

Emine Fetvacı,

The Album of the World Emperor: Cross-Cultural Collecting and the Art of Album-Making in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul,

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In *The Album of the World Emperor: Cross-Cultural Collecting and the Art of Album-Making in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul* Fetvacı makes available a dazzling album—the album of Ahmed I (Topkapı Palace Museum Library, B. 408)—to a broad audience, and provides a first comprehensive study of this work. Compiled by the courtier Kalender Paşa (d. 1616), this album is a striking gathering of a variety of materials, including calligraphy, painting and print, joined together artfully by the handiwork of Kalender himself. This album is remarkable in many ways. Diverse samples of painting, print, and calligraphy are put together through the fine paper joinery skills of Kalender Paşa, for which he was well-known. The compiler has also composed a seven-page preface in which he discusses the edificatory and sensorial aspects of the album. The Album of Ahmed I, while making references to older albums in the palace library, also diverges from these and the unified visual idiom to include variety—both non-Ottoman and non-courtly works find their place in the Album of Ahmed I. So aptly formulated by Fetvacı, this has broader implications for the study of albums as well as for the study of Ottoman art. At a point when the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal dynasties were each using art, architecture, and ceremonial to craft their distinct imperial identities, the Album of Ahmed I, remarkable for its eclecticism—an element that thus far deterred scholars to tackle this work fully—, speaks to the connectedness of this early modern world, while at the same time also relating to new ways of experiencing art and to new consumers of art.

Just as remarkable as the Album, is its patron. Ahmed I (r. 1603–17) came to the throne in 1603 as a thirteen-year-old who had not had to fight for the throne, who had not been appointed to a province to receive his princely education, who had not proven himself militaristically, and who had to deal with wars on the western and eastern fronts, as well as with nearly empire-wide rebellions and plague outbreaks. While the young sultan had to contend with these problems and attempt to establish his authority, there was also much liveliness in the urban centers and closer commercial contacts that were to also have a great impact on cultural

production. Fetvacı's first chapter discusses the reign of Ahmed I, laying the foundations for the rest of the book. This chapter highlights the particular context in which Ahmed I acceded to the throne, his first years taking charge of the empire and the ways in which he crafted his imperial identity—namely, looking at the past, modeling himself after the grandiose figures of Selim I (r. 1512–20) and Süleyman I (r. 1520–66); and looking at the example of the Prophet Muhammad and fashioning himself as a pious ruler. Fetvacı makes use of contemporary Ottoman and European accounts, as well as several accounts from the mid-seventeenth century, to support her points. Through a careful study of these sources, Fetvacı points out that Ahmed I crafted his imperial identity through drawing parallels particularly with Selim I and with Süleyman I. The connections with these rulers are prevalent in the account of Mustafa Safi's (d. 1616) *Zübdetü't-Tevarih*, even in unlikely places, such as the sultan's hunting trips or in his architectural patronage and renovations. That Ahmed I renovated the sanctuaries in Mecca and Medina in 1611 is seen as a symbolic re-conquest by Safi. Furthermore, Fetvacı sees the building of the Sultan Ahmed Mosque in line with and responding to the Süleymaniye Mosque. In this chapter, Fetvacı paints a comprehensive picture of the sultan as he tried to establish his imperial identity using architecture, poetry, calligraphy, as well as through the varied range of books that were dedicated to him. Additionally, she singles out this ruler among his predecessors as one who refined the idea of the ideal ruler as one upholding Sunni Islam. His contemporaries noted parallelisms between the sultan and the Prophet. The wish to model oneself after the Prophet was further supported through the sultan's interest in particular ceremonies, such as the celebration of the Prophet's birthday, and collection of relics. Ahmed I's piety is also reflected in his own *Divan*.

The second chapter focuses on the architectural and artistic production during the reign of Ahmed I. The discussion on the Sultan Ahmed Mosque further supports what Fetvacı pointed out in the first chapter: that is, the mosque is both an assertion of the sultan's power and an expression of his piety and justice. Through the similarities in elevation and in their foundation inscriptions, Ahmediyye harks back to the Süleymaniye, both of which also respond to the Hagia Sophia, and both of which were built during periods of sectarian and political tension. Ahmed I's mosque, however, also reflects the new aesthetic of the period with its emphasis on decoration. Fetvacı also notes that in terms of the inscriptions on the mihrab wall of the Ahmediyye, the mosque also responds to the Hagia Sophia. The inscriptions cite two verses from the Mary story. While the Mary

verse is an apt choice for the mihrab area, containing the word mihrab, Ahmediyye was the first two use two verses. The mosaic of the Virgin Mary and Child in the Hagia Sophia was kept intact, perhaps, Fetvacı suggests, referencing the prophet Muhammad's preservation of the Marian icon in the Ka'ba. This would further connect the Ottoman ruler with the Prophet, an aspect discussed in detail in the first chapter. Fetvacı also points to parallels with Sultan Süleyman's patronage and renovations, again supporting the statement that Ahmed I modeled himself on this ruler. Another ruler on whom Ahmed I modeled himself is Selim I, as previously mentioned. This point is further supported in the second chapter in Fetvacı's discussion of artistic production during the reign of Ahmed I, particularly an illustrated copy of the *Tercüme-i Miftah-ı Cifrül-Cami'*, where the young sultan is represented as the last ruler to rule before the end times.

Fetvacı furthers the continued interest in eschatology by remarking on the juxtaposition of the images of Ahmed I and Selim I in this manuscript. In this section, Fetvacı touches upon the artistic production during the reign of Ahmed I, bringing in examples such as the above-mentioned *Tercüme-i Miftah-ı Cifrül-Cami'*, as well as the *Falname*, another book that speaks to the occult interests, the *Tuhfetü'l Müluk ve's-Selatin*, a treatise on horses, horsemanship, and hunting. She also touches upon illustrated works that were begun during the reign of his father, and continued by Ahmed I. This nuanced approach situates the artistic production during the reign of Ahmed I in a specific context where certain continuities could be observed. Fetvacı suggests that Ahmed I's books portrayed a refined eschatological ideal for the Ottoman ruler—an aspect she has dealt with in the previous chapter as well. She also points out that the books prepared for this ruler also show an engagement with other books in the palace treasury. While Ahmed I's books do engage with the past, they also show a change in the conception of the image and the relation between text and image, where the images are starting to claim their independence from the text.

Fetvacı's third chapter then turns to the figure of Kalender, someone who seems to have had a good network as he rose through the ranks of Ottoman bureaucracy, and who was also renowned for his skills in paper joinery (*vassale*). In addition to his noteworthy skills in paper joinery, Kalender's organization of the materials allows the viewer to create looser narratives, to compare images and to scrutinize them. In fact, the notion of a scrutinizing gaze is at the core of this chapter, and indeed, of the Album. The arrangement, decoration, joining together of images on the page, subtle differences in decoration, as well as thematically

arranged compositions across two-page openings invite the viewer to contemplate on the Album and its contents.

As Kalender's preface also suggests, the contents are organized "with respect to each one's relationship to each other." Fetvacı's apt focus on this aspect of a close, comparative, scrutinizing gaze builds on what was hinted at in the previous chapter: that there are changes in the conception of art, collecting, and connoisseurship.

Furthermore, she builds on her previous point that Ahmed I modeled himself on previous rulers, particularly on Selim I and Süleyman I. In her comparative look across the pages of the album, where comparison is also encouraged by the compiler, Fetvacı posits the idea that one may also find parallels or links between two rulers depicted on two pages (fols. 11a and 27b), that is, between Selim I and Ahmed I. This is further supported by the inclusion of serial portraits of the Ottoman rulers in the Album, which as Fetvacı posits, creates both a corporate identity and a distinct one for each ruler. What is also particularly interesting in Fetvacı's analysis of the organization of the Album—with the caveat that we do not know the Album's original form—is the progression of the Album, starting with the introduction, folios containing hadith and verses from the Qur'an, history (representing the ancient ancestors as well as the serial portraits of Ottoman rulers), followed by paintings of urban types, entertainment, hunting. In this way, she relates it to a book.

Following the discussion on the organization of the Album and the invitation to compare its contents and contemplate, and to form a coherent whole through its decoration, Fetvacı then discusses the different styles present in the Album. What is particularly interesting is her point on the coexistence of works that were presumed to be made within and without the court. This has important scholarly implications, for it was often assumed that painters dubbed by Metin And as "bazaar painters" would have worked for an urban market (or potentially for the foreign market), and that artists on the payroll of the palace would have only worked to produce artworks for the court. As Fetvacı shows through a stylistic analysis of paintings included in the Album as well as through a parsing of contemporary textual sources, there was a shared visual culture and a broadening art market. This is corroborated by the several almost identical paintings and drawings found in other albums or independently. Fetvacı points to the fluid nature of art production and consumption where identifications of "Ottoman"

versus “Safavid,” or “courtly” versus “popular” need to be revisited. The Album of Ahmed I deliberately includes a multiplicity of styles, not just Ottoman and Persian, but also European.

Fetvacı connects the Album to literary production, both verse and prose, with which the viewers of the Album would have been familiar. Fetvacı also brings up the prevalence of miscellanies in this period and sees albums and miscellanies in conjunction. This suggestion would have been supported further by bringing in more examples from contemporary works and including images from these, such as the two anthologies of poetry in the British Library (Or. 4129 and Or. 2709). These are only mentioned in a footnote, but by virtue of the author’s comparison of the structure of poetry and painting, an in-depth discussion of these anthologies would have added to her argument.

What is quite interesting is that while the proliferation of urban types included in the Album of Ahmed I speak to the transformations in literature in the seventeenth century, the content of the calligraphic samples draws from older literature. Further elaborating on this point would support Fetvacı’s point in the final section of this chapter, which relates to the engagement with the past and with the palace treasury. Just like the Ahmediyye’s references to the classical Ottoman idiom, yet with its own nuances, the Album of this ruler is also modeled on Persian albums, examples of which were in the palace collections. Fetvacı tentatively suggests that H. 2153, an album that likely took its final form during the reign of Selim I and that included Persian and European works with several elements on a page, and more importantly, an album that Ahmed I closely engaged with, may have served as a model for the ruler’s own album.

The fourth chapter focuses on the calligraphic samples which are included in the Album. These samples are almost exclusively in Persian, are poetic texts, and are in the nasta‘liq script. Fetvacı argues that rather than being perceived as a Safavid form (as the language and the script may suggest), these samples are instead related to the Timurid artistic tradition. Fetvacı considers this particular choice in connection with the album of calligraphy that Kalender prepared for Ahmed I in 1612. The latter contained a broader variety of texts as well as of scripts. Fetvacı also notes that the inclusion of Persian calligraphy in albums is not unusual—she is careful to note the particular meanings they may have had in the context of individual albums (such as the Album of Murad III or the Album of Mehmed III). What is interesting is the fact that the Album of Ahmed I also includes calligraphic

samples in the nasta'liq script by Ottoman calligraphers. What is particularly valuable is Fetvacı's nuanced approach to the connected worlds within which calligraphers and artists operated. At question here, and elsewhere in the Album, is the boundary between what is identified as Ottoman and Safavid. This Album allows us to rethink such "neat lines of distinction between an Ottoman and a Persian realm of calligraphers."

Fetvacı's fifth chapter focuses on the paintings of "urban types" and genre scenes. The Album contains many individual figures drawn from a variety of social and ethnic backgrounds and suggest, according to the author, the multivalent ways of looking at the city (both in its positive and negative aspects), its control, and its apocalyptic end. In her discussion of these single figure paintings, Fetvacı brings up the plethora of costume albums that were becoming widespread in this period. Indeed, as the author points out, several overlaps can be seen between this Album and *The Habits of the Grand Signor's Court* that may even suggest the use of shared models and pounces. Additionally, the proliferation of Safavid single-page paintings at this time was also crucial in understanding the Album in its broader context. Equally important in understanding the broader context of the Album is to consider the literary corpus of the period, particularly *şehrengiz* literature which describes the exploits of the beauties of the city. In her discussion of the content of the poetry and her discussion of the literary corpus, Fetvacı compares the structure of the poems to the paintings, a very intriguing point, further discussion of which would add to the value of her study.

This chapter reiterates the point that the borders we have assumed to exist between the courtly and the popular were, in fact, porous. Another important point that comes across in this chapter is that costumes mark identity and difference. Fetvacı brings up the discussion of the comparative gaze, discussed previously. By adding a further point of the role of discernment—particularly of physiognomy and raiment—one may highlight his refinement, and indeed the viewers of this Album would have been the more privileged groups in society. This sense of the refinement of the viewers of the album as they discern the different types of people may perhaps also be connected to the idea of refinement in connoisseurship, which could have been elaborated on further. Additionally, a discussion of the "implied narrative" of these urban types—in conjunction with other comparable paintings—would have added to the multiplicity of readings that albums so often provide.

Fetvacı's final chapter studies the European materials that were taken out from the albums prepared for Ahmed I at some points in their lifetime and found their way into what is known as the Bellini Album (in the Metropolitan Museum of Art). While the Bellini pages are nearly identical in their marginal decoration with the calligraphy album prepared for the ruler, their pictorial focus as well as organization on the page—with, for example, images of the crucifixion next to one another—fit in well with the Album of Ahmed I, and like the rest of the Album, encourage comparison. Fetvacı points out that these prints date from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and most likely were in Istanbul in the 1610s. They may have made their way to the Ottoman capital as gifts from Europeans hoping to secure trade relations with the Ottomans, or via Jesuit missions. Alternatively, Fetvacı adds, these may have been bought in Istanbul given the Christians living or traveling in the city. While the Christian community should certainly not be overlooked as a possible, the dating of some of the prints, so close in time to the compilation of the Album renders this suggestion somewhat tenuous, yet intriguing. What is clear is that, as the rest of the paintings in the Album, these prints also point to a connected world. An additional point of reference would have been an album in the Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H. 2148, which includes several European prints, along with several other albums in the palace library. While the circumstances of the compilation of these albums are different from the Album of Ahmed I, a broader look at the availability of European prints would provide a more nuanced picture to the book.

Following a discussion of the codicology, content, and contacts, Fetvacı considers these materials in line with Ottoman paintings. She suggests that the Christological prints may have served as models for behavior for Sufi devotees—another intriguing point that would benefit from further elaboration. She also suggests, more strongly, that these may have also served as models for Ottoman paintings, bringing examples from the *Zübdetü't-Tevarih*, the *Miftah-ı Cifrü'l-Cami'* and the *Falname*. These particular examples also highlight a point raised earlier in the book—of the interest in the apocalypse and the occult. Fetvacı takes this point a step further when she suggests that the Album itself may be read almost as a companion piece to these manuscripts, and that the Album may be interpreted to reflect interests in the occult. Such emphasis on the occult and interest in eschatology, past the expected millennium in 1591/2, is quite interesting and deserves further study in relation to other works of the period.

This finely illustrated book makes available to the readers the complete Album of Ahmed I, together with the materials likely taken out of it. It provides an intriguing and contextualized approach to this Album, favoring a reading that highlights an interest in the occult, yet not disregarding other meanings and ways of looking. Altogether, the Album, as compellingly argued by Fetvacı, casts Ahmed I as a “World Emperor.” This book also has larger scholarly implications in engaging with albums, collecting, connoisseurship, and questions of genre, and mobility of objects (and of people) in early modernity, as well as in re-imagining boundaries between what seem to be discrete units.

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Charlotte A. Jirousek and Sara Catterall,

Ottoman Dress and Design in the West: Visual History of Cultural Exchange,

Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2019, 252 s.

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Osmanlı döneminde giyilen kıyafetlere ilişkin çeşitli çalışmalar mevcutsa da araştırmalar genel olarak kumaş konusu üzerinden gelişim göstermektedir. Bu bakımdan Charlotte A. Jirousek’in Osmanlı-Avrupa merkezli bir mukayeseye girişmesi *Ottoman Dress and Design in the West: Visual History of Cultural Exchange* isimli eserini ilgi çekici kılmaktadır. Ömer Lutfi Barkan ile Mübahat S. Kütükoğlu başta olmak üzere pek çok araştırmacının estetik gerekçeler dışında çalışmaları varsa da, Osmanlı giyim tarihine ilişkin araştırmaların belirgin bir biçimde estetik çerçevede değerlendirilmesi konunun genel olarak sanat tarihinin içinde ele alınmasıyla sonuçlanmıştır. Ancak giyimin sanat tarihinin dışında tarih, ekonomi, uluslararası ilişkiler, antropoloji ve benzeri çalışma alanları içinde de ele alınmasının gerekliliği ifade edilebilir. Çünkü giyim, taşıdığı pek çok değer ve malumat bakımından estetik yaklaşımın sınırlarını aşmakta ve duruma göre başka bir kimliğe bürünmektedir.

Avrupa 16. yüzyıldan sonra Doğu ile temasını Osmanlı Devleti üzerinden kurmuş, ilişki kanallarını ekonomiden diplomasiye değin pek çok farklı alanda