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Early Ottoman Diplomacy: Ad Hoc Period

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Throughout many centuries, until the period of overall reform by Selim III, the Ottoman sultans carried out their relations with foreign rulers in the form of ad hoc diplomacy. Although that was the general practice of the Middle Ages, as early as 1454 the Ottoman court had become acquainted with a residential ambassador in Constantinople. The Venetian *bailo* permanently resided in Istanbul to carry out relations with the Ottoman Empire as well as secure the interests of Venetian merchants. Nevertheless, successive Ottoman sultans preferred ad hoc diplomacy, and sent out representatives of various ranks as necessity required. In this study, the reasons for such a preference – Ottoman approach to diplomacy, Islamic influences, Ottoman diplomatic protocol and conduct of diplomacy – will be illuminated by the archives, with selected examples from contemporary sources and chronicles.

Early background

Just as the rules of diplomacy in Europe were framed in accord with the ethical principles of Christianity,¹ early Ottoman diplomacy was mostly shaped by the general principles of Islam. The pillars of Ottoman diplomacy were based on Islamic law, as the Ottomans were becoming a world power throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. From the eighteenth century onwards, however, the relative strength of the Ottoman State greatly decreased vis-à-vis the European powers. As a result, western standards of diplomacy were widely imposed on the Ottomans. By the nineteenth century, the conduct of diplomacy was totally shaped by the major states of Europe. As a result of the Paris Conference in 1856, the Ottomans were considered fit to benefit from the European Public Law of Nations. There was no more unique 'Ottoman' diplomacy. The

Concert of Europe had its own diplomatic tradition which was to be accepted by the Ottomans.

In addition to the requirements of 'power relations', the Ottoman state of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries based its relationships with other nations on the general rules of Muslim international law, the basic principles of which are known as *Dâr al-Harb*, *Dâr al-Islam*, *Dâr al-Sulh*, *amân* (safe conduct) and *dhimme* (status given to non-Muslims in a Muslim state). In the period that we are dealing with, Ottoman peace agreements with other nations were considered by the Ottomans to be truces rather than bilateral treaties. Since a continuous status of peace with infidels is not permissible according to classical Islamic principles, it was the usual practice for the Ottomans to conclude a temporary truce of ten, twenty and even thirty years.

It has been assumed that the Ottoman Empire was only concerned with waging *jihâd* and conquest, and consequently the importance of Ottoman diplomacy in the arena of international relations has been underestimated. The lack of Ottoman residential ambassadors at the major European capitals until the late eighteenth century has been cited as proof of Ottoman negligence in the realm of diplomacy. However, it is more accurate to characterize Ottoman practice as a synthesis of abstract Islamic principles with Ottoman Realpolitik. In other words, the Ottomans created their own method of diplomacy while respecting the pillars of Islam.

The Ottomans were the only medieval Muslim nation to have had close contacts with the European powers, both peaceful and belligerent. Since their foundation of a small principality, the Ottomans were surrounded by Muslim and non-Muslim rivals. Beginning with the early conquests in the Balkans, they were confronted with Crusader attacks. Prevention of Christian alliances led by the Pope was a constant concern for the Ottoman statesmen. For this reason they could not ignore the power-balance system, and diplomacy was an essential instrument in carrying out its relations with European nations. Even at the zenith of Ottoman military power during Suleiman the Magnificent's reign, the Sublime Porte did not only rely on sheer force, but also looked for allies among the Christian world and played one country off against another.

The Ottomans played an important role in the European balance of power throughout the sixteenth century by virtue of their military strength, which they employed in order to control the Mediterranean trade. The only way for European powers to facilitate their merchants' activities in Ottoman territories was through obtaining an *ahdnâme*,² that is capitulations, from the Sultan. The Porte deliberately granted

ahdnâmes to establish friendly relations with countries which were deemed politically and strategically advantageous. In order to prevent economic dependence on the Venetians, Mehmed II encouraged their rivals, Florence and Dubrovnik, to undertake commerce in Ottoman territories. Likewise, capitulations were granted to France on the eve of the Ottoman attempt to seize the island of Cyprus in 1569, to Britain in 1580 and to the Dutch in 1612 after the Lepanto disaster of 1571 when the Venetian–Spanish–Papal coalition endangered vital Ottoman interests in the Mediterranean. The Protestant northerners were not chosen by chance. Engagement with them was an important strategic decision. British and Dutch naval supremacy was an important factor in this preference. Venetian galleys in the Mediterranean were easy targets for the English *bretonis*, which were heavily armed with bronze and iron guns.³ The magnitude of the English ambassador Edward Barton's ship amazed the contemporaries in Istanbul.⁴ The Venetian *bailo* in Istanbul, Giovanni Francesco Moresini, wrote⁵ to the Doge and Senate in March 1584 and expressed his discontent about the arrival of English ships to the Levant: 'The Englishman had more guns than goods, which proved that her real object was to go pirating on her way home.' According to the dispatch⁶ of Antoino Foscarini, the Venetian *bailo* in England: 'There is not either in England or in Holland a berton so small that she could not out-fight the biggest Venetian.'

Through relationships with England and the Dutch Republic, the Ottomans were able to break up the embargo, imposed by the Pope, on the strategic war materials of lead, tin, cannon balls and gunpowder.

The extent of Ottoman involvement in European politics can be illustrated by the fact that the Italian city-states would threaten to call on the Ottomans against their enemies when in dire straits. In 1525 the French followed the same strategy when François I was defeated and imprisoned in Spain by Charles V. His mother could apply to no sovereign at that time other than Suleiman the Magnificent to rescue his son. The Ottomans took this opportunity to conquer Hungary in 1526.⁷ Only after the military pressure of the Ottoman armies was François I able to return his throne.⁸ The support of Protestants such as the Calvinists in the same period was one of the fundamental principles of Ottoman policy in Europe.⁹ In this way the Ottomans greatly influenced the balance of power in Europe which in turn affected the rise of the nation-states in the west. The Ottoman state played a crucial role in the shaping of the European political map in the sixteenth, and partially in the seventeenth, century. Without Ottoman influence, the European map, undoubtedly, would be different.

Nevertheless, it was not so easy to make contact with the Ottoman government in those times. Let alone an alliance, even diplomatic correspondence with the Sultan was not acceptable within the Christian world. In the early sixteenth century Papal fanaticism was so influential that François I could not send a written letter with his envoy to Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. The French envoy could only transmit oral information from his king to the Sultan in 1525.¹⁰

The Ottoman diplomatic efforts at breaking Catholic fanaticism were always fruitful. For instance, the Venetians joined the Spanish–Papal coalitions against the Turks only when their own imperial territories and trade privileges were under direct attack, and whenever the Turks showed willingness to renew peaceable relations, the Venetians were eager – treacherously eager from a crusading Christian point of view – to make peace and reopen trade with the Levant.¹¹ Observing the quick recovery of the Ottoman navy after the significant damage inflicted upon the Ottomans at Lepanto in 1571, Venice had dropped out of the Holy League, and concluded a truce with the Ottomans in 1573. The conditions of the peace treaty were so favourable that contemporaries said, as Charrière noted, 'it would seem that the Turks had won the battle of Lepanto'.¹² The disagreement between Venice and the Pope on relations with the Ottoman state was clearly indicated by the report of the Venetian *bailo*, dated 27 December, to Ottavio Bon in Constantinople. He explains to Lieutenant Grand Vizier 'the reason for the quarrel between Venice and the Pope is the determination of the Republic not to break with the Grand Turk'.¹³

After the conquest of Constantinople, when Ottoman supremacy began to be felt in Europe, they were proud of accepting western residential ambassadors. But at the same time the Ottomans declined to follow the same path. The Venetian *bailo* Bartelemi Marcello in 1454 was followed by the residential ambassador of France Jean de la Forêt (1535), of England William Harborne (1583) and of the Netherlands Cornelis Haga (1612) at the Porte. However, there was severe competition among the first residential ambassadors in Istanbul to prevent newcomers. When the first capitulations were granted to England and William Harborne was recognized as the residential representative of English merchants in the Ottoman territories, the Venetian *bailo* and the French ambassador in Istanbul allied to prevent his accreditation by the Sultan. The Venetian Senate instructed the *bailo* in Istanbul on May 1583 to cooperate with the French ambassador on this case:

As regards the arrival of that English ship, and the operation of the French ambassador to disturb the negotiations; in view of the

damage to us which English trade in those parts would produce, we charge you, as we charged your predecessor, to co-operate with the French ambassador in upsetting the negotiations.¹⁴

Cornelis Haga was faced with the same fate in 1612. The trio of ambassadors from Venice, France and England obstructed the first Dutch ambassador then in Istanbul. They went even further and did not hesitate to resort to bribery. According to the dispatch of Christoforo Valier, the Venetian *bailo* in Istanbul:

The [Dutch] Ambassador encountered the greatest opposition from the French envoy, who went the length of offering ten thousand sequins to upset the negotiations and although the English Ambassador was displeased at seeing the successful issue of the affair, at first he took no steps; however, when it far advanced he endeavoured to join with France, and on his side also offered to spend a similar sum for that same purpose.¹⁵

Despite these early examples, the Ottoman state waited until 1793 to send its first residential diplomatic mission to a foreign country.

The Islamic basis of Ottoman diplomacy

The basis of international relations with non-Muslims, the conditions of war, peace and truce, is clearly set out in the Holy Qur'an:

If ye gain the mastery over them in war, disperse, with them, those who follow them, that they may remember. If thou fearest treachery from any group, throw back (their covenant) to them, (so as to be) on equal terms: for God loveth not the treacherous.¹⁶ But if the enemy inclines towards peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace, and trust in God: for He is the One that heareth and knoweth (all things).¹⁷ But if they violate their oaths after their covenant, and taunt you for your Faith, fight ye the chiefs of unfaith: for their oaths are nothing to them: that thus they may be restrained.¹⁸

Ottoman diplomatic and administrative practice also observed the following Islamic territorial classifications:

- **Dâr al-Islam** – Islamic territories where the *Shari'a* is enforced and the residing non-Muslims, *dhimmîs*, were required to pay *jizya*, that is the poll tax, annually;

- **Dâr al-harb** – territories ruled by non-Muslims, open to *jihad* and conquest;
- **Dâr al-sulh** – Ottoman vassal principalities and other tribute-paying administrations.

Beside these territorial divisions, *amân* was also granted to certain nations in the form of capitulations, that is *ahdnâme*, so that merchants of a capitulatory nation could move freely within the Ottoman dominions with the status of *musta'min* for a term of one year without paying *jizya*. In practice, freedom of commercial activity in Ottoman lands was extended to the merchants of non-capitulatory nations as long as they sailed under a capitulatory nation's flag and paid *cottimo* (*elçilik ve konsolosluk hakkı*), the consulate fee, to the relevant consul.

The ad hoc nature of diplomacy

Capitulations

Although most of the Ottoman capitulations became permanent in practice, until the mid-eighteenth century they were technically and legally temporary instruments unilaterally granted by the existing Sultan and needed to be renewed by each incoming Sultan. A noteworthy Ottoman practice regarding the early capitulations was the treatment of resident ambassadors and consuls as the representatives of the merchants within the Ottoman dominions rather than as representatives of the country itself. Indeed, the English ambassadors in this early period were paid by the Levant Company.¹⁹ The consuls and the dragomans could carry out their activities with a diploma, *berat*, issued by the Sultan. The grant of a *berat* was a prerequisite for all positions in the Ottoman bureaucracy that describe the authority and responsibilities. The issuance of a *berat* meant the Sultan accredited him. Furthermore, the Porte never allowed any member of the capitulatory nations to establish fortified cities or regions such as the Genoese fortresses of Caffa and Pera which were permitted during Byzantine times. Together with the granting of immediate capitulations after the fall of Constantinople, Mehmed II had the walls surrounding the Genoese colony of Pera demolished.

The conquest of Constantinople ushered in a new conception of the Ottoman state. Mehmed II declared himself heir to the East Roman Empire and undertook the institutionalization of the state in all respects. The continuous rise of Ottoman power inevitably affected diplomatic relations with other nations. Until the late seventeenth century, the Ottomans did not recognize the European rulers as their equals.

For a long time European rulers were treated only as equivalent to the Ottoman Grand Vizier. Not until the peace treaty of Zsitva-Török in 1606 was the ruler of Austria recognized by the Porte as having the status of emperor (*Nemçe Châsârî*). Likewise, the Russian tsars were not recognized as emperors until 1740. All of these truces were unilateral documents, issued by the Sultan, and included his oath before God. Thus the Ottoman sultans considered themselves responsible only to God for the keeping of their oaths. The practice of unilateral agreements came to an end with the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699 when, for the first time, the Ottoman Sultan acknowledged a multilateral document to sustain a peace treaty.²⁰

A diplomacy characterized by the recruitment of career diplomats, an emphasis on the acquisition of local language and an elaborate hierarchy became, by the end of the eighteenth century, an inseparable part of European foreign policy. In the Ottoman Empire, relations with other nations were still governed by Islamic principles. As mentioned above, rather than being trapped by inflexibility, the Ottomans followed Muslim jurists who elaborated a series of interpretations which allowed for temporary truces and a system of safe conduct to facilitate relations with Europe.²¹

The modern practice of international rights and immunities was clearly observed by the Ottomans. All kinds of safe conduct were provided to merchants travelling by both sea and land. Since the danger of corsair activities was so great in the Mediterranean, merchant ships, their crews and the merchants of any capitulatory country were protected from piracy and slavery. Full safe conduct was also given in the Ottoman territories to such an extent that foreign merchants were allowed to wear Muslim clothes and even to carry arms (which was prohibited for Ottoman subjects under normal circumstances) during their travels through the countryside to protect them from banditry.²² The Ottoman Sultan, in return, expected similar respect for the Ottoman merchants. When the Ottoman merchants were detained in Venice during the siege of Cyprus and battle of Lepanto in 1571, Venetian merchants, in reciprocity, were not allowed to leave Istanbul. An imperial *firman* was sent to the Venetian *bailo* in Istanbul to inform him that the Venetian merchants would be unable to leave the city unless the Ottoman merchants were released.²³

The Ottoman government acknowledged the legal superiority of the capitulations, and in case of conflict, *firman*s were sent by the Sultan to the local authorities. The resident ambassadors in Istanbul, the consuls and the dragomans were equipped with diplomatic and commercial

immunities in the modern sense except the state of war. The Venetian *bailos* in Istanbul were held under custody many times in the Seven Towers when the Ottoman Empire was at war with Venice.²⁴ As soon as the long war of 1463–79 erupted, Venetian *bailo* Paolo Barbarigo was put into prison, but was released earlier in the year through the mediation of Mahmud Pasha.²⁵ In another case, in 1730 an Iranian diplomatic delegation was in Istanbul for peace talks. They stayed for about seven months. Meanwhile it was learned that Iranian troops had captured Erivan (Yerevan). The Ottoman authorities were convinced that the Iranian delegation had distracted the Ottoman government. They were soon imprisoned at the castle of Mardin. Since Ahmed III was dethroned as a result of the Patrona Halil rebellion and Mahmud I had ascended the Ottoman throne, the Iranian Shah conveyed another envoy named Veli Kulu to congratulate the new Sultan. He was also imprisoned at Bozcaada without passing through Istanbul.²⁶

Consuls and dragomans were exempt from customs duties. However, the foreign representatives abused the status of dragomans and issued certificates (*berats*) to irrelevant people in return for money. The Sultan, in the end, issued a *firman* in 1787 to regulate their status and limited the number of dragomans.²⁷ An inspection in Aleppo revealed 1500 'dragomans' employed in the city.²⁸ The Sultans also issued *firman*s prohibiting the appointment of consuls from among Ottoman subjects who were trying to escape taxes by acquiring this status.²⁹

Likewise, extraterritorial rights were granted in lawsuits between the members of a capitulatory nation unless an Ottoman subject was involved. Cases exceeding the amount of four thousand *akças* were to be heard in the Imperial Chancery at the capital to prevent local abuse. Guarantees were also given that the legacy of a dead merchant should be returned either to his company or to his embassy. In conclusion, principles of international general and private law were mentioned in the capitulations in detail.

The Ottoman approach to diplomacy

Ottoman conduct of international relations in the absence of a fixed diplomacy was generally attributed to its negligence of diplomatic means, its principles and its universally accepted rules. Moreover, many authors are inclined to describe the system of ad hoc diplomacy as a natural aspect of Islamic beliefs which prohibited peaceful relations with non-Muslims. Although the Ottoman state system observed basic Islamic principles in many respects, it also combined them with pre-Islamic

Turkish traditions and often followed a practical path without adhering strictly to religious law. Being an expansive empire, accommodating both three religions and many nations within her vast territories, it is hardly to be expected that the Ottoman state would run the state machinery along strict lines. It is true that the Sultans always sought the approval of the *Shaikh al-Islam* prior to the ratification of any international document, but at the same time the Sultans never hesitated to recruit Ottoman subjects of Christian and Jewish origin.

It is also true that as late as 1798 Ottoman religious scholars were involved in diplomatic affairs. When Napoleon occupied Egypt – then an Ottoman territory – and the dispute was to be discussed with the Russian embassy in Istanbul, Sultan Selim III required to be accompanied by a scholar in the discussions for consultation.³⁰

When the recognition of the status of Napoleon as an emperor and the attitude of the European powers towards his policies were under discussion with the Russian ambassador, the subject of a declaration of war came to the table. The Ottoman foreign minister, Reisülküttab, apprised the Russian ambassador that a declaration of war strictly necessitated a *fetva*, the approval of *şeyhülislam*. This would only be possible, he went on, on the conditions that religious law, that is *Sharia*, had been violated, the state threatened and the dispute could not be settled by peaceful means.³¹

The establishment of continuous diplomatic representation in Istanbul by the maritime states of the French, English and Dutch was basically prompted by commercial ambitions in the Ottoman market. The Ottomans approached these three powers because of their potential naval superiority against the Spanish and Venetian armadas. As indicated by Hurewitz,³² when the Ottoman state was at its zenith, the Sultans were under no pressure to abandon a system that produced results. As an acknowledgement of her superiority, the Ottoman government conducted a unilateral system of diplomacy with the European states. Sending an ambassador to a foreign country, particularly to the enemy, was considered a sign of inferiority. Until the long-lasting Austrian wars of 1593–1606, no Ottoman ambassador was sent to Vienna, since the status of the Austrian Emperor was not equal to that of the Ottoman Sultan.³³ Indeed, diplomatic non-reciprocity constituted a source of strength not weakness. Negotiations were conducted strictly on Ottoman terms. The Sultan's plenipotentiaries could take immediate decisions while their European counterparts were obliged to await instructions from their sovereigns. Besides, the dragomans of the Sublime Porte and of the European diplomatic missions came from the Greek Phanariote families, who were also

subjects of the Sultan and thus could not fully represent the interests of the European governments which employed them. Strangely enough, the Ottoman government itself suffered much from the treason of those Greek interpreters in the early nineteenth century, which resulted in the execution of three dragomans of Greek origin and the establishment of a Chamber of Interpretation at the Porte in 1821.³⁴

Collection of information

The utilization of ad hoc diplomacy by the sultans did not mean that the Ottoman court was unaware of European political developments. From the very beginning, potential Crusader attacks always kept the Ottoman army on the alert. The sultans established a well-run espionage system that provided a continuous flow of information from all over Europe. Hans Derschwam, the secretary of Austrian envoy Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq to Sultan Suleiman in 1555, is clearly complaining about this situation in his memoirs: 'The Jews have information whatever happens in the Christian world. They travel all the countries and pick secret information. Because of this, they are the traitors and spies that the Turks use against Christianity.'³⁵ Mehmed the Conqueror also paid great attention to intelligence. According to a diplomatic dispatch: 'Mahomet Bey told the Venetians that the Sultan [Mehmet II] maintained two spies in Venice, whom he paid 4,000 ducats each, annually, and informed him of all the secrets of the city. According to Mahomet Bey, "the Venetians could not even clean their teeth without the spies informing immediately the Sultan".'³⁶

The princes of Wallachia, Moldavia and Dubrovnik regularly conveyed information about military and political developments in Europe, which they obtained through merchants, who travelled all around the continent.³⁷ From the documents available in the Ottoman archives, we learn that any kind of military preparations by the enemy was reported to the Ottoman court. Sometimes the commanders of the frontier fortresses sent their own spies to pick up information about the enemy.³⁸ The interpreters of the Imperial Chancery also transferred valuable information to the Sultans which they had obtained from foreign missions at the Porte.³⁹ Through the reports from Ragusa, the Ottomans monitored Venetian and Spanish shipping in the Mediterranean.⁴⁰ The Crimea was also a source of information about Russia. Clearly, the Ottoman government had established a network of information to compensate for the lack of residential ambassadors at the major European capitals. It can be observed from the existing documents available in Ottoman archives

that there was a continuous flow of information from the above-mentioned sources.

To obtain information about the exact military capacity of the enemy, Ottoman authorities sometimes resorted to diplomatic tricks. During the 16-year long Ottoman–Venetian wars (1463–79), one of the diplomatic practices employed by Grand Vizier Mahmud Pasha was to sound out the enemy's peace proposals, without actually having any intention of concluding peace but with the sole purpose of finding out whether the Venetians were willing to fight and their readiness for concessions.⁴¹

Diplomatic protocol in the Ottoman court

The Ottoman court gave utmost priority to the ceremonial magnificence attending both Ottoman diplomatic delegations sent abroad, and the reception of foreign delegations by the Sultans. The Ottoman government paid all the expenditures of foreign envoys in the Ottoman territories. For this purpose a special fund of one million *akças* was allocated in the budget.⁴² The audience for foreign envoys coincided with payment day (*ulûfe günü*) of the janissaries at the Topkapi Palace. Envoys were welcomed at the outer gate of the Topkapi Palace by the master of horses, *mirahur*, together with dozens of gold and silver equipped horses. The envoy was first met by the Grand Vizier at the Imperial Chancery after the colourful ceremony of the quarterly payment to the janissaries, who numbered over ten thousand. He was then received by the Sultan in person with a splendid ceremony and exchange of expressions of goodwill.⁴³ The rank of the envoy was considered to reflect the importance given both to his mission and to the Sultan. During the Ottoman–Iranian wars, the Iranian Shah had sent Hızır Beg to request a truce vis-à-vis the Ottoman military advance in 1635. Since he was of a lower rank, Sultan Murad IV did not hold the envoy in esteem and declined to write an imperial letter to the Shah of Iran. The Ottoman Grand Vizier only wrote a letter to the Iranian Vizier Rustem.⁴⁴

The envoy then presented a royal letter of friendship and gifts to the Sultan. Envoys without a royal letter were not accepted by the Sultan at court. The importance of the letter of goodwill and promise of friendship was also clearly emphasized in the introductory part of all granted and renewed capitulations. The Ottoman Sultans expected the expression of an intention to sustain friendly relations from their counterparts.⁴⁵ The foreign representatives might never privately see the Sultan again. In short, the first steps of the Ottoman government to establish a peaceful

relationship with a non-Muslim country conformed completely to the Islamic principle of *amân*.

Other than ad hoc envoys, there were resident representatives of certain countries. Venice, Genoa and France were the earliest states to establish diplomatic missions at the Porte. Despite the fact that these residents were sent by their own sovereigns, for a long time the Sublime Porte considered them as the representatives of their merchants in the Ottoman territories. Dependent principalities such as the Crimean khan, the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia as well as major Ottoman viceroys had a special man, called *kapı kethüdası*, at the Porte to carry out their bureaucratic affairs.

The most favoured nation clause was somewhat obscure in Ottoman practice. The most favoured nation at the Porte could only be tacitly understood. The rank of the ambassadors before the Ottoman government changed from time to time as the influential viziers inclined from one state to another. In this respect, the personality of the ambassadors also played a great role. A general capitulation was granted to England in 1583, while the French ambassador had lost his previous prestige. The same attitude can be observed when the Dutch ambassador Cornelis Haga gained prestige through the favour of Admiral Halil Pasha in 1612.⁴⁶ However, diplomatic protocol always caused friction among the *corps diplomatique* in Istanbul.⁴⁷ One such instance was the claim of precedence between the French and English. The French ambassador De Germiny had to leave Istanbul in 1584 because of his disfavour at the Porte. The English ambassador sent his secretary to welcome the new French ambassador De Lancome. When the secretary began 'My master the ambassador...', De Lancome said: 'Your master is a merchant. I know only one ambassador at the Porte, and that is myself.'⁴⁸ De Lancome went so far as to officially request the expulsion of the English ambassador at his audience with the Grand Vizier. In 1612, as soon as the Dutch ambassador had arrived, a new conflict arose in Istanbul for precedence. English ambassador Paul Pindar criticized the attitude of Haga for his immediate claim on his place at the protocol:

The Fleming standes in defence of his and challengeth place before the Venice bailo; verrie ignorantly in my opynion, because the state of Venice hath kingdoms in domynion, butt the states of the Low countreyes have nott yet found out the qualitie of their tenure...⁴⁹

According to historian Selaniki Mustafa Effendi, representatives of Wallachia, Moldavia, Dubrovnik and Venice were not given a banquet

at the court, since they were considered to be of a lower rank at the Porte. With the truce signed in 1573 after the battle of Lepanto, the *bailo* of Venice was given the privilege of having a banquet on the condition that he would contribute a thousand gold pieces for the expenses.⁵⁰

Ottoman envoys

The economic and commercial structure of the Ottoman Empire did not necessitate the establishment of residential diplomatic missions at the major capitals of Europe. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the lack of such missions did not deprive the Ottoman court of information about military and political developments in Europe. For these reasons, the sultans conveyed temporary envoys, extraordinary and plenipotentiary, only for the purposes of:

- informing or greeting accessions to the throne;
- delivering ratified peace agreements (*ratificatio*);
- conveying Sultans' letters (*credential*);
- peace talks and discussion of truces;
- frontier demarcations;
- reciprocating a foreign envoy;
- the establishment or continuance of peaceful and friendly relations.

Envoys sent on routine missions involving the transfer of imperial letters were called *namer*s.⁵¹ When an Ottoman diplomat was assigned for frontier demarcations after a peace treaty, a scholar, called *hudud mollası*, also accompanied him to register the bilateral agreement on exact frontier line.⁵²

The Ottoman court placed great importance on diplomatic protocol. Because of this, the envoys were expected to reflect the superiority and magnificence of the Ottoman state in all respects. There was no special class of professional diplomat during the ad hoc period. Envoys were generally chosen from among the prominent members of the Ottoman Chancery of noble background. Personality was also an important factor in the selection of the envoys.⁵³ The sultans distinguished envoys according to destination, the nature of the mission and the importance of the receiving country. Knowledge of a foreign language was a determinant factor in selection and the sultans did not hesitate to send even their non-Muslim subjects.⁵⁴

When the backgrounds of the envoys with a specific mission during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are examined, it is clear that

almost all of them had occupied important positions in the Ottoman bureaucracy. They usually were either a senior official or an experienced member of the Imperial Chancery. Many of them had occupied lower positions in previous Ottoman delegations.⁵⁵ Naturally, during their long years of service, competence in the job and loyalty to the Sultan were confirmed in the bureaucratic hierarchy.

Preparations for an envoy

The court was sensitive even about the smallest details of an Ottoman foreign mission. Preparations were made long before an envoy departed from the capital. He was first granted a title of a senior position in conformity with the importance of his mission. Generally, the titles of *Defterdar* (Exchequer) or *Nishancı* were given to the envoys and *Beglerbegi* (Governor General) to ambassadors.⁵⁶ When the rank of the Austrian representative was learned to be merely that of an envoy, the rank of the Ottoman ambassador, Ebubekir Ratib Effendi, was also reduced to the same level and the gifts he was carrying were returned from Adrianople in 1791.⁵⁷ The Iranian ambassador to Istanbul in 1737, Abdülbaki Han, on the other hand, insisted on the Ottoman counter-envoy being that of the rank of a vizier. After long discussions, although contrary to the Ottoman practice, his wish was granted.⁵⁸

The typical Ottoman delegation consisted of hundreds of individuals, and preparations often took months. İbrahim Pasha, who went to Vienna after the Treaty of Passarowitz in 1718, was accompanied by 763 people, while Cânibî Ali Pasha who went after the treaty of Belgrade in 1739 was accompanied by 922 people.⁵⁹ Iranian delegations were no smaller. The envoy of Shah Abbas, Zulfikar Khan, came to Istanbul in 1597 with a company of a thousand people.⁶⁰

An envoy was supplied with all kinds of logistical support before his departure. The Porte provided the envoy with the necessary funds to pay for equipping the delegation and covering the costs of transportation: the horses, the rental of ships and so on.⁶¹ *Firmans*, that is decrees from the Sultan, were conveyed to the local authorities within the Ottoman territories to provide for the envoy's needs both in cash and in kind, which were met through local tax funds. It was usual Ottoman practice that the taxes of certain localities were ordered to be paid on site.⁶² The wages of the envoy and of the delegation, the costs of the horses and the rental of vessels were all provided from the relevant sources. Despite all the detailed needs that were taken into consideration, it appears that envoys sometimes covered additional expenditure from their own pockets. For example, it was reported that an envoy to

Russia, Abdülkerim Pasha, went into debt of five thousand *guruş* on official business and petitioned the Sultan to be refunded for this amount.⁶³ Much of the equipment was temporarily entrusted to the envoy with the expectation that it be returned to the Porte intact.⁶⁴ Certain provisions such as ceremonial jewelled weapons, ceremonial robes and other trappings of protocol were carefully recorded and with the return of the delegation they were stored away until needed again. According to Faik Reşit Unat, around the mid-eighteenth century a special treasury for diplomatic missions, called *elçi hazinesi*, was formed which was separate from the main treasury.⁶⁵

The gifts to be presented by the Ottoman envoy were also carefully chosen. Clothes embroidered with precious metals, valuable dishes, horse equipment, decorative household items, weapons, furs, jewellery and even elephants,⁶⁶ all worth considerable sums, were conveyed by the envoys.⁶⁷ The Ottoman sultans themselves expected to be presented with valuable gifts by foreign envoys. Traditionally, the foreign envoys should bring considerable souvenirs to the senior authorities as well. Viziers, the grand admiral and the chief of the janissary corps should especially not be forgotten. Up to the beginning of the long-lasting Ottoman–Austrian War (1593–1606), the Austrian Emperor was to deliver thirty thousand ducats of gold annually through his envoy. He should also send presents consisting of silver goods and clocks. On the way from Vienna to Istanbul, the envoy was to give presents to the Viceroy, the Accountant and the Commander of the Janissary Corps of Budha. In Istanbul, the Grand Vizier was also at the first rank that should be given a present.⁶⁸

Envoys from Iran and other Muslim countries used to bring jewellery, silk carpets, embroidered tents, valuable cloths, swords and daggers inlaid with jewels. The favourite presents of European ambassadors were woollen fabrics, clocks and luxurious utilities made of gold and silver. Among the long list of presents from States General to the Sultan, conveyed by the first Dutch ambassador at the Porte, Cornelis Haga, in 1612, there were also strategic naval maps, which were very valuable for Ottoman navigation.⁶⁹

The estimated amount of the delegation's travel expenses was first reported to the Sultan and, after his approval, the sum was handed over to the envoy.⁷⁰ The allowances of Ahmed Resmî Effendi, Ottoman envoy to Prussia in 1763, were reported by the government to be equal to those paid to Hattî Mustafa Effendi, who was sent to Austria in 1748.⁷¹ When all preparations were complete, the envoy was received by the Sultan in person. The Sultan would present the envoy with instructions, a robe of honour and the imperial letter to be conveyed to the foreign

ruler. Soon the envoy would start his mission by summoning his entourage and arranging a ceremonial departure. The route followed by Ottoman envoys to each country was, with some exceptions, almost traditional. Journeys to destinations other than to France were generally made over land. When another state sent a counter-envoy, both he and the Ottoman envoy met at a common frontier. Sometimes disagreement over the route to be taken by envoys and the location of exchange caused diplomatic crises. An example of such a case was the mission of the Ottoman envoy to Russia, Mehmed Emni Pasha. When he set out to meet the Russian envoy, he passed directly into Russian territories through the city of Bender, crossing the Dnieper, whereas the Russian envoy insisted on taking the route via Kiev, passing through Polish lands. Since both ambassadors had set off on their journeys without agreement, a compromise could only be reached after a long series of intensive communications causing considerable delay.⁷²

The meeting of the envoys at the frontier constituted a major diplomatic event accompanied by magnificent ceremony. The exchange ceremony between the Ottoman ambassador Ibrahim Pasha and the Austrian ambassador Graf Virmond in 1719 was realized with the participation of fifteen thousand troops from each side.⁷³ Each party assigned an officer for the exchange.⁷⁴ At the border, an Ottoman officer was responsible for obtaining a document from the other side citing that the envoy had been delivered, signed by the counter-authorities.⁷⁵ The document was returned when the Ottoman envoy was back from his mission. An Ottoman court official, called *mihmandar*, accompanied the counter-envoy along the road to Istanbul.

When the ceremony of exchange was conducted on land, three stones were erected on the borderline and the ambassadors were brought by their entourages between these stones. Traditionally, the moment of border crossing was celebrated by the shooting of guns by the troops. When a river constituted the frontier, the meetings were more elaborate. The welcome ceremony was held on a raft, located in the middle of the river. Since the Dnieper was the borderline between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, the ambassadors would board the raft, which was located in the middle of the river, near the city of Bender. Following the ceremony on the raft, the two ambassadors would proceed on their separate journeys. The welcoming ceremony in Vienna in 1757 for the Ottoman envoy Ahmed Resmî Effendi was carried out with difficulty, since the Sava River had frozen in the dead of winter. The ice had to be broken before the ceremonial raft could be floated on the river.⁷⁶

Ottoman envoys at the foreign courts

Once over the border, according to the records of the ambassadors (*sefâretnâme*), impressive ceremonies were held at each city through which the Ottoman diplomatic delegation passed on the way to the capital. When Yirmisekiz Çelebi Mehmed Effendi, the Ottoman ambassador to Paris, sailed for Toulon in 1720, the celebrations and the greetings of the nobles in each French city that he passed through greatly surprised him.⁷⁷ Thousands of people gathered along the canal to watch the Ottoman delegation during their trip towards Paris. The commander of Bordeaux, who had never seen an Ottoman until then, pressed the ambassador to visit his castle.⁷⁸ According to the ambassador, thousands of people gathered from all around in order to view his delegation.

The celebrations at the capital, of course, were the most magnificent. The Ottoman delegation could hardly make its way to the palace due to the large numbers of people and the thirty thousand soldiers who filled the streets of Paris. The Parisians showed an extraordinary interest in their Oriental guests⁷⁹ and their insatiable curiosity over the appearance and habits of the Ottoman delegation caused quite a furore in the capital. The wives and the young women of the nobility insisted on viewing the Ottomans as they were dining. The Parisian women came in groups to the Ottoman delegation's residence merely to observe their eating manners, just as if they were at the theatre.⁸⁰

Mehmed Effendi had the opportunity to meet the twelve-year-old French king Louis XIII. Strangely enough, the king's tutor proudly pointed out that the hair on the young king's head was real, not a wig. He even had the king run around in the salon in front of Mehmed Effendi. The ambassador caressed the king's hair and admired his youthful beauty. He also attended a royal hunting party with the king, and an opera which was held at the palace. According to protocol, at the Paris opera, the Ottoman ambassador preceded all other foreign representatives in Paris. This highly ceremonial visit of the Ottoman delegation to France, for the sole purpose of transmitting an imperial letter from the Sultan to the French king, lasted a whole year.

The second siege of Vienna in 1683 and other Ottoman defeats at the hands of the Austrian armies caused Ottoman diplomats to confront unusual situations. Zülfikar Pasha was sent to Vienna to notify Emperor Leopold of the accession of Suleiman II to the throne, and to carry out peace talks as the Ottoman plenipotentiary and extraordinary. The Austrian authorities requested Zülfikar Pasha to bow three times and kiss the emperor's hand at the presentation of the imperial letter. Zülfikar Pasha replied to this suggestion mildly, but behaved as usual before the

emperor at the court. During the discussions, he said that although the Ottoman armies had been victorious for over four centuries, the Ottoman sultans had never acted with conceit. The Austrians should not, therefore, show excessive pride at a few recent battlefield successes and must behave in accordance with the grandeur and power of the Ottoman State.⁸¹ Actually, the envoys were not dispatched from Istanbul to Vienna for a long time since the Austrian emperor was not considered an equal to the Ottoman sultans. The Viceroy of Budha used to send one of his officers to Vienna to demand the annual tribute.

The ceremonies of exchange could be the cause of major conflicts. During their era of military superiority, the Ottomans imposed their own ceremonies on foreign delegations.⁸² The Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699 constituted the turning point in this respect. Besides their territorial losses, the Ottomans began to lose prestige on the diplomatic front as well. When the plenipotentiaries of all participant belligerents claimed equality, an interesting solution was reached to prevent diplomatic conflict in protocol: a round building was constructed in Karlowitz, with many doors allowing each plenipotentiary to enter at the same time.⁸³ The Ottoman-Russian War of 1768-74 and the Treaty of Küçük Kainarja was a turning point in Ottoman-Russian relations. Following the loss of Ottoman military supremacy over the Russians in the late eighteenth century, the Ottomans became subject to Russian diplomatic caprices and humiliations. In accordance with the Küçük Kainarja Peace Treaty of 1774, the Ottomans and the Russians sent ratifications through their ambassadors. In 1775, at the point of exchange, the Russian ambassador, Repnin, requested his chair on the raft to be covered with gold embroidered fabric and to sit on the right-hand side. The discussions on the matter lasted ten days before a settlement was reached.⁸⁴ In 1793, the Russian ambassador, General Kutuzov, rejected the exchange raft and the colours of the chairs on the raft, which once more caused long discussions.⁸⁵ Yet, despite continuous defeats on the battlefield, up to the late eighteenth century the Ottoman state was strong enough to sustain diplomatic equality in Europe.

The ceremonies at the Russian court for the Ottoman delegations were more troublesome. The rise of Russia's military strength was gradually reflected in its treatment of Ottoman diplomacy. Russian caprice reached a point in 1782 at which the Tsarist authorities requested a repetition of the procession for their ambassador in Adrianople of 1740. The Russian request was inspected by the Ottoman government 42 years later.⁸⁶ Ottoman diplomats were faced with a string of Russian humiliations throughout the eighteenth century. The gradual change in Russian

attitudes towards Ottoman envoys and ambassadors can be easily understood by thorough examination of the *sefâretnâmes*. These show that envoys were sent to Russia from the early sixteenth century on but, unfortunately, only the *sefâretnâmes* of the eighteenth-century envoys remain available. However, these records also provide us with valuable information about contemporary Russia.

The first significant *sefâretnâme* regarding Russia was written by the Ottoman envoy Kapıcıbaşı Mehmed Agha.⁸⁷ He was sent to Peter the Great by Sultan Ahmed III in 1722 to explore the possibility of an alliance against Iran, and to express dissatisfaction about Russian military movements in Caucasia. Along the way he received a warm and respectful welcome at every stop. In Moscow, he expected to receive high dignity in every detail and objected to even minor counter suggestions, claiming that it would mean humiliation to the imperial letter he was carrying. The Russians accepted without resistance all of Mehmed Agha's insistences on diplomatic precedence. During his stay in Moscow, Peter the Great showed the utmost respect to him on many occasions. The Tsar personally came to discuss with the Ottoman envoy the Russian troops' activities in the Caucasus, even demonstrating their movements on a map, and guaranteeing him that they were present only for border security and were not a threat to Ottoman territories.

In contrast to Mehmed Agha's experience, ambassador Mehmed Emni Pasha, who went on a mission to Russia in 1740, was faced with endless difficulties.⁸⁸ First a conflict arose over where the exchange of ambassadors should take place, and it took six months before this issue was resolved and he could step into Russian soil. The subsequent succession of a new tsar further delayed his mission. The Russians expected the dispatch of a new imperial letter from the Ottoman Sultan to the new tsar, Ivan Antonovich. After Mehmed Emni Pasha finally entered St Petersburg, with a magnificent ceremony in which four thousand soldiers participated, he delivered the *ratificatio* of the Treaty of Belgrade. With this treaty, the title of 'emperor' was acknowledged for the tsars. Unbeknown to the ambassador, however, the newly enthroned Tsar Ivan Antonovich had been removed by a sudden *coup d'état* and the new Tsarina, Elizabeth Petrovna, received him instead. It took two years to complete his mission.

Shehdî Osman Effendi, who was sent to notify the Russian Tsarina of the accession of Osman III to the Ottoman throne, completed one of the most exciting diplomatic missions in 1757⁸⁹ and secured the release of Ottoman prisoners of war. In St Petersburg, he was shocked by the unusual suggestions of the Russian authorities regarding protocol. For example, he was ordered to kneel before the prime minister. Shehdî

Osman Effendi considered this an insult to the honour and dignity of the Ottoman state and refused to do so. As a result, he was not able to secure the release of the Ottoman prisoners of war, but in the meantime three of them obtained refuge with the Ottoman delegation. This enraged the Russian authorities, and the envoy was threatened with punishment if he did not release the 'slaves'. Replying that return of the Ottoman prisoners of war was one of the conditions of the treaty existing between them, Shehdî Osman Effendi nevertheless refused to surrender the prisoners.

Another conflict arose before Osman Effendi was received by the tsarina. The Russian royal dragoman, Constantin, requested amendments in his address to the court, but kept the content of the amendments to himself. Osman Effendi was informed that the text of the requested speech would be delivered to him only if he accepted the Russian changes. Shehdî Osman Effendi rejected this proposal, and consequently the reception by the tsarina was postponed. In the meantime additional conditions were brought to him:

- the envoy must wait for the Russians to accompany him across the river,
- no Ottomans could get on the royal coach but Russian soldiers would stand on both sides;
- at the entrance to the Tsarina's saloon the envoy was expected to make many exaggerated bowings;
- at the reception he would be held by both arms and forced to kiss the ground.

When all of these suggestions had been rejected by Shehdî Osman Effendi on the ground that they were not customary, and when he had reminded them of the practice in 1741 of the reception of Mehmed Emni Pasha, the authorities indicated that Russia was now more powerful than ever, and the usual practices were no longer appropriate. His request to send a man to Istanbul for instructions under those circumstances was kindly obstructed on various grounds. In the end, the Russians gave up their demands and a moderate solution was found. Osman Effendi was to be accepted by the tsarina, almost three months later, following his arrival in St Petersburg.

The adventures of Osman Effendi continued on his way back to Istanbul. The Russians insistently demanded the return of the Ottoman slaves held by the delegation, and at one stop about a hundred and fifty soldiers attacked the Ottoman delegation to recapture them. Eight

Ottomans beat all the Russians after a deadly fight. The Russian officer in charge was shamed by this result and Shehdî Osman Effendi safely passed into Ottoman territory.

As mentioned above, similar difficulties were encountered by ambassadors Abdülkerim Pasha in 1775 and Mustafa Rasih Pasha in 1793 regarding precedence at the points of exchange on the border. While Abdülkerim Pasha was not faced with unacceptable demands in the capital, Rasih Pasha could not rescue any Ottoman slaves in Russia.⁹⁰ Indeed his continuous requests for release were met with insults and humiliations. In contrast, the Russian ambassador General Kutuzov received a warm welcome in Istanbul.⁹¹

The gradual change in Russian diplomatic attitudes determined the end of the Ottoman period of influence. Russian victories on the battle-front were more heavily felt in the diplomatic sphere towards the end of the eighteenth century. However, according to the *sefâretnâmes*, the Ottoman ambassadors still received warm welcomes in the other European capitals and the Russian style of insults and diplomatic humiliations remained exceptional.

Intensive diplomacy

Another noteworthy Ottoman ad hoc diplomatic experience occurred during the early years of the reign of Sultan Bayezid II. The death of Mehmed II the Conqueror in 1481 gave rise to a struggle between his sons, Bayezid and Djem. After his final defeat at Ankara in 1482, Jem took refuge in Rhodes, relying on the promise of the Knights Hospitallers that he would be transferred to Rumelia to continue the fight against his brother. But he was first kept as a prisoner by the Grand Master, Pierre d'Aubusson, and then by Charles VIII in France, and finally by the Pope, Innocent VIII. The position of Jem as an hostage in the hands of European states gave rise to new developments in relations between western governments and the Ottomans.

Throughout his 13 years in Europe, Jem was the object of unceasing intrigues and negotiations among the Christian rulers. The aim of Ottoman diplomatic efforts was to prevent a crusade and to keep Jem from joining forces with the Christians. To this end, the peace treaty with Venice was confirmed in 1482 in order to achieve the neutralization of the Republic. The Venetian authorities kept the Sultan informed of Jem's movements in Italy and France, and of the progress of the major powers' intentions and plans.⁹² During this period Bayezid II sought particularly active diplomatic relations with all Christian governments suspected of aiding

Jem and the proposed crusade. He also created a spy network to keep himself informed of political developments in various western countries.⁹³

The transfer of Jem from France to Rome in 1489 caused alarm in Istanbul as signalling the beginning of a crusade. Indeed, a congress was convened by the Pope in Rome in 1490 with the participation of delegates from all European Christian states. All Ottoman tactics during the Jem crisis were to neutralize the West by activist diplomacy, on the one hand sending envoys with lavish promises, presents and money, and on the other discouraging Christian attack by showing strength.⁹⁴ The Porte made persistent efforts, both by diplomatic approaches to the European powers and by the dispatch of secret agents, to discover Jem's whereabouts, to recover his person and even to arrange his assassination.⁹⁵

For these purposes, Bayezid II sent a number of envoys to Europe. One of them, Ismail Beg, who was sent to Lorenzo de' Medici of Florence experienced a long and dangerous trip. His real mission was to detect Jem's location. But he was imprisoned by the Knights of St John for nearly two years and taken from one city to another. From the island of Rhodes he managed to send a letter through an Ottoman envoy and was released by the special request of the Sultan. The ill-fated mission of Ismail Beg lasted for four and a half years.⁹⁶

Another Ottoman diplomat involved in the Jem case is Hüseyin Beg, who signed an agreement with the Grand Master d'Abusson in Rhodes providing that forty thousand gold ducats would be paid annually by the Sultan in return for keeping Jem in custody.⁹⁷ Learning that Jem was in France, Hüseyin Beg went to the French king, Louis XI, in the summer of 1483. But, he was unable to meet Jem. Following the sudden death of Louis, he was sent to the new French king, Charles VIII, in 1484. Hüseyin Beg engaged in a kind of 'shuttle diplomacy' in Europe and most probably he personally received the reply of Jem to the Sultan, requesting his immediate return to the homeland.

In accordance with the agreement between Pope Innocent VIII and Charles VIII of France, Jem was taken by the papal nuncios to be brought to Italy, based on the argument that Rhodes and Italy were under serious threat of Ottoman invasion and that only the presence of Jem in Rome could deter Bayezid II. Aware of the Pope's intentions, the Sultan sent his envoy, Greek-born Antonios Ciritho, to the French court with the following offers to persuade the king to continue holding Jem under custody in France:

- Bayezid was ready to sign a peace treaty with the king of France, and with the entire Christian world;

- the king would provide military support against Bayezid's enemies;
- a considerable sum of money would be paid to France;
- the city of Jerusalem would be delivered to the French after its capture from the Mamluks.

Despite the fact that the king's council was impressed by the Sultan's offers, and orders were sent out to stop Jem on his way to Rome, the nuncios were able to put Jem in a boat and set out for Rome in early 1489.⁹⁸ This time the Ottoman Sultan chose Kapijibashi Mustafa Agha to ensure Jem was guarded by the Pope. Mustafa Agha reached Rome in November 1490 with the Sultan's letter, precious gifts and 120,000 gold ducats, three years' pension for Jem's expenditures. However, the real mission of the envoy Mustafa Beg was said to be to assassinate Jem. The letter said that the Sultan would be pleased if Jem was kept at the Vatican on the same terms as the Grand Master had previously undertaken. If his conditions were accepted and the idea of using Jem in a crusade was relinquished, the Sultan would keep peace with Christendom.⁹⁹

The policy of Bayezid II to appease Innocent VIII with generous gifts was successful in preventing a crusade against the Ottomans. Although no written document exists between the Pope and the Sultan, the request of forty thousand gold ducats by the Pope through his envoy in Istanbul seems to confirm the existence of a secret agreement between Bayezid II and the Pope. When Charles VIII invaded Italy in 1494, the new Pope Alexander VI demanded the payment of the annual pension in advance, relying on the excuse that he needed money immediately to resist the French invasion. But the money (40,000 ducats), carried by Kasim Chavush, with the company of papal envoy Bocciardi, was captured near Ancona by French partisans. The Italian alliance could not stop Charles VIII and he took Jem from the Pope in February 1495. However, on the way to Naples, Jem caught a deadly illness and died on 25 February 1495, though there were rumours that he was poisoned before his departure from Rome.¹⁰⁰

The intensive diplomatic activity carried out for thirteen years during the Jem crisis constituted a considerable page in both the Ottoman and European histories of the time. Until the Ottoman Empire established residential ambassadors in the major European capitals, the Porte preferred a pragmatic method, while observing the established rules of protocol and precedence.

Conclusion

The ad hoc period of Ottoman diplomacy up to the establishment of residential ambassadors displays a unique character. Particularly in parallel with the adoption of the philosophy of 'world power' after the conquest of Istanbul in 1453 by Mehmed the Conqueror, great importance was given to diplomatic protocol by the Ottoman court. The victories of Suleiman the Magnificent reinforced the Ottoman perception of world supremacy. Special colourful ceremonies were organized at the Topkapi Palace when a foreign envoy came. If the sultans were out of the capital on expedition, similar protocol was observed at military camps. During such expeditions envoys were sometimes deliberately invited to march with the army to observe the military strength of the Ottoman forces personally. It was considered to be part of the diplomacy.

The Ottoman ambassadors accorded the utmost importance to being received with the highest protocol in the foreign capitals. They considered any negligence on this matter a humiliation of the Ottoman Sultan and the state they represented. Until the early seventeenth century Ottoman sultans considered themselves the most powerful sovereigns on earth. The Ottoman sultans used the titles of *tâc bahş-i husrevân*, *padîşah-ı âlem-penah*, *padîşah-ı cihan-muta'*, meaning 'the Sultan who crowns the kings, the Sultan is the only one from whom help is asked, the Sultan to whom everyone in the world is obedient', respectively. These principles and the pillars of Islam guided Ottoman diplomacy for a long time. Many principalities were either tributary or dependent on the Ottoman Empire. Even the Austrian emperor was not considered equal to the Ottoman sultan until 1606.

The Ottoman state was able to sustain its unique diplomatic character up to the late eighteenth century. Although there was no formal education for the diplomats or any diplomatic institution, an informal diplomatic protocol and a tradition developed throughout this period. When their armies were victorious on the battlefields, the Ottomans could insist on their own impositions. From the mid-eighteenth century on, Russia began to rise as a powerful rival to the north. Military defeats by Russia after the mid-eighteenth century caused continuous disputes on diplomatic precedence. Diplomacy became a vital instrument to balance Russian power. Western involvement was urgently required to contain Russian imperialism. Hence the Ottoman rulers began to adopt permanent diplomacy and other western methods in their relationships with the European powers of the time.

Notes

1. J. C. Hurewitz, 'Ottoman Diplomacy and the European State System', *Middle East Journal*, vol. 15, no. 2 (1961), 141.
2. Capitulations are documents unilaterally granted by the Sultan to the subjects of a non-Muslim country that provide permission to trade in the Ottoman territories and regulate their legal status during their stay.
3. Halil İnalçık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 366.
4. Edward Barton's ship is described in *Tarih-i Selânikî* in an astonished manner: 'Vilâyet-i cezîre-i İngiltere elçisi piş-keş ve hediyesi gelüb çekildi. Gemisi gibi turfa-numûne gemi İstanbul limanına gelmemişdi. Üçbin yediyüz mil deryadan sefer eder ve seksenüç pare heman top kullanır. Sâir yarakdan ğayrı ateş-efşân heyet-i hâriciyyesi şekl-i hınzır idi. Ucûbe-i devran idi ki tahrîr olundu.' Selânikî Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Selânikî*, ed. Mehmet İpşirli, Vol. I (İstanbul: İ. Ü. Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1989), 334.
5. *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts, Venice*, Vol. VIII (London, 1894), 84.
6. 12 December 1611, to the Doge and Senate, *Calendar of State Papers*, Vol. XII, 249.
7. H. İnalçık, 'The Turkish Impact on the Development of Modern Europe', in Kemal Karpat (ed.), *The Ottoman State and Its Place in World History* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 51.
8. H. İnalçık, 'Turkey and Europe: A Historical Perspective', *Perceptions* (Ankara), vol. II, no. 1 (1997), 82; and 'Türkiye ve Avrupa: Dün Bugün' ('Turkey and Europe: Past and Present'), *Doğu Batı* (Ankara), no. 2 (1998), 10.
9. H. İnalçık, 'The Turkish Impact . . .', 52.
10. H. İnalçık, 'Avrupa Devletler Sistemi, Fransa ve Osmanlı: Avrupa'da Geleneksel Dostumuz Fransa Tarihine Ait Bir Olay' ('European States System, France and the Ottomans'), *Doğu Batı*, no. 14 (2001), 128.
11. William H. McNeill, *Venice, the Hinge of Europe 1081-1797* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1974), 140.
12. Kenneth Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, Vol. IV (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1984), 1091.
13. *Calendar of State Papers*, Vol. X, 449.
14. *Calendar of State Papers*, Vol. VIII, 57.
15. *Calendar of State Papers*, Vol. XII, 420.
16. *The Holy Qoran*, Sura Anfâl, 56, 57, 58.
17. Sura Anfâl, 61.
18. Sura Taube, 12.
19. *Calendar of State Papers*, Vol. XII, 248.
20. *Mecmu'a-i Muahedât*, Vol. 3 (İstanbul, 1298), 92-102.
21. Virginia Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace, Ahmed Resmî Efendi* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 45.
22. Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive; hereafter BOA), *Düvel-i Ecnebiye Defterleri, Felemenk Ahdnâme Defteri*, 22/1, document 88: '... esnâ-yı tarik eşkiyâ havfından kendüyü korumak için Müselman libası giyüb ve âlât-i harb getürdüğü bir ferd rencide ve remide eylemeyüb...'
23. 'Venedik Balyosuna hükm-i şerif yazıla ki, ... imdi eğer adavet zamanında ve eğer itaatiniz eyyamında taife-i tüccara zulm ü taaddi olunduğuna asla rıza-yı şerifim olmamıştır. Amma adavet zamanından mukaddem ol canibde olan taife-i tüccara hilaf-i ahd taarruz-olunub esbab ü emvali girift olunmağla, Memalik-i mahrusede bulunan tacirlerinize memleketlerine gitmeğe ruhsat verilmemişdi. ... ol canibde alikonulan tüccar saliverülüb esbab ü emvaliyle gelüb vasıl olmalarını mutazammın olursan tacirlerinize ruhsat ihсан olunub, ... Emin ve salim gelüb yollarda dahl olunub mallarına ve canlarına zarar erüşdürüle, özrün makbul olmayub senden sual olunur, ana göre tedarük eylesün.' BOA, *Mühimme Defteri*, 12, Nos. 530 and 987.
24. Selahattin Tansel, *Fatih Sultan Mehmet'in Siyasi ve Askeri Faaliyeti (Political and Military Policies of Mehmed II)* (Ankara: TTK, 1999), 195-216.
25. Theoharis Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2001), 212.
26. Şanizade Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi, *Mür'it-Tevarih*, Vol. I (İstanbul: İ. Ü. Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1976), 21-2.
27. BOA, *Felemenk Ahdnâme Defteri*, Document 1.
28. Thomas Naff, 'Reform and the Conduct of Ottoman Diplomacy in the Reign of Selim III, 1789-1809', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 83, no. 3 (1983), 301.
29. In a document dated c. 1178/1764 (BOA, *Cevdet Hariciye*, No. 422) the appointment of Dimitri Gaspari as the French consul of Athens and his refusal to pay tax was the subject of petition and complaint by the residents of Athens, since his share was charged on the others. He was reminded of the *firman* and was ordered to give up the consulate.
30. 'Böyle vakitlerde asıldan ulemadan bir kimesne mükalemelere refik olurdu. Yine ihtara sebebdir. Zira umur-i azimedendir.' E. Z. Karal, *Selim III'ün Hatt-ı Hümayunları (Firmans of Selim III)* (Ankara: TTK, 1999), 58.
31. 'Devlet-i Aliyye'nin harbe karar vermesi Şeriat-i mutabharaya bina kılınarak istiftâya merhûn olmağla bu dahi iki şikka muhtasardır: biri şeriatımıza muğayır bir teklif vaki olur ve biri mazarrat-i mülkiyye zuhur eder ise, ... Ve ol dahi evvel-emirde hüsn-i müdafaa ile ber- taraf kılınmağla sa'y olunub ... Bi'l-istifta herkesin malumu olarak i'lân-ı muharebe olacağı zahirdir.' BOA, *Hatt-ı Hümayun*, No. 1480.
32. Hurewitz, 'Ottoman Diplomacy and the European State System', 146.
33. 'Ve Beç'e Asitaneden varmak vâki olmamıştır. Ancak Budin Beğlerbeğisi tarafından ya Budin çavuşlarından biri varub hazine taleb ederdi.' Hezarfen Hüseyin Efendi, *Telhisül-Beyan Fi Kavânîn-i Al-i Osman*, ed. Sevim İlgürel (Ankara: TTK, 1998), 178.
34. Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. IX (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Osmâniye, 1309), 145.
35. Hans Derschwam, *İstanbul ve Anadolu'ya Seyahat Günlüğü (Diary of a Journey to Istanbul and Anatolia)* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1992), 152.
36. Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs*, 233.
37. Examples to such reports are: BOA, *Cevdet Hariciye*, Doc. Nos. 6416, 8036, 8055, 8335, 8836, 8821, 8372, 9230 and 9312.
38. See BOA; *Cevdet Hariciye*, Doc. Nos. 6040, 8158.
39. See BOA; *Cevdet Hariciye*, Doc. Nos. 8300, 8602, 9290.
40. The letters of Süleiman I and Selim II to Dubrovnik on the flow of information from Ragusa were published by N. H. Biegman under the title 'Ragusan Spying for the Ottoman Empire', *Belleten*, no. 27 (1963), 237-55.
41. Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs*, 234.

42. 'Etraf-i mülûk-i memâlikden Rikab-i Hümayuna gelen elçiler mühimmâtına senede on yük akça Hazine-i Amire'den verilir.' Hezarfen Hüseyin Efendi, *Telhîsü'l-Beyan Fi Kavânin-i Al-i Osman*, 99.
43. 'Tevki'î Abdurrahman Paşa Kanunnâmesi', *Millî Tettebbu'lar Mecmuası*, Vol. 1, 513.
44. 'Şah Hızır Beğ'i gönderüb sulh taleb eglemeğin, saâdetlü padişahımız dahi, Hızır Beğ küçük elçi olmağla sözüne çokluk itimad ve itibar eylemeyüb Hünkânımız tarafından Şah'a name yazılmadı. Ancak vezir-i azam tarafından Rüstem Han'a bir mektub yazulub...' IV. Murad'ın *Revan ve Tebriz Seferi Ruznâmesi*, ed. Yunus Zeyrek (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1999), 84.
45. An example of such phrases is provided by the first British capitulations, dated 1580 (BOA, *İngiltere Nişan Defteri*, 35/1): 'Vilhelmuş Harborne nâm âdeminiz ile mektublar gönderüb, âdemleri sâbıka âsitâne-i sa'âdet-âşiyânımıza gelüb izhâr-i 'ubûdiyet... eyleyüb ol tarafdân âdemleri ticaret için memâlik-i mahrûsemize gelüb gitmek bâbında isticâze eylemeğin, ... mâdâm ki müşârünileyhâ tarafından şerâit-i ahd ü peymâna riâyet ve kavâid-i sulh u amân kemâyenbağı sıyânet oluna...'
46. The behaviour and character of Cornelis Haga was praised both by the Sultan and the Ottoman statesmen, and this situation was mentioned in the letter of Deputy Grand Vizier Hadım Mehmed Pasha to the States General: 'Elçinüz rikâb-I hümayuna yüz sürdükte âdab ve hayâ üzre hareket etmekle saadetlü padişahımız küllî hazz u safâ eylemişlerdür. Hıdmet ise ancak olur. Tamam meretebe elçiliğe layık âdemdir.' Den Haag, Algemeen Rijksarchief, Staten Generaal, 1.01.08, 12593.13.
47. K. Heeringa (ed.), *Levantschen Handel*, Vol. 1 ('s Gravenhage: 1910), 258.
48. *Calendar of State Papers*, Vol. VIII, XL. The English ambassador was paid by the Levant Company.
49. *Public Record Office, State Papers, Foreign, Turkey, 7*; Heeringa, *Levantschen Handel*, 258.
50. Selanikî Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Selanikî*, Vol. 2 (İstanbul: İ.Ü. Edeb. Fak. 1989), 661.
51. The missions of such envoys were to notify accessions to the throne, victories and to demand payment of delayed tribute. However, annual tribute had to be delivered in Istanbul by the envoy of the vassal state together with precious gifts. For the list of Ottoman Envoys of the ad hoc period, see Faik Reşit Unat, *Osmanlı Sefirleri ve Sefaretnameleri (Ottoman Ambassadors and their Sefâret-nâmes)*, ed. Bekir Sıtkı Baykal, 3rd edn (Ankara: TTK, 1992), 221-36.
52. Ebu Sehl Numan Efendi, *Tedbirât-ı Pesendîde*, ed. Ali İbrahim Savaş (Ankara: TTK, 1999).
53. Unat, *Osmanlı Sefirleri ve Sefaretnameleri*, 23.
54. Sultan Bayezid II sent his special envoy Antonios Ciritho to the French court in 1489 to ask the French king not to surrender his brother Jem to the enemies of the Ottomans. Jem was defeated by Bayezid and imprisoned after his flight with the help of knights of Rhodes. See: Halil İnalcık, 'A Case Study in Renaissance Diplomacy: the Agreement Between Innocent VIII and Bayezid II on Djem Sultan', *Journal of Turkish Studies*, vol. 3 (1979), 209-30.
55. Yirmisekiz Çelebi Mehmed Efendi was present at the Passarowitz Peace Agreement of 1718 in the Ottoman delegation. His son, Mehmed Said Efendi (Ottoman envoy to Sweden 1732-33), had accompanied his father in 1722 to Paris. Mustafa Nazlı Efendi, Ottoman envoy to Iran in 1746, accompanied the previous envoys twice in 1729 and in 1741. The envoy to Iran in 1747, Hacı Ahmed Pasha, had been appointed to talk to Nadir Shah of Iran previously. Dervish Mehmed Efendi was appointed to Russia as an envoy in 1755 and 1764. Ahmed Resmî Efendi was sent to Austria in 1757, to Prussia in 1764 and was the chief of the Ottoman delegation at the peace talks. Mehmed Agha was envoy to Warsaw in 1757, and Shehdî Osman Efendi, envoy to St Petersburg, had accompanied the Ottoman envoy to Russia, Mehmed Emnî Pasha, in 1740. Abdülkerim Pasha, envoy to Russia in 1775, was previously appointed for the peace talks in 1772 to end the war with Russia.
56. According to a document (BOA, *Cevdet Hariciye*, No. 9275), Yirmisekiz Çelebi Mehmed Efendi requested the grant of the title First Exchequer, indicating that he was appointed as envoy to Paris in 1720.
57. Topkapı Arşivi No. 4819.
58. 'Elçi Han "tayin olunacak elçi elbette üç tuğlu olsun" dedikde, "bu devletde kaide daima elçi beğlerbeği olmaktadır" deyu beyan olunduğu müfid olmayacak nâ-çar Büyük Mir-ahur Kara Mehmed Paşazade Mehmed Bey'e üç tuğ verilüb elçi nasb olundu.' *Mür'it-Tevarih*, Vol. I, 62.
59. Ali İbrahim Savaş, *Tedbirât-ı Pesendîde* (Ankara: TTK, 1999), 12.
60. Selanikî Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Selanikî*, Vol. 2, 634.
61. BOA, *Cevdet Hariciye*, Nos. 361, 8925, 8911, 9070, 6800, 6780, 6799, 5954, 6114, 6124, 6127, 6532, 6611, 7094, 7239, 7380, 7727, 7782, 7816.
62. Since the transport of cash was dangerous because of banditry, the cheque system was preferred for payments both in cash and in kind. In a case in 1744, the money, belongings and weapons of an envoy were seized by bandits in Bosnia (BOA, *Cevdet Hariciye*, No. 8049). According to the *firman* (Başbakanlık Arşivi, *Cevdet Hariciye*, No. 8333) dated 18 Dhu al-hijja 1176/1763, the costs of Ahmed Resmî Efendi as far as the Polish frontier were to be paid and discounted from their annual *jizya*. The costs of the envoys between the stops were shared among the localities. For another example see BOA, *Cevdet Hariciye*, Nos. 9070, 7285.
63. BOA, *Cevdet Hariciye*, No. 6175.
64. BOA, *Cevdet Hariciye*, Nos. 6801, 6534, 9092, 8410, 8981, 8911, 361. Other than these examples, there are also various such documents in the Ottoman archives.
65. Unat, *Osmanlı Sefirleri ve Sefaretnameleri*, 24.
66. An elephant was sent to the king of Sicily in 1742 to reinforce the friendly relations between the two countries (BOA, *Cevdet Hariciye*, No. 7814).
67. For a full list of the gifts, with their values, to the French king in 1740, and to the Russian tsar in 1793, see BOA, *Cevdet Hariciye*, Nos. 9275, 5967.
68. Hezarfen Hüseyin Efendi, *Telhîsü'l-Beyan*, 178.
69. Bülent Arı, *The Conflicts Between the Dutch Merchants and the Ottoman Local Authorities According to Felemenk Ahdname Defteri*, unpublished MA thesis (Ankara: Bilkent University, 1996), 17. For the full list of Haga's presents see: Heeringa, *Levantschen Handel*, Vol. I, 266-74.
70. For a detailed list of would be payments en route to the Ottoman envoy to Austria, *Ali Pasha*, in 1740, see BOA, *Cevdet Hariciye*, Nos. 7782 and 7816.
71. BOA, *Cevdet Hariciye*, No. 8818.

72. See *Mehmed Emnî Paşa'nın Rusya Sefâreti*, by Münir Aktepe (Ankara: TTK, 1974), 12–15.
73. İbrahim Pasha, *Viyana Sefaretnâmesi*, *TOEM*, VII/40, 214.
74. For the assignment of Mehmed Pasha, to exchange Abdülkerim Pasha with the Russian ambassador in 1775, see BOA, *Cevdet Hariciye*, No. 9090.
75. F. R. Unat, 'Kapıcıbaşı Nişli Mehmed Ağa'nın Moskova Sefâretnameşi', *Tarih Vesikaları*, vol. 2 (1943), 9.
76. Ahmed Resmî Efendi, *Viyana Sefâretnameşi*, *Vasıf Tarihi*, Vol. 1, 77–8.
77. *Sefâretname-i Mehmed Efendi* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i İlmiye-i Osmâniye, 1283), 5.
78. *Sefâretname-i Mehmed Efendi*, 19.
79. *Sefâretname-i Mehmed Efendi*, 28–9.
80. *Sefâretname-i Mehmed Efendi*, 29.
81. *Silahdar Tarihi*, vol. 2, 661.
82. Even when Ottoman glory was greatly depreciated by the Passarowitz Peace Treaty of 1718, and ambassadors were exchanged between the Ottomans and the Austrians in 1719 to convey the *ratificatio*, the Ottoman plenipotentiary Abdullah Pasha insisted on a demonstration of Ottoman superiority on the frontier. See İbrahim Pasha, *Viyana Sefâretnameşi*, 214.
83. Mehmed Hilmi, *Hukûk-i Umûmiye-i Beyn al-Düvel*, Vol. 3 (Istanbul: 1328), 46.
84. For the detailed description of this exchange and the long discussions between the Ottoman and the Russian delegations, see *Sefâretname-i Abdülkerim Paşa* (Istanbul, 1316), 16–23.
85. H. İnalçık, 'Yaş Muahedesinden Sonra Osmanlı-Rus Münasebetleri', *A.Ü. DTCF Dergisi*, IV (1946), 197–8.
86. BOA, *Cevdet Hariciye*, No. 9096.
87. 'Kapıcıbaşı Mehmed Ağa'nın Moskova Sefâretnameşi', *Tarih Vesikaları*, Nos. 10–12 (1943).
88. *Mehmed Emnî Paşa'nın Rusya Sefareti ve Sefâretnameşi* (Ankara: TTK, 1974).
89. 'Şehdî Osman Efendi Sefâretnameşi', *Tarih Vesikaları Dergisi*, Nos. 1–5.
90. The exchange of slaves, who refused religious conversion, was also mentioned in the second article of the 1774 Küçük Kainarja Peace Treaty. It seems that the Ottoman government had taken it seriously, and *firman*s were sent to local *kâdî*s to return the Russian slaves, who were insistent in Christianity. For instance, the *kâdî* of Kayseri sent 14 Russian slaves to Istanbul in 1775 (BOA, *Cevdet Hariciye*, No. 8472). On the contrary, the Russian authorities were negligent on the issue, indicating that all Ottoman slaves had chosen the Christian religion.
91. İnalçık, 'Yaş Muahedesinden Sonra Osmanlı-Rus Münasebetleri', 195–203. According to BOA *Cevdet Hariciye* classification registers, the Ottoman government has conveyed orders to every province for the slaves of Russian origin to be returned to Russia via Istanbul, in accordance with the Yassy and Belgrade Treaties.
92. H. İnalçık, 'The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades 1451–1522', in Kenneth Setton (ed.), *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. VI (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969–89), 332–3.
93. İnalçık, 'The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades 1451–1522', 334.
94. İnalçık, 'The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades 1451–1522', 340.
95. V. L. Menage, 'The Mission of a Secret Agent in France in 1486', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (October 1965), 112.
96. İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, 'Cem Sultan'a Dair Beş Orijinal Vesika', *Bellekten*, vol. XXIV (1960), 458–9.
97. The report of Hüseyin Beg from Rhodes, which is registered in Topkapı Sarayı Arşivi, No. 3286, is published in Uzunçarşılı, 'Cem Sultan'a Dair Beş Orijinal Vesika', 464.
98. İnalçık, 'A Case Study in Renaissance Diplomacy', 211.
99. İnalçık, 'The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades 1451–1522', 341.
100. İnalçık, 'The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades 1451–1522', 346.



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First published 2004 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS and
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010
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ISBN 0-333-71364-8

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Ottoman diplomacy: conventional or unconventional? / edited by
A. Nuri Yurdusev.

p. cm. — (Studies in diplomacy)

Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.

ISBN 0-333-71364-8

1. Turkey—Foreign relations—History. I. Yurdusev, A. Nuri.

II. Series.

DR471.O88 2003

327.561'009—dc22

2003061333

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Antony Rowe Ltd, Chippenham and Eastbourne

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