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Popular Devotion to the Prophets in Ottoman Istanbul: A Study of Aḥmed el-Istanbulī's (d. 1197/1783) *Enbiyā'-i Kirām Hakkında Yalan Rivāyetleri Red Risālesi*

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Abstract

In twelfth/eighteenth century Istanbul, spurious stories about the prophets circulated widely among the Muslim masses. In response to these popular fabrications, the prominent theologian Kāzizāde Aḥmed b. Meḥmed Emīn el-Istanbulī (d. 1197/1783) composed the *Enbiyā'-i Kirām Hakkında Yalan Rivāyetleri Red Risālesi* ("A Treatise on Disproving Fabrications about the Noble Prophets"). Deeply concerned that such false stories about the prophets would endanger Islamic doctrines, el-Istanbulī sought to refute them in this treatise. Through a close analysis of his observations and apologetic defense of Islamic prophetology, this study explores the popular reception and theological significance of the stories of the prophets (*kıssa-ı enbiyā'*).

Keywords

Aḥmed b. Meḥmed Emīn el-Istanbulī – *kıssa-ı enbiyā'* – Islamic prophetology – prophetic infallibility – Ottoman Istanbul

1 Introduction

Debates concerning Islamic prophetology in the early modern Ottoman world remain relatively understudied.¹ Although some studies examined prophetological discussions in the eleventh/seventeenth and twelfth/eighteenth centuries Ottoman realm, a number of Muslim theologians who once engaged in prophetological writings have been consigned to oblivion, awaiting careful investigation to enhance our comprehensive understanding of intellectual currents. This study aims to further our understanding of prophetological trends within the context of twelfth/eighteenth century Istanbul, focusing on the well-known theologian Kāzizāde Aḥmed b. Meḥmed Emīn el-Istanbulī's (d. 1197/1783)² *Enbiyā'-i Kirām Haqqında Yalan Rivāyetleri Red Risālesi* ("A Treatise on Disproving Fabrications about the Noble Prophets," henceforth the *Enbiyā'*). This study delves into why el-Istanbulī composed the *Enbiyā'* by analyzing his observation of popular discourses of the stories of the prophets (*kıssa-ı enbiyā'*). Outlining his arguments, this article sheds light on el-Istanbulī's theological response to the popular fabrications about the prophets.

Some decades before el-Istanbulī's scholarly activity, prophetological themes drew serious attention from Muslim theologians throughout the Ottoman lands. For example, the view of the founder of the Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī order Aḥmad al-Sirhindī (also known as Imām-ı Rabbānī, d. 1034/1624) concerning the superiority of the reality of the Kaaba over that of the Muḥammadan Reality became the subject of a heated debate. Regarding al-Sirhindī's understanding of the metaphysical status of the Muḥammadan Reality, Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (d. 1101/1690) and 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1731) wrote their treatises to critique his controversial statement.³ In addition to this controversy, another prophetological debate concerned the Khalwatī Sufi Niyāzī-i Mişrī

1 I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their very helpful feedback on this article. For Arabic and Turkish transliterations, this article follows the *IJMES* system. To better reflect the nuances of Ottoman Turkish orthography, certain words derived from Arabic retain their original phonetic markers. For example, *Kāzizādeli* instead of *Kadıẓādeli*, *enbiyā'* instead of *enbiyā*, and *du'ā'* instead of *dua*. For translations of Quranic verses, this article relies on Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al. (eds.), *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: HarperOne, 2015).

2 El-Istanbulī is known as "Kāzizāde"; however, this designation does not signify his affiliation with the Kāzizādeli movement. Rather, it indicates that he was the son of a judge (*kāzī*).

3 Atallah S. Copt, "The Naqshbandiyya and Its Offshoot, the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya in the Ḥaramayn in the 11th/17th Century," *Die Welt des Islams* 43.3 (2003): 321–348; Atallah S. Copt, "The Legacy of Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī and Its Influence on the Writings of 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī," in *Early Modern Trends in Islamic Theology: 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī and His Network of Scholarship (Studies and Texts)*, ed. Lejla Demiri and Samuela Pagani (Tübingen:

(d. 1105/1694). Mişrî declared that affirming the “prophecy” of the Prophet’s grandsons Ḥasan b. ‘Alī (d. 50/670) and Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī (d. 61/680) is an indispensable element of a person’s correct beliefs.⁴ Mişrî’s designation of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn as prophets relies on Ibn ‘Arabī’s theory of “general prophecy” (*al-nubuwwa al-‘amma*), which is tantamount to *walāya* and not prophecy per se. This is distinct from what Ibn ‘Arabī refers to as “the prophecy of legislation” (*nubuwwat al-tashrī*), which came to an end with the Prophet Muḥammad.⁵ In response to this claim, Nābulusī composed a treatise to defend Mişrî’s position. In line with Ibn ‘Arabī’s prophetology, Nābulusī explained that Mişrî in this context meant Ḥasan and Ḥusayn were “prophet-saints” (*al-anbiyā’ al-awliyā’*).⁶ These scholarly engagements demonstrate that Muslim theologians rigorously tackled the subject of prophetology in that era.

Apart from the above theological debates, existing scholarship highlighted the dynamic social exchanges among Muslims, Christians, and Jews in twelfth/ eighteenth century Istanbul.⁷ However, these historical studies overlook, somewhat, the problem of the fabricated *kıssa-ı enbiyā’* discussed by Muslim

Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 97–106; Naser Dumairieh, *Intellectual Life in the Hijāz before Wahhabism: Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī’s (d. 1101/1690) Theology of Sufism* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 288–294.

4 Derin Terzioğlu, “Sufi and Dissident in the Ottoman Empire: Niyāzī-i Mişrî (1618–1694)” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1999), 434–443.

5 Niyāzī-i Muḥammad Mişrî, *Mawāidul-irfan: İrfan Sofraları*, trans. Süleyman Ateş (Ankara: Emel Matbaası, 1971), 142–145. For this distinction in Ibn ‘Arabī, see Michel Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn ‘Arabī*, trans. Liadain Sherrard (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993), 114–115.

6 Samuela Pagani, “Timeless Typologies and New Individualities: ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī, Niyāzī-i Mişrî and the Sufi Theory of Sainthood in the Early Modern Ottoman World,” in *Early Modern Trends in Islamic Theology: ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī and His Network of Scholarship (Studies and Texts)*, ed. Lejla Demiri and Samuela Pagani (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 171–194; Hiroaki Kawanishi, *The Virtues of Divergence: ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī’s Sufi Reception of al-‘Aqida al-Sanūsiyya* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2026), 157–159.

7 For instance, see Fariba Zarinebaf, “Intercommunal Life in Istanbul During the Eighteenth Century,” *Review of Middle East Studies* 46.1 (2012): 79–85; Suraiya Faroqhi, “Did cosmopolitanism exist in eighteenth-century Istanbul?: Stories of Christians and Jewish artisans,” in *Urban Governance Under the Ottomans: Between Cosmopolitanism and Conflict*, ed. Ulrike Freitag and Nora Lafi (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 21–36; Giovanni De Zorzi, “In Constantinople Among Music and Dervishes: Reports by European Travellers from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century,” *Mawlana Rumi Review* 6 (2015): 36–66; Fatma Sel Turhan, “Conversion of War Captives in the Ottoman Lands During the Eighteenth Century: Rules, Applications and Abuses,” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 26.4 (2024): 524–541; Hasan Çolak, “İbrahim Müteferrika and the Ottoman Intellectual Culture in the Early 18th Century: A Transcultural Perspective,” in *Arabic-Type Books Printed in Wallachia, Istanbul, and Beyond: First Volume of Collected Works of the TYPARABIC Project*, ed. Radu-Andrei Dîpratu and Samuel Noble (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024), 1–20.

theologians. Addressing this issue, el-Istanbuli's *Enbiya'* enables us to discern a largely forgotten prophetological trend in twelfth/eighteenth century Istanbul.

2 El-Istanbuli's Observation of Popular Prophetological Discourses

Born in 1133/1720, el-Istanbuli lived in Ottoman Anatolia. Although little is known about his life, he is remembered as the author of several popular theological works, particularly in the field of speculative theology (*kalām*).⁸ His most significant work is the *Farā'id al-fawā'id fī bayān al-'aqā'id* ("The Beneficial Obligations: An Exposition of Islamic Doctrines"), also known as the *Āmentü şerhi* ("A Commentary on 'I believe'").⁹ The *Farā'id* was an early text of the *Āmentü şerhi* literary genre, a collection of writings that were designed to teach the common people fundamental Islamic doctrines.¹⁰ The *Farā'id* was printed multiple times, including the latest critical edition in Modern Turkish (2014).¹¹ El-Istanbuli also wrote a commentary on Meḥmed Birgivi's (d. 981/1573) *Vaşiyyetnâme* ("Testament"), entitled the *Cevhere-i behiyye-i aḥmediyye fī şerḥ el-Vaşiyye el-muḥammediyye* ("The Splendid Gem of Aḥmad: A Commentary on [Birgivi's] *Muḥammadan Testament*").¹² Other than these two works, el-Istanbuli authored a Turkish commentary on Sirāj al-Dīn al-Ūshī's (d. 575/1179) creedal text *al-Qaṣida al-lāmiyya fī l-tawḥīd* ("The Lāmiyya Poetry on Divine Unity," also known as the *Bad' al-amālī*), entitled the *Şerḥ-i tercüme-i Lāmiyye* ("A Commentary on the Translation of *The Lāmiyya*").¹³ As

8 İlhan Apak (ed.), *Türkiye Gazetesi İslâm Âlimleri Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: İhlas Matbaacılık, 1986), 17:25–34.

9 Kâzîzâde Aḥmed b. Meḥmed Emīn el-Istanbuli, *Farā'id al-fawā'id fī bayān al-'aqā'id* (Istanbul: Dār al-Ṭibā'a al-Āmira, 1828–1829). For the public reception of the *Farā'id*, see M. Sait Özervarlı, "Ferā'idü'l-Fevā'id," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1995), 12:361–362.

10 Yusuf Şevki Yavuz, "Āmentü Şerhi," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1991), 3:30. The intended audience of the *Farā'id* was the commoners. El-Istanbuli, *Farā'id al-fawā'id*, 4.

11 Kâzîzâde Aḥmed b. Meḥmed Emīn el-Istanbuli, *Osmanlı Klasiklerinden Büyük Āmentü Şerhi ve Dürri Yekta Şerhi*, ed. A. Faruk Meyan (Istanbul: Berekat Yayınevi, 2014).

12 Kâzîzâde Aḥmed b. Meḥmed Emīn el-Istanbuli, *Birgivi Vaşiyyetnâmesi: Kadızâde Şerhi*, ed. A. Faruk Meyan (Istanbul: Bedir Yayınevi, 1988). Birgivi's *Vaşiyyetnâme* is a well-known *ilm-i ḥâl* (catechism) text written in Turkish. This text was taught for basic religious education throughout the Ottoman period, even at late Ottoman *ibtidaiyye* and *rüşdiyye* schools. Hatice Kelpetin Arpağuş, "İlmihal," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2000), 22:139–141.

13 The Modern Turkish edition was recently published. Kâzîzâde Aḥmed b. Meḥmed Emīn el-Istanbuli, *Şerh-i Tercüme-i Lāmiyye (Emali Şerhi)*, ed. Yusuf Şevki Yavuz (Ankara: Diya-

these works indicate, el-Istanbuli dedicated his scholarly efforts to composing doctrinal books aimed at a general readership.¹⁴ Compared to the *Farā'id*, the *Cevhere*, and *al-Qaṣīda*, the *Enbiyā'* received less attention from later generations of Muslim scholars, as it exists in a single manuscript copy in Turkish manuscript collections in accordance with the digital catalogue of Türkiye Yazma Eserler Başkanlığı (TÜYEK).¹⁵

In the *Enbiyā'*, el-Istanbuli condemns the fabricated *kıṣaṣ-ı enbiyā'* that had currency among the broader Muslim populace at his time. Despite the survival of its single manuscript copy, it likely reflects the author's observation of popular prophetological discourses in Ottoman Istanbul.

In the twelfth/eighteenth century Istanbul, he witnessed some deceptive inventions of the *kıṣaṣ-ı enbiyā'* that prevailed among lay Muslims as well as some educated preachers and teachers. El-Istanbuli considers that such fabrications would cause harm to the righteous belief of Islam. In response to this current problem, he authored the *Enbiyā'*. He begins the treatise by articulating that the prevailed fabrications about the prophets would lead one to heresy as follows:

In our time, false narratives [*hikāyāt-ı kâzibe*] concerning the stories of the prophets [*kıṣaṣ-ı enbiyā'*] have become famous and are publicly talked among the common people. Ignorant preachers [*cāhiller-i vā'izler*] and heedless teachers [*gāfil-i muderrisler*] recount [these fabricated *kıṣaṣ-ı enbiyā'*] in [their] sermon and exhortation. Those who hear [such fabrications] approve of and believe in them, [and for this reason,] deviate from the true doctrines [*i'tikād-ı haqqtan zeyg edip*], and stay on the false path [*semt-i bāṭulda*]. The humble servant el-Istanbuli, Ahmed b. Mehmed Emīn—may God, the Exalted, assemble him and the believers in the highest heaven [*fī gurfāt-ı 'illīyīn*—composed a brief Turkish treatise in order to save pious brethren from this great evil [*belā-i 'aẓīm*], to preserve the authority of prophecy [*sāḥa-i nübüvvat*] from rebutted falsehoods [*akāzīb-i merdūde*] and repelled falsities [*abāṭıl-i maṭrūde*],

net İşleri Başkanlığı, 2021). Al-Üshī's *al-Amālī* delves into Māturidite doctrines of metaphysics (*ilāhiyyāt*), prophetology (*nubuwwāt*), and revealed matters (*sam'iyāt*). This text also discusses doctrinal issues contested between major theological schools, such as the issue of the created nature of the Quran, the nature of the beatific vision of God, and the function and status of human actions. M. Sait Özervarlı, "el-Emālī," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1995), 11:73–75.

14 Yusuf Şevki Yavuz identifies thirteen works by el-Istanbuli, some of which are lost. El-Istanbuli, *Şerh-i Tercüme-i Lāmîyye (Emali Şerhi)*, 11–14.

15 MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi Hacı Mahmud Efendi 04438, 12 fols. (1786–1787).

and to warn the heedless [*ehl-i gaflet*] [of the fabrications]. Accordingly, I refuted several well-known fabrications [about the prophets] and wrote refutations [based on evidence] drawn from trustworthy books [*kütüb-i mevşûka*].¹⁶

In this preface, el-Istanbulî briefly describes popular fabrications of the *kıssa-ı enbiya'* and clarifies his motive of writing the *Enbiyā'*. Particularly, he draws our attention to the potential risk that such fabrications would consequently deviate people from the righteous faith. By tackling this problem, he aims to demonstrate the falsehood of some well-known fabrications about the prophets in a theological manner. As will be examined later, in support of his arguments, the *Enbiyā'* invokes extensive Quranic exegeses and *kalām* texts. Despite the presence of these theological references, the fact that this treatise was written in plain Turkish, while engaging in technical *tafsīr* and *kalām* works, indicates that its intended audience was the common people as well as learned experts.

In el-Istanbulî's understanding, a problem of the fabricated *kıssa-ı enbiyā'* is the alteration of the sacred scriptures, known as *taḥrīf*. In the *Enbiyā'*, el-Istanbulî accuses specifically disbelievers (*zenādiqa*), disbelieving stuffers (*ḥaṣviyye-i kāfirleri*),¹⁷ and Israelites (*benī-i Isrā'īl*) for their fabrication and dissemination of the deceptive *kıssa-ı enbiyā'*. In this context, it is noteworthy that most of the fabrications, which el-Istanbulî addresses, allegedly originated from non-Muslim groups.

In the *Enbiyā'*, el-Istanbulî refutes each fabrication by drawing on authoritative Islamic theological sources. More specifically, his argument appeals to Quranic exegeses (*tafāsīr*, sing. *tafsīr*) and *kalām* texts written by earlier scholars. Besides these sources, he occasionally references hadīth traditions to support his arguments, albeit limited in a few places. Concerning Quranic exegeses, he employs 'Alī al-Wāḥidī al-Naysābūrī's (d. 468/1076) *al-Basīt* ("The Expansive Commentary"), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's (d. 606/1210) *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* ("The Great Commentary"), Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī's (d. 745/1344) *al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ* ("The Encompassing Ocean"), and Abū l-Su'ūd al-'Imādī's (d. 982/1574) *Irshād al-'aql al-salīm* ("Guidance of the Sound Intellect"). Along

16 Hacı Mahmud Efendi 04438, fol. iv.

17 The term *ḥaṣwiyya* is derived from the root *ḥ-sh-w*, which carries the connotation of stuffing something with worthless material. While conventionally rendered as "literalists," the literal translation "stuffers" more accurately captures the nuances of the present context. This article consistently employs the term "stuffers." I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for this insightful suggestion.

with Muḥammed Himmātzāde's (d. 1175/1761) *Tuḥfat al-rāwī fī takhrīj aḥādīth Taḥsīr al-Bayḍāwī* ("The Gift of the Transmitter: Derivations of Hadith Traditions in the *Taḥsīr al-Bayḍāwī*"), el-Istanbulī frequently cites Nāṣir al-Dīn 'Abd Allāh al-Bayḍāwī's (d. 691/1292) *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta'wīl* ("The Lights of Revelation and the Secrets of Interpretation"), which is a masterful theological commentary and received great attention from later generations of Muslim theologians.¹⁸ When it comes to *kalām* references, el-Istanbulī often invokes al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī's (d. 816/1413) *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* ("A Commentary on *The Standpoints*"). This work was intensely studied at early modern Ottoman imperial madrasas.¹⁹ Other than these sources, el-Istanbulī's reference to the Maghribī Ash'arī theologian Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Sanūsī's (d. 895/1490) *Sharḥ al-'Aqīda al-wuṣṭā* ("A Commentary on *The Middle Creed*") reflects his expertise in the science of *kalām*.²⁰ Making use of these theological works, he demonstrates the falsehoods of the popular *kıssa-ı enbiyā'*.

Another noteworthy point is his criticism of *ignorant preachers* and *heedless teachers*. In the preface of the *Enbiyā'* examined above, he explicitly mentions certain preachers and teachers, who disseminate the false *kıssa-ı enbiyā'*. Towards the end of the *Enbiyā'*, el-Istanbulī once again criticizes some preachers who transmit wrong narratives (*hikāyāt-ı fāsıdeler*) to the common people. According to el-Istanbulī, one should be careful about fabrications uttered by these preachers because they would consequently slander God and the prophets.²¹ Here, the question of interest to this study is who these preachers actually are. To make the matter even more intriguing, situating the *Enbiyā'* within the broader context of the preceding Kāzizādeli (Turk. Kadızādeli) movement illuminates public religiosity in the eleventh/seventeenth century Ottoman

18 For al-Bayḍāwī's theological interpretations of the Quran, see Farid Suleiman, "Nāṣir ad-Dīn al-Bayḍāwī," in *Qur'anic Hermeneutics from the 13th to the 19th Century*, ed. Georges Tamer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2025), 93–106. A study that examines the later reception of al-Bayḍāwī's *Anwār* can be found in Walid Saleh, "The Qur'ān Commentary of al-Bayḍāwī: A History of *Anwār al-tanzīl*," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 23.1 (2021): 71–102.

19 See Mustafa Sait Yazıcıoğlu, "xv. ve xvi. yüzyıllarda Osmanlı Medreselerinde İlm-i Kelâm Öğretimi ve Genel Eğitim İçindeki Yeri," *İslam İlimleri Enstitüsü Dergisi* 4 (1980): 273–283; Mefail Hızlı, "Osmanlı Medreselerinde Okutulan Dersler ve Eserler," *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 17.1 (2008): 25–46; Osman Demirci, "Osmanlı Medreselerinde Kelam Öğretimi (İznik, Bursa, Edirne, İstanbul)" (PhD diss., Marmara Üniversitesi, 2012); Abdurrahman Atçıl, "Osmanlı Klasik Döneminde Eğitim: Medreseler," in *Kronolojik ve Tematik Türk Eğitim Tarihi*, ed. Mustafa Gündüz (İstanbul: İdeal Kültür Yayıncılık, 2018), 25–40.

20 For al-Sanūsī, see Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Al-Sanūsī* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2026).

21 Hacı Mahmud Efendi 04438, fol. 11r.

capital. The Kāzizādeli movement is well known for its denunciation of Sufi practices, innovations (*bid'ā*), the consumption of coffee and tobacco, and episodes that were sometimes accompanied by violent attacks.²²

The eponymous leader Kāzizāde Meḥmed Efendi (d. 1045/1635) and his followers—known as Kāzizādeliler—contributed to the shaping of popular religious discourses.²³ Many Kāzizādeli followers were outside of the Ottoman learned establishment and interacted directly with the general public through their preaching at mosques.²⁴ Given that their primary audience consisted of laypeople, one might argue that el-Istanbuli's condemnation of certain preachers refer to the Kāzizādeli preachers. Indeed, the Kāzizādeli followers and the ulema, who were trained within the imperial madrasa system, were in opposition because the former group's anti-elitist criticism targeted the ulema as well as Sufis.²⁵ In support of this argument, the Kāzizādeli preachers were notably effective in shaping public religious discourses, as Zekeriyāzāde Yaḥyā Efendi

22 Madeline C. Zilfi, "The Kadizadelis: Discordant Revivalism in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 45.4 (1986): 251–269; Madeline C. Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Postclassical Age (1600–1800)* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1988); Semiramis Çavuşoğlu, "The Kāzizādeli Movement: An Attempt of (sic) Şer'i'at-Minded Reform in the Ottoman Empire" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1990); Mustapha Sheikh, "Taymiyyan Influences in an Ottoman-Ḥanafī Milieu: The Case of Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 25.1 (2015): 1–20; Mustapha Sheikh, *Ottoman Puritanism and its Discontents: Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī and the Qāzizādelis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Derin Terzioğlu, "Bid'at, Custom and the Mutability of Legal Judgments: The Debate on the Congregational Performance of Supererogatory Prayers in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Empire," in *Dimensions of Transformation in the Ottoman Empire from the Late Medieval Age to Modernity: In Memory of Metin Kunst*, ed. Seyfi Kenan and Selçuk Aksin Somel (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 323–366. Despite their opposition to Sufi practices, Birgivi was a Sufi. Also, some Kāzizādeli followers were Sufis, for example, Osman Bosnevī (d. 1074/1664). Dina Le Gall, "Kadizadelis, Nakşbendis, and Intra-Sufi Diatribe in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul," *The Turkish Studies Association Journal* 28.1–2 (2004): 1–28.

23 After the committed preacher Üstüvānī Meḥmed Efendi (d. 1072/1661) and some leaders of the movement were arrested and exiled to Cyprus under the direction of the Grand Vizier Meḥmed Köprülü (d. 1072/1661), the movement lost its energy. Still, some like-minded preachers continued to promote their ideas in Istanbul. Later, another significant Kāzizādeli leader Vānī Meḥmed Efendi (d. 1096/1685) became popular, but the movement lost its reputation after his death. Zilfi, "The Kadizadelis: Discordant Revivalism in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul," 263–265.

24 Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, 164; Zilfi, "The Kadizadelis: Discordant Revivalism in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul," 265–269.

25 Many of the Kāzizādeli preachers were from provinces and less educated than the ulema educated at imperial madrasas. Zilfi, "The Kadizadelis: Discordant Revivalism in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul," 252; Le Gall, "Kadizadelis, Nakşbendis, and Intra-Sufi Diatribe in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul," 2.

(d. 1053/1644) accurately observes, “[their ability to] make the ignorant masses listen.”²⁶ Zekeriyāzāde’s description of the *Ḳāzizādeli* preachers closely parallels el-Istanbulī’s accusation of allegedly *ignorant preachers* and *heedless teachers* for their indoctrination of the general public with fabricated *ḵışaṣ-ı enbiyā’*. With the contemporary *Ḳāzizādeli* movement in mind, even though el-Istanbulī composed his commentary on Birgivi’s *Vaṣīyyetnāme*, who is regarded as the preceptor of the *Ḳāzizādeli* movement, the above excerpt seems to suggest that el-Istanbulī challenges the *Ḳāzizādeli*-influenced preachers. However, the *Enbiyā’* offers no explicit identification as to who these preachers and teachers are. Returning to the *Enbiyā’*, el-Istanbulī discusses eight specific fabrications that such preachers would propagate at his time. The present study now examines these eight fabrications and el-Istanbulī’s corresponding refutations.

3 El-Istanbulī’s Response to Fabricated *Ḳışaṣ-ı Enbiyā’*

In the *Enbiyā’*, el-Istanbulī critiques popular fabrications about the following prophets: Noah, Moses, Jonah, Hūd, David, Solomon, Job, and Abraham. With regard to each fabrication, el-Istanbulī briefs its story, clarifies its problem, and identifies who invented it. The order of his discussion of the eight fabricated *ḵışaṣ-ı enbiyā’* does not follow a chronological order. It is possible that he arranged the order according to the relative significance of each fabrication—that is, those discussed earlier may have been more widely circulated among the commoners or more harmful to Islamic doctrines.

(1) The first fabrication concerns Noah and Moses. At Noah’s lifetime, in his nation, there was a man called Og (‘Ūc b. ‘Unuḵ). The popular narrative relates that Og survived the Flood although he did not get on Noah’s Ark. This account contradicts the Quranic narrative that none of the people of Noah survived the Flood except those saved with him in the Ark. As this popular fabrication continues, surviving the Flood, Og remained alive until the time of Moses. Later, Moses struck by his Staff and killed Og. Regarding this false account, el-Istanbulī affirms its invention by disbelievers of the People of the

26 As quoted in Le Gall, “Kadizadelis, Nakşbendis, and Intra-Sufi Diatribe in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul,” 20. The following study provides valuable insights into the role of preachers in shaping public religious education and literacy in eleventh/seventeenth century Istanbul. Sümeyra Aslıhan Gürbüz, “Teachers of the Public, Advisors to the Sultan: Preachers and the Rise of a Political Public Sphere in Early Modern Istanbul (1600–1675)” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2016).

Book (*ehl-i kitābın zenādīkası*). As opposed to this fabrication, el-Istanbulī underlines that no disbeliever remained alive after the Flood and those saved in Noah's Ark passed away after the Flood. Then, el-Istanbulī details how many were those saved in the Ark and elucidates the offsprings of Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.²⁷ El-Istanbulī concludes this popular fabrication by referencing Najm al-Dīn al-Ghayṭī's (d. 983/1576) treatise, in which this narrative is documented in detail.²⁸

(2) The next story relates to Jonah. When the people of Jonah suffered punishment, they believed in and prayed to God. Accepting their invocation, God removed and suspended their punishment until the Day of Resurrection. As this popular fabrication reports, the people of Jonah are still alive in this world while they are invisible. This account is incorrect because the people of Jonah already passed away when their predetermined lifespan (*ecel*) terminated. To disprove their lives lasting at the time of el-Istanbulī, he invokes al-Rāzī's interpretation of the Quranic verse, "And they believed; so We granted them enjoyment for a while" (Q 37:148). As al-Rāzī explains the correct narrative, when the people of Jonah believed in God, He removed their fear of perishing (*helāk-ı hayfını izāle etti*), secured them from the punishment, and blessed them with long lives until they fulfilled their predestined lifespans. They later passed away.²⁹ Like al-Rāzī's exegesis, al-Gharnāṭī in *al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ* understands that the people of Jonah already passed away when they fulfilled their lifespans.³⁰ On the contrary, this popular fabrication adduces a hadith narrated by Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687), which reads that the people of Jonah will remain alive until the Day of Resurrection although God hides them from the other people—this is, in el-Istanbulī's understanding, a calumny (*iftirā'*) of Ibn 'Abbās. El-Istanbulī opposes to this invented account by acknowledging that it is a misrepresentation of the hadith tradition. In refuting this fabrication, el-Istanbulī appeals to al-Wāḥidī's Quranic exegesis, *al-Basīṭ*, in which Ibn 'Abbās's narration ex-

27 Hacı Mahmud Efendi 04438, fols. 1v–2r.

28 El-Istanbulī does not specify the title of al-Ghayṭī's work. However, it is likely the *Risāla fī ḥaqq 'Ūj b. 'Unuq* ('A Treatise on Og'), also known as *al-As'ila wa-l-ajwiba fī Iram dhāt al-'imād* ('Questions and Answers about Iram of the Pillars'). MS Manisa, Manisa İl Halk Kütüphanesi 10233/13, fols. 112v–119r; MS Istanbul, Beyazıt Kütüphanesi B1571/2, fols. 20v–21r.

29 Al-Rāzī expounds that God determined the lifespan (*ajal*) of every single individual of the people of Jonah. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Taḥsīn al-kabīr aw-Mafātiḥ al-ghayb*, ed. Sayyid 'Imrān (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2012), 13:425.

30 El-Istanbulī cites al-Gharnāṭī's interpretation of Q 37:148. Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī, *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ*, ed. 'Ādil Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawjūd et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1993), 7:360.

plicitly mentions that the people of Jonah already passed away, hence, they do not remain alive until the Day of Resurrection.³¹ El-Istanbuli also mentions the appearance of this narrative in the aforementioned treatise of al-Ghayṭi. It is noteworthy that el-Istanbuli paraphrases al-Ghayṭi's interpretation including the same references.³²

(3) The following fabrication speaks of Iram of the Pillars (*Iram dhāt al-'imād*), a lost city mentioned in Q 89:6–8, which existed at the time of Hūd.³³ According to this popular fabrication, the city Iram is made of gold and silver and has a thousand of parks (*bağçeler*), a rose garden (*gülbār*), and a flowery meadow (*gülistān*). Iram still exists in this world (*dünyāda*), though God has concealed it from human sight. Iram moves between multiple regions, such as Shām, Yemen, and Iraq. In el-Istanbuli's opinion, this account was invented by disbelievers of the Israelites (*benī-i Isrā'ilin zenādikası*) to subjugate and ridicule whoever believes in this fabrication (*inanan kimseleri müsaḥhar ve-istihzā' için*). To falsify this popular story, el-Istanbuli points out the Quranic statement, "Hast thou not seen how thy Lord dealt with 'Ād, Iram the pillared" (Q 89:6–7). In these verses, God acknowledges that the people of 'Ād already perished. To the people of 'Ād, God sent Hūd, however, they did not believe in him. Then, God destroyed them. In the end, el-Istanbuli suggests the aforementioned treatise of al-Ghayṭi, in which the same fabrication is examined.³⁴ Given that both el-Istanbuli and al-Ghayṭi discuss the same fabrications (1–3) in their works, it is likely that these false narratives circulated widely across the early modern Muslim world.

(4) The fourth fabrication is about David. According to this story, David fell in love with the wife of Üryā. When David became mad with love (*meftūn oldu*), he sent Üryā to a war for several times. As a result, in a war, Üryā became a martyr, which made David glad. Later, David married Üryā's wife. El-Istanbuli asserts that it is a false story invented by a group of stuffers (*haşviyye tā'ifesi*). In support of his argument, he references al-Jurjānī's *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*³⁵ and

31 'Alī al-Wāḥidī al-Naysābūrī, *al-Taḥsīn al-Basīṭ*, ed. 'Alī b. 'Umar al-Suḥaybānī (Riyadh: Jāmi'at al-Imām Muḥammad b. Sa'ūd al-Islāmiyya, 2009), 19:117.

32 Beyazıt Kütüphanesi B1571/2, fols. 26r–27r. Hacı Mahmud Efendi 04438, fols. 2r–3r.

33 Iram is interpreted either as a specific group of people or as the city belonging to the 'Ād, a pre-Islamic southern Arabian tribe. Nasr et al. (eds.), *The Study Quran*, 1510.

34 Al-Ghayṭi also regards disbelievers of the Israelites as the inventors of this fabrication. Beyazıt Kütüphanesi B1571/2, fols. 20r–20v. Hacı Mahmud Efendi 04438, fols. 3r–3v.

35 Al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, ed. Maḥmūd 'Umar al-Dimyātī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1998), 8:298.

Abū l-Su'ūd's *tafsīr*. As el-Istanbulī paraphrases, in Turkish, Abū l-Su'ūd's uncompromising assessment:

[This fabrication is] a falsehood [*ifk*], a calumny [*iftirā'*], a reprehensible innovation [*bid'at-ı mekrüha*], and an invented deceit [*mekr-i muhtera'*]; human nature [*ṭabā'ir*] abhors this story, and the auditory faculty [*ḳuvvet-i sāmī'a*] repudiates it. May whoever fabricated it remain in loss; and may those who disseminated this fabrication perish!³⁶

According to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib's (d. 40/661) report, whoever narrates this fabrication deserves to be beaten one hundred sixty times by a stick (*değnek*). In the end, El-Istanbulī presents a hadith to assure the falsehood of this narrative.³⁷

(5) In the next fabrication, Solomon heard about a disbelieving king (*bir kāfir padişahı*) living on an island, whom some men attacked and killed. Since then, the king's beloved daughter had been constantly crying over this misfortune. Thereupon, Solomon commanded the jinn to make a statue of the king. The daughter clothed the statue and, together with the king's sons, bowed down before it (*ona ṭapārdı*). One day, Solomon entered a privy (*beyt el-halā*), where he left his Seal (*hātem*) with a maid. After he came out, someone resembling Solomon entered the privy and took Solomon's Seal. This impostor then ascended the throne, pretending to be the real Solomon, which upset Solomon. Meanwhile, the vizier Āṣif and the people realized that the person sitting on the throne was not the real Solomon, because the impostor did not perform the major ritual ablution (*gusl*) after leaving the harem and recited several invocations (*du'ā'lar*) thereafter. Later, the impostor threw the Seal into the sea, and a fish swallowed it. Subsequently, a fisherman caught the fish and returned the Seal to the real Solomon. Then, Solomon reclaimed his throne and resumed his rule over humankind and the jinn. As el-Istanbulī assesses, this wicked story, which was fabricated by disbelieving stuffers (*ḥaṣvīyye-i kāfirleri*), does not correspond to the true narrative. Unlike the previous fabrications (1–4), el-Istanbulī does not provide any argument to disprove this account but concludes his discussion by suggesting al-Jurjānī's *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*

36 In his interpretation of Q 38:23–24, Abū l-Su'ūd states: "[This fabrication is] an innovated and reprehensible falsehood [*ifk muḥtada' makrūh*] and an invented deceit [*makr mukhtara'*]; how evil is the abominable thing that the ears reject [*tumijjuhu l-asmā'*] and human nature recoils from [*yanfir 'anhu l-ṭibā'*]. Woe unto whoever innovated and disseminated this [fabrication]; may evil befall whoever invented and spread this [fabrication]!" Abū l-Su'ūd al-Imādī, *Tafsīr Abī l-Su'ūd* (Beirut: Dār Ihya' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, n.d.), 7:222.

37 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib's report appears in Abū l-Su'ūd's *tafsīr*. Hacı Mahmud Efendi 04438, fol. 3v.

as a reference.³⁸ Although al-Jurjānī's description does not include Solomon's interaction with the maid, the impostor who pretended to be the real Solomon, and the fish, al-Jurjānī also regards inventors of the fabrication as *hashwiyya*.³⁹

(6) The sixth fabrication is about Job. According to this popular account, Job possessed abundant wealth, had children, and worshiped God with deep devotion. One day, the Devil (*ṣeyṭān*), that is, Iblis, told God that Job worshiped Him devotedly only because Job had abundant wealth; however, were he to lose his wealth, he would no longer worship Him with such devotion. As God replied to the Devil, Job was obedient to Him and patient for the sake of His contentment, not for anything else. The Devil then suggested that God annihilate Job's wealth, such that Job would abandon his worship of Him. Following the Devil's suggestion, God took away Job's wealth. However, Job remained patient, grateful, and obedient to God. Next, the Devil told God that if Job were to lose his children, he would no longer worship Him. After his children passed away, Job remained patient, grateful, and obedient to God. Then, the Devil told to God that without his health, Job would no longer obey Him. Then, a wolf ate Job, whence his whole body annihilated. However, Job remained humble and prayed to God. Accepting Job's prayer, God saved him from this misfortune.

Regarding this fabrication, el-Istanbulī holds that it originated from the Israelite traditions (*Isrā'īliyyāt*). He invokes Himmātzāde's *Tuhfat al-rāwī*, in which Himmātzāde cites Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī's (d. 543/1148) statement that no narrative about Job is right except what God acknowledges in the Quran: "And [remember] Job, when he cried unto his Lord, 'Truly affliction has befallen me!'" (Q 21:83); "Truly Satan has afflicted me with weariness and punishment" (Q 38:41). Following Himmātzāde's interpretation, el-Istanbulī insists that no mention about a wolf appears in these verses. Nor does any authentic hadith, except the following one related to Job: "When Job was taking a bath naked, golden locusts began to fall on him."⁴⁰ Moreover, no hadith reports a wolf. Outlining this tradition, el-Istanbulī holds that no mention about a wolf exists in Quranic verses and hadiths. In his opinion, this fabrication was invented by the ignorant of the Israelites (*benī-i Isrā'il cehelesi*). Verifiers (*ehl-i taḥkīk*) should abandon their false *kıssa-ı enbiyā'*. To conclude this sixth fabrication, el-Istanbulī calls for our attention to Israelites' fabrications by presenting the following hadith:

How do you ask the People of the Book about anything, while your Book, which was sent down to the Messenger of God, is the most recent news

38 Hacı Mahmud Efendi 04438, fols. 3v–4r.

39 Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8:300.

40 See, inter alia, Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, #279 (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2002), 78.

from God which you recite, pure and unsullied? God has conveyed to you that the People of the Book changed God's Book and made it different, *writing the Book with their hands and then saying, "This is from God," in order to sell it for a small price* [Q 2:79]. Should not the knowledge that has come to you prevent you from asking them? Indeed, by God, we have not seen a single one of them ask you about what has been sent down to you [i.e. the Quran].⁴¹

El-Istanbuli understands that the People of the Book changed (*tabdīl*), made different (*taghyīr*), and altered (*tahrīf*) the scriptures revealed to them.⁴² Thus, he cautions readers not to ask the People of the Book about the true narratives about the prophets. In his discussion of this fabrication, he basically follows Himmātzāde's description by translating it into Turkish.⁴³

(7) The seventh fabrication features Abraham's dream. One night, while he was sleeping, Abraham saw a dream in which he was commanded to slaughter his son by cutting his throat. However, Abraham was not certain whether this dream was divine (*raḥmānī*) or satanic (*şeytānī*). As Abraham saw the same dream three times, he ascertained that it was of divine origin. When Abraham was about to achieve this command, his son made the following final requests: Abraham should not show his son's cloth to his mother, such that she would not grieve, and he should not look at his son's face while cutting his throat. When Abraham was determined to carry out the command and placed a knife upon his son's throat, the knife did not work at all. Thus, Abraham could not accomplish the act. Thereupon, God sent down a sheep from Paradise (*cennetten*) through Gabriel. As el-Istanbuli responds to this fabrication, there are several falsehoods mixed with the true narrative about Abraham. First, a prophet's dream is revelation (*vaḥy*) and hence cannot be satanic. The above account that Abraham was uncertain whether his dream was divine or satanic amounts to a thrusting (*ta'n etmek*) to him and deeming him ignorant (*techīl etmek*)—this is a great calumny (*büyük bühtān*). Second, no scriptural evidence proves that Abraham's son left the final requests as mentioned above. Third, it is wrong that Abraham placed a knife upon his son's throat. Instead, the correct narrative reports that as soon as his son was made to lie down on the ground, God created and sent down a sheep through an angel. Fourth, no evidence tells that God sent down a sheep from Paradise. Demonstrating these

41 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, #2685, 655.

42 Hacı Mahmud Efendi 04438, fols. 4r–6v.

43 For Himmātzāde's explanation cited by el-Istanbuli, ms Istanbul, Hacı Selim Ağa Kütüphanesi 00153, 257 fols. (1744–1745), fols. 193v–194r.

falsehoods incorporated into this popular story, el-Istanbuli briefs the true narrative about Abraham.⁴⁴ In conclusion, he mentions Himmâtzâde's *Tuhfat al-râwî* to support his argument.⁴⁵

(8) The final fabrication is about Abraham's knowledge of God. In the Quran, says God, "When the night grew dark upon him, he saw a star. He said, 'This is my Lord!'" (Q 6:76). According to the popular fabrication, before his age of puberty (*bâliğ olamazdan evvel*), Abraham desired to know God. One night, he saw a star (*yıldız*) and said, "This is my Lord," however, when it set, he understood that it was not God. Abraham does not desire that which moves and sets. Next, he saw the moon rising and said, "This is my Lord." However, when it set, he said, "If God did not guide us, we would remain astray." Then, he saw the sun rising and said, "This is my Lord and large." When the sun also set, he understood that it was not his Lord. After that, said Abraham, "It is my Lord, who created the earth, heavens, and all creatures." In this way, Abraham attained his knowledge of God. According to el-Istanbuli's interpretation, this popular fabrication is a grievous error containing wrong information (*haṭâ'-i 'uzmâ'-i müteẓammin*). Particularly, he disproves Abraham's desire to know God before his age of puberty by emphasizing that all prophets are knowers of God (*'arîf bi-Allâh*) even before their puberty. Hence, it is impossible that ignorance (*cehl*) precedes their attainment of knowledge of God regardless of their ages. Aligning with this prophetological doctrine, el-Istanbuli understands that the Abraham's inference (*istidlâl*) in the Quran does not speak of Abraham himself but the people of his time. Thus, the Quranic narrative indicates Abraham's teaching to his people that God transcends changes, alterations, and other contingent qualities (*Allâh Te'âlâ'nın tebeddülâtta ve-teğayyürâtta ve-sâ'ir-i evşâf-ı imkândan muḳaddes ve-münezzeh olduḡunu onlara tebliğ ve-ta'lim için*). Therefore, the following verse, "That was Our argument, which We gave unto Abraham against his people" (Q 6:83) serves to convince his people that God transcends anything inappropriate for His Existence, Unity, Eternal Perfection, and Glory. Otherwise, the subject of the Quranic inference is not Abraham.⁴⁶ As a supplement to the eighth fabrication, el-Istanbuli offers similar fabrications about Abraham, Moses, and Adam.

Table 1 visualizes the eight popular fabrications which el-Istanbuli addresses in the *Enbiyâ'*. The table classifies each fabrication according to its protagonist, inventors, and sources adduced in support of el-Istanbuli's argument.

44 Hacı Mahmud Efendi 04438, fols. 6v–7v.

45 Himmâtzâde provides various reports about Abraham's dream, his son's final requests, and a sheep sent down from Paradise. Hacı Selim Ağa Kütüphanesi 00153, fols. 188v–189v.

46 Hacı Mahmud Efendi 04438, fols. 7v–8r.

TABLE 1 The eight fabricated *kısaş-ı enbiyā*⁷

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<i>Prophets</i>	Noah & Moses	Jonah	Hūd	David	Solomon	Job	Abraham	Abraham
<i>Inventors</i>	<i>Zenādiḳa</i>	–	<i>Zenādiḳa</i>	<i>Ḥaṣviyye</i>	Disbelieving <i>ḥaṣviyye</i>	Israelites	–	–
<i>Arguments</i>	K	Q, H, T, K	Q, K	H, T, K	K	Q, H, T	T	Q

Q: The Quran; H: Hadith; T: *Tafāsīr*; K: *Kalām* texts

El-Istanbulī’s serious engagement with popular fabrications about the prophets is also observed in the *Farā’id* and the *Cevhere*. In the *Farā’id*, el-Istanbulī briefly discusses two of the above eight fabrications. In the context of the necessary qualities of the prophets, he explains that verifiers should reject the fabrications about David (4) and Job (6).⁴⁷ In the *Cevhere*, with regard to prophetology, he briefly presents three fabrications about David (4), Solomon (5), and Job (6). Interestingly, Birgivi’s *Vaṣṣiyetnāme*, which el-Istanbulī comments upon, does not mention these false narratives.⁴⁸ Hence, this description relies on el-Istanbulī’s own observation of these fabrications. In short, both the *Farā’id* and the *Cevhere* do not investigate these fabrications as profoundly as the *Enbiyā*⁷. In these texts, other fabrications about the prophets are not discussed. It may be an indication that in el-Istanbulī’s observation, the three fabrications (4), (5), and (6) were particularly widespread among lay Muslims in Istanbul.

4 The Prophets’ Infallibility

Throughout el-Istanbulī’s refutation of the fabricated *kısaş-ı enbiyā*⁷, he accentuates the prophets’ infallibility (*’iṣma*), which ultimately invalidates any falsehood attributed to them.⁴⁹ Indeed, some of the aforementioned fabrications

47 El-Istanbulī, *Farā’id al-fawā’id*, 109 and 116.
48 Kāzizāde Aḥmed b. Meḥmed Emin el-Istanbulī, *Cevhere-i behiyye-i aḥmediyye fī şerḥ el-Vaṣṣiyye el-muḥammediyye* (Istanbul: Dār al-Ṭibā’a al-Āmira, 1842–1843), 55–56.
49 Since early times in Islamic history, *kalām* theologians discussed whether the prophets are immune from both major and minor sins, whether they may commit a slip (*zalla*), and whether their infallibility extends to the period before their prophetic missions. See

recount misdeeds of certain prophets, which contradicts Islamic prophetology. The question of whether a prophet can transgress revealed law or commit an immoral act is crucial to assessing the popular fabrications about the prophets. In the *Enbiyā'*, upon completing his discussion of the eight fabrications, el-Istanbuli delineates the necessary qualities of prophethood as follows:

According to Sunni doctrine, as the Quranic verses [*ḥaḳḳ-ı şarīḥ*] state, the prophets are the best of creation and the Real's beloved servants and close companions [*Ḥaḳḳ Te'ālā'nun sevgili kulları ve-muḳarrebleri*]. They are immune [*ma'sūm*] from sin, falsehood, and anything contrary to manliness [*mürüvvet*] and revelation [*şer'*]. All of them are erudite, pious, righteous, ascetic, entrusted with the Real's revelation, excellent in their nature, appearance, and ethics [*hulḳatları ve-şüretleri ve-aḥlakları güzeldir*], and just.⁵⁰

In this excerpt, el-Istanbuli reiterates that the prophets are not subject to falsehood in any respect. He dedicates the end of the *Enbiyā'* to the doctrinal theme of the prophets' infallibility. By commenting on al-Sanūsī's *Sharḥ al-'Aqida al-wuṣṭā*, el-Istanbuli articulates that all prophets do not commit any sin. In al-Sanūsī's prophetology, it is the prophetic miracle that proves the prophets' immunity from falsehood. Al-Sanūsī writes:

Wilferd Madelung and Émile Tyan, "İşma," in *ET²*, ed. E. van Donzel et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 4182–184. It should be noted that early modern doctrinal discussions on the prophetic *İşma* resonate with the proliferation of prophetological writings, some of which examine the prophetic miracle, the Prophet Muḥammad's Night Journey and Ascension (e.g. *mi'rācnāme/mi'rāciyye*), the eschatological fate of his parents, and his superiority over other prophets. See Patrick Franke, "Are the Parents of the Prophet in Hell? Tracing the History of a Debate in Sunni Islam," in *Bamberger Orientstudien*, ed. Lale Behzadi et al. (Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2014), 1: 135–158; Fadıl Aygün, "Osmanlı Dönemi Nübüvvet Literatürü," *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 14.27 (2016): 133–174; Alexandre Papas, "Mi'rāciyye: The Ascension of the Prophet in Ottoman Literature from the Fifteenth to the Twentieth Century," in *The Presence of the Prophet in Early Modern and Contemporary Islam*, ed. Denis Gril et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 460–498. Along with these texts, the special celebration of the Prophet's birth (*mevlid/mevlid kandili*) widely practiced in early modern Ottoman society further sheds light on popular devotion to the noble Prophet. Nebi Bozkurt, "Kandil," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2001), 24:300–301; Mehmet Şeker, "Mevlid," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2004), 29:479–480.

50 Hacı Mahmud Efendi 04438, fol. gv.

Their [i.e., the prophets'] immunity from falsehood [*kidhb*] is rationally established through [their] prophetic miracle [*mu'jiza*]; [their immunity] from major sins and minor sins [*kabā'ir al-ma'āṣī wa-l-ṣaghā'ir al-khissa*] is [established] through scholarly consensus [*ijmā'*]; thus, [they are immune] from all kinds of misdeeds [*sā'ir al-dhunūb*]. Since the people, to whom they [i.e., the prophets] are sent, are commanded to follow them, the Exalted does not command any act of disobedience [*ma'ṣiya*].⁵¹

In parallel with al-Sanūsī's argument, el-Istanbulī provides his interpretation in Turkish:⁵²

In short, the noble prophets' immunity from falsehood [*kizbden ma'ṣūm*]⁵³—may God bestow peace and blessings upon them—is proven by [their] prophetic miracle. [Specifically,] their immunity from major sins [*kebā'ir*] and minor sins [*ṣegā'ir*] is unanimously agreed upon and established [*icmā' ile sabbittir ve-ma'lūmdur*]. Since the prophets' immunity from all kinds of sin is demonstrated in this way, [you should] verify that the nations [*ümmeṭler*], to whom they [i.e., the prophets] are sent, are commanded to follow them. The Real never commands anyone to commit a sin or to follow a sinful individual [*Haḳḳ Te'ālā ise günahla ve-günahkāra iktidā' ile emr etmez*]. As this [argument] establishes, the prophets do not commit any sin.⁵⁴

In this excerpt, el-Istanbulī literally translates al-Sanūsī's explanation into Turkish without offering a new argument.

Outlining al-Sanūsī's argument, for a more detailed discussion of the issue, el-Istanbulī adduces *al-Shifā' bi-ta'rīf ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā* ("The Cure through Causing Us to Recognize the Rights of the Chosen One") by al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ (d. 544/1149)⁵⁴ and *al-Mawāhib al-ladunniyya* ("The Divinely-Granted Gifts") by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Qaṣṭallānī (d. 923/1517).⁵⁵ In reference to the popu-

51 Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Sanūsī, *Sharḥ al-'Aqida al-wuṣṭā*, ed. Anas Muḥammad 'Adnān al-Sharfāwī (Damascus: Dār al-Taqwā, 2019), 462.

52 El-Istanbulī mentions *al-'Aqida al-kubrā* ("The Great Creed") as the source he cites, however, the correct title of the source is al-Sanūsī's *Sharḥ al-'Aqida al-wuṣṭā*.

53 Hacı Mahmud Efendi 04438, fols. 9v–10r.

54 El-Istanbulī points out the *Şifā'-i şerīf* ("The Noble Cure"), a common designation of al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ's *al-Shifā'* in the Ottoman period. M. Yaşar Kandemir, "eş-Şifā," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2010), 39:134–138.

55 Hacı Mahmud Efendi 04438, fol. 9v–10v.

lar fabrications about the prophets, what is noteworthy is that by proving the prophets' infallibility, el-Istanbuli reveals the baselessness of the deceptive *kıṣaṣ-ı enbiyā'* and refutes one's attribution of falsehood to the prophets.

In the *Farā'id*, el-Istanbuli also makes a case for prophetic infallibility. In this text, he maintains that no falsehood applies to them. The fact that no falsehood originates from them, is demonstrated by their necessary quality of trustfulness (*şidk*).⁵⁶ Intriguingly, in the *Farā'id*, el-Istanbuli does not mention the name of al-Sanūsī or his *Sharḥ al-'Aqida al-wuṣṭā* when proving the prophets' infallibility.

In the *Enbiyā'*, after demonstrating the prophets' infallibility, el-Istanbuli cautions readers against problematic genres of writing that publish false accounts of the prophets. Following al-Sanūsī's explanation,⁵⁷ el-Istanbuli considers that fabrications about the prophets derive from "bizarre stories [*hurāfāt*] and absurd talks [*hezeyān*] of historians [*ehl-i tāriḥ*], and deviating statements as conveyed by ignorant Quranic exegetes [*ehl-i tefsīrin cāhilleri*]."⁵⁸ Accordingly, the readers must be alarmed about their *kıṣaṣ-ı enbiyā'*. Additionally, el-Istanbuli fleshes out how to discern the truthful *kıṣaṣ-ı enbiyā'* from the deceptive ones, namely, whether they conform to the principles of Sunnism (*ehl-i sünnet uşūlū*).⁵⁹ The Sunni principles, as he emphasizes, are established upon the Quran and Sunna.⁶⁰ According to this rule, any narrative that does not comply with Sunni prophetology has to be inspected cautiously.

Along with historians and Quranic exegetes, who allegedly propagate the false *kıṣaṣ-ı enbiyā'*, el-Istanbuli accuses ignorant preachers of their dissemination of the false *kıṣaṣ-ı enbiyā'*. He writes:

[...] In our time, how many ignorant preachers [*cāhil-i vā'iṣler*] stand on their pulpits and deliver the aforementioned fabrications [about the prophets] to the common people! Believing [the fabrications] to be true, they [i.e., the preachers] slander [*iftirā' ederler*] the Real and His prophets, encouraging and warning the common people, such that their [i.e., the common people's] hearts will be attentive. [As a result,] they [i.e., the preachers] would undermine Sunni doctrines, which are the capital of felicity [*sermāye-i sa'ādet*]. They would mislead [*izlāl ederler*] the believ-

56 El-Istanbuli, *Farā'id al-fawā'id*, 106–107.

57 Al-Sanūsī, *Sharḥ al-'Aqida al-wuṣṭā*, 462–463.

58 Hacı Mahmud Efendi 04438, fol. 10v.

59 Hacı Mahmud Efendi 04438, fol. 10v.

60 Hacı Mahmud Efendi 04438, fol. 12v.

ers participating [in their sermons]. We seek refuge in God, the Exalted, from this [misfortune].⁶¹

Taking this warning into account, el-Istanbulî puts forth three fundamental epistemic sources of Islamic doctrines for the common people: the sound senses (*ḥavāss-ı selīme*), truthful reports (*haber-i şādık*), and intellect (*‘aql*). In his opinion, the fabricated *kıssa-ı enbiyā* do not manipulate those who base their knowledge on these three sources. In the present context, el-Istanbulî's *kalām* epistemology agrees with that of *al-‘Aqā’id al-nasafiyya* (“The Nasafī Creed”) although he does not mention the name of Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142). In line with these three epistemic sources, el-Istanbulî further highlights the fact that the historians’ and exegetes’ accounts about the prophets are unacceptable unless they conform to the Quran and Sunna, whose narratives are undoubtedly true.⁶² In sum, throughout the *Enbiyā*, el-Istanbulî criticizes the misleading *kıssa-ı enbiyā* that prevailed in twelfth/eighteenth century Istanbul through his careful litmus test, namely, whether each account agrees with the Quran and Hadith.

5 Concluding Remarks

El-Istanbulî's *Enbiyā* is an important piece of writing that witnesses popular prophetological discourses in twelfth/eighteenth century Istanbul. With a focus on this treatise, this study analyzed el-Istanbulî's arguments against eight popular fabrications about the prophets. Regardless of whether his assessment of the inventors of each fabrication stands to historical scrutiny, his observation that such fabrications were widespread and manipulated among the broader population deserves more careful attention. El-Istanbulî's concise treatise offers a valuable glimpse into the religiosity of the Muslim populace. Intriguingly, not only a broader public, but also certain educated people, such as preachers and teachers, disseminated false *kıssa-ı enbiyā* through their preaching. As argued in this article, the preachers in question likely were the Kāzizādeli preachers or like-minded preachers. Overall, el-Istanbulî's engagement with the popular reception of the *kıssa-ı enbiyā* demonstrates that Islamic prophetology was the locus of heated debate involving both scholars and the general public at his time. More studies of prophetological writings

61 Hacı Mahmud Efendi 04438, fols. 11r–11v.

62 Hacı Mahmud Efendi 04438, fol. 12v.

that remain in manuscript sources await in-depth research for a deeper understanding of similarly overlooked prophetological trends.

Another noteworthy finding in this study concerns the multiple references drawn upon by el-Istanbulî. Particularly, some fabrications appear in *tafâsîr* and *kalâm* texts written by earlier scholars, such as al-Jurjânî, al-Bayḍâwî, Himmâtzâde, and Abû l-Su‘ûd. Theological sources such as these, which were widespread across different times and regions, signal the fact that the dissemination of false *ķıřař-ı enbiya’* was a rather common problem across various genres in the pre-modern and early modern Muslim world.

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