Unravelling the Image of the Turk: an examination of artists who travelled to Constantinople within a diplomatic context

(1453–1571):

Gentile Bellini, Pieter Coecke van Aelst and Nicolas de Nicolay.

Gentile Bellini, *Seated Scribe*, 1479–81, pen in brown ink, with watercolour and gold, on paper, 18.0 x 14 cm, Isabelle Steward Gardner Museum, Boston, Pl5e8
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General Introduction

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries various European diplomats travelled to Constantinople, passing through cities such as Vienna and Venice. Being on the crossroads of East and West, Christianity and Islam, these three cities offered a uniquely fertile environment for diplomats and artists to eyewitness the changing atmosphere of cultural and political encounters and conflicts. In recent years scholars have studied extensively the historical, political, religious and cultural ties between Istanbul, Vienna and Venice. This dissertation will focus on three artists who travelled within such a diplomatic context to Constantinople between 1453 and 1571: Gentile Bellini, Pieter Coecke van Aelst and Nicolas de Nicolay. On the one hand, this dissertation seeks to examine their artistic production in Constantinople and how this stay in the Ottoman Empire influenced their later artistic production. On the other hand, it aims to place these artists within a larger framework of the image of the Turk in Europe, while evaluating in what way they contributed to it.¹

With the Fall of Constantinople in 1453 at the hands of Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1444-46/r. 1451-1481), Europe became acutely aware of the presence and power of the Ottoman Empire. Suddenly, the Ottoman threat became very real and a general fear of the Turks spread throughout the West. This fear was increased by the Ottoman victory at the battle of Mohács in 1526 and peaked with the Siege of Vienna in 1529. However, after the Christian victory at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571, this public fear turned into a genuine interest in the Ottoman empire and its population. Europeans eagerly began to study the Ottomans: their manners, customs, religion and costume. Moreover, after this victory, the West understood that the Ottoman Empire was not an invincible power, but that they could be defeated. However, it would take almost a century more before the ‘Terror of the World’ became the ‘Sick Man of Europe’.²

¹ In this dissertation the term ‘Ottomans’ refers to all inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire. However, it should be noted that during the 16th century, it was common to describe everybody who was considered to be a Muslim as a ‘Turk’. No distinction was made between Ottoman Turks, Arabs, Persians or people from the Maghreb. Therefore, the word ‘Turk’ in this dissertation is used as a synonym of the term ‘Ottoman’. N. Bisaha, Creating East and West. Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks, Philadelphia 2004, pp. 72-73, 78; P. H. D. Kaplan, ‘Black Turks: Venetian artists and perceptions of Ottoman ethnicity’, in The Turk and Islam in the Western Eye 1450-1750. Visual Imagery before Orientalism, ed. J. G. Harper, Farnham and Burlington 2011, pp. 55-56.
² A. Çirakman, From the ‘terror of the world’ to the ‘sick man of Europe’: European images of Ottoman empire and society from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth, New York 2002; A. Wheatcroft, De vijand voor de poort. De Habsburgers, het Ottomaanse Rijk en de Slag om Europa, Amsterdam 2010, pp. 23-32, 179.
The artists under study have been researched separately by various scholars. Some focus on
the individuals and their oeuvre, while others have looked only at the diplomatic context
without really considering the artists participation in it. When examining the image of the
Turk, most scholars focus only on one particular geographic area of Europe such as Italy,
France or Germany. By doing so, they disregard the intrinsic historical and cultural ties that
linked Europe across borders and religious boundaries.

Until now, no one has studied extensively artists from different geographical areas travelling
within a diplomatic context to Constantinople, while placing their depictions of the image of
the Turk within a larger historical and geographical context in Europe. The aim of this
dissertation is precisely to show these intertwined relationships across Europe so as to better
understand later transnational encounters with the Ottoman Empire both artistic and
diplomatic in nature.

This dissertation will first establish in Chapter 1 the historical, cultural and political
framework of the countries in which these artists worked. The following three chapters will
examine the artists and their stay in Constantinople: Chapter 2 Gentile Bellini, Chapter 3
Pieter Coecke van Aelst and Chapter 4 Nicolas de Nicolay. Chapter 5 will then describe how
these three artists helped spread and shape the image of the Turk.

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3 C. Campbell and A. Chong, Bellini and the East [exhib. cat.], London and Boston 2005; U. Degenhard,
4 Bisaha, pp. 73, 181.
5 C. Duvauchelle, François Ier & Soliman le Magnifique. Les voies de la diplomatie à la Renaissance, Paris
2009; C. C. Smith, Images of Islam 1453-1600: Turks in Germany and Central Europe, London 2014; M.
Soykut, Image of the “Turk” in Italy: A History of the “Other” in Early Modern Europe: 1453-1683, Berlin
Chapter 1: Historical, cultural and political framework

East and West Relationships

By the fifteenth century, Venice had established trade relationships throughout the entire Mediterranean as well as in North Africa and Flanders, with many Venetian merchants being settled abroad, including the bailo, the Venetian consul, in Constantinople.\(^6\) Through Venice a variety of goods and ideas were spread across the rest of Europe. After the Fall of Constantinople, Venice was keen to keep its strong trading position in the Mediterranean and therefore lost no time in renegotiating its trading privileges with the Ottoman Empire.\(^7\) It sent ambassadors to Constantinople with the clear instruction to agree to anything that would maintain their commercial privileges. Consequently, after almost sixteen years of war a humiliating peace treaty was signed in January 1479, which relinquished all claims to the lost colonies and reduced the bailo’s privileges tremendously. Although Venice was at times at war with the Ottoman Empire, they always maintained a continuous trading relationship well into the sixteenth century.\(^8\)

The Habsburg Empire, on the contrary, found itself almost continuously at war with the Ottoman Empire, mainly because the Ottomans had started moving to the West, invading Hungary multiple times on their way. However, during the sixteenth century, there were some rare periods of peace between both empires due to the skilful negotiations of Habsburg ambassadors with the 1533 peace treaty conducted by Cornelis de Schepper being one of the first.

In contrast to Venice and the Habsburg Empire, France sought a political alliance with the Ottoman Empire. An enduring rivalry had existed between France and the Habsburg Empire. After signing a humiliating peace treaty in 1526, known as the Treaty of Madrid,\(^9\) the King of France, Francis I (1494-1547), sent a plea for help to the sultan. Sultan Suleiman (1494-1566, r.1520-1566) responded promptly, resulting in the Battle of Mohács (1526).\(^10\) After this sign of support by the sultan, it still took until 1536 for a treaty to be signed by Jean de la Forest,

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\(^7\) Howard, p. 16.
\(^8\) Mack, pp. 22-23, 25.
\(^10\) Duvauchelle, pp. 10-14, 22; Mattingly, p. 167.
allowing French subjects to reside in Constantinople. De la Forest became the first French resident ambassador in the Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{11} Until that date, the only western diplomat allowed to reside in Constantinople was the Venetian bailo, who had both consular and diplomatic functions.\textsuperscript{12}

The artist-diplomat

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, artists travelled far more than is generally assumed today. By travelling between different cities and courts, artists exchanged ideas, techniques and motifs. Some artists went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Among them Erhard Reuwich of Utrecht, who, after accompanying Bernhard von Breydenbach on his pilgrimage, made the woodcuts of von Breydenbach’s \textit{Peregrinatio in terram sanctam} (1486).\textsuperscript{13} Others were employed within a diplomatic context and some of them also travelled within this function. Apart from the three artists under study other well-known examples of artist-diplomats are Jan van Eyck (1390/1400-1441), Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen (1500-1559) and Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640).\textsuperscript{14}

During the sixteenth century, the role of the ambassador changed to that of a resident ambassador, who was officially sent and received from one ruler to another.\textsuperscript{15} Artists were considered to be good diplomats as they could blend in perfectly at foreign courts, thus being the perfect spies for monarchs. Artists could generally gather more information than diplomats, because no one expected them to work in a diplomatic function either. Moreover, in their drawings and paintings they could register useful details ranging from military information to precise cityscapes, which could enable their monarch to estimate the military power of his opponents. A famous example of this is Matteo de Pasti, who was sent by the court of Sigismondo Malatesta of Rimini to the court of Mehmed II in 1461. However, de

\textsuperscript{11} Duvauchelle, pp. 18-19.
\textsuperscript{12} Mattingly, pp. 64, 170.
Pasti was arrested by Venetians in Crete, who caught him for a spy as he was carrying maps of Italy and the Adriatic, as well as a copy of Valturio’s *De re militari*.

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16 Howard, p. 17.
Chapter 2: Gentile Bellini

Biography
Gentile Bellini (fl. 1460 – d. 1507) was the son of the Venetian painter Jacopo Bellini and the brother of Giovanni Bellini. Although famous at his time, many works by Gentile are now lost.

Gentile Bellini spent a large part of his career on the renovation and redecoration of the Great Council Hall in the Doge’s Palace, which he began in 1479. Although a fire destroyed the entire Hall in 1577, Bellini’s work is still known through the verbal descriptions of it by Giorgio Vasari in his 1550 edition of *Le Vite*, as well as through related drawings by Bellini himself like *A Procession before Santa Maria della Carità*.

In January 1479, while Gentile Bellini was still working on his monumental paintings for the Great Council Hall, a peace treaty was concluded between Venice and the Ottoman Empire thanks to the envoy Giovanni Dario, who returned to Venice accompanied by a Turkish envoy in April 1479. On 1 August 1479 the Venetian Senate received a request for a painter from Sultan Mehmed II, which was followed by a second one for a sculptor and a bronze founder. As Venice did not want to jeopardize its newly established relationship with the Ottoman Empire, the city immediately sent its most prominent painter, Gentile Bellini. What is interesting to notice here is that Bellini was thus sent to Constantinople not as an ordinary painter, but as a cultural ambassador for Venice, implying that besides excellent artistic qualities, he must have also possessed strong diplomatic skills. Bellini must have been encouraged by his friend, the ambassador Dario, to undertake this dangerous journey. On 3 September 1479 Bellini left for Constantinople from which he did not return until before 15 January 1481, when Mehmed II wrote a letter praising him.

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21 Chong, p. 107; Howard, p. 18; Meyer zur Capellen, pp. 17, 109-110.
After briefly examining Gentile Bellini’s stay at the Ottoman court between 1479 and 1481, this chapter looks at the impact this stay had on his later work produced in Venice, and particularly on his narrative paintings for the *Scuole Grandi*.

**Gentile Bellini in Istanbul**

Upon his arrival in Constantinople, Gentile Bellini allegedly gave to Mehmed II one of his father’s drawing books as a diplomatic gift. As the sultan had asked for a painter, Bellini knew that he would highly appreciate a book of drawings.

Bellini’s journey to Constantinople did not pass unnoticed, being mentioned by contemporaries such as Marin Sanudo, Giovanni Maria Angiolello and Jacopo Filippo Foresti. A description by Angiolello, who served Mehmed II between 1474 and 1481, describes Bellini’s duties at the Ottoman court, which included making various portraits. He also reported that after Mehmed II’s death, his son and successor Bayezid sold all of these works on the Bazaar, where many Italian merchants bought them.

Another contemporary published account, possibly provided by Gentile Bellini himself, is Jacopo Filippo Foresti da Bergamo’s *Supplementum chronicarum* (1490). This account describes how Bellini was first tested by the sultan, who then being impressed by his skills, asked Bellini to portray him.

Unfortunately, only few works from Bellini’s stay at the Ottoman court have survived including some drawings, the painting *Portrait of Sultan Mehmed II* and a medal of Mehmed II.

For the purpose of this dissertation only the drawings made by Bellini in Constantinople will be further examined. To begin with, the drawing *Seated Scribe* (Fig. 1) will be taken under...

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23 Chong, p. 106; Howard, p. 16.
26 Chong, p. 110.
28 Campbell and Chong, p. 100.
29 Campbell and Chong, p. 78.
30 Campbell and Chong, pp. 74-75.
consideration. *Seated Scribe* is a drawing in pen and ink that later was coloured and gilded in a manner inspired by Islamic techniques. Although the identification of the young man is uncertain, it has been suggested that he may have been a page at the court of Mehmed II that Bellini probably saw during his stay at the Topkapı palace.\(^{31}\)

In 1544-45 this drawing was included into an album for Bahram Mirza, the youngest son of Shah Isma’il at the Persian Safavid Court. At that time a cartouche with the inscription ‘The work of ibn-i mu’azzin, who is among the well-known masters of Europe’ was added to the drawing. The term *ibn-i mu’azzin* (*muezzin* is ‘the caller to prayer’) has created much discussion among scholars. However, as the inscription was added many years later it is now generally accepted that it cannot be read as an attribution, but rather as a claim stating the European origin of the drawing. The *Seated Scribe* was very influential in the East and was copied by at least two Persian artists.\(^{32}\)

Apart from *Seated Scribe*, a group of seven drawings are now generally believed to have been made by either Bellini, his workshop or one of his close followers. While they depict seven oriental figures, a precise identification of their subject is still difficult.\(^{33}\) Three of these drawings are attributed to the master himself, while three others are believed to be made within his workshop. A seventh drawing is believed to be a sixteenth century drawing made after Bellini.\(^{34}\) These seven drawings differ greatly from other preparatory drawings by Bellini in which he used a very sketchy style with little concern for detail. The oriental figures, however, are well-composed in the centre of the page and show great detail in their elaboration. In the depiction of two female figures, *Young Greek Woman* (Fig. 2) and *Seated Woman* (Fig. 3), Bellini wrote some notes in Venetian dialect to indicate which colour the fabric should have. Although this type of annotations is usually only used in *modelli*, the overall composition of both drawings tends more towards a finished work of art rather than a preparatory drawing.

\(^{31}\) Chong, p. 122.
\(^{32}\) Chong, p. 122.
\(^{33}\) Campbell and Chong, p. 99.
\(^{34}\) Campbell and Chong, pp. 98-105.
Venice

The majority of surviving paintings by Bellini were made after his return to Venice in 1481. It is interesting to see how his stay in Constantinople influenced his later artistic production. Four paintings will be examined in this way, namely *The Virgin and Child Enthroned* (about 1480), *The Procession in Piazza San Marco* (1496), *The Miracle at the San Lorenzo Bridge* (1500) and *Saint Mark preaching in Alexandria* (1504-07, completed by Giovanni).

*The Virgin and Child Enthroned* (Fig. 4) has been stylistically ascribed to Bellini’s later period after his return from Constantinople. The inscription on the painting ‘*OPUS. GENTILIS. BELLINI. VENETI. EQUITIS*’ (The work of Gentile Bellini the Venetian, Knight) provides a *terminus ante quem* as Bellini’s first knighthood was in 1469.

In her catalogue entry of this painting, Caroline Campbell has pointed out the oriental element depicted within it: the Virgin’s mantle of rich red voided velvet woven on a cloth-of-gold, the Western Anatolian prayer-mat under her feet and the architectural niche structure behind her which resembles a *mihrab* in mosques that shows the direction of Mecca. However, she does not discuss how these elements came into this painting made by Bellini. Considering Bellini’s biography it is most likely that he must have seen oriental clothes and carpets at the Ottoman court and was therefore able to render an accurate depiction of them. However, Bellini was not alone in placing an oriental carpet under the feet of the Virgin or dressing her in wealthy clothes with an oriental design. Moreover, during the Renaissance one did not need to travel to the Ottoman Empire to see oriental clothes or rugs. Therefore, it seems possible that this painting was influenced both by his stay in Venice as by the contemporary fashion to depict oriental elements within paintings.

Since the Middle Ages, many objects made in the Islamic World came to Europe through international trade as war loot from the crusades or as souvenirs from pilgrimages to the Holy Land. Frequently, Islamic textiles were wrapped around relics from the Holy Land to protect them during the travel. Thus many Islamic textiles found their way into churches and cathedrals). In everyday life, rugs were only meant to walk on in very exceptional circumstances. Luxury oriental rugs were frequently placed over furniture or depicted in paintings under the feet of someone very important, for instance the Madonna, to further enhance the status of the depicted person. Lately some scholars have opted for an additional

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35 Campbell, p. 60.
iconographical reading, interpreting the Madonna and/or the saints standing on an “oriental” rug as a symbol of Christian victory over Islam. This, however, seems an unlikely interpretation since during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries Muslims were in a stronger position than Christians, politically speaking, conquering more and more Christian territory every day. Therefore, as oriental rugs were appreciated because of their luxurious character, it seems more likely that they were used, primarily, to further enhance the important status of the Madonna and/or the saints.

With respect to the Virgin’s richly decorated velvet mantle, it is necessary to point out that during the fifteenth and even in the sixteenth centuries Italian merchants were actually exporting velvets to the Ottoman Empire. These velvets and silks were considered fashionable by the Ottomans as the Italians already in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries had adopted eastern motifs from silks and other objects imported from the Mongol empire as well as from the Muslim Levant.36

Finally, although the niche behind the Madonna may symbolise a mihrab, it can also be interpreted as a round apse in a Christian church, which in Byzantine times was sometimes decorated with a shell-designed dome. The geometrical decorative tiles also resemble certain eastern influence.

The next three paintings are large narrative scenes that Gentile Bellini made for the Scuole Grandi in Venice.

The first one is *The Procession in Piazza San Marco* (Fig. 5), which was commissioned by the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista for their meeting room. The painting narrates one of the miracles performed by the Scuola’s reliquary of the True Cross. In 1444 a Brescian merchant had thrown himself onto the cross in the hope of curing his injured son. Although this is the true topic of the painting, Bellini clearly chooses to emphasize the procession in front of the basilica rather than the unnoticeable kneeling merchant, who is depicted in red behind the baldachin that carries the relic. Every year on Saint Mark’s Day, a procession would be held at Saint Mark’s square in which the Scuole would carry their relic under a baldachin. The procession is also described in the diaries of Marin Sanudo, who claims that,

looking at the people attending the procession, one can identify their profession by the colour of their mantles.\textsuperscript{37}

Looking at this painting it initially appears as if there is no oriental influence present. However, when taking a closer look, one can identify three men in oriental costume standing in the background of the Piazza to the right. This detail was, among others, copied by Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) in a drawing which is now at the British Museum: \textit{Three Orientals} (Fig. 6).\textsuperscript{38} The detail itself is almost unnoticeable and can be easily overlooked when examining the painting. When comparing Dürer’s drawing with the group of seven drawings attributed to Bellini and his workshop, one can see a clear similarity between the man standing in the middle in Dürer’s drawing and the \textit{Standing Turk} (Fig. 7), which is attributed to the workshop of Bellini. Apart from similar turbans and facial appearances, one can imagine that if the \textit{Standing Turk} would close his ceremonial overcoat, he would resemble the figure depicted by Dürer. Moreover, the men standing to the left in Dürer’s drawing has not buttoned his coat all the way up, thus leaving part of his shirt visible which is vertically striped just like the one worn by the \textit{Standing Turk}. It seems that the \textit{Standing Turk} could have been the model for both men.

For the same \textit{Scuola}, Bellini also made another large narrative scene namely \textit{The Miracle at the San Lorenzo Bridge} (1500) (Fig. 8), depicting another miracle. During one of the processions of the True Cross, the relic fell into the water and many people immediately dived into the water trying to catch it. On the right side of the painting a woman is encouraging a black man, probably her slave, to jump in himself. Miraculously no one but Andrea Vendramin, the \textit{Gran Guardiano} or \textit{Grand Guardian} of the \textit{Scuola}, could catch the cross.\textsuperscript{39} Again almost no exotic element in this painting is apparent, apart from the black slave. However, this would not have been considered exotic at the time as black slaves were already imported by Venetian merchants in the fifteenth century. Until recently, it was believed that during the fifteenth century the streets of Venice were flooded by Ottoman and Mamluk merchants and visitors. This, however, has been shown to be a myth, with most visitors being envoys on diplomatic missions who visited the city rather infrequently. These figures were

\textsuperscript{37} Meyer zur Capellen, pp. 71-72.
\textsuperscript{38} Howard, p. 26.
\textsuperscript{39} Meyer zur Capellen, pp. 77-78.
probably included in paintings as some sort of oriental exoticism. In the past, the authenticity of their costumes has been claimed as evidence of their real presence in the city. However, to add some accuracy to their compositions, artists could have easily imitated from drawings made by travellers to the East, like Bellini. In *The Miracle at the San Lorenzo Bridge* it also becomes clear that Bellini would recycle some of his own work. The woman kneeling to the far left of the picture can be identified as Catarina Cornaro. Bellini made a portrait of her in which she is wearing the same dress.

The last large narrative painting by Bellini, *Saint Mark preaching in Alexandria* (Fig. 9), was commissioned by the Scuola of San Marco for their albergo (meeting room) and was completed after Gentile’s death by his brother Giovanni. Although the setting of this picture is not Venice, it does resemble the architectural lay-out and structure of *The Procession in Piazza San Marco*. Particularly the tiled structure of the square with its white lines and the basilica in the background, resembles the Square and Basilica of Saint Mark. However, the Basilica in *Saint Mark preaching in Alexandria* consists only of three portals, just like the preparatory drawing made by Bellini for *The Procession in Piazza San Marco*.

However, as the setting is meant to be Alexandria, Bellini used a variety of oriental elements to support this. The buildings standing on the left and the right side of the square clearly show oriental architectural elements such as the windows with latticework. Furthermore, the basilica in the background is supplied by minarets as a mosque, and to the right of the basilica a palm tree is depicted. In the background before the basilica men dressed in oriental robes wander across the square. On the left side next to the basilica one can see a camel, while on the right side another camel and a giraffe are depicted. By inserting a palm tree and exotic animals, Bellini ensured that the setting would be identified as an oriental city. In the foreground Saint Mark, dressed in Roman fashion, stands on a small bridge-like platform. Behind him stands a group of men wearing the traditional Venetian red and black robes as shown also in *The Procession in Piazza San Marco*. The crowd in front of Saint Mark is clearly non-European. Most of the men are wearing kaftans with round white turbans. In between some men wearing Venetian style clothing can be noted. The most remarkable group of listeners is the women sitting right in front of Saint Mark. They are all dressed in

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41 Meyer zur Capellen, p. 68.
42 Campbell, p. 55.
long white robes and they are veiled beyond recognition. They seem to be wearing some sort of headdress with a flat top that makes their veils fall across the rest of their bodies. The veiled woman standing to the right has been connected with the drawing of a Young Greek Woman by Bellini. Although both women are wearing different clothes, their poses are very similar with their left arm in a slightly bent. This painting demonstrates that Bellini used oriental motifs, such as costumes or architectural features, when he considered them appropriate. Aside from the obvious Mamluk costumes, Bellini also depicts exotic animals in the background such as a giraffe and two camels.

When comparing these paintings, it becomes clear that Gentile did not use Oriental details in abundance, rather he employed them according to the subject of his painting. By doing this he distinguished himself from some of his followers and contemporaries like Vittore Carpaccio and Carlo Crivelli. Both painters used an abundance of oriental details without paying much attention to their origin mixing Ottoman and Mamluk clothing together.

This can be compared to the painting Scenes from the Life of Saint Mark (Fig. 10) by Giovanni Mansueti, who was a pupil of Bellini. In this painting Mansueti used an abundance of oriental details like costumes, headdresses and architectural features. However, Mansueti never travelled to the East, instead borrowing his oriental details from others. For example, the female figures standing in the background he copied probably from Reuwich’s picture Saracenes in von Breydenbach’s Peregrinatio.

43 Chong, p. 119.
44 Howard, p. 29.
Chapter 3: Pieter Coecke van Aelst

Biography
During his lifetime, Pieter Coecke van Aelst (1502-1550) was considered to be one of the most influential artists of Antwerp. He was an *uomo universale* who worked with tapestries, drawings, paintings, prints and stained-glass windows. Both Vasari in his 1568 edition of *Le Vite* and Lodovico Guicciardini (1521-1589) in his 1581 edition of *Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi, altrimenti detti Germania inferiore* refer to Coecke as a renowned artist, particularly famous for his tapestry designs and his translation of the architectural treatises of Vitruvius and Sebastiano Serlio into French and Flemish. Coecke’s fame is further highlighted by the fact that Domenicus Lampsonius (1532-1599) includes him in his set of twenty-three engraved portraits of famous artists, known as the *Pictorum aliquot celebrium Germaniae inferioris effigies* (Antwerp 1572) (Fig. 11), which includes artists such as van Eyck, Rogier van der Weyden, Bernard van Orley and Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Each portrait is accompanied by a short Latin verse that describes the highlights of the depicted artist’s life and career. Coecke’s verse was subsequently translated into Dutch by Karel van Mander, who used it in his description of Coecke’s life in his *Schilder-boeck* of 1604.

Coecke presumably began his career in Brussels, where he was trained by Bernard van Orley, court painter to Emperor Charles V. In 1527, Coecke was registered as a *vrijmeester* or master in the Guild of Saint Luke in Antwerp. The *Liggeren* – the official register of the Guild – shows that Coecke had at least three official apprentices registered under his name. Coecke travelled to Italy, and more specifically to Rome, where he studied ancient sculpture and architecture, before travelling in 1533 to Constantinople. The details of this journey will be discussed later in this chapter.

45 Much confusion exists about the exact name of Pieter Coecke van Aelst. Besides a variety of different spellings, certain authors have misinterpreted the adjective *van Aelst*, which means *from Aelst*, as being Pieter’s surname. However, his official last name is Coecke.
51 Gerson, pp. 112-113, 135, 150.
In 1534 Coecke was in the Low Countries where he designed a giant for the Antwerp Ommeganck (pageant). After his return from the Ottoman Empire, he became court painter to Emperor Charles V. In 1549 he was in charge of the decorations for the Royal entry of Philip II into Antwerp, which are recorded in a book written by the city’s secretary Cornelius Scribonius Grapheus.

The aim of this chapter is to look at the authenticity of the pictures and their cultural and historical value as an eyewitnesses account of an artist travelling to Constantinople.

Istanbul
Unlike Bellini’s, Coecke’s journey to Constantinople was not mentioned extensively by his contemporaries. Some doubts have been raised as to whether Coecke actually undertook the journey, but the biographical note on him written by the Franciscus Sweertius in his Athenae Belgicae explicitly mentions Coecke travelling to Constantinople. Sweertius received his information most likely from his good friend Hubert Goltzius, who was married to the sister of Coecke’s second wife and thus knew Coecke personally. Sweertius mention of Coecke’s travel can be therefore considered as the most contemporary source of information on Coecke’s journey. In fact, today only two accounts of Coecke’s journey have survived, the earliest published more than fifty years after Coecke went. Interestingly, both accounts give rather contrasting narratives and will be discussed here together with a third theory about Coecke’s motives for travelling.

According to van Mander, Coecke travelled in 1533 to Constantinople to sell tapestries to the sultan in name of the Brussels tapestry merchant Van der Moeyen. Van Mander describes how the sultan, devoted to the laws of his religion, was not interested in Coecke’s figural depictions. As a result the mission was, according to van Mander, ‘a lost journey’.

Nonetheless, Coecke stayed almost a year in Constantinople learning the language and making drawings of everyday Ottoman life. This account given by van Mander has been

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53 Corbet, pp. 8-10; Marlier, pp. 42-43.
54 Marlier, p. 42.
55 Marlier, p. 31.
56 Marlier, p. 29.
57 After this short biographical note Sweertius includes a copy of Coecke’s epitaph, which he had already recorded earlier in his book Monumenta sepulcralia et Inscriptiones. Coecke passed away in August 1550 in Brussels where he was buried in the now lost church of Saint-Géry. Marlier, pp. 29-30; F. Sweertius, Monumenta Sepulcralia et Inscriptiones publice privatèq. Ducatus Brabantiae, Publisher Gasparem Bellervm, Antwerp 1613, p. 293.
58 Van Mander, fol. 218r, ‘verloren reys.’
followed by most scholars as van Mander is generally considered to be Coecke’s primary biographer.

However, Georg Braun had given an earlier account of Coecke’s journey in the fourth volume of his *Civitates orbis terrarium*, which was published between 1572 and 1618. However, few scholars have referred to this account. Concerning Coecke’s stay in Constantinople, Braun says the following:

> Peter van Aelst also published prints, certainly objects worth seeing, about the life and customs of the Turks which he observed in Constantinople, where, because of the unique excellence of his skill, he was so valued by Suleiman the Emperor of the Turks, that, forgetting his Koran, Suleiman wanted to be portrayed by him. And Suleiman of his own hand dismissed him with honour, filling him with [tokens] of royal munificence, with a ring, a jewel, horses, garments, gold and servants. Things that later, when in Brussels, he converted into an annual pension.

What is especially interesting here is that Braun does not refer in any way to Coecke’s involvement in tapestry designs. More strikingly, is that in Braun’s account Coecke got rewarded greatly for his talent, receiving many gifts, while van Mander’s account clearly states that it was a lost journey in which ‘large expenses were made’. Moreover, the sultan actually asked Coecke to make his portrait, much like years earlier Mehmed II had asked Bellini.

Unfortunately, due to the lack of contemporary accounts of Coecke’s journey it is rather difficult to establish which one of both accounts is closer to the truth.

A third theory on Coecke’s motives for travelling was given more than a century after the artist’s death by André Félibien, the official court historian to King Louis XIV of France. He included Coecke in his book on the lives and works of the most excellent ancient and modern

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60 Braun, fol. 10: ‘Edidit insuper Petrus Alostanus etypa, sane visenda, de vita & moribus Turcarum, quæ Constantinopoli observavit, ubi Solimano Turcarum Imperatorib, ob raram artis praestateam, Adeo carus fuit, ut Alcorani sui oblitus, ab eo depingi voluerit. Qui eum, de manu sua, annulo, gemma, equis, vestibus, auro, & servis, regia munificentia auctum honorificè dimisit. Quæ Bruxellæ deinde, in annuas pensiones convertit.’

61 Van Mander, fol. 218r, ‘groote costen ghedaen.’
painters saying that Coecke might have been send to discover ‘the secret of beautiful colours for the dying of wools and silks’.  

In recent years, it has been suggested that Coecke might have travelled to Constantinople in the company of the Habsburg ambassador Cornelis de Schepper. De Schepper had been working since 1523 for various members of the Imperial family, before he was employed by Charles V. In 1533, Charles V send de Schepper to the Ottoman Empire on behalf of his brother Ferdinand to help with the peace negotiations with the sultan. De Schepper kept a diary during his journey, which, unfortunately, has only survived partly through a sixteenth century copy.

During the sixteenth century the common route to travel from Vienna to Constantinople, was over land through the Balkans passing Slavonia and Macedonia on the way. Like all Habsburg ambassadors and diplomats, de Schepper followed this route, which was also depicted in the first scenes of the prints of Coecke. Although no contemporary sixteenth century source, including de Schepper’s journal, mentioned both men travelling together, it is not unlikely that they decided to travel the dangerous road together. As both fellow countrymen were in Constantinople at the same time in 1533, this suggests that they were at least on the road more or less during the same time period.

A final remark in favour of Coecke travelling within a diplomatic context is that both van Mander and Braun state that Coecke met the sultan in person. De Schepper was one of the first ambassadors who was granted a personal meeting with the Sultan in his Audience Hall. It seems very unlikely that Coecke would have been able to meet the sultan if he was not travelling with a highly placed official such as an ambassador.

**Customs and Fashions of the Turks**

The drawings that Coecke made during his stay in Constantinople were later turned into a series of ten composite woodcuts that together form a large frieze depicting seven scenes

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63 De Schepper, p. 4.
64 Marlier, p. 60.
65 Marlier, p. 60.
66 Braun & Van Mander, fol. 218.
showing the customs and fashions of the Turks. Around the frieze a decorative border is placed in which each scene is accompanied by a matching description in French. The series also has a frontispiece and colophon, which both consist of a similar decorative cartouche that only differs in content. The information provided in these cartouches shows that the series was published in 1553, three years after Coecke’s death, by his widow Mayken Verhulst (1518–1593/96) under the title: *Ces Moeurs et fachons de faire de Turcz*, hereafter referred to with their English title *Customs and Fashions of the Turks*.

In this dissertation the edition kept at the Prints and Drawings Department of the British Museum is under discussion. This entire frieze, border included, is in height approximately 455 millimetres (sheet), while the total width of the frieze is nearly 5 metres. This edition is one of the few that has survived with its original border, and as such forms a complete edition. In appendix I, the series of prints from the British Museum is shown with the English translation of their original French descriptions.

The only exhaustive study devoted to the prints themselves was published in 1873 by Sir William Stirling Maxwell, with the title *The Turks in MDXXXIII*. Max J. Friedländer discusses the series only briefly within the context of Coecke’s life and career. While doing so he gives a new interpretation to van Mander’s account by arguing that Coecke possibly made the series of drawings before going to Constantinople. Friedländer believes that Coecke turned his drawings into tapestry cartoons, which he then offered to the Sultan. August Corbet, one of Coecke’s main biographers in the twentieth century, took up this theory without adding any new hypothesis about the function of these prints and whether they can be considered as a testimony of these presumed tapestry designs.

When looking at the seven scenes of *Customs and Fashions of the Turks* together, it becomes clear that Coecke treated the entire frieze as one large procession scene. From the first scene a procession of soldiers guides the viewer’s eyes from one scene into another, passing through Slavonia and Macedonia on its way, before finally reaching the heart of the Ottoman capital: the hippodrome of Constantinople.

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70 Friedländer, p. 56.
71 Corbet, pp. 16-19.
Although every scene is framed by two oriental looking caryatides, the view in the background flows neatly from one scene into another, and by doing so enhances the feeling of looking at one large depiction. The next section will examine certain elements of the prints to establish whether these details are indeed an accurate representation.

According to the inscription in the border, the first print (Fig. 12) gives a depiction of Slavonia, a region in modern Croatia. In the centre of the foreground, Coecke depicted a man in Ottoman costume who is gesturing to his companion as if giving instructions. The details of this man’s costume are remarkable. He is wearing an ankle-length kaftan with a split in front that would enable him to tuck the bottom parts of his kaftan into the scarf around his waist, which functions as a belt, thus giving his legs more freedom to move. One can identify social rank through costumes in the Ottoman Empire and a general rule is that the longer and wider the caftan the higher someone’s position in society is. The same rule applies to headdresses: the higher or bulkier the headdress, the higher the social rank of the person depicted. When comparing this man’s ankle-length caftan with those of his fellow travellers depicted to his right, a clear distinction in their length can be noticed, suggesting that the man in front has a higher status than his fellow travellers. Combining all these details, one can assume that he may be their leader. Another element that suggests his higher social rank is the ceremonial sleeve which is depicted hanging from his right arm. Ceremonial sleeves were a further indication of one’s higher status in society.

When moving to the second scene (Fig. 13), the inscription identifies the women depicted in it as ‘Greek’, presumably referring to their origin as being Greek Christians living in the Balkans. When looking at these women in more detail, their costumes seem rather exotic, while the headdress worn by the women to the left is quite remarkable in its strange shape. Furthermore the costume of the woman standing does not resemble a typical Ottoman costume for women, although, the ceremonial sleeves can again be distinguished quite clearly. However, ceremonial sleeves were not only an indication of Ottoman costume; they were also used, for example, by Byzantine emperors long before the Ottomans took over. On the other hand, the sleeves can also be seen as an early sign of slow adaptation to the local costumes in order to conform to those worn by the Ottomans who now ruled these territories.

The two women are offering something to the men passing by, which according to the accompanying text is some sort of pie made in the hot ashes of fire. The Habsburg ambassador Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq in his *Four letters* on his travels to Constantinople
mentions a similar account, which implies that these Christian women probably provided in their own maintenance by selling food and drinks to travellers. A further detail to the right background shows a woman giving water to a man, while a small boy is clutching tightly onto her skirt.

In the third print (Fig. 14) the procession passes by an Ottoman cemetery to the left, before crossing mountains in the background and finally reaching water, most likely a river, in the right background of the scene. A very interesting detail is the man depicted to the far right in the foreground, who has turned his back towards us while squatting. At first it is rather unclear what this man is doing. To the left side of him, another man is filling a water bag from a constructed water well. Next to the right side of the man squatting a narrow stream of water can be distinguished. It seems rather strange that the man would empty his water bag while sitting near a water well. In this case the written description by Coecke is necessarily to understand what this man is doing. In his list of customs depicted, Coecke clearly states that in this depiction one can see how Ottomans, among other things, urinated. Thus, it suddenly becomes clear that the man with is back towards us is actually urinating. In general Coecke’s depictions have been considered as a well-detailed ethnographic and rather unbiased depiction of the Ottomans. However, the decision to show a man urinating and then directly behind this scene depicting three Ottomans praying (a prayer carpet can even be distinguished) is rather a bold and ambiguous statement. However, it is impossible to know whether Coecke deliberately decided to show these two scenes connected as a slander towards Islam or whether it is mere coincidence that these scenes happen to be depicted right next to each other.

The fourth print (Fig. 15) shows the celebration of a new moon. As the Ottomans followed a lunar calendar this was an important event that raises the occasion for celebration at night with torches and music.

In the foreground two children are depicted, one playing a pan flute, known in Ottoman Turkish as a miskal, while a dog is barking towards the boy. Another boy looks quite scared by the dog, which is considered to be an impure animal in Islam. Although it is not entirely impossible that Coecke came up with all these smaller intimate depictions by himself, the interactions and emotions shown do feel like something the artist may have witnessed. This does not imply that the scene is a literal depiction in every single detail, but rather a compilation of certain scenes witnessed by the artists and then put together in an overall
depiction that shows the general image of what would occur during for instance a feast to celebrate the new moon.

In the fifth print (Fig. 16) Coecke depicted a funeral procession. Four men carrying a stretcher with the deceased covered under a blanket while his turban decorates the front of the stretcher. The men are surrounded by children carrying young trees. The description identifies these as cypresses claiming that these would be planted next to the grave of the deceased. At the cemetery to the left indeed a bunch of planted trees can be noticed.

The penultimate print (Fig. 17) shows a joyful procession made out of men playing music, women accompanied by small children or carrying baskets balanced carefully on their heads. The additional text clarifies that this is a circumcision feast of Christian boys. The two women depicted in the far left corner in the foreground are dressed in a European style, while the women in the procession holding the hands of their children are covered entirely, only leaving some space open for their eyes. After the circumcision a banquet with music would follow. Again the level of details seems remarkable. In this print Coecke depicts several musical instruments including the mizmar, but also drums known as tabla, an instrument resembling a tambour called saz and cymbals. The women with the baskets and the men following them seem to be carrying food. Next to the two women in the left foreground a gravestone is visible with an inscription. Like the tombstones depicted in the previous print, again this inscription is characterized by pseudo-Arabic script that is trying to resemble in this case Ottoman Turkish.

In the second row of the inscription (Fig. 17 detail), three letters can be read which resemble a Fā’ (ﹰ), a Nūn (ں) and an Alif (ا). The letters are not combined, and although in the past scholars have debated on their hidden meaning, they do not form an Arabic or Ottoman Turkish word, neither can they be interpreted as the initials of Coeck van Alost as argued by Josef van Karabacek and even to only make the Alif correspond with the A of Coecke’s initial one has to read the three letter from left to right rather than from right to left. And also the hypothesis of these letters having a numeral value that could refer to Coecke’s journey in 1533 seems rather unlikely. Although van Mander stated that Coecke learned the language, there is no written evidence of that in these prints beside these three letters. It is, however,

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72 Marlier, pp. 62, 69. Marlier takes his information from a manuscript written by Josef van Karabacek in 1918, which is now at the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna. Unfortunately, I was unable to gain access to the manuscript itself.
possible that Coecke fascinated by this exotic script tried to imitate some random characters, which make this inscription resemble real Arabic script rather than the pseudo-Arabic he employed in the rest of his prints. However, the lack of written evidence does not immediately imply that Coecke did not learn the language. It is possible that Coecke picked up some spoken Ottoman Turkish, which could help him during his every day business.

In the last woodcut, the city centre of Constantinople is depicted (Fig. 18). However, instead of an accurate architectural view of Constantinople, Coecke created a narrative view, showing most of its important monuments. Because of this mixed panoramic view, it is rather difficult to identify each building or monument individually. Luckily, the description in the border helps to identify most of the scene. The print shows a procession of the Sultan through the city, which goes from the Hippodrome to perhaps the Hagia Sophia.\(^73\) It has also been opted that the Mosque in the middle of the print is Hagia Sophia, while the one to the left is then Mehmet Fatih Mosque.\(^74\) This scene has been identified as a depiction of the sultan’s weekly procession to the mosque on Friday. We can also clearly identify the Obelisk of Theodosius and the Serpentine Column with its three snake heads (Fig. 19).

Another rather remarkable monument depicted in the print is a column with three statues on top showing Hercules, Diana and Apollo (Fig. 20). This column, among others, was brought back as war booty from the conquest of Buda, but was removed again in 1536.\(^75\) De Schepper also mentioned this statue in his journal.\(^76\) The Hippodrome was the cultural and historical heart of the city and was thus used regularly for processions and feasts such as circumcision ceremonies.

After examining the prints in more detail, it becomes clear that the level of accurate iconographical details favours an *in situ* realisation of the drawings, demonstrating a high level of familiarity with everyday Ottoman life. Moreover the tremendous amount of small details, make it virtually impossible to consider these prints as tapestry designs.

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\(^73\) Maxwell, p. 119.


\(^75\) Maxwell, p. 8.

Furthermore, tapestry cartoons were designed at the actual size of the tapestry to help with the weaving process. Generally they are characterized by a certain flatness of design across the surface.\textsuperscript{77} In Coecke’s prints, however, no such flatness can be noticed. Most visual accounts on the Ottoman Empire available to Coecke during the early sixteenth century, for instance von Breydenbach’s account,\textsuperscript{78} did not provide sufficient accurate information for the artist to render such a detailed ethnographic study.

\textsuperscript{77} Silver, p. 26.
\textsuperscript{78} Bernhard von Breydenbach, \textit{Peregrinatio in terram sanctam}, Mainz 1486.
Nicolas de Nicolay

Biography

In 1517 Nicolas de Nicolay, Seigneur d’Arfeuille, was born in the French region of Dauphiné. Upon entering the army in 1542, he participated both in the Siege of Perpignan and in the Siege of Nice in 1543. The latter was the first time that he participated in a battle in which the French and the Ottomans were fighting alongside each other. During 1544 and 1545 he travelled extensively, mainly in Northern Europe, and by 1546 he was involved in England in a tale of espionage in which he played a major part. De Nicolay was a devoted countryman who did anything in his power to serve his king.79

Over the years de Nicolay had gained strong diplomatic skills, besides being a talented draughtsman and an excellent cartographer. It was in this function that he was employed by King Henri II to travel in 1551 with the ambassador Gabriel d’Aramon to Constantinople. The King wanted de Nicolay to make a visual account of the fortifications of sites encountered along the route.80 The embassy led by d’Aramon did not only have an important diplomatic function, but also a cultural and historical one. Apart from de Nicolay, many erudite humanists joined this embassy including Guillaume Postel, Pierre Gilles and Pierre Belon.81

De Nicolay is renowned for his written works, most of which were published after he stopped travelling. Upon his return from Constantinople, de Nicolay was honoured with the title of Royal Geographer. However, only when he left the army and the secret intelligence service in 1557-1558, did he start focussing entirely on this new function.82 In 1567 he finally publishes his costume book Les navigations, pérégrinations et voyages faits en la Turquie.

Istanbul

As de Nicolay was employed specifically as geographer and cartographer, it seems all the more striking that upon his return he decided to publish a costume book. During this diplomatic mission de Nicolay was rather well-informed as he had primary access to information that was only being shared among the upper levels of authority.83 Presumably the

80 Gomez-Géraud and Yérasimos, pp. 11, 17.
81 De Nicolay, p. 50.
82 Gomez-Géraud and Yérasimos, pp. 24-25, 26.
83 Gomez-Géraud and Yérasimos, p. 25.
fact that he had been entrusted by national security intelligence was one of the major reasons that he decided not to write about those experiences. De Nicolay’s costume book conformed in every way to the habits of the genre, by informing the reader about the local customs of the Ottoman Empire by describing their costumes. De Nicolay followed the writing practices of his own time by, on the one hand, using his undisputed status of being an eyewitness, which he expressed in phrases like ‘I saw it’, while, on the other hand, he also relied on the authority of well-known established classical authors.  

During the sixteenth century travel literature became increasingly popular, with more authors writing about their actual travel experiences. Nevertheless, they would still refer to the established authorities of classical texts to confirm and support their own statements. Diplomats also began to publish some of their experiences abroad with the ultimate culmination point of diplomatic travel narrative being the Habsburg ambassador Busbecq, who travelled in that function to Constantinople between 1554 and 1562. His *Legationis Turcicae epistolae quatuor* or *Four Turkish Letters* (1581-1589) became by far the most famous account written by a sixteenth century ambassador who travelled to Constantinople.

Les navigations, pérégrinations et voyages faits en la Turquie

*Les navigations, pérégrinations et voyages faits en la Turquie* consists of a preface followed by four books, which function as four separate chapters. The preface gives an overview of illustrious travel writers both classical and contemporary to de Nicolay with a particular focus on renowned French ambassadors including Jean de la Forest and Gabriel d’Aramon. The engravings in the book have the function of providing the reader with visual material that supports and further explains the written account. The sixty engravings are not used evenly throughout the text with, for example, only four illustrations in the first book.

These prints have been studied extensively mainly from an art historical point of view or within the context of costume history. For the purposes of this section, only certain aspects will be highlighted in order to see how de Nicolay helped create an image of the Turk in Europe.

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84 Gomez-Géraud and Yérasimos, pp. 25-31.
Premier Livre des Navigations

The first book primarily discusses the departure of the embassy of d’Aramon and the arrangements they had to make at the French court. It then describes their journey passing through the Balearic Islands, Algiers, Malta and Tripoli. 87

Second Livre des Navigations

In the second book their journey continues towards Constantinople passing through various islands including Malta and the Greek island of Chios. The main part of this book is devoted to the city of Constantinople and its foundation, ancient history and antiquities that still reflect its glorious past. De Nicolay further describes certain buildings in detail, for instance Le château des Sept Tours (Castle of Seven Towers), which according to him the Ottomans call Iadicula. This is actually the French phonetic pronunciation of the Turkish word Yedikule meaning Seven Towers. He also describes the Sarail (from the Turkish palace Topkapı saray), with its women’s quarters, the temple of Sainte-Sophie (Hagia Sophia), the Turkish baths – both for women and men –, the bezestan (covered market) and the European city district of Pera (named Galata by the Ottomans). 88

In this second book particularly the description of women and the bezestan stands out. Firstly, a bezestan is a large, square covered hall filled with various shops. In one such bezestan de Nicolay witnessed the sale of Christian slaves of all ages and sexes. 89 Already in his first book de Nicolay gave an account of a Christian slave sale, where he explained that these Christians were made to parade naked in front of possible buyers, so that any potential flaw could be seen. Furthermore, their eyes and teeth would be inspected in the same manner as if one were buying a horse. 90 However, in this account in the second book, he goes deeper into the subject stating that it is a pathetic and miserable thing to witness such a sale. Next he expresses the wish to describe in his second volume, which was never realised, in more detail the miserable servitude in which these poor Christians end up. Although this statement shows that de Nicolay clearly cared for the topic, the next sentence could not be more surprising as he suddenly changed subject and said: ‘The bezestan is open every day until the afternoon,

87 De Nicolay, pp. 53, 96.
88 De Nicolay, pp. 97-148.
89 De Nicolay, pp. 140-43.
90 De Nicolay, p. 83.
except on Friday which is the day of rest for the Turks, like Sunday is to us, or Saturday to the Jews.'

Secondly, de Nicolay gives some very interesting, but above all surprising descriptions of Ottoman women. When describing the women’s quarters of the sultan’s palace, de Nicolay emphasizes very strongly that apart from the sultan himself and the eunuchs, no other man is allowed to enter this sacred space, not even those of great importance. This, of course, raises an additional problem as it is impossible for de Nicolay to give an accurate account of the women’s costume if he is not allowed to see them. Nevertheless, his next two engravings show upper class women. De Nicolay assures the reader that these are indeed the costumes of these women as seen through his own eyes. Consequently certain authors have concluded that these depictions must be entirely fanciful and, as de Nicolay had given a false testimony of his eyewitness status, his other depictions should also be evaluated carefully. When carefully perusing de Nicolay’s account one reads how he became friends with a eunuch, Zaferaga, who was raised from a young age at the palace. Thus knowing what a woman’s costume looked like, and in order to help de Nicolay, this eunuch found two ‘two Turkish public women’ (prostitutes), whom he dressed richly with clothes bought at the bezestan, in this way de Nicolay could depict their costume (Fig. 21). This little anecdote shows the lengths to which de Nicolay would go just to render a costume accurately. Nevertheless, although Zaferaga will doubtlessly have chosen costumes in a similar style as those worn at the palace, the fact still remains that these were not real palace women.

Another interesting description about women occurs when de Nicolay is giving an overview of Turkish baths. He begins with a detailed description of the men’s baths in which he describes the entire bathing process, before particularly focusing on their shaving habits. Apparently, apart from cutting their hair and shaving their beard, Turkish men also remove the hair of their ‘secret parts’, by using a mineral drug called rusma that dissolved in water became a paste that made hair literally fall off. He points out that both men and women use this paste in large quantities as they were horrified by the idea of growing hair in those

91 De Nicolay, p. 143: ‘Le bezestan est tous les jours ouvert jusqu’après le midi, excepté le vendredi qui est le jour de repos des Tu¬rcs, comme à nous le dimanche, ou aux Juifs le samedi.’
92 De Nicolay, p. 129: ‘deux femmes turques publiques.’
93 De Nicolay, p. 129.
94 De Nicolay, p. 148, ‘les parties secretes.’
95 De Nicolay, p. 148.
places. When subsequently describing the women’s baths, he follows the same narrative structure. However, he soon focuses on the reason why women take a bath multiple times a week. According to him, apart from hygiene reasons as well as religious belief, women have additional motives.

Firstly, the Turkish bath is the only public place were women can go to without their jealous husbands, as no man is allowed in there. Secondly, de Nicolay states that women like to wash each other out of friendship. However, this sometimes leads to certain women being passionately in love with another woman, and, as a result, they do anything in their power to wash the woman of their desire so that they can touch her more freely. Thus women go to the baths multiple times if necessary to fulfil their heart’s desire. Although this very vivid account must have caused sensation throughout Europe, de Nicolay depicted a very serene scene of a woman, wearing outdoor garments, accompanied by a female slave who carries a basket with bathing supplies (Fig. 22).

It is interesting to remark here that when de Nicolay described the costume of the palace women, he freely admitted that he could not depict them from life as he was not allowed in there. By then explaining that his visual evidence depended on the eyewitness account of Zaferaga, he confirms again the truthfulness of the visual account rendered. However, when describing the lustful sexual desires of some Ottoman women in public as well as private baths, de Nicolay did not give any reference as to where he had received his information. It seems very unlikely, that this is an eyewitness account as, apart from the fact that he is not allowed to enter these baths, he also depicted a women fully dressed in her outdoor clothes, which he could have seen in the street. It has been pointed out that most of de Nicolay’s account about the baths can be traced back to other writers. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see here that he does not inform his reader of the fact that he is not a direct eyewitness.

96 De Nicolay, p. 136.
97 De Nicolay, p. 137.
98 De Nicolay, p. 138.
99 De Nicolay, p. 138.
100 De Nicolay, pp. 138-140.
101 Nicolas de Nicolay Dans L’Empire de Soliman le Magnifique, ed. by Marie-Christine Gomez-Géraud & Stéphane Yerasimos, Paris 1989, p. 29
The third book focuses on military and religious subdivisions within the population.102

*Azamoglan* were young Christian children who, every four years, were taken from their home countries as some kind of tribute payment to the sultan. De Nicolay gives a very vivid discourse about the injustice and cruelty done to these children, who are being raised as faithful Muslims eager to serve their sultan and to fight for their newly acquired religious belief. De Nicolay is particularly shocked by the fact that certain parents even prefer to sell their children as slaves instead of paying the requested tributes. The injustice of it brought de Nicolay to a strong discourse stating that all true Christian princes should be motivated by this injustice to become one peaceful Christian union that could direct its forces unanimously to bring back these Christian children and free them from their lives spent in miserable servitude under the infidels.103

This fragment clearly shows how truly repulsed he feels by the idea of Christian children being taken and raised by the Ottomans. Moreover, the fact that he argues for a united Christianity clearly shows that once more the different European states were drifted apart from each other more than ever.

After this passionate discourse, de Nicolay described how these children were being divided into two groups: those who will receive their training in Constantinople at the palace of the sultan, and those called *Azamoglan Rustique*, who will live in Anatolia for a few years before moving to Constantinople.104

Both type of *azamoglan* are shown in an engraving. The *azamoglan* from the first class is depicted as a young man playing an instrument, which according to de Nicolay sounds similar to a *cistre* (cittern), but which is called *tambora* (Fig. 23).105 On the other hand, the depiction of *Azamoglan Rustique* (Fig. 24) shows a strong resemblance with the costumes worn by the men lighting a campfire in Coecke’s first print, which corresponds with de Nicolay’s description of them as being toughened workers employed within the army. Precisely for this reason, costume books like that of de Nicolay have been used to help identify Ottomans in other depictions such as illuminations and paintings.

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102 De Nicolay, pp. 149-206.
103 De Nicolay, p. 151.
104 De Nicolay, pp. 151-153.
105 De Nicolay, p. 153.
The account of four religious subgroups within the Ottoman Empire shows interesting visual and written accounts. The four subdivisions are géomailers, calenders, dervis and torlaquis. All four groups lived on the outskirts of society and had a simple dress style largely consisting out of animal skins. They all have different religious beliefs, which they express in a unique way. The géomailer, pilgrims of love, are young men from rich families who, under the pretence of their religion, wander around different countries to see and understand the things of the world. They sing songs and sonnets about love in Farsi, while their songs are accompanied, according to de Nicolay, by the rather pleasant sound of the cymbals. However, some of these pilgrims of love, have sexual intercourse with men instead of women and thus commit an abominable sin against nature. Surprisingly, de Nicolay ends this description by saying that if there were such a religion of love back home, he believes that the majority of the youth would devote and surrender themselves with more enthusiasm to this religion, than to that of Christian observance.

In extreme contrast with these pilgrim of love are the calenders (Fig. 25), who although dressed half naked, as can be seen in de Nicolay’s engraving, are committed to a life of abstinence and chastity. The most striking feature of their appearance is the large metal ring which is pierced through their male genitalia, which according to de Nicolay is to buckle them down so that in no way they can perform any act of lust or desire.

*Quatrième Livre des Navigations*

In the fourth book de Nicolay widens his narrative to the description of people and their customs outside the borders of the Ottoman Empire, including Persia and Arabia.

When giving a brief description of the armies of Macedonia, de Nicolay does not give any account of the men and women living there, and instead of depicting a corresponding warrior, he shows a woman from Macedonia (Fig. 26). The woman’s headdress somewhat resembles the one depicted by Coecke in his print. Like the woman in Coecke’s scene she is wearing earrings and a distinctive necklace. Meanwhile she seems to be holding bread in her hands, which could be an allusion towards the fact that Macedonian women were known to sell food to travellers on the road as Coecke mentioned.

106 De Nicolay, p. 188.  
107 De Nicolay, p. 188.  
108 De Nicolay, p. 190.  
109 De Nicolay, p. 190.  
110 De Nicolay, p. 192.  
111 De Nicolay, p. 207-276.
Istanbul

On 9 March 1555 de Nicolay obtained his Royal Privilege for the publication of his costume books.\(^\text{112}\) On 23 November 1555 he already established a contract with the engraver Lyon Davent to produce engravings for his book based on his own drawings. Surprisingly it then takes until 1567 before the book leaves the press of Guillaume Rouille in Lyon.\(^\text{113}\)

As mentioned above, de Nicolay became royal geographer, and especially after leaving the army, he became more involved in projects related to this function. Possibly this resulted in postponing the writing of his costume book. Moreover, the fact that the first part of his book is very accurate, while the later part looks more like a bookish compilation might indicate that he wrote the first part immediately around 1555 when he obtained the royal printing privilege, while the more bookish compilation may have been written closer to the date of publishing in 1567.\(^\text{114}\) After ten years, the memories of his travel would not have been as fresh as in 1555, which may explain why he felt the need to rely more heavily on other established authors.\(^\text{115}\)

The illustrations in de Nicolay’s book follow a coherent thematic approach as they are all costume studies.\(^\text{116}\) In other accounts, like that of Melchior Lorch, who travelled as an artist with the Habsburg ambassador Busbecq, a variety of subject images are used ranging from costume studies to botanical, archaeological, architectural and ethnological depictions. The images have been copied more frequently and for a longer period of time than de Nicolay’s actual written account. They were used multiple times to illustrate a variety of publications that deal with the Orient.\(^\text{117}\) Nevertheless, the book itself was an instant European success with two French reprints in 1576 and 1586, and numerous translations into German (1572 and 1576), English (1585), Dutch (1576) and Italian (1576, 1577 and 1580). So during the final quarter of the sixteenth century a large part of Europe was familiarised with a certain image of the Turk as seen through the eyes of de Nicolay.\(^\text{118}\)

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\(^{112}\) Gomez-Géraud and Yérasimos, pp. 24-25, 26.

\(^{113}\) Gomez-Géraud and Yérasimos, p. 25.

\(^{114}\) Gomez-Géraud and Yérasimos, pp. 28-29.

\(^{115}\) Gomez-Géraud and Yérasimos, p. 34.

\(^{116}\) Gomez-Géraud and Yérasimos, p. 32.


Chapter 4: Image of the Turk

The image of the Turk has always fascinated Europeans and many articles and books have been published on the topic. However, these studies almost always seem to focus on one particular image of the Turk as perceived for instance in Italy, France or Germany and Central Europe. The aim of this chapter is to bring together the image of the Turk as perceived by three artists with different socio-cultural backgrounds, who travelled to Constantinople. Furthermore, this chapter seeks to evaluate how all three of them dealt with their experience in a different way and how this helped spread a particular image of the Turk.

Image of the Turk in the West

During the fifteenth century, Northern Europe was mostly familiar with the image of the Turk through second-hand depictions from Crusader accounts, pilgrimage accounts or news pamphlets. In the course of the sixteenth century, more and more firsthand eyewitness accounts were rendered orally or visually by Europeans who came across the Turk in the battlefield or while travelling. Bellini, Coecke and de Nicolay all brought back such a visual eyewitness account. The next section will look at how each artist’s account was of influence on the rest of Europe.

Gentile Bellini’s Influence on Europe

Although Gentile Bellini did not use oriental elements in abundance within his later paintings, his influence as an artist who had eye-witnessed the splendours of the Ottoman empire reached across Europe. It is not unlikely to think that in addition to the drawings discussed previously, Bellini also brought back from Constantinople some other drawings or even some sort of sketchbook. This might explain the level of accurate details for instance in Saint Mark preaching in Alexandria. The first and most direct impact of Bellini’s influence can be seen in paintings and drawings attributed to his workshop such as the sixteenth-century drawing Standing Turk now in the Musée du Louvre.

A second very important catalyst that helped spread Bellini’s influence across Europe was Albrecht Dürer. Dürer travelled twice to Venice, a first time in 1494-1495 and a second time in 1505-1507. During his first visit in Venice, he visited the workshop of Bellini. Here, he had the unique opportunity not only to look at the works that Bellini brought back from Constantinople, but also to copy some of their details with his copy of Three Orientals being

\[\text{Smith, pp. 13-40; 69-98.}\]
\[\text{H. Möhle, Dürer en zijn tijd, Brussels 1964, p. 25.}\]

34
a famous example. From Dürer’s second journey to Venice, some of his letters to Wilibald Pirkheimer have survived, as well as a diary of his journey to the Low Countries between 1520 and 1521 by which time he was already established as a well-known artist. In the Low Countries he met many of the most important contemporary artists including Bernard van Orley, Quentin Matsys, Lucas van Leyden, Joachim Patenier and Jan Provost. Over the years Dürer had incorporated certain Italian elements within his art and as such he helped to introduce the Renaissance to the North.

Pieter Coecke van Aelst’s Influence in Europe
In 1520, during his journey in the Netherlands, Dürer met Bernard van Orley at whose workshop Coecke was presumably working in those days. However, it is uncertain whether Coecke and Dürer actually met each other then. In 1534, Coecke returned from his journey to Constantinople and once more he was involved in Antwerp in various projects. Unfortunately, few works can be attributed to him with absolute certainty, which makes it rather difficult to evaluate whether his stay in Constantinople was of influence on his later artistic production. Only in one of his city decorations for the Royal Entry of Philip II, a small group of men wearing turbans is shown running away from the Emperor and Prince Philip II. However, the dimensions of this detail are so small that it would be rather unwise to attempt making a stylistic comparison with the Customs and Fashions of the Turks. Unlike Bellini, Coecke seems not to have been influenced greatly by his stay in Constantinople.

Notably, Coecke’s prints were only published twenty years after his journey by his widow, who on 20 March 1553 had obtained an official printing permit. Nonetheless, various copies of Customs and Fashions of the Turks have survived, which can be interpreted as an indication of its popularity. During the early sixteenth century, large-scale multiblock woodcuts were usually used as wall-decorations. Both in size and scale, they rivalled

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123 Dürer, pp. 24-25
124 Koreny, p. 249.
125 Since 1546 printers were legally required to obtain a printing permit called admissieoctrooi, which allowed them to officially work. This is not the same as a printing privilege that gave the printer the right to print and sell one particular book for a certain period of time. For more information on the difference between both see J. van der Stock, Printing Images in Antwerp. The Introduction of Printmaking in a City: Fifteenth Century to 1585, Rotterdam 1998, pp. 45, 201 (in note 96).
paintings and tapestries, which were more expensive to produce. They also used similar devices, like caryatides, to separate different scenes. Unfortunately, most of these large-scale prints are now lost, on the one hand because of the difficulties in safely storing them due to their large size, and on the other hand because of their function as wall-decorations. Moreover, the medium in which they were produced was fragile and consequently very prone to damage, resulting in their removal or replacement by other decorations. These large-scale series had a lower market value, but therefore were more affordable and thus available to a wider audience.

Therefore, it is very hard to determine how many copies were published and what percentage of those still survived. Additionally, the lack of explanatory borders may have caused certain doubts about the attribution of the prints. A clear example to illustrate this is the book *Le voyage de Monsieur d’Aramon: ambassadeur pour le Roy en Levant* by Jean Chesneau, who was a secretary of Gabriel d’Aramon. Chesneau’s manuscript was published in 1887 (reprint 1970) and includes various prints from different sources including Melchior Lorch. However, there are some prints without an attribution. The author of the 1887 published manuscript opts that these prints were presumably made in the first half of the sixteenth century probably in Antwerp. He further identifies the settings as Bulgaria and Constantinople, where he recognizes the columns that were removed in 1536. Finally, he assumes that the prints must have been made by someone travelling within a diplomatic Habsburg context, probably for Charles V or Ferdinand. When looking at these prints, they can be easily identified as the *Customs and Fashions of the Turks* by Coecke as they are probably another edition of his prints.

Furthermore, there are at least two cases in which a mention in an inventory can be possibly linked to *Customs and Fashions of the Turks*. A first one is in the inventory of Erasmus Quellinus (7 November 1678), which states that he was at the time of his death in possession of seven prints by Pieter van Aelst. A second mention is in the inventory of Rembrandt van Rijn, who also had seven prints of Coecke.

127 Unfortunately I was unable to gain access to the original manuscript in the Paris.
As in both cases the inventory speaks of exactly seven prints by Pieter Coecke van Aelst and as no other prints by Coecke are known, it seems plausible that these mentions refer to an edition of the *Customs and Fashions of the Turks*. It is known that Rembrandt owned some oriental costumes which he would use in his paintings. Although there is no direct visual evidence that Rembrandt copied from these prints, the fact that he owns a copy says something about the wide circulation of the prints.\(^{130}\)

Nicolas de Nicolay’s Influence on Europe

As said previously, de Nicolay’s costume book was an immediate success in Europe. Being one of the first costume books published, it became an example for many writers of costume books. In the end, de Nicolay’s prints outlived his text as they were continuously used when one needed to depict a Turk. The most famous copies after de Nicolay’s prints were made by Jean-Théodore and Jean-Israël de Bry, who used de Nicolay’s prints to compose various scenes of the life of Mohammed (1597).\(^{131}\)

Before turning to the general conclusion of this dissertation, two final examples are given in how these images are all linked with each other.

First of all, in the depiction of the ‘Greek’ women with the strange headdresses in Coecke’s print. Neither de Schepper, nor de Nicolay or Busbecq give any account of these women. De Nicolay merely shows an engraving, as seen before, but he does not give any description of this woman apart from her inscription that defines her as a woman from Macedonia.\(^{132}\) The first written account of these women is made by another Habsburg ambassador, Karel Rym, who went to Constantinople between 1570 and 1575. Rym is describing women in Bulgaria who cut their hair very short until they get married, from then on, they let it grow as long as possible. They tie their very long hair up in a way that they resemble Egyptian women. Moreover, Rym describes how these women enjoy wearing lots of jewellery, their reasoning being the more the prettier.\(^{133}\)

As said previously, Coecke’s circumcision print shows a circumcision feast with music to celebrate the events. De Schepper in his journal writes how a circumcision procession past

\(^{130}\) De Winkel, p. 259.
\(^{131}\) Gomez-Géraud and Yérasimos, pp. 35-36.
\(^{132}\) De Nicolay, p. 268.
their residence at night. He briefly explains that boys with long hair are not circumcised yet, while boys wearing a turban have been circumcised. De Schepper further more describes how these children walk in rows of two, while holding a scarf between them.\textsuperscript{134} In Coecke’s print the hair of the children is not very visible, but it is quite clear that they are all wearing a hat rather than a turban. However, in de Nicolay’s second costume book a Turkish woman is depicted together with two children. On a first glance, one would assume that the child with long hair and the hat is a girl, while the child with the turban is a boy. De Nicolay gives no account with this illustration apart from its inscription that reads ‘Turkish women watching her children’ (Fig. 27).\textsuperscript{135} However, de Schepper’s description suddenly changes the visual perception of the print. Thus, the child with the turban can be identified as a circumcised boy. The two children are holding a scarf, just like de Schepper described during the circumcision ceremony, together with the long hair of the child, one can therefore assume that this child is in fact a small boy waiting to be circumcised. When now looking back at Coecke’s print, it becomes clear that the children are all wearing a similar hat to that of the uncircumcised boy in de Nicolay’s print. These examples hopefully have illustrated how all of these images are connected with each other.

\textsuperscript{134} De Schepper, p. 160.
\textsuperscript{135} De Nicolay, p. 142, ‘Femme Turcque menant ses enfans.’
Conclusion

Although much research still needs to be done, some preliminary conclusions can be drawn from these three brief case studies. Even though all three artists stayed in Constantinople, at least for a couple of months, all three of them experienced it differently.

Bellini, coming from Venice where the image of the Turk was more common, did not use oriental motifs in abundance, but rather in a sober way. In comparison to many other artists, Bellini balanced out the oriental motifs in his paintings and only applied them when appropriate to the topic. Ironically, it was these sober oriental elements that were copied by Dürer who used them in his prints, which were spread all over Europe as the artist employed agents to sell his pictures. Furthermore, Dürer had stayed in the Netherlands for a considerable amount of time, where he met various renowned artists. As mentioned before, it is possible that Coecke also met Dürer, especially as Coecke was around this time most likely employed in the workshop of van Orley, whom Dürer definitely met. Thus, the image of the Turk as seen through the eyes of Bellini found its way across the Alps to the Netherlands.

However, this was not the only way in which Northern Europe became familiar with the image of the Turk. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a variety of Northern European artists travelled to the East. Some like Erhard Reuwich and Jan Provoost went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, while others like van Eyck travelled to al-Andalus in Spain (Muslim Spain). However, both van Eyck and Provoost used only occasionally an oriental detail in their paintings like the turban of a bystander or a city view in the background that could be Jerusalem. Ces Moeurs et Fachons des Turcs, on the other hand, was the first large-scale project that gave a rather unbiased image of the Turk. Although Coecke depicted a urinating man next to a depiction of three men praying, the overall effect of his prints is rather unbiased showing the Ottomans eating, sleeping, celebrating and mourning. Furthermore, the medium that Coecke chose, namely that of large-scale prints, suggests that this series was meant to be seen mounted against a wall functioning as a wall-decoration, cheaper than a tapestry or a painting. Unfortunately, as these prints were rather fragile, not many of them have survived. The fact that various copies of Coecke’s prints can be traced through history to the present implies that they must have had quite a large circulation. Even Rembrandt owned an edition of this series, which he kept in his studio.

However, only a few direct imitations of Coecke’s prints are known, including the exact copies of the prints used in the 1887 edition of Jean Chesneau’s travelogue of the French
ambassador d’Aramon. In this edition, they have been described as prints by an unknown artist, which can be considered as a testimony of the possibility that more copies of this series were still extant, but lacking a correct attribution.

Nevertheless, when comparing the influence of Coecke’s *Ces Moeurs et Fachons de Turcs* on Europe with that of Bellini’s work, it becomes clear that Coecke’s prints, although maybe available to a wider audience than the painting of Bellini, had a lesser diffusion across Europe and apparently influenced fewer people directly. Furthermore, the same selectiveness as in Bellini’s work can be also found back in Coecke’s work. In his city view of Constantinople, he showed great familiarity with the daily life and customs in the Ottoman Empire, but in his works made after his return in 1533, he showed almost no direct influences. While artists like Dürer included oriental costumes within their religious depictions, Coecke depicted no oriental motifs at all. Although his view of Constantinople seems an historical jigsaw of the city’s main contemporary monuments, this picture can rightly be seen as one of the earliest accurate eyewitness accounts and a somewhat unbiased depiction of the Ottomans in Northern Europe.

As the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg Empire were almost continuously at war, it can be argued that the inhabitants of the Habsburg Empire were not that interested in a series of printings that depicted their enemy, the infidel, as a fellow human being with similar customs and habits. Most likely they did not want to be identified with the Ottomans. At the time that Coecke’s prints were published, Northern Europe was still suffering from a common ‘Fear of the Turk’, which was heightened every time the Ottomans conquered another Christian city. Maybe this consideration had also brought Coecke to refrain from publishing the prints immediately upon his return, but instead to take his time in preparing them. However, no written account can confirm this hypothesis.

The same thing happened to de Nicolay, who also waited a very long time before publishing his costume book. Unlike Coecke’s prints, de Nicolay’s costume book became an instant success for several centuries, with many direct and indirect copies by other artists. When considering why it was more popular than Coecke’s prints, a few general remarks need to be made. Firstly, de Nicolay’s account is rich in narrative as well as in visual material. Furthermore, in his book de Nicolay gave very sensational accounts that would have appealed to the imagination of the reader. The exotic image of the Turk, a precedent for nineteenth century Orientalism, was born with de Nicolay’s sensational stories of women falling in love with each other, religious men piercing their genitals and Christian children being sold as
slaves to the infidel. However, the question that remains unsolved is whether de Nicolay deliberately had decided to wait and publish his book in a more favourable political climate or whether he was just too busy with his projects as Royal Geographer to finish the book sooner. Nevertheless, de Nicolay’s book, although not the first one that recounts these stories, was and still is very compelling in every sense of the word. Apart from giving incredible stories about the Turk, it shows beautiful costumes, which helped the reader to situate the Turk and to get to know him better.

De Nicolay also published his book in a better political climate than Coecke. Firstly, France had been in various alliances with the Ottoman Empire and as such was more familiar with the Turk than people from North Europe half a century earlier. Also, the ‘Fear of the Turk’ was slowly turning into a genuine interest which was stimulated by the publication of costume books.

Nevertheless, more research into this early period in artistic-diplomatic travel is necessary in order to comprehend better later diplomatic travels and their artistic production.

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PETRO COECKE ALOSTANO, PICTORI.
Pictor eras nec eras tantum, Petre, pictor Alostum
Qui facis hoc Orbi notius arte tuum:
Multa sed accessit multo ars tibi parta labore,
Cuius opus pulchras ædificare domos.
Serius hanc Italos tu, Serli deinde bilinguis
Interpres Belgas, Francigenasque doces.
Figure 12
Figure 14
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Appendix 1: Ces moeurs et fachons de faire de Turcz

Frontispiece

Ces moeurs et fachons de faire de Turcz avecq’les Regions y appertenantes, ont este au vif contrefaictez par Pierre Coeck d’Alost, luy estant en Turquie, l’ An de lesuchrist M. D. 33., Lequel aussi de sa main propre a pourtraict ces figures duysantes à l’impression d’ycelles.

The customs and fashions of the Turks along with the regions and their belongings were represented as in real life by Pieter Coecke van Aelst, who was in Turkey, in the year of our Lord 1533, and who also carved with his own hand these appropriate figures accurately.

Print I

Vecy les montaignes du pays de Slavonnie, auquelles lon ne trouve ny pour gens ne pour bestes nulz vivres quelconques, sinon ce que d’aventure les passans portent avec eulx. De trouver la ou de recouvrer une teyle ou escuelle de laict cest beauęop. Les voyagiers avec leurs bestes & pacquetz convient gesir & reposer les nuyctz soubz les nues au descouvert a la pluye, vent, neige, & gresle, la ou ilz peulent allumer feu pour eulx chauffer, reservé ceulx qui avec eulx meinent tentes ou pavillons, souzb lesquelz ilz se peulent coucher entre leurs fardeaux & pacquetz sur la terre, En forte que illec ya necessite de toutes choses.

Here are the mountains of the Slovenia country, in which we find no supplies for humans or animals, only whatever the passers-by adventurously bring with them. To find there or to discover a dish of milk is a big deal. The travellers with their animals and packages have to sleep and rest at night under the clouds unprotected from the rain, wind, snow and hail, there where they can light a fire to warm themselves, except those of them who brought their tents or pavilions, under which they can sleep between their packets on the ground, especially because there you need things of all sorts.
Print II

Quant on parvient aux champaignes & platz pays, lon trouve des conduyseurs, lesquelz ilz appellent Caranannes, avec les femmes Gregeoises, lesquelz apporment a vendre aux passans de toutes sortes & manieres tant de vivres & de denrees, daysantes & convenables aux vagans, comme fers de chevaux, orge, avoine, vin, pain ou torteaux cuictz sous lez les cendres. Il advient aulcunesfois qu’aulcuns chevaucheurs ou postes turcquois, lesquelz par eulx sappellent Vlaches, iceulx ravissent & prendent les chevaux des passans, & ceulx qui myeulx leurs plaisent, sans contradiction de personne quelconque.

When one arrives to the country side and flat lands, one finds the guides, those who are called Caranannes, along with the Greek women, who bring things for sale to the passers-by of all kinds and manners, so many supplies, appropriate and suitable to those wandering people, such as horse shoes, barley, oats, wine, bread or pies cooked under the ashes. It happens that sometimes some riders or Turkish posts, which they call Vlaches, dispossess the passers-by and take their horses and those who please them most, without anybody’s objection.

Print III

Vecy la maniere & de quelle sorte les Turcqz mangent, asscavoir sur la terre couvert d’ung rond cuyr. Et comment ilz se salvent & font reverence, Comment ilz pissent, comment ilz font leurs ayeses, Et en quelle mode ilz requieren ou adorent leurs Dieux & ydoles.

Here is the manner and way in which the Turks eat, sitting on the ground on a round leatherwork. And how they greet each other and curtsy, how they urinate, how they relieve themselves, and in which fashion they pray or worship their God and idols.
Print IIII

La qualité & abjete du pays de Macedoine, auquel les habitans turquoys, à la première veue d'une chascune nouvelle lune de toute lannée se resiouyssent merveilleusement, estantz les ungz sur chariotz ou charettes, les aultres sur petirz mons verdoyans (lesquelz sont plantureux & en grand nombre) avecques torches & flambeaux, faisans grans cris & hurlemens avec toutes sortes d'instrumens en grande lyesse a leur mode. Et par tresgrande reverence & adoration salvent la nouvelle lune.

The quality and places where the country of Macedonia stands, where the Turkish inhabitants, at the first view of every new moon of the whole year are delighted, some being on chariots or carts, the others on small green hills (which are full of plants and in great number) with torches, screaming and shouting with all sorts of instruments with great joy in their own way. And with great reverence and adoration they greet the new moon.

Print V

La maniere Turquoise, cõment & en quelle mode de pompes ilz font les funerailles, & portent a la sepulture leurs mortz avecques branches verdes en leurs mains, suyuant ung cheval (cõme portant dueil) couvert de drap noir. Aupres de leurs tombeaux ou sepultures ya grande quantité de Cipres plantez, auquel lieu ilz prient pour leurs defunctz. Ilz montent annuellement sur icelux arbres regardant a ung chascun desdictz arbres, en notant sur quelle sepulture desdictz defunctz son arbre est icelle annee le plushaulte creu & a surmonté les aultres, pensant & croyant que l’ame dicelluy qui illec soubz cedict arbre est ensepuely, soit en plushaulte gloire, que les aultres, de qui leurs arbres sont moins accreuz.

The Turkish way, how and in what fashion they perform their funerals, and carry to the grave their dead with green branches in their hands, following a horse (as if in mourning) covered with a black sheet. Near their tombs or graves there are already a large quantity of Cypresses planted, place where they pray for their deceased. Every year, they climb these trees looking at each one of them, and write down the grave on which each tree is located. That year the tallest that has grown and has surpassed the others, they think and believe that the soul of the deceased who is buried under that tree, has greater glory, than the others whose trees grew less.
Print VI

La vraye assiète ou qualite de la Ville de Constantinoble par le dehors contrefaict apres le naturel. Item, la pompe des Turcqz& en quelle sorte ilz la meinent apres avoir receu ou ouy quelque especiale bonne, ou ioyeuse nouvelle. Item, comment ilz portent les enfans des Chrestiens pour estre circoncis, suyuant diverses viandes en platz & aultres vaisseaux, pour apres la circoncision faicte desdictz efffants cômunicer ensemble en ioyeulx bancquetz & recines.

The true place or quality of the City of Constantinople accurately represented. Likewise, the pomp of the Turks and in which way they carry it out after having received or heard some special, good or joyous news. Likewise, how they carry the children of Christians to be circumcised, following various meats and plates and other dishes, to celebrate together, after the circumcision of those children with joyous banquets and collations.

Print VII

La Ville de Constantinoble, avex tous leurs Moschees ou temples, Obelisces ou Eguilles, et Coulomnes avex le Serpent de cuyure, a veoir par le dedens. Item, comment et enquelle maniere le grant Turcq ayant devant luy allans douze hacquebutiers ou archiers: et apres luy suyuent deux de ses plusnobles Chambrelains. Et ainsy circonvoyant la ville faict la demonstration.

The City of Constantinople, with all its mosques or temples, obelisks or needles, and columns with the Snake made of copper, which we see inside. Likewise, how and in what way the Sultan stands with, before him, twelve (halbediers or archers and following behind him two of his most noble chamberlains. And in that manner they circle the city.

Colophon


Maria Verhulst, widow of the said Pieter from Aelst who passed away in the year 1550, has ordered prints of those figures, under the grace and privilege of the Imperial Majesty. In the year 1553.