of fire:

Nice seylâb-ı **ateş** yağdururdu
Aceb **âteş** yire leş yağdururdu (Mahremî/1374)
Harbelerden **yıldırım** rahşân idi
Her yarak ol gün **şerâr-efşân** idi (Şükrî/2529)
Sinân üzre ser u dendân-ı hûn-bâr
Dehen açmış şecer üstinde san **nâr** (Mahremî/1321)

The psychological and sociological dimensions of the Battle of Çaldıran are rendered through the imagery of fire. With the dispersal of his army, Shah Ismail is said to have flushed like fire and blackened like smoke. The Safavid host is likened to a live ember that casts the fire of *fitna* and subversion:

Dili pür-cûş olup çün humm-ı şîre
Çü **âteş** tünd ü çün **dûd** oldu tîre (Mahremî/1306)
Sanasın her biri mânend-i **ahker**

Kim andan **âteş-i şer** durmaz artar (Şirî/vr.238b/4)

Supernatural Creatures

In the depictions of the armies, supernatural entities, no less than natural elements, serve as vehicles of comparison. The Janissaries are portrayed as a host before which even the armies of the jinn take fright; brandishing heavy maces and issuing elephantine roars, they evoke the image of İsrâfîl sounding the trumpet:

On iki bin Yeniçeri güzîde

*Görüp **Cin** leşgeri olur remîde* (Hadîdî/5589)

Salup elde girân-ser güz çün fil

*Ururlar na'ra mânend-i **Sirâfil*** (Mahremî/1249)

8. Social Life

Although the milieu of the classical Ottoman poet was relatively circumscribed, the poet treated every facet of social life through richly elaborated imaginings. In the verse chronicles, the Battle of Çaldıran is narrated by means of comparisons drawn from social practices: chess and chovgan (*çevgân*), samâ' (whirling), wedding ritual, seamanship, banquet (*bezm*) and intoxication, among others. Chess is a game constructed upon the constituents of war; in earlier warfare one encounters the very categories named on the board elephant (*fil*, i.e., bishop), horse (knight), infantry (pawn) and king (*şah*). In classical Turkish poetry there are poems composed in chess terminology and even a subgenre known as the satrançnâme.¹⁴⁹ In the verse chronicles, martial elements are articulated through this lexicon: the Battle of Çaldıran is likened to a chessboard, the soldiers to pawns, while the horse/knight, elephant/bishop and king appear as realist correspondences. Defeat is expressed by the phrase “to be mated” (*mat olmak*). The chess term *şah* (king/check) simultaneously evokes Shah Ismail; his loss before Sultan Selim is accordingly cast as being mated:

*Sürüp nat'-ı zemîne **fil** ü hem at*

*Diler birbirin ide anda **şeh mât*** (Mahremî/1346)

***Beydağın** meydâna sürdi meysere*

Düşmenün kalbine girdi yeksere (Cevrî/2162)

*Gördi **şeh** kim oynariken **fil** ü at*

*İşbu bayraklar kılıser **şâh u mât*** (Firâkî/187)

Alayına hemân-dem saldılar at

*Kızılbaş'un ideler **şâhını** mât* (Hadîdî/5633)

In earlier cultures, games constituted a significant element of social life. The verse chronicles refer to **çevgân** (*chovgan*, the Persianate antecedent of polo), a mounted game in which horsemen, using wooden mallets, attempt to drive a goatskin ball into the opposing goal.¹⁵⁰ In certain couplets, the **severed heads** of enemy soldiers are imagined as the *çevgân* ball, while the **swords** are figured as the *çevgân* mallets.

*Kelleler **tôb** eyleyüp **çevgân**-ı tîg*

¹⁴⁹ İlyas Kayaokay, “Divan Şiirinde Satranç Terimleriyle Yazılmış Manzumeler,” *Eski Türk Edebiyatı Araştırmaları Dergisi* 1, no. 1 (2018): 245–68.

¹⁵⁰ Şentürk, *Osmanlı Şiiri Kılavuzu*, vol. 2, 534.

Pâre pâre oldu tenler hem-çü mîg (Firâkî/168)

Samâ¹⁵¹ is an otherworldly, symbolic form of dance, performed by the **Mevlevîs** as a rite of whirling upon one's axis.¹⁵¹ The soldiers' turning in combat with one hand raised is likened to the **semazen**'s posture and their rotations to the semazen's movement. At the same time, it is related that 'Alî fought by turning;¹⁵² the soldiers' whirling on the battlefield thus provides the realist substrate of this comparison:

Yine gavvâs oldu has erenler

Sema-ı rezme ol rakkâs erenler (Mahremî/1345)

In earlier cultural conceptions, marketplaces were among the fundamental elements in the spatial articulation of the city.¹⁵³ The turmoil of the Battle of Çaldıran is likened to the teeming bustle of a marketplace:

Ma'reke başlandı bâzâr oldu tîz

Er ere kavuşdı kopdı rüstahîz (Cevrî/2125)

In classical Turkish poetry, the bride simile is frequently invoked.¹⁵⁴ In accounts of the Battle of Çaldıran, swords drawn from their scabbards are likened to a bride revealing her face from beneath the veil and the battlefield itself is compared to a wedding venue:

Kılıçlar barkaveş çıkdı ufukdan

Arûsı san zuhûr itdi tutukdan (Îsâ/2132)

Another image drawn from social life is the ship's anchor (*lenger*). The term *lenger* an alternative name for the anchor enjoys wide currency in classical Turkish poetry and, by virtue of its form and function, serves as the vehicle in numerous conceits.¹⁵⁵ In depictions of the Battle of Çaldıran, soldiers whose heads and arms have been severed are likened to a ship's anchor in a sea of blood.

Yatur kimisi bî-ser kimi bî-pâ

Düşüp hûn bahrı içre lenger-âsâ (Şîrî/vr.240b/10)

As both a metaphorical and a literal motif drunk from social life, intoxication figures in depictions of the Battle of Çaldıran. In these comparisons, death is likened to a goblet and the movements of soldiers at the moment of dying are compared to drunkards stumbling into one another. By contrast, the statements that the Safavid troops drank wine and became intoxicated prior to the battle constitute a representation of actual drinking and drunkenness:

Kelleler germ oldu içüp câm-ı ecel

Yürüyüben sundılar birbirine el (Firâkî/164)

Hâb-ı gafletinde kamuyı pâ vü dest

Giceden hamr içüp olmuşdı cümle mest (Firâkî/150)

9. Depictions of War Weapons

¹⁵¹ Pala, *Ansiklopedik Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü*, 412.

¹⁵² The epithet *Haydar-ı Kerrâr* ('the ever-charging lion') was given to 'Alî by his mother. See Pala, *Ansiklopedik Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü*, 211.

¹⁵³ "A 'city' is defined as 'a place where the Friday prayer is held and a market is maintained'." İlhan Şahin, "Şehir," in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 38 (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2010), 446.

¹⁵⁴ For further reading, see Pala, *Ansiklopedik Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü*, 38.

¹⁵⁵ Tuncay Tuncel, "Osmanlı Şiirinde Gemicilik Terimleri" (Master's thesis, Istanbul University, 2008), 70.

War and weaponry are enlisted in a range of similes within the framework of the beloved's beauty in classical Turkish poetry.¹⁵⁶ As literal constituents of warfare, weapons are transmuted through various similes and metaphors into literary tableaux in the verse chronicles. Among the implements used at the Battle of Çaldıran, the musket is likened to a cloud for the bullets it rains down; to lightning for the sound it produces; to a dragon for the fire issuing from its "mouth"; and to a serpent for the way its bullets wound and kill soldiers. The bullets themselves are compared, for their density, to a flood; for their shape, to beads; and for their destructive force, to the hailstones of calamity:

Kazâ yağmurları ebr-i tüfekden
Olur seylâb iner gibi felekden (Mahremî/1373)
Tüfek saçdukça od her sû çü ejder
Olurdu surh-serler çün semender (Mahremî/1376)
Tüfengün her birisi mâr çehre
Dutar her birisi ağzında mühre (Şîrî/vr.239a/9)
Sanasın gerd idi ebr-i bahârân
Ki ra'd idi tüfeng ü fir bârân (Şîrî/vr.239b/12)
Yağdurur tüfek belâ tegerklerin
Dökeridi yire meydân erlerin (Firâkî/174)

The spear and sword in respect of form, sound and brilliance are likened to lightning, the thunderbolt and the reed; the multitude of soldiers brandishing spears and swords in the heat of battle is compared to the flow of a river; and the sight of spears heaped upon the lake of blood on the battlefield is likened to a bridge:

Sanasın ra'd idi savt-ı dilîrân
Veyâhud berkidi şimşîr-i şîrân (Hadîdî/5643)
Harbelerden yıldırım rahşân idi
Her yarak ol gün şerâr-efşân idi (Şükrî/2529)
Nîzeden oldu neyistân ol fezâ
Ortaya girdi rızâ-y-içün kazâ (Şükrî/2389)
Subh-dem tâ asr peykâr itdiler
Nîze vü şemşîri cûybâr itdiler (Cevrî/2198)
Kan revân Ceyhûn'a döndi âşikâr
Nîzelerden köpri düzdi rûz-gâr (Şükrî/2760)

In the Battle of Çaldıran, the arrows loosed are likened, for their lethality, to birds of death (*ecel kuşları*); the soldiers, for their swift movement, to a keen arrow; the arrows crossing back and forth, to a courier bearing news of death; the wounds opened by arrows, to roses; the body, to a rose garden; the dust, to a cloud; and the arrows, to raindrops. Moreover, the twang of the

¹⁵⁶ Emel Nalçacıgil Çopur, "Divan Şiirinde Savaş Aletleri: Hançer, Kılıç, Ok," *Batman Üniversitesi Yaşam Bilimleri Dergisi* 10, no. 1 (2020): 58–81.

bowstrings of arrows that pierce armor is said to be so fierce as to deafen the very ear of the firmament:

Perr ü bâl açdı hadeng-i cân-sitân
Sanki murgân-ı ecel oldu ayân (Cevrî/2129)
Kamu yek-dil misâl-i nâvek-i tîz
Zebân-âver çü hançer cümle hûn-rîz (Mahremî/1250)
Girişdi her taraftan cenge leşker
Ok oldu arada peyk-i haber-ber (Mahremî/1312)
Keserler seslerini hûy ü hâydan
Giderler ok misâli katı yaydan (Îsâ/2162)
Hadeng-i ceng irüp her derdmende
Nihâl-i gül diker bâğ-ı bedende (Mahremî/1320)
Aceb benzerdi gerd ol gün sehâba
İçinde tûğlar bir katre âba (Şîrî/vr.239b/11)
İdüp nâvek güzer çeşm-i zirihden
Olur ker gûş-ı çarh âvâz-ı zihden (Mahremî/1318)

In the Battle of Çaldıran, the cannon are likened by virtue of their form and the fire they spew to dragons, and, for their searing heat and brilliance, to the sun. The fortress-battering pieces are compared, in their roundness, to human heads. The reports of the guns are said to be so thunderous as to deafen the ears of the peoples of Syria, Egypt and Iraq:

Tüfenk atıldı vü toplar tırâkı
Ker itdi Şâm ile Mısır'ı Irâk'ı (Îsâ/2134)
Anların iki yanında toplar
Turup ejder gibi ağzın açdılar (Cevrî/2120)
Ana nisbet hüsrev-i hâver hemîn
Yanarız bu âteşe olsak karîn (Cevrî/2085)
O âdem bâşı gibi darb-zenler
Yüzi bir kezden atıldukda neyler (Hadîdî/5666)

The maces wielded by the Ottoman soldiers are said to possess a force sufficient to bring down even Mount Alborz; in terms of their size, weight and form, they are likened to elephants:

Kime kim Tur Ali Beg ursa bir gürz
Tağıdurdı eger olursa Elbürz (Hadîdî/5636)
Salup elde girân-ser gürz çün fil
Ururlar na'ra mânend-i Sirâfil (Mahremî/1249)

The helmets worn by soldiers in battle, by virtue of their rounded shape and their fragility before the mace, are likened to water bubbles and to eggs. Likewise, the steel armor the soldiers wear is compared to a leaf, in that it sheaths and enfolds the body:

Tugulgasın habâb-ı âb gibi

Tağıdurdu yumurda kabı gibi (Hadîdî/5638)

Cemûi geydiler pûlâd-ı Çîn'i

Daşından berg-reg tutup içini (Hadîdî/5620)

10. Color Imagery

Beyond their basic function of differentiating entities, colors have been transmuted into symbolic expressions of cultural and individual codes of meaning; indeed, they have been invested with psychological significations that reflect the human psyche.¹⁵⁷

In Turkish cultural life, colors enjoy extensive application across religious, social and literary spheres. At times, the Qur'an articulates certain concepts and emotions through color symbolism.¹⁵⁸ The Ottoman social fabric multicultural in composition diversified chromatic symbolism under historical and cultural influences and this diversity found resonance in classical Turkish poetry.¹⁵⁹

There, the associative field of color provided a fertile ground for the poet's pursuit of novel and original conceits and assumed a functional role in expressing social values, natural description and shifts of feeling.¹⁶⁰

Red / Crimson

Owing to the cult of fire among the Turks, the color al (red) assumed special importance and came to be preferred for the flag.¹⁶¹ A red belt and red kaftan figured among the regalia of Ottoman sovereignty; indeed, at the Battle of Ridaniyye, Yavuz Sultan Selim wore a robe of red atlas.¹⁶² The Türkmen cap was fashioned from red felt, adorned with kerchiefs of various colors and the sipahi standards, too, were red.¹⁶³ In classical Turkish poetry, *lâle* (tulip), *gül* (rose), *gonca* (bud), *erguvan* (redbud), *karanfil* (carnation), wine, the lover's wounded body and tears and the beloved's cheek and lip are, in a variety of similes, associated with the color red. In the context of Ottoman-Iranian relations, red appears frequently with the connotations of blood and Qizilbash identity.¹⁶⁴ In the depictions of Çaldıran, poets render the palette of war in words, as if with brushstrokes on canvas. The prevailing color by reason of spilled blood is red; owing both to the nature of battle and to the resonance of Qizilbash symbolism, red is the most frequently employed hue. Blood is likened to fire, to the rose and tulip, to a tulip garden and to a sea, ocean, or flood. In terms of chromatic likeness, the blood shed in battle is compared to roses, tulips and a rose garden. The bloody heads and feet of the Safavid soldiers that filled the Çaldıran plain are imagined as having turned it into a tulip field. With the Qizilbash's crimson crowns and blood-stained boots and with the bloodied spears and shields fallen upon the ground, the Çaldıran plain itself is envisioned as transformed into a lâlezâr:

Sarf-ı maddûr eyleyüp ceng itdiler

¹⁵⁷ Ali Yıldırım, "Renk Simgeciliği ve Şeyh Gâlib'in Üç Rengi," *Millî Folklor* 9, no. 72 (2006): 130.

¹⁵⁸ See Beşir Çelik, "Kur'an'da Zikri Geçen Renkler ve Renklerle Verilen Mesajlar," *Siirt Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 6, no. 1 (2019): 83.

¹⁵⁹ Ahmet Öntürk, "Divan Şiirinde Renkler," *Ulakbilge* 5, no. 12 (2017): 973.

¹⁶⁰ Sait Yilter and Sibel Ökmen, "Şehî Bey Divânı'nda Renkler," *Hikmet – Akademik Edebiyat Dergisi* 10, no. 21 (2024): 70.

¹⁶¹ Hayrettin Rayman, "Nevrûz ve Türk Kültüründe Renkler," *Millî Folklor* (2002): 13.

¹⁶² Reşat Genç, "Türk İnanışları ile Millî Geleneklerinde Renkler ve Sarı-Kırmızı-Yeşil," *Erdem* 9, no. 27 (1997): 1079.

¹⁶³ Süreyya Coşkuner, *Renkler ve Kişiliğiniz* (Izmir: Sanat Kitabevi, 1995), 30.

¹⁶⁴ Öntürk, "Divan Şiirinde Renkler," 978–79.

Kan-ıla sahrâyı **gül-reng** itdiler (Cevrî/2166)

Lâlezâr oldu sahrâ yeksere

Tâc u hamrâ ol kadar düşdi yire (Cevrî/2134)

Lâle-i hamrâ bigi hep **sürh-pûş**

Sanasın deryâ-yı hündür itdi cûş (Cevrî/1966)

O heycâ benzer-idi nev-bahâra

Ki her **kanlu sünüler lâlezâra** (Şîrî/vr.239b/13)

Nîzelerden oldu sahrâ **lâle-zâr**

Oldı yeryüzi siperden **gül-izâr** (Fîrâkî/127)

Soldiers on horseback are likened to crocodiles swimming in a sea of blood; the severed limbs of soldiers, to branches of coral¹⁶⁵ in that sanguine sea; the fluttering rose-colored banners, to the Red Sea; the mutual slaying by the sword the reaping of souls to a diver plunging into the sea of blood to bring up the pearl of the soul; death, to a bloody rain pouring from the cloud; and the tear-filled eyes of soldiers helpless, grief-stricken and undone on the field to a fountain of blood:

Tekâver **bahr-ı hûn** içre şînâver

Neheng-i cengdür üstinde her er (Mahremî/1315)

Bürîde dest ü sâid **garka-i kan**

Nite kim **bahr-ı hûnda şâh-ı mercân** (Mahremî/1331)

Çözildi cümle ol **a'lâm-ı gülgûn**

Sanasın cûşa geldi **kulzüm-i hûn** (Şîrî/vr.239a/14)

Yine **umman-ı hûna tîğ tâlip**

Dür-i şeh-vâr-ı rûha oldu tâlib (Mahremî/1344)

Ecel ebri akıtmış **âb-ı hûnîn**

Revân olmuş akar **seylâb-ı hûnîn** (Mahremî/1324)

Tutulmuş gün **sehâb-ı lâlegûndan**

Tekergi âhen ü **bârân-ı hûndan** (Mahremî/1323)

Kimisi teşne yatur kimi dil-hûn

Kiminün çeşmi olmuş **çeşme-i hûn** (Şîrî/vr.240b/13)

Shah Ismail and his troops distinguished by their red headgear together with their crimson banners, are likened to a tulip garden. Indeed, the red tulips are imagined as mustering soldiers for Shah Ismail. The Safavid army's red standards are said to have turned the sky the color of tulips:

Çün **kızıl tâcıyla** çıkdı ata Şâh

Lâle dahi şâh için çekdi sipâh (Şükri/2385)

¹⁶⁵ Coral, in terms of form, resembles a tree branch; see Efsun Yılmaz Uğur, "Klasik Türk Şiirinde Renkler" (Master's thesis, Kırıkkale University, 2009), 22.

İtti bayraklar havâyı lâle-gûn

Tâc-ıla oldı zemîn deryâ-yı hûn (Şükrî/2384)

In depictions of the Battle of Çaldıran, red comes prominently to the fore in similes of fire and light. The Safavid soldiers' headgear, in respect of its redness, is likened to radiant flame; the Safavid troops themselves, for "scattering evil and sedition," are compared to live embers; and the bloodied heads and teeth fixed to spearpoints are assimilated to fire by virtue of their crimson hue. Sunbeams naturally filtering through the atmosphere are portrayed as swords thrust into the sky, while the redness of sunset is imagined as the heavens dyed in blood:

Geyüp her biri tâc-ı fitne-âmîz

Nice tâc âteşidür şu 'le-engîz (Şîrî/vr.238b/3)

Sanasın her biri mânend-i ahker

Kim andan âteş-i şer durmaz artar (Şîrî/vr.238b/4)

Nice seylâb ateş yağdururdu

Aceb âteş yire leş yağdururdu (Mahremî/1374)

Sinân üzre ser u dendân-ı hûn-bâr

Dehen açmış şecer üstinde san nâr (Mahremî/1321)

Şol kadar tîg urdu dâyimâ dîr-i mihr

Kim boyandı kana etrâf-ı sipîhr (Firâkî/166)

Black

In Turkic mythology, the color black carries predominantly negative connotations.¹⁶⁶ In the Göktürk Inscriptions, the phrase "kara bodun" employs *kara* to denote the common people the mass, the multitude. In the Book of Dede Korkut, black symbolizes pain and mourning.¹⁶⁷ Within Turkish cultural semantics more broadly, black often set as the antithesis of the positively coded white evokes ill omen and ugliness, yet it can also suggest strength and valor. These ambivalent resonances ground the positive and negative associations of the black-inflected images that recur in classical Turkish poetry hair, eyebrow, mole, eye, night and the like.¹⁶⁸ In the Sufî tradition, spiritual *states* and *stations* are symbolized by colors; here, black signifies the unknowability, invisibility and incomprehensibility of the Divine Essence.¹⁶⁹ In vivid depictions of pitched battle, black is among the dominant hues of the field. Dust and smoke raised by combat and the mass of standards filling the plain compose a dark tableau. As the two armies clash and maneuver, the dust is said to fill the world with darkness, turning the blue sky the color of night; the smoke from firearms rises to fill the nine spheres, rendering them black. Death itself is likewise imagined in black; the idiom "to fall into the black earth" (*kara toprağa düşmek*) serves as a color-coded kenning for death:

Kızılbaş'ı kara toprağa döker

Ki san berg-i hazâni bâd-ı sarsar (Hadîdi/5664)

¹⁶⁶ İhsan Toker, "Renk Simgeçiliği ve Din: Türk Kültür Yapısı İçinde Ak-Kara Renk Karşıtlığı ve Bu Karşıtlığın Modern Türk Söylemindeki Tezahürleri Üzerine," *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 50, no. 2 (2009): 101.

¹⁶⁷ Yılmaz Uğur, "Klasik Türk Şiirinde Renkler," 22.

¹⁶⁸ Orhan Hançerlioğlu, *Dünya İnançları Sözlüğü Dinler, Mezhepler, Tarikatlar, Efsaneler* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1993), 240.

¹⁶⁹ Yıldırım, "Renk Simgeçiliği ve Şeyh Gâlib'in Üç Rengi," 133.

Böyle germ-â-germ iken kâr-ı neberd
Kâinâtı eylemişken **tîre gerd** (Cevrî/2171)
Künbed-i mînâyı **şeb-reng** itdi gerd
Tozdan mihr ü meh oldı lâciverd (Şükrî/2499)
Al yaşıl **bayrak-ıla** toldı havâ
Lâciverd iken siyâh oldı semâ (Şükrî/2378) Bayrak
Duhân ile doluben dokuz eflâk
Melekler gördi kıldı yakalar çâk (Îsâ/2135)
Toldı **zulmât-ıla** dünyâ-yı denî
Lâciverdî çarh oldı sûsenî (Şükrî/2498)
Künbed-i mînâyı **şeb-reng** itdi gerd
Tozdan mihr ü meh oldı lâciverd (Şükrî/2499)

White

In Ottoman social life, the colors of dress present a sociological panorama. Beyond hue, a garment's material, cut, weave and accessories vary according to social strata. Beys are recorded as joining campaigns wearing white felt caps, while the 'ulamâ' donned white inner garments beneath gold-brocaded silk robes lined in green.¹⁷⁰ In classical Turkish poetry, white generally bears a positive valence: purity, felicity, the radiance of morning, feast days and festive attire, as well as the beloved's face and cheek, are symbolized by this color.¹⁷¹

In depictions of the Battle of Çaldıran, white appears in descriptions of Ottoman weaponry, maneuver and attire. The soldiers' arms are likened to resplendent light, their rapid advance to bright lightning and their garments to the white robes worn by the 'ulamâ' on feast days and even to the weeping willow in form:

Sad-hezârân âfitâb itdi zuhûr
Her silâhu kıldı bir **rahşende nûr** (Cevrî/1936)
Sordı Rûmî'den bu cem'i şâh-ı şark
Kim nedür bu ra'd u bu **rahşende berk** (Cevrî/1941)
Âdemîsi cümle giymişler sepîd
Hem-çü haftân meşâyih rûz-ı ıyd (Cevrî/1956)
Âdemîsi cümle giymişler **sepîd**
Gül zamânında misâl-i **müşg-bîd** (Şükrî/2431)

Green

In Islam, green symbolizes resurrection and life.¹⁷² In classical Turkish poetry it bears a positive valence, appearing in descriptions of nature, the banner, the sword, the sky and the beloved's hair and soft down.¹⁷³ In accounts of the Battle of Çaldıran, green is among the colors

¹⁷⁰ Coşkuner, *Renkler ve Kişiliğiniz*, 30.

¹⁷¹ Öntürk, "Divan Şiirinde Renkler," 978.

¹⁷² Yılmaz Uğur, "Klasik Türk Şiirinde Renkler," 22.

¹⁷³ Öntürk, "Divan Şiirinde Renkler," 980-81.

used to depict banners and weaponry: the green pennons on Ottoman lances are likened to the green leaves of forest trees; the troops spread across the plain with multicolored standards are compared to a violet attired in red, green and yellow; and the green of the banners, lances and standards is said to display a verdure of such ideal beauty as to put the very grass to shame:

Nîzeler hep sebze-gûn bayrak ile

Bîşe bezendi yaşıl evrâk ile (Şükrî/2429)

Hem alem hem nîze hem bayrak yaşıl

Sebze-zârın itdi gerdûnun hacil (Şükrî/2430)

Tutdı ol sahrâ yüzün rengin direfş

Sebz ü sürh ü zer don-ıla benefş (Cevrî/1925)

Yellow

In Turkic mythology, the god of beneficence, Ülgen, is situated at the center of the cosmos; his gold-plated palace and golden throne render yellow a symbol of centrality.¹⁷⁴ In the Ottoman context, there existed standards composed of the colors green (vitality), red (power) and yellow (sovereignty).¹⁷⁵ In classical Turkish poetry, yellow participates in a wide range of conceits: alongside negative associations bodily pallor and melancholy it also indexes display and brilliance.¹⁷⁶

In depictions of the Battle of Çaldıran, yellow appears as a color of dominion. The tips of the Ottoman standards are golden, casting light in every direction; Sultan Selim, wearing a gold-hued helmet, is envisioned as illuminating the world like the sun:

Başı altun ol kızıl vâlâ-alem

Kim salar pertev şuâi dem-be-dem (Cevrî/2012)

Urınmış miğfer-i zer çekmiş alay

Misâl-i âfitâb-ı âlem-ârây (Mahremî/1256)

Conclusion

The Battle of Çaldıran, in which Yavuz Sultan Selim and Shah Ismail two major and in many respects original historical figures confront one another as representatives of competing value systems, emerges in classical Turkish literature as a topic of distinctive weight to which men of letters devoted particular attention. Verse chronicles, as a genre situated at the intersection of literature and history, depict this battle between Yavuz Sultan Selim and Shah Ismail within a historical framework, yet through an overtly literary idiom and under the imprint of dominant Ottoman ideology. These depictions of war offer, in addition to their historical value, a strikingly rich and multilayered panorama in terms of language, style, and symbolic texture.

The analysis has shown that verse chronicles collectively construct a specific “war literature” and idiom; that, in the process of aestheticizing this historical event, they rely intensively on such rhetorical devices as simile, metaphor, allusion, and hyperbole in order to forge a descriptive mode of narration; and that many metaphors and figurative patterns, hitherto examined only in a piecemeal fashion, crystallize within the context of Çaldıran as part of a broader poetics of war, acquiring new semantic layers. While Yavuz Sultan Selim and the

¹⁷⁴ Genç, “Türk İnanışları ile Millî Geleneklerinde Renkler ve Sarı-Kırmızı-Yeşil,” 1095.

¹⁷⁵ Mustafa Kafalı, “Türk Kültüründe Renkler,” in *Nevruz ve Renkler* (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu, Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Yayını, no. 116; Kongre ve Sempozyum Bildirileri Dizisi, no. 7, 1996), 51.

¹⁷⁶ Öntürk, “Divan Şiirinde Renkler,” 980.

Ottoman troops are portrayed by means of positive religious and sectarian attributes and positioned at the centre as legitimate and normative actors, Shah Ismail and the Safavid forces are relegated to a marginal, frequently heterodox, position and characterized in predominantly negative religious and sectarian terms. In this way, the verse chronicles do not merely recount the Battle of Çaldıran; they also reproduce an Ottoman-centred hierarchy of values.

The power- and sovereignty-oriented face of war, much as in steppe culture, brings animal symbolism to the fore: in the sections devoted to Çaldıran, animal comparisons function at times as markers of concrete, physical resemblance and at other times as bearers of symbolic meaning. Together with “natural” sounds of war such as soldiers’ cries, horses’ neighing, the clash of weapons, shouts of attack, and expressions of pain and lament, military musical instruments help to establish both the rhythm and the psychological atmosphere of the battle, creating a dense auditory ground. Alongside the sea, floods, mountains, plains, and vegetation, natural phenomena such as hail, rain, clouds, lightning, thunder, rainbows, and the sun supply the primary material for the similes and metaphors that render the Battle of Çaldıran almost as if it were a painted tableau. In descriptions of the army, supernatural beings also enter the field as vehicles of comparison, while beliefs and assumptions about cosmic and astrological forces are mobilized metaphorically to idealize Yavuz Sultan Selim’s qualities as a commander. Plant and floral symbolism, above all the colour red as the dominant hue of war, are repeatedly invoked in conjunction with images of blood, tulips, and *lâlezâr* landscapes to construct a powerful chromatic symbolism. Analogies drawn from social life chess and *çevgân* (polo), ritual dance (*sema*), weddings, navigation, convivial gatherings (*bezm*), and drunkenness play a similarly important role in structuring the battle narrative.

Within this framework, the article’s main contributions may be summarized as follows. First, it offers a systematic classification of the modes through which war is aestheticized in Çaldıran narratives along the axes of colour, animal, cosmic/astrological, natural, auditory/musical, and social-life imagery and thereby reconstructs the literary representation of war in verse chronicles within a coherent analytical frame. Second, it reads these chronicles not merely as repositories of historical information but as sites of “ideological representation” that reflect and reproduce the religious and sectarian priorities of dominant Ottoman ideology; in doing so, it proposes a new reading of how the Ottoman polity constructs perception and legitimacy through the lens of the Battle of Çaldıran. Third, insofar as it is, to the best of the author’s knowledge, the first study to consider colour, animal, and cosmic symbolism together with natural and auditory elements on a shared plane in the specific context of Çaldıran, the article advances a new perspective on the symbolic components of war representations in classical Turkish literature.

In sum, the study demonstrates that verse chronicles possess a remarkable diversity in terms of literary war imagery and that this diversity manifests itself in an original configuration both at the level of symbolism and in narrative technique. It suggests that verse chronicles dealing with the Battle of Çaldıran are best read not solely as archives of historical data, but as texts in which the aestheticization of war and its ideological representation intersect and mutually reinforce one another. A systematic examination of such works, not only from a historical standpoint but also with regard to their language, style, and symbolic structures, has the potential to open up new questions and perspectives within the study of classical Turkish literature.

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