



L
C
V
t
S
t
t
V
I

From Sultan to Swindler

Seven Portraits from Cornelis Calkoen's Series of 'Turkish Paintings'

• EVELINE SINT NICOLAAS •

Cornelis Calkoen was ambassador of the Republic of the Netherlands in Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, from 1727 to 1744. When he presented his credentials to Sultan Ahmed III in the Topkapı Sarayı on 14 September 1727, he had the important moment captured by the Flemish painter Jean Baptiste Vanmour (fig. 1). During his time in Istanbul Calkoen bought many more

Detail of fig. 9

Fig. 1

JEAN BAPTISTE VANMOUR, *Ambassador Cornelis Calkoen in Audience with Sultan Ahmed III, 14 September 1727, 1727-30*. Oil on canvas, 90 x 121 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, SK-A-4078.

paintings produced by Vanmour and what was evidently a large workshop. Today this collection, which Calkoen refers to as his 'Turkish Paintings', is in the Rijksmuseum, and when the museum reopens a large part of it will be displayed in a separate Turkish cabinet, which will form part of the eighteenth-century exhibit.

In 2003 an exhibition about Ambassador Calkoen's collection was staged



in the Rijksmuseum and the Topkapı Sarayı Museum.¹ All the paintings and frames were restored for the occasion.² Since then interest in the collection has increased considerably.³ The research for the exhibition led to the conclusion that among the 65 paintings that Calkoen assembled, there are several groups of a different character. At the core of the collection are the three 'audience paintings', but it also includes genre pieces, topographical works, small costume paintings and, as I hope to show here, portraits. Not all of Calkoen's paintings were painted by Jean Baptiste Vanmour himself, nor did they all find their way into the Rijksmuseum's collection in the same manner.⁴

The seven small portraits of members of the Ottoman court, which are the subject of this article, can be safely attributed to Vanmour himself, unlike the costume paintings of lesser quality that were almost certainly painted by assistants in what must have been a large workshop.⁵ Many of his fellow ambassadors bought sets of paintings from Vanmour recording their audiences at the Sultan's court, but we know of few other ambassadors who also bought genre paintings. As far as the portraits are concerned, those in Calkoen's collection appear to be unique. Whose portraits did the ambassador own? What did these people mean to him? And what do we know about the roles these seven portraits played for Calkoen?

The Ambassador, the Sultan and the Artist

Cornelis Calkoen (1696-1764) was thirty years old when he became the ambassador in Istanbul (fig. 2). At that time he had no diplomatic experience whatsoever. He did, though, have administrative experience and he came from a family that for generations had played a role in Amsterdam's city government and, perhaps even more

significantly, was active in the trade with the Levant.⁶ The ambassador's most important tasks were safeguarding and promoting trade in the Levant and protecting the freedom of shipping.⁷ This is clear from the fact that the Department of Levantine Trade had an important say in Calkoen's appointment and paid part of his salary. The Department of Levantine Trade, which had its office in Amsterdam town hall, consisted of a board of eight directors, all important merchants.

During Calkoen's first years in Istanbul, Sultan Ahmed III (1673-1736) was in power. Ahmed III's rule and that of his right-hand man, the Grand Vizier Nevşehirli Damad İbrahim Pasha, is sometimes called the Tulip Era after the celebrations that were organized annually in the period when the tulips were in bloom. It was a time of relative peace and prosperity. The turning point for the Ottomans was the unsuccessful Siege of Vienna in 1683.⁸ The balance of power changed dramatically and the Treaty of Carlowitz (1699) and the Treaty of Passarowitz (1718) put a temporary end to the Ottoman Empire's military activities in the West. The shifts in political relationships also changed the ambassadors' positions. The sultan could no longer remain aloof from the political power struggle in the countries around him and for the first time Ottoman ambassadors were sent to European cities for prolonged periods. In turn foreign envoys in Istanbul were seen as valuable sources of information. The greater openness towards the West in diplomatic terms also ensured a cultural exchange. The Ottoman court was a place where poets, writers, philosophers and scholars came together and inspired one another. The printing press was introduced in the Ottoman Empire in 1729, generating a stream of new publications ranging from books on history, topography and science to dictionaries and collections of poetry.



Fig. 2

JEAN-ETIENNE
LIOTARD, *Portrait
of Cornelis Calkoen*,
1738-42.
Pastel, 63 x 51 cm.
Amsterdam, Rijks-
museum, transferred
by the Instituut
Collectie Nederland,
RP-T-2010-57.

The rule of Ahmed III came to an end during Calkoen's time in Istanbul. In 1730 a rebellion led by Patrona Halil, an Albanian seaman, brought a violent close to this, in many respects, exuberant period. Sultan Ahmed III abdicated in favour of his nephew, who assumed power as Sultan Mahmud I. Not much was to change for Calkoen. He continued to advise the Ottoman government on diplomatic matters, including the peace talks between the Sultan and the Tsar of Russia in 1737.

Jean Baptiste Vanmour (1671-1737) had been working in Istanbul for almost thirty years when Calkoen arrived in the city. Unlike other western artists he was not passing through; he had settled in the capital of the Ottoman Empire permanently. His clients were mainly diplomats and travellers, people who often only spent a short time in Istanbul. This meant that the market Vanmour served was continually being refreshed. His speciality was recording the audiences

with the Sultan, but his small paintings of court officials and people from different races were also very popular and in fact were probably the start of his success as a painter. The French ambassador, Charles de Ferriol, Baron d'Argental, whom he may have accompanied to Istanbul in 1699, had a hundred little costume paintings by Vanmour reproduced as engravings in Paris. This *Recueil de cent estampes représentant différentes nations du Levant* was published for the first time in 1714 and was well received.⁹ The *Recueil Ferriol*, as it is usually called, consists of images of members of the court and of various local peoples of the Ottoman Empire in their characteristic dress. At the end there are three large prints of a wedding procession, a funeral and whirling dervishes. These plates determined to a significant degree the image that people in western countries had of the inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire. Vanmour's repertoire also included genre pieces with scenes from the everyday lives of Turks, Greeks and Armenians. Among the subjects he painted for Calkoen were a Turkish wedding procession on the way to the bridegroom's house, Armenians playing cards by candlelight and Greeks dancing.¹⁰

The 'Turkish Paintings'

Calkoen's collection of paintings was appreciated during his lifetime. Vanmour's obituary, published in *Mercur de France* in June 1737, expressly refers to the collection: 'M. Calkoen, Ambassador for Holland in Istanbul, has a very large number of very fine (paintings).'¹¹ Calkoen himself likewise attached great value to his 'Turkish Paintings'. In 1762 the ambassador stipulated in his will that his family should keep the paintings together.¹² Childless, he left the collection to his nephew Abraham Calkoen (1729-1796). In the event that the family were no longer interested, the paintings

were to be gifted to the Department of Levantine Trade: 'In that case I bequeath the same to the Honourable Directors of the Department of Levantine Trade residing in Amsterdam, to be placed in their chamber in the Town Hall in Amsterdam and requesting the same for an inscription to honour the memory that my embassy was of great advantage to Commerce.'¹³ The clear directions in the will ensured that in the end the collection found its way into the collection of the predecessors of the Rijksmuseum by way of the Department of Levantine Trade.¹⁴

One important source for the interpretation of the paintings is a manuscript in the Rijksmuseum's archives which came into the museum's possession when the paintings were transferred from the Rijks Ethnografisch Museum in Leiden in 1902.¹⁵ It is a description in French of all Calkoen's Turkish Paintings, with the exception of a separate set of thirty-two little costume paintings which he had given to the Department of Levantine Trade during his lifetime so that they were not part of the bequest to his nephew Abraham. The text is written in the first person singular and sometimes quotes a guide, who as an expert, or sometimes as an eyewitness, provides the author with information about the paintings. In the description of painting number XI for example, we read: 'This place is next to a Village whose name escaped my guide.' And in the description of number XVIII: 'His portrait is very good there; my guide easily recognized the features of the person drawn by van Mour.'¹⁶ Who was this guide? Just one name appears in the manuscript – in the description of a painting of a cemetery. 'Mr Hoffmann, who saw him several times in the same pose and in the same place, said that he is painted perfectly and that is just how he looks.'¹⁷ The name Hoffmann very probably refers to is Jacob Hoffmann, Calkoen's secretary,

who had worked for him since 1731. He is also sometimes described as Calkoen's major domo, his personal servant. His position meant that he was well-informed about the ambassador's life.¹⁸ Hoffmann accompanied him to Dresden, Calkoen's next post in 1736, and settled all sorts of affairs for him when Calkoen was on the point of returning to Istanbul as ambassador. However, it was not to be. While everything in The Hague was ready for the move, Calkoen died unexpectedly on 2 March 1764. Hoffmann was given the task of dealing with the estate and other practical matters.¹⁹ We have little biographical information about this right hand man. He would have been at least twenty in 1731, probably slightly older in view of his important position as major domo. In any event, if he was born around 1710 he would have been over fifty in 1764. It is quite possible that he was the guide referred to in the manuscript.²⁰ There is a date – 10 June 1817 – on the cover of the manuscript that has caused confusion in the past. The date proves not to relate to the time when the descriptions were made, but is in fact the date on which Nicolaas Calkoen passed the paintings to the Department of Levantine Trade. The family must have handed over the notes along with the paintings. If the descriptions themselves had been dated 1817, Hoffmann would have been more than a hundred years old at the time.

Perhaps after the death of his Uncle Cornelis in 1764 and on receiving his bequest, Abraham Calkoen asked Hoffmann to tell him what he knew about the paintings. Abraham Calkoen recorded Hoffmann's account so that it seemed as though they were his own experiences, although he had never visited his uncle in Istanbul. When the gentlemen encountered the small portraits of court officials Calkoen noted, 'Of all these little paintings, those with just one figure are very true to life portraits and not just pictures.'²¹

This makes an important distinction between these and the genre works in the collection, whose subjects are generic types such as Turks, Greeks and Armenians. Here we have portraits of people identified by name. In the context of Ottoman society, which did not have a strong tradition of portraiture, it is unusual and sometimes even unique for Vanmour to have recorded their facial expressions.²² So far, moreover, we know of no other examples of ambassadors to the Ottoman Empire who not only had their audiences painted, but also owned portraits of the leading figures.²³ The greater openness of the court under Sultan Ahmed III meant that Calkoen had much more opportunity than his predecessors to meet highly-placed Ottoman court functionaries. Aside from diplomatic meetings it was also possible to meet Ottoman government officials at social engagements like parties and balls at the various embassies. Calkoen's relationship with the Ottoman court was to be said extremely good, and Vanmour may have benefited from these good connections by accompanying him to official receptions and festive occasions. At these events he would have had the opportunity to take a good look around him, since getting his subjects to pose was obviously out of the question. We do not know whether this happened at other times. This seems unlikely, certainly in terms of the portraits of the Sultan and the Grand Vizier. The officials are not only portrayed as people, there are also actually depictions of the jobs they did at court. The setting in which they are portrayed is that of the palace, the audience room or their offices. Their clothes, particularly their turbans, also denote their function at the court and they were sometimes pictured with attributes such as a writing table or a staff of rank.

The manuscript with the descriptions by Jacob Hoffmann is of great importance in identifying the portraits.



Fig. 3

JEAN BAPTISTE
VANMOUR, *Sultan
Ahmed III*, 1727-30.
Oil on canvas,
33.5 x 27 cm.
Amsterdam, Rijks-
museum, SK-A-2013.

His comments reveal that he was well-informed about local life and conditions. For example he cites details derived from personal experiences, and not simply based on the captions in the *Recueil Ferriol*. This makes the manuscript an extremely valuable and sometimes unique source. On occasion, however, he does adduce information that is demonstrably incorrect.

Sultan Ahmed III

Vanmour portrayed Sultan Ahmed III (1673-1736, fig. 3) outdoors, attended by two servants. In the background we can see trees with one or two buildings on the left. This may be the harem section of the sultan's palace, the Topkapı Sarayı. Ahmed III wears a fur-trimmed caftan and a turban known as a *kâtibi*. This type of turban was draped around a flat headdress and decorated with a fan-shaped ornament. The Sultan's belt is also elaborately set with jewels, as is the ceremonial staff which he holds in his right hand. The staff of office as the attribute of a sultan is a European motif which is not found in the miniatures by Levnî, a Turkish contemporary of Vanmour.²⁴ Remarkably, Vanmour did, though, derive the way he portrayed the Sultan's two servants from the Ottoman idiom. The two men dressed in red are a recurrent motif in the portrayal of sultans in miniatures.²⁵

In all probability Vanmour made a good likeness of the Sultan. He was able to study his features during various audiences and may also have seen him in other places in public. In 1717 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the wife of the British ambassador, saw Ahmed III during his journey to the mosque for Friday prayers. She described his appearance in a letter. 'The Sultan appeared to us a handsome man of about forty, with a very graceful air but with something severe in his countenance, his eyes very full and black. He happened to stop under the window where we stood, and, I suppose being

told who we were looked upon us very attentively, that we had full leisure to consider him and the French Ambassador agreed with me as to his good mien.'²⁶ Calkoen was also impressed by the Sultan. He wrote that 'Sultan Achmed had great talents, a good understanding, learning, sound and penetrating judgement, and many other qualities which are needed in a Great Prince.'²⁷

Portrait of a Sultan, possibly Mahmud I

As well as the portrait of Ahmed III, Ambassador Calkoen owned another portrait of a sultan (fig. 4). For a long time it was also thought to be of Ahmed III and some researchers considered it unique that Vanmour had portrayed the Sultan in later life, citing his grey beard.²⁸ However Hoffmann's description refers to a portrait of Ahmed III and a portrait of his successor Mahmud I. With regard to Ahmed III it says, 'He was in all respects a fine man; he was tall and well-made; he had an imposing air, a proud yet rather kindly look, even though he seems to be looking sad on his throne in picture No. IV.'²⁹ Mahmud I was described thus: 'He was small: furthermore his body was deformed, knock-kneed they say, but his face handsome. His body's defects were hidden beneath his robes so that he would have looked really quite comely had he not been so small.'³⁰

From observation the two portraits show two different men, with individual facial features and different heights. What's more, all the indications are that Calkoen bought or ordered the seven portraits from Vanmour at the same time, so it is highly unlikely that they would have included two portraits of Ahmed at different ages.

Without doubt the portrait discussed above is of Ahmed III. His features resemble those of the Sultan in Calkoen's audience painting (fig. 1) and in other audience paintings made in the Tulip Era. This means that if we



go by what Hoffmann says, the second portrait is of Ahmed's nephew and successor Sultan Mahmud I (1696-1754). There is a problem, in that Mahmud I must have been around thirty when Vanmour painted him, but the sultan in the portrait looks a good deal older. However, I feel that all the other factors weigh so heavily that it is likely that we are dealing with a portrait of Mahmud I here.

Grand Vizier Nevşehirli Damad İbrahim Pasha

İbrahim Pasha became Grand Vizier to Sultan Ahmed III in 1718 and remained in power until the violent uprising in 1730 led by Patrona Halil. He was married to Fatma Sultan, the eldest daughter of Sultan Ahmed III. During the Grand Vizier's regime several members of his family were placed in crucial positions in the government or allied to the Sultan's family through marriage. This system of patronage made the Nevşehirizade family extremely powerful in a short space of time. Although the Sultan was officially the most powerful man in the Ottoman Empire, the position of Grand Vizier should not be underestimated. The day-to-day administration was carried out by the Imperial Council, the *Divân-i Hümayun*, which was made up of the Grand Vizier as the Sultan's representative, and his ministers, the viziers. The most senior judges, the *kazasker*, sat on the Council, as did the *defterdar*, who was in charge of the imperial finances, and the *nişancı*, the head of the chancellery. After 1654 the Grand Vizier's power increased still further. From then on he was allowed to set up offices outside the walls of the palace. Henceforth many matters of state were decided at the Sublime Porte (*bâb-i âli*), as the Grand Vizier's headquarters were called. As the ambassadors dealt primarily with the Council, they were described as ambassadors to the Sublime Porte.

Vanmour painted a good likeness of Grand Vizier Nevşehirli Damad İbrahim Pasha (fig. 5), as Calkoen must have seen him on several occasions. It is again unlikely that the Grand Vizier posed for him, but during the long meetings in the Divan at which Vanmour was present as a member of the ambassador's retinue, the painter had ample time to study his features and possibly even make some sketches. We know that Vanmour attended the audience from the report that Calkoen's secretary made of that day. 'A painter, whom His Excellency expressly introduced to draw and paint the audience.'³¹

The Grand Vizier also frequently appeared in public, for example when he went to the mosque for Friday prayers. İbrahim Pasha is dressed in a white satin caftan lined with sable and a *kallâvi*, a ceremonial turban which identified him to the people (fig. 6). The Grand Vizier wore a gold band around the turban to distinguish him from the viziers, who wore a black band.³² In the background we can see the sofa or bench that can also be seen in the second audience painting in the Divan. Vanmour placed the Grand Vizier in an administrative environment in order to emphasize his position.

In the description of this portrait Hoffmann is not a reliable source. He stated that the portrait described here is of the Grand Vizier Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha, the Grand Vizier to Mahmud I, who was banished to the island of Chios during the Persian War in 1735.³³ The likeness to the Grand Vizier Nevşehirli Damad İbrahim Pasha as depicted by Vanmour in the audience paintings, however, is unmistakable.

The Mufti or Seyh ül Islam, head of religious affairs, probably Abdullah Efendi

Hoffmann describes the Mufti, the Islamic spiritual jurist as follows: 'It is the Mufti in his ceremonial robes. The turban, as we have seen, is the

Fig. 4
JEAN BAPTISTE
VANMOUR, *Portrait
of a Sultan, possibly
Mahmud I, 1727-30.*
Oil on canvas,
33.5 x 26 cm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
SK-A-2014.



Fig. 5

JEAN BAPTISTE VANMOUR, *The Grand Vizier Nevşehirli Damad İbrahim Pasha*, 1727-30. Oil on canvas, 33.5 x 26 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, SK-A-2017.



Fig. 6

Detail of JEAN BAPTISTE VANMOUR, *The Meal Offered to Ambassador Calkoen by the Grand Vizier on behalf of Sultan Ahmed III, September 1727*. 1727-30. Oil on canvas. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, SK-A-4077.

ON PAGE 46

Fig. 7

JEAN BAPTISTE VANMOUR, *The Mufti or Seyh ül Islam, Head of Religious Affairs, probably Abdullah Efendi*, 1727-30. Oil on canvas, 34 x 26 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, SK-A-2023.

distinctive badge of rank and of men. Only the Mufti may wear this type which is made of fine muslin. One would not think, to see it, that it is particularly light.³⁴ The Mufti of Istanbul was the Ottoman Empire's highest religious leader, sometimes called the Seyh ül Islam since the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent. He, the Grand Vizier and the Sultan were the three most powerful rulers. The Seyh ül Islam was responsible for ensuring that the policies of the

Sultan and his Grand Vizier did not contravene Sharia, the holy law.

Vanmour probably painted the portrait of Abdullah Efendi (1680?-1743, fig. 7). From 1718 this priest of Greek origin was part of the court as the Seyh ül Islam and had to step down after the 1730 uprising. He was banished, but quietly returned to Istanbul where he died in 1743.

Abdullah had an impressive collection of legal, religious documents and played a crucial role in the introduction of printing in the Ottoman Empire.³⁵



The portrait of the man in the red robe is a copy of the original painting by the artist. The original painting is in the collection of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

The portrait of the man in the red robe is a copy of the original painting by the artist. The original painting is in the collection of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

The portrait of the man in the red robe is a copy of the original painting by the artist. The original painting is in the collection of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



**The Reis Efendi or
Reisü'l-Küttab, probably
Üçanbarlı Mehmed Efendi**

The Reis Efendi or Reisü'l-Küttab was the head of the chancellery, where all official documents had to be registered. Another of the chancellery's tasks was the administration of the salaries of the government officials. The Reisü'l-Küttab was personally responsible for taking the minutes of the conversations between the Sultan and the Grand Vizier and for the contact with foreign envoys. Many of the ambassadors' conversations at court were with the Reisü'l-Küttab, and Calkoen met him on many occasions. Hoffmann said: 'The Reys Effendi or the Grand Imperial Chancellor. This portrait bears a perfect resemblance to the individual who held this office in 1727 and who lost it three years later, caught up in the downfall of the Prince who had elevated him. The turban he is wearing is unique to him and to the Grand Treasurer. If these are men of Law, as usually they are, their turbans are always like this. I do not know the name of this individual or anything else about him, other than that he was a man of importance and that the Ambassador saw him quite often.'³⁶

Üçanbarlı Mehmed Efendi served as the Reis Efendi from 2 August 1718 until the uprising led by Patrona Halil in September 1730. It seems likely that he was the person portrayed by Vanmour (fig. 8). He was looked upon as one of the greatest scholars of his time and we have a relatively large amount of biographical information about him. He was born in Istanbul in 1673 or 1674 and died in August or September 1732. He is probably around fifty-seven years old in the portrait Vanmour painted of him. His nickname was Üçanbarlı, which means 'three warehouses' and referred to his possessions.

**The Kadi Askeri, one of the
two kazasker, the highest
military judges**

Two kazasker sat on the Imperial Council. They and the Grand Vizier were responsible for the administration of the law in the Empire. Originally they accompanied the Sultan on his military campaigns and represented the legal power of the court, one for the European part of the Empire (Rumeli) and the other for the Asian part (Anadolu). By the eighteenth century their authority had already dwindled considerably. Some of their powers had been taken over by the Grand Vizier and others by the Seyh ül Islam. However in their splendid large turbans and fur-trimmed caftans they remained impressive figures. We do not as yet know the names of the two kazasker who were in post at the time of Calkoen's ambassadorship, but as the ambassador had only one portrait of a Kadi Askeri, it is likely that it was of the one responsible for Rumeli (fig. 9).

Mehmet, the Vizir kâhyasi

The portrait of Mehmet, the Vizir Kâhyasi, the Grand Vizier's lieutenant, shows him dressed in a green fur-trimmed caftan and a turban befitting his position (fig. 10). Originally the Vizir Kâhyasi was the Grand Vizier's personal servant, or major domo, a position that stood apart from affairs of state. In the course of time the position developed into that of the Grand Vizier's personal advisor and later even into that of secretary of internal affairs on the Imperial Council.³⁷ For many foreigners the word kâhyasi was difficult to pronounce and in the reports from foreign ambassadors it can be found in a variety of spellings: cecaia, cacaia, checaia, chiccaia, kaya, kehaia, kihahia. Ambassador Calkoen certainly met Mehmet personally during his audience with Grand Vizier Nevşehirli Damad İbrahim Pasha on 12 August 1727,

ON PAGE 47

Fig. 8

JEAN BAPTISTE VANMOUR, *The Reis Efendi or Reisü'l-Küttab, probably Üçanbarlı Mehmed Efendi, 1727-32.* Oil on canvas, 34.5 x 27 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, SK-A-2024.

Fig. 9

JEAN BAPTISTE VANMOUR, *The Kadi Askeri, one of the Two Kazasker, the Highest Military Judges, 1727-37.* Oil on canvas, 34 x 27 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, SK-A-2022.





but it is highly likely that he saw him more frequently.

Hoffmann went at length into the role of the Vizir Kâhyasi during the uprising led by Patrona Halil in 1730: according to him Grand Vizier İbrahim Pasha was generally more occupied with the organization of lavish parties centred on his beloved tulips than with ruling.³⁸ In the meantime Mehmet was in charge and he was able to exert his power unhindered. Instead of alerting his master to the unrest and the dangers of an uprising, he worked against him in secret and was in league with the Capitan Bacha (the admiral), who supported the rebels. Immediately before the Grand Vizier was condemned to death in order to meet the demands of the rebels, he in turn demanded that the same sentence should be passed on Mehmet. This was done, but the executions did not bring the peace that Sultan Ahmed III had hoped for. The Sultan finally abdicated in favour of Mahmud I. Peace only really returned when the new sultan decided to put an end to the increasing demands of Patrona Halil and his supporters. He invited them to the palace under false pretences, and they were quickly overpowered and killed.

Hoffmann, who described the role of Mehmet in that turbulent time in such detail, concluded with an unflattering description of the Vizier. 'Mehmet was quite a handsome man: but he had no beard at all. He would have paid a fortune for a few whiskers. You could see how much he thirsted for gold. Up to twenty-eight million was found in his various houses, concealed in vaulted storerooms and in hiding places within the thickness of the walls, and in cellars constructed in the bottom of Cisterns. The reward given to all the Workmen employed in this secret work was death, thus ensuring they would never talk about it.'³⁹ So hidden behind the friendly face that Vanmour gave him there would appear to be a violent schemer and swindler.

What did the portraits mean to Ambassador Calkoen?

All seven subjects are people that Calkoen had met personally during his embassy in Istanbul. They were people with whom he had shared information and on occasion established a friendly relationship. As far as the Sultan was concerned this was obviously very limited.

In all probability Vanmour painted all the portraits himself. None of them is derived from the earlier works used for the prints in the *Recueil Ferriol*. Sometimes the equivalent official can be found in the *Recueil*, but in a different pose or with a different background. The Mufti is a case in point (fig. 11). The portrait that corresponds most closely to a print from the *Recueil*

Fig. 10
JEAN BAPTISTE
VANMOUR, *Mehmet
Kâhya or Kul Kâhyasi,
Adjutant to the Aga*,
1727-30.
Oil on canvas,
34.5 x 27.5 cm.
Amsterdam, Rijks-
museum, SK-A-2026.

Fig. 11
GÉRARD SCOTIN
after VANMOUR,
*Le Moefti, Recueil
Ferriol*, plate 20.



is that of the Reisü'l-Küttab in which the head of the chancellery sits behind a splendidly fashioned writing desk (fig. 12). The Vizir Kâhyasi is entirely absent from the *Recueil Ferriol*.

All in all, it is probable that the portraits were commissioned by Calkoen and were not works the painter had in stock. Unfortunately there are few sources that can tell us anything about the relationship between the ambassador and the painter. In the Calkoen family archives there is an undated list of expenses which starts with 50 silver lion thalers 'paid to the painter M. Vanmour'; and an entry in 1732 states '19 October given to the painter 40 small *tuvalis* and 106 *pavas*'.⁴⁰ In this case the painter can be assumed to be Vanmour. In all other respects the documentation

Fig. 12
GÉRARD SCOTIN after
VANMOUR, *Effendi,*
homme de loi dans son
étude, Recueil Ferriol,
plate 20.



which might record Calkoen's commissions or purchases is absent.

It is striking that six of the seven people portrayed no longer had positions after the uprising led by Patrona Halil in 1730. The seventh person, Sultan Mahmud I, came to power shortly after this uprising. The portraits must have been painted at some time between Calkoen's arrival in Istanbul (May 1727) and the rebellion (end of September 1730). Perhaps the ambassador saw the portraits as a useful addition to the three paintings he had had made of his audience on 14 September 1727. After the fall of Ahmed III, the set was no longer current and Calkoen must have ordered the portrait of the new sultan, Mahmud I. Even more hypothetical is the suggestion that the ambassador supplemented his set of seven paintings – an uneven number – with a picture of a Turkish woman at her embroidery frame (fig. 13), so that when he hung the paintings he would have an even number of portraits of the same size. This, admittedly, is a type, not a portrait, yet it is undeniable that it is the only painting in the collection with the same measurements as the seven portraits. But what is even more significant, perhaps, is that in Hoffmann's description the woman embroidering appears at the end of the list of portraits.⁴¹ The sequence in the document is as follows: Mehmet, the Vizir Kâhyasi (12); Sultan Mahmud I (17); the Reisü'l-Küttab (27); Grand Vizier İbrahim Pasha (28); the Mufti or Seyhül İslam (29); the Kadi Askeri (30); Sultan Ahmed III (31); and the Turkish woman at her embroidery frame (32). That Hoffmann paid attention to the sequence in which he described the collection is suggested by a remark at the end of the document to the effect that one painting had been forgotten and should have been described in a different place.⁴² The woman at her embroidery frame completed the set of seven portraits as far as Abraham

Calkoen was concerned, or at least made it up to an even number. We will probably never know if that was also the case for his Uncle Cornelis. It is clear, though, that Hoffmann's description gives us information about the way in which the paintings were hung in Abraham Calkoen's house in the eighteenth century. As long as it remains unclear how the room in which the paintings were hung looked at that time, a reconstruction is impossible.⁴³

For Calkoen the portraits of the court officials and the audience paintings were tangible reminders of the political role he played during his embassy in Istanbul. These were key figures in the relationship between the court and the ambassador as the representative of the Republic of the Netherlands. The portraits are more than a pleasing reminder of his time in the Ottoman Empire; they are also evidence of his dedication, a certain pride or perhaps even vanity. After all the paintings illustrate the good relationships the ambassador had with the court and thus raised his political and social status.

Istanbul still held a special meaning for Cornelis Calkoen even after his departure from the Ottoman Empire. His 'Turkish Paintings' were dear to him and they travelled with him to his next post in Dresden, where they undoubtedly also enhanced his standing as ambassador. In Dresden he again succeeded in getting hold of a painter, J.C. Vollerdt (1708-1769), from whom he bought a great many riverscapes, possibly to decorate his country house. However he did not mention this large group of paintings in his will.⁴⁴ His 'Turkish Paintings' were the ones he was proud of and wanted to preserve for posterity in the broadest sense of the word. Vanity or not, in the new Rijksmuseum visitors will soon again be able to enjoy this remarkable window on to the Ottoman Empire in the early eighteenth century.



Fig. 13

JEAN BAPTISTE
VANMOUR, *Turkish
Woman at her
Embroidery Frame*,
1727-37. Oil on canvas,
33.5 x 26.5 cm.
Amsterdam, Rijks-
museum, SK-A-2042.

NOTES

- 1 *The Ambassador, the Sultan and the Artist: An Audience in Istanbul* ran in the Rijksmuseum from 4 July-26 October 2003 and in the Topkapı Sarayı Museum in Istanbul from 19 December 2003-15 April 2004. The following works were published to coincide with the exhibition: D. Bull, G. Renda and E. Sint Nicolaas, *The Ambassador, the Sultan and the Artist: An Audience in Istanbul*, Zwolle 2003. E. Sint Nicolaas et al., *An Eyewitness of the Tulip Era. Jean-Baptiste Vanmour*, Istanbul 2003. G. Renda and G. Irepoglu, *Vanmour and Levni. Two Perspectives on the Tulip Era*, exh. cat. Istanbul (Topkapı Sarayı) 2003-04.
- 2 The paintings were restored by Gwendolyn Boevé-Jones, the frames by Heleen van Eendenburg. The restoration was made possible by the generous support of Koç Culture and Communication, Istanbul.
- 3 In recent years a number of museums have asked for loans. The most important exhibitions have been *Istanbul. De Stad en de Sultan*, Nieuwe Kerk Amsterdam, 13 December 2006-15 April 2007. *Die Türken kommen! Exotik und Erotik: Mozart in Koblenz und die Orient-Sehnsucht in der Kunst*, Mittelrhein-Museum Koblenz, 24 November 2006-8 February 2007. *De Byzance a Istanbul. Un port pour deux continents*, Galeries nationales Grand Palais, Paris, 10 October 2009-25 January 2010. *Jean Baptiste Vanmour. Peintre de la Sublime Porte 1671-1737*, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Valenciennes, 23 October 2009-7 February 2010. *From Byzantium to Istanbul 8000 Years of a Capital*, Sakıp Sabancı Müzesi Istanbul, 31 May-31 August 2010.
- 4 The author is currently working on a thesis on Cornelis Calkoen's 'Turkish Paintings' collection.
- 5 It is also interesting to note the difference in size between the set of 32 costume paintings (on average 39 x 31 cm) and the seven portraits (on average 34 x 27 cm).
- 6 For Calkoen's ambassadorship in Istanbul see G.R. Bosscha Erdbrink, *At the Threshold of Felicity. Ottoman-Dutch Relations during the Embassy of Cornelis Calkoen at the Sublime Porte, 1726-1744*, Ankara 1975.
- 7 For trade relations between the Republic and the Ottoman Empire see Ben Slor's contribution in Hans Theunissens (ed.), *Topkapi & Turkomanie*, exh. cat. Rotterdam (Museum voor Volkenkunde) 1989.
- 8 See C. Finkel, *De droom van Osman. Geschiedenis van het Ottomaanse Rijk 1300-1923*, Amsterdam 2008, pp. 343-48.
- 9 For the *Recueil Ferriol* see S. Gopin and E. Sint Nicolaas, *Jean Baptiste Vanmour. Peintre de la Sublime Porte 1671-1737*, exh. cat. Valenciennes (Musée des Beaux-Arts de Valenciennes) 2009, pp. 79-99.
- 10 Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. nos. SK-A-2000, SK-A-2010 and SK-A-2009.
- 11 'M. Calkoen, Ambassadeur de Hollande à la Porte, en a un très grand nombre et des plus beaux [tableaux]'. Passage from a letter written in Istanbul on 4 January 1737 about the death of a 'peintre flamand' in *Mercur de France*, June 1737, pp. 1173-75.
- 12 National Archives The Hague, Calkoen Family archives 1.10.16.01-181 Calkoen's will.
- 13 'Legatere ik als dan dezelve aan de Heeren Directeuren van de Levandschen Handel in Amsterdam residierende om in haar kamer op het Stadhuis in Amsterdam geplaatst te worden haar Wel ed Achtb. als dan verzoekende dezelve met een inscriptie tot een gedagtenisse dat mijn ambassade tot groot avantage van de Commercie heeft gestrekt te willen vereeren.' National Archives The Hague, Calkoen Family archives 1.10.16.01-181 Calkoen's will.
- 14 For a full account of Calkoen's will and the further adventures of the collection after the death of the ambassador, see E. Sint Nicolaas, 'Old Archives, New Insights' in E. Sint Nicolaas et al., op. cit. (note 1), pp. 103-35. The full French text of the manuscript is included together with an English translation.
- 15 Noord-Hollands Archief, Rijksmuseum Archives, 362, description of C. Calkoen's 'Turkish Paintings' end of the eighteenth century.
- 16 'Cet endroit est vis à vis d'un Village dont le nom a échappé à mon guide.' 'Son portrait est très bien là; mon guide a facilement reconnu les traits de celui que van Mour a tiré'.
- 17 'Monsieur Hoffmann qui l'a vu plusieurs fois dans cette même attitude et dans le même endroit, dit qu'il est parfaitement peint et que sa physionomie y est au mieux'. The present whereabouts of this painting are unknown.
- 18 G.R. Bosscha Erdbrink discusses a possible position for Hoffmann in the consulate to be set up in Egypt. It is not clear whether he actually went to Egypt and later returned to service or if he remained there all those years. Bosscha Erdbrink, op. cit. (note 6), p. 162.

- 19 National Archives The Hague, Calkoen family archives 1.10.16.01-186, deed in German by the notary Gerrit Bouman, 5 July 1764.
- 20 In a previous article about this source I assumed that the date on the cover referred to the time when the report was made. Sint Nicolaas, *op. cit.* (note 14).
- 21 'De tous ces petits tableaux, ceux qui n'ont qu'une figure, sont des portraits très ressemblants et non pas des tableaux.'
- 22 More on this subject in *The Sultan's Portrait. Picturing the House of Osman*, Istanbul 2000.
- 23 We know, for example, that the French ambassador Jean-Louis d'Usson, Marquis de Bonnac (1672-1738) also owned genre pieces as well as his audience paintings. However, he had no portraits of court officials as far as we know. E. Sint Nicolaas, 'L'ambassadeur Cornelis Calkoen et d'autres collectionneurs contemporains de l'oeuvre de Jean Baptiste Vanmour' in Gopin and Sint Nicolaas, *op. cit.* (note 9), pp. 173-91.
- 24 See Gül Irepoğlu, *Levni Painting Poetry Colour*, Istanbul 1999.
- 25 Gül Irepoğlu, 'From book to canvas 1700-1800. Innovation and Change' in *The Sultan's Portrait*, *op. cit.* (note 22), p. 385.
- 26 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, introduction by Anita Dessai, London 1994, p. 67.
- 27 'Sultan Achmed had groote talenten, veel verstand, studie, een solide en doordringend oordeel, en verders veel qualiteiten, die tot een Groot Prins noodig zijn.' National Archives The Hague, Calkoen family archives 1.10.16.01-561, Relaa van de Aankomst en Audientie van Zijn Excellentie Mijn Heere Cornelis Calkoen Ambassadeur ... 1727.
- 28 Irepoğlu, *op. cit.* (note 25), p. 413 and G. Renda, 'Het hof en het rijk onder de loep' in Bull et al. *op. cit.* (note 1).
- 29 'Il étoit à tous les égards un bel homme; il étoit grand, bienfait: il avoit l'air majestueux, le coup d'oeuil fier et cependant assez gracieux, quoiqu'il semble faire une triste mine sur son trône dans le tableau No IV. Picture No IV is SK-A-4078, Calkoen's audience with the Sultan.
- 30 'Il étoit petit: son corps d'ailleurs étoit contrefait, ses jambes, dit-on, cagneuses et son visage beau. Les défauts de son corps se cachoit sous sa robe, ensorte qu'il auroit eu très bonne mine, s'il n'eut pas été trop petit.'
- 31 'Een Schilder, die Syn Excellentie expres deed introduceeren om de audientie aff te teeckenen en schilderen', National Archives The Hague, Calkoen family archives 1.10.16.01, 561: Account 1727.
- 32 See also C.K. Neumann, 'How did a vizier dress in the eighteenth century?' in S. Faruqi and C.K. Neumann (eds.), *Ottoman Costumes From Textile to Identity*, Istanbul 2004, pp. 181-217.
- 33 'It is Grand Vizier Ali Pacha dressed in his Ceremonial robes and turban. He was elevated to this rank three times. He was a son of the noble Venetian Cornaro family which became Muslim for what reason I do not know. He gradually ascended to this glorious position, only to fall from it on several occasions. It was his own fault that he fell into disgrace, in circumstances which it is not inappropriate to describe here. The Government of Baghdad was in the hands of a Pacha whose family had been in power for generations, as if by hereditary right. Over time, this house confirmed its authority, and so successfully that those who held the reins of Government hardly dared to challenge it and seemed to regard them as tributary princes. Cornaro was the declared enemy of the then Governor. Once he became Grand Vizier he allowed his resentment to explode, he dismissed the Pacha and served notice on him to get out of Baghdad forthwith. He did so immediately but advanced on the Capital with sixty thousand men. He was already in Tokat which was only ten days away. The Sultan was made well aware of the Grand Vizier's misdemeanours, which were all the harder to put right as the Emperor had ratified the situation by naming him as the Pacha's successor. Following that, how could the Prince's dignity be reconciled with his restoration? And if that approach was not taken, how could Civil war be avoided? The following arrangement was deemed best from all points of view. Ali was dismissed, his place was given to the designated Pacha of Baghdad and he was sent back to his Government. In this way, Cornaro became the victim of a blind resentment. In compensation, he was given the Government of Egypt. Here was another point on which I would have liked more information: for I can only say that I think all that happened during the reign of Sultan Mahmoud.' ('C'est le Gr. Vizir Ali Pacha revêtu de ses habits et de son turban de Cérémonies. Il avoit été élevé trois fois à cette dignité. Il étoit fils Cornaro Noble Vénitien qui s'étoit fait Musulman, je ne sais par quel motif. Insensiblement il étoit monté à ce haut degré de gloire pour en descendre aussi plus d'une fois. Il s'étoit enfanteres sa disgrâce par sa faute, dans une occasion qu'il n'est pas hors de propos de raconter. Le Gouvernement

- de Bagdat étoit entre les mains d'un Pacha dont la famille le possédoit depuis bien des générations, comme si, c'eut été par droit héréditaire. Cette maison avoit eu le tems d'affermir son autorité et y avoit si bien réussi, que ceux qui tenoit les rênes du Gouvernement n'osoient presque y toucher et sembloient les regarder plutôt comme des Princes tributaires. Cornaro étoit l'ennemi déclaré du Gouverneur actuel. Devenu Grand Vizir il laissa éclater son ressentiment, il cassa le Bacha et lui fit signifier l'ordre de sortir incessamment de Bagdat. Il obéit sur le champs, mais il s'avança vers la Capitale avec une armée de soixante mille hommes. Il étoit déjà à Tokat qui n'en est qu'à dix journées. On fit sentir au Sultan la faute du Gr. Vizir, faute d'autant plus difficile à réparer que l'Empereur l'avoit ratifiée en nommant lui même le Successeur du Bacha. Comment concilier après cela, la dignité du Prince avec le rétablissement de celui ci? Et si l'on ne prenoit pas ce parti comment éviter une guerre Civile? Voici l'arrangement que l'on trouva le plus propre à tout accorder. On cassa Ali, on donna Sa place au Successeur désigné du Bacha de Bagdat et on renvoya celui ci dans son Gouvernement. C'est ainsi que Cornaro fut la victime d'un ressentiment aveugle. On le dédomagea quelque tems après, par le Gouvernement d'Egypte. Voici encore un article sur lequel j'aurois désiré quelques details: car je ne puis dire autre chose sinon que je crois que tout cela est arrivé sous le règne de Sultan Mahmoud.)
- 34 'C'est le Mouphti dans son habit de cérémonies. Le turban comme on a pu le remarquer, est la marque distinctive du rang et des hommes. Il n'y a que le Mouphti qui puisse porter celui là qui est de fine mousseline. On ne diroit pas, à le voir, qu'il est d'une extrême légèreté.'
- 35 Information taken from www.osmanischesreich.com
- 36 'Représente le Reys Effendi ou le Gr. Chancelier de l'Empire. Ce portrait ressemble parfaitement à celui qui occupoit cette Charge en 1727 et qui la perdit trois ans après, entraîné dans la chute du Prince qui l'avoit élevé. Le turban qu'il porte est particulier à lui et au Gr. Trésorier. Si ce sont des hommes de Loi, et ordinairement c'en est, ils ont toujours leur turban ainsi fabriqué. Je ne sais point le nom de ce personnage, ni d'autre particularité qui le concerne, si ce n'est qu'il étoit un homme de mérite et que Monsieur l'Ambassadeur le voioit assez souvent.'
- 37 G.R. Bosscha Erdbrink, op. cit. (note 6), p. 55.
- 38 Noord-Hollands Archief, Rijksmuseum Archives, 362, description of C. Calkoen's 'Turkish paintings', late eighteenth century.
- 39 'Mehemet étoit un assez bel homme: mais il n'avoit point de barbe. Il auroit donné des sommes immenses, pour s'en procurer quelques poils. On peut juger de quelle soif de l'or il étoit altéré. On trouva dans ses différentes maisons jusqu'à vingt-huit millions qu'il avoit caché tantôt dans des armoires voutées et pratiquées dans l'épaisseur des murs, tantôt dans des caveaux construits au fond des Citernes. Tous les Ouvriers qu'il emploioit à ces ouvrages secrets, recevoient la mort pour recompense, afin qu'ils ne parlissent point.'
- 40 'Aen de Schilder Mr. Van Mour betaalt' and '19 oktober aen de vernd. Schilder gegeven 40 kleyne Tuvalis a 106 pavas', National Archives The Hague, Calkoen family archives 1.10.16.01-192. *Tuvalis* and *pavas* are units of currency.
- 41 The painting is described in the manuscript as follows: 'It is a Greek Lady sitting on her Sofa working at her embroidery frame.' ('C'est une Dame Grecque assise sur son Sopha et occupée à broder au métier.') See also plate 52 of the *Recueil Ferriol*: 'Fille turque qui brode'.
- 42 'This one was placed between the portrait of Ali Pacha and that of the Mufti, then after No. 28. It should therefore be No. 29 but unfortunately I forgot to put it in the correct place.' ('C'elui-ci est placé entre le portrait d'Ali Pacha et celui du Mouphti, d'abord après le No 28. Ainsi il devoit être le No 29, mais malheureusement j'ai oublié de le mettre en son lieu.'). This refers to the portrait of the woman with the fan (SK-A-2041).
- 43 A list of places in which the paintings were hung, both in Cornelis Calkoen's time as well as that of his descendants, including a possible reconstruction of those rooms, is part of my doctoral research.
- 44 After the death of Nicolaas Calkoen in 1817 an estate inventory was compiled by Jeronimo de Vries. He lists, 'Sixty-two paintings of the Rhine and other foreign views, also a copy of a view of the Levant by a modern artist, together valued at five hundred and fifty guilders.' ('Twee en zestig stuks Rhijn en andere buitenlandsche gezigten, beneevens eene kopij van een gezigt uit de Levant door een modern meester, te zamen getaxeerd op vijfhonderd en vijftig guldens.'). National Archives The Hague, Calkoen family archives 1.10.16.02-8.

