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2

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BENT HOLM

**THE TAMING
OF
THE TURK**

**OTTOMANS ON THE
DANISH STAGE 1596–1896**

translated from the Danish by
GAYE KYNOCH

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INTRODUCTION

PERCEPTIONS OF ‘THE TURK’

The springboard for this book is dramaturgic. It all began with the Danish playwright Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754). In 2006, as one in a series of new interpretations of Holberg’s plays, Danish regional Aarhus Theatre produced the little-known tragicomedy *Melampe* (1724).¹ During the preparatory process, it gradually became clear that a crucial key to understanding the plot – which takes place among aristocratic circles in Southern Italy and is played out in high-flown Alexandrine verse – is the absence of the head of the family, brave Pandolfus senior, for the very reason that he is involved in battles between Christians and Muslims in North Africa. This is stated in Holberg’s script. We also know that shackled Turkish and Moorish prisoners of war appeared on the eighteenth-century Danish stage performance of this tragicomedy. These surprising, but on the face of it somewhat peripheral, details provoked a more thorough enquiry. One line of investigation led back to passages about fear of the Turk in Holberg’s comic epos *Peder Paars* (1719–1720); and this led even further back to the writings of Martin Luther (1483–1546), which proved to be of fundamental significance for various identifications of ‘the Turk’ as figure of fear in a larger world drama stemming from religious concepts, and also with ramifications for secular power configuration.



Fig. 1 Scenefoto of Ludvig Holberg’s tragicomedy *Melampe*. Aarhus Theatre, 2006. Merete Hegner as Dorothea, flanked by Rolf Hansen and Pelle Nordhøj Kann as Turkish prisoners of war. Photo: Jan Jul.

¹ The Holberg productions were developed in association with Asger Bonfils (director) and Anette Hansen (designer).

THE TAMING OF THE TURK

This world drama is sustained by an eschatological temporality – with a term derived from the Greek word *eschatos*, meaning ‘last’ and denoting a view that treats of the end times, the Second Coming of Christ and the Day of Judgement – critical events that can be presented in an apocalypse, an exposition of the ultimate count-down.

At the root of the universal drama, therefore, was a perception of history as a process, a battle between divergent forces working their way towards a definitive outcome: resolution of conflict, the restoration of order. This particular reading of time, discord, development and final destination, which is fundamentally dramaturgic, is very much culture-based. The idea that history has an objective and a purpose runs deep. It even influences the writing of history, which at some level must involve a dramaturgy, a lens that sees one element as being more important than another element.

The year after our *Melampe* production, I was working on the libretto to Jens Baggesen’s and F.L.Æ. Kunzen’s opera *Holger Danske* (1789; ‘Holger the Dane’), in which the ‘Turkish’ dimension is highly relevant to the plot. The eponymous hero is in conflict with more than one sultan. I learned, to my surprise, that confrontation with the Turk was not just something that took place on stage, an element of the plot. Denmark as warring party during the period under consideration was also in a formal state of war with Turkey. This was not an area within the scope of my historical compass, to say the least.

The accumulation of connections between the stage references on the one hand and an underexposed historiography of the nation’s dealings with an Ottoman Empire on the other, became so insistent that a more comprehensive reading of the different forms of material available was inevitable – and this material ended up stretching from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.

THEM AND US

The term ‘the Turk’ has now been used several times. It denotes the image of an exotic or threatening figure that features in, for example, religious or fictional contexts: a construct or stereotype, distinct from the actual Turkish people, and inhabiting the realm of the imagination. In earlier times ‘the Turk’ was applied across a broad front, particularly with reference to exotic foreigners, and primarily – but not exclusively – those with connections to the Ottoman Empire. As mental picture, ‘the Turk’ represents menace and also the menacing, malignant turbaned foreigner with his moustache and scimitar – who might in fact be Turkish, North African or sometimes almost anyone from the East. Muslim is, however, probably the most prevalent supra-category.

‘Turkey’ as location is similarly varied. Algeria might be Turkey. Holberg had once almost been captured by Turkish pirates and had envisaged spending the rest of his days in Algeria. Danish sailor Hark Olufs (1708–1754) did indeed spend years in Algeria, as a slave; the account he wrote of his travels, published in 1747, tells about the time he spent in Turkey. Ship’s chaplain Nicol Seidelin Bøgh (1717–1778), having been on a 1746 negotiating trip to Algeria designed to conclude a peace and trade treaty, wrote that “*Europa vi forlod, vort Ansigt dermed vendte/ Og rejste hen mod det barbariske Tyrkie.*”² (Europe we left, our face thus turning/ And journeying on towards the barbaric Turkey.) All this refers to the Ottoman Barbary Coast, the North African Barbary States. Furthermore, in this real world, the ruling class of the Ottoman Empire comprised those people served by the slaves – by the Nordic slaves, for example, who later wrote about their incarceration – and these masters were in fact Turkish.

The ‘Turkey’ of popular belief was an even more horror-fairytale place. In the theatre, ‘Turkish’ was a category covering everything that was not ‘Antiquity’, ‘Gothic’ or ‘Spanish’, and was thus in some sense ‘Asian’ or ‘exotic’.

The term *turquerie* will also be used: the fascination, via fiction or fashion, with that which is ‘foreign’; the Occidental mirroring in all things Oriental. Briefly: there is a fictional-world of difference between ‘Turk’ and ‘Turks’, between *turquerie* and Turkey. ‘The Turk’ can be rendered as pure fabrication or can be configured in performative contexts: be it in royal ritual settings, be it in actual theatre productions, be it somewhere between these categories.

It should be noted that ‘job titles’ – emperor, king, sultan, queen, and so forth – have a small initial letter, whereas the historical person and the fictitious character are referred to as Emperor, King, Sultan, Queen, and so forth, where the actual name of the person/character is not applied. The conventional Ottoman titles are used for jobs and official posts; however, quotations retain appellations used at the time – for example, the Sultan of Morocco was called “Kejseren” (Emperor) in eighteenth-century Denmark, and thus keeps that title in the relevant quotations. The ‘meaning’ of the verse quotations being paramount, their translated versions have of course not been rhymed. Quotations are given both in the original and in translation; references are provided in the footnotes – with the exception of a few quotations in the Introduction, where their purpose is purely to illustrate differences in style.

Two scenes have to be set: the Turkish and the Danish. What is more, they have to be seen in an overall context of confrontation between empires: the Ottoman Empire versus the Germanic-Roman, Habsburg Empire. In this perspective, the history of the Roman Empire is a crucial component to the backdrop. The

2 N. S. Bøgh, pp. 29f.

Empire was split into two parts in Late Antiquity: a Western and an Eastern. The decisive event in this respect took place on May 29, 1453: the fall of the Eastern Roman – or Byzantine – Empire when Sultan Mehmed II (1432–1481), the Conqueror, captured – or liberated – the capital, Constantinople. Seen from a Christian point of view, the city had fallen to the Antichrist. The catastrophe was God’s retribution; the Turk was the scourge of God.³ By late July the awful news had reached as far as the North. Mehmed subsequently took the title *Rum-Kayseri*, Roman Caesar. The title was passed on to his successors. The Western Roman Empire had been carried forward via the Germanic emperors. The point being: Mehmed saw himself as the heir to the Eastern Roman emperors, and the Habsburgs saw themselves as heirs to the Western Romans. In the longer view, it was here that the basis for an antagonistic dynamic was laid. The Eastern Empire pursued a mission to unify the territories by conquest of the Western component. The Sultan took the Western Emperor to be nothing but an Austrian duke or German king. And conversely: the Western Roman Empire had an underlying notion that the empire should be made complete; the lost Eastern part had to be won back so that the empire could be made whole – the Germanic-Roman Emperor assumed the title ‘King of Jerusalem’, for example. Both sides came with a religious rationale of delivering the territories into the true faith: Islam and Christianity, respectively.

The ruler in the Ottoman Empire was the sultan; his power was absolute and had religious validation. The state was a manifestation of the divine order. Reform was therefore problematic. Defeat was the result of treachery. Several sultans were overthrown, typically by the otherwise loyal corps of elite warriors, the Janissaries. The sultan was served by a grand vizier for consultation and exercise of power, and also drew on an advisory council, the *Divan*. The centre of power was the sultan’s *Topkapi* palace, originally *Yeni Sarayi*, the New Palace, built on the orders of Sultan Mehmed II. The Turkish word for palace is *sarayi*, hence the westernised form ‘seraglio’ or ‘serail’. Central state administration was named after the entrance to the domicile of the grand vizier: *Bab-ı Ali*, Sublime Porte, or High Porte, sometimes simply Porte, a term applied to the regime as a whole. In 1756, for example, Denmark concluded a trade and peace treaty with the Sublime Porte. The sultan had a harem at his disposal, accommodating several hundred women: wives, concubines, odalisques – the latter being at the bottom of the ladder. They were guarded by Black Eunuchs, under the supervision of a *Kislar Aga*. The harem was a forum of sophisticated culture, and of major intrigues.

3 Wheatcroft (1995), p. 25. During the entire period under consideration, “Constantinople” was the name used in a Danish context, and will thus be used here rather than the Turkish “Istanbul”. The latter covered the central part of the city, Stamboul with *Topkapi* palace, and, on the other side of the Golden Horn, Pera with its somewhat European ambiance; see *ibidem*, chapter 5, pp. 138ff.

INTRODUCTION

The wives were often called ‘sultanas’. The palace *bostangi* (literally: gardeners) also fulfilled the role of executioners. One of their methods of execution was strangulation; the vizier being favoured by the use of silken cord. The accession of a new sultan routinely involved the execution of his brothers and male cousins. This practice was later replaced by their confinement in *kafes* (literally: the cage), isolated areas deep inside the palace.

The regime was based on an almost permanent state of war. The domain of war – the territories of the disbeliever – was to be turned into the domain of peace. When the army set forth under the flag of the Prophet, it did so as a holy act. The warrior marched towards martyrdom. Worse than the disbeliever was the heretic: the Persians. They had corrupted the pure Islam.

The Ottoman Empire expanded considerably during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Its greatest period came in the sixteenth century under Süleyman the Magnificent (c.1495–1566), the Lawgiver, leading to a territorial culmination in 1683 when the empire stretched from the vicinity of Vienna across the Middle East to Iran and the Arabian Peninsula and took in most of North Africa. The latter comprised what are known as the Barbary States, the source of the privateering that affected three centuries of Danish relations with the Ottoman Empire. 1683 is a defining year: this is when the dream of capturing Vienna, the heart of the Habsburg Empire, received its final blow.

There are various perceptions of when the vulnerability set in. These are manifestations of hindsight, in so far as every momentary triumph in the situation has been construed as a positive watershed, a new beginning. The very nature of ‘the moment’ as concept is its unpredictability. There was a Western tradition for predicting the impending collapse of the Ottoman Empire. It was forecast in 1522 when the Venetian envoy to Constantinople was able to state that the swift blooming now involved an equally speedy fading. Seven years later, the Turks besieged Vienna. In 1622 the English ambassador to the Sublime Porte was just as clearly convinced that the downfall was imminent.⁴ Internally, too, religious analyses might point to decline and the risk of ruin. And, conversely, after the end of the Crimean War in 1856, Sultan Abdülmecid I (1823–1865) moved into his newly-built Versailles-like Dolmabahçe Palace convinced that this was the start of a new period of greatness. In reality, the regime lived by borrowing and thus ultimately on borrowed time. Even when the threat to the West from Turkish ground forces waned in the eighteenth century, the maritime pressure nonetheless endured undiminished in the practice of privateering as a protracted, ongoing strategy of war. The Empire came to a definitive end in 1923 with the founding of a secular, westernised and much smaller Republic of Turkey.

4 Ibidem, p. 205.

The core area covered by the *Heiliges Römisches Reich Deutscher Nation*, Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, generally referred to as the Holy German-Roman Empire, comprised West and Central Europe, the main concentration being the German-speaking countries, but also reaching down into North Italy. The House of Habsburg had a kind of informal monopoly on power; 'the Habsburgs' is thus in practice another term for 'the Empire'. In the sixteenth century, the Holy German-Roman Empire under Charles V became part of the worldwide Habsburg Empire. The Danish king had a seat in the Reichstag in his capacity as Duke of Holstein. During the period covered by this study, Vienna was the seat of the reigning Habsburg monarch and thus the centre of power. Wars with the Turks – and the religious implications thereof – marked the Empire for centuries. Christendom, in the sense of the Christian countries, was challenged, threatened by the infidel enemy. The same applied to the religion, Christianity. This, on the other hand, was split: essentially into a Catholic and a Protestant section, each regarding the other as representing heresy, false doctrine, easily as dire as the infidel. France was the Holy German-Roman Empire's major Continental Europe rival, which had an affect on strategies vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire. As a result of mutual anti-Habsburg supremacy concerns, French-Turkish relations were more positive than those of the other Western powers. Territories bordering the Ottoman Empire endured erosive and protracted friction between the two empires. Hungary shifted between being Habsburg and being Ottoman. The Holy German-Roman Empire was dissolved in 1806. The subsequent Austro-Hungarian and German Empires fell at the end of the First World War, when the Ottoman Empire also collapsed – as did a third player in the confrontational manoeuvrings, the Tsarist Russian Empire, which also had pretensions of being 'Holy' and 'Roman'.

Danish kings ruled over the double-monarchy of Denmark and Norway. From 1660 this was an absolutist monarchy with a formal line of succession, and thus the kings held divine authorisation of power elevating them above subordinates; in reality, indeed, above the law. In addition, they were, as mentioned, dukes in Northern Germany. They were thereby allied with the Habsburg Empire. The Ottoman campaign, penetrating far into Western Europe and pressing at the Habsburg borders, thus affected the Danish-Norwegian realm; furthermore, the Danish royal family had close political and familial ties with German principalities. The religious dimension was also a factor. The king was the guarantor and defender of the true and pure faith. The Turk was the exponent of an 'infidel' faith, advancing with infinite cruelty. Christendom as such was facing a fateful showdown with this enemy of God, the Turk – inscribed by the Reformation and Counter Reformation conflict in an eschatological perspective. The Turk was not simply a military adversary. He was a player in a drama involving divine and demonic forces. The

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epoch operated, of course, within both a pragmatic and a symbolic forum. And, of course, the actual – military – Turkish threat against the Danish homeland was limited, if not downright illusory. The symbolic dimension, however, the mental circumstance, is a co-player in the overall picture. Imagination is also a reality. Later, too, during the Age of Enlightenment for example, underlying principles might seem profoundly irrational when seen from the vantage point of posterity. The Danish realm shrank drastically during the period covered by this book, eventually losing both Norway and the German territories. The country became a minor state. Absolute monarchy was dismantled in 1847.

Danish association with the Ottoman Empire came in various forms. At least four categories can be outlined:

1. ritualisation: religious activities such as prayer; performative activities, for example the *carrousel* (spectacles/tournaments on horseback)
2. theatricalisation: masquerades, theatrical performances
3. political practice: military and diplomatic activity in war and commerce
4. cultural practice: stereotypes, incipient exploration.

Interplay between the categories is of particular interest. The period evinces no crystal-clear distinction between rituality, performativity and theatricality. Being metaphysically based, the regime was intensely ritualised; court life was founded on formalised staging. Theatre was coupled with the exercise and display of power.

The ‘foreign’ practice or person can be hard to understand, but elements of otherness are also found closer to home. Domestic history is decidedly alien in crucial particulars. From time to time the Ottoman concept of power has been compared to Western absolutism in terms of ceremoniality, implementation and religious implication. As is the case with all comparative simplifications, the resemblance is disputable. But it is by no means futile. And yet in actuality the crowned heads sat far more securely on their bodies than did the turban-clad heads. The latter were not untouchable after all, despite all their ‘Oriental’ despotism.

THE GRAVEYARD OF CULTURE – THE SCRAPHEAP OF HISTORY

Ongoing existence in the cultural domain is, in itself, a manifestation of viability. And yet the matter is, nonetheless, not quite that simple. The concept of greatness has changed. Ostensibly immortal works have at times been stone-dead. The tragedy of Antiquity has been long forgotten. Shakespeare was long considered

barbaric, primitive and belonging to a past phase of civilisation, before he was revived in the mid-eighteenth century and later became a veritable cult for the Romantics. Shakespeare was dead for a good century. The music composed by Johann Sebastian Bach vanished, and was not appreciated again until Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy revived *St Matthew Passion* in 1829. Bach was dead for just short of a century. Antonio Vivaldi was already a forgotten composer when he died. He did not become widely known until after the Second World War. Vivaldi was dead for two centuries. All these examples come from the elite class – pillars and cornerstones of European culture. Even so, their works were weeded out as being worthless, uninteresting, dispensable. If we suppose that culture moves forwards or upwards, we must also assume that it involves some huge swerves and, in any case, the whole idea suffers from the basic weakness that quality criteria are changeable. The primary sources discussed in this study have largely been consigned to the graveyard of culture.

Similarly, historiography is one gigantic sorting machine or waste disposer in which central issues of the past risk becoming marginalised or downgraded to peripheral status owing to the experience, priorities and focus of posterity. Historiography is not, of course, fiction – as has been claimed by postmodernist quarters – at one with the idea that anything and everything is a ‘cultural construct’. But it is bound, inevitably, to be selective. As the brain weeds out and stores up unnecessary information, so must historiography select and focus in terms of central and peripheral; weed out or deposit seemingly irrelevant information. As is the case with the primary material used here – drama texts – the reconnaissance of context also relies on sources and circumstances largely found in the peripheral zones. The scrapheap of history is vast – and it is the site mined by the majority of sorties on which the following is based.

It is then a matter of interaction between text and context: of attempting to identify meaning potential by locating the material within parameters pertinent to the reality lived by the audience, and thereby the meaning-generating interplay between audience and performance. In other words: of identifying various perceptions of the Turk, images in the overlap zone between performative practice and theological, political, commercial and military circumstances; all of which largely falls into the category of weeded-out source material. This data is thus on equal terms with the bulk of the primary material for theatre productions – some of which were unique stagings for special royal occasions. Most of the texts discussed have been so pared down by the sorting machine of time that, for example, of the titles examined at length in the chapter about the nineteenth century none appear in the relevant volume of *Dansk litteraturs historie* (2008; ‘History of Danish Literature’).⁵

⁵ See *Select Bibliography*.

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There is usually a reason for a text to have disappeared. But it is not necessarily an objective reason. As will be discussed later, the relevant ‘Turkish’ works by Hans Christian Andersen and Erik Bøgh are better than their reputation would have it – to the extent that they can be said to have a reputation in scholarship and the public mind. These works played a role in nineteenth-century cultural controversies, and were subsequently marginalised by prevailing taste. Cultural policy can have far-reaching consequences.

THE KALEIDOSCOPE OF HISTORY

One fundamental approach in this study thus concerns the contextualisation of staged representation. The approach has a dual function. Partly to investigate meaning potentials in relation to a contemporaneous reception: within which parameters of understanding would a member of the audience have categorised the received impressions? Partly to confront fictional images of an ‘exotic’ sphere with sources relating to the factual world. What exactly does the picture reveal: the domestic Denmark of the day or the foreign actuality? Or rather: whereabouts in the region between these two zones is the picture (mainly) located?

In short, it is a matter of correlation and displacement between a pre-given image, The Turk, a given fictional representation, ‘the Turk’, and a real Ottoman character, the Turk.

The basic itinerary goes from an eschatological perception in the sixteenth century – the era inscribed into a notion of the beginning of the end – through various forms of exotic mask- and role-play and then a return to eschatology in the nineteenth century. This trajectory shapes an amalgamating arc in the survey, into which a series of spotlights and motifs have been inserted. Primarily, and quite understandably given the form of government: focus on the ruling figure. Several fixed recurring motifs also feature, typically associated with particularly singular aspects of the alien culture. Various versions of drinking habits and sexual habits. Cruelty and sensuality. Harem and executions. Piracy and slavery. These motifs are central to the stage analyses. For very good reason: they are basic elements of drama. They hold the excitation that will at all times quicken drama and theatre as art form – sex, crime, mortal danger, malice, the forbidden – in ‘masked’ and therefore legitimate form. In short, impassioned performance of angst and taboo, usually attached to narratives concerning ordeals, perils and fantastical coincidence, working its way up towards exaggerated confrontation and ending in something that looks like the intervention of Providence, redemption. On this small scale, it echoes the grand narrative of history as divine drama.

THE TAMING OF THE TURK

The recurring motifs are bound up with the Turk as stereotype. On the other hand, they are not a case of pure construct and fiction. They are based on actual circumstances of Ottoman civilisation. The motifs could configure moral discussions of the day. Or they might be fantasies of a mighty 'Asiatic' capacity as regards sexual and military potency. The Turk's marital- and sexual life are common themes in Occidental representations. His number of wives and children is traditionally staggering. The same is true of the Turk's military forces: the number of troops is often astronomical. Images of harem and armed forces are located in a zone between wishful thinking and nightmare.

The critical element is the lens: the fundamental concept of civilisation through which the representation is seen and shaped. Moreover, eschatological images seeped into the folklore and generated depictions of the Turk as an outright ogre coming to get us – a theme which can be traced throughout the entire period under consideration, and which therefore tinted audience perception of the picture presented to them.

The motifs feature in various combinations, relating reciprocally and relative to the changing contexts. This dynamic interplay is of a kaleidoscopic quality. The project undertaken in the three main chapters of this book is to decipher these shifting sands.

IDENTITY AND STAGING

First port of call is the coronation of 18-year-old Christian IV on August 29, 1596, in the cathedral of Copenhagen. The coronation festivities lasted for several days. The prevailing Lutheran doctrine emphasised the close link between divine authority and mortal authorities. The monarch's function was essentially based on and defined by religion. Power was divinely given, and the young King Christian pledged commitment to his reign as the imitator and representative of Christ. To be the true faith's armed defender against heresy and nonbelief. The focus will therefore principally be on elements of the festivities dealing with these two concepts – heresy and nonbelief, personified in the Lutheran view by two figures in particular: the Pope and the Turk. Self-image is also about defining what one is *not*. The perspective will then be expanded in time and place by looking at various stagings of 'the Turk' in correlation with specific political contexts: after Christian IV, the theme will be related to irony and parody in the work of playwright Ludvig Holberg; then to staged, self-reflective manifestations under, in particular, Christian VII and Crown Prince/King Frederik VI; next, to examples from the reign of Frederik VII when *turquerie* takes on the character of masquerade; and, finally, to eschatology in the work of the Danish theologian, educationalist and writer Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783–1872). The material employed is

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partly literary, partly theatrical; the latter understood in a wider sense that covers the ceremonial or ritualistic stagings of the ruling power, including its iconography. Pictorial art will also be involved to a limited extent. Documentary sources to the contemporaneous perception of both ‘the Turk’ and the actual Ottoman reality will be brought into play en route. Various types of text will be surveyed, and sometimes enlarged against their backdrop – this study is not, however, a complete examination of the material from a given period.

A great many elements are embedded in national mentality as unreflected premises of understanding. It is presumably of no little importance that the apocalyptic view of history is formulated in relatively identical terms by such weighty and central cultural figures as Martin Luther and N.F.S. Grundtvig, whose influence on the development of the Danish nation cannot be overestimated. In polemic foreshortening – or figuratively – they could be called the prophets of the Danes. But not just figuratively. In the introduction to his *Postilla seu enarratio Evangeliorum*,⁶ the eminent Danish Reformation theologian Niels Hemmingsen (1513–1600) refers to Luther as “Guds Prophet, salige Dr. Morten Luther” (Prophet of God, blessed Dr Martin Luther). And it is no secret that Grundtvig had visions, and that he is sometimes seen – also through his own eyes – as something of a prophet.

Reduction of the Danish realm to a minor power during the nineteenth century – first Norway and later the North German territories were lost – led to intensification of Norse self-image and the consequent development of a love-hate relationship to Southern Europe. On the one hand, there was a Romantic fondness for the charming and light-hearted people of the South. On the other hand, everything Romanesque was viewed with mistrust: the Southern foreigners are superficial, sensual and untrustworthy, quite apart from the fact that they are unfree Papists. Unlike the robust, true-hearted Northerners. These images and self-images are still deeply ingrained. Furthermore, in the wake of the realm’s territorial and military collapse, the German gains potent enemy status.

This is the very period in which Oriental role-playing thrives. Partly in development of the national-romantic self-image, partly as a superior form of escapism amidst a time of collapse. Curiously, this is also the period in which Pope and Turk reappear in Grundtvig’s eschatological historiography. The end times are at hand and we, the Danes, have our role as specially chosen players in the grand final drama. Caution must be applied when constructing unequivocal interpretations of any given period. On the other hand, sensitivity must be applied to recognition of non-simultaneity: the simultaneous presence of incompatible understandings. Interfaces also have their significance.

6 1561; English translation, 1569: *A Postle, or Exposition of the Gospels*.

IMAGES AND VOICES

History can be understood as a process of forming images. Of the formation of images. And of formation through images. Uncovering 'the Turk' as image is, therefore, the crux of the study. One method used will present a variety of texts in their original versions; a plurality of voices in dynamic tone constellations, making for a kind of vocal kaleidoscope. The principle will first come into play when the voices can actually be 'seen' and heard. Let us take, for example, a pearl such as the greeting from Moroccan Prince Regent Muhammed ben Abdallah al-Khatib (c.1710–1790) to Frederik V of Denmark on the occasion of treaty negotiations between Denmark and Morocco in 1751:

I den barmhjertige og forbarmende Guds Navn. Der er ikke Magt eller Styrke uden ved Gud den høje, den vældige. Móhamed Ben Abdallah. Lovet være Gud, der gav Pennen, som flyder med Talens Mening, naar dens yderste Dele dyppes i Blæk. Der er ingen mægtig uden Gud, som har aabenbaret Sandheden i sin viseste Bog (Koranen) og hver den som Gud vil lede paa Sandhedens Vej, hans Sjel styrer han til den mohamedanske Religion. En Første blant dem, som følge Móhameds Lov og Hánefi Befaling; en ophøiet og anseelig Første, hvis Bannere ikke aflade at være berømmelige og sejerrige og vidt udbredte, hvis Hære styrkes af Guddommen mod Fjenderne, og vinde Sejr; en Polar-Stjerne i Ærens Verden og dens Middelpunkt, en Bolig for den høye Ære og det Sted hvor al Ære kommer sammen; en Grundvold for den ophøjede Adel og dens Vælde; det mest straalende Lys Førsten Móhamed Ben Abdallah Ben Ismaíl; Gud være deres Forfædre naadig ved sin Miskundhed, og af sin Godhed vise Velgierninger mod deres Efterkommere! – Til Friderich den Store af Dannemark! Hilset være den som følger den rette Vej, og vogter sig for dem som falde i de Vantroendes Handlinger!

(In the name of the merciful and forgiving God. There is neither power nor strength unless by the grace of God the high, the mighty. Muhammed ben Abdallah. Praise be to God who gave the pen which flows with the meaning of speech when its furthest parts are dipped in ink. None are mighty without God, who has revealed the truth in His wisest book (Qur'an), and the soul of every person whom God will lead in His truth, He will guide to the Muhammedan religion. A prince amongst those who follow the law of Muhammed and Hánefsi command; a sublime and eminent prince whose banners never cease to be illustrious and victorious far and wide, whose army is strengthened against enemies by the deity and wins victories; a Pole Star in the world of glory and its midpoint, an

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abode for the elevated glory and there where all glory meets; a foundation for the elevated nobility and its might; the most radiant light, the prince Muhammed ben Abdallah Ben Ismaíl; God be merciful to their forefathers with His loving-kindness, and of His goodness show benevolence to their descendants! – To Frederik the Great of Denmark! Hail to he who follows the right way and is wary of those who fall so low that they discharge the deeds of the infidels!)

The full rhetorical abundance does not come to fruition if the text is simply reproduced for its actual message, which can be reduced to: Dear King Frederik V. The style is the man. The man is the power. The language is the point.

The cultural indicators depend on tuning into and listening to the range of voices. This insistence on polyphony involves a critique of generalisations. It is said that from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries a displacement occurs in the West's perception of the Turk: from polyphonic to stereotypical, from tyranny to despotism. This formula is not necessarily consistent with the Danish material. Or it is stated as fact that there is a softening in the image of the stage Turk in step with the onward march of Enlightenment. This largely depends on the choice of source material. As a tool, generalisation makes for manageability and clarity. The question is: how high can you pile material pointing in other directions before generalisation topples over? And what do you do then?

In instant repudiation of this statement of position, herewith a hypothetical and exploratory simplification of the parameters within which 'the Turk' will be viewed in the three periods examined in the three sections of this book: the sixteenth and seventeenth century approach will be deemed one of 'eliminating' the Turk, the eighteenth century of 'refining' the Turk, and the nineteenth century of 'amusement' through the Turk. With great prudence and with all possible provisos.

Bent Holm

March 29, 2014

CHAPTER 1

SIXTEENTH AND
SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES:
*CONSPIRACY AND
APOCALYPSE*

WAR AND CORONATION

The basic framework upon which *The Taming of the Turk* is constructed involves the clash between the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg Empire; this, in turn, involves a confrontation between Islam and Christendom, the latter being split into two blocs: the Catholic and the Protestant. Pressure from the Ottomans made, on the one hand, the two forms of Christianity appear as if they totalled one Christendom. On the other hand, the pressure provoked both camps to apocalyptic views – simply in reverse: the one bloc represented the Antichrist in the other bloc’s view. Luther was the Antichrist. The Pope was the Antichrist. Both blocs, however, viewed the Turk as a scourge, in the compound sense of God’s chastening rod and an instrument of the Devil, and in conspiratorial partnership with, respectively, Luther and the Pope. That Ottomans and Habsburgs alike saw themselves as successors to the Roman Empire is but one more aspect of this exceedingly complex drama, which was played out over three centuries in varied trials of strength between two empires.

Mythologisation of history – recording military and political events in religious interpretative parameters – was widespread, and common to all camps: Ottoman, Catholic, Lutheran. The ascension of Sultan Süleyman I to the throne in 1520 was swathed in major predictions. He was the tenth sultan; he acceded to the throne at the opening of the tenth century according to the Islamic calendar, calculated from the Prophet Muhammad’s migration from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE; he was an incarnation of the blessed Muslim number ten: the ten parts of the Qur’an, ten disciples, ten skies of the heavens, and so forth. At the beginning of every century, according to Oriental tradition, a great man would step forward, destined to embody and master the period: this time it was Süleyman, the perfecter of the perfect number, a celestial figure. In the other camp, the Crusader legends foretold that the Turks would advance to the holy city of Cologne, but that a Christian emperor would vanquish them and drive their forces back beyond Jerusalem. When crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 1519, Charles V was hailed as that very warrior.⁷ In a Christian context, the calendar – in this rationale calculated from the Creation – was also a weighty argument for a reading of events as augury of decisive dramatic developments, which might even be the coming of the end.

Events were thus read as signs, ascribed a significance that implied there was a meaning to it all. The worst-case scenario was that the Turkish agenda was to conquer the Occident and wipe out a Christian faith that is the prerequisite of eternal salvation. The ultimate prize was at stake. It is important to note that during the first period being examined here, the Turks were in a superior

7 Cf. Kinross, p. 174.

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position. Their conquests and military power were frightening. They dominated the Mediterranean region. Their self-esteem entailed no mean contempt for the Western countries, perceiving them as culturally underdeveloped, stagnant, decadent. In other words, the very same view of the East that looms large in the Western gamut of clichés.

A significant event on the diplomatic scene occurred in 1555 when the Habsburg monarch Ferdinand I sent a diplomatic delegation, led by Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq (1522–1592), to Constantinople – where it remained until 1562, in reality held hostage.



Fig. 2 Portrait of Sultan Süleyman I. Melchior Lorck, engraving, 1562. Royal Library, Copenhagen.



Fig. 3 Portrait of Süleyman's favourite wife Roxelana. Melchior Lorck, woodcut, dated 1581. Royal Library, Copenhagen.

Access to judicious information about the Ottoman Empire was limited. Danish artist Melchior Lorck (1526/27–after 1583) was a member of the mission, staying in Constantinople for three and a half years. His descriptions and depictions are clear-headed.⁸ Lorck's images, first published in 1626, remained a chief source of information about Turkey for more than a century. Frenchman Nicolas de Nicolay's (1517–1583) observations, published in an illustrated book, *Les quatre premiers livres des navigations et peregrinations orientales* (1567), was also a significant source of information at the time, and was similarly based on the travels of a delegation sent on a mission to visit Süleyman. However, an equally prominent role in the formation of images was played by populist books and the propaganda pamphlets known as *Türkenbüchlein*.

On the active military and political scene, the situation was such that after Sultan Selim I's (c.1465–1520) conquests in the Middle East and North Africa at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Süleyman I took Belgrade and Rhodes and entered Hungary. The Battle of Mohács (1526) was a turning point to Turkish advantage. In 1529 Süleyman advanced on Vienna with an army of 300,000 men, but ended up having to abandon the siege. Emperor Charles V entered a truce with the Sultan in 1547, involving the annual payment of tributes for peace. Parts of Hungary were still Turkish provinces. Disputes and military engagements turned into full-blown conflict in 1593: the Long War, which lasted until 1606. In 1596 the Turks besieged and captured the Hungarian fort of Erlau (Eger) in the district that then bordered Austria and Poland. This was followed in October by the terrible Battle of Keresztes – the Ottoman forces commanded by Sultan Mehmed III (1566–1603) under the holy banner of the Prophet – in which more than 30,000 German and Hungarian troops fell. The Turks were victorious, and for many decades to come Habsburg recapture of Hungary was off the agenda. It was while this war was in progress that the coronation of the new Danish king took place, an event discussed in the next section.

A central theme of Christian IV's coronation in 1596 was to present him as a Lutheran prince, the armed defender of the true faith and doctrine. The 'enemy' was heresy and unbelief. The charge of heresy – false doctrine – was levelled at the Papal Church. The Turk with his false religion embodied unbelief. The guest list for the festivities included German princes who were directly involved in the battle against the Ottomans. The coronation involved an ecclesiastical element – the actual rituals, including anointment – and also a series of spectacular displays. On the face of it, these latter imaginative stagings would seem to be manifestations of Renaissance opulence; when set in more overarching parameters

8 Cf. Fischer. On anti-Turkish pamphlets, see Wheatcroft (2004), pp. 278ff.; Møller, pp. 268ff.; Schwarz Lausten.

of understanding, however, they can be seen to develop central themes in forms that could be called ritualistic. This should be understood in the sense of the ritual having an inherent power of transformation simply by virtue of being carried out; and the ritualistic displays having structural and functional features resembling ritual, but without the ritual's fixed or recurrent form. Anointment of the king is ritual. The symbolic elimination of enemy images in the subsequent festivities is ritualistic, given that the meaning reaches beyond the purely spectacular and connects to the fundamental and transformative ritual ceremony itself: the coronation.

Rituality, spectacularity and staging are all complex entities to deal with – one reason being the implications of the lens through which they are viewed. What is symbol to one person can be spectacle to another. Experience and meaning are relative entities, dependent on cultural background and context.

The cornucopia of manifestations in the coronation celebrations will now be read in parallel with the religious and military circumstances at the time.

THE TURK AND THE POPE

The basis for understanding the concept of 'ruler', and thereby the coronation as event, was to be found in the ideology of Martin Luther. One of a ruler's duties was, as mentioned, to uphold and defend the true faith. It was also Luther who formulated the central theses on enemies of the faith, heresy and nonbelief, personified by the Pope and the Turk: particularly in his treatises *Vom kriege widder die Türcken* (1528/29; 'On war against the Turks') and *Eine Heerpredigt widder den Türcken* (1529; 'Military sermon against the Turk'), written in the immediate context of Süleyman I's terrifying encirclement and siege of Vienna in 1529.⁹ Süleyman – the Protector of Islam, Defender of the Faith, Lawgiver – was in command of a realm comprising more than a score peoples. As mentioned, territories adjacent to the Habsburg Empire had fallen to the advancing Ottoman war machine. In other words, Luther was speaking into an exceedingly dramatic and ominous situation. Pressure on Vienna triggered fear of a blow to the solar plexus of Christendom. The prospect was the fall of Christianity. Also from the Ottoman vantage point. The fear was far more real than the prospect.

Luther now embeds the actual events into the grand world drama: the history of humankind seen as a battle between God and the Devil, in clear continuation of the tradition for embedding the biblical apocalypses such as the prophet Daniel's

9 First published in Danish as *Om krigen mod Tyrken* and *Feltprædiken mod Tyrken* in the Tidehvervs Forlag 1999/2012 book *Mod tyrken og jøden* ('Against the Turk and the Jew'), along with his treatise against the Jews (1543; *Von den Jüden und jren Lügen*; 'On the Jews and their lies'; Danish trans. *Om jøderne og deres løgne*), described by the publisher as one of Luther's weighty theological treatises.

visions and *The Revelation of St John the Divine* in concrete historical contexts. In the ninth century, for example, Paul Alvarus warned the Christians against reading Arabic works, because he ascribed Islam an adverse apocalyptic effect, opening the way for the Antichrist as foretold by Daniel. Columbus took it for granted, based on calculations by the astrologers, that the Last Days were imminent: Muhammad's sect was on the verge of collapse and the Antichrist was about to appear.¹⁰ The variations were manifold and contradictory.

With direct reference to Daniel's apocalyptic prophecies in the *Old Testament*, Luther points out as fact that first the Pope, who should be seen as the Antichrist, was sent to murder us spiritually, and now the Turk has been sent on a mission to slay us physically. Luther is rigorously specific and concrete in his reading of the Holy Scripture. The true nature of the two central figures is evident: "wie der Papst der Endechrist, so ist der Turk der leibhaftige Teufel. [...] Sie sollen auch hinuntern zur Hölle, und sollt es gleich der jüngst Tag thun, welcher (ich hoffe,) nicht lange sein wird."¹¹ (as the pope is Antichrist, so the Turk is the very devil. [...] Both shall go down to hell, even though it may take the Last Day to send them there; and I hope it will not be long.) The underlying strategy is equally clear:

Also mus der teuffel, weil der welt ende fuerhanden ist, die Christenheit zuvor mit beyder seiner macht auff's aller gewlichst angreifen und uns die rechte letze geben, ehe wir gen himel faren [...] der Tuercke [...] sey [...] der vorlauff der hellen und ewiger (Dan. 7, 26) straffe. Denn Daniel sagt, das noch dem Tuercken flugs das gericht und die helle folgen sol.¹²

(Thus, because the end of the world draws near, the Devil must first attack Christendom most dreadfully with both his forces, and give us the due parting draught, before we ascend into heaven [...] The Turk [...] is [...] the forerunner of Hell and eternal (Dan. 7:26) punishment, for Daniel says that the Turk will be followed immediately by judgement and Hell.)

Strictly speaking, that is not what Daniel says; it is what a reading of Daniel's words as applied to the actual situation says. Daniel does not, for good reason, speak of the Turk.

A central point in the argument is the prophet Daniel's vision of four great beasts rising from the sea. Luther's interpretation of the vision is in keeping with the 'four empire' scenario of his contemporary historiography: the Assyrian-Babylonian,

¹⁰ Cf. Irwin, pp. 25 and 61.

¹¹ Luther, *Vom kriege widder die Türcken*, p. 126.

¹² Luther, *Eine Heerpredigt widder den Türcken*, p. 162.