UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Artists as Agents: Artistic Exchange and Cultural Translation between Venice and Constantinople—The Case of Gentile Bellini, 1479-1481

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Art History, Theory, and Criticism

by

Tatiana Sizonenko

Committee in charge:

Professor Jack Greenstein, Chair
Professor Norman Bryson
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Professor John Marino
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Professor William Tronzo

2013

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The Dissertation of Tatiana Sizonenko is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego
2013

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved mother Nina and my brother Igor Samatov, whose unconditional love, support, and encouragement through all these years made this project possible.

"There's some magic at work here," said Caspian. "Machinery!" said Eustace. "I do believe we come to a civilized country at last."

C.S. Lewis
"The Voyage of the Dawn Treader"

Одна из самых больших ценностей жизни—поездки по своей и по чужим странам. Путешествия многое нам открывают, о многом заставляют думать, мечтать.

Дмитрий Сергеевич Лихачев, "Письма о добром"

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Acknowledgements

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The completion of this dissertation is a result of the direct and indirect contribution of my committee members. I would like to thank my committee for their thoughtful review of my work, their extremely insightful suggestions, and their critical support and encouragement throughout the project. In particular, I am extremely grateful to Professor Jack Greenstein, Committee Chair, for his unconditional support, encouragement, and inspiration, and for introducing me to the excitement of Italian Renaissance painting and for acquainting me with intricate theories of portraiture. I would like to thank him for his advice, drawn from his deep knowledge of Renaissance art and theories of representation, without which this dissertation would have been much poorer, if even written at all. I am also very appreciative of Professor John Marino for introducing me to many aspects of Italian Renaissance history and Renaissance humanism, and for the many discussions we had during 2005-2007 in a sequence of

independent studies. This study's debt to Professor William Tronzo is great, especially for his seminars on medieval multiculturalism, which spurred my interest in cross-cultural exchange. I am grateful for his sound advice and rigorous guidance on this project. The help and support of Professor Norman Bryson were extremely valuable in the completion of this project. My warmest thanks for the independent studies, regular meetings throughout this project, critical and illuminating feedback on my drafts, important recommendations, and, overall, his broad expertise in the theory of art that is a constant source of inspiration for my scholarship. I extend my deep appreciation to Lev Manovich for his many contributions to the completion of this project. This study benefited from his theories of new media and the discourse of globalization, and from his critical and valuable advice throughout these years. The encouragement of Professor Manovich was one of the main reasons I decided to pursue the study of the history of art at the Visual Art Department (UCSD), and I would like to express my debt to him for this, for his unfailing interest in my work, and for his friendship. Last, but not least, I am extremely grateful to Professor Sheldon Nodelman, from whom I learned so much through his seminars on Roman art and his expert discussions of art in many areas. I would like to thank him for introducing me to theories of Roman portraiture and providing me with insightful comments on my research.

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cultural exchange. I am most grateful to Professor Norman Bryson for arranging my visit at the Department of History of Art and Architecture at Harvard University.

I extend my deep appreciation to the Mediterranean Seminar—an innovative intercampus research initiative at the University of California, which has become an important catalyst for my research in 2012-2013. In particular, Professor Brian Catlos, Professor Sharon Kinoshita, and Professor Oumelbanine Zhiri welcomed my work and offered critical feedback in the formative stages of this dissertation that aided my research and writing in so many different ways.

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Additional thanks go to curatorial departments in the Bogdan and Varvara Khanenko Museum in Kiev, the British Museum and British Public Library in London, the Fine Arts Museum in Boston, the Frick Collection and Archives in New York, the Fogg Art Museum in Cambridge, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, the Louvre in Paris, and the National Gallery of Art Archives in London for facilitating my research by giving me access to artworks. In addition, the University of California, San Diego Library, in particular the interlibrary loan department, was extremely helpful and supported my research by providing speedy access to obscure publications and books from other libraries. My stay in Venice in the fall of 2010 would have been impossible without the kind hospitality and assistance provided by the staff at the Cini Foundation. I

extend my profound gratitude to Professor Angelo di Tommaso, who enabled me to stay in Venice in the fall of 2009.

Finally, I am indebted to Steve Willard, who kindly offered much advice throughout this project, patiently listened to my tales about Bellini and Mehmed, and critically read some parts of this dissertation, offering insightful comments on my drafts.

Vita

Education

Ph.D.	University of California, San Diego, 2013
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History of Professional Employment and Activities

2013	Public Presentation, Timken Museum of Art, San Diego, May 30.
2013	Lecture, Robert Hull Fleming Museum of Art, Burlington, VT, April 20.
2012-2013	Curatorial Fellow, Timken Museum of Art, San Diego.
2010-2011	Curatorial Fellow, Dean's Office, Division of Arts and Humanities Gallery, University of California, San Diego.
2009-2012	Graduate Teaching Assistant, Eleanor Roosevelt College, the Making of the Modern World Humanities Core Sequence, University of California San Diego.
2008-2009	Collaboratories Fellowship "The Search for the Battle of Anghiari," Center of Interdisciplinary Science for Art, Architecture, and Archaeology, Calit2, UCSD Division.
2005-2012	Curator, Museum of Making Music, San Diego.
2005-2008	Graduate Teaching Assistant, Visual Arts Department, University of California San Diego.
2002	Invited Speaker, Distinguished Lecturer Series at Saint Anselm College, Manchester, NH, the presentation was funded by the Norwich S. and Elizabeth N. Bean Foundation, November 7.
2001	Gallery talk at the opening of the exhibition "Faces of Eternity: The Icon Collection of Louis and Carole McMillen," the Barrington Center for the Arts, Gordon College, Wehnam, MA, October, 2001.
2000-2001	Founding Director, Janus Russian-American Center for the Arts, Brookline, MA.
2000	Invited lecture, "The Post War Russian Avant-Garde: The Collection of Yuri Traisman," Boston College Public Programs, October 2000.
1998-2000	Lecturer, Academy of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Russia.
1998	Lecturer, Academy of Design, St. Petersburg, Russia.
1995-1996	Lecturer, Institute for the Study of Religion and Philosophy, St. Petersburg, Russia.
1995-2000	Assistant Curator, Department of Medieval Art, the State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Peer-Reviewed Publications

2014	"Gentile Bellini's *Impresa*-Portrait of Mehmed II and Its Intertextual Strategies," in *Portraiture and the Written Word* (Ashgate, 2014)

2000 "Old Testament Symbolism of Iconostasis Doors," in *Iconostasis: Origins-Evolution-Symbolism,* ed. A.M. Lidov (Moscow: Progress-Tradicija, 2000), 501-524.

2000 Contributing author, the State Russian Museum, Exhibition Catalogue, *Jesus Christ in Christian Art and Culture XIV-XX Ct.*, ed. E.N. Petrova (Palace Editions; Graficart-Formia: Italy, 2000).

Exhibition publications

2011 Brochure, *Cross-Disciplinary Productions: A Visual Arts Department Exhibition,* Dean's Office, Division of the Arts and Humanities Art Gallery, UCSD.

2011 Brochure, *Hyperlocal Identities: The San Diego Effect,* Dean's Office, Division of the Arts and Humanities Art Gallery, UCSD.

2010 Brochure, *Guitar Nouveau*, Museum of Making Music, Carlsbad, CA.

2010 Brochure, *The Art of the Stompbox*, Museum of Making Music, Carlsbad, CA.

2008 Brochure, *The Magic and Mystery of Slide Guitar*, Museum of Making Music, Carlsbad, CA.

2001 Exhibition Guide. Co-author with Nicholas Constas, *Faces of Eternity, The Icon Collection of Louis and Carole McMillen*, Barrington Center for the Arts, Gordon College.

2001 Brochure, *Russian Roulette: The Art of the Glasnost Years*, Janus Russian-American Center for the Arts, Boston.

Conferences and Colloquia

2013 "Gentile Bellini's Drawings from Constantinople: Fashioning the Cultural Identity of Mehmed II's Court between Constantinople, Venice and Heart," Society for the Medieval Mediterranean Conference Schedule, Churchill College, Cambridge, England, July 8-10. (forthcoming)

2013 "Gentile Bellini's Vision of Venice's History in the Scuola Grande di San Marco (1504-1507)," First Annual Symposium on Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, University St. Louis University, Missouri, June 17-19. (forthcoming)

2013 "Gentile Bellini and Venice's Humanist History: St. Mark Preaching in Alexandria as a Triumphalist Vision of Venice and Humanism's Patrons." The Annual Meeting of the Renaissance Society of America, "Renaissance in Venice Renaissance between Chronicle and History: Writers and Painters," San Diego, CA, April 6.

2012 "Gentile Bellini's *Impresa*-Portrait of Mehmed II and Its Intertextual Strategies." The Annual Meeting of the Renaissance Society of America, "Identity in Written Words," Washington, DC, March 24.

2012 "The Maritime Mediterranean in Art: A Case of Shared Venetian,

Byzantine, and Islamic Iconographies in Fashioning Early Modern Imperial Authority." Presented at the Mediterranean Seminar/UC Multi-Campus Research Project, Winter 2012 for Workshop and Colloquium, "The Maritime Mediterranean," University of California, San Diego, February 3.

2010 "Leonardo da Vinci's *Battle of Anghiari*: New Evaluation and Research of Surviving Copies Using Multispectral Imaging and Other Analytical Technologies, Including the HiperWall at CALIT2, UCSD." Presented to the Board of Trustees Meeting of the Center of Interdisciplinary Science for Art, Architecture and Archaeology, CALIT2, University of California San Diego, May.

2007 "Giorgione and Venetian Humanism." Presented at the Annual UCSB Graduate Student Conference "Civic Cultures: Cities and Towns in the Middle Ages," University of California, Santa Barbara, May 19.

1998 "Symbolism of Old Russian Iconostasis Doors." Presented at the 150th Anniversary of N.V. Pokrovsky Conference, November 4, the State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.

1997 "Symbolism of the Architectural Forms and Elements of Iconostasis Door Decoration." Presented at the Annual Research Conference of the State Russian Museum, the State Russian Museum, May.

1996 "Some Remarks Concerning Origins and Symbolism of Iconostasis Doors." Presented at the International Symposium "Iconostasis: Origins – Evolution – Symbolism," Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, June.

1996 "Arseny Konevsky and Hesychast Movement in Russian Monastic Culture in the End of the Fourteenth Century." Presented at the Conference "The Russian Orthodox Monastery as a Phenomenon of Culture: Present and Historical Views," April.

Curated Exhibitions

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2011 "Cross-Disciplinary Productions: A Visual Arts Department Exhibition," Dean's Office, Division of Arts and Humanities Office Gallery.

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Participating artists: Shane Anderson, Dia Bassett, Crystal Campbell, Jim Cavolt, Emily Halpern, Chelsea Herman, Andrew Hunter, Rizzhel Mae Javier, Ross Karre, Anna Chiaretta Lavatelli, Adam John Manley, Clare Parry, Iana Quesnell, Marisa Scheinfeld, Kelly Schnorr, Wendy Shapiro, Jeannette Ibarra Shindell, Aren Skalman, Rayyane Tabet, Silvia Valentino, Jude Weirmeir, Steve Willard, Joe Yorty, and Claire Zitzow.

Museum of Making Music, Carlsbad, CA

2011-2012 "Roots of Reeds: A Story of Instrument Migrations."
2010-2011 "The Quest for New Voices in Musical Instruments," San Diego International Airport, Terminal 2, September 16-March 15.
2010 "Guitar Nouveau."
2010 "The Art of the Stompbox."
2009-2010 "The Waves of Inspirations: The Legacy of Moog."
2009-2010 "On! The Beginnings of Electric Music Generation."
2008-2009 "The Magic and Mystery of Slide Guitar."
2008 "The Violin in America: Old World Tradition, New World Sound."
2007 "Harp Guitars: Artistry, Passion and Imagination."
2007 "The Ukulele and You: America's Enduring Love of the 'Jumping Flea.'"
2006 "Tribute to Glenn Miller: A Celebration of His Big Band Sound."
2006 "The Singing Saw."
2006 "Visual Mozart: Computer Visualization of Mozart Compositions."

Janus Russian-American Center for the Arts, Brookline, MA

2001 "Images Revealed: Sculpture and Prints by Konstantin Simun."
2001 "Russian Roulette: The Art of the Glasnost Years."
2001 "Alexei Neiman and Sonya Simun: Drawings and Ceramics."
2001 "New Works by Alexander Gassel and Katya Apoekina."
2001 "Unsettling Myths: Paintings and Drawings by Stephen Burt."
2001 "Enchanted Realm: Samuel Gareginyan and Alex Belozersky."
2001 "American Totem: Sculpture, Prints, and Jewelry by Konstantin Simun."

Co-Curated Exhibitions, Member of Curatorial Teams

Barrington Center for the Arts in Wenham, Gordon College, Wenham, MA

2001 "Faces of Eternity: The Icon Collection of Louis and Carole McMillen," co-curated with Nicholas Constas, PhD.

The State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia

2000 "The Life of Christ: Icons and Liturgical Arts," San Marino, Italy and the State Russian Museum.
1999 "Medieval Russian Embroidery 1400-1600."
1998 "Medieval Art from the Collection of N.V. Pokrovsky."

1998 "New Acquisitions and Gifts."
1998 "Golden Treasure House: Gold and Silver Vessels, Rare Books, Icons, Embroidery from the Tsar's Workshops, 1400-1600."
1997-1998 "Russian Monasteries: Monastery Collections of Russian Medieval Art 1300-1600."
1997 "Color Red in Russian Art."
1996 "The Image of the Mother of God in Russian Medieval Art: Icons, Liturgical Vessels, Manuscripts, Embroidery, Church Furnishings, 1100-1700," Milan, Italy, and the State Russian Museum.

Selected Curated Public Programs

University of California San Diego, La Jolla, CA
"Cross-Disciplinary Productions" Exhibition
2011 Exhibition-opening with Jeff Kelley (MFA, UCSD 1985), an art critic, curator, and educator, and an enactment of Allan Kaprow's "Easy" (1972) with PhD and MFA students, March 11.

Museum of Making Music, Carlsbad, CA
"Roots of Reeds" Exhibition
2012 "Tales of the Reed," East Mediterranean folk music and modern jazz performed by Dr. A. J. Racy (UCLA), Dr. David Borgo (UCSD), Sousail Kaspar (Los Angeles), and Rob Thorsen (San Diego), February 11.
2011 "Sounds of the Jungle Temple," traditional music from Asia and modern improvisation on Asian reed instruments presented by musician and ethnomusicologist Randy Reine-Reusch (Vancouver, Canada) with special guest Mei Han (Vancouver, Canada), December 10.
2011 "Howard Levy: Harmonica Fusion," legendary blues, folk, jazz, Latin, and country tunes performed by Grammy Award-winning harmonica player, October 30.
2011 "James 'Mr. Superharp' Cotton," a Grammy award-winning blues harmonica master, September 18.

"The Waves of Inspiration: The Legacy of Moog" Exhibition
2010 "Moog the Man I Knew and the Machine I Learned," a concert with composer and founder of Mother Mallard's Portable Masterpiece Company (the world's first synthesizer ensemble) David Borden, and with performer and arranger Josh Oxford (Ithaca College), April 17.
2009 "George Duke and His Quartet," November 6.
2009 "Exhibition opening and museum concert-demonstration with Keith Emerson and Erik Norlander," August 29.

"The Magic and Mystery of Slide Guitar" Exhibition

2009 "Eclectic Blues with Freddie Roulette, Henry Kaiser, and Friends," March 7.
2009 "The Country Sound with Cindy Cashdollar and Friends," February 7.
2009 "Bob Brozman's World of Slide and Rhythm Guitar," January 10.
2008 "An Evening with Martin Simpson," November 19.
2008 "South Indian Slide with Chitravina N. Ravikiran," November 1.
2008 "Opening Reception Featuring David Lindley and Sonny Landreth," October 11.

"Harp Guitars: Artistry, Passion and Imagination" Exhibition
2007 "Harp Guitars and Beyond" with two-time Grammy nominee William Eaton, April 21.
2007 "Harp Guitar Dreams: Past, Present, and Future" with John Doan, March 24.
2007 "Harp Guitar Experience" with Stephen Bennett, February 3.

Fellowships and Awards

2011-2012 UCSD's Visual Arts Department, Timken Art Museum Fellowship.
2012 UCSD's Visual Arts Department Dissertation Grant.
2012 UCSD's Visual Arts Department Conference Travel Award.
2010-2011 UCSD's Dean of the Arts and Humanities Office's Travel Grant for Dissertation Research and Writing.
2010-2011 UCSD's Dean of the Arts and Humanities Curatorial Fellowship.
2009 Russell Grant for Dissertation Research, Visual Arts Department, UCSD.
2009 Friends of the International Center Fellowship, UCSD.
2008-2009 Collaboratories Fellowship "The Search for the Battle of Anghiari," Center of Interdisciplinary Science for Art, Architecture, and Archaeology, Calit2, UCSD Division, La Jolla, CA.
2008 UCSD's Visual Arts Department Fellowship for Winter Residency at the Department of Art History and Architecture at Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
2007 UCSD's Visual Arts Department Conference Travel Grant.
2005-2007 UC San Diego Fellowship.
1999 National Fellowship for Distinguished Scholarship in Art History, Russia.

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Ph.D. Italian Renaissance art, 1400-1600; specialization: Venetian Renaissance art and architecture; Ottoman and Timurid art, 1400-1600; new media art.
M.A. Byzantine and Russian medieval art and architecture; specialization: Russian medieval art and architecture, 1400-1600; Museum Studies; specialization: museum administration.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Artists as Agents: Artistic Exchange and Cultural Translation between Venice and Constantinople—The Case of Gentile Bellini, 1479-1481

By

Tatiana Sizonenko

Doctor of Philosophy in Art History, Theory and Criticism

University of California, San Diego, 2013

Professor Jack Greenstein, Chair

This dissertation is a historical study of Gentile Bellini's artistic visit to Constantinople and its artistic products—the painted and the medal *Portrait of Mehmed II* and drawings of Ottoman people—that articulates Bellini's role as an agent of artistic exchange. Although recent publications purport to celebrate Bellini's intercultural

experience, they remain within what I call the Renaissance and documentary paradigms: Bellini's works are treated either as a universal achievement of Renaissance art that amazed the Sultan, or as documents of social life and customs in Constantinople. My dissertation, in contrast, argues that these works are a logical outgrowth of the practices of visiting court artists, the increasingly prominent role of images in political and cultural communications between courts and states, and the rising role of artists in diplomacy, which developed during the second part of the fifteenth century on the Italian peninsula and in the Greater Mediterranean. This dissertation examines how Bellini's artistic products reflect Mehmed II's politically motivated interests in ruler portraiture, as well as relate to theories and functions of portraiture in Renaissance courts.

That is, this dissertation argues that Bellini's works have an expressive symbolic purpose; thus my work revises and in part contradicts Renaissance accounts of how Bellini amazed Mehmed II and his court with his superior knowledge of art and skills in verisimilitude. My analysis demonstrates that Bellini learned from the art that he encountered in Constantinople, and that, while there, he tried to make his work comprehensible to viewers familiar with Eastern traditions. Bellini fashioned a new, polyglot visual language out of Romano-Byzantine, Venetian, and Timurid artistic traditions to express imperial authority and to visually proclaim the emerging cosmopolitan structure of Ottoman society developed by Mehmed II. In the end, this dissertation reveals that Bellini drew from a wide range of artistic conventions, including contemporary models available to him in both Venice and Constantinople—distinct,

heterogeneous cultural capitals in the Mediterranean, interconnected by trade and cultural exchange.

Introduction

Dissertation Overview: Research Questions, Historiography, Research Purpose, Methodology, and Organization

Research Questions

The memoir of the Ottoman court official Giovanni Maria Angiolello (ca. 1451-1525), a Venetian noble, merchant, and author of literary works on Ottoman history, describes a curious and lively interaction between Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-1481) and the renowned Venetian painter Gentile Bellini (c. 1429-1507) on the subject of art and cultural matters.[1] Even though the ruler and the artist did not speak the same language and came from different cultures or *semiospheres*[2], Bellini's art is presented in Angiolello's account as a universal tradition based on nature and therefore not culturally dependent on a particular discourse. Amazed by Bellini's skill, the Sultan asks the artist to make a drawing of a dervish who was singing praises to the ruler outside of his palace and pressing him for a post. They then discuss Bellini's representation of the dervish as well as his physiognomy and character. Bellini's artwork spurs diagnosis of the dervish's madness. Urged by Mehmed, Bellini describes the manner of singing praises in Venice and advises the Sultan to make the dervish the head of dervishes, even though they agree

[1] Giovan Maria Angiolello, *Il sultano e Il profeta: memorie di uno schiavo vicentino divenuto tesoriere di Maometto II Il conquistatore* (Milano: Serra e Riva Editori, 1985), 152-153. This passage will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

[2] Yuri M. Lotman defines cultures as distinct semiotic entities or spheres of semiosis—for which he coined the term *semiosphere*, in analogy with the concept of the biosphere. See discussion in the methodology section.

he seems to be mad. Mehmed II honors Bellini in the way a ruler honors a courtier by taking his counsel and appoints the madman to head dervish. Yet Bellini's suggestion was inappropriate or ill-advised if the man was mad. The source has been taken seriously in scholarship, but how should we interpret the story? Are we to believe its claim that Mehmed II was casually conversing with the artist on the matter of art and religious appointment? Did the Sultan indeed decipher the dervish's madness by simply looking at Bellini's drawing? Did Mehmed II make his decision based on a mutually (or dialogically) formed interpretation of Bellini's art? Should we read this account as a blatant promotion of Venetian art as a universal tradition, given that Angiolello was Venetian by birth and enslaved by the Sultan?

Angiolello's dialogue spurred by Bellini's artwork may be taken as an allegory for our understanding of cross-cultural exchanges involving artists, artistic products, and ideas among court cultures within the Mediterranean during the Renaissance. The story provokes an inquiry about the role of paintings and drawings in intercultural communication and whether such interactions resulted in interchange of ideas, knowledge, and artistic technologies.

This dissertation examines Bellini's artistic visit to Constantinople and especially its artistic products—the painted and the medal *Portrait of Mehmed II* and drawings of Ottoman people—to articulate his role as an international agent of cultural and political exchange. Although several recent exhibitions and publications purport to celebrate Bellini's intercultural experience, they remain within what I call the Renaissance and documentary paradigms: Bellini's work is treated either as a universal achievement of

Renaissance art by which he amazed the Sultan, or as documents of social life and customs in Constantinople in which he objectively depicted what he saw, employing an "eyewitness" style to record the mysteries of the Orient. My dissertation, in contrast, places these works in the context of several overlapping phenomena in the period: new theories of the functions of portraiture, the increasingly prominent role of images and artists in communications between courts and states, and the rise of the court artist.

This dissertation argues that Bellini's works have an expressive symbolic purpose; thus it revises and in part contradicts Renaissance accounts of how Bellini amazed Mehmed II and his court with his superior knowledge of art and skills in verisimilitude. My analysis demonstrates that Bellini learned from the art that he encountered in Constantinople, and that, while there, he tried to make his work comprehensible to viewers familiar with Eastern traditions. In this view, Bellini fashioned a new, polyglot visual language—an intercultural hybrid, a curious admixture— out of Romano-Byzantine, Venetian, and Timurid artistic traditions to express imperial authority and to visually proclaim the emerging cosmopolitan structure of Ottoman society developed by Mehmed II.

Bellini drew from a wide range of visual sources and artistic conventions, including contemporary models available to him in both Venice and Constantinople—distinct, heterogeneous cultural capitals in the Mediterranean, interconnected by trade and cultural exchange. As a producer of knowledge about Mehmed II's court, Bellini contributed to a recently established imperial school whose purpose was to fashion a visual identity for the perception of the Ottoman Empire in the East and in the West. The

success of his endeavor may be measured by the emergence, after his return to Italy, of a new tradition in Venice for the representation of Eastern people based on his works. By presenting Bellini as an artistic agent and court artist in the service of the Sultan, this dissertation offers a more nuanced understanding of the historical materials pertinent to Bellini's visit as elements in a complex artistic and political interchange.

This dissertation addresses several fundamental questions: How do Bellini's images of the Sultan and of Ottoman citizens differ from earlier Venetian representations of Eastern people? What did Bellini learn from artistic traditions that he encountered in Constantinople? What was the intended function and meaning of the works Bellini completed in Constantinople? These major questions will help elucidate larger theoretical issues in studies of cross-cultural exchange, particularly those concerned with Renaissance art in Venice.

Although Bellini's artistic visit to Constantinople in 1479-1481 is one of the earliest and best documented examples of an artistic appointment at the court of the foremost Islamic ruler, no extended monograph has yet been devoted to evaluating its artistic products as means of cross-cultural artistic dialogue. In addition, no work has addressed the question of Bellini's artistic agency in the context of his artistic appointment both as a representative of the Venetian Senate and as an employee of the Sultan. Instead, recent studies have focused on Mehmed II's court patronage and his interest in Western art as an index of his cultural and political orientation. These works have reviewed the products of Bellini's visit as factual documents of Mehmed II's

cultural program and as Italian works, but have given little consideration to Bellini's agency in the cross-cultural exchange.

Thus far, Bellini's works have been understood by employing two main paradigms. The first, as mentioned above, is the Renaissance paradigm, which identifies Bellini as a superior Venetian artist who astonished Mehmed II's court with his knowledge of art. By privileging the European mode of production and relying on the idea of artistic influence, this paradigm assumes that Bellini simply employed the pictorial techniques of Italy in Constantinople and did not interact with or learn from the local artistic traditions and visual regimes. The second paradigm may be called the documentary paradigm, and is informed by predominantly taxonomic, scientific, ethnographic notions of accurate transcription that originate in the late-sixteenth-century, reaching its peak in the nineteenth-century Orientalism and ethnographic research.[3] This paradigm treats Bellini's works from Constantinople as documentary images of Mehmed II's court, marking them as foreign and thus contradicting the historical fact that there was no category of documentary images in Italian Renaissance art in Bellini's time. Both paradigms are informed by the supposed binary opposition between East and West rather than by coexistence and bilateral cultural exchange; in addition, they overlook the existence of the Mediterranean as a multicultural entity, as has been recently and convincingly argued. Thus, they do not take into account that Bellini was a member of a

[3] For instance, the volume "Documentary Culture: Florence and Rome from Grand-Duke Ferdinand I to Pope Alexander VII: Papers from a Colloquium Held at the Villa Spelman, Florence 1990," ed. by Elizabeth Cropper, traces the beginning of a shift in Italian culture from predominantly aesthetic and narrative representations to predominantly scientific and taxonomic representations of the natural world in the later sixteenth-century, as connected to the schientific revolution and the age of exploration. See: *Documentary Culture: Florence and Rome from Grand-Duke Ferdinand I to Pope Alexander VII: Papers from a Colloquium Held at the Villa Spelman, Florence, 1990*, ed. Elizabeth Cropper (Bologna: Nuova Alfa, 1992). I thank William Tronzo for bringing this publication to my attention.

heterogeneous society—and a Mediterranean himself—due to Venice's wide-ranging economic and cultural relations in the East.

Gentile Bellini and His Visit in Scholarship

Sixteenth-century art historical writers like Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), Lodovico Dolce (1508/10-1568), and Francesco Sansovino (1521-1576) stand at the beginning of the Renaissance paradigm that was widely adopted in later scholarship. By making some disdainful comments about Bellini when writing about his place in the history of Italian painting, they have affected Bellini scholarship to the present day. Vasari, while acknowledging Gentile's accomplishments, considers him a second-rate artist, inferior in talent, judgment, and skills in portraiture in comparison to his half-brother Giovanni:

> E cosí successe miglior fortuna nell'arte a Giovanni, il quale dotato dalla natura d'ingegno e di memoria migliore, divenne e piú practico e di maggiore intelligenzia e di piú giudizio che non fu Gentile, avendo acquistato Giovanni credito e nome grandissimo da aver ritratto di naturale molte persone, e fra gli altri un doge di quella città, che dicono essere stato da ca' Loredano.[4]

Vasari believed that Giovanni's, not Gentile's, artistic style marked the dawn of the new modern manner, or the third historical period in the revival of Greco-Roman artistic techniques in the Renaissance. He characterized the modern manner as supreme and powerful in design and subtle in the imitation of all the details of nature:

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[4] Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite De' Piú Eccelenti Architetti, Pittori Et Scultori Italiani Da Cimabue Insino a' Tempi Nostri: Nell'edizione Per i Tipi Di Lorenzo Torrentino, Firenze 1550*. A cura di Luciano Bellosi, and Aldo Rossi (Torino: G. Einaudi, 1986), Vol. 1, 433.

> Ma lo errore di costar dimostrono poi chiaramente le opera di Lionardo da Vinci, il quale terza maniera che noi vogliamo chiamare la moderna, oltra la gagliardezza e bravezza del disegno, et oltra il contraffare sottilissimamente tutte le minuzie della natura cosí appunto come elle sono, con buona regola, migliore ordine, retta misura, disegno perfetto e grazia divina, abbondantissimo di copie e profondissimo di altre, dette veramente alle sue figure il moto et il fiato.[5]

According to these sixteenth-century writers, Bellini's art did not come close to this new, celebrated style.[6] These writers also suppressed rather than celebrated the value of diverse artistic traditions, as they regarded the new Italian art as more advanced and greater than any other artistic tradition. The possibility that Bellini learned from and interacted with non-Italian visual traditions at the Ottoman court was outside the scope of the art-historical agenda of these authors. Thus they firmly planted the conflicting assumptions that, on the one hand, Bellini's art was superior to any Eastern or medieval representational tradition, and he therefore did not need to learn anything while working at the Ottoman court; and that, on the other hand, his manner was outdated according to the aesthetic criteria of sixteenth-century Italian art. Subsequent scholars have often accepted Vasari's pro-Florentine account, and have not considered the possibility that

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[5] Ibid., Vol. 2, 541-542.

[6] For example, Lodovico Dolce characterizes Bellini's style as dry, labored, awkward, and old-fashioned, particularly in comparison with modern techniques of atmospheric painting, *sfumato*, and the expressive painting technique that is found in the works of Giovanni Bellini, Giorgione, and Titian. For example, Dolce comments: "…I put it to you that the painting by Bellini is not unpraiseworthy. For every figure in it stands up well, and there are some fine heads; the flesh areas are too, and the draperies equally, are at no great remove from the life. On this basis one can easily comprehend that Bellini was (insofar as his period allowed) a good and careful master. But he was outdone by Giorgione and Titian." (From *The Dialogue on Painting* by M. Lodovico Dolce, published in Mark W. Roskill, *Dolce's Aretino and Venetian art theory of the Cinquecento* ([New York: Published for the College Art Association of America by New York University Press, 1968), 85). In another instance, Dolce provides an account of why Titian supposedly left Gentile's workshop: "But Titian, propelled by nature as he was to greater heights and the perfecting of his art, could not bear to follow that arid and labored line of Gentile's…Titian leaves that clodhopper Gentile and attaches himself to Giovanni Bellini; but the latter's style did not entirely please him either, and he sought out Giorgio of Castelfranco" (Ibid., 186-187). For further discussion, also see Caroline Campbell and Alan Chong, *Bellini and the East* (London; Boston: National Gallery Company; Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2005), 106.

Bellini interacted with local pictorial traditions while working at a non-European or a non-Italian court, or even that he collaborated with local artists in the process of artistic production, which would be expected according to recent post-colonial theory and cross-cultural exchange studies.[7]

Using Vasari and other sixteenth-century writers as well as historical documents, Austen Henry Layard (1887), Louis Thuasne (1888), Gustavo Frizzoni (1898), F. R. Martin (1905), Friedrich Sarre (1906), Lionello Venturi (1907), Corrado Ricci (1912), and Joseph Karabacek (1918) focused on reestablishing the corpus of Bellini's works completed in Constantinople, the circumstances of his appointment by Mehmed II, and his activities at the court. These scholars shared an enthusiasm for attributing works to Bellini and underscored his role as a visiting artist who amazed Mehmed II as the pinnacle of his career.

The rediscovery of Bellini's works from his visit in Constantinople began with the collecting and scholarly activities of Sir Austen Henry Layard (1817-1894). A diplomat and politician, Layard was also an ardent traveler, a draughtsman, and a scholar. Although he is best remembered for his discovery of Nineveh in 1845,[8] Layard's interest in and study of Italian Renaissance art were lifelong concerns.[9] He recorded major frescoes and masterpieces, such as Arena Chapel in Padua, as well as art works in lesser

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[7] See, for example, Claire Farago, "The Semiotics of Images and Political Realities," in Claire J. Farago and Donna Pierce, *Transforming Images: New Mexican Santos In-Between Worlds* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 26-43.

[8] Austen Henry Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains: With an Account of a Visit to the Chaldæan Christians of Kurdistan, and the Yezidis, or Devil-Worshippers, and an Inquiry into the Manners and Arts of the Ancient Assyrians* (New York: George P. Putnam, 1849).

[9] Jaynie Anderson, "Layard and Morelli," in *Austen Henry Layard Tra l'Oriente e Venezia: Venezia, 26-28 Ottobre 1983*, ed. Frederick Mario Fales and Bernard Hickey (Roma: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 1987), 109-137.

known locations, like Perugino's frescoes of St. Sebastian at Panicale.[10] His work also facilitated the founding of a program for preservation and documentation of Quattrocento frescoes. His friendship with Giovanni Morelli (1816-1891), a noted Italian art critic, connoisseur, and political figure, resulted in a revised edition of Franz Kugler's *Handbook of Painting, Italian Schools* (1887),[11] which embodied Morelli's views and supplied more accurate attributions of Italian works. For Bellini scholarship, Layard's acquisition in Venice of the *Portrait of Mehmed II* (now in the National Gallery, London) in 1865 was a turning point. Described as "the arrogant knight of the golden spur" and "*goffo*" (clumsy or old-fashioned) in the sixteenth century,[12] Bellini became a forgotten hero for late-nineteenth-century art lovers.

For Layard, Bellini's *Portrait of Mehmed II* (Pl. I) was a palimpsest that shed light on the artist's sojourn to Constantinople, the person of the Ottoman ruler, and forgotten pages of Venetian art and history. An archaeologist at heart, Layard regarded Bellini's portrait as a truly important finding, comparable from a metaphorical viewpoint to his archaeological discoveries at Nineveh. When purchasing the portrait from an Englishman living in Venice for a mere five pounds (or twelve liras) in 1865, Layard was confident that he was acquiring Bellini's painting of Mehmed II, known from Vasari's account of the artist's sojourn in Constantinople, and he wrote immediately to Morelli,

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[10] Ibid., 113.
[11] Austen Henry Layard, *Handbook of Painting. The Italian Schools. Based on the Handbook of Kugler.* Originally edited by Sir Charles L. Eastlake ... fifth edition. Thoroughly revised and in part rewritten by Austen Henry Layard ... In Two Parts ... With Nearly 250 Illustrations (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1887).
[12] Quoted from *Bellini and the East*, 106.

overjoyed.[13] Bellini's portrait was restored by Molteni and Pinti, and then soon exhibited with a full transcription of its inscription at the National Exhibition of Works of Art at Leeds in 1868.[14] Based on his interpretation of the inscription, Layard believed that the portrait captured the true likeness of the Ottoman ruler, "[who] actually sat for it":

> It appears, at one time, to have been in the collection of portraits of remarkable men made by the celebrated historian, Paolo Giovio. It represents a specimen of exquisite and almost indestructible finish in the painted arabesque round the arch under which the profile of the Sultan appears, and in the embroidered and jeweled carpet in front of him. The head is painted with true delicacy, and is evidently a true likeness, although it little agrees with the character of a great conqueror and of a firm and energetic ruler. In the inscription the painter styles himself "miles auratus," which proves the estimation in which he was held, and the honors he received.[15]

Interpreting the *Portrait of the Mehmed II* as an accurate historical likeness, Layard assigns Bellini a prominent place in Venetian art for his "comprehension of perspective, decision of drawing, classical cast of drapery, … and his power of giving character and individuality to his figures."[16] He especially praises the artist as a portrait painter and a master of historical subjects and events, as well as of accurate and detailed studies of Eastern subjects.[17]

Layard's interest in Bellini as a master of the *Portrait of Mehmed II* and of "Turkish and other oriental costumes of various classes and ranks" (Pl. V-XII) was

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[13] Layard's letter to Morelli, 24 October 1865, Add. Mss. 38966, the British Museum (accessed in the British Public Library), Layard Papers, vol. XXXVI. Also, he lists the portrait by Bellini in the handwritten catalogue of his collection dated to 1869, now in the National Gallery of Art Archives, London. Original Mss Catalogue of Sir Henry Layard's Collection of Pictures, 1869, 41. According to Layard's notes in the NG, the Englishman's father was given the portrait as a payment for services from the Venturi family in Venice.

[14] Ralph N. James and L. Lefèvre, *National Exhibition of Works of Art, at Leeds, 1868: Official Catalogue* (Leeds: Printed by Edward Baines and Sons, 1868), 16.

[15] Layard, *Handbook of Painting. The Italian Schools. Based on the Handbook of Kugler*, 304-305.

[16] Ibid., 304.

[17] Ibid., 305.

shared among members of the scholarly and antiquarian community in England and France. Works by J. A. Crowe and G. B. Cavalcasele (1871), Bernard Berenson (1894), and Lionello Venturi (1907) helped to re-establish Bellini's oeuvre.[18] At the same, L. Thuasne (1888) supplied the first historical reconstruction of the circumstances of Bellini's sojourn to Constantinople and his artistic activities while at the Sultan's court.[19] Thuasne's study assembled the documents in Western archives pertaining to Bellini's visit as well as to Mehmed II's reign. He was the first to examine Mehmed II's patronage of Western painting in light of the Sultan's unorthodox religious beliefs and political views. Although Thuasne assumed Bellini's *Portrait of Mehmed II* was a true likeness, he was, like Layard, puzzled that Bellini's representation did not correspond to known textual descriptions of Mehmed II and tried to resolve the paradox by pointing to the Sultan's illness and old age. Thuasne also prominently mentioned and reproduced the drawings of Theodosius' column, drawings of Turkish people, and the portrait medal of Mehmed II as completed by the artist in Constantinople.

Building upon Gustavo Frizzoni (1898), F. R. Martin (1905), Friedrich Sarre (1906), and Corrado Ricci (1912),[20] Josef von Karabacek (1918) offered a much more

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[18] J. A. Crowe and G. B. Cavalcaselle, *A History of Painting in North Italy: Venice, Padua, Vicenza, Verona, Ferrara, Milan, Friuli, Brescia, from the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century* (London: J. Murray, 1871). Bernard Berenson, *The Venetian Painters of the Renaissance with an Index to Their Works* (New York: G.P. Putnam's and Sons, 1894). Lionello Venturi, *Le Origini Della Pittura Veneziana, 1300-1500* (Venezia: Istituto Veneto di Arti Grafiche, 1907).

[19] Louis Thuasne, *Gentile Bellini Et Sultan Mohammed II : Notes Sur Le Séjour Du Peintre Vénitien à Constantinople (1479-1480) D'après Les Documents Originaux En Partie Inédits* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1888).

[20] Gustavo Frizzoni, "Zu den vermeinten Zeichnungen Pinturicchio's für das Appartamento Borgia," *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 21 (1898): 284-285. F. R. Martin, "A Portrait by Gentile Bellini Found in Constantinople," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 9, no. 39 (1906): 144. F. R. Martin, "The Miniature by Gentile Bellini Found in Constantinople," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 11, no. 50 (May 1, 1907): 115-116. F. R. Martin, "New Originals and Oriental Copies of Gentile Bellini Found in the East," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 17, no. 85 (April 1, 1910): 5-12. Corrado Ricci, "Gentile Bellini a Constantinopoli," *Nuova antologia* 47, no. 162 (16 Nov. 1912), 177-191. Friedrich Sarre,

detailed study of Western historical documents relating to Bellini's visit and of his Constantinopolitan works.[21] Karabacek provided a much-needed historical treatment of Mehmed II's patronage of Bellini and other Western artists working at the Sultan's court. Detailing the Sultan's reign, he largely presented Mehmed II as the exotic Ottoman ruler with cultural interests similar to a Renaissance prince. The book particularly examined medal portraits of Mehmed II as an index of his political ambitions and conquests. However, other media, including Bellini's drawings and painted portraits, were largely interpreted as depictions accurately rendered from life or as anthropological and ethnographic "records" of the people he encountered. The painted portrait of Mehmed II was similarly regarded as a true likeness, unmediated by the artist's concerns or by the context of his artistic visit.

Many of Karabacek's conclusions about Bellini's visit and its artistic products have continued to inform later generations of scholars. A salient example is the interpretation of Bellini's drawing of *Seated Woman* (Louvre) as a Druze woman based on her conical headdress—an interpretation still used in current publications of Bellini's works.[22] To arrive to this conclusion, Karabacek relied on contemporary ethnographic documentation by French photographers in Syria. In addition, Karabacek's account of Bellini's works as Western products in the context of the Ottoman court has also continued to inform subsequent scholarship. Seemingly, Karabacek and his

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"Eine Miniatur Gentile Bellinis Gemalt 1479-1480 in Konstantinopel," *Jahrbuch Der Königlich Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 27, no. 4 (January 1, 1906): 302–306. Friedrich Sarre, "The Miniature by Gentile Bellini Found in Constantinople not a Portrait of Sultan Djem," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 15, no. 76 (1909): 237–238.

[21] Joseph von Karabacek, *Italienische Künstler Am Hofe Muhammeds II. Des Eroberers 1451 - 1481* (Wien: Hölder [in Komm.], 1918).

[22] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 101.

contemporaries were inspired by developments in the fields of archaeology, ethnography, and anthropology, and applied these findings to art history whenever possible. On the other hand, Orientalism in the arts of that time strongly informed approaches in art scholarship. Contemporary Western artists, including the Fauves and, especially, Matisse and Leon Bakst (the designer of the Ballets Russes in Paris), took inspiration from Persian miniatures as exotic catalysts in the formation of their own modernist traditions.[23] For Karabacek and his contemporaries, Bellini's sojourn was comparable in its agenda to the travels of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Orientalists, ethnographers, and artists, who aimed to produce a scholarly as well as an imaginary and artistic image of the Orient.[24] However, from a historical point of view, Bellini's artistic appointment was different in scope. It is this gap in understanding that this dissertation will address.

The next generation of scholars expanded previous findings and visual knowledge of works by discussing miniature portraits of Mehmed II from the Topkapi Palace collections and by evaluating Bellini's *Portrait of Mehmed II* in the National Gallery, London, in the context of the Sultan's artistic patronage. Basil Gray (1934) and Armenag Sakisian (1939) were the first to bring into consideration two miniature portraits of Mehmed II preserved in the Topkapi Palace. Sakisian, Gray, and W. Loftus Hare (1934)

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[23] See, for example, historiography of Persian art in Michael A. Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the Riddle of Bihzâd of Herât (1465-1535)* (Paris; [New York]: Flammarion; Distributed in North America by Rizzoli International, 2004), 27-29.

[24] The *Dictionary of Art* discusses Orientalism as an art-historical term applied to representations of the Near East by Western artists, particularly in the nineteenth century. The term Orientalism has had a pejorative connotation since Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). The term implies the assumed supremacy of European art production and alludes to the Eurocentric view of art history. Recent evaluations of Renaissance works in the context of cross-cultural exchange studies have tried to rescue the term "Orientalism" in art, suggesting a more neutral reading as to the intellectual fascination of Western artists with the Near East. See Ol'ga Nefedova-Gruntova, *A Journey into the World of the Ottomans: The Art of Jean-Baptiste Vanmour, 1671-1737* (Milano, Italy: Skira, 2009), 31-81.

also debated the *Portrait of Mehmed II* in the National Gallery: namely, whether it was Bellini's work, whether it was painted in Constantinople or in Venice, whether it preserved an authentic or badly overpainted image of the Sultan, and the nature of its relation to the miniature portraits.[25] In addition, Loftus Hare (1935) published a new painted portrait of Mehmed II, a replica of the portrait in the National Gallery, which was discovered in the private collection of Arthur L. Erlanger of New York and (at that time) attributed to Bellini. Although no definite consensus was achieved, these publications focused on the relation of Bellini's portrait in the National Gallery to the Topkapi's miniature *Portrait of Mehmed II Holding a Rose* (ca. 1480s). Sakisian and Loftus Hare argued that the London portrait was completed in Constantinople and that it was passed on to Paolo Giovio's collection at Como. Gray held, to the contrary, that the portrait was completed in Venice and that Giovio possessed the original portrait from Constantinople, which was reproduced as an engraving in Giovio's illustrated history of illustrious men;[26] in his view, the miniature *Portrait of Mehmed II Holding a Rose* was considered to be based on Bellini's original portrait that was later in Giovio's collection. Loftus Hare questioned the style of the London portrait, largely considering it symbolic and heraldic in order to explain its "incongruence" with common criteria for good Italian painting. The debate was complemented by scholarly interest in Costanzo da Ferrara's sojourn in Constantinople. Sakisian and Gray suggested that the other miniature portrait of Mehmed II, in profile on a gold background, at the Topkapi Palace was a copy after the medallic

[25] Armenag Sakisian, "The Portraits of Mehmet II," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 74, no. 433 (April 1, 1939): 172–181. Basil Gray, "Two Portraits of Mehmet II," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 61, no. 352 (July 1, 1932): 4–12. W. Loftus Hare, "The Portrait of Muhammad II by Gentile Bellini," *Apollo* 20, no. 115 (July to December, 1934): 249-250. W. Loftus Hare, "A New Gentile Bellini," *Apollo*, 21 (January to June, 1935): 112.

[26] For further details, see chapter 4.

portrait by Costanzo, pointing out that Bellini was not the only artist in Constantinople who left an imprint on the local workshop.

Overall, the debate can be described as largely dealing with questions of attribution, the person of Mehmed II and his patronage of Western artists, and the relation between Bellini's portraits of the ruler, miniature portraits of the ruler in the Topkapi Palace, and works by Costanzo da Ferrara. Bellini's *Portrait of Mehmed II* remained the key to understanding the Sultan's patronage of Western artists. The debate was also symptomatic of Orientalism in that it relied on the Eurocentric model of artistic influence and continued to treat Bellini's works as Italian, largely disregarding the political and cultural context of their production. Discrepancies between the appearance of Mehmed II, known from textual descriptions and in Bellini's painted portrait, were attributed either to the state of conservation of the painting or the declining state of the ruler's health. Whatever the case may be, scholars continued to largely regard the portrait as a "documentary" image from life. The original intent of the artist was outside the scope of these debates.

Studies of Mehmed II's reign led to further evaluation of Bellini's life and works in the 1960s-1990s. Esin Atil, Franz Babinger, Ernst Grube, Halil İnalcik, Colin Imber, Cemal Kafadar, Çiğdem Kafescioğlu, Gülru Necipoğlu, and Julian Raby made foundational contributions to understanding Mehmed II's reign, political program, and artistic and architectural patronage.[27] From these studies, a complex image of Mehmed II

[27] Esin Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting Under Sultan Mehmed II," *Ars Orientalis* 9 (January 1, 1973): 103-120. Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978). Franz Babinger, "Un ritratto ignorato di Maometto II, opera di Gentile Bellini," *Arte Veneta*, vol.

emerges: he is portrayed on the one hand as an unconventional Muslim ruler with interests in Western culture and art (Babinger, Raby), and on the other as a typical Muslim ruler (Inalcik), albeit with synctretic political and cultural interests (Kafadar, Necipoğlu). These studies greatly expanded understanding of the transformation of the Ottoman state from a principality into an empire. Although Bellini and his school also received a critical reappraisal, his visit to Constantinople and artistic agency were sidetracked and overshadowed by his imperial patron. Even though Kafescioğlu and Necipoğlu's magisterial works, innovative in their methodology, offer a detailed examination of Mehmed II's patronage of architecture and his political program, they do not engage in great detail with Bellini's sojourn, which receives only a minor account in these studies. At the same time, Bellini's visit to Constantinople has been largely studied as a case of artistic influence rather than an example of bilateral artistic exchange. Although certain conclusions about Bellini's artistic visit require reassessment today, it is thanks to the meticulous work of the scholars from this period that the current study is possible.

XV (1962): 25-32. Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1481* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1990). Halil İnalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973). Halil İnalcik, "Mehmed the Conqueror (1432-1481) and His Time," *Speculum* 35 (1960): 408-427. Halil İnalcik, "Istanbul: An Islamic City," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 1 (1990): 1:23. Halil İnalcik, "The Policy of Mehmed II toward the Greek Population of Istanbul and the Byzantine Building of the City," Dumbarton Oaks Papers 23-34 (1969-1970): 231-249. Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). Çiğdem Kafescioğlu, "The Ottoman Capital in the Making: The Reconstruction of Constantinople in the Fifteenth Century." (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1996). Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (New York, N.Y.; Cambridge, Mass.: Architectural History Foundation ; MIT Press, 1991). Julian Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom" (PhD diss., Oxford, 1980). Julian Raby, "Pride and Prejudice: Mehmed the Conqueror and the Portrait Medal," in *Studies in the History of Art, XII: Italian Medals*, ed. J.G. Pollard (Washington, DC, 1987), 171-196.

Among these scholars, Babinger and Raby greatly expanded our knowledge of Mehmed II's reign and artistic patronage of Western artists. Babinger published new painted portraits of Mehmed II. However, he continued to treat Bellini's works as visual documents of the Sultan's appearance. Recent theories of Renaissance portraiture, which suggest complex representational strategies employed by artists and point to functions beyond the mere naturalistic rendering of physiognomy, highlight some limitations in his analysis. Raby, who has continued to publish, details medallic portraits of Mehmed II as well as the artistic products of the imperial atelier in Constantinople. Despite the depth of Raby's research, however, certain conclusions he makes about Bellini's works in Constantinople fall short. In particular, the authors of the exhibition *Bellini and the East* (2005)[28] have reversed Raby's reattribution of drawings of Turkish subjects from Bellini to Costanzo da Ferrara.[29] Since Raby's work has primarily focused on Mehmed II's patronage, a reappraisal of Bellini's visit in Constantinople and its artistic products is necessary in view of new theoretical approaches to cross-cultural exchange in the Mediterranean studies. With the recent reattribution of works to Bellini, the visit is one of the best documented intercultural encounters in the Early Modern period and can provide further insights into the nature of cross-cultural interaction at Mehmed II's court.

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[28] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*.

[29] Scholars have never achieved consensus on Raby's attribution of the drawings to Costanzo da Ferrara. Other scholars of Venetian art and Italian drawings also disagree with Raby's attribution. See, for example, Francis Ames-Lewis, *Drawing in Early Renaissance Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981). Jürg Meyer zur Capellen, *Gentile Bellini* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1985). Hans Tietze and E. Tietze-Conrat, *The Drawings of the Venetian Painters in the 15th and 16th Centuries* ([New York: Collectors Editions, 1970). They continue to attribute the drawings to Bellini.

Among scholars of Venetian art, Patricia Fortini Brown (1988) and Jürg Meyer zur Capellen (1885)[30] have provided foundational reconstructions of Bellini's public commissions in Venice, his life chronology, and his works. However, these careful studies do not offer an evaluation of Bellini's artistic visit to Constantinople and the role of its products from a cross-cultural perspective. In addition, recent studies of Renaissance portraiture, theories of cross-cultural exchange, and studies in representation make it necessary to reevaluate their conclusions about Bellini's artistic style and his representational strategies by applying new methodologies. This dissertation, building on the work of Brown, zur Capellen, and other scholars in Venetian and Renaissance art, will fill the gaps in the understanding of Bellini's portraits, his deliberate artistic interaction with visual traditions at the Ottoman court, and his contributions to Venetian visual tradition in representing Eastern peoples and places.

Recent publications and exhibitions on the topic of cross-cultural exchange have suggested new methodological approaches to overcome the limitations in Bellini scholarship. Landmark studies by Jerry Brotton and Lisa Jardine[31] have introduced a new Mediterranean paradigm to art history. Instead of the notion of East and West as binary entities divided by war and religious conflict, the authors adopted the historical concept of coexistence in the Mediterranean that encouraged "cross-fertilization" of ideas and mutual influence. The authors have argued for rewriting the traditional accounts of Renaissance art history by demonstrating that European élites and Ottoman sultans

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[30] Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988). Meyer zur Capellen, *Gentile Bellini*.

[31] Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton, *Global Interests: Renaissance Art Between East and West* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000). Jerry Brotton, *The Renaissance Bazaar: From the Silk Road to Michelangelo* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

shared a vocabulary for the representation of power. Brotton and Jardine's concise and thought-provoking essays on the dissemination of artistic ideas between the courts offer important historical detail and rich propositions for this study. However, Bellini's works only figure as representative examples of Italian Renaissance style in Brotton and Jardine's research, and, as a result, their conclusions about them fall short. For example, even though Bellini's *Portrait of Mehmed II* and *Seated Scribe*[32] are employed to sustain the argument that modern Europe and its great Renaissance art and culture emerged as a result of "competing and exchanging ideas and commodities with its Islamic neighbors,"[33] Bellini's works are treated as Venetian works. Discussed as circulating objects or commodities in artistic exchanges between East and West, they have largely remained within the Renaissance paradigm. Neither *Global Interests: Renaissance Art* or *The Renaissance Bazaar: From the Silk Road to Michelangelo* specify what particularly was exchanged or negotiated concerning art and culture in the course of artist's sojourn. Brotton and Jardine's pioneering research helps to frame the high culture of Italian Renaissance in a larger context of history of cultural exchanges between East and West in the Mediterranean. They form the foundation of my project to demonstrate in practical terms the outcomes of these cross-cultural contacts and to determine if the artist learned anything at the Ottoman court.

[32] The authors rely on Raby's attribution of the work to Costanzo da Ferrara. This dissertation accepts the recent reappraisal and reattribution of the *Seated Scribe* to Gentile Bellini discussed in the *Bellini and the East* exhibition (2005). For further discussion, please see chapter 3.
[33] Brotton, *The Renaissance Bazaar: From the Silk Road to Michelangelo*, vii.

Two international exhibitions, *Bellini and the East* (2005) and *Venice and the Islamic World* (2007)[34] have extended Brotton and Jardine's Mediterranean paradigm to Venice's wide-ranging art works and paintings to illuminate the ways Islamic art inspired Venetian artists. In addition, *Bellini and the East* exhibition's main achievement is in reconsideration of the documentary and stylistic evidence to resolve some previous erroneous attributions and to reconstruct Bellini's corpus of works from Constantinople. The inclusion of a few Ottoman and Timurid works in the catalogue and on display further hinted at a possible connection between Bellini and the artistic traditions in Constantinople. The treatment of the art of Venice in the multicultural Mediterranean milieu assists with our understanding of Bellini and his works as products of mutual cross-cultural artistic borrowings and negotiations. These exhibitions, however, like the books that preceded them, have not successfully demonstrated the implications the Mediterranean paradigm has for Bellini's artistic visit and its products. The exhibitions' main approach has also remained within the Renaissance and documentary paradigms. Bellini's works are discussed in these exhibitions as documentary transcriptions of Mehmed II's court society, completed using the pictorial techniques of Italy.

In order to advance our understanding of Bellini's works, as well as those of other visiting court artists working overseas, we need to grapple with the social and political context of art production and to address the viewpoints of the audiences for whom these works were made. In other words, consideration of Bellini as a member of the multicultural Mediterranean milieu and further analysis of Bellini's artistic visit and its

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[34] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*. Stefano Carboni, ed., *Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797* (New York; New Haven [Conn.]: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Yale University Press, 2007).

artistic products using cross-cultural visual evidence will help us to fully develop the cross-cultural approach and to elucidate the inter-cultural function of his works. The results of such analysis can be also applied to other case studies in the Renaissance. In summary, the impact of exchange cannot simply be measured by tracing the products and ideas the West took from the East, or vice versa; rather, it is found in understanding the processes of mutual and deliberate adaptation of diverse artistic styles and cultural traditions in the Mediterranean.

Bellini scholarship, both in cross-cultural exchange studies and in previous art-historical works, has continued to rely on earlier models for understanding works of art. Current strands of art-historical work, particularly "new" and post-structuralist art historians, including Mieke Bal, Norman Bryson, David Friedberg, Alfred Gell, Michael Fried, W. J. T. Mitchell, and Donald Preziozi have opened the analysis of art in a number of different directions. Overall, their work advocates seeing art in the context of production and social relations and considering the discursive dimension of works of art by transcending the old European aesthetic criteria (or "pure aesthetics") as well as linguistic models for the interpretation of images as illustrations of some primary text.

Research Purpose

This study isolates the case of Bellini's artistic visit as an important moment in the larger field of cross-cultural exchange studies that has grown exponentially in recent

years.[35] In so doing, I bring together all available information on the artist's activities at the Ottoman court. The fragmentary evidence on Bellini's sojourn in Constantinople demands that the reconstruction of his artistic appointment be composed of various insights into Ottoman visual culture, Mehmed II's imperial ideology, and life at his court, drawn from extant visual evidence and studies on the culture and architecture of the period, as well as social relations between the Sultan and his officials. All these diverse elements shed light on Mehmed II's imperial project: the transformation of an Ottoman frontier principality into a cosmopolitan empire. Bellini's visit holds a prominent place in Mehmed II's imperial project, and thus this study offers critical insight into the visual culture at the Ottoman court and cross-cultural exchange practices between Venice and Constantinople in the Mediterranean context.

Works executed by the artist in Constantinople are essential in considering how the experience of residing at the Ottoman court transformed Bellini's artistic manner and whether this experience may have led to some shifts in the traditional representation of Eastern people in Venice in the circle of artists associated with him. The artist's sojourn also provides an opportunity to reappraise Bellini's interaction with the local artistic traditions he encountered in Constantinople. His contributions to the traditions of Ottoman imperial portraiture are the primary case study. By paying special attention to the artistic forms and formats Bellini fashioned, by reconstructing their function at the Ottoman court, and then by tracing their dissemination in Venice, this dissertation offers

[35] For review of the massive literature on the concept of the Italian Renaissance in the Mediterranean, see Monique O'Connell, "The Italian Renaissance in the Mediterranean, or, Between East and West. A Review Article," *California Italian Studies* 1, no. 1 (2010): 1-30, permalink: http://escholarship.org/uc/item/1zv8s58x

a cross-cultural view of Bellini's artistic visit. Such a study of bi-directional exchange positions the investigation in the purview of the larger issue of cross-cultural translation in the Mediterranean, which also naturally leads to further questions on the agencies of transmission: that is on what was transmitted, translated, and negotiated, and to what ends.

The corpus of drawings from the visit, now in the collections of the British Museum (London), the Isabella Gardner Museum (Boston), the Louvre (Paris), and the Städelsches Kunstinstitut (Frankfurt) (Pl. V-XII),[36] provides a point of departure from which to examine the circulation of drawing practices and formats between Venice and Constantinople. Previous scholarship on the drawings has focused on issues of authorship and style and their function in the context of Italian workshop practices;[37] until now, the drawings have been understood as works employing pictorial formats and techniques of Italian Renaissance art to document the ethnic and religious diversity of the Ottoman court in Istanbul. Indeed, the representations of *Young Greek Woman*, *Seated Janissary*, *Seated Woman*, several *Standing Turks*, and *Seated Scribe* demonstrate great attention to detail in the depiction of the dress, the organization of turbans and headgear, and the placement of buttons and various adornments. Most scholars explain the drawings as ethnographical studies documenting Eastern subjects the artist encountered for the first time in Constantinople. Yet, the idea of "documentary" [38] is itself a means of marking the

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[36] They have and recently and firmly reattributed to Bellini and his workshop, see Campbell, Caroline and Chong, Alan, *Bellini and the East*, 98-105, 118-119, 122.
[37] For a detailed bibliography on the issues of attribution and style, see ibid.
[38] According to Elizabeth Cropper's 1992 edited volume, the genre or category of the documentary image in Italian art can be traced back to the age of exploration and of the scientific revolution after Bellini's time. In Bellini's time, Italian art was still dominated by aesthetic, symbolic, and narrative modes of visual representation. See: Elizabeth Cropper, ed. *Documentary Culture: Florence and Rome from Grand-Duke Ferdinand I to Pope Alexander VII: Papers from a Colloquium Held at the Villa Spelman, Florence, 1990* (Bologna: Nuova Alfa, 1992).

subjects as "foreign" and thereby perpetuates Orientalist legacies, stressing the binary opposition between East and West. But Bellini was working for Mehmed II, who as ruler was the very embodiment of Ottoman culture and thus as far from "foreign" as one could be. In this perspective, questions arise about the meaning and intended functions of these drawings in the context of Bellini's residency at the Sultan's court. The drawings communicate calmness and thoughtfulness rather than spontaneity; the compositions breathe constructedness and dependency on preliminary sketches, previous artistic experiences, and preexisting conventions and artistic sources rather than the immediacy of visual experience drawn from life. Moreover, the artistic format of placing a single figure at the center of a separate sheet of paper does not find direct parallels in Bellini's earlier works or in other Italian works. Rather parallels can be found in the artistic traditions Bellini encountered and learned in Constantinople. Also, his later paintings, such as *St. Mark Preaching in Alexandria* painted for the Scuola Grande di San Marco (c. 1504-1507), incorporate similar Eastern figures and convey, to an extent, a continuity of artistic expression with his works from Constantinople. To reshape the documentary hypothesis, therefore, Bellini's drawings are considered in this dissertation in the context of local artistic traditions in Constantinople. The identification of Bellini as a member of a Mediterranean heterogeneous society also changes the interpretive lens. Further, because the local artistic conventions, formats, and costumes at the Ottoman court were part of the polyglot Mediterranean culture, they were not entirely foreign to Bellini in the first place. Thus, it is argued here that the process of artistic transmission was bi-directional. As I will show, Bellini's drawings show thematic and iconographic affinities with representations of courtiers in Byzantine and Timurid art. The artist deliberately

used local artistic conventions to fashion the Sultan's courtiers, and then, in turn, introduced them into his native tradition in Venice.

With regard to the issue of artistic transmission in the Mediterranean, a key aim of this study is to understand the extent to which Bellini interacted with the visual traditions in Constantinople.[39] While previous scholars have treated Bellini's works as visual documents of the Ottoman court, I argue that the artist consistently assimilated, interpreted, and manipulated the Ottoman visual tradition to fashion new artistic forms that would represent the imperial ambitions of the Grand Turk and the exalted magnificence of his court. Central to this dissertation is the *Portrait of Mehmed II* (Pl. I), which has been persistently interpreted as an authentic document of the Sultan's appearance made in the tradition of Venetian portraiture. The portrait's distinctive iconography, however, deserves a more substantial examination, and its function in Mehmed II's court has not yet been understood.[40] This dissertation regards the portrait as deliberately composite and investigates its Eastern sources. For example, I show how *Portrait of Mehmed II* incorporates some Timurid and Byzantine traditions of portraiture into a Venetian formula for depictions of rulers. The portrait makes explicit Mehmed II's claim to be a universal ruler, whose political sphere encompasses both the East and the West. This effect is achieved through fusing Western conventions for representing the individual with Eastern conventions for imperial and sultanic portraiture. The artist

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[39] F. R. Martin was the first to find Bellini's drawing of the *Seated Scribe* and to suggest that it owes a great deal to Islamic painting. See Martin, "A Portrait by Gentile Bellini Found in Constantinople." Martin, "New Originals and Oriental Copies of Gentile Bellini Found in the East." For a further review of the scholarship and the Islamic connections of Bellini's works, I refer to chapter 3 and chapter 4.

[40] For a further review of the scholarship see chapter 4. For a current bibliography see Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 78.

updated the vocabulary of the Western doge portrait to express ideas of magnificence and imperial sovereignty appropriate to the Ottoman ruler's universal pretensions, which would be understood at other princely courts in Italy and the rest of Europe. On the other hand, the portrait's iconography, especially the near profile or five-eighth view of the Sultan's visage, typical of Timurid and Turcoman sultanic portraiture, would be immediately recognized by Mehmed II's Eastern peers. At the same time, framing the ruler's likeness with Byzantine imperial symbols effectively represented his new imperial identity and sovereignty to ruling élites in both the East and the West. In this dissertation, a detailed examination of Mehmed II's portrait in relation to Eastern sources and his imperial program, with special attention to how different conventions of portraiture are used, articulates the process of artistic translation and transmission between Venice and Constantinople. The case study also illuminates to what degree Bellini transformed artistic forms of the Constantinopolitan court into extensions of the Venetian visual idiom and cultural identity. Finally, the study discusses the function and circulation of painted portraiture as a new artistic format at the Ottoman court.

By reexamining the artist's activities at the court and his drawings, this dissertation argues that Bellini interacted extensively with the artists in Mehmed II's imperial workshop. Recent studies of Bellini's drawings by Alan Chong and Caroline Campbell as well as this dissertation's reappraisal of Bellini's works in relation to Timurid and Byzantine sources, point out Bellini's more significant contribution to the imperial atelier. These findings add to Raby and Gülru Necipoğlu's interpretation of the

complexity of Mehmed II's artistic projects.[41] The so-called *Sinan Portrait* or *Mehmed II Smelling a Rose* (Topkapi Palace Museum, ca. 1480) shows close affinities with Bellini's portrait of the Sultan, both in the distinctive view of his visage and the treatment of wrinkles, folds, and costume details. The *Sinan Portrait*, together with other miniature portraits preserved in the Topkapi Palace collection, suggests that Bellini's imperial likeness of Mehmed II was the basis for the Ottoman idiom in portraiture and programmatic for the Sultan's imperial project. After Mehmed II's portrait atelier was disbanded by his son and successor, Bayezid II (1447-1512), Bellini's portrait helped re-establish the tradition of sultanic portraiture in Constantinople at the courts of Bayezid's successors.

By reconsidering Bellini's artistic strategies as the deliberate fashioning of images and perceptions of Mehmed II and his courtiers, this dissertation revises the documentary paradigm of Bellini as a realist and mere chronicler of the East. Bellini's representational techniques are better understood in the context of his court appointment in Constantinople, where he learned from local visual traditions he encountered and interacted with Mehmed II's artists and courtiers.

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[41] Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom." Julian Raby, "Cyriacus of Ancona and the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 43 (January 1, 1980): 242–246. Julian Raby, "A Sultan of Paradox: Mehmed the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts," *Oxford Art Journal* 5, no. 1 (January 1, 1982): 3–8. Julian Raby, "Mehmed the Conqueror's Greek Scriptorium," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 37 (January 1, 1983): 15–34. Julian Raby, Zeren Tanindi, and Tim Stanley, *Turkish Bookbinding in the 15th Century: The Foundation of an Ottoman Court Style* (London: Azimuth editions on behalf of l'Association Internationale de Bibliophilie, 1993). Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*. Gülru Necipoğlu, "The Serial Portraits of Ottoman Sultans in Comparative Perspective," and Julian Raby, "Opening Gambits" in *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman*, ed. by Selmin Kangal and Priscilla Mary Isin (Istanbul: Isbank, 2000), 22-63, 64-95.

Theoretical Approach and Methodology

My analysis of Bellini's visit as a bilateral, cross-cultural artistic encounter is informed by recent works of key scholars in cross-cultural exchange studies. Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell's recent reappraisal of the premodern Mediterranean as a nexus of contact and coexistence for diverse cultures has increasingly become a shared platform for a wide range of research themes in scholarship, including merchant culture, commercial exchange, crusade, pilgrimage, and shared sacred geographies.[42] Effectively termed the "New Mediterranean Studies,"[43] Horden and Purcell's method takes as a point of departure the monumental work on the history of the Early Modern Mediterranean by the French historian Fernand Braudel, first published in the mid-twentieth century.[44]

Braudel effectively reformulated the history of Early Modern Europe and the Islamic world by drawing attention to the Mediterranean region and Sea as a space of contact and an analytical starting point, rather than a barrier between East and West. At the heart of Braudel's argument is the proposition that the Mediterranean constituted a distinct form of unity in the centuries prior to the sixteenth. Coming from the School of French *Annales* in history and summating an entire epoch of scholarship,[45] Braudel focused on the connections that "bound people of the coasts and their continental

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[42] Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford [U.K.]; Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 2000). For a detailed overview of recent developments in the Mediterranean scholarship, I refer to O'Connell, "The Italian Renaissance in the Mediterranean, or, Between East and West. A Review Article."

[43] See, for example, Fred Astren, "Goiten, Medieval Jews, and the New Mediterranean Studies," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 102, No. 4 (Fall 2012): 513-31, 517.

[44] Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972)—3rd edition. The first edition appeared in 1949, the second in 1966.

[45] See Horden and Purcell's commentary on Braudel's scholarly genealogy: Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*, 36-39.

hinterlands to various trans-Mediterranean others"[46] rather than on the inherent qualities that separated them. Introducing the idea of the *longue dureé*, or long-term historical structures by which the individual was constrained, Braudel took geography as a point of departure and emphasized the unifying aspects of shipping lanes, the importance of trade and communication, and the cycles of wars and economic systems in the histories of particular peoples. In the introduction to the 1972 edition of *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, he underscored his vision of the unity and coherence of the Mediterranean: "I retain the same conviction that the Turkish Mediterranean lived and breathed with the same rhythms as the Christian, that the whole sea shared a common destiny…And the second is the greatness of the Mediterranean, which lasted well after the age of Columbus and Vasco da Gama."[47] Braudel's concept of the Mediterranean as a place defined by coexistence, communication, and contact significantly challenged dominant historical narratives that stressed the binary opposition between East and West. Despite harsh criticism, he maintained his ideas decades after the first edition of his book:

> The Mediterranean as a unit, with its creative space, the amazing freedom of sea-routes…with so many regions, so different yet so alike, its cities born of movement, its complementary populations, its congenital enmities, is the unceasing work of the human hands have to build with unpromising material, a natural environment far from fertile and often cruel, one that has imposed its own lasting limitations and obstacles.[48]

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[46] This new understanding of Braudel's historical contributions has emerged in the context of the "New Mediterranean" studies of the 2000s. Quoted from: http://humweb.ucsc.edu/mediterraneanseminar/news/index.php?id=189.

[47] Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 14.

[48] Quoted from Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*, 36. Horden and Purcell also provide a commentary of the reception of Braudel's work in scholarship.

Braudel's account assists with our understanding of the Mediterranean as a site and means of exchange; it shows how this kind of exchange across political boundaries makes the people and cities within it a heterogeneous "culture," as much as political or linguistic commonalities mark adjacent lands as a culture.

Horden and Purcell, whose research dispute Braudel's idea of Mediterranean unity and neutralizes his view of geography as a primary determinant, envision the premodern Mediterranean as a political and cultural entity comprising the ecological diversity and fragmented landscape of "microregions" bounded by temporal and geographical perimeters and interconnected by a network of relatively easy seaborne communications. Horden and Purcell's *The Corrupting Sea* is *history in* the region rather than *history of* the region; their work defines the Mediterranean through complex interactions between humanity and the environment. Stressing the durability and unity of microregions, these scholars find the distinctiveness of the Mediterranean in the microregions' paradoxical coexistence, interdependence, intermingling, and redistribution of resources as their means of survival. From Horden and Purcell's research, the Mediterranean emerges as a zone of connectivity; of striking continuity over centuries; of the free movement of people, goods, and ideas; and of a lucrative exploitation of microecological compartmentalization that leads to shared practices of language and cultural customs. As they underscore:

> The paradox of the Mediterranean is that the all-too-apparent fragmentation can potentially unite the sea and its coastlands in a way far exceeding anything predictable of a continent. The Mediterranean is, a 'peninsula in reverse,' but one whose possible cohesion and sense of identity exceeds anything normally associated with real peninsulas. The minutely subdivided topography bound by a vastly ramified complex of

> seaways constitutes a geographical expression. And, huge as it is, this geographical expression can be at least *conceived* as a political entity in the same way as can any of the smaller units whose political domain is defined by their horizon of communications…
>
> Such control of the movement of resources has always been an essential aspect of Mediterranean power at every period. Prehistorians have interpreted seaborne redistribution as the crucial element in the formation of early states and civilizations, and even in the development of agriculture. These tempting theories help remind us that the history of naval supremacy in the Mediterranean—a complex interaction of fleets, pirates, mercenary captains and privateers—is not a simple matter of political confrontation. Nothing short of control of the integrating medium across whole tracts of the sea is at stake, and the prize is one that transcends local interests…[49]

Placing the network of communications at the center of their investigation, Horden and Purcell conclude that "the coastlands of the Mediterranean as a political unit are at least intelligible as 'Europe' or the 'Middle East.'"[50] My study builds upon Horden and Purcell's idea of the intermingling, dialogical coexistence, and codependence of microregions by virtue of shared resources, languages, and customs, all of which suggest the possibility of intercultural understanding.

Horden and Purcell's concept of the coexistence and intermingling of cultures in the Mediterranean finds parallels in recent works of scholars concerned with the cultural pluralism of the Mediterranean. In particular, studies of cultural networks have further articulated the vision of the Mediterranean as a constellation of interconnected heterogeneous societies with fluid cultural identities and permeable borders.[51] For

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[49] Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*, 24-25.
[50] Ibid.
[51] For example, O'Connell shows that studies of cultural contacts and networks have grown exponentially. For a detailed bibliography in this area, see As O'Connell, "The Italian Renaissance in the Mediterranean, or, Between East and West. A Review Article," 8-9.

example, *The Mediterranean in History*, edited by David Abulafia,[52] argues that the Mediterranean was formed and unified as a multicultural entity through the coexistence and interaction of contemporaneous societies. Abulafia contends that the flourishing of diverse societies depended on a mutual borrowing of cultural models, ideas, texts, and religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) that molded "a vast number of common beliefs and ideals."[53] Eric Dursteler also builds on the model of the convergence of diverse cultures in the Mediterranean in his study of Veneto-Ottoman cultural interaction and coexistence and challenges the model of traditional bipartite/oppositional view of cultural relations between East and West.[54] For him, the intersection of cultures and religions in the Early Modern Mediterranean is characterized by coexistence and symbiosis that lead to a fluid, multivalent, and composite form of identity and to porous frontiers of faith, language, and community. Dursteler effectively portrays Venice as "a composite polity" containing "a precarious mixture of diversity" and "an ethnic pluralism," but lacking "geographical, religious, linguistic, or cultural coherence to the state's 'heterogeneous totality of distinct territories,' except that provided politically by Venice's governing institutions."[55] Similarly, Natalie Zemon Davis addresses the cultural pluralism and intermingling of cultural identities in the Mediterranean by examining the life of Leo Africanus (c.1494-c.1554), a captured North African diplomat from Fez named al-Hasan al-Wazzan who was presented to Pope Leo X, lived for a time in Italy,

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[52] David Abulafia, *The Mediterranean in History* (Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2003).
[53] Ibid., 14.
[54] Eric Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople: Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).
[55] Ibid., 16.

and finally recrossed the Mediterranean to North Africa.[56] In her view, Leo Africanus was a man "with a double vision, sustaining two cultural worlds [Islam and Christianity], sometimes imagining two audiences, and using techniques taken from the Arabic and Islamic repertoire while folding in European elements in his own fashion."[57] The works of these scholars point out that political and economic coexistence, codependence, commercial exchange, and mobility in the Mediterranean profoundly affected human agents, resulting in composite and dynamic cultural identities and world views—"convoluted fusions of all its imaginable constituent parts," as Dursteler puts it.[58] I extend the argument of multiculturalism and composite cultural identities in the Mediterranean into the realm of visuality and contend that a similar intermingling of artistic traditions and representational strategies takes place and leads to an intercultural dialogue replete with possibilities for mutual understanding and cross-fertilization.

In the context of the "new Mediterranean studies" and the "new cultural history" (or studies of the intersection of cultures, initially within the context of European encounters with the societies of Asia, Africa, and the Americas), the idea of the high Renaissance owing a great deal to exchanges with the East begins to take root.[59] A recent spate of exhibitions, conferences, and books has explored the concepts of cultural mobility, permeability of boundaries, and intercultural artistic encounters between East

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[56] Natalie Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006).
[57] Ibid., 12-13.
[58] Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople: Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, 18.
[59] For a detailed bibliography see O'Connell, "The Italian Renaissance in the Mediterranean, or, Between East and West. A Review Article," 3, 14-17. For additional bibliography and review of the "new cultural history" as related to Venetian studies, I refer to Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople: Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, 2-19.

and West and what they meant for Renaissance self-fashioning in Italy and in Europe. For instance, Brotton and Jardine's *Global Interests: Renaissance between East and West* has explored the circulation of ideas and objects between East and West in order to correct a lopsided view of the development of Italian art and civilization in isolation from its Eastern neighbors. They suggest that Western and Eastern neighbors were partners who shared histories and contributed equally to forming our artistic heritage, as opposed to the earlier view of European civilization offering benefits to the Eastern barbarian. As they sum up the argument: "Art objects from the Renaissance originally carried powerful associations with the East whose impact is now lost to us. Both the content and forms of Renaissance art reflected a vigorous two-way process of recognition and development in which what we have called East and West played their parts."[60] In the same vein, Rosamond Mack's *From Bazaar to Piazza*[61] stresses the broad impact of the international trade of luxury objects on Italian artistic taste and the introduction of new artistic ideas and models. She underscores that commercial exchange led to the development of shared tastes among Christian and Muslim people in the Mediterranean. Mack's study places Italian Renaissance culture in the context of dynamic commercial contact with the East, particularly in the area of material culture, which involved the exchange of textiles and decorative art objects. As she argues, not only various decorative arts, but also paintings, sculptures, and architecture reflect the impact of Oriental style and travel. Similarly, the exhibitions *Bellini and the East* (2005) and *Venice and the Islamic World* (2007)[62] further

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[60] Jardine and Brotton, *Global Interests: Renaissance Art Between East and West*, 183.
[61] Rosamond E. Mack, *Bazaar to Piazza: Islamic Trade and Italian Art, 1300-1600* (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2001).
[62] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*; Stefano Carboni, ed., *Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797*.

illuminate the ways Islamic luxury objects and overseas travel inspired Venetian artists. *Bellini and the East* reconsiders Bellini's visit to Constantinople in the context of Venetian-Ottoman relations, presenting him as a cultural ambassador of Venice who artistically responded to the East. *Venice and the Islamic World* particularly highlights Venice's role as an entrepôt between East and West—unique among Italian cities for its ongoing, reciprocal exchanges with several centers of "Eastern" cultures, notably the Mamluks of Alexandria, Cairo, and Damascus and the Ottomans in Constantinople—hinting at a complex dynamic system of cross-cultural dialogue and exchange. The authors point out to numerous examples of mutual borrowings of techniques and design ideas in the areas of metalwork, textiles, carpets, ceramic, glass, and bookbinding further underscoring the shared artistic taste. These exhibitions, together with international symposia such as the 2008 Congress of the International Committee of the History of Art (CIHA) in Melbourne, *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration, Convergence*,[63] put forward the model of Early Modern "globalization," strongly suggesting that Renaissance culture and European identity would have not emerged without dynamic interchange with Eastern partners.

Although recent cross-cultural exchange studies have been productive in pinpointing many instances of the movement of objects and motifs from one culture to another, key issues have yet to be sufficiently understood or explored: for instance, whether objects or motifs just moved from one culture to another or if they acquired different meanings in the process, and if the cross-cultural contact resulted in new

[63] Jaynie Anderson, ed., *CIHA 2008 Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration, Convergence. The University of Melbourne, 13-18th January 2008* (Melbourne, Vic: University of Melbourne, 2008).

technologies and forms of artistic expression and ideas. The limitations of the direct application of cross-cultural methods of research from the field of cultural and social studies to art history are particularly noticeable in the area of painting. Paintings with Eastern objects, costumes, and pictorial themes are often interpreted as a record of the direct experience of travelers in foreign lands, "a slice of life," or ethnographic documents of the encounter unmediated by the artists' own cultural concerns and the context of cultural production and reception. In essence, recent studies continue to rely on the Renaissance documentary paradigm that I have defined earlier. For instance, *Global Interests: Renaissance between East and West* and *From Bazaar to Piazza* refer to Bellini's drawings of the *Seated Scribe* and of "oriental figures" from Constantinople as "vivid" and "exceptionally objective detailed images" "of the mixed population" made from life "at court or on the streets of Istanbul."[64] Similarly, *Bellini and the East*'s catalogue essays consider Bellini's drawings as "anthropological-like studies" documenting "the ethnic and religious diversity of late-fifteenth-century Istanbul" and "the picturesque figures he encountered."[65] In addition, even though the authors shun the idea of European superiority, their studies of cultural contact in the Mediterranean rely on the bipartite/oppositional model between East and West rather than on the concept of the convergence of heterogeneous cultures and of dynamic identities in the Mediterranean, as historians have productively argued. As a result of the inconsistency in her theoretical framework, Mack, for instance, arrives at the conclusion that "continuous commercial and diplomatic contacts during the period contributed little to the Italian understanding of

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[64] Jardine and Brotton, *Global Interests: Renaissance Art between East and West*, 41-42. Mack, *Bazaar to Piazza: Islamic Trade and Italian Art, 1300-1600*, 157.
[65] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 99.

the Oriental world."[66] Although the reuse of iconographic motifs and common subjects does not necessary indicate negotiated differences and cultural hybridity, as Robert Osterhout critically observes,[67] artistic exchange in the Mediterranean is not a simple remix and pastiche of culturally *foreign* forms either. A crucial point is missed: shared motifs and iconographies, like the transfer of subjects and objects from one culture to another, do not necessary signal shared meaning. They are often an example of cultural translation, manipulation, and adaptation of meaning and formulae to a new context. Most importantly, these formulae and visual idioms do not remain unmediated by the artistic style and palette of meaning associated with representation in the local cultural tradition.

This dissertation's theoretical approach departs from the Renaissance documentary paradigm by setting Bellini within the traditions of art he encountered in Constantinople, which were not foreign to him as a member of a heterogeneous Mediterranean society. This view attributes agency to the works in forging communication across diverse "semiospheres" in the Mediterranean. I thus adopt the "new Mediterranean studies" framework that envisions the Mediterranean as a meeting place of diverse cultures that were codependent and existed in a state of mutual dialogue through constant exchange.

Deborah Howard, Gülru Necipoğlu, and Maria Georgopoulou's research in architectural history dealing with the process of translation and deliberate and conscious

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[66] Mack, *Bazaar to Piazza: Islamic Trade and Italian Art, 1300-1600*, 14.
[67] Robert Ousterhout and D. Fairchild Ruggles, editors, *Encounters with Islam: The Medieval Mediterranean Experience Art, Material Culture, and Cultural Interchange*, special edition, *Gesta*, XLII, No. 2 (2004).

appropriation of design ideas on the part of architects, patrons, and artisans in the Mediterranean are benchmark studies. Deborah Howard's *Venice and the East* examines cultural contact and artistic exchange between Venice and Mediterranean Islamic cultures and looks into the creation of new architectural vocabularies specifically concerned with the transfer of architectural visual formulae and idioms.[68] Her treatment of descriptive accounts from travelers and itinerant merchants provides a more generally applicable model for how the perceptive framework of travelers shaped the transmission and adaptation of certain Mamluk design forms and decorations. Howard focuses on the transmission of architectural language through the recollections of travelers and the visual records they carried as she outlines in great detail the socio-political history of cross-cultural encounters. Howard makes the case that the Venetian cognitive world was intellectually engaged with and open to Eastern imagery, facilitating the conscious adaptation and assimilation of Eastern forms into the Venetian built environment.

In the same vein, Gülru Necipoğlu's wide-ranging work[69] on the cross-cultural dialogue between Ottoman, Byzantine, and Venetian visual traditions is a magisterial study for understanding how visual formulae and practices can be purposefully manipulated and invested in a new cultural context. Her treatment of the adaptation of certain architectural practices and codes from Romano-Byzantine and European cultural traditions is particularly illuminating. Necipoğlu demonstrates how adopted architectural schemes, forms, and decorations from Romano-Byzantine palatial traditions as well as

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[68] Deborah Howard, *Venice & the East: The Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture, 1100-1500* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).
[69] Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century*. Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

architectural units and forms from Byzantine and European church traditions were reformulated and reinterpreted in Turco-Mongol terms. Necipoğlu's work convincingly establishes that the same visual formulae and motifs take on different symbolic meanings and roles in different cultural contexts, even when they are derived from the same cultural heritage.

Likewise, Maria Georgopoulou's extensive work on the influence of Venice on its Cretan colony shows that closely related Christian-based cultures invent similar religious subjects, ceremonies, and practices with different significance.[70] Georgopoulou's work examines the hybrid nature of the built environment on Crete and shows that the use of particular expressive forms in architecture was conditioned by political and cultural constraints. By analyzing the use of Byzantine artistic forms by the new Venetian hegemony in Candia, the author argues that such artistic strategies enabled the colonizers to strengthen their colonial power.

In the same way, arguments were made about painting by Eva Hoffman, Claire Farago, and Donna Pierce. The theoretical volumes recently published by Hoffman and Farago provide interdisciplinary models for dealing with culturally diverse aesthetic systems and overcome bipartite/oppositional models of cross-cultural exchange. The volume *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World* edited by Hoffman offers a new model of "dynamic geographical and chronological continuities" and

[70] Maria Georgopoulou, *Venice's Mediterranean Colonies: Architecture and Urbanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

"cultural exchange" in the study of the Mediterranean.[71] By drawing attention to the interchangeability of visual themes among diverse cultures and religious cults in the Mediterranean due to preexisting consensus on the meaning of artistic practices in this region, it proposes a reciprocal model for the appropriation of objects, visual motifs, and modes of production and decoration that is dependent upon their function in a specific cultural context. *Transforming Images: New Mexican* Santos *In-between Worlds*, Farago's recent theoretical volume, co-authored with Donna Pierce, proposes new ways to deal with images produced in heterogeneous colonial and postcolonial locations.[72] Although the book investigates art made in colonial New Mexico, a significantly later period than the Renaissance, it addresses fundamental questions of art historical and anthropological research, specifically investigating and theorizing processes of cultural appropriation. Using postcolonial theory and a semiotic theoretical apparatus, Farago and Pierce propose a model of active reception by artists and viewers of foreign visual motifs, which accounts for both 1) a conscious translation, transformation, and utilization according to local needs of foreign artistic styles and subjects; and 2) the shifts in meaning that occur in complex ethnic and cultural contexts when visual motifs are transferred, appropriated, or translated.

Farago's approach to dealing with the situations of intercultural artistic exchange, production, and reception parallels a more developed and comprehensive poststructuralist semiotic account of the dynamic interaction of heterogeneous cultures proposed by Yury

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[71] Eva R. Hoffman, ed. *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).
[72] Claire Farago and Donna Pierce, *Transforming Images: New Mexican Santos In-between Worlds* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006).

Lotman.[73] Lotman's theory refines the logic of structural linguistics by recognizing denotation (literal meaning encoded in a signifier, conscious expression, or representation) and connotation (mental idea, construct, or context-dependent, socially produced multiple meanings) as inseparably linked in a circular feedback process constituting a continuous open-ended semiosis, similar to the process theorized by Charles S. Peirce. Selectively drawing on structural linguistics, structuralism, post-structuralism, cybernetics, and psychology, Lotman and his colleagues from the Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics developed an original method of multidimensional cultural and cross-cultural analysis.

In Lotman's theory, cultures are interpreted as distinct semiotic entities or spheres of semiosis—for which he coined the term *semiosphere*, in analogy with the concept of the biosphere.[74] Lotman distinguishes between languages of culture (myth, cultural rules, religion, and the language of art and science) as *secondary modeling systems* and verbal languages as *primary modeling systems*.[75] The verbal language offers the model by which we apprehend the world, while the language of culture leads to understanding the world in a certain way. Lotman understands culture as a set of texts, specific to a particular historical period, and as "*non-hereditary collective memory*."[76] The *semiosphere* is not homogeneous or uniform; it is in constant flux due to ongoing processes of semiosis, described as a dynamic interaction between the center and the periphery, between one semiosphere and another. Lotman links the production of new cultural meaning with

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[73] IU. M. Lotman, *Izbrannye Stat'i: v Trekh Tomakh (Selected Writings in 3 Volumes)* (Tallinn: Aleksandra, 1992), vol. 1.
[74] Ibid., 12, 13,14,16, 18.
[75] See introduction by U. Eco to the English edition: IU. M. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), X.
[76] Ibid., XI.

internal and external dynamic exchanges between non-isomorphic[77] systems of signification, leading to exchanges of information, non-trivial acquisition of meaning, and production of new information as a result of a dialogical interaction between the entities. As he contends:

> The semiosphere is marked by its heterogeneity. The languages which fill up the semiotic space are various, and they relate to each other along the spectrum which runs from complete mutual translatability to just as complete mutual untranslatability. Heterogeneity is defined both by the diversity of elements and by their different functions. So if we make the mental experiment of imagining a model of a semiotic space where all the languages came into being at one and the same moment and under the influence of the same impulses, we still would not have a single coding structure but a set of connected but different systems.[78]
>
> The structure of the semiosphere is asymmetrical. Asymmetry finds expression in the currents of internal relations with which the whole density of the semiosphere is permeated. Translation is a primary mechanism of consciousness. To express something in another language is a way of understanding it. And since in the majority of cases the different languages of the semiosphere are semiotically asymmetrical, i.e. they do not have mutual semantic correspondences, then the whole semiosphere can be regarded as a generator of information.[79]

Lotman's theory emphasizes the interaction of dissimilar autonomous cultural systems, which results in the active transformation of texts, artistic forms, and cultural codes and gives a rise to contrasts and hybrids within a given culture as well as in the process of intercultural dialogue.[80]

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[77] Isomorphisms are studied in biology and mathematics. According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, isomorphic organisms of different ancestry in biology have similarities in form; in mathematics, isomorphic systems exhibit a one-to-one correspondence between their elements, such that the result of an operation on elements of one set corresponds to the result of the analogous operation on their images in the other set. Language-related isomorphisms are described in mathematical terms.
[78] Ibid., 125.
[79] Ibid., 127.
[80] Lotman, *Izbrannye Stat'i: v Trekh Tomakh* (Selected Writings in 3 Volumes), vol. 1, 111, 117, 118, 121, 122, 125.

According to Lotman, the notion of the boundary of a semiosphere or the way "every culture begins by dividing the world into 'its own' internal space and 'their' external space" is central to understanding the typology of culture.[81] Lotman's concept of the boundary is particularly applicable in the discussion of processes of cross-cultural exchange. As he describes it:

> But the hottest spots for semioticizing processes are the boundaries of the semiosphere. The notion of boundary is an ambivalent one: it both separates and unites. It is always the boundary of something and so belongs to both frontier cultures, to both contiguous semiospheres. The boundary is bilingual and polylingual. The boundary is a mechanism for translating texts of an alien semiotics into 'our' language, it is the place where what is 'external' is transformed into what is 'internal,' it is a filtering membrane which so transforms foreign texts that they become part of the semiosphere's internal semiotics while still retaining their own characteristics.[82]

In this view, an intercultural exchange is understood as an intervention from outside. It begins with the introduction of 'foreign' or 'alien' "texts," which are translated and transformed according to the conventions and practices of the receiving culture. In Lotman's theory, the boundary separating the internal space of the semiosphere from the external is only one part of a more complex system of internal boundaries, as "the entire space of the semiosphere is transected by boundaries of different levels, boundaries of different languages, and even of texts…hierarchically disposed on different levels."[83]These "sectional boundaries" and "hierarchies of codes" activate "different levels of signification in the single reality of the semiosphere," resulting in different kinds of interpretive competencies within a cultural sphere. These competencies lead to different understandings of the same "form" of signifier, and these different

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[81] Lotman, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*, 131.
[82] Ibid., 136-137.
[83] Ibid., 138.

interpretations lead to new formulas. In this view, exchange with a "foreign" or "external" culture is a more attenuated instance of what goes on within one semiosphere. Introduction of new texts increases the likelihood of a significant change within a semiosphere as it intensifies the indeterminacy of the semiosphere and leads to a massive output of new "texts" in the receiving culture. These are then transmitted to spheres outside of the receiving culture, thereby stimulating further production of new texts, which are translated back to the semiosphere where they stimulate even further new texts in a continuing process.

Lotman holds that the process of dynamic and reciprocal interaction between semiospheres during an intercultural encounter inevitably results in the production of new meanings through the processes of appropriation and translation of "foreign" or "alien" cultural codes and artistic forms. The sophistication of Lotman's theory matches the complexity of the heterogeneous cultural situation of microecologies in the process of constant flux and interaction in the Mediterranean, as described earlier. Lotman's theory offers us a means to effectively analyze the multivalent processes of cultural exchange and translation and explain *why* those cultures have produced those phenomena.

Although Lotman's theory provides an appealing approach to the study of cross-cultural exchange, most interdisciplinary cross-cultural studies rely instead on Pierre Bourdieu's account of cultural production, which remains essential for understanding the social role of art objects and individual agency in a social network. Bourdieu offers an alternative to the concept of style when dealing with artistic practices, which are described as "the process of objectification and orchestration in the language of *interaction* and mutual adjustment," "the production of a commonsense," which is

"secured by consensus of the meaning (*sens*) of practices of the world."[84] According to Bourdieu, agents—both producers and art objects—possess "the mastery of a common code" of production and interpretation, and act in accordance with "the objective structure of the relation between the groups they belong to;" hence both practices and works become instantly "intelligible and foreseeable."[85] Adherence to social rules and socially structured intercourse thus enables both the production and the interpretation of art. The strength of Bourdieu's theory of cultural production is that it emphasizes the dynamic interplay between social norms (social consensus on the meaning of practice) and schemes immanent in practice (including interpretations or reflections on practice); this interplay accounts for improvisation and the production of new meanings, and shows that artistic production is not rigidly predetermined.[86] However, Bourdieu's theory is limiting when applied to the context of intercultural exchange, since he insists that the reception of a work of art does not guarantee a transcendent code of interpretation or an adequate understanding; rather, it introduces a "mistaken" comprehension due to the unequal level of artistic competency between the producer and the beholder, which prevents a shared artistic language between them. Farago, critically applying Bourdieu's theory to the context of intercultural artistic production and reception, explains that these so-called "mistaken codes" are better understood as "semiotic shifters of meaning" that naturally occur in all human cultures, including hybrid societies, due to "the capacity of members of a society to improvise" and "to introduce new meaning" in both the

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[84] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 81.
[85] Ibid., 80-81.
[86] For critical discussion of Bourdieu's theory see Claire Farago, "Semiotics of Images and Political Realities," in Farago and Pierce, *Transforming Images: New Mexican Santos In-Between Worlds*, 38-39.

production and reception of works of art.[87] As Farago critically observes, "Bourdieu does not really come to terms with the complexities of a colonial society, and other heterogeneous sociocultural settings. In such settings, what may be viewed as 'mistakes' from the perspective of the dominant cultural position take on new social functions as semiotic 'shifters of meanings.'"[88] In contrast to Bourdieu, Lotman's theory offers an adequate and complex treatment of heterogeneous cultural settings, maintaining that the dynamic interaction between distinct cultural entities and the production of new meanings are ongoing conditions of all human cultures. There are no "mistaken" codes in Lotman's universe. Lotman's multidimensional account provides another theoretical framework to describe art production in the kinds of colonial situations and diverse cultural settings that figure prominently in Farago and Pierce's work. On the other hand, Lotman's theory does not address the issue of artistic agency and should be supplemented with discussions of "agency" as a form of directed competence. This dissertation adopts Lotman's approach to cross-cultural exchange, complemented by Farago's contributions to the intercultural theory of production and reception and relying on Bourdieu's and, even more, on precise Alfred Gell's understanding of the artistic agency of both makers and objects, as well as of objects or representations as the medium of communication in socially structured situations.[89]

While I adopt Farago, Georgopoulou, Howard, and Necipoğlu's methodologies in dealing with instances of cross-cultural contact as well as the context of inter-cultural production and reception based on Lotman's theory as discussed above, this dissertation

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[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid., 38. Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 1998).

also consults works of other scholars. Alfred Gell's theory of agency offers a means to analyze a complex net of relations among the artist, the work of art, the prototype(s), and the recipient(s), which can all be related to each other as agents and patients (causally affected by agents).[90] In contrast with earlier approaches that favor concepts of aesthetics, style, and meaning, Gell places the emphasis on the social agency realized through the medium of human agents as well as objects. Humans exercise their agency through the medium of artifacts, which are secondary agents that act in the milieu of causation. Gell's approach tabulates multiple relationships between agents and patients and thus transcends the conventional model of agency entailing an artist-genius and a powerful patron. As Robin Osborne and Jeremy Tanner's volume demonstrates, Gell's core conceptual framework can be productive in various art situations and contexts, where "the agency of objects as an alternative to traditional focus on meaning" helps to clarify the wider cultural background of the image and its participation in the construction of meaning and mediation of agency in social networks.[91]

This dissertation also consults foundational works in the field of Venetian studies by a number of distinguished scholars, including Patricia Fortini Brown, Otto Demus, Rona Goffen, Peter Humfrey, Debra Pincus, and David Rosand. It is thanks to the extensive research of these authors into issues of cultural influence, patronage, socio-political context, and circumstances of commissions, as well as their attribution and classification of many Venetian artworks and artistic styles, that a body of evidence exists

[90] See a detailed review of Gell's intellectual program in Robin Osborn and Jeremy Tanner's introduction in Robin Osborne and Jeremy Tanner, eds., *Art's Agency and Art History* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2007), 1-27, 12-13.
[91] Ibid., 23.

to enable the development of a synthesis and theoretical analysis of issues related to cross-cultural exchange in Venetian art. In the area of Italian Renaissance, this dissertation builds on works of Carmen Bambach, Hans Belting, David Alan Brown, Caroline Campbell, Lorne Campbell, Stephen Campbell, Jürg Meyer zur Capellen, Alan Chong, Keith Christiansen, Rab Hatfield, Colin Eisler, Jack Greenstein, John Pope-Hennesy, Francis Ames-Lewis, Joseph Meder, Alexander Nagel, John Shearman, Martin Warnke, Joanna Woods-Marsden, and Christopher Wood. Research for this project has involved consultation of milestone works on the issues of Mehmed II's artistic patronage, the rise of the Ottoman Empire, and art in Byzantine, Ottoman, Timurid, and Safavid courts. Such works include those of Nurhan Atasoy, Esin Atil, Franz Babinger, Sheila Blair, Jonathan Bloom, Michael Barry, Oleg Grabar, Colin Imber, Halil İnalcik, Cemal Kafadar, Çiğdem Kafescioğlu, Henry Meguire, Gülru Necipoğlu, Julian Raby, Scott Redford, David Roxburgh, William Tronzo, and Andrews Walter. This dissertation's theoretical and methodological approaches to history and art history are also informed by consultation of works by Norman Bryson, Lev Manovich, John Marino, and Sheldon Nodelman.

My project is specifically concerned with cross-cultural exchange as it relates to the circulation, translation, and mutual adaptation of artistic formats. I am interested in tracing how Bellini's stay at the Ottoman court informs his artistic style, representational choices, and artistic vocabulary and what Bellini learned from his visit. This project reconsiders the Renaissance documentary paradigm by setting Bellini within the traditions of art he encountered in Constantinople and treats him as a member of a

heterogeneous Mediterranean cultural milieu that is best described as a constellation of distinct semiospheres engaged in mutual multivalent processes of political, economic, cultural, and artistic dialogue.

Chapter-by-Chapter Preview

With this overall project in mind, the chapters are arranged in the following way: The first chapter reconstructs the activities and significance of Bellini's artistic visit to Constantinople in the context of the wider political and diplomatic agendas of the Republic of Venice and those of the Ottoman Empire. Through a critical review of extant Italian and Ottoman documentary sources, and an analysis of the episodes of artistic and diplomatic missions in the Early Modern period, this chapter establishes Bellini's role as a cultural ambassador for Venice and a court artist for Mehmed II, charged to learn about Ottoman court life in order to fashion portraits and other artistic products upon the Sultan's request. Bellini's service aided Mehmed II's efforts in establishing a school of representational arts in Constantinople. Bellini's work also furthered the promulgation of Ottoman imperialism through the techniques and practices of art and visual display, as, in this era, artists' expertise became a particularly important means by which potentates in Early Modern Europe and Islamic states forged socio-political bonds with allies and neighbors. This chapter also provides an account of exchanges that included visiting artists in order to more clearly articulate the role of artists in diplomacy. To this end, the

protocols and duties of visiting court artists are defined, and various social contexts in which such visits occurred are briefly discussed, along with the products of these visits. Bellini's visit to Constantinople occurred at the critical moment after the Venetian Senate signed the peace treaty with the Turks in 1479. Responding to Mehmed II's request for a good painter, the Senate chose Bellini, an official portrait painter of the Republic, to demonstrate goodwill. Despite the fact that he was decorating the Doge's Palace at the time, in a high-priority commission, Bellini went to Constantinople—and his visit turned out to be something more complex and important for art history: namely, the mutual transfer of artistic idioms, technologies, and practices. Historical evidence about Bellini's painting projects at the Ottoman court, as well as his extant works, show that the artist interacted extensively with the Ottoman visual tradition. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of Bellini's artistic agency in the context of his court appointment and completed artistic products.

The second chapter presents background to the reign of Mehmed II, the organization of his court, and Mehmed II's imperial ideology. It shows that Mehmed II defined his imperial program in the context of rival Islamic courts—Timurid, Turcoman, and Mamluk. This chapter draws on recent studies of Mehmed II's self-representation that interpret him as a hybrid figure, one who acted as a true Muslim ruler by furthering Islam in the conquered lands, and at the same time claimed the identity of a Roman-Byzantine and Renaissance ruler. Mehmed II's interest in Italianate traditions was intimately connected to his imperial goal to surpass both the Roman Empire and previous Islamic states by forging a new type of Islamic empire, fusing together historical and contemporary paradigms. Trusted sources on the reign of Mehmed II confirm that his

imperial program of Ottoman Caesarism had implications for the organization of his court. Mehmed II's court culture brought together Romano-Byzantine, Italian Renaissance, and Timurid-Turcoman court cultures. The central premise of his imperial self-representation was the unapproachable authoritarian ruler—a paradigm borrowed from Persianate (Sasanian)-Byzantine ideals. But Mehmed II also appropriated and promoted arts like a Renaissance ruler, who interacted with courtiers and also took the mantle of a Muslim ruler adhering to Islamic ideals of justice. Claiming to be a true heir of the Roman Empire, Mehmed II established the tradition of court artists and courtiers who had special access to him; the artists' supreme knowledge, talent, and expertise enhanced the legitimacy, honor, and exclusivity of his rule. The contextual reading of Mehmed II's imperial ideology helps to reconstruct the meaning of Bellini's artistic appointment in the context of the Ottoman court.

The third chapter reconstructs the function and meaning of Bellini's drawings in Constantinople in the context of the Ottoman court. In Constantinople, Bellini fashioned hybrid artistic models to aid local artists in developing a distinct Ottoman artistic style, while gaining knowledge of Eastern artistic formats and iconographies that he later used in his own painting in Venice. Bellini's careful and detailed drawings of Turkish characters are unique for their novel format, subject matter, and pen techniques. Formatted as stand-alone figures, each on a separate sheet of paper, Bellini's drawings resemble in their composition both samples of designs, typically collected as specimens in albums (so-called Timurid and Ottoman *muraqqa*), and Persian miniatures, included as illustrations in books. Their drawing techniques, emphasizing fine pen lines and careful shading, would particularly appeal to Ottoman artists, who appreciated calligraphy and

relied on outline as a means of constructing an image. At the same time, Bellini's drawings helped Ottoman artists learn Italian representational techniques. Adapting Venetian draftsmanship practices to the local context, Bellini also learned visual traditions by interacting with artists at the Ottoman court. From the perspective of Venetian workshop practices, then, Bellini not only created models for local artists, but also benefitted from learning local art formats, subjects, and costumes. From a wider cultural viewpoint, these drawings celebrated Mehmed II's court and his polyglot courtiers. Thus they underscore the importance of Bellini's role in the intercultural dissemination of workshop practices of drawing.

The fourth chapter analyzes the *Portrait of Mehmed II* to reveal Bellini's role in the cross-cultural dissemination of portrait conventions between Venice and Constantinople. In this work, Bellini fuses Eastern iconographic languages with the established tradition of Venetian portraiture to fashion a new kind of *impresa*-portrait that was able to convey Mehmed II's power and nobility to beholders familiar with either Eastern or Western imperial portraiture traditions—that is, with Venetian, Byzantine, or Timurid imperial portraits. Reports by contemporaries, such as Giovanni Maria Angiolello, show that Bellini made drawings of Ottoman courtiers and citizens and studied the Byzantine and Timurid images of rulers in circulation at Mehmed's court. In a close visual analysis, I demonstrate how these and other cultural and artistic codes are articulated in the Mehmed portrait and reappraise its function at the Ottoman court. Bellini was not the only Italian artist who worked for the Sultan in Constantinople, but his work in particular became a model for Ottoman portraiture in the courts of Mehmed's successors, perhaps due to his ability to integrate Italian and Eastern conventions of

portraiture. On the other hand, in Venice, and even in Bellini's own work, the Mehmed portrait's formula for the projection of imperial power was less widely used as a model, as this chapter shows in a comparative survey including Bellini's pre- and post-Constantinople portraits of Venetian doges. From the perspective of Venetian portrait painting, then, Bellini's negotiation of the frictions between distinct visual traditions remains unique. Bellini's fashioning of the Ottoman ruler via a non-Orientalist physiognomy, sumptuous attire, and an authoritative inscription proclaiming his imperial office is unprecedented.

Overall, "Artists as Agents" provides a rich historical account of how a leading Venetian artist helped represent Venice's political and cultural ambitions while serving as a visiting artist at the Ottoman court, and how the experience subsequently enhanced the artistic culture of Venice. My examination of Bellini's work and career as a cultural ambassador of Venice and Mehmed II's court artist illuminates Venetian cultural politics at a crucial historic moment of political change resulting from the fall of Byzantium. While many studies have investigated artistic dialogues between specific cultures, this study presents a more historically integrated approach by placing Bellini's Constantinopolitan sojourn in the context of reciprocal political and cultural exchanges. As an artist from Venice—a major heterogeneous Mediterranean polity with diverse artistic traditions and styles—Bellini had the necessary artistic training and cultural sensibilities to act as a broker to fashion hybrid expressive forms at the Sultan's court.

Chapter One

Gentile Bellini's Visit to Constantinople (1479-1481): History and Artistic Products

Gentile Bellini's (c. 1429-1507) artistic visit to Constantinople in 1479-1481was an outcome of the complex negotiations of a peace treaty between Venice and Constantinople, finalized in January of 1479.[92] Since 1463, Venice had been engaged in a long war with the Ottoman Empire. Mehmed II (1432-1481), well-known as a great patron of the arts and of Italian artists, asked Venice's Senate for an esteemed portrait painter—"un bon depentor che sapia retrazer"[93]—to be put at his service. The Senate, anxious to improve relations with the Sultan, attached Bellini to a diplomatic mission tasked with delivering payment for the right to maintain trade posts in Crete, Corfu, and Morea[94] (Fig. 1.1). Bellini's high social status, artistic expertise, and administrative and commercial experience gained in running his own workshop made him a particularly suitable choice.

Bellini was one of the most illustrious painters of the Venetian Republic. Trained in his father Jacopo's workshop, Gentile was renowned in his day for both his portraiture and his mastery in manipulating space and integrating figures.[95] Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) praised Bellini for his full command of liner perspective and his depictions of

[92] William Hardy MacNeill, *Venice the Hinge of Europe 1081-1797* (Chicago [u.a.]: Univ. Press, 1974).
[93] Appendix, document 2.
[94] Maria Pia Pedani, *In nome del gran signore : inviati ottomani a Venezia dalla caduta di Costantinopoli alla guerra di Candia* (Venezia: Deputazione ed., 1994).
[95] Jürg Meyer zur Capellen, *Gentile Bellini* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1985). Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

architectural details, costumes, and portraits in large historical paintings, such as *Procession in the San Marco Piazza* (1496) and *St. Mark Preaching in Alexandria* (1504-1507):

> [E]t in quella fece lo edificio di Santa Sofia di Constantinopoli, oggi moschea de' Turchi; è tirato in prospettiva, cosa veramente difficile e bella per molte parti che si veggono che egli ha fatto scoprire in quello edificio. Oltra che egli ritrasse di naturale tutte le femmine che sono in quella storia, con gli abiti alla turchesca, quail egli aveva recati di Gostantinopoli, e molte aconciature di capo che son tenute molto belle.[96]

Here, Bellini's representational technique is supreme, allowing the viewer to telescope between macro-views of the scene and micro-views of individual figures in a way that seems wholly lifelike, but is in fact impossible for the human eye to perform as well as the painter's hand does (Fig. 1.2).

In addition to Bellini's technical mastery, he also showed great skill in navigating Venetian social and political life, as evidenced by the upward trajectory of his career and by his membership in the élite group of *cittadini originari* or "original citizens," which entitled him, according to the rules of the Venetian class system, to hold high-level administrative posts within the city's government.[97] In 1469, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III, while touring Venice, granted Bellini the title of *Comes Palatinus* or Palatine Knight. By 1474, Bellini had been appointed by the Senate to refurbish the Grand Council Hall with a series of narrative paintings and portraits of Venice's rulers,

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[96] Giorgio Vasari, Luciano Bellosi and Aldo Rossi, eds., *Le Vite De' Piú Eccelenti Architetti, Pittori Et Scultori Italiani Da Cimabue Insino a' Tempi Nostri : Nell'edizione Per i Tipi Di Lorenzo Torrentino, Firenze 1550* (Torino: G. Einaudi, 1986), 436-437. *Procession in the Pizza San Marco* was painted for the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista, and *St. Mark Preaching in Alexandria* for the Scuola Grande di San Marco.

[97] For the social standing of the Bellini family in Venice see: Jennifer Fletcher, "Bellini's Social World, " in *The Cambridge Companion to Giovanni Bellini*, ed. Peter Humfrey (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 13-47.

called doges (Fig. 1.3).[98] Bellini also served in the highest administrative posts on the governing board (*Banca*) of the Scuola Grande di San Marco, both as *Guardian del Matin* (director of processions) in 1492 and *Vicario* (first deputy) in 1504. Although his work at the Ducal Palace was destroyed by fire in 1577, his other similar commissions in the Venetian confraternities (*scuole*) remain Bellini's most renowned and most-studied works (Fig. 1.4).

It is not, then, entirely surprising—given Bellini's high social standing, and the integration of Renaissance court artists in the court circles in which they served—that Bellini should have visited the eastern Mediterranean as part of an artistic visit. Bellini worked at the Sultan's court for sixteen months, returning to Venice after completing several artistic projects for the Sultan such as frescoes in the Palace and diverse paintings, of which only a few drawings, the painted portrait, and portrait medals survive in several collections (Pl. I-XII).

Mehmed II's grandiose imperial palace (now known as Topkapi), was completed in 1478 on the ancient site of the Byzantine acropolis at the heart of Constantinople, near the ruins of the palace of Byzantine emperors (Fig. 1.5-1.7).[99] Designed in a composite, cosmopolitan visual style, the palace incorporated into its ceremonial space the Byzantine Church of Hagia Sophia, an architectural miracle of the Mediterranean world, now converted into a mosque, and the ancient imperial Hippodrome (Fig. 1.8-1.9). Unlike any other Ottoman ruler, Mehmed II was fond of Byzantine relics and icons, which he

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[98] Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio*, 51-52.
[99] Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (New York, N.Y.; Cambridge, Mass.: Architectural History Foundation; MIT Press, 1991).

collected in his treasure rooms (Fig.1.10).[100] Perhaps due to Mehmed II's interest in the Christian faith, and as a result of his tolerant policies, many Byzantine churches, with their mosaics and frescoes, remained part of the capital's multicultural visual fabric. As I will show, the polyglot nature of Mehmed's imperial program, as reflected in the material life of the city and at court, was not lost on Bellini. In the following pages, I will detail how Bellini learned several distinct visual idioms at the Ottoman court and combined them to make drawings and the portrait painting of Mehmed II—all of which now seem difficult and obscure, though their symbolic meanings would have been recognizable *in situ* in the late fifteenth century.

This chapter will provide a full overview of Bellini's visit, its artistic products, and its role in cross-cultural exchange in the Mediterranean. A critical reconsideration of extant Italian and Ottoman documentary sources will clarify Bellini's twofold role as a cultural ambassador for Venice and a court artist for the Sultan. A comparison with other contemporary visiting court artists attached to diplomatic missions in the Mediterranean and North Europe leads to a reappraisal of the role of artists in Early Modern artistic exchanges and establishes Bellini as a cultural broker in an exchange between Venice and Constantinople. In conclusion, I contend that Bellini extensively studied the Ottoman visual tradition as part of fulfilling his duties as a court artist at that time.

[100] Julian Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom" (PhD diss., Oxford University, 1980).

Bellini's Visit in Documentary Sources

Meticulous work by several generations of scholars has uncovered nearly twenty accounts that document various aspects of Bellini's mission to Constantinople.[101] Although all sources have been reproduced, a critical evaluation of them awaits future publication. The historical sources can be divided into several categories: Mehmed II's requests for artists from Venice; the Venetian Senate's orders and annals specifying arrangements for Bellini's appointment at the Ottoman court; reports by Bellini's contemporaries on his appointment and activities in Constantinople, including informants from Constantinople, Florence, and Venice; reports on Bellini's appointment and activities by Renaissance historians of art and humanists who may have had access to oral histories and other documents pertaining to the visit that are now lost; and epigraphic and visual evidence about the rewards and titles he received. These sources vary in their reliability. In particular, reports by humanists and historians of art may suffer from authors' biases reflective of their respective agendas and anti-Ottoman (Orientalist) propaganda. The gathered documentary sources help set Bellini's visit within the context of his appointment at Mehmed II's court and of similar artists' appointments in courts and diplomacy.

The known facts about Bellini's visit can be summarized as follows.[102] After a peace treaty with the Ottomans was concluded in January 1479 and the Turkish embassy

[101] See all documents reproduced in Appendix. The documents have been verified in *Archivio di Stato* in Venice and using all available publications; some mistakes in references have been corrected.
[102] Two versions have been proposed: Julian Raby, "Pride and Prejudice: Mehmed the Conqueror and the Italian Portrait Medal," in *Studies in the History of Art, XII: Italian Medals*, ed. Graham Pollard (Washington, DC, 1987), 171-196, 180-186. Caroline Campbell and Alan Chong, *Bellini and the East* (London; Boston: National Gallery Company ; Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2005), 107-109.

was greeted in the Great Hall of the Ducal Palace on April 27, the Venetian Senate received a request for a painter from Mehmed II in the beginning of August. The Senate unanimously voted to send Gentile Bellini, despite his current, significant appointment to embellish the Great Hall with a series of frescoes. To replace Gentile, the Senate chose Giovanni Bellini to carry on the project until his half-brother was back. In addition to a request for a painter, the Senate received another request for a bronze founder in the month of August, and employed Master Bartolomeo (most likely the sculptor Bartolomeo Bellano) to join Bellini. In September, Bellini and his two assistants, along with Bellano and his assistants, sailed to Constantinople. Little is known of what Bellano did in Constantinople, but it was not to Mehmed II's liking, as Julian Raby demonstrated.[103] In contrast, Bellini engaged in various projects at Mehmed II's court, from painted portraits to paintings and murals for the imperial palace; from drawings of Mehmed's courtiers to people he wished to see, such as a dervish in the bazaar; from an icon of the *Virgin and Child* to medallic portraits of the Sultan—even though he was a tyro at the craft. Mehmed II recognized Bellini by conferring upon him the highest honors of Golden Knight and Palace Companion and by giving him gifts upon his departure to Venice. In all, the diversity of Bellini's projects at the court and the honors he received unmistakably place Bellini in the category of a court artist and exemplify his activities as such, as I will show further in this chapter.

[103] Julian Raby shows that another letter from the Sultan to the Senate, received on 7 January 1480, requested another bronze founder or sculptor, but better than the one they had sent to him. Raby concludes that Bellano stayed at the court only for six months and did not earn recognition from the Sultan and that the ruler was a discriminating patron. See: Raby, "Pride and Prejudice: Mehmed the Conqueror and the Italian Portrait Medal," 184.

The incompleteness of historical accounts as well as their biases leads to several questions that have not been entirely answered: Did Mehmed II explicitly request a portrait painter? How specific was the Sultan's request for Bellini? Was Mehmed II actually involved in sending the request for an artist—or was the request due to the involvement of his advisers and ambassadors? Did Bellini's visit to the Ottoman court have anything to do with diplomacy or the representation of the Venetian Senate and the State? Was Bellini on friendly terms with Mehmed II—and did he even see him? Where did Bellini stay—in the Sultan's palace, or with Venetian diplomats and merchants?

When Raby first raised questions about Bellini's visit, Giorgio Vasari's subjective account served as the main narrative of Bellini's biography and his visit in Constantinople.[104] Vasari used Bellini's visit to represent Italian art as a natural and universal technology that amazed Mehmed II. According to Vasari, Mehmed was greatly impressed by some portraits by Giovanni Bellini that had reached Constantinople, so he asked the Venetian Senate to send him the painter. However, Giovanni was too old and busy with commissions, and so Venetian officials chose Gentile. Gentile did as great a job as Giovanni would have done and amazed Mehmed even more with his skill in verisimilitude and perspective as well as in his execution of a broad range of artistic products upon the ruler's request. Raby observes that even though Vasari claimed Mehmed II's invitation for a painter was motivated "by his appreciation of Giovanni's work and by belief that the Renaissance art of portraiture had begun with the Bellini family; in fact, Venetian archival documents and other early accounts fail to prove that

[104] Document No. 18, Appendix.

Mehmet specified either Giovanni or Gentile by name."[105] Amy Worthen recently argued that Vasari's account, which stressed Giovanni's seniority as an elder brother, was based on the 1503 edition of the *Supplementum Chronicarium* by the Augustinian friar Jacopo Filippo Foresti—the source that must be taken more seriously by scholars, as its entries on Gentile and Giovanni Bellini dated to 1486, 1491, and 1503 were made with input from Gentile.[106] In this view, Vasari's account is evidently biased in representing Giovanni as the lead portrait painter whose fame reached Constantinople. But how reliable is the *Supplementum Chronicarium'*s claim that Mehmed II specifically asked for Gentile? Is it similarly skewed in its blatant promotion of the Venetian art of portraiture as a superior and universal technology?

Historical documents and accounts do not agree as to whether Mehmed II sent a request to the Venetian Senate for Bellini specifically or just for a good painter and other craftsmen. Official annals of the Senate simply state that the Sultan asked for an excellent painter ("un bon pytor") without specifying the artist. As Marino Sanudo (1436-1536)—a member of the Major Consiglio, who faithfully noted down everything that was said and done in the Senate's assemblies records:

> On the first day of August [1479], came a Jewish orator from the Lord of Turks with letters. He wished for the Signoria to send a good painter. He

[105] Julian Raby, "Opening Gambits," in Selmin Kangal and Priscilla Mary Isin, eds., *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman* (Istanbul: Isbank, 2000), 67. Raby, "Pride and Prejudice: Mehmed the Conqueror and the Italian Portrait Medal," in *Studies in the History of Art, XII: Italian Medals*, ed. Graham Pollard, 192, n. 58.

[106] Amy Worthen's 2012 critical publication of the text returns the *Supplementum Chronicarium* to scholarship as a reliable source. The text was previously avoided by scholars for its differing view of Giovanni and Gentile Bellini's birth order. Amy Namowitz Worthen, "An Inconvenient Text: The *Supplementum Chronicarium* as a Source of Information about Gentile and Giovanni Bellini," in *Examining Giovanni Bellini: An Art 'More Human and More Divine*, ed. Carolyn C. Wilson (Turnhout*, Belgium:* Brepols Publishers*,* 2012).

> invited the Doge to go to honor the marriage of his son. [The Doge and the Signoria] responded, thanking him, and sent Gentile Bellini, an excellent painter, who went with the galleys of Romania, and the Signoria paid his expenses, and he departed on September 3.[107]

Domenico Malipiero (1428–1515), a naval captain of the Venetian Republic and another reliable author of the Venetian Annals, further claimed that the Sultan had a specific interest in a painter who knew how to make portraits: "un bon depentor che sapia retrazer."[108] Reports of other contemporaries, including the Venetian Francesco Suarino (1450-1529), a Franciscan monk and a connoisseur of the Middle East (who knew Bellini personally), and Giovanni Maria Angiolello (1452-1524), a Venetian noble and a historian at Mehmed II's court (who may served at the court during Bellini's visit), also concur that the Sultan expressly asked for a good painter. Suarino states that Mehmed II asked for a good painter as well as a maker of glasses and a maker of chiming clocks—"li facesse christalini, un'altro che li facesse horioli da sonare,"[109] Angiolello reports that only a painter was requested: "haveva piacere di pitture et per questo scrisse all'Illustrìssima Signorìa che gli mandasse un pittore."[110] As well, two other fifteenth-century writers, Jacopo Filippo Foresti (1434-1520) and Pescennio Francesco Negro (1452-ca. 1523),[111] both may have had input directly from Bellini, declared that Mehmed II explicitly asked for Gentile Bellini. For example, in the 1486 edition of the *Supplementum Chronicarium*, published by Foresti, we find: "[Gentile's] great virtues came to the ears of Mahomet, prince of the Turks. Burning with desire to see them he

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[107] Document No. 1, Appendix. Translated from Marin Sanudo, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto* (Venezia: A spesi degli Editori, 1879-1903).
[108] Document No. 2, Appendix.
[109] Document No. 11, Appendix.
[110] Document No. 15, Appendix.
[111] Documents No. 14 & 16, Appendix.

wrote, as a supplicant, to the Venetian Senate, so that it might send him to Constantinople for his singular benefit."[112] This point of view was later repeated by Paolo Giovio (1531), Giorgio Vasari (1550), Francesco Sansovino (1581), and Carlo Ridolfi (1648), albeit with some modifications.[113] The majority of the fifteenth-century sources independently point out that Mehmed II was explicitly interested in a portrait painter, but may have left the choice of the artist to the Venetian Senate.

Interpreting these sources, we can conjecture that Mehmed II may have been informed about the paintings and portraits completed by Bellini in the Great Council Hall by the time of the Ottoman ambassador Lüfti Bey's visit to Venice in April of 1479. Patricia Brown connected the request for a painter with Lüfti Bey's visit and his return to Constantinople.[114] Additionally, further investigating a link between the Venetian peace-maker and diplomat Giovanni Dario and the artist, Brown argued that Dario was instrumental in discussing the proposal for a painter with the Sultan and persuading Bellini to agree to this mission.[115] Dario's instrumental role in arranging for Bellini's visit in Constantinople is further confirmed by his contribution to the recruitment of the Paduan sculptor and bronze caster Bartolommeo Bellano. As Patricia Brown concludes in interpreting the proceedings of the Senate of August 13, 1479, Dario was personally involved in arranging not only for a painter but also for a sculptor and a bronze caster: "just as also this desire of his is confirmed by his orator, who is departing from here, and

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[112] Document No. 16, Appendix.
[113] Documents No.17-20, Appendix.
[114] Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio*.
[115] Ibid., 64-65. Brown clarifies the earlier statement made by Franz Babinger that Dario was responsible for informing Mehmed II about Gentile's work in Venice as well as arranging his trip to Constantinople as a part of the treaty negotiations. See Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, 378.

by our secretary Joannes Darius."[116] In this context, it is more plausible that the Sultan and his advisors were negotiating with the Venetian Senate for the best portrait painter they could get, perhaps having Bellini specifically in mind after receiving intelligence reports.

It can also be corroborated that Mehmed II or his advisors perhaps had in mind a programmatic commission of portraits (both painted and glyptic), since he asked for a bronze founder only two weeks after his request for "un bon pytor." On August 13, 1479, another letter from the Sultan arrived.[117] His requests to Venice parallel the ruler's earlier efforts to secure the services of portrait artists. One example is the medal artist Costanzo di Moysis (active 1474-1524), whose visit was arranged by Ferrante I of Naples (1423-1494).[118] Costanzo may have stayed at the Ottoman court in 1478-1479 and cast two variants of his well-known medal of the ruler (National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC).[119] Simultaneously, early in 1479, letters from Mehmed asked for bronze sculptors in Florence, according to the Florentine writer Benedetto Dei.[120] However, there is no evidence to confirm that the recruitment of artists in Florence was successful. Yet Lorenzo de' Medici commissioned from his court artist, Bertoldo di Giovanni (ca.1435/40-1491), a portrait-medal of Mehmed II to send to the ruler as a token of friendship in response to his letters (Fig. 1.11).[121] Raby contends that Bertoldo's medal was based on Bellini's medal (Pl. IV), which was sent to Florence by Mehmed II's

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[116] Ibid., 64. See document No. 3, Appendix.
[117] Document No. 3, Appendix.
[118] Susan Elizabeth Spinale, ″The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2003), 112-23.
[119] Ibid. Also see Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 71.
[120] Raby, "Pride and Prejudice: Mehmed the Conqueror and the Portrait Medal," in *Italian Medals*, ed. J. G. Pollard, 83.
[121] Ibid., 82.

embassy in March 1480. Whatever the case may be, it is evident that either Mehmed or his close entourage and advisors were persistent in trying to find artists skilled in portraiture, particularly in 1478-1479. These years correspond to the final stage in the construction of the New (Topkapi) Palace as well as to the Sultan's efforts to promulgate a new set of imperial laws codifying his imperial persona and political status.[122] Mehmed II had relative success in commissioning portrait medals, yet no portrait painter entered the Sultan's service before Bellini.

The language of the Venetian Senate's subsequent communications indicates that Bellini was appointed to serve as an official painter of the Republic at the court of Mehmed II in Constantinople: "de mandato nostri Dominij proficiscitur Constantinopolim ad serviendum nostro Dominio."[123] The Venetian Grand Council reached the decision by August 28, 1479, a month after the first orator arrived in Venice. Shortly thereafter, in September, Bellini sailed to Constantinople, together with two assistants and the metal founder "Magistri Bertholomei, fusoris metalli" (identified as Bartolommeo Bellano) and his two assistants.[124] Although Babinger doubted that Bellano reached Constantinople, Raby offered a solid line of reasoning, suggesting that the Paduan sculptor did travel to Constantinople with Bellini and even later caused Mehmed II's dissatisfaction with Bellano's work.[125] The extant documents point to the swiftness

[122] Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 16. See also Chapter 2 for a detailed analysis of Mehmed II's imperial project.
[123] Document No. 4, Appendix.
[124] Document No. 5, Appendix.
[125] Raby, "Pride and Prejudice: Mehmed the Conqueror and the Portrait Medal," in *Italian Medals*, ed. J. G. Pollard, 184.

with which the Grand Council responded to Mehmed II's requests and the rather large scope of this artistic embassy.

The urgency with which the Grand Council decided to grant Mehmed's request to send him the city's most prominent painter—"Zentil belin optimo pytor"[126]—suggests the Senate took the ruler's interest very seriously. As the Senate's communications show, Gentile was decorating and repainting the walls of the Great Council Hall at the time.[127] During his absence, his brother Giovanni Bellini was commissioned to continue the repairs, on condition that Gentile would complete the project upon his return from Constantinople: "Remaneat tamen predicto Gentili officium suum Sansarie, qui cum redierit Venetias sit etiam obligatus predictus opus prosequi." Bellini was attached to the embassy headed by Benedetto Trevisan, a Venetian ambassador charged with settling the peace treaty and delivering Venice's first annual tribute of ten thousand ducats for the right to trade in Ottoman lands and to maintain its strongholds in Crete and Corfu as well as in the Morea at Coron, Modon, and Nauplion.[128] That Gentile reached Constantinople is confirmed by the Venetian Senate's document stipulating the refund to Melchior Trevisano, the captain of the galley, for the safe delivery of the artist.[129]

From the course of events it can also be corroborated that Bellini's sojourn to Constantinople had some diplomatic implications—mainly to improve relations with the Sultan and to strengthen the alliance in exchange for favorable trade conditions. For sixteen long years, Venice had been at war with Constantinople, and multiple previous

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[126] Document No. 1, Appendix.
[127] Document No. 4, Appendix.
[128] MacNeil, *Venice the Hinge of Europe 1081-1797*.
[129] Document No. 6, Appendix.

embassies had not yielded any results.[130] Finally, after Venice gave up Negroponte and Lemnos, withdrew from Scutari in Albania, and accepted a costly annual tribute for the right to trade, the peace treaty was ratified on January 25, 1479 by the Secretary of the Senate, Giovanni Dario. Despite these significant losses, the Venetians greeted the treaty with great enthusiasm and exchanged embassies with Constantinople over the course of the next few months. First, the Turkish ambassador Lütfi Bey, with his retinue of twenty people, was received at the Great Council Hall of the Doge's Palace in April.[131] The Venetians responded by sending an unusual embassy to Constantinople, which included the painter, the sculptor, and their assistants.

The embassy that included Bellini was extraordinary because the Venetian Republic had never before attached its own artists to embassies to other courts. In general, examples of travelling artists included in diplomatic delegations in the fifteenth century are relatively rare. Although artists were frequently employed in different courts in Italy and northern Europe starting from the Middle Ages,[132] requests for services from particular artists from other places' town councils and princes were closely scrutinized and not always accommodated.[133] Artists attached to diplomatic embassies began to contribute to high politics as a mechanism of favor to forge political alliances and ease economic negotiations.

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[130] Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore: inviati ottomani a Venezia dalla caduta di Costantinopoli alla guerra di Candia*.
[131] Ibid.,106.
[132] Robert Walter Hans Peter Scheller, *Exemplum: Model-Book Drawings and the Practice of Artistic Transmission in the Middle Ages (ca. 900-ca. 1470)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995).
[133] Martin Warnke, *The Court Artist: On the Ancestry of the Modern Artist* (Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

A particularly illuminating example is the case of Aristotele Fioravanti, a talented engineer, architect, bronze founder, and minter of coins. Fioravanti, a native of Bologna, served the principal powers on different projects in Rome, Bologna, Pavia, Mantua, Parma, Milan, and Venice, and was in the service of Matthias Corvinus of Hungary. In 1474, when the Russian Tsar Ivan III (r. 1462-1505) sent his ambassador Semion Tolbuzin to Venice to negotiate for an Italian architect, the Venetians were hard to persuade, because Fioravanti, although he was willing to make the journey, was contracted to work for the Venetians at that time. Finally, after several months of negotiations, Doge Nicolò Tron granted permission for Fioravanti's sojourn.[134]

In part, the positive outcome of these negotiations can be attributed to a potential alliance with the Russian Tsar in the war against Mehmed II.[135] Ivan III was married in 1472 to Sophia (Zoë) Paleologue, the niece of the last Byzantine emperor, Constantine XI. This marriage was arranged by Cardinal Bessarion of Nicaea, who played a major role in fostering the revival of Greek letters in Venice. Bessarion hailed Venice as a true heir of Byzantium and saw Moscow as a major ally in an organized crusade against the Turk. Even though he died in 1472, two years before Tolbuzin's arrival in Venice, Bessarion's lasting political and cultural influence in Venice might have played some role in aiding Tolbusin's negotiations with the Venetians.[136] This mission entailed a useful political alliance for Venice but did not further Venice's cultural politics or economic interests.

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[134] Raby, "El Gran Turco: Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom," 30-31.
[135] Willaim Craft Brumfield, *A History of Russian Architecture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 95.
[136] D. O. Shvidkovskii and Ekaterina Shorban, *Russian Architecture and the West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 81-82.

In contrast to Fioravanti's trip to Russia, the Venetians were eager to accommodate the Sultan's request. Following the Venetian Republic's significant military defeat, Bellini's visit to Constantinople suggests that the Venetian government might have hoped to reaffirm its political and cultural status in relations with the Ottoman Empire—not through arms but through the arts—as well as to reestablish its economic contacts with the Sublime Porte. Venice may have hoped to open a new avenue for economic and cultural exchange by supplying the best painter of the Republic to Mehmed II, who was rebuilding Constantinople in a new syncretic Ottoman style that fused Timurid, Irano-Anatolian, and Romano-Byzantine idioms with Italian elements and technology.[137]

Indeed, the Venetian government had long been aware of Mehmed II's mostly failed efforts to secure the services of Italian architects, sculptors, and metal founders. The best known case of a failed attempt was the invitation of Matteo de' Pasti (1420-1467/1468), a superb portrait medalist, skilled architect, and book illuminator who served Sigismondo Malatesta, the Duke of Rimini. Matteo de' Pasti was requested by Mehmed II in 1461 to make his medal portrait, as indicated by Sigismondo Malatesta's letter to Mehmed II.[138] However, the artist was arrested in Crete en route to Constantinople by the Venetian authorities and accused of espionage for carrying Italian maps along with his

[137] MacNeill, *Venice the Hinge of Europe 1081-1797*, 121-123. For a detailed study of how these architectural traditions were synthesized in the palatial architecture in Constantinople, particularly in the Topkapi Palace built by Mehmed II, see Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 248-249.

[138] This letter is fully transcribed and translated by Spinale: Spinale, *The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)* , 314-318.

artistic work. Following this abortive attempt, the Sultan tried to secure the services of other architects and artisans using diplomatic contacts with Ragusa and Florence.[139]

Even though Mehmed II succeeded in recruiting Italian technical experts throughout his reign, there is no evidence to suggest that his multiple efforts were hugely successful in the area of portrait arts, especially painted portraiture, before Bellini's mission to Constantinople. This made Bellini's visit particularly important in view of Venice's forward-looking cultural politics in Constantinople. The only other Italian portrait artist besides Bellini who made a defining contribution in the production of medal portraits for the Sultan was Costanzo di Moysis. The timing of Costanzo's trip to Constantinople remains open to interpretation. After reviewing scarce archival evidence in the context of political relations between Naples and Constantinople and revisiting the earlier argument made by Babinger,[140] Susan Spinale suggests that the artist might have taken the trip during an exchange of embassies between King Ferrante I and Mehmed II sometime in 1478, and must have left the capital before negotiations with Venice took place, as Venice and Naples were in open conflict, making any overlapping of their respective diplomatic missions in Constantinople impossible.[141] Costanzo's one securely dated portrait medal of Mehmed II, executed in 1481,[142] is thought to have been made after Mehmed II died during his military campaign on May 3, 1481, and therefore been intended for commemorative circulation in the West.[143] His other version of the medal

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[139] Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom."
[140] Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and his Time*.
[141] Spinale, "The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)," 112-123.
[142] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 72-73.
[143] Spinale, "The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)," 147-154. However, Necipoğlu has contested Spinale's conclusion suggesting the second medal as well was completed in Constantinople. See: Gülru Necipoğlu, "From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Kostantiniyye:

(now at the National Gallery of Art in Washington D. C.), although it does not have a date, is thought to be the first version executed during Costanzo's stay in Constantinople in 1478-1479.[144] In other words, his first medal was concurrent with Bellini's commission to paint the portrait of Mehmed II that is believed to be the London portrait. Other than a brief mention in a letter to Ercole d'Este written in 1485 by Battista Bendidio, the Ferrarese envoy to Naples, there is no further evidence of Costanzo's activities at Mehmed II's court. Raby attempted to associate some drawings with Costanzo's sojourn in Constantinople, but these attributions have remained a subject of scholarly debate. At best, his appointment was brief and narrowly confined to completing the medal portrait. This means that the Venetians had a wide-open opportunity to fill this gap by sending an artist, particularly a painter, who would establish a Venetian-based tradition at the Ottoman court or help promote a taste for Venetian art and culture that would potentially secure future opportunities for the trading of art and other luxury products for which Venice was renowned in Europe.

In contrast to Mehmed II's previous commissions of artists from other states, Bellini completed a wide range of artistic projects in Constantinople. Angiolello's and Foresti's accounts are particularly illuminating in enumerating Bellini's activities. According to Angiolello, Bellini completed many paintings for the ruler, including drawings or pictures of Venice, portraits of Mehmed II and his entourage, drawings of people who were famed for being beautiful, and people whom Mehmed II wished to see drawn: "Volse che gli facesse Venezia in disegno et retraesse molte persone, sì ch'era

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Creation of a Cosmopolitan Capital and Visual Culture under Sultan Mehmed II," in *From Byzantion to Istanbul: 8000 Years of a Capital* (Istanbul: Sakip Sabanci Museum, 2010), 262-277.

[144] Spinale, "The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)," 112-123.

grato al signore. Quando il signore voleva veder qualch'uno ch'aveva fama di esser bell'huomo, lo faceva retraere dal detto Gentile Bellin, e poi lo vedeva."[145] Angiolello goes so far as to tell the story of a dervish, whom Bellini portrayed for the Sultan, at length.

In his report, Angiolelo's use of the verb "ritrarre" to describe the activities of the artist is significant. "Ritrarre" means both to draw and to portray, and specifically to complete portrait drawings. In his magisterial study of old master drawings, Joseph Meder observes that portrait drawings enjoyed special recognition in Renaissance courts and were often "made independently of any plan for amplification."[146] As he contends, most of them "were drawn for the sitter's pleasure or for the artist's pleasure in his company, or for so small a recompensate as an invitation to dinner." Examples of unpretentious little portraits in Germany and the Low Countries are numerous at this time. Meder mentions that Dürer drew, for instance, ninety-eight such portraits on one of his trips. Holbein the Elder, Dürer, and Baldung are particularly known for drawing little portraits in sketchbooks and on folio sheets as souvenirs.[147] Angiolello's descriptions of Bellini's frequent drawings upon the Sultan's command may point to the practice of little portraits executed to please and entertain Mehmed II and his entourage; they suggest a friendly relation between the patron and the artist.[148] An entry in the *Supplementum Chronicarium* claims that Bellini drew various subjects for Mehmed II: "After Gentile came to him, so that he could test his expertise he appointed him to depict many of his

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[145] Document No. 15, Appendix.
[146] Joseph Meder, *The Mastery of Drawing* (New York, N.Y.: Abaris Books, 1978), 335-336.
[147] Ibid.
[148] I further elaborate on the meaning of Angiolello's report on Bellini's activities at the court and the relation between the Sultan and the artist in chapter 3.

extraordinary pictures and other nearly innumerable things, and then, in order that every activity test him more and more..." (1486 version).[149] Other sources, including Paolo Giovio, Giorgio Vasari, Francesco Sansovino, and Carlo Ridolfi repeat the earlier statements. Giovio and Ridolfi make a particularly interesting comment that Bellini made costume drawings—"pingere gli abiti di ponenti," as Giovio states, or "che gli dipinse parimente gli habiti tutti de' popoli Orientali," according to Ridolfi.[150] Whatever the case, Bellini's drawing and painting activities fall into several categories: little portrait drawings for the entertainment of the Sultan and his court, designs and paintings to decorate the rooms of the palace, and large-scale murals. In all, these accounts assume that Bellini had direct access to the Sultan, saw him, and interacted with him. The sources also imply that Bellini was the only artist in the Sultan's service, meeting his demands and his interests in portraiture, painting, and mural decoration.

Bellini may have completed a number of large-scale paintings as part of his commission for the New (Topkapi) Palace. Angiolello states that Bellini made a great variety of beautiful paintings for the New Palace, as well as "cose di lussuria:" "Fu dal detto Gentil fatto diversi belli quadri, e massime di cose di lussuria in alcune cose belle, in modo che ne haveva nel serraglio gran quantità."[151] Scholars have long disagreed about what "cose di lussuria" may have meant, and some have proposed to interpret them as erotic or obscene images.[152] However, Chong, in a recent rereading of the account,

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[149] Document No. 16, Appendix.
[150] Document No. 17 & 20, Appendix.
[151] Document No. 15, Appendix.
[152] Louis Thuasne, *Gentile Bellini Et Sultan Mohammed II : Notes Sur Le Séjour Du Peintre Vénitien à Constantinople (1479-1480) D'après Les Documents Originaux En Partie Inédits* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1888), 39. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, 378. Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom," 94.

convincingly argues, "*lussuria* was a term also employed by Renaissance writers to mean opulence, abundance and ostentation."[153] Chong's line of reasoning reinforces Patricia Brown's earlier suggestion that Bellini's paintings at the Topkapi Palace may have depicted banquets or scenes of court festivities celebrating court magnificence.[154] Chapter 3 argues that in so doing Bellini may have followed the newly established trend in Italian palace decoration, as seen in extant frescoes in the princely palaces in Ferrara and Mantua. Angiolello's mention of paintings for the New Palace is further reflected in Francesco Negro's testimony, reporting that the painter went to Constantinople to decorate the Sultan's palace: "Gentili Bellino, mirabili Venetorum pictore, memini me audivisse; qui ad Muhametum Ottomanum Turcarum imperatorem a Venetis decorandi palatii sui gratia missus, et Beatae Virginis tabulam Graecanico ritu depictam."[155] Much later, in 1566, Francesco Sansovino also wrote that Bellini had been called to Constantinople to paint some rooms in the palace.[156] In trying to locate where Bellini's paintings were, Gülru Necipoğlu convincingly argued that the artist may have decorated the Italian pavilion, a small palace built at the outer garden of the Topkapi Palace in 1480, together with two other pavilions—the Persian or Tiled Kiosk and the Greek—commissioned to celebrate the Sultan's military conquests.[157] In addition, Bellini may have completed portable paintings for the Sultan's residence in the third court of the New Palace as the reports suggest.

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[153] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 110.
[154] Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio*, p. 55. Also see note No. 26, 247.
[155] Document No. 14, Appendix. It is known that Francesco Negro met with the artist in Venice and learned directly from him about his sojourn. See Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 110.
[156] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 133, footnote No. 28. See Document No. 19, Appendix.
[157] Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 210-217.

Although Angiolello does not discuss painted portraits of the Sultan by Bellini, other sources fill the gap. In particular, the *Supplementum Chronicarium*'s entry reports: "[Mehmed] commanded that he himself be depicted in his own image; and indeed, when the Turkish ruler gazed upon that portrait so much like himself, he was astonished at the talent of the man, and said he excelled any painter who had ever lived."[158] However, the entry is evidently biased in the way it underscores Bellini's extraordinary skill in rendering Mehmed II's likeness lifelike. Subsequent editions of the *Supplementum Chronicarium*, published in 1491 and 1503, point out that the description should have been received as a literary trope; these later editions expand the story to compare Bellini's talent to that of legendary ancient artists like Apelles.[159] Vasari further exploited the lifelikeness metaphor to underscore that the Renaissance art of portraiture had begun with the Bellini family. As well, Vasari twisted the *Supplementum Chronicarium* entry to claim that Mehmed II asked Bellini not only to paint his portrait but also to make a self-portrait: "Gentile portrayed Mehmed from life so well that he appeared most alive; since this was unusual it seemed to him more miracle than art. Finally, after Mehmed saw many examples of his art, he asked him if would make a self-portrait, and Gentile answered to satisfy him that he would paint himself, and most skillfully."[160] Either Vasari misread the *Supplementum Chronicarium* or he invented the story of the Sultan's request for the artist's self-portrait in order to accolade the Italian maniera by adding an unthinkable request and possibly alluding to Bellini's supreme accomplishment.[161] While

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[158] Document No. 16, Appendix.
[159] See the 1503 version.
[160] Document No. 18, Appendix.
[161] See also for a somewhat different explanation provided by Chong. Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 109.

these accounts are unmistakably distorted, they nevertheless indicate that making portraits of the Sultan was central to Bellini's many activities at the court.

In addition to public works, such as pavilion and palace paintings and state portraits, as well as drawings for the court's amusement, Bellini may have completed works of a private nature for the Sultan. Francesco Suarino, who indicated Bellini as his source of information, reported that the Sultan showed the artist his private treasure room full of Christian relics and asked him to paint an image of the Virgin in the modern style.[162] Bernardino da Foligno also tells about the commission of a Greek image of the Madonna by the Sultan. Raby, who compared and critically analyzed both reports, proposed that Suriano's account reproduces Bellini's own story and thus should be regarded as a reliable and impeccable source, while Bernardino was a derivative author who may have learned about Bellini's story through Suarino.[163] Mehmed II's interests in Christian relics are well known from the inventories drawn in 1489 by his son Bayezid II, making Suriano's story highly probable.[164] In addition, there is a manuscript illumination of the Virgin and Child in the Istanbul University Library that Raby proposed to identify as Bellini's Madonna (Fig. 1.12).[165] Although this attribution is largely contested, its comparison with Bellini's extant images of the Virgin suggests that it may indeed descend from Bellini's original painting, as Chong has argued (Fig. 1.13).[166]

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[162] Document No. 11, Appendix.
[163] Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom," 345.
[164] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 112.
[165] Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom," 100-107.
[166] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 113.

Finally, Mehmed II's letter enumerating honors conferred on Bellini[167] states that the artist was made a Golden Knight and Count Palatine of the Sultan. The titles (*miles auratus ac comes palatinus*) are exactly repeated in reports of contemporaries and on Bellini's painted and medal portrait of the ruler, confirming the artist's court appointment.[168] Since inscriptions in the painted portrait with Bellini's titles date back to 1480, the honors must have been bestowed by Mehmed a few months before his actual departure. Scholars' interpretations of the titles differ. Collins and Babinger were suspicious of Mehmed II's letter of conferred honors.[169] However, Raby, Meyer zur Capellen, and Chong accepted the titles as legitimate, suggesting that the Sultan adopted the European practice of bestowing honors on artists.[170] Further, Chong has argued that Bellini entered Mehmed II's household as a select and intimate member, a "*familiaris*," which explicitly distinguished his court appointment from purely formal investitures.[171]

Extant sources point out that Bellini was involved in and completed wide-ranging artistic projects at the Ottoman court. Mehmed II may have explicitly asked the Venetian Senate to place Bellini at his service as a court artist. The cultural goals of Bellini's embassy must have been accomplished, as the artist returned to Venice with honors and rewards. The diversity of Bellini's works, including the Sultan's private commission of the *Virgin and Child*, suggests that Bellini indeed served as Mehmed II's court artist and became a trusted member of his retinue. Bellini's visit may have helped the Venetian

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[167] Document No. 10, Appendix.
[168] Document No. 8 & 9, Appendix.
[169] Howard Frank Collins, "Gentile Bellini: A Monograph and Catalogue of His Works" (PhD diss., 1970). Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, 88-92, 380.
[170] Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom," 111-117. Meyer zur Capellen, *Gentile Bellini*, 20-21. Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 114-117.
[171] I refer to Chapter 2 for further interpretation as to what Bellini's appointment meant in the context of Mehmed II's imperial project.

Senate to reach a broader cultural purpose—to establish Venice as a crucial trade partner, especially in the arts and luxury products, with Constantinople. Undoubtedly, Bellini's visit was an occasion to promote Venice as a great Renaissance center. In fact, Venice soon established itself as a main supplier of precious textiles, cloth, exceptional jewelry, and other luxury commodities for the Ottoman ruling elites.[172]

While it is evident that Bellini's trip to Constantinople was a very important event in the contemporary political and diplomatic context, the achievements of Bellini as an artist and a Venice's cultural emissary in transmitting artistic ideas are less obvious, as scholarship has assigned the agency in these matters to the patron rather than to the artist and has fallen into the trap of humanist writings blatantly promoting Renaissance art. By closely reviewing the artistic media Bellini completed in Constantinople, specifically their distinct visual language and function, the following chapters will further clarify the artist's agency and his interaction with the visual traditions at the Ottoman court to demonstrate what was exchanged and transmitted in the course of his visit.

A Survey of the Artistic Products Associated with Bellini's Visit

As the Venice Senate's documents and the reports of contemporaries suggest, Bellini's artistic appointment resulted in wide-ranging artistic products: state portraits of Mehmed II (painted and medallic), little portraits of the Sultan's entourage and people he

[172] Julian Raby, "The Serenissima and the Sublime Porte: Art in the Art of Diplomacy 1453-1600," in *Venice and the Islamic world, 828-1797*, ed. Stefano Carboni (New York; New Haven [Conn.]: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Yale University Press, 2007), 90-120.

wished to see, designs and paintings of Venice, designs and drawings (perhaps preparatory for paintings), and large-scale paintings for the New Palace (perhaps in the Italian pavilion in the outer garden). Of these diverse artistic products, only several survive. This section briefly introduces Bellini's extant works associated with his visit in Constantinople.

I. Portrait of Mehmed II, 25 November 1480 (Plate I)

Oil on canvas (transferred from panel), measuring 70 x 52 cm

National Gallery (NG 3099)

Inscribed:

(Right hand corner) MCCCCLXXX DIE XXV MENSIS NOVEMBRIS

(Left hand corner) TERRAR. MARISQ. VICTOR AC DOMATOR ORBIS . . . SULTAN IMP. . . MEHMET . . . RESULTAT ARS VERA GIENTILIS MILITIS AURATI BELINI NATURAE . . . QUI CUNCTA REDUCIT IN PROPRIA IAM PROPRIE SIMULACRA

(Victor on lands and sea and conqueror of the globe, Sultan and emperor Mehmet. The true art of Gentile Bellini, golden knight, echoes nature, he who renders all things accurately into their own images.)[173]

[173] The inscription and reconstruction by Anthony Edwards. See chapter 4 for further discussion.

Bought by Sir Austen Henry Layard in Venice in 1865, the portrait arrived at the National Gallery in London as part of the Layard bequest in 1916. The portrait depicts the Sultan's face in a five-eight view—that is, halfway in between the profile and the three-quarter view. The Sultan's body is represented in a three-quarter turn toward the viewer. An impressive architectonic structure emphasizes the Sultan's imperial presence and princely dignity by separating him from the viewer. Although the architectonic structure is depicted convincingly with light and shade and perspectival recession, it is incongruent with the flatness of the pictorial space, emphasized by the trios of stacked golden crowns floating above the arch, as well as with the Sultan's figure, which is squeezed in and cut off on the sides by the arch.

The parapet is lavishly decorated with an extraordinary embroidered and jewel-encrusted cloth of honor, prominently featuring the seventh crown in the center. On the parapet, two purple inserts celebrate the Sultan and the artist and give the date. The trios of stacked crowns are largely interpreted as Mehmed II's official device, alluding to his conquests of the realms of Greece, Trebizond, and Asia, while the seventh bejeweled crown on the cloth underscores his status in the House of Osman as the seventh ruler. The portrait is studied in detail in chapter 4 as a primary example of hybrid artistic forms fashioned by Bellini in Constantinople as a result of his interaction with local artists and visual traditions.

II. Gentile Bellini or workshop (?), Mehmed II with His Son, 1479-1481(?) (Plate II)

Oil paint on panel, 45.8 x 34 cm

Private Collection, Switzerland

Handwriting on the back: *Ritratti di Maometto e di suo Figlio di Gentile Bellini*

The painting was discovered in Switzerland by an Orientalist, Rudolf Tschudi (1884-1960), and published by Franz Babinger in 1969. This double-portrait depicts Mehmed II on the right and a youth on the left set against a dark background and behind a parapet, customary for Venetian painting during Bellini's time. A handwritten label on the back identifies the youth as Mehmed II's son. The faces of the Sultan and the youth are both presented in a five-eight view, while their bodies are painted in a three-quarter turn in relation to the viewer. Mehmed II's physiognomy echoes that in the London portrait. Except for some slight differences in the arrangements of the folds in his turban as well as in the depiction of the fur collar of the caftan, the Sultan's attire is depicted similarly to the London painting.

The youth's turban is decorated with an aigrette in the style of Timurid sultans, perhaps to indicate the sitter's status as a crowned prince or Mehmed II's successor on the throne. Babinger hesitantly proposed to identify the youth as Sultan Cem (Djem), but could not reconcile the absence of the aquiline nose he believed was characteristic of the

young prince's face.[174] Babinger argued the painting was completed in Constantinople; however, as chapter 4 will later discuss, it could have been also painted in Venice upon Bellini's return. This dissertation primarily considers this portrait as an example of the transmission of Bellini's ideas to Venetian painting.

III. Gentile Bellini workshop (?), Mehmed II, ca. 1500-1510 (Plate III)

Oil paint on panel, 21 x 16 cm

Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar

Most likely completed in Venice by a follower of Bellini, the painting depicts the Sultan from the back, turning toward the viewer—the position favored in Venetian portraits painted in the early sixteenth century. The Sultan's face is portrayed similarly to the London portrait, including the five-eight turn and a refined physiognomy. The panel's similarity with the London portrait's can be further found in the details of the Sultan's sumptuous attire, apart from the fringed tail of Mehmed II's turban, which is reminiscent of the turbans painted by Vittore Carpaccio, as in *Sermon of St. Stefano* in the Scuola di Santo Stefano (c. 1511-1520).[175] As well, the color palette of warm ochre, red, gold, brown, and off-white evidently resemble the London portrait. Even more important are the trios of stacked crowns decorating the upper corners, which uniquely link this panel

[174] Franz Babinger, "Un ritratto ignorato di Maometto II, opera di Gentile Bellini," *Arte Veneta*, Vol. XV (1962): 25-32, 30.
[175] Carboni, ed., *Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797*, 304.

with the London painting as a copy made after the prototype. The crowns were a part of Mehmed II's *impresa*, designed by Bellini, as discussed in chapter 4.

The portrait's provenance is not well-known, but it remained for some time in private collections in the Russian Empire. After the Russian revolution, the portrait appeared in New York in the private collection of Arthur L. Erlanger, subsequently changing ownership.[176] This dissertation considers this panel as an example of the dissemination of Bellini's ideas in Venice.

IV. Gentile Bellini, Medal of Mehmed II, c. 1480 (Plate IV)

Bronze, diameter 9.4 cm

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, England (HCR)

Inscribed:

(obverse)

MAGNI SOULTANI MOHAMETI IMPERATORIS

(Of Great Sultan Mehmed Emperor).

(reverse)

GENTILIS BELLINUS VENETUS EQUES AURATUS COMES. Q. PALATINUS F

(Gentile Bellini Venetian Golden Knight and Count Palatine made it).

Most likely designed by Bellini and cast by a metal worker, the medal portrays Mehmed II in a classical profile with his body slightly turned toward the viewer. The

[176] W. Loftus Hare, "The Portrait of Muhammad II by Gentile Bellini." W. Loftus Hare, "A New Gentile Bellini," *Apollo*, 21 (January to June, 1935):112. In 2005-2007, the portrait belonged to the Joli Quentin Kansil Collection in Singapore, and was then sold to the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar. Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 78. Carboni, ed., *Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797*, 304.

Sultan's visage is fashioned similarly to Mehmed II's face in the London portrait, but represents him as a bit more corpulent, as has been noted.[177] The inscription framing the Sultan proclaims his status as emperor. The artist's prolonged inscription on the obverse, stating his titles, frames the trio of stacked crowns—the imperial *impresa* also included in the London portrait.

It has been largely agreed that Bellini's medal or his design drawing served as a prototype for the medal by Bertoldo di Giovanni (1435/40-1491), completed in Florence under the patronage of Lorenzo de' Medici (1449-1292) in ca. 1480.[178] The medal is interesting as an example of the diffusion of Mehmed II's image in Italy. This dissertation uses the medal to contextualize Bellini's painted portrait and to illuminate Mehmed II's imperial identity in the end of his rule.

V. Gentile Bellini's Drawings of Ottoman Courtiers (Pl. V)

Seated Scribe or Artist, 1479-1481

Pen in brown ink with watercolor and gold on paper, 18.2 x 14 cm

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston (PI5E8)

Discovered by Frederick Martin in Istanbul in 1905, this fine drawing represents a splendidly attired Ottoman youth (a calligrapher or artist at work) in a classical profile. Bellini first drew the figure in brown ink and then applied watercolor and gold, which has

[177] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 74.
[178] Raby, "Pride and Prejudice: Mehmed the Conqueror and the Italian Portrait Medal," 180-182.

been interpreted as reminiscent of Islamic painting. Since 2005, the painting has been convincingly attributed to Bellini and is considered a primary example of the transmission of artistic ideas between East and West. Chapter 3 of this dissertation treats the drawing as a hybrid work by Bellini that includes symbolic content, and as one of a series of eight drawings completed in close interaction with Ottoman and Timurid (Persian) visual traditions and artists at the court.

VI. Bellini's Drawings of Ottoman Courtiers (Pl. VI-XII)

1. Gentile Bellini, *Young Greek Woman*, 1479-1481

Pen in brown ink on paper, 25.4 x 17.5 cm; inscribed: *velo* / *filo bianco*

Musée du Louvre, Paris, France (4654)

2. Gentile Bellini (?), *Standing Turk*, 1479-1481

Pen in brown ink on paper, 29.9 x 20.30 cm; annotated: *Giovan Bellini venetus*:

Musée du Louvre, Paris, France (4655)

3. Gentile Bellini, *Seated Janissary*, 1479-1481

Pen in brown ink on paper, 21.5 x 17.5 cm

The British Museum, London, England (PP.I-19)

4. Gentile Bellini, *Seated Woman*, 1479-1481

Pen in brown ink on paper, 21.5 x 17.6 cm; inscribed: orlo / rosso / oro / arzento / azuro / neg

The British Museum, London, England (PP.I-20)

5. Gentile Bellini or workshop, *Standing Man*, 1479-1481 (?)

Pen in brown ink on paper, 28 x 18 cm

Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt, Germany (3957)

6. After Gentile Bellini or workshop (?), *Standing Turk*, ca. early 1500s (?)

Pen in brown ink on paper, 20.7 x 11.4 cm

Musée du Louvre, Paris, France (4653)

7. Gentile Bellini or workshop, *Standing Young Man (called an Albanian)*, 1479-1481 (?)

Pen in brown ink on paper, 25.8 x 18 cm

Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt, Germany (3956)

The pen techniques and handling of the drawings are very similar to that of *Seated Scribe*, especially in the treatment of the sleeves and the angle of the falling light, suggesting the whole series was envisioned by Bellini. The drawings are not spontaneous and are clean workshop versions of earlier sketches. They exhibit stylistic features characteristic of Bellini's paintings and share subject matter. However, their artistic

format—each figure centrally placed on the sheet—is considered in chapter 3 as owing to Bellini's interaction with the Timurid visual tradition; thus they are reappraised as hybrid works with expressive, symbolic content rather than as mere anthropological studies from life of people the artist encountered in Constantinople. Even though some of the drawings are attributed to Bellini's workshop, this dissertation treats them as a series in the context of the artist's projects at the Ottoman court.

Bellini's Visit and Visiting Court Artists in the Early Modern Mediterranean

From the fifteenth century onward, the institution of the Early Modern court and a new and more sophisticated diplomacy provide a historical framework for assessing the expectations for Bellini's visit in this period.[179] The practice of appointing artists to serve as visiting court artists owed its development to several factors: the established tradition of gift exchange, the artist's expertise in representational technology, and an assertive international cultural politics in the competition for resources between rulers and imperial states. Bellini's sojourn in 1479-1481 to the court of Mehmed II (1432-1481) would have served a great variety of political and artistic purposes, among which the extension of Venice's economic and cultural relations with Constantinople was fundamental. Bellini's visit resulted in diverse artistic products in several media that had some lasting effects on

[179] Although there are instances of distinguished appointments of artists at courts beginning from the end of the thirteenth century, a wealth of documentation comes from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when artists began to serve as visiting court artists and were also attached to diplomatic missions. See, for example, a table of artists knighted or raised to the nobility in Warnke, *The Court Artist: On the Ancestry of the Modern Artist*.

subsequent political dealings between Venice and the Porte. Surveying examples of visiting artists attached to diplomatic embassies, or even serving as state envoys, and holding positions as court artists, as Pisanello did, helps theorize Bellini's role as a visiting court artist, representing a distinct form of diplomacy as a supplement to gift-giving and negotiations in the fifteenth century.

Maria Pedani's detailed study of diplomatic practices in the Early Modern Mediterranean, with a focus on Venice, suggests that the international etiquette of the exchange of embassies owes a great deal in its protocol and ceremonial to the ceremonies enacted in the Byzantine court.[180] The main Mediterranean polities—Venetians, Ottomans, Mamluks, and Persians—shared attitudes toward gift-giving as a vital part of diplomacy and mutual relationship-building.[181] Venetian archival records, beginning from the middle of the fifteenth century, detail gifts offered and narrate structures of gift exchange. The central feature of diplomacy in this period remains the expression of goodwill, magnificence, generosity, and propriety through gifts offered in exchange for treaty terms and economic privileges. The presence of artists in embassies further underscored goodwill and the desire for lasting political and economic alliances according to established traditions. Against this backdrop, artists themselves were treated as precious gifts to be exchanged in diplomacy. Although the exchange of luxuries between Venice and Constantinople was frequent, especially in the area of textiles, jewels,

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[180] Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore: inviati ottomani a Venezia dalla caduta di Costantinopoli alla guerra di Candia*., 5.

[181] Julian Raby's recent publication on practices of gift exchange and diplomacy between Venetians and Ottomans also confirms Pedani's findings. See Julian Raby, "The Serenissima and the Sublime Porte: Art in the Art of Diplomacy 1453-1600," in Stefano Carboni, ed., *Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797*, 91-115.

architectural and luxury glass, and mechanical marvels, there were no other invitations to figural artists after Bellini. As Raby suggests, most of the other art exchanges happened in the area of the minor and decorative arts.[182] Bellini's visit thus remains an extraordinary and singular event in the diplomatic exchange between Venice and Constantinople, but it closely corresponds to a developing trend in European diplomacy, with sporadic interventions in the East.

Scholars of exchange have productively analyzed rituals of gift-giving in diplomacy and politics as a reciprocal and dynamic interaction that demonstrates the generosity of giving as well as enacts a system of reciprocity and bonds of debt and obligation.[183] In particular, scholars have argued that from the Middle Ages, "gifts arbitrate[d] diplomatic cross-cultural encounter; they mediate[d] familial and dynastic relations; … and negotiate[d] rivalries and also serve[d] as agents of union."[184] Pierre Bourdieu, for instance, describes the gift exchange as "setting the seal of alliances."[185] Cecily Hilsdale especially stresses that gift-giving did not signify existing alliances and collaborations, but rather was frequently a strategy for establishing an alliance and was often intended for celebrations of peace and the construction of political and social bonds.[186] The theoretical implications of case studies of gift-giving in the fifteenth century for diplomatic embassies involving human agents—artisans, scholars, and

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[182] Ibid., 109.
[183] For a good study (and bibliography) on the gift in early modern Europe, please see *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Oxford University Press, 2000) by Natalie Zenon Davis. Also, see: Cecily J. Hilsdale, "Gift," in Nina Rowe, ed., *Medieval Art History Today—Critical Terms*, special issue, *Studies in Iconography*, 33 (2012): 171-182. I thank the author for sharing her article.
[184] Hilsdale, "Gift,"174.
[185] Pierre Bourdieu, "Selections from the Logic of Practice," in *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity*, ed. Alan D. Schrift (New York: Routledge, 1997), 190-230, 207.
[186] Hilsdale, "Gift" in Rowe, ed., *Medieval Art History Today—Critical Terms*, 176.

ecclesiastics—underscore the goodwill and aspirations of their givers to actualize relationships through representation. Sean Roberts argues that the concept of the artist-ambassador was in flux throughout Europe at this time; "lent" artisans emerged as agents representing Italy's rulers and their states in the exchange with "their trading partners, vassals, overlords, and sworn enemies."[187] That is, artists' specific expertise and skills were objects of exchange and, in some ways, their agency was similar to that of the offered objects and images themselves.

Although the practice of sending artists to another court in the Early Modern period owes a great deal to the model of gift exchange from the Middle Ages, the role of artists enlarges in cases of diplomatic and artistic embassies. Artists in the Renaissance emerged as possessing specific expertise and intelligence, skills in innovative representational technologies, and an elevated social status, which had to do with their direct affiliation with the ruling oligarchy or the princely court.[188] In addition, artists represented symbolic capital, or the capital of honor and cultural prestige associated with the benefactor or the state they represented. As a result, diplomacy involving the exchange of artists evolved as part of assertive cultural policies reflecting a desire to promote the political and cultural interests of the ruler or the state behind the artist. At the

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[187] Sean Roberts, "The Visual and Material Culture of Diplomacy," in Monica Azzolini and Isabella Lazzarini, eds., *Italian Renaissance Diplomacy. Texts in Translation* (Durham University Press, 2014) (forthcoming). I especially thank William Tronzo for pointing me to this source and Sean Roberts for sharing his essay.

[188] Warnke, *The Court Artist: On the Ancestry of the Modern Artist*.

same time, as Sean Roberts shows, they were still treated as "a gift to be parceled out by his lord" in the economy of gift exchange.[189]

Examples such as Jan van Eyck's artistic embassies on behalf of the Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good (1396-1467), illustrate the increasing role that artists assumed in diplomacy in the Early Modern period. Van Eyck, who served as court painter, visited several "distant and secret" places in diplomatic journeys representing the Duke in 1426, 1428-1429, and 1436.[190] The artist's role in the 1428-1429 embassy was part of the negotiation of the Duke's marriage with Isabella of Portugal. The artist was responsible for painting a portrait of the bride to send back to the Low Countries and inform the Duke about her appearance.[191] Perhaps he also rendered other services at the foreign court as an artist and a courtier. Typically in such circumstances, a few portraits would be painted, and the bride's family would certainly keep a portrait in the house. Van Eyck's embassy was a success and returned with the Infanta for the wedding in 1430. The choice of van Eyck for diplomatic sojourns resulted from his talents and skills as a visual artist. In particular, his knowledge of perspective, three-dimensional rendering, and the vivid portrayal of individuals earned him recognition and a following among his contemporaries.[192] In 1435, the Duke praised the artist: "[W]e are about to employ Jan for certain works and can find no other painter equal to our taste nor so excellent in matters

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[189] Roberts, "The Visual and Material Culture of Diplomacy," in Monica Azzolini and Isabella Lazzarini, eds., *Italian Renaissance Diplomacy. Texts in Translation.*
[190] James Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art: Painting, Sculpture, the Graphic Arts from 1350 to 1575* (New York: Abrams, 1985), 89.
[191] Carol M. Richardson, *Locating Renaissance Art* (New Haven [Conn.]; London; Milton Keynes [England]: Yale University Press; In Association with the Open University, 2007), 69.
[192] Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art: Painting, Sculpture, the Graphic Arts from 1350 to 1575*, 87.

of art and science."[193] The artist possessed the talents of a courtier, a companion, and a servant; these talents are clearly reflected in the regard the Duke had for him. His qualities as a courtier and companion must have been all the more important in matters of court portraiture, which often involved personal interaction between the patron and the artist.[194] Thus, expertise in representational technology and the courtly personality of the artist were both essential in diplomacy that aimed to secure political and economic relations, especially truces and familial alliances, and to favorably represent the power maker and his cultural prestige in the foreign court by demonstrating the artistic technology and innovations flowering in his own court.

The case of Matteo de' Pasti (1420-67/68), who was attached to a diplomatic mission from the lord of Rimini Sigismondo Malatesta (1417-68) to the court of Mehmed II in 1461, which howver never reached Constantinople, tells a great deal about the increasing status of artists in both North Europe and the Mediterranean. The artist was a skilled portrait painter and medalist, as well as a courtier and personal companion of Sigismondo.[195] Sigismondo's "loan" of the artist was aimed at securing the cooperation of the Turk, defying Pius II's call for a crusade against the Ottomans. The artist was delivering a letter of recommendation that described his qualifications, stated the virtues of portraiture, and underscored the exception to the rule, made in order to permit the artist to provide services to Mehmed II. In addition, Matteo carried other strategic gifts,

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[193] Ibid., 94.
[194] Lorne Campbell details the practice of court portraiture and illustrates many examples of actual sittings. Isabella d'Este was a notorious patron who refused to sit for a portrait. See Lorne Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits: European Portrait-Painting in the 14th, 15th, and 16th Centuries* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990).
[195] Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom," 7-10.

including a map of Italy and the Adriatic, as well as a copy of a book—Valturio's *De re military*. Venetian officials intercepted the artist en route in Crete as a spy, "being aware of the diplomatic influence a talented artist could exert."[196] Raby interprets Sigismondo's embassy to Mehmed II as a treacherous act in view of Mehmed's opposition to the Pope, even though the map and the book lacked practical relevance and were brought as gifts catering to the Sultan's interest in cartography and science. As Roberts posits, the fact that Matteo had an international reputation and was sought throughout Italy suggests he was far from an interchangeable craftsman; instead, artists like Matteo de' Pasti and their works "played pivotal roles in communication between courts and states."[197] In this view, artists' educational qualifications, cultural capacities, and personal charisma proved essential to the accumulation of symbolic power and cultural prestige by power makers.

Mehmed II understood well the special expertise and influence artists added to diplomatic missions. The Sultan employed his own court artist, Sinan Bey, as his ambassador to Venice in 1480 to seek a Venetian alliance against the Neapolitan King Ferdinand I, called Don Ferrante of Aragon (r.1458-1494), the common enemy of the Ottomans and Venetians, as well as to reach a compromise on the subject of Veneto-Ottoman conflicts engaging Morea and Albania.[198] Sinan Bey held a prominent position at the Ottoman court, as confirmed by Venetian and Ottoman documents studied by Raby. The sixteenth-century Ottoman biographer Mustafa Ali characterized Sinan Bey as "the

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[196] Ibid., 7.
[197] Roberts, "The Visual and Material Culture of Diplomacy," in Monica Azzolini and Isabella Lazzarini, eds., *Italian Renaissance Diplomacy. Texts in Translation.*
[198] Pedani, *In nome del gran signore: inviati ottomani a Venezia dalla caduta di Costantinopoli alla guerra di Candia*, 40-41, 204.

best of the Rumi artists at *sebih* writing (i.e. portraiture)."[199] Considering that Mehmed II was particularly interested in Italian innovations and that he continued to send requests to Venice for additional artists even after Bellini arrived at his court, the inclusion of the artist Sinan Bey in his embassy to Venice can be explained by at least two motives. The first is that the artist was capable of dealing with Venetians, in part because of his supposed apprenticeship to the Venetian master Pavli, as Mustafa Ali states. The second possible motive is that Sinan Bey's expertise in visual arts would have been particularly pertinent for spotting innovations and artists in Venice that would be useful for Mehmed II's projects in Constantinople. In addition, the Sultan followed developing trends in international diplomacy not only in Europe but also in Asia. For instance, it is known that Mehmed II received a Turanian (Central Asia) embassy of painters in his recently completed Topkapi Palace (ca. 1478). As Necipoğlu demonstrates, the Turanian painters "drew an image of the Topkapi Palace to explain its unusual layout in their homeland."[200] Thus artists' skills, their status, and the assurance that their work was of highest quality—and therefore worthy of the attention and respect of the ruler—set high expectations for artists and also facilitated their employability in diplomacy.

Considering the rising status of the Renaissance artist and his special skills in representational technologies, the appointment of visiting court artists emerged in the Early Modern period as a form of cultural policy. The inclusion of artists in diplomatic missions demonstrated princely power as well as the ruler's cultural capital, precisely as a manifestation of sophistication, appropriations of the past, and cosmopolitan taste. Rulers

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[199] Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom," 128.
[200] Gülru Necipoğlu, "The Serial Portraits of Ottoman Sultans in Comparative Perspective," in Kangal and Isin, ed., *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman*., 22-61, 30, footnote No. 33.

masterfully employed highly skilled artists and arts as a key means of aristocratic self-definition, and usually the choice of particular artists for service at another court was meticulously negotiated. Invitations of artists from rulers were carefully solicited. As Martin Warnke puts it:

> The special position accorded to artists at court resulted from the tasks that the arts were required to perform in the sphere of princely representation. The need for visual representation led to organizational changes that had far-reaching consequences. It was the courts that first evolved a system of bursaries for the training of artists, state responsibility for building projects, and the use of visual media for secular propaganda and state representation; and it was the courts that first promoted subjective and aesthetic appreciation of art.
>
> The artist was involved in the visible projection of the princely aura and had privileged access to the ruler's presence. This fostered the notion that he was engaged in a 'higher' form of activity, calling for special gifts and universal competence.[201]

Warnke illustrates the point by examining Cosimo de' Medici's (1389-1464) assertive cultural policy in the propagation of the Florentine Renaissance style. An impressive of body of evidence suggests Cosimo's part in negotiating the following commissions of Florentine artists outside of Florence: Filippo Lippi's decoration of the chapel of the Palazzo del Podestà in Venetian Padua in 1434; Brunelleschi's tour of the northern Italian courts in 1438, when Piero de' Medici was in Ferrara; Andrea del Castagno's work in Venice in 1442-1443; Federico da Montefeltro's request in 1444 from the Medicis for artists from Michelozzo's circle for his palace in Urbino; Fra Angelico's work for Eugene IV in 1445 and Nicholas V in 1447-1449 in Rome; Cosimo's backing of Piero della Francesca's work in Rimini in 1450-1451 for Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta; Filarete's

[201] Warnke, *The Court Artist: On the Ancestry of the Modern Artist*, xiv-xv.

work on the Sforza castle in Milan from 1451 to 1465; and so forth.[202] Cosimo not only wrote letters to promote his artists to positions and commissions at other courts, but also sent gifts of works of art whenever appropriate in Italy and beyond its borders in order to promote the Florentine modern style. Similarly, Cosimo's successor, Lorenzo de' Medici (1449-1492), continued the same cultural policy and employed suitable artists to cultivate foreign connections initiated by Cosimo. Two notable examples of artistic embassies from Lorenzo's rule are the diplomatic contacts with King Matthias of Hungary (1443-1490) and with King of Portugal, John II (1455-1495). Lorenzo sent art works as diplomatic gifts to King Mathias and arranged for the architect and sculptor Andrea Sansovino to work for King of Portugal from 1493 to 1500.[203] That the Medicis' cultural policy was a successful political undertaking is reflected in Giorgio Vasari's writing. Dedicating the *Lives* to Duke Cosimo, Vasari wrote, "It can be well said that the arts were reborn in your state, nay in your own town most happily favored house. Thus it is due to the members of your house that the world owes the benefit of these arts, restored, embellished, and ennobled as they are in our present day."[204]

The Medicis' use of art in politics represented a growing international trend. Many examples of distinguished artists employed at courts in other centers in Italy, especially Ferrara, Mantua, Rome, and Venice, as well as the Low Countries, demonstrate that Florence did not hold a monopoly on artists' diplomacy. As mentioned above, Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta's employment of Matteo de' Pasti as an envoy to

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[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid., 52-53.
[204] Quoted from Robert Nelson, "Byzantium and the Rebirth of Art and Learning in Italy and France," in Evans, ed., *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art: Distributed by H.N. Abrams, 1997), 516.

the Ottoman court in 1461 was contemporary with Cosimo de' Medici's cultural policy. The Aragonese King Ferdinand I of Naples also dispatched Costanzo da Ferrara to Mehmed II during a short period of peace between Naples and Constantinople in 1478-1480.[205] In light of these embassies, Bellini's sojourn at the Ottoman court in 1479-1481 can be understood an example of Venice's cultural outreach to Constantinople, even though the painter was requested by Mehmed II; Venice seized the chance to shore up relations with the Sultan by employing his illustrious artist. Considering the Venetian diplomat Giovanni Dario's involvement in the peace negotiations of 1479, Bellini's embassy could have been even initiated by Venetian officials who were well informed about Mehmed II's interest in art. In another instance, Venetian officials arranged the visit of the Venetian architect Alevisio Lamberti da Montagnano or Alevisio the New to the Grand Duchy of Moscow, where he worked at the Moscow Kremlin from 1504 through the 1520s. This underscores Venice's assertive cultural policy in the Mediterranean and in Muscovite Russia, although this policy takes a different form from the Medici's.[206]

Extant materials associated with the diplomatic appointments of artists illuminate their specific activities and duties as cultural emissaries and agents. Artists were responsible for learning about diplomatic delegations, customs, and costumes; the execution of painted and/or cast portraits of rulers; the development of a visual vocabulary and idioms for the representation of past and contemporary events; the generation of diverse design ideas based on preliminary sketches; and the propagation of

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[205] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 71.
[206] D. O. Shvidkovskii, *Russian Architecture and the West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 99-104.

the ideas and values of the state and/or the ruler's political, intellectual, and cultural worth. In other words, it was expected of artists to produce wide-ranging art objects and generate visual idioms and designs intended to function as ideological objects representing the goodwill and aspirations of the rulers they represented and served.

Pisanello's activities and artistic products associated with the visit of the Byzantine emperor John VIII Palaelogus (1392-1448) to Ferrara and Florence in 1438-1439 help illuminate the duties of a visiting court artist.[207] Although the terms of Pisanello's employment are not well documented during the Byzantine emperor's stay, Pisanello was probably brought in by invitation from either the marquis Niccolò III d'Este (1383-1441) or Pope Eugenius IV (1383-1447) to serve in a role like the one he performed for his other princely patrons of the time. He is recorded working on various court commissions, as both a painter and a medalist for the Gonzaga in Mantua, the Visconti of Milan, and the Este in Ferrara between 1439 and 1448.[208] Before that, until 1438, he worked mainly in Verona, with some commissions in Rome and Mantua; beginning in 1448, Pisanello is recorded as an official salaried court artist for Alfonso V of Aragon (1396-1458) in Naples. It is unclear who invited Pisanello to commemorate the most significant historical event of the first half of the fifteenth century, but the extant materials firmly document his presence at the councils in Ferrara and Florence.

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[207] Pisanello's drawings and medals associated with the emperor's visit in Ferrara and Florence have been recently discussed in Keith Christiansen and Stefan Weppelmann,eds., *The Renaissance Portrait: From Donatello to Bellini* (New York; New Haven [Conn.]: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Distributed by Yale University Press, 2011), 197-201. Also see: Evans, ed., *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, 527-536. Mack, *Bazaar to Piazza: Islamic Trade and Italian Art, 1300-1600*, 153-156.

[208] Luke Syson and Dillian Gordon, *Pisanello: Painter to the Renaissance Court* (London; [New Haven, CT]: National Gallery Co.; Distributed by Yale University Press, 2001), 34-38.

The emperor arrived with a large retinue of nobles, clerics, and courtiers upon the invitation of Pope Eugenius IV to attend the church council in Ferrara, which was scheduled to discuss the possibility of a union between the Greek and Roman churches and a joint effort against the Turks. The Byzantine delegation arrived in Venice in January of 1438 and then proceeded to Ferrara, where the negotiation of the union began in April. The council was interrupted by plague and the emperor spent time living and hunting outside of Ferrara from mid-August through December. Meetings resumed in January of 1439 in Florence, and, finally, the union was decreed in July 1439.

The Paris and Chicago sketchbook pages (Fig. 1.14-1.15) that represent details of the emperor's appearance, costume, and hunting gear are examples of studies preserved in their own right. The portrait drawing (Louvre, Paris) (Fig. 1.16) and the bronze medal (Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris) of the emperor (Fig. 1.17) are the final artistic products from Pisanello's appointment. All of these products furnish sound evidence that Pisanello was present in Ferrara and Florence for some time; they also indicate his special appointment to make portraits of leading figures from the Byzantine delegation in order to commemorate the event. It has been suggested that the Paris and Chicago pages may have been made while Pisanello was in Ferrara, while the portrait medal may have been done in Florence, during the emperor's last month of leisure in celebration of the successful closure of the council.[209]

The Paris and Chicago pages suggest that the artist serving as a courtier—a member either of Niccolò III d'Este's or Pope Eugenius IV's entourage—had to know

[209] For example, in Evans, ed., *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, 530. This is based on Giorgio Vasari and Paolo Giovio's accounts.

enough about court life in order to portray the emperor. He may have even been given special access to the emperor, which would allow him to take notes on the ruler's appearance, costume, and gear for the portrait, as seen in both the Paris and the Chicago sheets. Carmen Bambach suggests that the sheets primarily represent the emperor and not members of his entourage, as has been previously proposed.[210] One exception is a figure of a scholar, centrally placed on the recto of the Chicago sheet (Fig. 1.15, A), and notated "*chaloíre*," meaning "monk" in Medieval Greek. Other figures possibly represent the emperor, captured in different views—on horseback, standing frontally, three-quarter views, and from the back.

Both the Paris and the Chicago sheets exhibit purposeful drawing rather than casual journalistic note-taking. They are of a finished and formal quality and represent steps taken by the artist to make a likeness that is "symbolic" as well as naturalistic. Keith Christiansen has recently argued that these sheets were completed with a view toward both a painted and a medallic portrait.[211] This proposition can be confirmed by the specificity of details. The Paris sheet (recto) (Fig. 1.14, A) represents the emperor's exotic costume and his horse, both at close range and from a more distant viewpoint, as if to fashion the overall appearance of the sitter for subsequent study and refashioning. The emperor wears a domed Byzantine hat with a turned-up brim and a long, pointed visor, which later became a defining feature of the emperor's image on the medal. The emperor is also depicted in a three-quarter view facing left and in full length from the back. The horse, the beloved companion of the emperor in Italy, purchased from a Russian delegate

[210] Ibid., 529-532.
[211] Christiansen and Weppelmann, eds., *The Renaissance Portrait: From Donatello to Bellini*, 200.

to the council, Nicholas Gedeles, is also portrayed. The close-up drawing shows her slit nostrils, identifying her as one of the Russian mounts, known for their slashed nostrils; large head; short legs; and overall stumpy body proportions.[212] Pisanello also shows the emperor on horseback facing to the right—a representation of the emperor that would later be on the reverse of the medal, with a quiver attached to his thigh, at the imaginary moment when his hunt is interrupted by the sight of a cross (Fig. 1.17).[213]

The rest of the page on the recto is occupied with an accurate transcription of Arabic script and notes on costume colors along the upper margin of the page. The inscription has been translated and interpreted as a reference to a gown of Mamluk *tiraz* fabric, perhaps worn by the emperor when hunting. It is understood as a diplomatic gift to the emperor from the Egyptian sultan al-Mu'ayyad Abu al-Nasr Shaykh (r. 1412-1421), whose name appears in Arabic script. The question arises: why would the artist be so preoccupied with correctly transcribing an inscription in an unfamiliar and difficult language? The inscription on the gown and colors were not included on the medal. Could they have been intended for a painted portrait? Would the emperor himself or his advisors ask the artist to include the gown with the exotic inscription in the desired painted portrait? A superb illuminated portrait of the emperor in profile, facing to the right (Fig. 1.18), now in the Library of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai, parallels Pisanello's notes on color and appearance, suggesting that the drawings were made with both a painted and a medallic portrait in mind.

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[212] Evans, ed., *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, 32-33. Mack, *Bazaar to Piazza: Islamic Trade and Italian Art, 1300-1600*, 153. These catalogue entries also provide an extended bibliography on the drawings.

[213] The emperor was characterized as an avid and transgressive hunter in showing a greater passion for the hunt than for the ecclesiastical council.

Scholars have proposed various possibilities regarding the person who may have commissioned the portrait medal commemorating the Byzantine emperor's visit to Italy. Primary candidates include Pope Eugenius IV, who invited the emperor; the dedicated humanist Leonello d'Este—the heir to the marquessate of Ferrara; and Leon Battista Alberti, who was in attendance with the papal Curia in Ferrara and had likely produced a large self-portrait plaque *all'antica* based on ancient intaglio gems.[214] In addition, Brigit Blass-Simmen recently proposed that the medal could have been commissioned by the emperor himself.[215] Her observation is based on the analysis of the medal inscription in Greek letters on the obverse, which appears to accurately transcribe the official signature of the emperor from his diplomatic correspondence. As she argues, the transcription of the emperor's imperial signature must have been sanctioned by him. Since Pisanello's medal marks the beginning of Renaissance medallic art, the participation of the penultimate Byzantine emperor and his learned advisors in the revival of the ancient coin forms that were preserved in Byzantium along with ancient texts is highly plausible.

Pisanello's drawings also help us to understand the steps that went into the execution of specialized artistic products such as ruler portraiture. From the above-considered examples, it is clear that the artist went through many steps in fashioning a regal image—from quick sketches to formal drawings. Such a process may have included interactions with a circle of learned advisors and humanists. Luke Syson, in his analysis of Pisanello's medallic and painted portraits of Leonello d'Este, has reasoned that the

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[214] Christiansen and Weppelmann, eds., *The Renaissance Portrait: From Donatello to Bellini*, 197. Evans, *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, 535.

[215] Brigit Blass-Simmen, "Image and Inscription: Pisanello's Early Portrait Medals," conference paper for the panel "Identity in Written Words IV," The Renaissance Society of America Annual Meeting, March 24, 2012.

artist deliberately edited the appearance of the ruler to express the chivalric values that Este self-consciously and programmatically adopted at court.[216] Pisanello's subtle alterations to the natural proportions of Leonello d'Este's countenance were introduced to forge the analogy with the Alexander the Great, a leitmotif of the ruler's *all'antica* self-representation. As Syson posits, this aesthetic strategy may have been developed in association with court humanists such as Guarino da Verona (1374-1460), the professor of Greek in Ferrara associated with the Este court, with whom Pisanello was on close terms.

A similar process went into the design of the Byzantine emperor's official portrait. Guarino served as an interpreter of Greek during the church council in Ferrara and Florence and thus could have exerted particular influence on the visual vocabulary Pisanello used on the medal. For instance, he may have been helpful with a piece of advice about the inscription in Greek. The visage of the ruler with a scraggly beard, somewhat unruly hair, and flexible, peeling hat brim on the Paris sheet (Fig. 1.14, A & B) was additionally transformed into an elegant profile on the medal, reminiscent of ancient prototypes. Both the lifesize finished drawing (Louvre, Paris) depicting the emperor facing left (Fig. 1.16) and the medal portrait (Fig. 1.17) showing him facing right celebrate the ruler's regal profile, defined by the heroic physiognomy, the tidy and sharply pointed beard, the hair falling down in long and controlled spiral curls, and the remarkable, tall crowned hat, carefully described in order to underscore the prestige and dignity of the ruler. Clearly, Pisanello went through many steps in his skillful modification of the many physiognomic and costume irregularities, found both in the

[216] Syson and Gordon, *Pisanello: Painter to the Renaissance Court*, 87-93.

Paris and the Chicago sheets, to fashion a timeless image of the Byzantine emperor, reflective of Byzantine notions of decorum.

The steps Pisanello undertook in designing ruler portraits suggest that the court artist was perhaps expected to create a formal portrait likeness that accommodated notions of rank and decorum. Christiansen characterizes Pisanello's work process particularly well: "Pisanello's court portraits are the products of a conscious striving toward a poetic ideal no less artificial than the literary portraits composed by humanists."[217] It can be argued, then, that the court artist was expected to produce products that would reflect the program of self-representation at the ruler's court. As part of the court appointment, the artist would become a member of the ruler's entourage in order to fully immerse himself in the visual, rhetorical, and performative culture of the court. The artist would likely interact with the ruler's advisors and image makers and thus become well versed in the representational and social discourse employed at the court. However, in the end, it was also expected that the artist would fully exercise his agency by utilizing his skills as the sole expert in observational and representational technologies, as Pisanello's work also shows.

The examples of Pisanello, Jan van Eyck, Matteo de' Pasti, and Costanzo da Ferrara suggest that portraiture was one of the main expectations set for artists who served at court or were attached to diplomatic embassies in the Early Modern period. The artist's appointment to visit another ruler's court was part of the developing diplomatic trend that included the institution of permanent emissaries in international capitals as

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[217] Christiansen and Weppelmann, eds., *The Renaissance Portrait: From Donatello to Bellini*, 197. Evans, ed., *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, 195.

representatives of sovereign states. This more sophisticated system of diplomacy, which still exists today throughout Western Europe, replaced "the *ad hoc* structure that existed in the medieval Catholic world."[218] As Daniel Goffman has demonstrated, the Early Modern policy of resident ambassadors protected by the legal fiction of extraterritoriality evolved in the context of interactions between European powers and the Ottoman State, where the framework for dealing with citizens of other states was already in place.[219] Ambassadors were employed to send regular reports (*relazione*) about the politics, society, and ambitions of rival rulers. In this context, the artist's role in diplomacy was to provide visual products—primarily portraits of rulers—to facilitate the exchange of visual ideas between courts and to introduce new features into the iconography of princes. Thus artists, in contrast to ambassadors (who composed reports and negotiated various political and economic agreements on behalf of the state), commemorated, perpetuated, and promoted princes and their ruling authority through visual products. Artists' service in diplomacy supplemented traditional gift exchange and ambassadorial missions by making artists' expertise critical to sealing political and economic alliances.

The expectations for Bellini's artistic mission to Constantinople would have followed the above paradigms for an artist's service at another ruler's court. Bellini's visit was clearly attached to an embassy to represent Venice's Senate as well as to offer Mehmed II specialized services in portraiture while serving as his court artist. Bellini's mission underscored Venice's desire for a long-lasting political and economic alliance with the Turk. Bellini's activities and artistic products at the Ottoman court particularly

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[218] Daniel Goffman, "The Ottoman Empire," in *The Renaissance World*, ed. John Jeffries Martin (New York; London: Routledge, 2007), 347-363, 349.
[219] Ibid., 350.

mirror Pisanello's courtly model, which must have been known to Bellini through his training in his father's workshop. Thus it was expected that Bellini would have joined Mehmed II's entourage to immerse himself in the Ottoman court and to learn the Turk's codes of decorum and self-representation. This knowledge, initially recorded in preliminary drawings, would later be transformed into official portraits. Bellini's mission resulted in diverse products—painted portraits, medals, and drawings—intended for circulation both in Constantinople and in Italy. Thus the artistic products must have been made in several copies; some of them were brought back to Venice for study and to provide information about Mehmed II and his politics.

Conclusion

Bellini's artistic visit to Constantinople served a twofold purpose. Bellini acted as a cultural ambassador for Venice, attached to a diplomatic embassy charged to deliver payment to the Sultan. As well, Bellini acted as courtier and court artist for the Sultan; as such, his role was to immerse himself in the ceremonial and visual performative culture of the Ottoman court and to learn its traditions in order to fashion portraits of Mehmed II. Bellini also aided the Sultan's efforts to establish a school of representational arts aimed to promulgate Ottoman imperialism. Bellini's artistic expertise was an important means by which Venice and Constantinople forged their socio-political alliance. In sending Bellini, the Venetian Senate demonstrated the goodwill and hope for a long-lasting peace.

Mehmed II's request for a painter to visit his court acknowledged Venice's artistic expertise. Bellini's artistic appointment was an extraordinary event, as Venice's Senate had never before sent such a prominent artist attached to a diplomatic embassy. Bellini's visit turned out to be something complex and important for art history, as it resulted 1) in the mutual transfer and translation of artistic idioms, technologies, and practices, and 2) in wide-ranging artistic products, including painted and drawn portraits, drawings, and frescoes or paintings for the New Palace. These artistic works were completed with a view of the special function they would play at the Sultan's court, as I will further demonstrate. In the context of Bellini's appointment as a visiting artist at Mehmed II's court, I contend that the artist interacted extensively with Ottoman visual traditions. Bellini engaged with local traditions and visualities at the Ottoman court, translated his native artistic practices and idioms to local contexts, and fashioned state portraits of Mehmed II using these idioms.

Chapter Two

Mehmed II's Imperial Ideology and Bellini as a Court Artist in Constantinople

A letter of favor written upon Mehmed II's order in Constantinople to acknowledge Bellini's talent and to specify his newly earned titles of Golden Knight and Count Palatine (*Miles Auratus ac Comes palatinus*) provides an intriguing starting point for considering the set-up and cultural context of Mehmed's court, the nature of his artistic patronage, and the direction of his visual program:

> Zentilem Bellinum sicut magno desiderio expectavimus, ita plena letitia venisse gaudemus. Nam dum ipsum conspeximus & ad eximiam artem eius aciem oculorum ac mentis direximus, instar maximi muneris suscepimus. Inspecta siquidem prope diem artis sue industria ac speculatione, cui nihil est quod reprehensioni subiaceat preterea legalitate ac virtutis amplitutide gratiam Serenitatis nostre invenit benivolam & in omnibus liberalem, & merito adhibuimus eum **Militem Auratum** ac **Comitem palatimun** deputare. Atque ut fama illius longe lateque per orbem diffundatur, in signum purioris amoris, ut & honorem ac honorificentiam celebrem dignitatis acquirat, rotella liberalissima ex solido auro in Monile contenta inscruptis proiis litteris nostris eum decoravimus alteraque ex parte nostri nominis munimine insignita.[220]

This letter, probably presented to the artist upon his departure, illustrates both that Mehmed II adopted the Western practice of conferring honors on artists, and that he invented his own Western class of Knighthood, paraphrased and translated as the Knight of the Golden Spur (*equitem auratum*) in the Venetian version of the letter in the 1486 *Supplemetum Chronicarium* published by Jacopo Filippo Foresti:

[220] Quoted from Jürg Meyer zur Capellen, *Gentile Bellini* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1985), 111, doc. 21. See full text in Appendix 1, Document No. 10.

> After Gentile came to him, so that he could test his expertise he appointed him to depict many of his extraordinary pictures and other nearly innumerable things, and then, in order that every activity test him more and more, he commanded that he himself be depicted in his own image; and indeed, when the Turkish ruler gazed upon that portrait so much like himself, he was astonished at the talent of the man, and said he excelled any painter who had ever lived. And therefore, setting him up without delay as **a member of his household**, as an indication of his benevolence and generosity, he made him both **knight palatine** and a **knight of the Golden Spur**, and gave him a medal and necklace, and sent him back to his own country, dismissing him with significant privilege and many gifts.[221]

Mehmed II granted Bellini an investiture and recognition that find no parallels in the Ottoman tradition, or more broadly in other Muslim courts of the time. This fact led scholars to question whether the document was a deliberate forgery.[222] However, contemporary accounts of the letter in Venetian documents, including the *Supplemetum Chronicarium* (1486), Francesco Negro's (ca.1490) and Francesco Sansovino's (1581) biographies of the artist, as well as Bellini's *Portrait of Mehmed II* (1480), his medals of Mehmed II (ca. 1480), and his lost mural in the Doge's Palace in Venice,[223] all cite the honors he received at the Ottoman court and thus confirm the authenticity of the letter. How, then, should we understand Mehmed II's appropriation of the Roman-Italian investiture, and what implications does it bear for understanding the Sultan's court, the direction of his artistic patronage, and his self-construction as a ruler? What kind of

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[221] Quoted from Amy Namowitz Worthen "An Inconvenient Text: The *Supplementum Chronicarium* as a Source of Information about Gentile and Giovanni Bellini." This manuscript is forthcoming in Carolyn C. Wilson, ed., *Examining Giovanni Bellini: An Art 'More Human and More Divine (*Turnhout*, Belgium:* Brepols Publishers*,* 2012*)*. See full text in Appendix, Document No. 16.

[222] Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978).

[223] Caroline Campbell and Alan Chong, *Bellini and the East* (London; Boston: National Gallery Company; Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2005), 114. The inscription in the Doge's Palace was reproduced in Francesco Sansovino, *Venetia citta nobilissima e singolare, dscrita in XIII libri* (Venetia, 1481) as "Gentilis patriae dedit haec monumenta Belinus, Othomano accitus, munere factus Eques" (fol. 128v). See full text in Appendix, Documents No. 19, 13, 14.

model(s) of court culture was (were) implemented by Mehmed II in Constantinople? Why did Mehmed II employ Italian artists and like Italian art?

This chapter proposes to understand Mehmed II's court as hybrid of Romano-Byzantine, Italian Renaissance, and Muslim Timurid-Turcoman and Persianate (Sasanian) courts. Mehmed's ideal court centered on the unapproachable authoritarian ruler—a paradigm borrowed from Caesarian-Byzantine ideals—who also appropriated and promoted arts like a Renaissance ruler, and was, in addition, a benevolent Muslim ruler adhering to Islamic ideals of justice. Claiming to be a true heir of the Roman Empire, Mehmed II established the tradition of court artists who had special access to him and formed a personal relationship with him, and whose supreme knowledge, talent, and expertise enhanced the legitimacy, honor, and exclusivity of his rule.

Norbert Elias's pioneering book *The Court Society* (1969),[224] serves as a main reference point for this chapter. Specifically, Elias discusses the court in terms of social organization, spatial dimensions, and routine events or rituals, which manifested and legitimized political power, state institutions, and social hierarchies, through adherence to ethical, religious, and aesthetic ideals of honorable conduct. This chapter also considers current studies that have furthered Elias's ideas and methodologies by investigating the specific contexts of European and Islamic court societies. The 2011 collection of conference papers,[225] *Court Cultures in the Muslim World: Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries*, edited by A. Fuess and J.-P. Hartung, is of particular significance, as it not

[224] I thank Norman Bryson for our engaged discussions of Norbert Elias' scholarship in the beginning of my graduate studies.
[225] Albrecht Fuess and Jan-Peter Hartung, eds., *Court Cultures in the Muslim World: Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

only extends Elias's ideas but also underscores specific "Islamic" aspects of Muslim court cultures.

Fuess and Hartung suggest that the Muslim court is better described by means of the following categories:

1) "legitimization of political rule," which uses the Prophet Muhammad's rule as a benchmark of good governance as the dynastic principle; good governance and royal conduct are made specific to each Muslim court according to such key terms as the "common good," "charity," "justice," and the ruler's patronage of the arts and sciences;

2) "strategies of adaptation and emancipation," which elucidate the ruler's politics both in "the adaptation of non-Islamic elements" and in "the adaptation to Islamic elements within an Islamic framework"; this principle is key to understanding Muslim court cultures as they frequently evolved out of previous classical civilizations or as a result of regional transfer of political authority to a new dynastic power (the Umayyads, the Abbasids, the Fatimids, the Mamluks, the Ilkhanids, the Timurids, the Ottomans, the Safavids, and the Mughals are all examples of Muslim court cultures that began with "hybrid forms of administrations)"; and

3) "elaboration of splendid court culture," which comprises both the spatial (palace or nomadic tent) boundaries of the court and their public manifestations, as well as the human figurations of court society; the composition of the courtiers, including religious leaders, administrators, philosophers, poets, scholars, and artists was far more important

than the solid architectural structure in certain courts, which are better described as "travelling courts."[226]

Using this approach, this chapter demonstrates that Mehmed II's interest in Italian art, like his interest Eastern visual styles, was not merely based on his personal taste for "naturalism"; rather, Italian artists were fundamental to the Sultan's imperial project. Bellini and other Italian artists aided Mehmed II's efforts in both legitimizing his political rule and representing his sovereignty by creating a magnificent court culture that was very distinct from other Muslim courts.

The court artist was a highly valued cultural property for Mehmed II, used as an instrument for enhancing his political and cultural prestige in order to legitimize his claim as a new Alexander of Macedon, to elevate the political standing of the House of Osman among the dynastic élites to the East and West, as well as to style himself as a great Renaissance prince. In Bellini's appointment, Mehmed II realized his longstanding ambition to recruit an illustrious artist who would help fashion his public imperial image and thus greatly contribute to the construction of the Sultan's multifaceted imperial identity at the zenith of his power. As a court artist, Bellini benefited from his new social status, both as a courtier in service to the authoritarian ruler and as a cultural agent in the project of *translatio* of the Old Rome into New Rome. The new titles contributed to Bellini's recognition as one of the greatest living painters. The 1503 edition of the *Supplemetum Chronicarium* compared Bellini to Apelles—the great artist of antiquity—for painting Mehmed II, who was known as the most demanding of patrons, and pleasing

[226] Fuess and Hartung, introduction, *Court Cultures in the Muslim World: Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries*.

him with his art.[227] The use of Alexander the Great and Apelles as metaphors added to the legitimation of Mehmed II's imperial project in the public eye and acknowledged Bellini's talent and courtly manners.

Bellini's role at Mehmed II's court was in many ways similar to those of Greco-Byzantine and Italian humanists, tutors, and advisors, who contributed to making policies at the court and to founding a unique court culture. As an expert in portraiture, Bellini helped make Mehmed II's claim to the Roman-Byzantine throne stronger by evocatively visualizing his imperial persona in painted and medallic portraits intended for circulation at the court; as well, he helped advertise the Sultan's authority by decorating the imperial apartments and reception halls with paintings and murals. Bellini's work complemented Mehmed II's other artistic projects at the court, which were completed by artists from Islamic lands and served to showcase the Eastern identity of the Sultan's court. Perhaps Bellini helped to administer some of the mural painting projects at the palace and even trained some of the local artists. During his tenure he also had a unique opportunity to interact with a cosmopolitan mix of artisans—builders and decorators of Mehmed II's nearly completed New (Topkapi) Palace, his imperial residence and the seat of government.

[227] Appendix, Document No. 16.

Mehmed II's Imperial Idea and His Artistic Patronage

Much has been written about Mehmed II's artistic patronage and his representation of himself as a ruler. Yet the nature of his court, or, more precisely, the models of court cultures that Mehmed II aspired to emulate and establish in Ottoman Constantinople are not entirely understood. Upon the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, he made the "decayed" capital of the Byzantine Empire the seat of his power, with an imperial vision to rebuild the ancient city and to restore its greatness but in a new Muslim fashion—featuring opulent Oriental palaces, impressive Mosque complexes, highly respected Koranic schools, and charitable organizations.[228] A significant part of the Sultan's imperial vision was the establishment of his court in the capital. With the help of his Byzantine-Greek, Muslim, and Italian advisors, he actively sought and selectively adopted paradigms of court cultures from Italian, Romano-Byzantine, and Muslim traditions. For Mehmed II, it was not enough to transfer the traditions of court culture and rulership from Edirne, or the former Ottoman capital. His imperial patronage aimed at setting up a new precedent in the Mediterranean lands and seas—a paradigm of the Ottoman court that would both reflect the transformation of the Ottoman polity from principality to empire, and connect East and West. Thus far, scholarship has examined Mehmed II's imperial idea in the three distinct ways.

In the first view, the Sultan is interpreted as a Renaissance ruler with an eclectic mentality and narcissistic character. His love for art and the acquisition of knowledge was a sign of his personal talent, inspired by Renaissance cultural ideals. On this view, he was

[228] Çigdem Kafescioğlu, "The Ottoman Capital in the Making: The Reconstruction of Constantinople in the Fifteenth Century" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1996).

an unconventional Muslim ruler, who unfortunately failed to develop a coherent intellectual and aesthetic program.[229] His admiration of Italian culture is regarded as a private interest and restricted in circulation and influence to the private world enclosed by the high walls of the Sultan's palace:

> Gentile was invited to paint a private world, bounded by the high walls of the palace: to paint portraits of the Sultan and his courtiers, an enkolpion of the Madonna and Child, and to decorate the royal chambers with erotica … [H]e failed to achieve the [thematic] diversification of Peter Coecke van Aelst who in the 16th century combined portraits of Süleyman and the Grand Vizier Rüstam Pasha with views of Ottoman architecture and court processionals…That he could not express his talent in Istanbul must have been due to Sultan Mehmed's demanding patronage.[230]

Raby argues that Bellini's artistic visit had no bearing on Mehmed II's imperial project and his art program.

In the second view, Mehmed II was a typical Muslim ruler who had developed a rather well-planned and cohesive political, social, and ideological program in Constantinople. He used art and architecture to legitimize his military achievements. Byzantine, Timurid-Turcoman, and Italianate artistic traditions were a means to persuade and control diverse ethnic groups that came under Ottoman rule.[231] Necipoğlu and Kafescioğlu establish that the Sultan's architectural patronage closely reflected his

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[229] Julian Raby, "A Sultan of Paradox: Mehmed the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts," *Oxford Art Journal* 5, no. 1 (January 1, 1982): 3–8.

[230] My disagreement with Raby on the interpretation of Mehmed II's patronage of portrait arts does not lessen my respect for his seminal and pioneering contribution on the Sultan's artistic patronage. Julian Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom" (PhD diss., Oxford University, 1980), 121.

[231] Gülru Necipoğlu, "From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Konstantiniyye: Creation of a Cosmopolitan Capital and Visual Culture under Sultan Mehmed II," in *From Byzantion to Istanbul: 8000 Years of a Capital*, ed. Koray Durak (Istanbul: Sakip Sabanci Museum, 2010), 262-277.

imperial ideology.[232] According to Necipoğlu, "The [Topkapi] palaces' ambitious building program was primarily motivated by the new imperial image of the Sultan that crystallized while Constantinople was being transformed into the Ottoman capital."[233] Mehmed II's interest in Italianate visual language is interpreted in the context of his diplomatic relations with the West, a special type of gift exchange and political alliance formation.[234]

In the third view, Mehmed II was an Ottoman Caesar who drew on various traditions of rulership available to him in the Mediterranean. [235] Celine Dauverd interprets the Sultan as a hybrid figure, one who acted as a true Muslim ruler by furthering Islam in the conquered lands, and at the same time claimed the identity of a Roman-Renaissance ruler. He adopted Italianate traditions in order to repossess foundational knowledge of Romano-Byzantine civilization and to surpass both the Roman Empire and previous Islamic states by building a new type of Islamic empire, fusing together previous paradigms. As Dauverd rightly suggests:

> Mehmed as a hybrid figure … was someone who sought to appropriate the historical tradition of the Roman Empire to empower himself and to surpass it. Mehmed saw in his person a sultan able to combine traditions of the Turkish, Persian, Islamic, and Roman rulers. He was an ambivalent ruler and a cosmopole, which his different strategies of possession

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[232] Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (New York, N.Y.; Cambridge, Mass.: Architectural History Foundation; MIT Press, 1991). Kafescioğlu, "The Ottoman Capital in the Making: The Reconstruction of Constantinople in the Fifteenth Century."

[233] Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries,* 10.

[234] Necipoğlu, "From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Konstantiniyye: Creation of a Cosmopolitan Capital and Visual Culture under Sultan Mehmed II," 264.

[235] Celine Dauverd's article is particularly important for discussing Mehmed II's imperialism. I am grateful to the author for sharing this text, scheduled for publication in 2014: Celine Dauverd, "The Ottoman Caesar: Mehmed II's Strategies of Possession, 1453-81," *The Islands of the Mediterranean* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014).

> underscored. Based on his hybridity, he claimed to be true heir of the Roman Empire.[236]

In this view, the Italianate visual tradition was at the heart of Mehmed II's imperial idea—be a true heir of the Roman-Byzantine Empire. A possession of Italian artists and Italian visual technology was equivalent to possession of fundamental Roman knowledge and art expertise—key statecraft instruments in both Ancient Rome and Byzantium, as well as in current Renaissance city-states renewing the Roman model. Inviting Italian artists to his court, therefore, was an important strategy for Mehmed II to emulate and surpass Roman-Byzantine civilization as the principal ruler in the Greater Mediterranean. He equally employed Eastern visual traditions and artists to project the image of Eastern magnificence and splendor—well-known connotations of imperial triumph in the Renaissance.

The construction of the Sultan's imperial identity developed in the context of competing imperial state projects across Europe and Asia. The Timurids in Khorasan and Transoxiana, the Muscovites in Russia, the Safavids in Iran, the Mughals in India, the Venetian State, Papal Rome, the Hapsburgs, and the French in Europe all utilized visual and discursive (literary) enunciations of power—concrete manifestations of court and state rituals—to legitimize and (re)fashion their political authority, as well as to express competitive territorial claims. More importantly, these courts employed artists and architects in different ways and used artists' talent and status to promote their own standing in the competition for power. The period can be also broadly characterized by wide-ranging cross-cultural interactions, in which visual language was a central

[236] Quoted from Dauverd, "The Ottoman Caesar: Mehmed II's Strategies of Possession, 1453-81."

expressive element within the larger processes of political identity formation. In particular, the arts of portraiture and architecture increasingly became means for broadcasting ambitious political claims.

Building on the reviewed approaches in scholarship, the following pages will help us clarify Mehmed II's imperial idea and how Italian artists, like Bellini, contributed to it.

Mehmed II's Imperial Ideology as Nucleus of His Court

Mehmed II's prodigious military victories in Asia, the Balkans, and the Aegean wrought noticeable and rapid changes in many aspects of his self-representation, including the introduction of the new political and governing system, and initiation of new protocols and rituals at his court (Fig. 2.1-2.2). The most significant of these victories was the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, which launched the Sultan's "imperial project" and was the beginning of the transformation of the Ottoman state from principality to empire.[237] As Theoharis Stavrides recently adds, the conquest of Constantinople led to a change in Mehmed II's political prestige that was immediately proclaimed in new titles such as *Hünkâr*, "which means Emperor and Caesar."[238] The new imperial program touched on all aspects of political and court life, from aggressive

[237] Halil İnalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973).
[238] Theoharis Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs: The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vezir Mahmud Pasha Angelović (1453-1474)* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2001), 20. This new title is mentioned by a contemporary anonymous Greek chronicler.

foreign policy of conquest to key reorganization of internal political and religious institutions, from major new laws to new court ceremonials, and from essential architectural commissions to patronage of visual art and literature. Cemal Kafadar has previously shown that at the core of Mehmed II's imperial project was the institutionalization of "a central administrative apparatus" controlled by "a ruthless authoritarianism," which was unthinkable for the earlier Ottoman rulers from the House of Osman, who fashioned themselves as "emirs" (princes or commanders) or frontier "raiders of the faith" (*gazis*) who conquered territory on behalf of Islam.[239] By assuming the title of the "fist gazi,"[240] Mehmed II continued to draw upon the traditional *gazis* ethos that valorized "the war for the faith" against infidels as well as the attainment of victory in battle to acquire "treasures of the present world."[241] At the same time, his vision of supreme centralized authority that utilized Roman-Byzantine ideas of universal sovereignty was not only contradictory but foreign to the *gazis* ideals of autonomy for rulers of conquered territories.

Making Constantinople into the new capital of the Ottoman state and transferring centralized authority to Mehmed II and his court undermined the previously established power of local warlords and dervishes who enjoyed control of villages and lands as well

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[239] Cemal Kafadar, "The Ottomans and Europe," *Handbook of European History, 1400-1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation.* ed. by Thomas A. Brady, Heiko Augustinus Oberman, and James D. Tracy, (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1994), 590-628, 597.

[240] Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs: The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vezir Mahmud Pasha Angelović (1453-1474)*, 20-21. As Stavrides shows, Mehmed II used the title of the first *gazi* in his letter announcing the conquest of Constantinople to the new Mamluk Sultan Aynal and assumed "the responsibility for the holy war (*gaza*), while he left to the Mamluk Sultan the task of the protection of the pilgrimage to Mecca." Stavrides also supplies his translation of this letter: "Now the time has come to tie with mutual love and friendship the one who takes the trouble inherited from his father and ancestors of reviving once again the ceremony of pilgrimage to Mecca,… and the one who takes upon himself the trouble to equip the men concerned with the *gaza* and the holy war."

[241] Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 88.

as the ability to attack infidel communities if they acted dishonorably.[242] Mehmed II's new power base in his court in Constantinople, along with new laws governing the attainment of political and civic offices, the centralized distribution of rewards and booty, and taxation ended the egalitarian values of frontier society in favor of a monopolized sultanic rule. As Halil İnalcik remarks, "Mehmed's unusual centralizing policy and its far-reaching social and political consequences" led to "the implementation with an usual strictness of the laws governing these monopolies," and "prepared the way for the reactionary policy introduced under Mehmed II's son Sultan Bayezid II (1447-1512) upon his accession."[243] The new vision of the court of the Sultan in Constantinople alienated the ruler from the old-landed classes and warlord Ottoman élites, especially in central and northern Anatolia, as well as many large religious groups. This new system also established new court élites and rituals, and a new system of privileges and rewards.

Mehmed II's key innovation was in his style of rulership, particularly his adaptation of the Romano-Byzantine idea of government centered on the person of the emperor, and his appropriation of models of rulership, such as Alexander of Macedonia and Gaius Caesar, for close imitation.[244] These ideas were revolutionary in the context of orthodox Muslim courts, where leaders and founders of new dynasties claimed their political legitimacy based on their links to the Prophet Muhammad as a benchmark of

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[242] Ibid., 85, 97, 114, 148.
[243] Halil İnalcik, "Mehmed the Conqueror (1432-1481) and His Time," *Speculum* Vol. 35, No. 3 (Jul., 1960): 408-427, 426.
[244] See for example discussion of it in Dauverd, "The Ottoman Caesar: Mehmed II's Strategies of Possession, 1453-81" and in Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs: The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vezir Mahmud Pasha Angelović (1453-1474)*, 21.

Muslim governance.[245] The Byzantine model of rulership instead emphasized a direct continuation of the office of Roman emperors from Caesar Augustus forward, whose power was absolute, sacred, and unbroken. Byzantine law also regarded the emperor both as God on earth and as animate law, created by God "in order to unite the ecumene (the inhabited portion of the earth)."[246] The sixth century corpus *Juris Civilis* of Justinian codified the power of Byzantine emperors by proclaiming, "God promoted you [o holy lord emperor] to the imperial rule, and his divine grace … made you god on earth to do and make what you desire."[247] The absolutism of the Byzantine emperor was also reinforced by his right to promulgate new laws, which originated from the Roman law preserving formulations of Roman jurists. The concept of absolute rule by the Byzantine emperor was intertwined with the idea of possession of the throne in the Imperial Palace in Constantinople. Thus, just as the Byzantine emperor was the capstone of the state, governing from the capital of Constantinople, the center of supreme political, judicial, economic, and cultural authority, Mehmed II immediately asserted his supreme governing authority and claimed himself an heir to the Byzantine emperors upon his conquest of Constantinople.

The Conqueror's novel imperial ambitions are evidenced in many contemporary reports following the conquest of Byzantium. However, as we see below, he did not merely proclaim himself a new Romano-Byzantine emperor. Instead, Mehmed II

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[245] Fuess and Hartung, introduction to *Court Cultures in the Muslim World: Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries*, 5.
[246] Speros Vryonis, "Byzantine Society and Civilization" in *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843-1261*, ed. Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art: Distributed by H.N. Abrams, 1997), 5.
[247] Quoted from ibid., 5.

refreshed the Byzantine paradigm by going back to the roots of the imperial idea in the first Rome; he began to actively emulate Alexander the Great and Gaius Caesar with the goal of outdoing them by creating a universal empire with one faith and one rule, centered on the person of the Sultan.[248] Giàcomo de' Languschi and Niccolò Sagundino, who accompanied the new Venetian ambassador Bartolomeo Marcello to Constantinople, were among the first Italian observers to bear news of the Sultan's unconfined imperial idea of world dominion. As De' Languschi puts it:

> The sovereign, the Grand Turk Mehmed Bey, is a youth of twenty-six, well built, of larger rather than medium stature, expert at arms, of aspect more frightening than venerable, laughing seldom, full of circumspection, endowed with great generosity, obstinate in pursuing his plans, bold in all undertakings, as eager for fame as Alexander of Macedonia….
>
> Today, he says, the times have changed, and declares that he will advance from East to West as in former times the Westerners advanced into the Orient. There must, he says, be only one empire, one faith, and one sovereignty in the world.[249]

Sagundino, a humanist and scholar originally from Negroponte, similarly concurred in his address to Alfonso I of Naples in 1454, characterizing Mehmed II's ambitions:

> He has selected Alexander of Macedon and Gaius Caesar as those who are to be especially imitated, and he caused their deeds to be translated into his own language, which he delights in reading and hearing about in a most wonderful way. For by means of a certain glorious imitation, he tries to show himself to be their equal, and he seems to be roused and to burn with the study of glory and praise.[250]

These reports, as well as many other testimonies by renowned humanists and political leaders, including the humanist scholar Lauro Quirini, Russian Patriarch Isidore, and

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[248] Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, 111, 410.
[249] Ibid., 112.
[250] Quoted from Spinale, "The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)," 21-22. The original document is transcribed and published by Nicolae Iorga, *Notes Et Extraits Pour Servir à L'histoire Des Croisades Au XVe Siècle* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1899), 318.

Cardinal Bessarion, clearly convey Mehmed II's single-minded desire to imitate ancient Greek and Roman rulers, inspired by their landmark victories and absolute leadership.

Mehmed II's adaptation of Roman ideals was one of the main reasons biographers of the Sultan questioned his Islamic faith. As Mehmed II's court historian, Giovanni Maria Angiolello (1451-ca. 1525), a Venetian adventurer and merchant, reports, "Bayezid II, the son of the Sultan says that his father was domineering and did not believe in the Prophet Muhammad," adding, "or a religion of any kind."[251] Babinger rightly points out that these tales cannot be taken seriously, as the Sultan promulgated the Sunnite branch of Islam by sponsoring the building of new mosques, founding Koranic schools, promoting the traditional "pillars" of Islamic faith in his state politics, and publicly observing Islam by participating in religious rites. In other words, it can be inferred that despite Mehmed II's steadfast support of Islam, as was required of a good Muslim ruler, his contemporaries, including his own son and his entourage, did not support his unorthodox imperial ambitions and his claims to be an heir of Roman-Byzantine emperors; they disapproved of his politics aimed to fuse the Roman model of rulership with traditional Islamic values. The most basic dichotomies between *gazi* and imperial ideology, between Edirne and Constantinople, and between new and old political élites defined Mehmed II's rule, as Kafadar has stressed, led to a fearful revolt of

[251] Quoted from Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, 411. "E disse il ditto Bayasit che suo padre ear padrone, a che non credeva in Maccometto. Ed in effetto, era così, per quello dicono tutti Mememet non credeva in fede alcuna." From Giovan Maria Angiolello, *Il Sultano e Il Profeta: Memorie di uno schiavo vicentino divenuto tesoriere di Maometto II Il conquistatore* (Milano: Serra e Riva Editori, 1985), 153.

the Janissary and a reactionary administration upon the Sultan's death as İnalcik has argued.[252]

Another main innovation in Mehmed II's absolutist imperial project was the assertion that he was chosen by God for a special mission to take over the declining Byzantine Empire in order to build a new world power united under one faith, which would surpass the greatness of the Roman Empire. The Greek politician, scholar, and historian Kritovoulos (c. 1410-c. 1470), in his "History of Mehmed the Conqueror" written during his service at the Sultan's court (ca. 1460s), expresses admiration for Mehmed II's achievements. He portrays Mehmed's rule as promoted by God and divine grace, mirroring the corpus *Juris Civilis* of Justinian on the legitimacy of Byzantine emperors who were ordained by God (see quoted text earlier). Kritovoulos writes:

> Just at that period the Divine power sent many unusual, unexpected, and prodigious signs. These occurred both at the birth of this man and also at his entering on his rule as Sultan…. The soothsayers, sages, and prophets and inspired persons foretold and foresaw many things that were to happen, and announced that the new Sultan would have every good fortune and virtue, and that his dominion would be very large in every way, and that he would surpass all sultans before him in the very great abundance of his glory and wealth and power and accomplishments.[253]

While Mehmed II's employment of the idea of the political legitimacy by the Grace of God was typical in the Roman-Byzantine periods, as well as in medieval and early modern Europe, it was new to Muslim courts.[254] Interpreting Mehmed II's commission of the New (Topkapi) Palace near the Hagia Sophia and the Palace of Byzantine emperors,

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[252] Cemal Kafadar, *Between the Old and the New* (University of California, 1995). İnalcik, "Mehmed the Conqueror (1432-1481) and His Time."
[253] Critobulus, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror by Kritovoulos*, trans. Charles T. Riggs (Princeton, N.J., 1954), 13.
[254] Fuess and Hartung, introduction to *Court Cultures in the Muslim World: Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries*, 4-5.

Necipoğlu underscores that the location of the palace at the city's ancient acropolis and its elaborate architecture stressed the idea of the Sultan's "imperial sacredness," his chief position as the first *gazi* in the Islamic world and the successor to the Roman emperors.[255] The new palace ceremonial expressed the idea of "imperial sacredness" by introducing the concept of "princely seclusion" that greatly restricted access to Mehmed II's physical person and underlined the majesty of the Sultan by liberating him from the involvement in the day-to-day affairs of the state. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, by the time Mehmed II came to power, Muslim cultures had a well-developed system of criteria for political legitimization of rulership, including 1) the dynastic principle of succession, either going back to the Prophet Muhammad, or to the founder of the existing dynasty; and 2) an elaborate system of ideals for the ruler's conduct as defender of the faith, guardian of "the common good," "charity," and "justice," and patron of religious institutions, the sciences, and the arts.[256] It is likely that Mehmed II added a new criterion of royal succession—the appointment by the Grace of God— in order to legitimize his imperial ambitions as fashioned in the style of the caesars, as well as the expansion of the empire to include Byzantium and Europe, which was opposed not only by most rulers in

[255] Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 10-13.

[256] Ibid. Note, however, that here I expand the authors' categories by adding one of the main criteria of a good Muslim ruler, which legitimized rule since the time of the Prophet—the duty to be a good defender of the faith and a generous promoter of religious schools and religious institutions, as well as an ardent supporter of or active participant in *jihad*. These criteria played an important role in the *gazi* community, to which Mehmed II fully belonged, and were a shared ethos among other contemporary Muslim cultures, including Timurids, Safavids, Mamluks, and Mughals, not to mention smaller Islamic states.

Italy, Europe, Central Asia, and the Mediterranean, but also by his own father's advisors and sheykhs.[257]

Prior to Mehmed II's rule, Turkish sultans could legislate ("the principle of *urfi*") and supplement the holy law, *sharia*, with decrees, in contrast to rulers in other Islamic states, such as the Mamluks and Safavids, who could not.[258] Mehmed II's new style of Ottoman rulership transformed and greatly expanded this practice through two sets of laws (*kanunname)* prepared and issued during his rule. These laws were the first systematization of the laws of the Sultan's forefathers and inaugurated a comprehensive framework concerning "the concept of the sultan as the center of government" and "the system of protocol based on the degree of proximity to the sultan,"[259] which signaled the turning point in the transformation of Ottoman State from a *gazi* principality into a world empire. İnalcik underscores that the Conqueror's *kanunname* became the nucleus of Ottoman state legislation and "the cornerstone of the autocratic and centralizing Ottoman regime."[260] The first set of laws issued immediately after the conquest of Constantinople regulated taxation and criminal law, and were applicable to the Muslim, Christian, and Jewish populations of the Ottoman state. In essence, these laws introduced the monopolistic tax-farming system and established the authority of the Sultan over his

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[257] For example, the Grand Vizier, Halil Çandarli Pasha, formed an opposition group protesting Mehmed II's aggressive expansionist policy from the outset and the siege of Constantinople. He kept the defenders informed about Mehmed II and the besiegers' movements. This is detailed in Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1481* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1990), 153. About the opposition to Mehmed II's conquest of Constantinople, see also İnalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time* (1978). Tursun Beg, Halil İnalcik, and Rhoads Murphey, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1978).
[258] Speros Vryonis, "Byzantine Legacy and Ottoman Forms," in Speros Vryonis, *Studies on Byzantium, Seljuks, and Ottomans: Reprinted Studies* (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1981), Chapter XIII, 268.
[259] İnalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 72-73.
[260] Ibid., 73.

subjects and the land, specifying that "no one could exercise any authority over land and peasantry without a specific mandate from the sultan." Thus these first laws eliminated all other previous forms of legal lordship in the provinces as well as introducing heavy new taxes.[261] The second and final set of laws codified in 1476-1481 promulgated the Sultan's absolute sovereignty and the sacredness of his persona, and established the tradition of sultanic seclusion.[262] It also defined the order and hierarchy of the Ottoman State; described the administration, order, and ceremonies of the palace; specified the schedule of promotions and salaries of high officials and the titles to address them; and codified acceptable modes of behavior within the palace's ceremonial.

Although one school of thought interprets the ideas and forms of the Ottoman sovereignty promulgated in Mehmed II's body of laws as Turco-Islamic,[263] they can be also understood as hybrid forms modeled on both Roman-Byzantine and Turco-Islamic forms. In fact, the phenomenon of royal seclusion, based on the idea of the sacredness of the Sultan's persona, finds no precedents among Muslim rulers. Indeed, the accessibility of the ruler at regular, public legal hearings in the ruler's palace and in other public ceremonies, was one of the key requirements for Muslim rulers to uphold their image as just. For example, despite the constantly present threat of assassination, Mamluk rulers regularly appeared in public and "it remained possible to encounter the sultan personally until the very end of the Mamluk Sultanate," especially at his citadel on days designated

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[261] Ibid.
[262] Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 16-17.
[263] İnalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 73.

for legal hearings.[264] Similarly, in Seljuk Anatolia, it was customary for Ottoman sultans prior to Mehmed II to participate in the great divan "to hear the complaints of the oppressed."[265] Not only did the Sultan hold the divan, but he was visible from some distance away as he presided over the palace court. Bayezid I (1354-1403)'s Egyptian physician, Shams al-Din, reported:

> Early in the morning the Ottoman ruler would sit on a wide, raised sofa. The people stood some distance away, in a place whence they could see the sultan, and anyone who had suffered wrong would come to him and state his complaint. The case was judged immediately. Security in the land is such that nowhere will anyone touch a fully-laden camel whose owner has left it and departed.[266]

All earlier Ottoman rulers demonstrated a level of accessibility and simplicity unthinkable for Western princes, who were accustomed to appearing to visitors in magnificent ceremonies marked by distinct attire. The Burgundian knight Berthrandon de la Broquiìre, who visited the court of Murad II (1404-1451), father of the Conqueror, in 1433, reported:

> Saddles and harness are of the greatest simplicity. There is no sign of vanity or superfluity…. The great lords and princes display much simplicity in everything that they cannot possibly be singled out from the crowd…. I have seen the sultan at prayer in the mosque. He sat neither in a chair nor on a throne, but like the others had taken his place on a carpet spread out on the floor. Around him no decoration had been placed, hung, or spread out.
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> On his clothing or on his horse the sultan had no special mark to distinguish him. I watched him at his mother's funeral, and if he had not been pointed out to me, I could not have recognized him. It is strictly forbidden to accompany him or approach him without having received

[264] Albrecht Fuess, "Between dihlīz and dār al-'adl: Forms of Outdoor and Indoor Royal Representation at the Mamluk Court in Egypt," in Fuess and Hartung, eds., *Court Cultures in the Muslim World: Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries*, 149-167, 150.
[265] İnalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 89.
[266] Quoted from Ibid, 89.

> expressed permission. I pass over many particulars that have been related to me about his affability in conversation. In his judgments he shows maturity and indulgence. He is generous in giving alms and benevolent in his actions.[267]

Both of these passages demonstrate a well-established tradition that emphasized the visibility and presence of the ruler in the public sphere, both in religious spaces and court contexts. Although access was regulated by a well-established procedure for requesting an audience with the ruler, audiences were granted according to customary laws.

In contrast, Mehmed II's royal seclusion was clearly an innovation. Necipoğlu, supporting the earlier opinion of Babinger, interprets it in Byzantine terms and states that Mehmed II drew on "Byzantine notions of royal seclusion and the sanctity of the emperor" when introducing dynastic law codes and modifying court ceremonials.[268] In her view, royal seclusion had little to do with the security of the Sultan's person, and more with the concept of the Sultan as "a spiritual being, endowed with divine light," who "could not possibly dwell among ordinary mortals."[269] According to *kanunname*, the Sultan was scheduled to appear in public only twice a year in the religious holidays. In other times, the Sultan accepted petitions only from the high ranking officials of his court in the Chamber of Petitions. Stavrides provides a translation of this section of *kanunname*: "First, let a Chamber of Petitions be created. My imperial majesty will be sitting behind a curtain, and four times a week my Vezirs and my *Kadiaskers* and my *Defterdars* will

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[267] Quoted from Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, 418.
[268] Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 16.
[269] Ibid.

present petitions to my imperial presence."[270] The concept of the sanctity of the Sultan is confirmed by one of the most reliable contemporary Ottoman sources, Tursun Beg's "The History of the Conqueror," which describes Mehmed II as "the Sultan who had been chosen ruler by God to carry out the duty of Holy War."[271] In summary, *kanunname* promulgated new forms of Ottoman rulership that stressed symbolic aspects of the Sultan's authority, drawing on the Roman-Byzantine concept of sovereignty as well as court ceremonials.

Mehmed II's appropriation of Roman-Byzantine ideas of rulership, especially underscored by his political rhetoric emulating Alexander the Great and Gaius Caesar,[272] bears comparison with Renaissance princes on the Italian peninsula. Discourses defending the absolute authority of the prince as a trustee of divine concerns, a viceregent in place of God, and a supreme commander of the armed forces were flowering in Italian city-states. As Ernst Kantorowicz and Peter Stacey show, "Senecan ideology provided a foundation for Renaissance monarchs to articulate their claims" for possession of temporal jurisdiction and conquest and "to embody the person and authority of

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[270] Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs: The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vezir Mahmud Pasha Angelović (1453-1474)*, 35.

[271] Tursun Beg's history is noted for being one of the most essential contemporary Ottoman sources. Tursun Beg was an expert in state finances, was the first government surveyor in Constantinople, and served in the office of the grand vizier Mahmud Pasha. He accompanied the grand vizier on his expeditions to Serbia, Trebizond, and Bosnia; for this information see Halil Inalcik, "Mehmed the Conqueror (1432-1481) and His Time," *Speculum* 35, no. 3 (July 1960): 408-427, 408-409. The quote is from Tursun Beg, Inalcik, and Murphey, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, 43.

[272] Mehmed II's emulation of Alexander the Great and Gaius Caesar forms a leitmotiv in a multitude of reports by Western ambassadors and observers. Raby provides a full account of various Western reporters describing Mehmed II's aggressive expansionist politics: Raby, "El Gran Turco: Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom," 88-89.

princeps."[273] For instance, Alfonso V the Magnanimous (1396-1458), one of the older contemporary rivals of Mehmed II, upon his capture of Naples in 1442, celebrated his military triumph in the style of the Roman Caesars.[274] Employing the Senecan political theory of Roman monarchy, he staged triumphal processions, and justified his conquest as "the triumph of princely virtue" in commissioned eulogies and diplomatic correspondence.[275] Alfonso processed through the city in an ornate carriage featuring the figure of the Roman Caesar with a globe of the world at his feet, and accompanied by figures of cardinal virtues.[276] Alfonso's pretensions were not necessarily welcomed by other Italian princes. Humanists like Giannozzo Manetti, who was working as a diplomat in the court of Cosimo de' Medici, opposed Alfonso's territorial encroachments in Tuscany by criticizing Alfonso's exploitation of Caesar to justify his military conquests:

> For so great and violent is his ambition, so great and unbridled his desire to govern and dominate, and so great and so immense his lust and passion to rule and reign…. Indeed he has frequently declared as much plainly and openly in his words and actions: he shows no fear in recalling that every human and divine law was overthrown daily by Gaius Caesar on behalf of the object of his desire—the principate…. Alfonso does not hesitate to proffer this opinion of Caesar very frequently without any qualification and broadcast and interpret it in such a way that it gives licence to Christians (not to mention infidels) to violate any laws whatever for the sake of reigning supreme.[277]

Much like Alfonso, Mehmed II used the Caesar metaphor to justify his militaristic politics. The Sultan's eulogist Kritovoulos frequently refers to Caesar when discussing Mehmed II's military expeditions:

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[273] Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology,* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), 91. Quoted from Peter Stacey, *Roman Monarchy and the Renaissance Prince* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 173.
[274] Stacey, *Roman Monarchy and the Renaissance Prince*, 183-184.
[275] Ibid., 189.
[276] Ibid., 184.
[277] Quoted from Ibid., 188.

> When he became heir to a great realm and master of many soldiers and enlisted men, and had under his power already the largest and best parts of both Asia and Europe, he did not believe that these were enough for him nor was he content with what he had: instead he immediately overran the whole world in his calculations and resolved to rule it in emulation of the Alexander and Pompeys and Caesars and kings and generals of their sort.[278]

Kritovoulos further hails Mehmed II as the third commander, after Alexander and Pompey the Great, to pass through the treacherous Taurus Mountains on the campaign of 1461, advancing from Anatolia to Trebizond against the Persian ruler Uzun Hasan (1423-1478), an ally of the Trebizond Empire—much like Alexander who earlier crossed the mountains against another Persian King, Darius:

> They say that Alexander of Macedon was the first to cross this [mountain] range with armed forces—although Hercules and Dionysus had, of course, been earlier—when he marched against Darius, king of the Persians, and against the whole Asia. After him was Pompey the Great with the Romans.… And now Sultan Mehmed crossed it, but with arms and in war, the third after Alexander, counting the Romans and Pompey.[279]

Clearly, Mehmed II laid claims to Roman-Byzantine ideas of sovereignty, tremendously modifying the traditional image of the Muslim ruler by appropriating a historical past that was not part of the tradition in Islamic states. His emulation of Alexander and Caesar essentially was employed to legitimize his conquests and validate his ambitions sharing the vocabulary of power with Renaissance rulers in the Italian city-states and Northern Europe.

One may argue that Mehmed II's exploitation of the Alexander analogy in his political propaganda has little to do with the appropriation of Roman models of

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[278] Critobulus, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, 13-14.
[279] Ibid., 169.

sovereignty, as Alexander's biography was as much a part of Islamic cultural traditions as of Western Renaissance culture, but Mehmed II's distinct rhetorical strategy stressing Alexander's military prowess to justify his own conquests sharply contrasts with popular interpretations of the hero in Islamic wisdom literature. Classical Islamic accounts of Alexander's life were in wide circulation: the writings of Persian Moslems such as Firdawsī's *Shāhnāmah* (*Book of Kings*, ca. 1010), Nizāmī's *Sharafnāmah* and *Iqbālnāmah ya Khiradnāmah-yi Iskandarī* (*The Book of Alexander's Fortune* or *Wisdom*, ca. 1191), *Iskandarnāmah* (*The Book of Alexander*, 12-14th Ct.), and Al-Tarsusi's *Dārābnāmah* (*The Book of Dārāb*, 12th Ct.) glorified Alexander as a brave warrior, king, sage, and prophet.[280] These books creatively reinterpreted Greek sources such as the *Life of Alexander* by the Greek historian Pseudo-Callisthenes (also widely known in the West), as well as Ethiopic, Syriac, and Arabic biographies of the hero, including his mention in the Quran. In this tradition, the portrait of Alexander evolved as a "fabulous account" "which bears little resemblance to the Pseudo-Callisthenes version."[281] The Persian versions, especially such as *Iskandarnāmah* and *Dārābnāmah*, overshadow accounts of Alexander's military expeditions to stress his mystic and divine qualities as a sage and a prophet. Alexander appears as a seeker of marvels, a fundamentally good philosopher-king, a protector of mankind, a believer and defender of faith, and "a prophet sent by God to the inhabitants of distant lands."[282] In contrast, Alexander's original historical biography by Callisthenes, as well as *Anabasis Alexandri* (*The Campaigns of Alexander*) by the Roman historian Arrian, detail Alexander's military expeditions to celebrate his

[280] Minoo S. Southgate, "Portrait of Alexander in Persian Alexander-Romances of the Islamic Era," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 97, no. 3 (July 1, 1977): 278–284.
[281] Ibid., 279.
[282] Ibid, 280.

deeds as a brave warrior and ingenious leader in battle. It was this view of Alexander that was adopted by Mehmed II and depicted by Kritovoulos at the Sultan's court, and by the Italian observers quoted earlier. All contemporary historical accounts concur in comparing Mehmed II's aggressive militaristic politics to Alexander's victorious campaigns. In addition, the Alexander analogy, together with the comparison to Gaius Caesar, who was widely understood as an absolutist ruler, points to sources in circulation in Western Mediterranean and North Europe rather than traditional Islamic Alexander romance literature as Mehmed II's inspiration. This theory is further confirmed by the fact that Mehmed II possessed in his library a copy of Arrian's *Anabasis*,[283] or a Roman version of Alexander's historical biography, from which tutors read to him daily, along with other Roman texts and historical works of "Laertius, Herodotus, Livy, Quintius Curtius, the chronicles of the popes, the emperors, the kings of France, and the Lombards," as reported by De' Langusti.[284] In summary, Mehmed II's novel use of the Alexander analogy, along with references to Roman leaders and historical events, supports the interpretation that the Sultan deliberately appropriated Greco-Roman models by which to rule.

Nevertheless, the Sultan also upheld classical traditions of Muslim sovereignty and preserved the essential elements of the *gazi* identity, selectively drawing on Persian and Turco-Mongol models.[285] As a descendent of Osman, a founder of the Ottoman dynasty and a frontier *gazi*, Mehmed II continued to pursue the *gazi* ideals of continuous

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[283] This fact is well established and described by Raby in "El Gran Turco."
[284]Quoted from Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time,* 112.
[285] Kafadar, "The Ottomans and Europe," *Handbook of European History, 1400-1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation*, 597.

Holy War and expansion of *Dar al-Islam* (the House of Islam) until it covered the whole world. In frontier society, "*gaza* was a religious duty" inspiring all enterprises and encouraging leadership based on military prowess.[286] In practice, the *gazi* ideals of Holy War meant not destruction but the protection and unification of all subjects, including Christians and Jews "on the conditions of obedience and payment of a poll tax."[287] Mehmed II realized these ideals by both dramatically expanding the Ottoman Empire and strengthening cosmopolitan policies. In particular, he furthered religious tolerance in the Empire by permanently installing the Byzantine and Armenian Patriarchs in the new capital of Constantinople and codifying laws pertaining to the taxation of *reaya* (non-Muslim tax-paying members). Tursun Beg, whose "History of Mehmed the Conqueror" (ca. 1488) is based on over forty years of first-hand observations of the Sultan's campaigns and important decision-making meetings, stresses that Mehmed II exceeded all previous rulers of the House of Osman "in the conquest of new lands, in the collection of treasure, and all other tasks," essentially doubling the territories of the Ottoman State during his rule.[288] Tursun clearly portrays the Sultan as a great *gazi* warrior, detailing his military campaigns and legitimizing his expansionist politics by stating that "the Sultan had been chosen ruler by God in order to carry out the duty of Holy War."[289] However, Mehmed II's absolutism, strict punishments, excessively bellicose policy, and continuous warfare even in winter resulted in a civil war and a janissary revolt upon his death in

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[286] İnalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 6-7. Also see Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 232.
[287] İnalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 7.
[288] Tursun Beg, İnalcik, and Murphey, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, 24.
[289] Ibid., 43.

1481.[290] Responding to this opposition, Mehmed II's son and successor Bayezid II was forced to renounce some of his father's policies. In this context, Tursun's "History of the Conqueror" justifies Mehmed II's harsh authoritarian rulership as necessary for successful Holy War. As he says, "World conquest could not be accomplished without the spilling of some blood, nor was it possible to attain power without the crashing the enemies of the state."[291] It is nevertheless clear that certain aspects of Mehmed II's rulership did not fit well with classical ideals of the *gazi* frontier state. His contemporaries had difficulty accepting his harsh authoritarian style, which contradicted the *gazi* ethos, particularly its ideas of justice and forbearance, as well as of shared authority with heads of élite administrations and religious leaders, accepted as a part of the dynastic principle in the frontier state.[292] However, in furthering Holy War and territorial dominion, Mehmed II fully realized other *gazi* ideals, transforming the frontier state into the Empire. Mehmed II was truly a hybrid figure, a Muslim ruler who realized his ambitions to become a Roman—an "Ottoman Caesar," as Dauverd puts it.[293]

Mehmed II's dual sovereign identity is clearly manifested in the use of political titles throughout his reign. Diplomatic correspondence, issued coinage, and dedicatory inscriptions on architectural monuments and commissioned medals from Italian artists all correspond to the gradual development and codification of Mehmed II's imperial idea. With regard to the official use of titles, Mehmed II's reign could be roughly divided into

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[290]İnalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 30.
[291]Tursun Beg, İnalcik, and Murphey, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, 43.
[292]Tursun Beg, commenting on obligations of the ruler towards God, stresses the traditional virtues of the ruler that became part of the dynastic principle in all Islamic states, including the Ottoman Anatolian principality. He singles out wisdom, courage, honesty, and justice as the cardinal virtues of a good Muslim ruler, because they prevent the misuse of authority. Ibid., 21-23.
[293] Celine Dauverd, "The Ottoman Caesar: Mehmed II's Strategies of Possession, 1453-81," *The Islands of the Mediterranean* (forthcoming publication, quoted by permission of the author).

two periods: 1) the period following the conquest of Constantinople and the codification of the first *kanunname*, or before 1477; and 2) the period of the second *kanunname* and the completion of the Topkapi Palace, ca. 1477-1481.[294] Following the conquest of Constantinople, Mehmed II abandoned the traditional title "beg," an old title of rulership and nobility in Anatolia used by his father Murad II in diplomatic correspondence.[295] Mehmed instead adopted the title of "Sultan," like the Mamluks and earlier Abbasid Sultans who were legitimized by the Abbasid Caliphs, together with the title of "great lord" (*megas afthentis*, *effendi*) and "great prince" (*megas amiras*) in diplomatic correspondence.[296] These titles also appear on the first medal commissioned in the 1450s-1460s (?): "*magnus princeps*," "*magnus emiras*," "*sultanus mehomet*."[297] His silver coins with inscriptions in Arabic, struck in Constantinople, also consistently utilize the titles of "sultan" and "lord," as well as indicating his lineage according to Muslim law: "Mehmed Sultan, son of Murad, Lord" "May his victory be glorious."[298] During the second period, the Sultan began to use the title of "Byzantine emperor" (*imperator* and *byzantii imperatoris*) and proclaimed himself "a sovereign of land and sea," "Greece, Trebizond, and Asia."[299] This newly stated ambition of world sovereignty is further stressed in the gold coin "sultanic" issued in 1477-1478 with an inscription in Arabic: "Issuer of gold

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[294] Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 16.
[295] Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, 417.
[296] Ibid., 418.
[297] Ibid., 203.
[298] Jem Sultan, *Coins of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic: A Detailed Catalogue of the Jem Sultan Collection* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: B & R Publishers, 1977), 69.
[299] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 71-72, 76.

coins, the Lord of Power and Victory on the Lands and the Seas."[300] The foundation inscription in Arabic above the main Imperial Gate to the Topkapi Palace, dating to 1478—"Sultan of the Two Continents and Emperor of the Two Seas, the Shadow of God in this World and the Next, the Favorite of God on the Eastern and Western Horizons, the Conqueror of Constantinople, the Father of Conquest, Sultan Khan Mehmed"—expresses the essence of Mehmed II's imperial project as it took shape in the end of his reign.[301] The New (Topkapi) Palace, the artistic patronage of Italian artists, and the codification of the imperial ceremonial at his fully established imperial court all represent the full realization of Mehmed II's grand vision to become Roman-Byzantine Ottoman Emperor and Caesar.

Cultural Genesis and the Roman-Byzantine Identity of Mehmed II's Court

Mehmed II's deliberate hybridity in fashioning his imperial persona informed decisions taken by him and his entourage when establishing his court in Constantinople and reforming the state administration. Evoking both Alexander and Caesar, as well as dynastic lineage from Osman I (1258-1356), the founder of the Ottoman Emirate,

[300] Necipoğlu, "From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Konstantiniyye: Creation of a Cosmopolitan Capital and Visual Culture under Sultan Mehmed II" in *From Byzantion to Istanbul: 8000 Years of a Capital*, 272.
[301] Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 13. Necipoğlu, "From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Konstantiniyye: Creation of a Cosmopolitan Capital and Visual Culture under Sultan Mehmed II" in *From Byzantion to Istanbul: 8000 Years of a Capital*, 268.

Mehmed II created a new court society that had no precedent in prior or contemporary Islamic states.

The formation of Mehmed II's court occurs in a political context in which Islamic rulers employed three major strategies to express their political status and aspirations, and to acquire what Max Weber called "power prestige" or "culture prestige."[302] In one strategy, as Maria E. Subtelny's research shows, Chingizid and Timurid rulers in Central Asia, such as Abu 'l-Khair Khan (d. 1468), the founder of the Uzbek khanate and a direct descendant of Chingiz Khan, and Sultan Husain Bayqara (r. 1469-1506), a great grandson of Timur, who ruled Transoxiana and Khorasan from his court in Herat, supported the Sunni branch of Islam and legitimized their rule by tracing their lineage to Chingiz Khan (1162-1227) and Timur (1336-1405). They also selectively adopted an Iranian-Persian legal framework and cultural forms to claim "cultural prestige."[303] In particular, the Chingizid Uzbek rulers, who possessed Chingizid lineage and charisma on both sides of the family, claimed a more elevated political status over the Timurids and placed higher importance on *yasa*, the Mongol customary law, over *sharia*, or the religious Islamic law. Adhering to a Mongol nomadic framework, the Uzbeks did not possess Iranian-Islamic traditions of administration or law or refined cultural forms. Upon their conquest of Transoxiana and Khorasan from the Timurids, as Subtelny further elaborates, they had to adopt an Iran-Islamic legal framework and raise their cultural level to that of former Timurids by attracting scholars, literati, and artisans to their court. The Timurids, on the

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[302] Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology.* (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), 926.
[303] Maria Eva Subtelny, "Art and Politics in Early 16th Century Central Asia," *Central Asiatic Journal* 27, no. 1-2 (1983):121-148.

other hand, who had a limited Chingizid charisma, legitimized their rule by tracing their lineage to Timur on one side and to Chingiz Khan on another. They attained political prestige through generally accepted Mongol, Islamic and Persian legal and cultural forms, and by supporting a host of poets, calligraphers, scholars, and cultural administrators in their courts in Tabriz and Herat in order to favorably contrast with Chingizid Uzbek rulers. In the second strategy, Safavids rising to political prominence in Iran, beginning from the founder Shaykh Safi al-Din (1252-1334) and later followed by the political leader Shah Ismail (1487-1524), broadcasted their political prestige by tracing their ancestry to the Prophet Muhammad and giving priority to Islamic religious law by adopting a Shiite religious framework that proclaimed Shah Ismail the hidden imam, the reincarnation of Ali (Muhammad's son-in-law and cousin), and an epiphany of a divine being.[304] They utilized various Iranian-Persian cultural forms in their court in Isfahan, but their religious extremism scared away many scholars and artisans. In the third strategy, the Mamluk Sultanate, founded by Sultan Qalawun (r. 1280-90), supported the Sunni branch of Islam and adhered to Islamic law to rule. Bought as slaves from Kipchak Turks and raised to enter the military caste, they legitimized their rule through the Cairo Abbasid Caliphs, descendants of the Abbasid Caliphs now based in Cairo. As their main legitimizing principles, they also steadfastly defended Islamic law, and generously patronized religious and charitable foundations, scholars, and corps of builders and

[304] Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 231-234.

artisans. They also cultivated a cosmopolitan culture much like that of the Abbasid Empire.[305]

By means of these three strategies, these various Islamic rulers created distinct court cultures, the main instruments by which they demonstrated their legitimacy, political and cultural prestige, and longstanding cultural traditions. In contrast, the Ottomans, with their lineage going back to Osman I, did not possess a great charismatic or religious pedigree, nor distinct legal, scholastic, or artistic forms—their cultural identity was very much eclectic. Osman I (1258-1356) was a *gazi* frontier warrior and a leader of a Turkic tribe that migrated from Central Asia pushed by the Mongol invasions westward to the frontier between Byzantium and the weakened Seljuk sultanate. There, under Osman I's leadership, Turcoman *gazis* expanded their territory in western Anatolia through raids against Christian neighboring states. The Ottoman frontier principality was formally established after the decisive siege of Iznik (Nicaea), the former Byzantine capital, in 1301. İnalcik sees Osman I's victory in 1301 as a major event that attracted "new waves of fresh settlers of various origins from central Anatolia" and led to further expansion and unification of Muslim Anatolia and Christian Balkans under the Ottoman rule.[306] İnalcik characterizes the Ottoman frontier principality both as "a cosmopolitan state, treating all creeds and races as one," and as a warring state founded on the principle of continuous Holy War and continuous expansion of the *Dar al-Islam*—the realms of Islam. In contrast to the advanced civilization of the hinterland, "with its religious orthodoxy, scholastic theology, and palace literature," the frontier lands, as İnalcik argues,

[305] Jonathan Bloom and Sheila Blair, *Islam: A Thousand Years of Faith and Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 169-180.
[306] İnalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 6-7.

were open to "a popular culture, characterized by heretical religious orders, mysticism, epic literature, and customary law."[307] Even though the Ottoman State adopted some of the traditions and institutions of the Seljuk sultanate, as a frontier principality, the Ottomans "applied the principle of Islam with the greatest liberality and tolerance," "mixed freely with Christians," and were opposed to any kind of sedentary palace bureaucracy or imperial ideology. Therefore Mehmed II's task was to create an imperial ideology and a prominent court society which could effectively compete with mature political and cultural traditions of distinguished Chingizid, Timurid, and Mamluk rulers, as well as princely and imperial states in Italy and North Europe.

Mehmed II's conquest of Constantinople provided the foremost opportunity to create a distinct political and cultural pedigree, new to the Ottoman frontier principality. The city itself was a living link to and a site of continuous Greco-Roman civilization manifested in the Palace of Byzantine emperors, the political and ceremonial center at the Hippodrome, and various Roman-Byzantine forums spread throughout the city. The imperial city was full of intact ancient treasures such as the legendary Roman triumphal Column of Justinian, the *genius loci* of Constantinople, the Hagia Sophia, the Palace of the Byzantine emperors, and numerous Roman forums decorated with columns and statues that Renaissance scholars in Italy began rediscovering. Ancient monuments in Constantinople, just before the Ottoman conquest, were in part recorded in famous sketches and descriptions of the humanist and antiquarian Cyriacus of Ancona (1391-ca.1453), who travelled through the Eastern Mediterranean, Greece, Egypt, and Constantinople and provided invaluable resources for humanists and artists in Italy to

[307] Ibid.

produce art works based on Greco-Roman iconographies and monuments.[308] The city was also home to distinguished Greek scholars, like George Gemistos Plethon (ca. 1355–1452/1454) and Bessarion (1403-1472), who then became pioneers of the revival of Greek learning in Italy. The city also housed classical manuscript texts, which were only beginning to be rediscovered in Italy and were much sought after by Renaissance humanists. Italian humanists perceived Constantinople as a "living museum, a virtual library of Alexandria," and "the only remaining bridge between their world and ancient wisdom."[309] In fact, as scholars of late Byzantine art have observed, Byzantine élites and the imperial court in Constantinople surpassed the learned Italian courts in their education, knowledge of classical texts, and ostentatious display of wellbeing. For instance, Silvia Ronchey describes the period just before the fall of Byzantium: "L'altà societa bizantina era la più educata d'Europa; superava le corti italiane non solo per la qualità dell'istruzione, ma per l'estrema e contraddittoria ostentazione di benessere che vi era diffusa. Manuele, l'imperatore di questa corte, era filosofo, teologo e letterato. Il suo epistolario è una delle miliori letture del Millennio bizantino."[310] The entourage of the Byzantine emperor—ancient aristocratic families of substantial wealth, education, and prominent economic positions—contributed to the refinement and splendor of the social

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[308] Paul MacKendrick, "A Renaissance Odyssey, The Life of Cyriac of Ancona," *Classica et Mediaevalia*, 13 (1952): 131-145. Christine Smith, "Cyriacus of Ancona's Seven Drawings of Hagia Sophia," *The Art Bulletin* 69, no. 1 (March 1, 1987): 16–32. Julian Raby, "Cyriacus of Ancona and the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 43 (January 1, 1980): 242–246. Phyllis Williams Lehmann, *Cyriacus of Ancona's Egyptian Visit and Its Reflections in Gentile Bellini and Hyeronymys Bosch.* (Locust Valley, N.Y.: J.J. Augustin., 1977). Phyllis Williams Lehmann and Karl Lehmann, *Samothracian Reflections: Aspects of the Revival of the Antique,* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973).

[309] Marios Philippides and Walter K. Hanak, *The Siege and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453: Historiography, Topography, and Military Studies* (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate Pub. Co., 2011), 195.

[310] Silvia Ronchey, "Bessarione poeta e l'ultima corte di Bisanzio," in Gianfranco Fiaccadori et al., *Bessarione e L'umanesimo: Catalogo Della Mostra* (Napoli: Vivarium, 1994), 47-65, 48.

world of the city, as did a multitude of holy relics, including those of Old Testament prophets, venerated by both Christians and Muslims alike. This political, cultural, and social heritage was a world apart from Ottoman Anatolia, with its humble traditions of *gazi* frontier warriors. Despite this disparity, there was a connection between the two worlds. The longstanding tradition of intermarriages between Anatolian emirs and Christian Byzantine princesses; the presence of Byzantine aristocracy and Christians or converts in high offices in Anatolia; and the adaptation of Byzantine political, military, and administrative forms, as well as courtly fashions in Turkish courts in Anatolia and the Balkans all led to the development of a Turkish taste for Byzantine court style.[311]

The conquest of Constantinople created an opportunity to both tangibly and symbolically repossess Greco-Roman and Byzantine heritage—an opportunity to rebuild the second Rome. Although many contemporary eyewitness and non-eyewitness accounts relating the siege and fall of Constantinople present stereotypical descriptions of the desecration of churches, the devastation and pillaging of the city, the destruction of its cultural treasures, and the slaughter and enslavement of its inhabitants,[312] sources also agree that the Sultan clearly tried to save the city. As Raby correctly points out, Mehmed II may have regretted allowing his troops to sack the city according to Ottoman law and may have even tried to protect his immovable "booty," including Christian sites, as Dukas's account testifies.[313] His ensuing policies enabled enslaved Greeks to ransom their freedom, reinstalled the Byzantine patriarch Gennadios, and resettled the Greeks in

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[311] Speros Vryonis, "Byzantine Legacy and Ottoman Forms," in Vryonis, *Studies on Byzantium, Seljuks, and Ottomans*, Chapter XIII, 267-273.
[312] Philippides and Hanak, *The Siege and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453: Historiography, Topography, and Military Studies*.
[313] Raby, "El Gran Turco," 185-186, 210-211, 222-223.

the city, allowing them to retain possession of Christian churches and employing some of the noble Byzantine Greeks as members of his court and administration. In addition, he gathered Byzantine statuary, Christian relics, and an impressive collection of Greek manuscripts in his palace. These facts suggest that the Sultan salvaged and actively appropriated the material heritage of Byzantium, rather than "wag[ing] a campaign of destruction."[314]

The idea for Mehmed II's new court was intimately intertwined with the transfer of the capital from Edirne to Constantinople and the construction of a central administrative apparatus. As Kadafar has argued, earlier efforts to centralize ruling authority were not very successful, due to the longstanding conflict between "the warlords and the bureaucrats," who opposed the ideas of "consolidated bureaucratic practices" and "resented making Constantinople the capital."[315] The solution was found in the formation of a new type of imperial court and establishing a new kind of élite presiding, being trained, and living in a new palace—the Sultan's household, court, and center of state administration.

The vision and plans for the new administrative center crystallized soon after the conquest, as evidenced from Kritovoulos' report. Understanding well the city's legendary historical reputation and its strategic location for trade and warfare, Mehmed II assessed the capital and made strategic decisions about its transformation into a magnificent world capital:

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[314] Ibid., 227-228
[315] Cemal Kafadar, "The Ottomans and Europe," *Handbook of European History, 1400-1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation*, ed. Thomas A. Brady, Heiko Augustinus Oberman, and James D. Tracy (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1994), 597.

> As for the great City of Constantinople, raised to a great height of glory and dominion and wealth in its own times, overshadowing to an infinite degree all other cities around it, renowned for its glory, wealth, authority, power, and greatness, and all its other qualities, it thus came to an end.
>
> Then, with the notable men, and his courtiers, he [Mehmed] went through the City. First he planned how to repopulate it, not merely as it formerly was but more completely, if possible, so it should be a worthy capital for him, situated as it was, most favorably by land and sea.
>
> For himself, he chose the most beautiful location in the center of the City for the erection of a royal palace.[316]

From Kritovoulos' passages, Mehmed II emerges as planning to not only to restore the city to its former greatness, but to surpass its previous glory and grandeur.

The placement of the new royal palace was a key component of Mehmed II's far-reaching plan for the new capital and its new administrative center, ensuring the symbolic repossession of Roman-Byzantine civilization. In fact, after completing the first palace in the center of the city in 1455, Mehmed II soon commissioned the building of the New (Topkapi) Palace (ca. 1459-1478) near the Hagia Sophia,[317] which became the real center of government and the manifestation of the Sultan's imperial majesty: "He also gave orders for the erection of a palace on the point of Old Byzantium which stretches into the sea—a palace that should outshine all and be more marvelous than the preceding palaces in looks, size, cost, and gracefulness."[318] Kritovoulos, who had witnessed the imperial magnificence of the Byzantine emperors, further reports on the success of Mehmed II's

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[316] Critobulus, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror,* 82-83.
[317] İnalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 76-77
[318] Critobulus, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*,140. Necipoğlu details the construction of the Old and New Palaces, arguing the first Old Palace no longer could accommodate the growing number of courtiers and household members, nor fit well with the imperial vision of the Sultan as the ruler of a world empire: Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 112.

plan over the years and comments on the beauty and splendor of the New (Topkapi) Palace:

> The Sultan spent the winter in Byzantium. Among other things he attended to the populating and rebuilding and beautifying of the whole City. In particular he completed the palace—a very beautiful structure. Both as to view and to enjoyment as well as in its construction and its charm, it was in no respect lacking as compared with the famous and magnificent old buildings and sights.[319]

Kritovoulos's description makes it clear that the new royal residence was a key architectural accomplishment of the Sultan, which not only matched the former beauty of the famous palatial complexes of Byzantine emperors, but also had a unique character and charm that successfully represented the accomplishments and ambitions of the Ottoman ruler.

Eyewitness reports such as those of Tursun Beg, Kritovoulos, and Angiolello unambiguously define Mehmed II's court as comprising a small group of courtiers and dignitaries associated with the Sultan, along with the palace and the whole establishment surrounding him. The special sense of the intimate court underlies Kritovoulos's "History of the Conqueror," which refers to the Sultan and his diverse group of "notable men" and learned courtiers, some of whom were Greek, Arab, and Persian advisers:

> [H]e also occupied himself with philosophy, such as that of the Arabs and Persians and Greeks, especially that translated into Arabic. He associated daily with the leaders and teachers among these, and had not a few of them around him and conversed with them. He had philosophical discussions with them about the principles of philosophy, particularly of those the Peripatetics and Stoics.[320]

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[319] Critobulus, 207.
[320] Ibid., 209.

Mehmed II actively sought out such learned men of Greco-Byzantine background and recruited them when possible. The story of the philosopher George Amiroutzes of Trebizond (1400-1470) is particularly interesting, as he was summoned to join the Sultan's court from Trebizond where he was a companion of the Emperor David Komnenos, the last ruler of the Trebizond Empire:

> A great philosopher, learned both in studies of physics and dogmatics and mathematics and geometry and the analogy of numbers, and also in the philosophy of the Peripatetics and Stoics. He was also full of encyclopedic knowledge, and was an orator. The Sultan learned about this man and sent for him. He gave him a suitable position at his court and honored him with frequent audiences and conversations, questioning him on teachings of the ancients and on philosophical problems and their discussion and solution.[321]

Not only Mehmed II's historians, but also Italian humanists and scholars, such as Sagundino, who visited the Sultan's court soon after the conquest, concur that the Sultan surrounded himself with learned men, both Latin or Italian and Greek, who advised him on the history of ancient kings:

> He has with him a man very highly educated in philosophy, of Arab tongue, who every day at a certain time has the authority to go up to the prince and to say something to him that is worth hearing. He has in addition two doctors, one of whom learned in Latin, the other in Greek. With these he is on most intimate terms, and wished to acquire from them, through interaction, knowledge of ancient history, and he does not seem to have applied his mind to the deeds of Lacedaemonian, Athenian, Roman, and other kings and princes.[322]

As the most recent critical edition of eyewitness and early non-eyewitness accounts shows, Mehmed II indeed surrounded himself with notable Byzantine Greeks and

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[321] Ibid., 177.

[322] Quoted from: Spinale, "The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)," 21-22. The original document is transcribed and published by Nicolae Iorga, *Notes Et Extraits Pour Servir à L'histoire Des Croisades Au XVe Siècle,* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1899), 318.

advanced them to prominent administrative positions to the general "displeasure and dismay of the old Ottoman families."[323] Besides George Amiroutzes, other prominent Greeks such as Nikolas Isidore and Demetrios Apokaukos, also known as "Kyritzes,"[324] constituted the close circle of Mehmed II. Apokaukos was a personal secretary to Mehmed II and served on important diplomatic missions.[325] Nicholas Isidore was in charge of handling state finances, particularly the income from the state saltpans, and assisted in ransoming Greeks who were enslaved during the sack of Constantinople.[326] The Sultan's respected stepmother Mara Branković of Serbia, the widow of Murad II (1404-1451), hugely supported these and other Greeks in Mehmed II's court and in Constantinople. Mara contributed immensely to the active patronage of Orthodox culture and maintained "a sort of court within the realm of the Sultan."[327] It has been suggested that she might have also maintained a literary circle in which early histories of the Fall of Constantinople were composed.

The Roman- and Byzantine-oriented nature of Mehmed II's court facilitated the active appropriation of Roman-Byzantine heritage and was at odds with the traditional set-up of contemporary Muslim courts, which generally cultivated Islamic traditions of

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[323] As Philippides and Hanak observe that this subject of the employment of learned Byzantine Greeks by Mehmed II did not receive the attention it deserves: Philippides and Hanak, *The Siege and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453: Historiography, Topography, and Military Studies*, 73.

[324]Peculiarly, Kyritzes has been long mistaken, both in Renaissance documents and contemporary scholarship, for Cyriacus of Ancona. Raby earlier disapproves of the association of Cyriacus with Mehmed II as Cyriacus already died in 1452 at Cremon. Philippides and Hanak further confirm this point. Raby, "Cyriacus of Ancona and the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II." Philippides and Hanak, *The Siege and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453: Historiography, Topography, and Military Studies*, 78-79.

[325] Julian Raby, "Mehmed the Conqueror's Greek Scriptorium," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 37 (January 1, 1983): 15–34. Philippides and Hanak, *The Siege and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453: Historiography, Topography, and Military Studies*, 75.

[326] Philippides and Hanak, *The Siege and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453: Historiography, Topography, and Military Studies*, 74.

[327] Ibid., 86-87.

learning and employed skillful administrators trained in the highly regarded Iranian-Persian system of statecraft and accounting. A court where Byzantine Greeks held some key positions fundamentally contrasted with the old court in Edirne, where the role of Byzantine aristocratic families was much more limited, due to the domination of the old *gazi* families and old-landing élites. In fact, during the rule of Beyezid I, "The Thunderbolt" (1354-1403), the Ottoman court in Anatolia already consisted mainly of Ottoman viziers from *ulema* (experts in Islam and arbiters of *sharia*), administrators trained in registration and accounting systems, and Persian and Christian scribes, all working with the common purpose of increasing treasury funds and tax revenues without overburdening the population, while also dispensing justice and protecting "subjects against abuse from the representatives of authority against illegal taxation."[328] Mehmed II's imperial court politics undermined the power of the old establishment in Edirne not only by appointing Greek administrators to his court but also by removing, suppressing, and executing prominent leaders from old Ottoman families who actively protested his new policies. The arrest and execution of Çandarli Halil, a top-ranked member of the old society and the grand vizier, for opposing the military plans of the Sultan, is one of the most significant examples of Mehmed II's efforts to cleanse his opposition from the old families.[329] In addition to Halil, the second vizier Saruca Pasha, the favorite of Mehmed II's father, was also removed from office. Halil was replaced by the grand vizier Mahmud Pasha Angelović, who came from the most distinguished family of the Serbian despotate, the descendants of the Byzantine emperor Alexius III (1195-1203), and who was in the

[328] İnalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 65-66.
[329] Critobulus, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror,* 87.

service of the Ottoman court beginning with Mehmed II's inauguration.[330] It appears that the Sultan replaced key members of the executive cabinet with "Byzantines" and added a new layer of advisors or "courtiers" that did not fit the established structure of the traditional Ottoman court. These appointees formed an intimate company around the Sultan, facilitated his learning of the foundations of Greco-Roman civilization, advised him on and participated in making new state policies in rebuilding the capital, and clearly were a diplomatic and "public relations" corps.

Mehmed II's intimate circle of advisors and associates not only "Byzantinized" his court, but served as an "executive" council that influenced decision-making and politics. It functioned in addition to and overrode the authority of traditional political institutions, which had been well established in Edirne and continued in Constantinople, albeit with newly appointed élites. The old institutions, which remained in place under Mehmed II, comprised four branches of administration—the political or vizierate, the judiciary, the treasury, and the chancery—among which the political council known as the *divan* or high court of justice, composed of the grand viziers and the other viziers, was the supreme organ of the government.[331] The appointed executive holders or deputies of these four offices, known as "Pillars of the Realm," had direct access to the Sultan and "represented the royal authority in the imperial council."[332] Mehmed II made one of these executives the grand vizier, a supreme deputy and commander-in-chief who could make decisions without consulting the ruler; however, there were clearly set limits to his power

[330] Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, 115. Also see a recent monograph: Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs: The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vezir Mahmud Pasha Angelović (1453-1474)*.
[331] İnalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 68.
[332] Ibid., 93.

as he had to consult other members of the imperial council under the penalty of severe punishment, including, possibly, death. The grand vizier had the power to confirm all appointments or dismissals and to supervise all state departments; he was also supposed to receive automatic approval for all imperial council decisions submitted by him to the Sultan. As İnalcik shows, autocratic sultans, of whom Mehmed II was the foremost, often exercised dictatorial powers and had a personal circle of advisors and tutors, who also directly influenced the Sultan's executive decisions on state and military affairs, leading the Sultan to disregard decisions of the grand vizier and the imperial council.[333] A well-known example of power struggle between the Sultan and the vizierate is the execution by Mehmed II of the grand vizier Halil, mentioned earlier, which was encouraged by his rival Zaganos, the Sultan's old tutor, who then replaced Halil as the grand vizier. Another vizier from a later period, Köprülü Mehmed, accepted the appointment to the office of the grand vizier in 1656 on the condition that the Sultan would not take on any other consultants on state affairs. This example clearly suggests that after Mehmed II, sultans had a circle of close advisors, tutors, or courtiers that were "the main voice directing state's and domestic policies," besides the imperial council[334] Within the Ottoman government structure at Mehmed II's court, his intimate Byzantine Greek courtiers and advisors, such as Kyritzes and Isidore, not only served as members of his "informal executive" council but also held appointments in the main branches of the government.

Mehmed II's government reforms also included the overall expansion and transformation of the slave, or *kul*—meaning converted Christian-born slave—system.

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[333] Ibid., 97.
[334] Ibid., 97.

Compared to the previously limited use of slaves in military service, Mehmed II's innovation was the incorporation of *dervşhirme*, a levy on the non-Muslim and specifically Christian population, which provided children as slaves to be educated in the New (Topkapi) Palace for a career in the government or in the military corps.[335] The Sultan began to entrust administrative positions to educated slaves, replacing the old Muslim families. In the beginning, most of the slaves were prisoners of war and children of noble Greek and Slavic families, as Kritovoulos shows:

> He appointed some of the youth of high family, whom he had chosen according to their merits, to be in his bodyguard and to be constantly near him, and others to other service as his pages. He admired them for their prudence and their other virtues and for their training. They were indeed of physical beauty and nobility and talent of soul, and their manners and morals they were outstanding, for they were of high and renowned ancestry and splendid physique, and well trained in the royal palace.[336]

Mehmed II effectively replaced all of the key government posts with his new entourage, creating a new ruling class, largely chosen from educated slaves, including his bodyguards, and troops:

> He praised all the troops, and he chose out the best of them on the basis of judgment, courage, practice, and military experience. He promoted and plentifully rewarded the brave by gifts of money, offices, and civic rights, as well as by benefactions and gifts, and omitted nobody.
>
> After this, he promoted to the greatest and highest of honors and positions in the government the best of the governors, those who had proved most dependable by their acts and who had conducted their districts and provinces as they should, and had administered them well. He replaced them in their former governorships and positions by others.[337]

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[335] Ibid., 76-88.
[336] Critobulus, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, 85-86.
[337] Ibid., 148.

Angiolello details the Sultan's greatly expanded Palace school, explaining the overall structure of the Sultan's extended court, the ranks and duties of the Palace residents, and the day-to-day education of the pages.[338] The number of pages and members of the Sultan's court was steadily increasing, rising to over ten thousands residents and servants of the palace in 1480.[339] The magnificence of the New (Topkapi) Palace, the abundance of imperial personnel, and the differentiation of services, which grew exponentially in comparison with the old court in Edirne, indicate the creation of a court establishment that was imperial in scale and characterized by refined taste and high organizational, social, and domestic standards.

In its absolutist power emanating from the Sultan; its strict hierarchies, etiquette, and ceremonies codified in the second *kanunname*, the bible of Ottoman court life and administration; and the centrality of the New (Topkapi) Palace as a structure that defined the court physically, the Ottoman court was in many ways similar to the former Byzantine court and to absolutist European courts described by Elias. The foremost similarity is the ruler's enormous household, which became the center of state and military affairs, as well as the center of social life: "The King's rule over the country was nothing other than an extension of and addition of prince's rule over his household. What Louis XIV, who marked both the culmination point and the turning point of this development, attempted, was to organize his country as his personal property, as an

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[338] Angiolello, *Il sultano e Il profeta: memorie di uno schiavo vicentino divenuto tesoriere di Maometto II Il conquistatore*, 115-146.
[339] İnalcik provides a comparative table of the palace organization at various dates: İnalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 83.

enlargement of his household."[340] Mehmed II's absolutist politics, aimed at the total state control of lands and other resources, as well as the institution of salaried state employees at all levels of society, typologically corresponds to Elias' definition. As Tursun Beg reported, the Conqueror confiscated lands and properties from old Ottoman families and redistributed them to the new military and administrative élites in his immediate entourage, introducing tight control over land awards; land could be repossessed by the state at any time if the recipient fell out of royal favor.[341] Mehmed II also extended the number of salaried state employees, including even *ulema* and religious scholars in all Ottoman madrasas, further strengthening the centralized power of the state and the Sultan's authority as its head.[342]

The New (Topkapi) Palace as the Sultan's extended household was "the cornerstone of the autocratic Ottoman regime," as Necipoğlu puts it, typologically mirroring, to a certain degree, the social organization of the court of Byzantine emperors and prefiguring Louis XIV's absolutist court. For instance, the Palace of the Emperors in Byzantine Constantinople was the singular administrative, ceremonial, and residential center of imperial autocratic rule, with the highest officials residing in the palace together with an abundance of imperial servants, tightly controlled by imperial etiquette, ceremonies, and rituals, codified in the *Book of Ceremonies*. Similarly, the Ottoman court was singularly governed by the authority of the Sultan and *kanunname*.[343] According to

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[340] Norbert Elias, *The Court Society* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 42.
[341] Tursun Beg, İnalcik, and Murphey, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, 22.
[342] Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 21.
[343] Alexander Kazhdan and Michael McCormick, "The Social World of the Byzantine Court," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*. ed. Henry Maguire (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection; Distributed by Harvard University Press, 1997), 167-197.

Elias, the role of etiquette and ceremonies at the absolutist court was essential for enforcing the overall power structure of the absolutist regime—"a type of organization by which each act received a prestige-character symbolizing the distribution of power" at all times.[344] The magnificence and burden of etiquette and ceremony became a principal feature at the Ottoman court by the end of Mehmed's rule and were amplified even further by *kanunname*, as well as by architectural additions to the Palace, at the time of Süleyman the Magnificent. Ambassadors to the Porte reported in 1528 that the palace ceremonials were "extremely pompous, and they have made many beautiful ornaments."[345] The Sultan, the epicenter of the palace ceremonial, now presiding at the court much like an immovable idol, used the ceremonial apparatus as a magnificent tool for social and political control of the ruling class, and to manifest his absolute authority and claims for world dominion in the eyes of the international community.

While in so many ways, the Ottoman court was typologically similar to the Byzantine court and to absolutist courts in Northern Europe, its main difference was in the absence of a hereditary nobility. As Walter Andrews and Mehmet Kalpakli correctly observe, European courts depended on courtiers and high officials from the landed nobility.[346] In contrast, in Ottoman society only the blood line of the Sultan was important, whereas a majority of courtiers and high court officials were from the élite slave class. Educated and noble families found their sphere of influence in the judicial and educational systems, especially as tutors and advisers to the Sultan's family and the

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[344] Elias, *The Court Society*, 84.
[345] Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 25.
[346] Walter G. Andrews and Mehmet Kalpakli, *The Age of Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early-Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 237-238

élite slaves; these families were also influential outside of the capital as the landed and business nobility. In this respect, Ottoman court society depended on vertical mobility and institutionalized meritocracy, which much resembled other Muslim court societies that were based on the *kul* system. The Mamluk Sultanate is a primary example that strongly parallels the Ottoman court institution. Inheriting the political and social organization of the earlier Abbasid Caliphate, the Mamluk Sultanate's ruling élite was composed of actual slaves purchased in their youth in southern Russia and the Caucasus Mountains, educated and raised in the barracks of the Cairo citadel, and freed to serve as emirs and military commanders, and members of the governing class.[347] Promoted based on their merit and natural talent, which included splendid physical health and physiognomy, *kuls* constituted the ruling élite in the Ottoman Empire, much as in the Mamluk Sultanate. Thus they ensured the cultural affinity of the Ottoman court with long-standing social institutions that became fundamental to Islamic civilization.

As much as the *kul* system characterized the Ottoman court as a traditional Muslim institution, it also enabled the Ottoman ruling élite to uphold a Roman-Byzantine cultural identity. As Necipoğlu characterizes the situation, slaves who were Christian-born but converts to Islam were perfect intermediaries between the Muslim subjects of the Empire and Italian and Northern European political and economic partners, and were the cornerstone of the cultural identity that Mehmed II forged for his empire, "a polity mediating between multiple worlds at the crossroads of Europe and Asia."[348] Moreover,

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[347] Bloom and Blair, *Islam: A Thousand Years of Faith and Power*, 170-171.
[348] Necipoğlu, "From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Konstantiniyye: Creation of a Cosmopolitan Capital and Visual Culture under Sultan Mehmed II" in *From Byzantion to Istanbul: 8000 Years of a Capital*, 262.

they were a living link to the cultural heritage of the Byzantine Empire, especially during Mehmed II's rule, when his close entourage mainly comprised the sons of defeated Greco-Byzantine rulers, such as the princes of Trebizond, the Morea, Bosnia, and Wallachia, to name a few. The élite slaves, coming from different regions of the much-expanded multicultural empire, defined the polyglot nature of Ottoman court society and embodied the cosmopolitan nature of the Ottoman State, where Romano-Byzantine traditions were selectively preserved and appropriated. The polyglot ruling élite was one of the most telling characteristics of Mehmed II's court. This élite represented well "the cosmopolitan ethos of Konstantiniyye-Istanbul—a 'site of encounter'" between different religious, ethnic, and cultural traditions,[349] as well as the rebuilt seat of Roman-Byzantine emperors, surpassing the former in its "glory, wealth, authority, power, and greatness," in the words of Mehmed II's court historian Kritovoulos.

Through this analysis of the establishment of the Ottoman court, we see that Mehmed II's construction of his imperial persona determined the distinctive character of Ottoman court society and the ruling élite. Mehmed II borrowed the Roman-Byzantine charisma of Byzantine emperors by conquering the royal city—the throne of Roman-Byzantine emperors—and appropriating suitable forms of its court ceremonial, its organization of court society, and its palatial architecture to manifest his imperial persona. He further relied on Greco-Byzantine nobility and scholars as his courtiers and advisors to acquire a cultural pedigree for his court in Constantinople that was lacking in Ottoman Anatolia. Using the conceits of Alexander the Great and Caesar, Mehmed II created his dynastic charisma and imperial pedigree. His political propaganda and maneuvers

[349] Ibid., 263.

countered political maneuvers by Chingizid, Timurid, and Mamluk rulers, who used other claims for political legitimacy as well as cultural forms to construct their political and cultural prestige. Mehmed II claimed himself an heir to Byzantine emperors after the conquest of Constantinople, especially after the completion of the New (Topkapi) Palace, which was comparable in grandeur to the palace of Byzantine emperors. His newly constructed political persona was manifested in the titles used in dedicatory inscriptions in Arabic—the sacred language of Islam, in which God communicated with the Prophet Mohammed—prominently set above the main gate to the New (Topkapi) Palace, as well as in his diplomatic correspondence, coinage, and commissioned medals. As a result of Mehmed II's reforms of the ruling class, the Roman-Byzantine identity became deeply embedded in Ottoman court institutions and the cultural identity of the ruling élite, making Ottoman society open to the appropriation of Italian or Western Mediterranean cultural forms. These became a leitmotif of cultural exchanges, especially with Venice in the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries. However, these borrowings, whether political, social, or artistic, should be understood as appropriations rather than influences, as Roman-ness or Byzantine-ness was an integral part of the cultural identity of the Ottoman ruling élite, a direct outcome of Mehmed II's imperial project.

As Apelles to Alexander: Bellini as a Court Artist and Mehmed II's Court Culture

The Sultan's adoption of a Roman-Byzantine cultural identity and the conceit of Alexander the Great served as an instrument to negotiate and legitimize his political status as well as to acquire political and cultural prestige; it also had direct implications in the sphere of Mehmed II's artistic patronage. Similar to Italian and other European princely rulers, Mehmed II began to use European court artists' status as "a highly valued cultural property" that enhanced his recognition as a ruler and a patron of the arts.[350] In particular, Bellini's artistic visit in Constantinople was an ideal opportunity for Mehmed II to promote himself as a Renaissance princely patron of one of the most recognized portrait painters in Venice. Mehmed II conferred knighthood on Bellini, making him a courtier and *familiaris*, or an intimate member of his retinue, a status that finds no parallels in Muslim courts. In particular, Mehmed II may have used the story of Apelles, Alexander's court artist, as a template for constructing his own artistic patronage in similar terms and making Bellini a peer of the ancient craftsman to raise his own political prestige. Although Mehmed II made several attempts to summon Italian artists and architects to his court, including Matteo de' Pasti, Costanzo da Ferrara, and Aristotle Fioravanti,[351]and "is said to have knighted the artist Costanzo da Ferrara and the diplomat Giovanni Dario,"[352] the case of Bellini remains the best documented in historical documents, and extant art works completed in Constantinople. Finally, but not least

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[350] Stephen J. Campbell, "Mantegna's Triumph: The Cultural Politics of Imitation 'all'antica' at the Court of Mantua, 1490-1530," in *Artists at Court: Image-Making and Identity, 1300-1550*, ed. Stephen J. Campbell and Evelyn S. Welch (Boston; [Chicago]: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum; Distributed by University of Chicago Press, 2004), 91-105, 95-96.
[351] Raby, "El Gran Turco."
[352] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 114.

important, Bellini's service at the court is a unique example in which the agency of the artist, in addition to that of the patron, can be seen as negotiated and constructed. Bellini used his "despotic" and "Alexander-like" patron to fashion his own artistic persona in Venice. His recognition as the best portrait painter in Venice and his artistic skill gave Bellini license to refashion the imperial image of the Sultan and to become the subject of knowledge and authority for emulation in Constantinople.

Mehmed II's letter granting the titles of Golden Knight and Count Palatine (*Miles Auratus ac Comes palatinus*), or *familiaris*, to Bellini, indicates that his status and service at the Sultan's court were in many ways similar to those of humanists, tutors, and advisors employed by the ruler. Greco-Byzantine and Italian men of letters constituted a close circle of influential experts who had direct access to the Sultan and shared with him expertise in Roman-Byzantine heritage and contemporary scientific and artistic innovations in Italy. Similarly, Bellini offered his skill in art giving visual expression to Mehmed II's imperial image and his political agenda promulgated by *kanunname*. As Alan Chong rightly posits, Bellini joined the foremost intimate and élite group of Mehmed II's courtier, suggesting that the title of Count Palatine, granted by the Sultan, was in fact entirely different from a similar title conferred earlier on Bellini by the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III in Venice in 1469.[353] Although Bellini could have completed a portrait (or portrait drawing) for Frederick III during a diplomatic visit to Venice to help build alliances with the Republic in the anti-Turkish campaign, the artist was never formally employed by the Emperor, nor did he join his court. Bellini was most likely honored by the Emperor circumstantially, as a part of "an astute diplomatic ploy"

[353] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 114-115.

to recognize the Venetian hosts and to avoid participation in the costly Turkish venture, as Patricia Brown suggested.[354] This makes Bellini's terms of employment at Mehmed II's court distinct, as well as similar to the tradition of court artists developing in the princely courts of Mantua, Milan, Naples, and Rimini.[355]

Eyewitness accounts of the set-up of Mehmed II's court corroborate the theory that Bellini may have had access to the ruler and held a position similar to that of humanists and advisors as court artist. According to Angiolello's testimony, Bellini had the privileges of speaking directly with the Sultan and expressing his opinions. In the passage describing Bellini's activities at court, Angiolello portrays the interaction between the ruler and the artist as casual and personal, consisting of many dialogues, among which the story of a "mad" dervish takes center stage. Bellini is portrayed not as a mere servant of the ruler, but as a man who possesses opinions, which the Sultan takes as a counsel to follow up. Obeying the Sultan's order, Bellini completes a portrait of the dervish singing somewhere near the Palace and shares with the ruler his opinion about a question at hand—what to do about this dervish's petition to become "il signore" (perhaps the Sultan's employee):

> Or essendo portato ditto retratto ed appresentato al signore, lui lo guardò, e quando ebbe ben guardato disse: 'Gentil, che ti par costui?' Gentil tacendo, dubitando di parlare, disse il signor: 'Gentil, tu sai che sempre t'ho ditto, che tu puoi parlar con me, pur che tu dichi la verità, siché dimmi quello che ti pare.' Rispose Gentil: 'Signore, poiché mi hai dato licenza che ti dica la mia opinione dirò: per il mio giudizio, costui mi par matto.' Rispose il signor: 'Tu dici la verità, guarda come ha quegli occhi sboridi

[354] Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 52.
[355] Andrea Mantegna's service as court artist is exemplary for understanding these artist-patron relationships. See Stephen J. Campbell, Introduction, *Artists at Court: Image-Making and Identity, 1300-1550,* 9-18.

> ch'indicano matteria.' Disse Gentil: 'Signore, nelli nostri paesi sono molti che montano in banco e cantano le laudi di diversi signori, e la Sua Signoria, ch'é tanto sublime ed ha fatto più faccende che non fece mai Alessandro, non voul esser laudata.' Rispose il Turco: 'Se costui fosse qualch'uomo savio, sarei contento esser laudato, ma non volglio esser laudato da un matto.' Disse Gentil: 'La Tua Signoria lo voglia far capo delli *darvisi*,' ed il signor lo fece.[356]

Upon first impression, this dialogue does not make a lot of sense and could, indeed may, be entirely fictional; however, it reflects seemingly typical realities of Mehmed II's politics and interactions with his close tutors and advisors. First, the story bears a relation to one of the most pressing issues of Mehmed II's rule—the need to win the support of dervishes who were upholders of *gazi* ideals and who had begun to resent the Sultan's imperial politics. As İnalcik shows, dervishes formed an opposition and urged Janissary uprisings against many of Mehmed II's policies, including taxation, redistribution of *timar,* and other autocratic tendencies.[357] Mehmed II tried to tame the religious opposition by making them his imperial employees (as reflected in the end of this dialogue), or by expelling and prosecuting them. The Sultan, following Bellini's advice, makes the "crazy" dervish the head of dervishes and an employee on the imperial payroll, an act both of seeming pacification and of mockery. Second, the interaction between the ruler and the artist goes back and forth. The Sultan solicits the artist's opinion on issues unrelated to artistic practices, after using his artistic expertise in rendering a portrait of the dervish. The described interaction strongly fits the pattern of communication—known from other instances—between Mehmed II and his Greco-Byzantine and Italian courtiers and humanists. In the example of George Amiroutzes discussed earlier, the Sultan

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[356] Angiolello, *Il Sultano e Il profeta: memorie di uno schiavo vicentino divenuto tesoriere di Maometto II Il conquistatore*, 152-153. See the full excerpt in Appendix, Document No. 15.
[357] İnalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 30 & 99.

"studied geography from manuscripts of Ptolemy under the guidance of Amiroutzes, who was even reputed to have produced a map of the world for his master" with geographical names, written in Arabic in his own hand, and an explanation of measurements.[358] According to Kritovoulos, Mehmed II was fond of the humanist's erudition; he conversed with Amiroutzes as well as other Greek and Italian doctors "on teachings of the ancients and on philosophical problems" and discovered solutions to problems through his discussions with them.[359] Angiolello account describes Bellini's service in similar terms. In other words, the account underscores the artist's agency and expertise, and makes clear that Bellini also possessed great courtesy and was capable of holding a learned conversation with the Sultan.

The friendly interaction between Mehmed II and Bellini parallels later accounts that circulated in the city upon Bellini's return to Venice. One such account is recorded in the *History of Venetian Painters* (*Le meraviglie dell'arte: ovvero le vite degli illustri pittori Veneti e dello stato*), first published in 1648 by Carlo Ridolfi (1594-1658), a Venetian painter, collector, and historian, who was awarded a medal of St. Mark by the Venetian Senate for his books. Even though Ridolfi's accuracy is doubted, his book is written in a scholarly fashion and provides references to historical documents; often accurately describes art works, their location, and inscriptions; and supplies a corrective to Vasari's pro-Florentine account of the history of art in telling the story of Venetian art. Ridolfi recounts an anecdote not included in Vasari's biography of the artist, which provides an additional statement on the friendly nature of interaction between the Sultan

[358] Philippides and Hanak, *The Siege and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453: Historiography, Topography, and Military Studies*, 72. Critobulus, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror,* 209.
[359] Critobulus, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror,* 177, 209.

and the artist. In this story, Bellini was asked to paint a picture of the severed head of St. John the Baptist on a plate (John was venerated at Mehmed II's court). The story includes a lively argument between the Sultan and the artist about his rendering of the severed neck and involves a gruesome execution of a slave in order to compare the drawing with the real thing:

> Fecegli ancora altre pitture, ed in particolare la testa di S. Giovanni nel disco, il quale, come Profeta, è riverito da' Turchi, e recatala al Rè lodò la diligenza usatavi, avvertendolo nondimeno d'un errore, che il collo troppo sopravanzava dal capo: e paredogli, che Gentile rimanesse sospeso, per fargli vedere il naturale effetto fatto à se venire uno schiavo gli fece troncar la testa, dimostrandogli come diviso dal busto, il collo afatto si ritirava, per lacui barbarie intimorito Gentile, tentò ogni modo di tantosto licenziarsi, dubitando che un simile scherzo un giorno à lui avvenisse.[360]

Although the primary pretext of this anecdote is to illustrate the cruelty of the Sultan, and parallels many stories about the satanic nature of the ruler diffused in the West, nonetheless it preserves the main tenet of Angiolello's account about the dialogue, exchange of opinions, and discussion of painting technology between Mehmed and Bellini. Ridolfi's account obviously inflates the danger associated with Bellini's mission to Constantinople, imagined as a place of religious fanaticism, to underscore Bellini's patriotism and accomplishments on behalf of the Republic and to promote the power of Venetian Renaissance art.[361] It very well may be that the text belongs among the historical anecdotes about Bellini's visit that were still in circulation in Ridolfi's time among the art connoisseurs of Venice; these anecdotes were inspired by more credible

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[360] Carlo Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie dell'arte: Ovvero le vite degli illustri pittori veneti e dello stato* (G. Grotesche Verlagsbuchhandlung: Berlin, 1914), 57-58. For a full excerpt see also Appendix, Document No. 20.

[361] Corrado Ricci, "Gentile Bellini a Costantinopoli," *Nuova Antologia* Vol. 47, Ser. 5, No. 162 (1912): 177-191.

sources, such as Angiolello's *Il Sultano e il profeta* as well as Jacopo Foresti's *Supplementum Chronicarium*, with the latter prepared under the guidance of the artist himself. Whatever the story may be, Bellini's tenure at the Sultan's court was remembered as that of a courtier and an expert in painting technology, on whom the Sultan bestowed honors and with whom he may have conversed.

However, Bellini's tenure at the Sultan's court was not limited to private discussions with the Sultan and his private realm, as has been previously proposed.[362] Both Angiolello's *Il Sultano e il profeta* and Jacopo Foresti's 1486 edition of the *Supplementum Chronicarium* agree that Bellini executed many paintings, including portraits of the Sultan's entourage, Mehmed II's portrait, the artist's self-portrait, a view of Venice, and mysterious things of luxury "cose di lussuria," as well as a picture of the Madonna, according to Francesco Suarino.[363] Currently, both accounts have been accepted as credible extant sources.[364] Angiolello reports:

> Volse [Mehmed] che gli facesse Venezia in disegno, e retraesse molte persone, si ch'era grato al signore. Quando il Signore voleva veder qualch'uno ch'aveva fama di esser bell'uomo, lo faceva ritraere dal ditto Gentile Bellin, e poi vedeva.…
> Fu dal ditto Gentil fatto belli quadri, e massime di cose di lissuria in alcune cose belle, in modo che ne aveva nel seraglio gran quantità.[365]

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[362] See Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom," 121-124. This opinion was then cited in subsequent literature until it was recently questioned in the exhibition catalogue *Bellini and the East* (2005) by Caroline Campbell and Alan Chong.
[363] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 111.
[364] Amy Worthen has presented a very convincing investigation of Jacopo Foresti's Supplementum Chronicarium as a source of information, confirming its foremost importance as a primary source for Gentile Bellini's biography. See Amy Namowitz Worthen, "An Inconvenient Text: The *Supplementum Chronicarium* as a Source of Information about Gentile and Giovanni Bellini," *Examining Giovanni Bellini: An Art 'More Human and More Divine,'* ed. Carolyn C. Wilson (Turnhout, *Belgium:* Brepols Publishers, 2012).
[365] Angiolello, *Il sultano e Il profeta: memorie di uno schiavo vicentino divenuto tesoriere di Maometto II Il conquistatore*, 152-153. See also Appendix, Document No. 15.

Similarly, the *Supplementum Chronicarium* testifies:

> After Gentile came to him, so that he could test his expertise he appointed him to depict many of his extraordinary pictures and other nearly innumerable things, and then, in order that every activity test him more and more, he commanded that he himself be depicted in his own image; and indeed, when the Turkish ruler gazed upon that portrait so much like himself, he was astonished at the talent of the man, and said he excelled any painter who had ever lived.[366]

Both texts insist that the artist completed many extraordinary pictures, and that for these accomplishments Bellini was made "a member of his [Mehmed's] household" and "both knight palatine and a knight of the Golden Spur," according to the *Supplementum Chronicarium*.

However, a limited number of works has been associated with Bellini's sojourn. What has happened to the rest? Were they merely sold by Bayezid in the bazaar, as Angiolello further suggests? Or perhaps they were a part of a palace structure that no longer exists?

One plausible explanation is that Bellini may have painted frescoes in the garden pavilions in the Palace. Necipoğlu particularly connects Bellini's painting activities with the Italian pavilion, which was under construction during his visit. Three other pavilions or kiosks in the outer garden, commemorating "victories over the kingdoms of Greece, Trebizond, and Asia," one in Persian style, one in Turkish, and one in Greek, were already in place. [367] The Greek pavilion may still have been under construction when Bellini arrived, and an Italian pavilion was planned to celebrate the conquest of Otranto

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[366] Quoted from Worthen, "An Inconvenient Text: The *Supplementum Chronicarium* as a Source of Information about Gentile and Giovanni Bellini." See also for a full excerpt Appendix, Document No. 16.
[367] Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 210.

in 1480 and the beginning of Italian campaigns aimed at conquest of Rome and the Italian peninsula.[368] Since both Greek and Italian pavilions no longer exist, it would explain the limited number of Bellini's extant works by mere loss.

It can be reasonably assumed, then, that Bellini not only joined a small "executive" group of Greco-Byzantine and Italian courtiers, tutors, and advisors in Mehmed II's entourage, but also headed a significant fresco project at the court. Considering Bellini's celebrated status as a portrait painter and an official state painter appointed for the most prestigious public commission in Venice—to repaint the Grand Council Hall, where he would have led a group of workshop assistants as well as interacted with a committee of supervisors of the project, reporting directly to the Signoria—Bellini would have been a perfect match for similar projects at the Sultan's court. He would have been particularly valued for his experience and ability both to direct the workshop and to work on big public commissions, which would include many administrative duties. In fact, as Patricia Brown has suggested, Bellini's invitation to Constantinople was likely facilitated by the visit of Mehmed II's ambassador, Lüfti Bey, to Venice on April 25, 1479; Lüfti saw portraits of the doges and large paintings executed by Bellini in the Grand Council Hall. The Venetian secretary Giovanni Dario, who was responsible for signing the peace treaty with the Sultan and knew Bellini personally, likely also influenced the invitation.[369]

As Raby, Necipoğlu, and Chong have suggested, Bellini may have officially joined Mehmed II's artistic or *müteferrika* corps. Mehmed II laid the foundation of the Palace School by bringing to Constantinople and hiring as imperial employees highly

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[368] Ibid.
[369] Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio*, 54.

skilled artisans for the *müteferrika* corps of the Palace.[370] The artisans were loosely grouped with other élite professionals, including medical doctors, philosophers, astrologers, and other highly skilled and well-educated experts, who were needed at the court both as tutors and advisors for the School, as well as to provide company for the Sultan. The *müteferrika* corps also included sons of the élites from recently annexed territories, and other foreign dignitaries who resided at the court by invitation. According to Angiolello:

> *Delli 'mutaferica' cioè provisionati de' signori ed altri*. Dopo, circa duecento persone intitolati *mutaferica*, che s'intende li infrascritti: prima, alcuni figliuoli de' signori, com'era il figliuolo del despoti della Morea e quello dell'imperator di Trabisonda, ed un figliuolo del re di Bossina (questo giocava spesso a tavola col signore, e molto si scorucciava nel giocare, e diceva al signore parole a suo modo, ed il signor se ne rideva e se ne pigliava gran piacere), ed altri signori della Vallacchia, di Tartaria, e d'altri paesi, li quail in quell tempo il Gran Turco aveva appresso di sé, e li faceva buona compagnia.
>
> Ancora, in questi *mutaferica* s'intende medici, filosofi, astrologhi, gettatori dis sorte, ed indovini di più condizioni, maestri, ingegneri, depintori, orefici, gioieglieri, e molt'altri li quail servono e seguitano la corte.[371]

Bellini could have been officially admitted to the *müteferrika* corps as an employee and paid member of Mehmed II's household.[372] As a member of this court group, as well as a

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[370] Kritovoulos reports that Mehmed II gathered skilled artisans and especially building craftsmen and engineers from various regions of the East and the newly annexed Byzantine territories as well as from Italy. "He [Mehmed II] zealously directed operations on the buildings he was erecting on his own account—that is, the mosque and the palace… He took care to summon the very best workmen from everywhere—masons and stonecutters and carpenters and all sorts of others of experience and skill in such matters." In addition, concerned with rebuilding and beautifying the city, Mehmed brought skilled craftsmen from everywhere: "He introduced into it all the different trades and crafts, searching in every direction for men who knew these and were skilled in them, then bringing them in and settling them, sparing no expense or cost to this end." Critobulus, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror,* 149-177.

[371] Angiolello, *Il sultano e Il profeta: memorie di uno schiavo vicentino divenuto tesoriere di Maometto II Il conquistatore*, 124-125.

[372] Raby, ″El Gran Turco," 55, 113-114. Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 115.

highly acclaimed artist, he would have certainly been consulted on questions of the professional training of artists and may have even created artistic formats appropriate for such training in the imperial workshop. At the same time, considering his honors and the pattern of Mehmed II's interaction with the humanists and other learned doctors at his court, Bellini's appointment would parallel that of the nobles and humanists, who were Mehmed II's most élite entourage. Bellini's 1478 visit to Constantinople coincided with the completion of the New (Topkapi) Palace and the other key moments of Mehmed II's rule: the codification of the second *kanunname*, the development of the Palace School of the Pages as linked to the *kanunname*, and the beginning of Italian military campaigns in Otranto, signifying that the imperial project was coming to full realization. Bellini may have contributed to the establishment of an imperial school of portrait arts at the court.

A priority of Mehmed II that was perhaps still not realized at the time of Bellini's arrival was establishing a court atelier able to produce imperial images of Mehmed himself and his dynastic successors. Mehmed II's persistent requests to Italy for artists skilled in the art of portraiture could be interpreted as seeking this last missing piece of the puzzle—a regal image of the ruler that would reflect his imperial status and political ambitions as an heir to the Roman emperors. Raby's research into Mehmed II's invitations of Italian artists demonstrates that the Sultan was especially preoccupied with Italian portraiture, "both in its graphic and glyptic forms."[373] Beginning with the first invitation of Matteo de' Pasti in 1461 from the court of Sigismondo Malatesta, Lord of Rimini, which was unsuccessful due to the capture of the artist in route by the Venetians, Mehmed II expressed an explicit interest in painted and sculpted portraits and continued

[373] Raby, ″El Gran Turco," 1.

to invite Italian artists, almost all without success. The last two years of his reign, in particular, witnessed an increase in his invitations to Italy—to the medal artist and painter Costanzo da Ferrara, the painter Gentile Bellini, the sculptor Bartolomeo Bellano, and to various other skilled decorators and artisans, including clock makers. Although, as has been suggested, these invitations could be related either to the Sultan's "rekindled" interest in portraiture, inflamed by the successful invitation of Costanzo da Ferrara,[374] or to the upcoming architectural project of the Italian or European pavilion in the outer gardens,[375] they can be also related to the final stages of Mehmed II's imperial project.

Mehmed II chose Alexander the Great and Caesar to provide dynastic charisma to establish a new dynastic principle for the House of Osman, competitively positioning it among other rival powers including Timurids, Safavids, and Mamluks, as well as Europeans princes. For the final realization of his imperial project, Mehmed II needed portrait arts to project his imperial image in the manner of the Roman-Byzantine caesars, while preserving the key features of Ottoman identity. The Ottoman court in Edirne had no trained painters in portraiture or in representational arts, like those in Timurid courts. Scholars of Ottoman art have demonstrated that the earliest illustrated Ottoman manuscripts, calligraphy and drawings, and a few portraits (related to Bellini's tenure at the court, as the ensuing chapters will show) make their initial appearance during Mehmed II's reign.[376] In particular, as Esin Atil conclusively states:

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[374] Ibid., 55.
[375] Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 210.
[376] Esin Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting Under Sultan Mehmed II," *Ars Orientalis* 9 (January 1, 1973): 103–120, 103.

> The first century and a half of Ottoman history prior to the conquest of Istanbul reveals no distinct evidence of illustrated manuscript production. Bursa, whose architectural style and innovations has been sufficiently studied, possesses not even a single image although it was the seat of the court between 1326 and 1362. From Edirne, which was the capital until the fall of Istanbul in 1453, we have a singular manuscript executed after the city had ceased to be the administrative center of the empire. It is only subsequent to the establishment of the court in Istanbul that we observe a conscious effort to create a painting studio.[377]

Even more, the first locally produced Ottoman manuscripts, crude and provincial in their quality, had no models to follow. Therefore, Mehmed II had to rely on visiting artists to forge his own tradition of representational arts in Constantinople and to look for models to appropriate. Considering the ongoing rivalry and warfare with the Chingizid and Timurid rulers in the East, Mehmed II would have had limited access to highly skilled and singular artists like Bihzad, who worked under the patronage of Timurid rulers, was trained in the Persian tradition of representational arts, and was skilled in portraiture. It would be logical for Mehmed II, who had chosen Alexander the Great and Caesar as his charismatic exemplars, invite Italian artists to fashion his imperial identity reflective of the style of his rulership as the Ottoman Caesar.

Mehmed II's choice of Italian artists complemented his imperial project and reflected the Greco-Byzantine identity of his court—that is, they were not foreign to him. The story of the Byzantine Emperor John VIII Palaelogos (1425-1448), who commissioned a portrait medal by Pisanello while attending the Council in Ferrara in 1438,[378] may have become a model for Mehmed II in officially proclaiming himself an

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[377] Ibid., 103-104.

[378] The history of the commission of the medal has remained a mystery until now. Roberto Weiss's publication remains one of the primary sources on the medal. Most recently, Brigit Blass-Simmen has presented a well-supported proposition that the Emperor commissioned the medal while in Ferrara. Blass-

heir to the Byzantine emperors. Pisanello's medal became a widely diffused model of "both ancient and eastern potentate" "used by artists, and especially by painters and illuminators" in Italy,[379] as well as by Byzantine artists to portray both ancient and Eastern potentates.[380] It is not impossible that Mehmed II learned about the famous Pisanello medal from both Byzantine and Italian advisors, especially since he owned an engraved portrait signed "Gran Turk" based on Pisanello's image of the Emperor.[381]

Mehmed II's cultural ancestors, the Seljuqs of Rum in Anatolia (from whom the Ottoman State adopted certain traditions), and the Byzantine court had a long history of cultural intermingling. The Seljuqs of Rum had an admiration "for the architectural and artistic achievement of antiquity" and developed a tradition of appropriating and reusing Greco-Roman and Byzantine spolia—ancient inscriptions, ornamental or figural reliefs, columns, and statues.[382] These ancient spolia were incorporated into stone-built architecture and were endowed with talismanic powers; they became a marker of the distinct identity of the Anatolian Seljuqs, which was especially important in the context of Chingiz Khan's invasions and the post-Chingiz Khan, Mongol-Ilkhanid rule in Central

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Simmen attributes the beginning of medallic portraiture in Italy to the influence of Byzantine humanists and the Emperor's entourage. Her paper entitled "Image and Inscription: Pisanello's Early Portrait Medals" was presented at the 2012 Annual Meeting of the Renaissance Society of America in Washington, DC, on the Panel "Renaissance Portraiture: Identity in Written Words," 24 March, 2012. Roberto Weiss, *Pisanello's Medallion of the Emperor John VIII Palaeologus: Roberto Weiss* (London: British Museum, 1966).

[379] Ibid., 28.

[380] An exquisitely painted portrait of the Emperor John VIII, closely modeled on Pisanello's medal, was recently found in a psalter in the library of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai. The miniature was published as superior in execution and style and "as worthy of the hand of Pisanello himself." Because it was pasted into an earlier psalter (around 1242), the drawing might have made its way to Sinai with some of the noble Byzantines escaping Constantinople after the conquest. Quoted from *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, ed. Helen C. Evans (New York; New Haven: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Yale University Press, 2004), 533.

[381] This image is discussed in detail in later chapters.

[382] Scott Redford, "The Seljuqs of Rum and the Antique," *Muqarnas* 10 (January 1, 1993): 148–156.

Asia. As Scott Redford suggests, the Seljuq sultans drew on the deeds of Alexander the Great and "the antique past of the Anatolia" to construct the supernatural deeds of their own heroes.[383] As such, Ottoman rulers had a longstanding tradition of appropriating the antique as a distinct marker of their cultural identity in the context of competition with other Muslim states, particularly Chingizid and then Timurid rulers. The Anatolian Turks could have also traced their lineage back to Ancient Trojans, or at least used this lineage as a conceit and literary inspiration. In fact, the medieval chronicle tradition in the West did circulate the idea that Turks were actually Trojans.[384] Mehmed II revisited this idea, claiming Trojan ancestry to justify his military conquests as revenge for the Greek sack of Troy. The court historian Kritovoulos recorded the Sultan's alleged speech near the ruins of ancient Troy:

> God has reserved for me, through so long a period of years, the right to avenge the city and its inhabitants. For I have subdued their enemies and have plundered their cities and made them into the spoils of the Mysians. It was the Greeks and Macedonians and Thessalians and Peloponnesians who ravaged this place in the past, and whose descendants have now through my efforts paid the just penalty, after a long period of years, for their injustices to us Asiatics at that time and so often in subsequent times.[385]

One may argue that Mehmed II's invitation of Italian artists was contingent on the availability of artistic talent and that Italian artists were more readily available than trained artists from the blooming artistic courts in Central Asia and Persia, but as

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[383] Ibid, 155.
[384] Margaret Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 26.
[385] Critobulus, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror by Kritovoulos*, 81-82.

Kritovoulos reports, Mehmed II summoned the very best artisans from everywhere, including Byzantine artisans.[386]

In Italy, city-states and courts had a handful of painters with international reputation who specialized in ruler portraiture, and princely courts tended to support only few portrait painters at a time. Artists skilled and trained in painted and medallic portraiture would have been very hard to find and hire. Pisanello, Matteo de' Pasti, Cosmè Tura, and Andrea Mantegna are key examples of court artists in Italy at that time. Thus, Mehmed II's invitation of Italian artists may have been a strategic decision both to aid his efforts in founding the court atelier of portrait arts and to fashion his imperial image inspired by Roman-Byzantine emperors. Mehmed II needed for the realization of his imperial idea appropriate artistic talent knowledgeable in Greco-Roman iconographies and styles.

Mehmed II needed his own Apelles to fully realize the conceit of Alexander the Great. Apelles, a court painter of Philip II and his son Alexander, was regarded as the greatest painter of antiquity and became "the most sought out ancient exemplar for the Renaissance."[387] According to Arrian's and Plutarch's biographies of Alexander of Macedon and Pliny the Elder's biography of the artist, all of which were widely disseminated in Renaissance courts and were known to Mehmed II,[388] Alexander supposedly forged a bond of friendship with the artist, visited his studio to converse on the subject of art, appreciated his courtly manners, and issued an edict forbidding other

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[386] See footnote no. 150.
[387] Joanna Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture: The Visual Construction of Identity and the Social Status of the Artist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 5.
[388] Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom."

artists to paint his portraits. Mehmed II had already learned the importance of artistic talent comparable to that of Apelles and of portraiture as a means to bestow immortality and perpetuate fame in 1461, through his correspondence with Malatesta in negotiating a visit by Malatesta's court artist, Matteo de' Pasti.[389] Although the artist never reached the Porte, the Sultan would certainly have remained interested in obtaining another recognizable artist, skilled in the art of portraiture, to create his imperial image.

Mehmed II's realization of the Alexander-Apelles conceit can be linked with Bellini's tenure at the court. Bellini was known above all as the official painter of Venice, specializing in portraits of doges—the supreme ruling authority. He may have also made a portrait of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III, as discussed earlier, for which he could have been recognized with the conferred honor of Count Palatine in 1469. As such, Bellini, out of all the painters working at Mehmed II's court—including Costanzo da Ferrara and local artists like Sinan Bey, Şiblizâde Ahmed, and Baba Nakkaş[390]—had the necessary expertise and an international reputation to fashion the regal image of the Sultan at the zenith of his power, codified by the new imperial law in 1477-1481. The

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[389] Spinale, "The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)," 47.

[390] Raby, for example, assigned the foremost role in the production of portraits to Costanzo da Ferrara. However, the authors of the recent exhibition *Bellini and the East* (2005) reevaluated the claims made by Raby, convincingly arguing that attribution to Costanzo da Ferrara anything else besides two signed medals of Mehmed II has no basis. (See Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 118. On the other hand, Necipoglu suggested that three local artists—Sinan Bey, Şiblizâde Ahmed, and Baba Nakkaş—mentioned half a century later in the court annals, played a crucial role "in mediating the visual cultures of East and West by creatively translating the Italian manner to the indigenous medium of miniature painting on paper." (See Necipoğlu, "From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Konstantiniyye: Creation of a Cosmopolitan Capital and Visual Culture under Sultan Mehmed II" in *From Byzantion to Istanbul: 8000 Years of a Capital*, 264.) While Necipoğlu's opinion on the role of local artists is correct, her research assigns the agency only to the patron—Mehmed II—completely leaving out the discussion of Bellini's agency at the court. In the following chapters, I will clarify Bellini's role in establishing the tradition of portrait arts in Constantinople, and demonstrate that the skill of making portraits was highly specialized and impossible without a head master (in this case Bellini) to transfer his skill to his pupils. As such, Bellini's expertise was essential to establishing a distinct tradition of portrait arts in Constantinople.

dialogues between Mehmed II and Bellini in Angiolello's *Il Sultano e il profeta* exploit the model of Alexander and Apelles to describe a personal interaction between the princely patron and the artist. The conceit also surfaces in several editions of Jacopo Foresti's *Supplementum Chronicarium*, published in Venice after the artist's sojourn. The 1486 (second) version reads:

> After Gentile came to him, so that he could test his expertise he appointed him to depict many of his extraordinary pictures and other nearly innumerable things, and then, in order that every activity test him more and more, he commanded that he himself be depicted in his own image; and indeed, when the Turkish ruler gazed upon that portrait so much like himself, he was astonished at the talent of the man, and **said he excelled any painter who had ever lived**. And therefore setting him without delay as a member of his household, as an indication of his benevolence and generosity.[391]

The text praises the artist, making him a peer to the acclaimed artists of antiquity by implicitly referring to the widely disseminated description of Apelles's glory, which surpassed that of all the painters who preceded him and all who were to come after. In the fourth version of the *Supplementum Chronicarium* published in 1503, Bellini's talent, like that of his half-brother Giovanni Bellini and brother-in-law Andrea Mantegna, is openly compared to that of Apelles, Polycrates, Phidias, and Praxiteles:

> The Bellini brothers Giovanni and Gentile, from Venice, and Andrea Mantegna from Padua, and many renowned painters as well, at this time not only in Italy but, so to speak, in all Christendom and in the Turkish world, seemed to paint in a new style of painting. Truly, such grace of painting was conferred upon them, that they could be favorably compared with Apelles, Polycrates, Phidias, and Praxiteles, the wonderful painters of antiquity. Many highly learned men who saw their pictures extolled those distinguished painters with great proclamations. And when after many years the talent of these brothers Giovanni and Gentile especially had

[391] Quoted from Amy Namowitz Worthen, "An Inconvenient Text: The *Supplementum Chronicarium* as a Source of Information about Gentile and Giovanni Bellini." Also see Appendix, Document No. 16.

> reached the ears of Mahumet, prince of Turks, burning with desire to see them he wrote, as a supplicant, to the Venetian Senate, so that it might send one of them to Constantinople. After the younger brother Gentile came to him, so that he could test his expertise, he appointed him to depict many of his extraordinary pictures and other innumerable things, in order to test him more and more, he commanded that he himself depicted his own image.[392]

The text forges the conceit to underscore Bellini's talent and highly acclaimed status, which became "a highly valued cultural property" necessary both to enlarge and perpetuate the fame of his princely patron and to promote the artist's own recognition.[393] It also highlights Bellini's agency and accomplishments, stressing his knowledge and role as on a par with the greatest painters of antiquity.

Mehmed II's exploitation of the Alexander-Apelles conceit followed the developing practice in the Italian princely courts of Ferrara, Mantua, Milan, Rimini, and Naples of employing portrait artists on an exclusive contract basis. These courts, governed by princes and *condottieri* (mercenary captains) exploited the diplomatic and commemorative potential of medallic portraiture and ancient myths of imperial greatness to achieve political and cultural prestige.[394] Princes like Lionello d'Este (1407-1450) of Ferrara, Alfonso V of Aragon (1396-1458), and Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta (1417-1468) of Rimini were among the first to recognize the importance of artistic exclusivity as a means of gaining political and personal prestige. As Beverly L. Brown shows,

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[392] Ibid.

[393] Stephen Campbell demonstrates that the artist's status as a courtier and court painter was used mutually by patrons and artists—patrons used the artist's status for self-aggrandizement and fame, and artists used their courtier status and patrons to proclaim their elevated position, making themselves the peers of ancient craftsmen. Stephen J. Campbell, "Mantegna's Triumph: The Cultural Politics of Imitation 'alla antica' at the Court of Mantua 1490-1530," in *Artists at Court: Image-Making and Identity, 1300-1550,* 91-105.

[394] Beverly Louise Brown, "Portraiture at the Courts of Italy," in *The Renaissance Portrait: From Donatello to Bellini*, ed. Keith Christiansen and Stefan Weppelmann (New York; New Haven [Conn.]: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Distributed by Yale University Press, 2011), 26-47.

Alfonso V of Aragon, for instance, secured an exclusive contract with Pisanello, making him an illustrious member of his household, and utilized the Alexander-Apelles analogy to forge his distinct political and cultural identity. Pisanello, who was previously employed on a short-term basis by the lords of Ferrara, Mantua, Milan, and Rimini, thus became essentially a court artist, working solely for the Aragonese king. Similarly, Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta of Rimini employed Matteo de' Pasti, whom he recommended to Sultan Mehmed II, in a letter of 1461, as both an extraordinary portrait artist and an intimate member of his household.[395] Andrea Mantegna's appointment as a court artist in 1460 by Ludovico II Gonzaga (1412-1478) of Mantua was modeled on the contract between Alfonso V of Aragon and Pisanello. Mantegna was made a member of the ruler's household, and his tenure at the court became a model for court artists of the future; this model has been theorized in Martin Warnke's book *The Court Artist: On the Ancestry of the Modern Artist*. In particular, the Gonzagas made the most of Mantegna's celebrated status as a new Apelles in humanist and literary circles to enlarge their own fame and to boost the court's cultural prestige by occasionally lending Mantegna's services as a special favor.[396] As Stephen Campbell argued, Mantegna exploited his position at court to forge his own artistic identity "claiming a status on par with that of great Mantuan poet Virgil: not only by virtue of being protagonist for a regime, but as protagonist for himself."[397] As these early and well-known examples demonstrate, these powerful princes used the model of Alexander-Apelles and exclusive terms of

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[395] Spinale, "The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)," 48
[396] *Andrea Mantegna*. ed. Jane Martineau (New York: Olivetti; Electa; Distributed for the Metropolitan Museum in North America by Abrams, 1992), 151.
[397] Campbell, "Mantegna's Triumph: The Cultural Politics of Imitation 'alla antica' at the Court of Mantua 1490-1530," in *Artists at Court: Image-Making and Identity, 1300-1550,* 151.

employment for a celebrated artist as a member of their household to achieve fame and recognition, and to cement their power. I suggest that Mehmed II, well informed by Sigismondo Malatesta and his own Greco-Byzantine and Italian advisors, adopted the same model when making Gentile Bellini a knight and Count Palatine.

Recent scholarship on artists at Italian princely courts has shown that the role, conditions of employment, and status of the court artist greatly varied from court to court.[398] Artists were hired to execute a range of artistic projects as well as to perform diverse roles—"some functions associable with courtiers, and others with administrators, entrepreneurs, servants, and skilled laborers."[399] Likewise, Bellini would have assumed a multifaceted role in Mehmed II's court, being skilled in large monumental fresco painting, portrait arts, drawing, and perspective. However, his tenure was especially similar to that of his brother-in-law, Mantegna, in the Gonzaga court, who set an extraordinary model of artistic agency and of mutual artist-patron relations, becoming a paragon of court artists in the eyes of the literary élite, supported by his humanist patron.[400] Mantegna was responsible for large, complex frescoes and paintings in the Ducal Palace, such as the *Camera Picta* and the *Triumphs of Caesar*; large and small devotional pictures to satisfy the needs of the Gonzaga family and their friends; and portraits. As a court artist in the service of Ludovico Gonzaga, one of the most educated patrons of humanism with an illustrious humanist court, Mantegna's position afforded him the opportunity to fully demonstrate his creative agency by executing commissions unparalleled in scale and

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[398] Several articles in this volume survey employment of court-artists in Bologna, Ferrara, Mantua, Milan, and Rome: Campbell and Welch, *Artists at Court: Image-Making and Identity, 1300-1550.*
[399] Ibid., 55.
[400] Martineau, *Andrea Mantegna*, 27.

invention, which imaginatively recreated Roman-inspired ancient monuments and represented new subjects using the advanced technology of perspective.[401] Another example is Cosmè Tura in Ferrara who, unlike Pisanello in Naples who primarily made portrait medals, was performing an array of tasks at the Este court, including manuscript illumination, tapestry design, casket decoration, and bronze medal casting.[402] Only later in his career, according to Beverly Brown, did Tura become known as a portrait painter, when his Este patrons started to use portrait arts as a visual means for broadcasting their political standing and cultural identity. As a later instance, Leonardo da Vinci's employment in Sforza's court in Milan from 1482 to 1499, entailed tasks ranging from "great mural decorations at the *castello,* the planning of festivities, acting as an architectural adviser" to painting portraits.[403] Luke Syson has persuasively conjectured that Leonardo's distinct contribution as a court artist was in the establishment of the school of painting in Lombardy and "the Leonardesque as a new Sforza house style," which set apart his court and his rule and was promoted through works commissioned by his courtiers and supporters.[404] The examples of Pisanello, Matteo de' Pasti, Cosmè Tura, and Mantegna could all have had a particular appeal to Mehmed II, who understood well the value of an exclusive contract with a celebrated artist for building his own reputation, and who would be drawn to employ an artist like Bellini, who had many talents and could serve in a variety of roles in his court.

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[401] Ibid., 24, 27, 110.
[402] Beverly Louise Brown, "Portraiture at the Courts of Italy," in *The Renaissance Portrait: From Donatello to Bellini*, 38.
[403] Luke Syson, "Leonardo and Leonardism in Sforza Milan," in Campbell and Welch, *Artists at Court: Image-Making and Identity, 1300-1550*, 106-123, 109.
[404] Ibid., 110.

Mehmed II's use of the Alexander-Apelles analogy both as a defining principle of his art patronage and as a visual means to forge his dynastic principle and political prestige formed a stark contrast with models of artistic patronage in Chingizid and Timurid courts. As Maria Subtelny shows, rulers in Central Asia upheld the tradition of court patronage of literary activities as a key political means to justify their rule and communicate their political aspirations and status.[405] Although Chingizid and Timurid rulers, like Sultan Husain Bayqara of Khorasan and Transoxiana (r. 1469-1506), also sponsored a host of distinguished calligraphers and painters in their courts, they were especially known for their patronage of poetry. According to contemporary sources, over 250 poets were active in Transoxiana in the first half of the sixteenth century. Poets were prominent members of the household and were occasionally rewarded with lucrative posts similar to that of the court poet Riyazi Turbati, who was granted the office of supervisor of the newly conquered mines of Badakhshan by Sultan Husain Bayqara.[406] As Subtelny's research suggests, literary arts were a primary means for Uzbek and Timurid rulers to attain "culture prestige" and "power prestige."[407] The work of painters and calligraphers were primarily linked with the arts of the book and the literary life of the court—through the production of universal illustrated histories, Persian epics, and various anthologies of poetry. Court life revolved around the so-called institution of the *majlis*, the main forum for literary activity—"the customary form of socio-literary intercourse at which the main form of entertainment was recitation and criticism of

[405] Maria Eva Subtelny, "Art and Politics in Early 16th Century Central Asia," *Central Asiatic Journal* 27, no. 1-2 (1983):121-148.
[406] Ibid., 143.
[407] Ibid., 130.

literary works, primarily poetry, along with witticisms and relation of anecdotes."[408] The preoccupation with poetry and literary arts in Chingizid and Timurid courts, especially starting from the late fifteenth century, reflected Persian-Islamic concepts of the ideal Islamic ruler, who was expected to be skilled in poetry, as well as religious and pious, a prudent and just governor, and a staunch upholder of the Holy Law (*sharia*). In contrast, as scholars have concluded, Mehmed II's patronage did not produce or attract any significant poet or writer to his court in Constantinople. Babinger goes as far as to state that "At Mehmed's court we look in vain for a poet or even a historian who earned his keep by adulation of the sultan."[409] And further: "In Byzantium and above all in Italy, the humanist's supreme goal was the honored and well-paid post of court scholar and court poet; it never occurred to the Ottoman ruler in Istanbul to attach writers and poets to his person as heralds of fame."[410] Mehmed II's curious disengagement from literary arts is further confirmed by the fact that no works of Ottoman poets from his rule survive. However, during the reign of his son Bayezid II (r. 1481-1512), who renounced many of his father's policies,[411] one finds the court poet Zati, who had a successful and lasting career at his court, along with other poets.[412] Babinger, interpreting these and other facts, arrives at the conclusion that "the profession of a literary courtier was not held in high honor during Mehmed's reign."[413] This may seem hard to explain, especially considering that the Sultan regularly sent royal gifts to poets and literary stylists in remote Herat and

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[408] Ibid., 140.
[409] Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, 469.
[410] Ibid.
[411] İnalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 30.
[412] Andrews and Kalpakli, *The Age of Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early-Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society*, 35.
[413] Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, 471.

in Persia, and demonstrated his love for the Persian language and its poetry by collecting anthologies in Persian. However, it can be argued that these gifts simply represented the continuation of some of the established traditions of patronage by Mehmed's father in Edirne, in his role as protector of letters and sciences. Otherwise, Mehmed II completely reshaped the imperial program. Instead of closely following the pattern of art patronage in other Islamic courts, he altered the tradition by placing a new emphasis on visual arts—the technology of image-making—and exclusive contracts with celebrated artists as a means to define the Ottoman imperial identity.

Italian art and Bellini's service at the Ottoman court to fashion Mehmed II's imperial image were at the core of the Sultan's imperial program and his dynastic charisma. However, it would be wrong to assume that the visual culture cultivated at the Sultan's court was limited to the appropriation of Italianate and Greco-Byzantine artistic forms. Mehmed II's architectural commissions, as Necipoğlu has convincingly demonstrated, selectively integrated diverse artistic traditions—Perso-Islamic, Turco-Mongol, and Roman-Byzantine—representing a multiethnic and multicultural empire situated at the juncture of two continents of Asia and Europe.[414] The New (Topkapi) Palace, which was strategically placed near the Hagia Sophia on the ancient site of the Greek acropolis and in juxtaposition to the ruins of the palace of the Byzantine emperors, embodied the cosmopolitan vision of the Empire. Its three pavilions or kiosks in the outer garden were constructed in the manner of annexed territories:

[414] Necipoğlu, "From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Konstantiniyye: Creation of a Cosmopolitan Capital and Visual Culture under Sultan Mehmed II" in *From Byzantion to Istanbul: 8000 Years of a Capital*, 263.

> The first pavilion in the 'Persian manner (*alla persiana*)' was constructed in 'the mode of the Karamanid lands (*al modo del paese Caraman*),' the second one in the 'Turkish manner (*alla tuchesca*),' and the third in the 'Greek manner (*alla greca*).
>
> As architectural representations of major kingdoms united by the sultan (Ottoman, Byzantine, and Karamanid), these pavilions expressed the universalism of his vision of empire with their stylistic pluralism.[415]

Mehmed II forged the cosmopolitan nature of visual culture in Constantinople through architectural and urban policies as well as by gathering engineers, builders, and artisans from various regions of the East and the recently annexed territories. As Kritovoulos reports:

> He [Mehmed II] zealously directed operations on the buildings he was erecting on his own account—that is, the mosque and the palace.… He took care to summon the very best workmen from everywhere—masons and stonecutters and carpenters and all sorts of others of experience and skill in such matters.[416]
>
> He introduced into it all the different trades and crafts, searching in every direction for men who knew these and were skilled in them, then bringing them in and settling them, sparing no expense or cost to this end.[417]

The spirit of cosmopolitanism and plurality infiltrated the city of Constantinople, supported by Mehmed II's zealous urban policies. By the time of Bellini's visit to Constantinople, the city was rebuilt and beautified—transformed into the prosperous and repopulated cosmopolitan capital of the world. Its Greco-Byzantine architectural elements were skillfully integrated into new urban complexes, including Ottoman mosques, religious schools, bath complexes, palaces, and bazaars. In such circumstances, Bellini's role was to fashion an imperial image that would exist at the intersection of

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[415] Ibid., 271.
[416] Critobulus, 149.
[417] Ibid., 177.

several artistic traditions manifested in the rebuilt capital. Bellini employed the Renaissance painting technology as one of the means to represent the Sultan's Roman-Byzantine identity; but he also learned and adopted Eastern artistic idioms to portray his Ottoman identity, as Mehmed II equally claimed himself the Ottoman and Muslim ruler, superior to Chingizid, Timurid, Safavid, and Mamluk rulers in the East.

Conclusion

As a courtier, Bellini learned about Mehmed II's imperial program and his cosmopolitan court. Because of his artistic skill, he became the Sultan's court artist and a member of his entourage of humanists, tutors, and advisors. Mehmed II secured his fame through Bellini's work, which projected a magnificent image of the ruler, promoting him as an equal to Roman-Byzantine emperors. Bellini also aided the Sultan's efforts to found the imperial atelier of portrait arts in Constantinople. He benefited from his work at the Sultan's court as much as his imperial patron did. By coming into contact with leading humanists and artists, Bellini became knowledgeable in other artistic traditions and styles that were collected and practiced at the Sultan's court. Bellini also used his court-artist status as an intimate member of the ruler's household and the honors conferred by the Sultan, which were not attainable in his native milieu, to gain recognition for the intellectual and liberal core of his art.

Chapter Three

Bellini's Drawings in Constantinople: Mediating Painting, Technology and Culture

Of numerous paintings and drawings Bellini completed on the Sultan's request in the New Palace only the portrait of the emperor and a small number of detailed studies of Turkish characters survived. Preserved in the collections of the British Museum (London), the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (Boston), the Louvre (Paris), and the Städelsches Kunstinstitut (Frankfurt), the drawings have attracted much interest for their subject matter and pen techniques. Although it has been difficult to trace their origin to Constantinople, the drawings' arresting formulaic language, new to Italian painting in representing Ottoman subjects, has provided grounds for associating them with Bellini's sojourn. The authors of the landmark exhibition *Bellini and the East* (2005) brought this group of drawings together for the first time and convincingly rebutted a previous proposal to assign them to Costanzo da Ferrara.[418] The exhibition also made clear that the drawings share visual language and workshop techniques that can be connected to other works by Bellini and his workshop.

Although scholars distinguish between drawings made by Bellini and his workshop, whether the drawings were made by Bellini or in his workshop, they provide

[418] Caroline Campbell and Alan Chong, *Bellini and the East* (London; Boston: National Gallery Company; Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2005), 99-101, 118. This group was generally accepted in scholarly literature as by Bellini or Bellini's workshop until Maria Andaloro (1980) and Julian Raby (1980) challenged this view by reassigning the drawings to Constanzo de Moysis or Constanzo da Ferrara, along with *Seated Scribe*. This attribution was largely based on a biased assumption that Bellini was not a great enough painter to execute works of such excellent quality.

insight into the process of intercultural exchange and circulation of artistic ideas, as well as into the artist's activities at the court. Instead of treating them as anthropological studies of "the striking figures he encountered" in Constantinople, I place them within the social and cultural context of art production and within the audience for which they were made. This chapter then explores how Bellini used artistic motifs and conventions of the host culture while working at the Ottoman court. As such, it adds to understanding of the dynamic interchange and transformative process of production and reception that leads to fashioning of new artistic forms.

In this chapter, accepting their attribution to Bellini and his workshop as published in the *Bellini and the East* exhibition catalogue (2005), I look at the group of eight drawings with Oriental subjects as a series in order to clarify their functions with respect to the production, development, and transmission of pictorial ideas between Venice and Constantinople, that is between one semiosphere and the other. Since *Seated Scribe* from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum has been firmly established as an autograph drawing completed in Constantinople, it is the key work.[419] The finished and formal quality of the drawings suggest that they were meant to be preserved and studied in their own right, rather simply being the byproduct of Bellini's observations from life or of making a formal product.

This chapter proposes that the drawings played a role in the professional education of Bellini, his assistants, and the other artists at Mehmed II's court, for whom they served as a means to study unfamiliar works of art and subjects. Their formal

[419] The authorship of this work has been a subject of debate, but now it is largely accepted as one of the key works completed by Bellini in Constantinople. For a detailed discussion of the historiography and debate see section 2 in this chapter. This drawing that has typically been discussed as one-off due to its unusual color techniques on paper, but this dissertation treats the whole group as a unified series.

qualities demonstrate that Bellini engaged in deliberate fashioning and refashioning of the subjects to make a likeness in each drawing that is both "symbolic" and "natural" at the same time. They bridge differences in painting technology, workshop practices, and cultural meaning between Venice and Constantinople by adapting Venetian drawing techniques to the specific environment of Mehmed II's court and its art program and by establishing a novel representational format for portraying Ottoman courtiers.

A detailed examination of the whole group of Bellini's drawings from a cross-cultural perspective reveals that they relate to Mehmed II's imperial project—specifically his implementation of a new style of Ottoman rulership. Bellini's visit coincided with the final stages of the codification of a new set of laws— *kanunname*—which formalized the palace organization. Bellini underscored these laws and visually proclaimed the emerging new structure of Ottoman society. Functioning as representations of social types, rather than as portraits of particular courtiers, the drawings celebrate the new cosmopolitan society Mehmed II forged in Constantinople at the intersection of Timurid, Turco-Mongol, and Romano-Byzantine cultural traditions. Bellini's drawings are reappraised as hybrid artistic forms functioning at the intersection of three pictorial traditions: Byzantine, Timurid, and Venetian.

Bellini's Eight Drawings of "Ethnic" Figures: Negotiating Artistic Forms and Constructing Cultural Identity of Mehmed II's Court

Eight drawings on separate sheets of paper survive from Bellini's sojourn in Constantinople. Although there are differences in quality of execution among the sheets, they share the same workshop style in their approaches to composition, modeling technique, and artistic vision, and thus can be treated as a coherent group. Among them, *Young Greek Woman* (Louvre) (Pl. VI), *Standing Turk* (Louvre) (Pl. VII), *Seated Janissary* (British Museum) (Pl. VIII), *Seated Woman* (British Museum) (Pl. IX), and *Seated Scribe* (Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum) (Pl. V) are particularly noteworthy for the impeccable refinement of their execution. Each sheet features a single figure centrally placed and meticulously depicted with pen in brown ink. The treatment of the crinkled sleeves is nearly identical in all drawings and makes it a landmark feature of the series. In addition, each figure casts a shadow in the background that is unique in the fifteenth-century Italian drawing. Their well-measured and balanced compositions are startling in their individuality as portrait drawings and impressive as finished and independent works of art on paper. Of the eight drawings only is *Seated Scribe* fully finished with watercolor and gilding.[420] Two other drawings—*Young Greek Woman* and *Seated Woman*—include

[420] Although the miniature shares a great number of technical similarities with the rest of the Bellini drawings under consideration, the unusual application of watercolor and gold, reminiscent of Persian miniatures, has caused even scholars who accepted its attribution to Bellini to contend that the watercolor and gold were later added by an Islamic artist. See, for example, A. E. Popham and Philip Pouncey, *Italian Drawings in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1950), 5. In the catalogue, Popham and Pouncey describe the Boston drawing as having been drawn in pen by Bellini and then retouched in watercolor and gold by an Islamic artist. Hugo Chapman concurs in his catalogue entry, also available online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectid=717802&partid=1&searchText=bellini%2c+gentile&fromADBC=ad&toADBC=ad&numpages=10&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database.aspx&currentPage=3.

color notations on the costumes suggesting that the whole series was intended to be completed in watercolor similar to *Seated Scribe*. Together, the drawings form a gallery of unique costumes, ethnic types, and representational modes, as each drawing shows both a different outfit and a different standing or sitting position. For example, *Young Greek Woman* stands in a frontal view and is identified as a Greek woman from Pera (Galata); *Seated Woman* is depicted in a three-quarter view turning left and is identified here as a Karamanid woman; *Standing Turk*, in a frontal view, seems to represent a high-ranking official underscored by his tall turban; *Seated Man*, shown in a three-quarter view turning right, depicts a Janissary, particularly a Solak—an archer in the Sultan's bodyguard; and *Seated Scribe*, portrayed in a profile view, represents a Palace *kul* or an imperial page in the process of writing or painting.[421] The identification of the roles and costumes of the three remaining Eastern men—*Standing Man* (Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt) (Pl. X), *Standing Turk* (Louvre) (Pl. XI), and *Standing Man* (called an Albanian) (Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt) (Pl. XII)—is more elusive, but they clearly expand the visual vocabulary of standing poses and costumes. They are also

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Chong refutes this opinion, suggesting that Bellini also completed the watercolor in response to Islamic miniatures (see *Bellini and the East*, 122).

[421] The identifications of the *Young Greek Woman* as a woman from Pera and the *Seated Janissary* as a Solak are based on comparisons with Cesare Vecellio's *Habiti Antichi e Moderni* (1590); see the visual parallels in Margaret F. Rosenthal and Ann Rosalind Jones, *Cesare Vecellio's Habiti Antichi Et Moderni. The Clothing of the Renaissance World: Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas* (London; New York: Thames & Hudson, 2008), 420-421, 388. The proposed identification of the *Seated Woman* as a Karamanid woman is based on comparison with Vecellio's costumes. She has previously been identified as a member of the Druze sect in Syria, as Karabacek first proposed. See Joseph von Karabacek, *Italienische Künstler Am Hofe Muhammeds II. Des Eroberers 1451 - 1481* (Wien: Hölder [in Komm.], 1918), 81-83. *Seated Scribe* has endured incessant debates about its attribution and style, since its discovery by Frederick Martin in Istanbul in 1905. At first, it was identified as a portrait drawing of Mehmed II's son, Sultan Djem. See: F. R. Martin, "A Portrait by Gentile Bellini Found in Constantinople," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 9, no. 39 (1906): 144. F. R. Martin, "The Miniature by Gentile Bellini Found in Constantinople," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 11, no. 50 (May 1, 1907): 115–116. F. R. Martin, "New Originals and Oriental Copies of Gentile Bellini Found in the East," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 17, no. 85 (April 1, 1910): 5–8.

considered as being of a lower quality of execution, suggesting that they are probably copies by Bellini's workshop assistants or collaborators. The absence of direct transcriptions of the series of drawings in Bellini's own paintings casts doubt upon the validity of the assumption that they were mere exemplars or pattern drawings for Bellini's workshop assistants to copy and transfer into paintings in Venice.

The majority of scholars agree that at least four of these drawings of superb quality must have been made in Constantinople during Bellini's sojourn, due to the uniqueness of the Oriental types they represent.[422] G. Frizzoni ascertained the Venetian character of color notations on the costumes (for instance, *z* for *g* in *arzento* in the

[422] After the conclusive debate between Adolfo Venturi and Gustavo Frizzoni in 1898, the drawings were almost univocally attributed to Bellini or his workshop until Raby (1980) and Andoloro (1980) reassigned them to Costanzo da Moysis. For a summary of accepted and proposed interpretations see Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 99-105. Here is a complete list of publications concerned with the question of attribution and their conclusions: J. A. Crowe and G. B. Cavalcaselle, *A History of Painting in North Italy: Venice, Padua, Vicenza, Verona, Ferrara, Milan, Friuli, Brescia, from the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century* (London: J. Murray, 1871), 125 (Bellini). Louis Thuasne, *Gentile Bellini Et Sultan Mohammed II: Notes Sur Le Séjour Du Peintre Vénitien à Constantinople (1479-1480) D'après Les Documents Originaux En Partie Inédits* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1888), 76 (Bellini). Gustavo Frizzoni, "Zu den vermeinten Zeichnungen Pinturicchio's füf das Appartamento Borgia," *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 21 (1898): 284-85 (Bellini). Martin, "A Portrait by Gentile Bellini Found in Constantinople" (Bellini). Corrado Ricci, "Gentile Bellini a Costantinopoli" *Nuova antologia* 47, no. 162 (16 Nov. 1912): 177-91 (Bellini). Karabacek, *Italienische Künstler Am Hofe Muhammeds II. Des Eroberers 1451 - 1481*, 34-37 (Bellini). Lionello Venturi, *Le Origini Della Pittura Veneziana, 1300-1500* (Venezia: Istituto Veneto di Arti Grafiche, 1907), 343-44 (attr. to non-Venetian artist). Hans Tietze and E. Tietze-Conrat, *The Drawings of the Venetian Painters in the 15th and 16th Centuries* ([New York: Collectors Editions, 1944), 66-67, 69-71 (attr. to Bellini). Popham and Pouncey, *Italian Drawings in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum*, 5-6 (Bellini). Howard Frank Collins, "Gentile Bellini: a Monograph and Catalogue of His Works" (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1970), 199-203 (Bellini's workshop). Maria Andoloro, "Costanzo da Ferrara: gli anni a Costantinopoli alle corte do Maometto II," *Storia dell'arte*, no. 38/40 (1980): 185-212 (Costanzo). Julian Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom" (PhD diss., Oxford University, 1980), 69-76 (Costanzo). Francis Ames-Lewis, *Drawing in Early Renaissance Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 86-87 (Bellini). Jürg Meyer zur Capellen, *Gentile Bellini* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1985), 97-101, 168-172 (after Bellini). Julian Raby, "Picturing the Levant," in *Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration*. ed. Jay A. Levenson (Washington; New Haven: National Gallery of Art; Yale University Press, 1991), 77-81, 212 (Costanzo). Jürg Meyer zur Capellan, "Gentile Bellini" in *Saur: Allgemeines Künsler aller Zeiten und Völker*, Vol. 8 (Munich, 1994), 485-488 (Bellini). Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton, *Global Interests: Renaissance Art Between East and West* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 40-41 (Costanzo). Rosamond E. Mack, *Bazaar to Piazza: Islamic Trade and Italian Art, 1300-1600* (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2001), 157-58 (Costanzo). Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 99-105 (Bellini).

drawing of *Seated Woman*) and thus firmly associated the drawings with Bellini. It is not known exactly how Bellini's drawings landed in European collections. One explanation is that after Bellini brought the drawings back to Venice, and Pinturicchio (1454–1513) borrowed them for his frescoes for the Borgia Apartment (c. 1492-1494) in the Vatican and in the Piccolomini library (1502-1503) in Siena, Bellini then bequeathed them to his workshop assistants. This hypothesis was based on a reading of Bellini's will, dated 18 February 1506, published by Gustav Ludwig in 1903: "Item dimitto et dari volo Venture et Hieronimo meis garzonibus mea omnia designa retracta de Roma que inter ipsos equaliter dividantur."[423] Ludwig interpreted "designa retracta de Roma" as "the drawings that had been brought back from Rome" and thus argued that Bellini presumably had loaned them to Pinturicchio. Lionello Venturi (1907) rejected Ludwig's reading of the passage as overly simplistic, suggesting that the passage refers to some panoramic drawings of Rome "retracta de Roma" "or "i disegni con vedute romane," leaving the question of the provenance of Bellini's drawings unresolved.[424] Supporting Venturi's earlier view, Hans Tietze and Erica Tietze-Conrat (1944) speculated that Bellini may have brought the drawings with him and that copies of them reached Pinturicchio via a Venetian artist who had access to Bellini's drawings in Venice.

While these explanations are viable, another scenario is also possible. Bellini's drawings may have reached Rome with the fugitive Ottoman prince, Sultan Djem (1459-1495), who was in custody in the Vatican from 1489 until his death in 1495. In contrast to his brother Sultan Bayezid II (1447-1512), a conservative traditionalist who instituted

[423] Gustavo Ludwig, "Archivalische Beiträge zur Geschichte der venezianischen Malerei," *Jarbuch der Königlich Preußischen Kunstsammlungen* 24 (1903), Beiheft, 1-118.
[424] Venturi, *Le Origini Della Pittura Veneziana,* 344.

a regressive regime in Constantinople after succeeding Mehmed II, Sultan Djem was forward-looking in politics, supportive of his father's initiatives, and his father's favorite son.[425] John Freely shows that Prince Djem and Mehmed II had close relations and frequently corresponded. It may not be impossible that the Prince visited the capital during Bellini's sojourn at the Ottoman court and kept some of his drawings, as historical accounts suggest that Bellini's drawings were much admired at the court. An old inscription on the back of a double-portrait in a private collection in Switzerland (Pl. II) identifies the figures as Mehmed II and his son. Although attribution presents more questions than answers, Franz Babinger associated it with Bellini's stay at the Ottoman court and tentatively suggested that the son depicted was Prince Djem.[426] If so, the portrait is evidence that Prince Djem may have encountered Bellini in Constantinople. In this view, Prince Djem's confinement in the Vatican provides another explanation for how Bellini's drawings could have reached the Papal court, where they served as models in Pinturicchio's frescoes.[427] If they were in Prince Djem's possession, it also supports the idea that Bellini's drawings were valued as finished works of art and designs similar to those in circulation in the Turcoman and Timurid courts and collected in *muraqqa* albums, as we will see below.

The *Seated Scribe*'s separate and complex history of circulation between Constantinople and Timurid and Safavid courts in Herat and Tabriz further confirms the

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[425] John Freely, *Jem Sultan: The Adventures of a Captive Turkish Prince in Renaissance Europe* (London: HarperCollins, 2004), 28-29.
[426] Franz Babinger, "Un ritratto ignorato di Maometto II opera di Gentile Bellini," *Arte veneta,* Vol. XV (1962):25-32.
[427] I would like to thank Jack Greenstein for discussing with me this scenario for Bellini's drawings provenance.

theory that the drawings were appreciated in their own right. The painting's origin has been firmly traced to Constantinople, to Mehmed II's reign. The sheet was later included in the so-called Bahram Mirza Album, assembled in Safavid Iran in the sixteenth century. The album, comprising calligraphic specimens and paintings, which is now in the Topkapi Palace Museum in Istanbul (H. 2154), was assembled by Dust Muhhamad in 1544-1545 for Bahram Mirza (1517-1549), brother of the Safavid Shah Tahmasp (r. 1514-1576) and the youngest son of Shah Ismail. The album is famous for its extraordinary portraits of rulers of the late Timurid period and miniatures dating back to the early Safavid period, as well as for its preface, written by Dust Muhhamad, which provides the history of the album and of Persian artists.[428] David Roxburgh's research reconstructs the album's history by tracing some of the folios, including *Seated Scribe*, which were removed from it by early twentieth-century collectors (such as F. R. Martin, who was responsible for the discovery of *Seated Scribe* in Constantinople in 1905).[429] Julian Raby and Gülru Necipoğlu further argued that *Seated Scribe* was sent as a diplomatic gift during the 1470s, to the Aqqoyunlu ruler in Tabriz, Uzun Hasan (1423-1478). Later, it was mounted in the Bahram Mirza Album at the Persian Safavid court and an inscription on a cartouche was pasted in the upper right corner.[430] Since the instances of Ottoman embassies to the courts in Herat and Tabriz occurred only

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[428] W. M. Thackston, *A Century of Princes: Sources on Timurid History and Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, 1989), 335-350.
[429] David J. Roxburgh, "Disorderly Conduct?: F. R. Martin and the Bahram Mirza Album," *Muqarnas* 15 (January 1, 1998): 32–57, 39-41. David J. Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400-1600: From Dispersal to Collection* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).
[430] Raby, "El Gran Turco: Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom," 141. Gülru Necipoğlu, "The Serial Portraits of Ottoman Sultans in Comparative Perspective," in *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman*, ed. Selmin Kangal and Priscilla Mary Isin (Istanbul: Isbank, 2000), 30, footnote no.32.

sporadically in the 1470s[431] and prior to Bellini's visit to Constantinople, the painting's circulation as a diplomatic gift most likely began at a later time, after Mehmed II's reign. Indeed, diplomatic exchanges with the Safavids in Iran became regular beginning with the reign of Selim I (c.1470-1520), the grandson of Mehmed II.[432]

Current interpretations of the drawings' function have been mainly assessed in the context of Italian workshop practice and production and can be summarized as follows: 1) The drawings were reusable models (*simile*) or pattern drawings, employed in the preparation of finished works, and were also used to educate Italian artists by providing a vocabulary of Oriental types for them to draw on.[433] 2) They were detailed anthropological and ethnographic documentary studies of Turkish subjects who were new to the artist—not necessarily spontaneous studies from live models, but derived from other, more spontaneous sketches from life.[434] 3) They largely functioned as exotic objects (an Italian work) of diplomacy between the courts of Italy, Constantinople, and Herat. The first view may be correct in interpreting the reception and function of the drawings in Italy; however, the local cultural context of their production and reception in Constantinople has not been included in this analysis. The second largely regards Bellini both as an outsider and a European observer who was struck by exotic characters he encountered at the Sultan's court and made the drawings for his own use in his workshop in Italy, and thus perpetuates the Orientalist reading of the works. Previous scholarship

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[431] Raby refers with certainty only to one embassy to the court of Husayn Bayqara (1438-1506) in Herat in 1474, confirmed by Necipoğlu. Necipoğlu also suggests that the picture could have been sent to the Aqqoyunlu ruler in Tabriz, Uzun Hasan (1423-1478). Ibid.
[432] It is known that Selim I, grandson of Mehmed II, exchanged letters with Shah Ismail in 1510-14, prior to the decisive battle of Caldiran in 1514. Michael Axworthy, *Iran: Empire of the Mind* (Penguin, 2008), 133.
[433] Ames-Lewis, *Drawing in Early Renaissance Italy*, 86-87.
[434] As summarized in Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 99-105.

has assumed that Bellini looked only to Italian sources and his experience in running the workshop in Venice. Yet, Bellini was a court-artist employed by Mehmed II; and it was part of his official appointment to learn both local visual artistic traditions and codes of decorum, as the first chapter clarifies. Thus, Bellini most likely studied motifs, pictorial conventions, and artistic formats of other visual traditions he encountered in Constantinople. The third perpetuates the Eurocentric model of cross-cultural exchange that is especially clear in scholarship on *Seated Scribe*, as it emphasizes its function as a diplomatic gift between the courts, first to Herat from Constantinople, and later back to Constantinople with the Bahram Mirza Album. For instance, Jardine and Brotton remark that the painting "enabled recognition" and "absorption of a Western image into an Oriental tradition" and stress the painting's influence on Ottoman and Safavid artists in Constantinople and Persia.[435] Since, in all, scholarships overlooks specific functions Bellini's drawings had in the context of the Ottoman court and Mehmed II's imperial project, this section will reconstruct the drawing's intended function.

As I have shown in previous chapters, Bellini's tenure at the Sultan's court was fundamentally different from that of a mere European traveler recording exotic marvels and wondrous things, as well as of a diplomat responsible for specific political duties. Throughout his appointment, a diplomat remained an outsider and an informant, a voice of the State he represented, when charged with mediating a particular agreement.[436]

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[435] Jardine and Brotton, *Global Interests: Renaissance Art Between East and West*, 42.

[436] For a detailed overview of diplomatic missions and examples of specific appointments see Maria Pia Pedani, *In nome del gran signore: inviati ottomani a Venezia dalla caduta di Costantinopoli alla guerra di Candia* (Venezia: Deputazione ed., 1994). Deborah Howard, who examines diplomatic *relazione* among various agencies of architectural transmission, observes that *relazione* reports followed a set of established conventions codified by 1389 and usually included descriptions of the site, its name in antiquity, its climate and natural surroundings, and its inhabitants, including the elite. Deborah Howard, *Venice & the East: The*

Bellini was a member of Mehmed II's retinue, charged to execute portraits, paintings, and drawings as appropriate for his appointment as court artist.

The cultural setting and conditions of artistic production at Mehmed II's court suggest that Bellini had considerable opportunity to discover and experience Ottoman visualities first-hand,[437] as well as to go beyond the constraints of his own visual practice. As a member of Mehmed II's entourage, Bellini would have participated in palace ceremonies, where he might have observed and encountered a great number of palace attendants, international and local dignitaries, religious leaders, military men, and various other advisors and employees of the Sultan. The complexity and magnificence of Mehmed II's palace and its rituals provided Bellini with ample opportunities to comprehend the Ottoman visual regime. The palace itself, a monumental edifice that selectively fused Romano-Byzantine traditions of architecture with Timurid-Turkmen architectural and visual language—a hallmark of new "Constantinopolitan" aesthetics and Ottoman imperial cosmopolitanism[438]—was an occasion for Bellini to become acquainted with several architectural and ornamental traditions of Eastern Islam. Bellini's artistic horizons must have extended to apprehend and embrace not only the familiar

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Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture, 1100-1500 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 44.

[437] I utilize Norman Bryson's approach to visual culture and visuality, which examines visual events or objects constituting a particular visual culture as interrelated with practices of power. For example, Bryson states, "The study of the structure and operations of visual regimes, and their coercive and normalizing effects, is already one of the defining features of 'visual culture' as distinct from traditional art history; and to the extent that this is so, it is an area in which sites and occasions for cultural analysis, resistance, and transformation are bound to proliferate and multiply, in tandem with the regime's own expansive tendencies." Bryson, Norman, "Responses to Mieke Bal's 'Visual Essentialism and the Object of Visual Culture' (2003): Visual Culture and the Dearth of Images' (2003): *Journal Of Visual Culture* Vol. 2(2) (2003): 229-232.

[438] Gülru Necipoğlu, "From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Kostantiniyye: Creation of a Cosmopolitan Capital and Visual Culture under Sultan Mehmed II" in *From Byzantion to Istanbul: 8000 Years of a Capital* (Istanbul: Sakip Sabanci Museum, 2010), 262-277, 267.

visual culture of the Byzantine Empire, still alive and intact in the capital, but also the visual culture from Timurid and Turcoman courts, realized in the palace's architectural designs and planted at Mehmed II's imperial atelier by master decorators such as Baba Nakkaş. As recent studies show, Baba Nakkaş, together with other leading designers of Turcoman descent, were responsible for the development of non-figural floral, arabesque, and geometric designs that became characteristic of Mehmed II's court style, employed in ceramic pottery, Uşak carpets, tiles, book bindings, silks, and architectural decorations.[439] In addition, the Tiled Kiosk (c. 1474), or the Persian pavilion in the outer garden—work of itinerant Persian artists—was a source of authentic Timurid architectural style from Iran and Turan.[440] Lastly, as several contemporary sources report, Bellini was admitted to Mehmed II's treasure rooms, where the Sultan kept his collections of Christian relics and Byzantine icons and manuscripts, as well as other cherished items.[441] Among Mehmed II's valued collections were Timurid and Turkmen manuscripts and pictorial (*muraqqa*) albums that comprised a diversity of paintings and drawings from Herat, Tabriz, and Shiraz.[442] The latter, together with other circumstantial evidence, suggests that Bellini had multiple points of access to first-hand knowledge of

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[439] Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom," 160-161. Julian Raby, Zeren Tanindi, and Tim Stanley, *Turkish Bookbinding in the 15th Century: The Foundation of an Ottoman Court Style* (London: Azimuth editions on behalf of l'Association Internationale de Bibliophilie, 1993). Nurhan Atasoy et al., *Ipek: The Crescent and the Rose. Imperial Ottoman Silk and Velvets* (London: Thaes & Hudson, 2001), 226-230. Necipoğlu, "From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Kostantiniyye: Creation of a Cosmopolitan Capital and Visual Culture under Sultan Mehmed II," 264.

[440] Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (New York, N.Y.; Cambridge, Mass.: Architectural History Foundation; MIT Press, 1991), 212-217.

[441] Francesco Suarino, a Franciscan friar from Venice, and Bernardino da Foglio concur in reporting that Bellini was shown by Mehmed II to the private treasure room where the Sultan kept his Christian relics and icons and other valuable collections. As sources state, the Sultan asked Bellini to paint an icon in the modern manner. Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom," 95-102. Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 111-113. Also, see my discussion in chapter 1 and Appendix 1.

[442] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 84-87.

Eastern artistic traditions that could have stimulated his interest in appropriating and experimenting with pictorial conventions from other cultures in the Mediterranean.

The thesis that Bellini engaged with Islamic pictorial conventions and artistic formats is also supported by the new Mediterranean studies that view Venice and Constantinople as heterogeneous cosmopolitan societies.[443] In particular, Deborah Howard's research proposes wide-ranging intellectual assimilation and acute receptivity to Islamic visual forms in Venice. In *Venice and the East* (2000),[444] Howard argues that Venice's distinct visual culture and architectural environment owes to the transmission and propagation of Islamic architectural types and ideas. Howard's approach stresses a fundamental difference between Venice's overseas trade and travel and later European Orientalism, pointing out that the two had dissimilar agendas: the former was intellectually receptive to Eastern imagery, due to the maintenance of efficient channels of communication, while the latter was driven by an imperialist mentality.[445] In Bellini's case, Howard's model of Venice's intellectual openness further suggests that the artist's work in Constantinople must have been informed by the visual traditions he experienced and encountered.

A detailed examination of the artistic format of Bellini's drawings from Constantinople defeats the notion of them as "Oriental" anthropological studies of exotic Eastern types he encountered. The well-balanced, self-contained, and meticulously drawn full-length single figures on separate sheets of paper are comparable in refinement and

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[443] See introduction.
[444] Howard, *Venice & the East: The Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture, 1100-1500*.
[445] Ibid., 3-4.

artistic value with the finished drawings that circulated in Eastern Islam as precious objects and works of art in their own right.[446] Through his encounter with Eastern drawings, Bellini seems to advance the concept of the finished drawing in Northern Italy that were typically associated with compositional drawings based on Biblical narratives and devotional scenes. [447] Bellini's innovation in representing individual figures without any contextualizing background must have been inspired by Oriental artistic formats. Bellini's figures are likely types of Ottoman courtiers rather than portrait drawings of particular models. They are better understood as finished drawings of figure types that are "translations" of his Venetian techniques completed in response to the Central Asian tradition of pen-and-ink calligraphic drawings of full-length single figures representing either imaginary or typical court members. Such drawings were collected and appreciated as an independent medium and circulated either separately or mounted in *muraqqa* albums—the key medium of collecting in Turcoman, Timurid, and Ottoman (later in Safavid) courts.[448]

Could Bellini's drawings at the Ottoman court have been commissioned to represent the rich diversity of the multiethnic and multiconfessional polyglot society that Mehmed II forged in Constantinople? As is well known, costume was an effective marker of social standing and cultural identity. Bellini's representations of specific costume types would have been an appropriate project to celebrate the new cosmopolitan societies of the Ottoman Empire and Mehmed II's court. Bellini's visit also corresponded to the final stages of the codification of a new set of laws—*kanunname*—which formalized the

[446] Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400-1600: From Dispersal to Collection*.
[447] Ames-Lewis, *Drawing in Early Renaissance Italy*, 4.
[448] Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400-1600: From Dispersal to Collection*.

palace ceremonial and hierarchical roles within the administration and society at large. At such a moment it would be particularly fitting to categorize and visibly proclaim the structure of Ottoman society. Lastly, Bellini's drawings offered a great variety of sitting and standing postures, from full-frontal positions to various three-quarter views; such models of Turkish officials and people could help educate artisans in the imperial workshop in Italian visual language and representational techniques—training that would be appropriate for the school of portrait arts Mehmed II aimed to establish in Constantinople.

The highly polished character of Bellini's full-length single-figure drawings produces the effect of an autonomous and finished work of art. In the Italian Renaissance workshop, the production of drawings for their own sake was unusual. As Francis Ames-Lewis observed, Italian artisans largely looked at drawing merely as a disposable stage in workshop procedures, "not worth preserving and admiring for its own artistic and aesthetic qualities."[449] It was only in Northern Italy that a few artisans treated drawings as finished pictures in their own right—worthy of display as aesthetically viable works of art.[450]

The Central Italian approach to drawing practice does not change until Leonardo da Vinci's public presentation of the *Virgin and Child with St. Anne* cartoon in Florence in 1501 (Fig. 3.1).[451] Until then, as extant examples show, fifteenth-century drawings from Central Italy often were preliminary studies of figures—single or in groups—made

[449] Ames-Lewis, *Drawing in Early Renaissance Italy*, 2.
[450] Ibid., 4.
[451] Ibid., 3.

in preparation for specific compositions.[452] Carmen Bambach has convincingly argued that drawing studies in Central Italy were neither spontaneous utterances of artists' creative urges nor an autonomous medium, but an intermediary step in the preparation of large-scale cartoons and contract designs to be executed either in paintings or frescoes. Investigating extant drawings from Central Italy, Bambach concludes that many of them are in fact *spolvero*-figural cartoons and pattern drawings, systematically developed, beginning in the 1450s, as an intermediary step in the preliminary design process. Discussing the rise of exploratory drawings and cartoons in Tuscany in relation to Leon Battista Alberti's treatise *De Pictura* (1435), Bambach suggests that Alberti urged artists to rely on a precise figural design, called a "*circumscription*," as an essential technical device to ensure the production of a visually engaging and convincing *historia*; this process resulted in a scientific or technical approach to *disegno*, characteristic of Tuscan artistic practices.[453] As a result, fifteenth-century Tuscan drawings rarely give the impression of finished drawn pictures or depict single figures formatted as independent works of art.

Examples such as Benozzo Gozzoli's (c. 1421-1497) *Youthful Saint in a Niche* (Fig. 3.2) and *Study for the Patriarch Isaac* (Fig. 3.3)[454] are representative preparatory

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[452] Francis Ames-Lewis and Joanne Wright, *Drawing in the Italian Renaissance Workshop* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum in association with Hurtwood Press, 1983), 99; also Carmen Bambach, *Drawing and Painting in the Italian Renaissance Workshop: Theory and Practice, 1300-1600* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[453] Bambach, *Drawing and Painting in the Italian Renaissance Workshop: Theory and Practice, 1300-1600*, 186-87, 222-223.

[454] *Youthful Saint in a Niche*, a drawing on verso, is an autograph study for a fresco in San Francesco, Montefalco, completed in 1450-1452. It is a pen-and-ink drawing with wash on paper, currently preserved in the collections of the British Museum, London. *Study for the Patriarch Isaac* is a fully worked-up preparatory drawing in pen-and-wash on paper. The study was prepared for the fresco of the *Story of Esau and Jacob* painted by Gozzolli in the Camposanto at Piza in 1469-1474. The drawing is preserved in the

drawings indicating architectural forms, the figure's position in relation to the architectural background or other participants in the scene, and three-dimensional renderings of folds; they clearly function as preliminary compositions rather than finished works of art. Similarly, studies such as Filippino Lippi's (c.1457-1504) *Two Heavily Draped Men* (Fig. 3.4) and Vittore Carpaccio's (c.1465-1525/6) *Two Youths and an Old Man* (Fig. 3.5, 3.6),[455] depicting multiple figures grouped on the same sheet of paper, reveal their function as preparatory models of evolving figure types to be included in finished compositions. Pietro Perugino's (c.1446/1450–1523) *Head of a Bearded Man* (Fig. 3.7) and Giovanni Bellini's (c. 1430-1516) workshop drawing of *St. Paul* (Fig. 3.8)[456] also clearly demonstrate their relation to an external composition. In particular, Perugino's drawing, which was later used in the Pitti *Lamentation* (Fig. 3.9), lacks finesse and precision in contour, while detailing the variation of tone values and particularizing the expression. The sense of incompleteness and partiality, of a fragment, owes to the fact that the drawing was used as a guide to the execution of individual details in the painting.

In contrast, Bellini's Turkish characters are fully autonomous, highly polished, and convincing figures, detached from any compositional context, and appealing as

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National Gallery of Scotland in Edinburgh. See Ames-Lewis and Wright, *Drawing in the Italian Renaissance Workshop*, 128-131 & 156-159.

[455] *Two Heavily Draped Men* is a silverpoint exploratory study of figures developed as models to be included in later finished compositions. The drawing is preserved in the Devonshire Collection in Chatsworth. *Two Youths and an Old Man*, a brush-and-wash drawing currently preserved in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, is a typical *simile* drawing from Carpaccio's workshop. The drawing is attributed to a pupil in Carpaccio's workshop and is interpreted as a copy from a preparatory drawing of figures made by Carpaccio for his painting of *St. Ursula Taking Leave of Her Parents*. See Ibid., 164-165, 172-175.

[456] The drawing in pen-and-ink of *St. Paul*, now in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, is attributed to Bellini's workshop. The drawing is said to be a study copy of a figure study by Bellini. The black chalk drawing on paper of *Head of a Bearded Man* is a preparatory cartoon drawing, prickled for transfer; it was used in Perugino's *Lamentation* (1495), now in the Palazzo Pitti in Florence. It is preserved in Christ Church in Oxford. See Ibid., 170-171, 298-301.

precious jewel-like objects. For their virtuoso execution and autonomous compositions, they are a world apart from typical *simile* or pattern drawings produced both in Central and Northern Italy. As such, they fully realize the Persian and Ottoman approach to drawing as a finished and precious object and work of art in its own right. Bellini extends this concept of "drawn pictures," which typically circulated in Northern Italy as compositional drawings of Biblical or mythological scenes, to single, full-length figures representing contemporary characters and characteristic types, though not necessarily portraits of contemporaries.

Reconstructing the function of drawings in Northern Italy, Ames-Lewis connects the origin of the concept of the finished drawing to Jacopo Bellini's two books of drawings. Expanding upon the opinion of Robert Scheller, who recognized the progressive aspect of Jacopo Bellini's notebooks, which were in many ways unlike medieval model-books,[457]Ames-Lewis characterizes them as "mostly compositional drawings, produced by Jacopo for his own interest and self-conscious concern with his own abilities."[458] Ames-Lewis underscores that "Jacopo's compositional drawings were not made as preparatory designs for paintings"[459] but as carefully finished explorations in the field of pictorial design "to serve as paradigms of the workshop's style and traditions, preserved for the benefit of future generations of apprentices."[460] Drawn pictures enjoyed high status and were treasured objects in Venice, as evidenced by the Paduan humanist

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[457] Robert Walter Hans Peter Scheller, *A Survey of Medieval Model Books* (Haarlem: Erven F. Bohn, 1964), 214.
[458] Ames-Lewis, *Drawing in Early Renaissance Italy*, 125.
[459] Ibid., 4.
[460] Ames-Lewis and Wright, *Drawing in the Italian Renaissance Workshop*, 220. Also see: Colin T. Eisler, *The Genius of Jacopo Bellini: The Complete Paintings and Drawings* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1988).

Felice Feliciano's commentary about valuable drawings in his collection in his will of 1466. This attitude toward drawn pictures is also confirmed by the will of Jacopo Bellini's wife, Anna, who specified that "drawn pictures" and "all books of drawings" be inherited by her son Gentile.[461]

Bellini's Turkish characters extend the paradigm of his father's compositional drawings to single full-length figures. The precision, clarity, and continuity of the outline, the impeccable technical finish, the consistency and density of hatching and cross-hatching, and the careful and convincing rendering of costume details such as turbans, buttons, jewelry, and folds continue the tradition of workshop modeling and technical drawing found in Jacopo Bellini's albums and in such of his drawings as *City Walls with Well* (British Museum, 98, original leadpoint) (Fig. 3.10). However, Gentile goes beyond the mere preservation of his father's style—his own drawing techniques developed in the context of reworking Jacopo's notebooks, as can be seen in *Adoration of the Magi* (B) (Louvre 34) (Fig. 3.11) and *Flagellation by Torchlight* (A) (Louvre 5) (Fig. 3.12). Both are remodelled in pen by Gentile and his assistants in the 1470s, as Colin Eisler demonstrated.[462] Gentile preserved Jacopo's style of technical modeling (when compared to the clearly visible modeling in the London book) but reinforced the original faint silverpoint and leadpoint in pen to emphasize the line. Gentile's modifications to his farther's notebook may have happened in Constantinople in response to Ottoman and Timurid drawings he encountered at Mehmed II's court, as the outline was the key

[461] Ames-Lewis, *Drawing in Early Renaissance Italy*, 4, 12, 125.
[462] Eisler, *The Genius of Jacopo Bellini: The Complete Paintings and Drawings*, 100.

expressive element in eastern Mediterranean drawings. In one view, the Paris notebook was given as a gift to Mehmed II by the artist.[463]

The concept of the drawn picture in Northern Italy was realized not only by Jacopo Bellini and his workshop in Venice, but also by Andrea Mantegna in his Biblical compositions and mythologies, as well as by finished portrait drawings on paper by Vittore Carpaccio—all influenced by Jacopo in the same way.[464] Bellini's Turkish characters partake in the aesthetics of the drawn picture epitomized by Jacopo Bellini's exquisite "architectural portraiture," Mantegna's finished compositional drawings like *Judith* (1491) (Fig. 3.13), or Carpaccio's drawn portraits like *Portrait of a Middle-Aged Man* (Fig. 3.14).[465] Bellini, however, works with new subjects— Turkish characters— in his drawn pictures that are not Biblical characters, mythologies, or individual portraits, but rather contemporary figure types, endowed with a convincing, portrait-like presence.

Although we can never assuredly know the artist's intent, the cultural setting of the production of these Turkish characters suggests that their artistic format owes its inspiration to Islamic artistic forms and formats. Bellini's composition of Turkish characters finds parallels in Turcoman and Timurid *muraqqa* albums, collected by Mehmed II along with other specimens in the New (Topkapi) Palace.

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[463] Mary C. Fournier, "Drawing as Gift: Jacopo Bellini's Paris Volume in Ottoman Istanbul" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2006).
[464] Ames-Lewis, *Drawing in Early Renaissance Italy*, 4.
[465] Andrea Mantegna's *Judith* is a brush-and-wash drawing on paper, signed and dated February 1491; it is currently preserved in Uffizi, Florence. Vittore Carpaccio's *Portrait of a Middle-Aged Man* is brush and brown pigment over a slight black-chalk sketch, with white heightening on blue paper; it is preserved in the British Museum, London. See Ibid., 5, 47.

Representations of single figures, either standing or sitting, removed from any context, were a prominent feature of Turcoman, Timurid, and, later, Safavid miniature painting. Materials in the Topkapi Palace albums H 2152, H 2153, and H 2160 include many imaginary or real portraits and figure types of rulers, warriors, prisoners, horsemen, musicians, beloveds, and religious figures depicted full-length on separate sheets of paper. Impressive examples were likely known at Mehmed II's court, received as a ransom after the victory over the Aqqoyunlu (the White Sheep Turcomans) dynasty in 1473.[466] For example, a heavily armed Turcoman warrior in a twisted *contrapposto* stance (now in the Freer Gallery, Washington, DC) (Fig. 3.15) is a typical depiction of a warrior type circulating in the Aqqoyunlu cultural milieu and well represented in the Palace Albums.[467] A composite sheet uniting drawings and calligraphies (now at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) and showing a portrait of a calligrapher in a three-quarter view turning left, with a stylus and a book of his works (Fig. 3.16), is a typical figure-type representation of a court member that circulated widely in the Timurid and Safavid courts.[468] Later Safavid albums included a great number of single-figure drawings representing either "elegantly costumed courtiers, some possibly royal personages, standing as single figures or pairs, engaged in refined pastimes,"[469] or characters from various stations of life, representing diverse human activities or evocations of certain Persian poetic conceits, such as yearning for the beloved, youthful beauty, or the solace

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[466] Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom," 169.
[467] The drawing, dating back to the 1470s, is associated with Tabriz and is an example of the cross-currents in visual language characteristic of the art of Central Asia at this time. See Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 85-86. Also the Freer Art Gallery online catalogue.
[468] Reproduced in Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400-1600: From Dispersal to Collection*, 11. Roxburgh discusses the album's origin and development, tracing its origins to 1544-1545 in Iran.
[469] Ibid., 231-233.

of wine. Their artistic form developed from the traditions of Timurid painting practiced in the courts of Herat and Tabriz. For instance, *Standing Youth in a Cape* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) (Fig. 3.17) is a typical rendering of a warrior of high social standing (perhaps a courtier), indicated by the heron plume tacked onto his high turban, the sword attached to his sash, and the flanged mace in his hand.[470] *Lady with a Fan* (Fig. 3.18) and *Young Prince* (both from the Freer Art Gallery, Washington, DC) (Fig. 3.19),[471] on the other hand, are examples of allegorical figures representing the evocation of love and the solace of wine.

At the Ottoman court, the tradition of representing a single figure took a different turn and soon developed into the illustrated costume book, a popular genre in Constantinople and Europe beginning from the mid-sixteenth century.[472] It has been suggested that costume books started to be produced in the Ottoman Empire in the late fifteenth century and were "perhaps initially illustrated by Western foreigners living in Constantinople."[473] The function of these books is understood not as anthropologic, in the sense of distinguishing different peoples and their habits, but as representing "a varied landscape of different strata of the Ottoman world and their activities, from the sultan all the way down to the barber, the butcher, and the water-seller through the various

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[470] A work from the late sixteenth century. The drawing was mounted in the so-called Bellini Album by F. R. Martin. As Roxburgh has shown, most of the Persian paintings in the Bellini Album came from the Bahram Mirza Album assembled by Dost Muhammad in 1545. See Maryam Ekhtiar, *Masterpieces from the Department of Islamic Art in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York; New Haven [Conn.]: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Distributed by Yale University Press, 2011), 223.
[471] *Lady with a Fan* (F1932.9), c. 1590-1592, by Risa Abbasi (c. 1565-1635) and *Young Prince* (F 1937.8) by Muhammad Haravi, mid-16th Ct. Published in the Freer Art Gallery online catalogue.
[472] Ann Rosalind Jones, "Habits, Holdings, Heterologies: Populations in Print in a 1562 Costume Book," *Yale French Studies* no. 110 (January 1, 2006): 92–121.
[473] *Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797*, ed. by Stefano Carboni, (New York; New Haven [Conn.]: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Yale University Press, 2007), 298.

individuals of the court, such as the chief eunuch, the ceremonies attendant, and soldiers of diverse ranks."[474] Although completed later, the *Rålamb Costume Book*, acquired by the Swedish diplomat Claes Rålamb in 1657-58 in Constantinople and comprising a total of 121 miniatures, is a representative example of the costume book genre, which follows earlier examples produced in Constantinople beginning from the mid-sixteenth century, albeit not necessarily illustrated in the imperial atelier. It portrays Turkish officials, social occupations, and folk types, each on a separate sheet, depicted full-length in a three-quarter view, with explanatory captions (Fig. 3.20).[475] The later Ottoman costume book, as a distinct type, was adapted for the European market, fulfilling the European consumer's interest in travel and representation of foreign lands, as well as the need "to classify human diversity in the rest of the world."[476]

In this context, I argue that Bellini's Turkish characters prefigured representations of Turkish citizens and society types, which became prominent in later Ottoman costume books and preceded representations of costumes and peoples from around the world by more than a half century.[477] They also appear to correspond to the genre of single-figure painting, which depicted either real or allegorical types or social occupations. This genre was prominently established in Turcoman and Timurid courts beginning from the 1300s

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[474] Ibid.
[475] The costume book can be found online: http://greatestbattles.iblogger.org/Ottoman/Album/Ralamb.htm#1
[476] Jones, "Habits, Holdings, Heterologies: Populations in Print in a 1562 Costume Book," 93.
[477] The beginning of the tradition of representing people of the East and of the world, particularly in print form, has been associated with the scientific exploration of nature and the world, the discovery of the Americas c. 1492, and with Albrecht Dürer and his contemporaries' work in Northern Europe. Some of the earliest examples date back to the 1500s. See the exhibition catalogue *Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration*, ed. by Jay A. Levenson (Washington; New Haven: National Gallery of Art; Yale University Press, 1991). First print editions of costume books of people from around the world appear in the 1560s. See Jones, "Habits, Holdings, Heterologies: Populations in Print in a 1562 Costume Book."

and continued to blossom in the Safavid and Ottoman courts, albeit deployed for different ends. Bellini's Turkish characters may very well be models that take into consideration the popular and cherished artistic format of the single figure in Eastern Islam. They are better understood as "translational" forms completed in the process of translation of Venetian artistic techniques to the native visual traditions or the Ottoman semiosphere. However, Bellini's drawings reflected the cultural context of Mehmed II's politics, preoccupied as they were with the reordering of the Ottoman state into the cosmopolitan Empire. Thus, Bellini's drawings may have set a new representational type for Ottoman citizens, which was later employed in Ottoman costume books and *muraqqa* albums contained in the Topkapi Palace collections and produced for Ottoman and European collectors alike, starting from the sixteenth century.

The cultural context of Mehmed II's court must have provided an occasion for Bellini to celebrate the Sultan's courtiers and citizens and their distinctive and diverse social, religious, and ethnic identities pronounced in the new Palace ceremonial. Through the details of their costumes and the peculiarity of their poses, Bellini's drawings capture Ottoman citizens from various stations of life and offer an illuminating insight into the social and cultural specifics of Ottoman society under Mehmed II's rule by portraying it as culturally diverse and cosmopolitan as well as recognizing Ottoman subjects as its creative actors.

For example, the depiction of *Greek Woman* (Fig. VI), identified as a woman from Pera (Galata), in a frontal position looking directly into our eyes, is particularly notable. The drawing endows the subject with unexpected agency and challenges

contemporary viewer's notions of Eastern women, who presumably lived restricted lives circumscribed by religious and gender constraints under Islam. Bellini's *Greek Woman* parallels the new model for representation of women developed in the 1470s and particularly associated with Leonardo da Vinci's work in Florence and Milan. As Mary Garrard posits, in Italian painting we do not find portraits of women meeting the gaze of the beholder prior to Leonardo da Vinci's celebrated portrait of Ginevra de' Benci, painted in the 1470s in Florence (Fig. 3.21).[478] In contrast to the profile portraiture that was normative for women, Leonardo da Vinci established a new type of female portrait, in which the female subject looks "straight in the eye" of the beholder.[479] Although full-faced portraits of women existed in Northern Renaissance portraiture in the Quattrocento, the profile representation was preferred in both Central and Northern Italy. In this respect, Bellini's bold rendering of the Greek woman, with her veil lifted and her whole face exposed, is surprising; it seemingly appears directly linked with the new type of female representation made popular in Florence and Northern Europe.

Was Bellini familiar with the new portrait type introduced in Florence? Was he drawing on the Northern Renaissance portrait tradition? It is far more plausible that Bellini drew on Byzantine and Timurid artistic traditions, where representations of female subjects were more typically frontal or three-quarter view. In particular, Byzantine portraits of empresses and ruling aristocracy favored the frontal view with the eyes directly engaging the beholder. Such is the depiction of Mehmed II's first wife Sitt Hatun, daughter of the Turkic ruler of the Zu'l Kâdiroğlu (a state in present-day

[478] Mary D. Garrard, "Who Was Ginevra De' Benci? Leonardo's Portrait and Its Sitter Recontextualized," *Artibus Et Historiae* 27, no. 53 (January 1, 2006): 23–56.
[479] Ibid., 25.

southeastern Turkey) (Fig. 3.22, 3.23). The picture was painted by a Byzantine artist in 1449 as a frontispiece to be added to an early fifteenth-century manuscript of Ptolemy's *Geography* and Hero's *Pneumatica* (Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice, Gr. 516, fols. 2v-3r), which was presented as a gift to the bridegroom—her brother Melik Arslan.[480] The young woman is represented in a frontal view. Her face, framed with a white-and-gold head cover, is fully exposed; her gaze is directed to the beholder. As Scott Redford suggests, even though the bride was Muslim, the miniature was fashioned in the Byzantine style using existing conventions for depiction of rulers, thus reflecting "an extraordinary period of over a century of vassalage and intermarriage that ended with the conquest of Constantinople in 1453."[481] Bellini's drawing of *Greek Woman* parallels the Byzantine conventions in imperial portraiture manifested in the miniature of Sitt Hatun. The Greek woman's face appears similarly framed with veils covering her head, wrapping around her neck, and cascading down her shoulders and over her back.

The depiction of Mehmed II's bride follows Byzantine conventions not only for the representation of dress, but also for the position of the hands. For the latter, in contrast, Bellini adopts a motif from the Timurid visual tradition. A flower—a rose in the woman's right hand in our case—was a typical motif in Timurid and Turcoman art, referring to courtly refinement, nobility, elegant pastimes, and Sufi mysticism, particularly associated with poetry. A similar iconography of a rose is central in the so-called *Sinan Portrait* (Fig. 3.24) (discussed in the following chapter)—a miniature

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[480] Scott Redford, "Byzantium and the Islamic World, 1261-1557," in Helen C. Evans, ed., *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)* (New York; New Haven: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Yale University Press, 2004), 389-396.
[481] Ibid., 395.

portrait of Mehmed II completed at the Sultan's atelier, which parallels examples of Timurid ruler portraiture such as that of Mehmed II's contemporary, Sultan Husayn, who was a Sufi poet himself.[482] In the context of ruler portraiture, the flower chiefly underscored refinement, nobility, and religious mysticism. In the context of poetry and *muraqqa* albums, on the other hand, the flower was also associated with the representation of beloveds in Persian art (Timurid and Safavid periods). Beloveds as evocations of mystical love, beauty, and the yearning of the soul were usually represented in luxurious clothing with elegant gestures and attributes, and functioned to complement the accompanying poetry and to intensify the experience of poetic verse.[483] One of many examples is the pair of illustrations of female and male beloveds facing each other, depicted on two separate folios from the sixteenth century *muraqqa* album at the Biblioteca Nationale Marciana in Venice (Fig. 3.25).[484] Depicted in the distinctive style of the later sixteenth century, in three-quarter view with the head slightly tilted, a sinuous body, and opulent clothing, the young female on the left holds a spray of flowers in her right hand. Her right hand is directed upwards and the flowers are placed at the level of her heart to accentuate emotions; the reference to the heart was central to Sufi mysticism. Her other hand is elegantly placed along her body with its palm and fingers pointing down. The placement of the hands of the Persian miniature parallels that of *Greek Woman*, suggesting that Bellini became familiar with these visual conventions of Timurid art. Many existing miniatures confirm that this hand position was characteristic for

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[482] As Necipoğlu points out, Sultan Husayn also holds a rose in the Bustân group portrait painted ca. 1490. Necipoğlu, "The Serial Portraits of Ottoman Sultans in Comparative Perspective," in Kangal and Isin, ed., *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman*., 29.
[483] *Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797*, 142, 298.
[484] Published in Ibid, 142. I inspected the album while in Venice in 2010: Fondo G. Nani, Inv. Cod. Marc. Or. 94 (=64). The calligraphy is attributed to Mir Ali Katib, second half of the sixteenth century.

Timurid and Safavid representations of standing and elegantly costumed courtiers and beloveds. Confirmation can also be found in another example portraying a female beloved—a young woman with a spray of flowers from the Freer Gallery of Art, dating to 1575 (S 1986.296) (Fig. 3.26). This image accompanies a poetic verse and illustrates the yearning of the lover:

> How long are you going to wound me with grief?
> Keep me wondering in the lane of separation?
> If in the end you will raise me from dust,
> Why do you cast me away like an arrow?[485]

The Byzantine and Timurid conventions in *Greek Woman* drawing indicate that Bellini considered various visual sources in order to fashion a particular pose for the woman. She appears to combine the frontal view of Byzantine princesses with gestures reminiscent of Timurid and Persian drawings of beloveds and courtiers. It can thus be corroborated that Bellini's drawing was specifically designed for the multicultural and cosmopolitan context of Mehmed II's court, in an effort to establish novel portrait types of courtiers and beloveds that reflected the complex and competing visual ideas and visualities in the court and the city. Bellini's drawing can be understood, then, both as a costumed court woman—a royal personage—and as an idealized image of a beloved.

Bellini's depiction of *Greek Woman* significantly differs from the Orientalist representations of his younger contemporaries. Bellini's rendering of the woman standing

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[485] Quoted from the Freer Art Gallery website:
http://www.asia.si.edu/collections/singleObject.cfm?ObjectNumber=S1986.296

upright, with her fully exposed face and commanding gaze, underscores her agency and high station in life. A typical Orientalist painting, in contrast, would imply Western superiority and feature a prejudiced outsider's view of Eastern subjects, typically described in derogative terms.[486] This attitude was fueled by humanist literature commonly portraying the Turk as a terrifying barbarian—the enemy of Christendom.[487] As Amanda Wunder demonstrates, the next generation of European itinerant artists to visit Constantinople after Bellini, including the Flemish artist Pieter Coecke van Aelst and a Danish artist named Melchior Lörck, who sojourned in Constantinople in 1533 and 1555, respectively, continued to neglect the ethnic diversity of Constantinople. These artists also represented Turkish subjects as exotic, different, and backward, ubiquitously emphasizing the image of the Turk as "the terrifying mounted Turkish warrior, wearing an elaborate turban and enormous moustache."[488] Wunder suggests that the artists "did little to complicate the image of the Turk in sixteenth-century Europe," or, in other words, to humanize the image of Turk as the barbarian warrior that prevailed in Europe in the context of the "pessimistic fear of Turkish incursions into Western Europe."[489] In contrast, Bellini underscores the ethnic diversity of Constantinople and that of Mehmed II's court; he celebrates Turkish subjects by stressing virtù, individuality, and verisimilitude in rendering facial characteristics, costume details, and postures.

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[486] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).
[487] Nancy Bisaha, *Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). Margaret Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008).
[488] Amanda Wunder, "Western Travelers, Eastern Antiques, and the Image of the Turk in Early Modern Europe," *Journal of the Modern History*, 7 (2003): 89-119, 92.
[489] Ibid., 117, 93. Recent article by Larry Silver "East is East: Images of Turkish Nemesis in the Hapsburg World" discusses in detail representations of Turks as enemies of Christendom by these artists. See: *The Turk and Islam in the Western eye, 1450-1750: Visual Imagery before Orientalism*, ed. James G. Harper (Farnham, Surrey, UK, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 187-215.

The unusual frontal view of *Greek Woman* must have reflected the context of Mehmed II's cultural politics and his court, both of which showed a great degree of tolerance toward Byzantine Greeks and offered women protection and economic and social rights according to both religious law (*sharia*) and sultanic law (*kanunname*). Mehmed II's policies, as discussed in the previous chapter, expressed a great degree of tolerance toward Byzantine Greeks and the broader Christian populations of the Empire and Constantinople. Moreover, the Sultan gave orders on several occasions to relocate people from other regions to Constantinople, especially from the Balkan Peninsula, which were annexed during ongoing military campaigns. It is also known that his Christian-born viziers often came from mixed ethnic backgrounds. Some were Byzantine-Greek like Has Murad Paşa and his brother Mesih Paşa (two descendants of the Byzantine Palaeologus dynasty), or Italo-Greek like Iskander Bey, born to a Levantine Genoese father and a Greek mother from Trebizond, who was also married to the daughter of Genoese merchant from Pera. Other royal household members came from newly seized regions of Morea, Bosnia, and Wallachia.[490] It is said that Mehmed II's Christian stepmother Mara Branković (c.1416-1487), who was a Serbian princess, played a significant political and cultural role at the Sultan's court and often acted as an intermediary in Western diplomatic relations, particularly between Mehmed and the Republic of Venice during the second Ottoman-Venetian War (1463-1479).[491] Thus Bellini's depiction of *Greek Woman* boldly returning the gaze of the beholder must have been inspired by the noticeable presence of Mara Branković and other Greeks at the court.

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[490] Necipoğlu, "From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Kostantiniyye: Creation of a Cosmopolitan Capital and Visual Culture under Sultan Mehmed II," 262.
[491] Ibid.; also Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), 436-438.

The image would also particularly reflect the political setting of the Ottoman court and that of the trading capital, where Greek women played a prominent role in family alliances and social relations.

Bellini's representation of *Greek Woman* expresses her high station in life and underscores her dignity and secure position in both her own family and the socio-political relations of the capital. Indeed, starting in the Early Modern period, women in the Ottoman Empire enjoyed considerable economic power in their families as well as in society. They were able to secure administrative roles, act as administrators of pious foundations and *timar* holders, play roles in repairing their families' fortunes, and earn money.[492] In addition, they were protected by law from abuse by their husbands, could file for divorce in court, and, if divorced, received monetary awards through the Ottoman court system, including the right to obtain the shares that "Muslim law (*sharia*) accorded them."[493] Therefore, Bellini's drawing of *Greek Woman* could be understood as representing the sense of empowerment that women enjoyed in Ottoman Constantinople. In this sense, Bellini's drawing can be interpreted not so much as an idealized image of a beloved (though it can function as such as well), but rather as an image-type of Mehmed's entourage, specifically of a royal personage—an interpretation underscored by the attribute of the flower, inspired by Timurid conventions in regal portraiture—and citizen of cosmopolitan Constantinople. Thus Bellini's drawing provides insight into the realities of life and society in Ottoman Constantinople and must therefore be

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[492] *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era*, ed. by Madeline C. Zilfi (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997), 8-9.
[493] Ibid.

distinguished from typical Orientalist representations of Eastern subjects by Western artists in the Early Modern period.

Bellini's *Seated Woman* (Pl. IX), depicted in a three-quarter view, casually seated cross-legged in the Eastern manner and wearing a distinctive conical headdress and costume, further confirms the proposed theory that Bellini fashioned "portrait" types of Mehmed II's multiethnic and cosmopolitan court, relying on diverse sources in generating carefully posed images of Turkish citizens rather than walking around and making portraits from life in Constantinople.

In this drawing, attribution of the woman's costume continues to challenge the interpreter and remains far from conclusive. Joseph Karabacek proposed to identify her as a member of the Druze community,[494] an Arab tribe of the Shiite branch of Islam, found primarily in Syria (especially the Damascus and the Aleppo regions), Lebanon, and Palestine—territories that passed into Ottoman possession only in 1517.[495] Her conical headdress bears a resemblance to that aspect of the female Druze costume documented in Lebanon by French photographers like Félix Bonfils in the middle of the nineteenth century (Fig. 3.27). However, the differences between the Druze-style headdresses, known as a *hennin* in French, a *turtûr* in Arabic, or a *tâdsch* in Persian, and that of Bellini's figure are significant. In Bellini's drawing the veil, covering the woman's shoulders, leaves her face fully exposed and falls down her back; it is also attached at the lower part of her headdress (which is bordered with strips of trim, crimped into bands,

[494] Karabacek, *Italienische Künstler Am Hofe Muhammeds II. Des Eroberers 1451 - 1481*, 81.
[495] Nejla M. Abu Izzeddin, *The Druzes: A New Study of Their History, Faith, and Society* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), 127-132.

and embroidered with a flower-element or studded with jewels, and not Kufic script, as has been suggested[496]). In the Druze costume, the veil appears to be attached to the tip of the *hennin* and falls down in the front and back, making it possible for the woman to easily cover her face completely with its cascading folds. Additionally, *hennin* appears to be a separate part made of metal and attached on top to the head-cover. In Bellini's drawing, however, the headgear looks as a single conical unit without a separate part that attached on top; it was probably made of felt, which was typical of Anatolian fashions. The Druze-style headdress had become fashionable among élite European women, especially in Burgundy, and was widely disseminated in Northern European portraiture and illuminated manuscripts in the fifteenth century.[497] Illuminated manuscripts and portraits—among which Hans Memling's *Portrait of Maria Portinari* (c. 1470) (Fig. 3.28) is a remarkable example that correctly portrays the *hennin* with the veil attached to its tip in the manner of Druze costume— suggest that Bellini may have been familiar with this particular style of headdress and able to portray it correctly. However, the peculiarity of the headdress in the *Seated Woman* indicates that Bellini was most likely referring to a different ethnic costume.

A consideration of available examples from Persian and Ottoman costume books as well as Cesare Vecellio's *Habiti Antichi et Moderni*, published in Venice (c. 1590-8), suggests that the costume of Bellini's *Seated Woman* most closely resembles the descriptions in Vecellio's costume books of noble women from the Karamanid Sultanate, a south-central part of Anatolia (Fig. 3.29). Although Vecellio's prints of Karamanid

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[496] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 101.
[497] Karabacek, *Italienische Künstler Am Hofe Muhammeds II. Des Eroberers 1451 - 1481*, 72-73, 78-79.

women do not offer exact visual parallels to *Seated Woman*, his verbal descriptions of the costume's details and colors correspond with Bellini's representation, including its color notes. The drawings of élite women in the Persian "portrait" books and Ottoman costume books help to contextualize Bellini's drawing as a representation of a royal personage and as a social type that embodies several concepts: the apex of elegance and prominence in the Sultan's cosmopolitan court, the luxury and glamour of the women and wives in his harem, and his domestic policy and military conquests.

Vecellio provides four descriptions of the clothing of noble Karamanid women; among these, one from the early period and one from the modern provide clues for attribution of Bellini's *Seated Woman*. Both underscore that noble Karamanid women wore a *sottana*, a long robe similar to those worn by Turkish men and Catholic clerics, and a headdress that resembled a papal mitre. The early costume is comparable to the one in Bellini's drawing:

> [N]oblewomen of Caramania wear a *sottana* of turquoise-colored *velluto ad opera*, which has no bodice but covers the breast and falls to the feet, without many folds; its sleeves cover the arms. They wear no ruffles at their necks but strands of pearls instead. Their headdress resembles a papal miter, covered with *velo* and made of red velvet; in the middle at the front is a strip of cloth of gold, full of jewels. They wear their hair in many small curls and let a lot of it fall loose onto their shoulders, but twisted into rope-like braids. On top they wear a mantle in the style of a *saio* of fine wool, fringed along the edge, and slashed or trimmed with a patterned strip. Under this they wear a gown made in the style of a loose camicia like those worn by priests, and belted with painted velo.[498]

In Bellini's drawing, the woman wears a long, vertically striped garment without many folds or ruffles at the neck, as described above, and with long sleeves covering the entire

[498] Rosenthal and Jones, *Cesare Vecellio's Habiti Antichi Et Moderni. The Clothing of the Renaissance World: Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas*, 487.

length of her arms. The gown mirrors the straight cut of Turkish male robes worn in Ottoman Constantinople, with buttons placed in the middle, as well as that of robes for clerics in the Byzantine Orthodox and Catholic Church, which were adopted in Europe and are known even today as *sottana*. Scholars have clarified that the *velluto ad opera* mentioned by Vecellio signified "velvet with a pattern, often of gold or silver thread worked across its surface":[499] this description can be interpreted as the striped material in Bellini's drawing, where stripes are created by a thread worked across the surface. Bellini's color notes also directly correspond to Vecellio's description: the color of the robe is noted as *azuro* (azzurro) or blue, whereas in Vecellio it is turquoise; the lower part of headdress is swathed in red fabric, as the annotation states, seconding Vecellio's discussion of the red veil covering the headdress. In addition, the headdress is either studded with flower-shaped golden jewels or embroidered with gold flowers on the band bordering the red veil, per the annotation "golden," which points to the band; this, too, mirrors Vecellio's discussion of "a strip of cloth of gold, full of jewels" worn on the headdress. Further, the tall conical shape of the woman's headdress in Bellini's drawing can be described as resembling the papal mitre, as contemporary examples of the ceremonial headdress of the Popes consisted of tall, pointed tiaras. Well-known examples of tiaras can be seen in both the fresco of Pope Innocent III at the Cloister of Sacro Speco (Holy Cave) (c.1219) in Subiaco (Fig. 3.30), and in Raphael's frescoes of Gregory IX (portrait likeness of Julius II) at the Stanza della Segnatura (1508-1512) in the Vatican Palace (Fig. 3.31). Although Vecellio's prints of the Early Modern Karamanid costume do not offer an exact visual parallel to the turban in Bellini's drawing, they highlight the

[499] Ibid., 593.

tall and pointed headdress decorated with gold and jewels as an essential characteristic of the female Karamanid costume. It is also clear that both prints are mere approximations of the verbal descriptions; perhaps the author did not have a good model to draw upon. Overall, many details of the costume in Bellini's drawing agree with Vecellio's verbal descriptions and visual approximations, including even such minor characteristics as the small curls on the women's temple, a simple necklace either of precious beads or pearls, and a mantle fringed along the edge covering her shoulders. It is therefore possible to identify Bellini's *Seated Woman* as a noble Karamanid woman.[500]

The proposal to locate the turban in Bellini's drawing in the Anatolian cultural milieu strongly agrees with the fact that conical headdresses were a prominent feature of male costume among Central Asia Turks in Anatolia. Isli's research on monumental tombs demonstrates that a traditional felt headgear called a *seyfi sikke*, a long conical hat (much like in Bellini's drawing) (Fig. 3.32), can be traced back to the Mevlana Sufi order in Anatolia, founded after Mevlana Celaleddin-i Rumi's death in 1273.[501] Whether or not Bellini's woman wears a *sikke*-style turban, its conical style appears to be native to the culture of Anatolia.

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[500] I have also compared Bellini's *Seated Woman* to Vecellio's verbal descriptions and prints representing Ottoman noble women, Persian women, and women from Syria (Aleppo, Damask, and Tripoli), Macedonia, and Rhodes, as well as Greek women. The Karamanid costume appears to offer the closest parallel to Bellini's costume. In addition, scholars generally agree that a tall, narrow headdress known as a *hennin* originated in Central Asia and resembles the headgear worn by Mongol women depicted in miniature paintings staring from the fourteenth century, and later popular in Persia. This confirms the proposed theory identifying the costume as Karamanid, as Karaman was a close ally of states in Central Asia. See Charlotte Jirousek, "More than Oriental Splendor: European and Ottoman Headgear, 1380-1580," *Dress*, 22 (1995): 22-33, 27. Joyce Kubiski, "Orientalizing Costume in Early Fifteenth-Century French Manuscript Painting (Cité des Dames Master, Limbourg Brothers, Boucicaut Master, and Bedford Master)," *Gesta*, 40, no. 2 (2001): 161-180, 166.

[501] Necdet Isli, *Ottoman Headgears* ([Istanbul]: Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Traditional Arts Directorate, 2009), 166-173.

This identification of *Seated Woman* as Karamanid strongly relates to the context of Mehmed II's court politics and his imperial ambitions. The Karamanid Dynasty was one of the most powerful *beyliks* (a territory under the jurisdiction of a Bey or "Lord") in south-central Anatolia. The dynasty was founded by Kerimeddin Karaman Bey in the thirteenth century and lasted until 1474, when Mehmed II largely brought it to an end, with subsequent contributions by his successor, Bayezid II, in 1483.[502] The Karamanids were the Ottomans' greatest Anatolian Turkmen rival, as they, like the Ottomans, viewed themselves as the sole and legitimate successors to the Seljuqs of Rum. Due to this ongoing rivalry, the two dynasties were frequently at war, which usually resulted in exchanges of territories and peace treaties. The dynasties also forged political alliances against common enemies, at times solidifying them with marriage contracts like that between Karamanoğlu Alâeddin Ai Bey and Nefise Sultan, daughter of the Ottoman Sultan Murat I (1326-1389), which formed one of the first important political ties between the two dynasties. During Mehmed II's reign, the Karamanids posed a major threat to the Sultan's expansionist politics when they allied themselves with the Venetians and the Akkoyunlu Sultan, Uzun Hasan, in 1464-1465 in an effort to prevent the Sultan's conquests of Venetian and Greek territories and to oppose his plans to expand the Empire southwards and eastwards, encroaching on the Karamanids and the Akkoyunlu.[503] The war began in 1468, when Mehmed II suddenly attacked the Karamanids, capturing their two largest cities, Konya and Larende, and securing control

[502] "The Ottoman Empire" in http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/historiography-XIV. Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1481* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1990), 221.
[503] Ibid., 192-194.

at the southwest border.[504] This campaign resulted in the deportation of respected rich households and poor Karamanid families alike and their resettling in Constantinople. However, the Karaman affair remained central to Mehmed II's external politics, as the continuing alliance among the Karamanids, Uzun Hasan, and the Venetians led to the Karamanids' regaining of lost territories and posed the threat of an unexpected attack. To resolve the instability at the southwest border of the Empire, Mehmed II led three additional military campaigns against the Karamanids in 1471-1474. The defeat of Uzun Hasan in 1473 aided Mehmed II's definitive conquest of Karaman in 1474, which extinguished this dynasty's rule in central and southern Anatolia and stabilized the Ottoman territorial possessions in Asia.[505] In Mehmed II's expansionist program, the decisive capture of Karaman meant the ultimate legitimation of his imperial claims as the sole and rightful successor of the Seljuqs of Rum in Anatolia, bypassing the Mongols. His victory in the war with Karaman also resulted in glorified historical accounts of Mehmed II's deeds. These accounts proclaimed him as emperor and exalted the Ottoman dynasty as the supreme *gazis*, or wagers of *jihad*—the *gazis* who would lead the Islamic world to greater glory by overcoming the extreme rivalries and divisions among the Islamic peoples.[506]

In the context of Mehmed II's external politics and imperial ambitions, Bellini's drawing of *Karamanid Woman* relates to the Sultan's imperial identity; it could have also functioned as a personification of his military conquests and his dominion over Asia. Similarly, the drawing of *Greek Woman* may be interpreted as a personification of

[504] Ibid., 199.
[505] Ibid., 221.
[506] "The Ottoman Empire" in http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/historiography-XIV.

Mehmed II's successful conquests of Byzantine-Greek territories and the Byzantine-Greek identity of his court, according to the discussion above. After all, the use of maidens as allegories of military conquests was well established in ruler portraiture; even on the reverse of the medallic portrait of Mehmed II completed by Bertoldo di Giovanni in Florence in the 1480s, three female nudes, crowned and labeled "Greece, Trebizond, and Asia," represent Mehmed II's military achievements and illustrate his title as "Emperor of Asia, and Trebizond, and Great Greece"[507](Fig. 3.33). Further, as Bronwen Wilson, the historian of Early Modern costume books in Venice, convincingly demonstrates, naturalistic representations of women typically functioned as allegories of moral ideals and political identities; in such images, depictions of contemporary fashions with special attention to the materiality of the costume reinforced "the truth of the eye-witness account."[508] Wilson shows, for example, that collectors sought out images of the dogaressa in sixteenth-century Venice, due not to their interest "in a portrait of a historical individual" (as the dogaressa bore little relation to the actual experiences of visitors to or citizens of Venice, who could not have seen her in public), but to the images' function "as a representation of a moral ideal"—"a feminine symbol of domestic virtue," "the apex of patrician luxury, constancy, and the ideal wife."[509] Wilson's study demonstrates that examples of the dogaressa, like that from the *Album amicorum* (Egerton 1192 and Addington 15699, the British Library, London) (Fig. 3.34-3.35), appear, at first glance, to be painted from life; however, "different artists reproduce the same costumes and poses, which attests to the use of models instead of painting from

[507] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 76.
[508] Bronwen Wilson, "Reproducing the Contours of Venetian Identity in Sixteenth-Century Costume Books," *Studies in Iconography*, 25 (2004): 221-275, 255.
[509] Ibid.

life."[510] In this sense, Bellini's drawings of *Karamanid Woman* and *Greek Woman* can be understood both as personifications of Mehmed II's imperial identity and as relating to a programmatic series of drawings—among which there must have been additional female personages representing both the Sultan's external and domestic politics and the cosmopolitan identity of his court. In particular, the Karamanid woman's elaborate and exotic headdress, tall and studded with golden ornaments; the modesty and good taste of her dress; her calm comportment; and the elegance of her seated pose, referring to an indoor location, all would reinforce nobility and domestic virtù, purity, beauty, and luxury associated with the Sultan's wives and courtiers.

In Bellini's case, we may reconstruct his artistic process as drawing on various sources, including his own sketches as well as artistic models he found in Constantinople. *Karamanid Woman* is represented in the carefully posed manner associated with the studio. It has been suggested that she was an actual member of the Sultan's harem, but this view has been challenged by Campbell and Chong, who stipulate that it was highly improbable for a Muslim woman to have sat for a male European artist.[511] This opinion is further supported by Angiolello, who wrote in the fifteenth century that the Sultan's harem was located in the first or old palace, a mile away from the New (Topkapi) Palace. It is very unlikely that Bellini visited the old palace, where access was carefully guarded and restricted only to the Sultan. Unless Bellini as a guest of honor was provided with his own Karamanid concubine (of which no historical evidence is found), it is more probable that he drew on diverse examples of Eastern costume which he observed at Mehmed II's

[510] Ibid., 251.
[511] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 101.

court, in the imperial library collections, and outside the walls of Seraglio in Constantinople, where he could have seen Karamanid families that were forcibly relocated to the capital following the conquest. As such, the drawing of the *Karamanid Woman* is better understood as a portrait type or a personification relating to Mehmed II's imperial identity.

The remaining drawings of men depicted in various poses can be securely identified as members of Mehmed II's court; they represent its different hierarchies, including the high-ranking administrative élite, the military establishment, and slaves—all aspects of the diverse mix of races and nations at the court. For these drawings, Vecellio's costume book, extant costumes in the Topkapi Palace Museum, and Ottoman tomb sculpture offer the closest descriptive and visual parallels to aid in attribution.

The frontal position of *Standing Turk* (Fig. VII) represents his high social status, as does his clothing: a high turban wrapped around the *taj* in the manner of turbans featured in Mehmed II's portraits (Fig. 3.24), a *dolmen* (dulimano) of vertically striped silk,[512] decorated with buttons at the front and belted with a ceremonial sash of patterned silk, [513] and a caftan or *saio* (*saione*) with buttons and long sleeves.[514] His direct gaze at

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[512] A dolmen or *dulimano* was a long and straight robe with narrow sleeves and an opening at the front decorated with buttons. See Rosenthal and Jones, *Cesare Vecellio's Habiti Antichi Et Moderni. The Clothing of the Renaissance World: Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas*, 586. In its form, it closely relates to a cassock or sottana, a long, ankle-length robe worn by Christian clerics in the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Church. The dolmen parallels examples from the imperial collection from the Topkapi Palace, particularly in the style of the stripes, which were most appreciated in Ottoman Constantinople. See Atasoy et al., *Ipek: The Crescent and the Rose. Imperial Ottoman Silk and Velvets.*

[513] Patterned silk, for example, was used to indicate wealth and high social rank. See Necdet Isli, *Ottoman Headgears* ([Istanbul]: Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Traditional Arts Directorate, 2009), 63.

[514] A kaftan, also known as a saio, saione, or casacca in Venice and Italy, was a shin-length man's coat or jacket for outdoor wear. It had buttons at the front, long sleeves, and was typically made from wool, cashmere, silk, and cotton. See Rosenthal and Jones, *Cesare Vecellio's Habiti Antichi Et Moderni. The Clothing of the Renaissance World: Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas*, 585.

the beholder, unusual in portraiture at this time, also depicts power and rank, which are additionally underscored by the size and style of his turban. Elaborate turbans were markers of high administrative positions at the Ottoman court and were permitted to be worn by the Sultan's noble entourage—Muslim members of the Sultan's administration and provincial officials or emirs.[515] As Isli demonstrates, relying on early literary sources, monumental tomb sculpture, and illustrated miniatures, "there was an intimate link between headdress size and the status of individuals in high positions," who had much bigger turbans in comparison to those in lower positions, beginning from 1069, when the headgear rule was defined in *Kutadgu-bilik*.[516] Vecellio also observes that among the ranks of the imperial house, only a *Musti* or a religious leader of the Turks, an *Aga* or the general of the soldiers and the janissaries, and two *Cadils Eshiers* or doctors of law were distinguished by high and large *mücevveze*- and *örf*-style turbans (Fig. 3.36-3.37), as well as a by a long dolmen and a kaftan of expensive silks.[517] According to Isli's reconstruction, Mehmed II wore a large *örf*-style turban in the manner of the highly educated class—scholars, Sheikh ul-Islam, kadi (judges), and imams—as can be seen at Mehmed II's sarcophagus in Istanbul (Fig. 3.37).[518] *Standing Turk* wears a turban similar to Mehmed II's *örf*-style turban, which suggests his high administrative status in the court. Additionally, the style of *Standing Turk*'s striped *dolmen* with an elaborate sash is associated with the sultanic costume of that period; it parallels that of Mehmed II in the

[515] Jirousek, "More than Oriental Splendor: European and Ottoman Headgear, 1380-1580," 24; also Isli, *Ottoman Headgears*, 19-25.
[516] Ibid., 22. Historical anecdotes confirm the association of largeness of headgear with rank among the Ottomans: "During the reign the Süleyman the Magnificent, there was an imam named Kürdizâde in the palace and instead of making effort to conceive the teachings of Râşid Takiyüddin he was too busy with winding the turban larger." See Ibid., 25.
[517] Rosenthal and Jones, *Cesare Vecellio's Habiti Antichi Et Moderni. The Clothing of the Renaissance World: Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas*, 428-433.
[518] Isli, *Ottoman Headgears*, 75.

miniature portrait *Mehmed II Smelling a Rose*, and can be interpreted as a particular style of silk used in the costume of élite members at the Sultan's court. The use of Bellini's *Standing Turk* by the Umbrian artist Bernardino Pinturicchio to portray noble attendants in the *Sala dei Santi* of the Borgia Apartment in the Vatican (1492-1494), to the right of Emperor Maximilian in the *Disputation of Saint Catherine* (Fig. 3.38, 3.38A), and to the right of the pope in the *Arrival of Pius in Ancona* in Siena's Piccolomini Library (1505-1507) (Fig. 3.39), suggests that the drawing was understood as a representation of a high-ranking member of Mehmed II's entourage.[519] Some scholars have even proposed identifying the Turk in these frescoes as the fugitive son of Mehmed II, the Ottoman Prince Sultan Djem, due to his involuntary stay in the Vatican, beginning from 1489. However, extending Ricci's arguments, which doubt the validity of such identifications,[520] Bellini's *Standing Turk* is better understood as a portrait type of a high-ranking official under Mehmed II. In being reused in several contexts in Italy as a stock figure, it loses its portrait identity and clearly functions as a type for the representation of Ottoman courtiers.

Another figure of *Standing Turk* (Pl. IX), albeit in a three-quarter view, is strongly linked with the frontal type of *Standing Turk*. The styles of the voluminous turban and the long kaftan with narrow sleeves, almost reaching to the ground, closely parallel those of

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[519] Attribution of the drawings to Gentile Bellini and his influence on the designs implemented by Pinturicchio has been disputed by Julian Raby on multiple occasions. However, the authors of the exhibition *Bellini and the East* have convincingly reassigned the drawings to Bellini, and thus this dissertation stresses the view that Pinturicchio followed Bellini's drawings in representations of his Oriental figures. See Corrado Ricci, *Pinturicchio (Bernardino di Betto of Perugia), His Life, Work and Times, transl. Florence Simmonds* (London, 1902), 103-119. Julian Raby, "Picturing the Levant" in Levenson, *Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration*, 77-81.

[520] The *Portrait of Mehmed II and His Son* (attributed here to Bellini's workshop), now in a private collection in Switzerland, offers a more convincing example of Sultan Djem's likeness, which departs significantly from the *Standing Turk*. This will be discussed in greater detail in the subsequent chapter.

the frontal *Standing Turk* and suggest identifying him, too, as a high-ranking official. A variant of the standing pose, the drawing offers an alternate arrangement of the kaftan that is depicted fully closed in the front. Thus, the drawing suggests multiple ways in which Ottomans wore kaftans and provides a modification to the portrait type of a high-ranking Ottoman courtier.

Two other Turkish men—one seated (Pl. VIII) and the other standing in a three-quarter view with a feather decorating his hat (Pl. X)—can be identified as members of Mehmed II's military establishment, namely Janissaries. Janissaries were the oldest military establishment, organized during the reign of Orphan Gazi (1281-1362), the second sultan in the Ottoman dynasty founded by Osman. Orphan decreed that Janissaries were to be distinguished with a special hat called a *börk*.[521] The red-and-white *börk* was assigned to Janissary army officers and commanders to wear especially at ceremonies and in carrying out their duties as leaders of troops. In essence, the *börk* consisted of a band or "*daltac*," a middle cap or "*kasiklik*," and a long conical end or "*yatirma*" that extended from the nape of the neck to the lower back.[522] The headgear of the men in both drawings can be identified as a *börk*. In the case of *Seated Janissary*, the *yatirma* is worn standing up, whereas it falls down the back in the drawing of *Standing Man.* As can be seen in miniatures, the *börk* was worn in several ways to denote a particular rank. Extant examples of sculptural decorations of Ottoman tombs, Ottoman miniatures, and Vecellio's illustrations and descriptions of Ottoman costume support identification of *Seated Janissary* as a member of *Solacchi* (Solak), or archers of the

[521] Isli, *Ottoman Headgears,* 120.
[522] Ibid., 124.

Sultan's bodyguard, and *Standing Man* as a member of *Baluchi Bassi*, or Great Pashas of the Janissaries.

The rank and position of *Seated Janissary* (Pl. VIII) is marked by his high *börk* of felt, pointed upwards; the caftan; and the arms, including a bow, a quiver with many arrows, and a sword. Vecellio provides the following description of *Solacchi* (Fig. 3.40):

> Besides a great number of armed Janissaries and staff-bearers, the Sultan also keeps three hundred of specially chosen archers, selected from the boldest, most skilled Janissaries, all of whom he has wear colored livery, either of white *damasco*[523] or silk. These men's garments are long in back and hitched up in front, and belted with wide, rich belts of gold and silk in the Moorish style. They also wear a high hat of white felt, with a large and very valuable plume. Their weapons include a scimitar[524]and a gilded bow and arrow that they keep in their hands, drawn if they are always ready to shoot; on their shoulders they wear a quiver. When the Sultan goes to the mosque or out of his territories, they accompany him two by two, surrounding him completely.[525]

Seated Janissary closely parallels Vecellio's description and illustration, only differing in the absence of a plume attached to the headdress. As is well known, the official Ottoman costume underwent some significant transformations during the rule of Süleyman the Magnificent (1494-1566), who added pomp and splendor to the palace ceremonial in order to enhance his imperial status as well as to project a majestic image of the Ottoman ruling house.[526] As extant illuminated miniatures show, both aigrettes and plumes enter

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[523] *Damasco* or damask is a self-patterned, reversible fabric made of fine silk or linen. The pattern is formed using both warp and weft, usually with satin weave, which produces a surface design of shining thread against a matte ground. Since ancient times, the fabric was originally made or traded through the city of Damascus (Syria). Rosenthal and Jones, *Cesare Vecellio's Habiti Antichi Et Moderni. The Clothing of the Renaissance World: Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas*, 586.

[524] A scimitar is a curved Asian sword.

[525] Rosenthal and Jones, *Cesare Vecellio's Habiti Antichi Et Moderni. The Clothing of the Renaissance World: Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas*, 440.

[526] Necipoğlu characterizes the rule of Süleyman the Magnificent as the period of the creation of a new aesthetic canon that reflected the processes of state formation and self-imaging by the ruling elite and resulted in the establishment of a distinctively Ottoman visual canon across the arts and architecture,

the vocabulary of the official Ottoman costume in the sixteenth century and become ubiquitous by the end of Süleyman's reign. Since Bellini's drawing predates Vecellio's description and illustration by nearly a century, it must have reflected an earlier fashion without plumes.

The costume of *Standing Man* (Pl. X) seconds the description of the *Baluchi Bassi* or Great Pashas of the Janissaries (Fig. 3.41):

> Under of the General of the Janissaries there are three captains of a thousand of Janissaries each, called *Baluchi Bassi*. They wear particular hats, some like those of *Solacchi* or like those of Janissaries, but broader at the top. They wear silk, satin, damasco, and red and green *ormesino*,[527] but in dark shades. In the winter they wear the finest furs of any kind, such as lynx, sable, and marten, with gold buttons, short boots, and colored shoes in Turkish style, depending on whether they are riding or not. These men three or four hundred; their duties include accompanying the Great Lord into the countryside or to the mosque; when they do, they ride in a beautiful marching order, grandly seated on their horses in front of their squadron of Janissaries, carrying a small lance, and attached to their saddle pommels, a small round shield and a *busdegnano* or iron-clad mace. They make such an impressive show that whoever sees them from a distance in this formation would estimate that four hundred of them were a thousand of our horsemen, because of large standing feathers they wear on their heads. Sometimes, instead of these plumes they wear one white feather.[528]

Vecellio describes the headdress of the *Baluchi Bassi* as similar to that of the *Solacchi* and of the Janissaries, but broader at the top, which is reflected in Bellini's drawing. The

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including the official costume. See Gülru Necipoğlu, "A Kânûn for the State; A Canon for the Arts: Conceptualizing the Classical Synthesis of Ottoman Art and Architecture," *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps: actes du Colloque de Paris, Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, 7-10 mars 1990 = Süleymân the Magnificent and His Time: Acts of the Parisian Conference, Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, 7-10 March 1990*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Documentation française, 1992), 194-216.

[527] Ormesino was "a plain, light, and inexpensive silk cloth of Levantine origin, originally made on the island of Hormuz in the Persian gulf, widely produced in Italy in the sixteenth century, and in Venice in Cannaregio at the Fondamenta degli Ormesini; toward the end of the century woven in patterns." Rosenthal and Jones, *Cesare Vecellio's Habiti Antichi Et Moderni. The Clothing of the Renaissance World: Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas*, 589.

[528] Ibid., 432.

Standing Man wears the headdress or *börk* like that of the *Seated Janissary*, except that his *yatirma* softly falls down his back. His rank is noted by a single feather attached to the side of his *börk*, which agrees with Vecellio's mention of the Great Pashas of the Janissaries as sometimes wearing only one feather instead of big plumes. Additional examples representing Janissaries help to solidify the proposed attribution. Both in the Ottoman illuminated manuscript *Dīvān-i Nādirī* (1572-1573) (Fig. 3.42)[529] and in the European print of the *Ottoman Sultan and His Court* by Antonio Tempesta (c. 1640) (Fig. 3.43),[530] the captains of the Janissaries are shown wearing a pointy headdress decorated with a plume on the top and a single feather on the side. A detailed contemporary reconstruction found on the cover of *Serpuşlar* (Fig. 3.44),[531] which also parallels the illustration of the Janissary captain in the *Rålamb Costume* book (c. 1657-1658) (Fig. 3.45),[532] confirms that Janissary captains wore a *börk* with both a detachable plume in the center and a single feather on the side. In addition, Pinturicchio's fresco in the *Sala dei Santi* of the Borgia Apartment includes Bellini's *Standing Man* shown in a red kaftan (Fig. 3.38), which supports Vecellio's description of the colors worn by the captains. Thus, it is possible to corroborate that Bellini's drawing must represent a captain or Great Pasha of the Janissaries.

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[529] The manuscript is from the Topkapi Palace Museum Collection, TSK, H 899, fol. 4, published in Necipoglu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 26.

[530] The print is called *Ordine che tiene il Gran Turco quando cavalca* and was published in Paris; it is now in the Arcadian Library. Reproduced in Alastair Hamilton, *Arab Culture and Ottoman Magnificence in Antwerp's Golden Age* (London; Oxford; New York: Arcadian Library; In association with Oxford University Press, 2001), 21-25.

[531] Izzet Kumbaracilar, *Serpuslar* ([Istanbul?]: Türkiye Turing ve Otomobil Kurumu, 1979). The book cover is published in Isli, *Ottoman Headgears*.

[532] Page 75. See http://greatestbattles.iblogger.org/Ottoman/Album/Ralamb.htm#75.

Standing Man (called an Albanian) (Pl. XII), portrayed wearing the simplest costume in comparison to the other drawings, appears to parallel Vecellio's description of slaves (Fig. 3.46):

> Great numbers of people are made the slaves of the officers of the Great Turk and his *Bassas*, which he has in the hundreds. These send their slaves out to perform various tasks, both for their own affairs and as mercenaries; and in the evening, when they return from their work, these unfortunate slaves have to give whatever they have earned during the day to their masters. They live on bread and water. Their garments are of *grigio* and other rough, cheap fabrics. On their heads they wear small caps of finely pleated felt. They wear shoes and stockings in the Turkish style and many also go barefoot.[533]

Although Bellini's drawing differs somewhat from Vecellio's print in the details of the hat, the styles of the short garment and shoes agree with the print. Since in Ottoman court society and the Palace ceremonial the headdress size represented an individual's status, the simple cap worn by *Standing Man* instead of a turban[534] must refer to his non-Muslim background and low social position, which can be understood as that of a slave. Slaves played a crucial role in the Ottoman political establishment, having been captured in great numbers during recent military campaigns in the Balkans and Greece. It would be a logical step, then, for Bellini to close a series of society types with a drawing of a slave.

Lastly, the painting showing *Seated Scribe*, an Ottoman youth portrayed in profile, has been previously identified as the Sultan's page (Pl. V). The youth wears the finest Ottoman costume—a kaftan made from dark-blue brocaded velvet with vegetal forms

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[533] Rosenthal and Jones, *Cesare Vecellio's Habiti Antichi Et Moderni. The Clothing of the Renaissance World: Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas*.
[534] Turbans were a distinctive sign of Muslim identity and were prohibited for individuals of other religious backgrounds.

woven in golden thread and a *dolmen*[535] of red velvet underneath. The youth's beautiful caftan reflects Vecellio's description of the dress of pages (Fig. 3.47):

> In Seraglio…are found a very large number of children who have been taken or offered and handed over as payment for taxes to the Great Turk, called pages by us and by them. In any case, they are all slaves. They are always ready to serve and to carry out their master's will. In this place they are raised, fed and educated in the law of Mohammed, and also in horseback riding, archery, the handling of weapons, and other military and civil duties. Taken all together, they range from the ages of eight to twenty; their number, as has been said before, is usually five or six hundred. Their style of dress is unusual and splendid, for their gowns are floor-length. They carry no weapons, and on their heads they wear a small cap of velvet or light gold or silver cloth turned up in front, with a single feather.[536]

At the same time, the youth turban also clearly differs from the hat described by Vecellio. Postponing a discussion of the format, style, and iconography of Bellini's Ottoman youth until the next section, it is necessary to note here that the youth is engaged in either writing or painting. As Halil İnalcik has shown, Mehmed II revolutionized the traditional Muslim court by establishing the Palace School of the Pages. Palace *kuls*, who were recruited boys from Christian families, were trained in craftsmanship, drawing, mathematical sciences, calligraphy, religion, and philosophy, in addition to military and administrative skills at the Palace School.[537] Palace *kuls*, who were selected for different departments based on their natural talent and aptitude, were carefully observed and assessed upon their admission, and sent through different curricula accordingly. The selection process consisted of many steps, monitored not only by tutors and lead eunuchs,

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[535] For further information on *dolmen* see note No. 87 in this chapter.
[536] Rosenthal and Jones, *Cesare Vecellio's Habiti Antichi Et Moderni. The Clothing of the Renaissance World: Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas*.
[537] Halil İnalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600.* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 88.

but also by sultans, who sometimes examined pages personally.[538] During Mehmed II's time, the Palace School became a center for the training of artists and craftsmen, including architects, painters, jewelers, glass blowers, silk weavers, and others. An exemplary graduate of the School, albeit at a later time, was the architect Sinan (ca. 1490-1588), who received full professional training in the architects' office at the Palace and was later appointed to the office of chief architect of the Empire.[539] In this view, the Ottoman youth may be identified as a member of Mehmed II's palace *kuls*, who were trained to assume leadership positions at the court, thus Bellini's drawing essentially portrays the new Ottoman ruling élite, perhaps an Ottoman artist in a new courtly role.

The proposed attributions offer the following conclusion: Bellini's series of drawings is better understood as a visual record of the plurality of Ottoman society, representing the important hierarchies and ranks of Mehmed II's court and his military establishment, recently codified by the sultanic decrees, *kanunname*. *Standing Turk* (Pl. VII) in a frontal position and *Standing Turk* (Pl. XI) in a three-quarter view depict Mehmed II's administrative élite, perhaps regional emirs; *Seated Janissary* (Solak) (Pl. VIII) and *Standing Man* (Great Pasha) (Pl. X) are both key members of the military establishment or of the Janissaries; *Standing Young Man* (called an Albanian) (Pl. XII) is a member of the lowest class—Ottoman slaves; *Seated Scribe* (Pl. V) is a Palace *kul* or page, the new Ottoman élite, signifying Mehmed II's imperial project of reordering of

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[538] Ibid, 79.

[539] Necipoğlu details the organization of architectural practices in the Porte, stressing that the corps of architects along with other artistic guilds belonged to the machinery of the State, with the chief artisans occupying administrative positions on the level of *agas* in the Sultan's extended household of *kuls*. Following Mehmed II's reign, the artisan corps were further bureaucratically consolidated and made into individual administrative branches of the centralized state, separate from the loosely organized the *müteferrika* corps of Mehmed II's time. Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 39, 153.

Ottoman élites; and the drawings of women—*Young Greek Woman* (Pl. VI) and *Seated Karamanid Woman* (Pl. IX)—are portrait types personifying Mehmed II's imperial project, in particular his successful conquests of Byzantine-Greek and Asian (Anatolian) territories, as well as the cosmopolitan nature of his court. As is evident, the series of drawings is not complete and originally must have included other society types and regional female costumes to celebrate the Sultan's military conquests, his cosmopolitan empire, and ranks of the Ottoman administrative, military, and religious élites, including representatives of trades and guilds.

The artistic format of the drawings and their attribution allows us to reconstruct their function in the following ways:

First, Bellini's drawings were made as fine exemplars of finished portrait types inspired by the jewel-like calligraphic drawings that circulated in Eastern Islam and were preserved in collections or *muraqqa* albums. This series must have been one of the first *muraqqa* albums produced in the Ottoman atelier to celebrate Mehmed II's polyglot court and society, represented by means of the latest cutting-edge drawing and painting technologies. Negotiating between Timurid, Byzantine, and Venetian visual traditions, Bellini endowed Mehmed II's court with a distinct visual identity functioning at the intersection of several cultural traditions and established a visual bridge between East and West.

Second, since the fine execution of Bellini's drawings solicits close attention, they must have been passed around as exemplars of precious artworks at Mehmed II's court, albeit in somewhat different fashion than the more informal and festive socio-literary

gatherings, or *majlis*,[540] practiced in Turcoman and Timurid courts in Central Asia and later in Mughal India. Angiolello's account of a dialogue recorded between the Sultan and Bellini about a drawing of a dervish suggests that Bellini's drawings were discussed in Mehmed II's presence; while he was the primary audience, he was accompanied by his courtiers, perhaps from his close circle of Greco-Byzantine humanists, Italians, and other advisors—the trusted and élite members of his entourage. After a close examination of Bellini's vivid depiction of the man's wild eyes ("*occhi sboridi*"), Mehmed II speculated that the dervish was mad.[541] Similarly, the account of Bellini's sojourn in the second edition of the *Supplementum Chronicarium*, published in 1486 in Venice with input from Bellini, [542] talks about numerous pictures he made for the demanding patron that caused a great awe in the court. This account suggests that Bellini's drawings were discussed and appreciated as demonstration pieces of his talent and of artistic technology from Venice. However, Italian sources overstate the wonder Bellini's works caused at the court to promote the new Renaissance artistic manner as superior to the point of being miraculous. This theme was further exploited by Giorgio Vasari, who talks about the admiration of Bellini's paintings and numerous drawings at Mehmed II's court:

> E poi che egli presentò a quel principe una vagissima pittura, fu ammirato da quel signore che uno uomo mortale avesse in sé tanta divinità, che egli esprimesse sí vivamente e sí naturale le cose della natura. Né vi dimorò molto Gentile che egli ritrasse di naturale Maometto, che pareva vivissimo;

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[540] *Majlis* was a customary form of socio-literary intercourse in Turcoman and Timurid courts, at which literary works were recited and critiqued. They were typically informal and included music and drinking, telling entertaining stories, and reading panegyrics. See Maria Eva Subtelny, "Art and Politics in Early 16th Century Central Asia," Central Asiatic Journal, 27, no. 1-2 (1983): 121-148, 139.

[541] Angiolello, *Il sultano e Il profeta: memorie di uno schiavo vicentino divenuto tesoriere di Maometto II Il conquistatore*, 152.

[542] The new critical account of the *Supplementum Chronicarium* is published and discussed by Amy N. Worthen, "An Inconvenient Text: The *Supplementum Chronicarium* as a Source of Information about Gentile and Giovanni Bellini" (forthcoming, courtesy of the author).

> al quale, come cosa inusitata, pareva questo piú tosto miracolo che arta. Et in ultimo, dopo lo aver veduto molte esperienzie di quell'arte, lo domandò se gli dava il cuore di dipinger se medesimo, e Gentile rispose che per satisfarli si ritrarebbe, e facilissimamente. Né passò molti giorni che ritrattosi a una spera che somigliava forte, lo present al signore. Il quale, vedendo quel che Gentile faceva della pittura, ne rimase piú amirato e stupefato che prima; per la qual cosa da se stesso non poteva immaginarsi che é non avesse qualche spirto divino addosso.[543]

Vasari's account greatly expands the story in the *Supplementum Chronicarium*, casting it appropriately as a contemporary discourse on painting. Vasari's account further exaggerates that the drawings were discussed as an unusual miracle and caused rumors at the court that Bellini possessed a divine spirit that was acting through him. In view of Vasari's agenda to promote Florentine art and new Renaissance artistic style (the third manner, as he calls it), it is only credible that Bellini's works were discussed and appreciated at the court.

Third, the variety of poses—from standing to sitting, from frontal to three-quarter view—and different costume details leads me to propose that Bellini developed a vocabulary of Ottoman costumes and stances representing ideals of courtly attire and conduct. These types of courtly postures became available for local artists to be studied as models in their artistic training and practice. Although we do not find exact copies of the *Turkish Characters* completed by Ottoman artists at the court, miniature portraits of Mehmed II made in the imperial atelier show that the local artists used Bellini's drawings as models for representations of costume details. In both miniature portraits of Mehmed II—*Mehmed II Smelling a Rose* (Fig. 3.24) and *Bust Portrait of Mehmed II* (Fig. 3.48)—

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[543] Giorgio Vasari, Luciano Bellosi, and Aldo Rossi, *Le Vite De' Piú Eccelenti Architetti, Pittori Et Scultori Italiani Da Cimabue Insino a' Tempi Nostri: Nell'edizione Per i Tipi Di Lorenzo Torrentino, Firenze 1550* (Torino: G. Einaudi, 1986), 435-436.

the artists replicated Bellini's distinctive way of representing the folds of the *sottana* or *dolmen* sleeves that prominently appears in *Young Greek Woman* (Pl. VI), *Seated Janissary* (Pl. VIII), and *Seated Karamanid Woman* (Pl. IX), as well as in *Seated Scribe* (Pl. V).[544] The fact that in Bellini's painted *Portrait of Mehmed II* (Pl. I) the sleeves of the Sultan's *dolmen* do not have the same densely hatched stippling as in his drawings further confirms that the local artists used his drawings as models.[545] As Barry points out, the artists translated the Venetian way of rendering the folds into the local visual language based on a different set of aesthetic criteria and conceptual foundations. The subtle play of light and shade in the folds in Bellini's drawings became "a speculative abstraction" and "brutally crinkled sleeves" in Mehmed II's portraits by Ottoman artists.[546] Copying models by the best masters was essential to artistic education in both the East and the West, and such originals or superior models were passed from hand to hand.[547] Drawing education started from single figures. In this sense, Bellini's drawings would have been suitable for artistic education. Certainly, contact between the local masters and Bellini would have led to an exchange of recipes and trade secrets and contributed to the shaping of the local characteristics of the imperial atelier and to the development of the Ottoman visual idiom. In this way, Bellini's work contributed to the

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[544] There are some differences in opinion about this subject. The authors of *Bellini and the Eas*t, for example, ascribe "the densely hatched stippling of Mehmed's robes" to Pisanello's influence via Mastori Pavli, an artist from Ragusa and possibly a teacher of the local artist Sinan, one of the authors of miniature portraits (Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 89). The authors of the catalogue *Venice and the Islamic World* propose a direct link between Bellini's drawings and the miniature portraits (Stefano Carboni, *Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797*, 296). In my opinion, the miniature portraits of Mehmed II exhibit a close affinity with Bellini's portraits of Mehmed II, as will be shown in the next chapter, thus suggesting that the stippling of the sleeves is an additional characteristic detail that links these portraits to Bellini's models.

[545] Authors of *Venice and the Islamic World* exhibition arrive to a similar view suggesting that Bellini's drawings assumed the canonical status in the emerging tradition of Turkish sultan portraiture. Stefano Carboni, *Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797*, 296.

[546] Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the Riddle of Bihzâd of Herât (1465-1535)*, 42.

[547] Joseph Meder, *The Mastery of Drawing* (New York, N.Y.: Abaris Books, 1978), 219.

exchange of artistic technologies between Venice and Constantinople. This process involved translation and adaptation of Venetian models and fashioning of new "hybrid" artistic forms.

Fourth, in addition to their function as precious objects and models to be studied, Bellini's drawings or additional copies of them could have functioned as models for a larger program or series of drawings that may have been intended to be executed as frescoes. In the Italian workshop, fine finished drawings were typically made before the execution of frescos and large paintings, and as a part of the preparatory process especially in prestigious official commissions.[548] Angiolello reports that Bellini painted some rooms in the Palace and completed numerous paintings and pictures, an assertion which is also supported by the *Supplementum Chronicarium* and other contemporaries discussed earlier. These accounts were probably in agreement with oral stories circulating in Venice after Bellini's sojourn, to which there were other witnesses such as the diplomat and the Secretary of the Venetian Senate Giovanni Dario and his entourage, as well as the artist's workshop assistants, who traveled with him. As Necipoğlu showed, a kiosk or an outer garden pavilion in the Italian style was planned during the time of Bellini's visit at the court; it was there that the artist was most likely to paint frescoes.[549] If so, could Bellini have executed similar figure types in the fresco decorations in the Italian pavilion? No documentary or archeological evidence has been published in relation to the Italian kiosk at the Topkapi Palace. However, contemporary examples

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[548] Ames-Lewis, *Drawing in Early Renaissance Italy*, 128-137; also Bambach, *Drawing and Painting in the Italian Renaissance Workshop: Theory and Practice, 1300-1600*.
[549] Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 210.

exist, both in Central Asia and in Italy, of royal palaces painted with frescoes portraying the court members. Moreover, Mehmed II, who was well informed about the latest innovations in portrait arts and the ways in which his political rivals employed them in order to glorify themselves and proclaim their imperial pretensions and dynastic charisma, would not have missed the opportunity to glorify his own imperial project, not only with medallic and painted portraits, but also with a series of frescoes.

A couple of examples of exceptional palatial programs merit a brief overview. The legendary Timur (1336-1405), one of the most powerful Muslim rulers, was particularly known for his elaborate palace in Samarkand, decorated with an extensive and complex program of frescoes, which were executed by a host of deported artists from all over the empire. These frescoes set a paradigm of palatial decoration, especially of reception halls, for subsequent rulers in Central Asia, particularly in Safavid Iran and the Mughal Sultanate in India. Both dynasties drew upon the Timurid artistic legacy, creatively and imaginatively, to decorate their reception halls as well as to develop a varied iconographic repertoire for miniature painted royal portraits.[550] Although Timur's frescoes are no longer extant, contemporary chronicles, such as the Syrian Ibn ʿArabshâh, offer an overview of the scenes representing Timur and his court and courtiers, as well as his victorious military campaigns leading to his complete suzerainty over all the remnants of the Chagatai Khanate, Ilkhanate, and Golden Horde, nearly restoring the Mongol Empire of Genghis Khan:

[550] For a detailed discussion of differences in the use by the Safavids and Mughals of the Timurid artistic legacy in dynastic self-representation see Necipoğlu, "The Serial Portraits of Ottoman Sultans in Comparative Perspective," in Kangal and Isin, *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman*, 50-59.

> In some of these palaces he had depicted his assemblies and his own likeness, now smiling, now austere, and representations of his battles and sieges and his conversations with kings, amirs, lords, wise men, and magnates, and Sultans offering homage to him and bringing gifts to him from every side and his hunting-nets, ambushes, and battles in India, Dasht [southern Russian steppe] and Persia and how he gained victory and how his enemy was scattered and driven to flight; and the likeness of his sons and grandsons, amirs, and soldiers and his public feasts and the goblets of wine and cup-bearers and zither-players of his mirth and his love-meetings and the concubines of his majesty and the royal wives and many other things which happened in his realms during his life which were shown in series, all that was new that happened, and he omitted or exaggerated none of these things; and therein he intended, that those who knew not his affairs, should see them as present.[551]

Interpreting these descriptions, Barry comments that Timur's frescoes were a distinct example of palatial decoration in Eastern Islam that reminded viewers of "the carved reliefs of ancient Assyrian palaces" and functioned to "awe and even to terrify the viewer" with a vision of the ruler as "a predatory cosmocrator," merciless to his victims and exhibiting "virile strength."[552] What is essential is that the ideas of these frescoes were perpetuated not only in written texts and oral accounts, but also and primarily in a series of illuminated manuscripts—such as the *Zafar-Nâmeh* or the History of Timurid Dynasty and the Chronicle of Timur's Victories, written by the Persian historian Sharafuddîn ʿAlî Yazdî in 1425—which provided contemporary rulers with accessible models (Fig. 3.49).[553] Both the Mughals and Safavids deployed the Timurid-Herati iconographies,[554] establishing their versions of royal portraits, court receptions, and battle scenes. One extant example, the Chihil Sutun Palace, though built much later in Iran by Shah ʿAbbas II

[551] Quoted from Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the Riddle of Bihzâd of Herât (1465-1535)*, 90.
[552] Ibid.
[553] For example, it is a known fact that the Mughal ruler, Emperor Hamâyûn (1508-1556), owned and greatly treasured a copy, illustrated by Bihzad, of the Chronicle of Timur's Victories or *Zafar-Nâmeh*, which he took with him even on campaigns. Ibid., 162.
[554] Barry argues that the Timurid artistic legacy in the form of painted miniatures, as it was further developed by Bihzad in Herat in the 1480s, provided models for the Mughal and Safavid art ateliers. The Mughals, in particular, specifically declared Bihzad as their own. Ibid.

(1632-1666) (Fig. 3.50), confirms the lasting legacy of the Timur Palace murals. In summary, if the Safavid and Mughal courts exploited iconographies and ideas from Timur's decorated palace to such a great extent, it is not unreasonable to suggest that Mehmed II could employ Bellini and his assistants in a fresco project to represent his own imperial court at the Topkapi Palace. Bellini's drawings of Ottoman subjects are in their own way images of courtiers and society types that would allude to surpassing Timur's grand vision of autocratorical court. Considering that Mehmed II's imperial project aimed to outdo past and present emperors, both in military conquests and in artistic projects, it is possible to propose that a mural project celebrating the Sultan and his court could have been initiated during Bellini's tenure in Constantinople.

Fresco or mural decorations were also in vogue in princely and papal palaces and communal seats of government in Italy and Europe in the fifteenth century. The rapid development of new pictorial devices such as scientific perspective, three-dimensional rendering of human figures and natural surroundings, and convincing portrayal enabled artists to reach a new level of magnificence in palatial decorations, serving to enhance the image and prestige of Renaissance princes, to boost the power of the popes, and to promote the nobility and the political and economic power of ruling republican oligarchies. The examples of the *Palazzo Schifanoia* (Fig. 3.51), renovated in 1469-1470 by Borso d'Este on the occasion of his expected investiture as the first Duke of Ferrara, and the *Camera Picta* ("painted chamber") (Fig. 3.52), painted by Andrea Mantegna in 1465-1474 for Ludovico Gonzaga in the *Palazzo Ducale* at the *Castello di San Giorgio* in Mantua with the intent of glorifying the Gonzaga family, set a new model for

representation of princes with their family members, courtiers, and narrative scenes depicting receptions and aristocratic activities.[555] In particular, Mantegna's frescoes in the *Camera Picta*, a private audience chamber, became instantly famous for the inventive use of foreshortening, illusionistic devices, and convincing portrayals of the ruler and his court. Mehmed II must have regularly received reports and rumors from his diplomatic agents about large-scale palatial decorations commissioned by his princely peers in Italy. By 1461, he had already learned a great deal about the role of portraiture in perpetuating fame and bringing immortality when Sigismondo Malatesta, Lord of Rimini, sent him a detailed letter outlining virtues of portrait arts and arranged for a visit by his court portrait artist, Matteo de' Pasti.[556] Such frescoes as in the *Camera Picta* could have potentially served as another conceptual model for Mehmed II of palatial decorations made with cutting-edge pictorial devices. Bellini's drawings of Ottoman courtiers and social types can be understood as a thematic parallel to Mantegna's representations of courtiers in Mantua, albeit with significant differences in style. Mantegna's portrayal of the princely family and court hierarchies is particularly noteworthy for its extensive use of references to the deeds of some Roman emperors and to the Roman antiquities represented on the vaulted ceiling; Rome was also a topos in Mehmed II's imperial project. Mantegna's frescoes in the *Camera Picta*, together with his later addition in the 1490s of the large canvases of the *Triumphs of Caesar* for the Corte Vecchio of the Palazzo Ducale, enlarged the fame of the Gonzagas and represented the Gonzagas' imperial fantasies, casting Mantua as "New Rome" and fashioning the Gonzagas as heirs to the prestige

[555] John T. Paoletti and Gary M. Radke, *Art in Renaissance Italy* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2012), 338-339, 356-358.
[556] Susan Elizabeth Spinale, "The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2003), 44-54.

associated with Roman emperors through their service to and the captaincy general of the Roman Catholic Church.[557] As such, the *Camera Picta* iconographic program is one of the major successful examples of how a symbolic act of *translatio imperii* could be accomplished purely through visual means. In short, considering the Roman references in the *Camera Picta* and its exemplary role in palatial decorations in Italian princely courts, Bellini's drawings can be contextualized as models potentially relating to a similar program of fresco or mural decoration in the Topkapi Palace, perhaps realized in the Italian garden pavilion of the Sultan and aimed to aggrandize and perpetuate the fame and immortality of Mehmed II and his imperial project.

The trajectory of this analysis and the tentative reconstruction of the original functions and intended meaning of Bellini's drawings suggest interpreting them as relating to the series of initiatives undertaken by Mehmed II in the Topkapi Palace to immortalize his imperial project. Bellini's drawings are clearly complex artistic forms, functioning at the intersections of several artistic traditions. They are better understood as a product of the energetic negotiation of iconographies and meanings between Venetian, Byzantine, and Ottoman visual idioms. This chapter suggests going beyond their interpretation as anthropological sketches and portraits from life, which was first proposed within the framework of Orientalism in Europe. Their visual language and artistic format is better understood in the context of finished drawings, Persianate *muraqqa* drawing forms, and portrait types of courtiers and social ranks representing the

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[557] Stephen J. Campbell, "Mantegna's Triumph: The Cultural Politics of Imitation 'all'antica' at the Court of Mantua 1490-1530," in *Artists at Court: Image-Making and Identity, 1300-1550,* ed. Stephen J. Campbell and Evelyn S. Welch (Boston; [Chicago]: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum; Distributed by University of Chicago Press, 2004), 91-105.

identity of Mehmed II's cosmopolitan court, as well as relating to a program of palatial decoration conceived in the Topkapi Palace. They could also have been models specially fashioned to meet the needs of the newly established imperial workshop in Constantinople, thus serving as a tangible link that fostered artistic exchange between Venice and Constantinople.

Seated Scribe: Re-contextualizing Artistic Format and Function

The *Ottoman Youth*, known as *Seated Scribe* (Pl. V), is particularly noteworthy among other Bellini's drawings for giving the unusual prominence to the theme of writing or painting in the context of Italian, Byzantine, and Timurid art, as we will see. Despite the unique treatment of the theme, the painting has been largely discussed as a portrait *dal vivo* of a Palace page, since Martin's first publication of the painting in 1905, 1907, and 1910.[558] Its circulation as a model between Constantinople and Timurid and Safavid courts in Herat and Tabriz has also garnered an additional interest.[559] The debate has been primarily concerned with the question of authorship and style, resulting in two

[558] Martin, "A Portrait by Gentile Bellini Found in Constantinople." Martin, "The Miniature by Gentile Bellini Found in Constantinople." Martin, "New Originals and Oriental Copies of Gentile Bellini Found in the East."

[559] For instance, Martin (1910), Roxburgh (2005), and Chong (2005) considered the drawing as an adaptation to Oriental taste. Raby (1980) regarded it as an Italian work and ascribed its genesis to the Florentine tradition of representing scribes. Martin (1910), Raby (1980), Jardine and Brotton (2000), and Chong (2005) also suggested the painting's influence on Ottoman and Safavid artists in Constantinople and Persia. Roxburgh disagreed and emphasized "the absence of cross-cultural response" and argued that "it is a tradition that stands alone" when examined in the context of the genesis of the Bahram Mirza Album.

opinions: one that attributes it to Bellini and the other to Costanzo da Ferrara.[560] The unusual application of watercolor and gold, reminiscent of Persian miniatures, has caused even scholars who accepted its attribution to Bellini to contend that the painting was retouched by an Islamic artist.[561] Currently, with Chong's analysis of the pen techniques published in the *Bellini and the East* catalogue (2005), the painting can be firmly connected with practices of Bellini's workshop. This attribution, in part, depends on the

[560] Martin (1906, 1907, 1910), Sarre (1906, 1907), Hendy (1931, 1974), Berenson (1932), Meyer zur Capellan (1986), Spinale in Chong (2003), Barry (2004), and Chong (2005) confirm Bellini's authorship. Atil (1973), Blair and Bloom (1994), Roxburgh (1998, 2005), and Necipoğlu in Kangal and Esin (2000) are uncertain about the authorship. Andaloro and Raby attributed the drawing to Costanzo da Ferrara, which was repeated in Blair and Bloom (1994), Jardine and Brotton (2000), and Mack (2002) without further critical discussion. For a detailed discussion of the debate see *Bellini and the East*, 118 &122. A primary bibliography comprises the following: Martin, "A Portrait by Gentile Bellini Found in Constantinople." Friedrich Sarre, "Eine Miniatur Gentile Bellinis Gemalt 1479-1480 in Konstantinopel," *Jahrbuch Der Königlich Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 27, no. 4 (January 1, 1906): 302–306. Martin, "The Miniature by Gentile Bellini Found in Constantinople." Friedrich Sarre, "The Miniature by Gentile Bellini Found in Constantinople Not a Portrait of Sultan Djem," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 15, no. 76 (1909): 237–238. Martin, "New Originals and Oriental Copies of Gentile Bellini Found in the East." Philip Hendy, *Catalogue of the Exhibited Paintings and Drawings* (Boston: Printed for the trustees, 1931), 32-34. Bernard Berenson, *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance: A List of the Principal Artists and Their Works, with an Index of Places* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), 68. Esin Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting Under Sultan Mehmed II," *Ars Orientalis* 9 (January 1, 1973): 103–120. Philip Hendy, *European and American Paintings in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum* (Boston: Trustees of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 1974), 16-17. Raby, *El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom*, 61-76. Jürg Meyer zur Capellen, *Gentile Bellini* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1985), 125-126. Roxburgh, "Disorderly Conduct?: F. R. Martin and the Bahram Mirza Album." Sheila Blair, Jonathan Bloom, and Richard Ettinghausen, *The Art and Architecture of Islam 1250-1800* (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 1994), 325, footnote No. 55. *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman*, 30, footnote No. 32. Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton, *Global Interests: Renaissance Art Between East and West* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 42. Rosamond E. Mack, *Bazaar to Piazza: Islamic Trade and Italian Art, 1300-1600* (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2001), 157, 175-176. Alan Chong, Richard Lingner, and Carl Zahn, *Eye of the Beholder: Masterpieces from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum* (Boston, Mass.: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, in association with Beacon Press, 2003), 97. Michael A. Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the Riddle of Bihzâd of Herât (1465-1535)* (Paris; [New York]: Flammarion, 2004), 42-44. Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400-1600: From Dispersal to Collection*, 301-302. Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 118, 122.

[561] See, for example, A.E. Popham and Philip Pouncey, *Italian Drawings in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1950), 5. In the catalogue, Popham and Pouncey describe the Boston drawing as having been drawn in pen by Bellini and then retouched in watercolor and gold by an Islamic artist. Hugo Chapman concurs in his catalogue entry, also available online:
http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectid=717802&partid=1&searchText=bellini%2c+gentile&fromADBC=ad&toADBC=ad&numpages=10&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database.aspx&currentPage=3.
Chong refutes this opinion, suggesting that Bellini also completed the watercolor in response to Islamic miniatures (see *Bellini and the East*, 122).

interpretation of the inscription "work of ibn muezzin, who was a famous painter among the Franks."[562] Chong's recent reappraisal of the inscription provides the grounds for confirming the traditional consensus on Bellini's authorship. Although the questions scholars asked are significant, our understanding of the painting's artistic format, meaning, and original functions remains informed by the Renaissance documentary paradigm. In this view, *Seated Scribe*'s complex iconography offers an occasion to further reappraise Bellini's drawings as artistic models in exchange between Venetian artistic culture and Ottoman visual tradition.

I regard *Seated Scribe* as a depiction of an exemplary type, both "symbolic" and "natural," and place it in the context of several artistic traditions of the representation of historical authors, here is called the author "portrait." *Seated Scribe* began its life as a showpiece of the artist's skill, which was produced on demand, and, in part, to satisfy the needs of Mehmed II's imperial workshop for productive artistic models that accounted for local sensibilities. Its artistic format and iconography—the profile representation of the Sultan's page, either a calligrapher or a painter at work, rendered with pen in brown ink, watercolor, and gold on paper, as a stand-alone picture—celebrated Mehmed II's imperial workshop and had an expressive symbolic meaning in the context of his imperial

[562] Martin (1907) and Raby (1980) furnished two different readings. Martin argued that "ibn muezzin" (literally translated as "the son of the prayer-caller") was a Persian transliteration of Bellini due to misreading of a Greek rendition of 'bellin.' Raby interpreted it as an Arabized transcription of the name 'de moysis' (Costanzo da Moysis). Raby's interpretation, as Roxburgh observes, involves "some phonetic acrobatics." (Roxburgh, "Disorderly Conduct?: F. R. Martin and the Bahram Mirza Album," 39.) Chong further correctly adds that the artist's patronymic name 'di moysis' (Constanzo son of Moses) would not have been used alone in either Italian or Turkish practice. (Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 122.) Moreover, the evidence that Costanzo de Moysis (also known as Costanzo da Ferrara), worked in Constantinople is slight, indicated only by one undated medal of the Sultan and one short mention of his trip in Italian correspondence at a later date. Besides, there is no evidence to confirm Costanzo's fame as a portrait painter, especially on an international scale, whereas Bellini clearly had an international following, especially after his sojourn to Constantinople.

program. In this view, my analysis further illuminates Bellini's complex artistic agency as court artist in negotiating between different visual traditions and artistic conventions. Responses to Bellini's *Seated Scribe* by Islamic artists are here interpreted as creative output, "translations," and "new texts" in Lotman's terms.

The watercolor painting shows an Ottoman youth, portrayed in profile, sitting quietly with his brush or stylus prepared, concentrating on the work he is about to begin—either drawing or writing—on a sheet of paper propped against the tablet on his knee. The youth is depicted seated cross-legged on the ground, which is represented emblematically as a kind of a garden with soft and faded grass and flowers. A spray of flowers was later added on the upper left either to balance the trimmed composition or to further underscore its symbolic meaning. The youth wears the finest Ottoman kaftan made from dark-blue brocaded velvet with vegetal forms woven in golden thread and a *dolmen* of red velvet underneath. The style of the kaftan with its pointed collar closely parallels the painted and extant kaftans of Mehmed II in the Topkapi Palace collections (Fig. 3.53), as can be seen in the Sultan's portrait from the album B. 408 (fol. 15v) (Fig. 3.54).[563] In addition, its vegetal forms echo Baba Nakkaş's ornamental style, which became prominent under Mehmed II's patronage.[564]A multicolored silk sash, which belts the kaftan and is shown elaborately bunched on the youth's back, also stresses his status as a dignitary. His exquisite dress is further complemented by a large, voluminous so-

[563] Atil reproduces the miniature portrait and points out to this detail. Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting under Sultan Mehmed II", 113. An existing kaftan with a pointed collar from Mehmed II's time is discussed and reproduced in Nurhan Atasoy et al., eds., *Ipek: The Crescent and the Rose. Imperial Ottoman Silk and Velvets.* (London: Thaes & Hudson, 2001), 182, fig. 36.

[564] See example of velvets and silks associated with Mehmed II's reign in Atasoy et al., *Ipek: The Crescent and the Rose. Imperial Ottoman Silk and Velvets*, plates 13, 11-12. For discussion of the style of velvet see 228-229.

called *örf*- or scholar-turban (Fig. 3.37), akin to that represented by Bellini in the *Portrait of Mehmed II* (London) (Pl. I) and to extant examples in the Topkapi Palace.[565] Such turbans were worn by scholarly and religious élites according to Mehmed II's strictly codified court protocol. In wearing the finest of Ottoman clothing, in particular the snowy-white scholar's turban,[566] the youth is elevated to the status of an Eastern prince. The youth's nobility and dignity are also emphasized by the delicate handling of his features. His gracious profile, well-shaped ear, and neat lock of hair escaping from under the turban, and the general flowering of his youth shown by the slight traces of a moustache and his rosy porcelain-like complexion, all highlight his refinement. Yet, a ring in his ear indicates that he is a "slave" at the Sultan's court[567]—one of those recruits taken away from Christian families to be trained at the Sultan's palace for a leadership position in the empire, according to *dervshirme*.[568]

The complexity of the youth's representation and its allusion to the "princely" status expressed by his costume raise an issue about the assumption that Bellini made this drawing directly from life. Extant costumes and headgear in the Topkapi Palace, as well as Vecellio's costume book of Ottoman subjects, also suggest that imperial pages were prescribed to wear somewhat different headgear. For example, Vecellio stresses that pages "on their heads wear a small cap of velvet or light gold or silver cloth turned up in front, with a single feather."[569] Vecellio's description of the headgear strikingly differs

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[565] For further details see my discussion of *örf*-turban on pp. and references no, as well as the chapter 4 dealing with the *Portrait of Mehmed II*.
[566] For a detailed discussion see chapter 4.
[567] Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the Riddle of Bihzâd of Herât (1465-1535)*, 43.
[568] For reference see chapter 2.
[569] Rosenthal and Jones, *Cesare Vecellio's Habiti Antichi Et Moderni. The Clothing of the Renaissance World: Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas*.

from that of Bellini's page. Vecellio's page is depicted wearing not a turban but a cylindrical headgear decorated with a feather (Fig. 3.47). Vecellio's description of the page costume appears in full compliance with extant examples of headgear from the Topkapi Palace collections and samples at gravestones published by Nesdet Işli (Fig. 3.55).[570] Another example published is the so-called *zerrîn* cylindrical cap worn by pages of the Privy Chamber is made of velvet covered with silk embroidered in gold and gilded silver; it fully parallels Vecellio's description (Fig.3.56-3.57).[571]

The question thus becomes, did Bellini indeed paint a portrait of "a particular sitter" who is "a scribe/artist"? Or did he, instead, represent "an exemplum" or "type" that is "a particular kind" of social virtue, or essentially a symbolic representation painted "to the life"?

Richard Wollheim, in his pioneering essay "What the Spectator Sees," convincingly discusses the distinction between the depiction of a particular known person who is intended by the artist to be recognized as that person (or in other words, a portrait representing a living likeness) and the representation of a person of a particular kind or kinds, fashioned "to the life."[572] As Wollheim demonstrates, all portraits, like Ingres's *Portrait of Madame Moitessier* (1851, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC) (Fig. 3.58), represent that particular sitter as a person of a particular kind or kinds. But not every painting of a person "to the life," like Manet's young woman represented in *Plum*

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[570] Published Necdet Isli, *Ottoman Headgears* ([Istanbul]: Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Traditional Arts Directorate, 2009), 94-99.
[571] Ibid.
[572] Richard Wollheim, "What the Spectator Sees," in *Visual Theory: Painting and Interpretation*, ed. by Norman Bryson, Michael Ann Holly, and Keith P. F. Moxey (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1991), 101-150. I thank Jack Greenstein for bringing to my attention this article, also discussed in his seminar on *Representation*.

Brandy (1877, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC) (Fig. 3.59), is intended as a representation of a particular person. As Wollheim shows, the young woman in *Plum Brandy* is "just a young women, or a young French woman, or a young French woman of a particular epoch and class and age and character and occupation and prospects, but still not any young woman in particular."[573] A quote helps to elucidate this distinction further:

> Exclusive categories are paintings that represent particular objects-or-events versus paintings that represent objects-or-events that are merely of a particular kind. For every representational painting represents something of a particular kind. And this is not an idle fact about it. For if, additionally, the picture represents something particular, then it represents whatever that something is as belonging to that very kind. So Ingres's portrait of Madame Moitessier representing (as it does) a woman, young, French, born in the early nineteenth century, self-assured, expensive, represents its sitter as just such a person.
>
> And now I must emphasize that the distinction between pictures of particular things and pictures of things merely of a particular kind is a distinction that applies in the virtue of intentions, the fulfilled intentions of the artist. It has to do with how the artist's desired the picture to be taken, and how well he succeeded in making the picture adequate to this desire.[574]

In this sense, many characteristics of Bellini's painting, including the composition on the page, the choice of profile representation, and details of iconography and costume lead me to propose that *Seated Scribe* is better understood as representation of a person of a particular kind "to the life," rather than a particular person to be recognized by viewers as such. Bellini made this painting knowing that both the particular person who was his model, if there was one, and more important the particular type, would not be familiar to his viewers, especially to non-Ottoman viewers unacquainted with Ottoman scribes or artists. In other words, Bellini depicted *Seated Scribe* with the intention to represent the

[573] Ibid., 125.
[574] Ibid., 129.

scribe or the artist in a new courtly role, which makes him exemplary of a new type for the Ottomans.

The formal quality of Bellini's painting argues against the current understanding of the work as a spontaneous portrait rendered *dal vivo*. It is certain that the painting was based on some preliminary sketches of a model or models, but they were significantly transformed in a process to represent an ideal type. Examples of idealized profile portraits from the 1440s-1450s, and are associated with Pisanello, Masaccio, Paolo Uccello, and Domenico Veneziano and discussed below illuminate how *Seated Scribe* was fashioned as an ideal type.

In Bellini's painting, the sitter's expression, while intense, lacks a quality of interiority that is characteristic of other Bellini portraits, making it difficult to accept as a portrait of an individual. The style of the sharply delineated but very thin contour, covered by color, of the youth's profile, as well as of his neatly defined physiognomic features, is not convincing as a representation of the actual physical structure of the human face. Instead, every feature shown in the picture is an evocation of beauty and is seen in its most pleasant aspect—the elongated and elegant nose, the thin and beautifully trimmed eyebrows, the graceful arcs of the contours describing the eyes and the mouth, the ears shaped like perfect shells, the charming curl embellishing the youth's temple, and the porcelain-like skin of his wrinkle- and blemish-free face. The sitter's costume also communicates the utmost sense of decorum, built up with lighted and shaded planes which are deliberately concealed, but can be clearly seen in the infrared reflectogram. The delicate folds on the red sleeves and the turban are shown through nuanced variations

of tone. The voluminous and elaborate snow-white turban with its neatly arranged folds rivals the orderly beauty and magnificence of the imperial turban depicted by Bellini in the *Portrait of Mehmed II* (Pl. I) and becomes a marker of the exclusivity of the imperial society to which this picture alludes. Overall, the aesthetically pleasing physiognomic features and neatly arranged and flatteringly depicted elements of the costume project a sense of timeless and intelligible harmony as well as of seemingly natural representation.

The visual logic of this orderly and harmonious representation is akin to that found in the famous group of Florentine profile portraits from the 1440s-1450s, associated with Masaccio, Uccello, and Domenico Veneziano (Fig. 3.60-3.61). Considered the first independent portraits produced in Florence and generally interpreted as celebrating an individual rather than asserting noble lineage and legitimacy,[575] these portraits, nonetheless, represent an "individuality merged into a type," as Rab Hatfield has convincingly demonstrated.[576] Despite their seeming verisimilitude, Hatfield interprets the portraits as pictorial eulogies of men long deceased, which celebrated their exemplary qualities or virtù, thereby showed that the family produced excellent men. These portraits functioned as exempla or types of a certain kind of social virtue and share the same logic of design: they feature the physical beauty of the sitters and an innate harmony, while failing to depict either the sitters' tangible physical presence or the actual physical appearance of their faces. Although there is no uniform group of portraits of Ottoman youths against which to compare the physiognomic characteristics of Bellini's

[575] *The Renaissance Portrait: From Donatello to Bellini*, ed. Keith Christiansen and Stefan Weppelmann (New York; New Haven [Conn.]: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Distributed by Yale University Press, 2011), 90.
[576] Rab Hatfield, "Five Early Renaissance Portraits," *The Art Bulletin* 47, no. 3 (1965): 315–334.

sitter, as it is in the case with the group of Florentine portraits, the overall idealized and harmonious characterization of the sitter points to a poetic ideal rather than to a specific portrait of an individual. In fact, Bellini's representation of the Ottoman youth parallels the exalted description of Mehmed II's pages provided by Kritovoulos:

> He appointed some of the youths of high family, whom he had chosen according to their merits, to be in his bodyguard and to be constantly near him, and other service as his pages… .They were indeed of signal physical beauty and nobility and talent of soul, and in their manners and morals they were outstanding, for they were of high and renowned ancestry and splendid physique, and well trained in the royal palace.[577]

Bellini's representation of the Ottoman youth likewise celebrates an ideal of Ottoman beauty, nobility, dignity, talent, diligence, and excellence.

Even if Bellini's *Seated Scribe* was based on sketches from a model or models, any irregularities in physiognomy and physical appearance were modified to produce a regal image of Ottoman court ideals. Pisanello's portrait drawings offer an insight into that kind of working process. One pair of such drawings, discussed by Keith Christiansen,[578] showcase the striking differences between a rapid sketch for a portrait of Emperor Sigismund of Luxembourg and a next-to-final, more elaborated drawing of the Emperor (Fig. 3.62).[579] Due to the remarkable differences in style and technique between them, some scholars have questioned whether the more formal drawing was Pisanello's work. But Christiansen explains that the differences are due to their different functions not to different hands. The preliminary sketch shows the emperor's aged features—baggy

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[577] Critobulus, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror by Kritovoulos,* transl. from the Greek by Charles T. Riggs (Princeton, N.J., 1954), 85-86.
[578] Christiansen and Weppelmann, *The Renaissance Portrait: From Donatello to Bellini*, 194-195.
[579] Both drawings are in the collection of the Department des Arts Graphiques, Musée du Louvre, Paris (2479, 2339), ca. 1433.

eyes, sagging skin on his cheeks and under his chin—and the distinctive fur of the hat and the texture of the beard—rapidly observed and sketched with "repeated, overlapping chalk strokes."[580] The formal drawing, in contrast, eliminates descriptive characteristics of sagging skin, makes the outlines continuous, and smoothes the physiognomic irregularities of the profile to fashion an elegant contour of the face. The hair also undergoes a dramatic transformation—it "falls in undulating waves, and the beard has been combed out."[581] The eyes are also improved to acquire a penetrating and focused gaze, and the mouth is slightly open to portray the monarch speaking. Pisanello's drawings are instructive, as they together produce evidence of Pisanello's process of show the process for making a formal court portrait "in which likeness is accommodated to notions of rank and decorum."[582] They show that he was guided by a pre-established set of criteria, a sort of "poetic ideal," as Christiansen puts it, which appears to be akin to humanist literary portraits of the period.

Likewise, Bellini's painting cannot be considered rapid or spontaneous, as the underdrawing, visible in the infrared reflectogram (Fig. 3.63), is made with continuous and finely drawn outlines. Bellini's other drawings with pen in brown ink on paper, such as *Procession in Piazza S. Marco* (British Museum) (Fig. 3.64), *Procession before Santa Maria della Carità* (Duke of Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth) (Fig. 3.65), and *Standing Woman* (Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University) (Fig. 3.66), are examples of

[580] Ibid.
[581] Ibid.
[582] Ibid.

the master's sketching techniques.[583] The two drawings of the processions show the swift and abbreviated notation of figures, rendered with quick strokes of varied thickness. The artist appears more concerned with the overall pictorial structure of the composition and the integration of the crowd into the architecture within Piazza San Marco. People and figural architectural forms are abbreviated into geometrical patterns to show the organization of space on the whole. Bellini's *Standing Woman* from the Fogg Art Museum also gives the impression of a quick compositional drawing in its lively pen technique that records pictorial ideas swiftly with a few defining lines. As Ames-Lewis suggests, the artist would redraw brief sketches in detail on sheets in the last stage of a composition, as his final designs typically "have the labored, impersonal appearance of contract drawings," as can be seen in another drawing of Bellini's *Procession* (Florence, Uffizi).[584] Considering Bellini's working process on compositions, as well as the quattrocento workshop practices exemplified by Pisanello's drawing techniques, *Seated Scribe* is better understood as an elaborately worked painted drawing, the last stage of a process of carefully reworking previous models to fashion a showpiece: both an idealized interpretation of Mehmed II's page and the Ottoman artist at work.

Bellini filled the sheet with the Ottoman youth in formal profile on a neutral off-white background.[585] The profile format was unusual in the Ottoman context, combined with the large format of the figure, and the page's splendid attire, it endowed the sitter

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[583] Visual analysis of *Procession in Piazza S. Marco* see for example: Ames-Lewis, *Drawing in Early Renaissance Italy*, 140. Both processions were included in the exhibition catalogue: Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 50-51. I have consulted the drawing of *Standing Woman* and the curatorial files at the Fogg Art Museum and associate the drawing with Bellini's workshop.
[584] Ames-Lewis, *Drawing in Early Renaissance Italy*, 140.
[585] The image appears slightly trimmed, as a part of the youth's left hand is cut off and the border comes very close to his caftan on the left. The painting should have been at least a few centimeters bigger on all sides.

with an extraordinary sense of dignity and nobility, as the profile, in particular, had been reserved for the representation of rulers in Italy.[586] At the same time, this format places greater emphasis on the artistic process, as it prominently features an unmarked page and a poised stylus or brush in the youth's hand, and gives the viewer greater access whether to the act of writing or drawing. In fact, no exterior details, except the abbreviated and symbolic depiction of the green ground at the lower part of the drawing, distract the viewer from the youth's intense concentration on the sheet of paper—a moment of utter creative potency.[587] Although the youth's distinct facial features and costume details produce the effect of a convincing pictorial likeness, *Seated Scribe* is not a portrait in the true sense of the word. It celebrates the artistic process—doubly read here as calligraphy and drawing.

For its valorization of the theme of a scribe or an artist at work, Bellini's painting was a novel design and artistic concept in the context of Italian, Timurid, and Safavid painting. Indeed, in Italian painting, the artist at work had a different meaning: it was typically represented as mechanical labor that had more to do with a particular stage of design or formal training rather than with the liberal arts or the arts of divine knowledge.[588] In contrast, it is difficult to associate Bellini's artist or scribe with a

[586] The format of the profile portrait as court portrait is discussed in detail in the next chapter on the portraits of Mehmed II.
[587] Based on infrared image of the drawing, Chong observes that the depictions of foliage in the upper left and lower left corners are later additions, as no underdrawing is seen in these areas. Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 118.
[588] Thomas Puttfarken, *Titian and Tragic Painting: Aristotle's Poetics and the Rise of the Modern Artist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 20.

specific studio process that was well defined in Italian workshop.[589] Examples such as Andrea Pisano's reliefs of the *Painter* and the *Sculptor* (c. 1337-1343) (Fig. 3.67-3.68) made for the Campanile del Duomo in Florence, the model-study of a *garzone* (boy) copying a pattern book (the early 15th ct.) by an unknown Umbrian artist (Fig. 3.69),[590] and *Youth Sketching on a Tablet* (c. 1450) from the workshop of Maso Finiguerra (Fig. 3.70),[591] shows the draftsman or the sculptor at work under primitive conditions, dressed casually, operating on the level of practical, mechanical labor, or engaged in the most basic drawing method. Pisano's reliefs emphasize the sheer physical effort required of the artisan, as both the painter and the sculptor are portrayed in uncomfortable positions, their arms strained, especially that of the sculptor who holds a big hammer as he bends over a sculpture, with his other manual tools shown below. The two workshop assistants—one copying a model book and the other learning to draw on a boxwood tablet with a stylus—emphasize the first step in basic drawing that the youths are learning.[592] In contrast to this tradition, Bellini's painting represents a scribe or an artist dressed as a courtier engrossed in thought that is seemingly intellectual rather than physical. In some respects, Bellini's interpretation of the theme prefigures the well-known representation of the youth in profile holding a compass and a set square, engrossed in contemplation of a dark cave in front of him (Fig. 3.71), in Giorgione's *Three Philosophers*. This image has been interpreted as the personification of painting as

[589] For instance, Meder outlines the steps of artistic training that typically began by learning to draw from models, then from free-standing objects and nature, and then by drawing compositions. Meder, *The Mastery of Drawing*, 217-295.
[590] Per Bjurström, *Italian Drawings from the Collection of Giorgio Vasari* (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 2001), 24.
[591] Claire Van Cleave, *Master Drawings of the Italian Renaissance* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 11.
[592] Francis Ames-Lewis, *Drawing in Early Renaissance Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 20-21.

"surpassing astrology and philosophy" in the context of the intellectual climate and *paragone* debate about the merits of painting and other liberal arts in early sixteenth-century Venice.[593]

Bellini's painting format and the mode of representation of *Seated Scribe* finds close antecedents in the genre of the author- "portrait" depicting the author absorbed in thought. The author-"portrait" was a familiar genre in Venice and Italy, the Byzantine world, and Timurid art, albeit existing in somewhat different modalities. The following discussion will outline how Bellini draws on different visual traditions and transforms the traditional format by applying the science of perspective and three-dimensional modeling, and by fashioning a convincing likeness, which could have been based on a particular person who was his model.

First, in Italy, the author-"portrait" was a widespread genre that depicted philosophers and theologians in the act of thoughtful concentration or of writing, initially developed as a part of complex full-page frontispieces placed in the beginning of handwritten or printed volumes; it was quickly adopted and became prominent in painted portraiture for the representation of both historical church doctors and contemporary humanists. Examples such as the frontispiece with the portrait of Pliny the Elder from Pliny's *Historia naturalis*,[594] (Fig. 3.72) the depiction of Aristotle from Aristotle's

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[593] Sylvia Ferino Pagden and Giovanna Nepi Sciré, *Giorgione: Myth and Enigma* (Milano: Skira, 2004), 180.

[594] The manuscript is preserved in the Biblioteca Marciana, Venice, MS Lat. VI, 245 (=2976), fol. 3, and is attributed to the Pico Master and produced in the 1470s. See J. J. G. Alexander, ed., *The Painted Page: Italian Renaissance Book Illumination, 1450-1550* (Munich; New York, N.Y.: Prestel, 1994), 41.

Historia animalium,[595] (Fig. 3.73) and from Pope Innocent IV's *Commentary on Papal Decrees,*[596] (Fig. 3.74) represent the type of historical author-"portrait" associated with books produced in Venice and disseminated widely in Italian city-states from northern to southern courts. The author appears sitting on a chair in a *studiolo* or on the ground in natural surroundings; he is placed either in the upper left corner or centrally positioned, writing on a page or pensively holding a book, and framed by a *trompe l'oeil* of triumphal arches or monumental stele.

The genre of the author-"portrait" undergoes further development in the second part of the fifteenth century with the use of three-dimensional modeling and perspective in painted portraiture and depicts historical church doctors as contemporaries. For instance, Antonello da Messina's *St. Jerome in His Study* (c. 1475), painted in Venice,[597] (Fig. 3.75) represents the fourth-century church doctor, endowed with a believable likeness, surrounded with objects representing his intellectual interests and engaged in reading a manuscript. The recession of the architecture, the play of light and shadow, and the detailed treatment of objects and animals, which capture textures and surfaces, all evoke a believable sense of presence and verisimilitude, as if the author indeed sat for the

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[595] The Latin translation from the Greek by Theodore of Gaza of Aristotle's works History of *Animals, Parts of Animals, and Generation of Animals*, written in Rome c. 1473-80, with illumination attributed to Gaspare da Padova, and currently preserved in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican, Vat. Lat. 2094. See Ibid., 101-102.

[596] The book was printed in Venice on 15 June 1481; its illumination is attributed to the Master of the Seven Virtues, Venice, c. 1481, and is preserved in Landesbibliothek, Gotha, Mon. Typ. 1481, 2 (10), fol. IV. The philosopher is attributed as Aristotle despite the fact that he is wearing a Muslim turban similar to that in portraits of Averroes. See Ibid., 196, 198.

[597] The painting dates back to Antonello's sojourn in Venice during the1470s, and is preserved in the collections of the National Gallery in London. St. Jerome (born in 432 in Dalmatia) was one of the four most authoritative fathers of the Catholic Church, together with St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and St. Gregory the Great, and was often depicted in the Renaissance in his studio. For a discussion of the history and attribution of the painting see Mauro Lucco, *Antonello da Messina: l'opera completa* (Cinisello Balsamo, Milano: Silvana, 2006), 212.

artist. This sense of presence enables the viewer to transcend historical time, propagating the memory of the author through time. As Jack Greenstein persuasively argues, such visual qualities of a painting that "induce a viewer to see a sitter by means of likeness" and are "the grounds for portrait likeness" are often assumed to be portraits because of their level of "realistic" detail, even when no one actually sat for them.[598] In this view, even though Antonello da Messina's *St. Jerome in His Study* is not a portrait in the true sense of the word, as it was not painted from a real sitter, it arguably functions as a portrait and a true likeness of the renowned church doctor. The once abstracted historical likeness of the church father is given new life by the artist through enhanced visual qualities that make the surfaces and textures of objects and the outer parts of the saint's body easily recognizable and believable. Christopher Nagel and Alexander Woods describe this operation of transporting biblical and historical events into modern form as fundamental in modern painting. As they convincingly demonstrate, "deliberate anachronisms, juxtapositions of historically distinct styles in a single picture and staging of historical events in contemporary settings, fed back into the symbolic machinery of the pictures."[599] Such works that depicted the collapse of epochs, familiar and unfamiliar, and referred to a "here" and a "now" relative to the contemporary viewer stressed the origin of the modern painting as a representation or fabrication. It also underscored the artist's agency as the author and producer. It seems that a similar operation of an

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[598] On the subject how a sense of time conditions Renaissance portraits se: Jack Greenstein, "Faces in Time: Temporalities of the Sitter in Renaissance Portraits," in *Symbols of Time in the History of Art*. ed. Christian Heck and Kristen Lippincott (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 99-115, 99.

[599] Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York; Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books; Distributed by MIT Press, 2010), 36-37.

intentional juxtaposition of portrait genres, artistic formats, and iconographies takes place in Bellini's *Seated Scribe*.

The tradition of the author-"portrait", in part, defined the format of the humanist portrait, which Hans Belting considers "a separate category" first developed in Northern Europe and Northern Italian courts.[600] The humanist portrait, usually capturing likenesses of contemporary authors, in particular underscored the creative act of writing or thinking. As Hans Belting explained, the humanist portrait promoted not necessary "the likeness of the body per se," but the intellectual or the immortal Self of the author, known to the viewer through the body of his work.[601] Two portraits of Erasmus, one by Hans Holbein the Younger (Fig. 3.76) and the other by Albrecht Dürer (Fig. 3.77), exemplified different approaches of this tradition developed in the North. Holbein's 1523 image of Erasmus, depicted in profile and sitting in a scholar's cubicle, shows the humanist intensely concentrating on writing a letter. We can almost hear his reed stylus squeaking on the paper, feel that deep silence and pulsing thought hanging in the air around him, and follow the lines of his handwriting, shown from a slightly elevated viewpoint and accessible to the viewer by looking over Erasmus's left hand as it presses down on the paper. This specific moment in time is further intensified with a range of descriptive characteristics of the author's physical likeness, as well as surrounding objects and their textures, inviting the viewer to believe that this is how Erasmus looked when the artist joined him in his cubicle to make his effigy. As Greenstein demonstrates, such details as

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[600] Hans Belting, *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 79-80. Belting distinguishes the humanist portrait among other types of portraiture, including ruler or courtly portraiture and bourgeois or private portraiture.
[601] Ibid.

"rings and sags under the eyes, an indentation at his temple, and other textual characteristics of skin surfaces in his visage, all are indicative of a specific moment in time and of Erasmus's particular age."[602] In contrast, closely drawing on the medieval tradition of the author-"portrait," Dürer invents a commemorative engraved portrait of Erasmus in 1526 that manifests an "eternal" image of the author for his present and future readers, emphasized by a framed inscription in Latin that speaks of Erasmus as author—"better will his writing show"[603]—that implies the inadequacy of the physical likeness alone or of a specific moment in time for the portrayal of the humanist. Although the engraved portrait was based on sketches from life made by Dürer some years earlier, and it depicts Erasmus in the act of writing a letter, like Holbein's image, the portrait is abstracted, as it disregards the descriptive characteristics of the surfaces of the author's visage and of the objects that surround him. It rather represents the concept of the body of Erasmus—"the likeness fixed for posterity" or "the substantial form" of Erasmus from the point of view of Aristotelian philosophy, as Greenstein proposes to interpret it.[604] In certain ways, Dürer brings the humanist portrait back to the tradition of the medieval author-"portrait" by trying to represent Erasmus's "eternal" and "unportrayable Self," to put it in Belting's terms.[605] However, in contrast to the previous tradition of the author-"portrait" based on the fixity of iconography and attributes rather than on a physiognomic likeness, selective individual characteristics of Dürer's interpretation of Erasmus's physical appearance make his likeness singular and verifiable, as well as constitute an

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[602] Greenstein, "Faces in Time: Temporalities of the Sitter in Renaissance Portraits," in Heck and Lippincott, *Symbols of Time in the History of Art*, 104.
[603] Ibid., 104.
[604] Ibid., 103
[605] Belting, *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body*, 80.

individual with a distinct body, achieved by the new Renaissance techniques of perspective and three-dimensional modeling.

The fusion of the author and humanist portrait traditions in the later part of the fifteenth century is best exemplified by Vittore Carpaccio's *Vision of St. Augustine* (1502) (Fig. 3.78A), in the fresco cycle in the *Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni* in Venice. Carpaccio paints a commemorative portrait of Cardinal Bessarion in his study, disguised as the historical author and based on the historical episode, well known in Venice, of the vision of St. Augustine.[606] St. Augustine, taking on the likeness of Cardinal Bessarion, is shown in the act of writing a letter to St. Jerome (Fig. 3.78 B). Carpaccio depicts the specific point in the narrative when St. Augustine suddenly hears the voice of St. Jerome talking to him, at the very moment when St. Jerome dies in distant Bethlehem, and the scholar's study becomes filled with light and ineffable fragrance. Nagel and Wood characterize the operation of this painting as an intentional substitution and "anachronism"—"a structural condition" of Renaissance artifacts.[607] That is, a historical episode appears depicted in contemporary terms—with vivid objects and furnishings and the play of perspective and three-dimensional modeling to represent a contemporary setting and a specific moment—as a sort of anachronistic mix of historical and contemporary.[608] According to Nagel and Wood, the artist becomes the inventor, fabricator, and manipulator of the familiar and the unfamiliar, achieving a believable

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[606] The portrait of the Cardinal disguised as St. Augustine is essentially based on some life sketches of the Cardinal circulating in Venice. See Patricia Fortini Brown, "Saint'Agostino nello studio di Carpaccio: un ritratto nel ritratto?" in *Bessarione e L'umanesimo: Catalogo Della Mostra*. A cura di Gianfranco Fiaccadori (Napoli: Vivarium, 1994), 303-318, 311.
[607] Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*.
[608] Ibid., 37.

collision of historical and contemporary, while maintaining "a performative relation to the past."[609] It can be corroborated, then, that Carpaccio's *Vision of St. Augustine* is an inventive conceptual fabrication and manipulation of the tradition of the author-"portrait." The portrait of Bessarion simultaneously assumes several roles as a polyvalent image. It functions as a portrait of Cardinal Bessarion as it captures his particular likeness and represents his intellectual pursuits. It is also a commemorative author-portrait of St. Augustine that is based on the established genre and interprets its basic tenets by representing the author of a particular kind by showing the traditional occupation of writing as well as attributes of intellectual life—a sort of an ideal museum and *studiolo*, that portray the humanist atmosphere of Venice at the time. The reviewed genres of the author-"portrait" in Venetian and Northern Renaissance humanist portraiture show a range of artistic strategies that were available for Bellini with which he was most certainly familiar due to his wide-ranging professional contacts and the prominent status his workshop held in Venice.

The Italian tradition of the author-"portrait" goes back to Byzantium, where evangelists and church fathers were commonly depicted centrally placed on a golden background, consumed in thought, receiving divine inspiration, or writing on paper. Byzantine author-"portraits," such as the *Evangelist Mark* from the Lectionary (late 10th-early 11th ct.) in Baltimore, (Fig. 3.79)[610] the *Four Evangelists* from the Gospels at the

[609] Ibid., 44.
[610] The portrait of St. Mark associated with the imperial workshop in Constantinople is an example of the classical rendering of the theme in Byzantium. Originally the leaf belonged to the lectionary now in Athens, National Library, Cod. 2552, and is currently in the Walters Art Gallery. Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom, *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843-1261* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art: Distributed by H.N. Abrams, 1997), 102.

Getty (c. 1300) (Fig. 3.80),[611] the *Evangelist Mark* (c. 1300-1310) at the Getty (Fig. 3.81), and the *Evangelist Luke* from the Gospels (13th-14th ct.) (Fig. 3.82) are typical examples of the treatment of the theme; they provide insight into the great popularity of evangelist portraits in Byzantine illumination, and into the iconographic variety of their gestures in representing the authors either in the process of writing or contemplation. The "portraits"' function in Byzantium was to visually testify to the divine inspiration and provenance of the Gospels, as well as to celebrate the evangelists as authors and transcribers of the word of God.[612] The depictions of evangelists emphasize the theme of an unmarked open codex, or a parchment leaf prepared for writing or featuring the first words of the text, which are usually represented from a higher viewpoint to make them fully visible to the viewer. The *Evangelist Mark* from the Gospels (ca. 1300) at the Getty (Fig. 3.80) is unique among them as it depicts the author sitting with a codex open on a lectern, and pausing after finishing one line of text. His alert, erect, and pensive pose underscores his divine inspiration, further emphasized by the poised pen and furrowed brow. Bellini's *Seated Scribe*, depicted on an off-white neutral background (much like Byzantine golden backgrounds) and engrossed in thought, evokes the Byzantine tradition of the author-"portrait" as evident from the prominence given to the themes of the unmarked sheet of paper that the youth props against a tablet and of his poised stylus or brush. He is depicted as if he was waiting for inspiration. The isolated full-page representation of the youth against a neutral background is unusual in the context of the genre in Venetian

[611] The Four Gospels also are associated with Constantinople and represent the highest quality manuscript illumination, and are now preserved at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Ms. 65. Helen C. Evans, *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)* (New York; New Haven: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Yale University Press, 2004), 279.
[612] Evans and Wixom, *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843-1261*, 104.

author-"portrait," manuscript and book illumination, where the author-"portrait" was typically incorporated into a complex architectural frontispiece, as discussed above.

The Byzantine tradition of the author-"portrait" was also familiar in Islamic states. Instances of borrowing of the theme go back as early as the ninth century and are associated with the project of translation of Greek works of Aristotle, Dioskorides, Euclid, Galen, Plato, and Ptolemy to Arabic, initiated by the Caliph Al-Ma'mun (786-833) in Bagdad during the Abbasid Caliphate.[613] One of the finest examples demonstrating the transmission and Islamization of the Byzantine genre of the author-"portrait" into Islamic painting is the illustrated manuscript of Dioskorides' *De materia medica*, dating to 1229 (Fig. 3.83).[614] The manuscript includes the double frontispiece with Dioskorides depicted on the right page and gesturing toward the left page, where two individuals hold books, one of which is open. As Linda Komaroff shows, "this author portrait derives in nearly all its details from the depictions of evangelists in the tenth- and eleventh century Byzantine Gospel books."[615]As she further points out, the main difference between this portrait and the Byzantine counterpart is the turban given to the classical Greek author, which makes him a Muslim scholar and a part of an Islamic past. The open book, typically held by evangelists in Byzantine illuminations, is transformed here to reflect a new cultural context—particularly the moment of transmission and translation of the author from Greek to Arabic. As has been suggested, the two figures on the left page of

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[613] Gaston Wiet, *Baghdad: Metropolis of the Abbasid Caliphate* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971).

[614] The manuscript, produced in Northern Mesopotamia, is currently preserved in the Library of the Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul (Ahmet III, 2127). Dioskorides (a Greek physician, pharmacologist, and author, active ca. A.D. 65) was first translated in the ninth century. This manuscript is one of four such manuscripts that include author portraits. Evans and Wixom, *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843-1261*, 429-433.

[615] Ibid., 432.

the frontispiece, clad in Muslim costumes, may be students submitting their text for approval, or scribes/illustrators or translators of this manuscript.[616] This frontispiece, following the Byzantine tradition, preserves the halo around the head of the author and depicts him on a golden background, which was typically used sparingly in Islamic miniatures.

Timurid painting or Eastern Islam favored a more casual representation of a poet of scholar at work. A poet or philosopher was typically depicted seated and engaged in a conversation in the *majlis*, or "the customary form of a socio-literary intercourse" at which works were recited and criticized.[617] Persian illuminated manuscripts include numerous portraits of scholars, philosophers, and poets, represented gathered in the ruler's palace or garden for the *majlis.* For instance, *His Ministers Plead with the Sasanian King Hurmuzd to Forgive His Son Khusro* from the romance *Prince Khusro and Queen Shirin* depicts distinguished poets—"Jami in a brown caftan leaning on his staff, and to the right, the poet and minister Mir Ali Sher Nawai, standing with hands respectfully hidden in a long dark-green caftan"— gathered around Sultan Husayn sitting on his throne (Fig. 3.84).[618] In *Alexander and the Seven Sages of Ancient Greece* (Fig. 3.85), the minister Nawai, represented as Alexander, presides over a court of mystics and poets and attentively listens to them; his great respect and admiration for them is shown by his gesture of hiding his hands.[619] Similarly, the Turkish-language *Sadd-i Iskander*,

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[616] Ibid.
[617] Maria Eva Subtelny, "Art and Politics in Early 16th Century Central Asia," *Central Asiatic Journal* 27, no. 1-2 (1983): 121-148, 139.
[618] The illustration is attributed to Bihzad, from Nizami's Khamseh, copied for the Timurid Emir 'Ali Farsi Barlas in Herat, 1494-95. It is currently in the collections of the British Library, Or. 6810, fol. 37v. Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the Riddle of Bihzâd of Herât (1465-1535)*, 167.
[619] Same manuscript in the British Library, Or. 6810, fol. 214r, Ibid., 168-169.

"Alexander's Wall," celebrates the *Dream-Garden of the Great Persian Poets of the Past*, where Nizami's shade welcomes the minister Nawai (on the center left), introduced to him by Jami (center right) (Fig. 3.86).[620] These and many other examples of miniatures illustrating popular romances and chronicles represent lively gatherings of philosophers and poets at court, among which poets are shown with the attributes of their craft—a bound volume, an ink pot, and a stylus—as in the *Dream-Garden of the Great Persian Poets*. However, no attributes related to painters are included in such scenes, concealing the presence of painters even if they were included.

It can be argued, then, that Bellini, who would have been familiar with the Italian and Byzantine traditions of the author and humanist portrait,[621] evokes certain aspects of these traditions when fashioning the picture of *Seated Scribe*. By representing a convincing likeness of Mehmed II's page clad in the finest Ottoman ceremonial garb, Bellini effectively "Islamicized" the traditional format of the author-"portrait." The Ottoman youth or the new political and cultural "aristocracy" of the Ottoman Empire,

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[620] Painted by Mir Ali Sher Nawai, son of Ali in 1486, the manuscript is preserved in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, Elliot 340, fol. 95 vo. Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the Riddle of Bihzâd of Herât (1465-1535)*, 69.

[621] Gentile Bellini was clearly familiar with portrait frontispieces, as his cousin Leonardo Bellini (c.1443-90) was active in the area of manuscript illumination in Venice, securing some important commissions. Bellini would have known painted historic author portraits, as he would have encountered Antonello da Messina when he sojourned in Venice and painted *St. Gerome in His Study*; he himself clearly incorporated portraits of his contemporaries into narrative canvasses representing contemporary events as biblical narrative scenes, which he painted at the Doge Palace and various confraternities in town. Bellini would have been informed about the development of the humanist portrait in Northern Europe via multiple professional networks, including his own father Jacopo Bellini, his brother-in-law Andrea Mantegna, and his own reputation, which would later lead Albrecht Dürer to copy and reinterpret Bellini's own drawings completed in Constantinople. On a side note, Gentile Bellini's close ties with the Venetian illuminated manuscript tradition are without doubt, as Leonardo Bellini, trained by Jacopo Bellini as a miniature painter, was responsible for revitalizing Venetian manuscript illumination with Renaissance elements, contemporary architectural forms, and application of perspective and three-dimensional rendering of space. Information on Leonardo Bellini is summarized by Ulrike Bauer-Eberhardt in *Oxford Art Online*, accessed 08/15/2012: http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T007643pg4?q=leonardo+bellini&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit

depicted as an author with an unmarked page propped against his knee and poised stylus or brush in his hand, is endowed with talent and creativity. In the context of Italian Renaissance, the attributes of the author have been already associated with concepts of *ingenium*, *fantasia*, and imitation—the mental qualities that were also coming to be associated with the visual arts. Humanist debate of the time compared painting to poetry in order to elevate painting's status from a manual or mechanical art to that of poetry and other liberal arts.[622] The ambiguity of what the youth is about to do—either write or draw—is intended here, as it both makes reading of the image pregnant with possibilities and underscores the mental qualities that are associated with the artistic process rather than with the final outcome—whether a calligraphic sign or a drawn outline. In this sense, Bellini ennobles the practices of both drawing and calligraphy and equates them with those of theology, philosophy, and poetry.

Bellini's painting of the Ottoman youth, in part drawing on the tradition of the author-"portrait" in Italian and Byzantine manuscript and book illumination, would resonate with his imperial patron, his Byzantine and Italian advisors, and the artists at the court, who would have been familiar with Byzantine traditions either via Islamic art or directly through the vast collection of Byzantine manuscripts gathered and treasured by the Sultan in his imperial library at the Palace.[623] Responses to *Seated Scribe* by Islamic artists such as the *Freer Scribe* (Fig. 3.87),[624] which depicts the scribe on the bright

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[622] For a discussion of humanist discourse on the subject of painting as a liberal arts practice as it occurred in the second part of the fifteenth century in Italy and particularly in Venice, see Puttfarken, *Titian and Tragic Painting: Aristotle's Poetics and the Rise of the Modern Artist* , 27-40.

[623]For Mehmed II's imperial collections and gathering of Byzantine relics, manuscripts, and monumental art see: Julian Raby, "Mehmed the Conqueror's Greek Scriptorium," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 37 (January 1, 1983): 15–34. Raby, *El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom*.

[624] For discussion and catalogue description see: Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 123.

yellow background, make it even more Byzantine. The *Freer Scribe*'s "luminous, even sun-drenched" color (as Barry describes it[625]) can be interpreted as the closest parallel to the golden backgrounds of Byzantine manuscript illumination—the unmistakable sign of divine presence and inspiration. The *Freer Scribe* is clearly represented as a painter and resolves the ambiguity of Bellini's painting. In this view, the *Freer Scribe* suggests a complex circular process of transmission, appropriation, and transformation of visual motifs among Byzantine, Islamic, and Italian traditions.

In this sense, Bellini's miniature painting can be understood as the result of a complex operation of artistic mediation between several artistic traditions: Venetian and more broadly Italian, Byzantine, and Ottoman. It can be said that the process of transmission completes a circle: original Byzantine iconography that spurs the development of the author-portrait in Italy in the Renaissance is returned to Constantinople enhanced with the science of perspective and three-dimensional modeling, and is then Islamized by depicting the artist or scribe at work clothed in authentic Ottoman attire that represents the finest standards of fashion and style at the Ottoman court.[626]

Considering the significant differences between *Seated Scribe* and the Florentine tradition of representation of artists and apprentices, the valorization of the artistic

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[625] Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the Riddle of Bihzâd of Herât (1465-1535)*, 43.

[626] Recent studies of imperial Ottoman silks and velvets associate the motifs on the caftan in Bellini's *Seated Scribe* with a variant of the international style that had begun to develop under the patronage of Mehmed II. These motifs are understood as 1) the lotus blossom, placed on delicate stems, 2) an arabesque of split leaf form, on a heavier stem, and 3) a motif based on "lobed vegetal forms that bear some resemblance to oak leaves." The third motif in particular became prominent and was also seen in ceramic art tiles at the Fatih kiosk at the Topkapi Palace. This design has been associated with the leading designer Baba Nakkaş at the Palace atelier. For a detailed discussion see Nurhan Atasoy et al., *Ipek: The Crescent and the Rose. Imperial Ottoman Silk and Velvets.* (London: Thaes & Hudson, 2001), 227-229.

process in Bellini's painting is better understood in the context of the author-portrait. A similar artistic maneuver for representation of artists was already well established beginning in the late medieval period. The portrait of the evangelist Luke as a painter was used after the victory of the *iconophiles* of 843 as the primary means of conferring prestige on the visual arts; the image also legitimized the painter's ability to represent divine models by suggesting he partook of the creative power of God, whose image he rendered through divine permission. Characteristic Byzantine depictions of Saint Luke, such as a page from a Byzantine lectionary (Gr. 233, late 14th-early 15th ct.) preserved at the Holy Monastery of St. Catherine on Sinai (Fig. 3.88),[627] represent the evangelist sitting on a wooden throne at the moment he has nearly completed an image of the Virgin with the Christ Child (a much venerated icon type of the Virgin Hodegitria, considered a miraculous and sacred image, a palladium of Christian faith). The miniature of Saint Luke is unique, as it shows the evangelist painting a divine model on a panel, which underscores that painting could mediate between the divine and terrestrial world and, in that sense, was a part of the arts of divine knowledge. The image of the evangelist as a painter was based on the tradition that ascribed the first depiction of the Virgin to St. Luke; this tradition was widely diffused in Byzantine art in the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries and then spread rapidly in the West.[628] Recent scholarship has associated this quick adaptation and transformation of the Byzantine motif in the West with changing attitudes toward painting and the growth of painters' guilds, which commissioned the image of St. Luke drawing the Virgin to elevate their social standing and prestige.[629]

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[627] Evans, *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, 344.
[628] Ibid.
[629] Ibid.

Rogier van der Weyden's *St. Luke Drawing the Virgin* (c.1435-1440) (Fig. 3.89) at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston is a seminal example of the interpretation of the theme in Northern European painting and of the function of the image as a corporate patron saint of artists.[630] By portraying St. Luke pausing in the act of drawing a model of the Virgin on a sheet of paper with a stylus, Rogier van der Weyden's painting also introduced the novel idea that painting as a practice relied on drawing techniques, and was guided not only by divine inspiration but also by knowledge and the science of observation.[631] However, the main point in the discourse on the status of painting remained the same: the prestige of painting as an art practice was primary associated with the artist's ability to represent divine models. In contrast, Bellini's representation of an Ottoman artist or scribe celebrates both the scribe and the painter at work, precisely by not specifying what he is about to do—either to write or to draw, thus taking out of consideration the subject of artistic practice.

In Timurid and Safavid painting the theme of the artist at work, in the act of drawing or writing, does not appear until the later sixteenth century, and may have been directly connected with the introduction of the theme by Bellini. Bellini's sojourn in Constantinople coincided with a period of active reappraisal of visual art practices in Timurid courts. The discourse on the meaning of visual arts and the status of the painter in the age of Kamul al-din Bihzad (c. 1465-1535) reexamined not only major longstanding theological contradictions regarding figurative art, but also the presumed supremacy of the scribe's reed over the painter's brush. As Barry demonstrates in his

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[630] Chiyo Ishikawa, "Rogier Van Der Weyden's 'Saint Luke Drawing the Virgin' Reexamined," *Journal of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* 2 (January 1, 1990): 49–64, 55-56.
[631] Ames-Lewis, *Drawing in Early Renaissance Italy*, 36.

monographic study of Bihzad, the head of the royal ateliers in Herat and Tabriz, patterns of patronage of Timurid and Safavid rulers, combined with the exceptional talent of Bihzad, both as an artist and as an educator of princes and artists, led not only to the legendary status and prestige associated with Bihzad's art throughout Eastern Islam in his own lifetime, but also to the elevation of figurative art to the level of calligraphy and poetry, and the final legitimation of figurative art in Islamic thought in the Safavid period.[632]

According to Barry, prior to the age of Bihzad, Islamic thinkers, beginning with the central Asian theologian al-Bukhari (810-870), disapproved of figurative art and condemned visual artists "for usurping the prerogatives of the Creator."[633] As Barry shows, this iconoclastic attitude toward figurative art was frequently illustrated by recounting a miracle ascribed to Christ by the Gospel of Thomas the Apostle. In this story, also a part of the Koran, only Jesus, as Prophet, was "allowed a divinely sanctioned miracle of art" when he made a figure of a bird out of clay and breathed life into it.[634] Islamic thinkers, beginning with al-Bukhari, referred to this miracle when discussing figurative art and condemned artists for their inability to breathe life into their work, as Jesus did.

The iconoclastic attitude of Islamic religious and philosophical thought impacted the social standing of painters in comparison with that of the rival arts of calligraphy and

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[632] Shah Ismail's decrees of 1522 proclaimed Bihzad one "who might show manifested in depiction, through discernment, the unfolding forms upon the tablet of existence, and lift the veil upon the desired, yearned-for Countenance." The decree described Bihzad as a "rarity of the age, model of figurative painters, peer of illuminators in gold." Quoted from Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the Riddle of Bihzâd of Herât (1465-1535)*, 154.
[633] Ibid., 229.
[634] Ibid.

poetry, whose masters typically enjoyed celebrity status in the Turcoman and Timurid courts of Central Asia, as has been discussed in the previous chapter. Poetry and calligraphy as art forms were sanctified by tradition and widely exploited in the religious realm since the early days of Islam, attaining their most prestigious status in the Sufi movement. In contrast, the figurative art was not accepted in the religious sphere and was subjected to the whim of rulers, who employed painters to celebrate their dynastic, political, and cultural programs through lavishly illustrated histories of heroes and of their own deeds. Perhaps this iconoclastic tendency explains the absence of the motif of a painter at work throughout Eastern Islam until the later period of Bihzad. Instead, poets and scholars were typically represented in ruler's palace gathered for the *majlis*, as discussed earlier.

Bellini's painting of an artist or scribe at work was thus a novel and timely theme in Eastern Islam that corresponded to the changing status of the figurative arts. As Barry shows, the poet Jami (1414-1492) finally resolved the paradox of Islamic iconoclastic thought by celebrating the creative powers of the fictional artist in his poems. Jami compared the artist's skill of making figures to Christ and called the artist "the vessel through which God blows His creative breath."[635] According to Barry, Jami was among the first to stress the artist's share in the divine power of creation and to legitimize human-wrought figures as "Neoplatonic mirrors of God unto the beholder."[636] Jami also underscored the equality of pen (the instrument of poets and calligraphers) and of brush (the instrument of painters). Prior to Jami, traditional Islamic theological thought insisted

[635] Ibid., 229.
[636] Ibid., 233.

on the supremacy of the calligrapher's pen as "an image of divine intellect" and the instrument for circumscription of "the archetypes of all visible forms upon the tablet of non-being."[637] However, Jami, followed by the calligrapher Mir Ali of Herat and the painter Dost Muhammad of Herat, began to employ the allegory of the creative equivalence of the divine pen and the divine brush with God as a calligrapher-painter. This poetic metaphor resulted in the introduction of a theme of a calligrapher and a painter at work depicted on the same plane surrounded with their respective tools, working face to face, as can be seen in the concluding miniature painted by the painter Dawlat for the Mughal emperor Jahangir in 1610 (Fig. 3.90).[638] Bellini's painting then would have contributed to the elevation of painting to the status of calligraphy and poetry. His representation of the young man as either a classical calligrapher with a reed or a painter with a brush would directly parallel Jami's discourse on the equality of pen and brush. It is not surprising that Persian artists, when copying Bellini's *Seated Scribe*—in the Freer and the Kuwait *Seated Artists* (Fig. 3.91), both dating to the mid-late sixteenth century—resolve its ambiguity and interpret it as an image of an artist who is painting figures in Persian costume. In addition, the Muslim artists also add a white scarf that now hangs from the Ottoman artist's sash. As Barry comments, "the white scarf or kerchief, known as the *dastârcheh*, in the traditional Islamic court iconography, forms part of insignia of royal power," signifying that the artist is represented as "a true monarch of his art."[639] The "correction" of Bellini's painting in the later Safavid period reflects the new status ascribed to the figurative artist, directly connected to the sanctification of Bihzad's

[637] Ibid., 236-7.
[638] Ibid., 235, 238. Ms. Or. 12208, fol. 325 v, British Library, London.
[639] Ibid, 44.

art in Eastern Islam. No doubt, Bellini's painting struck a chord with the local artists in Eastern Islam, and functioned as an artistic model to celebrate the new social standing of the painter in the late Timurid and Safavid periods.

Given that the image equally celebrates a painter and a calligrapher, what then could have been the occasion for its creation? It is known from Mehmed II's pursuit of Italian artists that he sought to establish the imperial workshop in Constantinople and was particularly concerned with the practice of painting .[640] Could Bellini's painting of *Seated Scribe* have been fashioned to celebrate Mehmed II's royal atelier, ambiguously representing a scribe or a painter at work, clothed in the finest Ottoman garb to reflect the political and cultural identity of the Sultan's newly established artistic corps that united both calligraphers and painters? We may never know; but the loaded cultural meanings associated with the artist-at-work motif in Italian, Byzantine, and Ottoman artistic traditions make it possible to connect Bellini's work with Mehmed II's establishment of the royal atelier, as opposed to understanding it as a spontaneous portrait *dal vivo* of a favorite page. The ambiguous figure of the artist whether a scribe or a painter could also served to refute some of critical comments from the old Ottoman élite, who suggested that the Sultan did not believe in the Prophet Muhammad, as reported in Angiolello's and Tursun Beg's biographies of the Fatih, reviewed in the previous chapter.

Was this completely finished design intended to be replicated and used in various artistic projects, such as larger paintings, fresco cycles, or a series of illustrated manuscripts commemorating the ruler's life and deeds, including his accomplishment in

[640] See, for example, Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting Under Sultan Mehmed II."

founding the royal atelier? The previous section suggests these various uses were possible. The highly finished drawings could have served as models in the preparation of full-size figural cartoons.[641] Jacopo Bellini's *Notebooks* also contain a few colored designs and fully completed refined drawings that were used to make designs for paintings in his family workshop. If so, Bellini's *Seated Scribe*, along with other drawings, could have been deployed as models for artists at the court or in preparation of cartoons for the paintings in the pavilion or other large-scale projects at the court.

Even though these other uses were possible, the fine and highly finished character of Bellini's *Seated Scribe*, remarkable for its nuanced three-dimensional modeling and variation of tone, and unusual for Renaissance illuminated miniature and drawing in its techniques of watercolor and the application of gold, it was especially well suited to be included in *muraqqa* album-like codices, comprised of Italian, Timurid, and Turcoman works as well as drawings and designs produced at the court atelier in Constantinople. The foundation of the Topkapi Palace *muraqqa* collections is associated with Mehmed II's reign, as the Sultan was particularly interested in fine examples of Byzantine, Timurid, and Italian drawings and engravings. While Byzantine specimens constituted a separate group, collected as illuminated codices, the rest of the artistic materials were preserved in a loose format together with examples of Ottoman production. Among the rich collections of *muraqqa* albums, well known as Palace albums and currently in the Topkapi Palace Museum and the Istanbul University Library, three collections—H. 2153 (known as Fatih album), H. 2160, and F. 1423 (known as Baba Nakkaş album)—have

[641] Bambach, *Drawing and Painting in the Italian Renaissance Workshop: Theory and Practice, 1300-1600*, 187.

been particularly associated with Mehmed II's collecting practices and patronage. Raby and Roxburgh agree that the Palace albums received their definitive form either under Mehmed II's son Bayezid II, who ordered materials from his father's reign to be inventoried and compiled into album collections, or under Mehmed II's grandson Selim I, whose seal appears in both the H. 2153 and H. 2160 albums.[642] Indeed, *muraqqa* albums, initially developed in the Turcoman and Timurid courts of Central Asia, became a well-established form of cultural repository. More specifically, in practices developed particularly in the Safavid period and adopted in Ottoman and Mughal courts, these albums formed a new kind of anthology of fine calligraphy samples, paintings, and design models; organized as anthologies of texts (mainly poetry), they catalogued the historical past and present.[643] According to Roxburgh, *muraqqa* albums, as consciously assembled anthologies of fine specimens, gave preference to single-sheet calligraphies, paintings, and designs, emphasized the autonomy of the single page, and facilitated the production of works with ambitious visual effects, expressive calligraphic lines, and innovations in rendering established subjects. *Muraqqa* albums became of central importance to courtly life in the late Timurid period and began to circulate widely as fine diplomatic gifts between courts in Eastern Islam.[644] Mehmed II's demand for "rare books and *muraqqa*" as a ransom from the Aqqoyunlu Prince, Yusufca Mirza, following his capture in 1472 by Mehmed II's son Prince Mustafa,[645] underscores his interest in and

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[642] Raby, *El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom*, 164-178. Julian Raby, "Mehmed II Fatih and the Fatih Album," *Colloquies on Art and Archaeology in Asia* 10 (1985): 42-49. Julian Raby, Zeren Tanindi, and Tim Stanley, *Turkish Bookbinding in the 15th Century: The Foundation of an Ottoman Court Style* (London: Azimuth editions on behalf of l'Association Internationale de Bibliophilie, 1993). Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400-1600: From Dispersal to Collection*.
[643] Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400-1600: From Dispersal to Collection*, 144 & 147.
[644] Ibid., 149-179.
[645] Raby, "Mehmed II Fatih and the Fatih Album," 46.

familiarity with the format of Timurid and Turcoman *muraqqa* collections, and emphasizes the international fame the *muraqqa* albums had already acquired. For its highly finished form as a painting, innovative interpretation of the author portrait, and autonomy as a single-sheet model, Bellini's *Seated Scribe* fulfilled expectations for the "jewel-like" specimens typically assembled in *muraqqa* collections. It could have been originally included either in the Fatih or the Baba Nakkaş album, as both collections comprised examples of European and Ottoman works completed in response to Italian models. The fact that it found its way to the Safavid Bahram Mirza Album (1544-1545), perhaps sent to the Safavid court in Tabriz as a diplomatic gift after Mehmed II's death,[646] suggests that *Seated Scribe* was treasured and perceived as a fine specimen, worthy of being preserved as a part of a distinguished *muraqqa* album.

On this view, *Seated Scribe*, it could have been originally part of the so-called Baba Nakkaş[647] album (F. 1423), now in the Istanbul University Library. The Baba Nakkaş collection, also known as the *Compendium of Marvels*, comprises calligraphy, poetry, drawings, and pen-and-ink designs, including a few European specimens with predominantly local artistic productions from the Ottoman court atelier. It is agreed that the album was assembled into a bound format on Bayezid II's order, soon after his father's death in 1481, mostly using materials from Mehmed II's reign.[648] Raby has identified that a significant number of pen-ink designs in the albums were used as models for a variety of artistic products, including Uşak carpets, Iznik blue-and-white pottery, tiles, book-bindings, illuminations, and vegetal forms of designs in Ottoman brocaded

[646] See note no. 20 for literature and description.
[647] Baba Nakkaş is mentioned as one of the leading designers of Mehmed II's court atelier.
[648] Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom," 149.

silks.[649] Mary Fournier, extending Raby's and Roxburgh's research, proposes to interpret the *Compendium of Marvels* as an intentionally assembled collection of representative materials from the imperial atelier, which functioned as 1) a model-book ensuring stylistic coherency and quality among the products of the royal atelier, and 2) a showcase collection featuring a broad range of the atelier's artistic products, which both exemplified the developing appreciation of drawing as a medium of artistic expression at the Ottoman court and recorded the atelier's designs.[650] Bellini's *Seated Scribe* could have been intended for inclusion in this anthology and would have been a perfect fit as a multifaceted work that functioned on many levels: as a visual piece celebrating the artist or calligrapher at work, as a model-design for possible study and imitation, and as a showpiece of artistic products associated with the imperial atelier. In this context, it can be argued that *Seated Scribe* represented the artistic and cultural identity of Mehmed II's imperial atelier, conceived as existing at the intersection of several artistic traditions, with Byzantine and Italian idioms being primary, but not excluding Timurid or pan-Persian inspirations.[651] However, perhaps due to its exceptional artistry, Bellini's painting was separated and then sent as a diplomatic gift during the reign of Bayezid II, who disapproved of Mehmed II's artistic project and dispersed his collections of Italian works

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[649]Raby, Tanindi, and Stanley, *Turkish Bookbinding in the 15th Century: The Foundation of an Ottoman Court Style*; Atasoy et al., *Ipek: The Crescent and the Rose. Imperial Ottoman Silk and Velvets*, 227.
[650] Mary C. Fournier,"Drawing as Gift: Jacopo Bellini's Paris Volume in Ottoman Istanbul" (PhD diss., 2006), 116-124.
[651] The question of Byzantine cultural identity of the imperial workshop should be discussed separately. Here it is sufficient to mention Ernest Grube's research suggesting that early Ottoman artists under Mehmed II's patronage used Byzantine painting as a principal source for their own work in manuscript illumination. See Ernst Grube, "Notes on Ottoman Painting in the 15th Century" in *Essays in Islamic Art and Architecture: In Honor of Katharina Otto-Dorn*. ed. by Abbas Daneshvari (Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1981), 51-63.

per Angiolello's report. As a result, Bellini's painting carried its artistic message and ideas beyond the Ottoman Empire.

Finally, I will consider Bellini's decision to depict the Ottoman youth in profile. This choice stands out among Bellini's other extant drawings of Ottoman subjects from Constantinople. While a profile format was common in ancient coins and for backgrounds in a narrative Italian painting, it is unusual for a stand-alone and independent depiction of a human subject, as it is a self-limiting type of representation, showing only half of a person. For this reason, in Byzantine painting and Eastern Islamic figurative art, the profile is not common, and even carries negative connotations. In this sense, the profile sets limitations on the physical or tangible presence of the sitter, even though it fixes the most permanent features of the sitter's physiognomic characteristics. This is why, for example, the Venetian Senate prescribed the profile depiction as the acceptable format for official portraiture of doges through the 1480s, in order to stress the office of the doge rather than the individual holding the office.[652] As Hatfield argues, the profile view in portraiture "implies the regularity of the human countenance," so "one must assume that the invisible halves of the faces are the mirror-images of the sides that one sees."[653] Thus, the profile is well suited for an orderly and idealized depiction of the sitter. Since, as previously discussed, Bellini's painting seemingly evokes the standards of the Ottoman court rather than offering an accurate transcription of the sitter, one plausible explanation is that it should be understood as an index of nobility, exemplary qualities, and ordered beauty—connotations typically associated with idealized courtly

[652] Peter Humfrey, *Painting in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 100-101.
[653] Hatfield, "Five Early Renaissance Portraits," 322.

portraiture. Therefore, the profile here further stresses artifice and is exploited as an aesthetic device.

However, an additional meaning is possible—the painting was produced as an exemplary model for study and imitation by local artists and as showcase of Bellini's skill. First, the profile was a not-so-familiar format in early Ottoman art, since Byzantine painting and Persian figurative art rarely employed it. At the same time, the profile was an essential form of courtly portraiture in Italian art, with its conscious reference to ancient medals and coins, as I show in more detail in the following chapter. Thus it would have offered the local artists a model for training in profile representation. Existing profile miniature portraits of Mehmed II by local artists confirm the imperial atelier's inclusion of the profile into the scope of artistic projects at the court. Second, the profile carries a fundamental association with the beginnings of modeling and of painting. The account of the origin of painting, summarized by Pliny the Elder and widely known in the Renaissance, locates the invention of painting with the outlining of a man's shadow, or thus specifically in contour.[654]

The theoretical implications of Pliny's story in Renaissance thought were profound, beginning with Alberti's rationalization of the workshop practice of drawing and painting addressed in *Della pittura* (1435). As David Rosand articulates, Renaissance thought interpreted Pliny's account of the origin of modeling and the story of Apelles as a master of line in order to legitimize the art of drawing, or the art of outlining, as a self-sufficient practice existing in its own right; moreover, the account was understood to

[654] Rosand, *Drawing Acts: Studies in Graphic Expression and Representation*, 4.

claim drawing as the foundation of painting, and, further still, as a theoretical practice involving the intellect and hand together, rather than a strictly mechanical art, as it was previously conceived.[655] Rosand posits that Renaissance theoreticians and artists understood the potential of outline as the foundation of pictorial representation, an imaginary contour circumscribing physical bodies, a necessary graphic fiction, and an index of the artist. At the same time, the single line presented artists with an incredible challenge in three-dimensional modeling and illusionistic representation, as it both circumscribed and revealed what is behind the picture plane, thus suggesting what it concealed:

> The single line that seems to disrupt the flatness of the surface, subtly inflecting itself into space, disappearing behind its own horizon. This quality of the line – what Leonardo da Vinci will call its *serpeggiare* – stands for the complex potential of line itself, a mark at once created and creating. In such a mark resides the fundamental truth of pictorial representation, its most primitive aspect. Whatever progress may have been made since the first outline was traced around a shadow, the very priority of that original inscribing gesture claimed a special status.[656]

In this sense, Bellini's artistic vision is quite remarkable as he negotiates between the outline as a method of three-dimensional modeling, as Rosand characterizes, and the contour line as a calligraphic line, thus translating the practice of drawing from the Renaissance workshop to terms typical of Eastern painting that would be understood in the Ottoman semiosphere. On the one hand, the youth's face is fitted to the strict profile outlined by an underdrawing (Fig. 3.63), albeit covered with paint, and the whole figure makes a harmonious silhouette rather than a plastic contour, which establishes the painting in relation to Eastern calligraphic line. On the other hand, the curvilinear quality

[655] Ibid., 24-60, 128.
[656] Ibid., 7, 127.

of the outlines representing the folds of the youth's costume and of his turban, in combination with the use of light and shade modeling, produces the complex effects of plasticity and three-dimensionality. The profile painting can be understood as a visual lesson and experiment demonstrating the difference between a plastic contour or outline and a contour line or silhouette, thus revealing a range of representational techniques employed in the Renaissance workshop as well as in the Ottoman visual tradition.

Although essentially a silhouette, the curvilinear quality of the contour in *Seated Scribe* realizes the complex effects of plasticity and three-dimensionality. Bellini does not show the Ottoman youth in a strict profile; rather, he shifts the point of view by depicting the far shoulder and the concealed parts of the turban, or the head is turned slightly with respect to the body, as if we had started to walk around the seated youth. This effect is further intensified by the outlines circumscribing the numerous pleats of the sleeves and the stiff folds of the caftan, which attain an almost spherical quality through various "bulging" effects. Bellini's contours outlining folds have a pulsating, rhythmic quality, as they are partially concealed by the color, and their intensity varies depending on whether the plane is lighted or shaded, as well as on their role in the structural basis of his drawing. Thus, big folds in shaded zones are constructed by thick outlines, especially in the lower part where the caftan falls on the ground in heavy folds, whereas the outline almost disappears in brightly lighted areas such as the front part of the shoulder and the back. Bellini achieves a rich and harmonious contour, a typical characteristic of his profile portraits, for which he was particularly recognized and celebrated. Bellini's subtle and sensitive rendering of the contour line exemplifies the highest standards of drawing

in the Renaissance workshop, and thus could have been a perfect demonstration piece and a model for study by local artists.

However, we may never know what effect Bellini's drawing had on the artists at Mehmed II's court atelier or on courtiers. The account published in the *Supplementum Chronicarium* and retold by Vasari talks about the awe and wonderment that Bellini's portraits and drawings aroused at Mehmed II's court, causing some to believe that Bellini possessed a divine spirit acting through him. Was Bellini's painting studied and reproduced at the Ottoman court? It can be corroborated that it was used as model, because both extant miniature painted portraits of Mehmed II at the Topkapi Palace, one associated with Sinan Bey and the other with Şiblizâde Ahmed, rely on Bellini's treatment of crinkled sleeves in *Seated Scribe*, which are also repeated in other drawings of Ottoman subjects completed in Constantinople, albeit not in color.

As a model, Bellini's painting left a definite mark on Safavid painting, where it was indisputably studied and reproduced, though in a transformed manner. Both versions, the *Freer Artist* and the *Seated Artist* at Kuwait (Fig. 3.91), reinterpret Bellini's complex contour as a single, whole silhouette according to the aesthetic criteria of Persian art. The contrasts of local colors are intensified by bold juxtaposition of separate parts of the costume: the caftan, its collar, sleeves, and sash, are all of different bright, flat, and pure colors. Moreover, the artist's pensive expression is further strengthened by the addition of wrinkles on the forehead in the Kuwait copy and the subtle shading under the brow and around the eye in both copies. The artist in the Kuwait work also looks older—his age in underscored by a dark moustache and whiskers. He is also depicted barefoot. Michael

Barry treats the responses to Bellini's works as ingenious, demonstrating a selective and critical attitude when fashioning the theme according to conventions their native visual language:

> What is important is that Gentile Bellini's picture was studied, and reproduced in modified form, by a very talented Muslim artist—one more gifted that Naqqâsh Sinân Bey [Mehmed II's chief artist at the court] himself in terms of mastering the composition, the proportions, and the balance of the original before him…. But what truly turns this Eastern—Bihzâdian?—copy of Bellini's work into a masterpiece in its own right is its luminous, even sun-drenched color.[657]

The two responses to Bellini's painting suggest its circulation between different courts and its deliberate appropriation by the native artists and translation of its visual qualities and ideas to the local idiom.

Seated Scribe thus links together Renaissance, Ottoman, and Persian artistic traditions. It is also a link between the simple profile outline, and that three-dimensional representational of portrait art. In Italy, drawing was frequently employed either for contractual designs or as a workshop *simile*. In Constantinople and beyond the Ottoman Empire, Bellini's painted drawing functioned as a multivalent artistic form and assumed the status of an independent artistic format to be included in collections of poetry, calligraphy samples, and paintings according to Persianate collection practices. Bellini sensibly translated and adapted Renaissance drawing techniques to the demands of Islamic taste to fashion an exemplary model of an idealized portrait of the artist at work. Bellini's work can therefore be understood as an experiment, a comprehensive interpretation of the author-portrait genre and representation of the scribe or artist of a

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[657] Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the Riddle of Bihzâd of Herât (1465-1535)*, 43.

particular kind or kinds, rather than as a spontaneous portrait *dal vivo* of an Ottoman page or of a particular scribe or an artist. The proposed understanding of the function of *Seated Scribe* and its artistic form as a complex negotiation of different artistic traditions suggests that a similar artistic process took place with the rest of Bellini's drawings completed in Constantinople. They functioned as multivalent and symbolic artistic forms rather than anthropological studies from life or portraits of people Bellini encountered in Constantinople.

Conclusion

Consideration of Bellini's drawings in the Ottoman visual milieu suggests that Bellini acted as a "translator" and cultural broker who assisted Mehmed II's efforts in establishing an imperial painting workshop. Bellini developed a distinct Ottoman artistic idiom for representation of Mehmed II's courtiers, while also gained knowledge of Eastern artistic formats and iconographies that he later used in his own painting in Venice. Bellini's drawings of Ottoman courtiers formatted as stand-alone figures, each on a separate sheet of paper are better understood as "transformations" of his Venetian techniques (in Lotman's terminology) to the distinct sociocultural situation of Mehmed II's court and its diverse aesthetic systems. Resembling in their composition designs collected in Timurid and Ottoman *muraqqa* albums, Bellini's drawings would particularly appeal to Mehmed II's polyglot courtiers and artists, who appreciated

calligraphy that relied on contour as a means of constructing an image. At the same time, Bellini's drawings must have introduced the rules of Renaissance perspective and three-dimensional modeling to Ottoman artists by applying these rules to recognizable subject matter and formats.

Chapter Four

Bellini and the Royal Portrait, East and West: Fashioning the Imperial Identity of Mehmed II in the Early Modern Mediterranean

Of Bellini's wide-ranging commissions at the Ottoman court, the most remarkable is his nearly life-sized painted portrait of Mehmed II, now in the National Gallery in London (England) (Pl. I). Set against a dark background, the Sultan is represented behind an artificial architectonic structure comprising a free-standing arch and a parapet. The arch is made convincingly three-dimensional through the arts of perspective and shading. The parapet is decorated with a jewel-encrusted, embroidered cloth of honor. Two dark porphyry inserts in the parapet bear an inscription celebrating the ruler and the artist and stating the date. Two trios of stacked golden crowns float above the arch. Mehmed II is dressed in a red caftan with a fur collar and wears a magnificent snowy-white turban, according to his elevated imperial status.

The portrait is unusual in Renaissance portraiture generally and even in Bellini's own oeuvre. The presentation of Mehmed II's face at a five-eighth turn contrasts with the standard ruler profile and three-quarters aspect prominent at the time. The integration of the Sultan's figure within the artificial architectonic structure (composed of arch and parapet) is awkward—if not surreal. The Sultan appears to be squeezed into a very narrow and flat representational space designated by the architectonic frame, which makes the whole painting perspectivally incoherent. More difficult to notice is the

uniqueness of the signature-device on the dark inserts in the architectonic structure, which proclaims the *virtù* of both the ruler and the artist.

Signed and dated *November 25 1480*, Bellini's *Portrait of Mehmed II* is firmly associated with the artist's visit to the Ottoman court. Completed not long before the artist's return to Venice,[658] the panel was clearly the culmination of the artist's sojourn. Historical sources, such as Jacopo Foresti da Bergamo's *Supplementum Chronicarium* (1486) and Giorgio Vasari's *Le Vite* (1550-68),[659] particularly emphasized that the portrait had astonished the ruler and his retinue. In addition, it may have earned Bellini the title of the Golden Knight and Palace Companion, as *Supplementum Chronicarium* suggests:

> [Mehmed] commanded that he himself be depicted in his own image; and indeed, when the Turkish ruler gazed upon that portrait so much like himself, he was astonished at the talent of the man, and said he excelled any painter who had ever lived. And therefore, setting him up without delay as a member of his household, as an indication of his benevolence and generosity, he made him both knight palatine and a knight of the Golden Spur, and gave him a medal and necklace, and sent him back to his own country...[660]

Even though the Italian sources may exaggerate the effect of the painting on the ruler, it is hard to dismiss Mehmed II's overall satisfaction with Bellini's artistic services, as also

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[658] It is agreed that Bellini must have returned to Venice sometime in the beginning of 1481, based on Mehmed II's *Letter Conferring Honors to Gentile Bellini*, dated January 15, 1481. The letter must have been presented to the artist upon his departure, as Chong and other scholars suggested. See Appendix, Document No. 10. Also see Caroline Campbell and Alan Chong, eds., *Bellini and the East* (London; Boston: National Gallery Company; Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2005), 114.

[659] See Appendix, Documents No.16 and 18.

[660] Amy N. Worthen, "An Inconvenient Text: The *Supplementum Chronicarium* as a Source of Information about Gentile and Giovanni Bellini," in *Examining Giovanni Bellini: An Art More Human and More Divine*, ed. Carolyn C. Wilson (Turnhout*, Belgium:* Brepols Publishers*,* 2012). See Appendix, document 16.

confirmed by the Sultan's *Letter Conferring Honors to Gentile Bellini*, dated January 15, 1481.[661]

Historical sources indicate that Bellini's activities as a portrait artist were central to his appointment in Constantinople. The Venetian naval captain Domenico Malipiero (1428-1515) reported in his *Annali* that the Sultan specifically asked for a painter who excelled in portrait arts: "un bon depentor che sapia retrazer" (an excellent painter who knows how to make portraits).[662] This is also apparent from Bellini's surprising portrait medals of the ruler, which he most likely designed, but the die was probably cut by another artist, as Bellini was not an expert at the craft.[663] In addition, the Ottoman court official Giovanni Maria Angiolello (1451-1525), a Venetian-born Ottoman captive, reported that Bellini made many portrait drawings upon the Sultan's request, like the drawing of a mad dervish discussed in the previous chapters.[664]

The understanding of the production, uses, purposes, and meanings of Bellini's painted portrait is far from complete. During the last few years of his rule, which included the time of Bellini's visit, Mehmed II engaged in a concerted program aimed to redefine his public image in court ceremonies with the completion of the New Palace (now known as Topkapi) in 1478, as Gülru Necipoğlu demonstrated.[665] Mehmed II's

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[661] See Appendix, Document No. 10.
[662] For the full citation and information see Appendix, Document No. 2.
[663] Julian Raby, "Pride and Prejudice: Mehmed the Conqueror and the Italian Portrait Medal," in John Graham Pollard, ed., *Italian Medals* (Proceedings of the Symposium 'Italian Medals', sponsored by the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 29 - 31 March 1984)" (Nat. Gallery of Art, 1987), 171-194, 180.
[664] See Appendix, Document No. 15.
[665] Gülru Necipoğlu, "From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Kostantiniyye: Creation of a Cosmopolitan Capital and Visual Culture under Sultan Mehmed II," in *From Byzantion to Istanbul: 8000 Years of a Capital* (Istanbul: Sakip Sabanci Museum, 2010), 262-277, 271.

requests for Italian artists peaked in 1478-1481, with his embassies reaching Florence, Naples, and Venice.[666] In considering other portraits emanating from the imperial atelier, it becomes evident that Bellini's work was instrumental in fashioning Mehmed II's identity at the zenith of his power. Even though Bellini was not the only Western artist who worked at Mehmed II's court in Constantinople,[667] his portraits in particular laid the foundations for Ottoman imperial painted portraiture, as they were studied, copied, and adapted to the needs of the court atelier.[668] In Venice, Bellini's work helped to disseminate an imperial and dignified public image of the ruler, and provided a model for future representations of Ottoman sultans as equals of European rulers. Especially notable for its idiosyncratic visual language, comprising an unusual mix of representational devices to project the ruler's imperial authority, Bellini's painted portrait contributed significantly to the Sultan's efforts to forge his imperial identity by fashioning a new artistic vocabulary. Thus, I argue, Bellini's portrait was particularly influential in forming the perspectives of its élite audiences in Constantinople, including the current and future members of the Ottoman court, as well as in other courts in the Mediterranean and Northern European cultural milieu via disseminated replicas.[669]

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[666] Raby, "Pride and Prejudice: Mehmed the Conqueror and the Italian Portrait Medal," 178.
[667] Julian Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom" (PhD diss., Oxford University, 1980). Susan Elizabeth Spinale, "The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2003).
[668] Gülru Necipoğlu, "The Serial Portraits of Ottoman Sultans in Comparative Perspective," in *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman*, ed. Selmin Kangal and Priscilla Mary Isin (Istanbul: Işbank, 2000), 22-61.
[669] Babinger and Raby discuss replicas of Bellini's portrait in Italy in detail, so it goes without saying that Bellini's painted portrait was influential in Italy. See: Franz Babinger, "Un ritratto ignorato di Maometto II, opera di Gentile Bellini," *Arte veneta* 15 (1962): 25-32. Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom." Julian Raby, "Opening Gambits," in *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman*, 64-95. Julian Raby, "From Europe to Istanbul," in *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman*, 136-163.

In the late fifteenth century, portraiture gained popularity among the ruling élites in Italy, Northern Europe, and the East as an effective instrument of Renaissance self-fashioning and political legitimacy. In order to illuminate the most distinctive features of Bellini's representation of the ruler, this chapter highlights the intellectual, cultural, and political underpinnings of the ruler's portrait in both Italy and the East (Byzantine, Timurid, and Ottoman). It also describes conventions for the uses, display, and reception of ruler portraiture in the fifteenth century.

By considering Bellini's panel in relation to the portrait traditions that were known in Constantinople, where a wide range of Mediterranean cultural and artistic conventions intersected, I show that the painting's artistic idiom springs out of Mehmed II's cosmopolitan court. The portrait offers itself as an emblem for us to understand the permeability of "regional or national styles" within the Renaissance, and within the greater Mediterranean. Its visual language is largely symbolic, and draws not only on the visual culture of Renaissance Venice, but also on pre-Ottoman (Byzantine and Timurid) cultures and royal iconographies. Because of the diversity and subtlety of the portrait's polyglot visual language, many previous accounts of the painting detail only the most concrete aspects—such as the circumstances of its commission—by which we can read it as a projection of Mehmed II's power.[670] But in expanding on previous work, this chapter focuses on aspects of the painting which have tended thus far to resist association with his imperial and political program.

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[670] See, for instance: Necipoğlu, "From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Kostantiniyye: Creation of a Cosmopolitan Capital and Visual Culture under Sultan Mehmed II." Maria Pia Pedani Fabris, "The Portrait of Mehmed II: Gentile Bellini: The Making of an Imperial Image," *Art Turc/Turkish Art*, 10th International Congress of Turkish Art, ed. François Déroche et al. (Geneva: Foundation Max van Berchem, 1999), 555-558.

When dealing with Bellini's painted portrait, this chapter first will clarify the meanings of Bellini's five-eighth view in relation to Italian and Timurid portrait conventions. Second, the chapter proposes an interpretation of the architectonic structure's non-mimetic function. Together with the floating crowns and the inscription, the structure constitutes a complex imperial *impresa*—a device akin to a personal coat-of-arms, and a familiar convention from Venetian printed books of the day. Designed to project Mehmed II's imperial image, this *impresa* is a hybrid of Byzantine and Venetian pictorial sources. Third, the chapter will connect the inscription's legible content to its function in Mehmed II's palace ceremonies. Reading the portrait's language as heraldic, and in light of non-Italian portrait conventions, helps to explain its perspectival awkwardness.

In summary, this chapter evaluates the ways in which Bellini's painted portrait interpreted the Eastern representations of the ruler circulating at the Ottoman court, and in turn how his re-invented conventions were received and re-interpreted according to the aesthetic criteria of the local artistic tradition. This chapter goes beyond a simple assessment of visual homologies and differences in style to deal with issues of mutual reception and adaptation of portrait models between these artistic traditions. By deploying art historical paradigms of hybridity that suggest the interconnectedness of cultural life in the greater Mediterranean, I theorize this portrait as product of a multilateral exchange, which owes a great deal to Bellini's interaction with local artists and visual styles at the Ottoman court.

The Provenance of Bellini's Portrait

The provenance of Bellini's portrait is far from complete. It has sometimes been proposed that the portrait was painted in Venice after Bellini's return, as a record of his mission.[671] However, given the complex iconographic program of the portrait, together with the date and inscription, it is far more likely that the portrait was completed in Constantinople. In all, as I will show, the portrait's notable iconography is most meaningful in relation to Mehmed II's palace ceremonial at the Ottoman court. It is unclear how the portrait returned to Venice, but a generally accepted explanation is based on Angiolello's memoir.[672] According to Angiolello, upon Mehmed II's death, his successor, Sultan Bayezid II (1481-1512), rebuked his father's innovations in the style of both Ottoman rulership and figurative representation, and sold several paintings from the Palace, perhaps including Bellini's portrait, in the bazaar.

Bought by Venetian merchants trading in the Levant, the portrait may have reached Venice by the early 1500s. A small Venetian painting, *Portrait of Mehmed II*[673] (Pl. III)—dated to the early sixteenth century and now in Doha, Qatar—closely follows the London portrait in repeating the five-eighth turn of the Sultan's face as well as his distinct physiognomy, the shape of the turban, and the trios of stacked golden crowns in the panel's upper corners. Similarities between the two portraits, not only in iconography

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[671] Basil Gray, "Two Portraits of Mehmet II," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 61, no. 352 (July 1, 1932): 4–7.

[672] See Appendix, Document No. 15. Also see: Giovan Maria Angiolello, *Il sultano e Il profeta: memorie di uno schiavo vicentino divenuto tesoriere di Maometto II Il conquistatore* (Milano: Serra e Riva Editori, 1985).

[673] This portrait is attributed to either Bellini's workshop or his follower in Venice.The painting is now in the Museum of Islamic Arts in Doha, Qatar. Previously, it belonged to the Joli Quentil Kansil Collection in Singapore, as published in the *Bellini and the East* exhibition catalogue in 2005, 78.

but also in color, support the idea that the London portrait may have reached Venice in the early sixteenth century as the Qatar portrait is most likely based on Bellini's panel rather than on a portrait drawing.[674]

However, nothing certain is known of the London painting's whereabouts until 1865, when it was purchased by the archeologist and scholar of Italian art Sir Austen Henry Layard (1817-1894) in Venice. In his letter to the Italian art critic and politician Giovanni Morelli (1816-1891) from 24 October 1865, Layard stated that he acquired the panel from "an old Englishman, who had been a contractor in the service of the Republic of Venice."[675] According to the contractor's testimony, he secured the painting from the Venturi family in discharge of a debt. Layard, who published and exhibited the portrait at Leeds in 1868 (no. 65) and at South Kensington in 1869 (no. 32), later donated it to the National Gallery in London as part of his bequest.[676]

Prior to the Venturi family, the humanist and historian Paolo Giovio (1483-1552) may have owned either Bellini's painting or a replica in his collection of Ottoman portraits. In writing the *Commentario de le cose de' Turchi* (1531) and then the *Historiam sui temporis libri XLV* (Florence, 1550-1552), in which he devoted much space to describing the achievements of the Ottomans, Giovio amassed a collection of over 400

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[674] *Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797*, ed. Stefano Carboni (New York; New Haven [Conn.]: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Yale University Press, 2007), 303-304. Catalogue description no. 24 discusses similarities between the two in greater detail.
[675] Quoted from: Martin Davies, *National Gallery Catalogues: The Earlier Italian Schools,* (London: Publications dept., National gallery, 1961), 51-52. Original letters are kept at the British Library, Ms. 38966, Layard Papers, Vol. XXXVI.
[676] The painting was transferred to the Gallery in 1916.

portraits of historical figures, including Ottoman sultans.[677] Beginning from 1536, Giovio's collection was housed in his villa at Lake Como, which he called *Museo*. Each portrait was exhibited with a parchment label containing a resume of achievements and character traits that often also included a personal *impresa* associated with the portrayed individual.[678] Since Giovio's collection was in part neglected and then dispersed after his death, its contents are mainly known from the posthumous illustrated edition of his *Elogia Virorum Bellica Virtute Illustrium* (1575) that was prepared by the Swiss artist Tobias Stimmer (1539-1584) based on portraits from his collection. However, the woodcut portrait of Mehmed II in this book differs from the London portrait in as much as it represents the bust-length Sultan in profile, smelling a rose (Fig. 4.1). Since the London portrait reveals no trace of a hand with a rose, scholars have suggested that either 1) the artist based the woodcut on several models in Giovio's collection, perhaps including copies of those miniature portraits, now preserved in the Topkapi Palace Museum and attributed to Sinan Bey and Şiblizâde Ahmed;[679] or 2) Giovio had an altogether different portrait or portrait drawing of the ruler by Bellini. In any scenario, a different iconography of Mehmed II in the woodcut does not preclude that Giovio owned the London portrait of Mehmed II.

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[677] Raby, "From Europe to Istanbul," in *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman*, 136-163. Linda Susan Klinger, *The Portrait Collection of Paolo Giovio: 1545 - 1553*, PhD Dissertation (Princeton University, 1991).

[678] Dorigen Sophie Caldwell, *The Sixteenth-Century Italian Impresa in Theory and Practice* (New York: AMS Press, 2004). Mauda Bregoli-Russo, *L'impresa come ritratto del rinascimento* (Napoli: Loffredo, 1990).

[679] Scholars suggested that Giovio maintained direct contacts with Constantinople and different Italian courts to obtain best possible sources for his museum. See, for instance, Raby, "From Europe to Istanbul," in *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman*, 146. This was earlier also observed by Karabacek and Gray: Joseph Von Karabacek, *Italienische Künstler am Hofe Muhammeds II. des Eroberers 1451 - 1481* (Wien: Hölder [in Komm.], 1918). Also see: Gray, "Two Portraits of Mehmet II," 5.

In another instance, Carlo Ridolfi's 1648 book *Meraviglie dell'arte* mentions a portrait of the Sultan by Bellini in Pietro Zeno's collections in Venice.[680] Although that portrait was reattributed to Bartolomeo Veneto after it entered the collections of Lord Northwick in 1825,[681] Venetian sources suggest Bellini's iconography of Mehmed II was well-known in Venice. As Raby demonstrated, books published in Venice, such as the *Sommario et Alboro delli Principi Othomani* (1567), with illustrations by Niccolò Nelli ("Venetiano") and annotations by the historian Francesco Sansovino, included portraits of Mehmed II that followed Bellini's iconography of the Sultan—that is, in a peculiar near profile or a five-eighth turn.[682] Thus, in one scenario, it very well may be that Bellini's panel entered Giovio's collections at Como, albeit briefly, and then changed hands, coming back to Venice until Layard acquired the portrait. In another scenario, it could have been continuously present in Venice after Venetian merchants had brought it back from Constantinople.

Bellini's Portrait and the Fiction of Verisimilitude

Due to the political circumstances of Bellini's sojourn, the portrait has not gone unnoticed in scholarship. Most scholars treat the painting as a mere transcription from life. As Elizabeth Rodini observes, the portrait has been celebrated as an "authentic image of

[680] Jürg Meyer zur Capellen, *Gentile Bellini* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1985), 150.
[681] Laura Pagnotta, *Bartolomeo Veneto: L'opera Completa* (Firenze: Centro Di, 1997), 295.
[682] Raby, "From Europe to Istanbul," 140.

the (Islamic) other" and "the first documentary image of an individual Turk."[683] She shows that such readings essentially reflect "the colonial or post-colonial paradigm of West representing East."[684] Nonetheless, even within recent discussion of cross-cultural exchange, centered on Venice, with Eastern Mediterranean cultures, Bellini's portrait is still interpreted as a true image of the Sultan by deploying ethnographic and anthropological notions of accurate transcription from life.[685]

The paradigm of mimetic verisimilitude can be traced back to fifteenth- and sixteenth-century histories written by Venetian and Florentine humanists, which describe Mehmed's amazement at his own likeness. Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), in particular, characterized the work as "true to life" and "miraculous" in appearance, despite having never seen either Mehmed II himself or Bellini's portrait of him.[686] Similarly, most modern scholars, beginning in the late nineteenth century with the British archaeologist Austen Henry Layard, who discovered the painting in Venice, have taken the painting's mimetic qualities for granted, in spite of evidence to the contrary, and fallen into the trap of conventional Orientalist interpretation. Layard, and the next generation of Bellini scholars, puzzled over why the portrait failed to correspond to several other fifteenth-century eyewitness descriptions of Mehmed II's appearance; they reasoned that either the Sultan's illness at the time of Bellini's visit, or the painting's desultory state of preservation and antiquarian restoration, accounts for what they saw as the painting's

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[683] Elizabeth Rodini, "The Sultan's True Face? Gentile Bellini, Mehmet II, and the values of verisimilitude," *The Turk and Islam in the Western Eye, 1450-1750: Visual Imagery Before Orientalism*, ed. James G. Harper (Farnham, Surrey, UK, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 21-40, 21 & 24.
[684] Ibid.
[685] See, for example: Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 78-79, 99-101. Spinale, *The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)*. Julian Raby, *Venice, Dürer, and the Oriental Mode* ([S.l.]; Totowa, N.J.: Islamic Art Publications; Distributed by Sotheby Publications, 1982), 17.
[686] Appendix, Document No. 18.

*un*likeness.[687] Additionally, some scholars tried to explain the painting's *un*likeness by doubting its authorship altogether,[688] but the majority of scholars firmly assign it to Bellini.

Since 2005, reappraisals of the painting suggest that more of the original survives than had been previously thought.[689] As well, recent readings of Vasari's narrative uncover his tendency to valorize the Italian and Florentine artistic idiom above all others by claiming that these artists imitated the world so well that they could fool and astonish viewers. And studies of artists with court positions similar to Bellini's suggest that the primary goal of most ruler portraiture was to idealize the sovereign, bringing out a regime's political and intellectual program symbolically—the very opposite of verisimilitude.[690] Just as narratives of "bad restoration" ultimately fail to account for the painting's *lack* of resemblance, accounts of Bellini's painting as a "true to life" depiction of the Sultan's appearance must be considered with extreme caution.

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[687] See my complete review of bibliography in the introduction and chapter one. Austen Henry Layard, *Handbook of Painting. The Italian Schools. Based on the Handbook of Kugler.* Originally Edited by Sir Charles L. Eastlake ... Fifth Edition. Thoroughly Revised and in Part Rewritten, by Austen Henry Layard ... In Two Parts ... With Nearly 250 Illustrations (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1887), 304-305. Louis Thuasne, *Gentile Bellini Et Sultan Mohammed II: Notes Sur Le Séjour Du Peintre Vénitien à Constantinople (1479-1480) D'après Les Documents Originaux En Partie Inédits* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1888). Armenag Sakisian, "The Portraits of Mehmet II," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 74, no. 433 (April 1, 1939): 172–181. Gray, "Two Portraits of Mehmet II." W. Loftus Hare, "The Portrait of Muhammad II by Gentile Bellini," *Apollo* 20, no. 115 (July to December, 1934): 249-250. W. Loftus Hare, "A New Gentile Bellini," *Apollo*, 21 (January to June, 1935):112. Babinger, "Un ritratto ignorato di Maometto II, opera di Gentile Bellini." Babinger famously explained the portrait's *un*likeness both by its state of preservation and by Mehmed II's poor state of health at the time of Bellini's sojourn. Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time* (Princeton (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), 424-425.

[688] Davies, *National Gallery Catalogues: The Earlier Italian Schools,* 51-52.

[689] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 78.

[690] Luke Syson and Dillian Gordon, *Pisanello: Painter to the Renaissance Court* (London; [New Haven, CT]: National Gallery Co.; Distributed by Yale University Press, 2001). Joanna Woods-Marsden, "'Ritratto Al Naturale': Questions of Realism and Idealism in Early Renaissance Portraits," *Art Journal* 46, no. 3 (October 1, 1987): 209–216.

The painting's most distinctive features (with the exception of its obviously symbolic floating crowns) become nearly unreadable if our interpretation remains limited by earlier art historical paradigms of mimesis and ethnographic transcription of the East. Instead, art historical methodologies that acknowledge the pictorial rhetoric of Bellini's portrait and the artist's agency in fashioning the imperial image of the ruler help uncover the original messages and functions of the panel. Previous readings of the portrait as imperial, which highlight some of the heraldic and symbolic aspects of the painting and include work by Jürg Meyer Capellen, Gülru Necipoğlu, Maria Pia Pedani, and Günstel Renda,[691] are foundational for the further investigation of the portrait's hybrid visual language in the following pages.

[691] Meyer zur Capellen, *Gentile Bellini*, 212 (noted on heraldic aspect of the painting when discussing the trios of stacked crowns and links the portrait with Bellini's medal). Necipoğlu, "From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Kostantiniyye: Creation of a Cosmopolitan Capital and Visual Culture under Sultan Mehmed II" (this article interprets the portrait as projection of Mehmed II's imperial authority). Pedani Fabris, "The Portrait of Mehmed II: Gentile Bellini: The Making of an Imperial Image" (this article discusses Ottoman symbols in the bejeweled cloth and the meaning of the Sultan's costume and of the arch; it also argues that the portrait was dynastic as it depicted the Sultan as the seventh sultan in the House of Osman). Günsel Renda, "Traditional Turkish Painting at the Beginning of Western Trends," in *A History of Turkish Painting*, ed. Selman Pinar (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987), 15-86. Günsel Renda, "Portraiture in Islamic Art," in *Islamic Art: Common Principles, Forms and Themes*, Proceedings of the International Symposium, Istanbul, April 1983, ed. Ahmad Muhammad Issa and Tahsin Ömer Tahaoglu (Dar al-Fikr, 1989), 225-231. (Renda highlights some intersections of Italian and Ottoman portrait traditions).

An Iconographic Puzzle or the Three Interpretive Problems

Central to understanding Bellini's image of the ruler are three visual features that have not been previously described in detail nor understood, perhaps because they contribute to what the majority of scholars regard as the painting's "awkwardness."

First, instead of following the convention of portraying Italian rulers in profile, the painting represents the Sultan in a five-eighth view that is halfway between the profile and the three-quarter view becoming prominent at the time. That is, the Sultan appears turned a bit more toward the viewer than in a classical profile. This formula gives the viewer the profile of the distinctive nose, mouth, and beard and brings the far eye into view, but hides the other cheek's contour. It also hints at the potential for movement and animates the sitter in away that is impossible in profile portraits. While similar in effect to a three-quarter view, the five-eighth view is uncommon enough that Bellini's use of it has often been erroneously attributed to antiquarian restorations of the work.

Wearing a white scholar's turban, similar to those in Timurid portraits, neatly wrapped around a red *taj* (a small, brimless, conical, fluted hat worn by Ottomans),[692] Mehmed II appears as a magnificent ruler, whose countenance is idealized and much softened, thus greatly departing from the fifteenth-century textual descriptions of the ruler, as well as from previous bellicose representations of him. Mehmed II was not particularly handsome, and is described as having "black, bushy, and long eyebrows," "large eyes

[692] *Taj* is Persian and Arabic word for a crown or hat covering the crown of the head. A *taj* is slightly different from a *tokiya* or *kulokha,* which was a small, cone-shaped but flat hat worn by Turcomans and Timurids. The *taj* also appeared to be fluted and thus had a more sophisticated design, which started to be a marker of Ottoman identity in sultanic portraiture. See *Encyclopedia of Islam. New Edition*, ed. P.J. Bearman, TH. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 2000), Vol. X, 608-615.

with thick lashes," "a short, thick neck," and "a sallow complexion," and as being "fat and fleshy."[693] He was also known for his impulsive and brutal temper. In addition to killing a favorite mistress because he loved her too much, historical anecdotes recall that, upon noticing a cucumber missing from the royal garden, he cut his gardener's belly open to find it.[694] Bellini's portrait presents a subtle re-interpretation of the Sultan's overall public image and physical characteristics.

The ruler's thin face and angular features are set in contrast to his voluminous white turban. The elegant oval of his face, neatly trimmed beard, well-shaped ears, and thin and well-defined lifted eyebrows all emphasize a sense of decorum, controlled demeanor, and an expression of philosophical contemplation. The image speaks the language of refinement, dignity, and nobility, representing Mehmed as a wise and temperate philosopher-king according to aesthetic ideals accepted in both Eastern Islamic and Italian courts. The idealized re-presentation of his appearance is also signaled by a range of symbolic devices. His bust is framed by an architectonic structure in the form of a free-standing arch, resting on a parapet that extends across the entire pictorial field. Six crowns painted on the dark ground float above the arch, and a seventh is integrated into the embroidery of the jewel-encrusted cloth of honor draped over the parapet beneath the arch. These seven crowns represent him as the seventh Ottoman Sultan, as has been

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[693] For a description of Mehmed II's appearance by Angiolello, see Appendix, document 15. Babinger quotes Seyyid Lokman, court poet of Murad III (1574-1595). Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, 424.

[694]These anecdotes are famously told in Angiolello's memoirs and Ridolfi's description of Bellini's sojourn. See: Angiolello, *Il sultano e Il profeta: memorie di uno schiavo vicentino divenuto tesoriere di Maometto II Il conquistatore*. Carlo Ridolfi, *Le Maraviglie dell'arte: ovvero le Vite degli illustri pittori veneti e dello Stato descritte dal cav. Carlo Ridolfi* (Berlin: G. Grotesche Verlagsbuchhandling, 1914), 57-58. For Ridolfi see: Appendix, Document No. 20.

suggested. Two dark plaques set into the parapet bear inscriptions naming the ruler and the artist and giving a date.

Second, the architectonic framing device poses another interpretive problem for the mimetic paradigm, as the device cannot be fully analogized to an object in the actual world: its forms and components do not fully resemble an ecclesiastical portal, a balcony, an altarpiece frame, or a window, as has been suggested in recent scholarship.[695] In Italian Renaissance portraiture generally, and in Bellini's other work, including the *Portrait of Mehmed II and His Son* (ca. 1480s) (Pl. II), the parapet is typically understood as a material object in our world, continuing beyond the edge of the painting. It functions to mark the juncture between the painted world and the real space of the viewer. In Bellini's *Portrait of Doge Andrea Vendramin with His Secretary and a Papal Nuncio* (c. 1476-1478) (Fig. 4. 2), the background is depicted as window-like open space around the human figures in profile before it, and the frame is represented as a material object similar to the marble bay of a wall. In comparison, the isolated architectonic structure in Bellini's portrait is strikingly artificial and structurally incoherent. It functions rather like

[695] Different interpretations can be summarized as follows: 1) It has been proposed that the form of the arch is connected with Venetian ecclesiastical architecture, particularly portals in the Church of San Zaccaria (c. 1480), as well as with frames on paintings of the Madonna Enthroned, such as Bartolomeo Vivarini's *Virgin and Child* (1465). 2) Because of the possible ecclesiastical connotations, it has been hypothesized that the lost *Madonna and Child* painted for the Sultan by Bellini in Constantinople might have had such a painted frame, and so the Sultan requested a similar elegant form to be repeated in his portrait. See Stefano Carboni, *Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797*, 303. Although this hypothesis is interesting, the extant replica of the *Madonna and Child*, albeit by a Persian artist, now in the Istanbul Library, previously attributed to Bellini, as well as Bellini's *Madonna* from Berlin (c. 1460s), render this argument unsubstantiated. For the Istanbul Madonna see Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 112. 3) The form of the arch reflects a typical Venetian motif of a balcony similar to those depicted in scuole paintings with women watching public processions and celebrations. 4) An astute argument has been put forward by Maria Pia Pedani Fabris explaining the presence of seven crowns in the painting (one embroidered on the cloth) as a dynastic sign—Mehmed II, the seventh ruler in the Osman dynasty. Pedani Fabris, "The Portrait of Mehmed II: Gentile Bellini: The Making of an Imperial Image." This point of view supports the interpretation of the portrait as combining dynastic and personal representations of the Sultan. See also Julian Raby, "Opening Gambits," in *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman*, 64-95, 70.

a special effect—its scale suggests a huge architectural element, yet the Sultan's figure is tightly squeezed, as if the artist deployed two incongruent scales. The architectonic frame evokes the visual language of pan-Mediterranean medieval and Venetian book illuminations, where similar architectural frontispieces were used as enframements of ancient kings and authors. Thus, the architectonic structure functions as a symbolic form because of its perspectival incongruence. As well, the unified black background is not three-dimensional but rather a flat pictorial surface—the ground for a graphic display on which six crowns either float or sit.

Third, the relatively illegible condition of much of the text has made it necessary to rely on reconstructions by modern scholars, but the inscription clearly celebrates Mehmed and Bellini, and includes a specific date: November 25, 1480.[696] Portraits inscribed with the names of both sitter and artist are exceptionally rare in Italian Renaissance painting; this inscription neither follows the standard format of a *cartellino*—an artist's signature device linked with the rise of independent workshops[697]—nor matches the format of inscriptions on Bellini's other works or on other images of Mehmed II. Neither historical accounts, nor the provenance of the painting, shed light on the significance of the exact date, which I will interpret in the following pages as a part of the complex *impresa* device embedded in the work.

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[696] Complete reconstruction of the inscription and its translation in Appendix, Document No. 8. My sincere thanks to Anthony Edwards for collaborating with me and deciphering the inscription.

[697] For a discussion of the cartellino see: Joanna Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture: The Visual Construction of Identity and the Social Status of the Artist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). Louisa C. Matthew, "The Painter's Presence: Signatures in Venetian Renaissance Pictures," *The Art Bulletin* 80, no. 4 (December 1, 1998): 616-648. Joanna Woods-Marsden, "Introduction: Collective Identity/ Individual Identity," and Creighton Gilbert, "A Preface to Signatures (With Some Cases in Venice)" in *Fashioning Identities in Renaissance Art*, ed. by Mary Rogers (Aldershot, [England]; Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 2000). Rona Goffen, "Signatures: Inscribing Identity in Italian Renaissance Art," in *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, vol. 32 (2001): 304-370.

The Authenticity of Bellini's Five-Eighth View and the Painting's State of Preservation

Beginning with X-ray photographs taken in 1927, scholars questioned the extent to which Bellini's peculiar five-eighth view, as well as the overall painting's iconographical program, was the painter's own work or the result of restoration and overpainting. Howard Collins, who based his assessment on the 1940 conservation report,[698] critically wrote in 1970 of the portrait's pictorial fidelity: "The mouth is twisted into a profile on a face which was clearly placed in a three-quarter pose. It proposes an unbelievable physiognomy which would be even more incredulous as the work of Gentile."[699] Babinger also lamented in 1978: "next to nothing beyond the turban remains of the original."[700] However, the organizers of the exhibition "Bellini and the East" challenged these assumptions in 2005.

Infrared and ultraviolet photographs (1942, 1949, and 1971) (Fig. 4.3) in the National Gallery curatorial files, which I have reviewed, provide evidence that the panel is, for the most part, authentic. The photographs confirm that the Sultan's face is largely preserved, together with the architectonic structure, the inscription on the left insert, and the crowns. Significant losses can be seen in the area of the Sultan's fur collar and caftan, where the photographs show significant overpainting. Although the face was likely

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[698] William Bragg and Ian Rawlins. *From the National Gallery Laboratory, With a Preface by Sir William Bragg and Notes by Ian Rawlins* (London: N.G. Trustees, 1940).
[699] Howard Frank Collins, *Gentile Bellini : a Monograph and Catalogue of His Works* (University of Pittsburg, Pittsburgh, Pa.: 1970).
[700] Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, 425. The idea of the untrustworthiness of the historical likeness is also repeated by David Bomford, *Conservation of Paintings* (London, 1997), 49.

retouched by Giuseppe Molteni (1800-1867),[701] a delicate modeling, comparable in quality to other Bellini portraits, is still intact. Overall, I agree with the authors of the "Bellini and the East" exhibition who argue that "much more of the portrait survives than has been sometimes supposed." [702]

The authenticity of Bellini's remarkable representation of the Sultan at a five-eighth turn, as well as an overall characterization that emphasizes the ruler's humanity by showing him as somber and even melancholic, is further supported by the two earliest miniature portraits that reproduce key aspects of Bellini's depiction of Mehmed II. Painted in the Ottoman court at the time of Bellini's visit[703] and discovered in the Topkapi Palace collection some fifty years after Bellini's panel,[704] the miniature portraits offer key evidence in support of the authenticity of Mehmed II's likeness in the London portrait. One is the so-called *Mehmed II Smelling a Rose* (ca. 1480) (Fig. 4.4), a full-length seated portrait painted at the court and presently associated either with the naqqâsh (painter) Sinân Bey, or also with his pupil Şiblizâde Ahmed.[705] The treatment of the head,

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[701] Molteni was a conservator at the Brera, Milan, who worked on Bellini's painting when Layard acquired it. See Bomford, *Conservation of Paintings*, 48.

[702] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 78.

[703] I will discuss the date of these portraits later in the chapter. Here it is sufficient to notice that the catalogue entries for the "Venice and the Islamic World" exhibition place the production of these two miniature portraits during the time of Bellini's visit. Carboni, *Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797*, 296, no. 3-4.

[704] This means that Molteni had no access to these miniature portraits to fabricate the face of Mehmed II, as had been assumed.

[705] According to Mustafa Âli (1541-1600), an Ottoman historian and bureaucrat who lived a century after Mehmed II's death, there were two famous artists at the time of Mehmed II—Sinan Bey and his pupil Şiblizâde Ahmed. It appears that Sinan Bey was an official court painter who was trained, according to the historian, by Maestro Pavli from Ragusa. Venetian documents also mention Sinan Bey as a part of an official delegation to Venice on May 15, 1480, thus confirming his high rank and recognition at the Ottoman court and his ability to participate in diplomatic negotiations. For details of Sinan Bey's biography see: Mustafa Âli, *Menakib-i Hünerveran* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1926). Necipoğlu, "The Serial Portraits of Ottoman Sultans in Comparative Perspective," 30, also footnotes no. 27 & 34. Maria Pia Pedani, *In nome del gran signore: inviati ottomani a Venezia dalla caduta di Costantinopolia alla guerra di Candia* (Venezia: Deputazione ed., 1994). For a discussion of the portrait's iconography and dating see:

turban, and facial features are similar to Bellini's painting, with the mouth and chin drawn in profile and the rest of the face in a five-eighth view. The portrait likewise captures the protruding upper lip, representing an overbite. But the Ottoman artist changed the Sultan's body, depicting him sitting cross-legged, following Timurid conventions. The second portrait is a bust portrait of the Sultan from the same Ottoman atelier in a classical profile painted on a golden background (ca. 1479-1481) (Fig. 4.5). It has been variably attributed to Costanzo di Moysis (or Costanzo da Ferrara), to an unknown Turkish artist, and to Sinân Bey.[706] The physiognomic characteristics of Bellini's portrait are also preserved—specifically the distinctive, narrow, elongated nose, the raised thin eyebrows, and the shape of the eyes. The Sultan's averted gaze—directed inward, rather than expressing watchfulness—brings it close to Bellini's model and shows him as somber and sympathetic, rather than forceful and stern as in the medals by Costanzo da Ferrara. In addition to recalling Bellini's overall artistic ideas in depicting

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Gray "Two Portraits of Mehmet II," 4-6. Basil Gray, "Portraits of Mehmed II Fatih," *I. Milletlerarasi Türkoloji Kongresi (Istanbul, 15-20 X. 1973): Tebligler* (Istanbul: Tercüman Gazetesi ve Türkiyat Enstitüsü, 1979), 765-770. Esin Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting under Sultan Mehmed II," *Ars Orientalis* 9 (January 1, 1973): 103-120. Raby, *El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom,* 146-147. Meyer zur Capellen, *Gentile Bellini*, 101 ff. Raby, "Opening Gambits," 69-71, 82. Michael A. Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the Riddle of Bihzâd of Herât (1465-1535)* (Paris; [New York]: Flammarion ; Distributed in North America by Rizzoli International, 2004), 40-43.Carboni, *Venice and the Islamic world, 828-1797*, 296. The portrait is currently preserved in the so-called Fatih Album (H. 2153).

[706]I accept attribution of the portrait to the time of Bellini's visit and to Sinân Bey. Although the artist also used Costanzo da Ferrara's medal as a model in rendering his turban, Mehmed II's physiognomy was inspired by Bellini's portrait or portrait drawing. Gray, "Two Portraits of Mehmet II." Basil Gray, "Portraits of Mehmed II Fatih." Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting under Sultan Mehmed II." Raby, *El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom,* 125-43. Raby, "Opening Gambits," 69-71, 90. Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the Riddle of Bihzâd of Herât (1465-1535)*, 40-43.Carboni, *Venice and the Islamic world, 828-1797*, 296. The portrait is also currently preserved in the Fatih Album (H. 2153).

Mehmed II's image, both portraits render the sleeves of the caftan in the same distinctive way as in Bellini's drawings of oriental figures discussed in chapter 3.[707]

Bellini's five-eighth view is also closely followed in two Venetian portraits, associated with Bellini's workshop—*Portrait of Mehmed II with a Young Prince* (c.1480s) (Pl. II), attributed to Bellini, and *Portrait of Mehmed II* (c.1500-1510s) (Pl. III), attributed to Bellini's workshop or a Bellini's follower; both are portable panels produced soon after the London portrait. Both portraits capture Mehmed II's likeness as rendered in the London portrait down to the smallest detail, suggesting the function of the London painting as a model.

In the *Portrait of Mehmed II* in the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar (Pl. III),[708] the Sultan appears to be represented from the back, but is turning toward the viewer. This miniature portrait faithfully repeats not only the London portrait's facial features—nose, eyes, and gaze—but also the five-eighth view and the shape of the turban. Also, quite remarkably, this work closely follows the color palette of the London portrait and represents the face of the Sultan in the same off-white tonality combined with the warm reds, golds, and browns of the dress. Even more important is the presence of the

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[707] This has been noted and underscored in the following catalogue: Carboni, *Venice and the Islamic world, 828-1797*, 296.

[708] Loftus Hare, "The Portrait of Mohammed II by Gentile Bellini." Loftus Hare, "A New Gentile Bellini." Collins, *Gentile Bellini: A Monograph and Catalogue of His Works.* Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom." Meyer zur Capellen, *Gentile Bellini*. Kangal and Işin, eds., *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman.* Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East.* Carboni, ed. *Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797*.

three vertically stacked crowns at the top of the picture on each side of the sitter, which uniquely link this portrait with the London painting. [709]

The other portrait that shows a clear dependence on the London painting is a *Portrait of Mehmed II with a Young Prince*, now in Switzerland (Pl. II). Babinger attributed it to Bellini, Collins to Bellini and his workshop.[710] The mature ruler's face, the distinctive nose, and the similarity in the shape of the lips, chin, and beard echo the physiognomy of the Sultan in the London portrait. There is a slight difference in the arrangements of the folds of the turban as well as in the fur collar of the outer garment or caftan, but the overall appearance and iconography follow Bellini's type. The face of the Sultan is represented in the same five-eighth view, which shows an almost profile rendering of the chin, mouth, and beard, while the rest of the face is turning toward the viewer.

The double portrait of the Sultan with a younger man is remarkable for its dynastic connotations. Although this man's identity remains unknown, it is generally agreed that he is one of the Sultan's heirs. Indeed, the inscription on the back written in

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[709] Earlier attributions of this miniature portrait by Hare, Babinger, and Collins ascribed this work to Bellini based on its excellent state of preservation. These authors also questioned whether this work could have preceded the London portrait. The absence of an architectural frame in the miniature painting, and the presence of the fringed tail in the turban following the iconography of the Ottoman costume typical of late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Venetian paintings, especially favored in Vittore Carpaccio's cycles painted for Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni (c. 1502-1507), for Scuola degli Albanesi (c. 1502-1508), and Scuola di Santo Stefano (c. 1511-1520), speak against this possibility. In addition, the turning of the shoulders is typical of the animated style of portrait introduced in Venice by Antonello da Messina (c. 1470s), which became an artistic convention starting with the work of Giorgione and Titian. Evaluation of the portrait by Capellan and Campbell connects this work to Bellini's workshop in Venice after his return from Constantinople, and indicates that it was produced closer to the beginning of the sixteenth century.

[710] Babinger, "Un ritratto ignorato di Maometto II, opera di Gentile Bellini." Babinger, F. "Ein weiteres Sultanbuild von Gentile Bellini?" *Österr. Academie d. Wiss., phil.-hist. Klasse, Sitzungsberichte*, 237, Bd., 3. Abh. (1961): 3. Babinger, F. "Ein weiteres Sultanbuild von Gentile Bellini aus russichem Besitz." *Österr. Academie d. Wiss., phil.-hist. Klasse, Sitzungsberichte*, 240., Bd., 3. Abh. (1962): 3. Collins, "Gentile Bellini: a Monograph and Catalogue of His Works." (1970).

an old hand states that this is a portrait is of Mehmed II and his son, painted by Gentile Bellini.[711] The identification of the young prince, however, depends on where and for what purpose this portrait was painted. If this portrait was made after Bellini's departure from Constantinople, then the young prince could only have been Prince Djem (Cem Sultan) who was seeking refuge at the Papal court in Rome when his brother Bayezid took over the throne after Mehmed II's death. In such case, the portrait is a pictorial claim to Djem's right of succession. Even if it was completed by Bellini at the Sultan's court, the son would likely be Prince Djem, since he was the favorite son who adopted his father's idelology and was more likely to be presented as successor.

Together with the Ottoman miniature portraits of the Sultan, the portraits in Qatar and Switzerland reproduce incontrovertible characteristics of Bellini's style and Mehmed II's physiognomy. Thus, what Collins calls "distortions" in the London panel should be understood as intentionally fashioned by Bellini. The five-eighth turn of the Sultan's face, together with the architectonic structure, the inscription, and the crowns, forms a fully intact and complex iconographical program, which I proceed to interpret in the following pages.

[711] Collins, "Gentile Bellini: a Monograph and Catalogue of His Works," 138.

Intercultural Idioms in the Portrait: *Bellini's Five-Eighth View and Italian Ruler Portrait*

Since the portrait preserves Bellini's original intentions, we can start with a close examination of the five-eighth view in relation to other portraits of Italian rulers. Bellini's artistic strategies significantly depart from the three-quarter-view, communicative court portrait, as well as from the typical profile view found in medallic and painted ruler portraits.

The profile was a widely accepted convention in Italian medallic and painted ruler portraiture. First introduced in the portrait medal, which was commissioned as means of political and personal propaganda, the profile saw a meteoric rise in popularity among Italian élites from 1440 through the end of the century. The court of Ferrara during the rule of Leonello d'Este (1407-1450), in the first half of the fifteenth century, with Pisanello (1395-1455) as the court artist, was at the forefront in developing the conventions of ruler portraiture. Pisanello designed his medallic and painted profile portraits based on formats from ancient coins.[712] These portraits introduced a new degree of naturalism to official portraiture, but the images were still idealized.

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[712] An extensive bibliography on medals can be found in the following exhibition catalogue: Stephen K. Scher, ed., *The Currency of Fame: Portrait Medals of the Renaissance* (New York: H.N. Abrams in association with the Frick Collection, 1994). For a succinct treatment of the origin, meaning, and function of the Italian Renaissance medal, see Joanna Woods-Marsden, "'Ritratto al Naturale': Questions of Realism and Idealism in Early Renaissance Portraits," *Art Journal* 46, no. 3 (October 1, 1987): 209-216. Stephen Scher, "An Introduction to the Renaissance Portrait Medal"; Joanna Woods-Marsden, "Visual Construction of the Art of War: Images for Machiavelli's Prince"; Kristen Lippincott, "'Un Gran Pelago': The Impresa and the Medal Reverse in Fifteenth-Century Italy"; and J. Graham Pollard, "Text and Image," in *Perspectives on the Renaissance Medal*, ed. Stephen K. Scher (New York: Garland Pub.: American Numismatic Society, 2000). Catalogue essays on Pisanello's medals in *The Renaissance Portrait: From Donatello to Bellini*, ed. Keith Christiansen and Stefan Weppelmann, (New York; New Haven [Conn.]: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Distributed by Yale University Press, 2011). On the relationship between the

Pisanello designed medals for Byzantine Emperor John VIII Palaeologus (1392-1448); Leonello d'Este (1407-1450), Marquis of Ferrara; Sigismondo Malatesta (1417-1468), Lord of Rimini; King Alfonso I of Aragon (1396-1458) in Naples; and Francesco I Sforza (1401-1466), Duke of Milan. These medals were large in size (Fig. 4.6-4.9) and depicted their subjects in contemporary dress, in profile, on the obverse, accompanied by a Latin or Greek inscription stating the political office of the ruler; they also included a pictorial symbolic reverse with a heraldic device, personal emblem, or an allegory *all' antica* characterizing the ruler and his political and cultural interests. In designing heraldic and narrative images on the reverse, Pisanello relied on the language of the French *imprese*, which was well developed in the courts of Anjou, Burgundy, and Provence.[713] As Kristin Lippincott has shown, heraldic images on the reverse explicitly proclaimed the ruler's achievements, aspects of his character, political aspirations, and the titles to which he had laid claim. From its inception, Pisanello's portrait medal epitomized the values and aspirations of Italian Renaissance courts and rose to high fashion, so that, by the end of the fifteenth century, nearly all court centers in Renaissance Europe supported and utilized medal making as a means of heightening personal prestige and circulating political propaganda.

Overall, as scholars have demonstrated, these medal portraits were designed to express the ruler's authority and to emphasize prowess in warfare, chivalric qualities, and erudition. The intended audience was the ruling class. Thanks to Pisanello's

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portrait-medal and the culture of humanism, see this recent exhibition catalogue: Syson and Gordon, *Pisanello: Painter to the Renaissance Court*.

[713] Lippincott, "'Un Gran Pelago': The Impresa and the Medal Reverse in Fifteenth-Century Italy," in Scher, ed., *Perspectives on the Renaissance Medal*, 77.

extraordinary skills, the humanistic interests of his patrons, and a confluence of political events and people, the portrait medal became a remarkable and influential object in politics.

The rise of the medal coincided with the shifting political landscape in the Italian peninsula, which saw the processes of territorial consolidation and the absorption of many of the smaller Italian city-states into the larger ones, as well as the rise of new political élites and *condottieri* who were eager to claim their ruling authority and establish their princely and familial dignity. In this context, Pisanello's standard for the execution of medals became highly regarded and was quickly emulated in courts throughout Italy, due to the portability of the medal and to its effective communicative and commemorative dimensions.[714] The medal also became popular among patricians and *literati*, who used the format for self-promotion and social advancement. Similarly, the first medallic portraits of Mehmed II followed the accepted Italian conventions of ruler iconography and were clearly intended for circulation among his polyglot courtiers and in Italy, as Necipoğlu argued in interpreting their accompanying Latin inscriptions.[715]

Due to the influence of the medal, the profile also became an official and preferred formula in painted portable portraiture for depicting princely families in Italy from the 1450s through the early 1500s. Rab Hatfield has argued that the painted profile

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[714] Woods-Marsden, "Visual Construction of the Art of War: Images for Machiavelli's Prince," in *Perspectives on the Renaissance Medal*.

[715] Necipoğlu, "From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Kostantiniyye: Creation of a Cosmopolitan Capital and Visual Culture under Sultan Mehmed II," in *From Byzantion to Istanbul: 8000 Years of a Capital*. Necipoğlu reappraises Raby's earlier view of the function of medals commissioned by Mehmed II. Raby, followed by Spinale, argued that Mehmed II's medals were intended for the Sultan's peers in the West as political propaganda and collectible items. Necipoğlu suggests Mehmed II's cosmopolitan court as a primary audience for his medals. See also: Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom." Spinale, "The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)."

portrait was recognized as "one of the prerogatives of noble persons" and "was associated with the then most accessible portrayals of ancient rulers, the profiles found on coins and medallions."[716] Similarly to the portrait medal, the painted profile portrait was used to make claims about one's high station in life, i.e., royal or noble descent, and to promote one's authority and sovereignty. The format and type of the profile portrait was taken up first in France in the late 1300s[717] the Low Lands, then in the northern courts of Italy (Ferrara, Mantua, Milan, Rimini, and Urbino), and finally in Florence and Venice. Early examples of the iconic portraits of Italian rulers are Pisanello's *Portrait of Leonello d'Este* (1441) in the Accademia Carrara, Bergamo (Fig. 4.10), Piero della Francesca's *Portrait of Sigismondo Malatesta, Lord of Rimini* (1451) (Fig. 4.11) in the Louvre, Paris, and Piero della Francesca's *Portrait of Federigo da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, and His Wife Battista Sforza* (1465-1466), in the Uffizi, Florence (Fig. 4.12). As Luke Syson demonstrated at great length examining Pisanello's representations of Lionello d'Este, the profile portraits aspired to physiognomic resemblance, but individual features were adjusted to project a more flattering image.[718]

In this view, the profile portrait convention was specifically fitting to claim *virtù* for families of ancient descent, as Hatfield showed. Here, *virtù*, understood in Alberti's

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[716] Rab Hatfield, "Five Early Renaissance Portraits," *The Art Bulletin* 47, no. 3 (1965): 315-334.
[717] The earliest existing profile portrait painted on a portable panel is the portrait of John II King of France (c.1360), now in the Louvre; for a discussion of this portrait, see: Lorne Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits: European Portrait-Painting in the 14th, 15th, and 16th Centuries* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990). Also see: Stephen Perkinson, *The Likeness of the King: A Prehistory of Portraiture in Late Medieval France* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009).
[718] Syson and Gordon, *Pisanello: Painter to the Renaissance Court*.

sense, referred to excellence of character, dignified actions, and behavior.[719] One paradigmatic example of profile portraiture that promoted family nobility and virtù is Domenico Ghirlandaio's commemorative *Portrait of Giovanna degli Albizzi Tornabuoni* (1489-1490) in Museo Thyssen-Boremisza, Madrid (Fig. 4.13). As scholars have demonstrated, Giovanna's portrait celebrated her beauty and virtue as associated with the fulfillment of a wife's primary duties of continuing the family—as the young woman died delivering the second child of Lorenzo Tornabuoni.[720]

In Venice, doges were similarly painted in profile until 1500, as can be seen in Bellini's *Portrait of Doge Pasquale Malipiero (ca. 1460s)* (Fig. 4.14) in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and *Portrait of Doge Giovanni Mocenigo* (c. 1478) in the Museo Correr, Venice (Fig. 4.15). In Venice, the autonomous bust-length profile portrait was also inspired by Pisanello, who was involved in the original fresco cycle in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in the Palazzo Ducale.[721] The form was advanced by Jacopo Bellini, who defeated Pisanello in a competition to make a portrait of Lionello d'Este in 1441. Although Jacopo Bellini's portrait does not survive, Humfrey suggests that it showed the sitter in profile, deliberately evoking ancient coinage, as in Pisanello's *Portrait of Leonello d'Este*, now in Bergamo (Fig. 4.10).[722] Gentile Bellini elevated the profile portrait to the next level, excelling as an official portrait painter of the Venetian doges and the ruling élite, receiving the title of Count Palatine in 1469, in part for his skill in

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[719] Hatfield interprets *virtù* in Alberti's sense as the prerogative of patrons of high social standing. It refers to persons capable of great achievements. A person of humble social rank can never be "excellent" or "virtuous" under normal circumstances. Hatfield, "Five Early Renaissance Portraits," 232.
[720] Stephan Weppelmann, "Some Thoughts on Likeness in Italian Early Renaissance Portraits," in Christiansen and Weppelmann, *The Renaissance Portrait: From Donatello to Bellini*, 64-76, 67-68.
[721] Peter Humfrey, *Painting in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 100.
[722] Peter Humfrey, "The Portrait in Fifteenth-Century Venice," in Christiansen and Weppelmann, *The Renaissance Portrait: From Donatello to Bellini*, 48-63, 49.

painting portraits.[723] According to Humfrey, Gentile exclusively developed pure profile ducal portraiture as "a direct echo of ducal coinage, and hence carrying stronger connotations of antique dignity and imperial majesty."[724] To the bust-length profile portrait, Bellini introduced precision in capturing individual physiognomy, as in the Mocenigo portrait. He effectively represented Mocenigo unlike any other doge, portraying him both unidealized and in the full dignity of his official appointment. The ruler's dignity of his ancient lineage, nobility, and *virtù* are underscored by the rich golden decoration of his official dress and the golden background reminiscent of sacred images. However, this portrait type denies any individual personality to the doge outside of his office. For this reason, the profile portrait type was particularly favored in Venice for representations of the ruling élite: it was a perfect vehicle for expressing the ruler's corporate identity, that is, as a representative of the hereditary ruling class or patriciate.

Among the Italian city-states, Venice was particularly concerned with preventing the possibility of an authoritarian regime under princely rule since becoming a commune or republic in 1100, as demonstrated by Denise Romano.[725] The Grand Council of Venice passed various measures, including regulations of official representations or images

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[723] Meyer zur Capellen, *Gentile Bellini*, 39-54. However, Patricia Fortini Brown associated Bellini's title with his work on a cycle of *istorie* depicting the journey of Doge Cristoforo Moro to the port of Ancona in 1464, in the east wing of the Ducal Palace, which was destroyed by fire in 1483. Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 51.
[724] Humfrey, *Painting in Renaissance Venice*, 101.
[725] In 1032, the edict was passed to appoint two ducal councilors. This has been traditionally interpreted as the beginning of the diminishment of the doge's power, as he found himself under increasing pressure from wealthy merchant families in Venice. See Dennis Romano, *The Likeness of Venice: A Life of Doge Francesco Foscari, 1373-1457* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). I thank John Marino for introducing me to this book.

(*imago*)[726] of the doges, to ensure that consolidation of power in one individual's hands would never happen. To enforce these regulations, special committees oversaw public monuments and scrutinized official images of the doge commissioned by his office. As a result of these policies, the profile format was preferred for a long period of time, as it put greater emphasis on symbolic representation of the office rather than the individuality of the doge. As I will discuss below, it is against this tradition that Bellini's innovations in his representations of Mehmed II, specifically his rendering of the ruler as an individual by showing his humanity as opposed to simply a representative of his office, can be viewed as truly groundbreaking.

Profile portraits are highly artificial. The sitter is lifted out of time, as it were, since there is no sense that the face can move. The forward edge of the face is rendered in a continous line as if matching to a cast shadow; as a result the individual features appear as if seen from slightly different vantage points. This aspect has been noticed especially in Bellini's portraits of doges, where the emphasis on contour is unmistakable.[727] In contrast to likenesses that make sitters immediately present, the profile is a trace made in the past and fixed in time. To overcome this limitation of the profile, portrait artists used different pictorial effects to render sitters lifelike. As John Pope-Hennessy acutely observed, in the *Portrait of Federigo da Montefeltro and His Wife Battista Sforza*, Piero della Francesca illuminated them "from a common light source slightly to the right," so

[726] *Imago* refers to the image that is thought, like an icon, to have special properties to transmit saintly or divine power. In Venice, the doge himself was an *imago* or "the very likeness of Venice," embodying "the spirit or essence of the Republic" – see Romano, *ibid.*, p. XXI.
[727] Humfrey, *Painting in Renaissance Venice*, 102.

as "to convince us that real figures, not abstractions, are portrayed."[728] The artist also employed a continuous strip of landscape to stress the sitter's actuality.

The profile remained the preferred convention for representations of ruling élites in Italy, even after the three-quarter view animated the portrait, as Pope-Hennessy explained.[729] It was Sandro Botticelli who started to paint his subjects showing a three-quarter view of the face to the viewer.[730] In his artistically self-conscious *Portrait of a Young Man Holding a Medal of Cosimo the Elder* (c. 1474) (Fig. 4.16), Botticelli contrasted two forms of portrayal—the established medallic format of profile representation in the young man's hands, versus the new, animated style of representation of the portrait's youthful subject, whose gaze is directed to the beholder, displaying a great vivacity in the eyes and giving the subject a tangible presence. Similarly, when briefly visiting Venice in 1475-1476, Antonello da Messina introduced his own type of animated three-quarter view portrait based on northern European traditions.[731] Antonello's subjects, like the *Portrait of a Man* (c. 1475) (Fig. 4.17) from the Galleria Borgese in Rome, were depicted with the gaze directed to the beholder, displaying great vivacity in the eyes and giving the subject a tangible presence, stressed by strong lighting from the left. Although precedents of portraits in a three-quarter view existed in Venice even before Antonello, such as Andrea Mantegna's celebrated *Portrait of Cardinal*

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[728] John Wyndham Pope-Hennessy, *The Portrait in the Renaissance* (New York: Bollingen Foundation; distributed by] Pantheon Books, 1966), 160.
[729] Ibid., 101-154.
[730] Although Andrea del Castagno's *Portrait of a Man* (ca. 1450-1457) from the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, shows the subject in a three-quarter view, the authorship and the occasion of this painting have not been fully resolved. It has sometimes been attributed to Piero del Pollaiuolo and considered to be a fragment of an altarpiece rather than an independent portable portrait. See the catalogue essay in Christiansen and Weppelmann, *The Renaissance Portrait: From Donatello to Bellini*, 123-124.
[731] Peter Humfrey, "The Portrait in Fifteenth-Century Venice," in Christiansen and Weppelmann, *The Renaissance Portrait: From Donatello to Bellini*, 48-63, 50.

Ludovico Trevisan (ca. 1459-1460), now in Berlin (Fig. 4.18),[732] this style was not used for the portrayal of Venetian doges until the 1500s. Instead, the three-quarter portrait quickly became adopted for private portraiture placed in one's household.[733]

Pope-Hennessy particularly connected the development of this new style of portraiture with the activities of Leonardo da Vinci in Florence and in Milan and greatly clarified our understanding of this convention of portrayal.[734] The *Portrait of Ginevra de' Benci* (1475) (Fig. 4.19), painted in Florence, and by the *Portrait of Cecilia Galerani* (1489-1490) (Fig. 4.20), completed in Milan, gave rise to the style of portrait that captured the vivid actuality of the sitter, particularly concerned with the capacity of the portrait to represent faces in greater relief. Leonardo wanted to depict not only the vivid presence of the sitter but also the "workings" of the mind and their reflections in the movement of the face. The *Portrait of Cecilia Gallerani*, for instance, represented her turning toward both the light and an unseen interlocutor—her duke—which allowed Leonardo to emphasize her state of emotional or physical involvement and give a more particularized expression to her face, as well as to show the physical characteristics of her face in greater relief, as John Sherman has observed.[735] Overall, this portrait shows how great Leonardo's contribution was to the development of the animated portrait. By

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[732] *Andrea Mantegna*, ed. Suzanne Boorsch and Jane Martineau ([Ivrea?]; Milano; New York: Olivetti ; Electa; Distributed for the Metropolitan Museum in North America by Abrams, 1992), 333-335. It has been observed that Mantegna's depiction of the Cardinal was chiefly indebted to portrait busts rather than Flemish portraiture, as is the case with Antonello. In this view, the sitter is not immediately present to the viewer, as his likeness is not descriptive as in the animated portrait.
[733] David Alan Brown, "Portraits of Men," in *Bellini, Giorgione, Titian, and the Renaissance of Venetian Painting*, ed. David Alan Brown et al. (Washington; Vienna: National Gallery of Art ; Kunsthistorisches Museum, in association with Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2006), 238-245, 238.
[734] Pope-Hennessy, *The Portrait in the Renaissance,* 101-154.
[735] John Sherman, *Only Connect... : Art and Spectator in the Italian Renaissance* (Washington: The National Gallery of Art, 1992), 121.

representing the subject so vividly, this portrait style opened new possibilities for experimenting with communicative devices in portraiture that encouraged a more engaged relationship of the viewer with the subject. John Shearman theorizes this new kind of portraiture as a communicative court portrait that presents the sitter in relation to the viewer, acknowledging the viewer's presence.[736] The animated communicative portrait was more naturalistic, as it gave viewers the impression that the subject of the portrait was present.

However, this style was not used in the ruler portrait until the early 1500s. Ambrogio de Predis' (c.1455-c.1508) magnificent profile portraits, commissioned after the 1493 marriage of the Hapsburg Emperor Maximilian I (1459-1519) to his Milanese wife Bianca Maria Sforza (1472-1510) (Fig. 4.21-4.22), demonstrate that the convention of representing rulers in a formal profile was still in place at century's end. Similarly, *Portrait of Beatrice d'Este* (1475-1497) (c.1491) (Fig. 4.23), now in the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana in Milan, previously attributed to Leonardo and now to Ambrogio de Predis, represented the Sforza princess in a majestic profile, informing the viewer about the appearance of the bride, details of her royal costume, and family heirlooms, all of which speak more about her regal lineage and social standing than about her individuality or any momentarily captured "living expression." In another instance, when portraying Giuliano de' Medici (1453-1478) (c. 1478), the brother of Lorenzo il Magnifico, Botticelli, the pioneer of the three-quarter view portrait (Fig. 4.24), chose to represent his ruling subject in a near profile view that emphasized the majestic forehead, long nose, and strong chin

[736] Sherman, *Only Connect... : Art and Spectator in the Italian Renaissance*, 109-148.

to underscore the subject's nobility.[737] Another telling example is Leonardo's cartoon for a portrait of Isabella d'Este (c. 1500-1501) (Fig. 4.25), now in the Louvre,[738] in which the artist combines the stately representation of the sitter's head in profile with a presentation of her torso in a three-quarter view, thus investing the sitter with some sense of animation by showing the potential for her head to turn toward the viewer. David Alan Brown suggested that Isabella, having admired Leonardo's Portrait of Cecilia Gallerani, ordered one of herself,[739] most likely specifying what she wanted for the portrait, as she always did. It appears that both Botticelli and Leonardo met the demand for the profile portrait by representing faces of the ruling subjects in profile, but also investing the representations with the sense of animation they pioneered. In Venice, in the *Portrait of Doge Leonardo Loredan* painted in 1501 (Fig. 4.26), Giovanni Bellini depicts the sitter in a three-quarter view, celebrating the individuality of the doge's facial features. Yet the Loredan portrait preserves the static rigidity of a Roman bust, stressed by an undirected gaze off to one side. The sitter does not appear engaged with the beholder in an exchange of gazes, and thus Giovanni Bellini's characterization significantly departs from Antonello's animated portrait style. The conceptual and spatial distance is also underscored by a parapet separating the ruler from the viewer. In all, ruler portraiture was slow to use the new convention of the three-quarter animated communicative portrait, which first became popular in private realm.

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[737] Christiansen and Weppelmann, *The Renaissance Portrait: From Donatello to Bellini*, 174-177.
[738] *Leonardo da Vinci: Master Draftsman*, ed. Carmen C. Bambach (New York and New Haven: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Yale University Press, 2003), 17.
[739] David Alan Brown, "Leonardo and the Idealized Portrait in Milan," *Arte Lombarda*, no. 67 (1983):102-116, footnote no. 2.

Bellini's painting largely stands outside of the profile and three-quarter-view conventions of Italian portraiture. Bellini's representation of the ruler at a five-eighth turn shows the noble profile of the nose and mouth in profile, the contours of the far side of the forehead and the far eye, but not the far cheek. The ruler's torso is shown in a three-quarter view. Bellini evidently invests the portrait with the potential for movement, and such a representation projects a kind of interiority that many profile portraits lack. However, although Bellini introduced a hint of animation and made the ruler more present to the mind of the viewer, the portrait significantly departs from the three-quarter, animated, communicative portrait. Mehmed II is shown as aloof and unapproachable to the viewer, as stressed by his turned-away gaze. The architectonic structure further sets him apart from the viewer. Bellini offers no access to the ruler's psychological state, but rather underscores the imperial office and the ruler's ceremonial presence.

In this context, the five-eighth view demands an explanation. Why did Bellini modify the more stately and familiar profile representation that he used for portrayal of Doges in Venice? It is unlikely that he was familiar with Botticelli's *Portrait of Giuliano de' Medici* painted in Florence that endowed the profile portrait representation with a restricted sense of animation, since it dates to the late 1470s when Bellini was at the Ottoman court. Which conventions, then, other than Italianate, could he have considered when fashioning Mehmed II's imperial likeness? What prompted him to devise a quite different representational system in his portrait of Mehmed II?

If we correctly think of Pisanello, Pietro della Francesca, Botticelli, and Leonardo as innovators, we also should think this of Bellini, in as much as he fashioned a hybrid

ruler portrait, using not only elements of the new Italian style, but also Eastern portrait conventions, as I will show in the following sections. A Vasari-like reading might construe Bellini's use of the averted gaze within a five-eighth view to achieve partial animation as an imperfect precursor to Botticelli's and Leonardo's masterfully communicative likenesses—but I contend that Bellini's portrait deploys a symbolic language modeled after Timurid innovations, which he came to know during his sojourn. In fashioning Mehmed II's likeness in a five-eighth view, Bellini also endowed the sitter with as much imperial magnificence as the profile presentation did.

Intercultural Idioms in the Portrait: *Bellini's Five-Eighth View and Timurid Portrait Traditions*

Profile representation was not unfamiliar in the East, but the Timurid tradition, well-known at the Ottoman court, typically featured an animated depiction of the ruler in a three-quarter view with the gaze turned sideways. As such, Timurid ruler portraits provided models for Bellini to fashion Mehmed's face in a five-eighth view as an expression of the Eastern sense of decorum and interiority. Mehmed II, who adopted the title of Great Khan (*Khaqan* or *Hünkâ*r—that is Emperor and Caesar),[740] claimed himself

[740] *Khagan*—Khan of Khans—was the title of Genghis Khan and the persons who are elected to rule the Mongol Empire. Mehmed II adopted the title of Emperor and Caesar or Great Khan after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. As Halil İnalcik explained and Theoharis Stavrides recently elaborated, when Mehmed II came into possession of the former throne of the Byzantine emperors he had inherited their *imperium* from them: "according to ancient Central Asian tradition the *takht-ili* (throne region) was the seat of the *khagan* (emperor) and was considered as sacred territory, possessing in and by itself the legitimation

an equal to the legendary Turkic ruler Timur (r.1370-1405) and projected an image of himself as a great patron of the arts and an intellectual.

The Timurid sultans were peers of Mehmed II and descendants of Timur, who is known in English as Tamerlane, the founder of the Timurid dynasty (Fig. 4.27).[741] Timur and his descendants ruled an enormous kingdom in West, South, and Central Asia from a grandiose court in Samarqand. According to Necipoğlu (who clarifies the earlier view that individualized portraiture was unknown in the Islamic world until the late fifteenth century brought European influences), the early modern traditions of sultanic portraiture in Eastern Islam were established at Timur's court and then spread to the other centers of his empire ruled by his descendants.[742] Timurid portraiture traces its beginnings to the Mongol Ilknaids (1256-1353), who ruled Iran, Iraq, and Anatolia and who were the

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of imperial authority." See: Theoharis Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs: The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vezir Mahmud Pasha Angelović (1453-1474)* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2001), 20.

[741] A combination of shifting political powers and new dynasties rising to power led to cities like Baghdad, Tabriz, and Shiraz changing hands. These centers produced remarkable art. When the political scene changed and the courts moved the sites of their capitals, the artists migrated to the new centers. For the period under consideration here, we accept the following as fact: The Timurids (1370-1506), with their empire including the whole of modern Iran, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan, as well as parts of Anatolia, Mesopotamia, Caucasus, India, and Pakistan, ruled from Samarqand until the death of Timur in 1405. Samarqand was the main artistic center during Timur's life; after his death, cultural activities shifted to Shiraz and Herat, where Timur's son Shah Rukh ruled in Herat, and Timur's grandson Sultan Iskandar ruled in Shiraz. Timurid Shiraz lasted until 1453, when it fell to the Karakoyunlu Turkmens (1389-1468) expanding from Anatolia eastward and spreading through Iran. Their capital was in Baghdad. Baghdad and Shiraz remained important artistic centers under the Karakoyunlu Turkmens until 1478, when the Akkoyunlu Turkmens (1378-1508) took over Shiraz and moved the capital to Tabriz. Herat remained a major Timurid center until 1469, when it was captured by the Akkoyunlu Turkmens for a year. Sultan Hasayn, a grandson of Timur, took over Herat in 1470 and ruled until 1506. The Akkoyunlu Empire was terminated in 1501 when Shah Ismail, the founder of the Safavid dynasty, brought the whole of Iran under his control. Therefore, through the changes of dynasties in the fourteenth through fifteenth centuries, Tabriz, Shiraz, and Herat produced artworks containing idioms from a wide variety of sources and traditions, including Timurid and Turkic idioms in art and sultanic portraiture, founded on traditions going back to the Timur court in Samarqand and also accounting for earlier Turkic traditions flourishing in Baghdad. These traditions are linked to Mesopotamian and earlier Persian idioms in figurative arts from the Ilkhnaid period (1256-1353), rulers of Baghdad. See: Esin Atil, *The Brush of the Masters: Drawings from Iran and India* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Inst., 1978).

[742] Necipoğlu, "The Serial Portraits of Ottoman Sultans in Comparative Perspective," 22-23.

subjects of the Great Khan of China (Yuan dynasty, 1206-1368).[743] The Ilknaids were responsible for a far-reaching transformation of Islamic art after the conquest of Baghdad in 1258. The victors brought with them figurative pictorial models influenced by East Asian art and particularly by China; they also lifted the general prohibition of pictures in Islam that was introduced by Muhammad (570-632) and then widely supported by the earliest caliphs—the Umayyad dynasty with its capital at Damascus and the Abbasid caliphate with capitals at Baghdad and Samarra—who promoted aniconic culture.[744]

Preoccupied with his legitimacy, Timur patronized and encouraged a new tradition of royal portraiture at his court in Samarqand. According to the historian Ibn Arabshâh (1389-1450), Timur's garden palaces were decorated with grandiose wall paintings, representing Timur in victorious battle scenes, assemblies, hunting expeditions, and reception ceremonies with his descendants, visiting lords and vassals, courtiers, concubines, and wives.[745] Although none of these wall paintings survive, the general idea of the lost frescoes in Timur's garden palaces was reproduced in the later miniature chronicle of Timur's victories by Sharafuddin Yazdi, *Zafar-Nameh* (Book of Victories), illustrated in Bihzad's workshop in Herat in the 1480s. In the miniature page from the

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[743] Necipoğlu, "The Serial Portraits of Ottoman Sultans in Comparative Perspective," 22. See also: David Talbot Rice, *Islamic Art.* Revised Edition (New York: Oxford Univ. Pr., 1993).

[744] For a discussion of the prohibition of iconic art in Islam: Hans Belting, *Florence and Baghdad: Renaissance Art and Arab Science* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011). In particular, see chapter 2, "Taming of the Eye: Criticism of Seeing in Islam," 55-89.

[745] See Basil Gray, "The Tradition of Wall Painting in Iran," in *Highlights of Persian Art*, ed. R.E. Ettinghausen and E. Yar-Shater (Boulder, Colo.; New York, N.Y.: Westview Press ; American distributor, Wittenborn Art Books, 1979). Ibn Arabshâh was a writer and traveler originally from Damascus. When Timur invaded Syria, he moved to Samarkand and then to Transoxiana. He later moved to Adarna and worked in the court of Sultan Muhammad Uthman translating Arabic books to Turkish and Persian. At the end of his career, he came back to Damascus after having been absent from the city for 23 years and then went to Egypt, where he died.

book, now in the John Work Garret Collection in Baltimore (Fig. 4.28),[746] Timur is depicted enthroned in the center of a paradisiacal garden, like an exotic flower himself, an aesthete rather than a bellicose king. He appears seated on an intricately inlaid throne, with one knee bent and the other foot on a throne step. Shown in a three-quarter view, Timur's face is directed to the left, with his introspective gaze turned sideways. Besides his pose, Timur's royal status is shown by a Mongol-style crown decorated with egret feathers, a silk caftan, a belt with golden ornamental designs, and a royal kerchief in his right hand. A yurt-like structure behind him with carved and painted doors has an elaborately painted roof, incorporating plant and animal motifs, including the heads of deer, rabbit, sheep, goats, and foxes. The scene is filled with court attendants—such as viziers, officials, and soldiers, all captured in various poses—conversing on a carpet, passing by, or standing around Timur. The miniature articulates the aesthetic grandeur of imperial life, and is designed to bring a sense of awe to beholders.

The convention of royal portraiture promoted by Timur and his descendants subtly reinterpreted the earlier frontal and less individualized convention for rulers' portraits based on Byzantine and Sasanian models. One paradigmatic example, found in the popular, splendidly illustrated *Book of Kings*, or so-called Great Mongol *Shahnama*, created for the Mongol Îl-Khân Abû-Said (r. 1317-1335) in Tabriz, provides a glimpse into how these kings could have looked.[747] Pages include illustrations of different hero-

[746] Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the Riddle of Bihzâd of Herât (1465-1535)*. The miniature is preserved in the Milton S. Eisenhower Library at John Hopkins University (F 82 v).
[747] *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256-1353*. ed. by Linda Komaroff and Stefano Carboni (New York; [New Haven]: Metropolitan Museum of Art; [Distributed by Yale University Press], 2002). The book is known to have contained at least 57 illustrations; some of its texts were dismembered by the dealer George Demotte in 1910-1915 and scattered among various

kings of the Persian epic, including Iskandar (Alexander the Great), represented in various enthronement scenes. These scenes largely follow a standard composition, in which the crowned king is depicted in the center, seated on an elaborate, high throne before a palace with a garden and surrounded by viziers, courtiers, and soldiers, who have come to shower him with praise and offerings. For example, a page showing *Shah Zav Enthroned* (Fig. 4.29), now in the Arthur Sackler Gallery in Washington, DC, shows Shah Zev in a frontal hieratical position on a high throne, dressed in luxurious robes, sitting cross-legged. Some of his insignia of sovereignty include an elaborate crown in the style of King Solomon's, a cup in his right hand, an embellished belt, tall boots, and a fur-lined coat.[748] Although these miniatures of hero-kings are essentially symbolic and idealized representations rather than individualized portraits, they contain an iconographic vocabulary of sovereignty that later entered a more individualized Timurid idiom in portraiture (throne, kerchief, belt, etc.). Unlike the artist of the Great Mongol *Shahnama*, the painter of the *Zafar-Nameh* uses vertical perspective and geometry to indicate space, and moves away from a strict hieratical composition by placing Timur's throne slightly off-center to the right and arranging his courtiers asymmetrically, as well as by representing Timur in a three-quarter view gazing sideways.

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collections. The book is attributed to the patronage of the vizier Ghiyath al-Din ibn Rashid al-Din in Tabriz, 1335. Also see Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the Riddle of Bihzâd of Herât (1465-1535)*, 61.

[748] More detailed and well-argued explanations of Islamic royal insignia can be found in Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the Riddle of Bihzâd of Herât (1465-1535)*. Barry argues that thrones appearing in the Great Mongol *Shahnama* were also later incorporated into the language of royal insignia in Herat, Shiraz, and Tabriz. The origin and meaning of these royal attributes point to Sasanian and Byzantine traditions, and refer to the rule of King Solomon, an ancient archetype of good and wise governance in the Near East, as well as of a King who is chosen by God. The crown decorated with precious gems was also originally employed by Sasanian and Byzantine kings, and often incorporated symbols of celestial bodies: a star and a crescent moon, implying that the ruler received a mandate from heaven to rule. Disappearing from Timurid and Safavid royal iconography, this crown was adopted by Ottoman rulers. Additionally, representation of a cup in the ruler's hands was another ancient Persian symbol of magic power and cosmic rule. The cup also referred to the king's heart, or the very heart of a good ruler.

The combination of a variety of seated animated postures in a three-quarter view, introduced in the early fifteenth century, instead of the very static frontal and hieratic compositions of the Mongol-Turkic enthronement scenes of *Shahnama*, constitutes a major innovation within the Eastern Islamic portraiture tradition. The Timurid genealogical scroll (ca. 1405-1409) (Fig. 4.30), now at the Topkapi Palace collection in Istanbul, shows ruling members of the Genghis Khanid dynasty, including Timur, differentiated by their seated postures to indicate their lineage, rank, and status in the dynasty.[749] Only a few major ruling princes in this scroll were represented seated in frontal, cross-legged, authoritative positions; other minor or subordinate ruling princes within the family were represented in a three-quarter view, seated sideways and kneeling to indicate their humility. Timur himself is shown in a garden kneeling on both knees, in a three-quarter view, looking sideways (Fig. 4.31). As Necipoğlu demonstrated, in this case, Timur was represented according to his secondary status in the dynasty; he acquired the title of "royal son-in-law" through marriage to Genghis Khan's daughters. Timur could not claim the title of khan (which was reserved for direct descendants of Genghis Khan), but he adopted the title of emir or beg. His status as ruler of a huge empire in this portrait is shown instead through insignia, including a handkerchief in his left hand,[750] and a tall Mongol-style hat decorated with an egret plume.

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[749] Necipoğlu, "The Serial Portraits of Ottoman Sultans in Comparative Perspective," 25.

[750] Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the Riddle of Bihzâd of Herât (1465-1535)*. Barry sums up scholarly discussion of the meaning of the white scarf, which became a widespread royal attribute in Timurid and Turkic courts, and was later added to Ottoman royal insignia. As we will see, the white scarf appears in the ruler's left hand or tacked onto his belt. Some scholars have linked the meaning of the white scarf to the old Roman and Byzantine *mappa*, an insignia of Roman consuls who presided over gladiatorial games and waved the white kerchief to announce the beginning of the games. Others have emphasized the connection to the Sasanian Persian cloth of victory, usually depicted as a white ribbon or scarf held by

These early representations of Timur, along with the other portraits of the members of the ruling family in the scroll, served as models for later and more individualized portraits of Timurid and Turkic rulers who rose to power amid the dissolution of the Timurid Empire, as well as for small miniature portraits produced in Mehmed II's atelier, as Necipoğlu has shown. Two iconic examples, found in two contemporary portraits from the early sixteenth century, *Portrait of Sultan Husayn* and *Portrait of Muhammad Shaybani Khan* (both ascribed to Bihzad), [751] highlight the new Timurid conventions in portraiture, which were known in Constantinople. Originally, both portraits were included in the Bahram Mirza album, a sixteenth-century Safavid diplomatic gift to the Ottoman court.[752] Both rulers are shown in a three-quarter seated pose.

Sultan Husayn Mirza Bayqara (r. 1470-1506) (Fig. 4.32) was the Timurid ruler of Khurasan (modern Afghanistan); his court was in Herat, where traditions of Timurid artistic culture blossomed and Bihzad was a leading master. Husayn was a direct descendant of both Timur and Genghis Khan, through both the male and female lines, and thus ruled by hereditary right on Timur's throne. Although a direct descendant of Genghis Khan, the sultan is depicted in a three-quarter view, in the humble kneeling pose of a vassal, and turned to the left. In this instance the pose confirms an intentional choice to use Timur's iconography in the kneeling portrait to emphasize Sultan Husayn's

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angels above the head of the ruler. In any case, the kerchief was a royal emblem in Timurid, Turkic, and Ottoman courts.

[751] *Portrait of Sultan Husayn Bayqara*, from Iran or Central Asia, ca. 1500-1525, now at the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University Art Museums; *Portrait of Muhammad Shaybani Khan*, from Iran or Central Asia, ca. 1500-1525, now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Cora Timken Burnett Collection of Persian Miniatures and other Persian Art Objects.

[752] David Roxburg, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1996, quoted in Necipoğlu, "The Serial Portraits of Ottoman Sultans in Comparative Perspective," 26.

political and cultural aspirations. Husayn came to power following twenty-three years of dynastic strife after Timur's son Shah Rukh died in 1447. Husayn's rule was a late flowering of Timurid culture before the final dissolution of the Timurid Empire. Husayn took power from a puppet Timurid khan installed by the Turcomans and reestablished old cultural and artistic traditions, transforming Herat into a cultural oasis.

Besides the pose stressing his Timur's lineage and manifesting his political and cultural program to revive the glorious past, Husayn's other attributes in this image also reinforce Timurid iconography. Husayn is dressed in a silk robe, embroidered with a traditional Timurid arabesque, holding a royal handkerchief in his right hand. He wears a regal belt with gilded decorations, a gilded dagger, and a compass. The compass and his noble white turban adorned with a plume of heron feathers[753] emphasize his cultivated status as a learned monarch, an ardent supporter of the arts, and an accomplished poet. His compass alludes to drafting or mathematical skills,[754] and the white turban neatly wrapped around a *tokiya*[755] in small puffed folds, with one end at the top hanging loose and resembling a fan according to contemporary courtly fashion, further represent the aura of refinement surrounding this monarch.

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[753] Heron feathers were in high demand and of high value and were a sign of power and high status. These feathers were attached as a tufted crest adorned with studded jewels, particularly diamonds, rubies, and sapphires, called aigrettes, and became the centerpiece of Ottoman turbans.

[754] Necipoğlu, "The Serial Portraits of Ottoman Sultans in Comparative Perspective," 27.

[755] The *Tokiya* or *kulokha* was a small cone-shaped hat around which a cloth was wrapped to create a turban. Turbans were ceremonial or formal (*dastor*) and for everyday (*futa*). Sultans, emirs, and courtiers in the Timurid states wore medium-size turbans made from fine fabric such as silk, arranged in neat folds. High standing was emphasized by egret-plume or heron feathers and gems. Color and fabric indicated social group, status, and religious affiliation. See: "Semantics of Turban: On the History of Head-Dress in the 15th-16th Century Khorasan and Maverannakhr" by Zukhra Rakhimova, http://www.sanat.orexca.com/eng/1-08/semoftur.shtml

Although it illustrated the story of Alexander the Great kneeling before a hermit's cave, the drawing of Sultan Husayn was an individualized portrait. As Barry observes, the portrait evokes a literary sketch of Sultan Husayn, written by his cousin Prince Babur, ruler of Kabul:

> He was slant-eyed and lion-bodied, being slender from the waist downwards. Even when old and white-bearded, he wore silken garments of fine red and green. He used to wear either the black lambskin cap or the *qalpaq* [Turcoman fur bonnet], but on a Feast-day would sometimes set up a little three-folded turban, wound broadly and badly, stick a heron's plume in it and so go to Prayers.[756]

Herat, with its highly developed artistic culture, was a court that had already developed an appreciation of convincing likenesses. From reports by the sixteenth-century historian Wasifi, it is known that during the reign of Sultan Husayn, portraits were criticized by literati based on how well they captured the appearance of the sitter.[757] Thus the court at Herat appreciated individualized images and celebrated the Husayn image because they recognized how well it captured the likeness of the Sultan.

In contrast, the portrait of Muhammad Shaybani Khan, who was the Uzbek ruler of Central Asia (r.1500-1510) (Fig. 4.33), shows the ruler in the cross-legged pose of a major ruling prince of the Genghis Khan dynasty. Depicted in the normative manner for Timurid portraits, i.e., the three-quarter view, the khan is shown with an introspective gaze directed sideways and slightly down. Muhammad Shaybani Khan revived the Genghis khanate after seizing most of western Central Asia from the Timurids. In the

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[756] Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the Riddle of Bihzâd of Herât (1465-1535)*, 146. This quote also preserves realistic details about Husayn's casual attitude to his turban and his sloppiness in wearing it on formal occasions. In the portrait, his turban is neatly put together, which points to the obvious idealization of the Sultan's appearance. It is also known from Prince Babur's literary account that the Sultan was heavy, and that it was difficult for him to perform prayers because of his damaged joints.
[757] Necipoğlu, "The Serial Portraits of Ottoman Sultans in Comparative Perspective," 24.

portrait, in addition to classical royal attributes such as the white scholar's turban wrapped around a red cap, a handkerchief, and a simple pious robe with a belt, he is wearing an archer's thumb ring on his right hand, and has in front of him objects representing his intellectual interests—an ink pot, a pen case, and a porcelain bowl with gold lid. As in the portrait of Sultan Husayn, these objects suggest a refined and learned ruler, skilled in poetry, who was also a military commander skilled in archery.[758]

From these examples we find that the Timurid portrait formula stipulates that the ruler be represented in a three-quarter view with an averted, contemplative gaze—that is, turned inward—while the face turns sideways. The formula avoids an exchange of glances with the viewer, and thus intimacy, projecting the sitter's interiority. In all, these portraits also attribute a more demure animation to the ruler than do comparable three-quarter-view court portraits in the West. The sultans are portrayed seated with their heads slightly atilt. Their poses emphasize the controlled ease of the body as a form of personal decorum. Sultan Hasayn is represented gesturing with his hand as if acknowledging someone's presence. In Italian art, as we saw, rulers—as distinct from other members of their court—are not shown sitting casually but are represented in profile with a restrained interiority, as befits their station.

Bellini's representation of Mehmed II is thus a unique hybrid, which evokes Timurid conventions of demure animation alongside a bodily posture typical of Italian ruler portraiture. Mehmed II appears as a philosopher-king, in a white scholar's turban, fashioned similarly to the softened and idealized images of Timurid sultans. But his rigid

[758]Ibid., 28.

posture—apart from the face—suppresses the Timurid formula's valorization of humility, projecting Mehmed II's image more complexly than either tradition might allow singly. As such, it accurately portrays Mehmed's idea of himself as both a patron of arts and ideas, and as an heir to the magnificence of the Byzantine emperors, as I will detail below.

Intercultural Idioms in the Portrait: *Bellini's Portrait and Byzantine Portrait Traditions*

For Mehmed II's polyglot courtiers in Constantinople, who were familiar with Byzantine portraiture, Bellini's painting would have functioned less as a workaday mimetic representation and more like poetry in its allusion to Byzantine imperial magnificence. Bellini's idealized and emotionally restrained characterization of Mehmed II evokes the impassiveness of the dignified formal appearance of Byzantine emperors, known from sculptural and mosaics portraits of Byzantine emperors still *in situ* in Constantinople at the time of Bellini's sojourn. As well, Bellini's complex web of signifiers enveloping the Sultan's figure, including the fanciful architectonic structure, the bejeweled cloth of honor, and the golden crowns, alludes to the Byzantine vocabulary of power and majestically projects Mehmed II's imperial ambitions.

Mehmed II's dignified representation, harmonious and orderly, is akin to the idealized appearance and deportment of Byzantine emperors. The spectacular miniature portraits of Michael VII Doukas (r. 1071-1078) (relabeled Nikephoros III Botaneiates (r.

1078-1081)) show the emperor, magnificently clothed in bejeweled silks, either seated on an intricately decorated high throne or standing (Fig. 4.34-4.36).[759] Represented in strict frontality or in a three-quarter view, the immobile emperor is surrounded by "frozen" court officials turned toward him in submission and unquestionable reverence. In all of these miniatures, the emperor appears gazing out of the picture plane, signifying his status both as an equal to divine subjects, and as a ruler whose authority comes from God. Byzantine imperial imagery followed such strict, idealized conventions from the middle Byzantine period through the Ottoman conquest. The controlling gaze of the emperor represented both his semi-divine status and his absolute and sacred power. The *Corpus Juris Civilis* (body of civil law) of Justinian declared that "God has sent the emperor to earth as animate law."[760] The viewer's position was of a subject of the emperor, in submission to his controlling gaze, revering him as well as the invisible God, who was typically represented as an opening in the sky. Although Bellini's five-eighth view with an averted gaze, as we have seen, departs from the Byzantine frontality, the portrait's Byzantine inspirations may be found in Mehmed II's overall ceremonial presence and ideal demeanor.

In Bellini's portrait of Mehmed II, the elegant oval of his face, neat beard, well-shaped ears, thin and lifted eyebrows, expression of philosophical contemplation, and

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[759] A total of four miniature portraits from the introductory illuminations to the text of the Homilies of John Chrysostom are now in the Bibliotèque Nationale de France in Paris (Ms. Coislin 79). The history of these miniatures is complicated. Originally, these portraits were painted for presentation to the emperor Michael VII Doukas in 1071-1073, but when Michael abdicated, the miniatures were cut out of their original folios, the face of the emperor was retouched, and they were used to represent the successor of Michael VII, Emperor Nikephoros III Botaneiates. *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843-1261*, ed. Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art : Distributed by H.N. Abrams, 1997), 183, 207-209.

[760] Speros P. Vryonys, Jr., "Byzantine Society and Civilization," in Evans and Wixom, *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843-1261*, 5-19.

decorous white scholar's turban communicate a sense of harmonious order, dignity, nobility, and wisdom. Byzantine ideals of imperial deportment were not foreign at the Ottoman court. For instance, Tursun Beg, the first theorist of the Ottoman state, who criticized Mehmed for making impulsive and brutal judgments, emphasized that the ruler must possess wisdom and justice; he must use the power of punishment with forbearance.[761] One easily finds direct parallels in the flowery language of Byzantine orations praising emperors as "straight, true, stiff…steadfast, firmly fixed, lofty…an impartial judge, unwavering in judgment…a secure counselor, noble, unshaken in [stormy] waves,"[762] which mirrored Islamic literature describing ideal kings. Mehmed II's idealized appearance expressed the newly established ideals of imperial impassiveness canonized in the new palace ceremonial in the form of imperial seclusion. Mehmed II's new palace protocol of imperial deportment fused together the earlier Islamic traditions of royal justice and court decorum described by Firdawsi's *Book of Kings*, *Iskandarnamah* (Book of Alexander the Great) and Nizami's *Khamseh* (The Five Treasures),[763] as well as the Byzantine court ceremonial known from the *Book of Ceremonies*.[764]

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[761] Tursun Beg, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1978).
[762] From Michael Psellos' eleventh-century oration addressed to Isaac I Komnenos. This is quoted from Henry Maguire, "Images of the Court," in Evans and Wixom, *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843-1261*, 184.
[763] Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the Riddle of Bihzâd of Herât (1465-1535)*. Barry details the circulation of these major books in Islamic courts, especially among Turcomans and Timurids, discussing iconographies that emerged, especially from Herat, under the patronage of late Timurid rulers.
[764] Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (New York, N.Y.; Cambridge, Mass.: Architectural History Foundation ; MIT Press, 1991). Necipoğlu details how Mehmed II modified the palace ceremonial, adopting some of the protocols of magnificence from Byzantine emperors.

Other iconographic details of Bellini's painting evoke majestic portraits of Byzantine emperors more directly. Mehmed II's figure, framed by the architectonic structure, particularly parallels public images of Byzantine emperors that were still *in situ* in Ottoman Constantinople. Emperor Theodosius I (347-395) and his court appear in the imperial loggia behind the parapet under a vaulted arch on the base of the Obelisk of Theodosius in the Hippodrome, one of the main ceremonial spaces for Ottoman sultans as well (Fig. 4.37). Representation of Byzantine emperors under or in front of a semi-circular arch or a canopy, resting on columns, were typical throughout the middle-Byzantine period in other artistic media such as miniatures, as can be seen in *The Homilies of John Chrysostom* (ca. 1078-1081) (Fig. 4.36), where Emperor Nikephoros III Botaneiates is seated on a high throne in front of the imperial canopy.[765] Bellini's architectonic structure, with a regal cloth hanging over it, separates the Sultan from the viewer and alludes to the Byzantine vaulted arch and the imperial loggia from the Hippodrome portrait, albeit in an imaginative fashion, rather than as a detailed copy. As well, the Sultan's jewel-encrusted cloth of honor also brings to mind the heavily bejeweled Byzantine imperial garb that Bellini could have seen in the exemplary mosaic portrait of *Emperor Constantine IX Monomachus and Empress Zoe* (11th Ct.) (Fig. 4.38) in the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. The cloth in the London portrait is unparalleled in its iconography as well as in its deployment of precious stones in the context of Ottoman, Venetian, and Timurid official vestments. The crowns are also part of the Roman-

[765] This is one of four miniature portraits from the introductory illuminations to the text of the Homilies of John Chrysostom, now in the Bibliotèque Nationale de France in Paris (Ms. Coislin 79). Evans and Wixon, *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843-1261*, 183, 207-209. Mehmed II collected Byzantine manuscripts and even commissioned Bellini to paint a Madonna similar to one that he treasured in his "private museum." See Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 112.

Byzantine insignia of power. In this view, Bellini's architectonic structure, with a regal cloth, and the trios of golden crowns floating above it projected the image of Mehmed as an heir to Byzantine emperors to polyglot courtiers and international dignitaries in Constantinople.

Bellini's conception of Mehmed II, with its averted and introspective gaze, significantly departed from the frontal portraiture of Byzantine emperors. Bellini's solution spoke a familiar language of Timurid portraiture and expressed the Eastern sense of decorum that met the requirements of the Hadith,[766] which proscribed depiction of a living gaze. Hieratical frontal representations of Islamic rulers, with the gaze directed out of the picture plane toward the viewer as in Byzantine models, were not unfamiliar in Eastern Islam.[767] However, the controlling gaze out of the picture plane and frontal representation were short-lived conventions in Islamic portraiture. The face-to-face encounter between the ruler and the viewer did not become the hallmark of Islamic portraiture, due to the continuing disapproval of mimetic figural representation particularly, "even after individualized portrait was firmly established."[768] As I have explained, Timurid conventions emphasized an introspective and sideways gaze, and a three-quarter format that was better suited for representation of court ideals in Eastern Islam.

Theorizing the representation of the gaze in his book *Florence and Baghdad: Renaissance Art and Arab Science,* Hans Belting argues that the gaze is central for

[766] The Hadith is a compilation of oral traditions handed down from the time of Muhammad, which acquired the status of law in Islamic society. The prohibition of images is elaborated in the Hadith.
[767] Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the Riddle of Bihzâd of Herât (1465-1535)*.
[768] Necipoğlu, "The Serial Portraits of Ottoman Sultans in Comparative Perspective," 23.

mimesis or imitation of living subjects in art. The gaze out of the picture plane facilitates the exchange of glances between the subject and the viewer, supports the fiction of life, and is fundamental in Western portraiture since the Renaissance. In Islam, the prohibition of a particular class of images that reproduced "any life form possessing vocal cords and breath" initially resulted in banning all depictions of living creatures. However, after the Mongol conquest, Islamic art depicted living subjects, albeit largely avoiding the gaze directed to the beholder. In other words, Islamic law banned all artistic depictions that could "look at a viewer or invited his gaze."[769] As Belting explains, the Hadith prohibits pictures because they could only imitate nature, but never be nature, as they lacked the breath of life. Pictures that imitated living creatures by representing life-like glances were considered forgeries of creation. According to some ancient beliefs that influenced Islamic culture, such images could also potentially attract an evil spirit to lurk in them and draw a person's gaze. This fear especially affected portrait arts, as a portrait appears to be looking back at a viewer. Thus, the portrait ceases to be subject to taboo only when the image does not gaze at the viewer.

In this view, Bellini's maneuver in representing Mehmed II in a five-eighth view with an averted gaze negotiated among Byzantine, Timurid, and Italian conventions of portraiture. Bellini used Italian pictorial techniques but modified the visual formulae of princely portraiture accepted in Venice and other northern Italian courts. Bellini's artistic maneuvers established a novel ruler portrait appropriate for representing Mehmed's imperial triumph. By considering Eastern traditions, Bellini fashioned a hybrid image of

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[769] Hans Belting, *Florence and Baghdad: Renaissance Art and Arab Science* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 62-67, 84-89.

the Sultan that reflected well the cosmopolitan cultural identity Mehmed II forged in Constantinople. Bellini's re-presentation of Mehmed II's likeness within these traditions enabled the ruler to speak a familiar visual language to his polyglot courtiers and international visitors, by using a recognizable vocabulary of power and magnificence.

Bellini's re-presentation of Mehmed II can be interpreted as an exercise in inventing a new visual language appropriate to the new public image of the Ottoman Sultan, who was engaged in a deliberate re-fashioning of his imperial identity, as Necipoğlu demonstrated.[770] Bellini's portrait accommodated cultural sensibilities as well as projected the political aspirations of Mehmed II. It was not intended to serve as a "photographic" rendering of the Sultan's physical appearance or to provide an insight into his personality. Instead, Bellini's artistic strategy is best understood as a negotiation between Eastern and Venetian idioms in portraiture to meet the taste of the Eastern ruling élite: the result is a hybrid image that draws on several conventions of ruler portraiture. Bellini's portrait of Mehmed II appears to present a neutral image of the ruler, unlike earlier images that emphasized his military prowess and lust for conquest. Bellini's sober and decorous image of the Sultan, with his philosophical and introspective inward gaze, was better suited for well-established iconographies of refined and ennobled images of learned and humble Timurid rulers, sumptuous images of Byzantine emperors restrained by ritual, and self-possessed and virtuous Venetian doges.

[770] Necipoğlu, "From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Kostantiniyye: Creation of a Cosmopolitan Capital and Visual Culture under Sultan Mehmed II," 271-272.

Bellini's Portrait as *Impresa*

In addition to introducing innovative artistic solutions in depicting the ruler's likeness, such as the five-eighth turn, the sense of demure animation, and ceremoniously aloof presence, Bellini portrayed Mehmed II venerably framed by an idiosyncratic *trompe l'oeil* of a monumental stone with an elaborated inscription (Pl. I). The architectonic structure's sophisticated figuration, archaic air, and *un*likeness to typical *all'antica* parapets and framed openings—used in Italian and Netherlandish painting and fashionable in Venice for representation of half-length Madonnas and in portraits[771]—distinguishes Mehmed II's portrait from other "naturalistic" Italian ruler portraits.

As stated in the beginning of this chapter, the architectonic structure poses an interpretive problem, as there is no object in our world with such a form. The arch placed on the parapet is not treated as an autonomous architectural form, as it has no base. Yet it is not continuous with the parapet, since its edges are painted in gold to highlight it as a separate unit placed on the parapet. In addition, despite its seeming monumentality, it is too small as a frame for Mehmed II, as it cuts him off on the sides. It is not an embrasure, since it is not an opening in a wall, as the six crowns above characterize the pictorial space as a flat graphic display. Rather, the architectonic structure is a deliberately fashioned fictive object. The lack of architectural function makes the arch seem surreal despite the careful delineation of its material and form.

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[771] Beginning with Jacopo Bellini, Venetian artists used the customary parapet in portraits and in paintings of Madonnas. Gentile and Giovanni Bellini exploited the parapet as a device to separate the pictorial space from the space of the beholder. Gentile also used more complex architectural *all'antica* thrones in paintings of Madonnas, like in the *Virgin and Child Enthroned*, ca. 1480, in the National Gallery of Art in London (NG 3911). Rona Goffen, "Icon and Vision: Giovanni Bellini's Half-Length Madonnas," *The Art Bulletin* 57, no. 4 (December 1, 1975): 487-518.

In this view, Bellini's portrait is a painting with two represented objects: the emperor and a fictive architectonic structure portraying him with inscriptions and symbols. Bellini's unusual solution, achieved with a masterful use of perspective and viewed in conjunction with the crowns and cloth, should be understood as Mehmed's imperial *impresa*, integral to the portrait. As an *impresa*-portrait, Bellini's painting represented both Mehmed II's likeness and political aspirations as an heir to the Byzantine emperors. In its visual language, the architectonic structure parallels whimsical *all'antica* architectural forms in Venetian frontispieces, drawing on Hellenistic and Byzantine artistic traditions.

Early examples of the *impresa*, a form initially introduced on the obverse in medallic portraiture within the Italian courts of Ferrara, Florence, Mantua, Milan, and Naples, usually comprised a symbolic, pictorial figure and an accompanying statement or *motto* explaining the figure; these early examples exhibit a wide diversity of visual and textual strategies. Not to be confused with the coat of arms or other heraldic devices which referred to the genealogy of the whole family and its social rank,[772] the *impresa* was a personal device, illustrating a single individual's intentions.

Paolo Giovio's (1483-1552) comprehensive *Dialogo dell'imprese military e amorose,* published in 1555, marks the beginning of a formal discussion of *imprese*, and signals its essential role in portraiture starting from the mid-fifteenth century onward. The development of the *impresa* parallels that of the Renaissance portrait: just as the portrait increasingly began to be used to signify an individual's specific physiognomic

[772] Hans Belting, *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 62-83.

characteristics in relation to their genealogical lineage ("the natural body of the living person" within "the collective body of the family," [773] as Hans Belting puts it), the *impresa* illustrates one's specific personality, moral viewpoints, and ambitions (again contextualized within an ancestral line).[774] According to Mauda Bregoli-Russo, in the intellectual world of the Renaissance, the *impresa* constituted a sort of portrait of the person as well as of the institution (starting from the sixteenth century onward) which the individual represented.[775]

For example, already in the 1440s, Lionello d'Este (1407-1450), Marquis of Ferrara, was using personal devices on his medals, such as the image of a blindfolded lynx or a leopard seated on a square cushion together with the motto "Quae vides ne vide" ("Seeing these things, do not see them"), as an allusion to the diplomatic act of selective vision and the power of the lynx to see through walls—both judiciously blind and all-seeing (Fig. 4.39).[776] Another well-known favorite *impresa* device of Lionello's was the column-sail (*vela*), as depicted on the obverse of the 1444 medal designed by Pisanello to celebrate the Marquis' second marriage to the illegitimate daughter of Alfonso V of Aragon, King of Naples and Sicily (Fig. 4.40). Placed centrally on a stela, the *impresa* of the *vela* represented a favorite Renaissance concept drawn from antiquity, which literally

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[773] Ibid.
[774] Dorigen Sophie Caldwell, Dorigen Sophie. *The Sixteenth-Century Italian Impresa in Theory and Practice* (New York: AMS Press, 2004). Mauda Bregoli-Russo, *L'impresa come ritratto del Rinascimento* (Napoli: Loffredo, 1990).
[775] Bregoli-Russo, *L'impresa come ritratto del Rinascimento*.
[776] Ernst Kantorowicz, "The Este Portrait by Roger van der Weyden," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 3, no. 3/4 (April 1, 1940): 165-180. As Kantorowicz explains, "in the Ferrarese dialect a young lion was called *liunzello*, the words for leopard=*lunza* or for lynx=*lince* may easily have been put into some relation with Lionello-*liunzello* according to the habit of twisting and punning with words in those days." Here, the leopard has his eyes covered with a bandage, suggesting Lionello's device of the "vela," meaning both veil and sail.

meant *festina lente* (make haste slowly) or that "one ought to proceed though life with determination and energy tempered by caution and prudence," as Edgar Wind has shown.[777] Emulating the character and attitudes of courtly life, Piero Cosimo de' Medici (1416-1469) introduced the *impresa* to Florence in 1448 when he adopted an image of a falcon holding a diamond ring in its claw, and the motto "Semper," implying fidelity and strength, to mark his monumental commissions in Florence (Fig. 4.41).[778]

In Venice, *imprese* appeared as well in the competitive cultures of printing houses and painting workshops starting from the 1470s. Printers (such as the Aldine Press[779]) created personalized emblematic devices specific to each shop, and it became a convention to promote both the author and the printer-publisher on a book's title page and to include the specific day and date of publication, as well the location of the shop (Fig. 4.42). Louisa Matthew draws parallels between the development of personalized printer's marks and painter's signatures in Venice, stressing that the competitive environment in Venice led painters to use standardized forms of signatures, including name, date, and location, "to a degree not found elsewhere in Italy."[780] Influential painting workshops, including the second-generation Bellinis and Bartolommeo Vivarini, adopted the use of the cartellino and/or fictive monumental stone-devices featuring the author's signature and date, written in a standardized manner (Fig. 4.43-4.44). As

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[777] Quoted from Stephen K. Scher in Christiansen and Weppelmann, *The Renaissance Portrait: From Donatello to Bellini*, 205.
[778] Francis Ames-Lewis, "Early Medicean Devices," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 42 (January 1, 1979): 122-143.
[779] Lilian Armstrong, "The Hand-Illumination of Printed Books in Italy 1465-1515," in *The Painted Page: Italian Renaissance Book Illumination, 1450-1550*, ed. by J. J. G. Alexander (Munich; New York, N.Y.: Prestel, 1994), 35-47.
[780] Louisa C. Matthew, "The Painter's Presence: Signatures in Venetian Renaissance Pictures," *The Art Bulletin* 80, no. 4 (December 1, 1998): 616-648.

Matthews demonstrates, "All of these painters employed signatures with a frequency and standardization of form appropriate to workshops doing business in a commercial setting," like a title page of a printer. In this view, the cartellino and *trompe l'oeil* of monumental stone used by painters was equivalent to printers' emblematic devices and served as a "commercial imprimatur—a small but immediately recognizable commentary on the quality of the product and the skill of its maker."[781] This appears to be one function of the *trompe l'oeil* of the arch in Bellini's portrait of Mehmed II, as I will show in detail below. The arch in this portrait combined numerous additional meanings and functions. Bregoli-Russo, theorizing the *impresa* in her book *L'impresa come ritratto del Rinascimento* (1990), also traces its origins in Venice to the development of printing, specifically highlighting the role of the Aldine publication of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphii* (1499) with its hieroglyphs, and speculating about the careers of the humanist printers Gabriele Giolito de' Ferrari and Aldo Manuzio.[782]

Despite the proliferation of the *impresa* in the fifteenth century, whether as a personal heraldic device or as an author's personal emblem representing his intellectual achievements and skills, the rules governing its structure and composition remained fluid and not rigidly codified; no extant fifteenth-century source speaks of *imprese*. Giovio's *Dialogo dell'imprese military e amorose* was an attempt to create a guide to existing *imprese* and rules to use when inventing new ones. For Giovio, *imprese* were personal devices expressing the deeds and aspirations of great men and portraying the bearer's personality or *virtù* and his achievements.[783] Giovio and subsequent theoreticians,

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[781] Ibid.
[782] Bregoli-Russo, *L'impresa Come Ritratto Del Rinascimento*.
[783] Caldwell, *The Sixteenth-Century Italian Impresa in Theory and Practice*.

including Girolamo Ruscelli (d. 1566), Lodovico Domenichi (1515-64), Gabriele Simeoni (1509-1570), Lodovico Dolce (1508-1568), and Scipione Ammirato (1531-1600), stress several rules for composing an *impresa* as a metaphor for an individual man: 1) the words and images must be derived largely from ancient sources and involve a literary dimension, but should be neither too obscure nor too obvious; 2) the words and images must be bound together in a logical knot; 3) the *motto*—the *impresa*'s soul—must be written in a classical language; 4) the *impresa* must relate to a specific moment in the history of the depicted man; and 5) it must represent his virtuous intentions.[784] Although Giovio insisted on the importance of these five key qualities for composing an ideal *impresa*, he also acknowledged that ancient *imprese* did not always contain all the qualities he outlined, and sometimes were lacking the *motto* or the soul of the *impresa* according to his definition.[785]

Giovio also introduced the idea that an *impresa* was somewhat analogous to portraiture, collecting and including *imprese* alongside portraits in his *Museo* of illustrious men.[786] Giovio's *Museo* was a "catalogue" of famous men, whose portraits were not of great aesthetic quality but, coupled with inscriptions and *imprese*, represented both the character and the appearance of the sitter; that is, they provided a visual record of the individual likeness and "Self" in the humanistic sense, as elaborated by Belting.[787] Giovio's collection of portraits and *imprese* corresponds to the tendency of sixteenth-century portraiture to include an *impresa* as a clue to the character and *virtù* of the sitter.

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[784] Ibid.
[785] Ibid.,17.
[786] Ibid..
[787] Belting, *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body*, 62-83.

John Pope-Hennessy, in his seminal book *The Portrait in the Renaissance* (1966), discusses the gradual development of this special category of portraiture under the rubric of emblematic portraiture.

For Pope-Hennessy, the inclusion of emblems and other allegorical devices reinforced the sitter's personality "by literary means."[788] Tracing the origins of the emblematic portrait to the medallic portrait with commentary on the reverse, Pope-Hennessy stresses that the use of emblems in portraiture endowed the portraits with poetic overtones and allowed the artist to represent the cultural and intellectual interests of the sitter, to recreate a literary atmosphere or an intellectual setting, and to illustrate the sitter's psychological condition. Public images and rulers' portraits also used strategies and logic similar to those of private emblematic portraits, and expressed the sitter's political ambitions and achievements. State portraits of Queen Elizabeth I of England (1533-1603) are epitomic examples of this development, as the Queen's political aspirations were genuinely expressed through the varied use of *imprese*. In one well-known example, which conforms to the *impresa* rules codified by Giovio, Elizabeth stands astride a column decorated with scenes from *Dido and Aeneas*, below which is added a *motto* from Petrarch's *Triumph of Love*, "Stanco riposo e riposato affano," while wielding her favorite *impresa* device, a sieve (Fig. 4.45). The *impresa* as a whole alludes to the queen's hard work on behalf of the empire, and the sieve is taken to represent sifting the good seed from the chaff. The imperial consciousness of Elizabeth is portrayed by a regal crown placed above the queen's right arm. Pope-Hennessy detects that the

[788] Pope-Hennessy, *The Portrait in the Renaissance*.

inscription on the globe, "I see everything and much is missing," also asserts the theme of territorial expansion.[789]

Considering Giovio's definition of the *impresa*, examples of *imprese* in Venice, and evidence for the incorporation of *imprese* into portraiture as a means to represent the sitter's personality and ambitions, I propose that Bellini's *Portrait of Mehmed II* be understood as an early example of the painted *impresa*-portrait. The elements of this *impresa* correspond to the principles described by Giovio: 1) the architectonic structure is rendered *all'antica* in Byzantinizing Venetian style; 2) the inscription is written in Latin, reminiscent of antique sources; 3) images and inscription are intertwined visually and integrated to form a coherent meaning; 4) the inscription, as we will see below, is not the artist's commercial signature, but expresses the patron's political ambitions; and 5) the text relates to the personal history of the Sultan and represents his intentions in a specific moment in his career, emphasized by the specific date. In negotiating the elements of this *impresa*, Bellini chose specific regal symbols that would be understood by Mehmed II's polyglot courtiers and international visitors in Constantinople or could serve as a point of conversation at the court due to the overall portrait's alluring ambiguities, as we shall see.

[789] Ibid.

The Architectonic Structure as Part of Mehmed II's *Impresa*

Bellini's design of the architectonic structure corresponds to Giovio's first rule in its *all'antica* vocabulary—specifically, its borrowing from Byzantine visual language. Additionally, Bellini's design draws on pictorial techniques from the Venetian "architectural frontispiece," effectively transferring this device from the realm of book arts into painted portraiture (which is more likely to be read in terms of mimetic representation). In books of this period, jewel-encrusted, fantastical architectural frontispieces, rendered convincingly three-dimensional by shading and perspectival recession, were usually painted to look if they existed in a space behind the page to emphasize the flatness of the printed page.[790] The heightened illusion of these frames was set in contrast with the text, appearing as a piece of parchment, suspended in front of the architectural edifice. One example is the frontispiece completed by the Pico Master for the printer Nicolaus Jenson's 1472 printed edition of Pliny's *Historia naturalis* (Fig. 4.46).[791] The text is placed in front of a fanciful edifice *all'antica*, with the author represented seated on the upper ledge and the Pico della Mirandola arms at the base.

The architectural forms of these title pages evoke Roman triumphal arches, steles, and monuments, without imitating any ancient monument in particular, and create

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[790] Alexander, *The Painted Page: Italian Renaissance Book Illumination, 1450-1550*. This style was developed by Franco dei Russi, who arrived from Ferrara in 1463-1464; Marco Zoppo, a painter and follower of Squarcione; and Leonardo Bellini, nephew of Jacopo Bellini. Whimsical and colorful compositions *all'antica* with encrusted jewels decorating the frame were a distinctive feature of printed editions by enterprising foreign printers like Johannes and Vindelius de Spira and Nicolaus Jenson, who printed books in large formats and collaborated with illuminators to create elaborate frontispieces, first appearing in Venice in 1469-1470. Lastly, the presence of Girolamo da Cremona in Venice during the second part of the 1460s augmented and enriched the Veneto-Paduan miniature tradition and made his so-called "precious" style of jeweled frames in frontispieces a prominent feature of the Venetian style *all'antica*.

[791] Published in ibid.

inventive and colorful architectural enframements for the text and heraldic coats of arms and *imprese* that signal the cultivated taste of both the owner and the printer. Bellini's illusionistic treatment of the grey-white pearls, colored oval-shaped cabochons, floral motifs on the cloth, carved reliefs on the pilasters framing the Sultan, and the base of the parapet is reminiscent of these architectural frontispieces, as can be also seen in the architectural enframing created by Girolamo da Cremona for Nicolaus Jenson's 1478 printed edition of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* (Fig. 4.47).[792] There, Girolamo similarly enlivens the grayish-purple background of the basic slab of the monument or stele with monochromatic floral motifs, vases, and strings of trophies, and decorates it with huge clusters of jewels—grey-white pearls, colored gems, and cameos in fantastical gold settings consisting of dolphins, dragons, cornucopias, and satyrs.[793] In addition, Bellini's Roman fonts for the Latin inscription proclaiming Mehmed's political authority resemble the style of Jenson's Roman fonts, which were praised in Venice for their very high standards of typographic design and "unequalled beauty both for the lower case and capital letters."[794]

Although Bellini's *trompe l'oeil* design of the monumental stone shares some stylistic similarities with Venetian architectural frontispieces, however, his choice of architectural elements and floral motifs is highly specific and unique in this regal commission. Instead of the motif of the Roman triumphal arch, typical of Venetian architectural frontispieces *all'antica*, Bellini uses an arch embellished with volutes and candelabra reminiscent of Venetian architectural forms associated with the exceptional

[792] Ibid.
[793] Ibid., 188-189.
[794] Ibid., 35.

revival of Byzantine modes in both architecture and the visual arts between the 1470s and 1530s. Churches, like the Church of San Zaccaria (ca. 1480s) (Fig. 4.48), the façade of the Scuola Grande di San Marco (1489-1495) (Fig. 4.49), the entrance to the courtyard in the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista (1481), and other edifices associated with the building activity of Pietro Lombardo and Mauro Codussi in Venice employed arches and decorative details deliberately evoking Byzantine artistic heritage.[795] The imaginative revival of Byzantine and Hellenistic forms in Venetian architecture and the visual arts,[796] cherished by a particular class of Venetian élites, reaffirmed Venice's self-conscious identification with Byzantium, which was heightened by the contemporary political situation—the exaggerated influx of Greek refugees to Venice after the conquest of Constantinople, the revival of Greek studies, and the transformation of Venice into a cultural capital of Greek learning in the West.[797] In this view, Bellini's arch finds some stylistic parallels in its architectural vocabulary in the portal decoration of the Church of San Zaccaria (ca.1480s);[798] monumental stele, such as in Antonio Rizzo's (active 1465-1499) décor of the arch for the tomb of Doge Nicolò Tron (r. 1471-1473) in Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari; on frames of paintings, such as Giovanni Bellini's Triptych in S. Maria Gloriosa dei Frari (1488); and even in the portal design, exported from Venice, used by the Venetian sculptor and architect Alevisio Lamberti da Montagnana (who worked with Mauro Codussi designing the façade for the Scuola Grande di San Marco) in the Cathedral of Archangel Michael (1505-1508) in Moscow's Kremlin (Fig. 4.50).

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[795] Manfredo Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989).
[796] Deborah Howard, "Space, Light, and Ornament in Venetian Architecture: Pietro Lombardo Reconsidered," in *Reflections on Renaissance Venice: A Celebration of Patricia Fortini Brown* (Save Venice Inc; 5 Continents Editions: Milan, 2013), 95-103.
[797] Goffen, "Icon and Vision: Giovanni Bellini's Half-Length Madonnas."
[798] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*.

Bellini's choice of the arch as one of the main elements of the imperial *impresa* was appropriate to be "exported" to Mehmed II's court in Constantinople. It projected the Sultan's political aspirations and represented his personal imperial project to re-establish Byzantine territorial possessions at the time of the Roman Empire and "to bring the Mediterranean basin under the one rule by reuniting Constantinople and Rome."[799] Mehmed II, who saw himself as an heir to Byzantine emperors, had a keen interest in the city's imperial past and selectively appropriated the imperial heritage of Byzantium to create a new concept of sovereignty that combined Islamic, Turco-Mongol, and Roman-Byzantine traditions.[800] He commissioned a group of Greek and Italian scholars to compile a history of Byzantine rulers and monuments in the capital[801] and thus presumably was aware of extant major monuments and sites. His personal imperial project entailed the development of a new image of himself as ruler through a selective appropriation of Byzantine imperial insignia and loci to stress his imperial rule, establishing legitimacy and continuity with the millennial succession of Byzantine emperors.[802] The arch, albeit filtered through a prism of Venetian artistic tradition, was a potent symbol of imperial sovereignty in Byzantium. As I have shown earlier, official portraits of Byzantine emperors frequently depicted them under or in front of a semi-circular canopy resting on columns, typically with Corinthian capitals, to allude to palatial architecture in the Roman-Byzantine visual tradition, not unfamiliar in Venice.

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[799] Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*.
[800] Çigdem Kafescioğlu, "The Ottoman Capital in the Making: The Reconstruction of Constantinople in the Fifteenth Century" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1996).
[801] Necipoğu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 12.
[802] Kafescioğlu, "The Ottoman Capital in the Making: The Reconstruction of Constantinople in the Fifteenth Century."

Bellini's forms do not closely imitate Byzantine official imagery, but his choice of the arch would be easily associated by Ottoman polyglot courtiers with the particular semi-circular shape of the Byzantine imperial canopy and regal imagery still present in Ottoman Constantinople.

Byzantine imperial imagery was frequently appropriated in both the East and the West for the purposes of representing imperial authority. Charles Mitchell thoroughly investigated a telling case of the re-use of the iconography of the Byzantine imperial loggia from the base of the Obelisk of Theodosius for the fresco program of the Lateran loggia of benediction (c. 1300) erected by Pope Boniface VIII in Rome (Fig. 4.51).[803] Boniface, in restoring the Lateran, borrowed Byzantine imperial iconography to claim imperial authority. Constantine endowed Pope Sylvester, Boniface's predecessor in the Roman see and the founder of the Lateran, with imperial authority by giving him the crown of Rome. In turn, Boniface projected himself as the heir of the emperor Constantine through an elaborated decoration of the loggia as well as through its actual architectural design. As Mitchell showed, "Boniface VIII seized on an imperial form expressly to reassert an imperial idea," and to represent himself in "the likeness of a Roman emperor of the age of Constantine."[804]

Similarly, appropriations of Roman-Byzantine imperial forms took place from the early Islamic period to the Timurid period, especially in Anatolia, Syria, and Mesopotamia. Various Islamic rulers reused signs associated with "the awesome power

[803] Charles Mitchell, "The Lateran Fresco of Boniface VIII," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 14, no. 1/2 (January 1, 1951): 1–6. I am particularly grateful to William Tronzo for bringing this article to my attention.
[804] Ibid.

of the 'Caesars'" and "adorned their palaces with hundreds of sculptures representing royal figures, personifications, animals, nature, and masses of other topics."[805] In particular, representations of the rulers in Turcoman dynasties in Anatolia and northern Mesopotamia frequently reused classical and Byzantine imperial iconography as signs or symbols of their sovereignty and legitimacy.[806] Seljuk architecture in Medieval Anatolia shows appropriation of many classical forms from the Byzantine artistic heritage, leading to the creation of a common taste and shared artistic lingua, which was understood across confessional divides and shared symbols of faith and power.[807] In this period it was not uncommon for Turkish and Byzantine élites to intermarry or for Byzantine princesses to marry various Muslim rulers; in this culture of cohabitation and conflict, there was a longstanding tradition of artistic exchange between Islamic artists and their Byzantine counterparts. Muslim artists frequently borrowed motifs from Byzantine manuscripts suitable for Islamic narrative scenes. Therefore, Mehmed II's interest in Byzantine heritage followed an existing trend, but its implementation in Bellini's portrait of Mehmed II was nevertheless unique.

The hippodrome with its Obelisk of Theodosius (as well as the Serpent Column and the Walled Obelisk of Constantine Porphyrogenitus) may have indeed been the point of departure for Bellini's *Portrait of Mehmed II* in the use of Byzantine imperial language. After the conquest of Constantinople, Mehmed II appropriated the symbolic center of

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[805] Oleg Grabar, *Islamic Visual Culture, 1100-1800* (Aldershot, Hampshire, Eng.; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006).
[806] N. Lowick, "The Religious, the Royal, and the Popular in the Figural Coinage of the Jazira," in J. Raby, ed., *The Art of Syria and the Jazira 1100-1250* (Oxford, 1985), 159-174.
[807] Scott Redford, *Byzantium East and the Islamic World*, in Helen C. Evans, ed., *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)* (New York; New Haven: Metropolitan Museum of Art ; Yale University Press, 2004), 389-396.

Constantinople by converting the political and religious center of eastern Christendom, Hagia Sophia, into the royal mosque of the city and ordering his New (Topkapi) Palace to be constructed on the former acropolis of Byzantium. Through this building project he established a new symbolic core of the city, emulating the relationship of the Great Palace of Byzantine emperors to Hagia Sophia and the hippodrome.[808] The hippodrome quickly became a center of the ceremonial, processional, and social life of the Ottoman capital during the time of Mehmed II. As Necipoğlu shows, in the last years of Mehmed's rule, the Sultan appeared in highly staged processions with impressive retinues in the city and in the hippodrome on religious holidays.[809] This tradition continued and was further developed by Mehmed's successors in the sixteenth century, turning public appearances into highly charged events that displayed imperial power through carefully staged performances. A sixteenth-century series of woodcuts by Pieter Coecke van Aelst (1502-1550) (published at Antwerp in 1553) captures, for example, Süleyman the Magnificent processing through the hippodrome at a slow and stately pace, surrounded by richly dressed and hierarchically ordered courtiers, administrators, and slave soldiers (Fig. 4.52).[810] Ottoman miniatures depicting parades of the guilds of glassblowers and cloth weavers (c. 1582) (Fig. 4.53) in honor of the circumcision of the imperial prince also portray the old hippodrome as a locus for a highly structured court ceremonial—a potent symbol of the Ottoman political and social hierarchy and order.

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[808] Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*. Kafescioğlu, "The Ottoman Capital in the Making: The Reconstruction of Constantinople in the Fifteenth Century."
[809] Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*.
[810] Max J. Friedländer, *Jan van Scorel and Pieter Coeck van Aelst,* Comments and notes by H. Pauwels and G. Lemmens (Leyden: A.W. Sijthoff, 1975).

Bellini's unusual *trompe l'oeil* of the monumental arch also evokes architectural forms of the third monumental gate or *kapi* in the second court constructed for official appearances of Mehmed II in the New (Topkapi) Palace. Maria F. Pedani remarked that Bellini's representation of the arch may have alluded to the monumental *kapi* in the second court, as the word itself was highly charged in the Ottoman world and associated with the idea of justice and the State.[811] Necipoğlu convincingly demonstrates that the second court in the New (Topkapi) Palace with the third monumental gate was central to manifesting Mehmed II's imperial vision and ideas of sovereignty. Architecture and ceremonials in the second court of the Topkapi Palace visually articulated the prominence of the third gate, a monumental gate through which one entered the Chamber of Petitions. The monumental gate itself symbolically "expressed the supreme authority of the sultan, whose centralized state government operated from the nucleus of the second court." [812] The architecturally and visually articulated third gate, or *kapi*, reflected the main idea of Ottoman political thought and administration—that justice and law in the Ottoman state were founded on the act of justice performed "in front of the sultan's gate by his extended household and administrators."[813]Necipoğlu concludes that the gate was both a concrete place and also a representation of an abstract concept of government.

Many sixteenth-century miniatures variously represent the third gate topped by a domed canopy at the middle of a majestic colonnade. Mehmed II would appear there to meet his courtiers, but soon after his rule, the canopy became a nominal place,

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[811] Maria Pia Pedani Fabris, "Simbologia ottomana nell' opera di Gentile Bellini," *Atti dell'Istituto Venetodi scienze, lettere, ed arti: Classe di scienze morali, lettere, ed arti 155*, No. 1(1996-7):1-29.
[812] Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 56.
[813] Ibid., 57.

representing the ruler who was, in fact, absent. For example, a late sixteenth-century miniature portrays Mehmed II seated on a throne in front of the third gate, shown as a continuous colonnade topped by semi-circular canopies (Fig. 4.54).[814] The Sultan appears conversing with the Crimean scholar Mevlana Seyyid Ahmed, who is on a lower seat, while the grand vizier Mahmud Pasha stands behind. Mehmed II's ruling authority is emphasized through his enormous seat and his princely box, decorated with tile, in the background. Similarly, in Lokman's miniature from *Shahanshāhnāma* (1592) of a *bayram* ceremony in the second court (Fig. 4.55), Murad III is seated on a throne under a big, domed canopy supported by a semi-circular arch in the center of a marble colonnade. The ruler is surrounded by his standing courtiers, among whom only the grand vizier Osman Pasha is allowed, according to the court ceremonial, to approach the sultan and kiss the hem of his robe.[815] On another page of the same manuscript, the third gate is represented as vacant, but a semicircular arch marks it as an imperial location. The omnipresence of the sultan in this miniature is evoked by an empty, curtained royal window, placed directly above the central arch, its pointy rooftop reaching to the sky. Contemporary viewers of the miniature knew that the sultan often watched the progress of lawsuits from this window; here, the window substitutes for the sultan's physical presence, making him seem permanently present and all-seeing, as Necipoğlu has demonstrated.[816]

The throne under a semi-circular canopy, symbolizing the absolute authority of the sultan, corresponds to the new court ceremonial codified by the *kanunname* (dynastic

[814] Ibid., 89; originally Mss is TSK, R 406, fol. 12r from the Topkapi Museum Collection.
[815] Miniature from Necipoğlu, Ibid., 59, ill. 39, originally Mss TSK B 200, fol. 159v.
[816] Miniature from Necipoğlu, Ibid., 59, ill. 39, originally Mss TSK B 200, fol. 160r.

law code) formalized by Mehmed II between 1477 and 1481. As Necipoğlu shows, Mehmed II appeared regularly during ceremonial banquets seated on a "dazzling and high throne" in front of a "magnificent and excellent portico." [817] The contemporary sources stress the symbolism and high honors associated with this ceremony: "a monumental gallery which is at the far end of this court, made in marble, where, I remember, many years ago my lord Mannuel Palaeologos, who had been chased out of Greece used to sit. There is no other lord in Turkey who is allowed to sit at this place, which has a door from which one enters the sultan's residence."[818] In several accounts from Mehmed's II time and soon after his death, this colonnade is described as the "*loggia grande*" where high dignitaries held reception ceremonies or waited for an audience. Clearly, the domed canopy, reproducing the form of the royal umbrella tent, was an emblem of the sovereignty and imperial authority of the sultan, whether he was present or absent.[819]

Present analysis of Ottoman, Byzantine, and Venetian sources suggests that Bellini's representation of the arch, while partaking in the Venetian aesthetics of architectural frontispieces and Byzantinizing architectural forms, evokes the forms of the Byzantine imperial canopy as seen in imperial portraiture in the Hippodrome as well as the third gate at the New (Topkapi) Palace, associated with the Ottoman court ceremonial for Mehmed II's public appearances. The pregnant symbolism of Bellini's *trompe l'oeil* of the architectonic structure, which evidently lacks an architectural function, invites

[817] Ibid., 89.
[818] Ibid., 89 – from Spandugino's description of the public appearances of Bayezid II during his brother Cem's captivity at the Vatican Palace in Rome.
[819] Ibid, 88.

these multiple readings and makes it a potent imperial *impresa* evoking Mehmed II's complex vision of Ottoman rulership. In this view, the person of Mehmed II becomes the actual embodiment of the "Ottoman sultan," a synthesis of Timurid, Turkish, and Roman-Byzantine traditions of sovereignty.[820]

Bellini's expert representation of Mehmed II's complex ideas of sovereignty is further evidenced by the presence of seven imperial crowns and the cloth of honor thrown over the parapet. The golden crown—the crown of Rome—had been the symbol of temporal dominion since the time of Alexander the Great, as Alexander or *Iskandar* was always portrayed wearing a golden crown in Islamic miniatures. The two vertical trios of stacked crowns referred to Mehmed II's successful military campaigns, which led to capturing the three realms of Greece, Trebizond, and Asia.[821] The same crowns appeared on the reverse of Bellini's medal of Mehmed II, cast in 1480 (Pl. IV), as well as on the reverse of Bertoldo di Giovanni's medal, also cast in ca. 1480 (Fig. 4.56). Bertoldo drew on Bellini's iconography but also supplemented it on the reverse with an allegory of victory in *all' antica* style.[822] In Bertoldo's rendering, the crowns placed on the allegorical figures were supplemented with an inscription proclaiming Mehmed II as the emperor of Asia, Trebizond, and Great Greece. The repetition of the crown motif in Mehmed II's medallic portraits, as well as in the painted portrait now in the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar (Pl. III), has led scholars to suggest that the golden crowns were an official *impresa* device of the Sultan referring to his temporal dominion. This

[820] Kafescioğlu, "The Ottoman Capital in the Making: The Reconstruction of Constantinople in the Fifteenth Century," 4.
[821] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 78.
[822] Ibid., 74-76.

interpretation is further confirmed by the presence of the seventh embroidered crown in the center of the cloth of honor, which alluded to Mehmed II's personal position as the Seventh Sultan in the House of Osman.[823]

In addition to the crowns, a potent symbol of Roman-Byzantine sovereignty, the unique design of the cloth of honor over the parapet alluded to Byzantine bejeweled imperial garments, as discussed earlier. Byzantine emperors wore a heavily decorated *loros* or stole made of thickly embroidered silk or leather, studded with precious stones and pearls, wrapped around the body and reaching to the ankles in front.[824] The unique character of the cloth may reflect some artistic license on the part of Bellini, who evidently designed it as part of Mehmed II's imperial insignia, incorporating the motif of the tulip, prominently shown in the center right above the imperial crown, which only later became the characteristic motif of Ottoman textiles. The crowns, in concert with the bejeweled cloth, manifest Mehmed II's ambitions as an heir to Roman-Byzantine emperors. The unique rendering of Mehmed II's imperial *impresa* underscores Bellini's transformation of the Venetian idiom in portraiture to fashion a synctretic vision of sovereignty flowering at the Ottoman court.

[823] Maria Pedani Fabris, *Maometto II e Gentile Bellini* (Venezia, 1999), 1-16.
[824] Jennifer Ball, *Byzantine Dress: Representations of Secular Dress* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

The Inscription as Part of Mehmed II's *Impresa*: Its Tentative Reconstruction

According to Giovio's second and third rules, the inscription should be in a classical language and inter-connected with the images to form a logical knot. The original inscription in Bellini's portrait is in Latin and fully integrated into the architectonic structure, elucidating its iconographic forms, but scholarly attempts to untie this knot have been vexed due to the text's damaged condition (Fig. 4.57-4.58).

The inscription is peculiar, in that it gives pride of place not only to Mehmed II (referring to him as "Great Sultan, Conqueror of the World," and proclaiming his imperial office) but also proclaims Bellini's high social standing, referring to the artist as "Golden Knight and Palace Companion."[825] In addition, this formula, with slight variations, was replicated in Bellini's other medallic portraits of the Sultan, suggesting an intention to circulate these portraits widely as Mehmed II's official manifesto.

Still-legible fragments in the painting, together with conventions Bellini used in his other portraits of rulers, provide ground for a provisional reconstruction of the text. Previously, Austen Henry Layard published his reconstruction of the inscription in 1887.[826] In the painting's present condition, there are two overlapping inscriptions on the

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[825] Martin Davies, keeper of Italian paintings and later director of the National Gallery, was among the first scholars to confirm that the old inscription must have included the names of both Mehmed and Bellini. See: Davies, *National Gallery Catalogues: The Earlier Italian Schools*.

[826] Layard, *Handbook of Painting. The Italian Schools. Based on the Handbook of Kugler.* Layard published this reconstruction: TERRAR MARISS/ VICTOR AC DO/MATOR ORBIS SVLTAN MAHOM/ETI RESVLTAT/ ARS VERA/ GENTILIS MILI/TIS AURATI/ BELINI NATVRA/ SOATIVSIOVI/ CVNCTA RE/DVCIT INPROPR/ IAM PROPRIA SIMVLORE. The inscription was later republished with a few changes in punctuation and grammar by Thuasne: *Terrar. Marisq. Victor ac domator orbis…Sultan…inte…Mahometi resultat ars vera Gientilis militis aurati Belini naturae…qui cuncta reducit in propria…jam proprio simul. Cre MCCCCLXXX Die XXV mensis. Novembris.* In: Louis Thuasne, *Gentile Bellini et Sultan Mohammed II.: notes sur le séjour du peintre vénitien à Constantinople 1479-1480 d'après les documents originaux ... Avec huit planches, etc.* (1888).

left insert—an older text, likely by Bellini, and a newer, more prominent text painted by a later hand, inserted between the lines and partially overlapping with the older inscription. The infrared photograph does not record significant damage on the left insert with the inscription in the parapet. Therefore, it can be assumed that the extant inscription more or less preserves the original content, even if it was retouched at some point in the painting's history.

In collaboration with Professor Anthony Edwards,[827] I propose the following reconstruction of the inscription:

Version 1:

TERRAR. MARISQ. VICTOR AC DOMATOR ORBIS . . . SULTAN IMP. . .
MEHMET . . . RESULTAT ARS VERA GIENTILIS MILITIS AURATI BELINI
NATURAE . . . QUI CUNCTA REDUCIT IN PROPRIA IAM PROPRIE SIMULACRA.

(Victor on lands and sea and conqueror of the globe, Sultan and Emperor Mehmet. The true art of Gentile Bellini, golden knight, echoes nature, he who renders all things accurately into their own images.)

Version 2:

TERRAR. MARISQ. VICTOR AC DOMATOR ORBIS . . . SULTAN IMP. . .
MEHMET . . . RESULTAT ARS VERA GIENTILIS MILITIS AURATI BELINI

[827] Professor Anthony Edwards at the University of California San Diego made a new transcription of the extant inscription, partially reconstructing missing letters and applying knowledge of Latin grammar. There are still missing letters and words that cannot be reconstructed in the present condition.

NATURAE . . . QUI CUNCTA REDUCIT IN PROPRIAM FORMAM PROPRIIS SIMILIORA.

(Victor on lands and sea and conqueror of the globe, Sultan and Emperor Mehmet. The true art of Gentile Bellini, golden knight, echoes nature, he who renders all things into its own form more similar than the things themselves.)[828]

The newer fragments inserted in the interlining of the extant inscription parallel its words:

…ARISQ VICTOR…DOMATOR ORBIS….CVNCTA RE….

Whatever the case may be concerning these inscriptions, there is good reason to believe that the extant inscription preserves the original content.

The inscriptions on the portrait medals of Mehmed II that Bellini completed either during his stay in Constantinople or immediately after his return to Venice in 1481 support the proposed reading (Pl. IV).[829] These examples suggest that the painting's original inscription was modeled on those used in medallic portraiture:

The medal from the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford is inscribed:

[on the obverse]

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[828] The full text of the reconstruction authored by Edwards is forthcoming in 2014 as an appendix in my essay on the portrait in the volume titled *Portraiture and Written Word*, published by Ashgate. My sincere thanks to Edwards for deciphering the inscription and for his translation. Reproduced with permission from the author.

[829] Opinions collide in regard to this issue. Earlier scholars believed that the medals were produced in Constantinople, ca. 1480. Susan Spinale's dissertation proposes that they could have been produced in Venice, ca. 1481, for the Western market as the demand for images of the Sultan after his death was high. See: Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*. See also: Spinale, "The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)."

MAGNI SOULTANI MAHOMETI IMPERATORIS

(Of Great Sultan Mehmed, Imperator)

[on the reverse]

GENTILIS BELLINIS VENETUS EQUES AURATUS COMES. Q. PALATINUS F

(Gentile Bellini, Venetian, Golden Knight and Palace Companion [or Count Palatine], made it).[830]

On the medal from the Victoria and Albert Museum, the inscription appears as:

[on obverse]

MAVMET ASIE AC TRAPESVNZIS MAGNE QVE GRETIE IMPERAT.

(Mehmed, Emperor of Asia, Trebizond, and Great Greece)

[on reverse]

GENTILIS BELLINVS VENETVS EQVES AVRATVS COMES. Q. PALATINVS. F.

(Gentile Bellini, Venetian, Golden Knight and Palace Companion [or Count Palatine], made it).[831]

The similarity of the formulas used in these medals to proclaim the Sultan's imperial office and territorial conquests, as well as the artist's social standing as Golden Knight and Count Palatine (*miles auratus ac comes palatinus*),[832] together with the trio of

[830] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 74-75.
[831] Ibid.
[832] The title was granted to Bellini by Mehmed II in recognition of his accomplishments. The evidence for his status comes from a letter of Mehmed II, drawn up at the court of Constantinople on January 15, 1481.

stacked crowns, the Sultan's device, suggests that the language of the inscriptions, both in the medals and in the painting, was part of the official language employed to represent the emperor and his imperial program.[833] It also parallels the foundation inscription in Arabic above the main imperial gate leading to the second court in the New (Topkapi) Place, dating to 1478 (Fig. 4.59): "Sultan of the Two Continents and Emperor of the Two Seas, the Shadow of God in this World and the Next, the Favorite of God on the Eastern and Western Horizons, the Conqueror of Constantinople, the Father of Conquest, Sultan Khan Mehmed."[834] However, the inscription in Bellini's painted portrait is more elaborate: it also goes on to praise the artist for his skill in making the Sultan's likeness true to nature and thus asserts the artist's agency and his accomplishments. Are we to read it as self-promotion on Bellini's part?

Currently, a temporary consensus has been achieved that identifies the letter as an Italian transcription of the original document, presented to the artist on his departure from Constantinople. As Alan Chong explains in his catalogue essay "Gentile Bellini in Istanbul: Myths and Misunderstandings," *comes palatine* had a straightforward meaning of a "palace companion"' or a court intimate [*familiaris*], who was a salaried courtier who provided both services good company for the Sultan. Chong suggests that this title differed from the European title of Count Palatine [*comes palatinus*], granted by the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III to Bellini in 1469. Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 114-115.

[833] Ibid., 74-75. As the catalogue rightly suggests, the trio of stacked crown was a personal emblem of Mehmed II designed by Bellini.

[834] Necipoğlu, "From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Kostantiniyye: Creation of a Cosmopolitan Capital and Visual Culture under Sultan Mehmed II," in *From Byzantion to Istanbul: 8000 Years of a Capital* (Istanbul: Sakip Sabanci Museum, 2010), 268.

The Inscription in Mehmed II's *Impresa*: Fashioning His Imperial Persona and His Intentions in a Specific Moment in His History

The text on Bellini's painting corresponds to the last two of Giovio's criteria: that the *impresa* must relate to a specific moment in the history of the depicted man and must represent his ambitions. The presence of a specific date, November 25, 1480, as well as Mehmed II's newly adopted imperial titles, together with an introduction of the artist as his knight and palace companion, as is proposed here, allude to the period in the ruler's life when many of his ambitions for world dominion and humanistic reform at home came to fruition. It was during Bellini's sojourn to Constantinople that Mehmed II codified legal changes and his military conquests expanded his dominion to Italy. The presence of Bellini himself was a fulfillment of Mehmed II's long-term desire to have at his service a celebrated artist from Italy, particularly Venice, who was praised for his skill in the art of perspective and portraiture. I argue that the inscription on the painting was not a typical trademark or epigram broadcasting Bellini's artistic skill, but rather an index to the patron-artist interaction and the patron's political history.

The text inscribed in Bellini's fanciful architectural *trompe l'oeil* is a significant departure from both a simple *cartellino*,[835] bearing only the artist's name, and the humanist epigram, which speaks in the first person and draws the attention of the beholder to the artist's achievements. Bellini is known for signing his name on a *cartellino*, as can be seen in in *The Virgin and Child Enthroned* (ca. 1480) (Fig. 4.43):

[835] As Mathew has shown, the *cartellino* became a typical device in Venice, starting in the 1440s, for carrying the artist's signature: Matthew, "The Painter's Presence: Signatures in Venetian Renaissance Pictures."

"GENTILIS. BELLINI. VENETI. EQVITIS" (The work of Gentile Bellini the Venetian, Knight),[836] or in the *Portrait of Doge Agostino Barbarigo* (ca. 1490s) (Fig. 4.60). Such standardized artists' signatures in Venice served as "a commercial imprimatur" to advertise the skill of the master.[837] As well, the inscription does not fit the convention of the humanist epigram, with which Bellini was surely familiar. Bellini's *Portrait of Caterina Cornaro, Queen of Cyprus* (ca. 1500-1507), one of the most celebrated women of princely descent in Venice, includes a humanist epigram (Fig. 4.61). The Queen herself speaks directly to the beholder, commanding admiration of her persona as the Daughter of Venice and noble Queen of Cyprus, and of the artist's skill in depicting her so vividly that it appears she can speak.

> CORNELIAE GENUS NOMEN FERO/ VIRGINIS QUAM SYN SEPELIT/ VENETUS FILIAM ME VOCAT SE/ NATUS CYPRUSQUE SERVIT NOVEM/ REGNOR SEDES QUANTA SIM/ VIDES SED BELLINI MANUS/ GENTILIS MAIOR QUAE ME TAM/ BREVI EXPRESSIT TABELLA
>
> (Of the family of Cornelia. I bear the name of the Virgin whom Sinai buries [Saint Catherine of Alexandria]. The Venetian Senate calls me daughter and Cyprus serves me. I rule nine sees. You see how great I am but the hand of Gentile Bellini is greater which portrays me on such a small panel).[838]

According to Holly Hurlburt, the inscription in the Corner portrait is an evocation of a well-known Martial epigram in praise of the poet Virgil: "How small is the parchment that contains the measureless Virgil." The inscription may be not fully authentic, since the published X-ray shows that the original inscription area was enlarged as part of Zorzi

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[836] Meyer zur Capellen, *Gentile Bellini*. Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*., 60.
[837] Matthew, "The Painter's Presence: Signatures in Venetian Renaissance Pictures," 627.
[838] The transcription and translation are quoted from Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 46.

Corner's schemes for family glory.[839] However, it does not preclude the possibility that the altered inscription preserves its original content, since "the portrait's owners were amateur antiquarians, witty consumers of the classical culture from which they claimed descent."[840]

The form of the inscription in Bellini's *Portrait of Mehmed II* is distinct from the language of Martial epigrams, as the image does not address the viewer directly. The inscription celebrates Mehmed II as "Great Sultan, Conqueror of the World," proclaiming his imperial office, and also praises the artist for his skill, emphasizing the artist's high social standing as the Sultan's courtier. Bellini's skill is important only so far as it serves to elevate the Sultan for having secured the services of an illustrious artist. The title of "the Golden Knight and Count Palatine" asserts that Bellini was a select and intimate member of the Sultan's household.[841] Mehmed II, who knew the biography of Alexander of the Great,[842] may have been inspired to emulate the Greek emperor by bestowing this title on his own favorite painter, much as Alexander honored Apelles. In this view, the inscription is better understood as the *impresa*'s *motto*, representing Mehmed's II ambitions, rather than a humanist epigram concerning artistic bravura.

In Renaissance public monuments and painted portraits, humanists typically composed epigrams and *mottos*, as in a well-known and much simpler inscription on the

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[839] Holly S. Hurlburt, "*A la Cypriota*: Gentile Bellini, the Queen of Cyprus, and Familial Ambition," in *Reflections on Renaissance Venice: A Celebration of Patricia Fortini Brown*, 33-39.
[840] Ibid., 37.
[841] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 115. This interpretation is based on the contemporary account of Giovanni Maria Angiolello, a Venetian who served Mehmed the Conqueror between 1474 and 1481 and was present at the court, as well as on a letter from the Sultan himself, dated January 15, 1481.
[842] Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom." Spinale, "The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)."

verso of Leonardo da Vinci's *Portrait of Ginevra de' Benci*.[843] Undoubtedly, Bellini's text in the London portrait originated at Mehmed's II court, as it includes Mehmed II's official titles, which began to be used in his diplomatic correspondence with the Italian rulers in the final years of his rule.

What, then, of the date, November 25, 1480, inscribed on the right insert? It is customary to read it as the date when the painting was completed. But the inscription does not say "I am so-and-so, and completed this work on such a day, etc.," as was typical in Renaissance inscriptions.[844] As Giovio's fourth rule implies, the date could refer to a specific moment in Mehmed's life or office—one possibility is that it could mark a military event related to the capture of the Castle of Otranto in the Fall of 1480 (this campaign in Apulia, which began on July 28 of that year, expanded the Sultan's territorial domains to Southern Italy for the first time). While this is one possibility among many, given the prominent placement and size of the date (which is not on the reverse, not small, and visually equal to the "conqueror" inscription), I suggest that it is better understood as relating to the realization of Mehmed II's ambitions during the final years of his rule, rather than the date of the painting itself. However, the latter possibility should not be excluded from consideration.

Finally, Bellini's inscription, with its specific date, may have alluded to an unprecedented expansion of Mehmed's sovereignty codified in the *kanunname* in 1477-

[843] For a recent discussion of this question see: Mary D. Garrard, "Who Was Ginevra de' Benci? Leonardo's Portrait and Its Sitter Recontextualized," *Artibus et Historiae* , Vol. 27, No. 53 (2006): 23-56.
[844] For a discussion of examples, please see: Rona Goffen, "Signatures: Inscribing Identity in Italian Renaissance Art," in *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, vol. 32 (2001): 304-370, 304-315.

1481.[845] The *kanunname* promulgated the Sultan's absolute authority and the sacredness of his person. The sacralization of Mehmed II's persona was reflected not only discursively in the law but also manifested in his staged public appearances in the New (Topkapi) Palace—for which the portrait may have been commissioned, as I proceed to discuss in the following pages.

Mehmed II's Portrait in the Imperial Palace Ceremonial

The portrait's complex iconographic program suggests that it had a particular function in the new imperial palace ceremonial. The text on the architectonic structure emphasizes the public presentation and pronouncement of Mehmed II's ruling authority. The official language of the inscription, together with other imperial devices as elements of Mehmed II's imperial *impresa*, can be associated with official diplomatic receptions, when the Sultan appeared to international dignitaries, encased in rich robes either on the elevated golden throne under an enormous domed canopy in the second court or on a dais in the Chamber of Petitions in the third court. During such receptions, many precious items were brought from the Sultan's inner treasure rooms to impress visitors. In this view, it is likely that the portrait was made to be included in such diplomatic occasions, as had recently become customary both in Italian and Islamic courts, where portraits of the ruler were presented and discussed.

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[845] Necipoglu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*.

As Necipoğlu reconstructed, Mehmed II made regular public appearances in his imperial loggia or the Gate of Felicity during ceremonial banquets and extraordinary councils with his court (Fig 4.62). He was seated cross-legged under the canopy on a bejeweled imperial high throne brought from the Inner Treasury.[846] Important officials and court dignitaries sat on a bench under the colonnade at the left side of the gate. The rest of the Sultan's courtiers silently sat or stood to the right of the gate in a specific order reflecting the state and palace hierarchies. The second court and the royal colonnade were decorated with royal insignia, rich hangings, carpets, and curtains brought out of the Inner Treasury.

Besides the Sultan's public appearances, the second court was used for a special diplomatic ceremony—the Council of Victory—staged to impress envoys of European monarchs (Fig. 4.63). On these occasions, the second court was splendidly decorated with precious carpets, rare textile hangings, and curtains. The courtiers, in their best clothing, were lined up in a hierarchical order at the court. Ambassadors walked through richly clad courtiers and saluted various groups on the way to the Council Hall, where they were greeted by the viziers. Inside the Council Hall, the grand vizier received ambassadors for an audience, after which food was served (depending on the status of the envoy). The reception then concluded at the Sultan's Chamber of Petitions at the third court—the focal point in the program of imperial representation. Mehmed II sat cross-legged on an elevated and richly decorated dais furnished with expansive carpets, brocades, velvets embroidered in gold thread, leopard skins, and leatherwork (Fig. 4.64).[847] His imperial

[846] Ibid., 89.
[847] Ibid., 98-99.

insignia were also displayed nearby. Reserved for formal audiences with select dignitaries, the Chamber of Petitions was a single-storied vaulted chamber. Mehmed II was visible through a gilded iron lattice of the ceremonial window and could observe parades of gifts and approaching envoys. Rich cloth, carpeted floors, precious multi-media revetments on the walls and ceilings, throne covers, curtains for windows and doors, jeweled pendants, and royal insignia further amplified the sense of imperial grandeur. Overall, the visual program of the audience hall tangibly projected Mehmed II's supreme ruling authority.

Diplomatic *relazione* unilaterally remark that the majestic order, magnificent decoration, and etiquette at the Ottoman court intimidated and stupefied them.[848] The opulent display of wealth; the static, iconic pose of the Sultan in rich robes and regalia on a dais in the Chamber of Petitions; and the enormous domed canopy framing the elevated golden throne of the ruler in the second court (which remained empty during the Council of Victory receptions, as the Sultan was at the Chamber of Petitions in the third court) all reinforced the imperial splendor in the diplomatic ritual-visual nexus (Fig. 4.55, right). Necipoğlu observes that solemn ceremonies at the Ottoman court recalled ancient Byzantine and Abbasid palatine protocols.

Matthew Canepa's research on the rituals of sacred kingship of Byzantine and Sasanian kings suggests that these palatine traditions impacted late medieval court rituals in the Mediterranean.[849] Mehmed II's enormous canopy in the second court and the sky

[848] Ibid., 68.
[849] Matthew P. Canepa, *Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran* (Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 2009).

motif with golden stars inside the wooden dome of the Chamber of Petitions[850] recall ancient Mediterranean palatine traditions. In Sasanian Iran, an enormous throne covered with a domed baldachin, decorated inside with a lapis lazuli sky and golden stars of the zodiac, was instrumental in projecting the king's universal sovereignty. In Byzantium, the elaborate design of the throne room, state robes and regalia of power, images of enthroned celestial kings, and other cosmological associations were effective instruments in the rituals of kingship.

If this is the case, how do we explain the absence of visual representations of Mehmed II in enacted court rituals? All visual traditions that Mehmed II deliberately employed in the Palace—Byzantine, Persian, Turco-Mongol, Timurid, and Italian—incorporated images of rulers in state and diplomatic ceremonies. Could Mehmed II's zealous efforts in commissioning his painted and medallic portraits from Italian artists in 1478-1481 be directly related to his need to include painted or medallic images in his imperial ceremonial at the New Palace? If so, in what manner were they displayed in the New Palace? What was their function?

I would like to tentatively propose that banquets and diplomatic receptions in the second court and audiences in the third court offered formal occasions where painted and medallic portraits of the ruler could have been displayed and discussed with international dignitaries. These ceremonies were already enhanced with the presence of imperial insignia, precious objects, embroidered hangings, and rare carpets. Images of the ruler would further stress his political prestige among courtiers and international peers.

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[850] Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 100-101.

Contemporary practices both in Islamic and European states confirm the inclusion of portraits, allegory, and history paintings in audience halls and princely apartments as conversational pieces to spur discussions about the genealogy, history, and deeds of the ruling regime.[851] In this context, the Council Hall, where the grand vizier received ambassadors for an audience would be the primary place where Bellini's *Portrait of Mehmed II* could have been displayed and discussed with the envoys. Thus I propose that Bellini's portrait was painted with this specific ceremonial and diplomatic function in mind.

That painted and medallic portraits were instruments at courts for spreading the prince's fame is well documented by Angelo Decembrio's (1415-1467) dialogues "On Literary Elegance" (*De politia litteraria*). An Italian humanist who began his career in Ferrara in 1430, Decembrio underscores the function of portraits as idealizing likenesses in the court milieu. Decembrio expresses the popular argument on the connection between poets and painters, and between painted or cast ancient portraits and their literary equivalents in texts. He suggests that both painted and textual images are needed to properly celebrate the great men of their day:

> [Guarino replied] For both painting and writing tend to one end: the encouragement of learning and the desire of knowledge. It was for this reason that the Greeks and Romans often referred to both as *scriptura*. Leonello will remember, we covered this point thoroughly when he was showing how much the same principle underlay the *ingenium* [talent] of both poets and painters. Examining and handling – as we are examining and handling at this moment these gems here – the portraits of princes,

[851] As Stephen Perkinson argued that the function of the Portrait of John the Good (r. 1350-1364), King of France (now in the Louvre)—one of the earliest portraits of French kings— was to be discussed with a restricted audience of highly privileged guests in the king's apartments for diplomatic maneuvering. Stephen Perkinson, *The Likeness of the King: A Prehistory of Portraiture in Late Medieval France* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 299-300.

> you have to agree that it is worthwhile and pleasant from a literary point of view.
>
> [Leonello interposed] I often take great pleasure in looking at the heads of the Caesars on bronze coins – bronze having survived more commonly than gold or silver – and they impress me no less than the descriptions of their appearances in Suetonius and others. For the latter are apprehended by the mind alone.[852]

As the text indicates, looking at ancient images and discussing ancient texts related to them were a typical activity at court. Not only ancient coins and gems, but also contemporary portraits of the ruler at Leonello's court were passed around and contrasted in a similar fashion. Decembrio briefly documents the comparison of portraits by Pisanello and Jacopo Bellini, completed for the competition in 1441, and Leonello's bewilderment in the face of two different images of himself.

> You remember how Pisanello and Bellini, the finest painters of our times, recently differed in various ways in the portrayal of my face. The one added to its handsomeness with a more sympathetic sparseness, while the other represented paler, though no more slender; and scarcely were they reconciled by my entreaties.[853]

Decembrio's dialogue firmly situates the Italian court portrait's function as an effective means to celebrate the ruler among his courtiers and to impress important visitors.

Likewise, the inclusion of Bellini's portrait in diplomatic receptions or court appearances would put Mehmed II's court ceremonial on a par with practices widely employed in other Italian courts, as well as in the Timurid cultural milieu.[854] Bellini's portrait would help project Mehmed II's imperial power in the context of his recent

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[852] From Angelo Decembrio "On Literary Elegance" (*De politia litteraria*), Part LXVIII, published in Michael Baxandall, *Words for Pictures: Seven Papers on Renaissance Art and Criticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 64-66. I thank Jack Greenstein for bringing to my attention this new translation of the text.
[853] Ibid., 52.
[854] See chapter 2 and 3 that discuss this in more detail.

territorial conquests. It would also enhance Mehmed II's overall fame and expand the visual vocabulary of power employed in the New (Topkapi) Palace aimed to express the supreme authority of the Sultan. After all, Vasari's account talks about how much Bellini's painting impressed the Sultan and his courtiers, so they "remained wonderstruck and awed than ever before…the Sultan for his own part could not imagine anything else except that Gentile had some spirit divine behind him."[855] Given that Vasari was concerned with his own agenda to promote the Italian artistic manner, could the text still simply recall circulating rumors about the impact Bellini's portrait had when it was incorporated into diplomatic and state receptions at the Ottoman court?

Bellini's Portrait and Earlier Representations of the Sultan: Refashioning Mehmed II's Image

Scholars' understanding of the role of Bellini's portrait in fashioning Mehmed II's public image in Constantinople must change in accordance with the present re-appraisal of the portrait's iconographic program and meaning. Bellini's painting celebrates the regal physical appearance of the Eastern ruler to an unprecedented degree for an Ottoman sovereign; it also bestows upon him the princely dignity afforded by the complex iconography and visual conventions expressing virtù and nobility found in contemporary portraits of Italian and Eastern courtly élites. Although the painted portrait was completed

[855] Appendix, Document No. 18.

approximately contemporaneously with the medal portrait by Costanzo da Ferrara (c. 1450-1524), it marks a new phase in the development of Mehmed II's iconography by representing a majestic and unthreatening image of the Sultan.

Consideration of the London portrait in relation to preceding portraits of the Sultan suggests that Bellini's image significantly departs from the iconography of Mehmed II promulgated in Italy in the wake the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the rapid expansion of the Ottoman state both to the west and to the east. During that period, Western humanists and Christian leaders who felt a deep political and psychological threat from the Turks generated a great number of rhetorical texts portraying the Turks as slaughterers, savages, and cruel barbarians, lacking cultural roots. In 1453 Pope Nicholas V called Mehmed II "the precursor of the Antichrist" and "the red dragon of the Apocalypse, bearing seven heads with seven diadems and ten horns," ardently urging Christian princes to unite in a crusade against the infidel Turks.[856] In this context, a rhetorical image of Mehmed II emerged that coupled hatred with fascination. The Eastern ruler was portrayed as ruthless and evil, with ambitions for universal rule comparable to those of Alexander the Great. This image was promoted by semi-historical narratives and anecdotal stories circulating in Italy and Europe and illustrating the personal cruelty of the Sultan. It is therefore not surprising that the early portraits of Mehmed II produced in the West reflected in their iconography these widely circulating narratives about the

[856] Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*. For a history of the perception of Turks in Europe, I refer to several recent books: Nancy Bisaha, *Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). Margaret Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008). Mustafa Soykut, *Image of the "Turk" in Italy: A History of the "Other" in Early Modern Europe, 1453-1683* (Berlin: K. Schwarz, 2001).

powerful "savage" ruler. Even Costanzo da Ferrara's medals of Mehmed II, one of the most significant achievements in the genre of veristic ruler portraiture, nonetheless inherits the earlier rhetoric of Western humanists in portraying the Sultan as a bellicose king with an unlimited appetite for universal power, as I will show in the following pages.

Raby and Necipoğlu's research on Mehmed II's artistic patronage suggests that the Sultan was very much aware of various image traditions, the political dimension of art and architecture, and how they might be used to project his power and image.[857] Mehmed II's multiple attempts, between 1461 and 1479, to secure through diplomatic channels the services of an Italian portraitist may have been driven by his political agenda to produce a more positive official image of himself for circulation in the West, as well as among his polyglot subjects. He might have wished to broadcast an image that would accurately represent his enlarged imperial role. Bellini's portrait of Mehmed II, with its Eastern and Western sense of decorum and dignity, stands in stark contrast to other Western portraits of the Sultan at the time that grew out of a context of political propaganda ignited by the conquest of Constantinople. It helped redefine the public image of the Sultan in the Western eye by fashioning a refined and contemplative portrait of the sovereign, comparable to venerated representations of the Venetian ruling élite or philosopher-kings in the East. It also re-articulated Mehmed II's imperial image within his polyglot cosmopolitan court and aided the Sultan's efforts in founding a tradition of Ottoman portraiture in Constantinople. Here, I will add to Necipoğlu's recent argument that Mehmed II's cosmopolitan visual culture was forged through a self-conscious artistic

[857] Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom." Necipoğlu, "From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Kostantiniyye: Creation of a Cosmopolitan Capital and Visual Culture under Sultan Mehmed II," in *From Byzantion to Istanbul: 8000 Years of a Capital*.

and architectural patronage[858] by clarifying how Bellini's painted portrait contributed to this culture.

Among earlier images of the Turk are two emblematic portraits, designed in Italy with limited knowledge of Mehmed II's actual appearance: the unsigned medal by a follower of Pisanello (ca. 1460s-1470s) (Fig. 4.65) and the engraving captioned "Il Gran Turco" (the Great Turk) (ca. 1470) (Fig. 4.66). Who commissioned these two images is unknown, but it very well may be that they were sent or brought as diplomatic gifts to the ruler, knowing his interest in portraiture. The engraving was surely treasured, because it was found in the Sultan's collection of portraits, together with a group of fifteenth-century Italian prints, in the so-called Fatih Album.[859] These early portraits arguably ignited the ruler's imagination and spurred his interest in obtaining the services of an Italian artist, as has been proposed.[860]

The earliest medal of Mehmed II as a young man (ca. 1460s-1470s) portrays the Sultan on the obverse with generic physiognomic features—stern gaze, very long nose,

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[858] Necipoğlu, "From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Kostantiniyye: Creation of a Cosmopolitan Capital and Visual Culture under Sultan Mehmed II."

[859] Assembled after Mehmed's death, the Fatih Album is remarkable for its preservation of several painted portraits of the sovereign and a group of Italian prints. Despite the fact that the engravings are assembled in a group, their divergent styles—Florentine and Ferrarese—and various subject matters preclude the possibility of receiving the entire group as a gift from a single foreign potentate. The collection was likely assembled over a period of time. For more details see: A. M. Hind, "Fifteenth Century Engravings at Constantinople," *Print's Collector Quarterly* 20 (1933): 279-296. Julian Raby, "Mehmed II Fatih and the Fatih Album," *Islamic Art* I (1981): 42-49.

[860] Raby's research is the major contribution to our understanding Mehmed II's patronage of medals. See: Raby, "El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom." Julian Raby, "A Sultan of Paradox: Mehmed the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts," *Oxford Art Journal* 5, no. 1 (January 1, 1982): 3–8. See also: Raby, "Pride and Prejudice: Mehmed the Conqueror and the Italian Medal," in Pollard, *Italian Medals*, 171-194, 173-175. Raby, "Opening Gambits," in Kangal and Isin, *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman*, 64-95, 64. Spinale's research reappraises the earlier medals and clarifies the function of the later medals. See: Spinale, "The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)," 99-110. For a detailed bibliography and summary of opinions see: Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 67-70.

fleshy lips, and heavy jaw. He is represented proudly holding his head up, but his overall appearance projects a lack of royal pedigree—simplicity rather than nobility and princely refinement, especially noticeable when compared with Bellini's treatment of Mehmed II's headgear and attire. In this depiction of the ruler's physiognomy, the medal greatly departs from Pisanello's formulae of refinement as seen in medal portraits of Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta (1417-1468), Gianfrancesco Gonzaga (1395-1444), Alfonso V of Aragon (1396-1458), and Filippo Maria Visconti (1392-1447) (Fig. 4.8-4.9), all completed during the 1440s, which I have in part discussed earlier. Also, Mehmed II's dress—the basic turban and the caftan with an epaulette—have been understood as fictional and not reflecting his imperial persona.[861] The Western perception of the Sultan is further underscored by the allegorical scene *all'antica* on the reverse. A nude man reclining in a rocky landscape, holding a victory torch, with a Syrian-style minaret in the background, has been understood as borrowed from the Leonello d'Este medal designed in 1444 by Pisanello (Fig. 4.67). Pisanello's nude figure is interpreted as Bacchus evoking the image of Alexander the Great through associations with their respective mythological and actual conquests of India.[862] The reverse on the medal of Mehmed II reflects well what diplomats and humanists reported about him, emphasizing that the Sultan set himself to emulate Alexander the Great and re-conquer the whole world. Concerned with the rapid expansion of the Ottoman Empire to Italy, Niccolò Sagundino, who was recruited by Nicholas V to serve as advocate for the pope's crusade, wrote in 1453 to warn the pope and his affiliates: "[Mehmed] selected Alexander of Macedonia

[861] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 70.
[862] Syson and Gordon, *Pisanello: Painter to the Renaissance Court*, 90-92. Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 70.

and Gaius Caesar as those who are specially be imitated."[863] In all, the medal conveys fascination with the Turkish ruler and fear coupled with respect. The inscription—MAGNUS & ADMIRATUS SOLDANUS MACOMET BEY (Great Admired Sultan Mehmed Bey)—has been understood as mistakenly misinterpreting Mehmed II's Ottoman title of "amir" as "admiratus."[864]

The engraving captioned "Il Gran Turco" (the Great Turk), which has survived in two impressions, is another well-known fictional image of the Eastern ruler that circulated between Italian city-states, reaching the court in Constantinople.[865] It renders the Sultan bust-length, in profile, wearing a fanciful *all'antica* hat with a crown made in the form of a cornucopia topped with a springing dragon basilisk—a legendary venomous reptile, the king of serpents, which had the power to kill with a single glance.[866] The stiff collar of the dress and the peak and the brim of the hat are richly decorated with pearls, and their lavish patterns echo the splendid, oriental-style embroidered garments worn by ancient Eastern potentates. The image renders the ruler as young, with an elongated face, an aquiline nose, parted "pistachio"-like lips, deeply-set eyes under furrowed brows, hair streaming to his shoulders, and a full beard covering the entire lower part of his face. The long beard and long hair, along with the pronounced and long aquiline nose, set this representation apart from portraits of Italian nobility, which typically rendered their

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[863] Cited in Spinale, "The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)," 21.
[864] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 70.
[865] One engraving, 24.9 x 18.7 cm (sheet) with watercolor, is preserved in the collection of the Topkapi Palace Museum in Istanbul in the album containing the Italian engravings H2153, fol. 144r. The other engraving, 24.5 x 19.7 cm (plate) is in the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and cited by Alan Chong in "Italian Images of Mehmed the Conqueror" in Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 66-69.
[866] In medieval and Renaissance descriptions, the basilisk is reputed to have a crown-shaped crest on its head and white markings (spots) on his head—clearly visible on the uncolored sheet preserved in the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (140-1879). The basilisk is described in Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* (Book 8), as the deadliest of all snakes that kills anyone who sees its eyes.

subjects as clean-shaven and with short hairstyles. It is such naïve and orientalist images of the Sultan that Bellini's portrait replaces, with his tour-de-force painting infused with Eastern sensibilities.

Roberto Weiss has demonstrated that the "Gran Turco" engraving was based on Pisanello's famous medal portrait of Emperor John VIII Palaelogus (1392-1448) (Fig. 4.6) as a model.[867]Although it is unclear who commissioned the medal, its date is linked with the diplomatic visit of the emperor to Ferrara and Florence in 1438-1439 to attend the Council of Ferrara, which dealt with the unification of the Latin and Greek churches. The striking attire of the Eastern ruler and the convincing physiognomy captured in the medal made a deep impression on contemporaries, to the point that the medal portrait was reused by Pisanello's fellow artists as a stock type for oriental potentates, exotic figures, and characters from antiquity. Some examples include Piero della Francesca's representation of Emperor Constantine on the Milvian Bridge in the frescoes of the church of St. Francis at Arezzo (1452-66); Benozzo Gozzoli's representation of the king in the Magi procession in the frescoes in the chapel at Medici (Ricardi) Palace; representations of Theseus, Lycurgus, Polybius, and other antique characters in illustrated manuscripts; and the exotic bystanders in several *scuole* cycles painted by Vittore Carpaccio in Venice.

The engraved image of the Turk shares the air of exoticism with Pisanello's rendering of the emperor, but departs from the depiction of the Byzantine monarch in its details. The lavish pearl decoration on the Turk's attire; his tall, embellished, helmet-like

[867] Roberto Weiss, *Pisanello's Medallion of the Emperor John VIII Palaeologus* (London: British Museum, 1966).

headgear instead of a hat; and the distinct shape of his face and beard testify that the print is a deliberate manipulation of the model. It is now accepted that the engraver drew heavily on Pisanello's model in the absence of the Sultan's portrait from life, but may have been additionally guided by verbal descriptions of the Sultan circulating in Italy.[868] A few descriptions of Mehmed's appearance talk about his aquiline nose, bushy eyebrows, and long beard and mustache,[869] and some interpret them as signs of his severe personality. In particular, Spinale identified Niccolò da Foligno's (d. 1474) account that describes the Sultan with a long face, sunken eyes, and an aquiline nose, and as pale with long, kinky hair and a pointy beard that reveal "his cruelty and the rush of his passion."[870]

Both the circumstances of production and the function of this emblematic engraving are unclear, but it is thought to have originated in Florence and has been attributed to an anonymous engraver known as the Master of the Vienna Passion.[871] Scholars have proposed that the print might have been acquired as a gift from an Italian visitor or perhaps through Benedetto Dei, a noted Tuscan chronicler and representative of

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[868] Previously R. Weiss concluded that because the engraver couldn't read Greek, he mistook the image of the Byzantine Emperor for Mehmed II and thus signed it "Il Gran Turco" (see Weiss, *Pisanello's Medallion of the Emperor John VIII Palaeologus*, 27). A. Chong rightly reverses this opinion, suggesting that the print is a work inspired by Pisanello's medal and features a more complex iconography that was previously thought (see *Bellini and the East*, 66, also see Spinale, *The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)*, 103).

[869] For examples see Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, 423-424.

[870] "…Dicono che ora abbia l'età di venti-quattro anni, di alta statura, con un volto allungato, occhi infossati, sopracciglia che si congiungono al di sopra di un naso aquiline; la magrezza (del suo volto) si unisce ad un brutto colorito pallido, ha capelli crespi e lunghi che sventano, avvilupatti da una parte e dall' altra delle spalle; la sua barba, non molto lunga e che termina a punta, piutosto rada, palesa la sua ferocia o meglio la sua crudelità e la sfrenatezza delle sue passion." See: Spinale, "The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)," 107-108.

[871] Arthur Mayger Hind, *Early Italian Engraving; A Critical Catalogue with Complete Reproduction of All the Prints Described.* (London: Pub. for M. Knoedler, New York, by B. Quaritch, 1938). The current attribution has been confirmed by a number of scholars, including Oberhuber, Zucher, Spinale, and Chong. See: *Bellini and the East*, 67.

Medicean interests in various courts in Italy, France, and Constantinople, who stayed for a prolonged mission at the Ottoman court in 1460-1467.[872]

The print exemplifies the type of fictional iconography that renders the Sultan as an exotic and antique warrior, a mysterious Other that engenders both fascination and fear. The fantastical headgear echoes the representations of warriors *all'antica* that were fashionable in Florence in the 1460s-1480s and came out of the workshops of Antonio del Pollaiuolo (1429/33-1498) and Andrea del Verrocchio (c.1435-1488). The fanciful winged helmet, like that in Leonardo's drawing, *Study of a Warrior in Profile* (ca. 1476, British Museum, London) (Fig. 4.68),[873] or the elaborated helm-crest in the shape of a winged dragon on the helmet in Andrea del Verrocchio's marble relief of Alexander the Great (ca. 1483-86, National Gallery, Washington) (Fig. 4.69), celebrates the virtue of the professional warrior. The use of extravagant armor, and specifically the helm-crests or *cimieri* as signifiers of the warrior's identity and aspirations, was first introduced by Pisanello to the portrait medal and became a canonical language for the representation of soldierly skills and chivalric ideals in ruler portraiture (Fig. 4.8).[874] However, while the venomous basilisk on the crown of the hat is reminiscent of such chivalric helm-crests, it appears in the engraved portrait as a part of the exotic sovereign's attire rather than a helmet and serves to underscore his otherness. The snake can be interpreted here as a sign

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[872] Spinale, "The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)," 102-103. *Bellini and the East*, 67.
[873] Martin Kemp, *Leonardo da Vinci: The Marvelous Works of Nature and Man* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1981).
[874] The helm-crest is a decorative attachment to the crest of the helmet, which derived its imagery from familial heraldry and was used for tournaments and on the battlefield. For a detailed investigation of the symbolism and function of the helm-crests in Pisanello's portrait medals see Syson and Gordon, *Pisanello: Painter to the Renaissance Court* , 63-70.

of the Ottoman menace, as Raby righty proposed,[875] especially when coupled with the ruler's suspicious oriental physiognomy. As Weiss argued, the long hooked nose, furrowed brows, penetrating eyes, and long beard, first introduced as characteristics of Pisanello's image of the Byzantine Emperor John Palaeologos, quickly become adopted as signs of a cruel and cunning personality.[876] Thus the print, by intertwining familiar symbols of chivalric ideals with the demonic, hawk-like features of the oriental potentate, successfully communicated both admiration and fear. Additionally, the dragon and the snake in Western Christian culture were customary symbols of evil or the Devil, as is well-known from medieval and Renaissance Christian commentaries on the Bible; as well, they were widely employed in crusade-promoting, anti-Ottoman humanist literature. Considering that Mehmed II was typically portrayed in humanist and ecclesiastic literature as the principal enemy of Christianity and Christian city-states, this portrait clearly broadcasted to Western audiences an imaginary and orientalist view of the Eastern ruler: he was a potent and demonic tyrant, a mythic figure, rather than a man made of flesh and blood. We may never know how Mehmed II received this engraving as a gift. Was he flattered to have such a fictional exotic image of himself in his collection, which portrayed him as a menace to Christendom or as an exotically attired ruler?

A similar approach to representing Mehmed II as a menacing and mythical king is found in several print portraits produced and circulated in Northern Europe. One is an engraved image preserved in the British Museum in London captioned "Turgisch Kaiser," which is of German origin and dates to the second half of the fifteenth century (Fig. 4.70).

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[875] Raby, "Pride and Prejudice: Mehmed the Conqueror and the Italian Medal," in Pollard, *Italian Medals*, 171-194, 173-175.
[876] Weiss, *Pisanello's Medallion of the Emperor John VIII Palaeologus.*

This image was also probably inspired by Pisanello's medal, as the ruler's facial characteristics echo the visage of John VIII, and the shape of the hat is reminiscent of the tall hat of the emperor. The Sultan is portrayed staring intently with his lips pressed hard together, the same signs of a cunning and cruel personality as in the engraved portrait. The other print is an illustration, which appeared in the Trento volume in 1475 with a corresponding letter, written in poetic verse and addressed to Mehmed II after his conquest of Caffa (Feodosiya) in the Crimea. The ruler is fashioned wearing an unrealistic turban topped with a crown, dressed in heavily bejeweled oriental attire. The visage of the Sultan is distorted and emphasizes the ugly beak-shaped nose, unruly beard, and dark, averted gaze. The image significantly departs from Pisanello's iconography of the Byzantine Emperor and probably relies on verbal descriptions of the Turkish ruler, as well as on the conventions of using a hideous physiognomy to render exotic and dark characters from the Orient. Both images, published by Babinger,[877] can be linked with the anti-Ottoman sentiments of the time, and are examples of deliberately exaggerated representations of Mehmed II, rendering him as an incarnation of evil and designed to appeal to diverse Christian audiences as part of anti-Ottoman campaigns. In this view, Bellini's painted portrait glorifying the ruler is a significant departure from the conventions for representations of Eastern rulers. It revises the paradigm and fashions an appealing and humane representation of the Sultan, dressed decorously in the Eastern manner but communicating the sense of refinement of a contemplative philosopher-king.

[877] Franz Babinger, "Un ritratto ignorato di Maometto II, opera di Gentile Bellini.", *Arte Veneta* XV, 1961: 25-31.

The medal portraits by Costanzo da Ferrara, executed approximately simultaneously with Bellini's portrait of the Sultan, are surely a departure from emblematic representations of Mehmed II. Costanzo's medals have been hailed as the first and most compelling medallic portraits of the Sultan, which accurately render his actual physical appearance based on the artist's personal encounter with the ruler while visiting Constantinople.[878] However, I suggest that the Sultan's appearance in Costanzo's medals both functions as a rhetorical image that draws on representational devices widely employed in portraits of Italian military leaders—largely the tradition of warrior-type portraiture—to emphasize Mehmed II's military prowess. Employing Italian Renaissance representational techniques, the medals remarkably capitalizes on the tenets of humanist anti-Ottoman propaganda, recycling them to produce a simultaneously "veristic" and menacing portrait of the ruler to promulgate his upcoming military campaigns to his Italian ruling peers—the cultures that he intended to conquer and rule. One medal, signed by the artist but not dated, which exists as a single cast, is currently in the National Gallery in Washington (ca. 1478) (Fig. 4.71). The other dates to 1481 and survives in

[878] The timing of Costanzo da Ferrara's visit to Constantinople remains a subject of debate. No documents elaborate on or even provide anecdotal evidence about when Costanzo might have been dispatched to the Ottoman court. The evidence that he actually traveled to the Porte comes from Baptista Bendedei's single letter to Ercole d'Este in Ferrara. Bendedei, who was a Ferrarese ambassador to the Aragonese court in Naples, described Costanzo in his letter to Ercole as the artist who completed a portrait of Ercole's young son Ferrante who was then visiting Naples. In this letter, Bendedei clearly explains the credentials of the artist who served the Sultan and was in turn made a knight: "…Et e' quello che mandò già più anni la Maesta del S. Re al gran Turcho quando li richiedetj gli mandasse uno pictore de quelli dal Canto di qua: et stetesi moltj anni et bene tractato da epso gran Turcho il quale etiam lo fece Cavaliero…" (cited from Adolfo Venturi, "Costanzio, medalista e pittore." *Archivio storico dell'arte* 4(1891): 374-75). Babinger connected Costanzo's visit to the Ottoman court with the delegation from King Ferrante of Naples in the spring of 1478 and argued that his services were rendered late in Mehmed II's life (Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*. Raby proposed that Costanzo could have traveled to Constantinople either during 1464-1471 or 1475-1478, the periods of peace between the Aragonese court and the Sultan (Raby, *El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom*). Recently, Spinale has elaborated upon this research and concluded that Costanzo must have stayed in Constantinople during 1478, and was there as late as 1481, when Mehmed died. (Spinale, "The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)," 117.)

several casts (for example, in the collections of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London) (Fig. 4.72).[879]

The salient characteristic of this portrait type is its so-called "veristic" quality of representation, meaning that it presents a believable and convincing rendering of the Sultan's likeness. However, it can be argued that Mehmed's likeness in Costanzo's medals is not necessarily *descriptive*[880] of the ruler's actual appearance or how he looked when he "sat" for the portrait. In other words, the medal portraits are not intended to celebrate the Sultan's human qualities as they existed in a particular moment in time, although it may reflect how he looked. Instead, Mehmed II's likeness is idealized to project his military achievements and ambitions to specific audiences—ruling élites in the West and his conquered subjects. The medals are designed within a clearly understandable framework of contemporary pictorial conventions of ruler portraiture, introduced by Pisanello's celebrated medal portraits. And so, in their message and conventions, they starkly contrasts with Bellini's image of the Sultan.

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[879] Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 71-73.

[880] Jack Greenstein, in his seminal article on the temporal qualities of the art of portraiture, theorized that the form of likeness chosen in the portrait depends on the particular intended function of the image. Greenstein distinguishes two primary types of likenesses linked with the temporal qualities of portraiture—*descriptive* and *eidictic*. A *descriptive* likeness, in his view, "captures the appearance of the sitter at a certain time of life" and pays attention to the surfaces of the face, appearance of the flesh, and other minute details, drawing the viewer's attention to signs of age and the passing of time. A *descriptive* likeness relies on the choice of color palette, the use of particular artistic gestures like paint strokes and delineating lines to actually signify, by closely imitating, the appearance of flesh tones, the texture of facial surfaces, and networks of wrinkles. In contrast, an *eidictic* likeness captures and celebrates the substantial form of the sitter's appearance, focusing on enduring features like the underlying structure of the face instead of surface characteristics. An *eidictic* likeness makes the sitter recognizable through time and renders his appearance unique without describing him in terms of "how he looked when he actually sat for the portrait." A *descriptive* likeness emphasizes the sitter's temporal existence and presents him as "a subject of empathy and an example of human nature." An *eidictic* likeness captures the image for posterity, emphasizing the sitter's social status and achievements rather than his temporal existence. See: Jack Greenstein, "Faces in Time: Temporalities of the Sitter in Renaissance Portraits," in *Symbols of Time in the History of Art*, ed. by Christian Heck and Kristen Lippincott (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 99-115.

Costanzo's two medals share the same type of representation of the Sultan—a profile portrait bust on the obverse and an equestrian image on the reverse. However, the medals vary in their programmatic messages, as evidenced by the differences in the language of the inscriptions and the placement of lettering and letter characters. Also, some discrepancy in the technical qualities of the casts, especially signs of technical flaws in the first medal, which appear to be corrected in the second medal, have led scholars to identify these medals as two distinct types.[881]

In both medals on the obverse, the Sultan is represented in classical profile, turned to the left with shoulders positioned in a three-quarter view. He wears a caftan with a wide collar over a Turkish dolman dress that closes at the front. An imposing, Ottoman-style turban, made out of a long strip of cloth, typically of white cotton or silk, which wraps around a red fluted cap or *taj*, crowns his head. The turban, which completely covers the top of his head, is arranged in four broad and voluminous folds. The shape of the folds, later reproduced in one of the Topkapi Palace miniature portraits of the Sultan (which I discuss in more detail in the following pages), is less regal in appearance—or at least not as neat as in Bellini's portrait. As well, Mehmed II's appearance is represented as less majestically decorous, and more as worn out by military service and imperial leadership in combat. The aquiline nose, watchful eyes gazing intently into the distance,

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[881] A detailed and accurate study of these two medal types, with a careful assessment of existing multiple casts of the second dated medal, was recently completed by Spinale. Spinale is the first really to investigate and speculate upon the technical flaws of the first cast. She assesses Costanzo's skills in casting medals as amateurish and points out the manual tooling that suggests some casting flaws were corrected. Whatever the case may be, for the purposes of this study it is only important to point out the existence of two distinct types, as opposed to a single one. Regarding the current debate over when the medal was produced, Spinale's research confirms that it might in fact was produced in Constantinople under Mehmed II's patronage: Spinale, "The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)." Also in Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 71-73.

tightly closed lips, and thick moustache, along with the protruding, slightly exaggerated chin covered with a bristle of beard (also growing on his jaws) and very short, thick neck underscore his iron character, which was known from circulated anecdotes. The visage of the Sultan is far from flattering in the sagging skin of his double chin, the baggy eyelids marked by crow's feet, the deep groove running from the wings of his nostrils to the outer edge of his mouth, and the sagging folds around his bent ear. These exaggerated facial characteristics have little in common with *descriptive* likenesses found in some Renaissance portraits that feature passing, momentary expressions in portraits by northern Renaissance masters like Jan van Eyck or Hans Holbein the Younger. [882] Instead, these features function more as signs of permanent character traits that can be read as rhetorical devices similar to those found in the Roman veristic portraiture tradition adopted by Renaissance masters, especially in heroic medal and sculpted portraiture.

Sheldon Nodelman, a scholar of Roman portraits, proposed to understand the "hard-bitten" faces of Roman emperors and generals as rhetorical likenesses or systems of formalized conventional references, expressing ideological messages and "clearly drawn polemical content."[883] While not denying the reference Roman portraits make to the real physical properties of their subjects, Nodelman interprets overtly emphasized marks of age, along with other facial creases and wrinkles, as signifiers of faithful service

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[882] For a detailed argument, again see: Greenstein, "Faces in Time: Temporalities of the Sitter in Renaissance Portraits" in *Symbols of Time in the History of Art.* The portrait of Cardinal Niccolo Albergati (ca. 1435 or 1438) by Jan van Eyck and the portrait of the Merchant George Gisze (1532) by Hans Holbein the Younger are examples of descriptive likenesses. Mehmed II's characterization shares more similarity with Mantegna's portrait of Cardinal Ludovico Trevisan (1459-1460) in its chosen representational strategies. As Greenstein demonstrates, the age lines and various facial creases are signs of permanent character traits rather than of passing momentary expressions and attitudes adopted while posing.

[883] Sheldon Nodelman, "How to Read a Roman Portrait," in *Roman Art in Context: An Anthology*, ed. Eve D'Ambra (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1993), 10-20.

to the state. Romans founded a new portrait tradition that treated the face as an ideogram of public meanings that had an unprecedented capacity to articulate and project human character and achievements. It is not an accident, then, that Roman portraiture formed the basis for the Renaissance portrait tradition from its rebirth in the fourteenth century. After all, as is well known, Pisanello drew on imperial Roman portraiture when developing his iconic iconographies of northern Italian princely rulers in portrait medals.

In the case of Costanzo's medals, the explicit "veristic" details of the Sultan's visage, while making references to his appearance, about which we know from descriptions, seem to deliberately allude both to his hard military service and to stereotypical accounts, circulating widely in European historical annals, of his grave and severe imperial personality. The bellicose characterization of the ruler is further advanced by his equestrian portrait on the obverse and the inscriptions stressing his military prowess, painfully reminding viewers of the Sultan's ambition to re-possess Rome and Italy as part of his quest for universal empire.

The Latin inscription framing Mehmed's II profile on the first medal reads:

[on obverse]:

SVITANVS·MOHAMETH·OTHOMANVS·TVRKORVM·IMPERATOR

(Ottoman Sultan Mehmed, Emperor of the Turks.)

The Latin inscription is written in classical lettering; combined with a profile formula associated with imperial portraiture, it unequivocally proclaims the political status of the Sultan and his sovereignty.

[on reverse]:

HIC·BELLI·FVLMEN·POPVLOS·PROSRAVIT·ET·VRBES·CONST/ANTIUS F

(This man, the thunderbolt of war, has laid low peoples and cities. Constantius made it.)[884]

The reverse inscription framing the equestrian image of the Sultan announces his prowess in war.

In both medals on the reverse, the Sultan is rendered on horseback with a whip and a sword at his side. The horse steps proudly through a rocky landscape with leafless trees. The armed leader is both the Ottoman and Western sovereign. The equestrian image of the Sultan in part follows Pisanello's paradigm in representing the ruling imperial authority through a profile image on the obverse with an equestrian image on the reverse. For instance, Pisanello depicted Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta (1417-1468) (Fig. 4.73), who was well-known for his habitual seizure and occupation of territories in the Romagna, a fully armed warrior elegantly mounted on charging horse with a straight back.[885] Yet, Mehmed II's equestrian image, while following Pisanello's conventions, lacks the graceful posture that would reflect the Italian court culture and Roman ideals that Mehmed strived to emulate; he is hunched and bulky, "his top-heavy figure looks ready to topple over his mount," as Spinale correctly observes.[886]

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[884] Both inscriptions are cited from Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 70.
[885] The medal was designed in 1445 and is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
[886] Spinale, "The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)," 128.

Spinale attributes the handling of Mehmed's figure to Costanzo's lack of technical competency. However, it can be argued that the artist's interpretation of Mehmed II intentionally departs from Pisanello's paradigm of ennobled Italian princely warriors. It rather shows Mehmed as an oriental potentate in his lack of princely decorum. It may also be that Costanzo tried, albeit not very successfully, to represent the Ottoman ethos of the frontier *gazi*-warrior. Whatever the artist's intention may be, the medals continue to reflect the stereotypical Italian view of the ruler as a ruthless war machine due to his constant military engagements.[887] The medals serve to reinforce the bellicose public image of the Sultan, and, in so doing, it may effectively manifest Mehmed II's preparation for Italian campaigns. Joanna Woods-Marsden underscored that the primary function of such portrait medals, representing rulers fully armed on horseback, was to express the princely ideology of conquest and to support the maintenance of a successful regime.[888] In this view, Costanzo's medal would fulfill its political function by promulgating Mehmed II's readiness for war.

The rhetoric of the inscriptions amplifies the visual rhetoric of the ruler's profile, rendering him as an "iron" warrior with hawk-like features and a thick neck. The slightly untidy folds of the turban, bending the Sultan's left ear with their weight—a visual anecdote—suggest the context of a military campaign rather than one of royal ceremonies

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[887] For a record of the Sultan's military campaigns see, for example, contemporary biographies like: Tursun Beg, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, transl. by Inalcik, Halil and Rhoads Murphey. (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1978). Critobulus, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror by Kritovoulos,* transl. from the Greek by Charles T. Riggs (Princeton, N.J., 1954). Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*. Mehmed spent occasional winters during the 1460s in Constantinople (for example in 1467) directing the construction of the royal residence. Also, his presence in the capital was sporadic during the 1470s. He spent a prolonged time at the court when Gentile visited Constantinople in 1479-1480.

[888] Woods-Marsden, "Visual Construction of the Art of War: Images for Machiavelli's Prince," in Scher, ed., *Perspectives on the Renaissance Medal*, 47.

in the palace or first-hand observation of the ruler, as has been proposed. Costanzo's depiction of the Sultan's headgear evidently contrasts with Bellini's much more decorous and neatly arranged voluminous turban, which covers the ear and communicates the overall idea of regal honor and magnificence.

Costanzo's medals arguably are not *un*connected to the tenets of contemporary humanist rhetoric in representing the Eastern ruler as a menace to Italy and Europe. The word "Turcorum" (of the Turks) in the inscription on the obverse in the first medal connotes a pejorative classification of the Ottomans as barbarians, identical with "biblical villains like the Assyrians, the Egyptians, Gog and Magog, Antichrist, or Satan, effectively excluded from any connection to the classical world."[889] Is it possible that this inscription was an ignorant mistake on the part of the artist? Was Mehmed II or his advisors unaware of the pejorative connotation? Or did Mehmed II and his advisors try to use his "bad publicity" to further reinforce his bellicose image in the West? Spinale and Raby propose the Sultan's involvement in the political messaging of the medals. On the reverse, the first medal uses subtle references that would be only known in the Ottoman milieu. The choice of the epithet "thunderbolt" may have been made in reference to Mehmed's grandfather, Bayezid I (d. 1402), "known to his subjects as 'the thunderbolt'"[890] for the speed with which he mobilized troops and for a series of decisive conquests that laid the foundation of the Ottoman dominion in Anatolia. In addition, "the thunderbolt" may have referred to the story of Alexander the Great, whom Plutarch and

[889] Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought*, 32.
[890] Spinale, *The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81)*, 129.

Pliny called a "thunderbolt bearer,"[891] and whom Mehmed aspired to match in military victories and in the expansion of the Turkish imperial domain. Whatever the case may be, on the one hand, the first medal evidently celebrated Mehmed II's military conquests and his stern personality as a warrior. On the other hand, it reaffirmed the established image of Mehmed II as a barbarian from the East—emperor of the Turks and a menace to Christendom in his ambitions to conquer Rome and to enlarge his dominion to Italy. Mehmed II and his advisors may even have deliberately exploited this well-known image of the Sultan in the West as an effective vehicle to publicize his upcoming military campaigns. Employing the Italian veristic medal convention, Mehmed II may have wished to impress and engage ruling élites in Italy. The circulation of Costanzo's medals is not understood well enough to clarify their reception further.

The second medal executed by Costanzo and dated 1481, apart from some stylistic details, mainly varies from the first in the language of its inscriptions.

[on the obverse]:

SVLTANI·MOHAMMETH·OCTHOMANI·VGVLI·BIZANTII·IMPERATORIS·1481

([Image] Of Sultan Mehmed, descendant of Osman, Emperor of Byzantium, 1481.)

[On the reverse]:

MOHAMETH·ASIE·ET·GRETIE·INPERATORIS·YMAGO·EQVESTRIS·IN·

EXERCITVS

[891] Ibid., 130.

(Equestrian image of Mehmed, Emperor of Asia and Greece, on campaign.)[892]

The inscriptions proclaim Mehmed II's sovereignty and correct his previous title of "emperor of the Turks" to honor the Sultan as the Byzantine emperor and the ruler of the house of Osman. The language also celebrates his sovereignty over Asia and Greece. The commemorative character of the inscriptions has led Spinale to hypothesize that the medal was produced posthumously as part of the developing market for commemorative medals of the Sultan after his death in 1481. However, Necipoğlu suggests an Ottoman intervention in updating the medal's titles in accordance with the conquest of the formerly Byzantine colony of Otranto in summer of 1480.[893]

Both of Costanzo's medals represent the Western trend in the development of Mehmed II's imperial iconography, produced at the Ottoman court as part of his engagement with Italian Renaissance art. Arguably, this iconography does not take into account Eastern sensibilities and valorizes the anti-Ottoman humanist rhetoric focusing on the menacing power of the Oriental potentate as it was perceived by élites in the West. In Costanzo's medals, the Sultan is immortalized as an imperial general, rather than a subject of empathy and an example of human nature. Commissioned by Mehmed II, the medals may have been intended to further the Sultan's military goals for the conquest of Italy and to engage Italian rulers as his primary audience. Together with the emblematic images of Mehmed II discussed earlier, Costanzo's portraits complete the formation of the type of the Sultan as a bellicose Ottoman-Caesar.

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[892] Cited from Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 72.
[893] Necipoğlu, "From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Kostantiniyye: Creation of a Cosmopolitan Capital and Visual Culture under Sultan Mehmed II," 272.

In this context, Bellini's painting was a novel intervention, as it projected a refined and ennobled image of the Sultan, drawing on the conventions of decorum from both the East and the West. Bellini's portrait is unparalleled in depicting Mehmed II with a sense of demure animation in the five-eighth turn and for the complexity of its iconographic program. Mehmed II is also shown as a dignified, mature ruler with graceful and pleasing individual facial features: a narrow, oval face; an elegantly receding forehead; a distinctive elongated nose with a pleasing dip; raised, thin eyebrows; and a philosophical, averted gaze. Bellini's interpretation of Mehmed II emphasizes both his nobility and his humanity by showing him as contemplative and even melancholic; in this way, the artist negotiated between imperial and personal concerns in the portrait.

The portrait's polyglot visual language springs out of the cosmopolitan court Mehmed II forged in Constantinople. Employing Timurid, Byzantine, and Venetian pictorial traditions, the portrait encapsulates Mehmed II's imperial triumph as the true heir of Byzantium (Constantinople), the Great Khan, and an equal of Western European kings. In this view, Bellini's portrait greatly contributed to the refashioning of Mehmed II's public image, aimed at engaging polyglot Ottoman courtiers and visiting dignitaries in Constantinople as part of the redefined palatine ceremonial. As well, Bellini's portrait reflected the new phase of Venetian-Ottoman political relations—the peace agreement of which Bellini's court appointment was an outcome.

Bellini's Portrait: Establishing the Tradition of Sultanic Portraiture

The question of the assimilation of Italian pictorial techniques in the Ottoman atelier has been previously raised. Bellini's influence on artistic production has been also proposed. Yet many difficulties remain in tracking what has been transmitted and diffused between Italian and Ottoman pictorial traditions. Here, I would like to add to the scholarship by clarifying that Bellini's interpretation of the Sultan's image as both imperial and personal, as seen in the London portrait, was not a major generic influence but was assimilated in Ottoman portraiture more specifically. Bellini's representation of Mehmed II at a five-eighth turn (not a three-quarter view as it has been described) made a major contribution to the traditions of sultanic portraiture in Constantinople. Bellini's use of different portrait traditions may have facilitated the integration of Mehmed II's painted portraits into the scope of artistic products in the Ottoman atelier. However, the adoption of Bellini's likeness of Mehmed II perhaps owed much to a mutual exchange of preparatory portrait drawings between Bellini and Ottoman artists.

Central to our understanding of artistic exchange between Bellini and local Ottoman artists are two celebrated miniature portraits of Mehmed II painted in the Ottoman court atelier, which I began to discuss briefly earlier in the chapter.[894] The first is *Mehmed II Smelling a Rose* (ca. 1480) (Fig. 4.4), now attributed to Şiblizâde Ahmed and dating back to the time of Bellini's visit. The second is *Bust Portrait of Mehmed II*

[894] The portraits are currently preserved in the so-called Fatih Album (H. 2153). The full bibliography is provided earlier in the chapter. The latest publications on attribution and iconography are Necipoğlu, "The Serial Portraits in Comparative Perspective," in Kangal and Isin, eds., *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman*, 22-63. Raby, "Opening Gambits," in Kangal and Isin, eds., *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman*, 64-95. Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 88-91. *Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797*, ed. Stefano Carboni (New York; New Haven [Conn.]: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Yale University Press, 2007), 296.

(ca.1480?) (Fig. 4.5), now attributed to Sinan Bey. Dating the latter portrait remains problematic, and here I argue that the similarities in technique and characterization of the Sultan in these two portraits suggest they were probably made at about the same time but by different artists. In addition, they testify to an interesting and significant dialogue between local Ottoman painters and Bellini's portrait drawings (now lost). As the authors of the *Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797* suggest, local artists may have been challenged by Mehmed II "to surpass Bellini's masterful likeness of him."[895]

As has been shown, *Mehmed II Smelling a Rose* portrays the Sultan by combining two traditions, Italian and Timurid.[896] The artist adopts Bellini's overall noble conception of Mehmed II's face, but significantly departs in the representation of the ruler's body by depicting him sitting cross-legged in the pose of Timurid khans. The painting negotiates between multiple views—the Sultan's body is simultaneously frontal and slightly turned to the left; the face is at a five-eighth view as in Bellini's model. Venetian pictorial techniques of delicate modeling with light and shade are subtly reinterpreted, perhaps to accommodate the local taste for more abstract Persianate visual conventions. The artist boldly articulated the crow's feet under Mehmed's eyes, the stubble on his chin, and the densely hatched stippling of the Sultan's robes. The Sultan's royal attributes of power and refinement are depicted according to Timurid portrait conventions: a handkerchief in one hand, smelling a rose held in the other hand, and two rings—a stone-mounted ring on the little finger and an archer ring on the thumb; both are on the raised hand in which he holds the flower.

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[895] *Venice and the Islamic world, 828-1797*, 296.
[896] Necipoğlu, "The Serial Portraits in Comparative Perspective," 28-29.

It has been largely assumed that the miniature portrait was based on Bellini's painted portrait as well as on Timurid portraits Mehmed II received as gifts from Eastern rulers. However, considering the visual choices the artist made, it is also plausible that the miniature portrait is based on Bellini's lost portrait drawing. The question becomes whether Bellini's lost drawing represented Mehmed II sitting cross-legged and smelling a rose as well. Whatever the case may be, we can think about the diffusion of models between Bellini and Ottoman artists as directly based on portrait drawings that served as the medium of transmission.

In the miniature painting, the total absence of the imperial insignia featured in the London portrait—such as the architectonic structure, the cloth of honor, and the crowns—is significant. Also, the miniature's departure from the bust-length presentation to the sitting cross-legged pose is surprising. Here, Mehmed is presented as a Muslim ruler, as emir. In addition, the distinctive way of depicting the crinkled folds of the sleeves, the bold articulation of the crow's feet under Mehmed's eyes, and the stubble on the chin closely parallel Bellini's drawings of Ottoman courtiers, but are not present in the painted portrait.[897] In all, these characteristics of the miniature portrait help corroborate that the Ottoman artist was likely working from one of Bellini's portrait drawings rather than from the painted portrait. Angiolello's written testimonies, reporting that Bellini made many drawings of the Sultan and his courtiers, further support this

[897] See my chapter 3 for more details. Also this point was discussed in *Venice and the Islamic world, 828-1797*, 296.

idea.[898] The common practice of studying and copying from drawings in the Renaissance workshop, both in Italy and in the East, also aids this proposition.

Given that the miniature portrait is indebted to a lost portrait drawing by Bellini, it is not entirely impossible that the lost portrait depicted the Sultan sitting cross-legged and holding a flower. Extant Bellini drawings of Ottoman courtiers show his familiarity with Timurid pictorial conventions, as I have discussed in chapter 3. Both *Seated Janissary* and *Seated Karamanid Woman* are portrayed in a three-quarter view sitting cross-legged; *Young Greek Woman* is shown standing and holding a rose (Pl. VI, VIII, IX). As well, the engraving of Mehmed II in the illustrated edition of *Elogia Virorum Bellica Virtute Illustrium* (1575) (Fig. 4.1), which was based on a portrait by Bellini from Paolo Giovio's collection, depicts the Sultan smelling a rose, albeit bust-length. In any case, it is likely that one of Bellini's portrait drawings of Mehmed II may have portrayed him in a more strongly articulated Timurid idiom than the painted portrait, where the Timurid convention was one of the visual modes. In view of this likelihood, I propose the possibility of Bellini's more direct involvement with the Ottoman court atelier and his interaction with local visual styles and conventions. Although we cannot exclude from consideration the possibility that the Ottoman artist was simultaneously using Bellini's drawing of Mehmed II's face and Timurid models accessible to him, it is very probable that he had more to go on. In any scenario, Bellini's five-eighth presentation of Mehmed II's likeness evidently left a deep imprint on establishing conventions of Ottoman sultanic portraiture. As has been recently shown, the iconography of Mehmed II holding a flower

[898] Appendix, document 15.

with the particular characterization of the face in the miniature portrait became canonical in later representations of Ottoman sultans (Fig. 4.74).[899]

The relation between *Bust Portrait of Mehmed II* (Fig. 4.5) and Bellini's painted portrait is less obvious and is a subject of debate. However, it can be corroborated that the miniature adopts the London portrait's representation of Mehmed II as somber and sympathetic. It also shares some technical characteristics with both Bellini's painted portrait and *Mehmed II Smelling a Rose*. Previously, the miniature was considered to be a copy after Costanzo da Ferrara's medal of Mehmed II and dated back to the 1460s and 1470s (Fig. 4.71).[900] In view of the attribution of the Turkish drawings to Bellini, the authors of the *Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797* exhibition catalogue (2007) propose to associate this work with Bellini's arrival at the Ottoman court.

Following medallic conventions in portraiture, the painting shows the Sultan in a classical profile on a golden background, looking left; his corpulent body is slightly turned in relation to the viewer so one can see his front and the second shoulder. He wears a caftan with a wide collar over a Turkish dolman dress similar to that in *Mehmed II Smelling a Rose* or in Bellini's painting, although the colors are different—emerald green, dark brown, and black. An imposing, Ottoman-style white turban, wrapped around a red *taj*, crowns the head. The turban's arrangement in four broad and voluminous folds, together with a visual anecdote of a bent ear, is reminiscent of Costanzo's medal, as is the

[899] The point is well summarized and argued in Raby, "Opening Gambits," in Kangal and Isin, eds., *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman*, 82.
[900] Ibid., 90.

majestic bulky figure with the short and thick neck. Here, however, parallels with Costanzo's medal end.

In rendering Mehmed II's face, the miniature largely recalls the London portrait—the elegantly receding forehead, the narrow and elongated nose with a pleasant dip, the thin and raised eyebrows, and the contemplative gaze instead of an aggressive, warrior-like, watchful stare. Raby attributes the lack of intensity in Mehmed II's face to the work of a mere copyist.[901] However, it is also likely that the Ottoman artist rejected Costanzo's warrior-type interpretation of the Sultan to follow Bellini's decorous and refined image. The miniature portrait's delicate shading under the eye sockets and around the cheek, as well as the absence of pronounced wrinkles or baggy eyelids, brings it close to Bellini's painted portrait. In this, the miniature portrait markedly departs from Costanzo's exaggerated "veristic" image of the ruler as a military leader. Instead, it shares affinities with Bellini's likeness of the Sultan in balancing the humane or personal aspects with the imperial. Here, the imperial is clearly stressed by the ruler's profile as well as by the golden background that alludes to Roman-Byzantine ideas of sacred kingship. In its pictorial techniques, the portrait also follows Bellini's distinctive manner of representing crinkled sleeves as seen in the drawings of Turkish courtiers.

Bust Portrait of Mehmed II further helps illuminate the complexity of the visual dialogue between Ottoman painters and Italian artists. The miniature portrait was likely based on several models, but it was particularly indebted to Bellini's majestic representation of Mehmed in the London portrait. Yet the absence of Bellini's imperial insignia in the miniature portrait indicates that the Ottoman artist may have worked from

[901] Ibid.

Bellini's portrait drawings rather than directly from the London portrait. Bellini likely made a drawing of Mehmed II in a classical profile in preparation for his medal (Pl. IV), which echoes the London portrait in stressing Mehmed II's humanity and negotiating between the imperial and the personal. So it is plausible that another Bellini drawing, now lost, served as a model for the miniature portrait.

In all, the present analysis suggests the centrality of Bellini's portrait drawings in the diffusion of pictorial models. Bellini's drawings and his use of different portrait conventions—both five-eighth view and profile—spurred the development of painted portraiture in the Ottoman atelier; perhaps Bellini's conception of the Sultan's likeness is also indebted to his direct interaction with Ottoman artists. The inclusion of Bellini's painted portrait as part of the palatine protocol of the ruler's public appearances may have helped establish the new imperial iconography employed in contemporary and later painted portraiture at the Ottoman court. In this cross-cultural interaction, Bellini's learning from local visual idioms may have been central to his artistic mission's success.

Conclusion

Bellini's portrait of Mehmed II, in its relation to Timurid, Turkic, and Byzantine traditions of sovereignty, elucidates the processes of interaction, reception, and transmission of artistic vocabularies and iconographies, as well as the role of the artist in these processes. As court artist, Bellini interacted with local artists versed in the Timurid and Byzantine visual idioms and engaged in dialogue with local visual traditions. The

local artists also responded to Bellini's exemplary portrait and portrait drawings, translating the imperial image into their own technical, conceptual, and cultural terms, as seen in the miniature portraits discussed above. Designed to project Mehmed II's imperial image, Bellini's *impresa* was a hybrid of Byzantine, Timurid, and Venetian pictorial sources. The present study reconstructs a more complex process of interaction between different artistic idioms and places Bellini's portrait in the context of Mehmed II's polyglot court culture, where the artist learns Eastern pictorial conventions by depicting not only the Sultan but also his courtiers. The model of coexistence and interconnectedness of cultural life in the greater Mediterranean helps theorize this portrait as product of multilateral artistic exchange.

This study argues that Bellini's painted portrait of Mehmed II originally functioned in the palatine court ceremonial and held pride of place in the Sultan's personal art collection, though it is an anachronism to call his inner palace and treasure room a museum. In studying Mehmed II's use of art, it is clear that the Conqueror was aware and made use of different artistic idioms as a projection of cross-cultural political power: ruler portraiture existed as part of a larger social structure that communicated philosophies, codes of decorum, and political agendas between courts in the greater Mediterranean. In this view, Bellini's polyglot *impresa*-portrait helped accomplish Mehmed II's political goals in redefining his political image in the Mediterranean political and cultural milieu.

The diffusion and reception of Bellini's imperial image of Mehmed II is better understood as a dynamic interaction and dialogue, according to Yury Lotman's semiotic

theory of interaction between cultures.[902] Lotman discusses several stages in this process: a culture calls on a foreign culture for a particular need, the agent/text arrives, local artists translate it into their language, and they issue their own product back to the other culture. Oleg Grabar, who examines artistic exchange between Islamic art and other artistic traditions, highlights recurring instances of adaption of vocabularies and iconographies from Greco-Roman and Byzantine art in Anatolian cultures and throughout the Mediterranean.[903] In our case, the process of artistic exchange and adaptation of Bellini's models is a process of interaction, conscious translation, and filtration. *Mehmed II Smelling a Rose* very well could be "a supreme realization of Ottoman art," as Michael Barry puts it.[904] In this process, Bellini played the role of a cultural agent who helped forge a multicultural idiom in portraiture by learning at the Ottoman court. This process also speaks to conscious decisions made on the part of the local artists, who engaged with Bellini's hybrid works, translating them to the local cultural reality.

Traditionally, scholarship has ascribed the role of the mediator in such a process to the patron, endowing Mehmed II with the agency in fashioning hybrid forms and formulae. In our case, however, it is clear that the artist shared the agency as negotiator between cultural traditions and artistic idioms. Bellini unmistakably became familiar with examples of Turcoman, Timurid, and Byzantine formulae of sovereignty collected at the Ottoman court, having been shown the imperial collections of books and artworks that were typical in Islamic courts. The Topkapi Palace Museum Library preserves albums comprising examples of Persian, Arabic, and Chinese calligraphy, drawings, and a

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[902] IU. M. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).
[903] Grabar, *Islamic Visual Culture, 1100-1800*.
[904] Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the Riddle of Bihzâd of Herât (1465-1535)*.

variety of paintings and designs, including an early Timurid genealogical scroll with portraits of Timur.[905] Although scholars disagree about the date and circumstances surrounding the compilation of the albums, they agree that their contents were familiar to Mehmed II and were in circulation at the Ottoman court in the later fifteenth century.[906] Mehmed II, who appreciated the Herat workshop, exchanged gifts with Timurid rulers to obtain examples of their culture's art. Mehmed II also assembled an extensive collection of Byzantine manuscripts and relics. Bellini would have had ample opportunities to receive broad exposure to a variety of styles and iconographies at the Ottoman court.

Differentiating between the roles of the patron and the artist, this study suggests that the patron was responsible for the initiation of the contract and for the communication of his interests and wishes, but the artist was responsible for the performance at court. The artist's agency in Bellini's case, until now, has been eradicated from scholarly discourse, as previous studies have assigned the authorship of all commissions to Bellini's royal patron. Bellini's *impresa*-portrait shows that the artist had specialist knowledge of iconographies and expertise in negotiating between various styles and modes of pictorial representation: symbolic and naturalistic, ornamental and three-dimensional, and imperial and personal. He is both the carrier of another semiosphere's tradition and the translator of this tradition to the host culture. Mehmed II is responsible for stating the need to set up a tradition of representational arts different from that of other Eastern courts and representative of his particular imperial project; in response,

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[905] Necipoglu, "The Serial Portraits of Ottoman Sultans in Comparative Perspective," in Kangal and Isin, eds., *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman*, 25. J. M. Rogers "Mehmed the Conqueror: Between East and West," in Campbell and Chong, *Bellini and the East*, 84.
[906] Rogers, "Mehmed the Conqueror: Between East and West," 85.

Bellini delivered exemplar models accounting for local sensibilities and needs. Bellini's case is an example of artistic exchange in early modern Europe, when the agency of the artist becomes prominent in the transaction.

Chapter Five

Conclusions

Gentile Bellini's artistic visit to Constantinople in 1479-1481 is suggestive of a more complex picture of artistic exchange and diplomacy between Venice and Constantinople, or between Italian city-states and Islamic courts in the Greater Mediterranean, than has been previously envisioned. When it comes to discussions of cross-cultural exchange between West and East, historians usually highlight seemingly inherent oppositions and treat artworks as objects produced within the framework of regional or national styles. Viewed in the context of diplomacy, artworks are regarded as commodities that were swapped in order to actualize political allegiances and to project individual or corporate identities and power in representing their givers. As I argue in this dissertation, however, the picture was different. The works by Bellini studied in this dissertation reveal the permeability of regional styles and artistic conventions—in other words, a mutual dialogue between various *semiospheres* in the Mediterranean during the Renaissance. The rise of the institution of visiting court artists—who, much like humanists, worked at the courts of political rivals and enemies—contributed to a greater interconnectedness of art and culture that manifested itself in hybrid pictorial representations, despite political rivalries and ethnic, social, and religious differences.

The circumstances of Bellini's court appointment aid our understanding of the artist's integration with local art and culture in Constantinople. As I contend, Bellini interacted with local visual traditions, gained knowledge about Mehmed II's court and his

imperial program, and learned from an international mix of Eastern artists and courtiers employed at the Ottoman court. Bellini's tenure resulted in a broad-range of artistic products, many of them pioneering in their use of the polyglot visual language that sprang from the cosmopolitan context of the Ottoman court. In this, Bellini's work testifies to a complex dialogue between visual traditions and to a developing common ground in iconographies and styles of visual representation in the Greater Mediterranean.

Such cross-cultural exchange significantly owes to the emerging institution of visiting court artists, which was interconnected with the phenomenon of the Renaissance court, both in the East and in the West. Visiting court artists, like Bellini, helped construct a shared visual platform and facilitate the development of hybrid forms—that is, cross-cultural or polyglot visual forms—contributing to increasingly globalized political and cultural discourses contingent upon shared ideas and tastes. Since the position of a visiting court artist entailed immersion in and learning about the political and cultural setting of the court, it enhanced the previous model of diplomacy based on exchanges of luxury gifts. Bellini and other visiting court artists, due to their expertise and artistic license, advanced intercultural understanding in ways that politicians could not achieve. Bellini's example helps to demonstrate that the exchange of visiting court artists was a factor in the enlarged efficacy of images and the development of sophisticated systems of political and cultural representation projecting corporate identities in the much-interconnected political world of Europe and the Greater Mediterranean.

In this view, Bellini's example shows that the institute of visiting court artists was central to diplomatic exchanges in the Renaissance. Due to their expertise in visual

representation, artists began to play a pivotal role in communications between courts and states. At the same, the visiting court artist emerged as an extension of early cultural politics driven by political developments and concerns.

The Visiting Court Artist and Question of Agency

One of the overarching themes running through the case-studies discussed in the above chapters concerns the question of artistic agency in cross-cultural exchange. Cross-cultural exchange studies routinely trace the transfer of objects or "diplomatic things" between princes and governments and recognize artists themselves as diplomatic gifts to be exchanged. As this dissertation demonstrates, however, the efficacy of images is indebted to the institutionalization of visiting court artists who played a key role in communications between states by devising sophisticated systems of visual representation. As a visiting court artist, albeit attached to a diplomatic embassy, Bellini enacted a far more complex agency than has been acknowledged, as previous scholarship has placed greater importance on the agency of Mehmed II and his artistic patronage than on the agency of the artist inserted into the Ottoman cultural milieu in Constantinople. Bellini acted as a courtier and court artist for the Sultan, aiding the Sultan's efforts in establishing a school of representational arts to promulgate Ottoman imperialism, while interacting with and learning from a polyglot mix of artists and courtiers at the Ottoman

court. Bellini's artistic expertise was also an important means by which Venice and Constantinople forged their socio-political alliance.

In further understanding the agency of artists in the Renaissance, the fifteenth-century humanist Rudolph Agricola's (1444-1485) treatise *De invetione dialectica* (1479) offers a point of comparison. An amateur painter whom Michael Baxandal calls "a potential German Alberti," Agricola began in Ferrara in the circle of Battista Guarino, Tito Vespasiano Strozzi, and Lodovico Carbone—the pupils of Guarino of Verona and the second generation of the Ferrara school of humanism.[907] *De invetione dialectica* draws a distinction between the agency of the artist and that of the patron as causes for a work of art:

> …very often the same things are ends and efficients and effects and *destinata* [things or persons as put to use in the course of attaining an end]. For instance, in the case of building, the man for whom a house is built is efficient cause of it in the first instance, and the house is the ultimate end. However, those things that come between the first efficient and the ultimate end—architect, craftsmen and tools—are, if we take the house as an effect, efficient causes. But in relation to the patron (*dominus*) they have the status of effects. If however we take the house as end, then they have the status of *destinata*; but then again in relation to the patron, because he took pains to procure them, they are means to the end.[908]

Using two of the four Aristotelian kinds of causes—efficient ("the moving force of or agent by which an effect is produced") and final ("the end purpose"), as Baxandall clarifies—Agricola argues that patrons and artists perform multiple roles in relation both to final artistic products and to each other. However, in Agricola's approach, the patron could be both an efficient and final cause of the work, whereas the architect (or artist)

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[907] Michael Baxandall, *Words for Pictures: Seven Papers on Renaissance Art and Criticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 69-82

[908] Quoted from ibid., 79.

only an efficient.[909] As Baxandall remarks, Agricola's deliberation on the causes of a work of art accommodated "a broad and synthetic neoclassical structure of causal thinking" in the Renaissance and offered an alternative to Platonic notions of causes, which assigned the sculptor's (or artist's) conception as the final cause of a statue or a work of art. It is not surprising that later scholarship often adopted either Agricola's or Plato's approach to the agency of art, considering the patron or the artist as the primary causes of physical events.

Recent investigations of the agency of art in anthropology suggest a more nuanced theory of interrelations among the patron, the artist, and the work of art. Alfred Gell revises the theory of agency as "chains of physical/material cause-and-effect happenings" caused by human agents "independently of the state of the physical universe."[910] He reinserts the human actors into "everyday practices and discursive forms" and ascribes agency to "things" or "social relations with things," arguing that "things with their thing-ly causal properties are as essential to the exercise of agency as states of mind."[911] In addition to primary agents or intentional beings, secondary agents—such as the prototype (an entity that index represents visually), the index (visual representations and physical objects), and the recipient—become all-important. Thus, the relation between "agents" and "patients" plays the central role. In any "art-like situation," an index of a material object permits "the abduction of agency" by an observer through a particular kind of cognitive situation that leads to the reversal of agency. In this, artists

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[909] Ibid., 80.
[910] Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 1998), 16-17.
[911] Ibid., 20.

can act as agents on indexes or material objects as patients, shaping them through their skills; in return, material objects can resist and set limits by virtue of their material properties and thus can act as agents on the artist as a patient, affecting the final form of the work of art. In Gell's approach, artists, prototypes, indexes, and recipients can all be interrelated as agents and patients and thus create a more complex matrix of interrelations than binary relations.

Gell's theory of agency, applied to Bellini's performance as a court artist, implies a reconsideration of the typical formula of "prototype or patron as agent, artist as patient" in describing the situation of making a portrait and working for a patron. In this revised formula, Bellini is inserted in the context of the visual and performative culture of the Ottoman court, where he learns and interacts with diverse visual traditions and representational conventions (indexes) as a patient—and, at the same time, acts as an agent in fashioning new artistic forms, which can also function as agents in the context of court ritual and artistic production in Constantinople and Venice.

Overcoming Orientalism and Its Legacies

The case of Bellini's artistic visit in Constantinople helps to illustrate the complexities and ambiguities of Orientalist legacies and how they continue to affect our understanding of cross-cultural exchanges in the Renaissance Mediterranean. At every turn, inherent Orientalist ideology and Eurocentric biases have impaired our ability to see

and discriminate the cultural hybridity of visual representation in the Early Modern period. Edward Said's influential book *Orientalism* contended that the most outwardly objective Western texts about "The Orient'' and West-East encounters are culturally biased to a degree unrecognized by Western scholars.[912] Subtle and persistent Eurocentric prejudice against Arabo-Islamic peoples and their culture has effectively treated them as subaltern, exotic, or backwards—lacking in creativity, advanced artistic practices, and rational thought. Even now, Bellini's work in Constantinople is largely discussed as a universal achievement of Renaissance art and Mehmed II as the authentic, exotic, and culture-tinged "other." The biggest difference between past and recent scholarship is that modern scholars emphasize Mehmed II's use of Bellini's expertise, rather than simply his amazement at it. In this, Bellini is still treated as a representative of the "natural" style of Renaissance art, as the objective instrument, observer, or chronicler of culture.

As I have attempted to show, Bellini's works were conditioned by a fundamentally different set of circumstances created by his artistic appointment as Mehmed II's court artist and by the variety of artistic and cultural models available to him in Constantinople. The cultural hybridity of Bellini's visual forms suggests that new interpretive lenses accounting for the dynamic interaction of Italian Renaissance artists with Eastern artistic forms and visualities may enrich our understanding of the works of art completed in international locations in the Mediterranean. The case studies of Bellini's drawings of Ottoman courtiers and of *Portrait of Mehmed II* demonstrate the complexity of visual representation and reveal an allegedly symbolic content that may be understood by considering a diversity of visual models as well as particular

[912] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

circumstances of production and reception. Similar approaches may also aid us in the understanding of artistic forms completed in Italian courts and city-states, among which Venice was a particularly heterogeneous locale where artistic styles and iconographies freely intermingled.

Appendix A

Primary Sources for Gentile Bellini's Artistic Visit to Constantinople, 1479-1648

1. Marin Sanudo (1466-1536), 1 August 1479

1479. Adì primo auosto venne un orator Judeo del Signor Turco, con lettere. Vuol la Signoria li mandi un buon pytor, e invidò il Dose vadi a onorar le nozze di suo fiol. Li fu resposto ringraziandolo, e mandato Zentil Bellin ottimo pittor; qual andò con le galie di romania, e la Signoria li pagò le spese, e partì adì 3 septembre.

Marin Sanudo, *Sommarii di Storia veneta*, Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, ci. CII, cod. 157, fol. 88r.

Marin Sanudo, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto* (Venezia: A spesi degli Editori, 1879-1903).

First published by L. Thuasne, *Gentile Bellini Et Sultan Mohammed II: Notes Sur Le Séjour Du Peintre Vénitien à Constantinople (1479-1480) D'après Les Documents Originaux En Partie Inédits* (Paris, 1888), 10, footnote 2.

2. Domenico Malipiero (1428-1515), 1479

El Signor Turco recerca la Signoria per so lettre, presentade da un zudio vegnudo a posta, che la ghe mandi un bon depentor che sapia retrazer: e per gratificarlo è stà mandà Gentil Belin, contentandosse cosi esso: e ghe è stà pagà le spese del viazo.

Domenico Malipiero, *Annali Veneti dall'anno 1457 al 1500*, ed. F. Longo (Firenze, 1844), 123. Reproduced in Jürg Meyer zur Capellen, *Gentile Bellini* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1985), 109.

3. Venetian Senate, 13 August 1479

Venit huc his diebus ad presentiam nostri Dominii, quidam servus illustrissimi domini Turci, cum litteris ad nostrum Dominum prefati domini sui. Qui vehementer instat habere unum sculptorem et funditorem eris, sicuti etiam hoc desiderium suum declararunt orator suus, qui hinc discessit, et fidelissimus secretarius noster Joannes Darius. Et quia in simili re, adeo optata ab eo, omnino sibi satisfaciendum est; proinde, vadit pars, quod inveniri debeat per omnem viam et modum unus sculptor, ut supra, qui prestantior et sufficentior haberi possit. Et ut celerius ille habeatur, ex nunc committatur officialibus nostris Rationem Veteranum, qui etiam per antea habuerunt hanc praticam, quod omni studio et diligentia sua, illum invenire conentur. Pro cujus expeditione Collegium nostrum habeat libertatem expendere illas pecunias que sibi videbuntur.

De parte 106 — De non 0 — Non syncere 0

Venice, Archivio di Stato, Senato, Terra, Reg. VII, fol. 58.

First published by Louis de Mas-Latrie, "Testaments d'artistes vénitiens. Jacobello del Fiore, Gentile Bellini, Palma Vecchio," *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes* 30(1869), 195-211, 207. Reproduced in Meyer zur Capellen, *Gentile Bellini*, 110.

4. Venetian Senate, 28 August 1479

1479, Die XXVIII Augusti

Consiliarii

Ser Franciscus Dandulo Ser Joannes Contareno Ser Petrus Memo Ser Joannes Capello Ser Marcus Venerum Quum fidelis civis noster Gentilis Bellinus pictor qui instaurabat figuras et picturas hujus Sale Maioris Consilij, de mandato nostri Dominij proficiscitur Constantinopolim ad serviendum nostro Dominio: Et sit necessarium quia dieta Sala inter cetera hujus civitatis nostre ornamenta, est de principalioribus quod ejus instauratio persequatur: Vadit pars, quod auctoritate hujus Consilij, fidelis civis noster Johannes Bellinus pictor egregius deputetur ad dictum opus instaurandum renovandumque et teneatur id instaurare atque renovare quando et ubi fuerit opus, ac sibi mandabitur per Provisores nostros Salis, qui sibi providere debeant expensis nostris de coloribus et aliis rebus eidem operi necessariis. Verum quia omnis mercenarius dignus est mercede sua: Captum sit, quod in premium laborum suo- rum prima Sansaria fontici que vacabit auctoritate istius Consilij sibi conferatur in vita sua. Quemadmodum facto fuit predicto Gentili: Et si quod Consilium est contra sit suspensum prò hac vice tantum. Remaneat tamen predicto Gentili officium suum Sansarie, qui cum redierit Venetias sit etiam obligatus predictus opus prosequi.

De parte 350 — De non 11 — Non sincere 4

Venice, Archivio di Stato, Deliberazioni Maggior Consiglio, Vol. Regina 1455-1479, fol. 192.

First published by Giambattista Lorenzi, *Monumenti per servire alla storia del Palazzo ducale di Venezia: ovvero Serie de atti pubblici dal 1253 al 1797* (Venezia: Visentini, 1868), Nr. 192. Reproduced in Meyer zur Capellen, *Gentile Bellini*, 110.

5. Venetian Senate, 3 September 1479

Infrascripti domini consiliarii terminarunt et deliberarunt, quod capitaneus Galearum Romanie acceptare debeat super ejus galea, prudentem Venetum nostrum Gentilem Bellinum, pictorem cum duobus ejus sociis, vel famulis, qui vadit jussu nostro ad illustrissimum Dominum Turchum, causa pingendi vel faciendi quoddam opus; cui, vel ejus sociis non accipiatur aliquid ex nabulo. Et faciat ipse capitaneus fieri eis expensas victus. Quum redierit, providebitur per Dominium satisfactioni ipsarum expensarum, ut est honestum.

Ser Franciscum Dandolo Ser Petrus Memo

Ser Joannes Capello Ser Marcus Lauredano

Ser Joannes Contareno consiliarii

Item, suprascripti consiliarii terminarunt, quod prefactus capitaneus levare debeat duos socios Magistri Bertholomei, fusoris metalli, a quibus non accipiat aliquod nabulum; sed faciat illis expensas victus. De quibus, postmodum, in reduit galearum istarum, per Dominium providebitur, ut satisfiat.

Venice, Archivio di Stato, Collegio, Reg. 12 Notatorio 1474-1481, fol. 107.

First published by de Mas-Latrie, 208. Reproduced in Meyer zur Capellen, *Gentile Bellini*, 110-111.

6. Venetian Senate, 7 April 1480

Die septimo Aprilis MCCCCLXXX.

Nobilis vir Melchior Trevisano creditor est nostri Domimi de ducatis quinquaginta quos ipse solvit Reverendo Domino Archiepiscopo Corphiense ex ordine nobilis viri Antonii Lauredano militis procuratoris Santi Marci Capitanei generalis maris, pro tot frumentis datis per ipsum Archiepiscopum prefato. Capitaneo generali maris, quemadmodum ejus litteris constat. Item creditor est de ducatis LXIJ causa alimentorum per eum subministratorum in galea ex hac civitate Constantinopolim usque Gentilli Bellino pictori, et aliquot aliis opificibus missis per nostrum Dominium ad Illustrissimum Dominum Turcum. Et quum debitum et conveniens est prefato nobili civi nostro de suprascriptis duabus pecuniarum summis satisfacere, Vadit pars, quod prefatus Nobilis Melchior Trevisano per officium nostrorum camerariorum communis, ex omnibus pecuniis nostri Dominii exceptis obligatis, statim solvatur de suprascriptis 112 ducatis, non obstante parte suspensionis trium mensium.

De parte 123 — De non 0 — Non sinceri 1

Venice, Archivio di Stato, Registro 11, Senato Mar, fol. 67 v.

First published by Thuasne, 1888, 66.

7. Venetian Senate, 1 July 1480

1480 die 1 Julij.

Per partem captam in Maiori Consilio in MCCCCLXXVIIII die XXVIII Augusti decretum est: quod fidelis civis noster Johannes Bellinus pictor egregius, designaretur ad

pingendum et instaurandum picturam Aule nostre in qua Magnun Consilium cogitur. Et in premium virtutis atque laboris sui habere debet ipse Johannes primam Sansariam seu missetariam Funtici Teuthonicorum que vacaverit, sicut et quemadmodum habuerit Gentiiis eius frater qui ad instaurationem diete picture etiam constitutus fuit, sed ut predictus Johannes habeat causam et modum se et familiam alendi, atque libero animo pingendi, interim donec vacaverit Sansaria predicta, per infrascriptos Dominos Consiliarios determinatum et deliberatum fuit ut predictus Johannes, causa mercedis et labori sui, quot annis ab officio Salis habeat ducatos octuaginta, ultra impensam colorum aliarum rerum per ipsum Officium solvendarum. Que pecunie dentur et solvantur de mense in mensem donec et quosque ipse Johannes habuerit Sansariam predictam Funtici Teuthonicorum, de emolumentibus et utilitàtibus cuius prospiciet commodis et alimento familie sue, cessante tarnen dieta provisione habita Sansaria.

Consiliarii

Ser Stephanus Malipiero Ser Benedictus de Priolis

Ser Lucas Mauro Ser Hieronimus Diedo

Ser Mapheus Contareno Ser Johannes Trivisano

Cap. de XL. a loco Consil.

Venice, Archivio di Stato, Notatorio del Collegio 1474- 1481, fol. 128V.

First published by Lorenzi, 1868, Nr. 195. Reproduced in Meyer zur Capellen, *Gentile Bellini*, 111.

8. Gentile Bellini, *Portrait of Mehmed II*, National Gallery of Art, London, 25 November 1480

(Right hand corner) MCCCCLXXX DIE XXV MENSIS NOVEMBRIS

(Left hand corner) TERRAR. MARISQ. VICTOR AC DOMATOR ORBIS . . . SULTAN IMP. . . MEHMET . . . RESULTAT ARS VERA GIENTILIS MILITIS AURATI BELINI NATURAE . . . QUI CUNCTA REDUCIT IN PROPRIA IAM PROPRIE SIMULACRA

Victor on lands and sea and conqueror of the globe, Sultan and emperor Mehmet. The true art of Gentile Bellini, golden knight, echoes nature, he who renders all things accurately into their own images.

Reconstruction and translation by Anthony Edwards, University of California San Diego. Cortesy of the author. Unpublished.

9. Gentile Bellini, *Medal of Mehmed II*, ca. 1480

(Obverse) MAGNI SOULTANI MOHAMETI IMPERATORIS [Of great Sultan Mehmed, Emperor]

(Reverse) GENTILIS BELLINUS VENETUS EQUES AURATUS COMES. Q. PALATINUS F [Gentile Bellini, Venetian, Golden Knight and palace companion [or Count Palatine], made it]

Campbell, Caroline and Chong, Alan, *Bellini and the East* (London; Boston: National Gallery Company; Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2005), 74.

10. Mehmed II, *Letter Conferring Honors to Gentile Bellini*, 15 January 1481

Sultan Mahomet dei gra totius asye & gretie victoriosissimus Imperator & cetera Serenissimo Principi ac Illustrissime dominationi Venetiarum amoris plentitudinem ac sinceram voluntatem. Zentilem Bellinum sicut magno desiderio expectauimus, ita piena letitia venisse gaudemus. Nam dum ipsum conspeximus & ad eximiam artem eius aciem oculorum ac mentis direximus, instar maximi muneris suseepimus. Inspccta siquidem prope diem artis sue industria ac speculatione, cui nihil est quod reprehensioni subiaceat preterea legalitate ac virtutis amplitudine gratiam Serenitatis nostre inuenit benivolam & in omnibus liberalem, & merito adhibuimus eum Militem Auratum ac Comitem palatinum deputare. Atque ut fama illius longe lateque per orbem diffundatur, in signum purioris amoris, ut & honorem ac honorificentiam celebrem dignitatis acquirat, rotella liberaüssima ex solido auro in Monile contenta insculptis propiis litteris nostris eum decoravimus alteraque ex parte nostri nominis munimine insignita. Postremo inpresantiarum repetende patrie gratulabundus a nostra serenitate duxit licentiam implorandam, quam quidem mox amplissimam concessimus, insuperque has sibi commendatitias condonamus, serenitatis affectu a pro reditu sue laudabilis bonitatis, quatenus Illustrissime dominationi Vestre patefiat, quod quicquid in eo honoris ac dignitatis contulerit, tanquam in uno de nostris domesticis intimis & electis contulisse putemus. Enimvero & vestra liberalitas, que substen tat extraneos, tenetur ipsum

compatriotam intimum habere, ut sub umbra vestre Illustrissime dominationis valeat sentire gloriam & honorem. Scripta in constanitnopoli in soho Celsitudinis nostre Bisantii MCCCCLXXX primo die 15 Januarii.

Landesregierungsarchiv, Innsbruck, Standnummer: Kunstsachen I, 65.

Published by F. Babinger, Gnadenbrief 1962, 88. Reproduced in Meyer zur Capellen, *Gentile Bellini*, 111.

11. Francesco Suriano, c. 1484 (date according to Raby)

Li Turchi etiam la riueriscono quando la vedono con Christo in brazo. Alle Chiese dedicate a suo nome, quando lo sano, non li fanno veruno danno, como ho veduto quando fanno le chorarie. El Turco, chiamato Macometo Othomanhei, fu fiolo de christiana, fiola del re di Ulachia, la quale con ogni studio lo fece deuoto de la Madonna, la quale morite christiana nel monasterio de Monte Sancto che è appresso de Athene. Questo suo fiolo, quando andò a pigliare lo reame de Servira e la Bosnia, sempre per sua defensione e seguirtà portò indosso la vesta de Christo inconsutile, che li fece la Madonna. Retornando con victoria, non se reputando degno de portrarla più adosso, fece destrugere vna manica per farse de la lana vn circular per portrare in capo. E miracolosamente, facto che lo haueua el maestro, per tre volte sempre lo trouaua destructo e reduto in lana. La qual cosa notificandola al signor, fece questa experientia in sua presentia e veduta disse: Io non sum digno de portrare in capo tale reliquia. E posta la ditta lana intro la tunica, la collocò in un armadio eminente, in vna camera, dove non vi era altro che l'imagine de la Madona grece, in presentia de la quale sempre tenuia accessa una lampada d'oro.

Quando la Signoria di Venetia fece pace con lui del mille quatrocento settantasette, pregòlla che li mandasse uno, che li facesse christalini, un'altro che li facesse horioli da sonare, e un buono dipintore. Foli mandato maestro Zimbellino, e zonto che fu a la sua presentia, lo menò in la predicta camara, e monstroli tutte quelle figure. E poi se ne trasse una che portava sempre al pecto soto li pani, e diseli che ne depingese una che fosse più bella de tutte. Facta che l'hebbe ala moderna, ge la presentò. Quando la vide, molto se ralegrò e disse: Fino che viuerò, mai questa se partirà dal mio pecto. Tuto questo, me presente, recontò questo maestro Zambellino, quando ritornò ad Venetia.

Francesco Suarino, *Il Trattato di Terra Santa e dell'Oriente di frate Francesco Suriano ... Edito per la prima velta nella sua integrità ... dal P. G. Golubovich* (Milano, 1900), 94f.

Reproduced in Julian Raby, *El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom*. PhD dissertation (Oxford, 1980), 345-348.

12. Fra Bernardino da Foligno, c. 1484 (date according to Raby)

Magnus theucorum erat tantus devotus de Maria, quod tunicam quam X (Christo) fecerat inconsutilem in tantam venerationem habuit quod quominus semper supra se tenuit quando acquisivit Bosine regnum, tamen rediens Constantinopolim, indignum se reputans hoc indumentum fecit disui unam manicam et fieri unum pileum ut supra caput suum deferret. Quod cum bis et ter magister perfecisset, semper inveniebatur miraculose destructum. Quod miraculum videns, cum semel in conspectus suo fuisset factum, reputose (sic) indignum posuit tunicam illam cum predicta lana in una fenestra in sua

camera in cuius conspectu semper ardebat lampas auri usque in hodiernum diem. Item in ipsa eadem camera per girum nichil arderat nisi ymago b. Virginis, et semper unam deportabat ad pectus. Et ipse fecit pacem cum Venetis: inter alia que petit, postulavit meliorem pictorem venetiarum et missus fuit magister Johannes Belinus tempore meo, a quo fecit sibi depingi unam parvam ymaginem b. Virginis, quam adeo sibi placuit quod conspectu predirti magistri, sicut ipse postes retulit, extraxit quam habebat et posuit illam noviter factam, dicens quod usque ad mortem eam semper portaret.

Fra Bernardino da Foligno, Sermonale, fol. 31f; Foligno, Biblioteca Comunale, A.H.II.10. Reproduced in Julian Raby, *El Gran Turco, Mehmet the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts of Christendom*. PhD dissertation (Oxford, 1980), 345-348.

13. Francesco Pescennio Negro (1452-ca. 1523)

Bellinos habetis fratres, naturae ministros, quorum alter theoricen, alter picturae praxin professus, non regiam vestram solum pulcherrimis tabulis in dies illustrant, sed totam pene civitatem decorant, et quod longe mirabilius est, vobis etiam approbantibus maior natu Gentihs, Mohameto Turcarum rege poscente, Bizantium usque transmittitur, ubi arte et ingenio suo quid Venetus sanguis valeat non obscure demonstrans, et Venetam picturam mirifice illustravit, et equestri dignitate donatus, coronarium aurum virtutis suae praemium, phrygio etiam amiculo, tyara, cothurnis ac torque aureo decoratus, in patriam reportavit.

Francesco Negro, *Peri archon*, Rom, Bibliotheca Vaticana, Vatic. lat. 4033, fol. 86.

Reproduced in Meyer zur Capellen, *Gentile Bellini*, 109.

14. Francesco Pescennio Negro (1452-ca. 1523)

qui deinde inter omnes Christianae fidei inimicos acriores sunt et deteriores, Muhametani nanque, sive Turcae fuerint sive Mauri, Christum et Beatam Virginem honorant, dicente Muhameto in Alchorano suo: Nullus est inter filios Adae quem non tetigerit Sathan, nisi Christus et Virgo Maria', eorum imagines venerantur et apud se servant intactas, ut ex Gentili Bellino, mirabili Venetorum pictore, memini me audivisse; qui ad Muhametum Ottomanum Turcarum imperatorem a Venetis decorandi palatii sui gratia missus, et Beatae Virginis tabulam Graecanico ritu depictam et Redemtoris nostri inconsutilem tunicam cum summa observantia ab eo retulit detineri.

Francesco Negro, *Cosmodysticha*, lib. 4, c. 10, fol. 131 f.

First published by Giovanni Mercati, *Note sopra A.Bonfini, M.A.Sabellico, A.Sabino, Pescennio Francesco Negro, Pietro Summonte e altri.* (Città del Vaticano, 1939), Appendix, 38f.

15. Giovanni Maria Angiolello (1451-ca. 1525)

Mehemet secondo Gran Turco, settimo Signore da Ottoman, quando intrò in signoria per la morte del padre Marothei, d'anni ventuno, e fu 1450, qual ebbe la fortuna propizia, e fece più di tutti gl'altri Turchi passati, com'ho descritto.Visse in signoria dal 1450 fino al 1481 adì 3 Marzo, che sonno anni 31. Fu uomo ingegnoso si dilettava di virtù, et haveva

persone, che gli leggeva. Era crudelissimo, come si dirà a suo luogo. Si dilettava de giardini ad aveva piacere di pitture e per questo scrisse all'Illustrìssima Signorìa che gli mandasse un pittore.

Li fu mandato domino Gentil Bellin, peritissimo nell'arte, qual vidde volontieri. Volse che gli facesse Venezia in disegno et retraesse molte persone, sì ch'era grato al signore. Quando il signore voleva veder qualch'uno ch'aveva fama di esser bell'huomo, lo faceva retraere dal detto Gentile Bellin, e poi lo vedeva.

E fra li altre un giorno mandò, a chiamare Gentil, e dissegli: "Gentil, ti sarà menato un *darvis*, ritraetolo," e così fu fatto. Retratto che fu, Gentil lo portò al signore, et accioché sappiate, questo *darvis* montava in Besostum sopra una banca e cantava le faccende che haveva fatto il signore. Ed inteso per lui, li fece dir che non cantasse più di lui, et per questo lo fece retraere.

Or essendo portato detto retratto ed appresentato al signore, lui lo guardò, et quando ebbe ben guardato disse: "Gentil, che ti par di costui?" Gentil tacendo, dubitando di parlare, disse il signore: "Gentil, tu sai che sempre t'ho detto, che tu puoi parlar, con me, pur che tu dica la verità, siché dimmi quello che ti pare." Rispose Gentil: "Signore, poiché mi hai dato licenza che ti dica la mia opinione dirò: per il mio giudizio costui mi par matto." Rispose il signor: "Tu dici la verità, guarda come ha quegli occhi sboridi ch'indicano matteia." Disse Gentil: "Signore, nelli nostri paesi sono molti che montano in banca e cantano le laudi de diversi signori, e la Sua Signoria, ch'è tanto sublime ed ha fatto più faccende, che non fece mai Alessandro, non vuol essere laudata." Rispose il Turco: "Se costui fosse qualch'uomo savio, sarei contento esser laudato, man non voglio esser

laudato da un matto." Disse Gentil: 'La Tua Signoria lo voglia far Capo delli *darvisi*," ed il Signore lo fece.

Fu dal detto Gentil fatto diversi belli quadri, e massime di cose di lussuria in alcune cose belle, in modo che ne haveva nel serraglio gran quantità. Ed all'intrar che fece il figlioulo Baiasit signor li fece vender tutti in bazzaro, et per nostri mercanti ne furono comprati assai. E disse il detto Baiasit che suo padre era padrone, e che non credeva in Maccometto. Ed in effetto era così, per quello dicono questo Mehemet non credeva in fede alcuna.

Giovan Maria Angioletto, *Historia Turchesca dall'anno 1429 sin al 1513*.

Giovan Maria Angiolello, *Il Sultano e Il Profeta: Memorie di uno schiavo vicentino divenuto tesoriere di Maometto II il Conquistatore*. A cura di Jeannine Guérin Dalle Mese (Milano: Serra e Riva Editori, 1985), 151-153.

16. Jacopo Filippo Foresti da Bergamo, *Supplementum chronicarum*, 1486, 1490, and 1503

1486 "Venetus" version:

Gentile Bellini, of Venice, the most famous painter of his time, not only in the area of Venice, but it could be said, in all of Italy, for his unheard-of and admirable style of painting. Upon whom was conferred such grace of painting that he might be favourably compared with the painters of antiquity, Greek or Latin. Whose great virtues came to the ears of Mahomet, prince of the Turks. Burning with desire to see them he wrote, as a supplicant, to the Venetian Senate, so that it might send him [Gentile] to Constantinople

for his singular benefit. After Gentile came to him, so that he could test his expertise he appointed him to depict many of his extraordinary pictures and other nearly innumerable things, and then, in order that every activity test him more and more, he commanded that he himself be depicted in his own image; and indeed, when the Turkish ruler gazed upon that portrait so much like himself, he was astonished at the talent of the man, and said he excelled any painter who had ever lived. And therefore, setting him up without delay as a member of his household, as an indication of his benevolence and generosity, he made him both knight palatine and a knight of the Golden Spur, and gave him a medal and necklace, and sent him back to his own country, dismissing him with significant privilege and many gifts, so that he was received by that same Senate with great delight. And he was commissioned to paint histories in the palace of the rulers of Venice, for great reward.

Ge[n]tilis Belinus nato[n]e venetus pictor celeberrimus hijsde[m] t[em]pibus no[n] mo[do] orbe[m] venetu[s] lz et (ut ita dixeriz]/italia[m] tota[m] suo inaudito et admira[n]do pige[n]di mo[do] illustrare v[i]r: cui ta[n]ta collata e[...] pige[n]di gra[...] ut cu[m] q[ui]buscu[m]q[uibus] anti/q[ui]s et exq[ui]sitis pictoribus ta[m] grecis q[...] latinis sine iniuria merito c[om]parari possit. Cuiuis g[ran]de[...] virtutes cu[m] e[...]t ad/aures. Mahometi turcho[rum] p[rin]cipis p[er]venisset. Desiderio vide[n]di eu[m] fragra[n]s ad senatu[m] venetu[m] supplex scrip/sit: ut illu[m] sibi dono co[n]sta[n]tinopolis p[er] singulari b[e]nficio mittere dignere[n]t. Adque[m] ta[n]de[m] accedes ut ipsius peri/tia[m] te[m]ptare posset [post plurias et i[n]credibiles ei[...] picturas atq[ue] alia p[...]pe innumerabilia eu[m] dipige[m] fecit: deniq[ue][/ ut o[mn]is i[n]dustria magis ac magis experire[n]t seip[...]z i[n] p[ro]p[ri.]a[...] forma reduci cogit: cuius gr[an]de imagine[m]

sibi simili ima[...]/eu[m] i[mp[er]ato[co]spexisset:admiratus viri virtute dixit illu[m] cu[nc]tos pictores q[...] un[...] fuere excedere: et [...]pterea [cos]pexisti[...]/i[n] benivole[n]tie et legallitatis signu[m] ipsu]m suu[m] familiare[m] c[on]stitue[n]s et comite[m] palatinu[m] equitemque auratu[m] cu[m] quibusda[m] su/is isignibus et monille creavit; et a se laudatu[m] cu[m] celebru p[ri]vilegio et donis multis e[n] patria[m] remisit. Ubi ab ipso/ Senatu Veneto cu[m] multo illaritatis vultu exceptus e[st]. Et ad pinge[n]das i[n] palatio d[omi]nij veneto[rum] istorias inter/missas cum magno premio remissus est.

Jacopo Filippo Foresti, *Supplementum chronicarum* (Venice: Bernardinus Benalius, 15 December 1486), Liber XV, fol. 289 bis. Venice, Correr, Inc. E 96.

Published by Amy N. Worthen, "An Inconvenient Text: The *Supplementum Chronicarium* as a Source of Information about Gentile and Giovanni Bellini," in *Examining Giovanni Bellini: An Art More Human and More Divine*, ed. Carolyn C. Wilson (*Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2012*).

1491 version:

Gentile Bellino per natione Veneto pictore celeberrimo de questi tempi: ma non solame[n]te/ el circuito veneto ma anchora tutta la italia con el suo inaudito e admirabile modo de pinger/re pare illustrare et hornare: a cui e co[n]ferita tanta gratia nel pingere che a qualunque degli an/tiqui et electi pictori cossi greci come latini senza iniuria meritamente puol essere comparado: le/ qual virtu certamente essendo anchora pervenute a le orecchie de Mahumetto principe degli / Turchi et desiderando vederlo humilmente

scripse al Senato veneto che in dono p[er] benefitio/ singulare suo si dignasse mandarlo a Costantinopoli: tande[m] essendo arivato accio potesse experi/mentare la suoa peritia fece pingere se medesimo dapoi molte et incredibile picture et altre cosse/ quasi innumerabile: finalmente accio che la industria suoa fusse mazorme[n]te experime[n]tata lo astrin/se che si reducesse se medesimo in propria forma: quando lo imperadore vide la imagine simul/li[ss]ima a si maravigliandosi de la virtu de tal huomo disse costui certame[n]te excellere tutti gli picto/ri che mai furono: et per questo subitamente in segno de benevolentia et de fede con el suo signo/ la colana et anchora altri suoi hornamenti lo creo Conte palladino et Cavaliere a Spiron d'oro/ come huomo veramente per la suoa mirabile virtu di tal dignita degno. Et laudandosi poi essere/ ritornato nella patria suoa con singulari doni et privilegii: dove poi dal Senato Veneto fu/ volontieri recevuto et poi rimesso co[n] grande pretio a pingere le historie intermesse nel palazzo de/ la Signoria de Venetia.

Jacopo Filippo Foresti, *Cronicha de tuto el mondo vulgare* (Venice: Bernardino Rizo de Novara, 8 October 1491), fol. 294^{r} and fol. 294^{v}. Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Inc. V. 280.

Published by Worthen, "An Inconvenient Text: The *Supplementum Chronicarium* as a Source of Information about Gentile and Giovanni Bellini."

1503 version:

The Bellini brothers Giovanni and Gentile, from Venice, and Andrea Mantegna from Padua, and many other renowned painters as well, at this time not only in Italy but, so to speak, in all Christendom and in the Turkish world, seemed to paint in a new style of painting. Truly, such grace of painting was conferred upon them, that they could be favourably compared with Apelles, Polycrates, Phidias, and Praxiteles, the wonderful painters of antiquity. Many highly learned men who saw their pictures extolled those distinguished painters with great proclamations. And when after many years the talent of these brothers Giovanni and Gentile especially had reached the ears of Mahumet, prince of the Turks, burning with desire to see them he wrote, as a supplicant, to the Venetian Senate, so that it might send even one of them to Constantinople. After the younger brother Gentile came to him, so that he could test his expertise, he appointed him to depict many of his extraordinary pictures and other nearly innumerable things, and then, in order that every activity test him more and more, he commanded that he himself be depicted in his own image; and indeed, when the Turkish Sultan gazed upon that portrait so much like himself, he was astonished at the talent of the man, and said he excelled any painter who had ever lived. And therefore, setting him up without delay as a member of his household, as an indication of his benevolence and generosity, he made him both a palace attendant and a golden Knight, and sent him back to his own country, dismissing him with significant privilege and many gifts, so that he was received by that same Senate with great delight. But nevertheless the aforementioned most famous painters were not the first named who restored the ancient art of painting. We recognize from their

pictures that there were great painters for a hundred years before that, indeed before the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, although one was not able to find in Italy one who possessed the pure and clear ancient style. And so the art of painting and sculpting came about. For if anyone gazes upon the pictures from the 1200s and 1300s, the forms of monsters and marvels, not of men, will be found.

Ioannes & Gentilis germanus Bellini: patria Veneti. atque Andreas mantinea: patavi/nus: necnon alii plurimi pictores nibilissimi: his temporibus non modo in italia: sed (ut/ita dixerim) universum christianum: atque turcorum orbem: suo inaudito pingendi mo/do illustrare videntur. Quibus tanta certe pingendi gratia collata est. Ut cum Apelle/zeuse: pollicrate: phida: & praxitelle antiquis magnis pictoribus merito comparari pos/sint. Hos enim pictores celebres plurimi eruditissimi viri: qui eorum picturas aspexe/runt magnis efferuntur praeconiis. Horum aut maxime fratrum Io. & Gentilis virtus/cum iam annis multis ad aures Mahumeti turcorum principis pervenisset: desiderio vi/dendi eos fragrans: ad Senatum venetum supplex scripsit: ut vel unum ipsorum Consta/tinopolim transmitteret. Ad quem tandem Gentilis minimus frater accedens: ut ipsius/ peritiam tentare posset: post plurimas & incredibiles eius picturas: atque alia prope in/numerabilia ipsum depingere fecit. Denique ut omnis industria magis: ac magis experi/retur: se ipsum in propria forma reduci coegit: cuius quidem imaginem sibi simillima[...]/cum imperator turcus conspexisset:admiratus viri virtutem: dixit illum cunctos picto/res qui unquam fuere excellere. Et propterea confestim in benevolentiae: & largitatis/ inditium: ipsum suum familiarem constituens: & comitem palatinum & Equitem au/ratum creavit: & a se laudatum cum celebri privilegio: ac donis multis in patriam remi/sit: ubi & ab ipso Senatu

cum molto hyllaritatis vultu exceptus est. Nec tamen praedicti/celeberrimi pictores nominati primi fuere: qui antiquam pingendi artem restituerunt./ Cum a centum annis citra magnos pictores fuisse: ex eorum pictoris conspicimus: An/te enim centum: & trecentos annos: cum non in italia inveniebatur: qui tersum lucidum/ que antiquum sermonem haberet. Sic & pingendi sculpendique art acciderat. Nam si/ ducentorum trecentorumque annorum picturas quis intuetur: invenitur non hominu[…]/sed mostruorum portentorumque facies.

Jacopo Filippo Foresti, *Novissime hystoriarum*, Liber XVI (Venice: Albertinus de Lissona, 4 May 1503) fol. 427^{r}. Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Rari V. 22. Published by Worthen, "An Inconvenient Text: The *Supplementum Chronicarium* as a Source of Information about Gentile and Giovanni Bellini."

17. Paolo Giovio (1483-1552), 1531

Donò largamente a Gentile Bellino pittore Veneziano, avendo fatto venire da Venezia a Constantinopoli, per farsi ritrate del naturale, e pingere gli abiti di ponenti, insomma molte virtuose parti, congionte con la buona fortuna, lo fecero degno de l'Imperio di Constantinopol qual subbito assaltò per non occuparsi in basse e poco onorevole imprese e cosí assai presto con infinito apparato d'artiglieria, per mare e per terra, per forza prese la città di Constantinopoli, nella quale battaglia l'Imperadore voles morire con la spade in mano e fu notabile e fatale cosa che come Constantino figliulo de S. Elena fu il primo Imeradore di Constantinopoli, così questo nome Constantino, pure figliuolo d'Elena, fu l'ultimo dopo anni 1121.

Paolo Giovio, *Commentario de le cose de' turchi. A cura di Lara Michelacci* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2005), 98-99.

18. Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), 1550-1568

Laonde avendo egli finita una pittura non molte grande, nella quale erano alcuni ritratti di naturale che pareano vivi, ella fu portata in Turchia da uno ambaschiadore a Maumetto allotta Gran Turco. E se ben tal cosa era proibita loro per le legge maumettana, ella fu pure di tanto stupor nel presentarla, che non essendo usato il signore vederne, gli parve grandissimo magistero. Onde non solo prese la pittura, ma chiese loro il maestro che l'aveva fatta. Perché a Vinegia tornato, espose al Senato qualmente al signore dovessero mandare Giovan Bellino. Ma essi, come quelgi che molto l'amavano, essendo egli già in età che male poteva sopportare disagii, si risolverono di mandarvi Gentile suo fratello, il quale arebbe fatto il medisimo che Giovanni. Et inoltre si assicuravano di non prederlo interamente, e massime che egli seguitava per il palazzo le storie che egli aveva cominciate nella sala del Gran Consiglio. Laonde messosi Gentile in ordine, e montano in su le galee con onoratissima provisione, pervenne in Constantinopoli a salvamento. E presentato dal bailo della Signoria a Maumetto, fu veduto volentieri e come cosa nuova molto accarezzato. E poi che egli presentò a quell principe una vaghissima pittura, fu ammirato da quel signore che uno uomo mortale avesse in sé tanta divinità, che egli esprimesse sí vivamente e sí naturale le cose della natura. Né vi dimorò molto Gentile che egli ritrasse di naturale Maometto, che pareva vivissiomo; al quale, come cosa inusitata, pareva questo piú tosto miracolo che arte. Et in ultimo, doppo lo aver veduto

molte esperienzie di quell' arte, lo domandò se gli dava il cuore di dipingner se medesimo, e Gentile rispose che per satisfarli si ritrarebbe, e facilissimamente. Né passò molti giorni che ritrattosi a una spera che somigliava forte, lo presentò al signore. Il quale, vedendo quel che Gentile faceva della pittura, ne rimase piú amirato e stupefatto che prima; per la qual cosa da se stesso non poteva immaginarsi che e' non avesse qualche spirto divino addosso. E se non fussi stato che per legge tale esercizio era proibito, et andavane la morte a chi adoravava statue , non arebbe mai licenziato Gentile, anzi lo arebbe onorato grandemente e tenutolo a farli fare opera appresso di sé.

Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite De' Piú Eccelenti Architetti, Pittori Et Scultori Italiani Da Cimabue Insino a' Tempi Nostri : Nell'edizione Per i Tipi Di Lorenzo Torrentino, Firenze 1550.* A cura di Luciano Bellosi and Aldo Rossi (Torino: G. Einaudi, 1986), 435-436.

19. Francesco Sansovino (1521-1586), 1563 and 1581

Costoro ne lor tempi furoni stimati assai, intanto che il gran Turco ne richieste uni di loro a questo Dominio; il quale andato, e finite quell tant' che il Turco voles, ritornò di qua molto honorato & premiato.

Francesco Sansovino, *Dialogo di tutte le cose notabili che sono in Venetia* (Venice: Hieronimo Capelino, 1563), fol. 15r.

Published by Worthen, "An Inconvenient Text: The *Supplementum Chronicarium* as a Source of Information about Gentile and Giovanni Bellini."

Ma notabil cosa è questa & vera, che il Turco ha creato egli Cavalieri, & io come testimone lo affermo, perche ho veduto un previlegio fatto a Gentil Bellino pittore eccelente de suoi tempi, da Mahomet second, ilquale ho aveva chiamato a Constantinopoli per dipingere alcune sue sale. Et oltre al privilegio della Cavalieria, gli donò una bellissima collana, come fanno gl'imperadori. Ma non voglio hora in questa luogo discorrere, s'il Bellini fosse legittimo cavaliere o nò, & s'effendo Christiano dovesse ammettersi ne gli honori, poi ch'era obligato a Principe non fedele.

Francesco Sansovino, *Venezia citta nobilissima* (Venezia, 1581), fols. 11r-11v.

& percio ch' il detto Gentile era ritornato da Constantinopoli, doue haueua fatto il ritratto del Turco, dal quale era creato Caualiero (si come ho veduto nel suo priuilegio) con molti ricchi doni, scrisse sotto al predetto quadro i seguento versi.

Gentilis patria dedit hac monumenta Belinus, Othomano accitus, munere factus Eques.

Francesco Sansovino, *Venezia citta nobilissima* (Venezia, 1581), f. 127v.

20. Carlo Ridolfi (1594-1658), 1648

E fù quella Pittura fatta da Gentile ritornato da Constantinopoli, oue per ordine public erasi transferito pre servire a Maumet II. Re de' Turchi, il quale inuaghitosi d'alcune opera de i Bellini, portare da Mercatani a Constantinopoli, diuenutone curioso ne ricercò il Pittore al Senato, che gli mandò Gentile come riferisce anco il Giouio nella vita di quel Re & introdotto dal Bailo alla di lui presenza contra il costume de que' Regi, per lor

natura superbi e pieni d'alterigia, fù da Maumetto accolto con segni di molta humanità: così la Pittura puote insinuarsi nella gratia sua, di cui fece il ritratto e della Regina, che furono veduti da Turchi come cose miracolose, parendogli impossibile, che ad vn huomo fosse conceduta tanta Virtù di cangiar le tele in spiranti figure, che facilitò l'affetto di Maumetto verso di Gentile, che gli dipinse parimente gli habiti tutti de' popoli Orientali.

Fecegli ancora altre pitture, ed in particolare la testa di S. Giouanni nel disco, il quale come Profeta e riuerito da Turchi, e recalata al Re lodò la diligenza vsataui, auuertendolo nondimeno d'vn errore, che il collo troppo sorauanzaua dal capo: e parendogli, che Gentile rimanesse sospeso, per fargli vedere il naturale effetto fatto a se venire vno schiavo gli fece troncar la testa, dimostrandogli come diuisa dal busto, il collo a fatto si ritiraua, per la cui barbarie intimorito Gentile, tentò ogni modo di tantosto licentiarsi, dubitando che vn simile scherzo vn giorno a lui auuenisse.

All fine Maumetto fattolo a se chiamare, dopo lo hauer comendato la di lui Virtù, e demonstrandosi ben seruito dell'opera sua, lo creò suo Caualiere, ponendogli al collo vna catena d'oro di molto prezzo laurata all'vso turchesco; poscia da lettere regie accompagnato (non hauendo voluto Gentile chiedere altra gratia, tutto quello venisse incitato lieto fece ritorno a Venezia, non cessandogli il timore, che concetto haueua per lo accidente accaduto allo schiauo: poscia fatta la relazione in Collegio di quello haueua operato in seruigio di Maumetto, e presentate le lettere, fù comendato dal Doge, & assignatogli honoreuole stipendio in sua vita. Riportò etiandio Gnetile da Constantinopoli il ritratto di Maumetto, ch'è nelle Café del Signore Pietro Zeno.

Carlo Ridolfi, *Le Maraviglie dell'arte: ovvero le Vite degli illustri pittori veneti e dello Stato descritte dal cav. Carlo Ridolfi* (Berlin: G. Grotesche Verlagsbuchhandling, 1914), 57-58.

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Figure 4.47
Girolamo da Cremona
Printer Nicolaus Jenson, Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, 1478
Velins 700, Bibliotheque National, Paris

Figure 4.48
Façade of San Zaccaria, c. 1480
The façade completed by Mauro Codussi, Venice

Figure 4.49
Scuola Grande di San Marco, 1489-1495
Venice, Italy
The façade completed by Pietro Lombardo and Mauro Codussi

Figure 4.50
Alevisio Lamberti da Montagnana
Cathedral of Archangel Michael, 1505-1508
Moscow Kremlin, Russia

Figure 4.51
Pope Boniface VIII
The Lateran Loggia of Benediction, c. 1300
Reconstruction from: Charles Mitchell, "The Lateran Fresco of Boniface VIII," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 14, no. 1/2 (January 1, 1951): 1–6.

Figure 4.52
Pieter Coecke van Aelst (1502-1550) (published at Antwerp in 1553)
Süleyman the Magnificent Processing through the Hippodrome
Engraving

Figure 4.53
Procession of Guilds in the Hippodrome of Constantinople (Cloth-Weavers)
Surname-i Vehbi, 1582
Topkapi Palace Museum (Hazine 1344, folios 338b-39a)
Istanbul, Turkey

Figure 4.54
Mehmed II enthroned in front of the third gate with the Crimean scholar Mevlana Seyyid Ahmed seated on a lower seat, and the grand vizier Mahmud Pasha standing behind, c.1500
Topkapi Palace Museum (R 406, fol. 12r)
Istanbul, Turkey

Figure 4.55
A Bayram Ceremony in the Second Court with the Enthroned Sultan in the Gate of Felicity or Royal Loggia (showing the grand vizier Osman Pasha kissing the hem of Murad II's robe)
Lokman, *Shahanshāhnāma*, 1592
Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, Turkey (TSK B 200, fols. 159v & 160r)
Reproduced from Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace*

Figure 4.56
Bertoldo di Giovanni, *Portrait Medal of Mehmed II*, c. 1480

Victoria and Albert Museum, London (A.202.1910)

Figure 4.57
Text on the left insert (digital manipulation on the left)
Ultraviolet photography (on the right)
National Gallery of Art, dossier
London, England

Figure 4.58
Text on the right insert: MCCCCLXXX./DIE XXV.ME/NSIS NOVEM/BRIS
November 25, 1480
Ultraviolet photography
National Gallery of Art, dossier
London, England

Figure 4.59
The foundation inscription in Arabic above the main Imperial Gate to the Topkapi Palace, c.1478
Istanbul, Turkey

Figure 4.60
Gentile Bellini: Example of *cartellino*
Doge Agostino Barbarigo (ca. 1480s)
Private Collection

Figure 4.61
Gentile Bellini, *Portrait of Caterina Cornaro*, ca. 1500
Szepmuveszeti Museum, Budapest

Figure 4.62
A Banquet for the Retinue of an Austrian Embassy in the Second Court (showing a parade of gifts in the foreground center and the enthroned Sultan seen behind the third gate)
Album of Lambert Wyts, 1574, Ms.
Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, Austria (Cod. 3325)
Reproduced from Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace*

Figure 4.63
The Reception Ceremony in the Second Court (showing the Council Hall)

Left: *The Reception of Sinan Pasha*
Right: *The Reception of an Ambassador from Morocco* (showing the Council Hall)
Lokman, Shahanshāhnāma, 1592
Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, Turkey (TSK B 200, fols. 31r &142v)
Reproduced from Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace*

Figure 4.64
Left: *Selim II Receiving the Austrian Ambassador in the Chamber of Petitions, Furnished with Jewel-Embroidered Carpets*
Feridun Ahmed Beg, *Nüzhet el-esrar der sefer-I Zigetvar*, 1568-1569, TSK, H 1339, fol. 178r
Right: *Murad III Receiving the Moroccan Ambassador*
Lokman, *Shahanshāhnāma*, 1592, TSK B 200, fol. 143r
Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, Turkey
Reproduced from Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace*

Figure 4.65
Unknown artist
Medal of Mehmed II as a Young Man, 1460s or 1470s (?)
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (HCR 177)

Figure 4.66
Master of Vienna Passion
El Gran Turco, ca. 1470
Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, Turkey

Figure 4.67
Pisanello, *Medal of Leonello d'Este*, *Marquis of Ferrara*, c. 1442
British Museum, London, England (GIII, Ferrara M 26)

Figure 4.68
Leonardo da Vinci, *Study of a Warrior*, ca. 1476,
British Museum, London

Figure 4.69
Andrea del Verrocchio
Marble relief of Alexander the Great, ca. 1483-1486
National Gallery of Art, Washington

Figure 4.70
"Turgisch Kaiser," c. 1480
Print
British Museum

Figure 4.71
Costanzo di Moysis, *Medal of Mehmed II*, c.1478-1480
National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (1957.14.695)

Figure 4.72
Costanzo di Moysis, *Medal of Mehmed II*, 1481
Ashmolean Museum of Art, Oxford, England

Figure 4.73
Pisanello, *Medal of Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, Lord of Rimini*, 1445
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England (A.167-1910)

Figure 4.74
Mehmed II
Naḳḳāş 'Osmān
Şema'lnâme, 1579
Topkapi Palace Museum (H. 1563, fol. 47b)
Istanbul, Turkey

Appendix B

Artistic Products Associated with Gentile Bellini's Visit to Constantinople



Plate I

Gentile Bellini, *Portrait of Mehmed II*, 25 November 1480

Oil paint on canvas (transferred from panel), 70 x 52 cm

National Gallery of Art, London, England (NG 3099)



Plate II

Gentile Bellini and workshop (?), *Mehmed II with His Son*, 1479-1481 (?)

Oil paint on panel, 45.8 x 34 cm

Private Collection, Switzerland (last published by F. Babinger in 1969)

Handwriting on the back: *Ritratti di Maometto e di suo Figlio di Gentile Bellini*



Plate III

Gentile Bellini workshop (?), *Mehmed II*, ca. 1500

Oil paint on panel, 21 x 16 cm

Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar



Plate IV

Gentile Bellini, *Medal of Mehmed II*, c. 1480

Bronze, diameter 9.4 cm

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, England (HCR)

Inscribed:

(obverse) MAGNI SOULTANI MOHAMETI IMPERATORIS

(reverse) GENTILIS BELLINUS VENETUS EQUES AURATUS COMES. Q. PALATINUS F



Plate V

Gentile Bellini, *Seated Scribe or Artist*, 1479-1481

Pen in brown ink with watercolor and gold on paper, 18.2 x 14 cm

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston (PI5E8)



Plate VI

Gentile Bellini, *Young Greek Woman*, 1479-1481

Pen in brown ink on paper, 25.4 x 17.5 cm; inscribed: *velo* / *filo bianco*

Musée du Louvre, Paris, France (4654)



Plate VII

Gentile Bellini (?), *Standing Turk*, 1479-1481

Pen in brown ink on paper, 29.9 x 20.30 cm; annotated: *Giovan Bellini venetus*:

Musée du Louvre, Paris, France (4655)



Plate VIII

Gentile Bellini, *Seated Janissary*, 1479-1481

Pen in brown ink on paper, 21.5 x 17.5 cm

The British Museum, London, England (PP.I-19)



Plate IX

Gentile Bellini, *Seated Woman*, 1479-1481

Pen in brown ink on paper, 21.5 x 17.6 cm; inscribed: orlo / rosso / oro / arzento / azuro / neg

The British Museum, London, England (PP.I-20)



Plate X

Gentile Bellini or workshop (?), *Standing Man*, 1479-1481 (?)

Pen in brown ink on paper, 28 x 18 cm

Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt, Germany (3957)



Plate XI

Gentile Bellini or workshop (?), *Standing Turk*, ca. 1500s (?)

Pen in brown ink on paper, 20.7 x 11.4 cm

Musée du Louvre, Paris, France (4653)



Plate XII

Gentile Bellini or workshop(?), *Standing Young Man (called an Albanian)*, 1479-1481 (?)

Pen in brown ink on paper, 25.8 x 18 cm

Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt, Germany (3956)

Illustrations for Chapter 1

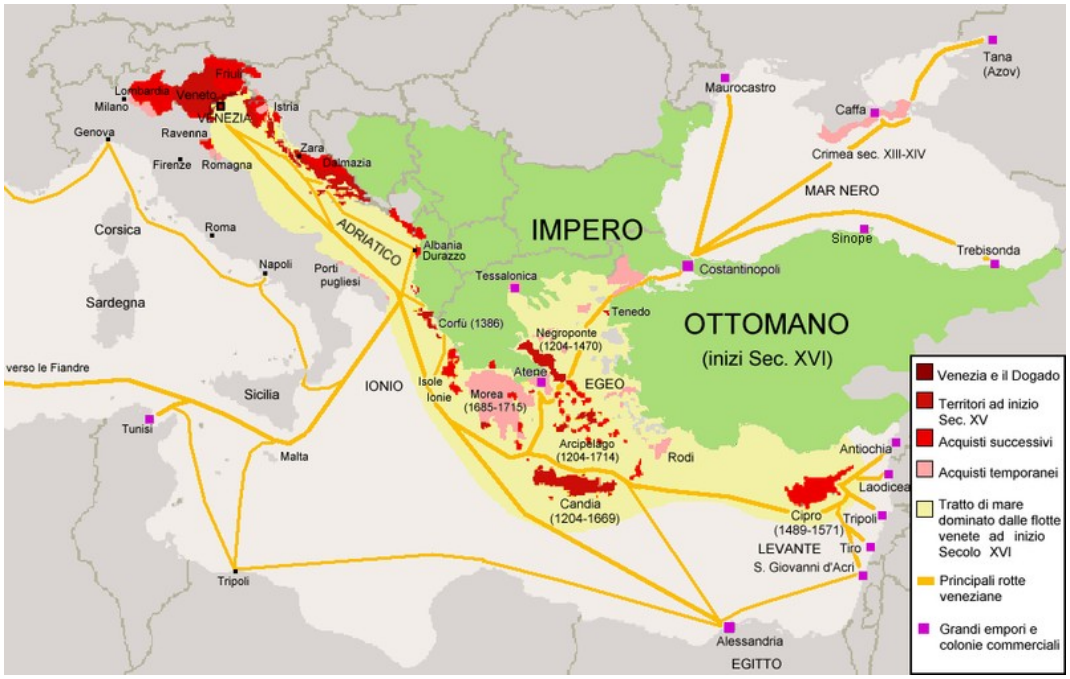


Figure 1.1

Map

Venice's territories (marked in red), 1400-1500



Figure 1.2

Gentile Bellini, *Procession in the Piazza San Marco*, 1496

Originally for the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista, Albergo, c. 1494-1505/10

Academia Gallery, Venice, Italy



Figure 1.3

Canaletto (Giovanni Antonio Canal) (1697-1798)

The Doge's Palace, Venice

Fitzwilliam Museum, England



Figure 1.4

Gentile Bellini

The Miracle of at the Bridge of San Lorenzo, 1500

Originally for the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista, Albergo, c. 1494-1505/10

Academia Gallery, Venice, Italy



Figure 1.5

Bird's Eye View of the Topkapi Palace (showing the second and the third courts)

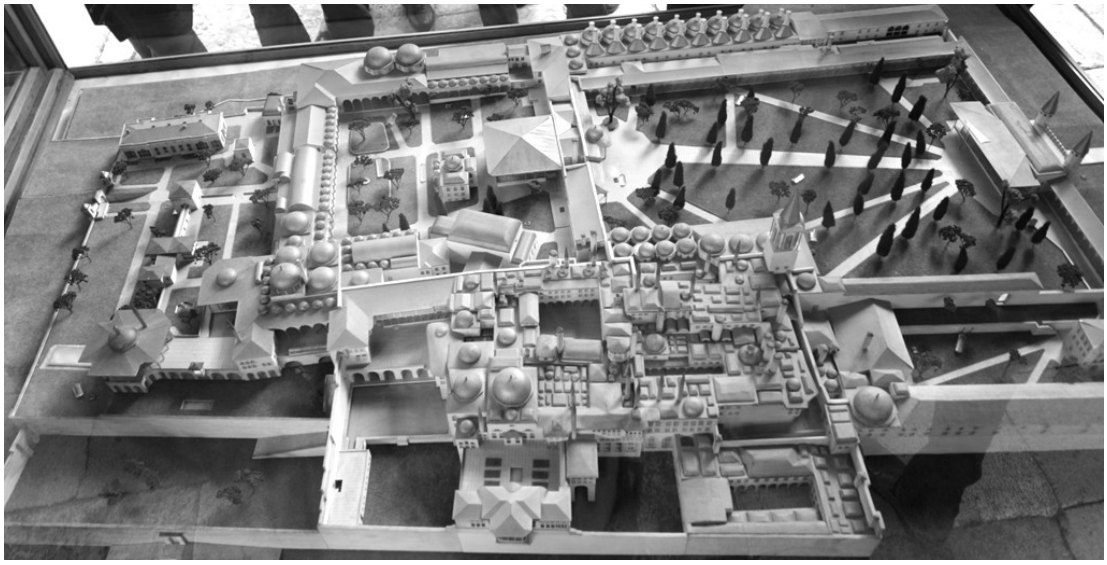


Figure 1.6

Model of the Topkapi Palace (The Second and Third Courts)

Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, Turkey



Figure 1.7

Cristoforo Buondelmonti

View of Constantinople, 1481

Ink drawing

(Showing the New Palace at the old acropolis adjacent to the ruins of the Byzantine Great Palace)

Collection of O. J. Sopranos

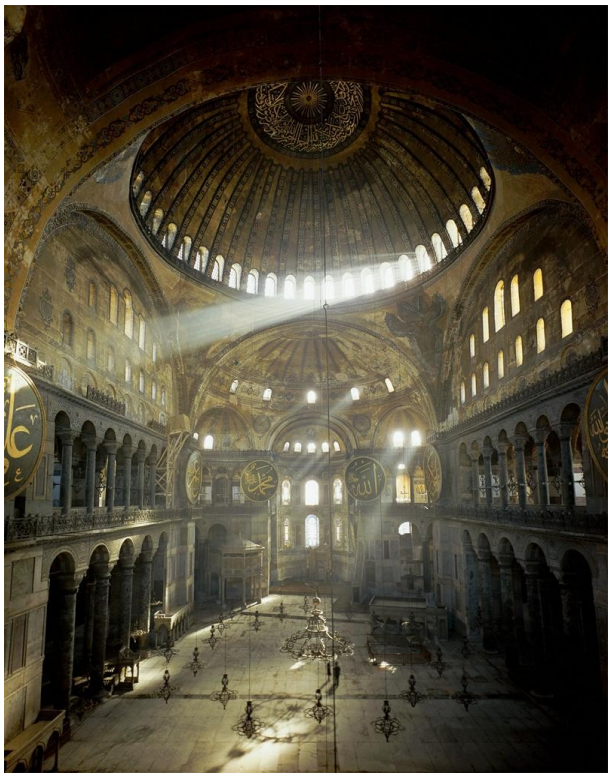




Figure 1.8

Church of Hagia Sophia, 532-537 (photos in public domain)

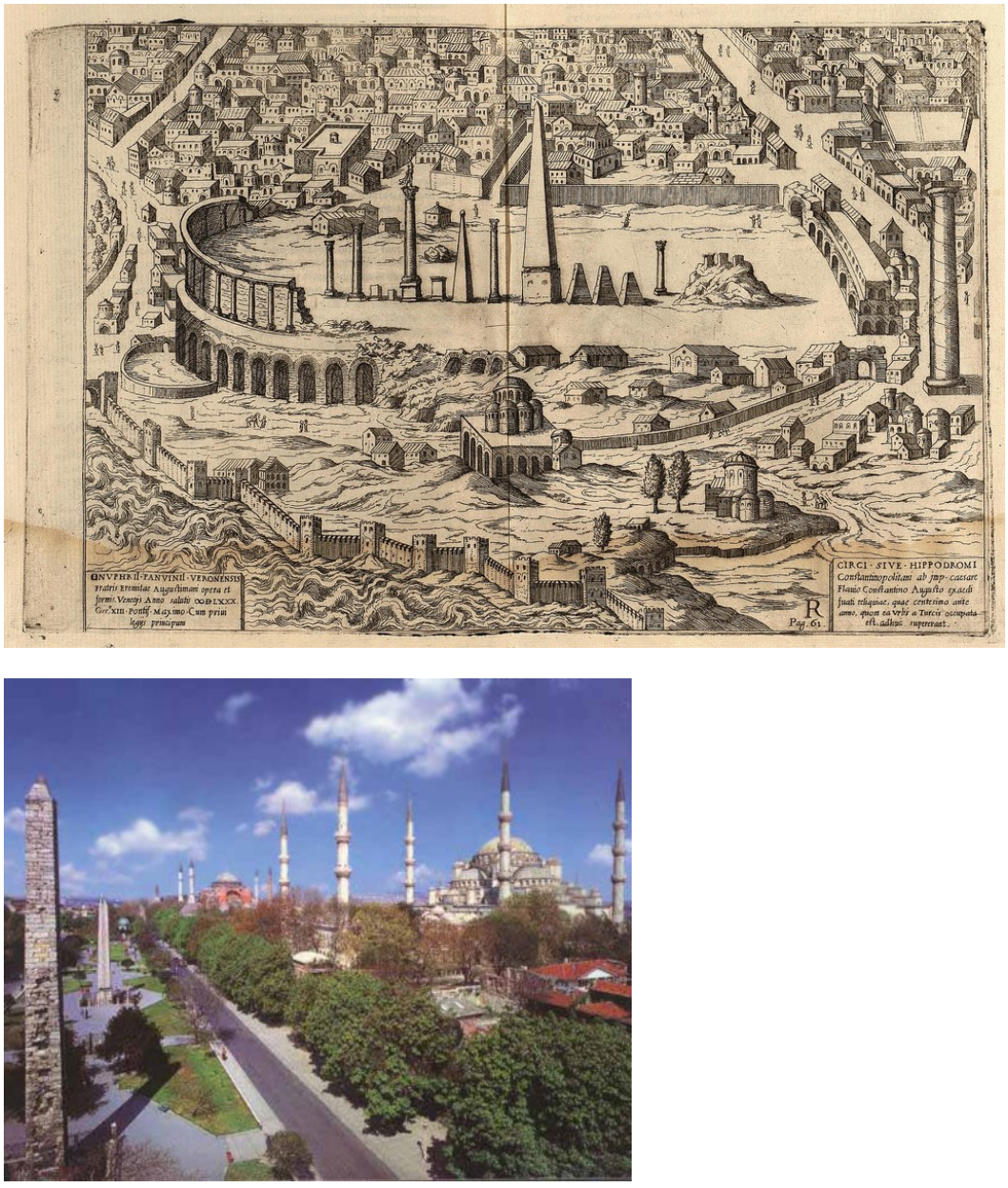


Figure 1.9

Imperial Hippodrome in Constantinople

Plate from: *De ludis circensibus, libri II. De triumphis, liber unus*, 1600

Author: Onuphrii Panvinii Veronensis,

Publisher: J.B. Ciottum Cenensem (Venice)



Figure 1.10

Relic of the Right Arm of Saint John the Baptist

Reliquary: 14-15 Ct.

Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, Turkey

Inscription:

Around the wrist: AYTH H XEIP ECTI IΩANNOY TOY BAΠTICTOY.
On the index finger: IΔE O AMNOC TOY ΘEOY.
At the elbow: ΔEYCHC (ΔEYCIC) ΔOYΛOY TOY ΘEOY ΔANIYΛ.

Translation:

Around the wrist: This is the arm of John the Baptist.
On the index finger: Behold the Lamb of God.
At the elbow: A prayer of the servant of God Daniel.

Source:

http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/show_document.php?do_id=726&lang=en



Figure 1.11

Bertoldo di Giovanni, *Medal of Mehmed II* (reverse), 1480 (?)

British Museum, London, England



Figure 1.12

Persian, after Italian model

The Virgin and Child, late 15th Ct., 27.3 x 23.5 cm

Istanbul University Library (FI422. Fol. 17b)



Figure 1.13

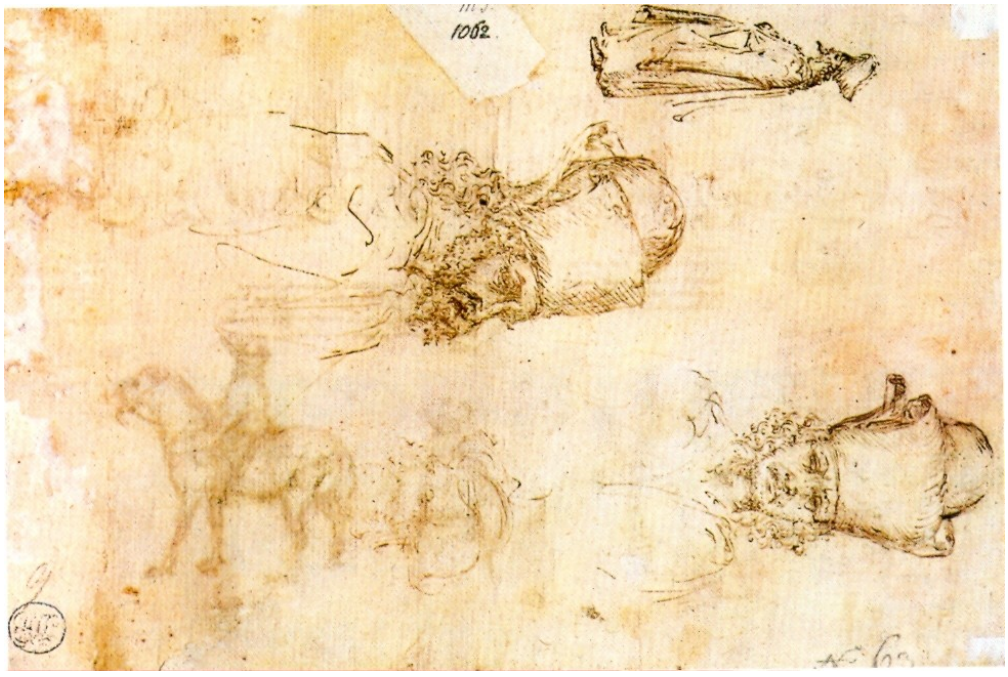
Gentile Bellini, *The Virgin and Child with Donors*, 1460s

Tempera on wood (transferred on canvas), 73.5 x 45.5 cm

Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museun zu Berlin (1180)



A. Recto

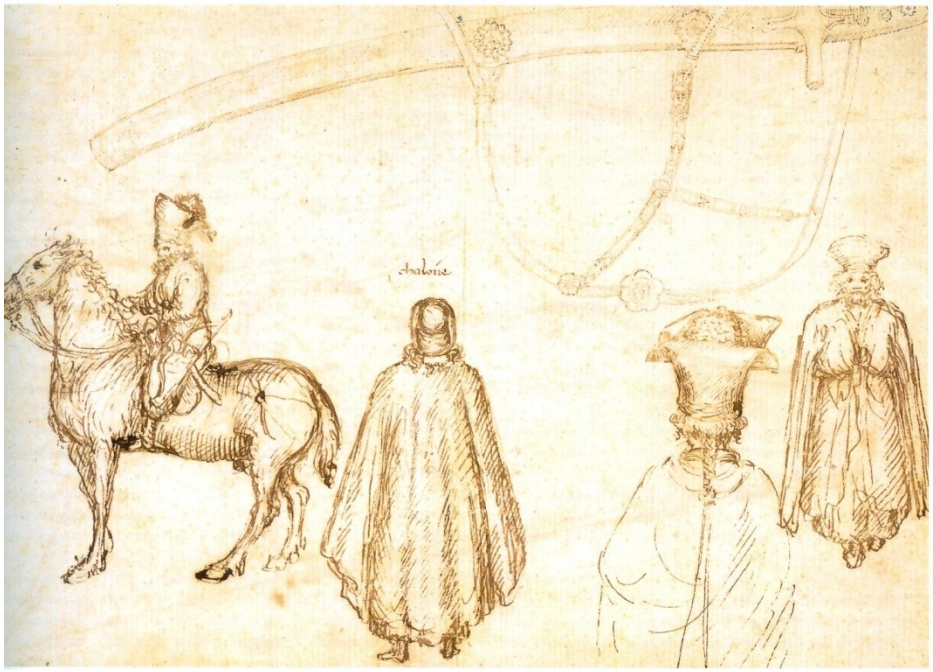


B. Verso

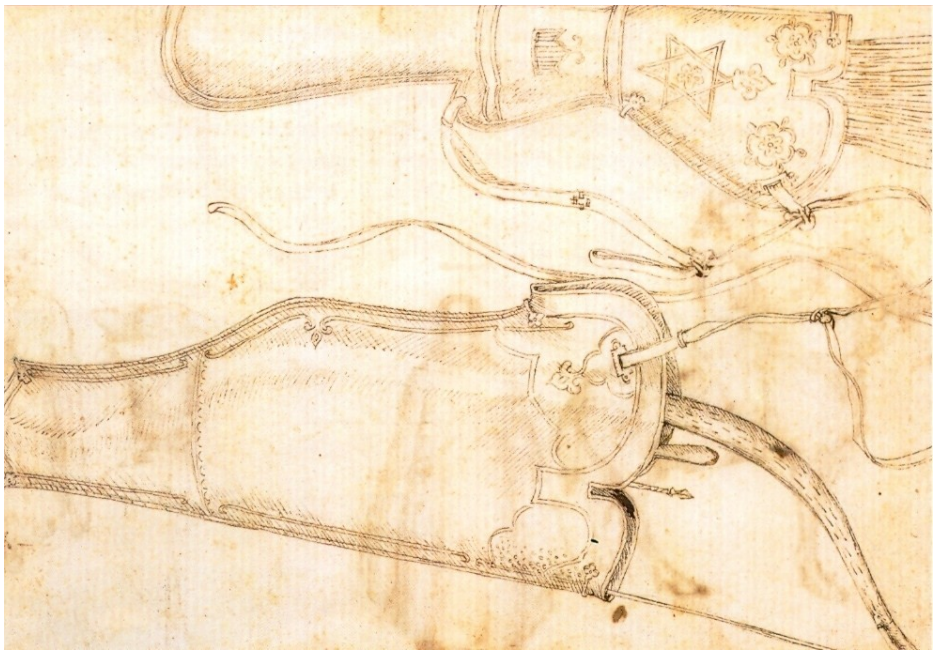
Plate 1.14, A & B, 20 x 28.9 cm

Pisanello (Antonio di Puccio Pisano), *Studies of Emperor John VIII Palaeologus*, 1438-1439

Musée du Louvre, Paris, France (MI 1062)



A. Recto



B. Verso

Plate 1.15, A & B, 18.9 x 26.5 cm

Pisanello (Antonio di Puccio Pisano), *Studies of Emperor John VIII Palaeologus*, 1438-1439

The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL (1961.331r)



Plate 1.16

Pisanello (Antonio di Puccio Pisano), *Portrait of Emperor John VIII Palaeologus*, 1438-1439

25.8 x 19 cm

Musée du Louvre, Paris, France (2478)



Plate 1.17

Pisanello (Antonio di Puccio Pisano), *Medal of Emperor John VIII Palaeologus*, 1438-1439

Diameter 10.4 cm

Münzkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (18200203)



Plate 1.18

Portrait of Emperor John VIII Palaeologus

Tempera on Vellum

Library of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt (cod. 2123, fol. 30v)

Illustrations for Chapter 2



Figure 2.1

Map of the Byzantine Empire from 527 to 1360

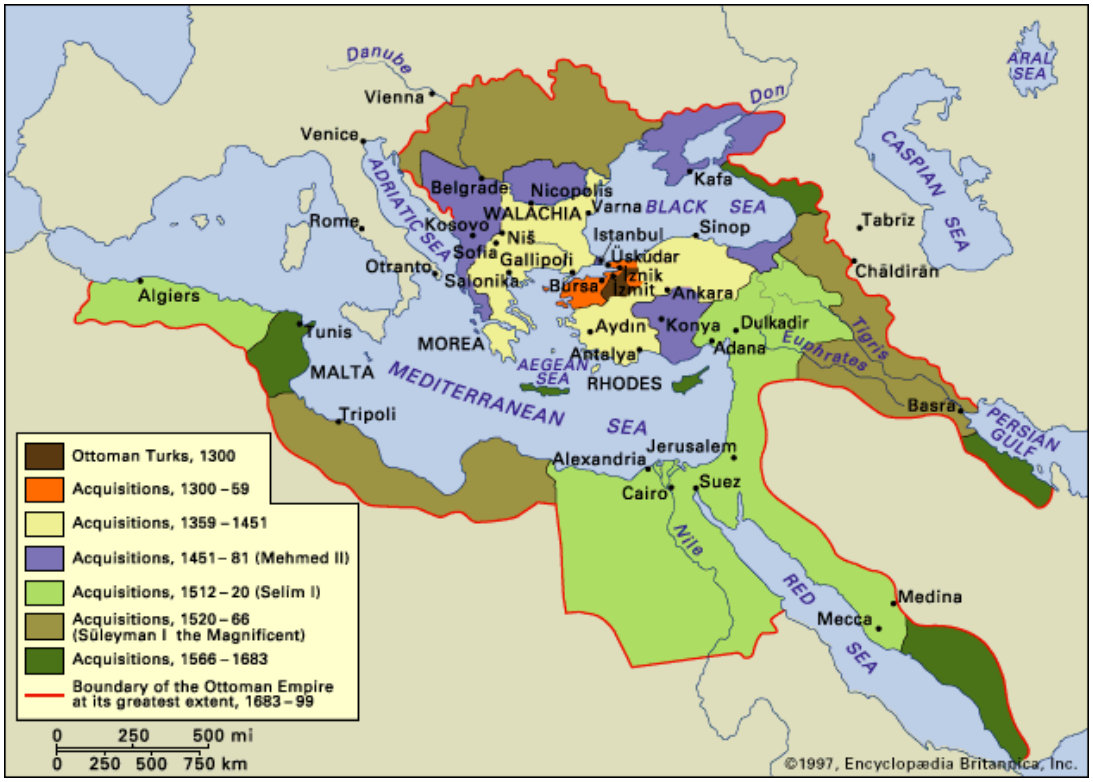


Figure 2.2

Map of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1699

Illustrations for Chapter 3

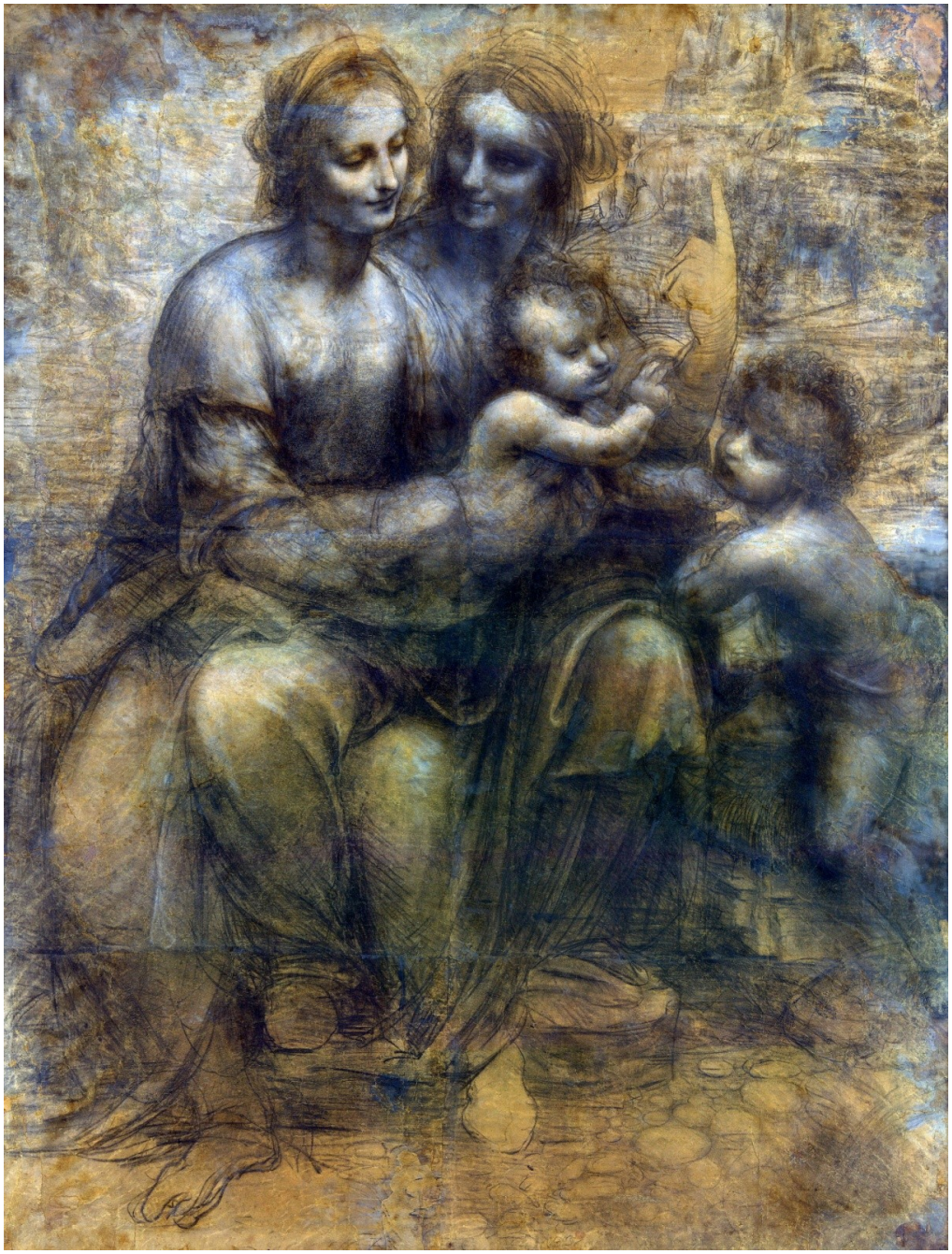


Figure 3.1

Leonardo da Vinci, *The Burlington House Cartoon*, ca. 1499-1500

British Museum, London, England



Figure 3.2

Benozzo Gozzoli, *Youthful Saint in a Niche*, 1450-1452

British Museum, London, England





Figure 3.3

Benozzo Gozzoli

Study for the Patriarch Isaac, 1469-1474

National Gallery of Scotland in Edinburgh



Figure 3.4

Filippino Lippi

Two Heavily Draped Men

Devonshire Collection in Chatsworth, England



Figure 3.5

Vittore Carpaccio and Workshop

Two Youths and an Old Man (workshop study)

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, England



Figure 3.6

Vittore Carpaccio and Workshop

St. Ursula Taking Leave of Her Parents, detail of the painting *Meeting and Departure of the Betrothed*, c. 1490-1500

Accademia Galleries, Venice



Figure 3.7

Pietro Perugino

Head of a Bearded Man (preparatory cartoon)

Christ Church, Oxford, England



Figure 3.8

Giovanni Bellini and Workshop

St. Paul

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, England



Figure 3.9

Pietro Perugino

Lamentation, 1495

Palazzo Pitti, Florence, Italy

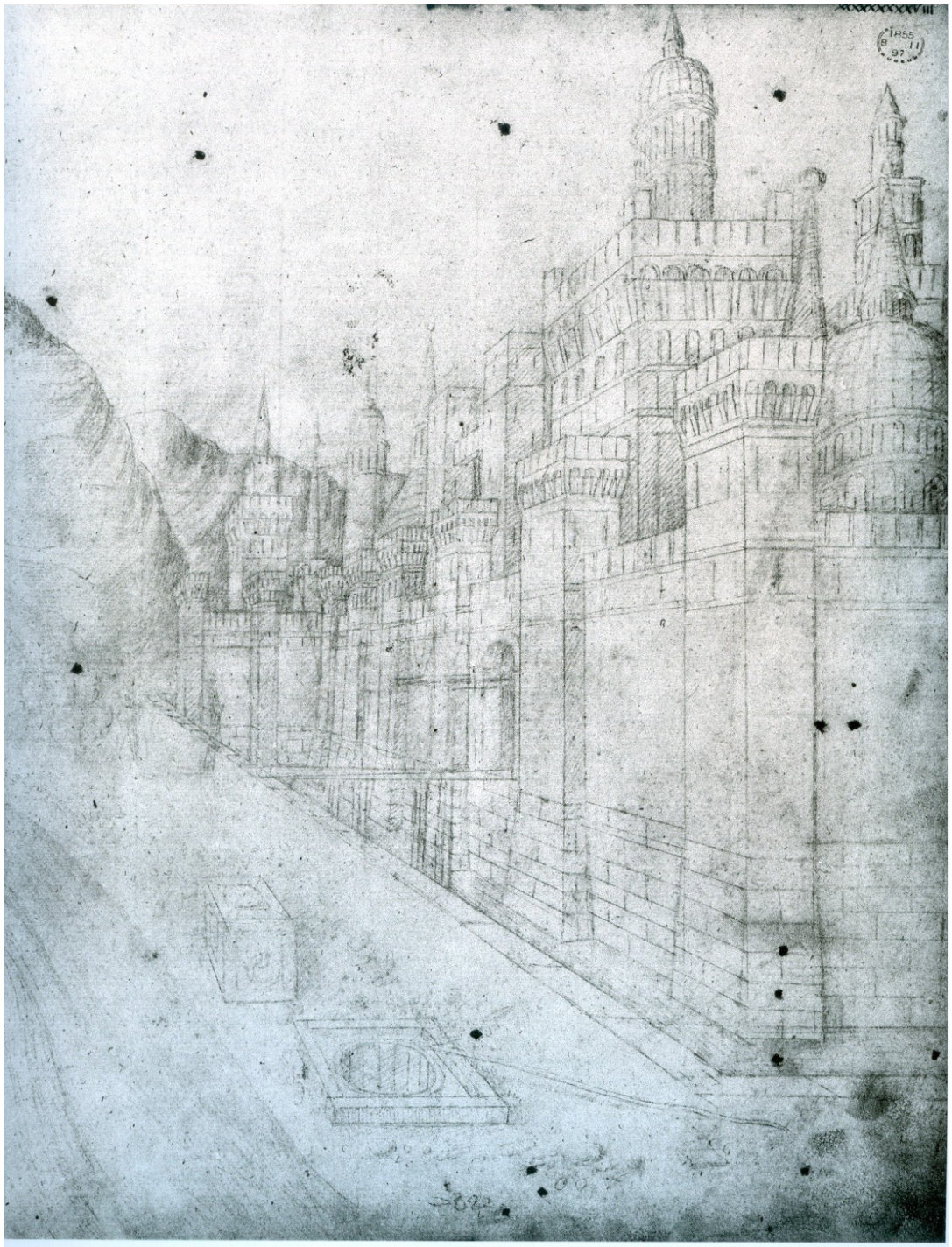


Figure 3.10

Jacopo Bellini, *City Walls with Well*

British Museum, London, England



Figure 3.11

Jacopo Bellini

Adoration of the Magi

Musée du Louvre, Paris, France

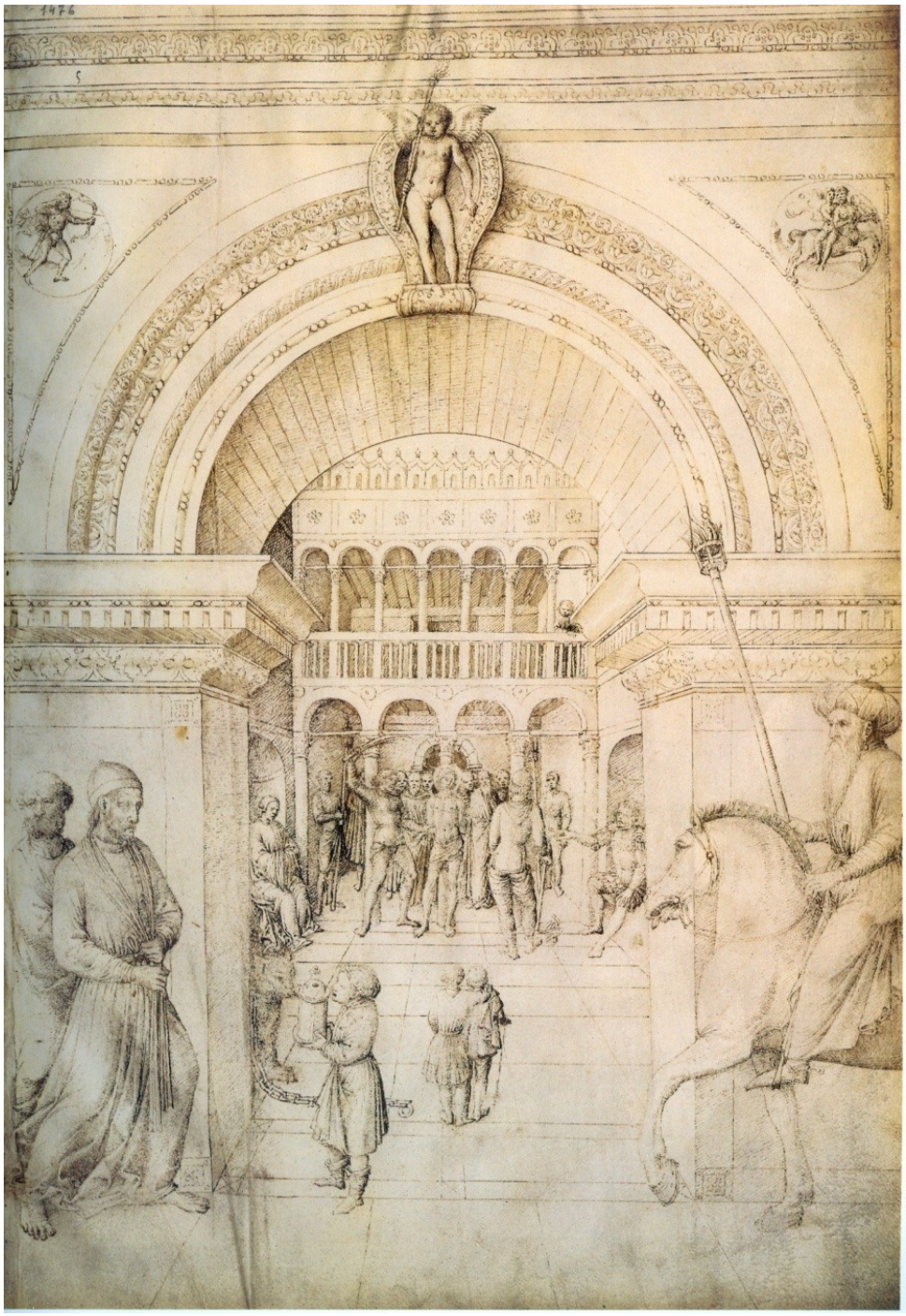


Figure 3.12

Jacopo Bellini

Flagellation by Torchlight

Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



Figure 3.13

Andrea Mantegna, *Judith*, 1491

Uffizi, Florence, Italy



Figure 3.14

Vittore Carpaccio, *Portrait of a Middle-Aged Man*

British Museum, London, England



Figure 3.15

Aqqoyunlu (?) Warrior, 15th Ct.

Freer Gallery, Washington, DC



Figure 3.16

Mir ‘Ali Shir and Mir ‘Ali (attr. to), *Portrait of a Calligrapher*, c. 1544-1545, Iran

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



Figure 3.17

Standing Youth in a Cape, late 16th Ct., Iran

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Figure 3.18

Risa Abbasi (c. 1565-1635), *Lady with a Fan*, c. 1590-1592, Iran

Freer Gallery, Washington, DC



Figure 3.19

Muhammad Haravi, *Young Prince*, mid-16th Ct, Iran

Freer Gallery, Washington, DC



Figure 3.20

Rålamb Costume Book

Acquired by the Swedish diplomat Claes Rålamb in 1657-1658 in Constantinople

Swedish Royal Library, Stockholm, Sweden



A.



B.

Figure 3.21

A. Leonardo da Vinci, *Portrait of Ginevra de' Benci*, c. 1470s

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

B. Paolo Uccello, Portrait of a Lady, c. 1450s

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Figure 3.22

Portrait of Mehmed II's First Wife Sitt Hatun, 1449

Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana (Gr. 516, fols. 2v-3r), Venice



Figure 3.23

Portrait of Mehmed II's First Wife Sitt Hatun and Her Brother Melik Arslan, 1449

Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana (Gr. 516, fols. 2v-3r), Venice



Figure 3.24

Mehmed II Smelling a Rose (so-called Sinan Portrait), ca. 1480

Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul



Figure 3.25

Album (*muraqqa*), second-half 16th Century, Iran

Fondo G. Nani, Inv. Cod. Marc. Or. 94 (=64)

Biblioteca Nationale Marciana, Venice



Figure 3.26

A Young Woman with a Spray of Flowers, 1575

Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, DC



Figure 3.27

Félix Bonfils (1831 – 1885)

Druze Woman

Image in public domain



Figure 3.28

Hans Memling, *Portrait of Maria Portinari*, c. 1470

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Figure 3.29

Cesare Vecellio, *Habiti Antichi et Moderni*, 1590-1598



Figure 3.30

Fresco of Pope Innocent III, c.1219

Cloister of Sacro Speco (Holy Cave), Subiaco, Italy



Figure 3.31

Raphael

Fresco of Gregory IX (portrait likeness of Julius II), 1508-1512

Stanza della Segnatura, Vatican Palace, Italy



Figure 3.32 (A)

A *sikke*-style turban

Mevlana Tomb, Anatolia, Turkey



Figure 3.32 (B)

A *sikke*-style turban

Mevlana Tomb, Konya, Turkey



Figure 3.33

Bertoldo di Giovanni

Medal of Mehmed II (reverse), 1480 (?)

British Museum, London, England



Figure 3.34

Dogaressa, 1575

Album amicorum, Egerton 1192

British Library, London, England



Figure 3.35

Dogaressa, 1575

Album amicorum, Addington 15699

British Library, London, England



Figure 3.36

Mücevveze Turban

Tomb sculpture, Istanbul, Turkey

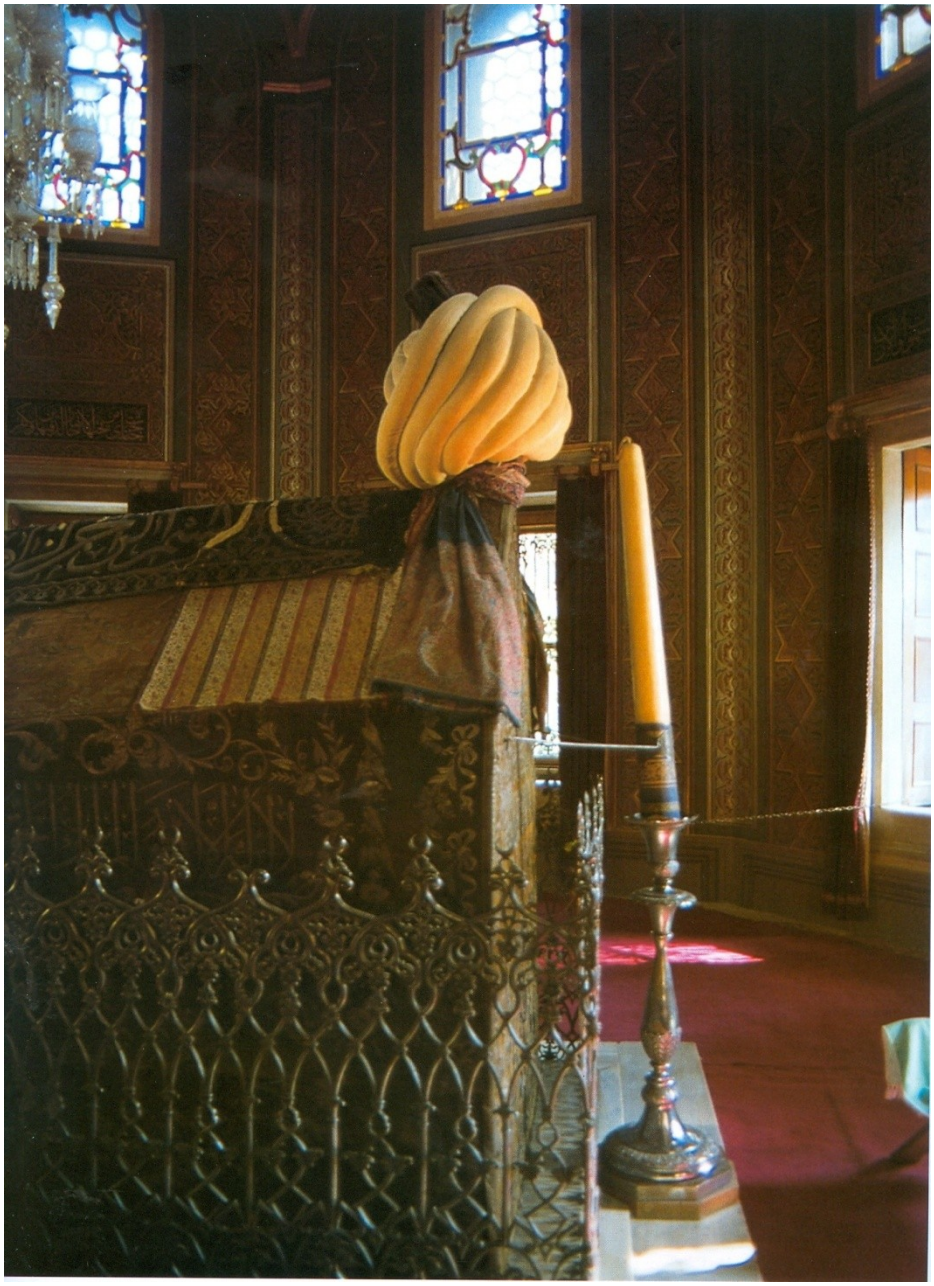


Figure 3.37

Örf-style turban at Mehmed II's turban at his tomb

Istanbul, Turkey



Figure 3.38

Bernardino Pinturicchio, *Disputation of Saint Catherine*, 1492-1495

Borgia Apartment, Vatican Palace, Italy



Figure 3.39

Bernardino Pinturicchio

Arrival of Pius in Ancona, 1505-1507

Piccolomini Library, Siena, Italy



Figure 3.40

Cesare Vecellio, *Habiti Antichi et Moderni*, 1590-1598



Figure 3.41

Cesare Vecellio, *Habiti Antichi et Moderni*, 1590-1598



Figure 3.42

Dīvān-i Nādirī, 1572-1573

Topkapi Palace Museum Collection, TSK, H 899, fol. 4



Figure 3.43

Antonio Tempesta, *Ottoman Sultan and His Court*, c. 1640



Figure 3.44

Cover of *Serpuşlar*



Figure 3.45

Rålamb Costume Book, Janissary

Acquired by the Swedish diplomat Claes Rålamb in 1657-1658 in Constantinople

Swedish Royal Library, Stockholm, Sweden



Figure 3.46

Cesare Vecellio, *Habiti Antichi et Moderni*, 1590-1598



Figure 3.47

Cesare Vecellio, *Habiti Antichi et Moderni*, 1590-1598



Figure 3.48

Bust Portrait of Mehmed II, ca. 1480

Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, Turkey



Figure 3.49

Timur Enthroned, Zafar-Nâmeh (Book of Timur's Victories), c. 1480s

John Work Garret Collection, John Hopkins University, Baltimore



Figure 3.50

Chihil Sutun Palace, 1647, rebuilt in 1706 after a fire

Esfahan, Iran

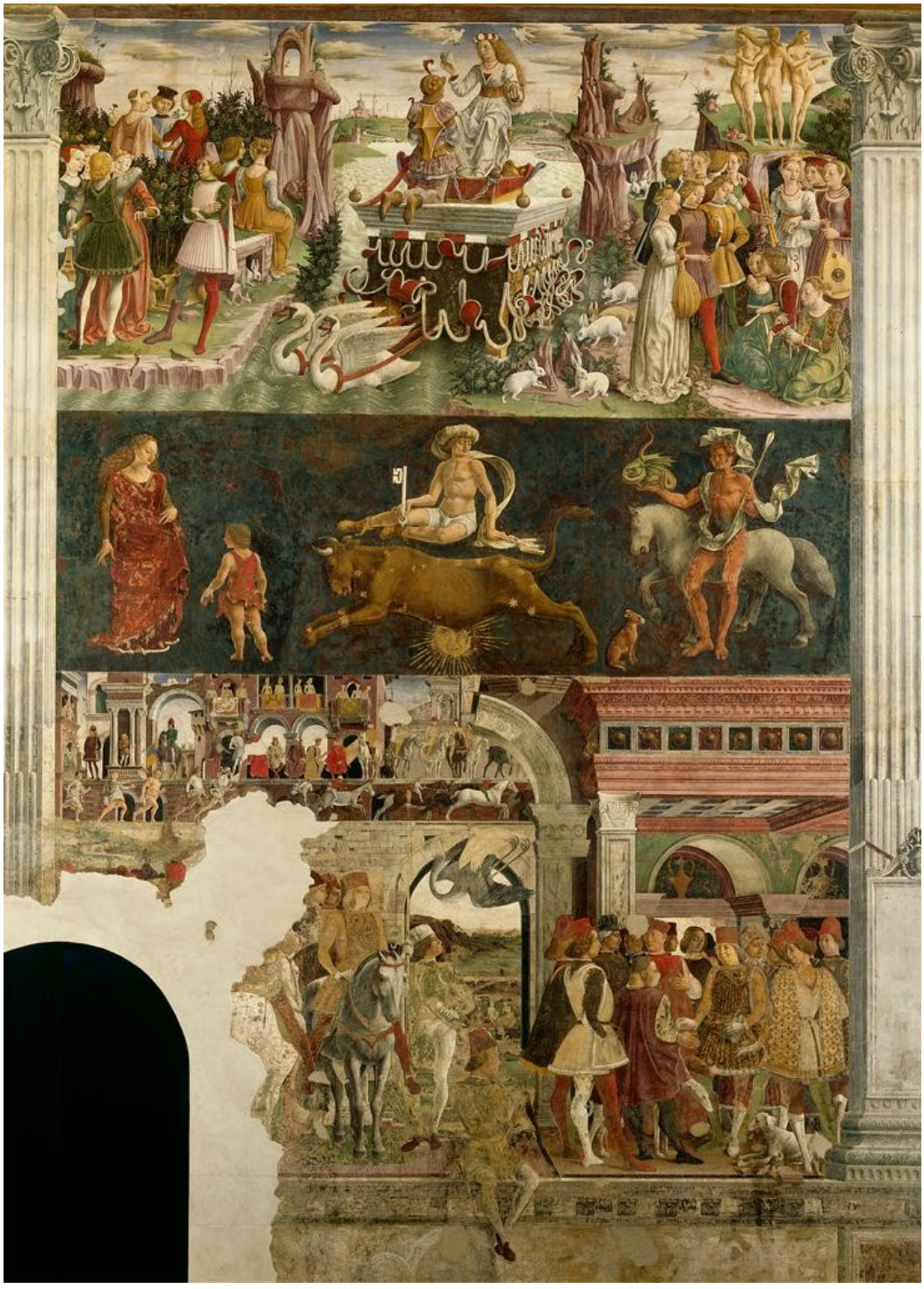


Figure 3.51

Francesco del Cossa, *Salone dei Mesi. Month of April*, 1469-1470

Palazzo Schifanoia, Ferrara, Italy

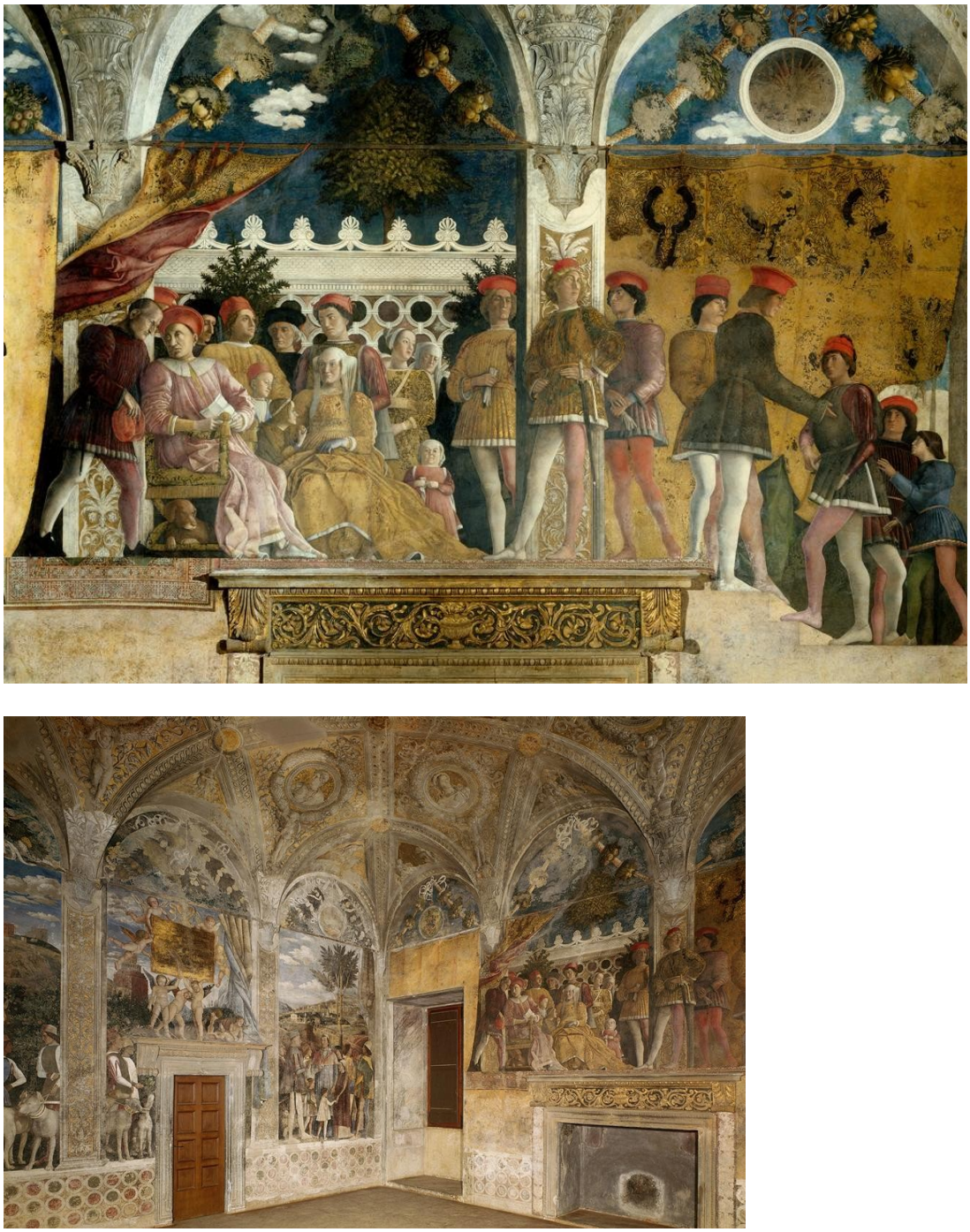


Figure 3.52

Andrea Mantegna, *Ludovico Gonzaga, His Family and Court*, 1465-1474

Camera Picta (Camera degli sposi), Palazzo Ducale, Mantua, Italy



Figure 3.53

Silk Velvet Ceremonial Kaftan, 16th Ct.

Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, Turkey



Figure 3.54

Portrait of Mehmed II, ca. 1480s (?) with later additions

Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, Turkey



Figure 3.55

Tomb Sculpture featuring cylindrical cap *zerrîn*

Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, Turkey



Figure 3.56

Cylindrical cap *zerrîn* worn by Imperial Pages

Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, Turkey



Figure 3.57

An Imperial page wearing cylindrical cap *zerrîn*

Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, Turkey



Figure 3.58

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres

Portrait of Madame Moitessier, 1851

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC



Figure 3.59

Edouard Manet

Plum Brandy, 1877

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC



Figure 3.60

Attributed to Domenico Veneziano, *Profile of a Man*, ca. 1440-1442

Musée des Beaux-Arts, Chambery, France



Figure 3.61

Masaccio, *Profile of a Man*, ca. 1426-1428

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston



Figure 3.62

Pisanello (Antonio di Puccio Pisano)

Emperor Sigismund of Luxemburg, 1433

Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



Figure 3.63

Gentile Bellini

Seated Scribe (infrared reflectogram), ca. 1480

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston

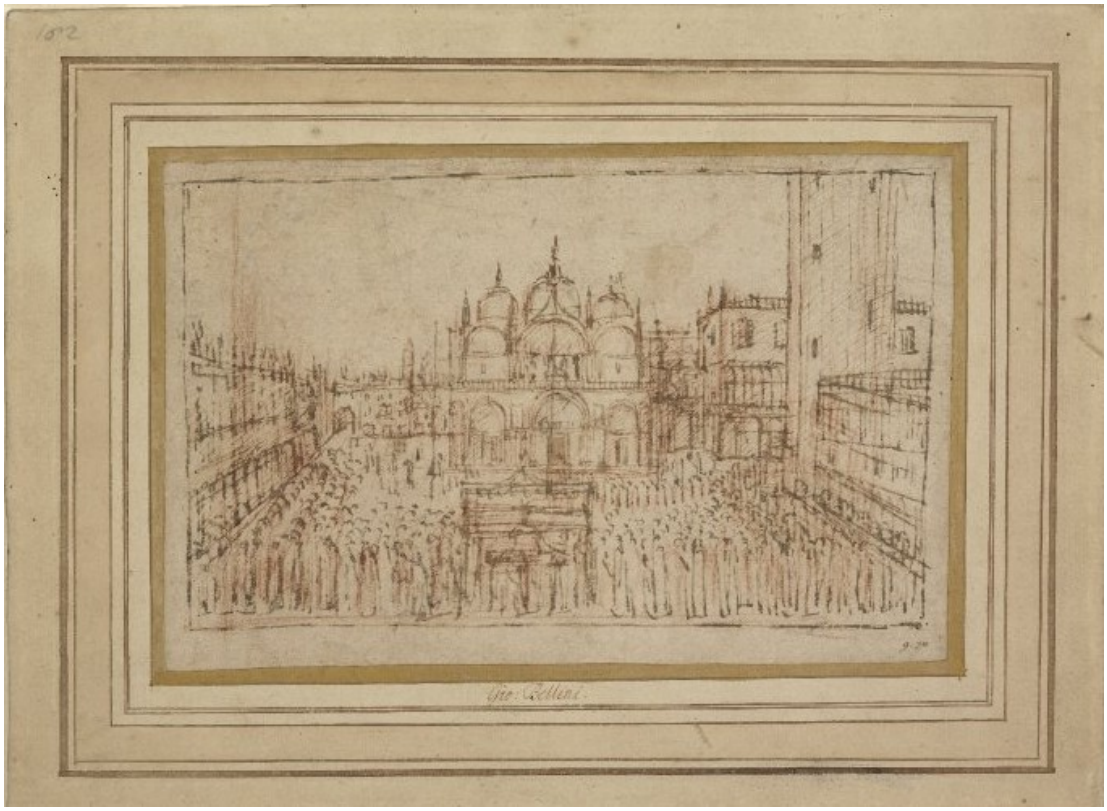


Figure 3.64

Gentile Bellini

Procession in Piazza S. Marco

British Museum, London, England

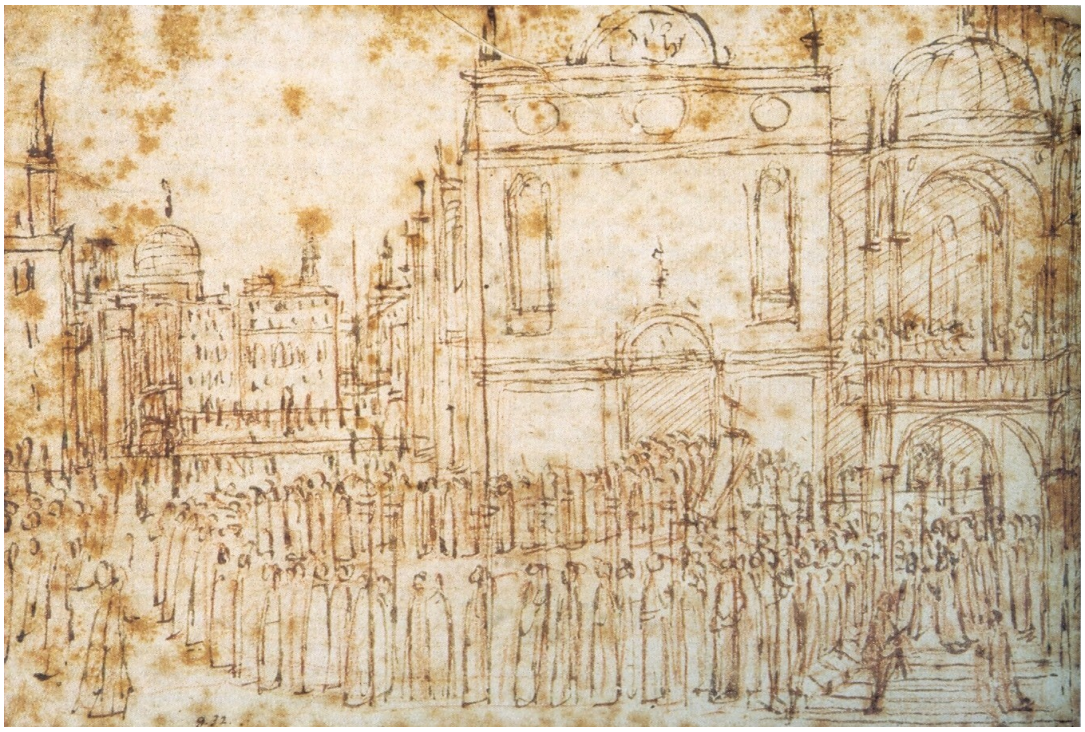


Figure 3.65

Gentile Bellini

Procession before Santa Maria della Carità

Duke of Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth, England



Figure 3.66

Gentile Bellini and Workshop, *Standing Woman*

Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Boston



Figure 3.67

Andrea Pisano

Painter, c. 1337-1343

Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence, Italy



Figure 3.68

Andrea Pisano

Sculptor, c. 1337-1343

Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence, Italy



Figure 3.69

Unknown Umbrian artist

Garzone (boy) copying a pattern book, early 15th ct.



Figure 3.70

Workshop of Maso Finiguerra, *Youth Sketching on a Tablet*, c. 1450

British Museum, London, England



Figure 3.71

Giorgione

Three Philosophers (detail), 1508-1509

Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria


LIBRO PRIMO DELLA NATVRALE HISTORIA DI. C. PLINIO SECONDO TRADOCTA IN LINGVA FIORENTINA PER CHRISTOPHORO LANDINO FIORENTINO AL SERENISSIMO FERDINANDO RE DI NAPOLI.

PREFATIONE

ITERMINAI O GIOCONDISSIMO imperadore con epistola forse di troppa licētia narrarti elibri della historia naturale: opera nouella alle muse romane: nata apresso di me nel lultima genitura. Sia adunq; questa prefatiõe uenissima di te mētre che gia inuecchia nel gradissimo tuo padre: per che usando el uerso di Catullo mio compatriota tu soleui pure stimare qualche chosa le mie ciãcie. Tu conosci questa castrense & militare parola. Et lui chome tu sai mutando le prime syllabe si fece alquanto piu duro che non uolea essere stimato da tuoi familiari & serui. Per questo adunq; determinai scriuerti: & ãchora per che le nostre chose appanschino & sieno manifeste p questa mia audacia maxime dolẽdoti tu che pel passato non lhabbi facto in una altra nostra procace epistola. Et accio che tutti glhuomini sappino quanto di pari lompeno techo uiua: Tu elquale hai triomphato & se stato censore & fei uolte cõsolo & participe della tribunitia potesta: Se stato prefecto del pretorio: ilche hai facto piu nobile che tutti glaltri magistrati: perche per piacere a tuo padre & allordine equestre lacceptasti: Et tutte queste cose per rispecto della republica hai facto: Et me chome nel contubernio castrense tractasti? Et certo niẽte ha mutato inte lamplitudine & grandezza della tua fortuna: se non che tanto piu possi & uogla giouare: quãto quella e maggiore. Adũq; bẽche a tutti glaltri huomini sia aperta la uia a impetrare ogni chosa da te uenerãdoti: Niente di meno solo laudacia fa che io piu familiarmente te honori. Questa audacia adunq; imputerai a te medesimo: & a te medesimo nel nostro fallo perdonerai. Io mistroppicciai la faccia: & niente di meno nessuno profitto ho facto: perche per unaltra uia mapparisti grande: & di lontano mi rimuoui con le faccelline del tuo ingegno. Et certo in nexuno piu sfolgora quella: laquale piu ueramente e decta in te che in altri forza deloquentia. In te e quella facundia che alla tribunitia potesta si conuiene: Con q̃ta risonantia tuoni tu le laude paterne? Cõ quanta (non sanza amore) dimostri quelle di tuo fratello? Quanto se excellente & sublime nella poetica faculta? O gran fecondita danimo. Certo hai trouato inche modo possi imitare tuo fratello. Ma queste chose chi potrebbe sanza paura considerare: hauendo a uenire al giudicio dellongegno tuo: maxime essendo quello dame prouocato? Certamente non sono in simile conditione quegli che publicano alchuno libro: & quegli che ate glinntolano. Impero che se io lo publicassi & non lo intitolassi ate: potresi dire perche leggi tu queste chose o imperadore? lequali sono scripte albasso uulgo & alla turba de glagriculton & de glartefici & a quegli che cõsumano elloro otio negli studii? Perche adunq; ti fa tu giudice: concio sia che quando io scriueuo questa opera: non thaueuo posto nella tauola doue sono descripti egiudici: Et eri di tanta excellentia: che non stimauo che tu ti degnassi scendere si basso? Preterea quando bene non fussi in si excelso grado: nientedimeno gli scriptori comunemente fuggono el giudicio de docti. Questo fa Cicerone: elquale e di tanta eloquentia: che puo sottomettere longegno al giuocho della fortuna: & quel

Figure 3.72

Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, c. 1470s

Ms. Lat. VI, 245 (=2976), fol. 3, Biblioteca Marciana, Venice, Italy



Figure 3.73

Aristotle, *Historia animalium*, *Portrait of Aristotle*, c. 1473-1480

Ms. Vat. Lat. 2094, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican, Italy



Figure 3.74

Pope Innocent IV's *Commentary on Papal Decrees*, *Portrait of Aristotle*, 15 June 1481

Ms. Mon. Typ. 1481, 2 (10), fol. IV, Landesbibliothek, Gotha, Germany



Figure 3.75

Antonello da Messina

St. Jerome in His Study, c. 1475

National Gallery of Art, London, England



Figure 3.76

Hans Holbein the Younger

Portrait of Erasmus of Rotterdam, 1523

Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



Figure 3.77

Albrecht Dürer

Portrait of Erasmus of Rotterdam, 1526



A.



B.

Figure 3.78

Vittore Carpaccio, *Vision of St. Augustine*, 1502

Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, Venice, Italy



Figure 3.79

Evangelist Mark

Lectionary, late 10th-early 11th Ct.

Ms. W530a, Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore



Figure 3.80

Four Evangelists, Gospels, Constantinople, c. 1300

Ms. 65, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles



Figure 3.81

Evangelist Mark, Gospels, Constantinople, c. 1300-1310

Ms. 70, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles



Figure 3.82

Evangelist Luke

Gospels, 13th-14th Ct.

Ms. W. 530f,g, Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore



Figure 3.83

Dioskorides, *De materia medica*, 1229

Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, Turkey



Figure 3.84

His Ministers Plead with the Sasanian King Hurmuzd to Forgive His Son Khusro, 1494-1495

Ms. Or. 6810, fol. 37v, British Library, London, England



Figure 3.85

Alexander and the Seven Sages of Ancient Greece, 1494-1495

Ms. Or. 6810, fol. 214r, British Library, London, England



Figure 3.86

Dream-Garden of the Great Persian Poets of the Past, 1486

Elliot 340, fol. 95 v, Bodlein Library, Oxford, England



Figure 3.87

Seated Artist, late 16th Ct., Iran

Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, DC



Figure 3.88

Saint Luke

Byzantine lectionary, late 14th-early 15th Ct.

Gr. 233, Holy Monastery of St. Catherine on Sinai



Figure 3.89

Rogier van der Weyden

St. Luke Drawing the Virgin, c.1435-1440

Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

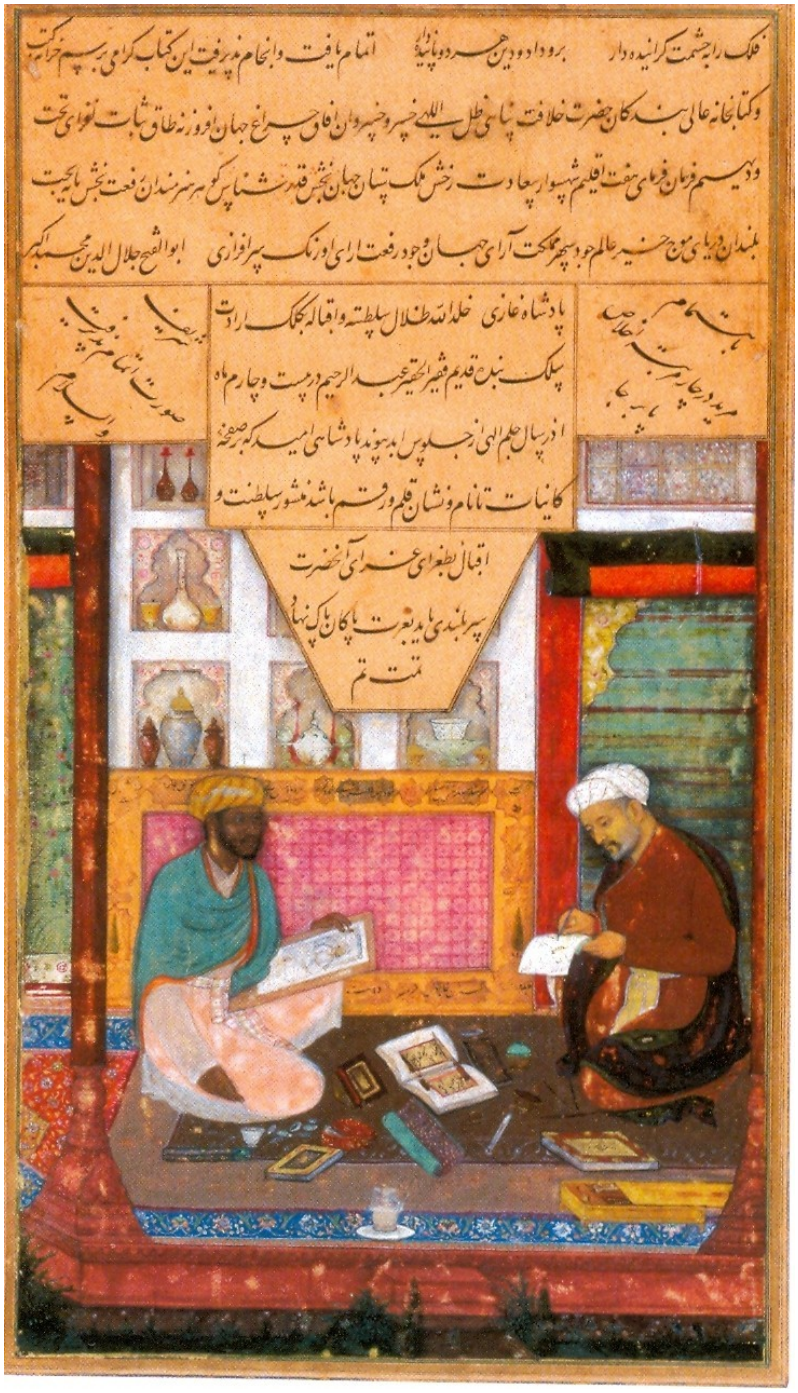


Figure 3.90

The Scribe "Amber Stylus" and the Painter Dawlat, 1610

Ms. Or. 12208, fol. 325v, British Library, London, England



Figure 3.90

Seated Artists, late 16th Ct., Iran

Freer Gallery of Art, Washington (left)

Kuwait National Museum (right)

Illustrations for Chapter 4



Figure 4.1

Mehmed II, 1575

Paolo Giovio, *Elogia Virorum Bellica Virtute Illustrium* (1575)

Illustrated by Tobias Stimmer (1539-1584)



Figure 4.2

Gentile Bellini

Portrait of Doge Andrea Vendramin with His Secretary and a Papal Nuncio, c. 1476 – 1478

The Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum



Figure 4.3

Infrared and ultraviolet photography, 1942, 1949, and 1971

National Gallery of Art, dossier



Figure 4.4

Mehmed II Smelling a Rose, ca. 1480

Watercolor on Paper

Topkapi Palace Museums, Istanbul



Figure 4.5

Bust Portrait of Mehmed II, ca. 1480

Watercolor and Gold on Paper

Topkapi Palace Museums, Istanbul



Figure 4.6

Pisanello (Antonio di Puccio Pisano), *Medal of Emperor John VIII Palaeologus*, 1438-1439

Diameter 10.4 cm

Münzkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (18200203)



Figure 4.7

Pisanello (Antonio di Puccio Pisano)

Medal of Leonello d'Este, *Marquis of Ferrara*, c. 1441

Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England (678-1865)



Figure 4.8

Pisanello (Antonio di Puccio Pisano), *Medal of Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, Lord of Rimini*, 1445

British Museum, London, England (M.9275)



Figure 4.9

Pisanello (Antonio di Puccio Pisano)

Medal of Alfonso V of Aragon, King of Naples, 1449

Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany (Inv.24)



Figure 4.10

Pisanello (Antonio di Puccio Pisano), *Leonello d'Este, Marquis of Ferrara*, 1444 (?)

Accademia Carrara, Comune di Bergamo, Italy (58 MR 00010)



Figure 4.11

Piero della Francesca

Sigismondo Malesta Lord of Rimini, 1451

The Louvre, Paris

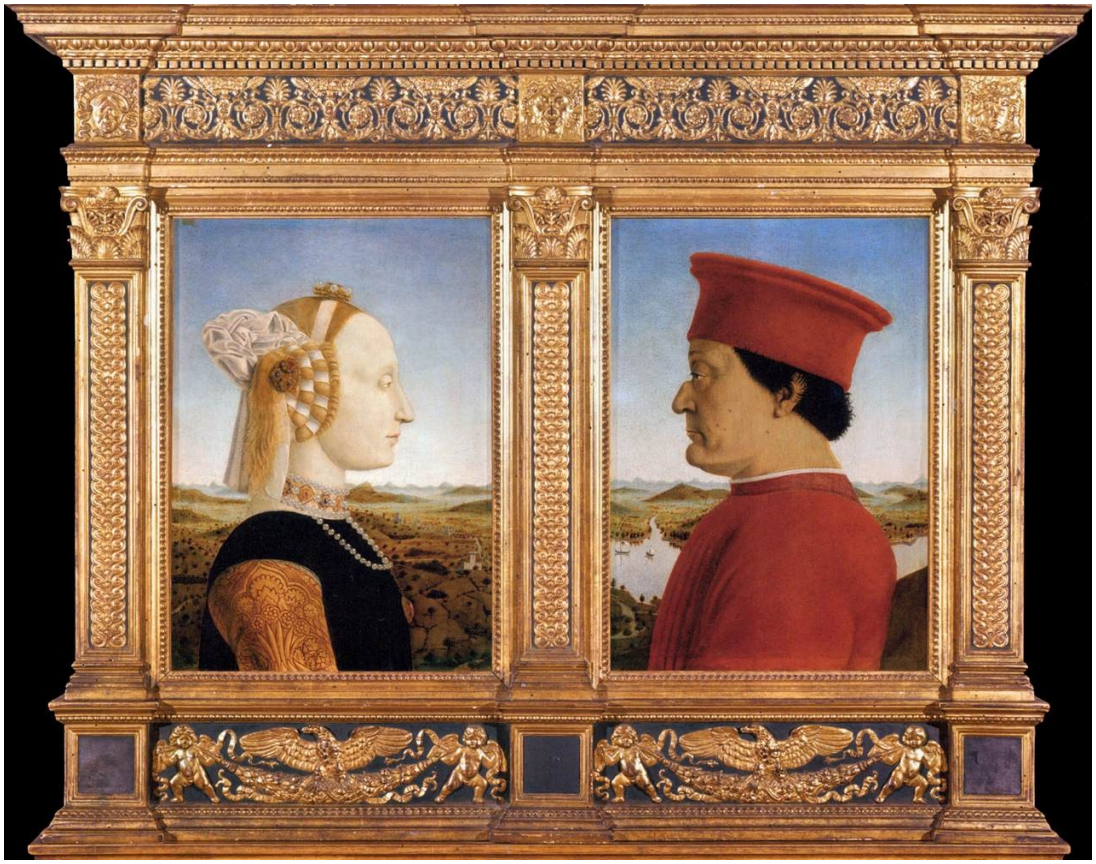


Figure 4.12

Piero della Francesca

Federico da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino and His Wife Battista Sforza, 1465-1466

Uffizi Gallery, Florence



Figure 4.13

Domenico Ghirlandaio

Giovanni de' Tornabuoni, 1488

Museo Thyssen-Boremisza, Madrid



Figure 4.14

Gentile Bellini

Doge Pasquale Malipiero, ca. 1460-1462

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



Figure 4.15

Gentile Bellini

Doge Giovanni Mocenigo, ca. 1478

Museo Correr, Venice



Figure 4.16

Sandro Botticelli

Portrait of a Youth Holding a Portrait Medal of Cosimo de' Medici, c.1474

Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy



Figure 4.17

Antonello da Messina

Portrait of a Man, c. 1475

Galleria Borgese, Rome



Figure 4.18

Andrea Mantegna

Portrait of Cardinal Ludovico Trevisan, ca. 1459-1460

Staatliche Museen, Berlin



Figure 4.19

Leonardo da Vinci

Portrait of Ginevra de' Benci, 1475

The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC



Figure 4.20

Leonardo da Vinci

Portrait of Cecilia Gallerani, 1489-1490

The Czartoryski Museum, in Krakow



Figure 4.21

Ambrogio de Predis

Portrait of Maximilian I, c. 1502

Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna



Figure 4.22

Ambrogio de Predis

Portrait of Bianca Maria Sforza, c.1493

The National Gallery, Washington



Figure 4.23

Ambrogio de Predis

Portrait of Beatrice d'Este, c.1491

The Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, Milan



Figure 4.24

Sandro Botticelli

Giuliano de' Medici, c. 1475

Accademia Carrara, Comune di Bergamo



Figure 4.25

Leonardo da Vinci, *Portrait of Isabella d'Este*, c. 1500

Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



Figure 4.26

Giovanni Bellini

Portrait of Doge Leonardo Loredan, 1501

National Gallery of Art, London



Figure 4.27

Map of the Timurid Empire, c. 1400



Figure 4.28

Zafar-Nameh (Book of Victories), *Timur Enthroned*

Bihzad's workshop in Herat, 1480s

John Hopkins University, Baltimore



Figure 4.29

Great Mongol *Shahnama,* c. 1330s

Shah Zaw Enthroned

The Arthur Sackler Gallery, Washington DC

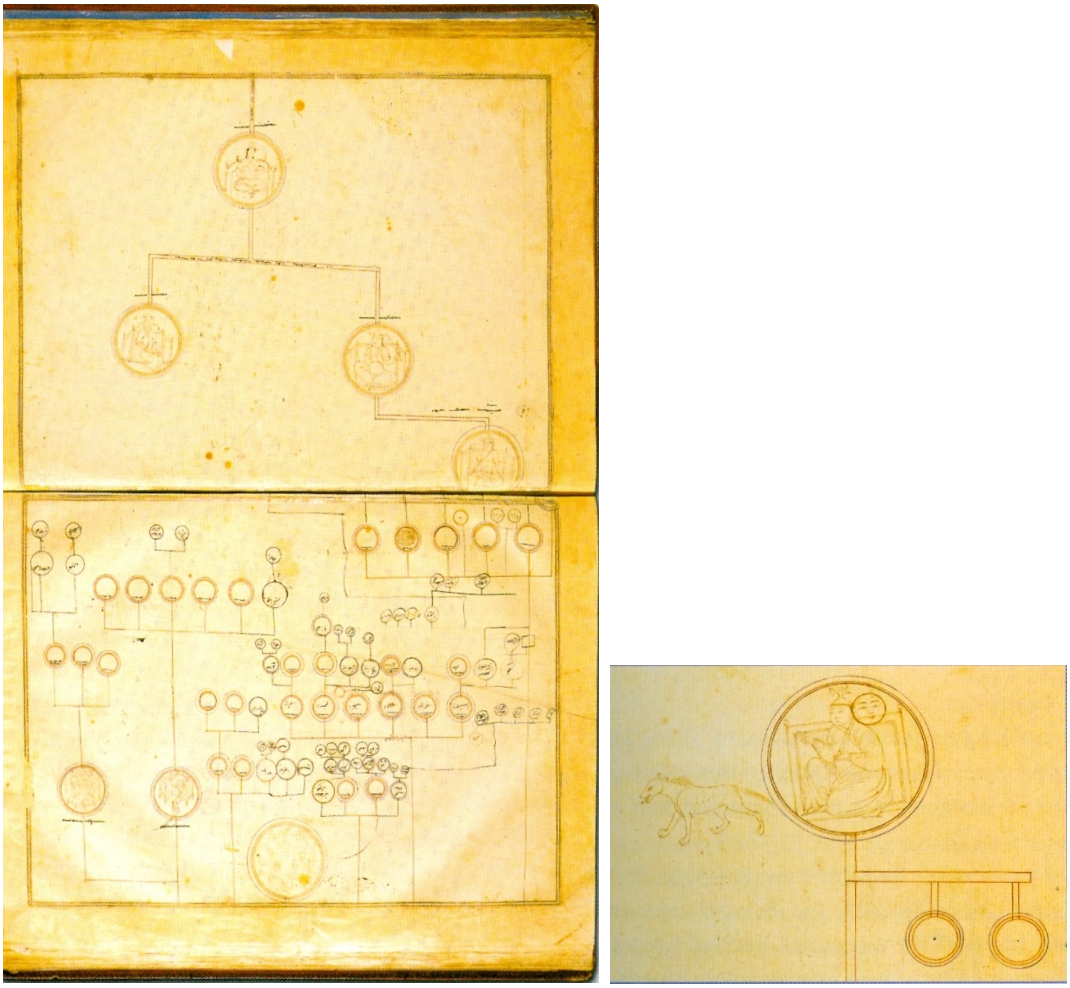


Figure 4.30

Timurid Genealogical Scroll, ca. 1405-1409

Mythical Ancestress Alanqoa, Detail

Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, Turkey



Figure 4.31

Timurid Genealogical Scroll, ca. 1405-1409

Timur Kneeling (r.1370-1405), Detail

Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, Turkey



Figure 4.32

Sultan Husayn Mirza Bayqara (r. 1470-1506)

The Arthur Sackler Museum, Harvard University



Figure 4.33

Muhammad Shaybani Khan (r.1500-1510)

Metropolitan Museum, New York



Figure 4.34

Portrait of Michael VII Doukas (r. 1071-1078), relabeled Nikephoros III Botaneiates (r. 1078-1081)

Bibliotheque Nationale de France, Paris



Figure 4.35

Portrait of Michael VII Doukas (r. 1071-1078), relabeled Nikephoros III Botaneiates (r. 1078-1081)

Bibliotheque Nationale de France, Paris



Figure 4.36

Byzantine Emperor Nikephoros Botaneiates Listening to the Monk

The Homilies of John Chrysostom, ca. 1078-1081



Figure 4.37

The Emperor Theodosius I (378-392) and His Court

The Obelisk of Theodosius I in the Hippodrome of Constantinople

Istanbul, Turkey



Figure 4.38

Mosaic of Emperor Constantine IX and Empress Zoe

Hagia Sophia, 11th Ct., Istanbul



Figure 4.39

Lionello d'Este's *Impresa*

On the reverse: the blind-folded lynx and inscription "Quae vides ne vide"

("Seeing these things, do not see them") refers to the diplomatic act of selective vision and

the power of the lynx to see through walls—judiciously blind and all seeing, c. 1440s



Figure 4.40

Pisanello (Antonio di Puccio Pisano)

Medal of Leonello d'Este, *Marquis of Ferrara*, 1444

Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England (A.165-1910)



Figure 4.41

Piero Cosimo de' Medici's *Impresa* "Semper"

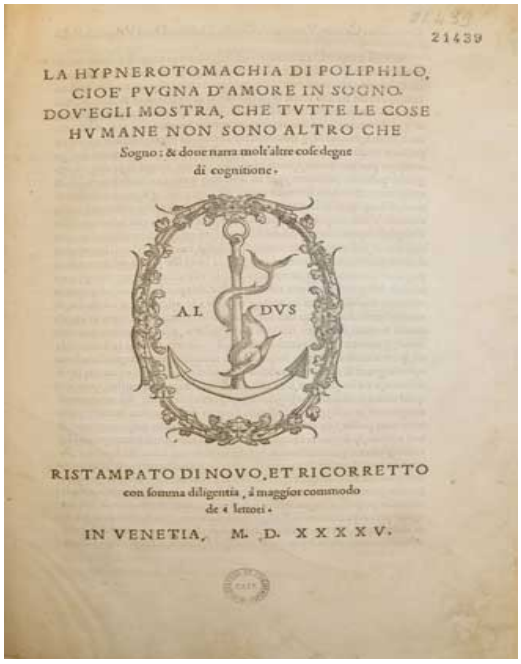


Figure 4.42

Aldo Manuzio's *Impresa*

Venice, 1545



Figure 4.43

Gentile Bellini: Example of *cartellino*

(left) *The Virgin and Child Enthroned* (ca. 1480)

GENTILIS. BELLINI. VENETI. EQVITIS (Gentile Bellini the Venetian, Knight)

The National Gallery, London

Figure 4.44

Giovanni Bellini: Example of *cartellino*

(right) *Madonna and Child (Madonna of the Pear)*

Accademia Carrara, Bergamo



Figure 4.45

Unidentified artist

Queen Elizabeth I of England (1533-1603)

Impresa elements are the column with the inscription “Stanco riposo e riposato affano” (“Tired, repose, and rest wheezing”) and a sieve.



Figure 4.46

The Pico Master

Printer Nicolaus Jenson

Pliny's *Historia naturalis*, 1472



Figure 4.47

Girolamo da Cremona

Printer Nicolaus Jenson, Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, 1478

Velins 700, Bibliotheque National, Paris



Figure 4.48

Façade of San Zaccaria, c. 1480

The façade completed by Mauro Codussi, Venice



Figure 4.49

Scuola Grande di San Marco, Façade, 1489-1495

Venice, Italy

The façade completed by Pietro Lombardo and Mauro Codussi



Figure 4.50

Alevisio Lamberti da Montagnana

Cathedral of Archangel Michael, 1505-1508

Moscow Kremlin, Russia

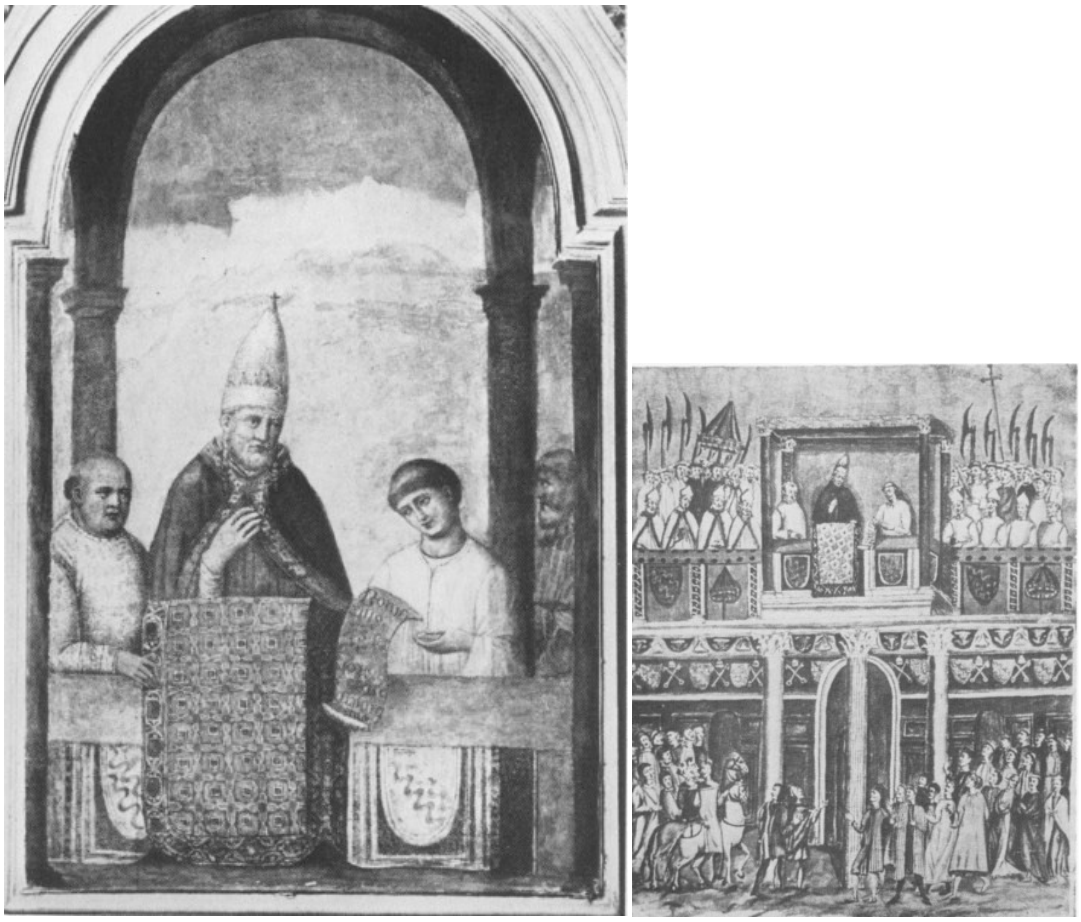


Figure 4.51

Pope Boniface VIII

The Lateran Loggia of Benediction, c. 1300

Reconstruction from: Charles Mitchell, "The Lateran Fresco of Boniface VIII," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 14, no. 1/2 (January 1, 1951): 1–6.



Figure 4.52

Pieter Coecke van Aelst (1502-1550) (published at Antwerp in 1553)

Süleyman the Magnificent Processing through the Hippodrome

Engraving

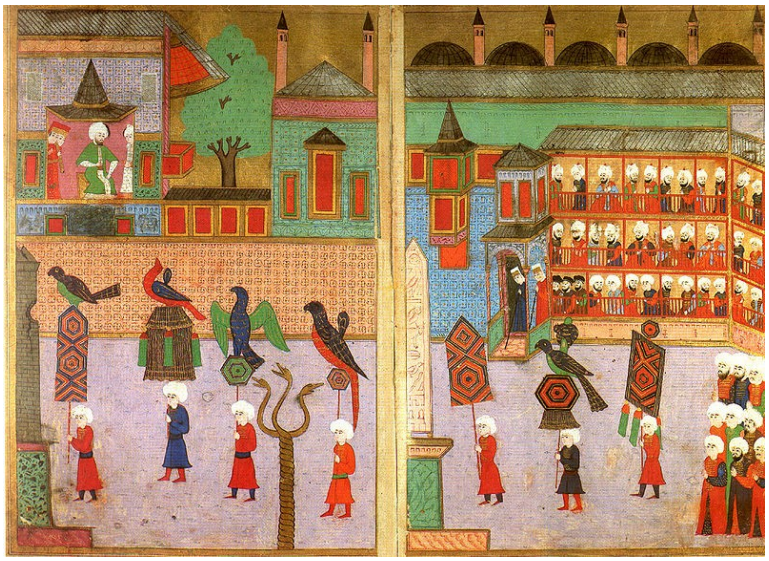


Figure 4.53

Procession of Guilds in the Hippodrome of Constantinople (Cloth-Weavers)

Surname-i Vehbi, 1582

Topkapi Palace Museum (Hazine 1344, folios 338b-39a)

Istanbul, Turkey

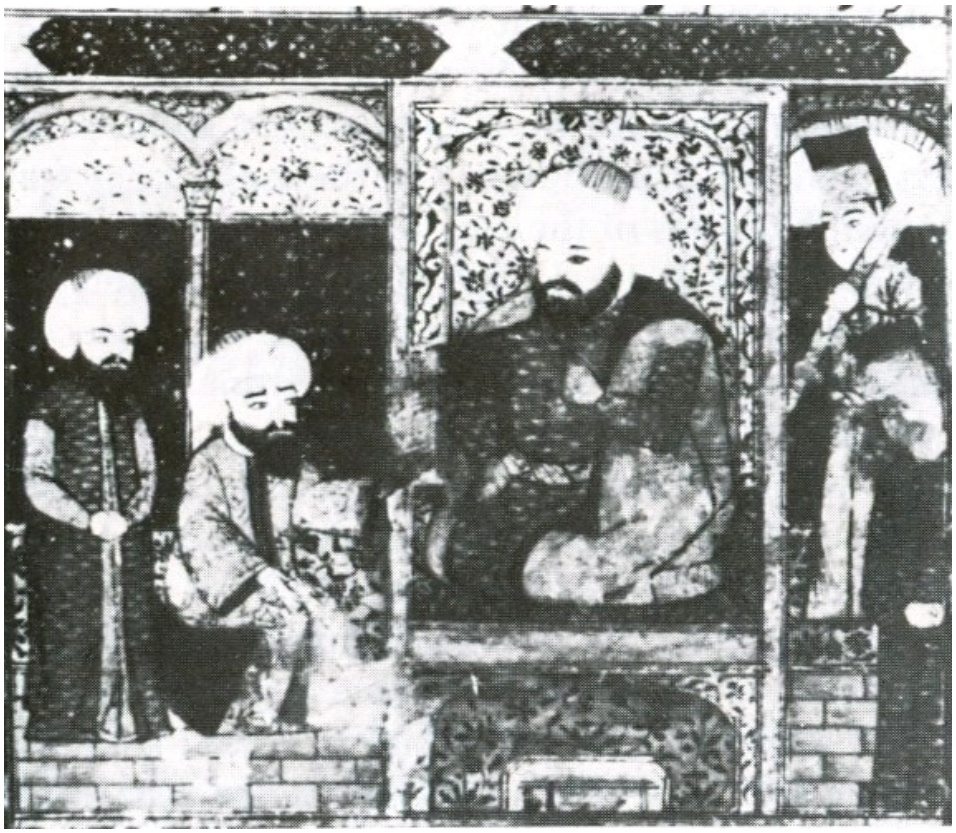


Figure 4.54

Mehmed II Enthroned in front of the Third Gate with the Crimean Scholar Mevlana Seyyid Ahmed Seated on a Lower Seat, and the Grand Vizier Mahmud Pasha Standing Behind, c.1500

Topkapi Palace Museum (R 406, fol. 12r)

Istanbul, Turkey

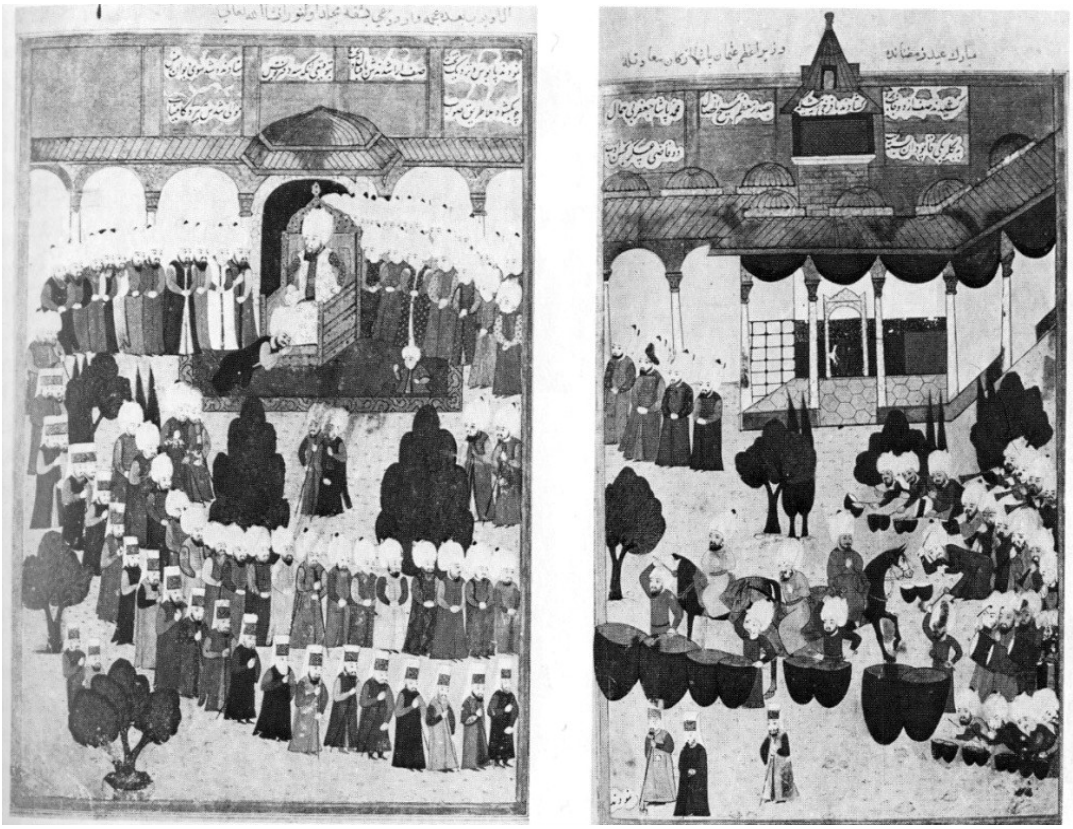


Figure 4.55

A Bayram Ceremony in the Second Court with the Enthroned Sultan in the Gate of Felicity or Royal Loggia (showing the grand vizier Osman Pasha kissing the hem of Murad II's robe)

Lokman, *Shahanshāhnāma*, 1592

Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, Turkey (TSK B 200, fols. 159v & 160r)

Reproduced from Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace*



Figure 4.56

Bertoldo di Giovanni

Portrait Medal of Mehmed II, c. 1480

Inscribed:

(obverse) MEVMET ASIE AC TRAPESUNZIS MAGNE QUE GRETIE IMPERAT

(Mehmed, emperor of Asia and Trebizond and Great Greece)

(reverse) GRETIE/TRAPESUNTY/ASIE

OPUS/BERTOLDI/FLORENTIN/SCULTORIS

(Greece, Trebizond, and Asia; the work of Bertoldo, Florentine, sculptor)

Victoria and Albert Museum, London (A.202.1910)

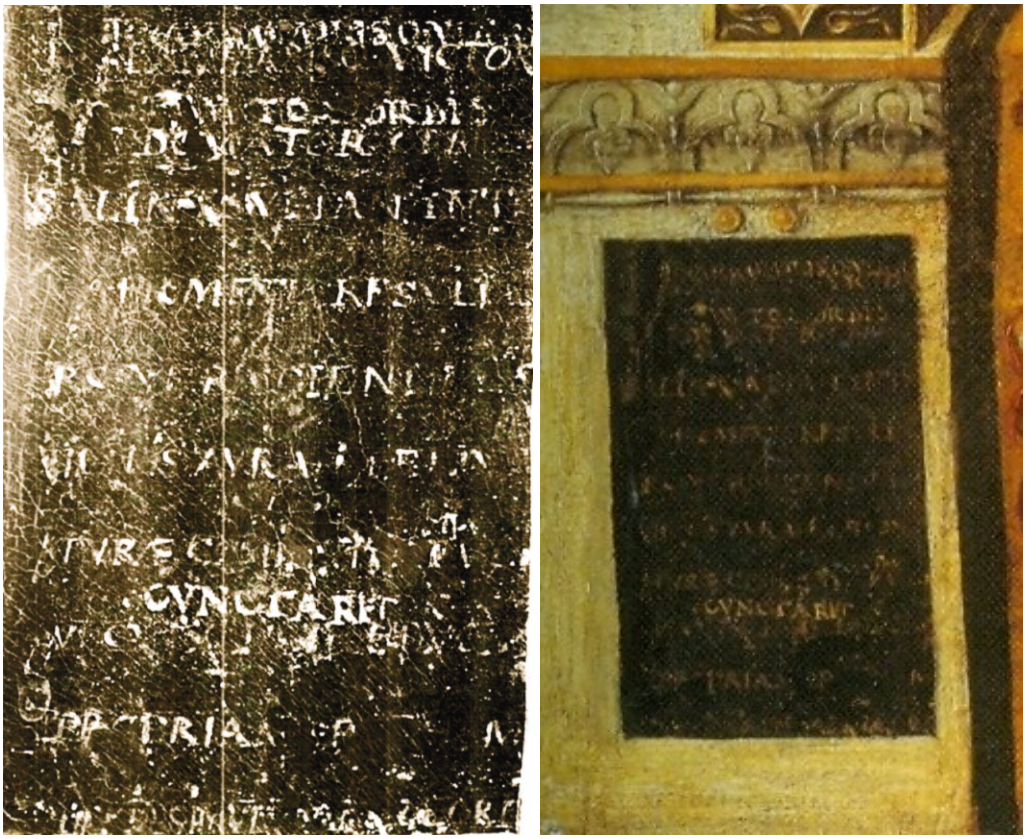


Figure 4.57

Text on the left insert (digital manipulation on the left)

Ultraviolet photography (on the right)

National Gallery of Art, dossier

London, England

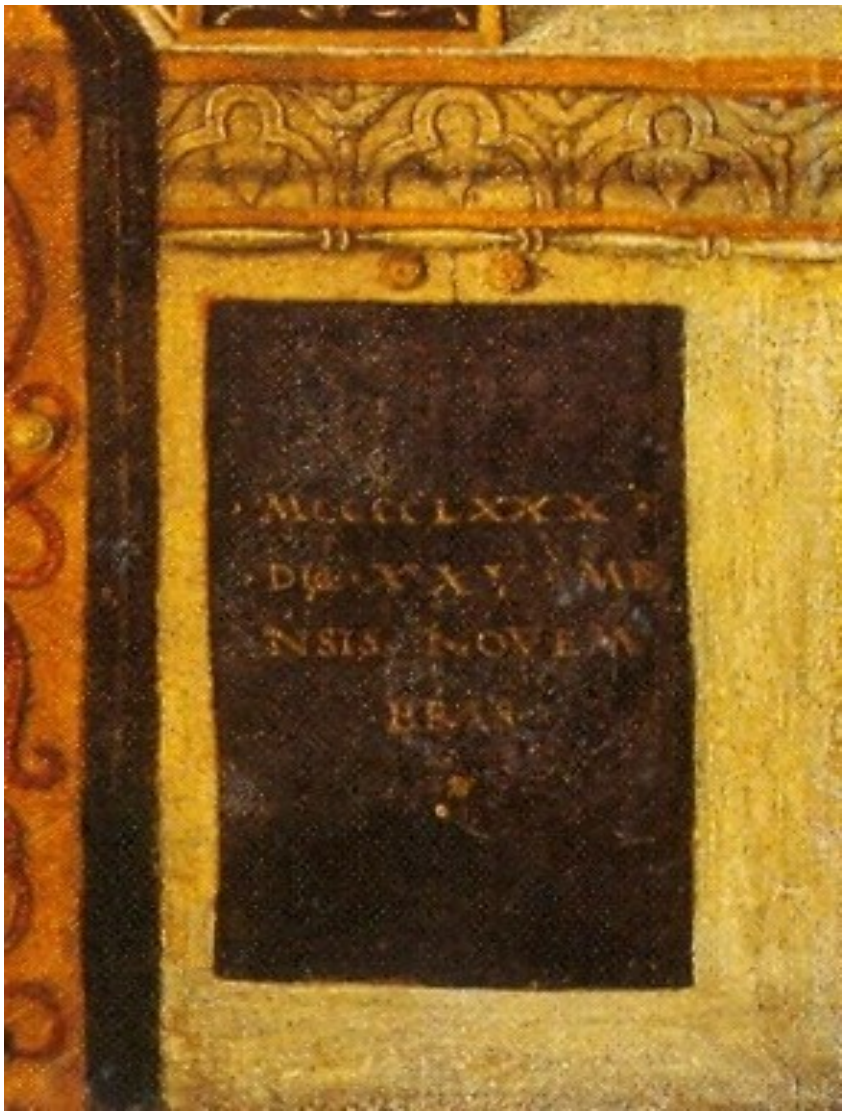


Figure 4.58

Text on the right insert: MCCCCLXXX./DIE XXV.ME/NSIS NOVEM/BRIS

November 25, 1480

Ultraviolet photography

National Gallery of Art, dossier

London, England



Figure 4.59

The foundation inscription in Arabic above the main Imperial Gate to the Topkapi Palace, c.1478

Istanbul, Turkey



Figure 4.60

Gentile Bellini: Example of *cartellino*

Doge Agostino Barbarigo, ca. 1480s

Private Collection



Figure 4.61

Gentile Bellini

Portrait of Caterina Cornaro, ca. 1500

Oil on wood, 63 x 49 cm

Szepmuveszeti Museum, Budapest



Figure 4.62

A Banquet for the Retinue of an Austrian Embassy in the Second Court (showing a parade of gifts in the foreground center and the enthroned Sultan seen behind the third gate)

Album of Lambert Wyts, 1574, MS.

Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, Austria (Cod. 3325)

Reproduced from Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace*

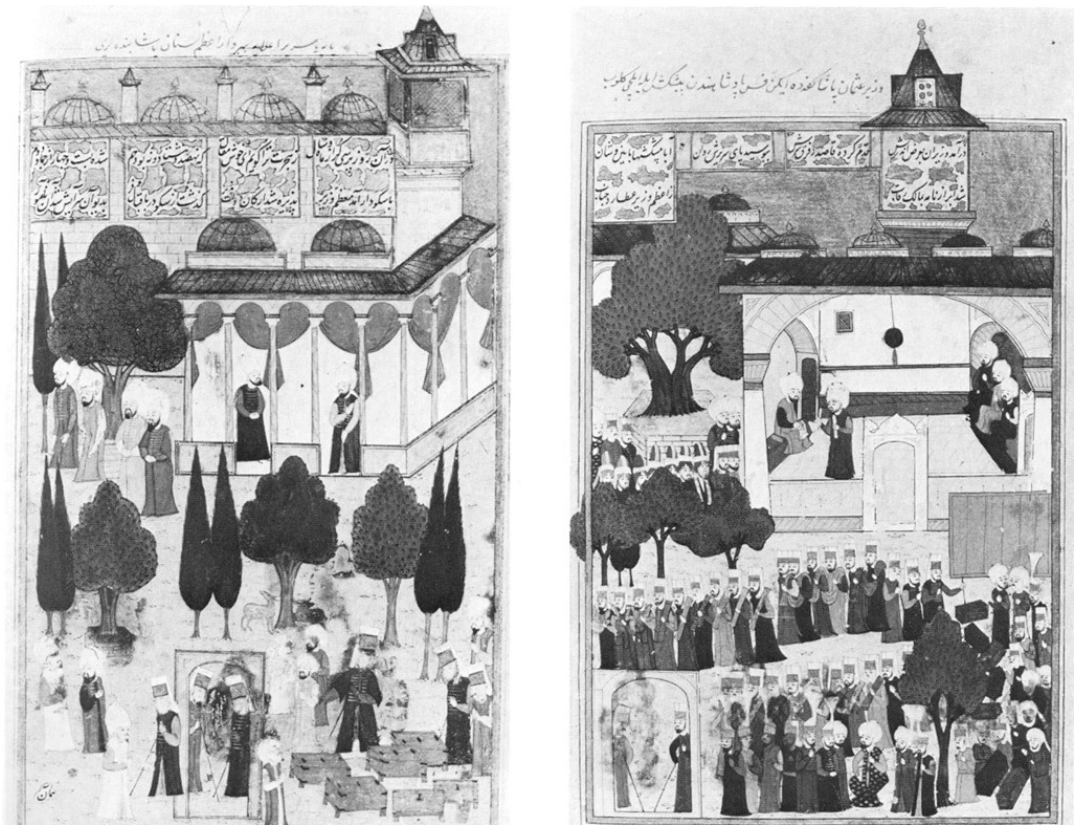


Figure 4.63

The Reception Ceremony in the Second Court (showing the Council Hall)

Left: *The Reception of Sinan Pasha*

Right: *The Reception of an Ambassador from Morocco* (showing the Council Hall)

Lokman, Shahanshāhnāma, 1592

Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, Turkey (TSK B 200, fols. 31r &142v)

Reproduced from Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace*

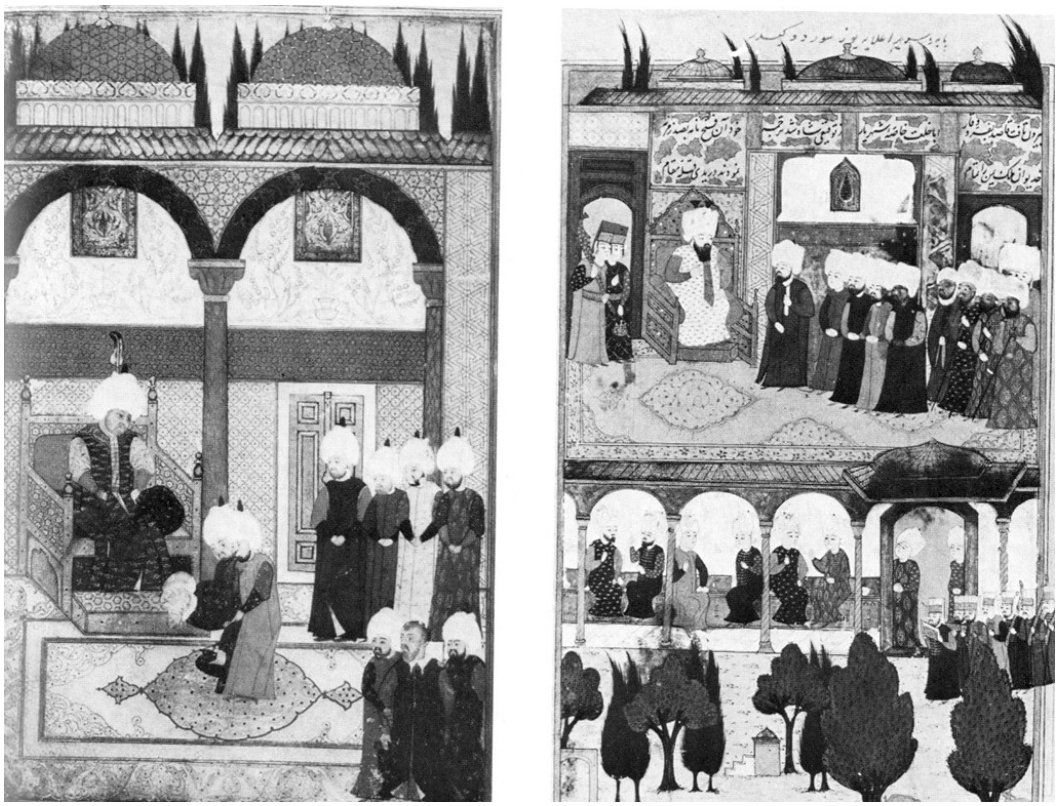


Figure 4.64

Left: *Selim II Receiving the Austrian Ambassador in the Chamber of Petitions, Furnished with Jewel-Embroidered Carpets*

Feridun Ahmed Beg, *Nüzhet el-esrar der sefer-I Zigetvar*, 1568-1569, TSK, H 1339, fol. 178r

Right: *Murad III Receiving the Moroccan Ambassador*

Lokman, *Shahanshāhnāma*, 1592, TSK B 200, fol. 143r

Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, Turkey

Reproduced from Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace*



Figure 4.65

Unknown artist

Medal of Mehmed II as a Young Man, 1460s or 1470s (?)

Inscribed: MAGNUS & ADMIRATUS SOLDANUS MACOMET BEI

(Great and Admired Sultan Mehmed Bey)

Bronze, diameter 6.1 cm

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (HCR 177)



Figure 4.66

Master of Vienna Passion

El Gran Turco, ca. 1470

Engraving and watercolor, 24.9 x 18.7 cm (sheet)

Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, Turkey



Figure 4.67

Pisanello (Antonio di Puccio Pisano)

Medal of Leonello d'Este, *Marquis of Ferrara*, c. 1442

British Museum, London, England (GIII, Ferrara M 26)



Figure 4.68

Leonardo da Vinci

Study of a Warrior, ca. 1476,

British Museum, London



Figure 4.69

Andrea del Verrocchio

Marble relief of Alexander the Great, ca. 1483-1486

National Gallery of Art, Washington



Figure 4.70

"Turgisch Kaiser," c. 1480

Print

British Museum



Figure 4.71

Costanzo di Moysis, *Medal of Mehmed II*, c.1478-1480

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (1957.14.695)



Figure 4.72

Costanzo di Moysis, *Medal of Mehmed II*, 1481

Ashmolean Museum of Art, Oxford, England



Figure 4.73

Pisanello (Antonio di Puccio Pisano)

Medal of Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, Lord of Rimini, 1445

Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England (A.167-1910)



Figure 4.74

Mehmed II

Naḳḳāş ‘Osmān, *Şema’lnâme*, 1579

Topkapi Palace Museum (H. 1563, fol. 47b)

Istanbul, Turkey

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