

The Wild and Exotic Gifts of Shah Abbas I

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Context

One of the expressions in the world of sincerity that connects the Ottomans and the Safavids is the culture of gift giving such as books, textiles, military equipment, watches, and medicines. Elements of material culture, which seemed to be the routine of daily life, brought the two palaces closer to each other and ensured the consolidation and development of relations. One of these gift records is included in a *Mecmū 'a*, which can be found in the Süleymaniye Manuscript Library, at Esad Efendi Collection nr. 3384.¹ The contents of the gifts which were sent by the Safavid ruler Shah Abbas I to the Ottoman Sultan Osman II via the ambassador Tohta Bey,² on 16 November 1620³ were detailed in this record.

When the contents of the presents in this record are analyzed, it is clear that textile products are predominant. As in previous periods, between the Safavids and the Ottomans, textile gifts were the most popular objects. However, the most remarkable feature of this gift list is the record of wild and exotic animals at the end.

In addition to the woven gifts, there are a total of 62 wild and exotic animals such as 40 lynxes, 12 foxes, 2 mare horses, 5 elephants (3 big and 2 young), 2 tigers and 1 rhino. Although animals are included in diplomatic gifts, they also have a very striking and popular aspect in terms of their appearance. Giving such gifts was another way for the

¹ Anonymous *Mecmū 'a*. Süleymaniye Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Esad Efendi Koleksiyonu nr. 3384. vr. 74a. The *Mecmū 'a*, which is estimated to have been compiled in the mid-seventeenth century, contains records on the Ottoman State's administrative and scientific organization, as well as poems by Veysî, Mustafa Âlî, and Ganîzâde Nâdirî and other texts. For *Mecmū 'a*, see. M. Kemal Özergin, "Eski Bir Rûznâme'ye Göre İstanbul ve Rumeli Medreseleri," *Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi* 4-5, (1973/1974): 273.

² Özer Küpeli, *Osmanlı-Safevi Münasebetleri (1612-1639)* (İstanbul: Yeditepe, 2014) 122.

³ Some Ottoman chronicles indicate that the gifts that are the subject of this study were brought to Istanbul by Yadiğar Ali Sultan about a year earlier. Topçular Kâtibi, *Topçular Kâtibi 'Abdülkâdir (Kadrî) Efendi Tarihi (Metin ve Tahlil)*, vol. II, ed. Ziya Yılmaz (Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu, 2003), 687-689; Kâtib Çelebi, *Fezleke [Osmanlı Tarihi (1000-1065/1591-1655)]*, vol. I, ed. Zeynep Aycibin (İstanbul: Çamlıca, 2016), 516-517; Sarı Abdullah Efendi, *Gazânâme-i Halîl Paşa (1595-1623)*, ed. Meltem Aydin (Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu, 2017), 306-309.

sovereign to demonstrate, consolidate or legitimise his power.⁴ For this reason, Shah Abbas I utilised the symbolic power of the gift in order to demonstrate his position of power in the changing balances after the Treaty of Serav.

Transcription

[vr. 74a]

Şāh ‘Abbās-ı bed-esās tarafından sene tis ‘a ve ‘iştirin ve elf Zilhiccesinüñ yigirminci günü gelüb harem-i muhtereme vâsıl olan hedâyâdur.

ibrişim, himl 50

katife, tonluk 220

münakkaş katife, tonluk 100

kemhâ-i ‘Acem, ‘aded 200

dârâyî, tonluk 150

kuşak-ı muṭabbak, ‘aded 100

destâr-ı muṭallâ, ‘aded 800

serâmî dülbend, 800

şâl-ı Keşmîr, 200

kalîçe-i kebîr, ‘aded 450

keçe-i mütenevvi ‘a, 40

vaşak, 40

rübâh-ı siyâh, 12

kemân-ı ‘Acem, [‘aded] 220

fağfür kablari, her günden [‘aded] 1000

esb-i kısrak, re’s 2

kebîr fil, 3

⁴ Suraiya Faroqhi, *Yeni Bir Hükümdar Aynası Osmanlı Padişahlarının Kamusal İmgesi ve Bu İmgenin Algılanması*, trans. Gül Çağalı Güven (İstanbul: Alfa, 2011), 25-26, Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Practicing Diplomacy, Practising Diplomacy in the Mamluk Sultanate Gift and Material Culture in the Medieval Islamic World* (London-New York: I.B. Tauris, 2016) 17-26.

şagîr fîl, 2

bebr, 2

gergedân, 1

bu cümleden şoñra bir muraşşa ‘ şandık cevâhir-i nefise ile

Translation

[Vr. 74^a]

The gifts were sent to the palace⁵ by ill-natured Shah Abbas on 16 November 1620.

Silk, *himl*⁶ 50

Velvet, *tonluk*⁷ 220

Inwrought velvet, *tonluk* 100

*Kemhâ*⁸ Ajem, 200 pieces

Dârâyî,⁹ *tonluk* 150

Folded belt, 100 pieces

Gilt *destâr*,¹⁰ 800 pieces

*serâmî*¹¹ *dülbend*,¹² 800

Cashmere shawl, 200

⁵ “Harem-i muhterem” which is mentioned in the original text is the Ottoman palace.

⁶ It is one of the measurements used in the Ottoman Empire. See. Halil İnalçık, “Yük (Himl) in Ottoman Silk Trade, Mining, and Agriculture,” *Turcica XVI*, (1984): 131-156.

⁷ *Tonluk/Donluk* is the “length” of one garment. Hedda Reindl-Kiel, “Power and Submission. Gifting at Royal Circumcision Festivals in the Ottoman Empire (16th-18th Centuries),” *Turcica XLI*, (2009): 70.

⁸ *Kemha* is a heavy silk weaving. Hedda Reindl-Kiel, “The Empire of Fabrics: The Range of Fabrics in the Gift Traffic of the Ottomans,” in *Inventories of Textiles - Textiles in Inventorie (Studies on Late Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture)*, ed. Thomas Ertl and Barbara Karl (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2017), 162.

⁹ *Darayi* is ikat of light silk. Reindl-Kiel, “The Empire of Fabrics,” 162.

¹⁰ *Destar* is muslin for wrapping the turban. Reindl-Kiel, “The Empire of Fabrics,” 162.

¹¹ *Seram* is probably a place name. It is the name of a mountain peak on the border between Iran and Iraq. Ali Ekber Dehkhoda, “Seram,” *Lugatnâme*, 1347, VIII, 11947. It is also the name of a settlement in what is now East India. I am grateful to Kaan Doğan for sharing this information with me.

¹² *Dülbent* is a length or square of muslin.

Large carpet, 45 pieces

A variety of felt, 40

49 lynxes

12 black foxes

Ajem bow, 220 pieces

Ceramic tiles, 1.000 pieces of all kinds

2 mare horses

3 big elephants

2 young elephants

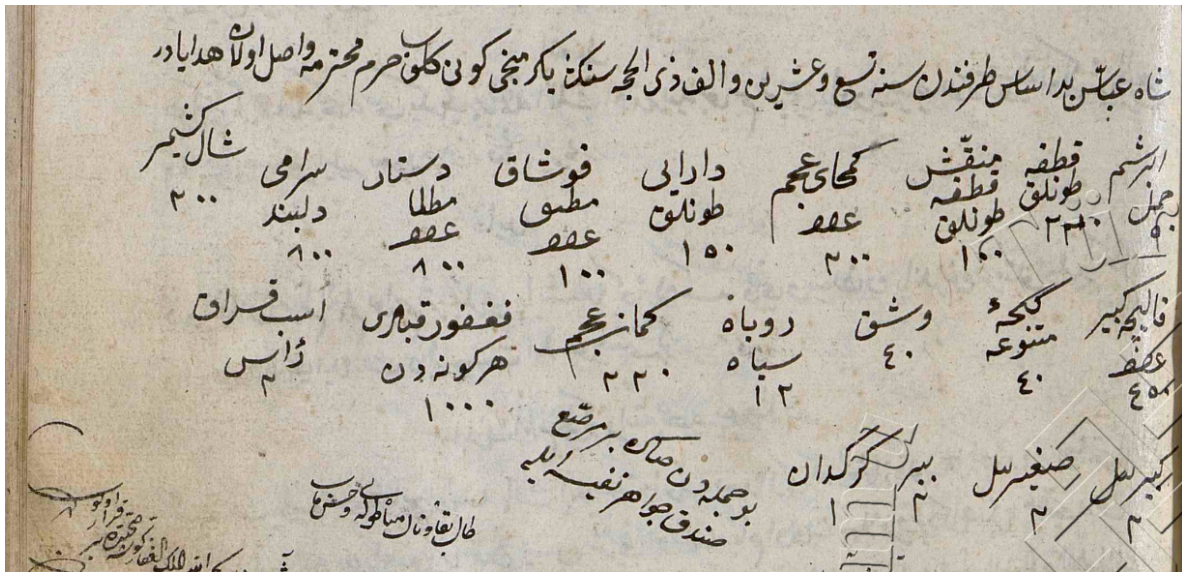
2 tigers

1 rhino

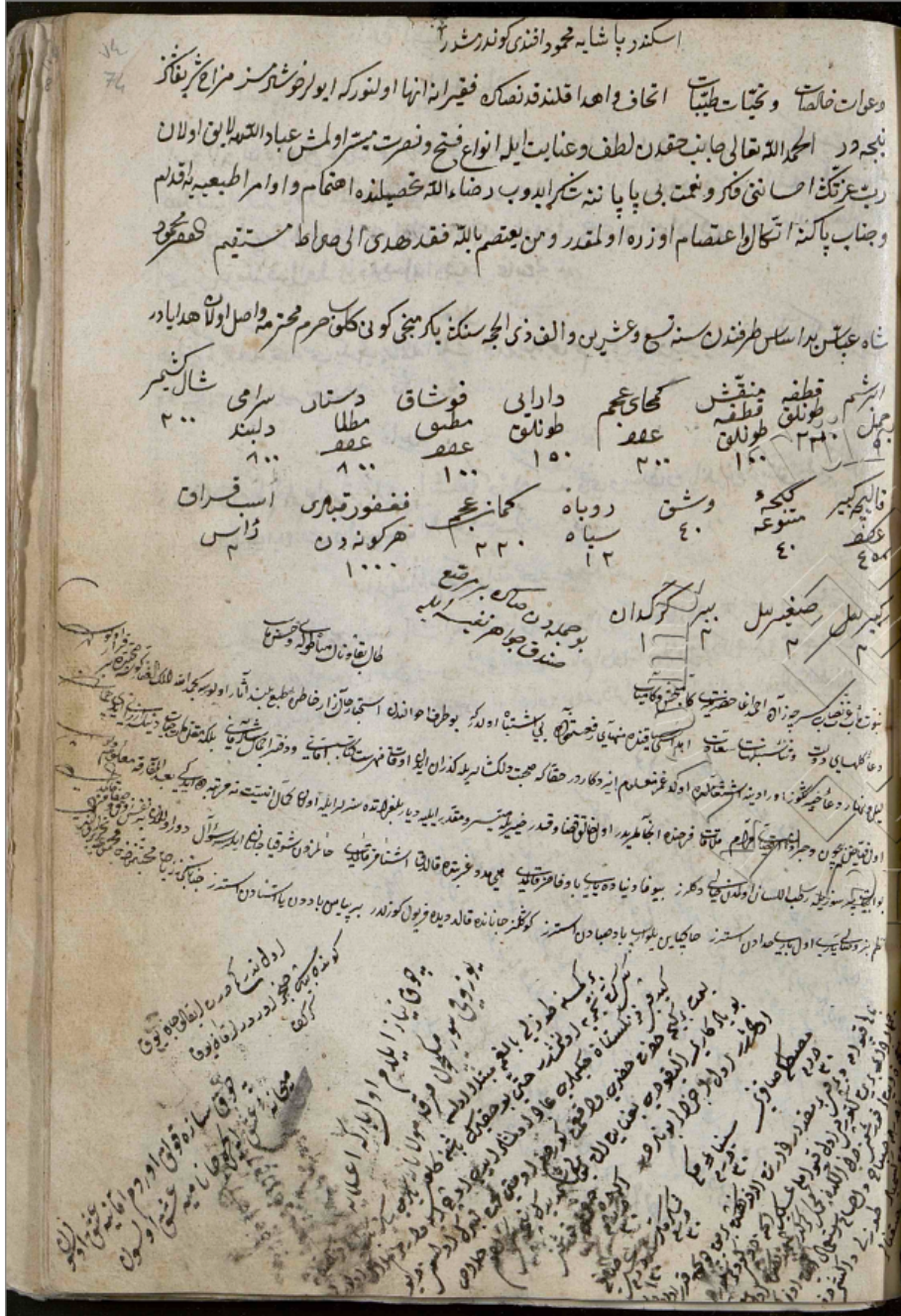
In addition to these presents, a jewelled chest with exquisite precious stones was also sent.

Facsimile

Fac. 1



Fac. 2



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