

On the Procession of the Great Mahomet, Manufacturing Prejudice: Published Fabrications - Alleged Translations of Ottoman Decrees

Büyük Muhammet'in Tören Alayı Üzerine, Önyargının İnşası: Tercüme Adı Altında Sahte Yayınlar: Padişah'ın 1687 ve 1697 Tarihli Fermanı


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Abstract: The subject of this paper is a series of variants on an alleged translation into English first published in the late 17th c. of what was said to be an ordinance-order-command-proclamation-decree, a *firman*, allegedly issued in consequence of Ottoman military defeats, by the Ottoman Sultans Süleyman II. (1687-1691), Mustafa II. (1695-1703), and Ahmed III. (1703-1730), for fasting throughout Ottoman territory on Mondays and Fridays by all Ottoman subjects, and, a procession to be held three times in three consecutive months at Mecca. This procession was to transport the coffin of the Prophet Mohammed over a distance of 20 or 10 or 25 miles, with lamentations and flagellations and a number of human sacrifice per mile, all specified in the alleged *Order of Procession*, to obtain the intercession of the Prophet Muhammed with the Almighty to ensure the future success of Ottoman arms. Published in English as a broadside pamphlet in 1687, and then in a journal article entitled *Advice From Turkey* –News from Turkey in 1697, but which are in fact examples of black propaganda. This series of alleged Ottoman decrees was published in English in variant forms in a variety of publications over the course of nearly two centuries. Doubtless many readers over these two centuries believed the allegations made in these alleged Ottoman decrees to be true, not the malicious fabrications they are, thereby reinforcing the illusion of truth concerning the bigotry and barbarity of “the Other”.

Keywords: Ottoman Decrees • Black Propaganda • the Tomb of the Prophet Mahomet-Muhammed • Turks • Fake News • the Illusion of Truth

Öz: Bu makalenin konusunu Sultan II. Süleyman (1687-1691), II. Mustafa (1695-1703) ve III. Ahmet (1703-1730) zamanında gerçekleşen askeri yenilgiler sonrasında hazırlandığı iddia edilen ve Osmanlı topraklarında pazar-tesi ve cuma günleri bütün tebaanın oruç tutmasını ve üç ay üst üste Mekke’de alay düzenlenmesini emreden ferman oluşturmaktadır. Bu sözde fermanın İngilizce tercümesi 17. yüzyılın sonuna doğru basılmış ve çeşitli türevleri farklı zamanlarda tekrar tekrar çeşitli yazılı kaynaklarda yer almıştır. Bu yayınlara göre fermana peygamberin şefaati ile Allah’tan Osmanlı ordusunun gelecekteki başarısını dilemek üzere üç kere düzenlenmesi gereken tören alayının kuralları da tanımlanmaktadır. Buna göre, peygamberin tabutu farklı yayınlara göre yaklaşık 10, 20 ya da 25 millik (40 km) bir mesafe olan tören güzergâhı boyunca taşınacak, yol boyunca katılanlar kendilerini kurbaçlayarak ağrıtlar yakacak ve her mil başına bir insan kurban edilecektir. İngilizcede ilk kez 1687 yılında bir broşür olarak basılan, daha sonra bir dergide “Advice from Turkey/News from Turkey” başlığı ile yer alan 1697 tarihli bu metin aslında kara propaganda örneği olarak değerlendirilmelidir. Bu sözde Osmanlı Fermanlarının İngiliz dilindeki farklı versiyonları yaklaşık iki yüz yıl boyunca basılan çeşitli yayınlarda yer almıştır. Pek çok İngiliz okuyazar 20. yüzyıla kadar iki yüzyıl boyunca sözde ve sahte Osmanlı fermanlarında yer alan kasti kötücül iddiaları gerçek kabul etmiştir. Bu da “Öteki”nin barbar ve yobaz olduğuna dair gerçeklik illüzyonu yaratılmasını sağlamıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı Fermanları • Kara Propaganda • Peygamberin Türbesi • Türkler • Sahte Haber • Gerçeklik illüzyonu

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Information and its distribution is power and power is expressed through warfare, overt and covert, with the control of information and the circulation of rumours and misinformation/disinformation as facts, the spreading of fake news has been around for millennia, and has served numerous purposes, forming a part of warfare in peacetime and in declared wartime, for consumption by both the home population and the enemy. Its importance recognised by Sun Tzu in his *The Art of War* written in 5th century B.C. China in the Warring States period, *All warfare is based on deception*¹ - *The whole secret lies in confusing the enemy, so that he cannot fathom our real intent*². - *I will force the enemy to take our strength for weakness, and our weakness for strength, and thus will turn his strength into weakness - when able to attack, one must seem unable, when active seem to be inactive, when near make the enemy think you are far away; when far away, seem to him to be near*³; a methodology explained rather less explicitly, by British Prime Minister, Winston Spencer Churchill, more than two millennia later in November 1943, *In war-time, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies*⁴.

In Europe from the late 15th century onwards with the development of printing text on paper with moveable type, the distribution of identical passages of misinformation for religious, financial, political, economic, personal, and other reasons, on a wider scale than ever before in human history was enabled. While published misinformation, frequently in a national language rather than the international language of Latin, also had a much longer life in its printed form than had been the case before, and, on occasion, previously published deliberate misinformation was re-issued, published after months, years, decades, or centuries. The published repetition of pieces of misinformation over time served to create the *illusion of truth*⁵ for readers, and, in this process, it establishes, prior to any actual experience producing judgement on the individual's part, prejudices upon a whole range of matters - built into a fabric that patterns the responses of the individual members of a particular nation or society, and the actions and reactions of a society itself; while prejudice in a variety of forms undoubtedly has been and remains of great importance to rulers and politicians of various types, enabling individuals and groups to be united and swayed through the rhetoric of "othering" and "belonging" particularly for the majority, inevitably always living vicariously, at some considerable remove from contact with the actuality of an event, place or person.

From the so-called *Donation of Constantine*, forged in the VIIIth c. of an alleged Roman IVth c. imperial decree, only recognised as a forgery half a millennia later, publicly in 1433 by Nicholas of

¹ https://www.army.mil/article/66819/the_lost_and_found_art_of_deception

² <https://suntzusaid.com/book/5> Point 3, note 11, *A comment on the T'ang Emperor T'ai Tsung goes to the root of the matter: 'A CHI maneuver may be CHENG, if we make the enemy look upon it as CHENG; then our real attack will be CHI, and vice versa. The whole secret lies in confusing the enemy, so that he cannot fathom our real intent.'* *To put it perhaps a little more clearly: any attack or other operation is CHENG, on which the enemy has had his attention fixed; whereas that is CHI, "which takes him by surprise or comes from an unexpected quarter. If the enemy perceives a movement which is meant to be CHI," it immediately becomes CHENG*".

³ https://www.army.mil/article/66819/the_lost_and_found_art_of_deception

⁴ On the 30th of November 1943, during the Teheran conference. No. 59, *In wartime... truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies. The Second World War vol. 5 (1951)* (<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780191866692.001.0001/q-oro-ed6-00002969>).

⁵ *The illusion of truth*, traditionally described as the increase in the perceived validity of statements when they are repeated (Hasher *et al.* 1977).

Cusa as by Lorenzo Valla in 1440 *De falso credita et ementita Constantini Donatione declamatio*, it has been the case that perhaps the most influential sector in the practice of misinformation has been the production and circulation of forged official documents. Forgeries that claim to be copies of official state documents, published or in draft form, which by virtue of their alleged source can therefore be understood to be authoritative, which provide the reader with “incontrovertible proof” of the intentions, aims and objectives of the “Other”. While the practice of translation, as for early newspapers, was itself an instrument for the manipulation of source texts⁶.

The series of published texts that form the subject of this article claim to record the text in *translation* of invented Ottoman decrees, their issuance attributed to Sultans, Süleymân II., Mustafa II., and Ahmed III., that ordered fasting and public prayers, and, at Mecca, the repetition three times of a penitential procession at the Holy city of Mecca. The name of the author of the original *translation ex nihilo* text of an alleged Ottoman decree of this fabricated type is unrecorded. Today the first surviving example in this series of alleged *translations* of alleged Ottoman decrees to be published in English, was a broadside pamphlet, dated 1686, published in the capital of the Catholic Kingdom of Scotland, Edinburgh, but dating from late 1687. It presumably was the translation into English of the text first published in German and brought to Edinburgh from Hapsburg or Polish territory. Then a version was published in London after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, in 1697, that possibly originated in the text of an article first published in Dutch and/or French in the city of Amsterdam, possibly in a copy of the *Gazette d'Amsterdam*, that was brought to London and which was then translated into English for publication, or, more probably, perhaps, was taken from the one page printed on both sides, Catholic broadside pamphlet of 1687⁷, but edited, appearing in an altered version in the London monthly entitled, *The Present State of Europe: Or, The Historical and Political Monthly Mercury*, reprinted in Edinburgh and Dublin. 17th century London journals in English reporting foreign affairs, *The London Gazette* (from 1665), and, *The Monthly Mercury*, published in the main translations of articles that were sourced from continental Europe.

These *translations* of alleged Ottoman, but fabricated decrees, were allegedly issued by Sultan Süleymân II. raised to the throne 8th November, 1687, following Ottoman defeat under Mehmet IV. at the second Battle of Mohács on the 12 August 1687; then by Sultan Mustafa II., in the context of the major Ottoman defeat at Zenta in 1697, and then allegedly in 1717 by Sultan Ahmet III., during in the course of the Ottoman - Venetian War of 1714 -1718, and in the course of the Ottoman-Hapsburg War of 1716 -1718, allegedly issued after the loss of Belgrade. These so-called *translations* from invented non-existent Official Ottoman documents were republished in English with variations over the course of the following two centuries in England, Ireland, Wales, Scotland, and the United States, from appearances in journals of foreign affairs, to books and newspapers.

⁶ Valdeón 2013, Paragraph 7.

⁷ This text was initially fabricated for a Roman Catholic population, given that it records the Sultan, *slighting the Christian Emperour* (the Roman Catholic Holy Roman Emperor from 1658-1705, Leopold I.). It may have been fabricated in Vienna or Cracow and this German text was probably translated into English at the Jesuit College at Holy Rood House, Edinburgh. It is noteworthy that the decade later version published in Protestant England does not record this slighting of the Roman Catholic Christian Emperor, but instead, records in its place, the Sultan's, *Alliances against the Emperour of the Christians...* In later versions, blame instead is attributed to Muslim corruption and pride, *because the mussulmans have corrupted themselves, and become too confident of their power.*

It is noteworthy that the 1697 published version of the alleged *translation* that appeared in an article in *The Present State of Europe: Or, The Historical and Political Monthly Mercury* in 1697, has recently been re-published, 17th March, 2015, as a Kindle Edition e-book, *Read with Our Free App, Read instantly on your browser with Kindle Cloud Reader*, Copyright © 2014 - Lucas Pereira - All Rights reserved, Cover art by tintin75 at iStock⁸, but at present, at a price of \$0.99, *The Kindle title is not currently available for purchase*, and, is an *Item Under Review/Item sob revisão/Productos en proceso de revisión*⁹.

These invented Ottoman documents in *translation* allege the ordering of fasts, public prayers and at Mecca penitential processions, included the transport of the remains, the coffin, or, the tomb, the shrine, or the sepulchral urn of the Prophet Mohammed in an official procession of more than twenty-one thousand soldiers and officials, in addition to Mecca's inhabitants and the pilgrims in the city, over a distance of 20 miles in the 1697 version, but in subsequent versions reduced to a procession over a distance of ten miles, or, increased in the paraphrased version published in 1770, republished in 1882, of 25 miles. The passing of this procession through the streets and fields of Mecca, and the seven times circling of these remains placed within an open area, like *tawaaf* at the Ka'ba, together with the use of 12 other boxes or coffins of the bones of Muslim "saints" or warrior martyrs, or, of a six-time circling; of hair-shirts, flagellation and mutilation, with the human sacrifice of a Christian slave and a Jew every mile, or the sacrifice of an ass and a Jew every quarter-mile of the procession, or of the sacrifice of an ass and a Jew every fifth of a mile of the procession, - in the alleged Ottoman attempt to ensure a change in military fortune - through fasting, public prayers and these Official Processions at Mecca, and with both human and animal sacrifice, to secure this change, through the intercession of the Prophet Muhammed with Allah, from the defeat of Ottoman arms, into once again the victory of Ottoman arms over Christian forces. In other words, these published *translations* of alleged Ottoman decrees are examples of black propaganda, propaganda intended to create the impression that these forged documents were actually created by those the propaganda intends through publication to discredit in the mind of the reader. Clearly displayed to the reader of the pamphlet, journals, newspapers and volumes that carried the English *translations* of the texts of these alleged Ottoman decrees published in the period from the late 17th into the late 19th century, was the evident and astounding extent of Ottoman officially sanctioned, as ordered by the reigning sultan, *Mahometan Bigotry* and barbarity, including the alleged repetition of human sacrifice to secure the intercession of the Prophet with the Almighty. In 1717 it was noted that, *The devotions of the Turks*

⁸ <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Turkish-fast-Monthly-Mercury-December-ebook/dp/B00UVM7REO?asin=B00UVM7REO&revisionId=&format=2&depth=1>

⁹ <https://www.amazon.com/Turkish-fast-Monthly-Mercury-December-ebook/dp/B00UVM7REO>
<https://www.amazon.co.jp/-/en/ebook/dp/B00UVM7REO>
<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Turkish-fast-Monthly-Mercury-December-ebook/dp/B00UVM7REO>
<https://www.amazon.in/Turkish-fast-Monthly-Mercury-December-ebook/dp/B00UVM7REO>
<https://www.amazon.co.jp/-/en/ebook/dp/B00UVM7REO>
<https://www.amazon.com.br/Turkish-Monthly-Mercury-December-English-ebook/dp/B00UVM7REO>
<https://www.amazon.com.mx/Turkish-Monthly-Mercury-December-English-ebook/dp/B00UVM7REO>
 All accessed 20/5/2022.

have been so very extraordinary, that we think it worthwhile to transcribe the Sultan's Order for the Performance of them¹⁰.

The Texts of Some Published Examples¹¹

It seems the earliest publication in English¹² to carry the text of this alleged Ottoman firman-decree was a broadside pamphlet from Holy-Rood-House, Edinburgh, Kingdom of Scotland, dated 1686, but which was certainly published late in 1687, as the sultan is named as Solyman/Süleymân II., who only came to the throne on the 8th of November 1687 (Figs. 1 and 2).¹³ It reads:

Relation of the Procession, Fasting and Penance, enjoyn'd by MAHOMET-SOLYMAN EMPEROUROF THE TURKS, From the rising to the setting of the Sun, Lord of Lords, and rightful Successor of the Race of the Great Prophet Mahomet, to be observed through the whole Ottoman Empire. - Translated out of a Turkish Copy - THE Turkish Emperour firmly believing the Hand of God to be stretched out over all His Kingdoms, and considering that the Almighty has given such prosperous Successes to his sworn Enemies the Christians, in the Events of this present Warr against him, and so Bless'd their Arms both by Sea and Land, that his Armies have not only been several times Beat and Routed, but whole Kingdoms are snatch'd from under his Power and Dominion, and the chief cause of all this to have been his little regard of the Divine assistance, his relying too much upon his own Force and Strength, and his slighting the Christian Emperour. To appease the Divine Wrath, and that of His Great Prophet Mahomet, He ordains throughout all his Empire, that the first three Fridays after the New Moon, in the 5, 6, and 7, all Persons shall be oblig'd to keep a strict and austere Fast, without Eating or Drinking any manner of thing till the Stars appear. On the same Days of Fasting, the Muphti (sic.), with the Officers of the Church, Clothed with Sack-Cloth only, Girded with Ropes, their Eyes cast down towards the Ground, and Beards hanging carelesly, are to walk through the Streets and Mercat (market) places till they come to the Mosque with howlings, and crying Tare dam dam muschay Allah Allah. But at Mecca the Coffin of the Great Prophet Mahomet is to be carried publickly, being laid upon a Hand-Barrow, or Bier for the Dead, made of Silver, but the Silver is to be smoak'd over, and made to appear Rusty. They are to carry 25 Boxes of the same sort of Silver, in which are to be put the Bones of such Officers and Spahies, as out of Love to

¹⁰ *The Historical Register* I, 5.

¹¹ The spelling, capitalisation, and punctuation, but not the letter forms employed, are retained.

¹² The text of this alleged Ottoman document was published in continental Europe: Anno 1686, npn. a copy of which it may have been translated in Edinburgh into English; Bergmann 1687, 685-687; Happelio & Happel 1687, 255-257; Collective 1688, 75-77; for the French unpublished copy of 1687 with some differences in the text, see: Ernst 2018, No. 331^r.

¹³ <https://digital.nls.uk/broadsides-from-the-crawford-collection/archive/188038687#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=1&xywh=-2206%2C-279%2C7518%2C5573>; accessed 20/5/2022. This is the complete text. Some words have missing letters in the transcription of another copy, at, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo2/B05120.0001.001>; accessed 20/5/2022

their Religion have lost their Lives, and who are to be accounted amongst the Martyrs, to the end that the consideration of those precious Hero's may move the Great Mahomet to throw himself in the Arms of an Offended angry God. Every Friday thereafter the Coffin of the Great Prophet is to be brought out to the open Field, The Pilgrims, Citizens, Merchants of Mecca, are to make the Procession seven times round the said Coffin, bewail and moan with grievous Lamentations, and Mournful Songs, without any Airy way of singing, but with sighs, Groans and Howlings: No Musical Instrument is to be heard, and on the last Friday they are to have a Procession which is to last four Hours, in the following Order.

1. They are to carry a Bier, followed by 600 Persons, Bare-footed, Clothed like Penitents, Girded about with Ropes, bearing all sorts of broken Weapons, as Arque buses, Splinter'd Javelins, strained Cross-bows, Targets, all in pieces, and the like¹⁴. 2. Three Thousand Musulmen in white Cloths, besprinkled with Blood and Ashes, with dreadful Howlings and Lamentable Cryes are to beat their Limbs and Bodies. 3. Next 6000 Turks with the uppermost part of their Bodies Naked, which they are to lash with Thorns till the Blood run down to the Ground. 4. In the midst, the Coffin of the Great Prophet Mahomet is to be carried by thirty Saphi's, with their Heads bare, and Beards Raz'd on both sides 300 Basha's are to March with drawn Symiters, and if any of the Company shall presume to cast a rash look upon the Coffin, he is immediatly cut in pieces and cast to the Dogs. 5. Every quarter of an Hour, that the Procession lasts a Christian Slave and a Jew are to be slain and left wallowing in their Blood. 6. Next follow 30 Basha's, Governours of different Provinces, in Cloths of a mean Colour without Purple¹⁵ or any other Colour, ty'd with a Black Crape, spotted with Blood, with one Hand upon their Backs they trail the Tail of a Camel upon the Ground, in place of Schutcheon. 7. Two Thousand Janisaries March in their Arms, with a Baton which they trail behind them, and with a confus'd noise they howl Allah pery musfat ay. 8. The Vizier Marches likewise mounted on a Lame Ass, with Reed teinted with Blood with which he Beats his Head, and mourns for the evil times, saying, Offat milay zus fay. 9. They carry a great Coffe, full of Turkish Money, which they throw to the Poor, but if any gather an Asper before the Procession be ended, he is to be empal'd. The confluence of People and Pilgrims closes the Procession. In the midst of all this Company are 100 Turkish

¹⁴ This resembles accounts of the Shii'ite Mourning of Muharram/Mohurrum processions, Francklin 1790, 252, *On the 10th day, the coffins of those slain in the battle are brought forth, stained with blood, on which scymitars and turbans, adorned with herons feathers are laid...*

¹⁵ *Purple*, employed to mean, to outwardly impress, for effect-show, display, as recorded by Lucian (of Samosata), *for, as a soldier is contemptible without arms, a garment without purple, or a horse without his trappings, even so does a great man without a parasite seem of no rank or estimation.* As later, Taylor 1676, 263 *...and the wife eats without purple;* As later by the Vicar of Weaverham, Hunter 1744, 336, *...his flesh not pampered to wantonness or enjoyment; grace grew in this miserable soil: virtue shines without purple or fine linen.*

Hermites, who with Razors cut the Flesh of their Faces, Arms, Breasts and Feet, in so much that the Ground is bedewed with their Blood¹⁶; They lift up their Right-Hand to Heaven, crying, Allah buffay allah mirray vestrinmay, Which is an Oath of Revenge against the Christians, and by this means they intend to appease the Wrath of God, and their Prophet Mahomet. Printed at Holy-Rood-House, and are to be Sold by James Mein on the North-side of the Street at the Cross, 1686.

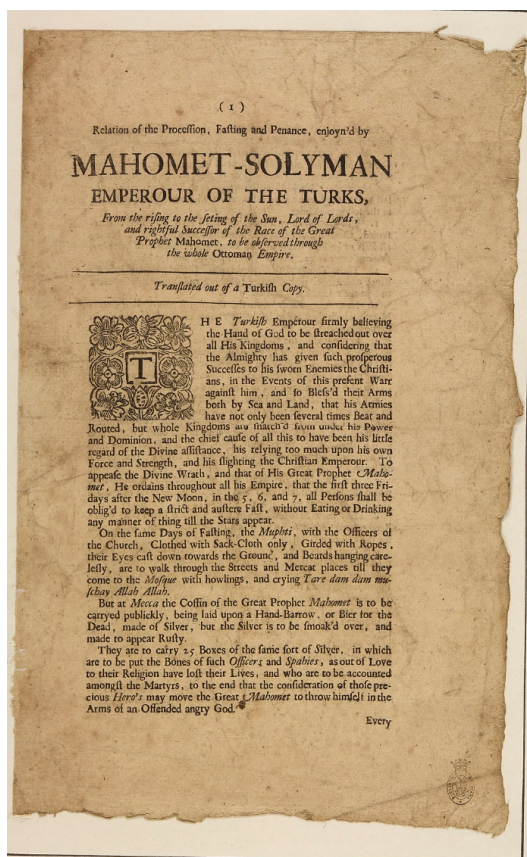


Fig. 1.

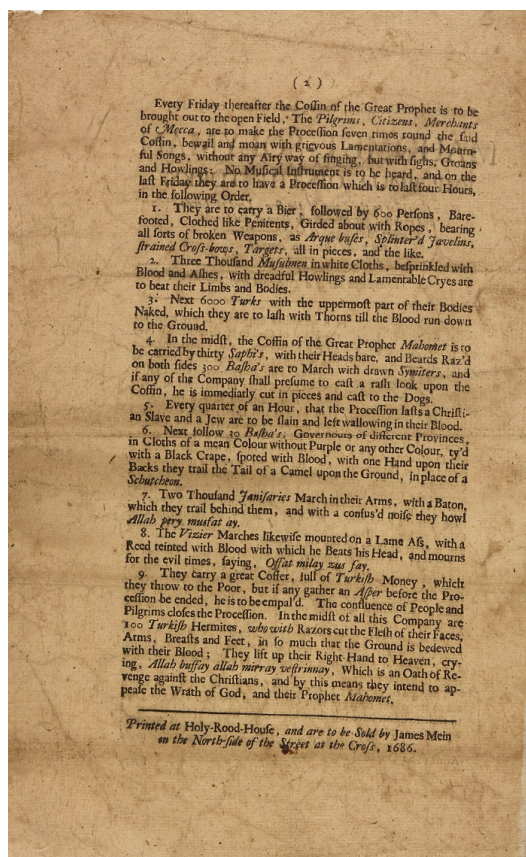


Fig. 2.

Figs. 1 and 2, Single-sheet Broadside pamphlet entitled: Relation of the Procession, Fasting and Penance, enjoy'n'd by MAHOMET-SOLYMAN EMPEROUR OF THE TURKS,... Translated out of a Turkish Copy. Published, Holy-Rood-House, Edinburgh, dated 1686, but certainly published after the 2 Muharrem 1099/8th of November 1687 when Sultan Solyman-Suleiman II. acceded to the throne¹⁷.

¹⁶ This likewise resembles accounts of the Shi'ite Mourning of Muharram processions, Thévenot 1689, 109, at Schiras-Shiraz in 1665, ...and some who are more sincere, cut and mangle their Bodies in several places; nay, and in the Head too, so that the blood comes running down on all sides: in all these different manners, they run about the streets in companies,... Francklin 1790, 251, During these various processions much injury is often sustained, as the Persians are all frantic even to enthusiasm... Many there are who inflict voluntary wounds on themselves...

¹⁷ Source: National Library of Scotland-Leabharlann Nàiseanta na h-Alba, <https://digital.nls.uk/188038687>, shelfmark, CRAWFORD.MB.412; Fig. 1: <https://deriv.nls.uk/dcn30/1880/3867/188038676.30.jpg>; Fig. 2: <https://der>

This was followed ten years later by the article entitled: 'Advice From Turkey and Germany,' 475-477, *The Present State of Europe for the Month of December, 1697*, *The Present State of Europe: Or, The Historical and Political Monthly Mercury, Giving an Account of all the Publick and Private Occurrences, Civil, Ecclesiastical and Military, that are most considerable in every Court,...*¹⁸, Vol. 8., No. 12, For Henry Rhodes, John Harris, London, 1697, 475-476:

The 29th of the last Month N.S.¹⁹ the new Aga of the Janizaries made his Public Entry into Adrianople; but he had not above Ten or Twelve Captains of the Janizaries to attend him, all the rest who were at the Battel of Zenta²⁰ being kill'd, or since dead of their Wounds. The next Day the Grand Signior arriv'd at the same City with his new prime Visir; but he rode directly to his Seraglio without entering into the City, not desiring they should make him any publick Reception, or that the Sultanness his Mother should meet him, as she intended, two Miles out of the City. The ill success of the last Campaign has cast a deep Consternation into all the Provinces of his Empire which have heard the ill Tydings, inso-much that in some Places the People begin to murmur against the Grand Signior and his Government. For which Reason the Sultan has caus'd a General Fast, and Publick Prayers to be said throughout all his Dominions Alamede de Turqueske²¹, which are to be accompany'd with Processions to Mecca, in hopes to appease the Anger of Heaven. To which purpose he has set forth the following Ordinance, wherein are many things to be observ'd relating to Mahometan Bigotry.

The Grand Signor of the Turks (Sultan Mustafa II. r. 1695-1703) acknowledging that the Hand of God lies heavy upon his Dominions and his Subjects, for that they have so often fought and been vanquish'd as well by sea as by Land by their Enemies the Christians who have also in a little time regain'd from 'em a large Extent of their country, attributes these frequent Misfortunes to the too great Confidence he has had in his Strength and his Alliances against the Emperor of the Christians. For which Reason he Ordains and Commands, by these Presents, for the attoning the Wrath of God, and his great Prophet Mahomet, That every Friday of the New Moon, as also upon the 5th. 6th. and 7th. of the Month, that all Persons fast all the Day, without eating or drinking, till the Stars appear in the Sky. That the Mufti and his Clergy upon those Days be cloath'd with Sackcloth, girt with Cords, with long beards; and that they go in that posture, first through the Streets, and then to the Churches, with their Eyes fix'd upon the Earth, lamenting and crying, Ja, Aagib, Allah, allah, that is to say, O

iv.nls.uk/dcn30/1880/3868/188038689.30.jpg

¹⁸ It began publication in July 1690 in London and was reprinted in Edinburgh and Dublin and it was *fundamentally a translation from Dutch originals* (Valdeón 2013, paragraph 8).

¹⁹ New Style, in the Gregorian, rather than Julian Calendar, when the new year starts on January 1st rather than March 25th.

²⁰ 11 September, 1697, near Zenta/Senta, Serbia, with the Ottoman main army badly defeated by Prince Eugene of Savoy's Imperial forces, resulting in the Treaty of Karlowitz, 1699.

²¹ Meaning in the fashion of the Muslim Turks.

Merciful God, O God. That they also take the Coffin of the Grand Prophet out of his Sepulchre in Mecca. That after they have plac'd it in a Chair, they also take Twenty five more Coffins full of the Bodies of those who were formerly slain fighting in Defence of the Musulman Religion; which done, they shall perfume 'em with Incense, to the end that by that means the great Prophet may be mov'd to employ his Intercessions to appease the Wrath of the Great God. That after all this has been done upon the above-mention'd Days, and that they shall have plac'd the Prophet's Coffin in the open Field, all Pilgrims and Inhabitants, as also all the Foreigners of all the Caravans, may walk seven times about the Coffin weeping and bewailing themselves, and that the last Day of the Fast they make a solemn Procession, Twenty Miles an end, in the following manner.

1. Six thousand Turks shall lead the way cloth'd in Sackcloth, girt with Cords, bare-foot, and without Turbans, carrying a box full of dead Mens Bones, with broken Scimitars, small rusty Fire-arms, etc. 2. Three thousand other Mussulmen all bloody, cover'd with Ashes, shall follow them bewailing themselves, and rearing (sic. rending) their Cloaths. 3. Six thousand Persons naked from the waist upward, shall follow them, whipping their Backs and Breasts with Thorns till they fetch Blood, which shall drop to the Ground, nor shall they be suffer'd to rub or wipe themselves. 4. After them shall appear Three thousand Spahi's bare-headed, with long Beards, carrying the Prophet's coffin, who shall be surrounded with Three hundred Basha's with naked Swords, and if any one shall offer to take off his Eyes from looking steadfastly upon the Coffin, the Basha's shall presently kill him and cast his Body to the Dogs. 5. At the end of every Mile they shall put to the sword a Christian Slave and a Jew, and they shall let them die in their own Blood. 6. Thirty Basha's, Governours of Provinces, shall follow them without Purple, and with Turbans of plain black Cloth²², dy'd before-hand in the Blood of a Jew and an Ass; and every one of these Basha's shall have one Hand bound behind him, and instead of a Sword shall wear a long Camel's Tail trailing upon the Ground. 7. Three thousand Janizaries shall follow them without Arms, but with Battons, which they shall trail after 'em, and they shall cry out, Allah bize Ramah eile, Lord be merciful unto me. 8. Next to them shall come a Chest full of Money, which shall be scatter'd upon the Road. But the Poor shall be forbid, upon pain of being empal'd, to touch the Money before the end of the Procession. 9. Lastly, The Concourse of People shall close the Procession. In the midst of the Crowd there shall walk a Hundred Santons, or otherwise Turkish Hermites, who shall cut their Arms, Breasts, and Faces, with Knives, till the Blood drop upon the Ground and at the end of every Mile they shall lift up their Hands to Heaven, and cry, Vengeance against the Christians, and say, Allah

²² The wearing of black turbans likewise can also be associated with published accounts of the Shii'ite Mourning of Muharram processions, Thévenot 1689, 108-109, *during these ten days, all the Persians are Sad and Melancholick, many being clad in black, others wearing only a black Girdle, and others a black Turban.*

*Jekfa, Ja Allah errhaman, 'Tis enough, Lord, Most merciful God*²³.

It is to be noted that the text of this article, like most of the other articles in the journal, was possibly a translation of an article that had already been published on continental Europe, translated by a bilingual Huguenot in London, from Dutch into English²⁴, although there is the possibility it derived from the Edinburgh dated 1686 version, with editing. The English reader was reminded of this Ottoman state-wide fast and solemn Procession at Mecca a month later, in the January 1698 issue of the same monthly journal *The Present State of Europe, or, The Historical and Political Mercury*, in an article having the same title, 'Advice From Turkey and Germany,'

*The Turks are known to be a very Superstitious People in their way, and so 'tis a sign; for certainly the Ministers of the Divan place a strong Confidence in the Merits of their late Ordain'd Fast and Inhumane Procession, or else they would never take those Methods they do, to ruine the Ottoman Empire; unless they think it has stood long enough, and therefore do it on purpose*²⁵.

'Advices from Rome and Italy,' *The Present State of Europe, or, The Historical and Political Mercury*, Vol. XXVII., for the Month of February, 1716, Henry Rhodes, London, 1716, 52-53,

They continue at Rome, and other parts of Italy, the extraordinary Prayers appointed by the Pope against the Turks, who on the other hand endeavour to engage Heaven on their side, and have caused unusual Processions and Devotions to be perform'd; of which, Letters from Turkey have brought the following Account.

The Great Sultan (from 1703-1730 Sultan Ahmet III. reigned) having Cause to fear, That God will pour down his Wrath to chastise his Empire, and all his Subjects, has, in order to prevent his falling, with his People, into the Hands of Christians, his Enemies, desired with Fervency, that the Wrath of God may be pacify'd by Means of the Procession of the Great Mahomet. Therefore he has most severely commanded that all and every one of them, fast twice a Week, viz. Mondays and Fridays, in a most strict manner, abstaining from all sorts of Food and Liquors till Night, and on those Days the Great Priest Mufri (sic.), with all his Ecclesiastick Attendants, shall appear immediately cloath'd in Hair-Cloth in the Streets and High-ways, their Eyes cast downwards, and shall pronounce with a loud and distinct Voice to all the Inhabitants of Mecca these Words, O God assist thy People. The Sultan commands besides, That the Tomb or Coffin of Mahomet be carried into a Publick Place and laid upon Four Golden Columns, surrounded by Twelve other Coffins full of Bones of their Saints, that by these Means the Great Mahomet may not fail, on his part, to pacify the Anger of God. The Great Sultan commands likewise, That all the Strangers who shall be in

²³ <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/evans/n29531.0001.001/2?page=root;size=100;view=text> Also archived at, THE Turkish FAST, Out of the Monthly Murcury (sic.), for December, 1697, <https://ota.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/repository/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.12024/N00751/N00751.html?sequence=5&isAllowed=y> ; This version is also in Russian of 1697, see Šamin & Watson 2014, 182-186.

²⁴ Valdeón 2013, para 8.

²⁵ *The Present State of Europe* IX, 21.

Mecca, together with all the Inhabitants of that Town, shall seven times walk in Procession round that Tomb in the open Country, crying, howling and groaning, and the Turkish Priests on this Occasion to speak to the People, and represent unto them the great Misfortunes the Ottoman Port has suffer'd for some Years past, and that if they do not repent, they will experience, by their Ruin, the Wrath of God. The Order of Procession.

First, 600 Men bare-footed cover'd with Sackcloth, carrying in their Hands Weapons, made use of in the last war, some broke and others entire, etc. 2. Next to them, 3000 Mufcimans, who are a sort of Monks, having sharp cutting Knives, with which they are to make Incisions in their Bodies, crying out, fighting, and striking themselves over their Breasts. 3. The 6000 Men with Whips or Scourges, lashing themselves over their shoulders. 4. The Tomb or Coffin of Mahomet carry'd by 30 Ispahiai, or Turkis Priests, having their Beards shav'd and bare-headed. That Tomb is to be surrounded and guarded by 300 Bashaws their Scymeters drawn, who have Orders to kill on the Spot such who shall presume out of Curiosity to look upon that Tomb, and, and the Bodies of such who shall be kill'd upon that account, are to be thrown to Dogs. 5. Fifty Turkish Princes, without any Ornament of Purple, bare-headed, and besmear'd with Christian Blood, their Left-hand ty'd, and dragging with their Right a Horse's Tail. 6. 3000 Janisaries, who instead of their Arms, will drag after them their Bucklers, crying out in a lamentable Tone, Halla, Halla, Hu. 7. One of the chief Viziers is to close the Procession riding upon an Ass bare-headed, in Token of Humiliation, holding in his Left-hand a Turkish Cap dip't in Christian Blood, and in the Right a Cane, wherewith he is to strike his Head, and is to deplore the future Calamity in these Words: O Great Prophet, assist us for obtaining the Grace of God that the Christians, our Enemies, may remain confounded. 8. After this Vizier is to come a Chest full of Aspers, or Silver Pieces of Money, to be thrown amongst the People by a Turk appointed for that purpose; but none is to be so audacious as to rise from the Ground till the Procession is gone by, upon pain of Death. 9. Last of all comes on an incredible multitude of Turks, amongst whom are the Pomites²⁶, who are to scratch and tear their Faces, and at every Hundred Paces they are to lift up their Eyes to Heaven, and cry out, Halla, Halla, Bacha, O God, O God, assist us that we may not perish.

'The War between the Turks and the Venetians' 1-8, *The Historical Register, Containing an Impartial Relation of All Transactions Foreign and Domestick*, Vol. I., For the Year 1716, Sun-Fire Office, London, 1717, 5-7.

The Turks having thus conquer'd the Morea, and taken besides Suda and Spina-Longua, two Fortresses on the Coast of Candia, withdrew into Winter-Quarters, as did likewise the Venetians, and no Hostilities, worth taking Notice of, have since

²⁶ Presumably the word, *Pomites* was the result of a typesetting error. The word should read, *Hermites*, employed in earlier versions of the text of clause 9 of the alleged decree.

happened between them. Both Sides are making vast Preparations for the next Campaign; for the Success of which, they have been sending up their Vows to Heaven. The devotions of the Turks have been so very extraordinary, that we think it worthwhile to transcribe the Sultan's Order for the Performance of them.

The Grand Sultan having Cause to fear that God will let loose the Scourge of his Wrath to chastise his Empire and all his Subjects, and being desirous to prevent his own and his People's falling into the Hands of the Christians, his Enemies, he most fervently prays, that the Wrath of the Almighty may be appeas'd by means of the Procession of his great Prophet Mahomet: To this End, he strictly commands all his Subjects whatsoever, to observe a most rigorous Fast two Days in the Week, that is to say, every Monday and Friday, by abstaining from all Sorts of Nourishment, both of Meat and Drink, 'till the Evening. And on those two Days, the Mufti, or Chief Priest, with his Clergy assisting him, all of them clad in Hair-Cloth, shall go in Procession thro' the Streets of Mecca, with their Eyes fix'd to the Ground, and shall cry aloud, that the Inhabitants may hear them, the following words, O God, assist thy People. The Sultan farther commands, That the Shrine of Mahomet be carry'd to a publick Place on four Columns of Gold, in the Midst of twelve other Shrines, fill'd with the Bones of Saints, that, by Means of their Presence, the Great Mahomet may appease the Wrath of God. Also it is the Sultan's Command, That all Strangers who shall happen to be at Mecca, as likewise all the Inhabitants of the City, march seven Times round the Shrine, fighting, crying, and howling; and the Priests are, upon this Occasion, to speak to the People, to lay before them the great Evils that have befallen the Ottoman Port for some Years past; and to declare to them, That unless they repent, they too will feel the Wrath of God in their Destruction. During these Days of Fasting, Humiliation, and Procession, Music and all other Diversions are strictly prohibited. Order to be observ'd in the Procession.

1. Six hundred Men, bare-foot and cloath'd in each of them bearing in his Hand some of the Arms that were us'd in the last War, some whole, others broken. 2. After them three thousand Mustlemans, or Mahometan Monks, carrying in their Hands sharp Knives, with which they shall gash their Bodies; and smiting their Breasts, shall pour out Groans and Lamentations. 3. Then six thousand Men with Whips and Rods, with which they shall scourge their naked Shoulders. 4. The Shrine of Mahomet, carry'd by thirty Ispahiais, or Turkish Priests, with their Heads bare, and their Beards shav'd This Shrine to be surrounded and guarded by three hundred Basha's, with their Sabres in their Hands, who are order'd to kill all Persons on the Spot, who shall dare, thro' Curiosity, to look upon the Shrine; and the Bodies of those so slain, shall be thrown to the Dogs. 5. Fifty Turkish Princes, divested of their Purple Attire, bare-headed, and bath'd in Christian Blood; each having his left Hand bound, and dragging in his right a Horse's Tail. 6. Three thousand Janisaries, or Foot-Soldiers, who, instead of Arms, shall drag behind them, on the Ground, their Shields and Bucklers; and shall cry with a lamentable Voice, Halla, Halla, Hu. 7. A principal Vizier shall

close the Procession, mounted on an Ass bare-headed, in Token of Humiliation, he shall bear in his left-Hand a Turban dipp'd in Christian Blood, and in his Right a Cane, with which he shall strike his Head, and shall deplore at the same Time the future Calamities of the War, in these Words: O Great Prophet, assist us for obtaining the Grace of our God, to the End of our Enemies (the Christians) may be put to confusion. 8. Then shall be drawn a Chest full of Silver Aspers, (A small piece of Money of about the Value of two Pence English) which shall be thrown amongst the People by a Turk appointed for that purpose: But no one shall dare to rise from his Knees before the Procession be ended, upon pain of Death. 9. Lastly, An incredible Number of Turks, and among them their Pomites²⁷, a certain Order of Priests, who shall scratch and tear their Cheeks, and at every hundred Steps, lifting up their Hands to Heaven, shall cry with a loud Voice, Halla, Halla, Bacha, O God, O God, assist us that we may not perish.

It is perhaps somewhat ironic to read this text in the first article of the first volume of a publication that, in its introduction claimed,

We pretend no longer to give our Subscribers a Paper of News, (I might say Falsehoods, for News-Papers and Lies are become almost synonymous Terms) nor will we ever relate any Thing that wants Confirmation, but only what on all Hands is agreed to have happen'd; not such Things as Time must discover to be either true or false, but such only as it has already stamp'd with the undeniable Mark of Truth: For Time alone it is, that in this Age of Fiction, can teach us to discover Truth from Falsehood, and to discern between the real Beauties of the one, and the artful Colourings that are industriously laid on to conceal the Deformity of the other. We shall be religiously scrupulous, in all our Relations, to inset only bare Matter of Fact, stript of all Disguise and sly Insinuations, and without any Remarks of our own upon them, either of Dislike or Affection²⁸.

A version in French of the alleged Ottoman decree-proclamation said to have been issued in 1717, was then published in, Louis Balthazar Néel, *Histoire de Maurice, comte de Saxe etc. enrichie des plans...* T. I., A Mittaw²⁹, 1752, 102-106, and published in Dresden the same year, and published again in French in Dresden in 1760, T. I., 101-105. The 1752 version in French, resulted in another edition that was published in French in London in 1753³⁰, while it was translated into English and was published in the same year as:

The History of Maurice Count Saxe, Field-Marshal of the French Forces, Duke Elect of Courland and Semigallia: Containing a Curious Account of All the Wars of Europe Since the Treaty of Utrecht, in which He was Concerned: with A detail of the several Battles and Sieges wherein he either commanded or assisted: Particularly those of Prague, Aschaffenburg, Fontenoy, Lawfeldt and

²⁷ *The Present State of Europe IX*, 18.

²⁸ *The Historical Register I*, ii-iii.

²⁹ Mod. Jelgava, Latvia.

³⁰ Collective 1753, I.

Bergen-Op-Zoom, Besides the Invasion of Scotland, the Expedition to Port l'Orient, And many other remarkable Transactions. To which are annexed, His Last Will; and a description of his pompous Funeral. The whole interspersed with Various other Particulars, relating to the Amours both of himself and his Father, King Augustus; as well as to his Election in Courland, and the unlucky Effects of his fighting the Duchess, who would have married him, and was afterwards Empress of Russia. Written by an Officer of Distinction, translated from the French, Vol. I., for T. Osborne, London, 1753, 76-80, This aga spoke very good High Dutch, and appeared very well disposed for the re-establishment of peace, in order to which a congress was necessary. The number of the discontented among the Turks was so great, that the deposition of the grand seignior³¹ was much to be dreaded; and things were come to such a height, that he neither durst go out, nor appear in publick. The famous victory which prince Eugene had obtained, was so complete, that all the mussulmen were under the greatest terror and consternation, and loudly murmured. Nothing can afford a more convincing proof of this, than the form of devotion which the soltân thought proper to appoint, in order to appease the people, who earnestly wished for a revolution: he addressed it to the Turkish aga at Belgrade, with commands, that he and his retinue should conform to it. This minister accordingly made it publick; and the singularity of that piece, not to be found in any of our publick writings, appeared worthy to be related here, faithfully rendered into English.

Ashmed Selim³², soltân, emperor of the East and of the West, lord of lords, true imitator of the grand prophet Mohammed, etc. The grand soltân being apprehensive, that the hand of the great God is stretched out against his government, his subjects, and his empire, since hr permits them to be oppressed and tormented by their enemies the christians, who have vanquished them several times, both by sea and land, as well as taken from them a large extent of country: and all this, as it appears to him, because the mussulmen are become corrupted in their works, and too confident of their own strength: therefore, to appease the wrath of God, and of his prophet Mohammed, he expressly orders, that on Friday, after new moon, in the fifth, sixth and seventh months, all and singular his subjects shall keep a rigorous fast all that day and abstain from meat and drink, from the rising of the sun to that of the stars. On that day the mufti and other ecclesiastical servants, cloathed with penitential habits of hair-cloth, with down-cast eyes, beards uncombed, and all in tears, shall repair first to the publick places, and afterwards to the mosks, crying with all their strength, Ya, Mofateh ilabwab; that is to say, Open the gates of thy favour. In the island of Mecca

³¹ Allegedly after the Ottoman surrender of Belgrade 22nd of August 1717, i. e. Sultan Ahmet III.

³² In fact, Sultan Ahmed III, r. 1703-1730.

(sic.³³), *the prophet's coffin*³⁴ shall be laid open, and exposed to public view, upon silver tressels; perfumed with incense, and filled with the bones of servants and spahi's killed in the battle; that the prophet, moved with so great and so sensible a loss, may be induced to appease the wrath of the great God. This to be performed during these three Fridays, the coffin carried through the streets and in the fields; and all the pilgrims and inhabitants of the mosques, with the chiefs of the trades, shall make the round seven times, singing, with a doleful voice, the canticle of lamentation³⁵ upon account of this disaster. No instrument of music shall be heard, but only cries of sorrow, and an universal mourning; and on the last day of fasting, a solemn and general procession shall be made ten miles round, in the following order:

In the first place, the march shall begin with a coffin filled with dead mens bones, broken scimitars, flatted cuirasses, broken bows, and blunt arrows. All these things shall be carried by six hundred Turks cloathed in penitential habits, bare-footed and bare-headed, without turbans. II. Shall follow next three hundred mussulmen, with habits dyed in blood, and strewed with ashes, striking their breasts, with lamentable outcries and doleful howlings. III. Six thousand men, naked from their shoulders to their girdles, shall lash their breasts and shoulders with thorns, till the blood runs down to the ground, without their wiping it off. IV. The coffin of the prophet, supported by thirty spahis without turbans, surrounded by four hundred bashâs, with drawn scimetars; to cut-down all those who shall look upon the coffin without respect, and whose bodies shall be thrown to the dogs. V. At every quarter of a mile an ass and a Jew shall be killed, and left lying on the ground in their blood. VI. Thirty land bashâs shall be without purple, and with pitiful turbans of black stuff dipt in the blood of the ass and the Jew; having one hand tied behind to their shoulder, without scimetars, but with tails of black horses, dragging on the ground to make the dust rise. VII. Three thousand janissaries, without arms, and sticks in their hands trailing on the ground, shall cry, Allah Hasbi Fagavuri! God is my protector! Let him pardon me! VIII. The grand vizier, mounted on a lame ass, with a blue turban and bloody, shall strike his head with a cane, and deplore the last and fatal battle in

³³ "The island of Mecca", "l'isle de la Mecque" in the French edition of 1752, p. 108, possibly, if derived from a Flemish text: was a mistranslation from the Dutch of the word meaning: sanctuary, refuge, oasis - *toevluchtsoord*

³⁴ *Mohammed's tomb is not at Mekka, but at Medinah, a city ten day's journey to the North; neither is his coffin ever exposed. This shows the formula to be spurious; not to mention the other absurdities which follow, particularly these relating to the Jew and ass.

³⁵ Canticles and Lamentations are the names of books in the Old Testament of the Holy Bible and the expression, canticle of lamentations was employed to describe the *Verses on the death of the* (Holy Roman) *Emperor Conrad II., One of us made a canticle of lamentations on the Emperor, which he presented afterwards to his son King Henry in the city of Constance.* Benson 2021, 98, for the lament, 99-100. Ascribed to "the Man of Sorrows" in the Roman Catholic Church, the canticle of lamentations forms a part of Holy Week, there is of course no such Ottoman prayer that resembles the Roman Catholic Churches' canticle of lamentations.

these terms; EsfaYa! Maulay an Iafay; Lord, forgive me my ingratitude. IX. A chest filled with silver to be thrown to the people, but not to be gathered till the procession is over, under pain of being impaled alive. X. And, in fine, this procession shall be closed by an innumerable multitude of people; in the midst of whom there shall be a hundred Turkish penitents³⁶, who with knives shall cut-off the flesh of their arms, breasts, and faces, the better to appease the wrath of the great God, and the prophet Mohammed: and at every quarter of a mile they shall lift up the right hand, and cry with all their force, Alla sifai sededni Ahdai: I invoke God with my mouth, that he may fortify me against my enemies.

This form of devotion having been published through all the dominions of the grand seignior, had the effect which he proposed to himself: the people taken-up with devotion, thought no more of revolting, and their minds became calm³⁷.

The above passage was then repeated in the review of this book entitled: ‘Memoirs of the Life of Maurice Count Saxe (Page 185, Vol. XII) continued,’ 195-202, *The Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure*, Vol. XII., No. LXXXIII., May, John Hinton, London, 1753, 198-199, with both textual changes and changes to capitalisation in the quotation. From: *Ya, Mofateh ilabwab*; to, “*Ya mofateth ilabwab*”. From, *Allah Hasbi Fagavuri!* to “*Alla hasbi fagavuri!*” and, VIII. *The grand vizier, mounted on a lame ass, with a blue turban and bloody, shall strike his head with a cane, and deplore the last and fatal battle in these terms; EsfaYa! Maulay an Iafay; Lord, forgive me my ingratitude.* is missing from the review quotation, while, *Alla sifai sededni Ahdai:* is unchanged, and there is the alteration from, *singing, with a doleful voice, the canticle of lamentation upon account of this disaster.* to, *singing, with a doleful voice, the canticle of lamentation upon account of this terrible destruction.* The section in the book review closes with: *The Grand Seignior found thixt (sic.) effect from this form of devotion (which he had caused to be published throughout all his dominions) which he proposed to himself; for the people, being taken up by devotion, thought no more of revolting. However, he did not think it prudent to return immediately to Constantinople, but held a Divan at Andrianople, from whence he sent Plenipotentiaries to Belgrade, to treat of a peace. This deputation was composed of the Aga already mentioned, and two Bashaws, having a very numerous retinue, and charged with presents carried on two horse litters.*

It can be noted that in other published contemporary biographies of Maurice Comte De Saxe there is no mention at all of this alleged Ottoman decree³⁸. A paraphrase of the 1717 alleged Ottoman decree-*firman* was then published in *The London Chronicle, or, Universal Evening Post*, Saturday, March 24th, 1770. A version was also published in the *Public Advertiser*, No. CLXII, in a letter dated Thursday, March 29, 1770, No. 11036; and, No. CLXIII, its continuation, dated March 31, 1770, reprinted in, *The Repository, Or, Treasury of Politics and Literature for 1770, Being a Complete Collection of the Best Letters (including Those of Junius) and Essays from the Daily Papers, . . .*, Vol. I., John Murray, London, 1771, 374-380; and in, *Fugitive political essays which have appeared in the Public Advertiser*

³⁶ In earlier versions described as *santons*=dervishes or, *Hermites, an order of Priests*, meaning holy-men, rather than *penitents*.

³⁷ Néel 1752, 149-150. The inclusion of this text in the author’s *Histoire de Maurice, comte de Saxe*, is perhaps not surprising, given his authorship of, *Voyage de Paris à St-Cloud par mer et retour par terre*, of 1751. This text in French also occurs in: Minuti *et al.* 2002, 315.

³⁸ Such as: Pérau 1757; nor is it in, d’Expagnac 1773.

During the last Winter, 1769 and 1770, Under the several Names of Old Slyboots, Faction, Hortensius, A Lover of Consistency, etc., for Richardson and Urquhart, London 1770, 152 ff.

I observed in the last Amsterdam gazette³⁹, a copy of a circular letter, or order, from the Grand Seignior, to appoint a solemnity, in which a very extraordinary procession is to be introduced; plainly calculated to amuse the people, who are dispirited by the late frequent victories of the Russians, and to fill them with hopes, that the next campaign will be attended with better success....Mustapha⁴⁰, Sultan of the East and West, Master of all the Grand Seigniors, and Descendant of the great prophet Mahomet⁴¹.

The Grand Seignior of the Mussulmans, having found that the Divine Being has stretched his arm in wrath over his subjects and his empire, (insomuch that the Christians, our enemies, who have so often been vanquished both by land and sea, and spoiled of their possessions, are permitted to afflict and weaken us; which most probably has happened only through the too great confidence of the Mussulmans in their own forces) enjoins and orders, to appease the wrath of the Divine Being, and the indignation of his prophet Mahomet, that on Friday, and at every new-moon of the 5th, 6th, and 7th month, every one shall abstain, in the most rigorous manner from eating and drinking, till the stars show themselves in the firmament. The Mufti, and all other ecclesiastics, shall be dressed that day as penitents, with ropes about their waists, their eyes fixed on the ground, their beards uncombed, and uttering melancholy sounds. They shall pronounce in the public squares, and in the mosques, the plaintive song, Open the doors of mercy! In the isle of Mecca, the sepulchral urn of Mahomet shall be publickly carried on a silver stand, perfumed and filled with the bones of his servants and spies (sic. spahis), who have been killed in battle, in order to move the prophet, by so great a loss, and engage him to appease the anger of the Almighty. This shall be done at the three stated times of penitence; and the urn shall be exposed in all the principal streets, and in the country. Then all the inhabitants, and the pilgrims of the mosques, and also all the trading companies, shall march six (sic.) times round the urn, and with tears in their eyes shall sing the Song of Calamity. There shall be no sound of any instrument with strings, no flute, nor any vocal music, but loud sounds of complaint and lamentation.

In my last letter, I translated from the Amsterdam Gazzette, part of the orders

³⁹ The French language *Gazette d'Amsterdam* published from 1691 to 1796, distributed throughout Europe and long regarded as the principal European journal of political information.

⁴⁰ This is referring to Sultan Mustafa III. r. 1757-1789, reigning when this was written, who declared war on Russia on September 25, 1768, that ended in Ottoman defeat in 1774, rather than to the reign of Sultan Mustafa II. in the 17th century.

⁴¹ There seems to be no evidence to show that Sultan Mustafa III. was of the family of the Prophet, a Sharif. It seems probable the author of this version of this text, by stating *Descendant of the great prophet Mahomet*, was indicating the Caliph.

of Mustapha, Grand Seignior of the Mussulmans, for a public solemnity, to be observed in all the provinces of his empire... I shall now proceed to lay before you the remainder of the Sultan's circular letter, in which he appoints, and regulates a public procession...⁴² On the last day of the solemnity, there shall be a grand and general procession, for a circuit of 25 miles, in the following order: Ist. Six Hundred persons with cords about them, clothed in bloody habits, bare-foot, and bare-headed, shall carry an urn filled with the bones of dead men, with broken scimiters and pikes, with bows unstrung, and unfledged arrows. 2dly. Three hundred Musselmans, in vestments defiled with blood and ashes, shall follow, weeping, and sending forth loud lamentations, and at the same time beating and striking themselves severely. 3dly. Six hundred other men, their bodies naked from the head to the waist, shall beat their shoulders and breasts with branches of thorns, 'till the blood runs in streams to the ground, without being allowed to staunch their wounds. 4thly. The urn of the Prophet shall be borne by thirty Spahis, without anything on their heads; and they shall be surrounded by thirty Pachas, with naked scimeters, to put every one to immediate death who shall dare to look with an irreverent eye upon the urn of the Prophet; and shall cast their bodies immediately to be food for the dogs. 5thly. At every fifth part of a mile they shall cut the throat of a Jew, and kill an ass; consequently in the whole 125 Jews, and as many asses; all of which shall be left in the road weltering in their blood. 6thly. Thirty Bashaws of the empire shall march, without their purple robes, with black turbans on their heads, besmeared with the blood of the Jews: they shall wear no scimeters, and but carry a horsewhip, which they shall drag along the ground to raise the dust. 7thly. These shall be followed by 300 Janissaries without swords, and only armed with clubs, which they shall drag behind them: every lamentation shall be made in a confused tone in these words, 'O God, my defence and my pardon.' 8thly. The Visir with a blue turban, marked with blood, riding on a lame ass, shall strike his head with a reed, and deplore the fate of the unfortunate, crying out, 'O Lord, pardon my ingratitude!' 9thly. Then shall follow a chest full of gold coin, to be distributed to the poor; but no one shall dare to pick up the money till the procession is ended; the chest to be guarded by two Bashaws, who shall order instant death to be inflicted on any one, who shall presume to stoop for a sequin, that may happen to fall at his feet during the time of the solemnity. 10thly. The procession shall be closed by an innumerable crowd of people, among whom there shall be an hundred penitents, or hermits, who shall cut their arms and breasts with knives, till their blood flows upon the earth; in order thereby to calm the anger of God and his prophet Mahomet: they shall also cry out at every fifth part of a mile, I call upon God in my distress that he may give me strength against my enemies. Such were the orders for the Turkish procession,... O.S.

The somewhat different version published in *The London Chronicle*, Saturday, March 24th, 1770, was

⁴² idem 1770, 156-161.

then reprinted in newspapers and journals in England in August-September 1882, after the bombardment of Alexandria, and before the battle of Tel El-Kebir, (see below, 1882).

'Proclamation,' 43-46, Thomas Holcroft, *The Family Picture; Or Domestic Dialogues On Amiable And Interesting Subjects: Illustrated By Histories, Allegories, Tales, Fables, Anecdotes, &c. Intended To Strengthen And Inform The Mind*, Vol. II., Lockyer Davis, London, 1783, 42-44,

The following account of a Turkish fast forcibly and lamentably describes the power of that superstition of which Mahomet was the founder. The Sultan Selim⁴³ having been constantly defeated in his wars with the Germans, who were commanded by the great Eugene, and being afraid of losing his crown and his life by popular insurrections, endeavoured to amuse the people, and divert them from rebellious thoughts by proclaiming a Fast, which exhibits a melancholy picture of abject folly, and incoherent cruelty.

Proclamation:

Ashmed Selim, Sultan, Emperor of the East and of the West, Lord of Lords, true imitator of the prophet Mahomet, etc. The Grand Sultan being apprehensive, that the hand of the great God is stretched out against his government, his subjects, and his empire, since he permits them to be oppressed and tormented by their enemies the Christians, who have vanquished them several times, both by sea and land, and taken from them a large extent of country; and all this, as it appears to him, because the Mussulmans have corrupted themselves, and become too confident of their power: To appease the wrath of God, therefore, and of his prophet Mahomet, he expressly orders, that on Friday, after new moon, in the fifth, sixth, and seven months, all and singular his subjects shall keep a rigorous fast all that day, and abstain from meat and drink, from the rising of the sun, till that of the stars. On that day, the Mufti, and other ecclesiastical servants, clothed with penitential garments of hair-cloth, with down-cast eyes, beards uncombed, and all in tears, shall repair first to the public places, and afterwards to the mosques, crying with all their strength, "Ya-mofateth ilabwab:" (i. e. Open the gates of thy favour). In the island of Mecca, the Prophet's coffin shall be laid open, and exposed to public view upon silver tressels, perfumed with incense, and filled with the bones of servants and Spahi's killed in the battle; that the prophet, moved by so great and so sensible a loss, may be induced to appease the wrath of Heaven. This to be performed three Fridays, the coffin carried through the streets and in the fields; and all the pilgrims and inhabitants of the mosques, with the Chiefs of the trades, shall make the round seven times, singing, with a doleful voice, the Cantic of Lamentation, on account of this terrible destruction. No instrument of music shall be heard, but cries of sorrow and universal mourning; and, on the last day of fasting, a solemn and general procession

⁴³ This is the invented decree allegedly issued in 1717 by Sultan Ahmet III. but here given to a Sultan Selim, stated twice in this alleged translation, published in 1783. Selim II. r. 1566-1574, while Selim III. r. 1789-1807, acceded after this alleged proclamation was published.

shall be made, ten miles round, in the following order:

First, The procession shall begin with a coffin filled with dead men's bones, broken scimitars, flatted cuirasses, broken bows, and blunt arrows. All these shall be carried by six-hundred Turks cloathed in penitential habits, bare footed and bare headed, without turbans. 2. Three hundred Mussulmen shall follow, with habits dyed in blood and strewed with ashes, striking their breasts, with lamentable outcries and doleful howlings. 3. Six thousand, naked from their heads to their girdles, shall lash their breasts and shoulders with thorns, till the blood droppeth on the ground, without their wiping it off. 4. The coffin of the Prophet, supported by thirty Spahis without turbans, surrounded by four hundred bashaws, with drawn scimitars, to destroy all who shall look on the coffin without respect, and whose bodies shall be cast to the dogs. 5. At every quarter of a mile, an ass and a Jew shall be killed, and left on the ground weltering in their blood. 6. Thirty land bashaws shall be without purple, and with pitiful turbans of a black stuff dipped in the blood of the ass and the Jew, having one hand tied behind to the shoulder; without scimitars, but with tails of black horses dragging on the ground to raise the dust. 7. Three thousand Janizaries, without arms, having sticks in their hands trailing on the ground, shall cry, "Alla hasbi fagavuri!" (i. e. God is my protector! Let him pardon me!) 8. A chest filled with silver to be thrown to the people; but not to be gathered, till the procession be over, under pain of being impaled alive. 9. In fine this procession shall be closed by an innumerable multitude of people, in the midst of whom there shall be an hundred Turkish penitents, who with knives shall cut off the flesh of their arms, breasts, and their faces the better to appease the wrath of the great God and his prophet Mahomet; and, at every quarter of a mile, they shall lift up the right-hand, and cry, with all their strength, "Alla fifai fededni Ahday" (i. e. I invoke God with my mouth, that he may fortify me against my enemies).

'Horrid Decree of the Grand Seignior; in Consequence of the Capture of Belgrade,' 301-303, *The Historical Magazine for September, 1792, The Historical Magazine or, Classical Library of Public Events, Consisting of Authentic Anecdotes, Biographical Memoirs, Manners and Customs, Philosophical Papers, Natural History, Theatrical Intelligence, Analysis of Historical Books, Domestic News etc. etc. etc. For the Year 1792, Vol. IV., No. XLVII., London, 1792, 301-303.*

*Ashmed Selim, sultan, emperor of the East and of the West, lord of lords, true imitator of the prophet Mahomet, etc.*⁴⁴ *The grand sultan being apprehensive, that the hand of the Great God is stretched out against his government, his subjects, and his empire, since he permits them to be oppressed and tormented by their enemies the Christians, who have vanquished them several times, both by sea and land, and taken from them a large extent of country; and all this, as it*

⁴⁴ i. e. This alleged decree dates from the capture of Ottoman Belgrade by Hapsburg forces in August 1717 in the reign of Sultan Ahmet III., not from the Hapsburg capture of Belgrade in 1789 under Sultan Selim III. The text remains largely the same, but the name of the ruling sultan is inserted.

appears to him, because the Mussulmen have corrupted themselves, and become too confident of their power: wherefore, to appease the wrath of God, and of his prophet Mahomet, he expressly orders, That on Friday after new moon, in the fifth, sixth, and seventh months, all and singular his subjects shall keep a rigorous fast all that day, and abstain from meat and drink, from the rising of the sun, till that of the stars. On that day the mufti, and other ecclesiastical servants, clothed with penitential garments of hair-cloth, with down-cast eyes, beards un-combed, and all in tears, shall repair first to the public places, and afterwards to the mosques, crying, with all their strength, "Ya mo, fateth ilabwab" i. e. Open the gates of thy favour. In the Island of Mecca, the prophet's coffin shall be laid open, and exposed to the public view upon silver tressels, perfumed with incense, and filled with the bones of servants and spahis killed in the battle; that the prophet, moved by so great and so sensible a loss, may be induced to appease the wrath of the Great God. This to be performed during these three Fridays, the coffin carried through the streets and in the fields; and all the pilgrims and inhabitants of the mosques, with the chiefs of the trades, shall make the round seven times, singing, with a doleful voice, the canticle of lamentation, on account of this terrible destruction. No instrument of music shall be heard, but only cries of sorrow and an universal mourning; and, on the last day of fasting, a solemn and general procession shall be made, ten miles round, in the following order: First, The procession shall begin with a coffin filled with dead men's bones, broken scimitars, flatted cuirasses, broken bows, and blunt arrows. All these things shall be carried by six hundred Turks cloathed in penitential habits, bare footed and bare headed, without turbans. 2. Shall follow three hundred Mussulmen, with habits dyed in blood and strewed with ashes, striking their breasts, with lamentable outcries and doleful howlings. 3. Six thousand men, naked from their shoulders to their girdles, shall lash their breasts and shoulders with thorns, till the blood droppeth on the ground, without their wiping it off. 4. The coffin of the prophet, supported by thirty spahis without turbans, surrounded by four hundred bashaws, with drawn scimitars, to destroy all who shall look on the coffin without respect, and whose bodies shall be cast to the dogs. 5. At every quarter of a mile, an ass and a Jew shall be killed, and left lying on the ground in their blood. 6. Thirty land bashaws shall be without purple, and with pitiful turbans of a black stuff dipped in the blood of the ass and the Jew, having one hand tied behind their shoulder, without scimitars, but with tails of black horses dragging on the ground to make the dust rise. 7. Three thousand Janizaries, without arms, having sticks in their hands trailing on the ground shall cry, "Alla hasbi fagavuri!" i. e. God is my protector! Let him pardon me! 8. A chest filled with silver to be thrown to the people, but not to be gathered, till the procession be over, under pain of being impaled alive. 9. In fine, this procession shall be closed by an innumerable multitude of people, in the midst of whom there shall be an hundred of Turkish penitents, who with knives shall cut off the flesh off their arms, breasts, and faces, the better to appease the wrath of the great God and his prophet Mahomet; and, at every quarter of a mile, they shall lift up their right

hand, and cry, with all their strength, "Alla fifai fededni Ahday" i. e. I invoke God with my mouth, that he may fortify me against my enemies.

This text was then re-published in 1799 in the local British newspapers, the *Kentish Weekly Post or Canterbury Journal*, Canterbury, Friday, 1st March, 1799, page 4; *Ipswich Journal*, Ipswich, Suffolk, Saturday, 2nd March 1799, page 2; *Cambridge Intelligencer*, Saturday, 2nd March, 1799, page 2; *Staffordshire Advertiser*, Saturday, 2nd March, 1799, page 3; *Caledonian Mercury*, Midlothian, Saturday, 2nd March, 1799, page 2; *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, Monday, 4th of March, 1799, page 4; *Chester Courant*, Chester, Tuesday, 5th of March, 1799, Page 2; and the *Oxford Journal*, Oxford, Saturday, 13th of April, 1799, on page 2, within the context of the Napoleonic invasion of Ottoman Syria.

This most extraordinary piece of black propaganda, which has no factual basis in any Ottoman proclamation or decree, late 17th century or otherwise, then resurfaces on the other side of the Atlantic in 1824, published in the context of the Greek rebellion against Ottoman rule.

'The Turks,' *Alexandria Gazette & Advertiser*, Vol. XXIV., No. 6493, Alexandria, Virginia, Tuesday, Morning, 2 March, 1824, Page 4,

A gentleman has lent us the number of an old work, called the Monthly Mercury, published in London, 1697, which gives an account of the events of the period; and from which we extract a curious statement regarding the Turks. At the present time, we think it might be interesting (my emphasis)...Advice From Turkey & Germany. The 29th of the last Month N.S. the new Aga of the Janizaries made his Public Entry into Adrianople; but he had not above Ten or Twelve Captains of the Janizaries to attend him, all the rest who were at the Battle of Zenta being killed, or since dead of their Wounds. The next day the Grand Signior arrived at the same City with his new prime Visir; but he rode directly to his Seraglio without entering into the City, not desiring they should make him any public Reception, or that the Sultanness his Mother should meet him, as she intended, two Miles out of the City. The ill Success of the last Campaign (sic.) has cast a deep Consternation into all the Provinces of his Empire which have heard the ill Tydings, insomuch that in some Places the People began to murmur against the Grand Signior and his Government. For which Reason the Sultan has caused a General Fast, and Public Prayers to be said throughout all his Dominions Alamede de Turqueske, which are to be accompanied with Processions to Mecca, in hopes to Appease the Anger of Heaven. To which purpose he has set forth the following Ordinance, wherein are many things to be observed relating to Mahometan Bigotry.

The Grand Signior of the Turks acknowledging that the hand of God lies heavy upon his Dominions and his Subjects, for that they have so often fought and been vanquished as well by Sea as by Land by their enemies the Christians, who have also in a little Time regained from 'em a large Extent of their Country, attributes these frequent Misfortunes to the too great Confidence he has had in his strength, and his Alliance against the Emperor of the Christians. For which Reason he Ordains and Commands, by these Presents, for the atoning of the Wrath of God, and his great Prophet Mahomet, That every Friday of the New Moon,

as also upon the 5th, 6th, and 7th of the Month, that all Persons fast all the Day without eating or drinking, till the Stars appear in the sky. That the Mufti and his Clergy, upon those days, be cloathed with Sackcloth, girt with Cords, with long Beards; and that they go in that Posture, first through the streets, and then to the Churches, with their Eyes fixed upon the Earth, lamenting and crying, Ja Agib Allah Allah, that is to say, O Merciful God, O God. That they also take the Coffin of the Grand Prophet out of his Sepulchre in Mecca (sic.). That after they have plac'd it in a Chair, they also take Twenty-five more Coffins full of the Bones of those who were formerly slain fighting in Defence of the Musselman Religion; which done, they shall perfume 'em with Incense, to the End that by that Means the great Prophet may be mov'd to employ his Intercession to appease the Wrath of the Great God. That after all this has been done upon the abovementioned Days, and that they shall have plac'd the Prophet's Coffin in the Open Field, all Pilgrims and Inhabitants, as also all the Foreigners of the Caravans, may walk seven Times about the Coffin, weeping and bewailing themselves, and that the last Day of the Fast they make a solemn Procession, twenty Miles an end, in the following Manner: 1. Six thousand Turks shall lead the way cloth'd in Sackcloth, girt with Cords, bare-foot, and without Turbans, carrying a Box full of dead Men's Bones, with broken scimetars, small rusty fire-arms, etc. 2. The thousand Turks other Musselmen, all bloody, covered with Ashes, shall follow them, bewailing themselves, and tearing their Cloaths. 3. Six thousand persons naked from the Waist upwards, shall follow them, whipping their Backs and Breasts with Thorns till they fetch Blood which shall drop upon the Ground; nor shall they be suffer'd to rub or wipe themselves. 4. After them shall appear Three thousand Spahis bareheaded, with long beards, carrying the Prophet's Coffin, who shall be surrounded with three hundred Bashas with naked Swords; and if any one shall offer to take off his Eyes from looking steadfastly upon the Coffin, the Bashas shall presently kill him and cast his Body to the Dogs. 5. At the end of every Mile they shall put to the Sword a Christian Slave and a Jew, and they shall let 'em die in their own Blood. 6. Thirty Bashas, Governours of Provinces, shall follow them without Purple, and with Turbans of plain black Cloth, dy'd before hand in the Blood of a Jew and an Ass: and every one of these Bashas shall have one Hand bound behind him, & instead of a Sword, shall wear a long Camel's Tail, trailing upon the Ground. 7. Three thousand Janizaries shall follow them without Arms, but with Battons, which they shall trail after 'em, and they shall cry out, Allah bize ramah eile, Lord be merciful unto us. 8. Next to them shall come a Chest full of Money, which shall be scatter'd upon the road. But the poor shall be forbid, upon pain of being empal'd, to touch the Money before the end of the Procession. 9. Lastly, The Concourse of people shall close the Procession. In the midst of the Crowd there shall walk a Hundred Santons, or otherwise Turkish Hermites, who shall cut their Arms, Breasts, and Faces with Knives, till the Blood drop upon the Ground, and at the end of every Mile they shall lift up their Hands to Heaven, and cry out, Vengeance against the Christians, and say, Allah Jekfa, Ja Allah errhaman, 'Tis

*enough, Lord, most merciful God*⁴⁵.

Then, after an absence of ninety-two years, the British public needed a re-fresh, a reminder of alternative reality, with the republication of this text in newspapers within the context of the lead-up to the Battle of Tel El Kebir on September 13, 1882, in course of the Anglo-French military intervention in Egypt against 'Urabi Pasha-Ahmed Arabi Paşa el-Mısri's forces.

'A Day of Humiliation, Notes and Queries' 112, *The Advertiser*, Saturday, September 9th, 1882, *Advertiser Notes and Queries (Reprinted from the "Stockport Advertiser")*, "Advertiser" Office, Stockport, 1882, 112,

(956) *The London Chronicle of Saturday, March 24th, 1770, contains some curious information. Here is an account of a procession:- "Copies of a circular order for the Grand Signor for the observation of a day of humiliation throughout all the provinces of his Empire, in consequence of the uncommon success of his enemies, have lately been published, in which the strictest abstinence is enjoined to all true Musselmen*⁴⁶. *The Mufti, and those belonging to the Church, were to appear dressed as penitents, and in all public places to implore the assistance of the Almighty. At Mecca, the sepulchral urn of Mahomet was to be exposed to the people with very singular services. The inhabitants and pilgrims were to march six (sic.) times round the urn, singing in a doleful manner the song of calamity; a solemn and general procession of twenty-five miles round was to conclude the whole in the following order:*

I. Six hundred persons clothed in habits stained with blood, their heads uncovered, their feet naked, bearing urns filled with the bones of the dead, armed with broken spears, bows, arrows, etc. II. Three hundred penitents in garments covered with blood and ashes, making loud lamentations, beating their breasts, etc. III. Six hundred men naked from the head to the middle, slashing their shoulders and sides with branches and thorns, till their blood runs down to the ground. IV. The urn of the Prophet borne by 30 Spahis, without turbans, surrounded by 30 Pachas, with drawn scymitars in their hands, to assassinate upon the spot whoever should have the presumption to regard with an irreligious eye the ashes of Mahomet, and to throw their bodies immediately to the dogs for food. V. At every 5th part of a mile they cut the throat of a Jew, and slay an ass; so that during the procession one hundred and twenty-five Jews, and as many asses are left on the road, bathed in their blood. VI. Thirty Pachas, defiled with blood of the Jews, bearing horse whips, with which they continually strike the ground, in order to raise the dust. VII. Three hundred Janissaries with staves intreating mercy of God. VIII. The Visier, with a sky-coloured turban, mounted on a lame Jack-ass, which he continually strikes on the head with a bull-rush, crying, 'Pardon, O Lord, my ingratitude!' IX. A chest filled with gold, which is

⁴⁵ <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85025001/1824-03-02/ed-1/seq-4> ; <https://virginiachronicle.com/cgi-bin/virginia?a=d&d=AGDD18240302.1.4&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN-%22hundred+santons%22----->

⁴⁶ This differs from earlier versions, that command the fast for *all and singular* subjects of the sultan.

distributed to the poor. X. The solemnity is closed with a great multitude, hermits, penitents, etc. who cut themselves with knives, and invoke the Deity to give them power over their enemies”.

‘An Old Newspaper,’ *Cambrian News*, Aberystwyth, Friday, 25 August, 1882, page 7, ...*implore the assistance of the Almighty. At Mecca the sepulchral urn of Mehemet was to be exposed to the people with very singular ceremonies. The inhabitants and pilgrims were to march six times (sic.) round the urn, singing in a doleful manner the song of calamity;...* Also published in the *Alderly & Wilmslow Advertiser*, Alderly Edge, Saturday, 9th September, 1882, page 3, ...*places to implore the assistance of the Almighty. At Mecca, the sepulchral urn of Mehemet was to be exposed to the people with very singular ceremonies. The inhabitants and pilgrims were to march six times (sic.) round the urn, singing in a doleful manner the song of calamity;...*

It can be noted that, *The Turkish fast, out of the Monthly Mercury, for December, 1697*, by Anonymous (Author), Kindle Edition, Eternity Books, 2015⁴⁷, has on the cover a representation of the United States of America flag, and is described on the cover as: *Early American Classics*, and the advertisement for it carries the quote of a paragraph from the 1697 text, which is followed by the line, *This is an edition of a classical book first published in the eighteenth (sic.) century*. The title and text tell a rather different story, it is a journal article, not a book, and it is entirely unrelated to the United States of America - it is a seventeenth-century Christian, almost certainly initially Catholic, and later adopted by Protestants, example of black propaganda, a malicious calumny on the Ottomans, Turks, Muslims and Islam, a text pretending to authenticity and authority as the translation of an Ottoman decree, but which is a malicious forgery, a mind poisoning literary fabrication, apparently in the 21st century provided worldwide by *Amazon.com Services LLC, Ships from United States*.

Some of the Obvious Errors in These Purported Ottoman Decrees

Firstly, there is fact that the mortal remains of the Prophet were buried where he died in 11 hicri = 632 A.D. in Medina. Yet the assumption of the writer and of the subsequent modifiers of the text of this alleged Ottoman decree is that the Ottoman sultan thought the Prophet of Islam was buried in Mecca, which was in fact the Christian Medieval and later frequently alleged location of the Prophet’s remains, an allegation that continued into the 20th century⁴⁸; at times also stated by Jews⁴⁹. Nor was it the case, as alleged in the 1770 and 1882 versions, that the Prophet’s remains were ashes that were held within a sepulchral urn, and it was this alleged sepulchral urn containing the prophet’s ashes that was paraded in the procession. The allegation that the Prophet was buried in the Ka’ba in Mecca was a Catholic and Protestant position maintained long after Mecca and Medina had been visited and accounts published from the start of the 16th century onwards, when in 1503, Ludovico di Varthema in his travels reached Mecca, and he clearly recorded that the Prophet was buried in Medina, not at

⁴⁷ <https://www.amazon.com/Turkish-fast-Monthly-Mercury-December-ebook/dp/B00UVM7REO>

⁴⁸ *The Wray Gazette*, 7 July 1927, page 5, *Pious Moslems who make the pilgrimage to Mecca go seven times round the Kaaba, or tomb of the prophet, reciting prayers and reverently kissing the Black Stone. They then proceed to the sacred spring of Zem-Zem,...*; *Healdsburg Enterprise*, 28 July, 1927, page 3; *Highland Recorder*, 12 August 1927, page 1. Patai 1997, 70, *They also travel to visit the tomb of Muhammad in Mecca (sic.), and come back through Jerusalem*,

⁴⁹ Schwarzbaum 1989, 298, *The Moslem sees in his dream the Prophet Muhammad who urges him to pay a visit to his sepulchre in Mecca (sic.)*.

Mecca, published in English translation in 1576⁵⁰. Secondly, the assumption that the Prophet, warrior-martyrs, “saints” or other Muslims were buried in a coffin in the ground, is not correct, nor were they cremated, nor was the Prophet’s tomb portable, a portable shrine like those of Catholic Saints, nor was it a sepulchral urn – clear indications that the text of this alleged Ottoman decree was both fabricated and then modified by persons who had no actual knowledge of Ottoman-Muslim burial practices. Thirdly, the penitential procession described, resembles the penitential processions of Catholics, of the flagellants, and those Muharram/ Moharrem processions of flagellants in Shii’ite territory⁵¹, not characteristic of any Ottoman official procession ever undertaken at Mecca, or elsewhere in Ottoman territory. While the Ottoman Mufti did not himself participate in the haj when in office, he had to be in İstanbul in order to advise the sultan and divan, not possible in the 17th century if he was in fact at Mecca at this alleged procession, held in three consecutive months. Fourthly, the allegation that Ottoman Sultans ordered the sacrifice by Ottoman Muslims of Christians, and Jews, and asses, at Mecca, in order to obtain the Prophet Muhammed’s intercession with the Almighty, is an evil and malicious calumny. Fifthly, there is simply no evidence that in the 17th and 18th centuries fasting was imposed by decree of the sultan on all the subjects of the Ottoman state, *all and singular his subjects*, Christian, Jewish and Muslim, at any time. The millet system, based on the different confessional allegiances of the Ottoman populations, means no such decree, requiring fasting on Mondays and Fridays by all, Muslims, Christians and Jews, could ever have been approved by the Ottoman Sheikh-ul-Islam and issued by any Ottoman Sultan.

Conclusions

The factual errors published from 1686 onwards in English language versions and variants of these alleged *translations* of alleged Ottoman decrees, show the author and those who modified these texts for publication over the course of two centuries possessed or employed a negligible knowledge of the Ottomans, of Islam and of Muslims. But of course, this was of no consequence in this matter. Only a truly miniscule proportion of the English literate population until the latter part of the 19th c. had any direct first-hand experience of Ottoman or Muslim territory, still less of Muslims, and the members of this minority, such as Levant traders and returned East India company employees, would have recognised this text for being a complete fabrication. But, for the bulk of reasonably well-to-do readers reading these *translations* into English of alleged Ottoman decrees, the result would have been almost inescapable, the creation of an image in the mind of the reader that Ottomans, Turks, Muslims, were the worst of barbarians, ruled by sultans who would order human sacrifice (of Christians and Jews)

⁵⁰ Translation from Latin, *The Nauigation and Voyages of Lewes Vertomannus* (Ludovico di Varthema), by Richard Edén, published in London in 1576, reprinted in Kerr 1812, 54. *I had here an opportunity to refute the vulgar opinion that the tomb or coffin of the wicked Mahomet is at Mecca, and hangs in the air without support. For I tarried here three days and saw with my own eyes the place where Mahomet was buried, which is here at Medina, and not at Mecca.* Also, As noted by Jean de Thévenot, *The Caravan that met at Damascus, upon their return pass by Medina, and visit Mahomet’s tomb, seeing it is upon their Road; of the rest, those who are prompted by Devotion go thither, but a great part return back to their several Countrys, without turning out of their way to visit the said Sepulchre, their Law not obliging them to that,...* Thévenot 1687, 158. Also, Prideaux 1697, 135, *The pilgrimage which that enjoins being to be performed to the Caaba at Mecca, and not to the tomb of the impostor at Medina as some have erroneously related.*

⁵¹ *Op. cit.* fn. 15, 17, and, 23.

at Mecca to obtain the intercession of their prophet Mahomet with the Almighty, to change past military defeat into future victory.

These fake Ottoman decrees were published in English in: 1686, 1697, 1716, 1717, 1753, 1753, at least three times in 1770, 1783, 1792, at least eight times in 1799, in 1824, and at least four times in 1882. It seems reasonable to suggest the dates chosen for the subsequent republication of these alleged Ottoman decrees was related to foreign affairs. For example, its appearance in at least eight local newspapers in Britain between March and April of 1799, was presumably in support of the Napoleonic invasion of Ottoman Syria; one version at least was reprinted in 1824, in the context of the Greek revolt against Ottoman rule, in Alexandria, Va., Republic of the United States of America, to garner support for the rebels; and another, a paraphrased and in points of detail, an altered version, first published in *The London Chronicle*, in 1770, was then reprinted more than a century later in English newspapers and journals in England in 1882, its republication occurring within the context of the Anglo-French military intervention in Egypt against 'Urabi Pasha-Ahmed Arabi Paşa el-Mısri, before the Battle of Tel El Kebir on September 13, 1882.

It seems reasonable to suggest the reason for the drop in the number of publications carrying the alleged *translations* of non-existent Ottoman decrees in the 19th century, when compared to the number published in the 18th century, was not because attitudes towards the indoctrination of instinctive Islamophobia into the English speaking Protestant world's population had changed, but rather, was because the production of anti-Ottoman anti-Muslim works obtained different sources of authority, some equally apparently authoritative and as equally fraudulent, for the conducting of Othering discourse concerning Muslims and Islam in publications in English in the 19th century.

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