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SOME NOTES ON HERSEKZADE AHMED PASHA, HIS FAMILY AND HIS BOOKS

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In the course of the last 30 years the late 15th and early 16th century of Ottoman history seems to have been somewhat out of fashion. This is indeed amazing, since the era of Bayezid II was a time when the foundations were laid for the dazzling expansionist movements of the 16th century. Moreover, the available sources for this period have by no means been exhausted. Heath Lowry is one of the very few who have worked on this period in recent years,¹ writing a study on one of the leading statesmen of this epoch, Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha (1459-1517),² which draws on hitherto unknown archival material. So we very much hope that our remarks on that extraordinary Ottoman statesman in the present volume, dedicated as it is to Heath Lowry will meet our friend's interest.

Considerable material on Ahmed Pasha in the archives of Dubrovnik has been studied and published.³ More than fifty years ago Erdmute Heller published in her dissertation parts of the correspondence between Hersekzade and Andrea Gritti as they negotiated peace between the *Serenissima* and the Porte during the years 1502-1503.⁴ It seems that from the treasures of the state archives of Venice on Hersekzade only the tip of the iceberg has been retrieved.⁵ Thus, the analysis of a documentation for Ahmed Pasha's life and activities, unparalleled for the Ottoman context, remains a *desideratum* for the future.

An Ottoman archival source, a so-called *in'amat defteri* (register of benefactions) of Bayezid II, a small part of which has been published,⁶ is a mine of information on a whole range of topics for the years 1503-1512 (Muharrem 909 – Zilhicce 917).⁷ This source, written – for the greater part – in a clear *siyakat*, should be made accessible as a whole in print, be it just as a facsimile. İsmail Erünsal made use of it long ago and unearthed details on poets and

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¹ For example, Heath W. Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State*. Albany, NY: SUNY, 2003.

² Heath W. Lowry, *Hersekzâde Ahmed Paşa: An Ottoman Statesman's Career & Pious Endowments. / Hersekzâde Ahmed Paşa: Bir Osmanlı Devlet Adamının Meslek Hayatı ve Kurduğu Vakıflar*. İstanbul: Bahçeşehir University Press, 2011.

³ Ćiro Truhelka, *Tursko-slovenski spomenici Dubrovačke arhive*. Sarajevo: Zem. Štamp, 1911.

⁴ Erdmute Heller, *Venedische Quellen zur Lebensgeschichte des Ahmed Paşa Hersek-oghlu*. München 1961.

⁵ Cf. Heller, *Venedische Quellen*, p. 1.

⁶ Atatürk Kitaplığı, Muallim Cevdet (henceforth: MC) 93 (former shelfmark: Muallim Cevdet 71). The part covering the year 909 (1503-4) is published in Ömer Lütfü Barkan, "İstanbul Saraylarına ait Muhasebe Defterleri", *Belgeler* IX/13 (1979), pp. 296-380.

⁷ MC 93, fol. 1 b – 252 a-255 a; fol. 256 b – 273 B b, contain data for the years 918-933 (1512-1527) concerning the ritual allotment of *boğcas* ("bundle", today: *bohça*) to female members of the Ottoman dynasty and a few high-ranking ladies from the ruling elite and the royal court.

literati in Bayezid's II period.⁸ Quite recently, Feridun Emecen presented his findings in this defter on Süleyman the Magnificent's time as a prince.⁹ The register presents several hitherto unknown insights into Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha's family life.

Ahmed Pasha had won Bayezid II's favour at an early stage of his career, probably when he served as *sancakbeği* of Hamid-ili and sided actively with Bayezid in the struggle for the throne.¹⁰ The latter's mother, Gülbahar Hatun, advocated sharply against Hersekzade,¹¹ yet she did not manage to change her son's mind. In 1484 Ahmed Pasha was honoured with a marriage to one of Bayezid's daughters, Hundi Sultan.¹²

In all likelihood, Hundi Sultan had died before Muharrem 909 (begin: 26. VI. 1503), since she is not mentioned in the *in'amat* register, as receiving the regular *boğca* (bundle) allotment for princesses and other ladies of high standing; no *ta'ziye* (condolence gift) to a family member because of her death is referred to either. This lends importance to Lowry's suggestion concerning Perîhâl Hatun (whose gravestone he located in the *hazire* of Ahmed Pasha's mosque in Rus/Keşan).¹³ This lady must indeed have been his wife (or concubine) after Hundi Sultan's death.

As political marriages could function only as monogamous matches, Ottoman statesmen had to divorce their wife (wives) before marrying a princess.¹⁴ It goes without saying that while married to a royal princess an open relationship with a concubine was not tolerated either.¹⁵ Hence, Perîhâl Hatun could have become Ahmed Pasha's spouse or official concubine and mother of his children only after Hundi Sultan had passed away.

⁸ İsmail Erünsal, "Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi'nin Arşiv Kaynakları I.: II Bâyezid devrine ait bir İn'amat Defteri", *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi* X-XI (1979-1980; İstanbul 1981), pp. 303-341.

⁹ Feridun M. Emecen, "Kanuni Sultan Süleyman'ın Şehzadelik Dönemine Ait Bazı Yeni Tespitler ve Notlar", Hedda Reindl-Kiel-Seyfi Kenan (eds.), *Deutsch-Türkische Begegnungen / Türk Alman Tesadüfleri: Festschrift für Kemal Beydilli/Kemal Beydilli'ye Armağan*. Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2013, pp. 342-357.

¹⁰ See Hedda Reindl, *Männer um Bâyezîd: Eine prosopographische Studie über die Epoche Sultan Bâyezîds II. (1481-1512)*. Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1983, pp. 130-131.

¹¹ M. Çağatay Uluçay, *Harem'den Mektuplar*. I, İstanbul: Vakıf Matbaası 1956, pp. 20.

¹² Çağatay Uluçay, "Bayazîd II.in Âilesi", *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi* X/14 (1959), p. 121.

¹³ Lowry, *Hersekzâde*, p. 18.

¹⁴ Cf. Leslie P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*. New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press 1993, p. 69.

¹⁵ A good example provides Nevşehirli İbrahim Pasha, married to Ahmed III's daughter Fatma Sultan. After his violent death in 1730 İbrahim Pasha left behind only four *güls*, but not a single female slave, see Selim Karahasanoğlu, *A Tulip Age Legend: Consumer Behavior and Material Culture in the Ottoman Empire (1718-1730)*. Ph.D. Thesis, Binghamton University State University of New York 2009, p. 59.

According to Ahmed Pasha's *vakfiye* of 1511, Hundi had three daughters with him:

Mahdûm(e)-zâde, who must have died shortly after her mother, Kamer-şâh and 'Aynî-şâh.¹⁶ Çağatay Uluçay names another daughter, Hümâ-şâh, referring to our *in'amat defteri*.¹⁷ The register mentions indeed in a list of '*adet-i boğca* under the date of 22 Rebi' II 929 (10. III. 1523):

Duhtarân-ı Ahmed Paşa b. Hersek:

Kamer-şâh, sultan-ı büzürg: benek 1; münakkaş 2; rişte 3; kemha-ı Brusa 1
*Hümâ-şâh, sultan-ı kücek: benek 1; münakkaş 2; rişte 3; kemha-ı Brusa 1.*¹⁸

The daughters of Ahmed Pasha b. Hersek:

Kamer-şâh, the elder princess: 1 [dress] in Chintamani pattern, 2 [dresses] patterned, 3 [dresses made of silk?] thread, 1 [dress] of Bursa brocade

Hümâ-şâh, the younger princess: 1 [dress] in Chintamani pattern, 2 patterned, 3 [dresses made of silk?] thread, 1 [dress] of Bursa brocade

The entry suggests that by now (1523) only these two daughters were alive, with 'Aynî-şâh probably having died by then. The register also names only two daughters for earlier dates. One of them (unfortunately no name is given) is referred to in the *in'amat defteri* under the date of 25 Receb 913 (30. XI. 1507) as being married to a certain Mehmed Beğ b. 'Ali Beğ who is specified in later entries as a member of the famous Mihaloğlu clan.¹⁹

The other daughter (maybe the elder one) is mentioned for 31. X. 1508 (6 Receb 914) as being married to the son of 'Ömer Beğ, a fief holder (*za'im*).²⁰ We can be sure that this son-in-law of Ahmed Pasha was not an ordinary fief holder, but a member of one of the Ottoman elite families, maybe with a power base in the Balkans. Alas, the meagre information does not allow us any attribution.

The new kinship of Hersekzade's family with the Mihaloğlus deserves our special attention. Beginning at the time of Mehmed II the Ottoman ruling elite witnessed serious upheavals; the old influential families were more and more marginalised and a new group of statesmen, new Muslims, for the greater part descendants of the old Balkan aristocracy,²¹ moved into the centre of power.

¹⁶ Lowry, *Hersekzâde*, p. 17.

¹⁷ Uluçay, "Bayazıd II.in Âilesi", p. 122, n. 136.

¹⁸ In the meantime the shelf number and the pagination changed to MC 93, fol. 268 b. Uluçay gives as date 22 rebi'ülâhır 924, which must be a printing mistake.

¹⁹ MC 93, fol. 116 b; 145 a; 215 b.

²⁰ MC 93, fol. 145 a.

²¹ Cf. Lowry, *The Nature*, pp. 115-130.

The relation between the two social groups must evidently have been rather frosty, perhaps comparable with the “white” and the “black” Turks of today.²² Except for the union between İnegöllü İshak Pasha, a member of the old elite, married to a daughter of the princely İsfendiyar dynasty,²³ and his son-in-law, the Serbian-born Gedik Ahmed Pasha,²⁴ no intermarriage between the two groupings is known. Arnavud Sinan Pasha, for instance, gave, in 1503, one of his daughters in marriage to Dukaginzade Ahmed Beğ, scion of an Albanian noble family and in 1506, Ayşe Sultan, Sinan Pasha’s widow, chose for her other daughter a grandson of Mesih Pasha²⁵ as a spouse, a progeny of the Palaeologan dynasty.

Certainly both social groups, the new elite and the former power holders, must have been biased against each other. The chronicler Ruhî Edrenevî, himself a son of the *şeyhülislam* Zenbilli ‘Ali Efendi,²⁶ gives some little clues about the prejudices of the old establishment. Referring to Mesih Pasha he says, for instance, *Rum oğlanı idi, amma hayli hubb* [meant is *hûb*] *imiş*,²⁷ “he was a Greek boy, but rather good”. Hersekzade did not have this quality in the eyes of Ruhî, who cast the blame for the death of Kemal Re’is on Ahmed Pasha (without mentioning his name), “a Hungarian boy, without love for Islam”. Indirectly Ruhî accused Hersekzade of being only outwardly Muslim, but inwardly a non-believer.²⁸ Roughly eighty years later Gelibolulu ‘Ali wrote frankly that newly converted Muslims (such as Serbs) only “in the second or third generation cast off the stigma of unbelief”.²⁹ Thus, the reservations of the former political elite against its more successful successors were clad in semi-religious objections that made close socialising with the newcomers undesirable, also from a moral point of view.

In 1507 the Mihaloğlus had long since left behind the “qualifying period” for being a fully-fledged established Muslim family. Nevertheless a marriage to a granddaughter of the

²² For these terms see Christoph Ramm, *Turkish Cypriots, Turkish ‘Settlers’ and (Trans)National Identities between Turkish Nationalism, Cypriotism and Europe*. Bochum: Ruhr-Universität Bochum, 2009, pp. 253-254.

²³ Reindl, *Männer*, pp. 223-224.

²⁴ See Hedda Reindl-Kiel, “Gedik Ahmed Paşa”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*. (henceforth: *DİA*) XIII, İstanbul 1996, pp. 543-544.

²⁵ Ayşe Sultan’s new son-in-law was Ahmed b. ‘Ali Beğ b. Mesih Pasha; MC 93, fol. 89 a; the wedding took place 14 Sefer 912 (6. VII. 1506), *ibidem*, fol. 90 a. Mesih Pasha had died already in November 1501. He must not be confused with Mesih Beğ, who was married to a daughter of one of Bayezid’s II daughters and Davud Beğ. In this function he is first mentioned as *mir-i ‘alem* in the *in‘amat defteri* for 25 Ramazan 909 (12. III. 1504), MC 93, fol. 21 b. For Mesih Pasha see Hedda Reindl-Kiel, “Mesih Paşa”, *DİA* XXIX, Ankara 2004, pp. 309-310.

²⁶ See Yusuf Küçükdağ, “Ruhî Çelebi”, *DİA* XXXV, İstanbul 2008, pp. 206-207. On Zenbilli ‘Ali Efendi see İsmail Hâmi Danişmend, *Osmanlı Devlet Erkânı*. İstanbul: Türkiye Basımevi 1971, pp. 111-112.

²⁷ Ruhî, *Tarih-i Âl-i ‘Osman*, Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, ms. or. 4^o Nr. 821, fol. 180 a.

²⁸ Ruhî, ms. or. 4^o Nr. 821, fol. 195 a/b. H. J. Mordtmann, “Zur Lebensgeschichte von Kemal Re’is”, *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen zur Berlin XXXII/II* (1929), Nachtrag, p. 231.

²⁹ Yet, “[a]mong its [Rum’s] notables there are few whose lineage does not go back to a convert to Islam”; Cornell H. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Âli (1541-1600)*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1986, p. 254.

reigning Sultan, and a bond with the former grand vizier³⁰ of Balkan background still in favour at Bayezid II, must have been tremendously attractive to a family whose fading power base had always been in the Balkans.

Up to now two sons of Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha were known: the poet 'Ali Beğ (with the *nom de plume* Şîrî)³¹ and Mustafa Beğ.³² The *in'amat defteri* refers for 13 Cemazi I 913 (20. IX.1507) to Mehmed Çelebi b. Hersekzade and his brother Mustafa as *muşahere-horan* (monthly paid [courtiers]), receiving 5,000 *akçe* and a robe of *çatma-ı Brusa* (brocaded velvet from Bursa) as a gift (*in'am*).³³ Thus, both of them must have been adults in 1507.

Another, unnamed, son is mentioned as being circumcised on 2 October 1512 (17. Cemazi II 915), while his brother (obviously still living in his father's home) was graced with a robe of *çatma-ı Brusa*.³⁴ Based on this information we might conclude that the boy circumcised in 1512 was born after 1500, and the same may be true for his brother. Since he is only designated as *veledeş* ("his son") of "his Excellency Ahmed Pasha, governor of Gallipoli" without the addition "from the daughter of his Majesty" (which we could expect if the boy were a son of Princess Hundi) it seems likely that the two younger sons had a different mother, probably Perîhâl Hatun. But there is no final proof.

One of Ahmed Pasha's sons died in January of 1512, as an entry in the *in'amat defteri* indicates. On 12 Zilka'de 917 (31.I. 1512) the pasha received two garments as a *ta'ziye* gift upon the death of his son (*veledeş*).³⁵ Since no other family members received a present of condolence (to be expected for the offspring of a princess) this son might have been a child of Perîhâl Hatun.

Whether any additional daughters resulted from this conjunction is unknown. This lack of records is certainly connected with the fact that ladies alimanted by the royal court were mainly members of the House of Osman. A record in a fragment of a *mevacib* (wages) register for princesses and several high-ranking ladies of the court lists for one daughter of

³⁰ Hersekzade had resigned from the office of grand vizier by his own choice in 1504 and had become *sancakbeği* of Gallipoli and admiral of the fleet according to his wishes, cf. Reindl, *Männer*, p. 142.

³¹ For Ali Beğ Şîrî's *tarih-i feth-i Musır* („History of the conquest of Egypt”), a history in verses (*mesnevi*), see Adnan Kadrić, “Ka narativnoj skici djela “Povijest osvajanja Egipta” 1517. godine bosanskog pjesnika Ali-bega Hercegovića Širija”, *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* LVII (2007; Sarajevo 2008), pp. 79-110 (with English summary).

³² Hazim Šabanović, “Hersek-zāde”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. New Edition (henceforth *El*²), III, p. 342. Mustafa Beğ was killed in 1526 (932) as *sancakbeği* of Bozok in an insurrection caused by the outcome of a new tax registration; Peçevî İbrahim Efendi, *Tarih-i Peçevî*. I, Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1980, p. 118. See also İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*. II, ³Ankara: TTK, 1975, p. 346/note 1. Faruk Sümer, *Safevî Devletinin Kuruluşu ve Gelişmesinde Anadolu Türklerinin Rolü*. Ankara: Selçuklu Tarih ve Medeniyeti Enstitüsü, 1976, p. 76.

³³ MC 93, fol. 112 a. It is unclear, whether they both received money and robe, because only one garment (*sevb*) is mentioned.

³⁴ MC 93, fol. 173 b.

³⁵ MC 93, fol. 253 a.

Princess Hundi and Ahmed Pasha³⁶ a yearly (beginning with 29 Safer 924/12.III.1518) payment of 34,689 *akçe*, consisting of a monthly salary (*'ulufe*) of 1,000 *akçe*, clothing (*melbusat*) per year worth 10,480 *akçe* and victuals (*me'kulat*) per year worth 12,209 *akçe*. Not included in this calculation was a yearly amount of 14 *müdd* 8 *kile* barley (*şa'ir*), roughly 7,390 kg,³⁷ and 300 (oxcart) loads (*yük*) of firewood.

The victuals, in all likelihood bread, meat, rice, honey, clarified butter, maybe some sugar, ice and snow (for cooling drinks), were certainly not meant for Ahmed Pasha's daughter alone, and even less the enormous amount of barley, which would be sufficient to feed 41 people a day! This system of distributing food, intended for re-distribution originated in the royal palace and was evidently meant to enable the recipient to provide a number of clients and followers, adequate to his or her rank. Benevolence and support of pious institutions such as dervish convents were of course included in the group of sub-recipients. This latter aspect may have been particularly in the focus of women. The yearly provisions for Hersekzade's daughter are helpful in understanding the scope and quality of Ahmed Pasha's household, where a single member would have been held responsible for so many individuals of minor standing.

We know deplorably little about the *habitus* of a successful Ottoman grand vizier. In the case of Mahmud Pasha Angelović (executed in 1474), who styled himself as "the Sultan of Viziers", we have seen that following the pattern of the 'ideal ruler' as portrayed in the *nasihatname* (mirror of princes) literature was one of the keys to success.³⁸ It seems that several long-term grand viziers of the "classical age", such as Mahmud Pasha or Makbul/Maktul İbrahim Pasha (executed in 1536) or Sokollu Mehmed Pasha (murdered in 1579) had developed a profound pleasure and true talent for displaying wealth, splendour and power. Things were slightly different, though, with Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha.

Andrea Gritti, Ahmed Pasha's Venetian close friend and negotiating partner during the peace talks in the years 1501-1503, emphasized, next to Hersekzade's immense influence on Bayezid II, his good and temperate character.³⁹ To conclude from the pasha's luxury assets, bought after his death by the royal treasury,⁴⁰ Hersekzade Ahmed must have been a man who was alive to the imperative to display his position by means of conspicuous consumption, but, it seems, without *nouveau riche* swaggering. Indeed, the architectural features of his pious endowments in Dil (Hersek) and Rus (Keşan) point in the same direction. Surrounded by the modest structures in each of these villages, these buildings

³⁶ Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi (henceforth: TSMA), D. 2938.0001.00, fol. 2 b (*be-cihet-i duhter-i şehzade, zevce-i Hersekzade*).

³⁷ According to Halil İnalcık, "Introduction to Ottoman Metrology", *Turcica* XV (1983), p. 324-325 and 333; one *müdd* corresponds to 20 *kile*, one *kile* = 20 *okka*.

³⁸ See Theoharis Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs: The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vezir Mahmud Pasha Angelović (1453-1474)*. Leiden et al.: Brill 2001, pp. 356-367.

³⁹ Marino Sanuto, *I Diarii*. V, Federico Stefani (ed.), Venezia: F. Visentini, 1881, p. 460. Cf. also Heller, *Venedische Quellen*, p. 87/n. 2.

⁴⁰ TSMA, D. 9576. This register has been detected by Heath Lowry, *Hersekzâde*, pp. 4-12.

must have been rather impressive when they were erected. Yet their elegance is still restrained elegance and they lack the egomaniacal monumentality, for which Gedik Ahmed Pasha's mosque complex in Afyon⁴¹ provides a good example.

In Hersekzade's luxury estate, acquired in September 1518 by the royal treasury, some remarkable pieces of jewellery, among them a ring with a diamond of 10 carat, worth 80,000 *akçe*,⁴² bear witness to his sense for pageantry proper for a grand vizier. The most costly item listed in the inventory was, however, a large golden tray weighing 3910 *miskal* (approximately 17.560 kg) for which the palace paid 234,600 *akçe*⁴³ (in the standards of today it would be worth almost \$ 700,000). Neither Ahmed Pasha's golden tray, nor his jewels or his swords (perfectly presented and identified by Heath Lowry)⁴⁴ were outlandish items in the possession of a vizier. They were necessary paraphernalia for statesmen of the top level, whom the Ottoman protocol viewed of a higher rank than the Khan of the Crimea or Christian kings (as the grand vizier's address in letters, "*kardeşim*", indicates). The luxury items of Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Pasha (executed in 1683), for example, which were confiscated after his death by the royal treasury, comprised not less than 25 belts studded with diamonds and other precious stones.⁴⁵

On occasions when gifts for the ruler had to be bestowed, the offerings of the viziers were usually golden (or gilded silver) objects bedecked with precious stones.⁴⁶ Hersekzade owned not only a range of silver vessels, but also of golden ones, among them seven goblets incrustated with precious stones.⁴⁷ Another seven goblets were made of jade,⁴⁸ apparently a material Ahmed Pasha was very fond of. It is evident that costly jewellery belonged to the necessary equipment in the highest office of state. The same is true for swords and daggers, which is why, in later times a special type of golden sword was produced. Merzifonlu's belongings at his death in Belgrade (25. XII. 1683) comprised several golden swords which were registered as *vezirlere mahsus* ("only for viziers")⁴⁹ and must originally have been gifts from the sultan.

Sable furs seem to have been musts for viziers already at Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha's time. He could choose between three of them (the royal palace bought his showpiece for

⁴¹ See M. Baha Tanman, "Gedik Ahmed Paşa Külliyesi", *DİA* XIII, Istanbul 1996, pp. 544-547.

⁴² TSMA D. 9576, fol. 3 a.

⁴³ TSMA D. 9576, fol. 3 a. Since the exact ratio of *miskal* for gold in this time is not clear I calculated 1 *miskal* to equal 4.5 g. Cf. Garo Kürkman, *Anatolian Weights and Measures*. Istanbul: Suna – İnan Kiraç Research Institute on Mediterranean Civilizations, 2003, pp. 59-60, 104, 106, 377.

⁴⁴ Lowry, *Hersekzade*, pp. 10-12.

⁴⁵ TSMA, D. 26, fol. 17 b-18 b and 22 a.

⁴⁶ Cf. Hedda Rejndl-Kiel, "Power and Submission: Gifting at Royal Circumcision Festivals in the Ottoman Empire (16th-18th Centuries)", *Turcica* 41 (2009), pp. 37-88.

⁴⁷ TSMA, D. 9576, fol. 3 a.

⁴⁸ TSMA, D. 9576, fol. 5 b.

⁴⁹ TSMA, D. 26, fol. 23 a.

12,000 *akçe*). Six “pieces” (*dane*) of furs of black fox (*rubah*)⁵⁰ indicate that entrenched gifting habits in the Ottoman elite (where single pieces of fur were much appreciated offerings) of the later 16th until the end of the 18th centuries had taken shape already at the beginning of the 16th century. Not too surprising, the number of fur coats regarded as a must for members of the ruling elite increased in the course of time. After the death of Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa’s brother-in-law, Kaplan Mustafa Pasha in December 1680, for example, who was twice grand admiral of the fleet and a rather austere man without any obtrusive pretentiousness, no less than thirteen sable furs found their way into the royal treasury.⁵¹

In comparison to later pasha or vizier inventories two items are completely lacking in Ahmed Pasha’s luxury assets: Chinese porcelain and clocks, objects later habitually craved for by the royal treasury.

Ahmed Pasha’s luxury textiles match the taste of his time: *çatma*, *benek*, satin (*atlas*), *kemha*, velvet, gold brocade (*zerbaft*) from Yazd and Italy and Indian *kutni*,⁵² qualities which were much favoured in court circles.

We learn a tiny bit more of his likes from the hodge-podge of his belongings under the heading *ecnas-ı mütenevvi’e* (“various kinds”), listing items such as Chinese paper (*kağıd-ı Hitay*), diverse prayer rugs, a lock, golden jewelled and scrimshaw buttons, a razor and scissors, chests, bundles, various kinds of incenses, Persian carpets, gloves, eight ornamented ostrich eggs and two backgammon boards.⁵³

Another, more telling, glimpse of Hersekzade’s personality provides his library, comprising 135 titles (including six Qurans and five sections of the Holy Book).⁵⁴ It is highly probable that the *muhallefat* inventory actually covers all the Ottoman, Arabic and Persian manuscripts in Ahmed Pasha’s possession, since booklets of minor value are also present, such as a *risale-i ‘Arabî, küçük* (“Arabic pamphlet, small”), valued only at five *akçe*.⁵⁵ Furthermore, one cannot imagine that the palace buying “scraps” (*hurdavat*) consisting of bows (*kemançe ve yay*) and other stuff (*gayrihi*)⁵⁶ would ignore any manuscripts in the three languages of Ottoman high culture.

⁵⁰ TSMA, D: 9576, fol. 5 b. Meant are single furs, which could be sewn together for a fur-lined kaftan.

⁵¹ TSMA, D. 26, fol. 3 b. Nine of the furs were *sammur-ı erkân*, official garments.

⁵² TSMA, D. 9576, fol. 4 b-5 a. While *kutni* was a mixture of cotton and silk, the other fabrics were made of silk. *Çatma* was a brocaded velvet, *kemha* was a heavy silk with a silver or gold-wrapped thread in the weft; see Hülya Tezcan, *Atlaslar Atlası: Pamuklu, Yün ve İpek Kumaş Koleksiyonu/Cotton, Woolen and Silk: Fabrics Collection*. Istanbul: YKY, 1993, pp. 28, 30, 32. *Benek* was a silk fabric with the three dots of the chintamani motif.

⁵³ TSMA, D. 9576, fol. 5 b-6 b.

⁵⁴ Lowry, *Hersekzâde*, pp. 4-8; the number of 145 manuscripts there must be a slip of the pen. TSMA, D. 9576, fol. 1 b-2 b.

⁵⁵ TSMA, D. 9576, fol. 2 b.

⁵⁶ TSMA, D. 9576, fol. 6 a.

In a sense Hersekzade's library displays features of a typical book collection for a grand vizier, even if works on *kelam* and related topics are missing, as Lowry rightly pointed out.⁵⁷ This does not mean, however, that religious literature was completely absent in Ahmed Pasha's assets; he owned, for instance, a copy of a *kısas ül-enbiya*,⁵⁸ al-Gazzālī's *ihya' ulûm al-din*,⁵⁹ a treatise of the Prophet's praise (*risale-i na't-ı Hazret-i Resul*, 'a. m.) and a number of works on *tasavvuf*, such as the *gülşen-i raz*,⁶⁰ or Celaleddin Rumî's *mesnevî* (in four luxury copies).⁶¹ Furthermore several of Faridaddin 'Attar's books are listed: two copies (one of them illustrated) of his *sitta*, incorporating six works of the author,⁶² the *musibatnama*, the *mantiq al-tayr* and the apocryphal *pandnama*.⁶³

Three rather valuable *shahname* copies, all with miniatures, can probably be seen as marker of vizierial status.⁶⁴ The most costly of them was valued at 4,000 *akçe*, a sum for which an unskilled builder would have worked three years.⁶⁵ Two books of jurisprudence, the Hanafî *fikh* work of Kâdîkhân⁶⁶ and an unspecified collection of worldly law (*kanun*) in a mid-size format⁶⁷ can be classified in the narrow sense of the word as professional literature for a vizier. In this context we must not forget that Hersekzade himself was responsible for an amendment of Mehmed Fatih's customary law.⁶⁸ The *kanun* volume might even be the fruit of Ahmed Pasha's endeavours in that field. Books on medicine were a must in libraries of high officials and Hersekzade's collection matched this pattern with a Turkish treatise on the science of medicine (*risale-i Türkî 'an 'ilm-i tibb*).⁶⁹

⁵⁷ Lowry, *Hersekzâde Ahmed Paşa*, p. 6.

⁵⁸ TSMA, D. 9576, fol. 1 b; cf. M. Süreyya Şahin, "Kısas-ı Enbiyâ", *DİA* XXV, Ankara 2002, pp. 495-496.

⁵⁹ TSMA, D. 9576, fol. 1 b.

⁶⁰ TSMA, D. 9576, fol. 1 b, 2 a; cf. J. T. P. De Bruijn, "Maḥmūd Shabistārī", *El*² VI, Leiden 1991, pp. 72-73. H. Ahmet Sevgi, "Gülşen-i Râz", *DİA* XIV, Istanbul 1996, pp. 253-254.

⁶¹ TSMA, D. 9576, fol. 1 b.

⁶² Cf. Fehmi Edhem Karatay, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi Farsça Yazmalar Kataloğu*. Istanbul: Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi, 1961, p. 171 # 484.

⁶³ TSMA, D. 9576, fol. 1 b-2 b. For 'Attar and his works see B[enedikt] Reinert, "Aṭṭār, Farīd al-Dīn", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. Ed. Ehsan Yarshater, Vol. III, London et al.: Routledge & Paul, 1989, pp. 20-25. Leonard Lewisohn – Christopher Shackle (eds.), *Aṭṭār and the Persian Sufi Tradition: The Art of Spiritual Flight*. London: I.B. Tauris – The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2006.

⁶⁴ The luxury assets of the unsuccessful besieger of Vienna in 1683, Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa, contained no less than seven *shahnames*, six of them illustrated; TSMA, D. 26, fol. 20 a, 20 b.

⁶⁵ TSMA, 9576, fol. 1 b. For wages at that time see Şevket Pamuk, *İstanbul ve Diğer Kentlerde 500 Yıllık Fiyatlar ve Ücretler: 1469-1998 / 500 Years of Prices and Wages in Istanbul and other Cities*. Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü 2000, p.

⁶⁶ See Th. W. Juynboll – [Y. Linant de Bellefonds], "Kāḍī Khān", *El*² IV, Leiden 1997, p. 377. Ahmet Özel, "Kāḍīhān", *DİA* XXIV, Istanbul 2001, pp. 121-123.

⁶⁷ TSMA, D. 9576, fol. 1 b.

⁶⁸ Nicoară Beldiceanu, «À propos du code coutumier de Mehmed II et de l'œuvre juridique d'Aḥmed Hersekzâde», *Revue des Études Islamiques* XXXVIII/1 (1970), pp. 166-172.

⁶⁹ TSMA, D. 9576, fol. 2 b.

Two books on falconry (*bazname*)⁷⁰ and possibly hunting in general⁷¹ in Hersekzade's collection were certainly non-standard for a vizier's library, since hunting was seen as an improper pastime for viziers.⁷² These volumes suggest, however, a vivid interest in sophisticated forms of chase, which were certainly appropriate for a *sancakbeğ* of Gallipoli and *kapudan paşa*. Was this favoured form of activity for Ahmed Pasha in March 1504 one of the reasons for his decision to resign voluntarily from the grand vizierate and to retire to Gallipoli?⁷³

While chronicles⁷⁴ were seen as a kind of textbooks for viziers and thus belonged to the body of literature we might expect, Hersekzade's collection of poetry went far beyond the average range of works that would have been read by a man with only superficial interest in this genre, as Lowry has demonstrated. Although Ahmed Pasha did not make it into the established Ottoman biographies of poets, he also wrote poems himself⁷⁵ and he passed his passion to his son, 'Ali Beğ, the poet with the *mahlas* Şirî.

The range of Persian classics, including authors such as Sa'di or Nizami, and, besides *divans*, works like *Layla* [wa] *Majnun*, Awhadi's *jâm-i jam* or Jamî's *baharistan*,⁷⁶ definitely reflect a deep fondness for poetry – and a good command of the language. Ahmed Pasha owned not only Turkish and Persian books, but a number of works in Arabic as well, such as a version of the Alexander romance,⁷⁷ Hariri's *maqamat*,⁷⁸ a version of *Kalila wa Dimna*,⁷⁹ and, even more astonishing, a copy of One Thousand and One Nights (*alf layla*).⁸⁰ To read, understand and enjoy the *maqamat*, famous for its word plays and rhymed prose (*saj*), Hersekzade must have had a fairly good knowledge of Arabic. This was clearly necessary for comprehending Arabic compilations of the *alf layla* as well, since there spoken language, rhymed prose and word plays are combined.

⁷⁰ TSMA, D. 9576, fol. 2 a.

⁷¹ Cf. Abdülkadir Özcan, "Bâznâme", *DİA* V, İstanbul 1992, pp. 284-285.

⁷² Cf. Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli, *Mevâ'idü'n-Nefâis fî Kavâ'idü'l-Mecâlis*. *Onaltıncı Yüzyıl Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Gelenekler – Görenekler ve Sosyal Hayat*. Cemil Yener (ed., trsl.), İstanbul: Hünkâr Kitabevi 1975, p. 43.

⁷³ Cf. Barkan, "Muhasebe Defterleri", p. 355 # 335.

⁷⁴ See the list in Lowry, *Hersekzâde*, p. 8.

⁷⁵ See 'Adnan Kadrić, "Veliki vezir i pjesnik Ahmed-Paša Hercegović u poetiziranju hronikama na Osmanskom jeziku", *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove biblioteke* 29-30 (Sarajevo 2009), pp. 187-204, esp. 198-199.

⁷⁶ TSMA, D. 9576, fol. 2 a.

⁷⁷ TSMA, D. 9576, fol. 2 a. The combination of title (*İskandarnâme/İskendernâme*) and classification ('Arabi') is somewhat odd, since the title points rather to a work in Persian or Ottoman.

⁷⁸ TSMA, D. 9576, fol. 2 b.

⁷⁹ TSMA, D. 9576, fol. 2 a.

⁸⁰ TSMA, D. 9576, fol. 2 a. The "Arabian Nights" developed its own life in the West; cf. Heinz Grotzfeld, „300 Jahre 1001 Nacht in Europa: 1001 Nacht im geteilten Besitz von Orient und Okzident“, Hannes D. Galter – Siegfried Haas (ed.), *Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall: Grenzgänger zwischen Orient und Okzident*. Graz: Leykam 2008, pp. 151-174. I thank Prof. Kemal Beydilli, who drew my attention to this article and provided me with it.

In Middle Eastern countries, *alf layla wa-layla* – although not unpopular – was not held in high esteem, not only because prose was not considered high literature, but also on account of its indecent and sometimes rude passages. Already at the end of the 10th century the Baghdadian scholar Ibn an-Nadîm called it “a worthless book with silly stories”.⁸¹ It definitely did not belong to the canon of prestigious Arabic works widely read by intellectuals in the pre-modern Ottoman Empire. This aspect is certainly one reason why it was translated into Turkish as late as in the 19th century, under Sultan Abdülmecid.⁸²

One wonders, how the “Arabian Nights” found their way into the refined company of Hersekzade’s other books. Was it a souvenir from his forced stay in Syria and Egypt?⁸³ In any case, as a part of his library *alf layla* gives evidence to its owner’s curiosity, his delight in juicy stories and his independent mind.

Ahmed Pasha has been suspected by some of his temporaries, such as Ruhî, to be a half-hearted Muslim and modern researchers followed this pattern.⁸⁴ Yet, a short look to Hersekzade’s books put us right. He dealt with his new religion, but he had not forgotten his former belief, as a *şerh-i incil* (in Turkish), a commentary to the gospel, in his possession reveals.⁸⁵ The religious world of converts to Islam such as Ahmed Pasha remains largely a black hole to us today. It seems plausible, though, that they merged elements of both religions to a very personal faith. Hersekzade’s predilection for *sufi* literature might be seen as an indication for such a stance.

Not only in this context would it be great to have a look at the Italian section of Ahmed Pasha’s library. Although we have no evidence, it is unimaginable that he did not possess some Italian books. He had a vivid official and private correspondence with Andrea Gritti, his *secondo dio amato fradello* (“according to God[’s will] beloved Brother”), in the latter’s native tongue and exchanged gifts with Venetian officials. Thus it is highly probable that he owned Italian (printed?) books as well, which after Ahmed Pasha’s death were of no interest to the Ottoman royal palace.

Hersekzade’s intelligence and his independent mind, attributes that peep out behind his book collection, along with his self-confidence, discernible in his temperate but distinct display of splendour, his absolute loyalty towards the ruler and his seemingly relaxed attitude towards personal power make him one of the most fascinating statesmen of his

⁸¹ Grotzfeld, „300 Jahre 1001 Nacht“, pp. 171-172.

⁸² The translator was Ahmed Nazif Efendi; all indecent passages were omitted and the work was published (without date) in four volumes. Veli Ulutürk, “Binbir Gece”, *DİA* VI, Istanbul 1992, p. 181.

⁸³ Ahmed Pasha was taken captive by the Mamluks in a battle near Adana in March 1486 and was brought in November to Cairo, where the army held a victory parade, followed by the Ottoman prisoners in chains. In January 1487 Hersekzade was set free and arrived mid February in Damascus. See Shai Har-El, *Struggle for Domination in the Middle East: The Ottoman-Mamluk War 1485-1491*. Leiden et al.: Brill 1995, pp. 141-143, 146.

⁸⁴ Cf. Heller, *Venedische Quellen*, pp. 84-88.

⁸⁵ TSMA, D. 9576, fol. 2 b.

time. Since our understanding of his life a period of transition and of consolidation for the Ottoman Empire, is still rather limited an in-depth study of this intriguing man would give us a clearer grasp of the processes that eventually lead to the establishment of a world empire.