

In his Own Voice: What Hatayi Tells us about Şah İsmail's Religious Views¹

Dealing with Şah İsmail's poetry has a few pitfalls that are impossible to avoid at the present state of the scholarship on the topic. The first and the most obvious one is the fact that there is no critical edition of his poetic corpus. Indeed, even a reasonably complete list of the relevant manuscripts is lacking. According to the most recent reckoning, a total of twenty-four manuscripts of his *divan* are in play, including at least two noted in previous secondary literature but currently unattested.² None of the extant manuscripts are from Şah İsmail's lifetime (he died in 930/1524), which leaves open the question of whether or not he compiled his own *divan*. The two earliest manuscripts are dated 942/1535 (Tashkent) and 948/1541 (Paris).³ Between 1937 and 2006, at least eight modern editions of his *divan* and/or other works were published in Azerbaijan, Iran, Italy and Turkey, with many other popular printings and possibly some early lithograph prints as well.⁴ These modern print versions are of varying quality, but none attempt a comprehensive documentation, and they all approach the materials from widely different vantage points. In short, there is no easy and convenient entry point into *Hatayi*'s corpus.

¹ Most foreign/Islamic names and terms in this essay are transliterated according to modern Turkish orthography, except for those that are now routinely used in English like "sharia, Quran, Muhammad" and others that are more appropriately transliterated as Arabic or Persian, like "Ḥallāj."

² Mehmet Fatih Köksal, "Şah İsmail Hatâyî'nin Şiirlerinde Kullandığı Vezin Meselesi," *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Velî Araştırma Dergisi* 66 (2013): 170–71. Köksal himself was able to identify five new (previously not noticed) manuscripts. His count does not include a very early illustrated manuscript at the Sackler Gallery in Washington DC, which brings the count up to twenty-five: Wheeler M. Thackston, "The Diwan of Khata'i: Pictures for the Poetry of Shah Isma'il," *Asian Art: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution*, 1988, 37–63. For an earlier discussion of the manuscript tradition, see Amelia Gallagher, "The Fallible Master of Perfection: Shah Ismail in the Alevi-Bektashi Tradition" (PhD Thesis, McGill University, 2004), 112–18.

³ Azizaga Mamedov, "Le plus ancien manuscrit du Dīvān de Shah Ismail Khatayi," *Turcica* 6 (1975): 11–23; Edgard Blochet, *Catalogue des manuscrits turcs [Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale]*, (Paris, 1932), 2: 229.

⁴ These eight are listed in Köksal, "Şah İsmail Hatâyî'nin Şiirlerinde Kullandığı Vezin Meselesi," 171.

Adding to the confusion, there is the further complicating factor that Şah İsmail's penname *Hatayi* was used by other Turkish poets, especially, perhaps exclusively, in Anatolia, after Şah İsmail's lifetime. While the manuscripts of Şah İsmail's *divan*, only two of which contain some compositions in syllabic meters, suggest that Şah İsmail *Hatayi* composed primarily in 'aruz, the Anatolian *Hatayis* versified exclusively in syllabic counts. It is, therefore, prudent to assume that the sizeable number of poems in syllabic meter that have circulated under the penname *Hatayi* should be ascribed to later poets belonging to Bektaşî-Alevi circles in Anatolia. Yet, since we are dealing with one and the same penname and, oftentimes, shared themes and imagery in the poems themselves, there has been considerable uncertainty, especially in Turkey, about whether Şah İsmail himself ever composed in syllabic meter, and if so, how one can go about setting him apart from his contemporary and later namesakes.⁵

Under these circumstances, it is difficult to know what the best course of action should be for modern researchers who are interested in Şah İsmail's poetic output, short of attempting a critical edition. For the purposes of this essay, I have decided to limit myself to poems in 'aruz, following the direction suggested by the great majority of the manuscripts, and also to give priority to poems found in the earliest two manuscripts. I wish I could have operated from a definitive corpus, but for now a reliable edition is not in the horizon.

So much for the caveats. Let me now turn to Şah İsmail's poems themselves and start with some general observations. As a poet, Şah İsmail belonged to the Azeri poetic tradition that

⁵ For persuasive arguments that poems in syllabic meter by poets using the penname *Hatayi* should not be attributed to Şah İsmail, see Köksal, "Şah İsmail Hatâyî'nin Şiirlerinde Kullandığı Vezin Meselesi"; Aslanoğlu İbrahim, *Şah İsmail Hatayî: Divan, Dehnâme, Nasihatnâme ve Anadolu Hatayileri* (İstanbul, 1992), esp. 333–37; Tourkhan Gandjei, "Pseudo-Khaṭā'ī," in Clifford Edmund Bosworth, ed., *Iran and Islam: In Memory of the Late Vladimir Minorsky*, (Edinburgh, 1971), 263–66.

had its most easily identifiable roots in the works of the Hurufi poet Nesimi (d. around 820/1417) and arguably reached its high point in the poems of İsmail's contemporary Fuzuli (d. 963/1556). He was a productive and skillful poet who used the stock themes and images of this poetic tradition with ease and considerable originality.⁶ Significantly, his poetic corpus is mostly lyrical in nature, and the great majority of his poems are *gazels* in praise of the beloved, while religious themes receive much less attention. To be specific, of the roughly two hundred and sixty independent poems, mostly *gazels*, found in the two earliest manuscripts of Hatayi's *divan*, only about forty have explicitly religious content.⁷ Under these circumstances, and without a thorough literary analysis of his corpus as a whole, it would be unwarranted to characterize his poetry as primarily propagandistic in nature, merely on the basis of what we know about his political career. Yet, this is precisely what happened in the European-language historiography of the Safavid Empire, largely due to the enormous influence of an article about Şah İsmail's poetry published in 1942 by the prominent Orientalist Vladimir Minorsky.⁸

In this article, Minorsky made no bones about his fundamental assumptions as to why Şah İsmail composed poetry in the first place: "The Shah's poetry... has personal elements (...), teems with queer religious ideas, and its ostensible purpose is to rally a party round a definite programme." This "definite programme" was to rally his Turkish "adherents" to his political

⁶ Less charitable views of Şah İsmail's skills as a poet, by European historians (Vladimir Minorsky and Jean Aubin), are noted in Gallagher, "The Fallible Master of Perfection: Shah Ismail in the Alevi-Bektashi Tradition," 118. However, as Gallagher observes, Azeri literary historians (Mamedov and Ahmet Caferoğlu are cited) seem united in their praise for his poetic expertise.

⁷ The oldest extant manuscript of his *dīvān* (Tashkent, dated 942/1535) contains 262 *kasides* and *gazels* and 10 quatrains (Mamedov, "Le plus ancien manuscrit du Dīvān de Shah Ismail Khatayi," 13–14), while the second earliest copy (Paris, dated 948/1541) preserves 254 *kasides* and *gazels*, 3 *mesnevis*, 1 *murabba'*, and 1 *müseddes*: Tourkhan Gandjei, *Il canzoniere di Šāh Ismā'īl Ḥaṭā'ī* (Napoli, 1959), 8. In addition to the *divan*, Hatayi composed at least two independent lengthy *mesnevis* in the *hezec* meter, namely the *Nasihatname*, which is sometimes incorporated into the *divan*, and the *Dehname* (comp. 911/1505-6).

⁸ V. Minorsky, "The Poetry of Shāh Ismā'īl I," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 10 (1942): 1006a – 1053a.

cause: “Shah Isma’il, even though he must have been bi-lingual from birth, was not writing for his own heart's delight. He had to address his adherents in a language fully intelligible to them, and thus the choice of the Turcoman Turkish became a necessity for him.”⁹ In other words, Şah İsmail, according to Minorsky, became a poet not by choice or through personal inclination but by necessity; he turned to poetry in Turkish primarily in order to secure the allegiance of Turkish speaking nomads, that is to say, the *Kızılbaş* of later Safavid history. His poetry, therefore, was of interest only insofar as it enabled historians access to the religious ideas behind the Safavid movement – it was otherwise devoid of literary interest: “The interest of the collection centres... in the poems reflecting the intimate religious views of the author. The *dīvān* alone gives a clue to the secret heresy of the early Safavids. These dynamic ideas, mystical and religious as they were on the surface, easily found their expression in direct action. They formed the political platform of the elements which constituted the spearhead of the movement.”¹⁰

Minorsky’s unabashedly utilitarian, even mechanical perspective on Şah İsmail’s poetic output has remained largely unchallenged in Safavid historiography up until our own day, and, moreover, his conclusions about the religious import of this sizeable poetic corpus have been adopted by many later modern Safavid historians as almost incontrovertible truths, normally without much independent scrutiny of the poems themselves.¹¹ Yet, Minorsky’s assumption that an ambitious “shah-wannabe” became a poet by design is, of course, totally untenable; it would be fair to say that such an assumption would not be made today about a major poet by any established scholar of literature. More importantly, the sheer volume and quality of Şah İsmail’s non-religious poems clearly demonstrate that Hatayi was a genuine participant in the Azeri lyric

⁹ Ibid., 1007a, 1008a.

¹⁰ Ibid., 1025a.

¹¹ For some examples of later adoptions of Minorsky’s views (and many more can be added), see Gallagher, “The Fallible Master of Perfection: Shah Ismail in the Alevi-Bektashi Tradition,” 118–47.

tradition and that his poetic corpus should be studied within that context. The significance of İsmail's poetry is, therefore, not primarily on account of its religious content, and Minorsky was overstating his case. Hatayi clearly expressed certain politico-religious views in his poems but it would be mistaken to argue that poetry was only a political tool in his hands. In the long run, proper literary analysis and contextualization of Hatayi's corpus requires more in-depth scrutiny of early Azeri literature than currently available, and, in the absence of such a broad literary framework for understanding his poems, all attempts to distill from his poems some reflections of his religious views can only be partial and somewhat tentative in nature.

With these general observations and qualifications, I can now turn to the main topic of this essay, namely Şah İsmail's religious views as reflected in his poetry. Contrary to much of the existing scholarly considerations of the subject, I shall start not with the *divan* but with the *Nasihatname*, a homily in the form of a *mesnevi* in 178 couplets, because it brings together and interweaves into a meaningful whole the various strains of piety that are otherwise displayed in Şah İsmail's poems in disconnected fashion.¹²

Hatayi begins the *Nasihatname* with the admonition to the "seeker of the path" to prioritize the "love of the Friend" over everything else. Love, it quickly becomes obvious, is the force that erases the sense of selfhood and transforms the seeker into a true "unitarian" (*ehl-i tevhid*), and the Friend is none other than God. Hatayi's God, however, is totally inherent in his creation: *kim oldur her işin ayınuda mevcud / özidur cümle mahluk içre ma'bud* (Aslanoğlu, 242). So inherent is God that all human deeds are in fact God's deeds, even though it is disrespectful to admit to this erasure of human agency by divine power publicly and one should simply keep it a secret! Hatayi then delves deeper into the sea of monism, explicating the

¹² Even though I have checked all poems I used against the other editions, for the sake of convenience all of my in-text citations of Hatayi's poems will be to the edition by Aslanoğlu.

oneness of God with his creation through the use of well-worn metaphors of “drop and the ocean,” “image and the mirror,” and “mote and the sun” and drives home the basic assertion that God is the essence of the human: *yüzinde vü sözünde vü gözünde / özidiür can olan ey can özinde* (Aslanoğlu, 243). The way to arrive at this basic truth, Hatayi reiterates, is to kindle the fire of love, and, crucially, to cling to those who are also driven by this same love. The touchstone that differentiates these latter, that is to say the true believers, from all others is the love of ‘Ali! Indeed, even though Hatayi first dutifully pays lip service to Muhammad (*cemal-i Mustafaya vir salavat*), he rapidly makes it known that the one who holds the universe in his hands is really none other than ‘Ali. The preeminence of ‘Ali is evidenced by the fact that when the Prophet arrived at the final destination of his heavenly ascension, he actually discovered his cousin waiting for him there in the shape of a lion (which is, of course, a motif that is well known in later Anatolian Alevi/ Kızılbaş lore).¹³ ‘Ali, therefore, is the true king (*şah*), and the surest guide to him is the love of the *imams* whose names Hatayi lists one by one down to Muhammad Mahdi. He then states that the time is ripe for the arrival of the *Mehdi*: *irişdi vade-i ‘ahd-i Muhammed / zuhur ide özin Mehdi Muhammed; yahın oldı çıtha sahib zamane / velayet leşkeriyle hanedane* (Aslanoğlu, 245). Under these circumstances, the correct course of action for the seekers is, naturally, to offer themselves to ‘Ali the king under the guidance of a spiritual leader (*pir*). Hatayi then plunges into an interiorizing interpretation of eschatology. The final judgment (the balance and crossing the *Sirat* bridge) is really nothing other than a test of allegiance to ‘Ali, while paradise and hell are metaphorical expressions for human virtues and vices: *yedi tamu sekiz cennet nişanı / hamusu sendediür anla beyanı* (Aslanoğlu, 247). The essence of faith is to cleanse one’s heart of hatred and to cultivate good relations with the faithful (this part is

¹³ Thierry Zarcone, “The Lion of Ali in Anatolia: History, Symbolism and Iconology,” in *The Art and Material Culture of Iranian Shi’ism*, ed. Pedram Khosronejad (London, 2012), 104–21.

reminiscent of Kaygusuz Abdal¹⁴). Hatayi ends his homily with an extended supplication during the course of which he refers, predictably, to ‘Ali, Hasan and Hüseyin but also to Ḥallāj, to the saintly hierarchy in the form of the three, the seven and the forty as well as the *pirs* of Khorasan and the *abdals* of Rum.

To recapitulate: God is imminent in his creation, but He is tangibly present to human beings as ‘Ali and his descendants the *imams*. True belief takes the form of acknowledgment of and unconditional love for ‘Ali, which are kindled in the seeker by the spiritual guide, who is, in this case, Hatayi. The true believers are distinguished from the rest by their devotion to the ‘Alid line of descent and their willingness to contribute to the construction of a salvific community here and now by virtuous living under the leadership of the Safavid master.

To judge by the *Nasihatname*, then, we are faced with a peculiar combination of (1) divinization of ‘Ali and the *imams*, (2) monism, and (3) a firm focus on the salvific community united with the love of ‘Ali and allegiance to the Safavid *shaykh/pir* that is tinged with messianic expectation. ‘Ali, the manifestation of God, is the king and lynchpin of existence; the Sufi master, who awakens love for the king in the seekers by guiding them to the truth, is the leader of the true believers on earth; and it is imperative to build a salvific community under the guidance and leadership of the Sufi master, especially since the arrival of the Mahdi, the master of time, is imminent! This is already a pretty potent brew, but Hatayi’s *divan* allows us to add a few more juicy ingredients to the mix.

¹⁴ Ahmet T Karamustafa, “Kaygusuz Abdal: A Medieval Turkish Saint and the Formation of Vernacular Islam in Anatolia,” in Orkhan Mir-Kasimov, ed., *Unity in Diversity: Mysticism, Messianism and the Construction of Religious Authority in Islam*, Leiden, 2014, 329–42.

Of the three of components of our brew – divinization of ‘Ali, monism, and firm focus on the salvific community – divinization of ‘Ali is the most prominent in the *divan*. Of the forty or so poems in the two earliest manuscripts of Hatayi’s *divan* (to repeat, Tashkent has 262, Paris has 254), twenty, that is to say a good half of them, are manifestly only about ‘Ali, and if we count others that also include the Shi‘i imams, that number goes up to almost thirty. In these ‘Ali-centered compositions, Hatayi either deifies ‘Ali or elevates him to a super-human, semi-divine status in a number of complementary ways. Here are a few examples of both:

Deification (referring to *gazel* and line numbers in Aslanoğlu)

42, 5 ‘Ali is the one who calls out “ene’l-hak” in Mansur [Ḥallāj]’s voice, but he is also the one who hangs him (that is, he is the divine agent).

42, 6 ‘Ali is the one who sacrifices Hasan and Hüseyin at Karbala at the hands of Yezid.

42, 7 ‘Ali is the one who lifts Yusuf out of the well and places him on the throne as sultan of Egypt.

60, 2 ‘Ali’s essence is the manifestation of God.

60, 4 The creative word [“*kun-fa-kān*”] is an apple in his hands.

68, 6 ‘Ali’s words declare God/Truth, his essence is the symbol of God; whoever says he is separate from God is an idolater.

68, 9 Even though his external appearance was human, it would not be appropriate to describe him as human.

187, 4 ‘Ali is co-eval (*hemdem*) with God.

223, 1 ‘Ali is forever!

259 [*murabba*] ‘Ali’s hand is God’s hand – the trio Allah-Muhammed-‘Ali is really all about ‘Ali.

260 [*müseddes*] ‘Ali is the creator, he is co-eval with God.

271 [*mesnevi*] A potent combination of all the themes expressed above.

Elevation

Where ‘Ali is not divinized, he is clearly elevated to super-human, semi-divine status, above all the prophets and saints:

60, 6 The *sūra insān* (Quran, chapter 76) was revealed in ‘Ali’s glory; indeed, the meaning of the whole Quran is his description.

60, 7-8 ‘Ali is the intercessor on the Day of Judgment.

60, 9 Whole regions submitted to ‘Ali’s miracles.

60, 13 ‘Ali is the head of the primordial gathering and the leader of the prophets, the pole of religion as well as the *qibla*.

74, 1 (also 76, 95) ‘Ali’s beauty is the place of manifestation for divine light, his eyebrows form the *mihrab* of the House of God, and his figure its *minber*.

187, 4 ‘Ali is the supreme intercessor, he is above all prophets and saints.

203, 4 ‘Ali is the lion at God’s court during Muhammad’s *mi‘raj*.

260 [*müseddes*] ‘Ali is the chief of prophets and saints.

This evidence, culled mostly from *gazels*, is fully corroborated by three longer poems: one *murabba‘* in twenty-one quatrains, the last lines of which is the refrain *Allah u Muhammed u ‘Alidür*, one *müseddes* in sixteen quatrains followed by the refrain couplet *‘Alidür ‘Alidür ‘Alidür ‘Ali / ‘Aliyyü’l-‘azimü’ş-şefiyyü’l-veli*, and one *mesnevi* of seventy-two couplets (Aslanoğlu, 149-154). In these independent compositions, Hatayi deploys the full array of the themes and motifs contained in the ‘Ali-centered *gazels* to spectacular effect, and indeed it is highly likely that these poems were recited collectively in performative contexts. The overall picture of ‘Ali that emerges from these poems is almost that of a neo-platonic or gnostic demiurge, the subordinate artisan deity, who, in this case, is of one essence with God but who is the actual creator and master of the universe. Naturally, in Hatayi’s poems, this demiurgic entity is devoid of any and all of the negative images with which it is endowed in many gnostic conceptions, and indeed it would not be far off the mark to say that in Hatayi’s religious imagination, ‘Ali almost totally replaces God as the supreme target of human worship and devotion.

In about a dozen poems, Hatayi mildly extends his fascination with ‘Ali to the Twelver Shi‘i *imams*, who are normally listed in rapid succession in chronological order, with little or no adulatory or even descriptive content. One cannot avoid the impression that the *imams* receive only cursory attention; Hatayi treats even Muhammad Mahdi in desultory fashion. This demotion of *imami* fervor and of messianic expectation is also reflected in verses where Hatayi lays bare his own self-image. In the ten poems or so where he reveals aspects of his self-perception, Hatayi links himself with ‘Ali (and by extension with God) in one fashion or another but he is always careful to designate his final status as the servant of the “king,” (meaning ‘Ali) and he never claims that he is the Mahdi. Here are some examples:

Self-Image

17 Hatayi – Sultan Hayderoglı (“a son of Hayder”) – simply likens himself to ‘Ali.

55, 8 Hatayi is the *imam* who guides (*imam-i rehniüma*).

56, 1 Hatayi, intoxicated with ‘Ali’s face, is always with God (*ba-hüda*).

112 He is the leader of *gazis*; he is both Sufi master and the king of the world but slave of the [only true] king.

114 Hatayi connects himself – in monistic fashion? – to ‘Ali and/or God.

137 Hatayi is Farīdūn, Khusrow, Jamshīd, Żahhāk, Rustam, Zāl and Iskandar [this is the only occasion in which he links himself to these Persian figures!]; he is of the Muhammadan light and the ‘Alid secret, he is the divine substance in the sea of reality, but he is the servant of the [only true] king.

197, 8 Hatayi is ‘Ali, he is his offspring (*aliyem, evladiyem*); he possesses Zhu’l-fiqār, Duldul and ‘Ali’s hat.

This last occasion and the very first verse cited where he designates himself as “a son of Haydar” are the only explicit claims of ‘Alid descent that Hatayi makes, and, given that Hatayi does not elaborate on this point or repeat it elsewhere, even this claim is best construed as metaphorical rather than literal. On balance, Hatayi comes across as the supreme enabler of the ‘Alid mission on earth. His connection with ‘Ali appears to be based not on blood descent but on a monistic conception, which, when coupled with his credentials as a Safavid shaykh, enables him to claim essential affinity with this larger-than-life demiurgic figure, while his status as the leader of the *gazis* and the Sultan only serve to bolster this link. In other words, Hatayi’s bid on

sovereignty can be interpreted as a clear instance, albeit a very particular one, of the strategy “of equating royal and sacred authority” which became so popular in the post-Mongol age: his sacred power, which accrues to him on account of his distillation of ‘Ali’s authority into his own person through his powers as the Safavid master, elevates him to the position of royal authority, the sovereign king.¹⁵

The evidence of Hatayi’s *divan*, then, is somewhat uneven with regard to the three components of the potent brew found in the *Nasihatname*.

The divinization of ‘Ali is easily the most prominent theme in the religious portions of the *divan*, and it might even be possible to make a strong argument that the beloved extolled in the great majority of its *gazels* is indeed none other than ‘Ali, even when Hatayi deploys the standard images and tropes of the love lyric in the “secular” mode. This last possibility definitely needs further exploration and corroboration in the light of comparative contextualization of these poems within the larger body of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Azeri poetry.

As for monism, this is on the whole less prominent but certainly in full evidence in the poems where Hatayi links himself to ‘Ali, past prophets, and even to God, and the dose of monism would increase considerably if at least some of the love *gazels* are read as directed primarily to the divine beloved ‘Ali rather than to a physical human being. The verses in which Hatayi seemingly identifies himself as God (advertised as such by Minorsky and repeated by countless others following his lead) are really to be read as poetic articulations of monism, a rhetorical realm of existence in which the time-space continuum collapses into itself, and the

¹⁵ On the conjunction of royal and sacred authority in the Ilhanate and beyond, see Judith Pfeiffer, “Confessional Ambiguity vs. Confessional Polarization: Politics and the Negotiation of Religious Boundaries in the Ilkhanate,” in Judith Pfeiffer, ed., *Politics, Patronage, and the Transmission of Knowledge in 13th-15th Century Tabriz* (Leiden, 2014), 129–68; the quote is on p.158.

poet/Sufi experiences and announces his/her identity with significant figures of salvation history (this particular genre is called *devriye* in Turkish poetry).¹⁶ Again, it would be a distortion to read them literally, and, for instance, see them as evidence for reincarnation, or, for that matter incarnation (*hulūl*).

On the other hand, the *divan* makes it abundantly clear that Hatayi is addressing a particular community of followers who are, more specifically, the lovers of ‘Ali committed to the Safavi Ḥaydari line of descent, and, of course, even more specifically to Hatayi himself. The divide between these true believers and all others is clearly drawn in the way specified in the *Nasihatname*, that is to say, the love of ‘Ali is the touchstone that sets the believers apart from the rest. More often than not Hatayi refers to his followers as *gazis*. Since militancy clearly emerges as one of the supreme qualities of ‘Ali in the *divan*, it is not surprising that Hatayi addresses his followers using the epithet *gazi*, and indeed, the Safavi leader encourages his *gazis* to emulate ‘Ali by fighting the enemies of the faithful, to whom he gives the designations *mūnaḥīk*, *yezid*, *mervani*, *harici/havaric*, and *kafir*. But Hatayi does not describe his *gazis* in any detail. Remarkably, he mentions the famous crimson hat only a few times, as *kızıl tac*, along with the crimson standard and the crimson flag, while he does use the word “red head” *kızılbaş* once.¹⁷ In any case, the Safavid salvific community is imagined as a community devoted to the

¹⁶ Mustafa Uzun, “Devriyye, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul, 1988-2013), 9: 251–53.

¹⁷ For crimson hat, standard and flag, see Gandjei, *Il canzoniere di Šāh Ismā‘īl Ḥaḩā‘ī*, 10 (poem # 7 = Minorsky 1030a, poem # 7). For “red head,” Ibid., 113–34 (poem # 214 = Minorsky 1038a, poem # 211). On the historical trajectory of the term *kızılbaş*, see Shahzad Bashir, “The Origins and Rhetorical Evolution of the Term Qizilbāsh in Persianate Literature,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 57 (2014): 364–91.

ruler/master through love of ‘Ali and, to a lesser extent but still palpably, through the urgent need to right past wrongs that have been committed against the Prophet’s family, *ehl-i beyt*.¹⁸

Yet, even though the salvific community clearly has a militant dimension, this militancy is not explicitly driven by a messianic impetus. On balance, messianic expectation is not much in sight in Hatayi’s poems, at least not with the intensity and clarity one would expect if, as is often stated or assumed in secondary literature, he was aiming to kindle the fire of messianism in his *gazis* through his poetry. When he is poetizing as Hatayi, Şah İsmail makes no pretense of being the Mahdi, and it would be a real distortion of the evidence of Hatayi’s poems to say that they are suffused with messianic fervor – they are not! As noted above, the arrival of Muhammad Mahdi is indeed designated as imminent in the *Nasihatname* ((Aslanoğlu, 245), but this is about the only nod towards messianic fervor that appears in his poetry. His followers, or to use his own preferred designation for them, his *gazis*, may have already practiced a messianic mode of piety or may have been in the process of developing one, but if so, this point needs to be established independently of Hatayi’s poems.¹⁹

As I stated at the beginning of my short paper, much remains to be done in order to establish reliable texts for Hatayi’s poetic corpus, and indeed, perhaps the most we can aim for is

¹⁸ In a recent article, Rıza Yıldırım contextualizes the sharp divide between the salvific community led by the righteous Safavid *şah* on the one hand and their “enemies” on the other hand in terms of a collective memory of the Islamic past prevalent among Turkish-speakers that was marked by the tragedy of Karbala: Rıza Yıldırım, “In the Name of Hosayn’s Blood: The Memory of Karbala as Ideological Stimulus to the Safavid Revolution,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 8 (2015): 127–54. Avenging Hüseyin’s blood is indeed a theme that appears in Hatayi’s poems, though the overall significance of this theme in his *divan* is debatable.

¹⁹ For an earlier call for toning down the messianic nature of İsmail’s political activities, see Erika Glassen, “Schah İsmā’īl, Ein Mahdī Der Anatolischen Türkmenen?,” *Zeitschrift Der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 121 (1971): 61–69. For a recent reexamination of the early career of İsmail that also downplays the role of messianism in his rise to kingship, see Ali Anooshahr, “The Rise of the Safavids According to Their Old Veterans: Amini Haravi’s Futuhat-E Shahi,” *Iranian Studies* 48 (2014): 249–67.

a critically documented collation rather than an authentic textual basis.²⁰ Regardless, the evidence of the two earliest manuscripts of his *divan* and the text of his *Nasihatname* (established on the basis of 6 manuscripts by Mamedov) suggests that a close scrutiny of Hatayi's poetry can throw fresh light on the historical personality of Şah İsmail. Contrary to what has commonly been asserted or assumed in scholarly literature, it does not appear likely that İsmail saw himself as the Mahdi or, more spectacularly, as God in human form. He was, rather, the political and spiritual ruler, *şah*, of the Safavid salvific community united around allegiance to 'Ali. How his followers, who overtime came to be known as *kızılbaş* actually viewed him is, naturally, a different, albeit related, question. It is, of course, possible that they were motivated by messianic or incarnationist fervor, but, on the basis of the evidence of Hatayi's voice, I would submit that it was, rather, İsmail's credentials and charisma as the Safavid leader of a socially heterogeneous salvific community composed of both nomadic and urban elements that enabled him to make a successful bid for earthly sovereignty of the imperial type.²¹ It is time that we recalibrate our understanding of Safavid origins by decreasing the dose of messianism and/or incarnationism in that potent brew and giving priority, instead, to grandiose salvific claims made by many Sufi shaykhs of the late medieval and early modern Islamic history for their devoted followers.

²⁰ The publication that comes closest to this goal is apparently Ismailzade's, which I have not had a chance to examine in detail: Resul Ismailzade, *Şah İsmail Safavi (Hatayi) külliyatı: gazeller, kasideler, nasihatname, dehname, koşmalar* (Tehran, 2004).

²¹ For the "use of Sufi ideas and personnel as state-building resources" in the early modern period more broadly, see Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), chapter 3 (the quote is on p. 128).

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