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NAKKAŞ OSMAN IN SIXTEENTH CENTURY DOCUMENTS AND LITERATURE

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The celebrated Ottoman miniature painter Nakkaş Osman's works, unique style and creativity have been extensively treated in the literature. However, the object of this paper is to investigate what is known about Nakkaş Osman himself, the environment in which he worked and his position in the palace which employed him as an artist, as revealed by contemporary references in 16th century documents and literature. Nakkaş Osman's career coincides with the second half of the 16th century, but precisely when he entered the company of palace craftsmen, known as the *ehl-i hiref teşkilatı* is unknown as his name does not appear in the payroll of palace painters for the year 1558. [1] The next surviving payroll is dated 974 Masar (July-September 1566), and for the first time we encounter the name of Osman, employed at six *akçe* per day. [2] This register confirms the fact that Nakkaş Osman was in the palace employ during the last year of the reign of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent. Tanındı has noted that miniatures in a style heralding that of Nakkaş Osman occur amongst those in the *Süleymanname* (Topkapı Palace Museum Libr., H.1517) of 1558 written by Arifi, the royal chronicler. [3] We might conclude from this, that Osman studied under the anonymous miniaturist who illustrated the *Süleymanname*, and who probably came from the western lands of the Ottoman Empire. Osman, himself, almost certainly entered the palace painting studio between 1559 and 1565.

Nuzhet el-esrar el ahbar der sefer-i Sigetvar (Topkapı Palace Museum Libr., H.1339) was probably the first manuscript illustrated by Nakkaş Osman. [4] This account of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent's Szigetvár Cam-

1. Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi, D. 9612; Rıfkı Melûl Meriç, *Türk Nakış San'atı Tarihi Araştırmaları, I Vesikalar*, Ankara, 1953, p. 7.
2. Başbakanlık Arşivi Maliyeden Müdevver 6196, p. 155; E. Atıl, *The Age of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent*, New York, 1986, p. 296.
3. Z. Akalay (Tanındı), "The Forerunners of Classical Turkish Miniature Painting", *Fifth International Congress of Turkish Art*, Budapest, 1978, p. 31-47; see for the Mss. *Süleymanname*, E. Atıl, *Süleymanname: The Illustrated History of Süleyman the Magnificent*, New York, 1986.
4. See for all references, E. Atıl, *op. cit.* [n. 2], no. 42 a-b; J.M. Rogers and R.M. Ward, *Süleyman The Magnificent*, London, 1988, no. 46 a-b.

paign and the events which followed was written by Ahmed Feridun. He entered the employ of Sokollu Mehmed Paşa as a clerk in 1552, later becoming a clerk of the Divan, and was appointed *nişancı* (Head of the Chancery of the Imperial Divan) in 1573. The work was completed in 1569, and illustrated with miniatures which clearly demonstrate Osman's distinctive style. They are free of any decorative element and, instead, focus solely on capturing the historical facts related in the text. In particular, his depiction of important figures such as Sultan Süleyman I, Selim II, Sokollu Mehmed Paşa and Ahmed Feridun, which can be considered true likenesses and the precision of his drawings of Szigetvár Fortress display the realism which Nakkaş Osman introduced into Turkish art. The miniatures illustrating this book suggest that he was an eye-witness, probably participating in this campaign with the book's author Ahmed Feridun. Some information in the *Şehname-i Selim Han* (Topkapı Palace Museum Libr., A.3595) by Seyyid Lokman who was appointed imperial chronicler (*şehnameci*) on 24 March 1569 implies that Osman was in the service of Ahmed Feridun during the Szigetvár Campaign and in the following years.

When the poet Şeyh Abu Said recommended that Lokman visit Şemsüddin Ahmed Karabağı for advice about writing the proposed chronicle, [5] Karabağı, who was a *müderris* (professor) at Sokollu Mehmed Paşa's *medreses* in İstanbul and Lüleburgaz, [6] invited Ahmed Feridun Bey and "the miniaturist in his service" to attend the same meeting at which he showed Lokman notes concerning Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent's Szigetvár campaign, and proposed that the history of those years be written in the verse form of traditional *şehname*. Among the miniatures by Nakkaş Osman in this book, is one depicting Şemsüddin Ahmed Karabağı, Seyyid Lokman, Ahmed Feridun and Nakkaş Osman at this meeting (fig. 1), which was perhaps a turning point in Osman's artistic career. However, the name of Osman is not mentioned in the text, which merely refers to him as the artist in Ahmed Feridun's service and as a painter of historic scenes. This is further confirmation that the artist depicted in the miniature is indeed Osman. Here, Osman has portrayed himself in clear detail. On the paper held in his hand a sketch of a building can be discerned recognisable as the *Kubbealtı* or council room at the palace which he is submitting as an example of his work so that he might be given the task of illustrating the book. This enables us to conclude that Osman already had a reputation as an artist in 1569, and was acquainted with the dignitaries in Sokollu's circle.

5. F. ÇAĞMAN, "Şehname-i Selim Han ve Minyatürleri", *Sanat Tarihi yıllığı* 5 (1973), p. 411-442.

6. There are two different possible dates for the meeting that marked the start of Nakkaş Osman's co-operation with Lokman. One is that the meeting took place in July 1569. But, when Lokman was appointed Imperial Chronicler, Şemsüddin Ahmed was working in the *medrese* of Sokollu Mehmed Paşa in Lüleburgaz. Another possibility is that the meeting took place after Safer 980 (1572), when Şemsüddin Ahmed was appointed to Sokollu's *medrese* in İstanbul. Şemsüddin Ahmed was appointed to the *medrese* of İsmihan Sultan in Ramadan 981 (December 1571); Nev'îzâde Atâî, *Hadaiku'l-hakaik fi tekmileti'ş-Şakaik* in *Şakaik-ı Nu'maniye ve zeyilleri*, (Neşre hazr. Abdülkadir Özcan), Vol. 2, İstanbul, 1989, p. 440-442.

Lokman commenced writing his verse account of the last years of Süleyman's reign (1558-1566), entitling it the *Zafername* (Book of Victories). Completed in 987 (1579), this manuscript in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin is illustrated with Osman's miniatures. [7] While writing the *Zafername*, Lokman also began to write his *Şehname-i Selim Han* about the reign of Selim II.

His prestigious position as the chief illustrator on the palace chronicler Seyyid Lokman's production team, meant that Nakkaş Osman's style came to dominate all miniature painting during this period. Detailed information concerning his selection is to be found in Lokman's *Şehname-i Selim Han*, which tells us that Nakkaş Osman was examined for his ability to illustrate the chronicles. As his presentation piece, he drew a picture of Selim II shooting an arrow from the Adalet Kulesi at a target hung on the *Kubbealtı* (fig. 2). [8] The painting based on this sketch can be seen among the miniatures in the manuscript.

Following this appointment, which apparently took place some time between 1570 and 1573, Nakkaş Osman illustrated or supervised the illustration of all the books produced at the palace under Lokman. According to the *ruus defterleri* (registers of government officials), Nakkaş Osman and the other painters, decorators, binders and scribes working for Lokman were engaged in the production of all the most important illustrated manuscripts at the Ottoman palace. From these registers information about the activities of Lokman and the artists who worked under him can be gleaned. We learn that Osman was involved in all aspects of book production, was in a position of authority over the other members of the team, and above all in charge of the painters working on the *şehnames*.

The first reference in this register concerns the *Şehname-i Selim Han* completed in 6 Dhu al-Hijje 988 (12 January 1581) and mentions that Nakkaş Osman received a wage increase of two *akçe* per day. [9] Osman also worked on the *Şehinşehname* (İstanbul University Libr., F.1404) which was completed nine months after the *Şehname-i Selim Han* at the beginning of Shawwal 989 (29 October-7 November 1581). [10]

The former was an account of the early years of Murad III's reign. In an entry concerning this manuscript dated 18 Shawwal 989 (15 November 1581) we learn that Nakkaş Osman received a further wage increase of three *akçe* per day. [11]

These were productive and successful years for both Lokman and Osman, beginning in the 1570s during the reign of Selim II and continuing through the first seven years of Murad III's reign. The three illustrated *şehname*

7. V. Minorsky, *The Chester Beatty Library: A Catalogue of the Turkish Manuscripts and Miniatures*, Dublin, 1958, no. 413; see for all references: E. Atıl, *op. cit.* [n. 2], p. 310, no. 43.
8. F. Çağman, *op. cit.* [n. 5], p. 413-14, fig. 2.
9. Başbakanlık Arşivi Kepeci Tasnifi, Ruus Defteri no. 238; F. Çağman, *ibid.*, fig. 11.
10. N. Atasoy and F. Çağman, *Turkish Miniature Painting*, İstanbul, 1974, p. 36-38, pl. 17-19; Hüsamettin Aksu, "Sultan III. Murad Şehinşehnamesi", *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı* 9-10 (1981), p. 1-22.
11. Başbakanlık Arşivi Kepeci Tasnifi, Ruus Defteri no. 239, p. 243.

mentioned above were presented to the Sultan between 1579 and 1581. All Osman's known work was carried out in conjunction with Lokman, which is why his works are of such significance with respect to Nakkaş Osman.

One of Lokman's first tasks, after being appointed to the post of palace chronicler, was to complete a work which had evidently been begun by his predecessors, entitled *Zübdetü't-Tevarih* or *Tomar-i Hümayun* (Topkapı Palace Museum Libr., A.3599). Murad III must have asked Lokman to recompile this work, originally in scroll form, as an illustrated book. Another work, begun by earlier chroniclers, was the *Hünername*, of which very little had actually been written. Lokman was asked to complete this work early in Dhu al-Qa'da 985 (10 January-8 February 1578). [12] Completion of these books, both of which were in Turkish, entailed that Lokman and Nakkaş Osman discover sufficient material on which to base reasonably accurate portraits of all the Ottoman sultans from Osman Gazi, founder of the dynasty, onwards. This also led to Lokman and Osman producing a further work together entitled the *Kıyafet el-insaniyye fi Şemail el-Osmaniye*. This book examines the characters and physical appearance of the first twelve Ottoman sultans from Osman Gazi to Murad III according to the "science" of physiology which presumes analogies between character and physical features. Nakkaş Osman painted the portrait of each sultan for this book. In his introduction to the work, Lokman refers to the lack of accurate depictions of the earlier sultans and explains that he embarked on this undertaking in order to make up for this omission. He says that he co-operated with "the unequalled Master Osman, royal painter"; that they searched for portraits of all the sultans, tracing some in Turkey and others in Europe; that they had informed the Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Paşa of this and that the Grand Vizier had arranged for these portraits to be obtained. Sokollu Mehmed Paşa approached the *bailo* of Venice with a request for the missing portraits, and Venetian archives refer to the fact that the portraits were sent to İstanbul. Lokman also explains that he made a careful study of written descriptions of the Ottoman sultans before beginning to write the work, and adds that Osman executed the portraits. Osman's interpretation of the available data in his portraits must have therefore played an important role in Lokman's research for this work, which was completed in autumn 1579. The original copies of these portraits by Osman are at Topkapı Palace (H. 1563). [13] This major work served as a source for many subsequent books, and in recognition of his contribution Osman's wage must again have been increased by two or three *akçe*.

Nakkaş Osman's most important work after 1581 is *Zübdetü't-Tevarih*, which was a demanding undertaking for Lokman and his team of craftsmen.

12. B. Kütükoğlu, "Şehnameci Lokman", *Prof. Dr. Bekir Kütükoğlu'na Armağan*, İstanbul, 1991, p. 44; Başbakanlık Arşivi Mühimme Defteri, no. 33, p. 189/380.

13. N. Atasoy, "Nakkaş Osman'ın Padişah Portreleri Albümü", *Türkiyemiz* 6 (February 1972), p. 2-14. See for all references, *Soliman le Magnifique* (15 Février au 14 Mai 1990, Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais), Paris,1990, p. 25-26; H.G. Majer, "Zur Ikonographie der Osmanischen Sultane", *Das Bildnis in der Kunst des Orients*, 1990, p. 99-119; U. Meroni, "La serie dei sultani turchi da Osman a Murad III", *Il Ritratto Antico Illustrato* I (1983), p. 28-53.

The illustrations were carried out by a team of artists under Nakkaş Osman. Dedicated to Sultan Murad III, this work dated 991 (1583) is in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art (no. 1973). [14] A document from the year 1582, concerning the cost of producing the *Tomar-i Hümayun* (Imperial Scroll), as this book is alternatively known, is in the palace archives. It includes the cost of the pigments and brushes used for the miniatures painted by Osman, whose name frequently occurs. From this document, we can infer that work on the manuscript continued through 1583. [15] The book was completed that year and presented to the Sultan. An entry in the *ruus* registers for 28 Ramadan 991 (15 October 1583) records that Osman had received another rise of three *akçe* for his work on this book. [16]

We know that in 1582 Nakkaş Osman illustrated a horoscope book for the Sultan's daughter Fatma Sultan. This manuscript, in which Nakkaş Osman is named as the illustrator, is in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. [17]

At the beginning of 1583, Lokman and Nakkaş Osman embarked on two major commissions. One was the *Surname*, an account of the circumcision ceremony and festival for the son of Murad III held the previous year, and the other was the *Hünername*, of which only two of the four volumes planned by Lokman were completed.

Evidently, Osman illustrated the first volume of the *Hünername* (Topkapı Palace Museum Libr., H. 1523) [18] before going on to illustrate the *Surname*. At the end of this work, which is in Turkish, Lokman records that he finished writing it on 5 Ramadan 992 (10 September 1584). The manuscript was completed and presented to the Sultan a year later according to a document dated 19 Shawwal 993 (14 October 1585). In this document, Lokman requests additional payment for the work, which presumably meant that Nakkaş Osman received a further increase of three *akçe*. [19]

Osman must have planned the 250 double page miniatures illustrating the *Surname* during 1583. There can be no doubt that he and other selected painters watched the circumcision celebrations which they went on to illustrate. This work originally contained 500 illustrated pages, but many have disappeared over the intervening years (Topkapı Palace Museum Libr., H. 1344). [20] This book was not written by Lokman but by a chancery clerk writing under the pen name of *Intizâmî* who says that he comes from the town of Foça in the *sancak* of Hersek and gives various pieces of information about

14. G. Renda, "İstanbul Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi'ndeki Zübdet-üt Tevarih'in Minyatürleri", *Sanat* 6 (Haziran 1977), p. 58-67.
15. Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşıvi, D.10759.
16. Başbakanlık Arşivi Kepeci Tasnifi, Ruus Defteri no. 242, p. 10-11.
17. I. Stchoukine, *La peinture turque d'après les manuscrits illustrés. 1re partie: de Suleyman 1er à 'Osman II, 1520-1622*, Paris, 1966, pls. 42-46.
18. See for all miniatures, N. Anafarta, *Hünername Minyatürleri ve Sanatçıları*, İstanbul, 1969.
19. B. Kütükoğlu, *op. cit.* [n. 12], p. 45.
20. N. Atasoy and F. Çağman, *op. cit.* [n. 10], p. 39-42; F. Çağman and Z. Tanındı, *Topkapı Saray Museum Islamic Miniature Painting*, Istanbul, 1979, p. 67.

the preparation of the book. [21] Among these, is a section entitled "About the Illustrator" on what is now the last page of the book. In this, he tells us that Nakkaş Osman also came from Foça, and in poetic metaphor praises his skill as a painter, his masterful use of colour, and the unequalled quality of his illustrations. He also implies that Osman had a private studio, *kârhane*, and that as well as miniature painting he executed ink drawings and wall decoration. The last part of this section is missing (fig. 3).

The document, referring to wage increases granted after this work had been completed and presented to the Sultan, is dated 15 Safar 996 (15 January 1588). This document explains that Lokman had the *Surname* completed and had commissioned some illustrations for the second volume of the *Hünername*, and details the distribution of the additional payment of fifty akçe. [22] Again, Nakkaş Osman received the highest wage increase of three *akçe* for this work. This document is important evidence that the *Surname* was produced under Lokman's supervision and completed towards the end of 1587.

Although the end of the second volume of the *Hünername* is missing, from a leaf of the draft copy in the palace archive we know that it was completed at the beginning of Safar 996 (1-10 January 1588) [23] (Topkapı Palace Museum Libr., H.1524). Another document tells us that illustrations for the work were completed and the manuscript presented to the Sultan on 15 Ramadan 997 (28 July 1589). [24] In the light of the wage he was receiving by the end of his career, we may assume that Nakkaş Osman was again awarded an increase of three *akçe* for this work. In the second volume of the *Hünername*, Lokman speaks with admiration of Nakkaş Osman. At the end of the last page is a sentence describing Osman as a "master painter who was an esteemed servant of the Sultan."

Over the twenty years that Nakkaş Osman worked in association with Lokman, his work can be seen to progress in skill and originality to a remarkable degree. All this time he was in charge of the production team under Lokman, working closely with grand viziers and sultans who held this great artist in esteem.

Another document concerning building costs for the Kaptan Paşa Köşkü (Yalı Köşkü) and Kule Köşkü at Topkapı Palace tells us that Nakkaş Osman executed the wall decoration for these new pavilions between 29 December 1591 and the end of 1592. [25]

21. Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H. 1344, fols. 428b-432b; G.M. Prochazka-Eisl, *Die Wiener Handschrift des Surname-i Hümayun* (unpublished dissertation), Wien, April 1992, p. 38.

22. Başbakanlık Arşivi Kepeci Tasnifi, Ruus Defteri no. 250, p. 207; Z. Tanındı, "The Miniatures of Hünername, Vol. 2, In the Light of a Newly Discovered Document", *Seventh International Congress of Turkish Art*, Warsaw, 1990, p. 237.

23. T. Öz, "Hünername ve Minyatürleri", *Güzel Sanatlar* 1, p. 3-16; N. Atasoy and F. Çağman, *op. cit.* [n. 10], p. 46-48. See for all references, *The Anatolian Civilisations* III, *Seljuk-Ottoman*, İstanbul, 1983, E. 184.

24. Başbakanlık Arşivi Kepeci Tasnifi, Ruus Defteri no. 252, p. 23; B. Kütükoğlu, *op. cit.* [n. 12], p. 45.

25. Başbakanlık Arşivi Maliyeden Müdevver, no. 750, p. 7; F. Çağman, "Saray Nakkaşhanesinin Yeri Üzerine Düğünceler", *Sanat Tarihinde Doğudan Batıya. Ünsal Yücel Anısına Sempozyum Bildirileri*, İstanbul, 1989, p. 39, n. 28.

From this time onwards, Osman drops into the background where book illustration is concerned. The illustrations for the six volume *Siyer-i Nebi* whose text was completed in 1003 (1594-1595) and which was presented to Mehmed III were completed under the direction of another artist, Nakkaş Hasan. A small number of these illustrations are evidently the work of Osman, as we can see from his distinctive style. [26]

The last book on which Osman worked with Lokman is the second volume of the *Şehinşehname*. The text of this account of events of the period 1581-1588, during the reign of Murad III, was completed in 1592. Copying the draft and painting the illustrations took several more years, and the finished book was not presented to Mehmed III until 1597 (Topkapı Palace Museum Libr., B. 200). [27] The delay in completing the chronicles for the reign of Murad III incensed his successor, Mehmed III, who dismissed Lokman from his post. [28] Evidently, Nakkaş Osman, who had been Lokman's colleague for so many years, was either similarly dismissed, or fell from favour, because Lokman's successor Talikizade, who wrote an account of the conquest of Eğri, chose to work with Nakkaş Hasan, a member of the privy chamber and a favourite of the new Sultan, rather than Nakkaş Osman.

For clues as to how and when Osman left the palace company of craftsmen, we must return to our examination of the payrolls. The payrolls for 1566 to 1592 are missing. However, Osman appears in those for 1001 Masar-Lezez (October 1592-August 1593) at the height of his career, at a wage of 31 *akçe*. [29] His name appears in the payroll for 1005 Masar (August, September, October 1596) at the same wage, [30] but is missing from the next surviving payroll which begins in August 1598. [31] Nakkaş Osman would have been of a fairly advanced age by this time, and it is highly likely that he resigned from a thirty year career resentful and disappointed at Lokman's dismissal and the failure of the *Şehinşehname*, the last work whose illustration he supervised, to win the recognition it deserved.

26. Z. Tanındı, *Siyer-i Nebi. İslam Tasvir Sanatında Hz. Muhammed'in Hayatı*, İstanbul, 1984.

27. See for all references: *The Anatolian Civilisations* III, E. 187; N. Atasoy, "Murad Şehinşehnamesi Sünnet Düğünü bölümü ve Philadelphia Free Library'deki iki Minyatürlü Sayfa", *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı* 7 (1973), p. 359-88.

28. B. Kütükoğlu, *op. cit.* [n. 12], p. 47.

29. Başbakanlık Arşivi, Maliyeden Müdevver 7238, p. 127, 166, 192, 224.

30. Başbakanlık Arşivi, Maliyeden Müdevver 7257, p. 5.

31. Başbakanlık Arşivi, Maliyeden Müdevver 7362, p. 98-220.

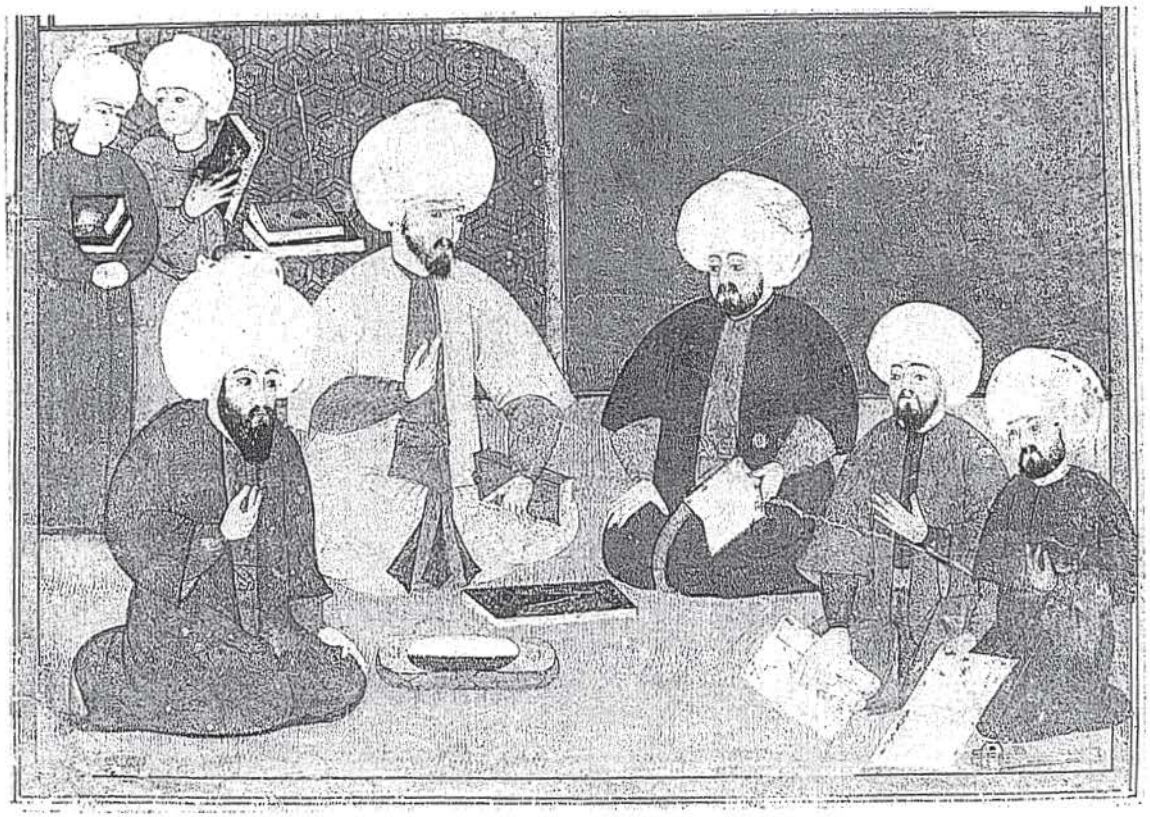


FIG. 1. Şemsüddin Ahmed Karabağı, Seyid Lokman, Ahmed Feridun and Nakkaş Osman assembled together, from *Şehname-i Selim Han*, Topkapı Palace Museum Library, A. 3595, fol. 9a.

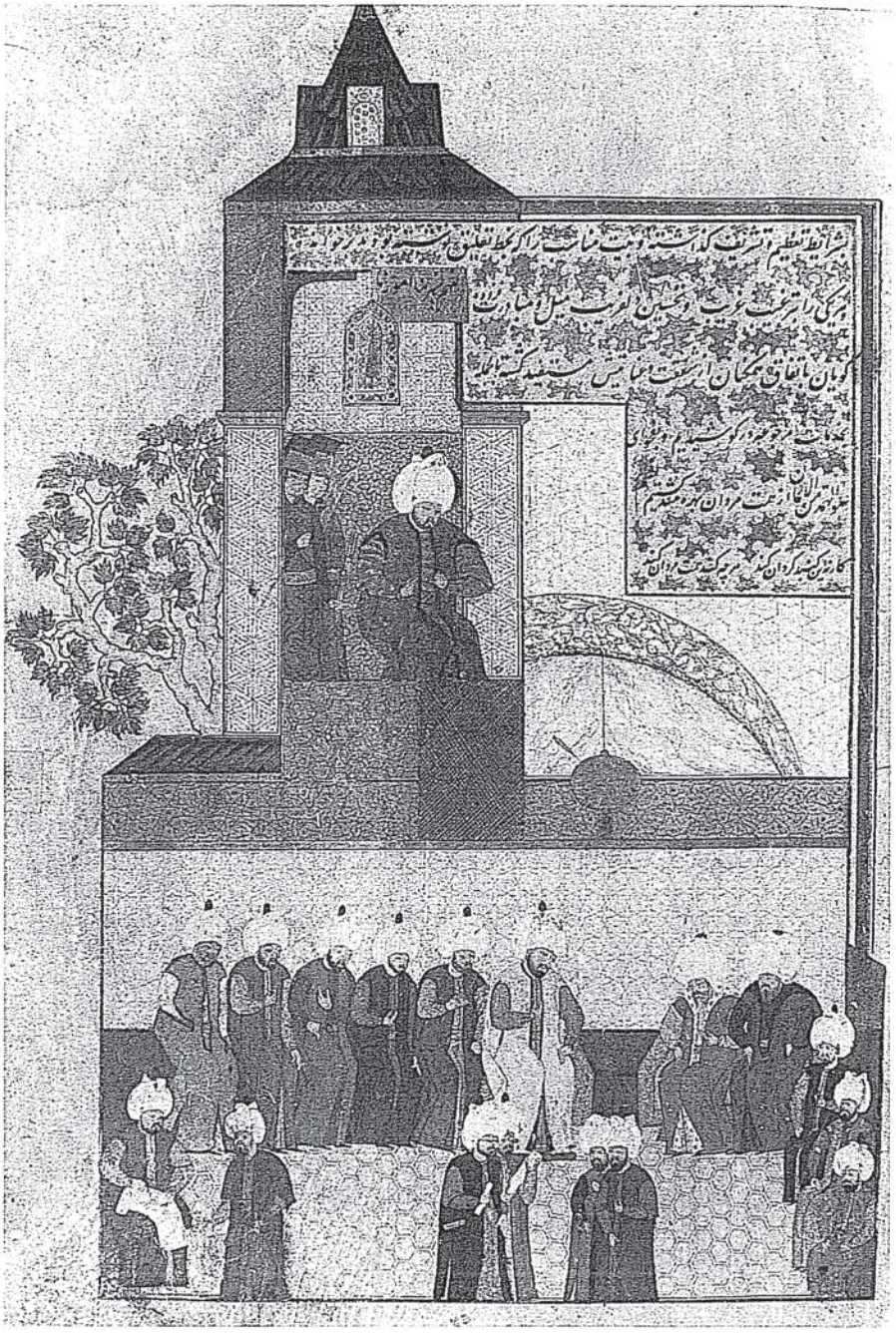


FIG. 2. Sultan Selim I shooting an arrow from the Adalet Kulesi at a target hung in the Kubbealtı.



FIG. 3. Last page of the Surname where Nakkaş Osman is described.
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H.1344, fol. 432b.