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## **Abbreviations, Dates, and Transliteration**

### **Abbreviations**

BWAM Baltimore, Walters Art Museum

KMS *Kebir Musavver Silsilename* (A.3109, TSM)

TSM Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi (Topkapı Palace Museum)

### **Dates**

Dates are given according to the Gregorian calendar.

### **Transliteration**

The transliteration system used in this thesis for Ottoman terms is the transliteration system of the *İslam Ansiklopedisi (İA)*. The transliteration system of the International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES) is employed for Arabic and Persian words.

In addition, the Turkish version of art historical terminology will be preferred to other romanised Arabic or Persian versions. Thus, *nesih* will be employed instead of *naskh* and so on and so forth.

In the quotes, the transliteration used by the quoted source is kept as in the original. Furthermore, diacritics will not be employed for personal names, place names, names of political parties and organisations, as well as titles of books and articles.

## 1.0 Introduction

Scholarship on the Ottoman painter and poet Abdülcelil Çelebi, more commonly known by his pseudonym Levni, has so far mostly focused on documenting the artist's life and determining the works he was responsible for. The artist's relationship to the Ottoman Court has been a main point of debate. Although comparatively little has been published on Levni, he has been given a special place in the history of Ottoman painting largely thanks to the work of A. Süheyl Ünver and Gül İrepoğlu. İrepoğlu in particular published the only existing monograph on the artist. Unfortunately a side effect of the importance given to her work has been the lack of further scholarly inquiry into the works attributed to Levni. This Master thesis aims to rekindle interest in the body of paintings linked to Levni, by focusing on the depictions of women in the album H.2164 in the Topkapı Palace Museum.

This introductory chapter will begin by providing an overview on the artist and the paintings attributed to him. Then three short sections will provide an introduction to important themes for the ensuing chapters. Finally, the goals, method, and structure of this Master thesis will be detailed.

### 1.1 The painter and poet Abdülcelil Çelebi Levni: his life and work

#### Levni's biography

Despite his fame today, little information is certain concerning the artist Levni. The main written source about his life is a short biographical note found in the historiographer Hafız Hüseyin Ayvansarayı's *Mecmua-i Tevarih (The Compilation of Histories)* written in the second half of the eighteenth century. The artist is designated by the name Abdülcelil Çelebi Levni and said to have been the apprentice of an illuminator after arriving in Istanbul from Edirne. He became skilled in *saz* decoration and later a successful painter. According to Ayvansarayı, Levni was the chief painter until the reign of Sultan Mahmud I (r. 1730-1754). He was also a poet. Ayvansarayı gives 1732 as the artist's date of death.<sup>1</sup>

Ünver has proposed 'Levni' (meaning colourful or varied) was a pseudonym adopted once he started his career as a painter.<sup>2</sup> İrepoğlu refers to one of Levni's poems in which he writes that this name was given to him by others. Georg Majer has put forward the hypothesis Levni was a student of the Ottoman painter Musavvir Hüseyin who was active in the 1680s

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<sup>1</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 37.

<sup>2</sup> Ünver 1951, 5.

and 1690s in Edirne.<sup>3</sup> The debate concerning Levni's relationship with the Palace will be summarised later in this thesis (see section 3.5).

Stchoukine suggests 1685 as Levni's birthdate, but does not give any evidence to support it.<sup>4</sup> İrepoğlu, instead, calculates 1681.<sup>5</sup> Levni seems to have begun his career in Edirne at the court of Sultan Mustafa II (r.1695-1703). İrepoğlu, using a letter from the artist to Sultan Ahmed III (r. 1703-1730), suggests Levni did not move to Istanbul until 1707.<sup>6</sup> The letter dated October 15<sup>th</sup> 1706 indicates the artist was still in Edirne at the time and requested financial support to sustain his family and himself for a year. The letter is signed using his pseudonym, which hints, in İrepoğlu's opinion, that he had already built a reputation for himself at this point.

### Levni's artistic production

The Moldavian prince Demetrius Cantemir claims the illustrations which accompany his text in *The History of the Growth and Decay of the Ottoman Empire* (printed 1734) were based on portraits of the Ottoman sultans executed by Levni.<sup>7</sup> He states he used his influence at the Ottoman Court to convince the sultan's chief painter to copy portraits of the Ottoman sultans for him.<sup>8</sup> The engravings made by Claude de Bosc for Cantemir's publication show a stylistic similarity to the portraits associated with Levni in the *Kebir Musavver Silsilename*, but the originals of those belonging to Cantemir have not survived.<sup>9</sup> İrepoğlu concludes that Levni was part of Cantemir's circle in Istanbul, where the prince resided from 1687 to 1691.<sup>10</sup> According to Majer, Levni copied the portraits from originals by Musavvir Hüseyin.<sup>11</sup>

A series of portraits of Ottoman sultans in the codex known as the *Kebir Musavver Silsilename (The Great Illustrated Genealogy)* (A. 3109) in the Topkapı Palace Museum has been attributed to Levni.<sup>12</sup> The twenty-three portraits by the artist measure between 14.3 x 23.5 cm and 16.4 x 25 cm, and are thus larger than previous portraits of sultans. Portraits of later sultans were completed by other painters and added later. The pictures of Sultans Mahmud I, Osman II, Mustafa III and Abdülhamid I were executed in the eighteenth century

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<sup>3</sup> Majer 2000, 342. Bağcı/Çağman/Renda 2010, 243.

<sup>4</sup> Stchoukine 1971, 122.

<sup>5</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 39.

<sup>6</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 39-40.

<sup>7</sup> Bağcı/Çağman/Renda 2010, 266.

<sup>8</sup> Majer 2001, 194.

<sup>9</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 51.

<sup>10</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 39.

<sup>11</sup> Majer 2001, 206.

<sup>12</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 53-55.

by Rafael or members of his workshop. At the start of the nineteenth century, Kapıdađlı Kostantin inserted portraits of Sultans Selim III and Mustafa IV. During Sultan Selim III's reign (r. 1789-1807), a text giving information about the depicted sultans was composed by the poet Münib and was associated with the portraits which had until that point stood independently from any text. The dating of the portraits attributed to Levni will be discussed in more detail later (see section 3.2).

Two sultanic portraits, attributed to Levni based on formal similarities with the portraits in the *Kebir Musavver Silsilename*, were added to the *Şemailname-i Al-i Osman Musavver* (H.1562, TSM) during the reign of Ahmed III.<sup>13</sup> The *Şemailname-i Al-i Osman Musavver* itself is a copy of the *Kıyafet el-İnsaniye fi Şemail el-Osmaniye* authored by Seyyid Lokman at the time of Sultan Murad III's reign (r. 1574-1595). The depictions by Levni show the Sultans Mustafa II and Ahmed III in similar poses to the portraits in the *KMS*, the main difference being that Ahmed III is sitting on the floor with his legs crossed instead of being seated on a throne.

Levni's most famous work is the copy of the *Surname* written by Vehbi (A.3593, TSM). The *Surname* describes the festivities organised to celebrate the circumcision of four sons of Sultan Ahmed III. The events took place in 1720 and lasted fifteen days and nights.<sup>14</sup> Levni executed 137 paintings, measuring 24 x 27.5 cm, which portray the numerous processions and the entertainment organised for the celebration.<sup>15</sup>

The Topkapı Palace also houses a second illustrated copy of the *Surname-i Vehbi* (A. 3594, TSM) which although very similar to the first as far as the pictorial language is concerned, contains episodes absent from Vehbi's text and Levni's images.<sup>16</sup> Ünver attributes this copy to Levni, but Atıl and İrepođlu are of the opinion it was painted by someone else.<sup>17</sup> The authors of *Ottoman Painting* bring forward a reference to the work on calligraphers by Suyolcuzade Mehmed Necib Efendi (d.1758), in which he designates himself as the calligrapher of the second copy of the *Surname* (A.3594, TSM) and a certain İbrahim Efendi as the painter.<sup>18</sup> More will be said concerning the dating and execution of these two manuscripts in section 3.5.

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<sup>13</sup> İrepođlu 1999a, 85-86.

<sup>14</sup> Atıl 1999, 23.

<sup>15</sup> Ünver 1951, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Atıl 1999, 36.

<sup>17</sup> ibid. Ünver 1951, 7. İrepođlu 1999a, 89.

<sup>18</sup> Bađcı/Çađman/Renda 2010, 272-275.



Statements on the formal or technical characteristics of Levni's paintings are sparse. In connection to the *Surname-i Vehbi*, Ünver notes a veristic mode of depiction, a colourful palette, and the painter's talent for composing scenes with a large number of figures, which evoke a lively atmosphere.<sup>19</sup> Atıl not only provides a more detailed analysis of the composition of the paintings in the *Surname-i Vehbi*, but also lists a few characteristics concerning the use of paint in these images. Raised surfaces are represented by more thickly applied pigment, and features painted in gold are outlined with pricking — in Atıl's opinion so as to increase the reflection of the light on these areas.<sup>20</sup> For transparent fabrics, the artists employed thinner layers of pigment.

İrepoğlu characterises Levni's painting by a greater 'realism', due to his familiarity with European art. She argues Levni introduced a number of changes to sultanic portraiture which resulted in depictions 'closer to realistic portraiture' that became the standard for the following generations of artists.<sup>21</sup> By that she means paintings motivated by a wish for verisimilitude similar to that of European painting. The idea of portraiture, in the sense of a depiction of a specific person in a mimetic manner, is a concept that links Levni's painting to the tradition of portraiture in Europe since the equation of portraiture to the mode of verisimilitude differs from the understanding of portraiture in lands with a Muslim ruling elite before the modern period.<sup>22</sup>

İrepoğlu credits Levni with the following innovations. In Levni's portraits of sultans in the *KMS*, the subjects are portrayed closer-up than usual. Their facial features are veristic and lively. The painter has attempted to depict them as voluminous figures inhabiting a three-dimensional space. The palette he employed relies more heavily on pastel tones. The authors of the survey *Ottoman Painting* add to this list the inclusion of ruffled curtains in the background of Sultan Selim I's portrait (fol. 9b), which they consider is an element inspired by European portraiture.<sup>23</sup> They point out that the way he paints the drapery is in itself innovative since he employs tonal rendering to achieve a light and shade effects in the fabric folds.

## 1.2 Ottoman albums from the seventeenth and eighteenth century

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<sup>19</sup> Ünver 1951, 8.

<sup>20</sup> Atıl 1999, 67.

<sup>21</sup> İrepoğlu 2000, 380-383.

<sup>22</sup> For a discussion of the perception of portraiture in Persian painting see Soucek 2000.

<sup>23</sup> Bağcı/Çağman/Renda 2010, 267.

In the arts of the book, an album is understood as a collection of images — which can include drawings and/or paintings — and calligraphic works, assembled together in compositions with elaborate aesthetics in which the arts of paper play a crucial role, and bound to form a book. David J. Roxburgh has established that the genre was born in Herat under the rule of the Timurids in the first half of the fifteenth century. The earliest evidence for Ottoman awareness of the album dates from 1472. Starting in 1572, and possibly even before, Ottoman albums include a preface.<sup>24</sup> The first albums prepared in the Ottoman palace workshop are dated to the mid-sixteenth century, but a notable increase in album production in the Ottoman realm did not take place until the reign of Sultan Ahmed I (r. 1603-1617).<sup>25</sup> A famous example dating from this period is the album prepared by the Ottoman courtier Kalender Pasha for Sultan Ahmed I (B.408, TSM). The album measures 33.5 x 47.5 cm and includes 32 folios with paintings and calligraphy.<sup>26</sup>

The album of Ahmed I also contains a preface that sheds light on the principles underlying the arrangement of this album. According to Emine Fetvacı, the preface's text follows Safavid precedents, but the discussion of the visual's power occupies a more important place than in Persian examples. Kalender presents a contemporary Ottoman courtly view, which sees images as a tool to inspire and to teach. From the preface, it is also clear that the sultan sees the album as 'a miniature version of his collection and as a memorial to himself'.<sup>27</sup> Kalender recounts that the arrangement of the paintings and calligraphy was derived from the relationships linking the pieces to one another, as per the sultan's wishes. The aesthetics of the artworks play a central role in their selection and combination. Fetvacı points out that Kalender attempts to present *vassale* (paper joinery) as an art equal to calligraphy and painting.<sup>28</sup> Fetvacı identifies two directions in the connections Kalender constructs deliberately between pictures. Firstly, he places depictions of Ottoman sultans next to paintings from historical manuscripts. She interprets this as the implementation of the idea put forward in the preface, that images have didactic powers, because such an arrangement implies the sultan and his courtiers should be inspired to follow the actions of memorable men

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<sup>24</sup> Roxburgh 2005, 11.

<sup>25</sup> For a more detailed history of albums in Ottoman culture see Bağcı/Çağman/Renda 2010, 229-242. It should be noted that in-depth research on Ottoman albums has only begun in recent years and many objects have yet to be published in full.

<sup>26</sup> Ünver 1963, 133. For an overview of the album's contents also see this publication.

<sup>27</sup> Fetvacı 2012, 130.

<sup>28</sup> Fetvacı 2012, 128-131.

by gazing upon paintings of them.<sup>29</sup> Secondly, Kalender associates calligraphy from Persian and Ottoman calligraphers, creating a link between these artists while coincidentally contrasting them. Fetvacı suggests Kalender claims Persianate cultural heritage ‘as a part of the Ottoman artistic genealogy’ and appropriates it deliberately.<sup>30</sup>

Two Ottoman albums compiled in the eighteenth century have also recently been discussed by two separate scholars. The album H.2135 (TSM) comprises 27 folios, which are the same dimensions as the binding, 37 x 26 cm. It was compiled in the 1790s by the Ottoman bureaucrat Mehmed Emin Efendi. The codex encompasses 65 ink drawings, including 3 European engravings, all of them assembled using the *vassale* technique and richly illuminated with gold-sprinkling (*zerefşan*) and chrysography (*halkār*). The ink drawings from Persian and Ottoman artists as well as the European engravings include touches of colour here and there. The album contains very few calligraphic works. Calligraphy only appears in the form of small cartouches with poetry verses on folios 4a and 24a. A. Nihat Kundak has argued that the European engravings were tinted after they had arrived in the Ottoman collections of Topkapı Palace and that they were perceived in the same way as the ink drawings from Persia and the Ottoman Empire. The author also emphasises that the selected images share a common theme of spirituality. The Persian and Ottoman drawings relate to Sufi mysticism, while all the European engravings depict biblical subjects except for a small picture of a landscape.<sup>31</sup>

The other album is the H.2169 also in the Topkapı Palace collections. It was compiled in the eighteenth century at the Ottoman Court and contains 65 folios measuring 41 x 27.5 cm. The folios are put together with the *vassale* technique and encompass paintings, drawings and calligraphic works written in *ta'liq* script. The album combines single folios from a dispersed Safavid album probably dating to the early seventeenth century, which had been produced by the Safavid royal workshop in Isfahan. Among the folios with a Safavid origin is a page with a European engraving of St. Ursula possibly dating to the sixteenth century (fol. 31b).<sup>32</sup>

### 1.3 Women in Ottoman painting before Levni

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<sup>29</sup> Fetvacı 2012, 131-133.

<sup>30</sup> Fetvacı 2012, 133-135.

<sup>31</sup> Kundak 2009, 425-432.

<sup>32</sup> Banu 2009, 466-472.

### Women in seventeenth-century Ottoman painting

As a book chapter by Nancy Micklewright shows, women as an independent subject matter is uncommon before the eighteenth century in Ottoman painting. Women are depicted in group scenes in histories and poetic works when their presence is called for by the text.<sup>33</sup> In the seventeenth century, artists seem to have developed an interest for single figures and several manuscripts and albums contain portraits of single women.<sup>34</sup> These portraits are standardised and the women appear almost identical. Taking one painting from folio 9a in the album of Ahmed I (B.408, TSM) as an example, we see the woman is depicted with a narrow waist and very large hips (Fig. 1). Her cleavage is visible in the opening of her robes. Her skin is pale and her long black hair is symmetrical parted on the forehead. Her eyes are almond-shaped and emphasised by joined eyebrows. The nose has a straight bridge and is pointed. The lips are very thin and the round chin is clearly depicted. She wears a conical hat with transparent veils dangling down. Her costume consists of a juxtaposition of robes and jackets, with sleeves of varying lengths and colours so that the elements of clothing are all visible and contrast with each other. The fabrics are painted with bright solid colours and almost devoid of patterns. A shawl is worn around the hips, as well as shoes that are raised on wooden platform soles.<sup>35</sup>

The late seventeenth century painter Musavvir Hüseyin is considered to have played an important role in the advent of depictions of women as a genre in the eighteenth century. The artist painted two *silsilenames*, either for Sultan Mehmed IV (r. 1648-1687) or for his vizier Kara Mustafa Paşa, which, for Majer, is evidence that he worked either at the court or in the vizier's retinue. Majer has attributed the paintings collected in two albums in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Cabinet des Estampes, OD 6 & 7) to Musavvir Hüseyin. Some of Musavvir Hüseyin's paintings were bound in a first album in 1688 (OD 6) and the second album was created in France in 1720 (OD 7), but considering the formal overlap between the paintings in both albums, Majer posits all the paintings should be dated 1688.

The albums in Paris contain numerous depictions of women, who appear more lively than previous examples, leading Majer to call them 'sexy women'.<sup>36</sup> For example, on folio 20

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<sup>33</sup> Micklewright 1997, 158-159.

<sup>34</sup> These manuscripts are B.408 in the Topkapı Palace Museum, Or. 4129 and Or. 2709 in the British Library. For more information about these manuscripts see Micklewright 1997, 160 and Artan/Schick 2013, 160. Stchoukine's publication from 1971 contains reproductions of a few depictions of women.

<sup>35</sup> See Ünver 1963 and Fetvacı 2012 for reproductions of other depictions of women in this album.

<sup>36</sup> Majer 1999, 463-464; 466-467.

of the OD 7 (Fig. 2), an Ottoman lady is depicted seated in a richly decorated interior and fanned by a female servant. The court lady is resting against cushions and her pose appears much more relaxed and alive than previous examples. Moreover, the proportions of her body are less idealised. Both women wear richly decorated clothing and the variety of patterns and colours is much more complex than in the images from the album of Ahmed I. As will become clear later on in the discussion, the detailed depiction of fabric is an interest also evident in Levni's work. Shading is applied to the court lady's cleavage and cheeks, which introduces a change from previous depictions and offers a link to the paintings associated with Levni.<sup>37</sup>

The albums were originally part of Louis XIV's royal library and Majer suggests the albums were commissioned by a French ambassador to introduce the new sultan, Süleyman II (r. 1687-1691), and his court to the French king. In Majer's view, the artist was aware of the French king's taste for women and accentuated the women's attractiveness to appeal to the king.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, Majer notes differences in the degree of verisimilitude between the work Musavvir Hüseyin executed for Ottoman patrons and the one he completed for European patrons. He proposes Musavvir Hüseyin was familiar with European painting and adopted a more mimetic visual language when painting for a European patron.<sup>39</sup>

#### Cultural factors in the new taste for women as a subject matter in the eighteenth century

If depictions of women before the eighteenth century were rare, one could wonder what factors led to the obvious interest for depictions of single women in the eighteenth century. Artan has demonstrated that Ottoman princesses gained in political importance at the time, which resulted in the public *mise en scène* of their weddings and the magnificent palaces built by the princesses along the shores of the Bosphorus. Although the princesses's physical appearance continued to be hidden from the public eye, their presence in the public sphere was obvious and played an important role in the Ottoman dynasty's legitimisation of their power.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> These similarities in the depiction of women might be a further argument for Majer's theory that Levni was Musavvir Hüseyin's student. Nonetheless, the attribution of the two albums in the Bibliothèque nationale de France to Musavvir Hüseyin still being hypothetical, more research is needed on this question.

<sup>38</sup> Majer 1999, 466-467.

<sup>39</sup> Majer 2000, 345.

<sup>40</sup> Artan 1993, 89-91. Artan 2011b, 340-355.

Another cultural change that could explain in part the proliferation of depictions of women are new trends in literature. Erotic literature seems to have been quite popular in the court circles in the eighteenth century, with such genres as the *şehrengiz* — also known as the ‘city thriller’ after the literature historian E.J.W. Gibb’s expression — becoming very popular. This poetic genre in which the handsome boys of a particular city are enumerated and portrayed could be quite erotic in some versions. Only very few of these actually discussed the physical appearance of women. İrvin Cemil Schick quotes three works of which only one is, in his opinion, a true *şehrengiz*.<sup>41</sup> Poetry also took a less idealised tone with poets such as Ahmed Nedim talking about real beloveds and describing the pleasure world of the Ottoman elite.<sup>42</sup> Ottoman poetry saw a shift in focus, whereby the poet’s persona as an individual played a central role in his poetry, and the body became a topic of discussion.<sup>43</sup>

#### 1.4 Eroticism in Ottoman painting

Another topic which will be discussed in this thesis is the erotic dimension of some of the paintings in the album H.2164. Eroticism in Ottoman painting is a theme that has yet to enter the main narrative of Ottoman art history.<sup>44</sup> Artan and Schick have tried to change this with their book chapter published in 2013, which drew on the overview provided by And at the end of the seventies, but introduced a greater number of manuscripts, whose erotic dimension had until then been ignored by academics, or which had escaped earlier notice. Their publication also offered a more analytical approach than And by emphasising the connections between these paintings context of production and their content.

In this thesis, the images which are qualified as erotic are understood as pictures, which suggest the artist’s intention to elicit sexual excitement in the viewer, either by the mental associations they bring to mind, or by the visual content of the artwork itself. In other words, a couple engaged in intercourse is not intrinsically erotic, but becomes so if the way it

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<sup>41</sup> Schick 2004, 89.

<sup>42</sup> Silay 1994, 71-74.

<sup>43</sup> Artan 2015, 758.

<sup>44</sup> This also goes for eroticism in Islamic art in general. Before the collective volume *Eros and Sexuality in Islamic Art* published in 2013, there had been no serious attempt to discuss the topic in a wide-ranging manner. The scholarly literature on eroticism in Islamicate cultures was restricted to the articles or book chapters written by a few scholars like Afsaneh Najmabadi or Susan Babaie who were interested in such themes. *Sarv-é Naz: An Essay on Love and Representation of Erotic Themes in Ancient Iran* by Robert Surieu is one of the two books published before 2013 on the topic. However, this publication can hardly be considered scholarly considering — to only name one problem — that the author makes no distinction between the Turkish and Indian material he incorporates in his survey and the artworks from Iran.

is depicted aims to provoke the viewer's sexual titillation. It should be noted that neither And, nor Artan and Schick define what they mean by the word 'erotic' in their essays.

And lists a number of Ottoman manuscripts and paintings with an erotic subject matter and offers a summary of the themes represented. He explains these images were private and only the sultan could afford to commission such paintings since he was also the religious head of Ottoman society. People who possessed such works outside the court were obliged to keep them concealed. Thus, And suggests paintings of an overt erotic character were not widely accepted by Ottoman society and religious authorities and their audience was limited to the elite. However, he identifies a change in the eighteenth century when he claims Ottoman society became more permissive and sensual depictions of women became a widespread subject matter among Ottoman artists.<sup>45</sup>

Artan and Schick explain that in addition to copies of poetic works with erotic paintings such as the *Hamse (Pentalogy)* of Nev'i-zade Ata'i (1583-1635), images with an erotic content were found in single sheet paintings, albums and copies of the *bāhnāme* titled *Ruju' al-Shaykh ila Sibah fi al-Quwwah 'ala al-Bah (Return of the Old Man to Youth through the Power of Sex)*.<sup>46</sup> The *bāhnāme* is a literary genre which focuses on the topic of sex, combining medical information and erotic anecdotes on matters including among others intercourse between subjects of the same sex, impotence, pregnancy, contraception and aphrodisiacs.<sup>47</sup>

The authors pinpoint a new trend in erotic depictions made by Ottoman artists starting with the depictions of women by Levni, which they name 'Ottomanization'. In their opinion, 'Levni "Ottomanized" his portraits both with regard to the precise details of their costumes and by inserting an İznik flask or an Ottoman landscape into the background'.<sup>48</sup> They posit that similarly to the eighteenth-century literary movement of 'Ottomanization', which aimed to localise and vernacularise texts, explicit depictions of sexual intercourse painted during the same period were anchored in the Ottoman context through the figures' costume and the scene's backdrop. Levni's paintings play a key role in this process in the sense that the costume elements which received so much attention in Levni's work function in later miniatures as 'Ottomanizing' features. This is particularly the case for the erotic paintings of

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<sup>45</sup> And 1978, 8-11.

<sup>46</sup> And offers a list of albums and manuscripts with what he views as an erotic content on pages 8 to 11. See also Schick 2013.

<sup>47</sup> Rowson 2006, 46-52.

<sup>48</sup> Artan/Schick 2013, 163.

the Ottoman painter Abdullah Buhari (fl. c. 1735-1745). Among his works are five single-sheet paintings of male and female partners, as well as one male-male couple, having intercourse.<sup>49</sup> Although Abdullah Buhari's depictions are extremely explicit, the characters' faces show no emotions.<sup>50</sup> Another element tying the two artists together are their graphic depictions of female breasts.

The erotic nature of the paintings in the different copies of the *Hamse* of Ata'i are also discussed by Artan and Schick. They count five different manuscripts with illustrations from separate artists, noting that 'all the artists involved, despite their different styles, were able to embark on creating an iconography for stories which had never been illustrated before'.<sup>51</sup> They consider the rise of this new imagery to be linked to the changes in artistic patronage at the time, when the main source of patronage shifted from the court to notables and artists sought new themes to distinguish themselves.<sup>52</sup>

The erotic paintings listed above have mostly limited themselves to depictions of male and female interaction, or female bodies. One should, however, not conclude that Ottoman erotic painting did not depict same-sex sexual relations. Same-sex scenes are recurrent in the *Hamse* of Ata'i as well as other manuscripts discussed by Artan and Schick that postdate Levni's death, which is why they will not be further examined here.<sup>53</sup> Fetvacı in her article on love in the album of Sultan Ahmed I (B.408, TSM) points out that the depiction of explicit sexuality in the codex is restricted to male-male interactions. Naked men are shown in the bathhouse, trading looks and touching each other in a way that makes the sexual nature of these exchanges obvious (upper part of fol. 18a). Lastly, two men caress each other in a landscape, their open clothing exposing their genitalia, and completely oblivious to their inebriated companions, or the shocked onlookers (fol. 23a). In Fetvacı's words: 'men's bodies become the object of our gaze in a way the women's bodies do not'.<sup>54</sup>

## 1.5 Presentation of the Master thesis

### The thesis' research question

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<sup>49</sup> Artan/Schick 2013, 160; 172; 175

<sup>50</sup> Binney 1973, 96-98.

<sup>51</sup> Artan/Schick 2013, 164.

<sup>52</sup> Artan/Schick 2013, 164; 190. Artan further discusses the question of audience and patronage here: Artan 2015, 767-773.

<sup>53</sup> Artan/Schick 2013, 164-190.

<sup>54</sup> Fetvacı 2010, 39; 43; 44.



The album H.2164 in the Topkapı Palace Museum in Istanbul contains a group of paintings of single figures signed ‘Levni’. It includes depictions of women and men in bright and extremely detailed costumes against a sober background. Nineteen of the paintings take women as their subject matter, which is particularly interesting since women are rare in other works attributed to Levni (see section 3.5), and in Ottoman painting in general before the eighteenth century (see section 1.4). The reproductions of the paintings in the album H.2164 were first published by İrepoğlu in 1999 and she described all of the paintings without taking a particular interest in the depiction of women as a subject matter in itself.<sup>55</sup>

İrepoğlu assumes the paintings in the album H.2164 are portraits of individuals, using the captions that accompany some of the paintings to identify them.<sup>56</sup> Noting the detailed character of Levni’s depiction of hairdos and costumes in this album, she concludes the artist must have spent time observing members of the Court and might even have known some of ‘his models’.<sup>57</sup> The work process she suggests, and the words she employs to do so, clearly place Levni in a similar mindset to European artists such as Jean-Baptiste Vanmour.<sup>58</sup> In fact, İrepoğlu connects Levni to the cultural and political phenomenon labelled ‘westernisation’.<sup>59</sup>

There is no doubt that Levni lived at a time in which the Ottoman Empire, and specifically, the inhabitants of its capital Istanbul were coming into close contact with Europeans and actively consuming European culture.<sup>60</sup> Political and military reforms were also initiated as a direct result of these exchanges with Europe. However, it appears İrepoğlu’s study of Levni’s work may have suffered from the tendency to frame Levni and his work as a product of the ‘westernisation’ taking place in Ottoman society towards the end of his life, instead of analysing the various sources of inspiration the artist drew from and identifying the overall logic of his work based on the study of its multiple facets.

A result of the focus on Levni’s relationship to European art has been the apparent lack of interest in other artistic traditions informing his work. The existence of other sources for his painting is particularly clear when examining the single-figure paintings attributed to the painter in the album H.2164, which exhibit clear parallels to Persian painting from the late

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<sup>55</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 146-181.

<sup>56</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 146.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> İrepoğlu 2003, 73-102.

<sup>59</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 11. In the context of the Ottoman Empire, ‘westernisation’ refers to an increase in the commercial and political exchanges between the Ottoman Empire and Europe in the eighteenth century, which led to an openness to European culture in Ottoman circles and durably influenced the political and cultural life of the Empire.

<sup>60</sup> Artan 2011a, 139. Artan 2015, 777-785. Avcıoğlu/Flood 2010, 8-9. Renda 2004, 1107-1116.

sixteenth and early seventeenth century. In addition, it assumes techniques to create verisimilitude are the prerogative of European painting, and thus European painting is Levni's ultimate source of inspiration for such elements.

This may not be the most useful way of looking at his work since it forces us to constantly compare Levni's production to standards, which are extrapolated from an artistic and intellectual tradition different from the one Levni was a part of.<sup>61</sup> More importantly it eliminates from the narrative the veristic techniques that had already been used by earlier Ottoman artist, and thus were also part of the tradition of painting associated with the Ottoman Court.<sup>62</sup> It also excludes from the discussion veristic modes of depiction as they were practiced by Persian painters such as Reza 'Abbasi and Sadiqi Beg.<sup>63</sup>

The Persian dimension has so far not been entirely absent from the scholarly literature even if it occupies a minor role compared to other directions of inquiry. Ünver states the subject matter of the painting on folio 4a in the H.2164, which according to the caption above the image is Şahı Orhan, the lover of Shah Tahmasp, was directly taken from a painting in another album in Topkapı Palace, the N.2158.<sup>64</sup> Although the inventory number of the albums have changed, one would assume he is referring to folio 12a of the album H.2158, which İrepoğlu also cites in connection to folio 4a. İrepoğlu says Levni inspired himself from the 'seventeenth century Persian figures of the Riza Abbasî School of Isfahan, also present in the Topkapı Palace', but does not investigate the nature of the connection.<sup>65</sup> Richard Ettinghausen and Ivan Stchoukine had also noticed this link, with Stchoukine pointing out the way of diminishing the hands and feet of the figures was inherited from Persian painters from the fifteenth and sixteenth century.<sup>66</sup>

Güner İnal published an article dedicated to Ottoman albums with single figure paintings, in which he compares two paintings from the album H.2164 with Safavid paintings in other albums in the Topkapı Palace Collections. He sees the paintings in the Palace

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<sup>61</sup> Michael Baxandall's *Patterns of Intention* and Finbarr Barry Flood's article 'From Prophet to Postmodernism? New World Orders and the End of Islamic Art' were crucial to making me realise the extent to which the political and cultural climate of a given time can influence an author's perception and discourse, including mine.

<sup>62</sup> For an example of a manuscript from the late fifteenth century with the recurrent use of tonal rendering and an obvious interest in recreating the illusion of depth see Yoltar-Yildirim 2005, 105-106. As for the visual idiom created by Ottoman painters for portraits of Sultan Mehmed II to fit with his taste for European art, a great number of publications exists. A few examples include: Campbell/Chong 2005, 88-89; Carboni 2007, 296; Necipoğlu 2000, 23-30.

<sup>63</sup> Rogers, Grove Art Online.

<sup>64</sup> Ünver 1951, 6.

<sup>65</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 153; 146.

<sup>66</sup> Ettinghausen 1965, 21. Stchoukine 1971, 124.

Collections as the source for Levni's knowledge of Persian painting and excludes an exchange with Persian artists as the cause for Levni's adaptation of certain motifs from Persian single-figure paintings.<sup>67</sup> Tülay Artan and İrvin Cemil Schick build on the conclusions of İnal and introduce the notion Levni reworked the Persian examples available to him in the Palace and modified elements such as the costumes to clearly signal the depicted figures were Ottoman, a process they label 'Ottomanization' (see section 1.4).<sup>68</sup>

The album H.2164 has also been mentioned in connection to the topic of the Ottoman costume album. Günzel Renda when discussing the H.2164 album in 1989 described it as an example of a costume album made by an Ottoman artist for a potential European patron.<sup>69</sup> This hypothesis has not been taken up by more recent scholarship.

### The method and structure of the thesis

The depictions of women in the album H.2164 have until now not been studied as a group and there are still many aspects of the album itself which need to be examined. Apart from their art historical value as examples of a little-researched genre in Ottoman painting, they provide a wealth of information that goes beyond this to inform our grasp of the album itself, and more generally the artistic production Levni is credited with. This thesis will thus focus on the nineteen paintings of women attributed to the painter Levni in the album H.2164, and will discuss the formal characteristics of these depictions, their production process and their history as objects, and their attribution to Levni. I was able to examine the album personally in Topkapı Palace and my notes constitute the basis for the material evidence presented in this thesis. Formal analysis and comparison are the main methods applied in this study, as well as reference to relevant secondary literature.

A close examination of the paintings in the album H.2164 in Topkapı Palace shows that the album was probably not created at the same time as the paintings, and that the paintings it includes were not initially meant to be displayed together (see chapter 2). Furthermore, the paintings show formal discrepancies which make the theory they were executed by the same hand unlikely. The depictions of women exhibit, nonetheless, a recurrent use of a specific set of visual conventions that suggest that they were completed by a workshop, and thus are probably the work of a Levni workshop (chapter 3).

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<sup>67</sup> İnal 1984, 93; 95.

<sup>68</sup> Artan/Schick 2013, 163.

<sup>69</sup> Renda 1989, 64.

The paintings all show a distinct interest in the depiction of fabric, which will also be investigated in this thesis (chapter 4). The discussion of fabric's rendering and the way the painters used it to make the body visible will offer a more nuanced analysis of the 'realist' label that has been hitherto applied to these images. The inspiration the Levni workshop drew from Persian images is the last topic addressed. In fact, chapter 5 will focus on the depiction of a reclining sleeping woman and compare it with a painting by Reza 'Abbasi and another by Sadiqi Beg in order to try to determine to what extent Persian paintings with a pronounced erotic content were a source of inspiration for the Ottoman painters.

In addition to the text, this thesis contains a catalogue of all of the depictions of women in the album H.2164 and attributed to Levni, which should help the reader's comprehension of the comparative approach, which was adopted for the formal analysis of the paintings. The two appendices provide further material, which I hope will facilitate its study. The first appendix includes a list of the inscriptions written on some of the paintings of women with their translations in English and German by different scholars. The second appendix provides close-ups of the signatures on the depictions of women in the album.

## **2.0 The H.2164 album**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The album has received relatively little attention compared to other works attributed to the Ottoman artist Levni. Gül İrepoğlu — the only scholar who published almost all of the pictures associated with Levni in this album — provided descriptions of the paintings, but the images in the reproductions were generally cut so that only the main figure was shown in the illustrations for her book.<sup>70</sup> This is problematic in a scholarly publication because by trimming the images in such a way, important information for the study of the painting, such as the page layout, the ratio of the image to the margins, and the overall effect of the folio, disappears.<sup>71</sup> For reasons that are not clear, folio 19b was excluded from her publication. The three paintings at the end of the album, which differ both stylistically and thematically from those attributed to Levni were not published either. Furthermore, she provided no information as to the material, measurements, or state of conservation of the paintings.

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<sup>70</sup> İrepoğlu 1999, 168-205.

<sup>71</sup> This is a well known problem in the study of book paintings, see Blair/Bloom 2003, 169.

İrepoğlu did not give any codicological information about the album, and to the best of my knowledge there is no literature on this topic. Single folios from the album have appeared in several different catalogues. In those cases, measurements were provided but there has been no single comprehensive effort since İrepoğlu's monograph to study the album as a whole.<sup>72</sup> As a result, information on the dating of the paintings, the binding, the history of the album in the Palace Collections, as well as possible restorations or modifications made to the album and its paintings are absent from the scholarly discussion. I will not be able to fill all these gaps, but having examined the album myself in the Topkapı Palace Museum Library, I will attempt to counter this lack of information as much as possible. Thus, this chapter will document the materiality of the H.2164 album based on my observations and propose a tentative reconstruction of the paintings' history.

## 2.2 Presentation of the album

The album H.2164 contains 43 single sheet paintings attributed to the Ottoman painter Abdülcelil Çelebi Levni. It is dated by scholars between 1710 and 1720 and is today kept in the Topkapı Palace Museum Library in Istanbul.<sup>73</sup> The album contains 45 paintings and one ink drawing. The pages measure 15.5 x 24.5 cm and the paintings' size varies between 7.8 x 15 cm and 9 x 16.2 cm.

### The book cover

The cover consists of two boards covered with dark brown leather on the outside, and light brown leather on the inside. The outside of the cover is decorated with a lobed centre-piece with pendants above and below and four corner-pieces. The whole composition is framed by an embossed frame. The lobed centre-piece and pendants are arranged in vertical symmetry. The centre-piece's design consists of symmetrically placed clouds and vine scrolls with blossoms. The ornamentation is stamped 1 or 2 mm deep and gilded with gold pigment, which appears to have been applied as a paint. François Déroche in his classification of the

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<sup>72</sup> Catalogues which provide measurements for some of the folios include the following: Ivan Stchoukine, *La Peinture turque d'après les manuscrits illustrés. IIe Partie. De Murād IV à Muşafā III*, Paris 1971; Filiz Çağman/ Zeren Tanındı, *The Topkapı Saray Museum*, eng. and ed. by John M. Rogers, Boston 1987 (originally in Turkish: *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi*, Istanbul 1979); Anne de Margerie (Ed.), *Topkapı à Versailles : trésors de la Cour ottomane* (Exh. Cat., Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles 1999), Paris 1999; Tulpen, Kaftane und Levni : höfische Mode und Kostümalben der Osmanen aus dem Topkapı-Palast Istanbul (Exh. Cat., Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt am Main 2008/2009), München 2008.

<sup>73</sup> Bağcı/Çağman/Renda 2010, 267.

ornamentation of lobed centre-pieces considered symmetrically arranged compositions with clouds were in use between the sixteenth and the nineteenth century.<sup>74</sup> Given that I do not possess a picture of this binding, it is for the time being impossible for me to provide a more precise categorisation.

The doublure's decoration shows a similar composition, but the decorative elements are restricted to the lobed centre-piece and corner-pieces, which are outlined in gold and filled in with flecks of gold. These elements are the same size as their counterparts on the outside of the cover, but the distance between the different parts was increased so that the overall composition would fit within the surface of the doublure. Since the decoration has fewer decorative elements than on the outside, the composition on the inside had to be adapted to fit the whole surface of the cover. The difference in ratio is visible on the doublure because the leather has taken a different coloration in the places corresponding to the embossed patterns of the outside cover. A cream-coloured pasteboard peeks through in the upper left corner of the upper cover in places where the leather doublure is damaged. 'H.2164' is written twice in black ink or perhaps pencil towards the tail of the bottom cover.

### The endpapers

The upper and lower covers are still joined to the endpapers which are made of pink and white marble paper with yellow veins. Like the folios, the endpapers are edged with a leather-like tape, in this case, the red colour has turned black. The endpapers bear several stamps and hand written numbers, for which, as has already been mentioned, there is no information in the secondary literature. The hand written numbers include ones with European digits and others with Arabic-Indic digits. These are written in ink, but also pencil and ballpoint pen. There are two captions in Arabic script, which I could not decipher. In the middle of the page, a stamp in purple ink reads TKS. MÜZE, which obviously stands for Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi (Topkapı Palace Museum). Another stamp in red ink spells out a name in Arabic script which is partly illegible, but by comparing it with the complete stamp on the endpaper of album B.408, I have come to the conclusion it should read طوپقپو سرايى تحريير قوميسیونى (Topkapı Sarayı Tahriir Komisyonu, The Topkapı Palace Registration Commission).<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Déroche 1985, 15.

<sup>75</sup> The Zenker dictionary gives the meanings 'the act of freeing' or 'the act of registering' for the word تحريير (see Zenker 1994, 263). I chose to translate it as 'registration' because it seemed to suit the context better.

### The folios

The folios of the album are no longer bound except for folios 23 and 24, which are still attached to one another and fastened to the lower cover. Originally each folio was made up of two leaves of paper stuck back to back. Today only pages 23a and 23b are still glued together. For the other folios, the individual leaves have been separated and are kept in this state. The back of the pages shows coloured, thicker paper with traces of glue indicating where the leaves were initially stuck together. The glue was applied along the outline of a rectangle corresponding to the gilded frame of the painting on the other side. Lines of glue were extended from the corners of the rectangle so as to form a sort of grid.

The page layout on the front side of the page is composed of the painting surrounded by a ruled and gilded frame, which sets it apart from the four margins, and hides the transition between the two (Fig. 3). The margins and the painting seem to be glued onto the thicker paper, which forms the back of the page. This thicker paper is pink or orange. The margins are made of very thin paper strips, which seem to have been glued together to form a frame. For example on folio 9b, the outline of the horizontal bands forming the upper and lower margins is visible in the places where the horizontal bands overlap with the vertical strips, which constitute the inner and outer margin (Fig. 4).

When the painting is not as big as the space delimited by the margins, it is glued onto a larger piece of paper, which is then affixed to the margins. For example in folio 9b, the border of the central paper is visible under the gold pigment of the frame (Fig. 4). The edge of the margin paper contiguous with the frame is hidden under the central piece of paper. On the contrary in folio 9a, the painting and the margins seem to have been glued directly onto the thick paper forming the back of the page. A close examination of the gilded frame reveals there is a space between the edge of the paper of the painting and the edge of the margin paper. The gilded frame was painted over the exposed strip of background paper to hide it (Fig. 5). This evidence also points to the fact the gilded frame was added once the painting and the margins had already been put together.

### The foliations

The current foliation consists of folio numbers in European digits associated with European letters. It is noted in pencil in the upper outer corner of each page, following a right to left binding direction. The secondary literature does not discuss the history of the albums or the paintings, which means it is also silent on the matter of the order of the folios. Scholars

assume the order in which the folios are kept today corresponds to the original sequence. An exception to this is Ünver's comment that the variations in the signatures on the paintings might indicate they were not originally meant to be bound in an album.<sup>76</sup> He then raises the possibility they were meant to be hung on the wall, but dismisses it saying the way the paintings are set in the accompanying margins clearly shows that they were meant to be bound. In fact, the album is characterised by the symmetrical arrangement of the layout and the paintings on opposing pages. The order in which the folios are currently foliated respects this principle. Furthermore, a transfer of pigment from one painting to the one on the opposite page can be observed in several instances. This supports the idea that the folios are still in their original order because it indicates that they have been preserved in this order for a long time.

There is a second foliation visible in the album, which has until now been ignored by scholars. Unlike the current foliation, this one employs small Arabic-Indic digits in black ink, which appear on all of the paintings in the album except folios 2b and 3a. The use of Arabic-Indic digits suggests a foliation anterior to the one using European letters and digits. The placement of the number on the page varies. Depending on the painting, they are written in the margin, on the paper of the painting, or in the intermediary space between the gilded frame around the painting and the gilded frame bordering the margin. The majority of pages are numbered by double facing page. In other words, opposite pages have the same number written in the lower corner closest to the spine.

The numbering starts at 1 on folios 1b and 2a, but then there are no numbers on folios 2b and 3a and the sequence starts over with number 1 on folios 3b and 4a. Whereas the number was written in the inner margin close to the lower corner on folios 1b and 2a, on folios 3b and 4a the number 1 is inscribed on the paper of the painting itself. From folios 3b and 4a onwards the numbering is consecutive until folios 22b and 23a. Within this sequence, the numbering shows inconsistencies. On folios 6b the Arabic-Indic digit 4 is inscribed on the paper of the painting in ink, while on folio 7a the Arabic-Indic digit 4 appears in faded ink in the space between the two gilded frames surrounding the painting. On folio 12b, the Arabic-Indic digit 10 is written, but it looks like it was at first a 11 which was modified to a 10. The opposite page, folio 13a, contains the Arabic-Indic digit 10.

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<sup>76</sup> Ünver 1951, 7.



The last three pages in the album contain numbers too, but these are illegible on folios 23a and 23b, and so it is difficult to say if the pages continue to be numbered by double facing pages. Folio 22b has a clear number 20 written on it and folio 24a a legible 24. On folios 23a and 23b only the first digit of the double digit number is recognisable as a 2 indicating the number is twenty something.

The presence of a number 24 on folio 24a may point to the fact the painting is numbered according to its folio number. If the folios continued to be consecutively numbered by double page as is the case up to folio 22b, then folio 24a should bear the number 21 since folios 23b-24a build the next double page after 22b-23a, and folio 22b is numbered 20. However, folio 24a exhibits the number 24, and thus does not follow the numbering by double pages. Instead the number 24 corresponds to its folio number.

Another possibility could be that the album initially contained more paintings, which are today no longer part of the album. If we assume the hypothetical missing pages followed the consecutive numbering by double pages, then the album would currently be missing eight paintings: one painting to form a double page with folio 22b, three double pages numbered 21, 22, and 23, and the pendant to the painting on folio 24a.

### The page layout

Each page of the album contains a picture. The painting is placed in the centre of the page and surrounded by four margins. The majority of the paintings are orientated vertically. There are three exceptions to this, folios 11b, 12a, and 23a, which all contain a painting showing a reclining figure. Thus, the horizontal orientation of these paintings seems to be determined by the formal implications of their subject matter.

The main gilded frame delineates the limit between the margins and the space reserved for the painting itself. Both the margins and the main gilded frame have a standardised size, which reoccurs on every page. The page itself measures 15.5 x 24.5 cm and the main gilded frame is 9.2 x 16.5 cm and circa 0.3 cm in width. The only exception to this is folio 3a, where the shape of the main gilded frame, normally a rectangle, changes to accommodate the feather of the figure's headdress. The standard for the margins and the main gilded frame could possibly be determined by the size of the first two paintings (fol. 1b-2a) since these fit perfectly within the margins. By comparison, the size of the paintings that come further in the album's order does not systematically coincide with the available space.

There is another variation of the layout for pages with paintings that are smaller than the picture field outlined by the standardised gilded frame mentioned above. To fit within the standardised margins, the smaller paintings are affixed to additional paper, which results in the presence of a blank between the borders of the painting and the standardised gilded frame. In order to create a similar visual effect on all of the pages regardless of the size of the paintings they contain, the layout of the pages with smaller paintings is composed of the main gilded frame and a thinner, second gilded frame running around the edges of the painting. As a result, the size of this second gilded frame varies according to the dimensions of the painting it surrounds. The space between the main gilded frame and the second gilded frame is designated here as the intermediary space.

The pages with paintings too small to fit in the empty space outlined by the margins exhibit multiple combinations of painting and intermediary space in their layout. The intermediary space is decorated in folio 23a, where marble paper is used, and in folio 17b, where the paper was painted with a vine scroll in gold pigment. More often the intermediary space is devoid of designs and restricted to blank paper or paper painted over with pigment. On folio 7a the painting is centred and the intermediary space frames the painting on all sides. The intermediary space can be placed towards the head of the page (fol. 4a); on both sides (fol. 15b), in some cases with the widest strip towards the fore-edge (fols. 5b and 6a); towards the spine (fols. 9b, 11b, and 22b); or above and below the painting (fol. 17b). There are also pages where the combination of painting and intermediary space follows axial symmetry, thereby emphasising that the paintings function as a double page. In this case, both pages are arranged in the same way with the intermediary space next to the outer margin (fols. 7b-8a, 14b-15a, 16b-17a, and 18b-19a).

The paper of all the paintings is lined with black ink along the outline of the gilded frames. Two lines appear outside the gilded frames and one line inside. Folios 2b and 3a differ from the other paintings because the main gilded frame is emphasised by a red line, which runs on the painting inside the frame.

### The margins

In all of the paintings attributed to Levni, the page is organised so that the upper, lower, and outer margins are of equivalent width. The inner margin is half the width of the other margins. All of the margins are made of laid paper, which hints to the fact they were

probably all prepared at once considering they come from the same material. The paper of the margins is tinted pink, white, orange, or yellow, and decorated with gold and silver sprinkling. The upper, lower and outer margins also include illuminations with gold flowers. The combination of blossoms and leaves changes from one page to another, but they all exhibit the same formal characteristics, which hints they were executed by the same person.

The decoration of the margins systematically brings opposite pages together: the margin paper is tinted with the same colour and the shape of the floral and vegetal illuminations mirror the ones of the opposite page. Folios 1b and 2a are the only pages where the inner margins has gold illuminations. On all the other paintings, the asymmetrical shape of the margins and the inner margins's lack of illuminations hints to the fact the paintings on opposite pages are supposed to be seen as a double page, as if the margins between the two paintings did not exist (Fig. 3). The margin acts as a frame for a double page, instead of encircling single paintings.<sup>77</sup>

### The paintings in general

Of the 46 paintings, 43 show aesthetic and thematic similarities. The images consist of depictions of single male and female figures except for two cases, in which a pair of servants and a group of female musicians are painted. The figures are represented in a variety of positions, but always in three quarter profile. They are displayed in bright and extremely detailed costumes against a sober background. These paintings, attributed to the artist Levni, are painted using watercolour on paper.<sup>78</sup>

The three remaining images (folios 23a, 23b and 24a) consist of an ink drawing of a woman reading (fol. 23a) and two paintings of outdoor scenes (folios 23b and 24a). The ink drawing is signed 'Kalem-i Veli'.<sup>79</sup> Their subject matter and formal characteristics set them apart from the corpus of single figures. In the folios' current sequence, the ink drawing forms a double page with a male single figure signed 'Levni' and the two outdoor scenes build the last double page in the album.

Two architectural decorative elements in the upper corners are repeated in different variations on most of the paintings attributed to Levni. Considered together these elements seem to form an arch, which frames the single figure. The most common form is the

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<sup>77</sup> I would like to thank Markus Ritter for bringing this to my attention.

<sup>78</sup> İrepoğlu 1999b, 219-223, 252-254.

<sup>79</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 146.

shouldered arch, but it can also be a simple arch (fols. 7a, 10a, and 19b) or a trifold decorative element that evokes a floral motif more than actual architecture (fols. 16b and 17a). The corner elements are painted a solid colour and ornamented with a vine scroll in another tint. Both elements function as a pair and are in the same colour palette. Considering the paintings as double pages, some pairs have comparable corner elements (fols. 16b-17a), but on others the decoration is completely different (fols. 6b-7a). On several paintings the same shouldered arch in dark grey with a silver vine scroll is painted (fols. 11b-12a, 6a-b, 9a, 13b, 15b, 16a, 20a, and 21b-22a).

#### The painting process for shading and patterns on clothing

In several paintings, it seems to be the case that the shading used to depict the folds of the fabric was painted first and that the motifs were added on top. The flowers on the light green robe of the 'woman with the ermine coat' (fol. 9b) are painted above the brown, black, and green lines which constitute the shading. This is particularly visible around the armpit and below the belt (Fig. 6). The woman's trousers show the folds were first painted with black (Fig. 7). Then, the stripes in coloured pigment were applied. Finally, white lines highlighting the folds were added. Pictures of women with striped trousers systematically follow this painting process. It is also used on the painting of the 'woman in a green robe arranging flowers in her hair' (fol. 15b). She wears trousers with a floral pattern, which leads one to suppose this painting process was not limited to one specific type of pattern.

Moreover, it seems the exterior outlines of the clothing items were painted on once the coloured surface of the fabric had already been applied. On the painting of the 'woman with the ermine coat' (fol. 9b), the orange band depicting the lining's border, on the flap of her robe on the right, peeks out from under the red line delineating the edge of the cloth (Fig. 8). This suggests the red line was painted on top of the orange border. The same can be observed on the flap of the robe of the 'woman carrying a jug' (fol. 21b), particularly on the upper part of the fold. The aforementioned features characterise all of the pictures of women in the H.2164 indicating that the same painting process was used for all the depictions of women's costumes.

#### The captions

There is no introductory dedication or colophon for the album H.2164, the only text it contains being the few captions labelling some of the images. The captions are always written in red ink in *nesih* script. They solely appear in the first third of the album (folios 2a-10a, and 14a). In addition to these captions in red ink, the painting of an enthroned male figure on folio 1b exhibits an inscription on the throne, which reads Sultān ‘Osmān Hān (سلطان عثمان خان).

The captions in red ink are generally placed within the picture field — written on the upper right above the figure’s head. However, there are two exceptions to this. The caption on folio 2a is placed in the margin above the head of the two figures, and on folio 4a, the caption is written above the figure in the intermediary space between the two gilded frames.

The captions in Ottoman Turkish identify the figures. In some cases the figure’s name and official position is stated (‘Cafer Bey, the Servant of Sultan Osman’ fol. 2b).<sup>80</sup> A number of people are clearly marked by the captions as Persian (‘Maverdi, the head of the Persian dance troop’ fol.7b). Another group is associated with the city of Bursa (‘Shah Mehmed, one of the young men of Bursa’ fol. 6b).

The captions also link the figures with one another. The caption on folio 14a indicates that both the European man depicted in the painting and the European woman on folio 13b are Austrian. The linking of two figures through the captions only occurs for female-male pairs.

### The ‘Levnī’ signatures

All of the paintings are signed ‘Levnī’ except for folios 2a and 22b. The signature is generally found under a plant in a lower corner of the picture field. Although the signatures all spell out the same word, there are inconsistencies in the spelling and the arrangement of the signature elements (see chapter 3 section 4).

### The folios’ state of conservation

The restoration history of the paintings and the album has, to the best of my knowledge, not been published. All of the folios show damage from humidity. In several instances, pigment has transferred from one painting to the opposite painting indicating the pages had adhered to one another because of humidity. The paper of some pages is crinkled in a way that shows it has dried after having been wet. The paper of the margins is flecked with

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<sup>80</sup> The translations given here are adapted from İrepoğlu 1999a, 146-171.

black, which one assumes is also a reaction to humidity. The metallic pigment used for the frame, the sprinkling on the margins and the illuminations is oxidised.

A few modifications to the folios and the paintings are noticeable. All the folios are bordered with a dark red leather-like tape. It seems this was a conservation intervention to preserve the edges of the pages from getting damaged. In addition, folios 17b and 18b show obvious repaints.

On folio 17b, the floor was repainted with black near the lower frame, which differs from the dark blue colour of the floor closer to the figures. Furthermore, this repaint obscures the lower part of the Levni signature (Fig. 9). The outline of a ledge between the two columns is still partly visible through the black paint. It seems that a white ledge ran between the two columns before the image was cut to fit within the margins. The fact the column on the right has a white base whereas there is none on the left column is evidence for the picture's resizing. The repaint aimed to hide the part of the white ledge that was still visible once the painting had been trimmed.

There are several elements on the painting on folio 18b, which point to a repaint of the man's left arm and part of his left side (Fig. 10). First of all, the skin colour of the left hand is white whereas the right hand is beige. The depiction of the left hand also appears much more schematic than the right hand, which exhibits a complex hand gesture. In addition, the shade of the jacket is darker on the left arm than on the rest of the body. The depiction of the folds of the sleeve around the wrist are also less refined than on the other arm. Further down, evidence of repaint is visible on the second lower tassel and on the gold embroidery along the edge of the black cloak, from below the arm, to the point where the tassel fringe ends. Finally, the area of the belt around the hand is smudged which suggests a repaint. There are no matching stains on the opposite folio (fol. 19a) so the possibility that the smudge was caused by the two pages sticking to one another can be excluded.

To conclude, it seems likely that the repaint on folio 18b is the result of a restoration undertaken because the original pigment layer had been damaged, possibly by water. The smudge on the belt provides evidence for damage by water for two reasons: first of all, because a ring is visible along the edges of the smudge, which resembles the effect created by a drop of water which has dried; secondly, because within the smudge's ring, the pigment layer is pure red and does not exhibit the lines of white and black pigment, which represent the folds on the rest of the belt.

### The arrangement of the folios within the album

The asymmetrical arrangement of the margins and their decoration indicate all paintings attributed to Levni were meant to be viewed as double pages (see the section on the margins). Folios 1b and 2a are the exception to this rule since these two folios have all four margin strips illuminated (Fig. 11). Nonetheless, they are thematically linked, which points to the fact they should be seen as a double page. The decision to decorate the inner margins, thereby visually separating the paintings from one another, may have to do with the sultan's unequalled social position. It might have been considered inappropriate to unify in a single plane the sultan with some of his servants given the difference in status.

The layout of the pages also implies all the paintings function as pairs and that the figures are connected to each other. Furthermore, the logic behind the layout of the pages is also verified by the order of the images. The link between the figures is obvious in pairs such as the European man and woman, who appear on opposite folios (fols. 13b-14a). It seems an attempt was made to put together paintings with common characteristics. For example, folio 12b shows a woman tying a scarf around her head and folio 13a exhibits a man wrapping his turban around his head.

Several other instances for a parallel between the figures could be cited, but there are also pairs, for which the link is unclear. On folio 21b a woman carries a jug on her shoulder. The male figure on the opposite page is standing with his right hand raised to his chest and his left hand clutching a handkerchief. No common factor is particularly noticeable.

Lastly, the connection between opposite pages is established by the figures themselves. The paintings were chosen and arranged so that figures on opposite pages would be facing towards each other. Thus, based on the mounting of the images the logic behind the arrangement of the folios with paintings attributed to Levni seems quite clear.

However, when one considers the foliation with Arabic-Indic digits in the album, it becomes more difficult to define the logic for the folios' order. The paintings are numbered consecutively by double page from folios 3b and 4a to folios 22b and 23a included. Yet, the last three images do not follow this pattern. Furthermore, a separate sequencing appears on folios 1b and 2a, and as far as I could see, no numbers appear on folios 2b and 3a. In other words, the order of the pages suggested by the foliation with Arabic-Indic digits only corresponds with the order in which the paintings are mounted for folios 3b to 23a. However,

both the numbering and the layout of the pages indicate the paintings attributed to Levni should be viewed as double pages since all of them are numbered in double pages, and even the two that are not numbered function thematically as a double page.

Considering the numbers on the last three folios are not clear and that these folios have the same layout as the previous pages, it appears the last three folios (fols. 23a-24a) should also be seen as double pages. In folios 22b and 23a we see the combination of paintings of a male and a female figure placed on two facing pages, which, as has already been discussed, is a recurrent pattern in the arrangement of the paintings attributed to Levni. Furthermore, the foliation with Arabic-Indic digits is probably an addition from the twentieth century (see section 2.3 for the discussion of their dating) and thus, is not relevant to the understanding of the arrangement of the folios in the album at the time it was first created. In conclusion, all of the paintings in the album should be viewed as double pages.

### **2.3 A tentative reconstruction of the paintings' history**

To my knowledge, no one has tried to reconstruct the history of the modifications made to the paintings, and once they were bound, the album. However, first hand observation of the album reveals interesting details, which indicate a complicated history well-worth investigating. It is obvious that there were several phases in the history of the album before it came to its present state. The dating 1710-1720 attributed to the paintings by the authors of *Ottoman Painting* seems too early to me, and there is firm evidence to suggest the album was put together after Levni's death.<sup>81</sup> It is not the aim of this thesis to offer a thorough reconstruction of the paintings' history, but a tentative chronology will be suggested here.

#### Phase I: the paintings

In the first phase, which obviously must date to the first half of the eighteenth century, either during Levni's life time or shortly after his death (see chapter 1 for Levni's biographical information), paintings on single sheets of paper were produced. The paper of the paintings, the pigments, the fact they were resized, their formal characteristics, and the variations in the signatures, all suggest that the paintings were executed by more than one artist, and most

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<sup>81</sup> Bağcı/Çağman/Renda 2010, 267.



plausibly by a group larger than two painters. The discrepancies in the formal characteristics of the paintings and the ‘Levnī’ signatures will be discussed in detail in chapter 3.

The paper on which the paintings are executed is not always the same. For example, the portrait of the ‘woman with the ermine coat’ (fol. 9b) was painted on blue wove paper, while the painting of the ‘woman wearing a transparent veil’ (fol. 14b) is on laid paper. The paper of the ‘woman with the ermine coat’ (fol. 9b) is quite thick and flocculent as can be seen in the corners where the paper has been partially torn off (Fig. 12). The undissolved fibres of the paper pulp are clearly visible, especially as some fibres appear greyish black. In contrast, the paper in the picture of the ‘woman wearing a transparent veil’ (fol. 14b) is characterised by its polished appearance. The vertical chain lines denoting the fact it is laid paper can be observed above the figure’s head (Fig. 13). The paper is thinner and the fibres appear more closely knit. According to Déroche, after the sixteenth century, European paper became predominant in the manuscript production of the Ottoman Empire so it is probable the laid paper observed in the album is of European origin.<sup>82</sup>

The appearance of the pigment layer is not identical across the whole corpus. For example, on folio 20a the clothing of the young man smelling a tulip is rendered in saturated half-tones (Fig. 14). The pigment layer is opaque and the ground cannot be perceived. On the contrary, on the sleeves of one of the sultan’s attendants (fol. 2a), the paint seems to have been watered-down to form a much thinner pigment layer (Fig. 15). In addition, while the colours in the folio 20a are dull, the ones in the paintings of the servants are rather luminous.

Separate paintings of different sizes were standardised to fit within the album. Several paintings were recut, or extended, in one case with a glued on piece of paper, to fit within the margins set out for the album. Folio 16b shows a young man with a pipe (Fig. 16). Right below his feet, a strip of paper was glued on to the paper with the painting to extend the picture field. The addition was decorated with leaves in gold pigment, which were painted so that they ran over onto the original paper of the painting. Several paintings were trimmed. For example, on the painting of the ‘woman arranging a transparent veil on her head’ (fol. 15a) the flower and the signature in the lower right hand corner have been cut off by the gilded frame. The repaint visible on folio 17b dates in all likelihood to this process of resizing the images (see section 2.2).

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<sup>82</sup> Déroche 2006, 57.

## Phase II: the album

Having proposed the paintings were the work of different artists wishing to associate themselves with the name Levni, and that they were not conceived as a group of paintings destined to the same album, the discussion turns to the second phase in the internal history of the album: the actual creation of the album. At some point after Levni's death in 1732, but still within the eighteenth century, the single sheet paintings were put together with an ink drawing and two painted outdoor scenes to form an album. The inclusion of the three works, which are thematically and stylistically different from the single figures, supports the idea of someone choosing to put separate paintings together in an album as a way of preserving them, rather than the hypothesis that the pictures were produced with the explicit intention to bound them together in an album.

I propose the compilation of the paintings in an album happened after 1732, and before the end of the century, because it seems logical that single sheets linked to Levni would be preserved after his death given the level of recognition he had reached by the end of his career. Furthermore, the heterogenous character of the works included suggests the collection of 'leftover' pictures, which were still deemed valuable, but which had lost their original purpose, possibly because of the death of the artist they were associated with. The arrangement of the images and the type of illumination used for the margins points to 1799 as terminus ante quem date for the creation of the album, because by the end of the eighteenth century, luxuriously decorated albums were no longer made.<sup>83</sup>

It is possible to partly reconstruct the production process of the album. First of all, the material of the margins suggests they were all completed at the same time. In contrast to the paintings, all of the margins are made of laid paper. The material of the margins also indicates that the folios were all included in the album from the onset. Secondly, the way the album is assembled proves the paintings were all put into the album at the same time. The symmetrical arrangement of the margins and the paintings indicates a wilful organisation of the paintings attributed to Levni into pairs. Thirdly, the margins, the framing arches, and the gilded frames serve as unifying factors in the formation of a homogenous whole.

I was able to observe a similar use of framing arches as cohesive element in the seventeenth-century album B.408, more commonly known as Ahmet I's album (Fig. 17). Interestingly enough framing arches also appear on the last few paintings of the *Surname-i*

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<sup>83</sup> Bağcı/Çağman/Renda 2010, 279.

*Vehbi* (A.3593, TSM) (Fig. 18). The fact the same decorative element — the framing arch — is employed as a cohesive element in three different Ottoman manuscripts seems to indicate it is a technique of album making. Moreover, it demonstrates that this decorative element had a history in Ottoman manuscript painting and that framing arches were used by Levni and his workshop.

The framing arches were probably not all painted on at the time the album was created. The framing arches do not appear on all paintings, and unlike the margin's decoration, opposite paintings can have framing arches dissimilar in shape and colour. In addition, it seems some of the paintings already had framing arches before they were mounted in the album.

On folio 6b, the gold pigment of the frame has partly rubbed off in the upper left corner revealing the dark grey colour of the framing arch underneath (Fig. 19). This indicates the gold pigment was applied above an already existing framing arch, hiding it partially. Moreover, the parts of the arch, which undulate along the upper frame, are painted in a faintly paler shade of grey than the main body of the architectural element. These undulating pieces were added to conceal the fact the upper segment of the arch had been cut off when the painting was fitted for the margin frame. In order to conserve the bow of the shouldered arch it was necessary to extend the elements in the horizontal direction. The presence of framing arches on paintings prior to their inclusion in the album could mean these paintings had already been mounted in an album with a different page layout, or at the very least, been prepared in view of their insertion into a different page layout.

In contrast, on folios 21b and 22a the two paintings were unified by framing them with similar arches. The papers of the paintings on these two folios have dissimilar colours which makes it obvious to the viewer they come from different sources. This example illustrates the crucial role the framing arches play in visually signalling the paintings function together.

### Phase III: the captions

One could think the captions which appear on the first third of the images might also date to this second phase in the album's internal history, but the material evidence seems to invalidate this. The script, the colour of the ink and certain idiosyncrasies in spelling prove that one single person was responsible for all of the captions. It can, therefore, be excluded

that the captions were written by different artists at different times. It is perplexing that only the first third of the pictures bears captions. This could be an argument against the idea that they date to the same time as the compilation of the album. If the album was put together with the idea that each image would have an accompanying caption, then why do some images not have one? In addition, in some cases the text of the captions builds a connection between two figures, who were already linked through the structure of the album. For example the inscription on folio 9a, which depicts a man holding a bottle and a dagger, identifies him as the lover of Dader Banu.<sup>84</sup> The painting opposite, which shows the ‘woman smelling a carnation’ (fol.8b) is identified by another caption as Dader Banu. The layout of the pages and the order of the folios already build a relationship between these figures by arranging them on opposite pages so that they face each other. In other words, these pictures function as a pair regardless of the content of the captions.

In several of the other paintings with captions, the text states an information that is visually obvious. In folios 2a, 2b, and 3a, the figures wear uniforms linked to their official position, thus, even without the captions they can be recognised as the ‘Sword-keeper’, the ‘Treasurer’, etc. The portraits of the European figures make their ethnicity obvious through their physiognomy and costume. In the case of the two couples connected to Bursa by the captions, the captions underline a relationship between the two pairs that is already visually striking because the ‘fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers’ on folio 7a is copied from the ‘fully veiled woman in a blue coat’ on folio 5b (see chapter 3 section 3). The paintings of men opposite these women are very similar to one another even if they do not exhibit the direct copying visible in the depictions of the women.

Thus, in ten out of eighteen paintings with a caption, the captions reinforce the information communicated visually about the figures by spelling out the figures’ supposed identity and relationship to others. This fact seems to invalidate the hypothesis of the captions being already present on the paintings before they were compiled in the album. The content of the captions underlines the relationship between the figures established by the arrangement of the paintings, and thus is influenced by order of the folios itself. In conclusion, I would suggest the captions were written by someone who coming across the album already finished, decided to identify the figures in the paintings using the connections that were already suggested visually. In other words, the captions embody a third phase in the internal history of

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<sup>84</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 158-159.

the album, but a third phase, which I hypothetically place before the end of the eighteenth century.

### Later phases

The Arabic-Indic digits written in ink on most of the paintings attributed to Levni seem to have been placed on the page depending on the available space, and so that they would be clearly visible. For instance, on the ‘woman tying a scarf’ (fol. 12b) the placement of the Arabic-Indic digit appears to have been determined by the presence of a carpet with a complex design occupying the lower part of the painting. To avoid the Arabic-Indic digit being hidden in the carpet’s pattern, it was placed higher up than on other paintings.

The function of the Arabic-Indic digits is unclear. They could be a guide for the person in charge of glueing the single leaves back to back so that he would know which pages should be facing each other. However, this interpretation does not explain why the numbering is incoherent on the last three paintings of the album. Furthermore, the fact some of the numbers are in the intermediary spaces adjacent to the paintings points to the Arabic-Indic digits being added after the painting and the margins had been put together.

The inconsistencies in the numbering might indicate the numbers were added by someone for whom the order of the folios was not obvious. This could imply time elapsed between the mounting of the album and the addition of the numbering. Thus, a more probable hypothesis is that the numbers were added once the pages had been separated — and before the foliation with European digits and letters had been added — so that curators would know in which order the images were to be kept. In conclusion, the Arabic-Indic digits probably do not date to the creation of the album, but rather to the early twentieth century when the Topkapı Palace became a museum after the establishment of the Turkish Republic.<sup>85</sup>

At some point the folios were unbound and edged with dark red leather-like tape. I would interpret this as a twentieth century dismantling or a ‘restoration’, the tape obviously being meant to protect the edges of the paper from being damaged. The significant repaint noted on folio 18b could also be the result of a restoration (see section 2.2).

The stamps and the captions on the end papers also seem to belong to the twentieth century. The use of a ballpoint pen did not become common until the twentieth century and

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<sup>85</sup> Tezcan, Grove Art Online. For the early use of the concept of ‘Islamic art’ in connection to museums in Turkey see Shaw 2000.

the preference for pencil corresponds to contemporary inventorial practices. The stamps of the Topkapı Palace Museum and the Topkapı Palace Registration Commission should be dated to the twentieth century and the creation of the museum.

Another modification dating to the twentieth century, is the addition of folio numbers to the pages of the album. A picture of the whole of folio 18b published in Ahmet Süheyl Ünver's publication on Levni dating from 1951 shows the number 18 written in Arabic-Indic digits on the upper outer corner of the folio.<sup>86</sup> Today, the same folio bears instead the number 18 in European digits accompanied by the letter 'a' in lower case. The earliest publication I could find with illustrations showing the folio numbers in European digits, written in pencil on the upper outer corner of each folio, is the catalogue of the exhibition on Topkapı, which took place at Versailles in 1999.<sup>87</sup> This proves that some time after 1951, and before 1999, folio numbers in European digits and 'a' and 'b' letters to indicate recto and verso were added to the folios. At some point within the same time frame, the album was given a new inventory number and H.2164 was written on the endpaper in blue ballpoint. The inventory number also post-dates Ünver's publication because he refers to the album with the inventory number reg. N. 1816.<sup>88</sup> The inventory number H.2164 is used by İrepoğlu in her monograph.<sup>89</sup>

## 2.4 Conclusion

Based on a first-hand study of the album H.2164 in the Topkapı Palace Museum Library, a tentative reconstruction of the paintings' history in four phases has been proposed. In the first phase dating to Levni's lifetime or shortly after his death, the paintings on single sheets of paper were produced. Some of these paintings were already framed with decorative framing arches by the time the decision was made to mount them in an album.

In the second phase, between 1732 and 1799, the album was created. The paintings were collected, and ordered in pairs placed on opposite pages. The paper of the margins was tinted and sprinkled with gold and silver. The paintings were trimmed or joined to larger pieces of paper to fit within the standardised margins. Folio 17b was partly repainted to hide the fact it had been cut. The folios were assembled by glueing the margins and the paintings onto thicker pieces of paper. The outline of the gilded frames was then lined with black ink

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<sup>86</sup> Ünver 1951, colour plates.

<sup>87</sup> Anne de Margerie (Ed.), *Topkapi à Versailles : trésors de la Cour ottomane* (Exh. Cat., Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles 1999), Paris 1999.

<sup>88</sup> Ünver 1951, 8.

<sup>89</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 144.

and the gold pigment was applied to form the main frame separating the picture field from the margin, and in cases where the painting was smaller than the main frame, a thinner additional frame edging the painting. The illuminated blossom and leaves were painted on the margins. The individual leaves were then stuck back to back to form the folios. The folios were finally bound in an album. In the third phase, captions were added to eighteen of the paintings. The hypothetical dating of this phase is the end of the eighteenth century.

In later phases, probably during the twentieth century, the leaves were unglued and edged with dark red leather-like tape. The folio 18b was partly repainted. Stamps and captions were added to the end papers including the stamps of the Topkapı Palace Museum and the Topkapı Palace Registration Commission. Between 1951 and 1999 the album was given the inventory number H.2164 — in 1951 the inventory number was instead reg. N. 1816. Folio numbers were first written in Arabic-Indic digits. At some point in the twentieth century, numbering in Arabic-Indic digits was added to the inner lower corners of a majority of the paintings. These were replaced between 1951 and 1991 by folio numbers in European digits associated with European letters inscribed in pencil on each page.

### **3.0 Reconsidering the current attribution of the paintings of women in the album H.2164 to Levni**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Based on Gül İrepoğlu's study of the paintings in the album, scholarship ascribes all of the paintings of single figures to the eighteenth-century Ottoman artist Abdülcélil Çelebi Levni. This attribution is based on the fact that almost all of the folios are signed with the name 'Levnī', and on the formal similarities with the paintings in the *Surname* composed by Vehbi (A.3593, TSM) and the *Kebir Musavver Silsilename* (A.3109, TSM) also associated with the artist (see chapter 1 section 1). A further element in this attribution is the iconographical parallel noted by İrepoğlu between the painting of a seated sultan on folio 1b of the H.2164 album and the portrait of Sultan Ahmed III in the *Kebir Musavver Silsilename* (*Series of Sultan Portraits*).

However, when I examined the paintings of women collected in the H.2164 album in the Topkapı Palace Museum Library, it struck me that there were significant differences from one painting to another, which made the attribution of the entirety of the single figures to one

person doubtful. Instead, I propose it would be more accurate to regard these pictures as the production of a, yet undetermined, number of painters working closely with Levni. It seems safe to assume the discrepancies I observed can be satisfactorily explained, if one exploits the idea that Levni worked with other painters, who also produced artworks. These would present very similar formal characteristics to those of Levni, but would also show slight differences. Moreover, the formal congruence of the paintings with other works attributed to the painter Levni makes the possibility they were executed by someone other than Levni or his collaborators unlikely.

The existence of a Levni workshop is accepted by scholars even if little research has been undertaken on the topic. The exact organisation of this workshop and the identification of the different artists involved in the execution of the paintings in the H.2164 album calls for a separate study devoted to the topic. Nonetheless, it is impossible to discuss the depictions of women in the H.2164 album, without pointing out that their attribution to one single painter, which scholarly publications have so far held for unquestionable, becomes unlikely under close scrutiny. Therefore, this chapter will make the argument for reconsidering the current attribution of the paintings of women in the album H.2164 to Levni, and in so doing, offer some new information on the conditions of production of these paintings. As the topic of this thesis is the depiction of women in the album, the discussion will focus on evidence for different painters being responsible for the depictions of women.

To begin with, an overview of the literature attributing the album to Levni will be provided. This will lead us to analyse in depth the link between the first painting in the album, the depiction of an enthroned Ottoman sultan, and the portrait of Sultan Ahmed III (r. 1115-43/1703-30) in the *Kebir Musavver Silsilename*. The second step of the argument will bring to light the discrepancies in the paintings of women, which suggest more than one hand. On the one hand the depictions of women in the album include paintings which exhibit direct copying of one painting by another artist. On the other hand there is evidence that the authors of these images were not following the same set of conventions. To conclude, the attribution of these paintings to Levni will be discussed in connection to the notion of a Levni workshop.

### **3.2 The attribution of the paintings in the album to Levni**

The state of research: Levni as the author of the paintings



In the scholarly literature on the Ottoman painter Levni, the album has, as a general rule, only been paid cursory attention. Ahmet Süheyl Ünver, who seems to be the first scholar to have drawn scholars' attention to Levni's work, dedicates only three paragraphs to the album H.2164 and another album with similar paintings in his short monograph on Levni dating from 1951.<sup>90</sup> In comparison, he discusses the illustrations of the *Surname-i Vehbi* in two pages. He attributes the paintings of the album to the artist, noting that the majority of the pictures are signed with the word 'Levni'. He mentions a portrait of Osman the Younger, which corresponds to the first painting in the album H.2164. Ünver provides a rapid description of the images — including measurements — and lists the figures represented in the paintings. He claims the pictures were bound in an album by Levni himself, and that the artist was also responsible for the margin decoration.<sup>91</sup>

In her 1999 monograph, İrepoğlu repeats Ünver's position, openly acknowledging her respect for his work and his role as a precursor in the study of Levni's oeuvre in the preface to her book.<sup>92</sup> Agreeing with Ünver on the above mentioned suppositions, she expands the scholarship on the album considerably by comparing its paintings with other works linked to Levni. She sets the first painting, which she also considers to be a portrait of Osman the Younger — preferring his other title, Osman II — in parallel with the depiction of Sultan Ahmed III on folio 22b of the *Kebir Musavver Silsilename*.<sup>93</sup> The *Kebir Musavver Silsilename* (A.3109, TSM) contains a collection of twenty-three sultanic portraits attributed to Levni. The portrait of Ahmed III comes at the end of the group of portraits. The paintings are associated with the artist on stylistic grounds, and the fact the portrait of Sultan Mustafa II (fol. 22a) bears an inscription in the margin spelling out 'al-musavvir Levni' (the painter Levni).<sup>94</sup> This is the only painting among those attributed to Levni in this album, which is signed.<sup>95</sup> Nonetheless, İrepoğlu uses at times an ambiguous wording, which seems to imply the portraits are all signed.<sup>96</sup>

The similarities pointed out by İrepoğlu between the portrait of Sultan Ahmed III in the *KMS* and the portrait of Osman II in the album H.2164 is an argument for the attribution of both paintings to the same artist, namely Levni, and by extension, for the attribution of the

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<sup>90</sup> Ünver 1951, 8.

<sup>91</sup> Ünver 1951, 5-6.

<sup>92</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 8.

<sup>93</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 146.

<sup>94</sup> Atıl 1999, 34.

<sup>95</sup> İrepoğlu 2000, 409.

<sup>96</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 54. İrepoğlu 2000, 380.

album as a whole to this painter. Therefore, it seems useful to our study of the album H.2164 that we stray temporarily from the depiction of women, to compare these two portraits. This comparison will bring to light the connection between the paintings, as well as explicit possible points of departure in the portrait included in the album H.2164.

### The portrait of Sultan Ahmed III and the portrait of Sultan Osman II

The album *KMS* measures 39 x 27 cm and the painting of Sultan Ahmed III is 16.4 x 25 cm.<sup>97</sup> The album H.2164 is almost half the size; the pages measure 24.5 x 15.5 cm and the painting of Sultan Osman II 16.8 x 9.5 cm (including the gold frame surrounding the painting). The portrait of Sultan Osman II is signed 'Levnī' in one of the diamond shaped motifs below the chair, close to the lower frame. The one of Sultan Ahmed III does not include a signature.<sup>98</sup> The overall setting is the same in both paintings. The sultan is seated on a throne in a lavishly decorated room. The margin of the painting in the *KMS* exhibits lavish floral motifs in silver pigment on a gold background (Fig. 20 & 21). The margin decoration of the portrait of Osman II is much less luxurious: flower patterns are painted in gold on the pale orange margin paper (Fig. 22).

### The depiction of a three-dimensional space in both paintings

In the portrait of Ahmed III, the evocation of a three-dimensional space relies on three elements: the use of contrasting patterns for the decoration of the wall and the floor; the painter's successful handling of the foreshortening of the throne; and the figure's placement in the space. On these three counts the artist responsible for the enthroned sultan in the album H. 2164 seems to have been less proficient than the author of the portrait of Ahmed III.

The pattern of the wall in the background combines squares and diamonds in a modular arrangement, suggesting tiles. The floor is covered by a pattern of complex flower garlands on a red ground, indicating a carpet or some sort of fabric. The garlands are arranged in horizontal lines, which emphasise the horizontal plane. Thus, the geometric pattern of the wall contrasts with the floor's floral one. The opposition of a pattern with a vertical direction (the tiles) to one with horizontal direction (the carpet) reinforces the distinction between wall and floor, which contributes to the illusion of a three-dimensional space.

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<sup>97</sup> İrepoğlu 2000, 402, 410.

<sup>98</sup> İrepoğlu 1999b, 258.

This contrast is absent in the painting of Osman II. Both the wall and the floor are ornamented with a modular, tile-like pattern. The motifs on the floor tiles are aligned with the squares on the wall, which underlines the two sets of motifs are part of the two dimensional plane of the painting. The choice of similar geometric patterns for both the wall and the floor in the painting of Osman II results in the absence of a sense of space and the room appears much flatter than in the painting of Ahmed III.

In both paintings, the throne is foreshortened. The front legs of the chair are depicted in the lower left corner, and the armrests extend diagonally towards the right creating the illusion of three-dimensionality. However, a closer look at the use of foreshortening in the painting of Osman II reveals its artist seems to be less adept at employing it.

In the painting of Osman II, the painter has ignored the rules of foreshortening by depicting the left back leg of the chair, which should be invisible at that angle. The left back leg does not appear in the painting of Ahmed III, and the fact the chair leg is slightly off axis suggests the artist did not have a model on which to base himself and struggled to find a way to depict the back leg. A consequence of this is that the chair loses in three-dimensionality since it does not appear to actually be resting on the floor.

In addition, the throne serves to anchor the figure in the three-dimensional space, by associating it with a three-dimensional object. The three-dimensional depiction of the throne is all the more so important, because without it, the figure loses some of its three-dimensionality.

#### A difference in skill in the depiction of a three-dimensional seated figure

The painter of the portrait of Osman II appears less comfortable with the depiction of a three-dimensional body within a three-dimensional space. The sultan's legs are squeezed into the space between the two armrests, and the line of the armrest in the foreground seems to collide with his legs. This is not the case in the painting of Ahmed III because his lap fills out the whole space between the two armrests. Furthermore, his knees are placed higher up so that his feet are resting flat on the footrest.

In the picture of Osman II, the sultan is bent slightly forward, and because his knees are quite low, the viewer has the impression the sultan is sliding out of his seat and that his heels are partly raised. As a result, the portrait of Osman II does not convey the feeling of a three-dimensional body anchored in a three-dimensional space.

### The depiction of fabric

The fabric of the sultans' clothing is different in both paintings, but the crucial point of departure in the depiction of fabric in the painting of Osman II is the lack of texturing and of shading. The fabric of both the robe and the coat in the portrait of Ahmed III are painted with parallel horizontal lines, which suggest the cloth's texture. These lines do not appear on the clothes of Osman II.

Furthermore, the artist who painted this portrait seems to be less experienced in the representation of fabric because the sleeve appears two-dimensional, and the folds are represented schematically by black lines without giving an impression of volume. By contrast, the sleeves on Sultan Ahmed III's gown exhibit a combination of brown lines underlined by thicker grey lines to create shading, and thus depict three-dimensional folds of fabric.

### The employment of shading on the face and the hand gestures

The depiction of the face is quite similar — reddish brown is used for the contours of the face, the nose and the mouth, the pupils are depicted with a colour graduation —, but once again the portrait of Osman II seems less detailed in comparison to that of Ahmed III (Fig. 23). There is no use of shading in the painting of Osman II, whereas shading is extensively applied to the face of Ahmed III, especially on the cheeks and below the eyebrows. The hands of Osman II are smaller than Ahmed III, but more importantly they are depicted in conventionalised gestures that appear elsewhere in the album (see the catalogue, particularly fol. 4b "woman with the gold headdress"). On the contrary, the hand gestures of Ahmed III seem natural and mimetic.

### Conclusion: Separate paintings, separate artists

The careful comparison of the portrait of Sultan Ahmed III in the *KMS* with the portrait of Sultan Osman II reveals significant differences that I would suggest indicate they were made by different painters. The painter of the portrait of Ahmed III is clearly more experienced with the depiction of three-dimensional space and objects, whether it be giving depth to the room through the choice of contrasting patterns, depicting three-dimensional fabric folds or suggesting the volume of a body seated in a chair.

The painting of Osman II also exhibits a concern with representing three-dimensionality, but the artist, while employing such techniques as foreshortening, seems to have been less adept at exploiting them. Moreover, the artist responsible for the portrait of Ahmed III uses shading masterfully on the sultan's face whereas the portraitist of Osman II does not, presumably because he is not able to.

#### Problems in the chronology proposed by scholarship

The formal analysis of the paintings suggests these were executed by different artists. How can this evidence be reconciled with the prevailing discourse on Levni and the works attributed to him? One could object that the paintings could have been executed by the same painter, but at different points in his career. Such an assumption would imply that the depiction of Osman II came first, at a time where the painter had not completely mastered the depiction of three-dimensional objects, or the use of shading to depict human faces. To resolve the issue, it would be useful to know the chronological order in which the two albums were produced. Unfortunately, there is very little evidence on the matter.

İrepoğlu discusses a document dated 15 October 1706, consisting of a petition by Levni to the Sultan Ahmed III and the imperial rescript in response.<sup>99</sup> She posits the artist's use of his pseudonym ('Levnī') to sign the letter indicates he was already known for his painting well enough to forgo signing with his name. The letter mentions a work, which the artist sends to the sultan at the same time as a gift. However, İrepoğlu does not include a full translation of the letter and her text itself is ambiguous as to the exact wording of the letter in relation to the gift for the sultan. She first says the letter mentions the gift as " 'pencil' works" and then points out that the absence of the word '*musavver*' (illustrated) from the text suggests a work without illustrations. Nonetheless, her final conclusion is that the work mentioned by the petition dated 1706 is the *KMS*, which Levni had originally intended for Sultan Mustafa II, but modified to appeal to his new patron by including a portrait of Sultan Ahmed III enthroned.

İrepoğlu considers that the paintings in the album H.2164 came after 1706 because in her opinion they are based on models from the 'Tulip Period', in other words, the reign of Sultan Ahmed III. Furthermore, she thinks the paintings in the album H.2164 were all executed at about the same time, which would make 1706 too early considering Ahmed III

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<sup>99</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 39-41. Document references: BOA İbnülemin Müstediyyat 301 T6 Receb 1118.

had only been ruling for three years by then, and, as the letter informs us, Levni had been afflicted by an eye illness for the same amount of time.

To summarise, İrepoğlu suggests the *KMS* was made before 1706 and the album H. 2164 after. İrepoğlu's dating of the *KMS* is repeated by the authors of the survey *Ottoman Painting*. The album H.2164 is dated 1710-1720 in the main text, but the captions of the illustrations indicate 1720-1730 as the dating.<sup>100</sup> No specific justification is offered for either of these dates.

#### A new perspective on the question of authorship

At this point, it is impossible to ascertain the exact dating of the two works. Nonetheless, the formal comparison carried out earlier can help elucidate the relationship between the two paintings. In light of the differences noted earlier between the two portraits, İrepoğlu's chronology seems somewhat problematic. It does not fit with the hypothesis of a single painter perfecting his art with time. If the album H.2164 came after the *KMS*, and both were executed by the same artist, how do we explain the fact the painter of the portrait of Osman II appears less experienced than that of the likeness of Ahmed III? Furthermore, why would Levni sign the painting of Osman II and not the one of Ahmed III, which is of much greater quality? Either the chronology proposed by İrepoğlu is wrong, or one needs to revise the idea both images were painted by the same artist.

These inconsistencies can be resolved if one abandons the idea Levni was responsible for both works. The difference in skill can be explained by their execution by different artists working in the same workshop, one painter completing the portrait of Ahmed III and another painting the likeness of Osman II. With this reasoning in mind, I think the attribution of the portrait of Ahmed III to Levni is most likely, but the painting of Osman II should rather be considered the work of one of Levni's collaborators.

#### The portrayal of the sultan's identity as an argument for two different painters

There remains a final point of contention linked to these two paintings, and that is the designation of the seated figure on the first folio of the album H.2164 as Sultan Osman II (r. 1618-1622). This question is significant because it could provide an additional argument for the thesis that the painting in the album H.2164 was painted by someone other than Levni.

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<sup>100</sup> Bağcı/Çağman/Renda 2010, 267.

The inscription on the throne reads Sultān ‘Oṣmān Ḥān (سلطان عثمان خان). This inscription seems to be the main factor for the identification of the young man as Osman II. Ünver mentions the album includes a depiction of Osman the Younger, which has led the album and its paintings to be listed ‘on the Table of Contents’ as relating to the period of Osman II.<sup>101</sup> İrepoğlu likens this painting with the portrait of Osman II in the *KMS* (fol. 16a), underlining the ‘innocence’ in the features and the facial expression she sees in both paintings.

It is true both the picture in the *KMS* and in the album H.2164 show beardless young men, but apart from this feature, they seem quite different (Fig. 24). The portrait of Osman II in the *KMS*, like the other portraits in the album, shows its artist’s concern with the mimetic representation of the sultan’s face. In this portrait, the painter has applied pink pigment on the sultan’s cheeks suggesting the colour of his skin and making his depiction three-dimensional. The depiction in the album H.2164 does not exhibit such an interest, as the face is devoid of shading.

The use of shading is also important because it is a characteristic of Levni’s approach to sultanic portraiture in the *KMS*. In fact, he associates in his images a veristic mode of depiction with the traditional attributes of the sultans in Nakkaş Osman’s portraits. It is this combination of physiological details taken from historical records of the sultans’ appearances, and codes for sultanic portraiture developed by Nakkaş Osman, which originally made the identity of the sultan clear to the viewer. Initially the portraits in the *KMS* stood alone, without any caption on the paintings or accompanying text. It is only during the reign of Sultan Selim III (r.1789-1807) that the poet Münib added the text giving information about the figures’ identities.<sup>102</sup> Thus, the practice of inscribing the sultan’s name within the picture field appears foreign to Levni’s approach to sultanic portraiture.

If Levni preferred to rely on the Ottoman painting tradition and written descriptions of the sultans to make the painted sultan recognisable, why did he not rely on such techniques in the depiction in the H.2164 album? Since Levni did not feel the need to indicate the identity of the sultans on the portraits in the *KMS*, why would he do so in the portrait in the album H.2164? The act of integrating the sultan’s title in the picture field, as it appears in folio 1b of the H.2164 album, implies a different approach to sultanic portraiture than the one employed by Levni in the portraits in the *KMS*.

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<sup>101</sup> Ünver 1951, 8.

<sup>102</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 55-56; 54.

Another unusual element is the fact Osman II is represented enthroned in the H.2164. It is disconcerting because İrepoğlu considers this type of setting was reserved to the ruling sultan as is the case in the *KMS*, in which Sultan Ahmed III is the only monarch sitting on a throne.<sup>103</sup> Osman II was long dead by the time this picture was painted, thus it is strange he was shown in such a setting.<sup>104</sup> İrepoğlu's explanation for this inconsistency is that the artist must have wanted to pay his respects to Osman II, yet she offers no concrete evidence for such an assumption.

In conclusion, the inconsistency in the iconography and the notable difference in the strategies adopted to make the identity of the sitter recognisable to the viewer suggest the two depictions were executed by separate artists. In other words, the portrayal of the sultan's identity in folio 1b of the H.2164 album and in the portrait of Osman II in the *KMS* provides another argument for the hypothesis of two different painters.

### **3.3 Artists copying from one another**

The previous part has suggested that the painting on the folio 1b of the H.2164 album was possibly executed by a painter working in Levni's workshop and not by Levni himself. Within the paintings of women in the album, there is evidence of different hands. In two cases in the album, a painting was directly copied from another one also in the album. These two pairs show formal similarities to each other, but a closer inspection reveals the hands of two different painters.

In the first example, the 'fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers' was directly copied from the 'fully veiled woman in a blue coat' by a painter that was less experienced with the use of shading and the depiction of fabric folds and texture. Furthermore, the manner in which the lining of the women's cloaks are painted is found in a third painting: the 'woman wearing a transparent veil' (fol. 14b). The differences in the formal characteristics of the lining's depiction suggest the hand of a third painter.

In the second case, the painter of the 'woman in a grey dress putting flowers in her hair' (fol. 20b) produced an adaptation of the 'woman in a green robe arranging flowers in her hair' (fol. 15b) less elaborate than its model, by greatly simplifying the depiction.

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<sup>103</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 146.

<sup>104</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 73, 146.



The ‘fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers’: a direct copy of the ‘fully veiled woman in a blue coat’

The ‘fully veiled woman in a blue coat’ (fol. 5b) and the ‘fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers’ (fol. 7a) constitute the first pair of depictions, in which one painting was clearly copied from the other. The women’s position and clothing is almost identical, but several differences can be observed between these images, which lead to the conclusion they were painted by separate artists.

The paintings’ thematic and formal overlap is obvious when looking at them (see the catalogue for illustrations). The women both wear the same clothing, but in different colours. The position of the body of the ‘fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers’ (fol. 7a) mirrors the one of the ‘fully veiled woman in a blue coat’ (fol. 5b). Moreover, the painter of the woman in grey clearly wished to imitate the depiction of the woman in blue. In fact, the same number of folds appear on the back side of both figures, and the folds are placed at exactly the same spots: under the bottom, next to the knee joint, and mid-calf. The painter of the ‘fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers’ (fol. 7a) also attempted to reproduce the texturing of the cloak as it was depicted in the ‘fully veiled woman in a blue coat’ (fol. 5b).

However, the ‘fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers’ (fol. 7a) is not just a variation of a specific figure created by an artist, who wished to depict the same subject matter with slight alterations. The ‘fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers’ (fol. 7a) exhibits formal departures from the ‘fully veiled woman in a blue coat’ (fol. 5b), which point to the fact the painter of the ‘fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers’ (fol. 7a) was less experienced than that of the ‘fully veiled woman in a blue coat’ (fol. 5b).

A first argument in support of this is the fact the ‘fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers’ (fol. 7a) is less detailed than the ‘fully veiled woman in a blue coat’ (fol. 5b). Buttons, which are absent from the grey coat, run down the front of the blue coat to the waist. The pattern of the robe’s fabric has been simplified. Although it is striped like in the depiction of the figure in blue, the pattern on the woman in grey includes only two colours and the arrangement of the stripes is less elaborate. In addition, the facial features are more roughly depicted on the picture of the woman with the grey coat than on the other painting. The line, which outlines the straight bridge and rounded tip of the nose of the ‘fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers’ (fol. 7a), continues back up her face in a way that her nostrils seem

non-existent. By contrast, the curvature of the woman in blue's left nostril is clearly recognisable.

Evidence of the painter's difficulties with three-dimensional representation in the 'fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers'

There are also formal discrepancies in the three-dimensional depiction of the costume. The shading is not executed in the same manner. In the picture of the woman in a blue coat, the black lines depicting the folds are completed with white lines. The white pigment is blended in with the blue of the coat to achieve the illusion of three-dimensionality. The same technique is used on the flaps of the coat and the sleeves. In contrast, the image of the lady in grey exhibits folds represented solely with a black line. Light grey wash is added on the sleeves to perfect the shading. In consequence, the shading in the 'fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers' (fol. 7a) is not as effectual in creating the illusion of three-dimensionality. The artist's use of a different technique for shading in the 'fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers' (fol. 7a) also suggests this painter did not understand the importance of using a combination of black and white lines and of blending in the white with the background to achieve the illusion of depth.

The three-dimensionality of the folds on the coat is also rendered with different levels of success in (Fig. 25). On the folds of the grey coat, the vertical line of the fabric hanging reaches down to the diagonal line of the fold. This creates the impression the folds are separate strips of cloth, which are wrapped around the main body of the dress. On the contrary, on the folds of the blue coat, only the exterior outline of the fold is emphasised, so that the horizontal line of the fabric hanging down is not seen as distinct from the fold itself. As a result, we get the impression this is one single piece of fabric, which has folds in it. Thus, the painter of the 'fully veiled woman in a blue coat' (fol. 5b) is able to give the illusion of a three-dimensional garment convincingly, whereas the painter of the 'fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers' (fol. 7a) cannot.

The images also differ in the depiction of the coat fabric's texture. In both pictures, squiggly lines are drawn on a ground of a darker tint. However, whereas the squiggly lines are so finely drawn on the woman in blue, that they blend in with the background colour, the lines on the grey lady's coat stand out against the background. On the latter, the squiggly lines are

applied like a pattern on a flat surface instead of playing an active role in the three-dimensional depiction of the fabric's texture.

#### A copy by a painter less experienced in three-dimensional representation

To conclude, the great care given to depicting the lady in grey in a similar way to the lady in blue — even to the extent of painting the squiggly lines on the coat — suggests a conscious imitation of the painting. However, the simplified character of the depiction, and more importantly the gap in the handling of pictorial techniques meant to give the illusion of three-dimensionality, invalidate in my opinion their attribution to one single person. The painter of 'fully veiled woman in a blue coat' (fol. 5b) is clearly a lot more comfortable with shading, depicting the folds in the fabric and its texture. The 'fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers' (fol. 7a) exhibits an attempt to imitate the illusion of depth visible in the 'fully veiled woman in a blue coat' (fol. 5b), but it is not entirely successful. Thus, one could suggest the painting of the 'fully veiled woman in a blue coat' (fol. 5b) was imitated by another, less experienced painter who produced the 'fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers' (fol. 7a).

#### The depiction of the lining as a motif circulating between painters

In the 'fully veiled woman in a blue coat' (fol. 5b), the 'fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers' (fol. 7a), and the 'woman wearing a transparent veil' (fol. 14b) the full-length coat all three women wear is folded back at the front to expose its lining. This is represented in a very similar way on all three pictures, but in an inconsistent manner. It will be suggested here, that these inconsistencies are probably due to them being executed by three different painters.

On the woman in blue, the lining consists of blue fabric, identical to the outside, bordered with green fabric. In the corner formed by the green edges, an additional piece of green fabric is joined with the blue one thanks to a zigzag seam (Fig. 26). The green fabric is delineated with white pigment, which is also employed to depict the diagonal seam in the lower corner of the flap. The lining of the woman in a grey coat follows the same structure, but the white line of the seam is barely distinguishable. The part of the lining made out of the same grey fabric as the outside is delineated with black as well as white.

The depiction of the lining on the picture the ‘woman wearing a transparent veil’ (fol. 14b) deviates from the previous two. Both the flaps are larger, and the curve of the folded back fabric is flatter. The flaps extend towards the sides, emphasising the horizontal axis. In contrast, the vertical axis is the predominant one in the depiction of the flaps in the two other paintings. In addition, the outlines of the different pieces forming the lining play a bigger role in the composition since they are painted with bright blue, which contrasts with the pale blue of the fabric.

In the ‘woman wearing a transparent veil’ (fol. 14b), the area of exposed lining is larger, revealing a greater portion of the inner field of the lining design. As a result, it becomes apparent that the zigzag pattern delineates the corner’s design. In the two other pictures, the relation of the zigzag seam to the whole was not as clear since only a small part of the design was visible.

To conclude, the painter of the ‘woman wearing a transparent veil’ (fol. 14b) obviously wanted to follow the same convention for depicting linings as in the other two paintings. However, the folds in the picture of the ‘woman wearing a transparent veil’ (fol. 14b) differ in size, in composition, and in execution. It has already been proposed that the ‘fully veiled woman in a blue coat’ (fol. 5b) and the ‘fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers’ (fol. 7a) were painted by different artists. Considering the singularities observed in the portrait of the ‘woman wearing a transparent veil’ (fol. 14b), one would suppose it was completed by a third painter.

The difference in quality between the ‘woman in a green robe arranging flowers in her hair’ and the ‘woman in a grey dress putting flowers in her hair’

The other pair of women in the album, that are extremely similar to one another, are the ‘woman in a green robe arranging flowers in her hair’ (fol. 15b) and the ‘woman in a grey dress putting flowers in her hair’ (fol. 20b). Like the previously discussed pair, the women’s position and clothing is almost identical (see catalogue).

However, there is a significant difference in the quality of the two paintings. The depiction of the woman in grey is more approximate than the one of the woman in green. The former seems to be missing some details. For example, she does not wear henna, but her nails are not depicted either. Usually, the nails of the women’s hands show the outlines of the nails

if they are undecorated. In fact, the fingertips of ‘woman in a green robe arranging flowers in her hair’ (fol. 15b) are dyed with red henna.

The lining of her coat also seems incomplete. The left lower corner of the flap should show the white and green lining of the robe below the grey fabric, but the painter did not depict it (Fig. 27). The lining should also appear between her legs, yet that is not the case. Folds are placed in roughly the same spots, but the density of the black lines and the placement of the white highlights varies from one painting to another so that the overall effect is quite different.

Another detail which underlines the difference in quality between the two paintings is the rendition of the headdress. The contours of the loops of cloth on the head of the woman in grey are more imprecise and the arrangement of the cloth itself is not as clear as in the woman in green’s headdress. Furthermore, the painter of the ‘woman in a green robe arranging flowers in her hair’ (fol. 15b) is able to depict fabric in great detail, as can be seen by the delicate and beautifully executed floral pattern on the trousers. This is not the case of the painter of the woman in grey. The patterns on the clothes of the latter are simpler and more schematic.

Moreover, the expression of the ‘woman in a green robe arranging flowers in her hair’ (fol. 15b) is livelier than that of the ‘woman in a grey dress putting flowers in her hair’ (fol. 20b). On the painting of the woman in green, the pupil of the right eye is painted close to the nose and the other pupil close to the temple. This suggests she is looking out to the left. The fact the eyes are narrow gives the impression her gaze is downcast. In addition, her pupils are painted with a gradation from grey to black, with a minuscule white dot in the centre. This technique to represent the pupils creates particularly realistic eyes. Yet, the woman in grey’s eyes are painted with two, parallel, black lines of similar thickness. The pupils are placed in the middle of both eyes, touching both the upper and lower lines, which gives the impression she is looking straight ahead. Compared to the woman in green, the lack of colour gradation in the pupils of the woman in grey makes her eyes expressionless.

Finally, the overall impression given by the woman in green is more graceful and lively than the effect created by the woman in grey. The difference in the depiction of the eyes plays a big role in this.

A lower quality version of the ‘woman in a green robe arranging flowers in her hair’

The discrepancy in quality between the two paintings points to their execution by two different artists. The lower quality of the painting of the ‘woman in a grey dress putting flowers in her hair’ (fol. 20b) suggests it is a cheaper copy of the ‘woman in a green robe arranging flowers in her hair’ (fol. 15b).

Unlike the case study of the ‘fully veiled woman in a blue coat’ (fol. 5b) and the ‘fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers’ (fol. 7a), the painter of the ‘woman in a grey dress putting flowers in her hair’ (fol. 20b) does not seem to be less experienced than the painter of the ‘woman in a green robe arranging flowers in her hair’ (fol. 15b). An argument for this is the fact he uses shading more liberally than the artist responsible for the ‘woman in a green robe arranging flowers in her hair’ (fol. 15b). More shading is used between the breasts, on the eyelids, and the corners of the mouth of the woman in grey, and a light blush dusts her cheeks.

Thus, one could think the painting was not executed by a painter less experienced in the use of shading, as was the case in the ‘fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers’ (fol. 7a), but rather that the artist responsible for the ‘woman in a grey dress putting flowers in her hair’ (fol. 20b) was not expected (or able) to uphold the same standards of quality as the painter of the ‘woman in a green robe arranging flowers in her hair’ (fol. 15b).

### **3.4 Artists following different conventions**

It has been suggested above that some of the paintings of women in the album H.2164 were direct copies of other paintings also in the album and that these copies were executed by different painters. When studying the corpus of paintings of women, one notices the majority of paintings follow a number of conventions, which determine the way the costumes are depicted (see chapter 4). Yet, two of the paintings of women collected in the album H.2164 are exceptions in that their painters depicted the women’s costumes without following the conventions apparent in the other paintings. In fact, the paintings ‘woman arranging a transparent veil on her head’ (fol. 15a) and ‘young woman spinning’ (fol. 11a) are unique in that they may point to their painters’ unfamiliarity with the conventions underpinning the other depictions of women in the album.

The implications of the absence of a full-length robe in the ‘young woman spinning’

The picture of the ‘young woman spinning’ (fol. 11a) is an interesting case because it points to the fact its painter was not aware of the convention according to which transparent shirts were depicted under robes. It seems incoherent in comparison with the rest of the corpus because she is the only woman wearing a transparent shirt as her outer garment. In all the images in which the woman wears a jacket, trousers and a transparent shirt, she is also clad in a full-length robe, which covers most of the transparent shirt (see the catalogue).

The woman’s costume seems in all other aspects to conform with the clothes seen on the women in the album. Thus, it is quite certain that whoever put the album together considered this painting to be part of the same group as the other pictures of women. The transparent shirt is clearly an undergarment so one can quite safely dismiss the idea the painting exhibits a change in fashion at the Ottoman Court.

Therefore, there are two possible explanations for the absence of the robe in the ‘young woman spinning’ (fol. 11a). It could be assumed the artist left the painting unfinished, and the woman without her robe. This hypothesis appears unlikely because, apart from the missing robe, the painting looks complete.

Given that this is virtually the only picture with such an omission, and that there is no other clue in the painting itself to justify not depicting the full-length robe, one could think the artist responsible for this painting did not belong to the same group as the painters who executed the portraits with the ‘correct’ combination of clothing. The lack of robe leads one to suppose that the artist was not aware of the convention followed by the other painters, or that he did not have access to the same prototype upon which he could base his painting.

#### A possible departure from the workshop’s conventions in the ‘woman arranging a transparent veil on her head’

The final example, the painting of the ‘woman arranging a transparent veil on her head’ (fol. 15a), comprises singularities in the depicted attire, which suggest it was executed by an artist who departed from some of the pictorial conventions employed in the majority of the paintings of women.

Firstly, the woman’s shoes do not correspond entirely with the shoes of the other women in similar costume. She wears white high-heeled shoes decorated with gold. The shoe colour and gold trimmings coincide with other depictions in the album, but shoes with such a

design are always flat, and more akin to slippers (see the catalogue). Only the European woman wears high-heeled shoes, and hers, although similar in shape, have a different design.

Another inconsistency in her outfit is the pattern of the headscarf fabric. In all the other depictions of similar headscarves, the headscarf's fabric is devoid of motifs and has a colour that contrasts with the other parts of the outfit. In this case, the headscarf's fabric uses the same colour palette as the woman's robe.

Furthermore, the scarf wound around her head seems to be made from the same cloth as her jacket. This scarf does not have the metallic trimming, which appears on most of the other women (see the catalogue). The artist seems to have restricted himself to contrasting the various components of the woman's attire between two different fabrics, or at least two specific sets of colours. The resulting effect is quite distinct from the other pictures, which are not ruled by such a clear-cut opposition.

These idiosyncrasies could indicate, in this case too, the artist's unfamiliarity with the conventions underpinning the other depictions of women in the album. They could possibly also imply this painting was completed at a later date than the other pictures of women in the album, or that the artist wished to imitate the pictorial conventions used by Levni and his workshop without belonging to the workshop himself.

### **3.5 Rethinking attribution: the Levni workshop**

#### The notion of a Levni workshop in the secondary literature

The secondary literature mentions Levni worked with assistants, but these artists are not the focus of these studies. Ünver argues that Levni worked in the imperial painting workshop, and that he was possibly the head painter who was also responsible for the assistants' training.<sup>105</sup> As such, Levni was able to complete the paintings of the *Surname-i Vehbi* with the help of 'the apprentices and the masters of the Department of Designs'. Comparing the two illustrated copies of the *Surname-i Vehbi* which exist today, the manuscript A.3593 and the A.3594 both in the Topkapı Palace Museum Library, he notes their stylistic consistency. Thus, he attributes them both to Levni, who presumably worked with the help of assistants, 'who seem to follow the same technique as their master'. By contrast, Filiz Çağman and Zeren Tanındı remark that only two of the hundred thirty seven illustrations are signed by Levni and they consider the manuscript was still unfinished when he died in

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<sup>105</sup> Ünver 1951, 6-7.



1732.<sup>106</sup> Their statement implies the two illustrated copies of the *Surname-i Vehbi* were completed by Levni's assistants.

Esin Atıl in her book on the *Surname-i Vehbi* considers Levni was not part of the *nakkāshane* (imperial painting studio), but rather held a higher position at court as is known of other painters like Matrakçı Nasuh.<sup>107</sup> She believes the A.3594 manuscript to have been painted by another painter than Levni since the paintings, although clearly inspired by those in the A.3593 manuscript, exhibit 'a remarkable degree of independence and spontaneity' and contain episodes absent from Vehbi's text and Levni's images.<sup>108</sup> She assumes Levni supervised the production of the second illustrated copy. She goes on to list a number of manuscripts and albums with single paintings, which exhibit similar formal characteristics to Levni's work, but which are not by the artist himself. She talks of 'Levni's school' saying that it was most influential in the domain of single figures as can be seen by the great number of single figure paintings in various albums.

İrepoğlu's monograph on Levni discusses at length his position in relation to the palace workshop. She notes Levni's name is absent from the list of artists working for the palace, although he is named by Hafız Hüseyin Ayvansarayî (active between 1765 and 1787) and Demetrius Cantemir (1673-1723) as head painter.<sup>109</sup> In addition, there is no head painter in the palace records for the period during which he was active. The amount of money awarded to the painter in the imperial rescript to the letter dated 1706 is considerably greater than the recorded salaries of other painters, which leads her to postulate Levni was held in great esteem by the sultan. Using his poetry as evidence, she proposes he was educated in the *Enderûn* (the palace school) and was one of the sultan's companions. On the topic of other painters working with Levni, İrepoğlu states a number of painters must have worked with Levni, and those which helped complete the *Surname-i Vehbi* worked in 'a total harmony of style'.<sup>110</sup> She also mentions that the A.3594 manuscript was made by an anonymous painter who used Levni's style of representation.<sup>111</sup>

The authors of *Ottoman Painting* leave the question of Levni's presence at the imperial painting workshop open, but give new information about the painter of the second

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<sup>106</sup> Çağman/Tanıncı 1987, 253.

<sup>107</sup> Atıl 1999, 33.

<sup>108</sup> Atıl 1999, 36.

<sup>109</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 37- 43.

<sup>110</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 91.

<sup>111</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 89.

copy of the *Surname*.<sup>112</sup> They bring forward a reference to the work on calligraphers by Suyolcuzaade Mehmed Necib Efendi (d.1758), in which he designates himself as the calligrapher of the second copy of the *Surname* (A.3594, TSM) and a certain İbrahim Efendi as the painter. No other information is known about this artist, but the authors consider he was also responsible for the paintings in the copy of the *Hamse-i Atayi* dated 1728 (R.816, TSM). Of the other four illustrated copies of the *Hamse-i Atayi*, the earliest dated 1721 (W.666, BWAM) exhibits formal characteristics distinct both from Levni and from İbrahim Efendi, pointing to the fact it was probably executed by a third artist.

#### The difficulties in defining the notion of ‘workshop’ in connection with Levni

It appears from the above review of the literature, that the existence of a Levni workshop is accepted by scholars even if the involvement of this workshop in the production of the paintings in the album H.2164 has until now not been taken into consideration. Nonetheless, the earlier discussion of the paintings suggests the depictions of women in the album were the work of more than one artist (see sections 3.3 and 3.4). The paintings probably correspond to the production of a group of painters working in close enough proximity to be able to follow the same conventions, borrow from each other, and even copy each other’s work.

The formal congruence of the paintings and the reoccurrence of certain motifs and conventions could suggest as their source a workshop with the same organisation as the one found in the *ehl-i hıref* (community of craftsmen). The registers of the *ehl-i hıref*, the craftsmen on the payroll of the Ottoman Court, reveal the existence of a department of design working for the Court, and lists the names of successive head painters and assistants, sometimes specifying which ‘master’ the assistant was working under.<sup>113</sup>

The notion that Levni worked within a group of people of which he was the leader is assumed by all of the scholars discussed above. There is no reason why the conception of the Levni workshop conveyed by scholarship in connection to the two copies of the *Surname-i Vehbi* could not apply to the H.2164 album as well. Indeed, the ‘fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers’ (fol. 7a) directly copied from ‘fully veiled woman in a blue coat’ (fol.

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<sup>112</sup> Bağcı/Çağman/Renda 2010, 266; 272-275.

<sup>113</sup> Çağman 2000, 48.

5b) points to the reproduction of certain figures perhaps as part of the learning process of artists within a workshop.

Yet, so little is known of the context of production of the works associated with Levni, that we should be wary of drawing definite conclusions. Fetvacı's chapter on the production of Ottoman illustrated histories in the late sixteenth century is to this day the most detailed investigation on the topic. She cites the unfinished copy of *Ferrūh ve Hümā* (R. 1484, TSM), which contains written instructions for the painters in the margins or the blank areas. The content of these vary greatly in precision, but they indicate the painters' high level of education since the latter were expected to read the instructions and the manuscript's text and depict their visualisations.<sup>114</sup>

Unfortunately her sources do not explain the distribution of tasks between the painters or the role of the 'assistants' in the production of the paintings. There is also no mention of the training received by the 'assistants' themselves. By the eighteenth century, the numbers of the *ehl-i hiref* had dropped from 1502 craftsmen, employed at the end of the sixteenth century, to 186.<sup>115</sup> It seems reasonable to suppose, this caused changes in the organisation of the painters working on codices.

The exact organisation of the department of design in the eighteenth century has, to my knowledge, not yet been researched. Furthermore, the issue of Levni's employment in the palace's department of design remains a debated topic — mainly because of the lack of evidence —, and it seems premature to assume that Levni was the head painter of the palace workshop, or that the painters who worked with him were only in charge of menial tasks. As Roxburgh has pointed out the model of the hierarchical workshop derived from Giorgio Vasari's concept of *maniera* (hand), in which the head painter, or 'master', supervises a team of assistants and completes the most delicate parts of the painting himself, has often unconsciously influenced scholars' conceptualisation of artistic workshops in Islamicate cultures.<sup>116</sup>

#### Possible new lines of inquiry based on the depictions of women in the H.2164 album

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<sup>114</sup> Fetvacı 2013, 77-78.

<sup>115</sup> Çağman 2000, 49.

<sup>116</sup> Roxburgh 2000, 121. I adopt the term Islamicate because I agree with the reasons given by Kathryn Babayan and Afsaneh Najmabadi for its use (see Babayan/Najmabadi 2008, ix).

The depictions of women in the H.2164 suggest possible new lines of inquiry to gain a better understanding of the great number of single figures attributed to Levni. The lower quality of the ‘woman in a grey dress putting flowers in her hair’ (fol. 20b) compared to the ‘woman in a green robe arranging flowers in her hair’ (fol. 15b) may suggest a different source of patronage. Patrons provided the artists working at court with the material to execute their work, and thus the patron’s wealth conditioned the physical appearance of the final product.<sup>117</sup> If one supposes this may also have been the practice for artists working outside of the palace, the ‘woman in a grey dress putting flowers in her hair’ (fol. 20b) might have been completed for a less wealthy patron than the ‘woman in a green robe arranging flowers in her hair’ (fol. 15b).

The three women wearing long coats and veils document how the same motif — the conventionalised depiction of the coat lining — evolved as it was in one case directly copied and in the other adopted by a different artist. Thus, another possibility for these reinterpretations of the same figure is that the single figure paintings exhibiting Levni’s approach to portraiture became so popular, artists working with him started producing such images in large quantities for less wealthy customers.

In the seventeenth century, Persian artists such as Muhammad Qasim drew inspiration from the later production of Reza ‘Abbasi (c. 1565-1635) and produced images which were very similar to his paintings, so much so that they were sometimes confused for his work.<sup>118</sup> The depictions of women in the album H.2164 might have been the result of a similar phenomenon. Indeed, the ‘young woman spinning’ (fol. 11a) and the ‘woman arranging a transparent veil on her head’ (fol. 15a) both imply a time gap between the execution of the majority of the paintings in the album and these productions since the two images disregard conventions evident in the other paintings. In other words, these inconsistencies could stem from the fact the painters were not part of the group of artists in direct contact with Levni.

An important obstacle in connecting the depictions of women in the album with other paintings by Levni is that the *Surname-i Vehbi* is the only other work attributed to the artist which actually contains representations of women. Women only appear rarely in the manuscript and very often as a group of fully veiled onlookers, in which the only factor that distinguishes them from one another is the use of a different colour for the coat (fol. 43a, 60a,

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<sup>117</sup> Fetvacı 2013, 71.

<sup>118</sup> Canby, Grove Art Online.

84a, A.3593, TSM). In another variation of this type, the veiled woman appears alone and is involved in the entertainment (fol. 90a and 92b). The gigantic female puppet, which appears on folio 108a is dressed in a similar way to the women in the album, but once again the depiction is schematic (Fig. 28).

The clothing worn by the women in these paintings correspond to some of the costumes in the H.2164 album, but these depictions are not comparable with those in the H. 2164 album in terms of variety and refinement. In this regard, the interest in the depiction of women and women's clothing which is apparent in the album could indicate this genre was a later developed by the artists who had collaborated with Levni, rather than by Levni himself.

### The 'Levnī' signature and the hypothesis of multiple artists

An interesting point when discussing the existence of a workshop working under Levni is the signature 'Levnī' (لوني) which appears again and again on paintings associated with the artist. These signatures are often the main argument for the attribution of works to the artist, even if the paintings themselves reveal upon closer inspection differences that make it unlikely they were all completed by the same painter.

The 'Levnī' signatures all follow the same basic arrangement. A vertical line builds the *lām* which is connected to the *wāw* written on the same axis. The line of the *nūn* starts on the left of the *lām* near the beginning of the letter. The line then forms a zigzag, going down and left and then sharply turning towards the right. The stem of the letter *yā'* crosses perpendicularly with the line of the *lām*. In some cases, the two dots of the *yā'* are placed right below the zigzag (see Appendix II). The dot of the *nūn* is written to the left of the line of the letter and at the same height as the beginning of the line. Another short vertical line resembling an *alif* is written to the left of the *wāw*, right below the zigzag.

Nonetheless, the signatures in the album are all different and most of these variations are observed in the combination of dots with the short vertical line similar to an *alif*. This is obvious when one compares them with each other. For example, on the painting of 'the woman with the gold headdress' (fol. 4b) the two dots for the *yā'* are placed between the *wāw* and the short vertical line. By contrast, the signature on the painting with 'the fully veiled woman wearing a blue coat' (fol. 5b) only has a short vertical line next to the *wāw* without the dots for the *yā'*. In addition, the picture of 'a woman smelling a carnation' (fol. 8b) bears another form of the signature. The *wāw* is much less vertical in the sense that it curves in

closer to the horizontal line of the *ya* ' / *nūn*. The space between the short vertical line resembling an *alif* and the *wāw* is bigger and the short vertical line appears almost as a dot because of the shortness of the line. To the left of the short vertical line, there is an ink blotch which corresponds to the two dots of the *yā* '.

In the opinion of Gisela Procházka-Eisl, these minute differences do not constitute enough evidence to say that the signatures were written by more than one person. The same goes for the signature in the *Surname-i Vehbi* (A.3593, TSM) (Fig. 29). Comparing the signatures in the album to the signature on the letter (Fig. 30), which according to İrepoğlu is in the artist's hand, does not help determine if they are by the same person because a different type of script is employed.<sup>119</sup> Thus, we are confronted with a paradox: on the one side, evidence of several painters having painted the depictions of women in the album; on the other side, signatures that all seem to be from the same hand.

The signatures all spell out the name 'Levnī' (لوني ا), and it is clear that they are intended to indicate a relationship to a single person. A possible explanation for the signatures being from the same hand is that the paintings were signed by a different person than the one who actually painted the work. If the painter and the person signing were separate people, there is in principle no reason why the same person could not have signed all the paintings in the album.

İrepoğlu and Ünver have both already mentioned discrepancies between the formal characteristics of some single figure paintings and the signature they exhibit. İrepoğlu cites a painting of a palanquin (fol. 12b) in the album H.2155 (TSM), which bears a slightly different 'Levnī' signature suggesting it was added later.<sup>120</sup> She deems it unlikely that the painting is by Levni. Another painting she identifies as having an unusual 'Levnī' signature is the painting of a rider on folio 13b in the album H. 2143 (TSM). Although the signature is very different — the arrangement of the letters is horizontal instead of vertical and there are no dots or short vertical line under the *ya* ' —, she attributes the painting to Levni on stylistic grounds. Ünver had previously singled out the depiction of the rider due to its signature, but had conveniently solved the issue by stating the signature was added by someone who knew it was Levni's work.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Gisela Procházka-Eisl, personal communication to the author in March 2017.

<sup>120</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 144.

<sup>121</sup> Ünver 1951, 7.

The ‘Levni’ signature in the *KMS* is also noteworthy because it lies in the margin of the portrait of Mustafa II and not on the painting itself.<sup>122</sup> Furthermore, it is as far as I know the only instance in which the word *muşavvir* (painter) is associated with the pseudonym Levni on a painting itself. The unusual character of this inscription, and the fact it is the only one among the paintings attributed to Levni in the *KMS*, might be an indication that the inscription was added in later years. This could possibly have happened when paintings were appended in the second half of the eighteenth century by Rafael and painters from his school, or in the early nineteenth century with the paintings by Kapıdağlı Kostantin.<sup>123</sup>

### 3.6 Conclusion

This chapter set out to reconsider the attribution of the paintings in the album H.2164 to the artist Levni. The parallel suggested by İrepoğlu between the painting of an enthroned Ottoman sultan on folio 1b of the album and the portrait of Sultan Ahmed III on folio 22b of the *Kebir Musavver Silsilename* was reexamined to determine the validity of this connection in establishing Levni as the painter of the single figures. A comparison of the formal characteristics of the two images brought to light the fact that the painter of the painting on folio 1b of the album H.2164 was less experienced in the depiction of three-dimensional space and objects than the artist responsible for the portrait of Sultan Ahmed III. This, in turn, led to the hypothesis the painting of Sultan Ahmed III was executed by Levni, while the other one was painted by another painter drawing inspiration directly from the iconography and pictorial conventions employed by Levni.

A number of examples were discussed to emphasise that the depictions of women in the album were painted by more than one artist. The first group of paintings provided evidence for artists copying from one another. The ‘fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers’ (fol. 7a) was directly copied from the ‘fully veiled woman in a blue coat’ (fol. 5b) by an artist less experienced in the use of shading and in three-dimensional representation. In addition, a specific way of depicting the coat lining seems to have been circulating among artists in this group, as can be deduced by the fact it was employed in three paintings by three separate artists. Finally, the lower quality of the painting of the ‘woman in a grey dress putting

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<sup>122</sup> Atıl 1999, 34.

<sup>123</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 54.

flowers in her hair' (fol. 20b) suggests it is a cheaper copy of the 'woman in a green robe arranging flowers in her hair' (fol. 15b).

Two other depictions suggest their authors were not following the same conventions. Hence, the lack of robe in the 'young woman spinning' (fol. 11a) leads one to suppose that the artist was not aware of the convention followed by the other painters, or that he did not have access to the same prototype upon which he could base his painting. The idiosyncrasies in the 'woman arranging a transparent veil on her head' (fol. 15a) could, moreover, imply this painting was completed at a later date than the other pictures of women in the album, or that the artist wished to imitate the pictorial conventions used by Levni and his workshop without belonging to the workshop himself. All in all, these examples make clear that the paintings of women in the album are the work of a group of painters working in close proximity. Furthermore, the combination of heterogenous paintings supports the theory developed in chapter 2, that the album contains a collection of 'leftover' pictures.

Scholars agree that Levni could not have produced so many paintings without the help of other painters, and the conception of the Levni workshop circulating in scholarship is one of a hierarchical organisation with Levni as its talented chief painter. However, much research still needs to be done before the organisation and the hierarchy within the group of artist collaborating on the projects he is considered to have been responsible for becomes clear. The parallel drawn with the production of Reza 'Abbasi's students in the seventeenth century, offers an interesting line of inquiry, which deserves to be explored in the future. In addition, the systematic association of paintings with Levni based on the presence of the signature 'Levnī' (لوني ا) needs to be considered critically as shown by the formal evidence from the depictions of women in the album H.2164.

Thus, although a clear relationship between Levni and the paintings in the album exists, the direct intervention of the artist in these paintings still remains to be established. Having criticised the use of the signatures to attribute paintings to the painter one is left with attribution purely on stylistic grounds. Unfortunately, given that the other artists in the workshop employed conventions established by Levni, it is difficult to determine whether or not Levni actually painted some of the depictions of women himself. Therefore, the paintings should be considered as the work of a group of painters collaborating with Levni.



## 4.0 Revealing and hiding the body: women's costumes in the album

### 4.1 Introduction

The pictures of women in the album reveal the artists' interest for the depiction of clothing and is one of the characteristic features of these images. The great care the artists took in painting the details of these costumes has led art historical literature to consistently emphasise the 'realism' of these paintings as their defining feature and the main locus of innovation.<sup>124</sup> This has led some scholars to see them as painted illustrations of the real clothes that women (and men) wore at the Ottoman court in the eighteenth century.<sup>125</sup> Their 'realism' has been used in two exhibitions about life at the Ottoman Court to document the history of Ottoman costumes.<sup>126</sup> The fact that clothes of similar cuts have survived indicate that these depictions are linked to historical clothing of the eighteenth century.<sup>127</sup>

However, these paintings, in their interest in the depiction of clothing and the body it clothes, also follow pictorial conventions. Their conventional aspect has so far been underestimated by scholarship, leading, in my opinion, to a misunderstanding of the pictures. It seems crucial to me that this so-called 'realism' be analysed. These paintings do inform historians about the fashion of the eighteenth-century Ottoman court women, but these images can only be used as primary sources once the visual codes, and the representational methods of the Levni workshop are fully understood. Furthermore, as a key feature of the artistic production of these painters, their depiction of clothing — and the artistic techniques they employed — deserves to be discussed if we are to better understand the artists' production itself.

Thus, this chapter will endeavour to outline the conventions, which underpin the depiction of the women and their costumes in the album. To begin with, the depiction of fabric itself will be investigated, paying particular attention to the colours, the patterns and the textures depicted on women's clothing. Patterns play various roles in the depiction of the

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<sup>124</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 11-12. İrepoğlu 1999b, 220. İrepoğlu 2000, 382. İrepoğlu 2003, 76. Bağcı/Çağman/Renda 2010, 266-272.

<sup>125</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 146-181. İrepoğlu 1999b, 219-223; 252-254. Cat., Museum für Angewandte Kunst, 2008/2009, 94-113.

<sup>126</sup> These exhibitions are 'Topkapı à Versailles : trésors de la Cour ottomane' held at the Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon in 1999, and 'Tulpen, Kaftane und Levni : höfische Mode und Kostümalben der Osmanen aus dem Topkapı-Palast Istanbul', which took place at the Museum für Angewandte Kunst in Frankfurt am Main between October 2008 and January 2009.

<sup>127</sup> For example the pink robe with a low-cut neckline in the Topkapı Palace Museum's collections (inventory number: 13/1877) published in Cat., Museum für Angewandte Kunst, 2008/2009, 174-175; or the robe made from pink and white striped French silk kept in the National Museum of Scotland and described in Scarce 1990, 200.

materiality of the costumes, which will also be discussed in the first part. This will lead us to consider the relationship between fabric and body in a second part. In so doing, the way in which the artists divulge the body through shading on the clothes will be analysed. Lastly, representational codes used by the Levni workshop will be summarised so as to make the conventional character of these depictions evident.

## 4.2 Painting fabric

### The use of colours and patterns

The diversity of the patterns and the richness of the colours impress the viewer upon first seeing the paintings of women in the album H.2164. İrepoğlu states Levni used a wider palette than previous painters and privileged pastel colours.<sup>128</sup> The paintings in the album do not exhibit a preference for pastel tones, but the variety of pigments is particularly striking. Pinks, oranges, and reds are used on almost all the portraits, sometimes over large areas like in the painting of the ‘woman holding a black handkerchief’ (fol. 19a), or as highlights, as in the picture of the ‘woman arranging a transparent veil on her head’ (fol. 15a) where the lining of her robe is edged with orange. The use of colours, which are perceived by modern viewers as warm colours, gives the portraits a certain buoyancy and vitality. This impression is further emphasised by the combination of multiple colours.

Each item of clothing generally has its own pattern and/or colour making the outfit as a whole visually complex. For example, the skirt of the ‘European woman’ (fol. 13b) is composed of horizontal stripes of solid blue, red and green, while her dark green bodice contrasts with the bright red stays. Specific colours are not always associated with the same items of clothing or the same part of a garment, but there are recurrent combinations. For example, bright orange is used to depict the edge of the lining on the robes of ten of the women. Veils and transparent shirts are painted white, and when decorated, then with gold pigment. White is also the main colour for the piece of cloth which sticks out between the legs of several of the women. Yellow and white are the most common colours for the shoes — eleven women have yellow shoes and seven white. In addition, pink and orange are often employed for the lining of the unbuttoned sleeves.

The patterns of the fabrics are equally varied, and contrasting motifs are used on different clothing items. The short coat the ‘woman with the ermine coat’ (fol. 9b) is taking

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<sup>128</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 183.

off is light grey, with an ermine lining edged with orange fabric at the bottom. Underneath, she wears a full-length light green robe. The fabric displays a floral pattern on the exterior, and a lining of the same green colour devoid of ornamentation except for the orange trim. The robe is left open, exposing a short magenta jacket with a silver vine scroll pattern covering her stomach. Part of the sleeve cuff is folded back to reveal its reddish purple lining. The flaps of the robe are drawn apart to present the white transparent shirt, the striped trousers and the cloth between her legs. The trousers are baggy and decorated with vertical pink and orange stripes on a beige ground. The piece of cloth between her legs shows decoration consisting of a floral pattern in dark green, red and grey, embroidered around gold roundels. White slippers with red and golden ornaments sheath her feet. Her kerchief is pink and the looping scarf around it grey with silver beads.

More so than was the case for colours, selected patterns are employed on specific pieces of clothing. Robes and jackets are embellished with almond-shaped motifs, flowers and a pattern which resembles leopard spots. The flowers have a vertical direction in every variation of the motif except on the jacket of the 'young woman spinning' (fol. 11a), where the flowers have a horizontal direction. The trousers the women wear are always striped except in the case of the 'female dancer' (fol. 18a) and the 'woman in a green robe arranging flowers in her hair' (fol. 15b). The former's trousers are solid red, and the latter's patterned with a flower motif usually seen on robes and jackets. The transparent shirts are also woven with vertical stripes, but there is a greater number of possible combinations in the arrangements of the stripes on the shirts, than on the trousers. The embroidery on the white cloth has a basic diamond-shaped composition and the pattern is always a floral one. The kerchiefs used in combination with a scarf are plain coloured, except for the one worn by the 'woman arranging a transparent veil on her head' (fol. 15a) which is spotted.

#### The depiction of the various materials included in the costumes

The paintings make clear that the women's costumes are made from a variety of materials. The artists represent the metallic components of the women's attire in two ways. Gold and silver pigments are applied for the trimmings on the clothes and the headdresses, or small items of jewellery. The pigments have oxidised in some places, meaning they sometimes appear black instead of silver or gold. Gold leaf is used for the belt clasps and the wide gold bracelets seen on some of the women. The jewellery, the belt and sometimes the

headdress are decorated with small holes made by pricking the paper with a point. Since it does not occur on the painted gold motifs on the clothes, it seems this decorative technique is employed to depict components of the women's attire made from solid metal.

The painters also endeavour to differentiate the textures of the various fabrics included in the women's attire. Veils or transparent shirts are represented with very thin, parallel strokes of white paint on top of the layer of colourful pigment, which makes up the clothes the women wear under the gossamer fabric. The picture of the 'European woman' (fol. 13b) displays an attempt to depict lace. The lace collar is painted with opaque white, while the patterns of the lace and the indentations in the cloth are depicted with black pigment.

The wool cloaks of the 'fully veiled woman in a blue coat' (fol. 5b) and the 'fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers' (fol. 7a) show intentional differentiation of the woollen material of the cloak from the presumably silk, or cotton material of the robes they wear underneath. On both of the pictures, the fabric of the cloak is depicted with thin dark squiggly lines, which evoke the texture of felt.

The clothes worn by the 'woman holding out her braids' (fol. 7b) exhibit extensive use of white highlights — a feature also found on several of the other women's clothes — suggesting the artists tried to render the appearance of silk by depicting the glossy effect created by light being reflected on its surface.

The 'woman with the ermine coat' (fol. 9b) includes a careful depiction of the ermine fur. The longer hairs with a black tip coming from the ermine's tail are clearly visible. The single hairs on the white fur covering most of the lining are painted with minuscule grey strokes. Cream-coloured pigment is also used for further texturing.

#### The role of patterns in depicting the fabric's materiality

A particularly interesting element of the depiction of fabric in the H.2164 album is the role the patterns play in the paintings of the women. At first glance it might seem that the motifs are equally distributed over the surface of the fabric, just like they would if one were looking at a piece of cloth laid out on the ground. However, upon closer inspection it appears this is not always the case. Motifs are placed deliberately on the surface of the clothing to achieve a certain number of effects. The painters use them to depict the materiality of the fabric by adopting strategies that will be explained shortly. In addition, the motifs underline

the contours of the clothing and the shape of the body underneath it. A few examples will be analysed to bring this to light.

#### The depiction of patterns' regularity

The arrangement of the patterns on the white skirt of the 'woman carrying a jug' (fol. 21b) gives the viewer a sense of regularity (Fig. 31). As a result, he would surmise that the motifs are equally distributed on the fabric and would probably assume this depiction reproduces the exact aspect of fabric in real life.<sup>129</sup> Yet, this impression of mimesis is completely artificial in the sense that the motifs are not depicted as they would actually appear to the viewer in reality. A real piece of fabric would naturally form folds, that would make some of the motifs completely, or partly, invisible to the viewer. However, the viewer's brain would complete the picture, and thus, comprehend the 'irregular' pattern as one that is continuous and regular.

Therefore, if the white skirt of the 'woman carrying a jug' (fol. 21b) were an 'accurate' depiction of a real fabric, some of the flower motifs on her skirt should be obscured, or only partly visible. This is not the case. The Ottoman artist has used another strategy to create the illusion of the fabric's materiality and the regularity of its pattern. First of all, the motifs are distributed on the available surface, so that the patterns are clearly distinguishable, which allows the viewer to appreciate the precision with which they are painted.

Secondly, they are also arranged in a way that the viewer gets the same sense of regularity that he or she would from a real, flattened out, fabric. The floral patterns on the main part of the skirt are painted in frontal view. Patterns on a real piece of cloth laid out flat would also be seen in frontal view. In other words, the viewer perceives the motifs on the skirt in the same angle as he would if a real skirt were laid out flat in front of him, thereby producing in the viewer an identical impression of regularity.

Thirdly, the flowers are staggered so that the motifs in the middle row are slightly more to the right than those in the upper row. This arrangement underlines the motion of the skirt, which according to the depicted folds, is swaying from left to right. By making the movement of the cloth visible, the painter makes the viewer aware of its materiality. Thus, the fabric of the skirt although depicted in a stylised way appears real to the observer.

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<sup>129</sup> Masculine personal pronouns are used systematically when referring to the viewer for the sake of brevity, but this should not lead to the assumption that the viewer is necessarily male.

The role the motifs play in reinforcing the movement suggested by the folds is even clearer in the skirt's lower decorative strip. In fact, the outlines of the folds are underlined by the depiction of the motifs in that the latter are placed so that they end right before the line of the fold. Two flowers fit neatly between the two grey lines delineating the folds of fabric. In real life, it would be unlikely that whole motifs are contained within the area of each fold in such an even manner. The artists who painted the 'woman carrying a jug' (fol. 21b) adopted such a strategy on purpose to impart the materiality of the fabric. The depiction of the motifs on the lower edge of the veil proves he was entirely capable of painting an 'accurate' rendition of fabric when he so desired. On the border of the veil the motifs follow the three-dimensional folds of the fabric and are depicted partly hidden according to the position of the cloth (Fig. 32).

#### The use of motifs to underline the fabric's volume

Another example of the use of motifs to highlight the materiality of the costume can be observed in the painting of the 'woman with the gold headdress' (fol. 4b). The motifs on the purple coat are orientated vertically on the lower part of the garment, and then horizontally, on the sleeves. One could postulate that the painter chose to paint the motifs in this way because this arrangement allows him to emphasise the clothing is three-dimensional and envelops a body. The motifs organised horizontally visually underline the volume of the sleeve by suggesting the cut-off motifs go on all around the diameter of the arm. Those arranged vertically on the lower part of the robe highlight the vertical motion of the fabric, which flows downward, from the waist towards the figure's feet. By underlining the fact the fabric is hanging, and thus has a weight and a volume, the painter makes the viewer aware of the clothing's materiality.

Interestingly enough, the shading is less visible on the purple coat than on the green robe underneath. This might be due to the fact the tone of green used is lighter than the hue of purple, and thus the black and white lines used for the shading are more clearly visible on the green than on the purple. However, it could also be explained by the problem the painter faced having chosen to contrast the green robe from the purple coat by depicting motifs with a horizontal axis. These did not allow him to underline the downward flow of the fabric in the same way as motifs with a vertical axis would. Therefore, he had to rely entirely on shading to

give an impression of the fabric's weight. One could suggest that as a result, the shading plays a more important role on the green fabric than on the purple one.

#### Patterns as a tool for the three-dimensional depiction of bodies

In the depictions of women, the patterns underline the outlines of the clothing, thereby further emphasising the shape of the body underneath it. This role the motifs play is evident in the painting of the 'woman tying a scarf' (fol. 12b). The gold and silver almond-shaped motifs decorating her dark green robe are placed all along the contours of her robe. This is particularly visible on the left leg, where the motifs follow the black line outlining the leg from the hip joint, down the swell of her thigh, and the curve of the knee. Another line of motifs emphasises the curvature of her buttocks, which is also painted with a black line. On the fabric folds pooling around her calf and ankle, the motifs are arranged diagonally so as to highlight the rounded shape of the flesh underneath. The same method is used to suggest the taper of her upper body, with motifs splayed out from her armpit towards her left breast and her waist. The painter even painted one motif under each breast as if to remind the viewer of the presence of the two globes. The motifs are displayed horizontally on the sleeves, which highlights the horizontal axis of the upper arms.

This way of suggesting the body thanks to the motifs on the clothing is employed throughout the corpus of paintings. The depiction of the 'musicians' (fol. 17b) includes a kneeling woman on the right, whose legs are represented using the same technique. The swell of both her folded legs is underlined by the motifs which supplement the black line of the outline. The 'female dancer' (fol. 18a) wears a beige robe with a floral pattern, which highlights the position of her limbs. The flowers follow the curve of her bottom. They are also arranged in a diagonal line on her torso. Starting on the stomach, the flowers extend to her right breast and end on the shoulder. The alignment of the flowers on a diagonal contributes to the impression the figure's torso is bending backwards.

However, this technique has a drawback in that it sometimes hinders the three-dimensional depiction of the body. In the painting of the 'woman tying a scarf' (fol. 12b) the placement of the motifs obscures the depiction of the shoulder joint. Since shading has not been applied to the motifs themselves, the shoulder joint lacks in modelling. As a result, her shoulder joints are no longer visible through the fabric, and she appears to be missing shoulders.

## Conclusion

The depiction of fabric in the paintings of women in the album H.2164 are characterised by the variety of the patterns, colours and textures of the costumes. The artists have an obvious interest in representing the physical properties of the materials making up the women's outfits and making these recognisable for the viewer. This desire to show the clothing and accessories' materiality involves the use of motifs to signal the fabric's movement and volume, and to underline the contours of the garments, and by extension, the shape of the body underneath it. The resulting images are, thus, more symbolic than strictly mimetic or 'realistic'.

### **4.3 Depicting the body through the clothes that clothe it**

#### The use of folds and shading in the depictions of women

Levni is often celebrated for reviving Ottoman painting by innovating in the field of figural painting.<sup>130</sup> One of these innovations is considered to be his use of shading. Shading is used in all the depictions of women in the album H.2164 even if one notes, depending on the painter, variations in the extent to which the shading actually contributes to the illusion of three-dimensionality. One can say shading and folds play an integral part in the common aesthetics of the depictions of women in the album H.2164 because their decorative potential is exploited in all of the images.

#### Representing folds through shading

First of all, shading is employed by the artists to give volume to the figures, since, by applying shading to the outfit, they reveal the body through the clothes that cover it. The 'woman wearing a transparent veil' (fol. 14b) is a particularly good example of this because she is cloaked in a full-length brown coat with long sleeves, which hides most of her body. The artist has to put special effort into painting the shading on the fabric since the corporeality of her limbs depends on it. Another reason for the choice of this picture is the fact the colour of the cloth is quite light and devoid of patterns so the shading is wonderfully clear.

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<sup>130</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 11-13. İrepoğlu 1999b, 220. İrepoğlu 2000, 378-82. İrepoğlu 2003, 76, 84. Bağcı/Çağman/Renda 2010, 266-67.



Diagonal lines depart from the woman's armpits towards her breasts. They are depicted with thicker strokes close to the armpit, which then thin out towards the breast. These serve to translate visually the bunching up of the fabric under the armpit and the smooth surface of the cloth stretched over the chest. Hatching is employed to represent the shadow under the bosom and around the armpit. The inward curve of the left shoulder is underlined by a dark brown line. Shading continues under the left armpit, emphasising the taper of her waist. The rounded belly and hips are suggested by pronounced folds drawn with curved lines between her right hip and her left hand. Several folds of cloth are depicted originating from the hand grasping her coat in front of her navel. The wish-bone shape of these folds reminds the viewer of her crotch, which lies underneath her clothes. Thin lines departing from the inside of the elbow and extending towards the outside of the arm suggest the elbow joint. These lines continue down the first half of the forearm. Lower down, stylised folds depict the fabric of the sleeve pooling around the wrists.

The fabric folds are represented with various techniques on different parts of the cloak. The larger folds — like the ones on the lower part of the garment — are depicted with a grey, a white, and a light brown line painted next to each other. The pigments used for these folds are more diluted than the ones for the thin folds, so that they blend more easily with one another. It is more difficult to distinguish the different brush strokes on the large folds than on the thin folds. A diluted brown pigment functions as a highlight on the folds on the stomach and the sleeves, while the folds on the lower part of the coat show white highlights. Hatching appears on the lower part of the coat to reinforce the thick brown lines. Thin folds like those on the sleeves, the breasts and the armpits are painted with a combination of thin brown lines and broad strokes of diluted light brown. The stylised folds on the sleeves are particularly minute. They consist of evenly spaced thin lines in the shape of a hair pin, going from each side of the sleeve towards the middle. The diluted pigment is applied to create an impression of volume by counterbalancing the dark shade with a lighter one in an attempt to imitate the play of light and shadow on the fabric.

### Experimentations in the three-dimensional depiction of breasts

The depiction of breasts deserves specific mention because the low-cut necklines are one of the characteristics of these women's costumes and because they offer an interesting case study of the relationship between fabric and body. The first depiction of female breasts

comes on folio 7b with the portrait of the 'woman holding out her braids' (fol. 7b). Her robe and the jacket underneath are left unbuttoned down to the middle of her cleavage. The opening ends in a flat line with rounded corners. The cleavage is outlined with two curved lines in brownish red pigment. The swell of the bosom is translated into the shading applied to the fabric of the dress. The shading of the folds below the breasts suggest the swell of her chest. The breasts in the pictures of the H.2164 album are always given corporeality by folds, which emphasise the low-cut neckline.

Another variation appears in the painting of the 'woman in a green robe arranging flowers in her hair' (fol. 15b). Instead of the flattened semicircle neckline seen previously, the opening here is v-shaped. The shading makes the right breast's volume clear, but, on the left side, the artist appears to have encountered difficulties in combining the depiction of the breast with the folds created by the movement of her raised arm. In fact, the modelling of the breast on the gown does not correspond to the outline visible in the cleavage. The depiction of the complicated arm position seems to have been more of a priority for the painter than giving the illusion of a three-dimensional object.

Several other paintings exhibit the same ambiguity. This indicates a certain number of the painters were either less experienced with the depiction of folds and shading, or gave priority to painting the arm position over three-dimensional folds. For example, the picture of the 'female dancer' (fol. 18a) offers a rare view of a breast in profile, but the curved line of the left breast does not seem to match with the curve of the breast in the dress. In this case, it appears the artist kept the standardised frontal view of the cleavage used in all the other paintings, yet depicted the shape of the breasts in the dress in three-quarter to match with the movement of her body. In another case, the 'European woman' (fol. 13b), the painter did not use shading to depict her breasts. These are represented by semicircles placed between her shoulders, which do not give the illusion of three-dimensional objects, but rather act as a symbol for her cleavage.

#### Pictorial conventions for the depiction of joints

Another important aspect for the depiction of women is the rendering of joints covered by fabric. Representing the articulations of the figure's body is crucial for the viewer's understanding of the body's corporeality. This is even more so the case when one wishes to represent bodies in movement or in elaborate positions. The portraits in the album feature

both elements, and the Levni workshop obviously invested a lot of effort in their depiction. Yet, the three-dimensional depiction of joints is sometimes abandoned in favour of a pictorial mode, which underlines other elements such as the figure's movement or the costume. This configuration highlights the conventional character both of the folds' placement and of the way in which shading is applied.

### The depiction of the arm joints

Differences can be observed in the rendering of the shoulder joints. The painter of the 'woman smelling a rose' (fol. 19b) painted the joint of the left shoulder by artfully manipulating shading and the folds formed by the arm swinging back, indicating his desire to produce a three-dimensional depiction. In contrast, the painter of the 'woman with the gold headdress' (fol. 4b) is more interested in depicting each body part in the angle which best showcases the clothes covering it, rather than solely focusing on the mimetic rendering of a three-dimensional body. While the left shoulder and upper arm are shown in lateral view, the outside of the forearm is painted in frontal view.

As with the depiction of breasts, shading as a device to create the illusion of three-dimensionality is only used when it does not obscure the legibility of the figure's pose. In the 'woman in a green robe arranging flowers in her hair' (fol. 15b), the elbow is extended back, and the arm folded towards the head. Holding the arm at such a slant is impossible in real life. The painter depicted the arm at this angle so that the arm movement would not obscure the view of the cleavage. In addition, this inclination allows him to simultaneously depict the fabric folds at the elbow and show the buttons on the left sleeve.

The artists seem to have had a predilection for depicting the arms folded in towards the chest. This position allows for an easy rendering of the elbow joint because the angle formed by the arm makes the articulation obvious, even when it is hidden under fabric. The painters are then free to add a little shading on the cloth to underline the bend, and the trick is done. The 'woman with the gold headdress' (fol. 4b) shows a particularly graceful version of the gesture. The practicality of this technique may also explain why in all of the images in which the women wear jackets with open sleeves, the sleeves envelop the elbow joint, making it visible with a curved line or a bump.

The elbow is only painted uncovered in the painting of the 'young woman asleep' (fol. 11b). In her case, the naked flesh of the forearm and elbow are shown, but the resulting image

of the joint is not three-dimensional. The inside of the hand is shown suggesting the viewer is also seeing the inside of the forearm and the elbow, but the elbow joint itself is depicted as if the outside of the joint were exposed. This ambiguity in the image makes the arm appear flat.

It could be argued from the above examples that fabric plays a crucial role in the depiction of a three-dimensional elbow joint because the painters use it to make the joint recognisable as such. One of the characteristics of the corpus is that shading is scarcely applied on the women's flesh. While the artists seem to be interested in applying shading to fabric, this interest does not extend to painted flesh. In fact, in the 'young woman asleep' (fol. 11b), no shading is employed for the elbow or the forearm.

In the case of an extended arm, the use of fabric to make the elbow joint visible is more complicated since it is straight and harder to suggest under cloth. In response to the challenge, the Levni workshop painted the arms so that they were always slightly bent at the elbow. This allowed them to suggest the bent elbow by painting folds on the cloth as in the 'young woman spinning' (fol. 11a). However, in cases where the fabric of the sleeve is particularly slack as in the 'fully veiled woman in a blue coat' (fol. 5b) and the 'fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers' (fol. 7a) the elbow joint seems to dissolve. The painters preferred to accentuate the downward flow of the fabric instead of the corporeality of the elbow. This choice may have been motivated by the fact it allows the artists to emphasise the weight of the fabric cloaking the figures and the garment's looseness.

The women's wrists are visible in a majority of portraits. The depiction of the wrist appears to be motivated by the desire to show the elegant hand gestures in the best possible viewing angle. The angle of the wrist follows this pictorial convention rather than the desire to show a realistic bend. This is clear in the portrait of the 'woman smelling a carnation' (fol. 8b), where the right wrist is depicted in frontal view so that the elaborate hand gesture is clear. If the wrist followed the curve of the arm, it would be painted in three-quarter view. Another example of this can be observed in the scene with the musicians. The hands of the musician playing the tambourine are represented in a way that emphasises she is playing her instrument with both hands, but also her attire. It would seem the depiction of the sleeve cuffs and the bracelets, which hide her wrists, and thus interrupt the visual continuity between hand and arm, was more important to the artist than the creation of a strictly mimetic painting.

#### The pictorial convention for the knee joint

The articulations of the upper body attract most of the attention since the figures' legs are generally hidden under their clothing. Nonetheless, there are two instances in which knee joints are suggested through the fabric, and the manner of signalling the joint utilises very much the same principle as the depiction of the bent elbow discussed above. One is the portrait of the 'female dancer' (fol. 18a). Her raised left knee drags with it the fabric of the transparent shirt and trousers, creating a bulge in the fabric, and causing the beige robe to fall to the side. The other corresponds to the two paintings of women kneeling, namely the 'woman tying a scarf' (fol. 12b) and the tambourine player among the 'musicians' (fol. 17b). In both cases, the folded knees create bumps in the fabric, which are further emphasised by the placement of the single motifs and the folds created in the clothes by the position of the limbs.

#### Depicting the body's movement through the clothing

Another dimension to the relationship between clothes and body, and a dimension in which shading plays a part too, is the depiction of movement. The pictures of women in the H.2164 are all represented mid movement. The movement might only be implied — like in the painting of the 'young woman asleep' (fol. 11b) where the twisting of her torso hints at her moving in her sleep —, but it is always there. The most obvious rendition of movement lies in the position of the figures. In fact, the women are shown in a variety of poses, some, like the picture of the 'woman with the ermine coat' (fol. 9b), remarkably complex.

These movements are depicted in the fabric itself. Several of the women are represented walking. In those pictures, the trouser legs are painted apart to show the legs themselves are apart. The distance between the two legs is further underlined by the white scarf, which hangs between the legs of several women. The movement is not only expressed in the position of the trouser legs, but also in the fabric itself. In the picture of the 'woman holding out her braids' (fol. 7b), the artist painted folds twisting around the ankle, to represent the fabric moving with the movement of the left leg.

The skirt, or the lower part of the robe, often seems to be affected by an invisible wind that sets the fabric in motion, creating folds in it. For example, several folds are painted on the dress of the 'European woman' (fol. 13b). Although the position of her feet is quite static, the folds, which seem to be flowing towards the right, communicate the idea of movement.

Another more common convention for depicting motion is to represent the lower part of the robe pushed back, revealing the robe's lining in the process. The picture of the 'woman arranging a transparent veil on her head' (fol. 15a) includes this convention. The front of her black robe flaps back, exposing the brown lining with its orange border, and forming regular folds behind her. In addition, this backward motion is depicted in the transparent shirt, which also forms a fold in the same direction as the robe. The diagonal lines created by the flap of the robe and the transparent shirt are translated in the stripes of her right trouser leg. Instead of painting the stripes vertically like on the left trouser leg, the stripes on the right are diagonal. This diagonal axis creates the impression of a right to left movement counterbalancing the left to right motion of her feet.

Movement is also visible in the way unbuttoned sleeves are depicted. In the picture of the 'woman smelling a rose' (fol. 19b), the sleeves of her beige jacket fall towards the ground as she raises her right hand to her face. This is represented by the fabric fanning out, whereby the lining becomes visible, but also by the cloth of the sleeve folding back towards the right. Folds in the sleeve of the transparent shirt indicate it is also falling towards her elbow. Her left sleeve moves behind her as she draws her left arm near. The fabric is shown flapping towards the back, shading around the elbow highlighting the motion.

In the cases of the 'female dancer' (fol. 18a) and the 'woman holding out her braids' (fol. 7b), the downward motion of the kerchief parallels the inclination of the head, further underlining the figures' movement. The 'woman holding out her braids' (fol. 7b) tilts her head towards her left shoulder and the end of her pink kerchief points in the same direction. The 'female dancer' (fol. 18a) also bends her head towards her left shoulder, in a position that perfectly mirrors the woman previously mentioned. Here also, the kerchief parallels the movement of the head.

## Conclusion

Shading is often used to create a three-dimensional representation of the clothes and make the body underneath it visible. In some cases, the placement of the folds and the use of shading is motivated by aesthetics rather than a desire to create the illusion of three-dimensionality. The dissociation of shading and folds from a mimetic mode of painting points to the conventional character of these elements in the depiction of women. The portrayal of breasts makes this particularly clear. Several conventions were identified in relation to the

painting of joints, in which the artists manipulate fabric to make the joint visible. A pictorial mode, which emphasises the figure's costume or movement is occasionally preferred to a three-dimensional depiction of the joints. The said movement is depicted in the fabric itself so as to underline the woman's gestures. In a few cases, the fabric makes visible motion, which was not otherwise obvious from the figure's body.

#### **4.4 A codified way of depicting women**

The previous two sections looked at the representational techniques used by the workshop to depict clothing and to suggest the shape of the body through the costume. In the course of this discussion, it has been suggested that the different artists all followed the same set of pictorial conventions to represent the women. Given the paintings were probably made by different artists, not all of the conventions are found in each painting. Instead, several representational techniques or specific elements come up repeatedly, allowing me to designate them as conventions. These create a visual language that gives the depictions of women in the H.2164 album a certain homogeneity. This section aims to develop the codified nature of the depictions of women in the album already alluded to in the discussion of the women's clothed bodies (section 4.3).

To begin with, the standardised features in the depiction of costumes, which point to the emphasis put on the decorativeness of the depiction, will be detailed. The manner in which these conventions shape an ideal female body will then be explored. Finally, to confirm the argument that the depictions of women in the H.2164 are standardised images, it will be shown that the painting of the 'European woman' (fol. 13b) exhibits exactly the same visual language as the portraits of the other, non-European, women.

##### The standardised features and the painterly aesthetic of fabric in the depiction of costumes

The Levni workshop seem to have been particularly interested in depicting the lining of clothing. This is in part due to their effort to represent clothes three-dimensionally. On the painting of the 'woman with the gold headdress' (fol. 4b), the depiction of the purple coat's lining at the mouth of the sleeves and at the bottom helps the artist to suggest to the viewer that the fabric cloaks a three-dimensional body. However, the almost symmetrical flaps on the central axis of the figure cannot be explained by a concern with three-dimensionality. The

lining's depiction is obviously stylised. One could consider this is a pictorial convention adopted by the Levni workshop.

Another standardised way of representing the lining can be observed on the picture of the 'fully veiled woman in a blue coat' (fol. 5b). The coat is folded back on each side of the opening on the central axis, with the one side being slightly larger, and decorated with another fabric. Almost identical interpretations of this appear on the pictures of the 'fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers' (fol. 7a) and the 'woman wearing a transparent veil' (fol. 14b) (see section 3.3).

The Levni workshop seem to have had a predilection for a specific representational device, which henceforth will be called the double depiction technique. In the painting of the 'woman smelling a carnation' (fol. 8b), the sleeves of her ochre jacket are painted so that both the inside and the outside of the fabric are visible at the same time. This technique allows the painter to contrast the patterns on both sides of the cloth and emphasise the decorative character of the image. In this painting — and in two others — the patterned surfaces of the sleeve's fabrics perfectly mirror each other. On the right sleeve, the spotted lining is the side that is the most visible. The outside of the fabric is only seen thanks to the folded back flap. On the left sleeve, the outside with its floral pattern is shown while the lining is almost completely hidden from view. This mirroring further underlines the aesthetic qualities of the depictions.

The painters are also interested in revealing the different layers of clothing worn by the women. The coats are pulled up in the case of the women wearing full-length cloaks to show the bottom edge of the dress underneath. The linings of the cloaks or robes are always edged with a different colour, —very often orange— which makes them more visible. Several women hold up the side of their robes to better expose the transparent shirt and the trousers they are wearing underneath. More generally, the long robes a majority of the women wear are left open at the front. The flaps of fabric flop at the sides, pooling at the feet and creating artfully arranged folds.

The 'artificial' character of the depiction of folds, which are stylised to evoke to the viewer's mind the clothing's materiality, rather than to transfer a three-dimensional object to a two-dimensional plane, has already been suggested at the beginning of this chapter. Moreover, one could argue the painting of folds is the occasion for the artists to increase the decorative character of the pictures' aesthetics. This is accomplished by arranging the folds evenly or



depicting them in a stylised way, which creates a pattern out of the fabric itself. In the painting of the ‘female dancer’ (fol. 18a), her beige robe forms stylised folds at the bottom, the beige floral fabric contrasting with the solid orange lining at regular intervals. The contour line of the folds forms a regular zigzag.

The transformation of fabric folds into a pattern through stylisation can also be observed in the depiction of the handkerchiefs held by the ‘woman holding a black handkerchief’ (fol. 19a) and the ‘woman smelling a rose’ (fol. 19b). In both cases, the corners of the fabric are excessively elongated causing the ends of the fabric to form a more or less rounded v-shape. The stylisation of the black handkerchief is particularly clear since the folds follow axial symmetry.

### Shaping an ideal female body

The pictorial conventions observed in the rendering of the clothing of these women has an impact on the depiction of the women’s body. It can be proposed they contribute to shaping an ideal female body. The term ‘ideal’ is used in the sense of a beauty standard that is conceptualised intellectually. The non-European women with uncovered hair have long hair, which is pushed away from their face and held in place by a headdress, which leaves their round faces and pale throats exposed. The cleavage is put on display, and even when hidden suggested by shading. The bulging stomach is emphasised by the folds of the robe hanging down towards the belt. The belt serves both to underline the taper of the waist and to prefigure the width of the buttocks. The flowing skirts hide the large thighs, but also draw attention to them by the fact they occupy so much of the picture field. As İrepoğlu has pointed out, even in the case of the women clad in full-length cloaks, which are supposed to hide their bodies, the folds of the cloaks barely hide their voluptuous figures.<sup>131</sup> Finally, the long sleeves, with their billowing cuffs which prolong them — sometimes to the extent the hands are hidden — evoke long and graceful arms.

### The portrait of the ‘European woman’ and the standardisation of the depiction of women

Having outlined the pictorial conventions used by the Levni workshop in the depiction of women in the album, it will now be explained how the ‘European woman’ included in the album supports the argument, that these pictures are to a great extent standardised. The picture

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<sup>131</sup> İrepoğlu 1999a, 154, 171.

of the 'European woman' (fol. 13b) was chosen because her costume and her wig immediately designate her as a member of a different culture, and thus, one could imagine her otherness has an impact on her appearance and the way she is depicted by the Ottoman artist.

Looking at the image in the album, it seems clear her otherness was made explicit through her clothing and her hair, but her image follows in every other aspect the same conventions as the depictions of non-European women in the album. She has physical features in common with the others. The hair of her wig is long. Her skin is pale. Her cleavage is exposed. Furthermore, in this painting too, the costume underlines the narrow waist; the billowing skirts emphasise the presence of her large hips; and the low-cut neckline of her dress makes her breasts an integral part of her outfit. The clothing also exhibits the juxtaposition of different patterns, and a variety of colours and textures (see the section 5.2).

Moreover, her portrait includes the same formal characteristics as the paintings of the other women. She is standing in three-quarter view. One of her arms is raised and folds back towards her face, while the other one is slightly bent, with the hand resting next to her bottom. This position of the arms parallels that of several other women (see the catalogue). The depiction of her cleavage follows the pictorial convention recurrent in the album (see section 5.3). Shading is used extensively, particularly on the sleeves, the collar, and the skirt, where it helps to depict the movement of her body. Furthermore, the folds of the glove of her right hand are extremely similar to the thin lines employed by the artists to render the palms of the other women (Fig. 33). The painter seems to have been concerned the viewer would not guess it was the palm of her hand since it was covered by the fabric of the glove. To prevent any confusion, the artist painted folds in the glove, extending the interior outline of the thumb and little finger, just like he would on the palm of an uncovered hand.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has studied the depiction of costumes as they appear on the portraits of women in the album H.2164. Scrutinising the way the Levni workshop represents fabric has brought to light the complexity and the variety of the painted clothing. This impression is reinforced by the multiple ways patterns render the costumes' materiality. Patterns reveal the shape of the body to the viewer, which is also one of the results achieved by employing shading. The extensive use of shading and other recurrent representational techniques allow

us to understand that these paintings follow specific pictorial conventions, which compose the recognisable aesthetics of the Levni workshop.

Coming back to the question of ‘realism’, it appears the painters have tried to represent the variety of materials and shapes found in the fashion of Ottoman and European women in the eighteenth century. Shading which is generally associated with mimesis in European painting is sometimes employed on the clothes to translate the shape of the body underneath them.

However, the attention for details and the interest in mimetic representational techniques is combined with stylisation. The fabric of the skirt of the ‘woman carrying a jug’ (fol. 21b), although depicted in a stylised way, appears real to the observer. Fabric folds are given depth with shading, yet their depiction is standardised so that they become a pattern in themselves. In fact, the decorative potential of folds and shading is always exploited, regardless of whether or not the artist created a three-dimensional representation. The dissociation of shading and folds from a mimetic mode of painting points to the conventionalised nature of the depictions of women.

Furthermore, the depiction of the breasts and the joints has been standardised so that they appear identical on several different paintings. The painters seem to have been following conventions, which dictated the way in which to depict each body part based on the principle that they should appear in the angle, which best showcased the clothes covering them. The artists take great care in rendering fabric in motion because it allows them to underline the movement animating the figures’ bodies and give a stronger sense of its reality. The motion suggested by the body and the one made visible by the depicted folds do not necessarily coincide, indicating the artists were not focused on representing movement three-dimensionally, but rather visually referring to it with specific pictorial conventions.

## **5.0 Eroticism and the motif of the reclining single figure in the album**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Folio 11b of the album H.2164 exhibits the painting of a female reclining figure who is asleep. This image is particularly fascinating for several reasons. It constitutes a unicum in an album characterised by figures recurring in the same pose, but at the same time it follows the arrangement of the paintings in the album by its association with a male pendant on the

opposite folio. Furthermore, the eroticism of the sleeping young woman and her companion is more overt than that of the other depictions in the album. In addition, the painting clearly adopts some of the formal characteristics of the iconography of the reclining naked or semi-naked woman as it was developed by Persian artists in the late sixteenth century and popularised in the seventeenth. As such it provides a case study for the role of Persian single figure painting as a source of inspiration for the Levni workshop.

A link between the artistic production of the seventeenth-century Persian artists and the single figures attributed to Levni has previously been noted by Ünver, and later İrepoğlu, but without an in-depth discussion of the question.<sup>132</sup> Güner İnal compared some of Levni's paintings to Safavid single figures in the collections of the Topkapı Palace coming to the conclusion that Levni had indeed drawn inspiration from these paintings.<sup>133</sup> Although he put forward the indebtedness of the 'young man asleep' (fol. 12a) to reclining female figures such as Sadiqi Beg's 'Bilqis, Queen of Sheba', he did not explore the erotic dimension of these paintings. Artan and Schick have briefly discussed the eroticism found in a number of single figure paintings attributed to Levni, but without delving into the exact nature of the role played by the reception of Persian painting in the elaboration of an erotic Ottoman visual idiom.<sup>134</sup> How is eroticism created in the 'young woman asleep' (fol. 11b) and the 'young man asleep' (fol. 12a)? Is the eroticism of these depictions intrinsically linked to the Persian iconography of the reclining naked or semi-naked woman? How does the eroticism in the depiction of the 'young man asleep' relate to that of the female reclining figure?

Focusing on the 'young woman asleep' (fol. 11b) and the 'young man asleep' (fol. 12a), this chapter will, first of all, use a comparative method to outline the relationship between the painting of the clothed reclining young woman in the album H.2164 and two Persian precedents, Reza 'Abbasi's 'Reclining Nude' and Sadiqi Beg's 'Bilqis, Queen of Sheba'. It is assumed the artists of the Levni workshop did not see exactly those paintings, but came across comparable examples which inspired them. The focus will then shift to the 'young man asleep' (fol. 12a), examining the formal congruency of the two paintings on folios 11b and 12a to determine the way in which the Levni workshop create eroticism in their paintings.

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<sup>132</sup> Ünver 1951, 6. İrepoğlu 1999a, 146.

<sup>133</sup> İnal 1984, 93-94.

<sup>134</sup> Artan/Schick 2013, 162-163.

## 5.2 The ‘young woman asleep’ and the reclining female figures in sixteenth-century Safavid painting

The first nude reclining woman was executed by the painter Reza ‘Abbasi in the early 1590s, probably inspired by European engravings such as Marcantonio Raimondi’s ‘Cleopatra’ (c. 1515-1527).<sup>135</sup> This subject matter was further explored by Reza ‘Abbasi’s students Mohammad Qasem (d. 1659) and Mir Afzal al-Hoseyni (active during the reign of Shah ‘Abbas II, r.1642-1666).<sup>136</sup> Of particular interest for the study of folio 11b is a painting by a contemporary of Reza ‘Abbasi, Sadiqi Beg (1533/4-1609/10), who was influenced by Reza ‘Abbasi’s work in the later years of his career.<sup>137</sup> Known as a portrait of ‘Bilqis, Queen of Sheba’, the picture shows a fully clothed woman reclining against a cushion next to a stream. Opaque watercolour and gold were applied on paper for this painting, which measures 10 x 19,5 cm and belongs today to the British Museum. Except for the fact ‘Bilqis’ is dressed, it exhibits an obvious similarity to Reza ‘Abbasi’s ‘Reclining Nude’ today in the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington DC. ‘Abbasi also employed opaque watercolour and gold on paper, but his depiction is slightly smaller in size measuring 9,5 x 17,2 cm. Both images are attributed to the 1590s.<sup>138</sup>

Comparing these two paintings with the one on folio 11b of the H.2164 album will allow a better understanding of the erotic visual idiom developed by Levni and his workshop as a result of their reception of Persian reclining figures. Thus, three questions will be discussed in connection to these paintings: How does Reza ‘Abbasi create eroticism in his picture? What does the Levni workshop adopt? How does the artist of the ‘young woman asleep’ (fol. 11b) treat fabric in comparison to Sadiqi Beg? How does the eroticism in the ‘young woman asleep’ (fol. 11b) differ from the eroticism in the Persian examples?

### The natural setting: a Persian erotic trope

In the ‘Reclining Nude’ by Reza ‘Abbasi (Fig. 34), the setting contributes to the eroticism of the woman by suggesting a sensual atmosphere. The landscape elements represent a stimulation of both the woman and the viewer’s senses. The breeze which appears to be stirring the leaves and the woman’s shawl is also felt by the figure and its depiction

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<sup>135</sup> Canby 1999, 32.

<sup>136</sup> Langer 2013, 180.

<sup>137</sup> Canby 1999, 39-42.

<sup>138</sup> Langer 2013, 180, 183.

evokes for the observer the feeling of air against skin, not only the woman's skin, but also his. The noise of the water flowing in the stream, the smell of the flowers and nature, all of these details induce in the viewer the sensory stimulation also undergone by the subject of the painting and trigger his own memories of similar experiences. In addition, the corresponding colours of the figure and the natural setting surrounding her illustrate that the two are connected by their sensual properties. It should be noted that the garden is associated with love in Persian poetry and lovers are often portrayed in one.<sup>139</sup> A further link to the theme of lovers is the letter lying next to the woman, which has been interpreted as a love letter, suggesting her reverie is probably occupied by thoughts about its author.<sup>140</sup> A figure dreaming about an absent lover is another trope of Persian poetry.<sup>141</sup> Thus, in his painting 'Abbasi translates and emphasises in visual terms mental associations, which were most probably obvious to a Persian audience, transforming the painting's setting into an active component of its erotic nature.

#### A sensual depiction of the female form

The contours of the 'Reclining Nude' are precise and flowing, conjuring a graceful form. The fabric wrapped around the woman underlines her curvaceous form. The reclining position chosen by 'Abbasi is ideal for an erotic portrait because it emphasises the female shape by allowing a clear view of the face, the breasts and the belly, the arch of the back, the profile of the buttocks and the shapely legs. Showing the woman with her right arm raised away from her bust enables 'Abbasi to highlight the perfect rotundity of both her breasts. The areolae and the nipples are also visible (Fig. 35). Moving down the figure, the viewer catches sight of her navel and the two folds of flesh above it. Interestingly enough, despite the veristic quality of 'Abbasi's painting of the female form, the woman's vulva is simply not depicted, though her lap is in full view. The woman's face follows the visual idiom adapted from Central Asia and absorbed in Persian painting, in which eyes are slit-shaped, the bridge of the nose is straight and the mouth small.<sup>142</sup>

Her hair seems to be caressing her flanks because the fine curls are rendered with a dynamic black line that introduces movement in the otherwise still figure of the reclining

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<sup>139</sup> Natif 2013, 46-47. Imbert 2015, 119.

<sup>140</sup> Canby 1999, 34.

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> Baer 2004, 13.

woman. The locks of hair escaping everywhere imply the woman is consumed by unbridled passion. In addition, the way in which the shawl is intertwined with her body suggests the mingling of lover's limbs, as if the piece of cloth represented her beloved embracing her. By using the shawl to draw the viewer's attention to her whole shape, it likens the viewer to a lover in their equal power to possess her; the lover by touch, the viewer by sight.

### The reclining figure as a visual constituent of eroticism

In the painting of the 'young woman asleep' (fol. 11b), the most obvious borrowing by the Levni workshop is the woman's pose (see the catalogue). In both the 'Reclining Nude' and the 'young woman asleep' (fol. 11b), the women are sleeping on their right side with their right arm bent at the elbow and one leg resting on top of the other.

The position of the legs is ambiguous in the Ottoman painting because the shape of the legs is hidden by the woman's robe. To clarify the arrangement of her limbs the artist has taken pains to depict the sole of one of her feet by adding minuscule brown lines stretching from her toes toward her heel (Fig. 36). It remains unclear which foot is the right and which is the left, but it is evident that the artist is adopting the overlapping position of the legs from the Persian reclining figures.

Both artists have chosen to show the women with their upper bodies propped up, and their hips and legs resting on the ground in a way that accentuates the arch of their backs. While adopting the reclining pose seen in Persian examples, the Ottoman painter has depicted the legs of the 'young woman asleep' (fol. 11b) particularly long. By extending her legs, the artist of the 'young woman asleep' (fol. 11b) gives the impression the figure is continuously being stretched thereby injecting dynamism into an otherwise still composition. Since the legs are covered by her robe, this also creates more space for him to indulge in his interest for the depiction of fabric.

Like 'Abbasi the artist of the 'young woman asleep' (fol. 11b) takes great care in emphasising the sensuality of his model. Her head is painted turned to the left, elongating her neck, and exposing a wide strip of skin. Small brown lines render the curve of her throat. Although the woman's chest is not depicted in the same anatomical detail as in the 'Reclining Nude', her cleavage attracts the viewer's attention. Hatching is employed to suggest the three-dimensionality of her breasts. In addition, their heaviness is underlined in the fabric of her dress by the use of white and black lines to indicate the bulge created by their curvature

(Fig. 37). A slight thickening of the line on her left side near the border of the neckline represents her nipple, which seems about to escape from the garment. The painter of the ‘young woman asleep’ (fol. 11b) adopted a profile view for the stomach in order to make its swelling obvious. He even makes visible the curve of the buttocks — also depicted in the ‘Reclining Nude’— thanks to the diagonal folds in the dress’s fabric, which suggest the rise of her bottom.

#### Transparent fabric and voyeurism as further commonalities

Another feature the Levni workshop possibly drew from Reza ‘Abbasi’s work is the inclusion of transparent fabric to emphasise the figure’s eroticism. Transparent drapery pretends to cover the flesh but actually attracts the eye. ‘Abbasi plays with the viewer’s sight by painting a transparent shawl over his model, yet making it almost imperceptible at times. He does so by painting the outline of the transparent shawl, and the folds in it, with a very thin black line. These lines are reinforced by washes of white pigment to render the greater opacity of the fabric in places where it reflects the light differently. A different technique is employed by the painter of the ‘young woman asleep’ (fol. 11b) who draws a relatively thick white line for the contours of transparent items of dress. He then recreates the fabric’s texture by adding thin strokes of white which represent folds.

Both painters transform the viewer into a voyeur by portraying the women asleep and in various states of undress. The folded legs of the woman in the ‘Reclining Nude’, her closed eyes, and the arm cradling her head suggest she is comfortably sleeping, unaware she is being watched. The whole of her naked form is available to onlookers. Her relaxed manner underlines the intimacy of the moment, which, by contrast, reinforces the transgressive nature of the viewer’s gaze.

The unfastened clothes of the ‘young woman asleep’ (fol. 11b) represent the unabashed abandon of a private nap. Her body appears equally relaxed although her pose seems more contrived than the Persian example. Whereas ‘Abbasi’s depiction of the female body has a distinct mimetic quality to it, the pose of the figure attributed to the Levni workshop is more obviously codified. The position of the left hand signals the woman’s elegance and refinement. The angle of her head seems quite unnatural for someone sound asleep and hints instead to the artist’s desire to arrange the figure in way that allows a better view of her throat.



Thus, the women are put on display for the enjoyment of the viewer and robbed of their agency by the fact they do not seem conscious of the attention they are attracting. The voyeuristic nature of the observer's gaze adds a transgressive dimension to his experience of the artwork.

### Different approaches to composition

In the 'young woman asleep' (fol. 11b) and the 'Reclining Nude', a central reclining woman occupies most of the oblong picture field. In 'Abbasi's painting, the background is left blank except for a few elements of landscape, which place the human figure in a garden. The stream running in the foreground and the plants indicate that the woman is resting on the ground. The landscape plays a much bigger role in 'Abbasi's composition than it does in that of the 'young woman asleep' (fol.11b). The blue stream underlines the reclining figure. The woman's right flank, and the willow branches bending towards the centre of the painting form an almond shape, which frames the female body. The elbow of her folded arm and the willow tree stump constitute the tips of the almond shape. This composition encourages a circular movement of the viewer's gaze, from the head of the figure down her body to her feet, and along the branches back to her face.

The artist responsible for the 'young woman asleep' (fol.11b) shows no interest in the depiction of a natural environment in his painting, which constitutes an important difference between the two artists. In the painting in the album H.2164, the figure's contextualisation is reduced to bare essentials with a few tufts of grass in gold pigment representing the landscape the figure is lying in. The use of gold for the landscape elements provides a direct connection with what Sheila Canby has identified as the works from Reza 'Abbasi's late period.<sup>143</sup> It is noteworthy that Levni and his workshop should have forgone the contextualisation of the figure almost completely, demonstrating the portrait of the woman and her attire was evocative enough without suggesting the context visually. In the upper corners, the decorative shouldered arch differentiates the top of the picture from the bottom. In 'Abbasi's painting , this differentiation is made explicit by the landscape.

The composition of the 'young woman asleep' (fol.11b) is governed by the horizontal format of the depiction. Much like a text, the viewer is given a clear reading direction, from left to right. The vertical axis emphasised by the cushion, the raised head, and the hanging

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<sup>143</sup> Canby 1999, 176.

sleeve visually signal the ‘beginning’ of the viewing direction by attracting the eye immediately. The eye moves from the face down the neck, and from there, onward, guided by the curve of the woman’s body. The elaborate folds around her ankles mark the end of the eye movement.

### Differences in painting technique

The ‘Reclining Nude’ is governed by an economy of line, which testifies to the importance of drawing in ‘Abbasi’s artistic production.<sup>144</sup> The smooth lines of her body are further emphasised by the choice of pigment: the pink carnation contrasts clearly with the brown colour of the outline. The outlines of the clothing are painted with a darker tone than the one used to fill in the shape. The depiction of the ‘young woman asleep’ (fol. 11b) is not underpinned by the same aesthetics of line. The contours play first and foremost the role of a limit, that is they provide visual clarity by separating different areas of colour and delineating the various shapes, with which the painter portrays his subject. Thus, the artist has used black consistently for the outlines — except for the body parts for which brown is used.

In fact, the handling of colour differs greatly between the two artists. ‘Abbasi’s patches of bright green, red and blue are according to Canby characteristic of his early phase.<sup>145</sup> He employs colours sparsely to attract the viewer’s attention to specific zones in the painting and to create links between elements within it. For example, the violent contrast between the red and green garments draws the eye and brings out the figure’s torso. In addition, the palette used for the landscape elements is the same as that employed for the woman’s clothes creating a connection between the two.

In contrast, the painter of the ‘young woman asleep’ (fol. 11b) confines himself to half-tones. The variety of colours is further expanded by the use of gold pigment to depict the metallic components of her attire. Gold is applied less abundantly in the picture by Reza ‘Abbasi than in the ‘young woman asleep’ (fol. 11b).

### Fabric as a tool for generating eroticism

The artist of the ‘young woman asleep’ (fol. 11b) is particularly interested in fabric and the aesthetics of ornament (see chapter 4). The variety of motifs, the layering of clothes,

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<sup>144</sup> Canby 1999, 32-34.

<sup>145</sup> Canby 1999, 34.

which favours contrasting fabrics, the stylisation of fabric folds, and the care taken in revealing the lining of the different garments indicates a fascination with the creation of an aesthetically pleasing depiction of clothing and the use of ornament in so doing. The painter is particularly talented in transforming fabric into a pattern as can be seen near the feet of the figure, where the folds of the dress are arranged systematically on each side of a wide central fold. In fact, the part of the dress hanging in front of her showcases a regular alternation of longer and shorter folds of fabric, creating a pattern.

Moreover, the woman's attractiveness seems to be made explicit by the refinement of her clothing and the way in which it frames her body suggestively. Her breasts, which are symmetric, are neatly placed within the opening of her robe and jacket. The layering of clothes underlines this balanced composition because the garments create successive frames, which serve to emphasise this part of her anatomy. It further titillates the observer by implying the gradual removal of the layers obstructing his vision. His eye travels from the outer edges of her décolleté girded in opaque fabric to the transparent shirt, coming to rest in her naked cleavage. The woman's clothing hides most of her figure to the viewer, but this draws even more attention to the areas of her figure, which are exposed to the eye. This is true, for example, of her belly, which is covered in a transparent robe that reveals more than it conceals. Furthermore, the exposed parts of her body all lie on a diagonal axis going from the top of her head to the triangular fold of her jacket. These pointed flaps slyly allude to the location of her crotch.<sup>146</sup>

### The motif of a clothed reclining woman

Sadiqi Beg's painting, 'Bilqis, Queen of Sheba', offers a Safavid example of a clothed reclining female figure (Fig. 38). The paintings share some of the similarities, which have already been discussed in relation to the 'Reclining Nude' by Reza 'Abbasi and will, thus, not be repeated. Instead, the comparative study of the two will focus on the depiction of fabric. One could suggest the manipulation of fabric to introduce eroticism in a woman's depiction as it appears in Sadiqi Beg's picture was a source of inspiration for the Levni workshop.

Both artists use fabric to reveal the shape of the woman's body while coincidentally keeping it hidden. In 'Bilqis, Queen of Sheba', the fabric clings to the woman like a second

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<sup>146</sup> The use of purposefully placed objects to suggest and draw attention to a figure's crotch area has already been pointed out by Natif concerning an illustration of the *Gulistan* executed by Govardhan (Natif 2013, 48).

skin, emphasising her curvaceous frame. The space between her thighs is hinted to by the clearly marked slit in her robe. The thick black line of the outline and the folds closest to her navel remind the viewer of the location of her crotch under the fabric (Fig. 39).

By contrast, the lower part of the robe hangs loosely over the legs of the ‘young woman asleep’ (fol. 11b) hiding their shape completely. However, the artist does unveil her form by contrasting in his paintings the parts of her clothing, which are slack like the skirt of her dress, with those that are not, notably her bodice. The fabric of the sleeves adheres to the upper arms, yet it is wide open over the lower arms.

Moreover, Sadiqi Beg renders the clothing in such a manner that it appears to twist around the woman, further underlining the succession of dips and rises in her figure. This rotating movement is expressed visually by the diagonal folds in the robe of the ‘young woman asleep’ (fol. 11b), but also by the upward direction of her head, which provides a counterweight to the downward course of the aforementioned folds.

Like Sadiqi Beg, the Ottoman artist places folds under the armpits of the woman, in the small of her back, and on the legs. He includes more emphasis around the chest area because of the breasts, which, contrary to Sadiqi Beg, he has depicted. The folds drawing attention to the woman’s lower belly and crotch are absent from the painting of the ‘young woman asleep’ (fol. 11b).

The placement of the folds on the legs also separates the two pictures from one another. Sadiqi Beg showcases the voluptuousness of his model’s thighs by opposing their smooth surface to choppy folds of fabric below the woman’s knee. This distinction is not made in the painting attributed to Levni. Instead, starting below the buttocks, folds consistently streak the expanse of her dress.

In ‘Bilqis, Queen of Sheba’, folds are represented by successive strokes of black pigment, which underline the sensuality of the female body. Considering the similar use of folds made in the ‘young woman asleep’ (fol. 11b), it seems plausible the Levni workshop learned this technique from Safavid examples. Nonetheless, the painting technique employed in the Ottoman painting is slightly different because the black lines of the folds are highlighted with white, which is not the case in Sadiqi Beg’s work.

Fabric patterns are conceived independently in ‘Bilqis, Queen of Sheba’ and the ‘young woman asleep’ (fol. 11b). The dress of ‘Bilqis, Queen of Sheba’ constitutes a painting within the painting, in the sense that the outlines of the garment encompass figures and

animals, which seem to exist in a separate universe from the rest of the depiction. Their comical facial expressions contrast sharply with the unexpressive features of the reclining woman.<sup>147</sup> The artist, thus, introduces the idea of the woman's body representing a canvas for his imagination, but also by extension for that of any observer. There is no visual parallel for this in the painting associated with Levni.

#### Conclusion: A distinct visual and cultural identity

It seems reasonable to presume the Levni workshop adopted the motif of the reclining figure from Safavid paintings such as Reza 'Abbasi and Sadiqi Beg's work. The reproduction of the legs' position — one leg overlapping the other with the leg underneath somewhat bent at the knee — in the painting associated with the Levni workshop is an argument in support of this. The association of the reclining figure with eroticism is taken on by the Levni workshop and adapted to suit their interests. Like 'Abbasi the Ottoman painter emphasises the sensuality of the female body in that position and exploits its visual potency.

Although 'Abbasi and the Ottoman artist each use a different technique to depict transparent fabric, both artists exploit its erotic ambiguity. The manipulation of fabric is the main instrument of eroticism in Sadiqi Beg's painting of a reclining clothed woman. The Levni workshop adopts his approach to the depiction of fabric, which consists in revealing the shape of the woman's body while coincidentally keeping it hidden. A concrete way of accomplishing this is to depict fabric folds with successive strokes of black pigment, so that they underline the sensuality of the woman's curves.

The viewer's voyeurism implied by the subject's ignorance of the attention it attracts is a constituent of both the 'Reclining Nude' and the 'young woman asleep' (fol. 11b). However, the overall impression created by the women is quite different. The figure's pose, the flowing lines, and the loose folds of fabric wrapped around the woman in the 'Reclining Nude' evoke a relaxed sensual atmosphere, which contrasts with her passionate state of mind made explicit by the letter and her tumultuous hair. The ordered composition and use of codified gestures causes the Ottoman depiction of the sleeping figure to appear less lively in comparison.

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<sup>147</sup> Sheila Canby discusses the juxtaposition of unexpressive main figures and amusing secondary figures in Reza 'Abbasi's work in Canby 1999, 169.

Furthermore, it is clear both women belong to different cultures. The dissimilarities in hair style and clothing, the presence of henna on the hands and feet of the 'young woman asleep' (fol. 11b) and the use of an Ottoman idiom for the depiction of the face, all point to the fact the 'young woman asleep' (fol. 11b) belongs to the Ottoman cultural sphere. This coincides with the process of 'Ottomanization' in eighteenth-century erotic Ottoman painting pointed out by Artan and Schick (see section 1.4).<sup>148</sup>

Finally, the mental associations derived from the garden and the visual role it plays in 'Abbasi's composition are reduced to the bare minimum in the 'young woman asleep' (fol. 11b). Instead, Levni and his workshop demonstrate the portrait of the woman and her attire are evocative enough without suggesting the context visually.

### **5.3 The male pendant**

The folio across from the 'young woman asleep' (fol. 11b) also contains a reclining figure, this time a 'young man asleep' (Fig. 40). The figure appears in the same position as the woman except that the young man is holding a bottle of wine in his left hand. Another small difference is the grassy incline the male figure is resting in. The depiction of the sleeping young man exhibits formal and conceptual overlaps with the reclining woman on the opposite page. The erotic nature of these images is a further link between them. How is the motif of the reclining figure, until now only discussed in connection to the depiction of women, used in the context of a male portrait? Is eroticism constructed the same way in both female and male pendants?

#### Two congruent erotic depictions

The 'young man asleep' (fol. 12a) is portrayed in a similar pose to the 'young woman asleep' (fol. 11b) and in a way that underlines his sensuality. His position mirrors perfectly that of the woman: he lies on his left side, his left hand supporting his head, and his left leg tucked under his right and slightly bent. Therefore, the depiction of the young man's legs follows the visual convention noted in the Persian examples and adopted in the painting of the reclining woman in the album. Both the woman and the man have their eyes closed and appear to be sleeping.

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<sup>148</sup> Artan/Schick 2013, 188.

The young man rests his cheek in his left hand causing his head to bend slightly to the left. The contact of the skin of his cheek with that of his hand evokes in the viewer the sensation of skin on skin. In addition, this angle allows the painter to underline the graceful curve of the neck. Displaying the graceful curve of the neck to enhance the figure's voluptuousness was already noted in the discussion about the 'young woman asleep' (fol.11b).

The young man's turban lies on the ground. The young man's open clothes reveal his chest in a similar way to the depiction of the 'young woman asleep' (fol.11b). His jacket is completely unbuttoned, his shirt pushed open exposing his chest and the sash around his hips untied. The outline of his breasts, which are denoted by faint brown lines, appears in the opening of his transparent shirt. Similarly to the portrait of the 'young woman asleep' (fol. 11b), the uncovered parts of his body all lie on a diagonal axis going from the top of his head to the triangular fold of his jacket. This compositional device builds a viewing direction, which guides the eye down the expanse of the young man's chest. Here too, the flaps of his jacket hint at the hidden genitalia. Additional attention is drawn to the crotch area by the ends of the scarf around his hips, which seem to frame the location of his clothed penis. The artist has also played in the painting of the 'young man asleep' (fol. 12a) on the contrast between displayed and hidden skin, piquing the observer's curiosity as to what lies under the young man's clothing, and thus further emphasising his desirability.

An important formal divergence lies in the composition employed to depict the figure. Although both the young woman and the young man are lying on their sides and supporting their heads with a bent arm, the curve of their bodies are different. In the female portrait, only the bust is raised while the legs are stretched out flat on the ground. By contrast, the man's body forms an inverted curve. This gives the impression his frame is sinking into the grassy depression which forms the background. In fact, the landscape seems to cradle him, emphasising the inverted curve of his body. In this way, the landscape plays a similar role in the composition as in the 'Reclining Nude' (see section 5.2).

Moreover, this inverted curve shape replaces the left to right viewing direction created by the composition of the painting of the 'young woman asleep' (fol. 11b). Instead, the eye is directed by the bend of his body, from his head down to his stomach and then upward toward his feet. Thus, the viewing direction implied by the composition appears closer to the one noted in the Persian examples than the one in the 'young woman asleep' (fol. 11b).

Like the 'young woman asleep' (fol. 11b), the young man's position suggests an intimate moment which the viewer's gaze violates. The male figure is sleeping and the peaceful expression of his face reveals his relaxation. The locks of hair, which are delicately placed symmetrically around his face, draw attention to his facial features. The bottle he is clutching, and the cup containing a red liquid close to his side, imply he has been drinking. The figure's pose and the wine hint that he loosened his garments to be more at ease while indulging in his intoxication. Wine itself points to the world of pleasure and revelling in which a sexual encounter would be particularly likely. The young man's open clothing and his drunken state create a sense of sexual availability, which the viewer's voyeuristic gaze does nothing to curtail. Once again, the person in the painting seems unaware of the attention he is receiving, transforming the observer into a voyeur and reducing the subject to an object of desire.

The painting of the young man also coincides with that of the young woman in the sense that it includes a sharp contrast between the unbridled sexual atmosphere it alludes to and the restraint of the pictorial language employed. The young man's clothes have been unbuttoned and pushed apart, which suggests sexual availability and/or drunkenness, yet the clothes themselves are depicted in a very orderly manner. The expanses of pigments representing the different layers are organised according to axial symmetry and in that sense mirror the frame created by the woman's clothing around her breasts. In fact, axial symmetry seems to be a recurrent organisational device in these paintings. In the 'young woman asleep' (fol. 11b), it is employed for the depiction of the décolleté and the dress folds near her feet. In the 'young man asleep' (fol. 12a), his open shirt and jacket, the ends of his scarf and his locks of hair are placed according to axial symmetry. The clearcut outlines and the carefully ordered composition evoke in the viewer a sense of order and restraint, which would a priori contradict the heavy sensuality these figures evoke, yet they constitute characteristics of the pictorial idiom employed by the Levni workshop.

#### A feminised depiction

A notable feature of the young man asleep is that he is feminised by the painter. The most obvious sign of this are the breasts, which appear between the flaps of his jacket. Unlike his female counterpart his clothing does not frame his breasts in a way that would put them on display. Nonetheless, they are drawn clearly enough to be unmistakable. The shape of the



breasts is not visible in the clothing itself; the folds depicted on the ‘young woman asleep’ (fol. 11b) around the breast area are absent. This could either signify that the artist wanted to indicate the male breasts were smaller than those of a woman, or that the young man’s clothing does not play the role of highlighting the breasts’ rotundity as it does in the images of women.

His figure as a whole corresponds to the ideal female body noted in the depictions of women in the album (see section 4.4). The man has a marked waist, wide hips, and consequent thighs. The curving line of his left side suggests his belly even if it is hidden to the eye. As previously mentioned for the depictions of female figures lounging, the reclining position enables the painter to emphasise the figure’s curvaceous forms. The long hair placed in front of the shoulders so as to be clearly visible is another characteristic of depictions of women (the ‘woman with the ermine coat’ (fol. 9b) ). The absence of beard also makes his round face very similar to the one of the ‘young woman asleep’ (fol. 11b).

The ‘young man asleep’ wears clothing that shares a certain common ground with female garb in the album (see the catalogue). A jacket and trousers are recurrent components of female dress. The long transparent shirt only visible on women in this album envelops his legs and peaks out under the jacket. An embroidered shawl is nestled between his thighs just like in some of the depictions of women. In lieu of a belt with golden clasps, his hips are encircled by an ornate scarf, which like the belt in the ‘young woman asleep’ (fol. 11b) is left open. Unlike his female pendant, the shape of his clothed legs is revealed by the transparent fabric of his shirt. The fabric of the jacket and the trousers differs from examples worn by women because they are relatively undecorated in comparison. Both are devoid of the colourful patterns observed on women’s clothing.

The young man’s physical appearance and the presence of wine links him to the figure of the *sāqi* or cup-bearer, who became a topos of poetry in Islamicate cultures with the *mujūn* or libertine poetry of Abu Nuwas (d. c. 815).<sup>149</sup> The poet enounces in verse his more or less carnal admiration for the prepubescent young man serving wine to the tavern’s clients whose effeminate physic enthral the carousers. The poetry discussing the cup-bearer could be extremely explicit, Abu Nuwas going sometimes so far as to divulge the number of thrusts during his latest tryst. The *sāqi*’s effeminacy was denoted by the lack of facial hair and his

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<sup>149</sup> Rowson 2006, 45.

perceived availability for anal-intercourse, in which he would be the receptive partner.<sup>150</sup> More broadly speaking, effeminate young men were preferred as lovers for homoerotic encounters, and this socio-sexual category was sometimes visually highlighted by depicting young male beloveds with breasts.<sup>151</sup>

Looking at poetry from the sixteenth and seventeenth century, Walter G. Andrews and Mehmet Kalpaklı have put forward the thesis that the majority of the love poetry produced in Ottoman circles in this period featured a male beloved.<sup>152</sup> The Turkish language does not denote gender and the androgynous descriptions found in poems create an ambiguity as to the sex of the person admired. According to Andrews and Kalpaklı, it was important to educated male Ottomans to extol the virtues of homoerotic relationships because this type of sociability was for them linked to Persian culture, of which they considered themselves to be the perpetuators. In addition, since the sixteenth century approximately, effeminate musicians and dancers were trained in the Topkapı Palace to provide entertainment for the court.<sup>153</sup> These entertainers were young men aged ten to eighteen, who dressed and behaved in a very similar way to female performers indicating their effeminate character was prized by their audience. Among the dancers' repertoire were dances of a sensual nature.<sup>154</sup> Some of these effeminate entertainers were reported to be the lovers of important people at court, including the Ottoman Sultan Murad IV (r. 1623-1640).<sup>155</sup>

The manuscript of the *Surname* written by Vehbi (A.3593, TSM) with paintings attributed to Levni contains numerous depictions of effeminate dancers. Their attire is distinctive and differs from that of the 'young man asleep' (fol. 12a) (Fig. 41). Thus, it is clear the painted figure is not supposed to represent an effeminate entertainer. However, with his round face, beardless cheeks, breasts, and long locks the young man depicted on folio 12a fits perfectly with the concept of the effeminate beloved admired in Islamicate cultures in the premodern period. Thus, it is almost certain the young man depicted in the album H.2164 is meant to evoke homoerotic sociability, which this image suggests was still viewed positively in Ottoman court circles at the time of its execution in the eighteenth century.

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<sup>150</sup> Olsen 2004, 15. For more details on effeminate young men and homoeroticism in Islamicate cultures refer to Kathryn Babayan, Afsaneh Najmabadi (ed.), *Islamicate Sexualities*, Cambridge Mass. 2008.

<sup>151</sup> Leoni/Natif 2013, 5. Suleman 2013, 21.

<sup>152</sup> Andrews/Kalpaklı 2004, 18, 39, 130.

<sup>153</sup> Klebe 2005, 97.

<sup>154</sup> And 2004, 1002.

<sup>155</sup> Klebe 2005, 102.

### Conclusion: The female and male reclining figures in the H.2164

Comparing the ‘young woman asleep’ (fol. 11b) with a very similar depiction of a young man on the opposite folio has brought several points forward. First and foremost, a number of identical devices were used to create eroticism by the artists responsible for these pictures. The two figures are depicted in a very similar way, with the same parts of their bodies being put on display. A diagonal axis of viewing is employed to draw attention to the naked parts of the figures’ bodies. The crotch area is emphasised by pointed jacket flaps, which remind the viewer of its presence.

Both artists toy with the viewer thanks to the contrast between covered and uncovered flesh. This titillation is increased by placing the observer in the position of a voyeur transgressing propriety by spying on a private moment and sexually objectifying the depicted figure. Both compositions include a sharp contrast between the unbridled sexual atmosphere they allude to and the restraint of the pictorial language employed by Levni and his workshop.

A second point of discussion concerned the visual construction of the young man’s effeminacy. The painter added breasts recognisable as such on the male figure and used the reclining position to emphasise his voluptuous forms much in the same way as in the painting of the ‘young woman asleep’ (fol. 11b). Great care was taken to include attributes often associated with women — such as long hair — and avoid physical marks of masculinity such as abundant facial and body hair. The young man’s physical and sexual overlap with women was also visually denoted by the similarity of his clothing to female garb. All these elements led to the conclusion the male figure on folio 12a should be understood as a *sāqi* and associated with homoerotic sociability.

### **5.4 Conclusion**

Based on the study of the ‘Reclining Nude’, ‘Bilqis, Queen of Sheba’ and the two reclining portraits on folios 11b and 12a, it appears to be the case that the reclining nude as a pose is particularly useful for the depiction of an erotic portrait because it combines a variety of angles, which are especially flattering for a curvy figure. The Levni workshop seem to have understood that when they came into contact with similar Persian paintings and the pose itself is the most obvious adoption by the Levni workshop of Persian iconography.

Other devices to create a sensual atmosphere were adopted by the Ottoman artists. Voyeurism established through a more or less naked sleeping figure was also employed in the

‘young woman asleep’ (fol. 11b) and the ‘young man asleep’ (fol. 12a). It seems likely that the artists in the Levni workshop chose to further develop this element in Persian erotic painting because they understood the lure for the viewer. The Levni workshop possibly learned to exploit the erotic potency of transparent drapery from Reza ‘Abbasi’s work.

In relation to fabric, Sadiqi Beg’s depiction might have inspired the Levni workshop as to the potential of fabric to create eroticism. In fact, both artists use fabric to reveal the shape of the woman’s body while coincidentally concealing it. Folds play a key role in both ‘Bilqis, Queen of Sheba’ and the ‘young woman asleep’ (fol. 11b) since they signal the articulation of the woman’s limbs, and one can wonder if the Levni workshop learned the use of successive black strokes to represent folds which underline the woman’s sensuality from Sadiqi Beg.

Although Persian paintings of reclining figures seem to have played an important role in the creation of an erotic idiom by the Levni workshop, the works in the album H.2164 should not be seen as merely copies of Persian examples in Ottoman garb. The Ottoman artists innovated in the painting of the ‘young woman asleep’ (fol. 11b) by forgoing almost completely the contextualisation of the figure, demonstrating the portrait of the woman and her attire was evocative enough without suggesting the context visually. In the ‘young man asleep’ (fol. 12a) the natural landscape was kept providing an example closer to the Persian paintings, yet the role of the context is not exactly the same as in the ‘Reclining Nude’.

Fabric is a crucial tool for generating eroticism in the paintings in the album H.2164. The clothes provide frames which guide the eye, notably to the breasts on both figures. By cloaking the figures almost completely, even more attention is drawn to the areas, which are exposed. In the female figure, the depiction of the fabric also creates contrast between the tightly fit bodice and the loose fabric of the skirt, thus enhancing the woman’s beauty. Fabric also serves as an ordering element, in that it structures the way the viewer perceives the figure’s body.

Both male and female beloved are depicted in the same way in the album. The young man is effectively feminised, showing no obvious physical signs of his masculinity and his ‘feminine’ attributes — the breasts, the curvaceous figure, and the long hair— being emphasised. The same parts of their bodies are put on display. A diagonal axis of viewing draws attention to the figures’ exposed skin. The crotch area is emphasised by pointed jacket flaps, which remind the viewer of its presence. The tension between the sexually charged

atmosphere and the restraint communicated by the ordered composition characterises both paintings. Axial symmetry is used repeatedly in both paintings, and the arrangement itself favours clarity and balance.

## 6. 0 Conclusion

This Master thesis has focused on the paintings of women contained in the album H. 2164 in the Topkapı Palace Museum in Istanbul. Based on my study of the original paintings in the museum, I suggested a tentative history of the pictures in the album identifying at least four phases. A new hypothesis was put forward as to the dating and production of this album. Indeed, I propose the paintings in the album were not originally conceived for this particular album, but rather were collected in an album as a means of preserving them after Levni's death when the Levni workshop probably ceased its activities.

The material evidence presented in the second chapter, which supports the idea of paintings executed by different artists, was further reinforced in the third chapter with the presentation of formal discrepancies among the paintings. This chapter examined the notion of a Levni workshop in connection to the album H.2164. Challenging İrepoğlu's contention that the portrait of Sultan Ahmed III in the *Kebir Mussaver Silsilename* and the portrait of Sultan Osman II in the album H.2164 were by the same painter opened the way for reconsidering the attribution of the paintings of women in the album to Levni. A comparative analysis of the nineteen depictions of women showed that in specific cases paintings were directly copied by others with a varying technical competence, or disparities in the quality of the painting. Furthermore, two paintings were brought forward, in which the artists did not follow the same conventions as the rest of the painters. This formal evidence led me to offer a revised attribution of the paintings to a Levni workshop rather than to the historical figure of the painter and poet Abdülcelil Çelebi Levni. A review of scholarly literature on the historical figure of Levni and the possible existence of a workshop connected to him showed how little we know on this topic. However, a few new lines of inquiry were suggested such as the potential usefulness of comparing the phenomenon of the spread of single figure paintings in Isfahan at the end of the sixteenth century with the one taking place in Istanbul in the eighteenth century.

With this concept of a workshop in mind, chapter four set out to provide an in-depth analysis and characterisation of the depiction of costumes in the paintings of women. Given the lack of a real study of the pictorial mode employed by these painters, the discussion centred on the conventions used to depict the women's clothing and their bodies underneath. A number of ways in which the painters rendered the fabric's texture were identified, which testify to these artists' interest in the depiction of fabric's materiality. The relationship between body and fabric was also put forward as an typical feature of these images. Fabric was in many instances employed to make the joints, and thus the articulation of the body, visible and tangible. Although the physical existence of body and cloth were emphasised visually in several ways, the resulting image was moulded by pictorial conventions that were repeated throughout the corpus creating a certain uniformity in the depictions of women. The artists seem to have developed an aesthetic of fabric with fabric folds being transformed into patterns in themselves.

The fifth chapter put forward the interpretation that the two paintings portraying sleeping reclining figures — a young woman and on the opposite page a young man — have an erotic dimension that was in part inspired from Persian sixteenth-century paintings of reclining figures. A number of formal similarities found while comparing the 'young woman asleep' (fol. 11b) with Reza'Abbasi's 'Reclining Nude' and Sadiqi Beg's 'Bilqis, Queen of Sheba' seem to indicate the author of the paintings in the album H.2164 might even have directly learned certain techniques from these Persian examples. A possible example of this is the use of successive black strokes to depict folds which highlight the woman's sensuality. At any rate, I would suggest the Ottoman artists who studied Persian examples in the Topkapı Palace Collections realised the erotic potential of the reclining pose. They not only adopted it for their depiction of a female figure, but also for a male figure, who was 'feminised' through the use of an identical pictorial language for both male and female figures. Furthermore, the depiction of the reclining young man evokes the figure of the *sāqi* whose effeminacy and association with homoerotic sociability ties in with the 'feminisation' taking place through the pictorial mode.

## Catalogue of the depictions of women

The paintings do not have titles. The ones used in the thesis and in the catalogue were given by me. I tried as much as possible to include pictures of the whole album pages instead of just the painting, but in a few cases it was not possible because I did not have images of the full page.

All the measurements given in this thesis were made by myself on the original manuscript. However, for conservation reasons I was not allowed to place a measuring tape directly on the pages so the measurements of the paintings and the gold frames surrounding them are approximate. This was not a problem for measuring the pages themselves since I could measure them by placing the tape next to the paper. Therefore, the measurements of the pages are exact.



### Woman with the gold headdress (fol. 4b)

attributed to Levni's workshop

dated first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

15.5 x 24.5 cm (page)

9.5 x 16.7 cm (painting)

opaque watercolour and gilt on beige wove paper

Conservation state: Pigment from the opposite page adhered to the painting in several places.

Inscription: see Appendix I.

Signature under a plant on the lefthand side.

The painting opposite is a depiction of a male figure.

Source: İrepoğlu 1999a, p. 153.



**Fully veiled woman in a blue coat (fol. 5b)**

attributed to Levni's workshop

dated first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

15.5 x 24.5 cm (page)

8 x 16 cm (painting)

opaque watercolour and gilt on beige wove  
(?) paper

Conservation state: The painting shows  
humidity damage and oxidisation of the gold  
pigment.

Inscription: see Appendix I.

Signature under a plant on the lefthand side.

The painting opposite is a depiction of a male  
figure.

Source: Cat., Museum für Angewandte  
Kunst, 2008/2009, p. 95.



**Fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding  
flowers (fol. 7a)**

attributed to Levni's workshop

dated first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

15.5 x 24.5 cm (page)

7 x 15.5 cm (painting)

opaque watercolour and gilt on beige wove  
paper

Conservation state: The paper shows stains  
from ageing and the pigments have flaked off  
in several spots.

Inscription: see Appendix I.

Signature under a plant on the righthand side.

The painting opposite is a depiction of a male  
figure.

Source: Topkapı Palace Museum, Topkapı  
Palace Museum Library, Istanbul.





**Woman holding out her braids (fol. 7b)**

attributed to Levni's workshop  
dated first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

15.5 x 24.5 cm (page)

8.2 x 16.2 cm (painting)

opaque watercolour and gilt on beige wove paper

Conservation state: The paper of the painting is covered in stains from ageing and the pigment layer has flaked off in multiple spots.

Inscription: see Appendix I.

Signature under a plant on the lefthand side.

The painting opposite is a depiction of a male figure.

Source: İrepoğlu 1999a, p. 157.



**Woman smelling a carnation (fol. 8b)**

attributed to Levni's workshop

dated first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

15.5 x 24.5 cm (page)

9.5 x 17 cm (painting)

opaque watercolour and gilt on beige wove

(?) paper

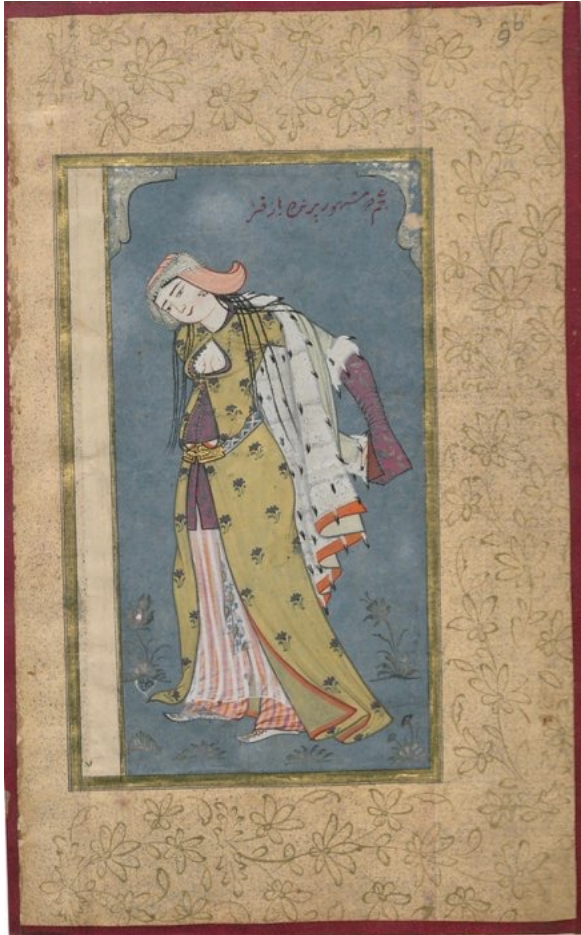
Conservation state: Pigment from the painting opposite has stuck to the page and the gold pigment on the shirt has rubbed off.

Inscription: see Appendix I.

Signature under a plant on the lefthand side.

The painting opposite is a depiction of a male figure.

Source: Topkapı Palace Museum, Topkapı Palace Museum Library, Istanbul.



**Woman with the ermine coat (fol. 9b)**

attributed to Levni's workshop

dated first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

15.5 x 24.5 cm (page)

7.7 x 16 cm (painting)

opaque watercolour and gilt on blue wove paper

Conservation state: The paper is torn off in the upper corner of the painting and the pigments have flaked off in several areas.

Inscription: see Appendix I.

Signature under a plant on the lefthand side.

The painting opposite is a depiction of a male figure.

Source: Topkapı Palace Museum, Topkapı Palace Museum Library, Istanbul.



**Young woman spinning (fol. 11a)**

attributed to Levni's workshop

dated first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

15.5 x 24.5 cm (page)

9 x 16 cm (painting)

opaque watercolour and gilt on blue wove (?) paper

Conservation state: Pigment from the painting opposite has stuck to the page and pigment has also flaked off in some areas.

No inscription.

Signature under a plant on the righthand side.

The painting opposite is a depiction of a male figure.

Source: İrepoğlu 1999a, p. 162.



**Young woman asleep (fol. 11b)**

attributed to Levni's workshop

dated first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

15.5 x 24.5 cm (page)

7.8 x 15 cm (painting)

opaque watercolour and gilt on beige wove paper

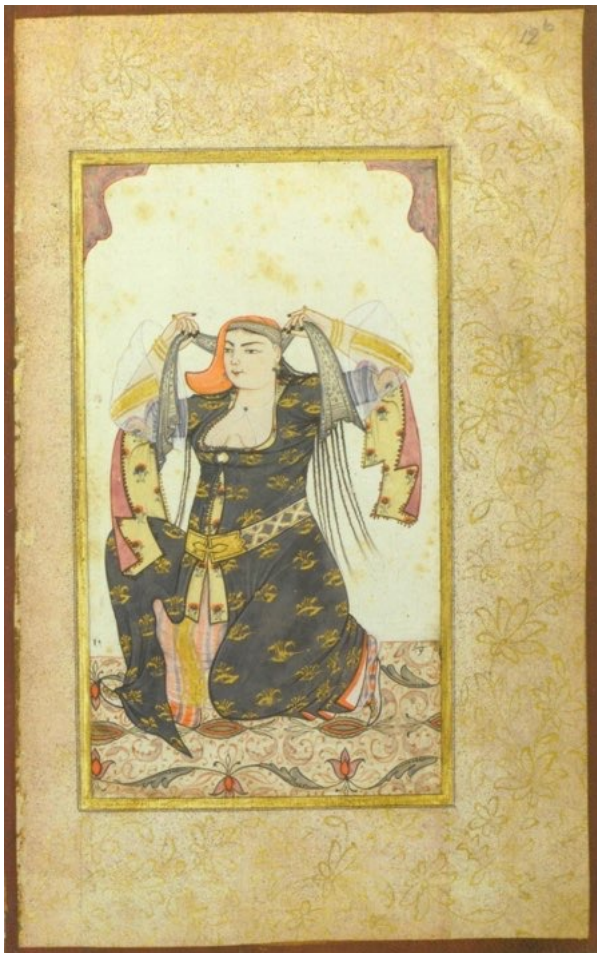
Conservation state: The painting is smudged at the level of her buttocks.

No inscription.

Signature under a plant on the lefthand side.

The painting opposite is a depiction of a male figure.

Source: Topkapı Palace Museum, Topkapı Palace Museum Library, Istanbul.



**Woman tying a scarf (fol. 12b)**

attributed to Levni's workshop

dated first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

15.5 x 24.5 cm (page)

9.5 x 16.8 cm (painting)

opaque watercolour and gilt on beige wove (?) paper

Conservation state: The paper of the painting shows stains from ageing and the pigment has been smudged in several spots.

No inscription.

Signature in the carpet on the righthand side.

The painting opposite is a depiction of a male figure.

Source: Cat., Museum für Angewandte Kunst, 2008/2009, p. 105.



**European woman (fol. 13b)**

attributed to Levni's workshop

dated first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

15.5 x 24.5 cm (page)

10 x 16.8 cm (painting)

opaque watercolour and gilt on beige lined (?) paper

Conservation state: The pigment layer is severely damaged in several areas.

No inscription, but the inscription on folio 14a refers to this painting.

Signature under a plant on the lefthand side.

The painting opposite is a depiction of a male figure.

Source: İrepoğlu 1999a, p. 168.



**Woman wearing a transparent veil (fol. 14b)**

attributed to Levni's workshop

dated first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

15.5 x 24.5 cm (page)

9 x 16.2 cm (painting)

opaque watercolour and gilt on yellow lined paper

Conservation state: The pigment layer is stained in several places and pigment has fallen off.

No inscription.

Signature under a plant on the lefthand side.

The painting opposite is a depiction of a female figure.

Source: İrepoğlu 1999a, p. 169.



**Woman arranging a transparent veil on her head (fol. 15a)**

attributed to Levni's workshop  
dated first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

15.5 x 24.5 cm (page)

9 x 16.2 cm (painting)

opaque watercolour and gilt on yellow lined paper

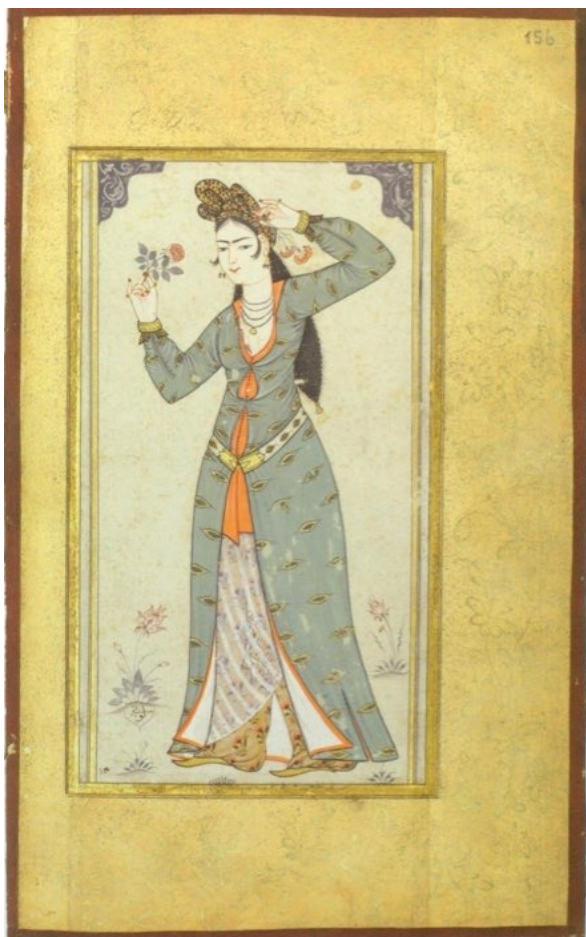
Conservation state: The gold pigment is oxidised in several spots.

No inscription.

Signature under a plant on the righthand side.

The painting opposite is a depiction of a female figure.

Source: Cat., Museum für Angewandte Kunst, 2008/2009, p. 107.



**Woman in a green robe arranging flowers in her hair (fol. 15b)**

attributed to Levni's workshop  
dated first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

15.5 x 24.5 cm (page)

8.8 x 16.2 cm (painting)

opaque watercolour and gilt on beige wove paper

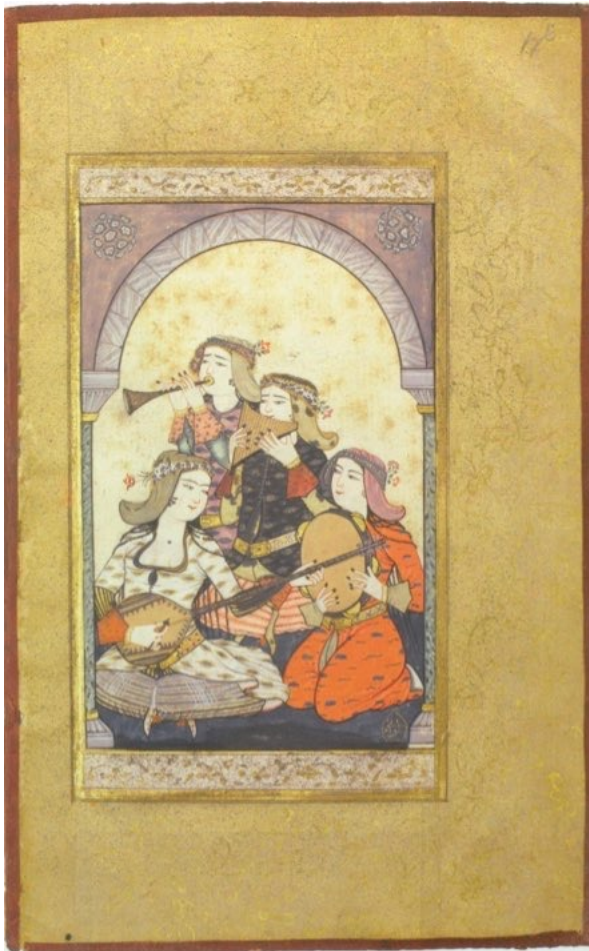
Conservation state: The pigment has flaked off in several places and the red colour of one of the buttons ran onto her breast.

No inscription.

Signature under a plant on the lefthand side.

The painting opposite is a depiction of a male figure.

Source: Cat., Museum für Angewandte Kunst, 2008/2009, p. 109.



**Musicians (fol. 17b)**

attributed to Levni's workshop

dated first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

15.5 x 24.5 cm (page)

10 x 16.8 cm (painting)

opaque watercolour and gilt on beige lined  
(?) paper

Conservation state: The paper of the painting shows ageing stains, and the lower part of the painting just below the women's feet was repainted. The silver pigment created black smudges in several spots.

No inscription.

Signature in the outer right corner.

The painting opposite is a depiction of a female figure.

Source: Cat., Museum für Angewandte Kunst, 2008/2009, p. 111.



**Female dancer (fol. 18a)**

attributed to Levni's workshop

dated first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

15.5 x 24.5 cm (page)

10 x 16.8 cm (painting)

opaque watercolour and gilt on beige wove  
(?) paper

Conservation state: The painting seems to be covered in a thin film of dirt.

No inscription.

Signature under a plant on the righthand side.

The painting opposite is a depiction of a group of female figures.

Source: Cat., Museum für Angewandte Kunst, 2008/2009, p. 113.



**Woman holding a black handkerchief (fol. 19a)**

attributed to Levni's workshop

dated first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

15.5 x 24.5 cm (page)

8.9 x 16.2 cm (painting)

opaque watercolour and gilt on beige lined (?) paper

Conservation state: The paper shows signs of ageing.

The pigment layer is stained black in several spots and pigment has also flaked off.

No inscription.

Signature under a plant on the right hand side.

The painting opposite is a depiction of a male figure.

Source: İrepoğlu 1999a, p. 177.



**Woman smelling a rose (fol. 19b)**

attributed to Levni's workshop

dated first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

15.5 x 24.5 cm (page)

10 x 16.8 cm (painting)

opaque watercolour and gilt on beige wove paper

Conservation state: Pigment has flaked off the paper.

No inscription.

Signature under a plant on the lefthand side.

The painting opposite is a depiction of a male figure.

Source: Topkapı Palace Museum, Topkapı Palace Museum Library, Istanbul.



**Woman in a grey dress putting flowers in her hair (fol. 20b)**

attributed to Levni's workshop

dated first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

15.5 x 24.5 cm (page)

9.5 x 16.8 cm (painting)

opaque watercolour and gilt on beige wove (?) paper

Conservation state: The paper shows stains from ageing, and the pigments have flaked off in several spots.

No inscription.

Signature under a plant on the lefthand side.

The painting opposite is a depiction of a male figure.

Source: İrepoğlu 1999a, p. 178.



**Woman carrying a jug (fol. 21b)**

attributed to Levni's workshop

dated first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

15.5 x 24.5 cm (page)

10 x 16.7 cm (painting)

opaque watercolour and gilt on beige wove paper

Conservation state: The gold sprinkling on the paper of the painting has turned grey.

Pigment from the opposite painting adhered to the painting.

No inscription.

Signature under a plant on the lefthand side.

The painting opposite is a depiction of a male figure.

Source: Topkapı Palace Museum, Topkapı Palace Museum Library, Istanbul.



## **Appendix I. The inscriptions on the depictions of women**

Below can be found translations of the inscriptions on the depictions of women in the album H.2164 attributed to Levni. In some cases, three separate translations by three different scholars were provided.

### Folio 4b

Translation by Gül İrepoğlu: 'The Persian bride is depicted' (İrepoğlu 1999a, p. 153)

Translation by Edith G. Ambros: 'Das ist das Bild der persischen Braut' (personal communication to the author)

### Folio 5b

Translation by Gül İrepoğlu: 'It is the representative depiction of the frivolous woman of Bursa' (İrepoğlu 1999a, p. 154)

Translation by Tülay Artan: 'the hussy of Bursa on her best behavior' (Artan/Schick 2013, p. 163)

Translation by Edith G. Ambros: 'Das ist das Bild der Verkleidung von 'Ārife von Bursa'. The caption could also possibly be interpreted as follows: 'Die Verwandlung des Bildes der 'Ārife von Bursa' (personal communication to the author)

### Folio 7a

Translation by Gül İrepoğlu: 'Menekşe Tûtî' (İrepoğlu 1999a, p. 156)

### Folio 7b

Translation by Gül İrepoğlu: 'Maverdi, the head of the the Persian dance troop' (İrepoğlu 1999a, p. 156)

### Folio 8b

Translation by Gül İrepoğlu: 'Description of Dâder Banu' (İrepoğlu 1999a, p. 158)

### Folio 9b

Translation by Gül İrepoğlu: 'Tumbler Girl, famous in Persia' (İrepoğlu 1999a, p. 160)

## Appendix II. The signatures on the depictions of women



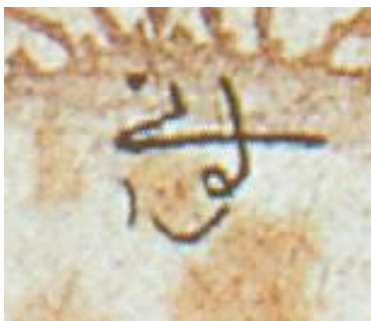
Levni signature fol. 4b, 'woman with the gold headdress'



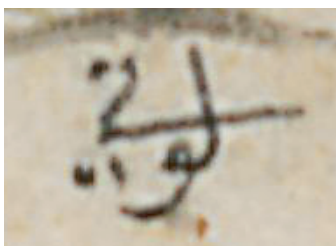
Levni signature fol. 5b, 'fully veiled woman in a blue coat'



Levni signature fol. 7a, 'fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers'



Levni signature fol. 7b, 'woman holding out her braids'



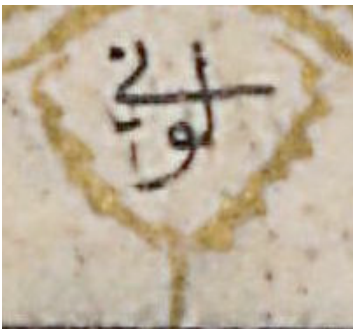
Levni signature fol. 8b, 'woman smelling a carnation'



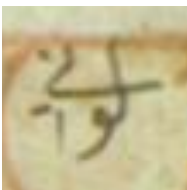
Levni signature fol. 9b, 'woman with the ermine coat'



Levni signature fol. 11a, 'young woman spinning'



Levni signature fol. 11b, 'young woman asleep'



Levni signature fol. 12b, 'woman tying a scarf'



Levni signature fol. 13b, 'European woman'



Levni signature fol. 14b, 'woman wearing a transparent veil'



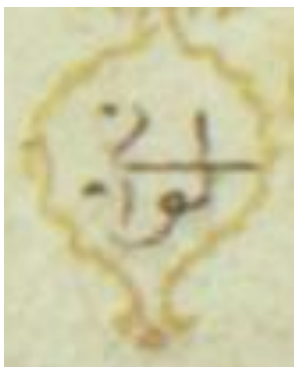
Levni signature fol. 15a, 'woman arranging a transparent veil on her head'



Levni signature fol. 15b, 'woman in a green robe arranging flowers in her hair'



Levni signature fol. 17b, 'musicians'



Levni signature fol. 18a, 'female dancer'



Levni signature fol. 19a, 'woman holding a black handkerchief'



Levni signature fol. 19b, 'woman smelling a rose'



Levni signature fol. 20b, 'woman in a grey dress putting flowers in her hair'



Levni signature fol. 21b, 'woman carrying a jug'

## **Abstract in English**

This Master thesis attempts to shed light on a corpus of little studied paintings: the depictions of women attributed to the eighteenth-century Ottoman painter Abdülcelil Çelebi Levni in the album H.2164 in the Topkapı Palace Museum. For the first time, the album's materiality is documented based on direct observation of the object. The material evidence from the album suggests a different history and chronology from the ones so far circulated in scholarly literature. The formal characteristics of the paintings themselves suggest they were completed by different artists, and it seems probable they were produced by a workshop linked to Levni. Indeed, a number of pictorial conventions reoccur in these works, which give them a certain homogeneity. The interest in the depiction of fabric and costumes is a defining feature of these paintings, and therefore, the study of these aspects enlightens us as to the aesthetics created by the artists. Another interesting component in this album is the painting of a reclining woman asleep, which is accompanied by an image of a sleeping reclining man on the opposite folio. The figures' pose recalls Safavid paintings with lying, naked or clothed, women such as some of the works by Reza 'Abbasi and Sadiqi Beg. Furthermore, the use of a reclining position in combination with other elements results in a 'feminisation' of the male figure, due to the fact he is depicted in the same way as the woman.

## **Abstract in German**

Die Masterarbeit befasst sich mit den wenig erforschten Frauendarstellungen im Album H. 2164 im Topkapı Palast Museum, die dem osmanischen Maler des 18. Jahrhunderts Abdülcélil Çelebi Levni zugeschrieben werden. Zum ersten Mal wird die Materialität des Albums dokumentiert, basierend auf dessen direkter Beobachtung. Die Hinweise aus dem Album deuten auf eine Geschichte und Chronologie, die sich von den gängigen Thesen unterscheidet, hin. Selbst die formalen Merkmale der Malereien suggerieren, dass sie von verschiedenen Malern abgeschlossen wurden, und das wahrscheinlich in einer mit Levni verbundenen Werkstatt. Tatsächlich weisen die Malereien etliche künstlerische Konventionen auf, die einen zusammenhängenden Stil bilden. Das Interesse für die Darstellung der Stoffe und der Kostüme ist eine Besonderheit der Malereien, deshalb erleuchtet deren Untersuchung die von den Künstlern geschaffte Ästhetik. Ein weiteres interessantes Element des Albums ist die Zusammensetzung zweier gegenüberstehenden Malereien: Eine mit einer liegenden, schlafenden Frau, die andere mit einem liegenden, schlafenden Mann. Die Haltung der Figuren erinnert an safavidische Malereien mit liegenden, nackten oder bekleideten Frauen, wie manche Werke von Reza 'Abbasi und Sadiqi Beg. Außerdem führt die Verwendung der liegenden Stellung zusammen mit anderen Aspekten zu einer 'Verweiblichung' des Mannes, da er in der gleichen Art und Weise wie die Frau dargestellt ist.

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## **List of illustrations**

Figs. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 31, 32, 33, 36, 37, 40 : Topkapı Palace Museum, Topkapı Palace Museum Library, Istanbul.

Fig. 2: Gallica, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

Figs. 10, 16, 21, 23, 24, 26, 27, 30, 33 : İrepoğlu 1999a, p. 176, 173, 83, 83, 74, 169, 178, 41, 168 .

Figs. 18, 28, 29, 41: Atıl 1999, p. 112-113, Fig. 67; p. 162, Fig. 42; p. 112, Fig. 67; p. 214, Fig. 16.

Fig. 20: Cat., Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, 1999, p. 259, Fig. 225.

Figs. 26, 27: Cat., Museum für Angewandte Kunst, 2008/2009, p. 95, 109.

Figs. 34, 35: Website of the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington DC.

Figs. 38, 39: Website of the British Museum, London.

## Plates



Fig. 1: Detail folio 9a, Album of Ahmed I (B.408), c. 1610, watercolour and gold on paper, TSM, Istanbul.



Fig. 2: Musavvir Hüseyin (?), Folio 20a, OD 7, c. 1688, watercolour and gold on paper, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.



Fig. 3: Folios 9a-8b, H.2164 (above left).



Fig. 4: Detail upper left corner of the 'woman with the ermine coat' (fol. 9b) (above right).





Fig. 5: Detail upper right corner of folio 9a (left).



Fig. 6: Detail of the patterns the 'woman with the ermine coat' (right).



Fig. 7: Detail of the trousers of the 'woman with the ermine coat' (above left).



Fig. 8: Detail of the robe's lining on the 'woman with the ermine coat' (above right).



Fig. 9: The lower part of the painting on folio 17b.



Fig. 10: Folio 18b, H. 2164 (right).

Fig. 11: Folios 1b-2a, H. 2164 (left).





Fig. 12: Detail upper right corner of the 'woman with the ermine coat' (fol. 9b) (left).



Fig. 13: Detail of the 'woman wearing a transparent veil' (fol. 14b) (right).



Fig. 14: Detail from folio 20a, H.2164 (upper right).



Fig. 16: Folio 16b, H. 2164 (left).



Fig. 15: Detail from folio 2a, H.2164 (lower right).

Fig. 17: Folio 9a, preface and album organised by Kalender, Album of Ahmed I, B.408, c. 1610, watercolour and gold on paper, 47.5 x 33.5 cm, TSM, Istanbul.





Fig. 18: Folios 172b-173a, Levni, *Surname-i Vehbi* (A. 3593), c. 1730, watercolour on paper, 31.9 x 19.3 cm, TSM, Istanbul.



Fig. 19: Detail upper left corner of the folio 6b.



Fig. 20: attr. to Levni, Sultan Ahmed III (fol. 22b), early 18th c., 16.4 x 25 cm (painting), pigment and gold on paper, *Kebir Musavver Silsilename* (A.3109), TSM, Istanbul.



Fig. 21: Detail Figure 20.

Fig. 22: attr. to Levni, Sultan Osman II (fol. 1b), 16.8 x 9.5 cm (painting with gold frame), pigment and gold on paper, H.2164, TSM, Istanbul (right).

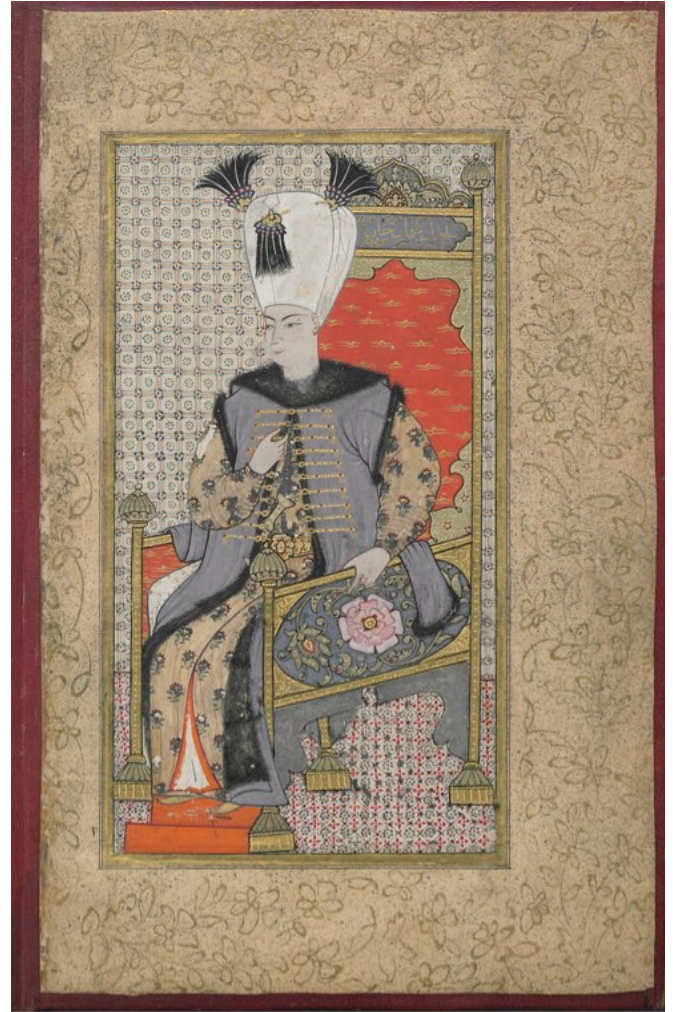


Fig. 23: Detail of the faces of Sultan Ahmed III (left) and of Sultan Osman II (right).

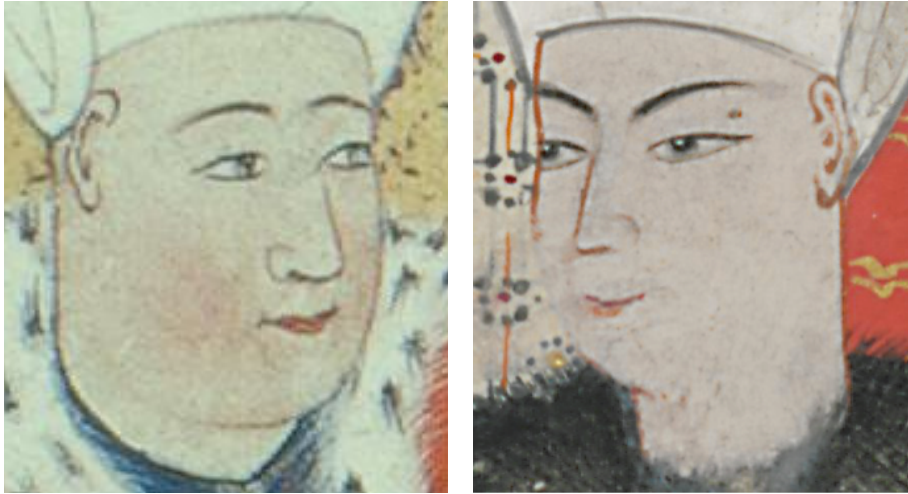


Fig. 24: Detail faces of Sultan Osman II in the *KMS* (left) and of Sultan Osman II in the H. 2164 album (right).



Fig. 25: Detail of the folds on the ‘fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers’ (fol. 7a) (left) and on the ‘fully veiled woman in a blue coat’ (fol. 5b) (right).



Fig. 26: Detail of the folded back lining on the ‘fully veiled woman in a grey coat holding flowers’ (fol. 7a) (left), on the ‘fully veiled woman in a blue coat’ (fol. 5b) (middle), and on the ‘woman wearing a transparent veil’ (fol. 14b) (right).

Fig. 27: Detail of the robe lining on the ‘woman in a green robe arranging flowers in her hair’ (fol. 15b) (left) and on the ‘woman in a grey dress putting flowers in her hair’ (fol. 20b) (right).





Fig. 29: Signature on folio 173a in the *Surname-i Vehbi* (A.3593, TSM).

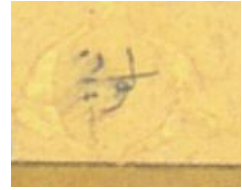


Fig. 30: Signature on the letter dated 1706 (BOA Ibnülemin Müstediyyat 301 T6 Receb 1118).

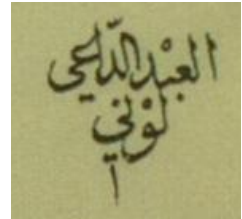


Fig. 28: The female puppet on folio 108a of the *Surname-i Vehbi* (A.3593, TSM).



Fig. 31: Detail of the skirt of the 'woman carrying a jug' (fol. 21b).



Fig. 32: Detail of the veil of the 'woman carrying a jug' (fol. 21b).



Fig. 33: The right hand of the 'European woman' and the right hand of the 'woman smelling a carnation'.



Fig. 34: Reclining Nude, Riza 'Abbasi, 1590s, opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 9,5 x 17,2 cm, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington DC (accession number: F1954.26).



Fig. 35: Detail of Figure 1.



Fig. 36: Detail of folio 11b, H.2164.



Fig. 37: Detail of folio 11b, H.2164.



Fig. 38: Bilqis, Queen of Sheba, Sadiqi Beg, 1590s, opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 10 x 19,5 cm, British Museum, London (accession number: 1948,1211,0.8).



Fig. 39: Detail of Figure 37.

Fig. 40: The 'young man asleep' (fol. 12a), H.2164 (below).







Fig. 41: Folio 37b, Levni, *Surname-i Vehbi* (A. 3593), c. 1730, watercolour on paper, 31.9 x 19.3 cm, TSM, Istanbul.