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# An early portrait relief of Sultan Mehmet II

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THE FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE ON 29 May 1453 brought Sultan Mehmet II (1432–81) from obscurity to renown, forming the foundation of an empire that flourished for five centuries and continues to define his reputation as ‘Mehmet the Conqueror’.<sup>1</sup> Mehmet had become leader of the Ottoman Turks two years earlier, and while no reliable image from that seminal period was previously thought to exist, a group of portraits were taken in his later years. Exceeding that of most of his western contemporaries by number as well as by genre, this body of material has been the subject of enduring interest, providing a valuable insight into this remarkable Muslim figure.

It is against this background that an unknown bronze relief of Mehmet emerged in December 2000 (fig. 1).<sup>2</sup> Undated and unsigned, it is referred to here as the *Magnus Princeps* relief on account of the sitter’s opening title. Bearing a strikingly youthful portrait and one clearly predating the iconography formerly known, it is not based on any recognisable model or prototype. When it was published in *The Medal* in 2003, its commission was speculatively sourced to a third party rather than to Mehmet himself. The work itself was attributed to the Dalmatian sculptor and medallist Pietro da Milano (fl.1430–75), whose medals, dateable to the 1460s, formed the basis for the chronology for that study.<sup>3</sup>

Given Mehmet’s propensity for self-representation, the absence of evidence to support the commission of the relief by a third party and the youthfulness of its profile, the discovery has the potential to shed light on a period of the sultan’s life from which little evidence has survived. Set amid the political turbulence between Muslim and Christian in the eastern Mediterranean during the 1440s and 1450s, with a focus on Constantinople, the present study is further informed by the prevailing culture of the Ottoman court as well as the character and disposition of Mehmet himself, twelve years old on his first accession as sultan in 1444.

## THE RELIEF

The relief has been cast with a flan approximately ninety-one millimetres in diameter in a copper alloy consisting largely of bronze.<sup>4</sup> The portrait is encircled by the Latin titles, MAGNVS. PRINCEPS. ET. MAGNVS. AMIRAS. SVLTANVS. DNS. MEHOMET. (Great prince and great emir, Sultan Master Mehmet), and accords in style and technique with mid-fifteenth Italian medals.<sup>5</sup> The one significant difference is the absence of any image or lettering on the reverse side, which would usually include references to the sitter’s achievements and sometimes an artist’s signature. The integrity of the workmanship has been preserved, with surfaces free of chasing and subsequent enhancement. A specimen in lead, emerging remarkably soon after the bronze, has clearly been cast from the same model (fig. 2).<sup>6</sup>

The bronze relief has been produced by the sand-casting process, as can be seen from the speckling across both sides of the flan, and its surfaces similarly betray residual evidence of its wax model in the form of small dark deposits. The remnant of a guidance line beneath the word MEHOMET, employed by the artist to position the lettering, is another legacy of the model and is similarly evident on the lead relief, which is believed to be a trial or proof.<sup>7</sup> There is light natural wear across Mehmet’s portrait, consistent with the intervening centuries, but the surfaces of the bronze relief remain as they left the artist’s workshop, revealing a cast of fine quality and surfaces that retain their original bronzed, reddish-brown patina.

Mehmet’s profile faces left, while his torso, truncated below the shoulders, is three-quarters turned. He wears a turban of a notably skimpy form, revealing a shaven area at the rear of his head, suggesting that its entire area was shorn. The size of the turban is in marked contrast to those in the sultan’s later medallic portraits, where it covers his entire head.

Within the crown of the turban is a patterned woven cap of lace. Included in the cap’s decorative design is a cursive inscription in Arabic that



1. Attributed to Pietro da Milano: *Mehmet II*, c.1451-53, bronze, 91mm., collection of the author. (Photo: Andrew Smart of A.C. Cooper Ltd, London)

2. Attributed to Pietro da Milano: *Mehmet II*, c.1451-53, lead, 91mm., collection of the author.

represents the *Alhamdullilah* or acclamation of praise to God (fig. 3).<sup>8</sup> It appears at both the front and the rear of the cap, encircling its central motif. Projecting somewhat incongruously from the rear of the cap is a feather or plume, while emerging from beneath the turban are tightly-formed side-locks, which continue to a full but narrowly formed beard and moustache. Mehmet wears a heavily patterned kaftan with four fastenings and a sable-like, fur-trimmed collar, beneath which is another garment of indiscernible form.<sup>9</sup>

Neatly drilled piercings on both the bronze and the lead relief avoid masking any of the lettering and facilitate the perpendicular alignment of the portrait. Their identical application suggests that they were applied by the same hand and were integral to the design.<sup>10</sup> Seen side by side, the reliefs reveal no differences in the modelling of the portrait other than those attributable to variances of metal flow during casting. The consequence is a seemingly gaunter profile on the lead, whilst on the bronze the beard appears thicker and an errant flow of

3. Detail of fig. 1.



4. Medallion of Commodus, AD189-190, bronze, 40mm., British Museum.



metal conjoins the O and M of MEHOMET.

The *Magnus Princeps* portrait is sufficiently characterised to suggest that it is based on a direct sitting, which is likely to have been given in Edirne (Adrianople), the Ottoman capital until the court moved to Constantinople after its fall in 1453. The portrait is stylistically based on a Roman imperial prototype found on coins and medallions (fig. 4).<sup>11</sup> It is unclear whether the artist responsible for any original drawing also prepared the wax model, but the skill and subtlety in the modelling would appear to exclude the hand of an eastern artist or one unschooled in relief modelling.

The Renaissance portrait medal had evolved in the late 1430s, largely under the influence of Antonio Pisano (c.1395-1455), the celebrated Italian draughtsman, painter and medallist more widely known as Pisanello.<sup>12</sup> Over the following decade and beyond, medal-making studios and workshops established themselves on the Italian peninsula, three hundred miles to the west of the Ottoman capital, in places such as Mantua, Florence, Naples and Ferrara, where the facture of the *Magnus Princeps* relief must almost certainly have occurred.

#### ATTRIBUTION

In attributing the relief to Pietro da Milano, the

2003 study linked its various stylistic elements to Pietro's medallion work for the French court of René d'Anjou in the 1460s.<sup>13</sup> Prior to this, Pietro had enjoyed a twenty-year career as a sculptor and established master in Dubrovnik (Ragusa), working, for example, on reliefs for the Rector's Palace.<sup>14</sup> By the late 1440s he had become a celebrated artist, receiving commissions not only from the city state but its wealthy citizens. Dubrovnik was an important intermediary between the Ottoman Empire and Naples, providing open and friendly channels of communication, with artists frequently migrating between the two. In the early 1450s Pietro's help was solicited as the director for the triumphal arch of the Castel Nuovo in Naples by king Alfonso V of Aragon (1396-1458), which was to be the largest sculptural project undertaken in Italy. Alfonso had been 'simultaneously pleading' for the services of the Italian sculptor Donatello (c.1386-1466), indicating the 'substantial fame' that da Milano had now achieved, having his own Neapolitan workshop and team.<sup>15</sup>

With a chronology that places the *Magnus Princeps* relief at much the same time as Pietro da Milano's arrival in Naples, his celebrity could explain why its commission had gone to a figure seemingly unassociated with medallion portrai-

5. Costanzo da Ferrara:  
*Mehmet II*, c.1475-78,  
bronze, 123mm.,  
National Gallery of Art,  
Washington, D.C.







6. Bellini: *Mehmet II*,  
c.1480, oil on canvas, 69.9  
x 52.1cm., National Gallery,  
London.

ture. It has been speculated that Pietro was 'directed' by Pisanello, but the position he had now attained suggests it unlikely that he would have joined the latter's workshop.<sup>16</sup> In any case, as mentioned below, political considerations further distance Pisanello's hand in the making of the relief of Mehmet.

Although Pietro da Milano's circumstances are sufficient to explain the means by which he might have received such a commission, the characteristics that have linked his signed medals to the *Magnus Princeps* relief are not unique to his hand, while the medals used to make such comparisons are insufficient in quality of cast to draw a firm conclusion with any safety. An unequivocal attribution to this or another artist hand thus awaits.

#### ICONOGRAPHY

The more conspicuous features of the *Magnus Princeps* profile, which are notably absent from the later portraits of Mehmet, are the leanness of face, narrowness of neck and erect posture, suggesting someone in their late teenaged years or early to mid-twenties. These determinants align with an early, though undated, eye-witness account of the young sultan, which refers to his 'just-grown

youthful beard' and 'proudly raised' head.<sup>17</sup>

By way of contrast, a portrait medal of Mehmet by Costanzo da Ferrara (c.1450-1525), known from a single casting in bronze, reveals a sitter in his early to mid-forties with a broad neck, hunched posture and somewhat wizened features (fig. 5).<sup>18</sup> This artist is believed to have visited Constantinople in the mid-1470s, when Mehmet was in his mid-forties, and the generational contrast with the *Magnus Princeps* relief is further apparent from the 'lumpy' equestrian figure on its reverse side. Costanzo's medal has been subject to various interpretations, but it leaves no doubt that the *Magnus Princeps* portrait was taken at a far earlier period of Mehmet's life.<sup>19</sup> These physical changes are confirmed by a courtier's eye-witness account of the sultan from the late 1470s, which describes a large man with a small, fat neck, aquiline nose and red beard.<sup>20</sup>

The process of physical change seems to have begun in Mehmet's mid-twenties, when in 1458 Giacomo de' Languschi (fl.1435-60), the Venetian emissary at the Ottoman court, observed the twenty-six-year-old's 'well-built' proportions as being of 'large rather than medium stature'.<sup>21</sup> In



7. Bertoldo di Giovanni:  
*Mehmet II*, c.1480, bronze,  
94mm., British Museum.

middle age, Mehmet would suffer from 'morbid corpulence' and 'inherited gout', and he had 'considerable difficulty in riding'.<sup>22</sup> Although subject to an uncertain degree of restoration, the celebrated portrait in oil by Gentile Bellini (c.1429–1507), taken in the late 1470s following the artist's visit to Constantinople, provides an element of concordance with the *Magnus Princeps* profile (fig. 6), the 'mature ruler's thin face and distinctive nose' distantly echoing 'the physiognomy of the youth' on the bronze relief.<sup>23</sup>

Other images of Mehmet II, produced in the last decade of his life, present varying degrees of similarity with the *Magnus Princeps* portrait. A watercolour by an unknown hand, featuring the sultan smelling a rose,<sup>24</sup> and another in the same medium, by or after Costanzo, both of which are thought to date to the 1470s.<sup>25</sup> A medal of Mehmet by the Florentine artist Bertoldo di Giovanni (d. 1491) carries an allegorical reverse relating to his conquests (fig. 7).<sup>26</sup> Bertoldo is believed not to have visited the Ottoman capital but to have worked from drawings supplied by the court, producing his dignified profile in the late 1470s. A medal of Mehmet signed by Gentile Bellini may be based

on drawings prepared during the artist's sojourn in Constantinople (fig. 8).<sup>27</sup> The chronology is uncertain, but the sultan's death in 1481 and the commercial opportunity that it presented may have been the reason for utilising a sketch as the basis for this medal. The occasion also elicited a reworking of Costanzo's medal dated 1481, which is known through examples cast in bronze and lead (fig. 9).<sup>28</sup>

Finally, a medal produced some years after Mehmet's death is based on a sketch or drawing of the *Magnus Princeps* portrait and is associated with a certain Jean Tricaudet, whose name appears on the reverse side (fig. 10). The medal is known from a number of examples, but the chronology is rendered uncertain by the extensively chased surfaces of all those examined by the present author. However, it is thought to belong to the sixteenth century or later. With elements of pastiche in the characterisation, the Tricaudet portrait has the virtue of highlighting the integrity and naturalism in the modelling of the bronze original.<sup>29</sup>

#### THE COMMISSION

In the absence of any design or inscription on



8. Bellini: *Mehmet II*,  
c.1481 or later, bronze,  
94mm., British Museum.



9. Costanzo da Ferrara:  
*Mehmet II*, 1481, bronze,  
121mm., British Museum.



10. Unknown artist and workshop: *Mehmet II*, 16th century, bronze, 84mm., F.R. Kunker, Osnabruck.

the reverse of the relief and of an artist's signature, the study published in 2003 attributed it to Pietro da Milano whose dateable medals belong in the 1460s. The study speculated that it may have been an unsolicited gift to the sultan from a French patron, who hoped thereby 'to curry favour and secure advantageous relations' or to present 'an artist's talent', enticing 'Mehmed to fill in the blank reverse with an image of his choosing'.<sup>30</sup> Unwavering from the attribution or chronology, another scholar suggested the relief may have been 'produced in the course of the gift-bearing embassies that the sultan exchanged in the mid-1460s', or 'cast for him around that time by an artist residing at the Neapolitan court'.<sup>31</sup>

In fact, the procedure for producing a medal, which changed little over the centuries, was for alterations to a design to be effected in a draft sketch or model without the need to produce a relief in metal, thus avoiding unnecessary time and expense.<sup>32</sup> This makes the suggestion that the medal is half-finished unlikely. Regard-

ing the chronology, the strategic and political importance of Constantinople to the Ottomans was such that placing the bronze relief a decade or more after its fall, and yet with Mehmet's imperial status entirely absent from the titulature, creates further difficulties, particularly for an object intended to 'curry favour' or have a diplomatic function. Indeed, in such circumstances, one would also have expected a suitably epigraphic reverse, for the medals of Mehmet's contemporaries were generally made with two sides, regardless of their function.

Whilst placing the *Magnus Princeps* relief in the 1460s, when Mehmet was in his thirties, the 2003 study refers to the physical characteristics of the profile as those of a 'youthful sultan', 'executed early in Mehmed's reign', showing the ruler as a 'young adult', and offering the 'most reliable indicator of Mehmed's appearance in his youth'.<sup>33</sup> The earlier chronology that this suggests fully concurs with the iconographic overview, as well as the titulature surrounding Mehmet's portrait, which closely aligns

with an Ottoman treaty with Venice dating to 1446, in which he is styled 'Magnus Princeps et Magnus Amiras, Sultanus Mehmet Bey'.<sup>34</sup> The portrait medals of Mehmet made after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 all include a reverse complete with imagery and inscription and an imperial form of address that omits *Magnus Princeps* and *Magnus Amiras*.

With the iconography and inscription indicating a date from a period of Mehmet's life earlier than has been hitherto suggested, it becomes increasingly difficult to assign the commission of the bronze relief to a third party. Not only was Mehmet little known beyond Ottoman court circles prior to the conquest, there is no evidence to suggest the availability at any time of a reliable model or prototype upon which a portrait might be independently based. A medal purporting to be of Mehmet, but conjured from an artist's imagination or based on an unknown sitter, illustrates the difficulty of working without an accurate representation (fig. 11).<sup>35</sup> The detailed modelling of the *Magnus Princeps* portrait and its depth of characterisation provide a sense of engagement between artist and sitter. Another element closely associating the medal with the interests of Mehmet is the presence of the *Alhamdulillah* within his patterned lace cap.<sup>36</sup> These various points of reference not only indicate an early chronology but directly link the commission of the *Magnus Princeps* relief to Mehmet himself. It confirms what is known of his interest in self-representation, which can now be seen to have had earlier origins than was previously recognised.

Mehmet's ascent in the 1440s had occurred amid political turbulence in the eastern Mediterranean, where the Byzantine capital of Constantinople had long been the focus of Ottoman interest. These elements were to synthesise in Pisanello's remarkable medal of John VIII (1392-1448; fig. 12).<sup>37</sup> The representation of the Byzantine emperor reflects the division between east and west, and Muslim and Christian. With iconography of this sort absent from Mehmet's own culture, the medal of John VIII graphically demonstrated the opportunity that the medallic form offered for titular recognition and self-representation. At a critical period

in his late adolescence, it would help foster an 'acute interest in the memetic power of portraiture and verisimilitude'.<sup>38</sup>

#### POLITICS AND CULTURE

Mehmet was born in 1432 in Edirne, the third son of Sultan Murat II (r.1421-51) and Sitt Huma Hatun (d.1449). His ascent occurred against a declining Byzantine empire, which had dominated the eastern Mediterranean for more than a millennium, protected trade routes, and formed a line of defence for the Christian west against Islam. Constantinople, the great eastern capital of the Roman Empire founded by Constantine the Great (272-337) and for the last millennium that of Byzantium, had over the centuries 'fuelled the fires of apocalyptic fears and expectation'.<sup>39</sup> The ancient city of fabled splendour had been a 'bone in the throat of Allah', and one to which Mehmet's great-grandfather Bayezid I (r.1389-1402) had unsuccessfully laid siege in the 1390s, as had his father Murat II in 1422.<sup>40</sup> Its importance to the Ottoman Turks, both strategically and symbolically, was thus imprinted upon Mehmet from an early age.

Forming a small principality in north-west Asia Minor and western Turkey, the Ottoman Turks were one of several dynastic Muslim clans to emerge in the late thirteenth century and increasingly demonstrated a hunger for territorial gain in their ongoing holy war against 'infidel Christianity'.<sup>41</sup> As Ottoman power progressively grew, an international conference, convened in 1438 at Ferrara in central Italy by Pope Eugenius IV (r.1431-1447), sought a reconciliation of the eastern and western churches and a universal crusade against this ambitious entity.<sup>42</sup> This gathering attracted much interest. Among its principal delegates, soliciting help from the west, was John VIII, whose territories, including Constantinople, were most under Ottoman threat. Also present were antiquaries and artists, including Pisanello who documented some of the exotically dressed delegates, including John VIII and his entourage, in a series of drawings.<sup>43</sup>

Shortly thereafter Pisanello produced his medal of John VIII, one of the earliest examples

11. Attributed to a follower of Marco Guidizani: *A fictitious or unknown man*, c.1460-70, bronze, 61mm., Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.



12. Pisanello: *John VIII Palaeologus*, c.1438-40, bronze, 104mm., British Museum.



of this type of work. The striking profile of the Byzantine emperor, who is seen wearing a tall conical crown with a distinctive upturned brim and pointed front, was coupled with an equestrian figure of the emperor on the reverse. The encircling Greek titles affirmed his position as 'King and emperor of the Romans' (as the inhabitants of Constantinople were known).<sup>44</sup> The despatch by John VIII of embassy officials and envoys to Venice and Rome in early 1442 is one of the means by which this representation of Murat II's adversary, cast in both bronze and lead, may have been distributed within Italy.<sup>45</sup> A specimen is thought to have found its way to the treasury in Constantinople.<sup>46</sup> As Ottoman incursions increasingly imperilled Byzantine territory, Pisanello's medal tacitly expressed 'hope for Christian victory in the East' and was as novel in its format as it was startling in its iconography.<sup>47</sup>

#### ASCENT OF THE OTTOMAN PRINCE

In Spring 1444 the twelve-year-old Mehmet was appointed regent of the province of Rumelia under the supervision of his father's trusted grand vizier Chandarli Khalil Pasha (d. 1453), scion of an illustrious Turkish family. Murat's celebrated victory in November 1444 at Varna, eastern Bulgaria, demonstrated the increasing power of this Muslim clan and he then 'resolved to abdicate' in favour of Mehmet, who, not yet thirteen years of age, would 'become the sole ruler of the Ottoman state' under the guidance of his father's vizier.<sup>48</sup> Hugely ambitious, though vastly inexperienced, the young sultan was encouraged by his accession at Edirne in late 1444 to wield increasing authority and become a 'law unto himself both by land and by sea'.<sup>49</sup> However, having come under the influence of a military faction planning an ill-advised attempt on Constantinople, he was deposed by Murat, who was persuaded to return to power in 1446.

Whilst he now remained in the shadow of his father, Mehmet's removal from the Ottoman throne seems to have done little to dent the fourteen-year-old prince's confidence. Over the following five years, he served in a relatively minor role in Manisa as an emir or governor of western Anatolia, ruling it as a virtual fiefdom.<sup>50</sup>

Following his 'frustratingly brief reign as a teenager', Mehmet's self-aggrandisement would begin to express itself in titular form, as when he was co-signatory with his father of the afore-mentioned Ottoman treaty with Venice in February 1446.<sup>51</sup> On his mother's death in 1449, the tomb inscription that the Ottoman prince is said to have commissioned, with its references to the 'Homonym of the Prophet' and 'Noble Lord', is such that one might take him 'for a sultan in his own right'.<sup>52</sup>

The conquest of Constantinople was perceived as the realisation of a prophecy, which had broad appeal within the Islamic world. By the late 1440s a sense of 'apocalyptic urgency' and what was referred to as 'End Time' and the 'Last Hour' had reached new levels of permeation.<sup>53</sup> The death of John VIII in 1448 and succession in 1449 of his brother Constantine XI (1405-53) had given the capture of 'New Rome' renewed vitality, with prophecies being made by skilled practitioners at the Ottoman court.<sup>54</sup> Among the 'visions', following the death in 1451 of Murat II and Mehmet's second accession to the Ottoman throne, was the belief that the new sultan would rule the world like 'Alexander the Two-horned'.<sup>55</sup> Like many of his western contemporaries, the youthful Mehmet 'cultivated' Alexander the Great as a role model.<sup>56</sup>

#### IMAGE AND IDENTITY

If Bellini was able to 'conjure up living beings' in paintings such as his representation of Mehmet in oil, artists such as Pisanello demonstrated the symbolic possibilities offered by medallic art and showed how much nearer to reality an artist could come when employing the spatial relief of cast metal.<sup>57</sup> Roman imperial coinage provided the stylistic prototype for those wishing to have their portrait fashioned in this manner by Pisanello and his fellow medallists. In much the same way it enabled the ambitious Ottoman prince and self-appointed heir to Constantinople to be pictured as king of the Romans in the 'most worthy' fabric of bronze.<sup>58</sup>

The success of Pisanello's medal of John VIII thus saw other contemporaries following suit, and there was ample opportunity for such work to reach the Ottoman court, carried by

merchants, emissaries and antiquaries along well-established trade routes running east from the Italian peninsula. An Ottoman sketchbook bearing truncated profiles of medallic form and thought to date to the late 1440s, its cover decorated with Mehmet's imperial cypher or *tughra*, may well be a manifestation of that influence.<sup>59</sup>

One of the most abundant medals, cast in many dozens, if not hundreds, was that of Sigismondo Malatesta (c.1417-68), executed in the late 1440s by Matteo de' Pasti (fl.1440-67), master medallist to the Riminese overlord.<sup>60</sup> It represented one of the means through which Sigismondo chose to communicate his interests to 'subjects, allies, and enemies',<sup>61</sup> another being various classically inspired literary works, of which Mehmet is believed to have been a recipient.<sup>62</sup> The extent of their relationship is not clear, but correspondence from Sigismondo dating to the early 1460s remarks upon Mehmet's appreciation of portrait sculpture and his desire to commission the services of Matteo de' Pasti.<sup>63</sup> Matteo never reached the Ottoman court, thus denying Mehmet a portrait medal from his hand, but the request is significant in revealing his continuing interest.

The carefully placed piercing on the *Magnus Princeps* relief facilitated the perpendicular alignment of Mehmet's portrait, which was perhaps intended to be displayed upon the walls of his private apartments or in the library that he had begun to build in the late 1440s during his governorship in Manisa.<sup>64</sup> It is here that the young sultan, fluent in Turkish, Greek and Slavic, would inform himself on matters of history, philosophy, geography and military engineering, along with other interests that included mathematics, theology, astronomy and poetry in books and manuscripts acquired from both the east and the west.

Following his accession to the throne on the death of his father in 1451, and now entirely his own master, he could develop the hugely ambitious plans for the taking of Constantinople that would be brought to fruition over the following two years. Underscored by the failed attempts of his immediate forebears, the importance to the Ottomans of this venture had been instilled from an early age in the young and superstitious

sultan.<sup>65</sup> Given his predisposition, a description of Mehmet 'donning a talismanic shirt, richly embroidered with verses of the Koran and the names of God as a magical protection against bad luck' prior to the final assault on the Byzantine capital on 29 May 1453 may not be entirely fanciful.<sup>66</sup>

Offering 'protection and prophetic blessing' for both viewers and wearers, talismans represented a deeply embedded culture at the Ottoman court and displayed an iconography and variety of type, shape and form that is bewildering.<sup>67</sup> A talismanic sword 'decorated with protective inscriptions' is attributed to the ownership of Mehmet,<sup>68</sup> while his grand vizier, Mehmet Pasa, would wear a 'magic square to protect himself'.<sup>69</sup> The talisman could also be an item of clothing worn close to the skin that sought to 'preserve the health and safety of the wearer', and among the earliest is a shirt also thought to have been owned by Mehmet.<sup>70</sup> Commissioned for personal use and seemingly not subject to multiple casting for commercial or other purposes, the *Magnus Princeps* relief almost certainly remained within Mehmet's private domain. Whatever the manner of its deployment, it subscribed to a form that was as displayable as it was wearable, and one entirely compatible with that assemblage of talismanic material attributed to his ownership. Bertoldo di Giovanni's depiction of the elderly sultan wearing an object hanging from his neck appears to indicate Mehmet's propensity for displaying such objects, whatever this particular representation is intended to be (see fig. 7).<sup>71</sup>

For the heir to an imperial legacy, whose own less than distinguished lineage could scarcely be contemplated in the same breath as that of Constantine the Great, the symbolic opportunity provided by the medallic form would continue to interest Mehmet. Made some twenty years or more after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Costanzo's medal powerfully conveys a 'sense of the ruler who seized Constantinople for the Ottomans' (see fig. 5).<sup>72</sup> Referred to as an 'intelligent appreciator' of Pisanello's work, Costanzo adopted the equestrian figure of John VIII on the master's medal for that of Mehmet, but changed its direction from right to left, bringing



it into line with the sultan's iconography.<sup>73</sup> In a personality as ambitious as he was superstitious, it expresses an unbending desire of 'reversing the eastward march of Western rulers', with eyes cast yet further afield to Rome.<sup>74</sup>

A similarly appropriate use of symbolism is evident in the Latin epigraphy surrounding the equestrian portrait on Costanzo's medal: HIC. BELLI. FVLMEN. POPVLOS. PROSTRAVIT. ET. VRBES. (This man, the thunderbolt of war, has laid low peoples and cities). Here Mehmet seems to be drawing a comparison with his great-grandfather Bayezid I (r.1389-1402), who was known by the name of the Thunderbolt (*Yildirim*) on account of the speed with which he could move his troops. Bayezid had 'recognized the necessity for the conquest of Constantinople and the complete destruction of East Rome' and had placed the Ottoman dynasty on a firm foundation.<sup>75</sup> It was after him that Mehmet would name his own son and successor Bayezid II (1447-1512). In successfully fulfilling his plan for Constantinople, Mehmet would himself be compared to a thunderbolt by his own chronicler Kritovoulos, 'burning, ruining and destroying everything'.<sup>76</sup>

#### OVERVIEW

Mehmet's youthful ambition would find resolution on the death of his father in 1451, which provided him with the means and the freedom to launch an audacious attack on Constantinople. The fall of the Byzantine capital on 29 May 1453 redefined the geo-political landscape of the eastern Mediterranean and was a personal success for the twenty-one-year-old Mehmet, who 'rode on the tremendous prestige of that feat'.<sup>77</sup> The portrait medals that followed recognised his achievement through the imagery and epigraphy on their reverses and the portrait with titles that include an imperial acclamation – but omit *Magnus Princeps* and *Magnus Amiras* – on the other. Titulature, a constituent element of the medallic portrait, was widely used by the Ottomans to legitimise their authority.<sup>78</sup>

If the fall of Constantinople can be seen as the *terminus ante quem* for the commission of the *Magnus Princeps* relief, the period following Mehmet's deposition in 1446, when

he was already considering himself a sultan and attempted to 'set up a government of his own', might be seen as a *terminus post quem*.<sup>79</sup> However, it was only when the young prince acceded to the Ottoman throne for the second time, in February 1451, that he felt able to 'proclaim his success over his brothers and rivals'.<sup>80</sup> Now nineteen years old, an age not discordant with the *Magnus Princeps* portrait, the following two-year period presents the most compelling window for its commission and one that accords with the diverse evidence.

The medallic portrait had revived a Roman imperial model, enabling Mehmet to assume the role of 'universal sovereignty'.<sup>81</sup> The 'self-confidence' that led to his early commissioning of horoscopes and his eagerness to patronise those with other skills, whoever they may be and 'regardless of their origin', concur with his inclination towards medals.<sup>82</sup> This would have resonated with the antiquary and epigraphist Cyriacos of Ancona (1399-c.1452), whose professed goal was that of 'reviving things long dead and forgotten'.<sup>83</sup> Present at the Council of Ferrara in 1438 and well-travelled across the eastern Mediterranean, Cyriacos is said to have been welcomed at the Ottoman court of Murat II in the mid-1440s and is likely to have had knowledge of a suitable workshop in Italy for the modelling and facture of the relief.<sup>84</sup>

Mehmet's deep-seated interest in self-representation is likely to have been sparked by Pisanello's medal of John VIII, to which the *Magnus Princeps* relief can be seen as a form of riposte. This is a further example of the broader influence of Pisanello's medal, not only 'on the proliferation of the form itself but on other mediums', which even today continues to be reassessed.<sup>85</sup> As desirous as it might have been for the greatest medallist of his generation to have been the hand modelling Mehmet's portrait, Pisanello's association with the medal of the Ottoman's adversary is likely to have rendered such a proposition unworkable.

The artist responsible for the *Magnus Princeps* relief, though yet to be definitely identified, produced a portrait of striking verisimilitude. The virtuosity is apparent in the modelling of its textural elements, in, for example, the sensi-

tive handling of the kaftan's fur-trimmed collar or the turban and its folds of cloth. The facial demeanour conveys a sense of earnest resolve, yet possesses none of the swagger of Costanzo's post-conquest medal. Free of orientalist stereotyping or generic stylisation, it is among the earliest relief portraits of an identifiable Muslim figure.

With an innate interest in medallic portraiture 'seeded in childhood and nurtured with time', Mehmet found in the genre symbolic possibilities not available in Muslim culture or tradition.<sup>86</sup> Mehmet developed a broad interest in iconography, but it is the medallic portrait relief that provides the most accessible means of assessing his open-minded attitude to such work at a remarkably early period of his life, while casting light on other aspects of his character.

Though seemingly unrepresented by a portrait, his son Bayezid II is widely celebrated in astrological terms as 'the prophesied ruler of the age'.<sup>87</sup> The 'courtly cultivation of the stars' had prophetically hailed the fall of Constantinople fifty years earlier, but this divinatory science was far from unique to the Ottoman court.<sup>88</sup> A century later, at the court of Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603), the 'visionary plans' of Dr John Dee (1527-1608) similarly attempted to bring about the 'apocalyptic unity of mankind'.<sup>89</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

Murat II recognised in his chosen successor the self-same ambition that occasioned his own assault on Constantinople two decades earlier, and, while he had been mistaken in the belief that the twelve-year-old Mehmet was ready to take the reins of power in 1444, that confidence would soon be vindicated. Possessing supreme political intelligence and military genius comparable to that of Constantine the Great, the precocious teenager would claim the Roman emperor's legacy as his own, realising that the capture of Constantinople would confer upon him the 'prestige and authority necessary to create an empire'.<sup>90</sup>

Reprising the very warnings given by John VIII fifteen years earlier at the Council of Ferrara in 1438 and memorialised over the intervening

years by Pisanello's medal of the Byzantine emperor, Cardinal Bessarion (1403-1472), the Latin patriarch of Constantinople, expressed renewed fears for the Christian west immediately following the city's fall. He declared that 'much danger threatens Italy, not to mention other lands' and recalled the manner with which the fabled city of 'splendour and glory' had been 'despoiled, ravaged and completely sacked by the most inhuman barbarians, by the fiercest of wild beasts'.<sup>91</sup>

The *Magnus Princeps* relief is testament to an imperial vision and self-belief that delivered Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks and brought Mehmet II to international prominence. ●

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## NOTES

1. Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and his time*, *Bollinger series*, xcvi (Princeton, NJ, 1978).
2. Collection of the author. Formerly, Christie's auction, Rome, 13-14 December 2000, 'Monete, medaglie, decorazioni e libri di numismatica', lot 696 (of twelve different medals). The auction contained several hundred Renaissance and later medals, many accompanied by their original tickets, indicating a period of acquisition c.1880-1920. No identifiable source was stated in the catalogue, nor divulged by the auction house following a request.
3. Susan Spinale, 'Reassessing the so-called "Tricaudet medal" of Mehmed II', *The Medal*, 42 (2003), pp. 3-22. Spinale, p. 19, n. 15, notes that Luke Syson had independently suggested Pietro da Milano as the possible creator of the medal, while leaving the question open.
4. The bronze relief has a weight of 184g., a diameter that varies between 90.13mm. and 91.45mm., and a depth of between 3.1mm. and 3.6mm. An x-ray fluorescence test indicated a composition of bronze (90.61%), tin (5.58%), lead (2.73%) and iron (0.50%). This was conducted at the University of Oxford's Research Laboratory for Archaeology and History along with the test referred to in n. 6 below; the help of Dr Brian Gilmour is gratefully acknowledged.
5. Spinale, 'Reassessing', p. 19, n. 11, quoting Luke Syson, then curator of medals at the British Museum: 'there is no doubt that this is a fifteenth-century cast, whose fabric and patina are entirely consistent with a date in the 1460s'; report of January 2001.
6. Collection of the author. The lead relief has a weight of 165g., a diameter that varies between 90.74mm. and 91.49mm., and a depth of between 2.85mm. and 3.30mm. An x-ray fluorescence test indicated a composition of lead (89.58%), tin (9.39%), silver (0.18%) and antimony (0.15%); see n. 4 above. The medal was formerly at Spink auction, London, 24 January 2008, 'An important collection of Renaissance medals and plaquettes', lot 132; this collection is believed to have been formed in 1900-1928 by Count Alessandro Contini-Bonacossi (1878-1955), Palazzo Capponi, Florence, from which source Samuel H. Kress acquired many objects, mostly now in the National Gallery of Art, Washington; information communicated by the auction house. Other objects from this collection are in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence, having been acquired directly from the Contini-Bonacossi estate in the 1990s.
7. The softness of lead generally made it unworthy for courtly exchange, though it could serve for an artist's proof, in which 'a medallist would most probably cast the first example of a medal and use that version as the model'; John Graham Pollard, *Renaissance medals: the collection of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, I, Italy* (Washington, 2007), pp. xvii, xxiii. See also Aimee Ng, *The pursuit of immortality. Masterpieces from the Scher collection of portrait medals* (New York, 2017), p. 23; also n. 58 below.
8. Spinale, 'Reassessing', p. 10: 'the Arabic script is positioned so that, on rotating the [relief] by ninety degrees, as if to begin the Latin inscription from its proper orientation, *li-llah* aligns itself with the word MAGNVS. It aligns itself again with the Latin as one arrives at MEHOMET'. The *Alhmadullillah* also occurs in woven and embroidered textiles and other objects; my thanks to David Sulzberger for helpful discussion in this regard.
9. Spinale, 'Reassessing', p. 13, confirms the kaftan's authentic style and design, and draws parallels with those pictured in later portraits of the sultan. The heavily patterned kaftan may be seen to constitute 'an essential part of the presentation of self'; Suraiya Faruqi, 'Introduction, or why and how one might want to study Ottoman clothes', in Suraiya Faruqi and Christoph K. Neumann, eds, *Ottoman costumes from textile to identity* (Istanbul, 2004), pp. 15-48, at p. 16.
10. The position of the piercing of both the bronze and the lead specimen has avoided masking any of the letters, while enabling the portrait to hang perpendicularly. The piercing is a common manifestation of the Renaissance medal, but it was frequently applied with little regard to the lettering or the alignment of the portrait; see Luke Syson, 'Holes and loops: the display and collection of medals in Renaissance Italy', *Journal of Design History*, xv, 4 (2002), pp. 229-44, at pp. 231-6.
11. See, for example, John Cunnally, *The role of Greek and Roman coins in the art of the Italian Renaissance* (Ann Arbor: University of Pennsylvania, 1984), and Cornelius C. Vermeule III, 'Graeco-Roman Asia Minor to Renaissance Italy: medallic and related arts', in J. Graham Pollard, ed., *Italian medals. Studies in the History of Art*, xxi (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1987), pp. 263-81; also n. 58 below.
12. George Francis Hill, *Corpus of Italian medals of the Renaissance before Cellini* (London, 1930), pp. 18-19; Roberto Weiss, *Pisanello's medallion of the emperor John VIII Palaeologus* (London, 1966); G.F. Hill, *Renaissance medals from the Samuel H. Kress collection at the National Gallery of Art* (London, 1967), p. 7; Stephen K. Scher, ed., *The currency of fame*, exh. cat. (New York, 1994), pp. 43-4; Pollard, *Renaissance medals*, pp. 2-3; Luke Syson and Dillian Gordon, *Pisanello: painter to the Renaissance Court* (London, 2001).
13. Spinale, 'Reassessing', pp. 11-12, draws some affinity between the epigraphy on the *Magnus Princeps* portrait of Mehmet and Pietro da Milano's signed medal of René d'Anjou and Jeanne de Laval dated 1462 (Hill, *Corpus*, no. 52). She also draws a stylistic connection between the configuration of Mehmet's portrait and that of Pietro's undated portrait of Ferry II de Lorraine (Hill, *Corpus*, no. 56; Spinale, 'Reassessing', p. 11, fig. 10).
14. Vladimir Gvozdanovic, 'The Dalmatian works of Pietro da Milano and the beginnings of Francesco Laurana', *Arte Lombarda*, nuova serie, 42/43 (1975), pp. 113-23; Stanko Kokole, 'Cyriacos of Ancona and the revival of two forgotten ancient personifications in the Rector's Palace of Dubrovnik', *Renaissance Quarterly*, xlix, 2 (1996), pp. 225-67; Nicole Riesenberger, 'King of the Renaissance: art and politics at the Neapolitan court of Ferrante I, 1458-1494', doctoral thesis, 2016 (<https://drum.lib.umd.edu/handle/1903/18255>), pp. 97-101 and passim.
15. Riesenberger, 'King of the Renaissance', pp. 98-9.
16. Syson and Gordon, *Pisanello*, p. 233 ('directed by Pisanello'). For stylistic differences between the *Magnus Princeps* relief and Pisanello's fully attributed medals, in both the portraiture and the epigraphy, see, for example, Hill, *Corpus*, nos 19-23.
17. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, pp. 423-4, citing Seyyid Lokman, *Personal descriptions of the house of Osman*. Lokman was Ottoman court historian from 1569 to 1597.
18. Known from a single casting in bronze 123mm. in diameter: Hill, *Corpus*, no. 321; Hill, *Renaissance medals*, no. 102; Julian Raby, 'Pride and prejudice: Mehmed the Conqueror and the Italian portrait medal', in Pollard, *Italian medals*, pp. 171-94, at pp. 176-8; Scher, *The currency*, no. 21; Pollard, *Renaissance medals*, no. 145; Caroline Campbell and Alan Chong, eds, *Bellini and the East*, exh. cat. (London, 2005), no. 16, pp. 71-2; Gulru Necipoglu, 'Artistic conversations with Renaissance Italy in Mehmed II's Constantinople', *Muqarnas. An annual on the visual cultures of the Islamic world*, 29 (Boston and Leiden, 2012), pp. 1-81, at fig. 17a.
19. Julian Raby writes that Costanzo's portrait gives 'a sense of the ruler who seized Constantinople'; Scher, *The currency*, p. 89. J.M. Rogers notes that it has been described as 'young and robust', but 'to this writer the reverse is more the case'; Campbell and Chong, *Bellini*, p. 88.
20. Necipoglu, 'Artistic conversations', p. 6, citing the journal of the Venetian adventurer Giovanni Maria Angioiello (1451-c.1525) in I. Ursu, ed., *Historia*

21. *Turchesca* (Bucharest, 1909), pp. 122-3. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, p. 112, with reference to Giacomo de' Languschi.
22. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, pp. 230-32, 243, 333.
23. Spinale, 'Reassessing', p. 13. See also Campbell and Chong, *Bellini*, no. 23, pp. 78, 70.
24. Ottoman Court artist: *Mehmed II smelling a rose*, c.1475-80, watercolour on paper, 39 x 27cm., Topkapi Sarayi Museum, Istanbul (H2153, fol. 10r.); Campbell and Chong, *Bellini*, p. 91 and fig. 35.
25. After Costanzo (di Moysis) da Ferrara: Mehmet II, c.1478-80, watercolour and gold on paper, c.1478, 26 x 21cm., Topkapi Sarayi Museum, Istanbul (H2153, fol. 145v); Campbell and Chong, *Bellini*, p. 90 and fig. 34.
26. Hill, *Corpus*, no. 911; Hill, *Renaissance medals*, no. 248; Necipoglu, 'Artistic conversations', fig. 17c; Pollard, *Renaissance medals*, no. 282; Raby, 'Pride and prejudice', fig. 8; Scher, *The currency*, no. 39, pp. 126-8; Campbell and Chong, *Bellini*, pp. 76-7. A few contemporary or early casts have been noted; see n. 71 below.
27. Mehmet is styled MAGNI SVLTANI F MOHAMETI IMPERATORIS (Of the great sultan Mehmet, emperor) on this medal; Hill, *Corpus*, no. 432; Hill, *Renaissance medals*, no. 144; Necipoglu, 'Artistic conversations', fig. 17d; Pollard, *Renaissance medals*, no. 165; Raby, 'Pride and prejudice', fig. 7; Campbell and Chong, *Bellini*, nos 19, 20, and pp. 74, 93-5. Several contemporary or early casts have been noted, as well as a number that are of poorer quality and later production; see n. 71 below.
28. Known from contemporary casts in bronze and others produced latterly in bronze and lead; Hill, *Corpus*, no. 322; Necipoglu, 'Artistic conversations', fig. 17b; Raby, 'Pride and prejudice', fig. 6; Campbell and Chong, *Bellini*, nos 17, 18, and pp. 72-3.
29. Specimens of the Tricaudet medal are cast in silver and bronze and vary in diameter between 83 and 85mm. The workshop(s) is not known. Hill, *Corpus*, no. 1202; Raby, 'Pride and prejudice', fig. 4; Spinale, 'Reassessing', figs 5-8. Spinale (p. 12) suggests that 'Jean Tricaudet acquired a cast' of the original relief, but the absence of any direct casts of the *Magnus Princeps* relief suggests this to be unlikely. Similarly, the divergence of the Tricaudet portrait from that of the relief is great enough to rule out a direct casting, yet close enough to suggest the source to have been a sketch or draft of the original design. The Tricaudet medal is believed to have been first published by Theophile Marion Dumersan, *Histoire du Cabinet des Médailles, Antiques et Pierres Gravées* (Paris, 1838), G4.
30. Spinale, 'Reassessing', p. 12.
31. Necipoglu, 'Artistic conversations', p. 21.
32. See Luke Syson, 'Designs on posterity: drawings for medals', in Mark Jones, ed., *Designs on posterity* (London, 1994), pp. 219-75, at p. 234.
33. Spinale, 'Reassessing', pp. 12, 13.
34. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, pp. 43-4; Necipoglu 'Artistic conversations', p. 66, n. 98. The treaty is in the Venetian State Archives, VSA, Pacta Secreta, ser. 2, no. 230. A further treaty with Venice in 1478, but now headed 'Pax cum Domino Mohamet
- Imperator Turcorum 1478', is similarly worded, using the same form of address; Diana Gilliland Wright and Pierre A. MacKay, 'When the Serenissima and the Gran Turco made love: the peace treaty of 1478', *Studi Veneziani*, liii (2007), pp. 262-77.
35. Hill, *Corpus*, no. 1201; Necipoglu, 'Artistic conversations', fig. 9; Raby, 'Pride and prejudice', pp. 173-4; Spinale, 'Reassessing', fig. 12; Campbell and Chong, *Bellini*, no. 15. The medal is 61mm. in diameter and known from a small number of examples cast in bronze and lead. Stylistic elements suggest the 1460s or later and school or follower of the medallist Marco Guidiazini (fl. 1454-62). The titulature on this unsigned medal, though blundered and inaccurate, makes it clear that the portrait is intended to represent Mehmet the Conqueror. However, the absence of a reliable sketch has resulted in a portrait conjured from the artist's imagination or loosely based on an unknown sitter. It subscribes to an Orientalist stereotype, characterised by features notable for their blandness, and which in form, shape and expression are detached from the confirmed representations of Mehmet II. The portrait is further compromised by a cap and turban that cannot be linked to authentic Ottoman dress. The reverse finds its inspiration in Pisanello's medal of Leonello d'Este and the parallels being widely drawn between Mehmet II and Alexander the Great in the decades following the fall of Constantinople; Hill, *Corpus*, no. 30; Syson and Gordon, *Pisanello*, pp. 89-90.
36. See n. 8 above.
37. Hill, *Corpus*, no. 19; Hill, *Renaissance medals*, no. 1; Pollard, *Renaissance medals*, no. 1; Scher, *The currency*, no. 4; Syson and Gordon, *Pisanello*, pp. 31-35ff.; Weiss, *Pisanello's medallion*.
38. Emine Fetvacı, 'From print to trace: an Ottoman imperial portrait book and its western European models', *The Art Bulletin*, xcvi (2013), 2, pp. 243-68, at p. 253.
39. Kaya Sahin, 'Constantinople and the end time. The Ottoman conquest as a portent of the Last Hour', *Journal of Early Modern History*, xiv (2010), pp. 317-54, at pp. 317-18. Details of the events that would happen during the period before the end, as well as further proof about the nearness of the Last Hour, are provided by prophecies found in divinatory treatises; Sahin, 'Constantinople', p. 345.
40. Roger Crowley, *Constantinople: the last siege, 1453* (London, 2013), p. 139.
41. For Ottoman origins, see, for example, Cornell Fleischer, 'Ancient wisdom and new sciences: prophecies at the Ottoman court in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries', in *Falnama: the book of omens* (Washington, DC, 2009), pp. 232-42.
42. Joseph Gill, *The Council of Florence* (Cambridge, 1959). The Council moved from Ferrara to Florence in 1439.
43. Syson and Gordon, *Pisanello*, pp. 29-34.
44. Kritovoulos of Imbros, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, trans. Charles T. Riggs, (Princeton, 1954), p. viii. The term 'Roman' was in common usage to describe the Greeks (Byzantines) of Constantinople, which was itself frequently referred to as the New Rome.
45. Donald M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice: a study in diplomatic and cultural relations* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 381. Weiss, *Pisanello*, p. 19, describes the distribution as 'plentiful'. Julian Raby, 'A sultan of paradox: Mehmed the Conqueror as a patron of the arts', *Oxford Art Journal*, v, 1 (1982), pp. 3-8, at p. 4, suggests it was 'known in the Levant'.
46. Campbell and Chong, *Bellini*, p. 87.
47. Robert Glass, 'Filarete and the invention of the Renaissance medal', *The Medal*, 66 (2015), pp. 26-37, at p. 26. See also Tanja L. Jones, 'Crusader ideology: Pisanello's medals in the Guanteri chapel in Verona', *The Medal*, 66 (2015), pp. 4-12.
48. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, pp. 31-2, 41, 511.
49. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, p. 58. For example, he had independently conducted naval raids on Venetian territory.
50. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, p. 61. For a broader discussion of these provinces or sanjaks, see Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire* (2002), pp. 177-215.
51. Necipoglu, 'Artistic conversations', p. 6.
52. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, p. 60. For details of the peace treaty document, see n. 34 above.
53. Sahin, 'Constantinople', p. 345.
54. Fleischer, 'Ancient wisdom', p. 235; Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, pl. X, fig. a. For a listing of apocalyptic sources and the identification of Mehmet II as the 'Antichrist', see Necipoglu, 'Artistic conversations', n. 1 and 3.
55. Ahmet Tunc Sen, 'Astrology in the service of the Empire: knowledge, prognostication, and politics at the Ottoman court, 1450s-1550s', online dissertation, Faculty of the Division of the Humanities, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Universi-

- ty of Chicago, Illinois, August 2016 (<https://www.academia.edu/28241235/>), pp. 173, 237. Among the more prominent of such practitioners at the Ottoman court, and a protégé of Murad II and Mehmet II, was Abd al-Rahman al-Bistami (1379-1454), a 'highly-regarded authority on prophetic tradition, mysticism and occult cosmology'; Fleischer, 'Ancient wisdom', p. 233.
56. Julian Raby, 'Mehmed the Conqueror's Greek Scriptorum', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, xxxvii (1983), pp. 15-34, at pp. 18-19; Latin contemporaries who were witness to the siege of Constantinople, or who met Mehmet afterwards, 'testify to his interest in ancient history, and in particular the history of Alexander the Great'. See J.M. Rogers in Campbell and Chong, *Bellini*, p. 82, regarding Mehmet having ordered the 'principal sources for the life of Alexander the Great'.
57. John Monfasani, *George of Trebizond: a biography and a study of his rhetoric and logic* (Leiden, 1976), p. 188, referencing Bellini's oil painting of Mehmet.
58. Within the genre of the Renaissance medal, 'bronze was the favoured metal and Latin the favoured language', providing 'a natural connection with the medallions and sestertii of the Roman Empire'; Vermeule, 'Graeco-Roman Asia Minor', p. 261 and passim. See also n. 7 and 11 above.
59. Topkapi Sarayi Museum, Istanbul (MS Hazine 2324g); Raby, 'Pride and prejudice', p. 172; Unver Suheyli, *Fatih'in Cocukluk Defteri. Un cahier d'enfance du Sultan Mehmed le Conquerant 'Fatih'* (Istanbul, 1961); David Roxburgh, ed., *Turks: a journey of a thousand years, 600-1600* (London, 2005), pl. 232.
60. Hill, *Corpus*, nos 184-6; Pollard, *Renaissance medals*, nos 27-9; Scher, *The currency*, p. 14. Matteo de' Pasti was a pupil of Pisanello.
61. Joanna Woods-Marsden, 'How Quattrocento princes used art', *Renaissance Studies*, iii, 4 (1989), pp. 387-414, at p. 390.
62. Anthony D'Elia, *Pagan virtue in a Christian world: Sigismondo Malatesta and the Italian Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA, 2016), p. 27.
63. The correspondence remarks upon the sultan's appreciation and knowledge of portrait sculpture; Julian Raby, 'Pride and prejudice', pp. 175-6, 187; Necipoglu, 'Artistic conversations', p. 17. Matteo de' Pasti was arrested by the Venetians en route to Constantinople in the belief that he was a spy, and he never reached the Ottoman capital.
64. J.M. Rogers in Campbell and Chong, *Bellini*, pp. 80-82. The sultan's Greek Scriptorum, which included items in his collection to which he had a 'sincere divotione', provides another context in which the *Magnus Princeps* relief could have been displayed; Julian Raby, 'Mehmed the Conqueror's Greek Scriptorum', pp. 5-6.
65. For Mehmet's superstition, see, for example, Raby, 'A sultan of paradox', p. 3. He also had mystical leanings during his teenage years, and, as an adult, sought advice and reassurance from a shadowy court astrologer Ak-Semsemmeddin (d. 1459), in whom he 'believed implicitly'; Kritovoulos of Imbros, *History of Mehmed*, p. 23, f. 55. During the siege of Constantinople he seized upon the sight of blackbirds and the waxing of the moon as portents of relevance; Crowley, *Constantinople*, pp. 173-86.
66. Crowley, *Constantinople*, p. 205.
67. Christiane Gruber, 'From prayer to protection: amulets and talismans in the Islamic world', pp. 33-4; Francesca Leoni, ed., *Power and protection. Islamic art and the supernatural*, exh. cat. (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 2016).
68. *Palace of gold & light. Treasures from the Topkapi, Istanbul* (Washington, DC: Corcoran Gallery of Art and Topkapi Sarayi Muszesi, 2001), no. A6 (TSM 1/375). Mehmet's sword is 100cm. in length; no date is provided.
69. Heather Coffey, 'Between amulet and devotion. Islamic miniature books in the Lilly Library', in Christiane Gruber, ed., *The Islamic manuscript tradition: ten centuries of book arts in Indiana University collections* (Bloomington, IN, 2010), pp. 78-115, at p. 80.
70. *Palace of gold & light*, no. A7 (TSM 13/408). Mehmet's talismanic shirt is 135cm. in length; no date is provided.
71. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, p. 385, believes Bertoldo's portrait medal of Mehmet 'to have been copied' from that by Bellini, but provides no evidence. He further – and no less puzzlingly – suggests that the 'crescent suspended by a chain from the sultan's breast' is 'a pure invention on Bertoldo's part, proving that he was never in Istanbul'; p. 386. Bertoldo is believed to have worked from a drawing sent to Florence from Constantinople, having produced a medallion portrait that in depth of character and sense of refinement sets it quite apart from that by Bellini. Furthermore, seen against Mehmet's superstitious nature, the talismanic culture at the Ottoman court and the objects attributed to his ownership, as well as the *Magnus Princeps* bronze relief and its particular characteristics, there is no apparent reason to question the veracity of Bertoldo's representation.
72. Julian Raby in Scher, *The currency*, p. 89.
73. Hill, *Corpus*, p. 80.
74. John Freely, *The Grand Turk: Sultan Mehmed II conqueror of Constantinople and master of an empire* (New York, 2009), p. 59, citing the eye-witness emissary, Giacomo de' Languschi, who reports that 'Mehmet burns with the desire to rule'.
75. Paul Wittek, edited by Colin Heywood, *The rise of the Ottoman Empire* (London and New York, 2012), p. 164.
76. Kritovoulos of Imbros, *History of Mehmed*, pp. 172, 178.
77. Cemal Kafadar, *Between two worlds: the construction of the Ottoman state* (Berkeley, CA, and London: University of California, 1996), p. 18.
78. Hasan Colak, 'Tekfur, fasiliyus and kayser: disdain, negligence and appropriation of Byzantine imperial titulature in the Ottoman world', in Marios Hadjianastasis, ed., *Frontiers of the imagination: studies in honour of Rhoads Murphey* (Leiden and Boston, 2015), pp. 5-28, at p. 5. For the treaty with Venice, see n. 34 above.
79. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, p. 58, where it is further suggested that at this time the young sultan had 'arrogated to himself the right of coinage'.
80. Rhoads Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman sovereignty: tradition, image and practice in the Ottoman imperial household 1400-1800* (London and New York, 2008), p. 79.
81. Halil Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: the classical age 1300-1600* (2000), p. 57.
82. For 'self-confidence', see Fleischer, 'Ancient wisdom', p. 233; for 'regardless of their origin', Sen, 'Astrology', p. 306.
83. Kokole, 'Cyriacos of Ancona', p. 248.
84. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, suggests that Cyriacos was 'personally acquainted' with Murad II and the Ottoman court, having enjoyed an audience with the sultan in 1444, and includes other references to Mehmet II and Constantinople, some of which are yet to be corroborated; pp. 29-30, 44-5, 496-7. For further discussion of Cyriacos in this context, see Edward W. Bodnar and Clive Foss, *Cyriac of Ancona: life and early travels* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), p. 303; Raby, 'Pride and prejudice', p. 172.
85. Scher, *The currency*, p. 46.
86. Raby, 'Pride and prejudice', p. 178.
87. Sen, *Astrology*, p. 201. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, p. 379, refers to Bayezid's 'iconoclastic zeal', having had 'all the many paintings in his father's palace sold cheaply in the Istanbul bazaar' following his death.
88. Sen, *Astrology*, p. 567; Ahmet Tunc Sen, 'Reading the stars at the Ottoman court: Bayezid II (r.886/1481-918/1512) and his celestial interests', *Arabica*, lxiv (2017), pp. 557-608.
89. Francis Yates, *The occult philosophy in the Elizabethan age* (London, 2001), p. 88.
90. Halil Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire. The classical age 1300-1600* (London, 2000), p. 22. For parallels between Constantine the Great and Mehmet the Conqueror, see Speros Vryonis Jr, 'Byzantine Constantinople and Ottoman Istanbul: evolution in a millennial imperial iconography', in Irene A. Bierman, Rifa'at A. Abou-El-Haj and Donald Preziosi, eds, *The Ottoman city and its parts: urban structure and social order* (New York, 1991), pp. 13-52.
91. Freely, *The Grand Turk*, p. 57.