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# Solomon, his temple, and Ottoman imperial anxieties

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**Abstract**
Several works focusing on the complex figure of Solomon appeared between 1450 and 1580, each offering variations on the themes of empire-building, sedentarization, sacral kingship, and technological change.The Dürr-i Meknun, written around the time of the conquest of Constantinople, uses Solomon to illustrate the risks of urbanization, imperial hubris and potential tyranny. The second, the Süleyman-name by the technically inclined author Uzun Firdevsi, portrays Solomon in the image of Sultan Bayezid II. The prophet, using his bureaucratic capacities, enacts Ottoman dreams of control over the eastern Mediterranean. Finally, the accounts given of the deeds of Sultan Süleyman, notably the reconstruction of the Temple Mount and the construction of the Süleymaniye complex in Istanbul, show the Solomonic myth consciously enacted by the state itself. These sources trace a trajectory whereby anxieties surrounding the transformations of early modernity are expressed and worked through by means of the vocabulary of a prophetological sacred history.
**Keywords:** Islamic studies, Ottoman studies, Prophetology, Islamic folk literature, Islamic political thought, Ottoman history, Ottoman intellectual history

In his library in Topkapı Palace in Istanbul, the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451–81) kept a copy of the *Testament of Solomon*, an anonymous Greek text of disputed date.[1] It tells of the Biblical Solomon's encounters with demons and spirits and closes with a cautionary tale in which the prophet-king falls in love with a princess from a pagan land. This pagan princess says she will not marry him unless he worships her gods, which Solomon, as prophet of the one God, refuses to do. She insists and lays before the king "five grasshoppers, saying 'Take these grasshoppers, and crush them together in the name of the gods Raphan and Moloch; then I will sleep with you'". Solomon confesses, "And this I actually did. And at once the Spirit of God departed from me …

1 Julian Raby, "Mehmed the Conqueror's Greek scriptorium", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 37, 1983, 15–34. The original composition of the *Testament* has been traditionally placed between the first and fourth centuries CE, but this date is disputed. See James Harding and Loveday Alexander, "Dating the Testament of Solomon", lecture, University of St Andrews, 28 May 1999, https://otp.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/guest-lectures/dating-the-testament-of-solomon/.

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Wretch that I am, I followed her advice . . . and my spirit was darkened, and I became the sport of idols and demons".[2]

Elsewhere in Topkapı's library were preserved closely related stories. Several versions of the ubiquitous medieval collections of prophet tales known as *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā* ("Tales of the Prophets") present Solomonic narratives derived in part from the sources of the *Testament*. Emerging out of a body of lore on pre-Islamic prophetology collectively termed *isrā'īliyyāt* ("Israelite lore"),[3] the *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā* of al-Thaʿlabi and al-Kisā'i tell of a pagan princess whom Solomon had married, and who was secretly devoted to the cult of her own father whom she had re-imaged as an idol of gold in her private palace.[4] The wise vizier Asaf discovers this and informs Solomon, who, distraught, loses his divine guidance as the demon Sakhr steals the king's signet ring and sits on his throne. Exiled from kingship and prophecy, the disgraced Solomon is forced to repent fully for his wife's paganism before he can regain his throne. The Solomon of the *Qiṣaṣ* of Ibn ʿAsākīr hews even more closely to that of the *Testament*: the king sacrifices a locust to his wife's idols.[5] As for the Quran itself, the standard by which Muslim readers would measure the authenticity of the others, Solomon is rehabilitated,[6] but not before he is for a time made absent from his throne, replaced by a "mere body".[7]

This exiled Solomon, whose love for his wives leads him to dabble in pagan worship and to rush towards a hubristic fall, is based on the canonical Solomon of the Hebrew Bible. "As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods . . .", reads 1 Kings, and God resolves to take his kingdom away from him.[8] This complex Biblical Solomon presents to the Jewish and Christian exegete a certain problem: the ultimate builder, possessed of wisdom and kingly virtues, nonetheless succumbs to a temptation that squanders his

2 F.C. Conybeare, "The Testament of Solomon", *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 11/1, 1898, 1–45. For analysis of this apocryphal Jewish–Christian text and a newer translation, see D.C. Duling, "The Testament of Solomon", 935–87, in James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009). For an ambitious survey of the mythic Solomon in the late antique and medieval Christian worlds that places *Testament* in its context, see Pablo A. Torijano, *Solomon, the Esoteric King: From King to Magus, Development of a Tradition* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2002).

3 See M.J. Kister, "*Haddithū 'an Banī Isrā'īla wa-lā Haraja*: A study of an early tradition", *Israel Oriental Studies* 2, 1972, for an overview of the *isrā'īliyyāt* genre.

4 William Brinner, *ʿArā'is al-majālis fī qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā, or "Lives of the Prophets"* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Kisā'ī, *The Tales of the Prophets of Al-Kisā'ī*, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978).

5 See M.O. Klar, "And we cast upon his throne a mere body: a historiographical reading of Q. 38: 34", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 6/1, 2004, 105; and J.E. Lindsay, "ʿAlī b. ʿAsākir as a preserver of *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā*: The case of David b. Jesse", *Studia Islamica* 82, 1995, 45–82.

6 "It was not Solomon who disbelieved". Quran 2: 102.

7 "Certainly We tried Solomon, and We cast upon his throne a mere body; then he repented." Quran 38: 34, trans. A.J. Arberry. Klar, in "And we cast upon his throne", provides a thorough overview of this verse within the context of the Quranic and *Qisas* Solomon.

8 1 Kings 11: 4–13.

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gifts.[9] In this profile Solomon resembles another mythic king whose rise and fall is told in another book in Meḥmed's library at Topkapı: Jamshīd, the culture hero of Abū'l-Qāsim Firdawsī's Iranian epic *Shāhnāma*. "[Jamshīd cried] 'Who would dare say that any man but I was king?' All the elders inclined their heads … By saying this he lost God's *farr*, and through the world men's murmurings of sedition grew … Jamshīd's days were darkened, and his world-illuminating splendor dimmed", writes Firdawsī.[10] For this reason, Jamshīd and Solomon were commonly interpreted by Muslims from India to the Ottoman lands as two names for the same person.[11] Indeed, the conflation of Solomon and Jamshīd seems to have created in the minds of Muslim commentators the same problem that vexes Biblical exegetes. How could Solomon and Jamshīd have been the same, when the latter clearly sinned? How can a glorious king and prophet fail so spectacularly? Although the fifteenth-century Persian historian Mīrkhwānd absolves Solomon of Jamshīd's sins by noting the many centuries that separate the two,[12] Solomon, in the imagination of many, had absorbed Jamshīd's darker aspects.

Seen together, the several Solomon stories that shared the shelves of Sultan Meḥmed's library speak with deep multivalence. While remaining the ultimate archetype of sacral kingship and the overseer of monumental urbanism, Solomon presents at the same time a counter-narrative critical of monarchy. In showing Solomon succumbing to the allure of power as his domain expands to pagan territories and as his household grows to include polytheist women, the story seems to give voice to an awareness of dangers of imperial expansion and the centralization that complements it. The story alludes to the precarity of the imperial model, always at the verge of a fall, a fall precisely connected to the cosmopolitanism of empire. The strength of empires in accommodating difference here leads to their disintegration.

This multivalence, I will argue, gives the Solomonic myth a particular utility for thinkers imagining the present and future of the early Ottoman Empire. These themes of sacral kingship and imperial overreach work as natural ingredients for commentary on politics and society in the great empire of Balkans, Anatolia, and the Levant in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries – a time experienced by Ottoman observers as one of political, social, and technological

9 It has been argued that the Solomonic narrative of 1 Kings was from the beginning a focus for "subversive" criticism of monarchy. See Eric A. Seibert, Andrew Mein and Claudia V. Camp, *Subversive Scribes and the Solomonic Narrative: A Rereading of 1 Kings 1–11* (New York and London: T&T Clark, 2006).

10 Abolqasem Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*, trans. Dick Davis (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 8.

11 See Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, "Contested memories: narrative structures and allegorical meanings of Iran's Pre-Islamic history", *Iranian Studies* 29/1–2, 1996, 149–75; Dominic Brookshaw, "Mytho-political remakings of Ferdowsi's Jamshid in the lyric poetry of Injuid and Mozaffarid Shiraz", *Iranian Studies*, 48/3, 2015, 467; Prods Oktor Skjærvø, "Jamšid i. Myth of Jamšid", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater, 14/5, 501–522 (New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 2008); Asadullah Melikian-Chirvani, "Le livre des rois, miroir du destin. II. Takht-e Soleyman et la symbolique du *Shahname*", *Studia Iranica* 20/1, 1991, 33–148.

12 Tavakoli-Targhi, "Contested memories", 168.

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experimentation.[13] The eastern Mediterranean, long a decentralized zone with "frontier" characteristics, found itself ruled for the second time by a bureaucratic state based in Constantinople.[14] Levying new military technologies of gunpowder and the janissary musket corps, the Ottoman centre commanded an unprecedented amount of labour enforced by systems of legal servitude and military slavery. To Anatolia and Iran's typical late medieval social pattern, characterized by the rule of military castes of nomadic heritage, the Ottomans introduced more efficient control over agricultural land and fostered maritime commerce, making use of the infrastructure of local elites who were being integrated into the state. As Ottoman society grew entwined with the non-Muslim or newly Muslim population of the Balkans and eastern Mediterranean, the state struggled with the diversity of its subjects. With its Turkish-speaking Muslim core and, after 1517, an Arabic-speaking south and east too important to peripheralize, it still engaged with Greek and Slavic-speaking Christians who thrived at the very heart of the "empire of difference".[15]

This unique situation produced both critics and enthusiasts, participants and left-behinds of this new social order. Scholars since Paul Wittek have imagined Ottoman elite society of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to be riven by an evolving internal division between centralizers, represented by the sultan and his entourage, and the *ġāzī*s, the frontier lords who were ultimately unsuccessful in defending their autonomy against Istanbul. Historiography often makes use of Khaldunian stereotypes to distinguish between the Persianized urbanism of recent converts or eastern immigrants and Turkic nomadism; between the sultan's triumphant slave corps and marginalized tribal forces; between scholastic Islam and rural Sufism. Though this study will refrain from directly addressing the historicity of these typologies, it is at least partially certain that the monarchy that grew up around the descendants of ʿOs̱mān only took shape as Rumelian and Anatolian pastoralists and warlords, urban notables, Balkan landlords, and other players were forced to relinquish their own power.

Ottomanist scholarship has only occasionally addressed how tensions surrounding new social formations were reflected in sources that are not expressly political or historical. On the one hand, relatively visible is the political content of the writings of Ottoman historians of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries: ʿĀşıqpaşazāde railed against Istanbul bureaucrats, and later authors of *naṣīḥat,* or advice literature, modernized a long lineage of writings of the "mirror for princes" tradition, using these tools to propose remedies for social or fiscal

13 This interaction between Ottoman social change and millenarian expectation is characterized by Cornell H. Fleischer in "The lawgiver as Messiah: the making of the imperial image in the reign of Süleyman", in *Soliman Le Magnifique et son temps : Actes Du Colloque de Paris, Galeries Nationales Du Grand Palais, 7–10 Mars 1990 = Süleymân the Magnificent and His Time: Acts of the Parisian Conference, Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais, 7–10 March 1990*, Rencontres de l'Ecole du Louvre (Paris: Documentation française, 1992), 159–77.

14 Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), summarizes and builds upon twentieth-century scholarship on the Ottoman frontier.

15 See Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

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ills. Contemporary scholars of Ottoman law have learned how to read Ottoman *qānūnnāme*s (sultanic law codes), *fetāvā* (legal opinions), and *sicil*s (law court records) to reconstruct social history. Religious and legendary narrative, on the other hand, has rarely been analysed in this way. Insofar as scholars have been interested in how litterateurs of the early Ottoman period engage with their political environments, their gaze has fallen on dynamics of patronage and production. Religious narratives, such as histories of the prophets and of the early Islamic community, are often treated as especially static forms reworked in superficially contemporary language. One exception is the study of Ottoman hagiography, where scholars have begun to use fruitfully the content of hagiographic *menāqibnāme*s ("books of feats") to research popular attitudes on social matters.[16] An equally fertile ground for historicizing readings of Ottoman literature is found in poetic epics, such as Aḥmedī's *İskendernāme*, an Alexander romance written between 1390 and 1410 that is most famous for containing the earliest historical account of the Ottoman house in its verse appendix. Caroline Sawyer analyses how the *İskendernāme*, in its basic story and across its various recensions during the fifteenth century, maps Ottoman expansion and the *gazi* ethics that legitimize it onto tales of Alexander's journeys of conquest and its rhetoric of universal justice.[17] Dimitri Kastritsis has closely investigated Aḥmedī's and related Alexander stories, finding that they not only deploy the epic form to express philosophical ideas, but that they are also remarkably responsive to social and political conditions that generated modifications and reworkings of themes and characters.[18] "The Alexander Romance functioned as a mirror", Kastritsis remarks, one that reflected the historical contexts and political agendas of both its writers and readers. Although the story was part of a "common cultural heritage", its "details were in the eye of the beholder".[19] Can one read the Ottoman Solomon in a similar way?

Recovering political content from texts and genres classified as "religious writing" or "popular legend" is especially necessary for the study of Islamic societies. The twin legacies of, first, Western Orientalism which inherits sharp generic distinctions between theology, philosophy, history, and popular literature, and, second, the Islamic pietist impulse to consider religious narratives to be immaculate since their origin in revelation, weave a screen between writing on the sacral and the social. This may have far-reaching consequences, not least

16 See Gottfried Hagen, "Chaos, order, power, salvation: heroic hagiography's response to the Ottoman fifteenth century", *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 1/1–2, 2014, 91–109; Gottfried Hagen, "Heroes and saints in Anatolian Turkish literature", *Oriente Moderno* 89/2, 2009, 349–61.

17 See Caroline Sawyer, "Sword of conquest, dove of the soul: political and spiritual values in Ahmadi's *Iskandarnama*", in M. Bridges and J. Ch. Bürgel (eds), *The Problematics of Power: Eastern and Western Representations of Alexander the Great* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1996), as well as Caroline Sawyer, "Revising Alexander: structure and evolution of Ahmedi's Ottoman *İskendername*", *Edebiyat* 13, 2003, 225–43.

18 Dimitri Katritsis, "The Alexander Romance and the rise of the Ottoman Empire", in A.C.S. Peacock and Sara Nur Yıldız (eds), *Islamic Literature and Intellectual Life in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century Anatolia* (Istanbuler Texte und Studien. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2016), 243–83.

19 Katritsis, "The Alexander Romance", 278.

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of which is a difficulty in adequately theorizing the boundaries between spiritual and political authority. One aim of this essay, then, is not to desacralize religious or popular narrative, but to show one instance in which these narratives, as they move through history, reflected and were reflected by political and social experience. Religious stories were not unmoving inheritances, but functioned in a diagnostic or even proscriptive capacity.[20] As their diagnoses and proscriptions were heeded, these narratives then become one party in a dialogue between sacred models and lived history, which together propel historical change.

What follows is an attempt to chart the channels through which the Solomonic story was used in Ottoman political discourse and grew to become part of political life. Using texts written from the mid-fifteenth to mid-sixteenth century, I show that the figure of Solomon became a way for Ottoman commentators writing in Turkish to criticize, praise, and understand early modern changes. Through Solomon, in other words, the empire was able to see itself. And this relationship also works the other way: even as discourse about Solomon subtly *expressed* political realities, political players came to *enact* these narratives. As political anxieties and hopes were voiced in the idiom of sacred history, actors at the heart of the state literally imitated their prophetic models. Looking beyond Ottoman borders, I suggest that a defining feature of early modernity is the way the vocabulary of prophetology became a lexicon of sovereignty, a kind of "mirror for empires". If, as scholars of the Renaissance have long believed, the post-medieval experience entails a fresh relationship to the imagined past, then this would be a place to start integrating the Ottomans into this framework. In the same way that Machiavelli and other writers re-approached the myth of Rome in order to examine the meaning of empire, its inheritance, and its revival, while others renewed universalist and Davidic models of statecraft, then, further east, models for the Ottoman political process that give accounts of empire, urbanism, and technology emerge out of a continually re-imagined pre-Islamic history of Solomon.

By way of arguing this, I hope to touch upon a theoretical issue concerning the nature of the relationship between sacred history and politics. Specifically, this study intends to suggest that the continued centrality of the Solomonic narrative to Ottoman political rhetoric and practice alike shows sacred history to be a *conceptually basic* feature of early modern societies. Rather than serving merely to "justify" or "criticize" social reality, it helps to define its institutions in a continual process of encounter. Narratives, for Meḥmed II, Süleymān the Lawgiver, and Philip II alike, help the early modern political actor or critic to interpret, adjust to, and direct political change, and so nourish the historical process.

This article is motivated by the work of Stéphane Yerasimos, historian of Ottoman urban spaces. What follows is, in part, an attempt to develop ideas from Yerasimos' *Légendes d'Empire*: *La fondation de Constantinople et de Sainte-Sophie dans les traditions turques*, which first examined the ways that fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Turkish popular narrative expresses distinct

20 For a different approach towards this problem, see Sami Helewa, *Models of Leadership in the Adab Narratives of Joseph, David, and Solomon: Lament for the Sacred* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2018).

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attitudes towards state and empire.[21] In this landmark study, Yerasimos develops a sophisticated genealogy of early Ottoman narratives on imperial urban development. He identifies the fifteenth-century Anonymous Chronicle and the *Dürr-i Meknūn* – the latter of which will be discussed here – as the core texts of an "anti-imperial" legendary tradition discussing the foundation of Constantinople. These texts speak in opposition to another lineage of imperial writing glorifying the Conquest as a token of divine favour, most clearly epitomized in Ottoman dynastic histories. These competing narratives, which pivot on the symbol of the great monument of Aya Sofya, contested each other over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with the imperial story eventually winning hegemony. This trajectory, as laid out by Yerasimos, provides the framework for this study, and what follows aims to expand it to new texts and territories. While Yerasimos' study focuses primarily upon the two fifteenth-century legendary narratives, dialogue about monarchy embedded in pious narrative did not end with these sources. This essay will outline three moments of Ottoman encounter between legend and political realities, focusing in each case on the story of Solomon. First, I will outline Yerasimos' reading of the critical Solomonic narrative of the *Dürr-i Meknūn*, before investigating the role of Solomon in the later writings of Uzun Firdevsī, a polymathic writer active around the turn of the sixteenth century. It is Uzun Firdevsī who is able to rework the earlier legend in order to articulate a theoretical understanding of Solomon and kingship that reinforces sultanic legitimacy: Uzun Firdevsī envisions Solomon as a kind of technocratic universal ruler, heir to a perennial Solomonic monarchical charisma which the Ottomans are now poised to inherit. Finally, this essay will turn to the artistic and architectural projects of Sultan Süleymān and the Solomonic discourse surrounding them; it is Süleymān who is able to actualize, in a concrete fashion, the Solomonic myth. The mythic Solomon is the vector that will allow us to glimpse this interweaving of narrative history and social transformation that animates the Ottoman fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[22]

21 Stéphane Yerasimos, *La fondation de Constantinople et de Sainte-Sophie dans les traditions turques: légendes d'Empire* (Istanbul and Paris: Institut français d'études anatoliennes; Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient J. Maisonneuve, 1990).

22 It should be first noted that this essay proposes to analyse only a small subset of Ottoman approaches to Solomon in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Those chosen here represent three different adaptations of the legend, arrayed over several decades, but others are omitted. This essay does not analyse, for instance, the profile of Solomon expressed in the text of the *Şehnāme* and *Süleymānnāme* Ottoman dynastic histories written by ʿĀrif Çelebi and Eflāṭūn. Considering our incomplete understanding of early Ottoman literature, what is presented here may provide a jumping-off point for future explorations of these themes – without aiming for comprehensiveness. Second, the chronological spread of the three sets of sources should not mislead the reader into imagining a single "evolutionary" trajectory for the story and the ideas behind it. While it is true that the comparisons made here are organized diachronically, this article aims only to explore the possibilities the legend can take in three separate contexts – three different ways in which the legend of Solomon can relate to Ottoman political realities – without foreclosing the possibility of other readings and expressions from these same contexts.

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## 1. *Dürr-i Meknūn*

We have seen how several Solomon stories, in Turkish, Greek, Arabic, and Persian, shared the shelves of the sultan's library in his new palace in his rebuilt capital. Outside of this precinct, in the Turcophone communities of the Balkan provinces and among the townsmen and nomads of Anatolia, others were familiar with some of these Solomonic variations and were at work retelling them in their own ways. Of these, it is the apostasizing Solomon of the *Testament* and the *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā* that is first brought into the early modern present in a fifteenth-century Turkish text entitled *Dürr-i Meknūn* (The Hidden Pearl).[23] As is argued elsewhere, the author of the *Dürr-i Meknūn* is unknown, though the text has traditionally been attributed to the Bayramī Sufi writer Aḥmed Bīcān of Gallipoli.[24] This wide-ranging popular cosmology, sacred history, and eschatology, composed in the latter half of the 1450s, places particular emphasis on the Solomonic story, the subject of two of its chapters.

Yerasimos observes that the text appears at a particular place and time in Ottoman history, just after Mehmed II's 1453 conquest of Constantinople and geographically close to it. For observers living in the Marmara basin, this was a world-changing event. For some, such as Aḥmed Bīcān, it augured an age of imperial glory that would culminate in apocalyptic victories over Catholic armies (the *Banū al-Aṣfar*, or "Yellow People" of classical Islamic eschatology). However, contemporary historians record how other Ottomans – most famously, the sultan's grand vizier Çandarlı Ḫalīl, who was opposed to the campaign that led to the city's fall – were not on board with what this conquest foretold. For the author of the *Dürr-i Meknūn*, the conquest was significant in a different way: it was a Sign of the Hour heralding the Last Days.[25] For him the city was a cursed one, and its conquest and reconstruction an ominous sign of a tyranny to come. Yerasimos argues that the *Dürr-i Meknūn* expresses this because of the political position of its author. This mysterious writer appears to be a "*ġāzī*", an Ottoman subject sympathizing with the Turkish and Muslim expansion into Rumelia and perhaps involved in it, but critical of how the Ottoman dynasty positioned itself as the sole legitimate focus of this expansion.

23 Two critical editions of the *Dürr-i Meknūn* have been published: Ahmed Bican, *Dürr-i Meknun: kritische Edition mit Kommentar*, ed. Laban Kaptein (Asch, Netherlands: Self-published, Laban Kaptein, 2007); Ahmet Bican, *Dürr-i Meknûn: inceleme, çevriyazi, dizin, tıpkıbasım*, ed. Ahmet Demirtaş (Istanbul: Akademik Kitaplar, 2009). Citations from the Demirtaş edition will be used here.

24 See Carlos Grenier, "Reassessing the authorship of the *Dürr-i Meknūn*", *Archivum Ottomanicum* 35, 2018, 1–19. Studies on the text using the traditional attribution include Laban Kaptein, *Apocalypse and the Antichrist Dajjal in Islam : Ahmed Bijan's Eschatology Revisted*. Asch: privately published, 2011; and Kaya Şahin, "Constantinople and the end time: the Ottoman Conquest as aportent of the last hour", *Journal of Early Modern History* 14/4, January 1 2010, 317–54. While there are no *Dürr-i Meknūn* manuscripts conclusively dated to before the seventeenth century, no scholar has yet ventured to revise its conventional date of composition in the late 1450s or 1460s. Its language and style is consistent with that period.

25 For more on the apocalyptic significance of the Conquest in the eyes of the *Dürr-i Meknūn's* author and contemporaries, see Şahin, "Constantinople and the end time".

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Stéphane Yerasimos demonstrates how the *Dürr-i Meknūn* shows itself as an anti-imperial narrative – a critique of Meḥmed II, his new capital, and his state – through its distinctive treatment of a closely related set of themes: the building of Solomon's temple, the foundation of Constantinople, and the construction of the structure that connects, in the imagination of Ottomans, the Temple with the City: the church of Aya Sofya. Within this creative reworking of the Solomonic legend Solomon stands in for the sultan and "crystallizes in himself the debate on power and legitimation".[26] In Yerasimos' reading, the *Dürr-i Meknūn* integrates Solomon into a long cycle of doomed kings connected to the city of Constantinople. In a past of unspecified antiquity, the first of these, a king named Yanqo ibn Madyan, builds Constantinople at an inauspicious hour. Yanqo gathers his architects and awaits the precise hour favoured by his astrologers, who would chime a great bell when that time arrives. As fate would have it, a passing stork is bitten by the snake it has caught in its beak and falls on the bell, ringing it loudly. Though it is the "cursed hour of Mars", Yanqo's workers take this as the signal to begin construction. "There is nothing I can do", says Yanqo, as the workers raise up Constantinople's palaces and the astrologers cry out in dismay. As a result, "since that time trials and judgments have befallen this city many times, whether plague or earthquake or fire … It will never rest from war and for many years it will lie in ruins, the homeland of tearing beasts and dragons…".[27] Note that these are the words of an Ottoman commentator writing soon after the triumphant conquest of this city.[28]

The *Dürr-i Meknūn* continues. Much later, David, king of Israel, attempts to build his own temple in the city, but everything he tries to construct fell into ruin. He is told by God that only his son Solomon could build this temple. After David's death God instructs the angel Gabriel to give Solomon his famous seal ring, the emblem of command over all living beings. With this power Solomon was able to raise up his *Beytu'l-Maqdis* (the "Sacred House", the Islamic term for the Temple) not in cursed Constantinople but in the hallowed site of Jerusalem, by calling upon the *jinn* to bring rare and valuable marbles from the depths of the sea and from the purple mountains at the edge of the world.[29]

26 Yerasimos, *La fondation de Constantinople et de Sainte-Sophie dans les traditions turques*, 49.

27 Demirtaş, *Dürr-i Meknūn*, 154–5.

28 Yerasimos analyses an expanded version of this legend that appears in an unsigned 1491 text known to historians as the Anonymous Chronicle. Here one sees a direct allusion to Mehmed II's forced repopulation of Istanbul. The text reads, "When they had accomplished all this they forcibly removed many households from all the provinces. They ruined many cities and took people to fill this city by force. They made all the people of this age suffer because they were brought by force, and they cursed this city, each in his own language and each according to his religion, and groaned and complained to God, and shed tears and caused the ruin of this city … Thus this city is destined for ruin." (Yerasimos 16). For an overview of Mehmed II's policy of deportation and forced migration, see Halil İnalcık, "Ottoman methods of conquest", *Studia Islamica* 2, 1954, 122–4, and Ömer Lutfi Barkan, "Les déportations comme méthode de peuplement et de colonisation dans l'empire Ottoman", *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Mecmuası*, 11, 1949–50, 67–131.

29 Demirtaş, *Dürr-i Meknūn,* 157.

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This rendering of the construction of Jerusalem's temple is distinctly preoccupied with administrative organization and logistics. The centrepiece of this tale is Solomon's unique ability to command the *jinn* – creatures Yerasimos connects to ideas about "telluric" powers, but which can more mundanely be linked to Ottoman deployment of *qūl* labour, gunpowder, and other early modern technologies. Solomon, writes the author of the *Dürr-i Meknūn*, "… separated the *jinn* and demons into three groups … They were present to perform whatever task was ordered. He gathered foremen from each group and began the construction of the mosque with white and yellow marble".[30] Vividly reimagining the Biblical passage on Hiram's cedars of Tyre, the author describes timber carried from Beirut to Jerusalem: "Twenty thousand people carried sometimes wood and sometimes provisions and brought them and deposited them in the port of Beirut. From Beirut to Jerusalem it was a two-day journey. It was a travelling market from the port to Jerusalem, and man and horse and mule were busy like ants …".[31] The temple was the product of a complex bureaucratic negotiation.

At this point the narrative shifts to the *Qiṣaṣ/Testament* version of the story of Solomon, but adds what Yerasimos recognizes to be a crucial new element.

> The king of the West, one ʿAnkur, did not submit to Solomon. Solomon defeated him. He had a beautiful daughter. He married her and built her a palace in Aydıncık. Solomon made the *jinn* bring the columns from the mountain Qaf. That woman had an image made of her father and worshipped it, hidden from Solomon. Then Asaf informed Solomon, and Solomon heard this and killed the woman and the palace was abandoned, falling into ruin.

The new element here is that the site where Solomon builds this princess a palace, the palace where she constructs an idol of her father and worships him in secret, is located in the ruins of the Roman city of Cyzicus (known in Turkish as Aydıncık or Edincik[32]) on the Marmara's southern shore just across from the imperial city and one of the most prominent antique ruins of the region. Solomon's cursed palace is a local site, not in far-off Israel, and its ruins were well known to contemporary Ottomans. By the sixteenth century Aydıncık had been given the popular name, *Qaṣr-i Süleymān*, or Solomon's Palace.[33]

30 Demirtaş, *Dürr-i Meknūn,* 157–8.
31 Demirtaş, *Dürr-i Meknūn,* 158.
32 The village of Belkis stands among the ruins. The village of Edincik (formerly Aydıncık) sits on the other side of the isthmus. Both are located between the larger towns of Erdek and Bandırma.
33 For a comprehensive though antiquated history of this site, see F.W. Hasluck, *Cyzicus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910). Yerasimos cites early Ottoman chronicles which describe the Ottoman prince Süleymān Paşa's first sighting of Aydıncık. "One day Süleymān Paşa went for a walk in the country. While walking, he arrived at Aydıncık, at the theater, and looked around him. He saw strange and wonderful buildings. He contemplated them and stood astonished …". Yerasimos 59, Friedrich Giese, *Die altosmanischen anonymen Chroniken: Teil 1, Text und Variantenverzeichnis*

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A final episode completes this narrative arc. Much later, at the exact hour that Nebuchadnezzar was razing Solomon's temple in Jerusalem, another unnamed king was building a structure in Constantinople. This temple, born with the destruction of the *Beytu'l-Maqdis*, was the church of Aya Sofya. Its foundation is described thus:

> This king had a daughter. Her name was Sofya Banū . . . . That daughter came and built a city on the side of a mountain, and gave it the name Sofia.[34] Then she passed away. She left much property and had stipulated that this property be used to build a mosque. The king's heart was in accord with this . . . . He took those wondrous green and porphyry (*ṣomāqī*) marbles from Aydıncık, from the palace of the prophet Solomon. So that king brought the wondrous marbles and columns to Aya Sofya and raised them up . . .[35]

It is worth pausing here to draw attention to a discrete component of this story, one that threads together other versions of the Solomonic myth that are to follow. These are the "green and porphyry marbles" of Aydıncık. The text claims that Aya Sofya, Constantinople's defining structure, was literally built from these marbles from Aydıncık's temple. This is, incidentally, historically true: Justinian did use the ruins of Cyzicus in building the church.[36] But in legend these columns come ultimately from the very same stock as those of the Temple, which were originally carried by the *jinn* from the bottom of the sea and from the mountain Qāf. They thus integrate Aya Sofya and early modern Istanbul in an Abrahamic sacred history. Most importantly, this continuity, from the Temple to Istanbul's defining structure, passes through a "middle term",[37] the ruined palace of an idolatress, and so it does not make Aya Sofya and Constantinople holy but rather imbues them with a danger already predetermined by the city's cursed foundation.

Yerasimos argues that this Solomon and the father of Sofya Banū would have been read by fifteenth-century readers as a clear allusion to Meḥmed II and his centralizing ambitions, and perhaps also as a commentary on the troubled "marriage" between the Byzantine landscape and Ottoman political ego. Although, as Yerasimos demonstrates, the textual genealogy of the *Dürr-i Meknūn*'s account runs from Ibrāhīm ibn Wāsif Shāh to Masʿūdī, and is made of components that were not designed with a Marmara cultural landscape in mind, its audience may have read it as highly topical. Indeed, the central role played by the porphyry and green marbles of these sacred and cursed buildings appears to have been reflected in a well-known obsession of the Sultan himself, for Meḥmed II brought green

(Breslau, 1922), 15; Aşıkpaşazade, *Tevārīḫ-i Âl-i Os̱mān'dan ʿĀşıqpaşazāde ta'rīḫi*, ed. Ali Bey (Istanbul: Matba'a-yı Âmire), 1914, 47.

34 The author appears to be aware of the church of St. Sophia in the city of Sofia. This may indicate a Rumelian origin.

35 Demirtaş, *Dürr-i Meknûn*, 160–1.

36 Hasluck, *Cyzicus*, 193.

37 Yerasimos, 71.

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marbles and porphyry columns, along with antique statuary, from the Pantocrator, the Church of the Apostles, the Hippodrome, and other antique sites into his own Topkapı palace.[38] Julian Raby has shown that Sultan Meḥmed, who was greatly interested in Aya Sofya, made a special point to incorporate similar porphyry columns in his Fatih Mosque. These columns, interestingly, are too small for their structural setting, demonstrating all the more clearly their symbolic significance.[39] Mehmed seems to have written this Solomonic image into his own secular law codes as well, which specify that his son Prince Cem should be addressed in chancellery documents as the "heir of the Solomonic dominion".[40]

While Solomon in his mode as builder is problematic for the *Dürr-i Meknūn*'s author, Solomon's nomadic throne, carried by the winds, becomes a kind of counter to the temple and palace. The throne, flying in the air and three miles long, housed the king in a bejewelled central tent along with his four-thousand advisers sitting in chairs of ebony, juniper, and sandalwood, beside 70 *miḥrāb*s in which stood the saints of Israel. Accompanied by flocks of birds and dragons, Solomon ruled from this airship, casting a shadow over his domains, scattering wealth among them and rendering his justice. If the "Living Star" (*kevkebi*'*l-ḥayy*) is the itinerant capital of a Turko-Persian ruler, then the Aya Sofya is the ominous symbol of a permanent seat of government in Istanbul, with its power that comes from *jinn* or from janissaries.

## 2. Uzun Firdevsī and *Süleymānlıq*

To the earthly kingdom will come many Solomons
And with God's authority their hands will stamp their seals.
Uzun Firdevsī, Süleymānnāme-i Kebīr

The fallen Solomon of the Hebrew Bible, the *Testament*, the *Qiṣaṣ,* and of Yerasimos' reading of the *Dürr-i Meknūn* – a king who exposes the "demonic" basis of political power – no longer appears so menacing in a set of Ottoman writings from the following generation. During the reign of Bāyezīd II, the polymath Uzun Firdevsī composed several works on Solomonic themes in which the king's *jinn* have all been domesticated, and the king's office rendered transcendent and inherently just. Born, according to traditional biographies, in around 1453 to a notable lineage of *ġāzī*s involved in the earliest Ottoman conquests, Uzun Firdevsī may have grown up near the very site of Aydıncık; other sources imply that he was from Bursa.[41] After an education

38 See Robert Ousterhout, "The east, the west, and the appropriation of the past in early Ottoman architecture", *Gesta* 43/2, 2004, 165–76; Julian Raby, "El Gran Turco: Mehmed the Conqueror as patron of the arts of Christendom" (Dissertation, Oxford University, Faculty of Oriental Studies, 1980), 219–29.

39 Raby, "El Gran Turco", 274.

40 Serpil Bağcı et al., *Osmanlı Resim Sanatı* (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2006), 46.

41 Basic biographical details are summarized in Orhan F. Köprülü, "Uzun Firdevsi", *Diyanet Vakfi İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: TDV İslam Araştırma Merkezi, 2004). The twentieth-century historian Mehmet Fuat Köprülü writes that Firdevsi was born in

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under the poet Melīḥī, he may have studied with Bursa's head Naqshbandi shaykh ʿAbdullāh İlāhī. By the 1490s he was presenting his own writings to Sultan Bāyezīd II.

The diversity of these compositions, which include: the *Daʿvetnāme*, an occultist's manual for summoning spirits; the *Quṭbnāme*, a hagiographic verse history of Bāyezīd's campaign for the island of Lesbos; the immense epic of the *Süleymānnāme*; the *Şatrancnāme* on the game of chess; and the *Silaḥşornāme* on military arts; betrays a certain thematic concern with the bond between the spiritual world and material and technological manipulation – precisely the characteristics of the mythic Solomon, exorcist and builder.[42] And he finds this union of technological or administrative capacity with metaphysical authority – a union he views with great enthusiasm – materialized in the Ottoman sultan and state.

Two of Uzun Firdevsī's works concern Solomon. The *Daʿvetnāme*, published and analysed by Fatma Büyükkarcı, is a Turkish manual for summoning spirits and angels (*ervāḥ*, *melekler*). After detailing how the planets, the stars, and the zodiac signs rule these spirits, the bookʿs third chapter outlines the summoning itself. As a human art, Firdevsī writes, this command over spirits was first exercised by Apollonius of Tyana (*Balīnas*) whose summoned angels allowed Alexander to conquer the world. This was less of a spiritual practice than an exact science, requiring a preparatory diet, special glass vessels, lengths of coloured cloth, and the use of talismanic inscriptions, incenses, and other tools to bring the spirits out of the hidden world.[43] However, this occult science reached its full potential not with Apollonius but with Solomon and his prophetic appointment. In fact, the central ritual in the *Daʿvetnāme* is the recital of the so-called *ʿahdnāme-i Süleymān*, or covenant of Solomon, an Arabic incantation

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1453 while his warrior father Haci Genek Beg was "in Balqis' Spring, touring the Palace of Solomon". These assertions are repeated in the introduction to İbrahim Olgun and İsmet Parmaksızoğlu, *Kutb-nâme* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2011). Laṭīfi and early Ottoman biographers claim an origin in Bursa. Several contemporary scholars have attempted to establish a clearer biography of this individual, but Firdevsi's early life remains largely unknown. See especially Mustafa Aksoy, "Firdevsi-i Rumi ve Süleyman-name'sindeki Destan Unsurları" (PhD thesis, Social Science Institute, Ege University, 2000), 23–8.

42 Many of these works have been published. See Fatma Büyükkarcı, *Firdevsī-i Ṭavīl and His Daʿvet-Nāme: Inceleme, Metin, Dizin, Tıpkıbasım ve Mikrofiş*. Cambridge, MA: Dept. of Near Eastern Langauges and Civilizations, Harvard University, 1995; Olgun and Parmaksızoğlu, *Kutb-nâme;* M. Atâ Çatıkkaş, *Süleymannâme-i kebîr* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 2009); Firdevsî-i Rûmî and Atâ Çatıkkaş, *Şatranç-nâme-i kebîr: inceleme-metin-dizin* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 2015); Bekir Biçer, *Silahşornâme* (Konya: Çizgi, 2011). Many volumes of the Süleymanname have now been studied by Turkish scholars and are available as dissertations; see footnote 51 below. For an up-to-date review of his works and their availability as publications and manuscripts, refer to Himmet Büke, "Firdevsi-i Rumi, Hayatı ve Eserlerı Hakkında Yeni Bilgiler", *Mehmet Akıf Ersoy Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 7/13, 2015. See also the introductions to Büyükkarcı, *Daʿvet-name* and Olgun and Parmaksızoğlu, *Kutb-name,* as well as Bekir Biçer, "Firdevsî-i Rûmî ve Tarihçiliği", (PhD thesis, Selçuk Üniversitesi Social Sciences Institute, 2005).

43 Büyükkarcı, 148–50.

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received by Solomon through the angels that has the power to bind the spirits to his will. Firdevsī insists that all other ritual stipulations are subordinate to the proper recitation of this lengthy Arabic invocation: "Without the *ʿahdnāme* it is impossible to execute the rite".[44]

This linguistic transition, between the pseudo-Quranic Arabic invocation of the *ʿahdnāme* and the Turkish prose that contains it, may be significant. The Arabic, mixed with the Syriac names of the *jinn*, is in this sense "administered" by the Ottoman imperial idiom; the Solomonic *ʿahdnāme* integrates a Semitic and Abrahamic past into the speech of the new empire in a subordinate place. Nicholas Watson discusses the *Ars notoria,* a medieval Latin treatise containing a closely parallel Solomonic incantation in a non-vernacular language, and suggests that the *Ars notoria*'s Latin glosses on its multilingual incantation endorse not only the ancient tongues but in fact sacralize the present-day vernacular that in this way gains a new a sort of leverage over the past.[45] This gives the vernacular reader "the opportunity to become Solomon" and speak in a contemporary tongue the angel's messages to the king. This insight applies naturally to Uzun Firdevsī's invocations, which give the Turkish speaker a way of administering the angels and spirits by re-enacting the Solomonic role of translator.[46] And if, as suggested earlier, the demons and *jinn* evoke imperial command over technology and labour, then the *Daʿvetnāme* and its linguistic command over the Solomonic covenant symbolize the containment of these forces within the scope of an imperial sacred history.

The ancient occult sciences the *Daʿvetnāme* brings under Ottoman control closely link the metaphysical and technological. In a later passage from the *Daʿvetnāme,* a Solomon-like figure announces this union. A "master of the science of talismans" named "the Western Solomon" (*Süleymān-i Maġribī*) requests that a jeweller make for him a gold box. At a certain astrological conjunction the master asks the jeweller a question: "Does the box move on its own?" The jeweller responds by inquiring whether anything without a spirit can move. Solomon places a gold coin under the box, which promptly begins to move on its own. *Süleymān-i Mağribī* tells the amazed jeweller that once every thirty years, "wherever in this world a hidden treasure exists, I will find it and it will move into my hands".[47] This Solomonic automaton uses the force of astrological cycles to control economically useful material, again synthesizing spirit and matter under the authority of the magician king. Where the *Dürr-i Meknūn*'s Yanqo failed, forced to build Constantinople at a cursed

44 Büyükkarcı, 150–51.

45 Nicholas Watson, "King Solomon's tablets", in Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson, *The Vulgar Tongue: Medieval and Postmedieval Vernacularity* (University Park, PA/ London: Pennsylvania State University Press/Eurospan, 2004), 1–13.

46 Solomon's role as translator stretches far back in Islamic memory. The *Epistles* of the Basran philosophical circle known as the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā, written in the tenth century, emphasize the role of Solomon as master of all human and animal languages, and a mediator between communities of different speech. See Jules Janssens, "The Ikhwan al-Safa on King-Prophet Solomon", in Jozef Verheyden (ed.), *The Figure of Solomon in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Tradition: King, Sage and Architect* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 241–53.

47 Büyükkarcı, 175.

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hour, the "Western Solomon" succeeds. In fact, for Uzun Firdevsī, Solomon lurks at the origins of all technical arts.[48]

The elements hinted at in the *Daʿvetnāme* are taken much further in Uzun Firdevsī's *Süleymānnāme*, his immense masterwork dedicated entirely to Solomon. Firdevsī spent most of his career writing the lengthy *Süleymānnāme*, which can only be described as an imaginative compendium of hundreds of fantastic stories with Solomon as protagonist.[49] Its most complete extant copies comprise 81 volumes, but internal evidence suggests that these represent only a portion of the author's originally intended 360, a number evoking the Solomonic arts of geometry and architecture.[50] Despite its extravagant length, this complex text was carefully preserved. It exists in a lavishly illustrated copy today preserved in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, along with several other 81-volume editions that exist in Turkish and European archives.[51] To date, only one volume of the *Süleymānnāme,* the seventy-second, has been published, in a recent edition by M. Ata Çatıkkaş. Editions of several other volumes have also recently become available as theses and dissertations from Turkish universities.[52] Most relevant for this investigation are the twenty-

48 One of his most unusual works is the *Cāmeşūynāme*, a short text that deals with, of all things, the Solomonic art of doing laundry. As the story goes, King Solomon had stained his clothes and ordered his *jinn* to find out how to clean them. So, concocting wondrous soaps out of the raw materials of nature, they taught him how to wash and clean any stain. While this may constitute a particularly mundane sort of "ancient knowledge", the operative idea – the Solomonic origins of the secrets of civilization – is equally clear. See Sezer Özyaşamış Şakar, *Terceme-i Câme-şûy-nâme* (Beyoğlu, İstanbul: Simurg, 2009).

49 This unique work of hundreds of stories connected only by the figure of Solomon is difficult to fit into a generic category. The closest parallel may be the *Hamzanāme* by Hamzavī, which has never been published in its entirety; for some of this text, see Neşe Seçkin, "Hamzavi Kıssa-i İskender (101a–200bv.): Metin, Sözlüğü ve Dilbilgisi Özellikleri", (MA thesis, Social Science Institute, Ankara University, 1991). For a more recent treatment of this work, see İsmail Avcı, *Türk Edebiyatında İskendernâmeler ve Ahmed-i Rıdvân*'*ın İskendernâmesi* (Ankara: Gece Kitaplığı, 2014).

50 See Çatıkkaş, *Süleymannâme-i kebîr*, 12–15.

51 Himmet Büke, "Firdevsi-i Rumi, Hayatı ve Eserlerı Hakkında Yeni Bilgiler", gives the most current overview of the availability of Firdevsi's texts as published books. See also Hasan Bicâri, "Süleymân-nâme'nin Budapeşte'deki Yazma Nüshası", *Bilimsel Bildiriler*, Ankara, 1975.

52 Volumes 8, 9, 11, 25, 26, 27, 37, 38, 39, 63, 76, and 81 of the *Süleymānnāme* are now available in the form of dissertations and theses completed by Turkish scholars. See Murat Vanlı, "Firdevsi-i Rumi: *Süleyman-name-i Kebir* (8–9 Ciltler)" (Erzincan: MA thesis, Social Science Institute, Erzincan University, 2012); Serap Ekşioğlu, "Firdevsi-i Rumi: *Süleyman-name*, Cilt 11" (Erzurum: PhD thesis, Social Sciences Institute, Atatürk University, 2018); Gülnaz Genç, "Firdevsi-i Rumi: *Süleyman-name* (25–26 Ciltler)" (İstanbul: PhD thesis, Social Sciences Institute, Marmara University, 1995); Adem Gök, "Firdevsi-i Rumi, *Süleyman-name-i Kebir* (37 Cilt)" (Isparta: PhD thesis, Social Science Institute, Süleyman Demirel University, 2019); Himmet Büke, "Firdevsi-i Rumi, *Süleymanname* (38 Cilt)" (Isparta: PhD thesis, Social Sciences Institute, Süleyman Demirel University, 2015); Aytan Şan, "Firdevsi-i Rumi, *Süleyman-name* (39 Cilt)" (Isparta: PhD thesis, Social Sciences Institute, Süleyman Demirel University, 2019); İlhama Jafarova, "Firdevsi-i Rumi'nin *Süleyman-name-i Kebir*'i (63 Cilt)" (Istanbul: Ph.D thesis, Social Sciences Institute, Marmara University, 2010); Yaşar Şimşek, "Firdevsi-i Rumi, *Süleyman-name-i Kebir* (76 Cilt)"

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fifth volume, studied by Gülnaz Genç, along with Çatıkkaş' published seventy-second volume.[53]

Volume 72 of the *Süleymānnāme* shows Solomon reimagined as an Ottoman sultan. The first of the volume's two large narrative segments describes Solomon's journey across the eastern Mediterranean to Jerusalem, during the course of which he meets and converses with several races of sea creatures, hears their stories, and receives their allegiance. His flying throne approaches Cyprus, where the populace gazes from watchtowers to wait for his arrival. There, a king of the sea named Zerrahīn emerges from the waves to tell him of his own race, and the legendary king of his own ancestral lineage named Süleymān ibn Bīn.[54] After hearing stories of how this sea creature ruled, Solomon son of David then encounters a second sea king, this one named Agvas, who tells the tale of the legendary ruler of his own people of the western sea who bears the name of Süleymān-i Cigi. This king's major feat was to unite the islands of the far west into a single kingdom, islands that were difficult to rule and manage because they moved around on the surface of the sea, joining with and separating from each other over the course of a year according to the signs of the zodiac. Süleymān-i Cigi, acting as an early modern emperor should, seized upon a moment in Aries when they were joined and brought them together under a common speech and law.[55] This then becomes a frame story in which that Süleymān describes yet another Süleymān from the even more distant past. More Solomons, and more sea kings, come out to tell their stories. Having learned these lessons (*ʿibretler*), Solomon son of David flies off to Jerusalem to build the Temple.

The second half of the volume, describing the building of the Temple, is relatively unremarkable. Solomon commands the *jinn*, has them dredge up columns of green marble and porphyry from the sea, and with these materials raises up the *Beytu'l-Maqdis*. Of significance is that this temple is not ominously entangled with the stories of pagan princesses, cursed cities, and imperial overextension, but is placed alongside the image of the Kāʿba that Abraham built and that Muhammad was to renew.

It is straightforward to read the first half of this volume of the *Süleymānnāme* as a vision of Ottoman command over the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean and as a parable on the mediation of populations on alien culture and speech. In a more historical sense, this Solomon who traverses the Aegean and lands

(Samsun: MA thesis, Social Sciences Institute, Ondokuz Mayıs University, 2013); Zeynep Çelik, "Firdevsi-i Rumi'nin *Süleymanname* Yazmasının (81 Cilt) (82b–123b yk.) Bilimsel Yayını ve Üzerine Dil İncelemeleri" (İstanbul: MA thesis, Social Sciences Institute, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, 2010). In addition to offering valuable transcriptions of this hard-to-access text and analysis of the language and themes employed in the *Süleymānnāme*, each of these theses independently provides overviews of Firdevsi's life and works.

53 Genç works from two manuscripts: Topkapı Müzesi Ktp. H. 1527 (Istanbul), and Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Török F. 4 (Budapest). Çatıkkaş bases his edition on İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakultesi TDE Böl. Kütüphanesi nr. 4008.

54 Çatıkkaş, *Süleymannâme-i kebîr,* 176–7.

55 Çatıkkaş, *Süleymannâme-i kebîr*, 210–15.

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at Cyprus seems to reflect or comment upon Sultan Bāyezīd's struggles for control over the Aegean archipelago. Near the time of the text's writing, the island of Lesbos was under Venetian siege, a conflict that was the subject of one of Uzun Firdevsī's other works, the *Quṭbnāme*. The Solomon of this *Süleymānnāme* thus traverses the same earthly geography as the Ottoman sultan, using his seal to stamp the eastern Mediterranean with his administrative consistency.

Even more striking is the way this story makes it clear that Solomon son of David was preceded by many other Solomons, and that each of these kingdoms constitutes a cycle of imperial dominion. Uzun Firdevsī tells how Solomon is not one man but rather a kind of office held by rulers in a recurring fashion – a feature denoted in the text by the abstract noun "*Süleymānlıq*" ("Solomonhood") or the related term "*Süleymān-i zamān*" ("Solomon of the age"). The significance of the Israelite Solomon is not that he is the only Solomonic king, but that he is the Solomon who carries this monarchical charisma into the sequence of Adamic prophecy.

Volume 25 of the *Süleymānnāme*, studied by Gülnaz Genç, relates the logic of *Süleymānlıq* with genuine elegance.[56] Among the text's countless distinct segments, one describes the Solomonic kingship of an ancient Solomon named Süleymān-i Ṭīn ("Solomon of Clay") to whom fell the duties associated with prophecy. "When Süleymān-i Ṭīn was given *Süleymānlıq* and God's command fell upon him, he called the tribe of Ṭīn to faith".[57] His successful *daʿwa* to his people leads to kingship over all things, and thence to a question Süleymān asks himself: "Were there any Solomons before me with dominion over the world?" Süleymān-i Ṭīn is then commanded by God to approach a dark mountain standing in a plain, and to search there for an underground city that would provide him with his answer. His men dig underground, finding a great city built of jewels centred on a palace and sanctuary. There, under a dome of red gold, he finds a vast shrine of diamond, and each diamond brick bears an inscription in an unknown language. Frustrated at being unable to read them, Süleymān-i Ṭīn pleads with God, who sends down an angel to reveal to him what they say.

What the angel reads to Süleymān-i Ṭīn is a stark and memorable parable that teaches not only of the eternal repetition of Solomonic kingship, but also the ephemerality of the reign of any given world-ruling Solomon:

> O Solomon of Clay, this inscription [on this stone] says: "I am Solomon whom they called 'Solomon of the Earth' [*Süleymān-i Arż*], and I ruled the creatures of the earth. The wind carried my throne in the skies. The wind took me wherever I wanted. I travelled the created world. I held *Süleymānlıq* for seven thousand years and ruled over the creatures of the world; I built seventy thousand cities; I conquered seventy thousand castles. I had seven sons. Fortune and prosperity were my companions. One

56 Genç, "Firdevsi-i Rumi". Genç works from two manuscripts: Topkapı Müzesi Ktp. H. 1527 (Istanbul), and Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Török F. 4 (Budapest).

57 Genç, "Firdevsi-i Rumi", 110.

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> day while the wind carried my throne with my armies, something came into my heart. When I said, 'I wonder if there will be another Solomon with dominion over the earth, who took the seal of *Süleymānlıq* in hand upon the throne of kingship? . . .' an angel suddenly came from God and greeted me and showed me this mountain in this plain. I commanded the wind to take me to that mountain, and it went, and this city was discovered. Then when I was touring this city, I came to this palace; I found these inscriptions engraved on the diamond stones in the sanctuary, and I saw in each one a Solomonic story [*ta'rīḫ-i Süleymānī*] and what I reasoned is that under every patch of this earth [*cihānuñ her bir turābı*] is a powerful Solomon. Each one finds a diamond and writes upon it his story and sets in it the gaps of this sanctuary, as a testimony for those who come after."[58]

Süleymān-i Ṭīn had the angel read a second stone, which tells an almost identical tale of another Solomon similar to the last, who is given prophecy and rulership, and then is guided to discover the underground city that will tell him he is not the first or last Solomon.[59]

> He saw on each stone that a Solomon came as ruler and inscribed with his sword that he may leave a memento for those coming into the world after him, for those Solomons of latter days. "So I took a stone and wrote this story on it, and left a memento for those coming after me, so that later on, Solomons may know how many Solomons came and lived in the ages before themselves . . ." he recounted. The angel read out countless stones to Süleymān-i Ṭīn, and explained each story. They counted that seventy thousand Solomons ruled the world, and all of them came to that palace and each affixed their testimonies in stone, wrote their stories, and travelled the world.[60]

In the end, Süleymān-i Ṭīn writes his own name and history on a new stone of diamond, and, seeing that the structure is not yet complete, knows that future Solomons will later descend to rule over man and *jinn*.

This tale describes an ageless Solomonic kingship, often uniting prophecy and monarchy, materialized in a shrine of precious stones. The diamond *ḥarīm*, a kind of Temple built not by one Solomon but by 70,000, is the memorial of the world-kingship of *Süleymānlıq* that has sustained the earth – for both human and pre-human races – since prehistory, as the original and only true institution of civilization. And even while the institution of *Süleymānlıq* effaces the individuality of each individual Solomon, as it does so it reinforces its own transcorporeal, transhistorical continuity. For Firdevsī *Süleymānlıq* is a real and enduring office, and yet each instance of kingship, and each individual sultan, is fundamentally unreal. A poem that closes this section confronts the reader with a

58 Genç, "Firdevsi-i Rumi", 114.
59 Genç, "Firdevsi-i Rumi", 117.
60 Genç, "Firdevsi-i Rumi", 118.

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timeworn trope: "worldly kingship is a lie".[61] Here it seems to imply that it is perhaps only *Süleymānlıq* that endures – not the glory of any specific king. In the context of the turn of the sixteenth century, when bureaucratic elites were on their way towards defining a state earlier centred on the individualized charismatic authority of sultans, Uzun Firdevsī's *Süleymānnāme* here seems to be offering a sort of Weberian comment, defining and justifying the sultanate as a routinized office constituted by institutional succession.

The forking paths of the rest of Firdevsī's dizzying *Süleymānnāme* await their intrepid surveyor. For now, let us return to an important point emphasized in the seventy-second volume: *Süleymānlıq*, unlike the prophetic chain of *nubūwwa* that is sealed by Muhammad, endures to the present. Thus when Uzun Firdevsī calls his patron Sultan Bāyezīd *Süleymān-i S̠ānī*, or "the Second Solomon", this goes far beyond mere encomium. This claim is serious and is naturalized within a historical framework in which *Süleymānlıq* descends periodically upon the world. Uzun Firdevsī says this explicitly:

> There are many signs that [Bāyezīd] is the second Solomon .... While the Prophet Solomon was presented by God with prophecy and the ideal caliphate, this second Solomon was presented with noble knowledge, chivalrous virtue and noble courage. Just as Solomon commanded man and *jinn*, this second sultan pronounced prayers over all nations from east to west; and just as Solomon the Messenger ... rode on his throne of winds ... this second Solomon ... greeted the breeze each morning .... And just as Solomon the Prophet set out to build the *Beytu'l-Maqdis* ... this Second Solomon appointed, through his eternal fortune, builders to construct many great mosques and exalted schools and foundations and hospitals throughout the lands of Rum and the city of Amasya and in the provinces of Rumelia and in the cities of Edirne and Constantinople as well.[62]

Uzun Firdevsī closes this section with praise of Bāyezīd's mosque in Istanbul, whose interior fountain was likened to the spring of Selvān in Jerusalem's temple. Here the author argues that Solomon is ontologically independent of his historically bounded career as king of Israel, implying that he continues to live in history as a recurring model of a sacral monarch.

Uzun Firdevsī thus creates a much more familiar tableau, at least from a political perspective. Although further investigation of the *Süleymānnāme* may reveal complicating aspects, these available writings paint a clear picture that identifies the Ottoman enterprise, especially its technological and administrative capacities, with the universal office of *Süleymānlıq*. In the 50 years between the *Dürr-i Meknūn* and the *Süleymānnāme*, Solomon had become domesticated and imperialized in the Ottoman image. The myth was now firmly in the hands of imperial hagiographers.

61 "*İy Süleymān'a şeh Süleymānlıḳ ḳılan / Bil ki dünyā şāhlıġıdur hep yalan*", Genç, "Firdevsi-i Rumi", 121. The elegiac poem of which this verse is a part (pp. 120–6), written in the voice of another ancient Solomon, recapitulates these themes concisely.

62 Çatıkkaş, *Süleymannâme-i kebîr*, 371–2.

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Incidentally, a manuscript of the *Süleymānnāme*, copied in around 1500, contains what may be the first Ottoman pictorial representation of Solomon.[63] This manuscript may be derived from a form that Serpil Bağcı notes as having become fashionable across the Persianate world by this time.[64] Bağcı observes how, beginning in the 1480s in Aqqoyunlu and then Safavid Shiraz, miniature painters favoured a scene depicting Solomon's divan and his encounter with Balqis, Queen of Sheba. Bağcı, by way of noting that these frontispieces were often dedicated not to the person who commissioned their production "but to Solomon himself", asks whether "Solomon occupied a privileged position" in the local repertoire of legends.[65] While for Bağcı this bespeaks a particular devotion to Solomon among the craftsmen of Shiraz, for whom the king and the Sassanian ruins of the *Takht-i Jamshīd* at nearby Persepolis were especially sacred, in the context of this study these frontispieces' dedications to Solomon hint at a similar notion of a recurring *Süleymānlıq* as a discrete charisma adhering to the courts of fifteenth-century Persianate monarchs.

## 3. From *jinn* to janissaries in the age of Süleymān

> Thousands of the demons of Solomon from among the Frankish prisoners shouted all together, "Heave ho!"
>
> Muṣṭafā Saʿi Çelebi, *Tezkiretü'l-Bünyān*

Out of this symbolic potential, *Süleymanlıq* was soon to become real. Across the sixteenth century the Solomonic legend, as it circulated in the above texts and many others, was intentionally enacted in the political will of the sultans themselves. This is most pronounced during the reign of Bāyezīd II's grandson Süleymān (1520–66 CE), born a few years before Firdevsī's *Süleymānnāme* was completed. It was during the age of Süleymān the Lawgiver that, in a sense, the Solomonic dreams of Uzun Firdevsī, as well as the premonitions of over-centralization expressed in the *Dürr-i Meknūn*, were both fully realized. For this phase, art-historical evidence provides the best way to see the transformation from rhetorical to material.

The art historian Rachel Milstein draws attention to the dynastic history *Şehnāme-i Āl-i ʿOsmān* by the poet Fetḥullāh ʿĀrif Çelebi.[66] A richly illustrated 1558 manuscript contains a large detached illustration of the prophet Solomon seated under a dome upon whose pinnacle perches a hoopoe and upon whose wall is inscribed "He is the Solomon of his time; he has the kingdom of Solomon in his days".[67] Citing contemporary Jewish and Latin Christian

63 Rachel Milstein, "King Solomon or Sultan Süleyman?", in Eyal Ginio and Elie Podeh (eds), *The Ottoman Middle East: Studies in Honor of Amnon Cohen* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 19, discusses *Suleymānnāme*, Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, ms. Turk 406, fol. 2b.

64 Serpil Bağcı, "A new theme of the Shirazi frontispiece miniatures: the Dīvān of Solomon", *Muqarnas* 12, 1995, 101–11.

65 Bağci, "A new theme", 107.

66 Milstein, "King Solomon or Sultan Süleyman?".

67 This same domed chamber, writes Milstein, is visible not only in the illustrated Chester Beatty *Süleymānnāme* but in a fourteenth-century Jewish depiction from Germany, a

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depictions of Solomon displaying related imagery, she suggests that Solomon in the sixteenth century represented "ideal man according to Renaissance values, as well as prototype of the messiah", and notes that the Ottoman court was receptive to such ideas. In this light, she claims, "the prophet in the 16th-century miniature in the image of King Solomon of his time is no other than Sultan Süleymān".[68] Reading the image this way, Milstein finds further allusions to the Tower of Justice of Topkapı, to officers of the sultan's court, and even an Ottoman admiral or astronomer with astrolabe in hand.[69] Just as for Uzun Firdevsī, an Ottomanized Solomon seems to combine in his person the technical and religious prestige of the Biblical figure.

This programme, by which the sultan identified with his namesake, is not restricted to the arts of the book. Sultan Süleymān built a *sebīl*, or monumental fountain, in Topkapı bearing the inscription, "Sultan of the worlds, Solomon of his time".[70] Perhaps his most overtly Solomonic gesture was when, in 1537, Sultan Süleymān boldly imitated his namesake by embarking on a programme of rebuilding and renovating the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The text inscribed on a fountain near the Dome of the Rock reads, "This *sebīl* was erected in the time of the great Sultan, second to Solomon in the kingdom of the world, Sultan Süleymān b. Selīm…".[71] On the new walls he built around Jerusalem he inscribed six-pointed seals of Solomon. Indeed, the grandest of his Solomonic gestures may be his choice to renovate heavily the Dome of the Rock. Writes Milstein, "The Dome of the Rock, mixed in the Islamic tradition with the Biblical Temple, is said to have been initiated by King David, completed by King Solomon, and rebuilt by Sultan Süleyman". Here Süleymān seems fully conscious of the myth he set out to bring into recurrence.

His other monumental building project, the Süleymāniye mosque and *ʿimāret* complex in Istanbul, completed in 1560, draws upon the accumulated riches of Solomonic imagery. The Süleymāniye, crowning Istanbul's highest hill to compete with Aya Sofya, was to be the centrepiece of Ottoman Istanbul, home to its most prestigious academies, its grandest public buildings, and its largest mosque. Gülru Necipoğlu-Kafadar observes that the mosque was designed deliberately to echo the Dome of the Rock on the site of the Temple, as well as Aya Sofya's own design, which, as we have seen, was imagined to be Solomonic itself.[72] The story of the procurement of its materials displays this programme even more clearly, as the stones used to build it were congruent with these same symbolic ambitions.

The history of the Süleymāniye's marbles has been the object of extensive research, beginning with the major investigations of Ömer Lutfi Barkan and

fifteenth-century Spanish Bible, and from manuscripts associated with the seventeenth-century Ottoman Jewish messianic claimant Shabbetai Zevi (Milstein, "King Solomon or Sultan Süleyman?", 17–19).

68 Milstein, "King Solomon or Sultan Süleyman?", 21.
69 Milstein, "King Solomon or Sultan Süleyman?", 24.
70 Milstein, "King Solomon or Sultan Süleyman?", 17.
71 Milstein, "King Solomon or Sultan Süleyman?", 22
72 Gülru Necipoğlu-Kafadar, "The Süleymaniye complex in Istanbul: an interpretation", *Muqarnas* 3, 1985, 92–117.

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his team,[73] expanded upon by Godfrey Goodwin[74] and subsequently J.M. Rogers,[75] and finally given a fresh look by İlknur Aktuğ Kolay and Serpil Çelik.[76] These studies use documentary evidence to describe an extensive search for exotic stones and marbles from across the Ottoman domains. Kolay and Çelik, in particular, have noted that these materials were gathered and prepared from quarries that each held specific meaning for Ottomans. First, a large portion of the Süleymāniye's extant marbles are of the Proconnesian type quarried in the Marmara region. Specifically, many of these were taken from the very same ruins of Cyzicus that carried such consequence in the *Dürr-i Meknūn*'s mythology.[77] That is to say, the marbles of Süleymān's major construction were brought across the Marmara from "Solomon's Palace" (*Qaṣr-i Süleymān*) at Aydıncık, a site long associated with King Solomon in the Turkish imagination, as we have seen.

But the stones most laden with meaning in both the legends of the Temple and of the building of the Süleymāniye mosque are the green marble and red porphyry (*ṣomāqī*) and granite, the stones that in the mythic accounts were lifted from the bottom of the sea by Solomon's *jinn*. This mythic sense seems to have resonated with Koca Sinān, the head architect of the Süleymāniye project, who intended for the mosque's largest and most important columns to be made from *ṣomāqī* granite, and collected the material in several major operations. Muṣṭafā Saʿī Çelebi, writing Sinan's autobiography with the latter's guidance, underscores the importance of these operations by dedicating a section of the *Teẕkiretü'l-Bünyān* ("Record of Construction") to documenting this effort. "Each of these four marble columns", he writes, "which are emblems of the Four Chosen Friends, is like a stately cypress of the garden of faith. Each of them came from a different land".[78]

Documentary accounts collected by Kolay and Çelik corroborate this last claim. Four giant Aswan granite columns were quarried in upper Egypt and shipped to Alexandria. Between 1550 and 1552, a custom-made barge was constructed in Galata to bring them from there to the capital. Two columns appear to have sunk during the operation, while the remaining two stand in the Süleymāniye's domed chamber. The year following the Egyptian operation, the sultan's architects embarked on an equally massive expedition to recover additional red granite columns from the ruins of the Temple of Jupiter at Baʿalbek. In the memories of Muslims, this site at Baʿalbek, like the ruins of

73 Ömer Lûtfi Barkan, *Suleymaniye Cami ve Imareti Inşaatı (1550–1557)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1972).

74 Godfrey Goodwin, *A History of Ottoman Architecture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press), 1971.

75 J.M. Rogers, "The state and the arts in Ottoman Turkey. Part 1. The stones of Süleymaniye", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 14/1, 1982 71–86.

76 İlknur Aktuğ Kolay and Serpil Çelik, "Ottoman stone acquisition in the mid-sixteenth century: The Süleymaniye complex in Istanbul", *Muqarnas* 23, 2006, 251–72.

77 Kolay and Çelik, "Ottoman stone acquisition", 261–3.

78 Sinan (trans. Howard Crane et al.), *Sinan's Autobiographies: Five Sixteenth-Century Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 123. The "four friends" (*çār-yār*) are the four *rāshidūn* caliphs that Sunnis understand as the legitimate political successors of the prophet Muhammad: Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān, and ʿAlī.

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Palmyra, has long been associated with Bilqis, Queen of Sheba, consort of Solomon. The *Tez̠kiretü'l-Bünyān* confidently states, "According to most historians, they were left from the palace of His Majesty Solomon's Belqis".[79]
The costly acquisition of its columns and their transport to Trablus echoes the accounts in the *Qiṣaṣ* and *Dürr-i Meknūn* of the transport of the Temple's materials out of the interior of Lebanon to the port of Beirut.[80] These columns were erected in the Süleymāniye's north portico in 1553.

The fourth of the mosque's main columns boasts an even more unexpected provenance. It was taken from Istanbul itself, from the so-called *Qıztaşı*, or Virgin's Column, erected by Emperor Justin II on Constantinople's fifth hill. The column had once supported a sculpture of Aphrodite, a feature that seems to have led Ottomans to associate it with a legendary princess. A poetic evocation of the column and its incorporation into the new mosque appears in the *Tez̠kiretü'l-Bünyān.* It begins:

> One of these columns was erected by a maiden in the time of the unbelievers ... known as the Virgin's Column, it was like a monolithic minaret and the trunk of the Tuba tree ...
>
> It seems as if that column of pure marble
> Became the pivot of Heaven's wheel,
> A maiden lavished a treasure upon men and *jinn*s,
> And, to ensure her memory, erected a memorial ...[81]

The account, filled with familiar imagery, describes the engineering works that hauled the Virgin's Column from the Fifth Hill to the site of Süleymān's mosque. Here Solomonic allusions abound and in a sense summarize the way Solomon appeared to Ottomans in the Süleymānic age. "Many thousand novices (*ʿacemīoğlanları*) entered the treadmill, and thousands of the demons of Solomon from among the Frankish prisoners shouted all together, 'Heave ho!'", says the author. Later, he writes, "the demons of Solomon mounted [the column] on boat chocks and brought it to the noble building".

This remarkable passage gathers together all of the elements we have seen so far: the control over supernatural beings representing control over men and technology (specifically captives and *qul*s), the gathering of marbles as the consolidation of the geography of the empire, and even the shadow of ancient paganism, are all woven together to express the ambition of Süleymān's *Süleymānlıq*. The *ṣomāqī* columns were to encompass the span of the empire, a span that extends between the Solomonic sites of Baʿalbek and Cyzicus in one direction and the imperial capital with its great domed temples of Aya Sofya and the Süleymāniye in the other. And their incorporation, by Frankish captives and Ottoman *ʿacemīoğlanları*, into Süleymān's mosque, was in the *Tez̠kiretü'l-Bünyān* likened to the same process by which the demons and *jinn*

79 Sinan, *Sinan's Autobiographies*, 123.
80 Trablus, the port from which Sinan transported Baʿalbek's marbles to Istanbul, appears in the *Süleymānnāme* as Solomon's favoured port – the equivalent of Beirut in the *Dürr-i Meknūn*, Sidon in the *Qisas* and Tyre in the Hebrew Bible.
81 Sinan, *Sinan's Autobiographies*, 123.

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built Solomon's temples and palaces. Or, to put this another way, the fears expressed by the author of the *Dürr-i Meknūn* a century earlier had come true, and a Solomonic absolutism had triumphed.

## Conclusion

In the immediate wake of the 1453 conquest, the author of the *Dürr-i Meknūn* brought together the resources of the *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā* and other writings to express anxieties about the empire to come. This author, writing from outside the Ottoman state project at the end of the pre-imperial period, uses the cautionary aspect of the Solomonic myth to create a counter-narrative to the Ottoman ideology of sacral kingship that was then emerging. A generation later, we see Uzun Firdevsī use the same basic sources to craft an elaborate Ottoman Solomon, master administrator, technocrat and negotiator of imperial diversity, heir to a monarchical charisma. Finally, the sixteenth century saw the Solomonic myth embedded into the sultan's own executive power, as Sultan Süleymān materially emulates his mythic namesake in art and architecture. The multiple meanings of the story of Solomon made it into a mirror in which Ottomans could see themselves in great detail – as criticism or praise, warning or support, of the political order, and eventually, as its very model. Across the course of a transformative century, the Solomonic story was used to "think through" the Ottoman transition from *beġlik* to world empire and became not only a vocabulary with which to comment upon early modernity, but a living part of it.

That these Ottoman commentators viewed their own history through the lens of sacred chronologies is not surprising. The stories of the prophets up to and including Muhammad, in wide circulation in Ottoman society, were intelligible to a broad audience. Through their connection to scripture these narratives possessed an inbuilt authority that gave them passage into the hearts of believers, and through it they could interpret their lived history. Just as important is another aspect of these narratives: their universality. It was the *isrā'īliyyāt* tales of pre-Islamic sacred figures like Solomon that provided a substantial shared vocabulary for the empire's Muslims and its Jews and Christians. That is to say, Jews, Christians, and Muslims were able to view Solomon, David, and other *isrā'īliyyāt* figures in compatible ways and participate in a joint discourse on the themes they raise. If the Ottoman sultan was credibly to claim universal sovereignty as the "shadow of God on earth", then stories like that of Solomon could express this claim using a common Abrahamic imaginary with which to speak about sovereignty with equal fluency to members of all three faith communities. Solomon was able to translate the idea of early modern monarchy beyond a strictly Islamic discourse, into the minds of other Ottomans.

In fact, contemporaneous Christian societies in Europe seemed to employ Abrahamic prophetology in much the same way. Scholars have noted a rising interest in Solomon in Catholic and Protestant Europe at precisely this time. In a particularly striking parallel, Phillip II of Spain, the great rival of Sultan Süleymān during the last part of the latter's reign and similarly preoccupied with problems relating to religious diversity, commissioned at least two treatises on the design of Solomon's Temple and then deployed the fruits of this

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investigation directly in the construction of his palace and monastery at El Escorial, designed by its architect Juan de Herrera and his Hermeticist student Juan Bautista Villalpando in imitation of the Temple's plan.[82] The fact that the Mediterranean's two most powerful rulers based their architectural masterworks on the same mythic template supports theories of a trans-confessional competitive discourse among the region's monarchies.[83]

One may speculate that the revival of pre-Islamic prophet narratives as a political language in Ottoman lands may also participate in a wider early modern turn to Hebraic visions of a primordial monotheism as an appropriate universal faith, a trend also shown by the embrace of Hebrew Bible scholarship in Renaissance Europe,[84] the emergence of Christian Cabbalism, the short-lived influence of the Judaizers of Novgorod in Muscovy,[85] and the Christian Hebraism of early modern Protestants.[86] Further research is needed to establish a connection between Islamic cultural trends and these well-known European developments.[87] These speculative comparisons can be extended to other parts of the Islamic world as well. The Azeri Turkish poetry of Shah Ismāʿīl, founder of the Safavid dynasty of Iran, was justifiably criticized by both contemporary

82 See Catherine Wilkinson-Zerner, *Juan de Herrera: Architect to Philip II of Spain* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993); Alberto Perez-Gomez, "Juan Bautista Villalpando's divine model in architectural theory", in *Chora 3*, Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 125–56. Sergey R. Kravtsov, "Juan Bautista Villalpando and sacred architecture in the seventeenth century", *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 64/3, 2005, 312–39; Henry Kamen, *The Escorial* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010); Juan Antonio Ramírez, Andre Corboz et al., *Dios arquitecto: J.B. Villalpando y el Templo de Salomón* (Madrid: Siruela, 1994); Lola Kantor Kazovski, "Piranesi and Villalpando: the concept of the temple in European architectural theory", in Bianca Kühnel (ed.), *The Real and Ideal Jerusalem in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Art*, 23/24 (Jerusalem: Center for Jewish Art, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1998).

83 For an art-historical approach to this question, see Gülru Necipoğlu, "Visual cosmopolitanism and creative translation: artistic conversations with renaissance Italy in Mehmed II's Constantinople", *Muqarnas* 29, 2012, 1–81, as well as Gülru Necipoğlu, "Süleyman the Magnificent and the representation of power in the context of Ottoman–Hapsburg–Papal rivalry", *The Art Bulletin* 71/3, 1989, 401–27.

84 For an overview of Christian Hebraism, see Stephen G. Burnett, *Christian Hebraism in the Reformation Era (1500–1660): Authors, Books and the Transmission of Jewish Learning* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

85 See Joseph L. Wieczynski, "Hermetism and cabalism in the heresy of the Judaizers", *Renaissance Quarterly* 28/1, 1975, 17–28.

86 See Burnett, *Christian Hebraism*; Adam Sutcliffe, "Hebrew texts and Protestant readers: Christian Hebraism and denominational self-definition", *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 7/4, 2000, 319–37; Anthony Grafton, Joanna Weinberg and Alastair Hamilton, "*I Have Always Loved the Holy Tongue*"*: Isaac Casaubon, the Jews, and a Forgotten Chapter in Renaissance Scholarship* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011).

87 This study does not intend to claim that the Solomonic legend was a radically new element in the political conversations of the Islamic world, as it was demonstrably not new in Europe (see Samantha Kelly, *The New Solomon: Robert of Naples (1309–1343) and Fourteenth-Century Kingship* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Jean-Patrice Boudet, "Le modèle du roi sage aux XIIIe et XVIe siècles: Salomon, Alphonse X et Charles V", *Revue Historique* 310/3, (647) (2008), 545–66). It intends only to show that it was used in a specific fashion in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

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Sunnis and more traditionally orthodox Shiʿis for its intimations of *tanāsukh*, or metempsychosis. Ismāʿīl Ṣafavī writes, "My mother is Fāṭima . . . and I am the living Khiḍr and Jesus, son of Mary, and I am the Alexander of my contemporaries . . .", as well as "I am Faraidūn, Khusraw, and Jamshīd . . . I am the signet ring on Solomon's finger".[88] In the context of Uzun Firdevsī's formulation of *Süleymānlıq*, Ismāʿīl's rhetorical excesses, usually understood within the framework of *ghulāt* Shiʿism, perhaps do not now seem so outlandish or exceptional.

This study's second conclusion is a subtler one. As the realities of early modern rule were expressed in sacred narrative, this process also moved in the opposite direction: sacred history set a model for real administration in the age of Süleymān. The Biblical, Quranic, and *Qiṣaṣ* templates functioned as political prescriptions, not simply as commentary. Here I would concur with Suzanne Stetkevych's criticism of Aziz al-Azmeh and argue that "Judaic kingship", at least in this mythic form, was a very tangible influence on Islamicate monarchy.[89] This has a further consequence for Ottoman and Islamic historiography. Perhaps the search for the roots of Ottoman political thought in Turko-Mongol, Persian, and classical Islamic political theories of khanate, *pādishāhī* and caliphate misses something important. This kind of scholarship typically aims to elaborate upon key concepts such as *khan*, *ṣultān*, *pādishāh* (emperor), *khalīfa* (caliph), *gāzī* (holy warrior), *mujaddid* (renewer) or *ṣāḥib-qirān* ("master of the conjunction"). Instead I suggest that royal ideology flows not only out of titulature and terminology of office, but also from concrete images and narratives of a shared Abrahamic repertoire that culminates with Muhammad and his successors but begins with Adam. The stories of sacred history, including Solomon and extending to Alexander, function in the Ottoman fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as basic ideas about politics, narrative models directly comparable to institutional concepts like caliphate and sultanate – or even prior to them as the bedrock of political thought. Claude Lévi-Strauss wrote that one of his structuralist aims is to examine "how myths think themselves out in men".[90] Here we can see how the image and legend of Solomon, and others like it, must be considered as constitutive of early modern history, and not just its rhetorical reflection. The early modern imperial age was born out of a vital relationship to narratives of the imagined past.

88 Vladimir Minorsky, "The poetry of Shāh Ismāʿīl I", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 10/4, 1942, 1042a, 1047a.

89 Suzanne Stetkevych, "Solomon and mythic kingship in the Arab–Islamic tradition: Qaṣīdah, Qurʾān and *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*", *Journal of Arabic Literature* 48, 2017, 3.

90 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, trans. J. and D. Weightman (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 12.

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