

Mercator's Globes for Murad III's Observatory in Turkey (1569)

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SUMMARY

In 2012 we have celebrated the 500th anniversary of Gerard Mercator born in 1512 and I was fortunate to present a study of his scientific books of his vast library. An exhibition was held in Sint Niklaas, between Antwerp and Ghent near the place where he was born in Rupelmonde I studied his life and work and this is probably, why I stand here to-day. Murad III (1546-1595) Ottoman Sultan of Turkey from 1574 to 1595 ;he expended the empire to the Caspian sea, to Azerbadjan and in the west he got in conflict with the Austrian Empire. His grandfather was Suliman the Magnificent; his father is called Selim II and his mother Nur Banu Sultan, she was born in Venice, but captured at sea when she was 12, and she became a favorite of Selim II. In 1574 Murad III became the sultan succeeding to his father. Shortly after he decided to construct an observatory in Istambul, the works were completed in 1577. In 1579 2 years later the grand vizier Sokahlin Mehmed Pascha was assassinated .The mufti, who had great influence on Murad III had issued a fatwa, to destroy the observatory and all its instruments, A miniature remains of the instruments in the observatory; The globes were to be installed in the Tophane observatory. I was asked if the globes left the workshop of Mercator? I think the 3 instruments left the workshop but never reached their final destination, as no record was found in the archives of the Ottoman court. They were probably ordered by a wealthy client to be offered, or sold to Murad III, and they probably remained in the family until the auctions by Christies in London in the 90es. The destruction of the observatory in 1579, can well be one of the reasons the instruments didn't reach Istambul. The instruments probably remained in the family for 4 centuries, until the auctions by Christies in London in the 90es. They have been attributed to Gerard Mercator's workshop during his Duisburg period. They are not signed but dated 1579 and all three have the same old inventory n° 154. The 3 instruments have the Tughra, the signature of Murad III and cartouches are written in latin and in Turkish. The inscription *omnium regnum mundi rex* is the translation for *sha in sha*. The inscription in the Indian Ocean reads: *Amurates III Magni in coeli Dei soly manus solus omnium regnum mundi rex imperator sulthanus Turcorum 1579* We find the magnetic pole, as we do on Mercator globes also the configuration as on his map of 1569 *ad usum navigantium*. The data are those of Mercator's Ptolomaeus map of 1578 and data his son Romuald published in his map of 1587,