

# Others and Other Geographies in the *Şehnâme-i Selīm Hân*

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*Şehnâme-i Selīm Hân'da Ötekiler ve Öteki Coğrafyalar*

Öz ■ Bu makale *Şehnâme-i Selīm Hân*'daki çeşitli yabancı, ya da "öteki," kişi (Venedikliler, Safeviler, Yemenliler ve Etiyopyalılar) ve yerlerin (Yemen, Tunus, Kıbrıs) nasıl resmedildiğini inceler. Resimlerin detaylı analizi sonucunda, yazmanın genel içeriğini şekillendiren ideoloji ve politik tasaların değişik ırk ve coğrafyaların gösterimini nasıl etkilediğini anlatır. Ayrıca, bu dönemde yapılmış pek çok resimde olduğu gibi *Şehnâme-i Selīm Hân*'daki resimlerde de etnik farklılıkların saç rengi, ten rengi gibi fiziksel unsurlarla değil kıyafet ve hareketlerle gösterildiğini öne sürer.

Anahtar kelimeler: Akdeniz, Tunus, Yemen, Kıbrıs, ırk, etnisite, kostüm, Osmanlı resim sanatı, deri yüzmek.

The *Şehnâme-i Selīm Hân*, completed in 1581, is exceptionally rich in the representation of vastly different terrains and peoples. In particular, it concentrates on the lands around the Mediterranean, a focus of activity during the period the book covers. Considering the representation of the various "others" (Venetians, Safavids, Tunisians, Yemenis, and Ethiopians), and other geographies (Yemen, Tunisia, Cyprus) in the manuscript, illuminates the attitudes of those involved in the making of the book towards the world around them. These representations also play into, and foster, the imperial ideologies evident in the manuscript. The definition of imperial ideology was contested territory during the years this book was prepared, 1571-81. As I have discussed elsewhere, the final contents of the *Şehnâme-i Selīm Hân*, and by extension the idealized image of Selim II (r. 1566-74), were determined by two specific power groups within

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the Ottoman court. One of these groups, involved in overseeing the contents of the manuscript while the text was still being composed, consisted of the companions of Selim II from his days as a crown prince, and one of their aims while editing the manuscript was to downplay the contributions of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha (d. 1579). The other group clearly had power at the court of Murad III (r. 1574-95), and also comprised of rivals of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha. The first group interfered in the making of the book during the early phases and edited out the discussion of the Szigetvar campaign, and the second group was involved in the last phase, clearly encouraging the author Lokman to expand his descriptions of the Yemen, Cyprus, Ethiopia, and Tunisia affairs, as well as the renovations at the Ka'ba.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the preferences of these power groups determined the depiction of Selim II's reign in the *Şehnâme-i Selim Hân*. In this article I will be examining the representation of "others" and "other" geographies vis-à-vis these political agendas.

The reign of Selim II appears as an action-packed and victorious era in the *Şehnâme-i Selim Hân*. Twenty-five out of the forty-six illustrations in the manuscript depict moments from the battles of Selim II's commanders.<sup>2</sup> While following their accomplishments, the manuscript depicts the Ottomans as a primarily naval empire, one that connects the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. This is probably because most of the events of concern at the time actually took place on or around the seas surrounding Ottoman lands. In this way, the Ottoman presence on the Mediterranean can also be understood as a "soft empire" based on an infrastructure of trade, communications, and religious ideology as Giancarlo Casale suggests for the Ottomans in the Indian Ocean at roughly the same time.<sup>3</sup>

Ottoman adventures in the manuscript can be grouped into various categories, such as suppression of rebels, securing the Hajj routes, and consolidation of Ottoman presence around the Mediterranean for security purposes. In other words, rather than territorial expansion, protection of Ottoman interests and the dispensing of justice seem to be the main concerns of the Ottomans as reflected in the manuscript. The foreigners encountered during these attempts are

1 Emine Fetvacı, "The Production of the *Şehnâme-i Selim Hân*," *Muqarnas* 26 (2009): 263-315, esp. 284-90.

2 Six paintings are currently missing from the manuscript. See the Appendix to Fetvacı, "The Production of the *Şehnâme-i Selim Hân*," 290-91, for a full list of current and missing illustrations and their subject matter.

3 Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 149-51.

therefore depicted as threatening to Ottoman, and at times, Muslim interests. Their depiction as enemies justifies the Ottoman wars recounted in the book. There is an attempt to record the unusual features of foreign geographies, such as rivers or different kinds of trees. The detailed depiction of foreign castles seems to enhance the heroic tone of the verbal narrative which privileges the recording of military action over geographic description. Thus the areas where war is waged are shown to be difficult to dominate, underlining the heroic efforts undertaken in the name of justice and security.

The images of Ottoman forces suppressing rebellions help to project an understanding of Ottoman superiority over those rebelling against them, and also underline the Ottomans as just overlords. The first four images in this regard (fols. 41b-42a, 43a, 45b, 48b) deal with the suppression of a rebellion in Basra that erupted in 1566, just around the time of Selim II's accession. In Casale's words, Basra was "a major international center of trade occupying a commanding position at the entrance to the Persian Gulf," and therefore was of critical importance to Ottoman ambitions in the region. It had been captured by the Ottomans in 1546.<sup>4</sup> The governor of Baghdad at the time, Iskender Pasha, suppressed the rebellion. The images (figs. 1 and 2) clearly pay attention to the geography of water, and depict the landscape accordingly. Thus we find a wide body of water flowing in all four images, and in three of them it also has dramatic canals flowing into the land, bisecting it at sharp angles. Other than the water canals, which almost appear as live beings because of the sense of movement derived from their sharp angles, the landscape is depicted as flat. Overlapping hills which often organize Ottoman compositions into distinct areas, helping to give order to large groups, here have left their place to the arms of the river, dividing the landscape and the people on it into discreet sections. The dryness of the land is communicated with the lack of tufts of grass that usually grace the depiction of Ottoman landscapes, and the verdant green trees and spring blossoms one is accustomed to see have left their place to date palms, immediately evoking a far away land. Thus in the depiction of the landscape, there is an attempt to portray the different geography with its salient features. The castles that make up the only bits of architecture in these four paintings are not distinguished in any way from castles in other lands.

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4 Casale, *Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 77.

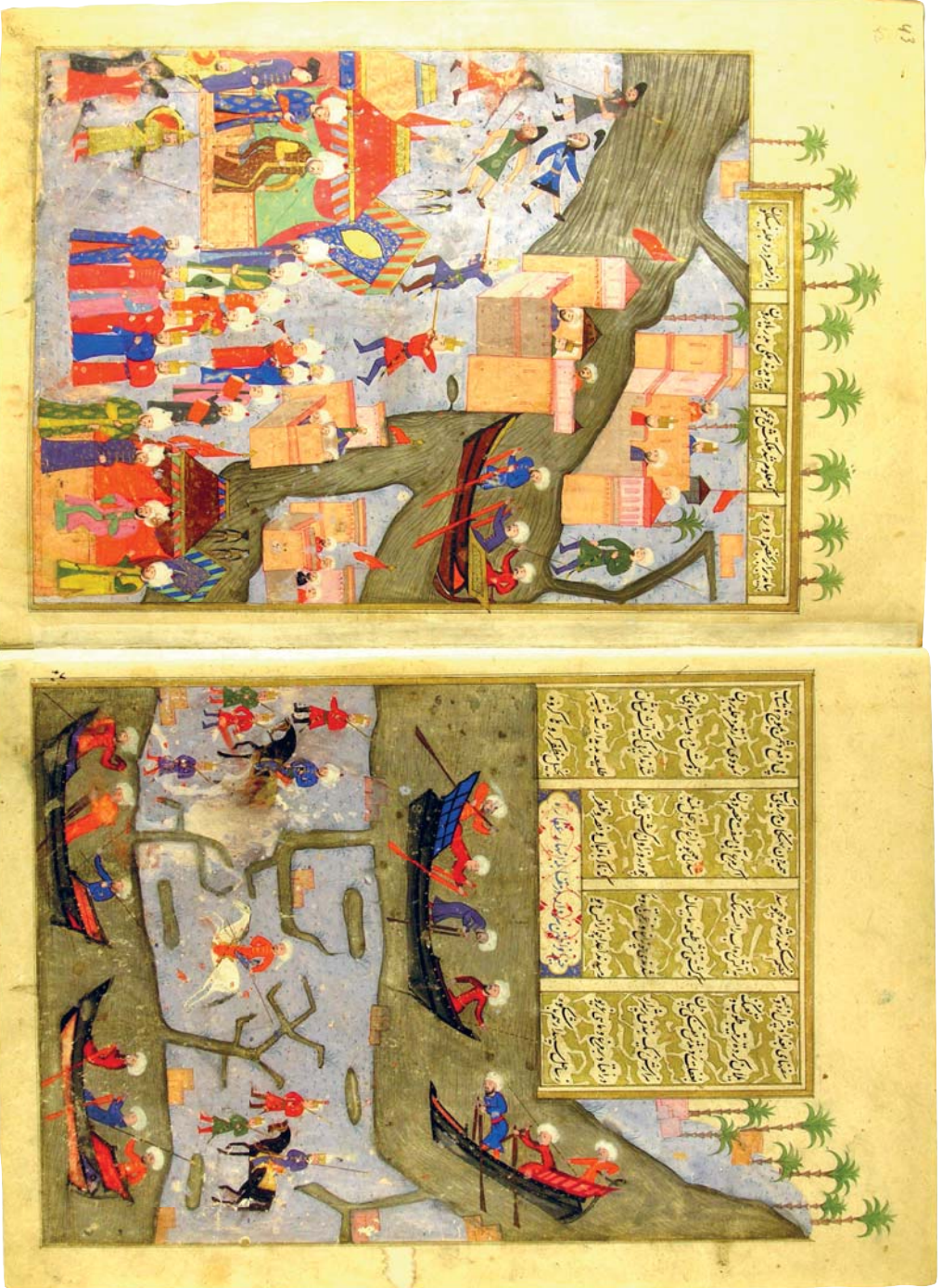


Figure 1 – Iskender Pasha's tent facing the rivers of 'Aqara, near Basra, *Şehname-i Selim Hân*, Istanbul, ca. 1571-81, Topkapı Palace Library, A. 3595, fol. 41b-42a. Photo courtesy of the Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul.



The people of Basra are indeed depicted as distinct from the Ottomans, but only by their costumes and their stances or movements, not by the tone of their skin, or any other physiological differences. The rebels of Basra are dressed in monotone costumes with their arms and legs bare, and sporting black helmet-like turbans around their heads. Their appearance is contrasted sharply with the Ottoman soldiers and officers in multi-colored gowns of red, blue, orange, green and other bright hues. Their bare legs and arms evoke a sense of helplessness and of poverty. Many of them are depicted as injured or dead. Another contrast is that between the large numbers of Ottomans in the paintings with the few locals, giving a sense that this rebellion is not a big challenge for the mighty Ottoman state. One painting (fig. 2) depicts the leader of the rebels, the ruler of Ju-yi Tawil, as he is referred to in the text, being led to his execution. He walks with his hands tied behind his back, his head bent in a somewhat humble pose, and his clothes echoing that humility in their plain brown color, with his arms and legs exposed, and his chest somewhat open, too. Behind him a Janissary in red is carrying a bright orange satchel on his back, and leading a woman carrying a child, presumably the family of the man about to be executed. The mighty, rich, and orderly empire thus contrasts with the poor and awkward rebels.

Another significant event during the reign of Selim II was the rebellion in Yemen, and its suppression absorbed significant amounts of time, money, and energy on the part of the Ottomans.<sup>5</sup> The rebellion was led by the Shia Zaydi Imam Mutahhar. Casale interprets Mutahhar's rebellion as a reaction to the Ottoman governor Mahmud Pasha's misdeeds. And Mahmud Pasha in turn was not only an ally and compatriot of Sokollu, but his actions in Yemen had been supported by Sokollu as well. However, after the rebellion broke out in 1567, Mahmud's actions in Yemen were scrutinized, and it became clear that he had indeed treated the locals unjustly while trying to raise revenues. He was therefore punished by death.<sup>6</sup> The widespread discontent in Yemen was directly connected with Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's efforts to intensify Ottoman involvement there as a prelude to his plans for expansion in the Indian Ocean. Yemen was hugely important for control of the spice trade which brought large customs revenues to the empire.<sup>7</sup>

5 For details of the Yemen campaign, see Muşafâ 'Âli, *Künhü'l-abbâr*, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Nuruosmaniye 3409, fols. 221b-227b; İsmail Hami Danişmend, *İzablı Osmanlı Tarihi Kronolojisi*, 5 vols. (Istanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1971-72), 2:373-87.

6 Casale, *Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 131-32.

7 Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The story of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1923* (London: John Murray, 2005), 155; Casale, *Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 131-32.

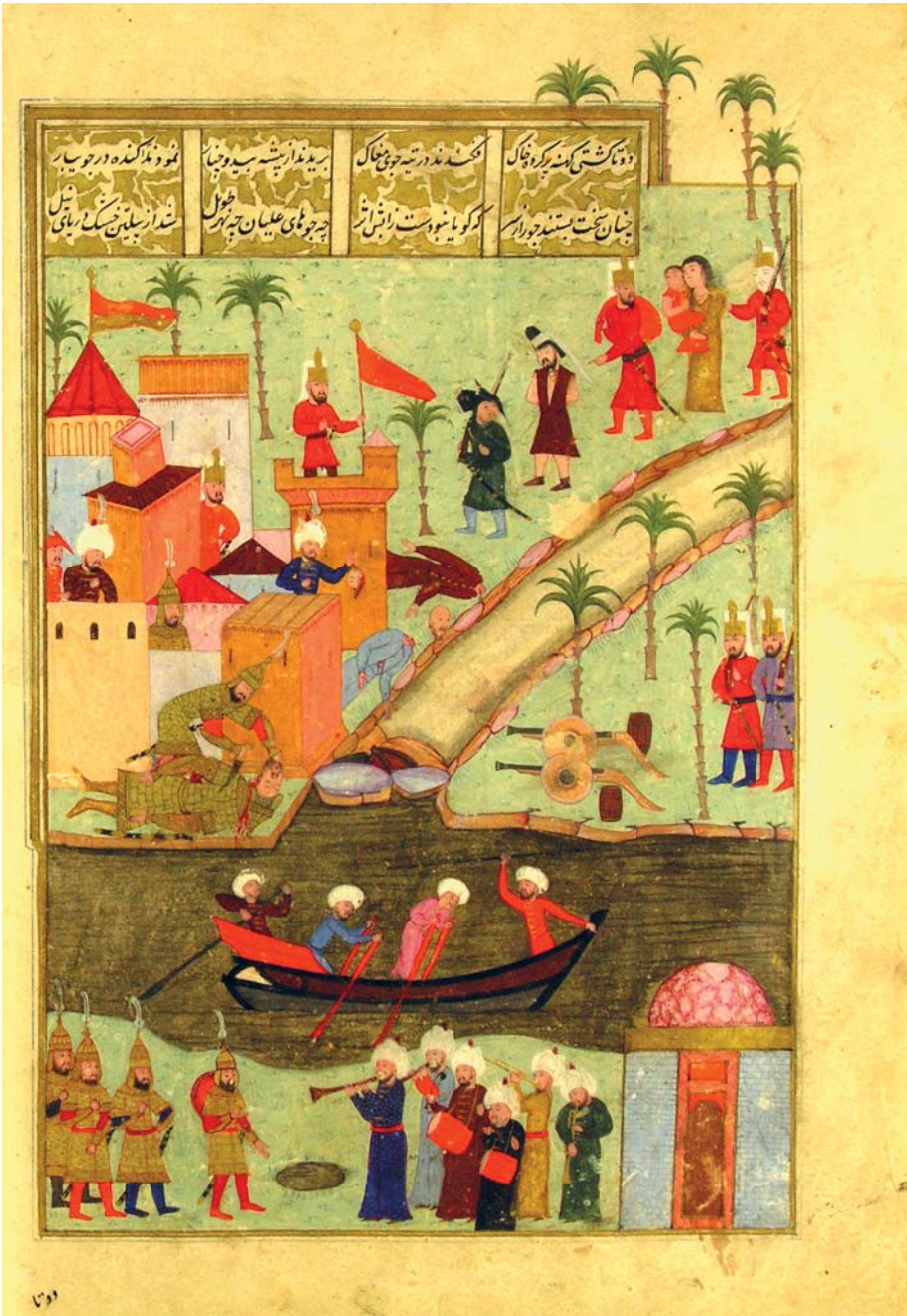


Figure 2 – Execution of the ruler of Ju-yi Tawil, *Şehname-i Selim Hân*, Istanbul, ca. 1571-81, Topkapı Palace Library, A. 3595, fol. 45b. Photo courtesy of the Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul.

The Yemen affair must have tarnished Sokollu's reputation somewhat, and surely its remembrance was not to his credit, but rather to the credit of those who suppressed the revolt, namely Koca Sinan Pasha, Lala Mustafa Pasha, and Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha, all three rivals of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha who became powerful at court after his death. It took three years and a lot of resources to finally bring an end to the rebellion. The suppression of the rebellion also became the stage upon which the rivalry between Koca Sinan Pasha and Lala Mustafa Pasha was acted out.<sup>8</sup> The depiction of the rebellion and its suppression in the *Şehnâme-i Selim Hân* were greatly extended during the revision of the manuscript in the last few years of the 1580s.<sup>9</sup> The extension of these sections of the text and its embellishment with paintings was a way to underscore the positive contributions of the three statesmen to the Ottoman cause. The depiction of the rebellion in Yemen is thus closely linked to the power balances at the Ottoman court.

Yemeni rebels (as seen in fig. 3, but also folios 90a and 91b) are shown as dressed more simply than the Ottomans, and are identifiable by their black headgear similar to those from Basra, with some among them (mostly the leaders) wearing red caps wrapped with a thin white stripe. While they do not look as poor as the people of Basra with their sleeveless clothes and bare legs, they certainly wear different robes than the Ottomans. Their robes are looser, of a single color, and long. The Ottoman soldiers and officers, by contrast, usually wear two colored robes, with long pants, and some janissaries, with red boots. The Yemenis' clothes, in fact, are the main markers of difference. Their poses, too, in a somewhat more subtle way, set them apart from the Ottomans. Yemenis (especially in figure 3) are painted with looser, larger gestures than the Ottomans: their arms open wider, they point to things with more exaggerated arm movements. All of this suggests a certain lack of both order and control—two qualities greatly prized by the Ottoman court and Ottoman artists in their depictions of their own court. The Ottoman figures in the Yemen scenes are much more controlled in their postures; their hands clasped in front of their bodies, or their arms by their sides, their movements reflect calm while the Yemenis are anything but calm and collected. These depictions seem to be a statement on the political situation and

8 *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. "Sinan Paşa" (Şerafeddin Turan). İbrahim Peçevî (*Tarih-i Peçevî*, 2 vols. [Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1980, facsimile of 1281-84/1864-67 edition], 1:479; 2:16) explicitly mentions the rivalry and mistrust between Sinan Pasha, Osman Pasha, and Lala Mustafa Pasha during the Yemen campaign. See also Casale, *Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 152-79.

9 Fetvacı, "The Production of the *Şehnâme-i Selim Hân*," 284-90.



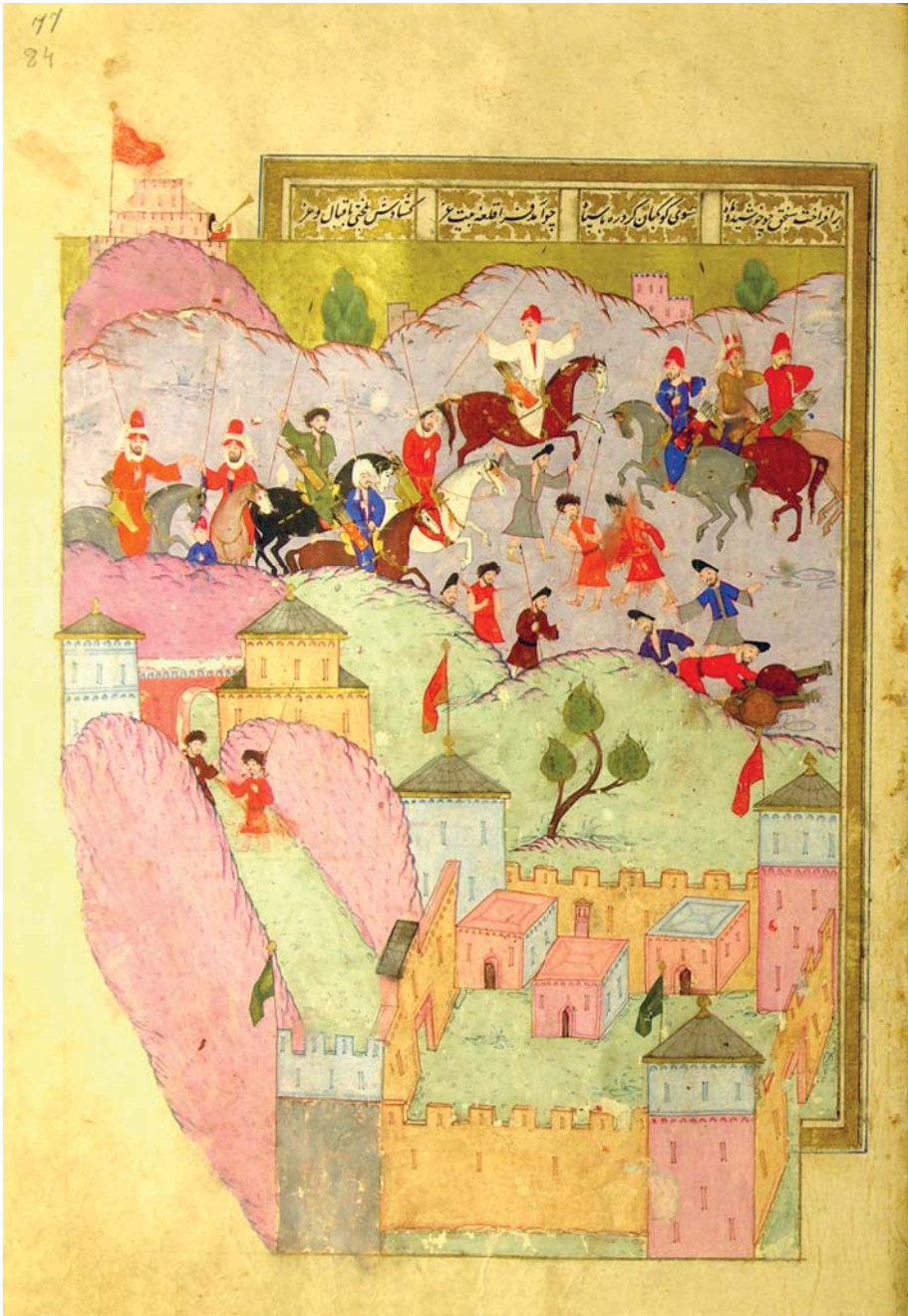


Figure 3 – Attack on Kevkeban castle, in Yemen (facing page with half of illustration missing), *Şehnāme-i Selīm Ḥān*, Istanbul, ca. 1571-81, Topkapı Palace Library, A. 3595, fol. 84a. Photo courtesy of the Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul.



reflect Ottoman perceptions of the rebels. The five existent paintings dedicated to the Yemen rebellion certainly allow the reader to linger on the affair, the difficulties encountered during the three years it took to suppress the rebellion are not denied, but the Yemeni strength is certainly downplayed, and the Ottoman soldiers and commanders are depicted as being in control of the situation.

When we turn our attention to the landscape of Yemen, it does not seem to be differentiated much from other geographies. It has hills, and a few deciduous trees. It is by no means lush, but neither does it have palm trees like those in Basra, or other dramatic features like the rivers of 'Aqara. (By contrast, the paintings in the *Tārīḫ-i Fetḥ-i Yemen* [İstanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, ms. no. T 6045], created in 1596, depict a very dramatic landscape, with extremely steep pink hills that rise to the tops of the compositions.) The few buildings visible in the paintings are non-descript. Certainly they are strong-looking fortresses, but not individualized in any way. Thus Yemen is not depicted as an exotic land, but simply an area of Ottoman dominion.

The manuscript contains three illustrations relating to Tunisia. In 1569, the corsair captain Kılıç Ali Pasha, referred to as the Governor (*mîrmîrân*) of Algiers in the *Şehnâme-i Selîm Hân*, sent a small army overland from Algiers which defeated the Hafsid and conquered Tunis. According to Fernand Braudel, the Hafsid ruler Mawlay Hamida's soldiers scattered without fighting, and Hamida first took refuge in the city of Tunis, then escaped to the Spanish fortress of La Goletta. The people of Tunis welcomed Kılıç Ali Pasha. At the time, Phillip II of Spain was busy suppressing the Morisco revolt in Granada and dealing with the Netherlands.<sup>10</sup>

The first painting in the *Şehnâme-i Selîm Hân* relating to this affair is on folio 65a (figure 4). Its facing page is no longer in the manuscript, it was originally a double-page composition. The scene depicts the Ottoman army conquering Tunis in January 1570. It is clear that the page currently in the collection of the Aga Khan Museum was the facing half of the painting still in the manuscript.<sup>11</sup> Together the two images provide exactly the same kind of contrast between the Ottomans and their enemies that we have seen in the case of the Yemenis or Basrans: the Ottoman army is marching in orderly fashion, with various kinds of soldiers grouped together in tight formations. They are fully in control and

<sup>10</sup> Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 2 vols. (New York : Harper & Row, 1976), II: 1055-68.

<sup>11</sup> Aga Khan Museum (previously Sadruddin Aga Khan Collection, inventory no. TM1. f. 65r).



Figure 4 – Conquest of Tunisia (facing page with half of image missing), *Şehname-i Selim Ḥān*, Istanbul, ca. 1571-81, Topkapı Palace Library, A. 3595, fol. 65a. Photo courtesy of the Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul.

moving with calm determination. The Tunisians (Hafsids) visible on the top of figure 4 are being chased on horseback by two Ottoman soldiers, and there is some commotion in the chase scene. The civilians depicted in the lower part of the scene are leaving the fortified city. One of them is holding up what must be a Quran box, and another man is carrying two large keys—probably the keys to the city, to be handed over to the Ottomans. This is a surrender scene, or a submitting to Ottoman order. The Tunisians are depicted in loose robes without any embellishments similar to the Yemenis, but their headwear is different. They are wearing loosely wound white turbans which also go under their chins. This is the same kind of headwear one finds in other contemporary Ottoman depictions of Arabs, or rather, the first Muslims, the companions of the Prophet Muhammad. So I interpret this as a short hand for Sunni non-Ottoman (Arab) headwear. This scene is more about non-Ottoman Muslims recognizing, perhaps preferring, Ottoman rule than it is about conquest. As such, it also helps to remind the viewer of Ottoman notions of being the leaders of the Islamic world, the protectors of all Muslims.

The verbal discussion of Tunisians (on fol. 63b), however, is the only reference to racial types in the *Şehnâme-i Selîm Hân*. Here the Tunisian commander (who might be the Hafsid ruler Mawlay Hamida) is described as black faced (*rû-siyâh*), as well as a squeezed raisin (*ângûr-u befeşurde*). Yet there is no one in the related image that is depicted in a different skin tone than the others—and there are certainly Tunisians in the painting. This might point to a disconnect between verbal and visual depictions of people, yet in the same manuscript, when Ethiopians are depicted (and in no way described verbally in such derogatory terms), their skin color is indeed shown as darker than the Ottomans they are fighting (folio 138a). The Ethiopians, however, are depicted with more dignity than the Basrans, Yemenis, or even the Tunisians. They are shown as well-dressed warriors, clearly skilled on horseback. They are still the enemy, and so are not as many in number as the Ottomans, and are not as orderly in their military movements, but still they do not seem to be in a state of disarray as most others who fight or flee the Ottomans in the manuscript.<sup>12</sup> This suggests that the derogatory remarks on folio 63b are directed specifically at the person of Mawlay Hamida and not at Africans in general, not even Tunisians in general.

12 The Ethiopian image of folio 138a relates both to the actual events it records, which have to do with the Ottoman involvement in Ethiopian internal affairs in the 1560s, but also to the 1579 loss of Ottoman control in Abyssinia, during the last months of Sokollu's life, and the regaining of position by Koca Sinan Pasha. The Ottoman presence in Abyssinia is discussed by Casale, *Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 152-3, and 157-8.



The author as well as the artists of the manuscript would be familiar with at least one high profile Ethiopian at the Ottoman court at this time, and that is the chief black eunuch Mehmed Agha, who served in that position until his death in 1590. Not only was Mehmed Agha one of the most influential figures at the court of Murad III, but he was also a manuscript patron who had used Lokman's services. Additionally, as a result of his official duties, he had frequent contact with the manuscript workshop of the palace.<sup>13</sup> When recording Mehmed Agha's death, the historian Selaniki quotes a couplet, supposedly penned "by the people," giving the date: "That black calamity is gone from the world."<sup>14</sup> We understand from this, and we also know from Baki Tezcan's work on the early seventeenth century in this regard, that Ottoman authors were not without prejudice when it came to darker skin tones than their own.<sup>15</sup> But there does not appear to be a consistent negative attitude towards all Africans in the *Şehnâme-i Selim Hân*.

Returning to Tunisian events, we see that these are concluded with two images of Spanish fortresses in folios 147b-148a and 150a, these relate to events that took place a few years after Kılıç Ali's conquest of Tunis in 1569. Tunis was retaken by the Spanish in 1573, and a new fortress was built in La Goletta. In 1574, Ottomans again captured it, in a combined operation with the land forces of the provinces of Algiers, Tripoli and Tunis, under the direction of Kılıç Ali Pasha and Koca Sinan Pasha.<sup>16</sup> The most striking aspects of the paintings are the castles that are depicted with great attention to detail. Their location in the landscape, and their placement in a harbor or inside a moat are rendered carefully to help with the account of the war. Again it is not so much exotic geography that is being depicted here as the difficulty the fortresses posed to conquest. Thus their detailed

13 For Mehmed Agha's life, career, and artistic patronage, see Emine Fetvacı, *Picturing History at the Ottoman Court* (Indiana University Press, forthcoming in 2013).

14 Selaniki Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Selaniki*, Mehmet İpşirli, ed. 2 vols. (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1989) 1: 229-30: *Reft az 'âlem ân belâ-yi siyâh*). For seventeenth-century attitudes towards blacks and eunuchs see Baki Tezcan, "Dispelling the Darkness: The Politics of Race in the Early Seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire in the Light of the Life and Work of Mullah Ali," 73-95, in Baki Tezcan and Karl K. Barbir, eds, *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World: A Volume of Essays in Honor of Norman Itzkowitz* (Madison, Wisconsin: Center for Turkish Studies at the University of Wisconsin and University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 73-95, esp. 77-79.

15 Tezcan, "Dispelling the Darkness," 77-79.

16 Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, p. 162. Casale, *Ottoman Age of Exploration*, pp. 152-3: But then in 1580, Portugal was eclipsed by Spain because of succession issues, and the two most important naval enemies of the Ottomans, Spain and Portugal, were now one. Also in 1579, Ethiopians defeat Ottomans.

depiction is intended to aid the verbal description of action that accompanies them, and also to enhance the heroic image of Ottoman warriors.

The group accorded the most visual respect in the manuscript are the Safavids, but even they are always in inferior position to the Ottomans. In the scene of Shah Tahmasp's envoy presenting gifts to Selim II (folios 53b-54a), the Safavid ambassador is forced to bend down in front of the Sultan, his hands held behind him, tightly, by two Janissaries. The depiction of Shah Tahmasp's agent being killed on his way to Mecca (fig. 5), while on the one hand sympathetic to the Safavids, on the other shows their bodies in highly comical poses. The center of the painting depicts a Safavid man in his undergarments (or perhaps his white Hajj garb), toppled upside down and about to fall to the ground. His turban has fallen before him, and is already upside down on the ground. His legs are raised in the air in a comical fashion. One of his companions, in the lower left corner of the image, has been wounded, and bent down to the ground. But his position, with his hips in the air, is almost identical to the poses of buffoons who entertain the public in scenes from the *Sûrnâme-i Humâyûn* (Topkapı Palace Museum Library, ms. no Hazine 1344).<sup>17</sup> Another Safavid man, in the middle ground, on the right side, has taken his turban under his arm and is simply giving up, walking away from the scene. Their attackers are Arabs, identifiable with their black turbans, but look nowhere as poor as the rebels in Basra. Instead, these men wear colored textiles, ride horses, and are skilled in using their spears. Perhaps this image makes a visual argument for the need to secure the Hajj routes, even for the Safavids. Thus depicting the attackers in dignified poses might be helping that cause. The depiction of the Arabs here also suggests that when they act in Ottoman interests, or on behalf of the Ottomans, their depiction is much more positive than when they are acting against Ottoman interests. In other words, the perception of otherness is also closely correlated to political interests and alliances.

Venetians appear most consistently in the images surrounding the conquest of Cyprus (1571)--perhaps the most significant victory of Selim II's reign, and certainly of Lala Mustafa Pasha's career. The Cyprus campaign was launched on the insistence of Lala Mustafa Pasha, and had caused an expedition planned by his rival the grand vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha to Hormuz to be called off.<sup>18</sup> Cyprus had been under Venetian domination since 1489, and attacking it meant

17 See Fetvacı, *Picturing History*, pp. 149-90; Derin Terzioğlu, "The Imperial Circumcision Festival of 1582: An Interpretation." *Muqarnas* 12 (1995): 84-100, Nurhan Atasoy, *1582 Surname-i Humayun: An Imperial Celebration* (Istanbul: Koçbank, 1997)

18 Casale, *Ottoman Age of Exploration*, p. 137. See also Braudel's description of the conquest of Cyprus, Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, pp. 1080-87.



Figure 5 – Shah Tāhmasp’s agent Masum killed en route to the Hajj, *Şehnāme-i Selīm Ḥān*, Istanbul, ca. 1571-81, Topkapı Palace Library, A. 3595, fol. 68a. Photo courtesy of the Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul.



breaking the peace treaty with Venice, something Sokollu Mehmed Pasha vehemently opposed. As he had predicted, the conquest of Cyprus encouraged Spain, Venice and the papacy to join forces, and the ensuing Lepanto debacle is well known<sup>19</sup>—though barely mentioned in the *Şehnâme-i Selīm Hân*. The depiction of the Cyprus campaign presents Lala Mustafa Pasha as a great hero, and can almost be interpreted as flaunting his victory in the face of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, or any of his supporters who would read the manuscript.

In the verbal account of the conquest, the landscape is not commented upon at all, neither is the appearance of the people, but deeds are center-stage: the story is a story of action. The same can be said of the images (folios 102b, 119a, 122a, 125b [fig. 6]). The architecture appears as backdrop to help narrate the story and locate the events in a specific place. Thus folios 119a (Siege of Famagusta) and 122a (Lala Mustafa Pasha's execution of Venetian commanders) depict the same city, Famagusta, with a church on its left side and a tower jutting out into the body of water that runs down the right side of the page--no doubt the Mediterranean. Famagusta was the last fortress on the island to be captured by the Ottomans, thus its conquest also meant victory in the campaign. While in the first image we see the fortress behind flames, the second one has the city with its walls full of cracks--evidence and result of the Ottoman attack. In the first scene the burning fortress city is the main focus, even though it is depicted as the background. The foreground itself is mostly empty, and the only Ottomans visible in it are those excitedly informing their officers in the bottom of the page and pointing up to burning Famagusta--a total of nine figures. The Ottoman camp is depicted but there are no figures in it, and the middle ground only contains two cannons in empty space, shooting at Famagusta. The topic, clearly, is the result of the Ottoman attack--conquest.

The following image (folio 122a) which depicts Lala Mustafa Pasha's execution of Venetian commanders now uses the city as merely a backdrop--the main event takes place in the lower two thirds of the page, while the fortress occupies the upper portion. This gruesome image with numerous bodies and severed heads scattered on the ground can also be read as a justification for why the Cyprus campaign had to be undertaken. The lower left corner shows Lala Mustafa Pasha seated in front of his tent, embodying the Ottoman state, kneeling in front of him is the Venetian commander Bragadino, who will soon be punished himself. This is the moment when Lala Mustafa Pasha learned that the fifty Muslim pilgrims captured by the Venetians had been killed, and in retaliation, he had

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19 Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, pp. 158-62.

Bragadino's companions executed.<sup>20</sup> This was also partially to suggest that the Ottomans had been right to break the peace accord, that Venetian control of the island was indeed against the interests of all Muslims. And the Ottomans, in the person of Lala Mustafa Pasha, were avenging the Muslim cause. In fact this image is thematically linked with the *fetva* that had been obtained from the Sheikhlislam Ebussuud Efendi prior to the campaign. When asked if it was appropriate under sacred law to break a peace treaty held with the infidels who had control of a piece of land that had previously been in Muslim hands, Ebussuud replied that peace was not appropriate to begin with, unless it benefitted all Muslims.<sup>21</sup> The *Şehnâme-i Selim Hân* thus reminds the reader/viewer that this peace had not been beneficial to all Muslims--some fifty pilgrims had been in captivity, and killed. Surely this had not been a just peace to begin with!

The flaying of Bragadino ten days after his audience with Lala Mustafa Pasha was probably meant to drive the same point home. It has also been interpreted as Lala Mustafa Pasha making sure--and sending a message to Sokollu Mehmed Pasha--that a renewed peace with Venice was impossible.<sup>22</sup> The image depicting the flaying (fig. 6) is quite jarring. It depicts two janissaries tugging at a rope to pull the flayed skin of Bragadino up a flag pole. The pole is placed at the center of the page, with a group of Ottoman officers around, watching the scene. The skin that is being raised up the pole simply looks like a naked body--except for a brown cloth around his genitals and a red hat on his head. On the ground lies a mutilated body with no hands or feet, and the head appearing like a skull with some pink flesh on it. Just as it would be on a skull, there are empty spots where the eye, nostrils and mouth would have been. But the color of this body on the ground is the same pink used to depict the skin on the pole, making it at first difficult to comprehend the scene. The skin that is vertical on the pole has the face--with facial hair and lips--but only dark circles for eyes. The facial features as well as the hands and feet makes the flayed skin look like a person, rather than the body on the ground. The hat placed on the flayed head, too, helps to mark this as a person, and a Venetian, or at least, a Frank. Just as the clothes of the Yemenis and Tunisians help to identify them, the Venetians, too, are identifiable by their clothes. While there is no firmer proof of this than the red hat on Bragadino's head, Baki Tezcan has also demonstrated that Western European Christians in

20 Ahmet Gazioğlu, *Turks in Cyprus: A Province of the Ottoman Empire (1571-1878)* (London: K. Rustem, 1990), pp. 61-66; Niccolo Capponi, *Victory of the West: The Story of the Battle of Lepanto* (London: Macmillan, 2006), pp. 233-6.

21 Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, pp. 158-9.

22 Capponi, *Victory of the West*, pp. 233-6.

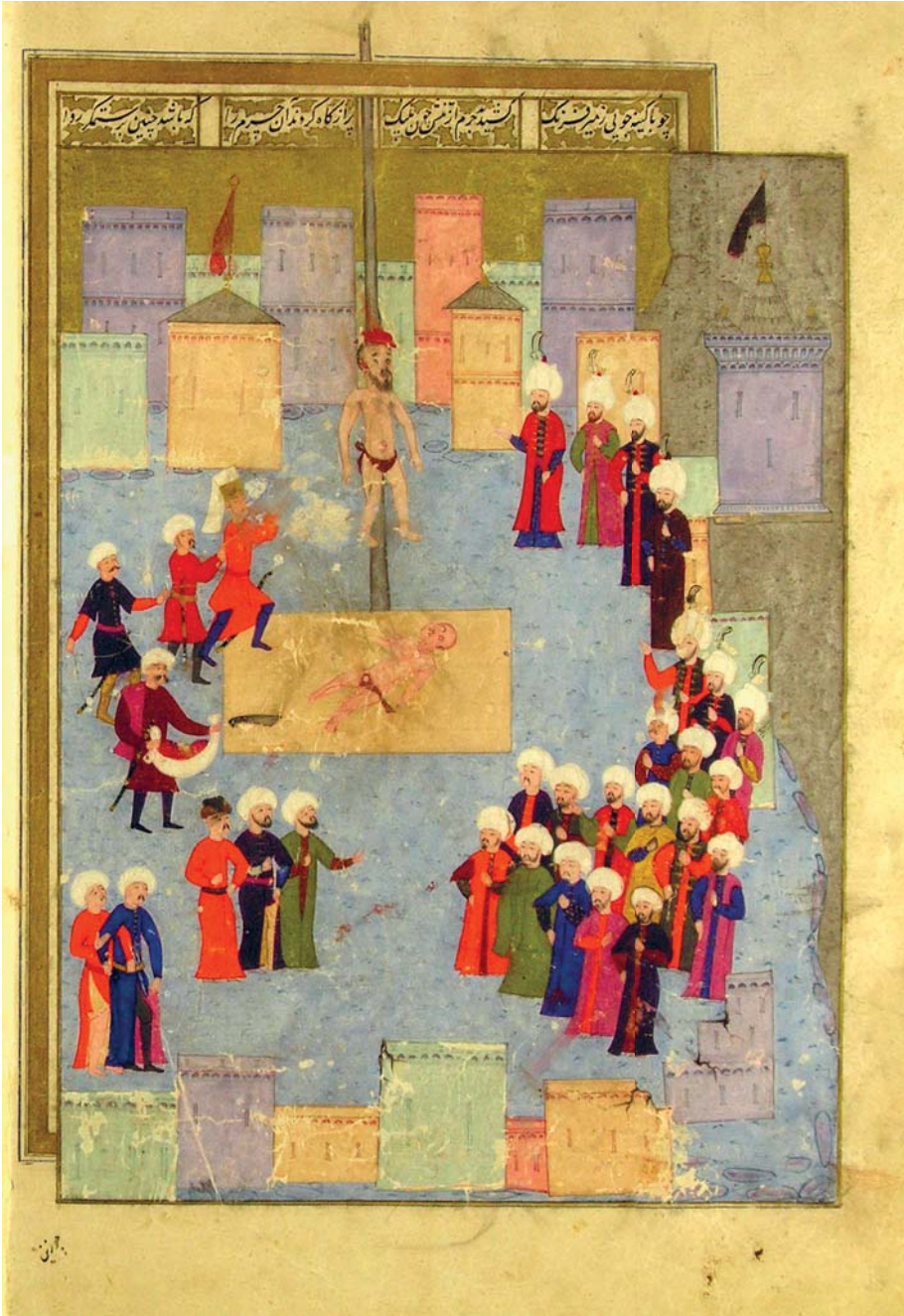


Figure 6 – Flaying of Venetian commander Bragadino, *Şehnâme-i Selim Hân*, Istanbul, ca. 1571-81, Topkapı Palace Library, A. 3595, fol. 125b. Photo courtesy of the Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul.



Ottoman manuscripts are usually identified as such not by skin tone or facial features, but by their hats. Tezcan also evokes the Mughal term for Western Europeans, or Franks, as the Ottomans and Mughals called them: "hat wearers."<sup>23</sup>

Given the importance of costume as a marker of identity in the rest of the manuscript I believe it is not only their hats that identify the Venetians as such--their clothes are also significant. This becomes most apparent in folio 102b showing the Ottoman army landing in Cyprus, at the beginning of their campaign. The Venetians in this painting are all identifiable by their dark clothes as well as their hats--there is a unity to their costumes. In the image of Bragadino's flaying, though we do not at first notice his clothes, they are actually present. They just happen to be bundled up in the white kerchief that the soldier to the left of the image is carrying. Thus it appears that we need to see his hat on his head and his clothes deliberately depicted as being away from his body in order to fully understand the painting. The hat on his head identifies him as Venetian, and the clothes taken off are a reminder that the flaying is a deliberately executed sentence, not a hasty decision. The inclusion of the bundle of clothes is an important indicator of the flaying sentence.

The other clue, of course, is the body that is lying on the ground. The connection between the body and its skin--that is still depicted as if it were a body--is clearly marked by the brown textile that covers the genitals of both. This repetition of the cloth reminds the viewer that the body and its skin are one and the same, one is an impression of the other perhaps, or one maps onto the other. One cannot help but wonder: is the skin the person? or is the body the person? How is Bragadino the Venetian commander to be recognized? The clues provided then come together, the hat on the skin, with the facial hair and features--the physiognomic specifics--is what identifies this man. And the explanation of why he is naked and on a pole are provided by the bundle of clothes and the mutilated body lying on the ground.<sup>24</sup> This visual explanation is needed because such a horrifying scene was not depicted too often--the clothes identify the scene as a flaying, because the skin separated from the body was not deemed clear enough

23 Baki Tezcan, "The Frank in the Ottoman Eye of 1583," in James G. Harper, ed, *The Turk and Islam in the Western Eye, 1450-1750* (Surrey, U.K. and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), pp/ 267-96, esp. pp. 269-72.

24 Some scholars suggest that the flaying of Bragadino caused such a stir in Europe, especially Venice, that it served as the inspiration for Titian's famous painting "The Flaying of Marsyas," completed between 1571 and 1576. (Edith Wyss, *The Myth of Apollo and Marsyas in the Art of the Italian Renaissance* [Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996], p. 134.)

to make this point. The artists needed to develop a visual formula that would be easily recognizable as a flaying scene. Lokman also had to find words to explain what happened. He found a parallel in the heroic lore of hunting, and described Bragadino's flaying as the skin being pulled from the body like that of a tiger (*keşîdend cerm az teneş çün pelenk*).

In a stratified society like the Ottoman one, costume already served to classify people according to social status, religion, region, and profession. Sumptuary laws regulated which sections of society could wear what kinds of fabrics and what colors they could use. The same thing was true in the European context as well. "The significance of precise details of dress, civil as well as military and ecclesiastical, throughout European history, has long been recognized: nationality, position in society, profession, status and income, the very city from which one came, not to speak of sex and civil state, were all proclaimed by dress."<sup>25</sup> Bronwen Wilson has convincingly shown in her study of printed Venetian costume books that it was the clothes, and not facial features or other physical characteristics, that were the loci of alterity in the early sixteenth century.<sup>26</sup> It was not what one's skin or eyes looked like that set "nations" apart in sixteenth century imagination, it was what they wore and how they conducted themselves. And wearing national costume was an issue at the time. Braudel notes that when the Habsburgs suppressed the Morisco rebellion in Spain, one of the conditions of the rebels as they surrendered was that they would be allowed to wear national costume—and they were granted that right.<sup>27</sup>

The images in the *Şehnâme-i Selîm Hân* seem to confirm the importance of costume for identity. Whether in the horrible image of Bragadino's flaying which cannot even be made sense of without the presence of his hat and clothes, or the depictions of Tunisian Sunnis or Yemeni Shia, the clothes and headwear help to identify people as belonging to certain geographic and religious, perhaps even linguistic, groups. Just as the clothes help us to recognize the people, the details of the landscape or architecture, when they are given, are provided so as to give specificity to the scenes. Thus the castles in Tunisia are shown in their precise locations, Basra is depicted as a land of rivers and date palms, and Famagusta's water-side location is highlighted with the depiction of its fortress extending into the sea.

25 Eleanor Sims, "Hans Ludwig von Kuefstein's Turkish Figures," pp. 20-40 in *At the Sublime Port: ambassadors to the Ottoman Empire (1550-1800)*. (London: Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox, 1988), esp. p. 23.

26 Bronwen Wilson, *The World in Venice: print, the city and early modern identity* (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2005), pp. 76-77.

27 Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, p. 1070.

The depiction of others and other geographies was as much a mapping of Ottoman preoccupations as it was a record of foreign or exotic people and places.<sup>28</sup> When interpreted with their specific audience in mind--that is the present and future Ottoman court--these informative details take on another guise, too. Tunisian castles are not only unique but also difficult to conquer, Basra's geography presents particular challenges to the brave warriors trying to bring it order in the name of the Ottoman state. Basrans and Yemenis do not only wear clothes that identify them as "Arabs," but they also appear as poorer than the Ottomans, and move in less orderly, more chaotic ways. Their clothes and gesture thus also mark them as disorderly rebels, riffraff. Venetians in Cyprus are depicted as wealthy in comparison to the rebel Arabs, but they are in contrast punished the most severely. This punishment is a sign not only of Ottoman dispensing of justice for all Muslims (it was, after all, avenging the deaths of poor pilgrims), but also a coded message to Ottoman courtiers about the righteousness of the Cyprus campaign. These representations of the peoples of the Mediterranean help, most of all, to depict the Ottomans in a certain light. They become the guarantors of safety, security and order for all Muslims; Tunisians and Shia Safavids alike. The commanders of Selim II, Kılıç Ali Pasha, Koca Sinan Pasha, and Lala Mustafa Pasha, act upon the orders of the sultan, becoming agents of his just rule as they spread it around the Mediterranean.

*Others and Other Geographies in the Şehnâme-i Selim Hân*

Abstract ■ This article examines the depiction of various "others" (Venetians, Safavids, Tunisians, Yemenis, and Ethiopians), and other geographies (Yemen, Tunisia, Cyprus) in the *Şehnâme-i Selim Hân*. Through a close examination of paintings, it argues that these representations reflect the imperial ideologies and political concerns that inform the manuscript as a whole. It further demonstrates that as is true of many early-modern depictions, the markers of ethnic identity in this period were costumes and customs rather than physical features.

Key words: Mediterranean, Tunisia, Yemen, Cyprus, race, ethnicity, costume, Ottoman painting, flaying.

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28 The reverse is true of course, of the depictions of Ottomans. See Emine Fetvacı, "The Grand and the Terrible: European Visions of Ottomans," in James Clifton, ed., *The Plains of Mars: European War Prints, 1500-1825, from the Collection of the Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation* (New Haven and Houston: Yale University Press and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 2009).