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The Parthenon, Pericles and King Solomon: a case study of Ottoman archaeological imagination in Greece[1]

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What made Athens different from other multi-layered cities absorbed into the Ottoman Empire was the strength of its ancient reputation for learning that echoed across the Arabic and Ottoman worlds. But not only sages were remembered and Islamized in Athens; sometimes political figures were too. In the early eighteenth century a mufti of Athens, Mahmud Efendi, wrote a rarely studied History of the City of Sages (Tarih-i Medinetü'l-Hukema) *in which he transformed Pericles into a wise leader on a par with the Qur'anic King Solomon and linked the Parthenon mosque to Solomon's temple in Jerusalem.*

Keywords: Ottoman Athens; Parthenon mosque; Mahmud Efendi; Evliya Çelebi; Islamic archaeology; Ottomanization

Early modern Ottoman writers who commented on monuments of the Greco-Roman past commonly confronted them not directly but at one remove, since many pagan buildings had already enjoyed a long life as Christian make-overs. The Christians whose lands the Ottomans inherited had done the gradual work of absorption, rejection and

1 I am grateful to the Gerda Henkel Stiftung for their generous funding of my research, including a grant that has made possible selected translations, especially those relating to the Parthenon, from Mahmud Efendi, *Tarih-i Medinetü'l-Hukema*. For these translations and related discussions I would like to thank Thomas Sinclair. Final discussion and composition took place within the 'Impact of the Ancient City Project' led by Prof. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (Faculty of Classics, University of Cambridge). This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement n° 693418). I thank Gülçin Tunalı for a copy of 'Another kind of Hellenism? Appropriation of ancient Athens via Greek channels for the sake of good advice as reflected in *Tarih-i Medinetü'l-Hukema*', PhD dissertation, Ruhr Universität Bochum, 2013, in which she transcribes most of the text, translates select passages, and sets Mahmud Efendi in a wider Ottoman historiographical context. Her dissertation is available online at https://www.scribd.com/document/334328999/Gulcin-TUNALI-pdf. I would like to thank Dimitris Loupis for photographs of the entire manuscript and Seyyed Mohammad Shariat-Panahi for an initial translation and discussion of the Pericles section in Athens in 2014. I have benefited from discussions about aspects of earlier versions of this article with Suna Çağaptay, Garth Fowden and Banu Turnaoğlu, and from the comments of the two anonymous reviewers, none of whom should be held responsible for errors or omissions in the present article.

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adaptation of the pagan material past by the time of the Islamic conquest. This is true for seventh-century Syria and Palestine, and also for fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Anatolia and the Balkans. The 'Ottomanization' and 'Islamization' of cities and monuments was a many-phased process.[2]

While it remains true that by the fifteenth century many pagan monuments bore the patina of long Christian use, close study of individual writers and local rulers in recent scholarship is revealing different varieties of engagement with the Greek and Roman past. One could mention recent and on-going work by Giancarlo Casale, Gülçin Tunalı, Tijana Krstić, and Emily Neumeier, to name four scholars working on textual and archaeological examples of Ottoman manipulation of pre-Christian, Greek and Roman history, literature and monuments, remixed for a variety of purposes.[3] The present article examines one very particular instance of reuse of the Athenian pre-Christian past by focusing on the figure of Pericles as builder of the Parthenon in a 291-folio history of Athens composed in early eighteenth-century Ottoman Turkish by a local mufti.

At the time of its conquest in 1456, Athens was a Christian city whose ancient monuments and myths had been reworked and reinterpreted for over a millennium.

2 Gülru Necipoğlu has discussed the processes of Islamization and Ottomanization, and the differences between these two, in the context of Hagia Sophia: G. Necipoğlu, 'From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Kostantiniyye: Creation of a cosmopolitan capital and visual culture under Sultan Mehmed II', in *From Byzantion to Istanbul: 8000 years of a capital, June 5 - Sept. 4, 2010, Sabancı University Sakıp Sabancı Museum, Istanbul.* Exhibition catalogue (Istanbul 2010) 262-78, and G. Necipoğlu, 'The life of an imperial monument: Hagia Sophia after Byzantium', in R. Mark and A. Ş. Çakmak (eds), *Hagia Sophia from the Age of Justinian to the Present* (Cambridge 1992) 195-225. See also C. Kafadar, 'A Rome of one's own: Reflections on cultural geography and identity in the lands of Rum', *Muqarnas* 24 (2007) 10: 'In short, the Turkish encounter with Hellenic Asia Minor was in some measure supplemented and filtered by the Turkish encounter with an earlier Arab (and other peoples') reception of the heritage of the lands of Rum'. Later Ottoman views of antiquities have been explored by W. M. K. Shaw, *Possessors and Possessed: Museums, Archaeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Berkeley 2003), and E. Eldem, 'From blissful indifference to anguished concern: Ottoman perceptions of antiquities, 1799-1869', in Z. Bahrani, Z. Çelik and E. Eldem (eds), *Scramble for the Past: A Story of Archaeology in the Ottoman Empire, 1753-1914* (Istanbul 2011) 281-329. See also G. Akyürek Altürk, 'Mid-nineteenth century Ottoman re-discovery of Constantinople: New practices of seeing architecture of the city', in E. Altan, S. E. Ekici, A. U. Peker (eds), *1. Türkiye Mimarlık Tarihi Kongresi / Architectural History Conference Turkey I* (Ankara 2017) 183-200, who explores the popular Ottoman press in the mid-19th century in order to discuss changing attitudes to and uses of ancient material in the urban fabric of the Ottoman capital. See now the stimulating issue of the *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 6 (2017) edited by S. Mulder and particularly her Editorial 'Imagining localities of antiquity in Islamic societies', 229-54.

3 G. Casale, 'Seeing the past: Maps and Ottoman historical consciousness', in H. E. Çıpa and E. Fetvacı (eds), *Writing History at the Ottoman Court: Editing the Past, Fashioning the Future* (Bloomington 2013) 80-99, and his current book in preparation, *Muslim Rome*; G. Tunalı, 'Another kind of Hellenism?'; T. Krstić, 'Of translation and empire: Sixteenth-century Ottoman imperial interpreters as Renaissance go-betweens', in C. Woodhead (ed.), *The Ottoman World* (London 2011) 130-42, and E. Neumeier, 'Spoils for the new Pyrrhus: Alternative claims to antiquity in Ottoman Greece', *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 6 (2017) 311-37, and 'Rivalling Elgin: Ottoman governors and archaeological agency in the Morea', in B. Anderson and F. Rojas (eds), *Antiquarianisms: Contact, Conflict, Comparison* (Havertown, PA 2017) 132-58.

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When Mehmed the Conqueror ascended the Athenian acropolis in 1458, the ancient temple of Athena known to us as the Parthenon was a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary of Athens. It had already served as a church for roughly a thousand years. The construction of a temple dedicated to Athena Parthenos on the Athenian acropolis was begun in 447 BC. This building was remodelled for use as a church probably in the fifth century AD, and converted to a mosque most likely on the occasion of Mehmed's visit in 1458. Anyone who visits the acropolis today will be struck by the singularly classical appearance of what we see, a representation of the past made possible by the destruction of the post-classical evidence from the 1840s onwards, when it was widely considered acceptable to privilege one period so radically at the expense of all others. In recent generations architects, archaeologists and historians have devoted considerable effort to understanding the Christian Parthenon.[4] It remains to explore how the Ottomans physically re-worked the Parthenon and, above all, imaginatively re-cast the histories of Athenian monuments in order to make them their own.

In a separate monograph I consider the complex reasons why the Parthenon mosque has occupied such a cultural blind spot from the nineteenth century onwards.[5] What I will focus on here is one episode in the Ottomanization of the Parthenon's history as portrayed by a member of the local ulema named Mahmud Efendi, who wrote over a generation after the more famous Evliya Çelebi's visit to Athens in 1667. Mahmud Efendi is a little-known figure. He describes himself as a native of what we know today as central Greece with family ties in Athens, Thebes and Chalcis. He relates that he studied in Istanbul and became mufti of Athens in 1698. This we know from the few comments he makes about himself in his history of Athens entitled *Tarih-i Medinetü'l-Hukema*, or *The History of the City of Sages*, which he began writing in 1715.[6] Today the unique manuscript of Mahmud's history survives in the Tokapı Palace Library.

4 See C. Bouras, *Byzantine Athens 10th - 12th Centuries*, trans. E. K. Fowden (Abingdon-on-Thames 2017) 146-54; T. Shawcross, 'Golden Athens: Episcopal wealth and power in Greece at the time of the Crusades', in N. G. Chrissis and M. Carr (eds), *Contact and Conflict in Frankish Greece and the Aegean, 1204-1453: Crusade, Religion and Trade between Latins, Greeks and Turks* (Farnham 2014) 65-95; A. Kaldellis, *The Christian Parthenon: Classicism and Pilgrimage in Byzantine Athens* (Cambridge 2009); R. Ousterhout, '"Bestride the very peak of heaven": The Parthenon after antiquity', in J. Neils (ed.), *The Parthenon: From Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge 2005) 317-24; M. Korres, 'The Parthenon from antiquity to the 19th century', in P. Tournikiotis (ed.), *The Parthenon and its Impact in Modern Times* (Athens 1996) 136-61; R. A. McNeal, 'Archaeology and the destruction of the Athenian Acropolis', *Antiquity* 65 (1991) 49-63.

5 See also E. K. Fowden, 'The Parthenon Mosque, King Solomon and the Greek Sages', in M. Georgopoulou and K. Thanasakis (eds), *Ottoman Athens: Archeology, Topography, History* (Athens forthcoming 2018).

6 *Tarih-i Medinetü'l-Hukema,* Tokapı Sarayı Emanet Hazinesi no: 1411 (hereafter TMH). For the date and circumstances of composition, see TMH 2b; on his family background, see TMH 267a.

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How it arrived there and what impact it made, if any, is not known. It was briefly discussed by Cengiz Orhonlu in 1972[7] and was in 2013 the subject of a dissertation by Gülçin Tunalı.[8] Part of my purpose in discussing one episode in Mahmud's *History* is to draw greater attention to a source that deserves an edition, translation and thorough study of its socio-historical, political and literary context and significance. My focus in this short contribution is much narrower and is aimed at what I call Mahmud's 'archaeological imagination', as part of my wider concern with Muslim responses to ancient monuments, particularly the Parthenon.

Mahmud's work, written in a flowery and allusive style, seems not to have been widely disseminated – whether it enjoyed success as a text to be read aloud is simply not known. Given the fact that Mahmud was educated in Istanbul, where he had tried and failed to procure a permanent position before returning to Greece to take up a post among the local Ottoman elite,[9] we may infer that he would have aspired to a wide public for his history. While he does not state explicitly who his intended audience was, he offers a social context for his work when he remarks that it was at a *meclis* that he was encouraged to write his history.[10] He might have settled for more local educated circles, although no evidence for even that has so far been discovered. Mahmud does, though, provide a fascinating clue to his Athenian social context when he thanks two learned

7 C. Orhonlu, 'The History of Athens (Tarikh-i medînetül hukema) written by a Turkish kadi', *Actes du IIe Congrès International des Études du Sud-Est Européen (Athènes 7-13 Mai 1970),* II (Athens 1972) 529-33, and C. Orhonlu, 'Bir Türk kadısının yazdiği Atina Tarihi' [The History of Athens written by a Turkish *kadı*], *Güney-Doğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi [Journal of South-East European Studies]* 2/3 (1973/4) 119-36.

8 See n.1 for the full reference to the dissertation; Tunalı has published two subsequent articles closely related to her dissertation, see Tunalı, ' "Seseya". Representation of Theseus by the Ottoman mufti of Athens at the beginning of the eighteenth century', in A. Helmedach, M. Koller, K. Petrovszky and S. Rohdewald (eds), *Das osmanische Europa. Methoden und Perspektiven der Frühneuzeitforschung zu Südosteuropa* (Leipzig 2014) 487-506, and Tunalı, 'Gregory Kontares, Theophanes Kavallaris, Grigoris Sotiris and Mahmud Efendi: The venture of *Tarih-i Medinetü'l-Hukema*', in Georgopoulou and Thanasakis (eds), *Ottoman Athens: Archeology, Topography, History*. I thank the author for sending a pre-publication version. See Tunalı, 'Another kind of Hellenism?', especially 1-2 and 32-43 on Mahmud's biography and his method of composition; 27-32 for a broad description of Mahmud's 'intellectual horizons'.

9 TMH 266b-267a. 'The addiction to *fetva*s in Athens was my fate' (267a, tr. Sinclair). Mahmud seems to have resigned himself to life among the educated elite of Athens, whose climate and manners he appreciated.

10 TMH 2b. On the role of the *meclis* in the transfer of knowledge between the early modern capital and provincial cities, see H. Pfeifer, 'Encounter after the Conquest: Scholarly gatherings in sixteenth-century Ottoman Damascus', *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 47 (2015) 219-39. Her investigation of social and intellectual exchange between Arabs and Turkish-speaking Ottomans might be profitably transposed onto Christian and Muslim exchanges in the Ottoman provincial cities of Rumeli, for which the compositional setting of Mahmud's history presents occasional, if meagre, evidence.

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Greek contemporaries in Athens – Papa Kolari and Papa Sotori, reasonably identified by Tunalı as the well-known abbots of the Kaisariani Monastery, Theophanes Kavallares and Gregorios Soteres[11] – for their help in translating from ancient Greek, Latin, modern Greek and 'Frankish', by which he probably means French, though he could be referring to any European language and might have been unclear himself which it was.[12] Tunalı has detected a compelling similarity between the outlines of Mahmud's work and another history by Georgios Kontares entitled *Old and Highly Beneficial Histories of the Celebrated City of Athens*, published in Venice in 1675, a work which draws heavily on classical Greek texts to write the history of Athens from its founder-hero Theseus to the first Christian Athenian, Dionysios the Areopagite.[13] As Tunalı points out, the striking similarities in the historical figures Mahmud includes in his own *History* suggest that thanks to his abbot-translators Mahmud relied on Kontares for at least some of his access to ancient sources. But in Mahmud's hands, these figures are reshaped to address the experience and expectations of a Muslim audience. The one episode I examine here exemplifies how the history Mahmud produced was not simply a cut-and-paste anthology of sources translated into Ottoman Turkish, but a synthetic and in many ways original work.

Mahmud has a broad historical vision. Not only does his history of Athens stretch from Adam to the late seventeenth century, but his method is complex: he integrates classical authors, eye-witness observation and local information, articulating his material through an Islamic cultural perspective infused with the traditions of Arabic and Ottoman geographical writing that associates topography and monuments with kings

11 On Kaisariani Monastery and the learned abbots, see the edition of the eighteenth-century history by I. Benizelos, *Ιστορία των Αθηνών*, edited by I. Kokkonas and G. Bokos, supervised by M. I. Manousakas (Athens 1986) 118-21. For discussion of Mahmud's informants and sources, see Tunalı, 'Another kind of Hellenism?', 67-78 and Tunalı, 'Gregory Kontares'.

12 Mahmud refers to these languages and cultures differently in close sequence, suggesting that either for reasons of style, imprecision or ignorance he varied his expression, for example at TMH 2a. For his impressionistic representation of the languages and periods of his sources, see also TMH 2b and TMH 4a; generally 4a-5a on his sources. See Tunalı, '"Seseya"', 487-9, who interprets the languages Mahmud mentions as 'Ancient Greek and Latin, Modern Greek and French'. For discussion of Mahmud's informants and sources, see Tunalı, 'Another kind of Hellenism?', 67-78; also on the sources, see Tunalı, 'Gregory Kontares'. On the (sometimes vague) use of *rumi* and *yunani*, and their variants, in Arabic writers, see N. Serikoff, 'Rūmī and yūnānī: Towards the understanding of the Greek language in the medieval Muslim world', in K. Ciggaar, A. Davids and H. Teule (eds), *East and West in the Crusader States* (Leiden 1996) 169-94.

13 Georgios Kontares, *Ἱστορίαι παλαιαὶ καὶ πάνυ ὠφέλιμοι τῆς περιφήμου πόλεως Ἀθήνης* (Venice 1675). Tunalı, 'Another kind of Hellenism?', 78-82 and Tunalı, 'Gregory Kontares'. The school teacher, historian and priest Georgios Kontares took the name Gregorios when he was elevated to the metropolitan throne of Servia and Kozani. The name Georgios appears on the title page of the 1675 publication.

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and prophets.[14] As we would expect, Alexander features prominently as he cut a familiar figure in both Hellenic and Islamic worlds.[15] In describing Athens and its monuments Mahmud shared with Evliya Çelebi an interest in sages. Evliya associates many sites in Athens with philosophers – figures such as Aristotle, Hippocrates, Socrates, Pythagoras, Galen, Ptolemy and Plato, who peopled Arabic philosophical discourse well into the Ottoman period. Evliya even imagines the philosophers of Athens and Baghdad in effortless telepathic communication.[16] This may have been Evliya's own, rather delightful, literary confection, playing on the prominence of Greek philosophy in the 'Golden Age' of Abbasid Baghdad. But Evliya does not write only about philosophers, he also brings Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (as Suleyman and Belkis) into his description of Athens. Again, this taps into the longstanding Arabic tradition of associating great buildings with Solomon and his queen. In Athens, the enormous temple of Olympian Zeus became for Evliya the Throne of Belkis, a palace built for her by Solomon on their honeymoon.[17] Evliya also mentions that the precinct was used in his own day as an open-air mosque, bringing together his characteristic interests in current circumstances and foundation myths. Both Evliya and Mahmud are mythoplastic in their mode of encountering Athens, its monuments and its history, creating and adapting their inherited traditions of explaining and animating monuments from the past with what they see and learn in situ in order to draw associative links between the Hellenic and Islamic legend and history. Evliya's technique is more an overlaying of Islamic myth and legend onto what he sees and experiences in Athens. Mount Pendeli is crowned by the ruins of an immense marble palace built by Solomon for 'Belkis Ana', the Queen of Sheba; the temple of Poseidon at

14 Tunalı, 'Another kind of Hellenism?', 124-6 suggests ways in which Mahmud 'Ottomanizes' ancient Greek history and examines his technique by closely examining his treatment of Theseus (126-43), Alexander (143-60) and Constantine (160-72), case studies of what she calls Mahmud's 'Ottomanization' of 'foreign cultural units' (124). On his various sources, and especially his development of Theseus legends, and Mahmud's place in the development of Ottoman interest in Hellenic history, see also Tunalı, '"Seseya"'.

15 For acute perceptions regarding Alexander's usefulness in 'two competing visions of Ottoman history: one that defined the empire as the "New Rome," destined to revive the lost glory of Greco-Roman antiquity, and another that defined it as a quintessentially Islamic state', see Casale, 'Seeing the past', esp. 92.

16 On the philosophers see *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi. Topkapı Sarayı Bağdat 304 Yazmasının Transkripsiyonu, Dizini*, ed. O. Ş. Gökyay et al., VIII (Istanbul 2005) 119. I examine Evliya's description of Athens in 'The Parthenon Mosque'.

17 On Muslim interpretations of the Olympieion, see E. Cohen, 'Explosions and expulsions in Ottoman Athens: A heritage perspective on the Temple of Olympian Zeus', *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 7 (2018) 85-106; and Fowden, 'The Parthenon Mosque'. On the possibility of multiple antiquarian views of the Olympieion, see B. Anderson, 'Forgetting Athens', in B. Anderson and F. Rojas (eds), *Antiquarianisms: Contact, Conflict, Comparison* (Havertown, PA 2017) 184-209. At TMH 54a, unrelated to his descriptions of the Olympieion or the Parthenon, Mahmud plays with the similarity between the wise Solon and the wise Solomon (Suleyman), see Tunalı, 'Another kind of Hellenism?', 125.

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Sounion is a Solomonic construction which housed Belkis's throne, described by Evliya as so many palaces of Khawarnaq, the legendary pre-Islamic *qasr* near the Euphrates, that became the metonym for a luxurious palace in Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman literature.[18] Mahmud, by contrast, is not a traveller carrying with him a repertoire of flexible literary tropes to delight his audience with the world's wonders, but a long-time resident of Athens interested to create a more deeply fused history of his city that is grounded in all the textual evidence as well as local lore he can access in order to communicate this information in a way that would inspire his Ottoman circle.

While Mahmud's *History* is inspired overwhelmingly by texts rather than autopsy, he does weave into his work strands of contemporary detail. Like Evliya – though revealing no direct debt to him – Mahmud Efendi also mentions the Throne of Belkis in Athens (Fig. 1). Whether Evliya had been the first to associate the ancient temple with Suleyman and Belkis, or simply related stories he had been told on his visit, the identification clearly survived at least a generation after him. And Mahmud brings Suleyman into his history of Athens in association with other buildings as well, including the Parthenon. It is not only in the Islamic geographical tradition that one finds the insertion of legendary kings and prophets into historical narrative. Christian chroniclers since Eusebius were accustomed to multiple chronologies and their colourful cast of rulers and sages, kings and prophets. Many chroniclers, such as John Malalas in the sixth century, had preferred a scheme of history with nodal points such as the Creation, the Flood and the Incarnation into which great figures such as Nimrod, Moses, Alexander, and Constantine were fitted. Compiled in the seventeenth century, the *Βιβλίον ἱστορικόν* by Pseudo-Dorotheos of Monemvasia is one such history that was constantly re-worked and widely read in Ottoman Greece. Whether such Christian schemes available through local informants would have fed into our Ottomanized histories of Athens has yet to be investigated, but what is striking about Mahmud when compared with Evliya and the Byzantine tradition is his focus on two Athenian figures – the hero Theseus and the statesman Pericles – who were not found among the usual ancient kings and prophets. It is to Mahmud's treatment of Pericles, famous as the builder of the Parthenon, that I will now turn.

The passage of greatest interest comes in Mahmud's account of Pericles' attempts to justify the construction of a new temple to the Athenian taxpayers. The idiosyncratic description shows distinctive signs of Mahmud's literary 'Ottomanization', but there is a faint enough whiff of Pericles addressing the Athenian assembly in Chapter 12 of Plutarch's *Life of Pericles*, that one may be allowed to envision the scene Mahmud himself describes, whereby his abbot acquaintances transmitted ancient and modern sources that he would

18 On Evliya's 'prospettiva … biblico-islamica' on the Attic landscape, see the rarely cited discussion of Mahmud Efendi and his *Tarih-i Medinetü'l-Hukema*, in E. Arrigoni, 'Fasti attico-salomonici ed Atene islamica: Il periegeta turco Evliya Celebì (sec. XVII) e la reinterpretazione del paesaggio archeologico della campagna attica,' in G. Botta (ed.), *Studi geografici sul paesaggio* (Milan 1989) 47-91, esp. 74-86 with n. 37.

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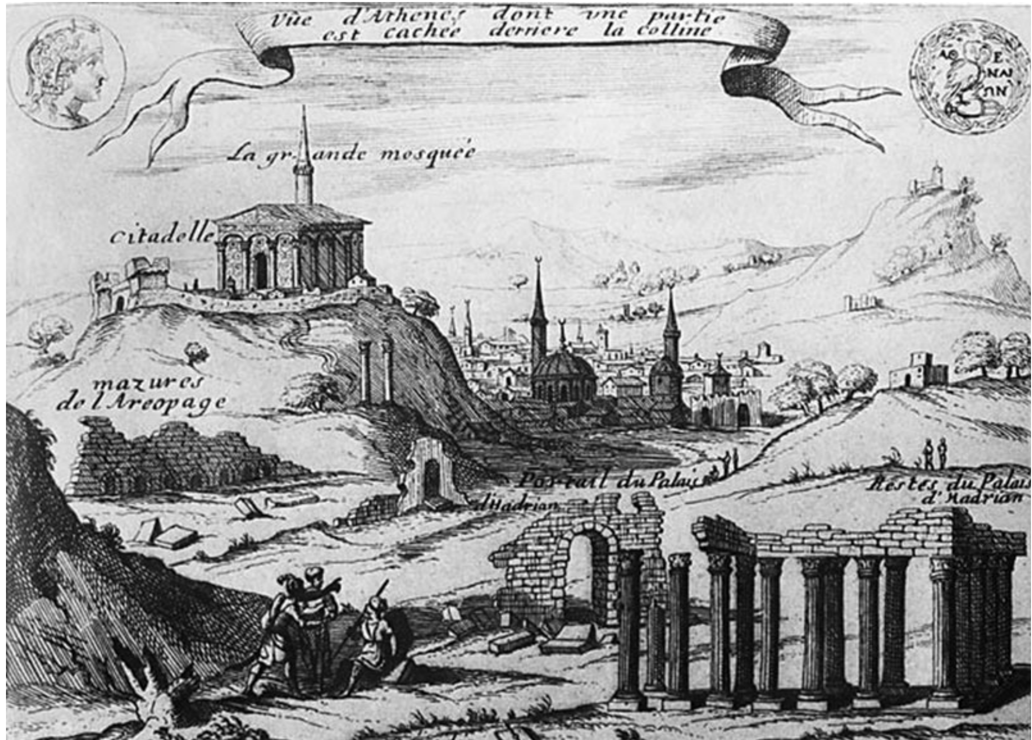

Fig. 1. View of Ottoman Athens, roughly contemporary with the visit by Evliya Çelebi in 1667. In the foreground are the columns of the Olympieion, identified here as the Palace of Hadrian and mentioned by Evliya as an open-air mosque. Both Evliya and Mahmud Efendi associate the structure with Belkis, the Qur'anic Queen of Sheba. 'Vue d'Athènes dont une partie est cachée derrière la colline', engraving in P. Jacques-Paul Babin, *Relation de l'état présent de la ville d'Athènes, ancienne capitale de la Grèce, bâtie depuis 3400 ans, avec un abrégé de son histoire et de ses antiquités* (Lyon 1674). Photo credit: Archaeology of the City of Athens. Digital Edition, National Hellenic Research Foundation. (http://www.eie.gr/archaeologia/En/chapter_more_8.aspx).

subsequently reformulate from his notes into his *History*.[19] In Mahmud's description the Athenian statesman is depicted in consultation with the assembled 'right-thinking learned men in a council' (ḥükemā feylosofları cemʿ eyledi).[20] In the speech Mahmud puts into the mouth of Pericles, the latter argues that the new temple in Athens would be as great as Suleyman's in Jerusalem, and like it would attract admiration and pilgrimage.

> In noble Jerusalem the sainted Suleyman (greetings be to him) has built a rare, valuable temple, and all, high and low, are desirous of going to worship in it.

19 TMH 4a. See above, n. 11. Plutarch is indeed one of the ancient authors named by Mahmud as a source he used thanks to the learned abbots. Others he names are Herodotus, Thucydides and Diodorus, see Tunalı, 'Another kind of Hellenism?', 89, and Tunalı, 'Gregory Kontares'.
20 TMH 124a.

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> However, the Greek population of Rumeli, which is extremely far away, has formidable difficulties in reaching [Jerusalem] to worship in the temple. But we must construct an outstanding and magnificent temple, unsurpassed in quality. Its walls should be of pure white marble. The roof that will rest on the walls should be supported on beams of white marble too, and indeed so also should its ceilings and substructures be constructed of white marble. Our region will acquire learning and religious knowledge. Most of its population [already] has a pious insistence on asceticism and on worship.[21]

As we have seen, because Greek philosophers had retained a reputation (however vague) in the Islamic world, they could easily be fitted into an Ottomanized history of Athens. But to incorporate a statesman whose place in the history of Athenian democracy was normally of no particular interest to Byzantine or Muslim writers required a different creative effort on Mahmud's part. His solution is to raise Pericles to the level of a pious king addressing the wise, philosophically-inclined men on his council. And it is not only that Pericles is worked into a universal monotheist narrative. His temple is treated not merely as a monument to admire as an artefact, but as a magnificent structure that attracts pious behaviour. The comparison of Athens with Jerusalem, and the suggestion that the new temple would provide a substitute shrine, may make us think of the many surrogate pilgrimage shrines that from the early Islamic period sprang up all over the Muslim world for those who could not perform the Meccan *hajj*. But more than this, I suggest that Mahmud – who had studied in Istanbul before returning to Athens as its mufti– was bringing the Parthenon into the charmed world of other great monotheist buildings such as the Haram al-Sharif complex in Jerusalem and, above all, Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, which had become venues of desired association, but also of competition, for rulers who would emulate and even try to surpass Suleyman, the greatest monotheist king, sage, prophet and builder. In fact, elsewhere in his *History* Mahmud explicitly compares the Parthenon mosque with Hagia Sophia. Referring to the citadel mosque at the time of its bombardment by the Venetians in September 1687, he notes:

> In the year 1098, during the Venetian attack, Venetian shells hit the artillery store within the great temple [ma'bed] built within the citadel: it was on account of the artillery store that the Venetians shelled the temple. The temple,

21 TMH 124a-b: Ḥālā Ḳudüs-i şerīf de Ḥażret-i Süleyman (ʿaleyhi's-selām) bir nādīde maʿbed-i merġūb binā itmişdir ki, cümle ḫāṣ u ʿāmm ziyāretine müştāḳlardür. Velākin mezbūr Rūmili'nden ġayet baʿīd olmaġla Rūm ḫalḳı ziyāretine gitmeğe ʿaẓīm ʿusretleri vardur. Ancak biz daḫı ṣāfī beyāż mermerden dört divārı binā olındıkdan soñra saḳfını daḫı beyāż mermer kirişler ve beyāż mermerden taḫtlar ile ṭavānlar döşenub bir nādīde ve mesbūḳ bi'l-miṣl olmayan muʿaẓẓam maʿbed idelim. Çünki diyārımız ʿilm u maʿrifet kesb olunacaḳ ve ekṣer ahālīsi semt-i zühd ve ʿibādete zāhiddir (transcription Tunalı, 'Another kind of Hellenism?' 291); English trans. Sinclair. Tunalı, 'Another kind of Hellenism?', does not discuss or translate this passage, but at 126 notes in passing that 'Mahmud Efendi mentions Pericles in the section on the building of the Parthenon with terminology belonging specifically to Ottoman culture'.

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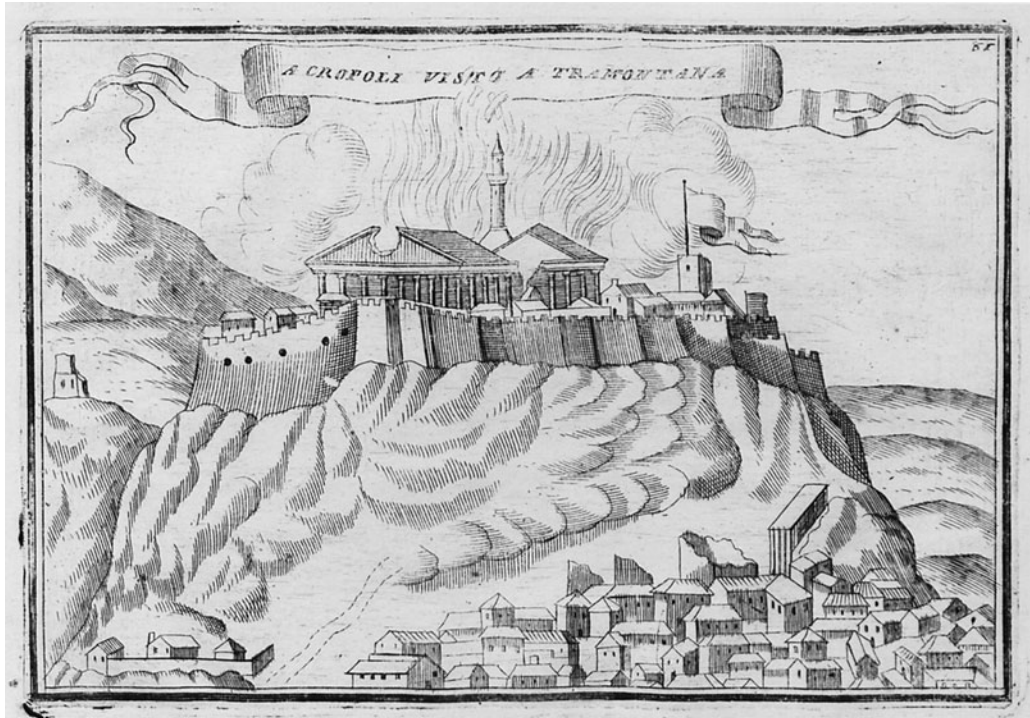

Fig. 2. Vincenzo Coronelli. 'Acropoli visto a Tramontana', in V. Coronelli, *Citta, Fortezze, ed altri Luoghi principali dell'Albania, Epiro e Livadia, e particolarmente i posseduti da Veneti,* IV (Venice 1688) of *Stati della Serenissima Repubblica di Venezia in terra-ferma, divisi in cinque parti.* Photo credit: Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation, Travelogues (www.travelogues.gr)

> the noble, richly decorated mosque, had become similar to Ayasofya. Seven hundred Muslims, men, women and children, who were inside it at the time, died when the temple, the mosque, was demolished (Fig. 2).[22]

Pairing Pericles with Solomon went a step beyond the insertion into Hellenic history of a legendary Islamic ruler with an architectural habit. The paradigmatic king and prophet Solomon had a tendency to appear at times when a strong authority was needed to bolster political claims in regions where the presence of the past still hung heavily about. The Umayyad dynasty in Syria, for instance, reinforced its political claims and architectural reformulations with overt Solomonic associations. The Umayyad architectural legacy has been understood as a process of absorbing, rejecting and reformulating artistic and architectural language and forms inherited from the Greco-Roman tradition

22 TMH 133a. English trans. Sinclair. See also Tunalı, 'Another kind of Hellenism?', 59.

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as it had evolved in Christian Greater Syria.[23] The material process was accompanied by recast legends and an Islamization of space in which the prophet-king Solomon was given a lead role. Umayyad reconfigurations of the symbolic urban spaces that became the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem, for example, or the Great Mosque in Damascus, illustrate how early Muslims adapted the late antique built environment and re-interpreted it with figures from the Qur'anic imaginary in order to assert their own ownership of these cities.[24] And the Umayyads were just the beginning.

In terms of size and political importance, Mahmud's late seventeenth-century Athens cannot be compared with seventh-century Damascus, one of the most important cities in late antique West Asia that became the Umayyad caliphal capital. Constantinople not Athens was, of course, the necessary showcase of power where the Ottomans played the Umayyads, so to speak, in their quest to reformulate and rival the culture they supplanted. Well-known are the Solomonic ambitions of Mehmed II and Suleyman I, expressed in both titulature and architecture: Mehmed's adoption of Haghia Sophia, which had been Justinian's answer to Solomon's temple in Jerusalem, and Suleyman's creation of a new imperial mosque. But Athens still retained its hazy prestige – it was, after all, the City of the Sages. We should not underestimate the power of this reputation when combined with the omnipresent monumental past in a city where ancient buildings had been constantly adapted within the living urban fabric. It was precisely in a space so enlivened by shades of a celebrated past and surviving wondrous structures that competition with the past was bound to be most intense and that Solomon's magical powers were required to impress Islamic tradition more deeply into the Athenian landscape. It is in such an atmosphere of complex cultural claims that Mahmud tapped into Islamic lore surrounding Solomon in order to heighten for an Ottoman audience the magnificence of Pericles' achievement.[25]

23 N. Rabbat, 'Politicising the religious: or How the Umayyads co-opted classical iconography', in M. Blömer, A. Lichtenberger and R. Raja (eds), *Religious Identities in the Levant from Alexander to Muhammed: Continuity and Change* (Turnhout 2015) 95-104.

24 For Jerusalem, see A. Marsham, 'The architecture of allegiance in early Islamic Late Antiquity: The accession of Muʿāwiya in Jerusalem, ca. 661 CE', in A. Beihammer, S. Constantinou and M. Parani (eds), *Court Ceremonies and Rituals of Power in Byzantium and the Medieval Mediterranean: Comparative Perspectives* (Leiden 2013) 87-112; G. Necipoğlu, 'The Dome of the Rock as palimpsest: 'Abd al-Malik's grand narrative and Sultan Süleyman's glosses', *Muqarnas* 25 (2008) 17-105, and for Damascus, see N. Khalek, *Damascus after the Muslim Conquest: Text and Image in Early Islam* (New York 2011), and F. B. Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus: Studies on the Makings of an Umayyad Visual Culture* (Leiden 2001), all with extensive bibliographies.

25 The full Parthenon account is at TMH124a-134b. For a partial translation of TMH126b-130b, without discussion, see Tunalı, 'Another kind of Hellenism?', 61-2. In a future publication, Thomas Sinclair is planning to analyse Mahmud's discussion of the Parthenon construction and measurements, including the question of sources. Consequently, I restrict myself here to Mahmud's remodelling of Pericles in a Solomonic guise. In my forthcoming monograph entitled *The Parthenon Mosque* I discuss Mahmud's fusion of Ottoman concepts and classical Greek history in his Parthenon description at much greater length.

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Conclusion

Mahmud Efendi lived a generation after the first wave of travellers who published descriptions of Athens, guided by what they read in classical texts.[26] Charles Marie François Olier de Nointel and Antoine Galland visited in 1675, followed by Francis Vernon, Jacob Spon and George Wheler a year later. Like Evliya who visited in 1667, this handful of French and English travellers managed to see the Parthenon at its fullest development, just a dozen years before its destruction. This cluster of visits to Athens by Europeans coincided with the publication of Kontares' *Old and Highly Beneficial Histories of the Celebrated City of Athens* in Venice in 1675. It was a time of quickening for the acquisition of knowledge about Athens, a provincial city off the usual travellers' route on account of Ottoman-Venetian tensions. Written roughly a generation after these accounts, Mahmud's *History* benefited from the dense, multilingual knowledge circuits that emerged from diverse cultural matrices and converged at Athens. He drew on autopsy, local information and the Arab-Ottoman historico-geographical traditions of making sense of the past, as well as all the ancient sources that were accessible, in various forms, in his day.[27] Like the European visitors, Mahmud was strongly text-guided with a wider range of sources than had been at Evliya's disposal. But Mahmud did not leave behind the tradition of interpreting ancient ruins employed by Evliya. Instead he fused the multiple traditions of responding to the past that would appeal to his Ottoman audience who, like Mahmud, were provincial elites aware of the gradually increasing numbers of foreigners coming to visit, measure and draw the ancient monuments that were an organic part of Ottoman cities such as Athens, Thebes, Chalcis, Livadeia, and Nauplion.

26 The best study of this period is N. Yakovaki, *Ευρώπη μέσω Ελλάδας: Μια καμπή στην ευρωπαϊκή αυτοσυνείδηση, 17ος – 18ος αιώνας* (Athens 2006).

27 Future study of the *Tarih-i Medinetü'l-Hukema* may make it possible to gauge how best to interpret its similarities to the earlier mode of translating and adapting European writing for Ottoman consumption examined by Tijana Krstić. She concludes that 'although the exchange of religious, literary and scientific knowledge with the west through translation continued throughout the seventeenth century, there are no similar attempts at seamless synthesis of disparate cultural, historical and religious elements for the glory of the Ottoman sultanate': Krstić, 'Of translation and empire', 140. The translation culture Krstić studies merits consideration alongside that which made possible Mahmud's *History* in the early eighteenth century as well as Veli Pasha's commissioning of a modern Greek translation of Pausanias to aid in his archaeological explorations, and his use of a modern Greek translation of Oliver Goldsmith, *The Grecian History, from the Earliest State to the Death of Alexander the Great,* the first edition of which was published in two volumes in London in 1774 and appeared in English in multiple abridged editions from the late eighteenth century: see Neumeier, 'Spoils for the new Pyrrhus' 153-4, and E. Angelomati-Tsougaraki, *Τα ταξίδια του Λόρδου Guilford στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο* (Athens 2000) 123-4, on a request from an English traveller for a copy of Pausanias in the original. I would argue that Mahmud's history provides at least one example of the work of 'seamless synthesis' a century later than Krstić's examples, but for a provincial rather than court audience. It would be helpful to know how Mahmud's *History* found its way to Topkapı Palace.

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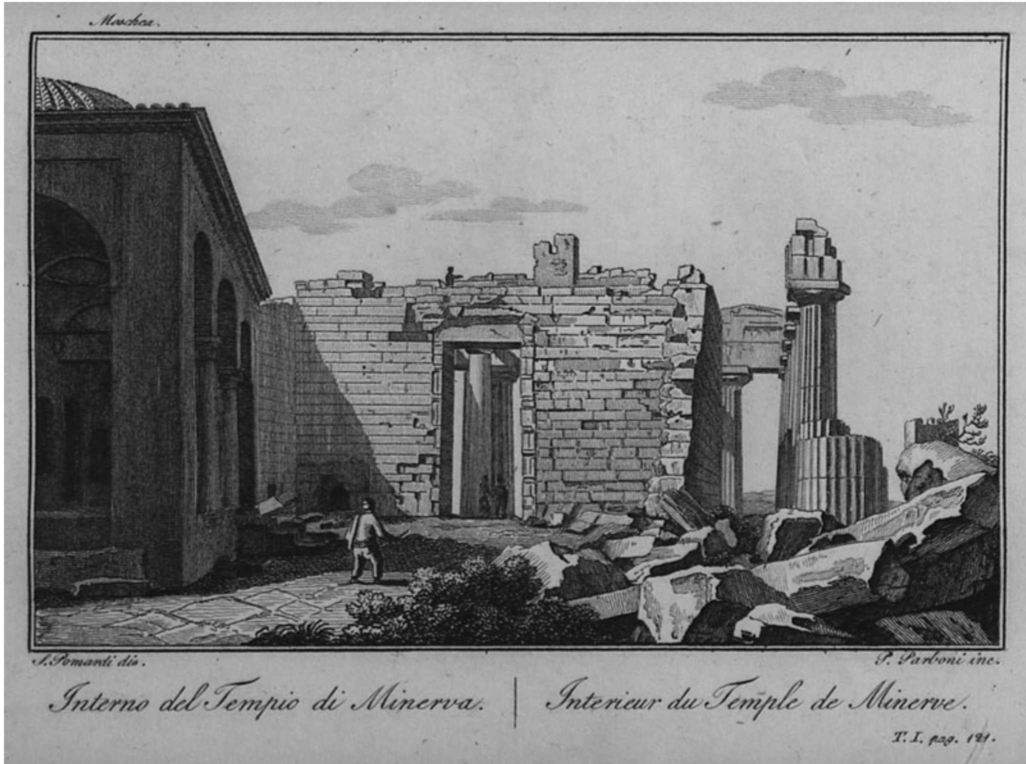

Fig. 3. After the Parthenon's bombardment in 1687, a second mosque was built of reused materials, and oriented on Mecca, inside the ruined shell. Simone Pomardi, 'Interno del Tempio di Minerva', c. 1804, in S. Pomardi, *Viaggio nella Grecia fatto da Simone Pomardi negli anni 1804, 1805, e 1806,* I (Rome 1820). Photo credit: Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation, Travelogues (www.travelogues.gr).

I have focused on the harmonization of Greek and Islamic history in the brief passage where Mahmud introduces his description of the Parthenon. The building he goes on to describe was the temple built by Pericles, in other words, the building as it appeared not in Mahmud's own day, but in classical antiquity. The reason for this lay mainly in his text-based approach to the City of Sages, but also the obvious fact that Mahmud began writing twenty-eight years after the Venetian bombardment. We do not know when exactly the second Parthenon mosque was erected directly on top of the Periclean pavement with cut stones cleared from the wreckage (Fig. 3). It is possible, though not provable from material evidence or Mahmud's own account, that the new mosque was built during the mufti's lifetime. It would stand for roughly a century, appearing in many European drawings of the temple for local colour, or discreetly imagined away by other artists who preferred to offer a view they felt was closer to the original temple.

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Had the second mosque been constructed during Mahmud's lifetime one may wonder whether he would have been aware of the ironic parallel between the conditions under which the celebrated Periclean temple to Athena Parthenos and the humble eighteenth-century mosque were built. In 480 BC Achaemenid soldiers, led by Darius's son Xerxes, burned and destroyed the buildings on the acropolis, including the Old Parthenon, then still under construction. For political, financial and symbolic reasons, the temple was allowed to lie in ruins for thirty-three years after the barbarous attack. Pericles would build a monument that would continue in use for more than two thousand years, first as a temple, then as a church for nearly a millennium, and a mosque for over two hundred years. After that building's bombardment by the Venetians in 1687 it lay again in ruins probably for a generation, as it had in the fifth century BC, before a new mosque was built.

The two Parthenon mosques can stand for two modes of seeing the relationship between Islamic and Hellenic culture that predominate today. The first view is represented by the pre-bombardment Parthenon mosque that had begun as the temple built under Pericles and developed organically to reflect on its skin the cumulative history of the holy place. This view understands Islam as interconnected with Greco-Roman history. The second view is represented by the second Parthenon mosque, the free-standing eighteenth-century mosque dwarfed by the roofless temple in which it was erected. This second view understands Islam as something alien imposed onto Greco-Roman history. The second mosque was structurally detached from the columns and fragmentary walls that remained standing and at an angle to the temple foundation on which it stood, oriented instead on Mecca. This shift in orientation, both literal and metaphorical, is what Mahmud Efendi provokes us to re-consider today, by paying more attention to early modern persons who were still attempting to take the former view of Islamic culture, as the culmination and continuation of Hellenic achievements.

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