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Magnanimous or Autocratic?
Muslim Rulers in Medieval and Early-Modern European Imagination

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ABSTRACT
One way to observe the Muslim-Christian encounters during the medieval and early modern periods and to measure the European fascination with the Islamic world is through the study of contemporary works of art by European artists in which the Muslim rulers were portrayed. These works also depict the Islamic culture, social life, customs, architectural and urban settings, politics and even the characteristics of exotic animals of the east through European gaze. By presenting a brief overview of selected art works produced for the European patrons and consumers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this paper discusses how the Muslim rulers and emperors were perceived in European imagination and what factors were significant in influencing these perceptions.

KEY WORDS
Muslim-Christian encounters, European art, Oriental Mode, Narrative art, Characteristic portraiture

INTRODUCTION
One dimension of the European fascination with the Islamic world was the production of portraits of the Muslim rulersor their depictions in the works of art. Some of these portraits were made for circulation in the Islamic world, but the majority were designed for European patrons and consumers. One significant example is *Divine Comedy* – an epic poem written in the first half of the fourteenth centuryby the famous Italian poet and philosopher Dante Alighieri (d. 1321). Although *Divine Comedy* is an outstanding specimen of late medieval European literature but from a Muslim perspective, it is indeed biased and outright judgmental. The poem that allegorically depicts the poet's own journey through hell, purgatory and paradise, accounts Dante'simagined encounters with

prominent Muslim figures during his voyage.[1] There are quite a few medieval and renaissance artworks surviving thatvisually represent Dante's imaginary encountersinportrayingthese Muslim figures. For example, *The Inferno*(1410) - a complex fresco wall painting by the Italian renaissance painter Giovanni da Modena (d. 1455)inthe Basilica of St. Petronius in Bologna. Moreover, as Christians also believed that idolatry echoes an alliance with the devil, an image in *Grandes chroniques de France* executed for Charles V in the 1370s depicts the Muslim individuals as dark demons and being the agents of devil are shown as attempting to frighten the knights of the Roman emperor Charlemagne (r. 768-814).[2]

The*Divine Comedy* and these images,therefore, in a wider context reflect the contemporary European outlook towards the Muslims, Islamic culture and religion. Dante's attitude, Modena's fresco and the image for Charles V all imitate the medieval Europeanmisbeliefs about Muslims as being pagans and idolaters.Such beliefs of hostilityand attacks on the virtueof Muslims and their leaders continued well into the sixteenth century. The Dutch artist Lucas van Leyden (d. 1533) produced an engraved image *Mahomet and the Monk Sergius* (1508),visually narrating a fictional story that circulated in Europe in the Middle Ages.[3]

However, heresy, monstrosity and immorality were not the only characteristics that the Muslims were associated with and from the late medieval period onwards, we find a change in the attitudein depicting Muslim rulers in the European art and literature. Several later worksshow Muslim rulers and emperors embodying power, tolerance, nobility and chivalric qualities,whereas somewereindicated as tyrants, despots and scourge of God. Focusing on the works of art produced for the European patrons and consumers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this paperdiscusses the major themes adopted by the European artists in portrayingMuslim rulers. Several case studies are used to explorethe ideological purposes of these portrayals and to show the variety in the themes,as the European imagination kept on changing in accordance with the political and social relationships between the two worlds. Broadly, thesecase studies belong to two genres: either they are works, mostly of large scale, with stories on religious, political or allegorical subject matters with the image of a Sultan as part of a complex narrative; or they are characteristic portraits of the Muslim rulers with fictional, non-fictional or metaphorical agenda.

With the expansion of the Islamic Empires, many Christian states came under Muslim rule. As early as the ninth century the Christians of Cordoba had adopted the Muslim living style and the "Mozarabs"(the Christians living under Muslim rule) became the first link between the people of the two faiths. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Sicilian court of the Norman King Frederick II (r. 1198-1250) had Arab scholars at his court for the purpose of learning.[4] These

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[1] For brief introduction on which Muslim figures are depicted by Dante and discussion on possible Islamic sources which Dante may have utilized for conceiving specific parts of the *Divine Comedy* see: Philip F. Kennedy, "The Muslim Sources of Dante?" *The Arab Influence in Medieval Europe* (1994): 63-82.

[2] For details on Muslims being represented as pagans, idolaters and demons in medieval art and literature see: Debra Higgs Strickland, "Saracens, Tartars, & Other Crusader Fantasies" in *Saracens, demons, and Jews: Making monsters in medieval art*. (Princeton University Press, 2003), 157-188.

[3] A copy of the engraved print is in the Auckland Art Gallery. This print of the year 1508 is an illustration of the fictional story aboutProphet Muhammad and the Monk Sergius. See:
Source: http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?_r=1&res=9C0DEFDA103EE233A25752C0A9679D946997D6CF&oref=slogin

[4] Kennedy, "The Muslim Sources of Dante?", 63-82.

communications between the Islamic and the Christian world grew stronger with time, mainly due to the strengthening of diplomatic exchanges and trade relationships between the Muslims and certain European states such as Venice.As a result of these exchanges Muslims became an avid subject matter during this period, for the European art patrons and consumers who due to the limited observation opportunities yearned to havefactual images of the Islamic world;to understand its exotic culture which was unknown but fascinating and terrifying for them. At the turn of the sixteenth century, between 1495 and 1525, the representation of Muslims and their culture reached its height in Venice when Venetian artists visited the courts of the Islamic Sultans and on their return supplied the western patrons with the images attempted to display the precise Islamic settings for the first time. In recent scholarship these artworks are termed as having an "Oriental Mode."[5]

THEMES IN NARRATIVE ART

The Venetian paintings having an "Oriental Mode" were in the form of large scaled narrative scenes, and at times adorning the walls of the city's religious buildings.[6] The themes of these narrative artworks were inspired from historic pasts as well as from contemporary politics, biblical stories, local traditions, ballads, popular poems and epics - fictional and non-fictional, representing accurate details about the costumes, exotic animals and architecture of the Islamic world. The art of the "Oriental Mode" remained exclusive as Venice remained in close contact with the Islamic world, producing the works further sub-categorized into having either a "Mamluk Mode" or the "Ottoman Mode," depending upon the settings and the individuals depicted in the images.[7] Later, however, the artists from other European regions also represented the Muslims along the same lines, often using Venetian art as their models.Here those narrative artworks are discussed thatalso have an image of a Muslim ruler.

Reception of European Embassies

In 1511, a very significant painting appeared in Venice - the *Reception of Venetian Ambassador in Damascus*, now in the collection ofMusée du Louvre, Paris.More commonly called the Louvre *Reception*, the painting is the work of an anonymous Venetian artist[8] and is unique among all the Venetian narrative paintings. Scholars have long debated over the date when the painting was made, but according to recent scholarship it was created in 1511. According to Julian Raby, the Louvre *Reception* was painted after 1488 but had arrived in Venice before 1499. Otto Kurz has dated the painting to 1516.[9]Showing Muslims against an accurate setting with the city of Damascus in the

[5] Julian Raby's pivotal work coined the term 'Oriental Mode' and is of great importance to understand the paintings of Venetian artists along with the whole process of their production. For a detailed discussion on this see: Julian Raby, *Venice, Dürer and the Oriental Mode* (London: Islamic Art Publications, 1982).

[6] Catarina SchmidtArcangeli, "Orientalist Painting in Venice, 15th – 17th Centuries" in *Venice and the Islamic world, 828-1797* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2007): 121.

[7] For details on these two sub-modes and how to distinguish among them see: Raby, *Venice, Dürer and the Oriental Mode*, 21-54.

[8] Louvre *Reception* is attributed to the circle of Gentile Bellini. The artist of the painting is still unrecognized but the details regarding the view of the city in the background provided clearly points to the personal visual experience of the artist.

[9] Arcangeli,"Orientalist Painting in Venice, 15th – 17th Centuries," 134.

background, it is the only Venetian Oriental painting that is secular in theme. Damascus was the hub of Venetian trade in Syria and the scene of the*Reception* suggests that it was probably observed from outside the city walls, somewhere around the Venetian *fondaco* or trading post.[10] The focus of the painting is aMuslim dignitary granting an audience to a Venetians delegation.The Orientals in the painting are recognized as Mamluks and the central figure, sitting on the raised platform*mastaba*, is the highest official wearing an enormous horned turban or headgear called *na'ura*, which served as a crown for the Mamluk Sultan.On the basis of this fact and some other details, Kurz believes that the central figure must be a Sultan.[11] However, Raby suggests that certain Amirs have also occasionally worn the horned turbans, given to them by the Sultans, so this could be the Amir (governor) of Damascus and not the Sultan himself.[12]The significance of the Mamluk horned turbans will be discussed in detail later in the essay but as it is associated with power and authority; in *Reception* it symbolizes the importance of the central figure. The authority of this person over Damascus is also evident from his facing the audience, his sitting position where the delegation and the dragoman are standing in his presence, and his two high officials, probably *Ulema* (religious leaders)are sitting at some distance behind him on the *mastaba*. Keeping with the overall composition, Louvre *Reception* was later copied twice, by other anonymous artists, with little modification in the viewing angel, architectural features, animals and human figures. In 1545 a fourth version appeared in the form of a tapestry.[13]

The *Reception of Venetian Ambassador in Damascus*"provided a compendium of the Mamluk urban milieu from which the Venetian painters selected authenticating details."[14]It also introduced a new theme in painting, the scenes showing Muslims rulers receiving foreign delegates, and became a model for many later works. The painters working in the Ottoman courts also adopted this theme. For example, a 1651 painting by European artist shows German Ambassador Freiherr von Schwarzen's visit to the Sultan Mehmet IV (r. 1648-1687). The eighteenth century Istanbul, which had growing diplomatic and cultural contacts with wider Europe, became a popular city for European artists. It is evident from Antoine de Favray's painting, *Sultan's Audience Granted to Ambassador Saint-Priest,* exhibited in Salon, Paris in 1771. Favray worked under the patronage of French ambassador in the Ottoman capital and this composition depicts an audience of November 1768. Another painting by the same artist title, *Audience Granted by Sultan Mustafa III to Ambassador Vergennes 17 December 1768* depicts a farewell visit paid by the ambassador.Although, these works are slightly outside the scope of the essay but significant to show the impact of the Louvre *Reception* carried well into the early modern Ottoman world and also to show the attitude of

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For a detailed discussion on the dating and characteristics of Louvre *Reception* see: Raby,*Venice, Dürer and the Oriental Mode,* 55-65.

[10] Deborah Howard, "Death in Damascus: Venetians in Syria in the mid fifteenth century,"*Muqarnas* 20(2003): 143-57.

[11] For a discussion over the identity of the horned dignitary see: Otto Kurz, "Mamluk heraldry and the *interpretatio Christiana*,"(in Myriam Rosen-Ayalon, ed.), *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet*. (Jerusalem: Institute of Asian and African Studies, 1977): 297-307.

[12]Raby,*Venice, Dürer and the Oriental Mode*,62.

[13]Raby,*Venice, Dürer and the Oriental Mode*, 55.

[14]Rosamond E Mack, *Bazaar to Piazza: Islamic Trade and Italian Art, 1300-1600* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002): 162.

Ottoman rulers in receiving European delegates.[15] Both the paintings are among a few others discussed by Gürçağlar. Whilehis focus is the presence of Ottoman interpreters in the court but he has also thrown light on a specificcourt ritual. This included the ambassadors to wear Turkish garbs and passing through the gathering of janissaries who were then served rice at that moment. Through the exhibition of these western paintings, the European audience got an insight to an aspect of Turkish court and a way in which the Sultan showered his generosity to his men, but also flaunting it in front of the westerners. This also depicted a strict and unchanging court ritual, imposed by the Sultan if the ambassadors were to get in direct contact with him.

Christian Religious Themes

Another important theme in the narrative artworks is the depiction of Christian religious stories. The cycle of fivegrand scaledpaintings, commissioned by Scuola di San Marco to decorate their new residence,are spectacular works of art representing this genre.These paintings illustrate the life and death incidents of Saint Mark, the patron Saint of Venice.[16]From among these, two of them painted by Gentile Bellini's[17] pupil Giovanni Mansueti titled, *Saint Marks Heals Anianus* and *Scenes from the Life of Saint Mark*are significant. In addition,another painting by the same artist but from a different cycle, originally made for the Church of Santa Maria dei Crociferi, titled *The Arrest of Saint Mark in the Synagogue*, is worth noting. All three with their iconological program having religious implications, are more substantial for the present study. These paintings depict urban settings similar to that of Renaissance Venice but representing the audience in Syrio-Egyptian costumes. The most elaborately clad figure among these is the crowned Muslim leader with *na'ura*, accurately rendering a high-ranking Mamluk personal, either Sultan or Amir.

Saint Mark was the founder of Christian Church in Alexandria and was martyred in the same city in 75 CE. However, these Venetian religious paintings from the circle of Bellini depict medieval Muslim audience in the presence of Saint Mark, the horned Muslim leader being themost prominentof all. AlbrechtDurer, a German artist had also worked along the same ideas and produced woodcuts and engravings around the same period, for example, *Martyrdom of Saint John* (1498), but using Ottoman audience instead of Mamluk.[18] Such piecesportray the life of Christian Saints, dressed in their contemporary Roman clothes, preaching to the "unbelievers" in Alexandria whoin the fifteenth and sixteenth century werenow Muslims and not the pagan Romans. The artist depicts "the intermingling of communities and cultures in a scene that evokes both the western church and the

[15] For detailed discussion on these eighteenth century paintings, see: Aykut Gürçağlar, "Representations of Ottoman Interpreters by Western Painters", *Acta Orientalia* 57, no. 2 (2004): 231–42.
[16] Scuola di San Marco was a powerful Venetian fraternity. The first two paintings in the cycle titled: *Saint Mark Preaching in Alexandria* and *Martyrdom of Saint Mark* show the events of the Saint's life and death in front of a group of people, which includes Oriental, Venetian and other European figures. The paintings however, do not depict any Muslim ruler as part of the group, who is otherwise shown in the other paintings from the cycle. For details see:Raby,*Venice, Dürer and the Oriental Mode*,35-52.
[17] Gentile Bellini (1429-1507) was the famous Venetian painter who stayed in Istanbul for one and a half year to work under the patronage of Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II.Bellini came into direct contact with Ottoman life and culture and his figural studies of the Turks became models for many Renaissance artworks, for example, the 'Ottoman Mode' woodcuts and engravings of German artist Albrecht Durer (1471-1528).
[18]Raby,*Venice, Dürer and the Oriental Mode*, 24.

eastern bazaar," thus "combining the two worlds: the contemporary and the classical."[19] In doing so, Brotton proposes that these religious narrative paintings concurrently also reflect how Europeans began to define themselves not in opposition to the mysterious east but through an acceptance of exchange in ideas and materials.[20] However, the scenes of arrest, torture and martyrdom by the Mamluk individuals and in the presence of their Sultan, places the Mamluks alongside the pagan Romans of Alexandria who were responsible for the Saint's death.With this approach, one wonders if it is possible that the Venetian artists were on one side fascinated by the exotic Islamic culture, but by using the Muslims as part of these religious themes, they are also presenting Muslims as religiouslyintolerantand equating them to pagans?

Courageous Opponents in Military Affairs

One of the most popular themes in European art is that of narrating the conflict between opposing powers, their emperors and scenes of theirbattles and wars.The sixteenth and seventeenth century artworks on this theme often show European emperors and Muslim Sultans as equal rivals, although earlier the Muslims were referred to as treacherous, deceitful, and in alliance with devil.At some instances, the art pieces were just dedicated to the Muslim Sultans to glorify their powers and victories. The reasons for this change was, for one,to make visible the concept that the Christian and Muslim rulers were equal opponents in a fair fight - making the victory of Christians all the more glorious, where possible. In resonance to this concept it was also significant in defending Christianity and to persuade the followers of Christ of the superiority of their religion and culture, and also for the justification of the wars. Secondly, the Europeans came into direct contact with the Muslims in the wars, where the latter clearly impressed the Christian knights and kings by their skills, virtues and conducts in war, especially following the Second and the Third Crusades.[21]Certain Muslim individuals were much admired in the west in these regards, especially the Ayyubid Sultan of Syria and Egypt, Salah al-Din or Saladin (r. 1174-1193),[22]from the times of the Third Crusade. The legend of Saladin and his armies engaged in combat with the army of King Richard the Lion Heart became the topic of many art and literature works, not just during the medieval period but also in early modern/modern periods. These works offer Saladin in dual perspective, "in which Saladin is presented as a historical villain, but an artistic hero."[23]

The European artists utilized these ideas in various media ranging from medals to portraits and from woodcut engravings to visual images and frontispieces of European Travel accounts and histories.Ideal cases to demonstrate this theme are the two frontispieces, which Avcioğluhas discussed.[24] The first is for Jean-Jacques Boissard's book *Vitae et Icones Sultanorum Turcicorum*,

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[19]Jerry Brotton,*The Renaissance Bazaar: From the Silk Road to Michelangelo* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003): 36.
[20]*Ibid:*37.
[21]*Ibid:*188.
[22]Ṣalaḥ al-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub (1138–1193), better known in the Western world as Saladin, was a Kurdish Muslim, who became the first Sultan of Egypt and Syria, and founded the Ayyubid dynasty. He led Muslim opposition to the European Crusaders in the Holy Lands. At the height of his power, his Empire included Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, Hejaz, Yemen, and parts of North Africa.
[23] Strickland, "Saracens, Tartars, & Other Crusader Fantasies," 189.
[24] For details see: Nebahat Avcioğlu, "Ahmed I and the Allegories of Tyranny in the Frontispiece to George Sandys's Relation of a Journey,"*Muqarnas* 18, no. 1 (22 March 2001): 203–26.

which contains biographical information and portraits of the Muslim rulers and nobilities and was published in 1596. This frontispiece shows Roman Emperor Ferdinand on the left and the reigning Ottoman Sultan Mehmed III on the right. Both rulers have similar postures, facing each other, and are treated equally with respect to their size, their costumes, headgears and the royal scepters that both are holding. Below these images there is a depiction of a battle and both the emperors have their eyes on that. This emphasizes their factual position as distant leaderswith regards to the Great Hungarian war, which was fought between the Habsburg and Ottoman armies for thirteen years (1593-1606).[25]The other image is the frontispiece of Richard Knolles's *Generall History of the Turkes, from the First Beginning of that Nation to the Rise of the Ottoman Familie* (1603).This piece also depictsa scene of battle at the bottom and opposing military leaders on each side within an architectural setting with marble columns of Byzantine style, relating the Ottoman lands.Although, both the leaders are shown having the similar dynamism and energy, however, the European leader is facing towards the Turkish, who in turn is looking in the other direction. This probably representsthe Turkish Sultan's slight shift from his victorious path, as according to Avcioğlu this frontispiece reflects"the victory at the battle of Lepanto in 1571, when the combined forces of Spain and Venice defeated the Turkish fleet."[26]

The Disgraced andDefeated Sultans

Even though Avcioğlu claims that the frontispiece of Richard Knolles's book represents the defeat of Ottomans in the battle of Lepanto, the piece itself does not confirms whetherthe Sultan shown on the frontispiece is Selim II (r. 1566-1574).However, in the later half of the sixteenth century an engraving depicting this Ottoman Sultan appeared in the works of European chroniclers and traveler's accounts.These images specifically indicated the defeat of Sultan Selim II at Lepanto in 1571. This was the frontispiece of a pamphlet entitled *Pianto, et Lamento de Selin*. The woodcut image depicts the Sultan standing aloneand removed from any natural setting. Although, he is wearing a Turkish costume and holding a scepter with a crescent on it, crescent being a Turkish symbol, but he no longer signifies"a symbol of power; instead it seems to rest on the shoulder of the Sultan as if to signify resignation, not unlike the position of a rifle held by a defeated soldier."[27]

Ottoman Sultan Bayezid I (r. 1389–1402), a strong and powerful ruler, was defeated in the battle of Ankara in 1402 and captured bythe great Central Asian conqueror and warrior Amir Timur (r. 1370–1405)or Tamerlane. Many contemporary historic sources, both eastern and western, have narrated the dramatic stories of the defeat and afterwards the humiliation of Bayezid by Tamerlane. These stories include his captivity like an animal in an iron cage, his being fed like a dog from Tamerlane's table scraps, his use as Tamerlane's footstool, and eventually his suicide by braining against the bars of his cage in despair.[28] Whether these stories are factual or myth is another debate, but these stories immenselyenjoyed the attention of Renaissance artistsand "found expression in

[25]*Ibid*: 204.
[26]*Ibid*: 205.
[27]*Ibid*. p 207.
[28]William J. Brown, "Marlowe's Debasement of Bajazet: Foxe's Actes and Monuments and Tamburlaine, Part I", *Renaissance Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (1971): 38–48.

Europe in the visual and dramatic arts from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century."[29] To mention a few significant works, the woodcut print titled *Caging of Bayazid* from*Chronicon Turcicorum* (1578),by German historian Philip Lonicer (d. 1599), shows the ill-fated Sultan locked in a cage while two guards and a turbaned man are looking at him. A second woodcut image in Lonicer's *Chronicon Turcicorum*titled *Tamerlane and Bayazid* (1578) depicts Bayezid being used as a footstool by Tamerlane to mount his horse. In part one of Christopher Marlowe's (d. 1593)famous play *Tamburlaine the Great*, first performed in 1587, Bayezid is kept in a cage and used by Tamerlane as a footstool while sitting on his throne. Another play,*Le Gran Tamerlan et Bejezet* (1648) by Jean Magnon (d. 1662), explored the same topic and so did Nicholas Rowe's *Tamerlane, a Tragedy* (1701)[30]and a ballet, and several operascomposed by the famous Baroque composers such as Vivaldi (d. 1741), Scarlatti (d. 1725), and Handel (1759). All theseexemplify that perhaps, there is no other Muslim ruler in the history besides the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid I, whose defeat was this thoroughly celebrated by the European artists and audience, even centuries after his death.[31]

CHARACTERISTIC PORTRAITURE

The Ottoman Empire, which existed since 1281 reached its height when the Mamluk rule finally came to an end with Syria and Egypt falling to the Ottomans in the early sixteenth century. At this time the Ottoman Sultan ruled over Anatolia, the Middle East, parts of North Africa, and much of southeast Europewith major Near Eastern trade portsincluding Bursa, Constantinople and Damascus. There was no other way for the Venetians but to strengthen commercial and diplomatic relations with the Turks, just as they had earlier with the Mamluks. This inevitably happened in the first half of the sixteenth century. By this time, all significant orientalist painters, who had invented the "Mamluk Mode"of painting and worked on the Scuola Grande di San Marco, had died. The Venetian tradition of setting large narrative scenes in the Islamic world had no followers in the late sixteenth century, [32] and at this timethegenre of portraits of Muslims, most often Ottoman Sultans, got exclusive attention from the European artists, which were also given as diplomatic gifts, thus had political agendas as well. However, the themes used in these portraits did not reflect the wide body of ideas that were utilized in the artworks made exclusively for the European eyes.

This approach of representation included the ethnographic, historiographical and characteristic studies of the Muslim Sultans, and these studies were presented in the artworks through iconographic elements. The roots of such portraitsexisted earlier too, when Ottoman Sultan Mehmetthe Conqueror (r. 1451-1481) invited Gentile Bellini (d. 1507) for an artistic mission in 1479. Bellini's portraits of the Ottoman Sultans were among the first accurate depictions of Turkish

[29] For a debate over the authenticity of the humiliating treatment of Bayezid by Tamerlane see: Marcus Milwright and Evanthia Baboula, "Bayezid's Cage: A Re-Examination of a Venerable Academic Controversy", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 21, no. 3 (2011): 239–60.

[30]Robert Irwin notes that Rowe's Tamerlane was performed annually on 5 November (the date of William of Orange's landing in England) until 1815. See: Milwright and Baboula, "Bayezid's Cage: A Re-examination of a venerable academic Controversy," 244.

[31] Milwright and Baboula have also mentioned the works such as the depictions of the capture and caging of Bayezid, painted for the Neues Palais in Potsdam (by Andrea Celesti) and Schloss Ambras in Graz (by Carl Franz Caspar or Andreas Raemblmayer). Moreover, they state that tapestries were also produced on these themes in Antwerp during the seventeenth century.

[32] Arcangeli, "Orientalist Painting in Venice, 15th – 17th Centuries,"134.

characteristics. When the Ottoman Empire conquered much of Eastern Europe in the sixteenth century, the demand forsuch portraits of Ottoman Sultans grew in Europe. Europeans princes became eager to collect the authentic characteristic portraits of the mighty Sultans. During the sixteenth century, illustrated histories of Ottomans, printed costume books, illustrated travel accounts and portraits of important men in world history appeared in great number across Europe,depicting the foreignness and exoticism of distant lands. These portraits were not just historical illustration, but were based on accurate descriptions of individual, gathered by great pains. Physiognomy was also given great importance in these portraits as it greatly supports the artist'snarrative of the individual's life, character and actions.[33] The following part of the essay will focus on the major themes developed for representing Muslim rulers in the form of allegorical and non-fictional portraits.

Sultan's Headgears and their Political Significance

In the medieval and early modern Islamic cultures, the most integral part of a Muslim'sclothing, was considered to be the headgear or headdress. This was all the more important in the case of Sultans and dignitaries as the headgear was a representation of ones status, ethnicity and position in the power structure. Thus, the most significant element that distinguishes the Muslims from one another in the European artworks was mostly the headgear. The association of certain headgears to particular dynasties makes the studies of portraits all the more interesting. The sub-genre of the "Oriental Mode" was also developed by the study of headgears and the Mamluk Mode thus became exclusive from the Ottoman Mode. Albrecht Fuess's interesting study on a variety of Middle Eastern headgears in the medieval period is a very interesting study. Here we briefly discuss a few with respect to some artworks where headgears allegorical represent certain characteristics of the Muslim rulers.

Representation of power and status through headgears was not just restricted to the Mamluks. The portraits of Ottomans Sultans from the Veronese Circle, for instance, represent a variety of elaborate bulbous headgears signifying their statuses. However, it was the Mamluks who were more creative in the shapes of their headgears.In the Louvre *Reception*, as mentioned earlier, the Amir wore a very prominent and elaborate headgear, which is known as the "horned turban" in current scholarship. This type of turban was exclusive to the Mamluks. In the fifteenth century the size of Mamluk turban increased immensely and the Amirs started putting horns on it. This was done with reference to *Dhu al Qarnayn*, a two-horned warrior mentioned in the Qurʾan and which some Islamic scholars identify him to be Alexander the Great of Macedon (r. 336–323 BC). Thus, the Mamluks placing themselves intheir geographic context associated themselves with Alexander and clearly saw him as an Islamic role model and started fixing the horns on their turbans. These turbans were called *naʾura* and were reserved for the Sultans or Amirs, representing power and status. A European image of Mamluk Sultan Qansawh al Ghawri (r. 1501–1516), shows the Sultan wearing a two-horned turban. Another image of 1516-17 of the last Mamluk Sultan Tuman Bay II(r. 1516–1517)shows him wearing another type of turban, which according to Fuess, does not have any horns at all but on close inspection the turban seems to have twisted elements on the sides taking the form of horns spiral in

[33]Bronwen Wilson, "Reflecting on the Turk in Late Sixteenth-Century Venetian Portrait Books", *Word & Image* 19, no. 1–2 (1 January 2003): 43.

shape like a ram's horn.[34] In the later half of the fifteenth century the number of horns started increasing and one's position in Mamluk hierarchy was represented by the number of horns in his turban. Thus the Sultan wore six-horned turban while the *amīr*s used to wear four or two-horned.[35]These headgears or turbans were a replacement of crowns. The Mamluk rulers shown in all the Venetian paintings discussed earlier show the six-horned Mamluk ruler sitting on the *mastaba*.

As observed, these horned turbans were exclusive to the Mamluk rulers; however, in the 1575 woodcut portrait of Sultan Saladinby Tobias Stimmer for Paolo Giovio's *Elogia Virorum Bellica Virtute Illustrium*, the Sultan wears a five-horned headgear.In another image, an oil painting by Cristofano dell' Altissimo from 1568, made for Cosimo de Medici also depicts the Sultan wearing a five-horned headgear.As these headgears present the highest level of status to the Muslim dignitaries wearing it, thus, for the European artists Saladin must be an ideal candidate for this honor. Saladin was after all responsible for the downfall of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1187, to the great dismay of the Latin Europe. Despite being the nemesis of the Crusaders, he was one of the highly respected Muslim rulers in Europe. Even Dante places Saladin in Limbo among the Classical heroes, virtuous non-Christians and intellectual characters like Socrates and Plato.[36]

Sultans as Tyrants and Despots

Another very important theme widely utilized in the artworks was the association of Muslim rulers with the European notion of Oriental tyranny and despotism.In awoodcut image, the frontispiece of *Lamento et Ultima Disperatione di Selim Gran Turco* (1575), an anonymous artist presents Selim II in a state of great grief and contempt, showing him ripping the front of his garb and perhaps beating his chest. The text above the image states, "Selim- the great Turk, is in depression over the loss of his army."Avcioğlu has wrongly associated the image with Selim's defeat in the battle of Lepanto in 1571.[37]The image in fact relates to the events following the battle of Famagousta on Cyprus, also fought in 1571.While the Turks eventually won and the Venetians surrendered Famagousta, but the Ottoman army lost fifty thousand men to this war. According to the surrender terms, the Venetian forces were allowed to return home but their Provveditore"was flayed alive and his skin was stuffed with straw and raised on a mast,"[38] and along with many other Christians, his lieutenantwas hanged as well.Juxtaposing these events give a clear and detailed narrative to the image whichshows Selim as a tyrant who under depression due to the loss of his men ordered the execution of the Venetians. The artist also shows that due to the Sultan's tyranny and despotism he "is about to be snared by Charon as retributive justice for events following the siege of Famagousta."[39]

The frontispiece to George Sandys's travel account, *A Relation of a Journey begun An: Dom: 1610. Foure Bookes Containing a description of the Turkish Empire, of /Egypt, of the Holy Land, of the Remote parts of Italy, and Ilands adjoining* (1615) represents another example of a tyrant Sultan,

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[34] For details see: Albrecht Fuess, "Sultans with Horns: The political Significance of Headgear in the Mamluk Empire," *Mamluk Studies Review* 12.2 (2008): 71-94.
[35]*Ibid*: 80.
[36]John Victor Tolan, *Sons of Ishmael: Muslims through European Eyes in the Middle Ages* (2013):79-80.
[37] See: Avcioğlu, "Ahmed I and the Allegories of Tyranny in the Frontispiece to George Sandy's Relation of a Journey," 207.
[38] See: Wilson, "Reflecting on the Turk in Sixteenth-Century Venetian Portrait Books," 39.
[39]*Ibid:*39.

this time Sultan Ahmed I (r. 1603-1617). The Sultan is shown standing over a broken scale and books, holding a yoke in one hand and a globe on the other. This iconography signifies the Sultan's power by the presence of the globe and also labels him as a tyrant for holding a yoke, an unjust ruler due to the broken scale and a person beyond reasoning and civility as he is trampling upon the books.[40] Thus, along with its historic context George Sandy's frontispiece is also a work of narrative art.

The Scourge of God

When Jerusalem was captured in 1099 at the end of the First Crusade, the Christian medieval chronicles boosted about the victories claiming their religion to be the true religion to win Jerusalem back. So when in 1187, Jerusalem fell to Saladin, the Christians began to question their defeat. The answer that they came up with was that it happened with the will of God who wanted to punish the Christians for their sins and Saladin was the scourge of God.[41]Although this theme is not very excessively shown in the European artworks but keptbeing repeatedly associated with Tamerlane the great. In*Tamerlane Witnessing a Scene of Brutality*, a woodcut illustration from Johannes Schiltberger's travel account *Ein wun derbarliche vnnd kurtzweilege History* (1549), the artist depicts a ferocious scene where a woman is being beaten and set on fire by two men. These men are brutally holding her by her hair, probably referring to the slaughter of the innocent virgins of Damascus. Demons and Tamerlane are a witness of this cruel scene or perhaps the artist is presenting Tamerlane, the fierce warrior, as an architect of the act, portraying himself as a tyrant and a Scourge of God, while the woman as a sinner. The Renaissance authors and artists also emphasize thatTamerlane's behavior with Bayezid was God's will and justice was served, as Bayezid was cruel, proud and valiant. Thus, to punish a sinner like Bayezid, Tamerlane was sent by God as the Scourge.

The images of Tamerlanein*L'Histoire de la décadence de l'Empire grec et establissement de celuy des Turcs* (1662), by Lanonicus Chalkondyle (d. 1470), shows the sun and moon above Tamerlane's head, on either side. In medieval and Renaissance art, this pairing of sun and moon represents the Apocalypse. Marcus Milwright believes that the Renaissance understanding of Tamerlane as a Scourge of God fits well with this apocalyptic imagery.[42]This theme was further exploited in the representation of Tamerlane inRenaissance literature and drama, for example, as in the case of Christopher Marlowe's play *Tamburlaine the Great* (1587) – the most famous of all English dramas.

Men of power and Justified Rulers

The portrait themes of showing Sultans as powerful rulers or warriors are the most common universally. This section highlights those prints and paintings that instead of plainly depicting the might of Sultans utilize some allegorical elements. The period following the fall of Constantinople in

[40] For a detailed discussion on the iconography of Sandy's frontispiece and the representation of Ahmed I in it, see: Avcioğlu, "Ahmed I and the Allegories of Tyranny in the Frontispiece to George Sandy's Relation of a Journey,"203-226.
[41] Tolan, *Sons of Ishmael: Muslims through European Eyes in the Middle Ages*, 82.
[42]Marcus Milwright, "So Despicable a Vessel: Representations of Tamerlane in Printed Books of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries", *Muqarnas* 23 (2006): 327.

1453 brought a major change in the European art world, especially the Venetian art. Mehmed, the conqueror of Constantinople, was a foremost patron of technology and culture, both eastern and western. He commissioned Italian artists, for example, Gentile Bellini, to make medals and portraits at his court. Bellini's painting,*Portrait of Sultan Mehmed II* (1480) and a medallion titled *Mehmed II* (1480), both have a similar theme. They depict a profile image of the Sultan with allegorical representation of his military power and rule symbolized with three gold crowns. The three gold crowns represent the three kingdoms of Mehmed's Empire, which encompassed Greece, Asia and Trebizond. Another medallion of Mehmed by Giovanni Bertoldo (d. 1491) steps a little further in its allegorical and iconographical personification of the Sultan's three Empires by portraying them as three figures bound by a lasso which the Sultan holds in his hand while he stands on a triumphal chariot.[43]

The iconography of the gold crown again became an allegorical representation of power in 1532 but this time for the highly gifted and cultured Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, Suleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520-1566). Suleyman was a collector of rare gems and jewels, known for his patronage of goldsmiths and jewelers in his own Empire as well as in Venice. In 1532, the Sultan made a heavy investment in some Venetian ceremonial parade accessories, which included a helmet shaped crown of gold and richly decorated with gems and pearls. Between 1532 and 1535 three woodcuts by anonymous Venetian artists and an engraving by Agostino Veneziano (d. 1540) all titled *Portrait of Sultan Suleyman*were made. The theme of these images was the allegorical representation of power and rightful rule, which was depicted by an image of the Sultan wearing the fantastic gold crown. The Sultan's physiognomy in these images does not seem accurate; however, the crown is shown more precisely, which seemed was more important for the artists as well as patron. The crown resembled thepapal tiara, which the popes of the Roman Catholic Church used to wear and thus was representative of Christian power. In the fourteenth century, it took a three tiered form, on which Suleyman's crown was modeled, however, the helmet-crown had one extra tier and replaced the cross of tiara with the plumed crescent shaped aigrette which was an emblem of the Ottoman Sultan. The iconography of crown had little meaning to the Ottoman audience, but as the images were produced to circulate within Europe, in the European context the images presented Suleyman as an equal, if not a superior rival to the Pope. Necipoglu shows that the purpose of this particular crown and its images was rooted political and historical context and aimedto project a "statement of superiority to the two allied heads of Christendom."[44]The images as well as the crown itself also powerfully advertised the Sultan's claim to universal sovereignty and his right to become the sole ruler of a united Empire. The crown was paraded in a procession on the eve when the Sultan had planned a military campaign to conquer Rome.

Keeping with the same theme of projection of power, a German print from copper engraving was made by an anonymous artist in the mid-seventeenth century. The image is titled *Equestrian*

[43] For details of the iconography of these medallions see: Julian Raby, "Pride and prejudice: Mehmed the Conqueror and the Italian portrait medal,"(in J. Graham Pollard, ed.), *Italian Medals*. Studies in the History of Art 21 (Washington DC: National Gallery of Art, 1987): 171-94

[44] For details on the crown, its images of Sultan wearing it and the political agenda behind this whole exercise see: Gülru Necipoglu, "Süleyman the Magnificent and the representation of power in the context of Ottoman-Hapsburg-Papal rivalry,"*Art Bulletin* 71, (1989): 401-427.

Sultan with Panoramic View of Istanbul in the Background and shows Sultan Suleyman sitting on a horse, wearing and holding all the ceremonial accessories, from royal scepter to crown. This image based on the sixteenth century original, incorrectly states the name of the Sultan as Mehmed IV (r. 1648-1687).

CONCLUSION

Muslims being the competitors of Christian Europe since the seventh century were bound to get representation in the European artworks. The early works depicted Muslims as heresy, monsters and immoral characters but with time there was a shift in the attitudes in depicting Muslim in the European art and literature. Due to trade and diplomatic exchanges between the two worlds, the bond grew stronger and in the late medieval period European artists started working for the eastern patrons and Muslims started spreading their knowledge in the European courts. These exchanges opened windows between Europe and the Islamic lands and the fear of the unknown and prejudices slowly melted away, leaving behindgenuine fascination and desire to learn about the other cultures. One of the most important themes explored by European artists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the artistic narrations of diplomatic visits to the Islamic courts. These works also gave an insight to the Islamic culture, social life, customs, architectural and urban settings, politics and even the exotic animals of the east. Working within their own architectural and religious settings, the European artists produced some large scaled unusual paintingsdepicting Muslim figures in biblical or Christian surroundings.

Even though both rivals accepted each other'sfaith but hostility and conflict still hovered between the empires. One of the most popular themes in European remained the narration of this conflict between opposing powers, their emperors against the backdrop of the scenes of their battles and the results of these battles also found narration in European artworks. Many of these artworks also focused on individual Sultans, their characteristics and life events. Such works are mostly small in scale and explored the physiognomy of the Sultans and are in the form of prints or portraits as part ofprinted books, histories and travel accounts. The seventeenth century also saw the birth of Renaissance drama and performance art, where the protagonists of many plays were Muslim rulers, often shown as courageous opponents, mighty warriors or as the scourge of God, as exemplified by Christopher Marlowe's famous play *Tamburlaine the Great*. Thus, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries proved to be an important era in the interaction of east and west, Islamic world and Europe. As a result of these interactions and due to the cultural and artistic exchanges between these two worlds, significant artistic masterpieces were produced.

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