MOBILE ART ALONG THE SILK ROADS:

MEHMED SIYAH KALEM PAINTINGS

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Kiraz Perinçek Karavit, certify that

- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;
- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
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ABSTRACT

Mobile Art Along the Silk Roads:

Mehmed Siyah Kalem Paintings

This dissertation aims to put a group of paintings back in their historical contexts, among which they had been mobile along the ancient Silk Roads. Known as Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, these unique works of art are found cut and pasted on various folios of two albums in Topkapı Palace Museum Library. The artistic style with Chinese impact, materials, and themes of nomadic life implicate a production environment at the intersection of Chinese and Central Asian Turkic realms in the fourteenth century. Although scholars assume their purpose is to illustrate recitations, they are deprived of their original format. Other works of art in the albums support their compilation in the Akkoyunlu court in Tabriz during the fifteenth century. Shreds of evidence strengthen their entry into the Ottoman court as spoils in Selim I's reign (1512-1520). Subject to photography projects stolen from the Ottoman palace library, some of them were smuggled to urban sites of Orientalism at the turn of the twentieth century. This dissertation contributes to the literature in solving the enigma of these paintings in three aspects: First is the abundant groundbreaking sources to enlighten various dark moments of the paintings' mobility. Second is the analysis to reveal the links with Chinese artistic traditions and to substantiate the storytelling function in daily practices. The last and fundamental contribution of this study is the theoretical framework that presents these paintings as mobility elements with shifting local meanings and global implications, where through these perception changes, we can trace historical transformations.

ÖZET

Kadim İpek Yolları’nda Bir Sanat Serüveni: Mehmet Siyah Kalem Resimleri

Bu çalışma, bir grup resmin kadim İpek Yolları’nda yaşadığı serüveni tarihsel bağlamına yeniden oturtmayı amaçlamaktadır. Mehmet Siyah Kalem resimleri olarak bilinen bu eşsiz eserler, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi'nde iki albümün farklı varaklarına kesilip yapıştırılmış halde karşımıza çıkar. Çin etkisi taşıyan sanatsal teknik ve malzeme ile göçebe yaşam konularına bakarak, eserlerin 14. yüzyılda Çin ve Orta Asya Türk alemlerinin kesiştiği kendine özgü bir coğrafyada üretildiği sonucuna varıyoruz. Bu eserlerin hikâye anlatıcılara eşlik etmek üzere tasarlandığını varsaysak da, özgün biçimlerini yitirmiş olmaları bu hikâyelere ulaşmamıza engel oluyor. Albümlerin içeriği, bu derlemenin 15. yüzyılda Tebriz'deki Akkoyunlu sarayında yapılmış olabileceğini düşündürmektedir. Tarihsel ipuçları, Yavuz Sultan Selim'in hükümdarlığı döneminde (1512-1520) Osmanlı sarayına ganimet olarak getirildiklerini destekler. 19. yüzyıl sonlarında fotoğraf projelerine malzeme olan, daha sonra Osmanlı sarayından çalınarak Batı merkezlerine kaçırılan kimi parçalar, saygın koleksiyonlarda yer bulmuştur. Bu tez, Mehmet Siyah Kalem’e ilişkin gizemi çözmede üç alanda katkı sağlamaktadır: İlk olarak, bir merkezden diğerine sürüklenen resimlerin yolculuğundaki çeşitli karanlık anları aydınlatan yeni ve sarsıcı kaynaklar sunmaktadır. İkincisi, gündelik yaşam içindeki kullanımlarına odaklanarak, Çin sanat gelenekleriyle olan bağları ve anlattıkları hikâyeler konusunda öneriler yapmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın temel katkısı ise bu sanatın serüvenindeki anlam değişimlerinin tarihteki dönüşümlere ışık tuttuğunu savunması ve teorik düzlemde ispat etmesidir. Mehmet Siyah Kalem resimlerinin serüveni, son derece yerel ve bir o kadar da küresel bağlantılar aracılığıyla, bize tarihi öğretir.

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Fed from Asia and Europe, this study is the product of the Turkish academy. As Esenbel indicates, "though modest in terms of library collections and university experience in teaching Asian studies compared to the major centers in Europe and the United States,"[1] Turkish academy has a unique perspective due to its geographical position and historical tradition. I owe my educational background and academic maturation to these Turkish manners, blending East and West as well as imperial and republican cultures.

I have always been a curious and hardworking student. Still, chances were on my side regarding teachers since primary school, continuing equally in Lycée Saint Benoit and finally in Bogaziçi University undergraduate studies. Arzu Öztürkmen became my advisor in graduate studies decades later, from whom I inherited not only Abdullah Kuran's pearls of academic wisdom but also real-life experience and even survival strategies as a woman scholar. Although Edhem Eldem thinks he is an "outsider to the field," he supported this study and any kind of to-be-historian curiosity with the most insightful comments. Oya Pancaroğlu stood as a great confidence not only for the

[1] Esenbel, "The global moment of Asian studies in Turkey and the case of Bogazici University," 5.

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Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings and the albums within which they were found are a bulk of material presented by the historical fate as complicated as possible. Lale Uluç is probably the only mind to clear and dissolve this bulk with her combination of mathematics and art history. But the same fate gave me a chance to be Uluç's student. Her support in knowledge and primary and secondary sources lies in the foundation and accompanies each step of this study. Without the Historiography and the albums' content in the unpublished facsimile edition, I could not grasp this journey. For consistency, I used all the paintings' titles and information as they appear in the facsimile and remarked my objections if needed.

The most distinctive contribution of this study to the literature is probably the substantiation of the connections between Chinese cultural and artistic realms and the so-called Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. The two-year research in China became only

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The grand global march of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings expands on a large geography, from China to Europe and the United States. The trace in museum collections and archives coincided with the pandemic lockdown. I am indebted to the collaboration efforts of several curators, librarians, and scholars who, beyond providing materials and sources, improved the research with relevant insights and comments. First of all, I am most thankful to Topkapı Palace Museum Library, and especially to Zeynep

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[2] All the titles and positions belong to the period I contacted them during the research.

The broad geography of the journey of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings required multi-linguistic sources. An essential feature of this study is the care it attributes to the linguistic aspects of mobility. There is still a lot to discover in the monumental works of the nineteenth-century generation. I feel I somehow got drops of blood from this generation. Many surprises are hidden in the classic dictionaries of Gerhard Clauson, Gerhard Doerfer, Martti Räsänen, Berthold Laufer or Julius T. Zenker. All Chinese, French and Turkish/Ottoman Turkish translations belong to the author, if not otherwise remarked. For the interviews and secondary publications in Chinese, I am grateful to Chen Yan, Tang Jiankun and Yin Tingting for their assistance. I am thankful to Fatma Artunkal for her help in German, Emre Özkan for Uzbek to Turkish translations, and Sadık Can Perinçek for Ottoman Turkish transcriptions.

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For all the passionate artists and storytellers

who have been embellishing our world

with grace from the start.

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CHAPTER 1

MOBILE ART ALONG THE SILK ROADS

AS REFLECTED ON "THE MIRROR"

> Impossible to write about the *Histories* of Herodotus without considering the history of how they have been interpreted.[1]

François Hartog builds all his work in *The mirror of Herodotus* over the assumption that it is "impossible to write about the *Histories* of Herodotus without considering the history of how they have been interpreted."[2] He focuses on this long procession of 25 centuries and searches in the historical layers of perception of how and why Herodotus became the father of history.[3]

Following a similar methodology, the main drive of this dissertation is to put a group of paintings back in their historical and social contexts among which they had been mobile along the ancient Silk Roads. The five dozen extant paintings are attributed to the unknown artist(s) whose sobriquet is Mehmed Siyah Kalem.[4] They are found cut and pasted into two albums, H.2153 and H.2160, which are preserved today at Topkapı Palace Museum Library in Istanbul. These paintings have an appeal to seize and apprehend the origin and the meaning attributed to them, because they are unique, as expressed by the prominent art historian Ernst J. Grube:

> Primarily striking in Mehmed Siyah Kalem's "style" is the fact that it has such an incredibly individual quality. This is a feature for which no parallels

[1] Hartog, *The mirror of Herodotus,* xvi.
[2] Hartog, xvi.
[3] Hartog, xix.
[4] *Mehmed* is one of the most common name in the Islamic societies. Some scholars write *Muhammed*, since only the consonants are written in the Arabic, Persian and Ottoman alphabet. In CHAPTER 2, the reasons for the preference will be explained basing on historical documents. *Siyah*, in contemporary Turkish and Persian means black. Whereas, as it will be exposed in CHAPTER 2 basing on a rigorous linguistic investigation, it used to mean “ink” at the time and geography of the artist(s). Similarly, it will be demonstrated that *Kalem*, mostly translated as “pen”, meant “brush” in this case. The sobriquet, widely known as “Muhammed the Black Pen”, must be in fact, “Mehmed the Ink and Brush”, if need to translate.

> have been found so far in the work of known ateliers elsewhere in the Muslim world. … By contrast, not a single painting executed in this manner is attributed to any of the other painters whose names appear in the inscriptions.[5]

The compilations contain many other works of painting and calligraphy, most of whose authors were working in the Akkoyunlu Yakub Bey's (r.1478-1490) palace in Tabriz. The albums must have been brought to the Ottoman court in Istanbul as a spoil from the conquest of Tabriz in 1514 after the Chaldiran Battle. The materials, unique style, and the theme and images of the paintings transcend the savors of the Yakub Bey court in Tabriz. The provenance of the paper and its production technique, skillful use of ink and brush, and visual imagery indicate an origin in interaction with Chinese artistic impact around the second half of the fourteenth century.

Analyzing such evidence as the use of simple, unprocessed paper, exaggerated face expressions, rough preliminary sketches, the absence of any theme or details relating to a ruler or court circles, and independence from any written texts, scholars presumed that these pictures were probably used to illustrate recitations. The storytellers wandering from village to village showed these paintings while narrating the related stories during their performances. Bigger than miniatures, these paintings might depict folk tales forgotten today. Besides entertainment, they might have been used for public information or education purposes. They depict scenes from life in the steppes, having as characters different kinds of ethnicities, demons, and horses. Since they are cut and pasted on album folios and many pieces were lost, it is impossible to reconstruct them in their integrity and trace the stories they were originally meant to depict.

[5] Grube, "The Problem of the Istanbul Album Paintings," 1–31.

Although inscriptions attribute many paintings to Mehmed Siyah Kalem, it is evident that these pictures are not the work of a single hand since they differ in style and technique. Scholars think that some of them were attributed to him later in the Ottoman court by people who looked at the albums. Because of Chinese artistic impact, Mehmed Siyah Kalem attribution had become an association, especially with Chinese traits, both in the Ottoman court and later in the European art *milieu*, since some pieces traveled further west from Istanbul. Stolen from the Ottoman palace library and sold to European collectors in the 1900s, they were attributed to the lands of Kipchak in the Timurid period and considered "very peculiar" concerning the style. Although not courtly art of miniature, they have been the center of curiosity with their uniqueness. They found rooms in exhibitions or museum collections in Berlin in 1910, Paris in 1912, London in 1931, and finally in the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1982.

The contribution of this dissertation to literature in solving the enigma of these unique paintings consists of three aspects: research material, methodological approach and theoretical framework. First of all, this dissertation enriches the material of research about these paintings by providing new groundbreaking sources. To cite the major ones: a linguistic investigation in mainly Turkic, Persian and Mongolian languages to show evidence that the sobriquet *Siyah Kalem* denotes *Ink Brush* rather than *Black Pen*; research in Chinese and Turkic sources to identify the narrative components and possible meanings of the paintings that have not been identified yet; an investigation in Ottoman archives and European museums to show how two of these paintings were stolen in Istanbul and smuggled to urban cites of Orientalism at the turn of the twentieth century. Various similar findings help to understand not only the theft of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, but that of many

other art pieces stolen from the Ottoman libraries during this period, and making part of worldly collections today.

Secondly, this dissertation contributes to the scholarship with the methodological approaches it develops to decipher mainly two crucial aspects related to the origins of these paintings. With a rigorous structural analysis of Chinese brush and ink techniques, this thesis shows and illustrates exactly the organic links with Chinese artistic and stylistic traditions. Another crucial input is the substantiation of the storytelling function of these paintings to reveal how they might have been used in daily practices.

Adopting an inter-field approach throughout the study resulted in a conversation between history and art history realms. Although this interplay may give an impression of difficulty securing a clear academic field for this study, it is an unavoidable fact as it aims to combine and present the knowledge accumulation of art history with a historical approach. Throughout this inter-field conversation, this study conducts an analytical method disguising not only what the artists painted on the surface of paper, but how they held the brush, focusing on the process of art production techniques. It is only through bringing these seemingly separate fields into conversation that it is possible to reveal these paintings' meanings.

The final and fundamental contribution of this dissertation is the theoretical structure developed, followed, argued and demonstrated all along it: A new approach to Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings in pursuing them not as simple artworks in a comparative framework but as mobility elements gaining and losing local meanings and global implications, where through these perception changes and shifting interpretations we can trace historical transformations. It uses the journey of this

artwork through the various centers to explain this mobility via historical transformation.

1.1 Yakub Bey albums

The albums where Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings are found cut and pasted are considered unique compilations in the history of Islamic book arts. They had been named for a long time as *Fatih albums*, the Conqueror's albums since portraits of Mehmed II, the Conqueror (r.1451-1481) exist among the works included in these albums. Later it was understood that the albums were not collected during his reign. Hazine 2153, which measures 50.2 x 33.8 cm, has 199 folios. Each folio comprises four sheets of paper pasted together, with the uppermost layer tinted light pink. The illustrations and texts were affixed haphazardly and covered the entire surface of the pages. Hazine 2160 measures 50.7 x 34.7 cm, but contains only 90 folios. The paintings and text are enclosed by a thick cream-colored polished paper 7 to 8 cm wide. Six of the pages (fols.5A, l0A, 13A, l4A, 76A, and 77A) are identical to those in H. 2153; it is possible that they were misplaced and bound into this album during the last rebinding in the nineteenth-century Ottoman court. Both albums contain paintings, scroll fragments, sketches, drawings, prints and calligraphic works mounted indiscriminately. Unrelated illustrations and samples of calligraphy are pasted on the same pages. In contrast, pictures of similar styles, or those from the same scroll or series, are scattered throughout the two volumes.[6]

Although the paintings and drawings are undated and unsigned, most of the calligraphy samples bear a date or signature and thus provide a clue to the provenance and history of the albums. The earliest example is dated 1291 (H.2160,

[6] Çağman, "On the Contents of the Four Istanbul Albums H.2152, H.2153, 2154, and 2160," 31-36.

fol.5A), and a few examples from the fourteenth century by Ilkhanid[7] and Jalayirid[8] calligraphers. The latest calligraphy is dated 1511-12 (H.2160 fol.55B), which helps provide a *terminus ante quem* date for the albums. The names and locations found in the calligraphy help to determine when and where these albums were compiled. Most texts were copied into Karakoyunlu[9] and later Akkoyunlu[10] regions, in the second half of the fifteenth century. [11]

The paintings in the albums are unique and cannot be compared with the contents of other albums made elsewhere. H. 2153 contains 546 paintings and drawings; H. 2160 contains 131, making 677 pieces. The earliest dates are from the llkhanid period in the first half of the fourteenth century. The latest paintings, which include copies of Chinese scenes, are the works of artists at the Akkoyunlu court, executed under the patronage of Yakub Bey (r.1478-1490) in Tabriz. Neither album contains any paintings executed after the death of Sultan Yakub. It is not known precisely when these paintings and texts were compiled into albums. The latest calligraphy sample is dated 1511, which suggests that the volumes were compiled around that date or sometime before. Whether the albums were made in Tabriz or at the Ottoman court has been debated. According to the opinion of experts, the material was in an album format before it reached the Topkapi Palace.[12]

Another remark one has to make about the journey of these albums is that although they were not executed in Herat, there are pieces of evidence showing their

[7] A Mongol khanate established by Hulagu Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan. It ruled between 1256-1335 in its core territory lying in what is now part of Iran, Azerbaijan and Türkiye.
[8] A Mongol dynasty which ruled over Irak and western Persia after the breakup of the Mongol khanate of Persia between 1335-1432.
[9] A Turkoman dynasty which ruled between 1375-1468 in territories of Eastern Anatolia, South Caucasia, Azerbaijan and northern Irak, with its capital Tabriz.
[10] A Turkoman dynasty which ruled between 1378-1503 in present day eastern Turkey and later Armenia, Azerbaijan, much of Iran, Irak and Oman, with its capital Tabriz.
[11] Çağman, "On the Contents of the Four Istanbul Albums," 31-36.
[12] Çağman, "On the Contents of the Four Istanbul Albums," 31-36.

entrance in Timurid court. They could have been brought to Tabriz from Herat. A petition preserved in H.2153-98A is commonly accepted to be a report addressed to the Timurid prince Baysunghur (1397-1433) on the progress of the current undertakings of his library staff. Some scholars drew direct stylistic links between paintings preserved in the same album and illustrations of a manuscript made for Baysunghur.[13] Nevertheless, even though the compilations can not be attributed for sure to the Yakub Bey court, they will be referred as Yakub Bey albums throughout the dissertation, as the main concern is not the origins but the interactions and perceptions.

1.2 Two components of the historical context

Multiple mobilities characterize Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings based on two components that define the historical context: temporality and spatiality. In the handling of both components its opposite is embedded. The temporal component is structured chronologically based on counter-chronological research. The geographical feature includes overwelmingly local elements on the one hand, and irresistibly global aspects on the other. The structure of chronological and geographical components consists of three parts: 1. Capillary routes as the pre-history and production geography of the paintings, 2. Courts as the violent appropriation of the paintings and 3. Museum Walls as the brutal commodification of the paintings. Each part reflects a historical period and a geographical locality. Besides, each reveals a historically and geographically defined conceptual framework that intervenes in the journey of this artwork.

[13] Thomas W. Lentz, "Painting at Herat under Baysunghur ibn Shah Rukh," Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1985, in Uluç, "Historiography," unpublished facsimile.

Capillary routes are neither at the center, nor in the periphery. The term is used by Jason Neelis in the context of the ancient Silk Roads, being not a single highway but a network of intertwined passageways. It defines these paths for long-distance trade and cross-cultural transmission between overland arteries, giving ancient travelers many choices of itineraries on the Silk Roads.[14] In this geography, the artist was able to encounter and learn from wide-ranged sources. On these middle paths, the Chinese impact of ink and brush technique can be predated. This was the kind of ordinary materials of paper and pigments available to the folk artist on these minor capillary routes. The tales belong to these people living in the intermediary regions and the storyteller's pictorial recitation addressed them. Capillary paths predate the production of these paintings in the epochal and regional interaction zones and describe the historical, social and artistic milieu on the background of their creation around the second half of the fourteenth century.

In the *Courts* began the afterlives of the paintings towards the end of the fifteenth century. They became part of a historically, geographically, and conceptually new world, as they were cut and pasted to fit on royal album folios of visual imagery. As a result of this violent act -cut and past- they lost their integrity and original function in the new environment. They are no more storytelling paintings, but visual reference models in courtly cross-cultural collections. They entered the wide range of cross-cultural collection of the Akkoyunlu Yakub Bey (r.1478-1490) court in Tabriz. They were brought to the Ottoman capital in Istanbul, among the spoils from the conquered city Tabriz after the Chaldiran Battle in 1514. Ottoman court welcomed them as part of the Ottoman Treasury Library. They were displayed and visited on special occasions within the shared court culture as a

[14] Neelis**,** *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks*, *Mobility and Exchange*, 1.

contemplation material of the leisure class. The contemplation concerned not only reading and entertainment but also an active one. They also served as an inspiration source for mimesis purposes for the court artists.

The *Museum Walls* denote the commodification period for the paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem towards the end of the long nineteenth century where they shared a similar fate with many artworks within the rituals of the Ottoman courtly life: The new system commodified them first as an image through the recent invention of the century, photography. Their second commodification was as artworks that were purchasable; hence they became subject to theft —indeed looting—and, subsequently, international art smuggling. These were the most brutal interventions in the history of these paintings. Old fashioned and outdated at home, these Ottoman artworks found themselves within the interest realms of scientific Orientalism in the capitals of Europe. They were stolen, exoticized according to the Oriental taste of the period, they were put on the frame for exhibition on museum walls.

1.2.1 Deconstruction of perception through archaeological digging

Although the mobility's temporal component is structured chronologically, this study's intellectual investigation method is based on counter-chronological research. The archaeological digging beginning from contemporary times and proceeding to venture back into the past periods has enabled the research to be free from anachronisms of later interpretations imposed on the past meaning of the albums. Considering each period's historical and social context in its integrity prevented the conventional chronology from pretending to foretell what would happen. By deconstructing the previous interactions in the Capillary routes and perceptions and

interventions in the Courts and Museum walls, the narration could flow beyond current research limits and decipher the epochally and regionally defined meanings and the accompanying mobilities.

The French author Marcel Proust, in his "monumental investigation of perception and memory," *A la recherche du temps perdu* (*In search of lost time*, 1913–27), "creates and gives form to the mobility of notions of self," which became a landmark in literature.[15] Probably, the most famous scene of the seven volumes novel is the episode of "petites madeleines," where the narrator Marcel, an aspiring writer, recollects his memories of childhood with the sensual flashback provoked by the taste of a morsel of a madeleine cake dipped in tea. Now an immortal moment in literature, this sensual re-encounter unleashes a torrent of memories about his family's country home in the town of Combray:

> Many years had elapsed during which nothing of Combray, except what lay in the theatre and the drama of my going to bed there, had any existence for me when one day in winter, on my return home, my mother, seeing that I was cold, offered me some tea, a thing I did not ordinarily take. I declined at first and then, for no particular reason, changed my mind. She sent for one of those squat, plump little cakes called "petites madeleines," which look as though they had been moulded in the fluted valve of a scallop shell. And soon, mechanically, dispirited after a dreary day with the prospect of a depressing morrow, I raised to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake. No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shiver ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, something isolated, detached, with no suggestion of its origin. And at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory—this new sensation having had the effect, which love has, of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me, it was me. I had ceased now to feel mediocre, contingent, mortal. Whence could it have come to me, this all-powerful joy? I sensed that it was connected with the taste of the tea and the cake, but that it infinitely transcended those savors, and could not, indeed, be of the same nature. Where did it come from? What did it mean? How could I seize and apprehend it?[16]

[15] Larkin, *Proust writing photography*, 1.
[16] Moncrieff and Kilmartin, *In Search of Lost Time*, 60-61.

Roger Shattuck defines the investigation of Proust in *A la recherche du temps perdu* as an "excavation", "a digging to discern" the particular world, rich in detail.[17] The research of this dissertation had been conducted similar to a Proustian investigation back to the memories of history lying deep under layers of "vicissitudes" and "disasters" of a long, multidimensional journey on the Silk Roads. It started from the surface material, the contemporary context and dug deep looking at the material appropriate to the previous centuries.

Thanks to this method of counter-chronological research, we know from the beginning, that two paintings were stolen from the Ottoman court library at the turn of the twentieth century and sold to art smugglers. That is why we included them within the initial collection of the storyteller strolling in capillary routes in the second half of the fourteenth century. Similarly, since we know that the paintings were cut and pasted on albums in the royal courts of the fifteenth century, we tried to complete them back to their integrity and speculate about the original size of paper and format of picture recitation. As we know that the kind of tufts of grass that appear in the stolen pictures did not exist before the eighteenth century, we suspected that they were added later to appeal to the Oriental taste of nineteenth-century art collectors.

Hence, although there is a conventional chronological narration throughout the work to make it easier to comprehend as a narrative from the past to the present, the findings had been already collected from the surface back to the origins in time and space; in a way they are retaking the same road, from the roots to the surface with references to the future layers of mobility.

[17] Shattuck, *Proust's Binoculars-A Study of Memory, Time and Recognition*, 3.

1.2.2 Overwhelmingly local, irresistibly global

Besides the temporal component, the geographical factor plays a significant role in the mobility of the paintings since it defines the limits of the available for all kinds of things; material or know-how. The pictures were produced once, and then, they had multiple local afterlives due to historical transformations. The basic structure of the thesis unrolls on the frame of these locally entangled chapters including the pre-history of the paintings: China to West Asia; Chinese Turkestan; Tabriz; Chaldiran; Istanbul; Paris, Berlin and London. The trace of the paintings along these centers exhibits opposing traits; it includes inevitably overwhelming local elements on the one hand, and irresistibly global aspects on the other.

Without paying attention to the particular local context, it is impossible to discern how these paintings could have been produced, how they were used, for what purpose they were cut and pasted, where they were kept, or who could have stolen them. On the other hand, the global context intervenes and had a crucial impact on the local one through historical events and transformations; the invention of paper, the decline of Dunhuang as an art center, the opening of the maritime Silk Roads, plague pandemic, Chaldiran Battle, Ottoman conquest of Tabriz or the rise of museums as modern institutions had all particular local context as well as very global impact.

In these terms the mobility of these paintings further indicates an exciting interplay between their local and global existence. On the one hand, the stories they depict are so local that nobody encounters a person who is acquainted with the stories they represent. Probably the storyteller as well was wandering in a minimal area. On the other hand, their style and theme owe their unique features to global historical links that intervened on a folk painter's works in nomadic lands on the

margins of the Silk Roads. Moreover, they became part of courtly collections in Tabriz and Istanbul and museum collections in modern Western art centers. In these terms, this irreversible historical activity pattern deals with the central debates of global history "surrounding historical research on human interactions, shared spaces, and encounter zones."[18]

Hence, to put these paintings back in their historical and social contexts and reconstruct the epochal and regional mentality, the localities are fed with an abundance of details, which in return, even crave further information provoking curiosity to learn about history.

1.3 Two components of the social context

The chronological and geographical components and the opposite elements embedded in them intervene in the mobility of these paintings as a complex, non-linear interplay with social factors. The research of this dissertation has given a prioritized ground to the social context defined based on a historical one. Two crucial components of the social context are the paintings' materials and their production conditions; and a functional approach to practice. Both contribute to trespassing the limits of art history by liberating the research from "dead-end searches for the origins" and concentrating on the historical and social capture of the moment of their production and use.

The followings are some of the research questions asked to approach the image of this capture as closely as possible: The provenance and production techniques of raw materials like paper and ink used in these paintings; analysis of artistic style and technique of application; the Chinese influence on brush and ink;

[18] Sachsenmaier, *Global Perspectives on Global History, Theories and Approaches*, 3.

epochal and geographical conditions behind the cross-cultural artistic flow. A crucial place was given to the linguistic investigation of the artist's sobriquet, *Siyah Kalem*, which hid his technique's secret. A detailed linguistic survey demonstrated that *Siyah* in this sobriquet does not refer to the meaning of the *Black* color as understood today in Persian and Turkic languages, but denotes *Ink*, as was used on a particular geography and time. Hence, *Siyah Kalem* elucidates the fundamental and unique technique of the artist(s): *Ink* and *Brush*. The original meaning has been covered through the accumulation of new substances, subsequent constructive and deconstructive processes the paintings had been subject to in their mobilities and accompanying historical transformations.

The functional approach towards everyday practices of which these paintings were a part implicates in some cases more information than what was depicted on them. Sam van Schaik emphasizes the centrality of the practice approach in recent developments in anthropology and sociology:

> The definition of a practice differs from one writer to another, but it is usually understood as a socially recognized activity of some complexity, which is learned through teaching and repetition. Practices involve both the body and the mind, in that they involve physical movements (sometimes but not always including speaking) and the knowledge (or know-how) to carry out these movements. This know-how or knowledge is not merely individual, but social; it must be taught and is subject to the judgments of others. Moreover, practices usually involve objects, and in this sense objects are part of the know-how of a practice. Objects shape and make possible practices that could not happen in the same way without them. [19]

Following the path of these remarks the dissertation's research tried to reveal how these paintings were used at centers of multiple mobilities. First of all, how was the storyteller showing them during the recitation? Were they kept in cases or booklets? How was he changing the pictures? While pasting them on the albums,

[19] Van Schaik, "The Uses of Implements are Different: Reflections on the Functions of Tibetan Manuscripts," 222-223.

did court artisans apply the adhesive all over the back surface or just on four corners? How did the elephants loaded with cases full of confiscated books and manuscripts cross the rivers while transporting them to the Ottoman capital after the conquest of Tabriz? Were the Ottoman sultans contemplating these paintings every night or on special occasions? How did the photographer prevent the album folios from closing while taking their pictures? In what ways did the persons pick and cut out some of these paintings from the albums in the Ottoman court library at the turn of the twentieth century? Did they enter the library with permission? Did they frame the stolen paintings before exhibiting them in European art centers?

Considering the functional purpose of these paintings and their places within everyday life patterns, such an approach redounded many insights about their production at the initial phase. It contributed to deciphering how they were perceived in subsequent periods and regions of mobility.

1.4 "The surprise of movement"

In the introduction of *Cultural Mobility*, Stephen Greenblatt writes that the motto of the essays assembled in the book reflects Montaigne's admission: "I cannot keep my subject still; it goes along befuddled and staggering, with a natural drunkenness." The case studies in the book "represent cultural connections between unexpected times and places"; they are peculiar, particular, and local. Greenblatt says these are "microhistories of 'displaced' things and persons."[20]

The mobility of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings along the Silk Roads' capillary routes, courts and even museum walls further West through centuries show that neither the production nor the use and perception of artworks are isolated, stable

[20] Greenblatt, *Cultural Mobility: A manifesto*, 16-17.

cultural systems. Rather, they consist of complex, dynamic processes embedded in historical and social contexts. As Greenblatt concurs in citing Montaigne's injunction, the apparent fixity and stability of cultures is "nothing but a more languid motion."[21]

The presupposition about the stability of cultures brings naturally that of purity and originality of artworks belonging to this culture:

> The problem is that the established analytical tools have taken for granted the stability of cultures, or at least have assumed that in their original or natural state, before they are disrupted or contaminated, cultures are properly rooted in the rich soil of blood and land and that they are virtually motionless. Particular cultures are routinely celebrated for their depth, authenticity, and wholeness, while others are criticized for shallowness, disorientation, and incoherence. A sense of "at-homeness" is often claimed to be the necessary condition for a robust cultural identity.[22]

Following the above assumption of Greenblatt, Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings were left "homeless" long ago; they lost all their celebrated parts and gained many points of criticism through their mobility. These are the remarks of historical transformations, reflecting on the mirror of history as the shifting interpretations. Through these remarks we can seize the periodical and regional perceptions and particularities and apprehend historical changes in the mobility centers.

1.5. Mobility exposing historical changes

Through this journey, Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings were not "passive" images transported from one center to the other. They greatly impacted each center: They fascinated the audience, inspired court artists, impressed photographers, provoked smugglers, enriched art dealers, and confused exhibition curators. Matthew Canepa

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[21] Michel de Montaigne, **"**Of Repentance,**"** in The Complete Works of Montaigne, tr. Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1948), p. 610 in Greenblatt, *Cultural Mobility*, 5, fn.2.
[22] Greenblatt, *Cultural Mobility*, 3.

argues that besides the role of local communities or even individuals, we must not lose sight of the independent agency exercised by images and art objects themselves in changing cultures:

> Although transported and shaped by the forces of diplomacy, commerce, and political power, images and art objects themselves had an independent agency to change cultures. (…) The dynamic interaction between image, object, and practical context affected both prestigious objects and activities, such as diplomatic gifts, tribute exchanges, or royal investiture ceremonies, and simple, almost ephemeral movements of manuscripts, relics, personal devotional images, amulets, and spells. [23]

Hence as remarked by Canepa, this study's research considers "not only origins, contexts, patrons and creators but also the process and practices of cross-cultural interaction that provide the dynamic means of their transformation."[24] In this sense, the journey of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings along the centers they were thrown at as a result of historical transformations apprehends us of history itself, through the image reflecting on the mirror of historical moments when the perception changes. This happens at two levels of historical activity: mobility and historical difference.

These artworks' mobility concerns the Silk Roads' broader region, from China to Chinese Turkestan, Tabriz, Ottoman Istanbul and further west to European centers. They are not traveling without reason: Each mobility points to the nucleus of a historical change with its corresponding social and cultural circumstances. In each center, new perceptions surround the paintings, reflecting on the mirror with equivalent concepts, the novel for art production is created with numerous aspects that define mobility. In each layer, we learn about historical changes that drove this artwork somewhere else. The mobility of this artwork, the distortions and ruptures they were subject to, and the subsequent gain of new meanings, expose—and thus

[23] Canepa, "Theorizing cross-cultural interaction," 14.
[24] Canepa, 14.

anticipate— historical changes. This bimodal historical activity—first, the mobility and second, the historical transformation—constitutes the basis of this dissertation. It uses the journey of this artwork through the various centers to explain this mobility via historical transformation.

Excavating through the historical layers of this mobility, and investigating the conceptual perception accompanying this mobility, we seize and apprehend history. CHAPTER 2 STATE OF THE ART AND THE IDENTITY DEBATE: "THE STRANGE TRUTH" exposes a literature survey based on various geographic attributions by modern scholarship. Who is this Mehmed Siyah Kalem and how and why he was adopted almost as the "father" of Turkish art, as a significant influence on modern Turkish painting, in a phase of identity search during the nation-building process of the Republic of Turkey after its foundation in 1923 with the end of the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire at the end of the World War I. A crucial part of this discussion constitutes the implications of the artist's sobriquet: Mehmed Siyah Kalem. What was meant with *Siyah Kalem* in the sobriquet of the artist, should be *Ink Brush*, rather than *Black Pen*, as usually translated in modern scholarship. Ink and brush are, in a sense, the “geography” of Mehmed Siyah Kalem artist(s). Due to the skillful application of ink and brush techniques and the extraordinary expressive power of the line, the paintings are often associated with Chinese impact.

PART ONE: CAPILLARY ROUTES, begins with the pre-history of these paintings with the attempt to put to a historical and social background this Chinese impact: CHAPTER 3 CHINA TO WEST ASIA: TURN AND TWIST WITH *BIMO* 笔墨. China is a source of historical, artistic, cultural, economic, and institutional references intermingling multidimensional interactions with the so-called Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. The chapter begins with studying the artwork’s ink and brush

style that links the artwork to China's cultural geography. The Chinese artistic impact is apparent since they exhibit the exquisite qualities of fine brushwork, components of Chinese art traditions and forms, and visual imagery. These sources enlighten the local production aspects of these artworks, their meanings and possible ways of use recreated in daily practices. However, China alone is insufficient to define the complex intervening cultures in these paintings; this was a multinational, transregional geography outstretching towards West Asia, including various cultural inputs, the major ones being Chinese and Turkic.

The importance of these sources comes from the fact that they provide primary documents to classify and interpret Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings under more specific thematic groups. With a utilitarian approach this categorization leads us to identify the mentalities behind these paintings based on Chinese sources and references to Central Asian Turkic sources.

Based on Chinese and Turkic narrative elements, I propose five fiction tales, with ascribed imaginary titles, employing relevant connections to the paintings, deprived of their "oral texts." This attempt constitutes an exercise to induce historicity into the paintings that have remained without meaning about the various themes and figures lost in their journey from China to the West. The importance of the tales lies in the fact that they identify Chinese and Turkic components of the paintings which no one has identified.

CHAPTER 4 CHINESE TURKESTAN: PAINTINGS OF THE STORYTELLER: "THE WEAVER" tries to capture the environment of these paintings' initial existence by developing a historical and social sensibility to the geography and period for producing these paintings. These unique paintings are probably produced in the second half of the fourteenth century in the broader

Eurasian geography of the Silk Roads. Originally they were part of an oral nomadic culture, serving as narrative paintings accompanying storytellers. They found existence on a creative ground in between several interaction zones. They are, in a sense, the weaver between the eastern and western ends of the Silk Roads, between center and periphery, between the decline of Mongols and the rise of Timurids, and between oral and visual aspects of human expression. The focus on practice plays a key role in the approach to handling these paintings.

In PART TWO: COURTS we find ourselves suddenly in the violent world of settled monarchies, first in Akkoyunlu Tabriz and then in Ottoman Istanbul. These were the cosmopolitan centers of various kinds of interactions, the world of cities and empires that always appropriate art. The paintings of the storyteller acquired new perceptions in the courts through new inputs and outputs, additions but also removals and changes of meanings amid new contexts. CHAPTER 5 TABRIZ: CROSS-CULTURAL COLLECTION AND VISUAL MEMORY introduce the historically new world that the paintings became part of towards the end of the fifteenth century. Somehow, they entered the wide range of cross-cultural collections of the Akkoyunlu Yakub Bey (r.1478-1490) court in Tabriz. The paintings are no longer in their original format when accompanying oral recitations, but single folio works cut and pasted within a codex. In other they lost their integrity and original function in the new environment. Instead, they acquired a new meaning as a reference for visual memory.

CHAPTER 6 CHALDIRAN: THE RIGHT OF THE SWORD analyzes the paintings through the point of view of the Ottoman conquest and booty economy. After the Chaldiran Battle in 1514, the albums with the pictures inside are among the spoils from Tabriz, conquered by the Ottomans. They became a legitimate right of

the sword of the Ottoman Sultan Selim I (r.1512-1520) confiscated from the legendary Akkoyunlu palace *Hest Behist*.

CHAPTER 7 ISTANBUL-TOPKAPI: CONTEMPLATION AND MIMESIS is about the new *milieu* of the paintings in the Ottoman court in Istanbul after 1514. They are, from then on, part of the Ottoman Treasury Library. As a significant transformation of the meaning of the albums here in Topkapı, the paintings are displayed and visited on special occasions within the shared court culture as a contemplation material of the leisure culture of the royal court members. The contemplation concerns not only reading and entertainment but also an active one. They serve as an inspiration source for mimesis purposes for the court artists. The sultan can use them as he wishes, write anything on them, repaint, and make careless attributions as he wishes, because these are his private property, not the storyteller's paintings for public display anymore.

PART THREE: MUSEUM WALLS concentrates on the brutal commodification of the artwork. Towards the end of the long nineteenth century, another phase began for the paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem, like many artworks whose original meaning derived from the rituals of the Ottoman courtly life: Now waned away with the decline of old-fashioned courtly culture in place of new fascinations of nineteenth-century lifestyle. The new system commodified them first as an image through the recent invention of the century, photography. Their second commodification was as artworks that are purchasable; hence they became subject to theft —indeed looting—and, subsequently, international art smuggling. CHAPTER 8 ISTANBUL-YILDIZ: THE LOOTING OF ORPHAN ARTWORKS IN THE CENTURY OF EMANCIPATION attempts to reveal the mechanisms and processes behind these historical developments. Old fashioned and outdated at home, these

Ottoman artworks found themselves within the interest realms of scientific Orientalism in the capitals of Europe. CHAPTER 9 PARIS, BERLIN AND LONDON: URBAN SITES OF "SCIENTIFIC" ORIENTALISM acts as the crescendo of the study discussing the actors, channels, tastes and mentalities that drove these paintings to these European art centers.

Finally, CHAPTER 10 HISTORICIST EXPOSÉ: MOBILITY AND UNIQUENESS discusses the critical debate on mobility and uniqueness. What are the factors that make these paintings unique? Is it because they are folk art? Or because they are artworks of nomads? Their mobility on the Silk Roads? Their incidental survival? The exposé speculates on these questions by revisiting the main arguments of the dissertation concerning the changes of perception reflected on the mirror through the mobility and the historical transformations along the journey of the paintings on the Silk Roads.

CHAPTER 2

STATE OF THE ART AND THE IDENTITY DEBATE

"THE STRANGE TRUTH"

> It is a strange truth that Herodotus has really become the father of history only in modern times.[25]

The albums H.2153 and 2160 which contains Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings are known today as Yakub Bey albums, named after the Akkoyunlu ruler, during whose reign (1478-1490) so many of the works in the albums were made. As far as my knowledge is concerned, the first person to attribute one of the albums (H.2153) to Akkoyunlu Yakub Bey is the nineteenth-century art connoisseur Arménag Bey Sakisian (1875-1949), who saw the album during his visit to the imperial library in Yildiz Palace.[26] Later Zeki Velidi Togan studied both albums in a detailed manner, translated all the scripts and matched scribes' and artists' names and attributions to primary sources and historical events. His mastery of languages and wide range of knowledge in geography, literature and history resulted in an objective approach to the albums. Thanks to his readings, the albums are attributed with high probability to the Yakub Bey court.[27]

For modern scholarly research, the albums and especially the artist(s) known as Mehmed Siyah Kalem have always been a center of curiosity, a mystery most Islamic book arts experts have tried to solve. The turning point for the widespread popularization of the albums, hence the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, was because portraits of Mehmed II, the Conqueror (r.1451-1481) exist among the

[25] Hartog, xv.
[26] Sakisian, *La miniature Persane du XIIe au XVIIe siècle*, 16.
[27] Togan, "Topkapı Sarayı'nda dört cönk," 73-89.

works included in these albums.[28] This draws much attention to the extent that the albums were named for a long time as *Fatih albums*, the Conqueror's albums. Although later it was understood that the albums were not collected during his reign, they became available to scholars as of 1953 as part of the 500th anniversary of Istanbul's conquest by the Ottomans. During this period, Mazhar İpşiroğlu undertook the facsimile reproductions of the paintings while Zeki Velidi Togan translated all the scripts. The period, marked by the availability of the albums, is characterized by the revival of interest and curiosity among scholars, resulting in considerable research on the subject.

The same year, another international event for the 500th anniversary of Istanbul's conquest took place in Musée des Arts Décoratifs (MAD), Paris: The exhibition *Splendeur de l'art turc*, Splendor of Turkish art (Figure 1). Organized under the patronage of French and Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministries, French and Turkish Education Ministries, and ambassadors of France and Türkiye, the exhibition stayed three months in Paris between February and April 1953. The selection mostly concentrated on the artifacts between the thirteenth and end of the eighteenth centuries and was designed directly by the chief conservator of MAD Jacques Guérin and Cahid Kınay, the general director of antiquities and museums, Turkish Ministry of Education.

[28] A detailed discussion about Mehmed II portraits in the albums will be undertaken in CHAPTER 7 ISTANBUL-TOPKAPI: CONTEMPLATION AND MIMESIS.

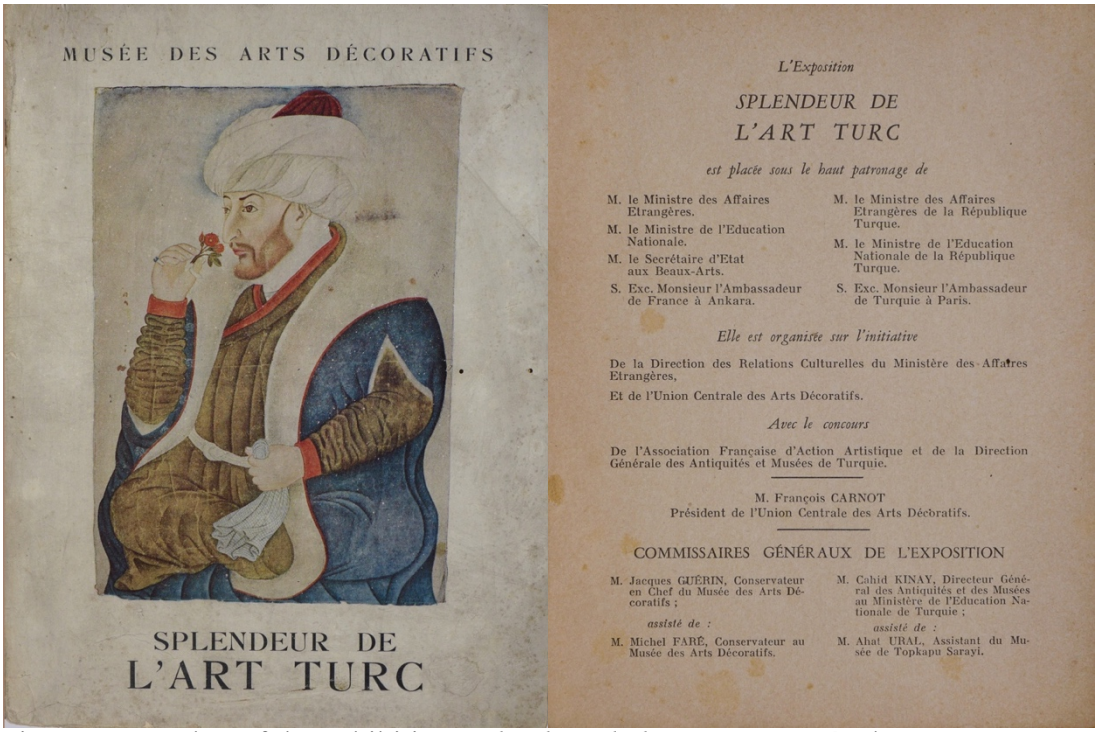

Figure 1. Catalog of the exhibition S*plendeur de l'art turc*, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, 1953, Paris

The first artifact in the section of "Miniatures – Manuscripts and Bindings, Calligraphies and Edicts" is, under catalog number 563, Fifteen miniatures from the album H.2153. One of these miniatures was published in Plate 43 of the exhibition catalog, as shown in Figure 2.[29] A large ink painting, the picture is pasted on folio 5B of the album H.2153: *Angels fighting with Chinese dragons with spears in rugged mountains* (276x364 mm, 15th century).[30] The note on the work, apparent between

[29] We do not know which other fourteen miniatures were selected from the album H.2153 for the exhibition *Splendeur de l'Art Turc*. Was any of them a painting of Mehmed Siyah Kalem *genre*? Unfortunately, the archives of the museum MAD were inaccessible because of the pandemic conditions, during which this research was conducted. The selection does neither exist in the archives of the Topkapi Palace Museum.
[30] unpublished facsimile of the albums.

two angels at the right, is a later attribution to Mehmed Siyah Kalem in the Ottoman court: *Work of Master Mehmed*کار استاد محمد [31]

Pl. 43 Miniature tirée d'un album. XIVe-XVe siècles. Cat. n° 563

Figure 2. Plate 43, Catalog of the exhibition *Splendeur de l'art turc*, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, 1953, Paris. (H.2153-5B *Angels fighting with Chinese dragons with spears in rugged mountains*)

Besides fifteen miniatures from the album H.2153, the whole album H.2160 was taken to the exhibition in Paris. The album was part of the show with number 608, "containing calligraphy works and 130 miniatures." One of the miniatures was published in the exhibition catalog in Plate 42: *Four sleepers*（四睡）*: Fêng-kan*

[31] A detailed discussion about later attributions will be undertaken in CHAPTER 7 ISTANBUL-TOPKAPI: CONTEMPLATION AND MIMESIS.

(豊干)*, Han-shan* (寒山)*, Shih-tê* (拾得) *and tiger* (310x306 mm, 15th century) is a large size round painting pasted on the folio 48B of the album H.2160 (Figure 3).[32]

Figure 3. Plate 42, Catalog of the exhibition *Splendeur de l'art turc*, 1953, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris (H.2160 48B, *Four sleepers*)

Both ink paintings closely resemble Chinese paintings in terms of technique, style and theme. Ink and brush painting on paper, depicting natural elements like mountains, flowers, human faces, and themes like dragons and Four Sleepers strongly remind of Chinese paintings.

Why were these fifteenth-century Akkoyunlu Yakub Bey's compilations, including many Chinese-style paintings chosen to represent "Turkish art" for an

[32] The work was trimmed along its round outline, and pasted on a backing paper. The bird, painted on another piece of paper, was pasted on the right shoulder of Fêng-kan. (*Unpublished facsimile of the albums*)

exhibition entitled *Splendeur de l'Art Turc*? It is possible to find an answer in the exhibition review written by André Blum, the conservator at the Musée du Louvre at that time:

> It is useless to go back to the origins, which date from the time when the people were reduced to nomadic tribes traversing the steppes of Asia. It is enough to start from the Middle Ages, when the Turks entered into relations with China, India, Persia and later with Byzantium. One can conclude from these relationships that their art was a synthesis of cosmopolitan elements. On the contrary, their works bear witness to an undeniable originality. They knew how to keep it despite their frequent contacts with foreign traders who passed through their territory, where the great international routes of spices, silk and paper ended.[33]

Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings responded to the current needs of the Turkish artists in the twentieth century, in their search for a national pictorial identity. Mehmet Güleryüz (1938-) prominent Turkish artist, who played pioneering roles in the international art realms as the Founding President of the International Plastic Arts Association in 1989, points out the discovery of Mehmed Siyah Kalem after many centuries:

> Following the discovery of his paintings after many centuries, Mehmet Siyah Kalem became a significant influence on modern Turkish painting when his work spilled over from Prof. İpşiroğlu and the academic milieu, with its discussions in art historical analyses of the structural problems at the heart of the concept of meta-art, and was taken up by Sezer Tansuğ, Ferit Edgü and Ömer Uluç. The impact on Turkish art of the frank unity of Mehmet Siyah Kalem's paintings can be seen indirectly in Yüksel Arslan's original departures, at the source of the 'balls' that Ömer Uluç turned from non-figures into figures, and in my own 1964 drawings, as well as in my oil paintings of 1965 and later, in the theatrical arrangements in which levels of color create a space for figural effects, in the organic formal initiatives based on intricate drawing, and in the penetrating power of their narrative irony.[34]

[33] Translated from French by the author. "Il est inutile de remonter aux origines, qui datent de l'époque où le peuple se réduisait à des tribus nomades parcourant les steppes de l'Asie. Il suffit de partir du Moyen âge, quand les Turcs entrèrent en rapports avec la Chine, l'Inde, la Perse et plus tard avec Byzance. On a conclu de ces relations que leur art était une synthèse d'éléments cosmopolites. Leurs oeuvres témoignent au contraire d'une originalité indéniable. Ils ont su la garder malgré leurs contacts fréquents avec les commerçants étrangers qui passaient par leur territoire, où aboutissaient les grandes routes internationales des épices, de la soie et du papier." André Blum, "Splendeur de l'art turc", 148.
[34] Güleryüz, "Siyah Kalem: A major foundation of modern Turkish painting," 144.

The strong tradition and uniqueness of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings influenced not only Mehmet Güleryüz's generation but also later generations in the Academy of Fine Arts or independent artists, as indicated in the title of Güleryüz's article: *Siyah Kalem: A major foundation of modern Turkish painting*. How and why was Mehmed Siyah Kalem, a fourteenth-century nomadic artist whose origins are unknown, re-discovered after many centuries, became "a major foundation of modern Turkish painting" and adopted almost as, at least, one of the fathers of Turkish art?

At this point, it is worthy of remembering the confused and surprised semi-question of Arnaldo Dante Momigliano (1908-1987), the Italian historian of classical antiquity, that François Hartog quoted in the Preface of his book *Mirror of Herodotus*: "It is a strange truth that Herodotus has become the father of history only in modern times."[35]

Identity became important in the twentieth century with the foundation of the Turkish nation-state in 1923. Turkish artists needed an appropriation of national identity convenient to modern western art norms. The courtly miniature tradition was no longer part of the making of the modern world. The discontinuity in lifestyles had been apparent in the change of the court milieu and the rise of new institutions since the end of the nineteenth century.

Ottomans were willing to adopt European style in every realm, following other contemporary elite circles in Europe and Asia: European dress, taste, music, furniture, politesse… Within this new agenda, instead of artists working on miniatures in the royal studio, after the mid-nineteenth century, we are witnessing the

[35] Hartog, *The mirror of Herodotus*, xv.

foundation of modern art institutions, such as the Ottoman Museum (c.1849), Fine Arts Academy (*Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi*, 1882) or Society of Ottoman Painters (*Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti*, 1909).

Western science and art constituted the first items of the agenda during the enthusiastic days following the proclamation of Constitutional Monarchy in 1908. Founded just after its proclamation, the Society of Ottoman Painters was active between 1909 and 1919. Prince Abdulmecid Efendi (1868-1944, the last caliph between the years 1922-1924) paid the expenses of this first independent artists association of Turkish fine arts history. The Society had a journal with the same name, Journal of Society of Ottoman Painters (*Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*). Beginning in 1916, the association organized regular exhibitions. Influenced by the atmosphere, Abdulmecid Efendi agreed to pay the expenses of two students going to Europe for education. As an accomplished European-style painter himself, he wanted one of them to study painting.[36]

In 1921, The Society of Ottoman Painters, would be renamed The Society of Turkish Painters, a further attempt in the search of national identity. Following this atmosphere, Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings were interpreted as strikingly closer to the westernized understanding of art, for the modern Turkish artists who assumed to be part of the modern art in a global context produced from Türkiye.

Interestingly, at an extremely late period in the 1960s, contemporary Turkish artists adopted and identified a national identity in Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings assumed to be produced in the Central Asian steppes.

[36] Toprak, "The literary world and intellectual identity of Avni Lifij," 193.

2.1 The search for identity for Mehmed Siyah Kalem and his paintings

The question of identity was crucial not only in Türkiye but in the modern European context at the turn of the twentieth century. Where Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings come from, which environment they depict and to what geography the artist(s) belong, were questions almost every scholar tried to answer in the search for identity for these unique paintings whose origins were unknown. In the modern scholarship concerning the albums and Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, we can distinguish four important periods: The turn of the twentieth century, the second half of the 1950s, the period beginning in the 1980s and lastly after the 2000s.

The first period for the scholarship of the albums and more specifically Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings covers the turn of the twentieth century when the field of Islamic art is flourishing in Europe. The interest in Oriental book arts, bindings and miniatures began with Paris 1903 Islamic art exhibition. Two paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem *genre*, purchased in Istanbul at the turn of the century, were the first time exhibited in the collection of German Orientalist Philipp Walter Schulz (1864-1920) in Berlin 1910. The collection's provenance is the *countries of Islam and East Turkestan.*[37] The two paintings were exhibited in the *Miniatures Persanes* exhibition in Paris in 1912. In the exhibition catalog, the two "miniatures" were attributed to the *lands of Kipchak of west, i.e. Crimean or Astrakhan Khanates*.[38] Publications following the show of these two paintings in public spaces included attributions of *maybe, a Mongol tribe/ N.W. frontiers of China, towards the lake Baikal?/ ancestors of the Russian Moujik?/ North of Caucasus and the territories of the Volga?*[39]*; Turkish-Tartarian Khan / Mongolian style* / *Golden Hoard of the*

[37] Sammlung Walter Schulz, *Katalog der Sonderausstellung Orientalische Buchkunst*, 36-53.
[38] *Miniatures Persanes*, exhibition catalogue.
[39] Anet, "Exhibition of Persian Miniatures at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris-1," 116.

Kiptschak?/ Turkish artist, about whom we know next to nothing.[40] Included in the International exhibition of Persian art at Royal Academy of Arts in London in 1931, one of these paintings *thought to represent Russian peasants from Qipchaq(?)*[41], was afterward removed from the exhibition due to influences on the ground that it was *not Persian* but *which must belong to the borderlands of Central Asia*.[42]

The second period was a turning point for the albums, covering the scholarship after 1953. From that date, they became available to scholars as part of the 500th anniversary of the conquest of Istanbul. As remarked, Zeki Velidi Togan attributed the albums to the *Akkoyunlu Yakub Bey court in Tabriz*.[43] Mazhar İpşiroğlu published a monograph illustrated by facsimile reproductions of the Siyah Kalem pictures. In his publications, İpşiroğlu, besides attributions of *Mongol* and *steppe*, pointed out the relation of Siyah Kalem paintings to the *Manichaeist-Buddhist wall paintings in Turkestan*.[44] Eventually, in this period, mostly Turkish scholars had undertaken connections with Turkic traditions parallel to the search for national identity adoption and developed their arguments in the subsequent years: relation of *Inner Asian Turkish tradition* to Siyah Kalem paintings and *subjects popular in China and Turkestan*[45]; relation of *Buddhist-Manicheist art and Bakshi tradition* to Siyah Kalem paintings.[46] Emel Esin pointed out the cultural interaction

[40] Schulz, *Die Persich-Islamische Miniaturmalerei,* vol. 1, 98; vol. 2, plate 31.
[41] *Catalogue of the International exhibition of Persian art*, 212; "Some typical exhibits at Burlington House", 108.
[42] Binyon et al., *Persian Miniature Painting*, 57.
[43] Togan, "Topkapı Sarayı'nda dört cönk," 73-89.
[44] İpşiroğlu and Eyüboğlu, *Fatih albumuna bir bakış*. İpşiroğlu, *Malerei der Mongolen*, 1965. İpşiroğlu, *Wind der Steppe Die schönsten Blätter des Meisters Siyah Qalem*. İpşiroğlu, *Bozkır rüzgarı Siyah Kalem*.
[45] Yörükan, "Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi'ndeki albümlerde bulunan bazı rulo parçaları." Karamağaralı, *Muhammed Siyah Kalem'e atfedilen minyatürler*.
[46] Esin, *Turkish miniature painting*. Esin, "The Bakshi in the 14th and 15th centuries." Esin, "Muhammed Siyah Kalem and the Inner Asian Turkish tradition." Esin, "Eren, Les dervis heterodoxes turcs d'Asie Centrale et le peintre surnommé Siyah Kalem." Esin, "Muhammed Siyah Kalem ve İç Asya Türk geleneği." Esin, *Türk sanatında ikonografik motifler*.

with China. Still, basing the history of Turkish art as 3000 years ago[47] and considering the grotto art at *Dunhuang* and *Kizil* as "classical Uyghur art"[48] she invented and adopted many shortcuts between the so-called *Uyghur art* and Siyah Kalem paintings.

The third period on the scholarship of the albums and more specifically, Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings begins with the Tenth of the Colloquies on Art and Archaeology in Asia, held by the Percival David Foundation at the School of Oriental and African Studies in 1980 in London, devoted to the examination of Istanbul albums, two of which are those of Yakub Bey. The internationalization of the Yakub Bey albums marks this period. The proceedings presented in the colloquium contributed to the study of the albums in terms of stylistic analysis and systematic classification of the paintings. Ernst Grube's comprehensive bibliographical survey is still a reference in the study of the albums and Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. Grube summarizes two fundamental scholarly positions reached by 1980 for the core group of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem images: the first leans towards *Central Asia* and to successive *Timurid* ateliers, in *Samarkand* and *Herat*, and the second, to a *Tabriz Turcoman* atelier of 1470 to 1490. He then states his position, saying that he is"largely in favor of the early fifteenth century *Central Asian Timurid* attribution for the majority of these paintings."[49]

During the colloquium participants proposed various sources or production centers for Siyah Kalem paintings: Mural paintings of the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, *Yong-le-gong palace in Shanxi*, *Dunhuang studios*, *Turfan*,

[47] Emel Esin, *Turkish miniature painting*, 3.
[48] Esin, "The Bakshi in the 14th and 15th centuries," 284, 288.
[49] Grube, "The Problem of the Istanbul Album Paintings," 9–10.

Chinese Buddhist art, *Kocho* and *Kashgar*;[50] *court of Akkoyunlu Yakub Bey at Tabriz*.[51] The colloquium and publication of the proceedings revived international scholarship. Subsequent publications contributed to the wide-ranging impact of the geography of Mehmed Siyah Kalem artist(s): representing *a mixture of Chinese and pre-Islamic Persian traditions;*[52]*Chinese influence through the intermediary of Central Asia*, especially with the intensification of diplomatic relations between Timurid and Ming courts during the first 30 years of the fifteenth century;[53] identification of three *Chinese subjects* in Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings;[54] *executed in Tabriz*;[55] *Buddhist iconography, art and literature* of the grotto art of *Gansu and Xinjiang regions* for the source of demons, a stylistic unit of purpose in *Chinese, European, Timurid or Turcoman parts* breaking down their constituent sources into something new, independent and resolved.[56]

In this period, James Cahill discussed the transmission ways between *Chinese sources* and Siyah Kalem paintings. He mentions that works of art, images, motifs and styles originally adopted from Chinese pictorial art of the Tang dynasty (618-907) by artists living outside China, might have been reintroduced in China after the Mongol invasion in the thirteenth century, after, so to speak, "migrating" for several centuries around the regions between China and Western Asia.[57]

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[50] Watson, "Chinese style in the paintings of the Istanbul albums," 75.
[51] Robinson, "Siyah Qalam," 62–6.
[52] Hartmann, "Siyah Qalem: Malerei aus mongolisch-turkischem Steppengebiet," 141–66 in Uluç, "Historiography."
[53] Sugimura, *The Chinese impact on certain 15th century Persian miniature paintings from the albums*, ph dissertation. Sugimura, *The Encounter of Persia with China*. Sugimura, "Chinese influence on Persian paintings of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries," 135-146.
[54] Shatzman-Steinhardt, "Siyah Qalem and Gong Kai," 59–71.
[55] Rogers, "Siyah Qalam," 21–39.
[56] Gillard, "Siyah Qalam: New Perspectives," 95-140.
[57] Cahill, "Some alternative sources for archaistic elements in the paintings of Qian Xuan and Zhao Mengfu," 64–75.

The fourth period concerning the modern scholar research about the so-called Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, begins with two simultaneous exhibitions in Istanbul, Yapı Kredi Kazım Taşkent Art Gallery in September–October 2004, and London, Royal Academy in January 2005. Through these exhibitions and related publications[58] we observe again a revival of interest, characterized by more comprehensive approaches (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Left: Exhibition catalogue *I, Mehmed Siyah Kalem, Master of humans and demons* (2004, Istanbul). Right: Exhibition catalog *TURKS: A journey of a thousand years, 600-1600* (2005, London)

David J. Roxburgh raises the question of whether Mehmed Siyah Kalem came from the courtly painting tradition that developed in Iran and Central Asia or was an artist living on the *edges or "fringes" of a sedentary world*, far removed from a center. He assumes that he was *someone from the periphery* describing his own life, through the "autobiographical dimension of his images". But on the other hand,

[58] *Ben Mehmed Siyah Kalem*. *TURKS*: *A journey of a thousand years, 600-1600*.

Roxburgh makes conclusions about the artist's "*learnedness from sources as far as Europe in the west and China in the east*, " suggesting that he had a *wide-ranging visual archive*, a case mostly possible for a center artist.[59]

Lastly in this period, Filiz Çağman, in her groundbreaking essay[60] suggests that although a real fifteenth-century artist called Muhammad[61] with the sobriquet *Siyah Kalem* might have existed, possibly in the *Khurasan region or Tabriz*, the bulk of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem images were attributed to this individual in error. She suggests geographical connections covering the material and technical features of the paintings.

Çağman exposes that the paper manufacturing plant originates *in northern and western China* and the *Himalayas*. The "floating mold" technique used to produce the paper also gives clues about the interconnectedness in the region: *Thailand, Nepal and Tibet*.

The eminent scholar further points out the existence of storytelling tradition in the sixth to seventh centuries in Kızıl wall paintings, heavily influenced by the role of pictorial art in Manichaeism, which gradually spread through Western Asia. She argues that these pictures were probably used to illustrate recitations by storytellers and these recitations must either have been orally transmitted folk stories or stories and texts stemming from *shamanism, Buddhism or Manichaeism*.

[59] Roxburgh, "Images on the fringe: Muhammad Siyah Qalam and responses of Turkmen artists," 97–113.
[60] Çağman, "Glimpses into the fourteenth-century Turkic world of Central Asia: The paintings of Muhammad Siyah Qalam," 148-156.
[61] Çağman prefers Muhammad for the name of the artist. I will undertake a detailed discussion about the artist name and the sobriquet *Siyah Kalem* further in this chapter.

Çağman thus concludes that the core group of Mehmed Siyah Kalem images depicts instances from the lives and beliefs of *Turkic, nomadic communities of Central Asia*.

2.2 Historical background behind the interaction zones

Looking at this literature survey concentrated on geographical attributions, it is possible to discern all the interaction zones of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings along their mobility on the Silk Roads. The pictures, in terms of material, technique, style, iconography or intervention to the artwork itself include direct or indirect influences from all these attributions:

East Turkestan, Kipchak of west, Crimean or Astrakhan Khanates; N.W. frontiers of China, towards the lake Baikal?; ancestors of the Russian Moujik?, Turkish-Tartarian Khan, Mongolian style; North of Caucasus and the territories of the Volga? Turkish artist, about whom we know next to nothing; Persian art / not Persian / borderlands of Central Asia; Akkoyunlu Yakub Bey court in Tabriz; Russian peasants / Buddhist-Manicheist art and Bakshi traditions; Dunhuang and Kızıl, classical Uyghur art; executed in Tabriz / Mongol-Timurid and Ming courts; Yong-le-gong palace in Shanxi, Dunhuang studios, Turfan, Qocho and Kashgar; a mixture of Chinese and pre-Islamic Persian traditions; Chinese influence through the intermediary of Central Asia; Chinese, European, Timurid or Turcoman parts; Tang motifs re-entering China during the Mongol invasion; someone from the periphery learned from wide-ranged sources; northern and western China and the Himalayas, Thailand, Nepal and Tibet, shamanism, Buddhism or Manichaeism, Turkic, nomadic communities of Central Asia.

2.3 Threefold contribution of this dissertation to the literature: new research material, new methodological approaches and new theoretical framework

The contribution of this dissertation to the literature in the study of and approach to these unique paintings consists of three aspects: research material, methodological approach and theoretical. First, this dissertation enriches the research material about these paintings by providing new groundbreaking sources. To cite the major ones: a linguistic investigation in mainly Turkic, Persian and Mongolian languages to show abundant evidence that the sobriquet *Siyah Kalem* denotes *Ink Brush* rather than *Black Pen*; research in Chinese and Turkic sources to identify the narrative components and possible meanings of the paintings that have not been identified yet; an investigation in Ottoman archives and European museums to show how how two of these paintings were stolen in Istanbul and smuggled to urban cities of Orientalism at the turn of the twentieth century. These findings help to understand not only the theft of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, but that of many other art pieces stolen from the Ottoman libraries during this period, and making part of worldly collections today.

Secondly, this dissertation contributes to the scholarship with the methodological approaches it develops to decipher mainly two crucial aspects related to the origins of these paintings. With a rigorous structural analysis of Chinese brush and ink techniques, this thesis shows and illustrates exactly the organic links with Chinese artistic and stylistic traditions. Another crucial input is the substantiation of the storytelling function of these paintings to unreveal how they might have been used in daily practices.

The final and fundamental contribution of this dissertation is the theoretical structure developed, followed, argued and demonstrated all along it: A new approach

to Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings in pursuing them not as simple artworks in a comparative framework but as mobility elements gaining and losing local meanings and global implications, where through these perception changes and shifting interpretations we can trace historical transformations. It uses the journey of this artwork through the various centers to explain this mobility via historical transformation.

2.4 The sobriquet

The attributions to Mehmed Siyah Kalem are the unique inscriptions on these paintings. Çağman remarks that the appellation Mehmed Siyah Kalem of the attributive notes may not refer to a historical character, but may have been an epithet used for more than one artist skilled in the technique.[62]

On works that differentiate largely in terms of style, there are signatures and references such as the *work of master Mehmet Siyah Kalem*. Judging by the location of the signatures and the way they were cast, it is noteworthy that most of them were written after the pictures were cut and pasted into albums. Therefore, it is seen that many of them are later ascriptions and references rather than being the signature of real artist/artists. Why the nickname of an artist who produced works with brush and ink on paper in the Central Asian geography in the late fourteenth century was Black Pen, since in the pictures, the artist(s) used many other colors like green, blue or red; and since, they were made with a brush, not a pen? Figure 5, Figure 6 and Figure 7 are pictures with Mehmed Siyah Kalem attributions. As can be seen they show a wide variety of styles, especially with Chinese impact.

[62] Çağman, "Glimpses into the fourteenth-century Turkic world of Central Asia," 148-156.

Figure 5. H.2153-64B Two demons dancing and musicians. Note on the work: The work of Master Mehmed Siyah Kalem *Kâr-ı üstad Mehmed Siyah Kalem* كار استاد محمد سياه قلم

Figure 6. H.2153-170B A pair of qilins and ling-zhi mushroom. Note on the work: Work of Master Mehmed Siyah Kalem *Amel-i üstad Mehmed Siyah Kalem* عمل استاد محمد سياه قلم

The following section concentrates on the projections about these three words, *Mehmed*, *Siyah* and *Kalem*. In the first part, I will consider how the Ottoman court might have perceived these three words in the sixteenth century, when the

albums arrived in Istanbul. Then, I will concentrate on the wider region of Central Asia for the meaning of the sobriquet.

Figure 7. H.2153-104B A camel and its herder. Note on the work: Copy by Mehmed Siyah Kalem مشق استاد محمد سیاه قلم

2.4.1 How did possibly the Ottoman sultans interpret Mehmed Siyah Kalem sobriquet?

An interesting question would be what did Mehmed Siyah Kalem sobriquet mean for the Ottoman sultan or court artist strolling through the folios, since later attributions with inscriptions exist on a considerable amount of work in the Yakub Bey albums. Looking at some primary sources of the period, it seems that the meaning of "siyah kalem" in the Ottoman *milieu* of the sixteenth century was not much different from that of today; that is, *siyah* as the black color, and *kalem* as the brush.

Since there is no vowel in the Ottoman script, we can not be sure if the name refers to Muhammed or Mehmed. As the contemporary references show, some scholars preferred *Muhammed* and others *Mehmed*. Although *Mehmed* is a Turkic variation of the prophet's name *Muhammed*, the two are different names, pronounced

differently and have different connotations in contemporary Turkish society. Tradition has it that using the name *Muhammad* in the original for a person's name was disrespectful to the Prophet lest that person become immoral or even a criminal.

It was similar in the sixteenth century, as seen in the European sources. A mid-sixteenth-century diplomat and scholar, Guillaume Postel, uses *Sultam Mahmed*, *Mahmed second* for the Ottoman sultan Mehmed II; whereas when he refers to the prophet he uses a different orthography, implying a differentiation in the pronunciation: *La doctrine de Muhamed*, *la loi de Muhamed*, *le prophète de Dieu, Muhamed*, *Muhamed, le prophete*.[63] This phonetic variation between *Mehmed* and *Muhammed* exists in the histories of Laonic Chalcondyle (1423-1511) and Thomas Artus (??-1614?). since for the Ottoman sultan's name they wrote *Mahomet* or *Mechmet*.[64] These historical examples and contemporary practice both in Turkey and Central Asian Turkic societies show that in the Turkic world there has been a phonetic and semantic differentiation between the two names, although one is derivative of the other. The reasons behind this might be the sublime aspects attributed to the prophet and his name, hence a desire to refrain from impudence to behave in a manner not worthy of his name and practical pronunciation difficulties. Nevertheless, it is more probable that the name in the sobriquet was pronounced as *Mehmed*, rather than *Muhammed*, a conscious preference throughout the dissertation.

As for *Siyah*, in the sixteenth-century Ottoman realm, this Persian-origin word mainly denoted the color black, as it is today. For this, we have examples in the codes of law prepared during the reign of Selim (1512-1520). Reading the regulations about market conditions and taxes on various products, we see that the

[63] Postel, *La tierce partie des Orientales, Histoires*.
[64] Chalcondyle and Artus, *Histoire des Turcs*, 166.

word *siyah* was used in the sense of color in this period. These lines from the code are to determine the qualities and price of the "black horse sack" in the market: "Siyah at çulunun uzunu 12 karış ve eni sekiz karış … siyah at torbasının gayet eyüsini beşe evsatı dörde ednası üçe (ola)."[65]

We also find clues about the Turkish spoken in the Ottoman lands in the sixteenth century in the notes of the Filippo Argenti. An educated Florentine, Filippo Argenti held the post of secretary at the Florentine embassy in Istanbul for almost ten years, from 1524 until 1533. His notes, titled *Regola del parlare Turcho*, meaning Turkish-speaking rules, include an extensive Turkish-Italian dictionary and grammar. Argenti's definition of *siyah* is the dark color: *black, blackish brown (horses)*. [66]

This perception must have continued following centuries, since in the nineteenth century, Julius Theodor Zenker (1811-1884), in the *sijah, sija* article of his Turkish-Arabic-Persian dictionary gives the color definition of the word: *noir, sombre* I *schwarz, trube* and notes various uses of the word like *Black Sea* or metaphoric meanings like *misfortune*. [67]

As for *Kalem*, although this is one of the most commonly used words in contemporary Turkish for "pen," this meaning is relatively new. The meaning of *Kalem* in the sobriquet of this enigmatic artist must be in the sense of "brush" a meaning which has been going on for centuries until recently. Sixteenth-century Florentine Argenti included the word in his notes, *kalam*, with the equivalent Italian

[65] Yücel and Pulaha, *I. Selim Kanunnameleri (1512-1520)*, 65, 199. Of course, a far frequently used word to denote the color black is the Turkish origin *kara*: *kara sabun* black soap, or *kara boya* black dye. (Yücel and Pulaha, 57, 190).
[66] Adamoviç, *Floransalı Filippo Argenti'nin Notlarına Göre (1533) 16. Yüzyıl Türkçesi*, 235.
[67] Zenker, *Dictionnaire Turc-Arabe-Persan*, 530.

meanings being *graft*, *pen*, *brush*: "Chalám marza, chalám magluolo, chalám penna, pennello."[68]

Kalem, has been used on a wide geography, mostly in the meaning of reedpen. For instance, *kalama* exists in the Khotan Saka language[69] as a loanword from Buddhist Sanskrit, the Sanskrit used in Buddhist texts.[70] It is richly attested by Buddhist and other texts dating from the seventh to the tenth century.[71]

Kalem, besides "reed pen", had been widely used as a "brush with thin bristles" until the end of the nineteenth century. Although this use is continuing today, it stays limited within the realm of traditional art practitioners. In the Ottoman Turkish *kalemdar*, with the Persian suffix *-dar* was widely used for a master painter, or portrait master; *kalemkâr*, with the Persian suffix *-kâr*, was for an an artist who makes paintings that look like reliefs on the walls.[72] These arts are applied with a brush, not a reed pen, used for calligraphy. In contemporary Turkish, fine "kalem work" *kalem işi*, is especially used to refer to the mastery by *kalemkâr*s in the traditional arts of miniature and decoration, a skill capable of applying various line thicknesses with the brush. These masters exist in the Ottoman registers of artisans working for the court.[73]

In Arseven's Ottoman Turkish-French dictionary of art terms, the author differentiates between two types of brush, *brosse* and *pinceau*, the latter being thinner, named *kıl kalem*, bristle brush:

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[68] *aşı kalemi, kalem, fırça.* Adamoviç, 192.
[69] Middle Iranian language spoken in the kingdom of Khotan, in Xinjiang, in northwestern China.
[70] Bailey, *Dictionary of Khotan Saka*, 55.
[71] *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Saka language.
[72] Tietze, *Tarihî ve Etimolojik Türkiye Türkçesi Lugati,* v.4, 75.
[73] "Bu muhtelif hizmet ve sanatkarların isimlerini ve 18. yüzyıl ortalarındaki mevcutlarını gösterir belgede, Katiban-ı kütüb: 1 adet, müstensih veya hattatlar (gösterilmemiş), mücellid: 3 adet, mürekkebciler: 1adet, nakkaşan: 7 adet, oymacı veya kalemkârlar. Saray Ehl-i sanat defteri (kâmil tasnifi) 7224 numaralı defter." Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilâtı*, 446.

> Brosse – Furça: A brush of thick bristles with a wooden handle, used to apply the dye while painting. Those made of fine sable hair are called Pinceau. We call both fırça. The olds named these thin brushes "kıl kalem."[74]

As it becomes clear from these references, the perception of the sobriquet of Mehmed Siyah Kalem has not changed that much since the sixteenth century onwards: *Siyah* as black and *Kalem* as reed pen or brush, *Mehmed the Black Pen* or more correctly *Mehmed the Black Brush*. In the international exhibitions and publications cited above, the sobriquet was translated, if needed, as *The Black Pen*.

2.4.2 Green, blue and red?

The following question arises, since Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings have not only black as a color: If *siyah* is black, why attribute such a sobriquet to an artist who uses besides black many other colors like green, blue and red? Mazhar İpşiroğlu asks the same question:

> As it is known, the term *siyah kalem* or *kara kalem* defines a certain painting technique where you do not use color. The name given to these paintings, in spite of they are colored, may be due to the unusual expressive power of the line.[75]

An artifact exhibited in the small museum of Imam Bukhari International Scientific Research Center in Samarkand, Uzbekistan helps to take further the speculation of İpşiroğlu. It clarifies the confusion about colors behind the sobriquet.

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[74] "Brosse – Furça: Kılları kalın olan ve boya ile resim yaparken boyayı sürmek için istimal olunan sapı tahta fırça. Pinceau diye ince samur kıldan olanlarına denir. Bizde her ikisine de fırça deriz. Bu ince fırçalara eskiler "kıl kalem" tabir ederlerdi." Arseven, *Dictionnaire des Terms d'Art*, *Sanat Kamusu*, 51.

[75] "Bilindiği gibi siyah kalem ya da kara kalem deyimi, renk kullanılmayan belli bir resim tekniğini tanımlar. Renkli oldukları halde bu resimlere bu adın verilmiş olması, çizginin alışılmadık bir anlatım gücü göstermesinden ileri gelmiş olabilir." İpşiroğlu, *Bozkır Rüzgârı Siyah Kalem*, 11.

In the hall where objects related to the book arts are exhibited, a ninth-century *siyahdan* is on display (Figure 8).

For *kalem* there is *kalemdan*, a pen holder, pencil case to put the pens or pencils; and for *siyah*, there is *siyahdan*, an inkwell to put the ink. Both words have the Persian suffix *-dan*, which gives the meaning of container, or holder. Hence, *siyah* in the sobriquet of Mehmed Siyah Kalem most probably determines not the color black, but ink: *Mehmed The Ink and Brush*. This sobriquet fits perfectly with the unique technique of the artist(s) based on the skillful use of ink and brush.

Interestingly, *siyahdan* and the meaning of *siyah* as ink do not exist in Persian dictionaries, despite Persian being the language of a long-settled civilization with a rooted writing culture. Rather it is to be found in Uzbek and Tajik languages, which inherited the reminiscences of cross-cultural interactions along the important centers of the historical Silk Roads. In the etymological dictionary of the Uzbek language with Persian and Tajik terms and definitions the entry of *siyah* is as follows:

> Siyah: It is a Tajik word and is used to mean black. In the past, it was also used in the sense of ink, apart from the meaning of color.
> Siyahdan: Adding the suffix -dan gives the word the meaning of ink container.[76]

The dictionary of Uzbek language with explications contains *siyah* in the meaning of ink and *siyahdan* for inkwell. For example, it notes *kara siyah*, *kızıl siyah*, meaning black ink, red ink.[77] Besides Uzbek and Tajik, *siyah* is used in Kazak[78] and Karakalpak[79] languages in the sense of ink.

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[76]Shavkat Rahmatullaev, *Etymological Dictionary of the Uzbek Language-Persian, Tajik terms and derivatives*, 214-215.
[77] *Uzbek Tilinning Izoxli Lugati*, 496.
[78] *сыя/sıya*: ink in Özdemir, "Kazakça'da renk kavramı ve renkler", 149-208.
[79] *Sıya*: ink in Uygur, *Karakalpak Türkçesi Sözlüğü*.

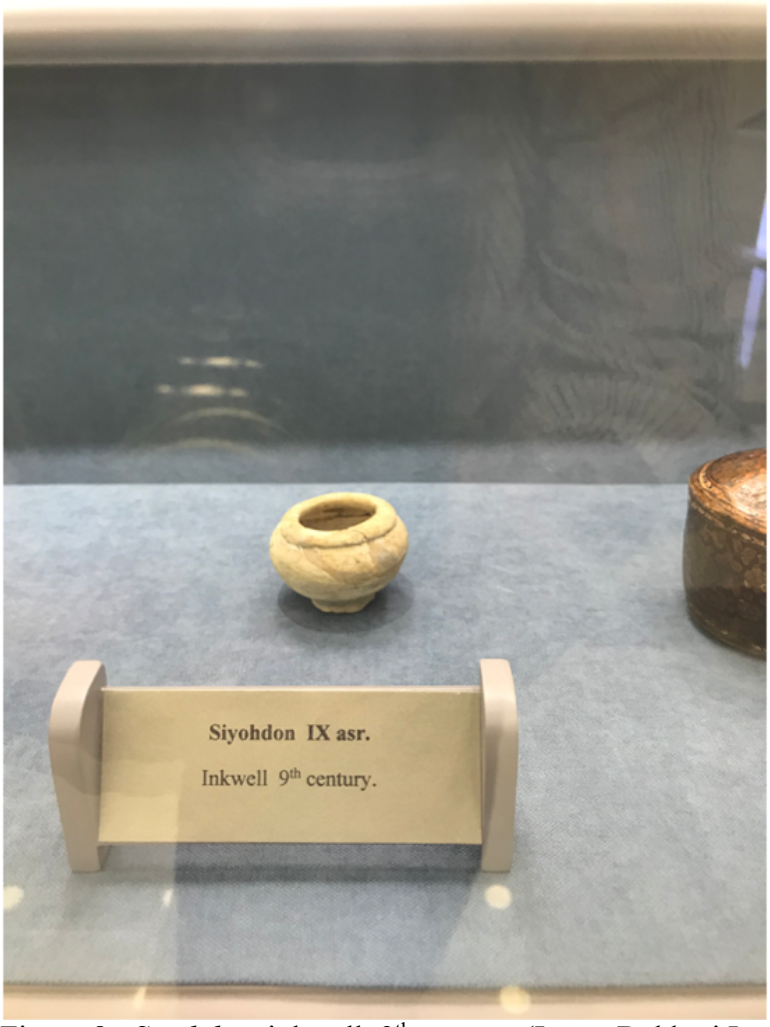

Figure 8. *Siyohdon*, inkwell, 9th century (Imam Bukhari International Scientific Research Center, Samarkand, Uzbekistan, 2019)

2.4.3 *Kara*

It is possible to approach the term *siyah* in the artist's sobriquet from a contradictory point of view and negate its use in the meaning of *black*. The color terminology among Central Asian Turkic and Mongolian societies shows that in both language groups the word for black is *kara* since ancient times.

Ilse Laude-Cirtautas demonstrates that in all Turkic dialects *kara* is used to denominate the color black. She considers nouns and verbs derived from *kara*, the word's literal meaning as dark color and figurative meanings like the color of evil

spirits; shame and dishonor; misfortune; mourning; poor, simple and ordinary; big, strong and brave. She also refers to various plant and animal names derived from *kara*. She investigates its synonyms, among them *siyah* as well. Notably, almost all of the examples of *siyah* are from Ottoman Turkish or modern Turkish.[80]

Regarding the historical sources of Turkic dialects, *kara* is far more frequent as a color determination and *siyah* is seldom used. In the eleventh-century Mahmud el Kashgari's *Compendium of the Turkic Dialects* the author cites *QARA: black of anything.*[81] In his eleventh-century monumental dictionary Mahmud el Kashgari uses *siyah* in various instances while explaining the meaning of many words. However, *siyah* does not exist as an entry like *kara*, nor as part of a word, or derivation from *siyah*.

Research conducted in Central Asian folk narratives and epics supports the assumption that the term for black is not *siyah*, but *kara among the Turkic-speaking folks*. A survey conducted in the eleventh-twelve centuries of Kirgiz's heroic epic *Alıp Manas*, shows that eight color names were mentioned in the epic. Among them *siyah* does not exist. The third of the most mentioned color names is *kara* (black, 29 places).[82]

As for the Mongolian language, the basic color names are *boro* (grey), *cagan* (white), *köke* (blue), *nogogan* (green), *qara* (black), *sira* (yellow), *ulagan* (red). From the etymological point of view, *qara* (*kara*, black) is a very early Turkic loanword, like *boro* (*boz,* grey), *köke* (*kök,* blue), *sira* (*sarı,* yellow). In part of the

[80] Laude-Cirtautas, I. (1961). *Der Gebrauch der farbbezeichnungen in den Türkdialekten*. Wiesbaden: Ural-Altaische Bibliothek, p.17-38
[81] Mahmud el Kashgari, *Compendium of the Turkic Dialects (Diwan-ı Lugat it Turk)*, edited and translated with Introduction and Indices by Robert Dankoff in collaboration with James Kelly, Harvard University Office of the University Publisher, 1984, Part II, p.265
[82] The first two being *ak-boz* (white-dun, 51 places), *ak* (white, 42 places). Akkaya, A. (2003). "Alıp Manaş Destanı'nda Renkler". *Tarih Okulu Dergisi*, 6 (XV), (p. 527-544)

Altaistic literature they are considered as ancestral Altaic words. For the basic meaning and in the semantic field -names of food, animals, plants, diseases, human characteristics, metals, figurative use, swear words and curses, compound color names, color names with strengthening prefix- Mongolians use only *qara* for the color name black.[83] In Mongolian culture, the most diverse color descriptions exist, not surprisingly, in horse colors. Looking at these various color names, all related to the black color are always derived from *kara*.[84]

Color symbolism in Turkic and Mongolian cultures has been an important research field in scholarship.[85] Most known symbolism is the color association with directions (north-black: *Karadeniz*-Black Sea, south-red, west-white, east-blue),[86] with religions (shamanism with black, lamaism with yellow, Christianity with white in Mongolian culture)[87] or with the tribal and dynastic past (Akkoyunlu-Karakoyunlu, Karakhans, Karakhitay, etc.). In all these associations, *kara* is used literally or figuratively for the color black.

In none of the above cases, *siyah* is used as the color name for black. In other words, as it becomes apparent with this linguistic investigation, kara has been

[83] Khabtagaeva, "Colour names and their suffixes, A study on the history of Mongolian word formation," 85-165.
[84] Gombkötö, "A mongol lószínnevek képzési formái" (The word formation of the Mongol horse colour names), 35-42.
[85] Some of them are the followings: Annemarie von Gabain. "Vom sinn symbolischer farbenbezeichnung", *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 1962, 15 (1/3), 111-117. Şerefeddin Yaltkaya, "Tarihte Renk", *Türkiyat Mecmuası*, 1942. // Omelyan Pritsak, "Qara Studie Zur Türkischen Rechtssymbolik", *60. doğum yılı münasebetiyle Zeki Velidi Togan'a armağan*, İstanbul, Maarif Basımevi, 1955. Facsimile, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara 2010. For the Turkish version with the bibliography added, see Elvin Yıldırım, "Kara Türk yön sembolizmi çalışması", *Genel Türk Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Cilt: 3, Sayı: 6, Temmuz 2021, 519-532. // Andrey Nikolayeviç Kononov, "Türk Lehçelerinde Renk Adlarının Semantiği", *Tyurkologiçeskiy Sbornik* (Türkoloji Koleksiyonu) (Moskova, 1978, 159-179) For the Turkish version: Reshide Adzhumerova ve Emine Atmacı, *Gazi Türkiyat,* Güz 2015/17: 185-204. // Ziya Gökalp, *Türk töresi*, Kültür Bakanlığı, 1976. Some of the more recent studies are: Ceyhun Vedat Uygur, "Kazak ve Karakalpak Türkçeleri Temelinde Türkçe Renk Adlarının Yan Anlamları", 2007 // Elvin Yıldırım master thesis, "Türk kültüründe renkler ve ifade ettikleri anlamlar", 2012. // Timothy May, "Color symbolism in the Turko-Mongolian world", *The use of color in history, politics and art* (ed.Sungshin Kim). University of North Georgia Press, Dahlonega, Georgia 2016. 51-77.
[86] Von Gabain, "Vom sinn symbolischer farbenbezeichnung," 115.
[87] Khabtagaeva, Colour names and their suffixes," 91.

the word for black color until the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Mongolian and Turkic communities.

So, what word did they use for ink in the languages spoken in Central Asia around that time?

2.4.4 *mekke, beke*

Mahmud el Kashgari notes in his *Compendium of the Turkic Dialects* that the word *mekke(h)* is "the name of an ink imported from China, with which Turkic books are written."[88]

The linguist Gerhard Doerfer argues in his dictionary about Turkish and Mongolian loanwords in Persian, that one of the double 'k' in the middle of *mekke* was dropped in Mongolian: *tü. mäkkä 'ink' = mo. beke.*[89] The word for Chinese ink in Persian is *bäkä*.[90] According to Gerhard Clauson, *mekke*, meaning black ink, is a loanword from Chinese *mo* 墨 'black ink' a derivation from Middle Chinese *mak*, in some dialects *mbak*. It is also a Chinese loanword in Mongolian as *beke*. In the Uyghur language of the fourteenth century, the word for ink is *meke*.[91] Prof Jens Peter Laut indicates that this word was later abandoned in ancient Uighur and not used for some reason.[92] It has been kept in the contemporary Mongolian almost in its initial form: *bekh*.

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[88] Mahmud el Kashgari, *Compendium of the Turkic Dialects*, 368.

[89] "Da das Wort nur im Tü. Etymologisiert werden kann, haben wir anzunehmen: frühbolgar. **dayqu* (oder auch schon **daqqu*)-+ mo. *daqu*. Zur Aufhebung der Gemination im Mo. cf. z.B. tü. (K 409) *mäkkä* 'Tinte' = mo. *beke*. Also ein klarer Beweis dafür, daß im ältesten Tü. noch d- existierte, das in dieser Form ins Mo. eindrang; ein alt. *d*- anzunehmen, ist nicht nur überflüssig, sondern sogar irreführend." Doerfer, *Türkische und Mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen. Band IV-Türkische Elemente im Neupersischen (Schluss) und Register zur Gesamtarbeit*, 284.

[90] Ligeti, "Un vocabulaire Sino-Ouigour des Ming: Le Kao-Tch'ang-Kouan Yi-Chou Du Bureau Des Traducteurs," 182.

[91] Clauson, *An etymological dictionnary of pre-thirteenth-century Turkish*, 766.

[92] Personal interview with Prof. Jens Peter Laut, 14 February 2020, Göttingen Georg-August University.

Louis Ligeti thinks that *mäkä* and *bäkä*, as loan words from Chinese, date from the Tang period (618-907), however, the final vowel remains without satisfactory explanation.[93]

2.4.5 *Kara* as ink

In various Eurasian communities, *kara*, besides black, has secondary meanings of ink, writing or literacy. One of these communities is the minority group Cheremiss.[94] In Kazak[95] and Kirgiz languages, kara has also been used to mean "written letters, script, literacy."

There are historical examples of *kara* in the meaning of ink. In *Codex Cumanicus*, the thirteenth-fourteenth century Kipchak language dictionary, the third meaning of *kara* is ink, after the black color and black people.[96]

In his *Etymological dictionary of pre-thirteenth-century Turkish*, Gerhard Clauson refers to the meaning of "black ink" in the entry for *kara.*[97]In another entry he cites a proverb where *kara* is used in the sense of ink: *qalamda kara tamsa altun kelir 'if black (ink) drips from the pen, gold comes.*'[98]

To use black and ink interchangeably is not surprising for reasonable factors in all cultures. A striking example of this exists in Grimmwelt Museum in Kassel, Germany. Dedicated to Grimm Brothers, the Museum holds a permanent collection about not only fairy tale collectors aspect, but a lesser-known aspect of Jacob and

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[93] "*Mäkä* and *bäkä*, comme emprunts, datent des Tang; la voyelle finale reste toutefois sans explication satisfaisante." Ligeti, "Un vocabulaire Sino-Ouigour des Ming," 182.
[94] Cheremiss language is a Finno-Ugric language, known also as Mari language spoken by a minority group in Russian Federation. A Tatarian loanword *kara* means *ink* in Cheremiss language. Räsänen, *Die Tatarischen Lehnwörter im Tscheremissischen*, 34.
[95] *қара мағу*/*qara tanuw*: to recognize *kara*, to recognize letters, to read. Özdemir, "Kazakça'da renk kavramı ve renkler," p.176.
[96] Toparlı et al., *Kıpçak Türkçesi Sözlüğü*, 127.
[97] Clauson, *An etymological dictionnary of pre-thirteenth-century Turkish*, 644.
[98] Clauson, *An etymological dictionnary of pre-thirteenth-century Turkish*, 503.

Wilhelm Grimm: They were ground-breaking linguists and are regarded as co-founders of German studies since they initiated the first German dictionary.

A display object in the Museum is the estimated amount of ink consumed by the Grimm brothers. The amount shown in the display was calculated based on catalogs of their papers on a measured average of 0.4 ml of ink per page. Figure 9 demonstrates the rough estimate making 207 liters of ink filled on a huge inkwell. The deep black color of the huge bottle filled with 207 liters of ink leaves no question about the association between black and ink.

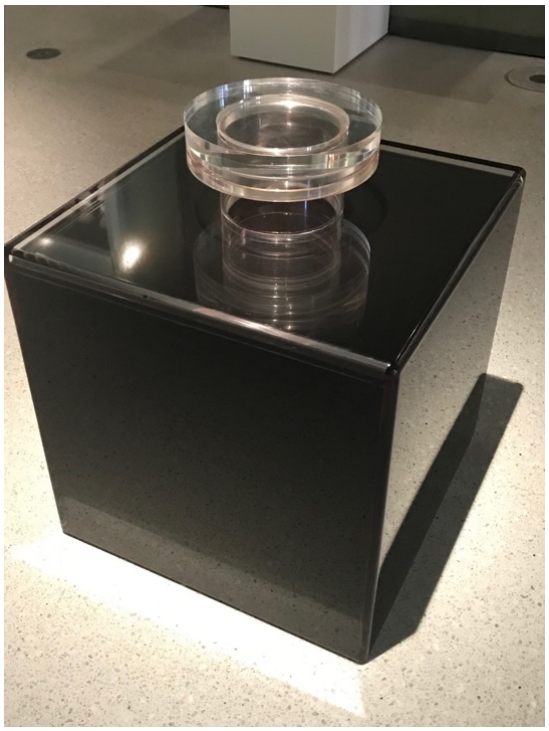

Figure 9. The huge bottle that contains 207 liters of ink, the estimated amount consumed by the linguists Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, regarded as the founder of German studies, Grimmwelt Museum, Kassel

Another example is the Chinese character *mo* 墨, which consists of two components: As shown in Figure 10, at the upper part there is *hei* 黑 (black), at the lower part *tu* 土 (earth), since it was first made by mixing soot with gum to produce

an earthy substance. The mixture was then molded and hardened into a solid stick, ready to be ground with water to form ink. Chinese people say that even though a little ink is better than a good memory, they prefer to heed the proverb: "S/he who is near ink gets black, committing it to memory.[99]

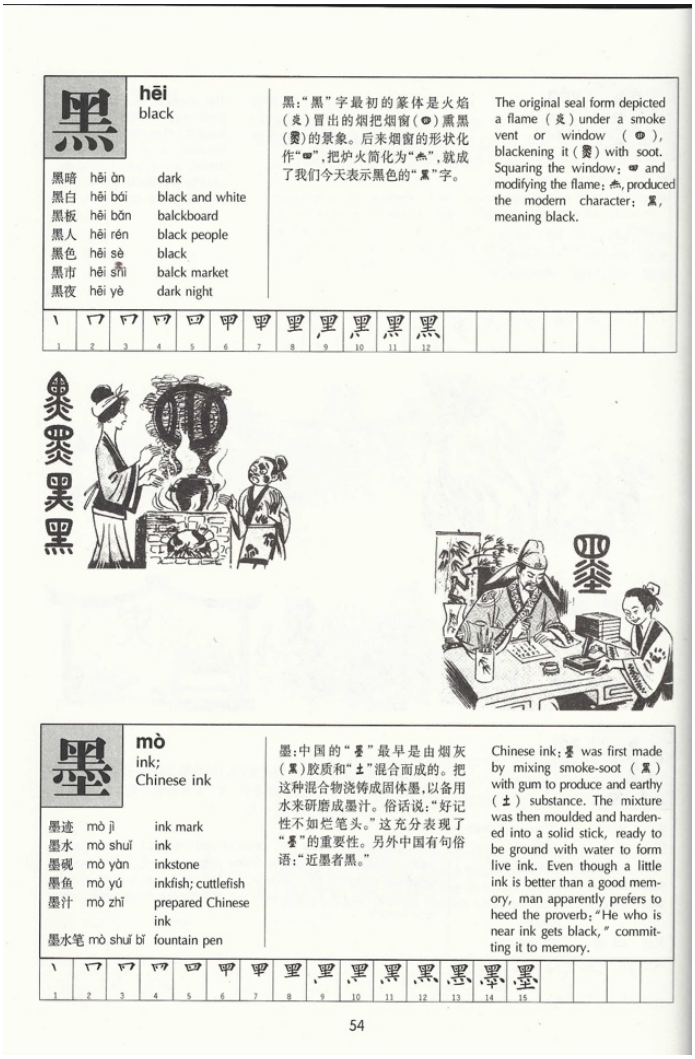

Figure 10. Illustrations of the Chinese characters black 黑 *hei* and ink 墨 *mo*. Source: Tan Huay Peng, *What's in a Chinese character*, 54.

This study points out that by the time the albums reached Istanbul, the Ottomans did not know about the meaning of *siyah* as ink and most likely understood

[99] Peng, *What's in a Chinese character*, 54.

and used it for black in sixteenth-century Istanbul Turkish. This consists of a sharp and strong detachment from the original meaning already in Istanbul with this "loss of memory" concerning the artist's very name.

2.5 Projections about Mehmed Siyah Kalem sobriquet

Gerhard Clauson, in his *Etymological dictionary of pre-thirteenth-century Turkish* indicates that all Turkish words for ink are loanwords borrowed from other languages.[100] This fact may be related to the dominance of oral rather than written tradition in Central Asian Turkic or other nomadic cultures where orality dominates. Eventually, oral cultures borrow the word for *ink* from the language of the nearest written culture. As mentioned above, the Uighurs and Mongols adopted *mekke* and *beke* from Chinese, and the Uzbeks and Tajiks *siyah* from Persian. For the Ottoman case, two main words exist for ink: *midad* and *hibr*, depending on the elements in their compositions. *Midad* was made of soot and was black, whereas *hibr* was a metallic ink made with chemicals like iron and copper; hence was rather brownish black. Both are loan words from the Arabic language, in use in Arabian peninsula since the seventh century on.[101]

To designate the color black, it seems that *kara* has strongly preserved its place as the dark color definition in Turkic languages and Mongolian for a long time. On the other hand, the investigation in historical and linguistic sources demonstrates that *siyah* in the artist's sobriquet designates ink, rather than the color black. It gives clues about the geography and period of the artist known as Mehmed Siyah Kalem. The cultural and linguistic zone of the artist(s) seems neither a central one like

[100] Clauson, *An etymological dictionnary of pre-thirteenth-century Turkish*, 867.
[101] Erünsal, *Orta Çağ İslâm Dünyasında Kitap ve Kütüphâne*, 270.

Persian or Uighur, nor a peripheral one in the Siberian steppes or Volga surroundings. Since the word *siyah* has kept its meaning of ink in languages like Uzbek and Tajik, the geography of the artist(s) with Siyah Kalem sobriquet was most probably open to cross-cultural and linguistic interactions on the Silk Roads. Hence, considerations about artistic style and linguistic evidence contain important clues about the period and geography in which this mysterious personality lived.

As it will be grounded and expanded in the following *Part 1: Capillary Routes as the pre-history and production geography of the paintings*, Mehmed Siyah Kalem art most probably belonged to this transregional land that had its peculiar cultural production in the interplay between Chinese sources and intermingled Turkic and Iranian peoples of Central Asia. The term *Chinese Turkestan* is chosen to define not as a politically limited land, but as a global cultural flow region whose wide-ranging sources extend from China towards West Asia during the second half of the fourteenth century.

In fact, what Siyah Kalem meant in the artist's sobriquet should be *Ink Brush*, rather than *Black Pen*.[102] Ink and brush are, in a sense, the "geography" of Mehmed Siyah Kalem artist(s). Due to the skillful application of ink and brush techniques and the extraordinary expressive power of the line, as suggested by İpşiroğlu,[103] the paintings are often associated with Chinese impact.

[102] For a larger discussion in Turkish about the sobriquet *Siyah Kalem*, please see: Perinçek Karavit, "Mehmet Siyah Kalem'in kalemi ne renk boyuyor?" 149-164. Although behind the scope of this dissertation, there arise interesting questions from this investigation. Some of them are: How did the Chinese word for ink *mo* was adopted in Uyghur, Turkish, and Mongolian languages and dialects as *mekke* and *beke*? Although it became widespread, why it stopped to be used in Uyghur and Turkic languages? Why did *siyahdan*, derived from the Persian word *siyah*, has been kept in Tajik and not in Persian?

[103] İpşiroğlu, *Bozkır Rüzgârı Siyah Kalem*, 11.

PART ONE

CAPILLARY ROUTES

AS THE PRE-HISTORY AND PRODUCTION GEOGRAPHY

OF THE PAINTINGS

CHAPTER 3

CHINA TO WEST ASIA

TURN AND TWIST WITH *BIMO* 笔墨

The investigation conducted in CHAPTER 2 STATE OF THE ART AND THE IDENTITY DEBATE implicates an impact of Chinese provenance in Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. Attributing these paintings solely to a “Chinese hinterland” would be the denial of their cross-cultural sources, hence a reduction in the transregional, multidimensional entanglements from which this unique artistic style arose.

These paintings' pre-history and production geography covers an area extending from China towards West Asia, along the ancient Silk Roads. On the other hand, none of the scholarly literature clarified the Chinese artistic contribution to these paintings. They depict all kinds of ethnicities, but no Chinese face appears. What makes us associate them with Chinese sources? Theme? Iconography? Costumes? Composition? Images? Motifs? None of these pictorial elements fully meet the “Chinese” feeling we seize while examining these paintings.

The first part of this chapter is dedicated to identifying the components of Chinese art traditions and forms. This aspect has remained unidentified until now: The sense of resemblance is the Chinese style of pictorial expression based on ink and brush techniques. That is why we can not immediately recognize it as a motif or an image on the paper's surface. Even though this technique is openly defined in the very sobriquet of the artist(s) -as Siyah Kalem means *Ink Brush*- this meaning has been covered up with subsequent layers of mobility and the ruptures caused by them. Yet, the Chinese impression we feel lies deep in these paintings’ way of existence.

A critical analysis of brush and ink application techniques compared to Chinese painting canons and practice reveals the skills transmitted from masters to pupils. This attempt to explain Chinese impact based on production methods and artistic practice traditions is a new methodological approach to analyzing the so-called Mehmed Siyah Kalem art.

3.1 To have or not to have brush and ink

Bimo 笔墨 is a term peculiar to traditional Chinese painting. The closest approximation in Western painting is "brushwork." Whereas, as emphasized by Sophia Suk-mun Law, compared for example to Van Gogh's distinctive brushwork, *bimo* in traditional Chinese painting refers to more than just the results that appear in the painting itself. Behind the results are a whole range of specific content and value systems.[104]

Among countless treatises on the study of *bimo*, "how can there be painting without brush and ink?" asks Wang Gai in *Jieziyuan Huazhuan* 芥子園畫傳 (The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting, 1679-1701). Known as the Chinese Tao of painting, this canon is still used as a handbook for painting. [105]

The compiler exemplifies the main skills of expression deriving from having or not having brush or ink:

> The ancients used the expression yubi yumo (to have brush and ink). Many people do not grasp the significance of the meaning of the two terms bi (brush) and mo (ink). To know how to outline peaks of a mountain range but not know the strokes for modeling (cun) is described as wubi (not having brush). To know the strokes but not know how to handle ink tones or

[104] Law, *Reading Chinese painting,* 120.
[105] For a comparison of differences between traditional Chinese painting and European painting mainly from the brushwork point of view based on *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* see Gao, "Roue de la Fortune et Grain De Moutarde: Une étude comparative de la peinture européenne et chinoise", 143-164.

> indicate the nuances distinguishing near from far, clouds from reflections light from shadow, is wumo (not having ink).[106]

Compared to subtleties of technical skills of *bimo*, the pictorial language of Mehmed Siyah Kalem artist(s) "had brush and ink," as revealed in the following comparative analysis.

3.2 Brushstrokes

Sophia Suk-mun Law points out that an understanding of the Chinese brush is integral to any discussion of the technical skills of *bimo*, since compared with the Western paintbrush, the Chinese brush offers the artist a wide-ranging variety of brushstrokes.

The types of brushstrokes and the names given to them by Chinese are extremely numerous, combined in almost innumerable ways for centuries: spread-out hemp fibers, entangled hemp fibers, sesame seeds, big ax cuts, small ax cust, cloud heads or thunderheads, raindrops, eddy or whirlpool, veins of a lotus leaf, lumps of alum, skull bones, the wrinkles on a devil's face, raveled rope, brushwood, hair of cattle, horses' teeth.[107]

Figure 11 displays Chinese brushes of different lengths, thicknesses and hair textures. The secret of the ability of the brush to produce such rich results lies in its construction:

> The conic shape and softness of the Chinese brush lend it a dynamism of its own. With the brush we can paint a dot as small as a speck of dust or as large as the shape of, say, the base of a bun. In the first case we just lightly use the tip of the brush and it's done. In the second we use the whole of the brush pressed down towards the shaft and what appears is not a dot but a large ink blot.
>
> We can imagine that from the tip to its bottom, the same brush is, in the hands of a painter, capable of an infinity of change according to how much

[106] Wang, *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, 29.
[107] Wang, *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, 26-29.

it is raised or lowered; and that the slightest difference in the strength and speed with which it is raised or lowered will result in subtle changes that cannot be fudged or concealed.[108]

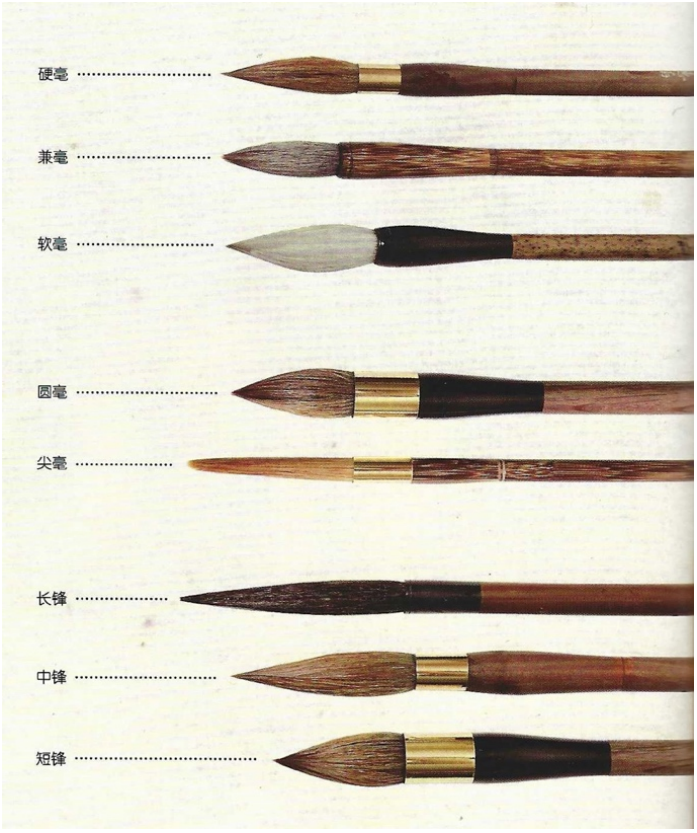

Figure 11. Chinese brushes of different lengths, thicknesses and hair textures (Source: Zheng, *Guide to Chinese landscape painting*, 16)

As shown in Figure 12, a single brush can produce a large permutation of brushwork changes according how you hold and use it.

[108] Law, *Reading Chinese painting,* 123.

Figure 12. A single brush can produce a large permutation of brushwork changes according how you hold and use it (Source: Zheng, Guide to Chinese landscape painting, 20-21)

The extraordinary expressive power in Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings could owe to the dynamic use of Chinese brush with great capacity and sensitivity. He may not know the names of these strokes but he applied some of these skillfully. Various values obtained by the flexible application of brushstrokes can be perfectly observed in the hairs of different ethnicities, giving such a sense of reality: curly,

sparse, floating in the air, dense, messy or well-kept, all these kinds of hair were successfully depicted thanks to the masterly use of one single brush (Figure 13).

Figure 13. The artist(s) exquisitely depicted the hairs of different ethnicities thanks to the masterly use of one single brush (Details from left to right H.2153-90A, 34B, 38A, 128A, 106B)

Besides the expertise in technical skills, we have to note here a crucial factor concerning the successful depiction of these ethnic varieties: Mehmed Siyah Kalem must have encountered these people in real life to be able to attain such an impressively realistic accuracy. While painting these varied types of hairs, he surely had observations on real models he had seen on the capillary routes. When the visual image is based on subjective narratives rather than personal observations, it is impossible to attain such a natural sense of depiction, approaching photography.

On this matter, almost contemporary fifteenth-century Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch's (c.1450-1516) *The garden of Eden* (Museo del Prado, Madrid, c.1495-1505) exposes a comparative example. Bosch depicted in his triptych oil painting the scenes representing from left to right Eden, The garden of earthly delights, and Hell. The left panel depicting a scene from the paradise of the Garden of Eden reveals several animals that would have been exotic to contemporary Europeans, including a giraffe, a monkey or a lion. In the foreground, from a large hole in the ground, birds and winged animals emerge, some realistic, some fantastic. Hans Belting observes that, although the creatures in the foreground are fantastical imaginings, many of the animals in the mid and background are drawn from contemporary travel literature.[109]

Whatever source served Bosch as exposure to these exotic animals, since he had not seen them with his own eyes, such a talented painter was not capable of depicting the proportions of a giraffe based on accounts in travelogues. However, he painted perfectly, for example, the rabbit standing in front of it, in Figure 14.

[109] Belting, *Garden of Earthly Delights*, 26.

Figure 14. Detail from *The garden of Eden*, Hieronymus Bosch (Museo del Prado, Madrid, c.1495-1505)

3.3 Ink shades

The brush technique and the use of ink are closely linked. An important characteristic of Chinese *bimo* is the thickness differences in the lines, which arise from the unevenness in the strength with which the brush is controlled. Changes in shade derive from the fact that at the start the tip of the brush is loaded with ink and will produce dark brushwork, and by the end, as the ink in the brush is used up, the brushwork will appear dry and exhausted. The result will be a line utterly different in degree of color and feeling from that at the beginning. The changes in the shade of

color or degree of saturation in the brush will affect the degree of color and balance of dry and wet in the line that the brush produces.[110]

Accordingly, the ink is divided into five main shades: burnt, thick, heavy, light and clear, as illustrated in Figure 15. A sixth property is the dryness and moistness of the ink. The so-called "ink charm" represents the brush technique for the dryness and moistness. Both a moist brush and a dry brush can produce dark and shade lights.[111]

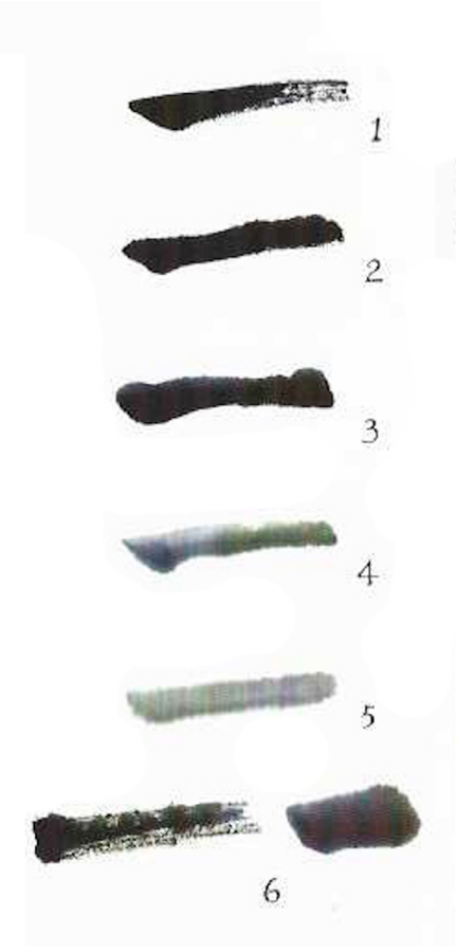

Figure 15. Ink shades: 1.burnt, 2.thick, 3.heavy, 4.light and 5.clear 6.dry ink and moist ink (Source: He and Deng, *An introduction to traditional Chinese painting*, 18)

[110] Law, *Reading Chinese painting*, 124.
[111] He and Deng, *An introduction to traditional Chinese painting*, 18.

Mehmed Siyah Kalem artist(s) used these ink shades very effectively to give the sense of color degree successfully. One of the most obvious examples of the application of ink shades is a black man, depicted with great courage, wearing a black costume, a black hat and keeping a black stick in this hand, which is also black. (Figure 16) Although everything is black in the figure except the white of his one eye and a few teeth visible in his side profile, and the blue-grey hairs of his beard, everything is discernible thanks to the details of rich degrees of ink shades and the well-elaborated relation between dark and shade lights. The same technique is applied in several places like black animals, demons' nude bodies, or costume draperies.

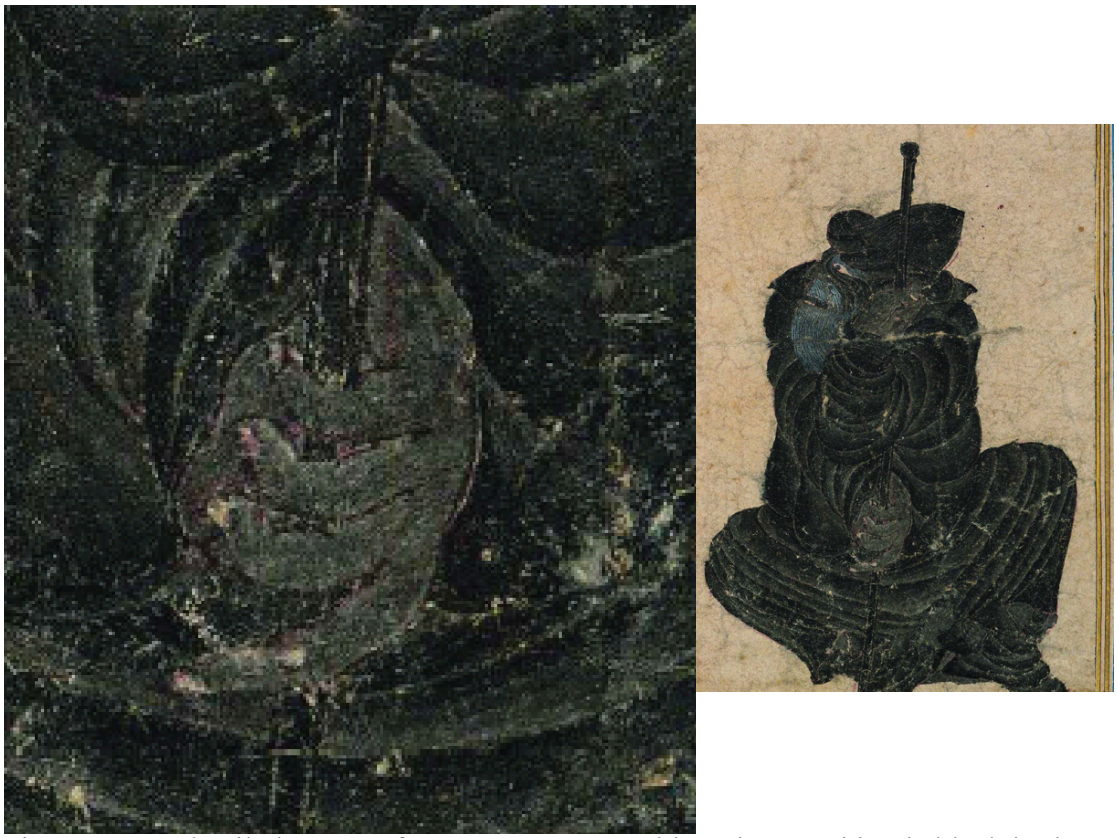

Figure 16. A detailed capture from H2153-37B: Although everything is black in the figure, everything is discernible thanks to the elaborate use of ink shades: hand, five fingers and nails, the stick he holds, his dress and folds.

3.4 Turn and twist

The tip of the Chinese brush is where the hair is most pointed. As introduced in many traditional Chinese painting handbooks, there are six main ways of using the brush, illustrated in Figure 17. In the Central brush-point technique, the brush handle is perpendicular to the paper and you keep the brush tip in the middle of the line. In the Side technique, you tilt the brush toward the paper while keeping the tip on one side of the line. In Reversing the direction taken by the brush tip, you move the brush upward or toward the left. Though inconvenient, your line will show richer variation when you paint in this way. The fourth is the *Duo* technique, you dip the brush tip in ink or colors, mostly one color after another, so that one stroke can paint both dark and light colors. Applying horizontal, vertical, round and slanting dots is another technique of using the brush. Lastly is Turn and twist, where you turn the brush tip inward and outward.[112]

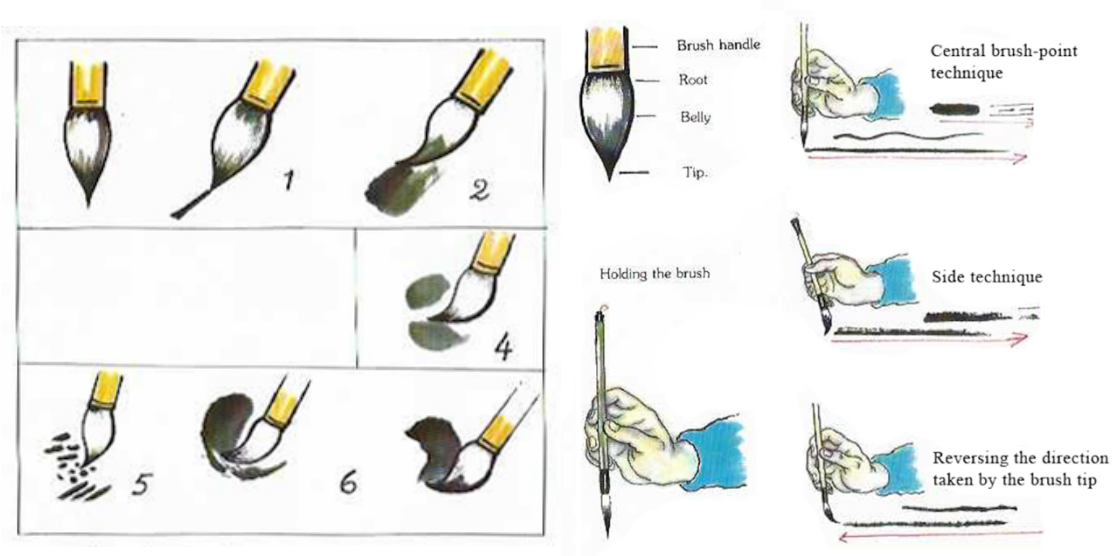

Figure 17. Six ways of using the brush and different line values obtained (Source: He and Deng, *An introduction to traditional Chinese painting*, 19-20)

[112] He and Deng, *An introduction to traditional Chinese painting*, 20.

The Chinese brush's expressive qualities and the artist's experiment with its flexible capacities are infinite. As indicated above, the artist's approach exposes all possible convenient and "inconvenient" means of using the brush. From the Western art point of view, probably the most sophisticated and unfamiliar way of using the brush could be turning and twisting it. Figure 18 shows the application of the specific method. Even today, non-Chinese students in art academies with Western tradition have trouble grasping and applying this movement, where you have to turn and twist both the brush and your wrist.[113]

Figure 18. Techniques of turning the brush tip: Begin a dot by moving the brush upward slightly, Turn the brush tip and move it downward and leftward, Move the brush tip to the right, Result: a round dot (Source: Li, *Chinese landscape painting for beginners*, 39)

[113] Observation of Prof. Caner Karavit in Traditional Chinese Painting classes (2015-2023) in Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Istanbul, Turkey.

The seventeenth-century Chinese painter Shi Tao 石濤 (1641-c.1717) dedicated a long section to the *Control of the Wrist* in his canon of painting, *Sayings of Friar Bitter-Melon* (*Kugua Heshang Hua Yulu* 苦瓜和尚画语录). Shi Tao, in his work defined as "the best and deepest essay on art written by a revolutionary artist,"[114] refers to four errors:

> [W]ithout change in the life and movement, attention is given to the superficial contour and texture strokes. Without change in method, the life and movement become stereotyped. Without knowledge of light and shadow, one sees only a row of hills and connections of waterways. Without the provision of woods and hills, one feels the emptiness of the scene.[115]

Shitao's advice to avoid these four errors is to begin with wrist control:

> For if the wrist is infinitely flexible and responsive, then the drawing goes in different ways. If the brush is quick and sure, then the forms take definite shape. When the wrist is firm, the drawing is sure and expressive, and when it is flexible, it darts and dances and soars. Or with a perpendicular position, the strokes strike the paper squarely without showing the tip of the brush. Or it may incline and make possible many graceful dragging lines. When it moves fast, it gathers force; when it moves slowly, there is a meaningful dip and turn. When the wrist moves, unconsciously inspired, the result is true to nature, and when it changes, the result can be weird and fantastic. When the wrist is gifted with genius, the painting is beyond the work of human minds, and when the wrist moves with the spirit, the hills and streams yield up their souls.[116]

All these ways of using the brush resemble figures a dancer can perform. Looking at Shitao's above passage on the Control of the wrist, the turn and twist movement consists of a crescendo of mastery, both in avoiding errors and reaching a level of the high command of expression. Once, as an artist, you attain this level of expression, your results merit adjectives like sure and expressive, flexible, graceful, meaningful, weird and fantastic.

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[114] *The Chinese theory of art*, 137.
[115] *The Chinese theory of art*, 145.
[116] *The Chinese theory of art*, 145-146.

Mehmed Siyah Kalem was acquainted with some of these figures, even performing them with a fascinating skill. Among them, apparently exists turn and twist, as shown in Figure 19.

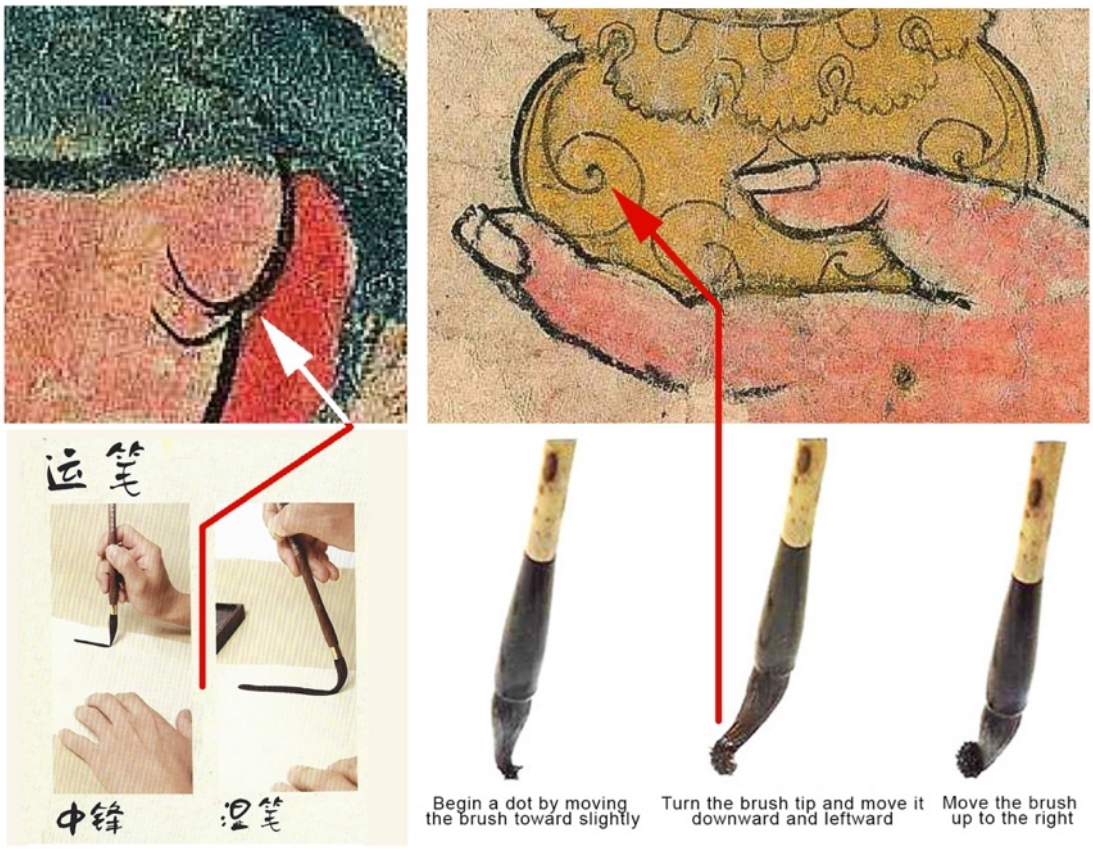


Figure 19. Detail from H.2160-10A sophisticated line values obtained with a brush, especially apparent in the depiction of the elbow and wrist

3.5 Painters and artisans from 51 countries

The identification of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings' components to Chinese art traditions immediately follows this question: How and when Mehmed Siyah Kalem artists could have encountered the masters of these Chinese brush and ink techniques? The historical conditions behind this encounter and artistic transfer have been another matter left untouched in the scholarly literature about the so-called

Mehmed Siyah Kalem. The following part aims to reveal the main historical aspects lying based on this encounter.

First of all, since the people traveling on the Silk Roads did not have a camera or other means to record, their visual memory was most likely more capable than today, a capacity that has gradually become blunt with the facilities of technology. Hence we must include the Silk Roads network objects and the visual memory of especially artists and artisans.

Having touched upon the importance of visual memory, a crucial center of cross-cultural artistic encounters from the fourth to the fourteenth century had been Mogao Grottoes near the ancient oasis town of Dunhuang at the western edge of the Gobi Desert. Hundreds of cave temples were carved into a cliff face and decorated with Buddhist wall paintings and sculptures.

According to the map prepared by the Dunhuang Research Academy in Figure 20, in these cave temples, whose number is around 500, had worked artists and artisans from 51 countries.[117]

[117] 1. Tahran 2. Damghan 3. Iran 4. Mali 5. Samarkand 6. Jambil 7. Ferghana 8. Afghanistan 9. Herat 10. Kabil 11. Pakistan 12. Islamabad 13. India 14. New Delhi 15. Nepal 16. Tashkurgan 17. Kashgar 18. Khotan 19. Aksu 20. Kucha 21. Korla 22. Yining (Gulca) 23. Lhasa 24. Urumchi 25. Hami (Kumul) 26. Guazhou 27. Dunhuang 28. Lanzhou 29. Yinchuan 30. Xi'an 31. Luoyang 32. Hohhot 33. Beijing 34. Wuwei 35. Zhangye 36. Yiwu (Ara Türük) 37. Korgaz 38. Qiuci (Küsen) 39. Gumo 40. Yutian (Hotan) 41. Shule (Yeni Sehir) 42. Talas 43. Dayuan (Tayuan) 44. Kang 45. Merv 46. Hecatompylos (Parthia) 47. Loulan 48. Karahoca (Karahoço) 49. Guma 50. Bactra (Bala Hisar) 51. Mongolia. The place names in Chinese: 1.德黑兰 2. 达姆甘 3 伊朗 4. 马里 5. 撒马尔罕 6. 江布尔 7.费尔干纳 8.阿富汗 9.赫拉特 10. 喀布尔 11. 巴基斯坦 12. 伊斯兰堡 13. 印度 14.新德里 15.尼泊尔 16.塔什库尔干 17. 喀什 18. 和田 19. 阿克苏 20. 库车 21. 库尔勒 22. 伊宁 23. 拉萨 24. 乌鲁木齐 25. 哈密 26. 瓜州 27. 敦煌 28. 兰州 29. 银川 30. 西安 31. 洛阳 32. 呼和浩特 33. 北京 34. 武威 35. 张掖 36. 伊吾 37. 霍城 38. 龟兹 39. 姑墨 40. 于阗 41. 疏勒 42. 恒罗斯城 43. 大宛 44.康居 45.木鹿城 46.番兜 47.楼兰 48.高昌 49.皮山 50. 兰氏城 51. 蒙古国. *The colors of Dunhuang, The magical door opening to the Silk Road*, 40.

Figure 20. The map showing the provenance of painters and artisans working in Dunhuang Grottoes

All these artists came to work in the construction of Dunhuang caves, commissioned by influential persons or noble families. Textual research and analysis of art styles of different periods show that the provenance of the painters and artisans at Dunhuang Grottoes consists of three major regions. The map defines these groups by three colors: green, blue and red.

The green arrow on the map shows the painters coming from the Western Regions along with the transmission of Buddhism. The blue arrow refers to three groups mainly from inland China: Artisans coming with ousted officials or powerful families, part of the migration from the Central Plains to the frontiers; Artisans coming with officials appointed by Chinese emperors; Painters coming from the Central Plains. The third group of red arrows implicates ethnic minority painters

coming from the bordering areas like Tibet or Mongolia with new art styles and techniques during the Tibetan Occupation (787-848), Western Xia (1038-1227) and Yuan dynasty (1280-1368).

What was the itinerary of the painters coming from Tehran, Ferghana, India or Kucha? Did they use capillary routes? How long did it take to reach Dunhuang? At which caravanserai did they stop and talk to whom in the street? Did they meet local artists during their journey? What did they buy for their families or friends with the money they earned at Dunhuang and to which merchant did they send these gifts?

Every ordinary or artistic object, any person traveling on the Silk Roads, even the memory itself, must have contributed to the visual vocabulary of Mehmed Siyah Kalem. Hence recognizing and matching images and motifs from Dunhuang or inner parts of the Chinese mainland, even from Tibet and Mongolia as represented by the red arrow, is not a surprise in the paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem. Independent of their original meanings, these similarities both in the images or motifs and in the artistic styles and techniques refer to the vivid cross-cultural encounters in the region.

3.6 The master of *gongbi* 工笔

Besides the general flow of artists and artisans in the region, there are more specific historical conditions behind this meeting, the meeting of Mehmed Siyah Kalem artists and Chinese brush masters. Water and land paintings (*shuilu hua* 水陆画) are crucial to understanding the transfer of style, techniques, motifs, and images along the art centers of the Silk Roads during the production period of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. Its practitioners played the role of transmission from Chinese

sources towards the Silk Roads after the decline of Dunhuang Mogao Caves in the fourteenth century.

Two reasons stand behind the decline of Dunhuang Mogao Caves as an art center. The first one is the opening of the Maritime Silk Road in the Song Dynasty (960-1279), which led to the decline of the northern overland routes during the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368). As a consequence, Dunhuang grotto art lost its sources of income. A second reason was that the Ming dynasty, after overthrowing the Yuan dynasty in 1368, could not regain the entire territory of the Hexi Corridor[118] and Western lands towards Central Asia. Dunhuang rested outside the empire's territory. The new border being Jiayuguan, the empire moved all the residents of Dunhuang, Anxi, and Yumen within the new frontiers. The map in Figure 21 shows the main centers of the Hexi Corridor.

The water and land ritual (*shuilu fahui* 水陆法会) was a Buddhist rite developed in China for the universal salvation of the deceased and all sentient beings. The paintings associated with this ritual, water and land paintings, were an indispensable visual aid to this ritual, often painted in Buddha halls or on hanging scrolls. Chinese scholars argue that artisans of mural paintings and water and land paintings in temples share the common heritage of *gongbi* 工笔, fine brushwork,[119] meaning "working brush". This is the traditional Chinese painting method very precisely executed. It is characterized by meticulous brush technique and detailed description. Its opposite is freehand brushwork, *xieyi* 写意, "writing meaning". It

[118] Hexi Corridor 河西走廊, transliterally meaning "west of the river," denotes the region west of the Yellow River; Shaanxi, Qinghai and Gansu provinces. This zone constitutes a corridor, not only geographically, but in historical and cultural terms as well, linking China to the wider Central Asia through the northern routes.

[119] Xie 谢, "Introduction to Water and Land Paintings in Hexi, Gansu Province 甘肃河西水陆画简介", 8-11.

suggests the freehand style characterized by bold strokes rather than accurate details. It is executed by spontaneous and vivid expression and a bold outline.

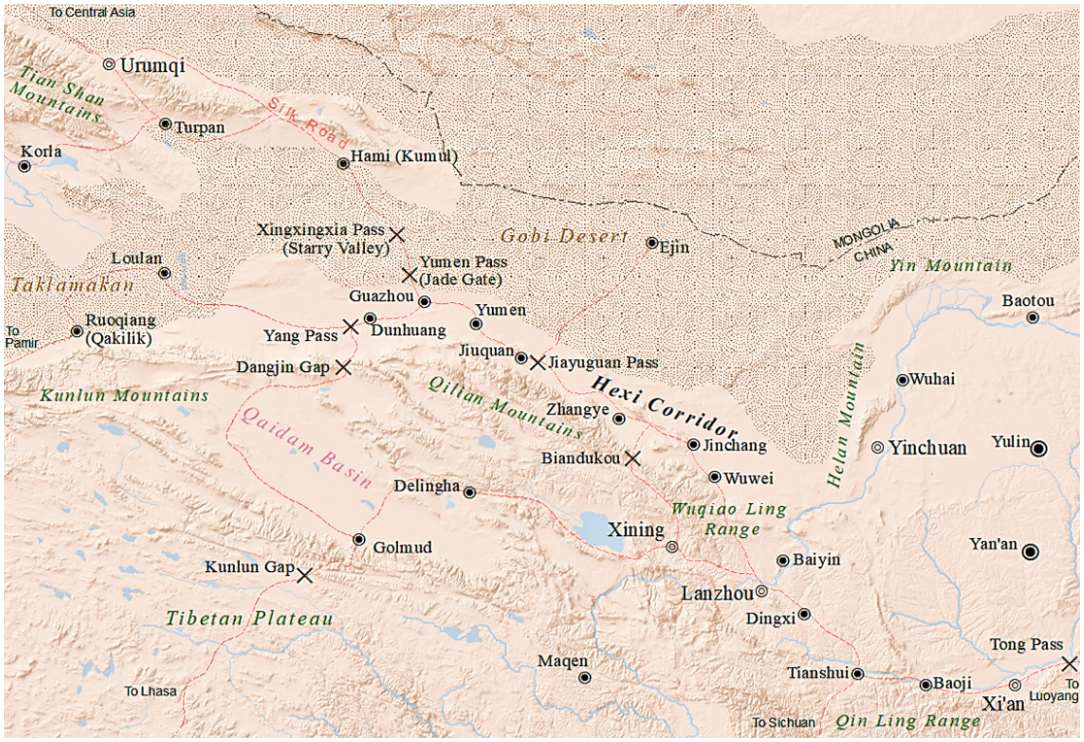


Figure 21. Hexi Corridor (Source: Wikipedia)

Because Chinese *literati* despised and rejected the branches of artisanship, even though the folk painters of *gongbi* 工笔 had high artistic skills, their names and impact remained unknown. Among these masters were thousands of craftsmen and artisans scattered in the region after the decline of Dunhuang in the fourteenth century. They painted murals and water and land paintings for temples in the Hexi counties in order to make a living. This is why the silk paper paintings found in Dunhuang Tibetan caves and the murals in the Yuan Dynasty are similar in style to Hexi water and land paintings.

Due to this artistic mobility after the decline of Dunhuang, the examples of water and land paintings in the Hexi Corridor and Gansu are considered an extension and continuation of Dunhuang art, hence named "mobile Dunhuang murals."[120]

Not all of these masters of brushwork became water and land painters in the Hexi Corridor. What about hundreds of others from 51 countries who created Dunhuang art? These transition periods between northern overland and southern maritime routes and between Yuan and Ming dynasties coincide with Mehmed Siyah Kalem production periods attributed to the second half of the fourteenth century in the unpublished facsimile of the albums. Both stylistic features of the ink and brush mastery and iconographic elements of especially demons strengthen the idea that Mehmed Siyah Kalem encountered some of these masters. Not maybe directly, but indirectly they affected the formation of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem *genre* on the capillary routes. These mobilities help us to explain various stylistic and iconographic sources of impact on Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings in this decline period of the Silk Roads.

In these terms, Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings exhibit components that can be identified with Dunhuang artistic traditions. Whereas, as remarked in the introduction of this chapter, China or Dunhuang alone is not sufficient to explain the complex sources playing a role on the production of these paintings. They share common elements with Islamic manuscript traditions as well. These artistic production techniques not dealt with before in the scholarly literature are red outline sketches, color application and line drawing.

[120] Xie 谢, “Introduction to Water and Land Paintings in Hexi, Gansu Province 甘肃河西水陆画简介”, 8-11.

3.6.1 Red outline sketches

Through a rough examination of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings one can remark very easily that the preliminary outline of the drawings was done with red, as in Figure 22.

Looking at various sources it is evident that this had been a tradition all over the Silk Roads both in Islamic manuscripts and in Dunhuang murals. Nineteenth-century Swedish diplomat and Islamic art collector Fredrik Robert Martin (1868-1933) gives details for the red preliminary sketches in book arts referring to Ceylon and Indian traditions:

> Worn brushes were carefully kept for fine outline work. In Ceylon, brushes for very fine drawings are made of the awns of the "teli tana" grass, and are admirably adapted to their purpose. The first outline was generally made with Indian red (garika), a colour used by mendicants for dyeing their clothes, and was used for the outlines without gum. The finishing outlines were made with lampblack which was prepared by burning a camphor wick in a lamp filled with mustard oil. [121]

In Dunhuang murals as well, the freehand sketches were done with red color at the initial phase of preparation. Figure 23 shows red sketch redrawn by the researchers in Dunhuang Academy. The artisans divided the walls into large areas and drew the line skillfully on the wall without a preliminary sketch. It was usually marked with a brush using earthen red pigment.[122]

[121] Martin, *The miniature painting and painters*, vol.1, 108.

[122] "How were the architecture, paintings and sculptures of Mogao Caves produced? 莫高窟的建筑、壁画和彩塑是怎么产生的?", *The colors of Dunhuang*, 34.

Figure 22. Outlines drawn with red apparent in the details of the paintings from H.2153-38A (upper left), H 2153 92B (below left) and H.2153-152A (right)

Why do Mehmed Siyah Kalem and other artists and artisans prefer red for the outline? First of all, red was the cheapest and easiest pigment to obtain. Another reason was that red was convenient for covering up all finishing colors like black or blue. So using earth red in Dunhuang drafts allows painters to modify and adjust accordingly, which would be convenient in the later stage of the painting. After completing the whole picture, the ink line is used as the setting line to draw the specific image of the characters.[123] Hence, the artists of the entire geography shared this tradition of red outlines for practical and economic reasons.

[123] Bao, "Discussion on the Painting in Cave 254 of Mogao Grottoes", 40-46.

Figure 23. Red sketch redrawn by researchers in Dunhuang Academy (Source: *The colors of Dunhuang*)

3.6.2 Color application

In Dunhuang murals, the finished draft was marked with color labels by masters. Generally, the master indicated the color choice by writing a color label, in running or cursive hand, directly on the cave wall, which can now be seen in some caves because of color changes. These were simplified versions of Chinese characters for the specific color. Some examples are 夕 *xi* for green (*lü* 绿), 工 *gong* for red (*hong* 红), 丰 upper part of the character *qing* 青 for blue, 廿 *nian* for yellow (*huang* 黄).[124] Then the pupils filled with color the parts as indicated by their masters. These stages of mural painting can be followed in Figures 24 and 25, where the experts in Dunhuang Research Academy revealed the techniques through re-applying them.

[124] *The colors of Dunhuang*, 35.

Figure 24. Shortened color names visible on the cave walls in Dunhuang (Source: Exchanges and mutual learning, The cosmopolitan art from Dunhuang Grottoes and the Hexi Corridor)

Figure 25. Colors reapplied by researchers at Dunhuang Academy (Source: Exchanges and mutual learning, The cosmopolitan art from Dunhuang Grottoes and the Hexi Corridor)

However, many wall paintings were painted without color labels because the painters had perfect mastery of the required skills. The final step was to highlight the lines that formed the shapes.[125]

To color the painting according to marked labels was an application technique used apparently in Islamic manuscript tradition as well. A Chinese-style drawing kept in the same album with Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings reveals these

[125] *The colors of Dunhuang*, 35.

intricate artistic interconnections on the ancient Silk Roads. Figure 26 is a large ink drawing on cloth depicting Three seated ladies in Chinese Taoist costumes.

Figure 26. Right: Three seated ladies in Chinese Taoistic costumes, large size unfinished ink painting on cloth, 262x414 mm. 15th century (H.2153-66B). Left: Detail capture showing color names remarked on different parts of the painting.

Notes on the drawing mark various color names in Persian to color different parts of the painting as follows: **لاجورد،** *lājvard* (lapis lazuli blue – at one place), لاجو *lājū* (contracted form of lapis lazuli - at seven places), شمط *shamat* (a kind of lapis lazuli blue - at three places), آسمانی *asimānī* (sky blue - at one place), سیلو *sīlū* (greenish color - at five places), زرد *zard* (yellow - at two places), بنفشی *banafshī* (purple - at two places), آل *āl* (red - at two places) and سفید *sifīd* (white - at one place).[126]

[126] Unpublished facsimile of the albums, H.2153 and H.2160.

Although Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings do not contain such color names, it is apparent that the artists followed the same technique of color application deriving from Chinese tradition: First outline, then color inside. The technique is clearly observable in Figure 27.

Figure 27. Detail from the H.2153-55A showing clearly the Chinese technique of color application: First outline, then color inside

3.7 Compositional aspects of storytelling

The author(s) of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings applied some techniques of pictorial composition to convey meanings and support the narration's effectiveness. The analysis of compositional elements like perspective and hierarchy among figures, observation angles and form distortions, disposition of elements in the space, the use of empty and full space, and the expression of temporality give the audience visual keys to the story's flow. The author(s) used perspective, figures, space and time not solely to please the eye; but for a functional purpose: support the pictorial recitation.

The following analysis brings a fresh methodological contribution to the field in broadening the art's historical perspective with a functional approach considering the storytelling practice of these paintings vis-a-vis their pictorial composition.

3.7.1 The coexistence in nomadic perspective

Referring to the first painted animals in Chauvet Cave during the Paleolithic era (c.30.000 BC, France, Figure 28), John Berger defines a crucial principle in the visual system of perspective:

> Nothing is framed in them; more important, nothing meets. Because the animals run and are seen in profile (which is essentially the view of a poorly armed hunter seeking a target) they sometimes give the impression that they're going to meet. But look more carefully: they cross without meeting. … When experts pretend that they can see here 'the beginnings of perspective', they are falling into a deep, anachronistic trap. Pictorial systems of perspective are architectural and urban – depending upon the window and the door. Nomadic 'perspective' is about coexistence, not about distance.[127]

Figure 28. Animal paintings in Chauvet Cave, France, c.30,000 BC (Source: Thomas T, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons)

[127] Berger, *Portraits*, 23.

The pictorial system of perspective in Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings is mostly a nomadic one in John Berger's terms. Filiz Çağman describes similarly this feature of coexistence where nothing meets: “An important feature of the pictures is the way the figures are portrayed separately, none interrupting the view of another. As in shadow theater, each figure is clearly discernible in its undefined setting.”[128]

Behind the nomadic perspective of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings is a dual reality: physical and sociological. The physical reality is the very fact that it is a nomadic setting, describing the steppes, nomads and animals. As pointed out by Berger, the development of perspective requires an urban physical environment where the artist, as an observer, can make references to distance among architectural elements like roads, buildings, windows or doors. In Mehmed Siyah Kalem the setting belongs to the steppes where all visual elements coexist on a uniform background.

The nomadic perspective of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings also implies a sociological reality. In Berger’s terms, nothing is framed in these paintings. In other words, no courtly figure, Buddha, Christ or Virgin Mary, is emphasized at the center with size or color.

Contrary to the pyramidal visual organization in contemporary miniatures, Buddhist paintings or Christian iconography, pictorial elements have no hierarchy. None of the figures dominates the scene in Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings; there is no hierarchy among humans, demons, animals, or different ethnicities. This perception of perspective is an element that supports the oral narration during the storytelling performance.

[128] Çağman, “Glimpses into the Fourteenth-Century Turkic World of Central Asia,” 152.

3.7.2 The sense of movement and communication of emotions

Another compositional element that strengthens the flow of narration is the use of multiple observation angles. The artist(s) depicted dynamic action instances with a kind of early animation technique which consists of juxtaposing view plans from different angles, impossible to arise naturally, like in the horse of Picasso's *Guernica*. Around half millennium before Picasso, a similar horse depiction exists in Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, viewed from three plans: the mouth of the horse from the profile, the eyes from the front, and the shoes from the front and back (Figure 29).

İpşiroğlu emphasizes that these organ distortions resulting from the simultaneous points of view are meant to give the sense of movement, "a unique montage" in the art of Siyah Kalem.[129]

Figure 29. H.2153-84A (detail): Several plans exist in this painting: The mouth of the horse from the profile, the eyes from the front, and the shoes from the front and back.

Çağman points out a similar technique for conveying emotions: The artist(s) used exaggerated lines in the faces as a vehicle of expression, a pictorial language

[129] İpşiroğlu, *Bozkır Rüzgârı Siyah Kalem*, 96.

very different from the traditional Islamic figurative art.[130] What could be the source of these exaggerated lines? The artist reflected the environment in the painting: The skin cracks when subject to the harsh conditions of cold and wind in the steppes and the face lines become very apparent, regardless of age. This view is a natural gift of the geography of the artist.

What makes this experience exceptional is its encounter with the pictorial language of Chinese tradition, based on expression with lines using masterfully various brush strokes, as investigated in the introduction of this chapter. Among many others, Nomad struck by a falling rock (H.2153-105A-p.2) in Figure 30 shows, with the body language and face mimics, the astonishment and worry of the man on the left caused by the fall of the other. Communicating emotions offers the audience the keys to following the narration, supporting the story's fluency.

Figure 30. Nomad struck by a falling rock (H.2153-105A-p.2)

[130] Çağman, "Glimpses into the Fourteenth-Century Turkic World of Central Asia," 152.

3.7.3 The usefulness of emptiness

The disposition of pictorial elements in the space and the use of empty and full spaces consist of another aspect of composition concerning narration in Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. As pointed out by Çağman, hardly any paintings indicate a setting, except a few natural details directly related to the subject.[131] Moreover, even the ground on which the figures stand or sit is, most of the time, not depicted. What could be the reasons for this non-spaceless?

Two reasons could have played a role in using compositional space in Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings: not commanding the spatial perspective and the practice of narration. As touched upon in the section on nomadic perspective, the sense of distance, hence the relative disposition of pictorial elements in the space develops in an urban or architectural setting. Miniature painters depict areas like courts or battlegrounds; because they are acquainted with the city view with various kinds of buildings like dwellings, shops, barns or bridges. They live in palaces, with doors and windows. Besides, they have to depict these elements for their subject matter, regardless of the correctness of their perspective. A sultan is a sultan with his palace, depicted the more splendid, the better for the artist.

Similarly, the artist can acquire and apply this spatial sense from the disposition of natural elements that create a perspective, as we see mountains, trees, rocks, valleys or plains in a landscape painting.

In contrast, the environment of Mehmed Siyah Kalem artists did not offer, most probably, such a visual experience and culture. In the wide plains it is impossible to seize the horizon for a spatial training of the eyes. Hence, Mehmed Siyah Kalem artists specialized more in figural depiction, rather than spatial ones,

[131] Çağman, "Glimpses into the Fourteenth-Century Turkic World of Central Asia," 152.

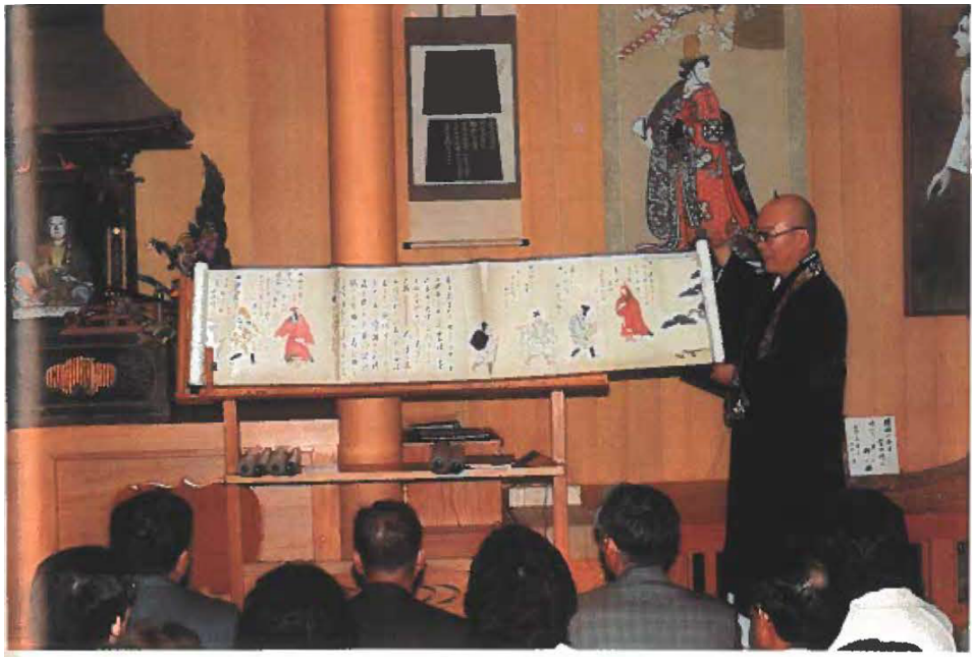
due to the physical conditions of their environment, which is poor in architectural and natural elements.

Another reason for the lack of spatial setting in these pictures could be the very practice of storytelling, since this is also the case in theatrical folk performances that scarcely use any décor or space indication.

Victor H. Mair exposes numerous examples of performance worldwide in his book investigating Chinese picture recitation, its Indian genesis and its transmission through Central Asia.[132] Even modern twentieth-century performances of *bhopo* (Rajasthani picture-storyteller), *etoki* (Japanese “picture explanation"), *dalang* (Indonesian shadow play performer and picture storyteller), *pardadar* (a variety of Iranian picture-storytelling), or visual documents like drawings and lithographs showing *bänkelsang* (German storytelling with pictures) or *cantastoria* (Italian “story singer”) depict hardly any setting.

Looking to the recitation pictures shown in Figures 31, 32 and 33 collected from different cultures around the world, they hardly depict any spatial setting. Those who depict are from urban environments after the nineteenth century, as in Figure 34.

[132] Mair, *Painting and Performance.*



Color Plate 6. Modern *etoki* performance at Dōjōji (道成寺) in Wakayama Prefecture (和歌山縣). Courtesy of Kazuo Tokuda.

Figure 31. Modern Japanese *etoki* performance at Dojoji in Wakayama Prefecture (Source: Mair, *Painting and Performance*)

Figure 32. Iranian *pardadar*, outside Masjid-i Juma' in Zavara. Photograph by Samuel R. Peterson (Source: Mair, *Painting and Performance*)

Figure 33. Depiction of a Dutch *liedjeszanger* ("song-singer") and his *Bänkelsang* from the seventeenth or eighteenth century (Source: Mair, *Painting and Performance*)

Figure 34. A street singer with a troupe telling of disasters in the year 1830 in Basel (earthquake) and Hollstein (flood). Drawing by Hieronymus Hess (1799–1850) (Source: Mair, *Painting and Performance*)

Emptiness is a useful element in the pictorial narration, since it is not full, in other words, not limited. The storyteller can fill this with anything s/he wants in this space with oral depiction. In these terms, spacelessness is a functional element for narrative creativity and rich imagination. On the contrary, full places have already lost their functionality. In a mountainous village, the storyteller can depict orally a mountainous environment where the demons live; whereas in the other, a lake from which the demons sort out to kidnap horses and humans.

The usefulness of empty pictorial space derives from the fact that it permits the storyteller to keep the expression of place dynamic, rich and diverse, to change and adapt it to the place of performance. The pictorial emptiness gives the storyteller a flexible fiction of space s/he can fill with anything s/he wants in the recitation. Hence the indication of space in narrative pictures exists if needed.

The primacy of emptiness finds one of its best expressions in Taoist ontology; it is found within all things, at the very heart of their substance and process of change. It relates to fullness, since it is emptiness that enables all things that are full to attain their complete fullness. In the order of external reality, emptiness is represented concretely by the valley:

> The valley is hollow, and one might say empty, but it makes things grow and nourishes them. Bearing all things with its bosom, the valley contains them without exceeding its capacities or being worn out.[133]

In these terms, the usefulness of emptiness for the storyteller matches with the following creative and functional conception: "Fullness makes up the visible aspect of structure, but emptiness structures use." [134]

[133] François Cheng, *Empty and Full, The language of Chinese painting*, Vide et Plein translated by Michael H. Kohn, Shambhala, Boston and London, 1994, p.46
[134] Cheng, *Empty and Full,* 47.

Of course, to be clear, Mehmed Siyah Kalem artists were neither Taoists nor Chinese. But they were wandering within the interaction zone of these cultures; they were subject to their producers and artifacts. Moreover, the historical background of these notions' impact on Chinese aesthetic thought coincides with the period of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. François Cheng, investigating the language of Chinese painting vis-à-vis the concepts of empty and full, points out that, essentially inspired by Taoism, a kind of painting dominated by emptiness came into being during the Tang dynasty (618-907), reaching its apogee during the Song (960-1279) and Yuan (1271-1368) periods.[135]

As remarked by François Cheng, the dichotomy of emptiness and fullness is certainly not the exclusive preserve of the Chinese; it is present in varying degrees in everything that has to do with the pictorial or sculptural arts. What differentiates the Chinese implication is that emptiness-fullness does not appear as an opposition of form or a technique for creating depth within the space. Rather, vis-a-vis fullness, emptiness is a living entity.[136]

Eventually, the Chinese conception of emptiness as a useful and functional entity matches the needs of the pictorial recitation artists: They can fill the pictorially empty spaces through oral narration. In these terms, the spacelessness of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings is most probably on purpose, as a functional convenience.

3.7.4 Flexible temporality

The spacelessness of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings consequently brings a sense of indefinite time. Although the pictures are found cut into pieces and lost their coherence, they do not seem to bear any indication of time. We can not say anything

[135] Cheng, *Empty and Full,* 60-61.
[136] Cheng, *Empty and Full,* 64-65.

about the succession or the time of the events, whether it is summer or winter, early in the morning or sunset. Since the artists can skillfully use brush and ink to express various grades of light and shade in face, body or drapery, the indefinite time, like spacelessness, was most probably an intentional preference for a flexible time in narration. In other words, the explicit lack of space and time markers allows the storyteller to change and reconstruct the story and time in a transformative temporality. Without space and time limits, it is possible to use the sequences interchangeably, take a sequence from the beginning to the end or the middle one to the beginning.

As pointed out by Cédric Laurent, in studies of ancient and medieval art the expression "narrative painting" evokes a location in space and time, the development of the action having a particular direction. The image represents real or imaginary events in sequence following a logical order defined in time and transcribed in space. The spatial representation reflects the temporal nature of the story's events. Laurent emphasizes that in the history of European art, narrative painting occupies a place of secondary importance. However, works of this type were commonly created in ancient times and the Middle Ages. The audience lost the liking for these representations with the advent of the centered perspective in the fifteenth century.[137]

In order to better seize the interdependence of space and time in narrative paintings it is possible to compare Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings to a contradictory example having a linear time composition. Shane McCausland exemplifies how the handscroll *Lady Zhaojun leaves China* (*Zhaojun chusai tu* 昭君出塞图, 1554) incorporates temporal change and spatial movement in a continuous-narrative type painting. The tale was so well known in China that it required no textual

[137] Laurent, "Narrative painting viewed as major art in sixteenth century Suzhou," 143.

counterpoint.[138] An early work by You Qiu (act.1553-83), the painting describes the journey made by the Han palace lady Wang Zhaojun to marry the Xiongnu nomad chieftain in 33 BC. McCausland breaks down the unfolding landscape setting into a series of three plotted visual tableaux that develop in time and space (Figure 35).

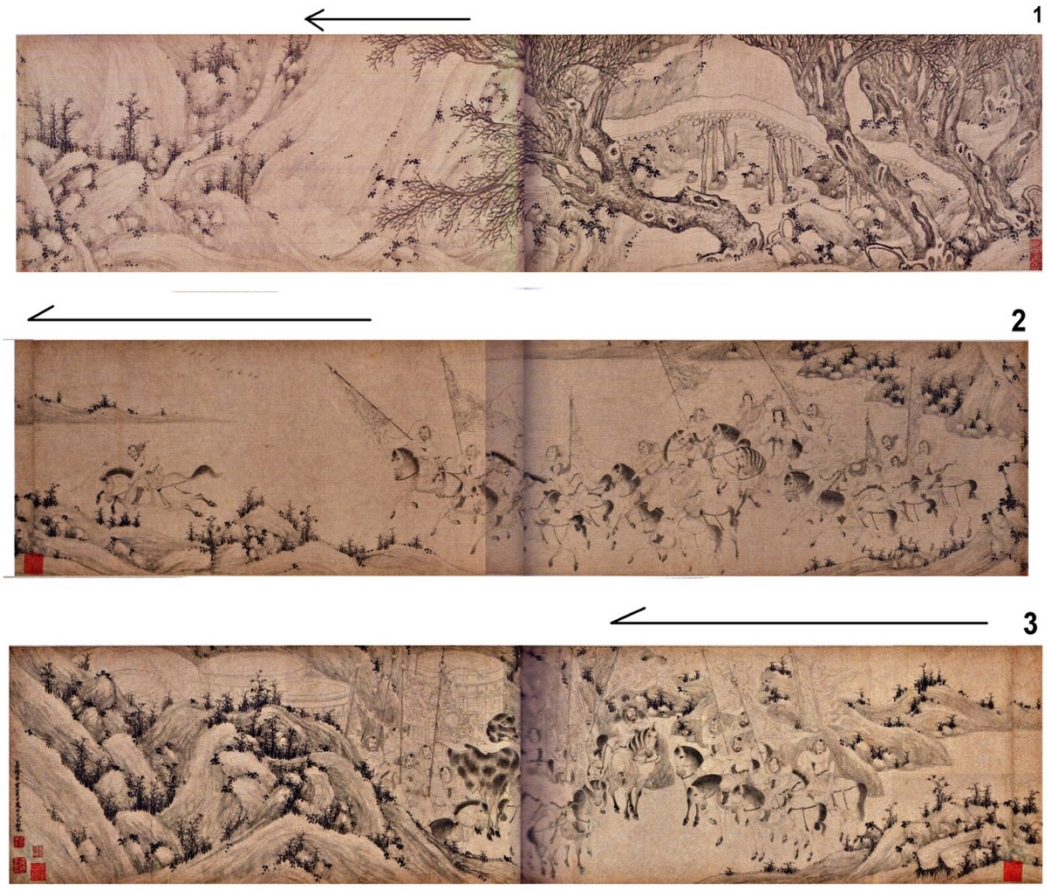


Figure 35. Lady Zhaojun leaves China (Zhaojun chusai tu 昭君出塞图, 1554). By You Qiu (act.1553-83). Handscroll, ink on paper. 25.8cm, 376.9cm. Shanghai Museum. 1.opening section, 2.middle section, 3.closing section (Source: Shane McCausland, *On Telling images of China*)

The painter configures in the scroll the past, present and future through the basic iconography of Wang Zhaojun approaching her future husband:

> In their configuration, these tableaux play with time and space. At the start, the viewer is too late to witness something happening. Then, the scroll

[138] McCausland, "Exemplary complicity, The Pictorial lives of Han court beauties in two narrative handscrolls of mid-Ming Suzhou," 89-116.

> catches up to a notional present at the point of the scene of Wang Zhaojun's escort. By the time we see the waiting chieftain and his encampment, we are in a mode of anticipating the future, having scrolled ahead. We know what the future holds for Wang Zhaojun, and this has only to be played out in the imagination.[139]

The narration of the story and sequences of the events can be followed through the interconnected use of space and time markers like tree trunks, bottoms of hills, forked openings of the steppe, plains yielding to hilly terrains, tents, bridges that both link and divide China and the steppes, their peoples, bride and groom, past and future.

The quest for balance between what is visually and orally exposed is well exemplified in the case of the *pardeh khani* tradition in Iran. Meaning "reading of the screen/curtain", *pardeh khani* has been one of the most widely practiced forms of storytelling in Iran, with a history traced back to before the advent of Islam.[140] Still occasionally performed, it consists of the narration and singing of epic stories painted on a screen, as can be seen in Figure 36.

[139] McCausland, "Exemplary complicity," 93.
[140] Lashkari and Kalantari, "Pardeh Khani: A Dramatic Form of Storytelling in Iran," 245-258.

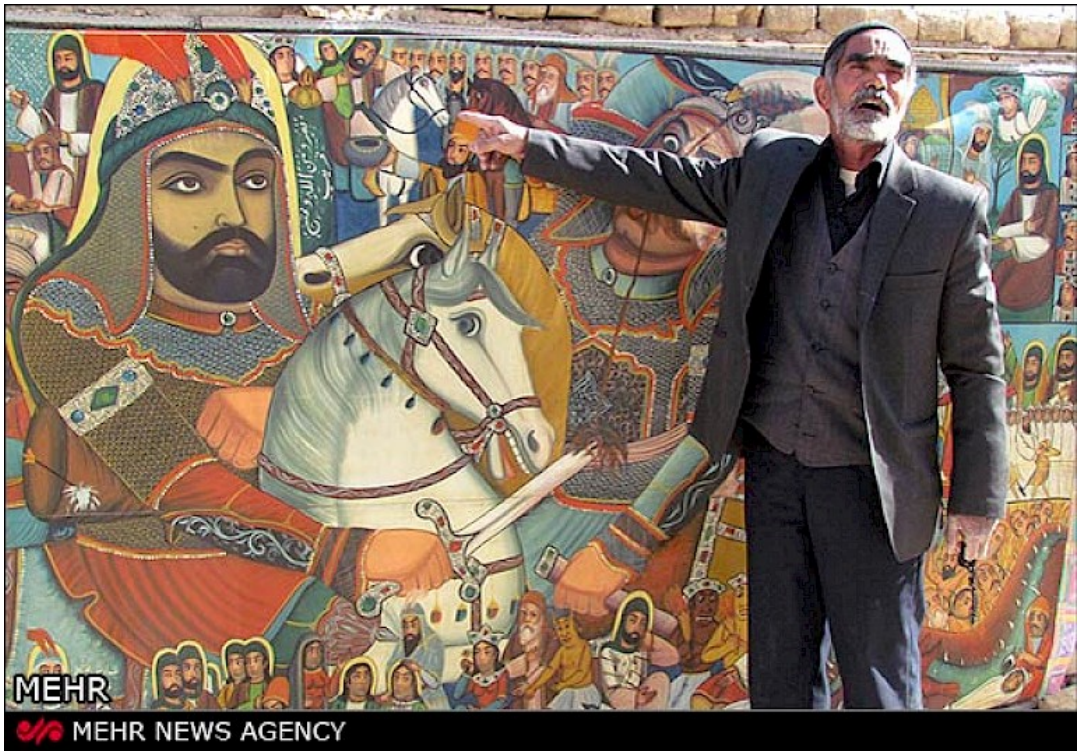


Figure 36. A modern performance of *pardeh khani* by the artist Ali Seidabadi, Iran (Source: Institute for Public Art, image copyright: Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts, Shanghai University)

During the performance the narrator uses all kinds of anecdotes, superstitions, myths, and other local material in depicting events. Each screen is a set of pictorial stories at the disposal of these sophisticated artists, who both create the images and manage to expound the scenes in full detail. Without blank space between the intertwining scenes, the *pardeh khan* narrator unrolls the screen little by little and does his transitions from one scene to the other in the twinkling of an eye and pulls the audience along. The performer uses his talent with a melodious and impressive voice, sad and touching tones, in detail and with lots of embellishments, without the possibility of a pause. This confidence in the oral power sometimes helps to cover up the weaknesses of the visual material, as mentioned in the following passage:

> Sometimes the pictures have been roughly painted and the distinction between the scenes seems impossible to discern. The painter has been too hasty in painting the faces and dismissed one event to reach another one. However, a pardeh khan, experienced in performing, might "cover up" these pictorial flaws with his loquaciousness. The storyteller would speak of real and imagined events, and the audience would soon forget that the image was incomplete. (Anasori 1366 [1987]: 214)[141]

Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings are not roughly painted or incomplete; on the contrary, they are visually very impressive, even inspiring for the twenty-first century's artists, as touched upon in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, the above passage reminds us that the performers had an oral expression capacity at least as powerful and impressive as the visual one. The narrator must have used this space and time flexibility in a creative improvisation to embellish the performance with elements collected spontaneously from the entourage. This could be one of the factors contributing to these paintings' overwhelming charm through their mobility transcending time and space.

3.8 Tale groups

If we leave outside later attributions in the Ottoman court, Mehmed Siyah Kalem *genre* paintings can be divided into three groups with recognizable features (Figure 37). The pictures in Group A are bigger. The figures are larger and more voluminous compared to other groups, using heavily applied, dark colors. The themes include demons and multiethnic varieties like red hairs and blacks, with highly expressive faces.

The paintings in Group B were executed in the same basic manner, but they are smaller in terms of both paper's size and the figures' scale. They contain more

[141] Lashkari and Kalantari, "Pardeh Khani: A Dramatic Form of Storytelling in Iran," 248-249.

environmental details such as plants or trees and objects and accessories. The themes pass around nomads, animals, and nomadic life.

The first two groups exhibit properties of the same tradition.[142] A group of painters who knew each other could have executed them. In comparison, the final group's artistic manner is very different. They must be produced later, with inspiration from the original group, maybe in the Akkoyunlu or Ottoman court. These paintings in Group C are executed without outlines. Most are painted on silk or cloth rather than paper as in the first two groups. Thematically they are more fantastic and erotic.

We leave Group C aside since they are most probably executed later following the models in the first two groups. Besides style, manner, and iconography, Group A and B paintings can further be divided according to compositional elements and principles like line, light and shade, color, texture, proportion and size, direction, and form.

Figure 37. Main tale groups of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings

[142] While categorizing the paintings into groups I included two other paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem genre, known as *Demon in Chains* and *Scene of Hommage*. The details about these two pieces will be elaborated in CHAPTER 9 PARIS, BERLIN AND LONDON: URBAN SITES OF "SCIENTIFIC" ORIENTALISM.

Considering the main characters, key figures and themes, it is possible to detect five subgroups in A and B. These subgroups facilitate attribution of meaning to these pictures. The categorization of the paintings brings a natural convenience to link them to mentalities and identify components through Chinese and Turkic references. In these terms, this study provides groundbreaking research material in fictionalizing tales based on Chinese and Turkic sources.

The five tales mainly develop around the subjects: dual confrontations, struggle with demons, ethnic variety, animal treatment, and storytelling. The first three are from Group A and the last two from Group B: *Tale 1-Girift-o Gir*, *Tale 2-Meeting up with tiki*, *Tale 3-Urus-i divana, Tale 4-Köse Baytar, Tale 5-Sanduk-al dunya.*

Since we do not have the complete set of pictures and the knowledge of the oral material behind them, these are attempts at approximations and connotations encouraged by historical facts. They propose a window for the meaning of the images, in reference to the cross-cultural interaction region extending from China to West Asia, within which these paintings were produced. The titles of the tales are consciously chosen among lost or forgotten terms along the secret corners of the capillary routes left behind centuries. The intention is to emphasize the cultural realms within which these paintings were meaningful *Once upon a time…*

3.9 Tale 1-*Girift-o Gir*[143]

If we let aside the unique stylistic properties and make a selection of thematic considerations, probably the most common association of Mehmed Siyah Kalem

[143] *Girift-o gir* is a pattern of figural painting defined by Sadıki Afshar Bey (1533/4-1609/10) in his treatise *Kanun el Suvar* (Canons of Painting). Meaning "give and take," the motif is based on double configuration of animals.

paintings is with demons. Looking at the iconography of these demons, some scholars suggested that the figures represented are shamans and that these strange figures appear to wear masks[144] or are demons or humans wearing demon masks.[145]

Considering factors like composition and theme, it is possible to group these paintings into two subgroups as shown in Figure 38 and Figure 39. In the first subgroup, there are three paintings: Two demons dancing and musicians (H.2153-64B-p.1); Quarreling demons (H.2153-37B-p.2); Demons sawing a tree trunk (H.2153-141A-p.1). In the second subgroup, there are three paintings: Two demons in conversation (H.2153-34B-p.2); Two demons captured by a third one (H.2153-31B-p.2); Demons at an entertainment (H.2153-112A-p.2). The main composition and theme of the paintings in the *Tale 1-Girift-o Gir* are dual confrontations, sometimes enriched with other figures like the musicians in H.2153-64B-p.1 or observers in H.2153-112A-p.2.

[144] İpşiroğlu and Eyuboğlu, *Fatih albumuna bir bakış*.
[145] Çağman, "Glimpses into the fourteenth-century Turkic world of Central Asia, " 153.

Figure 38. Chart of Tale 1-*Girift-o Gir*

Figure 39. Tags of Tale 1-*Girift-o Gir*

The first and second subgroups have a knotted cloth at the center of the confrontation. In between two opposing sides, this symbol remarks the perfect balance of the painting in composition and theme. The second one also has a mace, which sharpens the opposition and the ideal balance. In Demons sawing a tree trunk (H.2153-141A-p.1), the balance of the confrontation is provided by the tree trunk on the vertical axe. The saw intensifies, in a sense, the equilibrium of the opposing sides on a secondary horizontal axe.

In all these paintings, the opposing sides of these dual confrontations - sometimes enriched with a third or more figures- are seen amid entertaining activities. They dance and play musical instruments like humans; they hold the knife like humans; they sit and drink like humans; they capture and tie the hands of the opposing side and cut the tree trunk, as do humans. The only feature differentiating them from humans is their physical appearance, especially the horns, antlers and tails. Horns and antlers[146] are worth attention since they are different on the opposing sides; some looks like those of a bull, and some other like those of a goat or deer. The artist(s) seemingly depicted them conforming with natural aspects and consciously different in opposing sides. For example, in the Quarreling demons (H.2153-37B-p.2), the demon on the left bears the antlers of an animal from the family of *Cervidae* since the antlers are branched like those of deers. More features remind this animal, mainly the ears and skin color. On the opposing side is a demon representing the *Bovidae* family, with straight horns like bulls. The ears and skin color conform to the features of this animal. Males in fights and displays often use

[146] The terms horns and antlers are often used interchangeably, but in reality, they refer to quite different structures. Antlers are a pair of bony, branched structures that protrude from the frontals of the skull of animals and are shed annually; horns are also paired and protrude from the frontals, but they are permanent, unbranched, and made up of a bony core and a keratinized sheath. For more see Animal Diversity Web, University of Michigan.
https://animaldiversity.org/collections/mammal_anatomy/horns_and_antlers/

antlers and horns during the breeding season. These fights often include clashes that determine body strength. These are perfect symbols of the confrontations. Besides antlers and horns, animal tails, mostly ending with a dragon face, intervene and contribute to the dual oppositions.

3.9.1 *Girift-o gir*

The pictorial composition of these dual confrontations in Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings reminds us of a later *genre* put forth by Sadıki Afshar Bey (1533/4-1609/10) in his treatise *Kanun el Suvar* (Canons of Painting). The author grew up in Tabriz, where he studied painting in the royal Safavid atelier. He later worked in Kazvin, collaborating with some of the most important painters of his day, and eventually moved to the new capital, Isfahan. His treatise *Kanun el Suvar* (Canons of Painting), written in Chaghatai Turkish, is considered particularly valuable and unusual in that it explains design techniques like pattern, decoration, coloring, varnishing, gilding, and painting the figure.

Sadıki Bey divides the figural painting into two main categories defined by different principles. The first is the human representation, and the second is the animal representation. The types involved in the animal design are the *simurgh*-bird, the *azhdar*-dragon, the *hizabr*-lion and the *gav-i ganj* or the guardian-bovine. [147] An example of the genre is in Figure 40.

[147] *Islamic art and visual culture, An anthology of sources*, 50-52.

Figure 40. Dragon in foliage with lion and phoenix heads, attributed to Shah Kulu, Cleveland Museum of Art.

"But my brother," continues Sadıki Bey, "it should be borne in mind that there is a double configuration within this genre of animal design":

> It is the motif commonly called girift-o gir, which is to say the "give and take" of animals locked in battle. In connection with this girift-o gir there are three pointers which you must heed should you desire this motif: First, you must at all costs avoid any bodily slackness in your figures; in particular, the shanks of the hooves or paws must be drawn taut. Secondly, when two animals are designed in clawed combat, both bodies must be shown wholly at grips with one another; and not a single claw must be allowed to fall out of play -unless of course you cannot figure a way out. The third pointer is the undesirability of repeating identical patterns -indeed, what is required is the very antithesis. It is true that repeating a pattern may have some magical appeal; but, by nature this palls and becomes all monotonous.[148]

The double configuration of animal design in *girift-o gir* pattern bear a resemblance to the compositional aspects of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings: the equilibrium provided by the dialectical relation of giving and taking, bodily dynamism of figures avoiding slackness, depiction of the foot nude and big as animal claws taking a full part in the combat; more complex patterns with three figures with new kinds of antagonisms… are all elements reminding the style. Of course, the

[148] Dickson and Welch (trans.), *Islamic art and visual culture, An anthology of sources*, 52.

treatise of Sadıki Bey dates to a later period, and these paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem are not obviously *girift-o gir* paintings as described by Sadıki Bey. But, approaching them in terms of compositional aspect, they are both dynamic patterns profiting from the dialectical harmony of opposite sites.[149]

The pattern *girift-o gir* most probably circulated on the Silk Roads. Prof. Meng Sihui's interpretation of this kind of painting supports this assumption. Admitting the Chinese impact on the style, Prof Meng emphasized that dragon and phoenix figures have a long history in China, symbolizing the complementary antagonism between *Yin* and *Yang*. The relationship between these two mythical creatures is not that of a struggle but a kind of *fanyan* 繁衍, meaning "multiply, increase gradually in number for the continuation of the generations."[150]

In these terms the compositional logic in this group of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings is a fruitful condition obtained through the confrontation of the opposite sides.

3.9.2 Dancing with masks, wrestling with horns

What about the context of these dual confrontations? Chinese sources reveal essential clues for interpreting the images in this group. A valuable reference that can shed light on the context of these paintings is *Sancai Tuhui* 三才圖會, which is a richly illustrated encyclopedia compiled by the Ming period (1368-1644) scholar Wang Qi 王圻 and his son Wang Siyi 王思義. Meaning "Illustrated Compendium of the Three Realms" -three realms being heaven, earth and human- the book was

[149] I want to emphasize that *girift-o gir* is taken here only as a form of composition; not as a *kalem-i siyahi* pattern, since Sadıki Bey clearly states that girift-o-gir is a *kalem-i siyahi* painting where the main characters are only animals.

[150] Personal interview with Meng Sihui 孟嗣徽, former expert in Forbidden City Palace Museum and International Dunhuang Project, 27 May 2014, Beijing.

finished and printed in 1607. As can be seen in Figure 41, it is divided into 106 scrolls arranged under 14 thematic chapters such as astronomy, geography, personalities, buildings, tools, human body, clothing, rituals, animals, and plants. The most charming feature of this encyclopedia is that in almost every entry, there is an illustration with an explanatory text.

Figure 41. *Sancai Tuhui* 三才圖會 Illustrated Compendium of the Three Realms

One of the relevant entries for the research of demon depictions in Mehmed Siyah Kalem, is that of "wrestling" under the part where the compiler explains various kinds of drama performances. Looking at the section titled Wrestling Illustration 角觝圖 in Figure 42 and the accompanying information, one can detect

that wrestling was a performance executed with special music since the Han period (202 BC – 220 AD) where the contesters were bearing animal masks with horns.[151]

Figure 42. Wrestling Illustration 角觝圖, Human Affairs, *Sancai Tuhui* 三才圖會, 1793

The Chinese word for wrestling, jiaodi 角觝, literally means "horn resistance". Besides being a sportive competition since ancient times, wrestling gradually integrated the performance of dance, acrobatics and magic. It evolved to a

[151] "角觝圖, 三才圖會，人事十卷，四十一，九八, "角觝今相撲也漢武故事曰角觝昔六國時所造史記秦二世在耳泉官作樂角觝注云戰國時增講武以為戲樂相誇角其材力以相觝闘兩兩相當也漢武帝好之白居易六帖曰角觝之戲漢武始作相當角力也誤矣." Wang and Wang, *Sancai Tuhui*, 1793.

comprehensive song, dance and acting performance. Hence the differentiation between the sport jiaodi 角抵 and performance jiaodixi 角抵戏 was made. [152]

Although they have a particular cultural relationship having their characteristics, the former has gradually become competitive. At the same time, the latter develops in the direction of drama with performance as the main feature. China's initial concept of drama xi 戲 comes from the contradictory and opposite forms of this wrestling, incorporating all kinds of performances as a mixture of sports competitions, acrobatics, magic, juggling games, singing and dancing.[153]

In the depictions of jiaodi 角觝 performances dating as early as the Han period (202 BC – 220 AD), the performers wear horn masks with various horns imitating different animals, like in the paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem. In the Han dynasty mural shown at Figure 43, the performer on the left wears a mask with a single horn and the one on the right wears a mask with two horns.

According to the History of the Han dynasty 汉书 (finished in 111AD) the organization for the jiaodi 角觝 performances was a big event; to which people within three hundred miles came to watch as an audience.[154] Three hundred miles is around 150 km, demonstrating the performance's scope and impact at that time. There was also a particular music, "the music of wrestling," which accompanied the wrestling performance where the contestants fought two by two to show their strength and skills.[155]

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[152] Lin Heyi, Lecture Notes on the History of Chinese Drama, National Taiwan University website.
[153] Lin Heyi, Lecture Notes on the History of Chinese Drama, National Taiwan University website.
[154] 《汉书.武帝纪》:“（元封）三年春，作角觝戏，三百里内皆（来）观.” Jīn Xíngjiàn, *A dictionnary of the Silk Road culture*, 635.
[155] 文颖曰：“名此乐为角抵者，两两相当角力，角技艺射御，故名角抵，盖杂技乐也.” Jīn Xíngjiàn, *dictionnary of the Silk Road culture*, 635.

Figure 43. Mural from the Han period showing Jiaodi Opera scene, Nanyang, Shandong province[156] (Source: Zhu Peng, "Han huxiàng zhōng de jiǎo dǐ tú chūtàn")

During the performance, many spectators, including foreign guests, gathered to watch the performance; rewards were given, and wine and meat were offered.[157]

The depiction of the wrestling performances in Dunhuang murals shows similarities that strengthen the idea that the demons in the dual confrontations could be humans wearing masks. An especially striking mural is the Mogao Cave 290, dating to the Northern Zhou (557-581) period (Figure 44).

[156] "南阳角抵戏画像石拓片" Zhu Peng, "Han huxiàng zhōng de jiǎo dǐ tú chūtàn," 130-133.

[157] 《史记·大宛列传》载"是时上方于是大觳抵，出奇戏诸怪物，多聚观者，行赏赐，酒池肉林，令外国客遍观各仓库府藏之积，见汉之广大，倾骇之。及加其眩者之工，而觳抵奇戏岁增变，其盛益兴，自此始．Zhu Peng, "Han huxiàng zhōng de jiǎo dǐ tú chūtàn," 130-133.

Figure 44. Dunhuang Mogao Caves 290, Northern Zhou (557-581): A series of six long scrolls, totaling more than 20 meters.

The Northern Zhou period is characterized by the immigration of Central Asians along the Silk Roads towards the east and their settlements in China. Murals dating from this period in Dunhuang or other sites show the cultural and artistic interactions between the Central Asian immigrants and Chinese people.

The wrestling performance is worth attention among the successive events depicted in the long scroll. As can ben seen in Figure 45, the two contestants are topless, wearing shorts, and fighting. They are uniformly dressed, one with black shorts, the other with white. They have horns on their heads. A third person, probably a referee, is also depicted with horns. The competition seems to follow defined rules and patterns.[158]

[158] Lù and Zhāng, "The Ontological Development and Historical Evolution of Chinese Jiaodi Opera," 112-114.

Figure 45. Detail from Dunhuang Mogao Caves 290, Northern Zhou (557-581).

Wrestling performance was prevalent during the Sui (581–618) and Tang Dynasties (618–907). According to the records, the opera of jiaodi was even performed before the ceremony of offering sacrifices to heaven and earth during the Tang Dynasty (618-907). Everything was fortunate for three days.[159]

A comparison of the painting H.2153-64B-p.1 to the wrestling depictions in Figure 46 and written information in Chinese sources put forth details strengthening the idea that several scenes in the *Girift-o Gir* paintings can be performative events where the contesters entertain, make music, and dance.

During the events wearing animal masks with horns or antlers could be the ritualistic aspect of the performance to show skills and strength associated with the specific animal. Besides antlers and horns, costumes, accessories, body gestures, music, and musical instruments, spectators and referee support this assumption.

[159] “凡三日一幸” Jīn Xíngjiàn, *A dictionnary of the Silk Road culture*, 635.

Figure 46. H.2153-64B-p.1 and Wrestling Illustration 角觝圖 in comparison

3.9.3 Men and Women, day and night, dancing and singing with masks

Wrestling Performance was not the only event where people were entertained in performances with masks. The Ming period (1368-1644) encyclopedia *Sancai Tuhui* 三才圖會 reveals another case of masked performance. Shown in

Figure 47, the entry is in the Humans (Renwu 人物) part of the illustrated encyclopedia, where the authors give information about various people and their mostly strange or exotic traditions.

Figure 47. People, 14th scroll, 人物十四卷, *Sancai Tuhui* 三才圖會

According to the information written on the upper part of the illustration, in the Country of Poluozhe 婆罗遮国, men and women wearing dog-headed monkey face masks sing and dance day and night during a festival.[160]

[160] "婆罗遮国,并服狗头猴面,男女无昼夜歌舞"

Another piece of valuable information is that the festival takes place in the eighth-month of the lunar calendar. For the day part, a character is missing.[161] The day is ?5, which could be 15 or 25.

Fortunately, this entry was copied exactly from a Song dynasty (960-1276) compilation known as *Taiping Guangji* 太平广记, Strange Tales of the Taiping Era. Completed in 978, the collection consists of 500 volumes, including 7021 stories, mostly supernatural. The entry is relevant for the paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem, not only for information about masked performances but the region where this traditional performance takes place.

First of all, from the entry we can get the exact date for the festival: Fifteenth of the Eight Month.[162] There is answer to a crucial question about the place of this tradition. Where is this Country of Poluozhe 婆罗遮国? In the *Taiping Guangji,* this entry is under the Manyi-2 蛮夷二, Qiuci 龟兹 title.[163] Manyi 蛮夷 is the common historical term for non-Han peoples in former times; for people living in the north, west and south of China. Although it does not denote an exclusively derogatory meaning, it is often translated as "barbare."[164]

Qiuci is the ancient name of Kucha. It is the conceptual border where you get out from the Chinese realm towards Western lands, today situated in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

Music and dance were indispensable in the historical Kuchean culture. The region has been the encounter place of various cultures on the Silk Roads. According

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[161] "舞八月（?）五日,行像及透索为戏"

[162] "婆罗遮国,并服狗头猴面,男女无昼夜歌舞。舞八月（十）五日,行像及透索为戏" *Taiping Guangji* 太平广记, vol. 20, 8680.

[163] *Taiping Guangji* 太平广记, vol. 20, 8679.

[164] *Chinese-English Dictionnary* and *Grand Ricci* accessed via the digital dictionnaries compilation Pleco.

to the Tang Histories, since the Northern Zhou and Sui dynasties, hundreds of melodies for stringed instruments have been on the record. Those percussion instruments are mainly in the form of Kuchean music.

The Kuchean music theory significantly influenced traditional Chinese music through the Kuchean princess and attendants in the Sui and Tang dynasty courts. According to the Sui and Tang Histories, introducing Kuchean music to central China dates back to 385 AD. Kucha was famous for its dance and music; its opera was a crucial substance in drama. Many modern dramatic elements such as roles, dialogues, scenes and conflicts were typical in the Kuchean opera.[165]

Kucha's cultural and artistic richness plays a role because of its position at the intersection region of the Silk Roads cultures. In these terms, it is not surprising that Kizil cave murals in Kucha reflect these interactions. The symbolic knotted cloth at the center of the opposing sides of the dual confrontations in Mehmed Siyah kalem paintings has its counterparts in the Kizil murals of Kucha. Figure 48 offers a comparison of the knotted cloths.

[165] Ma Qin, *Murals in Kucha*,.21-22.

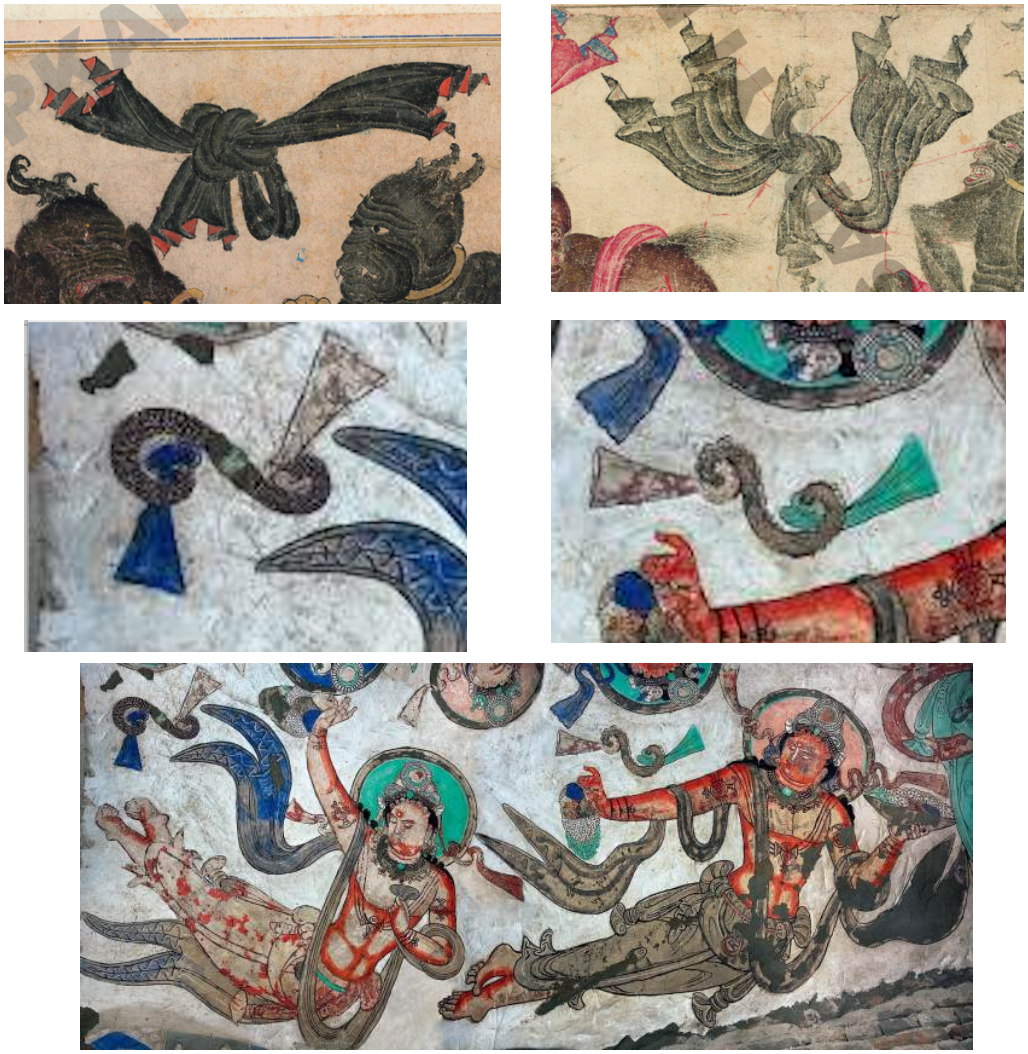

Figure 48. A comparison of knotted cloth images existing in Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings (above H.2153 34B and 64B) and Kizil Cave 80 in Kucha (New First Cave, about seventh century. Source: 中国国家地理-China National Geographic)

These two entries in the Ming encyclopedia of *Sancai Tuhui* 三才圖會, hence these two performative traditions as written in Chinese sources strengthen the idea that the demons depicted at least in some paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem could be humans wearing masks during performances. These performances consist of dual confrontations, a compositional pattern that can be compared to *Girift-o gir,* like in the treatise of Sadıki Bey.

3.10 Tale 2-Meeting up with *tiki*[166]

Among Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, there is another group of demons mistreating humans or animals. Shown in Figures 49 and 50, in the first group of *Tale 2-Meeting up with tiki* there are three paintings where most probably demons are kidnapping humans or animals: Demon carrying a sleeping man (H.2153-129B-p.2); Demon carrying a man on his shoulders (H.2153-101A-p.1); Demon carrying a horse (H.2153-38A- p.2). There are several reasons to think of the action as kidnapping.

First, in all three cases, the demons seem as if they are running, and their worried eyes are turned toward the direction from which they are coming. A possible reason could be that they are escaping from danger with humans and animals. But this is a relatively low probability for reasons which will be clarified in the final painting. The kidnapped man in H.2153-129B-p.2 is sleeping or fainted. His physical appearance differs from the nomads; he has red hair and a beard and does not have a hat.

The second group consists of two paintings: Two demons trying to make a tired donkey walk (H.2153-27B-p.1); Demon making a warning speech (H.2153-48A-p.1). They seem to be cut out from a larger painting. They are coherent in both papers' and figures' sizes and stylistic elements. If we think of them as a larger picture, two demons are trying to make the donkey walk, and another one on the left is making a warning speech. The animal's back is injured and bleeding, maybe because the demon beated it with the stick at his hand. This scene can be before or after a kidnapping; it may be meant to show the mistreatment of demons before kidnapping or their usual act in their country after they kidnapped a donkey.

[166] The droning or rustling sound the spirits of the deads make according to a well-known belief among the Turks. Dankoff, "Kāšġarī on the Beliefs and Superstitions of the Turks," 74.

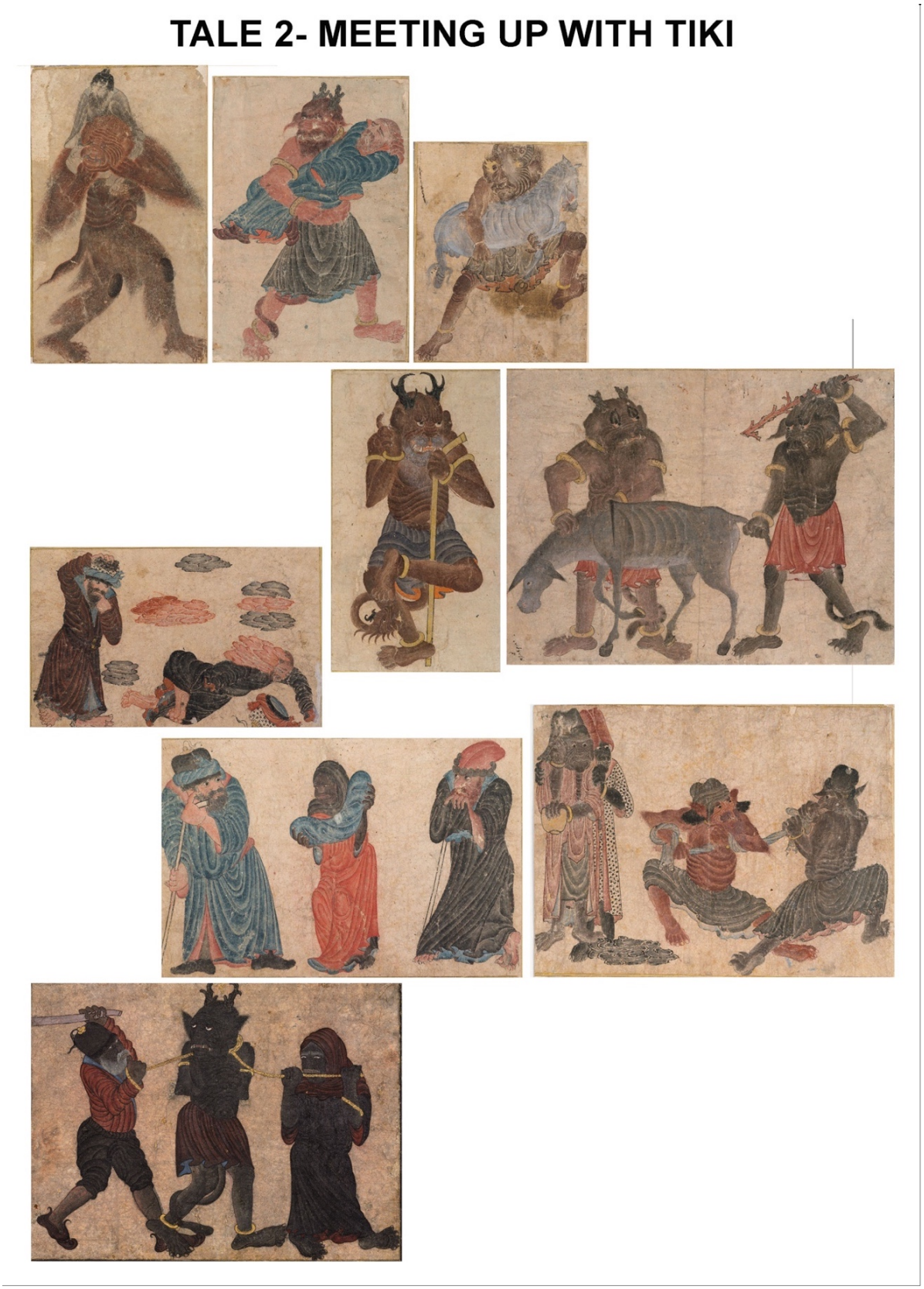

Figure 49. Chart of Tale 2-Meeting up with *tiki*

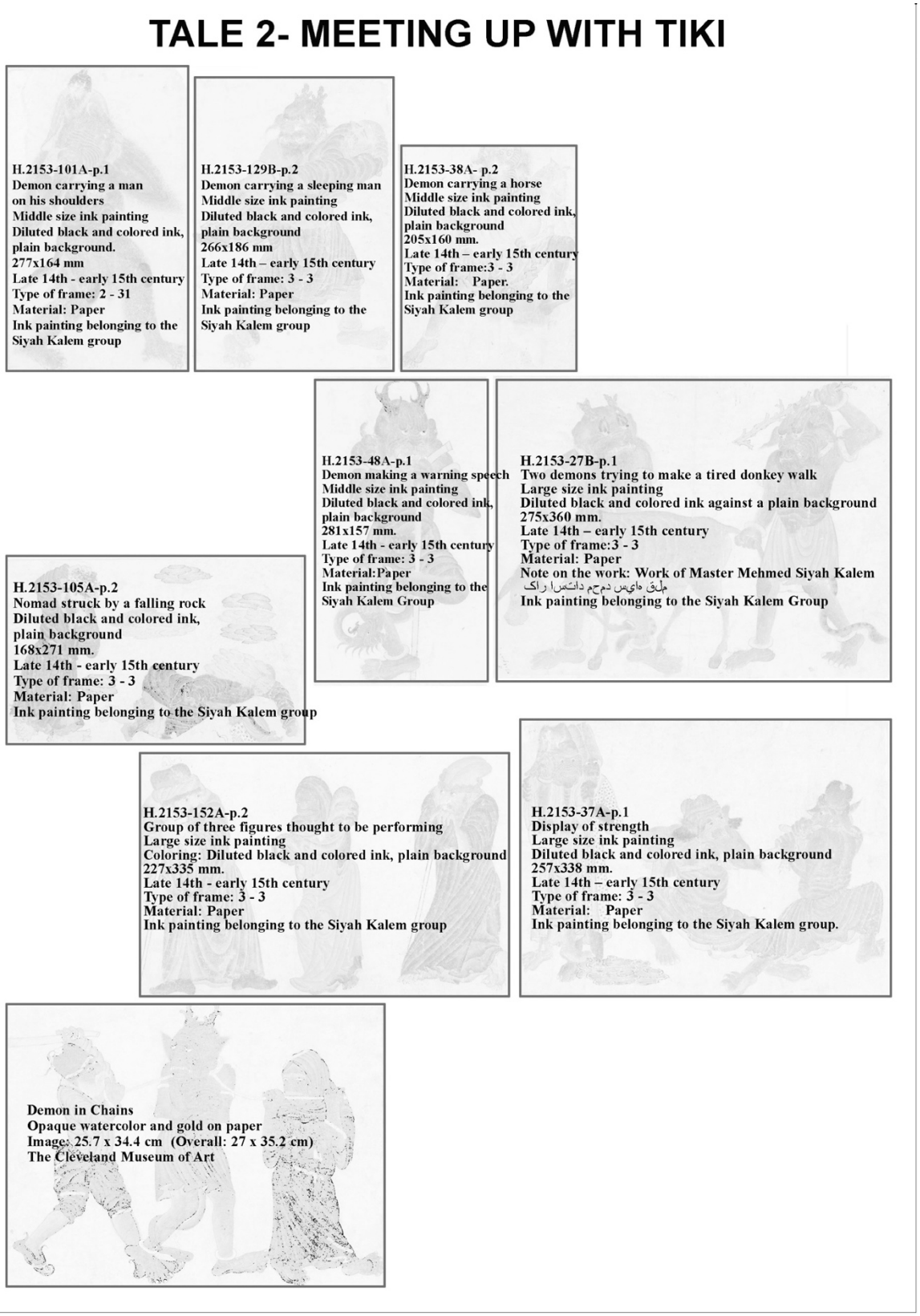

Figure 50. Tags of Tale 2-Meeting up with *tiki*

Then comes the painting Nomad struck by a falling rock (H.2153-105A-p.2). Here, we can detect the same red-haired man, kidnapped in his sleep. He does not seem to have regained consciousness; the nomad is worried about the red man's situation. His clothes are different, and he has a hat that fell on the ground. The same person appears in another painting with three persons in the painting Group of three figures thought to be performing (H.2153-152A-p.2). He is either a compatriot or the same red man kidnapped by the demon. Rather than a Central Asian nomad -as named in the unpublished facsimile of the albums- he looks more like a West Asian, with his red hair and nose. Here, he has a black cloth and a very different hat, a unique model that appears in Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. The black woman in the middle has a blue cloth in her hand. The blue fabric must be a key figure in solving this tale. Maybe it is the cloth the red man was wearing when he was kidnapped. In the subsequent painting Display of strength (H.2153-37A-p.1), two demons pull a blue fabric, and two others observe them curiously. This may be the same blue cloth. One thing is sure; the blue fabric is a precious or desired object in both pictures.

The last painting, *Demon in Chains*, is a kind of crosschecking painting for several reasons. The demon looks very much like the one that kidnapped the red man. If so, it connects the kidnapping scene to the black woman, hence to the blue cloth and the red man with unique hair. Since the demon is put in chains, we can eliminate the possibility of cooperation between demons and humans while escaping danger.

The demons in the paintings of *Tale 2-Meeting up with tiki* are different than those in the Tale 1-*Girift-o Gir*. They torture the donkey, kidnap humans and animals, and in revenge, humans capture them, put them in chains, and beat them.

Why do the peoples of Mehmed Siyah Kalem scare of demons, or to put it otherwise, who are the enemies of the humans and animals of Mehmed Siyah Kalem's world? Chinese written documents have some answers supported by other primary sources: unpredictable dangers of the long travels, hunger, and disease; punishment for sins.

3.10.1 Unpredictable dangers of the long travels

The terrain of the Silk Roads was difficult, the possible routes were numerous and complex, and the journey's dangers were deadly serious. The physiognomy of the red beard man looks very much like the depiction of the Sogdian merchants that dominated the Silk Roads trade, especially between 500-1000 AD. The pottery figurines from the Tang dynasty depict them with very similar physical features to the red man kidnapped by the demon, as in Figure 51.

Figure 51. Camel with Musicians, detail on the right. Tang dynasty (618–907), glazed earthenware (National Museum of China, Beijing).

Although in the fourteenth century Sogdians had already disappeared from the scene, it is possible that their physical features persisted as accepted models of the merchant. Moreover, he could be a Caucasian or Persian from western Asia.

What made the trade possible at all, besides the techniques of caravan travel and the expertise of the caravaneers, was the existence of substantial oases across Central Asia. Alternative caravan routes linked scattered oasis cities amid vast expanses of surrounding deserts, full of terrors and hardships. Deserted capillary routes were probably scarier for the travelers. The overland routes to the west began in Chang'an (today Xi'an), the capital of China during the Han, Qin, and Tang dynasties. After stopping in many towns, two main alternatives appear at Dunhuang: northern and southern branches around the Tarim Basin.

The northern route started from the Yumen (Jade Gate) outside of Dunhuang and went through northwest China passing by the towns of Hami and Turfan, near the Buddhist cave complex at Bezeklik. From Turfan, this route followed the southern foothills of the Tianshan mountains to Karashahr and Shorchuk before reaching Kucha. The northern way continued through Aksu, a junction for routes over the Tianshan and Maralbashi, near the Buddhist caves of Tumshuk, to Kashgar, where the southern route reconnects. This route entered Central Asia in what is now Kazakhstan and went through or near what is now Alma Aty (Kazakhstan), Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), and Tashkent (Uzbekistan).[167]

The southern route began at the Yangguan Gate outside of Dunhuang. It passed through the heart of the vast and inhospitable Taklamakan Desert via the oasis towns of Miran, Charklik, Cherchen, Endere, and Niya. This route followed the northern base of the Kunlun mountains to Khotan before joining the northern route in

[167] Silk Road Trade Routes, http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/exhibit/trade/trade.html; Silk Road Routes, https://factsanddetails.com/china/cat2/sub90/entry-8320.html

Kashgar. After leaving Kashgar, this route continues in Central Asia through passes of the Tianshan and Pamir mountains that are now on China's borders with Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan. [168]

The Himalayan caravan routes from India that passed through Karakoram Pass and Khunjerab Pass (on the modern Karakoram Highway) joined the Silk Road in Kashgar or Central Asia. Travelers' itineraries around the Tarim Basin depended on their goals and destinations, the political and physical environment, and economic conditions. The map on Figure 52 illustrates these major routes on the ancient Silk Roads.

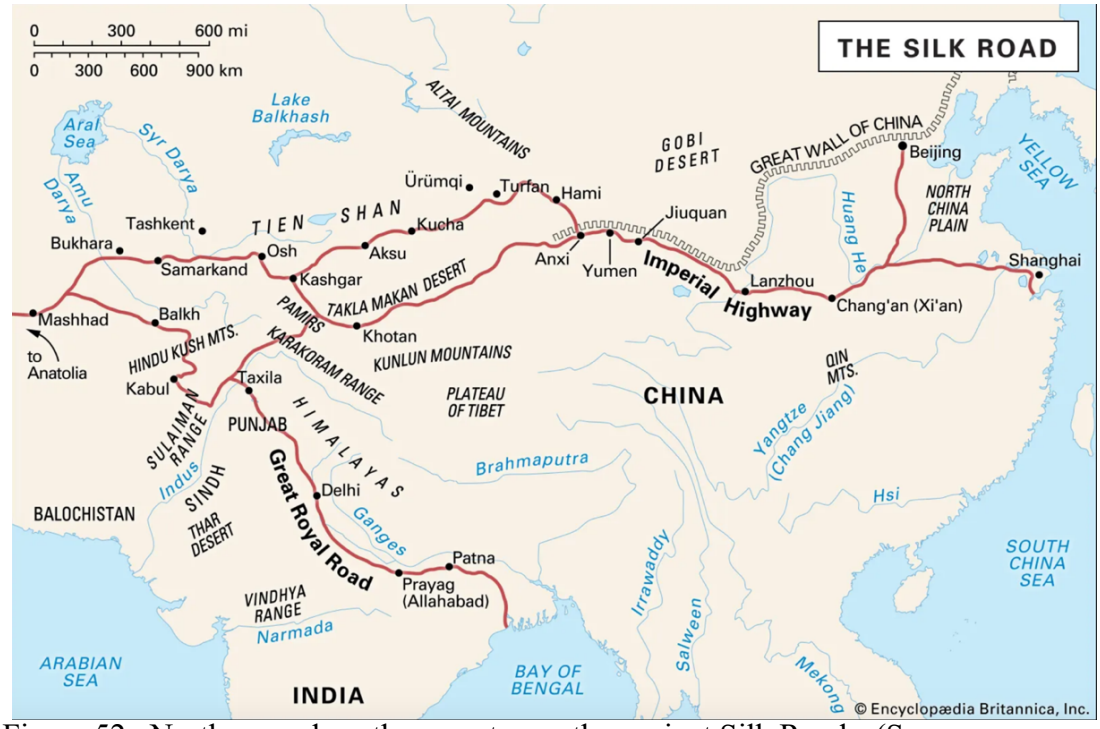

Figure 52. Northern and southern routes on the ancient Silk Roads (Source: *Britannica*)

[168] Silk Road Trade Routes, http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/exhibit/trade/trade.html, Silk Road Routes, https://factsanddetails.com/china/cat2/sub90/entry-8320.html

Whether merchant or from other professions, travelers to distant lands prepare themselves for the predictable dangers. For the travelers of the Silk Roads, for instance, if they chose the northern routes, they were preparing for plunder against looters. They had to prepare for a lack of water if they decided on the southern routes. But what about unpredictable dangers?

All in all, the imagination is in the service of unforeseen hazards, driven by the fears which easily drag along to the realm of demons. The seventh-century Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (602-664) noted such an event in his *Great Tang dynasty record of the Western Regions*, a precious primary document for modern scholarship about Central Asia.

The pilgrim was approaching towards the end of his journey on the way back from India. He enters a desert after Gostana, just before arriving at Tukhara. He found himself in such a nobodies desert where the skeletons of the dead serve as landmarks:

> 1 entered the Great Desert, in which the shifting sand gathers together and scatters apart with the wind. As no trace of wayfarers can remain visible on the sand, travelers often lose their way in the vast wilderness and do not know what to do. Therefore they have collected the skeletons of the dead to serve as landmarks. Water and pasture are scarce in the desert, and the wind is hot, and whenever the hot wind blows, men and animals fall into a swoon and become sick. The sound of singing and shouting, or wailing and crying, is sometimes heard, but when one looks around to locate the source of the sound, nobody can tell where it comes from. This phenomenon often causes death, as it is mischief wrought by ghosts and devils.[169]

Demonic possession or diabolic stroke has been the most fearful danger of all long journeys in unknown lands, at all times. Not all demons strolling around the desert were predictable by their sounds.

[169] Xuanzang, *Great Tang dynasty record of the Western Regions,* 387-388.

3.10.2 Was it *tiki*?

A night version of the same story is told by Mahmud el Kashgari in his *Divan Lugat at-Türk* (Compendium of the Turkic Dialects) compiled in c.1075. Born in Kashgar, the author, in his monumental dictionary, gives insights into various traditions of the Turkic-speaking people. Kashgari informs that "a well-known belief among the Turks" is that the spirits of the dead gather one night each year, go into the settlements where they had passed their lives, and visit their families. The droning or rustling sound they make is called *tiki* (the verb *tikilemek*, *tikiledi*), and "whoever meets up with this sound at night dies."[170]

Maybe the demon is making a warning speech about how to make the sound of singing and shouting or wailing and crying to the other two demons. Perhaps the red bearded man felt into a swoon and became sick because of the hot wind blowing? Or it was the most unfortunate night and he heard the *tiki*. These were mischiefs wrought by these demons, but the end of our story is different than the one told by Xuanzang: The demon is captured and put in chains.

3.10.3 *iduq*[171]

There is no other painting in which white is used that much more extensively than the Demon carrying a horse (H.2153-38A-p.2). Except in the beard of a few older men, Mehmed Siyah Kalem artists did not use white in the paintings. Hence, there must be an emphasis attached to the whiteness of the horse, which reminds the white horse cult and sacrifice in the steppe culture.

The tradition of white horse sacrifice was an important ritual, especially in the Liao dynasty (916-1125), also known as Khitan Empire. The practice has its

[170] Dankoff, "Kāšġarī on the Beliefs and Superstitions of the Turks," 74.
[171] a word to express blessedness and good omens of a religious nature, anything blessed.

background in the legend of tribal origin: "Tradition has it that a divine man riding a white horse floated along the Tu River (modern Laoha River, Jehol) from the Mayu Mountains to the east. A heavenly maiden riding a cart drawn by a gray ox floated down the Huang River (modern Shira Muren) from Pingdi Songlin. On reaching Muye Mountain, where the two rivers joined courses, [the two persons] met and mated. They had eight sons. Later on, their descendants gradually prospered. They split up into eight tribes. In each military undertaking and in the seasonal sacrifices of spring and autumn, they had to use a white horse and a gray ox as sacrificial animals to show that their origin was not forgotten.[172]

Kara Khitai also continued this old Khitan tradition. Before two important campaigns, leaving Kedun to go west around 1130 and organizing the campaign against Jin in 1134, The Qara Khitai founder Yelü Dashi, sacrificed a gray ox and a white horse to heaven, earth, and the ancestors, or just to heaven.[173]

In the mid-thirteenth century *Secret History of the Mongols* (1240) the ritual takes place in connection with the election of Jamuka to the khanship (1201 AD): "... these tribes gathered at Alqui bulaq and, deciding to elect Jamuqa the Jajirat as *khan*, they collectively hacked a stallion and a mare across the back and swore an alliance."[174]

Marco Polo, in his travels between 1271-1295, describes in detail the cult of the white horse among the Mongols during his visit to Ciandu:

> It is true that for the greater part of the food of this lord, he has a breed of white horses and of mares white as snow without any other color, and they are a vast number, that is that there are more than ten thousand white mares. And besides he has a great number of very white cows. And the milk of these white cows and mares no one else in the world dares drink of it on that

[172] Wittfogel and Feng Chia-Sheng, *History of Chinese society Liao*, 272.
[173] Biran, *The empire of the Qara Khitai in Eurasian history*, 173.
[174] Denis Sinor, "Taking an oath over a dog cut in two," 302-303.

> day except only the great Kaan and his descendants, that is those who are of the lineage of the empire that is of the lineage of the great Kaan.[175]

Kashgari's *Compendium* contains a word to express blessedness and good omens of a religious nature: *iduq*. The word is defined as "anything blessed." On the origin of this word, Kashgari states: "Any animal that has been set free is called *iduq*. One does not burden its back, nor milk its udder, nor shear its wool, because of a vow taken by its owner." Referring to Siberian and Altaic sources, Dankoff indicates that in some modern Turkic languages a form of the word *iduq* is used for the horse dedicated for sacrifice, or else the domestic animal to which is transmitted disease and which is then consecrated to the demons.[176]

Hence, the white horse in the arms of the demon in H.2153-38A-p.2 may be an *iduq*, infected by a disease and consecrated to the demons.

3.10.4 Feed the hungry ghosts in hell

The association of demons with hunger and disease occurs in many cases. Jan de Meyer indicates that it is no exaggeration to state that imperial China was a country filled with spirits and ghosts:

> Every mountain and hill, every lake, river and brook, every well and tree, every village and household housed them. As spirits were active from the moment of conception until long after an individual's death, no aspect of human life escaped their control. Spirits and ghosts were thought to be at least partly responsible for illnesses and epidemics, dreams and apparitions, good or bad harvests, floods and droughts, victory or defeat, yes, even for good or bad luck in gambling.[177]

A Buddhist rite and connected paintings shed light on a threatening factor for humanity and, consequently, human-demon relations of the period: hunger. The

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[175] Moule and Pelliot, *Marco Polo and the description of the world*, 187.
[176] Dankoff, "Kāšġarī on the Beliefs and Superstitions of the Turks," 73.
[177] Jan De Meyer, "From Beyond the Grave. Remarks on the Poetical Activities of Tang Dynasty Ghosts," 141-166.

water and land ritual (shuilu fahui 水陆法会) was a Buddhist rite developed in China for the universal salvation of the deceased and all sentient beings. It is considered the most extensive and grandest ritual in traditional Chinese Buddhism. The paintings associated with this ritual, water and land paintings (*shuilu hua* 水陆画), were an indispensable visual aid to this ritual, often painted in Buddha halls or on hanging scrolls.

Here it is worth to remember that the artisans of fine brushwork *gongbi* 工笔, who painted these water and land murals played the role of transmission from Chinese sources towards the Silk Roads after the decline of Dunhuang Mogao Caves in the fourteenth century. As touched upon in the begining of this chapter, these artisans are crucial to understanding the transfer of style, techniques, motifs, and images along the art centers of the Silk Roads during the production period of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings.

Pilu Temple 毘盧寺 located in Shangjing village, 12 km northwest of Shijiazhuang city, the capital of Hebei province, hosts some of the most elaborate examples of this rite. These mural paintings are exceptional because they are a fusion of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. More than 500 ancient figures, including gods, emperors, and heavenly kings, compose an enormous and complicated system mixing the three doctrines. In the Pilu Hall, on the six walls, there are 122 sets of mural paintings covering 122 square meters, most of which are accompanied by titles.[178]

Feeding Food to Searing Mouths was the most commonly seen and popular among the salvation rites of water and land depictions. The purpose of the ritual was to worship Buddha, confess and mourn for the dead, and release the souls of the dead in the war that lasted to the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). The shrine of the worship

[178] Sun, "Introduction," *The mural paintings in Pilu Temple*, 4-17.

becomes full of all kinds of diets sacrificed to deities, five great mountains, the earth, the legend of the ocean, the master of hell, relatives and even beasts, the hungry ghosts in hell. The ritual comes from two lines of an old poem in the *Introduction of Alms of Food* by Zunshi in the Song dynasty (960-1279): “To feed Buddha in the flowing water / And the ghosts on the land.[179]

The depiction of the Buddhist rite of Flaming Mouth, known as King of Hungry Ghosts, gives an approach to interpreting demons in Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. According to the legend illustrated in Figure 53, the King of Hungry Ghosts is a skinny and bony figure with a narrow throat and fluttering red hair that can spit fire. Around him stands five hungry ghosts who are much thinner, wearing nothing. Three figures behind are the "Three Great Masters of Enlightenment" out of whom Ananda is the most learned disciple of Buddha. The Buddhist story goes that Ananda put his heart into Buddhist doctrines when the King of Hungry Ghosts came over and said, "You will only have three days of life left and then you will become a hungry ghost like me. To avoid such a result, tomorrow you must offer a box of food to each hungry ghost." Ananda asked Buddha how to carry out the offer, and Buddha told him how to provide food. Later, this method became popular in Chinese Buddhism and turned into curses and doctrines to the hungry ghosts in Esoteric Buddhism. In the mural painting, Ananda seems to be practicing curses and principles to escape suffering, which evolved this important Buddhist rite of Flaming Mouth.[180]

[179] Shan, “Preface,” *The mural paintings in Pilu Temple*, 1-3.
[180] *The mural paintings in Pilu Temple*, 207-208.

Figure 53. The Flaming Face-King of Hungry Ghosts, Plates 144-145 (Source: *The mural paintings in Pilu Temple*)

Indeed, to be sure, the actions or events in Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings are not related to either Buddhism or Taoism. On the other hand, there are different opinions about Pilu mural paintings which mostly attribute them to the end of the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) and the beginning of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Considering the coincidence of the period, problems that people faced in the broader region could have resulted in similar associations or depictions. On this matter, it is helpful to remind the last decades of the Yuan dynasty, which saw a rise in popular rebellions driven by disastrous floods in northern China and a crippling drought in the south. In 1368, the charismatic rebel commander Zhu Yuanzhang drove the Mongols out of China and established the Ming dynasty, which lasted until 1644.[181]

[181] Wood, *Great books of China*, 7.

During this transition period or what was remembered from this period may be, at least for some, the sufferings caused by hunger. The demons in this group of Mehmed Siyah Kalem may well represent the living beings' eternal enemy: hunger.

3.10.5 The ghost kings of the plague

The latest archaeological findings by Spyrou et all show that the medieval Black Death pandemic (1346–1353) likely originated in the Tianshan mountains. The most debated archaeological evidence potentially associated with the pandemic's initiation derives from cemeteries near Lake Issyk-Kul of modern-day Kyrgyzstan. These sites are thought to have housed victims of a fourteenth-century epidemic as tombstone inscriptions directly dated to 1338–1339 state 'pestilence' as the cause of death for the buried individuals. Researchers reported ancient DNA data from seven individuals exhumed from two cemeteries, Kara-Djigach and Burana.

The synthesis of archaeological, historical, and ancient genomic data shows the involvement of the plague bacterium *Yersinia pestis* in this epidemic event. Two reconstructed ancient *Y. pestis* genomes are identified as the most recent common ancestor of a significant diversification commonly associated with the pandemic's emergence, dated to the first half of the fourteenth century. Comparisons with present-day diversity from *Y. pestis* reservoirs in the extended Tianshan region support a local emergence of the recovered ancient strain. Through multiple lines of evidence, the data support an early fourteenth-century source of the second plague pandemic in Central Eurasia.[182]

The map showing the regions encompassing *Y. pestis*, the bacterium that causes plague, demonstrates the impact area of the Black Death (Figure 54).

[182] Spyrou et all, “The source of the Black Death in fourteenth-century central Eurasia”, 718-740.

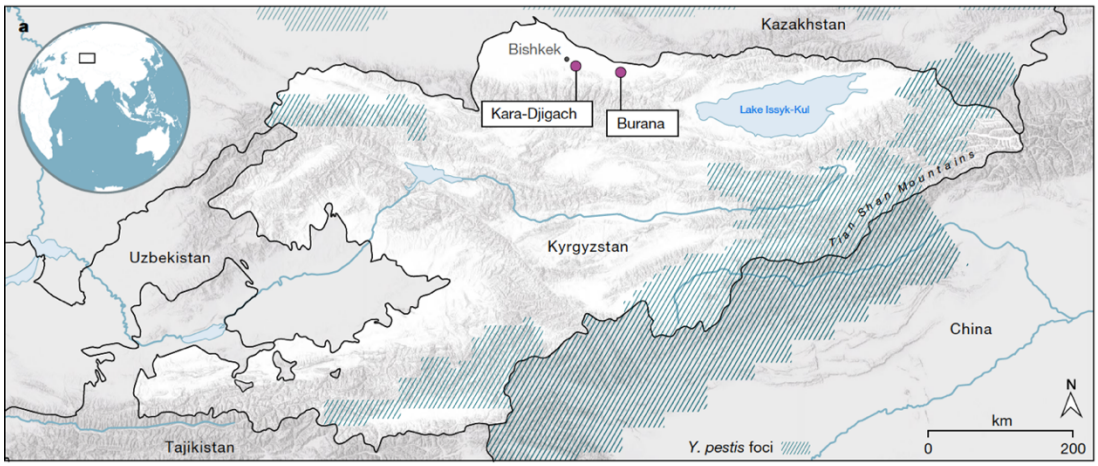

Figure 54. Description of the investigated fourteenth-century Chüy Valley archaeological sites: Locations of the Kara-Djigach and Burana in modern-day Kyrgyzstan. Regions encompassing *Y. pestis foci* at present are highlighted in blue (Source: Spyrou et al., Nature, vol.606)

Black Death spilled over from animals to humans and spread catastrophically in the fourteenth century, killing up to sixty percent of people in western Eurasia from roughly 1346 to 1353. Researchers suspect trade was essential since this community was at the heart of long-distance trade routes. Besides, they were "extremely cosmopolitan, very multinational, very multiethnic, and [had] lots of geographic mobility. Graves contained pearls from the Pacific and Indian oceans, silks from China or Uzbekistan, and shells from the Mediterranean." [183]

This brings to mind the possibility of demon depictions in Mehmed Siyah Kalem as representatives of plague, striking animals and humans, possessing them in their sleep, and killing them. Such depiction can be found in quasi-contemporary murals of the Pilu Temple: The ghost kings of the plague indicating the five diseases (Figure 55). The appearance of these ghost kings was told in Volume 4 of *A Collection of Deities in the Three Religions*:

> In June of the eleventh year of Emperor Suiwen's reign, five men of great strength in five-coloured robes appeared who were over three to five

[183] Cutts, 'Black Death' Likely Originated in Central Asia, Researchers Say."

> *zhang*[184] tall and held objects. Emperor Suiwen asked his court historian Juren what gods they were and what calamities or advantages they might give.
> Zhang Juren's answer was: They are the five men of great strength from all regions and are called the Five Ghosts when they are in Heaven, and the Five Diseases when they are on Earth; the one in charge of Spring Disease is Zhang Yuanbo; of Summer Disease, Liu Yuanda; of Autumn Disease, Zhao Gongming; of Winter Disease, Zhong Rengui, and their commander, the one in charge of Middle Disease, Shi Wenye.
> Emperor Suiwen had to build a memorial temple for them. It is clear that the gods of the plague would bring diseases to earthly people. Burning candles and paper boats to the sky to send them back was the best way he suggested to get rid of these diseases.
> One of the five gods looks like a man with long whiskers and angry eyes, while the other four have respectively a horse face, a tiger head (holding a kettle), a cock head (holding a metal ball with a handle in both hands), an ox head (holding a fan).[185]

To depict demons with animal features may be spilling the disease to humans.

[184] a Chinese unit of length and height, about 3.3 meters
[185] *The mural paintings in Pilu Temple*, 132.

Figure 55. The ghost kings of the plague indicate the five diseases (Source: *The mural paintings in Pilu Temple*, Plate 95)

Either long journeys' threats or hunger and disease, fortunately, *Tale 2-Meeting up with tiki* has a happy ending: The demon, as the source of all calamities, was caught and put in chains by two nomads as depicted in *Demon in Chains*.

3.11 Tale 3-*Urus-i divana*[186]

The key figure of this group of paintings, shown in Figures 56 and 57, is the Man lifting a heavy architectural element (H.2153- 33A-p.1). He is a red-haired man with blue eyes. The upper part of the picture is missing. The man seems to hold a heavy

[186] A folk figure meaning "Crazy Russian" in Central Asian Turkic.

architectural element. In another picture, in *Darvishes* in conversation (H.2153-128a-p.1), he is talking with a black, maybe a tribe leader, with a stick and local ornaments on his nose, ears, wrists, and neck.

The red-haired man seems to be adapted to the costume of the black as much as possible: Except for the ears and nose, which require piercing, he wears the same outfit and holds a stick in the manner of the tribe leader. In a second picture, in An entertainment (H.2153-90A-p.2) the same red hair man is talking to another black and an old nomad woman. The black is putting something to his mouth; the red-haired and the older woman are observing him with attention.

In the second series, three groups discuss news or a serious subject with similar postures and gestures. In one of them are two blond curly-haired men, Two priests in conversation (H.2153-106b-p.1). There are two nomads in another: Standing in conversation (H.2153-38B-p.1). In the last one, Three black men in conversation (H.2153-38A-p.1), three relatively older black men discuss some matters. The connection to the previous series is both over the blacks and nomads. They all make music and dance; some play a musical instrument, and others observe or talk in groups, similar to a celebration activity.

Figure 56. Chart of Tale 3-*Urus-i divana*

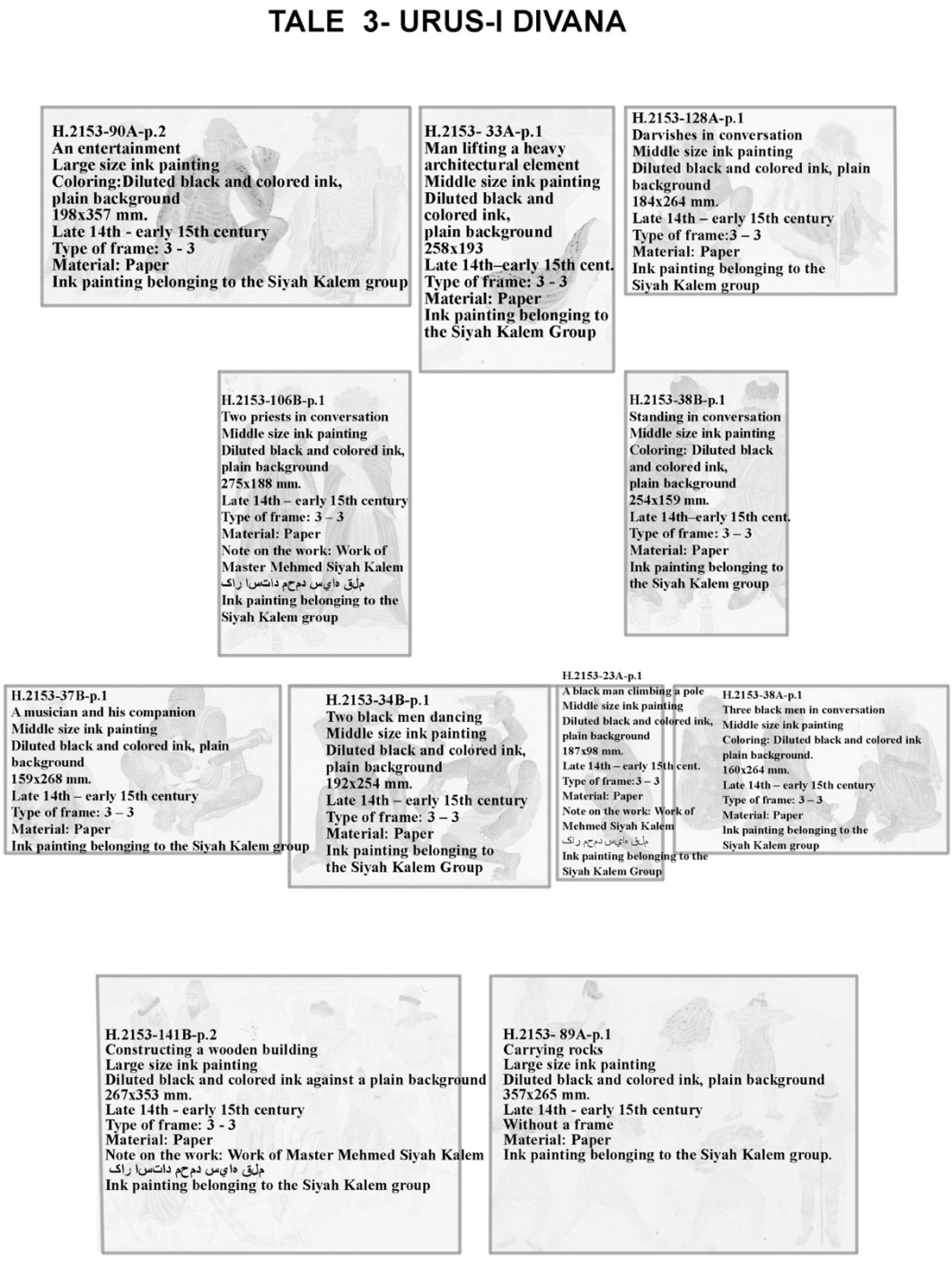

Figure 57. Tags of Tale 3-*Urus-i divana*

Two black men dancing (H.2153-34B-p.1) and A black man climbing a pole (H.2153-23A-p.1) are coherent in size and composition. They seem to be cut out from the same picture. If so, two black men are dancing, and one older observes them.

In A musician and his companion (H.2153-37b-p.1), one black and one nomad make music. One feature worth attention to is the variety of the black men: there are both features of African blacks, like curly hair and round noses, and those having features of Southeast Asian blacks, with flat noses.

Overall, the paintings in *Tale 3-Urus-i Divana* have a multiethnic representation, including red hair, blue eyes, blacks -possibly both African and Southeast Asian-, blonds and nomads. This tale depicts a kind of reunion of the representatives covering a vast geography, maybe the Silk Roads from Southeast Asia through Central Asia and the Caucasus with nomads, reds, and blonds, and finally, Africa. In some paintings, they discuss severe matters in small groups of nomads, blonds, and blacks and finally celebrate an event with music and dance. Silk Roads had been a cosmopolitan scene where various ethnicities, cultures, and religions met. The paintings in this *Tale 3-Urus-i Divana* may represent an event shared by the diverse people of such a large geography.

3.11.1 Mourning princes from sixteen nations and musicians

What kind of event could this be, uniting all black and blond people, nomad and red? There are cases of such multiethnic representation along the Silk Roads. A case of multiethnic representation is the mourning scenes after Buddha's nirvana. Depiction of this scene occurs at Kizil Caves in Kucha, no:161, as early as the sixth century (Figure 58). Buddha was quite old and staggering after forty-nine years of teaching

his doctrine and discipline. Knowing that he was abandoning the earthly body, he announced that he would soon enter Parinirvana, the final deathless state, in the abandoned jungles of Kushinagar. Conscious of the sorrowful news, all his followers near Kushinagar gathered around the Buddha to hear his last preaching. After his final words, he finally entered Parinirvana, leaving his disciples in great grief.[187]

Figure 58. The nirvana of Buddha in Kizil Cave 161, sixth century (Source: Ma Qin, *Murals in Kucha*)

Another Kizil cave where the mourning of Buddha at his cremation is depicted with various participants in ethnic costumes is Cave 224 (c.550-600) known as Maya Cave. Brought to Berlin after the German expedition of Turfan, the mural is now in Museum für Indische Kunst.[188] As depicted in Figure 59, three of the men among the mourners cut their forehead skin or chest with their knives, a practice of self-mutilation practiced by the Scythians. The second figure from the right is thought to be a Turk.

[187] Ma Qin, *Murals in Kucha*, 277.
[188] IB 8439 Die Verbrennung der Leiche des Buddha, Mayahöhle, Höhle 19 (Chin. Nr.205), *Museum für Indische Kunst, Dokumentation der Verluste*, 145.

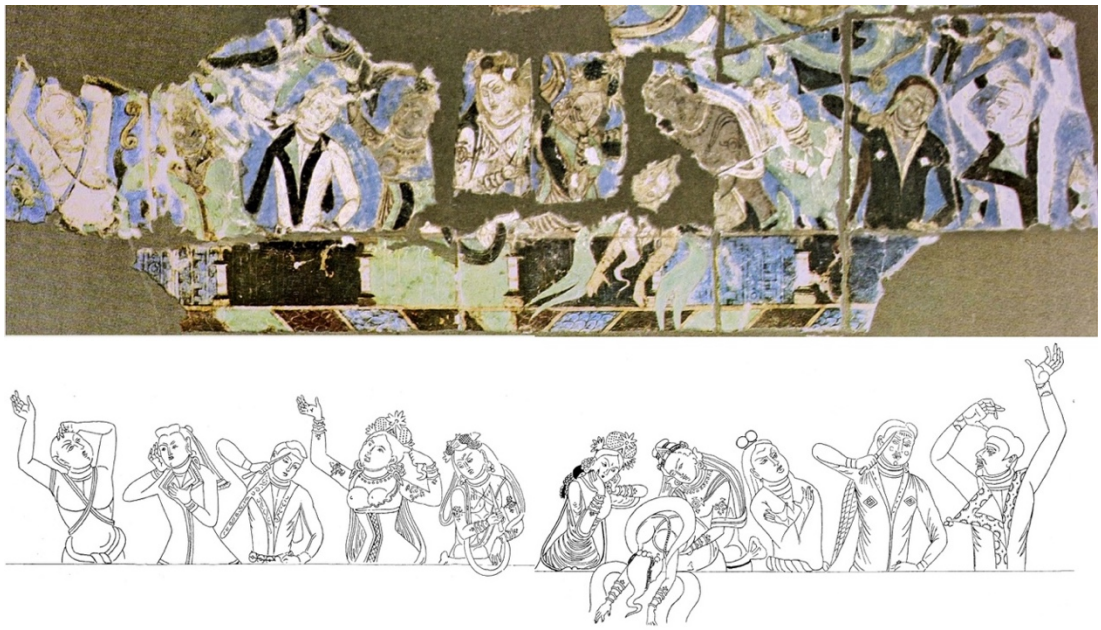

Figure 59. Kızıl Cave 224, Mural of the Mourning of the Buddha with drawing (Wikipedia sourced from Albert von le Coq, *Die buddhistische spätantike in Mittelasien*, VI, Drawing: Albert Grünwedel)

One of the most famous depictions of the mourning scene after Buddha's passing is found in Dunhuang Mogao Caves, no:158, dating to the Middle Tang period (781-848). As shown in Figure 60, the central theme of this cave is the Buddha's *nirvana* (his demise; the liberation from existence). On the long altar in front of the main wall is a giant reclining Buddha made of stucco on a sandstone frame. It signifies the *Mahaparinirvana* (the great completed nirvana).

There are paintings illustrating his followers surrounding him in mourning. Bodhisattvas, heavenly beings, dharma protectors, and apsaras are on the wall behind the statue; his disciples and envoys from different countries are on the two side walls, respectively. Although this is a mourning scene, it is considered the desired event. Hence, the Buddha's sleeping pose is serene and calm, even with a smile,

demonstrating the happiness of being extricated.[189] Below are depicted dancing people.

Figure 60. Views from Dunhuang Mogao Cave 158. Reclining Buddha, disciples, and envoys from different countries behind the statue. Middle Tang period (781-848)

Figure 61 shows Bezeklik Cave 33 in Turfan, Xinjiang. The mural depicts mourning princes from sixteen nations after Buddha's death. According to Buddhist scriptures, after Buddha's nirvana, the princes of sixteen states came to pay their respect to Buddha. Figures of different ethnical groups are portrayed in the picture.[190]

[189] *The colors of Dunhuang,* exhibition catalog, 52-54.
[190] Huo and Qi, *The Buddhist art in Xinjiang along the Silk Road,* 123.

Figure 61. Above: Mourning princes from sixteen nations, Bezeklik Cave 33 (eleventh century). Below: A copy of the mural (Source: Huo and Qi, *The Buddhist art in Xinjiang*)

Besides envoys, musicians from different ethnicities came to play music for Buddha. Figure 62 shows murals depicting musicians from Bezeklik Cave 16, dating to about eighth century, and Cave 31, dating to the eleventh century.[191] Some of the

[191] This famous piece was removed in the Japanese expedition by Count Otani Kozui (1876-1948): "Fig.51, Some pieces of the Otani Collection, Source: *Nihon no Bijutsu*, No. 434 (Jul.2002)", Küçükyalçın, "Exploring Church-State Relations in Modern Japan: Count Ōtani Kōzui's Quest for the

musical instruments displayed in the picture include bend-necked *pipa*, tom-tom, clappers, *bili* (bamboo pipe), and flute, all important musical instruments of the ancient city Gaochang.[192]

Figure 62. Left: Bezeklik Cave 16, Musicians, eighth century. Right: Bezeklik Cave 31, Musicians, eleventh century. (Source: *The Buddhist art in Xinjiang*, 118, 121)

3.11.2 A multiethnic group of artists in Kizil Caves, Kucha

These mourning scenes reflect the lively multinational *milieu* of the area at that time. Like the large provenance area of painters and artisans working in Dunhuang Mogao caves, primary documents show that an international group of artists worked on the paintings of Kizil caves. A text explaining the map of the Kucha area in Tibetan

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Pure Land in an Age of Turbulence," 395. The 22nd chief-abbot of Nishi Honganji monastry in Tokyo, Otani's three expeditions (between 1902-1904, 1908-1909 and 1910-1914 respectively) were to "serve both Kozui's insatiable desire to discover and his duty as a Buddhist priest to do pilgrimage to the sacred sites of his faith." The wideranging material brought to Japan was dispersed among individuals as well as institutions in a number of countries, and some were lost for good during the Second World War. Today, parts of it are stored in the collections of (Japan) Ryukoku University, Otani University, Tokyo National Museum, Kyoto National Museum, MOA Fine Arts Museum, (China) Lü Shun Museum, Beijing Library and (Korea) Seoul National Museum. For further details of Count Otani Kozui and his expeditions in Central Asia, refer to Erdal Küçükyalçın's phd thesis. According to Mario Bussagli, as of 1963, this mural was held in a private collection in Tokyo. Bussagli, *Central Asian painting*, 103.

[192] Huo and Qi, *The Buddhist art in Xinjiang along the Silk Road,* 119, 121.

found in Kucha by Albert Grünwedel (1856-1935) describes the images in the older caves (*Mischen-höle* and *Staten-höle* in the German naming system) as being commissioned by a Tokharian (Thogar) king called "Mendre" with the advice of Anandavarman, a high-ranking monk. The king ordered an Indian artist, Naravahanadatta, and a Syrian artist, Priyaratna, their disciples to paint the caves. Khotanese kings Vijayavardhana and Murlimin also assisted with painting Buddha Sakyamuni's life in Cave 60 (The Grösste-höle in German classification) by sending artists called Amoghabindu, Lipidatta, and Agathadima. Thus the Tokharian King Mendre and likely other Kuchean kings at different times played a significant part in creating the Buddhist complex at Kizil, with the help of other neighboring kings in gathering a rather international group of artists.[193]

3.11.3 The multiethnic crowd before the shaman's tent

Multiethnic reunion was not the peculiarity of Buddhist realms. The shaman's tent as well attracts international interest. The scene is depicted in the masterpiece of the Mongolian artist Baldugiin Sharav (1869-1939). Named *Mongolyn neg ödör* (One day in Mongolia), the large painting portrayed the wonders of the nomadic world (Figure 63). Although executed in the twentieth century, the painting reflects the traditional Mongolian lifestyle, not only as a one-day event but as a whole life period measured by years of the life cycle from their birth, growing, working, and death. The author owes his nickname Marzan (witty) to his sense of humor, with which he describes the daily life and deeds of herders in three kinds of the natural environment -mountainous, steppe, and desert- through four seasons.

[193] Walter, "Tokharian Buddhism in Kucha, Buddhism of Indo-European Centum Speakers in Chinese Turkestan before the 10th Century C.E.," 26-27.

Figure 63. Baldugiin Sharav, *Mongolyn neg ödör* (One day in Mongolia) (Source: 2007-2008 Calendar, Zanabazar Fine Arts Museum)

The straightforward and natural way of his depictions, similar to those of Mehmed Siyah Kalem, cover the scenes of the wedding, festival, funeral, felt making, lumbering, agriculture, horse breeding, sexual intercourse, or birth. Amid the scenes, an international gathering before the shaman's tent attracts attention. In the opening of the blue tent on a felt cushion, a shaman incited and, in ecstasy, pacified local spirits, causing anxiety in people. As can be seen in Figure 64, the artist portrayed one Chinese, Tibetan, and one Westerner in the crowd.[194]

[194] *One day in Mongolia*, 2007-2008 Calendar, Zanabazar Fine Arts Museum, Ulan Batur.

Figure 64. Baldugiin Sharav, *Mongolyn neg ödör* (One day in Mongolia) detail. (Source: 2007-2008 Calendar, Zanabazar Fine Arts Museum)

Like the multiethnic gathering for mourning after Budda's death, a shaman's performance can be considered a center of an international community in the Mongolian steppes, not only in the twentieth century but probably around Mehmed Siyah Kalem times as well.

Marco Polo's description of Mongol shamanism demonstrates this fact. In his travel account, Marco Polo (1254–1324) briefly summarizes the shamanistic beliefs and practices of the Mongols (ca.1300). During the time that Marco served in the Yuan Empire, the Mongols increasingly converted to Buddhism and Islam. Still, shamanism endured, particularly in the steppes:

> This is the fashion of their religion. [They say there is a Most High God of Heaven, whom they worship daily with thurible and incense, but they pray to Him only for health of mind and body. But] they have [also] a certain [other] god of theirs called Natigay, and they say he is the god of the Earth, who watches over their children, cattle, and crops. They show him great worship

> and honour, and every man hath a figure of him in his house, made of felt and cloth; and they also make in the same manner images of his wife and children. The wife they put on the left hand, and the children in front. And when they eat, they take the fat of the meat and grease the god's mouth withal, as well as the mouths of his wife and children. Then they take off the broth and sprinkle it before the door of the house, and that done, they deem that their god and his family have had their share of the dinner.[195]

3.11.4 *Urus-i divana*

Who may be this red-haired, blue-eyed man lifting an architectural element in H.2153- 33A-p.1. J. Michael Rogers argues that these blue-eyed figures in Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings may be Russian traders.[196] A historical analysis of the written documents dating between the eleven and mid-fifteenth centuries shows that the Indians associated Slav with the "reddish" skin color. The first mention of Russians on the territory of India happens in the *Divan* of Masud Sad Salman (ca.1046-1121), a Persian poet of the Ghaznavid Empire from Lahore. Accordingly, the name of the Slav is associated with a "reddish", or simply "beautiful" skin color (as opposed to the "black" skin color of an African).[197]

It is difficult to judge how much such information indicates direct knowledge of the Russians. It is known, however, that during this period, trade contacts expanded. Indirect ties with India, in all likelihood, noticeably stabilized in the era of the Golden Horde, which involved Russians in intensive trade exchanges with the East through Central Asia. The Mongol conquerors established communications between the Volga region they captured and Northern India, which contributed to the emergence of Russians in Mesopotamia, Western Asia, and Egypt, which were then entirely controlled by the Indians. In the Golden Horde capital itself -Sarai-Batu, Russian and Indian "guests" had their bazaars. According to the

[195] Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 250.
[196] Rogers, "Siyah Qalam," 21–39.
[197] Shokhin, *Ancient India in Russian culture (XI – mid-XV century)*

Tughlaknama, they (along with the Mongols and Greeks) occupied an important place in the army of Ghazi Malik, who usurped power in Delhi in 1320. It can hardly be doubted that these soldiers were Tatar slaves. Russian sources' first "synchronous" report about the contemporary mysterious South Asian power belongs to this period. In the Novgorod and Pskov chronicles in 1352, it is said that the plague that "pestilence came from the Indian country."[198]

Not only Indians but Turkic people of Central Asia also perceived Russians as red-haired. This perception is different from the red hair being characteristic of various demonic and comic characters in Far Eastern Buddhist art and European literature.[199] Among the examples in Far Eastern Buddhist art for the demonic character is the Flaming Mouth-King of Hungry Ghosts depicted in the mural paintings in Pilu Temple with long red hairs. In contrast, a different approach to red-haired people exists among Central Asian folks: *Urus-i divana*, the crazy Russian, a character in the traditional comic performances of Central Asia.[200]

The Russian archaeologist Boris Marshak (1933-2006), who spent more than 50 years excavating the Sogdian ruins in Pendjikent (5-8th centuries) identifies this character in two panels in the murals of Pendjikent: On the *Anecdote of the red-haired trickster and the fowler* (Figure 65) and the *Tale of the wife, her husband and three suitors*. Both panels are on the southern wall of Pendjikent murals, first register, Room 1/XXI, dating to the eighth century.

Marshak argues that the red-haired figure in these panels is a figure of a comic trickster, rather than a demon. He is a fat, almost naked man with flamboyant gesticulation. He has a comical grimace and red hair resembling European clowns.

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[198] Shokhin, *Ancient India in Russian culture (XI – mid-XV century)*
[199] Marshak, *Legends, tales, and fables in the art of Sogdiana,* 157, fn: 27.
[200] Basing on Professor Aleksandr M. Belenitskii's claims in Marshak, *Legends, tales, and fables in the art of Sogdiana*, 137.

According to Marshak, he plays a crucial role in both stories. It is possible that the story of the *Tale of the wife, her husband and three suitors* began with a bet between the woman and the red-haired trickster as to which of them was superior in trickery, or he boasted perhaps that he was familiar with all women's trick. In the *Anecdote of the red-haired trickster and the fowler*, this figure represents the possibility that his witty sayings were the most critical element of the stories illustrated, which is why it is impossible to reconstruct it in detail.[201]

Figure 65. Red-haired trickster and the fowler (Pendjikent southern wall, first register, Room 1/XXI, eighth century. The trickster is on the left, his red hair is quasi-apparent. (Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg)

[201] Marshak, *Legends, tales, and fables in the art of Sogdiana,* 129, 137-38.

The red-haired in this group of Mehmed Siyah Kalem shares common characteristics with the trickster character in Pendjikent murals. First, like the trickster, he plays a key role in gathering various ethnicities for a grand reunion. He meets up with blacks and nomads, maybe to convince them for specific purposes. Secondly, his physical appearance also reminds the trickster, with his red hair, almost naked body, vivid gesticulation, and comical grimace. Following Marshak, it seems possible that this comic character is older than the satirical interpretation of the colonial period. Such comic sketches' performance could have been traced to the pre-Islamic period.[202] In these terms, this character of *Urus-i divana*, the crazy Russian, could be an inspiration for Mehmed Siyah Kalem painters in the fourteenth century.

3.11.5 Architectural project?

Since the red-haired man is lifting a heavy architectural element (H.2153- 33A-p.1), this grand reunion could also be a big architectural undertaking. Although the upper part was cut out, this architectural piece seems like a single octagonal piece, probably a wooden plate.[203] As shown in Figure 66, one can encounter the motif on a large geography in paintings and mural art since the eight century.

[202] Marshak, *Legends, tales, and fables in the art of Sogdiana*, 137.
[203] Personal interview with Assoc. Prof. Hülya Dışkaya, 12 May 2018.

Figure 66. The same motif exists in *Daozimobao*, attributed to the Chinese artist Wu Daozi (680-759)

A similar composition exists in a large-size painting in H.2160-38A-p.1: An angel lifting with both arms a piece of land with a house inhabited by people and a dog, shown in Figure 67.[204]

[204] An angel lifting with both arms a piece of land with a house, inhabited by people and a dog, H.2160-38A-p.1, Middle size painting, Coloring: Opaque colors. 170x148 mm. Second half of 14th century. Without a frame. Material: Paper. *Unpublished facsimile of the albums*. Some scholars associated either of the painting with Solomon cycles, in reference to caryatids bearing the platform of Solomon.
Association of H.2160-38A-p.1: An angel carrying a building through the air, Painting from a lost manuscript, possibly a *Sulaymanname*, executed probably in Baghdad, about 1380. Grube, "The Problem of the Istanbul Album Paintings," 3, 13 fn. 55.
Association of H.2153- 33A-p.1: "we might consider representations of ifrits in the attitude of caryatids bearing the "platform of Solomon" as belonging to one or more cycles of scenes from stories and legends of Solomon and Balqis. In the light of these suggestions, it is useful to recall that historical sources compare Timur to Solomon, especially Sharaf al-Din. The obvious identification of a ruler with the legendary prophet-king does not occur elsewhere during the 14th century and seems to fit with the climate of Timur's reign better than of any other for a century to follow." Haase, "On the attribution of some paintings in H. 2153 to the time of Timur," 53.

Figure 67. An angel lifting with both arms a piece of land (H.2160-38A-p.1)

Whether the red-haired character is lifting a heavy architectural element or a piece of land, it seems he is doing an important job, probably part of a construction project. In these terms, two other pictures can be considered in relation to this group of paintings: Carrying rocks (H.2153- 89a-p.1) and Constructing a wooden building (H.2153-141b-p.2). Together, these two paintings reflect each phase of building construction: carrying raw materials like rocks and a tree, carpentry, tools and metal pieces of equipment, ordinary workers, and probably supervisors or architects managing the process.

The figures' proportions differ from those in other paintings of *Tale 3-Urus-i Divan*. This can be due to the desire of the painter(s) to include all participants and all phases of the construction of the picture which required a diminishing in scale. This is to increase the project's impact and emphasize the power of the project's owner, as an impressive undertaking.

Figure 68 is a selection among construction site depictions in Mogao murals at Dunhuang. As in the two paintings of construction sites executed with Mehmed Siyah Kalem style, several murals represent different phases of the work divided among the artisans at cave art.

To construct the caves at Mogao, patrons and donors hired specialized, highly accomplished artisans. The artisans were divided into *lianggong* 良工 (excellent workmen), who hollowed out the caves from the cliff face, and *qiaojiang* 巧匠 (skilled artisans), who created the paintings and sculptures. [205]

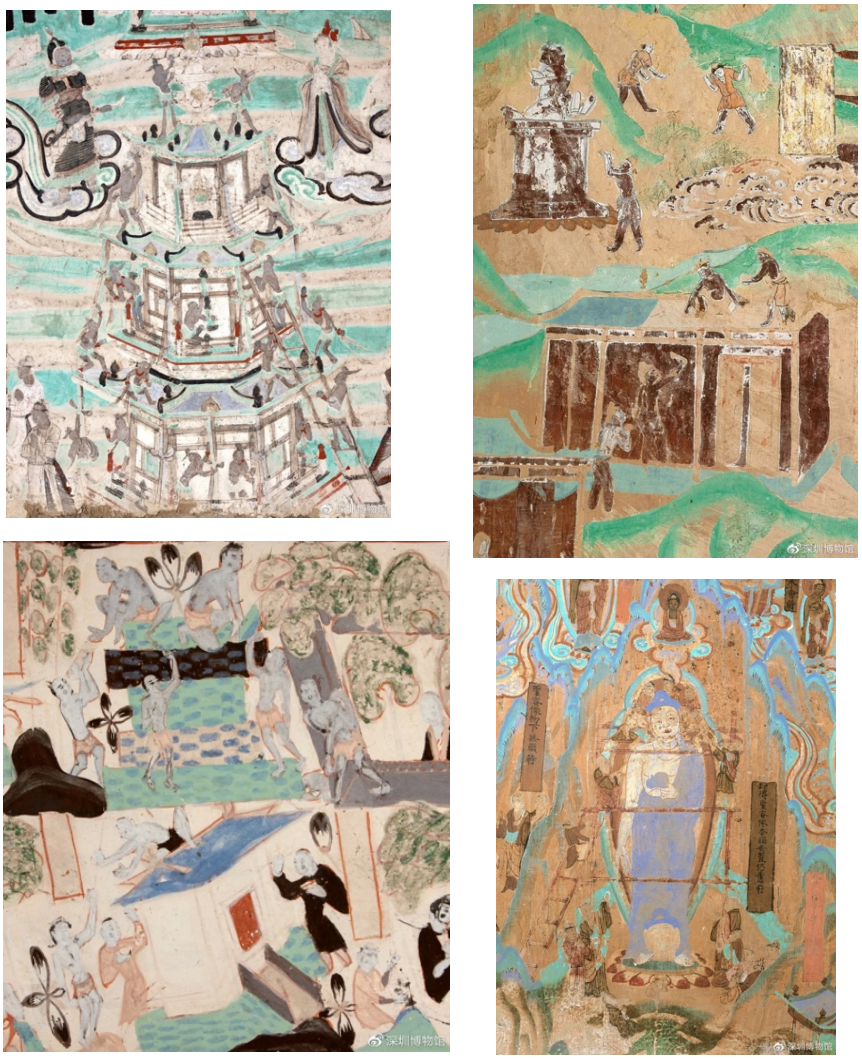

Figure 68. Several construction phases are depicted in Dunhuang Mogao Caves (details from caves no: 55, 72, 296, and 321 from left to right. (Source: "Exchanges and mutual learning, The cosmopolitan art from Dunhuang Grottoes and the Hexi Corridor")

[205] *The colors of Dunhuang,* exhibition catalog, 32-33.

Accordingly, the construction of caves involved a detailed division of labor from the beginning: 1. Chiselers who dug and excavated the cave out of the cliff 2. Stonecutters who handled stone materials and stone tools and also dig caves 3. Bricklayers who built wooden or earthen structures. 4. Carpenters who built structures and also made and repaired wooden tools. 5. Sculptors who created the statues. 6. Painters who painted the caves and statues.[206] Figure 69 represents this elaborated division of labor for carving the caves, as depicted on the murals.

Figure 69. The work divided among the artisans at Mogao Caves in Dunhuang, as depicted on the murals (Source: "Exchanges and mutual learning, The cosmopolitan art from Dunhuang Grottoes and the Hexi Corridor")

What could be the architectural project depicted in Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings with multiethnic participation? Indeed, it must be a project undertaken by a

[206] *The colors of Dunhuang,* exhibition catalog, 32-33.

powerful patron. The famous painter Bihzad (1450-1536) depicted in his miniatures two projects that can give an idea for the construction site in this group of paintings: *Building of the Great Mosque in Samarkand* (1467-68, John Work Garrett Library, John Hopkins University) and *Construction of the fort of Khavarnak* (ca.1494-95, British Library, OR 6810). Both miniatures, shown in Figure 70, reflect the milieu in construction sites around a century later than that of Mehmed Siyah Kalem. The multiethnic participation of blacks and even Chinese and the cooperation of various professional skills support the possibility of this group of paintings to depict the environment of an architectural project.

Figure 70. Left: Building of the Great Mosque in Samarkand, Bihzad (1467-68, John Work Garrett Library) Right: Construction of the fort of Khavarnak, Bihzad (ca.1494-95, British Library)

Whether a grand reunion for sacred purposes, uniting all kinds of people or an architectural project gathering all professional masters and workers, the event in the *Tale 3-Urus-i Divana* was impressive, showing the impact and power of the

driving force behind it. In this project, a red-haired man, maybe *Urus-i Divana*, the crazy Russian, seems to play a crucial role.

3.12 Tale 4-*Köse Baytar*[207]

Some paintings in Mehmed Siyah Kalem *genre* depict animals. As shown in Figures 71 and 72, The *Tale 4-Köse Baytar* happens around these animals. In the first group, there are four paintings: A nomad grazing his horse (H.2153-84A-p.1), Two nomads watering a horse (H.2153-113A-p.2), Nomads leading an ox (H.2153-38A-p.3), Stubborn donkey and two nomads (H.2160-14A-p.2).

Two exciting facts exist concerning these depictions: None of the animals are being ridden. Moreover, they are shown in problematic situations: some are very skinny; some seem uncomfortable, even suffering from pain; some are stubborn and unwilling to move. The discomfort of the animals is observable in the nomads' faces; their expression *vis-à-vis* the animals' behavior is rather helpless and desperate in all four cases.

[207] Meaning "beardless veterinarian" in Turkic languages, further details will be explored in the chapter.

Figure 71. Chart of Tale 4-*Köse Baytar*

TALE 4- KÖSE BAYTAR

Figure 72. Tags of Tale 4-*Köse Baytar*

In the second group, there are three paintings: Presenting a gift (H.2160-10A-p.1), Nomad family feeding a donkey (H.2153-23B-p.2), Wandering *darvīsh*es (H.2153-55A-p.3). In the Presenting a gift (H.2160-10A-p.1), a young man without a beard offers a plant to two others. He is saying something, and two other men are listening with attention. Their face and costumes are similar to the nomads having problems with their animals in the first group paintings. In the Nomad family feeding a donkey (H.2153-23B-p.2), a nomad feeding a donkey that defecates simultaneously under the worried eyes of all family members. In the last painting named, Wandering *darvīsh*es (H.2153-55A-p.3) in the facsimile edition of the albums, a group of nomads try to calm down a donkey while a young man without facial hair tries is needling the animal on its back. The group looks at two persons from behind, one carrying another on his back.

3.12.1 *tianma* 天嗎, heavenly horses

Chapter 96 of the history of the former Han dynasty consists of The Memoir on the Western Regions. Together with Chapter 61, these chapters of the Chinese Histories "have as much, or even a greater, bearing on the history of Central Asia as on that of China herself" for the period between 125BC-23AD. Describing the state of Da Yuan (usually identified with the region around Ferghana), the Chinese records noted the following impressions:

> There are many fine horses. The horses sweat blood, and it is said that their progenitors were descended from the Heavenly Horses. When Zhang Qian first told Emperor Wu about this, the emperor sent envoys bearing a thousand pieces of gold and a golden horse with which to make a request for the fine horses of Yuan.[208]

[208] Hulsewé, *China in Central Asia, The early stage*, 132-135.

The Chinese term *tianma* 天嗎, heavenly horses, seems to have originated during the Former Han period when contacts with the West began. From this time on, all along the centuries, the desire of the Chinese rulers for Central Asian horses did not change that much.

Undoubtedly, the horses in these paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem are not the descendants of these heavenly horses. Where are these legendary Central Asian horses worth thousands of pieces of gold? Why do these nomads living in the steppes not ride their animals? What could be the problems of these skinny, unhealthy animals?

3.12.2 *The emaciated horse*

Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt proposed the identification of *The emaciated horse* from the Chinese painter Gong Kai (d. 1307). She argues that the emaciated horse, which appears several times in the Yakub Bey albums, is a straightforward imitation of the Chinese model or one of its copies. Steinhardt adds that the Topkapı album versions of the subject provide examples of three types of transmission of forms discussed earlier by Richard Ettinghausen (1972, pp.1-2): the first as imitation, the second, as adaptation, and the third, as integration.[209]

Another scholar who discussed the transmission of animal images from Chinese sources is James Cahill. He proposes that Tang–derived sources of imagery and style that were available to the early Yuan artists should be supplemented by another possible source provided by the influx of people into China following the Mongol invasion. He suggests that some works of art, artistic styles, and motifs from

[209] Shatzman-Steinhardt, "Siyah Qalem and Gong Kai: An Istanbul Album Painter and a Chinese Painter of the Mongolian Period," 59–71.

outside China that must have been introduced by these incoming peoples may have preserved Tang artistic elements, which were then re-introduced into China. He utilizes the "Tang-like" elements of some of the paintings from the albums H. 2153 and H. 2160 to argue that the sudden appearance of certain images of apparently Tang origin in early Yuan painting might best be understood through the theory of transmission over the intervening centuries in the region west of China and their reintroduction into China in the early Yuan period. Cahill states that this theory would supplement, more than replace the common supposition that Yuan painters learned these archaic images from rediscovered Tang works or their copies transmitted within China. He asserts that the Tang elements in the Istanbul paintings could not have been modeled on Yuan examples since they are not found in Yuan or Song paintings, and must have come from pre-Song sources outside of China. To support his argument, he uses foreshortened images of animals as examples, arguing that they are within an illusionistic mode of portrayal developed in the Tang period, but were generally abandoned in the Song period.[210]

The surprising similarity between animal representations of Mehmed Siyah Kalem and Chinese sources could be based on the transmission of Chinese veterinary manuscripts in Central Asia. In return, this fact suggests that some of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings can be popular depictions of veterinary practices or stories about the animal disease and treatment. There are several pieces of evidence to support this assumption.

3.12.3 Chinese veterinary texts based on Turkic and Mongolian dynasties

"Chinese Horse Medicine: Texts and Illustrations" by Paul D. Buell, Timothy May

[210] Cahill, "Some Alternative Sources for Archaistic Elements in the Paintings of Qian Xuan and Zhao Mengfu," 64–75.

and David Ramey exposes an interesting collection of manuscripts about the history of Chinese veterinary science.[211]

The authors emphasize that the earliest surviving veterinary texts in China are a few stray horse recipes found among Dunhuang documents. These are mainly from Qin (255–206 BCE) and Han (206 BCE–220 CE) times. References to specialized veterinary texts began to appear in Chinese sources during the early sixth century. One of the popular manuals, *Qimin Yaoshu* 齊民要 術 (Essential Arts to Assist the People) was written during the Northern Wei dynasty (386–535).

Unsurprisingly, one of the first references to horse treatment was written during the Northern Wei dynasty, founded by the Turkic Tuoba (Tabgach) clan. Several other manuals are mentioned in early bibliographies, but unfortunately, none of these early texts appear to have survived. A late fourteenth-century compilation does contain genuine works from earlier times, *Simu Anji Ji* 司牧安驥集 (Collections for Pacifying Stallions when Administering Flocks), published in 1384. Again, most of its texts were probably northern in origin.

According to Buell et al., *Bo Le zhenjing* 伯樂鍼經 (BLZJ-Bo Le's Needling Classic), reproduced in the SMAJJ of 1384 and *Bo Le hualuo tu ge jue* 伯樂畫烙圖歌訣 (BLHLTGJ-The Song Secrets of the Diagram of Bo Le's Branding) are most likely works of the Yuan dynasty (1260–1368), founded by the Mongols. Figure 73 is an illustration from Bo Le Branding Diagram.

[211] Buell et al., "Chinese Horse Medicine: Texts and Illustrations", 315-326, *Imagining Chinese Medicine*, Brill, 2018. Unless remarked otherwise, following references to Chinese manuscripts of horse medicine are sourced from this article.

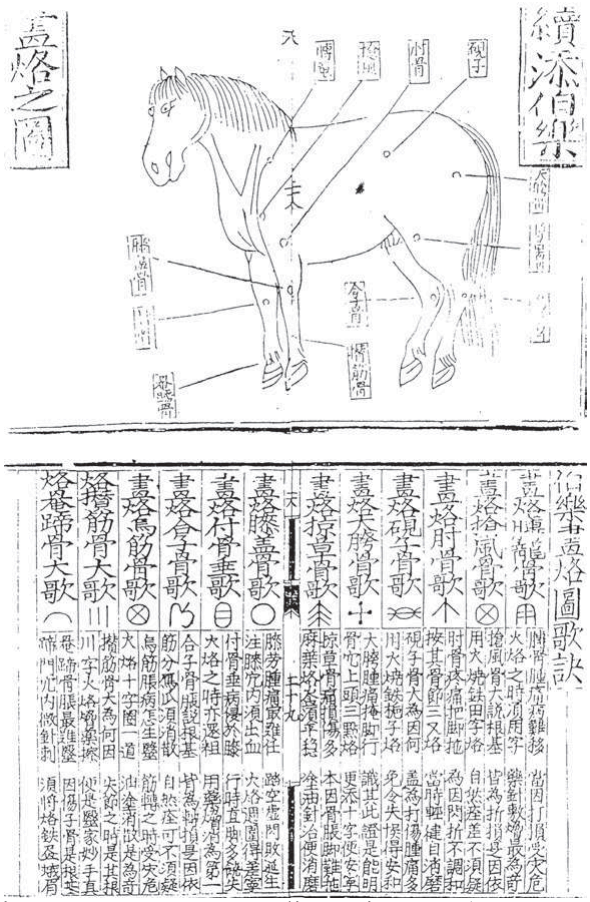

Figure 73. *Bo Le* Branding Diagram (Source: Buell et al., "Chinese Horse Medicine")

The authors remark that both texts appear to show Western influences during the Yuan period, considered a maximal period for such results in China, particularly those coming from the Islamic world, including its veterinary literature and methods of practice. Hence, much of the existing veterinary materials seem to date back to the Yuan since China's Mongolian rulers took a particular interest in the horse. The "Mongolian language is meticulous in its horse descriptions to the point that Mongolian sources of the period spend more time describing what a hero rode than the hero himself or even his actions."[212]

[212] Buell et al., "Chinese Horse Medicine: Texts and Illustrations", 315-326.

3.12.4 The disease's origin is in a stiff intestine

In these terms, these texts with illustrations consist of valuable sources that can shed light on the research of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. For instance, the horses' discomfort in the images A nomad grazing his horse (H.2153-84A-p.1) and Two nomads watering a horse (H.2153-113A-p.2) can be due to colic. Figure 74 exposes a comparison between the Chinese illustration of colic and Mehmed Siyah Kalem horses.

Moreover, not only the picture but the text depicting the animal suffering from colic seems to describe the posture of these unfortunate horses. The diagnosis is to be found in the first surviving monograph devoted exclusively to horse medicine *Xinbian jicheng mayi fang* 新編集成馬醫方 (Newly Printed and Collected Recipes for Horse Medicine). Here is the Colic from this manuscript first published in 1399:

> Disease origin [is] in a stiff intestine and excrement that does not move. When there is a stiff intestine and excrement that does not move it is not difficult to treat. [The animal] lies down and gets up frequently. The spleen and belly are high. … When the intestine is stiff and the excrement does not move it is a matter of the horse eating grass excessively on account of difficulty, and there is a lot of excrement. It hardens for a long time. The horse drinks and does not rest. Also it sometimes eats to satiation and sometimes harbours chill and heat and this is not in accord with the brightness of the intestines. It is primarily this illness.[213]

[213] Buell et al., "Chinese Horse Medicine: Texts and Illustrations", 320.

Figure 74. Left: Colic from the *Xinbian jicheng mayi fang* (Source: Buell et al., "Chinese Horse Medicine") Right: A nomad grazing his horse (H.2153-84A-p.1) and Two nomads watering a horse (H.2153-113A-p.2)

There is also a salvation recipe for the colic treatment:

> Take grass ash, rat dung, and pig oil [lard]. Heat [each] and in succession make an oily powder. Combine into an ointment. The five flavors [spices] will subsequently be combined [with it]. Make sure [the material] is abundant. A hard iron will also dissipate it. [214]

These illustrated veterinary manuscripts contain various kinds of horse diseases and related treatments. Some examples are hoof problems, some others deal with a horse suffering from chill pain, or prolapse of the anus. Behaviors of a horse suffering from prolapse of the anus is very interesting in comparison with some depictions of Mehmed Siyah Kalem:

> Whenever a horse unseasonably has an over exertion throat, raises up its tail, the haunches are curved, the head is lowered, the ears are rolled up, and the grass fine hairs [of the coat] are scorched, then this is called the

[214] Buell et al., "Chinese Horse Medicine: Texts and Illustrations", 320.

pathocondition of chill Qi of the entrails, and overexertion wound of apparent force. [215]

It looks as if the nomads in the two paintings shown in Figure 75 hold the tails of their animals to help them release in a similar condition since when they have prolapse of the anus, they raise their tails.

Interestingly enough, when your animal suffers from prolapse of the anus "it is prohibited to ride the horse energetically for seven days."[216] This could be the reason why these animals are not ridden in Central Asian steppes: Because they suffer from some diseases.

Figure 75. Left: Prolapse of anus. Right: Nomads leading an ox (H.2153-38A-p.3) and Stubborn donkey, and two nomads (H.2160-14A-p.2)

3.12.5 *Köse baytar*

According to the experts, the approach in Chinese horse medicine and the treatment

[215] Buell et al., "Chinese Horse Medicine: Texts and Illustrations", 320, Fig. 22.4.
[216] Buell et al., "Chinese Horse Medicine: Texts and Illustrations", p.323.

options are half magic, half pragmatic experience, rather than serious scientific information. Following the rich manuscript tradition, nearly all the texts of Chinese veterinary medicine are illustrated. China's rich veterinary medicine practice, which became a flood during Ming times, is early associated with textual illustrations. Some circulated separately as independent publications, and others traveled quickly, and witnessed elements of Chinese popular art found their way until Iran before and after the Mongol period. These illustrations are diagrams seeking to summarise lore and serve as aids to memory rather than seriously presenting scientific information. Nevertheless, scholars argue that while the treatment options may have little relevance in modern veterinary medicine, the accurate clinical observations indicate that the Chinese were keen observers of the horse.[217]

In this group of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, a beardless character frequently appears: In one of the paintings, he pushes the stubborn donkey while holding the animal's tail (H.2160-14A-p.2); in a second one, he is offering a kind of plant to two nomads (H.2160-10A-p.1) and in another, he is most probably stabbing a needle on the donkey (H.2153-55A-p.3). He may be a *baytar*, an Arabic origin word (بیطار *beyṭar*) used in Turkish to indicate a veterinarian working in rural areas, mostly for horses or other farm animals. Since his beard and mustache do not grow, he is *köse*, a Persian origin word that indicates a man whose beard and mustache do not grow or very sparsely grow.

3.12.6 Cannabis for animal treatment?

Scholars of historical veterinary medicine argue that the Chinese approach to horse treatment is overwhelmingly herbal, which is the main focus of Chinese medicine for

[217] Buell et al., "Chinese Horse Medicine: Texts and Illustrations", 315-326.

humans. Throughout some of the books, where treatment is called for, the emphasis is herbal. They include a detailed listing of herbal drugs, preparations, and their specific applications.[218] *Köse baytar* seems to be holding over a plant to two nomads in one of the paintings. This plant is very similar to hemp, or with its scientific name, *cannabis*. Figure 76 offers a comparison between the cannabis plant in nature and the plant at the hand of *Köse baytar*.

Figure 76. Comparison of Cannabis in nature and the plant in H.2160-10A-p.1(detail)

Cannabis is a genus of flowering plants in the family *Cannabaceae*, of which *Cannabis sativa* is a species, and *Cannabis indica* and *Cannabis ruderalis* are subspecies. John Gerarde, the master in Chirurgie at the seventeenth century, has drawings of the male and female hemp. (Figure 77)

[218] Buell et al., "Chinese Horse Medicine: Texts and Illustrations", 315-326.

Figure 77. Hempe (Source: Gerarde, *The Herball or generall historie of plantes*)

For the *Temperature and Vertues*, Gerarde indicates that the seed of hemp, as Galen writes in his book of the faculties of simple medicines, is hard of digestion and hurtful to the stomach and head. On the other hand, Dioscorides says that the herb's juice dropped into the ears assuages their pain, proceeding of obstruction or stopping. The inner substance or pulp of the seed pressed out in some kind of liquor is given to those that have yellow jaundice when the disease first appears and frequently with success if the disease comes of obstruction without an ague, for it opens the passage of the gall and disperses and concordes the choler through the whole body. The last reference is from Mathiolus, who says that the seed given to hens causes them to lay eggs more plentifully.[219]

According to a recent report by the American Veterinary Medical Association, the potential therapeutic benefits of cannabis continue to be examined by people, and veterinarians are encountering cannabis-derived products intended for

[219] Gerarde, *The Herball or generall historie of plantes*, Ch.238-239, 709.

use in companion animals. The plant has been part of recreational, religious, and medical activities for more than five thousand years. Although the first evidence of *cannabis* cultivation for recreational and industrial use appears in China in 4000 BC, *cannabis* appears not to have been used for medicinal purposes until 2700 BC. Reported in 1993, the first direct evidence of therapeutic use is based on the presence of *cannabis* material in the remains of an Egyptian mother who died during childbirth in 400 AD. Medical indications are recorded in the world's oldest pharmacopeia (0-100 AD) and Avicenna's *Canon of Medicine* (980-1037 AD), and *cannabis* is known to have been used in both Arabic (900-1400 AD) and South American medicine (the 1500s). Analgesic, anticonvulsant, anti-inflammatory, and antibiotic effects were among its diverse medical indications. *Cannabis* first appeared in Western Europe in the 1830s to treat muscle spasms associated with tetanus and rabies. Its use rapidly spread among physicians in Europe and North America.[220]

There are historical and literary shreds of evidence showing that Turkic peoples were using cannabis as a mind-altering drug from ancient times up to the late fifteenth century, a period of flourishing cannabis subculture both in Anatolia and in Central Asia. Nomadic Turkic peoples living in the steppe region of Central Asia might have been familiar with the custom of using intoxicating fumes like the Scythians or the Massagetae before them. During later centuries, besides being consumed in its most basic form as *beng* or *esrar*, it was also used in a pulverized version as *gubar.* It became the main ingredient of many "designer drugs" generally termed *majun*.[221]

[220] American Veterinary Medical Association, *Cannabis in veterinary medicine*, 5.
[221] Benedek Péri, "'It is the weed of lovers' the use of cannabis among Turkic peoples up to the 15th century," 139 – 155.

Interestingly, E. Bretschneider (1833-1901) in his *Botanicon Sinicum: Notes on Chinese botany from native and western sources* (1894, p.206), asserts positively that *huma* 胡麻, or foreign hemp, is a plant introduced from west of Asia in the second century BC.[222] According to Berthold Laufer, all that there is to this theory amounts to this. Some others state that *huma* originally grew in Da Yuan, the country of heavenly horses, Ferghana; hence it received the name of *huma*,[223] *hu* 胡 being a term used for foreigners from the West, sometimes translated as barbare. Whereas Laufer emphasizes that the records regarding Da Yuan do not mention *huma*, nor does this term occur in the Histories. He conducts a detailed historical and linguistic discussion on this matter. Even though we let aside these discussions about whether this theory of hemp's provenance to China from Central Asia, behind these associations, can be the use of hemp by Central Asians since ancient times, if not the origin.

Eventually, the uninterrupted use of the plant for different purposes and the association in some historical sources -whether factual or not- demonstrate that Central Asian nomads knew various ways of using cannabis. Among them, there was probably its use for animal treatment, as proposed by *Köse Baytar* to two nomads.

3.12.7 Herbal application through the nostrils and cauterization

The painting Nomad family feeding a donkey (H.2153-23B-p.2) is a strange scene because the animal is fed from a bag. Amid large steppe pastures, why feed the animal from a bag rather than let it graze by itself? The reason may be a prescribed herbal formula that the animal must eat or sniff through the nostrils since the

[222] Bretschneider, *Botanicon Sinicum: Notes on Chinese botany from native and western sources*, 206.
[223] Laufer, *Sino-Iranica*, 288-289.

treatment methods include herbal application through the nostrils, besides bleeding and drenching. Then, the painter's purpose of depicting the animal in excretion finds ground; he probably wanted to show that the treatment works.

In the last painting of this group, *Köse baytar* is stabbing a small needle to the donkey. Other men seem to be trying to control the animal, with desperate expressions in their faces, as shown in Figure 78.

Figure 78. A man is stabbing a small needle to the donkey, while others seem to be trying to control the animal (H.2153-55A, detail)

Other than an injection, it can be a cauterization therapy, which exists among animal treatment solutions, which calls not just for herbal treatment but also specialized bleeding and cauterization. According to the experts, The cauterization called for in the sixth-century manual of *Qimin yaoshu* recipes, for example, had little or nothing to do with moxa-cautery, the indigenous tradition of cauterisation already established in China. It seems to represent something entirely novel and

probably an introduction elsewhere.[224] The diagram in Figure 79 shows cauterization points on a horse, with 28 different points and what they are used for.[225]

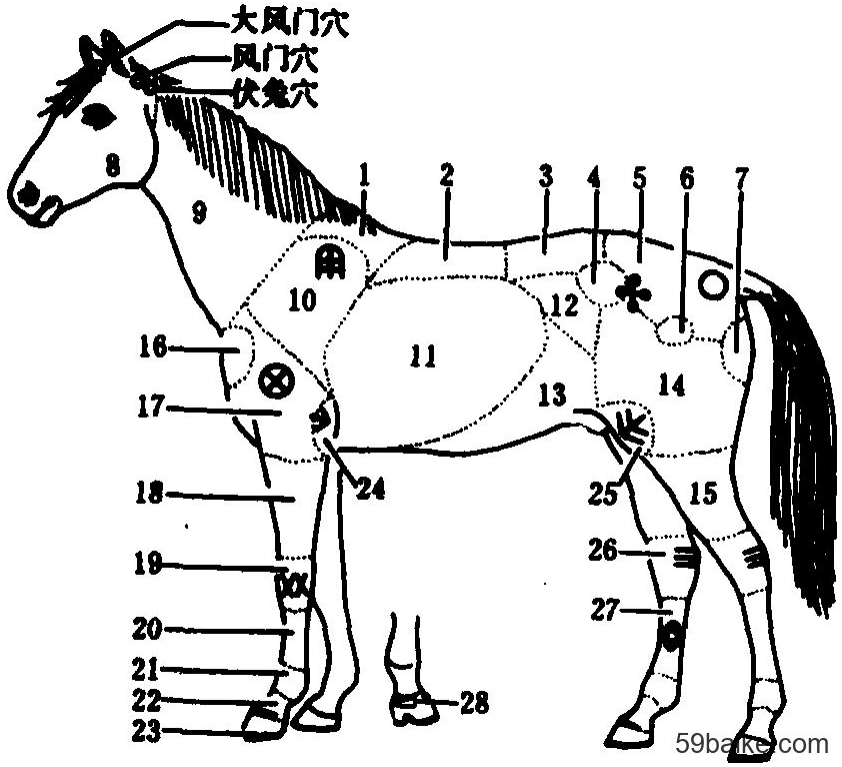

Figure 79. A diagram showing cauterization points on a horse (Source: Buell et al., "Chinese Horse Medicine")

Heavenly horses that Chinese emperors admired had been among the first goods exchanged along the early Silk Roads. Since early times, due to the apparent easy exchange of veterinary ideas in Eurasia, the traditions become almost identical at both ends of the Silk Road. However, Buell et al. argue that the essential concepts went from West to East, and not the reverse. The manuscripts show that Chinese horse medicine borrowed from foreign traditions, probably drawn from Eurasian competitors and distant cultures situated along the Silk Road. This transmission happened mainly during the two significant eras of China's history. One was the era

[224] Buell et al., "Chinese Horse Medicine: Texts and Illustrations," 315, fn. 7.

[225] "烧烙疗法, 中兽医百科"

of the Han and the Southern and Northern Dynasties when the interactions between Central Eurasia and China were strongly present. The second is the Mongol period, where books physically walked from one part of the Mongol world to another; Chinese medical and other works went to Iran and were translated and adapted there, while Islamic works and some Tibetan ones were translated and adapted in China.[226]

Interestingly for our tale, the storytellers had worked as early "advertisers" or "public information desks." Several lithographs dating to Europe's eighteenth and nineteenth centuries support this assumption. Examples can be found in Victor H. Mair's book about the development of picture recitation in various cultural traditions worldwide. Mair remarks that the performance of the storytellers was, in a sense, an advertisement for the published wares; they sold other sorts of goods, including quack medicines, at parish fairs, entertainment centers, and elsewhere.[227] In some of these images we see picture reciters operating in close association with medicine sellers, quack doctors who are also storytellers treating patients, or street singers telling of disasters.[228] When we think of this group of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings in the light of the above function of storytelling, there is enough reason to attribute them similar aspects of veterinary medicine advertisement.

This case exposes various layers of mobility between nomad and sedentary populations on the margins of China. In the first layer, the knowledge of veterinary practices and treatment methods entered the Chinese *milieu* during the Northern and Yuan dynasties. The mobility of this knowledge must have happened orally. In the second layer of mobility, this knowledge is written down and consequently materializes on richly illustrated texts, even in later cases printed. The third layer of

[226] Buell et al., "Greek and Chinese horse medicine: déjà vu all over again", 31–56.
[227] Mair, *Painting and Performance*, 126.
[228] Color Plate 3, Figures 38 and 70a respectively in Mair, *Painting and Performance*.

mobility began with the travel of these texts as portable objects back to nomadic lands along the Silk Roads to the West. In a way, what is orally transmitted from nomadic lands to sedentary China goes back to its sources in a written and illustrated format. The fourth layer of mobility can be considered the work of the historian today, trying to understand the meaning of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, the products of a nomadic oral tradition, referring to written Chinese sources.

3.13 Tale 5-*Sanduk-al Dunya*[229]

Filiz Çağman interpreted some pictures of Mehmed Siyah Kalem *genre* as "clues," supporting the assumption that these paintings were made for display during recitals of stories. According to Çağman, the clues are cases that seem to contain pictures for display. As shown in Figures 80 and 81, in the first group of the *Tale 5-Sanduk-al dunya* exist two paintings with cases of the storyteller. The first one is Journey of a storyteller (H.2153-38B-p.3) "portraying a group of three people where the young man approaching from the background holds a large, flat case of a shape and size that suggests it would have contained pictures." In a second painting known as Encounter by candlelight (H.2153-65A-p.1), there is "a man holding a candle that is showering light on the person facing him, who holds a long oval case, the shape of which suggests that it may contain pictures for display." [230]

[229] Literally meaning "chest of the world", the term *Sanduk-al Dunya* is used in Arabic to refer to several different types of street entertainment still popular in Egypt. The version referred here involves a painting that is turned while the storyteller narrates a story where during the show you have to look through a hole in the box to see the painting.

[230] Çağman, "Glimpses," 155. Çağman includes a third painting, Constructing a wooden building (H.2153-141b-p.2) to the group of paintings related to storytelling. The painting shows men carrying building materials for a wooden structure, which she suggests, may be a stage. According to my opinion, this painting depicts an architectural undertaking much more grandiose than a wandering storyteller's stage.

Figure 80. Chart of Tale 5-*Sanduk-al Dunya*

Figure 81. Tags of Tale 5-*Sanduk-al Dunya*

As a second group two paintings seem connected, since they depict persons with almost identical physical features and costumes. In Rope making (H.2153-73B-p.2), the storyteller riding the horse in the Journey of a storyteller is making rope with another person. In the Nomads at work (H.2153-38A-p.4), the man with a red costume, holding the case of pictures in the Encounter by candlelight, looks like he is kneading something in the container before him. Other people are surrounding him, they all have some work they do using various instruments. These works, including rope making, can be preparations for producing or displaying storytelling paintings.

Letting aside whether the person is a journeying storyteller and the cases contain storyteller pictures or not, I want to discuss with a functional approach various aspects of how these narrative paintings could have been used in practice. This method of analysis vis-à-vis these paintings is a crucial contribution to the literature in proposing patterns about their physical use in daily life. Hence, this last account, *Tale 5-Sanduk-al dunya*, is the tale of the storytellers themselves, about how they perform their picture recitation.

3.13.1 Storyteller argument

The idea that these paintings have a narrative content was first raised in 1910 by the German Orientalist Philipp Walter Schulz (1864-1920) in an exhibition catalog published in Berlin. Schulz's collection from *countries of Islam and East Turkestan* included two paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem *genre*, purchased in Istanbul at the turn of the twentieth century. He expressed the idea with a short question in parenthesis: *For shadow plays?*[231]

[231] "Für Schattenspiele?", *Katalog der Sonderausstellung Orientalische Buchkunst*, 50.

Mazhar Şevket İpşiroğlu (1908-1985) further developed and expressed in his 1985 publication the argument that these paintings were initially produced to accompany storytellers during their performances.[232] Lynda Gillard, pointed out that many images with conversing figures emphasize by visual means their speaking.[233] Leo Jungeon Oh reminded the spread of Buddhist iconography through illustrated scrolls by traveling storytellers.[234] In their above arguments these scholars suggested a narrative function for Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings to accompany oral recitations.

Filiz Çağman strengthened the argument by commenting about the physical condition of the papers. The fact that the papers are badly worn and many bearing fly spots indicate that they were handled much and exposed to open air. Moreover, the careless execution of pictures, most of the time not strictly following the original sketches, shows that they were not made to be looked at from a distance close enough to discern detail. Other supporting details for the assumption that these paintings were meant to illustrate an oral folk tradition, are the absence of any courtly figures and independence from a known literary text.[235]

3.13.2 Storytelling performance - where and how?

Thinking about the probable storyteller cases to carry pictures for display in the paintings Journey of a storyteller (H.2153-38B-p.3) and Encounter by candlelight (H.2153-65A-p.1), I will question and propose some alternatives to the way the performance took place. Letting aside what was painted on the paper surface, I will

[232] İpşiroğlu, *Bozkır Rüzgârı, Siyah Kalem*, 10. The tGerman title of the book is *Wind der Steppe: Die schonsten Blatter des Meisters Siyah Qalem*.
[233] Gillard, "Siyāh Qalam: New Perspectives," 117.
[234] Oh, "Islamicised Pseudo-Buddhist Iconography in Ilkhanid Royal Manuscripts," 95.
[235] Çağman, "Glimpses into the Fourteenth-Century Turkic World of Central Asia," 148–56.

conduct a functional investigation following methodological suggestions of Imre Galambos in approaching manuscripts: 1. Examine both text and manuscript, 2. Focus on people and practices, rather than texts, 3.consider the entire collection, 4.look at them cross-culturally.[236]

This holistic examination of manuscripts includes not only content but form as well to gain insights into their production and use. In the case of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings there is visual content, instead of textual one. Galambos' approach to Dunhuang manuscripts is from the point of view of the typology of book form and binding, contrasting these features with those in other manuscripts. While content is an equally important part of the equation, he tries to go beyond the practice of focusing solely on the texts, through merging these two aspects.[237]

Sam van Schaik is another scholar who adopted a similar practice approach towards a group of Tibetan manuscripts derived from Dunhuang.[238] Schaik concentrates on the roles the manuscripts played in everyday life, rather than extracting them from a jumble of material and studying them in isolation. He raises the following questions to discern patterns of behavior:

> When we study ancient manuscripts we are faced with the material remains of a social group. Instead of mining this material for interesting texts, and stripping out the material context, we could use all of the context we can get our hands on to reconstruct the patterns of behaviour, the forms of life, of which these objects were once an integral part. This can be formulated as a series of simple questions, which despite their simplicity are not always asked about manuscripts: how was it made? Who brought it here? Who read it, and for what purposes? And as they do for archaeologists, these would become questions about wider patterns of behaviour. Over time, by studying significant numbers of objects from a complex of sites and placing them in relation to each other, we could hope to discern these patterns. This would allow us to consider not just the meaning of the text, but its use, the practice in which it was embedded. [239]

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[236] Galambos, "Multicultural Dunhuang: Manuscripts and Paintings."
[237] Galambos, *Dunhuang Manuscript Culture*, 24.
[238] Van Schaik, "The Uses of Implements are Different: Reflections on the Functions of Tibetan Manuscripts," 222.
[239] Sam van Schaik, "The Uses of Implements are Different," 222.

Eventually, among the Tibetan texts in question, Schaik discovered various purposes of use: A Handbook for Funerals, A Sermon Book, A Manual for an Initiation Ceremony, A Students' Notebook, A Bilingual Glossary and Phrasebook, A 'Receipt' for Merit Received, An Amulet.

Following this approach based on function and practice in the case of Mehmed Siyah Kalem, we can discern details about how the pictures were used and the related patterns of storytelling.

3.13.3 Paper format

As Çağman pointed out, so many of the pictures are incomplete and have been cut at random and pasted into albums making it impossible to know their original size and form with any certainty. On the other hand, looking at their physical properties, she assumes that some were originally in the form of scrolls, because the top of the image extends beyond the folio, and from this the width of the scroll to which it once belonged is known. Some of them seem to be in the form of fairly short scrolls comprising a few images, and others in the form of separate pictures illustrating one or more episodes in a story and carried in special cases.[240]

Scrolls represent the largest proportion of the Silk Road manuscripts. Most scrolls independently of script origin are on paper 25-27 cm in height, ranging from 40 to 900 cm in length. They are constructed of panels cut to specific sizes usually ca.30x50 cm and pasted together end-over-end to form a long paper streamer, which is then scrolled.[241] If we compare the size of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings all of them fit into the usual scroll format sizes of the Silk Road papers. In Figure 82 is the

[240] Çağman, "Glimpses into the Fourteenth-Century Turkic World of Central Asia," 155.
[241] Helman-Wazny, "Art and technology of the Silk Road Manuscripts: A snapshot based on an analysis of ca. 350 extant manuscripts."

longest picture, *Two demons dancing and musicians*, 486 mm in length (H.2153-64B, 22.7x48.6 cm.)

Figure 82. The longest picture among Mehmed Siyah Kalem's: Two demons dancing and musicians (H.2153-64B, 22.7x48.6 cm.)

Concerning the height, an exceptionally high picture is *Carrying rocks* (H.2153-89A, 35.7x26.5 cm) 35.7 cm, beyond the usual scroll size of the Silk Road manuscripts. Following this, the most typical example is in Figure 83, *Demon making a warning speech* with a height of 28.1cm (H.2153-48A, 28.1x15.7cm).

Figure 83. Demon making a warning speech (H.2153-48A, 28.1x15.7 cm)

Other formats encountered in Silk Road manuscripts are *concertina*, *pothi*, butterfly booklet, thread booklet, stab-stitched booklet, single leaf and fragment.[242] Among them *concertina* is worth attention concerning Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. As shown in Figure 84, these are folded codices, exhibiting variety in size and shape according to the length of the paper.

[242] Helman-Wazny, "Art and technology of the Silk Road Manuscripts: A snapshot based on an analysis of ca. 350 extant manuscripts."

Figure 84. Concertina manuscript containing a Chinese commentary on the Lankavatara Sutra (dating to 800-850, British Library, Or.8210/S.5603)

The concertina format is probably the easiest way to produce a book: Folding a piece of paper like an accordion. Quick and effective, it can be folded in different ways depicted in Figure 85.

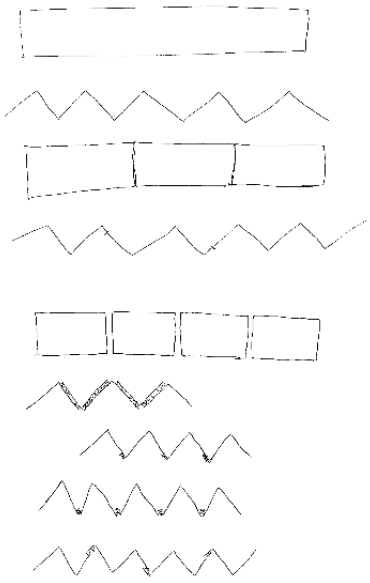

Figure 85. Different ways of folding a concertina and attaching separate leaves (Source: Bookish things to think about, scrolls and concertinas)

Interestingly, a close examination of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings reveals details similar to folding marks that appear predominantly on bigger-size pictures. In most cases, the folding mark is just from the middle, sometimes horizontal[243], and in others, vertical[244] as in Figure 86 according to the paper's dimensions.

Figure 86. vertical folding marks apparent on the middle of the painting Two demons trying to make a tired donkey walk H.2153-27B-p.1

Nevertheless, these marks are not meaningful on the album folios the pictures are found pasted. Hence, they belong most possibly to the period when these paintings were used for narrative recitation. At this initial phase, the storyteller(s)

[243] Some examples are to be found in H.2153-33A, H.2153-34B, H.2153-34B, H.2153-37B, H.2153-101A, H.2153-106B, H.2153-129B, H.2153-141A

[244] Some examples are to be found in H.2153-27B, H.2153-31B, H.2153-37A, H.2153-37B, H.2153-52A, H.2153-64B

perhaps kept these paintings folded both/either for protection reasons and/or for format requirements.

The fact that concertinas are among the forms whose origins lay in Central Asia and Tibet supports the assumption that it is a possible format for Mehmet Siyah Kalem paintings. Imre Galambos emphasizes that concertina, pothi and booklet types of folded and layered manuscripts do not exist among Chinese book forms before the ninth century.[245] They first appeared in Dunhuang, after the region lost direct connection with the Tang and developed closer ties with Tibetan and Central Asian cultures. In a sense, they are the results of the new cultural contacts in the region.[246]

3.13.4 Storyteller cases

How could the storytellers have protected these pictures on paper from environmental damage while wandering from village to village? Çağman thinks they are carried in special cases, like those in the Journey of a storyteller (H.2153-38B-p.3) and Encounter by candlelight (H.2153-65A-p.1). Considering the format and size of these paintings and the portability issue, some pictures may have been used to address small groups of people indoors for educative or advertisement purposes. Such a scene exists in Bernardo Bertolucci's movie *Little Buddha* (1993). The film opens with the scene of a Tibetan lama unpacking a book's cloth cover and telling his child disciples a Buddhist tale while showing them a series of related paintings (Figure 87)

[245] Although in terms of overall numbers the scroll remained the dominant form, the introduction of these types is considered by Galambos a milestone in the history of Chinese book: This was the time when Chinese books first began having pages and, consequently, folio numbers.
[246] Galambos, *Dunhuang Manuscript Culture*.

Figure 87. The opening scene of Bernardo Bertolucci's movie *Little Buddha* (1993)

Dedicated to the 190 years of the Russian Asiatic Museum,[247] the exhibition of *Russian expeditions along the Silk Route* included some Tibetan and possibly Buryat boxes for books depicted in Figure 88.

Collected by the Russian explorers or received as gift, these boxes are relevant in terms of giving an idea about how some of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem pictures could have been carried. Decorated with painted cloth, these wooden boxes were used to put and read scroll and *concertina*-type codices.

[247] Founded in 1818 in St. Petersburg, Asiatic Museum is considered as the first specialized institution for Oriental studies in the world, today known as the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences.

Figure 88. Wooden boxes for books. Right above: Wooden box, painted cloth, Second half of 19th c., Tibetan, 19.5x71cm, Gift of Chinese emperor to Nicolai II. Below: Wood covered with painted cloth, 443 pages, 19th c.?, Tibetan language. Left: To put and read the Tibetan style books, Wood, paper, cloth, 28.5x71.5cm, Buryat?, Turn of 19th c. (Source: *The Caves of One Thousand Buddhas*)

Looking at the cases in Figure 89 thought to be carrying storytelling pictures, they seem rather heavy like a wooden object, and not that easy to handle. At least they need to hold them with both hands. The decorations on the object's cover are similar to those of especially Tibetan-type books.

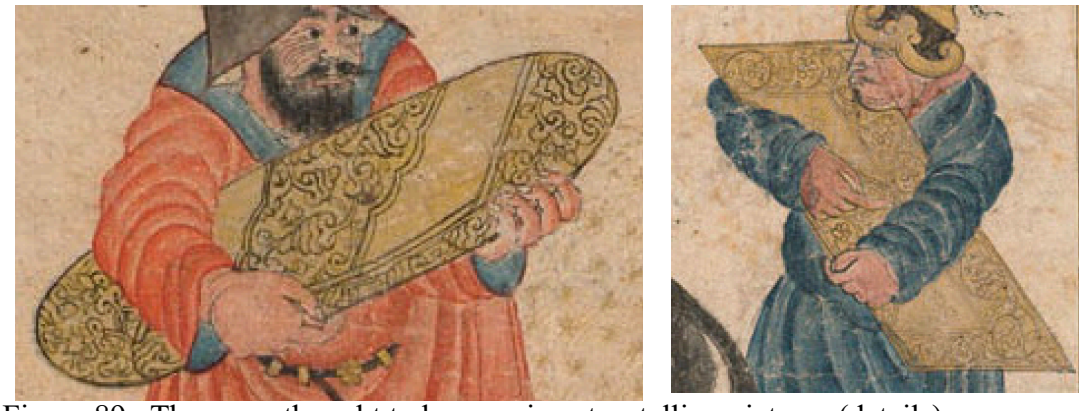

Figure 89. The cases thought to be carrying storytelling pictures (details)

In these terms, the Tibet sacred book dating to the seventeenth century shown in Figure 90 can be a model to envisage the kind of case or book format with a hard protective cover similar to those depicted in Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings.

Figure 90. Tibet sacred book (Source: Pakhoutova and Helman-Wazny, "Tools of Persuasion," 125)

3.13.5 *Sanduk-al Dunya*

Another possible way of use for especially larger pictures of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem genre is what is known as *sanduk-al dunya* in Arabic and as *yang pian* 洋片 in Chinese. Meaning the "chest of the world" and "foreign cinema" respectively, both forms of storytelling format continue to be performed similarly in the Arabian peninsula and China.

This street entertainment involves a painting that is turned while the storyteller narrates a story. It differs from public puppet shows in that you have to look through a hole in the box to see the painting, as shown in Figure 91. Dwight Reynolds points out that in Egypt it is almost always only for children:

> I have never actually seen such a performance, but have interviewed people who remember them from their childhood. I once saw the painting from one of these displayed in a museum in Cairo, and one time I was riding on a bus and we passed a man carrying one -- but it was too crowded for me to get off the bus and try to find him. [248]

Figure 91. Pictures, museum objects and photos of *sanduk-al dunya* in Egypt

The performance of *yang pian* 洋片 has been continuing in its traditional form in contemporary China. It is possible to encounter the performance at Chinese new year fairs. In a performance I witnessed at Beijing Ditan Temple Fair during the Chinese New Year in February 2008, the storyteller narrated, and sang a famous episode from the *Eight Immortals* (Figure 92). Unlike Egypt, the audience of *yang pian* are adults rather than children. Besides the crowd only listening to the recitation, those who pay 10 yuan can sit and watch the accompanying paintings through the holes reserved for each one.

[248] Dwight Reynolds, personal correspondence, 10 April 2021.

Figure 92. A *yang pian* 洋片 performance in Beijing Ditan Temple Fair during the Chinese New Year, February 2008 (photograph by the author)

In another performance I recorded during the Chinese National Holiday in October 2013 at the International Sculpture Park in Beijing (Figure 93), the storyteller used a smaller case. That day's episode was an adventure of the Monkey King selected from one of four Chinese classical novels *Journey to the West.* Looking to the paintings decorating the case, the program was set among a range of alternatives in his repertoire of folk stories about beauties, animals or quests in the nature. The performance of the *yang pian* 洋片 consists not only of the recitation of the story accompanied by paintings but was enriched with singing, body gestures and beating drum and gong, which are attached on top of the case.

Figure 93. A yang pian 洋片 performance in Beijing International Sculpture Park during the Chinese National Holiday, October 2013 (photograph by the author)

The performance equipment, including the tabourets for the audience is very convenient in terms of portability and mobility of the storyteller. It is possible to find lots of traditional performers all over China. A website displays photographs of this "big world lying behind the small round holes." The young performer Zhang Zhen 张振 from Dezhou 德州 in Shandong 山东 province shows step by step how this "one-man-show" works: He prepares the paintings, constructs the wooden box, builds the mechanisms to change the pictures via pulling the numbered ropes, beats the drum and gong with the red ribbon, shows how the view looks like from the holes.[249] Figure 94 is a selection of various stages of preparation for the performance.

[249]山东手造丨德州"拉洋片：小圆孔藏着大世界，一人一箱演绎最早"土电影, https://rmh.pdnews.cn/Pc/ArtInfoApi/article?id=27852642.

Figure 94. The young performer Zhang Zhen 张振 shows all the stages of this traditional performance in Dezhou 德州, Shandong province, China

Looking at these photographs, nothing seems to have changed since centuries of performance except for the modern carpentry tools with electricity. As the performance flows on various pulling mechanisms -pulling the ropes for changing the pictures and beating the drum and gong- it is known as *la yang pian* 拉洋片. "Pulling" in each case refers to the fact that the pictures were attached to a rope the

operator would pull on to bring a new picture into view. As he did so, small cymbals fixed to the box would sound.[250]

Besides this horizontal mechanism of pushing and pulling left and right, there is also a vertical system based on sliding the pictures up and down. Figure 95 illustrates a diagram of "do it yourself" listing materials, tools and instructions to produce your own "film box".

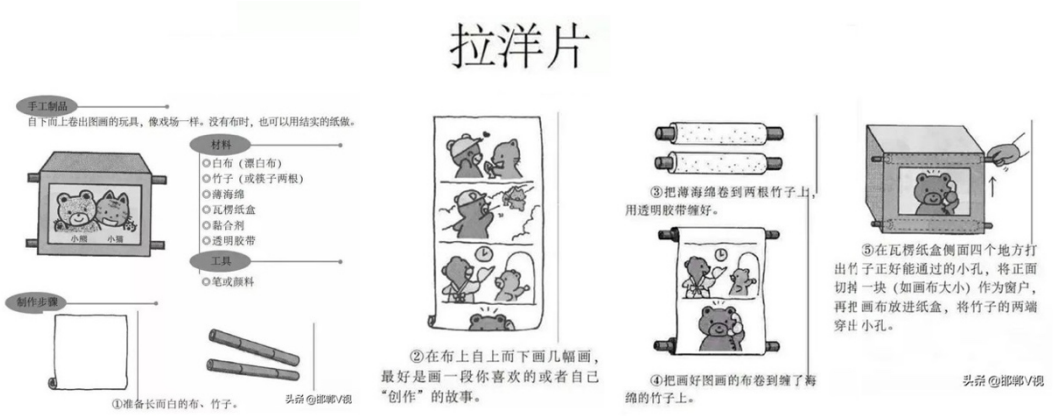

Figure 95. Instructions about how to do your own *la yang pian* 拉洋片 (Source: Intangible cultural heritage of Handan 邯郸)

The explanations in Figure 95 enlighten the working system of the vertical mechanism within the square box: 1. prepare the scroll materials, white paper and bamboo sticks, 2. paint the story plots in a vertical direction from up to down, 3. cover the bamboo sticks with the sponge, 4. roll the paper over the sponged bamboo sticks, 5. place the bamboo sticks on a square box and slide the pictures.[251]

The performance in China has a history of more than 300 years.[252] There are performers of fifth generation in Guangping 广平 county, with whose efforts the

[250] Mair, *Painting and Performance*, 14.

[251] Intangible cultural heritage of Handan 邯郸

[252] Zhang, "Wu dou dou-la yang pian 舞斗斗·拉洋片," 61.

performance is approved as an intangible cultural heritage protection project in Hebei 河北 Province in 2007. In the entry of *la yang pian* 拉洋片 in the popular online Chinese encyclopedia Baike Baidu 百科百度, the origins of the performance are attributed to the Song dynasty (960-1276).[253]

The performance exists in Europe with names like raree show, peep show or peep box, with a history traced back to the early modern period. Italian Renaissance artist Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472) may have been the inventor of the peep-show box, for some such device is ascribed to him in a contemporary biography.[254]

These worldwide examples help us to imagine an appropriate form of storytelling performance for the large-size Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. Considering the importance of ropes in the case of this storytelling system, of which we can find examples worldwide from China to Europe for centuries, the picture of Rope making (H.2153-73B-p.2) gains a different meaning. Of course, people use ropes for several purposes and not every rope maker is a storyteller. But as the person making rope seems quite similar to the man identified as a storyteller, it is worth considering the following aspect: With the painting Nomads at work (H.2153-38A-p.4), these two pictures can be preparations for a performance.

Eventually, some of the tales proposed in this chapter could have been used for indoor performances addressing small audiences, and others for a wider public. Following Victor Mair's map about the transmission lines of picture recitation around the world, the geography of Mehmed Siyah Kalem artists stands on the crossroads between East and West, in direct connection with India and China.

[253] https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%8B%89%E6%B4%8B%E7%89%87/3410555
[254] Peep-show box, *The Oxford Dictionnary of Art and Artists*, accessed from oxfordreference.com

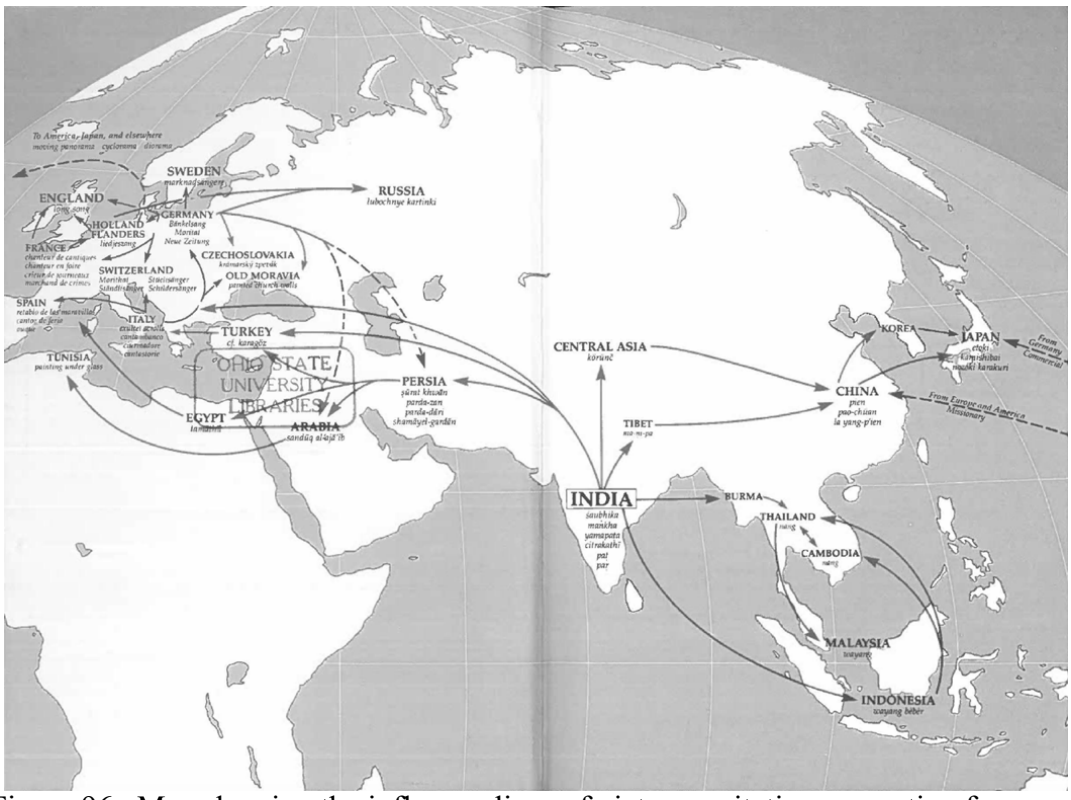

Figure 96. Map showing the influence lines of picture recitation emanating from India (Mair, *Painting and Performance*)

As Mair points out,

> For a genre of folk literature that has been so vital for such a long period of time and in so many different places cannot conceivably be reduced to a few lines on a simple schematic map. Hence the map ought to be viewed only as suggestive of some possible connections in the spread of this phenomenon across the globe.[255]

Nevertheless, considering India as the "apparent fountainhead of picture recitation"[256] at least for some major traditions, Central Asia has indirect connections with Tibet and Southeast Asia as well as with Persia, Arabia, Egypt, Türkiye and further west towards Europe, in the "broad diversity and wide distribution" of picture recitation throughout the world. Hence, although *China to West Asia* seems a "global" connotation for the interaction geography of these storytelling paintings flowing among folks, it defines a historical reality.

[255] Mair, *Painting and Performance,* 131.
[256] Mair, *Painting and Performance,*131.

The next chapter will attempt to narrow down this global perspective to a locally more specific one. It will propose a historical, geographical as well as conceptual location for the probable production geography of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings: A transregional land that had its own peculiar cultural production in interplay between Chinese sources and intermingled Turkic and Iranian peoples of Central Asia.

The term *Chinese Turkestan* is chosen to describe not as a politically defined area, but as a multicultural flow region whose wide-ranging sources extend from China towards West Asia during the second half of the fourteenth century.

CHAPTER 4

CHINESE TURKESTAN

PAINTINGS OF THE STORYTELLER – "THE WEAVER"

> The word 'text,' before referring to a written or spoken, printed or manuscripted text, meant 'a weaving together'. In this sense, there is no performance which does not have 'text'. That which concerns the text (the weave) of the performance can be defined as 'dramaturgy', that is, drama-ergon, the 'work of the actions' in the performance.[257]

Where was the homeland of the author(s) of these paintings, the so-called Mehmed Siyah Kalem? The production geography of these paintings was obviously in intense interaction with Chinese cultural and artistic realms. Whereas the influences were not a one-way direction from a settled civilization to its periphery, as to consider this geography a "Chinese hinterland."

It is important to note that Central Asian influences occurred in medieval Chinese manuscript culture at various periods, as reflected in the Dunhuang material. These influences had changed Chinese scribal habits, ranging from the use of the pen instead of a brush, to the appearance of entirely new book forms and donor inscriptions written in a reversed direction.[258]

We think of these elements -brush, scroll and direction of writing- almost as taboo today, concerning Chinese manuscript culture. On the other hand, as emphasized by Imre Galambos, even the Chinese scribal culture is not a passive recipient of external influences:

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[257] *A dictionary of theatre anthropology*, p.66.
[258] Galambos, *Dunhuang Manuscript Culture*, 11.

> Yet contacts are seldom unilateral. Actions involving more than one party are usually multi-directional exchanges that affect all participants. Interaction does not simply modify local customs and habits but combines internal and external factors into something new that had not previously existed. [259]

As reviewed in Chapter 2 modern scholarship since the beginning of the twentieth century includes a widerange of attributions or implications about the provenance of these paintings. A geographical enigma with many question marks, Mehmed Siyah Kalem was seemingly dominating, if not the entire world map, almost all of the eastern part of the northern hemisphere in Asia.

This chapter aims to locate the geographical and historical accounts that prepared the conditions for creating these unique style paintings. In these terms, Chinese Turkestan refers not to a political or geographical connotation. It is rather, far beyond bilateral, this complex cross-cultural interaction zone, subject to a specific chain of historical moments and cultural and artistic mobilities. Mehmed Siyah Kalem *genre* had risen as a “weaver” of these elements in a production center of its own, on the capillary routes over the ancient Silk Roads.

4.1 The beginning of the east on the *Catalan Atlas*

Catalan-speaking Majorca was the center of a flourishing chart-making school in the fourteenth century, where the author(s) of the so-called Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings is thought to live. Its best-known practitioner was Cresques Abraham (d.1387), a Jewish mapmaker to the royal family of Aragon in northeastern Spain, whose title was "master of maps and compasses." Commissioned to prepare a large illuminated world map as a gift from the crown prince of Aragon to the thirteenth-

[259] Galambos, *Dunhuang Manuscript Culture*, 12.

year-old King Charles VI of France, Cresques produced the masterpiece known as the *Catalan Atlas* (c.1375) shown in Figure 97.

Figure 97. *Catalan Atlas*, illuminated manuscript on parchment, eight leaves mounted on wooden boards, each 25x54cm, Majorca, c.1375. (Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, cote Espagnol 30)

The Cresque Abraham's *Catalan Atlas* contains the earliest known illustration of the Silk Road, where a caravan crosses the desert of Chinese Turkestan, the camels laden and merchants on horseback (Figure 98). The main distinction of the map from its predecessors is its depiction of the wider world based on travelers' observations. Of major significance is Asia's evolving appearance, which reflects Marco Polo's travels (1254-1324) and other thirteenth-century explorers like the Franciscan traveler Friar Odoric (1286-1331), who journeyed in China from 1324-1328. Manuscript copies of their narratives circulated in the fourteenth century, bringing them widespread fame. According to Donald F. Lach, author of *Asia in the making of Europe*, "No map produced before the 16th century gives so comprehensive a picture of Asia as the celebrated *Catalan Atlas*."[260]

[260] Nebenzahl, *Mapping the Silk Road and beyond, 2000 years of exploring the East*, 38.

Figure 98. The earliest known illustration of the Silk Road with a caravan crossing the desert. *Catalan Atlas* (detail)

Intended for the young king of France, the portolan map of eight leaves mounted on wooden boards was informative and fascinating. Geographical, political, and economic information is mixed with ancient legends sourced from medieval stories and wonders of faraway Asia from travelers' accounts. The author wanted to reflect on this map bounded like a book, an image of the entire known world of his time.

The first representation of the so-called Silk Road illustrates a caravan of camels laden with goods and merchants on horseback. They are headed for China, proceeding across the Taklamakan Desert of Chinese Turkestan below the Tianshan Mountains. Besides commercial networks, the map collects information based on travelers' experiences. One such note on the map is about traveling the desert: "Know that those who want to cross the desert stop and rest for a whole week in a town called Lop."[261] Lop Nur, also called Lop Nor, is a former saline lake in northwestern China that is now a salt-encrusted lake bed (The generic term *nur* is derived from the Mongolian word *nuur*, meaning lake). It lies within the Tarim Basin of the eastern

[261] https://images.cnrs.fr/video/6862.

Taklamakan Desert, in the Uygur Autonomous Region of Xinjiang, and is one of the most barren areas of China today.[262]

Illustrated to the west of the caravan, The *Catalan Map* contains the first known representation of the Kipchak Khanate (empire of the Golden Horde) on the Volga River.[263] Looking to the map on Figure 99 and taking into consideration the attributions for Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings *Kipchak of the west, i.e., Crimean or Astrakhan Khanates, North of Caucasus and the territories of the Volga*, the first representations of Silk Roads and Kipchak Khanate happening on the same map might not be a coincidence.

Figure 99. The first known representation of the Kipchak Khanate, the Empire of the Golden Horde, on the west of the caravan routes. *Catalan Atlas* (detail).

Another detail worthy of mention about the map is the depiction of real and imagined sovereigns from all over the world. One of those rulers is the Kipchak khan, very similar to the nobleman depicted in Mehmed Siyah Kalem painting known as *Scene of Hommage*, with their sitting positions, the sticks in their hands, both having similar beards. Figure 100 exposes a comparison between two representations.

[262] *Encyclopaedia Britannica* online.
[263] Nebenzahl, *Mapping the Silk Road and beyond, 2000 years of exploring the East*, 38.

Figure 100. Kıpchak khans in comparison: Details from Scene of Hommage and *Catalan Atlas*

As reflected on the map, the European geographical perception of the fourteenth century represents the Golden Horde as the beginning of the Silk Roads, the starting point for the journey to the east, an interweaving region where east and west both meet and diverge simultaneously.

4.2 The beginning of the west on the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang's account

Where is the other end of the Silk Roads? Or, to put it otherwise, where does the west begin according to the medieval Chinese conception of geography? An appropriate source is the "epoch-making" Chinese classical *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions*, the itinerary of the journey undertaken by the Tripitaka Master Xuanzang in India and some parts of Central Asia between 629-645. Along his journey to India, the pilgrim Xuanzang visited all the important Buddhist sites and enjoyed great popularity in India through his learning as an

outstanding Buddhist scholar. Among several depictions, Dunhuang murals contain a representation of Xuanzang traveling in Figure 101.

When he reached Khotan on his way back to China, he sent a message by a merchant to inform Emperor Taizong (r. 627 -49) of his forthcoming arrival in the capital. The Emperor gave him a warm and lively welcome. During the conversation, the Emperor inquired about the conditions in various regions and countries the Master had visited. The Master informed the Emperor of what he had seen or heard concerning the religion, geography, local products, habits and customs, climates, and legends and fables of the different localities of India and Central Asia. Fascinated by his account, the Emperor requested the Master to write a book about the journey for his reference. This was the cause of the compilation of this Record, which the Master completed in 646, the year after his return to the capital, with the assistance of Bianji, a monk-scholar of Zongchi Monastery, who was invited by imperial order to help the Master in his translation tasks.[264]

[264] Xuanzang, *Great Tang dynasty record of the western regions*, Li Rongxi (English trans.)

Figure 101. Dunhuang mural painting depicting Xuanzang traveling

Xuanzang's record of western regions of China is one of the earliest primary sources which gives a detailed account of Central Asia. The report is made of twelve fascicles. The first fascicle includes 34 countries beginning from Agni to Kapisi. After Agni, the second site in the first fascicle of the pilgrim is The country of Kuci (屈支國, Qūzhī guó).[265] Today situated in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, Kuci -sometimes referred to as Qiuci-, or by the contemporary name Kucha, is the conceptual border towards the west where you get out from the Chinese cultural sphere if you take northern routes of the Tarim Basin. For the southern routes, this border is Khotan, since when reached there, Xuanzang let the emperor of his forthcoming arrival from this city.The map in Figure 102 shows the position of Kucha along the ancient Silk Road centers.

[265] Jì Xiànlín 季羡林, "Dà Táng Xīyùjì Jiàozhù"《大唐西域记校注》

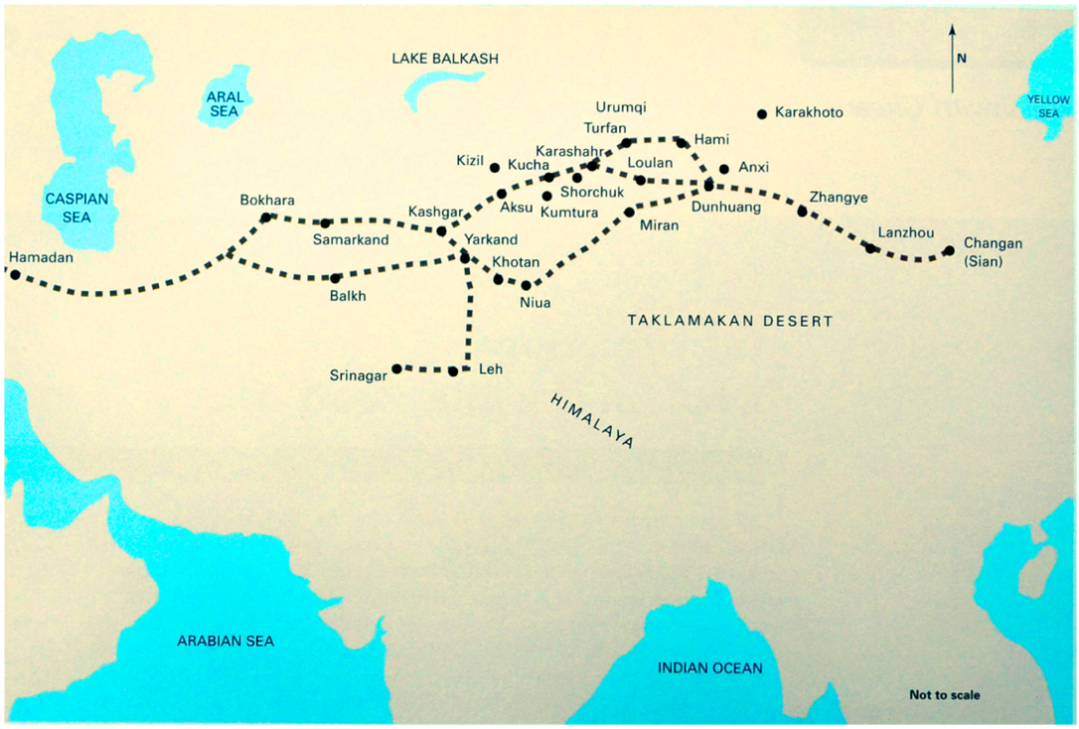


Figure 102. Sites along the Silk Roads and Kucha's position (Source: *Kizil along the Silk Road*)

From the other point of view, many merchants, early Buddhist translators, envoys, and officials moved to China from Central Asia. The migration routes and settlements of the Central Asian groups along the Silk Roads during the early middle ages confirms this position of Kucha as the meeting point of Chinese and Central Asian cultural spheres.

In this sense, Kucha had been one of the most important cultural centers of Buddhist-Manichaeist art, another source attribution to Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. Kucha's main sites of Kizil, Mingöi, Kumutura, Kizilgaha, and Simsim had been centers of the rich artistic tradition of mural painting, as shown in the map by Grünwedel in Figure 103.

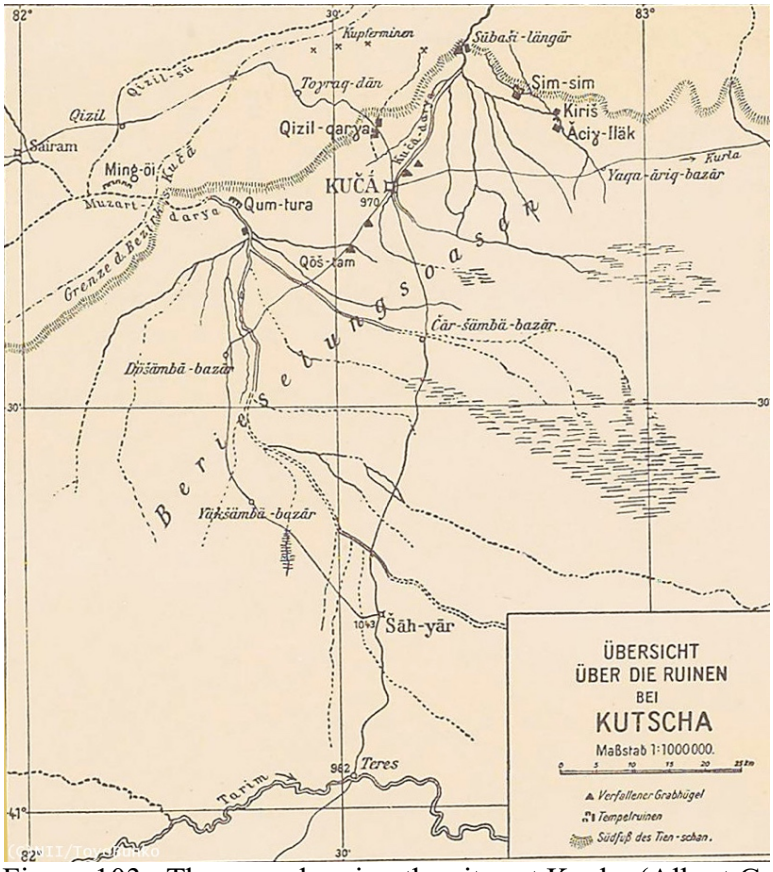


Figure 103. The map showing the sites at Kucha (Albert Grünwedel, *Alt-Kutscha*?)

The Chinese geographical perception of the middle ages, as reflected in Xuanzang's account, Kucha was the starting point for the journey to the west, the beginning of the western lands. In this interweaving region, the west and east meet and diverge simultaneously.

Modern literature attributed Mehmed Siyah Kalem to both ends of the Silk Roads; on the one hand, to *Kipchak lands/Golden Horde* and on the other to *Buddhist-Manicheist art/Turfan, Qocho and Kashgar*. In a sense, these paintings are thought to belong to the east as perceived by the west and the west as perceived by the east.

4.3 Chinese Turkestan: creative interaction zone of multiple cultural spheres

Which term can we use to denote the interaction zone of these two cultural spheres, between the east of the *Catalan Atlas* and Xuanzang's west, to which Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings belong? The terms "Chinese hinterland", "Margins of China", and "Frontiers of China" do not reflect the equilibrium of the creative tension that derives from this cross-cultural interaction. The term Central Asia and its permutations, discussed in many aspects by scholars[266], stands too broad and flexible to the point of exterminating the creative tension. Golden Horde and Transoxiana, besides being too specific *vis-à-vis* today's knowledge about Mehmed Siyah Kalem, Golden Horde seems too much centrifugal, whereas Transoxiana is right at the center.

Many nineteenth-century "scientific" Orientalists and travelers use the term *Chinese Turkestan* to denote the expedition zone in the broader region beyond the west of China.[267] French Sinologist Paul Pelliot draws the area in his three years mission itinerary in Turkestan and China, shown in Figure 104.

[266] To cite some: Andre Gunder Frank, *The centrality of Central Asia*, 1992; Christopher Atwood, *Is There Such a Thing as Central/Inner (Eur)Asia and is Mongolia a part of it?*, 2011.
[267] Some of the publications are Captain Deasy, *In Tibet and Chinese Turkestan*, London, 1901 (Yarkand, Yangi Shahr, Guma, Taklamakan, Khotan, Aksu); Percy W. Church, *Chinese Turkestan with caravan and rifle*, London, 1901 (Yarkand, Aksu, Urumchi, Kucha, Khotan); Major Bruce, *Chinese Turkestan, Proceedings of the Central Asian Society*, 1907; Albert Grünwedel, *Altbuddhistische Kultstätten Chinesisch Turkistan*, Berlin, 1912 (Kucha, Karashahr and Turfan Oasis); Paul Pelliot (trans. H. Getty), *Three thousand four hundred miles through Turkestan and China, itinerary of the Pelliot mission, three years in Upper Asia*, Paris, 1912; Aurel Stein, *Memoir on Maps of Chinese Turkistan and Kansu*, Dehra Dun, 1923 (The oasis of the Tarim Basin, Taklamakan Desert, The terminal depression of Lop and the Turfan Basin; The Su-lo-ho Basin, From the Central Nan-shan to the Etsin-go1 Basin, The pei-shan and the Easternmost T'ien-shan); Albert von le Coq, *Buried Treasures of Chinese Turkestan*, London, 1928 (Turfan, Karakhoja, Bezeklik, Tujuk, Kumul, Kashgar, Kızıl, Korla-Karashahr).

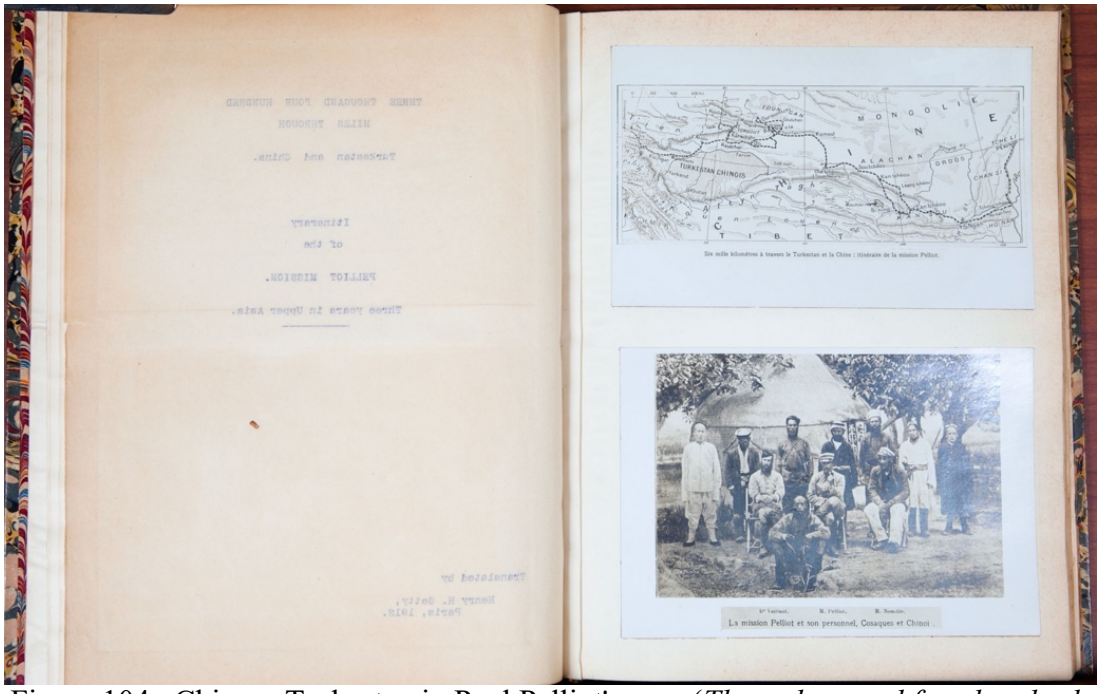


Figure 104. Chinese Turkestan in Paul Pelliot's map (*Three thousand four hundred miles through Turkestan and China*)

Chinese Turkestan, with a connotation of cultural and artistic interaction zone exhibiting features of a unique blend in close connection with China, rather than a precise geographical and political term, fulfills the conditions that prepared the ground for Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings.

4.4 Capillary routes

Another controversial aspect concerning the provenance of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings is the center/periphery attributions. The dichotomic question is whether he came from the courtly painting tradition that developed in Iran and Central Asia or an artist living on the edges or "fringes" of a sedentary world far removed from the center.[268] There are peripheric attributions like borderlands of Central Asia, *towards*

[268] Roxburgh, “Images on the fringe: Muhammad Siyah Qalam and responses of Turkmen artists,” 97–113.

the lake Baikal?; ancestors of the Russian Moujik? and nomads, dervishes, and shamans interpreted as images with autobiographical dimension. On the side of the center artist, there are attributions to Mongol-Timurid and Ming courts; and mentions about his learnedness from sources as far as Europe in the west and China in the east, which suggests that he has a wide-ranging visual archive, a case mostly possible for a center artist.

Jason Neelis uses the term "capillary networks" or "capillary routes" that gave ancient travelers many choices of north-south and east-west itineraries. Silk Roads was not a major highway but a network of intertwined passageways providing long-distance trade paths and cross-cultural transmission between transregional overland arteries. Since crossing the high mountains was difficult for large groups of traders in caravans, they were probably using capillary networks for a smaller trade scale than the bulk trade of the main arteries. According to Neelis, deep river valleys and high passes in the mountain desert environment formed capillary networks that linked the border regions to centers like Gandhara, Swat, Kashmir, and the Tarim Basin. Travelers used this micro-network of capillary routes between neighboring valleys for intra- and interregional travel and trade.[269]

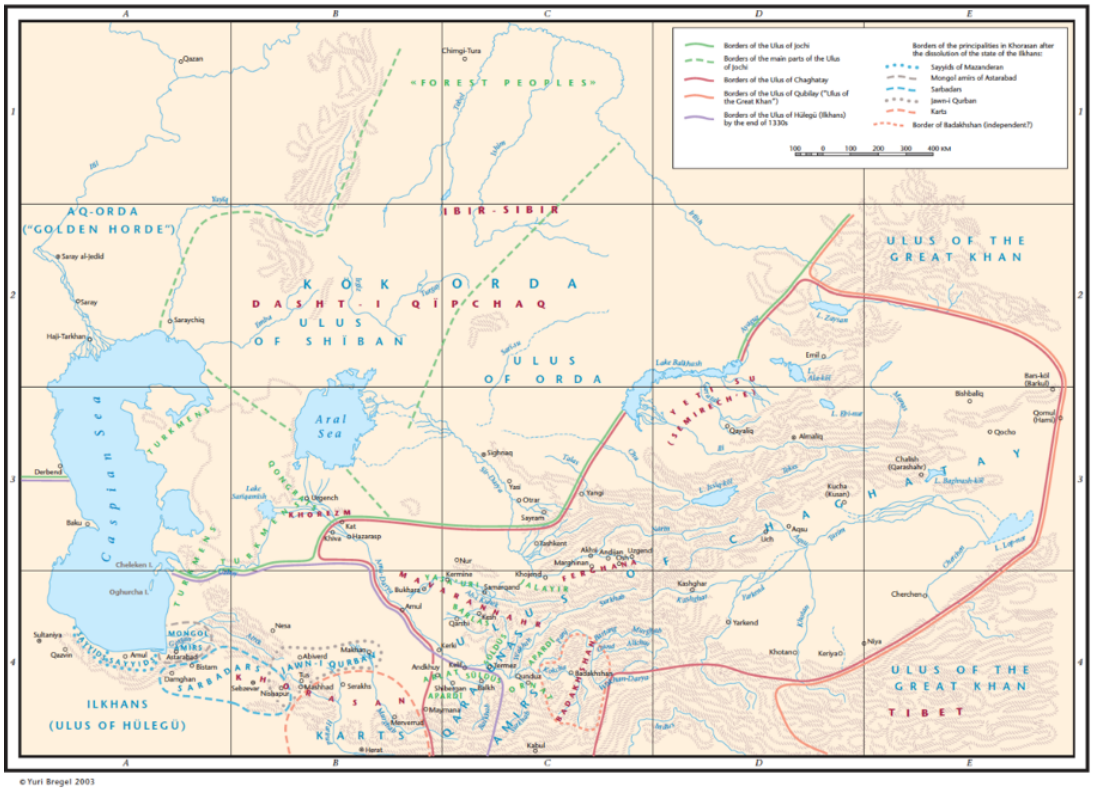
Rather than restricting themselves to a single superhighway, the travelers on the Silk Roads followed various itineraries, including major arteries, minor capillary routes, and "middle paths" to travel back and forth between destinations. Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings embody the properties of an artistic genre neither exactly from the periphery nor from the center. This dichotomy suggests an interweaving

[269] Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks*, *Mobility and Exchange.*

production site where the center and periphery meet and diverge simultaneously, situated on the capillary routes.

4.5 The period in-between the decline of Mongols and the rise of Timurids

In the unpublished facsimile of the Yakub Bey albums, scholars of art history attribute the main group of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings to the fourteenth century. Mongol *ulus*es shared the region's political scene from the early fourteenth century to the rise of Timur, with defined borders and large entities of the Ulus of Jochi, Ulus of Chagatai, Ulus of Kubilai-The Great Khan, Ulus of Hülegü (Ilkhanids). The map in Figure 105 illustrates the region from the early fourteenth century to the rise of Timur.



20. THE MONGOL *ULUS*ES FROM THE EARLY 14TH CENTURY TO THE RISE OF TIMUR

Figure 105. The Mongol uluses from the early fourteenth century to the rise of Timur (Bregel, *An Historical Atlas of Central Asia*)

In the early fourteenth century, the conflicts among members of the Mongol royal family led to disintegration. During this era, many princes neglected their administrative, diplomatic and political duties and largely returned to traditional nomadic life, indulging themselves in hunting, small military campaigns, and family wars. The political chaos undermined economic development and further weakened the numerous members of the Genghis clan in Central Asia. In this environment, Timur emerged as a new regional leader. In Figure 106 are the two maps of the region to compare the transition between two empires.[270]

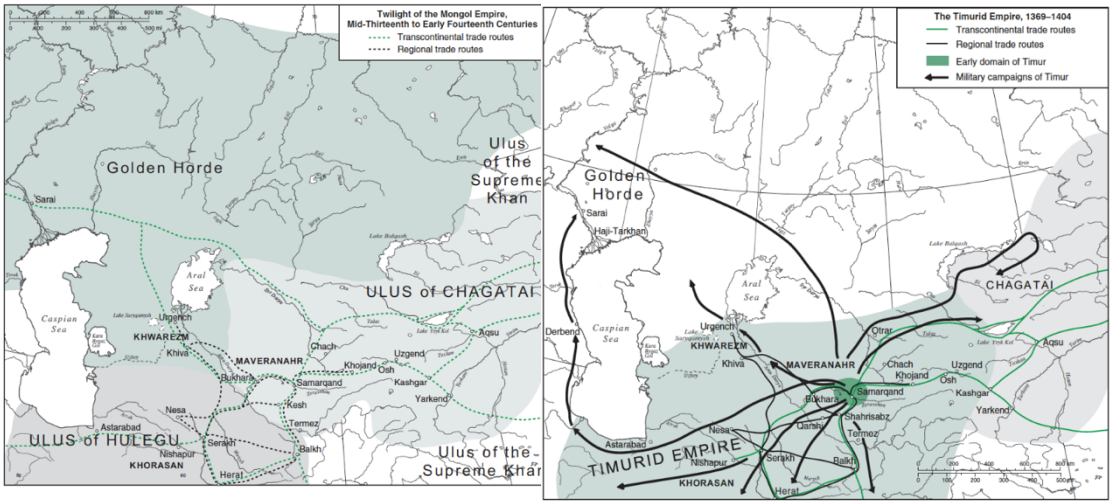


Figure 106. Left: Twilight of the Mongol Empire Right: The Timurid Empire (Abazov, *Historical Atlas of Central Asia*)

The transition period between the disintegration of the Mongol Empire and the rise of Timurids in the first half of the fourteenth century is the most likely period where Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings found ground in-between two strong artistic traditions.

[270] Abazov, *Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of Central Asia*.

On the one hand, the centers' impact is enough to reach and feed the capillary routes. On the other hand, this impact is loose enough to leave a unique *genre* to flourish. Hence some scholars' approaches to the paintings with the following attributions become more meaningful: *Mongolian style,* Yuan period Yong-le-gong Palace in Shanxi, Timurid art, or Tang motifs re-entering China during the Mongol invasion. Hence, Mehmed Siyah Kalem is a weaver of two periods with solid traditions, Mongol and Timurid.

4.6 The period of Islamisation in the region

The fourteenth century was a period of transition at the western edge of the Silk Roads as well. Andrew Peacock attracts attention to the profound changes in Muslim society and culture during the same period in medieval Anatolia, which evolved from a Christian, Greek- and Armenian-speaking land to a predominantly Muslim and Turkish speaking one. According to Peacock, the crucial but neglected period in Anatolian history, that of Mongol domination, between circa 1240 and 1380, represents a decisive phase in Islamisation.[271] Peacock emphasizes that this process did run broadly parallel to that in the Golden Horde, especially the emergence of a Turkish literary language in which the faith of Islam could be propagated, which in both the Dasht-i Kipchaq and Anatolia took place in the late thirteenth to fourteenth centuries. At this transitional era, the connections between Golden Horde and Anatolia were forming a common cultural area, through exchanging itinerant scholars and Turkish language and texts, as remarked by Peacock.[272]

[271] Peacock, *Islam, literature and society in Mongol Anatolia*.
[272] Peacock, "Islamisation in the Golden Horde and Anatolia: Some remarks on travelling scholars and texts," 1-10.

During this transition period of Islamisation and conversions at the western part of the Silk Roads geography, sources record an interesting figure known as Barak Baba (d.1307–8). A prominent dervish leader in Anatolia and Iran, he gained the trust of the Ilkhanid rulers. 1306 he journeyed to Syria and Egypt with a group of dervish disciples. He was famed for taming wild animals like tigers and his outlandish appearance. Multiple sources mention him with his party of roughly one hundred followers.[273] Their extraordinary appearances noted in historical documents read as if they described the demons dancing in Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings:

> His hair and mustache were long, while the rest of his face was clean shaven. On his head, he wore a felt turban affixed with buffalo horns, and around his neck, a rope adorned with the knucklebones of cattle or sheep. He carried a club and henna-dyed bells. His disciples resembled him, and some carried tambourines, drums, and bugle-horns. Baraq Baba did not accumulate any wealth, and he apparently had power over wild animals, which he demonstrated by frightening a tiger and riding an ostrich on two occasions (Mamluk sources give conflicting accounts of these feats). His dervishes performed the prescribed religious prayers (though on pain of forty blows of the bastinado), but they failed to observe the ritual fast and consumed legally objectionable foods and drugs (al-Ṣafadi, al-ʿAyni).[274]

Nothing is known about Barak Baba's undertakings until the end of the thirteenth century, when he traveled to Iran and gained the trust of the Ilkhanid rulers. Contrary to what his physical appearance makes us think, he was not insane, since this trust was to such an extent that the Ilkhanid ruler Uljaytu (r.1304-1316) sent him to diplomatic missions, one of them being to the Mamluks. In some of the primary sources, he is referred to as *Barak el Kırımi*, Barak from Crimea.[275] Although he never set foot in the Kipchak lands, he used Kipchak for writing his ecstatic utterances.[276]

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[273] For the largest collection of primary sources please refer to Ülken, *Anadolu'nun Dinî Sosyal Tarihi (Öncüler: Barak Baba, Geyikli Baba, Hacı Bektaş)*.
[274] Karamustafa, "Baraq Baba," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.
[275] Ülken, *Anadolu'nun Dinî Sosyal Tarihi (Öncüler: Barak Baba, Geyikli Baba, Hacı Bektaş)*.
[276] Peacock, *Islam, literature and society in Mongol Anatolia*, 182.

Interestingly, he was baptized as a child and received priestly training from the Greek patriarch in Constantinople, but was reconverted to Islam by Sarı Saltuk, the most famous "warrior-saint" associated with the partial Islamization and Turkification of the Ottoman Balkans during the second half of the thirteenth century. [277]

Long hair and mustache, buffalo horns, a rope adorned with the knucklebones of cattle or sheep around the neck, a club and henna-dyed bells, disciples like him, with tambourines, drums and bugle-horns… These descriptions match exactly physical features of some of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem figures. Of course these similarities do not mean that these paintings describe Barak Baba and his disciples. Yet they are meaningful in describing the reactions to the large-scale conversion to a new religion in the region during the fourteenth century. He may represent these in-between solutions that a society created while adapting to new historical and social contexts.

Barak Baba lived during this transitional period of Islamisation in Anatolia and Iran, having close contact with Golden Horde. The accounts about this unconventional person in comparison with Mehmed Siyah Kalem figures can serve as a reference to understand the tensions in the wider region around the production period of these paintings. The appearance of Islamic and non-Islamic aspects in Mehmed Siyah Kalem art gains ground when thinking about attributions to a

[277] Karamustafa, "Baraq Baba," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

shamanistic milieu,[278] to "reminiscences of Turkish Buddhism"[279] or to "heterodox sects of Central Asia and Turkish *dervishes* of diverse races and the paintings representing supernatural legends circulating in these heterodox circles."[280]

The reflection of these processes on artistic production is discussed and exemplified by Leo Jungeon Oh. The author shows the interaction between Buddhism and Islam in visual arts by tracing elements in Ilkhanid royal manuscripts to earlier Buddhist iconography and motifs. Considering that Ilkhanids were at the beginning devoted Buddhists and then converted to Islam, his study demonstrates that the conversions do not happen overnight but are continuously prolonged periods. These transitions reflect on art as artistic elements bearing features from both cultures, sometimes in the minute details of the artworks, sometimes in its overall composition. [281] In this sense Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings interweave various religious aspects of this in-between period.

4.7 Oral-visual aspects: A synthesis of several views

Another interweaving aspect of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings is about orality and visuality; the realms interweaved through oral narration accompanied by pictures. These two realms both meet and diverge simultaneously in the storyteller's narration. Attributions like Buddhist-Manicheist art and Dunhuang studios constitute the visual

[278] The suggestion that the figures represented are shamans is made for the first time in 1955 and undertaken and discussed at various occasions later by many scholars in relation to the spiritual atmosphere of shamanism. İpşiroğlu - Eyüboğlu 1955; Otto–Dorn 1964, 'Hintergrund die magische Welt des Schamanismus', pp. 216-217; Lommel 1967, p. 161; Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam: 1250-1800* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994); Robert Hillenbrand, *The Dictionary of Art*, s.v. "Islamic art. 8. Subject-Matter," vol. 16, 131; re-published in Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom, ed., *The Grove Encyclopedia of Islamic Art and Architecture,* s.v. "Subject-Matter. IV. Secular Themes," 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3: 243-248.
[279] Esin, 1970, 105. Uluç, "Historiography."
[280] Esin, "Eren, Les dervis heterodoxes turcs d'Asie Centrale et le peintre surnommé Siyah Kalem."
[281] Oh, "Islamicised Pseudo-Buddhist Iconography in Ilkhanid Royal Manuscripts," 91–154.

aspects, whereas those associations with shadow play and *Bakshi*[282] traditions constitute the oral aspects of the paintings. This tension reflects on the art of Mehmed Siyah Kalem in a genius creative representation similar to animation, as investigated with examples of storytelling techniques in the previous chapter. In the performance theory, this is known as the simultaneous interweaving of several actions:

> The simultaneous interweaving of several actions in the performance causes something similar to what Eisenstein describes in reference to El Greco's View of Toledo: that the painter does not reconstruct a real view but rather constructs a synthesis of several views, making a montage of the different sides of a building, including even those sides that are not visible, showing various elements – drawn from reality independently of each other – in a new and artificial relationship.[283]

An early animation performer, Mehmed Siyah Kalem is the weaver of several actions between oral and visual aspects of narration.

4.8 "The weaver"

Eugenio Barba, one of the twentieth century's most influential theater authorities, notes various interweavings embedded in the performance; the performer is a weaver of several elements along the performance. In his work now classical in the field, *A dictionary of theatre anthropology,* the subtitle of the book, *The secret art of the performer,* comprises the interweaving of the drama, the story or the situation; the

[282] *Bakhshi* art is the epic poetry in the musical and poetic heritage of the Uzbek and Karakalpak people of Uzbekistan. Called *doston*s, the traditional centuries-old poems are based on myths, legends, folk tales and legendary chants, and address varied themes. *Bakhshi* refers to the performance of these epic stories and original pieces with the accompaniment of musical instruments. The storytellers, also called *bakhshi*s, perform the stories from memory, incorporating cultural traditions and practices. Successful *bakhshi*s must have the ability to captivate listeners with their melodies and to narrate stories in an interesting and original way, making creative use of language, word games, proverbs and phrases. The art was inscribed in 2021 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. (UNESCO website)

[283] Eugenio Barba, "Actions at work," 68.

interweaving of events**;** the interweaving of dramatic actions and behaves; the interweaving of tensions; the interweaving of objectivity and subjectivity (i.e., expositions of facts and reactions to them); the interweaving of links and relationships; the interweaving of simple elements in opposition or in harmony (to achieve the complexity); the interweaving of the movements; interweaving a dynamic web of theme and action; the interweaving of sequences and succession; weaving separate facets of the same story simultaneously, where present, past, and future may intertwine.[284]

The performer is, more than anything, a weaver. For the artist(s) known as Mehmed Siyah Kalem, besides those touched upon by Barba, there are more conditions of weaving: interweaving between the east and the west from Golden Horde to Kucha, interweaving between the center and periphery along the capillary routes; interweaving Mongol and Timurid periods; interweaving in conversion periods; interweaving two performance realms, the oral and the visual narration.

In these aspects, the weaver was in constant mobility. By interweaving the two ends of the dichotomies, Mehmed Siyah Kalem had risen as a unique *genre* on the creative ground that flourished in the intersection zones of cross-cultural tensions between east and west, center and periphery, Mongol and Timurid, Islam and non-Islam, oral and visual.

These meeting and diverging zones of tension resulted in this unique blend, that belong everywhere but anywhere, accepting and denying the comprehensive range of sources that nourished the ground for the birth of these unique art features.

[284] *A dictionary of theatre anthropology, The secret art of the performer*.

This exceptional ground reflects on the materials, artistic style, and techniques, as well as on the visual vocabulary.

4.9 Analysis of the paper sample

If a work of art is unique, most of the time, the materials used in its creation also happen to be unique.[285] For the case of Mehmed Siyah Kalem, these materials are paper, ink, and brush, which bear the interweaving characteristics of these paintings between various traditions and historical moments.

Concerning the main group of these paintings, there are different hands and kinds of paper, raw, simple, and ordinary, within reach of capillary routes. In folio H.2153-38A each paper pasted on the album page seems different from another (Figure 107).

Although color differentiations are very apparent, what is important is the differentiation of texture, which give clues about the plant used in paper manufacture. The primary color of the paper used in these paintings is dark beige. Since the pictures are pasted on album folios, examining the paper's texture against the light is impossible. But analyzing the surface morphology, Topkapı Palace Museum experts assumed that the paper used in these paintings was produced on a woven sieve by the technique known as the floating mold method.[286]

[285] An observation by Dr. Hande Günözü Ulusoy, personal interview.
[286] Çağman, "Glimpses into the Fourteenth-Century Turkic World of Central Asia."

Figure 107. Detail from the folio H.2153-38A.

Helman-Ważny explains the peculiarities of the paper making methods using floating and dipping moulds.[287] As shown in Figure 108, the floating type papermaking method, the mold is floating on the water surface, and paper pulp is poured on the screen directly within the mold's frame, which explains why we don't have the same fiber distribution, hence density in different parts of the paper.

In the 'dipping' type, the pulp is mixed with water in a larger tank, and the papermaking mold is dipped into the tank, and the pulp is scooped into the mold. Usually, the dipping method resulted in thinner paper sheets and more even in thickness. Floating mold is more time-consuming since the newly made sheets of

[287] Helman-Ważny, "More than meets the eye: Fibre and Paper Analysis of the Chinese Manuscripts from the Silk Roads."

paper must be left to dry, limiting the amount of paper produced to the number of molds the papermaker owns. On the other hand, Helman-Ważny remarks that since a mold with a movable sieve is used in the dipping method, paper production is faster because it is possible to remove a wet sheet of paper from the sieve just after its shaping. The main difference between the two types of mold is in their construction. The floating mold comprises a wooden frame with a woven textile attached to it. In the case of the dipping mold, on the other hand, a movable sieve made from bamboo, reed, or another kind of grass is attached to the wooden frame.[288]

Figure 1 Paper pulp being poured on the 'floating' type of mould placed on the water surface in the wooden tank. The papermaker stirs up a quantity of the pulp with his hands, then moves the frame in the water until the pulp entirely and equally covers the surface of the mould; she/he then tilts the frame until the water drains off. Kathmandu, Nepal (2016).

Figure 2 Mr. Ma Songsheng from Beizhang Village (South of Xi'an) making paper on a dipping mould equipped with a bamboo screen (April 21, 2013).

Figure 108. Floating and dipping moulds compared (Source: Helman-Ważny, "More than meets the eye")

The floating mold technique was traditionally used in Thailand, Nepal, and Tibet. Whereas in India, China, Vietnam and Transoxiana, the paper was manufactured with the flexible mold technique, where the sieve is made of local plant stems and thin lines mark the resulting paper.[289]

[288] Helman-Ważny, "More than meets the eye."
[289] Çağman, "Glimpses into the Fourteenth-Century Turkic World of Central Asia."

In the Himalayan regions, woven molds have been preferred until the present day. The experts indicate that although the westward spread of papermaking along the Silk Roads has been widely investigated, its migration to the south towards the Himalayas, including Tibet and Nepal, and to India remains to be studied in detail. [290]

4.9.1 Chinese Turkestan: homeland of paper culture

The oldest manuscripts were discovered in the ancient sites of the Silk Roads, revealing the early history and technology of papermaking. Among the earliest repositories of extant paper, besides Dunhuang, where a hidden Library Cave was found in 1900, are sites like Kucha, Turfan, and Khotan. Figure 109 shows the places where texts were found along the ancient Silk Roads. Nevertheless, the vast collections are dispersed mainly among European centers after the nineteenth-century expeditions and archaeological excavations of Orientalists like Paul Pelliot, Albert Grünwedel, Albert Le Coq, Aurel Stein.

The manuscripts and other artifacts excavated from the Silk Roads sites were stolen or sold and filled the Oriental departments of European museums and libraries. As a result, Britain holds a collection of about 50,000, Germany c. 40,000, and France a collection of c. 30,000 manuscripts and other artifacts. Japanese and Russian collections amount to c. 20,000 manuscripts each, and the Dunhuang materials in China, being the least in number, are around 16,000 items.

[290] Helman-Ważny, "Notes on the early history of paper in Central Asia based on material evidence."

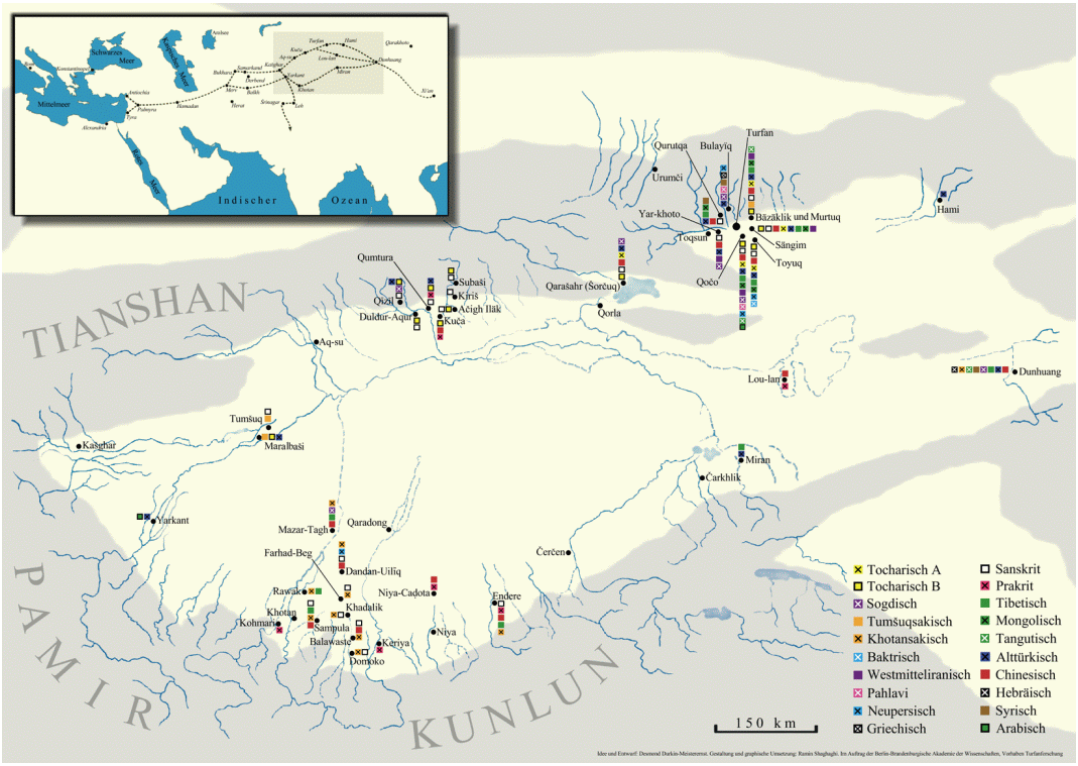

Figure 109. Map showing places where texts were found in comparison to the routes of the Silk Road on the upper left (Source: www.bbaw.de)

Dated between the third and thirteenth centuries, the extant manuscripts were written in over twenty languages and scripts, including those of the empires and kingdoms on the periphery of Central Asia during this period: Chinese, Tibetan, Iranian, Indian, and Turkic. From the earliest to the latest, using paper -which does not always mean production- was within the interaction zone of Mehmed Siyah Kalem. The oldest paper manuscript dating to the third century was found in Kucha, the conceptual border towards the west for the Chinese realm. Khotan was also among the earliest sites, where paper was used for manuscripts in the fourth century. By the fifth century, paper manuscripts were produced in Dunhuang. The latest repository of old papers from Central Asia is the Turfan collection dating between the ninth and thirteenth centuries.[291]

[291] Helman-Ważny, "A Tale of Papermaking along the Silk Road."

4.9.2 Simple and available for those in the capillary: Ramie

The Chinese eunuch Cai Lun (d.AD 121) is credited in textual sources with the invention of paper in AD 105. He reports the technique of papermaking to the Eastern Han Emperor Ho. According to the record in the *Hou Han shu* (History of the Later Han Dynasty), the materials for the first paper are ropes, tree bark, shoes' soles, hemp remnants, cloth rags, and broken fishing nets.[292] Fibers constitute the fundamental component of any paper sheet, so determining the fiber composition is essential in characterizing the paper. Analysis of paper samples from Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings has identified the plant used in the paper's manufacture as ramie (botanical name: *Boehmeria nivia*).[293]

One of the earliest examples of paper made of vegetable fibers was found in Lopnor, where those who want to cross the desert stop and rest for a whole week in the *Catalan Atlas*. Dated on circumstantial evidence to around BC 49, the fragment was found in the ruins of a watchtower during the Mission of the Northwestern Expedition of China in 1934.[294] Analysis of the historic papers showed that *Boehmeria sp.* was one of the plants most often represented as raw materials in historic papers (others being *Broussonetia sp.*, *Edgeworthia sp.*, *Daphne sp.*).[295] One of the recent research results is by the members of the Turfan Project of the Berlin Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities. The investigations of the 40,000 fragments of manuscripts in the Berlin Turfan Collection, dating from ca. 300

[292] Tsien Tsuen-Hsuin, "Paper and Printing," 40.
[293] Çağman, "Uzak ve Yakındoğu arasında bir başka geçit: Mehmed Siyah Kalem," 465. Turkish Republic Ministry of Culture Istanbul Restoration and Conservation Central Laboratory, Serda Kantarcıoğlu. "Herzbedg redktifi ve Graff "c" boyası ile preparat hazırlanarak polarizan mikroskop altında incelenmiş ve karşılaştırma için aşağıdaki kaynak kullanılmıştır: T. Collings-D. Millner, "The Identification of Oriental Paper-Making Fibers" Part I, The Paper Conservator, 3 (1978): 51-79 ve Part II, The Paper Conservator, 4 (1979): 10-19. Samples from: H. 2153, y. 27a, 29b, 141b (iki resim)."
[294] Tsien Tsuen-Hsuin, "Paper and Printing," 39.
[295] Helman-Wazny, "Asian Paper in Works of Art: A Comparative Fiber Analysis."

through ca.1400, show that all the papers used for the fragments are typical rag papers composed of ramie and hemp.[296]

Despite the discovery of many samples along the Silk Roads and in Western China, the Chinese provenance of rag paper has finally been confirmed by the first results of fiber analyses from the Dunhuang manuscripts and other paper fragments excavated in Central Asia. The rag paper is supposed to be found in all groups of manuscripts, irrespective of the script in which they are written. It includes many Sogdian and Turkic manuscripts fragments produced in the Western regions of the Silk Road as far as Samarkand, located at the junctions of trade routes from China and India.[297]

Judging from the availability of resources for papermaking, experts assume that the Dunhuang and Turfan area could be the prominent place where this type of paper was produced, especially when taking into account the fact that cultivation of papermaking plants required a lot of effort in these desert regions, or would be impossible. Interestingly, rag paper seems to have declined in use from the tenth century because of the shortage of raw materials and the high production cost. Chinese documents about papermaking after the Song Dynasty (960-1279) mention rag paper only occasionally, and its reduction is also confirmed by the greater variety of plant components identified in manuscripts from this period onwards.[298]

A technical treatise dating to the first decades of the fifteenth century points out other centers of paper production and the mobility of paper fashions from east to west. Simi Nishapuri, a librarian in Mashad and an authority in the book arts, is the

[296] Durkin-Meisterernst et al., "Scientific methods for philological scholarship: Pigment and paper analyses in the field of manuscriptology."
[297] Helman-Ważny, "Notes on the early history of paper in Central Asia based on material evidence."
[298] Nöller and Helman-Wazny, "The Materials of Turfan and Dunhuang Manuscripts: Analysis of Paper, Pigments and Dyes," 6-7.

author of the technical treatise on color embedded within a more extended work called *Jawhar-i Simi* (finished 1433). His work is the oldest known manuscript to give explicit instructions for tinting and application of colors to paper. This fashion derived from the Chinese and reached Islam through the trade exchanges along the Silk Roads in the thirteenth century. Nishapuri's advice about best paper is as follows:

> The papers of all countries have been tried, and the best paper for calligraphy is produced in Baghdad, Damascus, Amul and Samarqand. The paper from other places is generally rough, blotches, and is impermanent. It is better to give paper a slight tint because white is hard on the eyes and the master calligraphic specimens that have been observed have all been on tinted paper.[299]

It seems that Mehmed Siyah Kalem took advantage of his position in the capillary routes and collected probably the leftovers from here and there in the isolated parts of the region since this kind of paper was used occasionally after the tenth century along the Silk Roads center. Another possibility could be a differentiation of paper selection for manuscript or painting. Moreover, we do not know if all the papers were made of ramie since only samples from two pictures were analyzed.

In any case, the region from where the material of the paper comes sheds light on the cross-cultural interaction zone of these paintings, as suggested by Jonathan Bloom, along the Paper Routes rather than Silk Routes. The artist(s) of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings were in close contact with the homeland of paper culture. However, they could not enjoy this position as much ornately as to paint on gold tinted papers.

[299] *Islamic art and visual culture, An anthology of sources*, 38-39.

4.10 Using *kalem* as a talented wizard

As exposed in Chapter-2, the two words in the sobriquet of the artist, *Siyah* and *Kalem*, reflect the main tools of Mehmed Siyah Kalem: ink and brush. The late sixteenth-century Persian treatise on the arts of the book reveals the wonders behind the brush, “the first object created by the Lord”. The author, Kadi Ahmed, was a man of letters and a scholar rather than a professional calligrapher or artist. In the preface of the treatise *Calligraphers and painter* (c.1606), the author defines the purpose of the treatise as to write a goodly treatise on the first appearance of the *kalem* and the invention of writing.

Kadi Ahmed differentiates between the reed for writing and the brush for painting, praising the latter more. In these terms his treatise is considered the first record of a point of view directly opposed to the usual ideas of the Muslim world on the making of images of living beings. He expresses it in the "theory of the two *kalem*s":

> The qalam is an artist and a painter.
> God created two kinds of qalams:
> The one, ravishing the soul, is from a plant
> And has become a sugarcane for the scribe;
> The other kind of qalam is from the animal,
> And it has acquired its scattering of pearls from the fountain of life.
> O painter of pictures which would have enticed Mani!
> Thanks to you the days of talent have been adorned.[300]

The author continues in prose: "The animal *kalem* is (but a) hair by whose enchantment the works of those gifted like Mani and of the wizards of China and Europe (*Firang*) , have settled on the throne of the land of Talent and become artists

[300] *Calligraphers and painters, A Treatise by Qadi Ahmad*, V. Minorsky (trans.), 50.

(*naqsh-band*) in the shop of Destiny." Under the second type of *kalem*, a brush of hair is understood, with which the talented wizards of China and Europe become artists. This idea is taken up again at the beginning of the last chapter and a tale is quoted in the attire of verse:

> I have heard that Chinese artists,
> When they became "producers of likenesses" for the first time,
> Mixed paint with the heart's blood
> And sketched images of roses and tulips.
> Their brush of hair became like a hair
> From their desire to split hairs.
> They adorned one page with flowers
> According to the manner and beauty which they wished.
> The painting was called Khitai ("Chinese"),
> Because the Chinese reed had succeeded in producing it. …[301]

Mehmed Siyah Kalem was indeed using the second type of *kalem*, with which he produced all these pictures with a significant impact of likeness based on the skillful use of animal brush, a brush of hair. The masterly use of brush techniques demonstrates the artist's trained learnedness, thanks to his interweaving with Chinese culture, as perceived from the Islamic manuscript point of view.

4.11 *Siyah* as black, *siyah* as ink

The primary colors of Mehmed Siyah Kalem are black, red, and blue. In some parts, brown and very few yellow and white are used. Black and red are the most common colors obtained from readily available pigments. An analysis with modern

[301] *Calligraphers and painters, A Treatise by Qadi Ahmad*, V. Minorsky (trans.), 175.

technological facilities would give the exact provenance of the pigments and more information about the artists' geographical connection and period.[302]

Black is embedded in the heartland of Mehmed Siyah Kalem's art, in his sobriquet *Siyah*, both as ink and as the color of ink. Hence the black color is most probably acquired from carbon inks, which belong to the oldest writing materials used not only in the region, like in the Turfan collection but in Egypt, India, or China for more than a millennium.

Turfan collection is a reliable reference for Chinese Turkestan; it is the latest repository of old paper from Central Asia, with paper manuscripts until the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries. They consist of carbon pigments mixed with a water-soluble binding media (e.g.gum, Arabic or glue). The material was dried and pressed into small bars, available for immediate use. In many cases, the smooth carbon material came from burnt oil. [303]

Çağman emphasizes that the role of the *siyah kalem* or *kalem-i siyahi* technique is worthy of examination in the context of Islamic visual art:

> Qalam-i siyahi pictures formed a branch of Islamic visual art distinct from the category of manuscript illustration in technique and function. Although these works were principally executed in brush (qalam-i mu) and ink, there is evidence that reed pens (qalam-i vasıti) were also used on occasions. Most of these paintings were not adjuncts of a specific written text but independent pictures on paper. (…) Brush and ink are used with great skill to define the main lines, while the coloured inks or paints play a secondary role, being watered down and used selectively. The predominant black brush lines narrow and expand like those of calligraphy. [304]

The outstanding individual character of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem genre resulted from its interweaving position blending Chinese and Islamic traditions.

[302] Topkapi Palace Museum refused my applications.
[303] Durkin-Meisterernst et al., "Scientific methods for philological scholarship."
[304] Çağman, "Glimpses into the Fourteenth-Century Turkic World of Central Asia," 148.

4.12 Red: cinnabar and lead

After black, the most common color in Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings is red. As mentioned in the previous chapter, red is preferred for the outline drawings. What could be the raw material to produce this color? A highly possible source is cinnabar which has been used as a painting material for thousands of years in many regions. Artists prefer this color because of its deep red, exceptional gloss, good covering characteristics, and adhesive strength. Due to its low hardness and high density, it was the material most suitable for coloring surfaces. Furthermore, it is resistant to oxidation or acid rain, which is why many ancient objects still show an unaltered bright red color. On paper, ink made out of cinnabar remains red in most cases. In the Middle Ages, cinnabar of good quality came to Europe from China because it was the best of all.[305]

Simi Nishapuri, in his technical treatise on color, gives insights into the preparation of cinnabar:

> Cinnabar comes originally from sulfur and mercury, (which are put into) a vessel made from lute (mud cement) and heated very slowly over a flame. The best type (of cinnabar) is made in Europe. It is widely used by calligraphers. Extreme care must be taken in pulverizing it. It should first of all be rubbed on a stone until it is good and soft. Then it can be pounded little by little with some sour pomegranate juice until no solids are left. With warm water wash (it off) the stone and your hands into a receptacle and let sit for two hours. Then pour off the yellow water that will have collected on the top and spread the residue onto a newly baked unglazed brick so that it will dry quickly. Then knead a bit of it with resin water and write with it.[306]

The researchers in Berlin Brandenburg Academy analyzed the coloured pigment based inks in Turfan manuscripts. They found cinnabar as the principal red pigment, and in a few examples red lead and iron oxide.[307]

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[305] Nöller, "Cinnabar reviewed: characterization of the red pigment and its reactions."
[306] *Islamic art and visual culture, An anthology of sources*, 40.
[307] Durkin-Meisterernst, et al., "Scientific methods for philological scholarship."

Another possible source of red is lead, one of the earliest metals used in human history. The lead pigment is usually considered to be the earliest human-made pigment. Investigation and analysis of the paintings and statues at the Mogao Grottoes has confirmed that lead pigment was used in most of them. Pigment deterioration over more than one thousand years, discoloration, and even complete blackening occur in most places where the lead pigment was used. The lead element has a variety of chemical valence. With excellent coating performance, it was extensively used in various pigments throughout human history. [308]

4.13 Ultramarine blue

Another main color in Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings is blue. The primary source of the blue color had been *lapis lazuli*, more precious than gold until its artificial production in the nineteenth century. The gem has been extracted and exported worldwide since ancient times from Badakhshan Mountain, located in northeast Afghanistan. The first mention of Badakhshan occurs in Chinese sources dating to the mid-sixth century Northern Wei Period, referring to the region as Fudisha 弗敵沙. It is the mountainous district of Tokhara or Tokharestan 都貨羅, occupied by the Yuezhi. Histories of Wei dynasty (386-535) remarks that the color and shining light of the Badakshan's *lapis lazuli* were so impressive that this can only be attributed to the gods.[309]

Lapis lazuli was a crucial article of trade over the caravan routes that led to the Mediterranean and, hence, to Europe during the Middle Ages. It was probably

[308] *The colors of Dunhuang,* 40.

[309] Guóxué Bǎodiǎn 国学宝典, Chinese Classics. *Chau Ju-Kua: His Work on the Chinese and Arab Trade in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,* Hirth and Rockhill (trans.), 227.

imported into Italy through Venice, a terminal for the Silk Road commerce.[310] It had sometimes been deliberately adulterated in trade. A fourteenth-century text tells us that "some confounded tricksters deliberately put the sand into the blue to increase the weight, and it is the ruin and destruction of the color." Some merchants also had a treacherous habit of putting all the best blue at the bag's top and the poor quality at the bottom.[311]

Hence in medieval Europe, natural ultramarine was a costly material; it was in a class with gold as a symbol of luxury. It was frequently specified by the rich in contracts and commissions for paintings. The pigment was current in Europe earlier than the recipes to prepare it. It was probably attracted to the centers of wealth and luxury, first as an imported and later as a domestic product. Dürer used ultramarine, and he complained of its cost in his letters to his patron, Jacob Heller. De Wild lists several Dutch and Flemish paintings, beginning with the Van Eyck St Barbara (1437, at Antwerp), on which he identified it.[312] Even in the sixteenth century, in 1549, Valentin Boltz remarks, "Ultramarine is prized as the choicest of all, but in German lands is seen seldom, and in small quantity."[313]

The above document of Wei chronicles shows that Badakshan was the primary import place of this mineral -hence the provenance of the particular blue color produced from it- not only for the West but also for China. The mineral first became a pigment in the region of its origin and adjacent countries. Researchers found some of the earliest and most abundant use of *lapis lazuli* pigments in Dunhuang grottoes for coloring the mural paintings and statues from the Northern

[310] Gettens and Stout, *Painting Materials A Short Encyclopedia*, 165.
[311] Thompson, *The Materials and techniques of Medieval painting*, 132.
[312] Gettens and Stout, *Painting Materials*, 166-167.
[313] Thompson, *The Materials and techniques of Medieval painting*,150-151.

Wei[314] to Yuan dynasties.[315] Besides Dunhuang, this pigment appears in other caves on the Hexi Corridor, Gansu, and Xinjiang.[316] Gettens has reported its occurrence in sixth and seventh-century wall paintings in the cave temples at Bamiyan in Afghanistan. It was also in contemporary wall paintings at Kizil.[317]

Among the Chinese names used for the mineral, there had been a lot of attributions to the gold like jinbi 金碧, jinjing 金精, jinxing shi 金星石, qing jinshi 青金石. This attribution with gold is probably due to the mineral's radiance. In the Tang dynasty (618-907) histories the term used for *lapis lazuli* is jinjing 金精. In 741, the kagan of Tokharistan sent an ambassador to express the greetings for the new year. The ambassador offers the Chinese emperor some products from his country; among them, *lapis lazuli* (jinjing 金精) and agate (manao 玛瑙).[318]

The Mongols conquered the north of China in 1234 and proclaimed the founding of the Yuan dynasty in 1271. It was just the year Marco Polo visited the Badakshan Mines:

> Badascian is a large province where the people worship Mahomet and have a language of their own. (…) In this province or kingdom the precious stones are produced which one calls balasci, which are very beautiful and of great value. (…) And again you may know in truth that in this same country in another mountain are found the stones from which one makes ultramarine azure, and it is the finest azure and the best that is known in the world. And the stone of which I have told you, of which one makes azure, is dug, as gold and silver are, from a vein of the earth which is produced in the mountains like other veins; and that vein is called lapis laçul.[319]

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[314] The earliest reference to Badakshan with its mine of *lapis lazuli* and the earliest use of the pigment both being in the Wei period must not be a coincidence. Further research is promissing to reveal the details.

[315] Wáng Jìnyù 王进玉, Zhōngguó gǔdài cǎihuì yìshù zhōng yìngyòng qīng jīnshí yánliào de chǎndì zhī mí 中国古代彩绘艺术中应用青金石颜料的产地之谜.

[316] Lǐ Yīngliàng 李英亮 et al., Xīnjiāng Qiūcí Kùmùtǔlǎ shíkū bìhuà zhìzuò gōngyì yǔ cáiliào fēnxī 新疆龟兹库木吐喇石窟壁画制作工艺与材料分析.

[317] Gettens and Stout, *Painting Materials*, 165-166.

[318] Chavannes, "Notes Additionelles sur les Tou-kiue (Turcs) Occidentaux, " 65-66.

[319] Moule and Pelliot, *Marco Polo and the description of the world*, 136-137.

Marco Polo mentions "açur" (azure) as a mineral three times, in the chapters on Badascian, on Tenduc and in the description of the palace of Qubilai. The hill where the palace stands is covered with green trees and "azure-stone" which is also very "green."[320] According to Paul Pelliot, Marco Polo certainly takes "açur" in its original meaning of *lapis lazuli*. Commentators have admitted that we are concerned with *lapis lazuli* in all three passages.[321]

Analysis of the colored pigment-based inks of Turfan manuscripts shows azurite and indigo besides lapis lazuli for blue colorations. [322] Without a scientific study, we can not be sure if Mehmed Siyah Kalem took advantage of being in the capillary routes neighboring Badakshan, the mines of ultramarine. Maybe he knew Nishapuri, who describes a practical way to obtain the blue color from indigo, the

[320] Marco Polo defines the color of lapis lazuli as green. It could be a problem of color terminology, as noted by Michel Pastoureau: "Because of the imprecise terminology used to denote blue tones, along with the relative infrequency of blue in Greco-Roman art, past philologists wondered if the Greeks and Romans were incapable of seeing the color. The sea and sky can be called any shade of any color, but rarely are they associated with shades of blue. Hence the question asked by specialists at the turn of the last century: Did the Greeks see blue as we see it today? The difficulty that the Greeks had in naming blue recurs in classical Latin (and later in its medieval form). There were, of course, numerous terms for blue (*caeruleus*, *caesius*, *glaucus*, *cyaneus*, *lividus*, *venetus*, *aerius*, *jerreus*), but they were all polyvalent, chromatically imprecise, and sometimes contradictory. This lack of lexical precision for blue shades reflects how little Roman authors, and the medieval ones who followed them, cared about blue. They left a gap in the Latin color vocabulary that would later be filled by two foreign words for blue, the Germanic *blavus* and the Arabic *azureus*. Thus in English, as in French, Italian, and Spanish, the most common words denoting the color blue are inherited not from Latin but from German and Arabic: blue (blau) and azure (lazaward). The Romans may not have been "blind to blue," as many nineteenth-century specialists thought, but they certainly were indifferent to it - if not downright hostile. For them, blue was above all the barbarians' color. Both Caesar and Tacitus remarked that the Celts and Germans dyed their bodies blue in order to terrify their opponents." Pastoureau, *Blue, The History of a color*, 23-26.

[321] Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo 1*, Azure, 58-61.

伯希和《马可波罗注》第 43 条"Azure"，58—61 页。58 页：认为 azure 在法语和意大利语文献里通常写作 lazur。这个词马可·波罗提到三次，分别是在描写 Badascian，天德以及忽必烈宫殿使用使用的。一般认为马可·波罗在这三个地方用的 azure 均指其原始意义"青金石 lapis lazuli"。60—61 页：在巴达哈商一节，azure 指青金石应该没有疑问。在天德这一节，伯希和认为是指石绿/孔雀石（green malachite）或石青/蓝铜矿（blue malachite /azurite），石绿和石青均是铜的碳酸盐，与青金石无关. (Notes and discussion points from the Marco Polo translation sessions in Peking University, under the direction of Prof. Rong Xinjiang 荣新江, 24 June 2014)

[322] Durkin-Meisterernst et al., "Scientific methods for philological scholarship."

plant-based source of blue:

> A practical ultramarine can be compounded of first-rate raw indigo, ceruse (white lead), and resin water. The indigo should be rubbed on a stone with water. The ceruse should be washed and the soft part added to the indigo. When it has stiffened, pound it with the resin water and use it. Writing (done with this substance) lasts a long time. [323]

This substance comes from the leaves of the indigo plant and in regions of Asia and Africa where the plant grows, people have been dyeing with indigo since the Neolithic period. In Europe, the use of indigo remained rare for many centuries, not only due to its high price but also because blue tones were so little appreciated.[324]

Unfortunately, indigo was rather suitable for dying the fabrics, not producing successful artwork results. Hence Nishapuri's "practical" suggestion is a way to confine oneself in the absence of ultramarine.

4.14 Yellow: only for mace and daggers

Compared to the *Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* (*Jieziyuan Huazhuan* 芥子園畫傳 1679-1701), it seems that the color palette of Mehmed Siyah Kalem would probably differ broadly in the Chinese artistic realm, since in this classical Chinese canon, one of the most varied colors is yellow. For the various tones and treatments of red, the Chinese canon cites vermilion, deep vermilion, coral red, preparing red, old red, and rouge red. For the yellow as well, there are six variations: cock yellow, mineral yellow, liquid gold, rattan yellow, umber, and yellow ocher. Whereas for blue, there are only two alternatives: mineral blue and indigo.[325]

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[323] *Islamic art and visual culture, An anthology of sources*, 39.
[324] Pastoureau, *Blue, The history of a color*, 17.
[325] Wang Gai*, The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, 38-44; "Concluding Notes on the Preparation of Colors," 579-585. For the Chinese version see Wáng Gài 王概，Jièzǐ yuán huà chuán 芥子園畫傳，一集，山水（上），28-33.

In contrast, Mehmed Siyah Kalem uses only one sort of yellow only an obligation, in the metallic ornaments of the demons and a few objects like mace, daggers or sticks. This can not be explained solely by the availability of the pigment. Cultural factors must also be considered in the choices of colors.

4.15 "Portability" of visual vocabulary and migration of artistic styles

Many scholars discussed the transmission of images and motifs from Chinese sources to Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings.[326] This impact was natural along the medieval Silk Roads, where there was a vivid multilayered circulation of objects and humans. The objects consisted of not only trade artifacts; travelers consisted of not only merchants. In this regard, portability is a term that brings an approach that encompasses not only the movement of the object but the dynamic potential behind this movement turning out the object into an active agent along the pathways of mobility:

> What is proposed here is a reconceptualization of cultural space, predicated on the notion that movement is inherent in the nature of the object and that through movement the coordinates for identity may be defined. This approach offers a more complex and expansive view of the object; highlighting its dynamic potential and defining it, not simply as a static product of culture contained within physical and geographical boundaries, but rather as an active agent engaged in self-definition and in shaping the contours of culture. The object may literally traverse cultural and geographical distances. The object itself also serves as a point of departure for a journey leading in many directions, following continuous and changing relationships and connections over space and time. The implications of portability, therefore, allow the object to extend beyond its literal self to an expandable field of identifications and meanings. Identity is relational. Through its exchanges, the object both defines and is defined by its relation

[326] Some of them are: William Watson, “Chinese style in the paintings of the Istanbul albums.” Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, “Siyah Qalem and Gong Kai: In Istanbul album painter and a Chinese painter of the Mongolian period.” Toh Sugimura, “The Chinese impact on certain 15th century Persian miniature paintings from the albums.” Toh Sugimura, “Chinese influence on Persian paintings of the 14. and 15. Centuries.” Lynda Gillard, “Siyah Qalam: New Perspectives.”

> to other objects, people and representational practices along its pathway of portability.[327]

Silk Roads were a scene of complex pathways of portability that indeed and naturally influenced Mehmed Siyah Kalem's art. The implications of Sogdian ancient letters from the fourth century is an exemplary case among many others to envisage how fluid these pathways were.

Discovered by Sir Aurel Stein (1862-1943) in 1907 at a watchtower to the west of Dunhuang, these five letters date to the early fourth century. They appear to be the contents of a mailbag lost or confiscated in transit. Sogdian merchants and their family members in western China wrote these letters to compatriots in the Sogdian homeland or the oasis of Loulan 楼兰/樓蘭 (in present-day Xinjiang).

These five very personal and ordinary letters were meant to connect people from several cities on a large geography: Sogdians living in the Chinese capital at the time, Luoyang in Henan province, and some of the central staging posts on the route to China, such as Dunhuang and Jiuquan 酒泉 (ancient Suzhou) , in Gansu Province; Wuwei 武威 (formerly called Liangzhou 涼州), in Gansu Province; and Jincheng 晉城/晋城 , in Gansu Province 山西省. Some were concerned with commercial matters, others addressed their partners in Samarkand, or a woman complaining about her husband to her mother.[328]

What about the millions of letters delivered to the address, at least, since the fourth century? What kind of gifts or souvenirs did they send to compatriots? Besides all types of courtly diplomatic exchanges or trade artifacts, the mobility caused by ordinary people traveling along the Silk Roads must have contributed

[327] Hoffman, “Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian interchange from the tenth to the twelfth century,” 17-50.
[328] Nicholas Sims-Williams, “Ancient Letters.”

immensely to the "image bank" or "picture gallery" of Mehmed Siyah Kalem. These objects went beyond their original meaning and became "independent of their literal self," as pointed out by Hoffman.

As the Chinese artistic realms were not passive recipients of external influences, the Chinese Turkestan of Mehmed Siyah Kalem was a production center of its own, receiving those materials and influences resulting from multi-directional exchanges and picking up some of them to combine into something new with unique features.

4.16 The lost weave of the performer

David Roxburgh assumes that even though the images of Mehmed Siyah Kalem seem to imply a narrative content, this is only to thwart it deliberately and that they "defy any relationship to literature or life." He then asks if they may be "humorous visual commentaries," refers to their "strangely coy dimension," and interprets them as "ambiguous" and intentionally "enigmatic." [329] This idea disregards the possibility that they may refer to a narrative content no longer available to us. It was known either as an oral tradition or perhaps is hidden in some yet undiscovered text. The absence of direct literary evidence that can be tied to these images and the apparent nonexistence of narrative themes do not prove that they lacked specific meaning for their viewers, just that we cannot identify what those meanings may have been.[330]

Eugenio Barba's emphasis is meaningful at this point:

> The word 'text', before referring to a written or spoken, printed or manuscripted text, meant 'a weaving together'. In this sense, there is no performance which does not have 'text'. That which concerns the text (the

[329] Roxburgh “Images on the Fringe: Muḥammad Siyāh Qalam and Responses by Turkmen Artists,” 97–113.
[330] Uluç, “Historiography.”

> weave) of the performance can be defined as 'dramaturgy', that is, drama-ergon, the 'work of the actions' in the performance.[331]

Apparently, among many of his interweaving actions, Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings had lost their weaves along the pathways of portability, along the journey that began in the capillary routes of Chinese Turkestan to the courts in Timurid Herat and then Tabriz.

Natural and mostly human factors played their roles in this violent rupture. First, the images became independent of their text, which was most likely oral, and "redefined by their relation to other objects, people and representational practices."[332] Secondly, their integrity was decomposed once and forever by their cutting and pasting on the album folios. This redefinition was made in a new realm for Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings: Courts.

[331] *A dictionary of theatre anthropology,* 66.
[332] Hoffman, "Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian interchange from the tenth to the twelfth century," 17-50.

PART TWO

COURTS

AS THE VIOLENT APPROPRIATION OF THE PAINTINGS

CHAPTER 5

TABRIZ

CROSS-CULTURAL COLLECTION AND VISUAL MEMORY

> "My father was anxious to see me develop into a good man,"
> said Niceratus, "and as a means to this end, he compelled me to
> memorize all of Homer; and so even now
> I can repeat the whole Iliad and the Odyssey by heart."[333]

The first part of this dissertation contributed to the literature with wide-ranging new research material about the pre-history and production geography of these paintings. Through the tales fictionalized with references to mainly Chinese and Turkic sources, a categorization and an identification of meaning became possible for most of these images, so far handled separately from each other. Moreover, the methodological approach considering the practice and function of these paintings in daily life patterns brought new perspectives concerning their use for storytelling.

Beginning from the second part titled *Courts as the violent appropriation of the paintings*, the theoretical framework will be more visible as the driving argumentation of the thesis, contributing to the literature with a new point of view: The mobility of this artwork apprehends us historical transformations through the changes in the meaning of art, through its varying perceptions at various historical environments. Although this theoretical approach is defined at the beginning of the thesis, it will become more apparent from the second part on, since the physical mobility of the paintings began with their appropriation by the courts, first in the Akkoyunlu Tabriz via Herat, and then in the Ottoman Istanbul.

[333] Reichl, " Memory and Textuality in the Orality-Literacy Continuum," 19.

The post-history concerning the afterlives of the paintings began towards the end of the fifteenth century. They became part of a historically, geographically, and conceptually new world, as they were cut and pasted to fit on royal album folios of visual imagery. As a result of this violent act -cut and paste- they lost their integrity and original function in the new environment. They are no more storytelling paintings, but visual reference models in courtly cross-cultural collections. They entered the wide-ranging albums of the Akkoyunlu Yakub Bey (r.1478-1490) court in Tabriz.

Before Tabriz, it is important to remember that although these albums were not executed in Herat, there are shreds of evidence showing their entrance into Timurid court. They may have been brought to Tabriz from Herat. Some scholars drew direct stylistic links between paintings preserved in these albums and illustrations of manuscripts made for the Timurid princes. Nevertheless, even though the compilations can not be attributed to the Yakub Bey court with today's knowledge, they will be referred to as such. Similarly, Tabriz was a center of mobility, since the main concern is not the origins but the interactions and perceptions. This appropriation by monarchies of settled societies caused a permanent loss of meaning to the paintings' original format and function within the rituals of daily life in the production region.

During the reign of Yakub Bey (r.1478-1490), the Akkoyunlu court in Tabriz was a center of artistic collection from rich sources of Chinese, Central Asian, and Islamic traditions, as visible in the composition of the albums. Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings must have become a component of this cross-cultural collection, contributing to the wide-ranging quality of the albums, not as a courtly produced art but as a unique curiosity from Chinese Turkestan. Çağman characterizes the

composition of the albums as a unique blend of Islamic culture with the style, technique, materials, and iconography of both Central Asia and the Far East:

> Apart from paintings attributable to western Iran in the 14th and 15th centuries, there are important fragments of handscrolls, types of illustrations which do not conform to Islamic traditions. Among these, the most notable and interesting are executed on silk or Chinese paper and consist of representations of nomads and demons attributed, in art historical literature, to "Mehmed Siyah Kalem." The attribution "Siyah Qalam" indicates a particular artistic style, and art historians feel that both the illustrations attributed to Muhammad Siyah Qalam, and some of the handscroll fragments in the albums, were made in Turkestan, an area under the influence of Chinese culture. Paintings other than those attributed to Siyah Qalam include fragments of scrolls, drawings, details of flora and fauna, representations of Buddhist themes, and drawings and paintings inspired by Chinese mythology. No other group of Islamic paintings reflects such a world, in which Islamic culture blends the style, technique, materials, and iconography of both Central Asia and the Far East. [334]

Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings did not end up by chance in Tabriz. The flow of the cultural and artistic artifacts and their regional concentration at the end of the fifteenth century was towards Tabriz as an important center. The expression that the Florentine merchant Filippo Argenti wrote in his notes for Tabriz reflects this city's position like the center of the world: "Beyond Tabriz, before Tabriz": “Tebriz: Tebrisdén ottedé di la dal Tauris, Tebrisdén beridé di qua dal Tauris.”[335]

This expression in Turkish that Argenti heard in sixteenth-century Istanbul implies that the city was considered a kind of zero point or bearings, according to the distance to which a place is measured. Akkoyunlu Yakup Bey's court in Tabriz represents the environment that is fed up with this unique blend, with its uninterrupted cultural continuity in a vertical path and with its cross-cultural collection in a horizontal path. Hence Tabriz was where Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings became part of this collection, in Çağman terms, representing an

[334] Çağman, “On the Contents of the Four Istanbul Albums H.2152, H.2153, 2154, and 2160,” 33-34.
[335] Adamoviç, *Floransalı Filippo Argenti’nin Notlarına Göre (1533) 16. Yüzyıl Türkçesi*, 244.

"encounter via the Silk Road between the Far East, Central Asia, and Iran under Timurid-Turkmen rule."[336]

In violent facts of historical reality, Tabriz was where Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings permanently lost their original meanings attributed to their lands of origin and gained a new value amid a courtly environment as part of an art collection. Beatrice Forbes Manz explains the historical background behind Tabriz during the Akkoyunlu period in the following abstract:

> The fourteenth century produced three great conquerors: The Ottoman Yildirim Bayazid, Tokhtamysh of the Jochid Ulus, and Temür (Tamerlane) from Transoxiana. Tamerlane, aiming to dominate the former Mongol Empire and the Islamic world, defeated Bayazid and Tokhtamysh, but established administration only over the lands of the Ilkhanate and the western Chaghadayid lands. Separate identities developed among the descendants of the steppe nomads; nomad Anatolian powers traced descent from the mythical Oghuz Khan of the Turk Khaganate, while Turco-Mongolians in the eastern regions remained faithful to the Chinggisid tradition according to which only descendants of Chinggis Khan could hold sovereign power. Temür suppressed tribal organization in his army and administration, but tribalism increased in borderlands, notably Anatolia. In the mid-fifteenth century, the tribal confederations of Anatolia – first the Qaraqoyunlu and then the Aqqoyunlu – took over western and central Iran. From this time on, tribes became central to the military and provincial organization of Iran. The courts of the period patronized literature and art in a mixture of Chinese, Central Asia and Islamic traditions, and Turkic became a language of high culture.[337]

Tabrizi folk poet Aşık Garip's verses reflect how the city was historically where the best artifacts from all parts of the region arrived. Aşık Garip, thought to have lived at least before the Safavid period, arrives at Tbilisi, the country of his beloved Şahsenem. He answers with the following verses to a tradesman who is curious about the poet's hometown Tabriz:

> Dinleyin ustalar tarif edeyim
> Baharda açılur gülü Tevriz'in
> Dilberleri geyer bayramda toyda
> Zarbalı kumaşı alı Tevriz'in

[336] Çağman, "Glimpses into the Fourteenth-Century Turkic World of Central Asia," 156.
[337] Manz, "After the Mongols: Timurids, Turkmen and Ottomans" *Nomads in the Middle East*, 139-167.

Tevriz'in çevresi dağdır meşedir
İçinde oturan beğdir paşadır
Seksan bin mahalle yüz bin köşedir
Çarşusu bazarı eli Tevriz'in

Pehlivanlar kisbet geyer yağlanur
Cümle beyzirganlar anda sağlanur
Üç yüz altmış yükü günde bağlanur
Elden ele gider malı Tevriz'in

Kahvesi Yemen'den ekilir gelür
İpeği Gilan'dan bükülür gelür
Koyunu Ravan'dan çekilür gelür
Gürcistan'dan gelür balı Tevriz'in

Bir ah etsem arşı alemi yıkar
Bir od düşdü Aşık Garibi yakar
Yüz bin penceresi kıbleye bakar
Böylece görmüşem halı Tevriz'in.[338]

According to this folk poem titled *Tebriz Tariflemesi* (Description of Tabriz), the coffee comes to the city from Yemen, the silk from Gilan, the sheep from Ravan, and the honey from Georgia. Besides the beauty of its natural landscapes, the city's bazaar and market facilities are meant to be very large, covering an area of "eighty thousand quarters, one hundred thousand corners." The flow of goods also looks pretty vivid, with 360 loadings per day, which gives the impression of a yearly amount in a single day. The flow was based on imports as well as exports, since "the goods of Tabriz circulate from hand to hand."

5.1 Artistic continuity in Tabriz

Tabriz lies in the eastern corner of the alluvial plain, sloping slightly towards the northeast bank of Lake Urmiya. Several streams water the plain. The site of Tabriz is the only suitable pass for communications between east and north, as the Karaca Dag

[338] Muallim Cevdet Library, K.566. F. Saltkan, "Tebrizi öğen bir halk şiiri", 93-96.

in the north and northeast is a very wild and mountainous region and the great massif volcanic cone of Sahand fills the whole area between Tabriz and Maragha. Moreover, as the outer spurs of the Sahand leave a relatively narrow couloir along the east bank of Lake Urmiya, communication between the north and the south must also occur via Tabriz. This fortunate position predestined Tabriz to become the center of the vast and prosperous province.[339]

Besides the city's natural factors like geographical position and fruitful lands, there could be historical reasons behind the concentration of a cross-cultural collection in Tabriz during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The observations of Ambrosio Contarini, the ambassador of Venice to Akkoyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan (r.1457-1478), the father of Yakub Bey, give some insights on this matter. In the travel notes dating to 1473, Contarini wrote his following conversation with a Tabrizi:

> On my asking him why all the people of the city did not sally forth, he replied that they were not fighting men, but gave obedience to any chief who had possession of the city.[340]

This impression is not surprising thinking as the region had been a battle scene since the thirteenth century, with great conquerors making their appearance before the walls of Tabriz: the Mongols (1220-1), The Khwarazm Shah (1225), the Ilkhanids (1263), The Jalayirs and the Chobanids (1336), Timurids (1385), the Karakoyunlu (1406), Akkoyunlu (1467) and Safavids (1500). One of the potential factors behind the obedience of the residents could be a reaction to the change of rulers almost every three-four decade and accompanying massacres and ruins.

[339] Tabriz by V. Minorsky, C.E. Bosworth and Sheila S. Blair, *Historic Cities of the Islamic World*, 486.
[340] Barbaro and Contarini, *Travels to Tana and Persia*, 126.

Another factor behind this perception of the Tabrizi population could be the ruin caused by natural disasters, especially earthquakes in the case of Tabriz. It has long been recognized that earthquakes have occurred more frequently in Tabriz than in any other major city in Iran. The town was accredited with many of them, the first adequately recorded shock occurring in 858. Historical accounts include the description of an earthquake in Azerbaijan around the same time, with shocks lasting seven days and nights until the city (sc.Tabriz?) was flattened, with many material losses. Nothing survived the city, so the survivors built a new town a mile away from the old and remained there until the Mongol invasions.[341]

Epidemics that caused high death rates could have contributed to this inclination among the people of Tabriz. In the case of Akkoyunlu Yakub's reign, historians recorded two devastating attacks of cholera and plague in the city during 1488. In the second attack, two children of the late prince Ibrahim b. Jahangir died on the same night.[342]

These destructive events, wars and natural disasters, could have led the residents and rulers of Tabriz to become harmonious rather than contentious, inclined to avoid destruction as much as possible. The accumulation of artistic and cultural wealth may have arisen based on this inclination in the region to protect the knowledge of artisanship and trade.

Besides, as new conquerors took over the cities, they employed many of the same people; the Timurid prince Iskandar Sultan presided over a competent court in Shiraz, while the Karakoyunlu continued the artistic traditions of Tabriz. When the Timurid sultan Shahrukh (r.1405-1447) conquered Tabriz in the winter of 1420-

[341] Melville, “Historical monuments and earthquakes in Tabriz”, 159-177.
[342] Minorsky, *Persia in A.D. 1478-1490*, 56.

1421, one of his prizes was the famous calligrapher Cafar Tabrizi, who finished his illustrious career in Herat.[343]

Hence, the city's artistic and cultural continuity had been uninterrupted as opposed to the subsequent military interventions and political changes. In the second half of the fifteenth century, several political events, though invasion, conquest, or exile, led to the accumulation of this material at the Akkoyunlu court at Tabriz during the fifteenth century:

> One of them was the invasion of Herat by the Qaraqoyunlu Jahan Shah on 29 june, 1458, when the sultan was accompanied by his two sons, Pir Budaq and Yusuf. When Jahan Shah and his sons left Herat six months later, they must have taken artists with them, as well as an important number of paintings and texts. After the death of Jahan Shah, this material and these artists passed on to the Aqqoyunlu Turkman court. Another significant event was the defeat of Abu Said Mirza by the Aqqoyunlu Uzun Hasan at Qarabagh in 1469, and the consequent transfer of artists working for Abu Said and, in all likelihood their works as well to the Aqqoyunlu court. Works made in Transoxiana and Khurasan must have reached the Turkman court via Herat. The collection of this material at Herat can be explained by the many years spent by the Timurid princes, Abu Said Mirza and Ala al-Daula Mirza, on the Qipchaq steppes before their return to Herat. It is highly likely that these princes brought back with them paintings executed in these regions as well as the artists of Khwarazm and the steppes.[344]

In the second half of the fifteenth century, Tabriz had an outstanding royal studio with an extensive cadre of artists and a royal library containing masterpieces not only from Akkoyunlu sultans' treasuries but inherited from other dynasties like Karakoyunlu or Timurid, covering many artistic centers in the broader region of Herat, Transoxiana, Khorasan, Kipchak steppes and Khwarazm.

5.2 Cross-cultural collection

Francesco Balducci Pegolotti was the agent in Cyprus of the Florentine banking operation of the house of Bardi. The handbook he prepared for merchants, *The*

[343] Manz, *Nomads in the Middle East*, 70.
[344] Çağman, "On the Contents of the Four Istanbul Albums," 31-36.

Pratica Della Mercatura, compiled around 1336–40, includes a well-known itinerary from Ayas-situated in southern Anatolia- to the great commercial city of Tabriz in Iran. Sinclair emphasizes that the commercial context of the itinerary shows that at least until 1323, it was impossible to transport goods from India (principally spices) via Baghdad and the Euphrates.

If these goods were to come through Ilkhanid territory at all, they had to go through Tabriz, which required a long, northerly detour from the Baghdad route. Tabriz, however, was at that time a hub where goods from several directions converged and were put on sale in the markets. During the activity along the Ayas–Tabriz line (the mid-1250s to 1337), trade between Europe and the east (principally China and India) enjoyed an intensity not paralleled until the modern age.[345] At the time this commercial itinerary had been active with a significant scale of trade, there were mainly four lines:

> The essentially new one was that from China crossing Inner Asia and reaching the sea at Tana and Caffa. The second and third are those reaching the sea at Trebizond and Ayas respectively. Tabriz was the hub to which goods from Iran, Georgia and India (spices and silk) were carried; after being traded there they were transported to Erzurum, and from there either over the passes to Trebizond, from which the journey to Constantinople and south European ports was done by ship, or else westwards to Erzincan and Sivas and then southwards to Ayas and Famagusta, where again merchants exported them to European destinations. Here the Erzurum–Sivas sector preserved the line of a route from the previous period. Those goods which had formerly come up the Persian Gulf to Baghdad and so to the Upper Mesopotamian cities now had to be diverted via Hormuz and Tabriz or else via the Red Sea and Cairo. In the Levant, Aleppo had now been knocked out as a trading centre. But the Red Sea spice trade continued, benefiting principally Cairo and Damascus.[346]

[345] Thomas Sinclair, *Eastern Trade and the Mediterranean in the Middle Ages-Pegolotti's Ayas-Tabriz Itinerary and its Commercial Context*, Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Studies, Routledge, London and New York, 2020

[346] Thomas Sinclair, *Eastern Trade and the Mediterranean in the Middle Ages-Pegolotti's Ayas-Tabriz Itinerary and its Commercial Context*, Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Studies, Routlledge, London and New York, 2020, p.288

The fact that Tabriz had been the hub of the intense trade between east and west explains the repeated interest in the city every few decades and the cross-cultural *milieu* and variety of goods available in its markets. In the fourteenth century Tabriz, the goods were sold in specific *khan*s allocated for each good. Among these *khan*s, primarily situated in the quarter of the city known as Bab-i a'la, were *Hanu'l Ebrişumi,* Silk Merchants' Khan and *Hanu-r Rehani*, Pearl/Paper Merchants' Khan. Both buildings, khan for silk and khan for paper, were recorded in historical documents once and only in 1380.[347] Jonathan Bloom challenges the Austrian explorer Ferdinand von Richthofen (1833-1905), who coined the term *Seidenstrasse,* with the question "Silk Road or Paper Road?":

> Von Richthofen was surely correct that the trade routes linking China to West Asia and the Mediterranean world played a crucial role in human history, but he was wrong to think that silk was the most important good traded along those routes. This brief investigation into the history of one of the most important, but least appreciated materials carried across Eurasia suggests that it might be time to modify his original idea to reflect the relative importance of the goods and ideas exchanged along these routes. In that case, the network would be more accurately known as the Paper Route.[348]

Whether the most important product was silk or paper, Tabriz had a central position in the trade routes linking China to West Asia and Europe. Specific khans were built for the trade of each one of these products in the city in the fourteenth century.

5.3 Ilkhanid capital Tabriz on the "Paper Route"

Tabriz was one of the four Persian cities "decorated" with the *Darus-Saltanat* title, capital of the kingdom; three others being Kazwin, Isfahan, and Tehran.[349] Bloom emphasizes "the pivotal role of the Islamic lands in the transmission of papermaking

[347] Yıldız, *Safevi döneminde Tebrîz, Kentsel mekânda dönüşüm süreçleri (1501-1736)*, 718.
[348] Bloom, "Silk Road or Paper Road?," 572.
[349] Jouannin and van Gaver, *Turquie*, 110.

from Asia to Europe" since the paper was unknown in Western Asia and the Mediterranean world before the coming of Islam. Although Muslim armies encountered paper for the first time while they conquered Central Asia in the late seventh and early eighth centuries, the anecdote of capturing Chinese papermakers following the Battle of Talas in 751 is without factual basis. More than that, paper had been known and made in Central Asia for centuries, as shown by the discovery of the Sogdian letters written on paper, one of them addressed to a merchant in Samarkand in the fourth century.

After Central Asia, Iran was an important center for the transmission of paper along the "Paper Route." The oldest dated copy of the Quran transcribed on paper was produced, presumably in Iran, in 971-72 by the calligrapher Ali ibn Shadhan al-Razi, whose name indicates that he came from Ray, a city near modern Tehran. The period after the Mongol conquests in Central and Western Asia in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries once again encouraged trade and communication along the routes linking China to the West. At this time, papermakers in the Islamic lands, particularly in Iran and Irak, developed techniques for making larger and finer sheets of paper which were used not only as supports for magnificent manuscripts but also as for drawings that served as intermediaries between designers and craftsmen.[350]

Various kinds of papers, like grid paper, and marble paper, began to circulate from China to the Islamic lands, especially at the end of the fourteenth century when embassies were exchanged. Sheila Blair traces the use of gold-decorated paper back to Chinese originals. By the fifteenth century, local artists had

[350]Bloom, “Silk Road or Paper Road?,” 563-573.

begun to produce their imitations, which became increasingly elaborate in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[351]

On the courtly level, among the most striking artifacts driven by unprecedented travel and exchange during the Mongol period is an illustrated manuscript from Tabriz on Chinese medicine. Known as *Tansuknama* the manuscript is the *Tansuknama-i Ilkhan dar funun-i ulum-i Khata'i* (Treasure Book of the Ilkhans on the Branches of the Chinese Sciences). The only known manuscript is in the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul. Completed in 1313, it contains cosmological and medical images rendered with a pen at the behest of the Ilkhanid vizier Rashid al-Din (d. 1318).

As shown in Figure 110, the manuscript evokes Chinese visual traditions and the images are unlike any other known images from the Islamic world. Although based on various Chinese medical texts, the manuscript was meant for readers of Persian. According to Persis Berlekamp, the *Tansuknama* compels an exercise of historical imagination:

> [A] polymath vizier, a Chinese doctor, a Persian doctor, a translator, a scribe, and possibly an artist, gather in fourteenth-century Tabriz. They do not fully understand the words of one another's languages, the visual conventions of one another's images, or the foundational paradigms of one another's medical traditions— and yet they strive over long years to combine their ultimately incompatible knowledge. Together, they work at the precise limits of artistic exchange in fourteenth-century Tabriz.[352]

Cities, villages, and shrine centers, especially those on trade and pilgrimage routes with easy access for pastoralists, became places where the steppe and the sown met. As shown in the case of this manuscript, Tabriz played a preeminent role

[351] Blair, "Color and Gold: The Decorated Papers Used in Manuscripts in Later Islamic Times," 24-36.
[352] Berlekamp, "The limits of artistic exchange in fourteenth-century Tabriz: The paradox of Rashid al-din's book on Chinese medicine, 209-250.

as a central node in trade networks and as a meeting point for scientists, diplomats, merchants, artists, and litterateurs from east and west.[353]

Figure 110. The head, Rashid al-Din, *Tansuknama-i Ilkhan* (Treasure Book of the Ilkhans), Tabriz, 1313. Istanbul Süleymaniye Library, Ms. Aya Sofya 3596-83a (Source: Berlekamp, "The limits of artistic exchange in fourteenth-century Tabriz")

This was more or less the encounter pattern of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. Unsurprisingly, these works, produced with ink and brush on paper around the fourteenth century, followed the itinerary of its raw material, paper, as did many of other companion artifacts: Chinese impact, made in Central Asia, ended up in Tabriz.

[353] Pfeiffer, "Introduction. From Baghdad to Marāgha, Tabriz, and Beyond," 1-11.

5.4 A patron of art "like a sugar cane": Yakub Bey (r.1478-1490)

Characterized by the waning of imperial ambitions and withering of European alliances, the reign of Akkoyunlu Yakub was a period of turning inward, which prepared a convenient ground for courtly pleasures. According to Woods, political conservatism replaced Yakub's father Uzun Hasan's dreams of world domination and no new territories were added to the Akkoyunlu domains. One of the central preoccupations of his regime was preserving the economic status quo. To this end considerable energy was expended on retaining and strengthening the hold of Tabriz on the Caspian-Mediterranean trade. Nevertheless, despite particularisms and personalities, the city of Tabriz remained the center around which revolved not only Yakub Bey's court but also the entire political, economic, cultural, and religious life of the Akkoyunlu Empire. [354]

Determined by financial and commercial concerns, relations with the other Islamic capitals -Herat, Cairo, and Istanbul-were superficially peaceful. Frequently dealing with family, cultural, or religious matters, Akkoyunlu-Timurid diplomatic exchanges during Yakub Bey's reign exhibit no trace of earlier rancor and emphasize the ties of goodwill linking the two houses. Through this policy of neutrality and prudence, driven by the fear of economic reprisals, not only was war averted but considerable wealth continued to accrue to the elite in Tabriz.[355]

While reading the *Tarikh-i Amini*, Akkoyunlu history written by the contemporary scholar Fadlullah b. Ruzbihan Khunji (1455- ?), one can assume the reasons for the cultural and artistic richness under the patronage of Yakub Bey. In the dedication part, after pages of fulsome praise, the author sums up this sultan's virtues under eight points:

[354] Woods, *The Aqquyunlu, Clan, Confederation, Empire*, 134-137.
[355] Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 134-137.

> (a) As a noble descendant of Bayandur he is like a sugar cane equally sweet at every joint; (b) he possesses a sun-like appearance veiled by the screen of modesty; (c) he is brave and (d) generous; (e) he is merciful, forgiving and (f) just; (g) he abounds in knowledge and has a mild nature, in conversation he would eclipse Farabi and Avicenna, and in poetry Anvari, Sanai and Nizami; (h) his religious beliefs are strict and he enforces the Shari'at.[356]

Shown in Figure 111, the double folio painting in H.2153-90B and 91A represents according to Woods, Yakub Bey and his court.[357]

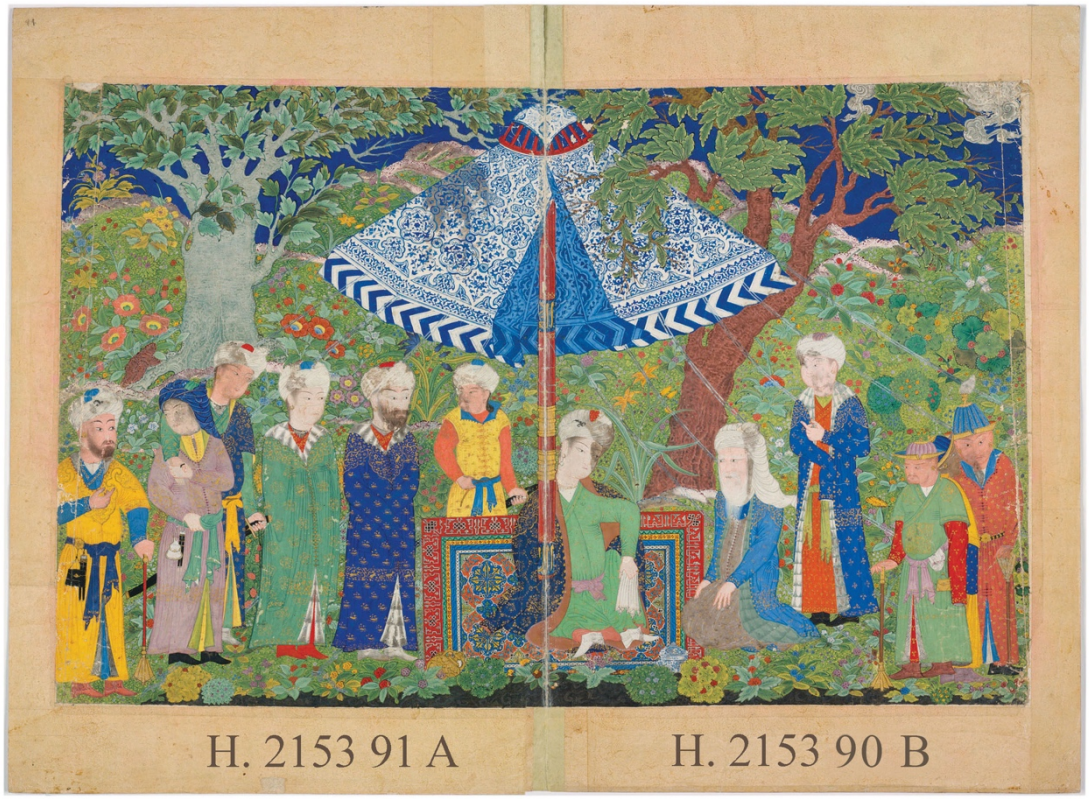

Figure 111. Nobleman under a tent with attendants, double folio painting in H.2153-90B and 91A, fifteenth century.

Kind and handsome, modest and generous, mild and of good manners, and highly intellectual with artistic merits, Sultan Yakub was a perfect patron of art. The continuous flow of wealth sourced by the fortunate position of the city, the

[356] Minorsky, *Persia in A.D. 1478-1490*, *An abridged translation of Fadlullah b. Ruzbihan Khunji's Tarikh-i 'Alam-Ara-yi Amini*, 22-23.
[357] Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 133. In the unpublished facsimile edition of the albums the title of the painting is "Nobleman under a tent with attendants."

equilibrium with surrounding powers, and the turning inward of the dynasty during his reign supplied a secure and fertile *milieu* for the accumulation and production of art in his court.

5.5 A compilation covering more than two centuries

As for the compilations known as Yakub Bey albums today, The first one, H.2153, measures 50.2 x 33.8 cm, and has 199 folios. The second one, H.2160, measures 50.7 x 34.7 cm and contains 90 folios.[358] Both albums include paintings, scroll fragments, sketches, drawings, prints, and calligraphic works mounted indiscriminately. Although the paintings and drawings are undated and unsigned, most calligraphy samples bear a date or signature. Accordingly, the earliest example is dated 1291 (H.2160, fol.5A), and there are a few examples from the fourteenth century by Ilkhanid and Jalayirid calligraphers. A few inscriptions date from the early part of the fifteenth century Herat, the latest dating to 1461-62. The majority of the calligraphies in these albums belong to artists working for the Karakoyunlu and Akkoyunlu sultans. The latest calligraphy is dated 1511-12 (H.2160 fol.55B). [359]

The names and locations help determine when and where they were produced. Most texts were copied in the Karakoyunlu and later Akkoyunlu regions, during the second half of the fifteenth century. Two calligraphers whose works are the most frequently encountered in H. 2153 and H. 2160 are the celebrated brothers Abd al-Rahim and Abd al-Karim, sons of Abd al-Rahman Khwarazmi. The albums contain 140 signed examples by these artists, from apprenticeship to maturity. Both artists produced a significant amount of work under Sultan Yakub. [360]

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[358] These are indeed their final conditions today in Topkapi Palace Museum Library; we can not know exactly if they were compiled in Tabriz or not.
[359] Çağman, "On the Contents of the Four Istanbul Albums," 31-36.
[360] Çağman, "On the Contents of the Four Istanbul Albums," 31-36.

The paintings in the albums are unique and cannot be compared with the contents of other albums made elsewhere. H.2153 contains 546 paintings and drawings; H. 2160 contains 131, making 677 pieces.[361] The earliest of these date from the llkhanid period in the first half of the fourteenth century, a fragmentary copy of the *Jami al Tavarikh*, Compendium of Chronicles written by the Ilkhanid vizier Rashid al-Din (d. 1318).

Çağman indicates that the latest paintings, which include copies of Chinese scenes, are the works of artists at the Akkoyunlu court, executed under the patronage of Yakub. Neither album contains any paintings executed after the death of Sultan Yakub. There are groups of paintings of coherent subject and style that can be attributed to specific centers and periods: a group to Transoxiana or Herat no later than the first half of the fifteenth century; another group to western Iran, in such centers as Tabriz and Baghdad during the llkhanid and Jalayirid periods at the fourteenth century; several manuscript illustrations during the Karakoyunlu and Akkoyunlu periods in the same area.

In addition, illustrations attributable to cities like Transoxiana, Khwarazm, and Khurasan, especially Samarkand and Herat, may be dated, at the earliest, to the second half of the fourteenth century and, at the latest, towards the middle of the fifteenth century. This historical framework supports the facts obtained from the textual material: the illustrations were collected at the court in Tabriz during Sultan Yakub's reign. [362]

5.6 The dragons of the Hest Behist Palace

According to Woods, the ostentation of Akkoyunlu Yakub's court and the tendency

[361] Some of them were surely added later in the Ottoman court.
[362] Çağman, "On the Contents of the Four Istanbul Albums," 31-36.

toward excessive display was apparent in glittering state receptions, banquets, and huts and the construction of monumental architectural testimonies to the greatness and affluence of Akkoyunlu rule.[363] One of the most influential buildings is the legendary palace Hest Behist, meaning "Eight Paradises" because of its octagonal shape. Yakub Bey's historian Khunji cites the construction of the building among the events of 1486:

> The shah spent the first of Muharram (7th January, 1486 ?) in Tabriz and in this year the construction of the Hasht Bihisht castle was completed. Like a turquoise throne it stands in the centre of the Sahib-abad garden and by the elevation of its pinnacles challenges Khavarnaq and the Pyramids. It has an octagonal shape and opposite each side there is a platform (suffa) with a charming niche (taq).[364]

The details about the palace exist in the admiring description of the Italian-origin Cypriote merchant Francesco Romano, who visited the city in 1507. He remarks huge bronze spouts in the form of dragons, so well made as to be taken for live dragons:

> The terrace of the palace has for each angle a gutter or spout, which spurts out water, and the spout is immensely large, and made in the form of a dragon; they are of bronze, and so large that they would do for a cannon, and so well made as to be taken for live dragons.[365]

The dragons must be inspired by the Chinese motifs collected from the cross-culturally fed environment of the Yakub Bey court in Tabriz. Although, unfortunately, these architectural elements disappeared today, they were depicted in a Tabriz miniature in the drafts of an illustrated dynastic history project whose title and author remain unknown.[366] Today in Dresden, Germany, this map of Tabriz is

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[363] Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 137.
[364] Minorsky, *Persia in A.D. 1478-1490,* 53.
[365] Grey, "The travels of a merchant in Persia," 174.
[366] "Die Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden, *Mscr.Dresd.Eb.391,* fols.197b, 198a. Zeynep Yürekli-Görkay identifies the first volume of the Dresden drafts as a manuscript combining two separate drafts of the years 1481-1520 (fols. 1-313) and 1542-1543 (fols. 318-396). (Zeynep Yürekli-Görkay, "Bir Silahşor, Birkaç Resimli Kitap ve Bilmediğimiz Birçok Şey", p. 8, 12). There is also a second volume with picture sketches. (SLUB Dresden, *Mscr.Dresd.Eb.391,* Bd. II)" in Yıldız, *Safevi döneminde Tebrîz*.

attributed to 1514 (Figure 112). On the drawing, the dragons on the two sides of the multi-story pavilion are apparent, matching the details given by the Cypriote merchant.

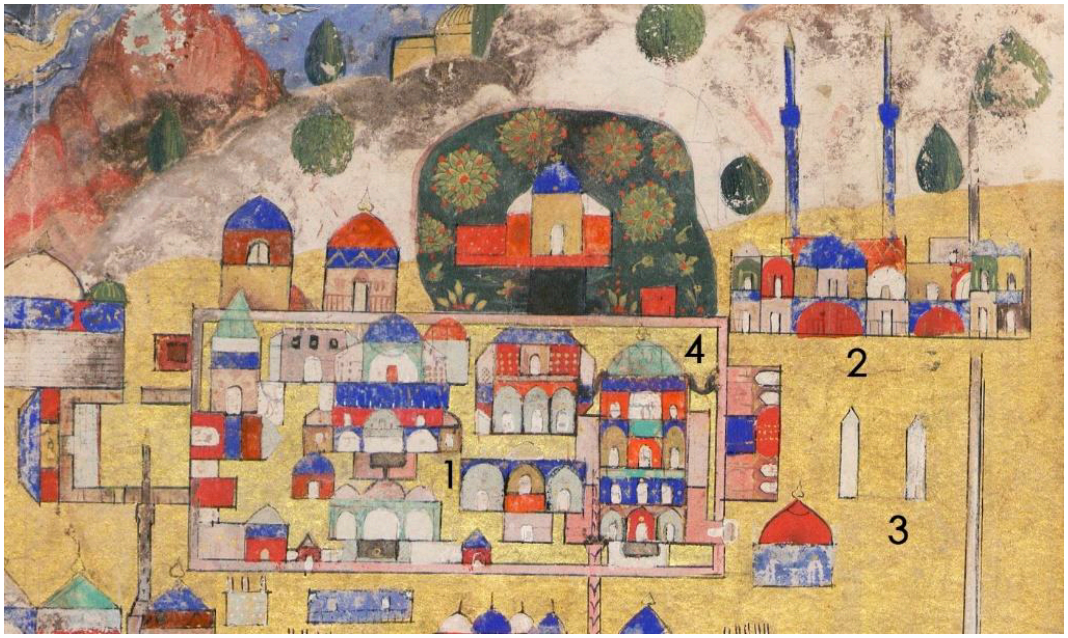

Figure 112. Tabriz city in Dresden Drafts, 1514 (detail) 1. Hest Behist complex 4. huge bronze spouts in dragon form (Source: Yıldız, *Safevi döneminde Tebrîz,* 410)

Another depiction of the palace complex is found in the unique copy of the *Mecmu-i Menazil* (Compilation of the Halting Places), compiled in 1537–38 by Matrakçı Nasuh (1480-1564). Figure 113 is Matrakçı Nasuh's Tabriz map.The famous Ottoman mathematician and historian drew the city map when he accompanied Sultan Süleyman (r.1520-1566) on his campaigns in Iran and Iraq, during which the Ottoman army re-conquered Tabriz in July 1534.

Figure 113. Tabriz city in Matrakçı Nasuh's *Mecmu-i Menazil*, 1534 (detail) 1. Hest Behist complex (Source: Yıldız, *Safevi döneminde Tebrîz,* 410)

In Matrakçı Nasuh's depiction of Tabriz, the palace Hest Behist is easily recognizable as the largest structure in the center of a beautiful garden that incorporated not only the palace but also a mosque with an attached hospital and the harem. Interestingly enough, the dragon spouts disappeared over the twenty years between 1514-1534.[367] Figure 114 shows a comparison of Hest Behist palace depictions in two maps.

[367] For a discussion with rigorous scrunity on this subject as well as on the process of urban transformation during the Safavid period of Tabriz (1501-1736) with the largest primary sources refer to Leyla Yıldız, *Safevi döneminde Tebrîz* (Tabrīz during Safavid period).

Figure 114. The dragon spouts visible on the two sides of the palace in 1514 Dresden Drafts (left). They disappeared in Matrakçı Nasuh's 1534 depiction in *Mecmu-i Menazil* (right) (Source: Yıldız, *Safevi döneminde Tebrîz,* 474)

5.7 Gold and ultramarine blue in the Hest Behist Palace

Besides architectural virtuosity, the internal decorations of the palace were so impressive for the Cypriote merchant: Chinese dragons, Central Asian ultramarine, tiles, and carpets as local handicrafts; rhinoceros from exotic lands; horses, pearls, gold, silver, and needlework as universal ruler treasuries, murals depicting battles, embassies, and hunts… All these rich elements, "a wonder to see," exhibit the multiculturally sourced aspects of Tabriz and Yakub Bey's court at his time:

> Within the palace, on the ceiling of the great hall, are represented in gold, silver, and ultramarine blue, all the battles which took place in Persia a long time since; and some embassies are to be seen which came from the Ottoman to Tauris presenting themselves before Assambei, with their demands and the answer he gave them written in the Persian character. There are also represented his hunting expeditions, on which he was accompanied by many lords, all on horseback, with dogs and falcons. There are also seen many animals like elephants an rhinoceroses, all signifying adventures which had happened to him. The ceiling of the great hall is all decorated with beautiful gilding and ultramarine. The figures are so well drawn that they appear like real living human beings. On the floor of the hall is spread a magnificent carpet, apparently of silk, worked in the Persian manner with beautiful patterns, which is round, and of the exact measurement the place requires; likewise in the other rooms the floor is all covered. (…) The ceiling of this

> harem is ornamented with gold and ultramarine. From this hall there are many chambers on every side, with all the doors superbly decorated with gold and blue, and many signs and letters made of mother of pearl, in beautiful patterns; and through the centre of this hall flows a stream of pure water, a cubit in breadth and as much deep. On one side of this harem is a summer-house four yards square, beautifully decorated with enamel, gold, and ultramarine blue, in patterns really a wonder to see. Here the queen stays with her maidens to do needlework, according to their custom. [368]

Here ultramarine is worth attention, for it is the only source of blue pigment at that period. In contrast to its high value compared to gold, it is one of the colors used frequently in Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings.

The term ultramarine, meaning "across the seas," refers to the absence of the pigment in Europe. It was a luxury product during the Middle Ages and was uncommon before the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries. The Italian painter Cennini (c. 1360 – before 1427), in his intriguing guide to painting methods, *Il Libro dell' Art,* written in fifteenth-century Florence, defines this pigment as "the most precious color".[369]

According to Persian sources, the gem was extracted from Badakhshan Mountain and exported to China along the ancient Silk Roads.[370] Badakshan is the mountainous region situated on the left bank of the upper reaches of the Amu-Darya, today located in northeast Afghanistan. Looking at the archaeological evidence, Badakhshan mines have been the unique source of *lapis lazuli* since ancient times.[371]

By the mid-fourteenth century, the preferred color scheme for rosettes and borders had evolved to a marked predominance of dark blue and then dark blue and gold. This color combination was a trend in book arts and architectural elements, as is apparent in the palace of the Yakub Bey court. The dark blue from *lapis* is

[368] Grey, "The travels of a merchant in Persia," 175-176.
[369] Cennini, *The Craftsman's handbook*, 36-38.
[370] Heravi, *Ketāb-ārāyi dar tamaddon-e eslāmi*, The Art of book in Islamic civilization, 62, 341.
[371] Herrmann, "Lapis Lazuli-The Early Phases of Its Trade," 21-57.

particularly effective when set off against gold ground, and this striking combination of dark blue against gold continued to predominate throughout the fifteenth century. Manuscripts of the Koran from fourteenth-century Iran are typically written in gold with blue vocalization. Many of the multi-volume manuscripts are decorated with magnificent frontispieces done in the same combination of colors.[372]

5.8 Who is Bihzad's grandmaster, "Ustad Gung, the Dumb"?

Among the spoils the Ottomans confiscated in Hest Behist Palace after the city's conquest in 1514, there were various artifacts imported from China or processed in the Chinese style: China vases (*avani-yi chini*), sixty-five small and large Chinese imperial porcelain plates called *faghfuri*; (From Ustad Shams al-Din Ali) three unfinished decorated horse saddles: one watery-blue (*mavi*), one Chinese-style (*chini*), one silver-plated; Chinese-style (*chini*) binding, gilded.[373] Besides vases directly imported from China, horse saddles or bindings processed or decorated in the Chinese style show the scope of the royal cross-cultural collection in the late fifteenth-century Tabriz.

The impact of Chinese elements in Tabriz was not only sourced from finished products. The mobility of the artists and the skills and visual vocabularies transferred from master to pupil undoubtedly contributed to the spread of styles and *genre*s. The artistic genealogy of the legendary painter Bihzad (c.1450-1535/6) reveals such a connection. Originally from Herat, this unsurpassed painter worked in Herat and Tabriz courts. According to the earliest Ottoman source about calligraphers and painters, Mustafa Ali's *Epic Deeds of Artists*, Bihzad was a choice

[372] Blair, "Color and Gold: The Decorated Papers Used in Manuscripts in Later Islamic Times," 24-36.
[373] Genç, "From Tabriz to Istanbul: Goods and treasures of Shah Isma'il looted after the Battle of Chaldıran," 227-276.

apprentice of Pir Sayyid Ahmad of Tabriz, who himself was a pupil of the pillar of portraitists, Master Jihangir of Bukhara. Jihangir was a talented apprentice of a certain Master Gun:

> The foremost leader of eminent and world-famous figural-painters (musavvir), and the endless treasure of the decorators (naqqas) was Master [Kamal al-Din] Bihzad, who was from Herat. His art became manifest, with perfect esteem, first during the reign of Sultan Husayn Bayqara, and then during the time of Shah Ismail, son of Haydar. Like the artists of China, he was renowned in lands far and wide for his painted images (naqşü nigar). Though he was a choice apprentice of Pir Sayyid Ahmad of Tabriz, who is mentioned below, the [main] reason for his recognition, popularity, and excellence in decoration and portraiture was his special connection to the lofty favors of the aforesaid padishahs.
>
> Another was Pir Sayyid Ahmad of Tabriz, the mentor of the said [Bihzad] and a pupil of the pillar of portraitists, Master Jihangir of Bukhara. Jihangir was a talented apprentice of the choice writer Master Gun.[374]

Who was this Master Gun, the grandmaster of the exquisite masters like Bihzad? As Esra Akın pointed out, Chinese artists were thought to possess unequaled skill and ability in the Islamic world. Could there be a factual basis behind Mustafa Ali's analogy for Bihzad, him being "like the artists of China"? Oriental art collector Fredrik Robert Martin, has convincing arguments on this matter:

> Eastern authors claim as their most ancient painter Ustad Gung, the Dumb, who is declared to have been the founder of the Timurid school. His name appears to shew (sic) a Chinese origin, but as no work of his has been transmitted to us and we know of no other biographical details than that he was called Naqwat al-Muharririn, "the choicest of the writers," no definite conclusion can be made. He had a pupil, Ustad Jahangir, from Bukhara, who is sometimes named Umdat al-Musavvirin, "the pillar of the painters," and all we know about him is that he was the master of Pir Sayyid Ahmad, from Tabriz, who is said to have been the master of the famous Bihzad. These notices, however brief they may appear, seem to indicate Samarqand and Bukhara as the primal sources of Persian painting. This Master Gung may have been a Chinaman; and he need not necessarily have been dumb, but simply unable to speak the language of his new country. Was he one of the artists brought in by Hulagu, or was he one of the painters of Timur's court? One can only make a guess.[375]

[374] Akın-Kıvanç, *Mustafa Ali's Epic Deeds of Artists*, 264, transcription: 399-400.
[375] Martin, *The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India and Turkey*, 28.

This artistic lineage covering up almost the whole geography of the Silk Roads, beginning from China to Bukhara, Herat, and Tabriz, explains the extreme but merited praise and admiration for Bihzad's unique art. We can surely include Samarkand as the capital and cultural and artistic center of the Timurid geography. Such was the cross-cultural *milieu* of the Akkoyunlu Yakub Bey's court where the largest content of the albums was compiled.

5.9 Chinoiserie in the albums

The variety of cultural and artistic impacts during Akkoyunlu Yakub Bey's period is visible not only in the architectural projects in Tabriz. His regime patronized historical writing, literature, science, and the arts effectively and prestigious. Calligraphy and miniature painting attained high originality and refinement, rivaling the more celebrated Timurid school of Herat, which had been the center of art and culture throughout the fifteenth century. Woods points out that Yakubid Tabriz was an Islamic cultural center of considerable importance and that judgments on the cultural barrenness and barbarity of Turkmen rule are no longer tenable.[376]

These albums represent the highest degree of Turco-Persian book arts of the period, where, other than the Turkoman, there are paintings from Ilkhanid, Jalayirid, and Timurid, as well as European and Chinese traditions. The vast range of the albums includes various cases of Chinese art elements -material, style, theme, or paintings- traveling westward to Central Asia and Iran during the Mongol and post-Mongol periods. The pictures compiled in the albums constitute a selective totality that reflects a Persianate mode of connoisseurship and collecting patterns in late fourteenth to fifteenth-century Central Asia and Iran.[377]

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[376] Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 138.
[377] Yu, "From the Picture Gallery of China: A Glimpse into the Persianate Collecting of Chinese

The impact of Chinese imagery comprising Chinese figures, landscapes, themes, or compositional ideas was defined as *Chinoiserie* and discussed by various art historians.[378] It is visible in the context of manuscript painting, textiles, ceramics, and metalwork of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Some of these paintings were diplomatic gifts to enhance courtly relations. According to the Ming chronicles, Ming China dispatched several missions with offerings to the Timurid rulers and vice versa. The Timurid historical record *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh* states that the Chinese emperor gave the portrait of a horse as a gift in kind.[379]

Travelers, diplomats, or merchants must have purchased others while in China. Some others were local copies made by Persian painters after Chinese models. Figure 115 illustrates a selection. Examples exist from landscape paintings to figural ones, from the famous Chinese animal painting themes like birds, tiger or eagle on a perch, to the representation of beauties. As Yu Yusen illustrates, some of the compositions must have been of particular interest or success for painters within some specific workshop, for it appears four times in the different paper and silk copies preserved in the same album (H. 2153, fol. 42a, 146b, 148a, and 150b).[380]

Religious Painting in the Late 14th to 15th Centuries," 19.

[378] Some, but not all, are: Yuka Kadoi, *Islamic Chinoiserie: The Art of Mongol Iran*, Edinburgh 2009. Ching-Ling Wang, "Iconographic turn: On Chinese Buddhist and Daoist iconography in the Diez Albums, *The Diez albums*, Brill, 2016. Gülru Necipoğlu, "From International Timurid to Ottoman: A change of taste in sixteenth-century ceramic tiles" *Muqarnas*, 1990, Vol. 7 (1990), pp. 136-170. E. Sims and Ernst J. Grube (eds.) *Between China and Iran. Paintings from Four Istanbul Albums, A Colloguy held 23-26 June 1980, University of London*, The Islamic Art Foundation, New York, 1985. Toh Sugimura (1981) 'The Chinese impact of certain fifteenth century Persian paintings from the Albums (Hazine Library Nos 2153, 2154, 2160) in the Topkapi Saray Museum, Istanbul', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan.

[379] Homma, "The Influence of Chinese Art on Persian Paintings," 241-260.

[380] Yu, "Representing Ming China in Fifteenth-Century Persianate Painting," 57-73.

H2153-36B

H2153-68A

H2153-47B

H2153-123A

Figure 115. The latest paintings on the albums are copies of Chinese scenes executed under the patronage of Yakub by the court artists. Some examples are Two Daoist deities Liu Haichan 劉海蟾 and Li Tieguai 李鐵拐 (36B); Small birds (47B); Autumn landscape (68A); Two Ming Military Officers (123A)

Besides secular themes, there are religious ones as well. Among them are the *Two Daoist deities* representing Liu Haichan 劉海蟾 and Li Tieguai 李鐵拐 (H. 2153-36B) or Water-moon Guangyin 水月觀音, typical images that were very popular in East Asian countries during the Ming period (1368-1644).

Thus, although the Chinese-related paintings in these albums lack dates or artists' names, examination and comparison with Chinese paintings clearly show that

the Chinese models had been spreading from the East and adopted in the West.[381]

5.10 A codex of single-folio works: *Murakka*

Tabriz was a scene of uninterrupted artistic accumulation fed by a large geography from China to West Asia and Europe from the thirteenth-century Mongol period to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings took advantage of this flow and somehow made their way to the Akkoyunlu court in Tabriz as a gift or rarity. The esteemed patron of art Yakub Bey or the artisans of his studio wanted to make these paintings part of their valuable selection.

How were these paper works kept physically in albums? The composition and content of the albums shed light on the main drive behind this cross-cultural collection. It also gives insights into the inclusion of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings within them.

The precise term for this type of codex made of single folio works is *murakka*. The origins of the *murakka* tradition date back to the fifteenth century. It would not be wrong to assume that Yakub Bey's albums are one of the earliest examples of the *genre*. *Murakka* production gradually developed as a distinct branch of Islamic book arts towards the mid-sixteenth century. It required the collaboration of various kinds of artisans in a professional studio environment that can be afforded only by rulers, princes and other members of the ruling class:

> The murakka, or album, is a type of codex that brings together single-folio works of renowned contemporary and past calligraphers, artists, illuminators, and paper cutters in a single volume. As distinct from illustrated manuscripts, the paintings, drawings, illuminations, or calligraphic examples in a murakka are not necessarily connected to a specific text. In other words, while the intention of compiling a murakka album is occasionally to protect and preserve, the main objective is to form a collection of works of fine art that are deemed "valuable." Apart from illuminators, painters and scribes,

[381] Homma, “The Influence of Chinese Art on Persian Paintings,” 241-260.

> vassale masters were also instrumental in meticulously pasting works one by one on the pages of a murakka, for they skillfully joined the papers without a trace. Although their date and provenance varied, these single-folio works were placed on the same page with careful calculation, skill, and harmony.[382]

To protect and preserve these paintings in a *murakka* they cut them into pieces without paying attention to the function, context, or composition, nor if they are related to other texts or pictures in the same folio. Figure 116 is the whole folio kept in H.2153-38B, as an example of *murakka* page.

Figure 116. H.2153-38B: In a *murakka*, single-folio works were placed on the same page with careful calculation, skill, and harmony. The logic of the compilation is to use the whole surface as much as possible.

The logic of the album compilation was to use the whole page surface as much as possible. Nothing matters for this end, whether the texts and pictures are related, whether the direction of reading or looking at the pasted pieces is harmonious, or whether it is convenient for the format or composition of the artifact.

[382] Bağcı et al., *Ottoman painting*, 229.

The only complementary element they seemed to care about was spatial complementarity, to fit as many pieces as possible on a folio's surface.

Moreover, the rupture happens to such an extent that it separates the upper and lower parts of a figure's body, with an irreversible intervention resulting in severe deprivations about the format, composition and meaning of the images. In Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings shown in Figure 117 body parts are cut out on the left corner of 38A, on the right corner of 64B, and on the left corner of 141A.

This rupture did not happen solely for Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. Several scrolls cut and pasted on various folios of the two albums constitute striking examples, where sharp destructions occurred. Figure 118 illustrates the cutting in pieces of a long scroll. Parts of the painting are found today on four different folios of the album H.2153.

Figure 117. Body parts are cut out from the corners: On the left corner of 38A, on the right corner of 64B, on the left corner of 141A.
Figure 118. A long scroll cut in pieces and pasted on different folios of the album H.2153. The upper row shows the original scroll, and the lower one shows the folios the subsequent parts were pasted on the album H.2153: folios 19B-18A-95B-94B.

We must admit that not every aspect was mobile for the paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem, as in the case of many other works of art. By being cut into pieces, the transfer, hence the mobility of some artistic elements stopped due to the historically and culturally defined perceptions. Courts appropriated art, including Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, neither in their original format and connotation nor in their original function. They transported, even "teleported" these paintings into a different pattern of logic, and adopted them after fitting to the dimensions convenient for their manuscript tradition *murakka*.

Within this new environment, unrelated illustrations and samples of calligraphy are pasted on the same pages. Whereas, drawings of similar styles, or those from the same scroll or series, are scattered throughout the two volumes. On the other hand, designing an album requires careful calculation, skill, and harmony. But the logic that defined this harmony or preferences behind the detailed calculation did not necessarily match those adopted in the production of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, whose initial function was for storytelling purposes. This format was incompatible with the *murakka* format, both in terms of size and function. Hence, they are cut and pasted according to the compilation rules of this binding pattern, as models to have inspiration. Akkoyunlu court protected and preserved its valuables in its way, according to the logic of the *murakka* compilation.

5.11. Understanding the language of the image and visual memory

According to Persis Berlekamp, the *Tansuknama* was produced not because Chinese culture was exotic but because Rashid al-Din, trained as a medical physician, wanted to enrich Islamic culture with centuries of Chinese learning. Even so, and even in its highly specialized original *milieu* among a handpicked team in early fourteenth-

century Tabriz, the images probably functioned more as markers of authenticity than as vehicles of cosmological and medical knowledge. [383]

In these terms, a cross-cultural milieu does not imply the existence of a universal language. As argued by Berlekamp, there are difficulties in such kinds of projects. She defines Rashid al-Din's project of translation as "a gloriously bold failure" because of the following paradoxical situation:

> It arose from the fact that the visual nature of medical imagery did not by any means imply that it was a universal language; on the contrary, it was only understandable through deeply rooted paradigms of ultimately cosmological thought. The great achievement, and the great failing, of the Tansūqnāma seem to have been one and the same. When Rashid al-Din's team encountered something that was anathema in a medieval Islamic milieu, or even simply inaccessible, it refrained from radically reinventing it. Instead, the team obscured the difficulty, whether deliberately or by mistake. If the goal was to avoid misrepresenting the original sources, the fact that more familiar alternatives were generally not interpolated into the translation was an achievement. But if the aim was to make Chinese medical knowledge and imagery accessible in a new milieu, the same choice was a failure. For the sake of the latter goal, the problem with the visual translation (and with what little I have been able to learn about the verbal translation) was not that it departed from the Chinese originals too much. Rather, it seems to have been that it departed from them too little. In other words, if we can say with confidence that the Tansūqnāma team visually translated the images from the cosmological paradigms that provided the theoretical underpinnings of Chinese medicine, it is not at all clear that it translated them into any alternative cosmological or medical models that would have been more familiar to its new target audience in a medieval Islamic milieu.[384]

Behind the inclusion of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings in the albums may stand a similar paradox. On the one hand, they are treated as valuable artifacts that deserve protection in a royal collection. On the other hand, they were subdued to a severe distortion, which detached them from their original context, and primal reason of existence.

In the case of *Tansuknama*, the Persian side is ignorant about the philosophical background of the manuscript, based on totally different paradigms to

[383] Berlekamp, “The limits of artistic exchange in fourteenth-century Tabriz,” 209-250.
[384] Persis Berlekamp, “The limits of artistic exchange in fourteenth-century Tabriz,” 229-230.

the extent that even the images require translation. For Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, there was probably ignorance of the oral tradition within which these paintings were functional. On the other hand, the distortion of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings happened inside the Hest Behist Palace, whose walls were decorated with narrative paintings depicting war scenes of Iranian shahs or visiting delegations. Why cut and paste storytelling paintings before the storytelling murals?

Akkoyunlu court was not foreign to the oral tradition of storytelling or narrative painting, especially when we think of *Shahnama* reciting practice in the larger Persian geography. But for them, the valuable part of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, the reason to protect and preserve them was simply different. They preferred to keep these paintings not because of the narrative aspects or the story they depict but because of their influential and unique artistic style.

The fundamental approach was to treat them as creative and stylistic models, like the *Chinoiserie* imitations in the albums. No matter if they represent Song or Ming officials, nor do they care about the implications of Daoist deities. These paintings were solely important as stylistic, technical, or figural models and motifs in a world where the artist must rely only on visual memory. These *murakka*s differ from *Shahnama*s or other illustrated manuscripts where the story dominates the narration and flow of related images. These compilations seem to play a function similar to the visual reference guides.

Karl Reichl's example about orality and memory is meaningful for comparison: In Xenophon's *Symposium*, Socrates asks the participants in the banquet to tell the company what they believe to be their most valuable accomplishment or possession. One of the guests is Niceratus, the son of Nicias, a general in the Peloponnesian War. He boasts of knowing the Homeric epics Iliad and the Odyssey

by heart due to his father's incitement, who was anxious to see him develop into a good man. As a means to this end, his father compelled him to memorize all of Homer.[385]

To recite by heart or to memorize is a way of learning, a technique most of us refer to even today in contemporary education. According to the general Nicias, it contributes to your development into a good man. Reichl emphasizes the close connection between orality and memory, as the Greek expression for "by heart" puts it, "by mouth" (*apo stomatos*). On the other hand, in learning the epics, Niceratus was coached by the rhapsodes, oral singers of epics who performed from memory. Interestingly, their craft had come into existence only after the introduction of writing in Greece; hence classicists assume that the rhapsodes learned the Homeric poems from written texts rather than through oral transmission.[386]

*Murakka*s were the texts of court artists in reference to which they memorized the Mehmed Siyah Kalem *genre* and developed into good artists who produced masterpieces "by heart", not "by mouth" memory, but "by eye" memory. This memory includes both visuality and hand skills, as the performer could recite the epics besides memorizing.

Album folios contain such examples, both clumsily and masterfully produced artifacts, along the way to becoming a good artist. Especially those paintings on silk or cloth inspired by Mehmed Siyah Kalem examples are the achievements of this memory. One of those examples classified in the subgroup is "Two demons working," in Figure 119, attributed to the fifteenth century (192x206 mm, H.2153-fol. 39b-p.1)

[385] Reichl, " Memory and Textuality in the Orality-Literacy Continuum," 19.
[386] Reichl, " Memory and Textuality in the Orality-Literacy Continuum," 20.

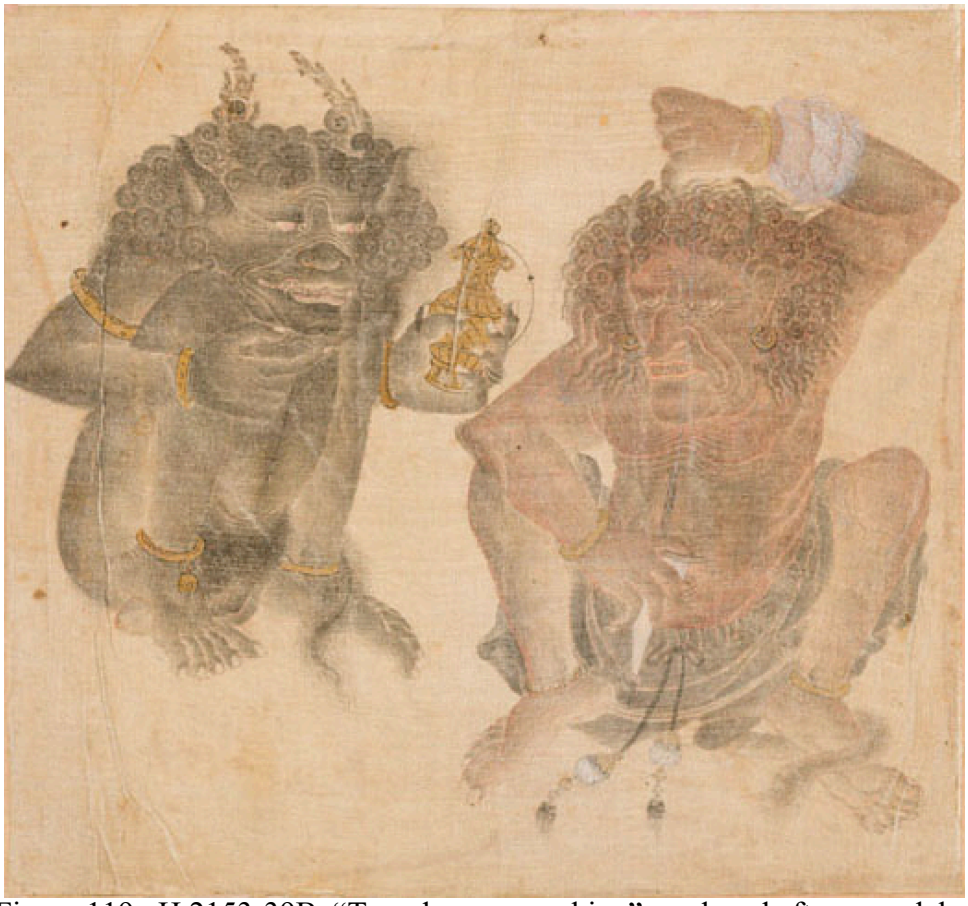

Figure 119. H.2153-39B, “Two demons working” produced after a model of Mehmed Siyah Kalem genre.

For the Akkoyunlu court, Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings were the words of a foreign image language, as were the *Tansukname* pictures for the Ilkhanid readers. But they were artistically unique and stylistically strong. These features must have provoked a fascination to learn the language of these images. The artist wanted to be a good artist, like Niceratus wanted to be a good man. The way to learn, even surpass, was to memorize them and recite them by heart. But first of all they had to imitate them by observing them closely. They cut and pasted these valuables on the album folios to protect and preserve them.

The albums, the artist, the studio, the court, and the empire were as prestigious as the scope of its collection, accumulated vertically through time and

horizontally through geography to include dragons and *Chinoiserie*, ultramarine and Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, unique style of the storyteller originated in the capillary routes of Chinese Turkestan.

5.12 Shah Selim, son of Bayezid Han, forever glorious

On the first folio of the album H.2160, as it stands in the Topkapi Palace Museum Library today, a simple seal attracts attention: The seal of the Ottoman Sultan Selim I (r.1512-1520) reading *Şah bin Bayezid Han Selim el Muzaffer Daima*,[387] meaning "Shah Selim, son of Bayezid Han, forever glorious."

H.2153 and H.2160, containing Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, are known as "sibling albums" with similar and complementary contents. The existence of the seal in one of them and the compilations' attribution to the Akkoyunlu Yakub Bey's court, let us permit to assume their provenance from Tabriz during Sultan Selim's reign. Ottomans most probably brought them to the court in Istanbul as spoils after the conquest of Tabriz in 1514 following the Chaldiran Battle.

An essential term in the Ottomans Empire's conquest and booty economy is *kılıç hakkı*, the "right of the sword." It defines the sultan's authority to affirm the legal condition of the conquered territories and their population after a military victory. The Ottoman custom included not only territory and population but artworks to enrich the treasury, art styles to contemplate on palace walls, and even deported artists to create these beauties in the Ottoman court back home.

[387] Umur, *Osmanlı Padişah Tuğraları*.

CHAPTER 6

CHALDIRAN

THE RIGHT OF THE SWORD

Sultan-ı Acemün ol şehr-i mu'azzamda olan asar-i celilesinden
Heşt-Bihişt dimekle ma'ruf saray-ı bi-hemtayi,
ki letafet-i mebna ile meşhur binadur, seyr-ü temaşa itdi.[388]

Courts' appropriation of art is a historical fact demonstrating the power of the royal state. Their patronage of artworks or artists had been in various ways throughout history: undertaking huge architectural projects, building royal studios, and sponsoring court artists are some usual forms of art patronage by medieval courts. The entrance of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings into the courtly realms was violent in terms of cutting their organic linkages from their origins. Following the Ottomans' victory after the Chaldiran Battle in 1514 the compilations of the Akkoyunlu Yakub Bey were displaced from Tabriz to Istanbul court.

To understand the logic behind the Ottoman Empire's appropriation of the spoils including the albums after the conquest of Tabriz, this chapter introduces a novel term in handling the mobility of art, and hence Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings: *kılıç hakkı*, right of the sword. The notion is not a simple plunder act but refers to a complex legal and economic system whose rules were clearly defined in the Ottoman state theory. Following the conquest of Tabriz Selim ordered mass deportation and emigration of artists and artisans of the city to the empire's capital in Istanbul. Ottomans had practiced this method of conquest from the earliest time as a reorganization tool to serve the capital's prosperity.

[388] Kemalpasazade Defter 9, fol.138a. Uğur, "The reign of Sultan Selim I in the light of the Selim-name literature," 121.

The perception of Tabrizi art and artists from the Ottoman point of view is crucial to make sense of these notions of conquest. The city was considered the land of "all the beautiful inventions, the delicacies and kindnesses," [389] not only by the Ottomans but by the Europeans as well. Although the paintings were transferred from one court to another on the same geography, different historical transformations drive their mobility, with embedded new meanings attributed to these artworks.

6.1 "spoils and bloody broils"

Enriching the court environment and the empire through seizures and deported artisans and scientists, even by force, was usual for a sixteenth-century ruler. Only eleven years before the Ottoman Sultan Selim I (r.1512-1520), Shah Ismail (r.1501-1524) had seized Tabriz and its beauties from the Akkoyunlu Dynasty. The defeat marks the end of the Akkoyunlu Dynasty under Alumut (r.1498-1501), nephew of Yakub Bey, and the victory marks the founding of the Safavid Empire under Shah Ismail. The Italian-origin Cypriote merchant Francesco Romano[390] noted the seizure of the city with the following impressions:

> Then began a great slaughter of these poor wretches, so much so that at the hour of three they were all cut to pieces, except Alumut, who escaped with a few companions to Tauris, where he kept his treasures and his harem, and thence to Amit. Ismael took an immense booty in tents, horses, arms, etc., while all his soldiers enriched themselves with spoil.[391]

Although we are deprived of an official document proving the entry of these albums to the Ottoman treasury after the conquest of Tabriz in 1514, multiple

[389] Artus, *Histoire des Turcs*, 371.
[390] This merchant's name has remained unknown until recently, when Jean Aubin identified him as Francesco Romano, a Cypriote of Italian origin, and not a Venetian. For detailed information see Aubin, "Chroniques persanes et relations italiennes. Notes sur les sources narratives du règne de Shah Esma'il l[er]," 247-259; Genç, "From Tabriz to Istanbul: Goods and treasures of Shah Isma'il looted after the Battle of Chaldıran," 236.
[391] Grey, "The travels of a merchant in Persia," 190.

historical facts support this assumption.

Selim's (1470-1520) short period of eight years (1512-1520) was characterized by spectacular conquests: eastern Anatolia, Syria and Palestine, the Arabian Peninsula with its holy cities of Mecca and Medina, Yemen, and then Egypt. When he died on September 22, 1520, because of a carbuncle,[392] he left to his successor an empire whose territories nearly tripled, bestriding the three continents. Securing the empire's eastern borders, he aimed to expand into the western Mediterranean, for which purpose he began the construction of a new navy.

The annexation of Syria, Egypt and Arabia, the old heartland of the caliphate, and especially of Mecca and Medina, to the Ottoman Empire marks the beginning of a new era. The empire was no longer a frontier state but an Islamic caliphate, protector of Mecca and Medina and guardian of the pilgrimage routes. Hence the status of the Ottoman sultan changed radically, now considering himself a protector not only of the frontiers but of the entire Muslim world. This was more significant than his bearing the title of caliph, a title then used by every Muslim ruler.[393] The political advantages of this concept of the state became apparent in the reign of Selim's successor. One result of the new consciousness of the Ottoman rulers was to raise the religious law of Islam to a position of prime importance in the administration of the state. An equally important result of Selim's conquests was that the Ottomans now controlled the world's wealthiest centers of the transit trade. Ottoman state income doubled, the reserve treasury in the palace was overflowing, and with these resources, Süleyman I (1520–66) was able to support his plans for worldwide conquests.[394]

[392] *Şirpençe*, a fatal disease caused by bacterial infection.
[393] İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire The Classical Age 1300-1600*, 84.
[394] İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*, 55.

The impression of Selim among European historians of the period was based on this image of a cruel warrior who ran tirelessly after spoils, even in his grave. In the history books of the period, Selim's part begins with this short epitaph, said to be graven in the Greek, Turkish, and Sclavonian tongues upon his tomb:

> Lo here I lie great Selymus, which held the World in fear,
> The World I leave, but not the Wars, which I seek, though not here.
> No Fortunes force, or Victors hand, could take from me the Spoils:
> And though my Bones lie buried here, my Ghost seeks bloody broils.[395]

Yet, Selim's aim was not indeed to gain spoils in the Chaldiran Battle. After eliminating his brothers rival for the throne, he directed his forces to the eastern borders to secure Anatolia against the Safavid threat. Safavids were Shiites, equivalent to heretics, in the eyes of most Sunnis. Ismail Safavi (1487-1524) was the descendant of a family of sheikhs from Ardabil and a blood-relative of Turkoman Akkoyunlu leader Uzun Hasan (1423-1478), father of Yakub Bey. Shah Ismail had defeated the Akkoyunlu dynasty in about 1501, seized their capital Tabriz and began to rule over eastern Anatolia, Azerbaijan, and Iran with the conquests of Diyarbakir (1507) and Baghdad (1508). As the leader of a heterodox religious order, he extended his influence over all the Anatolian Turkomans, spreading his cause among Ottoman subjects throughout Anatolia and even in Rumelia. As he became the religious and political leader of all the Turkomans, the movement had become more

[395] Phi. Lonicerus Turcicae Historiae, Tomo primo. Lib. primo. in Knolles and Rycaut, *The Turkish history,* 379. The French version is the following "Je suis ce grand Selim qui fis trembler la Terre, / Mars même redoutoit les coups d'un bras si fort: / Je cherche les combats encor apres la mort: / Mon corps est au tombeau, mais mon coeur à la Guerre" in Artus, *Histoire des Turcs*, 342.
Yet the impression of this Ottoman sultan on contemporary Western scholarship has still sublime attributions as *God's Shadow* is the title chosen by the historian Alan Mikhail for his book about "Sultan Selim, his Ottoman Empire, and the making of the modern world." (Liveright, 2020). The introduction of the popular biography ends with an emphasis on the extent of Selim's global influence: "As we chronicle Selim and his age, a bold new world history emerges, one that overturns shibboleths that have held sway for a millennium. Whether politicians, pundits, and traditional historians like it or not, the world we inhabit is very much an Ottoman one. This is a story only Selim can tell." On the other hand, Mikhail's account was heavily criticized for containing "falsehoods, half-truths and absurd speculations" by Fleischer et al., "How to Write Fake Global History," *Cyber Review of Modern Historiography*, 10 September 2020.

than a domestic problem for the Ottoman Empire. The contemporary historian Ibn Kemal (also known as Kemalpasazade) is well-known for his treatise that prepared the Ottoman public opinion against the Safavids. Kemalpasazade reflects the Sunni perspective towards Shah Ismail and Shiites openly, stating that the war against them will be considered *jihad*, just like a war against enemies from other religions.

Moreover, it is declared that killing Shiites is permissible (*caiz*), their property is *halal,* and their marriage is superstitious (*batıl*).[396] Denouncing Shah Ismail as a Shiite heretic, Selim imprisoned and executed thousands of his supporters in Anatolia and marched to Chaldiran Plain to confront the Safavid army and subdue the movement, which began to gain more and more partisans in the Ottoman lands.[397] The decisive victory at Chaldiran on August 23, 1514, ensured Selim more than securing Anatolia; it opened to the Ottomans the routes to Azerbaijan, the Caucasus and Baghdad.

6.2 Ottoman conquest and booty economy

According to Guillaume Postel (1510-1581), the French diplomat and scholar adept at many languages, the conquests of Tabriz (1514) and Egypt (1517) are "two of the greatest victories that have been made in five hundred years."[398] Postel was sent by French king Francis I as the official interpreter of the French embassy to the Ottoman sultan Süleyman in 1536. For this evaluation, the French diplomat must have seen the results of these conquests in the Ottoman capital and the court, while doing his job of interpretation, in a period just after these victories. If we consider the splendid spoils acquired in the conquest of Tabriz in 1514, Postel had the right to rank it

[396] Tekindağ, "Yeni kaynak ve vesikaların ışığı altında Yavuz Sultan Selim'in İran Seferi," 55.
[397] Tekindağ, "Yavuz Sultan Selim'in İran Seferi," 51.
[398] "deus victoires des plus grandes qui ont eté faites de cinq cens ans" in Postel, *La tierce partie des Orientales, Histoires,* 86.

among the most significant victories of five hundred years.

On the other hand, the Ottoman conquest and booty economy was not a haphazard system. It was strictly defined by the Ottoman law of war and peace, deriving from various juridical and diplomatic sources that established, confirmed and finetuned rules and notions concerning war and peace. Among them are sacred Islamic traditions (*şeriʿat*), secular law (*kanun*), peace agreements (*ʿahdname*), sultan's will and international customs.[399] In these terms, all the details of the conquest and spoiling were subject to strict rules.

6.3 Legitimate spoils and infidels

First, as a Muslim ruler, the Ottoman sultan was obliged to conform to the Muslim Holy Law, the *şeri'at*. The *şeri'at* decrees that if a community of Christians and Jews rejects the obligatory invitation to surrender and continues to resist, they are to be treated as *mushrik*s (literally, "those who admit partners to God, in effect, polytheists). When they have been subdued "by force"-,*anwatan*, *qahran*- no rights are conceded to them: their goods are legitimate spoils and they and their children are reduced to slavery. In the division of movable property, the Muslim ruler is entitled to one-fifth. The immovable property represents a different category of booty. According to a principle that long before the rise of the Ottomans had been accepted in Islamic land law, the freehold possession over land, whether acquired by force or by peaceful occupation, belonged to the *bayt al-mâl*, the state treasury; in other words, the land belonged to the state.[400]

[399] Panaite, *Ottoman Law of War and Peace,* 4.
[400] İnalcık, "The Policy of Mehmed II toward the Greek Population of Istanbul and the Byzantine Buildings of the City," 232.

Selim had to find a legitimate motive to mobilize his soldiers for the Persian campaign, since among them there were supporters of Shah Ismail. The answer is in *Selimname*s, considered the basic documents for all subsequent narratives of the reign of Selim I. Looking at these documents, Selim compared the evils of the Christians to those of Shah Ismail, arguing that the latter was more grievous in every respect. If they do not repent, they will prove a greater danger than the infidels.[401] Consequently, his first campaign must be against them, and the spoils from this campaign are legitimate since they are infidels.[402]

Eventually, Selim addressed the Divan with these words, denouncing Shah Ismail as an obstacle to the religion of the Prophet:

> God has given me troops and power such as has been given to no other ruler. We today are the frontier of Islam, and it is proper that we fight for Islam. However, a certain person has emerged from the city of Erdebil and stained the world with blood. The people, thinking him the descendant of saints, obey him, and thus, with a crown on his head, he has made many disciples. Indeed, there are numerous such in Anatolia. The whole East as far as India is under his sway. His name is Şah Ismail; he is an obstacle to the religion of the Prophet, no aspect of which has escaped his injury. The Kizilbaş, wearing crowns on their heads, make a profession of wrongdoing. They are now the true enemy of the religion and it's my intention to fight them. You should at once prepare for a campaign against Tebriz; and if you have any difficulties, bring them to me.[403]

6.4 The Ottoman right of the sword: *kılıç hakkı*

An essential term in the Ottoman conquest and booty economy is the "right of the sword." According to the Ottoman legal view, the territories falling under Muslim control were considered "conquered" regardless of whether they had been taken "by

[401] Terms for infidels (*küffar*, sing. *kafir, gavur*) were abundantly used in juridical texts, as well as in Ottoman chronicles and documentary sources, encompassing all people of faith other than Islam. These "infidels" were then divided into two categories: "polytheists" (*müşrik*; pl. *müşrikin*) and "people of the Book" or "Scripturaries" (*ehl-i kitab*). The latter name was given specifically to Christians and Jews as followers of religions which Islam considered revealed. It was also used (although less consistently) for Zoroastrians and Sabians. Panaite, *Ottoman Law of War and Peace,* 42.
[402] Uğur, "The reign of Sultan Selim I," 87.
[403] Uğur, "The reign of Sultan Selim I," 88.

force" or had submitted themselves "willingly." An example from this period could be the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, which, despite the resistance and peace agreements from the fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth century, were eventually conquered by the sultans' "power of swords." The concept consolidated its ground after the mid-sixteenth century, especially during the reign of Suleyman, the son of Selim, as apparent in his confident statement dating to 1559 claiming that these are "dominions and countries of mine that have been conquered and invaded with my sword, the Simguide to victory."[404]

A military victory gives the sultan the authority to affirm "the right of the sword" (*kılıç hakkı*) over the territory conquered "by victorious and defeating sword." It was a widespread custom in the premodern period since the conqueror could decide the legal status of a subdued territory. According to the Hanafi view, the sultan had the right to determine the legal condition of the conquered territories and their population unilaterally. Concerning the lands, the sultan could choose from a range of solutions, taking into consideration the geographical, military, and political circumstances: to divide them among warriors, to leave the lands in the hands of the local population in exchange for a land tax, to declare them as being the property of the whole Muslim community.[405]

According to the Ottoman theory, all subjects and lands within the realm belonged to the Sultan. This principle abolished all local and inherited rights and privileges in the Empire. It was formulated to confirm the sultan's absolute authority and show that all rights stem from his will.[406] On the other hand, as remarked above, the sultan must make decisions conforming to holy law, even concerning booty from

[404] *benim şimşir-i zafer-rehberim ile feth ü-teshîr olmuş memleket ü vilâyetimdir* Panaite, *Ottoman Law of War and Peace,* 160.
[405] Panaite, *Ottoman Law of War and Peace,* 156-157.
[406] İnalcık, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest", *Studia Islamica*, 1954, No. 2 (1954), p.112

infidels. The best example of this concern was probably the conquest of Istanbul in 1453 by Mehmed II, the grandfather of Selim. The religious law required him to grant three days of pillage for the soldiers since the city had been taken by force; therefore, the movable property was the lawful booty of the soldiers, and the population could be legally enslaved.

Mehmed II did not wish that the city he envisaged as his empire's future capital should pass into his hands, after a sack, as a mere heap of ruins. In addressing Emperor Constantine three invitations to surrender the city, he was obeying a precept of the Muslim Holy Law. As a ruler, he could not rob the fighters for the faith of this right to sack, which Allah granted them. But at the same time, he was hoping to win a city that had not been exposed to pillage.[407] An Ottoman source reports that the sultan proclaimed the assault and sack in these terms: "The stones and the land of the city and the city's appurtenances belong to me; all other goods and property, prisoners, and foodstuffs are booty for the troops."[408]

Selim I, as clever as his grandfather, well-planned the processes related to the right of the sword in the conquest of Tabriz following the Chaldiran Battle in August 1514. The spoils after the victory of the Persian campaign had taken place in three realms, each having influence on the Ottoman world in many terms: on the battleground, in the prosperous city of Tabriz and the legendary palace of *Hest Behist*. The final place was the "residence" of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings.

6.5 Spoils on the battleground

According to the chronicles, Shah Ismail and his Safavid army had arrived at the battleground in Chaldiran before the Ottoman one, waiting for it with a strategic

[407] Halil Inalcık, "The Policy of Mehmed II toward the Greek Population of Istanbul," 231.
[408] Inalcık, "The Policy of Mehmed II toward the Greek Population of Istanbul," 233.

superiority. Selim and his army had been marching a long way from Rumeli through Anatolia since March 1514, encountering all kinds of physical and moral threats, to arrive at the end of five months to the battleground in Chaldiran. Thinking about the conditions at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the army was not only equipped with arms. We must think of the military as a whole living entity, with all the domains of daily life accompanying the Ottoman sultan, the Safavid shah and soldiers of both sides, even in the battleground. Looking to the spoils on the battlefield, these domains covered not only basic needs like food and shelter, but many rarities, furniture, luxurious objects, jewels, wives, and artisans. Life had continued with its daily routines in the tents on the battleground as was in the palace:

> But the Turks intangled with many difficulties, having no hearts for fear, nor strength for weariness to pursue their Enemies, yet coming to the Persian Tents, took them without resistance: where beside the rich Pavillions wrought with Needle-work of Silk and Gold, and much other precious Furniture, many noble Ladies and Gentlewomen were found, which after the manner of the Persians had followed their Husbands in those Wars, whom Selymus caused to be all freely fet at liberty untouched, excepting one of the Wives of Hysmael whom he detained and gave her in Marriage to one of his Bassaes.[409]

A certain amount of the valuable goods was put aside for Selim, and the remainder was distributed among his troops. All the accounts or histories about the spoils of this battle include exaggerative expressions, mentioning the great spoils collected by the Ottoman soldiers. The historical accounts provided the objects collected by the army when it was permitted to loot. Accordingly, The Persian camp fell prey to the victors, who seized "immense treasures and numerous slaves."[410]

Everyone was loaded down with booty. The poor at Chaldiran became rich.[411] Among the spoils on the battlefield, there were "well-worked weapons,

[409] Knolles and Rycaut, *The Turkish history,* 348.
[410] Hammer-Purgstall, *Histoire de L'Empire Ottoman*, 420.
[411] Şükrî-i Bitlîsî, *Selim-nâme*, 180.

encrusted with gold and adorned with precious stones, tents lined with the richest fabrics, sumptuous clothes, women of rare beauty, who had followed in the war either their husbands or their masters; frightened horses, covered with the most superb harness."[412] The booty was so abundant that when they piled up the spoils with what was left of the enemy, the land rose like a mountain;[413] the army was so rich in the booty that the camel's back was bent under the burden of gold.[414]

The spoils on the battleground in Chaldiran included persons as well; the most known example is one of Shah Ismail's wives, Taclu Hanum. This controversial event found a place in *Selimname*s, historical chronicles, European travelers and ambassadors' accounts of the period. One of the enigmas of the Chaldiran Battle, this problem has been discussed for centuries with the following questions: Whether the capture was Taclu Hanum, Shah Ismail's favorite wife, if not who was the woman? Caught or not caught, brought to the sultan or immediately released, she spent the night in whose tent, she was taken prisoner or released, she was later married to whom, matched with the sultan's will or not, who took her jewelry, what was the content of her jewelry, she was brought to the Ottoman capital or not, etc.[415]

Our interest is that a Safavid court member was captured on the battlefield, her treasure became booty, and its contents are recorded in the Ottoman archives.[416] There are efforts on the Ottoman side to establish a legitimate argument, a legal basis

[412] Mignot, *Histoire de l'Empire Ottoman*, 389.
[413] "Ganimetleri bir yere çekip yığın haline getirdiler, Düşmandan kalan şeylerle, toprak dağ gibi yükseldi" Bilgen, *Ada'i-yi Şirazi ve Selimnamesi*, 91.
[414] "Ordu ganimet bakımından o denli zengindi ki, Altın yükü altında devenin beli bükülmüştü." Bilgen, *Ada'i-yi Şirazi ve Selimnamesi*, 92.
[415] Selected articles discussing various aspects of this event: Uzunçarşılı, "Şah İsmail'in zevcesi Taclı Hanım'ın mücevheratı"; Savory, "Tajlu Khanum: Was she captured by the Ottomans at the Battle of Chaldiran, or not?"; Gündüz, "Tajlu Begum, the wife of Shah Ismail"; Emecen, *Yavuz Sultan Selim*, 148. Tansel, *Yavuz Sultan Selim*, 76.
[416] TSMAE 276-40, November 1520, Şah İsmail Safevî'nin Çaldıran harbinde esir düşen zevcesi Taçlı Hatun'un, Vidin Sancakbeyi Mesih Bey tarafından alınan mücevheratına ait Veziriazam Piri Mehmed Paşa ve Mustafa Paşa'nın padişaha arzı.

while confiscating her property as booty and marrying her to a high-ranking Ottoman official.

Another interesting detail concerning the spoils on the battlefield is that while the captives from the Safavid camp were slain and their heads brought to Sultan's tent fixed to spears, while many of the military leaders of Shah Ismail were killed, the only survivors of this massacre were principally artisans and skilled workmen. Those men of talent and learning who the Shah had persecuted were liberated.[417]

Selim, known as a tireless man of action, a violent face always on the ground be at war if not hunting, could only pardon the lives of artisans on the battlefield. This seemingly contradictory aspect of Selim, his being a sultan well educated and cultured, his praising intellectual and artistic merits, will be more evident concerning the spoils in Tabriz.

6.6 Spoils on Tabriz-the rich city and the legendary palace of *Hest Behist*

It is important to emphasize that goods captured on the battlefield differed from those taken from Tabriz. Selim and his army stayed two days in Chaldiran and marched towards Tabriz. In the meantime, he sent a group of his officials and soldiers to Tabriz in advance to seize the city. They would also capture Shah Ismail's treasury and protect the city from plunder. This party went from the plain of Merend (Mehend) to Tabriz arriving there Friday evening. There were still some enemy troops in the city, including Huseyin Bey Helvaci who had been the city governor for a while. He stayed here to collect the property the Shah left behind. All the goods

[417] İdris-i Bitlisi "çaresizlik yüzünden o zalim topluluğa bağlı olan bazı fazıl insanları ve sanatkarları serbest bırakıp kayıttan kurtardılar." *Selimşahname*, 189, Emecen, *Yavuz Sultan Selim*, 15. 1 Cf. GS. 82., IdrSN (90b-91a) in Uğur, "The reign of Sultan Selim I," 119.

were collected and placed in chests by the governor of Tabriz, but only the most valuable among them were taken away by the Safavids retreating to Kazvin. As the majority of the goods were not ready for transportation, they were handed over to artisans to be prepared for dispatch.

Selim entered the city on September 6, fifteen days after his victory. Before the sultan's arrival in Tabriz, the belongings of the Shah in his palace were identified and registered one by one. On the second day of this registration process, on September 3, 1514, Selim urged to write a victory letter to the Venetian doge. Addressing him in Greek, he states, "the Safavids were repelled and Shah Ismail fled, leaving his two wives, many women, his pages, goods and wealth."[418]

Moreover, the belongings of the Shah's men such as Lala Bey and Necmi Bey were captured and recorded. Two documents currently held at the Topkapi Palace Museum Archives in Istanbul shed light on some of the goods and treasures left in Tabriz by the Shah and his surroundings.[419]Although the fate of the goods and treasures was overstated in the Ottoman sources, interestingly, it was not mentioned in Safavid sources. In chart form, the register books give an idea of the lesser-known aspects of the Chaldiran Battle and its consequences. Two precise dates in the first document (TSMA D. 10734) identify the moments of the actual registration of the goods that took place in Tabriz: While folio 1B indicates September 2, 1514, on folio 3B the scribe gives another date, September 8, 1514. Looking at these dates it is possible to infer that the registration process spanned over at least one week. It should be noted that while the first seven folios registered the goods of Shah Ismail

[418] For the Italian translation of the letter please see "I diarrii di Marino Sanuto, XIX, XXII, XXIV Bologna, 1968; XVIII Bologna, 1969." Emecen, *Yavuz Sultan Selim*, 146.
[419] "Şah İsmail'in sarayında, mehterhanede ve muhtelif üstadların zimmetlerinde bulunan eşyalarının, evanilik, otak, hayme ve sayebanların müfredatı ve Şah İsmail'in beylerinin eşyaları ile Tebriz Reznişanyan Cemaati'nin isimlerini havi defter." 2 September 1514, TSMAD 10734 and TSMAD 9608

and his commanders, the last folio (8B) lists the names of Tabriz craftsmen (*Ehl-I Hiref*) who were forcibly exiled to Istanbul following the Ottoman-Safavid war.

The second document (TSMA D. 09608) consists of four folios. Despite being shorter than the first, it is also a register book, in which the goods of Shah Ismail were recorded. The first folio (1B), is relevant to our concern, since it contains the record of books taken as booty. The last folio (4A) gives the weight of gold and silver items, expressed in dirham, while the main list of the looted goods occupies the second and third folios. Even though the second register does not contain any dates, the note on the title "A declaration of the list of goods that were confiscated in Tabriz"[420] let us think that this document was recorded at the same time as the first one. The complete inventory of the goods that belonged to the Shah, influential court figures and chiefs included kitchen wares; carpets, rugs and curtains; many imperial tents and their equipment; old register books; military gears; rings, precious stones and bones; various imperial costumes; pieces of hunting equipments; measures and weights. The belongings of various court artists and masters of crafts were likewise confiscated.[421]

As remarked earlier, the second register mentions some items of booty that do not appear in the first one, most significantly, illustrated books and albums. There are about 30 volumes of valuable books perfectly bound in the list of items. Most of these are literary works, *divan*s.[422] Found in chests, they were probably prepared to be taken, but unfortunately for Shah Ismail, and fortunately for Selim, it was impossible to take everything due to time pressure and weight limits. The albums including Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, which Shah Ismail had undoubtedly

[420] "Tebriz'de alıkonulan esbablardır ki beyan olunur"
[421] Genç, "From Tabriz to Istanbul," 227-276.
[422] Emecen, *Yavuz Sultan Selim*, 373.

inherited from his predecessor Akkoyunlu, must be among those left or could not be taken with the hurry.

Selim immediately ordered the collection of the treasures to be presented before the council of state. According to Ottoman historians, these included all the treasures of earlier shahs, such as Karakoyunlu Jahanshah, Timurid Abu Said, Akkoyunlu Uzun Hasan, and Sultan Yakub, which were in the possession of Shah Ismail. Among those officials Selim had sent on ahead with 400 janissaries to Tabriz after the victory at the battle, were the *vizir* Dukaginoglu Ahmed Pasha, the *defterdar* Piri Celebi and the historian Idris-i Bitlisi, author of *Selimname*, to reassure the people that they would not be harmed and to settle all things for the solemn reception of the sultan.[423] Bitlisi (1452-1520) had served as the state secretary of Akkoyunlu Yakub (r.1478-1490) in Tabriz, in the same palace they seized, captured and registered Shah's treasures. It would not be wrong to think of Bitlisi informing Selim and Ottoman officials about the treasures of Akkoyunlu, which included those albums produced in the courtly studio of Yakub Bey.

Messer Giovan Battista Ramusio (1485-1557), the Italian geographer and travel writer from Venice collected the accounts of Italian travels to Persia during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Third book of travels from Ramusio is that of a merchant trading from Damascus and Aleppo to Persia, where he remained for upwards of eight years, from 1511 to 1520. His style is an involved one. His historical facts correspond, and his description of the towns and country is detailed, due probably to his occupation. Tabriz was a legendary rich city, the historical seat of the kings of Persia:

> The great and noble city of Tauris, where was the abode of Darius, King of Persia, who was afterwards defeated and slain by Alexander the Great, and

[423] IdrSN (92b-93a) Uğur, "The reign of Selim I," 121; Hammer-Purgstall, *Histoire de L'Empire Ottoman*, 420.

> which has always been the seat of the kings of Persia. Here lived Sultan Assambei, and, after him, Jacob Sultan, his son. This great city is about twenty-four miles in circumference in my judgment, and is without walls, like Venice. In it there are immense palaces, as memorials of the kings who have ruled over Persia. There are many splendid houses. Two streams flow through it; and half a mile outside the city, towards the west, there is a large river of salt water, which is crossed by a stone bridge. In all the neighbouring regions there are fountains, the water of which is brought by underground aqueducts. The numerous palaces of former kings are wonderfully decorated within, and covered with gold on the outside, and of different colours; and each palace has its own mosque and bath, which are equally overlaid, and worked with minute and beautiful designs. Every citizen of Tauris has his room all overlaid in the inside, and decorated with ultramarine blue, in various patterns; many mosques, also, are so worked as to cause admiration in all who behold them; among these, there is one in the middle of the city so well built that I do not know how I am to describe it.[424]

Besides the city and the historical events that took place during his stay, he seems to have been in the palace *Hest Behist,* which he names *Astibisti*:

> The palace in the Persian language is called Astibisti (Hesht Behesht, eight heavens), which, in our tongue, signifies 'eight parts', as it has eight divisions."[425]

The Italian-origin Cypriote merchant describes the royal palace with a lot of minuteness and admiration, "so beautiful that he can hardly find words to express it.[426] The palace was built by Yakub Bey, after whose death in 1490 the Akkoyunlu Confederacy fell into an internal struggle as fighting broke out between his sons and nephews over who would succeed him. As a result of weakening power caused by this succession crisis, Safavids captured Tabriz in 1501, and established Safavid Empire with Ismail as its first Shah. Since then, it had only passed about a dozen years until Tabriz's Ottoman conquest in 1514.

During this short Safavid period in Tabriz, Yakub Bey's *Hest Behist* palace was used uninterruptedly without destruction. This is the only palace in Tabriz that was not abandoned unlike the examples in the past, since from the fourteenth century

[424] Grey, "The travels of a merchant in Persia," 166-167.
[425] Grey, "The travels of a merchant in Persia," 174.
[426] Grey, "The travels of a merchant in Persia," 174.

onwards, Ilkhanids, Jalayirids, and Karakoyunlus had transferred their court to new buildings with their seizure of the city.

Hest Behist palace would host the Safavid court for almost two and a half centuries, after the Ottoman reign in the city.[427] Selim was the first Ottoman sultan who visited Tabriz and hence this palace, of whose praise he and his *pasha*s heard about. After entering the city he first visited the Yakub Han mosque, whose *mihrab*[428] and *mimber*[429] had been destroyed by the shiites. The Ottoman sultan had these repaired and appointed a *hatib* and an *imam*. The friday prayer was performed there, the *hutbe* being read in the name of Selim. Coins were struck in his name, and a general amnesty was proclaimed. The second place that Selim visited was the palace of Sultan Yakub, known as Hest-Behist.[430] The historian Kemalpasazade's account describing the palace and Selim's first impressions reveals how famous the palace was at that time:

> Sultan-ı Acemün ol şehr-i mu'azzamda olan asar-i celilesinden Heşt-Bihişt dimekle ma'ruf saray-ı bi-hemtayi, ki letafet-i mebna ile meşhur binadur, seyr-ü temaşa itdi; ve andan gayri dahi meşhur ve müte'arif olan emakin-i latife ve cevami-i şerifeyi görüb, otak-ı gerdün-nitakına gitdi.[431]

Selim observed and contemplated the palace where these albums were compiled, as indicated by his historian's words "*seyr-ü temaşa.*"

6.7 Spoils on Tabriz-excellent masters

As remarked earlier, at the end of the first register book of booty confiscated from Shah Ismail's palace, there is a part listing the names of artisans forced by Selim to

[427] Yıldız, *Safevî döneminde Tebrîz*, 468-469.
[428] a niche in the wall of a mosque that indicates the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca towards which Muslims should face when praying.
[429] a pulpit in a mosque where the *imam* (leader of prayers) stands to deliver sermons.
[430] Şük (95b-102a). Ahmet Uğur, "The reign of Sultan Selim I," p.125.
[431] Kemalpasazade Defter 9, fol.138a. Uğur, "The reign of Sultan Selim I," 121.

migrate from Tabriz to Istanbul. They were goldsmiths, jewelers, blacksmiths, tailors, tent makers, silver-thread makers, silk weavers, bookbinders, confectioners, players of wind instruments, singers and painters. The number of artisans, sometimes given together with their families, varies from one thousand to three thousand.[432] Judging from the official documents, even the number 1700 seems an exaggeration.[433]

The late sixteenth-century French historian Thomas Artus sieur d'Embry (whose life remains still an enigma, died around 1614) who wrote the first part of the *Histoire des Turcs* covering the Ottoman imperial history from 1467 to 1611, explains the reason behind this act with the following words:

> The city being very rich and merchant, besides that, he (Selim) removed well almost three thousand families of workers or about, of the most excellent in their trades who were then in Tauris, to take them to Constantinople, because all the beautiful inventions, the delicacies and kindnesses come from there, the Turks having too coarse a mind and naturally awkward in spiritual things: and with all these spoils he left Tauris. [434]

Tabriz was the home of "all the beautiful inventions, the delicacies and kindnesses" and the artisans from Tabriz were the creators of these beauties. On the other hand, mass deportation (*sürgün*) and emigration had been Ottoman methods of conquest practiced from the earliest time as a reorganization tool. Sixteenth-century decrees ordering such resettlement show that they served a variety of social, political, and economic purposes. Behind the reasons for this elaborate system were not only

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[432] "parmi les habitants, il choisit mille artilisans des plus habiles pour les envoyer a Constantinople (Tabi Beg, fol.159)" Hammer-Purgstall, *Histoire de L'Empire Ottoman*, 420; "Selim levied on the conquered city a contribution of a thousand of its most skilful artisans. These were sent by him to Constantinople, and received houses and the means of carrying on their respective manufactures in the Ottoman capital." Creasy, *History of the Ottoman Turks*, 225; "It is specified that two thousand families of artists and artisans were sent to Istanbul." KPZsn (72a-73a) Uğur, "The reign of Sultan Selim I," 126; "la ville etant tres riche et marchande, outre ce, il enleva bien presques à trois mille familles d'ouvriers ou environ, des plus excellens en leur metiers qui fussent alors à Tauris, pour les emmener a Constantinople." Artus, *Histoire des Turcs*, 371.

[433] Emecen, *Yavuz Sultan Selim*, 156.

[434] Artus, *Histoire des Turcs*, 371.

security, as in the case of turbulent nomads or rebellious populations of a village shifted to a distant part of the Empire.[435] Sometimes it was used as a tool in organizing newly conquered lands such as to restore prosperity in a deserted countryside or a ruined city, to restore to production a potential source of wealth, to move people from an overpopulated to an underpopulated region, to provide a means of livelihood to a landless community.

In some cases like in Tabriz, the purpose was to serve the capital's prosperity. The best example of this method was probably the mass deportations by Mehmed II (1451-1481) after the conquest of Istanbul. With the chief object of securing the prosperity of the new capital, he settled the deportees from Serbia, Albania, Morea and Kaffa to the villages around Istanbul.[436] During the campaigns waged against Karaman in the years 1468-74, numerous deportees, both Turkish Muslims and Armenians, were brought to Istanbul from Konya, Larenda, Aksaray, and Eregli.[437] Orders were issued that from each city some hundreds of households of artisans and wealthy citizens should be selected for transfer.[438] When townsfolk were subjected to compulsory resettlement, a certain proportion of the population, e.g., the members of one household in ten, were selected by the *qâdi* of the town and its prefect (*subashi*), their names and descriptions were recorded in a register, and they were deported to their new home. There the deportees enjoyed a special status; they were exempt from taxation for a specified period but were forbidden to move elsewhere.[439]

Although merchants and artisans were often exempt from deportation, they

[435] İnalcık, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," 112.
[436] İnalcık, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," 123.
[437] Kemal Pashazade, *Tevârih-i Al-i' Osman*.
[438] İnalcık, "The Policy of Mehmed II toward the Greek Population of Istanbul," 238.
[439] İnalcık, "The Policy of Mehmed II toward the Greek Population of Istanbul," 235.

consisted of the main target group in Tabriz. Of course, it was a recurrent cause of complaint that, in the course of such deportations, wealthy and influential individuals who were reluctant to abandon their homes managed to win over the local authorities and procure their exemption, but the central authorities knew well how essential to the rehabilitation of a city were merchants and artisans, and the sultans made it a principal point of policy to resettle, especially in their capital cities, men of influence, wealthy merchants, and skilled craftsmen of newly conquered territories.

This was the case after the conquest of Istanbul where Mehmed II made every effort to convert the ruined city into a real metropolis, the seat of a universal empire. At the end of 1459, he sent orders that Greeks who, before or after the conquest, had left Istanbul as enslaved people or refugees to live in other cities should return. According to Critoboulos, numerous Greek artisans had settled in Adrianople, Philippopolis, Gallipoli, Brusa, and other cities, where they had become rich. All of these were brought to Istanbul, given houses and plots of land, and helped in different ways.[440]

Similarly, the artisans exiled to the Ottoman capital from Tabriz, well registered with their names, numbers and crafts in the Ottoman archives, had an immense impact on the Ottoman cultural and artistic life in Istanbul, echoing even after centuries. The registrar book in Ottoman archives (TSMAD 9784), dating to January 23 1517 lists the names and numbers of artisans deported from Tabriz.[441]

According to the documents, the Ottoman palace had an organization of craftsmen known as *Ehl-i Hiref*. The royal craftsmen, whose number was around two thousand, had diverse specialties including furriers, tailors, hatters, glovers, boot

[440] İnalcık, "The Policy of Mehmed II toward the Greek Population of Istanbul," 237-238.
[441] Tebriz'den gelen nakkaşlar, sazendelerle hakkak, katip, altın dökücü, çini üzerine altın işleyici (kaşitıraş), camcı, hallac, miskci gibi muhtelif ve müteferrik sanatçıların adlarını ve sayılarını havi defter

makers, jewelers, goldsmiths, damasceners, metalworkers, locksmiths, swordsmiths, armorers, arrow makers, bow makers, shield makers, carpet and textile weavers, embroiderers, intarsia workers, carpenters, glaziers as well as calligraphers, painters, and bookbinders. Centrally organized as an integral part of the palace administration, they were directly affiliated with the chief treasurer who supplied the required raw materials and distributed their salaries.

The earliest document about these artisans dates to January 1526 (TSMAD 9306/3), listing the names of artisans, with special notes about provenance. Among these masters one can remark many from Tabriz thanks to such notices as "exiled from Tabriz", Tabrizi Ahmed the Angel (*Tebrizli Melek Ahmed)*, Tabrizi Hoca Bey (*Hoca Bey Tebrizî*), "Persian master" (*Acem üstadı*) or directly "These are all those brought by Sultan Selim from Tabriz to Amasya and were taken from there."[442] Their products filled the Ottoman treasury and were widely used in the royal household. In these registrar books we find the gifts they prepared and offered to the sultan during the festivals.[443]

Since Tabriz was the home of all beauties, the artisans from Tabriz were the creators of these beauties. Hence, as revealed in these registrar books, the language of art was Persian at the Ottoman court in Istanbul, since the Ottoman treasurers and scribes used Persian idioms and terms while writing these craftsmen's books. Except the one in 1558 (TSMAD 9612) written with Turkish terms, the *Ehl-i Hiref* books in 1526 (TSMAD 9306/3), and those following in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (such as in 1791 and 1796-TSMAD 1406) were all written with Persian

[442] Selim had them brought to Amasya first, where he was spending the winter, and from there sent them to the convenient services in the palace according to their crafts.
[443] For the transcription of these registrar books and further details: Uzunçarşılı, "Osmanlı Sarayı'nda Ehl-i Hiref (Sanatkârlar) Defterleri", 23-76. For a focused analysis on Tabriz artisans with revisions on Uzunçarşılı, see Uluskan, "Ehl-i Hiref Maaş Defterlerinde Kayıtlı Tebrizli Sanatkarlar (1526-1566)", 849-887.

terms. According to Uzunçarşılı, this custom of using Persian terms of art has its roots in the Ilkhanid and Seljukid traditions.[444]

The Ottoman-Safavid rivalry did not solely occur on political and military grounds. Competition for the best craftsmen and artisans formed another dimension of inter-dynastic rivalry, as is testified by Selim's decision to deport thousands of Tabrizi artisans, including painters, calligraphers and experts in ceramics, to Istanbul following his victory over Shah Ismail at the battle of Chaldiran in 1514.

In short, whether as defectors or deportees, the drain from the courts of the dynastic rivals in the east formed an important dimension of the Ottomans' search for prestige and projection of their own court's claim to represent the pinnacle of achievement in the fields of art and literature. Prestige was partly bound up in achieving actual military dominance and acquisition of territory.

Still, equally, it was connected with the portrayal and pronouncement of military achievements in works of literary and artistic merit such as the lavishly illustrated campaign histories specially commissioned by the sultan. For example, we know that Sultan Süleyman allocated 21,000 akçes just for the paper, ink and scribal fees for transcribing the 45,000 couplets belonging to a eulogistic versified history of his reign, which was completed in 1558 by a Persian émigré named Fethullah Arifi Chelebi.[445]

6.8 Court celebrities: Bihzad and Shah Kulu

Tabrizi art and artisans had been praised so much in the Ottoman court that Ottoman-Turkish artisans were embarrassed by this privilege granted to *Acem*, Persian ones.

[444] Uzunçarşılı, "Osmanlı Sarayı'nda Ehl-I Hiref (Sanatkârlar) Defterleri", 23-76.
[445] Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty, Tradition, Image and Practice in the Ottoman Imperial Household, 1400–1800*, 66.

The poet Leâli Ahmed Çelebi (d.1563) expressed in these verses he complains about the highest positions given to each Persian coming to Ottoman lands:

> Acem'in her biri kim Rûm'a gelir
> Ya vezâret ya sancak uma gelir.[446]

These verses represent the personal point of view of the artist, who is jealous of his rivals who are probably more talented than him. On the other hand, the following phrase from the *Selimname* explains the broader perspective of the ruler and the motive behind the exile of the artists:

> Selim gave orders that all the treasures and valuable objects in Tabriz should be located. Moreover, all the scholars, artists, merchants, and men of wealth should be taken to Istanbul so that, henceforth, the Ottomans would have no further need of Persia in such matters.[447]

Why did the Ottomans need Persia on matters of art and artisanship? What makes Tabriz, its artisans, and its products so unique? Why were the albums collected in the court of the Akkoyunlu Yakub Bey, not in the Selim's court in Istanbul? How did these masters of miniature and calligraphy, as well as unique curiosities like Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, end up in these albums, which caused the jealousy and envy of the Ottoman artists? We can think of some answers to these questions in light of the investigations and concepts in the previous chapter.

Yet, an anecdote shows how consolating can be to save even one or two of these artisans while defeated at war. Ottoman intellectual and historian Mustafa Âli (1541-1600) recounts the story of the Safavid ruler Shah Ismail's fear of protecting his favored artists. Âli is the author of Epic Deeds of Artists (*Menakib-i Hunerveran*), a treatise including about two hundred and seventy artists. Regarding the geography covered, it is considered the most inclusive work from the sixteenth-century Islamic lands. Moreover, it is significant to include Safavid and Turkoman

[446] İnalcık, Ş*air ve Patron, Patrimonyal devlet ve sanat üzerinde sosyolojik bir inceleme*, 13.
[447] Şük (95b-102a). Uğur, "The reign of Sultan Selim I," 124.

artists whose names and accomplishments did not make their way into contemporary histories because of their sectarian, political, or ethnic allegiances.

According to the story, before he departed for the battle of Chaldiran, Shah Ismail, fearing for the lives of the respected calligrapher Shah Mahmud Nijad and the famous painter Bihzad, hid them in a cave. Upon his return, he first went back to the place where he had lodged the two artists and was filled with gratitude to the lord:

> When the late Sultan Salim … battled with that Shah Ismail on the Chaldiran plain …Shah Ismail first hid the praiseworthy Shah Mahmud Nijad and then the matchless figural-painter Master Bihzad in a cavern, saying, "Who knows, should flight or death befall my body, and destruction and chaos [overtake] the land of Persia, they might fall prey to the God-empowered hand of Sultan Salim Khan of Rum. And saying, "I entrust your protection to God's will," he left for the battlefield. Later, when [the Shah], crushed and subjugated, fled [and] returned, he first went to the place where he had lodged them and searched for them. When he found [the two] where he had left [them], he was filled with gratitude to the Lord of Power from the depths of [his] heart.[448]

Shah Ismail had the right to protect the legendary painter Kamaladdin Bihzad, who would later be the head of the Safavid library in Tabriz. Arriving from Herat in 1522, Bihzad directed the activities of Shah Ismail's royal studio in Tabriz, where numerous calligraphers, bookbinders, painters, illuminators, gilders and other artisans worked.

With what he acquired from Tabriz, Selim, well aware of the significance of artworks and artists, became pretty competitive in this rivalry. Although Bihzad and Shah Mahmud Nijad did not exist among them, artisans exiled from Tabriz played later pioneering roles in the Ottoman capital. As noted above, in the registrar's book of Shah Ismail goods taken from the Hest Behist Palace, there was a list of crafts masters as well. The folio 9A begins with the artisans from the corporation of painters (*nakkashan*) including the head of painters:

[448] Akın-Kıvanç, *Mustafa Ali's Epic Deeds of Artists*, 139.

> Shah Mansur Tabrizi, the head of painters (sar-i nakkasan) Abd al-Ghani, Husayn Nakkas (the painter) Kazvini, Shah Kuli the painter (nakkas) [449]

Shah Kulu (d.1556), would later be the head of painters (*basnakkas*) in the Ottoman court during Süleyman's reign. His name appears in what is known to be the earliest *Ehl-i Hiref* book dating to January 1526. The first entry under the heading "Group of Painters" lists Shah Kulu among the artists brought from Tabriz to Amasya by Sultan Selim after the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514. With a daily pay of 22 aspers, he is the second best-paid artist following Melek Ahmed Tabrizi, the recipient of 24 aspers.[450] Mustafa Âli gives details about the position of Shah Kulu in the Ottoman palace during Suleiman's reign and his talents compared to Bihzad:

> He was given a private workshop in the imperial palace and his excellency, the felicitous padishah, conqueror of lands with Alexander-like zeal, arranged numerous favors and kindnesses for him to enjoy as he wished. He was distinguished with a choice position [that paid] one hundred aspers a day and was rightfully entitled to leadership of the masters of beautiful creations. He was a pupil of Agha Mir [i.e., Agha Mirak]. In fact, he commendably realized in himself the adage, "A[true] designer (naqqas) is the one whose final design supersedes his first one." Had he possessed morals as [excellent as] his art, Bihzad in his day could not have achieved the fame he did.[451]

In his celebrated biographical work, Asik Celebi (d. 1571) provides us with an extraordinary *medhiye* (eulogizing poem) on Shah Kulu's artistic skills, defining him as "the ruler of the land of painting":

> Bihzad could not rival him in the art of representation. If he were to paint the mouth of a beauty, no one could comprehend its mystery. If he were to paint a cloud, the world would be flooded with rain. If he were to paint the sea, the waves would rise. Birds would fly from his cypress tree. If he were to paint a river, it would make the wheels of a mill revolve. In short, he was the ruler of the land of painting.[452]

Shah Kulu was only an example among artisans from various fields who attained the highest positions in the Ottoman court during Suleyman's reign. To

[449] TSMAD 10734, 2nd to September 1514. Genç, "From Tabriz to Istanbul," 268.
[450] Akın-Kıvanç, *Epic Deeds*, 268
[451] Akın-Kıvanç, *Epic Deeds*, 268
[452] Bağcı et al., *Ottoman painting*, 231.

name a few among them, the chief royal architect Alaüddin, also known as *Acem* Ali (or Persian Ali, since exiled from Tabriz) who carried out the large-scale renovation of the New Palace in 1525.

Royal ceramics atelier (*kasihane-i hassa*), where tiles were made for Süleyman's renovated palace and other buildings, was founded by a Tabrizi ceramicist named Habib. The collaboration between the ceramicists and court painters trained in Tabriz represented the culmination of a Timurid-Turcoman taste patronized in the sultan's court during the 1520s and 1530s. This Persianate aesthetic differed from the classical Ottoman tiles produced in İznik after the 1540s and 1550s. It flourished until the classical Ottoman style was formulated around the middle of the sixteenth century. After that, the fashion for architectural tiles in a blue-white-turquoise color scheme was abandoned in Sinan's buildings in favor of a bold floral aesthetic, developed in İznik, that relied on more vivid, contrasting colors, adding red and green to the formerly limited palette influenced by prestigious Chinese blue and white ceramics.[453]

These cases show on the one hand how transient the borders for art elements were and how fluent was the mobility of talents among Akkoyunlu, Safavid and Ottoman courts. Selim, as he heard about Bihzad's extraordinary figures, it is quite possible he heard about the albums compiled in the Akkoyunlu court or maybe the strange and unique paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem.

At the time of its conquest by Selim in 1514, Tabriz had an outstanding royal studio with an extensive cadre of artists and had a superior standing in the Islamic world concerning the arts of the book. The founder of the Safavid state, Shah Ismail (r. 1501-1524) had taken over from the Akkoyunlu Turkmans in 1503, Tabriz,

[453] Necipoglu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power, The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 197.

Shiraz and environs. These were places where superior works of Islamic painting had been prepared throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The masterpieces of the treasuries of the Akkoyunlu Sultans Halil (r. 1478-1479) and Yakub (r. 1478-1490) were at the royal library of Tabriz. Thus, by the time Selim seized Tabriz, the imperial studio of the Safavids was filled with the most outstanding artists and artworks of the period.[454]

The booty was not the aim of the Chaldiran Battle, it was only a consequence. Nevertheless, these "heard about" could have constituted a motive to search for specific items. As Ismail thought to hide the artists, Selim could have supposed to look for them.

6.9 Badiuzzaman Mirza and his gift to Selim

The only source of books and manuscripts was not through booty after the Chaldiran Battle and during the capture of Tabriz. After two days of looting, the army moved on to Tabriz, where the camp was pitched on the banks of the Surhab river, outside the city. Here, the people of the city came out to welcome them. On the west of Tabriz there was a high domed building from which a group of people came out to welcome Selim. When he inquired who they were, he was told that they were a group who followed Badiuzzaman Mirza (1469-1515), the Timurid ruler of Herat from 1506 to 1507. While he was in power, governing Herat and Horasan, he waged war against the Shiites and was defeated. He left everything and came here to a life of seclusion, and Shah Ismail even forbade him to mount a horse. He now came forward to greet Selim. Selim replied, "Tell him to return to his place, and come to me formally at my divan." When Bediuzzaman came to the divan he was shown a

[454] Bağcı et al., *Ottoman painting*, 56-57.

tremendous honor, given precedence over the *pasha*s. He brought Selim a copy of the *Shahname* as a present. Selim had him seated alongside himself on a jeweled throne and sympathized with the misfortunes he had experienced, explaining that he intended to exterminate the Kizilbas, annex their territories, and restore Bediuzzaman to his former position. He would also give him the rule of India and Sind if possible. Selim gave him numerous presents on parting and settled an income upon him.[455]

Badiuzzaman Mirza, a direct descendant of Timur, was the last ruler of the Timurid empire, whom contemporary Turkish authors called the Shah of Khorasan. A petition found in the same album with Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, in folio 98A of the album H.2153 shows the scope of the Timurid atelier, hence the provenance of the *Shahnama* presented to Selim. Although neither dated nor signed, the petition seems to be a progress report to Timurid ruler Baysunghur (1397-1433) from Jafar Tabrizi, the head of Baysunghur's artistic establishment. In essence merely a list, this petition is a critical source for investigating the Timurid *kitabkhana* practices, mentioning as many as 22 underway projects. Included are manuscripts, designs, objects, tents, buildings and grounds and 23 artists, painters, illuminators, calligraphers, binders, rulers and chest makers. Citing responsible artists and ongoing works the document demonstrates the Timurid patronage on a grand scale gathering artists and artisans to the imperial studio from all corners of the Muslim world.[456]

Badiuzzaman Mirza was among those who were brought to Istanbul. Selim paid special attention to the prince and allocated to him a per diem of 1000 Osmani. [457] His contribution and impact to the Ottoman world had been more than a *Shahnama*. The presence of several fifteenth-century manuscripts from Herat in

[455] Şük (95b-102a). Uğur, "The reign of Sultan Selim I," 123-124.
[456] For the translation and commentary of the petition see Thackston, *A century of princes, Sources on Timurid history and art*, 323.
[457] Hoca Sadettin Efendi, *Tacü't-Tevarih-IV*, 224.

Istanbul libraries reveals that the prince brought his private books to the Ottoman capital. Soon, the manuscripts illustrated in the Ottoman court revealed the conventions of the artists who employed the late fifteenth-century Khorasan style.[458]

Even though we do not know the initial compilation of the album H.2153, the Timurid studio's petition in folio 98A was found today in the same album with Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. Whether as part of booty or gift, whether existed in the initial compilation or added later in the album, the Akkoyunlu, Timurid, Safavid and Ottoman rulers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries must have found something precious, unique or at least interesting in these works to keep safe and make them part of their cross-cultural collection in their courts.

6.10 Books and manuscripts transported on camels and elephants

How did all the spoils make their ways from Tabriz to the Ottoman capital Istanbul? The overland route of 1809,2 km takes 22 hours and 20 minutes with automobiles using today's infrastructural conditions. Selim wished to remain in Tabriz to bring his operations against the Shah to completion; however, the leading men of the state and the army insisted upon returning, claiming that the troops should be allowed to see their families after all the hardship they had suffered since the spring. Moreover, the winter season was approaching. On September 15 1514, after nine days stay in Tabriz, the army left the city with many families of the artisans and prominent figures. [459]

According to the historian Sadettin Efendi, "the art-loving sultan" chose about a thousand artists and distinguished gentlemen in this country to bring them to Istanbul with their families, goods and belongings. He appointed one of the great

[458] Bağcı et al., *Ottoman painting*, 57.
[459] IdrSN (94b-95b). Uğur, "The reign of Sultan Selim I," 126.

lords on this journey to protect and accompany them. He provided them with all necessities like horses, mules, donkeys, wages and travel allowances. They received such high care that they were blamed for forgetting their old friends and homeland *vis-à-vis* this hospitality. [460]

Thinking about the army's route back from Tabriz, it would be via Amasya, where Selim was born about 44 years ago. On leaving Tabriz, Selim set out in the direction of Karabag where the winters were known to be mild. Many animals died on the Georgian roads and groups of soldiers often lost their way. On the way back home, although not as intense and largescale as the Chaldiran Battle, the army undertook some military activities as well: Bayburt was conquered, made a *sancak* and given to Biyikli Mehmed Pasa; Trabzon, Karahisar and Erzincan were made subject to it.[461]

The anecdote in primary documents about crossing the river Aras is impressive in imagining various problems imposed by natural conditions. While the army was crossing the Aras River, which drains the south side of the Lesser Caucasus Mountains, many people and animals were caught in the water due to the flood. Hunger reached the highest level. With the provoking of some viziers, the janissaries surrounded the sultan's tent on the shore of Aras, put their tattered clothes on the tip of their spears, and demanded to return to Anatolia.[462]

They finally arrived in Amasya on the Black Sea coast on November 24, more than two months after they left Tabriz. As noted in the earliest *Ehl-i Hiref* book

[460] "Öte yandan sanatsever padişah bu ülkede yaşayan sanatçılardan ve önde gelen anlı şanlı beylerden bin kadarını seçerek ev hakları, mal ve eşyalarıyla birlikte İstanbul'a göçürdü. Bu yolculukta uluğ beylerden birini de anları koruyup götürmek için görevlendirdi. Anlara yolculukta ne gerekse, at, katır, eşek bütün gereksinimlerini, ücret ve yol harçlıklarını da verdirdi. Bunlar orada öyle ilgi gördüler ki, bu konuklukta eski dostlarını, yurtlarını unutmakla yerildiler." Hoca Sadettin Efendi, *Tacü't-Tevarih-IV*, 223-224.
[461] Şük (I02a-108a). Uğur, "The reign of Sultan Selim I," 129-130.
[462] Bitlisi, *Selimname*, 190-191. Emecen, Yavuz Sultan Selim, 156.

dating to January 1526, Shah Kulu was among these artists brought from Tabriz to Amasya. Selim would return to his palace in Istanbul on July 11, 1515, after the harsh seasons of autumn, winter and spring.

Human beings like Selim or Shah Kulu, either sultan or artist, made their way on horse or by walking. How were the books, albums and manuscripts, full of paper works transported to Istanbul through all these weather conditions like rain and wind, natural conditions like flood, insects and humidity? The unique artworks of today, for example Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, stored in museum collections under certain temperature conditions and if by chance permitted to see after special procedures, can be examined wearing gloves, arrived in Istanbul with a journey of ten months on top of camels and elephants.

As stated in the primary documents, the main means to carry the spoils captured on the battlefield were camels, poor animals, as mentioned earlier, whose "backs were bent under the burden of gold." [463] The carriage to the battleground had been realized with the same mean, again with camels: The Persians covered with gold and precious stones, having with them an abundance of food carried by a multitude of camels, no longer offered the hungry and greedy Ottomans anything but prey and spoils.[464]

According to a mid-seventeenth-century history, they loaded all they could into their wagons and Selim ordered them to burn the rest, which was still huge, not wanting it to return to the enemy.[465] Apparently, besides camels, elephants as well carried the booty all the way to the Ottoman capital. The precious treasures Shah Ismail confiscated from Akkoyunlu ruler Yakub Bey and Timur's grandchild Abu

[463] "Ordu ganimet bakımından o denli zengindi ki, Altın yükü altında devenin beli bükülmüştü." Bilgen, *Ada'i-yi Şirazi ve Selimnamesi*, 92.
[464] Salaberry, *Histoire de l'Empire Ottoman*-1, 285.
[465] Artus, *Histoire des Turcs*, 369.

Said, hereafter in Ottoman possession, were transported to Istanbul with elephants.[466]

Among the load on the camels and elephants, besides the rich fabrics, dazzling jewelry and precious weapons, resisting the flood while crossing the Aras River, were indeed the albums containing Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, as spoils captured from the magnificent library of books from Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Middle East of this city of great culture.

The custom of the period was to carry books and libraries with these animals. Historical accounts state that it was the custom of Selim's brother Korkud (1467-1513) to transport his library from one place to another, from the city to the plateau, with camel trains. This enlightened prince was considered to be the highest not only among the Ottoman princes, but also among the scholars, poets and musicians who grew up in the sixteenth century.[467]

Although at a later period, the *Mémoires* of the diplomat and merchant Laurent d'Arvieux (1635-1702) gave ideas about the precious objects loaded on these animals and the transportation conditions. He describes in detail the departure of the Ottoman sultan Mehmed IV (1642-1693) going to a camp outside Edirne, with all the infantry, cavaliers, war instruments, army, hunting equipment, court officials and the throne transported with animals.[468] D'Arvieux notes that the holy *Koran* and the relics of the prophet as well as other treasures, were transported by camels.[469] He counts around 200 camels, each loaded with two big chests full of objects.[470]

[466] *Selimname*, fol. 33; Seadeddin, fol. 640. Hammer-Purgstall, *Histoire de L'Empire Ottoman*, 420; Tekindağ, "Yavuz Sultan Selim'in İran Seferi," 72.
[467] Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilâtı*, 114.
[468] D'Arvieux, *Mémoires du chevalier d'Arvieux, envoyé extraordinaire du roi*, tome 4, 525.
[469] D'Arvieux, *Mémoires*, 537, 549.
[470] D'Arvieux, *Mémoires*, 551.

6.11 Selim's contribution to the palace library

If the camels and elephants loaded with Tabriz spoils of books and manuscripts had accompanied Selim along the way back to Istanbul, he had probably been impatient to stroll through the folios. He may have taken some of them from the top of the pile or even arranged the pile from the beginning in Tabriz according to his primary interests. According to the accounts, it was his custom to read during travels. Even on crucial military campaigns he was carrying his favorite books. The historian Sadeddin reveals one of these instances. Sultan Selim was traveling with a chest full of books during his campaign in Mamluk Syria-Egypt (1516-17). The chest was part of a load that was left behind. Among the lost volumes in the chest was a copy of Ilkhanid historian Vassaf's (d. 1323) chronicle, *Tarikh-i Vassaf*, the book Selim was reading at the moment. He commissioned a new copy as soon as he arrived in Cairo, after the conquest of Egypt, to a swift-handed copyist, the palace tutor Mevlana Semseddin, known to transcribe the Qurʾan in merely ten days.[471]

The story shows on the one hand the passion of Selim for books and reading, and on the other hand his high intellectual capability, since using a literary language, Vassaf's work requires a good command of Arabic and Persian, let aside reading it during military campaign.

The influx of books to the Ottoman palace library was primarily from these sources. The most significant hoard of manuscripts entering the Ottoman treasury was after the victory of Selim in Chaldiran with the booty from the capture of Tabriz. The Tabriz library in 1514 housed not only Ilkhanid, Akkoyunlu, and Karakoyunlu

[471] "Bir gice mirf esbab yükinden biri zulmet-i leylde girü kalmağla arab garet itmiş. Meger bir sanduk kitap dahi bile zayi' olmış. Bir latif hat ile Tarih-i Vassaf ol kitapların içinde imiş. Merhum Padişah ol nüshaya mailler olup yolda eğlenceleri imiş. Valid eydür: Saray hocası var idi, Mevlana Şemseddin dirlerdi. . . Sür'at-i hattı böyle idi ki on günde bir Mushaf-ı şerif yazar idi . . . Mısır fetholundukda hocaları Halim Efendi'ye buyurdılar ki "Şemseddin bize bir Tarih-i Vassaf yazsun." Hoca Sadettin Efendi, *Tacü't-Tevarih-IV*.

works, but also manuscripts from the Timurid library in Herat which had been raided by Shah Ismail a few years prior. In other words, Tabriz held the most treasured manuscripts of the Persianate cultural sphere of the mid-thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. The countless jewels thus incorporated into the Topkapı collection include a *Khamsa* of Nizami that changed hands among Timurid, Akkoyunlu, Karakoyunlu, and Safavid owners and was embellished by each in turn.[472]

While the Ottoman army was leaving Tabriz, the janissary scribe, Tali'i, wrote these verses which Selim greatly admired:

> Diyar-i nazük-i Rum'un değer bir köyi bin şehre
> Gerekse Heşt-Bihişt olsun degişmem anı Tebriz'e[473]

The verses express on the one hand the longing for homeland and its privileged place in hearts. On the other hand, a disguised fascination for Tabriz and its legendary palace Hest Behist is embedded inside: "A small village in the delicate lands of Rum is worth of a thousand city / Even with Hest Behist, I will not change it for the Tabriz city."

The albums that contain Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings arrived safely in the Ottoman palace in Istanbul among the spoils from Tabriz, the home of "all the beautiful inventions, the delicacies, and kindnesses" with the words of contemporary historian Thomas Artus.[474] Fortunately, they were not on the back of camels that drifted in the flood while passing the Aras River or inside the lost chests of books. A new life began for them in the Ottoman Treasury Library, compared to the Caspian Sea, continually fed by many rivers.[475]

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[472] TSMA, H. 762. Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, 244–45. Emine Fetvacı, *Picturing History at the Ottoman Court*, 61-62.
[473] KPZsn (72a-73a). Uğur, "The reign of Sultan Selim I," 126.
[474] Artus, *Histoire des Turcs*, 371.
[475] "C'est une mer que je puis comparer à la mer Caspienne, où il entre plusieurs rivieres que l'on n'en void point sortir," Tavernier, 130 in Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power,* 141.

CHAPTER 7

ISTANBUL-TOPKAPI

CONTEMPLATION AND MIMESIS

Hazine-i amire zineti seyr ve temaşa olundi.[476]

Ottoman Empire's Istanbul had profited in many realms from the exiled artists and the spoils brought from the conquered lands. The seizures lead to the flourishing of new *genre*s in their new environment, inspired by new styles, techniques, or materials. From then on, they became part of the Ottoman Inner Treasury Library, as a means of contemplation, *temaşa,* the exact word in the Ottoman realm. The paintings were displayed and visited by royal members within the shared court culture on special occasions. The contemplation concerned not only reading and entertainment but also an active one. The art spoils served as an inspiration for mimesis purposes in book arts, architecture, ceramics or poetry.

The sultan would use the albums and the paintings as he wished: He could write anything on them, he could repaint them, seal them, could make careless attributions on them no matter whether he was unable to distinguish between an Islamic painting from a Western one. Because, these were the Ottoman sultan's private property, which he enjoyed in whatever way he liked. Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings were not the storyteller's paintings anymore.

This final chapter of *Part 2: Courts* investigates the perception of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings and art in general as new materials opening fresh grounds in

[476]"The decorations of the imperial treasury were observed and contemplated**",** Mustafa Naima, *Tarih-i Naima*, 6 vols. Istanbul, 1281-83 (1864-67) 2:107. Necipoğlu, *The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 286, fn. 94.

the Ottoman courtly milieu. In this sense it contributes to the literature by speculating about their use in the sixteenth-century Ottoman world and through the implications of this change of perception vis-à-vis historical transformations.

The court was at that time in what we know today as Topkapi Palace, then referred to as *Yeni Saray*, or *Saray-ı Cedid-i Âmire* in some documents.[477] Meaning the New Palace, was built by Mehmed II (r.1451-1481), the grandfather of Selim, conqueror of Constantinople in 1453. Topkapi Palace comes originally from the monumental summer palace called the Canon Gate, Topkapi, built in the mid-eighteenth century as an expansion to *Yeni Saray* and destroyed by a fire in 1862-63. Nothing remained from the wooden shore palace except a few paintings by European artists, and its name, Topkapi Palace, was adopted after the fire by the New Palace.

With today's knowledge we can not know when precisely the original group of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings was included in the albums. Besides all the masterfully delicate works of art, the Akkoyunlu ruler must have found something unique in these paintings, worth making part of his world-class collection as pieces of curiosity from nomadic lands. So did the Ottoman sultan, since imitations or repetitions were produced later in the Ottoman courtly studio. This was the case for other pieces of art in the albums, many signed by legendary masters, like Bihzad, whom the rulers felt the need to hide in caves before going to battles.

These spoils elements were contemplated in the courtly leisurely activities; moreover, they became "influencers" of Ottoman art in many fields like painting and architecture. In a sense the contemplation continued and was reproduced in the

[477] The old palace, *Eski Saray* -known in documents as *Saray-ı Atik-ı Mâmure*- was the one built just after the conquest of Istanbul in 1453, over the ruins of a monastery on the city center. After two years, for some reasons, it seemed not convenient for the sultan to reside in this palace and Mehmed II decided to build a new one. (Âli, unpublished copy, fol. 121.) Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilâtı*, 7.

making, creating its works in return. During this process, the albums did not remain intact, they were used within daily court life and elaborated continuously.

7.1 The two seals of Selim I: the Imperial seal and the Treasury seal

The title page of the album H.2160 bears the almond-shaped sovereignty seal of Selim I. Selim might have stamped both albums with his imperial seal to signify his possession and appreciation. Whereas today his imperial seal appears only on the first folio of the album H.2160. This fact lets us attribute with confidence the entry of these albums to the Ottoman palace library during the period of Selim I (r.1512-1520).

The first Ottoman sultan to use his seal as a marker of ownership on manuscripts was Bayezid II (r.1481-1512). Although some works bear dedications to Mehmed II who founded the Inner Treasury, the books he collected in the Inner Treasury were not stamped with his seal. Whereas Bayezid II, a keen collector of books like his father, expanded hugely the collection he inherited and had all manuscripts in the Inner Treasury stamped with his seal.[478]

Selim I (r. 1512–20) followed his father's customary practice of stamping the new inclusions with a seal. Selim used to have two seals: The almond-shaped sovereignty seal[479] and the round Inner Treasury seal.[480]

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[478] Bayezid II had a huge library, as we know from the inventory of his library, published in *Treasures of knowledge*, Necipoğlu et al. (eds.) Brill, 2019. The inventory seems to be the sole comprehensive catalogue of the holdings of the Topkapı Palace book treasury in Istanbul. Commissioned by the Ottoman sultan Bayezid II, it was prepared by his royal librarian Atufi in the year 908 (1502–3) and transcribed in a clean copy in 909 (1503–4). Preserved today in the Oriental Collection of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MS Török F.59) the inventory's title is "Register of Books" (*defter-i kütüb*, *kitāb alkutub*) the only surviving example of its kind from the Ottoman period.

[479] Described as eye-shaped or almond-shaped, Selim I's oval sovereignty seal (*zat mührü*) reading *Şah bin Bayezid Han Selim el Muzaffer Daima* (Shah Selim, son of Bayezid Han, forever glorious).

[480] Selim I's round treasury seal bears at its center the inscription Sultan Selim Şah and is surrounded by the four-fold rotation of the pious phrase *Tawakkaltu ʿalā Khāliqi* (I have placed my trust in the Creator).

According to the Ottoman imperial tradition, the genuine sovereignty seal of a sultan was annulled by engraving a line over it and never used again after his death. On the other hand, Selim I is said to have willed the lock on the courtyard gate of the third domed hall of the palace to be sealed by his round treasury seal in perpetuity to commemorate his unsurpassable augmentation of its contents. Following this testament of Selim I, only his round seal (known as the treasury seal) was used on the Inner Treasury doors and for new manuscripts entering that treasury after his death until the end of the empire.[481]

Whereas the seal on the title page of the album H.2160, as shown in Figure 120, is the almond-shaped imperial seal of Selim I, used only by him in his lifetime. This fact demonstrates the inclusion of the albums in the palace library during Selim's reign of eight years between 1512-1520.[482]

[481] Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilâtı*, 307.

[482] The ignorance on these specifities about the use of the two seals of Selim I causes in the field to some misunderstandings about the originality of the manuscripts. Researchers who do not have a command on the difference of these two seals are driven to take some manuscripts as fake, since it is sealed by Selim's seal but dating to a period after his death. In fact, this does not mean directly it is fake, since the round treasury seal of Selim had continued to be used according to his testament. The existence of this round seal only means that the object at hand was included to the Ottoman treasury after Selim I. Observations of Zeynep Atbaş, manuscript curator in Topkapi Palace Museum Library at the time of personal communication.

Figure 120. imperial seal of Selim on the first folio of the album H.2160 (near the left corner)

7.2 Inner Treasury

The Inner Treasury for the Ottoman sultan was the place to cherish the albums in July 1515. That was the treasury where a new life began for these albums, hence for the paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem. There were three treasuries in the Ottoman palace; Public Treasury, Inner Treasury and a third one in Privy Chamber. According to the Ottoman court organization, the Treasury Chamber was higher than the Cellar Chamber and lower than the Privy Chamber. The establishment of the Inner Treasury dates back to the reign of Mehmed II in the mid-1460s. The number of pages serving there had never been less than 60. According to the documents, 157 pages served in the Treasury in 1772. The imperial treasury included three rooms inside one another and many exquisite items were displayed in it. The *Ehl-i Hiref* organization of

craftsmen working for the court was under the head treasurer's supervision, who supplied the artisans' raw materials and distributed their salaries.[483]

The Ottoman treasury contained gold and silver and many other objects, including curiosities, precious artworks and materials. The earliest surviving register of the Inner Treasury is a document from the middle of Bayezid II's reign. Compiled for Bayezid II in 1496, this general inventory of the imperial Inner Treasury, gives an impression of the treasury content, like *a cabinet de curiosités*. It mentions among objects stored in the basement, robes, caftans, swords, chessboards, incense burners, belts, sheets of paper, elephants' tusks, rhinoceros horns, sharks' teeth, arrows, Korans in *kufic*[484], attributed to the hand of 'Ali, pillows, floor spreads, prayer carpets, bed sheets, books, table spreads, shoes, and Menemen carpets. Objects stored upstairs included ceramic wares of Iznik and China; Korans in kufic, kept in mother-of-pearl chests; objects of silver and gold; bed sheets; belts; cushions; books and illustrations; pitchers; metal cups; chandeliers; turbans; velvet, silk, brocade, and wool textiles; sheets of paper; archival documents and historic calendars; astrolabes and astronomical instruments, musical instruments; bows and arrows; chessboards; backgammon sets; incense; lapis lazuli; rosary beads; carpets; and chests full of miscellaneous objects. An inventory made nine years later in 1505, adds to these categories of objects chests full of manuscripts, maps, and architectural plans, and several sealed coffers containing the revenues from the imperial gardens, which were the sultan's personal spending money.[485]

[483] D'Ohsson, c.7, fasıl 3, kısım 2; *Topkapı Saray-ı hümâyunu* (Abdurrahman Şeref Bey) *Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni Mecmuası*, 2, 401. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilâtı*, 70, 304, 307.
[484] A style of Arabic script.
[485] For the treasury inventory of 1496 see TSAD 4. For the treasury inventory of 1505, see T. Öz, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi Kılavuzu, facsimile no. 21. Necipoğlu, *The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 134-135.

The albums, full of exciting pieces representing various styles and themes, including Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, would find a secure place amid this royal accumulation.

A document from the Ottoman archives dating to 7 February 1514 gives a general idea of the content of the imperial treasury, *Hazine-i Amire*, short before Selim set off for Tabriz. According to the register book, there were in the imperial treasury not only gold and silver coins, but many other precious or daily use objects as well: Holy Kuran, belts, kitchen utensils, swords and bows, knives, napkins, bundles and cushions, beds, quilts and sheets, prayer rugs, chess and various pieces of leather.[486] A later Inner Treasury register from the end of Selim I's reign (ca. 1518) lists booklets of annual almanacs with prognostications; Samarqandi, Indian, and Herati papers; figures of the climes and a single map; chests containing scrolls of letters and miscellaneous documents as well as a hugely increased collection of holy books, in total 330 volumes kept in small chests or boxes.[487]

The above-mentioned registers give sufficient hints to understand the content of Inner Treasury. It functions as a supply place for the raw materials the craftsmen use to produce works of art, such as sheets of paper and *lapis lazuli* to obtain the blue pigment or make the jewelry. Moreover, it is a place to store the end products like manuscripts and documents in chests.

As the right of the sword from the victory over Safavids, the booty from the Chaldiran Battle and the conquered city of Tabriz covered books and artisans, the

[486] TSMAD 5. Hazine-i Amire'de mevcut Kuran-ı Kerim, hasene-i mütenevvia, altın paralar, altın ve gümüş evani, kemerler, çini fağfur evani, kılıç, yay, tir ve tirkeşler, kuburlar, masar ve bıçaklar, peşkirler, bohça ve minderler, yatak, yorgan ve çarşaflar, örtü ve seccadeler, satranç, muhtelif deriler, bakır evani ve saireyi gösteren defter.
[487] TSMAD 3/2: "Defter-i mevcudat-i hizane-i enderuni," written in Istanbul ca. 1518, fols. 1b, 9b, 12a–b. Necipoğlu, "The Spatial Organization of Knowledge in the Ottoman Palace Library: An Encyclopedic Collection and Its Inventory," 13.

treasury's content was accordingly. Hence, the Inner Treasury was the exact place for the albums brought as booty from Tabriz, full of precious and rare objects, both raw and incomplete and finished. On the one hand the Tabrizi artisans like Shah Kulu became affiliated with the Inner Treasury; on the other hand, the material booty, including the albums, became part of this same Inner Treasury. In these terms, the Inner Treasury was a site for collecting and commissioning the production of artifacts in multiple media, including manuscripts.

Unlike the Timurid and Turkmen institution of the *kitabhana*/*kutubkhana*, which is believed to have combined a treasury/library for storing books and a book workshop for copying and producing them, the Ottoman royal library in the Inner Treasury was spatially separate from, yet institutionally connected to the court scriptorium. Most likely established by Mehmed II as a dependency of the Topkapi Palace built between 1459 and 1478, the scriptorium was housed in a converted Byzantine church at the nearby Hippodrome. The relatively loose organization of court workshops under Mehmed II would be systematized and amplified by Bayezid II and later sultans. An undated wage register from Bayezid's reign shows that his palace staff included a group of eight book calligraphers, another group of nine consisting of bookbinders and their assistants, and painter-decorators with their assistants consisting of twenty-two persons, adding up to a total of 39 employees.[488]

The Inner Treasury occupied the far right corner of the third court in the palace. It was locked, and could be opened only by the head treasurer, in the company of pages, when an object was required by the sultan. As indicated earlier, it had been sealed with Selim's seal on his will so long as his record in accumulating treasures remained unbroken. His successors followed the custom until the end of the

[488] Necipoğlu, "The Spatial Organization of Knowledge in the Ottoman Palace Library," 14.

Ottoman dynasty. Hence today, the classification of the Topkapi Palace Museum Library indicates as *Hazine*, Treasury, the albums' provenance within the former Ottoman library system: *Hazine* 2153 and *Hazine* 2160.[489]

7.2.1 Inner Treasury Library

The tradition of keeping treasured relics in the library goes back to Mehmed II's reign (second reign: 1451-1481). The warning of Mehmed II to his royal librarian reveals one of the most exciting relics kept in the library together with the books. According to the anecdote, when the royal librarian, Molla Lutfi, stepped on a marble stone to reach a book on a high shelf, the sultan became greatly distressed; the stone, it turned out, was purported to be the cradle of Christ. It is mentioned in the relic inventory as "the stone on which our Lord Jesus Christ was born, for which the Venetians offered to the old Turk [i.e., Mehmed II] thirty thousand ducats to which the Grand Signor replied that he would not give it to them [even] for a hundred thousand."[490]

Manuscripts arriving at the Topkapi Palace were placed in the royal library at the Inner Treasury beginning from the reign of Mehmed II onward. The Inner Treasury building in the third courtyard and its partially intact book collection survived until today. The holdings of the Topkapi Palace book collection just before

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[489] After the conversion of the palace into a museum in 1924, some of the manuscripts preserved for centuries in the Inner Treasury, the Privy Chamber, the Ahmed III Library, and in various other pavilions and the dormitories for pages within the Topkapi Palace were gathered together. These manuscripts were transferred to the former Mosque of the Aghas in the third courtyard of the palace in 1928, forming the current manuscript library. The ten closets filled with manuscripts in this library were labeled according to the original location of their contents within the palace and classified according to their fields of knowledge and languages, as in the former Ottoman library system. Atbaş, "Artistic aspects of Sultan Bayezid II's book treasury collection: extant volumes preserved at the Topkapi Palace Museum Library," 162.

[490] Sehi (1471-1548), 149–51. The story is cited in Raby, "A Sultan of Paradox: Mehmed the Conqueror as a Patron of the Art," 5–6. Necipoğlu, *The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 136.

the reign of Selim can be traced thanks to the discovery of the book inventory commissioned by Bayezid II. The royal librarian Atufi prepared the inventory in 1502–3 and transcribed it in a clean copy in 1503–4. In each volume appears the sultan's seal. This inventory is preserved today in the Oriental Collection of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest.[491]

According to this inventory, listing books dating from the ninth to the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Palace library at the beginning of the sixteenth-century records over five thousand volumes, and more than seven thousand titles on virtually every branch of human erudition at the time. If we attempt to compare the scope of the collection to its contemporaries, it houses an unmatched collection of learning and literature. In an article on Bayezid II's library inventory, Miklós Maróth observed that the famous Corviniana library, created around the same time, featured only about 2,500 volumes and was the most extensive private royal library in Europe. By contrast, Maróth counted about 5,700 volumes with approximately 7,200 titles in the inventory of the Ottoman sultan's library. It must be noted, however, that the actual number of titles was certainly higher because ʿAtufi did not systematically list all items that were bound together in compendiums. Moreover, the palace library collection would expand considerably in the last decade

[491] The book inventory commissioned by Bayezid II is registered in Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Könyvtára Keleti Gyűjtemény, MS Török F.59. Introduced to scholarship by Ismail Erünsal, the manuscript and its content became subject of the workshop "The Ottoman Palace Library Inventory" in Harvard University on April 4–6, 2014, which resulted to a double-volume publication: *Treasures of knowledge*, Gülru Necipoğlu, Cemal Kafadar, and Cornell H. Fleischer (eds) Brill, 2019. The first volume contains twenty-eight interpretative essays on this document, authored by a team of scholars from diverse disciplines, including Islamic and Ottoman history, history of science, arts of the book and codicology, agriculture, medicine, astrology, astronomy, occultism, mathematics, philosophy, theology, law, mysticism, political thought, ethics, literature (Arabic, Persian, Turkish/Turkic), philology, and epistolary. Following the first three essays by the editors on implications of the library inventory as a whole, the other essays focus on particular fields of knowledge under which books are catalogued in MS Török F. 59, each accompanied by annotated lists of entries. The second volume presents a transliteration of the Arabic manuscript, which also features an Ottoman Turkish preface on method, together with a reduced-scale facsimile.

of Bayezid II's (d. 1512) reign and beyond.[492]

In any case, Selim took over one of the largest libraries on earth, containing works commissioned by the sultans as well as those acquired by various other means, such as inheritance, purchase, gifts, and booty. The booty acquired after his victories over the Safavids -and later Mamluks- contributed to the augmentation of this collection tremendously, not only in terms of volume number but more significantly, in terms of artistic *genre*. Zeynep Atbaş, in her essay about the artistic aspects of Sultan Bayezid II's book treasury collection, concentrates on the artistic manuscripts prepared in such cultural hubs as Tabriz, Herat, Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, Bursa, and Istanbul. Analyzing 784 extant manuscripts[493] she initially identified as belonging to Bayezid II's collection at the Topkapi Palace Museum Library, she found that 405 are on scientific topics, 192 on religion, 144 on literature, 41 on history, and only one album. Moreover, only twenty-three of these manuscripts are illuminated.[494] From these numbers, it is possible to deduce that the *murakka* format was a rarity during Bayezid's reign: only one single in 784 artistic manuscripts.

A possible reason for this could be the librarian Atufi's classification preferences. Early Inner Treasury registers let us think that Atufi, while preparing his book inventory, might have made a difference between books and treasured reading materials like scrolls, maps, and albums, belonging to the Inner Treasury collection. Hence, some items, generally without bindings (such as scrolls, maps, archival documents, and annual prognosticative almanac booklets), were deliberately excluded from Atufi's book inventory even though they were kept in the same

[492] Necipoğlu, "The Spatial Organization of Knowledge in the Ottoman Palace Library," 16-17.
[493] A number that has since then increased to 1010 and will likely continue to grow, as estimated by Atbaş in her article.
[494] Atbaş, "Artistic aspects of Sultan Bayezid II's book treasury collection." (Atbaş was the manuscript curator in Topkapi Palace Museum Library at the time of workshop and publication)

building, much like the non-Islamic books with bindings belonging to the Inner Treasury collection. The latter books may have been omitted from Atufi's inventory not because they were undervalued, but because they were categorized in the same order as treasured objects that were not expected to be regularly requested or circulated.[495] The album was a treasured rarity in the Ottoman court at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Those brought from Tabriz as spoils must have been very enthusiastically received.

7.2.2 Display of the objects in the Inner Treasury

The anecdote about Mehmed II's royal librarian Molla Lutfi, stepping on the marble stone to reach a book on a high shelf gives a certain idea about the physical environment in the Inner Treasury Library. Where and how the relics and books were kept physically? We have some archival documents and descriptions of foreigners about the visual aspects inside the Inner Treasury, which was used as a library, a *cabinet de curiosités*, and a storage place for raw materials. According to the documents, there were niches, coffers, cupboards, cabinets and large trunks in the treasury for the display of objects, and some others were kept in storage chests.

The walls of the upper suite of halls were pierced up to the ceiling with large niches, which functioned both for displaying and storing objects. According to an account book of 1527–28, the ceramics mentioned in the earliest inventories of Bayezid II were kept in "large coffers and cupboards for storing royal porcelains in the chambers of the Inner Treasury."[496]

Another inventory dating to 1564 tells us in detail how the objects were

[495] Necipoğlu, "The Spatial Organization of Knowledge in the Ottoman Palace Library," 13.
[496] BAKK 7097, MM 17884. Necipoğlu, *The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 135.

stored in various halls. According to this source, the first hall, adjacent to the latrine, contained eight large storage coffers filled with jars of electuaries; textiles; belts; objects and swords of silver; miscellaneous items, including bows, musical instruments, and turbans; tall caps, helmets, and belts; muslin pillowcases, underwear, napkins, sashes, and towels; and finally, in the eighth coffer, boots and shoes. The second hall contained two large coffers, one for royal furnishings, such as cushions, carpets, and sofa spreads; the other for the royal caftans, raincoats, and furs. The manuscripts were also kept there, in cabinets. The third hall, adjacent to the bath's disrobing room, had two large coffers. The first was filled with floor coverings— thick felt rugs, kilims, prayer carpets and silk carpets. The second held royal insignia such as turban ornaments, bows, and arrows. One of the two large trunks in a fourth space, identified as a "bath furnace" contained miscellaneous objects, including tables, shields, water vessels, guns, plates, china and musical instruments. The other trunk held bedding and household furnishings. The inventory has a separate list of utensils, vessels, and weapons distributed among the various cabinets.[497]

Another primary source for the physical environment in the Ottoman court library is the court physician Domenico Hierosolimitano (c.1552-1622). Born in Palestine, Domenico studied medicine. He was called to Istanbul in 1574, serving as a court physician to Sultan Murat III (r.1574-1595) until 1588/9. He accompanied the sultan's sister on a pilgrimage to Mecca. After almost fifteen years in the courtly service, in his impersonal and rich description of the Ottoman palace, Domenico mentions two large libraries:

> On the left side, that is where the men serve, there are two large libraries: a communal one behind the rooms of the servants and pages who serve him,

[497] TSAD 4855, fols. 1v–4v. Necipoğlu, *The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 139.

> and the other (?further) behind, more private (and) joined on to his rooms. This is the more famous. Moreover, in his (own) room, there are, one on each side, two cupboards with glass doors, and in these cupboards there are always some two dozen illuminated books, which he is accustomed to read often. These cupboards are low, so that, sitting in the Turkish fashion, one can see the books that are there through the transparency of the glass, and (so) he can conveniently take them out, and he is accustomed to reading them.[498]

The gravure *Livres Turcs*, Turkish Books in Figure 121, by Augustin François Lemaitre (1797-1870), gives an insight into the library cupboards, the position of books placed horizontally, the reading habits "sitting in the Turkish fashion" on the ground and the format of the books in the mid-eighteenth century.

Figure 121. *Livres Turcs*, Turkish Books, gravure by Augustin François Lemaitre (1797-1870)

Joseph Marie Jouannin (1783-1844) was the first secretary interpreter to the French king for Oriental languages. His book titled *Turquie* includes both courtly and ordinary life at the Ottoman lands, very richly detailed. Of the 96 gravure plates

[498] Hierosolimitano, *Domenico's Istanbul*, 21.

by Lemaitre, some based on eye witness some others surely imaginary, like women's bath. The Turkish Books, if not seen in the palace, could be from one of the public libraries at that time. It reflects more or less contemporary display habits in the library.

7.2.3 Access to the library

As indicated by Domenico, no one was permitted to touch the books in the Treasury Library.[499] It was an extraordinary grant to enter inside, especially for a foreigner. Due to this limited access to the palatine library, subject to strict permission directly from the sultan, the information about the visual aspects concerning the arrangement of books and relics is very limited. Those court officials, diplomats, or travelers who were able to get this privilege to access the Inner Treasury Library briefly conveyed their observations.[500]

Marquis de Nointel (1635-1685), the French ambassador to the Ottoman court from 1670 to 1679 mentions a building he visited inside the palace, which is said to be full of rare manuscripts captured by the Turks during the conquest of Istanbul. According to Nointel, "it is impossible to enter this treasury unless one of the persons in charge of its preservation is obtained."[501] Thanks to the journals of Antoine Galland (1646-1715), we learned these observations. He was the dragoman

[499] Hierosolimitano, *Domenico's Istanbul*, 21.
[500] There are also people who directly describe the palace libraries without stating that they have seen the library, such as the historian Michel Baudier (1589-1645), clearly copying almost word by word Domenico's account: Michel Baudier, *Histoire génerale du serrail et de la covr dv Grand Seigneur Empereur des Turcs*, 36. For the English translation: Baudier, *The history of the serrail and of the covrt of the Grand Seigneur, emperour of the Turkes*, 26.
[501] "Puisque les livres sont au nombre des choses qu'on cherche dans le Levant et particulièrement les manuscrits, on sera bien aise de sçavoir en quels endroits il y en a. On monstre dans l'enclos du serrail de Constantinople un bastiment qu'on dit estre rempli de ceux qui tombèrent entre les mains des Turcs à la prise de Constantinople, et l'on tient par tradition qu'il y en a de très rares. Ce thrésor est impénétrable, à moins qu'on ne gagne quelqu'un de ceux qui sont destinés pour sa conservation." *Journal d'Antoine Galland pendant son séjour à Constantinople (1672-1673)*, 215.

who accompanied the French ambassador to Istanbul during 1670-75, learned Arabic, Persian and Turkish and wrote a journal of his travels. Galland is best known for his adaptation of the 1001 Nights which would constitute one of the primary inspiration sources of Orientalism.

Laurent d'Arvieux (1635-1702) was a merchant and diplomat known for his travels in the Middle East during the second half of the seventieth century. He describes the *Serail*, the first and second court, kitchens, stables and divan hall and points out the lack of details in his descriptions, the cause being the impossibility of entering the palace. Hence one can know nothing about it except by the relations of the eunuchs, or of few other people, admitted inside the court due to their jobs.[502] Nevertheless, he managed to visit the library of one of the Ottoman princes, Mustafa Efendi (the eldest son of Mehmed IV), and writes that, unlike the palatine library, he could easily enter inside it, which was according to his impressions, an exclusive library with very well selected books. Ultimately, the prince embraced him with love and asked to visit him often.[503]

The Frenchman Jean-Claude Flachat (d. 1775), who was granted access to the Inner Treasury as a premier palace merchant, described the imperial treasury as a monumental building lit by windows facing the Marmara Sea with many underground chambers in which objects resistant to humidity were stored. He observed that in its upper halls, "they hang on planks in multiple tiers, or cupboards, all kinds of textiles, harnesses of infinite value, and precious stones raw or worked; in a word, everything valuable that the sultans possess." It is clear that the upper and lower halls were intended from the very beginning to display and store treasured

[502] "Cette impossibilité d'entrer dans le serail est cause qu'on n'en peut pas dire grande chose et qu'on n'en peut rien savoir que par les relations des Eunuques, ou de peu d'autres gens, que leurs emplois nécessaires y font admettre." D'Arvieux, *Mémoires du chevalier d'Arvieux,* vol.4, 474-478.
[503] D'Arvieux, *Mémoires du chevalier d'Arvieux*, vol.4.

possessions, including books.[504]

7.3 Contemplation in the Treasury and shared court culture

These albums and artworks such as Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, had a double function in the Ottoman court after they became part of the Treasury collection. Firstly, they served as contemplation material in the Treasury Library, a *lieu de plaisance*, a place for pleasure. At the second level, this contemplation and all the rituals accompanying this leisure activity, had served, in return, to the creation of a shared court culture.

According to Necipoğlu, the inbuilt niches in the Treasury suggest that Mehmed II must have conceived the building as an exhibition space when it was built. In function it complemented both the Privy Chamber and the Large Bath, acting as a storehouse, a royal library, and a mansion for relaxation and intellectual contemplation, as well as a treasury. In these terms, the Inner Treasury's architectural prominence reflects the prestige Mehmed II attached to collecting rare artifacts from all over the globe, to support his claim to universal monarchy. In this place Mehmed II could contemplate his rich collection of art objects, manuscripts, maps, albums, and paintings.[505]

As a result of Selim's victorious conquests of Tabriz and then Cairo, the booty was both quantitatively and qualitatively very rich. This abundant treasury played a vital role in establishing and strengthening the dynastic legitimacy and supremacy of the Ottoman imperial culture over vast territories in the later sixteenth century:

> Whatever developed into a distinctively "Ottoman" culture in the later sixteenth century was not merely an organic phenomenon implicit in the

[504] Necipoğlu, "The Spatial Organization of Knowledge in the Ottoman Palace Library," 6.
[505] Necipoglu, *The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 135.

> library of 1502–3; it was equally a construction shaped by the massive perturbations of the reign of Selim I (r. 1512–20), the struggles of his successor to secure dynastic legitimacy and supremacy over opponents internal as well as external, and the establishment of a human apparatus that could seem, at least, to control vast territories formerly ruled by the suddenly vanished states of the Timurids, Mamluks, and Turkman Akkoyunlus.[506]

The memories of Albertus Bobovius about courtly life in the 1660s are relevant. Bobovius (1610-1675) came to the palace as a captive and rose to the position of chief musician, later known by his Turkish name Ali Ufkî Bey. According to the chief court musician, the Treasury was a kind of exhibition place, since the Ottoman rulers had achieved greater and greater successes, the relics were exhibited as antiques and sacred objects. The valuables belonging to each sultan were kept in separate compartments.[507] Bobovius mentions some rituals concerning the Treasury chamber: It was cleaned twice a year and the imperial clothes were laundered and left to dry in the sun.[508]

Atufi's categorization in the library supports such differentiation between books to read and scrolls, maps, and albums to contemplate by scrolling through its folios, as the royal librarian most probably excluded the latter from his inventory.

7.4 Leisure class

In the sixteenth century, the aristocracy privately enjoyed the works of art in royal courts or households. Hence, the contemplation of the albums was the activity of the "leisure class," the upper class which has the privilege to perform free-time activities, playing, or relaxing in a deliberately non-productive fashion, to which a degree of honor attaches.[509] The palace or the court was the purest center of these

[506] Fleischer, "Learning and sovereignty in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries," 155.
[507] Among the items stored in the Treasury were a picture and a dress of each sultan. D'Ohsson, c.7, fasıl 3, kısım 2, 39. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilâtı*, 306.
[508] Ali Ufki Bey, *Saray-ı Enderun, Topkapı Sarayı'nda yaşam*, 53.
[509] Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, 7.

activities, by custom exempt or excluded from industrial occupations. One of the typical examples of how members of courtly society sought entertainment is provided by the Middle High German poet Hartmann von Aue in his translation of Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain* from ca. 1160, *Iwein* (ca. 1200), where we encounter the company of King Arthur during the festive season of Pentecost. Every member of his court is dedicated to some kind of enjoyment because there is free time and everyone has complete freedom to do whatever might please them:

> Some knights are chatting with ladies, some take care of their own well-being and appearance, some are dancing and singing, some are running and jumping for exercise, some are listening to the playing of string instruments, some are practicing shooting with bow and arrow, some are telling love stories, and others relate heroic adventures. King Arthur and his wife retire to their tent to take a nap, but less because they need a rest, as the narrator emphasizes, and more for giving each other some company. At the same time, four knights, Dodines and Gawein, Segremors and Iwein, along with the court seneschal Keii, form a group and listen to an extraordinary account told them by Kâlogrenant who a long time ago had experienced a most difficult time in a knightly encounter and then had failed to win a joust. The queen listens and finds this so intriguing that she gets up from bed and joins the company to hear more about this adventure.[510]

The courtly *milieu* the albums joined in the Ottoman palace was pretty much the same. In a sense, what makes a palace a palace, were those leisurely activities in courtly pastimes such as hunting, falconry, horsemanship, archery, music, chess or literature. Selim matched perfectly to these properties as the Ottoman sultan of the period: a skilled hunter, an elaborate composer of Persian poetry with the penname Selîmî, and an ardent bibliophile.

Among these pastimes in the medieval courts, the primary one was hunting for pleasure, which bloomed into a full-blown spectacle of significant proportions

[510] Hartmann von Aue, Iwein, ed. G. F. Benecke and K. Lachmann, newly rev. by Ludwig Wolff. 7th ed. Vol. 1: Text (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1968). Classen, "Pleasure and Leisure from the Middle Ages to the early Nineteenth Century-The Rediscovery of a Neglected Dimension in Cultural History. Also an Introduction," 7.

involving the entire court society, both as actors and spectators.[511] Selim's passion for hunting was emphasized in all primary sources. *Selimname*s mention that after the death of his father Bayezid, Selim crossed to Anatolia merely for relaxation and hunting. Before confronting his rivals, he diverted himself to hunting for five days, in the region of Edirne. Even the name of the hunting-ground is mentioned in the sources: Tondurma.[512] Next, he went to Edirne, receiving those who had come to congratulate him on his accession and declaring an amnesty.

The habit of reading books and looking at albums was means of entertainment during the pastimes in the palace. While some literary texts serve explicit didactic and philosophical purposes, most literary texts, both in the pre-modern and the modern world, have contributed specifically to public and private entertainment.

Benedek Péri, discusses Selim's literary contribution to helping the Ottoman cause in the Ottoman-Safavid propaganda war, where the rulers of the two rival states personally took part in this war of words and symbolic gestures. Péri demonstrates that Selim was an elaborate composer, using words to win battles as well, through spreading fear and disinformation to create chaos in the enemy heartland.[513]

Naturally, the Ottoman sultan was not born with these skills and manners. He gained them within the courtly environment due to the processes and institutions embedded in the shared court culture, which was continually recreated and reinforced through these leisurely activities in daily or special day rituals.

[511] Classen, "Pleasure and Leisure from the Middle Ages to the early Nineteenth Century," 53.
[512] Keş (23a-27b), IdrSN (61b-62a), KPZsn (57b-60b). Uğur, "The reign of Sultan Selim I," 68-80.
[513] Benedek Péri, "Yavuz Sultan Selim's Persian poetry in the light of the Ottoman-Safavid propaganda war," 183-192.

7.5 Visiting the Treasury on special occasions

A new life began for these albums in the Ottoman court, a new perception within the new cultural environment. How were they used in the Treasury as a contemplation material, a means in the service of shared court culture? As remarked earlier, the Inner Treasury was designed originally like an exhibition place where they kept the artifacts in niches, coffers, cabinets, cupboards and chests. The sultan visited the Treasury on special occasions like after the accession ceremony or on religious holidays. During these special days the Treasury was elaborately decorated from floor to wall with selected objects for the contemplation of the sultan. Various artifacts accumulated over the years with new conquests and hence spoils, constituted the positive evidence of the world empire's victories over vast and rich lands, including Tabriz. The visit was also a way of paying homage to the Islamic relics and the personal belongings of the ancestors. One of these instances is mentioned for the Ottoman Sultan Ahmed I (r.1603-1617) who went to admire the objects displayed in the Inner Treasury after the *bayram* ceremonies in 1613: "Hazīne-i āmire zīneti seyr ve temāşā olundi."[514]

This was an established ritual long before Ahmed I, since he, envying his ancestors, wanted to see the Treasury like his ancestors and the pages prepared the display as in an exhibition after his will.[515] When Ahmed I came to survey his riches, he was served *halva* and *sherbet* by the head treasurer. The treasurer and the Treasury pages who had spent the month mounting this exhibition then received gifts from the sultan for their efforts. Ahmed is reported to have visited the exhibit several

[514] "The decorations of the imperial treasury were observed and contemplated**",** Mustafa Naima, *Tarih-i Naima*, 6 vols. Istanbul, 1281-83 (1864-67) 2:107. Necipoğlu, *The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 286, fn. 94.
[515] *Zübdet-üt-tevarih*, folio: 322-325. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilâtı*, 308.

times, deriving a lesson from each object on display. Contemplating the transitoriness of life, he thanked God for giving him all of these treasures.[516]

Among them were the albums of Akkoyunlu Yakub Bey, brought as spoils from Tabriz by his grand grandfather Selim. It is possible that, during these visits, some of the richly decorated albums were left open on reading stands to make visible to the sultan exquisite works of painting or calligraphy.

Besides special occasions, the Ottoman sultan was also visiting the Treasury in ordinary times. The observations of the palace merchant Flachat (d. 1775) expose intriguing details about the ceremonial aspects of Treasury items' contemplation. Flachat states that the sultan was spending several hours with his favorite objects examining each item one after the other, without tiring of admiring them. The pages were bringing the items on a table at the end of a large room. They were spreading on the table all the most precious objects in all kinds of production, the most admirable products of nature or art, without equivalence neither for the work's perfection nor the richness of the materials.

Every treasure had its place; so, when his highness grew weary of examining one, the pages returned the object precisely to its place. It would take entire days to go through the items of each art, even if one looked at them fairly quickly because each item was unique like none other. Everything was spread out in open cupboards. In this treasury cabinet,[517] one can observe all kinds of objects in very well order, shelves full of books,[518] chandeliers, desks, tea and coffee, chocolate sets, mirrors, tables, armchairs, sofas, fabrics of all kinds, porcelain, cages, thermometers, barometers, clocks of marvelous invention, gold and silver plates. In

[516] Safi, fols. 138v–39v. Necipoğlu, *The Topkapi Palace*, 140-141.
[517] cabinet des bijoux
[518] tablettes pleines de livres

this exceptional collection created over many centuries by prodigiously wealthy princes, nothing is uniform; everything is varied. According to Flachat's impressions, all the nations of the world had exhausted their treasures, their talents, and all their industry, to pay homage to this sultan, or rather to dispute before his tribunal the prize of good taste and genius.[519]

7.6 Entertainment in the Ottoman court

Looking at archival documents and observations of the foreigners in the Ottoman palace, the books and albums in the Treasury Library were not only the sultan's contemplation material. They had been circulated for the education of the youth, like princes and pages. Besides, they functioned as material for entertainment in performance activities among high-ranking officials, women in the harem, servants of the imperial household or court physicians. It becomes clear that many people who were part of the Ottoman elite used the Treasury book collection, which provided the foundation for a shared court culture in the Ottoman court. The aesthetic and intellectual tastes of the sultans, the nucleus around which the court gathered, were also formed by their access to the contents of the Treasury, and the use of these books in their education and entertainment.[520]

Books were often read in groups, aloud, probably in an interactive manner between the reader and the listener. The performative aspect shows that books in the Ottoman court were rendered most valuable by their use as objects with a social function. They were objects around which people gathered, and contained stories that were eventually shared by the entire ruling elite, stories that bound them together.

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[519] Flachat, *Observations sur le commerce et sur les arts d'une partie de l'Europe, de l'Asie, de l'Afrique, et même des Indes Orientales*, tome II, 215-218.
[520] Fetvacı, *Picturing History at the Ottoman Court*, 75-80.

Books did not only function socially by being read out loud, of course, but also through their circulation. More than their belonging to the treasury, their circulation rendered them valuable objects and activated their purpose—to unite the Ottoman court and give it shape. Fetvacı points out that the importance of group reading or oral performance is attested by the title of the official court historian, referred to interchangeably as *şehnamehan* (the reader of the *şehname*); *şehnameguy* (the sayer/performer of the *şehname*); or *şehnameci* (maker or writer of the *şehname*).[521]

According to Woodhead, the development of the *sehname* genre in the Ottoman court historiography was reinforced by the presence in Istanbul of increasing numbers of artisans transported from Tabriz by Selim I. This influx had a "dramatic" effect on the personnel and painting style of the Ottoman *nakkashane* (painters' workshop), making possible the illumination and illustration of a range of works, including *sehnames*.[522]

The Yakub Bey compilations brought from Tabriz were among those popular in the Ottoman court. A dated note on the title page of the album H.2160 shows the ongoing popularity of the compilations after more than 50 years of their arrival in the Ottoman court: "In the month of *Dhū al-Ḥijja* of the year 983 [March 1576] this book was removed from the Privy Chamber for safekeeping."[523]

Being not the only example, these notes, probably written by librarians, demonstrate the volumes moving from the Inner Treasury library to reading spaces such as the Privy Chamber. [524]

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[521] Fetvacı, *Picturing History at the Ottoman Court*, 60.
[522] Woodhead, "Official Historiography in the Late Sixteenth Century," 67-80.
[523] *Sene 983 māh-i dhī'l-ḥiccede odadan ḥıfẓ olınmaqa çıkan kitābdur.*" Unpublished facsmile.
[524] There were four chambers in the sultan's service: *Has Oda* (Privy Chamber), *Hazine* (Treasury), *Kiler* (Larder) and *Seferli Oda* (Campaign Chamber). Pages graduating from the lesser and greater chambers served in one of the last three chambers, and could then after another review rise to the

7.7 Reading in the Privy Chamber, Performance in the Harem

The presence of books at the Privy Chamber is confirmed by archival documents from the reign of Selim I onward. As mentioned earlier, in the Inner Treasury inventories there are references to books loaned to the Privy Chamber.[525] Domenico Hierosolimitano, refers to two large libraries in the third courtyard of the Topkapi Palace. According to Necipoğlu's interpretation, the first library can be identified as that of the Inner Treasury and the second one as within the Privy Chamber complex.[526]

Eventually, Hazine 2160 was not the only book circulating in the court. From time to time, sultans were known to have manuscripts removed to their Privy Chamber (*Has Oda*), where they had established personal libraries consisting of illustrated works, *Kuran* copies penned by celebrated calligraphers, as well as literary, scientific, and historical works of particular interest. Notes inscribed on the title pages of several extant manuscripts, such as "*odadan çıkan Farsi* / *odadan çıkan Türki* / *odadan çıkan Arabi*" indicate the books' mobility: On loan at the Privy Chamber, they were frequently being returned to the Inner Treasury.[527]

Reading was not solely a personal activity, but rather a courtly performance since Ottoman sultans had readers at the Privy Chamber where they were customarily served meals in the presence of the chief physician. According to Luigi Bassano da Zara (ca. 1537–40), Ottoman dynastic chronicles and the history of Alexander the Great were always read out there after dinner to Sultan Süleyman, the

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Privy Chamber. The forty pages of the Privy Chamber attended directly on the sultan, being responsible for his toilet, clothing and weapons, and standing guard at night. The chief of the Privy Chamber, *Has Odabaşı,* was the person closest to the sultan, never leaving his side, as one of the most important functionaries in the palace. İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire The Classical Age*, 114.

[525] TSMAD 3/2: Contents of the Imperial Inner Treasury, kept inside the storage chests for swords near the Privy Chamber. Among the contents of those chests are listed swords, daggers, and book pouches.

[526] Necipoğlu, "The Spatial Organization of Knowledge in the Ottoman Palace Library," 18.

[527] Atbaş, "Artistic aspects of Sultan Bayezid II's book treasury collection," 162.

son of Selim. A reader would read to him once or twice a week the histories of the deeds of his ancestors. These reading practices were not confined to private contemplation by the Ottoman sultans, but also involved books read out to them in the exquisite spaces of the Privy Chamber complex. Spaces for reading in the Topkapi Palace included airy pavilions with ample natural light and garden settings.[528]

Looking at the palace library inventories, the women of the imperial harem had access to Inner Treasury books.[529] The Harem, the section reserved for the sultan's women and family, was another environment for using these albums, as a means of contemplation and entertainment, through which the shared court culture had been created and reinforced. As shown by the note on it, the famous world map of Piri Reis (1513) was also among those items popularly circulated in the Harem. Women for the sultan's palace were carefully selected primarily from among prisoners of war, or from the slave markets.

After all, there were a few free-born Muslim women in the Harem too. Like the pages, these girls passed through a long period of education and training. When they first came to the palace they lived together in two large rooms, the Greater and Lesser Chambers. Under the strict supervision of a woman superintendent – they grew up as refined and skillful women. They learned the principles of Islam, at the same time acquiring skills according to their capabilities. Among these skills were puppetry and storytelling, besides sewing, embroidery, dancing, singing and playing musical instruments.[530]

Reading as a pastime was not solely the sultan's and his family's activity.

[528] Necipoğlu, "The Spatial Organization of Knowledge in the Ottoman Palace Library," 20.
[529] Necipoğlu, "The Spatial Organization of Knowledge in the Ottoman Palace Library," 37.
[530] İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire The Classical Age*, 120-121.

The Italian ambassador Bernardo Navagero (1507-1565) states that, while the sultan was sleeping, four pages were guarding him and caring for his needs. Two were waiting from early evening to midnight, and the other two from midnight to sunrise. As soon as the sultan goes to bed, the two guards sit under two torches that burn all night and in order not to sleep, they took a few books in their hands and read them during their guard duty.[531]

Another interesting group was bibliophile eunuchs, famous palace eunuchs associated with works of art produced at the palace. Probably it was not a coincidence that the production of decorated books at the painting studio of the Ottoman palace increased from the mid-sixteenth century onwards. Indeed with the influence of spoils from Tabriz, books presented to the sultan as diplomatic gifts swelled the palace book collection.

Examination of the inscriptions on the manuscripts and archival documents relating to palace administration reveal that some of the palace eunuchs were involved in commissioning works of art, to be influential in political affairs and the relations between the sultan and other court members. The power groups that formed around the chief palace eunuchs were influential in the production of decorated books at the court studio and the foundation of libraries inside and outside the palace.

The idea of constructing a palace library in the name of Sultan Ahmed III (r.1703-1730) may well have originated with one of these bibliophile eunuchs, Besir Agha (d.1746), who had served as palace treasurer in earlier years. Besir Agha continued to serve as the eunuch of the palace during the reign of Mahmud (1730-54). He may also have influenced this sultan to find the tile-decorated library of the

[531] Bernardo Navagero, *Venedik Elçilerinin Raporlarına Göre Kanuni Ve Şehzade Mustafa* (trans.:P.Gökpar), Yeditepe, Istanbul, 2012. Tekin, "Avrupalı seyyahların bakış açısından Osmanlı'da kitap ve kütüphane kültürü (1453-1699)," 157.

Haghia Sophia Mosque. Several of the illustrated books belonging to the Revan Kiosk, the collection of which today is in Topkapi Palace Museum Library contain the seal of this eunuch and record his ownership.[532]

Travelers' impressions confirm that one of the best ways to gain respect *vis-à-vis* the Ottoman rulers was to present valuable books as gifts. Based on the travelogues of the German theologian Salomon Schweigger (1551-1622) and the Dutch ambassador Cornelius Haga (1578-1654), the book was the perfect item for bribery in the Ottoman realm. Moreover, an expensive, ornamented, materially and morally valuable book was the best method of diplomatic communication and effectiveness.[533]

7.8 Yakub Bey albums: contemplating material for the Ottoman sultans

How did the sultans use and contemplate the albums? One thing is sure that Selim was a sultan meeting the leisurely court entertainments fair enough, spending months hunting and hours reading. According to one of his intimates, it was his habit of passing most of the nights reading until the morning. Sometimes another person was reading for him, he was listening.[534] He was so passionate about reading books that he was neither sleeping nor showing interest in women. His surrounding often reminded him of the meal time, since he was solely concentrated on "spiritual" foods. According to one of his closest men, Hasancan, the father of the historian Sadettin, Sultan Selim had read all the exquisite books kept in the Imperial Treasury, one by one, from beginning to end.[535]

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[532] Tanındı, Z. "Bibliophile Aghas (Eunuchs) at Topkapi Saray," 333-343.
[533] Tekin, "Avrupalı seyyahların bakış açısından Osmanlı'da kitap ve kütüphane kültürü," 184.
[534] "merhum padişahın adetleri bu idi ki, çoğu gecelerinde kitap okumakla eğlenüp uyumazlardı. Zaman zaman bu kullarına okutur dinlerler idi." Hoca Sadettin Efendi, *Tacü't-Tevarih-IV*, 128.
[535] "Gözünden hiçbir an gitmezdi kitap, uykuya, hurilere vermezdi yüzü. Babam merhum eydir ki, yemek zamanlarını biz söylerdik. Yoksa gözünde ruhani gıdaları derlemekten başka bir şey yoktu.

As the Yakub Bey albums were in the collection of the Treasury Library, it is sure that Selim contemplated them at least once from beginning to end. We can not know exactly which calligraphies or paintings he liked the most. But, the existence of his seal on the first and last folios of H. 2160 proves both a sign of possession and appreciation.

The seal of Selim stands in the album as the claim of the new sovereign's authority over this treasury. In a sense it is an affirmation of the conquest and adoption of the booty as the right of the sword, the symbol of the authority over a territory, Tabriz. This adoption covered the city's cultural and artistic past, represented by the looted objects, artists and artworks, books and albums. His seal appears on several places of the album H.2152 as well, another album very likely to be brought to Tabriz from Herat by the Timurid prince Bediüzzaman Mirza and reached the Ottoman court by the same means.[536] The right overtaken by sword opened a road for cultural and artistic relics, materials, themes, and styles to flow towards the new center of power and authority.

Besides a claim of authority, the Ottoman sultans might have used the seal with a different purpose *vis-à-vis* books: To show appreciation, and even to "bookmark" his favorite pages. Such case is Selim's seal appearing on multiple folios of a manuscript of İbrahim Kirmani, *Kamil üt-ta'bir*, a book of dream interpretations. He affixed his seal to two separate sections of the manuscript, in the margins of two pages, folios 26A and 127A, to probably "bookmark" these pages.[537] Birnbaum, questions the reasons for Selim bookmarking those pages. As both places

Hazine-i Amire'de bulunan değerli kitapları başlarından sonlarına dek birer kere okuduğunu kendi ağzıyla söylediğini anlatıp dururdu." Hoca Sadettin Efendi, *Tacü't-Tevarih-IV*, 364.
[536] Çağman, "On the Contents of the Four Istanbul Albums," 32.
[537] Birnbaum, "Superstitous tough guy? Yavuz Sultan Selim and dream interpretation."

deal with dreams concerning royalty, the author considers this act as a confirmation of his interest and sense of ownership:

> One might wonder why a man who possessed such military and intellectual gifts and sophistication would feel the need to possess, and even read, the extensive and detailed compilation on the interpretation of dreams contained in his (and now our) manuscript, and certainly why he "bookmarked" certain pages with his seal. It is a truism that the books which a man owns reveal something of his personality as well as of his interests.[538]

Two anecdotes told by the historian Sadettin Efendi support the fact that Selim was personally concerned about dreams[539] and that dreams could contain meaningful prognostications.[540] What is relevant for us is that the seal of Selim on the folios does not indicate solely possession, but personal interest and appreciation as well.

Subsequent sultans left their marks of contemplation on the albums' folios. The handwriting of Ahmed I (r.1603-17) is recognizable at least on two occasions. The first is a notation about the Prophet Muhammad dated November 1615 in the margin of H.2160. The second is a poem inscribed and dated by Sultan Ahmed in the margin of H. 2153-87B and an inscription on the drawing. Both tell us that he reviewed the two albums and that they were in his possession. According to Çağman, it is likely that the albums were removed from the Treasury to the Privy Chamber during his reign. The sultan, who ascended the throne at his thirteen, must have been

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[538] Eleazar Birnbaum, "Superstitous tough guy? Yavuz Sultan Selim and dream interpretation," 48.
[539] "Bir gece uyku bastırıp sağlığım da bir parça bozuk olduğundan yatağıma varıp uykuya dalmışım. Sabaha kadar uyumuşum. Birkaç gecedir uykusuz olduğumdan tan ağırırken uyanıp sabah namazını kıldıktan sonra uyu hizmetlerine seğirttim. Birkaç gecedir uyumamakla bu gece gaflet bastırıp hizmetten uzak kalmışım diye özür diledim. Buyurdular ki imdi ne düş gördün, anlat. Söylenecek değerde bir düş görmedim diye yanıt verdim. Israrla sordu, bir geceyi tamamı tamamına uykuyla geçirirsin ve düş görmezsin, herhalde görülmüştür, söyle gizleme. Dahi ben ne denli düşünüm aklıma nesne gelmedi ki görmüş olam. Yemin ettim ki açıklamaya değer nesne görmedim. Mübarek başını sallayıp tuhaf diye buyurdular. Bana garip geldi, yineleye yineleye sormanın nedeni nedir ola? Şaşırdım kaldım." Hoca Sadettin Efendi, *Tacü't-Tevarih-IV*, 128.
[540] "Kapıyı hızlı hızlı çalıyorlar, nur yüzlü kişilerle dolu, elleri bayraklı, silah ve gereçlerle hazır. Kapı dibinde dört nur yüzlü kimse, ellerinde birer sancak. Kapıyı çalanın elinde padişahın ak sancağı. O gördüklerin resullahın ashabı. Bizi resulallah gönderdi, Selim Han'a selam etti ve dedi ki kalkıp gelsin Haremeyn hizmeti ona buyuruldu" Hoca Saadettin Efendi, *Tacü't-Tevarih*, IV, 129-130.

fond of the illustrations. It is also likely that various poorly written and inappropriate attributions as well as scribblings over drawings and paintings were added by Sultan Ahmed I. [541]

7.9 Active contemplation, contemplation in the making

The spoils from Tabriz were immense and wide-ranging not only in terms of quantity, but quality as well. Once in the Ottoman court, at the first level, they immediately augmented the Inner Treasury content. In the process of the Ottoman court using these objects as contemplation and entertainment materials, they began to add up new flavors, broadening Ottoman courtly art with novel *genre*s, motifs, and themes discovered and imitated from the originals. Of course Tabrizi artists contributed to this process a lot. This can be considered a second level of contemplation, surpassing passive contemplation of the art object. It became an active contemplation, a contemplation in the making in which, as the basis of classical art education even in our times,[542] those appreciated masterworks were

[541] Ahmed I's interest in the albums is further supported by the existence of an illustration in the *Falnama* which was prepared for the sultan by Kalender Pasha and copied from one of the album paintings. This illustration (H. 1703-6B) made by an Ottoman artist was copied from the Chinese original in H. 2154, fols. l50A and 123B. Filiz Çağman, "On the Contents of the Four Istanbul Albums H.2152, H.2153, 2154, and 2160," 34-35.

[542] The contemporary art education in academies, both in Western or Eastern traditions, begins with copies of great masters. It can be a portrait from a Renaissance master or landscape from a Song master. The contemporary Turkish painter Mehmet Güleryüz's (1938-) first encounter with Mehmed Siyah Kalem is insightful in terms of the imitator's feelings *vis-à-vis* a master's work on the one hand, and the striking effect of those paintings even at the twentieth century: "I had seen some of Mehmet Siyah Kalem's paintings in my early student years at the Academy (1958) in not particularly successful black and white prints. At that time, Siyah Kalem's name was not on the list of recommended painters from whom we were attempting to choose our own models among the Old Masters. Much later, during the process of copying the drawings of the Renaissance masters during our training at the Academy, it emerged that our tast in painting was dependent to some extent on our intuitions. While that copying, for which we could see no need, bored us and turned us off painting, and the artists not on the recommended list grabbed our attention, paintings that we encounter purely by chance continued to affect us for a long time afterwards, intermittenly triggering unexpected crises. Whether you are a student of painting or a painter, you enter into an incomprehensibly complex and difficult relationship with the great painters. A painting you have seen has struck you in the most inexplicable way. You just keep on telling yourself how unsurpassed it is, while, a hopeless tide of questions, each answer to which only sweeps you farther away, can actually convince you of your own worthlesness." Güleryüz, "Siyah Kalem: A major foundation of modern Turkish painting," 143.

imitated in the courtly studio.

The mobility or displacement of objects, occurs for diverse reasons: They can move from hand to hand and from one place to another in the form of gifts. The emigration of the people themselves also contributed to the displacement of objects. In these forms of mobility, the objects travel with their environment, with people knowing their function, with people who created, bought or used them. But the objects moving in the form of booty, ransom, or looting can have the most unexpected effects in the destination place, since it is detached once and for all from their native environment, from the background scene where they were once meaningful.

Displaced objects are essential in transmitting and developing decorative patterns and specific techniques. They generally contribute to changes in taste since they inspire artisans in other countries, exposed to such new articles, to innovate and create fresh styles.[543]

The reign of Selim was a turning point for the transmission of artistic patterns and elements in all fields, including poetry. In the conquests of Tabriz and later Syria and Egypt, the competent poets of these countries presented to the sultan odes and litters. According to Aşık Çelebi (1519-1572), the famous Ottoman biographer, poet, and translator of the period, the art of poetry showed an unprecedented development in the Ottoman lands, with talented poets imitating these samples.[544]

One of the pioneers of this transmission in poetry was Selim himself, a

[543] *Book of gifts and rarities*, 39.
[544] "Pâdişâh dahi ehl-i 'irfân ve murebbi-i zarîfân idi, kâmillere murâdlarınca ve kâbillere isti'dâdınca envâ'-i bahşiş ve bahşâyişle ve bâb-i lûtf ve ihsânından küşâyişle telakki etdi... gerçi Rûmî oldukları cihetten Türki şi're tetebbu etdiler... üslûb-i Acem dahi tetebbu etdiler, bu sebebden Türki'den Fârisî şi'irleri ekser ve halk içinde eşherdir" (Âşık Çelebi, 22a). İnalcık, Ş*air ve Patron,* 49-50.

highly talented and extremely skillful poet, who unlike his Ottoman contemporaries, composed his poems almost exclusively in Persian. A great part of his poetic output consists of poetic replies inspired by the classics of the Persian poetic canon as Ottomans perceived it. Although he was not the only sultan with a collection of poems,[545] his poetry is considered a "rare phenomenon in the Ottoman literary context."[546]

7.10 Mimesis in literature and art

The logic behind imitation in art and literature follows two stages, as happened for the albums. The first stage is appreciation and contemplation, the second is active contemplation which has a reflective impact on what the court artists produced. In other words, you imitate what you admire in all fields of creativity. This can be your master when you are a pupil or a creative rival the artist envies in more mature years. In both cases, imitation in art and literature is a sign of contemplation and a highly appreciated creative process, rather than an unfavorable characteristic. Assuming the role of the past in the creation of new genres, imitation was considered an accepted method of creation within which the artist feels the pressure of surpassing or at least equaling the imitated model to be regarded as successful. In this respect, emulation meant knowledge and appreciation in interacting with the traditions of the past on the road to mastery and perfection. At the same time, traditions also encouraged and valued originality through innovative uses of conventional tools. Imitation, in short,

[545] Selim's uncle Cem also compiled a full divan in Persian.
[546] For an in depth analysis of the poetic strategies Selim used when he composed poetic imitations inspired by ghazals of Hafız, see Péri, "Yavuz Sultan Selim (1512–1520) and his imitation strategies, A case study of four Hafız ghazals," 233–251.

was not simply a convenience, much less a derogatory act; it was an inseparable component of the creative process.[547]

Mimesis, with its connecting concepts of imitation, simile and similarity, has been cited since classical times in exploring the relationship between art and reality. Mimesis is always the meeting place of two opposing but connected ways of thinking, acting and making: similarity and difference. Arne Melberg discusses the theory and history of mimesis as a way of thinking to find these movements of difference even in those versions of mimesis that suggest similarity.[548]

In these terms, the prevailing public opinion on poetic imitation in the fifteenth century is well reflected by a few lines well-known in the Ottoman Empire composed by the Persian poet Câmî (1414-1492). This last great poet of the classical period compared the process of poetic imitation to dressing up the beautiful person of poetical meaning (*mana*) into a fresh garb of verbal expressions. The new dress however, Câmî warned, should always be more brilliant and elegant than the previous one, otherwise the result would be shameful.[549] This was the meeting place of similarity and difference, the mimesis.

Imitation was a prestigious attempt for the arts of the book, like in literary art, during this period both for the Ottoman and Persian realms. In medieval literary theory, there were many kinds of copying. Adamova refers to philologists who noticed that to "recognize" a favorite image in a new and unexpected form was seen as the highest pleasure readers of poetry could have. In the painting we meet with the same phenomenon. Adamova, studying many Timurid manuscripts, draws two conclusions concerning imitation in manuscript production. One is that every royal

[547] Akın-Kıvanç, *Epic Deeds*, 113-114.
[548] Melberg, *Theories of mimesis*.
[549] Péri, "Yavuz Sultan Selim's Persian poetry," 185.

manuscript has several illustrations copied from older works, of which some are more or less exact copies. The second is that there are always one or two in all of them, and sometimes more, miniatures showing new subjects. She argues that copying was not just a way of working in the artistic output of these miniaturists. It is instead an aesthetic program with clear rules and conventions regarding treating earlier models and creating new compositions.

Copies in a manuscript can be explained by the movement of artists, manuscripts, or libraries from one court to another or by the existence in the royal workshops of albums with sketches and stencils, as in the case of Yakub Bey albums. But this only explains how the same compositions appeared in successive manuscripts; it does not explain why even the most famous masters were entrusted with the most prestigious manuscripts copied paintings. According to Adamova, the painter had to show not only that s/he followed tradition and respected his predecessors but that he also merited comparison with earlier masters and that his skills were not inferior to theirs. Her example is the well-known miniature of Bahram Gur and the dragon (British Museum, Add.25900), attributed to Bihzad, copying the corresponding scene from the *Khamsa* of Nizami of 1444. Bihzad painted all the details in his miniature in the style of his time. Still, he retained all the compositional components of the prototype, so that it would be possible for lovers of painting to recognize the work of his famous predecessor.[550]

That imitation required knowledge, professional skill and creative talent in calligraphy or painting. Looking at the earliest known Ottoman literary source about the lives and works of artists, Mustafa Âli's *Epic Deeds of Artists* (1587), there was a constant tension of comparison between Persian and Ottoman artists, hence

[550] Adamova, "Repetition of Compositions in Manuscripts," 67-75.

competition between their works of art. This is apparent in Mustafa Âli's attempts on various occasions to promote the artistic world of Rum, with its "jewel-like artists." Poems embellish Âli's praise-filled accounts of these Rumi calligraphers, deliberately composed in Ottoman Turkish, instead of Persian.[551] With his statements in verse and prose, Âli foregrounds the rooted traditions of Ottoman calligraphers and champions the masters of Rum as equals to the most revered personages in the history of calligraphy. As he celebrates the accomplishments of Rumi artists, Mustafa Âli tries to underscore the importance of emulating excellence in well-grounded training. The ideal models to be emulated were by default the masters of Persia. Thus, in an account about a pupil named Dervish Husam, Âli praises the calligrapher for not resisting, like other artists of Rum, a learning process based on imitation of Persian models:[552]

> And to date, among the people of Rum, {there has been none} who held the masters of Persia in high[er] esteem or as singularly refrained from being stubborn and followed the paths of learning and imitation.[553]

Accordingly, Âli believed emulation would bring advancement when fused with creativity. One such moment of ingenuity is recorded in his treatise. Following his accounts of the Persian calligraphers who wrote in *diwani*, a calligraphic style of Persian origin, Mustafa Âli brings the subject to the masters of Rum. He notes that the writers of that script in the lands of Rum "modified the Persian style in its entirety and transformed [it] into an admirable [style] with easy-to-read forms and characters." The achievement of the Rumi calligraphers that Âli lauds with these

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[551] "Mustafa Âli was proficient in four languages: Chaghatay Turkish, Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, and Persian. One of his great concerns was to make Ottoman Turkish a literary language, and fusing historical and biographical writing with literary practices was a component of the formula he devised to achieve this goal. Esra Akın emphasizes that "a true appreciation of the *Epic Deeds* requires, therefore, an awareness of Âli's larger literary objectives as well as an understanding of the text as part of his lifelong efforts to elevate Ottoman Turkish to the level of the mor emature Persian literary traditions that prevailed at the Ottoman court." Akın, *Epic Deeds*, 113.
[552] Akın-Kıvanç, *Epic Deeds*, 146-147.
[553] Akın-Kıvanç, *Epic Deeds*, 251.

words is twofold: their mastery of the Persian hand through imitation, and their creation of a distinctively Ottoman calligraphic mode by refining the original script in form and style. Indeed, for centuries, diwani became the most frequently used script in Ottoman imperial decrees and orders.[554]

In these terms Serpil Bağcı questions through examples the textual or narrative dependence of the art of painting in the Islamic world, which she thinks is the main characteristic of it. The most important thematic sources of Islamic painting have been masterpieces of Persian literature. Based on some core texts, book artists mostly adopted and copied the same images in different ways. According to Bağcı these ready-made images restrict the artists' stylistic creativity. But some artists used both earlier and contemporary images innovatively, which can be evaluated as a special form of creative activity. This happened in two ways. The first group of examples consists of images inspired by written and oral sources and modified into new representations. In this type of imagery, a visual or literary model belonging to the collective cultural memory is used in a different context and transformed into something different from its source, then acquires new meanings and associations. As for the second group of images, they are created by pasting some already existing works into new contexts. More clearly, the artist uses an earlier manuscript illustration in a different manuscript. This collage can take place either using an illustration on its own or in combination with other cut-out images, in the context of a new narrative. Most of the time artists also made some modifications or additions to form the final composition of the whole page. Serpil Bağcı concludes that the first technique was a broader phenomenon, whereas the second one seems to have been used exclusively by Ottoman artists. According to her, one of the main reasons for

[554] Akın-Kıvanç, *Epic Deeds*, 147.

the artists' use of old images in the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries was the lack of an established tradition of deluxe book production.[555]

7.11 Yakub Bey albums: inspiration source for book arts

Scholars argue that it would not be an exaggeration to say one could reconstruct the history of the arts of the book in the Islamic world based solely on the Topkapi collections.[556] The spoils from Tabriz, this wide-ranging inspiration material, and especially the albums of the Akkoyunlu Yakub Bey seem to have played an essential role as a turning point concerning the production and use of books in the Ottoman court. Eventually, the albums of the Akkoyunlu Yakub Bey did not remain intact, contrary to what we expect today as must be for an art piece. It had been constantly used as an active contemplation material by the sultans and the court artists. The perception of art and artworks during this period was closer to what we perceive today as craft or artisanship. This category leaves a space for the audience to intervene and make changes to it. The spectator of art has gradually lost this freedom of interactive appreciation after the nineteenth century, at the end of which the artwork was placed in the museum as an untouchable semi-sacred object.

Yakub Bey albums had served as an inspiration source in the Ottoman court in several ways; mainly by completing unfinished works and by imitation, repetition, or reproduction. Consequently, new works were added to the albums, some produced before the arrival of the albums in the Ottoman court. Looking at the architectural ornaments in the Topkapi Palace, it is apparent that the works in the albums also

[555] Serpil Bağcı, "Old Images for New Texts and Contexts: Wandering Images in Islamic Book Painting," 21-32.
[556] Fetvacı, *Picturing History at the Ottoman Court*, 61-62.

played a functional role as patterns or templates to apply in various fields of artisanship.

To finish incomplete works of art or craft was perceived as normal during the sixteenth century. As remarked in the records, there were many unfinished or incomplete pieces among the goods looted in Shah Ismail's palace, captured from the belongings of the shah, his commanders or various court corporations. These incomplete pieces include every kind of craft such as tents, gold-encrusted necklaces, unfinished gold buttons, unfinished gold-embroidered gloves, one unfinished *burunjuk* (a piece of raw silk) with gold embroidered edges, handkerchiefs, waist-belt, crown, one unfinished orange satin *giysi* or muslin shirt, table spread, horse saddles, chain for horses, weapons and felt. Besides, they include pieces of book art, like an unfinished gold embroidered book cover and an unfinished *Shahnama* volume, gilded with figural motifs, from the calligrapher Mawlana Fath Allah.[557]

Copying the works of earlier masters had been considered a meaningful way to hone the artist's skills since the fifteenth century on by Timurid and later Akkoyunlu times. Up to four similar pictures – monochrome drawings and small paintings – of the same scene or figure can be found on nonsuccessive pages in the albums H. 2153 and H. 2160.[558]

Similarly, after arriving at their final destination in Istanbul in the sixteenth century, the court artists used the albums for centuries in the Ottoman palace as an image bank and by the sultans and their surroundings as a medium for leisure activity. They were reworked, stamped, and annotated at the palace workshop, a sign of connoisseurial activity. There is also evidence that from the sixteenth to the

[557] Genç, "From Tabriz to Istanbul," 227-276.
[558] and also, though more rarely, in H. 2152, as well as in the Diez albums. For details see Tanındı, "Repetition of Illustrations in the Topkapi Palace and Diez Albums."

eighteenth centuries, several Ottoman sultans took aesthetic delight in these albums and made them accessible to court artists as sources of inspiration. Several fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Timurid, Turkman, and Safavid albums, including H.2153 and H.2160, were regularly looked at and perused in the Ottoman palace as a source of artistic inspiration up to the eighteenth century. This is especially evident from identical reproductions of calligraphic specimens in larger calligraphic panels and wall decorations.[559]

As pointed out by Zeren Tanındı, the royal workshop at the Ottoman palace functioned as a center not only for the production but also for the conservation and repair of manuscripts. Like other art patrons in the Islamic world, Ottoman patrons were well aware of the activities of workshops in neighboring states- what and how much they produced, the caliber of their artists, and the amount of patronage extended by their ruler.

Eventually, as in the case of Tabriz, the conquests did not lead to the destruction of royal or commercial workshops, they were simply gathered up and taken to the conqueror's library or treasury. The new patron would take care of them, and if need be, have them repaired, bound or filled in any spaces left blank for illumination or paintings following the new owner's taste.

Tanındı illustrates this kind of work done on precious manuscripts at a court works based on three books from the Topkapi Palace Library. These were outstanding works of their original owners' workshops. They were refurbished at the end of the fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth century for their new patrons when the production of illustrated books in the Ottoman court workshop was modest and the number of illustrators and binder who worked in the *ehl-i hiref* was not

[559] For details see Uluç, "The Perusal of the Topkapi Albums: A Story of Connoisseurship," 121-162.

great.The miniatures executed in these unfinished manuscripts were not stylistically similar; none were representative of the overall Ottoman style of contemporary and later times. Among the earliest examples of Turkish painting, these illustrations can be considered experimental.

The workshop administrators might have thought that it would be less expensive and quicker to illustrate a work with a ready text and leave space for miniature. The process these three books underwent demonstrates the attitude of the palace administration as patron and led to the creation of an Ottoman style of illustration that can be identified at a glance.[560]

Several works such as reproductions and other European or Ottoman works, had been added to the albums after their arrival in the Ottoman court. They were instead treated as "living organic objects" in the experimental laboratory of the Ottoman court studio, with an ongoing process of contemplation through imitations, repetitions, exclusion of the existing pieces, and inclusion of new elements over the centuries.

These later additions, especially European-origin prints and illustrations and Ottoman-origin portraits belonging to the period of Mehmed II (r.1451-71) long blurred the dating problem of the albums, hence their provenance. Because of the association of some of the contents in H.2153 with this Ottoman sultan, the albums had long been known as *Fatih* albums, the albums of the Conqueror. Figure 122 shows three portraits of Mehmed II, that lead to confusion of dating.

[560] Tanındı, "Additions to illustrated manuscripts in Ottoman workshops," 147-161.

Figure 122. Three portraits of Mehmed II in the album H.2153. From left to right: H.2153-10A Seated portrait of Meḥmed II. 390x270 mm. ca. 1480-8. Attributed to Şiblizade Ahmed of Bursa, physiognomy based on Gentile Belllini's Bust Portrait of Meḥmed II (1480). H.2153-144A El Gran Turco, profile bust portrait of Sultan Mehmed II. Florentine engraving, 248x180 mm., ca. 1470 or 1460s. Attributed to the Master of the Vienna Passion. Inscription: EL GRAN TVRCO (Inscribed in the lower right corner is the Italian nickname of Mehmed II) H.2153-145B Bust Portrait of Mehmed II. .266x220 mm. ca.1478-8. Attributed to Sinan Beg.[561]

Julian Raby clarified some stories stories behind these these later additions. Among them are two portraits of Mehmed II, a profile bust (fol. 145B) and a three-quarter face portrait depicting the sultan smelling a rose (fol. 10A).[562] Two other gouache portraits in the album can also be associated with Mehmed's court, for they are Europeanising in format and style, while their subjects, a Young Janissary (fol. 46A) and a Bearded Greek (fol. 46A), help confirm their Ottoman origin. A fifth miniature attributable to Mehmed's reign is a full-face depiction of the Madonna (fol. 48B).

Although these five paintings are a meager total given the hundreds of miniatures in the two albums, there is a group of European engravings in H. 2153

[561] Unpublished facsimile of the albums.
[562] As an inspiring iconography for future works, "the sultan smelling flower" became the symbol of the Ottoman courtly lineage for the centuries to come. The painting had been previously attributed to Nakkas Sinan Bey. Recent studies suggest that this portrait may have been painted by Siblizade Ahmed, a student of Sinan Bey. For details see Bağcı et al., *Ottoman painting*, 39.

which can be associated with Mehmed II with any certainty (4B, 58B, 79B, 78B, 82B, 133B, 144B, 159A). Of the fifteen, ten are Florentine work from the decade 1460-1470, with another from 1470-1480; the remainder is north-eastern Italian, probably Ferrarese, datable to between 1465-1480. Julian Raby exposes the circumstantial evidence that strongly suggests that Mehmed acquired these Florentine prints, and that he did so not by diplomatic gift, but from the Florentine merchants of Pera.[563]

Looking at Atufi's catalog another primary reason for the albums used extensively as inspiration material must be the rarity of albums during the reign of Bayezid II in the Ottoman realm. Most illustrated manuscripts from the reign of Bayezid II were works of literature. Examples of miniature painting are prevalent in literary manuscripts produced in Istanbul and those prepared in the urban centers of Iran and Central Asia, which arrived at the Ottoman court incomplete and were supplemented by illustrations added in the palace workshops.

Although a hint of Western European stylistic influence is evident in these miniatures, some others reveal the Shirazi style of Akkoyunlu workshops. The type of work carried out in the Ottoman palace workshops of the period tended mainly toward the crafting of additions to fourteenth- and fifteenth-century copies of the

[563] Julian Raby starting from the enigmatic inscription to the right of the Mehmed smelling a Rose, proposes a possible itinerary for how this portrait ended up into the album H.2153: The inscription is written obliquely and upside down, and reads *otuz alti* or "thirty-six". Precisely the same style of numeration, in the same hand, occurs in the University Library F.1423, where we find calligraphic pieces inscribed with numbers. In the present pagination these numbers are not consecutive; in fact their occurrence is haphazard. F. 1423 was rebound for the Yildiz Library and the original sequence of pages may then have been confused. This would suggest that a large collection of at least some 170 items was inventoried in a loose state and that some of these items were subsequently entered into the album F. 1423 while one, the Mehmed portrait, found its way into H. 2153. For more details about the additions associated with the court of Mehmed II, see Raby, "Mehmed II Fatih and the Fatih album," 42-49.

Khamsa (Quintet) by the Iranian poets, complemented by the restoration of such manuscripts.[564]

The album-making process includes various artisanship, such as miniatures, illuminations, brush works, and calligraphies. Mahir points out that, although the same arts exist in manuscript production, albums differ from manuscripts in form and composition. The first albums were made in the Timurid court studios, developed in the Turkoman and Safavid courts, and arrived at the Ottoman court as spoils or gifts. This book art form was adopted and developed in the Ottoman court studio, especially during the sixteenth century.

The first Ottoman album, known as Shah Mahmud Nishaburi's album, dates to 1565. The impact of Tabriz's booty is obvious in this first Ottoman album, since Persian artists were influential in its creation. Shah Mahmud Nishaburi was a famous Safavid calligrapher and most of the paintings in this album belong to Shah Kulu, the artist brought from Tabriz after the Chaldiran Battle in 1514.[565]

7.12 Yakub Bey albums: inspiration source for architectural decorations

Especially the drawings in the albums seem to have played a functional role as well. Yves Porter, considering pen and ink drawings in the Diez albums[566] that embody

[564] Atbaş, "Artistic aspects of Sultan Bayezid II's book treasury collection," 182.
[565] The second important Ottoman album is the Murad III album, dating to 1572-74. It also consists of paintings mostly the style of Shah Kulu and his pupil Kara Memi. The influence of Herat, Bukhara and Tabriz schools can be visible in the paintings. The calligraphic works belong mostly to Persian artists, as in the previous one. This album is the first example showing a new period of development in the Ottoman album making. The third album, dating to 1600, was made for Sultan Mehmed III. Tabriz, Quazvin and Isfahan schools were influential in the paintings and miniatures of this album. Album making had continued during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and attained its highest level during the period of Sultan Ahmed I. Beginning from the eighteenth century, single figure paintings began to constitute the majority of the pages in the albums. As a result of changing taste of the court in the nineteenth century, this form of book art began to decline and disappeared at the end of the century. For details see Mahir, "XVI. yüzyıl Osmanlı nakkaşhanesinde murakka yapımcılığı," 401-411.
[566] The five albums Diez A fols. 70–74, named after the Prussian diplomat and Orientalist Heinrich Friedrich von Diez (1751–1817), stand out today among the most precious objects in the holdings of the Oriental Department of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin. They contain an exceptional number of rare

different stages in the creation of manuscript illustrations, differentiates three groups according to their function: first, formal experiences, such as scraps and exercises; second, for projects, such as sketches to be approved by the head of the workshop; and third, general layouts already connected to the manuscript page context, such as underdrawings for illustrations.

Porter also analyzes Persian texts on painting concerning what they say about the role of drawings in the creative process. After examining several drawings in the Diez albums, he finally reflects upon constructing a specific "visual Timurid identity" through the continuous reuse of pictures.[567]

In the case of Yakub Bey albums, *saz* style drawings,[568] had been extensively used as models or inspiration sources for the architectural decoration in the Ottoman court. The decorations of the buildings that the Persianate architect Alaüddin added to Topkapi Palace between 1525 and 1529 were deeply embedded in a Timurid-Turcoman aesthetic, and continued to incorporate foreign elements imported from the lands conquered by Selim I.

The architectural decorations of Alaüddin's buildings, created by Istanbul's court workshops (painters, ceramicists, and goldsmiths), mainly were headed at that time by the artists Selim had imported from Tabriz.[569]

The ceramic tiles with the *saz* style were among the most apparent impacts on the architectural decorations of the palace, like the tile revetments on the Petition

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and very finely made artworks from Persianate regions. They relate very closely to the Yakub Bey albums, since a huge portion of the material in the five Diez albums had been culled from three albums of the Topkapi Palace: H. 2152, B. 411 (both presumably compiled at the Timurid court in Herat in the second quarter of the fifteenth century) – and H. 2153, the larger of the Yakub Bey albums, where most of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings were found pasted.

[567] For details see Porter, "Models, Sketches, and Pounced Drawings in the Diez Albums: First Steps in the Making of Illustrated Manuscripts," 353-379.

[568] Besides many others in world museums and collections, today there are in total 108 *saz* style drawings left in two albums.

[569] Necipoglu, *The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 253.

Chamber façade shown in Figure 123,[570] or in other constructions like the tiles from tombs behind the mosque of Selim.[571]

[570] Discovered under a layer of rococo style ornaments during the restoration works undertaken by the former director of the Topkapi Palace Museum Kemal Çığ (1913-1983), these ceiling decorations of the throne prepared for Sultan Mehmed III (1596-1603) in the Audience Chamber (Chamber of Petitions), are considered as the most valuable works of the Ottoman *saz* style. Depicting the struggle between a dragon and phoenix among the dagger leaves, rosette-type flowers the style points out to a tradition earlier than this date, at least to the beginning of the sixteenth century. For the details see Çığ, "Türk lake tezyinatının bir şaheseri," *Türkiyemiz*, no:7, 1972; Çığ, "Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi binaları ile iç süslemeleri ve gösterdikleri değişiklikler," *Sanat Dünyamız*, no:6, 1976. Both articles were republished in Çığ, *Topkapı Sarayı ve Türk-İslam Sanatları*, 93-96 and 115-123 respectively.

[571] Extensive tile decoration appears for the first in the Yeşil Mosque and tomb complex of Mehmed I in Bursa, built between 1419 and 1424. The signatures of the Tabriz masters, *Amel-i üstad-ı Tabrizi*" meaning "work of Tabriz masters," appears on the tilework. The masters of Tabriz apparently were sent from Bursa to Edirne, and from Edirne to Istanbul after the conquest of the latter by the Ottomans, to decorate many buildings. Ceramicists are absent from the register of wages dating to early sixteenth century. After this time interval, they appear for the first time in 1526 *Ehl-i Hiref* registers, mentioned earlier. Many of those artisans, including the chief of the ceramicists, Habib, were among the craftsmen Selim brought from Tabriz. For the details of this mobility and its impact on various parts of the Ottoman palace, see Necipoğlu, "From International Timurid to Ottoman: A change of taste in sixteenth century ceramic tiles," 136-170.
The impact of Tabrizi artists on the development of tile decoration technique in the Ottoman realm was crucial. The polychrome overglaze painting technique, was developed in Central Asia in the late fourteenth century. Named as black-line, this kind of tilework is also found in fifteenth and sixteenth century Anatolia, yet it is unclear how the tradition emerged in this region. Aneta Samkoff investigates the appearance of the technique in Anatolia by tracing the history of two tiles from the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and by stylistic, technological and contextual comparisons with Seljuk, Timurid and Ottoman examples. Both the historical accounts and stylistic analysis suggest that the earliest blackline tile revetments in Asia Minor were the products of Persian artists, who probably originally inhabitants of Tabriz, must have been familiar with the technology and aesthetic developed in Transoxiana. The tiles show that the black-line technique appeared on Anatolian soil only after foreign artists were dismissed after Timur's death from Samarkand in 1411. The arrival of the new styles and techniques from the East, brought by the freed craftsmen, used in combination with local traditions, turned the fifteenth century in Anatolia into a period of exciting experimentation and innovation that eventually laid the foundations for the development of mature Ottoman tilework. For the details see, Samkoff, "From Central Asia to Anatolia: The transmission of the black-line technique and the development of pre-Ottoman tilework," 199–215.

Figure 123. Ceiling decorations of the throne prepared for Sultan Mehmed III (1596-1603) in the Audience Chamber (Chamber of Petitions), are considered the most valuable works of the Ottoman saz style.

Shah Kulu was the pioneering artist of the *saz* style painting which was influential in the Ottoman court from the beginning of the sixteenth till the mid-seventeenth century, considered to shape the classical age of Ottoman art.

The style is characterized by ink and brush technique in which the dimension effect is expressed through thick brush strokes. The central motifs of the style consist of the struggles between animals like dragons and phoenix and *khatai* or Cathayan-style leaves, flowers often intertwined with birds, beasts and cloud bands.

Following the artist's track in the primary documents, Shah Kulu learned this ink and brush technique from his master Agha Mirak in Tabriz. The earliest known work bearing his seal is a dragon he made in the early sixteenth century. The painting is in a Safavid album, now kept in Topkapi Palace Museum Library, *Hazine* 2154, folio 2A. He produced many similar works after he came to Istanbul, between

the years 1520-1556 in the Ottoman royal studio.[572]

7.13 Contemplating Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings: imitations

Some of the works in Yakub Bey albums were well received in the Ottoman artistic realms, since the court artists adopted and transformed their contemplation into products with new materials, approaches and interpretations. This process created new tastes and new creative styles. Whether in the Akkoyunlu, Safavid or Ottoman court, the paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem were among those imitated in theme or style. Some scholars named these later works inspired by the main group, as "secondary groups" or "subgroups."

Ernst Grube suggested that succession in time helps to account for the production of these various groups of paintings. In these terms, the pictures of the main group, which he names Group I, have inspired for a second, whose compositions are based on the "iconography" of the first, at times to the point of copying individual figures or entire groups. Still, there can be no question that the painters who created the pictures of Group II followed in the footsteps of the painters

[572] For Shah Kulu's art and the development of the saz style in Ottoman lands under his leadership, see Walter B. Denny, "Dating Ottoman Turkish in the Saz Style", *Muqarnas*, vol.1, New Haven and London, 1983, pp.103-121; Bânu Mahir, Osmanlı Resim Sanatında Saz Üslûbu. Phd dissertation, İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Arkeoloji ve Sanat Tarihi Bölümü, 1984; Bânu Mahir, "Saray Nakkaşhanesinin Ünlü Ressamı Şah Kulu ve Eserleri", *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Yıllığı* 1, 1986, 113-31; Bânu Mahir; "Osmanlı Sanatında Saz Üslubundan Anlaşılan", *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Yıllığı* 2, 1987, 123-41; Bânu Mahir "Kanuni Döneminde Yaratılmış Yaygın Bezeme Üslubu, Saz Yolu," *Türkiyemiz* 54, (1988), 28–37. Bânu Mahir, "Osmanlı saz üslubu resimlerinde ejder ikonografisi," Sanat Tarihinde İkonografik Araştırmalar, Güner İnal'a Armağan, 271-294, Ankara 1993.
Mahir questions why this ink and brush technique is named "saz style." Looking to the first dictionary of the Turkish language written by Mahmud Kashgari in the eleventh century and some other fourteenth century dictionaries, *saz* is a Turkish word. According to the etymology and different usages of the word, scholars argue that the most convincing explanation is that this word means "a dense and intricate forest where wild animals live." Mahir reference to the fourteenth century Turkish usage of the word in the meaning of "dragon" is also significant (Mahir, 1986, 126). An interesting detail to support this argument is to be found in the notes of Florentine Filippo Argenti who lived in the Ottoman capital in the first half of the sixteenth century. His notes published later with the title *Regola del parlare Turcho* (The rules of speaking Turkish), includes a Turkish-Italian dictionnary, from where we learn that *sazağan* means *ejderha* (dragon) in Tatarian language. Adamoviç, *Floransalı Filippo Argenti'nin Notlarına Göre (1533) 16. Yüzyıl Türkçesi*, 232.

of Group I. In all cases, however, the execution of the paintings of Group II differs fundamentally from those of Group I. A number of these paintings also exist in several versions, some of which may simply be repetitions by assistants or pupils while others may be followers' work.[573]

Filiz Çağman proposed a categorization according to the material and technical attributes that enable reliable identification of their distinguishing characteristics and purpose. Çağman divides Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings into three main categories; one primary, the other two secondary groups. This approach of categorization helps to reveal later groups of inspirations and imitations. Although they are similar in theme and style, they differ in terms of their materials and techniques. She points out that pictures belonging to both these categories also occur elsewhere, rather than being unique like the main group.

In these terms it is wrong to attribute equal status to all of them, since the two small groups do not have the same origin as the main pictures. Eventually, she attributes the first group to fourteenth-century Central Asia, and the second to fifteenth-century Iran or Central Asia.[574] The Ottoman court can be considered as a possibility as well.[575]

The first group includes the main body of the pictures known as Mehmed Siyah Kalem. They are executed on unsized paper and feature scenes from the daily life of nomads and demons.[576] The second smaller group consists of later pictures of

[573] Grube, "The problem of the Istanbul album paintings," 5.
[574] Çağman, "Glimpses into the Fourteenth-Century Turkic World of Central Asia."
[575] An analysis of materials and painting techniques with modern equipments can clarify these matters. Directorate of National Palaces refused the author's petition concerning these aspects in May 2022.
[576] H.2153-8B Campsite, 113A Horse drinking water and two nomads, 152A Group of three figures, 55A Travelling dervishes, 23B Nomad family, 29A Conversation, 29B Entertainment and show of strength, 106B Two priests in conversation, 34B Dance, 128A Two dervishes in conversation, 129B Two dervishes conversing, 37B Group of three figures, 37B A musican and his companion, 38A Nomads driving an ox, 38A Three figures in conversation, 38A At work, 38B Two standing figures in conversation, 38B Encounter on the steppe, 38B Journeying, 73B Rope making, 65A Encounter by

demons on sized paper,[577] representing a technique widespread in the Islamic world. Although these paintings are thematically connected with the original group, they differ from them with fine brushwork on sized paper, in compliance with all the characteristics of the traditional *kalem-i siyahi* technique.[578] Moreover, there are differences in depiction as well. Although demons are similar to those in the main group, they are distinguished by their pointed talons in the second group examples.

As shown in Figure 124, examples of the first and second categories are pasted together on the same folio: H.2153-37A. Besides apparent aspects of differentiation, there are features visible with close observation. In these terms, although the gold ink of the secondary group shines vis-à-vis daylight extensively, that of the first group looks very much like a pale yellow.[579] The quality differences between paper and ink can explain this fact. The unsized and unpolished paper does not reflect the gold ink as the sized and polished paper does. More importantly, only the court artists could use gold ink, a precious pigment, probably not within reach of the main group artist(s).

candlenight, 33A Man carriying a heavy architectural element, 141B Preparations for building a wooden structure, 141A Demons sawing a tree, 64B Dance of the demons, 27B Two demons trying to drive a stubborn donkey, 34B Two demons in conversation, 48A Demon standing and speaking in admonishment, 129B Demon carrying a man, 38A Demon carrying a horse in his arms, 31B One demon overpowers two others, 37B Two demons in combat, 37A Tug of war, 112A Demons at an entertainment.

[577] H.2153-37A Two demons binding a captured dragon and H.2153-109A Two demons wrestling.

[578] A branch of Islamic visual art distinct from the category of manuscript illustration in technique and function. Most of these paintings were not adjuncts of a specific written text but independent pictures on paper, principally executed in brush and ink.

[579] Observations in July 18, 2019, Topkapi Palace Museum Library.

Figure 124. Two examples of Mehmed Siyah Kalem *genre* belonging to the first and second categories according to Filiz Çağman, H.2153-37A.

According to Çağman's categorization, the third group consists of a few examples executed in polychrome on silk.[580] Probably due to their similarity of theme, they were later attributed to Mehmed Siyah Kalem by writing on the paintings such notes as "Work of the Master Mehmed Siyah Kalem." Nevertheless, they display a very different character. As expressed by Çağman, the ink is applied

[580] H.2153-39B Two demons in conversation, H.2153-40B Sacrifice of a horse, H.2153-164B-165A, Palanquins carried by demons.

carefully using a very fine brush and the colors are different from those of the *kalem-i siyahi* technique. Their style, wide color range, and notably the clothing, faces, ornamentation and other details of the figures, give these pictures an affinity with court art under the patronage of Timurid and Turkmen rulers in western Asia. An example of this group is displayed in Figure 125. At the same time, the use of silk and their themes reveal a link with China and the Far East. All this evidence makes it inappropriate to regard these paintings as attributable to Mehmed Siyah Kalem. Instead they illustrate the influence of the Silk Road and its links with China in the first half of the fifteenth century.[581]

Figure 125. H.2153-40B Sacrifice of a horse. Although later attributed to Mehmed Siyah Kalem, this painting displays a very different style of brush technique implicating an affinity with court art under the patronage of Timurid and Turkmen rulers in Western Asia in the first half of the fifteenth century.

These paintings imitate Mehmed Siyah Kalem *genre*, but differentiate from them in many terms. They are classified as belonging to the "Mehmed Siyah Kalem subgroup" in the unpublished facsimile of the albums.[582]

[581] Çağman, "Glimpses into the Fourteenth-Century Turkic World of Central Asia," 156.
[582] In H.2153: fol. 37a-p.2 A demon couple exterminating a Chinese dragon; fol. 39b-p.1 Two demons working; fol. 40b-p.1 Demons scrambling for horse meat; fol. 64a-p.1 A man fighting with a horned demon; fol. 70a-p.1 Two men with a mortar and a pitcher; fol. 88b-p.1 Demons carrying large chests covered by fur; fol. 109b-p.1 Two fighting demon; fol. 121a-p.3 Seated old woman; fol. 124a-p.2 A procession in the mountains; fol. 135a-p.1 Three men seated outdoors with a mortar; fol. 164b-p.1

Why did the style cease in the Ottoman court? This may be because the master-apprentice chain was broken and the skills of ink and brush technique rested in remote lands of Chinese Turkestan, which is a different cultural geography. As argued in Chapter 2, even the sobriquet Siyah Kalem was most probably misinterpreted in the Ottoman court, let aside the continuation of the specific artistic skills. As a master of this technique did not exist in the Ottoman realm, the court artists did not have access neither to the training nor to peculiar materials. Hence, the style must have remained mainly exotic and perished after a while. A contrary example of comparison could be *saz* style, a technique which attained its zenith in the Ottoman court. The difference was Shah Kulu, the grand master of *saz*, the artist brought by Selim to the Ottoman court after the Chaldiran Battle in 1514.

Besides repetitions and imitations, there are paintings left incomplete or with Europeanizing iconography, following the Mehmed Siyah Kalem *genre*. Figures 126 and 127 are examples of this kind. These were either left incomplete in the Akkoyunlu/Safavid court in Tabriz or the Ottoman court in Istanbul. In either case, they were considered a source of inspiration by court artists whose sultans appropriated them for the enjoyment of their settled courts.

Demons carrying luxurious palanquins with courtly personages; fol. 164b-p.2 Flying demons holding a palanquin with courtly personages; fol. 165b-p.1 Two fighting demons.
In H.2160: fol. 50b-p.1 Black skinned man waving a tuft next to a horse fallen on his back; fol. 52a-p.1 Two men with a firework in disk form.

Figure 126. An incomplete painting imitating Mehmed Siyah Kalem genre. H.2153-70A-p.1:Two men with a mortar and a pitcher. Unfinished ink painting on paper, belonging to the Siyah Kalem subgroup, 15th century.

Figure 127. A painting of Mehmed Siyah Kalem genre with Europeanizing iconography. H.2153-29B-p.4: Entertainment and show of strength. Ink painting on paper, belonging to the Siyah Kalem Group with Europeanizing iconography, late 14th or early 15th century.

As can be seen from the imitations, these paintings had been well received with high interest by the Ottoman court artists, most probably due to their strong stylistic tradition of expression, uniqueness of themes and impressive depiction. Another factor must surely be the original blend resulting from the transregional interplay lying deep down in their origins. In Çağman's terms, "no other group of Islamic paintings reflects such a world, in which Islamic culture blends the style, technique, materials, and iconography of both Central Asia and the Far East." [583]

7.14 Contemplating Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings: Private reading

While strolling through the pages of Yakub Bey albums, Sultan Selim surely saw Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. What could have been his reaction *vis-à-vis* their sight? How did he perceive Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings? Did he like them or not? Of course it is not possible to give exact answers to these questions. On the other hand, there are documents and historical facts that can let us speculate that he most probably liked them. Two main reasons supporting this argument are his appreciation of figural painting and his close familial ties with Crimea, dominated by the nomadic steppe culture.

First of all, there are numerous anecdotes showing Selim's appreciation of figural painting. More than that, he even practiced figural painting according to European sources. While describing Selim's personality in *Histoire des Turcs*, Thomas Artus gives a most interesting detail, not mentioned in the Ottoman sources: Skillful in painting, Selim painted a scene of the Chaldiran Battle and sent the painting to the Venetians.[584] Contemporary eyewitnesses indicated that they saw this painting displayed in the hall of the great council in Venice, which will be

[583] Çağman, "On the Contents of the Four Istanbul Albums," 33-34.
[584] Artus, *Histoire des Turcs*, 433.

investigated further in detail.

Selim's appreciation of the figural painting was first mentioned in primary sources during the conquest of Tabriz in 1514. As remarked in the introductory verse of this chapter based on Kemalpasazade's history, when Selim visited the *Hest-Behist* palace of Sultan Yakub, he contemplated its beauty.[585] On his turn, Bitlisi described the visit with the following verses, implying Selim's admiration for the internal decorations to which Bitlisi attributed a "heavenly" character:

> Heşt-Behişte vardı Câmi'de Selîm
> Olda bir 'âli 'imâretdür 'iyân
> Hem binâ itmiş ânı Ya'kûb Hân
> Heşt-behişte girdi ol nîgu-Sirişt
> Tâ'ati makbul olanındır behişt
> Ol makâmı gördi Şâh-ı kâm-yâb
> Ol behiştî-sîret u cennet-meâb
> Çün temâşâsın tamâm itdi ferîd
> Hayme vu har-gâha döndi ehl-i dîd[586]

What were these decorations Selim admired in the Hest Behist palace? The Italian-origin Cypriote merchant Francesco Romano has interesting observations on this matter explaining the factors behind the admiration of the Ottoman sultan Selim:

> Within the palace, on the ceiling of the great hall, are represented in gold, silver, and ultramarine blue, all the battles which took place in Persia a long time since; and some embassies are to be seen which came from the Ottoman to Tauris presenting themselves before Assambei, with their demands and the answer he gave them written in the Persian character. There are also represented his hunting expeditions, on which he was accompanied by many lords, all on horseback, with dogs and falcons. There are also seen many animals like elephants and rhinoceroses, all signifying adventures which had happened to him. The ceiling of the great hall is all decorated with beautiful gilding and ultramarine. The figures are so well drawn that they appear like real living human beings.[587]

It would not be wrong to interpret these decorations as storytelling paintings depicting scenes from battles, diplomatic relations, daily life activities and

[585] Kemalpasazade Defter 9, fol.138a. Uğur, "The reign of Sultan Selim I," 121.
[586] fol.102a. Şükrî-i Bitlîsî, *Selim-nâme*, 202.
[587] Grey, "The travels of a merchant in Persia," 175.

adventures. These depictions must have left a considerable impression on Selim, with their vivid and colorful appearance and skillful, lively representations. The scale of the paintings must have contributed to this impression, as painted on the ceiling and walls of the palace. In these terms, the storytelling paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem, with their engaging style and exciting theme, and their scale bigger than miniature probably impacted the Ottoman sultan and his surrounding, to whom the albums were available in the court. Besides, these were perhaps the reasons why Akkoyunlu rulers found these paintings interesting and included them in their collections.

Surprisingly, a saz style mural of the early sixteenth century was revealed accidentally in Topkapı Palace during the restoration works at the end of 2020. Ornamented with Oriental motifs of flowers and mythological creatures such as dragon and phoenix, the mural painting reflects the influence of the Chinese style ink and brush drawings in the Yakub Bey albums. (Figure 128)

Thinking about the above description of the Hest Behist Palace by the merchant Francesco Romano, in comparison to this newly uncovered saz style painting, one can easily guess the inspiration source of the Ottoman decorations: Vivid Chinese figures like dragons and phoenixes, gold, silver, and ultramarine blue…Romano's description of Hest Behist reads like the description of the newly discovered mural dating to the sixteenth century.

Figure 128. Sixteenth-century saz style mural discovered in Topkapi Palace at the end of 2020. Right: A detail of the mural depicting a dragon's head.

Since the painting was found under the plaster on the Privy Chamber portico, it is attributed to the beginning of the sixteenth century. Sultan Selim or his successor, must have appreciated these Oriental motifs and wanted to contemplate the works of this new style not only in the albums but on the walls of the palace. For this, the sultan seems to spare no expense to execute the artisanship most fascinatingly, since for the largescale foundation of the painting the most expensive dye of the period, blue, was used abundantly. The source to obtain this color was most probably through processing the mineral *lapis lazuli*, which was listed in the Inner Treasury inventory dating to 1496 as raw material for court artisans.

The mural painting was found under two layers dating to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Figure 129 is a photograph during restaurations. What excited the Ottoman sultan of the sixteenth century remained under two additional layers of later centuries, which offered different enthusiasms like the Baroque taste.[588]

[588] Topkapi Palace Museum refused the author's petition of 25 March 2021 requesting the digital images and on-site examination of this *saz* style mural. So far, the only publication about this *saz* style mural painting is by Aziz Doğanay, upon request by the National Palaces Restoration Department:

Figure 129. Restaurateurs are working to uncover the sixteenth-century saz style painting which remained under additional layers of the following centuries

On the way back home, after the conquest of Egypt, Selim had built a shore pavilion in front of the Cannon Gate, known as Marble Kiosk. In constructing this kiosk, the architects used the spoils of the Egyptian campaign, precious Cairene marble, praised by European travelers. According to the historian Hoca Sadeddin's account, he had painted its walls with historical scenes, most probably following the mural paintings of the Hest Behist palace he was fond of.

The French antiquarian Petrus Gyllius mentions that the Marble Kiosk "is gilded, and adorned in a surprising manner with Persian paintings." Some foreign observers described similar historical paintings in several other royal kiosks built for Selim along the Bosphorus. The favorite subject in these historical scenes was the

Doğanay, "Yüzyıllar sonra Topkapi Sarayı'nda ortaya çıkarılan ejder-sîmurg karşılaşması üzerine," 5-25. Doğanay attributes the wall paintings, with high probability, to Shah Kulu. As remarked earlier, Shah Kulu was among the artists Selim brought to Ottoman lands from Tabriz after the Chaldiran Battle (1514). He worked in the Ottoman court from 1520, until his death in 1556, during the reign of Suleyman.

Chaldiran Battle of 1514. Busbecq and Lubenau, two foreign visitors to the Ottoman lands, witnessed two separate pictures of the famous victory of Selim over Shah Ismail in two royal kiosks. Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq (1522-1592), ambassador of Ferdinand I in Constantinople between 1552-1662, wrote in his letter to his friend these observations:

> If I had not visited the Black Sea, when I had an opportunity of sailing thither, I should have deserved to be blamed for my laziness, since the ancients held it to be quite as great an exploit to have visited the Black Sea, as to have sailed to Corinth. Well, we had a delightful voyage, and I was allowed to enter some of the royal kiosks. On the folding doors of one of these palaces I saw a picture of the famous battle, between Selim and Ismael, King of the Persians, executed in masterly style, in tesselated work.[589]

In 1587, the Königsberg apothecary Reinhold Lubenau wrote in his travelogue that he saw a kiosk with an "artistic painting" that depicted the same victory.[590]

Selim's appreciation of the figural painting is also apparent in a letter from Edirne by Tommaso di Tolfo to Michelangelo on 1 April 1519. Tolfo urges the latter to come to the Ottoman court because Selim, unlike his father, Bayezid II, is not opposed to the figural arts.[591]

The decorations of figural paintings featured not only in the kiosks, but inside the palace as well. Bitlisi mentions the existence of images on the walls of the various royal structures in the inner palace. The words he had chosen to describe these decorations were "charming pictures (*tamāṣīl*)" and extraordinary figures (*ṣuwar*)."[592] These charming pictures and extraordinary figures that Bitlisi mentions

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[589] First letter, Vienna, September 1555. Forster and Blackburne Daniell, *The Life and Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq*, vol.1, 129.
[590] According to Necipoğlu, this was probably the one built for Selim in the Karabali Garden near Beşiktaş, a typical Persian quadripartite garden. Necipoglu, *The Topkapi Palace*, 224.
[591] Gülru Necipoglu, *The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 1991, p.224
[592] Bidlisi, Hasht Behisht, fol. 5. Necipoglu, *The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 143.

might well be the newly discovered *saz* style mural paintings, with dragon and phoenix.

Another anecdote by Hoca Sadettin Efendi shows that Selim was not a passive receiver of the finished work, rather he was intervening and criticizing the artists during the execution of the figural painting. One day during the construction of the Marble Kiosk he observed the painters at work. At that instance they brought him the portrait of his grandfather Mehmed II, painted by one of the artists. Unfortunately, the portrait did not look like the late Sultan Mehmed who was falcon-nosed, as Selim remembers his face from childhood, where he used to sit on his grandfather's lap.[593] Although Selim criticized this portrait's failure to capture the likeness, Yakub Bey albums contain several portraits of Mehmed II, as discussed above. Some depicted the conqueror sultan falcon-nosed, some not, it seems they had passed Selim's critical view of figural painting in terms of artistic quality and likeness, to deserve a later-adding in the albums.

European sources imply that Selim had more than a refined taste assessing the likeness of a figural portrait. Thomas Artus, in his *Histoire des Turcs*, at the part of eulogy and summary of Selim's life, points out to a fascinating detail about this sultan: *expert en la peinture,* expert in painting.[594] None of the Ottoman sources mentions such a skill of Selim or any other fact implying this expertise, contrary to his passion for reading histories or his capacity of composing poetry. After this short

[593] "Bir gün deniz kıyısında Sultan Selim köşkü diye bilinen köşkü yaptırırlar iken, bahçeye inip kasrı gezmeye buyurdular. Meğer nakkaşlar bezeme ile uğraşıyorlardı. Bir ressam merhum sultan Mehmed Han hazretlerinin güzel yüzün resmetmiş. Bir dilsiz görüp alıp padişahın katına getirdi. (…) Dilsiz tabloyu padişahın görüşüne sunacak, gerçekte Sultan Mehmed Han hazretlerinin portresini yapmak istemiş ama ancak benzetememiş. Merhum bizi çocukken mübarek dizleri üstüne almışlardır. Şerefli yüzleri hala hayalimdedir. Doğan burunlu idiler. Bu ressam tamamca benzetememiş deyüp Ahi Çelebi'ye buyurdular ki, sen de merhumun zamanına irişüb anları görmüşsündür, göre deyüp eline viricek çabucak ne münasebet yaparken, önem bile göstermemiş deyü görüşünü açıklamıştı." Hoca Sadettin Efendi, *Tacü't-Tevarih-IV*, 139-140.

[594] Artus, *Histoire des Turcs,* 343.

mention in the introduction part of Selim and his reign, the author gives more detail on this subject on the following pages:

> [H]e had become so expert in painting, that he himself wanted to paint the battle he had fought against Sophy of Persia, which he then sent to the Venetians, and is still seen today in the hall of the great council in Venice.[595]

We encounter this most exciting detail in some other European historians' and travelers' accounts. There are eyewitnesses that confirm the existence of a painting sent by Selim to the Venetians, depicting his victory in the Chaldiran Battle (1514). Said to be painted by the Ottoman sultan, it was placed on the walls of the Hall of Great Council in Venice Palazzo Ducale. Unfortunately the present decoration of the *Sala del Maggior Consiglio* (Hall of the Great Council) in the Venice Palazzo Ducale was renovated after the disastrous fire of 1577 during which all the structures of the Gothic ceiling and the wall paintings were destroyed.[596]

Selim's choice of Venice to send a painting depicting his overwhelming victory over the Safavids was indeed a diplomatically conscious act. Especially thinking about the literary correspondences between him and the Safavid ruler Shah Ismail while the two armies were approaching there are surely political motives for keeping the peace and military strategies of intimidation behind this deliberate gift to be placed on the Hall of the Great Council. Many facts demonstrate that Selim was a capable ruler in terms of artistic talent which he exercised, even playing with it, in an exquisite and self-enjoying manner: poetry to Persians, painting to Venetians.

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[595] "Il aimait fort la lecture des Histoires, tant de ses ancetres que des autres grands capitaines de siecles passés, à quoi il emploiyait les meilleures heures du jour, quand il etait hors d'affaires: il composait aussi des vers en sa langue, et s'etait rendu si expert en la peinture, que lui-meme voulut peindre la bataille qu'il avait livrée au Sophy de Perse, la quelle il envoya depuis aux Venitiens, et se void encores aujourd'hui en la sall du grand conseil à Venice." Artus, *Histoire des Turcs,* 433.

[596] I am indebted to Dr. Valeria Cafà, conservatrice in Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia, Museo Correr, for her enthousiastic support to the research about this painting. The preliminary findings of an ongoing research by the author shows strongly that the painting known as *La battaglia di Cialdiran* (359x198 cm, oil color on canvas) at Palazzo Mirto Museum in Palermo, Italy could be the one sent by Selim to Venice. Resting outside the scope of this dissertation, the author will publish the details and results of the research once completed.

The association of the Chaldiran Battle and Tabriz with visuality in many cases at the Ottoman realm might not be a coincidence: Selim's admiration of Hest Behist Palace decorations in Tabriz; contemplation of Inner Treasury albums; historical scenes in Marble Kiosk; charming pictures, extraordinary figures, *saz* style figural ornaments in the royal structures of the inner palace; Chaldiran Battle painted in two royal kiosks along the Bosphorus and paintings depicting Chaldiran Battle in Venice Palazzo Ducale and Palazzo Mirto…

All these instances cited in the primary documents and contemporary accounts point out a boom of figural arts inspired by the conquest of Tabriz and the right to sword brought from there. The Battle of Chaldiran scene painted at various occasions from the Black Sea shores to Venice and Sicily, can not be explained solely by a military victory over the main enemy in the East. This victory, hence the conquest of Tabriz, opened the doors of a legendary visual world, a memorable encounter with figural arts that broadened the inspiration limits of the Ottoman sultans, court and artists. Apart from various miniatures and *saz* style brush works in the albums, Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, with their unique theme and style, must have had an impact that contributed to the contemplation and appraisal of figural arts.

7.15 Contemplation of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings: connotations of nomadic themes

What about the theme of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings? Although the material used in these paintings was very ordinary, the theme and the depiction style make them unique. How could Selim have perceived the theme of nomads and nomadic life depicted in these paintings? Did he find them meaningful or have some

connotations while looking at these pieces cut and pasted randomly in the albums he brought from Tabriz?Similar to the appreciation of figural arts, we can also speculate on this matter.

First of all, looking at the names chosen for Ottoman sultans of this period, there are names not-cited in the holy book *Koran* or not that commonly picked up: Bayezid's sons Korkud and Selim; Ahmed's son Aladdin and daughter Kamerşah. Especially the brother of Selim's name, Korkud is interesting; a Turkish origin name, which differs from most of the other Ottoman dynasty members—inspired by the *Dede Korkud Tales*, epic legends of the Oghuz Turks of Central Asia, carrying morals and values significant to the social life of the nomadic Turkic peoples. Orally transmitted since pre-Islamic times, a few copies have reached today, kept mainly in Dresden and Vatican. It is told that the name was given to the prince by his grandfather, Mehmed II, who was very impressed by the tales. The historian Halil Inalcik has remarks that can clarify this attachment to Central Asia and Central Asian origins during the initial phase of the Ottoman Empire:

> The observation made on the disconnection between high court culture and local folk culture should not be taken as an absolute fact in the Eastern cultural milieu. The first Ottoman beys were attached to the Babaî and Kalenderî dervishes, religious-epic folk literature, in a word, the 'Turkmen cultural circle'. In the following centuries, especially during the reign of Mehmed the Conqueror, this Turkmen cultural tradition continued its influence when the court turned its direction to the cosmopolitan culture of the Middle East. [597]

Based on some historical facts, another connotation of nomadic life scenes for Selim can be due to his close familial ties with Crimea, which was dominated by the steppe culture. In this case, it is useful to remind the attributions of Mehmed Siyah Kalem

[597] "Yüksek saray kültürü ile yerel halk kültürü arasında kopukluk üzerinde yapılan gözlem, Doğu kültür çevresi içinde mutlak bir gerçek gibi alınmamalıdır. İlk Osmanlı beyleri, Babaî'Kalenderî dervişlerine, dinî-epik halk edebiyatına, bir kelime ile 'Türkmen kültür çevresine bağlı idiler. Sonraki yüzyıllarda, özellikle Fâtih Sultan Mehmed döneminde saray, Orta-Doğu kozmopolit kültürüne yöneldiğinde, bu Türkmen kültür geleneği etkisini sürdürmüştür." İnalcık, *Şair ve Patron,* 14.

paintings to "the countries of Kipchak in the West, i.e., the Crimean or Astrakhan Khanates."[598]

As pointed out in all the biographies, we have very scarce information about Selim's family life. His only known wife is Ayse Hafsa Sultan, the daughter of the Crimean khan Mengli Giray (1445-1515). Selim's contemporary Cantacasin writes that while he was the governor of Trebisonde, unlike the general practice of marrying or choosing as consort slave girls, he went to marry the daughter of the Khan of Tartary Precopie without his father Bayezid's approval. With the favor of the khan and the large number of horses provided by his brother-in-law, he compelled his father to quit the throne for him.[599] Another factor contributing to this relation could be his only son Suleyman's appointment as governor (*sanjakbeyi*) to Kefe at the southern coast of Crimea in 1509. According to archival documents Selim visited his son with 56 ships departed from Trabizonde. He was welcomed by the Crimean khan and stayed there for seven months.[600]

Both before and after his accession to the throne, Selim's father-in-law Mengli Giray and brother-in-law Saadet Giray would always play a protective and supportive role, during all the main events of his reign, be it as advice in the struggle for the throne with his brothers or as military support in his campaigns. Saadet Giray participated with his Tatar soldiers, especially archers, in all the expeditions that Selim had undertaken and continued to play an active role in the reign of Suleyman until Saadet Giray died in 1538.[601] Taking into consideration these close familial ties

[598] *Miniatures Persanes*, exhibition catalogue.
[599] "Selym, le plus jeune des enfans dudict Bazait, partit de Trebisonde dont il estoit le gouverneur et sans le sceu de son pere, alla espouser la fille du Chan de Tartarie Precopie avec la faveur duquel, et d'un grant nombre de chevaulx, que son beau frere, appellé des Turcs Chamogli ou Canogli amena pour l'acompagner, ayant aussi gaigné les Jannissaires, il contraignit son pere de Iuy laisser le royaume." Cantacasin, *Petit traicté de l'origine des Turcqz*, .331.
[600] Emecen, *Yavuz Sultan Selim*, 45-51.
[601] Emecen, *Yavuz Sultan Selim*, 322.

with Crimea, especially his only known wife and son being closely related to this geography dominated by the steppe culture, the constant support of his family-in-law in all matters during his whole reign, his visits and extended stays before he acceded to the throne, it is possible that Selim was acquainted with these scenes of nomadic life at least from his years before being sultan.

7.16 Later attributions to Mehmed Siyah Kalem

The attributions with inscriptions in such variations like “Work of Mehmed Siyah Kalem”, “Work of Master Mehmed Siyah Kalem”, “Work of Master Mehmed”, and “Work of Siyah Kalem” exist not only in *saz* style but on various kinds of other paintings in the Yakub Bey albums. There are 32 works in H.2153 and 21 in H.2160, in total 53 pictures are attributed to Mehmed Siyah Kalem. All these pictures differ so widely in terms of theme, material, style or technique that it is impossible that they belong to the same artist.

Many scholars have questioned these inscriptions since the beginning of the twentieth century: lvan Stchoukine called the sobriquet “apocryphal” (1935). Zeki Velidi Togan made a strong point of saying that the signatures on the paintings were added later and that both *Ustad* and *Siyah Kalem*, were not originally part of this artist’s name, but were added later by the same person who added the inscriptions to the paintings (1953). Mazhar İpşiroğlu did not accept the inscriptions as signatures but as attributions (1976).[602]

According to Ivanov, most of them are later attributions because they are written in different and not very accomplished scripts and arranged with no regard for the orientation of the pictures. Inscriptions that begin with the word *kâr*, "work",

[602] “Bibliographical Survey of the literature on the Istanbul albums,” 17-30.

are in any case always dubious, since authentic signatures of painters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries all start with the word *amal* or *amila*, meaning "work of" or "made." Ivanov distinguishes only one miniature, Two qilings (H. 2153-170B), a painting with the inscription *Amila Ustad Mehmed Siyah Kalem*, in which the inscription is oriented properly with the picture. But this miniature stands apart from others as regards its subject, Chinese qilins, and the representation of some landscape elements.[603]

Grube as well approached inscriptions with doubt, since the attributions are affixed to such a variety of works as to make it inconceivable that one artist especially a Muslim artist should have painted them. There is no evidence in the Muslim world that a single identifiable painter ever worked in so many -at least five- different styles and techniques, even over a long time. On the contrary, one of the essential qualities of Islamic painting is that even the most outstanding artists worked so profoundly within the limits of the "official" style and manner of a given atelier that they virtually disappeared as individuals. Grube argues that the person who affixed these inscriptions to the paintings was very unfamiliar with the styles and manners of traditional Islamic painting, because such an Islamic work as the *Lady with a floral spray* (H.2153-112A) is attributed to a Western artist, *kâr frank*, an attribution that more understandably appears on another drawing, of European figures. Thus, according to Grube, there seems little sense in basing any attribution of these paintings on the "evidence" of the "signatures" they carry, and, we must look for such evidence within the pictures themselves.[604]

Zeren Tanındı focuses on the qualities of handwriting, most of which are written carelessly in a clumsy *nastaliq* script, and it is immediately evident that they

[603] Ivanov, "Some observations on the miniatures of Muhammad Siyah Qalam," 66.
[604] Grube, "The problem of the Istanbul album paintings."

are not in the hand of a skilled calligrapher. We do not know whether the author of these inscriptions had any information concerning the artist mentioned, or his style, but what is interesting is the close resemblance of these inscriptions to the hand of Sultan Ahmed I (1590-1617) in H. 2153 (fol. 87B) and H. 2160 (fol. 4A). Some of these attributions are written on what once was polished paper, but which was later rubbed so badly that the ink spread, blurring the script to a point to make it difficult to recognize the sultan's hand. However, Tanındı indicates that it seems most probable that these attributions were inscribed by Sultan Ahmed, who looked at the albums occasionally. There are, in fact, very few pictures, bearing genuine signatures in the albums. Many other careless attributions in the same unskilled hand appear as *kâr-i Khitay* -Work of China- on figural groups of a Far Eastern type (H. 2153-l34B, l39A, 139B) and as *kâr-i Frank*, -French Work- written in a careless *nastaliq*, on paintings and drawings of figures in Western dress (H. 2153-54B, 112A). [605]

Tanındı notices that some attributions were the work of master calligraphers. The signature *Amel-i Üstad Mehmed Siyah Kalem* -Work of the Master Mehmed Siyah Kalem- in the Forest Scroll (H. 2160-34A-75A-78A), is one of those executed in a fine *nastaliq*. It would appear that some of the paintings bearing these signatures were trimmed when they were placed into the album (H. 2160- 66A, 78A), indicating that the signatures were inscribed before the paintings were pasted into the albums.

According to Tanındı, only one of these attributions is unquestionably original: Shown in Figure 130, it is an actual signature that reads *Mashq-i üstad Mehmed Siyah Kalem* (H.2153-104B). This signature is inscribed in the *taliq* script, much used in western Iran in the fifteenth century. The style of this painting must,

[605] Tanındı, "Some problems of the two albums, H.2153 and 2160," 37-41.

therefore, represent the style that may truly be called that of Mehmed Siyah Kalem.[606]

Figure 130. The only Mehmed Siyah Kalem attribution which is unquestionably original, according to Tanındı. It is an actual signature that reads *Mashq-i üstad Mehmed Siyah Kalem* (H.2153-104B)

Although the attributions with inscriptions were made in an intuitive manner by a non-connoisseur, there is a pattern in the association of these paintings and the sobriquet Mehmed Siyah Kalem. This pattern reflects the reception of these works of art in the Ottoman court: fine work, individual quality, ink and brush, and Chinese impact. Taking mimesis as an artistic form of contemplation, these works -regardless of their author- and the sobriquet Siyah Kalem -irrespective of his identity- was associated with these qualities after they arrived in the Ottoman realm. In these terms Mehmed Siyah Kalem had become the name of a *genre* denoting these aspects of art, in such a way that surpasses its genuine creators, that claims independence from its roots through not only blurring but cutting severely their links to the past.

[606] Tanındı, "Some problems of the two albums, H.2153 and 2160," 37-41.

Hence what we call Mehmed Siyah Kalem today was not the name of the genuine artist of these paintings depicting demons and nomadic life, but careless attributions by Ottoman court members, who, according to Grube, seem very unfamiliar to the artistic styles and manners in such an extent to be unable to distinguish between an Islamic painting from a Western one. Moreover, the attempt to rub them from the polished paper caused the ink to spread on the paper. That much extensive "active contemplation" of the work of art during the courtly pastime in the private treasury of the sultan, would not be the behavior of the nineteenth-century ruler. Nevertheless, the violent appropriation that these works of art were subject to in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Akkoyunlu and Ottoman courts detached them forever from the genuine creator, environment, and function. Not to compare the violence in the process beginning in the nineteenth-century with their commodification at the hands of thieves and art smugglers and finalizing with their placement on museum walls at the turn of the twentieth century.

PART THREE

MUSEUM WALLS

AS THE BRUTAL COMMODIFICATION OF THE PAINTINGS

CHAPTER 8

ISTANBUL-YILDIZ

THE LOOTING OF ORPHAN ARTWORKS

IN THE CENTURY OF EMANCIPATION

> The album was presented by the Sultan ‘Abdul‘Aziz to one of the highest dignitaries of Turkey who was a great bibliophile; after his demise it was divided among his sons, and it was from one of them I bought the portion I possess. Pages could be filled with the story of all the adventures experienced by this album from the time it left the Turk‘s house until it was brought into my room at the Swedish Legation at Constantinople. There are some things that can happen nowhere but in the East.[607]

Historical transformations beginning in the nineteenth century had dragged Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings to physically and conceptually new environments: Museum Walls. The third part of the study concentrates on this final phase of their mobility characterized by the waning away of the court life and a brutal process of commodification. It contributes to the literature with a meticulous investigation conducted in the Ottoman and European museum archives.

This research material is unprecedented in terms of exposing, at a first level, the ways in which happened practically the looting, theft and smuggling of the artworks from the Ottoman authorities. At a second level consisting of theoretical approach to mobility, the investigation in these last two chapters implicates the historical transformations with the rise of the modern world. These changes can be

[607] Martin, *The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India and Turkey,* 59. Who could be this bibliophile? Ahmed Vefik Paşa? Abdüllatif Suphi Paşa? Personel correspondence with Sinan Kuneralp, November 2020. Although the question is not the direct interest of this dissertation, further research can reveal crucial details.

followed parallel to the mobility of these paintings which found place in new institutions like exhibitions and museums.

The "long nineteenth century" was a "century of emancipation"[608] and tumult, starting with the French Revolution in 1789. However, this period of revolutionary upheaval was not limited to Europe, and new political orders arose in the great non-Western states of the world. The period of tumult arguably peaked in the 1880s when radical political change seemed at its height.

After the turn of the twentieth century, successive revolutions rocked Eurasia, including the 1908 Young Turk Revolution in the Ottoman Empire. Although the societies and political systems within which these revolutions took place varied in many aspects, learning from Europe and from each other, they all contributed to the spread of the idea of change and consequently to the century of emancipation.

During this period of change, the face of transformation was two-fold. On the one hand, new institutions were born, and ideas that had scarcely existed before the eighteenth century—including civil rights and popular sovereignty—became increasingly mainstream. But on the other hand, older elements were subsumed and—in the process of integration with the emerging order—lost much of their established meanings and were reinterpreted anew.

Those ancient ideas and artifacts that did not evaporate and disappear were thereby drawn into the interstices between the ancient and modern until they found meaning in the consolidating post-revolutionary political order of the late nineteenth century. Caligraphies, miniatures, and album paintings—including those of Mehmed Siyah Kalem—were among those that belonged to the ancient world undergoing

[608] Osterhammel, *The transformation of the world, A global history of the nineteenth century*, 9.

rapid deconstruction but still somehow brought through into the new order under construction. Even as they appeared outdated, their meanings would be refashioned as they settled in new surroundings largely defined by nineteenth-century Orientalism.

If history teaches us anything, it is that it is impossible to predict or control what will happen during large-scale processes of political and social transformation. The looting of the Chinese imperial capital by British and French troops during the Second Opium War (1858–60) and the subsequent vanquishing of China after its defeat following the Boxer Rebellion in 1900—after which vast swathes of ancient Chinese culture was pilfered—is an extreme example.

On an arguably less grand scale, the paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem, like many artworks whose original meaning derived from the rituals of the Ottoman courtly life, became subject to theft —indeed looting—and subsequently, international art smuggling. Nevertheless, they found themselves orphaned from a flailing Ottoman Empire, passing through many hands until they fell into the custody of the private collections and museums of the European centers of Orientalism.

The mobility of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings during this period is embedded in the two-fold process of historical transformation mentioned above, where changes in the meaning of art reflected the discontinuity in lifestyles that accompanied the collapse of the old and the rise of the new. Like many others, the original meanings of these artworks, inscribed through their place in the Sultan's court library, were stripped away when they were acquired by Western collectors. Yet, in being acquired by European Orientalists, they were remade and inscribed with a new value—namely, as a commodity of luxury consumption. And, given that the flow of history cannot be reversed, this process of reinscription was irreversible.

The Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings —and, indeed, any other work of art belonging to the courtly lifestyle —could only survive if new value could be ascribed to them within the emerging scheme generated by history. These old-fashioned works of art were de-valorized, deconstructed, and looted on the one hand but endowed new material and immaterial values in the European centers of Orientalism on the other.

8.1 The broken seal of the Sultan's library

On June 15, 1910, the seal on the library door in the Yıldız Palace was found broken, and nearby a window smashed, an obvious sign of forced entry. A document dated July 3, 1910, tells us that the Ottoman authorities were treating this as a case of theft from the Yıldız Palace's Outer Library.[609] The authorities took steps to secure the remaining material in the library and museum.[610]

Coincidentally—or not, as would appear likely—three weeks after the investigations into the theft were concluded, certain manuscripts from Istanbul libraries appeared at an auction in Paris. A report from the Turkish embassy in Paris informed the Turkish foreign ministry that the manuscripts on sale regrettably lacked any stamp or other official marking that would allow them to be definitively attributed to the sultan's library.[611]

8.2 The court's move to Dolmabahce Palace

The chain of events that resulted in a vast swathe of Ottoman treasures—including the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings—ending up in European centers of nineteenth-

[609] Ottoman Archives, DH.EUM.THR., 39 – 48.
[610] Ottoman Archives, BEO, 3764 – 282279.
[611] Ottoman Archives, HR.SFR.4., 822 – 19.

century Orientalism began with the physical move of the court from its centuries-old home at Topkapi in the Golden Horn up the Bosphorus Strait, first to Dolmabahce and then to Yıldız. The sequence was also abstract, as theft led to art smuggling, followed by commodification in the global art market and, ultimately, the loss of meaning of these artworks. Old fashioned and outdated at home, these Ottoman orphans found themselves within the interest realms of the scientific Orientalism in capitals of Europe.

The construction of Dolmabahce Palace began in 1843 and was completed in 1856, during Sultan Abdulmecid's reign (r.1839–1861). That same year, the court moved from Topkapi to Dolmabahce. Although Topkapi Palace lost its original function as the sultans' residence and the seat of the government, not all the furniture and other belongings went with the court. Moreover, while the court moved quickly, everything else —dinnerware, furnishings, and other trappings — were relocated only gradually. Notably, the court library stayed in Topkapi.

As the archival documents indicate, the libraries in Topkapi Palace never ceased being actively used until the 1910s. Almost two decades after the court moved to Dolmabahce, in 1875, the library in Topkapi Palace known as *Enderun-ı Hümayun* —which was built in 1718 by Sultan Ahmed III (r.1703–1730) — underwent extensive maintenance and repairs, according to a document detailing the costs of the renovations.[612]

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, much effort was devoted to maintaining the books in the libraries of Topkapi Palace. Many documents refer to the different libraries in various parts of the palace, which had long since ceased to be the sultans' residence. A document dated 1875 lists the names of the books in the

[612] Ottoman Archives, TS.MA.e, 1190 – 28.

library of the Revan Room;[613] another from 1880 details the regulations and duties concerning the library in the Treasury Grounds.[614] This same library would undergo major renovations in 1882.[615] In a document from 1890, the registry of the Imperial Treasury Library again lists the name of the books.[616]

In 1899, the head teacher at the Topkapı Palace Library, Hadimli Mehmed Ziyaeddin Efendi, died. Mehmed Nuri Efendi was appointed to his place. This indicates that, even at the end of the nineteenth century, the post remained significant since Mehmed Nuri Efendi was the *dersiam* of the Fatih Sultan Mehmed Mosque, a position of high status at the time. The term *dersiam* refers to a professor who teaches students collectively in large mosques.[617]

Furthermore, according to three documents dating from between February and March 1902, the libraries in the Topkapi Palace underwent further maintenance and repair.[618]

8.3 Photography as the novelty of the period and sultan's passion

The long-run effects of the doors of the court library being opened, first when they were broken wide by looting thieves and then with the more gentle prising open through the photographer's lens. The precious albums of the Treasury, touched before only by noble courtly hands, became "ordinary" subjects of a photography project. To capture the images, a mini-studio was set up in the court library with the help of bellows, pocketknives, ropes, and even wooden clothespins to stabilize the manuscripts and folios. Surely, the photographer(s) conducted the project with the

[613] Ottoman Archives, TS.MA.d, 298.
[614] Ottoman Archives, TS.MA.e, 626 – 94.
[615] Ottoman Archives, TS.MA.e, 623 – 54.
[616] Ottoman Archives, TS.MA.d, 477.
[617] Ottoman Archives, TS.MA.e, 1064 – 54.
[618] Ottoman Archives, ŞD., 156 – 43, H-17-11-1319; İ..EV., 30 – 39; BEO, 1819 – 136390.

sultan's permission, or even, perhaps, on his orders.

This period was described evocatively from the perspective of one of the great Western empires. The yearly report from Great Britain's mission in the Near East lays bare that embassy's view of the future of the Ottoman realm: "Turkish Empire on the eve of its fall." The first subtitle of the report concerning "The Sultan and his executive" focuses on the "Position of the sovereign and the Machinery of Government". A short notice foresees upcoming events:

> ED. NOTE.- The system of government in the Turkish Empire explains so much of International Policy from 1908 onwards that it has been decided to give some general account of it. This can, fortunately, be compiled by selections from the Annual Reports of 1906 and of 1907. These give a complete picture of the Sultan and his Empire on the eve of its fall and are therefore of unusual interest.[619]

On the eve of the Ottoman Empire's fall, the century of emancipation witnessed an altogether revolutionary new technology: photography. The revolutionary scientific discoveries made it possible to record images from the external world, giving the visual arts an objectivity and lifelike quality never seen before. Once images became reproducible in the early 1850s, they could be circulated extensively across the world.

In a letter dated November 25, 1909, the German Embassy invited the Ottoman Empire to join the Munich 1910 exhibition. Some three months later, the Ottoman government announced it would participate in the exhibition in a memo released on February 24, 1910. Ottoman authorities selected 22 items from private and public collections for the exhibition to "emphasize the magnificence of the Ottoman state," as expressed in the archival documents.[620]

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[619] Great Britain, The Near East, "Chapter XXX: Turkish Empire on the eve of its fall," Enclosure in Despatch from Mr. G. Barelay, No:43 of January 18, 1907, R. February 11, 1907, 1.
[620] Ünlü, "Ottoman Empire's participation at the 1910 Munich exhibition 'Masterpieces of Islamic art': Archival documents, artifacts and impacts," 53–55.

Some of these items were exhibited for the first time at the Munich Exhibition of 1910, such as the four folios (60A, 60B, 73B, 59B) of the album *Hazine* 2152.[621] Formerly named after the bibliophile Prince Baysunghur (d. 1433), H.2152 has recently been renamed the "Timurid workshop album" as its primary audience seems to have been the artists and calligraphers of the royal scriptorium in Herat. Believed to have been compiled there during the first half of the fifteenth century, it mainly contains works from the early Timurid courts.[622] Together with the albums Bagdat 408, known as the Album of Ahmed I, and TSMK Hazine 2153, many folios of this album were photographed extensively in the second half of the nineteenth century.

It seems, as a result of this process of wide recognition through the spread of photographic images and their public displays in European exhibitions, these items of courtly leisure activity found new meanings in the realm of modern art institutions. Through this process, many of these folios would end up in Western art collections, both private and public.

In the confluence of geopolitical tumult, new academic and scientific institutions — and the inventions they brought in their wake— the nineteenth century as a whole influenced the mobility of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings in two critical aspects. The first aspect of mobility was stimulated by photography— arguably the archetypal invention of the nineteenth century — which underpinned their circulation as captured images. The second mobility was harsher, as the paintings became the subject of theft and looting (and distribution through international art markets).

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[621] Ünlü, "Ottoman Empire's participation at the 1910 Munich exhibition," 75.
[622] Necipoğlu, "Persianate Images between Europe and China: The 'Frankish Manner' in the Diez and Topkapi Albums, c. 1350–1450," 532.

8.4 The first vector of mobility: circulation as image

Through the widespread circulation of images, along the journey beginning with their "capture" from the sultan's library, the paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem and many other pictures from various court albums gained new meanings as photographic images subject to new interpretations as well as distortions. To be sure, through the reproduction of these artworks as images with photographic techniques and widespread distribution, they were seen by more people than they had in the presence of the sultan and his relatively small court. Moreover, whether the art itself was fully appreciated or not, for the first time, ordinary folks could purchase and collect such treasures, if only in the form of a photographic image of the original. From this point of view, the nineteenth century democratized the sharing and contemplating of artwork by devising new technologies of mass distribution.

This democratization went well beyond the medium of photography, and its effects were not limited to the world of collectors and artworks. Ahmet Ersoy refers to this process of democratization as "pluralisation of knowledge and information," brought about by the new inventions of the age — the camera, the illustrated journal, and the gramophone.[623] Focusing on the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II (r.1876–1909), the author situates photography within a hybrid and highly image-based media environment that radically transformed Ottoman modes of looking and remembering.[624]

The phrase "Kodak galaxy" in the title of Ersoy's article denotes a changing world touched by cameras and the enhanced movement of images, with the technical and practical facilities, especially after the introduction of the mass-produced Kodak

[623] Ersoy, "Ottomans and the Kodak Galaxy: Archiving Everyday Life and Historical Space in Ottoman Illustrated Journals," 356.
[624] Ersoy, "Ottomans and the Kodak Galaxy," 330.

Box in 1888.[625] An image-oriented logic began to dominate knowledge from this period, both in public and private spheres of intellectual and social life. The late nineteenth century was no longer the "galaxy" of miniatures and *muraqqa*s produced in *nakkashane*s but the "Kodak Galaxy" of *fotografhane*s.[626]

Eventually, as we have established, the physical artworks from the albums of the court library at Topkapi began a journey that would take them to the walls of European museums. In addition, a parallel mobility was beginning, a very new kind of circulation of images among amateur photographers. A chain of characters with relatively benign intentions played crucial roles in this mobility: Pascal Sébah (the photographer), Dániel Szilágyi (the antiquarian), Armin Vámbéry (the Hungarian Orientalist), Jenö Radisics (the museum director), and Jules Maciet (the amateur collector with magic scissors).

8.5 The Photographer: Pascal Sébah (1823–1886)

Pascal Sébah (1823–1886) was probably the first person outside the Ottoman court ever to touch the Treasury albums, including the folios containing the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. Moreover, his photographic mission conducted in the court library provides first-hand evidence of the earlier effort to break the seal and loot the paintings in the first instance. Even though he was overseeing the project, Sébah probably had little foresight of how it would broaden the receipt and perception of the album paintings and lead them to be attributed with new meanings from a European Orientalist perspective.

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[625] A phrase Ersoy uses in homage to media theorist Marshall McLuhan' s book *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962), where he investigates the foundational impact of mechanised printing on human consciousness. Ersoy, Ottomans and the Kodak Galaxy," 333.

[626] "-hane" is the suffix indicating "the place for" in Turkish; thus *nakkashane*, *nakkas* (miniature artist) studio, and *fotografhane*, photograph studio.

The casting off of old customs and the embrace of new modern ways of living was not only the preserve of the Ottoman court. Across the central districts of Istanbul—especially in Galata and Pera, which were evolving into European quarters—a new model of urban life was developing. This modern concept of urban living differed markedly from that of the old city, where the traditional customs continued to dominate. These modernizing districts increasingly became the capital's center of social gravity and symbolized the ascendency of Europe over the traditional Ottoman culture in all fields of activity.

Besides the intense modernization underway in the economic and sociopolitical fields, other developments influenced urban growth and, eventually, population increase in the capital. Istanbul's population was highly cosmopolitan, comprising Muslim Turks, Orthodox Greeks, Gregorian and Catholic Armenians, Jews, Catholic Levantines,[627] and colonies of other foreigners. The adaptation to the requirements of modern living was realized faster in Galata and Pera, inhabited chiefly by non-Muslims. The photographic center in Pera, the city's most cosmopolitan district, was not only the first in the empire but in the entire Levant. Among the members of this rising non-Muslim middle class were the photographers of the leading studios of Istanbul: the Greek Basile (Vassilaki) Kargopoulo, the Armenian Abdullah brothers, and the Syrian Pascal Sébah.

Pascal Sébah was born in Istanbul in 1823 as the fourth child of a Syrian Catholic father and an Armenian mother. He opened his first studio in 1857 at number 10 Tomtom Street in Pera, near the Austrian Post Office, as indicated in his

[627] The term *Levantine* originally referred to communities of Europeans whose Italian, Catalan and French anscestors settled in Istanbul in Byzantine and Ottoman times, but in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the term was also used for settlers from central and northern Europe. In the eyes of the government the Levantines were regarded as a community of Latins belonging to the Roman Catholic Church. Many of them made fortunes in banking or trade, and others worked as dragomans at foreign embassies. Özendes, *Sébah & Joaillier'den Foto Sabah'a: Fotoğrafta Oryantalizm*, 77.

studio card. This is the 16th street on the left, walking from Taksim Square toward Tunel.[628] We do not know how Sébah learned photography. According to an interview with Bedros Iskender, the last surviving heir of the Sébah studio, Pascal went to Venice to study to be a priest. While there, he dabbled in painting, particularly miniatures. Before long, he dropped out of school and returned to Istanbul.[629]

Sébah's interest in art is apparent in his first studio card dating to 1857, which features a palette and brushes surrounded by ribbons and garlands.[630] This was during the reign of Sultan Abdulmecid (r. 1839–1861), who was very supportive of art and artists. In some of his later studio cards, Sébah continues to emphasize the artistic character of photography through the use of palettes and brush motifs. Figure 131 shows one of these designs. Sébah participated in both national and international exhibitions. Among the significant international exhibitions he participated in were those of the Société Française de Photographie (SFP) in Paris, which awarded him the first medal in 1859, only two years after he opened his first studio.

Although he had never been a court photographer, some of these events denote his relations with the court and court library, which is vital for our case. Among them is the first national exposition ever held in the Ottoman Empire, known as the *Sergi-i Umumi Osmani*, which opened in Sultanahmet Square, situated in the old city, in 1863. Although the exposition covered a wide range of artifacts, the most extensive section was devoted to photography, distinguishing itself in the art section, which included drawings, paintings, woodcuts, metal engraving, printing, and books.

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[628] Marmara, *Osmanlı başkentinde bir Levanten semti: Galata-Pera,* 106.
[629] Öztuncay, *The Photographers of Constantinople-Pioneers, studios and artists from 19th century Istanbul,* 259, fn. 2: Haluk Şehsuvaroğlu, "Istanbul'da ilk Fotoğrafçılar," *Cumhuriyet*, 12 July 1949. (The author quotes from an interview with Bedros Iskender).
[630] Özendes, *Sébah & Joaillier'den Foto Sabah'a*, 248.

Two Istanbul panoramas by Sébah, each consisting of ten sections, were also exhibited.[631] This was the age of the photographic image, not of book arts.

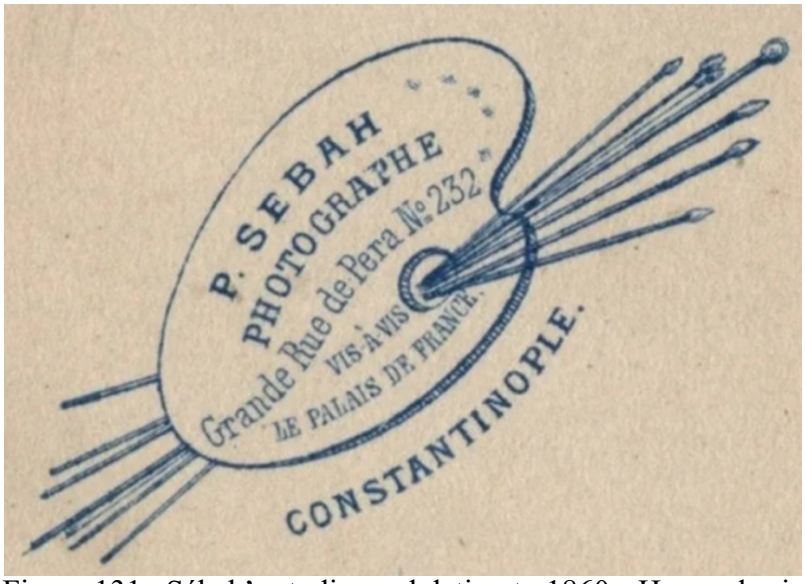

Figure 131. Sébah's studio card dating to 1860s. He emphasized the artistic character of photography through the use of palettes and brush motifs (Source: https://en.sebahjoaillier.com/tarihce)

Before long, the Sébah studio became one of Istanbul's most prestigious. The Paris Exposition of 1867 brought a new award for Sébah, and in the first issue in 1868 of *L'indicateur Constantinopolitain Guide Commercial,* he was mentioned alongside the photographers.[632] In 1868 he opened another branch at number 439 Grande Rue de Péra, next to the Russian Embassy, where it would remain for the rest of his life. He called the studio *El Chark Société Photographique*, "El Chark" being an Arabic term for "east," written according to French phonetics. History would record the first photographs of the album folios, among them those of Mehmed Siyah Kalem, under the name *El Chark Société Photographique*.

[631] Özendes, *Sébah & Joaillier'den Foto Sabah'a*, 177.
[632] Özendes, *Sébah & Joaillier'den Foto Sabah'a*, 177.

Various examples demonstrate Pascal Sébah's capacity to meet the Orientalist expectations of the nineteenth century. The very name he chose for his company—*El Chark*—with its blending of notions from the Occident and the Orient, underscored the Westernizing vocation of people living in Ottoman realms. The motto engraved on his studio card demonstrates this nicely, blending properties of "the east" as the source of light and the eternalizing magic of the Western invention of photography: "Thanks to the wonder of light, the beloved is the light that never disappears."[633]

8.5.1 Directly from the sultan's library

An important sign of Sébah's relations with the court emerged in 1869 when he contributed 18 photographs to the 8th Exhibition of the Société Française de Photographie (SFP). Most interestingly, among them are ten drawings "taken directly from the originals in the sultan's library":

> Sébah, in Constantinople
> 797–Panorama of the Hagia Sophia Church, in Constantinople
> From 798 to 804—various views, taken in Constantinople
> From 805 to 814—Arab and Persian drawings, from the originals of the Library of H.H. the Sultan."[634]

What could these Arab and Persian drawings from the originals of the sultan's library be? According to this short description in the exhibition catalog, they correspond perfectly to the *saz* style drawings or even some of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. Unfortunately, this remains speculation, as with the technique of the time, it was not possible to print the photographs on catalogs. There is no trace of

[633] "Bi-resmi'z-ziyâ'i'I-acîb, Fe'I-habîb munîr lâ yagîb /Şaşkınlık veren ışığın sayesinde, sevgili kaybolmayan ışıktır." Accessed via https://en.Sébahjoaillier.com/tarihce.
[634] translated from French by the author, *Catalogue de la Huitième Exposition de la Société Française de Photographie*, 21.

them in the archives of the SFP,[635] nor is there any clue about them in the archives of historians specialized in Ottoman photography.[636]

In which court library could Sébah have photographed these Arab and Persian drawings? As remarked earlier, the court had moved to Dolmabahce in 1856, with much of the furniture and many objects remaining behind at Topkapi, alongside the libraries. Abdulmecid may have brought some of his favorite books to Dolmabahce but not the whole library.

Looking at the content of his library in Dolmabahce, the albums that contain Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings were probably outdated, not exciting, and too Oriental for this nineteenth-century Ottoman sultan. Instead, what constitutes the central part of the *Abdulmecid Efendi Library* in Dolmabahce were the catalogs published after the 1860s. It was an up-to-date library that followed the fashions of the period: factory catalogs, prefabricated house catalogs, the catalog of a Marseille factory producing cement tiles, catalogs of lamps or gardening, and design.[637]

Besides, the year 1869 was during the reign of Abdulaziz (r.1861–1876). Abdulaziz, who was Dolmabahce's longest-resident sultan, allowed just one photographer — Basile Kargopoulos — inside the palace. Kargopolous was the palace's principal photographer from the earliest days of its construction. We can therefore follow the construction process of the Dolmabahce Palace building through his photographs. After the court's move to Dolmabahce, other photographers were only permitted to take photos outside the palace. From inside, there are only those by Kargopoulos.

[635] Personal correspondence with Société Française de Photographie, Vincent Guyot, April 2019, October-November 2020.
[636] Personal correspondence with Engin Özendes, May 2019.
[637] Damla Acar, personel interview.

Pascal Sébah must have photographed the drawings for the 1869 SFP exhibition at the library in Topkapi. Sébah and other photographers of the period photographed Topkapi Palace many times during these years. These photographs dating to the 1870s give the impression of a relatively deserted place, showing the entrance of the harem, the façade of the *Khirka-i Sherif* room, and the imperial treasury from the outside. The photographs from the interior— for example, those of the Bagdad Kiosk — give the impression of spaces frozen in time. Every tiny detail carries reminiscences of everyday life, like a still life painting, even in the 1880s, almost 30 years after the sultan had departed.

On the other hand, even though the place seems deserted, we know from the many archival documents cited above that the place was a constant hive of activity, with people coming in and out for maintenance, research, or to take photographs.

Pascal Sébah's collaboration with the Turkish painter and museologist Osman Hamdi Bey (1842–1910) could have played a key role in his court relations, providing "direct access" to the sultan's library. The son of Ibrahim Ethem Pasa, the minister of trade and public works, Osman Hamdi, was the leading artist of the period. Beginning with their meeting around the year 1869, the partnership between the artist and the photographer was very much reciprocal. Through Sébah's work, Osman Hamdi was learning to exploit the advantages of this new art form. Sébah's camera allowed him to freeze the poses of his models and eternalize the proper lighting effects, using these as the basis for his oil paintings.

Sébah's later collaborations with Osman Hamdi Bey would all be realized during Abdulaziz's reign. The most well-known of these joint projects was arguably the catalogs prepared for the 1873 Vienna World's Fair, for which Osman Hamdi was appointed as the commissioner in charge. The catalog *Les Costumes Populaires*

de la Turquie was prepared to accompany the exhibition and displayed folk costumes from various regions of the empire. All the photographs were set up, taken, and printed in Pascal Sébah's studio. Another project intended for the 1873 World's Fair was *Usûl-I Mi'mârî-I Osmanî*, the first systematic scholarly treatment of Ottoman architecture every published. The *planche*s of this catalog were also prepared and printed in Sébah's studio.

After 1873, following this successful period of collaboration with Osman Hamdi Bey, the Sébah's attention turned to the branch he opened in Cairo. Photos from this period, therefore, concentrate more on Egyptian images. Their collaboration continued when Osman Hamdi Bey was appointed as the director of the *Müze-i Hümayun* (Ottoman Imperial Museum) in 1881; Sébah was the official photographer of the museum. With some interesting exceptions that we will touch upon, we see Sébah's signature on almost all the photographs of museum objects during this period. After this period the bulk of the photos in Sébah's studio were portraits of Ottoman government officials, photos from the collection of the Imperial Museum, and photos from Egypt.

Besides the ten "Arab and Persian drawings" from the originals of the sultan's library, Pascal Sébah photographed many of the folios of the album *Hazine* 2153, including some of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. Eventually, among thousands of images Sébah captured, we know only those that have survived until today, either in the form of a negative, as reproduced images or as published material.

As a result of urbanization and the rise of population in Istanbul during the nineteenth century, the risk of fire was an ever-present concern, especially in the growing center of the city. The Great Pera Fire of 5 June 1870 is considered one of

the greatest disasters to befall Istanbul in the nineteenth century, and it was followed by other, albeit less extensive, conflagrations in the area through the decade. Pascal Sébah suffered severely from the Pera fires. In the 1870 blaze, one of his three branches—the one at *Jardin des Fleurs*[638]—was raized to the ground.

In 1881, a second fire not only destroyed the building housing his Tomtom Street atelier but resulted in the complete destruction of all its equipment and, more crucially, the entire collection of negatives that Sébah had spent years accumulating.[639] Sébah never recovered from the loss of these precious, irreplaceable negatives. He temporarily settled in Cairo, where, as mentioned, he had established a branch studio. In 1883, he suffered a brain hemorrhage that left him paralyzed. He was unable to work again and died in 1886. Even though the negatives were destroyed, many images thankfully survived these disasters.

Indeed, we are aware of the mission to photograph court albums mainly thanks to the photographs contained in the bequest of the Istanbul-based antiquarian Dániel Szilágyi in 1885, which were published in 1888 by the Hungarian museum director Jenő Radisics de Kutas (1856–1917), and to French amateur collector Jules Maciet, who visited the leading photographic ateliers of Istanbul in 1891.

8.6 The Antiquarian: Dániel Szilágyi (1831–1885)

The bequest of the Istanbul-based Hungarian antiquarian Dániel Szilágyi (1831–1885) reveals Pascal Sébah's photographic project in the court library. We have learned of the existence and the details of these photographs, stamped with *El Chark Société Photographic*, primarily from this bequest transferred to Budapest after his

[638] Öztuncay, *The Photographers of Constantinople,* 261.
[639] Öztuncay, *The Photographers of Constantinople,* 272.

death in 1885 in Istanbul. How and why could Szilágyi have included these photographs in his collection?

Sultan Abdulmecid had built a cemetery for Protestant Christians in Feriköy, Istanbul, in 1857. On the wall at the end of the cemetery, an inscription, placed in 1990 by the Hungarian-Turkish Friendship Association, commemorates the 1848–1849 revolutions. These revolutions mark a crucial set of events in the "century of emancipation" in continental Europe. The national uprisings against the Habsburg Empire in Hungary were especially strong.

One of the central squares in Budapest is *Hősök tere* ("Heroes' Square"), which hosts a monument of statue complex representing historical chieftains of the Magyars and important Hungarian national leaders. After Habsburg troops put down the Hungarian revolt in 1849, the Ottoman Empire welcomed Hungarian emigrants — patrician leaders and ordinary citizens alike — for the next two years. Among them were revolutionary elites, including Kossuth Lajos.

Among Kossuth Lajos' close circles was Dániel Szilágyi — one of the most prominent refugees of 1849 who settled in Istanbul. During his exile, he developed a passion for languages. He spoke excellent Turkish and wrote a grammar booklet for his comrades.[640] Besides Turkish, he learned Arabic and Persian, and he spoke English, French, and German very well. Like many other Hungarian emigrants, Szilágyi also participated in the Crimean War (1853–1856).[641]

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[640] Csorba, "Hungarian emigrants of 1848-1849 in the Ottoman Empire," 226.

[641] The Crimean War was a military conflict fought from October 1853 to February 1856 in which Russia lost to an alliance made up of France, the Ottoman Empire, the united Kingdom and Sardinia, The immediate cause of the war involved the rights of Christian minorities in the Holy Land, then a part of the Ottoman Empire. The French promoted the rights of Roman Catholics, while Russia promoted those of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Longer-term causes involved the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the unwillingness of Britain and France to allow Russia to gain territory and power at the Ottoman Empire's expense. *Wikipedia*

Szilágyi worked as a victualler and interpreter in the French and English armies. He earned enough money to buy the antique bookstore where he had previously worked as an assistant. As the contemporary accounts mention, this bookshop was located in Beyoglu in Timoni street, present-day Gönül Sokak.[642] Walking from the Taksim Square toward Tunel, Timoni was the 27th street on the right side of the Grande Rue de Péra.[643]

In the meantime, Sébah moved up the road to number 439, next to the Russian Embassy in 1868, which would remain his main studio until his death in 1886. Even today, it takes just one minute to walk the 64m from the place on Gönül Sokak (then Timoni street, where the bookstore of Szilágyi was situated) to the studio of Pascal Sébah next to the Russian Embassy (today the Russian Consulate).[644] To reach Sébah's laboratory in Tomtom Street, another 340 meters further along, takes five minutes more.[645]

Dániel Szilágyi was a refined intellectual with significant expertise in languages and a passion for collection. As an antique bookseller, he collected a lot of Oriental rarities. His interest and efforts were confined to his rich book and manuscript collection, which soon became an important source for local Turkish readers and scholars as well as European researchers. In these terms, Szilágyi played an important role not only in the exchange of publications and ideas but also in the development of Oriental studies in Europe. Among others, was first of all his compatriot, the well-known Hungarian Orientalist Armin Vámbéry.

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[642] Kovács, "Hungarian Turkophils in 19th Century Istanbul and Their Bequests in the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences," 455.
[643] Marmara, *Osmanlı başkentinde bir Levanten semti*, 88.
[644] *Google Maps*, Gönül Sokak-Russian Consulate.
[645] *Google Maps,* Gönül Sokak-Tom Tom Kaptan Sokak.

8.7 The Hungarian Orientalist: Armin Vámbéry (1832–1913)

Armin Vámbéry met Szilágyi for the first time in 1857 in Istanbul. Both relatively young men, their friendship would last for many years. Szilágyi was an important connection in Istanbul and a mediator with the Ottoman authorities, so Vámbéry would always call on his help and advice during his stays in Istanbul. Although there is no clear evidence, it is assumed that Vámbéry acquired a part of his Oriental manuscripts through Szilágyi's mediation.[646]

Dániel Szilágyi played a crucial role in discovering and then persuading the Ottoman authorities to return the *Corvinus* to Hungary, illuminated codices dating back to the fifteenth century. His letter to Áron Szilády in 1868 reveals details about the adventures of the 1862 Hungarian delegation trying to locate the *Corvinus.* Moreover, and crucially for our case, this letter supports the conjecture that although the sultan had moved to Dolmabahce in 1856, the court library was still at Topkapi in 1862 when the Hungarian delegation visited. It seems that as early as this date, there had developed ways of smuggling valuable books in the deserted environment of the Topkapi Palace, with the help of some library guards:

> One of the Sultans' Library Guards (with whom I had once bargained, on the old Kubinyi's advice, about the possibility of smuggling one of the most valuable Codices of the known Corvinas out of the building through a tunnel, for the purpose of returning it to its country of origin, but the bargain fell through on account of the shortage of gold lubricants) told me through the mediation of one of the public library guards (more like poachers) that now an infidel book could be obtained.[647]

Szilágyi's support for Hungarian academia was not limited to organizing delegations and assisting scholars. He contributed on many occasions at the

[646] Nándor Erik Kovács, "Hungarian Turkophils in 19th Century Istanbul and Their Bequests in the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences" in p.457

[647] Dániel Szilágyi's letter to Áron Szilády, May 14, 1868. MTAK Ms 4450/258, 1 sheet, 4 pages, autograph manuscript, 4, fn. 31. Kardos and Szántó, "A 19th-century photography collection documenting Persian album paintings in the Istanbul libraries," 70–75.

institutional level as well. His donations were demonstrations of cultural belonging and heavily political gestures because the Academy was a symbol of Hungarian cultural and national identity from its inception.

Despite being in the service of this national "cohesion" throughout his life, Dániel Szilágyi chose to remain in the Ottoman capital until his death in 1885. Although his wife and two sons returned to Hungary as early as 1863, it seems he could not bear to part from his book collection to which he was passionately attached. In the Protestant cemetery of Feriköy, built by Sultan Abdulmecid in 1857, there are approximately 50 Hungarian graves, one of them belonging to Dániel Szilágyi. The inscription on his tombstone reflects the "crystallized cohesion" of the Hungarian émigrés living in Istanbul at that period, paying their respects to this "forty-eighter": "raised collectively by the Hungarian Association in Constantinapolis."

The period between the mid-nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century is considered "the golden age of the Istanbul Latin community."[648] Looking at Sultan Abdulmecid's words — "I would shed fifty thousand Ottoman bodies for each Hungarian, but still not return them"[649] — it appears that it was an "extravagant golden age" for the Hungarians as well. On the other hand, the popular saying, "*Extra Hungariam non est vita, si est vita non est ita*,"[650] conveys the profound relationship between Hungarian immigrants and their homeland. An extraordinary exception in many fields, Dániel Szilágyi was not an exception on this matter. He

[648] Marmara, *Osmanlı başkentinde bir Levanten semti*, 53–62.
[649] Fn. 2, Ebubekir Sofuoğlu, "Abdülmecid ve Macar mülteciler," *Tarih ve Toplum*, c.36, sayı: 215 November 2001, 41. Ender Arat, *Türklere güvendiler*, 27.
[650] The original source of which is unknown means "Outside of Hungary there is no life—And if there is [life], it is not the same." This couplet is in a collection of folk proverbs edited by Hans Walther (1965–83). The only source there cited, however, is another collection, indicating that this is just a popular saying not traceable to a specific source. Huseby-Darvas, "Extra Hungariam Non Est Vita? The Relationships between Hungarian Immigrants and Their Homeland."

clearly intended to let his collection pass to Hungary for the benefit of Hungarian scholars after his death, and this intention, although not fixed in a written last will, was also respected by his heirs. Vámbéry as well, writing a letter to the Secretary-General of the Academy on 7 February 1886, kindly insisted on the purchase of Szilágyi's legacy:

> The inventory of the library of the late Dániel Szilágyi, prepared by the Imperial and Royal Consulate of Constantinople, lays before me, and I have the honor to inform Your Excellence that this library indeed constitutes a rare treasure of high esteem, so that it would be a great loss if our Academy did not buy it, and it went over to foreign hands.

According to Vámbéry's report, the precious bequest consisted in three categories: "books in European languages on Oriental subjects (8,918 volumes), Oriental manuscripts (491 volumes), and Eastern, mostly Turkish printed books (2,009 volumes)."[651] The Hungarian Academy of Sciences purchased the most valuable part of this heritage, which is still a prized part of the Academy's Oriental Collection. Today, the "Collectio Szilágyiana" makes up about half of the Turkish manuscripts in the Oriental Collection, consisting of about 850 items, of which about 438 are from the Szilágyi bequest.

It is hardly a stretch to imagine the passionate book collector Dániel Szilágyi at the end of a tiring day, closing his shop one evening, and crossing the Grande Rue de Péra and walking the few minutes up Tomtom Street past the well-known studio of Pascal Sébah. Perhaps he would even pass by the studio on the way to open his shop in the morning and pop in quickly to pick up a *carte-de-visite* photo. Indeed, he was likely a frequent visitor at Sébah's studio, spending time discussing newly acquired manuscripts with the entrepreneurial photographer and perhaps even

[651] Kovács, "Hungarian Turkophils in 19th Century Istanbul," 463.

Osman Hamdi Bey, Sébah's long-time collaborator. Certainly, we cannot discount the possibility.

When Pascal Sébah died on one hot summer's day in June 1886, he had been confined to bed for three years. He was buried in the Catholic Cemetery in Feriköy, located opposite the Protestant cemetery where Szilágyi had been at rest since November the year before. Having died exactly seven months apart, these two men were buried on opposite sides of the avenue Abide-i Hurriyet, and — as it happens — in exactly the same position as their shops, Szilágyi on the right, Sébah on the left. We can only speculate as to whether these two gentlemen still keep in touch, but we can be sure that they met at least once before 1885 since a group of photographs marked with the *El Chark Société Photographique* stamp was found in the bequest of Dániel Szilágyi, as shown on Figure 132.[652]

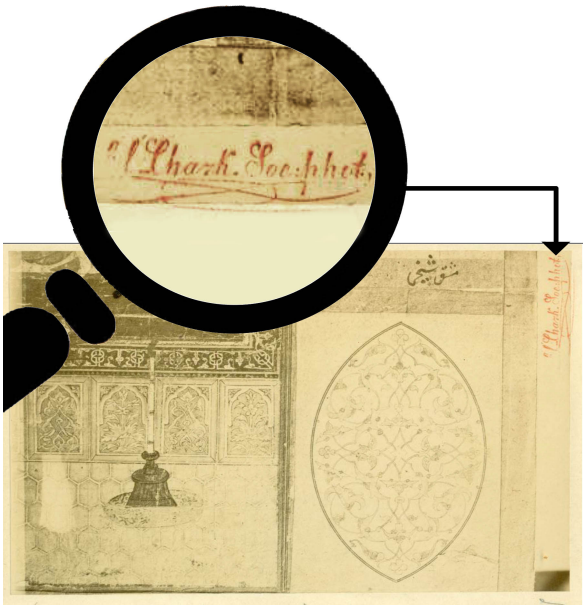

Figure 132. The stamp of El Chark Société Photographique on the photographs from the bequest of Dániel Szilágyi. (Hopp Museum Archives)

[652] 47 photographes now in Ferenc Hopp Museum of East Asian Arts. Hopp Museum Archives (HMA) F 2009, and F 2012.

8.8 The museum director: Jenö Radisics de Kutas (1856–1917)

Recalling Vámbéry's description of it as a "rare treasure of high esteem" snatched at a "rather low and advantageous price," the Szilágyi bequest entered the Hungarian Academy of Sciences soon after his death. In 1888, the director of the Hungarian Museum of Applied Arts, Jenö Radisics (1856–1917), acquired 47 photographs and 2 leather bookbindings for the Museum of Applied Arts from Szilágyi's bequest. On one of the boards where the photographs were affixed is a remarkable vignette with the handwritten words "*Szilagy/Const.*".[653]

The collection consists of albumen prints[654] of large but varying dimensions: they are contact prints made using same-size negatives. The larger ones measure 32 x 27 cm on average, the smaller ones 20 x 16 cm, with only three photographs that measure less (10 x 20 cm on average).[655] The photographs show clearly book covers and folios of calligraphy, drawings, and paintings, from albums and manuscripts. Four of the photographs affixed to the 29 boards presently held at the Ferenc Hopp Museum show book covers made of leather,[656] while four depict

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[653] Szánto, "The Topkapi Saray albums and some early photographs in Budapest," 748.

[654] The albumen print, also called albumen silver print, was published in January 1847 by Louis Désiré Blanquart-Evrard, and was the first commercially exploitable method of producing a photographic on a paper base from a negative. It used the albumen found in egg whites to bind the photographic chemicals to the paper and became the dominant form of photographic positives from 1855 to the start of the 20th century, with a peak in the 1860–90 period. During the mid-19th century, the *carte de visite* became one of the more popular uses of the albumen method. (*Wikipedia*)
Albumen silver print, 1850–ca1900, silver in albumen on paper: A paper is brushed with a solution of albumen (egg white) and table salt and is allowed to dry. It is then bathed in silver nitrate and again allowed to dry, this time in darkness. Albumen, salt and silver form an emulsion containing light-sensitive silver salts which are exposed in daylight in direct contact with a negative until the desired image appears (printing-out). Residual light-sensitive silver salts are then removed through fi xation, and the picture is washed in water. After 1855, most albumen silver photographs were goldtoned, followed by additional fi xation and rinsing. Commercially produced albumen silver paper became available in 1863. Albumen silver prints have a thin paper support and are therefore normally mounted. The surface is usually glossy, and the tone may vary from yellow/red/brown to a violet blue, depending on exposure time and toning. Prints commonly change in tone to yellow/yellow-green in high-keys due to deterioration of the albumen. In magnifi cation characteristic cracks can be seen. (*Written in light*, Stockholm Moderna Museet)

[655] Kardos and Szántó, "The mediation of photography: Persian paintings in European printed books and journals," 177.

[656] The boards unmarked with numbers (marked with vignettes) and also, cardboards nos. 1, 3, 7 (HMA 2009.42-45).

title pages.[657] Additionally, there are three pictures of album pages,[658] five images of separate drawings,[659] five depictions of calligraphies,[660] four reproductions of miniatures or illustrated book pages,[661] and three additional boards with photographs covering various other subject matters.[662] There are boards with photographs juxtaposed in a random fashion, showing enlarged details of paintings.[663]

Jenő Radisics de Kutas had been a civil servant since 1881. He first worked in the Ministry of Religious and Educational Affairs, then in the Royal Museum of Industrial Arts (today's Museum of Applied Arts), becoming its director in 1887, at the tender age of 31, just one year before the museum acquired the photographs from Szilágyi's bequest. As a scholar, his strength was metalwork, but he wrote about multiple areas in various journals. He was the editor of the journal *Művészi Ipar* (Industrial Art), Hungary's leading journal devoted to decorative arts. In 1888, almost immediately after receiving them, Radisics published an article in *Művészi Ipar* on the 47 photographs.[664] This acquisition by the Hungarian Applied Arts Museum was precious, above all, for scientific research purposes. Radisics recognized this fact in his article in *Művészi Ipar*:

> The Museum of Applied Arts has recently acquired 47 photographs from the bequest of Dániel Szilágyi, a Hungarian national who died in Constantinople. It has been quite some time since our museum purchased material of such great, or one might even say exceptional, interest.[665]

In evaluating this "exceptional" material, Radisics enlisted the help of Vámbéry to decipher the signatures and other texts and provide further explanation

[657] Boards nos. 5, 8-10 (HMA 2009.46-49).
[658] Boards nos. 29, 42, 45 (HMA 2009.50-52).
[659] Boards nos. 34, 36, 40-43 (HMA 2009.53-57).
[660] Boards nos. 13-16, 23 (HMA 2009.61-65).
[661] Boards nos. 17, 18, 20, 23 (HMA 2009. 66-69).
[662] Boards nos. 31, 39, 47 (HMA 2009.58.1-2, 59.1-3, 60.1-2).
[663] Kardos and Szántó, "The mediation of photography," 178.
[664] Radisics, "A Szilágyi Dániel-féle fényképgyű jtemény [The Dániel Szilágyi Collection of Photographs]."
[665] Kardos and Szántó, "The mediation of photography," 177.

of the compositions. It is clear Vámbéry offered his thoughts in assessing the photographs. His remarks appear beside the faintly visible glosses in his handwriting beside a few of them. However, while Vámbéry's remarks surely offered, in some cases, valuable starting points, Radisics either disregarded them or chose not to acknowledge them, since none appear in his essay in *Művészi Ipar*.[666]

These photographs and original compositions, including some still mysteries even for today's scholarship, were not within the scope of this young museum director. That could also be an intrinsic factor for this article and the material it focuses on, although published before Paris, Berlin, and Leipzig as early as in 1888 in Budapest, to remain asleep for years, as Radisics' contribution had escaped the attention of modern scholarship of book painting in general and the albums in particular. It will be deficient in explaining this only because it was in Hungarian.

Eventually, although Jenő Radisics published 28 photographs and brought to front this material from the bequest of Dániel Szilágyi, his scholarly "offerings" remained at a superficial level of description and interpretation. Moreover, it was not an analytical attempt to link their production to a historical context with a place and time of origin. "Monsters," Radisics ponders while analyzing a painting in the style of Siah Qalam ("Black Pen"),[667] "are the figment of Oriental imagination. Now again, we admire the abhorring beasts into which the artist has breathed formidable strength and passionate wildness." In another description, Radisics praises the keen ability of the artist to observe nature's infinite variation yet criticizes the incorrect

[666] Kardos and Szántó, "The mediation of photography," 180.
[667] Here, what is meant with "black pen" is the style of *kalem-i siyahi,* Chinese-style ink and brush drawings. In these drawings named as *saz* style, mostly beasts as dragon and phoenix are depicted among wild branches, leaves and flowers. What is meant are not the paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem.

rendering of some natural forms. On one occasion, he daringly links two or more paintings to a single artist. He takes great pains to describe non-figural designs and analyze technical details, such as pounces, which are visible on the photographic renderings. His lack of interest in calligraphy counterbalances his high esteem for book bindings. Radisics did not consider any of the five photographs depicting calligraphic specimens worthy of mention or reproduction.[668]

On the other hand, Radisics was not the person to blame. Probably it was a period too early for these considerations. These photographs are now kept in the File Archives of the Ferenc Hopp Museum of Eastern Asiatic Arts in Budapest. They were left unnoticed until Tatjána Kardos, librarian of the Museum, rediscovered and cataloged them in 2009. On one of the boards in the collection, there is a vignette with the handwritten words *Szilágy/Const*. The remaining boards have numbers from "1" to "47," written next to the inventory number, which suggests that 47 boards were added simultaneously to the File Archives under the same inventory number.[669]

8.9 Details of the photographic mission

According to Szanto and Kardos, judging from the quality of the pictures and the large size of the negatives, these were the works of a professional photographer.[670]

Who was this photographer? In 12 cases, the words *El' Chark Société Photographique* are stamped in the corner of the photographs.[671] The fact that in some cases, the stamps on the photographs overlapped the boards shows that the

[668] Kardos and Szántó, "The mediation of photography," 179.
[669] Kardos and Szántó, "The mediation of photography," 177.
[670] "Amateur photographers did not use negatives of such a large format (Károly Kincses' remark). Since the clippers, pins, strings and even a pocket-knife used to keep the books in position are visible, the photos must have been taken for the purpose of scholarly publication, rather than artistic reproduction." Kardos and Szántó, "The Dániel Szilágyi Collection of Photographs," 70–75.
[671] On boards nos. 5, 16, 18, 34, 36, 39, 40, 42, 43, and 45 (photographs nos. HMA F 2009. 47, 51-55, 57, 59.1-3, 64, 67).

photographs were affixed to the boards in the studio of Pascal Sébah. Apparently, however, Radisics did not remark upon the stamps and erroneously believed that Szilágyi himself might have taken the photographs.[672]

A close look at the photographs offers up exciting details that hint at how the photos were taken and the practical solutions the photographer devised to deal with the bulky objects. First of all, where did they take the photographs? In the studio of Pascal Sébah or "directly in the library of H.H. the Sultan," as indicated with disguised pride by Pascal Sébah in the 1869 exhibition catalog of the SFP? If in the library, when (and in which specific library), and for what purpose?

In some of them, the background is visible since the photographer did not aim to fit the picture perfectly into the frame. In some other cases, an accordion-like object, most probably the expanded bellows of the photographic device, is visible behind the albums.[673]

The photographer used the bellows as a flat ground to take pictures of rather heavy objects like the album itself or the binding. He found other solutions to stabilize the folios, which are not as rigid and stable as the leather book covers. In some cases, he used a pocketknife to support a book and keep it stable.[674]

In other instances, he made use of thin nails to ensure the folios remained in an upright position.[675] Figure 133 displays the bellows and pocketknife which were used by the photographer to facilitate picture taking process.

[672] Kardos and Szántó, "The mediation of photography," 178.
[673] Inv. No. F2009.45, F2009.65.
[674] Inv. No. F2009.43.
[675] Inv. No. F2009.46, F2009.47.

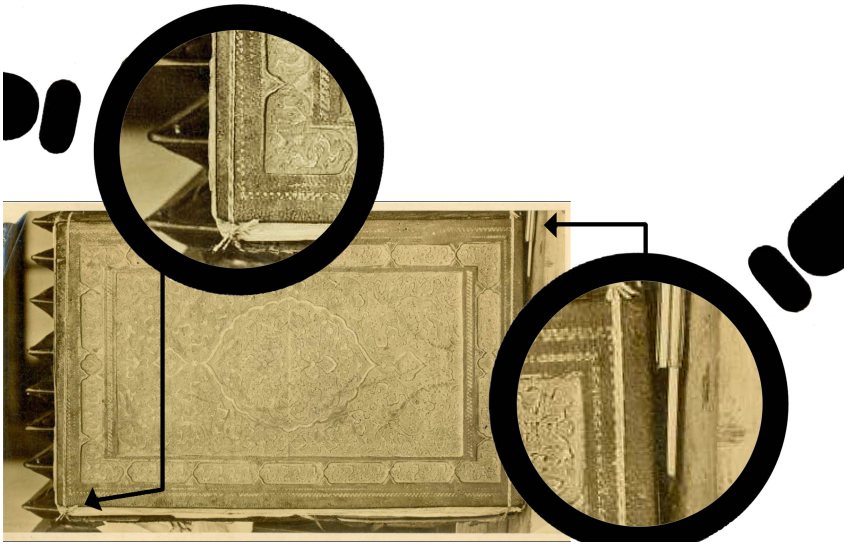

Figure 133. The mini-studio setting facilitating the picture-taking process: bellows and pocketknife. (Hopp Museum Archives)

While taking pictures of folios from the albums, he envisaged a functional set-up. Thanks to a simple mechanism of ropes attached and stretched between two thin slats, he ensured that the folios stayed straight during the capture, as shown in the Figure 134. Since the camera is from the top, the opposite side of the album is visible on the left, in the upright position.[676]

[676] Inv. No. F2009.65.

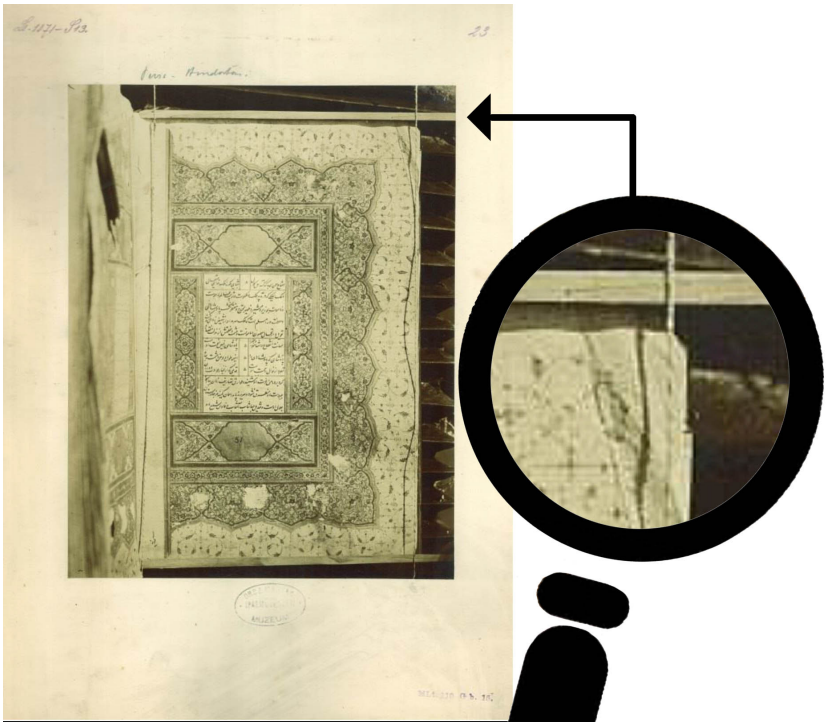

Figure 134. Ropes attached and stretched between two thin slats (Hopp Museum Archives)

To take pictures of the folios which were dispersed had been easier for the photographer. There are many cases where he used a wooden clothespin to stabilize the folios.[677] Such an example is in Figure 135.

These details bring us to the conviction that the photographer or the photographers were prepared and equipped with more than one machine and some practical tools while taking these images. Thinking about the technological possibilities of the period, the photographer was probably using a wet-plate calotype, developed in the 1850s. In other words, he had to process the negatives as soon as possible since the images tended to disappear within about 15 minutes. For these reasons, it makes sense to assume that besides two cameras, he was equipped with a practical darkroom setting and the required chemicals and types of equipment to

[677] Inv. No. F2009.54, F2009.55, F2009.56, F2009.58.2, F2009.60.1, No. F2009.60.2, F2009.62, F2009.67, No. F2012.2.2.

process the images immediately after they were captured. The development of the dry-plate calotype in the 1870s facilitated the procedure and eliminated time limitations. It did not require the photographer to develop the plate immediately after exposure, leaving them hours before needing to transfer images to the glass plate negatives.

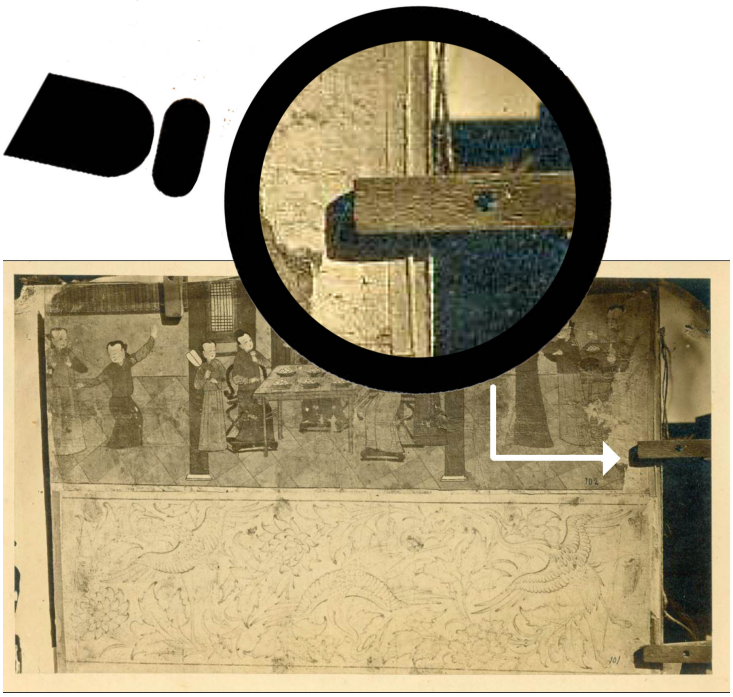

Figure 135. wooden clothespin to stabilize the folios (Hopp Museum Archives)

We can assume that they were not in a well-equipped studio environment but on-site with a portable mini-studio close to the albums themselves (i.e., in the library). The tools used to assist in photographing the items are reflected in the final images. Additionally, other shadow sources are visible due to the lighting environment, which was not suited to photography. Overall, these details strengthen

the supposition that the pictures were taken somewhere outside a professional studio.[678]

8.10 The move to Yıldız Palace

In the meantime, a new Ottoman sultan came to the throne in 1876, and the following year, the court moved again, this time from Dolmabahce Palace, which Sultan Abdulaziz (r.1861–1876) had used, to Yıldız Palace. Abdulaziz's successor, Sultan Abdulhamid II (r.1876–1909), found Dolmabahce unsafe. Built right on the Bosphorus, it was vulnerable to maritime assault. Indeed, one of his first decisions as sultan was to order the move to Yıldız, used as royal hunting grounds ever since the reign of Sultan Suleyman I (1520–1566), which took place in April of 1867. After this date, the compound was known as the Imperial Yıldız Palace (*Yıldız Saray-ı Hümayunu*).[679]

Yıldız Palace would come to be closely associated with Abdulhamid II and the period of his reign. He soon expanded the palace area, surrounding the palace park with thick walls, and launched a series of new construction projects on the grounds. Unlike Topkapi and Dolmabahce, the Yıldız Palace complex consists of several mansions and pavilions scattered in a wooded area. Renovations were needed not only to house the sultan and his household but to ready buildings allocated to officials and others for various purposes: workshops, carpentry, theater, museum, and library. More than a palace, during the reign of Abdulhamid, the complex became "a town with a population of 12,000" people.[680]

[678] Inv. No. F2009.52, Inv. No. F2009.58.1, F2009.60.1.
[679] Atasoy, "The Yıldız Palace Library," 20.
[680] Kocaışık and Uslu, "Sultan II. Abdulhamid Albümleri'nin Yıldız Sarayı ve yapıları ekseninde incelenmesi," 510.

Besides the change in the court *milieu,* the discontinuity in lifestyles from Abdulaziz to Abdulhamid in the emergence of new institutions. Within this new agenda, instead of court artists working on miniatures in the *nakkashane*, from the mid-century, we witness the foundation of modern art institutions, such as the Ottoman Museum (c.1849), Fine Arts Academy (*Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi*, 1882), and the Society of Ottoman Painters (*Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti*, 1909).

Yıldız Palace was significant as the residence of the sultan but also as the site of court life. The new court reflected the particular interests of the sultan, and many technological novelties of the century were introduced to the building. His curiosity reached such an extent that the decision was taken to outfit the court with a private photography studio. Mastering the technique and the power of the photographic image, Abdulhamid provided financial support for preparing albums. Taken and cataloged by the well-known photographers of the period, in line with the sultan's requests, this enormous visual archive consists of 36,585 images collected in 918 albums.

As the sultan and the imperial court moved physically from Topkapi Palace, they stepped mentally to a new mode of life as well, with the gradual detachment from the social and cultural past due to changing economic and social relations. Interestingly, Abdulhamid observed much of this changing world through photographic images. The new Ottoman sultan used photography as a means of documentation in various subjects. There are photographs of urban and natural beauties, palaces, factories, ships, weapons, various industrial products, religious and state leaders, museums, and artworks worldwide. The central part of the photographic collections is from territories of the Ottoman Empire on a wide variety of subjects: from city panoramas to modern infrastructure (such as bridges, police

stations, hospitals, and schools) and technology (factories, ships, and railways), not to mention monuments (fountains, mosques, and tombs) and Ottoman finery (palaces, mansions, pavilions, palace jewelry, and court theater). Modern sporting events, ceremonies, visits of foreign representatives to Istanbul and Jerusalem, exhibitions, and group photographs from various circles of the society also feature prominently. There are approximately 263 signatures in the collection, among them the greatest photography masters or photography houses of the period.[681]

During this period, through the life story of Felice Beato (1834–1907), the renown of the Ottoman environment as an excellent tableau to master photography had echoed in far away countries like India, China, and Japan. Banu Kaygusuz brings into focus his professional career which began in the Crimean War (1853–1856) as a documentary photographer, intersecting with that of the young interpreter Dániel Szilágyi. He continued to record the significant regional conflicts of the British Empire in Asia, including the 1857 Indian Mutiny, then the 1860 Second Opium War in China, and finally to Japan, where he developed the genre of commercial photography. He is credited for having produced the first series of photographs about the early Meiji period, *Views of Japan*, which became very popular, particularly among the Westerners in Japan. In his photographic imagination, Beato, in some sense, blended the Ottoman and Meiji worlds. His nostalgic images of the "Near East" and the "Far East" circulated the globe as images portraying the "traditional" Ottoman and Japanese worlds. This success relied on the visual ideological baggage of Beato, who carried it as a cultural interpreter. In these terms, the life and works of

[681] Interview with Dr. Pervin Bezirci -Directrice of the Library and Documentation Department, Istanbul University- about the digitalization of the archive accessed via https://www.istanbul.edu.tr/tr/haber/19-yuzyilin-en-buyuk-gorsel-arsivi-ii-abdulhamid-hanin-Yıldız-albumleri-dijital-ortamda-6800320061004100510061004300500037005000440039007900700046006200610041004F003200370077003200

this photographer vividly expose the cultural and technological circulation of the era, hence the transfer of this nineteenth-century European invention to Japan via Ottoman lands. This fluid dynamic process connected the two empires through the "transmigration" of photographic knowledge and experience.[682]

These albums included original bindings, elegant layouts and ornaments, editions prepared in different languages, and information about the photographs. Yet, this sultan dedicated far less of the court's daily leisure contemplating the manuscript folios as his ancestors. Instead, he trolled around his vast collection of photographs, fairly known today as the "largest visual archive of the nineteenth century."[683]

8.11 The "man with the magic scissors": Jules Maciet (1846–1911)

In this new era "hegemonized by the image,"[684] the Ottoman sultan was certainly not the only person who was collecting images. Jules Maciet (1846–1911), an amateur collector known in French museology as "the man with the magic scissors,"[685] is one such pertinent figure in the case of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings and other images from the Ottoman court albums. Maciet used his magic scissors to exercise his "passion for cutting into small pieces" thousands of images. Among them are many courtly album folios' photographs, residing today in those albums as precious hints or even direct evidence in the attempt to solve several mysteries in art history related to the theft of artworks.

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[682] Kaygusuz, "F. Beato beyond empires: Flaneur, photo reporter, merchant."
[683] This is the title of the news promoting the website of the photography archive of Abdulhamid II, digitalized and offered to the public online access by Istanbul University. The administration of the Yildiz Library –which includes also the photo collection of Abdulhamid- was given to the Ministry of Education during the Ottoman period. In 1924, the very first year after the foundation of the Republic, two parliamentary ordinances ordered its transfer to Istanbul University with all its furnishings. The move extended until the first months of 1925.
[684] Ersoy, "Ottomans and the Kodak Galaxy," 332.
[685] Title of the article by Jérôme Coignard, "L'homme aux ciseaux magiques, La passion de se couper en petits morceaux," *Le cabinet des merveilles de Monsieur Maciet,* exhibition catalogue, 11.

Maciet dedicated his whole life—and his sizable bourgeois fortune—to collecting art. The work of this amateur collector forms today an essential visual collection of art, architecture, and design pictures, cut and pasted into albums arranged by thematic classification under 422 titles such as animals, costumes, furniture, painting, sculpture, sport, and the like. He donated his iconographical collection in 1904 to the library of Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris. At that time, the collection was about 4,000 albums. After his death in 1911, the collection did not stop, reaching today millions of images in more than 5,000 albums, lining the walls of the library's reading room and creating a "dizziness of images."[686]

Maciet's aim was not to collect rare or valuable documents. Instead, he was driven by a somewhat functional purpose: to offer a wide range of utility to the readers who come to consult these albums, including cabinet makers, bronziers, fashion designers, theater decorators, artists searching for inspiration, and many others. He cut every image that reached him, without prejudgement and without discrimination, even the advertisements for paper glue and scissors (of which he was a fervent user).[687]

To enrich his visual databank for art education for all, Maciet visited the leading photographic ateliers of Istanbul in 1891. By then, Sébah had been resting in the Feriköy Catholic Cemetery in Istanbul for five years. Yet, among the many photographs Maciet collected from the studios of Istanbul, we find many stamped *El Chark Société Photographic*. After the death of Sébah in 1886, his studio was incorporated into a new family partnership and renamed Sébah & Joaillier. We have

[686] A term used by Jérôme Coignard (Le vertige des images, la collection Maciet, Paris, Union centrale des Arts décoratifs, Le Passage, 2002) referred by Josiane Sartre, "Avant-Propos," *Le cabinet des merveilles de Monsieur Maciet*, exhibition catalogue.
[687] Coignard, "L'homme aux ciseaux magiques, La passion de se couper en petits morceaux," 13.

to assume it was on the door of this studio that Jules Maciet must have knocked at some point during his visit to Istanbul in 1891.

Some of these photographs are the same as those in the bequest of Szilágyi. But there are many additional ones. Therefore, after some remarks discussing some points concerning the general aspects of the reception of these images in European museums, the entire catalog of Sébah's photographs from both the Szilágyi and Maciet archives will be discussed in a single treatment.

8.12 *Bibliothèque de Constantinople* and *Turkestan Chinois*

Records were kept before the nineteenth century in Europe and other parts of the world. However, they began to be systematically archived, safeguarded, and evaluated during that period.[688]Although Maciet was more concentrated on collecting, he classified, labeled, and cataloged the images in a scientific and informative manner, according to the nineteenth century's new customs. The traces of scientific Orientalism are visible in this willingness to organize things in catalogs and attribute labels and references.

On almost all of the pages with the provenance of Ottoman court Maciet noted the *Bibliothèque de Constantinople* (Library of Constantinople). He knew the provenance of the photographs, a piece of information he probably picked up during his visit to the studios in Istanbul. Most of the time, he wrote *art musulman* and on some pages *art persan* or *art oriental.* The photographs are generally pasted on consecutive pages, and on all of them, the stamp "*A.D.*," the initials of the *Musée des Arts Decoratifs*, is visible. Figure 136 exhibits examples from these labels.

[688] Osterhammel, *A global history of the nineteenth century*, 9.

There is an interesting concept attributing a geographical provenance to some of the paintings from the Ottoman court library. Especially on ink and brush drawings with dragon and phoenix motifs, representing the characteristics of the genre known today as the *saz* style, one note attracts attention: *Turkestan Chinois*.[689] It is worth mentioning that Maciet attributed these paintings to Chinese Turkestan, observing their in-between character, which made them attractive in the newly flourishing environment of Oriental art.

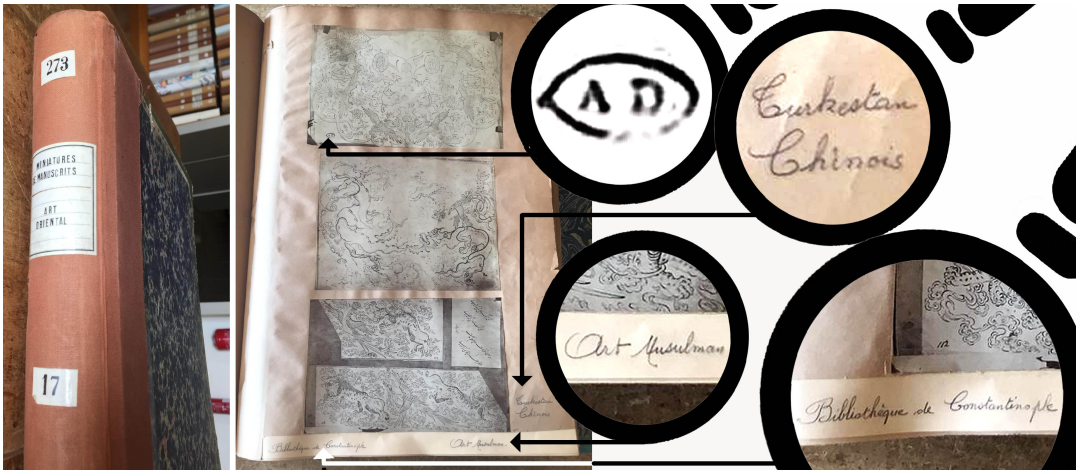

Figure 136. The labels in Maciet albums: *Turkestan Chinois*, *Art Musulman*, *Bibliothèque de Constantinople*

We can observe this preference even in the selection from the sultan's library for the SFP exhibition in 1869. These were not miniatures but drawings, probably ink and brush drawings. This preference persists in the selection of the album folios chosen to be photographed. We have many ink and brush drawings in the *saz* style among them. This preference persisted in contemporary publications of art historians such as Gaston Migeon's *Manuel d'art musulman* (1907, Paris) and

[689] Maciet 273.17.42, Maciet 273.17.43.

Armenag Beg Sakisian's *La Miniature Persane du XIIe au XVIIe Siecle* (1929, Paris) using the material in Maciet albums.

Why did these ink and brush paintings attract more attention than the artful and richly colored miniatures? We can find some hints in the Radisics' description of one of these drawings showing a scene of combat of fabulous creatures:

> A Sketch, painted on paper with brush. Square format. From the left corner, a wide, large tree with finger-like leaves grows toward the centre. Coiling on the rugged trunk of the tree with its claw (...), an imaginary dragon, together with a similar but smaller creature, threatens a nestling which is depicted in the upper part of the tree and ferociously defended by a crested bird-mother. This must have been a popular subject in certain areas of Oriental art, as shown by numerous examples in the collection. As we have mentioned, the bird resembles the Chinese phoenix, one of the four symbolic animals which have been present in the art of that country since the earliest times. [690]

It seems that Chinese Turkestan, this intersection region gave the products appealing the taste of the period, hence the selection was a meaningful one, meeting the interest and demand to Oriental art in many terms. First of all, this style of ink and brush drawings exhibited the unusual but masterful way of using the strokes delicately, bearing and conveying all the values of painting on a wide range in between two contradictory edges as light and dark, sparse and dense, thin and thick, light and shadow. With Radisics words, "the rugged trunk of the tree with its claw" and "the finger-like leaves" were both expressed with brush strokes. Whereas in European painting, this was considered nothing other than a "sketch" until then, which means "quick drawing" with adjectives "rough, preliminary, preparatory."[691]

Another factor underlying the attractiveness of the "Chinese Turkestan" drawings must surely be the theme of drawings, with exotic subjects of Oriental art, such as the Chinese dragon and phoenix, more than matching expectations.

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[690] Fn. 39: F.2012.2. Radisics 1888, 60-62, fig. 11. The painting is preserved in the Topkapi Sarayı Museum, Istanbul (H. 2153, fol. 83a). Kardos and Szántó, "The mediation of photography," 179.
[691] ozdic.com

8.13 Arts or applied arts?

According to the nineteenth-century European conceptualization, without exception in all centers—Paris, Berlin, Leipzig, and Budapest—the institutional category or label salient both to originals and the photographic images of book arts was "decorative arts" or "applied arts."

Among the reasons that decorative arts institutions might have taken an interest in book arts include the provenance of the works, the material, and their subject matter. The following arguments expose another dimension of this relation existing between applied arts museums and the acquisition of Islamic items:

> The creation of museums of 'applied' or 'industrial' art from the mid-nineteenth century, at a time when European nations were extending production to capture colonial markets, had important consequences for the acquisition of Islamic items. As a principal aim of such museums was to encourage high-quality design in manufacturing, it was considered appropriate that examples of well-crafted items, regardless of their origin, should be included in the collections. In Britain, the value of Islamic artefacts for providing lessons in design was noted at the Great Exhibition of 1851 and, through the work of Owen Jones, the concern for the renewal of 'applied art became linked to an appreciation for Islamic design. By the time the South Kessington Museum opened in 1857, it was understood that Islamic artefacts could constitute a significant part of its collection.[692]

As remarked by Vernoit, in the decades that followed, museums with aims similar to those of the South Kensington Museum were founded in cities throughout Europe, including the Museum für Kunst and Industrie (Handelsmuseum) in Vienna in 1864, the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin in 1867, and others at Brno, Budapest, Dresden, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Kassel, Kiel, and Leipzig.

Not surprisingly, some of them were visited by the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings.

[692] Vernoit, "Islamic art and architecture, An overview of scholarship and collection," 22.

The idea was developed mainly in German-speaking lands, and most of the museums observed principles suggested by the German architect and art theoretician Gottfried Semper (1803–1879), namely that collections of "applied" art were best classified by materials and techniques.[693]

Semper's ideas on classification were also influential at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, founded in 1870. Containing some Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings among its collections,[694] the role of the Metropolitan Museum was all-embracing: to promote the study of "fine" art, encourage the application of art to manufactures and advance general knowledge.[695]

The use of Islamic art items as a source of inspiration for crafts and manufactures is another factor explaining their demand, not only as original pieces but also as images. In this matter, another juxtaposition occurs with Jules Maciet, collecting material worldwide with his magic scissors to offer artisans in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs*,* which opened its doors in 1877 in Paris.[696]

This perception possibly gives more sense of freedom to intervene in the artifacts, as was the case for the two Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings purchased in Istanbul at the turn of the century. The person who added tufts of grass to the background of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings would probably hesitate to do the same vis-à-vis an oil painting on canvas bought from an art dealer in Paris.

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[693] Vernoit, "Islamic art and architecture," 23.
[694] Four Captive Demons, Watercolor and gold on silk, 34x20.2cm, Credit Line: Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1968, Accession Number: 68.175, Provenance: B.H. Breslauer, London, until 1968, sold to MMA.
[695] Vernoit, "Islamic art and architecture," 23.
[696] After a lottery of 1882 yielded to the *Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs*, about 6 million francs, items were purchased, and a temporary home was established for them at the *Palais de l'Industrie*. The first Islamic items destined for the *Musée des Arts Décoratifs* (MAD) were acquired at the Albert Goupil sale in Paris in 1886. While forming its collection, however, MAD suffered from the disadvantage that Islamic items were no longer as cheap as when South Kensington Museum made its initial purchases. (Vernoit, 23).

8.14 The numbers of Guillaume Berggren (1835–1920)

An interesting detail about these photographs that reveals hints about the reason they were captured is the numbers attached to them. There was a selection, and the photographer followed the numbers according to this selection. Naturally, these numbers do not appear on the original bindings or folios; they exist on the images of the Szilágyi Archive and those in the Maciet albums.

In other words, they re-marked the numbers on the glass plate negatives, so whenever they reproduced them from the negatives, the numbers appeared on the photograph. We can not find numbers on some others, but we can almost be sure that they belong to the same series since there appear “mini-studio setting.” In these cases, the numbers were most probably cut out to fit the pages or were not assigned in the first place.

It was a standard procedure for the photography studios to write information about the image and the photographer's name on the top of the glass plate during this period. They could move this information whenever they wanted since it was on the glass.

Every studio had its characteristic set-up, most of the time recognizable. For example, Sébah and Joaillier wrote the number and name of the place or person on the left side, whereas the name or signature of the photographer was on the right one.

In our selection, scattered in various collections, the photographer(s) chose an empty place to write the numbers to be easily visible on the photograph — for example, the whitest part of a colorful miniature, the quiet corner of a drawing, or the plain part of a binding. In Figure 137 appear three images of the same drawing at different archives. They rewrote the number with white color in some cases, probably to make it visible on darker backgrounds.

Interestingly, the handwriting of numbers does not match that of either Pascal Sébah or Polycarpe Joaillier, the company's partner after 1883.[697] Considering other probable names for this selection of court albums, we find no match with Osman Hamdi Bey's handwriting either.[698]

Widening the circle to other contemporary photographers, the handwriting on the selection's photographs fits perfectly comparing every tiny characteristic of each number on the details with that of the Swedish photographer Guillaume Berggren (1835–1920). Born in Stockholm, Berggren —a journeyman carpenter — learned photography in Berlin while undertaking repair work for a woman who was both the widow of and the successor to a photographer.

After obtaining more formal photographic training by attending an institute of photography in Berlin, Berggren's yearning to travel and curiosity about new places took him to Dresden, Ljiubliana, Bucharest, and Odesa, where he stayed until 1866. From Odesa, he signed onto a ship destined for Marseille, with a stop in Constantinople along the way. But, taken by the beauty of the Bosphorus, he decided to sign off the ship and explore the city, where he would remain for the rest of his life. The earliest photographs we have signed by Berggren date to 1868. He opened his first studio in the 1870s at Number 414 Grande Rue de Péra.[699]

[697] I am indebted to Fabrizio Casaretto, the fifth generation grandson of Polycarpe Charles Joaillier (1848–1904), for the information about Sébah and Joaillier's handwritings.
[698] I am indebted to Prof. Edhem Eldem for sharing with me letters of Osman Hamdi Bey to compare the handwriting.
[699] Wigh, *Fotografiska Vyer Från Bosporen Och Konstantinopel*.

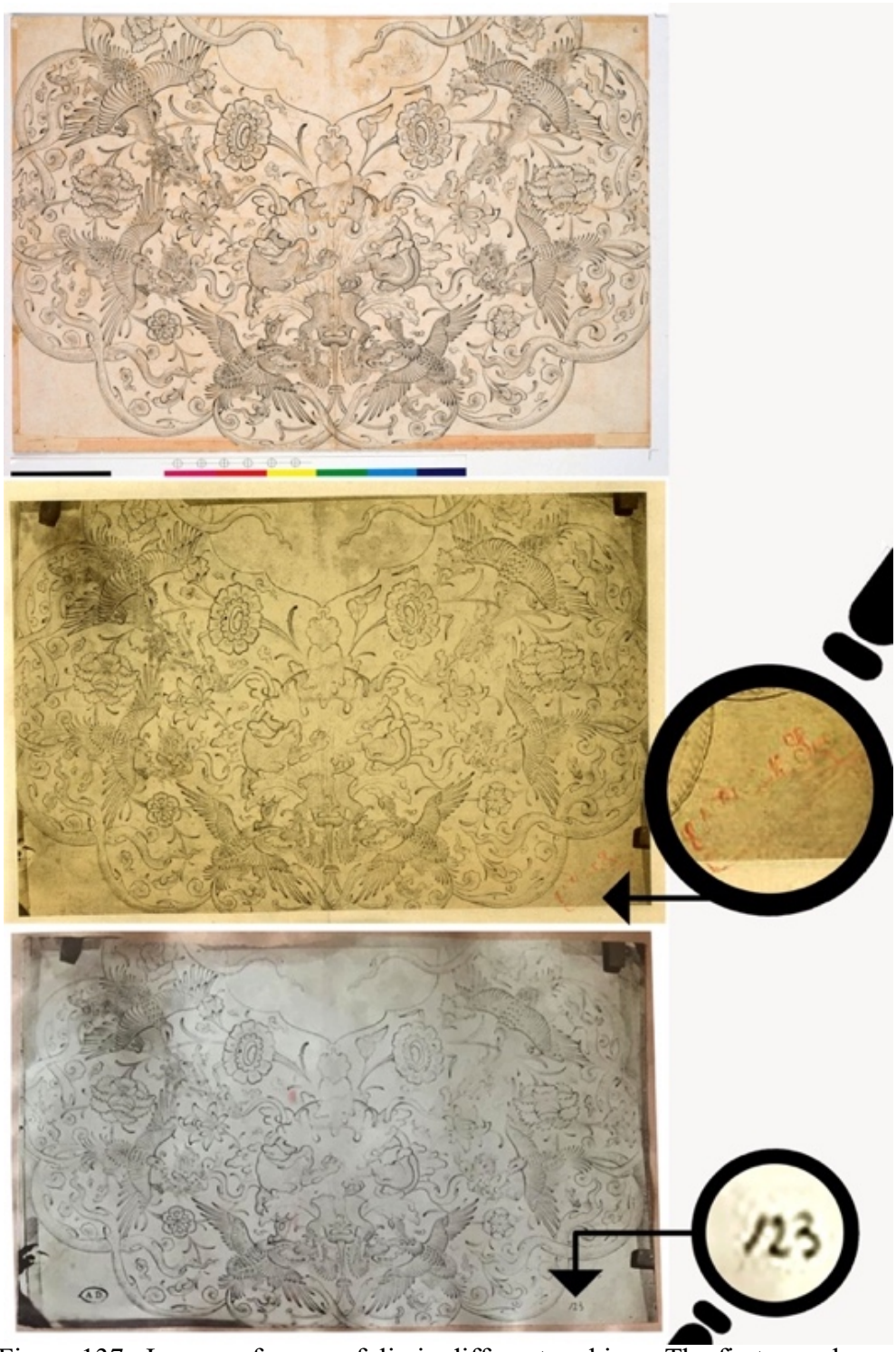

Figure 137. Images of a same folio in different archives. The first one above is the original of a *saz* style ink drawing in the album H.2153-67A. The second one is the photo of the drawing in Ferenc Hopp Museum Szilágyi Archive F2009.54. The El Chark stamp can be seen in the bottom right corner. The third one is the photo of the drawing in the Maciet album with the stamp "A.D." on the left corner down and number 123 on the bottom.

The studios of Sébah and Berggren were neighbors during this period. They surely knew each other and most probably exchanged negative plates or photographs, as was common among the photographers at that time. This practice is why it is sometimes impossible to determine the actual photographer since the same images were sold under various studio signatures. It is also possible that they collaborated in this project of photographing the courtly albums.

Another piece of information supports the idea that the two men collaborated, possibly joined by Osman Hamdi Bey. We know that as director of the Ottoman Museum (*Müze-i Hümayun*), Osman Hamdi Bey worked with Pascal Sébah in the photography for the museum. Interestingly, among the artifacts of the Archaeological Museum supposedly photographed by Sébah are at least two bearing Berggren's signature.[700] Moreover, the distinctive aspects of his handwriting can be readily discerned. In view of these collaborations, it could also be possible that Maciet or even Szilágyi could have purchased the images from Berggren's studio.

8.15 The selection from the court library

Every photograph became the leading actor in complicated adventure after being captured in the sultan's library. If we collect and re-arrange by number all these intensely circulated images scattered in museums, library archives, publications, and private collections all over the world, we acquire a meaningful selection. From those available in collections, the smallest number being 3 and the highest being 125, it is fair to surmise that it was a wide selection compiled essentially from bindings, drawings, illuminations, and miniatures.

[700] Statue colossale de Caracalla en marbre, NEKYA91529/6; Bas-relief en marbre fragment bataille des Amazones, NEKYA91529/9 in Istanbul University Rare Collection Library, Abdulhamid II Yıldız photograph albums.

Besides the numbered ones, there are 20 images without numbers, but surely from the same collection (the numbers were likely cut out). The available total makes in 101 photographs out of 125. The two dozen missing images are likely to be found in the Maciet albums in Paris.

The numbers follow a loose kind of grouping, beginning with some examples of bindings and miniatures, then a large group of illuminated pages followed by a large group of ink drawings. As discussed earlier in this chapter, *saz*-style drawings constitute the majority of the drawings with their "oriental" character, defined as "Chinese Turkistan" by Jules Maciet. Other than this, the selection has a more ornamental character, with bindings, illuminations, and ink drawings rather than colorful miniatures, which make up a small part of the selection.

The bindings date to different periods in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and are mostly of Iranian, Safavid, and Shiraz origin. Apart from bindings, most of the miniatures, drawings, and illuminations were photographed from three albums, as traced in the Table: TSMK Bagdat 408 known as the Album of Ahmed I, Hazine 2152, formerly known as the Baysunghur album,[701] and Hazine 2153, known as Yakub Bey album.

In tracking the provenance, the main focus had been on the H.2153 album since this was the album where most of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings and ink drawings were kept. To conceptualize better the scope of the selection and envisage the interest in this album, it would be helpful to know how many folios were photographed from this album specifically.

[701] H. 2152, formerly named after the bibliophile prince Baysunghur (d. 1433), has recently been renamed the "Timurid workshop album" as its primary audience seems to have been the artists and calligraphers of the royal scriptorium in Herat. Believed to have been compiled there during the first half of the fifteenth century, it mostly contains works from the early Timurid courts (1370–1506). Necipoğlu, "Persianate Images between Europe and China," 532.

Today the album H.2153 consists of 199 folios,[702] where various works of caligraphy and painting were pasted on A and B faces. Among the 199 folios of the H.2153 album, they photographed images on at least one side of 25 folios in total. This makes more than one-tenth of the whole album.

Since the range includes one or more folios from each decimal, it is fair to conclude that the photographers went over the whole album and picked out what they found intriguing. The 25 images they took have followed various paths after being photographed in the sultan's library. Probably more copies of these images or other images survive today in public or private collections worldwide.

The implications of this itinerary are two-fold. First, it shows the mobility of images thanks to the fluidity they gained after the invention of photography. On the one hand, the photographic image gained value in a commercial market with a new-found "Oriental taste" rather than from the old custom of contemplation of the albums in private spheres.

Accordingly, what had been for centuries meaningful as a collection was divided into independent pieces and dispersed without consideration to the original logic of album making.

The new meaning emerged in the image as such, displayed in public rather than contemplated in private as part of bound album folios. The itinerary reveals Orientalist preferences in a second sense since the most produced, the most purchased, and the most circulated images were those most attractive to tourists or the connoisseurs of the period, such as the ornamental "Chinese Turkestan" ink and brush drawings.

[702] *199 varak, 298 minyatür, 19 çiçek*. These are numbers noted by the committee that was appointed for the organization and transfer of the books from the Yıldız Library.

8.16 Why photograph the album folios?

The motivation behind taking photographs of these folios is not clear. But there is matching information in the monograph of Fredrik Robert Martin (1868–1933), a key figure in the "mobility" not only of these paintings but many others as well. A prominent art dealer of Swedish origin, Martin first visited Istanbul was in 1896. He would take advantage of his posting in the Swedish Legacy to collect items from 1903. In his book *The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India, and Turkey* published in London 1912, he refers to a particular album he named "Bellini Album" due to "the fine portrait of a Turkish prince by Gentile Bellini."[703]

To our knowledge today, the album was almost certainly assembled in Turkey during the first half of the seventeenth century, probably for Sultan Ahmed I (r. 1603–17). Today most of the folios are at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Martin gives some matching facts about the photography process of the album:

> It [the album] remained in the possession of the various sultans until about forty years ago, when a large number of its pages were photographed. The plates were soon afterwards sold to a photographer, who, after printing a few copies for which he found no sale, destroyed the plates. A complete collection of these photographs is to be found in the library of Musée des Arts décoratifs in Paris.[704]

Martin indicates that "it was only by good fortune and after lengthy research that he was able to trace out the vicissitudes" of the history of this album.[705] Good fortune and lengthy research notwithstanding, it seems that at least some part he wrote was true. Since Martin's book was published in 1912, "about forty years ago" corresponds to around 1872, the most intense period of Pascal Sébah's relations with

[703] Martin, *The Miniature Painting and Painters*, vol. 1, p.59.
[704] Martin, *The Miniature Painting and Painters*, vol. 1, p.59.
[705] Martin, *The Miniature Painting and Painters*, vol. 1, p.59.

the Ottoman court. Another supporting fact is the existence of many images (albeit not the complete collection) in the library of *Musée des Arts Décoratifs*, collected by Maciet.

Martin further implies that the plates were sold to a photographer; founding no sale, he destroyed them. Or perhaps they were destroyed by fire. After all, the 1881 and 1883 fires in central Istanbul mentioned above were the main reason that so few Sébah photographs have survived. Guillaume Berggren is central to completing the larger picture. Even though there is no written proof, Berggren and Martin, two Swedish nationals, most probably knew each other. Martin was in Istanbul for shorter and longer periods during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the golden era of Berggren and his studio. Between 1903 and 1908, Martin had a diplomatic position at the Swedish Legation, and almost every Swede traveling to Istanbul went to Berggren's studio to have their picture taken. Many of these travellers were guests at the Swedish embassy, which Berggren photographed extensively from both the inside and outside.[706] Hence, Berggren could be the source of all the information and specific details Martin obtained about the album's story.

In the end, we can only speculate until the discovery of supporting documents. On the other hand, although the plates were destroyed, some reproductions survived, numbered by Berggren, purchased by Szilágyi, and cut and pasted by Maciet.

8.17 Where were the photographs taken?

It was probably the library in Topkapi for the project with the portable studio set-up where they photographed more than 100 artworks now found in the Szilágyi and

[706] An album of nine pictures by Berggren, Palais de la Légation de S. M. le Roi de Suéde et de Norvége à Constantinople, NEKYA90868.

Maciet albums. Since the technological level of the period required a great deal of sunlight and bulky equipment, they indeed worked with authorization. Nevertheless, the deserted palace must have offered a rather suitable environment without much pressure for this well-organized, long-term project. Moreover, Osman Hamdi Bey was based in the neighborhood, so his support and cooperation were close at hand. As mentioned above, the cooperation of Sébah and Osman Hamdi Bey began at the latest in 1873 for the Vienna Exhibition and continued on numerous occasions with the appointment of Osman Hamdi Bey as the director of the Ottoman Imperial Museum in 1881.

Judged by some of the technical characteristics, the photographs in the Szilágyi bequest must have been produced in the 1870s or 1880s.[707] In any case, they were produced no later than 1885, the year Dániel Szilágyi died. On occasions, the stamps on the photographs overlapped the boards, proving that the work of affixing the photographs to the boards was also done in the studio *El Chark*, which began its adventure absolutely after Sébah moved to 439 Grande Rue de Péra in 1868.

If we consider the collaboration with Osman Hamdi Bey, it could be a turning point for the start of this project. Around these years, until 1870, Osman Hamdi Bey worked in the archaeological excavation in Baghdad. Upon his return, he worked as a protocol officer in the foreign ministry. Therefore, it is almost certain the two men met first around 1872 for Vienna Exhibition.[708]

It is possible to narrow the period to before 1883 when Sébah suffered a brain hemorrhage that left him paralyzed until he died in 1886. His elder brother Cosmi Sébah took over the studio, partnering with the younger Polycarpe Joaillier. On the other hand, Pascal Sébah had already developed the relations with the

[707] Kardos and Szántó, "The Dániel Szilágyi Collection of Photographs," 70–75.
[708] Edhem Eldem, personel correspondence, 7 June 2021.

Ottoman court needed to pursue such a project in the sultan's library, contacts made almost certainly in the first months of 1869. After all, he joined the SFP exhibition in May 1869 with photographs "directly from the sultan's library." The taking of these photographs covers ten years, roughly around 1870 and 1880. As mentioned, Sébah opened a second branch in Cairo at the end of 1873 and remained there until his stroke, meaning we can focus on the first half of the 1870s.

All the infrastructure of the mini-studio set-up and the numbered selection points out a well-planned and long-term undertaking. From the almanac of 1881, we learn that Sébah's studio was equipped with the latest photo equipment and a penthouse for natural daylight.[709] Whereas the practical tools and solutions developed to deal with the much longer exposure times needed given the technology of the time indicate a non-professional environment rather than the studio itself. As we know, these albums formed part of the sultan's treasury, so even leaving aside the fact that it is implausible they were allowed to leave the palace, gaining entry was impossible without official permission. Nobody outside the Ottoman court and government had access to the imperial library without special permission granted (and even then in exceptional cases). Whereas the tight administration over the court library had loosened steadily toward the end of the century.

Concerning the main scope of studio photography at that period, this project was probably not meant to appeal to tourist demand. Instead, the febrile environment of the nineteenth century in Europe, where all over the wind of scientific research, museums, archives, and exhibitions was blowing, provided the drivers. It is reasonable to think of the purpose of this undertaking as part of the modern

[709] Özendes, *Sébah & Joaillier'den Foto Sabah'a*, 205.

enthusiasm. Szanto argues that Osman Hamdi Bey asked Sébah to photograph the paintings for an objective evaluation of Islamic painting:

> While the rationale behind the selection of the subjects cannot be established yet, by the time of taking the photographs, the new technology had been increasingly utilised as a scientific means of recording and investigating the visual heritage of the Ottoman Empire. (…) In 1889, the Museum, hitherto focusing on Greco-Roman antiquities, made its first tentative attempt to divest Islamic art of its still-prevailing religious functionality and re-contextualise it within a secular space by establishing the Islamic Arts Division. Since the manuscripts of the Imperial Library were scattered in various locations in the palatial complex, scarcely anyone could formulate a clear idea of their pictorial contents even among the library staff—this circumstance alone made the photographic survey a most welcome achievement. One might well suspect here Osman Hamdi, the driving force behind much of the reinvention of Turkish art in the late Ottoman period. Thus, the photographs may record the first steps toward an objective evaluation of Islamic painting.[710]

A similar motive could be a catalog of Ottoman book arts for display in the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. With the successful experience in Vienna in 1873, the Ottomans participated in Philadelphia Exposition with three main realms of display: the Turkish Pavilion, a bazaar, and a coffee house. On the subject index of national exhibits, we learn that Turkish pavilions had samples from various product categories sent from 1557 different locations. The largest group of dispatchers was private citizens with 1272 items.[711] Only three articles were displayed in the "photography" category, one remarkably by Pascal Sébah, displaying *Photographic views of Athens and the interior of the mosque of St. Sophia*.[712] This contribution would bring him a medal in 1877.

Among Ottoman products published in *The Masterpieces of the Centennial International Exhibition,* there are earth vessels, gold bracelets, Turkish green

[710] Szántó, "The Topkapi Saray albums," 750–751.
[711] *The Album of Turkish Fairs-Ottoman era*, 74.
[712] "Catalogue of the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition," 371. *The Album of Turkish Fairs*, 75.

pottery, and embroidery selected from the Turkish court.[713] Looking to the scale and organization of Ottoman participation in the 1876 Philadelphia Fair, the selection from the court albums could well have a meaningful place to complete this Orientalist aura, besides carpets, narghiles, and Angora goats.

Some documents in Ottoman archives shed light on other likely occasions for the realization of this project. Although these events took place at later periods than the photographs of *El Chark*, they give ideas about using the photograph for exhibiting in library and museum purposes.

The first document dating to 1892 informs that "the photographs of antiquities in *Müze-i Hümayun* and the printed catalog of some libraries' books were presented to be given to the clerk of *Mabeyn-i Hümayun* Kamil Bey who will attend the Lisbon Congress."[714] A second document dating to 1904 is a request of permission from the Sublime Porte "to send the catalogs of antiquities published in French by the Egypt Museum to the Müze-i Hümayun Library."[715]

As these various possibilities demonstrate, the project's photographs could easily find a place in the nineteenth-century world of fairs, exhibitions, catalogs, and museums.

8.18 Left outside the margins: the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings

As this photography project shows us, it is evident that the photographer(s) got around and touched some of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings while working on the album H.2153. Whereas from the selection that has reached us today, it seems

[713] *The Album of Turkish Fairs*, 72–73.
[714] Ottoman Archives, MF.MKT., 147 – 60.
[715] Ottoman Archives, MF.MKT., 819 – 4.

that these were not the kind of works at the project's core. It is not difficult to guess the probable reasons. These were not as courtly, delicate, or sophisticated as the *Turkestan Chinois* ink drawings but possessed an enigmatic attraction as far as provenance, artistic style, and Oriental themes are concerned. Another reason could be that they did not match the project's targets, which seem to consist mainly of ornamental elements.

Nevertheless, with a careful examination, it is possible to detect some of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings left outside the margins, since while taking the photographs, they did not aim to fit the focus image in a perfect frame. In most cases, the binding, the binding thread, the opposite page or parts of the caligraphy, miniature or drawing next to the captured one is visible in the photograph.[716]

One such picture reveals the horns of two demons in a painting in the style of Mehmed Siyah Kalem, as shown in Figure 138. In this capture, it is clear that the photographer's target was the miniature. On the other hand, at the right of the miniature, we see part of a caligraphy, along the upper side a drawing. This is the folio 112A of the album H.2153. The miniature depicts a scene from Firdawsi's *Shahnama*, the murder of Daqiqi by his slave, as marked in the inscription.[717]

Although not the focus of this capture, the demon horns of a Mehmed Siyah Kalem painting entered incidentally on the framing. Besides horns, on the left of the cat cheerfully playing, unaware of the murder, the note on the work is visible as well: "Work of Master Mehmed Siyah Kalem."[718] Apparently, these entertaining demons were not as interesting as the murder of Daqiqi by his slave. Or maybe the technique of this ink painting on ordinary paper was not the concern of this selection.

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[716] Inv. No. F2009.51, Inv. No. F2009.58.1, No. F2009.60.2, F2009.65, F2009.68.
[717] کشته شدن دقیقی به دست غلام, Daqīqī is murdered by his slave. Unpublished facsimile of the albums.
[718] کار استاد محمد سیاه قلم

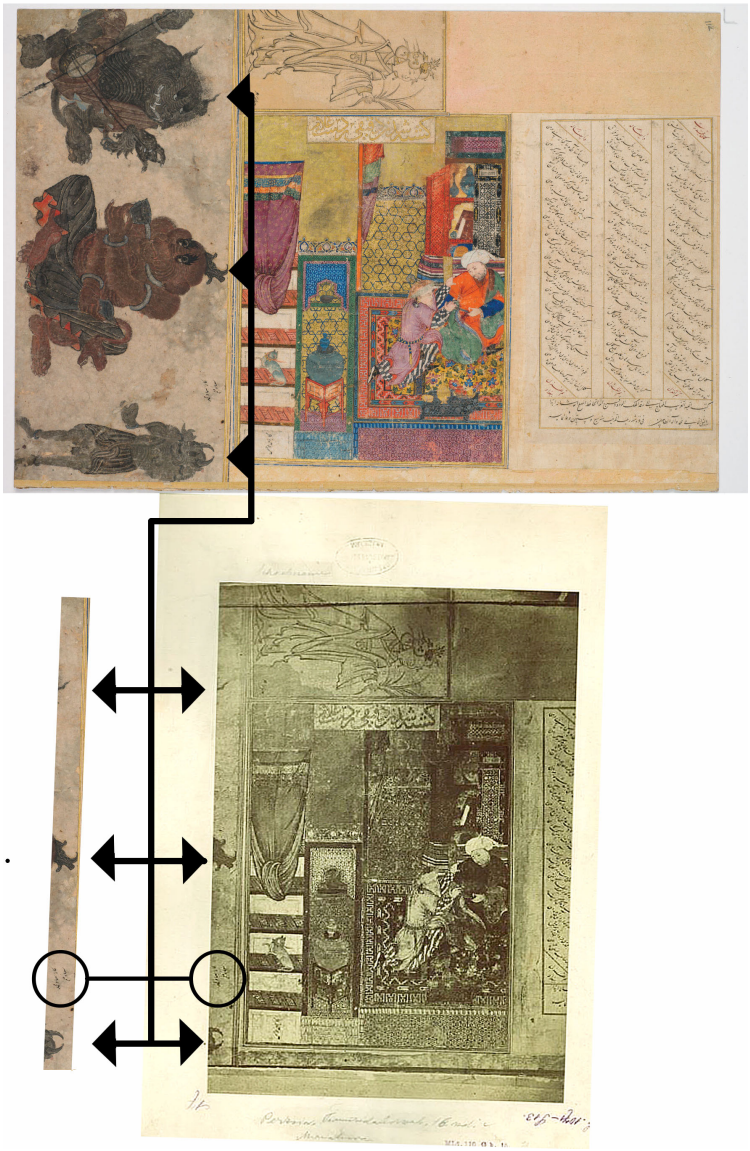

Figure 138. Above: H.2153-112A. Below: The photo of the miniature depicting The murder of Daqiqi by his slave (Ferenc Hopp Museum Szilágyi Archive F2009.66.) The note on the work "Work of Master Mehmed Siyah Kalem" and the demons' horns are visible on the left side of the photo.

In some pieces of the selection, on the other side of the folio, there were Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. For instance, they took the pictures of ink drawings in H.2153–34A,[719] which contain on the verso, in 34B, two Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. Or just beside two small ink drawings[720] on the folio H.2153-90A, one of

[719] selection number 97 and 98, F2009.58.2. (Szilágyi Archive no: 17–19).
[720] selection number 114 ve 115, Maciet 273.17.60-2 and 3.

the largest Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings covers the whole page. But they did not take it into account and took the photograph of two small ink drawings, as can be seen in Figure 139.

Figure 139. Left: H.2153-90A. Right: Maciet album 273.17 with the photos of the drawings.

8.19 Among later prints

Looking at the technical aspects of the surviving photographs, it is clear that the studio(s) continued to reproduce some of the images from the same negatives with new techniques.[721] An excellent example of multiple reproductions from the same negatives is the first folio of the very famous TSMK Bagdat 408, known as the Album of Ahmed I (r.1603–1617). Considered to be the predecessor of the kind of albums created in the seventeenth century,[722] this compilation had been one of the

[721] In some cases, the numbers appear only either one of the images, in Szilágyi prints or mostly in Maciet prints, proving multiple reproductions of the images. For example the numbers 47, 59, 92, 93, 94, 116, 117 and 123 exist only in Maciet prints, not in Szilágyi ones.

[722] Compiled by the court official Vassal Kalender for the sultan Ahmed I, the album includes calligraphies, narrative scenes, drawings, and paintings of single figures and portraits of Ottoman sultans. Kalender states that the sultan directly commissioned him to compile an album of the existing

main sources of the selection, besides H.2153 and H.2152. We can trace the photograph of the album's first page (Bagdat 408-1A) in Dániel Szilágyi's collection (F2009.46, Szilágyi Archive no: 5) and in a later silver print purchased at an auction during the twentieth century.[723] Figure 140 shows all three versions together.

The later one must date to the 1900s since silver print technology started around this date in the Ottoman photographic studios. On the back of the photograph, the stamp of Sébah & Joiallier is visible. The note "Photographes de la Cour Royale de Prusse" confirms the date since the German Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm II gave this title to Sébah & Joaillier in 1889 after they had taken beautiful photos of him and his wife during a visit to Istanbul. Hence, the existence of this photograph in Szilágyi's collection indicates the pictures were taken in 1885 at the latest and the silver reproduction not before 1889.

Figure 140. From left to right: Bagdat 408-1A; the photo in Dániel Szilágyi's collection F2009.46; and a later silver print with the stamp of Sébah and Joaillier on the verso, now in the collection of Fabrizio Cassaretto.

works in the treasury, works of previous and contemporary calligraphers and painters. Bağcı et al., *Ottoman Painting*, 232.

[723] Fabrizio Cassaretto private collection.

Among these later prints, there are at least two Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings in the three additional boards found in 2011 in the archives of the Ferenc Hopp Museum. The first one[724] depicts an encampment scene from the folio 8B of H.2153. The original is a large ink painting of 197x372 mm, with diluted black and colored ink on paper, as shown in Figure 141. The second one[725] in Figure 142 is from the folio 29A of the same album. On this middle-size ink painting on paper (169x123mm), we see two men engaged in conversation. Interestingly these boards do not belong to Dániel Szilágyi's collection. They were transferred from the Hungarian Museum of Fine Arts (Szépművészeti Múzeum) in the 1950s to the Ferenc Hopp Museum, as part of a profile improvement operation.[726]

Figure 141. Above: Encampement scene, H.2153-8B. Below: the photo of the painting in additional boards found in 2011 among the archives of the Ferenc Hopp Museum, F2012.4

[724] F2012.4.
[725] F2012.5.
[726] Personal correspondence with Tatjána Kardos, librarian of Ferenc Hopp Museum, June 2019.

Figure 142. Left: H.2153-29A. Right: the photo of the painting in the additional boards found in 2011 in the archives of Ferenc Hopp Museum, F2012.5.

Furthermore, they are not contact prints like the others in the Szilágyi's bequest. Rather, they must have been printed after the death of Szilágyi, as they were celloidin prints.[727]

Although these are later prints, they show strong evidence of the same methods and facilities as the others, such as the attempt to fix the folio on a stable

[727] Celluloid originated in 1856, when Alexander Parkes created Parkesine, generally considered the first thermoplastic. Celluloid was easily molded and shaped. The main use was in movie and photography film industries, which used only celluloid film stock prior to the adoption of acetate safety film in the 1950s. Celluloid is highly flammable, difficult and expensive to produce and no longer widely used. (*Wikipedia*)
Collodion silver print (celloidin, aristotype), 1880-ca 1930, silver in collodion on paper: Photographic paper coated with an emulsion of silver halogens in collodion (nitrocellulose). Between the emulsion and the paper support is a baryta layer containing barium sulphate which keeps the image from sinking into the paper fibres and lends the picture its whiteness and surface texture. The paper is exposed in daylight in contact with a negative until the picture appears (printing-out). It can then be fixed, toned, and washed. Collodion silver prints have a thin paper support and usually a glossy, smooth surface. A paper with additional starch was introduced in the 1890s. This paper gave a matte surface. Without toning, the picture ranges from reddish brown to neutral, with gold toning the tone is cooler. If viewed in fluorescent light (such as a light tube) a colour spectrum is clearly seen in the surface, and tiny scratches in the emulsion may appear in magnification. Celloidin and Aristotype were originally brand names, but is often used to designate collodion silver prints. (*Written in light*, Stockholm Moderna Museet)

position with the help of ropes. Since the celloidin print technique began to be used widely after the 1900s, these were apparently later produced from the same set of negatives of *El Chark*, probably in the early twentieth century.

The circulation of such multiple prints reproduced with evolving photographic techniques is, in a sense, evidence of the period's Oriental taste. These two photographs show that the images of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings were taken at least before 1885 from the Ottoman court albums and were in circulation after this time.

Demand for them seems to have intensified after the turn of the century, first as photographic images and, following the widespread recognition in the realm of applied arts, as an original folio.

8.20 The second vector of mobility: The looting of Yıldız Palace

The second vector of mobility concerning the courtly book arts was a harsher mobility in so far as they became subjects of theft, indeed outright looting. The dual process, the commodification of the image per se through its photographing and the propagation of Oriental taste, resulted in turn in the commodification of the originals. The album folios—or even each artwork in a folio—which the sultan and his court would contemplate at leisure in the private court library first became images circulating as photographs within nineteenth-century Orientalist realms. The logic of the album contemplation, as a bound compilation of various works of caligraphy, drawings, and miniatures, was no longer operable in the new *habitus* since the public display was not possible. What it was now the folio itself that was convenient, given it could be hung on a wall with its framework, purchased in auctions, or displayed in

museums. Hence, after its image, the folio itself was commodified through the looting of the court library and subsequent art smuggling.

In these respects, a severe transformation in lifestyles is apparent, compared to previous centuries. For this second vector of mobility, a crucial event was the move of the imperial court from Dolmabahce to Yıldız in April 1877. Although the court library stayed in Topkapi during the move to Dolmabahce, this was not the case concerning when the court moved to Yıldız Palace. Nevertheless, as discussed earlier for Dolmabahce, neither the move nor the settling took place overnight. Instead, it was a gradual process, whereby the ties with former living places like Dolmabahce or Topkapi palaces were retained to a greater or lesser extent. Furthermore, the architectural structure of Yıldız Palace must have contributed to the blurred multi-centrality since, as mentioned above, the palace compound consisted of several mansions and pavilions scattered in the wooded area.

In the light of available documents, there has been no indication about the exact date the albums were transferred from Topkapi to Yıldız. Still, they were certainly transferred and kept in Yıldız since, like many others, the albums H.2153 and H.2160 were rebound in red velvet, almost a signature of the binding studio of the Yıldız Palace Library, known as the Zülveçheyn Kütüphane-i Hümayunu. Moreover, the script on the red velvet binding of the H.2153 reads: *"Abdulhamid Han bin Abdulmecid Han* (…)[728] *Kütüphane-i Hümayunu*" and on the back of the red binding "*Hazine-i Hümayundan* (…)."[729] As for the album H.2160, on the red binding, one reads the script "*Hazine-i Hümayundan nevrut asardandır*," meaning "one of the works found in the imperial treasury." On the verso of the red binding, the seal of Abdulhamid is visible small, on the right: "*Abdulhamid Han bin*

[728] Not clear.
[729] Not clear.

Abdulmecid el Muzaffer Daima el Gazi." Below, in sülus script, the name of the library was marked: "*Zülveçheyn Kütüphane-i Hümayunu*." Zülveçheyn—meaning "double-faced"—refers to the imperial library in Yıldız Palace.[730]

Five documents from the Ottoman archives demonstrate that they had engaged in binding work for the books in Zülveçheyn Library over a one-year period, expanding from June 1894 to April 1895. These are all about the expenses of binding various books paid from the Treasury to a certain Kitapçı Karabet Aga, the name of the binding master, in June 1894,[731] September 1894,[732] November 1894,[733] January 1895,[734] and April 1895.[735] Among the books and manuscripts bound by the Karabet Aga could well be the albums H.2153 and H.2160.

8.21 The Zülveçheyn Library

How were the conditions of the courtly library in Yıldız, where the albums had been kept? The palace compound consisted in three key parts: the palace and its connected buildings, the Cihannuma Kiosk in the inner garden, and the outer garden. The valuable collections of the private library of Abdulhamid were in the pavilions in the outer garden. Zülveçheyn Kütüphane-i Hümayunu was the largest of the palace libraries, and it had a particular building. It included publications in diverse languages about the Ottoman Empire and extensive holdings of manuscripts. It was managed by a head librarian (*başhafız-ı kütüb*) and around 30 assistants.[736]

[730] I am indebted to Prof. Hüseyin Gündüz for the reading of scripts.
[731] HH.İ., 93 – 6.
[732] HH.İ., 94 – 14.
[733] HH.İ., 95 – 51.
[734] HH.İ., 96 – 30.
[735] HH.İ., 97 – 40.
[736] Atasoy, "The Yıldız Palace Library," 20.

The earliest document available in the Ottoman archives citing the Zülveçheyn Library dates to 1881. It is about the birth of Tevfik Efendi, the son of Omer Aga, one of the guards of Zülveçheyn Library.[737] There are many other documents dating to following years about Zülveçheyn Library guards. It seems that to be a guard in the court library could be a long-term job, which probably required a certain trust since Omer Aga had worked until 1904 in this position. After working at least 23 years as a guard in the Zülveçheyn Library, Omer Aga was appointed "the second harbinger," as the archival document indicates.[738]

Nevertheless, even after moving to Yıldız Palace in 1877, instead of housing just one library, the court had several collections of books dispersed in various buildings. There had probably not been a strict categorical partition of books among the libraries. Besides the bought and gifted books in the Yıldız library, some were commissioned or transferred from the Topkapi Palace Library. Interestingly, some works that consist of two volumes have one volume in the Topkapi Palace Library, the other in Yıldız Library.[739]

Besides the difficulties of adaptation to the new institutions, the scattered structure of libraries must have been a prominent factor obstructing the exercise of control and power over the state treasures. Archival documents about research applications submitted to the Ottoman court libraries help to illustrate the situation. It seems that European Orientalists took a particular interest in the Topkapi Palace libraries, even in the heyday of the Yıldız Palace Library. One research application involving the renowned Orientalist Arminius Vámbéry illustrates the general process

[737] DH.SAİDd., 160 – 5.
[738] İ..EV., 36 – 42.
[739] Atasoy, "The Yıldız Palace Library," 22.

of applying and getting permission to borrow manuscripts for research purposes and the method of return.

After Vámbéry paid a visit to the sultan, the latter granted permission in February 1889 for members of the Hungarian Science Academy to conduct research in the imperial libraries.[740] In September of the same year, Vámbéry presided over the research visit of a delegation from Pest University to the imperial libraries.[741] Although the research visit included more than one library, we can not be sure if the delegation visited both the Yıldız and Topkapi libraries. In a document dating to July 1890, we learn that Vámbéry returned the book he had taken from the Enderun Library in Topkapi.[742]

As the archival documents tell us, the Topkapi libraries continued to be actively used for research purposes, parallel to those of Yıldız until almost the end of Abdulhamid's reign. According to a document dating to January 1908, Russian, German, and Hungarian delegations of researchers applied to examine and take photographs of some valuable manuscripts in Topkapi Palace libraries. It also tells us that once again, the head of the Hungarian delegation, Monsieur Vámbéry, had returned a Latin manuscript he had previously borrowed.[743]

Looking at these documents, one must envisage the three palaces as one court, having blurred boundaries in time and place. On the other hand, every item stayed in the temporal and spatial realm of the lifestyle it belonged to, such as the albums in Topkapi, the fabric house catalogs in Dolmabahce, and the photo albums in Yıldız.

[740] HR.SYS., 185 – 9.
[741] Y..PRK.BŞK., 16 – 69.
[742] Y..PRK.HH., 23 – 10.
[743] TS.MA.e, 702 – 30.

A revival of interest toward the turn of the century would see these outdated albums taken to Yıldız, where they would be embellished with new bindings in order to be put into a modern library. Losing their customary meaning and function, the album folios would become “rootless vagabonds.” Like the proverbial "canary in the coalmine," these orphan artworks seem to foretell the death of the old lifestyle and the birth of the new one as they moved through the murky world of art dealing into the private collections and museums within the European centers of Orientalism.

8.22 Cases of theft from Istanbul libraries

Although the sultan was the supreme authority in approving applications to conduct research in court libraries, numerous persons were involved in the libraries’ maintenance and administration, such as the binders, librarians, assistants, and guards. The system must have had significant security flaws since many folios now scattered in world collections.

One of the earliest cases of theft worth mentioning is connected to the Prussian diplomat and Orientalist Heinrich Friedrich von Diez (1751–1817). He acquired an amount equivalent to five albums between 1784 and 1790 during his posting as Prussian envoy at the Ottoman Sublime Porte in Constantinople. The five albums Diez A fols. 70–74 are now among the most precious objects in the holdings of the Oriental Department of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin. The lion’s share of material in the five Diez albums was culled from three albums from the Topkapi Palace Library: H. 2152, B.411, and H.2153. [744]

Diez was supplied with entire folios from the Topkapi Palace album B. 411, which were eventually incorporated into his A fol. 74. Someone with privileged

[744] Gonnella et al., “Introduction,” *The Diez Albums. Context and Contents*.

access (most likely a eunuch) must have removed these folios. It seems highly likely that the eunuch adopted a similar approach to removing items from H. 2152 and H. 2153. This would explain why the pages in the surviving pictorial section of H. 2152 have relatively few missing drawings or paintings. Rather than lifting single items from a page, the eunuch removed not only complete folios but possibly whole sections.[745]

We can tell from the documents in the Ottoman archives that research applications in both court and public libraries intensified toward the end of the century. The resources of the imperial past constantly drew the interest of European experts who asked to visit it and carry out research there. Yet, not all of these persons were driven by the same intentions. Some searched for antique and medieval European source material, which might be relevant to the researcher's specific national past. Some others were looking for traces linked to the Byzantine past of Istanbul. Others still were Arabists or Turkologists whose attention focused on historical and philological manuscripts.

In the last quarter of the century, it seems that Ottoman authorities were sensitive to the removal of books and manuscripts from the public libraries. They must have felt the demand since there is an apparent effort to supervise and maintain accurate records of library holdings. A document dated October 1873 refers to the prohibition against removing books from the public libraries.[746] Another document dated October 1874 explains the reasons for this prohibition: even though books were never supposed to leave the library premises, some had been lost. In those cases, the librarian was personally billed for the cost of replacing the lost

[745] Raby, "Contents & Contexts: Re-viewing the Diez Albums," 32.
[746] MF.MKT., 14 – 60.

manuscript.[747] These were, of course, rules concerning books in the public libraries. For the court libraries, different conditions applied, especially around the conservation of the books. For example, the manuscripts were sent to experts to maintain the folios or caligraphies.[748]

In November 1881, Derviş Salih Efendi was appointed as the Istanbul libraries inspector. After he took the position, there was an attempt to prepare a catalog of books in the holdings, including titles and quantities.[749] A document from July 1882 cites the necessary measures to manage and control the libraries in Istanbul.[750] A document dating to May 1893 listed the books in the imperial library, including those that arrived in the previous two days.[751] The intention to classify, maintain, and take control of books in public and court libraries is apparent in various documents. Nevertheless, these precautions remained superficial since it was a problem adapting to the new system with all its modern institutions.

As dusk started to fall on the Ottoman era, the sultan doubled down on his attempts to retain control over the items in his court and thieves became ever more ardent and daring. The struggle really concerned who would end up with the lion's share of the loot when the end came. The audacity of the looter vis-à-vis Ottoman authority largely reflected if not a definitive prediction then at least a clear sense that night was falling on the heirs of Osman. At the turn of the century, the Ottoman archives tell of many cases in which all sorts of actors, using various "creative" ways, pilfered manuscripts' folios from Istanbul libraries. For example, in February 1884, we are told of a Jewish merchant caught in Galata while trying to send a

[747] MF.MKT., 20 – 154.
[748] MF.MKT., 33 – 32.
[749] MB.İ., 84 – 102.
[750] ŞD., 209 – 9.
[751] Y..PRK.SGE., 5 – 35.

manuscript stolen from the Hagia Sophia Library to Marseille.[752] In April 1884, the assistant inspector of libraries, Salih Efendi, was prosecuted for stealing manuscripts from libraries and selling them on to foreigners.[753] Then, in September 1885, we learn of precious manuscripts stolen from mosques and libraries of Istanbul and sold to European antiquarians.[754]

8.23 The thief masquerading as a diplomat: Fredrik Robert Martin (1868–1933)

One of the most prominent figures of the looting during the first decade of the twentieth century was Fredrik Robert Martin**,** the aforementioned Swedish art historian, collector, and diplomat who took advantage of his posting to the Swedish Embassy in Istanbul to collect manuscripts from the Hagia Sophia and Yıldız Palace libraries. He dismembered and dispersed the manuscripts by selling their folios individually to European collectors. For his transgressions, Martin has been harshly criticized by today's art historians: "Fredrik Robert Martin prowled around the Topkapi Saray with his penknife and portfolio like some latter-day Burke or Hare, seeking codices rather than corpses to dismember and with his capacious diplomatic bag conveniently at hand."[755]

How did Martin become the thief behind the circulation of these orphaned folios from the Ottoman court library? Born in 1868 into a bourgeois family in Stockholm, Martin was a registered student at Uppsala University in 1887. We encounter his name as an assistant to the board at the Eighth Orientalist Congress held in Stockholm and Kristiania in 1889. Between 1890 and 1902, he worked as an

[752] MF.MKT, 82 – 112.
[753] ŞD., 2479 – 28.
[754] MV., 5 – 6.
[755] Hillenbrand, "Western Scholarship on Persian painting before 1914: Collectors, exhibitions and Franco-German rivalry," 209.

assistant at Stockholm's Statens Historiska Museum (Swedish Historical Museum). He received his Ph.D. from the University of Vienna in 1901. Although his dissertation title has not been definitively determined, it is either *Figurale Persische Stoffe aus dem Zeitraum 1500–1650* or *Thüren aus Turkestan*.[756]

Focusing his attention on Islamic art, Martin traveled widely and collected artifacts in Siberia, Russia, Caucasia, Central Asia, Egypt, and Turkey, beginning from 1891, shortly after working in the Swedish Historical Museum. The Swedish government financed all of his voyages. It is possible to track Martin's journeys from the letters he wrote to the Director-General of the Central Board of National Antiquities in Sweden, Hans Hildebrandt, a legend in the Swedish museum field: Siberia (in 1891–92), European Russia, the Caucuses, and Central Asia, including St. Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa, Kertsch, and Tiblis (1894–95), and, finally, Cairo and Constantinople (1895–96). Then, between 1898 and 1902, he again visited Turkey and Russia, searching for Swedish cultural heritage and traces of King Charles XII and the Vikings (Väringar/Varjager).[757]

In the Prefatory Note of his monograph, Martin states that he "began to collect material when at Bukhara in 1894."[758] His collection of Central Asian manuscripts in Turkic, Persian, and Arabic languages includes a total of 412 items he acquired during his journeys in 1894–95. Contrary to most of the Orientalists of his time, he knew none of the languages important to the study of Islamic art, at least in the initial period. Inspecting Martin's collection at Uppsala University, Swedish Turkologist Gunnar Jarring noted that the collection contains not less than 30 copies of one text, namely *Sufi Alhajar*. According to Jarring, their binding and calligraphy

[756] Persian figurative fabrics from the period 1500–1650 or Doors from Turkestan.
[757] Personal correspondence with Ulla-Karin Warberg, curator at Nordiska Museet (Nordic Museum), Stockholm, August 2020.
[758] Martin, *The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India and Turkey*, vol.1, vii.

probably attracted Martin.[759]

Martin states that he first time visited Istanbul in 1896. As the previously cited archival documents indicate, a mature looting network was well-established in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It seems that on his very first visit, Martin fell into (or deliberately sought out) this favorable environment for trade:

This manuscript was offered to me on my first visit to Constantinople in 1896. I offered 200 pound [*sic*] for it, which the owner refused. A few months afterwards he sold it to the British Museum for about a quarter of the price I offered for it. Such are the Orientals.[760]

According to Swedish researchers, the period in Istanbul is a relatively unexplained part of Martin's life. How was he able to acquire the folios from various albums in the Ottoman imperial libraries? The answer is partially in the Ottoman archives, which contain convincing documents about the mechanisms by which Martin acquired the album materials. Moreover, these documents overlap with Martin's accounts and official reports in the Swedish archives.

In the first group of documents dating between 4–14 September 1898, we find his name as "Mösyö Martin," a Swedish researcher after traces of the Swedish King Charles XII, who once sojourned in the Thracian seaside towns of Dedeağaç (present-day Alexandroupoli) and Dimetoka (Didymoteicho), both of which are now in Greece. Martin asks permission from Ottoman authorities to take photographs in these areas and research the libraries about the king. In addition, there are five

[759] Personel correspondence with Håkan Wahlquist, keeper of the Sven Hedin Foundation in the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, formerly Sr. Curator Asian Collections in the Museum of Ethnography, Stockholm, March 2019.
[760] Martin, *The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India and Turkey*, vol.1, 140, fn. 52. Discussing Bukhara School in p.54: "The British Museum possesses a rich manuscript of the Gulistan of Sa'di with twelve miniatures copied after Bihzad. It was executed in Bukhara, A.H. 975 (A.D. 1567)"

documents of internal correspondence concerning official procedures.[761]

What traces of Charles XII could there be in Ottoman archives? Certainly, in the eighteenth century, Sweden and the Ottoman Empire had common enemies in the Russians and the Habsburgs. Whether or not it was the true purpose of Martin's expedition, looking for traces of the Swedish king was a clever pretext since the latter had withdrawn to Bender (in present-day Moldova) in the Ottoman Empire after his loss to Tsar Peter of Russia at the Battle of Poltava in July 1709. Charles XII stayed in Bender until 1713, and he borrowed a considerable amount of money from the Ottoman sultan. Much later, the Ottoman Empire sent envoys to recoup this money from Sweden. There are paintings of the Swedish court painter Schroeder in the Pera Museum depicting one of these envoys.[762]

Nevertheless, during the late nineteenth century in Sweden, there was an awakened interest around King Charles XII and his era. Coinciding with the rise of interest in Oriental book arts, Martin was sent to look for traces and hopefully objects connected to Sweden and the royal family. From 1898 to 1902, the Swedish Ministry of Culture financed Martin's travels to Russia and Istanbul.

The second group of documents dating between 8 November-
8 December 1900 justifies this attempt. In these documents, he is referred to not only as "Mösyö Martin," but "Doktor Mösyö Martin," an officer of the Stockholm National Library, or in some parts, the Royal Library.[763] Accordingly, these documents reflect official procedures to acquire permission to research on the subject

[761] I.HR. 360 – 9. HR.TH.216 – 98. BEO 1190-89242. DH.MKT. 2106-1.
DH.MKT. 2106-2.
[762] Personal correspondence with Ulla-Karin Warberg August 2020.
[763] "All the Swedish national cultural heritage institutions were connected during Martin's era. All the institutions were interested in finding Swedish objects, archive material, or other connections that belonged to the Swedish superpower era 1650–1700." Personal correspondence with Ulla-Karin Warberg, August 2020.

of Charles XII.[764] The late nineteenth century was a time of nation-building throughout Europe, in which new institutions of science and arts were developing to feed national narratives. Sweden was no exception, and national museums, the national library, and the Central Board of National Antiquities were essential components. The documents confirm that Martin was traveling on official business since the permission for the research was sought by the embassy.[765]

The answer of the Ottoman authorities to this demand from the Swedish diplomatic mission demonstrates the efforts to retain control over the imperial treasures. Although permitting Martin to visit Istanbul libraries and Treasury archives, the Ministry of Interior added a confidential warning below the permission document addressing the authorities in Edirne to keep him under surveillance.[766] Another document, from three weeks later, on December 8, 1900, notifies authorities not to allow him to carry out excavations during his investigation in Dimetoka and do whatever necessary to ensure that none of the stoneworks at the site were disturbed.[767]

Martin comes returned for a third visit the next summer. In August 1901, as an officer of the Stockholm Museum, he sought permission to research Swedish history in the Treasury archives.[768] The following month, he seems to have abandoned his study of Swedish history since his petition names Islamic helmets and horse equipments as the primary research focus. Two documents are dating to September 12 and 16, 1901, according to which he came to the military storehouse and took photos of Islamic helmets and horse equipments from the time of Timur.[769]

[764] I..HUS._85-56. BEO_1579-11842. I..HUS._85-80. DH.MKT._2429-66. DH.MKT._2436-10.
[765] I..HUS._85-56.
[766] DH.MKT._2429-66.
[767] DH.MKT._2436-10.
[768] Y..PRK.TSF._6-55.
[769] Y..PRK.ASK._174-59. Y..PRK.ASK._174-78.

The official support continues since he was accompanied by a certain Ali Efendi, one of the guards of the Swedish Legacy.[770] The report of the Ottoman authorities is a detailed one noting the hours of coming and leaving, from 6 to 8.30, and how many helmets and horse equipments Martin photographed.[771]

The Swedish archives point out more or less the same facts as the Ottoman ones. In his report of 1901 addressing the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History, and Antiquities, Martin noted that he failed to get access to the Ottoman archives in the so-called *Old Seraglio*, old palace, another name for the Topkapi Palace.[772] Instead, he visited all the libraries he was allowed into in order to take photos of old maps and other materials, including Hagia Sofia, Topkapi, and the Dervish Library.[773] In addition, he visited the Treasury at Topkapi and the collection of old weapons in the Hagia Irene. He took hundreds of photos of the objects in the exhibit in the armories.[774]

Martin's shift from studying Swedish history to Islamic artifacts in 1901 seems a turning point in his interest in art smuggling from the Ottoman court libraries, probably after discovering the book art treasuries. Among the treasures Martin contemplated in the imperial libraries was most probably the album H.2153, transferred from Topkapi and bounded with red velvet in the Zülveçheyn Library at Yıldız Palace. The art of the Turkestan Chinois, as Jules Maciet labeled it, which so attracted the attention of other European connoisseurs of the period, Martin found "splendid" as well, as he notes in a 1912 book:

I was shown twelve years ago in the private library of Sultan 'Abdul Hamid

[770] Y..PRK.ASK._174-78-1.
[771] Y..PRK.ASK._174-78-2.
[772] Martin, "Kort redogörelse för forskningar efter svenska minnen I främmande land åren 1900–1901," Personal correspondence with Ulla-Karin Warberg, August 2020.
[773] Most probably in Konya.
[774] Martin, "Kort redogörelse för forskningar efter svenska minnen I främmande land åren 1900–1901," Personal correspondence with Ulla-Karin Warberg, August 2020.

> at the Yildiz Kiosk a most splendid album with miniatures in Chinese style and decorative pages of finer and rarer style than any I had before seen. Is it still in safe custody there?[775]

Working back "twelve years" tells us he was shown the album in 1900. What he saw in the private library of Sultan Abdulhamid and the convenient environment must have encouraged him to plan a much longer stint in Istanbul. Following his shorter visits, Martin returned in June 1903, first as an *attaché* at the Swedish Legacy in Istanbul and then, in June the next year, for an extended stay working as a dragoman at the embassy, a position he held until June 1908. While planning this longer sojourn, he was already a determined thief, with concrete goals like stealing a Bellini:

> When I was appointed attaché at the Swedish Legation at Constantinople one of my friends asked me, 'How long will you stay there?' I answered, 'Till I get a Bellini.'[776]

Martin refers numerous times to the Bellini Album in his book, so named because Gentile Bellini was believed to have been the artist of one of its paintings. David Roxburgh argues that Martin's "scattered descriptions in fact refer to items in several different albums, now in Istanbul's Topkapi Palace Library," such as the H.2153, known as Yakub Bey album and H.2154, known as Bahram Mirza album.[777]

Eventhough Martin's descriptions refer to items in several different albums, there are exact descriptions surpassing beyond the limits of his imagination. *Appendix-A "Portrait of a Dervish" as evidence of theft from the Bellini album* investigates photographic evidences to clarify what Roxburgh thinks as Martin's "intriguing inconsistencies."

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[775] Martin, *The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India and Turkey*, 60.
[776] David J. Roxburgh, "Disorderly conduct? F.R. Martin and the Bahram Mirza Album," 48.
[777] Roxburgh, "Disorderly conduct?," 32.

The last document about Martin in the Ottoman archives dates to August 31, 1906, when he was working as a dragoman at the Swedish Legation. The document confirms his position as "İsveç maslahatgüzarı Mösyö Martin" or the "Swedish ambassador's deputy Monsieur Martin."[778]

According to Martin's report of 1901, the Ottoman officials that he and later Count Stenbock —by that time head of the Swedish Legation—were in contact with were the Master of Ceremonies Ibrahim Bey and the General Secretary of the Foreign Affairs Ministry Nouri Bey.[779]

Although there had been attempts and measures to protect the treasuries at the ministerial level, and while the internal correspondence among Ottoman authorities gives the impression of a strict procedure for entering the imperial libraries, they were insufficient to prevent the theft of many courtly album folios. Moreover, new institutions required new mechanisms to adapt to the system's transformation. With these changes and new mechanisms, the court lost its authority and governance over its own treasuries.

The system was new, but the artistic inheritance was very much from an older time and set up to meet very different demands. The court library was meant for the imperial family and its immediate network, not for researchers. The albums were meant to be looked at by the court, not to be photographed or publically exhibited.

Abdulhamid's reign is known as one of the most autocratic periods of Ottoman history, associated with strict censorship and state surveillance. Yet, the

[778] Y..PRK.TSF._8-11.
[779] Martin, "Kort redogörelse för forskningar efter svenska minnen I främmande land åren 1900–1901," Personal correspondence with Ulla-Karin Warberg, August 2020.

same sultan could not even exercise sufficient power to protect the household treasures under his own roof.

Ultimately, the fault lay with the lack of effective governance in the transition between the two systems. During this period, there was no failsafe mechanism to control all the traffic into the libraries brought about by the nineteenth-century interest in Ottoman art and history. The result was various security flaws, which gave opportunities to profit to unscrupulous people, like Martin, who even managed to pilfer sixteenth-century masterpieces:

The Turks mention with pride an artist, Haidar Bey, who is said to have painted the portrait of Salim the Great. I have two signed specimens of this master's work, obtained from the Imperial library in Constantinople.[780]

8.23.1 The peak of Martin's career as an art smuggler

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Fredrik Robert Martin was regarded as one of the leading Orientalists at the European museum field. He reached the peak of his career in the first decade of the twentieth century. He first published *A History of the Oriental Carpets before 1800* (Vienna, 1906–8). Several of the carpets published in the book belonged or had once belonged to him. In 1909, Martin was appointed curator for the Munich 1910 exhibition, *Meisterwerke Muhammadanischer Kunst*, which opened the century's ground for the field of Islamic art.

Although he resigned from this position before the opening of the exhibition, he collected many items during this period, where the authorities themselves were involved as active actors in the looting:

[780] Martin, *The Miniature Painting and Painters*, 93.

In 1911 a Turkish Prince entrusted a small manuscript to me that had charming borders of a very lovely and delicate tone. I showed it to the greatest connoisseurs in Paris, and they all agreed that it was a masterpiece of taste, but as not one of them would give more than half the sum demanded by the owner, I was obliged to buy it myself.[781]

As both the Ottoman and Swedish archives reveal, Martin obtained official support in his research. Like many others in his position, he was a collector and dealer. According to Warberg, the objects he acquired and sold in national and international museums have very weak provenances. However, his reputation is sufficient to suspect that he bought some of these objects under extraordinary circumstances.[782]

Fredrik Robert Martin stayed in Istanbul long after meeting his stated aim presented in his letter, till he gets a Bellini… One of these folios, now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York (MMA, also known as "the Met"), exposes a detail containing all the elements of mobility, ironically evoking how the sultan lost its sovereignty and authority. The seal, the supreme symbol of the sultan's authority, was detached from the center of the folio after it was photographed. If we view this together with the broken seal of the Yıldız Palace library door in 1910 mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the Ottoman sultan of the nineteenth century, along with this dual mobility of photography and theft, lost his authority and the symbol of his authority, the seal.

The seal which was the symbol of the sovereign's authority once upon a time, had gradually become a piece of artwork that could be photographed and then detached and stolen from the center of an album folio. *Appendix-B Lost authority, lost seal* reveals in detail the story of the stolen seal from the Bellini album.

[781] Martin, *The Miniature Painting and Painters*, 107.
[782] Personal correspondence with Ulla-Karin Warberg, August 2020.

8.24 The looting of Yıldız Palace

Until as late as 1889, even the Ottoman Imperial Museum did not regard Islamic art as a legitimate branch of collectibles. Ottoman awareness of the paintings dwindled after the seventeenth century, and it remained peripheral throughout the eighteenth.[783] Thus, those belonging to the lifestyle of the Vieux Sérail remained there in terms of place and time. They became subject to an artificial revival of interest in response to the demands of Orientalist Europe in the late nineteenth century. At the turn of the twentieth century, the court library had already lost its original function and gradually completed its evolution to a new cycle. During this transition from one system to another, manuscripts, folios, and artworks were subject to two vectors of mobility —namely, as photographed image and as commodified artwork.

After Martin left his diplomatic mission in Istanbul in June 1908, the situation got worse, or maybe foreseeing that the situation would worsen, he left. The peak for these events was the looting of Yıldız Palace after the "31st March Incident," when the forces of the Committee of Union and Progress took control of the government in Istanbul on March 31, 1325 Hijri (April 13, 1909). According to the documents in the Ottoman archives, Cambridge University professor of Greek and Latin literature Stephen Gaselee (1882–1943) was the last European researcher in Istanbul libraries. Unaware of the events about to occur in the leadup to the sultan's overthrow, Gaselee applied to visit Topkapi Palace Library and received permission on April 10, 1909.[784]

The new government liquidated the official residence and the seat of the sultan, Yıldız Palace, and all its connected mansions and kiosks, including the

[783] Szántó, "The Topkapi Saray Albums and some early photographs in Budapest," 747.
[784] İ..HUS., 174 – 59.

imperial library. On April 27, 1909, the Ottoman parliament removed Sultan Abdulhamid from the throne, and he was sent into exile. Prince Mehmed Resad Efendi (r.1909–1918) assumed the throne. Soldiers looted part of the imperial library, and the rest was liquidated. The target of the looting was not books and manuscripts but rather gold, silver, and precious jewelry. As a result of the looting, the gaps open in the old institutions of a decaying system were calcified. The ongoing liquidation in the Yıldız Palace was political, targeting all that belonged to the imperial system, including its institutions and lifestyle.

Thus, the looting of Yıldız Palace symbolized the end of the Abdulhamid era. The period for Topkapi Palace had already been closed, as exposed at the beginning of this chapter. Now, even further, the library of Topkapi Palace became a meeting hall. In his article "Stroll in the Old Palace," published about eight months after the 31st March Incident, the Russian writer Nejdanov recounts his observations of the library in highly literary language. He states that the rich library of the palace proved the sultans' close interest in the cultural matters of the state. The newest book here was about 200–300 years old. It contained 24,000 volumes. In the library, Nejdanov noted, was also a room where the sultan studied political matters. Nejdanov finishes his article expressing hope for the future:

> The Old Palace is a very valuable historical artifact. In its archive, a commission established at the initiative of Mehmed V works on Ottoman history. They generally gather in the sultan‘s library. This great job, in which Turkey's most enlightened people are energetically undertaking, will not last less than ten years.[785]

[785] Nejdanov, "Progulka Po Staromu Sarayu," Stambulskie Novosti, no:1 (1 January 1910), 5–9. Perinçek and Odabaşı, *Stambulskie Novosti'de Jön Türk Devrimi*, 389–390. As Nejdanov estimated "the great job" lasted more than ten years. Following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1924, the Topkapi Palace became a museum. The books dispersed in the various buildings of the palace were collected in one place, the Agalar Mosque. As for the Yıldız photograph albums they were entrusted to Istanbul University's library of the young republic in the same year. The Topkapı Palace Museum Library was opened in 1928, following the completion of the Agalar Mosque's restoration.

Those gathering in the sultan's library were the committee members appointed for the organization and transfer of the books from the imperial libraries in Yıldız back to Topkapi. The records of the commission established in Yıldız Palace to transfer books and manuscripts can be found in the Ottoman archives. The commission registered the material in the imperial library by subject classification. The registries date is October 12, 1911. According to these records, there are 20,535 volumes of manuscripts and printed books in Yıldız Library. In a document dating to July 30, 1911, a higher number was given since more than 5,000 volumes were not cataloged. According to an article from 1912, the exact number of books and manuscripts exceeds 30,000.[786]

8.25 Hints from the "Kodak Galaxy"

Notwithstanding the discussion through this chapter, we still cannot be sure, based on the available documents alone who made the selection from the courtly libraries, who took these photographs (and when and where), who wrote the numbers on the plates, and, lastly, who took the folios from the albums. However, one thing is sure: If we compare the photographs to the originals kept in the Topkapi Palace Museum Library today, there are apparent differences. In other words, one vector of mobility (of images through photography) sheds some light on the other (the mobility of the originals).

Mainly concentrating on the album H.2153, where most of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings were found pasted, these differences occur mainly on three subjects. First, today, album H.2153 is kept in the Topkapi Palace Museum Library in separate folios, not as a bound album. Nevertheless, as the red velvet

[786] Çavdar, "Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Kadar Osmanlı Kütüphanelerinin Gelişimi," 71–72.

inscription "*Abdulhamid Han Kütüphane-i Hümayunu*" tells us, it was bound during Abdulhamid II's reign (1876–1909). Looking at the photographs of folios from H.2153, we see most are separate folios stabilized by using clippers. So, it must have been disbanded within a short period of time, at most three decades. On the other hand, its sibling, the album H.2160, which was not included in the photography project, has remained bound and with not that many blank folios.

Secondly, at least some folios changed place after the capture of photographs. For example, looking at the photograph of the folio H.2153–49A in the Szilágyi archive F2009.58.1, we see that it was still attached to folio 48. However, on folio 48B, opposite to 49A, there is a different folio compared to the current ordering of the album: 51B. In other words, after being photographed, folio 48 was detached from folio 49 and placed in folio 51 (or vice versa). Moreover, on folio 49B on the verso, there are leftovers of detached paper, either a painting or calligraphy.

Nevertheless, the photographs reveal small surprises about these empty places. For example, the photograph F2009.51 in the Szilágyi archive shows folio 57A of album H. 2152 in the Topkapi Palace Museum Library. The same image also exists in the Maciet albums (273.17.76-1), from where Gaston Migeon published a detail. The "slight" difference today is that there is a missing drawing on the bottom left. Hence thirdly, the comparison between two mobilities offers us a chance to spot the missing parts and how they looked before and after. Please refer to Figure 143 to see the differences.

Figure 143. From left to right: H. 2152-57A as found today; The photograph of the folio in Szilágyi archive (F2009.51) and a detail of the folio published by Migeon (*Manuel d'art musulman*, 39) using Maciet album (273.17.76-1). As clearly visible, the third drawing on the bottom is missing today, whereas it appears in the photo of Sébah.

8.26 "199 folios, 298 miniatures and 19 flowers"

Strolling further through the pages of Maciet albums we encounter two images of Mehmed Siyah Kalem *genre*. The surprise is that these paintings do not exist today in the albums at Topkapi Palace Museum Library. Apparently, on some of the empty places in the so-called Yakub Bey albums were once pasted two more paintings by Mehmed Siyah Kalem (Figure 144).

These two paintings were simply labeled as *art oriental*, as Jules Maciet regrouped what he collected in numbered, thematic albums like Album no.273: Miniatures des Manuscrits-Art Oriental-17; Album no.273: Miniatures des Manuscrits-Orient-Perse-19 and Album no.431: Reliures-Orient-27.

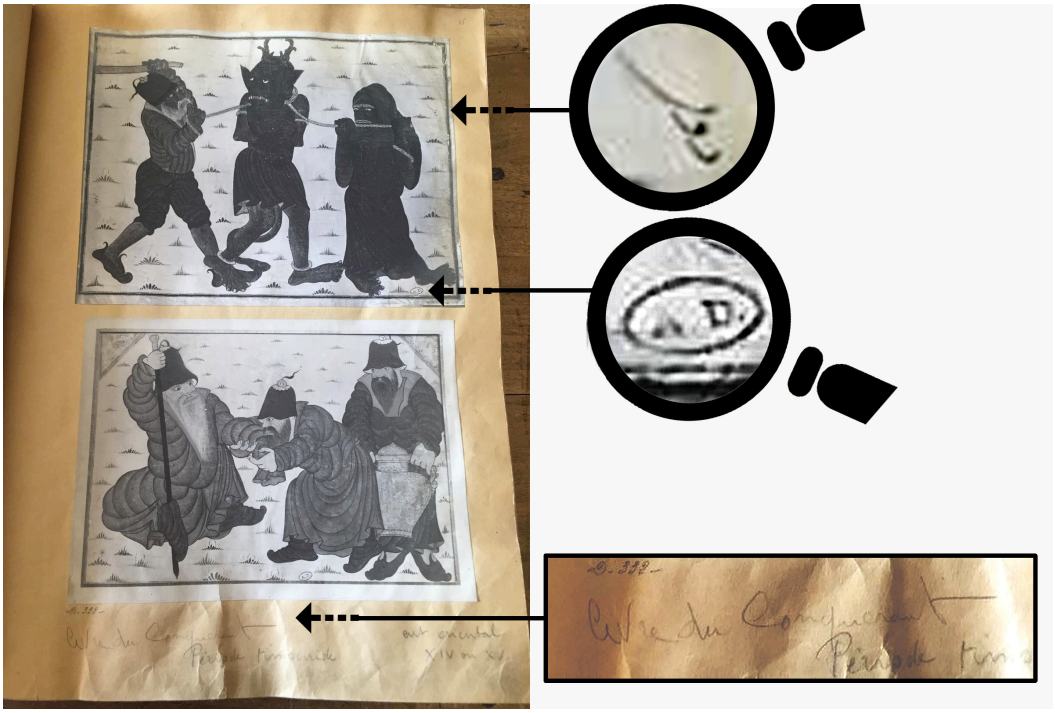

Figure 144. Two paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem genre pasted in Maciet albums. The term "Livre du Conquérant" appears as an attribution to the albums of Mehmed II, The Conqueror.

The capitals A.D. on the seal stand for *Arts Décoratifs*, which exist on all images pasted in Maciet albums. The paintings' attribution note below reads: *Période timouride* and *XIV ou XV*. There is also a provenance note reading *Livre du Conquérant.*[787]

Many folios from the imperial libraries were scattered in collections worldwide until the end of this transformation period. The mobility of the courtly folios as photography signifies a loss of original meaning alongside the acquisition of a new one. At the end of this transformation, the imperial images whose contemplation had been solely reserved to the sultans and his court became commodified images photographed, numbered, and reproduced in studios according to the demand from tourists, collectors, and modern museum archives.

[787] "The Book of the Conqueror." H.2153 had long been attributed to Mehmed the Conqueror, due to a number of his portraits in the albums.

The disintegration of the system expresses itself in the second vector of mobility: the commodification of the courtly artwork itself. Through this harsher mobility, many courtly artworks, even the sultan's seal, became subject to theft and sale on the art market. During the looting of the Ottoman orphaned artworks at the turn of the century, they were pilfered from palace libraries through illicit means, sold on the Istanbul art market, and scattered in Oriental book arts collections worldwide.

As a result, they were no longer pasted in court albums but framed and hung on walls, with museum tags indicating object details acquired through the new meaning: title, date, geography, medium, dimensions, classification, credit line, accession number, provenance, exhibition history, and references.

On the very first folio of the H.2153 album, the Editorial Commission of the Topkapı Palace noted the inventory works from the old system that survived the looting: *199 varak, 298 minyatür, 19 çiçek* (199 folios, 298 miniatures, and 19 flowers).

Today, the album H.2153 lists the above inventory with many empty places. Some of them were likely initially reserved to these two paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem stolen from the Ottoman palace library and purchased in Istanbul at the first decade of the twentieth century. In these terms, thinking about the whole journey of these paintings in the nineteenth century, we might think to correct the note of the Editorial Commission of Topkapi Palace, adding the two pieces *in absentia*, leaving us with 199 folios, 300 miniatures, and 19 flowers.

The two images of Mehmed Siyah Kalem genre pasted on Maciet albums are copies from an exhibition catalog in Paris. The vivid centers of European Orientalism received the originals of these paintings through a network of art dealers,

collectors, experts in the vibrant environment of museums, exhibitions, and scholarly research. The final chapter will follow the track of these paintings in the urban sites of European Orientalism.

CHAPTER 9

PARIS, BERLIN AND LONDON

URBAN SITES OF "SCIENTIFIC" ORIENTALISM

> The character of European Orientalism changed in the early nineteenth century. As it divided more sharply than before by region (Chinese, Arabic, Persian, etc.), it also defined itself more narrowly as the study of ancient texts and sought the same kind of scientific detachment that its model, Greek and Latin philology, had already achieved. This entailed a lack of interest in the contemporary Orient; everything that seemed of value in Asia lay deep in the past, accessible only in a dubious inheritance of written texts and material relics over which Asian or Egyptian archaeology claimed an interpretive monopoly.[788]

The turn of the twentieth century was marked culturally as a period when interest in Oriental and Persian art flourished in Europe. The cities of Paris, Berlin, and London became sites of expertise in the new field of oriental artworks, which circulated in a new global market of consumers and connoisseurs.

This final chapter will explore the mobility of two Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings between flourishing cultural centers of many cities that became hubs of global transformation. We will put forth how these transformations changed—in turn—the meaning of the artworks themselves. This study sheds light not only to the case for the two paintings per se, but many others from across the Orient—from Beijing, Samarkand or Isfahan, and, as in our case, from Istanbul.

Looking back from our own vantage point to the past, we have a study in contrasts. For we see in the nineteenth-century Western academic exploration of other cultures, on the one hand, and, on the other, "a founding impetus for the globalized human sciences of the contemporary world."[789] And, although this

[788] Osterhammel, *A global history of the nineteenth century*, 817.
[789] Osterhammel, *A global history of the nineteenth century*, 820.

"impetus" saw the costs involved in reaching and accessing the Orient decline for the scholars, it exacted a steep price from the societies whose historical wealth they looted. As Osterhammel notes concerning China during the Second Opium War (1858–60), the looting

> reached a climax with the plunder and burning of the Summer Palace in Beijing by British and French troops, and again during the foreign occupation of the imperial capital after the defeat of the Boxer Rebellion in summer 1900. Shortly after the turn of the century, hundreds of thousands of documents from the fourth to the eleventh century were "acquired" for a token price and carted off from caves near Dunhuang (in today's northwestern province of Gansu) to European libraries and museums.[790]

Actually, the situation was far cruder than a "gentle permitting" or "letting down" of changing conditions. The upheavals and revolutions were not simply against the authority of this or that emperor or sultan—they also targeted the ways of life and culture associated with the system. Trampling or looting the symbolic elements and objects of the decaying system means trampling the *ancien régime*'s ideology and looting the state's dignity and authority.

Although the looting in the Ottoman case was relatively minor, without being on the edge of this historical transformation and without the unavoidable events that precipitated and followed it, it would not have been possible for these paintings to be detached by art dealers. This was how many artifacts moved to the great European art capitals within the urban Orientalist scene.

The paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem embodied unique themes and high artistic value for the European connoisseurs of the time. These artworks had been created in a long-forgotten nomadic past—possibly in the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries—somewhere in the capillary routes in Chinese Turkestan. They entered the Ottoman Palace Library of Istanbul sometime in the sixteenth century, thus coming

[790] Osterhammel, *A global history of the nineteenth century*, 818.

to rest at the crossroads between Asia and Europe. Throughout the journey from the ancient Silk Roads the paintings were subject to numerous distortions and shifts in both meaning and function. After arriving at their final destination, the paintings were used for centuries in the Istanbul Ottoman court as a medium for private courtly leisure activity. The artworks made their first public appearance in the nineteenth century, when the international art community found a place for them in an emerging artistic *milieu*, characterized by the central "inventions" of modern cultural life—namely, the museum, the national archive, the national library, and photography.

Some of Mehmed Siyah Kalem's paintings found their way out of the Ottoman palace library, probably with the "assistance" of both local and European dealers, who emerged against the backdrop of an expanding global art market and community of European curators. These, in turn, were embedded in an urban elite culture linked to the general accumulation of capital in the big European cities such as Paris, Berlin, and London.

It is not surprising that they waited until the end of the 19th century to make their first appearance in Europe. The nineteenth century was "the age of museums and archives, of archaeology, and of textual criticism" and Paris, Berlin and London, the leading centers of these developments. The work of collecting, preserving, and classifying material to produce written knowledge of the earlier history of humanity piled up during this period on a scale unprecedented in any previous century.[791]

As for the art scene—where exhibitions and publications about this new perspective towards oriental art were taking place—it was monopolized, as Robert Hillenbrand notes, by "Franco-German rivalry."[792] The 1903 Paris exhibition of

[791] Osterhammel, *A global history of the nineteenth century*, 43.
[792] Hillenbrand, "Western Scholarship on Persian painting before 1914: Collectors, exhibitions and Franco-German rivalry."

Islamic art, the 1907 Paris exhibition, the 1910 Munich exhibition, and the 1912 Paris *Miniatures Persanes* exhibition were important occasions for the display of Oriental art in these two countries.

The German art historian and museum curator Richard Graul (1862-1944) argued in 1908 that only in recent years had interest in the artistic legacy of Persian-Islamic culture come to life, and scientific research into these broad art fields tackled more vigorously in Germany, while the British and French had been bringing together remarkable collections of Persian art for quite some time.[793] He expressed polite disapproval of French "Orient riders who content themselves with the purchase of exotic junk, which fills the oriental bazaars and is offered in large quantities at the various world exhibitions."[794] On the other hand, he criticized those Germans who based their knowledge of the Orient on "amateurish collecting and aesthetic enthusiasm" and emphasized the need to "acquire a more insightful idea of the nature and value of East Asian art" and "to gain their own [i.e., German] knowledge of Persian art themselves through undergoing a serious revision" of what they had seen from the French.[795]

Publications also contributed to the scene with crucial works, such as Gaston Migeon's (1861-1930), *Manuel d'art musulman*, Paris 1907; Clément Huart's (1854-1926), *Les calligraphes et les miniaturistes de l'orient musulman*, Paris 1908; Fredrik Robert Martin's (1868-1933), *The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India and Turkey*, London 1912; French art collector Georges Marteau (1852–1916) and jeweler Henri Vever's (1854–1942), *Miniatures persanes*, catalog

[793] Graul, "Die persischen und indischen Miniaturen der Sammlung Walter Schulz," 9.
[794] Graul, "Sammlung Walter Schulz," 9.
[795] Graul, "Sammlung Walter Schulz," 9.

of the exhibition, Paris 1913; as well as Philipp Walter Schulz's (1864-1920) *Die persisch-islamische Miniaturmalerei*, Leipzig 1914.

Appreciated by both the French and German sides of this rivalry, it is not surprising that Mehmed Siyah Kalem's paintings found their way from the Ottoman court library to this vivid European scene. They first appeared as part of the French collections in Paris museums in 1912. Later, in 1914, German orientalist scholars published work on them. Almost two decades later, in 1931, they were exhibited in London by British art connoisseurs, who had come rather late to the scene.

Thus, at the local level, the various interruptions to the Ottoman courtly lifestyle that had incorporated such paintings into leisure activity permitted their flow towards European lands in the nineteenth century. In that way, it became a forerunner of the historical transformation of the meaning of art, scattering artworks from the albums of the court library where they had been for centuries, to be displayed on museum walls for the gaze of the public voyeur. Such a transition was not possible earlier, since Osterhammel's "treasuries of memory and knowledge" — the archives, libraries, museums, and other collections that became universally accessible to the public—emerged within the new forms and institutions of cultural life only in the nineteenth century.

In the development of knowledge society in Europe in the long nineteenth century, the universality of libraries, exhibitions, and encyclopedias played a crucial role. This process was supported by the most important theoretical currents of the time—namely, positivism, historicism, and evolutionism. This cumulative and critical conception of knowledge went together with the idea of its public significance.[796] This was exactly what the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings

[796] Osterhammel, *A global history of the nineteenth century*, 17.

recognized—namely, public display and scholarly knowledge. So, they ended up in the urban centers of the continent at the turn of the twentieth century, where new institutions and ways of appreciating and displaying art—museums, exhibitions, and collections—were established. Through this mobility from the private courtly sphere to a more public one, the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings were subject to distortions and loss of meaning, on the one hand, and new interpretations and newly attributed meanings, on the other.

9.1 Paris—The Museum

Major developments and changes in the nineteenth century were taking place in Europe, and Paris was the cultural center. Of the world exhibitions, which were also nineteenth-century novelties, the two with the largest attendance were both in Paris: the Exposition Universelle of 1889 (50 million visitors) and the Exposition Universelle of 1900.

As mentioned, the museum in the sense we understand it today was an invention of the nineteenth century, and this includes museums of art, ethnography, and science and technology.

Concerning the journey of Mehmed Siyah Kalem's paintings, special attention has to be paid to decorative arts or applied arts museums. Indeed, it was these specialized museums—rather than general art museums—that these paintings had attracted the attention of in Paris, Berlin, Leipzig, and Budapest. Three possible reasons present themselves—the provenance of these works, the material with which they were produced, and their subject matter.

At the turn of the century in Europe, and probably still today, Oriental art such as miniatures and illuminations were considered not as *pure art* but rather as

decorative artifacts of skilled artisans. Similarly, oil on canvas exhibits much more the qualities of painting art, compared to ink and brush on simple paper. Moreover, the "exotic" folk themes of Mehmed Siyah Kalem's paintings—including all kinds of demons, bearded nomads dressed in curious costumes, and stubborn mules and donkeys—received a warmer welcome in decorative arts or applied arts museums. Undeniably, the themes depicted contrasted sharply with those of the renowned paintings of Claude Monet, Picasso, and Van Gogh.

Thus, while folk elements attracted attention during this period, the consensus was that their place was in highly specialized museums, and not the general museums of art. This taste for folk elements was not only as an external exoticism of the Orientalist persuasion but also concerning the internal exoticism of folklore traditions within Europe.[797] This search for inspiration in the anonymous arts of ordinary people was even evident in the field of music, where a kind of musical exoticism developed within Europe itself. Among the examples are Georges Bizet's Carmen (1875) and Franz Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies (1851).

Through a steady process of institutionalization, the museum developed as a space and as a locus of expertise during that period, propagating thus art historians, learned curators, and connoisseurs.The museum presented something new by classifying, organizing, and labeling objects and through the narrative it created in the new public sphere. The journey of two paintings purchased in "Constantinople"[798] (today's Istanbul) most probably in the first decade of the twentieth century exposes us to the conjuncture, where they could exist according to the new forms of life, developed along the nineteenth century.

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[797] Osterhammel, *A global history of the nineteenth century*, 823.
[798] The city had many names at the time. *Konstantiniye* was one of the official names, including Der Saadet and, of course, Istanbul (in laymen's terms, just the old city across Galata). Foreigners have always used Constantinople.

The Musée des Arts Decoratifs in Paris hosted the exhibition *Miniatures Persanes* in 1912. Figure 145 shows the exhibition catalog, which was published in just 150 copies in 1913 by *Bibliothèque d'Art et d'Archaélogie*.[799]

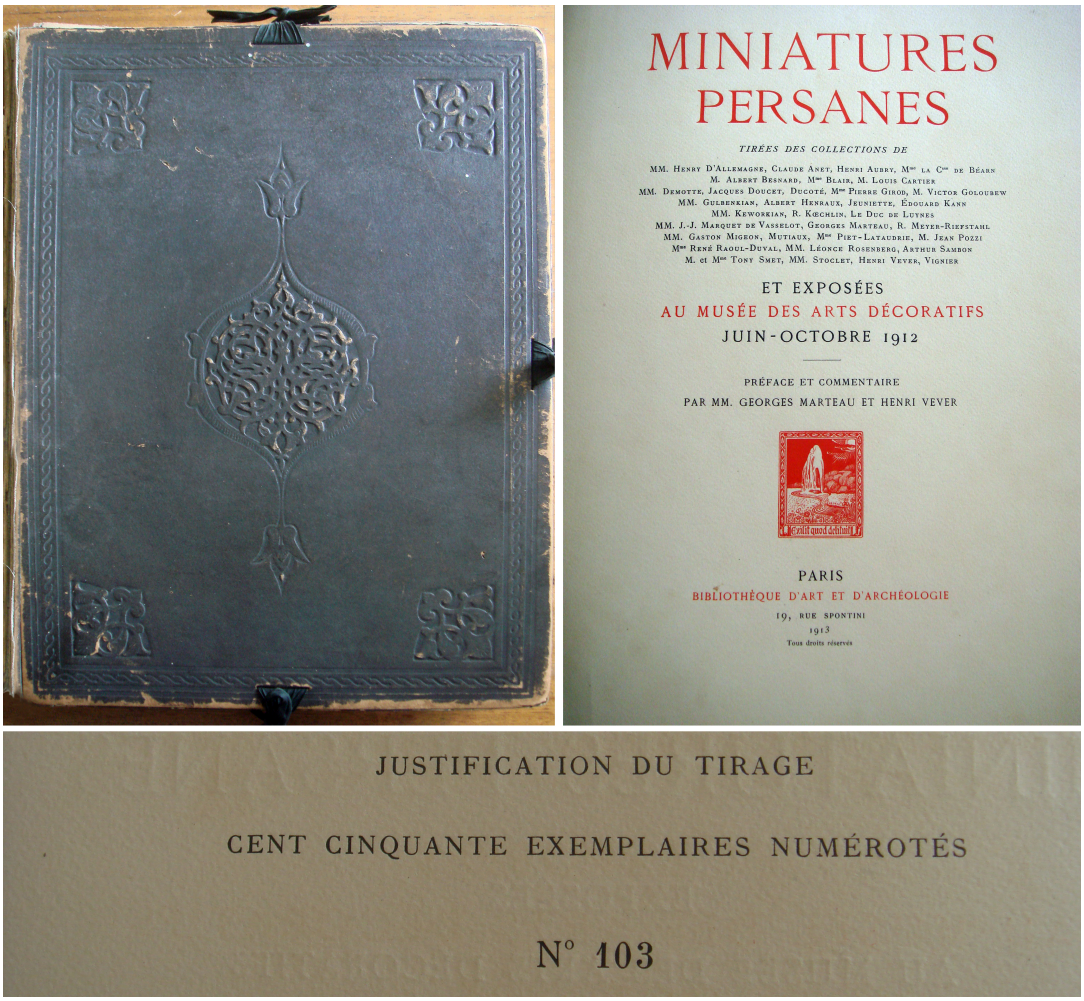

Figure 145. Catalogue of the *Miniatures Persanes* exhibition published by Bibliothèque d'Art et d'Archaélogie in only 150 copies, Paris, 1913.

In the *Bulletin des Musées de France*, the exhibition, which contributed mightily to the Franco-German art rivalry, was considered "more abundant and complete" than the Munich 1910 exhibition in terms of painting, "even though only the Parisian collections were on display."[800]

[799] Indebted to Esen Çamurdan, who kindly let me photograph her catalogue numbered 103.
[800] *Bulletin des Musées de France*, 71.

Why were French art connoisseurs comparing the 1912 exhibition to the exhibition *Meisterwerke Muhammedanischer Kunst*, held for six months in 1910 in Munich in Germany? "Munich 1910," as it came to be known, was the first comprehensive exhibition displaying "Islamic" art in Europe, organized initially as a result of the particular interest of Prince Luitpold of Bavaria toward Persian carpets. With an exhibition committee and academic experts composed of the pioneers of the field, it went beyond its original impetus. It became a vast "reference" exhibition of 3600 artifacts. The term "reference" was used because the objects being exhibited became the best-known examples—the icons—of the arts of Islam in the West. Many unique pieces of Oriental art, and many invaluable folios of miniature art that are today still among the most precious pieces in the most prestigious museums, made their first appearance in the Munich 1910 exhibition. Indeed, as marked in the book dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the exhibition, it is generally accepted that this exhibition gave a new impulse to the reception of Islamic art in the West. Hence it is considered a turning point in the "Orientalist" view of—and romantic passion for— Muslim art and culture.[801]

How and why these carpets or thousands of artifacts came to be considered as unique pieces of Oriental or Islamic art is a question that is linked in our case to how the two folios (among the hundreds of others) were detached from the albums of the Ottoman sultan's library and ended up in Paris, Berlin, London, and other centers in Europe. The journey of the two pieces exhibited among the miniatures from the pioneering Parisian art connoisseurs in *Miniatures Persanes* 1912 gives us some ideas not only about the answer to this question but also about the historical transformations that their journey represented.

[801] *After One Hundred Years, The 1910 Exhibition*, vii.

Among the items in the exhibition catalog we will focus on two paintings numbered as 59 and 60. Item 59 had been exhibited from the collection of Claude Anet (1868-1931), a prominent figure in Parisian cultural and artistic life. Shown in Figure 146. this is a three-person scene, in which two people are depicted paying their respects to a white-bearded man, who is seated. One of them is kissing his hand, while the other is waiting his turn, with a golden vase in his hand, most probably an offering for the nobleman.

PÉRIODE TIMOURIDE

59. — Miniature.

Scène à trois personnages : Khan à barbe blanche recevant les hommages de deux de ses sujets. L'un lui baise la main, l'autre apporte un vase d'or.

Nous inclinons à croire, avec MM. Claude Anet et Vignier, à une origine plus occidentale que celle des autres pièces de la série timouride, probablement les pays Kipchak de l'ouest, c'est-à-dire les Khanats de Crimée ou d'Astrakhan.

Cette pièce et la suivante sont d'un caractère très particulier dont nous ne connaissons que ces spécimens.

Quatorzième ou quinzième siècle.

M. Claude Anet.

Figure 146. Item 59 from the exhibition catalog *Miniatures Persanes*

In Item 60, also a scene of three subjects, we see a demon captured by two peasants. As seen in Figure 147, ne is a woman, and the other is a man, both of whom hold a chain rope attached to the neck of the demon. The man brandishes a stick and appears ready to strike the demon. In the upper right and lower left of the painting, which belonged to the Oriental art expert Charles Vignier (1863-1934) at the time of the exhibition, are two remarkable scripts, both written *devler*, meaning "demons." What is most interesting about these writings is that they were inscribed by two different hands, indeed in two different scripts, one Turkish, the other Persian. The details and implications of this script will be dealt with later in this chapter.

PÉRIODE TIMOURIDE

60. — Miniature.

Efrit ou Div enchaîné par deux paysans.
De même origine que la précédente.

Quatorzième ou quinzième siècle.

M. VIGNIER.

Figure 147. Item 60 from the exhibition catalog *Miniatures Persanes*

The editors of the catalog and the collectors were inclined to attribute the two "miniatures" from the "Timurid period" to an "origin more western compared to the other pieces of the Timurid series, probably to the countries of Kipchak in the West, i.e., the Crimean or Astrakhan Khanates and to the 14th or fifteenth centuries."[802] They consider the style of paintings "very peculiar," neither having ever seen that style before setting eyes on these two miniatures.[803]

9.1.2 "Very peculiar" and "never seen before"

In many respects, these works bear a striking resemblance to the so-called Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. First of all, these paintings share a material likeness, being produced with ink and brush on paper. The size of the paper used in these paintings is very similar to those in the Yakub Bey albums, H.2153 and H.2160, in which we have empty pages or pages with noticeable empty space created after some of the original pieces were cut out. In both cases, one can very clearly observe the signs of the detachment of paper pasted onto these blank pages or areas. The size of the number 59 painting is 17.5x25 cm;[804] the number 60 painting is 25.7x34.4 cm.[805] When we analyze the empty spaces in the albums, it is clear the paintings could fit within them. One example is in H.2153, folio 68B or 111A, which contains a whole empty folio of about 49.7x34.9cm.

Similarly, in H.2160, we also find pages in which at least one of these paintings could fit perfectly, such as 63A, which has empty space of 34.5x23 cm. Besides, we have a space of 49.4x34 cm for one folio, and when a double folio is used, an area of about 49.4x67.4 cm for H.2153 is available. So, these paintings and

[802] *Miniatures Persanes*, exhibition catalogue.
[803] *Miniatures Persanes*, exhibition catalogue.
[804] *Catalogue of the international exhibition of Persian art*, 212.
[805] Cleveland Museum of Art website accessed via https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1982.63.

other paintings could also be pasted on a whole folio or double and could be taken as an entire folio from one of them. Although there is *no direct evidence* that the two paintings were cut out and stolen from the albums, they almost certainly were, subsequently ending up in the hands of curators in Paris who put them in the exhibition.

What are the grounds for this assertion? Considering composition, perspective, scale, proportion, and anatomy of figures—not to mention drapery, color choices, use of brush and ink techniques on lines as well as light and shadow values— these two paintings all conform to the genre of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. Moreover, probably most striking at first glance in the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings is the unique subject matter—namely, *nomadic life and demons*. Besides all these technical and artistic issues, bearded nomads, and horned, half-naked demons also constitute the central theme of these paintings.. Looking at all these details— especially style and technique, on the one hand, and the central subject theme, on the other—it is almost certain that figures 59 and 60 belong to the main group of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. Consequently, it is reasonable to conclude that they were detached at some point from these albums.

Nonetheless, some "very peculiar" and "never seen before" details existing in the albums can be found in the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings as well. We have to emphasize some exceptional details that we do not see in the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings still in the albums, but which appear in those shown in the *Miniatures Persanes* exhibition in Paris in 1912. First of all, none of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings in the albums has, as a background, tufts of grass or, indeed, any other indication of ground or landscape. We discussed the functionality of the empty space in painting in relation to storytelling function. We know that this kind of

landscaping background became a typical decoration in miniatures during later centuries, especially in the eighteenth century—namely, at least three or four centuries after the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings.

Some typical examples of such background tufts of grass can be found in the seventeenth-century Safavid miniatures found in another album—*Hazine* 2155—in the Topkapı Palace Museum Library. While these were seventeenth-century Safavid works, they were collected in the Ottoman albums at the end of the eighteenth century. During that time, small tufts of grass and trees were added to the background of these miniatures.[806] Such an example is displayed in Figure 148.

Figure 148. H.2155-16A. The kind of background tufts of grass became typical decoration during the eighteenth century.

[806] Atbaş, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi'ndeki H.2155 Numaralı Murakka*, unpublished MA thesis.

In folio 16A of the album *Hazine* 2155, a man is depicted standing (the painting size is 15x8.7cm). The figure reflects, in many respects, the characteristics of the Isfahan style around 1620—the curling body, a slightly raised stomach, the cut, curved lines of the turban and of the belt on the waist, and the depiction of individual identity through expression on the face.[807]

In contrast to the slightly colored young man, the background coloration and landscape must have been added during the preparation of the album in the eighteenth-century Ottoman period. In adding tufts of grass, plants and small hills, an attempt has been made to introduce a kind of perspective to the painting.[808]

Another example from the same album can be found on folio 27A, which depicts a kneeled man (painting size: 17.9x11.4 cm; Isfahan, c. 1600). The painting has typical characteristics of the Safavid style in the second half of the sixteenth-century: the decorations on the two sides of the upper and lower left corners, the *khitai* motifs on the bordures, etc.[809] The background coloration, as well as the tufts of grass and the two thin trees, are Ottoman additions during the eighteenth century. Moreover, the simple braided ornaments on the middle right and left sides of the illuminations were also added later in the Ottoman period to fill the gap in-between.[810]

Lower part of the folio 35A contains a similar example. According to Atbaş, this is an eighteenth-century Ottoman copy of a seventeenth-century Isfahan painting, where a sitting man with a candle in his hand is depicted (size:

[807] Atbaş, "Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi'ndeki H.2155 Numaralı Murakka," unpublished MA thesis, 64
[808] Atbaş, "H.2155 Numaralı Murakka," unpublished MA thesis, 64.
[809] Atbaş, "H.2155 Numaralı Murakka," 116.
[810] Atbaş, "H.2155 Numaralı Murakka," 116.

16.6x11.7cm).[811] As in the previous examples, we see typical eighteenth-century Ottoman style tufts of grass and trees added on the background of this painting.

Another important most probably later-added element is the triangular corner spaces on the painting number 59. Such decorations are also elements we do not have in any other Mehmed Siyah Kalem painting in the albums, whereas we have many similar corner spaces, mostly on the calligraphy works of the albums, which were also eighteenth-century Ottoman decorations. These are sometimes delicately decorated as in H.2153-3A, the Calligraphy 2 (fol. 3a-c.2), which is a *Ghazal* by Jāmī, a *qiṭ'a* by Sa'dī (from the second chapter of the *Gulistān*). A work of 311x76 mm on paper sprinkled with gold by the calligrapher 'Abd al-Karīm Khvārazmī is from the second half of the fifteenth century in Shīrāz-Tabrīz.[812]

These triangular corners were used sometimes in one corner only, with scripts inside them as in H.2153-15B, Calligraphy 1 (fol. 15b-c.1), an Arabic poem with black and gold letters, by the calligrapher Sulṭān 'Alī Mashhadī, copied according to the colophon in 878 (1473-74). We have many more such examples, sometimes on opposite corners and empty as in H.2153-39A, Calligraphy 2 (fol. 39a-c.2), a *Rubā'ī* by Avḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī with *Nasta'līq* script on paper sprinkled with gold. We find this kind of triangular space used more rarely in paintings. The last example is in the form of an envelope for a small ink painting (86x86 mm) on paper, in H.2153-85A, Picture 3 (fol. 85a-p.3). Like the previous examples, this one also is from the late fifteenth century.[813]

Another detail "never seen before" in the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings in the albums of the Topkapı Palace Library are the thematic labeling of the works as

[811] Atbaş, "H.2155 Numaralı Murakka," 141.
[812] Unpublished facsimile of the albums.
[813] Unpublished facsimile of the albums.

"divs." None of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings in the albums have script describing the subject matter of the picture, such as "skinny horse," "nomads traveling," "demons fighting," and the like. The only scripts present are signatures or attributions to the artist, Mehmed Siyah Kalem, most of them almost certainly added after the cut and paste of the paintings on the album folios.

When we compare the two reference paintings to the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings in the Yakub Bey albums as above, we can almost surely say that they are from the albums, but with some later added details. It is possible to attribute these additions to the Ottoman period, as with the aforementioned tufts of grass on the background of the seventeenth-century Safavid miniatures in the album Hazine 2155. In contrast, we observe no intervention of this kind—i.e., tufts of grass, corner spaces and especially thematic labels—in other Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, to which Ottoman court artists had free access after the sixteenth century.

This strongly suggests these elements were added after the works were removed from the Palace Library at the turn of the century. Moreover, the changes were driven by different motives than those to the Safavid miniatures in the album *Hazine 2155*. The question naturally arises: When, why, and by whom?

The owners of the two paintings were Claude Anet and Charles Vignier, two prominent figures in the Parisian literary and artistic *milieu*, having connections both with the Asian and the Western art circles at the turn of the twentieth century.

9.2 Scene of homage—Claude Anet (1868-1931)

Named later as "Scene of homage," the number 59 painting was at that time in the collection of Claude Anet (1868-1931), a French citizen born Jean Schopfer in 1868, in Switzerland. Anet, who was an author and a journalist—knew many languages,

including Russian and Persian, and traveled to many countries. He wrote novels and theater- and travel books, some of which were adapted to the cinema.

Anet's connections with Europe's art world were balanced by Anet's acquaintance with "Oriental lands." First of all, his wife Leila was of Persian origin. Another connection is the fact that he had worked as a journalist for the *Journal* in Saint Petersburg during the Russian Revolution in 1917. This position must have allowed Anet to become acquainted with the culture and art of the Caucasus and Central Asia. Living and traveling this way, Claude Anet was a typical intellectual portrait of the nineteenth century.

A *genre* that developed during the nineteenth century was travel literature, which was considered as an indispensable source of knowledge about the world. Indeed, some travelogues achieved high status both in world literature and as factual sources. In the nineteenth century, more people than ever before were traveling across vast distances and for long periods.[814] Claude Anet was among them.

Anet's book *La Perse en automobile* is a diary of the first automobile trip to Persia, which he and six others took over three months in 1905[815]. The group of seven travelers, which included the motorists George Valentin (Prince Bibescu), Leon Leonida, and Mihai Ferekide, began their journey in April 1905 in Baku and progressed through the Crimea, the Caucasus, Batum, Tabriz, and Qum. Finally, the tour ended up enjoying "an unforgettable week" in Isfahan, which Anet considered "the center of Persia." He remarked that they had reached the center of Persia "to collect the roses of its glory," which is the likely source of the subtitle of the book shown in Figure 149: "The Roses of Isfahan."[816]

[814] Osterhammel, *A global history of the nineteenth century*, 21, 164.
[815] Anet, *Les Roses d'Ispahan, La Perse en automobile à travers la Russie et le Causcase*.
[816] Anet, *La Perse en automobile*, VII.

Figure 149. *La Perse en Automobile*, The diary of the first automobile trip to Persia by Claude Anet.

On their way back, they visited Tehran, Tiflis, Tabriz, and Zendjan. In the last stage, they traveled from Batum to Ottoman lands in the Black Sea region—Trabzon, Fatsa, Unye, Samsun and Inebolu. Finally, they arrived at the Bosphorus on June 19, where the sky, according to Anet, was "like the sky in a Delacroix painting" and Constantinople, "the most beautiful city in the world." Of course, Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) was a valuable visual reference for any French intellectual traveling to the "Orient" in this period. He was one of those French painters active between 1830 and 1870 who used Oriental art not only for decoration and costumes—as had artists of the previous century—but also for exotic settings of

desert and harem motifs. In a way, Anet recognized the sky of the Bosphorus that Delacroix himself had borrowed from Oriental art.

European travelers and connoisseurs of Oriental art cultivated and embellished the image of the Orient during such trips. Traveling with Prince Bibesco and his wife, the Princess Marthe,[817] Anet's automobile journey offered many occasions that "ennobled his emotions."[818] Surely was among these moments the encounter with Maxim Gorki in Yalta, where they visited the Russian novelist in the villa he was reposing.[819]

Bearing many details that would contribute mightily to the contemporary image of the Orient, the trip, and the diary of it had implications for the way European collectors acquired Oriental pieces and their approach towards these artifacts. Five years before the Munich 1910 exhibition, the narrative laid out in Anet's travelogue would be a precursor to the exhibition's romanticism, expressed in the words of a Francophone intellectual. Indeed, some examples from the diary allow shed much-needed light on how the European middle-class intellectual perspective toward "the Orient" was forming at this time. This, in turn, provides a better understanding of the intellectual's approach to the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings.

The first example concerns the "border" demarcating the beginning of the Orient itself. In the nineteenth century, the counterpart to "the city" was no longer "the country"—the realm of agriculture and forest, of farming and hunting—but rather "the frontier." For the city, the frontier was an *active periphery* that brought

[817] Marthe, Princess Bibesco wrote her own memoir of the trip in French, *Les huit paradis* (*Eight Paradises*) in 1908 to critical and commercial acclaim. The book is largely credited with launching her career as a journalist, biographer, and fashion columnist, with the peak of her success coming in the interwar period. Princess Bibesco, a celebrated socialite and *bon vivant*, also wrote popular fiction as well under the pseudonym Lucile Décaux.
[818] Anet dedicated this travelogue to the Princess Georges Valentin Bibesco and Madame Michel Charles Phérékyde, "who shared this travel with him and ennobled the emotions."
[819] Anet, *La Perse en automobile*, 47.

special interests, identities, ideals, values, and character types into interaction with the core. The city saw its counterpart in the periphery, which was savage and exotic.[820]

We see this at the end of the Caucasus part of the trip of Anet and his companions as they disembark from Baku by ship and cross over to begin the last leg to their final destination—Persia. Anet's entry on Monday, May 8, 1905, is telling in this sense, inspired as it was by the tour's crossing an invisible border from the far eastern edge of the West across into these mysterious Oriental lands, which held out the promise, perhaps, of encountering wild and exotic animals:

> We are slowly approaching Persia. We spend five hours this morning at anchor with a view of Lenkoran.
> It is a small Russian town nestled amongst the trees. Behind it rise the large ridges of the Ghilan mountains, covered with forests. A bluish vapor fills the atmosphere, softens the contours, and gives this country a velvety, unreal seduction reminiscent of certain landscapes in the depths of the Flemish 'greenery'.
> It is one of the most dangerous and wildest regions in the world. There were, we are told, tigers in these mountains a few years ago.
> Tigers! We are indeed far from Ile-de-France.[821]

Anet thus creates an image for the reader that evokes the image of the *familiar* "Flemish" greenery, while underscoring the fact that they are very much entering the *unfamiliar*—the *dangerous wildlands* of the Orient, home to exotic tigers. In so doing, he rearticulates the classic image of the "perilous" Orient. The author implicitly shakes the reader, reminding him "sternly" to "beware!" For we are no longer in Paris and its tamed natural surrounds, where tigers are only ever encountered in the menagerie.

[820] Osterhammel, *A global history of the nineteenth century*, 322
[821] Anet, *La Perse en automobile*, 117.

The visit of Anet and his friends to the Shah's[822] palace in Tehran was full of disappointment, apparently triggered by expectations inspired by the tales in *Shahname* or *Thousand and One Nights.* This also reflects the main character of European Orientalism in that period: scientific detachment about the past, and a lack of interest in the present. What is valuable in Asia lay deep in the past, accessible only through written texts and material relics. Anet remarked that those "travelers who have preceded us thought that they were obliged to speak with reverence and admiration of the palace of Shah." He announces that he "will talk about it freely" and then continues:

> It would be wrong to imagine that the Shah, a descendant of the King of Kings, an absolute and oriental monarch, lives elegantly in a palace like those in the 1,001 Nights. He lives, instead, in the European style, and this Persian monarch has a nasty taste, which sees him prefer items from the Viennese bazaar worth nineteen pennies instead of works of art made in Persia.[823]

Anet and his friends carried a burden on their shoulders, one that had existed since antiquity, but was heaviest in this period—a mission to civilize barbarism and savagery. Never was the idea as powerful as it was in the nineteenth century.[824]

He extends this with a comparison of taste between the East and the West, basing his argument on the value of the Oriental art of the miniature understood in the West, but unfortunately not by the Persians and the Shah himself:

> Persia had the most refined, the most exquisite of arts. In Europe and America, we compete for miniatures, *reflets métalliques*, brass works, and even for pieces of ancient Persian rugs. At the Shah's place, there are no Persian works of art to be found.
> In his highly vaunted museum, we see, under glass, small paper fans, items

[822] Mozaffar ad-Din Shah Qajar (1853-1907), the fifth Qajar ruler of Persia (Iran), reigning from 1896 until his death in 1907. He is often credited with the creation of the first Persian constitution (in 1906), which he approved in one of his final acts as Shah.
[823] Anet, *La Perse en automobile*, 172.
[824] Osterhammel, *A global history of the nineteenth century*, p.827

> from Paris, and so that nobody is mistaken, a price-tag of 0 fr. 65 was still attached. They stand next to a hand mirror of 3 fr. 45. (...)
> Finally, there are in the museum some pieces from Sèvres[825] and other products from European states, which various sovereigns wisely got rid of, for the benefit of His Persian Majesty.
> We also walk for more than an hour in rooms overflowing with the most detestable objects.[826]

Anet's critical argumentation about contemporary "Oriental taste" continues long after. But of course, in Isfahan, he "wisely" ran after miniatures that Persian owners had gotten rid of, for the benefit of European collectors. First comes a series of sessions with art dealers that hold out the hope of marvelous discoveries, as he wrote on May 28:

> Nothing is more fun, more touching at times, than these sessions with the *dellals* [middlemen]. There are six or eight of them that the servants let into the garden. They arrive at seven o'clock because I get up early in passionate haste where I am to see if they have finally found the wonders hoped for; a small vase with metallic reflections from the thirteenth century, the ancient bronze from Isfahan, a piece of carpet depicting the hunts of Shah Abbas, some beautiful miniature from the sixteenth century. With such fervor, I make them unpack their packages and empty their pockets, which seem bottomless![827]

The sheer sense of excitement in discovery evinced here was common to all the travelogues penned by the European voyagers of the time but would disappear for the next generation of travelers.

Finally, the wonders Anet had hoped for arrived on the first day of June:

> After lunch, I have great emotion. Here, a merchant whom I have never seen before brings me about fifty miniatures. More than forty of them are worthless, but I find, out of the lot, eight that are charming and, of these eight, there are four that date from the sixteenth century and show the characteristics of the exquisite art of Shah Abbas.[828]

Having discovered them, Anet then "bids" for some of these miniatures, but the merchant rejects his price, and Anet becomes furious and sends him away. He

[825] Since Anet was originally from Switzerland, the Sèvres items attracted his particular attention.
[826] Anet, *La Perse en automobile*, p.172-173, translated from French by the author.
[827] Anet, *La Perse en automobile*, p.242, translated from French by the author
[828] Anet, *La Perse en automobile*, 258.

immediately regrets his hasty decision, for this was a once-in-a-lifetime chance to buy an exquisite work from the sixteenth century. In reality, Anet knows that even had he paid three times what the merchant asked, he would have acquired the work for a steal. Hoping the stubborn merchant could be coaxed into reconsidering,[829] Anet waits through the afternoon and again, impatiently, into the next morning. In the meantime, he manages to acquire a few more items, some small cups. Happily, the merchant returns in the afternoon:

> After lunch, the miniature merchant returns. I pay the price he asks and put the precious miniatures in my suitcase. Ten times a day, I take them out; ten times, I put them back in and lock the suitcase with a key. Never was an explorer prouder of his discoveries, and if I find the plaque from Mongolian times in Kashan,[830]my happiness will be complete.[831]

Anet's diary thus includes—besides the narrative of the journey itself—a summary of some of the pieces bought during the trip and described above, including the sixteenth-century Persian miniature,[832] small Persian cups from the eighteenth century, and a metal plaque from the Mongol period dating from the end of the thirteenth century, found in Kashan.[833] These are today very well-known, exquisite examples of Persian art.

Who were "the travelers who preceded" Claude Anet and his friends—the ones who felt compelled to speak with reverence and admiration of the Shah's palace? Indeed, the ones following in their path, since in the part of the book entitled "How to go by car to Isfahan," Anet answers several of the "frequently asked questions" posed by many people on various subjects like car choice, luggage,

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[829] Anet, *La Perse en automobile*, 261.
[830] A city in the northern part of Isfahan province. With Anet words: "Kashan, which we had so much trouble gaining, is the city which gave birth to Zubeide, first, legitimate and preferred woman of Haroun al Raschid. Kashan is also famous for the activity of its inhabitants who work copper and silk, for an old mosque from the Mongol era, and for its scorpions" Anet, *La Perse en automobile*, 208
[831] Anet, *La Perse en automobile*, 267-268.
[832] Anet, *La Perse en automobile*, plate 23.
[833] Anet, *La Perse en automobile*, plate 24.

season, etc.[834] They were members of a privileged commercial upper-middle class that had been expanding since the late nineteenth century, and for whom travel had become an affordable luxury, as a result of the advent of the steamship and the rise of the package tour. Such travel, a mark of high status, was a privilege reserved only for the very wealthy.[835]

These European *nouveaux riches* travelers contributed significantly to the rise and spread of "scientific" Orientalism in Europe, with all these artifacts they brought back from their travels to form collections, fill museums, and open exhibitions. This all formed the basis for the expanding modern scholarship on the Orient.

Claude Anet deploys the metaphor of the *Thousand and One Nights* a few times in his diary. The discovery and translation of the *Tales from the Thousand and One Nights* also contributed significantly to the development of Orientalism in Europe, beginning with Antoine Galland's (1646–1715) translation of the tales from Arabic into French. The fabled East of djinns and flying carpets, but also of violence and debauchery, found its literary moment in Galland's translation at the dawn of the eighteenth century. It later became a common setting and source of materials for romantic literature, with many writers making use of travel reports to stimulate their imaginations.

Thus, to the European bourgeois connoisseur of the time, the Orient was, on the one hand, romantic, attractive, and overflowing with precious discoveries, but, on the other, ungrateful and incognizant as well as an insecure and dangerous place full of perversions. As Anet emphasized, the danger posed by the Orient was not only the

[834] Anet, *La Perse en automobile*, 313-317.
[835] Alario, "Travelers' instruments," 160-161.

"tigers" missing from the "Ile de France," but all kinds of supernatural creatures, such as *jins*, *divs*, and—of course— demons.

9.3 Demon in chains—Charles Vignier (1863-1934)

The number 60 painting, later named "Demon in chains," was borrowed from Charles Vignier's collection for display in the exhibition *Miniatures Persanes* in Paris in 1912. Born in 1863 in Switzerland, Vignier, a French citizen, was a student and disciple of Paul Verlaine, and a friend of Stéphane Mallarmé, the poet who pioneered the transition to "classical modernism" in the field of literature in the 1880s. Vignier was also a close friend of the leading poets and artists of the time, such as André Malraux, Henri Matisse, and André Derain. Picasso's paintings are among the works he traded, and André Derain made his portrait. In Figure 150 is a drawing of him by M. Reymond with the title *Les Hommes d'Aujourdhui*, Today's Men.

Widely schooled and knowledgeable in Islamic art, Vignier became, in the second part of his life, one of the specialists and collectors of Asian and Oriental art in Europe. From the 1900s, he supplied pottery and sold manuscripts and paintings to such clients such as Henri Vever, Jacques Doucet, the art historian Bernard Berenson, and Alfred Pierpont Morgan.[836] Between 1920 and 1930, he worked as an expert for the Hôtel Drouôt, one of the leading auction houses of the period—not only in France but also globally. Still open today, the Hôtel Drouôt is said to be the biggest auction house in the world (at 10,000 m^2 of space, it trades 500,000 objects every year).

[836] Stephen Vernoit, *Islamic art and architecture*, in Discovering Islamic Art, Scholars, collectors and collections, 1850-1950, Stephen Vernoit (ed), I.B. Tauris, 2000, p.30.

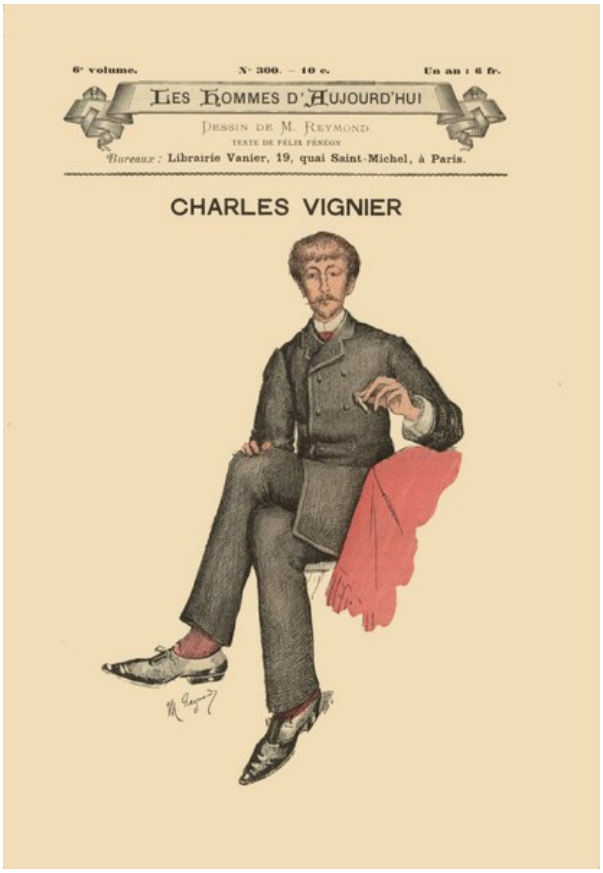

Figure 150. A drawing of Charles Vignier by M. Reymond.

Comparing two images in Maciet albums, it must not be a surprise that the exhibition catalog of *Miniatures Persanes* (1913) became a source of images for these albums just residing in the museum's library where the exhibition took place. According to Laure Haberschill from the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, it is not possible to know when the images were pasted on the albums since they never note the date. But the mention of *Bibliothèque de Constantinople,* which appears on all the folios, is most often by the hand of Jules Maciet, which places their insertion in the albums between 1891 and 1911. The few times this is not the case, the writing seems to be that of Léon Deshairs, the library's curator from 1902 to 1931.[837]

[837] Personal correspondence with Laure Haberschill, Mai 2019.

Since Maciet had passed away at this date, it must be Léon Deshairs who pasted the two paintings' images which were stolen from the court library in Istanbul at the turn of the twentieth century: *Scene of Homage* and *Demon in Chains*.

9.4 Burlington Magazine, 1912

Claude Anet wrote two articles in the *Burlington Magazine* about the exhibition.[838] In the October 1912 issue, he introduced the two miniatures, preferring, of course, to publish the one from his collection, as shown in Figure 151.

In the article, Anet discusses the source of these "unique works," which belong to a series that had never been seen before. Interestingly, he perceived the woman peasant to the right of the demon as an *effrit*, a word deriving from the Arabic language meaning "goblin, demon, evil-doer." The word *effrit* had been most commonly used in Europe by the French, under two forms, either with one "f" as in *éfrit* or two, as in *effrit*.

The etymology and the history of the word in the French language was rather a fresh "discovery" driven by the "scientific curiosity" toward Arabic mythology in the nineteenth century. The poet (and also dramatist and successful diplomat), Paul Claudel (1868-1955), was the first to use the word in the French language. Claudel introduced this word into the language in his *Cinq Grandes Odes*

[838] Anet, "Exhibition of Persian Miniatures at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris" I and II. The first was published in October 1912 and the second November 1912.

(1910),[839] a work that helped make his reputation as a poet and "which revolutionized French verse at the beginning of the 20th century."[840]

(D) TABARI. HISTORY OF THE CALIPHS. CIRC. 1203. POSSESSION OF M. KEVORKIAN

(F) HOMAGE SCENE. KIPCHAK (?. CIRC. 1300 (?) AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

(F) TRAITÉ DES AUTOMATES. EGYPT, 1351-54. M. SAMBON'S COLLECTION

EXHIBITION OF PERSIAN MINIATURES AT THE MUSÉE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS, PARIS
PLATE II

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Figure 151. *Miniatures Persanes* exhibition in the Burlington Magazine, October 1912 issue.

Here, in this text, the combination of "two peasants+one demon" became "two effrits and one peasant":

> I introduce a very singular work which belongs to no series that I know of. M. Vignier possesses a miniature by the same hand representing two Effrits, led in chains, and beaten by a peasant. The one I give here [PLATE II, E] is a scene of homage. A man holds the arm of a chief and kisses it, another behind brings a golden vase. The character of these figures is strange; they are clothed in thick wadded robes, and have very curious shoes. The physiognomy resembles no other in Persian art, the nose is flattened, the

[839] https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/effrit, Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales: [Dans la myth. ar.] Génie malfaisant. Contre la large poitrine vient se rompre la charge de l'éfrit et du diable sanglotant (CLAUDEL, Gdes odes,1910, p. 286): Les effrits descendaient au milieu des hommes avec des corbeilles de rubis et des corbeilles de topazes, et la lune qui se levait était comme une perle tombée du collier d'étoiles qui fait le tour de l'étendue... FAURE, *Hist. de l'art,*1912, p. 265. Prononc. et Orth. : [efrit]. Écrit avec 1 *f* ds ROB., *Pt* ROB., *Lar. Lang. fr.* qui transcrivent le mot. Étymol. et Hist. 1910 (CLAUDEL, *loc. cit.*). V. *afrite.* Fréq. abs. littér. *Éfrit* : 1.

[840] Lauren Butler Berger, "Paul Claudel's Cinq Grandes Odes: A Translation and Commentary,"

> beard long and thick, the head-dress and the golden vase remind us of China, though the figures are far from Chinese. The marked accentuation of the touch, the farouche air of the faces, the odd draperies, the polychromy which is rough and sombre, in dark browns, blacks and blues, give a striking air to this isolated work. From what book does it come? Perhaps from the first Raschid ed-din, and illustrates, maybe, a Mongol tribe. Ought we to place it on the N.W. frontiers of China, towards the lake Baikal? May we not, on the other hand, find in these curious types the ancestors of the Russian Moujik? That is not impossible, and the work would then come from the North of Caucasus and the territories of the Volga at the time when the Golden Horde, after the conquests of Batu, reigned on the Kipchak, and it would date between the end of the 13th and the middle of the 14th century.[841]

Looking to the perception of the Paris paintings as "unique examples" and the discussions about their origin, we understand that neither the collectors and curators of the exhibitions nor the authors of the catalog and the visitors to the exhibitions were at all aware of the so-called Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, cut and pasted in the two albums in the Ottoman court library.

9.5 *Divs*—Not one, but two?

As noted above, there are two remarkable inscriptions to the right and left of painting 60. Interestingly, both of them were written as the paper was laid out vertically, the "portrait" layout in today's terms, rather than horizontally (i.e., in the "landscape" layout). In this way, the direction of the script contradicts that of the painting. Maybe this is because the binding was in that direction when the scripts were written. Figure 152 shows in focus these inscriptions.

What is interesting about these otherwise ordinary words is that they were written *by two different hands* and that they display two different ways of writing "*devler*," the plural form of "*dev*," meaning "demon" in Turkish.[842] "*Dîv*" in vernacular Persian has the same meaning: "1. A demon, a fiend, a genie. 2. A giant;

[841] Anet, "Exhibition of Persian Miniatures at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris-I," 16.
[842] Redhouse, *A Turkish and English lexicon*, 917.

anything of a gigantic size, and ugly."[843] On the left, we read "**ديولر**" (*dîvler*) with a "*–y*," as written and pronounced in vernacular Persian, but with the Turkish plural suffix "*–ler*." On the right, the same word is spelled "**دولر**" (*devler*) as sometimes written and always pronounced in vernacular Turkish.

Figure 152. Two remarkable inscriptions to the right and left of painting.

It is highly doubtful that the two different writers who penned the "divs" scripts were aware of the rest of Mehmed Siyah Kalem's paintings in the albums. This is quite evident since we see the same woman peasant, who is one of the very few female characters among Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, in the H.2153 album, folios 37B and 152A. Had they seen these paintings, they would have readily understood that the female the artist depicts is a human peasant, not an *effrit*. Figure 153 presents a comparison for the pictures of the woman.

[843] Redhouse, *A Turkish and English lexicon*, 940.

Figure 153. The same woman appears in different folios of the album H.2153: 37B (detail) and 152A (detail).

Naturally, doubt follows as to the originality of the script "divs," which misleads whoever reads the writing—or indeed views the painting—into perceiving the depiction as two demons chained by one peasant, instead of one demon chained by two peasants, as the painter initially intended. This misinterpretation was reinforced in subsequent publications over the next few years. Nevertheless, in the catalog of the *Miniatures Persanes* exhibition published in 1913, they correct themistake: "effrit or div, chained by two peasants."

This illusion was not solely because of the use of the plural "*divs*" in the script, but also because of a romantic preference reminiscent of the eighteenth century for exotic *jins* and *divs* rather than poor nomads or peasants. Here, the illusion conjured the world of travelers to the land of the *shah of the shahs,* the world in the *Nights,* full of supernatural creatures.

Nevertheless, why use the plural and write "divs" for a scene depicting a demon held in chains by two peasants? It is a critical detail that hints at the journey

of these paintings. To uncover the mystery, we have to proceed one step back before their journey to Paris.

9.6 Berlin–The Scholar: Philipp Walter Schulz (1864-1920)

At the end of the eighteenth century, there were only a few specialists in Europe capable of reading religious, philosophical or historical documents from other parts of the world and "oriental objects were lost amid the colorful diversity of princely 'wonder chambers.'"[844] However, by the turn of the twentieth century in Europe, a highly sophisticated academic study of the Orient had developed. Even travel reports were not usually naive accounts of exciting adventures and strange fables but were penned by observers who carried the most advanced knowledge in their luggage.[845] Thanks to this intellectual curiosity about the outside world, European experts kept adding to the body of knowledge about foreign civilizations with scholarly seriousness.[846]

One of these "capables" was Philipp Walter Schulz (1864-1920), the owner of the paintings before Anet and Vignier and also the "first scholar" to analyze them. It was mainly Schulz who introduced these works in the vivid "scientific" Orientalist realms of Europe, which received these unique works well, drawing them immediately into exhibitions, museums, and publications.

Born into a wealthy family in Leipzig, Germany, in 1864, Schulz received his doctorate in law from the University of Leipzig (1891). He studied Persian and Arabic languages in Berlin. When his first teacher, Dschami Chan Ghori, returned to his former home in Istanbul, Schulz followed him, staying a while. He started

[844] Osterhammel, *A global history of the nineteenth century*, 818.
[845] Osterhammel, *A global history*, 817.
[846] Osterhammel, *A global history*, 818.

collecting objects during his travels through Persia in 1897, where he remained for two years.

Schulz was initially interested in ethnographic studies, but more and more, his inclinations shifted from cultural history and ethnography to art history. When he returned to Leipzig in 1899, he already had a wide-ranging collection. Immediately after he returned, his collection went on display at the Museum of Applied Arts (*Kunstgewerbemuseum*) and was shown at the Museum of Ethnography in Leipzig in the Spring of 1900. After the display in both museums, many of the exhibits stayed as a donation or on long term loans. Some of the articles on display since 1900 were later permanently given by him in 1901 and 1907 to both museums.[847]

Thanks to the financial independence conferred by his family's wealth, Schulz was generous toward museums. Another likely factor was his scholarly inclinations, which he pursued at the expense of trade and commercial endeavors. His generosity and non-profit purposes were considered as an "honorable thanks to his hometown" by the art historians and museum curators of his time, indicating that he only retained his miniature collection for scientific study purposes.[848]

In 1907 a part of his manuscript collection was on display in Leipzig. Three years later, in 1910— the same year as the great Munich exhibition—Schulz loaned manuscripts or single, illustrated pages from his collection to a temporary exhibition of Oriental book art organized by the Museum of Applied Arts in Berlin. In the thin catalog of the exhibition that took place during February–March 1910, the fifth part consists of the collection of Schulz.

[847] Gierlichs, "Philipp Walter Schulz and Friedrich Sarre: Two German pioneers in the development of Persian art studies," 224.
[848] Graul, "Sammlung Walter Schulz," 9.

Schulz wrote the introduction part of 4.5 pages; then comes his collection, grouped under four titles: *Book*, *Bindings*, *Calligraphy*, *Miniatures (Persia, Turkey, India),* with article numbers running from 173 until 323. Under the *Miniatures* part, the last two articles of the *Turkey* section, numbers 278 and 279, we see the two paintings that appeared in the collections of Claude Anet and Charles Vignier in the *Miniatures Persanes* 1912 exhibition (catalog published in 1913), the Scene of homage and Demon in chains, as it came to be named (Figure 154)

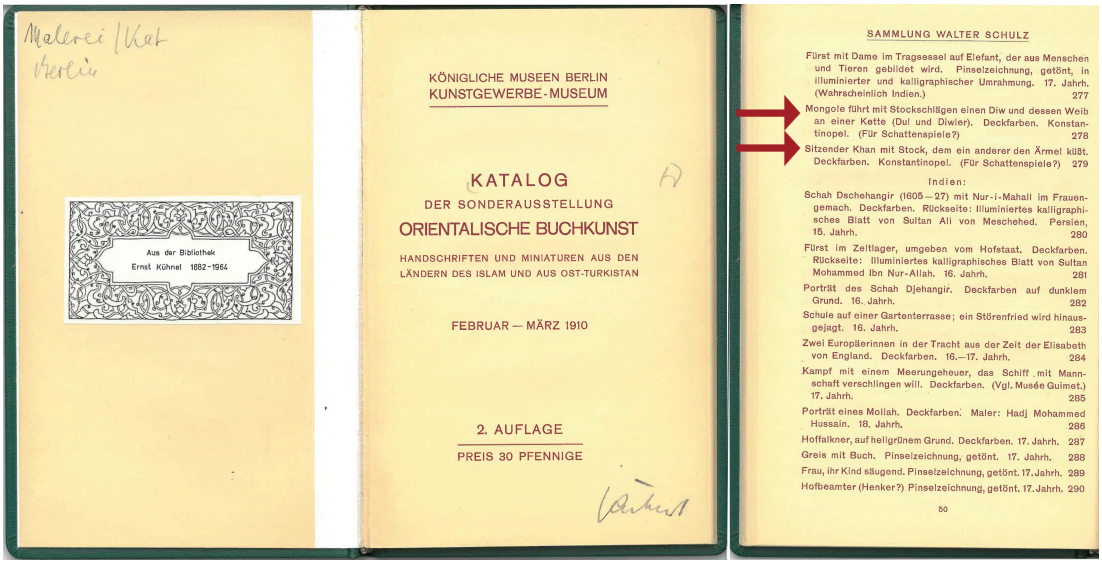

Figure 154. Catalog of the Oriental book art exhibition organized at the Museum of Applied Arts in Berlin, February-March 1910.

In the catalog, we read the following information about these paintings, which we now know are from the Mehmed Siyah Kalem *genre*:

> Mongolian leads beating with a stick a div and his wife on a chain (Dul and Diwler). Opaque watercolors. Constantinople. (For shadow plays?) 278
> Khan is sitting with a stick, another kissing his arm. Opaque watercolors. Constantinople. (For shadow plays?) 279[849]

This text was most probably the first publication about these two paintings and also,

[849] *Katalog der Sonderausstellung Orientalische Buchkunst*, 50.

albeit unaware of this provenance, on the paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem in general. Since they were referred to in the *Turkey* section of the catalog and since we have Constantinople as the place of origin, we can be almost sure that they were from the Istanbul albums. We will be able to voice more firmly this argument one step further when establishing for sure that they were purchased in Constantinople.

Another vital detail concerning this short but essential reference is the question raised by Schulz in parenthesis: "*For shadow plays?*" The argument that these paintings were initially produced to accompany storytellers during their performances was first developed by Mazhar Şevket İpşiroğlu (1908-1985) in a publication from 1985 emphasizing the similarity of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings to puppet and shadow theatre plays.[850]

İpşiroğlu was the first scholar to publish a monograph about the Siyah Kalem paintings, in the year 1977 in ADEVA (Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt, Graz) in Austria. İpşiroğlu completed his higher education in Germany from the late 1920s, the first year in the Painting Department of Düsseldorf Academy, and then after 1929 at universities in Bonn, Hamburg and Berlin in the departments of philosophy and art history. Finally, at Tübingen University, he got his doctorate in philosophy in 1933 with a thesis entitled "Hegel's Esthetics in its Historical Context." Thinking about his skills of reading and writing in the German language as well as his connections with German academic circles, it is not surprising that he was the first to present an argument about the original function of these artworks—namely, as narrative paintings accompanying storytellers during their performances. Schulz's question must have inspired İpşiroğlu, as it was posed less than two decades before he arrived in Germany as a talented young painter as

[850] İpşiroğlu, *Bozkır Rüzgârı, Siyah Kalem*, 10.

well as a scholar candidate, curious about philosophy and art history. Indeed, Schulz has raised the idea of shadow play as early as in 1910.

9.7 One *dul* and two *divs*?

Schulz was the initiator of another argument, one about the subject of painting 60, Demon in chains, which would be adopted in later publications, by Anet (*Burlington Magazine*, 1912) and by Schulz himself in 1914 in his monograph about Persian and Islamic miniature painting.

The explanation for the "Demon in chains" painting was as follows. According to Schulz, in 1910: *Mongolian leads a div and his wife on a chain beating them with a stick (Dul and Diwler).* "Dul and Diwler" are Turkish terms meaning "the widow and the divs," a romantic, thematic association made by Schulz. Nevertheless, as discussed previously, this is probably due to the disorientation of the scripts already existing over the painting. Schulz—although remarkably close to the point in asking the question "For shadow play?"—was unfortunately mistaken in this case. Although the misconstrual was abandoned in the *Miniatures Persanes* catalog in 1913, Schulz again insisted on this false interpretation of the "Mongolian peasant leading the div couple on a chain" instead of "the peasant couple leading the div on a chain" in his monograph of 1914.

The poor peasant woman had long been taken for the div's wife, maybe because she was too dark to be the wife of a Mongolian or maybe because she went barefoot, unlike the husband, the "real" Mongolian peasant. We cannot precisely know the reason today. However, if one thing is for sure, it is that she was sacrificed for the sake of an Orientalist point of view on two levels. In the first one, with the

handwriting the "divs" twice on this painting, in the second level with the eyes reading it and taking it for granted.

Schulz's study of Islamic painting with an emphasis on Persian examples, *Die persisch–islamische Miniaturmalerei* (Leipzig), was published as a two-volume monograph in 1914. The first volume consists of text and the second of plates. Published more than 100 years ago, this monograph is today considered the first comprehensive study on this subject.[851]

The second volume of plates includes both of the paintings (Figure 155), both of which, as mentioned, had been in his collection. He revised the titles of the paintings slightly: "Khan of Kiptschak, fifteenth century" and "Tied up ghul couple, fifteenth century."[852] The title suggests the peasant woman was still considered as the wife of the wild creature, this time referred to as a "ghul," a shortened version of "gulyabani." This is another word of Persian origin, also used in Anatolian Turkish folk tales to denote a mythological wild creature.

In the first volume of the monograph, Schulz raised comments about the origin of these paintings, offering up the valuable information that they were acquired in Constantinople:

> Above all, it is not entirely clear what the origin of the strange, highly interesting genre of fantastic, almost Russian-looking figures is. They are depicted in billowing, flowing drapery reminiscent of the Russian style. The pictures were acquired in Constantinople. One depicts a Turkish–Tatar Khan with his servants, the other a Diw Afrid, or Ghul, with his wife, both being led by a man. Both the clothing and the physiognomy—that is, the straight and flat nose, the bell-shaped headwear, and the small braid protruding out of the top— accord with the Mongolian style of the early Timurid period. Also, the thickly painted, light-color background is Mongolian in its technique and application. Only somewhat coarser and darker is the color scheme in brown, black and blue. Could these copied (!) pictures perhaps originate from the art of the Golden Horde of the Kipchak? (see plate 31). It

[851] Gierlichs, "Philipp Walter Schulz and Friedrich Sarre: Two German pioneers in the development of Persian art studies."
[852] Schulz, *Die persisch-islamische Miniaturmalerei*, vol. 2, plate 31.

> is likely that they originate from a Turkish artist, about whom we know yet very little.[853]

What of these references to the Tartars? "Tartary" is a geographical term that deserves some attention, since no contemporary inhabitants of Asia fitted the eighteenth-century image of the "barbarian" better than the Tatars (or Tartars). They were nomads embodying the raw forces of history, which had only recently been pacified. All the most devastating scourges of history—the Scythians, Huns, Turks, Mongols and Manchus—seemed to originate in that "terrible vast land in deepest Asia."[854] On the other hand, the area referred to as "Tartary" in the middle of the Asian landmass lacked such a sharp definition in early modern maps. For the nineteenth-century Europeans, this corresponded vaguely to the terms "Inner Asia" and "Central Asia," which even today have not achieved conceptual stability.[855]

In line with the trend of this scientific exploration of the past, Schulz—like many other middle-class European intellectuals and scholars—made a long term, a well-planned journey to Persia. Eight years before Claude Anet and his friends, he followed almost the same itinerary, setting off in the autumn of 1897 from Odesa, one of the largest ports on the Black Sea. Schulz traveled through the Crimean Peninsula, the Caucasus, and then from Baku by ship to Anzali on the shores of the Caspian. He then entered the Persian lands, traveling through Qazvin, the medieval capital of the Safavid dynasty for over forty years (1555-1598), Tehran—the Iranian capital from the end of the eighteenth century—and two historical cities in the eastern Azerbaijan province, Ardabil and Tabriz.

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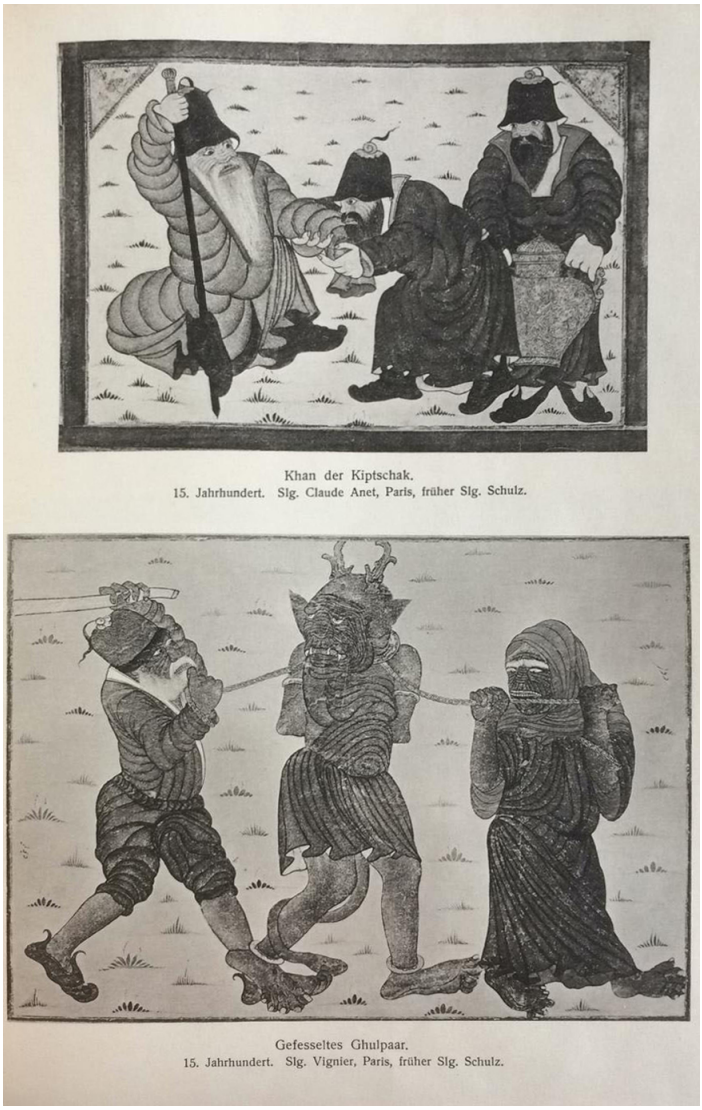
[853] Schulz, *Die Persisch-Islamische Miniaturmalerei,* vol.1, 98. German translation by Fatma Artunkal and Simon Watmough.
[854] Osterhammel, *Unfabling the East*, 303-304.
[855] Osterhammel, *A global history of the nineteenth century*, 82.


Khan der Kiptschak.
15. Jahrhundert. Slg. Claude Anet, Paris, früher Slg. Schulz.

Gefesseltes Ghulpaar.
15. Jahrhundert. Slg. Vignier, Paris, früher Slg. Schulz.

Figure 155. Schulz published the two paintings with titles “Khan of Kiptschak, fifteenth century” and “Tied up ghul couple, fifteenth century” (*Die persisch–islamische Miniaturmalerei*)

While in the northwestern part of Iran, Schulz visited the archaeological site of Takht-i Sulaiman, Sasanian, and antique ruins. He then arrived in Kermanshah in the western part of Iran and visited the ancient city of Persepolis. From there, he ventured to the carpet city of Sultanabad and onward to Qum, the holy city in the salt desert. His next stop was the city of Kashan—famous for its tiles and ceramics, its bazaar and its textile production. Via the garden city of Kuhrud in the central part of the country, he finally arrived at the ancient Safavid capital Isfahan, where he stayed

seven months. It was in Isfahan that he sourced many of the objects that formed his collection.[856]

Throughout his two-year journey collecting Islamic artifacts—an objective he met with extraordinary success— Schulz wrote a detailed travelogue. He returned to his home town Leipzig with an extensive collection in 1899 and, as mentioned, opened a large-scale exhibition in the spring of 1900, at the Museum of Applied Arts and the Museum of Ethnography.[857] Schulz canceled a second expedition planned for Persia and India in 1901 due to ongoing health problems.[858] In 1900 he moved from Leipzig to Berlin, where he stayed until his death in 1920, after many years of health problems.

9.8 Acquired in Constantinople

Since the first reference to these two paintings—known today as the Scene of Homage and Demon in Chains—is in the 1910 Berlin exhibition catalog, it would not be wrong to think that Schulz must have acquired them before the opening of the exhibition in February 1910. They may not be in his collection before 1907 since a part of his manuscript collection was on display at the Museum of Applied Arts in Leipzig from this time. He would surely have exhibited and published on these "unique" and exciting pieces as soon as he included them in his collection. He probably had not acquired these singular works of art by 1908, since there is no mention of them in an article published by the art historian and museum curator Richard Graul about the collection of Schulz in this year.[859] Furthermore, since he

[856] Gierlichs, "Philipp Walter Schulz and Friedrich Sarre: Two German pioneers in the development of Persian art studies," 220-221.
[857] Gierlichs, "Philipp Walter Schulz and Friedrich Sarre," 224.
[858] Gierlichs, "Philipp Walter Schulz and Friedrich Sarre," 217.
[859] Graul, "Sammlung Schulz."

stayed permanently in Berlin between 1900 and 1920, it is reasonable to think that Schulz did not purchase the two miniatures in Constantinople himself, but instead acquired them from someone else.

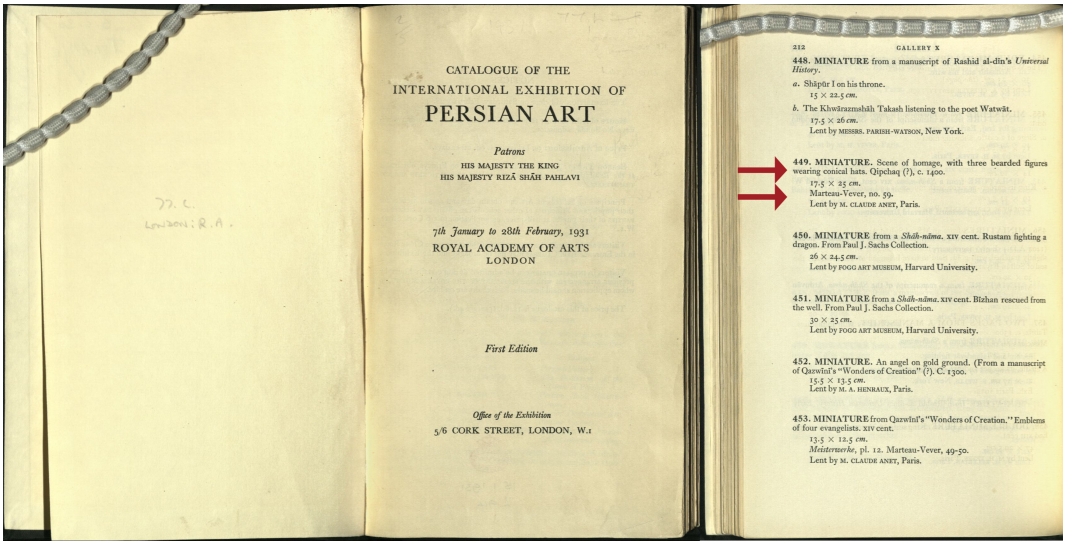
The information he gave in 1914 about the provenance of the paintings also supports this reasoning: "Before W. S. Coll., B. C. 278. 279, now, Cl.A. and Vignier Coll."[860] This means that before they were part of Walter Schulz Collection. According to the abbreviation list at the beginning of the book, B.C. stands for the *Katalog der Ausstellung islamischer Buchkunst im Kunstgewerbe-Museum zu Berlin*, Berlin 1910. The numbers 278 and 279 refer to the article numbers in the catalog. "Cl.A." and "Vignier" stand for Claude Anet and Charles Vignier, respectively, indicating the new owners of the two paintings.

If Schulz possessed them at the time of the 1907 Leipzig exhibition, he would have indicated it here in this part of the provenance information. Eventually, drawing all the clues together, we can state with sufficient confidence that Schulz must have acquired these two paintings around 1907/08 until the February 1910 Berlin exhibition from another person who gave him the information that they were acquired in Constantinople. We know that Schulz made a significant contribution to the Munich 1910 exhibition, which opened its doors on May 14. Most probably, someone offered to him the two miniatures purchased in Istanbul during the preparation period for the exhibition, where the circulation of Islamic artworks must have intensified. The two paintings were acquired by Anet and Vignier at the earliest after the end of the Berlin exhibition in March 1910 and before June 1912, when the *Miniatures Persanes* exhibition opened its doors in Paris.

[860] Schulz, *Die persisch-islamische Miniaturmalerei*, 98.

9.9 London—The exhibition

Following the track of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings further, we arrive in London, where "Scene of homage" was on show during the international exhibition of "Persian art" organized in the Royal Academy of Arts in London between January 7 and February 28, 1931, as shown in the catalog in Figure 156. It seems that the European perception of the Orient from the nineteenth century had shifted and Persian monarchs had become more respected since the time of Anet's visit to the Shah's "disappointing" palace since the patrons of the exhibition were the British king and "his majesty Rıza Shah Pahlavi," the Emperor of Iran.



CATALOGUE OF THE
INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF
PERSIAN ART

Patrons
HIS MAJESTY THE KING
HIS MAJESTY RIZĀ SHĀH PAHLAVI

7th January to 28th February, 1931
ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS
LONDON

First Edition

Office of the Exhibition
5/6 CORK STREET, LONDON, W.1

212 GALLERY X

448. MINIATURE from a manuscript of Rashid al-din's *Universal History*.
a. Shāpūr I on his throne.
15 × 22.5 *cm.*
b. The Khwārazmshāh Takash listening to the poet Watwāt.
17.5 × 26 *cm.*
Lent by MESSRS. PARISH-WATSON, New York.

449. MINIATURE. Scene of homage, with three bearded figures wearing conical hats. Qipchaq (?), c. 1400.
17.5 × 25 *cm.*
Marteau-Vever, no. 59.
Lent by M. CLAUDE ANET, Paris.

450. MINIATURE from a *Shāh-nāma*. XIV cent. Rustam fighting a dragon. From Paul J. Sachs Collection.
26 × 24.5 *cm.*
Lent by FOGG ART MUSEUM, Harvard University.

451. MINIATURE from a *Shāh-nāma*. XIV cent. Bīzhan rescued from the well. From Paul J. Sachs Collection.
30 × 25 *cm.*
Lent by FOGG ART MUSEUM, Harvard University.

452. MINIATURE. An angel on gold ground. (From a manuscript of Qazwīnī's "Wonders of Creation" (?). C. 1300.
15.5 × 13.5 *cm.*
Lent by M. A. HENRAUX, Paris.

453. MINIATURE from Qazwīnī's "Wonders of Creation." Emblems of four evangelists. XIV cent.
13.5 × 12.5 *cm.*
Meisterwerke, pl. 12. Marteau-Vever, 49-50.
Lent by M. CLAUDE ANET, Paris.

Figure 156. Scene of homage exhibited in the international exhibition of Persian art, Royal Academy of Arts, 1931

Only in the first edition of the exhibition catalog do we find "Scene of homage" exhibited with catalog number 449. Here, a piece of crucial information about this painting was embedded: the dimensions of the painting (17.5 x 25 cm). We also learn that it was still part of the collection of Claude Anet in 1931:

> "449. MINIATURE. Scene of homage, with three bearded figures wearing conical hats. Qipchaq (?), c.1400.

17.5 x 25 cm.
Marteau-Vever, no.59.
Lent by M. CLAUDE ANET, Paris"[861]

Interestingly enough, the work did not appear in the following editions of the catalog. In the *Bibliographical Survey* of the literature on the Istanbul albums published in 1981, the art historian Ernst Grube remarked that the painting was withdrawn from the exhibition "after only a short period because it was not considered Persian."[862] The first edition of the catalog was not available to Grube—he based this argument on a 1933 publication by Binyon et al. in which the authors included a "critical and descriptive catalog of the miniatures exhibited at Burlington House in January-March, 1931 ... to fulfill the need of a permanent record, more detailed than the catalog sold at the Exhibition, and fully illustrated."[863]

The authors not only published the exhibition but covered the whole field of Persian miniature painting, though illustrated only by examples displayed at Burlington House. Under the third part entitled The Timurid School, the authors consider "The Scene of homage" painting as one of the works of the painter attached to Shah Rukh's embassy to the court of China in 1420–3. This man, whose name was Ghiyas al-Din, was ordered to write an account of all that he saw on the way. On the return of the embassy, this was presented to Shah Rukh:[864]

> There are a number of pages which must belong to the borderlands of Central Asia, through which the Embassy passed on the journey to China. An example in this style, belonging to M. Claude Anet, was shown in Gallery X at Burlington House during the first few days of the Exhibition, but was afterwards removed to the room illustrating influences on the ground that it was not Persian. Ghiyas al-Din's account is full of the devil-worshippers of these regions. It was not unnatural that the Buddhists should appear to Muslims in this light, when they saw some of the Buddhist paintings, especially those produced under Tibetan influence. Probably such paintings as those of M. Claude Anet (cf. Schulz, Taf. 31) are caricatures of

[861] *Catalogue of the International exhibition of Persian art*, 212.
[862] Grube, "Bibliographical survey of the literature on the Istanbul albums," 19.
[863] Binyon et al.,, *Persian Miniature Painting*, V.
[864] Binyon et al.,, *Persian Miniature Painting*, 56.

> the inhabitants of those regions, confused with recollections of the frescoes to be seen in their country, especially scenes of the last judgement.[865]

Another probable reason for this painting's removal from the exhibition was the death of its owner, Claude Anet, on January 9, 1931, just two days after the exhibition opened. On the other hand, the painting attracted the attention of the popular art magazine *Apollo*,[866] in which it was presented as "a miniature of special interest." Among many other various Persian artifacts, only eight objects from the Burlington House exhibition were chosen as "typical examples" for publication. One of these was "the scene of homage" published in the plate VI (facing page 121):

> Plate VI – Here, through [an] embarrassment of riches, we hit upon a miniature of special interest lent by M. Claude Anet of Paris. The drawing has humour, and might be thought to represent Russian peasants about to disagree upon some questions of local politics. It is known as a "Scene of Homage," and is thought to come from Qipchaq, to belong to the fourteenth century, and is therefore, among the primitives (449).[867]

It is suspiciously unusual that "a typical example" chosen as one of eight representatives among many others was later excluded from the exhibition, with the argument that it was not "Persian enough." It seems that the definition of "Persianness" had changed since the 1912 *Miniatures Persanes* exhibition in Paris, where they stood as unique pieces from Kipchak lands. In other words, nothing significant had happened in the period after that would have influenced the attribution of these paintings to Persian or Kipchak lands. Possibly, Claude Anet's heirs "recalled" the miniature after his death on the second day of the exhibition. That, however, remains speculation, since we have no further credible information has come to light since.

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[865] *Persian Miniature Painting*, 57.
[866] "Some typical exhibits at Burlington House," plate VI.
[867] "Some typical exhibits at Burlington House", 108.

9.10 New York—The "new" center

In his 1985 book *Bozkır Rüzgarı*, Mazhar Ş. İpşiroğlu mentions that two Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings (once in the Schulz collection, and then in the Claude Anet and Vignier collections) appeared in a sale at the Hotel Drouôt, Paris, a few years before.[868] Therefore, the two paintings must have been on sale there in the first half of the 1980s. The place is not surprising since Charles Vignier had worked for years as an expert in this auction house, being still one of the biggest ones in the world today.

Demon in chains has been part of the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art since 1982.[869] The museum purchased the painting from the J. H. Wade Fund by negotiated private sale in lot 114 of the Sotheby's Islamic Art Sale in New York on May 19, 1982.[870]

However, when we compare the two images, i.e., the 1913 *Miniatures Persanes* image and the 1982 Cleveland image, one sees very clearly some crucial differences: The background tufts of grass, as well as the "divs" scripts, have disappeared, as can be seen in Figure 157.

[868]İpşiroğlu, *Bozkır Rüzgarı Siyah Kalem*, 18.
[869] Mehmet Siyah Kalem style, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper, the image size is 25.7 x 34.4 cm. Overall with trimmed marbled borders: 27 x 35.2 cm. The Museum purchased it from Sotheby's sale in New York, 1982 ("Islamic Works of Art," sale no. 4867Y, 5/19/82, lot 114).
[870] Personel orrespondance with Sonya Rhie Mace, March 2019, Cleveland Museum of Art.

Figure 157. Demon in chains has been part of the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art since 1982

We can find the reason for the disappearance of these elements in the "Condition" part of the Sotheby's Sale Catalogue, where the painting is considered as "an important miniature painting related to the Istanbul albums H.2153 and H.2160" with the title "two nomads lead a demon in chains."[871]

> Condition: This miniature painting as previously illustrated in the Marteau-Vever exhibition catalogue in Paris 1912 clearly shows tufts of grass which had been added to the background of this picture. These additions have since been removed and explain the extensive rubbing on the background. The man's beard and the blue trim on his orange coat and the blue trim on the demon's skirt have also been added later.[872]

It is reasonable to think that the "divs" scripts were also added at the same time with tufts of grass and other elements cited in the sale catalog but not mentioned

[871] I am thankful to the Cleveland Museum of Art for supporting this research and sending me the information and documents about it.
[872] *Sotheby's Sale Catalogue*, New York, "Islamic Works of Art," sale no. 4867Y, 5/19/82, lot 114.

in any of the publications. These “extras” must have been added when the paintings were detached from the albums and taken out of the Palace Library. The intention may have been to increase the market value of the artwork with some sense of perspective or some more decorations conforming to the taste of the period and “exotic” scripts making it more attractive, and indeed, more valuable.

Another element different from the album paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem is that Demon in chains is pasted on an album page with trimmed marbled borders. It is not possible to detect if this was the case in the 1910 Berlin and 1912 *Miniatures Persanes* exhibitions. It is not visible, and there is not such a remark in the exhibition catalogs and publication of Schulz. However, probably, this is also a later “intervention.”

9.11 Long-lost meanings with interventions at many levels

If we focus on the last strata in the journey of the Mehmed Siyah Kalem *genre* paintings, two of them made part of the group subdued to brutal commodification with their theft from the Ottoman court library. Known today as Scene of Homage and Demon in Chains, these paintings were sold in Constantinople. Once part of the Ottoman treasure, as objects for the leisurely activity of the sultan or as exemplar works imitated by the artists in the courtly studio these two paintings followed a different path. They were embellished, commodified, and purchased for private collections at the turn of the twentieth century. One of them ended up in a more public sphere—namely, on the wall of the Cleveland Museum—as a result of an auction in 1981.

Chronologically, we first encounter them in the collection of a German scholar, Philip Walter Schulz, a pioneer in the field of Islamic art in Europe at the

turn of the 20th century. in 1908 His collection was considered "currently unlikely to be surpassed in diversity and art historical value by any other private collection."[873] Unlikely to have been the direct purchaser of the paintings, Schulz exhibited these works of art in Berlin in 1910. Since we do not have images of the paintings in the catalog of the exhibition, but only written references, we cannot know for sure if "some new elements" featured in the paintings in 1910 or not. Most probably, theywere incorporated once they were out of the library.

In the case of Demon in Chains, there is explicit information in the Sotheby's Sale Catalogue about later additions: tufts of grass in the background, the man's beard and the blue trim on his orange coat, as well as the blue trim on the demon's skirt.[874] A tiny but crucial later added element that nobody remarked on before among the tufts of grass were the "divs" scripts, which were written on two different sections of the painting.

This small "exotic" script was considered sufficient to improve the attractiveness of the painting. Of course, not all Europeans—not even all European scholars—were driven by intellectual curiosity and enthusiasm for discovery in the twentieth century, characteristics specific to nineteenth-century "scientific" Orientalism. Not all of them saw closeness to the text as the guiding principle, as was the case in the "new history" that took shape from the 1820s in the work of Leopold Ranke and his disciples, first in Germany, then much elsewhere. For them, the past was to be reconstructed out of written sources; history was to become more scientific, more verifiable, and more critical in its attitude to received myths.[875]

[873] Graul, "Sammlung Schulz,"10.
[874] *Sotheby's Sale Catalogue*, "Islamic Works of Art," sale no. 4867Y, 5/19/82, lot 114.
[875] Osterhammel, *A global history of the nineteenth century*, 8.

Nevertheless, there were other actors in the scene, notably art dealers. The nineteenth century and turn of the twentieth century also witnessed the detachment of text and image from each other, where collectors were no longer too interested in and tolerant of texts they could not read or understand, seeking instead mostly beautiful images. The most typical example of this trend is undoubtedly associated with George Joseph Demotte (1877–1923), a Belgian-born art dealer and owner of galleries in Paris and New York. Demotte has become known among historians of Islamic art for his treatment of the legendary *Great Mongol Shahnameh*, known today, regrettably, as "the Demotte *Shahnameh*."

The process that saw Demotte's name ended up linked to this precious artwork began around 1910 when the well-known art dealer Hagop Kevorkian brought it from Tehran. Demotte bought it from Kevorkian's brother-in-law, Shemavan Malayan. After the purchase, Demotte tried to sell it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and other potential buyers but failed to get the price he wanted for the whole manuscript. He was haunted by the idea of selling the miniatures as separate folios. He altered the works physically in several ways to increase their sale value, without adequately recording the original form of the book. Pages were pulled apart to produce separate sides with miniatures. To disguise this and the resulting damage, he hired calligraphers to add new text, often from the wrong part of the work. Demotte did not expect his new clientele of wealthy collectors to be able to read Persian. This has left the subject of some of the miniatures uncertain, as the surrounding text does not match them.[876]

For Scene of Homage, looking to the evidence in the case of its "companion," it will not be wrong to deduce that they shared the same destiny for

[876]George Joseph Demotte, *Wikipedia*.

"tufts of grass." Moreover, comparing it to other Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings in the albums, triangular corner spaces also were later added elements with the intention to give a "value-enhancing stylish touch."

Two years after they entered the European scene in Berlin, the two paintings re-appeared in Paris, in the aforementioned *Miniatures Persanes* exhibition in 1912. Here the new owners were Claude Anet and Charles Vignier, prominent figures among the Paris, and indeed the European, art scene. Thus began a search for the identity of the artist of the paintings—as well as for the persons he had depicted—in the international arena. Were they Mongolian, Kipchak, Russian, Tartar, Persian, or Turk?

Another discussion attended this part of the journey, from court library to private collectors and then through exhibitions, museums and publications to public scenes. Aside from the identity of the persons, even their nature as species was not precise for the "experts": The woman nomad who helped her husband to catch the demon was for a long time interpreted as the wife of the demon. The "original sin" of this misinterpretation was most probably the scripts "divs" inscribed in the plural form. Looking for at least two divs to satisfy the plurality, the barefoot woman must have seemed the more likely "candidate" than the man beating the demon with the stick in his hand.

After 1913, we next encounter the Scene of Homage in London, in an exhibition of Persian art in the Royal Academy of Arts in 1931. The piece was later removed from the exhibition supposedly because it was deemed *not Persian,* or maybe due to other reasons, such as the death of its owner in Paris.

Although this is the last public appearance of Scene of Homage, we know more about the final stop of Demon in chains, which was purchased in a Sotheby's

sale in New York in 1982 by the Cleveland Museum of Art. We have new information about the painting: it was pasted on trimmed marbled borders, a feature not remarked on before. Surprisingly, we learn from the sale catalog that some of the later added elements were removed from the painting. The painting was returned to the original "empty" background, without tufts of grass, which were erased. The Demon in Chains painting looks different than when we last saw it in 1914, published in Schulz's monograph. However, the person or persons who erased them decided not to remove other additions, i.e., the man's beard, the blue trim on his orange coat and the blue trim on the demon's skirt. Probably it seemed too difficult to erase them since it caused "extensive rubbing." I have not yet had the opportunity to see this painting in person, but looking at the sale catalog, later additions and removals are readily noticeable. Although the reasons for the additions and removals can be surmised, there is no information about who is responsible.

After the 1910s, besides the shifting background, we see a "new" peasant woman, the wife having been "returned safely to her original husband," thanks to a more accurate interpretation. The museum phase of the painting's life has been even more glorious than earlier ones, with a rich exhibition history[877] but also prestigious citations.[878]

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[877] *The House of Timur: Princely Arts in Fifteenth Century Iran and Central Asia*. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, DC (April 14-July 6, 1989) also to Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA, (August 13-November 5, 1989). *The Year in Review for 1982*. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH (organizer) (January 5-February 6, 1983). *The Twain Shall Meet*. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH (organizer) (October 30, 1985-January 5, 1986).

[878] Lee, Sherman E. "Year in Review for 1982." *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, vol. 70, no. 1, 1983, pp. 3–55. Reproduced: pp. 24, 52, no.64. Grube, Ernst J., and Eleanor Sims. *Between China and Iran: Paintings from Four Istanbul Albums: a Colloquy Held 23-26 June 1980.* [London]: Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, 1985. Reproduced: fig. 295. Neils, Jenifer. "The Twain Shall Meet." *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, vol. 72, no. 6, 1985, pp. 326–359. Mentioned: p. 358, cat. no. 43. Blair, Sheila, Jonathan Bloom, and Richard Ettinghausen. *The Art and Architecture of Islam 1250-1800*. New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 1994. Mentioned: no. 82, p. 62. Gertsman, Elina and Barbara H. Rosenwein. *The Middle Ages in 50 Objects*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Mentioned: p. 100-103; Reproduced: p. 101.

The pinnacle of its fame may be the recent publication in 2018, in which it was one of 50 objects selected "to reveal the full and rich history of the Middle Ages."[879] The authors collected all kinds of objects, such as an altar front, a pilgrim's flask, a calyx, an incense burner, a leaf from the Kur'an, a fragment of mosaic, a curtain panel, a plaque, a bowl, a fibula, and a button. They grouped the objects under four topics: The Holy and the Faithful, The Sinful and the Spectral, Daily Life and Its Fictions, and Death and Its Aftermath. Each section is organized chronologically, and every object is accompanied by a penetrating essay that focuses on its visual and cultural significance within the broader context in which the object was made and used.

Demon in Chains is the twenty-fifth object, the last in the second thematic section, The Sinful and the Spectral. Here we have also a satisfying explanation for the use of the script "div*s*" in the plural:

> The woman, on the other side of the demon, appears to be a hybrid, half-human and half-animal, her physiognomy not much less grotesque than that of the div she has captured. She holds a length of the chain in both hands, raising it close to her face and particularly her mouth, as if to examine it or even gnaw at it. Her long, narrow red mouth with pale lips echoes her eyes: the red of the irises and the white of the sclera. Dressed in a long cloak and dark red scarf, she nonetheless remains barefoot, and her feet have huge toenails, just like the demon**'**s.[880]

After comparing the Demon in Chains to other Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings in the Topkapı Palace Library in terms of stylistic and thematic traits, the essay concludes that "this is precisely the style of this painting, which, however, does not bear the artist's name."[881]

Since the Sotheby's sale in New York 1982 was a "negotiated private sale,"

[879] Gertsman and Rosenwein, *The Middle Ages in 50 Objects*, 100-103.
[880] Gertsman and Rosenwein, *The Middle Ages in 50 Objects*, 100.
[881] Gertsman and Rosenwein, *The Middle Ages in 50 Objects*, 101.

we do not know the market value of the painting at this time. Nevertheless, we can form an idea from another painting sold at a recent Christie's auction. In a sale numbered 14218 on October 26, 2017, in London, a painting named "Dancing Demon" was auctioned in "Art of the Islamic and Indian worlds including Oriental rugs and carpets," with lot number 76.

Attributed to Mehmed Siyah Kalem, Central Asia, 14th century, the estimated price of this painting, whose size is 16.6x12 cm on a folio of 25.2x20.7cm, was £40,000–60,000 (US$53,000–79,500). The final price of this "Dancing Demon" shows the significant historical change in the exchange value of such works as commodities to be hung on walls, rather than pieces of paper cut and pasted on an album folio in the Ottoman court. With a final sale price of £43,750 (US$57,969), this was among the highest price realized in the whole auction of 178 lots, in which total sales reached just over £4.78 million.[882]

9.12 "Scientific" Orientalism

The above narrative of detective work sheds light on a "miniature" scale on how the two pieces of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings entered in the Orientalist realm at the turn of the twentieth century and how they were received. All these interconnected activities had built up the profile of the main actors in this strata—namely, the collectors, connoisseurs, and scholars of this realm. The process provides insights about their perception about the Orient and their peoples: insecure places, magnificent art, people, and even a shah who has no awareness of how precious his own heritage is. We witnessed newly arising or mediating institutions such as

[882] Christie's sale 14218, Art of the Islamic and Indian Worlds Including Oriental Rugs and Carpets, 26 October 2017, London.

museums, auction houses, or publications. We accompanied them in their primary activities: trips to the Orient, making discoveries, collecting artifacts, scholarly study of these objects, spreading the knowledge and experience through diaries, letters, publications, and of course, exhibitions.

More than ever before, the flow of knowledge that reflected all these activities was a one-way street around the world in the long nineteenth century. Why do these two paintings existing since the sixteenth century in the Ottoman court library in Istanbul had been exhibited, published, and seen for the first time both by the general public as well as scholars and experts in Paris, London, Berlin, and recently in New York? Were the artworks coincidentally flowing among these places to appear in auction sales? Europe, where the modern western art institutions such as the museum, scholarship, collection, and exhibition culture were flourishing, was the place to welcome the flow of artworks. The impetus of this flow was the connected chain of center attraction: accumulation of new urban wealth, the rise of interest-collections-museums-scholars and experts-publications-exhibitions.

We observe, on the other hand, the rise of Western cultural and artistic centers of the period. Purchased in Constantinople and sold to European art dealers on a rising wave of interest in Oriental art and miniatures, the two paintings became the subject of modern scholarly research and publication, exhibited and finally displayed in modern public museum collections as part of the vibrant, nineteenth-century cultural and financial centers of Paris, Berlin, and London. In the twentieth century, their ranks have been joined by New York, where modern art institutions—the museum, the scholar, and the exhibition in a world of "scientific" Orientalism and artistic taste—have flourished and developed, driven by the enthusiasm for "new" discoveries of old texts and artifacts.

As discussed all through this chapter, the professionalization and institutionalization of the fields of archaeology and history, the development of scholarly work in non-European languages, the extensive travels and publication of the resulting discoveries, and the public museums and private collectors in major European countries have contributed to the accumulation of vast quantities of Oriental "antiquities" in Western places. Manuscripts from all cultures have found their way into special sections of the great Western libraries.

Scene of homage and Demon in chains followed the same east-west path. Their mobility reflects the decline of a mode of life, i.e., the courtly culture of the Ottoman world. Compared to the concepts of inspiration and mimesis in the sixteenth-century Ottoman courtly studio, these later added-elements to the paintings were regular interventions in the experimental laboratory activities at that time. Whereas to conceive them as normal acts in the modern world, one has to undermine a vast three hundred years left behind.

When arrived to the nineteenth century, the ink and brush mastery, the recitation pictures of a certain folk artist, the cross-cultural collection of a courtly album, the right of the sword as war spoils, the contemplation and mimesis material of the treasury, had all become museum objects through a process of commodification. For this purpose, it became possible to detach it from the folio it had been pasted, steal it, embellish it to upgrade to the Oriental taste with additions and removals and put it on a frame to display conveniently.

Amidst this transitory period, in all this range of events beginning with the paintings' purchase in Istanbul, was the commodification of artwork—as part of the expansion of European-dominated global capitalism—the only process to blame? Since the purchase of these paintings was not a unilateral act, the episode sheds light

on the decline of Istanbul's power at the turn of the twentieth century and, indeed, marking a turning point before impending historical transformations. For this was when the so-called Ottoman "sick man" of Europe had entered its twilight years, and these works, subject to distortions and ruptures, had started to scatter to more attractive centers to be absorbed into new institutions and given new meanings in Paris, Berlin, and London.

CHAPTER 10

HISTORICIST EXPOSÉ

MOBILITY AND UNIQUENESS

There was a grace from the start.[883]

Kept in the Ottoman Treasury Library since the beginning of the sixteenth century, the mobility of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings along the centers of the Silk Roads exposes a case of a multilayered, non-linear journey. These unique paintings belonged to this transregional land with its peculiar cultural production in the interplay between Chinese sources and intermingled Turkic and Iranian peoples of Central Asia.

The term *Chinese Turkestan* was chosen to express not as a politically defined region, but as a multinational cultural flow area whose wide-ranging sources extend from China towards West Asia during the second half of the fourteenth century.

The study's structure of chronological and geographical components consists of three parts: Capillary routes as the pre-history and production geography of the paintings, Courts as the violent appropriation of the pictures and Museum Walls as the brutal commodification of the paintings. Each part reflects a historical period and a geographical locality.

Besides, each of them is embedded in a historically and geographically defined conceptual framework that intervenes in the journey of this artwork as a social behavior driven by the approach to the painting.

[883] Berger, *Portraits: John Berger on Artists*.

The contribution of this dissertation to the literature on these unique paintings consists of three folded aspects: research material, methodological approach and theoretical.

10.1 New groundbreaking research material input

First, this dissertation enriches the research material about these paintings by providing new groundbreaking sources. To cite the major ones: a linguistic investigation in mainly Turkic, Persian and Mongolian languages to show shreds of evidence that the sobriquet *Siyah Kalem* denotes *Ink Brush* rather than *Black Pen*; research in Chinese and Turkic sources to identify the narrative components and possible meanings of the paintings that have not been identified yet; an investigation in Ottoman archives and European museums to show how two of these paintings were stolen in Istanbul and smuggled to urban cites of Orientalism at the turn of the twentieth century.

These exciting details revealed by the rich resarch material have further implications to seize the context at the historical moment per se through projections on wider scholarly questions.

A case to exemplify could be the multiple depictions of Chaldiran Battle as an inspiration provoked by the Tabriz spoils. Various examples of the largescale research show how the Ottomans valued figural painting.

Moreover, this fact has wider implications about how the so-called Islamic ban on figure painting was actually circumvented in Ottoman urban culture in Istanbul at the sixteenth century.

10.2 New methodological approaches: structural analysis and functional use in daily practice

Secondly, this dissertation contributes to the scholarship with the methodological approaches it develops to decipher mainly two crucial aspects related to the origins of these paintings. With a rigorous structural analysis of Chinese brush and ink techniques, this thesis shows and illustrates exactly the organic links with Chinese artistic and stylistic traditions.

Another crucial input is the substantiation of the storytelling function of these paintings to reveal how they might have been used in daily practices. The paintings' production materials provide reasonable ground for geographical attribution and equivalent social and historical conditions. Opening new perspectives about these paintings, this approach supports the identification of meanings using mainly Chinese and Turkic sources to fictionalize the oral aspect of the tales that these paintings may depict.

10.3 New theoretical approach: explain the mobility of art via historical transformations

The final and fundamental contribution of this dissertation is the theoretical structure developed, followed, argued and demonstrated all along it: A new approach to Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings in pursuing them not as simple artworks in a comparative framework but as mobility elements gaining and losing local meanings and global implications, where through these perception changes and shifting interpretations we can trace historical transformations.

The study uses the journey of this artwork through various centers to explain this mobility via historical changes. These centers can be grouped into three

conceptual frameworks that define the three parts of the study: Capillary routes, Courts and Museum Walls.

Capillary routes refer to the network of intertwined passageways. It defines these paths for long-distance trade and cross-cultural transmission between overland arteries, giving ancient travelers many choices of itineraries on the Silk Roads.[884] Capillary routes predate the production of these paintings in the epochal and regional interaction zones and describe the historical, social and artistic milieu on the background of their creation around the second half of the fourteenth century.

China is a source of historical, artistic, cultural, economic, and institutional references intermingling multidimensional interactions with the so-called Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. The Chinese impact of the ink and brush technique can be predated on these middle paths. These sources enlighten the local production aspects of these artworks, their meanings and possible ways of use recreated in daily practices. However, China alone is insufficient to define the complex intervening cultures in these paintings; this was a multinational, transregional geography outstretching towards West Asia, including various cultural inputs, the major ones being Chinese and Turkic.

Originally these paintings were part of an oral nomadic culture, serving as narrative paintings accompanying storytellers. The tales belong to these people living in the intermediary regions and the storyteller's pictorial recitation addressed them. In this geography, the artist encountered and learned from wide-ranged sources.

This was the kind of ordinary materials of paper and pigments available to the folk artist on these minor capillary routes. They found existence on a creative ground amid several interaction zones. They are, in a sense, the weaver between the

[884] Jason Neelis**,** *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks*, *Mobility and Exchange.*

eastern and western ends of the Silk Roads, between center and periphery, between the decline of Mongols and the rise of Timurids, and between oral and visual aspects.

The importance of these sources comes from the fact that they provide primary documents to classify and interpret Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings under more specific thematic groups through building relevant connections to the images, deprived of their "oral texts." This attempt constitutes an exercise to induce historicity into the paintings that have remained in the available literature without any meaning about the various themes and figures lost in their journey from China to the West. The importance of the tales lies in the fact that they identify Chinese and Turkic components of the paintings which no one has identified.

In the *Courts* began the afterlives of the paintings towards the end of the fifteenth century. We are suddenly in the violent world of settled monarchies, first in the Akkoyunlu Tabriz and then in the Ottoman Istanbul. They became part of a historically, geographically, and conceptually new world, as they were cut and pasted to fit on royal album folios of visual imagery. These were the cosmopolitan centers of various interactions, the world of cities and empires that always appropriate art.

The paintings of the storyteller acquired new perceptions in the courts through new inputs and outputs, additions but also removals and changes of meanings amid new contexts. As a result of this violent act -cut and past- they lost their integrity and original function in the new environment. They are no more storytelling paintings, but visual reference models in courtly cross-cultural collections. They entered the wide range of cross-cultural collections of the Akkoyunlu Yakub Bey (r.1478-1490) court in Tabriz. The paintings are no longer in their original format when accompanied by oral recitations, but single folio works cut and pasted within a codex.

After the Chaldiran Battle in 1514, the albums with the paintings inside are among the spoils from Tabriz, conquered by the Ottomans. According to the Ottoman conquest and booty economy, they became a legitimate right of the sword from the legendary Akkoyunlu palace. Ottoman court welcomed them as part of the Ottoman Treasury Library.

They were displayed and visited on special occasions within the shared court culture as contemplation material. The contemplation concerns not only reading and entertainment but also an active one. They serve as an inspiration source for mimesis purposes for the court artists. The sultan can use them as he wishes, write anything on them, repaint, and make careless attributions as he wishes, because these are his private property, not the storyteller's paintings for public display anymore.

The *Museum Walls* denote the brutal commodification period for the paintings of Mehmed Siyah Kalem towards the end of the long nineteenth century, where they shared a similar fate with many artworks within the rituals of the Ottoman courtly life: The new system commodified them first as an image through the recent invention of the century, photography. Their second commodification was as artworks that were purchasable; hence they became subject to theft —indeed looting—and, subsequently, international art smuggling.

These were the most brutal interventions in the history of these paintings. Old fashioned and outdated at home, these Ottoman artworks found themselves within the interest realms of scientific Orientalism in the capitals of Europe. They were stolen, and exoticized according to the Oriental taste of the period, they were put on frame for exhibition on museum walls.

10.4 "Pure" origins of mobility

Instead of an attempt to isolate each one of these intricate relations intervening as an input or output to the artwork, it is relevant to adopt the approach of Matthew Canepa, who emphasizes a focus on practice:

> Avoiding dead-end searches for, or comparisons between "original" or "pure" cultural structures, the most productive theoretical approaches for understanding cross-cultural interaction share an insistence that cultures are not unitary monoliths but dynamic interrelated systems continually recreated by daily or generational human practice. Such approaches do not assume that cultures or an individual's cultural identities are static, much less pure. This focus on practice enables researchers to ask questions that extend beyond identifying cultural provenance to the means by which cultural traditions, including art, are recreated and reinterpreted. It allows the researcher an interpretive field wherein art objects and images are not only representative of cultures, but take an active role in constituting and transforming them.[885]

Eventually, each center of this journey constitutes the departure and arrival points of some elements of the artwork, sourcing some artistic components and welcoming others. In each layer, the artwork was recreated and reinterpreted by itself and by its new *milieu*, which in return, was influenced and transformed through this dialectical reflection. From this perspective, "the original" is always changing, sometimes slower, at other times more quickly, and "the pure" is continually blurred during historical transformations. The mobility of this artwork, the distortions and ruptures they were subject to, and the subsequent gain of new meanings, expose—and thus anticipate—historical changes. Following the bimodal historical activity—first, the mobility and second, the historical change—we learn about the history.

10.5 Mirror of mobility

The special circumstances of these paintings are defined by the historical conditions of their period: Under which exceptional circumstances they found ground for

[885] Canepa, "Theorizing cross-cultural interaction among ancient and early medieval cultures", 9.

Chinese artistic impact? What events led to their arousal as unique paintings of "incredibly individual quality"? What historical circumstances made them cut in pieces and pasted on album folios at the Akkoyunlu court in Tabriz? How were they confiscated in the Tabriz court as the right of the sword after the city's conquest in 1514? How did the Ottoman sultan and court artists use them as contemplation and inspiration? What particular historical circumstances made them the subject of art smuggling in the nineteenth century? What historical changes led to their hanging on museum walls in the twentieth century?

The answers to all these questions consist of part of the historical layers in the past of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. Each cluster of special circumstances that reflect the perception of their period is crucial to seizing and apprehending these paintings' history. These interactions extending from China to Chinese Turkestan, then from Tabriz to Ottoman Istanbul and further west in European centers, expose a case of entangled global history through a complex web of non-linear, multidimensional cultural and artistic mobility relations. In this journey, the local experience in each center consists of a significant departure from the past meanings of the artwork.

François Hartog's *The mirror of Herodotus* departs from the idea that it is "impossible to write about the *Histories* of Herodotus without considering the history of how they have been interpreted."[886] He searches in the historical layers of perception of how and why Herodotus became the father of history over 25 centuries.[887]

Adopting a similar approach, this dissertation attempts to contextualize these paintings within their historical and social environments among which they had

[886] Hartog, xvi.
[887] Hartog, xix.

been mobile along the ancient Silk Roads. Considering their history through how they have been perceived in various historical circumstances reveals their history. The image that reflects on the mirror differs according to their perception at different times and places per se. The image that reflects on the mirror is not solely the painting's image. It is also the perception of the period and the memories of history itself as the shifting interpretations.

It is important to remark that this study's intellectual method of investigation is based on counter-chronological research, which provided a ground secure from anachronisms of later interpretations. Considering each period's historical and social context in its integrity prevented the conventional chronology from pretending to foretell what would happen. By deconstructing the previous interactions in the Capillary routes and perceptions and interventions in the Courts and Museum walls, it is possible to seize the epochally and regionally defined meanings and the accompanying mobilities.

The movement with the reflection on the mirror is a kind of circular one, going on between the object, the environment using it and the historical circumstances. Like the movement of coil springs, the object changes, the human perception and practice towards the object changes, and historical events change at each center of mobility due to complex interrelations.

These intertwined circular movements are in a constantly improving process of change and evolving, like what Greenblatt designates as "the surprise of movement", "the sense of not quite knowing where the journey will end or even where it began."[888]

[888] Greenblatt, *Cultural Mobility: A manifesto*, 18.

10.6 Uniqueness and coincidences

In the scholarly literature *unique* is probably the adjective the most used to define Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings. What makes these paintings unique? These pictures are unique primarily because of their artistic style and technique that flourished under specific historical conditions we examined in Chapter 4-Chinese Turkestan. But, was the artist(s) as we name today Mehmed Siyah Kalem the one and only executor(s) of this style, the unique pupil(s) of this Chinese master from the Hexi Corridor? Probably not. Or, were these the only work these artists produced throughout their lives? Probably not. Were these the unique storytellers who used pictures during their recitations? Probably not.

It would not be wrong to assume that when storytellers produced and used these paintings, there were other examples of this kind. Hence, these paintings are unique because they are, as far as we know, the unique survivors of the storyteller's pictures executed with this exceptional style. Coincidences might have played a role in their existence until today, slipping away among many others, common and ordinary in their initial historical and social context.

Such a surviving example of narrative folk painting is preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris: Pelliot Dunhuang manuscript 4524, a picture scroll depicting the contest of supernatural powers between Buddha's disciple Sariputra and the chief of the heretics Raudraksa. In Victor H. Mair's words, this is a "unique and inestimably precious" Chinese picture scroll. Its uniqueness comes from the fact that it is the only surviving example of a genre of Chinese popular literature known as *bianwen* 變文, transformation texts.

The genre date from the Tang period (618- 906), and is considered extremely important in Chinese literature's history because they are the first extended

vernacular narratives in China, with both secular and religious contents. The genre derived from a type of oral storytelling with pictures where the practitioners were primarily lay entertainers, some of them women.[889] The manuscript is Mair's favorite of all objects from Dunhuang mainly because "this unique scroll holds the key to unlocking the relationship between the pictorial and textual narrative that became a hallmark of popular fiction and drama in succeeding centuries."[890]

Surprisingly, Pelliot Chinois 4524 is the only *bianwen* picture scroll survived among numerous others amid a Chinese culture where writing and manuscripts are highly prioritized. To compare with Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, a crucial factor that determines "the survivors" is the social background:

> Unfortunately, because transformation picture recitation in China was basically a folk tradition, there are very few details about it in the historical record, which naturally was the product of elite society. Only one uniquely precious picture-scroll has survived, Pelliot Tun-huang manuscript 4524.[891]

Who selected Pelliot Chinois 4524 to resist until today against temporal and environmental factors? Probably nobody. This manuscript's survival could result from unimaginably simple haphazard quirks of historical and social circumstances. Eventually, as a folk tradition product, Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings could owe their uniqueness to the role played by coincidences.

10.7 Uniqueness and mobility

Besides the role of coincidences, locally defined factors contribute to this journey as an impulse toward global centers. What makes the so-called Mehmed Siyah Kalem

[889] Mair, *Painting and Performance*, xi.
[890] International Dunhuang Project Blog accessed via http://idpuk.blogspot.com/2013/11/a-few-of-our-favourite-things-1-victor.html
[891] Mair, *Painting and Performance*, 1-2.

paintings unique is their profiting from the specific circumstances aroused in historical and geographical interaction zones that prepared a creative ground for the individual style and expression. In this sense, they show traits of the weaver between the eastern and western ends of the Silk Roads, between center and periphery, between the decline of Mongols and the rise of Timurids, and between oral and visual aspects.

Once produced, uniqueness enhances mobility, and in return, mobility supports uniqueness. The hero who encountered these paintings in the capillary routes has taken them to the courts, because they are unique, or at least have appealing traits. Ottoman officials confiscated these paintings with the albums as a right of the sword, because they have extraordinary, even unique traits of the capillary routes, making part of the Akkoyunlu selection. Art smugglers stole, art dealers traded, and art collectors exhibited them because they had a unique, fascinating charm. Along the journey of Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings on the Silk Roads and further West, at every center, regardless of regional and epochal perceptions, uniqueness and mobility had been mutually supportive, yet enhancing each other.

Why the agents of mobility did not care about these paintings' folk background? At this point, Greenblatt's remarks are meaningful about the vital global cultural discourse "producing the temporary illusion of sedentary, indigenous literary cultures making sporadic and half-hearted ventures towards the margins":

> The reality, for most of the past as once again for the present is more about nomads than natives.[892]

[892] Greenblatt, *Cultural Mobility: A manifesto*, 6.

The reality is more about nomads than natives, probably because of this mutual enhancing factor, where uniqueness supports mobility and mobility supports uniqueness. This does not mean of course that the passive or the court do not produce unique works of art; rather folks as well can produce unique works of art, and in this uniqueness mobility plays a role. This brings us to another illusion of mobility defined by Greenblatt:

> And yet, to be fully convincing, mobility studies also need to account for the intense illusion that mobility in one particular direction or another is predestined.[893]

Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings began their journey in the capillary routes and without being influenced by the above illusions of mobility, they had passed through courts and museum walls. Throughout their mobility, they fascinated the audience, enchanted sultans, made jealous court artists, inspired new styles, impressed photographers, provoked smugglers, and captivated art collectors, as they were adopted almost as "the father of Turkish art" in modern times.

Behind the adventure of these works of art along the Silk Roads and further west throughout the centuries, there persists as well another actor of mobility, very basic and simple: These paintings are fascinatingly beautiful!

10.8 Mobility and aesthetics of beauty

These paintings' charm and impressive beauty surely stimulated their mobility from the start. All the mobility agents picked them up simply because they were attracted by their beauty, as they have been for thousands of years in natural and human environments. Beauty transcends time and place, locally and globally, and artistic beauty has always its charms. Observing the paleolithic cave paintings at Chauvet in

[893] Greenblatt, *Cultural Mobility*, 16.

France John Berger expresses his adoration for these "works of art" produced more than 32 thousand years ago:

> What makes their age astounding is the sensitivity of perception they reveal. The thrust of an animal's neck or the set of its mouth or the energy of its haunches were observed and recreated with a nervousness and control comparable to what we find in the works of a Fra Lippo Lippi, a Velázquez, or a Brancusi. Apparently art did not begin clumsily. The eyes and hands of the first painters and engravers were as fine as any that came later. There was a grace from the start. This is the mystery, isn't it?
> The difference between then and now concerns not finesse but space: the space in which their images exist as images and were imagined.[894]

As Berger puts out, *there was a grace from the start* and Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings were a mobility center in the journey of grace for thousands of years. The difference between these mobility centers concerns not finesse but space; such as caves, steppes, courts or museums. This thesis aimed to narrate the historical and social context behind these spaces; and the images of Mehmed Siyah Kalem as images and epochal and regional imaginations reflecting on the mirror as historical transformations.

[894] Berger, *Portraits: John Berger on Artists*.

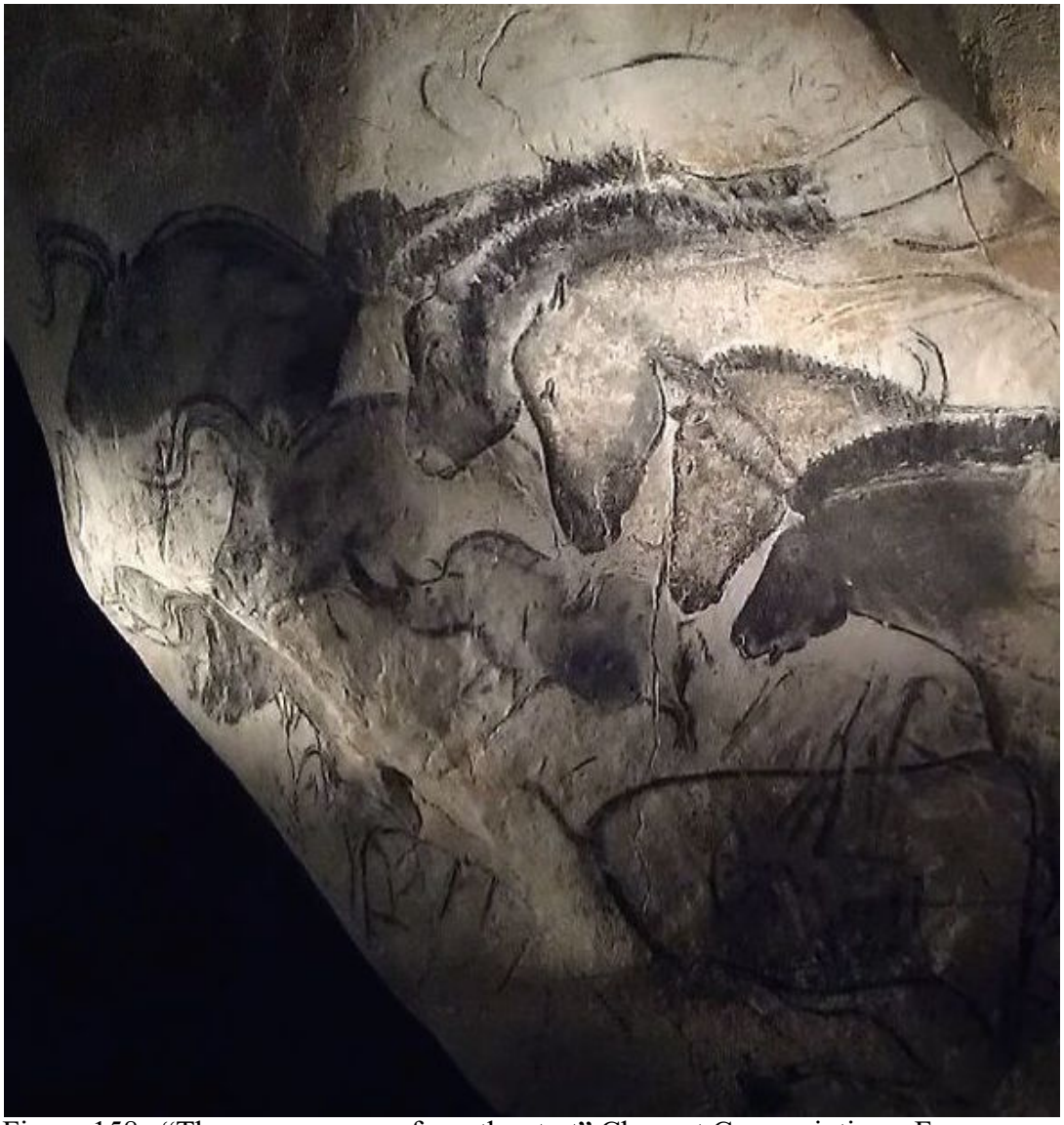

Figure 158. “There was a grace from the start” Chauvet Cave paintings, France, c.30,000 years BC.

APPENDIX A

"PORTRAIT OF A DERVISH"

AS EVIDENCE OF THEFT FROM THE BELLINI ALBUM

Martin, narrating the story of what he refers as Bellini album, surely refers to some folios now in various albums, such as H.2153 and H.2160, where the Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings are found pasted today.

An example is the Florentine etching, which is now in H.2153, fol.144A. It is possible that he misremembers and mixes up the albums he saw in Yıldız Palace library. Otherwise it is possible that the contents of various albums had been mixed up and placed on different albums after the loot.

Roxburgh focuses on "intriguing inconsistencies" in Martin's book and explains the reasons of his confusing references through the argument of "psychoanalytic projection":

> Although we may never know the precise mechanisms by which he acquired the album materials, it would seem clear that his confusing and contradictory references served a purpose Martin felt compelled to invent an album as a red herring that would conceal the means -licit or illicit- by which he acquired materials from the Istanbul collections. His fears about the future of the Istanbul albums may be nothing more than an exorcism of guilt- classic psychoanalytic "projection," in today's parlance.[895]

On the other hand, there are convincing details on what Roxburgh argues as chronologically inconsistent in Martin's story. It is possible to explain these chronological inconsistencies through differentiating the photographic image and looted image.

Let us clarify the inconsistency through the example of a painting known as "Portrait of a Dervish." Roxburgh's argument is the following:

[895] Roxburgh, "Disorderly conduct?," 33.

> Further evidence of the inconsistency of Martin's story is the publication of the Portrait of a Dervish from Baghdad by Gaston Migeon in 1907. Here the portrait bears the caption "Bibliotheque de Constantinople" suggesting its presence in Istanbul up until that time. This offers a chronological problem given that Martin claimed the portrait to have been part of the Bellini Album which had left an imperial library setting during the reign of Abdulaziz (r. 1861–76).[896]

In fact, there was no inconsistency in Martin's story. Suppose one looks more carefully at Migeon's publication in Figure A1. In that case, one can remark two slight hints on the painting of Dervish portrait, which eliminates the inconsistency: The number 99 on both sides of the painting and the stamp of A.D., which stands for Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris.

The story goes on like that: Pascal Sébah photographed the Dervish Portrait from an album in the Ottoman court library. The photographic selection number given for the painting was 99, with Guillaume Berggren's handwriting. The period covers at most between 1868–1885, concentrating roughly on the decade from 1870 to 1880. Jules Maciet, visiting in 1891 the studios in Istanbul, acquired the photo with others in the selection.

The painting was attributed to Bihzad (1455–1535), probably the most famous Persian painter, active during the Timurid period of Herat and Tabriz. So, on the way back, he carefully used his magic scissors to cut and paste on the album 273-19-*Miniatures de manuscrits-Orient-Perse.*

[896] Roxburgh, "Disorderly conduct?," 33.

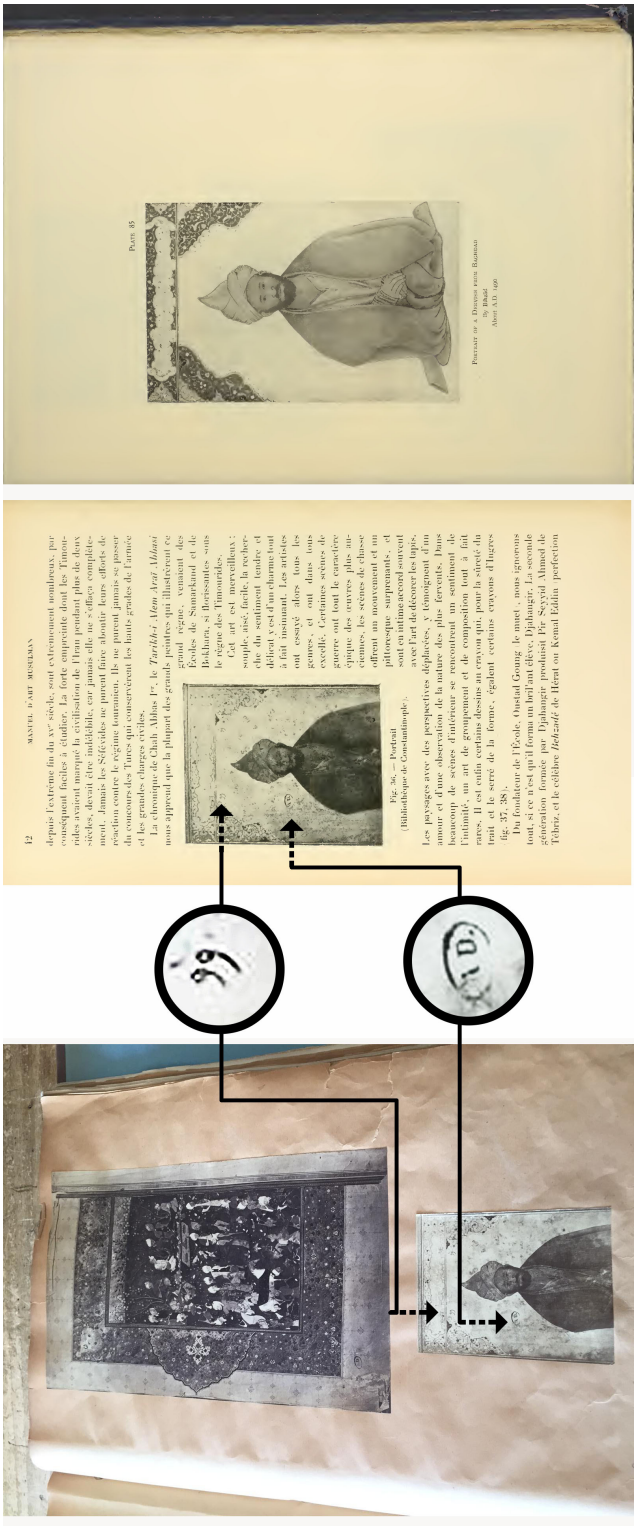

Figure A1. Left: Dervish Portrait in Maciet Albums. Middle: Dervish Portrait in Migeon, *Manuel d'Art Musulman*, 1907. Right: Dervish Portrait in Martin, *The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India and Turkey*, plate 85, 1912.

Since he acquired the series of selections from Istanbul, he knew from the photographer about the provenance: *Bibliothèque de Constantinople*. He donated his albums to the library of MAD; hence the stamp A.D. exists on the photograph.

Then, French art historian Gaston Migeon, looking to the pages of Maciet albums in MAD, decided to use, among many others, this miniature in his publication *Manuel d'Art Musulman* in 1907. Of course, since there was no photoshop at the time, both the number 99 and the stamp A.D. are visible on his publication.

Following the chronology, Fredrik Robert Martin came for the first time in Istanbul in 1896, five years later than Maciet and long after the photographic mission of Sébah. Martin obtained the miniature from the court library and printed it in 1912 (Plate 85), the reproduction from the original he had stolen or purchased, hence without the number 99 nor the A.D. stamp: "Plate 85: Portrait of a Dervish from Baghdad, by Master Bihzad. From the Bellini album. F.R.M."

The painting's final destination happened to be Dublin, Chester Beatty Library (acc. no. 3094.5).

APPENDIX B

LOST AUTHORITY, LOST SEAL

The "imperial tughra," which was the symbol of the sovereign's authority once upon a time, had gradually become a piece of artwork that could be photographed and then detached and stolen from the center of an album folio. The folio represents an illuminated page; and its number in the selection is 63.

Martin acquired this folio among many others and published it in Plate 269 with the following information: "*269. Details from the first leaf of the Bellini Album. About. A.D. 1600. F.R.M*." His initials, F.R.M., indicate that these pieces were already in Martin's possession in 1912. Like many other Bellini album folios, this illumination makes part of Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET) collections today.[897]

Looking to the photograph in the Maciet album (273.17.59) taken by Sébah at the end of the century, there is an essential difference from Martin's publication and from the original in MET: A seal exists at the center of the illumination on Sébah's photograph in the Maciet album! Whereas in Martin's publication reproduced from the original folio in 1912 and in MET's image there appears no seal at all (Figure B1)

The note *Bibliothèque de Constantinople* below the image in Maciet's album denotes the photograph's provenance from Istanbul, before passing in Martin's hand.

[897] Folio from the Bellini Album, ca. 1600, geography attributed to Turkey, opaque watercolor and gold on paper, H. 26.7 cm, W. 22.5 cm, Provenance: Art market, Istanbul, before 1912; sold to Martin; F. R. Martin, Stockholm (in 1912); Hagop Kevorkian, New York (until d. 1962; his estate sale, Sotheby's, London,December 6, 1967, no. 213, to MMA)
https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/451964

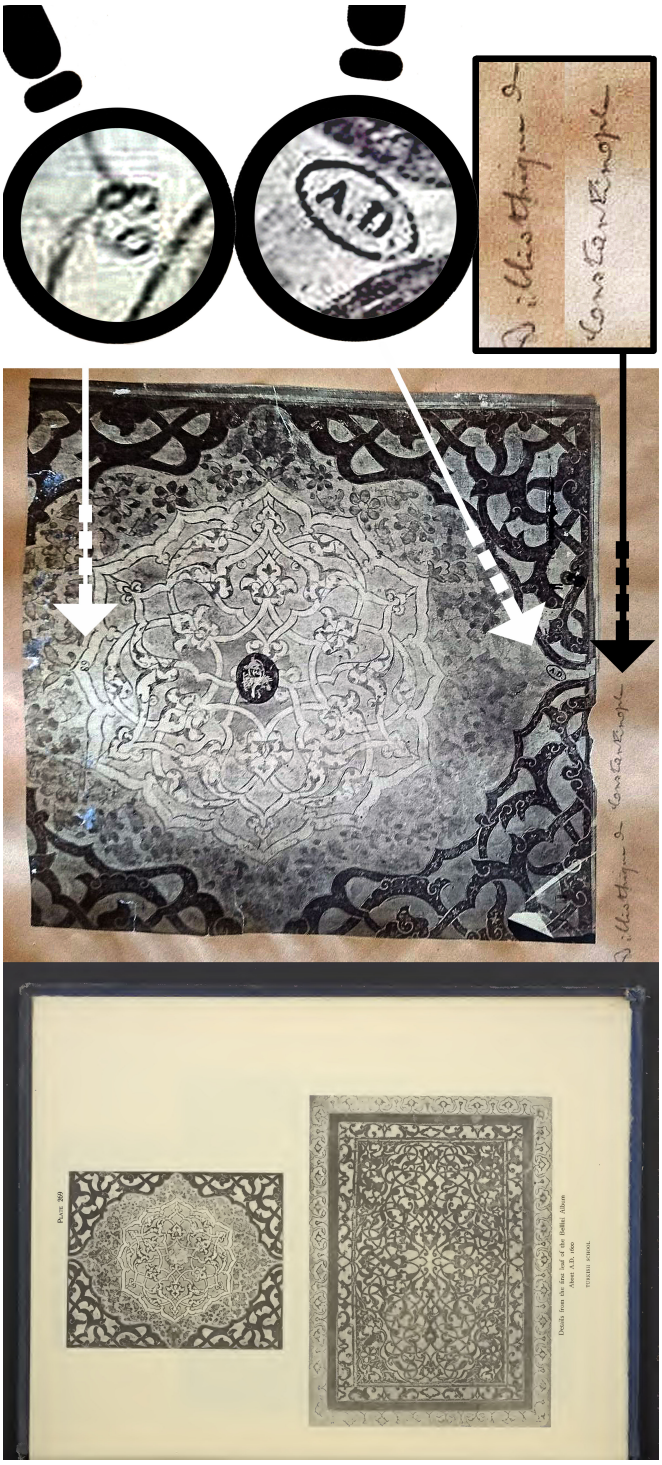

Figure B1. Left: Plate 269, Martin, *The Miniature Painting and Painters*, 1912. Right: Maciet album (431.27.3). Selection number 63, in the photo of Sébah, a seal is visible on the center of the illumination. Maciet placed the image upside down, without noticing the number 63, nor recognizing the seal's direction. He just pasted it, since the decorative design is symmetrical on both ways.

Looking at the excellent quality digital visual reproduced by MET in Figure B2, the place of the seal is apparent at the center, with worn paper pieces caused by

the detachment. The seal, which exists in the photograph of Sébah, disappeared in the publication of Martin in 1912 and does not exist neither on the original piece at MET.

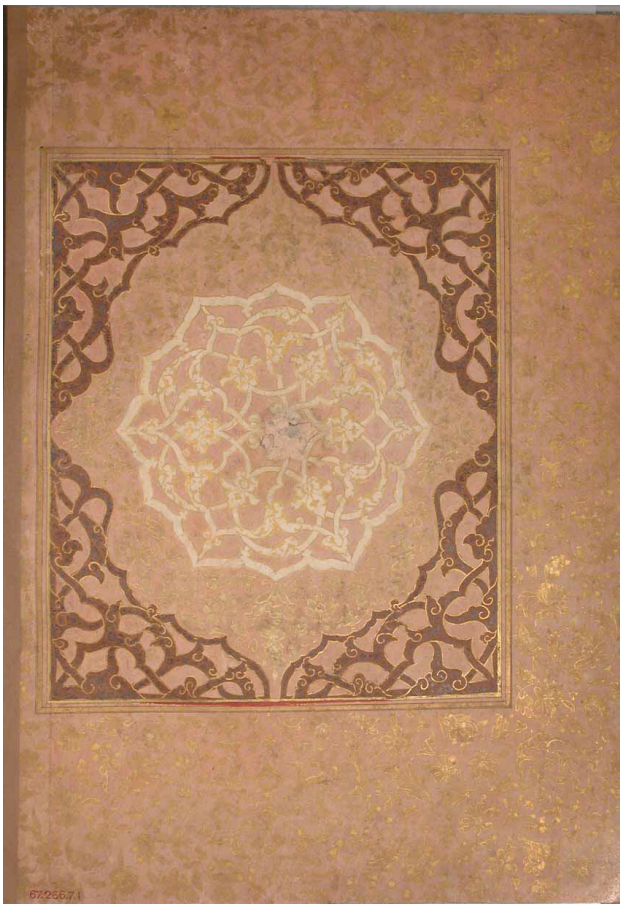

Figure B2. The folio is today in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York. The place of the seal is apparent at the center, with worn paper pieces as a result of its detachment.

Where had the seal of the sultan in this folio of the Bellini album gone? A most exciting assumption is to be found in Martin's assertion about the subject of Bellini Album, which, according to his own words, is "assuredly one of the most extraordinary albums ever executed in the East":

> Fortunately, the photographer took the last page, showing the imperial tughra, which has since been erased from the original.[898]

[898] Martin, p.59

Although not the focus of this dissertation, to which sultan belongs this seal is very meaningful question for Ottoman art history, since Bellini album is one of the most mysterious albums of book arts, thought to be assembled in Turkey during the first half of the seventeenth century for Sultan Ahmed I (r. 1603–17). The seal at the center of this illumination, which Martin attributes to "*the first leaf of the Bellini album,*" is that of Mustafa III (r.1757–1774).

Figure B3. Left: The seal on Maciet album (detail). Right: The seal of Mustafa III in Garo Kürkman, forthcoming book, *Anatolian Seals and Engravers*)

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