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Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Narratives on the Hagia Sophia Reconsidered

Günseli Gürel

Abstract
This paper examines fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Ottoman narratives on the Hagia Sophia. Stefanos Yerasimos analyzed these within the framework of Ottoman imperial consolidation, describing two narrative strands that he associated with distinctive milieus with differing and at times conflicting political views and attitudes concerning the new imperial regime. Building on his work, this paper illustrates the changing political, ideological, and cultural significance of this ancient monument over time and across different social groups. It also explores how textual sources reflected upon building practices during the period.

Keywords: Hagia Sophia, Ottoman narratives of Byzantium, imperial consolidation, religious architecture, perception of the past

Ayasofya Üzerine Yazılan On Beşinci ve On Altıncı Yüzyıl Osmanlı Metinlerini Yeniden Düşünmek

Özet
Bu makale, on beşinci ve on altıncı yüzyıl Osmanlı anlatılarında Bizans imparatorluk kilisesi Ayasofya'nın temsilini incelemektedir. Stefanos Yerasimos bu anlatıları sosyo-politik bir bağlama yerleştirip Osmanlı imparatorluk konsolidasyonu çerçevesinde analiz etmiştir. İki anlatı türüne dikkat çekerek, bunları yeni imparatorluk rejimiyle ilgili farklı ve bazen çelişkili siyasi görüşler ve tutumlara sahip olan ayrı sosyal çevrelere bağlamıştır. Bu makale Yerasimos'un çalışmalarına dayanarak, zaman içinde ve farklı toplumsal gruplar arasında bu antik binanın değişen siyasi, ideolojik ve kültürel önemini gösterir. Ayrıca, dönem boyunca yapı uygulamalarının metinsel kaynaklarda nasıl yansıtıldığını da araştırır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Ayasofya, Bizans'a dair Osmanlı anlatıları, imparatorluk inşası, dini mimari, geçmiş algısı

Ottoman narratives on the Hagia Sophia offer rich insights into how Ottomans engaged with the Greco-Roman material culture of the Byzantine Empire (fig. 1). While much early historiography treated the Byzantine and Ottoman pasts as two distinct cultural universes and neglected Ottoman responses to Byzantine heritage,[1] pioneering work over the past several decades has offered a much needed corrective, exploring not just the ruptures but also the many continuities between early Ottoman and Byzantine architecture in Anatolia, as well as Ottoman uses of spolia and selective appropriation of and responses to Byzantine Constantinople's imperial legacy.[2] Others have plumbed early modern Ottoman literature for

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Günseli Gürel
University of Oxford
gunseli.gurel@ames.ox.ac.uk
ORCID: 0009-0006-5454-876X

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1 An important exception is Frederick W. Hasluck's detailed study on the transformation of Byzantine sacred spaces in Anatolia into Islamic holy sites: Frederick W. Hasluck and Margaret Masson Hardie Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, 2 vols (New York: Octagon Books, 1973 [1929]).

2 Gülru Necipoğlu, "The Life of an Imperial Monument: Hagia Sophia after Byzantium," in *Hagia Sophia from the Age of Justinian to the Present*, ed. Robert Mark and Ahmet Ş. Çakmak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Necipoğlu, "Challenging the Past: Sinan and the Competitive Discourse of Early Modern Islamic Architecture," *Muqarnas* 10 (1993); Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire* (London: Reaktion, 2005), 77–103; Stefanos Yerasimos, *Türk Metinlerinde Kostantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri / La fondation de Constantinople et de Sainte-Sophie dans les traditions turques*, trans. Şirin Tekeli (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1995, c1993); Çiğdem Kafescioğlu, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul: Cultural Encounter, Imperial Vision, and the Construction of the Ottoman Capital* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009); Kafescioğlu, "Byzantium in Early Modern Istanbul," in *The Cambridge Companion to Constantinople*, ed. Sarah Bassett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022); Zeynep Yürekli, *Architecture and Hagiography*

Figure 1: The Hagia Sophia. Atatürk Library, Rare Collections, Krt_011737.

glimpses of how Ottomans understood the meaning of the ancient past in Constantinople and beyond, including in Athens, Alexandria, and Baalbek.[3] Building on this scholarship, this article explores how Ottoman narratives on the Hagia Sophia's construction changed over time and in response to different historical contexts, imbuing the iconic building with new significance in an Ottoman framework while also offering valuable reflections upon contemporary building practices. The period considered here spans from the late fifteenth century, when the monument's meaning and associations were fluid and contested, to the mid-sixteenth century, by which time a relative consensus had emerged on the Hagia Sophia's significance.

In this essay, I draw on the late historian Stefanos Yerasimos's analysis of narratives on Constantinople and the Hagia Sophia in the context of Ottoman imperial consolidation.[4] Yerasimos identifies two narrative strands, pro- and anti-imperial, which he associates with distinctive milieus that reflected differing attitudes toward the new Ottoman imperial regime. The anti-imperial strand, he argues, was largely neutralized and absorbed into pro-imperial narratives by the mid-sixteenth century, only to reemerge around the time the Süleymaniye, Sultan Süleyman's (r. 1520–1566) imperial mosque complex, was constructed.[5] Although I agree with Yerasimos's analysis of the late fifteenth-century narratives, I argue that his interpretation of the later texts accompanying the construction of the Süleymaniye complex needs revision. As I will show, rather than representing two ends of a pro- versus anti-imperialist debate, these later texts point to a reconciliation between the different versions of the construction story.

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in the Ottoman Empire: The Politics of Bektashi Shrines in the Classical Age (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); Yürekli, "Osmanlı Mimarisinde Aleni Devşirme Malzeme: Gazilerin Alamet-i Farikası," in *Gelenek, Kimlik, Bireşim: Kültürel Kesişmeler ve Sanat*, ed. Serpil Bağcı and Zeynep Yasa Yaman (Ankara: Hacettepe University Press, 2011); Robert Ousterhout, "Ethnic Identity and Cultural Appropriation in Early Ottoman Architecture," *Muqarnas* 12 (1995): 60; Suna Çağaptay, *The First Capital of the Ottoman Empire: The Religious, Architectural, and Social History of Bursa* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2020).

3 Aslı Niyazioğlu, "Into the Deep Past of the Ottoman Istanbul: The Bronze Horseman of Constantine in Sixteenth-Century ʿAcāʾibs," *Acaʾib: Occasional Papers on the Ottoman Perceptions of the Supernatural* 3 (2022); Elizabeth Key Fowden, "The Parthenon Mosque, King Solomon and the Greek Sages," in *Ottoman Athens: Archaeology, Topography, History*, ed. Maria Georgopoulou and Konstantinos Thanasakis (Athens: The Gennadius Library, 2019); Giancarlo Casale, "Time and the Other: Ottoman Encounters with Egypt's Ancient Past," in *1516: The Year That Changed the Middle East and the World*, ed. Abdulrahim Abu-Husayn (Beirut: AUB Press, 2021); Nir Shafir, "Nābulusī Explores the Ruins of Baalbek: Antiquarianism in the Ottoman Empire during the Seventeenth Century," *Renaissance Quarterly* 75, no. 1 (2022).

4 Yerasimos, *Kostantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*. The groundwork was laid by the following earlier studies: Felix Tauer, "Les versions persanes de la legende sur la construction d'Aya Sofya," *Byzantinoslavica* 15, no. 1 (1954); Tauer, "Notice sur les versions persanes de la légende de l'édification d'Ayasofya," in *60. Doğum Yılı Münasebetiyle Fuat Köprülü Armağanı* (Istanbul: Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi, 1953); Paul Wittek, "Miscellanea; 2. Zu den persischen Tarih-i Ayasofya," *Türkiyat Mecmuası* 14 (1964); Friedrich Giese, *Die altosmanischen anonymen Chroniken* (Breslau: Selbstverlag, 1922); J. H. Mordtmann, "Die Didosage in Orient," *Der Islam* 12, nos. 3–4 (1922).

5 Yerasimos, *Kostantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*, 234–256.

My examination here is informed by Cemal Kafadar's nuanced approach to early modern Ottoman historiography and the fluidity he underlines between dynastic chronicles, legends, and hagiographies.[6] This fluidity is particularly evident during Süleyman's reign, a time characterized by the consolidation of the imperial order, the domestication and assimilation of socio-political dissent, and the reinforcement of sectarian divides.[7] For instance, while there was an unprecedented emphasis on orthodox Sunni Islam, which marginalized many Sufi sects, dynastic historiography increasingly incorporated elements from hagiographies concerning saints from one the most dissident sects, namely, the Bektashis.[8] A similar process of appropriation, as noted by Yerasimos, seems to have occurred with the incorporation of the non-imperial version of the Hagia Sophia's construction story into official historiography.[9] As I aim to demonstrate, the mid-sixteenth century texts accompanying the Süleymaniye's construction marked a culmination of this process.

Turkish texts narrating the construction of the Hagia Sophia emerged during the late fifteenth century.[10] Sources recount that Sultan Mehmed II ordered Greek and European scholars in his court to write a history of Constantinople to learn about the "wondrous and bizarre" structures in his new capital.[11] The sultan's library contained a Greek copy of *Patria of Constantinople*—an undated, anonymous, and widely circulated compilation of stories about the city and its architectural and sculptural marvels.[12] A part of this compilation was translated into Turkish by Yusuf bin Musa under the title *Hazâ Binâ-yı Âyâsofya* (The construction of the Hagia Sophia) in 1479, and into Persian by Derviş Şemsüddin under the title *Târîh-i Binâ-yı Âyâsofya* (The history of the construction of the Hagia Sophia) in 1480.[13] These translations were most probably commissioned by Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1444–1446, 1451–1481). The earliest Turkish and Persian texts were partial translations based on the *Patria*'s fourth book, entitled *Narrative on the Construction of Hagia Sophia* (*Diēgēsis peri tēs Hagias Sophias*), and these contained a brief account of the subsequent creation of the renowned bronze horseman and a concise description of the city's foundation by Byzas and then by Constantine. Several copies of Şemsüddin's version were made in the sixteenth century.[14] Moreover, it became part of official dynastic historiography with its incorporation into İdris Bidlisi's *Eight Paradises* (*Hasht Bihisht*), written in 1505 in Persian and dedicated to Sultan Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512).[15]

But this official dynastic version of the Hagia Sophia's construction was not the only account in circulation. A second narrative strand emerged around the same time, in the late fifteenth century, with an anonymous chronicle of the House of Osman dated 1491.[16] Written from the perspectives of various dissident groups, it, too, drew on the *Patria*, but also on medieval Islamic lore and oral accounts.[17] Over the following century, this was expanded

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6 Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 90–109.

7 Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Âli (1541–1600)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); Kaya Şahin, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman: Narrating the Sixteenth-Century Ottoman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 214–242. For the implications of these developments on art and architecture, see Gülru Necipoğlu, "A Kânûn for the State, a Canon for the Arts: Conceptualizing the Classical Synthesis of Ottoman Art and Architecture," in *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: Documentation Française, 1992).

8 Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, esp. 94–98; Yürekli, *Architecture and Hagiography*, 51–78.

9 Yerasimos, *Kostantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*, 229–234.

10 Yerasimos, *Kostantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*; Necipoğlu, "The Life of an Imperial Monument," 198.

11 Yerasimos, *Kostantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*, 13.

12 This manuscript, dated 1474 and dedicated to Mehmed II, is Topkapı Palace Museum Library *GI* 6 (hereafter TPML). For this manuscript see, Julian Raby, "Mehmed the Conqueror's Greek Scriptorium," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 37 (1983), 17, 29; Necipoğlu, "The Life of an Imperial Monument," 198. For a published version, see Theodorus Preger, ed., *Scriptore originum Constantinopolitanarum* (New York: Arno Press, 1975). For an English translation, see Albrecht Berger, trans., *Patria of Constantinople: Accounts of Medieval Constantinople* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013). References here are to Berger's translation, except where otherwise noted.

13 Yerasimos, *Kostantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*, 225–229, 271; Necipoğlu, "The Life of an Imperial Monument," 198–199. The Persian texts were translated into French by Feliz Tauer and published in "Les versions persanes."

14 Yerasimos, *Kostantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*, 271.

15 Ibid., 228.

16 A critical edition of this text was prepared by Friedrich Giese in *Die altosmanischen anonymen Chroniken*. Yerasimos reproduces this text in *Kostantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*, 13–47, and I use it here for convenience.

17 Yerasimos, *Kostantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*; Zeynep Yürekli, "The Sultan, His Monument, and the Critical Public," in *A Companion to Early Modern Istanbul*, ed. Shirine Hamadeh and Çiğdem Kafescioğlu (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 536: "The text presents an amalgam of critical positions vis-à-vis the fifteenth-century Ottoman state, not necessarily of a single social group."

with new details of popular Muslim piety, arguably from oral legends.[18] Unlike the official narrative, this version pays considerable attention to the foundation of Constantinople by the fictional figure Yanko bin Madyan at an inauspicious time, leading to the city's destruction and rebuilding many times, before the account turns to the Hagia Sophia's construction.[19] While this alternative narrative was absorbed by official historiography in the sixteenth century, elements from both official historiography and the legend in the anonymous chronicle of 1491 appear to have been synthesized in mid-sixteenth-century texts. These include İlyas ʿArabi's 1562 *Tevârîh-i Kostantiniyye ve Âyâsofya ve Bazı Hikâyât* (Histories of Constantinople and Hagia Sophia and some tales) and an anonymous chronicle entitled *Târîh-i Binâ-yı Âyâsofya* (Construction history of the Hagia Sophia) evidently belonging to this period and dedicated to Sultan Süleyman I.[20]

Gülru Necipoğlu shows how Şemsüddin's official history places a greater emphasis on the regal associations of the Hagia Sophia's construction, whereas the 1491 chronicle emphasizes the building's sacred character, reflecting a dissident viewpoint on the imperialist policies under Mehmed II.[21] However, when comparing İlyas Efendi's *Tevârîh-i Kostantiniyye ve Âyâsofya ve Bazı Hikâyât* and the anonymous *Târîh-i Binâ-yı Âyâsofya*—two accounts dating from the same time during the reign of Süleyman—it becomes apparent that the regal and sacred associations of the building are interwoven. In these sources, composed around the time of the Süleymaniye's construction, the Hagia Sophia is portrayed as a symbol of both political power and divine legitimation. To illustrate this point, I will compare the texts by examining their narration of critical phases in the Hagia Sophia's construction. These phases include the conceptualization of a unique church, the search for an appropriate design, and the securing of funds to complete the project. My analysis, set against the backdrop of the *Patria*'s construction story, begins with the late fifteenth-century texts—namely, Derviş Şemsüddin's version and the chronicle of 1491—to identify the central themes in these narratives and the differences in emphasis between them. Then, I will explore how the accounts written during the Süleymaniye's construction reconcile these different narratives. Finally, I will examine how the depiction of the building and its patron contributed to Sultan Süleyman I's royal image as a divinely ordained ruler.

Late Fifteenth-Century Genesis of Meaning

Written on the orders of Sultan Mehmed II, Derviş Şemsüddin's text connects the construction of the Hagia Sophia to the emperor Justinian's defeat of pagans in the city, a connection also found in the *Patria*.[22] Both texts credit the idea of building the church to a divine source. However, where the *Patria* does this in but one sentence—"God inspired him [Justinian] to build a church such as had never been built since the time of Adam"[23]— Şemsüddin goes into far more detail.[24] Adopting a common topos of Islamic hagiography/historiography, Şemsüddin narrates a dream in which a saintly person appears to Justinian and instructs him to build a major sanctuary, "the like of which has never been seen."[25] This construction, the saint says, would glorify both the path of God and the emperor himself, ensuring his command over theworld.[26]

18 Necipoğlu, "The Life of an Imperial Monument," 200.
19 Yerasimos, *Kostantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*, 63–67, relates the appearance of the name Yanko to a misreading of Arabic sources by Yazıcıoğlu Ahmed in *Dürr-i Meknûn*.
20 On this text, see Yerasimos, *Kostantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*, 239–256, 272; Turhan Ozan Yıldız, "Ilyas Arabi's *Risale-yi Istanbul*: Perceptions of Architecture and Legend through a Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Text" (master's thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2019).
21 Necipoğlu, "The Life of an Imperial Monument," 202.
22 Berger, *Patria*, 231.
23 Quoted in and translated by Tauer, "Les versions persanes," 4.
24 Tauer, "Les versions persanes," 4.
25 Ibid., 5. On dream narratives and hagiographies, see Ann Marie Plane and Leslie Tuttle, "Introduction: The Literatures of Dreaming," in *Dreams, Dreamers, and Visions: The Early Modern Atlantic World*, ed. Ann Marie Plane and Leslie Tuttle (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 132–133; Colin Imber, "The Ottoman Dynastic Myth," in *Studies in Ottoman History and Law* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1996); Aslı Niyazioğlu, *Dreams and Lives in Ottoman Istanbul: A Seventeenth-Century Biographer's Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2017); Yürekli, *Architecture and Hagiography*, esp. 51–77.
26 Tauer, "Les versions persanes," 5.

Figure 2: The Hagia Sophia, view from the interior showing marble columns. Atatürk Library, Rare Collections, Krt_005102.

As in the *Patria*, Şemsüddin follows the emperor's decision to build a unique sanctuary with an account on the acquisition of construction materials (fig. 2).[27] In the *Patria*, Justinian orders his officials to "search for columns, revetments, parapets, slabs, chancel barriers and doors and all other materials which are needed to build a church."[28] Şemsüddin's account, however, is more imaginative in its depiction of where the building materials are sourced. Şemsüddin

27 Ibid., 5–6. See also Berger, *Patria*, 233.
28 Berger, *Patria*, 233.

notes that Justinian commanded his tributary kings across the "seven climes" to send valuable stonework. For example, the king of Persia sent ten columns as well as some green marble columns from a ruined temple in Ctesiphon called "Alyu."[29] Thus, the author asserts that the imperial church, built to commemorate the Christian Byzantine emperor's victory over pagans, was constructed using highly prized stonework sent from the four corners of the world.

The building's plan, too, involved divine intervention. In the *Patria*, this takes form of a brief mention of an angel appearing in a dream.[30] The events leading up to the dream as well as the dream itself are described more elaborately in the Ottoman text, incorporating elements from Islamic hagiographies.[31] Şemsüddin recounts that the emperor, dissatisfied with all the plans drawn for his building, has another dream. In this dream, the same saint who instructed him to build a great church appears holding a silver tablet with a drawing of the building. The saint shows it to the emperor and instructs him to build the church according to that drawing, indicating that the design was divinely ordained.[32] The saint also tells him that the name of the building is "Hagia Sophia," which in ancient Greek means both "House of Worship" and "Holy Wisdom."[33] Şemsüddin elaborates the story further by adding that the architect, a certain Ignadyus (Ignatius), had the same dream at the same time. The next morning, when the emperor sees that the architect Ignadyus has the exact drawing the saint showed him in the dream, he concludes that the name and design of this church were sent from the other world.[34]

In this episode, Şemsüddin alters the narrative of the *Patria*, which recounts the naming of the building separately from the dream concerning the building plan. According to the account in the *Patria*, an angel disguised as a eunuch dressed in white appears to an apprentice who has been left to safeguard the construction while his masters are having breakfast. The angel orders the boy, who is the architect Ignatius's son, to call his masters so that the building of God—that is, the "Holy Wisdom, the Word of God"—could be completed quickly. He also assures the boy that he will remain there until the boy returns, as he was "assigned to this place by the Word of God."[35] When the boy tells this to his masters, they take him to the emperor, who names the building the Hagia Sophia—"Holy Wisdom," as in Şemsüddin's account—and also orders the apprentice not to return to the construction site, as this would guarantee that the angel would stay there.[36]

The third major episode in the construction involves financial problems that halt work on the building halfway through.[37] Şemsüddin recounts how the prospect of not finishing the building greatly upsets the emperor, so he prays to God for a solution. His prayers are answered when he sees the saint who showed him the plan of the building again in a dream.[38] The saint, who now introduces himself as the prophet Khidr, appears praying at the construction site. When he finishes praying, he tells Justinian that he has been ordered to take care of this church from the other world. Upon hearing this, the emperor complains about the bankruptcy of the treasury. Khidr directs him to a hidden treasure outside the city, beyond Silivri Kapı (the Golden Gate, the Byzantine Gate of Pege on the Theodosian city walls) and marked by a blue column.[39] When he wakes up, Justinian goes to the place Khidr told him of in the dream and discovers a hidden treasure under the column.[40]

This dream account is another addition by Şemsüddin to the *Patria* narrative. There, the emperor meets the saint, who appears to him as "a eunuch in white dress," inside the build-

29 Şemsüddin notes that while the king sent ten columns, two were damaged on the way (Tauer, "Les versions persanes," 5). The *Patria* identifies the source of these columns as the Temple of Helios in Rome (Berger, *Patria*, 233).
30 Berger, *Patria*, 241.
31 Tauer, "Les versions persanes," 8–9.
32 Ibid., 9.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Berger, *Patria*, 245.
36 Ibid., 243–247.
37 Tauer, "Les versions persanes," 12.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.

ing, while "he was standing in the building's galleries during a very late breakfast time at the sixth hour of Saturday." The next day, the saint leads him to the treasure outside the Golden Gate.[41]

It appears that, while closely following the *Patria*, which also highlights Justinian's role, Derviş Şemsüddin places more emphasis on the divine help that the emperor receives.

A very different version of the story is narrated in the 1491 chronicle, which starts with the mythical ruler Yanko bin Madyan's founding of Constantinople at an inauspicious time. The text then relates the periodic destructions visited upon the city and its major sanctuary, which stood on the eventual site of the Hagia Sophia, and their subsequent rebuilding by Yanko's successors through to Constantine the Great, during whose reign the Hagia Sophia was built.[42] However, rather than Constantine himself, in this text, it is Constantine's fictitious wife Asafiyya who comes up with the idea of building a unique church in her memory and offers up her inheritance for this purpose.[43] This text also continues with the account of stone acquisition. According to this version of the story, however, the building materials were collected from sites that were associated with the prophet-king Solomon in Islamic sources and were believed to have been built by his divs and jinns with precious materials, such as the Temple of Jupiter in Baalbek and Temple of Hadrian in Cyzikcus (modern-day Aydıncık in northwestern Asia Minor).[44]

The second major episode in the narrative cycle, concerning the plan of the Hagia Sophia, is also narrated differently. While God conveys the plan to the emperor in Şemsüddin's text, here, it is communicated to a poor, ordinary man posing as the architect by an angel who then guides the man throughout the construction with no mention of the emperor whatsoever.[45] In the third episode, regarding the construction's financial problems, the emperor again has no role in the resolution of the problem. The text states that a boy is left to look after the half-finished building and the warehouse. A saintly-looking person visits the construction site, asking the boy why the building is incomplete.[46] When the boy tells him that the emperor ran out of money, the saint promises to lead the boy's masters—not the emperor—to the treasure.[47] Although this account is derived from the *Patria*, there, as detailed above, it was related to the naming of the building, not to finding the funds to complete construction.[48]

As the preceding outline shows, while Derviş Şemsüddin's adaptation of the *Patria* in the final years of Mehmed II's reign associates the grand monument of the Hagia Sophia with Justinian, emphasizing his role in its construction, the anonymous author dissociates the emperor, here identified as Constantine, from the construction process. He does this by downplaying his role in episodes where it is emphasized in Şemsüddin. In this version, it is actually Constantine's fictitious wife, Asafiyya, who conceives the idea of building a unique church in the name of Christianity, dedicating her inheritance to this purpose.[49] The plan for the Hagia Sophia, which, in Şemsüddin's text, is divinely communicated to the emperor, is instead given to a poor, ordinary man posing as architect. This man is guided throughout the construction by an angel, with no mention of the emperor's involvement whatsoever. The same goes for the account of the completion of the building, which remained unfinished because of the bankruptcy of the imperial treasury.[50] Here, a saintly figure visits the construction site and promises to lead a boy who has been left to look after the half-finished church and his masters to a hidden treasure, which they then use to finish the construc-

41 Berger, *Patria*, 247–251.
42 Yerasimos, *Kostantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*, 27–37.
43 Ibid., 28.
44 Ibid., 30–31.
45 Ibid., 32–33.
46 Ibid., 29.
47 Ibid.
48 Berger, *Patria*, 243–247.
49 Yerasimos, *Kostantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*, 28.
50 Ibid., 29–32.

tion.[51] Thus, in this version, it is ordinary workers—rather than the emperor, as in the *Patria* and in Şemsüddin's account—who recognize the visitor as a holy man and complete the construction.[52]

The image of the mighty emperor we find in Derviş Şemsüddin's account is entirely missing from this anonymous chronicle. While in Şemsüddin's account the emperor Justinian is divinely guided to construct the Hagia Sophia, with even the ambitious scale of his building a result of God's orders, the anonymous chronicle of 1491 minimizes the role of the emperor, in this case Constantine, in the construction. Yerasimos links this way in which the anonymous author narrated the Hagia Sophia's construction to his critical stance toward the imperial project under Mehmed II.[53]

Furthermore, the author openly criticizes the sultan's mosque, contrasting it unfavorably with the construction of the Hagia Sophia. As observed by Kafescioğlu, unlike authors close to the palace circles, this anonymous author views Mehmed II's mosque as technically and aesthetically inferior to the Hagia Sophia.[54] This critique is significant, as the sultan's monument replaced the Church of the Holy Apostles, which contained Byzantine imperial mausolea. As Zeynep Yürekli points out, the demolition of the Byzantine church to make room for the Ottoman mosque should be seen as a symbolic act resonating with the ghazi ideals and frontier culture celebrated in the lore of the holy warriors.[55] Furthermore, the author portrays Mehmed II's grand public monument as a symbol of his cruelty and injustice, involving forced labor and unfair treatment of its architect.[56]

Yerasimos views the anonymous author's critical stance in the context of the profound political transformation taking place in the closing years of Mehmed II's reign. The rebuilding of Constantinople as an Ottoman capital went hand in hand with the structural transformation of the frontier polity into a centralized state.[57] Mehmed II's harsh measures for establishing a centralized imperial order included tightening the center's control over centrifugal elements like frontier warriors (ghazis) based in the Balkans, who were integrated into the central army, and dervishes, whose private and endowed lands were confiscated and turned into fiefs.[58] While keeping these groups, which had been central constituents of

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51 Ibid., 29.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid., 131–152.
54 Kafescioğlu, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul*, 90–91; Kafescioğlu, "Heavenly and Unblessed, Splendid and Artless: Mehmed the Conqueror's Mosque Complex in Istanbul in the Eyes of Its Contemporaries," in *Aptullah Kuran İçin Yazılar / Essays in Honor of Aptullah Kuran*, ed. Çiğdem Kafescioğlu and Lucienne Thys-Şenocak (Istanbul: YKY, 1999); Yerasimos, *Kostantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*, 35–36, 147, 159–169.
55 Yürekli, "The Sultan, His Monument, and the Critical Public," 532–535; Julian Raby, "From the Founder of Constantinople to the Founder of Istanbul: Mehmed the Conqueror, Fatih Camii, and the Church of the Holy Apostles," in *The Holy Apostles: A Lost Monument, a Forgotten Project, and the Presentness of the Past*, ed. Margaret Mullett and Robert G. Ousterhout (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2020), esp. 254–257. On Mehmed II's interests in Renaissance culture and ancient history, see Julian Raby, "El Gran Turco: Mehmed the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom" (DPhil diss., University of Oxford, 1980). See also several relevant articles by Raby: "A Sultan of Paradox: Mehmed the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts," *Oxford Art Journal* 5, no. 1 (1982); "Pride and Prejudice: Mehmed the Conqueror and the Italian Portrait Medal," in *Italian Medals*, ed. J. Graham Pollard (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1987); "Mehmed II Fatih and the Fatih Album," *Islamic Art* 1 (1981); "Mehmed the Conqueror and the Byzantine Rider of the Augustaion," *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Yıllık* 2 (1987); "Cyriacus of Ancona and the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 43 (1980): 279–282.
56 Yerasimos, *Kostantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*, 35–36, 152–169; Yürekli, "The Sultan, His Monument, and the Critical Public," 536–537. On the formation and significance of public opinion regarding sultanic monuments in the capital, see, in addition to Yürekli's article, Lucienne Thys-Şenocak, *Ottoman Women Builders: The Architectural Patronage of Hadice Turhan Sultan* (London: Routledge, 2016), 187–268; Ünver Rüstem, "The Spectacle of Legitimacy: The Dome-Closing Ceremony of the Sultan Ahmed Mosque," *Muqarnas* 33 (2016); Samet Budak, "'The Temple of the Incredulous': Ottoman Sultanic Mosques and the Principle of Legality," *Muqarnas* 36 (2019).
57 Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (New York: Architectural History Foundation, 1991), esp. 3–30; Kafescioğlu, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul*. On the Ottoman imperial project under Mehmed II, see Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300–1600*, trans. Norman Itzkowitz and Colin Imber (New Rochelle, NY: A. D. Caratzas, 1973), 23–34, 59–103; İnalcık, "Mehmed the Conqueror (1432–1481) and His Time," *Speculum* 35, no. 3 (1960); İnalcık, "Mehmed II," in İslâm Ansiklopedisi: İslâm Âlemi Tarih, Coğrafya, Etnografya ve Biyografya Lugati, 13 vols. (Istanbul: MEB, 1940–1988), 7:506–535; Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 96–97, 138–154; Kafadar, "The Ottomans and Europe," in *Handbook of European History, 1400–1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation*, ed. Thomas A. Brady, Heiko A. Oberman, and James D. Tracy (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994); Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1923* (London: John Murray, 2005), 48–80.
58 Ömer Lütfi Barkan, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Bir İskân ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Vakıflar ve Temlikler I: İstilâ Devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve Zaviyeler," *Vakıflar Dergisi*, no. 2 (1942). For a revisionist view on the

the early Ottoman polity, at a safe distance from the state, Mehmed II set out to establish a hierarchical central state apparatus linked to the sultan alone. These measures caused widespread resentment, which found expression in chronicles and hagiographies written under Mehmed II's son Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512).[59] As Cemal Kafadar explains, Bayezid II adopted a different approach to rulership, seeking to establish a modus vivendi with potentially rebellious religious groups in the empire through the exercise of "soft power" and to accommodate complaints rooted in his father's uncompromising imperialist vision, like those expressed in the anonymous chronicles.[60]

Amid the political turmoil of the late fifteenth century, the meaning of the Hagia Sophia, perhaps the most potent symbol of imperial Byzantium, was fluid and contested. The Hagia Sophia, like the city itself, became a symbolic site upon which conflicting political ideas were projected.[61] As the historical context changed—that is, as the Ottoman imperial order was consolidated, a process that was accompanied by the assimilation of socio-political dissent—elements that once carried clear imperial or non-imperial (if not necessarily anti-imperial, as suggested by Yerasimos) connotations during this transitional period lost their original meanings and merged into a common pool of legends.[62] This process is evident in mid-sixteenth-century texts that incorporate elements from both official historiography and the legends in the anonymous chronicle, thereby creating a new synthesis. These texts, two of which are addressed at length below, bring many of the narratives related above together, adding new details of popular Muslim piety arguably drawn from orally circulating legends. While the Hagia Sophia's meaning is ambiguous and contested in the late fifteenth-century sources analyzed above, the next section will show that sixteenth-century accounts seem to agree on its meaning.

Synthesis in the Sixteenth Century

One of the mixed versions of the narrative is İlyas ʿArabi's 1562 *Tevârîh-i Kostantiniyye ve Âyâsofya ve Bazı Hikâyât*.[63] Although İlyas Efendi includes popular elements like Yanko, the mythical founder of Constantinople, from the legends in the 1491 chronicle,[64] he follows Şemsüddin's text closely when it comes to the construction story, and it is the emperor Justinian who receives divine ordination in dreams.[65] It is worth mentioning that an official chronicle associated with Süleyman I's grand vizier Rüstem Pasha and written seemingly around 1560 presents its narrative in this framework as well.[66]

In the first dream, the saint tells Justinian to construct a church that will be "famous around the world like the sun" for the sake of God's religion.[67] This part is followed by the account of stone acquisition, relating how the emperor immediately sends orders for the search for building materials in the provinces. Following Şemsüddin's account, this text attributes the porphyry marbles to a temple called Alyu in Ctesiphon, which was constructed by Ulyanu during the time of the prophet Abraham. The author adds that the green columns were sent by Indian rulers, while the yellow, white, and red columns were quarried from Cycladic is-

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activities of Mehmed II regarding pious foundations and the question of unpopular fiscal reforms in the years before his death, see Oktay Özel, "Limits of the Almighty: Mehmed II's 'Land Reform' Revisited," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 42, no. 2 (1999): 226–246.

59 Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 96–97, 138–154; Yürekli, *Architecture and Hagiography*, 7–8, 73–76, 126–133.

60 Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 97–98; Yürekli, *Architecture and Hagiography*, 30–31; Kafescioğlu, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul*, 213–214. For a reevaluation of the reign of Bayezid II, see Cemal Kafadar, "Between Amasya and Istanbul: Bayezid II, His Librarian, and the Textual Turn of the Late Fifteenth Century," in *Treasures of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3–1503/4)*, vol. 1, ed. Gülru Necipoğlu, Cemal Kafadar, and Cornell Fleischer (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 79–86.

61 Kafescioğlu, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul*, 143–177.

62 Yerasimos, *Kostantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*, 229–233, 238, observes this development in the official histories associated with Süleyman I's grand viziers Ayas Pasha (served 1536–1539), Lütfi Pasha (served 1539–1541), and Rüstem Pasha (served 1544–1546/1553–1561).

63 Berlin Staatsbibliothek (hereafter BPSB), Pertsch 232.

64 BPSB, Pertsch 232, 8a–35a.

65 Ibid., 41a.

66 Yerasimos, *Kostantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*, 238.

67 BPSB, Pertsch 232, 41a–42b.

lands, and the calcite columns brought from Ethiopia.[68] Also, he emphasizes the scale of the operation by stating that wherever stones and marbles of high quality and large columns were found, near or far, they were brought to Constantinople.[69]

The account continues with the description of the plan of the Hagia Sophia. İlyas Efendi repeats Şemsüddin's narrative of how Justinian sees a saint in his dream, holding a silver plate that depicts the Hagia Sophia. As in Derviş Şemsüddin's version, when Justinian discovers that the architect had drawn the exact same design after a similar dream, he realizes the plan to be divinely sent.[70] In the third episode, it is once again the emperor who receives divine guidance in his dream, revealing the location of the treasure that will enable him to complete the sanctuary.[71]

A second mixed narrative from the same period, the anonymous *Târîh-i Binâ-yı Âyâsofya*, portrays the founder of the city as Constantine, and the patron of the Hagia Sophia as Justinian.[72] Similar to Derviş Şemsüddin and İlyas Efendi, this anonymous author states that Justinian conceives the idea of constructing a church in a divinely inspired dream, which he and his courtiers interpret as an indication that God has chosen him because he is worthy and just.[73] Unlike the earlier accounts, this text introduces a skilled architect in the emperor's audience who advises him to dispatch orders to the begs and governors under his command, instructing them to send columns and polished, colorful marble.[74]

We are then informed about an ancient church in the province of Iran built by a king named Şehribaz and destroyed in an earthquake, leaving behind only its columns.[75] The rest of the multi-colored marbles were sourced from various locations, such as Ayasuluk (Ephesus), Ethiopia, the province of Greece, Mihaliç (also known as Karacabey, near Bursa, ancient Miletopolis), and the ruins of an ancient church in the province of Algiers. Adding a detail from the 1491 chronicle, the author mentions that "chameleon-like polished marble columns from the palace of Solomon in Kyzikos" were brought to the construction site of the Hagia Sophia.[76]

When narrating the emperor Justinian's second dream, in which he receives the plan of the building, this text gives more detail about the design than any other account, focusing mostly on the role of the saint/angel. The drawing that the saint shows to Justinian depicts a building with a vestibule (*dehlîz*), many doors (*ebvâbî*), and windows (*pencerelî*). Again, when the architect presents Justinian with the same drawing the next day, Justinian declares that the "master of this sacred place is an angel."[77]

In this text, the bankruptcy of the treasury which halts the construction is resolved through the intervention of the pious emperor. Deeply distressed by the inability to finish the building, the emperor prays throughout the night and falls asleep. He then dreams of an angel, who instructs him how to find a hidden treasure that allows him to complete the construction.[78]

The anonymous text further develops the notion that the Hagia Sophia's design was divinely ordained by linking it to the account of the *miʿrâj*, the prophet Muhammad's nocturnal journey from Mecca to Jerusalem and his ascension to heaven from there. According to the text, during his journey over the earth and through the heavens, Muhammad sees a building with "forty ruby columns" and "walls that are revetted with chalchuites and emeralds."[79] When Muhammad inquires about this place, Archangel Gabriel reveals that God built it for

68 Ibid., 43a–45b.
69 Ibid., 45b.
70 Ibid., 49b–51a.
71 Ibid., 52a–55a.
72 Istanbul Atatürk Library (hereafter IAL), Muallim Cevdet K138, 5b–8b.
73 Ibid., 8b–9a.
74 Ibid., 9a.
75 Ibid., 9a–b.
76 Ibid., 9b–11b.
77 Ibid., 16b–17a.
78 Ibid., 18b–21b.
79 Ibid., 26b.

him and his community of believers. Gabriel refers to this sacred space as the Great Mosque (*Câmiʿül-kübrâ*) and mentions that there is a smaller version, a reflection (*misâl*) of it, called the Small Mosque (*Câmiʿüs-sugrâ*), known as Hagia Sophia, located in Constantinople. Muhammad is pleased to learn from Gabriel that this most sacred sanctuary on earth, the Hagia Sophia, is predestined to be inherited by his community.[80]

The account of Muhammed's nocturnal journey exemplifies the theme of predestination, complementing the idea of divine intervention.[81] All the accounts discussed, including Şemsüddin's adaptation of the *Patria*, feature a narrative about the collapse of the semi-dome over Hagia Sophia's apse on the night of Prophet Muhammad's birth. This collapse is followed by a reconstruction that requires Muhammad's saliva to be mixed with the mortar.[82] The Prophet agrees to the reconstruction, knowing that Muslims will one day conquer Constantinople and take over this most sacred sanctuary. Necipoğlu emphasizes the significance of these narratives, especially the theme of predestination, in "the reconsecration of Hagia Sophia and Constantinople in the new Islamic context."[83]

The foregoing shows how in these mixed versions of the Hagia Sophia's construction story, depictions of the emperor as well as the monument converge. The imperial monument is associated with Justinian, whose role in the construction is highlighted. He receives divine assistance for a church that is destined to bolster monotheism, suggesting that God has chosen the emperor to rule over his kingdom on earth. While reproducing the "imperial" version of the story that portrays the emperor Justinian as a powerful ruler of the world, the accounts consistently reinforce the belief that the Hagia Sophia is the "House of God," built by divine will.

A Note on the Particular Architectural Relationship between the Süleymaniye and the Hagia Sophia

The theme of divine creation in the histories of the Hagia Sophia may have influenced the design of Ottoman sultanic mosques. The characteristic features of the Hagia Sophia depicted in these Ottoman texts were its singular design and the use of ancient building materials in its construction. The Süleymaniye emulated the Hagia Sophia on both fronts, something unprecedented in Ottoman architecture.[84] The Süleymaniye's unprecedented allusion to the Hagia Sophia is attested by the surviving archival documents regarding its construction, published by the late Ömer Lütfi Barkan.[85] These documents reveal an empire-wide initiative to acquire high-quality spolia for the building. It appears that collecting and transporting the spolia, particularly the ancient columns supporting the domed baldachin, proved a significant challenge with the technical means and infrastructure available at the time (fig. 3). This challenge, as scholars have emphasized, added value to the building in the eyes of its contemporaries and testified to the power and command of its patron, Süleyman I, over his imperial domains.[86]

Carried out on an imperial scale over a period of seven to eight years, these operations also demonstrated the sultan's control over his territories, which was well established after

80 Ibid., 26b–27b.
81 Necipoğlu, "The Life of an Imperial Monument," 200.
82 Tauer, "Les versions persanes" 19–20; Yerasimos, *Kostantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*, 38; BPSB, Pertsch 232, 66b–67a; IAL, K138, 27a–29b.
83 Necipoğlu, "The Life of an Imperial Monument," 198.
84 On the impact of the Hagia Sophia on Ottoman religious architecture, see in particular Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*, 3–30; Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 77–103; Necipoğlu, "Challenging the Past"; Necipoğlu, "Architectural Dialogues across the Eastern Mediterranean: Monumental Domed Sanctuaries in the Ottoman Empire and Renaissance Italy," in *The Companions to the History of Architecture*, edited by Harry Francis Mallgrave, vol. 1, *Renaissance and Baroque Architecture*, ed. Alina Payne (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2017).
85 Ömer Lutfi Barkan, *Süleymaniye Cami ve İmareti İnşaatı (1550–1557)*, 2 vols. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1972–1979), 1:331–360. See also İlknur Aktuğ Kolay and Serpil Çelik, "Ottoman Stone Acquisition in the Mid–Sixteenth Century: The Süleymaniye Complex in Istanbul," *Muqarnas* 23 (2006).
86 Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 311; Necipoğlu, "The Süleymaniye Complex in Istanbul: An Interpretation," *Muqarnas* 3 (1985); Barkan, *Süleymaniye Cami ve* İmareti İnşaatı, 1:331–360; Stefanos Yerasimos, *Süleymaniye*, trans. Alp Tümertekin (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2002), 45, 51; J. M. Rogers, "The State and the Arts in Ottoman Turkey, Part 1: The Stones of Süleymaniye," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 14, no. 1 (1982).

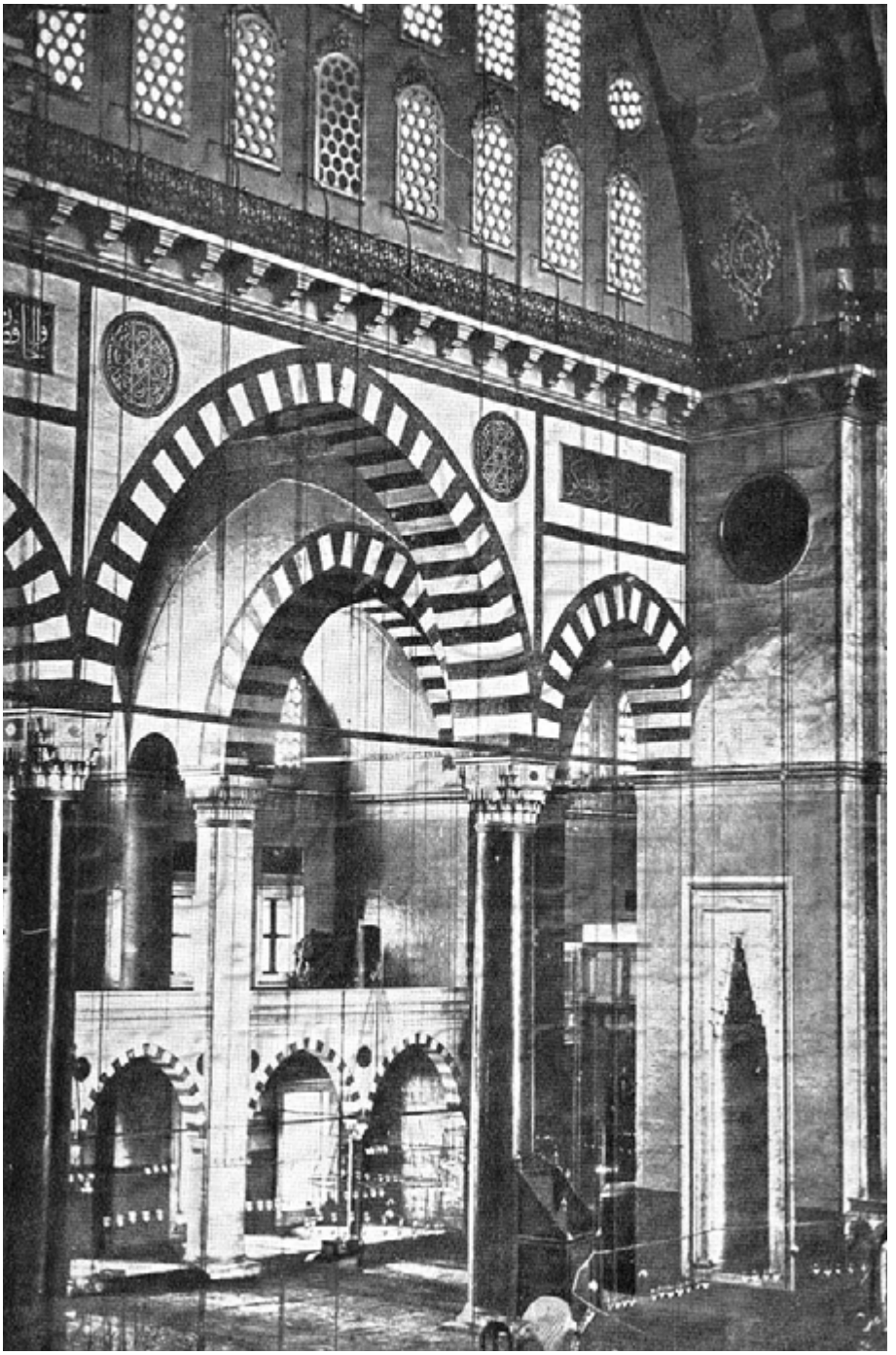

Figure 3: Süleymaniye interior. İstanbul, Atatürk Library, Rare Collections, Krt_004297.

three decades of truly illustrious and transformative rulership by the time the construction started. What better testament to the power and wealth of a sultan who claimed universal sovereignty than mementos brought from the four corners of his vast empire to construct his major public monument in the capital?

The territories of the Ottoman Empire had expanded substantially during Süleyman's reign, incorporating Hungary in the west and western Iran and Iraq in the east. Also, the conquest of North African shores enabled the Ottomans to control the eastern Mediterranean basin. With increasing territorial expansion on land and sea, universal sovereignty may not have seemed unrealistic to the sultan who assumed the title of "master of the lands of the Roman Caesars

and Alexander the Great."[87] This title was complemented by caliphal titulature proclaiming Süleyman the leader of the Islamic world, following the incorporation of Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem, the three principal sanctuaries of Sunni Islam, during his reign and that of his father, Selim I (1512–1520). Süleyman further fashioned himself as the "caliph of the whole world" upon the conquest of the ancient Sunni Abbasid capital of Baghdad in 1534.[88] Furthermore, as noted by Cornell Fleischer, the conception and representation of the sultan as a divinely ordained king was very much related to the apocalyptic visions and millennial expectations that marked the larger Mediterranean and Islamic world in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In particular, Süleyman I, like his contemporaries across Eurasia, was associated with the idea of a messianic world emperor who would lead mankind under one religion and polity.[89] In Islamic traditions, this figure would be the *mahdî*, the redeemer during the end times, or the *müceddîd* (renewer) of the age, signaling the end of one era and the coming of another.[90]

The planning of the Süleymaniye followed the treaty signed with the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V of Spain and his brother Ferdinand I of Austria and Hungary in 1547, which affirmed Süleyman's supremacy over his major rivals in the West, making them tributaries.[91] The construction coincided with two campaigns against the Safavids, ending with the Amasya Treaty in 1555, which forced Shah Tahmasb to put an end to the ritual cursing of the Sunni caliphs and other divergent practices, which gave the Ottoman sultan the ideological upper hand.[92] In this context, the stone acquisition for the Süleymaniye could well have signified its patron's universal domination and his political and ideological supremacy over his primary rivals.[93] In addition to the royal mosque, the renovation of the Dome of the Rock, a Solomonic site as well as one of the three holy places of Islam, and the illustrated *Shahnâma-i Âl-i ʿ*Osmân, a universal history starting with the prophets and culminating with Süleyman's reign, expressed the sultan's imperial claims as a world emperor.[94] Furthermore, the sultan was readily compared with the prophet-king Solomon; his *waqfiyya*, for instance, refers to him as the "second Solomon" and the "Alexander of the age," while the association of the sultan with his namesake was also underlined by inscriptions on some of the public fountains he built in Edirne and Jerusalem.[95]

Necipoğlu observes that for Süleyman's mosque, "Justinian's Hagia Sophia was a perfect model," drawing on the building's symbolic link to the prophet-king Solomon's legendary temple.[96] In Ottoman narratives, the Hagia Sophia, much like Solomon's temple, embodied

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87 Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 27–28; Halil İnalcık, "State and Ideology under Suleyman I," in *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire: Essays on Economy and Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Turkish Studies, 1993).

88 Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 27–28; Colin Imber, *Ebu's-su'ud: The Islamic Legal Tradition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997); Imber, "Süleyman as Caliph of the Muslims: Ebūʾs-Suʿūd's Formulation of Ottoman Dynastic Ideology," in Veinstein, *Soliman le Magnifique*; Hüseyin Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined: The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

89 Cornell Fleischer, "A Mediterranean Apocalypse: Prophecies of Empire in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 61, nos. 1–2 (2018); Fleischer, "The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleymân," in Veinstein, *Soliman le Magnifique*; Fleischer, "Ancient Wisdom and New Sciences: Prophecies at the Ottoman Court in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries," in *Falnama: The Book of Omens*, ed. Massumeh Farhad and Serpil Bağcı (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009).

90 Hayrettin Yücesoy, *Messianic Beliefs and Imperial Politics in Medieval Islam: The ʿAbbāsid Caliphate in the Early Ninth Century* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2009).

91 On Ottoman–Habsburg rivalry and its relation to cultural production under Süleyman I, see Gülru Necipoğlu, "Süleyman the Magnificent and the Representation of Power in the Context of Ottoman-Hapsburg-Papal Rivalry," *The Art Bulletin* 71, no. 3 (1989).

92 Adel Allouche, *The Origins and Development of the Ottoman-Safavid Conflict (906–962/1500–1555)* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1983); Gilles Veinstein, "Les premieres mesures de Bâyezîd II contre les Kızılbaş," in *Syncrétismes et hérésies dans l'Orient seldjoukide et ottoman (XIVe–XVIIIe siècles): Actes du colloque du Collège de France, octobre 2001*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: Peeters, 2005); Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 47–70; Yürekli, *Architecture and Hagiography*.

93 Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 207.

94 Ibid., 207–222; Necipoğlu, "The Süleymaniye Complex in Istanbul;" Necipoğlu, "The Dome of the Rock as Palimpsest: ʿAbd al-Malik's Grand Narrative and Sultan Süleyman's Glosses," in "Frontiers of Islamic Art and Architecture: Essays in Celebration of Oleg Grabar's Eightieth Birthday; The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture Thirtieth Anniversary Special Volume," ed. Gülru Necipoğlu and Julia Bailey, special issue, *Muqarnas* 25 (2008): 57–79; Fatma Sinem Eryılmaz Arenas-Vives, "The *Shehnamecis* of Sultan Süleyman: 'Arif and Eflatun and Their Dynastic Project" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2010); Eryılmaz Arenas-Vives, "From Adam to Süleyman: Visual Representations of Authority in ʿĀrif's *Shāhnāma-yi Āl-i ʿOs̱mān*," in *Writing History at the Ottoman Court: Editing the Past, Fashioning the Future*, ed. H. Erdem Çıpa and Emine Fetvacı (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

95 Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 190–191, 220.

96 Ibid., 222.

the divine legitimation of Justinian's authority, making it an ideal model for Süleyman's mosque as a powerful political statement of sovereignty. The deliberate reference to the Hagia Sophia in the Süleymaniye's design likely served to signify the divine endorsement of Süleyman's rule. If such a message was central to Süleyman's grand public monument, then the mixed narratives concerning the Hagia Sophia's construction must have been instrumental in reinforcing it. Sixteenth-century accounts underscore themes of imperial patronage and divine sanction within the narrative cycle, portraying Justinian as a divinely appointed universal monarch, whose authority the Hagia Sophia visibly affirms. The specific architectural relationship between the Hagia Sophia and the Süleymaniye may thus be an intentional reference to this notion of the ruler's divinely sanctioned power, setting Süleyman's mosque apart from the series of other royal mosques that mark Istanbul's skyline.

Conclusion

To conclude, the late-fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Ottoman narratives of the Hagia Sophia examined here illustrate that Ottoman views on the late-antique heritage of Constantinople were neither fixed nor monolithic.[97] As noted by scholars, these texts, which attached great significance to the ancient monument, were influenced by the political and cultural contexts in which they were produced. The official histories written in the final years of Mehmed II's reign were complemented by alternative accounts recorded in chronicles from Bayezid II's time. This was a period marked by negotiation and debate among various social groups regarding the nature of the state and its past. Critical voices, including traditional power-holders such as the frontier warlords and Orthodox Christians in the capital who were dissatisfied with the new regime for various reasons, gradually lost political influence by the middle of the sixteenth century as the patrimonial empire was consolidated. At the same time, the imperial heritage of Constantinople as the Ottoman capital became a source of pride for the ruling elite and intellectuals. In this context, the alternative narrative of the Hagia Sophia's construction gradually lost its critical edge, merging with the official account.

However, as scholars like Ebru Turan and Zeynep Yürekli have shown, counternarratives persisted into the sixteenth century, even during the so-called "golden age" of Süleyman's reign.[98] The sultan's autocratic tendencies and deviations from established norms provoked public criticism, including his elevation of his longtime companion Ibrahim, an unknown public figure at the time, to the role of grand vizier, his marriage to the concubine Hürrem, and his executions of Ibrahim in 1536 and of prince Mustafa, his eldest son, in 1553.[99] Yürekli interprets the sultan's mosque complex "as the ultimate response to all criticism thus far levelled towards the aging sultan Süleyman."[100] This grand public monument directly engaged with the Hagia Sophia through its superstructure, construction process, and dome size, outshining his great-grandfather Mehmed II's efforts in this regard.[101] While anonymous chroniclers viewed Mehmed II's mosque as inferior to the Hagia Sophia and as a symbol of the sultan's cruelty, Yürekli argues that Süleyman's mosque promoted an image of its patron as a just and powerful ruler.[102] I argue that the Süleymaniye may have reinforced Süleyman's image also as a sanctified ruler through its unprecedented emulation of the design and building process of the Hagia Sophia, which was associated with sacral kingship in the contemporary Ottoman narratives.

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97 The construction story changed further in the seventeenth century with the integration of European, Greek, and Latin sources into the encyclopedic compilations of intellectuals such as Katib Çelebi and Hezarfen Hüseyin Efendi. Kafescioğlu, "Byzantium in Early Modern Istanbul," 348; Cumhur Bekar, "A New Perception of Rome, Byzantium and Constantinople in Hezarfen Huseyin's Universal History" (master's thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2011).

98 Yürekli, "The Sultan, His Monument, and the Critical Public," 543–537; Ebru Turan, "Voices of Opposition in the Reign of Sultan Süleyman: The Case of İbrahim Paşa (1523–36)," in *Studies on Istanbul and Beyond*, ed. Robert G. Ousterhout (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2007).

99 Yürekli, "The Sultan, His Monument, and the Critical Public," 541; Ebru Turan, "The Sultan's Favorite: İbrahim Pasha and the Making of the Ottoman Universal Sovereignty in the Reign of Sultan Süleyman (1516–1526)" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2007); Leslie P. Pierce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

100 Yürekli, "The Sultan, His Monument, and the Critical Public," 541.

101 Ibid., 542.

102 Ibid., 536–537, 542–543.

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