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Making Sense of Miscellanies: Houghton Library MS Turk 11, an Ottoman *Mecmua*

Meredith M. Quinn

LIBRARIES IN TURKEY AND OTHER FORMER OTTOMAN LANDS house hundreds of manuscript miscellanies, compilations which contain texts from a bewildering variety of genres.¹ A single manuscript might include copies of letters, poems, religious texts, stories, jokes, and personal notes. It is no secret to specialists in Ottoman history or literature that these miscellanies contain much of interest. Some scholars have plumbed them for versions of canonical texts when preparing critical editions. Others have drawn on letters copied into them to establish chronologies and reconstruct key events in political history. Still others have discovered in miscellanies first-person narratives that provide a unique, microhistorical perspective on life in the Ottoman Empire.² Understanding miscellanies as a phenomenon in their own right, however, has remained elusive. Scholars do not share an explicit understanding of who created miscellanies, where and how they were created, and,

Part of the research presented in this article was published in earlier form, and without illustrations, in Meredith Quinn, “Houghton MS Turk 11 ve Kişisel Mecmûaların Söyledikleri ve Söyleyebilecekleri,” pages 255–270 in *Mecmûa: Osmanlı Edebiyatının Kırkambarı*, ed. Hatice Aynur et al., Eski Türk Edebiyatı Çalışmaları 7 (İstanbul: Turkuaz, 2011). All figures in the present article are images from MS Turk 11, Houghton Library, Harvard University. I would like to thank Ann Blair, Cemal Kafadar, Dennis Marnon, Himmet Taşkömür, and the anonymous reviewer for the *Harvard Library Bulletin* for comments which improved this study substantially. Responsibility for remaining shortcomings rests with me.

1 The Ottoman dynasty (ca. 1300–1922) ruled a vast territory, at various times extending from Egypt to the Balkans and from modern-day Greece to Baghdad.

2 Examples of these kinds of uses include Latîfî, *Evsâf-ı İstanbul*, ed. Nermin Suner Pekin (İstanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1977), xxix; Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 251; and Cemal Kafadar, “Self and Others: The Diary of a Dervish in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul and First-Person Narratives in Ottoman Literature,” *Studia Islamica* 69 (1989):

121–150.

most fundamentally, why they were created. By definition, manuscript miscellanies are idiosyncratic, making generalization about them difficult.

The Turkish word for these works—*mecmua*—comes from an Arabic root meaning “to gather” or “to collect.” It can be translated most literally as “collection.”³ Today, the term *mecmua* is a convenient cataloging convention, a catch-all category that describes manuscripts containing a variety of texts, with or without a discernable unifying theme. It was also a term used by Ottomans themselves, at least as early as the fifteenth century, to describe manuscript anthologies. For example, a list of books given to a library by the Ottoman vizier Umur Bey in 1454 includes “one medical miscellany in Arabic” (*ṭıbbdan ‘arabī mecmū’a*) and nine additional miscellanies (*mecmū’alar*).⁴ When the official interpreter of the Polish-Lithuanian embassy in Istanbul created a multilingual thesaurus in the seventeenth century, he saw fit to include “mecmū’a,” which he defined as “Res collecta, collectio, compendium, & liber collectionum.”⁵

As with the English word “miscellany,” the term *mecmua* encompasses texts which are very different from each other. András Riedlmayer describes two ends of a spectrum:

Some of these *mecmū’a* manuscripts are ad-hoc assemblages, akin to scrapbooks or commonplace books, with material drawn from a variety of sources, including personal and official letters, calendars, prayer texts, astrological charts and assorted snippets of prose and verse that may have caught the eye of the compiler. Others appear to be more organised compilations, primarily of letters and various sorts of documents that

3 The manuscript anthology has a long history in Arabic and Persian literatures. While Persian and Arabic both had a half-dozen words denoting “anthology” or “miscellany,” with overlapping but slightly different meanings, *mecmua* came to be the primary word used in Ottoman Turkish. A. Hamori, J.T.P. de Bruij, Günay Alpay Kut, J.A. Haywood, “Mukhtārāt,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Brill Online: <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/mukhtar-at-COM_0791>, accessed January 16, 2010); A. Hamori and T. Bauer, “Anthologies,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Three* (Brill Online: <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/anthologies-a-arabic-literature-1-pre-mongol-period-2-post-mongol-period-COM_0031>, accessed January 16, 2010). Throughout this article, Ottoman titles and place names that are common in modern Turkish are written according to modern Turkish orthography; less common words are transliterated according to the system used in *İslam Ansiklopedisi*.

4 Tim Stanley, “The Books of Umur Bey,” *Muqarnas* 21 (2004): 329–330.

5 Franciscus à Mesgnien Meninski, *Thesaurus Linguarum Orientalium Turcicae-Arabicae-Persicae*, 6 vols. (Istanbul: Simurg Yayıncılık, 2000), 3:4408. The work first appeared in three large folio volumes in Vienna in 1680.

have, at least in part, been assembled for some practical or didactic purpose.⁶

The latter category might best be termed an anthology, a purposeful collection created by one person and united by a theme or a common genre of texts. These types of *mecmuas* evolved into distinct genres of their own, such as epistolary or chancery collections (*münşeât*) and poetry collections (*mecmû'a-i eş'âr*).⁷ They seem to have been intended for circulation as intact anthologies. In contrast, “ad-hoc assemblages”—which I call personal miscellanies—do not have discernable themes, and they are characterized by a variety of genres. Their uniqueness implies that they were intended for personal use, perhaps by successive compilers who added to them over time. Armando Petrucci, a scholar of medieval European manuscript culture, has observed a similar range of coherence and intended use among medieval European compilations. Petrucci calls personal miscellanies “exasperating” because they are “incoherent, unorganized, and reduced simply to being a container for heterogeneous texts.”⁸ Indeed, the idiosyncrasies of these personal miscellanies are exceedingly exasperating for a scholar who would like to use them to make broader generalizations about the culture of a particular place and time. However, the prevalence of personal miscellanies in the Ottoman Empire and other manuscript-based cultures suggests that they were exceedingly *useful* for their compilers. After all, it took effort to assemble the required paper and to copy all of those texts; there must have been a reason to do so.

This study focuses on one particular personal miscellany in order to identify the potential and the challenges in using personal miscellanies as sources for cultural

6 András J. Riedlmayer, “Ottoman Copybooks of Correspondence and Miscellanies as a Source for Political and Cultural History,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 61 (2008): 201–202.

7 For more on *mecmua* sub-genres, see Riedlmayer; Günay Kut, “Mecmua,” in *Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Ansiklopedisi*, 6 vols. (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 1986), 6:170; and Mustafa Uzun, “Mecmua,” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, 40 vols. (İstanbul and Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1988–2011), 28:266 (cited hereafter as TDVİA).

8 Armando Petrucci, *Writers and Readers in Medieval Italy: Studies in the History of Written Culture*, ed. and transl. Charles M. Radding (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 16. Petrucci uses terminology different from what I use here. He defines books “conceived of and produced as a whole, often in the same hand, often treating a single theme” as “miscellanies,” and those with less coherence, “filled with successive additions written by different writers,” as “container books.” I call these two types of manuscripts, respectively, anthologies and personal miscellanies, because I believe that “anthology” better denotes the intentionality of the first category, and because I find “container book” to be a somewhat inelegant term, seemingly reflecting Petrucci’s own reaction to this type of manuscript. A third kind of *mecmua* is a compilation created when disparate and unconnected texts were bound together long after their creation. These *mecmuas* truly are “container books,” demonstrating little to no coherence at all.

history. The particularized and tailored nature of personal miscellanies offers insight into how individuals related to their texts; as such, these miscellanies reward careful, close reading. At the same time, any single miscellany remains too idiosyncratic to support weighty generalizations on its own. Larger cultural patterns emerge only when a single miscellany is put in the context of other personal miscellanies.

Among the hundreds of Islamic manuscripts housed at Harvard University is a bound manuscript that resists easy definition. Because it lacks a title, I will refer to it by its call number in Houghton Library, MS Turk 11.⁹ The manuscript measures approximately nineteen centimeters by fifteen centimeters, and is bound in half-leather and unremarkable marbled paper boards. MS Turk 11 begins much like a planned anthology, since it opens with several religious treatises written in the same hand and following an identical format. However, its 236 pages (unnumbered) also include poems, model templates for letters and official signatures, laws and legal opinions, and even a recipe.¹⁰ These texts and the marginalia that accompany them are written mostly in Ottoman Turkish, in at least seven different hands (see figure 2.1).

The provenance of MS Turk 11 is known back to 1835, when it was purchased as part of a lot of manuscripts in Salonica (Thessaloniki) by W. B. Llewellyn, the local U.S. consular agent. The group of manuscripts comprised diverse Arabic, Turkish, and Persian works. Similarities in binding and earlier cataloging numbers suggest that at least some of the manuscripts had together previously been part of other collections, but their owners and whereabouts prior to 1835 are not known.¹¹ Llewellyn gave the manuscripts to the U.S. Naval Lyceum in New York, whence it was transferred to the U.S. Naval Academy Museum in 1892. In 1919, with the approval of Franklin D. Roosevelt (then Assistant Secretary of the Navy), the Naval Museum sent all but one of the manuscripts to Harvard on extended loan for educational purposes. In 1931, the Navy donated the manuscripts to Harvard.¹²

9 MS Turk 11 was one of almost 600 works recently digitized as part of the Islamic Heritage Project at Harvard University (<<http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/ihp/>>, accessed January 16, 2010). The Islamic Heritage Project was curated by Wolfhart Heinrichs, Recep Göktaş, and Himmet Taşkömür. The manuscript can be accessed in its entirety at <<http://pds.lib.harvard.edu/pds/view/11177230?n=1&imagesize=600&jp2Res=0.125>> (accessed January 16, 2010). References to MS Turk 11 in this paper are given according to the “sequence” numbers (e.g., seq. 104) of the digitized version.

10 I am grateful to Himmet Taşkömür for helping me to decipher many of the passages in MS Turk 11. I have also relied heavily on guidance given by Hakan Karateke in “Ottoman Turkish Manuscripts and Documents at Harvard’s Houghton Library,” *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 7 (2006): 172–213.

11 A notation in Polish on seq. 33 offers an enigmatic clue to one of its previous owners.

12 “Extract of a Letter” from W.B. Lewellyn [*sic*], *Naval Magazine* 1, no. 2 (March 1836): 195–197. I am grateful to Dennis Marnon, Coordinating Editor of the *Bulletin* and Administrative Officer of Houghton Library, for this reference, for encouragement in pursuing the provenance of MS Turk 11, and

The list of manuscripts purchased by Llewellyn identifies MS Turk 11 as “The Concealed Pearl, or judicial pieces—Turkish.”¹³ “The Concealed Pearl” is the title of the first text in the miscellany. This title notwithstanding, scholars have not yet found any hidden textual treasures buried in its pages.¹⁴ Furthermore, as far as we know, MS Turk 11 did not previously belong to anyone consequential. In other words, MS Turk 11 is an entirely ordinary example of an Ottoman personal miscellany, which makes it an ideal subject for exploring the value of personal miscellanies for cultural history. Any value that it contains will come neither from its association with a well-known figure nor from a particularly interesting excerpt, but from its ability—in spite of its idiosyncrasies—to reflect a broader cultural milieu.

Unlike a printed book, MS Turk 11 was not conceived of or created at a single point in time.¹⁵ MS Turk 11 contains material and textual evidence of having evolved with the participation of several people. While some of the many hands manifest on its folios might have belonged to professional copyists, the marginalia and other notes are in at least three different hands, suggesting that it had a number of owners or, at least, intensive users. The fundamental structure of the miscellany also suggests accretion over time rather than planned composition, since the lengths of its paper quires vary from four to twelve bifolia.¹⁶ Finally, the lack of a table of contents or other paratext to unite the diverse contents is consistent with its cumulative evolution.¹⁷

Although the contents of MS Turk 11 were created by several people over a span of time, the manuscript is not simply a collection of unrelated papers that share a much later binding. MS Turk 11 presents material evidence of some degree of coherence. First, the relationship between quiring and contents shows that most of the pages were added in the order in which they appear today. After the first text, each later text begins in the same quire, so that it was an addition to an existing manuscript rather than

for his observations about the material clues provided by the manuscript. James W. Cheevers, Associate Director of the U.S. Naval Academy Museum, was kind enough to share with me the early twentieth-century correspondence related to the transfer of this group of manuscripts.

13 “Extract of a Letter,” 197.

14 I do not know of any scholars who have published studies of MS Turk 11.

15 Of course, printed books also evolve over time and usually involve many people in their creation. Even so, the fact of printing signals the end of one stage of a book’s development. Some manuscripts also have this characteristic of being “finished”; for example, when a scribe has penned a colophon and no further blank space is left. In both of these cases, it is easier to make distinctions between a “main text” and later marginalia than it is in the case of a miscellany like MS Turk 11.

16 In contrast, the miscellany MS Turk 45, also in Houghton Library, contains two texts but is written in one hand on regular gatherings of five bifolia each.

17 Some miscellanies did indeed have tables of contents; see, for example, 06 Hk 4358 and 06 Hk 4905 in the Milli Kütüphane (National Library) in Ankara.

a separate composition. Identical handwriting appearing in noncontinuous parts of the miscellany also serves to unite parts of the collection. The paper used throughout is almost all of similar quality. Like most paper used in core Ottoman lands, the miscellany's paper was likely imported from Europe and then burnished and glazed locally.¹⁸ It displays several types of watermarks, but one watermark appears both at the beginning of the manuscript and towards the end.¹⁹ This means that an earlier owner had either left blank pages towards the end of the manuscript, or a later owner had access to a similar stock of paper, perhaps implying geographical continuity. Of the 118 folios in MS Turk 11, there are only nine folios that cannot be linked to the rest of the miscellany by quiring, handwriting, or textual evidence. MS Turk 11 therefore can be best described as an accumulation of layers over time. Although the manuscript reveals a multiplicity of makers, it also shows a degree of coherence, since later additions were made with reference to what had been compiled before.

Very roughly, the layers of MS Turk 11 can be clustered into the following sections (the foliation differs from the sequence numbers because the digitized images begin with the cover and endpapers):

1. Folios 1 verso through 32 recto / seq. 6–77: three texts on religious themes, all in the same handwriting and identical format. The presence of catchwords, gold frame rubrication on the opening pages, and the extremely neat handwriting suggest that these might have been copied by a professional copyist.
2. Folios 32 verso through 71 verso / seq. 78–146: two texts—the *Ma'rūzāt* (Requests), legal opinions that a sixteenth-century religio-judicial leader asked Sultan Süleymān to convert to imperial decrees, and the *Ḳānūnnāme-i cedid* (New Law Code), a land code promulgated in 1673. These are written in one hand, which differs from that of the first section.

18 Franz Babinger, *Das Archiv des Bosniaken Osman Pascha* (Berlin: Reichsdruckerei, 1931), 25–33; Babinger, “Papierhandel und Papierbereitung in der Levante,” *Wochenblatt für Papierfabrikation* 62 Jahrg., nr. 52 (1931); Osman Ersoy, *XVIII. ve XIX. Yüzyıllarda Türkiye’de Kâğıt* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1963), iii; Ersoy, “Kâğıt,” *TDVİA*, 24:163–166; İsmail Güleç, “Osmanlılarda Kâğıt ve Kâğıtçılık,” *Mütefferika* 2 (1994): 85–94; and Şinasi Tekin, *Eski Türklerde Yazı, Kâğıt, Kitap, ve Kâğıt Damgaları* (İstanbul: Eren, 1993).

19 This is the monogram CW, which must be a countermark, on the corner of the larger sheet of paper. I was not able to identify this watermark in Asparouh Velkov, *Les Filigranes dans les Documents Ottomans* (Sofia: Éditions “Texte—A. Trayanov,” 2005) or in Vsevolod Nikolaev, *Watermarks of the Ottoman Empire, Vol. 1: Watermarks of the Medieval Ottoman Documents in Bulgarian Libraries* (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1954).

3. Folios 72 recto through 111 verso / seq. 147–226: a series of legal opinions (fatwas) interspersed with miscellaneous shorter texts. It is most difficult to parse the various layers in this section.
4. Folios 112 recto through 118 verso / seq. 227–240, and interspersed throughout other sections: marginalia and other short texts, such as poems, prayers, and sample letters, written throughout the miscellany. I cannot determine precisely how many hands are represented in the marginalia, but I have been able to link one of them to the person who copied some of the fatwas in the third section, above.

MS Turk 11 could be dated either by dating its constituent elements separately or by determining a span of time over which it was created. Unfortunately, the manuscript presents few clues to support either method with much precision. The current binding probably dates to the early nineteenth century, after the creation of the text itself.²⁰ The watermarks in the paper do not point to a specific period of time, though the style (a monogram in cursive Latin letters, fashioned from single pieces of wire) appears to be most similar to watermarks used in the seventeenth century.²¹ The handwriting is not attributable to a particular period.²² The only date given in MS Turk 11—the record of a marriage in 1700—falls within a gathering that cannot be linked conclusively with the rest of the miscellany by quiring or by handwriting. As a result, there is a chance that this gathering was added to the collection much later, when the miscellany was bound, and therefore does not reflect the date of the miscellany as a whole.²³ The texts in the miscellany contain some clues about dating, but these do not yield a satisfying conclusion. It seems likely that the first section of MS Turk 11 was copied in the seventeenth century, since most other extant versions of the first text were copied

20 Dennis Marnon has noted some material evidence suggesting the manuscript had an earlier binding than the current one. The dating of the current binding is Marnon's estimate. Personal communication, October 13, 2011.

21 Nikolaev, *Watermarks*, 63.

22 Others have remarked on the difficulty of dating Ottoman manuscripts that do not contain a colophon. See, for example, Aldo Gallotta, "Sur le problème de datation des manuscrits turcs," in *Les Manuscrits du Moyen-Orient*, ed. François Déroche (Istanbul and Paris: Institut Français d'Études Anatoliennes et Bibliothèque Nationale, 1989), 31–34. MS Turk 11 contains texts written in both the *ta'lik* and *nesih* styles. Himmet Taşkömür, who helped to curate the Islamic Heritage Project (through which MS Turk 11 was digitized) believes that the handwritings in MS Turk 11 could be comfortably dated to either the seventeenth or eighteenth century (personal communication, June 21, 2010).

23 Seq. 227.

then.²⁴ This can provide us with a rough *terminus post quem* for the miscellany. The *terminus ante quem* for the compilation as a whole must be 1835, when the miscellany was purchased by W.B. Llewellyn in Salonica. This leaves a very broad span of time—roughly, two hundred years, from the 1600s to the early nineteenth century—within which the miscellany might have been created. Of course, it might have evolved in a short period of time within that span. There is no way to know, and this limits the kinds of questions that can be asked of the miscellany.

Identifying the owner(s) of MS Turk 11 is also challenging, because the manuscript contains no owner's seal or other obvious identifying information, aside from the annotation by the Polish owner mentioned in note 11. However, the nature of the collection itself provides an important clue. The texts included in MS Turk 11, though varied, are not entirely random; they suggest some recurring themes or interests. Most obvious is the significant number of fatwas (legal opinions), filling fully 61 percent of the pages. Complementary to the fatwas are legally themed entries, such as law codes and sample judicial signatures. There are also many texts of a religious nature. While poetry or letters predominate in some miscellanies, MS Turk 11 has very few examples of either. Its contents tend towards religious and legal subjects. Taken together, the religious-legal contents suggest a specific educational background and profession for the main compiler(s) and reader(s) of the manuscript: they were almost certainly muftis (jurisconsults) or judges who had graduated from a *medrese* (religious college).

The Ottoman government appointed judges throughout the empire to adjudicate disputes and notarize transactions in particular regions. Muftis were less hierarchically organized than judges and were not necessarily appointed; someone noted for his learning—perhaps a professor or the leader of a mosque—might serve as a mufti. Muftis issued fatwas in response to questions from judges or ordinary people. Their opinions were not binding on judges, and muftis might disagree with each other. The most important mufti from the fifteenth century to the end of the Ottoman Empire was the mufti of Istanbul, known as the *şeyhülislam*. A *şeyhülislam* could issue dozens of fatwas in a day in response to questions, and the fatwas of the most famous *şeyhülislams* were collected and copied—including into MS Turk 11.²⁵

24 Four of the six manuscripts of 'Abdurrahman's *Dürr-i meknûn* (The Concealed Pearl) that I have located date from the seventeenth century, including three from the 1620s. Since one would expect earlier copies to be underrepresented in libraries today (due to loss over time), it is all the more significant that earlier copies predominate in this sample.

25 For more information on fatwas, judges, and muftis, see Uriel Heyd, "Some Aspects of the Ottoman Fetvâ," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 32, no. 1 (1969): 35–56; Fahrettin Atar, "Fetva," *TDVİA*, 12:486–496; J. H. Kramers and R. C. Repp, "ŞHaykh al- Islâm," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Brill Online: <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/shaykhal-islam-COM_1052>, accessed February 3, 2012); E. Tyan and J.R. Walsh, "Fatwâ," *Encyclopaedia*

An unusual feature of MS Turk 11 is that it also contains, in the margins, fatwas attributed to the “mufti of Filibe” (present-day Plovdiv, Bulgaria).²⁶ Filibe was not a particularly prominent city in the Ottoman Empire, certainly not on the order of Istanbul, Damascus, Bursa, Cairo, or Edirne.²⁷ When the Ottoman traveler Evliyâ Çelebi visited Filibe in the mid-seventeenth century, he reported that it had a few *medreses*; the mufti of Filibe might have been associated with one of these. Perhaps he was even a teacher at the most prominent of these colleges, the Şehâbü'd-din Paşa *medrese*, which was founded in the fifteenth century and ranked in the second-highest tier of the Ottoman *medrese* hierarchy. Even so, the Şehâbü'd-din Paşa *medrese* was merely one of over 150 colleges in that tier in the empire.²⁸ Filibe was a middling city, and one would not expect the fatwas of a mufti in Filibe to have a wide circulation. The prominence of these fatwas in MS Turk 11 makes it likely that one of the miscellany's owners was either himself a mufti in Filibe, using the miscellany to record important fatwas that he had issued, or else he was a judge in or near Filibe who made use of the fatwas in his rulings (see figure 2.2).

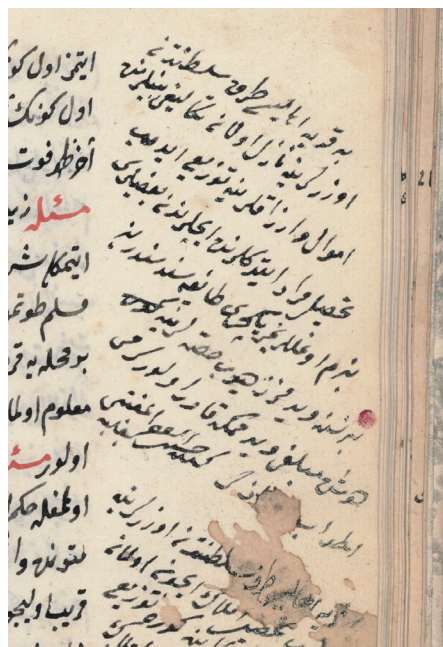


Figure 2.2. Fatwa attributed to the “mufti of Filibe” inscribed in the outer margin of fol. 49v (detail of fol. 49v / seq. 102).

of Islam, Second Edition (Brill Online: <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/fatwa-COM_0219>, accessed February 3, 2012); and Madeline C. Zilfi, “The Ottoman ‘Ulema,” in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, ed. Suraiya N. Faroqhi, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3:209–225.

²⁶ See seq. 102, 109, 124, 212, and 225.

²⁷ For a hierarchy of Ottoman cities from the religious-legal point of view, see Zilfi, “The Ottoman ‘Ulema,” 216.

²⁸ Machiel Kiel, “Filibe,” *TDVİA*, 13:80–81.

²⁹ Cahid Baltacı, *XV-XVI Yüzyıllarda Osmanlı Medreseleri* (İstanbul: M.Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 2005), 12–14, 517–519.

Perhaps one of the owners was a certain Muṣṭafā bin Meḥmed, whose name is recorded in a series of sample judicial signatures at the end of MS Turk 11.³⁰ We lack conclusive material or paleographical evidence to link these signatures to the rest of the miscellany, but these signatures indicate that someone named Muṣṭafa bin Meḥmed was “appointed judge as a representative of the main judge in Tatarpazarı.” Tatarpazarı (present-day Pazardhik, Bulgaria), is located less than 25 miles from Filibe. It seems plausible that the fatwas issued by a mufti in Filibe would be relevant to a judge in Tatarpazarı or its environs.

Thus, instead of specific dates and owners, MS Turk 11 offers a series of clues that locate the miscellany in a broad time period—roughly, from the seventeenth century through the early nineteenth century—and in the possession of muftis or judges, at least one of whom was located near present-day Plovdiv, Bulgaria. This still allows for many possibilities, since we cannot know how the miscellany was passed from person to person (perhaps from father to son?), where various parts of it were copied, or even how many owners it had. Given how little we can know about MS Turk 11, it is difficult to imagine that a meaningful historical argument can be built upon it alone. For this reason, MS Turk 11 must be placed in the context of other miscellanies.

MS Turk 11, while unique, is not entirely idiosyncratic. Judges and muftis all over the empire needed legal handbooks to help them in their work, and these handbooks seem to have often taken the form of manuscript miscellanies. When viewed as part of a phenomenon rather than an isolated manuscript, MS Turk 11 has the potential to enrich the study of Ottoman legal history. Although the analysis that follows focuses on legal history because of the nature of MS Turk 11, it also suggests how personal miscellanies with other types of content could be used to illuminate the circulation of texts and reader reception of texts in fields outside of law.

In Ottoman historiography, there is a division between those who study how legal thought evolved over the Ottoman centuries and those who study the everyday practice of courts. Scholars who focus on the evolution of legal thought draw upon laws proclaimed by the sultan and upon the fatwas and legal treatises written by the *şeyhülislam* and the learned men of the empire’s most prestigious colleges.³¹ The

30 Seq. 238. I am grateful to Himmet Taşkömür for his help in understanding these signatures. For more information on judicial signatures, which served to authenticate legal documents, see Asparouh Velkov, “Signatures-formules des agents judiciaries dans les documents Ottomans à caractère financier et juridique,” *Turcica* 24 (1992): 193–240.

31 For example, see Ahmet Akgündüz and Halil Çın, *Türk Hukuk Tarihi* (Istanbul: Osmanlı Araştırmaları Vakfı, 1995–1996); Baber Johansen, *The Islamic Law on Land Tax and Rent* (London: Croom Helm, 1988); and Uriel Heyd, *Studies in Old Ottoman Criminal Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973).

intellectual history of Ottoman law has traditionally centered on Istanbul.³² In contrast, scholars who focus on the everyday practice of law use the court registers (*siciller*) in which Ottoman judges throughout the empire recorded the outcomes of the disputes they adjudicated and the agreements they notarized. It is no exaggeration to say that court registers are the main Ottoman source used in historical research today.³³ As in Europe, research based on Ottoman court registers often raises broader questions about social structures and processes; some of this research also uses case outcomes empirically to determine how the practice and substance of law itself evolved.³⁴ Personal miscellanies that have a legal focus, like MS Turk 11, could enrich both types of scholarship by tangibly connecting legal intellectual history to the history of legal practice.³⁵

MS Turk 11 contains both texts that circulated widely and those of local provenance. One of the texts contained in MS Turk 11, *şeyhülislam* Ebu's-Su'üd's *Ma'rûzât* (Requests), circulated from the late sixteenth century, when it was composed, until the end of the Ottoman Empire.³⁶ This brief text—filling just thirteen folios in MS Turk 11—contains a series of fatwas organized by subject such as “Prayer,” “Betrothal,” and “Endowment” (see figure 2.3). Because fatwas did not normally carry the force of law, the *şeyhülislam*

32 For two historiographical reflections on the relative scarcity of research on intellectual legal history outside of Istanbul, see Zilfi, “The Ottoman ‘Ulema,” 209; and Şükrü Özen, “Osmanlı Döneminde Fetva Literatürü,” *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 3, no. 5 (2005): 249.

33 Suraiya Faroqhi, *Approaching Ottoman History: An Introduction to the Sources* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 55–57. The 2009 conference of the Middle East Studies Association had three panels dedicated to studies using Ottoman court registers.

34 For example, see Boğaç A. Ergene, *Local Court, Provincial Society, and Justice in the Ottoman Empire: Legal Practice and Dispute Resolution in Çankırı and Kastamonu, 1652–1744* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Leslie Peirce, *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); and Ronald Jennings, “Limitations of the Judicial Powers of the Kadı in 17th C. Ottoman Kayseri,” *Studia Islamica* 50 (1979): 151–184.

35 Judith Tucker’s work is a notable exception to the general historiographical trends outlined here. Her study drew upon both *sicils* and fatwas to describe how gender was understood in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Syria and Palestine. Haim Gerber also used *sicils* and fatwas to understand the structure of Ottoman legal institutions. Both of these scholars made use of widely-circulated fatwa collections authored by prominent muftis. See Judith E. Tucker, *In the House of the Law: Gender and Islamic Law in Ottoman Syria and Palestine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); and Haim Gerber, *State, Society, and Law in Islam: Ottoman Law in Comparative Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

36 Özen, “Osmanlı Döneminde Fetva Literatürü,” 287; Ahmet Akgündüz, “Ma’rûzât,” *TDVİA*, 28:72–73. The *Ma’rûzât* has been published (in Arabic script) in *Millî Tettebbü’ler Mecmû’ası* 1 (İstanbul, A.H. 1331): 337–348, and in Paul Horster, *Zur Anwendung des Islamischen Rechts in 16. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1935).

requested that Sultan Süleymân convert them into imperial decrees. Scholarly studies of the *Ma'rûzât* focus on Ebu's-Su'ûd's creativity in writing the *Ma'rûzât*: his attempts to reconcile customary law with religious law and to give his opinions the weight of law. Consistent with the aim of better understanding Ebu's-Su'ûd as a canonical figure, scholars have tried to identify which of the remaining manuscripts are closest to the original text and therefore closest to the author's intent.³⁷

Miscellanies invite very different questions about the "afterlife" of a text like the *Ma'rûzât*. On the basis of one unique miscellany like MS Turk 11, it is difficult to say much about how the *Ma'rûzât* was received or the impact it had. However, analyzing a reasonable sample of personal miscellanies that include the *Ma'rûzât* yields broader conclusions. The research collections that house these manuscript copies are scattered throughout formerly Turkish-speaking Ottoman lands, from Sarajevo to Erzurum.³⁸ While any single manuscript's current location offers only a faint clue to where it was created and used, this distribution does suggest that the *Ma'rûzât* received a broad geographic circulation outside of Istanbul.³⁹ This is not surprising, given that each large town had a judge assigned to it. Perhaps more surprising is that the manuscripts seem to range broadly in time as well. Thirty-eight of the manuscript copies are datable, falling between 1667–1831, with twenty-four copies dated between 1750–1850.⁴⁰ One would expect that later manuscripts would be more likely to survive, but even this

37 Özen, "Osmanlı Döneminde Fetva Literatürü," 287; Pehlul Düzenli, "Şeyhülislam Ebussuûd Efendi: Bibliografik bir Değerlendirme," *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 3, no. 5 (2005): 461–464; Gerber, *State, Society, and Law*, 88–92; R. C. Repp, *The Müfti of Istanbul: A Study in the Development of the Ottoman Learned Hierarchy* (London: Published by Ithaca Press for the Board of the Faculty of Oriental Studies, Oxford University, 1986), 280–282.

38 Ottoman miscellanies can be found in more distant collections as well. The most thorough cataloging of Ottoman miscellanies can be found in Jan Schmidt, *Catalogue of Turkish Manuscripts in the Library of Leiden University and Other Collections in the Netherlands*, 3 vols. (Leiden: Legatum Warnerianum, 2000), and in *Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland: Türkische Handschriften*, 5 vols. (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1968, 1974, 1979, 1981). In the United States, Ottoman miscellanies appear in all substantial collections of Ottoman manuscripts, including those at Harvard, the University of Chicago, Princeton, and the University of Michigan.

39 If anything, the current locations of manuscripts in Turkey would underrepresent their use in the provinces, since some collections were later gathered into libraries in Istanbul and Ankara. The text discussed here, the *Ma'rûzât*, would not have been subject to demand on the rare book market, and therefore that source of distortion can also be discounted.

40 I have no reason to believe that including a copy date became more prevalent in later periods; there are many examples of early manuscripts with copy dates (including one in Houghton Library, a miscellany cataloged as MS Turk 13, which was copied in 1438).

chronological distribution raises questions about why a sixteenth-century composition was still being copied into the nineteenth century.

The extant manuscripts suggest that miscellanies were one important means of circulation. A survey of catalogs of Turkish manuscripts held in Germany, Russia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Turkey shows that almost all of the extant copies of the *Ma'rûzât* are bound with other texts.⁴¹ One of the challenges of studying miscellanies is to determine whether texts bound together reflect the way that they were created and used by their early owners, or whether they are the product of later reordering. Based on cataloging descriptions and an examination of available digitized copies,⁴² I have identified thirty-five copies of the *Ma'rûzât* that were clearly created at the same time as other texts in the volume; that is, similarities in handwriting or dating indicate that the *Ma'rûzât* definitely belonged with the other texts from the beginning.

Identifying whether the *Ma'rûzât* was originally part of a miscellany allows us to learn something of its ecology: if two texts are copied together and then preserved together, this suggests that it was useful to have them together. If this is true of a substantial sample of miscellanies, then a broader picture emerges of the intellectual resources upon which a class of people—Ottoman judges, from the seventeenth century to the legal reforms of the nineteenth century—drew upon. The thirty-five miscellanies that contain the *Ma'rûzât* do show similar tendencies. In these miscellanies, the *Ma'rûzât* is bound together with other texts related to jurisprudence and judgeship. The *Ma'rûzât* most frequently occurs with a text labeled *kānūnnāme* (law code). (Unfortunately, the cataloging information does not always indicate which law codes specifically are included in these collections.)⁴³ Interestingly, the copy of the *Ma'rûzât* in MS Turk 11 is also closely linked to a law code; the New Law Code follows the *Ma'rûzât* directly with no blank space left between the texts, and the two texts are written in the same hand with similar rubrication.⁴⁴ Viewed in the light of these other anthologies, MS Turk 11 seems less idiosyncratic and unique, and more like a reflection of a broader intellectual milieu. The close association (in this sample) of the *Ma'rûzât* with law codes implies that the *Ma'rûzât* itself carried the force of law, not just in Ebu's-Su'ūd's intent, but for judges who decided cases centuries after he lived.

41 I do not intend to argue that miscellanies were the primary means of circulation, since there is certainly a selection bias at work here: texts that were bound or kept with other texts would have been more likely to survive. Catalogs consulted were *Katalog Arapskih, Turskih i Perzijskih Rukopisa*, 17 vols. (Sarajevo: Gazi Husrev Bey Library); the union catalog of Turkish manuscripts: <www.yazmalar.gov.tr> (accessed January 8, 2010); the electronic catalog of the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul (accessed on site in August 2011); and *Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland*.

42 I was not able to consult originals.

43 For an account of many types of *kānūnnāme*, see Halil Inalcık, "Kanunnāme," *TDVİA*, 24:333–337.

44 See seq. 104–105.

A statistical analysis of circulation patterns alone, however, overlooks some characteristics of miscellanies that make them particularly interesting for historical study. Although MS Turk 11 contains standardized texts like the *Ma'rûzât*, it also contains customized elements that were apparently tailored to the owners' needs. Most of the fatwas in MS Turk 11 were copied into the manuscript as part of longer compositions, but some fatwas were jotted in two or three at a time at a later date, either into the margins or between other compositions.⁴⁵ These additional fatwas, which were presumably useful or important to the owner(s) of MS Turk 11, focus mostly on issues related to property, inheritance, and taxes.⁴⁶ In contrast, the *şeyhülislam* and other muftis regularly issued fatwas on a much wider variety of topics, including proper religious practice, criminal activity, family law, and licit and illicit pastimes.⁴⁷ The relatively narrow focus of the fatwas in MS Turk 11 suggests that the primary concern of a local mufti or judge was practical dispute resolution between members of a community.

In both their standardized and their personalized elements, personal miscellanies like MS Turk 11 can shed light on the intellectual framework with which Ottoman judges approached their cases. An especially exciting case study would result from comparing the personal miscellany of one judge with his decisions.⁴⁸ While we cannot conclusively identify any of the seventeenth or eighteenth-century owners of MS Turk 11, there are other personal miscellanies that do include individual judges' names. For example, two manuscripts located in Ankara indicate that they were both personally copied by judges, whose names are given.⁴⁹ In cases such as these, it might be possible to identify

45 See seq. 102, 103, 105, 109, 124, 148, 150, 151, 162, 173, 174, 179, and 181.

46 Most of the marginal fatwas seem to have a vague thematic relationship with the main text next to which they are written; although they do not directly comment on the main text, many are written next to passages that deal with property and inheritance.

47 For a useful overview of the topics upon which Ebu's-Su'ûd issued fatwas, see the table of contents in M. Ertuğrul Düzdağ, *Şeyhülislâm Ebussu'ûd Efendi'nin Fetvalarına Göre Kanunî Devrinde Osmanlı Hayatı* (İstanbul: Şûle Yayınları, 1998), 5–9. Scholars have debated whether it is possible to infer societal conditions on the basis of fatwas, particularly since many of them appear to have been intellectual exercises rather than questions spurred by real situations. The presence of clearly local fatwas dealing with practical problems in MS Turk 11 would seem to make them more reliable as sources for social and cultural history than fatwas originating in Istanbul.

48 To the best of my knowledge, this type of research has not been done. It would require some serendipity, first in locating a miscellany owned by a judge who could be identified in archival sources, and, second, in the survival of the relevant court register.

49 According to the union catalog of Turkish manuscripts, <www.yazmalar.gov.tr>, the manuscript 06 Hk 4905 was copied by Kađi Mehmed bin Ahmed İstanbuli in 1713. It includes three works: Ebu's-Su'ûd's *Ma'rûzât*, "Kânünnâme" (Law Code—this could be a generic collection or could refer to a specific law code), and a collection of fatwas from the *şeyhülislam* 'Ali Efendi. A second manuscript which mentions a judge

the court register dating from the individual judge's tenure and to explore whether and how the judge's personal miscellany is reflected in the court records, and vice versa. Records of disputes adjudicated by Ottoman judges often include detailed accounts of the testimony provided by claimants and witnesses, but provide little explanation for the ultimate decision reached. Comparing a judge's personal miscellany with his decisions might illuminate the reasoning and assumptions that remain implicit in the court records. At the same time, understanding the types of transactions and disputes that a given judge saw might shed light on why particular texts and fatwas were important to him.

Even a perfectly ordinary miscellany like MS Turk 11 offers insight into the ways that texts circulated and were received by their readers. Making optimal use of miscellanies for cultural history would require a combination of statistical analysis across a large sample and intensive, close reading of a few.⁵⁰ Comparing the contents of many miscellanies suggests how texts relate to each other and which combinations of texts were associated with a particular milieu. This statistical analysis makes possible broad generalizations about textual "ecology." At the same time, the specific and particular way that miscellanies were put together suggests how individuals related to their texts. Just as some scholars of European history have found insights into book owners' worldviews by examining how they chose to bind particular texts together into one volume,⁵¹ the selection and order of texts within a manuscript compilation reflects (even if imperfectly) the concerns and worldview of its compiler. In fact, scholars of manuscript-based cultures might have an advantage compared to those who study print-based cultures: manuscripts would have given their compilers more flexibility to select which texts or parts of texts they wanted to have, and what relation they wanted those texts to have to each other. As Armando Petrucci, the scholar of medieval European miscellanies, has observed, creating a manuscript miscellany is akin to creating a private library.⁵²

by name, 06 Hk 4042, contains Ebu's-Su'üd's *Ma'rûzât* and "Kânünnâme." It was copied in 1773 by Mehmed Şerif Kađı.

50 However, Jan Schmidt has recently demonstrated the difficulty of analyzing *mecmuas* using quantitative methods. Schmidt conducted a survey of dozens of miscellanies with the hope of identifying patterns in their contents. He found very few patterns. The approach outlined here requires focusing on canonical works (like the *Ma'rûzât*), which are more likely to have been cataloged. Jan Schmidt, "The Surplus Value of the Ottoman Mecmûa as a Genre" (paper presented at the Eski Türk Edebiyatı Çalışmaları conference, Istanbul, Turkey, May 3, 2011).

51 Ann Blair, *The Theater of Nature: Jean Bodin and Renaissance Science* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 186–187.

52 Petrucci, *Writers and Readers*, 8.

Creators of miscellanies selected not only the texts to include, but also tailored the graphic and material aspects of the manuscript to their own needs and preferences. For example, although the copies of the *Ma'rûzât* that I examined are similar word-by-word, the appearance of these manuscripts on the page varies considerably along most dimensions: the number of lines on the page, the quality of the paper, the presence of marginalia, the “professionalism” of the handwriting, and the decorations (if any).⁵³ Even the rubrication varies, so that different versions emphasize different aspects of the text. In spite of this variety, the content is mostly identical. This combination of diversity and similarity reminds us that Ottoman manuscript practices could flexibly accommodate diverging interests and needs even while preserving fidelity to the text. Manuscript technology makes possible a different kind of engagement with texts than is imaginable in the age of print. Personal miscellanies, with their idiosyncrasies, are the ultimate manifestation of manuscript technology’s flexibility. It is these very idiosyncrasies that make personal miscellanies such promising sources for cultural history.

53 I compared the first section of *Ma'rûzât* in MS Turk 11 to the same sections of the following digitized manuscripts from <www.yazmalar.gov.tr>: 01 Hk 502/2; 45 Hk 6471/2; 60 Hk 109/3; 06 Hk 4358/2; 06 Hk 4905/2; 06 Hk 4645/2; 06 Hk 3016/2; 06 Hk 4198; 06 Hk 4042/2; 06 Mil Yz A 5012/2; 18 Hk 286/2.

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