

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF AN EMPIRE: OTTOMAN STATE UNDER SÜLEYMAN THE MAGNIFICENT

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In 1547, when Süleymân the Magnificent corresponded with the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, he addressed him as "the *King* of the province of Spain" rather than "*Kayser* (Caesar)," the Ottoman term for emperor. He referred to himself as Sultan Süleymân Hân bin Selîm Hân bin Bâyezîd Hân, the *Pâdişâh* "who commands the caesars of the era and crowns the emperors of the world."¹ This exchange, with its precise use of titulature, signifies the elements that socially constructed the Ottoman empire; it reveals the three traditions of universal sovereignty with which the Ottomans associated themselves which. Among the titles of Süleymân the Magnificent, *Hân* symbolized the Central Asian tradition and *Sulîân* the Islamic one. *Pâdişâh* referred to the Ottoman imperial synthesis which emerged under Süleyman's rule to give new meaning to the term as the *Ottoman* emperor.² The title *Kayser* which Süleymân abstained from bestowing upon Charles V indicated the Ottoman association with the Eastern Roman claims to universal sovereignty. Süleymân, as the descendant of Mehmed II, the conqueror of the Eastern Roman Empire, rejected the claims of Charles V to be the Roman emperor.

This paper employs Ottoman titulature as a vantage point to study the Ottoman construction of an empire under Süleymân the Magnificent. First, it analyzes the three traditions of universal sovereignty — the Central Asian, Islamic, and Eastern Roman — which constructed the Ottoman concept of empire. It then discusses the Ottoman conceptions of absolutism and justice, the two significant elements that differentiated the Ottoman imperial tradition from its predecessors. The paper concludes with an analysis of the cultural symbol which reproduced the Ottoman concept of empire.

¹See H. İnalçık "Osmanlı-Rus Rekabetinin Menşei ve Don-Volga Kanalı Teşebbüsü (1569)" *Belleten* XII, p. 349, and H. İnalçık *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age* p. 57.

²See H. İnalçık "Osmanlı Padişahı" *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi* XIII/2, pp. 68-79.

I. THE FORMATION OF THE OTTOMAN CONCEPT OF EMPIRE: THE HERITAGE

The Ottoman dynasty structured its concept of empire and acquired its drive for expansion from the three traditions of universal sovereignty it came into contact with throughout its history. The Central Asian tradition influenced the nature of Ottoman rule, particularly its state structure and administration. The subsequent development of an Indo-Iranian Islamic imperial tradition around the possible universal sovereignty of Islam informed the concept of the Ottoman ruler, particularly the supreme nature of his rule. The interaction in Asia Minor with the Byzantine Empire first as an adversary and then as the successor advised the Ottoman dynasty of the Eastern Roman imperial tradition and its European claims; the frequent Ottoman campaigns to the West reflected the Eastern Roman aspect of this universal sovereignty.

THE CENTRAL ASIAN TRADITION

The Central Asian association with the title emperor dates back to Çingiz Hân and Oğuz Hân. The ancient Turkic epic *Oğuznâme* depicts Oğuz Hân as the first world emperor who conquered the world with his six sons; the Ottomans trace their lineage to the three older sons who inherited the claims to a world empire.³ Çingiz had regarded himself as the emperor of the world, one who had been sent to that position by the heavens. Later, according to the Chinese sources, Temuçin was given the title emperor, "Çingiz," by the assembly he had gathered in 1206, whereby he regarded himself, in contrast to the Chinese emperor, as the emperor of the nomads.⁴ According to both of these depictions, the ruler was imbued with sacredness through his association with the eternal powers. He ruled the earth with the powers given to him by the eternal sky. His sovereignty on earth was as vast and broad as the ocean; like the ocean, he touched and ruled all the shores of the world: he was the world emperor. He descended from god because his mother as a princess who was impregnated by a light descending from the sky.⁵ The pre-Islamic beliefs of the Turks shaped this naturalistic image of the sovereignty of the Turkic ruler and the expanse of his rule.

The creation myths of subsequent empires all drew upon the legitimation offered by this sacred origin: the founders of both the Seljuk and Ottoman dynasties had dreams that capture this sacred association which promised them a

³See H. İnalçık "Osmanlılar'da Saltanat Veraseti Usulü ve Türk Hakimiyet Telâkkisiyle İlgisi" *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi* 1959, pp. 77-8, and O. Turan *Türk Çiçan Hakimiyeti Mefkûresi Tarihi* p. 147.

⁴See O. Turan "Çingiz Adı Hakkında" *Belleten* 1942, p. 267.

⁵See H. İnalçık "Osmanlılar'da Saltanat Veraseti Usulü ve Türk Hakimiyet Telâkkisiyle İlgisi" *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi* 1959: XIV/1, pp. 74-5, and O. Turan "Çingiz Adı Hakkında" *Belleten* 1942: V/18, pp. 270-5.

world empire.⁶ Seljuk's father Dukak dreamt of three trees growing out of his navel, branching out to spread the world empire. 'Osmân Gâzî (1281-1324), the founder of the Ottoman dynasty, had a similar dream with an additional Islamic component. He, after having shown utmost respect to the Qur'an while a guest of Sheikh Edebali, dreamed that a moon emerged from the Sheikh and entered 'Osmân's breast whereupon an enormous tree ascended to branch out and cover the world. The Sheikh interpreted the dream as foreshadowing the future world empire to be founded by the dynasty of 'Osmân Gâzî, and gave him his daughter Mal Hâtûn in marriage.

These myths of origin and the claims of sovereignty they offered created conflicts among different dynasties in Asia Minor. In 1040, the Seljuk ruler Tuğrul Bey sent an envoy to the Ghaznavid sultan informing him that while the sultan descended from slaves (*kölezâde*), Tuğrul Bey, who could trace his lineage to Oğuz Hân, had come from a dynasty of rulers.⁷ In the fourteenth century, both the Ottomans and Timur and his sons claimed descent from the Central Asian dynasty of world emperors. Timur wanted to legitimate his rule of the area by stating that he, as a descendant of "a lineage of rulers going back to Çingiz Han," had a natural right to rule whereas Bâyezîd I (1389-1403) who was "a mere frontier lord" did not.⁸ Bâyezîd countered this assertion by producing a genealogy to the ancient Turkish hânns of Central Asia, claiming descent from Oğuz Hân, thereby holding on to his right of rule. This was the only serious challenge to the Ottoman appropriation of the Central Asian heritage which structured the Ottoman imperial synthesis through its conceptions of sovereignty, legislation, and state formation. Symbolically, the Ottomans kept drawing on the legitimation of this tradition in their accession ceremonies; the girding of the sword of 'Osmân to the newly established ruler was one such Central Asian practice adopted by the Ottoman dynasty.

The Ottoman attempts to establish this Central Asian conception of universal sovereignty are evident in the endeavors of Mehmed II (1444-1446, 1451-1481) and Süleymân I, the Magnificent (1520-1566). Giacomo de Languischi recounted that Mehmed II had stated there must be one world empire, with one faith and one sovereignty⁹. Already possessing the heritage of the Central Asian and Islamic traditions of universal sovereignty, and having just conquered the Eastern Roman Empire, Mehmed II undoubtedly saw himself as

⁶See H. Inalcık "Osmanlılar'da Saltanat Veraseti Usulü ve Türk Hâkimiyet Telâkkisiyle İlgisi" *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi* 1959: XIV/1, pp. 77-8, and O. Turan *Türk Cihan Hakimiyeti Meşkûresi Tarihi* 1978, pp. 150-2.

⁷See O. Turan, *Türk Cihan Hakimiyeti Meşkûresi Tarihi* 1978, p. 269.

⁸See H. Inalcık, "Osmanlılar'da Saltanat Veraseti Usulü ve Türk Hâkimiyet Telâkkisiyle İlgisi" *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi* XIV/1: 1959, pp. 77-8, and H. Inalcık *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age* 1973, p. 56.

⁹See H. Inalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age* 1973, pp. 57-8.

the most likely candidate for such a position. In constructing his rule, Mehmed II was also influenced by¹⁰ Trapezuntios who called him the Roman emperor, and Pope Pius II who promised to make him, if he accepted Christianity, the most powerful emperor of the world and bestow upon him the title of "the emperor of the Greeks and the East". The Ottoman chronicler Kemâlpaşazâde also mentioned that Mehmed II sought after world sovereignty. The establishment of an Ottoman navy for sea conquest supports this claim; Mehmed II's campaign against Otranto was no doubt the first step in his conquest of Rome a plan aborted upon his death. The subsequent conquest East and West of his great grandson Süleymân I to establish sovereignty over the seas by conducting campaigns to the Indian Ocean signify the continuation of this notion of universal sovereignty.

THE ISLAMIC TRADITION

The title *sultan*, meaning authority or government in Arabic, had become a common designation employed by independent Muslim rulers in the tenth century. It became an official title in the eleventh century as the Seljuks redefined it as the supreme political and military head of Islam.¹¹ Sultan then turned into the usual Islamic title of sovereignty. The Ottoman attempts to use this title increased as they fought Christian Byzantium and slowly expanded beyond the control of the weakening Seljukid state. Orhan Gâzî (1324-1360) was the first Ottoman ruler to bear the title of *sultan* and to strike the first Ottoman coins as a token of independence. His son Murad I (1360-1389) carried the titles *hüdâvendigâr* (emperor), and *sultân-i â'zâm* (the most exalted sultan).¹² Yet it was with the rule of Bâyezîd I that the Ottoman dynasty attempted to have the Abbasid Caliph in Cairo formally recognize the title of *sultân ar-Rum*, the sultan of the Byzantine lands. After his rule, as the power of the Ottoman dynasty expanded over Muslim lands, the title sultan became an integral part of its titulature. The conquest of Constantinople had made Mehmed II the most eminent Muslim ruler; when his grandson Selîm I (1512-1520) expanded the Ottoman boundaries to cover Syria, Egypt and Arabia, the Ottoman rulers became the protectors of all Muslims.

The Seljuk redefinition of sultan differentiated the political and military head of Islam from its religious head, associated with the title *halîfe*, the deputy (of God). The title *halîfe* had initially signified authority deriving directly from God, one supreme Muslim ruler above all.¹³ After the destruction of the caliphate in Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258, the title lost its significance and came to be applied to all those Muslim rulers who acted to protect Islam; its real

¹⁰See H. İnalcık "Mehmed II" in *İslâm Ansiklopedisi* 1957, volume 7, pp. 513-4.

¹¹See B. Lewis *The Political Language of Islam* 1988, pp. 51-2.

¹²See H. İnalcık *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age* 1973, pp. 55-6.

¹³See B. Lewis *The Political Language of Islam* 1988, pp. 46-7.

power was replaced by the title of sultan. Selim I thus became the protector of Mecca and Medina, and the guardian of the pilgrimage routes. By the era of Süleymân the Magnificent, the Ottoman usage of the title Caliph of the Muslims was accepted by all. The institution of the caliphate had lost its power by then. The classical definition of the caliphate in terms of lineage became replaced by action in the name of Islam, Süleymân could therefore claim the right to the title as a protector and defender of Islam. Nevertheless, another title Süleymân employed, *halîfe-i rû-i zemîn* (the caliph of the world), suggested world sovereignty, this time articulated in Islamic terms.¹⁴ Symbolically, the Ottomans kept drawing on the legitimation of this Islamic tradition in their accession ceremonies. For example, each new sultan visited the tomb of Eyyüb Enşârî, a Companion of the Prophet Muḥammad. After 1520, the Ottoman accession ceremony occurred, in the Topkapı Palace at the room where the holy relics of the Prophet Muḥammad (brought to Constantinople from Egypt by Selîm I and considered to be the symbols of the caliphate) were kept. The accession contained, in the Islamic tradition, a *bi'at* ceremony whereby the Ottoman officials and the military swore allegiance to the new sultan.

THE EASTERN ROMAN TRADITION

The title "emperor" originated in the Latin *imperium*, from *imperare*, to command, indicating the sovereign or supreme monarch of an empire. It designated the sovereigns of the ancient Roman Empire. After 27 B.C., *imperator* was regularly adopted by the Roman ruler as a forename and gradually came to apply to his office. The spread of Christianity affected the sovereignty of the emperor. In medieval Europe, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne, the King of the Franks and the Lombards, emperor in Rome. Henceforward, until the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453, there were two emperors in the Christian world, the Byzantine and the Western. The title empire thus implied sovereignty over the Christian world, one that was fully supported by the sovereignty of God.

With the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, the term emperor was attributed to Mehmed II. Because of the Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholic division within Christianity, the Greeks saw Mehmed II as their emperor and as the true heir of Rome and the Western world. Mehmed II in turn assumed the former Byzantine capital as the capital of his empire, appointed the Greek Orthodox and Armenian patriarchates, and beckoned the Chief Rabbi to reside in his capital. His employment of the sons of Greek notables in the palace his use of Greek in correspondence, his constant interest in Christianity and in European

¹⁴See H. Inalcık "Osmanlı Padişahı" *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi* XIII/2:1958, pp. 70-1.

culture¹⁵ can be interpreted as indications of Mehmed II's interest in sustaining the Eastern Roman tradition of sovereignty over the civilized world.

These three traditions of universal sovereignty and the titles associated with them thus structured the Ottoman concept of rule and produced a new title that the Ottomans themselves gave meaning to: *padişah*, the supreme shah.¹⁶ This term was first attributed to Mehmed II who through his conquest of Constantinople, combined the Central Asian, Islamic and Eastern Roman traditions within himself. Even though Mehmed II gave meaning to this title through his conquests, it was only by the era of Süleymân I the geographical boundaries and the wealth of the Ottoman state reached world empire heights to signify what a *padişah* needed to strive for in order to merit the title. The care the Ottomans took in using this title became evident¹⁷ during the Zsitva-Torok Treaty negotiations in 1606. These almost failed because of the Ottoman resistance to concede the title to the Holy Roman Emperor (whom they had addressed instead as the King of Vienna). Even then, the Ottoman chronicler Re'isü'l-Küttâb Hüseyin remarked that he fervently wished the Ottomans would ultimately "wipe the name of Caesar from the surface of the world."¹⁸ Yet the Ottoman imperial synthesis extended beyond the symbol of a new title. The Ottomans socially constructed an empire that, in addition to drawing upon these traditions, contained two new concepts of absolutism and justice which differentiated the Ottoman empire from its predecessors.

II. THE ELEMENTS OF THE OTTOMAN CONCEPT OF EMPIRE: ABSOLUTISM AND JUSTICE

Most studies of empires¹⁹ focus on the political conditions that structure an empire. An empire comprises "wide, relatively highly centralized territories with an autonomous center which contains both the person of the emperor and the central political institutions".²⁰ An empire differs from other societal formations in that it is a *political* system; of the ideological, economic, military

¹⁵See H. Inalcık "Mehmed II" in *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, volume 7, 1957, pp. 532-35.

¹⁶See H. Inalcık "Osmanlı Padişahı" *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi* XIII/2: 1958.

¹⁷See B. Lewis *The Political Language of Islam* 1988, p. 98.

¹⁸See O. Turan *Türk Cihan Hâkimiyeti Meşkûresi Tarihi* 1978, p. 358.

¹⁹See, for example, M. Weber *Economy and Society* [1978], S. Eisenstadt "Empires" in *The New International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* 1968, P. Anderson *Lineages of the Absolutist State* 1974, R. Bendix *Kings or People: Power and the Mandate to Rule* 1978, J. Kautsky *The Politics of Aristocratic Empires* 1982, and M. Doyle *Empires* 1986.

²⁰See S. Eisenstadt "Empires" in *The New International Encyclopedic of the Social Sciences* 1968, p. 41.

and political components of power,²¹ the political dominates the other three. This political formation is also unique in that the centralization and monopolization of political power and resources are necessary conditions for its construction.²² This sociological definition is mostly informed by the context of the European historical experience and the analyses of Max Weber.²³

Max Weber defined empire with respect to the type of political authority it entailed. According to him, the Ottoman empire would be a type of traditional authority, namely sultanism — a form of patrimonialism. Traditional authority referred to a political system legitimated by the sanctity of age-old rule and powers. Patrimonialism, and its extreme case, sultanism, emerged when this domination developed an administration and a military force which were the personal instruments of the ruler. Patrimonialism transformed into sultanism when the ruler broadened the range of his arbitrary power at the expense of tradition.²⁴ This emphasis on arbitrary power formed the basis of Weber's depiction of justice within sultanism. The system of justice was not a rational but an ad hoc one, based entirely on the ruler's personal discretion and exercised by his officials without restraint. Hence a typical feature of the patrimonial state in the sphere of law-making was "the juxtaposition of inviolable traditional prescriptions and completely arbitrary decision-making, the latter serving as a substitute for a regime of rational rules."²⁵ Subsequent attempts to develop comparative classification system of empires did not alter Weber's fundamental interpretation of patrimonial systems.²⁶

How accurate is this sociological depiction of the Ottoman empire? The analyses of Halil İnalcık²⁷ demonstrate that the Ottoman conception of an empire was different and unique. The Ottoman definition of an empire centered more around the idea of sovereignty over many states — on a Central Asian legacy, rather than on the Western conception of empire which emphasized territories, political institutions, or religion as its unifying principle. The portrait of Mehmed II where he is surrounded by six crowns for the six states he had conquered (see Necipoğlu in this volume), and the correspondence of Süleymân I

²¹See M. Mann *The Sources of Social Power* 1986, pp. 518-9.

²²See N. Elias *The Court Society* 1983, p. 2.

²³See M. Weber *Economy and Society* [1978].

²⁴See M. Weber *Economy and Society* [1978], pp. 226-7.

²⁵See M. Weber *Economy and Society* [1978] pp. 1013-14.

²⁶See S. Eisenstadt *The Political Systems of Empires* 1963.

²⁷See, for example, "Osmanlı-Rus Rekabetinin Menşei ve Don-Volga Kanalı Teşebbüsü" *Türk Tarih Kurumu Belleten* XII: 1948, "Osmanlılar'da Saltanat Veraseti Usulü ve Türk Hâkimiyet Telâkkisiyle İlgisi" *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi* XIV/1: 1959, "Kutadgu Bilig'de Türk ve İran Siyaset Nazariye ve Gelelenekleri'in Reşit Rahmeti Arat İçin 1966, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age* 1973, and "The Question of the Emergence of the Ottoman State" *International Journal of Turkish Studies* II: 1980.

where he refers to himself as "he who crowns the emperors of the world," for example, demonstrate the validity of this definition. The ruler who governed the Ottoman empire derived his sovereignty from his membership in a dynasty, the Ottoman dynasty, rather than from a nation, a territory, or a religion. Sovereignty was not given to a person, as in the West, but to this dynasty, so much so that the Ottoman empire was "not an empire with a dynasty but a dynasty with an empire."²⁸ The Ottomans differentiated this new conception of empire from its predecessors through their exercise of absolutism and justice. These Ottoman conceptions of absolutism and justice contradict Weber's depictions of the incontestability of the ruler's power and the arbitrariness of rule, however. Absolute authority did indeed develop around the Ottoman ruler, but was never arbitrary. Instead, an elaborate system of justice based on both religious and civil laws bound the ruler and the ruled.

THE CONCEPT OF ABSOLUTE RULE AND SUCCESSION

The Ottomans retained the Central Asian succession procedure where all members of the dynasty contended for the throne, but altered the apportionment of the state among the contenders. It was this alteration that enabled the Ottomans to centralize rule and make it absolute. Originally, the Ottoman rulers, in accordance with the Central Asian tradition and the Seljuk practice before them, distributed the lands among their sons. The first ruler of the Ottoman dynasty, 'Osmân Gâzî, followed this pattern. The succeeding Ottoman rulers, however, started sending their sons to the provinces as governors rather than relinquishing these areas to them. They also carefully selected the tutors and administrators to accompany their sons, closely controlled the amount of revenues each received, and structured their obedience to orders from the center.²⁹ The Ottoman heirs were appointed to the provinces upon reaching puberty. For example Murâd I sent his older son to Kütahya, his second son Ya'kub to Karesi, and kept his youngest at the center. Of his predecessors, Orhan's (1324-1360) son Savcı was the only Ottoman prince to be sent to a governorship in the European side; all others were assigned to former state capitals in Asia Minor.

When Timur defeated Bâyezîd I in 1402, he attempted to terminate this new Ottoman practice by apportioning the Ottoman state he had defeated among Bayezid's sons.³⁰ Yet one of the sons, Mehmed I, united the Ottoman state under his rule and executed his brothers. This act drew criticism from Timur's son Shâhrûh who stated that fratricide was against the Central Asian Ilkhanid

²⁸See H. İnalcık *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age* 1973, p. 59.

²⁹See H. İnalcık *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age* 1973, p. 60.

³⁰See H. İnalcık "Osmanlılar'da Saltanat Veraseti Usulü ve Türk Hakimiyet Telâkkisiyle İlgisi" *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi* XIV/1959, pp. 84-6, 90.

tradition of rule. Mehmed I (1413-1421), in reply, emphasized that the Ottomans were shaping their own tradition; "in sovereignty," he is said to have stated,³¹ "Ottoman rulers have let experience be their guide and therefore do not accept partnership in rule." The Ottomans could have adopted the practice of fratricide from the Iranian political tradition where it was common. Mehmed I also stopped the convention of giving land and estates to uncles and brothers. He only permitted the ruler's sons to retain this privilege, and then only in their capacity as provincial administrators of the Ottoman state.³² This Ottoman principle of centrality of rule had become so ingrained by the fifteenth century that when Mehmed II's sons Bâyezîd and Cem were contending for the throne in 1480 and Cem suggested dividing the empire into the European and Asian parts, Bâyezîd II (1481-1512) replied that "the Ottoman state was such an honorable bride that she could not tolerate the demands of two grooms; the bride of sovereignty could not be divided."³³

Fratricide demonstrated the prevalence Ottomans gave to the dynasty and its empire over blood ties. Although Bâyezîd I was the first Ottoman ruler to practice fratricide in 1389 against his brother over the fight for succession, it was Mehmed I who codified this practice for the sake of the state. He decreed that "for the welfare of the state, the one of my sons to whom God grants the sultanate may lawfully put his brothers to death. A majority of religious scholars, *ulema*, consider this permissible."³⁴ Another significant aspect of the Ottoman fratricide was the mode of death it employed.³⁵ As in the Central Asian tradition of rule, it was forbidden to spill the blood of members of the ruling dynasty. Even though forbidden in the Islamic tradition, some Seljuk and early Ottoman rulers were mummified before burial. The contending members of the Ottoman dynasty were, upon defeat, strangled with a bowstring. Only Muştafa "the pretender," who claimed to be the son of Murâd II, was executed like a commoner.

The Ottoman pattern of sending sons to the provinces underwent changes with the centralization of sovereignty. As the sultan became identified with the center, with the core of the empire and its charisma, he or any of his possible descendants could no longer leave the center of the empire which had assumed a centrifugal symbolic force. After Süleymân, Selîm II (1566-1574) and Murâd III (1574-1595) only sent their oldest sons to governorships. Mehmed III (1595-1603) ended the practice of sending heirs to the provinces. From then on, they

³¹See O. Turan *Türk Cihan Hakimiyeti Mefkûresi Tarihi* 1978, p. 334.

³²See H. Inalcık, "Osmanlılar'da Saltanat Veraseti Usulü ve Türk Hakimiyet Telâkkisiyle İlgisi" *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi* XIV/1: 1959, p. 90.

³³See Hoca Sa'deddîn and 'Âşıkpaşazâde in O. Turan *Türk Cihan Hakimiyeti Mefkûresi Tarihi* 1978, p. 328.

³⁴See H. Inalcık *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age* 1973, p. 59.

³⁵See O. Turan *Türk Cihan Hakimiyeti Mefkûresi Tarihi* 1978, p. 172.

became confined to the palace in Istanbul instead.³⁶ The marriage patterns of the rulers and their daughters underwent similar changes with the Ottoman consolidation of power. The Ottoman rulers had initially expanded their political power by marrying the daughters of local potentates in Asia Minor. After they started to conquer vast territories on their own, however, the Ottoman sultans attempted instead to monopolize and consolidate power within their empire. The sultan's female slaves, who had no political power except that bestowed by the sultan, replaced the daughters of potentates as the sultan's mates. Personal devotion rather than alliance thus became the main mate selection criterion as the Ottoman state transformed into an empire. The sultan's sisters and daughters, initially married to the sons of local potentates, also started to be wedded instead to the ruler's administrators. As the Ottoman state expanded territorially into an empire, the loyalty of the administration which governed in the name of the sultan became more pivotal in sustaining the government.

The Central Asian tradition of letting divine dispensation determine the candidate favored by the heavens succeed the throne persisted until the end of Ottoman rule, however. According to the Ottomans, the strength God gave made one Ottoman candidate win over others. The persistence of this tradition overruled all earthly attempts to regulate succession. It made all male members of the Ottoman dynasty equally eligible in the competition for the throne; the victorious one succeeded "by God's will and his own fortune." This principle of the role of divine intervention was so strong that when Bayezid, the son of Süleymân the Magnificent, attempted to seize the throne, his father told him that "it is not man's pleasure but God's will that disposes of kingdoms and their government. If he has decreed that you shall have the kingdom after me, no man will be able to prevent it."³⁷ The sacredness, brilliance which descended from the skies to envelop one contender against others was called *kuş*, fortune which imbued sacredness on ordinary people.³⁸ The term and its depiction is very similar to Weber's conception of charisma, to charismatic authority which emanated from "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he was considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers and qualities... (which were) regarded as of divine origin and as exemplary."³⁹ These qualities caused the person to be treated as a leader. If, however, he could not provide proof and success, and if he failed to serve his followers, the leader quickly lost this charismatic quality and, with it, the right to rule. Like the Central Asian perception, it was as if the heavens withdrew their blessings from him.

³⁶See H. İnalcık *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age* 1973, p. 60.

³⁷See H. İnalcık *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age* 1973, p. 59.

³⁸See H. İnalcık "Osmanlılar'da Saltanat Veraseti Usulü ve Türk Hâkimiyet Telâkkisiyle İlgisi" *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi* XIV/1: 1959, p. 74.

³⁹See M. Weber *Economy and Society* [1978], p. 241.

If, on the other hand, his "fortune" persisted, the charisma extended beyond the rule of the sovereign to become routinized. Routinized charisma could either take the form of hereditary charisma "where the selection of heir stayed within a kinship group," — as in the case of the Ottoman dynasty — or get translated into the charisma of office "where legitimacy was no longer directed to the individual but to acquired qualities and the effectiveness of ritual acts."⁴⁰ As charisma became routinized, the grounds for the success of some contenders against others altered. The administration routinizing this charisma became an important factor in legitimating Ottoman succession. The creation of this administration from household slaves was another Ottoman innovation that enhanced Ottoman absolutism.⁴¹ The Turkish and Mongol rulers of Central Asia had employed leaders of defeated tribes in their retinues. The Ottomans continued this tradition, establishing, in addition to the supply of slaves purchased from the marketplace and those given as gifts to the sultan, a system of levying the sons of Christian subjects for the sultan's service (*devşirme*). Mehmed II was the first Ottoman ruler to delegate his authority to his slaves rather than to leaders of old Ottoman families. He eliminated local dynasties and strong frontier lords, filled administrative posts with his own slaves, established new military units loyal to his person, and started the tradition of having slave females rather than marrying daughters of local potentates.⁴² A century later, Mehmed IV (1648-1687) displayed the increasing power of the Ottoman administration when he stated that he had acceded the throne "by God's will, his own abilities, and the consent of the civil officials and religious scholars (*ittifâk-i ârâ-i vüzerâ ve 'ulemâ*)."⁴³ This administration was to play a significant role in the other unique concept of Ottoman rule: justice.

THE CONCEPT OF JUSTICE AND ADMINISTRATION

The Ottoman concept of justice unfolded around two bodies of law that were equally significant: the sultanic law of the ruler (*kânûn*) and the religious law of Islam (*seri'at*). What differentiated the Ottoman synthesis was that each one was as significant as the other. This legal modification also enhanced the new image of absolutism in the person of the sultan.⁴⁴ In creating this Ottoman synthesis, Mehmed II and Selîm I focused on institutionalizing the authority of the sultan, and Bâyezîd II emphasized the sovereignty of religion. Yet it was Süleymân I who, for the first time, united these two components under his rule.

⁴⁰See M. Weber *Economy and Society* [1978], p. 248.

⁴¹See H. İnalcık "Osmanlı Padişahı" *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi* XIII/2: 1958, p. 494 and *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age* 1973, p. 77.

⁴²See H. İnalcık "Mehmed II" in *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, volume 7, 1957, pp. 511-2.

⁴³See H. İnalcık "Osmanlılar'da Saltanat Veraseti Usulü ve Türk Hâkimiyet Telâkkisiyle İlgisi" *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi* XIV/1: 1959, p. 74.

⁴⁴See H. İnalcık "Osmanlı Padişahı" *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi* XIII/2: 1958, p. 77.

The codification of many practices from the inception of the Ottoman state formed the basis of the Ottoman sultanic law, *kânûn-i 'oşmânî*. The equal treatment of this sultanic law with the religious did not increase the arbitrariness of justice as Weber implied, however. Instead, the sultanic law suppressed this arbitrariness as it required the sultan personally to guarantee that his empire rested on law and justice.

The close Ottoman tie between sovereignty and justice originated in the Central Asian tradition of political rule which combined politics and ethics through "the circle of justice."⁴⁵ This circle stipulated that state control required a large army, and such an army required great wealth; the prosperity of the people which would provide this wealth depended on having just laws. Only through such laws could the ruler control the state: the failure to have just laws would undermine his sovereignty. A just ruler also had to possess certain qualifications such as⁴⁶ justice (*'adl*), gentleness (*hilm*), generosity (*sehâ*) in treating his subjects. He also had to display bravery (*seca'at*) and wisdom (*hikmet*). What facilitated sovereignty was not military strength alone but a combination of these personal qualities. This conception of justice differed from the Persian tradition which defined justice as the grace and favor of the sovereign's absolute authority, thus interpreting it in accordance with the pragmatic goals of the ruler.⁴⁷ In the Persian tradition, the ruler did indeed precede law as Weber claimed; yet the Ottomans followed the Central Asian tradition which put the law before the ruler — sovereignty was coupled with law, not the ruler.

Since sovereignty resided in the Ottoman dynasty and was entrusted to a particular member on the condition that he administer his people justly, the ruled could oppose and rebel against an unjust ruler. The Ottoman sultans therefore took many measures to secure a fair administration of justice. The sultan's court was both the supreme organ of government and a high court of justice. Everyone in the empire, regardless of their social position, was invited to petition the court for the administration of justice.⁴⁸ The sultan exercised his just rule through delegating his executive power to two officials, the grand vezir and the sheikh-ul-islam. The grand vezir was, as in the Central Asian tradition, the sultan's absolute deputy in civil administration. The two creators of the Ottoman imperial tradition, Mehmed II and Süleymân I, fully delineated the post of the Ottoman grand vezirate; they increased its responsibilities to meet the increasing demands of an expanding empire. The sheikh-ul-islam was the absolute

⁴⁵See H. Inalcik "Kutadgu Bilig'de Türk ve İran Siyaset Nazariye ve Gelenekleri" in *Reşit Rahmeti Arat İçin* 1966, pp. 261-3, and *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age* 1973, p. 66.

⁴⁶See H. Inalcik "Kutadgu Bilig'de Türk ve İran Siyaset Nazariye ve Gelenekleri" in *Reşit Rahmeti Arat İçin* 1966, p. 266.

⁴⁷See H. Inalcik, "Kutadgu Bilig"de Türk ve İran Siyaset Nazariye ve Gelenekleri" in *Reşit Rahmeti Arat İçin* 1966, p. 267, and *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age* 1973, p. 66.

⁴⁸See H. Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age* 1973, pp. 89-91.

representative of the sultan's religious authority. The religious administration he directed constituted the greatest power in the empire independent of the grand vezir. The religious and civil administration together oversaw the fair execution of justice in the Ottoman empire.

The composition of the sultan's administration was of crucial importance to the sultan because these officials were given the authority to execute justice in his name. After Mehmed II, these officials were recruited more and more from among the sultan's household slaves whose allegiance was exclusively to their provider, the sultan, and their goal paralleled his, i.e., a just administration. The sultan also sent inspectors and spies throughout the empire to affirm the fair execution of justice. He also proclaimed rescripts, *'adâletnâmeler*, redressing the malpractice of his administrators. The branches of government were divided into a system of checks and balances to guarantee justice. In the provinces, for example, three separate authorities represented the sultan: the governor had the sultan's executive authority, the kadi his legal authority, and the treasurer (*hazîne defterdâri*) his financial authority.⁴⁹ The Ottoman imperial tradition thus formulated a very elaborate system of absolute and just rule as it modified the imperial succession and molded a scrupulous administration.

III. THE REPRODUCTION OF THE OTTOMAN CONCEPT OF EMPIRE: CULTURAL SYMBOLS

The cultural reproduction⁵⁰ of an empire occurs through the symbols that are associated with it. The ruler as the nucleus of the empire, the capital as the geographical center, the newly constructed building complexes as the physical image, the court and public ceremonies as rituals that extend beyond time, and the victory celebrations as salutes to the greatness of the empire, culturally construct and reproduce the empire. As political power is successfully centralized and stabilized, the boundaries of action extend from the person of the ruler beyond time and space. As Clifford Geertz⁵¹ states, "the court mirrors the world the world should imitate; society flourishes to the degree that it assimilates this fact; and it is the office of the king, wielder of the mirror, to assure that it does." It is the ruler who provides the magic that enables the whole system to work. The intensive concentration of political power in the person of the sovereign moves him from the realm of the natural to that of the supernatural.

⁴⁹See H. İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age* 1973, pp. 104, 118.

⁵⁰See M. Foucault *The Archeology of Knowledge* 1972, and P. Bourdieu *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* 1977.

⁵¹See C. Geertz "Centers, Kings and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power" in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* 1983, p. 124.

Mehmed II was the first Ottoman sultan to concentrate power in himself and his capital. As he lived in his palace surrounded by an elaborate court ceremony his power became more abstract and celestial. Süleymân the Magnificent's ritual⁵² of visiting in Constantinople the tombs of his ancestors (specifically of Mehmed II, Bâyezîd II and Selîm I) before going on campaigns, his paying homage to the tombs of the Hungarian kings during the Estergon campaign and that of Imam Abû Hanîfa in Baghdad during the Eastern campaigns, in addition to his praying in a newly conquered church that had just been converted into a mosque all drew upon and reproduced the celestial power that grew around him. He symbolically obtained strength from all that was sacred in the past and present. He and his dynasty then emanated strength that surpassed temporal and spatial boundaries.

The capital city⁵³ plays a significant role in reproducing imperial rule; it provides a physical setting for the centralized political power of an empire. Most ceremonies of the empire, those performed vis-à-vis foreign ambassadors, local dignitaries, the urban populace take place within the capital. The capital of the Ottoman state was Bursa in Asia from 1326-1402 and Edirne in Europe from 1402-1453. With Mehmed II's conquest of Constantinople in 1453, Constantinople, situated on the two continents of Asia and Europe, provided a geographical locus for the Ottoman boundaries that kept expanding to form an empire. Mehmed II actively aided the reproduction of Ottoman society around the symbols of an empire. He built up the physical image of Constantinople as he ordered the construction of the Fatih complex. Süleymân the Magnificent, his great-grandson, followed his ancestor's example; imperial construction in Constantinople reached its zenith under him and his architect Sinân. Süleymân had six mosque complexes constructed in Constantinople, for his father Selîm I, his deceased sons Mehmed and Cihângîr, his daughter Mihrimâh, his spouse Hürrem, and, the Süleymaniye complex for himself. The imperial palace and buildings such as the mosques, markets, schools and libraries, aqueducts for water provision, and libraries furnished a physical image to the expanding Ottoman power. Byzantine structures informed this new imperial space and Islamic forms gave shape to it. This image and the new rule expanded to the provinces as Süleymân repaired the tombs of Rûmî, Imam Abû Hanîfa, 'Abd al-Ḳâdir Gilânî, Seyyid Battâl Ğâzî, as he built walls built around the old city in Jerusalem, and as he constructed an educational complex in Mecca.

Ceremonies and festivities celebrated this new Ottoman imperial image and extended its impact beyond spatial boundaries. The court ceremonies recreated the Ottoman power for the visitors; the public ceremonies in the capital enabled the populace to share the Ottoman imperial image. The circumcision and

⁵²See T. Gökbilgin "Süleymân I" in *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, volume 11, 1970, p. 102.

⁵³See N. Elias *Power and Civility: The Civilizing Process* 1982, p. 45.

wedding ceremonies, elaborately celebrated under Süleymân the Magnificent in 1530 and 1539, displayed Ottoman power. The parades of the guilds, the military, and exhibits of elaborate gifts given to the sultan by foreign ambassadors demonstrated, both geographically and economically, the expanding boundaries of the empire's might. In addition to the life-events of the sultan and his household, Ottoman victory festivities celebrated the military greatness of the empire that had been created. As the populace joined in these celebrations, they symbolically supported and enhanced Ottoman conquests and reconfirmed their trust in the sultan; the victories during the German campaign of 1532, for example, were celebrated in Constantinople in great pomp.

The monuments and public works constructed by the sultan, the public festivities celebrating campaign victories, and the feasts marking the life events of the sovereign and his children thus created an Ottoman imperial image for the entire society. As local and foreign dignitaries flowed through the imperial court, the Ottoman society acquired a sense of who among these was like them and who differed from them. They thus associated the imperial image with a unique social identity. The public ceremonies, spectacles, court rituals symbolically reproduced the exercise of imperial power to communicate what an empire was. As court officials, artisans and visitors traveled to the provinces and to other societies, they diffused this Ottoman imperial image, this identity, to the rest of the world.

CONCLUSION

The Ottomans, as they reformulated the existing practices of succession and administration, constructed a new conception of an empire around the parameters of absolutism and justice. The imperial tradition they created was not, as Weber argued, based on the personal practice of arbitrary authority. Instead, it drew its power from a tradition of rule reinterpreting the Central Asian, Islamic and Eastern Roman practices. It aspired to a world sovereignty that would ultimately result from this just rule. During the era of Süleymân the Magnificent, this ideal Ottoman imperial tradition was institutionalized. It was then that the Ottoman state united its ideological, structural and cultural images of empire into a synthesis that was to last for a long period.

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