

ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK ON SUFISM

MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN
SONRA GELEN DOKÜMAN

THE QĀDĪZĀDELIS AND SUFISM¹

Mustapha Sheikh

Edited by Lloyd Ridgeon

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Introduction

A millennium after the migration of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina, corresponding to the seventeenth Gregorian century, the religious landscape of Ottoman Turkey was shaken to its core by a movement of scholar-activists known as the Qāḏīzādelis. Drawn from a spectrum of ethnic and social identities, and bonded by a unified vision for Ottoman society, this movement was able to manoeuvre itself into hugely significant positions of influence such that, by the reign of Sultan Murād IV (r. 1623–1640), it had a virtual monopoly over the pulpits of Istanbul's imperial mosques. Determined to reclaim Islam from a scholarly establishment they perceived as corrupt and Sufis they considered wayward, the Qāḏīzādelis promulgated a return to the way of the Salaf (the early generations of Muslims), a new vision for the spiritual path and a form of social activism which emphasised personal responsibility for bringing about a righteous society.²

Qāḏīzādeli polemic consisted of invective directed at a host of doctrines and practices that had significant purchase in Ottoman lands. Among these were traditions such as prayer at the graves of saints, audible meditation, mystical singing and extra-scriptural prayers performed in congregation. Not limiting themselves to the targeting of practices they deemed in conflict with sacred law, the Qāḏīzādelis also took aim at various social phenomena, norms and behaviours that they believed compromised upright Muslim behaviour. Coffee, tobacco, opium and kahvehanes were among these.³ What marked the Qāḏīzādelis apart within Ottoman society more broadly, and specifically from their counterparts in the learned hierarchy, was that they placed the burden of responsibility for rectification of self and society on the shoulders of every individual, whether scholar or layperson.

Interest in the Qāḏīzādelis is growing fast. In terms of the field of study, significant work has been done on the life and work of Bırgılı Mehmed Efendi (d. 1573), widely considered the spiritual inspiration of the Qāḏīzādelis. He is author of by far the best-known revivalist text of the Ottoman period, *al-Tarīqat al-Muḥammadiyya*, which by the twelfth/eighteenth century was one of the most widely owned books in the Ottoman Empire, and which today is part of the canon of texts taught in madrasas across the Muslim world.⁴ Qāḏīzāde Mehmed (d. 1635), the movement's eponym, and under whom the revivalist agenda was catapulted into the political centre of Ottoman society, has been