

The Significance of the Number ‘Nine’ for the States and Societies in the Early Modern Turkic Empires

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Introduction

Turkic peoples have considered the number nine as bearing a special mystic significance. In accordance with the ancient Turkic customary practice, the gifts were presented in nines. One of the leading tribes of the Turks was known as the ‘*Tokuz Oguz*’, the ‘Nine Oghuz’. The mysticism of the number ‘nine’ is used in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. The eleventh-century Turkish poet from Central Asia, Yusuf Balasagunlu, a writer of the epic *Kutadgu bilig* (The Knowledge of How to Become Happy) compared the sunrise to the appearance of the ruler before whom nine gold-colored banners were carried¹. Abu’l Ghazi, an author of *Shajarah-i-turk* divided his work into nine chapters because ‘wise men have said: “nothing must exceed the number nine”². Ottoman, Mughal and Safavid chroniclers often mention of “nine skies”, “nine vaults of heaven”.

The number ‘nine’ also played an important role in gift exchanges: it was customary to give presents in groups of nine. Gift-giving and tribute payment in denominations of nine were also recorded by both local and European authors of the late medieval and early modern periods³. This number was also observed

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1 Mustafa Kaçalin, *Yüsuf Has Hâcib: Kutadgu Bilig*, Metin, Kültür ve Turizm Bak. Yay., 2008, (e kitap), s. 254.

2 *Rodoslovnoye drevo tyurkov. Sochineniye Abul'-Gazi, Khivinskogo khana // Izvestiya obshchestva arkhologii, istorii i etnografii pri imperatorskom Kazanskom universitete*, Tom XXI, Vyp. 5-6, Kazan 1906, p. 5.

3 Venetian traveler Marco Polo speaking about the gift-giving ritual among the Turco-Mongols states that: “And you must know their custom in offering presents to the Great Kaan (at least when the province making the present is able to do so), to present nine times nine articles. For instance, if a province sends horses, it sends nine times nine or 81 horses; of gold, nine times nine pieces of gold, and so with stuffs or whatever else the present may consist of”. Henry Yule, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo, the Venetian Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East* (Volume 1) (3rd ed.), John Murray, London 1903, p. 390-391. Similarly, 13th century Armenian monk Hayton mentions: “Tatars hold the number nine in great esteem and consider the number nine as good

in administrative divisions. According to Hamd-Allah Mustawfi, 'Azerbaijan comprised nine *tumans* (vilayet), with 27 cities in the 13th and 14th centuries⁴. 16th century Venetian envoy Vincentio d'Alessandri mentions that, Tabriz city was divided into the nine municipal districts⁵.

Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals and built their legitimacy mainly on Turco-Mongol traditions and some important features of these traditions had persisted in political life until the end of the dynasty. According to the "Tadhkirat al-muluk", "the *Yasavulan-i suhbat* (Aides-de-camp) could be only the sons of respected amirs, and in olden times they were but 8 or 9 in number"⁶. Anne Broadbridge points out that, "Epitomized by the Turco-Mongolian custom of *toquz*, which involved offering gifts in nines, ritual of gifting was highly developed in the Timurid patrimonial establishment⁷. As with Timur, the number nine held special meaning for Mughals. Gifts given in sets of nine through much of the Mughal era and Mughal princes were fond of symbolism⁸. According to the author of the *Akbarnama*, the official history of Mughal Emperor Akbar (r.1556-1605) Abul Fazl, "The generations of the Mughuls are nine in number, beginning with Mughul Khan and ending with Ilkhan. The Mughuls have taken the usage of *Tuquz* (nine) from this, and they consider this number most excellent in all matters"⁹. Regarding

fortune. And if one should present anything to one's lord, it is best that one presents nine items of one wish that one's present would be graciously received and so is the practice of the Tatars unto this very day". Hayton: *Temujin and the Rise of the Mongol Empire Islamic Central Asia*: an anthology of historical sources, ed. Scott C. Levi and Ron Sela, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 2010, p. 124-125.

- 4 *The geographical part of the Nuzhat-al-qulub*: composed by Hamd-Allah Mustawfi of Qazwin in 740 (1340); trans. G. Le Strange and printed for the trustees of the "E.J.W. Gibb memorial", E.J. Brill Leyden 1915-1919, p. 73.
- 5 *Narrative of the Most Noble Vincentio D'Alessandri / A narrative of Italian travels in Persia, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries*. Hakluyt Society, London 1873, p. 224.
- 6 *Tadhkirat al-muluk*. A manual of Safavid administration (circa 1137/1725), Translated and explained by V. Minorsky, "E.J.W. Gibb Memorial" series, Luzac & co., London 1943, p. 64.
- 7 Anne F. Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008, p. 179. Ahmad ibn Arabshah's description attests the importance Timurids attached to the number 'nine'. During Timur's expedition to Azerbaijan Shirvanshah Sheikh Ibrahim, offered nine of every sort of various gifts, but of slaves eight; but when the men who received those gifts said to him "Where is the ninth slave ? I myself am the ninth." said the Sheikh, and so won the heart of Timur. Ahmad ibn Arabshah, *Tamerlane, or Timur the Great Amir*, trans. J. H. Sanders, Luzac and Co., London 1936, p. 74.
- 8 James L. Wescoat, Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Mughal Gardens: Sources, Places, Representations, and Prospects*, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington DC, 1996, p. 123.
- 9 *The Akbarnama of Abu'l-Fazl*(history of the reign of Akbar including an account of his predecessors) translated from the Persian, volume I, H. Beveridge, The Asiatic Society, Calcutta 1907, p. 170.

the mystic importance of nine, Abul Fazl writes: “A work of many thousands of years was accomplished in nine days¹⁰. Similarly, he adds that, “The king has made this long march in nine days¹¹. The famous pilgrimage of Shah Abbas I (r.1587-1629) to Mashad in 1601 covered nine days¹².

Turkic peoples also used number ‘nine’ in legal affairs. 14th century traveler Ibn Battuta notes that, “A man in whose possession a stole horse is found is obliged to restore it to its owner and to give nine of the same value”¹³. In Great Mughal Empire, where many ancient Turkic customs continued, the chronicler Abu’l Fazl records that, an officer of the rank of *Tarkhan* was not liable to be punished provided the number of his crimes did not exceed nine. He writes: “Just rulers exempted some among their servants from certain injunctions and prohibitions, and distinguished them by this name (*Tarkhan*). A *Tarkhan* of the *Sahibqiran* was one whom his ushers did not keep out of any place, and from whom and from whose children no inquiry was made up to the number of nine faults”¹⁴.

10 *The Akbarnama of Abu'l-Fazl* (history of the reign of Akbar including an account of his predecessors) translated from the Persian, volume III, H. Beveridge, The Asiatic Society, Calcutta 1939, p. 87.

11 *The Akbarnama*, III, p. 76.

12 Munshi, Isgandar Bey Turkman, *Tarikh-i 'alam ara-yi Abbasi*, edited by Yagub Mahmudov, translation from Persian to Azerbaijani by Shahin Farzaliyev, 2 vols, vol.II, Sharq-Qarb, Baku 2010-2014, s. 1531.

13 Ibn Battuta: *Travels in Asia and Africa 1325-1354*, translated and selected by H. A. R. GIBB (The Broadway Travellers.), George Routledge, London 1929, p. 143.

14 *The Akbarnama*, vol.I II, p. 973. According to Mirza Muhammad Haidar, an author of the “*Tarikh-i-Rashidi*” Tarkhans had originally the following seven privileges: “1. *Tabl* (or the drum) 2. *Alam* (or the Standard). The former being called in Turki “nakara”, the latter “tuman tugh”. 3. Two of his servants might wear the “Qushun-tugh”. 4. He might wear the Qur in the councils of the Khan, through it is custom among the Moghuls that no one but the Khan may carry his quiver in his hand. 5 Certain privileges in connection with the Khan’s hunt. 6. He was to be an Amir over all the Moghuls... 7. In the presence of the Khan, the other Amirs were to sit a bow’s lengths further than he from the Khan. *The Tarikh-I-Rashidi of Mirza Muhammad Haidar, Dughlat: A History of the Moghuls of Central Asia*, an English Version: Edited, with Commentary, Notes, and Map, by N. Elias, the Translation by E. Denison Ross. S. Low, Marston, London 1895, p. 54. Mirza Muhammad Haidar continues to add: “Such were the seven privileges bestowed upon Urtubu by Chingiz Khan. When Amir Bulaji had brought Tughluk Timur Khan from the land of Kipchak, and had set him on the throne of the Khanate, he, in return for his services, received in addition to the seven privileges above enumerated, two others, so that he enjoyed nine in all. The first of the new privileges was that he should have the power of dismissing or appointing Amirs of Kushuns (that is. Amirs who had one thousand followers) without applying to, or consulting with, the Khan; and the second was as follows: Bulaji and his descendants should be permitted to commit nine crimes without being tried”. *The Tarikh-I-Rashidi of Mirza Muhammad Haidar*, p. 54-55.

It was also a customary among Mughals to bend the knee nine times as a sign of allegiance and reverence. The evidence for this tradition was recorded in “Baburnama”: “After advancing to the place of interview, he (The Younger Khan) nine times bent the knee; that done, went close and saw (his brother). The Elder Khan, in his turn, had risen when the Younger Khan drew near. They looked long at one another and long stood in close embrace. The Younger Khan again bent the knee nine times when retiring, many times also on offering his gift; after that, he went and sat down”¹⁵. Mirza Muhammad Haidar describes this custom in a poetic way:

“All the mighty rulers and proud princes, at one time
Bent the knee nine times in obedience to him”¹⁶.

The present article aims to explore to what extent and in what ways the number ‘nine’ continued to carry the significance for the states and societies in the Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal empires?

“Nine Heavens”

Among Turkic people ‘nine’ is also connected with the spheres, and the highest, ninth heaven is located beyond the 7 planetary spheres and the upper vault of the sky that contains the fixed stars. Annemarie Schimmel points out that, the Turks speak of 9 spheres “for there is nothing beyond 9”¹⁷. References to “nine heavens” can be found in many Safavid and Mughal sources, such as *Ahsan al-Tavarikh*¹⁸ by Hasan Rumlu, *Tarikh-i Alam Ara-yi Abbasi* by Iskandar Bek Munsh¹⁹, Akbarnama, and etc.

He’s a Shah whose heart holds the mighty talisman,
Heaven’s nine treasures come short of his weight...²⁰.

15 *The Babur-Nama in English* (Memoirs of Babur). Translated from the original Turki Text Zahiru'd-din Mubammad Babur Padshah Ghazi by Annette Susannah Beveridge, Vol. I, Luzac & Co., London 1922, p. 160.

16 *The Tarikh-I-Rashidi*, p. 30.

17 Annemarie Schimmel, *The Mystery of Numbers*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1993, p. 170.

18 Hasan bey Rumlu, *Ahsan al-Tavarikh*. Translation from Persian with commentaries by Ogtay Efendiyev and Namig Musali, Uzanlar, Kastamonu 2017, s. 96, 155, 287, 614, 616, 627, 640.

19 Munshi, *age.*, s. 1154.

20 *Akbarnama*, vol. III, p. 104.

Gifts By Nines

The tradition of exchanging gifts held a prominent place in Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal court etiquette and diplomatic protocol. The Turkic sovereigns paid highly attention to the choice of gifts. The presentation of nine gifts meant particularly friendly intentions.

Textile goods (fabrics, garments) held a place among major gifts in exchanges between Turkic sovereigns. As pointed out by Hedda-Reindl-Kiel, lavish fabrics were standard gifts of all high-ranking dignitaries²¹. Shah Abbas I sent the Husain Beg, to the ruler of Golconda by way of embassy who brought some *tuqiz* (nine-pieces) of cloth from the Deccan and Gujarat²². According to Abul Fazl, among the gifts from the Safavid ruler Shah Tahmasp I (r.1524-1576) to Humayun (r.1530-1540; 1555-1556), were "...twelve times nine pieces of silk, including velvet, satin, European and Yezdi *kamkhab* and *bafta* – *shami* and other choice materials..."²³.

In a letter dated from the middle of Dhu 'l-Hijja 817 (February 1415) from the Ottoman sultan Mehmed I (r.1413–21) to the Mamluk sultan al-Muayyad Shaykh (r.1412–21) was stated that, "We have sent to you...intended as a gift, five *taqūzāt* of various *Rūmī* fabrics, three *taqūzāt* of European fabric, and two bundles of Persian fabric..."²⁴. Gifts from Shah Tahmasp to the Ottoman court which were sent in 1576 also included a gold embroidered tablecloth, a handkerchief for the sultan, and nine pieces of gold embroidered woolen cloths with *seraser* borders...²⁵.

The vast majority of the textile and porcelain gifts sent in 1692 by the Safavid shah Sultan Huseyn (r.1694-1722) through his ambassador Kalb'Ali Khan to the Ottoman sultan Ahmet II (r.1691-1695) on the occasion of his enthronement were in nine and its multiples: "36 cups and bowls of blue, 27 bows, 9 pieces of silk fabric, 27 pieces of velvet, 9 pieces of cashmere fabric, 9 pieces of satin fabric,

21 Reindl-Kiel, Hedda. "Power and submission. Gifting at royal circumcision festivals in the Ottoman Empire (16th-18th centuries)", *Turcica* 41 (2009), p. 49

22 *The Tūzūk-i-Jahāngīrī, or Memoirs of Jahāngīr*, trans. , Alexander Rogers, ed., Henry. Beveridge, Royal Asiatic Society, London 1909, p. 372.

23 *Akbarnama*, v. I, p. 427-428.

24 Elias I. Muhanna, "The Sultan's New Clothes: Ottoman–Mamluk Gift Exchange in the Fifteenth Century." *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Culture of the Islamic World* 27 (2010), p. 191.

25 Sinem Arcak, "Gifts in Motion: Ottoman–Safavid Cultural Exchange, 1501–1618", PhD diss. , University of Minnesota, Minneapolis 2012, p. 173.

9 pieces of cotton fabric of various colors, 18 carpets of small and big sizes²⁶. Among the gifts delivered from the ruler of the Kalmyk Khanate Ayuki Khan (r. 1669–1724) to the Ottoman court in 1710 were nine bottles of musk, and nine Russian leather hides²⁷.

The customary quantity and quality of these textiles varied only according to the donor's standing. The beğlerbeği of Tripolis sent gifts of nine for the Sultan and three for the Prince²⁸. According to Hüseyin Hezarfen's account, governor of Egypt Canbuladzade Hüseyin Pasha's gifts to sultan consisted of precious fabrics, silver vessels mostly in multiples of nine and for the princes Ahmad and Mustafa, in lesser multiples, such as three, four and five²⁹. The governor of Anatolia, Vizier Ali Pasha presented all fabrics in old-fashioned quantities of nine. Based on this fact, Hedda-Reindl-Kiel asserts that, "the knowledge of the old etiquette was evidently still alive, but not every governor had the potential to stick to its rules"³⁰.

Rhoads Murphey points out that, the multiples of nine were increased to suit the dynasty's enhanced stature and international reputation in later centuries, but the essence remained unchanged³¹. Murphey asserts that, to magnify the decibel level and the impressiveness of the sultan's household band (*mehter*), the instrumental sections were composed of nine musicians, each in keeping with the mystical significance of nine and of multiples of nine³². The processing and parading of the governors and their presentation of the *piskesh*, often deliberately denominated in nines and multiples of nine to accord with ancient Turkic customary practice, provided not only a spectacle for onlookers but also a demonstration that faithfulness to tradition and sensitivity to the proper performance of these rituals of respect and subservience carried a profound significance for the Ottomans³³.

26 Joseph Von Hammer-Purgstall, *Histoire de l'Empire ottoman, depuis son origine jusqu'à nos jours*, traduit de l'allemand par J.-J. Helle, Tome 12, Bellizard, Barthès, Dufour et Lowell, Paris 1835-1843, p. 328-329.

27 Michael Khodarkovsky, *Where Two Worlds Met: The Russian State and the Kalmyk Nomads 1600–1771*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY 2006, p. 61.

28 Hedda Reindl-Kiel, *age*, p. 49.

29 Murphey Rhoads, *Tradition, Image and Practice in the Ottoman Imperial Household, 1400-1800* London, England: Continuum UK, 2008, p. 190.

30 Hedda Reindl-Kiel, *age*, p. 71-72.

31 Murphey Rhoads, *age*, p. 71.

32 Murphey Rhoads, *age*, p. 72.

33 Murphey Rhoads, *age*, p. 189.

The beğlerbeği of Sayda and Beyrut, Isma’il Pasha contended himself with sending his gifts in sets of four and sancakbeği of Birecik chose his gifts in packages of three, while several more conservative (or cautious) dignitaries, such as Ömer Pasha, governor of Erzurum or his colleague in Baghdad, Abdurrahman Pasha preferred to stick to the number of nine, which was correct in terms of protocol³⁴.

Copies of the Qur’an formed the core of book gifting among the Muslim rulers. The Qur’an copies, nine large and nine small in number were included to the gifts sent from Shah Tahmasp I to Murad III (r. 1574-1595) in 1576³⁵. Among the gifts that Shah Abbas sent to Murad III for the conclusion of the peace in 1590, was nine *aba*, entirely embroidered with gold³⁶. In addition to other objects, Safavid shahs also send birds of preys in nine or multiples of nine, particularly falcons and hawks to the Ottoman sultans. Nine hawks were also among the presents sent to the Ottoman court in 1576³⁷.

The different levels of gifts exchanged were indicators of each official’s status in the state. In the eve of the *Treaty of Serav* which signed on 26 September 1618 between the Safavids and Ottomans, Safavid envoy Burun Kasım (Yadigar Ali Sultan) brought gifts to Damat Halil Pasha who was grand vizier of the Ottoman Empire in 1616–1619. According to the Ottoman sources “... to the grand vezir alone he sent nine camel-loads of sweetmeats, of preserved fruits of various sorts, of lemons and oranges.... To the agha of janissaries, to the grand vezir’s deputy, and to the other pashas and grandees of the army he sent two, three or five similar loads of presents, each as he thought proper³⁸. Gifts consisting of sweets were representative of goodwill and friendship.

The reference to the nine items can be found in Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun: “following the hunting, Shah Tahmasp sent nine deer as a present to

34 Hedda Reindl-Kiel, *age.*, p. 60.

35 Sinem Arcak, *age.*, p. 118.

36 Huseyn Farah, *Osmano-sefevidskaya voyna 1578-1590 gg* [Ottoman-Safavid wars 1578-1590], Nurlan, Baku 2005, p. 192.

37 Sinem Arcak, *age.*, p. 119.

38 Kâtip Çelebi, *Fezleketü't-Tevarih I-III, Tahlil ve Metin*, (hzl. Zeynep Aycibin), Mimar Sinan. Üniversitesi Güzel Sanatlar Fakültesi, Yayınlanmamış Doktora, İstanbul 2007, s. 639; Mustafa Naima, *Annals of the Turkish Empire: from 1591 to 1659*, Trans. Charles Fraser, Oriental Translation Fund, London 1832, p. 462-463.

the King (Humayun)³⁹. In other place, Humayun mentions that, “senior of the caravan presented a bow and nine arrows, offered up prayers for his (Humayun’s) success”⁴⁰. Meals were given in nine dishes during the supper given for Humayun⁴¹.

Horse gifts in nine items appear frequently in historical sources as these animals were the most valued item exchanged among the courts. Abul Fazl notes: “Among the choice presents were 206 noted elephants, nine of which obtained the special rank.⁴² Similarly, Italian traveler and writer Niccolao Manucci who worked in Mughal court writes: “... presents sent from Shah Abbas to Mughal ruler Aurangzeb consisted of twenty-seven handsome, large and powerful horses... Nine of these horses were decked out with precious stones, and saddles decorated with pearls”⁴³. According to the order of the Shah Tahmasp dated March, 1544 to the Governor of Herat, “... on the day when he (Humayun) is host, tender a present of nine horses, of which three will be for the king’s special use...”⁴⁴. Shah Tahmasp sent gifts including nine horses for Sultan Suleyman Kanuni (r.1520-1566) in return for Ottoman presents brought to the Safavid court in Hijri 969 (1561-1562)⁴⁵.

Abul Gazi reports that, Safavid Shah Tahmasp sent to Bujugha Khan⁴⁶. Nine daggers framed in gold, nine tents, with their tops made of brocade, and the bottom of the cloth, nine horses with saddles and bridles”⁴⁷. According to “Jahangirnama”, “Bahadur Khan, governor of Qandahar, had sent seven Iraq horses and nine *tuquz* (81) of cloth stuffs”⁴⁸. In other place of this source, it is mentioned that, “Chandar Sen, who is one of the chief *zamindars* of this country,

39 Jouher, *The Tezkereh al vakiat; or, Private memoirs of the Emperor Humayun*, written in the Persian language by Jouher, Trans. Major Charles Stewart, Printed for Oriental Translation Fund, London 1832, p. 67.

40 Jouher, *age.*, p. 97.

41 Jouher, *age.*, p. 71.

42 *Akbarnama*, vol. III, p. 1122.

43 Niccolao Manucci, *Storia do Mogor; or, Mogul India 1603-1708*, Vol. 2, translated by William Irvine, J. Murray, London 1907, p. 51.

44 *Akbarnama*, vol. I, p. 423.

45 Xacə Zeynalabidin Əli Əbdi bəy Şirazi, *Təkmilətül-əxbar / Fars dilindən tərcümə və müqəddimə Rəhimov Əbülfəz Həşim oğlunundur* (electron kitab), Elm, Bakı 1996, s. 84.

46 Bujugha Khan (r. 1522-1526) was a ruler of Khanate of Khiva.

47 *Rodoslovnoye drevo tyurkov*, p. 187.

48 *The Tūzuk-i-Jahangīrī*, p. 319.

had the good fortune to kiss the threshold, and presented an offering of nine horses"⁴⁹.

Animals in general were a category of formal gifting, not only horses but also camels, dogs and falcons for hunt. Ibrahim Beg, the hakim of Adana, for example, sent nine horses and nine camels⁵⁰. Mustafa Beg, the ambassador of the ruler of Iran brought nine large European hunting dogs to Mughal Emperor Jahangir (r.1605-1627)⁵¹.

The ruler would accept either the entire or a part of the offerings and in these cases, they mainly took the items given in nines. Concerning this, there is a description in "Jahangirnama": "On this day Raja Kalyan, zamindar of the province of Idar, had the good fortune to kiss my threshold, and presented an elephant and nine horses as an offering; I gave him back the elephant"⁵².

It is interesting that, in some cases, gifts in nines were also sent by Turkic rulers to their non-Muslim counterparts. For instance, individual gifts from the Safavid shahs to the Tsardom of Moscow were presented in nine articles (nine *qizilbashi* velvets of gold and silver, nine combs (*darag*), nine carpets embroidered with gold and silver thread)⁵³. When Shah Abbas sent his messenger Kaya to Moscow in 1591, he sent with him as gifts to Tsar of Moscow "nine" rings⁵⁴. Gifts in nine items sent by Shah Abbas I to Doge of Venice was recorded by the Safavid documents⁵⁵.

An English traveler Anthony Jenkinson noted, gifts in nine items sent from the Khanate of Khiva to Russian tsar in 1558⁵⁶. In 1679, the ruler of the Khiva

49 *The Tūzuk-i-Jahangīrī*, p. 428.

50 Hedda Reindl-Kiel, *age.*, p. 53.

51 *The Tūzuk-i-Jahangīrī*, p. 270-271.

52 *The Tūzuk-i-Jahangīrī*, p. 427.

53 S. I. Kologrivov, *Materialy dlya istorii snosheniy Rossii s inostrannymi derzhavami v XVII v.* tip. V.D. Smirnova, Sankt-Peterburg 1911, p. 124, 131, 133.

54 *Pamyatniki diplomaticheskikh i torgovykh snosheniy Moskovskoy Rusi s Persiyey / izdany pod redaktsiyey N. I. Veselovskogo. Tovarishchestvo parovoy skoropechatni Yablonskiy i Perott, Sankt-Peterburg 1890-1898*, p. 167-168.

55 Giorgio Rota, "Safavid Envoys in Venice", in *Diplomatisches Zeremoniell in Europa und im Mittleren Osten in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Ralph Kauz, Giorgio Rota, Jan Paul Niederkorn, Vienna, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009, p. 246.

56 *Early voyages and travels to Russia and Persia by Anthony Jenkinson and other Englishmen, with some account of the first intercourse of the English with Russia and Central Asia by way of the Caspian Sea*, edited by E. Delmar Morgan and C.H. Coote, Hakluyt Society, 1st ser. vol. 72, B. Franklin New York 1967, p. 65-66. The tradition of giving presents in nines was preserved among the Uzbeks even in the 19th century. Hungarian Turkologist and traveler A.Vambéry who visited Khanate of Khiva in

Khanate Anush Muhammad Bahadur Khan sent to the Russian tsar the following gifts in nines: “9 leopard skins, 9 arrows decorated with gold, 9 good steel swords, 9 brocades, 9 *zerbafis*, 9 red velvets”. However, these gifts were robbed by the *kazaks* on the road⁵⁷.

Contemporary European Sources on the Usage of Number ‘Nine’

The usage of number nine by the Safavids and the Ottomans were recorded by European travelers and envoys visiting the Safavid and Ottoman empires. Concerning this, Michele Membre, a Venetian envoy to the Safavid court in 1539-1540, writes: “So, after an hour had passed, he (Shah Tahmasp I) ordered him (Gazi Khan Takali) to be summoned; and he came alone with a present to give to the said Shah: there were camels, 45 in number, fine horses 25⁵⁸, mules 36, lances of Babylonia about 200, slaves 9 in number and gold coins in a little bag, the quantity of which I do not remember”⁵⁹.

M.Membre, who saw Ottoman prince Mustafa⁶⁰ in Manisa on his way to the Safavid state, reports that: “... He (Sultan Mustafa) himself, together with his *lala* or tutor, an old man with a white beard; and in front of him footmen, 9 in number, each one of the 9 wearing a very long and wide white shirt”⁶¹.

Gift exchange was an important part of celebration of holidays. The gift-giving in nine on the occasions of *Novruz* holiday was described by Membre: “After this the Easter festival which they call *Bairam* was celebrated and many festivities were

1863, speaking of the *kalim* or marriage price among the Uzbeks says: “The question is always, how many times nine, i.e. how many times nine sheep, cows, camels or horses, or how many times nine ducats, as is the custom in a town, the father is to receive for giving up his daughter. The less wealthy give twice nine, the wealthier six times nine, and the Khan alone has to pay nine times nine, for the purchase of his bride”. Vámbéry, Arminius, *Sketches of Central Asia: additional chapters on my travels, adventures and on the ethnology of Central Asia*, Wm. H. Allen & Company London 1868, p. 103.

57 *Letter of Nadir Bahadur, and the envoy from the Khiva khanate to Feodor Akekeyevish date 3 January, 1679*, http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/M.Asien/XVI/15801600/Mat_Uzb_Tadz_Turkm_I/Part_I/81-100/99.htm

58 A. Morton was right in noting that, there should be 27 horses in accordance with old Turkish practice of gift-giving. Michele Membre, *Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia (1539-1542)*. Translated with Introduction and Notes by A.H.Morton, School of Oriental and African Studies London 1993, p. 45.

59 Michele Membre, *age.*, p. 45.

60 Şehzade Mustafa (1515-1553), the eldest son of the Ottoman Sultan Suleyman Kanuni, was the *prince-governor of Manisa* from 1533 to 1541.

61 Michele Membre, *age.*, p. 9.

held, in the way I have already said: the pavilions placed in the *maidan* and polo played, as I have said above. And the next day, the King's Minister, Qadi-yi Jahan, gave a very great present to the Shah, which was, if I remember correctly, 9 fine horses with brocade horse-cloths and saddles of massy gold and with threads of gold in the middle of their hair; and 18 fine mules, and 36 very fine camels; and velvets, satins, many turban-cloths and cups of silver, bottles, gilded belts and I know not how much money in cash"⁶².

Italian traveler Pietro Della Valle who visited Ottoman empire in 1614-1616, writes that, "when this prince of Bitlis went to the divan to an audience with *Grand Signor* (Ottoman Sultan) he did not go without gifts, he brought, nine pieces of velvet, nine pieces of satin, nine masked, and nine pieces of wool and silk fabric..."⁶³. Jean Chardin mentions "nine small crystal mirrors" among the gifts brought by the Muscovite ambassador to the Safavid court⁶⁴.

According to Adam Olearius, a secretary of Holstein embassy, in a feast given in honour of the Europeans visiting to the Safavid court, "the meat was brought in six great copper vessels and the conserves, in nine great vessels of porcelain"⁶⁵. In his description of the Qiziluzen river, Olearius, mentions that, "Shah Tahmasp built a very fair bridge over *River Kısılsein* (Qiziluzen) of brick, containing nine arches"⁶⁶. He also writes: "while shah goes to hunting, he takes along with him nine persons of his own Retinue"⁶⁷.

Azerbaijani scholar H.H.Zarinazadeh states that, "during the Safavid period, number nine lost its previous significance and was replaced by the number ten"⁶⁸. However, the above examples from Membre's account is suffice to demonstrate that, the number nine continued to carry out its importance among the Safavids.

62 Michele Membre, *age.*, p. 36.

63 Pietro Della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle, il pellegrino: la Turchia, la Persia, e l'India, colla vita e ritratto dell'autore*, volume primo, G. Gancia 1843, p. 125-126.

64 Jean Chardin, *Voyages de Monsieur le chevalier Chardin en Perse et autres lieux de l'Orient*. Tome 3 Éditeur : J.-L. de Lorme, Amsterdam 1711, p. 224.

65 Adam Olearius, *The voyages and travells of the ambassadors sent by Frederick, Duke of Holstein, to the Great Duke of Muscovy and the King of Persia begun in the year M.DC.XXXIII. and finish'd in M.DC. XXXIX : containing a compleat history of Muscovy, Tartary, Persia, and other adjacent countries*, John Starkey and Thomas Basset, London 1669, p. 174.

66 Adam Olearius, *age.*, p. 184.

67 Adam Olearius, *age.*, p. 211.

68 Zərinəzadə H.H. *Fars dilində Azərbaycan sözləri*. Azərb. SSR EA nəşriyyatı, Bakı 1962, s. 219.

Conclusion

The state and societies of Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals continued to practice number nine which were attested by the accounts of both local and foreign authors. While Mughals widely practiced number nine from its diplomacy to its administrative institutions, Ottomans and Safavids maintained using number 'nine' mainly in gift-giving. Sending and receiving some gifts in numbers of 9 makes it clear that, both the Safavids and Ottomans preserved that ancient Turkic tradition. The most precious presents exchanged between these Turkic empires were in nine and its multiples. Presenting gifts in nines were also used a gift in the tributary relations.

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