

## The birth of Üftāde

It is at the turn of this complex century that Üftāde was born, in the town of Bursa in 895/1490, in ‘The Quarter of the Arabs’ above the Inebey market where his father had come to live.<sup>20</sup> His father was originally from Manyas, and his mother from a little village near Bursa called Hamamlıkızık Köyü. His birth was surrounded by favourable omens. His mother dreamt that she saw her son dive into and come out of an ocean of milk, which his father interpreted as the announcement that his son would be called to become a perfect saint, who would be one of the people of knowledge and people of perfection;<sup>21</sup> this was characteristic of masters of the time, who received exoteric religious education before being initiated into mystical knowledge. According to Huseyn Vassāf, he was *Seyyid*, that is to say, a direct descendant of the Prophet. However, this descent may have been of a purely spiritual nature, coming through the devotion that Üftāde displays for the Prophet,<sup>22</sup> as we can see in this account taken from the *Menākīb*:

Muhammad Çelebi recounts: “One day I was in the presence of my master, Mustafā Efendi (Üftāde’s grandson). While he was talking, I was conscious of a perfume better than musk coming from the master. As I said to myself: ‘What a wonderful scent’, the master turned towards this poor person and smiled. It was

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He also mentions a clearly anti-Shī’ite story about Muslihüddīn Efendi (ibid. fo. 82a).

20. For the dates of his birth, see Mustafa Bahadıroğlu, *Celvetiyye’nin piri Hz. Üftāde ve dāvān’ı*, Bursa, 1995, p. 45.

21. İsmail Hakkı, *Kitāb-ı silsile*, p. 77. Üftāde himself tells the story that his father had told him: “One day I woke up and your mother was crying. She told me: ‘I dreamt that my son Muhammad was taken and put on a throne in the middle of an ocean of milk.’ He said to her: ‘Why cry when this is the good news that our son will be a person of knowledge?’” (*Wāqi’āt*, fo. 83a).

22. H. Vassāf, *Sefīne-i Evliyā*, İstanbul, 1999, II, p. 620; Yılmaz, *Azīz Mahmūd Hüdāyī ve Celvetiyye tarikati*, p. 178.

clear that this scent came from his body. He said with joy: ‘Last night in our interior world we kissed the blessed hand of Abū Bakr. This blessed perfume has come from his subtle body.’ And he added: ‘But if a privileged one amongst these creatures reaches the Muhammadian Reality, his body will be perfumed even better.’”<sup>23</sup>

Once Üftāde spoke of having a vision in which he saw that the world was “full of the Prophet’s spirit, and that he heard and that he replied, and the one who is capable of hearing can hear him reply, and if there was no effusion coming from him, one could do nothing, neither talk to me nor listen to me.”<sup>24</sup> In the same way, in a passage in the *Wāqi’āt*, Üftāde gives the rather ambiguous impression that he was in fact *Seyyid*: “In my early stages I wore a green coat. But one day it occurred to me that green was the colour of the clothes of the princes of the family of Muhammad. So I abandoned it out of regard for the clothing of my ancestor, and I chose not to use this colour except for the headgear (*tāj*).”<sup>25</sup> One source gives his father the title Shaykh ‘Alī Efendi, but this is unlikely.<sup>26</sup>

Üftāde was very soon in contact with a dervish endowed with spiritual powers, who was responsible for leading the prayer and preaching in the mosque of Selcuk Hatun, Muslihüddīn Efendi as he himself called him. They very soon became like father and son. The sight of Muslihüddīn’s spiritual perfection had a decisive effect upon the young Mehmed, who eventually begged his patron to accept him as disciple, asking him to lead him on the way of spiritual realisation. The master would not agree to this because of the young boy’s

23. *Menākīb*, pp.97–8. Üftāde explains that “the highest states and stations consist in being close to the Prophet” (*Wāqi’āt*, fo. 18b).

24. *Ibid.* fo. 39a.

25. *Ibid.* fo. 24b. The headgear, or to be more precise the crown, was a head-dress by which the orders were distinguished from one another, and a replica of which was placed on tombstones to identify the tombs of dervishes of such and such an order.

26. Bahadıroğlu, *Celvetiyye’nin piri Hz. Üftāde ve dīvān’ı*, p. 35.

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age, and later, no doubt, because Üftāde was bound to his master Hızır Dede. Üftāde must have been very impressed by this person, whom he mentions several times in the *Wāqi'āt*, and he was clearly still alive at the time when Üftāde was asked to preach in the Emīr Sultān mosque, for he recounts how Muslihüddīn intervened to persuade him to accept the job, as we will see later.<sup>27</sup> As Üftāde must have started preaching between the ages of 40 and 48, Muslihüddīn was evidently still living between 1530 and 1538. Üftāde describes the virtues and spiritual training of Muslihüddīn in the *Wāqi'āt*. His account shows a mystic who above all lets himself be guided by his unveiling, and who does not waste the opportunity to go and find what his visions show him, even when it involves those who are named infidels.

He used to say that he invoked the Unity of God night and day 70,000 times, and he possessed unveiling and spiritual powers. He told me that one day, during his retreat, it was said to him: "Go and see such and such a person in the church of the Patriarch of Constantinople." So I left the place where I was staying and went to this church. I asked for him amongst the infidels who were found there. They replied: "We do not know of him, but there is, over there in that cell, a man who hardly ever mixes with others." When I arrived at the door of the cell, this person came out. He said to me: "Come in, Muslihüddīn." I entered the cell and there I saw the signs of Islam. He told me to do my ablutions and he prayed with me. Then I wanted to take my leave of him, to go and eat something. I came on the day of 'Arafāt.<sup>28</sup> He asked me: "Are you in a state of ablution?" I replied "no" and he ordered me to ablute myself, which I did at once. He continued: "Shut your eyes, put your feet on mine and put your heart in confidence." So that is what I did. Then he seized me and drew me against his chest. We stayed like that

27. *Wāqi'āt*, fo. 82a.

28. A hill close to Mecca, where certain rituals are performed on the ninth day of the month of pilgrimage.

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for a moment and he said: “Open your eyes.” I opened them and there we were at ‘Arafāt. He said to me: “when you have finished your prayer, you will find me again here.” Later, having done that which I had to do, I came back and found him where he had said. I again did what I had done the first time, and we found ourselves back in his cell. Some days later, I went back to see him, but I found his cell empty. I asked the infidels where he was, and they replied that he was dead and that they had buried him [in Christian earth]. I lamented, saying to myself that he must have been a demon. But then I saw him in a dream, and he said to me: “O Muslihüddīn, if you want to see me, come and join me on the tomb which is under such and such a tree in the Muslim cemetery.” I woke up and went to the place he had indicated. Then he appeared to me as a Muslim, his face flooded with light. When I wanted to approach, he disappeared.<sup>29</sup>

Üftāde, in his childhood, was also in contact with another mystic, a dervish enraptured with God, by the name of Abdāl Mehmed, who also had a mausoleum.<sup>30</sup> The young Mehmed would also witness his unveiling and spiritual powers. Üftāde gives the following account according to the *Menākīb*:

I noticed each day that in the morning before the day rose, Abdāl Muhammad Efendi went to a large cave called the Cave of Cenk, in a place called Gökdere. He had long hair falling untidily from his head. Leaving his hair loose, he went up to the cave, stayed a moment, then came back down. One day, before he arrived, I rushed off to get there before him, I too letting loose my hair. As I let it loose, I saw all the kingdoms of the Arabs, the Persians, the Indians and the Europeans,

29. *Wāqī'āt*, fo. 38a. The same kind of spiritual power is reported with regard to Üftāde, who carries one of his dervishes in the same way as far as the new mosque of Kanūnī Süleymān in Istanbul, to perform the midday prayer there. *Menākīb*, p. 115.

30. This is a different person from the one mentioned in Mehmed Şemseddīn's *Yādīgār-ı şemsī*, ed. M. Kara and K. Atlansoy, Bursa, 1997, pp. 269–70.

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unveil themselves to me. No sooner had I covered my hair than they vanished as if they had never existed. Then I saw Abdāl Muhammad who had just arrived at the cave and who, seeing me, took me by the hand and said to me: “Go Muhammad, off you go, you insolent boy!”, telling me off in order to get me to go down. I kissed his blessed hand and went off.<sup>31</sup>

Üftāde may well have been impressed and felt great admiration for these two people, but they were not his spiritual masters. As is the case with other mystics, the choice of the spiritual life didn't come about easily. Üftāde's spiritual aspiration was against his father's wishes, who wanted him to have a career in the silk trade. We may assume that Üftāde's father had been drawn to Bursa to work as a silk merchant, since Bursa was a very important centre for the production of silk. He had the trade taught to his son, who was then compelled to do this work in spite of his repugnance for it, as he himself records in the *Wāqi'āt*. Üftāde dreamt only of following in the footsteps of the saintly people whose spiritual powers he saw, even more so because he lived in a town where for a long time a great number of dervishes had been coming – as we can see from the number of lodges which the old sources record the existence of. Eventually Üftāde could no longer tolerate the master with whom he was serving his silk apprenticeship. More and more arguments arose. One day, after one of these quarrels, he found himself in front of the Great Mosque of Bursa – the Ulucami – and following a prayer, that same night his employer died and his own father within the week. Üftāde experienced these events as a real liberation, as he recounts in the work of his disciple, 'Azīz Mahmūd Hüdāyī:

31. *Menākīb*, pp. 50–1. A variant of this story is mentioned, without the name *meczūb* (the enraptured one) in which Üftāde contemplates “the totality of the worlds, the light of the sun of divine secrets” and when the *meczūb* sees that, he tells him: “Oh child of pure lineage, do not miss the rules of good education – otherwise you will suffer and go astray” (ibid. p. 29).

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My father entrusted me to a silk merchant, and I worked for him for eight years despite the repugnance and aversion that my heart experienced. One day I met my master in the Great Mosque. He asked me if I was working and I replied: “Yes.” He continued: “Work, my son, and I shall bring you to a free workshop!” My tongue let slip that God would not accept his prayer, and yet my employer died that night and my father the same week. Four of us were left, me, my brother, my sister and my mother. We lived for a time, my mother working all night to weave the silk and I following my trade. Then my brother died, and my sister married a man who agreed that my mother could live with them. Thus I found myself alone, enjoying my tranquillity, and I could dedicate myself to the spiritual life under my master’s direction. I was a young man of eighteen when my master went to the mercy of God. I fell into an immense affliction and great distress on this path, and God didn’t open a single door for me until the day that I had the vision, where two drops or more fell on my heart from that intelligible universe, after which it opened. I saw what I saw while I was travelling in the universe of immersion for six or seven days, such that I no longer perceived myself or anything else. The opening of the door came to me as I was walking towards Kapulunca, for I used to walk the route to the mountain twice each day.<sup>32</sup>

32. *Wāqi’āt*, fos. 34a–b. A story of Üftāde at his investiture as master, told to his mother by a mysterious person, mentions that he should stay with her at that time in Kapulunca and that he should do his retreats in the mosque at this place (*Wāqi’āt*, fo. 40b).