Christopher Markiewicz. *The Crisis of Kingship in Late Medieval Islam. Persian Emigres and the Making of Ottoman Sovereignty*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2019. 348 pages. ISBN-13: 9781108684842.

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Christopher Markiewicz's *The Crisis of Kingship in Late Medieval Islam* is a masterful intellectual history focusing on the life and works of Idris Bidlisi (d.1520). Bidlisi makes a convincing central character, for, as a Kurdish literatus, his career spanned the four major realms of early modern Central and Southwest Asia: the Aqquyunlu, Mamluks, Ottomans, and, to a lesser extent, the Safavids. Throughout the book, Markiewicz interweaves Bidlisi's life into the phenomenon of other émigré scholar-officials to depict norms of scholarly interconnectedness and movement in the late medieval Islamicate ecumene. To guide this journey, Markiewicz asks how the Ottomans – as well as others – came to assert a vision of kingship situated in sacred and cosmic terms. Bidlisi's life is presented as one of many migrating intellectuals cast in comparative terms to depict how thinkers like Bidlisi played a role in circulating a new vocabulary of kingship.

The book is split in two parts. The first three chapters focus on Bidlisi's life and the development of his worldview until the end of his life. In the first chapter, Markiewicz sets Idris' life in the courtly culture and political context of the Aqquyunlu's demise until the early years of Safavid rule under Shah Ismāʿīl I (r. 1501–1524). Centring on the cultural milieu of Iran in the mid-late fifteenth century, Markiewicz describes the political backdrop in which Bidlisi grew up and moulded him. Offering unparalleled insight into Bidlisi's life, Markiewicz illustrates the millenarian tendencies that emerged enmeshed with the prevalence of confessional ambiguity. Equally, we are given a balancing act displaying Bidlisi's education, entry, and ascent into courtly culture, and a portrayal of Tabriz as an entrepot of ideas. The author contextualises the events of Bidlisi's life within the greater cultural practices of well-to-do families as well as setting the religiopolitical scene in an insightful, refreshing way.

Chapters two and three, in a way, are set in dialogue. Whereas chapter two discusses Bidlisi's efforts to gain patronage at Bāyezīd II's (r. 1487–1512) court in the Ottoman realm, the following chapter addresses Bidlisi briefly leaving to Mamluk Egypt only to be recruited by Bāyezīd's conquering son, Selim I (r. 1512–1520). The chapters build on the themes of rulers' patronage of scholars and how patronage motivated scholars' movement to other realms. The third chapter, which details Bidlisi's return to the Ottoman court, centralises his place in fostering relations between the Ottomans and Kurdish nobles around Diyarbakır, culminating in the Ottoman's conquering the region as a buffer between themselves and the Safavids. Finally, it details his assistance to the Ottomans in conquering Mamluk Egypt and Syria as a trusted advisor, his departure from office due to courtly intrigue, and death in Istanbul.

Diyâr, 1. Jg., 2/2020, S. 340–342, DOI: 10.5771/2625-9842-2020-2-340

In part two, Markiewicz emphasises the historical development of kingship on both a historiographical and contextual level. After discussing broader historiographical trends of political sovereignty, chapter four discusses how characteristics of Timurid rulership diffuse into Ottoman conceptualisations of kingship. In doing so, Markiewicz discusses this dialectic in terms of historiographical developments from specialists of Mamluk, pre-Safavid Iranian, and Ottoman history which are important for understanding Bidlisi's evolving worldview. Chapter five draws attention to the concept of lasting memory (*ẕikr-i jamīl*) within Bidlisi's seminal *Eight Paradises* and how the work filtered into Ottoman literary tradition and was mimicked ever since its completion. Markiewicz also demonstrates the acceptance of new concepts of rulership well into Süleymān I's reign (1520–1566) through the works of Shah Qāsim Tabrīzī – who had a comparable migratory scholar-official background as Bidlisi. The final chapter focuses on the conceptualisation of the Viceregency of God (*khilāfat-i raḥmānī*) from Timurid times – as developed within the converging fields of literature, Sufism, law, and other religious and political circles – to its translation into the Ottoman court up to the mid-sixteenth century. Furthermore, the chapter puts the concept into dialogue with others familiar to scholars of Islamic kingship such as *saḥib-qirān*, or Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction.

One might refer to the diffusion of the conceptions of kingship – ideologies and terminologies – as the discourse of dynasties. When politics and religion are bound together in titles and the concepts bestowed on Islamicate thrones, one also finds avenues unexplored. As the Ottoman and Safavid Empires sought to unify their realms on confessional lines, it would be revealing to see how dialectics about kingship and the 'Age of Confessionalisation' interacted prior to, during, and following the period in which Bidlisi wrote. Markiewicz certainly illustrates that many aspects of the 'Sunni' and 'Shi'i' divide were often shared without the baggage they gained following initial forays between the Ottomans and the Safavids. It might be argued that the embodiment of Bidlisi's confessional ambiguities perpetuated beyond his own life – ambiguities that survived in the court. Yet, one should ask about the effects these concepts had on the subjects of these realms. Apart from the ambiguities which were prevalent throughout this period, it would be equally interesting to see how much these dialectics of kingship filtered into the minds of the masses. While Ottoman history 'from the top' is perhaps the most accessible way of understanding the state's view of itself, it is equally important to consider how – or even if – these discourses mattered to the broader contemporary public.

Setting these concerns aside, the book as a whole opens exciting new questions for rulership which should inspire future generations of scholars. In bringing out the details of Bidlisi's life, Markiewicz builds thematic bridges to guide us through the evolution of Ottoman sovereignty in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. In this sense, the book's achievements are couched in the sheer volume of texts put into a smartly written form. Throughout, Markiewicz brings an impressive array of primary and secondary sources in multiple languages which have not been put in dialogue with one another. Further, he balances this assemblage of sources in a cogent synthesis. In sum, what he achieves is no small feat and deserves praise. Much like his

itinerant subject matter, Markiewicz's achievement should enjoy equally wide circulation across thematic and field-specific boundaries.