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# Authoring and Publishing in the Age of Manuscripts: the Columbia University Copy of an Ottoman Compendium of Sciences with Marginal Glossing

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## Abstract

This study examines an early-seventeenth century copy of a popular book in Ottoman Turkish originally composed by Nevî Efendi (d. 1599) in the early 1570s. With around 150 extant copies available in almost every major Islamic manuscript collection across the world, Nevî Efendi's compendium, or the "fruits," of sciences (*Netāyicü'l-finūn*) deserves to be called an early modern bestseller among the Ottoman reading public. The particular copy of the work located at Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library (Or. 360) is a notable one with numerous *minhu* records (i.e., marginal glosses one could trace back to the author) written in Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, and Persian. In this article, besides situating Nevî Efendi's work in the broader genre of *taşnif al-ʿulūm* (classification of sciences) in the Ottoman as well as the broader Islamicate realm of learning, I will pay closer attention to discussing the *minhu* notes that present intriguing insights into the questions of what a published work meant in the age of manuscripts, and how the continuous interventions on the text made by the author, and possibly by the copyists and readers, enrich as well as shuffle the "authentic" contents of the "published" version.

## Keywords

Ottoman Empire – manuscripts – classification of sciences – paratexts – marginalia – glosses – *minhu* – Nevî Efendi – *Netāyicü'l-finūn*

## Introduction

In the fall semester of the academic year 1958–1959, Columbia University had a distinguished visitor from Turkey. Ahmet Süheyl Ünver (1898–1986), one of the most prominent and prolific scholars of Republican Turkey, publishing extensively on the history of science and medicine, cultural history, and history of art, spent a few months at Butler library to examine its Islamic manuscript collection. Ünver did not shoulder the task of inspecting and cataloging books in Arabic, Persian, and (Ottoman) Turkish as part of a commissioned work. Merely out of his profound enthusiasm for manuscripts, and indeed for any cultural and historical artifact, Ünver worked meticulously on the Islamic manuscripts at the Columbia University Special Collection and prepared a card catalog that is still available to view in the card cabinet located in the Butler Library Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Ünver wore many hats during his active professional life from the early 1920s through the early 1970s. He was a medical doctor practicing at Istanbul University, where he also worked as a professor of history of medicine in the Institute of Medical History that he founded and directed for decades. Ünver was also a skilled artist in calligraphy, manuscript illumination, marbling, and quilling, formally teaching at the Fine Arts Academy and regularly meeting with his students at the Topkapı Palace library and other manuscript libraries of Istanbul. During his year-long stay in the U.S., he not only explored the Islamic manuscripts at several libraries, including the New York Public Library, the Firestone Library at Princeton, the Library of Congress in D.C., and the Free Library in Philadelphia, but also exhibited some of his miniature drawings and other artistic works, which made local pundits describe him as the “Turkish Leonardo da Vinci.”<sup>1</sup>

As a real manuscript sleuth, Ünver once estimated that throughout his active career, he flipped through the folios of over 60,000 manuscripts. For him, the books were not to be read from cover to cover but rather to be browsed and skimmed through.<sup>2</sup> His regular visits to manuscript libraries in Turkey and elsewhere enabled him to pen over a thousand short articles and pamphlet-sized books through which Ünver shared with the reading public his immediate impressions and observations about his research that he closely noted in

1 For the definitive biography of Süheyl Ünver, see Ahmed Güner Sayar, *A. Süheyl Ünver: Hayatı, Şahsiyeti ve Eserleri: 1898–1986* (Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1994). See p. 398 in Sayar's work for the reference to the newspaper article.

2 Sayar, *A. Süheyl Ünver*, 628.

his pocket journals amounting to no less than a few thousand.<sup>3</sup> An intriguing note in one of those journals he kept during his visit in 1961 to Edirne, the former Ottoman capital before Istanbul, neatly captures Ünver's unique and precocious appreciation of the significance of the manuscript paratexts, including colophons, ownership statements, and any marginalia scattered across codices. For Ünver, tracing such notes offers to the historian much more than what the standard textual contents of books could do:

In the Selimiye library, I was able to work only briefly during my visits in September 1960 and September 1961, because the library lacks a proper catalog and the current librarian is blind to important manuscripts [...] One must stay here for months and go over every manuscript in order to be able to draw some conclusions. A few months ago, Prof. Ahmed Ateş [from Istanbul University] visited the library and did some research on manuscripts. Nevertheless, he was more interested in what the contents of the rare texts reveal; he did not pay any attention to the bindings, ownership inscriptions (*temellük kitâbeleri*) and paratexts (*metin hârici notlar*), and the decoration as well as [the quality of the] paper, I mean to the 'life story' of the codex. For that reason, one cannot benefit from his research notes [...] *The particular type of research I would like to conduct over manuscripts is not done in any part of the world. No one is looking carefully at the 'personality' and 'peculiarity' of the copies.*<sup>4</sup>

Ünver kept 67 such journals in total during his sojourn in the U.S., one of which he named *Butlernâme* (The journal of Butler [library]). This notebook stored all the necessary information he needed before he published in the May 1959 issue of the Columbia Library Columns a brief article on the Islamic manuscripts in the Columbia repository. He enumerates at the Butler library 546 manuscripts written in three major languages of the Muslim world. Based on his count by then, 375 of them are in Arabic and 128 in Persian, and only 43 manuscripts are in Ottoman Turkish. These 43 manuscripts include, according to his classifying scheme, "four calendars, two registers of accounts and guides

3 There are three lengthy bibliographies devoted to listing the publications of Ünver. See Osman Nuri Ergin, *Prof. Dr. A. Süheyl Ünver bibliyografyası*, vol. 1, (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Tıp Fakültesi, 1941); Ergin, *Prof. Dr. A. Süheyl Ünver bibliyografyası*, vol. 2 (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Tıp Fakültesi, 1952); Gülbün Mesara et al., *A. Süheyl Ünver bibliyografyası* (Istanbul: İşaret Yayınları, 2017). Today, Süleymaniye Library houses the majority of Ünver's journals under the special collection named after him.

4 Gülbün Mesara, Mine Esiner Özen, ed., *Süheyl Ünver'in Edirne defterleri* (Istanbul: Kubbealtı Neşriyat, 2013), 198. Italicized parts are my own emphasis.

to letter-writing, twelve literary works, two social works, four dictionaries, ten religious works, one collection of prayers, four scientific works, two historical works, and two miscellaneous.”<sup>5</sup> He does not name in this article any specific title, nor does he spare any extra words on a particular item. Hence, it is only speculative to say that the particular copy now cataloged as Or. 360, which is the main subject of this article, caught his eye. Nevertheless, as a scholar and a true manuscript connoisseur with unprecedented care for paratexts, this hefty Ottoman Turkish manuscript with heavy marginalia must have grasped his attention.

Taking its inspiration from Ünver’s ahead-of-its-time methodology manifested in the quoted note above and dedicated to his living memory, this article will examine in a closer fashion Columbia Or. 360, and more specifically, its abounding marginal glosses. Columbia Or. 360 is a complete copy of the *Netāyicü’l-fünūn ve meḥāsini’l-mütūn* (The Fruits of the Sciences and the Beauties of the Texts), a widely-circulated work in Ottoman Turkish of the genre of the classification of sciences composed initially in the late sixteenth century by Nevī Efendi (d. 1599), a prominent scholar from the sixteenth-century Ottoman world of learning. Immediately after its composition, *Netāyic* became, with a bit of anachronism, an early-modern bestseller among Turkophone readers. With around 150 extant copies scattered all over the world, it is difficult not to come across a copy of this text, either partially or in *toto*, in any decent Islamic manuscript collection. Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library is thus no exception.

The Columbia copy of Nevī Efendi’s *Netāyic* merits closer examination for its extensive marginal glosses that are carefully copied by its copyist, likely from a contemporary “critical edition” of the text, if not from an autograph copy. The particular copyist of the codex labels these glosses with the expression *minhu* (منه), a term used in Islamic manuscript culture often to refer to the marginal annotations and comments traced back to the “original” author.<sup>6</sup> A more detailed discussion about the current scholarship on *minhu* records will follow below, but I should add here that in his inspiring work on the techniques of Muslim scholarship, Franz Rosenthal observed that the device of inserting extra marginal remarks in the context, which seems to have proliferated especially from the fourteenth century, was identified with other expressions as

5 A. Süheyl Ünver, “Islamic Manuscripts in the Columbia Libraries,” *Columbia Library Columns* 8, no. 3 (1959): 31–35.

6 For a few illustrative examples of *minhus* and other marginal notes, see Adam Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts: A Vademecum for Readers* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 115–116.

well, such as *tanbīh* or *fāʿida*, in addition to *taʿlīq*, *bayān*, or *hāshiya*.<sup>7</sup> How did the authors, readers, and copyists in the age of Islamic manuscripts decide which particular expression to use when adding a marginal comment, and was there a uniform practice shared and maintained by different actors of the manuscript culture? The growing number of studies in the last decade on marginalia and paratexts in Islamic manuscript culture is a welcome development, yet questions as to the varying purposes and nomenclature of marginal note-taking certainly await more case studies.<sup>8</sup>

As will be demonstrated below, Columbia Or. 360 is indeed not the only *Netāyic* copy with extensive *minhu* records; the majority of the copies of the text coming down to us from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century contain these glosses, albeit occasionally varying in substance and arrangement. Taking this particular copy of Nevʿī's *Netāyic* as a stepping stone and comparing, even cursorily, its glosses to those available in other copies of the text, this article aims to share a few preliminary observations and raise some questions, rather than to provide decisive answers as to the meaning of authoring and publishing a book in the manuscript age. The hope is to stimulate further research in Ottoman and the broader Islamic studies on a curious but sorely understudied textual corpus of *Netāyic* copies, which could allow us to treat more accurately what John Dagenais has probed as “the process by which an individual, concrete manuscript book came into being, grew through accretions of gloss, commentary, and irrelevant marginal jottings [...] and was, in many cases, transformed into another individual, concrete manuscript book.”<sup>9</sup>

### The Copy, the Text, the Author

Little can be reconstructed as to when and how this particular codex entered the Butler library repository. The presence in the copy of the ex libris of David

7 Franz Rosenthal, *The Technique and Approach of Muslim Scholarship* (Roma: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1947), 40.

8 Three recent volumes of collected articles deserve special mention: the first is the *Manuscript Notes as Documentary Sources*, edited by Andreas Görke and Konrad Hirschler. The second is the special issue edited by Asad Q. Ahmed and Margaret Larkin and published in *Oriens* in 2013. See Asad Q. Ahmed and Margaret Larkin, “The *Hāshiya* and Islamic Intellectual History,” *Oriens* 41, no. 3–4 (2013): 213–216. The third one is a collection of articles in Turkish devoted to the detailed examination of marginalia and paratexts in the books owned by a late-seventeenth, early-eighteenth century Ottoman scholar. See Berat Açıl, ed., *Osmanlı Kitap Kültürü: Cârullah Efendi Kütüphanesi ve Derkenar Notları* (Istanbul: Nobel, 2015).

9 John Dagenais, *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture* (Princeton [NJ]: Princeton University Press, 1994), 18.

Eugene Smith (1860–1944), the professor of mathematics at Teachers College at Columbia University and the primary benefactor of Islamic manuscripts in the Butler collection, suggests that the copy was among those items purchased and donated by Smith in the first few decades of the twentieth century. The book clearly shows an Ottoman provenance, written in Ottoman Turkish in a fine *naskh* script and beautifully bound in brown leather with gold. There are 173 leaves in total, and each page has 19 lines with catchwords consistently placed on the verso of the folios.

The volume has a colophon on 173b stating that the clean copy of the text was completed in the 16th of Safar in the Hijri year 1033 (corresponding to December 1, 1623) by a certain el-Ḥācī Süleymān b. el-Ḥācī Maḥmūd. There are also two ownership statements inscribed in the first and last folios of the manuscript. The first note, available on page 1a, reveals that the book was owned by a certain Muştafā, who was the superintendent of the imperial arsenal (*cebeḥāne-i ʿāmire*). The Sicill-i ʿOşmānī, the multi-volume “Who is Who” in the Ottoman world compiled by Meḥmed Şüreyyā (d. 1909) through the end of the nineteenth century, lists at least two Muştafās from the imperial arsenal, one from the late seventeenth and the other from the mid-eighteenth century, but ascribing the ownership of the copy to one of those two Muştafās would be only conjectural in nature.<sup>10</sup> The second note on the page facing the colophon inscribes the name of another Muştafā, this time Muştafā Hıfzī, who apparently was a bookkeeper in the *waqf* complex of Pīr Muḥammed Paşa when he got his hands on the manuscript in the years 1775–6.

Other than the colophon and the two ownership statements, the copy is replete with brief marginal glosses amounting to no less than 170 individual notes dispersed among different sections of the text. These notes are in Turkish, Arabic, and some in Persian, and the overwhelming majority of them are signed with the expression *minhu* overlined with a long dash in red. These marginal notes begin as early as page 3b; while the longest *minhu* record spans three folios from page 17b through 19a, a significant number of them take only a couple short lines. As will be discussed further below, these *minhu* records serve various purposes that range from presenting extra content-related information regarding the matter covered in the body of the text to signaling the readers to diverging opinions over the particular issue discussed in the context.

Besides the *minhus*, there are a few other marginal notes named by the copyist differently, such as *müfred* and *maṭlab*, the latter used primarily to designate the chapter headings. Except for only a few cases, the glosses are not signaled

10 Mehmed Şüreyya, *Sicill-i Osmani*, vol. 3, 6 vols. (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1996), 1130–1210.

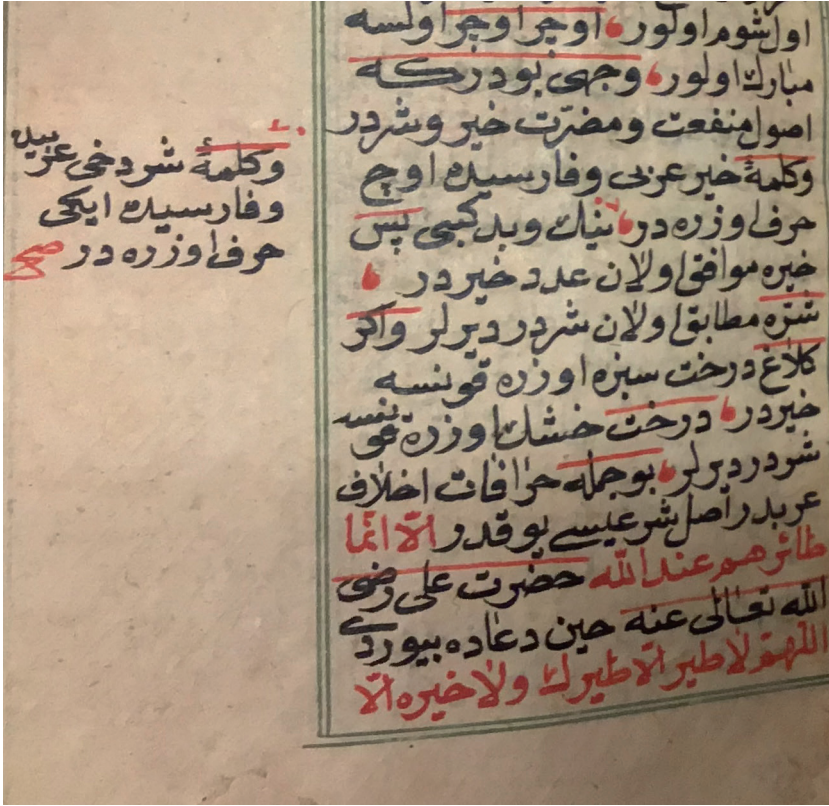


FIGURE 1 The “footnote” on p. 149 that adds a missing explanation about the word *şerr* mentioned in the body.

by a distinctive sign or symbol that would show which specific line or word in the text is concerned with the marginal note at hand. In these exceptional cases, such as the ones on p. 106a or p. 149a, is found either a little circle or a small letter *ν* replicated both in the relevant line of the text and right above the gloss, functioning almost like an early modern footnote. That in these exceptional cases, the notes are concluded not by the word *minhu*, but rather with the word *şahha* (marking the correction of the reading) suggests that the copyist follows a pattern while deploying different devices of annotation.<sup>11</sup>

Not unlike many other early modern Ottoman Turkish manuscripts that surprisingly offer a limited number of collation statements, the Or. 360 also lacks a collation remark that could have informed us of the model copy or a set of authoritative copies that the copyist el-Ḥācī Süleymān might have consulted

11 For *şahha*, see Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*, 283–285.

when penning his particular one. As already documented by Franz Rosenthal, the collation was indeed deemed essential in Islamic manuscript culture in order to produce correct copies of texts. For many Muslim men of letters, such as al-Shāfi'ī (d. 820) and Yaḥyā b. Abī Kathīr (d. no later than 749), an individual copying a book without comparing it with another reliable copy of the text is like someone who “enters a latrine and after its use does not clean himself.”<sup>12</sup>

This specific issue of the collation remark, or the lack thereof, in the Columbia copy is particularly noteworthy for a text as widely reproduced and circulated as the *Netāyicü'l-fünun*; but before moving into a discussion on the textual as well as paratextual variants of the available *Netāyic* copies, it will be instructive first to introduce here the text and its contents. The *Netāyic* is a compendium of sciences, covering useful information about a select set of disciplines, including philosophical, religious, and divinatory sciences. In the introduction to the work, Nev'i Efendi states that he has divided his compendium into twelve branches of knowledge, just as there are twelve constellations in the sky, and that in each chapter, he has reviewed three exemplary issues related to the particular branch of learning to which the chapter is devoted. However, his systematic investigation in individual chapters provides information about more than twelve sciences whose naming and order might vary among different copies of the text: 1) history (*'ilm-i tāriḥ*), 2) philosophy (*'ilm-i ḥikmet*), 3) configuration [of the celestial spheres], i.e., astronomical theory (*'ilm-i hey'et*), 4) philosophical theology (*'ilm-i kelām*), 5) principles of jurisprudence (*'ilm-i uşūl-i fikh*), 6) juridical disagreement (*'ilm-i ḥilāf*), 7) Quranic exegesis (*'ilm-i tefsīr*), 8) Sufism (*'ilm-i taşavvuf*), 9) dream interpretation (*'ilm-i ta'būr-i rü'yā*), 10) enchantment and incantation (*'ilm-i ruḳy ve efsün*), 11) medicine (*'ilm-i tibb*), 12) agriculture (*'ilm-i filāḥa*), 13) the science of the stars (*'ilm-i nücüm*), and 14) divination and ornithomancy (*'ilm-i fāl ve zecr*).<sup>13</sup> In addition to these sciences systematically covered in the text in fourteen separate clusters, Nev'i Efendi also briefly mentions in the lengthy allegorical story at the end, which stands as the conclusion of the work, the following additional

12 Quoted in *al-Mu'īd fi adab al-mu'īd wa-l-mustafīd* (The Tutor Concerning the Etiquette of the Provider and the Acquirer [of Knowledge]) of 'Abd al-Bāsiṭ b. Mūsā al-'Almawī (d. 1573), a Damascene contemporary of Nev'i Efendi. See Franz Rosenthal, *The Technique and Approach of Muslim Scholarship*, 14.

13 Unless otherwise noted, my references are to the English translation and Turkish transcription of the text made available in the following study: Gisela Procházka-Eisl and Hülya Çelik, *Texts on Popular Learning in Early Modern Ottoman Times II: "The Yield of the Disciplines and the Merits of the Texts:" Nev'i Efendi's Encyclopaedia Netayic el-Fünun*, in collaboration with Adnan Kadrić (Cambridge [MA]: Harvard NELC, 2015).



branches of literary sciences: grammar (*'ilm-i nahv*), morphology (*'ilm-i şarf*), poetry (*'ilm-i şi'r*), lexicography (*'ilm-i luğat*), and calligraphy (*'ilm-i hatt*).<sup>14</sup>

Based on the number of surviving copies, *Netāyic* proves to have been the most sought-after work of classification of sciences in the early modern Ottoman realm. As is well-known, the classification of sciences (*tasnif al-'ulūm*) is an established literary genre in the Islamic world of learning, the earliest examples of which date back to the time of al-Kindī in the third century of Islam. Numerous works in Arabic, and later in Persian and Turkish, were composed in the medieval Islamicate realm, including the famous examples of al-Fārābī's (d. ca. 950) *Ihşā' al-'ulūm*, the *Epistles* of the Ikhwān al-Şafā' (ca. tenth century), al-Ghazālī's (d. 1111) *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's (d. 1209) *Jāmi' al-'ulūm*, or Ibn al-Akfānī's (d. 1348) *Irshād al-qāşid*.<sup>15</sup> These accounts vary significantly in the number of disciplines treated as well as in the methodology and categories deployed by their authors when classifying and hierarchizing different branches of knowledge; hence one should avoid viewing the genre as a uniform encyclopedic endeavor.

Particularly in the Ottoman realm, the refined examples of the *tasnif al-'ulūm* works began to appear only a century after the Ottomans appeared in the historical scene at the turn of the fourteenth century. Two specific accounts worth mentioning in this context are Muḥammed Şāh Fenārī's (d. 1436) Arabic translation-cum-elaboration of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Jāmi' al-'ulūm* and 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Bistāmī's (d. 1454) *al-Fawā'ih al-miskiyya*, also composed in Arabic and presented to Sultan Murād II (r. 1421–1444; 1446–1451).<sup>16</sup> The time of Murād II is marked for the heightened level of intellectual and literary activities, including the composition and translation of works encyclopedic

14 Nev'ī Efendi concludes each chapter with one of his original quatrains that sound thematically relevant to the particular science introduced in the chapter. Since there are fourteen concluding quatrains, the total number of clusters Nev'ī Efendi uses should indeed be regarded as fourteen, not twelve.

15 See especially the analyses and bibliographies of the following studies: Gerhard Endress and Abdou Filali-Ansary eds., *Organizing Knowledge: Encyclopaedic Activities in the Pre-Eighteenth Century Islamic World* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006); Ziva Vesel, ed., *Les Encyclopedies Persanes: Essai de Typologie et de Classification des Sciences* (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1986).

16 For Muḥammed Şāh Fenārī's encyclopedic work relying heavily upon al-Rāzī's text, see Kemal Faruk Molla, "Mehmed Şah Fenārī'nin *Enmûzecu'l-Ulûm* adlı eserine göre Fetih öncesi dönemde Osmanlılar'da ilim anlayışı ve ilim tasnifi," *Divân İlmî Araştırmalar* 18, no. 1 (2005): 245–73. For Bistāmī's work, see Faruk Akyıldız, "Erken Dönem Osmanlı Tarihi'nde İlim ve Tasnif Anlayışı: Abdurrahman Bistāmī'nin *el-Fevâ'ihü'l-Miskiyye fî'l-Fevâtihi'l-Mekkiyye* Adlı Eseri ve Etkileri" (Unpublished MA Thesis, Istanbul 29 Mayıs University, 2019); Ömer Yağmur, "Terceme-i Kitāb-ı Fevâ'ihü'l-Miskiyye fî'l-Fevâtihi'l-Mekkiyye" (Unpublished MA Thesis, Istanbul University, 2007).

in nature. In addition to the Arabic works of Muḥammed Şāh Fenārī and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Bistāmī produced during this time, one should also name the Anatolian Turkish translations of the *Qābūsnāme*, some of which circulated under the name *Murādnāme* due to their dedication to Murād II, covering essential information about a host of branches of knowledge deemed useful to become a cultured and pious person.<sup>17</sup>

As the Ottoman political enterprise gradually developed from the mid-fifteenth through the mid-sixteenth century into a mature imperial entity with a commensurate bureaucratic structure, imperial culture, and refined language, which historians often identify as the pillars of the “classical” Ottoman order, the scholarly practice of composing books on *taşnîf al-‘ulūm* also underwent a similar process culminating in the production of Taşköprizāde’s (d. 1561) “classical” work, *Miftāḥ al-sa‘āda wa mişbāḥ al-siyāda fī mawḍū‘āt al-‘ulūm*.<sup>18</sup> In this text, originally written in Arabic and translated afterward into Ottoman Turkish by the author’s son, Taşköprizāde treats in a truly encyclopedic manner all branches of knowledge one could have imagined in the medieval Islamicate world, ranging from philosophy and magic to literary and mathematical sciences. On the whole, he presents information for over three hundred individual “sciences” (i.e., *‘ilm*), systematically grouped into seven main sections. Besides providing its readers with the definition of each *‘ilm* and a brief discussion of its subject matter and objectives, every particular section on an individual discipline also lists a set of titles one should study pertaining to the *‘ilm* in question. Such a bibliographic scope endows Taşköprizāde’s massive account with its encyclopedic quality.

Nev‘ī Efendi’s *Netāyic* maintains this encyclopedic tradition with the genuinely selective, and at some points peculiar, approach of its author toward classifying sciences. As an erudite scholar trained and later taught in the prestigious *madrāsas* of Istanbul, Nev‘ī Efendi was firmly rooted in the study of

17 For a useful catalog of author names and the titles of their works composed during the reign of Murād II, see Nihat Azamat, “II. Murad Devri Kültür Hayatı” (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Marmara University, 1996).

18 Taşköprizāde, *Kitāb Miftāḥ as-sa‘āda wa mişbāḥ as-siyāda*, 3 vol. (Hyderabad: Osmania Oriental Publications Bureau, 1977). For a brief analysis of Taşköprizāde’s classification, see Francesca Bellino, “The Classification of Sciences in an Ottoman Arabic Encyclopaedia: Taşköprizāde’s ‘Miftāḥ al-Sa‘āda,’” *Quaderni Di Studi Arabi* 9 (2014): 161–80. For the gradual “classicization” of the Ottoman culture and bureaucratic practice by the sixteenth century, see Gülrü Necipoğlu, “A Kanun for the State, a Canon for the Arts: Conceptualizing the Classical Synthesis of Ottoman Art and Architecture,” in *Soliman le Magnifique et son Temps: Actes du Colloque de Paris*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: Documentation française, 1992), 195–215; Cornell H. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and the Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: the Historian Mustafa Ali (1541–1600)* (Princeton [NJ]: Princeton University Press, 1986).

scholastic curricula. He was born and raised in a learned family from Malkara, a small town between Edirne and Istanbul, and received his early education in his immediate locality from his *tariqa*-affiliated father. As he reached the age of puberty in the early 1550s, Nevî moved to Istanbul to advance his studies in the city's top colleges. His scholarly development shows the general patterns of the rigidly ranked Ottoman scholarly establishment, where the schoolmen moved along the hierarchical academic route with the help of their literary-scholarly talent as well as the hand of influential patrons. Upon completing his *madrassa* education, Nevî Efendi received his first teaching appointment in the year 1563 at a low-level *madrassa* in Gelibolu. Gradually climbing up the academic ladder in the next two decades, thanks to his literary productivity and strong relations with the grandees, he eventually was appointed in 1587 to one of the *Sahn* colleges, still among the most prestigious, if not highest-paying, institutes of higher learning in the capital. Nevî Efendi taught there a little less than three years and then received a promotion to the judgeship of Baghdad in 1590. However, this appointment seems to have disquieted him due to the burden of undertaking jurisdictional roles, and Nevî Efendi stayed in Istanbul and took the task of tutoring the second eldest son of Murâd III (r. 1574–1595) instead. He remained in this tutorship until 1595 when the reigning sultan Murâd III died, and the newly enthroned sultan had all the sons of his predecessor executed, including the one to whom Nevî Efendi was attached.<sup>19</sup>

In his widely circulated biographical dictionary of scholars and poets, Nevî Efendi's son reports that throughout his almost four-decade-long teaching career, his father composed around thirty books in the fields of Qur'anic exegesis, Philosophical Theology, Hadith, Logic, Sufism, and Poetry.<sup>20</sup> Today, only one third of this entire corpus, most of which are of literary/poetic and mystical nature, seems to be extant. At any rate, his son's biographical entry on him vividly captures the breadth of Nevî Efendi's learning, which can easily be verified by the richness and accuracy of references in his *Netâyic* to a wide array of texts. In the introduction to his account, for example, Nevî says

19 For the most comprehensive biographical account of his life and career, with samples from his poetry, see the relevant section in his son Nevîzâde's biographical dictionary of learned people: Nevîzade Atayi, *Hada'iku'l-Haka'ik fi Tekmiletî's-Şaka'ik: Nevîzade Atayi'nin Şaka'ik zeyli = Hadaikü'l-hakaik fi tekmeletî's-Şekaik.*, ed. Suat Donuk, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu, 2017), 1134–1158. See also Meserret Diriöz, "Nevî," *Türkoloji Dergisi* 7 (1977): 83–100; Didar Ayşe Akbulut, "The Classification of the Sciences in Nevî Efendi's *Netâyicü'l-Fünun*: An Attempt at Contextualization" (Unpublished MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2014), 10–46.

20 Nevîzade Atayi, *Hada'iku'l-Haka'ik*, 1142.

that while preparing his compendium, he has relied upon three fundamental works in the classification of sciences: the *Yawāqūt al-'ulūm* (The Rubies of Sciences), which, he says, is attributed to al-Ghazālī; the *al-Fawā'ih al-miskiyya* (The Musky Odors) of al-Bistāmī; and the *Mawḍū'āt al-'ulūm* (The Subjects of Sciences), by which he most likely referred to ʿAṣḥabī's *Miftāh* without explicitly mentioning the name of the author. Besides these three accounts devoted to the classification of sciences, he also had recourse to a multitude of texts in various disciplines and genres in order to help his readers acquire "from every river of knowledge a small drop."<sup>21</sup>

It is beyond the purview of this article to discuss thoroughly the full contents of *Netāyic*, which the interested reader can easily access now thanks to the English translation of the text by Gisela Procházka-Eisl and Hülya Çelik, with contributions by Adnan Kadrić, based on five manuscript copies in Austria. Kadrić's brief article in the same volume on the sources of the *Netāyic* also nicely tabulates the parallel and diverging components between the text and its main sources.<sup>22</sup> Another study worth mentioning here is Didar Ayşe Akbulut's M.A. thesis that situates the work and its author into their proper historical and intellectual contexts.<sup>23</sup>

One of the distinguishing features of Nev'î's scheme of classification in the *Netāyic*, also mentioned by Akbulut, is the pride of place accorded to the science of history. Diverging from the many famous examples of the classification of sciences works, both from the Ottoman and broader Islamicate realm, that pay little attention to history as a literary discipline, *Netāyic* dedicates its first, and the lengthiest, chapter to a discourse on history where he also lists the dates of major events that occurred from the creation of the world till the reign of Selīm II (r. 1566–1574). When justifying why he gives primacy to history, Nev'î Efendi says that since the essence and the pillar of all sciences is the enigmatic knowledge of God's being and attributes, such an enigma could only be grasped by looking at His creation. History informs us, says Nev'î Efendi, of the genesis of the universe and the emergence of humankind; hence it deserves to take precedence in the hierarchy of knowledge. The section on History is

21 Procházka-Eisl and Çelik, *Texts on Popular Learning in Early Modern Ottoman Times II*, 45.

22 Procházka-Eisl and Çelik, 13–32.

23 See above footnote 18. Two other MA theses completed in Turkey that present a modern Turkish transcription of *Netāyic* on the basis of a select but unspecified manuscript should also be cited: Ömer Tolgay, "Netayic el-Fünun ve XVI. Yüzyıl Türk Düşüncesi" (Unpublished MA Thesis, Marmara University, 1989); Nadir İlhan, "Nev'î Efendi: Netayicü'l-fünun ve mehasinü'l-mütun (giriş-metin-dizinler)" (Unpublished MA Thesis, Elazığ Fırat University, 1992). The former was later published as *İlimlerin Özü: Netayic el-Fünûn* (Istanbul: İnsan, 1995).

also the part that contains, in different copies of the text, the largest amount of *minhu* records, which serve either to add new information, chronological or otherwise, for the names and events mentioned in the text or to explain words that might sound curious to the readers.

Nev'i Efendi was not a historian by practice, nor did his vast literary and scholarly corpus include a single account that would qualify as a historical narrative; hence, it is unusual for a non-historian to promote the science of history, which, unless elaborated by a history writer, was often regarded only as a useful literary science. One could speak here of the impact of al-Bistāmī's *al-Fawā'ih* on Nev'i Efendi, as this early fifteenth-century encyclopedic work also gives unprecedented weight to the science of history with all its derivatives, ranging from the knowledge of the age of the world to the chronology of the lives of the prophets, rulers, and sages. Despite these similarities, al-Bistāmī does not put history in the first place of his classification that ranks around one hundred different fields of knowledge.<sup>24</sup>

Aside from the privileged status ascribed to history, another significant feature of the *Netāyic* that deserves special mention is its composition in a higher yet accessible register of Ottoman Turkish, which must have expanded the scope of its readership compared to its predecessors. In the early modern Ottoman world of learning and literature, Arabic and Persian were undoubtedly accessible to many literate people, the former particularly to schoolmen and the latter to the cultured urbanites. Nonetheless, with his deliberate decision to compose the work "in the robe of the Turkish language," Nev'i Efendi consequently widened the extent of his target audience. A comparative look at the manuscript records of *Netāyic* to those of its peers demonstrates that *Netāyic* was by far the most popular book of its genre. The bio-bibliographical survey of Ottoman classification of sciences literature prepared in 2011 by IRCICA (Research Center for Islamic History, Art, and Culture) lists, for example, 26 copies of al-Bistāmī's *al-Fawā'ih* and 33 copies of Ṭaşköprizāde's *Miftāh*. The number of surviving *Netāyic* copies listed in this survey is 127.<sup>25</sup> These numbers should not be taken as decisive since there are often missing or miscataloged codices. The Columbia copy of the *Netāyic*, for instance, is not listed in the IRCICA inventory. Still, these numbers are indicative of the overall

24 My remarks here on al-Bistāmī's *al-Fawā'ih* are based on my examination of the BnF copy of the text (BnF Ms. Arabe 6520) available online through Gallica: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10030464c.r=bistami?rk=343349;2> (last time accessed on June 23.).

25 Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, *Osmanlı bilim literatürü tarihi zeylleri = Supplements to the History of Ottoman Scientific Literature (Mathematical, Geographical, Music, Military Arts, Natural and Applied Sciences, and Medical Sciences Literature) and History of Ottoman Classification of Sciences Literature* (Istanbul: IRCICA, 2011), 509–511, 517–519, 523–528.

pattern of the early modern Ottoman readers' preference vis-à-vis the books in the classification of sciences tradition. I should also note that apart from the preferred language of the text, its composition as a *mukhtaşar* (compendium) might have also boosted the number of copies. However, before speaking with greater confidence on this question, more studies are needed that would examine how the type and length of books might have influenced reading and copying preferences in the Ottoman as well as Islamic manuscript culture.

### Marginal Glosses in Columbia Or. 360

The abundance of extant *Netāyic* manuscripts, scattered all over the world today, renders it difficult to reconstruct precisely the entire textual genealogy of the work. It is maintained in the current state of scholarship about Nevî Efendi and the *Netāyic* that the number of its manuscript copies ranges between 130 and 170 and that there are at least two different authorial recensions of the text. The first was completed during the reign of Selîm II, likely in the year 1571, when Nevî Efendi was still a junior faculty at a low-level provincial *madrassa*.<sup>26</sup> The two earliest surviving manuscripts of *Netāyic*, Istanbul University Rare Books Library Turkish Ms. 6768 and Topkapı Palace Museum Library Revan Collection Ms. 1079 respectively, were penned in that year.<sup>27</sup> None of these copies was the autograph manuscript, however, and both lack a dedicatory passage lauding the sultan or another grandee. But next to the colophon of the former is a marginal note saying that the copy was made based on the autograph. The second recension of the work must have been produced during the reign of Murâd III (r. 1574–1595), for many subsequent copies involve, either within the body of the text or on the margins, a dedicatory passage to the sultan. There are also copies of the text enclosing dedication remarks devoted to the grand vizier Sokollu Meḥmed Paşa, who held the office of grand vizierate from 1565 to 1579, spanning the reigns of Selîm II and Murâd III. Hence, it is not entirely clear whether the copy with a tribute to Sokollu Meḥmed Paşa is one of those two recensions or, ultimately, a newer edition.

The question of the number of *Netāyic*'s textual variants becomes more complicated when we take into consideration the extensive marginalia available on many surviving copies that come down to us in a slightly different format and with a considerably varying content. As already mentioned, Columbia

26 Akbulut, "The Classification of the Sciences," 8; Procházka-Eisl and Çelik, *Texts on Popular Learning in Early Modern Ottoman Times II*, 39–40.

27 İhsanoğlu, *Osmanlı bilim literatürü tarihi zeylleri*, 523.

Or. 360 is a remarkable copy for its myriad *minhu* records, but this particular codex is not the only one bearing such glosses that annotate the “authentic” contents of the work, whatever they really were. Quite intriguingly, the overwhelming majority of the copies of the text (re-)produced before Columbia Or. 360 have similar paratexts. Based on the IRCICA inventory and the details provided therein on the manuscript colophons of *Netāyic* copies, there are around 25 manuscripts copied between 1571, the likely original composition date of the text, and 1623, the date Columbia Or. 360 was finished. Among these 25 manuscripts, almost half of them are now located in Istanbul University Rare Books Library and Süleymaniye Library, which I had a chance to examine, albeit briefly.<sup>28</sup> There are two additional copies at the BnF in Paris that have recently been digitized and made available online through the library’s online portal *Gallica* and one copy at the Haus-, Hof-und Staatsarchiv in Vienna completed in the year 1602–3, which was taken by Procházka-Eisl and Çelik as the model text in their version of the critical edition of the work.<sup>29</sup> All these sixteen copies incorporate marginal glosses of varying contents and lengths that can, and indeed should, be collated and correlated in the future for a more definitive analysis and edition of the text.

Such an endless, inexhaustible task of producing an authoritative edition of a widely-circulated text with variant readings whose supposedly original or “archetypical” copy is missing provokes broader questions about authorship and the definition of publishing in the age of manuscripts. What does a published work mean in manuscript culture? How easily and accurately can a modern textual critic or a philologist draw the lines between the published and draft version(s) of a text copied and circulated in a relatively open manner thanks to the very nature of the manuscript form? In the age of printing, where the composed, edited, typeset, printed, and hence “closed,” text attains by definition the status of the finished product, the distinction between the published work of the author and the manuscript or the work-in-progress is evident.<sup>30</sup> How about in the manuscript age, where the copyists and readers actively joined the authors in the process of producing texts, enjoyed the freedom to

28 These include: Istanbul University Rare Books Library Turkish Manuscripts Ms. 6768, Ms. 6744, Ms. 4842, Ms. 588, Ms. 6781; Süleymaniye Library (sl hereafter) Hacı Beşir Ağa Ms. 656/12, sl Hamidiye Ms. 1208, sl Laleli Ms. 1974/1, sl Çelebi Abdullah Ms. 330, sl Yazma Bağışlar Ms. 3507 and Ms. 5586, and sl İbrahim Efendi Ms. 444.

29 The copies available at the BnF are catalogued as BnF Turc 44 and BnF Supp. Turc 199.

30 For an insightful comparative treatment of the closed text of a print culture and the open text of a manuscript culture, see Gerald L. Bruns, “The Originality of Texts in a Manuscript Culture,” *Comparative Literature* 32, no. 2 (1980): 113–129. See also John Dagenais, *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture*.

revise and alter the contents of works in circulation, and freely recycled the duplicates with considerable amounts of variation? Could variant manuscript copies of a single work equally qualify as the “published” version of it in the absence of means or authorities to establish definitive standards? What I mean here by the “published version” of the text is not the same with the presentation copy, which might be relatively easier to reconstruct by tracing the special dedication notes, seals and autographs, or other helpful components. For such works, one may conclude that the presentation copy, which often survives as the unique copy of the text, is the published version. However, for those titles lacking autographs but surviving in multiple copies that were produced close to the time when the hypothetically “original” and “authentic” work was composed, the boundaries between the finished and unfinished, or the closed and open, text are no doubt fluid.

What is indicated by the heavily annotated copies of *Netāyic* from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, particularly by the Columbia Or. 360 with extensive *minhu* records, is somewhat a work-in-progress that has been continuously revised and enriched through authorial, and maybe also through scribal and readers' interventions. Despite their importance for historical, intellectual, and codicological analyses, these interventions often attributed solely to the authors have remained understudied by modern-day scholars. Three valuable exceptions should be named here. The first of them is Hans Georg Majer's study of the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century Ottoman scholar 'Uṣṣākizāde İbrāhīm Efendi (d. 1724) and his biographical dictionary of learned people (*Zeyl-i Şakāyık*), where Majer showed various *minhu* records in several manuscripts of the text. As documented by Majer, although not all extant copies contain *minhus*, the marginal glosses available in the known autograph of the *Zeyl-i Şakāyık* that were jotted down by 'Uṣṣākizāde were adopted in the same form by many copyists in the subsequent copies of the text.<sup>31</sup> The next notable study on the concept of *minhu* is Gottfried Hagen's monograph on Kātib Çelebi (d. 1657) and his *Cihānnümā*. In three manuscript copies of the text, Hagen has identified *minhus* that he ascribed to the author himself. These glosses, for Hagen, were added by Kātib Çelebi as notes to himself while revising and copying his text. As such, they functioned as early modern footnotes: sometimes explaining unfamiliar words, names, or terms of foreign origin, sometimes presenting additional and not infrequently opposing views about the particular matter treated in the text, and at some other times referring to useful titles and authors for further reading. Having an early

31 Hans Georg Majer, *Vorstudien zur Geschichte der İlmîye im Osmanischen Reich: I. zu Uṣṣakizade, seiner Familie und seinem zeyl-i Şakayık* (München: Dr.-Dr.-Rudolf-Trofenik, 1978), 68–76.



career in scribal service before turning himself into a critical and pedantic polymath, Kâtib Çelebi's use of *minhu*, says Hagen, might have been inspired by the conventions of writing and note-taking in the chancery.<sup>32</sup>

The third noteworthy study that constitutes the most comprehensive analysis of *minhu* records comes from Rosemarie Quiring-Zoche, who has devoted her article to the careful analysis of numerous such marginal glosses she has accumulated during her work of cataloging Arabic manuscripts in different collections.<sup>33</sup> Concurring to no small extent with the main arguments of Majer and Hagen regarding the authorial origins and textual purposes of the *minhu* records, Quiring-Zoche stretches the date of their proliferation in manuscripts back to the thirteenth century, before the Ottomans. She also notes, albeit grudgingly, two points worth elaborating further: firstly, in the absence of autograph copies or manuscripts certified by the author where one can relatively more easily verify the authenticity of authorial interventions, the *minhu* preserved unevenly in different copies of a single text might have originated from the copyists. Secondly and more importantly, the use of the term *minhu* (literally meaning “from him,” using the personal suffix of the third person male singular) instead of *minnī* (i.e., “from me”) might be related to copying texts during lectures and dictations. It is indeed a standard convention in medieval Islamic literature that an author generally speaks of himself in the third person singular; hence, one should not be surprised for the preference of *minhu* over *minnī*. Nevertheless, for Quiring-Zoche, at least some of the *minhu* were marked by the participants of the lecture or dictation whenever they heard an additional explanation during the hearing.

Quiring-Zoche's slant towards involving non-authorial agents, such as copyists, readers, or students, in not only the replication but also the original composition of *minhu*, might bear particular significance for the analysis of abundant marginal glosses in the *Netāyic* copies. When compared to its peer copies produced before or around the date of its completion in 1623, Columbia Or. 360 draws immediate attention with the relatively higher number of *minhu* records. By my count, there are about 170 individual marginal annotations, the greater majority of which are marked by the expression *minhu*. Making the

32 Gottfried Hagen, *Ein osmanischer Geograph bei der Arbeit. Entstehung und Gedankenwelt von Kâtib Çelebis Ğihānnüma* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2003), 288–291, translated into Turkish by Hilal Görgün as *Bir Osmanlı Coğrafyacısı İş Başında: Katib Çelebi'nin Cihannüma'sı ve Düşünce Dünyası* (Istanbul: Küre, 2015). Also see another work by Hagen, “El Yazmasının Kenarındaki Hayat: Cihānnümâ Müellif Hatları ve Coğrafyacının Atölyesine Bir Bakış,” in *Doğumunun 400. Yıl Dönümünde Kâtib Çelebi*, ed. Bekir Karlığa and Mustafa Kaçar (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2009), 173–187.

33 Rosemarie Quiring-Zoche, “Minhiyât—Marginalien des Verfassers in arabischen Manuskripten,” *Asiatische Studien = Études Asiatiques* 60, no. 4 (2006): 987–1019.

full list of the marginal glosses in this particular copy would not serve much without meticulously indexing and collating all the marginalia available in all the other extant manuscripts of the *Netāyic*. Such an ambitious project, however, exceeds the scope of this modest preliminary study. Yet, my impression drawing on a cursory look at the surviving copies produced before Or. 360 is that while one can match up many of the *minhu* records in Or. 360 with those available in other copies, there is no uniformity in the amount and content of *minhus* located in different copies.

It is in order now to present several examples of *minhus* from Columbia Or. 360 that are either inserted into the main body of the text or altogether missing in many of those sixteen other copies I have consulted. The marginal note on 7a, for example, reads as follows: “*ammā mücerred bu kitābda vazîfem naql ve rivāyetdir, taşarruf ve dirāyet yokdur. Ve bu cümleden ğarez ve netice zikr bi'l-cemil ve du'ā' bi'l-ħayrdır, ğayrı deĝildir minhu*” (The only commitment I have in this book is to transmit and relate [accurately], not to intervene and use my own comprehension. What I mean by that is to establish a lasting memory and receive the good wishes [of the readers], nothing else *minhu*). While the same note also features on the margins of the Süleymaniye Laleli Ms. 1974/1, the earliest extant copy of the *Netāyic* found at Istanbul University Rare Books Library (Ms. 6768) keeps this sentence in the main body of the text, immediately following the author's explanation of the reason for the composition (*sebeb-i te'lif*).<sup>34</sup> The sentence is altogether missing in the Vienna copy and other contemporary copies I have consulted in the Süleymaniye library and the Istanbul University Rare Books collection. Similarly, the additional information on the Umayyad governor 'Abd al-'Aziz b. Marwān (d. 705) and his marriage, which is placed in the main text of the Vienna copy, seems to appear only on the margins of the Columbia Or. 360 and the Istanbul University Ms. 6768.

Another interesting example in Columbia Or. 360, not always easily traceable in other copies, is about a dream experience aptly inserted as a marginal note in the chapter on the science of dream interpretation. In the relevant section of the main text on p. 122b, Nev'i Efendi narrates a story where a man dreams that his penis and testicles were cut off. He had this dream interpreted by various interpreters, who came up with different interpretations. One of them told him that he would lose his honor; another said he would lose his wealth. Yet another one told him that his penis and testicles would be cut off in reality. These interpretations, according to the story, pushed the man in suspicion. He then divorced his wife and sailed for a long journey away from his children and relatives. His ship, however, was broken into pieces by a strong

34 SL Laleli Ms. 1974/1, 5a. The note, however, is concluded not by *minhu*, but by *şahha*.

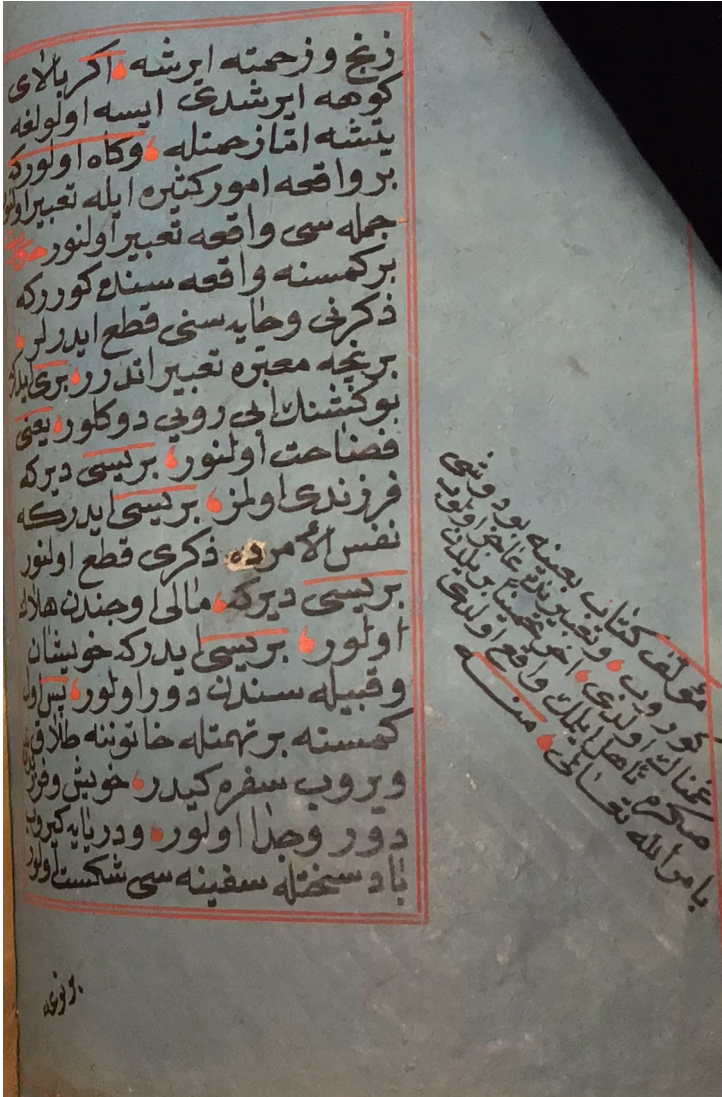


FIGURE 2 The *minhu* record about the dream narrative available on p. 122b

wind, and the man eventually died after a swordfish pulled out his penis and testicles. In the Columbia copy, there is a marginal note next to this story that reads: “*mü'ellif-i kitab bi-'aynihi bu düşi görüb ve ta'bırinde 'aciz olub ğamnâk oldı. Âhır tahmînen bir yıldan şoıra te'ehhül eylemek vâkı' oldı bi-emrillâh te'âlâ*” (The author of the book did indeed have this dream but was unable to interpret it and became downhearted. Around a year later, he got married with the decree of God the Exalted). The exact same sentence kept on the margins in the Columbia copy is available inside the main text of the Vienna copy but

seems missing in the Istanbul University and Süleymaniye library copies listed above.

Aside from loosely matching marginal glosses in different copies, some of the *minhus* in Columbia Or. 360 appear to be unique. The note on p. 23b, for example, added to present new information as to the list of individuals introduced in the text as those *mujaddids* (renewers of faith) designated in every century says the following: “*ulemādan ‘Alī Çelebi el-Cemālī ve ba’zular Kemāl Paşazāde ḥazretleridir derler minhu.*” ([the sheikhulislam Zenbilli] ‘Alī [d. 1526] and others from the ulema say that [the renewer of faith in the tenth century] is Kemāl Paşazāde [d. 1534]). In the relevant sections of the text in other copies I examined, I was not able to locate this remark, neither in the body of the text nor on the margins. Another similar case is the marginal note on p. 37b, where the main text treats the story of Abū Muslim al-Khorasānī (d. 755), the leader of the Abbasid army revolting against the Umayyad cause. The note next to the relevant section says that the reports on him being dispatched to Khorasan are untrue (*Ebū Müslimīñ Ḥorāsāna irsāl olunmasınñ rivāyetiniñ*

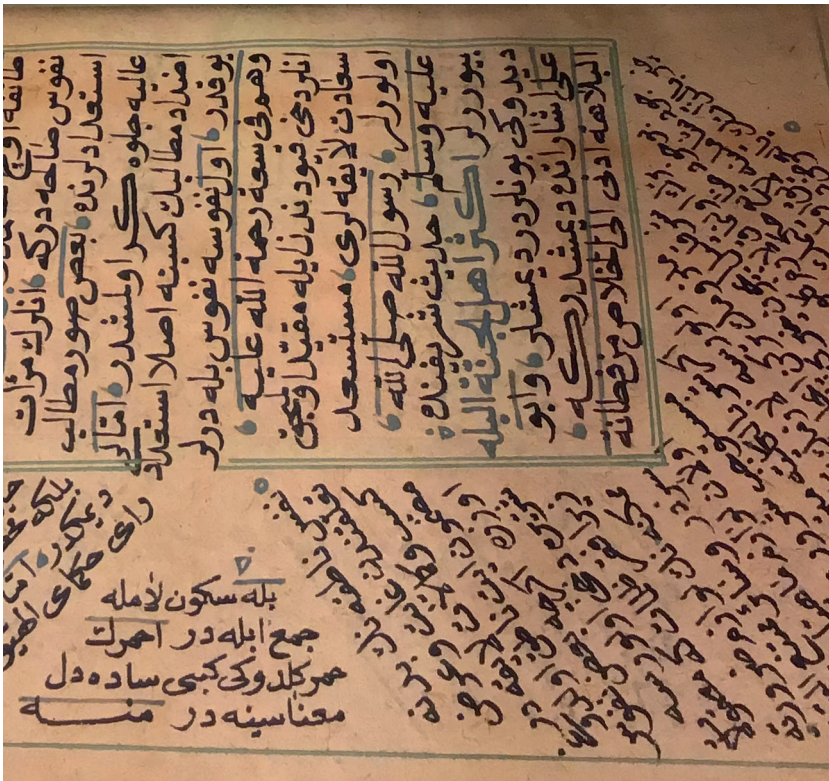


FIGURE 3 The explanation of the Arabic word on the margins of page 68a introduced by a reverse triangle and concluded by the *minhu* remark.

*buṭlānu zāhirdir minhu*). This intervention also seems lacking in other copies. In another note on p. 68a, the sentence introduced by a little reverse triangle explains the correct pronunciation of a single Arabic word in the text, and this “footnote” also does not feature in other copies.<sup>35</sup> The current state of scholarly literature on Nevī Efendi, his *Netāyic*, and the marginalia in its numerous copies does not enable us to answer now whether these unique notes derive from a copy penned by Nevī that is inaccessible to us or if they were jotted down by actors other than the author himself whose identities we cannot reconstruct.

Examples as to the similarities and discrepancies of *minhu* across different copies of *Netāyic* can easily be multiplied, but as already mentioned, this requires a thorough examination of all the extant copies dispersed across various manuscript libraries. Only after completing such an exhaustive treatment of the entire *Netāyic* corpus can one fully reconstruct its textual archaeology and identify which *minhu* notes were added authentically by the author Nevī Efendi and which by others. Future research on these copies may also reveal traces pertaining to the instruction of the work in the *madrasas* Nevī Efendi and his scholarly descendants taught. Although a *taṣnīf al-‘ulūm* book is often assumed an unlikely candidate to study in the Ottoman *madrasas*, one should not rush to completely rule out such a title from the *madrasa* “curricula.”<sup>36</sup> Notwithstanding the wealth of studies focusing especially on the heavily bureaucratized and institutionalized character of the Ottoman learned culture, we still know very little indeed about how life really was inside Ottoman institutes of education. How did the personal dynamics and predilections shape, for instance, the selection of titles to be instructed by scholars? And how were these select titles studied in the master-and-pupil as well as in the peer-to-peer configuration? Hence, the case of Nevī Efendi as an established scholar teaching for about four decades at different level *madrasas* and that of the *Netāyic* corpus widely copied and circulated in the seventeenth- and

35 The note says that the letter *lam* in the word **ل** is not to be followed by a vowel and that the word *ablah*, which means dull-witted (*sāde-dil*), is derived from it, just like the *hamr-ahmar* connection.

36 Despite the earlier scholarship on the social history of medieval Islamic learning, including the works by Jonathan Berkey and Michael Chamberlain that have convincingly argued for the absence of centrally-planned and standardized “curricula” in the *madrasas*, students of Ottoman history often tend to overstate the “state-prescribed” nature of “curricula” formation. An obvious example is an oft-quoted article by the late Shahab Ahmed and Nenad Filipovic who seem to have misconstrued a sentence passing in an archival register, which merely lists the books sent from the palace library to the *madrasa* collection without meaning any implicit or explicit imposition of a curriculum: “The Sultan’s Syllabus: A Curriculum for the Ottoman Imperial Medreses Prescribed in a Fermān of Qānūnī I Süleymān, dated 973 (1565),” *Studia Islamica* 98/99 (2004): 183–218.

eighteenth-century Ottoman world may provide intriguing insights into such questions.

### Conclusion

This article is only a modest attempt to explore the extensive marginal annotations found in the Columbia Rare Book and Manuscripts Library Or. 360 that houses an early seventeenth-century copy of a widely circulated Ottoman classification of sciences book. These marginal notes, marked overwhelmingly by the *minhu* remark, hint at first sight that they were replicated from a copy once held and edited by the author. However, a cursory comparison of the Columbia manuscript to a dozen other copies of the text produced from the 1570s to the 1620s reveals that such marginal glosses feature in these copies in a significantly varying frequency and substance. Hence, it is not entirely possible with the current state of the research to draw the full genealogical chart of the text and to identify which notes were added by whom at what stage. Nevertheless, despite the general tendency of the scholarship to attribute the *minhu* records solely to the original author of the text, more room should be allocated for involving non-authorial agents, such as the copyists, readers, or students. This is especially important when a book known to have been plentifully copied and broadly circulated like Nev'î Efendi's *Netāyic* is at stake.

Given the dearth of mass-produced and standardized printed books in the age of manuscripts, no matter how the professional or voluntary copyists might have subscribed to the idealized protocols of manuscript collation, copying, and annotation, it rather seems to be the norm of the personalized manuscript culture to encounter variances, deviations, and inconsistencies among custom-made copies. Just as the original “textual” contents of books often indicate significant disparities between different copies, which eventually require the philological and textual-critical skills of modern-day scholars toward producing the authoritative critical editions, the same is even more true for the paratextual components. The individual discretion of the copyists, as well as the readers and students, “in the age of non-mechanical production” as to decide which of the marginal glosses were to be replicated or removed should not be totally disregarded.<sup>37</sup> After all, a new copy of any title was produced not on a Xerox machine but by the manual handling of a willed person.

37 Inspired by Walter Benjamin's thought-provoking essay: “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 217–252.

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