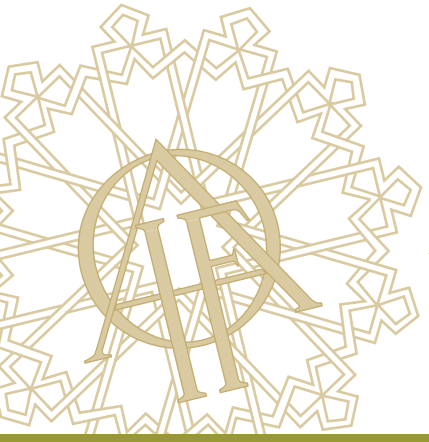
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AnIsl 37 (2003), p. 191-199

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Jane HATHAWAY

Exiled Chief Harem Eunuchs as Proponents of the Hanafî Madhhab in Ottoman Cairo

THE CHIEF Eunuch of the harem of the Ottoman imperial palace (*aghât Dâr al-Sa'âda*, Turkish *Darüssaade Ağasy* or *Kızlar Ağası*) was by the seventeenth century one of the wealthiest and most powerful figures in the Ottoman Empire. Toward the middle of this century, Chief Harem Eunuchs came to be routinely exiled to Cairo upon their depositions. There, they lived out their lives in relative comfort, receiving what amounted to a pension from the imperial treasury, building mansions, establishing pious foundations (*awqâf*), and even establishing elite households. I have explored the exiled eunuchs' political and economic impact on Egypt in two articles, published in 1992 and 1994, and in one chapter of my book *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt*, published in 1997.[1] In this essay, however, I shall explore tentatively the possible religious influences of the exiled eunuchs in Cairo. In particular, I will argue that the eunuchs contributed to the prominence of the Hanafî *madhhab* (legal rite) in Egypt, and that this was part of their overall contribution to the dissemination of Ottoman elite culture in Egypt.

Ottoman Hanafism

The Hanafî *madhhab* had evidently been the official legal rite of the Ottoman Empire virtually since the empire's inception.[2] The Ottomans are distinct from earlier Turco-Iranian states, notably the Great Seljûks, Ayyûbids, and Mamlûks, in patronizing a single *madhhab*

Jane Hathaway, Dept. of History, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, USA.

[1] J. Hathaway, "The Role of the *Kızlar Ağası* in 17th-18th Century Ottoman Egypt", *StudIsl* 75, 1992, p. 141-158; idem, "The Wealth and Influence of an Exiled Ottoman Eunuch in Egypt: The Waqf Inventory of 'Abbâs Aghâ", *JESHO* 37/4, 1994, p. 293-317; idem, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of the Qazdağlıs*, Cambridge, 1997, chapter 8.

[2] C. Imber, *Ebu's-su'ud: The Islamic Legal Tradition*, Stanford, Calif., 1997, p. 25.

AnIsl 37 (2003), p. 191-199 Jane Hathaway

as the sole rite to which officials appointed by the central authority could belong.[3] Thus, they appointed Hanafî muftis and chief judges (s. *qâḍî al-quḍḍât*, or *qâḍî 'askar*) in the capitals of their provinces. This was a relatively straightforward task in Anatolia, where the Seljûks of Rûm and the Turkish emirates had also been Hanafî, and in the Balkans, which had not previously fallen under Muslim rule. In the Ottoman Arab provinces, however, the Hanafî *madhhab* was only one of three influential legal rites (the other two being Shâfi'î and Mâlikî). Although the Mamlûk sultans who ruled Egypt before the Ottoman conquest of 1517 had themselves followed the Hanafî rite, they never adopted Hanafism as an official *madhhab* throughout their empire, which encompassed Syria, southeastern Anatolia, and the Hijâz as well as Egypt. Hence we find that the Shâfi'î *madhhab*, which first took root in Egypt and which had enjoyed support from the Ayyûbid dynasty (1171-1250), remained eminent, if not pre-eminent, under the Mamlûks.

In comparison to the Ayyûbids and Mamlûks, the Ottomans can be called promoters of Hanafism in as much as they named a Hanafî *qâḍî 'askar* to every province (*wilâya/vilâyet*). This official was chosen by the sultan on the advice of the *shaykh al-Islâm*, or chief mufti of Istanbul, and arrived in Cairo from Istanbul roughly every year, although some served two or even three years.[4] Thus, the imperial government's sanction of Hanafism was made publicly visible in the *qâḍî's* arrival at the port of Alexandria, progress up the Nile to Cairo, and procession to his new residence. In Egypt, too, the imperial government appointed the *naqîb al-ashrâf*, or head of the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, who through the seventeenth century was a Turcophone efendi and a Hanafî, as well.[5]

The arrival of Hanafî officials from Istanbul was thus a motif of Egypt's political culture. In this context, the exiled Chief Harem Eunuchs were simply part of the parade. Yet the eunuchs stood out in one important respect: they were to remain in Egypt for the rest of their lives unless, as occasionally happened, one or another of them were recalled for duty as head of the eunuchs who guarded the Prophet's tomb in Medina.[6] This meant that the potential for exiled eunuchs to influence features of Egypt's elite culture was considerable. In earlier publications, I have examined their impact on Egypt's household politics through the purchase of *mamlûks* and the patronage of particular grandees, and their impact on Egypt's commercial enterprises through the foundation of *awqâf*. Yet these same activities, particularly the creation of *awqâf*, could also affect Egypt's religious life in such a way as to enhance the public profile of the Hanafî *madhhab*.

[3] On the Ayyûbids, who were predominantly Shâfi'î, see *EI*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Ayyûbids", by Cl. Cahen. On the Mamlûks, see J. Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education,* Princeton, 1992, p. 147-50; L. Fernandes, "Mamlûk Politics and Education: The Evidence from Two Fourteenth-Century *Waqfiyyas*", *AnIsl* 23, 1987, p. 87-98; U. Haarmann, "Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage: Mamlûks and Their Sons in the Intellectual Life of Fourteenth-Century Egypt and Syria", *JSS* 33, 1988, p. 81-114. The Mamlûk sultans patronized both the Hanafî and Shâfi'î *madhhabs* but during the Circassian period seem to have preferred the Hanafîs.

[4] G.H. el-Nahal, *The Judicial Administration of Ottoman Egypt in the Seventeenth Century*, Studies in Middle Eastern History 4, Minneapolis and Chicago, 1979, p. 13-14.

[5] M. Winter, "The *Ashrâf* and *Niqâbat al-Ashrâf* in Egypt in Ottoman and Modern Times", *AAS* (Haifa) 19/1, 1985, p. 17-41.

[6] Hathaway, *Politics of Households*, p. 141, 146, 150-52, 154, 161.

The Awqâf

First of all, the creation of *awqâf* was a legal-intensive process. The endowment deed, or *waqfiyya,* often many pages in length, had to be read out in the presence of and signed by a number of witnesses in a *qâḍî*'s court. This *qâḍî* would typically be the Hanafî *qâḍî* whose court lay in closest proximity to the residence of the eunuch in question. Thus the *waqfiyya* of the *sabîl-kuttâb/sabîl-maktab* (Qur'ân school above a fountain) of Shâhîn Ahmad Aghâ (who in any case was not a Chief Harem Eunuch but evidently a harem eunuch of another rank), published a decade ago by Hamza 'Abd al-'Azîz Badr and Daniel Crecelius, was witnessed in December 1675 in the mosque of al-Qusûn at a session presided over by the Hanafî judge al-Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmân Efendi.[7] The fourteenth-century Mamlûk emir Qusûn (a.k.a. Qawsûn) gave his name not only to the mosque but to the neighborhood in which it stood, south of Bâb Zuwayla near Birkat al-Fîl. In the seventeenth century, this neighborhood was the site of a number of exiled eunuch residences. This was a corollary of its status as the hub of elite residence during this period,[8] for the exiled eunuchs were part of Cairo's power elite. Not only Shâhîn Ahmad but also Tâş Yâtûr 'Alî (term 1054-1055 H./1644-1645) and his client Yûsuf (term 1082-1098 H./1672-1687), Yûsuf's successor Hazînedâr 'Alî (term 1098 H./1687), 'Abbâs (term 1078-1082 H./1668-1672), and Mehmed (term 1059-1060 H./1649-1650), had large houses there.[9] As late as 1713, the famously long-lived al-Hâjj Beshîr Aghâ (term 1129-1159 H./1717-1746), then an exiled *hazînedâr*, or harem treasurer, acquired a house in the same neighborhood next to property that had been held previously by the harem eunuchs Süleymân and 'Abd al-Halîm Aghâs.[10] There is even evidence that these residences passed from one generation of eunuchs to another along patron-client lines: Yûsuf Aghâ inherited the house of his patron, Tâş Yâtûr 'Alî, while a court document related to 'Abbâs Aghâ's *waqf* properties refers to Hazînedâr 'Alî's house as "the residential palace of the aghâs" (*sukn qaṣr al-aghâwât*).[11] Small wonder that a street in Qusûn was popularly known as "Ḍarb al-Aghâwât".[12] This concentration of eunuch residences probably meant that the mosque of al-Qusûn enjoyed a high volume of Hanafî legal traffic in the seventeenth century, making it a major site of Hanafî legal praxis. It would be interesting to learn whether the same phenomenon occurred in the latter half of the eighteenth century in the Hanafî court nearest Birkat al-Azbakiyya, which displaced Birkat al-Fîl as the hub of elite residence, including, naturally, exiled eunuch residences.[13]

[7] H. 'Abd al-'Azîz Badr and D. Crecelius, "The *Waqfs* of Shâhîn Ahmad Aghâ", *AnIsl* 26, 1992, p. 79-114, at p. 85.

[8] A. Raymond, "Essai de géographie des quartiers de residence aristocratique au Caire au XVIII[e] siècle", *JESHO* 6, 1963, p. 58-103, especially p. 61, 72-73, 85-86; idem, "The Elite Residential Districts of Cairo's Elite in the Mamlûk and Ottoman Periods (Fourteenth to Eighteenth Centuries)", transl. S. Winter, in T. Philipp and U. Haarmann (eds.), *The Mamlûks in Egyptian Politics and Society*, Cambridge, 1998, p. 218.

[9] 'Abd al-'Azîz Badr and Crecelius, "*Waqfs* of Shâhîn Ahmad Aghâ", p. 80-82; Hathaway, "Wealth and Influence", p. 305.

[10] 'Abd al-'Azîz Badr and D. Crecelius, "The *Awqâf* of al-Hâjj Bashîr Aghâ in Cairo", *AnIsl* 27, 1993, p. 293 and n. 11.

[11] Istanbul, Topkapı Palace Archives, E 7900; Mehmed b. Yûsuf al-Hallâq (fl. c. 1715), *Târîḫ-i Mısr-ı Kâhire*, Istanbul University Library, T.Y. 628, folio 219 verso.

[12] Ahmad Çelebi b. 'Abd al-Ghanî (fl. c. 1737), *Awḍaḥ al-ishârât fî man tawalla Miṣr al-Qâhira min al-wuzarâ' wa-l-bâshât*, ed. A.A. 'Abd al-Rahîm, Cairo, 1978, p. 187; 'Abd al-'Azîz Badr and Crecelius, "*Waqfs* of Shâhîn Ahmad Aghâ", p. 82.

[13] Raymond, "Essai de géographie", p. 73-75, 79, 83, 85-87; idem, "Elite Residential Districts", p. 220-22.

Libraries

Before a eunuch's *waqfiyya* was publicly witnessed and recorded in the *qâḍî's sijill*, it was carefully prepared according to Hanafî rules of endowment. This partially explains why in a posthumous inventory of 'Abbâs Aghâ's library, discussed at length in my 1994 article, nine of twenty-seven books listed are classic works of Hanafî *fiqh*, including a commentary on the leading work on the Hanafî law of inheritance, Sirâj al-Dîn Abû Tâhir Muhammad al-Sajâwandî's (fl. c. 1200) *Al-farâ'iḍ al-Sirâjiyya*.[14] If we think of 'Abbâs' library as not only a window onto the intellectual predilections of its owner, according to the manner in which I exploited it in my earlier article, but as a cultural artifact, then its potential impact becomes noteworthy. These works are milestones of Hanafî jurisprudence, composed chiefly in pre-Mongol Central Asia, although several seminal contributions of Ottoman Hanafî jurisprudents are also represented. 'Abbâs Aghâ evidently did not stash these works away for his own private use before endowing them as *waqf*. His collection was familiar to key officials in the imperial capital, to judge from a 1697 imperial order condemning the then-governor of Egypt, Ismâ'îl Pasha, for trying to sell off 'Abbâs' *waqf* properties. This order makes special mention of 'Abbâs' library, to which it refers as *kitâbḫâne*, literally, "book room", but also close to *kütüphane*, the word used in modern Turkish for a library.[15] The implication is that this was an organized collection of unusual quality and monetary value. In fact, there is no reason not to believe that 'Abbâs' collection was available for limited public use in the manner of the late eighteenth-century grandee Mehmed Bey Abû'l-Dhahab's library, part of a *waqf* studied by Crecelius.[16] 'Abbâs Aghâ's *waqfiyya*, as opposed to his estate inventory, would in that case list a salary for a librarian. His collection, then, would resemble a small closed-stack library or rare books collection in the modern era. The clientele would be ready to hand: the other eunuchs and grandees who lived around Birkat al-Fîl, as well as members of the ulema. In that context, 'Abbâs' collection would represent an importation of seminal works of Hanafî *fiqh* into Cairo, ensuring part of the written source base necessary for the conduct of Hanafî law.[17]

Furthermore, 'Abbâs Aghâ was almost certainly not unique in possessing a sizable collection of key Hanafî works. The French merchant Jean-Claude Flachat, who supplied imported luxuries to Moralı Beshîr Aghâ (term 1159-1165 H./1746-1752), reports that Moralı Beshîr, while acting Chief Harem Eunuch in Istanbul, spent long hours every day in his

[14] Hathaway, "Wealth and Influence", p. 299.

[15] Istanbul, Başbakanlık Ottoman Archives, Mühimme Defteri 110, no. 947 (Jumâdâ al-Âkhira 1109 H./December 1697).

[16] D. Crecelius, "The *Waqf* of Muhammad Bey Abû al-Dhahab in Historical Perspective", *IJMES* 23/1, 1991, p. 69. It is interesting to note in this connection that while Abû'l-Dhahab's *waqfiyya provides* for more Mâlikî and Shâfi'î than Hanafî *shaykhs* and endows larger stipends for them, his library contains many more works of Hanafî than of Mâlikî or Shâfi'î *fiqh*. I would suspect that he somehow acquired the libraries of one or more exiled eunuchs.

[17] The Tâhirid sultans of Yemen in the fifteenth century likewise endowed works of Shâfi'î law (*fiqh*) and theology (*kalâm*) as *waqf*; see 'Abd al-Rahmân b. 'Alî b. Muhammad b. al-Dayba' (d. c. 1537), *Kitâb Qurrat al-'uyûn bi-akhbâr al-Yaman al-maymûn*, ed. M. al-Akwa' al-Hiwâlî, 2 vols, Cairo, 1977, vol. 2, p. 193-94; idem, *Bughyat al-mustafid fî ta'rîkh madînat Zabîd*, ed. A. al-Hibshî, San'â, 1979, p. 213-14; Yahyâ b. al-Husayn b. al-Qâsim (1625-89), *Ghâyat al-amânî fî akhbâr al-quṭr al-yamânî*, ed. S. 'Ashûr, 2 vols, Cairo, 1968, vol. 2, p. 622-23.

library reading.[18] Meanwhile, Moralı Beshîr's predecessor, the legendary al-Hâjj Beshîr Aghâ, is described in a twentieth-century work as "one of the eighteenth century's great bibliophiles".[19] Indeed, an addition to the *waqfiyya* of al-Hâjj Beshîr's *sabîl-kuttâb* in Cairo, studied by 'Abd al-'Azîz Badr and Crecelius, includes a salary for a librarian to look after his books.[20]

Hanafî Sufism and Hanafî Conservatism in the 17th and Early 18th Centuries

The *waqfiyya* of al-Hâjj Beshîr Aghâ and the estate inventory of 'Abbâs Aghâ together give the impression that the chief Harem Eunuchs of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries combined an intense interest in—indeed, a virtual obsession with—Hanafî law with the practice of "mainstream" Sufism. 'Abbâs' estate inventory contains, in addition to works of Hanafî *fiqh*, the mystical poetry of al-Ghazâlî (d. 1111), Jâmî (d.1492), and Farîd al-Dîn 'Attâr (fl. 12th century), as well as 'Attâr's collected lives of Sûfî "saints" (*Tadhkirât al-awliyâ'*) and a book of Sûfî devotional prayers (*awrâd*). Both eunuchs endowed *zâwiyas*, or small Sûfî lodges, although the Sûfî order or orders with which these would have been affiliated are not specified. Although the Mevlevî order was closely associated with the Ottoman court, it is not known whether harem eunuchs participated in it, nor did it become widespread in Egypt.[21] On the other hand, the Khalwatî order was at the height of its powers in Istanbul during the seventeenth century; Sultan Murâd IV (r. 1623-1640) and his mother are known to have been sympathizers.[22] Several branches of this order were well-established in Cairo even before the Ottoman conquest,[23] and Khalwatî*s* enjoyed a heyday in the latter part of the eighteenth century, when Cairo's leading ulema were members and even leaders of the order.[24] (At this stage, the Khalwatî order in Egypt falls under the problematic rubric of "neo-Sufism" because of its supposedly new emphasis on *ḥadîth* study and reverence for the Prophet in preference to Sûfî "saints".)[25]

[18] J.-Cl. Flachat, *Observations sur le commerce et sur les arts d'une partie de l'Europe, de l'Asie, de l'Afrique, et même des Indes orientales*, 2 vols, Lyon, 1766, vol. 2, p. 128; J. Hathaway, "Jean-Claude Flachat and the Chief Black Eunuch: Observations of a French Merchant at the Sultan's Court", in S.J. Webber and M.R. Lynd (eds.), with K. Peterson, *Fantasy or Ethnography? Irony and Collusion in Subaltern Representation*, Papers in Comparative Studies 8, Columbus, Ohio, 1996, p. 48.

[19] H.A.R. Gibb and H. Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West: A Study of the Impact of Western Civilization on Moslem Culture in the Near East*, vol. I: *Islamic Society in the Eighteenth Century*, 2 parts, London and New York, 1950-57, part 1, p. 223.

[20] 'Abd al-'Azîz Badr and Crecelius, "*Awqâf* of al-Hâjj Bashîr Aghâ", p. 301.

[21] See, for example, J.S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam,* new foreword by J.O. Voll, New York and Oxford, 1971, 1998, p. 61-62; J. Dickie (Y. Zaki), "Mawlawî Dervishery in Cairo", *AARP* 15, 1979, p. 9-15.

[22] M.C. Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Post-Classical Age (1600-1800)*, Minneapolis and Chicago, 1988, p. 138-140, 171.

[23] Muhyi-yi Gülşenî (d. 1606), *Menâkib-i İbrâhîm-i Gülşenî ve Şemleli-zâde Ahmed Efendi, Şîve-i Tarîkat-i Gülşenîye*, ed. T. Yazıcı, Türk Tarih Kurumu Publications 3/9, Ankara, 1982, p. 314ff., 336-337, 376; B.G. Martin, "A Short History of the Khalwatî Order of Dervishes", in N.R. Keddie (ed.), *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions since 1500, Berkeley*, 1972, p. 290-297.

[24] Martin, "Short History", p. 297-304.

[25] See F. Rahman, *Islam*, 2nd ed., Chicago, 1979 [1966], p. 148-149, 165-166, 201-203; R.S. O'Fahey and B. Radtke, "Neo-Sufism Reconsidered", Der *Islam* 70/1, 1993, p. 52-87; F. De Jong, "Mustafâ Kamâl al-Dîn al-Bakrî (1688-1749): Revival and Reform of the Khalwatiyya Tradition?" in N. Levtzion and J.O. Voll (eds.), *Eighteenth-Century Renewal and Reform in Islam*, Syracuse, 1987, p. 117-132.

In this connection, the books in 'Abbâs Aghâ's estate inventory that point to a Sûfî tendency have particularly interesting implications, for 'Abbâs was exiled to Cairo during the heyday of the puritanical Kadızadeli movement. The Kadızadelis were mosque preachers of largely provincial Anatolian origin who, beginning in the early seventeenth century, mobilized against the leading ulema of Istanbul, most of whom belonged to the Khalwatî order. The Kadızadeli agenda called for the eradication of all innovations (*bid'a*) to the Prophet's *sunna*; Sûfîs were the focus of intense hostility. During the middle decades of the seventeenth century, pro-Kadızadeli mobs destroyed several Khalwatî lodges in Istanbul. The grand viziers of the Köprülü family, particularly Köprülü Fâzil Ahmed Pasha (term 1661-1676) openly supported the Kadızadelis; in the 1660s and 1670s, under the leadership of Vanî Mehmed Efendi, who was personally close to Fâzil Ahmed Pasha, the Kadızadelis enjoyed unprecedented social influence that would end only with the military débacle at Vienna in 1683.[26]

The Köprülüs' relations with the Chief Harem Eunuch appear to have been variable. In "canonical" accounts of late seventeenth-century imperial politics, the Köprülüs are depicted as reformers struggling against the forces of corruption and palace intrigue, which typically include the sultan's mother (*Vâlide sultân*) and the Chief Harem Eunuch.[27] This portrayal is, of course, implicitly gendered: the Köprülüs are a throwback to the uncorrupted "masculine" days before the "sultanate of women" and the tyranny of the harem; the Chief Harem Eunuch inhabits the "feminine sphere" but, because he exists outside the standard bipartite definition of gender, represents at the same time an unnatural and corrupting importation into the Ottoman system. In point of fact, Köprülü Fâzil Ahmed and his father and predecessor, Köprülü Mehmed Pasha, were not above injecting their own candidates into the office of Chief Harem Eunuch—a strategy that, as they well knew, would ultimately affect Egypt's political complexion. Thus, 'Abbâs Aghâ's predecessor, Solak ("left-handed") Mehmed Aghâ, was a member of Köprülü Mehmed's circle.[28] The Köprülü agenda encompassed not only political influence but also fiscal reform: under the Köprülüs, a career path was established whereby the harem treasurer (*hazînedâr-i şehriyârî*) ascended to the rank of Chief Harem Eunuch. Nonetheless, certain Chief Harem Eunuchs during this period ran afoul of the Köprülüs, in which case banishing them to Cairo became an expedient means of removing them from the imperial palace. Mustafâ Aghâ (term 1098-1101 H./1687-1690) requested exile to Egypt as a result of his difficulties with the grand vizier of the time, Köprülüzade Fâzil Mustafâ Pasha.[29] Like Mustafâ Aghâ, 'Abbâs had bypassed the post of *hazînedâr-i şehriyârî*; before becoming Chief Harem Eunuch, he had, in fact, been the Chief Eunuch of the sultan's mother (*Vâlide baş ağası*).[30] Following the Chief

[26] Zilfi, *Politics of Piety*, p. 146-57.

[27] See, for example, İ.H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilatı*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Publications 8/15, Ankara, 1945, p. 95-98, 156-158, 174-175; Lord Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries: The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Empire*, New York, 1977, p. 331 ff.; M.A. Cook (ed.), *A History of the Ottoman Empire to 1730: Chapters from the Cambridge History of Islam and the New Cambridge Modern History*, Cambridge, 1976, chapter by V.J. Parry.

[28] Ahmed Resmî Efendi (1700-83), *Hamîlet ül-Küberâ*, Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, MS Halet Efendi 597/1, folio 89 verso.

[29] Ibid., folio 91 verso.

[30] M. Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmânî*, 4 vols, Istanbul, 1308 H./1890-1891, vol. 4, p. 724ff.

Harem Eunuch's career pattern during the last four decades of the seventeenth century, we can discern a competition between the Vâlide and the (Köprülü) grand vizier over the post of Chief Eunuch. This circumstance, combined with 'Abbâs' Sûfî affinities in an era of unprecedented Kadızadeli influence, could well have contributed to his exile. Further research is needed on the relations of 'Abbâs' predecessors and successors with the Köprülüs, as well as on their Sûfî affiliations.

Where the Hanafî *madhhab* is concerned, however, neither 'Abbâs Aghâ's nor any exiled eunuch's Sûfî affinities are decisive, for both the Kadızadelis and the Khalwatîs of Istanbul adhered to Hanafism. Indeed, they appeared to be contesting the nature of Hanafî orthodoxy, and their contestation appears to have spilled over into Cairo. In Ramadân 1123 H. / October 1711, an incident occurred that has become relatively well known in the secondary literature on Ottoman Egypt. A mob of Turkish soldiers, inspired by the anti-Sûfî rhetoric of a "Rûmî" mosque preacher (from western Anatolia or the eastern Balkans), attacked a Sûfî gathering near Bâb Zuwayla (not far from the *qâḍî* court of al-Qusûn, interestingly enough). In light of their stringently anti-innovationist rhetoric and hostility toward Sûfî practices, the Dutch scholars Barbara Flemming and Rudolph Peters, in separate articles published roughly a decade apart, both described the soldiers as "proto-Wahhâbî".[31] On the other hand, the soldiers were reading the treatise (*Risâle*) of Birgevî Mehmed Efendi, the veritable proof-text of the Kadızadeli movement.[32] In a very recent paper, Professor Flemming observes that the doctrine of the Rûmî mosque preacher and his followers seems to have embodied Hanafî orthodoxy; in other words, it was not proto-Wahhâbî so much as neo-Kadızadeli.[33] The so-called "battered dervishes of Bâb Zuwayla" (Peters' title) were probably not themselves Hanafî. But perhaps the *qâḍî* court at al-Qusûn, with its high volume of exiled eunuch traffic, had become a site for the contestation of Hanafî orthodoxy.

Al-Hâjj Beshîr Aghâ as Hanafî advocate

Against this backdrop, the endowment activities of al-Hâjj Beshîr Aghâ (term 1717-1746) take on added significance. Although he died in office, al-Hâjj Beshîr spent a year or two (1127-1129 H./1715-1716?) in Egypt after being exiled to Cyprus with Uzun Süleymân Aghâ (term 1116-1125 H./1704-1713). In addition, he, like all acting Chief Harem Eunuchs, kept a *wakîl*, or agent, in Cairo to look after his interests and those of the *awqâf* of the Holy Cities (*Awqâf al-Harâmayn*), of which the acting Chief Harem Eunuch was superintendent (*nâẓir*). A 1730 addition to the *waqfiyya* of his *sabîl-kuttâb* in Cairo, studied by 'Abd al-'Azîz Badr and Crecelius, includes a small mosque in Dâr al-Nahhâs in which Friday

[31] Ahmad Çelebi, *Awḍaḥ al-ishârât*, p. 251-54; B. Flemming, "Die vorwahhabitische *Fitna* im osmanischen Kairo", in *İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı'ya Armağan*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Publications 7/70, Ankara, 1976, p. 55-65; R. Peters, "The Battered Dervishes of Bâb Zuwayla: A Religious Riot in Eighteenth-Century Cairo", in Levtzion and Voll (eds.), *Eighteenth-Century Renewal and Reform*, p. 93-115.

[32] Zilfi, *Politics of Piety*, p. 144-45.

[33] B. Flemming, "The Story of the Cairene '*Fitna*' of 1711", paper presented to the symposium "Chronicler's Text, Rebel's Voice", University of Leiden, January 2002.

prayers could be held, almost certainly according to the Hanafî rite.[34] More tellingly, this addition reveals that Beshîr Aghâ endowed a portion of his evidently very extensive library to the *rîwâq* of the Turks at al-Azhar. (A *rîwâq* somewhat resembled a Collège in the Ancien Régime French university system; that is, it was a residential unit typically based on place of origin.)[35] Residents of the Turkish *rîwâq* would have belonged to the not inconsiderable number of Anatolian religious students, including at least one Kadızadeli leader, who had come to Cairo to study, often with the intention of returning to Anatolia to take up positions as *qâḍîs* or mosque preachers.[36] This *rîwâq*, just like the Hanafî *qâḍî* courts, would have needed periodic infusions of manuscripts of critical works of Hanafî law, tradition, and theology. The *waqfiyya* addition specifies a librarian to look after the books, implying that they were not necessarily limited to the *madrasa* curriculum but may have been used by a wider clientele of professional scholars—and, perhaps, other eunuchs.

In the *sabîl-kuttâb* itself, al-Hâjj Beshîr Aghâ provided for a *faqîh* (expert in Islamic law) to instruct the students in Hanafî law.[37] It is important to remember that a *kuttâb* (*mekteb* in Ottoman Turkish) was a primary school and, as such, typically represented the first formal education that young boys received. Indeed, the *waqfiyya* addition specifies that boys attending the *kuttâb* were to learn to read and write, as well as to memorize the Qur'ân. Twenty of these boys (it is not clear whether this represents the total number) were evidently orphans, and the *waqfiyya* provided for their food and clothing, as well as that of the *faqîh*.[38]

To introduce young, underprivileged boys to Hanafî *fiqh* at this early stage of their education constitutes what today would be called "getting them when they're young"—in other words, ensuring that a Hanafî education was available right at the start of a boy's schooling. When we combine al-Hâjj Beshîr Aghâ's meticulous provisions for his *sabil-kuttâb* with his assistance to the *rîwâq* of the Turks at al-Azhar, we can perceive a high Ottoman official who is vitally concerned with the maintenance and promotion of Hanafî education in the Ottoman Empire's largest province. This appears to have been consistent with al-Hâjj Beshîr's practice in other provinces of the empire and in the imperial capital: he endowed a *madrasa* and library in Medina and in the Danubian province of Sistova, as well as mosques, *kuttâb*-s, *madrasa*-s, and libraries in various districts of Istanbul.[39] Meanwhile, N.M. Penzer's plan of Topkapı Palace, drawn in the 1920s, shows al-Hâjj Beshîr Aghâ's ruined mosque just outside the walls.[40]

[34] 'Abd al-'Azîz Badr and Crecelius, "*Awqâf* of al-Hâjj Bashîr Aghâ", p. 300.

[35] Ibid., p. 301. On al-Azhar's *rîwâq*-s, see J. Heyworth-Dunne, *A History of Education in Modern Egypt*, London, 1968, p. 39; B. Dodge, *Al-Azhar: A Millennium of Muslim Learning*, Memorial ed., Washington D.C., 1974, p. 201-206.

[36] Zilfi, *Politics of Piety*, p. 141-143.

[37] 'Abd al-'Azîz Badr and Crecelius, "*Awqâf* of al-Hâjj Bashîr Aghâ", p. 301.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., p. 295.

[40] N.M. Penzer, *The Harem: An Account of the Institution as It Existed in the Palace of the Turkish Sultans, with a History of the Grand Seraglio from Its Foundation to Modern Times*, 2nd ed., New York, 1993 [1965], plan inserted between, p. 160-161.

Conclusion

In sum, harem eunuchs exiled to Cairo—and even those, like al-Hâjj Beshîr, still in office in Istanbul—seem to have been fairly aggressive promoters of the official Hanafî *madhhab* in Egypt, as well as in other Ottoman provinces and in Istanbul itself. In Egypt, their pro-Hanafî activity arguably carried a certain degree of urgency since this *madhhab* was underrepresented, relative to the Shâfi'î and Mâlikî *madhhab*-s, in the highest ranks of Egypt's ulema. With the emergence in the late seventeenth century of the office of *Shaykh al-Azhar* (rector of al-Azhar mosque/university) as the focus of orthodox religious authority, furthermore, Hanafî ulema in Cairo were even more decisively overshadowed. For several decades, the *Shaykh al-Azhar* belonged to the Mâlikî *madhhab*; from the late eighteenth century until today, however, he has consistently been a Shâfi'î.[41] The conflict that erupted over the selection of a new *Shaykh al-Azhar* in 1778 illustrates the parlous state of Cairo's Hanafî ulema by this time: the *rîwâq* of the Syrians (al-Shâm) and that of the Turks (al-Atrâk), both Hanafî, split over the Hanafî candidate, Shaykh al-'Arîshî; students from the two *rîwâq*-s even came to blows over whether to support him. This rupture enabled the Shâfi'î candidate, Shaykh al-'Arûsî, to win the post by posing as a compromise candidate.[42]

In this context, the Chief Harem Eunuch's goal appears to have been to ensure that Hanafism remained viable in Egypt: that it be represented not merely by the august religious officials appointed from Istanbul but at all levels of religious and legal education and practice among the populace at large. Toward this end, the eunuchs pursued the quiet but effective strategy of endowing institutions that would serve as sites for Hanafî education and practice and, perhaps most importantly of all, supplying the raw material—books—necessary to maintain Hanafism as a lived reality. This was an integral part of their identity as Ottomans and of their role as representatives of Ottoman culture throughout the empire but with a unique concentration in Egypt. Collectively, the exiled eunuchs were a population of Ottoman culture-bearers to Egypt—a population that was, moreover, long-lasting and continuously renewed.

[41] D. Crecelius, "The Emergence of the *Shaykh al-Azhar* as the Pre-Eminent Religious Leader in Egypt", in *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire*, assembled under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Cairo, 1969, p. 109; Dodge, *Al-Azhar*, p. 193-194.

[42] 'Abd al-Rahmân b. Hasan al-Jabartî (1754-1825), *'Ajâ'ib al-âthâr fi'l-tarâjim wa-l-akhbâr*, 7 vols, Cairo, 1958-1967, vol. 3, p. 218, 222-224. Dodge, *Al-Azhar*, p. 88, misrepresents this incident owing to his reliance on the flawed nineteenth-century French translation of al-Jabartî's chronicle.