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### *Usbek to Ibben in Smyrna*

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As soon as an important person dies, people assemble in a mosque, and they deliver his funeral oration, which is a speech in his praise, by which one would be hard pressed to determine truthfully the merit of the deceased.

I would like to ban funeral ceremonies : men should be mourned at their birth, and not at their death. What good are the ceremonies and the all the dismal paraphernalia placed before a dying man in his final moments, [1] even the tears of his family, and the grief of his friends, except to exaggerate to him the loss he will suffer ?

We are so blind that we do not know when we should grieve or rejoice : almost all our sorrows or joys are false.

When I see the Mogul, [2] who goes foolishly every year and steps onto a scale to be weighed like an ox [3] ; when I see people rejoice that their prince has become more material, in other words less able to govern them, Ibben, I pity human extravagance.

*Paris this 20th day of the moon of Rhegeb 1713*

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[1] For administration of extreme unction.

[2] "Mogol, or the empire of the Great Mogol, also called Indostan, containing the most part of the continent of the Indies" (Collier 1701).

[3] According to Tavernier, describing the anniversary festivals for Aureng-Zebe (livre II, ch. viii, vol. II, p. 267), and François Bernier, who specifies : "On the third day of the moon of the festival the king is very ceremoniously weighed, and after him several Omrahs, with a great scale and weights said to be solid gold." (*Voyages de François Bernier, contenant la description des états du Grand Mogol*, Amsterdam : Paul Marret, 1711, vol. II, p. 55.)