

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

Nimet İpek\*

## 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.

**Keywords:** Mahmûd I, Nâdir Şâh, bibliomancy, Shiite, Sunrite

---

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

[nimet.ipek@sabanciuniv.edu](mailto:nimet.ipek@sabanciuniv.edu) ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2678-2747>

<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>)

## Transcription

*Sene-i müteyemmine-i tis 'a ve erba 'ine ve mi 'e ve elf şehri-i recebü'l-müreccebi evâ 'ilinde işārāt-ı kūr 'āniyyeden bir laṭīfe-i ğaybiyye ser-zede-i şahīfe-i zuhūr olmuşdur ki sebt ü tahrīre muḳtezā-yı ḫāl oldu. Vechi budur ki memālik-i Īrān-zemīnde seyfi-i meslūl-i cihād ile ḳāl ' u ḳam '-i rafz u ilḫāda āġāz idüb mezḫeb-i sedīd-i ehl-i sūnneti memālik-i maşṭūrede neşr ü icrā dā 'iyesiyle serīr-i şāhīye cülūs iden Nâdir Şāh bā-intibāḫ ḫālā çār-bāliş-nişīn-i mesned-i 'izz ü temkīn ḫalīfe-i rüy-ı zemīn sulṭānu'l-berreyni ve'l-baḫreyn ḫādīmu'l-ḫarameyni'ş-şerīfeyn şevketlü kerāmetlü ḫamiyyetlü pâdişahumuz Sulṭān Maḫmūd Ḥān ibn Sulṭān Muşṭafā Ḥān e'azza'llāhu enşārahu ḫazretlerinüñ sūdde-i seniyye-i 'ālem-maşīr-i devletlerine ilticā idüb memālik-i Īrānda icrā-yı mezḫeb-i ehl-i sūnnet ve teşyīd-i mebnā-i milk ü milletde 'ināyet-i 'aliyye-i ḫüsrevāneleri recāsıyla mu 'teber ve münteḫab süferā irsāl ve mesāliḫ-i 'adīdeyi mütezammın zırā 'atnāmeler irsāl olduḫda maḫzūrāt-ı şer 'iyye ve 'orfıyyeden 'ārī ba 'zī mevād üzerene 'aḳd ü vifāḳ ve 'ahd ü mīsāḳ olunub nāme-i ḫümāyūn-ı cihāndārī tahrīr olunmuş idi. Binā 'en 'aleyh bu aḳd ü 'ahduñ sebat ve ḳivāmı ve ilā māşā Allāh devāmı müyesser ve muḳadder ise levḫ-i ğayb ve kitāb-ı lā-reybden işāret ve beşāret recāsıyla şevketlü kerāmetlü mehābetlü efendimiz ḫazretleri ve şāḫu's-sadr 'izz ü iclālī olan Muşḫaf-ı şerīfi yed-i mü 'eyyedleriyle fetḫ ü küşād buyurduklarında suver-i şerīfeden sūre-i Yūsufda ser-i şahīfede ḳāla'l-maliku ütünī bihi<sup>3</sup> ilḫ.<sup>4</sup> naşş-ı kerīmi nūr-baḫş-ı naẓar-ı ḫümāyūn olmaḫla 'aḳd-i ma 'hūduñ kemāl-i metānet ve emn ü selāmetle ḫuşūline işāret ve beşāreti mütezammın āyet-i ḫikemiyyedür deyü istidlāl olunmaḫın bu maḫalle me 'müren sebt 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 Şāh sat on the sultanic throne claiming to extend and fulfil the claims of the apposite Sunnite sect on these mentioned lands. Vigilant Nâdir Şāh 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

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

<sup>4</sup> for ilā āhirihi.

harams,<sup>5</sup> strong, bountiful, benevolent Mahmûd Hân b. Mustafâ Hân – may Allah glorify his followers. Nâdir Şâh asked for the exalted sultanic support of Mahmûd 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, Mahmûd I 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 *sûrat Yûsuf*, 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.

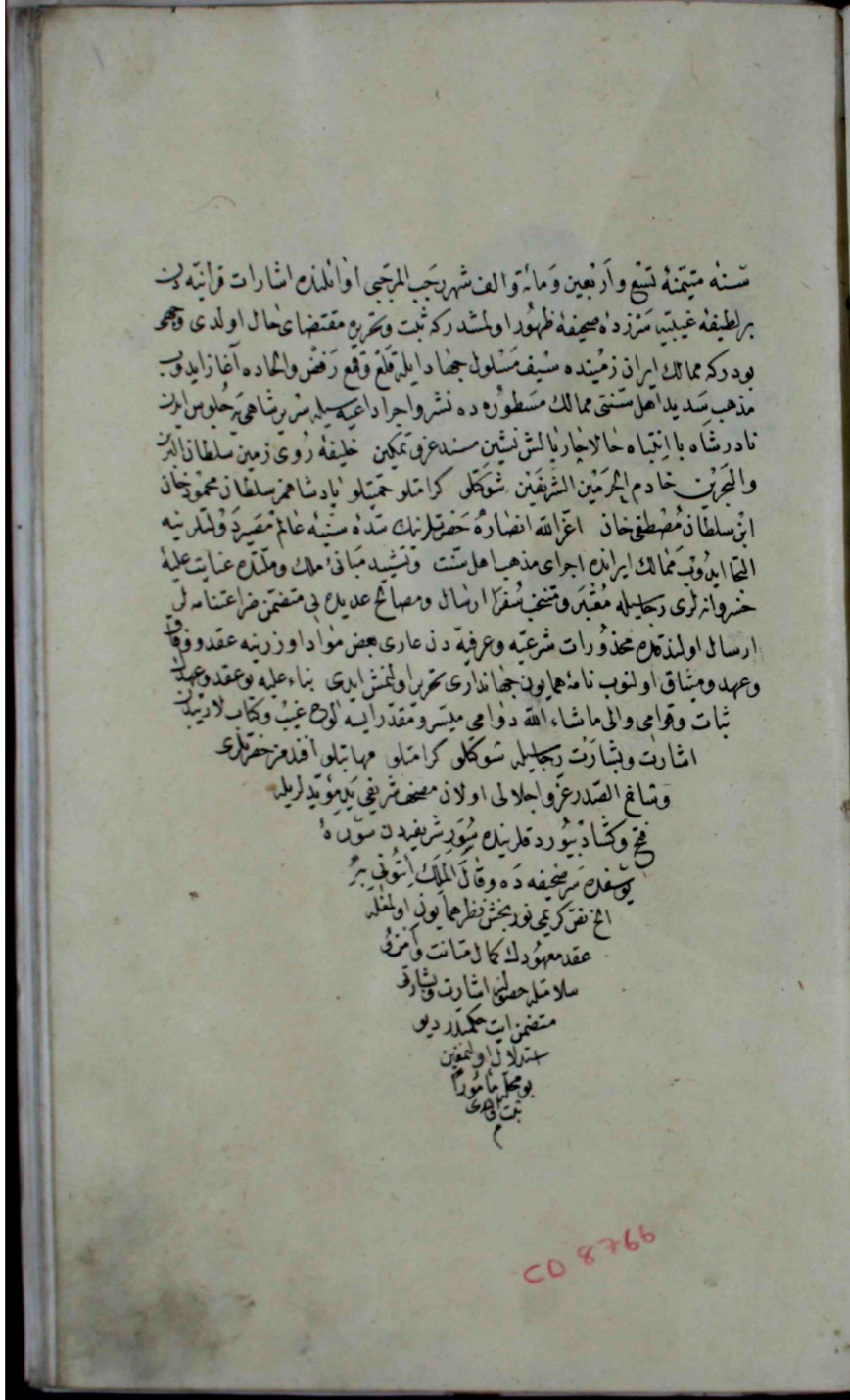
---

<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.

<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



## **Bibliography**

Aynur, Hatice, ed. *Gölgelenen Sultan: Unutulan Yıllar 1. Mahmud ve Dönemi*. Istanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2021.

Nâşır al-Dîn Abū Sa‘îd ‘Abdullâh b. Omar al-Beyzâwî, *Envâr al-Tanzîl ve Esrar al-Ta`vîl*, MS Ayasofya 163, Süleymaniye Manuscript Library.

## **Cite this article:**

İpek, Nimet. “Interpreting with Bibliomancy: Shiite-Sunnite Convergence Policy between Mahmud I and Nadir Şah”. *Keshif: E-Journal for Ottoman-Turkish Micro Editions* 1/1 (Winter 2023): 22-26. <http://doi.org/10.25365/kshf-23-01-05>