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GELİŞ TARİHİ

TURKISH MINIATURES IN THE *SELİM-NĀME*

THE metrical history of Sultan Selīm II (1566-74) entitled *Selīm-nāme* was written in Persian by Seyyid Loḳmān¹ in 988-1580. It commemorates the events of the Sultan's reign in epic verse in the grandiose style employed by the court officials whose duty it was to write such works. Tradition demanded that these poems had to be written in Persian in the metre of the Persian Epic of the Kings, the *Shāhnāme*. Hence the term *Shāhnāme* was applied to every chronicle of this type and the poet who was commissioned to write one was called a *Shāhnāmejī*. It was not until the end of the sixteenth century that the official rhymed chronicles were written in Turkish. As one might expect, in the *Selīm-nāme* the historical content comes secondary to the task of praising the Sultan's achievements, but some interest lies in illustrated copies. One of these,² originally the property of the Turkish scholar E. J. W. Gibb, was acquired by the Department of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts in 1901. Nothing is known of the previous history of this manuscript except that it bears a printed label 'Exposition Lyon 1894'. Copies of this work are rare and I have been able to trace only one other with illustrations (in the Ahmed III Library—No. 788 A. 3595, Istanbul).

The British Museum copy (Or. 7043), which contains eight illustrations, was made for some important person (unnamed) to whom the manuscript was presented in 1099-1687/8, according to a note on the last folio. This would appear to have been the date of transcription since the entire manuscript has been copied in the same bold *Nasta'liq* hand as that in which the note was written. The miniatures are completely in the spirit of a century earlier except in so far as they show distinct traces of Western influence.

The first miniature (7b) shows a *Dīvān*³ scene while in the upper register (a convention showing the view through a window in the room in which the *Dīvān* was held) Sultan Selīm is at archery practice. He has just discharged an arrow at the target (*kabak*). An interesting feature of this and the other miniatures

is the careful way in which the details of the elaborate silk brocade garments is shown. The illustration of Selim on the throne (14a, Pl. xvi) is probably based on a scene from the *Nūzhet el-esrār el-akhbār der sefer-i Sigetvār* in the Seraglio Library⁴ where the high military and civil officials are seen paying homage to Selim on his accession in 1566. The face of the sultan, showing his characteristic blue eyes is, however, a more detailed portrait in the British Museum manuscript where the sultan is wearing a maroon *kaftan* with gold embroidery. He is seated on an elaborate golden throne with orange curtains decorated with a gold design of swimming swans and wispy clouds. At the head of the six dignitaries standing before Selim in the attitude of submission is the Grand Vizier, Şoğollu Mehemmed Paşa.⁵ Here, again, the face is a true portrait and the features are easily recognizable in the other miniatures. Behind the throne stand the sultan's Sword-bearer (*Sıhhdār*) and his Seal-bearer (*Mühürdār*), each in blue, wearing the distinctive red head-dress of the royal attendants. The pointed roof of the pavilion is silver and the dome is coloured mauve.

The next scene (15a, Pl. xvii) is a lively representation of a group of petitioners waiting for an interview with the Grand Vizier. Each face has been carefully drawn, in some cases with a certain amount of humour—especially the 'Frank', shown on a smaller scale than the others to make him look deliberately insignificant. This person, who is dressed in brown with a flat cap and lace collar, is trying desperately to attract the attention of the small turbaned figure in sky-blue (his interpreter?), who maintains a lofty indifference with his snub nose in the air. The costume of the 'Frank' indicates that this miniature is a copy from a sixteenth-century original which I have not yet been able to identify. The inclusion of a child and its mother is also a touch which gives an intimate quality to this scene. On the right a *Şolak* guard has just entered the room. The secretaries to the left and the right of the Hajji, who is addressing the Grand Vizier, have pencases in their girdles. One of them bears a petition on which are inscribed the Persian verses which appear above the illustration 'Thou art the just and talented Āşaf,⁶ the Vizier of Selim whose dignity is that of Sulaimān'.

The four miniatures which follow (15b-16a, 16b-17a) show ministers in council but are smaller. They are much defaced and are of no particular merit.

The last illustration (25b) in this copy of the *Selīm-nāme* shows Selim's father, Sultan Süleymān the Magnificent, visiting the tomb of Ayyūb al-Anşārī, who was the standard-bearer of the Prophet.⁷ This observes all the conventions of other versions of this theme, notably one in the Chester Beatty Library at Dublin.⁸ The same plane tree with yellowing leaves and a stork's nest appear there; also the custodian of the shrine keeping well in the background, perhaps in awe at the presence of his sovereign.

Judging by the blank spaces that have been left here and there, the manuscript was to contain further illustrations. The standard is much above the

average for the period and the miniatures have some value for the history of Turkish art in that they are copies of originals which seem to have disappeared.

G. M. MEREDITH-OWENS

¹ For the author see Babinger, *Die Geschichtschreiber der Osmanen* (Leipzig, 1927), pp. 164-7.

² The manuscript contains 31 folios and measures 47 × 30 cm. It is handsomely bound in contemporary style with inset medallion and corners which have been gilded and touched with blue. On the doublures and flap there is decoration in filigree leather of various colours. The section headings are in gold and various coloured inks.

The text ends with the journey of Süleymān the Magnificent to Szigetvár where he died in 1566. Thus the manuscript must be only the first volume of the *Selīm-nāme*.

³ A ministerial council made up of the chief ministers of the state (*Erkân-i Devlet*). The six figures in this and the miniature which follows represent the six *Erkan* who were present at these councils. The sultan did not attend in person but received the members of the council in audience once every week to hear a report on their decisions (pl. xvi).

⁴ No. H. 1339 (dated 1568).

⁵ This Grand Vizier, known as *Tavil* (the Tall),

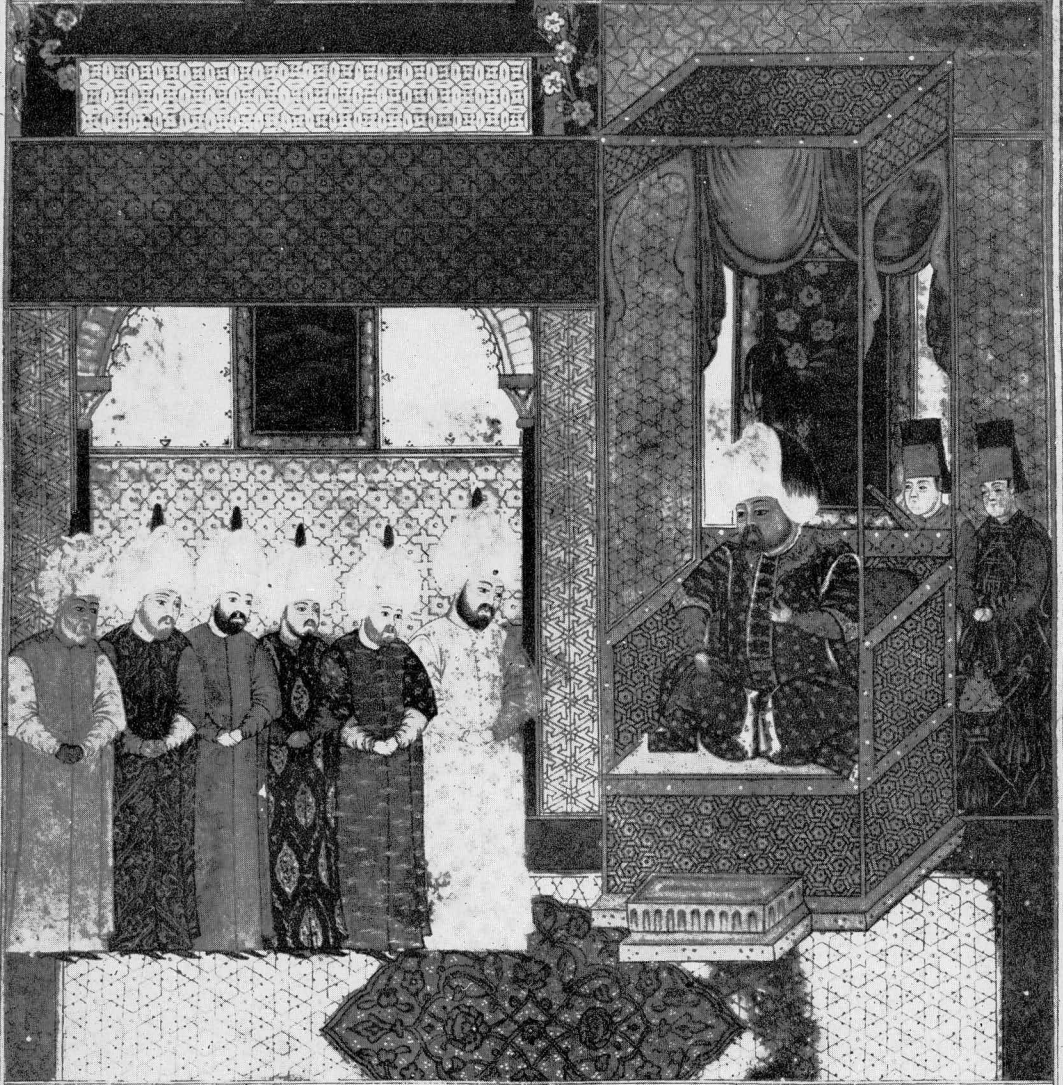
was of Bosnian origin. In 1562 he married Selim's daughter Esmikhān, who was forty years younger than he was. He held office as Grand Vizier from 1568 to 1579 when he was stabbed to death by a man disguised as a beggar while leaving the *Divān*. His two secretaries were Feridūn Bey and Ja'fer Ağa, who are probably the two appearing in pl. xvi.

⁶ Āsaf was the vizier of King Solomon (Sulaimān) in Oriental legend. His name became a by-word for justice and efficient administration.

⁷ After the Turks occupied Constantinople Sultan Meḥemmed the Conqueror built a mosque near the burial-place of Ayyūb al-Anṣārī (d. 672), who is called Eyüp in Turkish. Both the mosque and the near-by village bear the name Eyüp. Every Ottoman sultan on his accession went in solemn procession to this shrine to be girded with the sword of 'Osmān by the head of the Mevlevī Order of Dervishes—the equivalent of a coronation.

⁸ See pl. 7 in *The Chester Beatty Library. A catalogue of the Turkish manuscripts and miniatures by V. Minorsky. With an introduction by the late J. V. S. Wilkinson* (Dublin, 1958).

زین نظر نصر خست عظیم
 شهنشاه افاق پطینم
 سرفراز شاهان دینی
 که چندی کشت او پت فقور حسین



وزراء او وظائف اندازند
 مردم را بوجه بشنند
 فدود و محمد نوکر نوکانش
 چه راه او بسته و چه کارکش

XVI. MINISTERS IN AUDIENCE WITH SELIM II

کس از پرت ز خانه خبری است

سرای تو چون طایر اطل است

گر شد در جهان مصلحت خط روح

برین محمد نمودی فتوح

وزارت ترا ختم شد و اسلام

رسالت پذیرفت از تو است تمام

بعاظم وزان کبابی کباب

ز نام محمد شدت فتح تاب

بدح شهبان نظم شنید ام

منم بنده تلخمانا بکف خانه ام

وزیر سیم سیم ایجان

تو تی آصف عادل کار دان



مهد دفع شد خزان غم رسید

وز اقبال تو نوشت بازید

زن مرد و طفل از پیمان وغیر

زدیوان صلت جهان دوسر

بکیتی حرمی مهر فلک تافقی

یو مهر سپیدمان بکف یافتی

بتعیظم کشتی مغظم وزیر

شدی از وزارت یو عظم وزیر

XVII. THE GRAND VIZIER, ŞOKOLLU MEHEMMED PAŞA, GIVES AUDIENCE TO PETITIONERS