

Leisure, Pleasure – and Duty

The daily life of Silahdar Mustafa, éminence grise
in the final years of Murad IV (1635–1640)

Otto Spies Memorial Lecture

edd. Stephan Conermann & Gül Şen

Volume 2

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EBVERLAG

Bibliographic information published by
Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this
publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;
detailed bibliographic data are available at
[<http://dnb.ddb.de>].

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Images on the cover: *top*: Aqueduct of Mustafa Pasha,
(late 1490s), near Skopje
Photo © Machiel Kiel, 2005.
below: Entrance to the “Institut für
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formerly called Orientalisches
Seminar, Bonn
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Layout: Rainer Kuhl

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Berlin 2016

ISBN: 978-3-86893-215-7

Homepage: www.ebverlag.de

E-Mail: post@ebverlag.de

Printed in Germany

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The daily life of Silahdar Mustafa, éminence grise in the final years of Murad IV (1635–1640)¹

Hedda Reindl-Kiel

Silahdar Mustafa Pasha, the hero of this paper, would have been utterly stunned by its title. Particularly the division between ‘leisure’ and ‘pleasure’ would have amazed him, as the Ottoman Turkish of his time did not have a precise and unambiguous word for ‘leisure’ separated from ‘pleasure’. A proper word for leisure was also lacking in the pasha’s native South Slavic ‘Bosnian’.² Moreover, the notion of time split into fixed hours of duty (work) and hours of self-determined activity (or rest) might not yet have entered Ottoman minds.

Peter Burke has demonstrated that in Europe the concept of leisure (especially among the elite) started to develop from Renaissance times, but only really took off as a broader, popular phenomenon in the 18th century, which does not imply, however, that people had not been enjoying merrymaking or *dolce far niente* before.³ In an interesting article

¹ The research for this article was largely done during my stay as a Senior Fellow at the Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations of Koç University in 2013/14. I would like to express my gratitude for this wonderful opportunity, the financial support and the assistance I received from all staff members.

² Nenad Moačanin has kindly informed me that he was not able to find a precise equivalent for the Latin *otium* (leisure) in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian of the 17th century, only *praznik* (holiday) and *dokolica* derived from *dokon* (idle). Bosnian also contains Turcisms: *uzur* (from *huzur*, ‘peace of mind’) and almost in the same sense *rahatluk*. I thank him very much for this valuable piece of information.

³ Peter Burke, “The Invention of Leisure in Early Modern Europe”, *Past & Present* 146 (1995), pp. 136–150. Joan-Lluís Marfany, “Debate: The Invention of Leisure in Early Modern Europe”, *Past & Present* 156 (1997), pp. 174–191; Peter Burke, “Reply”, *ibidem*, pp. 192–197, esp. p. 196. For a good summary of these articles see Marinos Sariyannis, “Time, Work and Pleasure: A Preliminary Approach to Leisure in Ottoman Mentality”, *idem* (ed.), *New Trends in Ottoman Studies: Papers presented at the 20th CIÉPO Symposium, Rethymno, 27 June – 1 July 2012*, pp. 797–811, esp. 798–799. E-publication: <http://www.univie.ac.at/ciepo/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/downloaded1.pdf>

Cemal Kafadar has linked the urban population's increasing use of night-time for socialising, amusement, labour and new forms of entertainment with the spread of coffee and coffeehouses.⁴ In this context he explored the changing meanings of Turkish/Ottoman *eğlenmek*, which in modern language means 'to amuse oneself, to have a good time'. Surprisingly, the oldest denotation (from the 14th to the 18th century) was 'to stop and rest, to spend some time (someplace).' But by the 17th century the term had acquired an additional meaning, and Evliya Çelebi uses it more or less in the same sense the word has today.⁵ Meninski's dictionary from 1680 has 'stay, pastime, diversion, and delay'.⁶ Thus, albeit still on slippery ground for the thirties of the 17th century, we might say, *eğlence*, would denote 'pleasure, amusement' and also something pretty close to 'leisure'.

It might well be that the new understanding of the word was, in the early 17th century, still only common in elite parlance. We must not forget that Evliya belonged *qua* birth and education to the urbanite upper echelons of society. In his Book of Travels he perceived and described people who were mainly his socially equals or of higher rank. For him the lower classes of society, such as the rural population or urban petty bourgeois, were virtually out of focus.

As Silahdar Mustafa Pasha, the hero of this tale, might be seen as an embodiment of privileged life and elitism, the question of whether leisure and pleasure for an ordinary Ottoman of the first half of the 17th

(accessed 12 October 2015) This stimulating article constitutes a first endeavour to study the Ottoman approach to leisure.

⁴ Cemal Kafadar, "How Dark is the History of the Night, How Black the Story of Coffee, How Bitter the Tale of Love: The Changing Measure of Leisure and Pleasure in Early Modern Istanbul", Arzu Öztürkmen and Evelyn Birge Vitz (eds.), *Medieval and Early Modern Performance in the Eastern Mediterranean*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2014, pp. 243–269.

⁵ Kafadar, "How Dark is the History of the Night", p. 249.

⁶ Franciscus à Mesgnien Meninski, *Thesaurus Linguarum Orientalium Turcicae, Arabicae, Persicae: Praecipuas earum opes a Turcis peculiariter usurpatas continens nimirum lexicon Turcico-Arabico-Persicum& grammaticam Turcicam...* etc. Viennae 1680, col. 357 (Latin, German, Italian and French: 'Occupatio, oblectamentum & mora. Verweilung/Zeitvertreibung/ Kurzweil/ und Verzug. Occupatione, trattamento, passatempo & Indugio, dimora, tardanza. Entretien, occupation, pasetemps & retardement.')

century were one single notion is probably of secondary importance. As our perspective on the pasha, his pleasures, duties and his everyday life is primarily shaped by account books, we should commence our narrative with a short glance to our sources.

The sources and their peculiarities

We rely predominantly on two rather long large-format treasury registers covering the years 1635–40.⁷ Both documents are clearly related, with the second record evidently being an extension of the first. Typically for treasury inventories, their organising principle is only partially chronological; the nature of incoming or outgoing items had priority when drawing up such a document. Unlike the treasury registers of other grandees, they record not only objects purchased or received as gifts but also cash coming in and the details of how this money was spent.⁸ Many purses full of cash came in as gifts, which is by no means unusual in the 16th and 17th centuries and not automatically connected with corruption. We cannot, however, tell whether some of the purses were meant as bribes. It is difficult to calculate the monetary value, as next to *guruş* (from Ital. *grosso*, via German *Groschen*; large silver coin) three kinds of *akçe* (small silver coin) were involved.

Since a lot of this money was used up in paying tips, the books give us an opportunity to trace aspects of the pasha's everyday life, especially thanks to entries in the second register. A considerable amount of money was spent on charity and alms; support was provided most notably to the weak and the ill,⁹ while the young pages, i.e. *oğlançık* ("little

⁷ Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi (henceforth: TSMA), D. 525 (Muharrem 1045 H/July 1635-Şa'ban 1648 H/end of December 1638), 89 folios. D. 2014 (Muharrem 1049 H/May 1639–Zilhicce 1049 H/April 1640), 16 folios.

⁸ TSMA, D. 9575 is another inventory, which clearly was owned by Silahdar Mustafa Pasha. It lists only the gifts received during outings. These gifts are, however, also recorded in D. 2014.

⁹ A good example is his payment of 13,000 *akçe* to a certain Hüseyin, which was a quarter of the man's debts, for which he had been jailed; TSMA, D. 3194, fol. 34b (on the register v. i.). In the autumn of 1636 200 *akçe* were spent on fruits "for the ill"

boys”), were particularly pampered. From time to time the pasha would organise a *yağma*, a “plundering” of coins for his servants, foremost his pages.¹⁰ In the royal palace the *yağma* was an integral part of important feasts;¹¹ it would be arranged with food offerings, mostly sweetmeats. Bowls filled with delicacies would be placed on the floor and, at a sign from their commander, the janissaries would storm forth and “plunder” the dishes. In the courtly ceremonial coins would also be scattered by chamberlains (in the name of the sultan of course) on occasions such as the discharge of pages who had completed their training.¹² Silahdar Mustafa, too, would take the royal pages into consideration and supply them with pocket money.¹³

In the cash version of *yağma* our pasha himself would throw the coins onto the ground¹⁴ in a ceremony that might not have been any different from the custom in the royal palace. It is all these details, which reveal quite something about the pasha’s personality, that make the records extremely charming.

The registers apparently represent only the book-keeping for matters outside the pasha’s palace, as they do not cover daily expenses for food and other necessities of life or wages. Several entries indicate the existence of other registers,¹⁵ mentioning at one point a ‘great’ *defter*.¹⁶ This might be identical with “Mehmed Efendi’s register”, which is referred to a number of times.¹⁷ The archives of the Topkapı Sarayı contain a

(*hastalara*); ibidem, fol. 37a. On 12 June 1637 Silahdar Mustafa spent 4,000 *akçe* to have food cooked for the ill in the Süleymaniye hospital (*timarhane*): a refined dish of rice (*dane*) and of a sweet rice pudding with saffron (*zerde*); ibidem, fol. 40a.

¹⁰ D. 525, fols. 4a, 66a, 70b. D. 2014, fol. 4b.

¹¹ See Hedda Reindl-Kiel, “The Chickens of Paradise: Official Meals in the Mid-Seventeenth Century Ottoman Palace”, Suraiya Faroqhi & Christoph K. Neumann (eds.), *The Illuminated Table, the Prosperous House: Food and Shelter in Ottoman Material Culture*. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2003, pp. 67–69.

¹² See Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, And Power: The Topkapı Palace in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries*. New York: Architectural History Foundation; Cambridge, Mass. – London: The MIT Press, 1991, pp. 117–118.

¹³ D. 525, fol. 4a, 11b.

¹⁴ D. 2014, fol. 4b.

¹⁵ D. 525, fols. 6a, 8b, 10b, 12b, 13a. D. 2014, fol. 15b.

¹⁶ D. 525, fol. 6a. This entry is, however, made on the march to Baghdad.

¹⁷ D. 525, fols. 17b, 20b, 22b, 32b. D. 2014, fol. 15b.

lengthy bookkeeping-cum-treasury register of Silahdar Mustafa Pasha.¹⁸ The scope of this record suggests that it is identical with the ‘great’ *defter*, but to gain certainty a future detailed study of all registers would be indispensable. Therefore we will refer to it as the ‘long’ register and to the *defters* mentioned above as ‘brief’ registers. As for buildings or other major expenses, separate records were kept,¹⁹ but, contrary to our expectations, for the greater part they were not copied into the ‘long’ *defter*.²⁰

Both ‘brief’ inventories have one great shortcoming: they do not disclose the name of their original owner, who appears only as *sahib-i devlet* (lit. “possessor of luck; lucky fellow”). It is generally thought²¹ that the term pointed to the grand vizier. Only after producing a profile of the movements of the register’s original owner was I able to rule out the most obvious candidate, Tabaniyassı Mehmed Pasha, then the incumbent grand vizier and not a particular friend of Silahdar Mustafa.²²

The contents of the two ‘brief’ records suggest a very close relationship between the owner and Murad IV. The official sometimes made very valuable presents to his lord, such as sable furs at the Feast of Sacrifice in 1638 and, shortly after at the outset of the Baghdad campaign,²³ as a whole collection of jewelled vessels in summer and autumn of 1639.²⁴ On 10 September 1636 the pasha had acquired emerald buttons (for

¹⁸ TSMA, D. 3194; 142 folios.

¹⁹ D. 525, fols. 15a, 66a, 72a. D. 2014, fol. 3a.

²⁰ Only smaller constructions or alterations appear in this register, such as the installation of water pipes (10,072 *akçe*) combined with a renovation of the *hamam* in the Pasha’s palace (D. 3194, fol. 102b) or the building of the upper structure of a well (*kuyu*) in Üsküdar (ibidem, fol. 103a).

²¹ Cf. Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*. III. ²İstanbul: Millî Eğitim Basımevi, 1971, p. 93.

²² Naima depicts Silahdar Mustafa even as the *spiritus rector* of Tabaniyassı’s execution; Naîmâ Mustafa Efendi, *Târih-i Na’îmâ (Ravzatü ’l-Hüseyn fî Hulâsati Ahbâri ’l-Hâfikayn)*. Mehmet İpşirli (ed.), Ankara: TTK, 2007 (henceforth: *Târih-i Na’îmâ*), vol. II, pp. 922–926. Nejat Göyünç, “Eski Malatya’da Silâhdar Mustafa Paşa Hanı”, *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi* I (1970), p. 77.

²³ D. 525, fol. 87a.

²⁴ D. 2014, fol. 10a. In this time (8 September 1639) he gave a pearl-studded fan, a gift from his own major-domo Hüseyin, as a present to the sultan; ibidem, fol. 10b.