

The revival of *ḥadīth*-related “transmission documents” from the 17th-18th century Ottoman Hejaz: Implications on Islamic scholarship in the central regions of the Ottoman Empire.

Abstract

This discussion concerns the history of documents testifying to the transmission and teaching of particular, very often *ḥadīth*-related texts, including *ṭhabats* and *ijāzas*. These types of "transmission documents" gained considerable popularity during the 17th and 18th centuries, centered around Mecca and Medina's scholarly and Sufi communities. Towards the end of the last century, the historian John O. Voll proposed that this development was intertwined with the emergence of particular intellectual and political movements around the early modern Islamic world, especially in India, Southeast Asia, and Africa. Even though Voll's theory has been criticized through and through ever since, these transmission documents continued to pose tantalizing questions for historians. At any rate, it has been proposed by several scholars that such transmission documents served as tools of self-fashioning among the '*ulamā*' and laypeople by, akin to *Ṣūfī khirqas*, connecting them to the Prophet and other esteemed figures in Islam. However, the discussions surrounding the emergence of these documents and the attendant social and cultural phenomena usually omit references to the reception of these documents in the regions of the Ottoman Empire, including Rumelia and Anatolia.

In this talk, therefore, I will attempt to draw attention to the circulation of these documents to figures hailing from the central domains of the Ottoman Empire. From the mid-17th century onwards, members of the central administration of the Ottoman Empire received several such transmission documents from prominent scholars and religious specialists in Mecca and Medina. I argue that to make the argument that one particularly strong motivation for copying was the accumulation of prestige and its circulation within the limits of close kinship and household networks. I will discuss the cases of the Beyāzī-zāde family, some members of the Köprülü family, and Reisülkuttāb Mustafa Efendi (d. 1749), who all circulated *ijāzas* they acquired among themselves without any sign of passing these documents to anyone else beyond their immediate relatives. Preliminary, I would contend that the acquisition of *ijāzas* and *ṭhabats* by particular members of the Ottoman elites was seldom performed for the sake of further propagation of these intellectual and spiritual lineages, but in the Ottoman contexts, these documents instead operated through the exclusivity and rarity of such prestigious transregional connections. In addition, I will also make mention of the reception of these documents in Sufi contexts of the central domains of the Ottoman Empire, where the reception of these *ijāzas* and *ṭhabats* displays more continuity with the Hejazi tradition of these transmission documents than in the case of the bureaucratic elites of the Empire.

Short Bio

János Galamb is a PhD student at Central European University in Vienna. He earned his BA in Arabic philology and history at Eötvös Lóránd University, Budapest, an MA in Arabic philology at ELTE, and an MA in history at Central European University. János' research concerns the history of *ḥadīth* scholarship and transmission in the early modern Ottoman Empire and the ritual uses and symbolic associations of *ḥadīth* in early modern Ottoman Sunni Islam.