Cosponsored by the Department of the History of Art, University of Michigan, and the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Ars Orientalis solicits scholarly manuscripts on the art and archaeology of Asia, including the ancient Near East and the Islamic world. Fostering a broad range of themes and approaches, articles of interest to scholars in diverse fields or disciplines are particularly sought, as are suggestions for occasional thematic issues and reviews of important books in Western or Asian languages. Brief research notes and responses to articles in previous issues of Ars Orientalis will also be considered. Submissions must be in English, with all non-English quotations normally provided in translation. Authors are asked to follow The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th ed. A style sheet is available from the editorial office.

Ars Orientalis subscriptions are handled by Turpin Distribution. (For contact information, go to www.asia.si.edu/research/ArsOrientalis.asp.)

Current subscription rates (including shipping):
- U.S. individual: $40
- U.S. institution: $50
- International individual: $42
- International institution: $52

Subscription-related inquires (invoice, payment, and change of address):
turpinna@turpin-distribution.com (Canada, Mexico, USA)
custserv@turpin-distribution.com (all other countries)

Special subscription rates are currently available as a membership option through the American Oriental Society. For more information, please contact the American Oriental Society, Hatcher Graduate Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109–1205, or access the society’s home page at www.umich.edu/~aos.

The full text of Ars Orientalis is also available in the electronic versions of Art Index and online through JSTOR (www.jstor.org).
ARS ORIENTALIS VOLUME 39

GLOBALIZING CULTURES: ART AND MOBILITY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

NEBAHAT AVCIIOĞLU AND FINBARR BARRY FLOOD, GUEST EDITORS
CONTENTS

7  INTRODUCTION
   Globalizing Cultures: Art and Mobility in the Eighteenth Century
   Nebahat Avcıoğlu and Finbarr Barry Flood

39  A ROOMFUL OF MIRRORS
   The Artful Embrace of Mughals and Franks, 1550–1700
   Sanjay Subrahmanyam

84  LOOKING EAST
   Jean-Etienne Liotard, the Turkish Painter
   Kristel Smentek

113  EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY OTTOMAN PRINCESSES AS COLLECTORS
   From Chinese to European Porcelain
   Tülay Artan

148  TRANSLATING VISIONS
   A Japanese Lacquer Plaque of the Haram of Mecca in
   the L. A. Mayer Memorial Museum, Jerusalem
   Anton Schweizer and Avinoam Shalem

175  THE “PALAIS INDIENS” COLLECTION OF 1774
   Representing Mughal Architecture in Late Eighteenth-Century India
   Chanchal Dadlani

198  “DRESSING TURKS IN THE FRENCH MANNER”
   Mouradgea d’Ohsson’s Panorama of the Ottoman Empire
   Elisabeth A. Fraser

231  HISTORY OR THEORY?
   French Antiquarianism, Cairene Architecture, and Enlightenment Thinking
   Mercedes Volait
“DRESSING TURKS IN THE FRENCH MANNER”

Mouradgea d’Ohsson’s Panorama of the Ottoman Empire

Abstract

An Ottoman Armenian dragoman (interpreter) active in Constantinople, Mouradgea d’Ohsson (1740–1807) traveled to Paris in 1784 to publish a historical overview of the Ottoman Empire. Writing in a fraught political context following the Russian defeat of the Ottomans, Ohsson forthrightly cast his publication as a defense of Islam and the Ottoman Empire. More than a textual apology, his illustrated book embodies a supreme act of cultural crossing. Written by an Ottoman, the book continues an Ottoman tradition of illustrated historiography, but it was published in French and produced by a large French team of artists and artisans of the book trade, who interpreted and transformed its Ottoman elements, creating a heterogeneous object. Ohsson’s book bridges and blurs French and Ottoman cultures, suggesting their contingency and entanglement. Moreover, the process of making this book was itself a cultural encounter for those who were involved, an encounter whose traces remain visible in the final product for the viewer-reader to experience. The cumulative effect of these crossings is to see Ottoman and French forms as connected across a continuum of visual possibilities; the heterogeneity of Ohsson’s book served as an allegory of entanglement, interrelation, and alliance in the very moment when they were politically contested.

THERE IS NOTHING IN ISLAM, nothing in the law and authority of the sultans of the Ottoman Empire that is contrary to reasoned governance and the enlightened cultivation of the arts and sciences; only popular prejudice, borne of caprice and passion and contrary to the spirit of the Koran, afflicts the Empire. With these arguments Ignatius Mouradgea d’Ohsson begins his extraordinary Tableau général de l’Empire Ottoman (Panorama of the Ottoman Empire), published in 1787. Ohsson, an Ottoman Armenian dragoman (interpreter) in the service of the Swedish consul in Constantinople, left for Paris in 1784 to publish his magnificent and singular work. Ohsson wrote in the political wake of the Russian defeat of the Ottomans in 1774; with the renewal of hostilities imminent, a dramatic upheaval in alliances threatened and the sultan now reversed his unilateral politics, seeking coalitions with European powers (Prussia, France, Sweden, and England). In this fraught context, Ohsson forthrightly cast his book as a defense of Islam and the Ottoman Empire. But more than a textual apology, his illustrated book embodies a supreme act of cultural crossing. Written by an Ottoman, the book draws on Ottoman historiography and art, but it was published in French and was produced by a large French team of artists and artisans of the book trade, who interpreted and transformed its Ottoman elements, creating a tangibly heterogeneous object. This heterogeneity is the essence of Ohsson’s defense of Ottoman culture.
The *Tableau général* is well known to historians of the Ottoman Empire. Long exploited as important sources of historical information, Ohsson’s text and images tend to be evaluated in terms of their accuracy. One of the most interesting aspects of this book, however, is not so much its accurate representation of one culture or another, or even the information it provides about the Ottoman Empire in the late eighteenth century, but the way that it bridges and blurs French and Ottoman cultures, suggesting their contingency and entanglement. Moreover, the process of making this book was itself a cultural encounter for those who were involved, an encounter whose traces remain visible in the final product for the viewer-reader to experience.

Studies of European and Ottoman interactions are not new; however, they have long been written under the sway of an outdated, retrospective view that sees the Ottoman Empire as entering a state of progressive decline from about 1600, and looking increasingly to Europe. Consequently, concern with this interaction has been slanted toward the study of “Western” influences on Ottoman culture. But new Ottoman history rejects this so-called decline paradigm, an overtly Orientalist construction, whereby cultural innovation and vitality were widely equated with Europeanization. As ways of interpreting Ottoman and European histories have shifted, so too must relations between Ottoman and European culture be reconsidered.

Ohsson’s book, with its adoption of the language of reform, has been interpreted by diplomatic historians in terms of European meaning-making, as part of a Westernizing embrace of the politics of the European Enlightenment. But this would be to miss a subtle countercurrent in his volumes. His *Tableau général*, with its self-conscious, autoethnographic defense of the Ottomans, offers a precious perspective onto a meeting of French and Ottoman cultural actors, extending from a history of crossings back and forth that is only beginning to be fully acknowledged. As Suraiya Faroqhi has recently concluded, “Before the last quarter of the eighteenth century […] the Ottomans and their European neighbours still inhabited a common world.” Ohsson’s work, then, insinuates and strategically relies on likenesses between French and Ottoman imperial culture precisely at a moment when this commonality would be politically contested. Within these entangled histories, Ohsson’s project is unique in bringing together both Ottoman and French artists, artisans, and writers in the creation of a single object, which fostered a mutual study of forms and technologies at a pivotal historical moment, in a period when the Ottomans were increasingly concerned with the necessity of building diplomatic alliances. In what follows, I look at the *Tableau général* as a product of active agents consciously adopting cross-cultural modes, implicitly negotiating issues of legibility, significance, and acceptability into the bargain.
Remaking the French Illustrated Travel Book

Ohsson chose France, with its luxury book trade, as the place to produce his work. France was the Ottoman Empire’s oldest European ally and had good relations with the Swedish court, to which Ohsson was connected as interpreter to Sweden’s representatives in Istanbul, Gustaf and Ulric Celsing.13 His diplomatic services on behalf of Sweden, which went far beyond his duties as translator, were so appreciated that King Gustav III ennobled him in 1780.12 Ohsson gratefully dedicated his book to the Swedish monarch.

Ohsson’s Tableau général was an ambitious enterprise, printed by the famous French typographer Pierre-François Didot, and illustrated by some of the most sought-after French artists and print makers of the time. Initially planning as many as eight volumes with hundreds of prints,13 Ohsson ultimately published two thick volumes in 1787 and 1790, both well over three hundred pages; a third, nearly five hundred pages in length, was completed by his son in 1820 after his death. According to his published book prospectus, he intended to cover the dauntingly immense topics of “the customs, mores, religion, and laws of the Ottomans” but only the sections on Islamic, civic and military law were completed, while many of the other topics are dealt with in abundant digressions.14 His three massive, large-folio tomes together contain a total of 233 plates, many of which are double-page or larger. At least twenty-eight artists (painters, designers, and engravers) were involved in the production of the book, whose artistic direction was initially assumed by Charles-Nicolas Cochin, a major figure in the eighteenth-century French art world and well
experienced in book illustration. The number and quality of these fine prints, along with the attention paid to typography and paper, place Ohsson’s publication clearly within the bibliophile book trade of the period. The production of high-quality illustrated books reached a peak in France during the last several decades of the eighteenth century and bibliophile collectors were willing to pay high prices for finely produced works. Ohsson’s enterprise, then, was as much commercial as it was political and pedagogical, involving large sums of money.

Illustrated travel books were becoming a cultural phenomenon in France in this period. Many travel books included costume plates, particularly publications on the Ottoman Empire because of the great diversity of Ottoman ethnic, religious, regional, professional, and political identities that were articulated through dress. Ohsson’s book has over 150 costume plates, illustrating court and military hierarchies and social types (Fig. 1). In other ways, the Tableau général can be seen as related to types known in French travel literature: many of his subjects were common to books on the Ottoman Empire, including scenes from the imperial court and harem, ambassadorial receptions, the Bayram festival, Eyüp cemetery, women at the tandir, the hammam, and views of the most famous mosques (Fig. 2).

A reader of Ohsson’s volume in 1787 would have been particularly struck by similarities between it and the famous Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce, published in 1782 by Count Marie-Gabriel de Choiseul-Gouffier, who was subsequently appointed French ambassador to Constantinople in 1784, the year Ohsson left that city for Paris. A highly publicized and well-received work,Choiseul’s Voyage created a prototype followed by artists and authors who published travel books after him: richly illustrated volumes made for the bibliophile market, sharing many of the same artists and engravers, size (grand-folio) and format (interleaving text and plates), typography, type of decoration (fleurons, vignettes, culs-de-lampe), and mode of distribution (through subscription) and production (collective).
Like Choiseul, Ohsson launched his publication with a handsome prospectus and subscription campaign and announcements in learned journals. In determining his format and price, a grand 150 livres per volume with a subscription and 180 without, Ohsson was advised to use Choiseul’s as a standard. Ohsson’s title page (Fig. 3), with a fine vignette by Jean-Michel Moreau, mimics the page composition of Choiseul’s (Fig. 4), which was also designed and engraved by Moreau. The engraver Jean-Baptiste Tilliard and artist Jean-Baptiste Hilair, who were responsible for almost all of Choiseul’s images, also produced many of Ohsson’s. (Indeed, Cochin had counseled Ohsson to hire Tilliard specifically because of his success with Choiseul’s work.) Like the Voyage pittoresque, the Armenian’s publication included landscapes and costume plates, along with court scenes and rituals. Some of his specific subjects were the same as Choiseul’s (and those of other travel accounts): the traditional Greek dance called the Romeca (Fig. 5), the cirid (javelin) game, and official reception scenes. The late eighteenth-century catalogue of the great eighteenth-century book tradition, Jacques-Charles Brunet, who considered Choiseul’s book one of the best of the period, also praised the “especially fine execution” of Ohsson’s work.

Ohsson’s references are multiple and complicated and do not point exclusively to Choiseul’s publication. Nonetheless, a comparison of the two does illuminate the Tableau’s specific qualities and helps us see the balancing act between two cultures in which Ohsson and his artists were engaged. Selective borrowings are part of Ohsson’s fascinating process of translation, where he appropriates certain forms in order to make his views and concepts legible to his French audience, a delicate act of mediation which Ohsson’s correspondent Ulric Celsing referred to as “dressing up Turks in the French manner.” Likewise, I understand the word “translation” not as a transparent transference of meaning from one medium or language to another,
but as an act of cultural mediation—suggested by Celsing’s sartorial metaphor—in which process, naturally, meanings and forms are disturbed; the “original” is inevitably transformed.25

Choiseul’s book provided Ohsson with a structure and an external shape, helpful in lending his enterprise commercial and intellectual legitimacy: recognized by his audience, the format of Choiseul’s large-folio illustrated volume gave Ohsson’s approach and subject (Muslim doctrine) familiar form. But the Frenchman’s work also provided a kind of negative framework: while conforming to some of its external appearances, Ohsson shifted the content to encompass a different perspective, countering the Orientalist tropes lacing the French aristocrat’s account of his voyage through the Ottoman Empire. We might say that he used the conventions of travel literature in order to subvert them.

Although Choiseul’s book covers the Ottoman regions Romelia and Anatolia, it skirts the Ottoman Empire as a political and cultural entity, whereas Ohsson’s—despite its nominal focus on religious doctrine—features extensive coverage of Ottoman history and contemporary life, including such topics as social prac-
tics, dress, architecture, and cooking, among many other sub-themes. Choiseul's primary focus on antiquity, common in early modern European travel literature, is suggested in the classical geographic terms he uses (Greece, Asia Minor) rather than the geopolitical one preferred by Ohsson (the Ottoman Empire). Choiseul pays little attention to the administrative structure of the Ottoman Empire, contemporary Ottoman culture, or Islam; where these subjects do appear in his work, it is usually in negative or generalized terms. His itinerary places him in the provinces of the Ottoman Empire where he only occasionally encounters provincial pashas. By contrast, Ohsson's work focuses on the elite culture of the Ottoman capital and especially on the court and military hierarchy.

The Tableau général is itself a travel book in an important sense: it is a product of Ohsson looking back at the Ottoman Empire from his perch in Paris; he, like other travelers, is also looking as a cross-cultural figure. The book is informed in many ways by the place in which he produced it. Ever the translator, the dragoman frequently compares Ottoman and European custom, a common convention in travel literature, but Ohsson usually avoids suggesting a preference for one or the other. Muslim women of the Ottoman Empire, he says, lack the grace and elegance of European women, but they have instead a nobility of dress and the charms of a simpler nature (see Fig. 1). Europeans stand up to greet a newcomer to a room; Ottomans do not, as it is not their custom to move freely about a room once installed in it. Only the sultan or members of the Divan sit “à l’Européenne” (on a chair) on specific ceremonial occasions. Never does an Ottoman sit cross-legged or stretch out a foot while seated unless he is in the presence of intimate friends or inferiors. These comparisons contextualize and clarify customs but do not, for the most part, provide a scale of values. Moreover, the bringing into a comparative relationship of French and Ottoman culture undercuts exoticist approaches to the latter: Ohsson places cultural similarities and differences within a common frame of reference.

In one fascinating passage juxtaposing European and Ottoman social practices, Ohsson explains that Muslims never go to European parties in the capital (although sometimes Greeks do). A young seigneur of the court might occasionally permit himself to attend but he would take precautions, sitting withdrawn on a corner sofa. Here, in a mise en abîme, Ohsson imagines the Ottoman prince watching Europeans at leisure and what would surprise or shock him, a device whereby Ohsson's European readers, the observers of Ottomans as the consumers of this text, suddenly become the watched.

Over and over again, Ohsson portrays Ottoman culture and Muslim practices as sober, serious, dignified, and designed to inculcate moral behavior, countering Choiseul's generalizations. Writing about a festivity he has happened upon, Choiseul describes “Turks” as fanatical, driven by a kind of grotesque drunkenness and
vice; the dancers are obscene. By contrast, Ohsson’s discussions of music and dance are specific, not generalized: he describes who practices what and under what conditions. Although music is in theory prohibited by religious doctrine, it is practiced in specific places, claims Ohsson: in Constantinople and other big Ottoman cities, some do enjoy music passionately; the sultan himself listens to music performed by pages and slave girls. No music is performed in a mosque, however. According to Ohsson, the Muslim interdiction against dance is taken far more seriously in the Ottoman Empire: Christian Greeks do dance (see Fig. 5), especially at Easter when they have a special dispensation (firman) to do so; Muslims for the most part do not dance, unless they are part of the public troupes of dancers (which rarely in fact include Muslims) or slave girls (Fig. 6). In another example, Choiseul’s images of resting “orientals” (see Fig. 11) conjure up the stereotype of the indolent Turk, a theme the author develops in a passage on the Ottomans’ discouragement of industry.30 The maxims of Islam are designed to instill a work ethic, Ohsson flatly declares by contrast.31 In his descriptions, even the pleasures of court life are occasional and limited: a day’s outing to Beşiktaş along the Bosphorus (depicted in Ohsson, plate 169), the spectacle of javelin-throwing (cirid) performed by the palace pages (Ohsson, plate 171), and a return at day’s end to the administrative work of New Palace (now Topkapı). In this way, filling in gaps left by Choiseul’s book, providing some new terms and omitting others, opening new perspectives, Ohsson departs from this prototype and transforms it.

Ohsson’s work also tellingly omits maps and plans, important components of contemporary travel books of all kinds: with their obvious strategic value, maps were one of the main reasons the French government was so interested in funding travel books. (In a note buried in the archives, Napoleon’s minister of war writes to Choiseul in 1802 asking for maps in his possession used for his publication.)32 Choiseul’s book is studded with maps, but Ohsson was clearly not interested in the surveying of Ottoman space, the making visible and accessible of Ottoman territory.

Promoting the Ottoman Culture of Letters
If Ohsson’s Tableau général harnesses the prestige of the French book to his defense of Ottoman society, using the power of the book and the trappings of the French book trade to new ends, its author also makes it clear that bibliophilia is not the exclusive domain of the French.33 An Ottoman might learn from France’s book culture, but Ohsson’s French readers can also learn from his: Ohsson’s publication is a two-way proposition, as he makes clear in a lengthy discussion of Ottoman books and manuscripts. The author tells us, in his usual top-down approach, that Ottoman princes greatly favor the “culture of letters” in their states and that most imperial mosques have public libraries (called “Kitab-Khanes”), “built with taste
and elegance,” with thirty-five in Constantinople alone. Those who own books (manuscripts and printed books) will them to public libraries. Always mindful of the court hierarchy, he does not fail to mention the sultan’s private collection of manuscript books, as well as two large libraries in the imperial palace: the Ahmed III and Mustafa III foundations. After a plate illustrating Arabic characters, two particularly fine prints overseen by Cochin depict two public libraries: one (Fig. 7) represents the library founded by Grand Vizier Raghib Pasha, an interior view attentive to the architectural details and elegance of the vast space and conveying a sense of its hushed solemnity. A third image by Hilair presents “livres turcs” to show the format of Ottoman books and their famous leather bindings. (Book bindings were also much admired in late eighteenth-century France.) A detailed history of the famous Istanbul printing press established by Ibrahim Muteferrikâ in 1729 follows. According to Ohsson, Ottoman rulers had long been reluctant to allow the establishment of a printing press because of its possible negative effects on the important commerce of manuscript production within the Ottoman Empire. Ahmed III finally allowed a press to be set up to print works on philosophy, medicine, astronomy, geography, history, and science. So important is this printing press to the image Ohsson seeks to convey that he provides a complete list of the books printed by Muteferrikâ, including histories of the “grands hommes” of the Orient, the Ottomans’ maritime expeditions, and Egypt and its conquest by Selim I. Another publication is a deliberation on different forms of government, good administration, and the military arts. (How close these subjects sound to the kinds of topics addressed by eighteenth-century French authors!)

But it is not merely in describing and picturing aspects of Ottoman book culture that Ohsson valorizes it. His book embodies this culture, alluding to and drawing upon Ottoman traditions. History-writing, an important feature of the Ottoman manuscript tradition, spawned a rich visual culture of illustrated books in which text and miniatures formed a composite whole. These court-sponsored works combining word and image, produced from the fifteenth century following the
Ottoman conquest of Istanbul, were executed by teams of artists, scribes, and bookbinders overseen by a court historiographer and master illustrator.\textsuperscript{27} Ohsson, who had gathered a team in Paris to create his own illustrated Ottoman history, might well have seen himself as the heir to this imperial tradition.

Imperial illuminated histories were produced into the early eighteenth century, with the Surname manuscript written by the poet Vehbi and illuminated by the artist Abdülcelîl Çelebi, known as Levni, and his school circa 1721.\textsuperscript{28} Ohsson suggests that Mûteferrikkâ, whose founding of the eighteenth-century Istanbul printing press he has just discussed, also carried on the tradition of illustrating history, imitating "Persian" manuscripts in books produced by his press. Citing the success of Mûteferrikkâ's illustrated History of the West Indies (Tarihü’l-Hindi’l-Garbi el-Müsemma bi Hadis-i Nev), supported by “enlightened ministers,” Ohsson applauds the “novelty of a project so contrary to the prejudices of the multitude.” His praise for the printer's work comes at the end of a discussion of Muslim prohibition against images: he promotes Mûteferrikkâ’s government-supported work as an example of how easily prominent statesmen could encourage representational arts in Ottoman society, an encouragement that he regards primarily as a question of the courage to go against the tide of popular opinion.\textsuperscript{29} (Only sultans who commissioned portraits have previously had this courage, he asserts.) With its revival by Sultan Abdülhamid in 1784 under the direction of the imperial historiographer, the Istanbul printing press was now at work, Ohsson tells us, on a suite of Ottoman history.\textsuperscript{30} Tellingly, Ohsson ends this discussion of the printing press, illustrated histories, and religious views about images with a lengthy exposé of his efforts in obtaining images for his own work, implicitly linking his own enterprise with the “courageous” publishing innovations of the Istanbul press. (Indeed, Ohsson claims it was on reading a work produced by that press that he conceived the idea for his own book.\textsuperscript{41}) In that context, Ohsson's own Tableau général, as an illustrated history book produced in large part thanks to his connections within the court hierarchy, intervenes in this debate about Islam and images in Ottoman practice.\textsuperscript{42} Ohsson presents his work, like Mûteferrikkâ’s illustrated history, as an initiative from above to turn the tide of popular opinion, placing it, moreover, within a historiographic lineage. Ohsson implicitly styled his Tableau general as a continuation of Mûteferrikkâ’s publishing activity, bringing Ottoman print culture to France. The effect is not to emphasize Ottoman adoption of a European technology, but the reverse: to connect print culture to a specifically Ottoman book tradition and, hence, to remind his readers of the longevity of the Ottoman Empire. Even as he appropriated the trappings of French book production and travel literature, then, Ohsson positioned his book within Ottoman historiography.
Authentically Ottoman

Throughout his text, Ohsson returns to his great efforts in gathering primary material for his publication. His court connections gave him access to official annals, “my titles of authenticity for all that I put forward, because the most scrupulous truth and exactitude are in my eyes the primary merit of this work.” Assuring his French audience of his book’s “authenticity,” this use of Ottoman sources also legitimizes it as a novel contribution to writing about the Ottoman Empire in France. Ohsson presents his credentials, his direct experience, and his connections to the inner circles of the court hierarchy: “Born in Constantinople, raised in that country, and attached all my life to the service of a court allied with the Porte through intimate relations,” Ohsson vaunts his special qualifications for his task. They derive not only from his service with the Swedish consulate, but also from “particular charges in the direct service of the Porte.” Seeing “ministers and the principal officers of diverse departments almost every day,” Ohsson “came to know profoundly ... all the objects that concern this nation.” The heads of departments of state themselves had such confidence in the dragoman and his historical project, he claims, that they eagerly offered him excerpts from their own ledgers.

Of particular importance to Ohsson are the images that make up such a significant portion of his book. In the book itself, he goes into some detail about his great pains to obtain them, dramatizing his difficulties by emphasizing and perhaps exaggerating the dangers involved, and returning to the subject in several passages. These discussions of images ring with words like “fidelity,” “faithfulness,” “truth,” “exactness,” and “scrupulousness,” signaling the author’s particular concern to make the reader aware of the images’ authenticity. Ohsson is adamant that all of his prints are derived from paintings made in Istanbul: in addition to copies of a special album of sultans’ portraits (never used), “all the other prints that adorn this work are part of a collection of paintings executed locally [dans le pays]. [...] Their composition, the work of many years, was directed with the greatest care. The most scrupulous truth and exactitude are their greatest merit. All these paintings are now being engraved in Paris.”
Returning to this theme later in his work, he again is emphatic about his great efforts to obtain images made in situ within the Ottoman Empire. The difficulty in obtaining images is twofold in Ohsson’s exposé. First, he has to contend, he claims, with a Muslim reluctance to deal with images, particularly figural ones, obliging artists to take “infinite precautions,” and to “work in their homes or mine, in silence and secrecy.” Second, he needed official protection and to get it, he had to overcome officials’ fear of being compromised. It was through official connections, he asserts, that he was able to get drawings of the interiors of mosques, burial chapels, libraries, and the rooms of the Divan. According to Ohsson, artists who had worked in the imperial palace were able to make images of the sultan’s apartments, the harem, and imperial kiosks, but images of burial chapels proved most difficult to get because no Christian was allowed to enter; he had to convince Muslim painters to overcome “their superstitious prejudices.” He concludes: “With this exposé of the means I have employed for more than ten years to form the collection of paintings and drawings relative to Ottoman history, one can glean the trouble and expense this aspect of my work occasioned me and the research I did on all that pertained to civil society and political administration.” He leaves no doubt in the reader’s mind that these images are particularly estimable, as they were difficult to come by and were produced within the Ottoman Empire itself by people who were knowledgeable about Ottoman culture—unlike, one is given to infer, the images in French travel literature.
dressing Turks in the French manner"

By comparison with Choiseul’s plates, many of Ohsson’s prints themselves are stark and sober, standing for the simple dignity he identifies as the core of Muslim practice. The illustrative clarity of the images underscores Ohsson’s spare, direct language: akin to a how-to guide to Muslim practices, two images, for instance, demonstrate the various stages of daily prayer (namaz) for men (Fig. 8) and women. The difference between Choiseul’s and Ohsson’s images holds true even when the images were made by the very same artist. With his light touch, Hilair infuses his images in the Voyage pittoresque with optimism and serenity and fills them abundantly; in the Tableau général his images are stripped down, plain, and simplified. Using the same serialized format of four plates appearing on one sheet, Hilair’s inhabitants of Caria (Fig. 9) for Choiseul and his Ottomans, Arab, and Tatars for Ohsson (Fig. 10) share the usual conventions for costume plates: the figures appear isolated in a loosely defined landscape with a low horizon line that sets them off. They pose, gesture, tilt their heads, and turn in different directions in a way that is

---

11 J. Dambrun, engraving after J. B. Hilair, Vue d’un théâtre de Té MISSISUS. Plate 71 from Choiseul-Gouffier, Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce, vol. 1, 1782. Paris: s.n. Photograph BnF

meant to undercut the potential monotony of serialization. But the plates for the
Voyage pittoresque are noticeably richer: full, deep shadows define the figures, the
landscape settings are more elaborate, and the figures hold attributes and props.
Even the terrain on which they stand is enlivened by greater detail in the vegeta-
tion, rock, slope, and fall in the earth, and vast cloud formations animate the skies
behind. Similarly, if we compare an architectural image after Hilair from each work,
the ruins of a theatre at Telmessus (Fig. 11) in Choiseul’s book and Mustafa III’s
burial chapel (Fig. 12) in Ohsson’s, the view of the latter is emptier, more basic, and
far less whimsical, dominated by hard lines and clear structures, which vegetation
does little to soften. This contrast suggests the distinct purposes of the two works,
but it also points to differing origins and visual traditions.

The austerity of many of the images is underscored by the absence of decorative
motifs typical of illustrated books in the period, the fleurons, vignettes, bandeaux,
and elegant culs-de-lampe (Fig. 13) which grace Choiseul’s book with such
abundance. These elements, mostly commissioned pieces, added to the duration
and expense of book production, so it is possible that they were omitted from the
Tableau for financial reasons. Nonetheless, their absence contributes to the over-
all effect of the book’s sobriety and seriousness. When compared with Choiseul’s
book, these differences connote directness and frankness—the bare, unvarnished
truth—which commentators interpreted as signs of the work’s authenticity. The
royal censor who evaluated the manuscript, for example, praised its “character of
truth, authenticity, and most profound erudition.” Cochin wrote, condescending-
ly, of its “naive truth,” a view I discuss further below. The sober appearance
of Ohsson’s book, seen as a kind of “reality effect” by contemporaries, countered the
picturesque appearance of Choiseul’s, lending it greater authority.

Making Ottoman Images French (Or Not)
As is already apparent, the story of the images in the Tableau général, their origins
and their transformation into prints, is complex. (The subject has been dealt with
in detail by art historians Günsel Renda and Christian Michel.) Gathered from a
diverse range of sources, the images Ohsson had made in Istanbul were either copi-
es of earlier works (imperial portraits, illuminated manuscripts), or original works.
Discerning exactly who executed these paintings is difficult, above all because
the artists are unnamed in the final work, Ohsson dramatically invoking his vow
to preserve the anonymity of those who were involved in the different parts of his
task, in order to protect them from potential ridicule. References to authorship of
the original works are general and contradictory: in his prospectus and “Discours pré-
liminaire,” Ohsson refers broadly to “Greek and European painters” but later men-
tions Muslim painters as well; Cochin refers vaguely to “Greek or Italian artists.”
Yet Cochin clearly regarded the paintings from Istanbul as foreign, and, for him, strange. Although both Ohsson and Cochin mention European artists, Cochin’s lengthy discussion of the production of engravings makes it evident that these images had to be transformed, translated into what would be for him a recognizable and acceptable idiom. Complaining that “all the figures are too short, their heads too big,” the artist says the paintings are “of a great exactness, but without taste, without effect, and with a disagreeable perspective.” His negative assessment aside, his list describes well features that distinguish Ottoman from French art, even in the later eighteenth century: the different proportions of figures; the use of exact, strong contours; an absence of atmospheric effects; and high perspectives. It is the different cultural origin of Ohsson’s images, in part, that gives many of the prints a palpably different appearance from those of other illustrated French books of this period.

Ohsson’s description of how he came by the images of Mecca (Fig. 14) and Medina is particularly elaborate. After seeing paintings made by a “Muslim painter” who accompanied a court official on a pilgrimage in 1778, Ohsson obtained permission for copies to be made by “one of the best painters from Istanbul,” to which figures were added to show the pilgrims’ movement around the Ka’aba for the first day of Bayram. Images of Mecca were not scarce in Ottoman culture, but this one, an enormous tableau-like, double-sized plate, one of the most remarkable of Ohsson’s prints, might well be based on direct observation. Günsel Renda convincingly presents a gouache painting of the Holy Cities by court painter Kostantin
Kapıdağlı, executed for Sultan Selim III, as a version of the painting he most likely made for Ohsson’s work.55 Its skewed perspective, reduced color range, and simplification of form are not conventional in French art and have been softened by the French designer and engraver, who have also added lush nuance and texture to the scene, visible in the final engraving. With its large-scale, panoramic perspective, and high horizon line, the print shows Mecca spread out before the viewer. The city is embraced by mighty mountains, rendered in stunning engraving and echoed in form by the snaking line of pilgrims, whose infinite (or at least uncountable) number is suggested by the infinite reach of the vast landscape. Figures, box-like buildings, and mountains multiply serially throughout the image, which strikingly encompasses both small detail and vast scale in one. It is a particularly felicitous marriage of Ottoman art and French print making.

Because of a legal wrangle between Cochin, François Denis Née, Cochin’s principal partner in carrying out the engravings, and Ohsson over payments and costs, we know more than usual about the making of this book. In addition to his correspondence, where he mentions this demanding project, Cochin also wrote a lengthy memorandum describing it, to be used as part of his legal defense. (In the end, the three men came to a settlement arbitrated by a notary, and Cochin and Née ceased work on the publication.)56 As the supervisor of the image-making process for at least the first and part of the second volumes, Cochin was responsible for having the Ottoman paintings commissioned by Ohsson drawn (or redrawn) by an
intermediary draftsman as preparation for the engraving. (It was a standard part of the complicated process of creating copper engravings in the eighteenth century for a designer to prepare a highly finished drawing for the engraver, usually in reverse, to the exact size determined for the print.)

His description of this process provides a rare glimpse into the mechanisms of a cultural encounter, making Cochin’s account especially valuable. After all, processes of European transculturation, as Mary Louise Pratt has argued, are often only visible as subterranean traces and are frequently repressed or ignored by those who publish travel accounts.

Although Cochin criticized the Ottoman images, he valued their “great exactitude” and “naïve truth,” a phrase mixing praise with condescension. “I had to correct everything, and I redid almost all of it,” but “I was taken with the idea of conserving the naïvely true effect [these works] have; I only want to perfect them without abandoning their true system of nature.”

Ohsson himself seems to have vacillated between leaving the Ottoman images as they were and having French artists completely repaint them, as was apparently done for a few images before the draftsman made the drawing for the engraver to work from. Moreau, initially engaged as draftsman for the project, urged that all the works be redrawn completely. This was counter to Cochin’s view, as he admired the way the Ottoman images bore “a character of truth that, possibly, none of our sophisticated artists would be able to capture to the same degree. I am obliged, since I want to conserve this truth whose importance I so value, to redraw all the figures that are too small and whose heads are too big, taking care not to ‘frenchify’ [franciser] them, something that our best draftsmen would no doubt accomplish.” Since, in addition to obliterating elements of the originals, the process of repainting was time-consuming and expensive, Cochin developed a technique of contour drawing that adjusted the Ottoman images minimally.

Differences in attitude and approach to the images brought by Ohsson from Istanbul help to explain why the final prints in his book present clearly differing pictorial idioms. The “Frenchness” Cochin sought to avoid is evident in some of the images, obviously made by artists who did not share Cochin’s qualified appreciation for the Ottoman works. For instance, Moreau’s masterful double-page print of the procession of the Sürre Emini (Fig. 15) resulted from a work redone most likely by Moreau himself. Its perspective, with a lower horizon line and a softer integration of detail into the whole (with Moreau’s characteristic extreme fineness), reads very differently from the Mecca image, which is more clearly the product of an aesthetic merging. The element of what Cochin saw as “naïve truthfulness” is gone.

Overall the whole process of image-production for this work was tremendously complicated (and expensive), involving three or four maker-translators: the Ottoman artist who rendered the first image, the French painter who repainted the
image in some cases, the French designer who made the engraver’s drawing, and the French engraver. What emerges from Cochin’s description is a conception of the image-making process where French artists functioned less as translators—making Ottoman images French—than as performers of Ottoman-ness—French artists making Ottoman images. This process necessarily entailed a confrontation with and even a kind of study of Ottoman art. And because of the diversity of visual interpretations—the degrees to which Ottoman or French traditions are made visible—the reader of Ohsson’s book becomes aware of this aspect of it: it is not submerged or hidden. (Ohsson’s reiterated explanations of how he obtained his images further heighten his reader’s awareness of this aspect of the book’s production.) The process of translation is made visible and the reader-viewer is enjoined to participate in a cultural encounter—or at least to observe it unfolding in the book.

Several of the images in the Tableau général are derived from Ottoman manuscripts, adding yet another layer to the process of image-making and translation. (Ohsson calls them “Persian,” presumably a translator’s shorthand.) In introducing his first plates, Ohsson claims they are “copies fidèles” of these manuscripts, but their attempt at fidelity—their performance of Ottoman-ness—varies considerably. Some are derived from court historiographer Seyyid Lokman’s 1583 illustrated manuscript, a world history entitled Zübdettü’te Tevarih (Quintessence of Histories) that linked the Ottoman sultans to the prophets and past Islamic rulers.64 These images were most likely transmitted to the French artists via copies made by a contemporary Ottoman artist. Each visual correspondence to or divergence from the Ottoman originals reveals the artistic decision-making entailed in the creation of these images.

Adam (the first prophet) and Eve, appearing in the first plate in Ohsson’s book (Fig. 16), are shown, in the author’s words, in “oriental costume” in earthly paradise, next to the tree of life and death. In the original illumination (Fig. 17) their children, represented in differing scales, surround them and angels fly overhead, but all these figures are eliminated in Tiliard’s print, probably done after a drawing (or gouache) by Hilaire. The engraved representation of Adam and Eve, who stand alone on either side of the tree, more closely resembles European than Ottoman iconography. The flames above their heads remain—Ohsson explains that Adam is suspended between fire and water, body and spirit—though they are made more ethereal. Only these flames and the tree (lacking the apples and snake conventional to European images) with a river flowing from its base adhere to the original iconography of the Ottoman miniature. The appearance of Adam and Eve, too, has been considerably modified: the figures are stouter and more volumetric, their faces rounder and more detailed, and they stand in a field of light-
ened space rather than on or against a flat ground, casting shadows on the earth that recedes behind them. Delicate modeling replaces monochromatic and patterned surfaces. That the image is reversed right to left probably indicates that the intermediary drawing made for the engraver was not itself done in reverse, as was the usual practice in fine French book illustration, possibly suggesting a disregard for the original. The image of Adam and Eve has become a French representation of "oriental" figures.

The depiction of the Miraj, Muhammad’s night journey from Mecca (Fig. 18), is closer to its sixteenth-century Ottoman source (Fig. 19) than the engraving of Adam and Eve, perhaps because there is no corresponding European visual tradition to represent the subject. In this image, Muhammad rides Buraq, a human-headed beast, led by Gabriel and other angels, from the shrine of the Ka’aba in Mecca. Although the image is once again reversed, the French draftsman retained the multiple perspectives given in the original: the Ka’aba is seen frontally within the courtyard of the Grand Mosque against a checkered floor viewed from above; the nearest and furthest walls are also seen frontally, with two nominally vertical minarets positioned at left and right lying across the aerial view of the side arcades (hence compressing two views into one plane). In Ohsson’s plate, engraved by Tilliard, the architecture is given greater density, depth, and some shading, all of
which works to make the construction easier to read as a three-dimensional space according to post-Renaissance perspectival rules. But the convention whereby the Prophet’s face is obscured is adhered to: in the print we see only his foot in a stirrup and his turban, a flaming halo blocking the rest from view. In the upper quadrant of this plate, the arrangement of figures, their actions and attributes closely resemble those in the Ottoman original, but again everything is rounder, more modeled, with a greater sense of depth. The clouds, flatly incised, curled shapes in the Lokman manuscript, become softer, less tangible forms that recede behind the figures, subtly opening up space. But the iconography is wholly Ottoman.

This becomes clearer still when compared with the opening title page (see Fig. 3), a very fine fleuron engraved by Jean-Baptiste Simonet after Moreau, which places Muhammad in the flesh in the center foreground, entirely visible from head to foot, in a dramatic pose, his emotive visage raised heavenward as his left hand holds up the Koran. His right hand aggressively brandishes an unsheathed saber. Ohsson describes the scene, which represents

the Ka’aba in Mecca with its idols, which Muhammad overturns to establish the cult of a single god, on the ruins of paganism. In one hand his saber, in the other the leaves of the Koran, instruments for subjugating minds and
propagating his doctrine. On the right side we see the first four Caliphs, and on the left side, the four Imams who were the authors of religious legislation and founders of the four orthodox rites. The Caliphs are armed with a saber, the Imams with the Koran. […] both groups […] spreading the doctrine and power of Muhammad with different means.67

A deep space defined by the conventions of European landscape painting, the image is framed heraldically by vertically thrusting trees; with their dense, inky texture, the trees function as repoussoir devices. A series of rises and dips in the terrain beyond shapes compositional space, in which are clustered the Caliphs and Imams. The composition recedes atmospherically into the deep background where the horizon is edged by soft mountain forms and the sky is activated with darkened, billowing storm clouds. The terrain opens into the foreground, giving Muhammad a stable plinth, with rocks and vegetation forming its edges. Nothing about this image suggests an Ottoman convention. If this image was adapted from an Ottoman work—and this appears highly unlikely—the original has been completely cancelled out.

Among the images in which we see French artists meeting and matching pictorial effects, trying to adopt a pictorial idiom different from their own, the results


21 Heads of Legal Schools, from Zübetti’i Tvarîh (The Quintessence of Histories), Istanbul, late 16th century. 39.5 x 25cm. Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, T 414, fol. 130a. Photograph © The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin
vary. This is clearest in cases where the imagery can be likened to conventional European subjects. In Hilair’s depiction of the four Imams who were founders of the Sunni rite (Fig. 20), all are seated, turbaned figures, shown in pairs, gesturing simply to each other and holding the Koran. They are drawn from the same Lokman manuscript of 1583 (Fig. 21) as the images of Adam and Eve and the Miraj. Eliminating the patterned backgrounds and floors (which have become rich carpets), and adding modeling and mass to the figures, Hilair and the engravers François-Robert Ingouf and Simonet have pulled them towards French modes of representation. Yet if we compare these images to others by Hilair, for instance, his drawing of seated Albanian soldiers for Choiseul (Fig. 22), we notice a more static quality in the image done for Ohsson. There is a subtle disjunction between the Imams’ heads and bodies; their heads are slightly, disproportionately large; and the faces are expressionless and the eyes unseeing. The rendering in the Ohsson print lies somewhere between the more stylized, iconic treatment of the sixteenth-century miniature, with its serial repetition of four figures in nearly identical poses and dress situated symmetrically on the page, and the lively scene-setting of Hilair’s usual figural compositions. To strike this balance, Hilair must have closely studied the Ottoman work he was given.

This case is very different from the representation of Mehhdy (Fig. 23) by De Longueil after Le Barbier, also based on a “Persian” manuscript according to Ohsson, although no original has been identified. In a sumptuous engraving displaying a virtuoso range of textures and contrasts of light and dark, the seated figure of Mehhdy appears in his cave, with a gesture close to that of the Imams, but the handling of his form and of the space is unlike those in either Hilair’s work or the miniatures. (It is also the only print in which the French artists’ royal and academic credentials are boldly asserted along with their names in the lower margin.) Whatever image Le Barbier worked from, he was not interested, it would appear, in conveying some specifically Ottoman quality.

Finally, some transformation appears to result also from the French artists’ confusion. Le Barbier’s view of a women’s public bath (Tableau général, vol. 1, pl.13) is a good example of this: the recognizably Ottoman architecture ultimately does not make spatial sense: the middle area of the ceiling collapses in on itself, failing to suggest recessive space. A neoclassical painter, Le Barbier knew well how to render deep space and architectural settings, but his work records his confusion in reading his Ottoman source image.

The cumulative effect of all these visual crossings is to blur the boundaries between French and Ottoman forms, to see them as connected across a continuum of visual possibilities. To see before one the means by which cultural translation might happen was to envision a world—to adapt Suraiya Faroqi’s phrase—that
Europeans and Ottomans still shared. The heterogeneous object that Ohsson the
dragoman created can be read as a model of desired political behavior, an allegory
of entanglement, interrelation, alliance, with the understandings and also miscom-
prehensions they entail.

As Ohsson’s first volume was going to press, Constantin-François Volney was
penning his seditious ruminations on why France should abandon its alliance with
the Ottomans, in the aftermath of their defeat by the Russians in 1774 and with the
present renewal of hostilities. “One must henceforth acknowledge that their empire
offers all the symptoms of decadence,” he wrote, continuing further on, “All Europe
has felt that the Turkish empire is now but a useless phantom, and that this colos-
sus dissolved of all its ties, awaits only a shock to fall into ruin.”68 Ohsson’s book
could be seen as an attempt to forestall this conclusion, a demonstration against the
diplomacy of separation and dissolution.

Ohsson’s Panorama of the Ottoman Empire is the kind of object that needs to be
uncovered if we are to decenter European empires as the inevitable apotheosis of
modern history. John Darwin, in his recent global history, After Tamerlane, calls for
placing European imperialism in a much larger context: amid the empire-, state-
and culture-building projects of Eurasia.69 In writing today of the eighteenth-cen-
tury decline of the Ottomans, historians echo Volney, problematically anticipating
the fall of the Ottoman Empire almost 150 years in advance of its actual demise.
This anticipatory conquest underwrites a history of empire that culminates in the
grand narrative of the “Rise of the West.” Rather than perpetuate this triumphalist
position, I prefer, in the words of Ottomanist Virginia Aksan, to “bury the Ottoman
sick man” and develop “models of reform in early modern empires” that explain the
survival and rebirth of the Ottoman Empire and consequently, I would add, cre-
ate more complicated pictures of Ottoman–European cultural interaction.70 I see
Ohsson’s book as an example of this kind of representational strategy that explains,
rather than dismisses, Ottoman longevity.
The Dragoman’s Art

That a traveler from Constantinople could oversee the making of this most unusual object is testimony to Ottoman cosmopolitanism, long eclipsed by one-sided accounts of European travel writing. As dragoman, Ohsson’s role had already been to translate between cultures, he already was a go-between (as had been his father, a dragoman in Izmir (Smyrna), before him). His book, too, was an instrument of intercultural connection, drawing together the three cultural elites to which he was most closely affiliated: Swedish, French, and Ottoman. But it would be wrong to see Ohsson exclusively as a representative of official interests or a pawn of diplomatic negotiations.

Ohsson, Ottoman native, Franco-Armenian Catholic, Swedish subject, dragoman, diplomat, and learned scholar, produced not only a defense of the Ottoman Empire but also a self-defense as well. The Tableau général, with its many layers of mediation, is a celebration of the art of translation. Styling himself in his Ottoman dress in Paris, appearing before the Ottoman ambassador after leaving Paris sporting a (European) wig, Ignatius Mouradgea, ennobled as Chevalier d’Ohsson, clearly knew how to perform his status as cultural mediator.71
Just as many European travelers to the Ottoman Empire (and elsewhere) forged their social and professional standing through their travel publications and images, Ohsson formed his reputation with this book. Choiseul’s *Voyage pittoresque* had brought its author membership of no less than three prestigious French academies and his nomination as ambassador in Constantinople, where he served until his exile to Russia in 1792. Likewise, Ohsson’s book can be seen as a successful act of self-making and self-promotion with multiple ends: acceptance into European society, advancement as a diplomat, the gaining of the sultan’s favor. When Ohsson returned to Istanbul in 1792 he presented his two volumes to Selim III and was rewarded with 2000 gold pieces. Ohsson’s diplomatic career took off and he was charged with high-level negotiations by both the Ottomans and the Swedes.72

In many ways Ohsson positions himself in the text, despite the seemingly neutral tone he takes. He represents himself and his own point of view in his periodic criticisms of the Ottoman Empire (among them the way it treated Catholics). His clear preference for the culture of the elite betrays his identification with court circles and officialdom, repeatedly manifest in his negative view of popular opinion, which he depicts as fanatical. In the very idiosyncratic form of the text, he presents a kind of subjective interpolation that interrupts the systematic quality and distant tone taken throughout. In sections labeled “observation,” “variant,” and “commentary” that can digress for many pages from the main subject at hand, Ohsson seems to most clearly represent his own experience; these sections are among the most valuable and interesting in the book. Historian Carter Findley humorously observes, “As one plunges into reading the book”—where ‘lengthy ‘observations’ on Turkish cooking, Sufi orders, or Greek dances [are inserted] into a discussion of Islamic law”—“the schematic clarity of the table of contents becomes difficult to keep in mind.”73

But above all Ohsson positions himself as author and progenitor of this monumental enterprise, despite the collectivity behind its construction. Taking advantage of the new regulation in favor of authors, Ohsson obtained a *privilège général* (a form of copyright) in 1787, securing his exclusive right to publish and enjoy the profits from his *Tableau général* in perpetuity. Only recently instituted in 1777, this regulation marked a major shift in the book trade; previously authors had essentially ceded their rights to the publishers, with no copyright or royalty in the transaction.74 But in the case of the *Tableau général*, the great Didot was a mere printer; it was Ohsson who was author and publisher.75 The certificate of *privilège*, appearing at the end of volume one, bears the censor’s report praising Ohsson’s knowledge. As an act of authorship and a display of erudition, Ohsson’s self-defense was also simultaneously a demonstration of the Ottoman culture of learning. In 1788, a year after Ohsson’s first volume appeared, another censor, writing a report for
the Bureau de la Librairie on a manuscript about Ottoman literature, sheepishly admitted that until recently the French had assumed no literature could thrive in this Muslim culture. His words echo those Ohsson used in the opening to his book:

We have to admit that we did not believe Turks at all capable of giving themselves to Study and to Letters: we saw them even as condemned by the Law of their Prophet to a kind of ignorance, from which they could not extract themselves. Now, when in France Literature and Philosophy, having made greater progress, have accustomed us to seeing things from a more truthful point of view, we are beginning to blush at this prejudice; they have convinced us that the Turks, just as the European Nations, are capable of cultivating with success Sciences and Letters.76

Perhaps Ohsson’s book, with its celebration, even demonstration of Ottoman culture and of the art of translation itself, had made its mark.

Elisabeth Fraser, Ph.D. (1993), Yale University, is Professor of Art History at the University of South Florida, Tampa. Author of Delacroix, Art and Patrimony (2004), she is currently finishing another book, Mediterranean Encounters: Artists in the Ottoman Empire, 1780–1850. E-mail: fraser@arts.usf.edu
NOTES

I wish to thank the editors of this issue, Nebahat Avçoğlu and Barry Flood, for their expert guidance and important suggestions, and to acknowledge with gratitude the support of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Bibliographic Society (U.K.), and the University of South Florida for my research, most of which was completed during a residency at the Columbia University Institute for Scholars, Paris.

A note on usage: Ohsson was called by a variety of names, with differing spellings, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: Mouradja, Mouradjah, Mouradjea d’Ohsson, d’Ohsson, and so on. I have chosen the simplest modern usage, defined by the Chicago Manual of Style.

1 Ignatius Mouradjea d’Ohsson, Tableau général de l’Empire Othoman, 3 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie de Monsieur, 1787, 1790, 1820). Ohsson concludes his “Discours préliminaire” with this defense, p. IX: Although the Ottomans are isolated, “tous les maux publics et particuliers qui affligent les Othomans, n’ont pour principe ni la religion ni la loi; [...] ils dérivent des préjugés populaires, de fausses opinions et de règlements arbitraires dictés par le caprice, la passion, l’intérêt du moment, tous également contraires à l’esprit du Cour’ann et au dispositif de la loi canonique.” In a plea for reform in the Ottoman Empire, Ohsson calls for a sage, enlightened, enterprising sultan, whose task would be made simpler by his absolute authority over his subjects, and who would cultivate more intimate relations with Europeans.

2 According to Ohsson, he had been gathering materials in Constantinople for many years, and most likely did some of the writing there. He also wrote in France, apparently with the aid of at least one other person. On the genesis of Ohsson’s book, see Carter Findley, “Writer and Subject, Self and Other: Mouradjea d’Ohsson and his Tableau général de l’Empire Othoman,” in Sture Theolín et al., The Torch of the Empire: Ignatius Mouradjea d’Ohsson and the Tableau Général of the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century (İstanbul: Yapi Kredi Kültür, 2002), 27–8.


6 Faroqhi’s edited volume, The Later Ottoman Empire 1603–1839, exemplifies this revisionist approach to early modern Ottoman history, as does her The Ottoman Empire and the World around It (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004). For a discussion of this issue in the context of eighteenth-century Istanbul architecture, see Shirine Hamadeh, “Westernization, Decadence, and the Turkish Baroque:
Modern Constructions of the Eighteenth Century,” *Muqarnas* 24 (2007): 185–97. Hamadeh counters the notion of “Westernization” as a force imposed on a compliant Turkish audience to reveal the internationalism of Ottoman culture, including Mughal and Persian as well as European elements. Ussama Makdissi makes it clear that this Orientalist perspective was not simply a European construction, but was also strategically adopted by some Ottomans in the nineteenth century: see his “Ottoman Orientalism,” *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002), pp. 768–96. I refer to “Orientalism” as defined by Edward Said in his classic *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978).


9 I borrow here from Mary Louise Pratt’s use of the term “autoethnography.” It is her interpretive emphasis on contact and exchange in selective processes of “transculturation” that informs my own approach: “how subordinate or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture.” I adapt the term to Ohsson’s circumstances; Ohsson was hardly a subordinate, but he was an outsider appropriating French forms to address, in part, a European audience. See Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 7–9.

10 See Faraöhi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It*, 211.

11 On the Swedish-French-Ottoman alliance against Russian expansionism, see Mansel, “The Tableau général de l’Empire Othoman as Symbol.” For the diplomatic complications of France’s position, see also Kaiser, “Evil Empire?”

12 On Ohsson’s background, see Findley, “Writer and Subject,” 24–6.

13 The “addition au prospectus” mounted on the prospectus bound into a copy at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter BnF) mentions six or seven volumes, but Cochin writes in a letter of 1786 that there are to be 700 to 800 prints in at least eight volumes. See Christian Michel, ed., “Lettres adressées par Charles-Nicolas Cochin fils à Jean-Baptiste Descamps, 1757–1790: Correspondances d’artistes des XVIIIe et XIXe siècles,” *Archives de l’Art français* 28 (1986): 77.


18 This tradition is exemplified by the famous Ferriol compendium of Levantine costumes of 1714, an embassy production that must have been well known in diplomatic circles: *Recueil de cent estampes représentant différentes Nations du Levant, tirées sur les Tableaux points d’après Nature en 1707 et 1708 par les Ordres de M. de Ferriol, ambassadeur du Roy à la Porte, et gravées en 1712 et 1713 par les soins de Mr Le Hay, Paris, 1714*. A tradition of costume albums also existed within the Ottoman Empire itself, flourishing particularly at the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when they were made for Ottoman consumption as well as for European markets. See Nurhan Atasoy, et al., “The Birth of Costume Books and the Fenerci Mehemet Album,” in *Ottoman Costume Book: Fenerci Mehemet* (Istanbul: Vehbi Koc Vakfı, 1986), 22–30; Leslie Meral

19 The continuation of Choiseul-Gouffier’s book was interrupted by his exile to Russia during the French Revolution; only in 1809 did a second volume appear and a third was published posthumously in 1822. For the most part, then, Ohsson’s book would have been responding to Choiseul’s first volume only, published in installments between 1778 and 1782, and it is to this volume that I refer throughout. For a more detailed discussion of Choiseul’s publication, see Fraser, “Books, Prints, and Travel,” and Frédéric Barbier, “Le comte de Choiseul comme guide: voyage pittoresque en Grèce en compagnie d’un noble français du XVIIIe siècle,” Gryphe. Revue de la Bibliothèque de Lyon 4 (2002): 3–12. (A note on usage: Choiseul acquired his hyphenated last name, Choiseul-Gouffier, through marriage; in eighteenth-century and present-day usage, “Gouffier” is commonly dropped.)


21 See Ohsson’s correspondence, cited in Findley, “Writer and Subject,” 31. Prices are taken from the prospectus.


24 I do not believe that Ohsson saw his work as a “counter-blast” to Choiseul’s book specifically, as has been suggested by Mansel in “The Tableau général de l’Empire Ottoman as Symbol,” 80. Instead, Ohsson seems to respond to a whole category of writing, of which Choiseul’s book is a leading example.


26 Favoring the past over the present and denying contemporaries geopolitical agency are, of course, two fundamental modes of Orientalism as defined by Said.

27 Ohsson, Tableau général, 2:145.

28 Ibid., 214.

29 Ibid., 235.

30 See Choiseul-Gouffier, Voyage pittoresque, 164–65. The Turkish administration does not support happiness and prosperity in commerce: “... une constitution absurde et cruelle étouffe l’industrie,
et arrête tous les moyens que l’intérêt personnel pourrait inventer et développer.” Commerce can only be found in big cities; despotism and a continual state of war kill it in the provinces. “Cet empire immense, maître des pays auxquels la nature a tout accordé, ne peut jouir de ses bienfaits, et langui inanimé.”

31 According to Ohsson, Tableau général, 2:162, all Muslims must work as a religious obligation. “Les moeurs actuelles des Mahométans ne sont que le résultat de ces maximes dont le but est d’encourager l’industrie, de rendre l’homme laborieux, humain, charitable; de lui inspirer l’amour de la vertu, le goût de la médiocrité [moderation], et l’honneur du vice; de lui donner de l’aversion pour le luxe et l’abus des richesses; d’ennoblir enfin toutes les professions de la vie civile, mais sur-tout le métier des armes.”

32 Archives nationales, T/153/160, Letter of 1802 from the Minister of War to Choiseul-Gouffier.

33 The French may have been particularly receptive to this message, as “oriental” illuminated manuscripts and printed books were already being collected in France. The current collection of Oriental manuscripts in the BnF, in which Ottoman books are a major component, was initiated by Colbert under the reign of Louis XIV; it includes acquisitions made through the travels of state emissaries, with the express purpose of manuscript collection, and through the purchase of private collections. On the BnF collection of printed Ottoman books, see Mileva Bozic, “Le fonds imprimé turc de la Bibliothèque Nationale: Les débuts de l’imprimerie ottomane,” Revue de la Bibliothèque Nationale 1, nos. 1; 2 (Sept., Dec. 1981): 8–16; 70–79.

34 Ohsson, Tableau général, 1:296.

35 On Muteferrikâ and the history of printing in the late Ottoman Empire, see
Indies was illustrated, Ohsson says, with “twelve little prints” and was successful “despite the imperfection of the plances.” Is Ohsson seeking to improve on Mürteferrikâ’s prior example with his lavish and highly accomplished prints?

40 Ohsson, Tableau général, 1:301–2. Ohsson does not mention whether this Ottoman history was to be illustrated.

41 Ibid., 301.

42 The entire section on Islam and images is in Ohsson, Tableau général, 2:239–50. Ohsson highlights official support for his research and publication in his prospectus and again in his “Discours préliminaire.”

43 “mes titres sur l’authenticité de tout ce que j’avance; car la vérité et l’exactitude la plus scrupuleuse sont à mes yeux le premier mérite de cet ouvrage,” Tableau général, vol.1, i–iii, adding that his sources are the chronicles of the monarchy, written in a pompous style by the highest persons of state, “Muftis, Pashas, Reis Efendys,” etc. On Ohsson’s textual sources, see Findley, “Writer and Subject,” 39.


47 These passages are from Ohsson, Tableau général, 2:244.

48 “Par cet exposé des moyens que nous avons employés pendant plus de dix ans pour former la collection des tableaux et des dessins relatifs à l’histoire Othomane on peut se former une idée de ce qu’ont dû nous occuper de peine et de dépenses cet objet de notre travail et les recherches que nous avons faites sur tout ce qui a rapport à l’état civil et à l’administration politique”: ibid., 245.

49 The royal approbation (privilège) citing the censor’s report appears at the back of volume one. For Cochin’s comments, see Michel, “Lettres adressées par Charles-Nicolas Cochin,” 78 and 83.

50 See Michel, “Une entreprise de gravure”; and Renda, “Illustrating the Tableau général.”

51 On the necessity of anonymity, see Ohsson, Tableau général, 2:245. The works Ohsson had made in Istanbul have apparently disappeared. Various drawings and watercolors by French artists have been found, for instance those reproduced in Theolin, et al., Torch of the Empire, but these are most likely images made in the process of preparing the engravings, as described above.
52 The mention of Greek artists corroborates Renda’s assertion that many of the Istanbul images were by Kostantin Kapdağlı, an Ottoman Greek court painter. The term “European” in this context is confusing: for instance, in his section on art practices in the Ottoman Empire, Ohsson mentions in passing Ottoman Armenian painter Refail, who had training in Italy; Kostantin, too, along with most eighteenth-century artists, was obviously exposed to European artistic spatial conventions. Late eighteenth-century Ottoman and European art should not be understood as wholly divided visual cultures, but instead as mutually informed through specific points of contact, as Renda asserts. Ohsson and his Istanbul artists would have been aware of this proximity between idioms; it was Cochin who reimposed cultural difference on these works. See Renda, “Illustrating the Tableau général,” 65–72.


54 On this episode, see Renda, “Illustrating the Tableau général,” 69–70. In a letter, Ohsson identified the official who commissioned the paintings as Yazici Efendi, who had held the office of Sürre Emin, the official in charge of carrying the treasures sent to the Holy Cities for the pilgrimages. Ohsson discusses the making of the original images first in his Prospects, 26 (repeated in “Discours préliminaire”) and again at greater length in 2:245.

55 See Renda, “Illustrating the Tableau général,” 70, where Kostantin’s painting is also reproduced.

56 Christian Michel makes extensive use of the correspondence and mémoire in “Une entreprise de gravure.” For the settlement, see Archives nationales, ET/LXXXII/631.

57 See Griffiths on the making of images for illustrated books, Prints for Books, 10–11.

58 See Pratt, Imperial Eyes, especially 136.


60 See Michel, “Une entreprise de gravure,” 9.

61 The full passage reads: “Imaginez des tableaux faits en Turquie par des artistes grecs ou italiens qui sont sans goût, sans art, mais qui portent un caractère de vérité que, peut-être, aucun de nos habiles artistes n’aurait pu saisir au même degré de vérité. Je suis obligé, voulant conserver ce rany dont je fais si grand cas, de redessiner toutes les figures qui sont trop courtes, dont les têtes sont trop grosses, et tout cela avec l’esprit occupé du soin de ne les pas franciser, ce que ne manqueront pas nos meilleurs Dessinateurs.” Cochin, in Michel, “Lettres,” 78.

62 Christian Michel discusses this diversity closely in his account of the print-making process; see in particular his comparison of two images of dervish lodges, where he identifies the difference between Cochin’s preservationist approach, with some rectification of the Ottoman work, and an image done after Cochin resigned from the project. Michel, “Une entreprise de gravure,” 22–3.

63 Cochin said that Moreau repainted the original, which may have been painted by Kostantin Kapdağlı. See Günsel Renda and Carter Findley, “Comments on Engravings in d’Ohsson, Tableau général de l’Empire Ottoman,” in Theolin, et al., Torch of the Empire, 211.

64 According to Renda, who identified this source, three copies were made; one, for the Chief Black Eunuch Darüssade Agasi Mehmed Aga, now in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, T 414, is likely the version used for the Tableau. See Renda, “Illustrating the Tableau général,” 68. I am grateful to Elaine Wright, curator at the Chester Beatty Library, for her help with images.

65 On the practice of reversal and on the preparation in general of book illustrations, see Griffiths, Prints for Books, 10–11.

66 See the commentary on this image and its divergence from other Islamic sources in Renda and Findley, “Comments on Engravings in d’Ohsson,” 205.

67 See Ohsson, “Explication du frontispice.”

68 “Considérations sur la Guerre des Turks, en 1788,” in Voyage en Syrie et en Égypte (3e edition, 1799), rpt. (Paris: Fayard, 1998), 645, 646. Volney began his famous essay in 1787, it was published without censor’s approval in 1788, hence London was (falsely) given as the place of publication.


72 See Findley, “Writer and Subject,” 32.

73 Ibid., 36 and 37.


75 Mansel mistakenly assumes that Ohsson’s privilège and Didot’s title of “imprimeur de Monsieur,” are indications that Ohsson’s book was published with the patronage of the French court. See Mansel, “The Tableau général de l’Empire Othoman as Symbol,” 79, 80–81. On Didot’s acquisition of this title, see Griffiths, Prints for Books, 127.

76 “Il le faut avouer, nous n’avions guère cru les Turcs capables de s’adonner à l’Etude et aux Lettres: nous les avions même toujours regardés comme condamnés par la Loi de leur Prophète à un genre d’ignorance, dont ils n’auraient pas voulu se tirer. Aujourd’hui que chez nous mêmes les Lettres et la Philosophie ayant fait plus de progrès, nous ont accoutumés à voir les choses sous un point de vue plus vrai, nous commençons à rougir de ce préjugé, et à nous convaincre que les Turcs, ainsi que les autres Nations Européennes sont en état de cultiver avec succès les Sciences et les Lettres.” BnF, Manuscrit français 22,015: Bureau de la Librairie, Censor’s report of September 8, 1788, register no. 1704.