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“In one of our long email chains with Tarık Tüten, I wrote: ‘I began to think that Hafız Ahmed Agha’s soul somehow finds me.’ After my very late realization, I suspected that the places I frequently visit that are very close to my home, such as the mosque in Karacaahmet built by him or the Fethi Pasha Grove, once belonged to his son. Now I am writing an article about the inventory that was so close to his heart that he prayed not to miss a page in the future; God forbid (*ma’âzallâhü ta’âlâ*)! Therefore, it is a privilege and a debt to be part of this Conversation, which is, among other things, a reverence for his donations, starting with the beautiful library he built in Rhodes. I would like to thank the people who made this possible, especially Tarık Tüten, who was always on hand to answer my questions and provide the necessary documents and corrections at every stage of this article. His friendship is one of the indirect ‘endowments’ of Hafız Ahmed Agha to my life. My dear professor İsmail Erünsal also contributed to this study with his ‘field-constituting’ research on Ottoman libraries and catalogs, and also with our ‘conversations’ in another library, İSAM.”

Elif Sezer-Aydinli

Founding Inventory (*Defter*) of the Ahmed Agha Library in Rhodes Text, Context, and Para-Text

Pour qu’une chose soit intéressante, il suffit de la regarder longtemps.
(Anything becomes interesting if you look at it long enough)
Gustave Flaubert¹

It was on the news of 2 July 1991 that two missing Qurans were put on preview at a renowned auction house for 2 billion liras in London. These books –a Mamluk Quran dated 1427 and an Iranian Quran dated 1555– were stolen from Ahmed Agha Library in Rhodes in November 1990.² Fortunately, Interpol seized the manuscripts following the auction and returned them to the library in Rhodes. This was one of the rare unpleasant events - closing with a happy end - that the original manuscript collection of the Ahmed Agha Library with its 828 core bound volumes endowed in the 18th century has gone through while being preserved in an exemplary way until today. As opposed to many of its contemporaries, the collection succeeded standing ahead in its original building and in the hands of the founding family with minor missing elements thanks to the registration and preservation programs of many people in its history starting from its donator/founder Ahmed Agha to the chief librarians (*hafız-ı kütüb*), local religious leaders (imams, muezzins, muftis), members of the Islamic community (*cemaat-i İslam*), trustees, and deputy trustees up until today.³

This article scrutinizes one of the most crucial documents in Ahmed Agha Library’s history of preservation: its founding inventory that is still in the library’s collection. Alongside the comparisons with the proceeding inventories or with the inventories of other contemporary libraries, I will particularly focus on this inventory book with a holistic approach. As a veneration to the centuries-long legacy of this beautiful library and as a contribution to the field of Ottoman book culture, I will discuss the content, physical aspects and registers on the inventory after contextualizing its patronage and function.

Context: A Typical 18th Century Inventory of Books

Regarding the detailed discussions of other articles in this edited book on the biography of the founder Ahmed Agha (ca. 1740-1801) and the founding history of his library, I will be settled for the historical context of this inventory in particular. It is registered today as *Fihrist-i Kütübhâne-i Hâfız Ahmed Ağa* with a registration number of 441 although the inventory itself does not bear a title.⁴ Missing a title page is not highly probable since all pages of the inventory are numbered and the book list starts on the page numbered as 1 (‘).

As its title, date of the inventory is also ambiguous although one may speculate that it should be on the year of 1793 -just before 18th November of this year- which is the writing date of the addendum (*zeyl*) of Ahmed Agha’s endowment deed (*vakfiyye*) that mentions an inventory (*defter*). Although it is

1 Letter to Alfred Le Poittevin dated 16 Sep 1845.
2 *Cumhuriyet*, 2 July 1991, p. 16.
3 There is a notebook (*fihrist*) in the library including a dozen of inventory registers by these people in the 20th century. *Defter-i Vukuât ve Fihrist-i Kütüphanesi-i Hafız Ahmed Ağa*, Rhodes, Hafız Ahmed Agha Library, MS Donations 442 and 443.
4 *Fihrist-i Kütübhâne-i Hâfız Ahmed Ağa*, Rhodes, Hafız Ahmed Agha Library, MS Donations 441.

not certain that this is the exact mentioned inventory, Ahmed Agha's seal pressed on the middle of each of two corresponding pages on the inventory and almost identical classification systems, titles and qualifications of books with this addendum suggest that this must be the founding inventory (*defter*) of the library.¹ Lack of a title and colophon may also be caused by the designation of the document as a suffix to the endowment deed and as a trustable check-list for the annual inventories. Thus, the scribe did not deem it necessary to assign a separate title, an introductory part to explain the applied classification system or context of patronage, or a colophon on the inventory itself.

As already mentioned, the very first list of the endowed books is present in the addendum (*zeyl*) of the library's endowment deed originally penned on 26 February 1792 preceding its addendums dated 18 November 1793, 13 July 1796, and 8 July 1808.² In the addendum of 18 November 1793 copied by the inspector of endowments (*müfettiş-i harameyn-i şerifeyn*) Mehmed Münif Efendi, the books endowed by Ahmed Agha are listed with some of their physical aspects. The list starts with the phrase - from the mouth of Ahmed Agha: "I put [them] to the closets of the mentioned library from my own purchase and property [*kendi malim ile iştirâ ve kütübhane-i merkume dolablarına vaz' eylediğim...*]"³ Then the books are listed consecutively as embedded in the text without any title or sign of categorization, FIGURE 1-2.



FIGURE 1: Ahmed Agha's endowment deed dated 26 February 1792: *Vakfiyye-i Rodosî Ahmed Ağa*, Ankara, Milli Kütüphane, MS Yazmalar B.260, f. 1b-2a. The booklist starts on the page 34a.



FIGURE 2: The endowment deed dated 18 November 1793. The book list starts in the middle of the left page after a panegyric introduction to its patron. VGMA 743/79/26.

- 1 This inventory is referred to as the 1795 *Catalog* including in the library's website www.hafizahmedaga.com
- 2 See: VGMA 743/37/11, 743/79/26, 743/153/36, 743/159/37 for the endowment deed and addendums besides *Vakfiyye-i Rodosî Ahmed Ağa*, Ankara, Milli Kütüphane, MS Yazmalar B.260.
- 3 In this article, I benefited from the transliterations of the endowment text and its addendums from *Rodosî Ahmet Ağa Fethi Paşa Vakfınamesi*. This is an unpublished source from the archive of Hafız Ahmed Ağa & Ahmed Fethi Paşa Vakfı archive.

After the book list that will be analyzed later, the passage written in Ahmed Agha's voice is crucial for understanding the function of the founding inventory:

...each year when the month of muharrem arrives, the scholars and notables and the gentry of the mentioned island should gather in the mentioned library, and they should survey the bound volumes in the mentioned library one by one according to the signed and sealed inventory (*defter*). They should be circulated and repaired and put in their place again. God forbid, if there is even one page missing from the mentioned inventory (*defter*) or the mentioned books were replaced by another book, the librarians and their guarantors should compensate and replace it...⁴

Firstly, the physical evidence on the inventory proves that this is the *mümzâ* (signed) and *mahtûm* (sealed) *defter* mentioned in this paragraph. As seen in **FIGURE 3** and **FIGURE 4**, there are Ahmed Agha's seals on the inventory twenty-six times situated in the middle of corresponding pages.⁵ Double (just for two times) or single time pressed seals are situated on the corresponding pages (except for the first page). Without exception, each section of the book bears the seals, but a section could also have seals for two distinct corresponding pages, especially if

this section is relatively long such as the hadith section. The function of these seals, as also stated clearly in the endowment deed, is demonstrating the legal status of the document and preventing the (God forbid! [*ma'âzallâhü ta'âlâ*]) loss of pages from the inventory.



FIGURE 3: The seal of Ahmed Agha first appears on top of the first section of books, Qurans [*kütübü'l-mesâhif*], f. 1-2 (The pages of the inventory follow single page numeration; thus, they will be referred to accordingly in this article). *Demirbaş Defteri*, Hafız Ahmed Agha Library. Photo: T. Tuten

⁴ ...ve beher sene mâhı muharrem'ül-haram duhül eyledikde cezîre-yi mezkûrenin ülema ve âyân ve ekâbir ve aġniyâsı kütüphâne-yi mezkûrede cem' olup hâkim-i belde huzûrunda kütüphâne-i mezkûrede mevzu' kütüb-i mücellide mümzâ ve mahtûm defteri mantukunca yegân yegân tatbîk olunarak devir ve ta'dâd ve yine yerli yerine vaz' olunup ma'âzallâhü ta'âlâ defter-i mezkûrdan ancak bir verak noksan bulunub yâhüd kütüb-i mezkûre tebdil ile yerine âher kitab vaz' olunmuş bulunmak ihtimâli olur ise hâfız-ı kütüb efendilere ve küfelâsına alayyi-hâlin tazmin ettirilüp yine yerine vaz' ettireler... Translations are mine if not indicated otherwise.

⁵ The seal reads: "These are the books endowed by the former *rikâbdâr* (lit. stirrup-holder) of the Sovereign Sultan, Hafız Ahmed Agha of Rhodes to the library he built up in the aforementioned island [*sâbikan rikâbdâr-ı hazret-i şehriyâri Rodosî Hâfız Ahmed Ağa'nın cezîre-i mezbûrda binâ eylediği kitâbhânesinin kütüb-i mevkûfesidir*]."

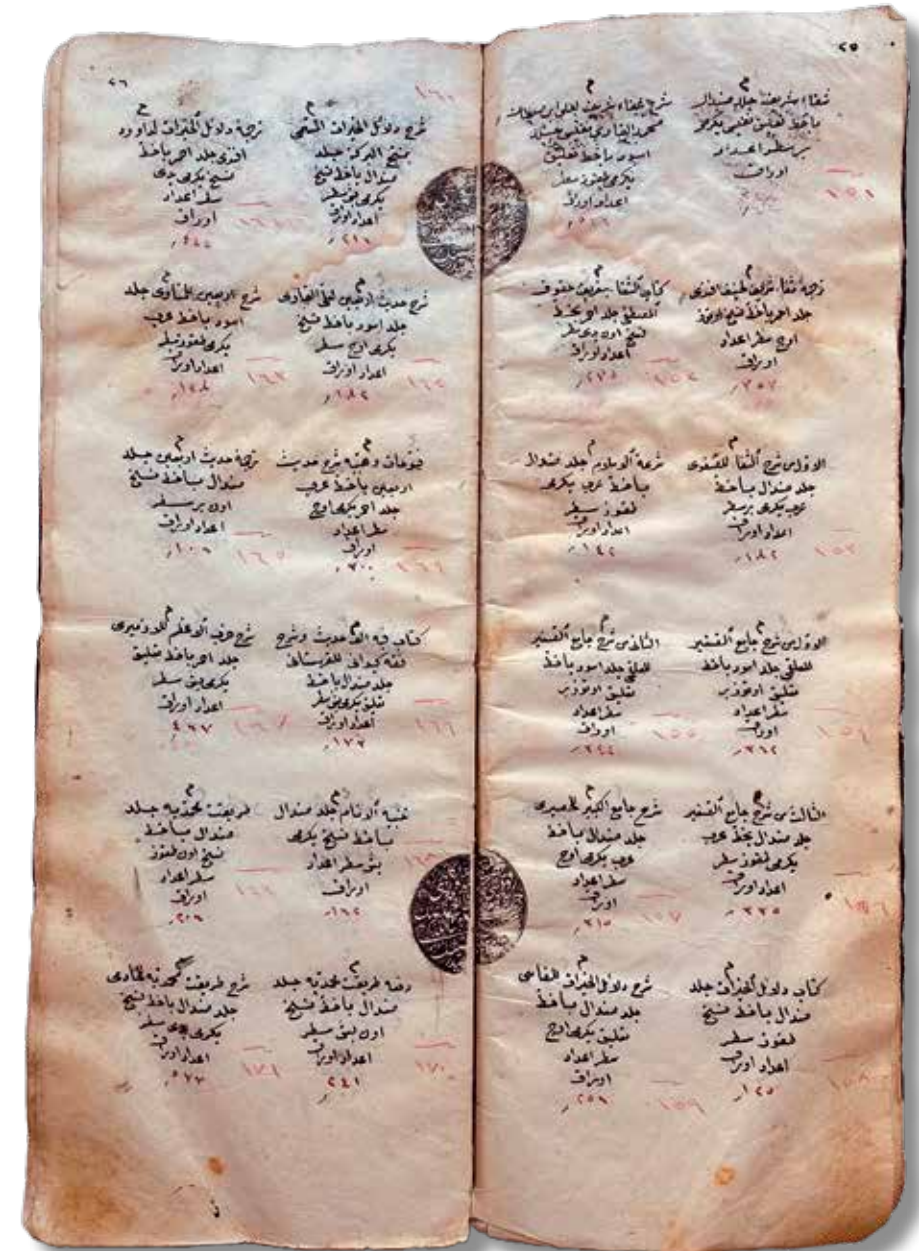


FIGURE 4: Double-time pressing of the seal in the middle of corresponding pages under the hadith books (*kütüb-i ahâdis-i şerife*), f. 25-26. *Demirbaş Defteri*, Hafız Ahmed Agha Library. Photo: T. Tuten.

Apart from the physical evidence, the parallelism in the order of scientific classes and book entries also strengthens the function of this document as a founding inventory. The inventory follows the order in the endowment deed, except for the case where Quranic recitations (*kıra’ât*) come after exegesis (*tefāsîr*) instead of hadith (*ahādîs*).⁶ The order of entries under each title also show a remarkable similarity. As a sample for this similarity, the following chart show the order of books under the title of literature mentioned as “from the science of literature (*fenn-i edebiyâtta*)” in the endowment deed, and titled as “the books of literature (*kütübü’l-edebiyyât*)” in the inventory:

Endowment Deed (<i>Vakfiyye</i>)	Founding Inventory (<i>Defter</i>)
<i>Esâsü’l-iktibâs</i>	Same
<i>Makâmât-ı Harîrî</i>	Same
<i>Şerhü’l-makâmât li’s-Şerîşî</i>	Same
<i>Ravzâtü’l-ahyâr</i>	Same
<i>Şerh-i dîvân-ı mütenebbitü’l-Vâhidî</i>	Same
<i>Divânü’l-Mütenebbî ve Divân-ı Ebu İshak</i>	Same
<i>Kâmilü’l-Müberred</i>	Same
<i>Dürretü’l-Gavvâs li’l-Harîrî</i>	Same
<i>Hamâse fi’l-edebiyye</i>	Same
<i>Yetimetü’d-dehr fi’l-edebiyye</i>	Same
<i>Riyâzü’l-inşâ li’l Hâce-yi Cihân</i>	Same
<i>Şerh-i dîvân-ı hâfız li’s-Sûdî</i>	Same
<i>Divân-ı Hâfız bâ tertîb-i Sûdî Efendi</i>	Same
<i>Şerh-i dîvân-ı Hâfız li’s-Surûrî</i>	Same
<i>Şerh-i dîvân-ı Hâfız li’s-Surûrî</i>	Same
<i>Gülistân ve bostân li’s-Şeyh Sûdî</i>	Same
<i>Li’s-Sûdî</i>	<i>Şerh-i Gülistân-ı Sûdî</i>
<i>Şerh-i Gülistân ve bostân li’s-Surûrî</i>	<i>Şerh-i Güistân-ı Sürûrî ve şerh-i bostan-ı Surûrî</i>
<i>Şerh-i bostân li-ş Şemi’</i>	Same
<i>Kitâbü’l-ikd fi’l-edebiyye</i>	<i>Kitâbü’l-ikd fi’l-edebiyyetü’l-Ferîd-i ibn-i Abdürabbih (the author’s name seem to be inserted later)</i>

6 For a comparison of all library’s catalogs in terms of the order of classifications, see John R. Barnes’ article in this volume. Ottoman scholar John R. Barnes’ in-depth study on the Hafız Ahmed Agha Library in Rhodes was originally published in Greek in *Δωδεκανησιακά Χρονικά*, περιοδική επιστημονική έκδοση της Στέγης Γραμμάτων και Τεχνών Δωδεκανήσου, Τόμος ΚΣΤ’ (Rhodes 2014), 333-90; and Τόμος ΚΖ’ (Rhodes 2017), 963-1043. The abbreviated version of this remarkable piece of work in this volume is the first publication in English with the kind permission of the author and the editor of *Δωδεκανησιακά Χρονικά*.



<i>Şerh-i şebistân li’s-Surûrî</i>	Same
<i>Tuhfetü’l-hameyn li Nâbî Efendi</i>	Same
<i>Külliyât-ı divân-ı Sâib</i>	Same
<i>Divân-ı Örfî-yi Şirâzî</i>	Same
<i>Divân-ı külliyât-ı Şevket</i>	Same
<i>Şerhü’l-lâmiyeti’l-Acem li’s-Safedî</i>	Same
<i>Şerh-i nihâyet-i İbn-i Hâcib ve şerhü’l-hazreciyye ve Endülisî</i>	Same
<i>Şerh-i hazreciyye li’d-Demâminî ve’s-seyyîd</i>	Same
<i>Nefhatü’r-reyhâne</i>	Same
<i>Dîvân-ı Sâmi</i>	<i>Kitâb-ı Divân-ı Sâmi</i>
<i>Divân-ı Münif</i>	Same
<i>Divân-ı Hilâlî ve Vecdî ve Neşâtî</i>	Same
<i>Hayriyye-yi Nâbî Efendi</i>	Same
<i>Şerh-i bostan li’s-Sûdî</i>	Same
	<i>Fakihetü’l-hulefâ</i>
<i>Yevakitü’l-mevâkid li’s-Se’alebî</i>	Same
<i>Mecmu’a-yi arûz</i>	Same
<i>Mecmu’a-yi keşkül</i>	Same
<i>Şerh-i kitâbü’s-Şihâb fi’l-edebiyye</i>	Same
<i>Şerh-i risâle-yi İbn-i Zeydûn</i>	Same
<i>Mecmu’a-yi Şefîk</i>	Same
<i>Şefîknâme</i>	Same
<i>Hilye-yi hâkânî</i>	<i>Hilye-yi hâkânî aleyhi rahmetü’l-bârî</i>
<i>Sa’atnâme</i>	Same
<i>Münşe’ât-ı Takiyüddin bi lisanü’l-Arab</i>	Same
<i>Divân-ı Külliyât-ı Vehbî</i>	Same

As seen in the chart, the order of the entries is almost identical except the insertion of *Fakihetü’l-hulefâ* in the inventory and some minor differences in the definition of some books such as *Kitâbü’l-ikd fi’l-edebiyyetü’l-Ferîd-i ibn-i Abdürabbih* instead of *Kitâbü’l-ikd fi’l-edebiyye*, *Kitâb-ı Divân-ı Sâmi* instead of *Divân-ı Sâmi*, and *Hilye-yi hâkânî aleyhi rahmetü’l-bârî* instead of just *Hilye-yi hakânî* in the endowment deed.

Descriptions of books are also very similar, if not identical. As a sample, the following chart shows the order of the entries and physical definitions in the section of Qurans (*kütübü’l-musâhif*):

Endowment Deed (Vakfiyye)	Founding Inventory (Defter)	Today ⁷
<i>Kebîr kut'a nesih hat ile on üç satır ikiyüz yirmi sekiz kağıtta bir kut'a mushâf-ı şerîf</i>	<i>Hazâ kelâmullah-ı ta'â'lâ 'azze ve celle <u>cild ahmer</u> bâ hatt-ı nesih on üç satır kut'a-yı kebîre <u>a'dâd-ı evrâk</u> 228</i>	Existent
<i>İki cildde nesih hat ile yedi satır ve etrâfı Ebu'l-leys tefsiri tahrîr olunmuş mushâf-ı şerîf</i>	<i><u>El-nısf-ı evvel</u> min mushâf-ı şerîf ve fî etrâf-ı tefsîr-i Ebu'l-leys-i Tûrkî <u>cild sandal</u> bâ hatt-ı nesih yedi satır <u>a'dâd-ı evrâk</u> 496</i>	Existent
<i>Nesih hatla on beş satırda ve ikiyüz altmış üç kağıtlı bir kut'a mushâf-ı şerîf</i>	Different order	Existent
Already mentioned as 2 volumes	<i>El-nısf-ı sâni min mushâf-ı şerîf ve fî etrâfı tefsîr-i Ebu'l-leys-i Tûrkî bâ hatt-ı nesih yedi satır <u>a'dâd-ı evrâk</u> 481</i>	Existent
Different order	<i>Mushâf-ı şerîf bâ hatt-ı nesih <u>cild ahmer</u> on beş satır kut'a-ı <u>kebîre</u> <u>a'dâd-ı evrâk</u> 263</i>	Existent
<i>Mustafa dede hattile nesih dokuz satırda yirmisekiz kağıtlı müzeyyen bir kut'a enâm-ı şerîf</i>	<i>Enâm-ı şerîf bâ hatt-ı Mustafa Dede <u>cild mezin</u> tokuz satır <u>a'dâd-ı evrâk</u> 28</i>	Non-existent
<i>Şükrullah hattile nesih sekiz satır yüz on dört kağıtta bir kuta nefis enâm-ı şerîf</i>	<i>Enâm-ı şerîf bâ hatt-ı Şükrullâh <u>cild ahmer</u> nefis sekiz satır <u>a'dâd-ı evrâk</u> 114</i>	Non-existent

As seen in the chart, the only difference in the order of Qurans is on two volumes of Qurans with the exegesis of Ebul'l-leys-i Tûrkî which is registered together in the endowment deed. Apart from the order, the physical definitions of books look very much alike except the inventory gives extra information on the covers of pages (underlined on the chart) probably for easier navigation of the books during inventory. Unfortunately, two precious Qurans from the original Quran collection

⁷ According to Rodos *Fethi Paşa Vakfı Hafız Ahmed Ağa Kütüphanesi Yazma Eserler Kataloğu*, eds. Bekir Şahin and Faruk Ağartan (Konya: TİKA, 2010).

of the library, penned by two famous calligraphers of the city Amasya, Mustafa Dede (d.1438) and Şükrullah (d.1543/4) are lost today. The absence of these two *enâm-ı şerif* are indicated also in the 20th century inventories.⁸

Despite this similarity in the order of sciences and entries, endowment deed and inventory were designed to serve distinct purposes. After the completion of the book list without any diacritical mark, the endowment deed announces -in Ahmed Agha’s voice- the landing property of the library, then the teaching days, salaries of teachers and librarians, and the prohibition of any lending outside of the library.⁹ Programs on praying and teaching in the ‘agha-endowed,’ individual (*müstakil*) libraries is nothing but typical in the 18th century Ottoman book culture looking at the endowment deeds of other libraries with the same character such as Yusuf Agha’s library in Konya or Hacı Selim Agha’s library in Üsküdar from which Ahmed Agha seems to be inspired while establishing his library.¹⁰ We learn that these programs of Ahmed Agha were well applied in the following years from the travel account of Edward Forbes written fifty years after the establishment of the library. He flatters the education on the island and in the library by saying there were one hundred and fifty students from the madrasa and higher schools funded by the bequest of Ahmed Agha as he learned from the chief librarian at that time, “a true book-worm Mehemet Effendi.”¹¹

On the other hand, the founding inventory does not have any clue of these functions on the document itself. As already said, it lacks any part for the reason of writing (*sebeb-i telif*), or an introductory part as well as any colophon to inform on the name of the scribe, date, and place of writing. Therefore, although it is a separate document, the inventory could be envisioned as a legal appendix to the endowment deed, but this time, instead of showing the grandeur and generosity of the endower, the aim was forming a checklist for the future librarians and prominent figures (*eşraf*) of the island to detect any possible absence of books.

Other possible functions of a catalog as a practical tool to locate the books on the shelves should be listed out considering that there are no location numbers on the inventory.¹² It was also not

⁸ For example, the inventories in the years of 1955 and 1963, see: *Defter-i Vukuât ve Fihrist-i Kütüphane-i Hafız Ahmed Ağa*, Rhodes, Hafız Ahmed Agha Library, MS Donations 442, p. 125 and 129. They are not the same Qurans stolen and auctioned in London in 1990. They were the Mamluk Quran on top of the chart and the other one is not from the original collection but from later donations.

⁹ VGMA 743/79/26.

¹⁰ İsmail E. Erünsal, *Osmanlılarda Kütüphaneler ve Kütüphanecilik* (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları: 2015), 233-5.

¹¹ This passage deserve to be quoted in whole, especially regarding the scantiness of accounts on the library from the 19th century: “In the town of Rhodes that Osmanlis have a public library, containing about one thousand volumes, and placed in a neat building erected for the purpose, founded about fifty years ago by Turbend Agasi Achmet Aga. We had an interview with the present librarian, Hadgi Mehemet Effendi, a highly intelligent old man, at his house, where we found him, buried among manuscripts, like a true book worm. He took much interest in the account of what we had seen in Lycia, and discourse, according to the learning of the East, on the ancient history of the country, as described in volumes around him. To the library in his charge, the students of the Madraseh or higher schools, have access. These students, about one hundred and fifty in number, are instructed, boarded, and lodged out of funds provided from private bequest [...] These facts show how our Turkish friends of Rhodes are to the value of instruction for the young.” Edward Forbes, *Travels in Lycia, Milyas, and the Cibrratis*, v. II, London 1847, p. 6-7. I learned about this account from Erünsal, *Osmanlılarda Kütüphaneler ve Kütüphanecilik*, footnote 531.

¹² For an excellent discussion on which signs on the catalogs might indicate the practical use, see Hirschler’s study on the catalog of Ashrafiyya Library in the 13th century Damascus: Konrad Hirschler, *Medieval Damascus: Plurality and Diversity in an Arabic Library The Ashrafiyya Library Catalogue* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), p. 60-100.

organized as a lending library because only *in-situ* reading and copying books were allowed, lending books -even a single page to be read or copied- outside of the library was strictly prohibited by the endower.¹³ Therefore, the title of “inventory” fits perfectly regarding the way this document has been organized by the patron and -in later centuries it has served- as an inventory for ‘protecting the collection.’ This function is typical to 18th century Ottoman catalogs called *defters* which have started to be organized as separate documents while the list of endowed books was mostly given in the addendums of endowment deeds in the previous centuries.”¹⁴

Text: Classification and Qualification of Books

As discussed in detail, the function of the founding inventory that was probably written in the year 1793 was neither to facilitate the navigation of books in the library shelves nor register the lending activities but “to correctly count and to place the books one by one [*mantukunca yegân yegân tatbik olunarak devir ve ta’dâd*]” in Ahmed Agha’s words.¹⁵ This function has an influence also on the content of the document in which the books were organized according to their subjects not to their locations or physical aspects to identify them during annual inventories.

Apart from being an ‘inventory-catalog’, the founding inventory of Ahmed Agha’s library is typically subject-oriented since from the 15th century, organizing booklists according to their subjects was the most conventional and dominant method in Ottoman catalogs. As early as the reign of Murad II, in his endowment deed dated 1435, the books were listed according to their subjects (first exegesis and hadith). Or, after the conquest of Istanbul, in the endowment deed of Fatih Complex dated 1470, the order of sciences was exegesis, hadith, and jurisprudence although it lacks proper titles.¹⁶ In the following centuries, the books have continued to be classified according to the Islamic sciences in the endowment deeds or in the individual catalogs despite some changes, insertions, and modifications of titles in time. For example, the eulogies constitute an individual title in the catalog of Turhan Vâlide Sultan Library in the 17th century or in the catalog of Ragıp Paşa Library in the 18th century, the section of exegesis divides into two sub-sections as “the exegesis and commentary of Keşşâf” and “the exegesis and commentary of Kâdî” that would be interpreted as the abundance of books under these sections.

The taxonomies of books in the catalogs deserve to be studied as sources for the field of classification of sciences.¹⁷ Since they are organized according to the subjects, the library catalogs are crucial documents to illuminate the current classification of sciences in Ottoman scholarship. From this perspective, Berat Açıl interrogated the titles of books in three library catalogs from three

distinct centuries, the catalogs of Mahmud Paşa (15th century), Habeşi Ahmed Ağa (16th century), and Fazıl Ahmed Paşa (17th century) libraries.¹⁸ Although Açıl is cautious about the representativeness of these catalogs to all of their centuries regarding the personal choices of the endowers and the reason for endowment (such as education), the formation of new titles such as literature (*edebiyât*), or the increase in the books of history (*târih/tevârih*), prophetic biographies (*siyer*), and hadith in the 17th century is a sign for a transformation in Ottoman library collections and scholarship. Looking at other Ottoman catalogs in the 18th century, the subject-oriented organization of books in the catalogs still seems the most common and dominant method. For example, the books in the catalogs of Sultanic libraries/ collections of Mahmud I (r.1730-1754), Ayasofya, Fatih and Galatasaray Libraries, or Ahmad al-Jazzar library in Acre were all classified according to their subjects although the number of titles varies.¹⁹ This system has been applied in other collections such as İsmihan Sultan or Şehid Ali Paşa, or the libraries of ‘aghas’ as an increased phenomenon in the 18th century such as Yusuf Ağa, Hacı Selim Agha, or our Ahmed Agha.²⁰

The collection at Ahmed Agha’s library in Rhodes shares the same approach with its contemporaries by its subject-oriented taxonomy of books and by the diversification of titles. The following list shows the titles of sections and the numbers of books in each section:

Genre	Title of Section	Number of Books	Blank pages afterwards
Quran	<i>kütübü’l-musâhif</i>	6	3
Exegesis	<i>kütübü’l-tefâsir</i>	72	3
Quranic recitation	<i>kütübü’l-kırâ’at</i>	27	3
Hadith	<i>kütübü’l-ahâdis-i şerife</i>	110	4
Exhortations	<i>kütübü’l-mevâ’iz</i>	23 ²¹	3
Prophetic bibliography	<i>kütübü’s-siyer</i>	20	4
Dogmatics and theology	<i>kütübü’l-akâ’id ve kelâm</i>	51	3
Jurisprudence	<i>kütübü’l-fıkh-ı şerif</i>	120	5
Manners of jurisprudence	<i>kütübü’l-usûl-i fıkh</i>	22	4

13 “Ber vech-i muharrer hâfız-ı kütüb ve müderris ve bevvâb ve müstahfız olan efendilerden her biri yevm-i Cuma ve Salı ve iydinden maada beher yevm kitabhâne-yi mezkûreyi tulû’-i şemsden vakt-i asra değin küşâd idüb mütâli’in ve müstensihine iktizâ eden kütübü ihrâc ve vakt-i asırda alub yine birine vaz’ ve takfil ve kemâl-i mertebe hıfz ve hirâset eyleyeler ve kütüb-i mezkûreden ancak bir varakı mütâla’a veyahud istinsah içün rehin veyâhüd âher bahane ile bir vechile kütübhâne kapusundan taşraya çıkarmayalar...” VGMA 743/79/26.

14 Erünsal, “Katalog,” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*, accessed online on 15.01.2025 <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/katalog>. For an early example to individual catalogs in the Ottoman culture, see the voluminous and brilliant discussion on the inventory of Topkapı Palace Library penned by the librarian Atûfî (d.1541) in the 16th century: *Treasures of Knowledge: an Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3–1503/4)*, eds. Gülru Necipoğlu, Cemal Kafadar, and Cornell Fleischer (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

15 VGMA 743/79/26.

16 Erünsal, “Katalog,” accessed online on 16.01.2025.

17 For the current discussions and main sources of this field, see: Müstakim Arıcı, *İlimleri Sınıflamak: İslâm Düşüncesinde İlim Tasnifleri* (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2020).

18 Berat Açıl, “Fazıl Ahmed Paşa Koleksiyonu ve İlimler Tasnifi: Karşılaştırmalı Bir Deneme,” *Darulfunun İlahiyat* 35 (1), pp. 129-152.

19 The studies on Ottoman catalogs are inspiringly developing. See: Yoichi Takamatsu, “I. Mahmud’un Kurduğu Üç Kütüphane: Ayasofya, Fatih, Galatasary Kütüphaneleri, in *Osmanlı Kitap Koleksiyonerleri ve Koleksiyonları: İtibar ve İhtiras*,” eds. Tülay Artan and Hatice Aynur (İstanbul, Dergah Yayınları, 2022). In the same book: Hatice Aynur, “Vakfiyesine Göre İsmihan Sultan’ın (ö. 1585) Medresesine Bağışladığı Kitaplar;” Tülay Artan, “On Sekizinci Yüzyıl Başında Osmanlı Bilgi Üretimi ve Dağılımı: Yazma Eser Koleksiyonları ve Koleksiyonerler Arasında Şehid Ali Paşa’nın Yeri,” *Müteferrika* 58, no. 2 (2020): 5–40. The latest study on Ottoman (ized) catalogs, see: *The Library of Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzâr: Book Culture in Late Ottoman Palestine*, eds. Said Aljoumani, Guy Burak, and Konrad Hirschler (Leiden: Brill, 2025).

20 For the increased involvement of the aghas into the Ottoman book culture, see: Zeren Tanındı, “Bibliophile Aghas (Eunuchs) at Topkapı Saray,” *Muqarnas* 21 (2004): pp. 333-343.

21 This number is 24 on the website of the library.

Islamic law	<i>kütübü'l-ferā'iz</i>	14	2
Sufism	<i>kütübü'l-tasavvuf</i>	47	5
Rhetoric	<i>kütübü'l-me'āni ve'l beyān</i>	21	6
Dictionaries	<i>kütübü'l-lügāt</i>	35	6
Logic, philosophy, etiquette	<i>kütübü'l-mantık ve'l-hikmet ve'l-ādāb</i> ²²	57	5
Arabic grammar	<i>kütübü'n-nahiv</i>	45	6
Arabic grammar	<i>kütübü's-sarf</i>	17	6
Literature	<i>kütübü'l-edebiyāt</i>	46	6
History	<i>kütübü'l-tevārih</i>	52	5
Medicine	<i>kütübü'l-tıbb</i>	18	6
Astrology	<i>kütübü'l-nücüm</i>	24	1
Albums	<i>murakka'āt</i>	2 ²³	5 blank pages before the end of the inventory

As seen on this chart, under 21 sections among which 3 of them are compound titles (exp. logic, philosophy and etiquette), there are 829 items in the inventory of which 22 are lost today.²⁴ The numbers of books that are not arranged in alphabetic order under jurisprudence (120 items) and hadith (110 items) outnumbered the following titles exegesis (72 items), logic& philosophy& etiquette (57 items), history (52 items), then dogmatics and theology (51 items). High numbers of books under the subjects of jurisprudence, hadith, and exegesis books are expected in any of the Ottoman catalogs since they are part of the madrasa education curriculum. But the section of history books in the inventory is worth focusing on, firstly because of the separation of history (*tevārih*) and prophetic biographies (*siyer*) which seems a 18th century phenomenon. Besides, 52 among 829 books is remarkable for the section of history. This portion contributes to the ‘common wisdom’ in Ottoman studies that the military men and bureaucratic class has gained a specific interest in

history among others such as literature (*edebiyāt*), Sufism (*tasavvuf*) and (*ādāb*).²⁵ One can assume the books under these sections especially reflect Ahmed Agha’s personal reading choices since he clearly states that he purchased these books himself (*kendi malim ile iştirā*), so they are not part of the madrasa curricula.

Apart from the numbers, the content of books is crucial to see that Ahmed Agha who held top positions in the Ottoman bureaucracy followed the current publications of his time. Alongside the ‘classical’ history books such as the history of Taberī, *Mukaddime* of İbn Khaldun or Taşköprüzâde’s *Şakāyık-ı Numāniyye*, the books written in the 17th and even 18th centuries are remarkable in Ahmed Agha’s collection which might reflect his personal tastes, and the bestseller history books of the period. The history of Altıparmak, Cihād-ı Sadrâzam Fâzıl Ahmed Paşa, Katip Çelebi’s *Takvîmü’t-Tevârih* and *Cihannümâ*, and the history of Naïmâ are some examples for the 17th century histories while the history of Subhî, Nazmizâde’s-*Gülşen-i Hulefâ*, or the history of Râşid are some examples of 18th century histories in the inventory. Two books under the history section are especially meaningful within a collection endowed to be stored in a library in Rhodes. One of them is the history of the island of Rodos (*Tevârih-i Feth-i Rodos*) written by el-Hacc Halîl Sofyavî, and the other is Kâtib Çelebi’s *Kesfî’z-Zünûn an Esâmi’l-Kütüb ve’l-Fünûn* which is registered only as *Esâmi’l-Kütüb*. The latter should have played a role in the categorizations of books on this inventory as it played a significant role in the Ottoman classification of Islamic sciences after the 17th century.

Finally, on its content, the inventory is typical also on the qualifications of books. For each entry, other than the title (mostly in its abbreviated version) and -sometimes- the author’s name, the physical features of the book are indicated. This information has a documentary value for the field of book culture which developing towards the studies of the materiality of manuscripts.²⁶ The physical features given in the catalogs contribute to the art history on one hand, and the perception of Ottomans over the physicality of books. The studies on bindings in Ahmed Agha’s collection are no surprise regarding the well-preservation of the books which can be supported by the written evidence in the inventory.²⁷

In a typical entry which acts like an identity card of each book, firstly, the title of the book or the author’s name (if the book is known by its author) is given. If it is a certain volume from this work, the entry also indicated the volume number at the beginning. The inventory tends to register each volume (*cild*) of a work separately. After the title and volume numbers, the entries continue in this order: the material and color of the binding, the type of script, the number of lines per page, and the total number of pages, as in this following example:

25 See: Hülya Canbakal, Meredith Quinn, and Derin Terzioğlu, “Book Ownership Across Centuries: The Case of Military Men in Bursa, 1620-1840,” in *Crafting History: Essays on the Ottoman World and Beyond in Honor of Cemal Kafadar* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2023). This study on the book ownership of military men in Bursa according to their probate registers (1620-1840) has similar conclusions, also footnote 35 on this article for other studies on that ‘common wisdom.’ For the title of *edebiyât*, the authors say: “The term seems to have gained currency as a comprehensive descriptor for a multitude of literary genres only towards the end of the seventeenth century,” p. 156. Berat Açıl had a similar statement in his aforementioned article: Açıl, “Fazıl Ahmed Paşa Koleksiyonu.”

26 See the publications and activities of two prominent institutions: Center for Manuscripts Studies at Fatih Sultan Mehmed University and Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC) at Hamburg University.

27 For example: Ayşe Ergin, “Rodos Fethi Paşa Vakfı Hafız Ahmed Ağa Kütüphanesi’ndeki XII. Ve XIII.Yüzyıl Ciltleri,” M.A. Thesis, Necmettin Erbakan University, 2019.

22 This title is written only as mantuk on the website of the library.

23 There are three entries but the last one seems to be inserted later with a distinct handwriting. This title is not included on the website of the library but the title in the inventory seems original with its color and handwriting.

24 Total number is 828 on the website that is due to the number of exhortations books which is 24 on the website but 23 according to my counting from the inventory. The number of losses is according to the website of the library.

Sa'di Çelebi ale'l-Beyzavi cild sandal bâ hatt-ı nesih yigirmi tokuz satır âdâd-ı evrâk 403	Sa'di Çelebi over Beyzavi binding is green, script is naskh, twenty-nine lines, number of pages 403
--	--

The colors of bindings throughout the inventory are yellowish green (*sandal*), red (*ahmer*) (FIGURE 5), brown (*mezîn*), yellow (*asfer*), colorful (*ebri*) and black (*esved*). Types of scripts are *nesih*, *arab*, and *ta'lik* whereas the number of lines and total pages vary immensely as other records of the books' physicality/materiality while navigating the books during the inventories.



FIGURE 5: *Sandal* (left) and *ahmer* bindings on two Qurans from the original collection registered with the numbers 2 and 4.

Paratext: Triangles, Notes, and More

For book entries, the most remarkable aspect is their shape which is an inverted pyramid (see FIGURES 3 and 4) marked with total page number in red at the end. Although a detailed analysis and comparison to previous catalogs and other contemporary catalogs are required to have a concrete conclusion, this triangular shape was probably invented in the 18th century by the proliferation of individual catalogs to dissociate the entries from other textual parts and to facilitate navigation during inventories. See for example, FIGURE 6, 7, and 8 from the catalogs of Ayasofya, Ragıp Paşa, and Al-Jazzar libraries, respectively:



FIGURE 6: The first page of the inventory of the Ayasofya Library. Süleymaniye Library, MS Yazma Fihrist 25-2.



FIGURE 7: The first two folios of the inventory of the Ragıp Paşa Library. Süleymaniye Library, Ragıp Paşa 4111.

Except the page of Quran section which only has six entries and the end of other sections, pages in the inventory of Ahmed Agha library have two columns, and each column has six entries. Thus, a typical page totally comprises twelve entries, FIGURES 3 and 4. All of the entries are written in *riqa* script with black ink except the numbers showing the total number of books' pages in red which should be -again- for easy navigation.

Looking at other materialities of the inventory, it is in codex form with 432x150-340x105 mm measurements and bound with a border-lined (*zencîrekli*), burgundy, leather cover, FIGURE 9.

As opposed to the traditional way in Ottoman manuscript culture, not the folios but pages are numbered with Arabic-Indic numerals with the last page number 178. There are book entries only on 83 pages whereas the rest of the pages are reserved blank for future additions, or they are the front or back cover pages (*zahriye* and *vikāye*) that have some manuscript notes.

On the cover page and *zahriye* page, there are 'modern' seals in Latin alphabet that reads "The Foundation of Fethi Pasha Hafız Ahmed Agha Library Rhodes [*Fethi Paşa Evkafı Hafız Ahmed Ağa Kütüphanesi Rodos*]." After a blank page, there is a table of contents (*fihrist*) showing the first-page number for each section, FIGURE 10.

In this *fihrist*, apart from the original sections, there is a section titled "dictionary books endowed by Ömer Râsim Efendi [*Ömer Râsim Efendi'nin vakf eylediği kütüb-i lügat*]," Therefore, this *fihrist* should be added around 1830s regarding Ömer Râsim Efendi was in Rhodes in the years 1828 and 30. Under the *fihrist*, there is a calculation that sums the page numbers for each section probably by a misunderstanding that the numbers display the total books for each section. The pray that reads

“O God, may your blessings and peace be upon us, you created our Master, our Master Muhammad, the soul of the body of the two universes, and upon his family and companions as numerous as your words” stands alone in the whole page preceding this *fihrist* after a blank page also resembles to the handwriting on the book entries.



FIGURE 8: First pages of the Quran section in the inventory of Al-Jazzar library. Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü (Ankara), Defter 1626, 13-14.

Another note is on page 30 under the hadith section that tells the 10th volume of *Şerh-i Buhārî* was endowed in the year [1]304 with a signature that probably reads the name Ömer. Another endowment note that is almost-full page long stands on page 44 informs on Nâzır Nâzım Paşa's endowment of 10 volumes of the books under the titles Sufism and History.¹ On the last page (p.175) of the inventory is another endowment note that reads “these are the names of the books endowed to Rhodes library by Ömer Râsim Efendi who was head of the financial department [*esbak defterdâr kisedârî Ömer Râsim Efendi'nin Rodos kütübhânesine vakf ve vaz'eylediği kütübü-i mevkûfesinin esâmisidir*]” preceding the names of two books: *Kâmûs Tercemesi* and *Burhân-ı Kâti*.² Ömer Râsim Efendi (1778-1846) whose name also appeared on the aforementioned *fihrist* was exiled to Rhodes in the year 1828 because of the report he presented to the Sultan on the Russian war. Therefore, his note dated 1831 should demonstrate his generosity towards the library he was acquainted with during this exile.

Last note on the same page is critical for deciphering some paratextual elements of the inventory. It tells that a new inventory was made after the chief librarian Mehmed Efendi passed away and Mehmed Nuri became the chief librarian, FIGURE 11. During this inventory, fifteen missing books were detected and were displayed over the catalog as present (*mevcûd*) or non-present (*lâ-mevcûd*). The letters *mim* (م) seen on top of the entries are common to other Ottoman catalogs meaning present (*mevcûd*). The dots on *mims* are probably marked during a following inventory. 17 entries in total don't bear *mims* and some of them are marked with the letters *lamelif* (ل) meaning non-present (*lâmevcûd*). So, we understand these marks were made during the inventory of Esseyyîd Mehmed Nuri el-Hacc as he indicated on his note dated 21 Receb 1261 [27 July 1845], FIGURE 11. It is also the same Mehmed Efendi that Edward Forbes had a chat with on Hafız Ahmed Ağa's library in the year 1847!³

1 Probably the war minister Hüseyin Nâzım Paşa (1848-1913).

2 See footnote 16.

Lastly on the marks and signs, there are numbers that start with red ink then changeably continue with blue ink and pencil black in Arabic-Indic numerals near all the entries, FIGURE 12.

However, these numbers that ends with 843, are not in correlation with the numbers registered on the 20th century inventory book. In this book, the inventory dated 1341 (1923) is a list of books with their detailed physical features and there are two numeration system of books that are the endowment number (*vakıf numerosu*), and order number (*sıra numerosu*), FIGURE 12.³ Therefore, these numbers on the founding inventory were probably put just to determine the total number of books in the founding inventory maybe by the hand of 1923 inventory-writer or by someone else.



FIGURE 9: Burgundy-leather, border-lined binding of the inventory, the *Demirbaş Defteri*, Hafız Ahmed Ağa Library. Photos: T. Tuten.

3 *Defter-i Vukuât ve Fihrist-i Kütüphanesi-i Hafız Ahmed Ağa*, Rhodes, Hafız Ahmed Ağa Library, MS Donations 442 and 443. In this inventory, two *enâm-ı şerîf* which are lost today are present.

فهرس الكتاب

كتاب الاحاديث شريفة	كتاب التفسير	كتاب القواعد	كتاب الاحاديث شريفة
٤١	١٥	١٥	٤١
كتاب الفقه الشريفة	كتاب العقاب	كتاب الفقه الشريفة	كتاب الفقه الشريفة
٥٥	٤٧	٥٥	٥٥
كتاب اصول الفقه	كتاب الفرائض	كتاب الفقه الشريفة	كتاب الفقه الشريفة
٧٤	٧٩	٧٤	٧٤
كتاب المعاني والبيان	كتاب اللغات	كتاب المنطق والكلام والبيان	كتاب المعاني والبيان
٩٥	١٠٤	١١٤	٩٥
كتاب الفقه	كتاب الصرف	كتاب الادبيات	كتاب الفقه
١٤٤	١٤٤	١٥١	١٤٤
كتاب الطب	كتاب النجوم	مرقات	كتاب الطب
١٦١	١٦٩	١٧٤	١٦١

عزيم الدين بن قاضي بن كيت لفت

١٧٥

FIGURE 10: A table of contents (*fihris*) showing the first-page number for each section, Hafız Ahmed Agha Library, *Demirbaş Defteri*, Photo: T. Tuten.

[illegible]

FIGURE 11: The endowment note of Ömer Râsim Efendi and the books he endowed. The note on the lower right dated 1845 informs on the inventory made during the chief librarianship of Mehmed Nuri Efendi. Hafız Ahmed Agha Library, *Demirbaş Defteri*. Photo: T. Tuten.



FIGURE 12: Consecutive numbers in blue and red inks on each entry, Hafız Ahmed Agha Library, Demirbaş Defteri, Photo: T. Tuten



FIGURE 13: Two types of numeration systems on the 20th century that are not the same with the numbers on the inventory. Defter-i Vukuât ve Fihrist-i Kütüphanesi-i Hafız Ahmed Agha, Rhodes, 1923. Photo: T. Tuten.

Conclusion

Turning back to our starting point, preservation was (and still is) the main motivation behind the inventories, from the first one to the ones registered on the 1923 inventory book. Despite some losses precisely over two hundred and thirty-three years, the founder of the library and endower of its collection, Ahmed Agha, has fulfilled his aspirations over the protection of his books. Unlike many others of their contemporaries, the books succeeded to stand in their original place and subjected to a diligent care by their protectors, chief librarians, at first but also the trustees, the local administrators, men of religion, and anyone from the islander community. Starting from the son of Ahmed Agha, Fethi Pasha (1801-1858) whose life and endowments deserve a distinct study, the donors carried this collection one step further than just protection by expanding the collection almost double in size until today.

As the development of literature on the Ottoman libraries, collections and catalogs has shown, the 18th century was a special period for the Ottoman libraries since they grew in number, expanded geographically and established/supported by the patrons from a more diversified administrative and social backgrounds. Ahmed Agha was one of the bibliophile aghas in this period who collected books by his own purchase and endowed them to the library he established in his hometown to primarily serve the students. He determined the non-negotiable rules and regulations of his library from the numbers and salaries of the librarians to the days of praying or lending prohibitions. One of them was about a signed and sealed inventory book (*defter*) of which even a page should not be lost and which should be used during the annual inventories. Like the teaching or praying functions assigned to his library, the function of this *defter* was also not uncommon in the 18th century Ottoman world as an item on the checklist to be approved by the patron himself and it was designed as a separate but attached document to his endowment deed.

However, remembering the epigraph I quoted from Flaubert, anything becomes interesting when you stare at it for a long time, because, in time, you realize the bits and pieces of something which are authentic and distinctive from its counterparts. This study stares for a long -but never enough- time to decipher the similarities and differences of this ‘inventory-catalog’ in terms of the definitions and classification of books, layout of the entries, shapes and colors dominant in the pages, and manuscript notes that whisper on the afterlife of the inventory. Looking closely on more of such catalogs will certainly illuminate their historical and cultural context besides contributing to the field of Ottoman book culture.

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Tefsir, Commentaries (left), *Tasavvuf, Mysticism* (center), *Hadis, Hadith* (right) sections.
Hafız Ahmed Ağa Library, Rhodes
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