

# Interpreting with Bibliomancy: Shiite-Sunrite Convergence Policy between Mahmud I and Nadir Şah

Nimet İpek

## Author:

Ph.D. candidate, History Department, Sabancı University.

[nimet.ipek@sabanciuniv.edu](mailto:nimet.ipek@sabanciuniv.edu)

ORCID: [0000-0002-2678-2747](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2678-2747)

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## Context

The following passage is taken from MS Ayasofya 163, Süleymaniye Manuscript Library. It is present in f. 1r of a *Tafsîr al-Beyzâwî* copy, one of the favorite books Mahmûd I enjoyed being read out loud.<sup>1</sup> The copy has the seal of Selim I, the endowment seal of Mahmûd I, and the *taftîsh* seal of Şeyhzâde Ahmed on fol. 1r. It bears neither a colophon nor another written identifier that specify a date of production. Given the note was jotted down on this codex, the copy under consideration must be the copy Mahmûd I looked at. Divining by means of *Tafsîr al-Beyzâwî* brought glad news to Mahmûd I and the result was written down so that it wouldn't fade into irrelevance.<sup>2</sup> The divination broadly supports his convergence policy because the Quranic verse says the Prophet Yûsuf, in other words Nâdir Şâh, was employed in the service of the King, namely Mahmûd I, as a highly esteemed and fully trusted officer.

## Transcription

*Sene-i müteyemmine-i tis'a ve erba'ine ve mi'e ve elf şehri recebül-müreccebi evâ'ilinde işârât-ı kur'âniyyeden bir laţîfe-i ğaybiyye ser-zede-i şahîfe-i zühûr olmuşdur ki şebt ü tahîre muĸtezâ-yı hâl oldu. Vechi budur ki memâlik-i İrân-zemînde seyf-i meslûl-i cihâd ile ĸal' u ĸam'-i rafz u ilhâda âĝâz idüb mezheb-i sedîd-i ehl-i sünneti memâlik-i maştûrede neşr ü icrâ dâ'iyesiyle serîr-i şâhiye cülûs iden Nâdir Şâh bâ-intibâh hâlâ çâr-bâliş-nişîn-i mesned-i 'izz ü temkîn ĸalîfe-i rüy-ı zemîn sultânu'l-berreyni ve'l-bahreyn ĸâdimu'l-ĸarameyniş-şerîfeyn şevketlü kerâmetlü ĸamiyyetlü pâdişahumuz Sultân Maĸmûd ĸân ibn Sultân Muştafâ ĸân e'azza'llâhu enşârahu ĸazretlerinüñ sütte-i seniyye-i 'âlem-maşîr-i devletlerine ilticâ idüb memâlik-i İrânda icrâ-yı mezheb-i ehl-i sünnet ve teşyîd-i mebânî-i milk ü milletde inâyet-i 'aliyye-i ĸüsrevâneleri recâsıyla mu'teber ve münteĸab süferâ irsâl ve mesâlih-i 'adîdeyi mütezammın zîrâ'atnâmeler irsâl olduĸda maĸzûrât-ı*

<sup>1</sup> Hatice Aynur, "I. Mahmud Döneminde Edebi Kültür". *Gölgelenen Sultan Unutulan Yıllar 1. Mahmud ve Dönemi*, ed. Hatice Aynur. (Dergah Yayınları, İstanbul: 2021). 167.

<sup>2</sup> Qur'an 12: 54. "The King said, 'Bring him to me. I will employ him exclusively in my service.' And when Joseph spoke to him, the King said, 'Today you are highly esteemed and fully trusted by us.'" (accessed at 27 January 2023 <https://quran.com/yusuf/54>)

şer 'iyye ve 'örfiyyeden 'ārī ba 'zī mevād üzerine 'aḳd ü vifāḳ ve 'ahd ü mīsāḳ olunub nāme-i hümāyūn-ı cihāndārī taḥrīr olunmuş idi. Binā 'en 'aleyh bu aḳd ü 'ahdüñ şebāt ve kıvāmı ve ilā māşā Allāh devāmı müyesser ve muḳadder ise levḥ-i ğayb ve kitāb-ı lā-reybden işāret ve beşāret recāsıyla şevketlü kerāmetlü mehābetlü efendimiz ḥazretleri ve şāḥu'ş-şadr 'izz ü iclālī olan Muşḥaf-ı şerīfi yed-i mü'eyyedleriyle fetḥ ü küşād buyurduklarında suver-i şerīfeden sūre-i Yūsufda ser-i şāḥīfede ḳāla'l-maliku ūtūnī bihi<sup>3</sup> ilḥ.<sup>4</sup> naşş-ı kerīmi nūr-baḥş-ı nażar-ı hümāyūn olmağla 'aḳd-i ma'hūduñ kemāl-i metānet ve emn ü selāmetle ḥuşūline işāret ve beşāreti mütezammın āyet-i ḥikemiyyedür deyü istidlāl olunmağın bu maḥalle me'mūren şebt olundu.

## Translation

At the beginning of Rajab of the auspicious year 1149, a concealed delicacy came out of Quranic guidance, and therefore, it emerged as a necessity to jot down and record this. This is the reason that in the Iranian lands, Mahmūd I commenced exterminating and curbing bigotry and heresy with his bare sword of holy war. Nâdir Şâh sat on the sultanic throne claiming to extend and fulfil the claims of the apposite Sunnite sect on these mentioned lands. Vigilant Nâdir Şâh resorted to the imperial sublime threshold, where the whole world shelters, of our still-on-the-throne sultan, prop of dignity and consolidation, the caliph of the earth, sultan of two earths and two seas, servant of two noble harams,<sup>5</sup> strong, bountiful, benevolent Mahmūd Hân b. Mustafâ Hân – may Allah glorify his followers. Nâdir Şâh asked for the exalted sultanic support of Mahmūd I for to perform *ahl al-sunna*<sup>6</sup> and to construct religious buildings across the Iranian lands. Therefore, he sent a reliable and selected envoy and letters relating to various affairs. Then, free from legal and traditional restrictions, an agreement was made on some provisional points and an imperial letter was thus written down. Consequently, Mahmūd I

<sup>3</sup> Qur'an 12: 54.

<sup>4</sup> for ilā āḥirihi.

<sup>5</sup> This word refers to the two holy cities, Makka and Madina.

<sup>6</sup> People who adhere to the authentic lifestyle (sunnah) of the Prophet Muhammad are referred. The opposite term is *ahl al-bid'a*, namely, followers of fabricated beliefs and deeds.

anticipated a sign or a message from the invisible world and the unquestionable book about whether this agreement and covenant were destined to come true to the extent God wished or not. Accordingly, our almighty, bountiful, flamboyant lord opened the almighty and honorable Quran with their corroborated hands. As a result of this bibliomancy, in the *sūrat Yūsuf*, a verse at the top of the page that begins with “The King said, ‘Bring him to me’” ad finem<sup>7</sup> became a target for his divine light bestowing glance. It was deduced that this verse is a sign and a harbinger of the completion of this agreement with perfect steadiness, safety, and peace. The result of the bibliomancy is here jotted down by order.

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<sup>7</sup> Qur’an 12: 54. Full quote: “The King said, ‘Bring him to me. I will employ him exclusively in my service.’ And when Joseph spoke to him, the King said, ‘Today you are highly esteemed and fully trusted by us.’” (accessed at 27 January 2023 <https://quran.com/yusuf/54>)

## Facsimile

