In the spring of 1986, thousands of people in Washington, D.C., visiting an exhibition at the National Gallery, stopped to marvel at the elegant signature of the Ottoman Sultan Süleyman I. Its gold and blue curving form, delicately embellished with tiny flowers in red and green, together with the other stunning examples of calligraphy, textiles, jewelry, ceramics and painting on display, exemplified Süleyman’s Western epithet, “the Magnificent”. Yet this audience of museum goers, and subsequent crowds in Chicago, New York, London, Paris, and Berlin, may not have appreciated that the imperial signature on the wall was not intended to be displayed before so many eyes, and indeed probably never had been prior to this exhibition. Few, if any, knew something of the document which was written beneath the signature; in fact, the text was rolled up during the exhibit, hiding the black and gold lines of intricate script which bore the message of this imperial deed. It would have been impossible for anyone to comprehend, then, the combined impact of the document’s message and its physical form.

This dissociation of form and content forced upon the museum-goers reflects an attitude not uncommon among historians of the Ottoman Empire as well. These historians, to judge from published works, have only infrequently stopped to reflect upon the material character and aesthetic aspect of the documents they read, or to incorporate such reflections into a comprehensive analysis of the text. As one of them, I have recently recognized how utilitarian my general attitude has been towards the external form of the documents I study, whose contents provide the substantive basis of my historical research. Certainly, in reading documents one notes the style of the handwriting to help identify which office may have issued a particular item, whether the document is neat or messy, a draft or final format, the quality and shape of the paper. Scholars have long paid attention to these features as they analyze the philology and diplomatics of Ottoman documents. But rarely does one stop to consider how the physical form is part of the meaning of the written text, the way in which form and content can work together to deliver a complex and powerful message.

Crafted writing is part of our everyday visual world. Diplomas, citations, certificates, and invitations are all associated with a distinctive choice of paper, lettering style, and ornamentation, particularly when compared with the quotidian clutter of bureaucratic forms, correspondence, financial statements, and newspapers. Yet the message conveyed in each of these documents would have had an identical literal meaning had it been delivered typed in black letters on plain white paper. An aesthetically pleasing presentation adds nothing to the legal force or literal message of the document: deeds, stocks, wedding contracts, and university degrees have the same validity on paper, parchment or vellum, large or small, whether engraved, hand-lettered or scrawled.

Once a piece of writing has been executed with some attention to design and composition, however, it acquires another vocabulary. In the language of its art, the writing now speaks on more than one level and the meaning of the document is conveyed emphatically by its total composition. Depending on the culture, black borders can add solemnity or represent bereavement; ornate shapes and lavish colors announce important celebrations; cartoon figures and skewed writing convey levity or festivity. An obvious omission of design and embellishment can also deliver a visual message, indicating that a matter is routine and unexceptional, or in certain circumstances seeking to convey insult.

Arabic writing evolved the standard shapes and proportions of the letters it has today by about the year 1000. At the same time, calligraphers created several variant alphabet styles for use in writing Arabic, Persian, and later Ottoman Turkish. Over time, more styles developed and each became associated with certain languages and types of written compositions. These could be religious, literary, or bureaucratic, and executed on any one of several media: paper, cloth, ceramic, metal, or stone.

Calligraphy has been a ubiquitous element of design and a field for decoration throughout the Islamic world. Any number of scholarly works have discussed the meaning of Arabic calligraphy and its various uses as an
element of decoration. Grabar regarded it as a kind of ornament that serves as an intermediary between the work of art it enhances and the world. Grabar explored "the meaning of writing in Islamic art," the discussion here will instead explore the meaning of art in Islamic writing, taking the calligraphy of a particular group of works of art it enhances and the required by law until modern reforms were introduced. The addition of written documents to confirm the right of the waqf to a particular property. The nature of the endowments, which were made in perpetuity, explains in part why these documents were carefully preserved in general. In the present case, however, their splendor, as well as their origination in the imperial palace also ensured their conservation.

Neither Süleyman’s decrees nor Hürem’s actions were extraordinary; the transfer of properties and their endowment as waqf were part of the standard repertoire of imperial behavior, and both Süleyman and Hürem were particularly generous benefactors. Numerous imperial complexes throughout the lands formerly part of the Ottoman Empire remain to attest to this. They are found not only in Istanbul, but in Edirne, Bursa, Mecca, Medina, Damascus, and Cairo, among other places. Written records of their founding and operation exist in the various archives of Turkey and other former Ottoman lands.

HÜREM SULTAN’S ENDOWMENT IN JERUSALEM

Among the imperial decrees (firman) issued by Sultan Süleyman were the group of twelve documents discussed here. They are dated between May 1550 and July 1560 (21 Rebi”ul-ahar 957-14 Ramazan 967). Each was a mülknâme, a deed to freehold of property, that Süleyman presented to his wife Hürem Sultan. The properties belonged to the imperial treasury; they were all classified either as imperial domain (hâss-i zâhi) or had formerly been tmars which were now vacant. They included agricultural lands and buildings in the southern Syrian districts of Jerusalem and Ramle and near Tripoli in northern Syria. Hürem, in turn, endowed what she was given as revenue sources to support the waqf she founded in the city of Jerusalem.

Before it could be given to an endowment, property had to be proven to be held as mülk (freehold) by the founder. Sufficient proof could be given by the sworn statement of eligible witnesses, in accordance with the dictates of Islamic law. The addition of written documentation became more common over time but was not required by law until modern reforms were introduced. A document such as the mülknâme, formally composed, witnessed, and signed was also considered valid proof; it was then preserved in case the legality of the endowment was ever challenged. In the event of an investigation, a qadi might examine a mülknâme to confirm the right of the waqf to a particular property. The nature of the endowments, which were made in perpetuity, explains in part why these documents were carefully preserved in general. In the present case, however, their splendor, as well as their origination in the imperial palace also ensured their conservation.

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Hürem’s foundation in Jerusalem, comprising a mosque, rooms for students, caravanserai, and a soup kitchen, was comparatively modest for an imperial endowment. The properties made waqf to support this complex — mostly villages in the region — were similarly modest, and thus seem unlikely to have provided sufficient inspiration for the execution of such striking documents. The establishment of the Jerusalem waqf was a conventional imperial act, and the foundation itself in no obvious way uncommon. The impetus for lavishing artistry and talent on producing the firmans, then, must lie outside of their immediate literal declarative task.

THE FIRMANS AND THEIR MEANING

The catalogue of the Topkapi Palace Museum archives describes the firmans as containing "the most beautiful examples of ornamented Süleymanic tuğras." However, the tuğras are only the most dramatic element in these documents. Taken together, the imperial signature and the text in each case form a single composition. These twelve firmans, however, do not constitute anything unusual: illuminated and embellished firmans were produced in the palace studios from the time of Mehmed II until the end of the empire. In Süleyman’s own time, similar firmans existed for other endowments of Hürem and her daughter Mihrimah Sultan, and diplomatic firmans could also be highly embellished. While the
documents discussed here are truly outstanding, they are also part of a typology of imperial idioms. The proportions of each decree are roughly similar, though the dimensions vary between 36 and 59 centimeters in width, and from 163 to 379 centimeters in length. The length depends primarily on the number of properties described in the decree; the opening and closing formulaic phrases are much the same in each case. Differences in paper width are probably owing to the taste either of the artist or of the papermakers.

Each decree begins, not with the tuğra, but with the Arabic word huwa, the short version of the invocation of God (“He”), at the very top of the page in small letters. However, the large sweep of the tuğra distracts the eye immediately downward, focusing our gaze on the intricate enlacing of the Arabic letters which spell Süleyman’s name and his epithets. Every firman but one (TSAE-7816/10), the tuğra is drawn in gold and lapis-blue inks, with some red, black, and green used in varying combinations to add to the floral or vegetal motifs that complete the ornamentation. The tuğra of TSAE-7816/10 is drawn only in gold, the text is written in blue in the first line, and the remainder in black. The text is identical to that of TSAE-7816/11, which has, however, a tuğra in gold and lapis, and text in gold and black. In addition, TSAE 7816/11 is witnessed at the end of the text, but TSAE 7816/10 is not. Perhaps there is some flaw in this unsigned copy, which led to its being set aside and rewritten before it was completed. Both are dated identically, and detail the properties Süleyman added to the Jerusalem waqf soon after Hürem’s death. Below the tuğra, all of the texts continue in the celi divânı script, the usual style for imperial decrees at that time and a variation of divânı, the script used for official Ottoman documents and registers. Neither belongs to the ahlâm-i sitta, or six calligraphic styles which were the main, though not the only, standard Arabic scripts by the tenth century. Divânı seems to have developed out of ta‘lîk, a style invented by Persian calligraphers influenced by the great calligrapher of the Abbasid court, Yakut al-Masta‘simi (d. 1298). Its actual invention is usually attributed, however, to the time of Mehmed II, and linked to Mehmed’s creation of the imperial council (divân-i humâyûn) after the conquest of Istanbul.

Despite an overall unity of shape and style, the composition of each text and choice and arrangement of ink colors and embellishments differ from one decree to the next. Most commonly, gold and black ink were used in varying combinations, sometimes by phrase, sometimes by line. Occasionally, one finds a blue phrase in lapis ink (TSAE-7816/5) or the entire text in a single color (TSAE-7816/7 in gold; TSAE-7816/10 in black). One text (TSAE-7816/8) is entirely in gold, except for “Allah” and all diacritics, which are in red ink. Gold, blue, and black alternate line by line in another (TSAE-7816/9) to produce a strong striped effect.

By comparison with more routine administrative documents, the mülknamêses are obviously the work of skilled and talented artists, specially trained in this type of work, and not the regular calligraphers or scribes of the imperial bureaus. All scribes, of course, were practiced in the writing styles needed for the office in which they worked. Men of exceptional talent were promoted after perfecting their calligraphic hands to produce firmans such as these as well as the magnificent Qur’ans, epic chronicles, and other masterpieces of writing patro- nized by the Ottoman imperial court. Unlike the artists of these, however, the calligraphers of the divân-i humâyûn did not sign their works, so individual attribution of any particular document is virtually impossible. The names of the scribes (kâtibên) working in the palace are known, however, from the occasional pay registers that survive for the palace artisan corps. The chancery head (nisancı) normally drew the sultan’s tuğra on ongoing documents after the body of the document had been written. Affixing the tuğra denoted final approval. Illuminated tuğras, like the ones found here, were probably the combined work of the nisancı, a tuğrakes, and an illuminator (müsehhib nakkâs). The tuğrakes was especially practiced in forming the intricate letters of the tuğra; an illuminator would apply the gold and multicolored elaboration to the basic form.

The painter-illuminators are better known than the divânı calligraphers. Shah Qulu, who was exiled from Tabriz and came first to Amasya, then to Istanbul, is credited with creating the elegant sâ{s style that decorated the loops and interstices of the tuğras with slim spiraling branches bearing tiny flowers. He headed the Topkapı painters until his death in 1556, when he was succeeded by his student Qara Memi, who was associated with semi-naturalistic floral designs. Even before this, however, Qara Memi seems to have executed major works. The majority of the firmans under consideration were executed between 1550 and 1557, and so their illumination and decoration is likely the work of Qara Memi and/or his students.

Altogether, therefore, a firman was the work of a team of artists, each of whom executed some specific aspect of the whole composition. This, too, would have contributed to the standardization of the documents, as each
man had to complete his task according to more or less fixed rules, leaving the most room for those who embellished to be extravagantly creative. The chief nakbāş probably executed the illuminations in documents of preeminent importance, such as Hürrem's müłknāmes.

In contrast to this set of firmans, most documents in the Ottoman archives, in either the Topkapı Palace or the Başbakanlık archives, were written in black ink, though one does find a gold tugra at the front of some registers or tiny gold flakes which were scattered over the wet ink. Every once in a while, gold dots were introduced for decoration. Red is quite commonly found in account registers of various kinds, distinguishing numbers from the text or highlighting some particular entry. Lapis blue and green seem to have been reserved for the illuminators and painters.

The presence of gold and blue inks distinguishes these particular imperial firmans from more routine documents, and the lavish use of these costly colors makes them different from most other mülknamēs issued in Süleyman's name. Those issued by Süleyman to his daughter Mihrimah Sultan also contain generous amounts of these colors. Blue and gold are found in many of the examples from Süleyman's time as well as before and after. The raw materials for these precious inks — gold leaf and lapis lazuli — may have been supplied separately from the imperial treasury, and not distributed with the other materials (inks, paper, pens, etc.). Moreover, the value of the precious gold and lapis, together with the fine quality of all the materials used, may even have equaled that of some of the smaller properties that were endowed. The irony of this, however, was probably irrelevant to the whole project.

One might well begin to consider the meaning of these documents by asking: Who saw the firmans? Who was privileged to appreciate their crafting? For whom were they meaningful, and for whom were they intended?

Certainly, the men who created these firmans saw them. This is not an idle observation, for any artist's pride and joy in his or her own handiwork is integral to a process of inspiration and affirmation. Paradoxically, we can be certain that the artists and the signatories — the hāžitaskers of Rumelia and Anatolia, and three or four viziers — saw the firmans but not anyone else. In all likelihood, though, other members of the workshop in which they were created also saw them. We might justifiably assume that Süleyman saw the ones issued in his name and that Hürrem was alive to see ten of this particular group of twelve — the other two were issued after her death, detailing the properties added by Süleyman in her honor.

Beyond this somewhat circumscribed group, it is difficult to know who had access to the firmans. Household servants who attended Süleyman and Hürrem may have seen the scrolls presented and unrolled; perhaps Hürrem looked at them occasionally to enjoy their artistry. Ebu 's-Su'ud Efendi, the mufti (şeyhülislam), may have examined them in his capacity as senior religious-legal official. The general manager (nāzir) of the endowment ex officio, the kapş aşas of the Bāb-i Şe'adet (Gate of Felicity), might have been privileged to see the mülknamēs in the course of his administrative duties, and perhaps Haydar Kethûda, who was appointed by Hürrem to be joint administrator with her, saw them.

No record of any public display exists for these documents or others like them. Important proclamations about matters affecting the people of Istanbul or any other place were read out publicly and therefore might also be more visible, but, there is no indication that firmans such as these were rolled up, carried to the villages that they mentioned, and read out to the local peasants. In fact, there is no reason to think that these firmans ever left the Topkapı Palace, from the moment the first penstroke touched paper until today, when TSAE-7816/2 clocked several thousand miles in its travels to some of the world's great museums. However, anyone who saw the firmans might have spoken of their beauty and artistry to others, so that people knew about them.

Other mülknamēs, such as those given to Mihrimah Sultan, Süleyman's daughter, did not remain in the Topkapı Palace. Mihrimah did not reside there after her marriage to Rüstem Paşa, and some of the mülknamēs given to her appear to have been stored in his mosque in the Tahtakale quarter of Istanbul. There, they may have been viewed by a larger group of people.

As for the meaning and intention of the firmans, we again begin with the calligrapher-artist. The firmans were made as part of a commission; they were meant to be beautiful and outstanding examples of artistic talent within a highly circumscribed, formalized, and stylized organization of document production. We know little of the status of document-making compared to other forms of painting and calligraphy within the world of these artisans. Presumably a hierarchy of prestige and talent was reflected in the assignments bestowed and their attendant rewards. While a hierarchy of masters, journeymen, and apprentices certainly existed in the palace workshops, it is unclear how the studios of calligraphy and painting illumination were related to each
other, particularly in the execution of the elaborate imperial firmans. Was such a work considered of equal prestige with that of embellishing a Qur'an or other manuscript?

Leaving aside those who actually produced the firmans, one turns to the man who initiated and paid for their production and to the woman who received them. Süleyman's act of property transfer prompted the writing down of its terms, and because it was he, this inscribing was carried out in the appropriate studio of his palace workshops. The firmans stood for Süleyman, representing him to Hürem, as the sultan of the Ottoman Empire, as the master of the imperial household, and as her husband. By the 1550's, Süleyman was in the fourth decade of his rule, and Hürem had long been his spouse. No object that passed from him to her as a gift could be trifling. The documents, restricted to certain forms and characteristic embellishments, could only aspire to be the finest of their type, nothing more. But they had to be the finest, and nothing less. Thus the artisans likely selected designs and materials from among a hierarchy of possible elements, choosing those appropriate to the status of the person being addressed.²⁵

Süleyman derived many benefits from the firmans; they not only echoed his stature, but may also have bestowed spiritual advantage on him. Qadi Ahmad said of a famous scribe:

> The aim of Murtadā ṬAli in writing
> Was [to reproduce] not merely speech, letters and dots,
> But fundamentals, purity and virtue
> For this reason he deigned to point to good writing.²⁶

As patron, did Süleyman share in the spiritual benefits of the actual calligrapher?²⁷

The exceptional execution of the firmans was, I think, inspired by the persona of Süleyman himself, and by the particular relationship between Süleyman and Hürem. No doubt, an imperial gift of property entailed the production of documents which reflected the magnanimity of the sultan in his capacity as grantor. However, the strong ties between this imperial couple, well known and well documented, may also have encouraged the scribes, or Süleyman in his instructions to them. The waqf was established in the last decade of Hürem's life. She had already endowed numerous institutions throughout the empire, and the final endowment deed of this one is dated to the year before her death. Thus the firmans also acknowledge, and announce, her senior status and her reputation for beneficence.

The documents did not represent merely an imperial act. They were the initial step of a pious undertaking, and so reflected the importance ascribed to such endowments. The firmans imply Süleyman's presence as a kind of silent partner in what was to become an undertaking in Hürem's name alone. Hürem's endowment-making was an imperial pious act enabled by the generosity and munificence of her husband the sultan. At the same time, however, Süleyman was engaged in the construction of the Süleymaniye mosque complex in Istanbul, his crowning endowment and a project of enormous proportions. The firmans, therefore, echo the magnificence of Süleyman's own endeavor and underscore the general preoccupation of the time with pious imperial construction. Ultimately, the efforts of the two redounded to the greater glory of Süleyman and the Ottomans.

Hürem accepted the documents and properties they specified from Süleyman. In this she was passive, yet they enabled her, in turn, to act in her own name, as benefactress and patroness. However, her endowment deed, the written evidence of her own actions, lacked the imperial éclat of the firmans. While appropriately fine, the waqfiyya is not spectacular. The opening page is illuminated; the tugra is in gold; and the text bears small gold medallions and is enclosed in gold and black borders. But these elements do not set it apart from others of its type as much as do the aesthetic qualities of the firmans.²⁸

Despite the lack of evidence on the subject, one must also wonder, at the very least, what kind of effect the documents produced on Hürem herself. Although she could read, could she read the elaborate calligraphic script? If so, did she understand the elaborate introductory Arabic phraseology that paid tribute to her and to Süleyman? These questions are not idle, for the firmans were directed to Hürem. She is addressed in them as ṭāli ṭalibat el-hayrât ve ṭusenât netice el-ṭali ve l-sa'dat azimet el-ṣān ("patroness of good works and pious deeds, producer of greatness and prosperity, of vast renown"); el-mahfiṣa bi-sunuf-i laṭ bei ("encompassing every sort of gracious act") and malikat el-malikât ("queen of queens").²⁹ Her response to them — expected or actual — would further reveal the intentions accompanying the production of firmans of this kind. Was she more flattered by the words or the stunning appearance of the documents?

Some diplomatic firmans from Süleyman's time provide an interesting comparison with the mülknames.³⁰ In these, a decorated gold and blue tugra was placed between two parts of a long introductory section which
details Süleyman’s strengths. The first part of the text was written all in gold, the two other portions in black. Before the text addressed to the foreign ruler, the name of Süleyman was written out again in large blue letters, rather like a herald shouting out his name. More than the mülknämes, this letter aggressively expresses Süleyman and his power. The repetition of Süleyman’s name, written out clearly and not in the stylized tuğra, marked the end of the section praising the Ottoman ruler and the commencement of the stated business of the letter. It was deliberately bombastic, but less elegant than the firmans drawn for Hürrem.31

CONCLUSION

Ultimately it is difficult to know how much meaning to read into the production of any specific document or group of documents. To what extent can we weigh intent or imperial intervention in the crafting of individual firmans against the fashions and tastes in document production in the Ottoman imperial workshops, or the standard format for a particular category of document? It does not seem credible to attribute the form of the firmans entirely to the taste and competing agendas of the artists themselves. The aesthetics of document production defined the artistic vocabulary of the documents; the rank of the people involved — Süleyman and Hürrem — restricted the choice of materials and craftsmanship to the finest possible. And, if we consider the firmans together with the finest examples of artistic production in all other media from Süleyman’s time, the impression is overwhelmingly one of an imperial culture possessed of a refined appreciation for splendid aesthetic creation for its own sake.

The various collections of Ottoman archives have so far yielded up for study and appreciation a wide array of document styles, ranging from preliminary draft scribblings to the sumptuous illuminated texts considered here. This variety suggests that the form for a document was intentionally chosen to amplify its textual meaning. However, just as our interpretations of the written texts, so too our attempts to explicate the meaning of their form are susceptible to contamination by our own contemporary sensibilities. Any appreciation, then, of the combined effects of text and embellishment must be informed by insights into the nature and organization of Ottoman imperial taste and artistic production of the time. In this case, a study of imperial endowment policies under Süleyman must include an exploration of aesthetic document production. It is not just a question of understanding why Hürrem Sultan endowed a foundation in Jerusalem, but of appreciating what was involved in the process of effecting the endowment from its inception in sultanic acts. Within the framework of Islamic legal requirements alone, the firmans were superfluous since oral testimony to the transfer of land would have been sufficient. In the culture of Ottoman imperial administration, written documents of all transactions and acts were a matter of routine.

The meaning imparted by the magnificence of the documents might have had a limited public broadcast range, restricted to an intensely personal dialogue between Süleyman and Hürrem. Such dialogues, however, became unavoidably part of the public discourse of sultanic legitimation. The pious endowments of Süleyman and Hürrem together bolstered the reputation and legitimacy of the Ottoman sultan and his household. The firmans only become transformed into something entirely not themselves when they are displayed in the twentieth century for their aesthetic value alone. When seen and/or read in the Ottoman milieu, the name of Süleyman, the evidence of his authority, and the praiseworthy and beneficence of Hürrem are inextricably merged with the physical appearance of his firman to convey the message of imperial power, patronage, and piety.

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NOTES

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1. A color reproduction of this signature can be found in Marthe Bernus Taylor et al., Soliman le Magnifique (Paris, 1990), p. 37. Oleg Grabar pointed out, generally with regard to the objects with writing that were on display, “Reading the writing is necessary both for determining the meaning of objects and for visually appreciating them”; see “An Exhibition of High Ottoman Art,” Muqarnas 6 (1989), 3.

2. See the article “Khart” in Encyclopaedia of Islam (henceforth EI), 2nd ed., and Yasin H. Safadi, Islamic Calligraphy (London, 1978), pp. 7–31, on the development of Arabic writing and calligraphy. For the history of Arabic calligraphers, see V. Minor-
5. Ibid., p. 91.
6. The staff of the Topkapi Palace archives repeatedly emphasized the extraordinary beauty of these documents while I was reading them. Leslie Peirce, too, notes their high quality in The Imperial Harim (New York, 1993), p. 205.
7. These firmans are located in the Topkapi Palace Archives (TSA), in the Evrak (E) series, numbers 7702 and 7816/1-11.
8. In fact, the sworn testimony of two reliable witnesses traditionally took precedence over written evidence. And the oral declaration of a waqf's founding was adequate according the Hanifi madhhab which was predominant under the Ottomans (S. D. Goitein, Muslim Law in Israel: Introduction to Muslim Law (Jerusalem, 1957), p. 110 [in Hebrew]). Cultures of written testimony in Islamic society developed at different paces; see, for example, the discussion in B. Messick, The Calligraphic State (Berkeley, Calif., 1993), pp. 215-290.2.
10. See the examples in ibid., pp. 45, 49, as well as in the catalogue edited by Ayegfil Nadir, Imperial Ottoman Firmans (London, 1986).
13. Safâfed's Islamic Calligraphy provides a very detailed and extensively illustrated explanation of the different styles.
14. See “Khat,” pp. 1125–26. Filiz Çağman says it is generally agreed that divâni was developed by the calligrapher Tâcîddîn, who came from Bukhara during the time of Selim I (see Taylor et al., Soliman le Magnifique, p. 306). Mustafa Ali says that it was Ma'tâkî Naṣîfî (d. 1564) who then altered the divâni style to make it more readable. See his Menâzîh-i Hürnerverîn (Istanbul, 1926), p. 61; and also Safâfed, Islamic Calligraphy, p. 30.
15. This changes by the nineteenth century, on which see “Khat,” p. 1126.
16. Çağman, in Taylor et al., Soliman le Magnifique, p. 305.
17. Atîl, Age of Sultan Suleyman, pp. 32, 36, 38.
18. Çağman, in Taylor et al., Soliman le Magnifique, p. 308; and see also the long discussion of Qara Memi’s career in Michael Rogers, “Kara Mehmed Celebi (Kara Memi) and the Role of the sâr-nâkhiyân,” in G. Veinstein, ed., Soliman le Magnifique et son temps (Paris, 1992), pp. 297-338.
19. Firmans issued to Mihrimah by Süleyman may be seen on display in the Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi in Istanbul. There are also examples reproduced in Nadir’s Imperial Ottoman Firmans.
20. Qâdi Ahmad provides instruction for the making of lapis lazuli and gold inks, on which see Calligraphers and Painters, pp. 196-200.
21. Such was the case when they were issued for the decorative paintings of a kiosk built by Bayezid II. On this structure, see Gülru Necipoğlu-Kafadar, "The Account Book of a Fifteenth-Century Ottoman Royal Kiosk," Journal of Turkish Studies 11 (1987): 32-33. Necipoğlu notes there that blue and gold had a similar status in Europe at that time.
22. Grabar notes that "books, writing, objects were manufactured in order to be kept, most of the time, invisible, except on official occasions or as gifts to others" (Mediation of Ornament, p. 97. Of the firmans, TSAE-7816/7 and /10 are unsigned; /4 may have a signature now invisible beneath its frame.
24. My thanks to Gülru Necipoğlu for sharing with me preliminary findings on this matter from her current research.
25. In other artistic media there were clearly articulated hierarchies of items produced, categorized by fineness and value, and intended for particular recipients. Tahsin Öz cites the brocades graded as "Hasîl-ıhas seraser, Vezir seraseri, Beylerbeyi seraseri, Esat seraser, Edna seraser" (Türk Kumas ve Kadifeleri (Istanbul, 1946), 1: 62-65). This, in turn, recalls categories of taxation divided into a'zâ, esvat, and edna according to the means of the taxpayer.
27. Grabar, Mediation of Ornament, p. 91. In his discussion of writing as ornament, Grabar points out the levels of meaning traditionally assigned to writing. While it may merely communicate a literal meaning, it can also proclaim "directly or indirectly, by the very fact of its existence, the power of a ruler or of God." And, writing can embody the intent of the writer in creating something beautiful as "an act of piety that purifies both maker and beholder."
28. This is true for both the Ottoman Turkish version found in the Khalidi library in Jerusalem (catalogue number: "Tur. 4") and the Arabic version located in the Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi (no. 2192) in Istanbul. I would like to thank Kha'îfa Khalidi and Lawrence I. Conrad and Barbara Kellner-Heinkele for allowing me to ascertain the physical aspect of the Jerusalem waqfiyya; it is reproduced and translated in Stephan, "Endowment Deed," pp. 170-94. A color reproduction of the first page of the Arabic waqfiyya can be found in Taylor et al., Soliman le Magnifique, p. 38.
29. From, respectively, TSAE-7816/2, TSAE-7816/8, and TSAE-7816/6.
30. Examples of these are also found in the catalogue by Taylor et al., Soliman le Magnifique, p. 45, and passim.
31. See, for example, the letter from Suleyman to Francis I of France, in Taylor et al., Soliman le Magnifique, p. 45.