

NAKKAŞ LEVNÎ IN THE TULIP ERA: ARTISTIC VISION AND CULTURAL REFLECTIONS

Zülbiye SEVGİLİ POLAT¹

Abstract

This study provides a comprehensive examination of Nakkaş Levnî, one of the leading representatives of Ottoman miniature painting during the Tulip Era, focusing on his artistic approach, aesthetic preferences, and the cultural reflections of his works. In his miniatures, Levnî treated the relationship between figures and space, the arrangement of scenes, and the integrity of composition with an original perspective; he transcended the limits of the traditional two-dimensional narrative, infusing his works with depth and dynamism. The high horizon line, S-shaped arrangements of figure groups, and the conscious use of light-shadow and natural elements reveal Levnî's technical mastery and visual expression. Although traces of Western painting traditions are evident in his works, these influences were integrated into Ottoman aesthetic values, resulting in a distinctive style. Collections such as *Silsilename* and *Surnâme-i Vehbi* meticulously documented the elegance, festivities, and social rituals of the Tulip Era, visually reflecting both palace life and the cultural trends of the period. By situating Levnî's technical and aesthetic innovations within their historical and cultural context, this study aims to interpret the visual and cultural values of eighteenth-century Ottoman art from a broader perspective.

Keywords: Miniature, Nakkaş Levnî, Tulip Era, Ottoman art, cultural reflection

Introduction

In its broadest definition, miniature painting refers to illustrations incorporated into manuscripts with the purpose of visually supporting and elucidating the text. The origins of this art form trace back to Antiquity in the West and to pre-Islamic periods in the East (Günsel Renda, "Miniature," *Eczacıbaşı Art Encyclopedia*, Vol. II, Yem Yayın, İstanbul 1997, p. 1262).

The developmental trajectory of Ottoman miniature art is typically examined within three main periods: "Early," "Classical," and "Westernization." The Early Period spans from the fifteenth century to the second half of the sixteenth century and encompasses the works produced in the Ottoman palace atelier (*nakkaşhane*). The miniatures of this era exhibit significant stylistic similarities with other Islamic miniature schools. The "Classical Period" of Ottoman miniature art extends from the second half of the sixteenth century to the first quarter of the seventeenth century. During this time, works produced in the palace atelier became distinctly differentiated from other Islamic miniature schools in terms of form and style, acquiring a unique artistic identity.

1. Akdeniz University, Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Traditional Turkish Arts, Assistant Professor, email: zulbiye@akdeniz.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0001-9768-9921

Following the first quarter of the seventeenth century, a marked decline in miniature production is observed within the Ottoman palace atelier. However, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the art of miniature was revitalized with the works of Nakkaş Levnî, and this artistic current continued into the nineteenth century until the adoption of Western painting concepts by different artists. Due to the perceptible influence of Western techniques during this period, the span between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is referred to as the "Westernization Period" (Banu Mahir, *Ottoman Miniature Art*, Kabalcı Publishing, İstanbul 2005).

Prior to the seventeenth century, Ottoman miniature painting was predominantly featured in historical manuscripts, illustrating wars, significant events, ceremonial receptions, hunting scenes, and portraits of sultans. Court painters sought to record important events and figures as accurately as possible, in a distinctive form of realism, while avoiding distracting ornamental excesses. In these miniatures, critical details of events and individuals were emphasized, and the overall style adhered to the general aesthetic principles of Islamic miniature art—

particularly a painting conception based on color and line, devoid of shadow, and characterized by flatness. Architectural structures rendered in cross-sections, independent scenes stacked upon each other, figures scaled according to their significance within the event, and realistic details from nature were among the fundamental elements shaping the style of palace painters. By the second half of the sixteenth century, the classical style had reached full maturity. It was sustained during the first half of the seventeenth century with some variations in subject matter, but in the second half of the century entered a stagnation phase, showing a clear decline in both quantity and quality for various reasons. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, contacts with Europe began to influence miniature painting, giving rise to new stylistic experiments. During this period, subject matter shifted: multi-figured historical miniatures were gradually replaced by single-sheet album paintings depicting pastoral scenes, costume studies, flower drawings, and portraits (Figure 1). Although miniature painters long refrained from breaking away from traditional forms, by the late seventeenth century they began to incorporate into their compositions the notion of three-dimensionality that had gained prominence in Western painting, as well as an increasingly expanded use of nature and space (Renda, G. (1977). *Turkish Painting Art in the Westernization Period 1700–1850*. Ankara: Turkish Historical Society Press, pp. 29–31).



Figure 1: *Acem Çengi*, Levnî, ca. 1720

(<https://kulturportali.gov.tr/turkiye/edirne/haberduyuru/edirneli-levni-3>)

From the first half of the eighteenth century onward, the Ottoman Empire increasingly oriented itself toward the West and, as part of its efforts at renewal, adopted Western models in various fields, including the arts. During this period, Sultan Ahmed III and Grand Vizier Nevşehirli Damat İbrahim Pasha made significant contributions to the development and patronage of the arts (İlden, S. (2011). “The Understanding of Figures in Levnî-Signed Human Portraits,” *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 94, 1303–1315).

During the Tulip Era, Ottoman miniature painting experienced a revival following the stagnation of the previous period. With the relocation of the imperial court to Edirne, artists such as Levnî, Buhari, Derviş Hasan Eyyûbî, Ciltçi Mehmed, and the painter Barseg reactivated miniature production. Among these artists, Nakkaş Levnî in particular gave miniature painting new momentum. By consciously systematizing the plastic values of painting—such as proportion, scale, and perspective—he surpassed earlier, more rigid forms and began designing his miniatures in accordance with realistic values (Bulut, H. (2001). “Two ‘New’ Figures from a Century Full of Innovations: Nedim–Levnî and Their Works,” pp. 62–63).

The Cultural and Artistic Milieu of the Ottoman Empire in Levnî's Era

The eighteenth century was a period in which Westernization and reform movements began to exert strong influence at both cultural and social levels in the Ottoman Empire. This process made adaptation to changing circumstances imperative for the empire. In this context, art emerged as one of the most significant instruments of cultural exchange and social transformation. Indeed, traces of the transformations brought about by new social and cultural conditions can be clearly observed in Ottoman art of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Renda, G. (1977). *Turkish Painting in the Westernization Period 1700–1850*, Hacettepe University Publications, Ankara, p. 193).

The developments of the eighteenth century also manifested themselves in the arts: elements transferred from Western culture to the East made Ottoman society's turn toward the West inevitable and necessitated a process of adaptation to these changes. The eighteenth century in Ottoman history thus marked a period in which Westernization movements accelerated, cultural interaction with Europe intensified, and creative artists came to the fore. Under the patronage of Sultan Ahmed III and Grand Vizier Nevşehirli Damat İbrahim Pasha, the artistic milieu flourished, providing fertile ground for the emergence of new trends (İrepoğlu, G. (1999). *Levnî: Ornament, Poetry, Color*, Ministry of Culture Publications, Istanbul, p. 11).

The eighteenth century functioned almost as a “second classical period” for Ottoman miniature painting, with significant artistic developments accompanying the Westernization process. Levnî, the foremost figure of this era, revitalized the classical style that had stagnated in the seventeenth century; however, in his works and those of his contemporaries, the influence of the new artistic understanding of the period was also palpable (Renda, G. (1977). *Turkish Painting in the Westernization Period 1700–1850*, Hacettepe University Publications, Ankara, p. 35).

Another prominent artist who left his mark on this era was Ali Çelebi of Üsküdar (Figure 2). He distinguished himself through his bookbindings, writing pads, richness of color, and flower paintings that he stylized with remarkable fidelity to nature. Likewise, Abdullah Buhari, known as a flower painter (Figure 3), was among the leading artists of the time (Derman, Ç. (1999). *The Art of Illumination with Its Styles and Artists in the Ottoman Centuries, Ottoman Culture and Art*, Vol. 11, pp. 108–1119). The innovations introduced into art under Western influence were blended with Ottoman style, resulting in a unique richness. The most striking example of this was the emergence of “Turkish Rococo,” a new and original style developed not by direct imitation but through creative adaptation of French Rococo.

Among the foremost artists of the period, the flower painter and lacquer master Ali Üsküdârî further developed the *saz* style pioneered by Şahkulu, preserving both classical and innovative elements while forging his own unique style. The process of engaging with European art paved the way for the emergence of new stylistic trends; the artistic conception of the West was reinterpreted by blending it with Ottoman cultural values and aesthetic criteria. As a result of this interaction, traditional miniature art underwent technical and formal transformations, while similar innovations appeared in architecture and painting during the same period. For example, wall decorations executed in *kalem işi* (painted ornamentation) were replaced by Baroque- and Rococo-influenced compositions, into which landscape paintings were incorporated (Renda, G. (1977). *Turkish Painting in the Westernization Period 1700–1850*, Hacettepe University Publications, Ankara, p. 194).

The Ottoman Empire, rather than directly copying Western influences, integrated them into its own cultural identity, thereby producing a new and original synthesis. Relations with France strengthened not only commercial ties but also cultural exchange.



Figure 2: Flower paintings by Ali Üsküdârî (İstanbul University Library, Turkish Manuscripts, no. 5650, fols. 33a, 39b, 40a) (<https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/sukufe>)



Figure 3: Two Miniatures from the Album of Abdullah-ı Buhârî (İstanbul University Library, TY, no. 9364) (<https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/abdullah-i-buhari>)

The Tulip Era was a period in which Western influence permeated many aspects of Ottoman life. From clothing to architecture, from garden design to everyday objects, this cultural exchange brought about changes in social tastes and behaviors. One of the most striking innovations of the period was the use of wall paintings in palaces and mansions. These structures served as tangible examples of the Westernization process (Arık, R. (1999). *Wall Paintings in Ottoman Art, Ottoman Culture and Art*, Vol. 11, pp. 423–436).

The years 1718–1730, corresponding to the second half of the reign of Sultan Ahmed III, were marked as one of the periods of peace and prosperity in the Ottoman Empire. Due to the peak of interest in the tulip—regarded as the symbol of beauty and refinement—this era came to be known as the “Tulip Period.” The leading poet of the time, Nedim, reflected in his works both the desire to enjoy life and the lifestyle ethos of the era. Levnî’s miniatures, with their rich use of color and elaborate scenes, visually embodied the aesthetic spirit of the Tulip Era (İrepoğlu, G. (2006). “Levnî: The ‘Çelebi’ Painter of the Tulip Era,” *Sanat Dünyamız*, No. 100, İstanbul, p. 237) (Figure 4).

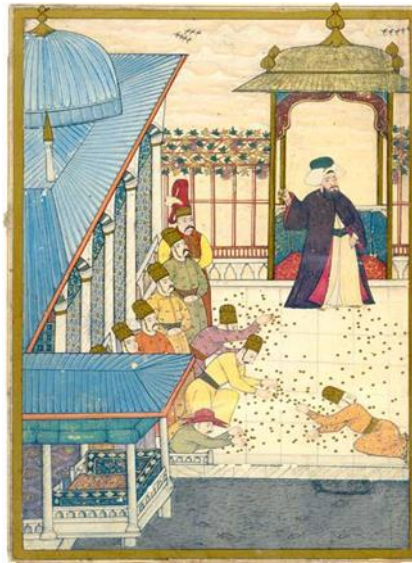


Figure 4: Sultan Ahmed III scattering gold, Surnâme-i Vehbî (folio 174b)
(https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surname-i_Vehbi#/media/Dosya:Surname_174b.jpg)

The Tulip Era and Cultural Patronage

Nevşehirli Damat İbrahim Paşa was a central figure of the Tulip Era (*Lale Devri*), remembered not only as Grand Vizier to Sultan Ahmed III but also as a cultural patron who significantly shaped the artistic and aesthetic outlook of the period. His passion for tulips symbolized the refinement and extravagance of the era, and under his patronage Istanbul's gardens were richly adorned with these flowers. This fascination with tulips transcended mere horticultural enthusiasm; it became a cultural marker that inspired new forms of architectural design, decorative arts, and public festivities. Damat İbrahim Paşa, therefore, was not only a statesman but also a *mecenas*, whose support for the arts illustrates how political power and aesthetic sensibility intersected in Ottoman governance (Aktepe, 1963, pp. 441–443).

Architecture emerged as another key expression of Tulip Era aesthetics. Palaces, waterfront mansions (*yalı*), and pavilions were constructed to reflect both imperial grandeur and cosmopolitan refinement. These structures embodied a hybrid style that combined Ottoman architectural traditions with European and Asian influences, reflecting the era's cultural pluralism (Öndeş & Makzume, 2000, pp. 51–56).

The most profound cultural exchanges of this period occurred with France, facilitated through diplomatic and artistic interactions. Jean-Baptiste Vanmour, a French painter who resided in Istanbul between 1699 and 1737, documented Ottoman ceremonies, urban landscapes, and daily life through his oil paintings. His Pera-based atelier became a hub of observational art, and his works provided both a visual record of Ottoman society and a fresh artistic perspective that broadened the empire's cultural horizons (İrepoğlu, 1999, p. 26).

Toward the end of the Tulip Era, Ottoman patronage of foreign artists increased, further accelerating processes of cultural synthesis. This growing openness introduced new techniques and materials into Ottoman miniature painting. The traditional flatness of composition gradually gave way to perspective and spatial depth, while naturalistic shading introduced a heightened sense of realism. Meanwhile, the adoption of gouache and watercolor replaced traditional pigments, enabling miniature painting to move beyond manuscript illustration to broader applications on canvas and wall surfaces (Akkurt, 2015).

Levnî: Life and Works

The most celebrated figure of 18th-century Ottoman miniature art was Levnî, widely regarded as the last great master of the tradition. Born in Edirne in the late 17th century, his given name was Abdülcélîl Çelebi. The pseudonym *Levnî*—meaning “colorful” or “varied”—aptly reflects

his artistic identity as both painter and poet. The honorific “Çelebi” further indicates his refined education and elevated social standing (İrepoğlu, 1999, p. 38).

Levnî’s role in the Ottoman court is underscored by contemporary sources. Dimitrie Cantemir, the Moldavian prince who lived in Istanbul between 1701 and 1710, later described Levnî as “the Sultan’s adviser” or “chief painter” (Öztelli, 1966, p. 509). Similarly, Hafız Hüseyin Ayvansarayî’s *Mecmua-i Tevarih* identifies him as Abdülcélil Çelebi of Edirne, initially trained as an illuminator (*tezhip*) before excelling as a portraitist (*musavvir*). He is thought to have died in 1732/33, during the reign of Sultan Mahmud I (Atıl, 1999, p. 31).

Although rooted in classical traditions, Levnî’s oeuvre reveals a strikingly individual style. His illustrations in the *Surname-i Vehbî* epitomize his innovative approach: blending conventional iconography with dynamic compositions and vivid color harmonies. His depiction of ceremonial events combined narrative fidelity with poetic sensibility, marking a departure from rigid formalism. Levnî’s position at court is further affirmed by his portrayal in the *Sünnet Festival* procession, where he appears on horseback alongside members of the *Enderun*. This imagery situates him within the ranks of elite court artists such as Matrakçı Nasuh and Nakkaş Hasan Paşa (Atıl, 1999, p. 31).

In addition to his visual art, Levnî also engaged with vernacular poetry, embedding local expressions into his representations of people and events. His dual role as painter and poet underscores the multi-dimensional creativity of Ottoman court artists and reflects the interrelation of visual and literary aesthetics during the Tulip Era.

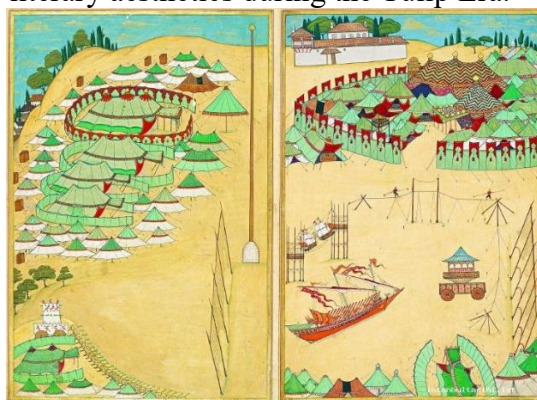


Figure 5. Okmeydanı. Illustrated by Levnî (*Sûrnâme-i Vehbî*, 1727) (Topkapı Palace Museum, A. 3593, fols. 10b–11a)

[Source: <https://istanbultarihi.ist/275-istanbul-sarayinin-resim-hazinesinden-osmanli-sanatinda-minyatur>]

Levnî’s works have survived in four different manuscripts, each reflecting the aesthetic and thematic expectations of Tulip Era painting. Among these, the *Silsilename*—an album containing portraits of Ottoman sultans from Osman Gazi to Ahmed III—is preserved in the Topkapı Palace Museum (İrepoğlu, 2000, pp. 378–439). The portraits in the *Kebir Musavver Silsilename* (A 3109), also housed in the Topkapı Palace Library, are considered to belong to Levnî’s early artistic period. It is generally accepted that Levnî began this series of signed portraits during the reign of Sultan Mustafa II and completed it under Ahmed III. The twenty-three portraits contained in the work are consistent with the artistic sensibilities and aesthetic tastes of the early 18th-century Ottoman court. As both artist and intellectual, Levnî emerges as a figure uniquely capable of reflecting the cultural transformation of the period (İrepoğlu, 1999, p. 38).

Two copies of the *Silsilename*—a genealogical record of the sultans with full-page portraits—include works by Levnî. The first copy, comprising 22 portraits, corresponds to engravings that appear in Dimitrie Cantemir’s historical chronicle. In these depictions, most sultans are shown

seated cross-legged on carpets, with the exception of the final portrait of Mustafa II, where he is depicted on a throne. The present location of the original portraits is now identified. The second copy of the *Silsilename* was produced between 1710 and 1720 and contains 29 portraits (Topkapı Palace Museum, A. 3109) (Figure 9). The first 23 portraits, from Osman I to Ahmed III, are attributed to Levnî; the final portrait, depicting Mustafa IV (r. 1807–1808), along with six others, was added later. Levnî's depictions in this series follow the conventional stylistic models used in *silsilename* manuscripts since the 16th century (Atıl, 1999, p. 33). A third work, compiled between 1720 and 1730, is an album of 46 independent paintings without accompanying text, also preserved in the Topkapı Palace Museum (H. 2164).

Levnî (Abdülcelil Çelebi) distinguished himself at the beginning of the 18th century as a pioneer of renewal in miniature painting. The tradition of serial portraiture continued under his hand, drawing on earlier models while also introducing subtle innovations (İrepoğlu, 1999, p. 38).

Another of Levnî's major works is the *Sûrnâme-i Vehbî*, written by the renowned poet Seyyid Vehbi and illustrated by Levnî (Topkapı Palace Museum, Library of Ahmed III, A. 3593) (Figure 6). Prepared after Levnî settled in Istanbul, the manuscript narrates the circumcision festivities of Ahmed III's sons in 1719: Şehzade Süleyman (aged 10), Şehzade Mehmed (aged 3), Şehzade Mustafa (later Sultan Mustafa III, aged 3), and Şehzade Bayezid (aged 2). The celebrations lasted fifteen days and nights, and the manuscript depicts the events in remarkable detail across 137 double-page miniatures. These include banquets, receptions, performances, guild processions, fireworks, and festivities on barges in the Golden Horn. Levnî's signature appears only once, at the end of the manuscript.

The precise date of the manuscript's completion and presentation to the sultan remains unknown. No reference to it is found in historical records. However, based on an *abjad* calculation contained within the manuscript, Seyyid Vehbi's text was completed in 1727/28 (Atıl, 1999, p. 34).

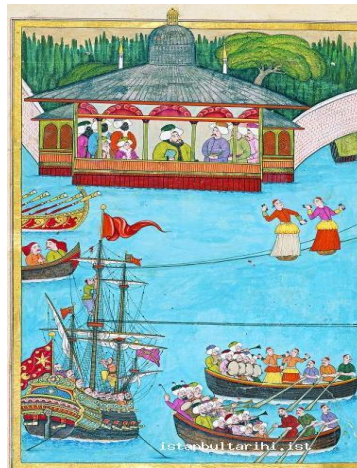


Figure 6. Festivities in front of the Aynalıkavak Pavilion on the Golden Horn. Illustrated by Levnî (Vehbî, 1727) (Topkapı Palace Museum, A. 3593, fols. 92b–93a)

[Source: <https://istanbultarihi.ist/275-istanbul-sarayinin-resim-hazinesinden-osmanli-sanatinda-minyatur>]

Levnî's *Sûrnâme-i Vehbî* is regarded as the last great example of the Ottoman illustrated manuscript tradition. Following this work, illustrated manuscripts under imperial patronage gradually lost their importance; book painting gave way to canvas painting, calligraphic panels, and panoramic wall decorations. Although a few later manuscripts containing portraits of sultans and ambassadors survive, it is evident that the genre quickly lost its earlier influence (Atıl, 1999, p. 34).

Levnî's Artistic Vision

As one of the leading figures of 18th-century Ottoman art, Levnî left a profound mark on his era through his works and his distinctive style. At a time when miniature painting had entered a phase of stagnation under Western influence, his artistic contributions sought to revive the genre (İnal, 1995, p. 174). In an age when daily life was characterized by a pursuit of pleasure and entertainment, Levnî captured the spirit of the period through his use of diverse colors and innovative compositional arrangements. The 18th century, during which Levnî lived, marked the beginning of a new era of intense cultural contact between the Ottoman Empire and Europe—an era defined by “Westernization” and “innovation.” Reforms in the military, political, technical, educational, and administrative spheres had a profound impact on Ottoman cultural and artistic life, paving the way for new forms and genres. Within this context, Levnî contributed to the development of a unique artistic understanding in which traditional elements were blended with innovative approaches (İrepoğlu, *Jean-Baptiste Vanmour: A Witness of the Tulip Era*, p. 73).

Levnî was a painter who reflected the relative atmosphere of freedom of his time in his art. While employing traditional styles and formulas, he transcended them to develop a more realistic and individual mode of expression. In doing so, he introduced a previously unseen form of representation in Ottoman painting, paving the way for a new era. Rather than imitating Western art, Levnî sought to rejuvenate Ottoman painting. His innovative perspective influenced subsequent artists and contributed significantly to the renewal of Ottoman pictorial traditions (İrepoğlu, *Levnî: Ornament, Poetry, Color*, p. 12).

Levnî distinguished himself particularly through his mastery of portraiture. While maintaining traditional compositional schemes, he portrayed figures with full, rounded facial features and dynamic gestures. Even in crowded scenes, he carefully rendered facial expressions to emphasize individual character, thereby enhancing the expressive power of his works (Renda, “Levnî,” *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, p. 211). His focus on the human face clearly demonstrates his skill as a portraitist. Whether depicting sultans or ordinary members of Ottoman society, Levnî represented each figure in a way that highlighted their human qualities. In his scenes of the joyful and carefree men and women of the Tulip Era, the figures are rendered with natural poses and often shown making direct eye contact with the viewer (İrepoğlu, *Levnî: Ornament, Poetry, Color*, p. 89) (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Woman Spinning Yarn

[Source: <https://www.tarihiakadim.com/lale-devri-sanatcisi-levni-ve-eserlerindeki-kadin-tasvirleri/>]

In his portraits of sultans, Levnî often depicted rulers seated in a relaxed posture within an interior space, sometimes incorporating draped curtains in the background. This approach signals his departure from rigid traditional portrait models and his attempt to introduce a new interpretation. Alongside his skill in portraiture, Levnî was also a master of compositional design. While adhering to conventional formulas in figural representation, he applied a more

innovative and original approach to the overall structure of his compositions (Renda, “Levnî,” *Eczacıbaşı Art Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, p. 1108). This innovation became one of his lasting contributions to miniature art.

In his multi-figured compositions, Levnî employed high horizon lines and arranged groups of figures in superimposed or S-shaped formations, descending from top to bottom, thereby creating different spatial planes. This technique imparted depth to his scenes and introduced a new visual conception into miniature painting (Mahir, *Ottoman Painting*, p. 170). Another innovation appears in his depictions of nature: by situating trees between steep hills, rendering their shadows on the ground, and adding flying birds, he created a sense of depth and dimension in the composition (Renda, “Levnî,” *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, 1994, p. 211) (Figure 8).



Figure 8: Sultan and Musicians, TSM (fol. 57b–58) (https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surname-i_Vehbi#/media/Dosya:Surname_57b-58.jpg)

With his strong powers of observation, Levnî introduced new techniques into Ottoman miniature painting, enriching the traditional style by employing light, shadow, and tonal values of color. These innovations are particularly evident in details such as curtains, cushions, and garments in the sultans' portraits (Renda, G., “Levnî,” *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, Tarih Vakfı, Ankara 1994, p. 211). (Figure 9)



Figure 9: Levnî's miniature depicting “Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent”

(<https://www.kitaptansanattan.com/naksi-ve-levninin-padisah-resimleri-hazal-seyran-yazdi/>)

Levnî embellished objects suitable for ornamentation—such as carpets, kilims, tents, and tiles on buildings (Figure 10)—by blending Western decorative motifs with the classical Ottoman style in line with the fashions of his time (Ünver, A. S., *Ressam Levnî Hayatı ve Eserleri*, p. 15). He favored the use of natural colors in his works. Among the most striking innovations in

Levnî's miniatures is his success in giving a sense of depth and perspective; this approach transcended the traditional Ottoman miniature style and produced a visual effect closer to the Western painting tradition (Renda, G. (1977). *Batılılaşma Döneminde Türk Resim Sanatı 1700–1850*. Ankara: Hacettepe Üniversitesi Yayınları).



Figure 10: TSMK, R. 989, Külliyyât-ı Kâtibî, fol. 93a, Year 1460. Sultan's Assembly
(<https://www.tarihi kadim.com/lale-devri-sanatcisi-levni-ve-eserlerindeki-kadin-tasvirleri/>)

Conclusion

The Tulip Era stands out as a transformative moment in Ottoman cultural history, where aesthetic refinement, leisure, and cross-cultural encounters shaped new artistic directions. Nakkaş Levnî's miniatures vividly embody this synthesis, combining traditional Ottoman miniature conventions with novel approaches to composition, color, and subject matter. His works not only reflected the refined tastes of the early 18th-century Ottoman court but also symbolized the empire's openness to external influences and its capacity to reinterpret them within local artistic traditions.

Yet the significance of Levnî's miniatures extends beyond their own time. As cultural heritage, they continue to inform modern debates on identity, aesthetics, and the representation of tradition. In this respect, the dynamics observed by Summak, Erbay, and Algan Özkök (2024) in the field of heritage communication are especially relevant: heritage is not a static legacy but a living cultural resource, continually reinterpreted and "presented" to new audiences through evolving channels of cultural mediation (Erbay, *The Role of Public Relations in Promoting Intangible Cultural Heritage*). Just as Levnî's visual language once mediated between Ottoman tradition and Western influences, today his works stand as a testament to how art embodies the dialogue between past and present, tradition and innovation.

Levnî's art illustrates how, in a cultural environment enriched by Western influences, he preserved the essence of the Ottoman classical style while creating a unique synthesis. In this context, Levnî drew inspiration from Rococo and Baroque aesthetics in Europe, but instead of mere imitation, he blended these elements with Ottoman cultural and artistic values to forge an original style. His miniatures' vivid color palette, expressive individuality of figures, spatial design, and use of light and shadow reveal both his technical mastery and his creative innovations. In particular, details in his sultanic portraits—such as rulers' relaxed postures within interiors, as well as the curtains and cushions included in the background—clearly reflect the new perspective he brought to portraiture.

Levnî's miniatures are not only of aesthetic significance but also serve as invaluable sources for understanding the social and cultural fabric of the era. Works such as the *Surnâme-i Vehbî* and *Silsilename* visually document the refinement, festivities, and cultural diversity of the Tulip

Era, providing detailed insights into courtly and social life. By emphasizing individual character and social roles through his figures, Levnî advanced both the visual and narrative power of miniature painting. His approach transported the experiences of Ottoman society—its various groups and its cultural dynamics—into the realm of visual art, offering viewers a vivid experience of the period's lifestyle.

Moreover, the technical and aesthetic innovations visible in Levnî's works mark a turning point beyond the traditional patterns of Ottoman miniature art. The elevated horizon line, layered figure placement, spatial depth, light-shadow interplay, and detailed depiction of natural elements all highlight the originality of his artistic vision. These techniques not only introduced a quasi-three-dimensional approach to miniature painting but also established a lasting point of reference for later artists.

In conclusion, Levnî should be regarded not only as a representative of Tulip Era miniature painting, but also as an interpreter of eighteenth-century Ottoman cultural life and a visual narrator of the era's aesthetic values. His works reflect both the traditional roots and the transformative innovations of Ottoman painting, securing his place as a pivotal figure in its evolution. Levnî's art must therefore be considered an indispensable resource for understanding the aesthetics, culture, and social dynamics of the Tulip Era; his miniatures preserve the visual memory of the past while transmitting the universal dimensions of Ottoman aesthetics to the present day.

References

- Akkurt, A. (2015). Cumhuriyet Sonrası Türk Minyatür Sanatı'nın Özellikleri Sorusu [Yüksek lisans doktora tezi]. Gazi Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü El Sanatları Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı
- ARIK, R. (1999). Osmanlı Sanatında Duvar Resimleri, Osmanlı Kültür ve Sanat, cilt 11, s.423-436
- Atıl, E. (1999). Levni ve Surname Bir Osmanlı Şenliğinin Öyküsü. Koçbank
- Banu MAHİR, Osmanlı Minyatür Sanatı, Kabalcı Yayınevi, İstanbul
- Bulut, H. (2001). Yeniliklerle Dolu Yüzyıldan İki 'Yeni' İsim: Nedim-Levnî Ve Eserlerindeki
- Derman, Ç. (1999). Osmanlı Asırlarında Üslup ve Sanatkârlarıyla Tezhip Sanatı, Osmanlı Kültür ve Sanat, cilt 11
- Günsel RENDA, (1997), "Minyatür", Eczacıbaşı Sanat Ansiklopedisi, II. Cilt, Yem Yayın, İstanbul
- İlden, S. (2011). "Levni İmzalı İnsan Resimlerinde Figür Anlayışı", Turkish Studies, Cilt. 6 Sayı. 1
- İnal, G. (1995). Türk Minyatür Sanatı (Başlangıcından Osmanlılara Kadar), Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Yayını, Ankara
- İrepoğlu, G.(1999). Levni: Nakış şiir Renk, T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, İstanbul
- İrepoğlu, G. (2006). Lale Devri'nin "Çelebi" Nakkaşı: Levni, G. Sanat Dünyamız, Sayı 100, İstanbul
- İrepoğlu, G. (2000). "Yenilik ve Değişim", Padişahın Portresi. Tesavir-i Al-i Osman, İstanbul
- İrepoğlu, G. Lâle Devri'nin Bir Görgü Tanığı Jean-Bapiste Vanmour
- Mahir, B.(2012), Osmanlı Minyatür Sanatı, Kabalcı Yayıncılık, İstanbul
- M.Münir AKTEPE, Damad İbrahim Paşa Nevşehirli, İslam Ansiklopedisi 8. Cild
- Öndeş, O. ve E. Makzume. (2000). Lale Devri Ressamı Jean Baptiste Van Mour, Aksoy Yayıncılık, İstanbul
- Öztelli, C.(1996). "Ressam Levnî Üzerine Yeni Bilgiler", *Türk Dili*, İstanbul
- Renda, G. (1977), Batılılaşma Döneminde Türk Resim Sanatı 1700-1850. Ankara: TürkTarih Kurumu Basımevi

Renda, G., “Levnî”, Eczacıbaşı Sanat Ansiklopedisi, c. 2

Renda, G., “Levnî“, *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, Tarih Vakfı, Ankara 1994

Summak, M. E., Erbay, M., & Algan Özkök, G. (2024). The role of public relations in promoting intangible cultural heritage. *Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences*, 22(2), 16994–17008. <https://doi.org/10.57239/PJLSS-2024-22.2.001234>

Ünver, A. S., Ressam Levnî Hayatı ve Eserleri

Internet Source

<https://istanbultarihi.ist/275-istanbul-sarayinin-resim-hazinesinden-osmanli-sanatinda-minyatur>

<https://www.tarihi kadim.com/lale-devri-sanatcisi-levni-ve-eserlerindeki-kadin-tasvirleri>

<https://www.kitaptansanattan.com/naksi-ve-levninin-padisah-resimleri-hazal-seyran-yazdi>

https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surname-i_Vehbi#/media/Dosya:Surname_57b-58.jpg

<https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/sukufe>

<https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/abdullah-i-buhari>