**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY**
**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**
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**MASTER THESIS**

# REWORKING HISTORY INTO NATIONALISM: ÖMER SEYFETTİN'S PRIMARY SOURCES FOR "HEROES OF YORE"

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**THESIS SUPERVISOR**
**PROF. HALİL BERKTAY**

**ISTANBUL, 2024**

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**by**
**ENİSE AKTAŞ**

**A project submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Turkish Studies**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR**
**PROF. HALİL BERKTAY**

**ISTANBUL, 2024**

APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that, in our opinion, it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Turkish Studies.

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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# ÖZ

## TARİHİ MİLLİYETÇİLİĞE DÖNÜŞTÜRMEK: ÖMER SEYFETTİN'İN "ESKİ KAHRAMANLAR"I İÇİN BAŞVURDUĞU BİRİNCİL KAYNAKLAR

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Bu çalışma, Ömer Seyfettin'in Eski Kahramanlar öykü serisinin içeriği ve kaynakları hakkındadır. Tarihsel ortam ve olaylardan hareketle çeşitli kahramanlık hikâyeleri kurgularken güçlü karakterlere yer veren bu dizi, İslâm tarihinin erken aşamalarından Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun "klasik çağ"ına kadar uzanır. Konuya ilişkin mevcut akademik literatürde, Ömer Seyfettin'in, 16. ve 17. yüzyıl olaylarını kapsayan ve ağırlıklı olarak 17. yüzyıl civarında kaleme alınan klasik Osmanlı tarihlerinden yararlandığına ilişkin gözlem ve tesbitler yer almaktadır. Bu fikri derinleştirmek ve somutlamak amacıyla, bu çalışmada Ömer Seyfettin'in kahramanlık öyküleri tek tek, detaylı bir şekilde okunarak, bu öykülerin zamanı, mekânı ve kişileri incelenecek; anlatılan olaylar dizisi Naima ve Peçevi gibi Osmanlı tarihlerinde geçen "gerçek" olay ve anlatımlarla karşılaştırılacaktır. Bu çerçevede, hikâyeler ile tarihi vesikaların benzerlik ve farklılıkları tartışılacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Eski Kahramanlar, Milliyetçilik, Naima Tarihi, Ömer Seyfettin, Peçevi Tarihi.

ABSTRACT

REWORKING HISTORY INTO NATIONALISM:
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This thesis addresses the contents and original sources of Ömer Seyfettin's series of "Heroes of Yore" (Eski Kahramanlar) stories. In terms of the historical contexts and incidents that these stories rework into heroic fiction revolving around powerful protagonists, they range from Early Islamic history to the "classical age," so-called of the Ottoman Empire. In the existing scholarly literature on this subject, it has been repeatedly noted that Ömer Seyfettin was inspired mostly by 17th-century Ottoman accounts of events in 16th and 17th-century Ottoman history. By way of pursuing, deepening, and concretizing this idea, Ömer Seyfettin's stories of past heroism will be subjected to close readings in terms of their setting, time frame, and cast of characters. Subsequently, their narrative will be compared with the "real" events as described by Ottoman historians such as Naima or Peçevi. This will pave the way for discussing the similarities and differences between fiction and historical evidence.

**Keywords:** Heroes of Yore, Naima's History, Nationalism, Ömer Seyfettin, Peçevi's History.

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Enise Aktaş
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

In the Tanzimat era, the Ottoman Empire went through a set of transformations that originated in rivalry with Europe and were mainly based on emulating what was happening in Europe. Waves of Western-style reforms began to be introduced from the top down of the state, which eventually began to impact Ottoman society. Beginning from this period until the Republican era, the late Ottoman and Turkish societies went through processes of Westernization led by Tanzimat, Unionist, and Kemalist bureaucrats, elites, and authors.

Together with state-level reforms that took place in the 19th century, Westernization continued to carry its influence into many other fields, including literature. Nationalism originated in Europe as one of the main ideologies of the 19th century and became widely known and followed by intellectual environments in empires outside Europe. Ottoman intellectuals also took their share of Nationalism, which had a significant impact on their worldview and hence also on their works. It was in this overall framework that Ömer Seyfettin came into prominence with his story-writing skills, so his works contributed to producing a national narrative of history, including especially those that he wrote as part of the initial launching of a National Literature movement by Enver Paşa. By that time, Turkish nationalism, emerging as Turkism (in contradistinction from Ottomanism), was becoming systematic and regular with strong ideological foundations. Turkish language, history, culture and civilization were considered issues that needed to be addressed to awaken national consciousness.[1]

Rıza Nur is known as a politician who was against the *İttihadists*, the Committee of Union and Progress. He was exiled by the CUP in power because of his activities in Albania. When the Ottoman Empire was defeated in World War I, he returned and joined the National Struggle. In his autobiography *Hayat ve Hatıratım,* he points out

[1] Bahri Kuş (2013), 11.

the importance of writing heroic stories. He speaks of how he was significantly influenced by the heroic stories he read in his childhood about Turkish heroes such as Battal Gazi. He argues that it is essential to create a heroic national discourse through stories capable of affecting the next generations. In this way, people can feel and identify with heroism through their ancestors.[2] To be able to create a nation that is united, history must play a crucial role. Erol Ogur summarizes the motivation and the ideology behind creating a national history in the paragraph below:

> Nations must know and have opinions about their histories, drawing strength from them when envisioning their futures. When shaping visions and ideals about the future of a nation, it is crucial to awaken historical consciousness in individuals. Historical consciousness does not emerge spontaneously; rather, it arises by examining time, space, and circumstances through historical knowledge and interpreting what is seen in the context of the values of the lived moment. In this way, it may be possible for the nation to overcome adverse conditions and make strides toward the future.[3]

Hence it was that while shifting from Ottomanism to Turkism, late 19th or early 20th century writers and politicians were searching for a glorious past. As I have indicated, Rıza Nur explicitly poses this question. As for his response, he looks back to stories that date back to pre-Islamic or early Islamic Turkish states and heroes. In contrast, Ömer Seyfettin takes another route concerning the same problem. He, too, wants to create a national narrative of a glorious Turkish history. Still, he prefers to do it through Ottoman history and based on Ottoman sources available to a late Ottoman intellectual. Occasionally, he writes stories that are rooted in Islamic history, but only by placing Turkish elements here and there. His stories about mostly Ottoman and, to a minor extent also, Islamic history showcase strong, virtuous, clever, and ambitious heroes. It is generally agreed that they played a crucial role in national literature and the discourse of national history at the beginning of the 20th century.

In Ömer Seyfettin's "Heroes of Yore" series[4], it is possible to come across various events that take place in Ottoman history that, even at first reading, hint at originating in narratives by famous Ottoman period historians or chroniclers such as Peçevi or

[2] Rıza Nur (1993), 23.
[3] My translation from: Erol Ogur (2011), 92.
[4] This is Halil Berktay's translation of the original Turkish title *Eski Kahramanlar*. As I shall be explaining later (in section 4.3), it is Prof. Berktay's unpublished Ömer Seyfettin translations that I have used, with his permission and approval, throughout this thesis.

Naima[5]. One of my research questions is uncovering the connection between these past works and Ömer Seyfettin's stories. This has required a detailed study of these primary Ottoman (narrative) sources, as well as checking their accounts with established modern chronologies and factographies. Another question has to do with the kind of intellectual environment that led Ömer Seyfettin into creating works that revolve around great Ottoman victories in the heyday of the Empire. The shift from the ideology of Ottomanism to Turkism goes hand in hand with changes in the intellectual environment reflecting the passages from the first (1908-1912) phase of CUP rule through its second (1912-1918) phase to the establishment of the Republic. Hence, an inquiry into Ömer Seyfettin's approach to ideologically motivated story-writing is capable of shedding some further light on these transitions.

In short, this thesis aims to examine the sources from which Ömer Seyfettin may have drawn inspiration for the historical-themed stories he penned. While Ömer Seyfettin produced works in various genres, including poetry and essays, this study will not comprehensively analyze all his works. Other scholars such as Ali Canip Yöntem, Hülya Argunşah, Ayşe Demir, Duygu Oylubaş Katfar, and Zehra Kaplan have undertaken similar studies, which serve as valuable resources for research on Ömer Seyfettin. Given that Ömer Seyfettin wrote close to 150 stories, even conducting an exhaustive analysis of all his short stories would exceed the scope of this master's thesis. Many of his stories, indeed, depict everyday social life and conflicts or contradictions arising within this context. I am leaving all those aside and focusing only on Ömer Seyfettin's stories deliberately and consciously promoting Turkish nationalism. These constitute nearly thirty stories (out of the aforementioned 150 stories). Even within these, I will concentrate only on a subset of historically framed stories.

This requires some explaining. When examining the narratives saturated with nationalism, we can categorize them into two sub-groups. The first group comprises action-oriented stories directly set in the early 20th century, within the five years before or the ten years after the Young Turks Revolution. They may be said to have a historical dimension, but one is bordering on what may be called current history. These

[5] See my Chapter III for an overview of these histories.

stories include, for example, *Nakarat* (The Refrain), *Tuhaf Bir Zulüm* (A PeculiarTorment), *Hürriyet Bayrakları* (Flags of Liberty), *Primo: Türk Çocuğu* (Primo: A Turkish Boy) or *Beyaz Lâle* (A Pure White Tulip).[6] In these stories, the main protagonists are Turks, positioned as victims, facing and oppressed by the rising Balkan nations of that era, especially Bulgarians, then Greeks, and occasionally Serbians or Armenians. The narrative often revolves around the persecution and injustice suffered by the Turks in the face of the growing and strengthening Balkan nationalisms. Ömer Seyfettin's primary objective in crafting these narratives is to convey the idea that, just as these new and hostile nations have found their identities through nationalism and succeeded in establishing themselves in the territories they have gained from the Ottoman Empire, so the Turks can only survive in this jungle of nationalist infighting by doing as they have done and are doing -- they can overcome all threats and hardships only by upholding national interest and embracing national unity. So, the Turks' oppressors become not only enemies but, paradoxically, models to learn from.

As the Harvard anthropologist Michael Herzfeld suggests, these stories unfold in "social time." He makes the following distinction between "social" and "monumental" time in nationalistic writings:

> Between social and monumental time lies a discursive chasm, separating popular from official understandings of history. Social time is the grist of everyday experience. It is above all the kind of time in which events can-not be predicted but in which every effort can be made to influence them. It is the time that gives events their reality because it encounters each as one of a kind. Monumental time, by contrast, is reductive and generic. It encounters events as realizations of some supreme destiny, and it reduces social experience to collective predictability. Its main focus is on the past -- a past constituted by categories and stereotypes. In its extreme form, it is the time frame of the nation-state.[7]

The second group of stories, as Herzfeld terms it, occurs not in social time but rather in monumental time. Chronologically set in the 16th century, during the peak of Ottoman power, these stories feature Turkish heroes confronting the adversaries and enemies of the Ottoman Empire during that period.[8] The narratives depict the Ottomans engaging in conflict against the other strong kingdoms or empires around

[6] All English titles are taken from Halil Berktay's translations.
[7] Michael Herzfeld (1991), 10.
[8] Ömer Seyfettin avoids using the term Ottoman and always prefers to speak of Turks, even choosing his names to emphasize a non-Ottoman strain of Turkishness.

them: in the west, the Habsburgs and Medieval Hungary, the Venetians at sea, and the occasional Danubian kingdom, plus Safavids (i.e. Contemporary Iran) in the east. Another challenge emerges in the form of occasional independence uprisings in the territories they have subjugated in the West, even if this is relatively new in the 16th century.

It is this sub-group, entrenched in monumental time, that is collectively titled *Eski Kahramanlar* (Heroes of Yore) and which lies at the heart of this thesis. Each story narrates an episode in one of the regions bordering or surrounded by the Ottomans' enemies in this vast geography. Ömer Seyfettin crafts characters that are the opposite of the victims in the first group of stories. Here, his heroes ultimately achieve victory over their adversaries. There are significant connections between these two groups of stories. In the first group, the Turkish heroes (or those representing Turkishness) are in a victimized and oppressed position against the enemies of the early 20th-century Ottoman state. In the second group, the stories set in the 16th century, the Turkish heroes triumph over their enemies in one way or another. This return to past imperial triumphs may perhaps be seen as psychological compensation for the traumas of the present.

The author employs various literary techniques to place these Turkish heroes in challenging situations. Despite the Ottomans being the most powerful state of that era, constantly on the offensive, and achieving victory after victory, Ömer Seyfettin deliberately creates situations where his Turkish heroes find themselves at a disadvantage in the short run. However, they overcome these difficulties not through brute force but through intelligence, agility, and courage. The author thus demonstrates where the path to victory and success lies, even in adverse situations.

Upon first reading these stories, any individual can quickly sense that, for Ömer Seyfettin to have been able to construct such individualized micro-narratives embedded within various macro-historical contexts, he must have been familiar with specific sources of Ottoman history. Someone who had never read any Ottoman history or had no knowledge of it could not have invented such scenarios solely from his own imagination. At the very least, a degree of familiarity with a period and culture, a sense of background and atmosphere, as well as knowledge of inter-state conflicts,

including an understanding of how specific wars unfolded, would be necessary. These are not things that can be concocted without any knowledge of history. As we go through individual stories, I believe this will become apparent in all its clarity.

In order to carry this project through, it is essential to examine the stories making up Ömer Seyfettin's Heroes of Yore series one by one. After briefly introducing the author, his life, intellectual character, and his works, I will try to convey a general picture of the time period he lived in and the intellectual and political environment he was producing for. Then, each story that Ömer Seyfettin wrote under the umbrella title Heroes of Yore will be studied to find related passages from the relevant Ottoman sources. Finding out the actual events that these stories refer to requires further study of the secondary sources that cover specific topics such as the Ottoman-Habsburg or the Ottoman-Safavid wars. Only in that way will it be possible to pinpoint the actual date and place of the events that are referred to by Ömer Seyfettin in his stories.

Over 1908-1912, Ömer Seyfettin increasingly supported the transition from Ottomanism to Turkism, as advocated by the radical Unionists of the time, stating that Ottomanism had failed to achieve the desired goal of holding the empire together. He reflected on this transformation and trauma through the series Heroes of Yore, as well as a few other stories that he wrote for a projected new series on New Heroes (*Yeni Kahramanlar*). It resulted in a romantic writing that embodied national sentiments, including nostalgia for and glorification of the past. This was not unique to Ottoman Turkey. The entire 19th century witnessed various countries experiencing similar quests for romantic national literature. The latter half of the 19th century is considered an era of Romanticism and Nationalism in painting, music, and literature. Especially in Central and Eastern Europe as well as Scandinavia, romanticizing the national past was omnipresent. In the realm of music, figures like Zoltan Kodaly and Béla Bartók from Hungary, Bedřich Smetana and Antonín Dvořák from Bohemia, Edvard Grieg and Jean Sibelius from Scandinavia, and numerous national composers in Russia such as Aleksandr Borodin, Nikolay Rimski-Korsakov, Mily Balakirev, and Modest Mussorgsky played influential roles in popularizing this genre. Similarly, in the field of romantic English national history, Sir Walter Scott emerged as a prominent figure.

The agony of becoming a nation was also witnessed in Poland, a country with the tragic fate that was just barely evaded by Ottoman Turkey. Poland lost its independence through three successive partitionings in the late 18th century. The rise of Romanticism coincides with Poland losing its independence. Faced with occupation by the Austrian and Russian empires and aspiring to gain independence, Poland gave rise to a literature of nationalism. Polish Romanticism, unlike romanticism in other parts of Europe, was largely characterized by a movement for independence against foreign occupation. The Romantic movement in Poland considered the pinnacle of Polish literature, reflected the ideals and traditions of the Polish people. Friedrich Chopin became the greatest exponent of this emotion in music. Major poets, too, reflected this national tragedy of the loss of independence in their poetry. Three great Romantic poets who hold authority and vision in interpreting Poland's tragic fate are Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, and Zygmunt Krasiński. By writing in exile, they kept alive their belief in the restoration of Poland's independence. The poets' interest and dedication added strength and passion to the literature of the Polish Romantic movement.

Similar examples can be found in all geographies where tortuous nation-building processes went hand in hand with romantic and nationalist literary movements. The National Literature movement, of which Ömer Seyfettin was a part, should ultimately be seen in this broader context.

# CHAPTER II

# ÖMER SEYFETTİN
# IN HISTORY AND PUBLIC MEMORY

To state the obvious, Ömer Seyfettin is a renowned Turkish author. He is one of the most prominent figures in Turkish literature in the early 20th century. He played a crucial role in shaping the foundations of modern Turkish literature with his exceptional narrative skills and insightful observations of society. He is best known for his short stories. Some of them have been required reading in primary and middle schools in Turkey for a long time. The construction of a national identity remained on the agenda of numerous governments for a long time. The works of Ömer Seyfettin were considered very suitable for this program. He lived a very short life, but he still continues to influence Turkish literature and society.

## 2.1. A Short Biography

Ömer Seyfettin was born on March 11, 1884, in Gönen county of Balıkesir province. He was the son of Fatma Hanım and Major Ömer Şevki Bey. Ömer Seyfettin's early education was spent at a number of different schools. His father's postings as an officer required him to move from one place to another. In 1893, at the age of nine, when his mother came to Istanbul with him, he was enrolled in a veterinary school in Eyüp. After his graduation from this school in 1896, he enrolled in the military high school in Edirne in the same year. He completed his secondary education in 1900. He was then enrolled in the higher level of the Military School (*Mekteb-i Harbiye-i Şahane*) in Istanbul. On 2 August 1903, there was a sudden need for more officers in the army due to the insurgent guerrilla movements that were flaring up in Macedonia. Students who were in their last year, including Ömer Seyfettin, were considered “graduated” in advance in order to be sent to that region as soon as possible.

Before his appointment as a lieutenant in Izmir, he was on field duty in Thessaloniki and Manastır. “For two years, he was involved with pursuing guerrillas in border settlements in the Balkans such as Velmefçe, Prilepe, Osenova, Pirbelice, Serez, Shtip, Babina, Demirhisar, Cumayibala, Razlık.”[9] He was subsequently awarded two merit medals.

While serving in the military, he also took his first steps into politics, language, and literature. He began to teach at various institutions. He embarked upon writing articles supporting the leadership of the Committee of Union and Progress. When he was transferred to Thessaloniki in 1909, he became part of a new editorial nucleus (together with Ali Canip Yöntem and Ziya Gökalp) that took over publishing the journal *Genç Kalemler* (Young Pens) from 1910-1912. Here, he also started the literary movement called *Yeni Lisan* (The New Language). This movement, which received financial support from the Committee of Union and Progress, was interrupted by the outbreak of the Balkan War in 1912. He fought against the Serbian armies at Komanova and the Greeks at Ioannina. He was taken prisoner by the Greek army at Kanlıtepe on January 20, 1913.[10]

After about ten months of captivity, he benefited from the mutual prisoner exchange, and upon his return to Istanbul, he resigned from the military. He resumed writing while also working as a literature teacher at Kabataş High School in Istanbul. The articles he wrote after his captivity include details about how the Balkan guerrilla groups built nationalism and how the Turks fought in these regions. After this period, heroism became a recurrent theme in his stories. He also described the atrocities committed by Bulgarians, Serbians, and Greeks in detail, sometimes in a very explicit way. After the rebellions he witnessed, Ömer Seyfettin decided that the idea of “Ottomanism” had lost its validity. Hence, he became an essential representative of the rising Turkism ideology in those years.[11]

Even during the occupation of Istanbul, he continued to write and publish. Under the leadership of Zekeriya and Sabiha Sertel, and together with many influential writers

[9] Nâzım Hikmet Polat (2011), 19.
[10] Polat (2011), 1, 19.
[11] Melih Erzen (2014), 283.

such as Ali Canip, Falih Rıfkı, and Halide Edip, they supported the national struggle. In 1919, he published the story *Forsa* in the journal *Büyük Mecmua*, a story similar in spirit to the Heroes of Yore series that he had started to publish in the journal *Yeni Mecmua* in 1917. I will go into this problem in section 4.4.10 below.

Due to an undiagnosed case of diabetes, he fell acutely ill and died on March 4, 1920, in İstanbul. He was later buried at Zincirlikuyu Cemetery. Passing away at the young age of thirty-six, Ömer Seyfettin left behind a huge corpus.

### 2.2. Writing Style, and Historical and Ideological Background

Ömer Seyfettin's literary contribution has been instrumental in the development of modern Turkish literature. Ömer Seyfettin greatly influenced the development of the short story genre in Turkish literature with his dynamic plots, as well as his simple and understandable language. His advocacy of a simplified, accessible Turkish in literature conformed with the ideas of Ziya Gökalp and Baha Tevfik. His short stories, in particular, are witnesses (almost documentaries) of the period between 1908 and 1920, depicting important developments in Ottoman history as well as the main (competing) currents of Ottomanism, Islamism, and Turkism.[12]

Ömer Seyfettin believed that Turkish society had to find (what he saw as) its roots and embrace (what he regarded as) its true national identity in order to be able to survive the wars and invasions closing in on it and to create a stronger state. After the end of World War I and the fall of the CUP, in the short period before his death in 1920, true to his Turkist nationalism Ömer Seyfettin had already committed himself to supporting the National Struggle. This has provided him with further and enduring legitimacy from the vantage point of the eventually victorious Republican nation-state. It has also led to approaches tending to reduce him to his ideology. Literary critics and historians, who are mostly in search of national identity in his stories, have preferred to set off from the life of Ömer Seyfettin, instead of from a text-centered approach, and to explain his stories purely on the basis of his years of military service and captivity in the Balkans, as well as his activities in and around the CUP.[13] As a result, the nationalist

[12] Umut Uzer (2019), 363.
[13] Serkan Özdemir (2011), 1.

side of Ömer Seyfettin has received most of the attention in academic studies. Furthermore, this has happened within an intellectual framework that, to the extent that it is disconnected from the last fifty years' critical developments in international scholarship, tends to naturalize nationalism.

On one level, of course, it is true that Ömer Seyfettin's war experience and close relations with the CUP as well as other Turkist intellectuals was a major factor in shaping his ideology, and thereby also influencing his approach to writing. This much cannot be faulted. But can this approach, which we can perhaps summarize as "he lived like this; therefore, he wrote like this," provide a complete explanation? Is ideology only a one-to-one "[objective] reflection" of materiality, or does it also have its "[subjective] constructed" side, which then becomes a force capable of creating its own "reality"? A fuller understanding of the intellectual and ideological framework of Ömer Seyfettin, and grasping the purpose (or the messages) behind his stories necessitates an examination of the period he lived in and the ideological context surrounding him.

### 2.3. A New Generation of Nationalism Studies

Ömer Seyfettin's ideological outlook can be situated within the nationalist ideology and movements that reached the shores of the Ottoman Empire starting from the late 18th century. The winds of democracy blowing from the French Revolution challenged monarchy and aristocracy. Simultaneously, the conflicts involving France and other European countries intensified to the extent that not only did the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity spread, but nationalism also gained prominence. Alongside the liberation of the people, this other ideology began to prioritize one's own nation above all else. This perspective, although not entirely consistent with other ideologies in Europe, went unnoticed for a while because of the presence of European empires within Europe – the Russian Empire, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottomans. All three were dynastic monarchies led by a czar, emperor, or sultan, at the same time encompassing numerous ethnic and religious groups. For those opposing these empires, two reasons were prevalent, often overlapping. First, there was opposition to autocracy, dynastic rule, or a feudal system, which meant a demand for freedom, democracy, land reform, a parliamentary system, and a constitution. This was

liberalism, or the liberal package. Second, many sought rights, freedom, and even independence specifically for their own nation, their own ethnic and religious community. This was nationalism, or the national(ist) package. Hence, there were moments of convergence between these two sets of demands in certain contexts within Europe. These opponents of empires could be both democratic and nationalist for a while, as exemplified by the Young Turks. However, eventually, all these groups began to prioritize their own nation over freedom and democracy for all.

For some time, these two ideologies of liberalism and nationalism coexisted during the transition from the 18th to the 19th century. Those rebelling against or opposing Russian rule in Poland, or those supporting Greek independence against Ottoman rule in the Balkans, could position themselves as both democrats and friends of Poland, or both democrats and friends of Greece. Throughout the first half of the 19th century, liberal-democratic revolutions dominated, with movements like the 1830 and 1848 revolutions following the 1815 Congress of Vienna, long after the end of the French Revolution.

These were revolutions where the primary agenda was still the overthrow of autocracy. However, for complex reasons that cannot be detailed in this thesis, when the wave of 1848-1850 subsided, there was a noticeable decrease in repeated liberal-democratic revolutionary attempts. In their place, there was a growing focus on national revolutions, nationalist ideology, and nation-building projects. Nationalists formulated their own agendas and programs. In Europe, during the late 19th century and the early 20th century, for a span of fifty or sixty years, nationalist movements and national revolutionary efforts took center stage. There were primarily two types: some fragmented ethno-linguistic communities, politically divided, attempted to unite as a single nation and form a national unity. The most striking examples are Germany and Italy, where their national unity struggles that began in the 1850s culminated successfully in 1870, resulting in the establishment of a large German national unity and a large Italian national unity. Thus, both Germany and Italy became nation-states, taking their place in European politics.

On the other hand, ethnic and religious communities within the three previously mentioned traditional empires engaged in a struggle for their rights and progressively

escalated this struggle step by step. This process, examined in detail by the Czech historian Miroslav Hroch, began with the intellectual and cultural activities of small groups of intellectuals, whom Hroch provisionally calls patriots:

> We shall use the word patriots to denote those individuals who consciously, of their own volition, and over a long period of time, devoted their activities to the support of the national movement, endeavoring in particular to diffuse patriotic attitudes.[14]

They came together, formed associations, published materials, gathered around journals, and, through books and articles, aimed to prove the ancient existence of their nation with its culture, folklore, songs, dances, music, legends, epics, and other literature. Over time, these activities attracted more readers and supporters, forming increasingly larger segments of the population who shared these ideas and feelings. According to Hroch, in the second stage, this cultural and intellectual activity expanded toward cultural-political demands. They began demanding the right to publish in their own language, establish schools teaching in their own language, and have the right to register their national identity in censuses -- in other words, the right to be recognized as a Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Slovenian, Serbian or Croatian. Additionally, they progressively demanded the right to establish their political parties, participate in elections, and have representation in parliament, even within the framework of a constitutional monarchy, asserting the right to express "our" rights as "who we are." This can be considered part of the second stage.

As Hroch elucidates, these expanded rights eventually extended beyond equality to independence.[15] Looking at numerous examples in Central and Eastern Europe, it is evident that the path to an independent nation-state often involved fragmentation. The dissolution of the Russian Empire and years later, the Soviet Union, resulted in the emergence of states such as the Ukrainian People's Republic, the Belarusian Democratic Republic, and the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic (including Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan), which then splintered further along ethnic lines. The disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire led to the creation of the nation-states of the Republic of Austria, the Kingdom of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia then broke up through violent

[14] Miroslav Hroch (2000), 14.
[15] Hroch (2000), 11.

civil wars in the post-communist era to give rise to Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Kosovo. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire gave rise to numerous states in the Balkans, Caucasia, and the Middle East, including Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Albania, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Yemen, Oman and others. In sum, more than seventy states emerged in Europe, as well as the neighboring regions of Caucasia and the Middle East, after the dissolution of these three empires.

The analyses and approach that Miroslav Hroch initiated in the late 1960s and 1970s brought about a significant transformation in nationalism studies, transitioning from an objective approach to a subjective approach. By the early 1980s, this shift gained clarity through the contributions of scholars who comprehensively addressed nationalism in their works, including Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*[16], Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism*[17], and a famous compilation called *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Terence Ranger and Eric Hobsbawm.[18] This new approach in the field has emphasized ideological, subjective developments over objective, material-economic developments in the path leading to nation-states. In other words, answers to questions about how a given society became a nation need to be sought in the nationalist ideology that emerged and succeeded within that society. This shift to a subjective approach is crucial in understanding nationalism. How did nationalist thinkers, writers, literary figures, and artists manage to create a "national consciousness" specific to their ethnic and religious communities? In contemporary nationalism studies, the focus has shifted to this realm. This, in turn, underscores the significance of the role played by the generation of Young Turks and members of the Committee of Union and Progress, including Ömer Seyfettin, in the formation of Turkish nationalism through literature.

Ömer Seyfettin's espousal of Turkish nationalism in literature aligns with Miroslav Hroch's subjective approach to nationalism studies and the comprehensive stages he delineates on how nations emerged from empires. The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, one of the three major empires in Europe, set the stage for the emergence of

[16] Benedict Anderson (1991).
[17] Ernest Gellner (1983).
[18] Terence Ranger and E. J Hobsbawm eds (1983).

numerous nations. Ömer Seyfettin wrote extensively about the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of small nations, albeit from a hostile, Turkish nationalist point of view. The nationalist sentiments that arose in the process of Ottoman dissolution led to a struggle for self-preservation, resulting in a clash of nationalisms. Each nationalist movement -- be it Greek, Albanian, Armenian, Serbian, or eventually Kurdish -- sought to carve out territories where they could establish independent states and subsequently expand their territories. Thus, both the Ottoman Empire and these emerging nations found themselves in conflict, creating a clash of nationalisms. This clash entailed a struggle between nationalist movements that were revolting and seeking independence and the Ottoman state. But interestingly, eventually, the Ottoman state found itself in the hands of its Turkish (or Turkish-Muslim) element. As other nations seceded, this Turkish-Muslim element came to stand alone. The Ottoman administration was gradually transformed (or was perceived to be transforming itself) into a Turkish administration. Consequently, the conflict between the departing nations and the Ottoman Empire evolved into multiple struggles between Turkish nationalism and the departing nations.

Ömer Seyfettin's generation lived through this period and experienced the intellectual reactions and psychological stresses of this transformation. Nations pursuing independence viewed the Ottoman state as a hostile entity, and as it came into the hands of Unionist nationalism, as even more of a hostile entity. Following the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, a rapid shift from Ottomanism to Turkism occurred within four or five years. The Unionists initially pursued the ideal of Ottomanism, emphasizing the unity of all ethnic elements. However, the rising wave of nationalism compelled them to transition from Ottomanism to the ideal of Turkism. Ömer Seyfettin and many intellectuals of his generation found themselves in the midst of this seismic shift throughout their lives. Reflecting the collapse of the empire in every dimension of his life, his past, and his family, Ömer Seyfettin became a writer who embodied the Turkish nationalist reaction to this imperial downfall.

Hailing from a family of Turkish-Muslim refugees from Caucasia who fled Russian expansion, Ömer Seyfettin's father joined the army in his new country when the family was uprooted from their homeland. In the next generation, Ömer Seyfettin also became part of the rapidly modernizing army, thereby situating himself within the new

military-bureaucratic class created by Tanzimat reforms. Embracing the values and education of this class, he enrolled in the gendarmerie officer school, and prior to the 1908 Revolution, when Macedonia became critical due to the activities of especially Bulgarian *komitacis*, he was among the young officer candidates sent on "anti-brigandage" missions before having fully graduated. He incorporated some of these painful experiences into his stories. For instance, around 1904-1906, he witnessed the active disdain of Bulgarian nationalism towards Turkish-Ottoman rule and wrote it into his story *Nakarat* (The Refrain).[19]

It was after the 1908 revolution that Seyfettin entered the literary scene, advocating Unionism and aligning himself closely with Enver Pasha. He contributed articles to almost all the new Turkish nationalist journals, with the most significant being *Türk Yurdu* and *Halka Doğru*. These were the two most important journals produced by the Turkish nationalists of that era. Conforming to Hroch's envisaged pattern, this intellectual group produced literature with high nationalist sentiments. The two journals delved into research on Turkish culture, literature, epics, and folklore, particularly exploring Turkish history. They staunchly defended Turkish nationalism against Ottomanism.

When the First Balkan War ended in defeat, the Ottoman Empire lost its remaining territories in Southeast Europe. In response to this defeat, Turkish nationalism gained momentum. The Unionist leadership of that era seized the opportunity created by the defeat's impact on the state, and employed their Special Organization to carry out the Bab-ı Ali Raid. This raid, personally led by Enver Pasha, constituted a military coup against the established Ottoman government. Ömer Seyfettin's proximity to the Unionist leadership can be inferred from his role of standing watch outside the building. His special relationship with Enver Pasha is also evident from the epitaph at the beginning of his story *Mehmâemken*.[20]

As reflected in that epitaph, after the defeat in the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 Enver Pasha undertook significant military reforms. Young, ambitious, and ideologically committed officers were promoted everywhere. They enabled the war effort to be

[19] Argunşah (1991c), 17.
[20] Argunşah (1991c), 290.

sustained for four years. Despite initial victories such as the Gallipoli campaign, the situation began to deteriorate around 1917. The Ottoman economy, general socio-economic backwardness, the tax system, the inadequacy of production, and a demographic collapse due to territorial losses, all contributed to the worsening situation. Crucially, Germany, the great ally on whose military machine the Unionists had placed such high hopes, also failed to deliver. Enver Pasha had placed great confidence in Germany's war machine, but the situation did not unfold as expected, leading to Germany's decline.

In response to this deterioration, Enver Pasha initiated a literary effort to boost the morale of especially the capital's elite and to launch a new public mobilization. This initiative marked the inception of the National Literature movement in Turkey. Artists, writers and intellectuals were summoned and asked to create literature that would strengthen the fighting spirit of the Ottoman people and uphold nationalism. Ömer Seyfettin took a prominent role in this literary mobilization and emerged as one of its most successful contributors. All the stories in the Heroes of Yore (*Eski Kahramanlar*) series were written and published, one after the other, in that same year of 1917.

As mentioned earlier, the stories in this series predominantly focus on the 16th century rather than the early 20th century, stepping back four hundred years from the day's worsening defeat to the peak of the Ottoman Empire. The author attempts to instill morale and fighting spirit into contemporary society by highlighting selected triumphs of the Turks in Suleimanic times. Through these stories, he suggests that what the Turks achieved in the 16th century can be replicated, also sending a message about the conditions that led to imperial success (such as absolute obedience to the state). Ömer Seyfettin calls on society to adopt all the values needed to triumph against adversity in modern times.

To write these stories, Ömer Seyfettin relied on his knowledge of Ottoman history. What were the sources at his disposal? What did Ömer Seyfettin read as an elite intellectual of that time? What was the cultural accumulation during the Tanzimat period, the reign of Abdulhamid II, and the Second Constitutional Era? Where did the intellectuals of that era stand between traditional culture and modern education?

These questions bring us back to the discussion of what works, books or other readings were included in the general cultural formation of late Ottoman intellectuals. This leads to the examination of the relationship between Ömer Seyfettin and contemporary Ottoman historians. What did these individuals know and read? They belonged to generations before the new Republic's Alphabet Reform of 1928 -- generations who had grown up in a cultural world of Ottoman Turkish and the Ottoman script, who therefore had access to centuries of "traditional" learning, in the form of both manuscripts and printed books, that later generations without special training would not be able to read. We know, for example, that Ömer Seyfettin read Nev'î-zâde Atâyî, and reworked one of the tales in Hamse-i Atâyî into his own *Tos* (The Butt) story.[21] Hence it would not be far-fetched to assume that they would also be familiar with famous 16th and 17th-century historians such as Peçevi or Naima, as well as more recent products of Oriental Studies like Hammer or Leon Cahun that were making their printed way in as examples of Western learning to the consciousness and cultural acquisitions of late Ottoman intellectuals.

The question of how much Ömer Seyfettin knew about Peçevi, Naima or Hammer before 1917 has not been explicitly addressed in the existing scholarly literature. This thesis can provide not a precise, biographically-grounded answer to this question. But it can provide a more general answer. My investigations of the plots and contexts of individual stories should make it clear that he had already read these authors, and knew what he was looking for. In other words, he cannot have been starting from scratch to research Ottoman history just and he was sitting down to write his Heroes of Yore stories.

[21] See the introduction to my next Chapter III. For the story itself, see Argunşah (1999c).

# CHAPTER III

# HISTORICAL SOURCES IN OVERVIEW

Ömer Seyfettin was an intellectual of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. We are living in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. There is a gap of at least a century between his time and ours. Over this interval, there have been significant societal transformations, with the most prominent being the 1928 shift to the Latin alphabet, known as the Alphabet Reform. Since the late 1920s, we belong to generations that read and write Turkish using the new Turkish alphabet based on Latin letters. Texts written in the "old script" (*eski yazı*) and not converted to the new alphabet are outside the cultural realm for new generations. However, for Ömer Seyfettin and his generation, it was a different situation. They belonged to generations that could read anything in the "old script." They read and knew sources that we, as part of our general culture, do not read and do not know. An example of this can be found in Ömer Seyfettin's own story *Tos*.

The protagonist of the short story *To*s is Fatma Hanım, a wealthy and pious woman whose entire family consists of pilgrims and scholars. Fatma Hanım's problem is the sexually predatory behavior of her husband of twenty years towards Makbule, a seventeen-year-old in their household. Additionally, the husband has accustomed a sacrificial ram, which Fatma Hanım couldn't bear to sacrifice, to butt people with its horns. The once docile animal now attacks everyone. She prays to Allah, asking for her husband to feel ashamed of his actions. One day, while hosting guests at home, Fatma Hanım instructs Makbule to join the religious gathering, satying out in the hall but looking in from the door. When her husband sees Makbule in this state, he approaches her from behind while saying "hush" for her to keep quiet and not resist. At that moment, the untethered ram hears the word "hush" and understands it to be the command "tos," promptly attacking and butting the man from behind, causing him and Makbule to fall in front of all the guests, humiliating them. Thus, Fatma Hanım's prayer is accepted.

Ömer Seyfettin's story *Tos* is a clear indication of his familiarity with old Ottoman sources. The narrative in the story closely follows the fifteenth *nefha* of Nev'î-zâde Atâyî's second *mesnevi* titled *Nefhatü'l-ezhâr*. [22] Obviously, Ömer Seyfettin had read Atâyî, also seen the miniature of the final grotesque scene, and borrowed the plot in its entirety, reworking it into a modern (early 20th century) social satire story. [23]

This example alone provides a serious insight into the cultural and literary knowledge of late Ottoman Turkish intellectuals from Ömer Seyfettin's generation, a cultural and literary tradition that later weakened or disappeared. It makes it much more plausible to assume that if he could do this with *Hamse-i Atâyî*, surely he would be even more familiar, and could therefore do much more with famous historians like Naima or Peçevî.

### 3.1. Peçevi's History

Peçevi İbrahim Efendi was born in 1574 in the city of Pecs in Hungary that was then part of the Ottoman Empire. His early education included a rigorous study of Islamic learning, languages and literature. This laid the foundations for his future role as a chronicler. In his youth he lived through the heyday of Ottoman power under Murad III and Mehmed III. H cam to be referred to as Peçuyî, Peçuylu and Peçevi due to his birthplace. He is typically referred to as Peçevi in Ottoman historiography.

Most of the information regarding his life comes from his own writings.[24] On his mother's side, he came from the illustrious Bosnian family of the Sokollus (Sokolovici). The turning point in Peçevi's career was his entry into the service of the Ottoman government. His official positions included working in the financial administration, which allowed him to gain a unique perspective on the inner workings of the Ottoman state. This firsthand experience enriched his historical writings with insights into the empire's political, economic and social affairs.

[22] Osman Ünlü (2007), 236.
[23] Tunca Kortantamer (1997), 428.
[24] İbrahim Pazan (2023), 50.

Developing into a distinguished Ottoman historian and chronicler, Peçevi played a crucial role in preserving and narrating the events that shaped the Ottoman Empire. His great work is known as *Peçevi Tarihi* (Peçevi's History) or *Peçuylu Tarihi* (Peçuylu's History). Completed in 1656, this comprehensive narrative covers the history of the Ottoman Empire from its beginnings to the 17th century. Specific events stretch from the enthronement of Suleiman the Magnificent until the death of Murat IV. He supplemented the sources he used with references to several other historians as well as people that he quoted as eyewitnesses. He also utilized Hungarian sources, and added them to his work especially when the Ottoman sources in the chapters concerning various peace treaties did not provide enough information.

İbrahim Efendi continued to work on his book until he passed away. *Peçevi Tarihi* provides not only a meticulous account of political events, but also insights into the cultural, economic and military aspects of Ottoman society. His work served as a resource for historians who came after him, like Cevri or Naima. It is still one of the main narrative sources that Ottoman historians commonly consult today. It is a work that continued to be regarded as part of the requisite intellectual formation of a well-read late Ottoman intellectual into the early 20th century.

### 3.2. Naima's History

Another famous Ottoman historian, known as Naîmâ, whose real name was Mustafa Na'îm, and who eventually adopted Naîmâ as his pen name, coming to be known in this way throughout his career as a historian. He was born in Aleppo in 1655 to an affluent family of notables descended from his grandfather, who as a retired janissary officer has settled in Aleppo. He began his education in Aleppo and continued it at the Enderûn school in Istanbul. During Amcazade Hüseyin Pasha's grand vizierate (1697-1702), in the year 1700, he started working in the palace as the first official court historian of the Ottoman Empire.

It was also Amcazade Hüseyin Pasha who assigned him the task of writing a history starting from incomplete drafts of an earlier work on events of the 1591-1659 that was in the grand vizier's library. In response, Naîmâ sat down to write his renowned work, known by its full title as *Ravdat-ül-Hüseyn fî Hülâsâ-i Ahbâr-il-Hâfikayn,* which is

commonly referred to as *Tarih-i Naima* or Naima's History. It narrates the events of a period spanning nearly eighty years from 1574 to 1659. Naima also added a preface to this work. In this preface, unlike other historians before him, Naîmâ explains how he looks at events and evaluates them. Among his sources he used Peçevi and Katip Çelebi, and also tried to apply Ibn Haldun's sociological approach to history. We can infer from various details in Ömer Seyfettin's stories, that he, too, must have been a keen reader of Naima's History.

### 3.3. Hammer's Ottoman History

Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1774–1856) was an Austrian diplomat who built on his foreign ministry experience to also become an orientalist and historian, making a significant contribution to the study of the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century. His extensive and comprehensive work, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches* (History of the Ottoman Empire) remains one of the most notable and influential accounts of Ottoman history.

Born in Graz, Austria, Hammer began his career as a diplomat but soon developed a keen interest in Oriental Studies. His passion for the East, more specifically the Middle East, led him to learn several languages, including Arabic and Turkish, and he eventually became one of the leading European scholars on Ottoman history and culture.

Hammer's magnum opus, his *History of the Ottoman Empire*, was published in multiple volumes between 1827 and 1835. This monumental work covered the entire history of the Ottoman Empire from its early origins to the 18th century, providing a thorough examination of its political, military, cultural, and social aspects. The depth of his research and the meticulous attention to detail made this work a reference point for scholars and researchers studying the Ottoman Empire.

One of the key features of Hammer's approach was his reliance on Ottoman primary sources, a departure from many of his contemporaries who often relied on secondary European accounts. By consulting original Ottoman documents and manuscripts, Hammer aimed to offer a more authentic and nuanced portrayal of Ottoman history.

This emphasis on primary sources added credibility to his work and contributed to a more accurate understanding of the empire's development. Hammer's work was not received uncritically, as even at the time some scholars questioned his interpretation of certain events and his reliance on translated texts. Nonetheless, his dedication to the study of Ottoman history and his contributions to the field were widely acknowledged.

In its own time, Joseph von Hammer's *History of the Ottoman Empire* represented a jump from earlier forms or stages of Oriental Studies, such as Antiquarianism, Linguistics, or Religion, to genuine History. Hence for 19th century Ottoman intellectuals, it also constituted a first introduction to Western scholarship and methodology brought to bear on Ottoman history. It was also a first encounter with how the Ottoman state and civilization was being seen from the outside.

As European production in Turcology and Ottoman historical studies increase over the rest of the century, this new stream of learning became more and more important for Ottoman-Turkish readers of Hammer, Leon Cahun, and other Orintalist scholars. There are relatively few passages that Ömer Seyfettin utilizes directly from Hammer, and they can also be found in earlier Ottoman sources. Nevertheless, Hammer’s commitment to scholarly rigor, linguistic expertise, and reliance on primary sources made him a landmark for generations.

# CHAPTER IV

# "HEROES OF YORE"

## 4.1. The Background to the "Heroes of Yore" Series

As part of the National Literature initiative under the leadership of Enver Pasha, over 1917-1918 Ömer Seyfettin aimed to contribute to the war effort through literature by publishing a number of stories in the periodical *Yeni Mecmua*. He believed that national consciousness should reach every segment of society. Therefore, in addition to stories addressing everyday topics, he also penned tales extolling heroism in wartime. In his stories under the heading *Eski Kahramanlar* (Heroes of Yore), Seyfettin focused on historical (monumental) time, highlighting heroic archetypes, aiming to uplift and boost morale in society and the army by reminding people of the inherent qualities of their nation. During the same period, he also wrote a number of stories under the *Yeni Kahramanlar* (New Heroes) heading, reflecting the positive atmosphere rsulting from victory at Gallipoli. Included in this category are: *Bir Çocuk: Aleko* (A Child Called Aleko), *Müjde* (Glad Tidings), and *Kaç Yerinden* (In How Many Places). Particularly noteworthy is his comparison of modern soldiers fighting in the contemporary era with with his "heroes of yore." In *Kaç Yerinden*, he feigns self-criticism for not having recognized that Turkish soldiers in World War I are worthy of greater praise than those of bygone centuries. This is a complicated literary device: Ömer Seyfettin is eulogizing the past to energize the present, and then he is also holding that present as superior to the past (again by way of further energizing the present).

At the same time, he is aware of a crucial aspect: many of the regions once dominated by the Ottoman Empire have already been lost, while others have sunk (or are sinking more and more) into worsening conflict. To evoke the memory of the extensive Ottoman rule in distant lands, he places events making up the Heroes of Yore series in either eastern or western border regions, emphasizing the past greatness and territorial

integrity of the empire. Each story, set in different regions, features heroes with distinct character traits and yet high levels of national commitment held in common, thus embodying the values that Ömer Seyfettin envisions for the Turkish nation. It is important to realize that as a modern Turkish nationalist, Ömer Seyfettin does not embrace everything about Ottoman civilization. Instead, he can be quite critical about, for example, the *devşirme* system, which in his view leads to the subordination of ethnic Turks to ethnically non-Turkish bureaucrats, including the top viziers and grand viziers. This has been recognized in the relevant scholarly literature:

> Ömer Seyfettin, who in these stories occasionally blames the statesmen of the period of Ottoman ascndancy, even Sokullu Mehmet Pasha, attributes the successes nevertheless achieved in these times to the national sensitivity of unnamed heroes and their miraculous personalities equipped with high values.[25]

In contrast, there is no such problem in his *Yeni Kahramanlar* (New Heroes) stories, or others written at more or less the same time, which attempt to convey the same ideals through events in a contemporary social context. Long after the obsolescence and abolition of the *devşirme* system, here there are only Turkish heroes in the service of Turkish nationalism or the emerging (Unionist) nation-state.

Thus in *Primo: Türk Çocuğu* (Primo: A Turkish Boy), a father and a child searching for their true national identity transform themselves from cosmopolitans into patriots and nationalists by the end of the story. Similarly, stories like *Bir Çocuk: Aleko* (A Child Called Aleko), *Müjde* (Glad Tidings), *Çanakkale'den Sonra* (After Gallipoli), or *Kaç Yerinden* (In How Many Places) carry the emotions and struggles of old heroes into the contemporary period. Total self-effacement in the national cause are the common theme of *Kaç Yerinden* and *Bir Çocuk: Aleko*. Hence Ömer Seyfettin may be seen to have pursued the same goal in two different settings: seeking strength and inspiration from the past, and addressing contemporary issues to explore possible solutions.

[25] Nâzım Polat and Filiz Ferhatoğlu (2020), 18.

### 4.2. Basic Themes; Grouping and Ordering

The stories in Heroes of Yore exhibit certain recurring themes. These include patriotism, the sanctity of national sentiments, absolute obedience and allegiance to the state, dedication to the national cause over self-interest, and striving to achieve victory even under the most challenging conditions. In what order to address them? I have decided to start with two stories embodying the mystical, unfathomable dimension of nationalism: *Kızılelma Neresi* (Where is Crimson Apple Located) and *Başını Vermeyen Şehit* (The Martyr Who Wouldn't Give Up His Head). Similar to the first story, they also address the spiritual dimension of national sentiments. They represent a meta-idea, or rather a feeling, an emotionality that transcends all reason and, therefore, is regarded as common to (hence above) all the rest.

Building on that, stories like *Pembe İncili Kaftan* (The Caftan Decorated with Pink Pearls), *Ferman* (The Imperial Decree), and *Teselli* (The Consolation) all revolve around the idea of unwavering obedience and allegiance to the state. The next step or stage is represented by *Teke Tek* (Single Combat), *Kütük* (The Log), and *Vire* (Negotiated Surrender), which first place their Turkish heroes in difficult predicaments and then highlight their ability to overcome such difficulties -- not through brute force, but through a combination of intelligence, agility and courage. While a primary emphasis is on triumphing over adversity, a second theme is about the superiority of brains over brawn. Finally, *Topuz* (The Mace) is about putting down arrogant revolt, while *Forsa* (The Galley Slave) eulogizes an old soldier who, after decades in captivity, insists on fighting yet again despite his infirmity and advanced age, thereby standing, perhaps, as an allegorical symbol for Occupation Istanbul.

### 4.3. A Note on the Translations

Over years of teaching a graduate course called "From Empire to Republic: Turkish Nationalism and the Nation-State" (HIST 572 by its Ibn Haldun University code), Halil Berktay has translated a number of Ömer Seyfettin stories from both the "social time" and the "monumental time" sub-groups. It is these translations, including his footnotes and locational research, that, though unpublished, are used with his

permission in this thesis. I myself have done all other translations from the secondary literature.

### 4.4. Individual Studies

There is ample scholarly literature on Ömer Seyfettin as a major writer and a key figure of Turkish nationalism. In various articles and reviews, it is generally assumed, or casually stated in passing, that Ömer Seyfettin drew inspiration for his plots and characters from Ottoman histories. However, beyond such loose assertions, it seems that there has been no rigorous and comprehensive inquiry into the sources that he actually used for his Heroes of Yore stories. In this chapter, I will go into all the Heroes of Yore stories one by one, first providing a plot summary for each and then submitting an analysis comparing the storyline with the historical sources that I have found to be underlying it. Each story will be briefly explained in terms of where and when it might have occurred in real time. Then, I will try to present my findings on the connection between the story characters and real (historical) persons, as well as date and place information. Sections titled "source-checking" will deal in detail with the relevant passages from Ottoman histories (which I have translated into English while giving the original versions in my footnotes).

#### 4.4.1. Where is "Crimson Apple" Located

- Plot Summary

During the reign of Suleiman I, also known as Suleiman the Lawgiver or Suleiman the Magnificent, the Ottoman army is about to set out on yet another campaign. A field camp has been set up, with all the soldiers' tents surrounding the imperial pavilion. The story unfolds in the sultan's tent, where Suleiman is left alone after the conclusion of a *divan* (imperial council) meeting. Resting, he keeps hearing incessant shouts of "Crimson Apple, Crimson Apple, all the way to Crimson Apple…"[26] He grows curious about this popular slogan, which he has been familiar with from his childhood but

[26] Halil Berktay's translation. The Turkish original is "Kızıl-Elma'ya... Kızıl-Elma'ya... Kızıl-Elma'ya gideceğiz!"

which he hasn't really thought much about. He calls back all his councilors, ranging from his viziers, through chief judges of the army, the rest of his central bureaucracy, and his provincial governors, down to lower-ranking jurists and Islamic scholars. Turning to the entire assembly, the Sultan asks, " Where is Crimson Apple located? Is there anybody among you who happens to know?"[27]

He receives various answers, with some suggesting Vienna, others Rome, China or India, but there is yet to be a consensus on the location of the Crimson Apple. The sultan becomes frustrated and speaks harshly, questioning the value of their learning. A bold young legal scholar (*fakih*), unable to bear such contempt, bravely asserts that Crimson Apple is wholly fictitious: "O my padishah! he said, this Crimson Apple is nothing but a legend invented by your commoner subjects. There is no substance, no truth to it…"[28] But this, too, is not acceptable by the sultan: "The word of the people! The word of God!"[29], he retorts, affirming that if the people say so; there must be an essence to it, even if they cannot put into words.

In the ensuing, embarrassed silence, Iskender Pasha speaks up to suggest that, in that case, they might do better by directly asking the ordinary soldiers. The sultan agrees and instructs Iskender Pasha to go out and bring back three individuals who have been shouting, "To Crimson Apple!" The vizier does so, and they are successively questioned by the sultan. When they get over their initial anxieties about being called into the sultan's presence, they come up with very similar explanations. The first soldier says: "Where our padishah is going to take us! Our padishah knows where."[30] The second person echoes a similar sentiment, and the third one, a young gardener, also expresses ignorance about the place, leaving it to the Sultan's knowledge.

The sultan is pleased and rewards them. He likes and accepts this answer (if it is an answer). After his councilors leave, he finds inner contentment in the idea that Crimson Apple is wherever God will send him. It is not a specific place, not a clear geographical

[27] Halil Berktay's translation. The Turkish original: "Kızılelma neresi? İçinizde bilen var mı?"
[28] Halil Berktay's translation. The Turkish original: "Padişahım! dedi, bu Kızılelma, halk kullarının uydurduğu bir efsanedir. Ne aslı vardır, ne faslı..."
[29] Halil Berktay's translation. The Turkish original: "Halkın dediği! Hakkın dediği!" (Literally: Vox Populi, Vox Dei – a Medieval Latin saying that can be taken as far back as at least the 14th century.
[30] Halil Berktay's translation. The Turkish original: "Padişahımızın bizi götüreceği yer! Padişahımız bilir."

location, but wherever the sultan is going to take his army. It is, in other words, contingent on the ruler's will and the concrete embodiment of the ruler's will. That will, in turn, is identical with both God's will and the will of the people: they will go wherever the sultan wants them to go, and do whatever the sultan wants them to do. This is circular, and hence not very logical or rational, but it does represent the nationalist ideal of a perfect unity and harmony between the people and the state or the ruler.

• Source-Checking

The concept of the Crimson Apple is part and parcel of Turkish culture. It is a symbol frequently encountered in literary and political texts and is the expression of an ideal goal or aspiration of global dominance. At times, it also stands for all the past victories achieved by the Turks. As in Ömer Seyfettin's story, it extends beyond the confines of a specific geographical location; on the contrary, it typically represents a vague place or situation that is beyond any actual borders and is, therefore, difficult to attain. It has figured strongly not only in traditional Turkish lore and legend but also in European travelers' accounts, such as Reinhold Lubenau[31], for example, while scholars who have explored the Crimson Apple problematic include Karl Teply[32], Semih Tezcan[33], Orhan Şaik Gökyay[34] or Salih Akın, who in his review of Gökyay's book[35] cites the 12th-century Islamic scholar Yakut el-Hamevi, as well as the German Orientalists Martin Hartmann (1851-1918), Carl Brockelmann (1868-1956) and August Fischer (1865-1949), in connection with this problem.

Ömer Seyfettin's Crimson Apple narrative is the most abstract and symbolic of all the stories in the Heroes of Yore series. It is shrouded in mythological sentiment, further accentuated by the lack of any specific historical action or related characters. Such is the level of discursive legendarization that it becomes difficult, to say the least, to look for any specific primary sources that Ömer Seyfettin may have used for this story.

[31] *Reinhold Lubenau Seyahatnamesi*.
[32] Karl Teply (1980).
[33] Semih Tezcan (2013).
[34] Orhan Şaik Gökyay (2018).
[35] Salih Akın (2018), 21-23. Akın cites the 12th century Islamic scholar Yakut el-Hamevi, as well as the German Orientalists Martin Hartmann (1851-1918), Carl Brockelmann (1868-1956) and August Fischer (1865-1949), among those who have touched upon or worked on this problem.

Indeed, while it is widespread in other and much more popular sources, in the Peçevi and Naima histories addressed in this thesis, such is the realistic, matter-of-fact narrative that the term Crimson Apple is not to be found. However, in Hammer's *History of the Ottoman Empire*, in a section detailing changes in the army during the reign of Suleiman, it is possible to find the following passage:

> After the Sultan took a sip from the cup, he would hand it to his sword-bearer, who would return it filled with gold. A Janissary officer would also offer a cup of sherbet to the chief black eunuch in the Sultan's entourage. This custom was also observed during the sword-girding parades of sultans who had ascended the throne. When passing in front of the old barracks, the Sultan would take the cup from the hand of the agha of the Janissaries and say, "We'll meet at the Crimson Apple." This is how the Ottomans called Rome. [36]

Clearly, this means that Hammer must have seen Ottoman narrative sources or other documents referring to the Crimson Apple, which would also have been available to late Ottoman intellectuals even before Hammer's work was translated into Ottoman Turkish. But this doesn't help us when it comes to pinpointing the incident in the story (if indeed it is a real and not totally invented incident). For a start, the story unfolds at a place that is not explicitly named. Suleiman personally went on sixteen major imperial campaigns, and all we can say is that the story is set at the outset of one of them. A *divan* meeting appears to have been held by way of formally inaugurating the expedition, but no further information is provided. So, we have to look for other bits and pieces of evidence. Useful in this regard are the names of some members of the imperial council that are mentioned by Ömer Seyfettin, for example, in the following sentence:

> After Ahmet Pasha and Hadım Ali Pasha, the kazaskers, and then Sokollu Mehmed Pasha[37], Haydar Pasha, Ayas Pasha and İskender Pasha all entered the pavilion with their eyes on the ground.[38]

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[36] Joseph von Hammer (2010), vol. 6, 186-187: "Pâdişâh, bardağı ağzına götürdükten sonra silahdârına verir, o da altınla dolu olduğu halde iade ederdi. Bir yeniçeri zabiti de Pâdişâhın maiyyetinde bulunan kızlarağasına bir bardak şerbet verirdi. Bu âdet, tahta cülus eden pâdişâhların kılıç alaylarında da tekrar edilmek mu'tâd idi, Zât-ı şâhâne eski kışla önünden geçerken bardağı yeniçeri ağasının elinden alır ve 'Kızıl elma'da görüşürüz' derdi. Osmanlılar Roma'ya bu ismi vermişlerdi."

[37] Also known as Mehmed Paşa Sokolovic; born in Bosnia in 1506, recruited into the Ottoman elite through the child-levy (*devşirme*) system; rose to serve three different sultans as grand vizier over 1565-1579; assassinated in the latter year, at the age of 73. In this story he is presented as not yet grand vizier but governor-general (*beylerbeyi*) of Rumelia; we know him to have been in this post over 1551-55.

[38] Halil Berktay's translation. In the Turkish original: "Ahmed Paşa'yla Hadım Ali Paşa'nın arkasından kazaskerler, Sokullu Mehmet Paşa, Haydar Paşa, Ayas Paşa, İskender Paşa, gözleri yerlerde otağa girdiler."

Some of these leading dignitaries are known to have participated in the Nahçevan campaign alongside Suleiman, as evidenced by historical records.[39] In Peçevi's account of the Nahçevan campaign, in a passage titled “Summary of the Nahçevan Campaign,” we find the names of Ahmet Pasha and Haydar Pasha. [40] Beyond this, finding a direct event related to a specific incident or individual is nearly impossible. However, when examining the general theme of the story in conjunction with the environment and the various locations where these dignitaries’ paths crossed with the sultan, things begin to become more tangible. In the first volume of Peçevi's work, in a section titled “The March of the Sultan on Iran,” it is mentioned that Suleiman set out on a campaign against Iran on May 7, 1554, and that three days later, he camped at a place called Çülek near Diyarbakır. [41] Subsequently, a council was convened there at the sultan's command, and some individual soldiers appear to have been brought in -- under the imperial protocol, brought in one by one. The Sultan is said to have addressed these soldiers, explaining the necessity of the campaign, and emphasizing that those who were going to fight there would be shown as much respect as their ancestors before them:

> With thousands of promises and encouraging words, he won their hearts to such an extent that young and old alike, shedding tears, collectively exclaimed, “Even if you march to India or Sind, or venture to the Caucasus Mountains, we will not turn away. We pledge our lives and hearts for the Sultan, and consider it a duty in both this world and the afterlife. Whatever you command, we will obey." Sincerely praying for the Islamic emperor.[42]

Apart from the emphasis on total unity and allegiance, this quotation from Peçevi exhibits striking similarities with another passage in Ömer Seyfettin's story:

> The padishah questioned the learned *kazaskers*, too, one by one. For Crimson Apple, some suggested China, and others the land of Machina.[43]
> - It’s India, said Ayas Pasha.

[39] Peçevi (1981c), 213.
[40] Peçevi (1981c), 214, 215.
[41] Peçevi (1981c), 218.
[42] Peçevi (1981c), 218, 219.
[43] Halil Berktay’s note in his translation: *Maçin* in the original. This gives rise to a translation problem. In Turkish, the expression *Çin ü Maçin* is used to referred to the distant and very broad lands of China. So Maçin is not really a separate or different country. But in popular usage, it has also come to be referred to as if it were a separate country somehow linked with China out there to the east. In this story, Suleiman’s leading dignitaries, too, mention it as a separate country. I have sought to preserve this sense by rendering it as Machina, to rhyme with China.

- It's the land of Sind[44], said Haydar Pasha.
- It should be on the other side of Mount Kaf, said İskender Pasha.[45]

Upon examining these two passages, we observe the use of very similar terms. In a general sense, the points mentioned above in both works overlap. On this basis, we can argue that the location where the story takes place is near Diyarbakır, the year of the action is 1554, and some of the characters in the story are real historical figures. Ömer Seyfettin appears to have been familiar with this section in Peçevi and to have superimposed his imaginary debate about the Crimson Apple onto Peçevi's brief account of the council meeting and Suleiman's speech at Çülek.

For Ömer Seyfettin, Crimson Apple becomes a significant element of Turkish identity. In line with previous tradition, for him, too, the Crimson Apple was an imaginary place that kept changing and could not be pinpointed on a world map. [46] By writing a story with this title, Ömer Seyfettin appears to have carried this Ottoman (read: Turkish) ideal into the 20th century. The fact that the Crimson Apple legend reached Ömer Seyfettin indicates that this myth was widely known in previous centuries. However, when he reworked the legend into his story and, with its title, posed the question of "Where is Crimson Apple Located," this served to enormously highlight and modernize the myth. Other contemporary writers picked up the idea. Thinkers like Ziya Gökalp reiterated its political significance and importance for Turkish nationalism. Scholars like Orhan Şaik Gökyay and Necati Gültepe[47] further elaborated the Crimson Apple narrative by comparing it with different civilizations and societies throughout history.[48]

[44] Halil Berktay's note in his translation: *Sind* in the original. As with *Çin ü Maçin*, *Hind ve Sind* were used to refer to the lands of South Asia. But in this case, *Sind* also means, more specifically and concretely, the lands of the Indus valley.
[45] Halil Berktay's translation. In the Turkish original: "Padişah, sırasıyla âlim kazaskerlere de sordu. Kızıl Elma için kimi 'Çin', kimi 'Maçin' diyordu. Ayas Paşa: Hind'dir. Haydar Paşa: Sind'dir! İskender Paşa: Kafdağı'nın arkası olsa gerektir."
[46] Nâzım Polat and Filiz Ferhatoğlu (2020), 26.
[47] Necati Gültepe (2019). *Kızılelma'nın İzinde* (Ötüken, 2019).
[48] Oğuz Şentürk (2019), 132.

### 4.4.2. The Martyr Who Wouldn't Give Up His Head

• Plot Summary

The story takes place in an Ottoman-Hungarian border region called Grijgal. The setting is the *palanga* (small fortress) of Grijgal, where sacrificial animals are grazing. The main character is Kuru Kadı, who, as a jurist-scholar, has been provisionally put in charge of this fortress (and whose name conjures up an old, thin, gnarled person). Preparations are under way for an *eid*. The major fortress of Zigetvar (Szigetvaradin), which is in enemy hands, and which has survived a harsh winter and a siege by Toygun Pasha, looms menacingly in the distance. The weather is gloomy. Crows flying over Zigetvar seem to carry a mysterious message, adding to the eerie atmosphere. The gloom represents the mood of Kuru Kadı, who dreams of conquering the fortress of Zigetvar but has been unable to do so.

Kuru Kadı, a pensive figure, stands at the gate of *palanga* and ponders the situation. Zigetvar is the only place not yet under the control of the Turks. It is an unyielding obstacle that has, therefore, come to be referred to as Kızılelma.[49] Kuru Kadı is depicted as a peculiar character who sleeps very little and is even referred to by Governor Ahmet Bey as "our bat." He prays frequently and is constantly occupied with *dhikr* inside the fortress. Despite not being a soldier, he envisions capturing Zigetvar with only a few thousand troops. The *palanga*'s commander, Ahmed Bey, has joined Toygun Pasha's army, leaving Kuru Kadı in command.

Two friends, known as Mehmed the Mad (Deli Mehmed) and Hüsrev the Mad (Deli Hüsrev), keep the *palanga* lively with their jokes and banter. They are renowned for their extraordinary feats in battle. Disregarding worldly possessions, they reject ranks and trappings, prioritizing commitment to God's justice (*hak*) over material rewards. They view warfare as a joyous celebration, a passionate rush into battle. Kuru Kadı enjoys their amusing banter.

[49] This concept has already been discussed in the previous section 4.4.1.

Kıraçin, Zigetvar's commander, arrives with more than a thousand soldiers to besiege Grijgal. He sends a messenger for the defenders to hand Grijgal over in exchange for safe conduct. Kuru Kadı firmly rejects the offer and resolves to defend the palanga with just over a hundred warriors that he has at his disposal. They also fire signal cannon to alert all nearby forts for assistance. Despite being vastly outnumbered, the soldiers express their readiness to fight; they are dedicated to the cause, and none of them is willing to surrender. While they are debating, it is almost time for prayers. Kuru Kadı suggests performing their prayers first, appealing to the men's religious and spiritual sentiments. However, Mehmed the Mad goes up to and confronts Kuru Kadı, saying that he should let them go immediately into battle. All the soldiers huddle behind Mehmed, eager to fight. Kuru Kadı tells them to relax; they should first spend time in prayer, solidarity, and mutual forgiveness before preparing for battle. He convinces the soldiers, and they spend their time performing their ablutions and prayers until noon.

Kuru Kadı opens the *palanga* gate, and the Grijgal forces charge into battle, led by the spirited Mehmed the Mad and Hüsrev the Mad. These two prove to be exceptionally brave in combat. Deli Mehmed scores a remarkable victory against a powerful enemy knight. In spite of their initial success, tragedy strikes when Deli Mehmed is killed in battle, which leads to the most important scene in the story. A black-clad knight has killed Mehmed and keeps striking Mehmed's dead body with his lance (we will encounter this motif of a black armored knight also in *Teke Tek* -- Single Combat). Seeing that the black knight has cut off Mehmed's head and is turning his horse to ride away, Hüsrev lets out a terrific yell, shouting: "Mehmed! Mehmed! You have given your life! Don't give your head, Mehmed!" Suddenly, the dead, prostrate, headless Mehmed shoots up to his feet, chases the rider, jumps up on his horse behind him, retrieves his head, instantaneously falls down where he was before, cradles his head in his arm and closes his eyes, going back to being dead.

Kuru Kadı is deeply affected and temporarily incapacitated. After the battle, he puts Mehmed in a grave that he himself digs right where Mehmed fell. At that moment, he has another supernatural experience: a green light envelops the grave, and an angelic figure descends from heaven to comfort the fallen hero. Kuru Kadı is completely traumatized by all that he has seen. He becomes a regular visitor to Deli Mehmed's

tomb, spending days in solitary contemplation. Eventually, he cannot keep his mystical experience to himself; he pours it into an epic verse describing what he has seen.[50] But this causes the inner fire to go out of him. He sinks into depression. As time passes, Kuru Kadı's mental state worsens, and his eccentric behavior becomes more frowned upon. Despite his merits, even Ahmed Bey finds it difficult to deal with Kuru Kadi's erratic behaviour. This eventually leads to his dismissal from the service. Twelve years later, Zigetvar is finally captured. Hüsrev the Mad falls dead, while another unknown martyr is found lying next to him, wearing a large green turban. We are given to understand that it is Kuru Kadı who has been reunited with Hüsrev in martyrdom.

• Source-Checking

The "severed head" motif, or narratives about heroes or martyrs with a severed head, can be found in Christian epics as well as stories about the caliph Ali and appear in Turkish folklore and literature, too, after the Turks came into Anatolia.[51] Thus, there is also a section involving a severed head story in *Vesîletü'n-necât*, the first ever (and the most famous) Turkish *mevlid* written by Süleyman Çelebi (1351-1422). Pursuing all these different variants lies beyond the scope of this thesis. Suffice it to say that eventually, the legend makes its way into Peçevî's 16th-century History, from where it is clearly and explicitly borrowed by Ömer Seyfettin and reworked into his story.[52] In this case, the connection is so out in the open that I will be directly comparing Ömer Seyfettin's and Peçevi's versions of the story.

Ömer Seyfettin starts his story with a quote from Peçevi. This itself leaves no doubt about his source of inspiration:

> So this is what we have to grant, that if there had been no such brave warriors among all those warriors of the faith, what with so many other fortresses of the infidels in such close proximity to Zigetvar, how could they have maintained such calm and confidence and also invested such effort in combat.[53]

[50] In a rare footnote in his story, Ömer Seyfettin acknowldges that a hundred couplets of this long epic poem are quoted by Peçevi in the second volume of his History.
[51] Nurettin Albayrak (2002).
[52] Seyfullah Yıldırım (2020), 75.
[53] Peçevi (1981d), 252. In the original: "...Hak budur ki, ol guzzâtın içinde böyle gaziler olmasa. Zigetvar'a bu kadar kurbi civarda cevânib-i erbaa kafir hisarı iken meks ve ârâm bâhusus böyle cenge ikdâm ne mümkün idi..."

As I have already indicated, the legend of Kuru Kadı and Deli Mehmed, including the epic poem attributed to Kuru Kadı, are all to be found in Peçevi. Indeed, before narrating the kadı's epic, İbrahim Peçevi provides information about the kadı and the *palanga* he was in, which is exactly repeated by Ömer Seyfettin. Peçevi includes the "Epic of Mehmed the Mad [Deli Mehmed]," which is said to have been written by the kadı of Grijgal in his *Gazilerin Kerametleri Üzerine* chapter (On the Miracles of Veterans).[54] Peçevi takes this as a real incident and argues that it is the writings of witnesses such as this Kuru Kadı that make history understandable. He directly quotes a hundred couplets of the epic, a few of which are repeated by Ömer Seyfettin in his story.

With his emphasis on heroism and martyrdom, including a perceived need to surround Turkish nationalism with a mystical aura (as already evidenced by Where is Crimson Apple Located), it is understandable why Ömer Seyfettin should follow in Peçevi's tracks with regard to accepting the veracity of Kuru Kadı's story. But such transcendentalism should not blind us to the other side of the coin -- that, also following Peçevi, Ömer Seyfettin incorporates a very high degree of factual accuracy into his narrative. Grijgal fortress is on the border region of Hungary near the fortress of Zigetvar. The region is located in today's Baranya county in Hungary. These are real locations that were once Ottoman territories. Ömer Seyfettin's story ends with a few sentences indicating that "after twelve years" Szigetvar was finally conquered. We know Szigetvar to have been conquered in 1566 (during Suleiman's last campaign, which also saw the death of the sultan). Therefore, it can be said that the action in the story takes place around 1554-55.[55] Strong evidence that it took place exactly in 1554 comes from a passage in Peçevi about the exploits of Toygun Pasha and Ahmet Bey (which is repeated in brief by Ömer Seyfettin). In Peçevi, the relevant passage is in the chapter titled "The Conquest of the Kapuşvar, Bobofça and Kortina Fortresses," which he says happened in 1554, and under the leadership of Toygun Pasha.[56] Toygun Pasha was the provincial governor of Budin, while Ahmet was directly *bey* of Grijgal under him. All these details are repeated by Seyfettin in his story.[57]

[54] Peçevi (1981d), 252.
[55] Interestingly, this makes it yet another of Ömer Seyfettin's Heroes of Yore stories to be taking in place in 1554-55, together with "Crimson Apple" and others to come.
[56] Peçevi (1981d), 251.
[57] See Argunşah (1999b), 151.

Of course, there are also some differences that may be regarded as the inevitable consequence of fictionalization. Ömer Seyfettin's main character is Kuru Kadı, the deputy guardian of Grijgal fortress. The name Kuru Kadı cannot be found in Peçevi, who refers to him as "the kadı of Grijgal who wrote the epic of Mehmed the Mad."[58] "Kuru" as an adjectival noun is added by Ömer Seyfettin, perhaps to enhance the otherworldly aura surrounding his protagonist. The same qualities extend to Mehmed and Hüsrev:

> These two madmen, who gained an incredible fame like fairy-tale heroes with their unimaginable usefulness, were among those Anatolian dervishes who did not comply with any order, any record, any restraint, and had no eyes for worldly honor.[59]

Here and in the following sentences, these two warriors are presented as embodying the heroic Turkish character that keeps recurring in Ömer Seyfettin's stories. Muhsin Çelebi in "The Caftan Decorated with Pink Pearls" (section 4.4.3 below); Tosun Bey in "The Imperial Decree" (section 4.4.4); İskender Pasha in "The Consolation" (section 4.4.5); Ferhat Ali Bey in "In How Many Places" (from the New Heroes series) all epitomize this same idea of refusing material rewards in selflessly serving the nation or the state.

This was a theme that became particularly acute as the Ottoman Empire went into a downward spiral in its last years. Under the dictatorship of the Unionist triumvirate, statism became rampant. I shall now turn to this concept of total devotion, obedience and allegiance.

### 4.4.3. The Caftan Decorated with Pink Pearls

- Plot Summary

This story is set on the eastern front of the Ottoman Empire at a time of escalating tensions with the newly established Safavid dynasty in Iran. More specifically, it revolves around a tense confrontation between Shah İsmail and an Ottoman

[58] Peçevi (1981d), 252.
[59] This is my own translation from the original; see Argunşah (1991b), 153.

ambassador called Muhsin Çelebi, who is sent to the Safavid court. Ismail is said to have been constantly encroaching on Ottoman territories; the Ottomans state keep sending envoys to Iran to get the shah to stop his attacks, but to no avail. He has jailed previous Ottoman ambassadors and even had some of them beheaded. Istanbul will send one last envoy to Tabriz, but this has to be a truly brave and resilient person capable of confronting and coping with the shah.

In a council meeting, various names are suggested and dismissed until one of the viziers comes up with the name of a certain Muhsin Çelebi. He is said to be retired and living off the income of his dairy farm. So, he is well-off and known to be strongly patriotic. Muhsin Çelebi is sought, found, and brought before the grand vizier. They have a long conversation, during which the grand vizier is stunned by Muhsin Çelebi's blunt, forthright manner, to the point of wondering whether he should turn this man over to the executioner. And then he is ashamed of his thoughts; he accuses himself of having become so used to the sycophancy of his subordinates at court that he cannot appreciate the honesty of a free man. Here, indeed, Ömer Seyfettin, as a Turkist, implies a strongly critical attitude against the *devşirme* dignitaries of the Ottoman court. In any case, the situation is quickly clarified: the sultan expects a great service from him; Muhsin Çelebi accepts the task but on one condition: he will not take anything from the state. He will organize his entourage with his own money, he will have his own clothes made, and no one will interfere.

These are a bit extreme even in the context of patriotic selflessness in state service, but as Muhsin Çelebi is adamant, his terms are accepted. Muhsin Çelebi begins his preparations. He carefully selects all his subordinates who are going to be in the delegation representing the Ottoman Empire. Their garments should reflect the wealth and splendor of the Ottoman Empire. For himself, he purchases something extra special. A leading dignitary by the name of Sırmakeş Toroğlu has recently obtained a priceless caftan decorated with pink pearls. Its fabric is from India, and its pearls are from Venice. Muhsin Çelebi explains to the grand vizier that he will buy this caftan and then re-sell it to the original owner (of course, at a reduced price) upon his return. So, while he spends all his wealth on getting his embassy together, he hopes to recover at least part of it when he comes back to Istanbul.

Muhsin Çelebi sets out with his delegation and arrives in Tabriz. The people watch with envy the magnificence of the Ottoman ambassadors. News of the delegation's arrival soon spreads everywhere. The magnificence of the Ottoman envoy is on everyone's lips. Finally, they are received into the imperial presence. Shah Ismail had no chair placed in the hall in order to keep the Ottoman ambassador standing in front of him. Ottoman and Safavid protocol are known to have differed in this regard. In the Ottoman court, it is out of the question for anybody to sit in the sultan's presence, or to directly hand his letter to the sultan, or to ever turn his back to the sultan. In later centuries, too, when ambassadors arrived from Europe, they will remain standing in one corner of the Imperial Audience Hall, handing their missive to the grand admiral, who hands it over to the grand vizier, who then advances to the throne and ceremoniously presents it to the Sultan.

Iranian palace culture is somewhat looser, all three conditions being relatively breachable.[60] Thus, Muhsin Çelebi arrives, takes out the sultan's letter, kisses it, and then hands it to the shah. Then he looks to sit down. When he cannot find a place to sit, he realizes that the shah has resorted to this means to keep him standing. He immediately takes his splendid caftan decorated with pink pearls from his back, spreads it on the floor, and, sitting cross-legged on it, he begins to verbally repeat (in a loud voice) the message of the Ottoman sultan. The shah is so stunned that he doesn't know what to do. As soon as Muhsin Çelebi finishes his words, he stands up and walks to the door (turning his back on the shah) while a Safavid vizier picks up Muhsin Çelebi's caftan from the ground and runs after him. But Muhsin Çelebi refuses to take it back, saying that a Turk would not put on his back what he had put on the ground.

What is crucial in this part of the story is that the Ottoman ambassador had invested virtually his entire wealth in this extraordinary caftan, which he then leaves behind in the Iranian palace as if it were an ordinary piece of cloth. Muhsin Çelebi returns to Istanbul, having made a great show to the Safavids of Ottoman wealth and power. He has made an immense sacrifice out of his love and respect for the state. Not being able to sell the caftan back to Sırmakeş Toroğlu even at a reduced price, from that point on Muhsin Çelebi lives propertiless, in near penury, without ever mentioning the caftan.

[60] Selim Güngörürler (2018), 168-169.

He makes out a living selling vegetables in the market for the rest of his life. Absolute loyalty to the ideal of a strong state is paramount.

• Source-Checking

The Safavid state was founded by Ismail at the beginning of the sixteenth century and expanded to include Azerbaijan, Eastern Anatolia, Western Iran, and later Khorasan. The eponym of the Safavids is Shaykh Safi aI-Din Ishaq (d.732/1334), the founder of a Sufi *tariqah* in Ardabil, a town located in Azerbaijan. [61] Although their ethnic origins have been debated by many historians, according to most sources, they emerged as a Turcoman tribal state in terms of their language and religion. They then transitioned from Sunnism to Shiism over time. The core tribe, which was part of the sect, migrated to Azerbaijan and established itself as a dynasty. They adopted Azerbaijani Turkish as their language and became a state rooted in Iran. Their Twelver Shiism became a major ideological weapon in their struggle against the Ottomans over Eastern Anatolia. In contrast with their aggressiveness, Bayezid II (1481-1512) is regarded by Ottoman (and then also Turkish nationalist) authors and historians as having pursued a timid policy, which led to increasing Safavid influence in the region. A vindictive (and, for the moment, victorious) Ottoman reaction came with Selim I (1512-1520). Nevertheless, the Ottoman-Safavid conflict would continue for long years to come.

Ömer Seyfettin's story is set in the early years of this struggle. The Ottomans ar pursuing a very cautious policy toward Ismail and the Safavids. This would change very radically when Selim I forced his father to abdicate and ascended the throne in 1512. So, it must be late in the reign of Bayezid II. This is further affirmed by a key sentence in the text: "The nature of Bayezid-i Veli, who spent his princedom with books rather than riding horses, playing javelin, or bearing arms, was extremely meek."[62] The Ottoman outlook on the Safavids as usurpers of nondescript origin is reflected by the following statement: "On the ruins of the collapsed and extinct Akkoyunlu dynasty, Shah Ismail had established a rogue reign."[63] The victory of Ismail over the Akkoyunlus was in 1501. "Shortly after his victory at Sharur, Ismail

[61] Adel Allouche (1983), 32.
[62] Argunşah (1999b), 125.
[63] Argunşah, loc. cit..

entered the Aq Qoyunlu capital in triumph and proclaimed himself Shah."[64] He not only overthrew the Akkoyunlu state but also began to advance on the eastern borders of the Ottoman Empire. "In 1507 he extended his rule into the Akkoyunlu heartland in eastern Anatolia, capturing Diyarbakır. With this, his domains reached the Ottoman Empire's eastern frontiers."[65] The Ottoman view of Shah Ismail as a very cruel and aggressive sultan of unpredictable behavior. This is how he is presented in Ömer Seyfettin's story. That is why a more usual kind of diplomatic envoy is considered unlikely to be able to cope with such abnormal aggression. Hence, it is that the grand vizier, in search of a tough and vigorous type of ambassador, tries to persuade (and succeeds in persuading) Muhsin Çelebi to take on this task.

The names of places and people given by Ömer Seyfettin overlap with some real historical characters and places, as reflected in the following lines:

> The previous year, he [Ismail] had asked Alaüddevle, the ruler of Zülkadriye, for his daughter in marriage. Alaüddevle had not given his daughter away. Ismail was enraged by this insult of rejection; he passed through the sultan's land in search of revenge. He entered the land of Zulkadriye, which lay defenceless, and captured the castles of Harput and Diyarbekir.[66]

Alaüddevle Bozkurt Bey was the ruler of the Dülkadiroğulları (or Zülkadiroğulları) principality, and he was also Bayezid II's father-in-law, having given away one of his daughters, Ayşe Hatun, to Bayezid in marriage. The fact that Shah İsmail, too, wanted to marry another of Alaüddevle's daughters further exacerbated the rivalry between these two rulers. In Hammer, there is a relevant passage (which, however, speaks of Ismail wanting to give his daughter in marriage to Ala'ü'd-devle):

> Neither was he well-accepted by Ala'ü'd-devle, whom he had wanted to marry his daughter to. İsmail wanted to take revenge for this rejection by the Dülkadirli ruler; however, fearing the formidable power of the Ottoman Empire, he sent ambassadors again to ask for forgiveness because his soldiers had passed through Ottoman territory.[67]

[64] Adel Allouche (1983), 62.
[65] Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Alan Masters (2009), 285.
[66] Argunşah (1999b), 126.
[67] Joseph von Hammer 2010), vol. 6. 74. The Turkish translation reads: "Kızını evlendirmek istediği Alâ'ü'd-devle'den de hüsn-i kabûl göremedi. İsmail, Dülkadirli hakiminin bu reddinden dolayı, intikam almak istedi; lakin Osmanlı Devletinin müthiş gücünden de korkarak, askerinin Osmanlı toprağından geçmesinden dolayı i'tizar için yeniden sefirler gönderdi."

In Ömer Seyfeddin's story, Shah Ismail is said to have plundered these lands and even to have committed cannibalism by butchering, cooking and feasting on the flesh of a son and two grandsons of Ala'ü'd-devle that he happened to corner and capture in the hills they had fled to. Such propagandistic exaggerations aside, what Ömer Seyfettin narrates closely corresponds to the Safavids' Central Anatolian campaign:

> Shah Ismail undertook repeated expeditions to Gilana, Shirvana, and Khorasana to strengthen his position after he came on the throne of the Safavid state in the city of Tabriz in Azerbaijan. In 1507, he organized an expedition with a large army against the Dulkadiroğlu state, which occupied an important place in Central Anatolia. Heading west from Tabriz, he marched on Dulkadiroğlu Alaüddevle Bozkurt Bey by way of Erzurum, Erzincan, and Sivas.[68]

As stated here, in 1507, Shah Ismail entered the Ottoman lands from Erzincan and reached Maraş and Elbistan. The province of Zülkadriye, which was not yet fully incorporated into the Ottoman Empire, was ruled by its own local dynasty and included today's Maraş province and its surroundings. Shah Ismail's campaign against Alaüddevle Bozkurt Bey, who appears to have avoided giving battle to the Safavid army, was also recorded by Peçevi in his History:

> Afterwards, Shah Ismail, who was immersed in heresy, had returned to Azerbaijan in the spring of 913 (1507), having had to satisfy himself with just plundering the country since Ala'ü'd-devle of the house of Zulkadir, whom he had marched on, took shelter in steep mountains.[69]

When all this information is put together and compared, it becomes possible to say that "The Caftan Decorated with Pink Pearls" is based on events surrounding Shah Ismail's 1507 expedition against the Zülkadiroğlu emirate, which involved trespassing on Ottoman territory. At the same time, it should be noted that these Central Anatolian expeditions by the Safavids are not widely covered in Peçevi, who devotes only a few paragraphs to these events. It seems that Ömer Seyfettin may have consulted more than one Ottoman source to write this story.

[68] Remzi Kılıç (2004), 409-419.

[69] Peçevi (1981b), 128. The original reads: "Daha sonra, sapkınlığa boğulmuş Şah İsmail, 913 yılı [1507] ilkbaharında, üzerine yürüdüğü Zülkadir oğulları soyundan Alaüddevle'nin sarp dağlara sığınması üzerine, ancak ülkesini talan etmekle yetinerek Azerbaycan'a dönmüş idi."

### 4.4.4. The Imperial Decree

• Plot Summary

This story is set during one of Suleiman's western campaigns. The central character is an exceptionally heroic Turkish warrior called Tosun Bey. He is both supremely brave and artistic, a singer and poet. He is also known for his ferocious loyalty to the sultan. Despite his youth, he is regarded as likely to rise quickly to become a vizier, and then also grand vizier, in the not-too-far future. On this particular expedition, the Ottoman army has been advancing in stormy weather for days. They are nearing Belgrade when the army stops to make camp. But conditions are so difficult that the group responsible for the imperial pavilion has been lost in the storm. So, when the sultan himself arrives in his carriage, the grand vizier (who, because of his height, is easily identifiable as Sokollu Mehmed Pasha[70]) has to ask for the padishah's forgiveness in begging to be allowed to host Suleiman in his own pavilion.

Tosun Bey is furious when he learns of this situation. In conversation with two top dignitaries, both of whom actually love and admire him enormously, he cannot control his anger. He directs his rage at the grand vizier and drops a very dangerous remark about "how a man who cannot take care of a pavilion might be expected to take care of an entire empire." This is too much. The two dignitaries in question lapse into an ominous silence. Tosun, however, immediately forgets what he has said. All he can think of is how the imperial pavilion could disappear. He goes out to look for it in the storm, riding all over the countryside for hours, but to no avail. Returning, drenched and exhausted, he is met by janissary pickets who have been sent to look for him. They conduct him to the grand vizier's tent, where the grand vizier (Sokollu) personally welcomes him and entrusts him with an imperial decree (*ferman*) that has to be taken to the *bey* of Nish (which is a long way down south[71]) as soon as possible; the grand vizier shows great kindness to Tosun Bey and keeps praising him, saying that only he would be capable of performing this task.

[70] Sokollu was also known as Tavil [Tall] Mehmed Pasha.
[71] Today it is a driving distance of around 240 kilometers.

But all is not what it seems. Here we have an encounter between a *devşirme* grand vizier and an ethnic Turkish hero that will end in tragedy for the latter. Ömer Seyfettin, as a staunch Turkist, is subtly working his dislike of *devşirmes* into his narrative. So here we have an idea that resonates with the tension in Muhsin Çelebi's conversation with the grand vizier in "The Caftan Decorated with Pink Pearls." But we don't know all this yet. Only in retrospect shall we understand just how malicious, how hypocritical the grand vizier is.

In any case, Tosun Bey, who regards any state orders as virtually sacred, immediately leaves with the imperial decree (without any rest) and starts riding to Nish that night and the next day without stopping, without any break whatsoever, until he arrives at an inn near Nish, and wants to spend the night there so that he can take the decree to the *bey* of Nish early in the morning. At this point, Ömer Seyfettin introduces a fantastic element into his narrative. For then, Tosun Bey cannot sleep easily; he keeps having nightmares where the decree that he is carrying on his chest turns into blood. When he wakes up, the decree seems to be burning his chest. He begins to wonder about what might be in that decree. The seal on the purse containing the decree has been eroded by sweat and rain and looks as if it might be easily opened by slipping it to one side without breaking it. Finally, he cannot stand it, so he opens it and reads it. He then goes into shock because the decree is about his own execution. It declares the body of Tosun Bey to be a danger to the state and orders the *bey* of Nish to have his head cut off immediately.

This causes Tosun Bey to go into a moral, psychological crisis. We, as readers, can put everything together. But Tosun himself, having completely forgotten about the seditious remark that he made about the grand vizier's incompetence, simply cannot understand why he is being sent to his death. He has always been a devoted soldier; he has fought bravely in every war, and he has loyally served the sultan. From incomprehension, he passes into indignation and even begins to contemplate revolt. His father, too (we learn), was beheaded unjustly as a result of having been slandered by some vizier. So, he has fleeting thoughts of running away rather than giving up so easily. He plays with the idea of crossing over to Anatolia and turning bandit, brigand.

But then, the cult of loyalty asserts itself. He remembers a conversation he had with his father's old servant when he was in Istanbul. When he went to kiss the hand of Salih Agha before going on a campaign, he remembered the advice the old man gave him: "Never disobey the padishah…"[72] In the morning, he rides into Nish, goes up to the *bey*, and delivers the decree. The *bey*, who loves Tosun, does not want to carry out the orders. But in an act and attitude of extreme (indeed, somewhat implausible) obedience to authority, Tosun Bey turns on the old *bey*, saying that he would kill anyone who does not obey the sultan's decree (about his own execution). Half an hour later, Tosun Bey's head has been cut off, and the old *bey* of Nish is reading Yasin[73] by himself while rain falls on the fresh blood on the flagstones in the courtyard.

- Source-Checking

As part of the Heroes of Yore series, *Ferman* was published in *Yeni Mecmua* on 23rd August 1917. In the story, the army is advancing towards Semlin. "The Belgrade-Sabac road had collapsed," we are told. Then again, another dignitary is said to be "talking with Nişancı Eğri Abdizâde Mahmut Çelebi about how the Sabac bridge [over the river Sava] had been rebuilt by Bayram Bey, governor[74] of Semendire." Belgrade is the capital of Serbia, and Sabac was a military district and a fortress in Serbia. It is known as Böğürdelen castle in Turkish. The Semlin mentioned in the story is the Zemun region, which is part of Belgrade today. It is called Zumun in Peçevi's History. "They passed through Böğürdelen and landed [after traveling on the Sava] near Zumun."[75] Clearly, therefore, the Ottoman army is on its way to (and very near) Belgrade. But this cannot possibly be the 1521 campaign that actually resulted in the capture of Belgrade. For in the story, the padishah (whose name is not given) is very old: "The aged padishah was ill,"[76] we are told, while Sokollu, explicitly named, is the grand vizier:

[72] Argunşah (1999b), 59.
[73] The thirty-sixth *sura* of the Koran, starting with the two letters *ya-sin*, is commonly agreed to mean "You, Man" and hence to refer to the prophet Muhammed. This *sura* is said to have been termed by Muhammed "the heart of the Koran." It is recited in Islamic countries to the dying or after death, or at the tombs of saints; thus it carries with it connotations similar to a requiem.
[74] *Beylerbeyi*
[75] Peçevi (1981e), 55.
[76] Argunşah (1999b), 50.

> Through the dim shadows of the rain, there gradually appeared Sokollu with his tall figure and great turban, slowly approaching the carriage, his hands joined in front and his gaze lowered.[77]

But Sokollu became a grand vizier only after the death of Semiz Ali Pasha in 1565. This is how it is mentioned by Peçevi:

> When Ali Pasha died, he became the grand vizier because he was then the second vizier. He served as grand vizier to the late Sultan Suleiman for two years, to Sultan Selim for more than eight years, and to Sultan Murad Han for six years.

So, between Sokollu becoming grand vizier and Suleiman I's death, there are only two years. But after the Nahcevan expedition of 1553-1555 (mentioned in discussing the imperial council meetings in *Kızılelma Neresi*; see section 4.4.1 above), Suleiman is known not to have personally gone on the campaign until 1566. Therefore the historical setting for "The Imperial Decree" has to be his very last campaign of 1566, when he was 72 and ill with gout. After setting out from Istanbul on 1st May 1566, he laid siege to (and died a day before the capture of) Zigetvar (Szigetvaradin).

### 4.4.5. The Consolation

- Plot Summary

Ömer Seyfettin begins this story by describing a building and a room. One might think that he is describing a religious temple, but this happens to be a governor's town house within a fortified city. There is a person who has completely withdrawn to his room and shuttered all windows, disconnecting himself from life, daylight, and the outside world. It is as if he is already dead or has buried himself alive. This is İskender Pasha, the *bey,* governor or commander of Erzurum. He has wholly given himself over to his prayers. This is because he has no hope left in this world. This is not because he is a coward but because he regards his death as certain. From time to time, he actually sees himself dead. At times like this, he recites the *salât-ü selâm*.[78] He also keeps dreaming of the afterlife.

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[77] Argunşah (1999b), 51.

[78] A form of Islamic ritual prayer or supplication that usually begins with a formula such as : *Allahumme salli alâ Muhammedin…*, or *Allahumme salli ve sellim ve bârik ala seyyidinâ ve Mevlânâ Muhammedin…*, asking God Almighty to shower the Prophet Muhammed and his community, or his companions and disciples, etc, with His mercy, protection, and bounty.

Eventually, we learn that this despair is due to his perception of having failed to defend the region against the Shah of Iran. Which shah, we are not told. But it is said that the shah's son İsmail Mirza entered Erciş and captured the fortress. Subsequently, he promised protection to the people of Ahlat in order to obtain their negotiated surrender. But he did not keep his word and put the inhabitants of the city to the sword. In the face of these attacks by İsmail Mirza, the commanders or governors of many sub-provinces suffered martyrdom. When İskender Pasha himself led his soldiers out to confront İsmail Mirza, he fell into a well-prepared ambush. He had underestimated the enemy. Trying to forget his imminent death, at one point, his thoughts turn to his wife and children. As his children are young, İskender Pasha is also likely to be young (though he has aged through anguish). He remembers the courage he showed in the conquest of Van. Then he remembers how he was sent to Erzurum. They had said it was not easy to stay there because the winters were so harsh, but this had not stopped him. At the time of his appointment, the padishah, in his wisdom, had actually allocated significant numbers of troops to the Erzurum front, but in his over-confidence, he, İskender Pasha, had de-commissioned most of them. And then, faced with İsmail Mirza's offensive, what he kept had turned out to be inadequate. Outnumbered, he had fought bravely right down to the end. He had had twelve horses killed under him. It was a miracle that he hadn't died in combat. Here, we see once again the element of heroism that Ömer Seyfettin emphasizes in other Heroes of Yore stories. The hero never gives up. He is brave and fearless enough to continue the fight even if he is alone. Whether this is realistic or not, it embodies the "lone Turk" symbolism.

But now, as İskender Pasha keeps recollecting all this, he is also absolutely certain that he will lose his head because he couldn't defend his border region. The padishah will definitely punish him because the padishah is fair to everyone, and the penalty for mistakes like this is death. Hence, he has transferred almost all his responsibilities to his *defterdar*.[79] He tells his steward to watch for the horsemen who will come riding from Istanbul to execute him and to inform him when he sees them. He wants to stand in prayer and to be taken (strangled) in prayer. No one breaks the silence in the mansion; only the wind and rain are heard from the outside. This atmosphere grows on the reader. We, too, feel inside İskender Pasha's living tomb. We come to share his

[79] As in the original; literally, "book-keeper", i.e. the head of finances in any province, as well as the equivalent of a finance minister at the level of the *divan*, the imperial council, in Istanbul.

fatalism. At the same time, we are faced with yet another expression of the ideal of unconditional submission to the padishah as emblematic of state power.

In “The Caftan Decorated with Pink Pearls,” Muhsin Çelebi’s self-effacing sacrifice in serving the state is magnified all the more because it lands him in poverty for the rest of his life. Similarly, in “The Imperial Decree,” Tosun Bey’s ultimately uncompromising obedience does not save his life but is ideologically glorified precisely because of that supreme sacrifice. This time, in “The Consolation,” the same attitude is rewarded, for what awaits İskender Pasha turns out to be not death but a reprieve. After a long and despondent wait, the day finally arrives when İskender Pasha’s steward comes in to say that “they” are coming. As he has planned all along, İskender Pasha begins to perform what he believes will be his final prayers because his wish is to give his life in the presence of Allah. The steward is also crying because he, too, has come to believe that his pasha will be executed. They hear footsteps coming up the steps; İskender Pasha is afraid but continues his prayer. He expects to be struck with a sword in the back of the neck; he calls out to his imagined executioners to get it done with, but nothing happens. Instead, he hears a respectful voice saluting him in the name of the padishah. He opens his eyes and sees four well-dressed court sergeants holding various gift bundles. There is a purse containing a letter from the sultan; he takes it, kisses it, puts it on his head, then opens the seal and begins to read. The sultan is telling him to be at ease. There was no way he [İskender Pasha] could have coped with the Shah’s son’s offensive, the letter says; he did all he could and was not found wanting in valor. The sultan affirms that he values İskender Pasha’s past services. He has sent İskender Pasha precious gifts: a ceremonial robe, a gold-inlaid sword, and a jeweled mace. In addition, upon the request of the sultan, all viziers of the imperial council have also written individually to console İskender Pasha.

İskender Pasha cannot believe his eyes. From the edge of death (so he believed), he has suddenly gone back to life, honor, and glory. He is completely rejuvenated. Left alone, he draws the sword and looks out of the (now opened) window at the horizon, the setting sun reminding him of the gate of heaven. Coming to be praised and honored by the sultan is capable of providing entry to Paradise if it should please Allah. He believes in a mighty army marching out from Istanbul to defeat Iran and re-unite all Turan. He, too, will join this glorious army. In this way, Ömer Seyfettin not only

rewards İskender Pasha's total submission, but also elevates the state to a sacred position by associating elements of faith with the state. Rather than selecting a period when the Ottoman Empire was continuously invincible, Ömer Seyfettin has chosen to focus on a crisis-ridden time to further underline the sultan's mercy and understanding. This can be regarded as a reflection of another critical era, encompassing the Unionists' growing ideology of statism and the supreme authority of leadership (embodied in the Enver-Talât-Ceml triumvirate).

• Source-Checking

All the major characters in this story are real historical figures, and the framing events narrated or referred to are also real historical events. Thus, first, İskender Pasha is known to have been an Ottoman dignitary and commander-governor of Erzurum in the 1550s. Second, İsmail Mirza is historically known to be the son of Shah Tahmasb. Third, again, on the basis of all historical evidence, Shah Tahmasb is known to have captured Van, Kars, Vostan, and Adilcevaz in 1552. Furthermore, his son Şehzade İsmail is known to have defeated İskender Pasha near Erzurum, and then also captured Erzurum (which is left out from Ömer Seyfettin's story). It was, indeed, against all these transgressions that Sultan Suleiman I finally launched the 1554 Nakhchivan Campaign against the Safavid state (which we have seen in section 4.4.1 in dealing with the "Crimson Apple" story). But despite Ömer Seyfettin making İskender Pasha express unbounded enthusiasm and optimism for the mighty army soon to arrive from Istanbul, the Nakhchivan Campaign was a strategic failure. Because of factors of distance, terrain, and outreach, combined with local resistance and a series of rapid Qizilbash victories, Suleiman the Magnificent was unable to achieve his objective of seizing Azerbaijan.

Nevertheless, fourth, all of the above imply that it is much easier to pinpoint "The Consolation" in history compared with other Heroes of Yore stories. And fifth, in this story, Ömer Seyfettin quotes a lot from Peçevi's History. All the main elements, such as İskender Pasha, the loss of the battle for Erzurum, and the sultan comforting the pasha with gifts, are present in the *Tarih-i Peçevi*. Katip Çelebi, too, mentions İskender Pasha's life after the Erzurum war, but Ömer Seyfettin appears to have taken his plot directly from Peçevi. This is borne out by the following details.

In “The Consolation,” İskender Pasha remembers a dream he had before going into war against İsmail Mirza. Due to this dream and an optimistic interpretation of his dream, he rushed recklessly into combat without waiting for janissary reinforcements. This may seem rather fantastic, but this exact passage exists in Peçevi. Again, it is Peçevi himself who comments that believing an optimistic interpretation of his dream resulted in his defeat. This is the relevant *Teselli* passage:

> Yes, he remembered now; while he himself had been riding on a black horse through a narrow, thicketed path, a snake had appeared before him. This snake had been putting its forked tongue out at him and dashing among the bushes. He had jumped off his horse and had run and caught it. But as soon as he grabbed it, his hands had turned all bloody. And there was no snake to be seen. When he had related all this to the *beys* and the men of learning[80] who had joined him in the morning, one had said:
> -- To hold a snake is to hold poison; it is a harbinger of gloom and grief, while an old *hoca* had given a different interpretation:
> -- It seems that the Shah’s son is advancing against you; God willing, you will be able to seize him.[81]

The corresponding passage in Peçevi’s History is very similar:

> According to the story, it is said that one night the pasha caught a snake in his dream. One of those present interpreted this by saying, "Catching a snake in a dream means swallowing poison, it is a sign of worry and anxiety." Another person interpreted it as a sign that the Shah's son would come against him, and expressed hope that he [İskender Pasha] would capture him [İsmail Mirza]. In fact, this second interpretation coincided with their expectations from both worlds, just as they wished for day and night from the divine. This interpretation became the reason for his audacious and reckless behavior in the war.[82]

Ömer Seyfettin’s text goes on to narrate how İskender Pasha was enthusiastic about immediately confronting İsmail Mirza after hearing the second interpretation. The continuation, too, adheres very closely to Peçevi, especially with regard to the two advance regiments that Mirza positioned in front as a decoy and how İskender Pasha then had to put his back to the fortress. This is the *Teselli* narrative:

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[80] *Ulema* in the original.
[81] Argunşah (1999b), 120. In the Turkish original: “İşte hatırlıyordu; kendi siyah at üstünde, dar, çalılık bir yoldan giderken, önüne bir yılan çıkmıştı. Bu yılan, iki çatal dilini ona çıkarıyor, çalıların arasına kaçıyordu. Atından atlıyor, koşuyor, onu tutuyordu. Ama tutar tutmaz elleri kan içinde kalmıştı. Artık yılan filan yoktu. Sabahleyin yanına gelen ümerâ ile ulemâya bunu anlatmış, biri: Yılan tutmak zehir tutmaktır. Gam ile gussa suretidir demiş, ihtiyar bir hoca da: Şahoğlu galiba üzerinize geliyor. İnşallah onu tutacaksınız...”
[82] Peçevi (1981c), 211-213. In the Turkish original: “Söylendiğine göre paşa bir gece düşünde bir yılan tutmuş. Yanındakilere bunu anlatıca birisi; ‘düşte yılan tutmak zehir yutmak demektir, tasa ve kaygıya işarettir’ demiş. Birisi de Şah oğlunun üzerinize geleceğinin belirtisidir, inşallah onu yakalarsınız diye yorumlamış. Hattâ bu ikinci yorum, ulu Tanrı'dan gece gündüz dilediği gibi, her iki dünyadan da beklediklerine uygun düşmüş ve savaşta bu denli pervasızca atılgan davranmasının nedeni olmuş.”

> So it was that he had put his faith in this favorable interpretation, and when he saw the two regiments that Mirza pushed forward in order to trick him, he had discarded all patience, reason, intelligence and deliberation to launch himself upon them. To be sure, he had then put his back to the fortress to fight for hours on end.[83]

Then this is the corresponding passage from Peçevi's History:

> Afterwards, the Shah's son, Ismail Mirza, arrived in the vicinity of Erzurum with thousands of soldiers, and made a demonstration with one or two of his regiments while placing the rest of his army in ambush. His objective was to find an opportunity to trap and capture Iskender Pasha. Although Iskender Pasha was a brave and experienced warrior, he couldn't contain his impatience upon seeing the enemy. He engaged in battle with his back to the fortress and killed many Iranians.[84]

Other correspondences between Peçevi's History and Ömer Seyfettin's story include the sultan's letter and gifts to İskender Pasha, as well as the viziers' letters of consolation as ordered by the sultan. What we do not and cannot know is whether İskender Pasha was in such total and despondent readiness to be executed. Throughout the story, Ömer Seyfettin plays up the pasha's psychological condition in order to highlight the idea of total submission to the single authority of the sultan.

### 4.4.6. Single Combat

- Plot Summary

An Ottoman force is laying siege to the fortress of Jajice.[85] These are soldiers of the *beys* of Bosnia and Semendire, who are waiting for the arrival of their commanders before taking any further steps. The fortress appears strong but empty, with no visible signs of life. A group of soldiers is sitting out in the open, at some distance from the walls, listening to an old officer recounting his past experiences. His grandfather, he says, was at one point commander of Jajice and died there a martyr. Ignorant of earlier

[83] Argunşah (1999b), 117-123.
[84] Peçevi (1981c), 212. In the original: "Ondan sonra şahın oğlu İsmail Mirza binlerce asker ile Erzurum dolaylarına geldi ve bir, iki alayını gösterip geri kalan askerini pusuya yatırdı. Amacı, fırsat kollayarak İskender Paşa'yı tuzağa düşürüp yakalamaktı. Gerçi İskender Paşa kahraman ve denemesi bol bir savaşçı idi, fakat düşmanı görünce sabırsızlanarak kendini tutamadı. Kaleye arka vererek savaşa tutuştu ve birçok İranlı'yı telef etti."
[85] *Yayçe* in the original. For its actual location in Bosnia, see : Donald Edgar Pitcher, *An Historical Geography of the Ottoman Empire* (Leiden : Brill, 1972), map XIII (A1), which indicates that it was the subject of an early Ottoman raid in 1438; map XVI (A2); map XXVIII (B1); map XXIX (B3); Paul Robert Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe* (University of Washington Press, 1993), map 9, maps 46 and 46a (when it was part of greater Croatia).

events, one of the young soldiers assumes that Jajice has always been an enemy stronghold. So, the old man's grandfather has to have been an infidel, and he simply cannot comprehend why the old man should persist in calling him a martyr (*şehit*). He and all the others are surprised to learn, first, that the old soldier's grandfather was a Turk called Sungur Alp, and second, that Jajice had been previously besieged and conquered in the time of "Fatih Gazi" (Mehmed II). Sungur Alp and his troops, the old soldier continues, showed mercy to the people inside the fortress, treating them with justice and fairness and not harming their lives or property. What they got in return was betrayal and treachery. Instead of being grateful for good government, the locals built up their inner hatred, waited, bided their time, and then attacked the mosque where Sungur Alp and his men had gathered for Friday prayers, catching them unawares and killing all of them.

After this archetypal story, from the Turkish nationalist perspective of the Balkan peoples' ungrateful response to Ottoman benevolence, talk turns to how, for a true warrior, the worst fate is not death (which means martyrdom) but to be sidelined from combat. At this point, the old soldier begins to tell the story of Cem, who is said to have been a great, robust, powerful fighter. During a previous siege, Cem is bored from the relative inactivity and goes up to the besieged fortifications to challenge their best fighter to single combat. They agree, and out rides a huge armored knight called Blas Şeri[86]. He is fighting with a drawn sword, while for some strange reason, Cem is using his lance. They spar for a while, and then suddenly, Cem's lance breaks, and Blas Şeri seizes the opportunity to deliver a mighty blow with his sword to Cem's thigh, severing his left leg above the knee. He then turns and rides back into his stronghold to the cheers of the enemy soldiers lining the parapets. As for the Turks, they somehow manage to stem the blood and sew up what is now Cem's stump, even though he is pleading with them to kill him and not leave him a cripple.

Among the listeners is a youngish *voivode*[87]called Kasım, who so far hasn't stood out much from the rest. He is of slight build, and a quiet and modest disposition although

[86] As in the original.
[87] *Voyvoda* in the original. A high-ranking title among the pre-Ottoman ruling elites that was eventually absorbed into Ottoman terminology, albeit with a shift in meaning, coming to refer to middling *sipahi*-like warriors.

he is always in the thick of the fighting. He gets up and calls to his squires for his horse, lance, and armor. Not bothering to put on his helmet, he rides up to the walls of Jajice, where he also throws away his sword and body armor, chases his horse away, and shouts his challenge to the defenders, asking for Blas Şeri in single combat. When told that he is not there, he asks for their next best fighter. Eventually, somebody called Jan Hobordansky appears, who is described as a giant clad in black armor, riding a similarly black armor-clad giant of a horse. He drives at full gallop against this seemingly defenseless Turk (who has deliberately left himself helmetless, horseless, unarmored). But Kasım ducks under Hobordansky's horse comes out behind, and deals his enemy a mighty side blow with his lance to unhorse him; once the knight is lying helpless on the ground, his rib cage already crushed from that spear swipe, Kasım pounces on him "like a tiger," pulls his arms back to dislocate his shoulders, and also pummels his back to further crush his thorax. But while his comrades keep shouting for him to cut off Hobordansky's head, Kasım simply leaves him lying there as he rides back into camp, saying (in revenge for what befell Cem) that being left a cripple is a warrior's worst fate.

- Source-Checking

In the specific case of this story, we have to deal with both literary and historical sources. This is because Ömer Seyfettin is operating not only with a certain knowledge derived from Ottoman history and historians but also with a certain literary tradition behind him.

At first glance, we see the theme of a one-on-one encounter between a Turkish soldier and an enemy soldier. We can find this theme in the works of different writers during the period of national literature. As an example, we can mention Léon Cahun's novel *Gök Bayrak,* originally published in French in 1876.[88] This novel received considerable attention and was widely read by the supporters of the Turkish nationalism movement in the Ottoman Empire at the time. We can understand from a passage in Ömer Seyfettin's story *Primo II* that he was also a close reader of Cahun's works:

[88] *La Banniere Bleue* in French.

> He knew French as his native language. His father brought him a book with a yellow cover called "Mavi Bayrak" [The Blue Banner]. Little Oğuz kept reading it, and his dreams were filled with Cebe's armies and Cengiz's palaces. After finishing his lessons, he would immerse himself in "Mavi Bayrak" and read for hours. The first thing he did in the morning was to go through the newspapers. The lowly Italians were being struck so hard in Tripoli![89]

As understood from the passage, the book Kenan gives his son Primo/Oğuz to read is the French original. Hence, it is referred to as *Mavi Bayrak*, which is Ömer Seyfettin's own literal translation from the French, rather than using *Gök Bayrak*, which will be the title of the later Turkish translation by Galip Bahtiyar. [90]

It is evident that Ömer Seyfettin, like other Turkish nationalists, was influenced by Leon Cahun. One element or motif that Leon Cahun introduced into popular Turkish nationalist history was the theme of "the stupid and clumsy Western knight." Thus, *Single Combat* echoes the initial presentation of this idea in *The Blue Banner*. In Leon Cahun's novel, there is an archetypal duel of this sort. The hero of *The Blue Banner* is a "Turco-Mongol" warrior (that is how Leon Cahun defines him) called Cani, which has been translated as Can Beg. Cani becomes a close comrade-in-arms for the young and rising Temucin and then also a banneret (standard bearer) for him when he becomes Cengiz. His missions in the service of the Great Khan took him all over Asia, including the Middle East, where in the late 12th or the early 13th century, he encounters the still surviving Crusaders and Crusader states.[91] As part of this adventure, Cani and his small retinue encounter a German Crusader knight by the name of Hugo, who is portrayed as a stupid brute of a man. Tensions escalate between Hugo and Cani, and as a stereotypically rude and crude Western knight, Hugo hot-headedly challenges Cani to mortal combat. This is going to take place as a traditional Medieval joust on horseback. Cani is so sure of his superiority that he disdains to put on his body armor. As he doesn't really want to kill the man, he also does not fit his lance with its steel tip at the first pass. But infuriated by Hugo's continuing insults and provocations, he finally does screw on the steel tip and consequently kills Hugo at the next pass.

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[89] In the Turkish original: "Fransızcayı anadil olarak biliyordu. Babası, ona sarı kaplı ve 'Mavi Bayrak' adlı kitap getirdi. Küçük Oğuz, hep onu okuyor, rüyaları Cebe'nin orduları ve Cengiz'in sarayları ile doluyordu. Derslerini bitirdikten sonra "Mavi Bayrak"a dalar, saatlerce okurdu. Sabahleyin ilk işi gazeteleri gözden geçirmekti. Trablus'ta alçak İtalyanlara öyle darbe vuruluyordu ki!.."

[90] Léon Cahun (1933).

[91] Historically speaking this is realistic, for while Cengiz died in 1227, the Principality of Antioch finally fell only in 1268, the County of Tripoli in 1289, and the Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1291.

So in both *The Blue Banner* and subsequently in Single Combat, we see the Turco-Mongol hero Cani (Can Beg) and the Ottoman-Turkish hero Kasım fighting with minimal body armor protection against 13th or 16th-century representatives of European (Western, Christian) knighthood that is depicted as heavily armored. Leon Cahun explains this dichotomy by saying that, in general, unlike Western Medieval knights, "Turco-Mongols" prefer offense over defense, and hence agility over protection. So they are normally lighter-armored compared with (for example) the Crusaders, and Cani's refusal to put on his armor to fight (and kill) Hugo is presented as an extension (perhaps an extreme extension, but still an extension) of this socio-cultural preference.

Ömer Seyfettin builds on this previous conceptualization but takes it to a new and different level. For him, Western armor is just as important as the Turkish lack of armor. He is writing in the early 20th century, specifically in 1917, which is two or three years after Gallipoli (1915). This was an era when the West created a civilization of steam and steel. The Great Powers of the time have a monopoly of this technology, which is embodied above all else in dreadnought-type battleships. It was this technology that the Ottoman Empire faced at Gallipoli in 1915, and in the hands of Muslim patriots or Turkish nationalists, it gave rise to a David-vs-Goliath vision of their predicament. They chose to portray the situation as a 1/0 binary opposition: all power on one and all powerlessness on the other side. Thus it is that in his famous *Çanakkale Şehitlerine* (Hymn to the Martyrs of Gallipoli), Mehmed Akif writes of "cowardly hands clad in armor" standing off (meaning, standing offshore) to rain fire on [our] "naked breasts."[92] The reference to the British and French warships and their heavy artillery fire is very clear. Mehmed Akif goes on to assert that [our] "Heroic army laughs at this threat! / It asks for no steel ramparts, and neither does it shrink from its adversary; / It is not a conquerable fortress, its faith-filled breast."[93] These same ideas and metaphors will be repeated, albeit in a bit more compressed form, in

[92] In the Turkish original: "Saçıyor zırha bürünmüş de o nâmerd eller / Yıldırım yaylımı tûfanlar, alevden seller / Veriyor yangını, durmuş da açık sînelere,…"
[93] In the Turkish original: "Kahraman orduyu seyret ki bu tehdîde güler! / Ne çelik tabyalar ister, ne siner hasmından; / Alınır kal'a mı göğsündeki kat kat îman?"

the same poet's lyrics for the Turkish National Anthem: "What if a wall of steel plate girds the West's horizons? / I have my faith-filled breast as my bulwark."[94]

It is this dichotomy between armor and lack of armor that Ömer Seyfettin, too, is exploiting and developing in *Single Combat*. Of course, historically speaking it was not the case that Ottoman sipahis (or janissaries) were lacking in armor. So, it is in order to create a fictive binary opposition between armor and lack of armor, capable of echoing the Gallipoli situation in the minds of his readers, that Ömer Seyfettin makes Kasım Voyvoda discard his sword and armor and chase away his horse, to appear momentarily powerless. But then, victory turns out to be possible (indeed, certain) even under these extreme circumstances. We did it back in the 16th century, the author seems to be saying; we did it in 1915, and now we can do it again (in 1917). The symbolic message of *Single Combat* becomes similar to Mehmed Akif's poems, holding out hope and promise of victory against modern imperialism.

In the remaining part of this section, I will examine the alignment of the story with real events. To uncover those parts of the story that coincide with or approximate historical facts, it is necessary first to turn to the place and personal names Ömer Seyfettin mentions. The setting for *Single Combat* is an Ottoman expedition to Bosnia and Herzegovina when Jajice is (again) in enemy hands. Early in the story, we learn from an old officer that his grandfather Sungur Alp had been commander of Jajice when it was conquered during the reign of Mehmed II and for two years remained in Ottoman hands. According to Peçevi's History, this must have happened in 1461-62 because it was during this period that Jajice was briefly under the control of the Ottoman army. Peçevi confirms that Jajice was captured under Mehmet II, but a few years later, it again fell into enemy hands. In Ömer Seyfettin's story, the old officer regretfully notes that "for nearly seventy years now, Jajice has once more been in their hands."[95] Adding seventy to 1462 puts us in the year 1532, that is to say, in the Reign of Suleiman I, though we must also bear in mind the imprecise expression used by the old officer: "nearly seventy years" (*aşağı yukarı yetmiş sene*). Then again, Ömer Seyfettin's

[94] In the Turkish original: "Garbın âfâkını sarmışsa çelik zırhlı duvar / Benim iman dolu göğsüm gibi serhaddim var."
[95] Argunşah (1999b), 178. In the Turkish original: "İşte aşağı yukarı yetmiş sene var ki Yayçe yine onlarda…"

reference to how "troops under the *beys* of Bosnia and Semendire[96] had been laying siege to Jajice for many a week now, waiting for their commanders to arrive"[97] gives us to understand that in storytime, while the fortress had not fallen yet, it was just about to be conquered.

When we turn to Peçevi, we find strong confirmation of all these hints or details. He describes the final capture of Jajice in a way that also reveals where Ömer Seyfettin took the old officer's story about his grandfather from:

> The Conquest of Yayça Fortress, Year 934 [1527-28]
> This fortress was previously conquered and garrisoned by the ancestors of Sultan Mehmet Han Gazi during the year 866 (1461-1462). After remaining in the hands of Muslims for two years, on a Friday while the Muslims were praying, the infidels suddenly attacked and killed or captured the Muslims, chaining many of them. Thus, after remaining in the hands of these vile infidels for a full sixty-eight years [i.e. during the "current" siege in Single Combat] a man came to the commanders outside the fortress and informed them that he would guide the Muslims to enter the fortress through the main gate with a ladder. The commanders reported the situation to Hüsrev Bey, may he rest in peace. However, fearing that the enemy would become aware if they waited for Hüsrev Bey to arrive, they immediately took action that night and captured the fortress. Hüsrev Bey received the news on the way, and he presented his horse and all his belongings and equipment to the bearer of the good news.[98]

Since, according to Peçevi, Jajice fell in 1527-1528, the action in *Single Combat* must also be taking place in the same year. With this main chronological fix in mind, I have also researched the names of the main story characters to see if they might be real persons in Ottoman history. Ömer Seyfettin does not name the old officer who tells the stories of Sungur Alp or Cem, and we understand that the other characters, too, are likely to be fictional. However, the name Kasım Voivode is mentioned in Peçevi's work, though not in the section on the conquest of Jajice but in the section titled "Summary of the German Campaign." This campaign took place in 1532. Considering that the conquest of Jajice took place in 1527-1528, clearly the two events were not far apart, and we can perhaps understand how Ömer Seyfettin might have combined is readings of both. The passage mentioning Kasım Voivode is as follows:

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[96] Semendria (Gr) or Smederovo (Sl). For its actual location, just east-southeast of Belgrade, see : Hupchick and Cox, *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of the Balkans* (Palgrave, 2001), map 19; Donald Edgar Pitcher, *An Historical Geography of the Ottoman Empire* (Leiden : Brill, 1972), map XVI (B2), map XXVI (A1), map XXIX (C3); Paul Robert Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe* (University of Washington Press, 1993), map 9, map 9a, map 13, map 14 (for the entire Semendire *sancak* below Belgrade).
[97] Argunşah (1999b), 176.
[98] My translation from Peçevi (1981e), 100.

> Moreover, the hero named Kasım Voyvoda, who had become the commander of the soldiers, especially the raiding party, according to one rumor, with five thousand men, and according to another rumor, with twenty thousand men -- consisting of some raiders and some volunteer veterans -- set off from the same base towards the eastern slopes of Alaman Mountain for a raid. The fortunate Sultan himself, on the other hand, marched with the Islamic army towards the west, and these lands were trampled under the hooves of the victorious soldiers from one end to the other. They would advance following the light of fires at night and the rising smoke in the sky during the day. After Kasım Voyvoda crossed to the other side from a steep point of Alaman Mountain, the infidels blocked his return path. Wherever he turned, he couldn't pass, and thus many veterans, unable to find an escape route, drank the elixir of martyrdom and headed for the path to paradise.[99]

We cannot say whether Kasım Voivode was also involved in the conquest of Jajice. What we can say is that Ömer Seyfettin appears to have merged these two incidents and created a single story based on them.

### 4.4.7. The Log

• Plot Summary

*The Log*[100] is a captivating short story written by Ömer Seyfettin, with Arslan Bey as the central character. It takes us on a journey through the battle experiences of Arslan Bey, a courageous and respected Turkish commander. The story is woven around the siege of Shalgo Bastion in Hungary by an Ottoman force under the command of Arslan Bey.

The story begins by describing the natural surroundings of a mountainous region, the gloomy weather, and a besieged fortress. Shalgo is built on a rocky hilltop, and its high walls make it even more difficult to capture. Arslan Bey and his detachment of two thousand soldiers have encircled the fortress and set up camp. They are waiting to be ordered to attack. But Arslan Bey bides his time; he gazes at the flag fluttering on

[99] My translation from Peçevi (1981e), 123. In the Turkish original: "Yine, askere, özellikle akıncı takımına serdar olmuş Kasım Voyvoda adındaki kahraman, bir söylentiye göre beş bin, başka bir söylentiye göre ise yirmi bin adam ile -- ki bunlar kimi akıncı, kimi gönüllü gazilerden oluşmakta idiler -- Alman dağının doğu yönlerine akın için aynı üsten kalkıp gitmişlerdir. Saadetli padişahın kendisi ise İslam askeri ile batı yönüne yürür ve bu topraklar baştan başa muzaffer askerin atlarının ayakları altında çiğnenirdi. Geceleri ateş ışığına, gündüzleri de göklere yükselen dumanlara uyarak yol alırlardı. Adı geçen Kasım Voyvoda Alman dağının sarp bir noktasından öte yana geçtikten sonra kafirler yolunu tıkadılar; nereye yöneldi ise geçemedi ve böylece çoğu gaziler kurtuluş yolu bulamayıp şehitlik şerbetini içerek cennet yolunu tutmuşlardı."

[100] *Kütük* in the Turkish original. Published in the first volume of the periodical *Yeni Mecmua* on 27th September 1917, 234-238. Argunşah (1999b), 82-91.

Shalgo Bastion, and dreams of conquering it. Meanwhile, his steward (*kethüda*) arrives with news of the siege of another fortress. They sit down to talk among themselves. The Turkish army has been advancing swiftly, separating small detachments to lay siege to the various strongpoints on its way and conquering them one by one. A major obstacle to Hadım Ali Pasha's progress has been Dregley [Dregely] fortress, though it has finally fallen. Arslan Bey's steward has been there throughout. He describes how difficult it was, and the truly heroic defence put up by its commander, who is named as a certain Zondi. Talk turns to valor, honesty, integrity, heroism. Despite his skepticism, Arslan Bey is persuaded, on his steward's testimony, that this Zondi was truly a brave and generous man. He admits there may be heroic warriors among the enemy, too, such as Zondi, Plas Batanyus or Lozonci.[101]

Meanwhile, Arslan Bey is thinking all the time about how he is going to capture Shalgo Bastion. Despite having enough troops, Arslan Bey refuses to give the order to launch an attack. He also refuses his chief gunnery officer's request to move his two guns up, open fire, and start "softening" the walls of the bastion. We are given to understand that Arslan Bey has a secret plan, but we don't know what it is. He keeps his thoughts to himself, only suggesting that he is looking for foggy weather or heavy cloud cover. As time passes, nobody understands why no attack has been launched. When his subordinates ask Arslan Bey about the timing of the attack, he tells them that he will capture the fortress without firing a single shot. At the same time, every day, Arslan Bey rides his horse into the depths of the forest, leaving everyone puzzled about what the commander is trying to accomplish.

Arslan Bey planning everything on his own is similar to Ömer Seyfettin's portrayal of a Barhan Bey, another strong commander, in what I shall be taking up in section 4.4.8 -- his story *Negotiated Surrender*.

After an increasingly impatient wait, one day Arslan Bey notices that the weather is turning very foggy, and announces to his troops that the time has come. He asks his officers and sergeants, including the artillery commander. to move their men up close to Shalgo's walls, and to get them to shout and make as much noise as possible. He

[101] All names as in the original.

also instructs his steward to go and fetch the fifty water buffaloes that he has collected at a nearby farm, and bring them to a point in the forest. As the dense fog begins to clear, Arslan Bey rides up to the walls and shouts out a long declamation at the defenders, praising himself, highlighting his genealogy, extolling his past achievements, and calling on them to surrender. Noting their hesitation, he asks them to look at the mouth of the road leading out of the forest. There, pulled by fifty water buffaloes, everybody sees the huge black snout of an enormous cannon emerging from the undergrowth. Arslan Bey boasts that this was the gun that captured Istanbul, because two shots from it sufficed to bring down the city walls. He has now had it brought all the way from Istanbul, and threatens the Shalgo defenders with only a single shot, which should be enough to demolish their entire bastion.

Soon enough, the bastion puts up a white flag, which Ömer Seyfettin describes as "the funeral shroud of glory and honor."[102] Arslan Bey reiterates his promise of safe conduct. Then he takes the commander of the fortress, together with his leading knights and nobles, knights to the cannon. Initially they are afraid to even approach this massive weapon, but then they realize that it is just a huge black-painted log. The commander mutters that such trickery is not chivalry. Is it chivalry to surrender in fear of a gun that has yet to fire a single shot, Arslan Bey retorts.

Arslan Bey therefore emerges as not only a fearless warrior but also a compassionate leader who has a strong belief in the state (or empire). The story delves into the themes of bravery, intelligence, and the complexities of leadership. Arslan Bey becomes a symbol of unwavering resolve, believing in what he is doing, and inspiring his soldiers to believe in him. Through his unwavering determination, he teaches his soldiers the importance of preserving their strength and belief in the commander. *The Log* highlights what the author regards as the essence of Turkish heroism: combining brains with courage. It does this by depicting the struggles faced by leaders in border fighting and ongoing tactical games with the enemy. The prominent element highlighted in the story is Arslan Bey, a clever character capable of strategic warfare. Furthermore, the soldiers who listen to him and follow him highlight the importance of trust in and obedience to authority.

[102] Argunşah (1999b), 90. In the Turkish original: "şan, namus kefeni olan meşum beyaz bayrak…"

• Source-Checking

Matching the main character, Arslan Bey, with a real historical figure based on primary sources is not an easy task. In the end, however, he does turn out to be at least *based* on a historical personality. What Ömer Seyfettin does is to take a real-life character, use his name but also re-define and re-position him in order to both fictionalize and claim historical authenticity. This is perhaps similar to *The Galley Slave* (see section 4.4.10), where Kara Memiş is portrayed as a fictional character while Turgut Reis is there but in a secondary position. This is a narrative technique Ömer Seyfettin frequently employs in his Heroes of Yore series. Here, too, Arslan Bey is a real name but a fictional character with imaginary characteristics, side by side with the much more real-historical figure of Hadım Ali Pasha, who is frequently mentioned in the sources as an Ottoman statesman who is known to have held top positions like provincial governor for Anatolia[103], county governer[104] for Bosnia, and governor of Budin.[105] In the secondary literature, a major Turkish historian notes that Hadım Ali Pasha and a certain Arslan Bey fought together during the siege of Dregley. In the process, he also provides the date of this major campaign:

> Hadım Ali Pasha marched towards the strategically important Dregely Fortress, and captured the fortress defended by Szondy György. During this operation in July 1552, alongside Yahyâpashazâde Arslan Bey he also captured the fortresses of Hay, Gyarmat, Seçen (Széczèny), Hollókö, and Bujak. As a result, the border between the Ottomans and the Habsburg Empire expanded in favor of the Ottomans, encompassing the southern part of Slovakia.[106]

We cannot find Arslan Bey, mentioned as Yahyâpashazâde Arslan Bey, in the works of Naima, frequently used by Ömer Seyfettin. In Peçevi's History, on the other hand, we come across various Arslan Beys whose names are mentioned sporadically. Considering the period and region in which Hadım Ali Pasha lived, it emerges that at this time it is just one person, and we can conclude that he is actually Yahyâpashazâde Arslan Bey.

[103] *Beylerbeyi*.
[104] *Sancakbeyi*.
[105] *Beylerbeyi.* Budin is the Ottoman name for Buda, which is part of the city of Budapest.
[106] Feridun Emecen (1997).

We also encounter him in Hammer. According to Joseph Von Hammer, Arslan Bey (Pasha) received the nickname "lion" (*aslan* or *arslan*) due to his bravery. In Hammer his name is Mehmet Pasha, the son of Yahyâpaşazâde Mehmet Bey, and Arslan is his acquired nickname. "The unfortunate Mehmed Pasha, who gained the name 'Arslan' with his proven merits, was the grandson of Balı Beğ, son of Bosnian Governor Yahya Pasha, one of the bravest generals of Sultan Mehmed II." This is rather precisely echoed in *The Log*, where Arslan Bey boasts about his genealogy in front of Shalgo Bastion:

> I am a grandson of Yahya Pasha, governor of Bosnia, who conquered for my padishah's grandfather lands vaster than all the countries currently held by your king. My ancestor Hamza Balı Bey routed your armies when he was only fourteen, covering himself in glory during the siege of Vienna, outside Wienberg. [107]

Why, then, does Hammer refer to him as "unfortunate"? It is because, on the pretext that he could not properly protect some border fortresses and collect taxes from their respective localities, he was sentenced to death as a result of the intervention of Sokollu Mehmet Pasha, and after being executed on August 3, 1566, Mustafa Pasha, Sokollu's nephew, was appointed governor (*beylerbeyi*) of Budin. Arslan Pasha is said to have written a letter to Sultan Süleyman against Sokollu, as a result of which Sokollu appears to have contrived his execution. Hence, Ömer Seyfettin appears to have immortalized an Ottoman soldier not in spite of his tragic end, but perhaps of his tragic end. Arslan Bey with all the details of his ancestry appears as a representative of a native, truly Turkish warrior nobility of the frontier marches. In contrast, Sokollu is the embodiment of the *devshirme* system, which was hateful for the strongly Turkist Ömer Seyfettin. We have seen indications of this hostility in *The Caftan Decorated with Pink Pearls*, where Muhsin Çelebi's straightforward honesty is tolerated with great difficulty by the grand vizier, and also in *The Imperial Decree*, where again it is Sokollu who sends a brave and honest Turkish warrior to his death.

As for Shalgo Bastion, where the story takes place, it is not to be found in the aforementioned historical sources. But this is not the case with many other details, including everything associated with Dregley, its siege, and its heroic commander.

[107] In the Turkish original: "Ben, padişahımın dedesine sizin kralınızın memleketlerinden büyük yerler zapt etmiş Bosna Valisi Yahya Paşa'nın torunlarındanım. Ceddim Hamza Balı Bey daha on dört yaşında iken sizin ordularınızı perişan etmiş, Viyana muhasarasında, Viyenberg önünde şan almıştır." It is, of course, the first (1529) siege of Vienna that is involved.

Dregely (by its Hungarian name) was a key fighting fortress (and is now a historical site) near the Hungary-Slovakia border. The commander mentioned in the story as Zondi is actually Szondy György, whom we also come across in Hammer's History:

> He [Hadım Ali Pasha] had left Buda to capture Dregley Fortress. Despite the courageous defense of its commander Szondy György, the fortress did not yield any results against the bravery, determination, and military skill of Ali Pasha. When the fortress was captured, the Pasha paid tribute to this defeated yet heroic enemy by burying him and erecting a spear and flag on his grave.

On this basis, Ömer Seyfettin seems to be on solid ground with his characterisation of Zondi (Szondy György), including the Hungarian's heroism. The following conversation between Arslan Bey and his steward closely echoes Hammer:

> Crawling around on his knees, he kept fighting until he died, having been repeatedly holed by sword cuts and lance thrusts all over his body.
> -- So, the paşa was unable to meet and talk with this brave enemy.
> -- Yes, he couldn't. He had his body and his severed head buried right in front of the fortress. He ordered a lance and a banner to be planted on his grave.
> -- Well done! Though I myself would have ordered a tomb to be built, I swear…[108]

Here, when Arslan Bey says that he himself would have even had a tomb built for Zondi, through appreciation for a good and solid enemy, it is ultimately Turkish grace, benevolence, and genuine heroism that is exalted. Perhaps the final message has to do with Ottoman, i.e. Turkish moral superiority, bringing with it belief in future victory.

### 4.4.8. Negotiated Surrender

- Plot Summary

The Hungarian border setting and frontier fighting context of this story is similar to *Başını Vermeyen Şehit* (The Martyr Who Wouldn't Give Up His Head; see section 4.4.2). The action takes place in and around a *palanka*, a small frontier fortress on the military border with Imperial (Habsburg) territory in central Hungary, which after Mohacs (1526) has come to be divided between the Ottomans and the Holy Roman Empire. In the story, this is said to be the last (furthest) border fortress that the

[108] Argunşah (1999b), 84. In the Turkish original: "O, diz üstü sürünerek, her tarafı kılıçla, mızrakla delik deşik olup, ölünceye kadâr vuruştu. -- Demek paşa, bu mert düşmanla konuşamadı. -- Evet, konuşamadı. Vücudu ile kesik başını kalenin karşısına gömdürdü. Mezârının üstüne bir mızrak, bir bayrak dikilmesini emretti. -- Aşkolsun! Ben olsam bir türbe yaptırırım vallahi…"

Ottomans have conquered in the west. We are not told the name of the *palanka*, only that it is near Goça. It is intimated that it has to be staunchly defended because this is the point that determines the western border of the Ottoman Empire. So, a life-or-death situation is hinted at to echo the dire straits that the Unionists found themselves in at the time of Enver Pasha's 1917 call to create a new "national literature."

In *Negotiated Surrender*, this last-stand mission has been entrusted to Barhan Bey, who is the *palanka* commander and the hero of the story. He is said to be the step brother of Kuduz Ferhat Bey, who is portrayed as the epitome of brute strength -- a powerful and ferocious warrior capable of tearing apart steel wire armor with his bare hands. Barhan is the very opposite: of relatively slight stature, and with a head too big for his body, which he always carries slightly bent to one side, as if it were too heavy for his neck, an innate dignity, and in his eyes a never-to-be-extinguished spark of intelligence. Thus, it is not brawn but brains that he represents.

He is also patient, prudent, resourceful and resilient. These frontier *palankas* are undermanned, and supplies are running low. An Ottoman army of sixteen thousand is said to have ravaged this region two years ago, though now only a hundred and fifty soldiers are left as Barhan's garrison. Since then, they have been waiting for the sultan to come at the head of yet another imperial expedition, but nothing of the sort has happened. Neither have any other reinforcements arrived, so their situation is becoming more precarious by the day. Barhan Bey rejects the idea of raiding nearby towns and villages because he does not want to leave the fortress undefended. When his subordinate Mahmut Ağa, an experienced soldier, conveys his concerns, Barhan Bey simply repeats that "Allah is merciful…" Soon enough, (as in *Başını Vermeyen Şehit*) a large enemy force is seen leaving a nearby Habsburg strongpoint and heading in their direction. Warned by the watchman, Barhan Bey peers at the horizon, and identifies them not as irregulars (*hajduks*) but as an elite fighting force of knights.

Unfazed, Barhan Bey -- like Arslan Bey in *Kütük* (The Log) -- turns out to have his own secret, devious plan. He has two boxes brought from his room. He takes out some mysterious powders from both of them, sprinkling them in both the fort's well and the cistern. He has a large amount of coal ground to coal dust in the courtyard. In the *palanka*'s arsenal, he orders a handspan's depth of gunpowder to be removed from the

top of twelve powder sacks, to be replaced with this coal dust, and the sacks to be neatly tied again. He then tells Mahmut Ağa that he is ready to conduct a negotiated surrender. His soldiers are surprised by this unexpected decision. At this point Ömer Seyfettin's authorial voice intervenes to pass editorial judgment on the character of the ideal Turkish soldier:

> He [Barhan Bey] knew that the Turkish soldier was very obedient. Whatever their commander tells them to do, they do immediately. But there is only one command that they do not obey. It is the order to 'surrender.' The Turk prefers death to surrender.[109]

As with the paeans to chivalric fortitude and condemnations of the idea of surrender in *The Log* (section 4.4.5), these, too, should be considered in the context of the year 1917, and therefore as further warnings, on behalf of the CUP leadership, against capitulating to the Allies even as things were going from bad to worse for the Central Powers including the Ottoman Empire. Ideals of absolute obedience, of total self-sacrifice for the national cause (or of service to the state), and of no surrender whatsoever -- these appear as some key elements of Unionist policy that Ömer Seyfettin keeps echoing in these stories. So it is that Barhan Bey convinces his soldiers, albeit with difficulty, by saying that they are not really going to surrender but only going to move to a more suitable place or space to fight. He then addresses the besiegers, telling them that he is actually well prepared to withstand a long siege, in proof of which (in return for a unarmed sipahi sent hostage to the enemy) he admits a unarmed knight into the *palanka* and shows him their food supplies, their sources of water, their ammunition. Nevertheless, he says, he is willing to accept a negotiated surrender, though he drives a hard bargain for it. He and his men are to be allowed to ride out with all their arms and armor, though leaving all their food and ammunition behind. Meanwhile, the besieging force of around three hundred must be divided into two equal groups, one armed and the other unarmed, with the armed group entering the fortress first, and the unarmed group waiting outside as the defenders exit and ride away in safety. In the course of setting out all these details, as well as the relevant dialogues between the two sides, Ömer Seyfettin reveals his understanding of the material realities of 16th century Ottoman border warfare, including arms and armor

[109] Argunşah (1999b), 96. In the Turkish original: "Biliyordu ki Türk askeri çok itaatlidir. Kumandanları ne söylerse hemen yaparlar. Fakat yalnız bir emre karşı itaat göstermezler. Bu da 'teslim emri'dir. Türk ölmeyi teslim olmağa tercih eder."

as well as fortress design and construction, based on his readings of Peçevi's and Naima's Histories.

As for the conditions put forth by Barhan Bey, there is a trick in this, which however the Imperials fail to perceive in their eagerness to achieve an easy and bloodless victory. For "They all knew how difficult it was to take a fortress from the Turks by force, through combat."[110] The key element is that half of the enemy force should be disarmed and wait outside. What then happens is that as the armed portion of the besiegers enter the fortress and begin celebrating (prematurely, over-confidently and arrogantly), Barhan Bey's men, who have left the *palanka* fully armed, suddenly pounce on this vulnerable group, capturing them together with all the besiegers' supplies, ammunition and baggage train, all of which have been left out in the open, and have yet to be taken into the "captured" fortress. Simultanously, fifty of Barhan Bey's warriors occupy a small hummock a short distance from the *palanka*'s sole gate, so that from the commanding position no sortie becomes possible. In brief, the two sides have changed places; bow the Imperials ar inside, and the Turks have become the besiegers. Barhan Bey promptly dictates his conditions to the bewildered enemy. He bluffs pretty much in the same way that Arslan Bey bluffs with his enormous cannon in *The Log* (see section 4.4.7). You have no drinking water, he says, for I have poisoned both the cistern and the well. Also, he says, those gunpowder sacks are full of not gunpowder but coal dust; go look if you want. So now you have no choice except to negotiate your surrender with me.

His bluff works. Over the next three days, the trapped Imperials try their best to find a way out, but are ultimately forced by their thirst to surrender. In accordance with Barhan Bey's orders, they first throw all their arms and armor from the walls, and then they gather submissively in the courtyard, where Barhan separates fifty top noblemen from the remaining two hundred and fifty. In the process, he meets their commander, a certain Prince Petonleç[111], and (almost exactly like Arslan Bey revealing to the commander of Shalgo Bastion that the enormous cannon that so scared them into surrendering was nothing but a painted log) reveals to Petonleç that the cistern and the

[110] Argunşah (1999b), 98. In the Turkish original: "Türklerden zorla, muharebe ile kale almanın ne çetin şey olduğunu hepsi bilirdi."
[111] As in the original.

well were not poisoned; furthermore, that the sacks of gunpowder were actually full of gunpowder, topped only by a thin layer of coal dust. In *The Log*, Arslan Bey reprimands the unnamed enemy commander for having been so afraid of a gun that had not been fired a single time as to surrender; in *Negotiated Surrender*, Barhan Bey reprimands Prince Petonleç for having been so afraid of death as not to try to taste the well's or cistern's water to see if it was really poisoned or not.[112]

Such humiliating recriminations being over and done with, Barhan Bey dictates his final terms: Prince Petonleç must leave with his two hundred and fifty disarmed warriors, and return within a month to bring an enormous supply of food, including a thousand bags of flour, five hundred sacks of rice, five hundred sheep, and loads of fat, cheese, and grape molasses. If not, Barhan Bey's fifty aristocratic hostages will be executed. Petonleç grows pale under this threat, but has no choice except to comply. Before a month has elapsed, a huge caravan arrives to unload everything that Barhan Bey has demanded. "This poor little fortress that was so far from the interior could now easily wait for a few more years for the arrival of the great army that would surely capture the Crimson Apple," Ömer Seyfettin concludes.[113] What is striking is the similarity between this ending and the ending of *The Consolation* (section 4.4.5). In both cases, on the eastern front with Iran as well as the western front with the Holy Roman Empire, there is a promise of a great imperial army to arrive and continue the momentarily interrupted process of world-conquest, whether in the direction of Turan or the Crimson Apple (*Kızılelma*).

• Source-Checking

Turning to our usual historical sources, in Peçevi or Naima there is no single event that exactly matches this story. Instead, once more there are numerous details that help us form an idea of how Ömer Seyfettin has fictionalized history. Place names stand out in this regard. In *Negotiated Surrender*, Tata is cited as a strategically important strongpoint further south from our *palanka*, said to be a few days away, to which Barhan Bey and his soldiers might eventually consider retreating. So, it has been

[112] Argunşah (1999b), 101.
[113] Argunşah (1999b), 102. In the Turkish original: "İç eyaletlerden çok uzaklardaki bu garip kalecik, mutlaka 'Kızılelma'yı alacak olan büyük ordunun gelmesini, artık birkaç yıl daha rahat rahat bekleyebilecekti!"

previously conquered, and in story-time is already in Ottoman hands. Nevertheless, it, too, is part and parcel of the borderlands, which means that reaching it is going to be a dangerous venture in itself:

> In that case it would be necessary to abandon the fortress and retreat to Tata. But how would it be possible to pass through the enemy [as well as all sorts of frontier bandits and irregulars] for days on end with just one hundred and fifty people? Since the sultan had not yet crossed into Rumelia, this meant that a big army would not be coming this summer.[114]

As we might expect (given Ömer Seyfettin's attention to historical authenticity), Tata is a real place, located in the valley between the Gerecse mountains and the Vértes mountains, today on the Hungarian border with Slovakia, about seventy kilometers north of Budapest. According to Naima, it fell to the Ottomans in 1594:

> Tata fortress was besieged that day and captured through negotiated surrender on the third day and soldiers were placed in it. The infidels from Tata went on to Comran [Kornom]. At that time, the Khan of the Tatars, too, came and caught up with the army on the 10th of Zükade, met with the vizier by shaking hands on horseback, went down to the grand vizier's tent, where they sat together and had dinner, after which a bejewelled gold basin and ewer were brought, and after they had washed their hands, were given to the Khan's squire. -- Tata fortress was conquered on 17 July 1594.[115]

In *Negotiated Surrender*, we are told that Barhan Bey's little fortress, whose name and exact location is not given, has been on its own for two years. This puts us in or around the year 1596, and explains why no relief is forthcoming: because attention has shifted to the Iranian front. But what bigger expedition or campaign was the capture of Tata a part of? At the time, Murad III (r. 1574-1595) was still on the throne, and his grand vizier was Sinan Pasha. What would come to be called the Ottoman-Austrian War of 1593-1606 had broken out in 1593. Fighting would continue to flow back and forth across the borderlands over the next thirteen years, with the fortresses of Györ (Yanıkkale), Erlau (Eğri), Komarom (Komaron), Esztergom (Estergon) and others repeatedly changing hands. Sinan Pasha's 1594 expedition was part of the early stages

[114] Argunşah (1999b), 93. In the Turkish original: "O vakit kaleyi bırakıp mutlaka Tata'ya çekilmek icap edecekti. Halbuki yüz elli kişiyle günlerce düşmanın, martolosların, oskofların, norlakların, haydukların arasından nasıl geçilirdi? Mademki padişah henüz Rumeli'ye geçmemişti, artık bu yaz büyük ordu gelmeyecek demekti."

[115] Naima (1967-1969a), 93. In the original: "Tata kalesi ol günü muhasara ve üçüncü gün vire ile fetholunup içine asker konuldu. Tata'dan çıkan kâfirler Komran'a [Kornom] gittiler. Ol esnada Tatar Hanı dahi gelip Züka'denin onunda orduya erişip vezir ile at arkasında müsafeha ile görüşüp, vezir-i a'zam otağına indi ve bir mak'ada beraberce oturup yemekten sonra bir murassa altın leğen ve ibrik gelip, el yuduktan sonra Hanın silâhtarına verildi. -- Tata kalesi (28 Şevval [17 Temmuz] 594'te fetholunmuştur."

of this major conflict. “The Grand Vizier Sinan Pasha gathered an even greater army in 1594,” we are told in the modern secondary literature. [116] Sinan Pasha reached Hungary at the end of May and relieved the fortresses of Estergon and Hatvan, which were under siege by the Austrians. Faced with this danger, the Austrians also gave up their siege of Gran, a castle that had been destroyed during Suleiman's reign. Then, with the participation of the Crimean Khan, the capture of the fortresses on the border began. In July 1594, Tata was captured, then in September Yanıkkale (Győr) was also capture, and Komaron was besieged. The only solace the Austrians experienced that year was when the citadel of Komárno managed to repel the armies of the vizier long enough to force the Ottoman army to withdraw for the winter. A passage from Naima reflects the accidentalities and hence the frequently confused ebb and flow of the fighting:

> As time was pressing, it was decided that it would be suitable to proceed toward the Weszprim and Palota fortresses in the vicinity of Szigetvar, and to conquer them. In mid-Muharram, there was a convergence at a location known as ‘Dal deresi’ with an arsenal and soldiers arriving from Budin, and after reaching Stuhlweiszenburg, the Bosnian governor stayed behind with the skirmishers and the Anatolian troops while the plain of Weszprim was reached on the 20th of Muharram, where the Hasa Pasha, the constable of Budin, led his frontier veterans in assaulting and besieging the fortress, and so valiantly did they fight that within three days the infidel army suffered greatly and eventually sued for a negotiated surrender.[117]

Murad III died of a stroke in 1595. After his death, the throne passed to Mehmed III, and the Long War continued. Therefore, it is not clear in which sultan’s reign this story takes place. Neither can we find the names of Barhan Bey or Prince Petonleç in these sources. This much is clear: border warfare is virtually continuous, with mutual raids being launched, and large or small fortresses either defending themselves successfully or changing hands all the time. It is this overall context that provides Ömer Seyfettin with the suitable historical background for placing his Turkish heroes in yet another tactical predicament, and once more weaving around them a narrative, intended as a

[116] The following summary is from Mehmet İpşirli, "Koca Sinan Paşa", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/koca-sinan-pasa

[117] Naima (1967-1969a), 82-83. In the Turkish original: “Vakit tenkdir [dardır], hâlâ Sigetvar [Szigetvar] semtinde Besprem [Weszprim] ve Polata [Palota] hisarları fethine varmak münasiptir deyû ol tarafa teveccüh mukarrer oldu (o tarafa gidilmesi kararlaştı). Muharremin yarısında ‘Dal deresi’ nam mahalde Budin’den gelen cebehâne ve asker ile cemolup İstonî-i Belgrad’a [Stuhlweiszenburg] varıldıktan Bosna beylerbeyisi çerhacı [öncü] ve Anadolu askeri gerûye kalıp 20 muharremde Bespirem sahrasına varıldıkta Budin muhafızı Haşan Paşa serhad gazileriyle kaleye hücum edip muhasara ve dilîrâne [yiğitçe] cenk ile üç gün içinde küffar askeri ıstıraba düşüp vire [müzakere yoluyla teslim] bayrağı diktiler.”

parable for the dire straits of 1917, of how they manage to extricate themselves from this precarious situation not so much through brute force, but a combination of courage with resilience and intelligence.

### 4.4.9. The Mace

- Plot Summary

This is a story about the just punishment (as the author sees it) meted out by the Ottomans at the height of their power to presumptuous rebels against their authority in the Balkans. It takes place in the Danubian Principalities of Wallachia (Eflâk) and Moldavia (Boğdan) that in the 15th and 16th centuries were a hotly contested buffer zone between the retreating Medieval kingdom of Hungary and the expanding Ottoman Empire. After the fall of Belgrade in 1521, the battle of Mohacs in 1526, and the subsequent capture of half of Hungary by the Ottomans, it was the Holy Roman Empire, now in the hands of the Habsburg dynasty, that confronts the Ottoman presence in Central Europe.

In the beginning, we are in a small unnamed capital that appears to have just declared its independence from Istanbul. It is a festive day like no other. Its streets are overflowing with celebrating people. Women dressed in white and men in their embroidered waistcoats are drinking and dancing. There is a huge crowd in the square in front of the palace. Everyone is eagerly awaiting the arrival of the envoys sent by the Turks to the prince who, refusing to accept the rule of Mehmet Bey, the Turkish sub-provincial governor (*sancakbey*), has revolted and declared his independence, his claim to rule this principality on his own. Church bells ring and brave boyar horsemen stand guard at the palace gate. We are introduced to somebody simply called "the famous commander" (*meşhur kumandan*). He makes a triumphant appearance on horseback, flushed by the wine he has been drinking since the early hours of the morning. His second-in-charge, referred to as "the first officer" (*birinci zâbit*), and addressed only at one point as Dimko by his superior, does not share the commander's sense of ease. He believes that the Turks will not accept the situation as quickly as expected, and is worried that they are sending a delegation of three hundred, ostensibly to congratulate the prince and recognize his independence. "No matter how ornate their

swords are, they will still cut," he says.[118] The commander dismisses these concerns. He argues that the officer is exaggerating the power of the Turks. In turn, he (the commander) interprets the arrival of the envoy with such a large entourage as a sign that the sultan considers the Wallachian prince to be his equal. Ömer Seyfettin uses this conversation both to praise Ottoman power (through the anxious officer), and to warn against underestimating it (through the commander's arrogance).

So, in the palace square, they watch the swirling crowd, through which the Ottoman delegation suddenly emerges. Leading them is an envoy who sits in full splendor on his horse, wearing a tall headdress and a robe that reaches down to his feet. The commander meets them on his horse, and instructs the envoy to dismount and enter alone on foot. The envoy agrees, but explains that he cannot carry the gifts the sultan has sent all by himself. So, in addition to the envoy, three soldiers are allowed to enter into the presence of the prince -- to carry a drum with a leather case, a flag in a red sack, and a heavy mace. The area around the throne is filled with noblemen, prominent warriors, and lords of the Wallachian tribes. All watch the Turkish envoy with curious eyes. The chief envoy greets the prince, smiling and bowing his head, and offers the letter he has taken from his robe to the prince, who (in a further display of pride and arrogance) nonchalantly hands it to the man next to him. The envoy then starts presenting his gifts one by one. Up to this point, the reader is unsure of what is going to happen. The envoy seems to be doing everything the commander says, not causing any trouble and following orders. He always has his head bent in respect and obedience. Eventually, he walks up to the prince with the mace he has taken from the shoulder of the soldier accompanying him, always slowly, always respectfully -- but then, when he reaches the throne, he lifts the mace with all his might and brings it down on the prince's crowned head, killing him instantly. He then shouts: "You see! The rebel who became enamored of independence has met his due punishment!"[119]

Everyone in the hall is stunned, frozen, unable to react. The envoy immediately orders the three soldiers accompanying him to beat the drum so as to signal success to the rest of his retinue waiting outside, and instructs them to disarm the soldiers of the

[118] Argunşah (1999b), 187. In the Turkish original: "Kılıçları ne kadar süslü olsa, yine keser…"
[119] Argunşah (1999b), 189. In the Turkish original: "İşte gördünüz ya! İstiklâl sevdasına düşen asi cezasını buldu!"

principality. He orders the Ottoman flag they have brought with them to be raised in the palace square. He removes the body of the slain prince from the throne, sits down in its place, and tells the lords inside, who are trembling with fear, to obey him in the name of the sultan. The nobles, who had previously paid homage to the prince, now line up to kiss the hand of this brave Turkish envoy. Meanwhile, only two people have their heads cut off: the drunken commander, and the officer who tries to escape.

- Source-Checking

*The Mace* was published in the periodical *Yeni Mecmua* on 27th December 1917. Identifying the historical connections behind the story proves more difficult than in the rest of the Heroes of Yore series. Ömer Seyfettin refrains from using personal and place names; his chief character, the Turkish envoy, also remains anonymous; and it is not easy to determine the exact chronology of events from the narrative alone. The story does briefly mention Wallachia and Mehmet Bey, who is said to be the *sancakbey*, the governor of this sub-province. This is perhaps enough of a clue in itself, for both Peçevi's and Naima's Histories, identify a certain Mehmet Pasha as the governor of the *sancak* of Wallachia (*Eflak beyi*) under the provincial governor (*beylerbeyi*) of Budin, Mahmut Pasha.

In turn, this leads us, in both of our major sources, into a tumultuous era during the long Ottoman-Austrian War of 1593-1606, ending with the Treaty of Zsitvatorok. Hence the early years of this conflict become a shared historical background between *Negotiated Surrender* (section 4.4.8) and *The Mace*. Also similarly, both stories revolve around incidents hidden in the ups and downs or the momentarily changing fortunes of this conflict. *Negotiated Surrender*, as we have seen, is about not one but two successive negotiated surrenders, going opposite ways, compressed into the ultimately successful Ottoman defense of a small frontier fortress. In *The Mace*, it is an entire *sancak*, a sub-province, that seems about to change hands but through a clever ploy is retained by the Ottomans.

In Peçevi, the relevant details are provided in a section titled "Virenin Verilmesi" (How a Surrender was Negotiated).[120] In Naima's account, on the other hand, crucial are the sections titled "How Mihal the Rebel Captured the Fortresses of Bucharest and Targovishte" (*Asi Mihal'in Bükreş ve Tergovişte Kalelerini İstilası*)[121] and "How the Islamic Army Headed for Esztergom" (*İslam Askerinin Usturgon Tarafına Teveccühü*).[122] Figuring very prominently in this narrative is Mihai Viteazul (1558-1601), born as Mihai Pătrașcu, who was Prince of Wallachia over 1593–1601, Prince of Moldavia in 1600, and de facto ruler of Transylvania in 1599–1600. As already indicated, as the outermost frontier principalities of the empire on the Danube, Wallachia and Moldavia constituted a buffer zone between Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, or between the Holy Roman Empire and the Ottoman Empire, and were held by the Ottomans under loose ties of vassalage, involving the "appointment" (or recognition) of some prominent local power-holders as voivodes (*voyvoda*) governing this or that region. This was in the hope that they would remain loyal to Istanbul. This was sometimes the case, but sometimes not, for the conflicting Danubian interests of the Habsburg monarchy, the Ottoman Empire, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth frequently made it possible for these locally grounded dynasties and princes to play complex balancing games between these much greater powers. Especially in the late 16th century, various changes in these voivodes' loyalties went hand in hand with increasing unrest along the Danube, all of which both fed into, and were further fed by, the 1593-1606 war.

In Wallachia, it was Mihai Viteazul who for a time was successful in playing this complex multilateral game, managing to carve out an autonomous niche for himself over 1593-1600, which is why he is known as Mihai the Great or Mihai the Brave, and revered as a national hero in Romania. Starting out as an Ottoman-designated voivode, he managed to form strong connections with both Transylvanian lords and the Habsburg rulers of the Holy Roman Empire, drawing on their military and financial support to make some serious inroads against Ottoman territory and power. In contrast to the Romanian perspective, because of the challenge he thereby posed to Ottoman power he is hated by Ottoman chroniclers; "Mihai the Rebel" (*Asi Mihal*) is the name

[120] Peçevi (1981f), 169.
[121] Naima (1967-1969a), 134.
[122] Naima (1967-1969a) 131.

given to him in Naima, while Peçevi calls him "Mihai the Deviant and Deceitful" (*Sapkın ve Hileci Mihal*) in Peçevi.[123] In Selanikî's history, too, Mihai is presented as a sly, manipulative, and deceitful figure. Riots breaking out in Wallachia (*Eflak*), Moldavia (*Boğdan*), and Transylvania (*Erdel*) ar regarded as having led to the start of the Ottoman-Austrian War on the advice of the grand vizier, Koca Sinan Pasha. Peçevi attributes a major role to Mihai in these developments: "Deviant Mihal, already a rebellious and malicious infidel, was ready to revolt. Upon the Serdar's action, he immediately raised the banner of rebellion and massacred the Muslims in the land of Eflak."[124]

Estergon was initially lost during this period (though subsequently recovered), and its strategic importance in the border region made this an unfortunate defeat for the Ottomans. Mihai was again a key player, to judge by Naima's account of the siege of Usturgon (Estergon, Esztergom), Mehmet Pasha's efforts as *sancakbey* to defend it, followed by the negotiated surrender of the fortress to the enemy. Eflâk (Wallachia) and Tergovişte (Targovishte) are explicitly mentioned in Ömer Seyfettin's story. In Naima, however, Eflak is rendered as Bükreş (Bucharest), which is the capital of modern Romania while Tergovişte (Targovishta, now in modern Bulgaria) was the capital of Medieval Wallachia. Naima's History has this to say about Mihai's attack on the fortresses of Bucharest and Targovishte during this war:

> The day they arrived at the previous location, the rebel voivode Mihal emerged from the forest with his soldiers and invested Targovishte. Artillery fire could be heard from where the army was. He captured the fortress by force in three days, skewered Ali Pasha, Koçi Bey, and other notables who were inside, and roasted them over a fire. He withdrew after taking all soldiers captive and burning down the fortress.[125]

Although it is unclear from Ömer Seyfettin's story what exact date he is referring to, assuming that the Mehmet Bey mentioned in the story is the same as the Mehmet Pasha mentioned in Naima and Peçevi's histories, we know him to have been governor of Wallachia in 1595. In the story, this Mehmet Bey is said to have routed the previous

[123] Peçevi (1981f), 140.
[124] Peçevi (1981f), 141.
[125] Naima (1967-1969a), 135. In the Turkish original: "Evvelki yere gelindiği gün, âsi voyvoda Mihal asker ile ormandan çıkıp Tergovişte'ye sarıldı. Ordudan top sesleri işitilirdi. Üç günde zorla kaleyi alıp içinde kalan Ali Paşa ve Koçi Beyi vesair âyânı şişe geçirip ateşte kebap edip, geride kalan askeri esir ve kaleyi yakarak çekilip gitti."

voivode of Wallachia, and then to have proclaimed himself *sancakbey* for Eflâk[126], against which the Wallachians have turned to a certain Count Zapolya of Zips for support.[127] It is in response to this alliance that Mehmet Bey is said to have handed over the *sancak*, and it is this "independence," won in bloodless fashion, that is being celebrated in the story. In turn, the prince in *The Mace* is pictured as having forged a coalition with the boyars nobility in the area.

Given these details, one can infer with some degree of accuracy the story's geographical location and time-frame, though everything else is fictional, including the commander, the first officer, and the Turkish ambassador, as well as the killing of the rebellious prince. Ömer Seyfettin appears to have fictionalized the eventual Ottoman recapture of Wallachia, though without giving any precise date, and in this overall context it is the historical figure of Mihai Viteazul that is likely to be lurking behind the unidentified Wallachian prince who presumptuously aspires to independence, and who is therefore dealt just punishment, even if only in fiction, from the Ottoman Empire.[128]

### 4.4.10. The Galley Slave

- Plot Summary

The story commences with a depiction of a Mediterranean island, highlighting the soothing warmth of the sun, the vibrant blue hues of the sea, and the sprawling almond and olive groves that stretch to the coastline. Amidst these gardens, an aged man emerges from a dilapidated hut. His hair and beard have turned white, and he carries a sack on his bare back. Standing barefoot, he gazes out towards the calm sea, where there is nothing discernible on the distant horizon. This suggests that the old man is anticipating something, though it is not clear what. It is also unclear who this elderly gentleman is, or whether he is going to be the protagonist of the story.

[126] Argunşah (1999b), 185.
[127] As in the original.
[128] Mihai Viteazul was ultimately assassinated in 1601 (not by the Ottomans, but) by mercenaries under orders from General Giorgio Basta, probably on the basis of secret orders from Rudolf II, Holy Roman Emperor.

As the story progresses, we learn that the old man was once an Ottoman warrior. Known as Kara Memiş, he was a sailor who was famous in the Ottoman navy. One fateful day, he was captured during the siege of Malta. Shackled by his feet, he endured years of servitude as an oarsman on the vessels of the Maltese pirates (the Knights of St John). Nevertheless, his physical condition remained robust. Despite being chained to his bench for years, his body remained resilient like steel. What he regretted was his inability to make his ablutions before performing his prayers. Chained to his rowing bench, he turned towards the qibla and conducted his five daily prayers with his eyes, signifying his unwavering faith even under these arduous circumstances. In this manner, he rowed and toiled for the pirates for two decades. When Kara Memiş reached the age of fifty, after twenty long years, the pirates decided to sell him as a slave to a farmer on an island. That is where he is now: an elderly galley slave continuing to reside as a captive farm-hand. He experiences a greater sense of happiness since his feet are no longer bound, as he can perform his ablutions and engage in proper prayer. His heart is filled with longing for his hometown Edremit. This portion of the story delves into his former life as a sailor, where he emerged victorious in numerous naval battles, commanding his own ship and accumulating treasure from distant lands. His fame spread far and wide, to the point where the sultan invited him to the palace to hear his exploits. Here Kara Memiş appears as a collage of all famous Ottoman corsairs in the 15th and 16th centuries, including especially Hızır Reis, who went from being a Maghrebian pirate to Suleiman the Magnificent's grand admiral as Barbaros Hayrettin Pasha. We are also told that during his voyages, Kara Memiş had married a woman from a land where six months of daylight and six months of nighttime prevail.[129] On his way back to his homeland, while passing through Çanakkale, his son Turgut was born. He believes that his son Turgut must now be around forty-five years old. (An analysis of this question of Turgut's age will be provided below.)

Over a span of forty years, Kara Memiş has persistently dreamed of Turkish ships and sailors arriving to rescue him. One day, as he experiences the same dream yet again, it comes true. Observing the silhouette of the approaching ships, he recognizes them as Turkish galleys. In order to check if he is still dreaming, he pinches his hand and even

[129] Argunşah (1999c), 173. In the Turkish original: "Ben Türküm oğullar, ben Türküm."

hits his head with a stone. He is finally persuaded that everything is real. As the soldiers disembark, Kara Memiş rushes towards them exclaiming: “I am Turkish boys, I am Turkish.” He discloses his identity as a former Ottoman sailor, Kara Memiş. Upon hearing this, his rescuers are thrilled, for the name of the heroic sailor Kara Memiş is known to everyone. They hastily convey this information to their captain, and prepare to escort Kara Memiş to him.

Kara Memiş is brought before the captain, introducing himself once again. Upon hearing this, the captain, who turns out to be (named) Turgut, recognizes and confirms Kara Memiş as his father. Thus, after forty years, Kara Memiş is both liberated from captivity and reunited with his son. Turgut and his fleet turn out to be heading for Malta. Despite his old age, Kara Memiş expresses his desire to join this siege. His son Turgut attempts to dissuade him. Despite his age, Kara Memiş insists. In the event of his martyrdom, he advises them to wrap him in the ship’s great pennant, saying: “Isn't the homeland wherever the crimson flag waves?”[130] With this concluding sentence, Ömer Seyfettin intertwines the notions of homeland and patriotism from a nationalist standpoint.

- Source-Checking

Ömer Seyfettin published *Forsa* not in 1917 but in 1919. So strictly speaking it was not part of the Heroes of Yore series, but when looked at in terms of content, it seems more appropriate be affiliated with the Heroes of Yore series. Why is this date important, and why might Ömer Seyfettin have written such a story during this period? At the time the Ottoman Empire had suffered defeat in World War I. It had had to sign the Mudros Armistice, and Istanbul was under British occupation. Nevertheless, Ömer Seyfettin continues to write and publish. In this story, not Turgut but Kara Memiş is the main character. Kara Memiş may be seen as symbolizes the aging, defeated, occupied Ottoman state. Hence, his escape and willingness to fight on affirms a belief in the eventual liberation of Istanbul (and Turkey), based on a willingness, like Kara Memiş, to keep fighting on.

[130] Argunşah (1999c), 176. In the Turkish original: “Vatan al bayrağın dalgalandığı yer değil midir?”

As for his sources, in this story Ömer Seyfettin has chosen to focus on Ottoman naval history. To judge from the name Turgut as the commander of the Ottoman fleet and from the further detail that they are now going to sail on and lay siege to the island of Malta, it is rather obvious that Ömer Seyfettin has taken the life and exploits of the famous Ottoman pirate Turgut Reis as his source of inspiration for this story. Nevertheless, there are various gaps and discrepancies between the real historical events and the events in the story. Turgut, who is thought to have been born near Bodrum in around 1485, came from a peasant family. Turkish corsairs kept roaming the Mediterranean, and they would frequently put parties ashore to try to recruit sailors and warriors, especially from among the fishing and seafaring populations of the littoral zone, to their enterprise. Turgut, too, appears to have first gone to sea in this way, and despite his young age, to have managed to stand out in the galley that he joined, going on to become one of the most important names in Turkish naval history. Achieving fame as Turgut Reis, and notoriety as Dragut in the West, like so many other Mediterranean corsairs he was simultaneously engaging in piracy (against Christian shipping) on his own, and also moving easily in and out of Ottoman imperial service. He is mentioned as Turgutça or Turgut Bey in Peçevi, who well captures his dual role:

> At that time, Grand Vizier Rüstem Pasha's brother Sinan Bey was the grand admiral and governor of Gelibolu. Whenever they launched an offensive against the infidels, he would send a message to Turgutça Bey, who would then join the imperial fleet with his ships, so that they would campaign together and achieve numerous conquests.[131]

Kâtip Çelebi (1609-1657), a renowned 17th century biographer, geographer and historian, also allocated a few paragraphs to Turgut in his maritime history of the Ottomans, titled *Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr fi Esfâri'l-Bihâr*:

> Turgutça's Beginnings: This Turgutça Bey was the son of a peasant named Veli from the Saravuloz district of the sancak of Menteşe. Due to his inherent bravery and warriorship, he tried his hand at archery and wrestling. Eventually, he joined the maritime levends and gained fame for his courage, leading to his appointment as the kapudan of these levends.[132]

[131] Peçevi (1981a), 245-246. In the Turkish original: "O çağda Sadrazam Rüstem Paşa'nın kardeşi Sinan Bey Gelibolu beyi ve derya kapudanı idi. Kafirler üzerine saldıkça Turgutça Bey'e haber gönderir, o da gemileriyle devlet donanmasına katılır, beraber gazaya gider ve birçok fetihler başarırdı."

[132] Kâtib Çelebi (2007), 87. In the Turkish original: "Turgutça'nın Çıkışı: Bu Turgutça Bey Menteşe sancağından Saravuloz nahiyesinden bir köyde, Veli adlı raiyyetin oğluydu. Yaratılışında yiğitlik ve cılasunluk olduğundan ok atmaya ve güreş tutmaya çalıştı. Sonunda deniz levendine karıştı, yüreklilikle ün aldığından giderek levent takımının kapudanlığı kendisine verildi."

These passages from two key narrative sources of Ottoman history give us to think that like other late Ottoman intellectuals, Ömer Seyfettin, too, is likely to have been familiar with the history of Ottoman history not just on land, whether on the Iranian or Balkan and Central European fronts, but also in the Mediterranean. On that basis, we can move on to a few more concrete questions. Kara Memiş is said to have been a prisoner of war, then a galley slave for twenty years, and then a farm-hand on an island for another twenty years. In the story, this island is about to be invested and occupied by a fleet of Ottoman galleys on the way to laying siege to Malta. What might this unnamed island be? Furthermore, how old might Turgut be at the time?

This leads us to a complicated series of problems. Geographically part of the Maltese archipelago, very close to Malta and administratively, too, part of Malta, there is a somewhat smaller island of Gozo that could be a good candidate for the island where we find Kara Memiş in his old age. In the story, Turgut is said to have first captured this island (whatever it might be), and then proceeded to sail to and join the siege of Malta. In an all-out attempt to get rid of the Knights of St John, the Ottomans laid siege to Malta (but failed to capture it) in 1565, late in the reign of Suleiman I. Could Turgut have besieged or captured Gozo on the way to Malta, and if so, would this fit the sequence of events in the story, adding greater weight to the possibility of Kara Memiş's island being Gozo?

Plausible as this hypothesis might sound, there are at least three major obstacls in its way. First, in Ömer Seyfettin's *The Galley Slave*, Kara Memiş is said to be 70 and his son Turgut 45 years old. Turgut Reis did take part in the 1565 siege of Malta, and died during it -- at the age of 80. So, the Turgut in the story is much too young to be the historical Turgut in 1565. Second, the historical Turgut Reis did not stop at Gozo on his way to Malta in 1565. But third, the historical Turgut Reis is known to have attacked Gozo on at least seven earlier occasions. He first sacked Gozo, also known as Little Malta, in 1540.[133] He attacked again in 1544 and laid siege to the island in 1546. In 1550, on his way back to Tunisia, he stopped at Gozo to replenish his ships with water. Turgut Reis would have been 55 in 1540, 59 in 1544, 61 in 1546, and 65 in 1550. In 1551, when he was 66, he was part of a much bigger action. The fleet of Grand

[133] İdris Bostan (2012).

Admiral Sinan Pasha, consisting of 120 galleys, joined forces with Turgut Reis's squadron in the Mediterranean. They launched a raid on Malta and sacked the island of Gozo before heading for Tripoli.[134] On another occasion in 1561 (when he was 76), he once more stopped at Gozo to take on fresh water before returning to his home base in Tripoli. Finally, during a 1563 raid on Sicily, he again landed at Gozo, where he fought briefly with the Maltese knights that had recolonized the island. This was two years before the great siege and his death. He was 78 at the time.

There are two ways of looking at all this evidence. Clearly, if we are looking for an exact fit with the story, there is no such thing. It is impossible to find a first-Gozo-then Malta sequence where Turgut Reis was only 45 years old. The closest is the attack and sacking of 1551, when this possibly greatest Mediterranean pirate of all time was 65-66 or so. But on the other side of the coin, the atmosphere, the confused turbulence of the age is all there: the mutual raids, sieges, sacking, captured galleys, noblemen held to ransom, others forced to row for years on end -- including Turgut Reis himself in 1540-1544.

So, Ömer Seyfettin operates in a way similar to what he does with *Negotiated Surrender* (section 4.4.8) and *The Mace* (section 4.4.9). He takes not a specific episode but an entire historical situation, combines various incidents, splits the historical persona of Turgut Reis between Kara Memiş and his son Turgut, and weaves them into a fictional but very plausible story.

[134] Ibid. In the Turkish original: "Kaptanıderyâ Sinan Paşa'nın 120 kadırgadan oluşan donanması Turgut Reis'in filosu ile Akdeniz'de birleşerek önce Malta'ya akın düzenledi ve Gozo adasını yağmalayıp Trablusgarp'a yöneldi. (12 Şâban 958 / 15 Ağustos 1551)."

# CHAPTER V

# CONCLUSION

Ömer Seyfettin, with his great literary talent and acute social observations, holds a major place in the history of Turkish literature. In addition to his skill in crafting short stories with a variety of themes, he also translated foreign works, wrote poems, political pieces, memoirs and diaries. However, it was the stories he was able to write throughout his brief life that helped him gain widespread fame.

Numerous academics have discussed his affiliation with the Committee of Union and Progress and his commitment to their emerging Turkist nationalism. It is also claimed that Seyfettin's participation in the Balkan Wars had a further impact on his beliefs and literature, as reflected by *Nakarat* (The Refrain), *Hürriyet Bayrakları* (Flags of Liberty), *Beyaz Lale* (A Pure White Tulip), *Bomba* (The Bomb), and similar stories. But it is not only in such stories set in (what Michael Herzfeld calls) “social time,” that his nationalism foundexpression. He turned to history and “monumental time” to create a bigger, broader, more epic and heroic vision of Turkishness. Unlike the early 20th century stories where Turks appear purely as victims, in the Heroes of Yore series of 1917 he came to set out a much more positive set of ideal characteristics for the Turkish people. As part of the National Literature movement, he tried and largely succeeded in creating a new narrative of Turkish heroism that, he hoped, would carry Turkey into a brighter future.

It is possible to say that *Teke Tek* (Single Combat) is the most dense, most compact, and most iconic of all his stories in this regard. At the same time, it clearly reflects how Ömer Seyfettin was influenced by the works of previous writers. As I have already mentioned (in section 4.4.6), the clash between Kasım Voyvoda and Jan Hobordansky echoes the earlier clash between Cani (Can Beg) and Hugo in Leon Cahun's *The Blue Banner*, which was widely read by Turkish nationalists. In both cases, relatively lightly armed and armored Turks triumph over their very heavily armed and armored Western

adversaries. In this conjunction, one should also look at the metaphors of “cowardly hands clad in steel armor" in Mehmet Akif’s Hymn to the Martyrs of Gallipoli and “a wall of steel plate girding the West’s horizons” in his lyrics for the Turkish National Anthem. What is common to all is a conception of the West as a civilization of steel. How can it be defeated? In *Teke Tek* as well as his entire Heroes of Yore series, Ömer Seyfettin emphasizes the superior courage, intelligence and agility of the Turks. At least in the stories that I have examined in this study, he leaves a secondary role or scope for faith, for Islam. In contrast, in Mehmet Akif, faith appears as the single most important element of resistance.

So here, somewhat different (though not entirely opposite but overlapping) ideological approaches emerge. As a moderate, reforming Islamist, Mehmet Akif portrays a profile of the nation that is defined more by Islam. As a modernist nationalist, Ömer Seyfettin emphasizes a strongly Turkish identity, with Islam perhaps in a secondary subordinate role. This distinction is important because the idea of Islamism that was widespread during the reign of Abdulhamid II, followed by the early Ottomanism of the Young Turks, have begun to lose support during the Unionist decade. Faced with a new wave of Balkan and other nationalisms, the CUP leadership loses hope of keeping the empire’s diverse ethno-religious elements together, and increasingly turns to Turkism. Figures such as Ziya Gökalp, Ali Canip Yöntem and Ömer Seyfettin achieve intellectual prominence in this context. They turn to language, history, and culture in their attempts to build (or rejuvenate) a Turkish nation.

Here, there arises a question of which (age or stage of) Turkish history to embrace. While some turn to pre-Ottoman or even pre-Islamic Turkish history (such as the Mongols or other steppe empires), Ömer Seyfettin, as a mostly Istanbuliote late Ottoman intellectual, chooses the 16th century heyday of the Ottoman Empire as his preferred golden age. At the same time, he retrospectively Turkicizes (or de-Ottomanizes) the Ottoman Empire. He makes the empire seem more Turkish than it really was. He also chooses to magnify aand idealize the state. This is a choice that continues to resonate from his time into the Republican era. Instead of ignoring Ottoman history, he attributes its greatness to the power of the state and to Turkishness. While doing this, he does not completely disregard the Islamic aspect of the Ottoman Empire. Here and there, in the Heroes of Yore series, he presents some of his characters

as devout Muslims. In *The Galley Slave*, Kara Memiş has been praying with his eyes while rowing in the galleys for twenty years. Similarly, in *The Consolation,* İskender Pasha asks to be executed while he is in prayer, as he prefers to be in the presence of Allah in his moment of death. In such details, we can see that (at least after the Balkan Wars) Ömer Seyfettin does not have a nationalist perspective completely detached from Islam.

Of course, he is probably also influenced by the Ottoman historians he relies on when writing these stories. This is what I have tried to do in this study: putting Ömer Seyfettin's Heroes of Yore stories side by side with their historical sources. This is important in order to understand the intellectual background and constitution of an Ottoman author in the late 19th or the early 20th century. It is generally acknowledged that Ömer Seyfettin drew inspiration as well as many of his topics from Ottoman history. However, a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between historical sources and his stories has not been conducted specifically for the Heroes of Yore series. I believe that this thesis might be a useful contribution not only for understanding Ömer Seyfettin but also for comprehending the literary environment he was part of.

During the final period of the Ottoman Empire, the intellectual elite utilized literature as a powerful tool in politics. The intertwining processes of politics and literature have always played a prominent role in bringing about change within states. The messages conveyed by Ömer Seyfettin's works were intended to instill the idea of a strong Turkish nation. But there were other ideas, too. As demonstrated in the relevant sections, *Ferman* (The Imperial Decree), *Teselli* (The Consolation), and *Pembe İncili Kaftan* (The Caftan Decorated with Pink Pearls) advocate unwavering obedience to the state. In this way, Ömer Seyfettin aimed to facilitate the unquestioning acceptance of the new régime that resulted from the 1908 revolution, the Balkan Wars, and the Bâbıâlî Raid of 1913. This pointed to the Unionist Triumvirate of 1913-1918 and especially Enver Pasha, who Ömer Seyfettin was particularly close to. It has also extended strongly into the Republican Era.

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| 2017-2018 | Arabic Prep School Ibn Haldun University |
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Experience:

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| 2017 | Event Manager / Instructor Department of Urban Policy Center / Marmara Municipalities Union |
| 2020 | Practical English Trainer, Başakşehir District Directorate of National Education |
| 2019-2022 | Teaching Fellowship for SPS 101, SPS 102, HIST 101 and HIST 102 Courses, Ibn Haldun University |
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