

1

DRAFT / PLEASE DO NOT CIRCULATE

**To Observe, to Record, to Memorialize (ca. 1582): Depicting the Circumcision of an
Ottoman Prince**

Kaya Şahin

Indiana University, Department of History

Abstract

In the summer of 1582, Sultan Murad III (r. 1574-1595) organized a circumcision ceremony for his son, Prince Mehmed (b. 1566; r., as Mehmed III, 1595-1603). Next to its unprecedented duration and scope, the ceremony became one of the most extensively recorded events in early modern Ottoman history. The contemporary and near-contemporary testimonies include archival sources, odes, accounts in general historical works, and “books of celebration” (*sūrnāme*) devoted to the event. This textual record is further enriched by miniatures (found in a history of Murad III’s reign and a *sūrnāme*), which portray scenes from the celebrations. This article will discuss the different ways in which the celebrations were recorded as an event and memorialized as a rite of passage.

Introduction

Among the late medieval and early modern Islamic dynasties, the Ottomans were unique in organizing fairly regular public celebrations on the occasion of the circumcision of princes, especially after the mid-fifteenth century. Before, when the members of the Ottoman dynasty married members of neighboring dynasties, circumcisions were part of wedding celebrations. Following the transition from marriage to concubinage in the biological reproduction of the Ottoman dynasty, male circumcisions came to the fore as the main dynastic celebrations of fertility and masculinity. The act of circumcision referred to the traditions of Muhammad and allowed the Ottoman palace to emphasize its piety. Charity was another crucial component of these public ceremonies: as part of the celebrations, children from poor families were circumcised, and the sultan’s bounty was displayed in the form of free food, gifts in kind and cash, etc. In the context of an elite culture that focused on physical appearance and professional

reputation, circumcision celebrations also allowed members of the elite to perform their professional identities in military games, scholarly debates, parades, gift-giving rituals and banquets. Finally, concerts by martial bands and chamber ensembles, shows by performers brought from all parts of the empire, mock battles, and nightly fireworks helped entertain the audiences during the celebrations.

The first independent public circumcision celebration took place in Adrianople in 1457. Following the repopulation and restoration of Constantinople after the Ottoman conquest of 1453, and the construction of new residences there for the dynasty, circumcisions shifted to the old Byzantine capital. The Byzantine Hippodrome, repurposed by the Ottomans, became the main public arena for Ottoman ceremonies. As part of the transition from a dynastic kingdom to an empire with a new universalist claim to rule over East and West, a new Ottoman ceremonial culture was developed under Süleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520-1566). As a result, the sultan's departures for campaigns and his returns to Constantinople, his processions from the Topkapi Palace to the Islamicized cathedral of St. Sophia for the Friday prayer, his entries into cities during campaigns, the public punishment of criminals, and indeed the new chancery language utilized in the crafting of imperial correspondence and edicts conveyed a new sense of majesty around the figure of the sultan. Two circumcision celebrations, organized in the summer of 1530 (for the duration of three weeks) and in the fall 1539 (for the duration of a week and a half), emerged in this period as the most elaborate reflections of this new ceremonial culture.

While centered around the act of circumcision, these two events also celebrated the recent political and military achievements of the dynasty with specific references to recent developments in mock battles and exhibited objects. The participatory aspect of the celebrations expanded from the elite to the inhabitants of Constantinople. Circumcision celebrations thus became operative events that allowed members of the elite as well as the inhabitants of Constantinople to perform their professional identities, and their place in the Ottoman social order, through public appearances. Finally, from 1457 onwards, the prominence of the act of male circumcision, together with the impact of large-scale celebrations, motivated several observers to record their experiences. Many of these observations are found in Ottoman works of history, as part of the story of a particular reign or a general history of the Ottoman dynasty. The

historical record is further enriched by the existence of diplomatic reports, prepared by Venetian observers of the celebrations in 1530, as well as odes prepared on the occasion of specific events, and various observations scattered throughout collections of miscellanies and non-historical writings.¹

The celebrations in 1582 were both inspired by previous ceremonies and departed from them in significant ways. In a clear indication that the Ottomans, by the late 16th century, felt they had developed a ceremonial tradition, the organizers of 1582 sought very early on to gather information about the celebrations under Süleyman. This search yielded mixed results, since the relevant archival documents, which the organizers hoped to locate, were not available. Still, the narrative depictions of earlier celebrations were in circulation, and 1582 reflects, to a certain extent, the legacy of 1530 and 1539. The use of the Hippodrome as the main venue for the celebrations, mock battles and military games, gift-giving rituals, parades by members of the elite, banquets and public feasts, nightly fireworks, scenes of buffoonery and jest alleviating the austerity of the ceremony replicated several features observed in the celebrations of 1530 and 1539. At the same time, the proceedings in 1582 were also influenced by, and were answers to, more recent political and cultural developments.

The celebrations in 1582 partially stemmed from Murad III's desire to emulate the grandeur of Süleyman, as mentioned above. At the same time, the need to organize a large-scale ceremony to re-emphasize the relationship between the sultan, the elite and the city-dwellers was rendered particularly acute by other developments. Following his accession to the throne in 1574, Murad had struggled with the members of the ruling elite, and particularly with Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, over control of the decision-making process. The pasha's assassination in 1579 strengthened Murad's (and his close associates') grip over the ruling elite. War with Safavid Iran after 1578, coupled with problems of monetary inflation, created political and financial strains in the capital, and traces of these concerns are visible in several dramatizations and performances observed throughout the ceremonies. Worries related to the approaching Islamic millennium (dated to

¹ For earlier ceremonies, and particularly the circumcision of 1530, see Kaya Şahin, "Staging an Empire: An Ottoman Circumcision ceremony as Cultural Performance," *American Historical Review* 123, 2 (April 2018): pp TBD; Zeynep Yelçe, "Evaluating Three Imperial Festivals: 1524, 1530 and 1539," in Suraiya Faroqhi and Arzu Öztürkmen, eds., *Celebration, Entertainment and Theatre in the Ottoman World* (London: Seagull Books, 2014), 71-109.

October 1591), and rumors in Constantinople about Murad's secluded lifestyle inside the palace, likely motivated the sultan and his entourage to organize a large celebration. Prince Mehmed, born in 1566, was already a pubescent boy, and the biological/medical imperative may have played a role as well.²

Next to the impact of their immediate political and cultural context, the proceedings in 1582 differ from earlier ceremonies in terms of their duration and content. When we think of the public circumcision ceremonies as a distinct strain in Ottoman court and ceremonial cultures, what we see from 1457 to 1582 is a transition from official court ceremonial to an event that looks like a festival. While the inhabitants of Constantinople were visible as participants and observers from 1530 onwards, 1582 reflected the dynamics of a time when an expanding urban population, split into various professional/occupational communities and social classes, enthusiastically represented itself during a public celebration. While the most visible and representative activities in earlier ceremonies consist of gift-giving rituals between the sultan and the grandees, banquets and feasts, and skills demonstrations, the most visible activity in 1582 is the guild parade. The duration of the ceremony, which extended into fifty-five days, is another indicator of the increasing participatory dimension, since the celebrations had to be extended to allow the largest possible number of communities and professional groups to organize parades. Finally, the level of political and sexual innuendo was particularly obvious in 1582, in mockeries of religious scholars, dramatizations that exposed the abuse of shopkeepers by the agents of the palace, and the salacious exchanges between young boys in parades and members of the audience in the Hippodrome.

In terms of the present workshop, the most distinguishing feature of 1582 was the attention given to the organization and recording of the event by the members of the Ottoman administration as well as Ottoman litterateurs, thanks to whom we have several archival records and narratives that describe the preparations, the event itself, and the experiences of the participants. Archival records of the preparations begin almost a year before the event itself; various details pertaining

² For a short but insightful analysis of the background as well as the celebration itself, see Derin Terzioğlu, "The Imperial Circumcision Festival of 1582: An Interpretation," *Muqarnas* 12 (1995): 84-100. For the political and cultural atmosphere of Murad III's reign, see Cornell H. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Muştafâ Âli (1541-1600)* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 293-307.

to the event, such as lists of gifts and names of performers, are recorded in registers during the event itself; the central bureaucracy follows up on various issues such as the remuneration of vendors, and the preparation of an illustrated “book of celebration (*surname* in Ottoman, hereafter BoC)” for the palace for a few years after the event, and archival coverage eventually trickles down to halt. The largest body of sources, in terms of sheer length as well as coverage, consists of three BoCs whose composition began during the event. One of these BoCs were eventually expanded, following its presentation to the palace, in terms of text and, more importantly, by the addition of several miniatures depicting the event. Textual reactions coeval with the event include odes offered to the sultan; shorter than the BoCs, the odes nevertheless illustrate the instant memorialization of the event within the high literary conventions of the time.

Finally, there are near-contemporary works of general history that treat the event within a larger context. One of them, an illustrated narrative of Murad III’s reign in Persian, describes the celebrations of 1582 through text and miniatures, and is the only Persian narrative on 1582. (All other texts are in Ottoman Turkish.) A universal history that extends from early Islamic history to the Ottomans places 1582 within the developments of Murad III’s reign. An Ottoman history that covers the second half of the 16th century also places the event within the flow of political and military developments. The Persian history approaches the level of panegyrics, but the universal history and the Ottoman history represent a different approach to 1582, as part of history proper, instead of an event that is depicted and memorialized separately. The author of the universal history is also the author of one of the BoCs for 1582, which makes it possible to raise questions about the difference, in the minds of Ottoman authors, between a single event and history itself as a collection of events.

In this project, my aim is to bring together all of these above-mentioned records around a single question: how was the celebration of 1582 foretold, framed, celebrated, memorialized and relayed to the next generations in different types of record-making? Related to this, what can we say about the notion of “event” in the minds of Ottoman bureaucrats and litterateurs? Here, my aim is to bring together all three Ottoman CoBs (one of them was recently discovered), and read them as context-bound, yet highly individual reactions to a large-scale, unique celebration that

must have been an exciting, tense, tiresome, sublime... experience for all parties involved. The rich performative dimension of the event left an indelible mark on the CoBs themselves, which brim with passages that convey movement, sound, and other sensory experiences. Putting the CoBs side by side with more general works of history, odes, and archival documents, I hope to show how the event itself is framed, produced and described through different individuals and state-centered interventions, via different instruments. Instead of advancing a single notion of “event,” I want to discuss the ways in which an event may be created, interpreted and re-interpreted through separate media, in different cultural and political circles.

As is, this project has a number of limitations that have to be mentioned at the outset. First of all, it leaves aside the considerable number of descriptions, narratives and diplomatic reports prepared by the European observers of the event, in order to focus solely on the Ottoman sources. Second, while it mentions the visual depictions of the event included in narrative sources, it gives primacy, for now, to the texts themselves; hopefully, the relationship between text and image, which so far has been squarely placed within the domain of Ottoman art historians, will be discussed during the workshop. Finally, the question I ask here, and the act of compiling all the relevant sources, risks to create a very modern notion of what constitutes a historical record; the notions of contemporary Ottomans on time, event, and history have to be incorporated more in the final written product that will hopefully emerge from this draft and the ensuing discussion.

1. Archival sources: Framing the event

The availability of several archival sources is one of the distinguishing features of 1582, as mentioned above. Archival sources rarely exist for earlier circumcision celebrations. When they exist, they are either partial (like a register for food served in 1539) or buried within other narratives (such as Venetian diplomatic correspondence, which gives the numbers of participants for a wedding in 1524). There are other archival sources, such as palace registers listing gifts given from the sultan to others, or the numbers of servants and soldiers included in different palace units, that give a relevant yet indirect idea about the material culture of gifts and the numbers of participants. (These archival sources pertain to dates shortly before or shortly after specific ceremonies, and do not address the ceremonies themselves.)

In the case of 1582, the existence of more archival sources is related to the development of the Ottoman central bureaucracy throughout the 16th century. While documents recording decisions and correspondence of the imperial council exist in considerable numbers from the late 15th century onwards, the fairly regular maintenance of “registers of important affairs” (*mühimme defterleri*, hereafter MD) from the mid-16th century onwards helps shed light on the logistics behind 1582, an information that lacks in the case of earlier ceremonies. In this sense, 1582 is more visible in the archives thanks to the development of the Ottoman bureaucracy, and the Ottoman notions and practices of record-keeping. Even in this case, however, the involvement of the central bureaucratic apparatus in the organization shows how the event is seen as an important state matter, on par with other issues encountered in the same registers, extending from the management of law and order in the empire to diplomatic relations.

In the MD, the event becomes visible in November 1581, nearly eight months before the celebrations. Here, we begin to see the complex logistical background of the event. The governor-general of Egypt Hasan Pasha was late in sending a shipment of grains and other foodstuffs earmarked for the celebrations. (Since the organization of banquets and the distribution of free food to the commoners were integral parts of the ceremony, the palace needed large quantities of food.) After chastising the governor-general, Ottoman officials in Rhodes, Alexandria and Damietta are ordered to supply galleons for the transportation of the said shipment. Moreover, the governor-general of Egypt is sternly reminded about a large quantity of black pepper sent from Yemen and held up in Egypt.³ In the same month, the Ottoman judge in Gallipoli and the doge of Venice are contacted for the supply of materials to be used in mock battles.⁴ In December, the governor-general of Egypt is ordered to send additional shipments of rice, sugar and other grains for the use of the palace, the previous shipments having been earmarked for the celebrations. The same governor is further instructed to send skilled military men to Constantinople to take part in military games, while judges between Constantinople and Adrianople are instructed to help men dispatched from the capital to purchase chickens.⁵ In

³ Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (Prime Ministry Archives, hereafter BOA), Mühimme Defteri (hereafter MD) 46, orders no. 181, 182, 183, 187, 191,

⁴ MD 46, nos. 402, 481.

⁵ MD 46, nos. 611, 620.

February, the governors-general of Anadolu and Karaman are called to Constantinople to help with the preparations.⁶ In May and June, as the celebrations approach, the central bureaucracy aims to fulfill last-minute needs, by asking the governor-general of Tripoli for a shipment of fruits and sugarcane, and the judge of Bursa for additional shipments of good-quality flour, the earlier shipment having been exhausted.⁷ Not everything goes smoothly: a group of merchants or officials bringing goods from Damascus to Constantinople were robbed by bandits near Constantinople, and the regional judge are ordered to find and prosecute the culprits.⁸

As the preparations end and the celebrations unfold, the attention of the sultan shifts to the proper rewarding of the janissaries and members of the palace contingents who helped organize the event and performed in it. These rewards are given in the form of cash disbursements sent to their unit chiefs and, in some cases, promotions to higher positions.⁹ The imperial council then follows up on the event's various repercussions. The Polish envoy's safe return to his country is ensured through orders to local judges between Constantinople and Wallachia; the king of Poland is thanked for his dispatch of a mission to the event; an official charged with the purchase of chickens is pursued for his failure to return additional funds.¹⁰ The imperial council follows up on the event in the ensuing years: in December 1585, an investigation is ordered into the estate of a recently deceased official who was responsible for the purchase of mutton to be served during the event; another, who had to stay in Constantinople to help prepare a BoC a few years after the event, is given permission to withdraw his initial stipend under the governorate-general of Diyarbekr.¹¹

While the entries in the MD illustrate the day-to-day operations of the central bureaucracy, a series of registers prepared during and shortly after the event reflect the urge, on the part of the palace, to record the event, with a particular attention to the gifts presented to the ruler and the circumcised prince. The registers that record gifts are prepared according to the identity of the gift-givers. Gifts by the grand vizier, the other viziers, and the commanders/chiefs of various

⁶ MD 46, no. 707.

⁷ MD 47, nos. 160, 350, 400.

⁸ MD 47, no. 300.

⁹ MD 47, nos. 492, 554, 584.

¹⁰ MD 48, nos. 44, 46, 53, 317.

¹¹ MD 56, no. 382; MD 60, no. 206.

palace units are recorded in a separate register.¹² Another register records gifts received from high-ranking members of the elite, as well as the amounts of reward money disbursed from the treasury.¹³ A third register includes gifts from Wallachia, Moldavia, Dubrovnik, Transylvania, Austria and Poland, as well as gifts by members of the religious establishment, governors-general, and provincial governors.¹⁴ In a fourth register, we see a list of gifts presented by the members of urban communities, such as guilds and religious orders; on the last page, this register also includes reward money from the sultan to his Christian subjects who ceremonially converted to Islam during the event.¹⁵ The central bureaucracy also kept a register that list the names of the performers (buffoons, shadow-play artists, rope-walkers, musicians) who came to Constantinople from Egypt, Syria and other parts of the empire, and another one that gives the names of wrestlers, clothiers, tanners and other tradesmen who displayed their talents.¹⁶ Unlike those listed in the previous register, these must have been individuals who lived and worked in Constantinople. The Ottoman palace prepared registers of gifts received and granted already from the last decade of the fifteenth century onwards, but these registers follow a chronological order, and do not focus on a single event. The preparation of registers specific to the event reflects the urge to take stock of the relationship between the sultan and his various interlocutors at the time of the event, as well as leave behind a record of ceremony, a precedent the like of which the organizers had sought, to no avail, before the preparations. These registers also tell us that dedicated scribes were given the task to record all this information in the midst of the tumult of the celebrations. In other words, a bureaucratic eye kept a close watch on the proceedings. The narrative depictions of the event also give information about the gifts and the identities of the participants, but, unlike these records, they tell an ongoing story that is full of sound, color, movement, excitement...

2. Books of Ceremony: Monumentalizing the event

In the overall arc of Ottoman history writing, from the second half of the fifteenth century onwards, event-based narratives were typically dedicated to major military achievements and campaigns. Under the generic name of *fethname* (Book of Victory/Conquest), these narratives

¹² Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi (Topkapı Palace Museum Archives, hereafter TSMA), d. 5649.

¹³ TSMA, d. 7856.

¹⁴ TSMA, d. 9614.

¹⁵ TSMA, d. 10022

¹⁶ TSMA, d. 10104, and 10377.

celebrated the capture of fortresses and cities, and told stories about individual campaigns. In these texts, the sultan and his men played critical roles, and they were usually put at the center of the action. Similarly, illustrated works existed, although in limited numbers, given the artistic and financial requirements of producing lavishly illustrated narratives. Still, even before the reign of Süleyman and the emergence of a new cultural discourse for Ottoman imperialism, works with illustrations exist. Under Süleyman, the illustrated text was promoted to the status of a high cultural achievement, finding its apogee in the Persian *Sulaymannama*, completed in June-July 1558. The last volume of a five-volume work on prophetic and Ottoman history, the work's Persian text is accompanied by sixty-nine paintings (four of them in double folios) that depict various political and military events from 1520 to 1555. Ottoman illustrated works were inspired by earlier examples, particularly works produced in Timurid Central Asia and Mamluk Egypt. At the same time, the illustrated manuscript tradition was increasingly adapted to Ottoman realities, both in terms of textual as well as visual content.

What we see in 1582 is the emergence, for the first time, of an Ottoman sub-genre under the title of *surname*. While earlier ceremonies were depicted in larger works of history, in 1582, for the first time, we see the emergence of narratives that are dedicated to a single event that is not a conquest or a campaign. Moreover, the Ottomans are unique, among the early modern Islamic dynasties, in producing CoBs.¹⁷ Next, in the case of one of the CoBs written for 1582, we see the adoption of the illustrated manuscript tradition to a single event that is, once again, not a conquest or a military campaign. (I will provide more information about this particular work below.) In other words, 1582 is elevated, through detailed narratives and miniatures dedicated to the celebrations, to the status of a major dynastic event on par with military and political achievements. At the same time, the existence of three different narratives, by separate authors, makes it possible to discuss the different ways in which the event was perceived and recorded in different milieus. These are Mustafa Ali's *Cāmi 'u'l-buhūr der mecālis-i sūr* (The Conflation of the Seas in the Celebratory Gatherings), Intizami's *Sūrnāme-i Hümāyūn* (The Imperial Book of Celebration), and Farahi's *Surname* (Book of Celebration).

¹⁷ For a survey of Ottoman books of celebration, see Mehmet Arslan, *Osmanlı Saray Düğünleri ve Şenlikleri*, vol. 1: *Manzum Sūrnāmeler* (Istanbul, 2008), 23–134;

Mustafa Ali (1541-1600) is one of the best-known Ottoman litterateurs thanks to a magisterial monograph on him by Cornell H. Fleischer. Ali spent his life as an Ottoman bureaucrat, serving in secretarial, military and financial posts. A consummate stylist, and a keen careerist frustrated in his search for higher status throughout his life, Ali's oeuvre extends from poetry to history, from a biographical dictionary of artists to a description of the mores in the city of Cairo, etc. Before the celebration of 1582, he was employed as the treasurer of land grants (*timar defterdari*) for the province of Aleppo, a mid-level posting he resented. He was among the Ottoman provincial officials who received letters of invitation from the palace; his first reaction to the letter was one of scorn, since he believed the authors of the letter had written a subpar piece of correspondence in terms of style and content. Ali duly left Aleppo to observe the celebrations in Constantinople, probably already forming in his mind the idea of writing a description of the ceremonies, in order to prove his intellectual worth, and possibly in order to receive a promotion to a better posting.

Ali's first written text related to the celebration was quite likely an ode (*kaside*), which was appended to the end of his BoC, but which was likely presented to the ruler during or shortly after the celebrations. While Ali does not talk about his process of observing and recording the event, he must have spent a considerable amount of time taking notes and thinking about a suitable format. Following his return to Aleppo, he finished his work in the second half of 1583.¹⁸ There are three extant manuscript of the work.¹⁹ One of them, kept at the Topkapi Palace Library today, is an autograph copy that was quite likely meant for presentation to the palace. The work is written in a careful, orderly hand, and a few folios are left empty for subsequent illustration. The fact that only a few folios are earmarked for miniatures shows that Mustafa Ali underestimated the kind of work the palace would eventually sponsor, since the palace-sponsored BoC would end up including a few hundred miniatures. Moreover, the choice of another work for palace patronage meant that yet another one of Mustafa Ali's attempts at securing patronage failed.

¹⁸ For modern editions of his work see *Cāmi' u'l-buhūr der mecālis-i sūr*, ed. Ali Öztekin (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1996); Arslan, *Osmanlı Saray Düğünleri ve Şenlikleri*, 1: 355-621 (text), 622-641 (index).

¹⁹ TSMK, ms. Bağdad 203; Nuruosmaniye Library, ms. Nuruosmaniye 4318; Süleymaniye Library, ms. Veliyyüddin Efendi 1916.

The absence of contemporary appreciation aside, Ali was able to create a work of great interest in describing the ceremonies. First of all, as mentioned above, he openly declares his contempt of fellow litterateurs, and claims to his readers that what they are about to read is a work of singular achievement. With the exception of a passage on an earlier celebration in 1530, found at the end of the work, Mustafa Ali's CoB is written in verse, in a poetic idiom that describes the celebrations through the language and style of Persianate Ottoman poetry. The use of verse instead of prose brings this CoB, at first sight, closer to the panegyric form. (Ali consistently utilizes prose in his other historical writings.) In terms of content, however, Ali develops a realistic narrative that is based on his observations of the celebrations; he is able to establish a balance between the aesthetic dimension of the work, and its documentary dimension. Next, unlike the other two BoCs, Ali's work reconstructs the event under thematic headings. In the first chapter, Ali talks about the preparations for the ceremony and the issuing of invitations. In the second chapter, the sultan is described in conversations with the high-ranking members of elite about the event's organization; the same chapter also presents Prince Mehmed, who is soon to be circumcised. The third chapter is on gifts presented by grandees, notables and foreign rulers, and the fourth chapter describes the parades of artisans and their presentation of gifts. (These two chapters replicate, albeit differently, the lists of gifts encountered in the registers mentioned above.) The fifth chapter is on the celebrations themselves, and the sixth is on feasts and banquets. The sixth chapter is a praise of the sultan, especially with reference to his munificence; the seventh chapter is an account of the prince's circumcision and related celebrations. An appendix at the end gives a description of the circumcision of 1530. Ali, throughout the work, complains about straying from the tradition established by earlier ceremonies; this appendix is his indirect way of reaffirming past tradition in the face of contemporary departures from it.

Despite Ali's claims to having produced the most accomplished work on the celebrations of 1582, the Ottoman palace would eventually choose to endorse a different work, and help turn it, through its artistic patronage, into one of the most lavishly illustrated book projects of Ottoman cultural history. This is Intizami's *Sūrnāme-i Hümāyūn* (The Imperial Book of Celebration). Compared to Ali, who is one of the best-known, most-studied Ottoman litterateurs, Intizami remains an unknown figure. For a long time, it was thought that his CoB was not signed; he has lately been recognized as the work's author, but additional information about him is almost

nonexistent. Intizami presents himself, in the introduction, as a low- to middle-ranking secretary of the imperial council who produced this work in order to distinguish himself and receive a promotion; somewhere else, he mentions an acquaintance, a judge named Süleyman, who supposedly told him, while they were watching the festivities, to write a description. After the celebrations, Intizami thus set out to compose his work, which is, unlike Ali's, a prose account of the event. (Intizami, like other Ottoman prose writers of the time, often uses poems and versified passages in between sections of prose, where he introduces his own poetry as well as works from other Ottoman poets of the time.) The work was finished and then presented to the Ottoman palace, between the end of the celebrations and 1584 (according to the date in a manuscript kept in the Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul).²⁰

While the Ottoman palace had shown an acute interest in palace-produced illustrated manuscripts for a few decades before 1582, the reason behind the choice of Intizami's work as the basis for a new project is not articulated anywhere. It is obvious that the Ottoman sultan was keen to create a specific record of the ceremony; the presence of an established workshop in the palace, working on similar projects, was a facilitating factor. It may be surmised here that, compared with Ali, Intizami's text is more conducive to illustrations in terms of structure. In terms of content, as mentioned above, Ali's work reflects a higher aesthetic sensibility while Intizami's text is written in a more accessible prose. (In this regard, it may be suggested here that, idealist assumptions to the contrary, the Ottoman palace did not always prefer the choicest, most rarefied forms of artistic expression.) More importantly, Intizami's text is written chronologically, and it is thus more conducive to an accompanying illustrated narrative that follows the same chronological flow. It is obviously written after 1582, on the basis of the authors' -and his milieu's- recollections. For instance, while Intizami gives the number of artisan parades as 250, his text mentions only 173 of them; at other times, there are discrepancies between his text and those of European observers in terms of the order of the parades and event flow.

²⁰ The first versions of Intizami's CoB are ms. Hekimoglu 642, Süleymaniye Library; ms. Vienna Staatsbibliothek 1019 (**check correct ms numbers/locations**); ms. Belediye Kitapları Bolumu, No: 0.108, Istanbul Atatürk Library (**check**); ms. Or. 309, Leiden University Library; (**check anonymous work referred to in the Jan Schmidt catalogue**). A critical edition of the Vienna manuscript is Gisela Procházka-Eisl, *Das Sürnâme-i Hümayûn. Die Wiener Handschrift in Transkription, mit Kommentar und Indices versehen*; a transliteration of the Süleymaniye manuscript, preceded by an analysis of the text, is Şeref Boyraz, "Sürnâme-i Hümayûn'da Folklorik Unsurlar," unpublished MA thesis, Erciyes University, Kayseri, 1994.

Still, following revisions to the text Intizami initially submitted, *Surname-i Humayun* would emerge, in 1588, as the canonical textual and visual narrative of the celebrations in 1582.²¹ The initial plan was to have 250 double miniatures; the existing work has 427 miniatures and text over 432 pages. The paintings were executed by Nakkaş Osman and his team, who were also active in the creation of a near-simultaneous two-volume project on Ottoman dynastic history, the *Hünernâme* (Book of Skills). The textual revisions were the work of Seyyid Lokman, who worked in the palace as the palace historian (*şehnameci*). *Surname-i Humayun* was, in this sense, a product of a time when a specific textual and visual expression of Ottoman dynastic history was being articulated. This expression was closely related to cultural and political tensions: on the one hand, there was the sense that Ottoman culture had reached a mature, almost “classical” level; at the same time, the image and power of Ottoman sultans after the rule of Süleyman (r. 1520-1566), and the achievements of the Ottoman polity itself, were constantly judged, and sometimes found wanting, against the example set by Süleyman. In the midst of the conflicting currents of a search for cultural self-confidence and an overbearing angst about failure and decline, *Surname-i Humayun* anchored a specific event in history as the continuation of past tradition as well as its surpassing.

The final example of a CoB produced for the celebrations of 1582 is a recently-discovered work written by a certain Farahi, for which there is only a single extant manuscript.²² Information about the author’s identity is even scarcer than what we know about Intizami. The penname Farahi (mistakenly rendered as Ferahi by the modern Turkish editor of the text) refers to the author’s or his family’s origins in the city of Farah, near today’s Iranian-Afghan border. The seamless use of colloquial Ottoman Turkish in the text, the author’s familiarity with Ottoman history and lore, and his apparent sympathy for, and possible affiliation with, the Ottoman Bektashi religious confraternity all indicate that his ancestors, instead of the author himself, had been emigres while the author was likely born in Constantinople. Farahi’s *Surname* (Book of

²¹ The illustrated work is ms. Hazine 1344, Topkapi Palace Library (hereafter TSMK), Istanbul. A definitive transliteration of the text, on the basis of the Süleymaniye and Topkapi manuscripts, is Mehmet Arslan, *Osmanlı Saray Düğünleri ve Şenlikleri*, Volume 2: *İntizâmî Sûrnâmesi* (Istanbul: Sarayburnu Kitaplığı, 2009). For a discussion of the illustrations and a number of samples from the original work, see Nurhan Atasoy, *1582 Surname-i Hümayun: An Imperial Celebration*, Istanbul: Koçbank, 1997).

²² The manuscript is ms. Yeni Yazmalar 2921, Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul; the transliteration, with a critical introduction, is Ferâhî, *Sûrnâme: Bir Özge Âlem. Osmanlı Pâyitahtında 1582 Şenliği*, ed. and transliteration by Mehmet Özdemir (Ankara: Grafiker Yayınları, 2016).

Celebration) was finished shortly after the event, as the text itself indicates. Unlike Ali and Intizami, Farahi did not spend a considerable amount of time to make the text more palatable for the tastes of the palace, or more in conformity with the high literary taste of the period.

Farahi's text, unlike Ali and Intizami, opens up in a more generic way, like so many other historical and hagiographical narratives of the period: it begins with a praise of Muhammad, the four caliphs, and Muhammad's grandchildren Hasan and Husayn. It is then followed by a section on Ottoman sultans from Mehmed II to Murad III, where the author gives us several anecdotes from their lives and reigns. Finally, around 66a, the author begins to talk about the preparations for the celebrations, and then proceeds with the event in a way similar to Intizami: the sending of the invitations, the sultan's entry into the Hippodrome, the parades, mock battles, talent shows, feasts and banquets, etc. Farahi's narrative covers forty days, while the event in Intizami spreads over forty-three days. Like Ali and Intizami, Farahi conveys details about the grandees who attended the event, the gifts that were presented to the sultan, etc. His language is the easiest, most accessible one of all three; his narrative is written from the vantage point of someone who is outside the Ottoman elite, even though he shares several sensibilities with it. In Farahi's text, the guild parades are the most important aspect of the celebrations, and the march of palace officials and military men play second fiddle to them. Farahi is familiar with the roads guildsmen utilize to march from the surrounding neighborhoods to the Hippodrome; he is sensitive to the songs and poems of the artisans and merchants, which he consistently records as part of the event's soundscape. (Farahi's inclusion of poems and songs reportedly uttered/sung by the participants makes the modern reader wonder about how he memorizes all these details.) To summarize, his narrative is the most "popular" CoB of all three, not only in terms of linguistic sophistication, but also in terms of its cultural sensibilities, and in terms of the ways in which the text conveys the experience of the event in a way that is not mitigated by status or patronage.

4. Remembering the event: Works of history proper

As Cornell Fleischer has noted,

a tremendous interest in the documentation of events seems to have been a relatively generalized phenomenon in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. During this reign royal patronage for works of historical content, and for their lavish illumination, increased dramatically relative to the preceding and succeeding periods. Furthermore, this period produced a tremendous number of less "official" historical

works, in the form of general histories, Ottoman chronicles, and accounts of individual campaigns to such an extent that the reigns of Murad and his predecessor Selim II remain one of the best-documented segments of Ottoman history.²³

Next to the considerable increase in the imperial patronage of historical works, which becomes very prominent already in the 1550s, the last quarter of the sixteenth century was marred with a variety of problems that turned history writing into the chief domain for the discussion of political opinions and positions. Writing history became a panacea against the malaise of a time when inflation, constant warfare without tangible territorial gains, the approach of the Islamic millennium (whose beginning corresponded with October 19, 1591), and the loss of cultural and political confidence suffered by the elite in the post-Süleyman years pushed several authors to take stock of their time and utilize history writing as an instrument of political intervention as well as reflection. Looking for the celebrations of 1582 within larger works of history is thus useful in getting away from the glorifying tone of the works that are dedicated to the event, and discovering the ways in which 1582 figures within the wider narratives on Ottoman history.

One of the first works in which the celebrations of 1582 are presented as part a larger story is the two-volume Persian *Shahinshahnama* (Book of the King of Kings), dedicated to the reign of Murad III. The versified, illustrated work was written, in Persian by Seyyid Lokman, the palace historian who was also instrumental in the re-writing of the *Surname-i Humayun*. The miniatures were prepared by a team headed by Nakkash Osman, who was also the head of the *Surname* miniatures project. In this sense, the *Shahinshahnama* may be seen as a companion piece to the earlier palace-commissioned the *Surname*. The work's first volume covers the reign of Murad III from 1574 to 1580; completed in 1581, it spreads over 153 folios and includes fifty-eight miniatures.²⁴ The second volume is dedicated to the period between 1581 and 1588; completed in 1592, it has 136 folios and ninety-five miniatures.²⁵ Despite the palace background, however, there are significant differences between the *Surname* and the *Shahinshahnama*. The earlier work is written in Ottoman Turkish prose, while the latter continues the Persianate panegyric tradition: its language is more rarefied, and its textual content is more allegorical. While the *Surname* gives

²³ Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire*, 242.

²⁴ Istanbul University Library, ms. FY 1404.

²⁵ TSMK, ms. Bağdad 200.

considerable space to the parades of artisans, the narrative is re-centered towards the palace and the elites in the *Shahinshahnama*. Finally, the celebrations of 1582 are placed within the general narrative of Murad III's reign, and become part of an unfolding drama that involves wars, diplomatic negotiations, the sultan's charitable works, court rituals, etc. The passage of time is more prominent in *Shahinshahnama*: the author pays particular attention to the passage of the seasons, the celebration of the two major Muslim festivals, the march of time from the sultan's youth to his old age, etc.

The second volume is mostly dedicated to the developments around the Ottoman-Safavid war of 1578-90, but the celebrations occupy a good part of the work: fifty-six folios out of 136, and forty-two miniatures out of ninety-five are about the event, in an indication of the event's importance in the overall narrative of Murad III's reign.²⁶ The event flow begins, similar to other narratives, with the dispatch of the letters to Ottoman notables and foreign sovereigns. Then, it is interrupted by the arrival of the Safavid ambassador. Considerable effort is spent in the work to show the ways in which the Ottomans try to dazzle the Safavid envoy with their ceremonialism; in a sense, the ceremonialism observed during the circumcision celebrations is preceded by, and tied to, a larger Ottoman ceremonial culture. The description of the circumcision celebrations, different than the *Surname*, is more focused on the sultan and the role played by the members of the elite: miniatures now show individual fireworks organized by separate members of the Ottoman imperial council, while the parades of artisans and other popular entertainments are lumped together. Just before the end of the festivities, the textual/visual narrative turns once more to the tensions with the Safavids: a temporary peace agreement is abrogated, the hostilities resume, but the Ottoman forces quickly prevail. Then the festivities' final chapters unfold: the circumcision of the city's orphaned boys, followed by the circumcision of the prince; a few entertainments and the sultan's distribution of gifts; the customary horse races that typically signaled the end of major celebrations. The sultan then returns to his palace, where he receives more news of victory from the Safavid front. In a way, while the *Surname* focuses only on the celebrations themselves, the *Shahinshahnama* adopts the Persianate dual tropes of *bazm o razm*, feast and war, treated in various narratives as well as miniatures.

²⁶ For an analysis see Nurhan Atasoy, "III. Murad Şehinşahnamesi, Sünnet Düğünü Bölümü ve Philadelphia Free Library'deki İki Minyatürlü Sayfa," *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı* 5 (1973): 358-387.

The second work of near-contemporary history where 1582 is presented as part of a larger narrative is Muṣṭafā Selānikī's (fl. 1600) *History of Selaniki*.²⁷ His account begins during the last years of Süleyman, in 1563, and goes to 1600. Written in a simple language, by a career bureaucrat close to various members of the elites' upper echelons (such as treasurers, chancellors, members of the imperial council), the work reads like a memoir. Selaniki is a typical representative of late sixteenth century secretarial angst: his work is replete with critical remarks on the abrogation of Süleymanic meritocracy, the breaches of protocol, the sultan's increasing seclusion in the palace, etc. the celebrations of 1582 appear, in his work, as part of this critical, at times gloomy narrative that is at the same time enriched with details that were available to a bureaucrat.

In the *History of Selaniki*, 1582 is part of a series of events that happen in the spring of 1582, for which Selaniki is a close observer. Just before his account of the circumcision celebrations, he talks about the marriage of the chancellor Feridun Beg to the daughter of an ex-grand vizier, who is also a granddaughter of Süleyman (pp. 162-163). Right after the end of the festivities, we read about the downfall of Nasuh Agha, one of the sultan's favorites and a true palace creature. The focus here is thus very close to the everyday developments in and around the palace, unlike the overarching, fairly generalizing narrative we find in the *Shahinshahnama*, which portrays the rule of Murad III through broadstrokes, by focusing on major and/or representative events. In Selaniki's narrative (found in pp. 163-168), the festivities open up with the customary letter; the author then provides very specific information about how those were organized: the appointment of specific officials responsible for the organization; the infrastructure for the public kitchens to dispense food during the event; the measures taken to ensure the proper recording of the expenses and gifts given and received (these are the registers referenced above); the building of loggias for the grandees; the specific locations of those loggias, etc. Always with the critical eye, Selaniki laments a fight that broke out between the janissaries and other palace contingents, which results in the dismissal of several unit commanders; he also notes that religious scholars, unable to come to an understanding about hierarchy among their ranks, refrained from taking part in the celebrations. Selaniki sees this as a slight against past protocol, since, as he remarks,

²⁷ Muṣṭafā Selānikī, *Tārīḥ-i Selānikī* (Istanbul: Maṭba' a-yı ' Āmire, 1864),

such celebrations always included a parade of religious scholars and a public debate among them.

The last near-contemporary work of history that will be discussed is *Künhü'l-ahbar* (The Essence of History, hereafter KA), the magnum opus of Mustafa Ali, who also wrote *Cāmi'u'l-buhūr*, as mentioned above. His KA, written between 1591 and 1599, is generally accepted as one of the most original works of history produced by an Ottoman author in the early modern period. Very much like Selaniki, Ali's KA was influenced by the spirit of his times; as Cornell Fleischer has suggested, Ali "sought to assess the development and character of the civilization into which he was born, and with which he identified."²⁸ His search for the meaning of Ottoman civilization was particularly motivated by what he felt as a political and cultural crisis after Süleyman; this search was exacerbated by his intense personal feelings about the lack of recognition he suffered from. (While someone like Selaniki, whose simple tone would have been seen by Ali as a lack of cultural refinement, was able to receive positions in Constantinople, Ali spent most of his career in the provinces, in dead-end positions that he resented.) His intellectual quest took the form of a major historical work that consists of four sections: the creation of the universe and cosmography; prophetic and Islamic history; the history of the Mongols and the Turks; and, finally, the history of the Ottoman enterprise (the longest part of KA), from its beginnings in the late thirteenth century to 1596 CE. KA is distinguished from a work like Selaniki's not through its sheer scope, but also through the use of a metaphor-laden, rich language that shows the author's claim to cultural achievement. Very much like Selaniki's work, on the other hand, Ali's KA is not dedicated to any patrons. After a lifelong search for deserving patrons, it is particularly meaningful that Ali's magnum opus, the last work he finished, is written as a supreme gesture of scholarship.

Understandably, in a work of such scope, the celebrations of 1582 receive very little space.²⁹ The language of the passage is significantly different than his CoB. In the first place, the earlier work is written in verse, while KA is a prose work. The celebrations are bookended, like in the case of other works from the period, by the developments on the Safavid front. However, while the

²⁸ Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire*, 235.

²⁹ The copy I am using here is ms. Raşid Efendi 920, Süleymaniye Library. The celebrations are found in 526b-529a.

festivities still occupy a major role in, for instance, the *Shahinshanama*, they are akin to a short aside in KA. They do not even receive a separate title; rather, they are listed as “Occurrence Nineteen,” stuck between the Ottoman commander-in-chief activities in the southern Caucasus and the developments in Shirvan. The bulk of the narrative consists of the letter of invitation Ali received from Constantinople while working in Aleppo, and the letter he wrote in response. These letters clearly have documentary value for him; the inclusion of his answer to Constantinople, in which he tries to upstage the palace’s letter in terms of style and content, is further sign of his ongoing critical streak and his yearning for recognition. The festivities are mentioned in a quick summary: the main grandees who took part in them, the feasts, the sultan and the prince’s munificence, a few entertainments. He refers the reader to his CB for more information. Perhaps more meaningfully, he finishes his section with the following statement: “It is best to refrain from being superfluous, since what is necessary is to write down what happened.”

Concluding remarks

Here, I would like to include a few issues/questions that have been keeping me busy, instead of a formal conclusion to the discussion above. I hope to discuss at least a few these during the workshop.

First of all, since the workshop is about Islamic historiographies, what is specifically Islamic about these above-mentioned texts, and their different approaches to recording? What is specifically Ottoman in them? What is specifically early modern? In terms of writing/reading and recording technologies, we have to take it into account that this is a society without the printing press, but with a lively manuscript culture, and with high levels of “consumption of literacy,” even though the levels of individual reading and writing proficiency are somehow low compared to a society with the printing press and a middle class reading public.

What are the authors and patrons trying to achieve? To leave a record behind, obviously. What is the function of that record itself, however? To serve as a guide for future generations? To hope to advise future generations, and achieve a sort of immortality? Or, perhaps, they were motivated

by more mundane and more immediate reasons: to make money and become promoted; to write, for writing's sake, because that is what an educated individual does, etc.

What is the relationship between texts and the accompanying miniatures? This is one of the points where a particular attention to the Islamic pictorial/representational tradition is needed. In the Ottoman case, did text accompany painting, or was the relationship the other way around? Perhaps they were meant to compliment each other. However, it is also true that the miniatures of the *Surname* and the *Shahinshahnama* establish an almost autonomous visual narrative that can be followed without the textual accompaniment.

The composition dynamics of the *Surname* are interesting, and they deserve more discussion: what kind of intervention did the palace require on his original text? Also, why was Intizami's text picked for the production of the imperial BoC? Content? Simple logistics, such as the comprehensive content and chronological narrative as against Ali's thematic structure? Patronage, Ali once again on the losing side?

Was there an element of competition among the litterateurs about producing a better account, a more popular account? Was Ali aware that Intizami was also writing on the same event? Is this why he is so embittered in parts of his CB? Did he plan to have his own work illustrated by his own initiative, since he left a few empty pages in one of the copies of his work to be filled with miniatures later on?

Finally: do we see a split, in the minds of Ali and Selaniki, between panegyrics and history? This question is more important in Ali's case, since he wrote a description of the festivities in verse next to a major work of history? Is this what he means when he says, at the end of his short section on 1582 in his KA, that one must refrain from superfluous words? History is concise; it is an account of what happened in proper form, while one can go farther in panegyrics, but at the risk of becoming superfluous.