Representation and Self-Consciousness in 16th Century Habsburg Diplomacy in the Ottoman Empire

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The military advance of the Ottoman Empire in south-eastern Europe in the 16th century brought along a confrontation between two Roman Emperors, the Habsburg Emperor and the Ottoman Sultan. Having its origin in the dispute over the former Kingdom of Hungary, initials Habsburg-Ottoman contacts were between Ferdinand, King of Hungary, and the Sultan. But from the beginning the Sultan wanted to negociate directly with his brother, the Emperor. From the middle of that century onward, that demand would be fulfilled. Habsburg-Ottoman contacts had existed since the end of the 15th century, but solely through Hungarian mediation.[1] In the following century, these contacts would slowly evolve from nominally into de facto independent relations, whereby Habsburg (and, on a wider scale, European) modern diplomacy had left its infancy.

Imperial ideologies

The massive self-glorification of the Habsburg emperors and the imperial ideology with Roman and Christian roots had already matured in the fourth decade of the sixteenth century.[2] Charles V was the first monarch to use printed media on a large scale. Together with coins, portraits, and tapestries, printed speeches and pamphlets portrayed the Emperor as ruler of the world, champion of the Christian faith, head of the Habsburg dynasty and military leader. During Charles' reign the connection with his Roman predecessors was a crucial aspect of the imperial ideology. The universal empire he ruled signified the continuation of the classical Roman Empire. His successors would continue this young tradition and commission writers to compose a history of their dynasty demonstrating the *fila imperatorum*, the connection with the Roman Emperors, which became a popular literary genre in the sixteenth century.[3] The capture of Tunis in 1535, and, more precisely, the personal participation of the Emperor and the liberation of thousands of christian slaves, was heavily used in imperial propaganda to portray him as defender of Christianity.

The image that the Ottoman Porte had of the Habsburg Emperors was mostly shaped under the influence of French diplomats, in particular during the first half of the century when Habsburg diplomacy relied heavily on France. Ottoman historian Kemalpaşazade described Charles as the most powerful Christian ruler that strived to enslave his neighbours using

[1] G. David & P. Fodor, 'Hungarian-Ottoman Peace Negociations in 1512-1514' in: idem, *Hungarian-Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Relations in the Age of Süleyman the Magnificent* (Budapest, 1994) 14, 22.
[2] The capture of Tunis in 1535 and the many entries in Italian cities accelerated this process. See also below.
[3] G. Vitásek, 'Das Effigiervm Caesarvm Opvs, eine illuminierte Kaiserreihe von 1580. Ein Beitrag zur Tradition der *fila imperatorum* an den Höfen der Habsburger', *Frühneuzeit-Info*, 11 (2000/2) 28-49.

disciplined but cruel armies. Antonio Rincon and other French diplomats are known to have described the Emperor as a deceitful tyrant who had cunningly imprisoned the French King and wanted to increase his powers even further.[4] The slowly maturing diplomatic network and the sheer curiosity of the viziers, who regularly asked questions about military fortifications and events, the confusing Habsburg political system and titles, and European history allowed the Habsburg ambassadors to influence and correct that image slightly. One notable example is the audience of the envoy Joan Maria Barziza with the sultan during which he was asked to explain the difference between the French and Spanish King and clarify why the latter called himself 'Emperor of the Christians'.[5]

The Ottoman Empire presented itself as an exceptional case to Habsburg diplomacy. It was an Islamic empire that was ruled by the Shariah and the Sultan, as conqueror of Constantinople, disputed the title of the Roman Emperor. Moreover, the conquest of Rome, Hungary, and Vienna had received a prominent place in popular Ottoman belief, especially in military circles.[6] It would be wrong to consider the Islamic world to be unfamiliar with the basis of international, diplomatic relations of that time, since the principle of legal universality, neutrality and diplomatic immunity and privileges were all generally accepted in Islam.

There were nevertheless vast differences between both political systems. According to Islamic Law, a muslim sovereign could only conclude temporary treaties with non-Islamic rulers. Mamluk tradition added that these truces could last up to ten years and were, if necessary, renawable. The duration of Habsburg-Ottoman treaties in the sixteenth century was always set to eight years, with the exception of the first one in 1547.[7] Diplomatic contacts with Christian states were largely unilateral in the 16th century – precisely a period that saw an increase in islamicization in the Ottoman Empire. However, while early modern diplomatic relations with the Porte were officially one-sided, in reality they already contained some reciprocal elements, such as the requirement of ratification by a Christian monarch and the mutual safety of merchants on foreign territory.[8]

Defenders of Reputation

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[4] A. Servantie, 'Charles Quint aux yeux des Ottomans', *xxx*, 11-12, 16.

[5] Report of Barziza (Aug. 23-24th 1536) (HHSA Turcica I, 4 Konv. 4, fols. 112-133). A slightly insecure Busbecq was asked by grand vizier Rüstem during his first audience about the Spanish-Dutch war and the complicated Habsburg succession customs. The same to Ferdinand (Constantinople, Jan. 23rd 1555) (HHSA Turcica I, 11 Konv. 20v).

[6] P. Fodor, 'Ungarn und Wien in der Osmanischen Eroberungsideologie (im Spiegel der *Târîh-i Beç krâlı* – 17. Jahrhundert)' in: idem, *In Quest of the Golden Apple. Imperial Ideology, Politics, and Military Administration in the Ottoman Empire* (Analecta Isisiana 45) (Istanbul, 2000) 45-69.

[7] They usually were prolongued before expiring. The 1606 Szitvatorok Treaty was the first one to last 20 years, the usual duration for seventeenth-century treaties. See also B. Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (London, 1982) 61-63.

[8] Kołodziejcik, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations*, 68; A.N. Yurdusev, 'The Ottoman Attitude toward Diplomacy' in: idem (ed.), *Ottoman Diplomacy. Conventional or Unconventional?* (Basingstoke, 2004) 27-28.

Abroad, the proponents of the Habsburg policy and imperial ideology were the diplomatic envoys. In a letter to the Duke of Alva former ambassador Busbecq considered Rijm to be the most adequate candidate to succeed de Wijs since he was a prudent and modest, of good descent, experienced in law and humanities, and in his mid-thirties.[9] This seems to summarize the average diplomat in the sixteenth century quite well: a single, relatively young and healthy man, who was a trained jurist, was recruited from the ranks of the civil servants or the higher nobility, and had gained political experience, but not necessarily as a diplomat.[10] But due to the long and difficult journey to Constantinople, the length of their stay abroad, the different climate, the harsh and sometimes dangerous circumstances, and the heavy financial burden that was placed on the envoys, the available number of worthy candidates was very scarce. This was an evolution that was recognizable throughout Europe at that time.[11]

The weight and dangerous nature of the mission frightened them, a fact that they sometimes admitted in letters to the Emperor. They felt, however, one diplomat wrote, obliged to serve the interests of Christendom.[12] To compensate for those deterrent aspects of a diplomatic mission, the returning envoys were rewarded with a promotion of their social status by an appointment in a national council, a function in the Order of the Golden Fleece, or a knighthood. But more permanent measures to cope with these chronic problems were hardly seen in the sixteenth century.[13]

The knowledge that the diplomats had of the Ottoman Empire, its form of government, and its religion was limited to the general and all too often biased information from general and libellous literature. Most diplomats only had a few weeks after their official appointment to inform themselves thorougly and spent that time mostly on learning the details of the military and political situation in Hungary.[14] In some commission letters the name of the candidate was deliberately left open only to be filled in at the last moment.[15]

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[9] Busbecq to de Alva (before Sept. 1569) (HHSA Turcica I, 25 Konv. 3, fol. 158r).

[10] Married men were normally not even considered, regardless of their other qualities. See for example the letter of the Bishop of Eger (Erlau) to Maximilian II (Bratislava, Nov. 7th 1572) (HHSA Turcica I, 29 Konv. 1, fol. 8r).

[11] A. Lanzer, 'Das Gesandtschaftswesen im Westen zu Beginn des 16. Jahrhunderts' in: G. Pferschy (ed.). *Sigmund von Herberstein. Kaiserlicher Gesandter und Begründer der Rußlandkunde und die europäische Diplomatie* (Veröffentlichungen des Steiermärkischen Landesarchives 17) (Graz, 1989) 64.

[12] Veltwijck to Ferdinand (Vienna, July 28th 1546) (HHSA Turcica I, 6 Konv. 4, fols. 65-66); de Wijs to Maximilian (Constantinople, July 20th 1562) (HHSA Turcica I, 16 Konv. 1, fol. 13r).

[13] Experienced insiders like double agent Michael Cernovic and ambassadors Busbecq and Rijm tried to establish an effective network of informants and spies that was less dependent on Venetian and Ragusan intermediaries. While Ferdinand understood the need for such a network, the lack of money and interest frustrated these efforts. See the very informative letter of Cernovic to Ferdinand (s.l., Apr. 19th 1567) (HHSA Turcica I, 18 Konv. 2, fols. 179-186).

[14] As can be seen from the bundle of military reports and summary of gifts that was composed by Malvezzi and served as documentation for the new ambassador Busbecq (HHSA Turcica I, 11 Konv. 4, fols. 166-179).

[15] For example the commission of Antál Verantius, Franciscus Zay and Gian-Maria Malvezzi by Ferdinand (Vienna, June 13th 1553) (HHSA Turcica I, 10 Konv. 4, fol. 49).

While the political outcome of their mission was perhaps not endangered by this limited knowledge of Ottoman culture, it might have benefited from a better understanding of local religion, politics and customs nevertheless. Even a stay of several years was not enough to overcome age-old stereotypes. Franz von Sprinzenstein, Ferdinand's envoy to the Porte in 1536, was deeply surprised, he wrote to the Roman King, about the fact that 'an ugly, dirty, effeminate and barbaric people' was able to threathen Christendom.[16] While personal statements were rare in diplomatic correspondence, some sparse remarks reveal that the view of the Turks was severely stained with these traditional images.[17] The misinformation of candidates for an embassy, combined with the peculiar nature of a Christian embassy in a hostile Islamic Empire, resulted in the continuation of a deformed image of Muslim culture deep into the seventeenth century.

Renaissance manuals emphasized virtuousness and elegance and created an image of the ideal diplomat of which some traces were still visible in the eighteenth century. A diplomat should strive to present himself in an agreeable, courteous, eloquent, and dignified manner and to acquaint himself with the history, the culture, and the institutions of the country in which he resides.[18] Following these principles will provide him with respect of his peers and consequently with a good and honourable reputation. Dissimulation – concealing one's true feelings – and the virtue of cunning – the skill of being creative and dextrous during official talks – was encouraged and cultivated chiefly by Italian writers throughout the 16th and 17th century.[19]

With this in mind, it is easy to understand the incessable effort used by the diplomats to defend the Emperor's reputation. This was reflected in the embassies' apparatus, conflicts over protocol and international legal standards, the attention given to titulature, and the exchanging of presents. But a mode of conduct that was heavily based on Renaissance court culture had few practical implications for official negotiations between state representatives, for diplomats were no courtiers. Thus the question remains if and how these theoretical guidelines were interpreted in reality.

The Embassies

One of the most difficult aspects of official relations between Christian powers and the Ottoman Empire was the fact that European reciprocal and permanent diplomacy was still in

[16] Sprinzenstein to Ferdinand ([Constantinople], start of Oct. 1537) (HHSA Turcica I, 4 Konv. 5, fol. 39r).
[17] Other typical characterisations of the Turks can be found, among others, in: Zay & Verantius to Ferdinand (Constantinople, Nov. 20 & 27th 1553) (HHSA Turcica I, 10 Konv. 2, fol. 129v); Malvezzi to Ferdinand (Ibidem, July 16th 1554) (HHSA Turcica I, 11 Konv. 1, fol. 66r); Rijm & Ungnad to Maximilian II (Ibidem, Dec. 2nd 1573) (HHSA Turcica I, 29 Konv. 4, fol. 135r. Other nations' diplomats were no exception. Negative commonplaces in their letters revealed their true thoughts.
[18] H. Nicolson, *The Evolution of Diplomatic Method* (London, 1954) 64-67.
[19] E. Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997) 121-122; J.R. Woodhouse, 'Honourable Dissimulation: some Italian Advice for the Renaissance Diplomat', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 84 (1994) 25-50.

its infancy in the sixteenth century. Only very slowly became now standard practices as reciprocity, diplomatic precedence and immunity accepted at the various European courts.[20]

In creating an immaculate and splendid image, the material equipment of an embassy played a vital part. When Gerard Veltwijck, imperial envoy in 1545, saw the impressive outfit and suite of his French colleague, he felt the need to provide his fellow-travellers with a more sumptuous appearance. He spent all his money on buying thirty horses and new clothes for himself and his servants 'pour ne donner occasion aux Franchois et Turcqs de parler legierement des seruiteurs de vostre mageste [Charles V]'.[21] Not having the appropriate garments was considered a lack of respect for the host and, more importantly, unfavourable to the reputation of the Emperor, especially when the French and Venetian embassies were often far more impressive.[22] In the following decades, almost all ambassadors would spend a great deal of their funds on clothing which often caused financial problems.[23]

The size of an embassy varied strongly and depended on the political circumstances, the financial status of the commissioning monarch and the diplomat, and the interest of noblemen and scientists to join.[24] A regular embassy seems to have counted at least forty members, including personnel.[25] It roughly consisted of two parts: the personal staff of the ambassador and the voluntary companions. The ambassador had a hand in the composition of both. He appointed a competent secretary that understood French, Italian and Latin and a Turkish interpreter. These were often complemented with a doctor, a chaplain, couriers, a watchmaker[26], et cetera. But especially from the second half of the sixteenth century onwards, he could rely on the personnel that remained permanently in the Ottoman capital and formed, as one ambassador called them, 'the old friends of the House'.[27] While the information about the Habsburg diplomatic personnel in Constantinople remains limited, it is clear that there indeed existed a certain continuity of staff that served the successive ambassadors. At the time of Rijm's stay at the Ottoman Porte, it still counted among its members a chaplain that had

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[20] J.C. Barker, 'The Theory and Practice of Diplomatic Law in the Renaissance and Classical Periods', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 6 (1995/3) 593-615.

[21] Veltwijck to Charles V (Ragusa, June 30th 1545). K. Lanz (ed.), *Correspondenz des Kaisers Karl V.* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1966) II, p453.

[22] Angelo Rachani (Malvezzi's secretary) to Ferdinand ([Constantinople, end of Nov. 1551?]) (HHSA Turcica I, 9 Konv. 3, fol. 89v.

[23] One of many examples can be found in the letter of Provisionali and Anselm Stöckl to Maximilian II (Constantinople, Feb. 20 1570) (HHSA Turcica I, 26 Konv. 1, fol. 166). The period between the decease of de Wijs and the advent of Rijm was troublesome for the ambassador's servants.

[24] A typical early modern embassy is described by Picard, *Das Gesandtschaftswesen Ostmitteleuropas*, 60-63.

[25] Zay and Verantius had forty servants. The same to Ferdinand (Constantinople, June 13th 1556) (HHSA Turcica I, 12 Konv. 5, fol. 140r). Having brought over the Emperor's yearly tribute, Provisionali's train consisted of 50 servants and 60 horses. Provisionali to Rijm (Belgrade, Sept. 20th 1570) (HHSA Turcica I, 27 Konv. 1, fol 121r). Polish embassies were by far the largest. Kołodziejczyk, D. (ed.), *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations (15th-18th Century). An Annotated Edition of '*Ahdname*s and Other Documents* (The Ottoman Empire and its Heritage 18) (Leiden, 2000) 172.

[26] To look after the clocks that were to be given as gifts. See for example Rijm & Ungnad to Maximilian II (Constantinople, Oct. 12th 1573) (HHSA Turcica I, 29 Konv. 4, fol. 18v).

[27] Rijm to Maximilian II (Constantinople, July 15th 1570) (HHSA Turcica I, 26 Konv. 3, fol. 204).

served under Busbecq and two interpreters that were once appointed by Malvezzi more than twenty years ago.[28] The second, most variable part of the embassy was composed of noblemen, traders, cosmographers, botanists, writers, pilgrims and adventurers. For them, an official mission was a perfect opportunity to travel safely in the Ottoman Empire.

The relationship between the ambassador and his companions was often of a friendly nature, although both sides always kept a distance. Sometimes the long and often fatiguing stay in Constantinople led to internal conflicts in the household. According to a Venetian informant, Karel Rijm was a very rigid and stingy master to his personnel. Some of his servants dined outside of the residence with friends they had in the city, which was considered extremely unfavourable to the Habsburg reputation. Rijm also insisted on knowing whereto and when someone left the house.[29] All this of course cast a slur on the image of the Habsburg representation; such news spread quickly in the slightly gossipy diplomatic circles and in the city.

Maintaining excellent relations with the ambassadors of other Christian countries served two key purposes. It was first of all considered good practice to meet certain social requirements. Paying visits to other diplomats, inviting them for dinner, congratulating a newly arrived ambassador or even attending the funeral of a deceased ambassador[30] are examples of typical social activities. No written rules existed for this way of conduct, but it was silently expected like it was at European courts. Secondly, assuring the friendship of another representative was a way of garantueeing a modest but often crucial amount of diplomatic assistance during negociations.

Conflicts and Agreements

Conducting political relations with the Ottoman Empire inevitably led to conflicts over formal hierarchy. Two problematic elements lay at the basis thereof: the interaction of two foreign empires that were unaccustomed to each other's forms of conduct, and the relatively immature state of those forms.

The early Habsburg embassies are good examples of the lack of knowledge of Ottoman court ceremonial and diplomacy. The first envoys did not always bring presents and freely asked the Sultan questions during the audience. They were immediately made aware of how to

[28] While his predecessors still relied heavily on the Porte's interpreters, it was Rijm who first started using the Habsburg dragomans systematically. See, amongst many other examples, Rijm's letter to Maximilian II (Constantinople, July 15th 1570) (*Ibidem*, fols. 203-204v, 233r, 259r). See also his next letter (*Ibidem*, July 2nd 1571) (HHSA Turcica I, 27 Konv. 5, fol. 17r.).
[29] Report of Bon (*ca.* May 1573) (HHSA Turcica I, 29 Konv. 4, fol. 190v-191r).
[30] The Venetian and senior French ambassador attended de Wijs' funeral, together with a large number of merchants and citizens. His servants to Maximilian II (Constantinople, Oct. 24th 1569) (HHSA Turcica I, 25 Konv. 4, fols. 10v-11r); Stöckl to the same (Ibidem, Oct. 26th 1569) (HHSA Turcica I, 25 Konv. 4, fols. 17-18).

behave in a more appropriate manner.[31] The Habsburgs, however, adapted quickly.[32] Slowly over the years, the Austrian Chancery built up considerable knowledge of court practices at Constantinople, mainly thanks to the information contained in diplomatic correspondence and the advice of returned ambassadors.[33]

While the 1606 treaty of Szitvatorok officially stipulated that the Emperor would be called 'Roma çasarı' (Roman Emperor) by the Sultan, the titles 'Çasar' and 'İmperator' had been used before in letters to designate the Emperor.[34] On the other hand, Ferdinand had always rejected the Ottoman claims to his Hungarian royal title and used this title in official correspondence. At the same time, he fully adopted Süleyman's extended titulature and called him 'Emperor of the Turks'. This awkward compromise was a result of the fact that Habsburg used a vocabulary that was formally indistinguishable from traditional European usage. Outwardly, Ferdinand wished to conduct negociations with the Sultan on the same premises as with any other sovereign in order to ensure diplomatic relations.

A significant anecdote to illustrate the sensitive nature of matters of protocol and the role of the ambassadors is the following. Shortly after his arrival in Constantinople ambassador Charles Rijm came into conflict with the Ottoman court. His predecessor Albert de Wijs, who had passed away in the autumn of 1569, had for several years the habit of greeting the sultan and his retenue when he passed his house every Friday on his way to the mosque. He instructed his servants to wear their best clothes, stand in front of the residence and pay the sultan their respects. The Porte asked that the new ambassador would continue this custom. Rijm, however, refused to do this because, in his view, it would be harmful to the Emperor's reputation. He, as an imperial ambassador, had to safeguard that reputation. Nevertheless, he could not risk a political incident in the first week after his arrival. That first Friday, his solution was to allow his servants to watch the procession outside while he stayed in the house and watched through the window.[35] Naturally, a *çavuş* was sent to the ambassador to demand an explication for his absence. The Porte would not allow this respectful custom to erode that easily.

[31] Sprinzenstein to Ferdinand ([Constantinople], start of Oct. 1537) (HHSA Turcica I, 4 Konv. 5, fols. 22-39).
[32] Ferdinand's commission of Sprinzenstein alread showed good knowledge of standard diplomatic procedure at the Sultan's court (Vienna, Nov. 20th 1536) (HHSA Turcica I, 4 Konv. 4, fols. 155-158). Another seventeen years later, the instructions of the ambassadors contained extremely detailed descriptions of the consecutive audiences. Ferdinand to Zay, Malvezzi & Verantius (Vienna, June 13th 1553) (HHSA Turcica I, 10 Konv. 4, fol. 49r).
[33] From the fourth decade on, returned diplomats were involved in the instruction of the new ambassador. See for example the report of a meeting with Veltwijck ([Augsburg?, before Dec. 7th 1547) (HHSA Turcica I 7, Konv. 2, fols. 187-188); Busbecq to Maximilian II (Vienna, Sept. 15th 1569) (HHSA Turcica I 25, Konv. 3, fol. 157r).
[34] Kołodziejcik stated that the 1606 treaty was only a *temessük*, a draft version not carrying the *tuğra* or imperial insignia. Idem, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations*, 47-55.
[35] Addendum to Provisionali's report (Constantinople, Feb. 20th 1570) (HHSA Turcica I, 26 Konv. 1, fol. 163v) & Provisionali to Maximilian II (Constantinople, June 18th 1570) (HHSA Turcica I, 26 Konv. 2, fol. 122r).

The recurring confinement of diplomats by the Porte had always been a thorn in the Habsburg flesh. From the earliest missions onward, Ferdinand and his successors had always challenged this behaviour, which they openly described as unjust and unwarranted but silently despised as barbaric. The Habsburg Emperors urged the Sultan time upon time to abide by international law, which prescribed that, in the words of Ferdinand, 'Ambassadors and Envoys should always remain free, unharmed and secure, especially at the High Porte of the esteemed Emperor of the Turks, which, as is evident from his letters […], always provides free access and protection to friends and enemies'.[36] His clever use of metaphorical language that was familiar to the Ottoman government did, however, did not impress the Ottoman government.

Another effort to impose European standards on Habsburg-Ottoman relations concerns the permanent residence of diplomats at the Ottoman court. While France and Venice already possessed residing ambassadors in Constantinople for a number of years, the sending of a new Habsburg ambassador – and thus the continuation of relations – always had to be asked at the end of the current diplomat's assignment. Again, Ferdinand was the first of the Emperors to try to achieve this. He once attempted to obtain a de facto permanent embassy indirectly, namely by expressly prohibiting his ambassador to return home before he was recalled by the Emperor instead of awaiting the Porte's permission.[37] This, though, did not happen.

Reciprocity in diplomatic relations was never explicitly demanded by the Habsburgs. It was nevertheless suggested in virtually every letter of instruction. Before Gerard Veltwijck was sent as the first official envoy of Charles V, there was a long-standing argument about the fact that only his brother had sent his envoys to the Porte. During his last audience with the Sultan, Sprinzenstein, another diplomat of Ferdinand, was asked once again why the Spanish King (as Charles was called) had not yet sent a diplomat. Sprinzenstein jokingly said that 'the Spanish King could say the same about the Turkish Emperor'.[38] While the main Dragoman of course ostentatiously objected to that remark, the point was once again made.

Meaningful Gifts

In Habsburg circles a strong belief existed that giving presents to Ottoman functionaries was not only beneficial to the outcome of peace talks, but also absolutely indispensable. While this conviction was rooted in the traditional stereotypical image of the Muslim, experience of the diplomats confirmed this time upon time. It should be noted that the exchange of gifts was not exclusive to Christian-Islamic relations. In early modern European society, where regular and permanent wages did not exist, gifts created or strengthened personal ties. Charity was a Christian value, thus a Christian King used gifts as a means of securing mutual relationships

[36] Ferdinand's commission of Verantius, Zay & Malvezzi (Vienna, June 13th 1553) (HHSA Turcica I, 10 Konv. 4, fol. 62r.

[37] Sprinzenstein to Ferdinand ([Constantinople], start of Oct. 1537) (HHSA Turcica I, 4 Konv. 5, fol. 29r).

[38] Sprinzenstein to Ferdinand ([Constantinople], start of Oct. 1537) (HHSA Turcica I, 4 Konv. 5, fol. 29v).

with his subjects. Presents were much more than a simple transfer of property between two persons. They confirmed the mutual commitment between giver and receiver.[39]

The presents that were given by the Emperor and his representative served three purposes. First and foremost, it was considered necessary in order not to endanger the outcome of the negociations, much to the frustration of the diplomats, who considered the Turks to be greedy.[40] An envoy that did not carry any gifts for the Sultan or the courtiers was immediately made clear that this was contrary to usual practice, whether is was one of a befriended country such as France or an enemy.[41] The inadequate knowledge of the Ottoman government structure resulted in a strong dependence on dignitaries and courtiers of which the diplomats believed they could exert influence on the negociations. This led to the maintaining of an arbitrary strategy – which was far from effective – where almost every official at the Sultan's court who posed as being favourable to the Habsburg cause, could count on receiving gifts or money from the Habsburg ambassadors.[42]

Secondly, good relations implied the exchange of gifts. It was expected by both sides and resulted in an often friendly environment that facilitated difficult negociations. When the wife of Grand Vizier Rüstem had given birth to a daughter, the residing diplomat Malvezzi went to congratulate him, 'which is necessary for a servant of Your Majesty', he wrote to Ferdinand, and gave him more than a dozen silk and cotton garments.[43] Ottoman dignitaries did not refrain from returning the favour by giving something that was rare or wanted by the Emperor or his relatives. After learning about the interest Prince Maximilian had in bezoars (stones that were found in the stomach or intestines of certain animals and were used as antidotes), the Grand Vizier donated two of these stones, which were given to him by the Persian Shah, to the Ambassador.[44]

Finally, gifts were meant to reflect the wealth and technical skills of the giver's culture. The increasingly sophisticated clocks – undoubtably the most popular present in Christian-Ottoman relations – is a prime example of this implication. They were given to the Porte since

[39] C. Windler, 'Tributes and Presents in Franco-Tunisian Diplomacy', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 4 (2000/2) 168.

[40] 'As soon as one crosses the border', wrote Busbecq, 'he must open his purse and close it only when he leaves the country'. Idem, *Legationis Turcicae epistolae quatuor. Vier brieven over het gezantschap naar Turkije*, M. Goldsteen & Z. von Martels (eds.) (Hilversum, 1994) 45. See also a letter from Leonard von Vels (end May 1545). *Austro-Turcica 1541-1552. Diplomatische Akten des habsburgischen Gesandtschaftsverkehrs mit der Hohen Pforte im Zeitalter Süleymans des Prächtigen*, K. Nehring et al. (ed.) (Südosteuropäische Arbeiten 95) (Munich, 1995) 69. The 'natural avarice' of the Turks was a widespread stereotype. See P. de Brantôme, *Oeuvres complètes de Pièrre de Bourdeille, seigneur de Brantôme*, L. Lalanne (ed.) (Paris, 1882) II, 54.

[41] As was the French envoy Jean de Monluc: Veltwijck to Charles V (Adrianople, Nov. 10th 1545). Lanz, *Correspondenz*, II, 469; and Sprinzenstein: himself to Ferdinand ([Constantinople], start of Oct. 1537) (HHSA Turcica I, 4 Konv. 5, fol. 22r).

[42] For example the influence that was (often incorrectly) attributed to the dragomans. Compare with J. Matuz, 'Die Pfortendolmetscher zur Herrschaftszeit Süleymāns des Prächtigen'. *Südost-Forschungen*, 34 (1975) 26-60.

[43] Malvezzi to Ferdinand (Constantinople, Aug. 26th 1547). *Austro-Turcica*, 178.

[44] De Wijs to Maximilian II (Constantinople, April 23rd 1569) (HHSA Turcica I, 25 Konv. 2, fol. 134v); Provisionali's report (Belgrade, Sept. 21st 1570) (HHSA Turcica I, 27 Konv. 1, fol. 117r).

the earliest Habsburg envoys and were brought along by representatives of other countries as well.[45] The Porte had an astronomical interest in the western clocks, at a time when the first observatory still had to be built in Constantinople.[46] Naturally, this too was valid for the Porte: Archduke Matthew received coral stones and other curious things from an Ottoman official in Hungary as a sample of the beauty of his country, as he described in the accompanying letter.[47]

An exception to this classification was the tribute, the yearly payment of tens of thousand gold ducats that was imposed upon the Habsburg Emperors in return for the possession of the western part of Hungary. To ensure the integrity of the imperial reputation in Europe, they always refused to use this expression and stubbornly called it a 'munus', a gift from one friend to another by the Emperor, who instructed their envoys to do the same.[48] In 1545, when the first negotiations about a Habsburg-Ottoman treaty had started, Grand Vizier Rüstem wanted to put down in writing that Ferdinand would pay a tribute to the Sultan. Ferdinand's envoy said the paying of a tribute by a Christian monarch to the Sultan was 'foolish', but added that Ferdinand would keep his promise of donating a yearly gift 'out of pure generosity'.[49]

Conclusion

I have tried to demonstrate the way in which both the Habsburg and Ottoman Empire, being forced by political and military reality to negotiate, outlined their diplomatic contacts on the intersection of ideology, reputation and religion. Diplomacy is here seen as an element of representation of the State, of its values, its monarch and its culture and the diplomats as the most important actors in this process. The great value attached to reputation and physical appearance by both the Ottomans and the Habsburgs must be understood within this context of a slowly evolving modus operandi of diplomatic relations wherein, in this century, no rules or protocol had been set and wherein both parties tried to enforce new regulations and modes of conduct that were considered fair by both and that allowed them to engage in negotiations. This was a slow process, wherein some elements were quickly adopted and others continued to be disputed.

The confinement of ambassadors, however, continued throughout the century, although it was heavily disputed by the Emperor and labeled illegal and barbaric. To the Porte, the restriction in freedom of movement of Habsburg ambassadors was simply a crude but effective way of

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[45] It was said at the time that the French diplomat Jean de la Forest brought 'un excellent orloge' in 1535. Quoted in J. Ursu, *La politique orientale de François Ier* (1515-1547) (Paris, 1908) 175.
[46] It was built in 1574 by Takiyüddin, who had written a treatise on astronomical clocks some 20 years earlier. Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*.
[47] Cesare Gallo to Matthew (Komárno, Sept. 30th 1605) (HHSA Turcica I, 89 Konv. 1, fol. 85v).
[48] For example, Ferdinand's instructions for Niccolò Sicco (Worms, May 21st 1545). *Austro-Turcica*, 62-64.
[49] Sicco to Ferdinand (Constantinople, Aug. 25th 1545). *Austro-Turcica*, 74.

enforcing the yearly payment of tribute.[50] But foreign diplomats were treated far from disrespectfully at the Ottoman court. One of them thanked the Grand Vizier for his honourable treatment and several others have described their stay in praising terms.[51]

To the diplomats, who played a crucial role in this process, the Ottoman Empire was an 'alien' empire and continued to be.[52] But, remarkably, traditional stereotypes as 'barbaric' only surfaced when diplomats found themselves threathened or were hindered in their work.[53] Otherwise, to facilitate negociations, they adopted certain customs and habits and assumed an almost professional attitude. Because a moderate stance was necessary, their personal convictions were set aside and appeared only in personal or official letters. Importantly, this concessionary approach was created by efforts of both sides.

This study intends to show that the traditional historiographic image of early modern Ottoman-Christian contacts as an unbridgeable dichotomy between orthodoxy and barbarity, between *Dar al-Islam* and *Dar al-Harb*, should not be taken down, but at least be softened.[54] From the 17th century onward, knowledge of the Ottoman world increased in Europe and became more objective. Perhaps one can defend the position that the seeds of this evolution were planted in the 16th century, when economic and political relations between Europe and the Ottoman Empire intensified and a relatively open field for diplomatic interaction had been created.

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[50] Rijm & Ungnad to Maximilian II (Constantinople, June 9th 1574) (HHSA Turcica I, 30 Konv. 3, fols. 36r); the same to the same (ibidem, July 3rd 1574) (HHSA Turcica I, 30 Konv. 3, fol. 59r).

[51] Paulus de Palyna to Ferdinand (Jan. 11th 1564) (HHSA Turcica I, 18 Konv. 1, fol. 20v); Ferdinand's spy reports that Busbecq is 'loved and respected by all Viziers and the court' (Constantinople, Apr. 28th 1562) (Turcica I, 15 Konv. 2, fol. 15v).

[52] Rijm & David von Ungnad to Maximilian II (Constantinople, Sept. 21 1573) (HHSA Turcica I, 29 Konv. 3, fol. 154v).

[53] Rijm & Ungnad to Maximilian II (Constantinople, June 9th 1574) (HHSA Turcica I, 30 Konv. 3, fol. 36v).

[54] A. Nuri Yurdusev defends a similar position in 'The Ottoman Attitude toward Diplomacy' in: idem (ed.), *Ottoman Diplomacy. Conventional or Unconventional?* (Basingstoke, 2004) 29-30.