

CONSTANTINOPLE CONFIDENTIAL. NEWS AND INFORMATION IN THE DIARY OF JEAN-LOUIS RIGO (C. 1686-1756), SECRETARY OF THE DUTCH EMBASSY IN ISTANBUL¹

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Abstract

Over the last decades, the focus of diplomatic history has shifted from political relations to the cultural and social history of diplomacy. New Diplomatic History looks at topics such as rituals, borders, networks and families of diplomats. For this kind of research, Ottoman-European diplomacy has been at the centre of attention.

This essay aims to bring to light a unique source, which has never been studied extensively. Jean-Louis Rigo, secretary of the Dutch embassy, kept for a period of nearly thirty years (1727-1744 and 1747-1756) a diary about life and diplomacy in Istanbul. The value of the diary lies in the description of the author's dealings with news and information. In this essay, I will argue that instead of relying on standard sources for diplomacy such as foreign correspondence, *nouvelles* and newspapers, the Dutch embassy depended mainly on the local Levantine community and Rigo's extended patronage networks for diplomatic news.

Key words: Istanbul – news networks – diplomacy – Levantine community – diary

The diary of Jean-Louis Rigo

In the eighteenth century, Istanbul was the capital of the Ottoman Empire, the seat of the Sublime Porte, the Ottoman court, and its main diplomatic centre. As a port that connected the Mediterranean with Eastern Europe, Persia, India and Arabia, it was an important commercial centre. Merchants from around the world established trading houses in the capital. The city contained large Jewish and Christian minorities, who were allowed to practise their religion under Ottoman law. European states sent to Istanbul their most accomplished envoys, who competed with their colleagues to negotiate favourable trade tariffs. From the Peace of Karlovitz (1699) onwards, the Ottoman Empire became increasingly integrated with the European diplomatic system. In their wars with one another, European

¹ This essay is based on a master thesis I completed in 2011. I am grateful to my thesis supervisor Maartje van Gelder, the Netherlands Institute in Turkey for support and hospitality, Steven Richmond, the Consulate General of the Netherlands in Istanbul and the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research.

powers such as England, France, Russia and Prussia formed quick-changing alliances with the Ottomans. Because European ambassadors lived far from their home countries and governments, it was essential that they be well informed. Awareness of the latest news gave an ambassador a considerable advantage over his colleagues.

Interest among historians in the relation between news and diplomacy, of course, dates back to the days of Leopold Ranke and the Venetian diplomatic correspondences. In recent years, under the influence of New Diplomatic History, with its sociological and anthropological turn, interest in diplomatic news has revived. This revival runs parallel to developments in Early Modern News research, where historians have looked at the ways diplomats dealt with news.² For European-Ottoman diplomacy, the focus has mostly been on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A great deal needs to be done to fill what Virginia Aksan once called ‘the empty halls of the Ottoman eighteenth century’.³ In making this cultural turn, historians moved away from the analysis of political events and have instead looked at practices of daily diplomacy. To do this kind of research, however, historians need other sources than the official letters and dispatches diplomats sent to their governments: they need ‘ego-documents’ such as personal letters, memoirs and diaries. Among these kinds of sources from the eighteenth century, one of the few that is widely known and cited is the correspondence of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, wife of British ambassador Edward Wortley Montagu, written during their stay in Istanbul from 1716 to 1718.⁴

² For an important study about information in early modern Venice, see F. de Vivo, *Information and Communication in Venice: Rethinking Early Modern Politics*, Oxford, 2007. Also, see especially a wonderful recent book by John-Paul Ghobrial depicting diplomacy and information in Istanbul at the end of the seventeenth century: J.-P. Ghobrial, *The Whispers of Cities: Information Flows in Istanbul, London, and Paris in the Age of William Trumbull*, Oxford, 2013. On New Diplomatic History, see J. Watkins, ‘Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, vol. 38, 2008, pp. 1-14; also see the website newdiplomatichistory.org. On Early Modern News research see, for example, A. Pettigree, *The Invention of News: How the World Came to Know About Itself*, New Haven, 2014; J. Raymond, ed., *News Networks in Seventeenth-Century Britain and Europe*, London, 2006; and P. Arblaster, *From Ghent to Aix: How They Brought the News in the Habsburg Netherlands, 1550-1700*, Leiden, 2014.

³ V.H. Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace: Ahmed Resmi Efendi, 1700-1783*, Leiden, 1995, ‘acknowledgements’. See also her more recent *Ottoman Wars 1700-1870: An Empire Besieged*, Harlow, 2007.

⁴ Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s remarks on Ottoman society have often been cited in literature on European-Ottoman relations and life in eighteenth-century Istanbul. T. Heffernan and D. O’Quinn, eds, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: The Turkish Embassy Letters*, Peterborough, ON, 2013. She has also been a subject of many books and articles, most recently including R.A. Meriwether, ‘Transculturation and Politics in the Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’, *Studies in*

In the National Archives in The Hague, however, a unique source can be found: the diary of Jean-Louis Rigo, secretary of the Dutch embassy in Istanbul, who for many years kept a private account of life and diplomacy there. This journal can contribute a great deal to our understanding of eighteenth-century Ottoman-European relations and daily diplomacy in Istanbul. Diaries were an uncommon phenomenon in the Ottoman Empire: autobiographical writing was not a standard genre.⁵ Naturally, we have diaries from European travellers or envoys, but these visitors often stayed for short periods, whereas Rigo lived in the Ottoman Empire his entire life. And although European ambassadors occasionally published their memoirs or accounts of their travels, these were often edited to appeal to a larger public.⁶

Rigo's diary offers insights into how the Dutch embassy acquired its news and information, and consequently why it managed to keep up so well with international diplomacy in eighteenth-century Istanbul. I would like to argue that Rigo's diary shows that the embassy did not get the bulk of its news from subscriptions to *nouvelles* or from correspondence with the Netherlands. On the contrary, it obtained most of its information by connecting with local communities: Levantine merchants, missionaries and janissary guards. Via Rigo, the embassy presided over a network of contacts and clients from which it received constant information. This news varied from the latest shifts in power at the Ottoman court to events in Persia, Russia and France.

Rigo began writing his notes in 1727, while secretary to ambassador Cornelis Calkoen. He originally intended the diary to be a logbook, containing business-like and practical notes on people visiting the embassy or the details of appointments. Over time, however, the log came to resemble a personal diary, with

English Literature, 1500-1900, vol. 53, 2013, pp. 623-641; E.K. Bowman, 'The Poet as Translator: Mary Wortley Montagu Approaches the Turkish Lyric', *Comparative Literature Studies*, vol. 50:2, 2013, pp. 244-261; and A.R. Beach, 'Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Slavery in the Ottoman (and the British) Empire', *The Philological Quarterly*, vol. 85:3-4, 2006, pp. 293-314.

⁵ S. Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan: Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire*, London, 2000, p. 202.

⁶ See Sir James Porter, *Turkey: Its History and Progress. From the Journals and Correspondence of Sir James Porter, Fifteen Years Ambassador at Constantinople. Continued to the Present Time with a Memoir of Sir James Porter*, by his grandson Sir George Larpent, London 1854, first edition as *Observations*, Dublin, 1768. For an overview of the memoirs of French ambassadors, see R. Zaimova, 'L'espace culturel de Constantinople. Témoignages des ambassadeurs de France à Constantinople (XVII^e-XVIII^e siècle)', *Etudes balkaniques*, 2002-1, pp. 86-95. A recent publication stands out among these ego-documents because of its author: the butler of English ambassador Lord Kinnoull. However, he remained in Istanbul only for three years and did not write a great deal about Ottoman society. N. Webb and C. Webb, *The Earl and His Butler in Constantinople: The Secret Diary of an English Servant Among the Ottomans*, London, 2009.

Rigo commenting on events.⁷ He wrote down news he heard and accounts of his conversations or those he had overheard, along with the emotions he felt. Rigo seems to have kept this diary for his own purposes, to help him remember important things. Sometimes he recorded complete conversations with ambassadors in their *salons* or with neighbours on the streets. As the years passed, he also became more elaborate and prolific with his entries. In January 1748, for example, he wrote more than forty pages. Rigo's diary ends in 1756, the year of his death.⁸

In the historiography of Dutch-Ottoman relations, there has been some confusion about Rigo's identity. Some historians have called him a French-Levantine, others have been sure he was an Italian. He has also been supposed to be a Greek or a Dutchman. Standard works such as *Bronnen van de Levantse Handel* and *Repertorium der Nederlandse vertegenwoordigers* hardly mention him, even though he was an important member of the Dutch embassy for more than thirty years.⁹ This omission is a direct consequence of Rigo's elusive identity. He was a member of the international Levantine community, among whom nationalities and origins are sometimes hard to trace. At the same time, traditional (Dutch) diplomatic and trade history has focused largely on the ambassadors and merchants from the Dutch Republic, with little attention given to locally appointed embassy staff. But these people often did as much as if not more than the ambassadors themselves to further Dutch interests at the Ottoman court.

⁷ On the genre of 'ego-documents', see J.S. Amelang, *The Flight of Icarus: Artisan Autobiography in Early Modern Europe*, Stanford, 1998; J. Pollmann, *Een andere weg naar God. De reformatie van Arnoldus Buchelius (1565-1641)*, Amsterdam, 2000, pp. 28-37; and J. Pollmann, *Religious Choice in the Dutch Republic: The Reformation of Arnoldus Buchelius (1565-1641)*, Manchester, 1999.

⁸ The diary consists of two parts: National Archives, The Hague. 1.10.16.01. Collectie Calkoen, 1131-1953. 213-230. 'Journalen van het ter kancelarij voorgevallene'. 1727-1744; and National Archives, The Hague. 1.02.20. Inventaris van het archief van de Legatie in Turkije, 1668-1810, 595. Dagboek van het op de ambassade voorgevallene 1747-1756. Henceforth called: 'Diary Rigo'.

⁹ K. Heeringa and J.G. Nanninga, eds, *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis van den Levantschen handel, 1590-1826*, The Hague, 1910-; O. Schutte, ed., *Repertorium der Nederlandse vertegenwoordigers, residerende in het buitenland, 1584-1810*, The Hague, 1976. Literature in which his importance for Dutch diplomacy is recognised are B.J. Slot, 'De diplomatieke betrekkingen tussen Nederland en het Osmaanse Rijk', in: H. Theunissen, A. Abelmann, and W. Meulenkamp, eds, *Topkapi en turkomanie. Turks-Nederlandse ontmoetingen sinds 1600*, Amsterdam, 1989, pp. 9-18 (14); and Z. Çelikkol, A. de Groot and B. Slot, *Lale ile başladı: It began with the Tulip: The History of four Centuries of Relationship between Turkey and the Netherlands in Pictures*, Ankara, 2000, pp. 112-113, 126-140.

I found out more about Rigo's background in the church registers of Santa Maria Draperis, a Franciscan church in Istanbul mentioned by Rigo in his diary. He was born around 1686, almost certainly in Izmir (Smyrna). Rigo's father and uncles were Rotterdam and Amsterdam merchants, who became involved in Ottoman diplomacy and trade and joined the Dutch consulate in Izmir.¹⁰ Rigo's father married a woman who was probably Italian-Levantine. Jean-Louis Rigo moved to Istanbul and married the daughter of the Dutch *dragoman* (interpreter) Willem Theijls. When Rigo died in 1756, he was buried in the church of the Franciscan friars, close to the Dutch embassy in the Ottoman capital.¹¹

The diary is written in French, and punctuated with Italian and Ottoman-Turkish words. As Rigo intended the notes for his own use, the handwriting is very crumpled and sometimes illegible. The paper Rigo used was of poor quality, and because he often wrote on both sides, ink from the opposite side frequently shows through on the diary's pages. This has probably been one of the reasons why Rigo remained unstudied for so long. In addition to thousands of pages of daily notes, Rigo exchanged hundreds of letters with people in cities all over Europe and the Ottoman Empire, such as Vienna, Marseille, Izmir and Baghdad. For the purpose of this essay, I will focus on the period between November 1747 and May 1748. In this small span alone, Rigo wrote more than one hundred and fifty pages in his diary. In November 1747, a new ambassador, Elbert de Hochepied, arrived with his family from the Dutch city of Haarlem. Rigo's task was to introduce him to diplomatic circles in Istanbul. While teaching his ambassador about Ottoman diplomacy, he also disclosed information about his sources and the process of gathering news.

¹⁰ See N.A. The Hague. 1.03.01. Vertegenwoordigers in Smyrna 1657-1826. 127. 1692-1695. In this archive are a few documents that are signed 'Lorenzo Rigo, Cancelier'. According to Schutte, Lorenzo Rigo was chancellor of the Dutch consulate in Smyrna, 1674-1694. He died at Chios on 31 July 1694. Schutte, *Repertorium* (as in n. 9), 341. For the correspondence, see: 124. Brieven van de vertegenwoordigers te Constantinopel, van de consuls en andere ambtenaren in de Levant en langs de Middellandse Zee. Smirna. 1675-1680. For example Lorenzo Rigo to Johannes van Grol, secretary of the 'Levantse Handel' in Amsterdam, 28 October 1676, in which Rigo thanked Van Grol for delivering his letters to his mother. I am grateful to Merlijn Olnon for showing me these letters. Also see the inventory of merchant Joannes Rigo (30 July 1670), who left Amsterdam to go to Smyrna. Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 5075: Archief van de notarissen ter standplaats Amsterdam. Notaris Arnout Voskuijl. 4063. 23 January-31 December 1670.

¹¹ Church Register of the Santa Maria Draperis, Istiklal Caddesi, Beyoğlu-Istanbul. I would like to thank Fr. Rubén Tierrablanca González, ofm, for generously letting me have a look at the register.

May 1st

1748.

Recd. my a steady Lamb & de Brusset et
all faire la visite au Capteur Barbe. /

Cet jour vers le midi le Capteur se convoie devant
le lieu provincial à Bayonne est Bolgrad,
fort solides fortés bâties à l'entour de ces Environs, qui
tous jurent que leur y sont permanentes
grand laboriel. L'ambit de venir longtemps

Cest jour aussi il y a une assemblée
au village, on tout les maîtres et l'assemblée
de France avec M. le Maréchal le tout arrivé
à la fin de la nuit, ainsi que Mad. l'épouse

Tout d'abord dans l'assiette tout se trouvent
just pour faire de cette ambassade de
Capteur Barbe, acte et décret de l'assem-
ble à appuyer que le Capteur Barbe se trouvent
accable l'affaire et de volez, il leur était im-
possible de venir la visite de S. E. lequel
avait appuyé à son pouvoir 50. du moins à
l'heure d'arriver en que le gl. Vaud devint
appelé au Carmel pour rentrer le
duc de Longj. il a été de Castellane anti-
de France pour faire faire la place de
l'assemblée au Capteur Barbe. C'est tout
Palais, et après la partie de Soc, il est mis à l'assemblée
à la famille des royaux lequel l'autre d'aujourd'hui
sont appuyé l'ordre de l'ordre d'Urgo, sur Barbe
l'ordre de l'ordre d'Urgo, il de l'autre d'aujourd'hui
aux tentes de l'ordre d'Urgo, il a été appuyé que le Capteur Barbe
ayant toujours relâché à ce que le tentes a fait
peut jurer à l'ordre d'Urgo, le tout dressé devant
le Capteur et l'ordre d'Urgo en son palais de S. E.
l'autre d'aujourd'hui que cette présentation a été
telle qu'il fallait entre toutes les
tentes tenues dans lequel il a été accueilli à modi-
cette réception avec les autres, et quel respect assuré
entre le Capteur et l'autre d'Urgo de la justice d'Urgo
de l'autre d'Urgo, l'autre d'Urgo, l'autre d'Urgo
nous appuyé, cest que l'autre d'Urgo connu son
peut être à cette cause, c'est à dire il a été
rencontré dans l'autre d'Urgo, l'autre d'Urgo
dans la partie de l'autre d'Urgo de l'autre d'Urgo,

Figure 1. The Diary of Jean-Louis Rigo, 1-2 May 1748

The Dutch embassy in Istanbul

Official diplomatic relations between the Republic and the Ottoman Empire were established in 1612, when the Dutch Republic sent Cornelis Haga to be its ambassador in Istanbul.¹² In the eighteenth century, despite the Republic's relative economic and political decline, the Ottoman court still considered the Republic to be a European superpower. Already in 1673 French ambassador De Nointel had grumbled: 'La République des Provinces-Unies jouissait alors d'un prestige hors de proportion avec sa force réelle [...] frappés de ses progrès et prodigieusement ignorants en géographie, les Turcs se figuraient la Hollande comme un vaste Empire.'¹³ It was hardly a lack of geographical knowledge that caused this 'over-estimation' of the Dutch Republic. In 1668, the Dutch ambassador had even presented the sultan with a Blaeu Atlas, which reportedly had delighted the Ottoman sovereign.¹⁴ Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Dutch Levant trade remained important and merchants from the Republic competed with English and French traders.¹⁵ Furthermore, Dutch ambassadors Jacobus Colyer (ambassador from 1682 to 1725) and Cornelis Calkoen (ambassador from 1726 to 1744) had maintained warm relations with the Sublime Porte. Colyer played an important role as negotiator in the peace talks between the Austrian and the Ottoman empires at the Serbian city of Passarowitz in 1718. Cornelis Calkoen was often summoned to the Porte to give his opinion about important international political questions. Because the Republic in the eighteenth century long remained neutral towards the hostile European power blocks, the Ottoman ministers considered Calkoen to be a reliable source.¹⁶

¹² For an overview of Ottoman-Dutch diplomatic relations see, for example, A. de Groot, *The Ottoman Empire and the Dutch Republic: A History of the Earliest Diplomatic Relations, 1610-1630*, Leiden, 1978; G.R. Bosscha Erdbrink, *At the Threshold of Felicity: Ottoman-Dutch Relations During the Embassy of Cornelis Calkoen at the Sublime Porte, 1726-1744*, Ankara, 1975; M.H. van den Boogert, *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System: Qadis, Consuls and Beratlis in the 18th Century*, Leiden, 2005; H. Theunissen, A. Abelmann, and W. Meulenkamp, eds, *Topkapi en turkomanie. Turks-Nederlandse ontmoetingen sinds 1600*, Amsterdam, 1989; M. van den Boogert, ed., *Friends and Rivals in the East: Studies in Anglo-Dutch Relations in the Levant from the Seventeenth to the Early Nineteenth Century*, Leiden, 2000; M. van den Boogert and J. Jonker Roelants, eds, *De Nederlands-Turkse betrekkingen: portretten van een vierhonderdjarige geschiedenis*, Hilversum, 2012.

¹³ Letter of the French ambassador De Nointel (1673), cited in: Bosscha Erdbrink, *At the Threshold of Felicity* (as in n. 12), p. 39.

¹⁴ H. de la Fontaine Verwey, *Uit de wereld van het boek III. In en om de 'Vergulde Sonnewyser'*, Amsterdam, 1979, pp. 201-202.

¹⁵ Van den Boogert, eds, *Friends and Rivals* (as in n. 12); Ismail Hakkı Kadi, *Ottoman and Dutch Merchants in the Eighteenth Century: Competition in Ankara, Izmir and Amsterdam*, Leiden, 2012.

¹⁶ On Calkoens' neutrality, see Bosscha Erdbrink, *At the Threshold of Felicity*, *passim*.

Almost all foreign diplomats lived in the neighbourhoods of Galata and Pera, the hills to the north of Galata, in the ‘European quarter’ across the Golden Horn. Under the Byzantines Galata was already a neighbourhood for foreign tradesmen, especially from Genoa and Venice. After the Ottoman conquest in 1453, Galata remained a ‘European’ neighbourhood. Many merchants from Europe settled there, as did many Christian and some Jewish Ottoman subjects. Still, this did not mean the neighbourhood was religiously segregated: Muslims also resided there. The Galata Saray School trained servants employed at the Topkapı Palace, and the local monastery of Mevlevi dervishes was one of the most important dervish lodges in the Empire. Ambassadors lived in large residences with extensive households. The Dutch embassy, the Palais de Hollande, was in the Grand Rue de Pera, next to the French embassy complex.¹⁷ The Russian and the Swedish palaces were also located in the same street. For most of the day, the ambassadors kept to themselves, and sent each other messages via their secretaries. In the evenings they gathered together at balls and soirées.

The Galata merchants often availed themselves of their large family and business networks in the Mediterranean. In their circuit of news, Istanbul was merely one of many cities in the ‘contact zone’.¹⁸ Their trade-oriented diplomacy focused on the network of Mediterranean seaports, the *scale* or *échelles* of the Levant, in modern-day Turkey, Greece, the Balkans, Italy, the south of France and North Africa. In Rigo’s diplomatic and news correspondence, too, these cities were considered to belong to one region.¹⁹

The Dutch embassy, naturally, stayed in touch with the Netherlands. Letters and dispatches usually took six weeks to two months to arrive at their destination. The route most used was the ‘ordinary post route’ by way of Vienna.²⁰ Here one of Rigo’s trusted news sources, the Dutch envoy Barthold Douwe van Burmania, maintained a steady correspondence with the secretary in Istanbul.²¹ The Dutch

¹⁷ M. Hoenkamp-Mazgon, *Palais de Hollande te Istanbul. Het ambassadegebouw en zijn bewoners sinds 1612*, Amsterdam, 2002.

¹⁸ Natalie Rothman uses this term following M.-L. Pratt: see E.N. Rothman, ‘Interpreting Dragomans: Boundaries and Crossings in the Early Modern Mediterranean’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 51, 2009, pp. 771-800 (771). See also M. Greene, *A Shared World: Christians and Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Princeton, 2000.

¹⁹ For Rigo’s correspondence with acquaintances in the Mediterranean, see NA The Hague. 1.02.20. Inventaris van het archief van de Legatie in Turkije, 1668-1810, NA The Hague. 1.02.20, no. 479 to 600.

²⁰ Bosscha Erdbrink, *At the Threshold of Felicity*, 134.

²¹ Minutes of letters from Jean-Louis Rigo to Barthold Douwe van Burmania (Envoy of the Dutch Republic, 1739-1766): NA The Hague. 1.02.20. Inventaris van het archief van de Legatie in Turkije, 1668-1810. 596. Minuten en diverse klasaantekeningen. 1721-1756.

embassy also used other foreign diplomats, such as the Imperial envoy Heinrich Penckler, as cover for its own diplomatic mail.

Le dit jour à midy S.E. a envoyé à l'Int[ernon]ce Imp[eria]le six lettres séparées de politesses qu'elle a ecrisses aux pers. seign[eu]rs de la Cour Imp[eria]le pour les leur envoyer sous son couvert. Et le soir Elle a envoyé au même Ministre le pacquet de sa depeches à savoir avec les lettres pour Hollande adressées à M. Koets; celles pour l'Allem[agne] adressées à [...] de Burmania à Vienne, et tout pacquet adressé à Mr. Coller, direct[eu]r de la Poste Imp[eria]le et Roy[a]le à Semlin.²²

The embassy in Istanbul received official *nouvelles* from Amsterdam.²³ This sending of newsletters was a traditional means of spreading diplomatic news. In these letters, the most important news from European capitals was listed from each city.²⁴ The States-General addressed their letters and resolutions directly to the ambassador. On 23 December 1747, according to Rigo's diary, Elbert de Hochepied received a letter from The Hague sending word that the Republic was on the verge of war with France, in what was to be the last stage of the Austrian War of Succession (1740-1748). He discussed the latest developments with Rigo and his first *dragoman* Carlo Caratza, whom he then sent to the Ottoman court to tell the ministers the news.

Le dit jour le cour[rie]r est arrivé avec les letters de l'ord[inair]e de Vienne du 2: de ce mois. S.E. a recue diverses Depêches et des Resolutions de L.L. H.H. P.P., par les plus fraiches desquelles on conjecture que la declaration de Guerre entre la france et notre Rep[ublique] doit suivre de près, sans un coup de la Provid[enc]e propre à y faire succeder une négociation serieuse de Paix, que l'on doit écrire, mais que l'on ne peut point esperer humainem[en]t parlant.

Après nous avoir communiqué, à M. Caratza et à moi, le plus essentiel de ses depeches, il a donné commission à ce pre[mier] drogm[a]n de donner communication aux mini[str]es de la Porte de la situation critique des affaires de notre Rep[ublique] prette à envenir à une guerre ouverte contre la France.²⁵

²² Diary Rigo, 6 January 1748.

²³ NA The Hague. 1.02.20. Inventaris van het archief van de Legatie in Turkije, 1668-1810. 183. 'Nouvelles', verzonden uit Amsterdam, 1748-1759 (only preserved from 1748 onwards?).

²⁴ In recent years, a great deal of research has been published on early modern newsletters and some admirable projects have seen the light. See, for example, the Fuggerzeitungen project: <http://www.univie.ac.at/fuggerzeitungen/en/>, accessed 21 July 2014. And especially see Mario Infelise's book on Italian newsletters, the *avvisi*: M. Infelise, *Prima dei giornali. Alle origini della pubblica informazione*, Rome, 2002.

²⁵ Diary Rigo, 23 December 1747.

Introducing the new ambassador

However, the sparse correspondence with the Republic hardly satisfied the need for news. Most of the international news that Rigo heard was from his contacts in Istanbul. Accordingly, he put considerable effort into maintaining his local news networks. In 1744, Ambassador Calkoen returned to the Netherlands. Pending the appointment of a new ambassador from Holland, a local Dutch businessman acted as an interim-ambassador and Rigo was dismissed.²⁶ However, Rigo did not abandon his news and patronage networks. He even continued to visit other foreign diplomats, thus providing for continuity in the embassy's stream of news, apparently in the hope that the new ambassador would reappoint him. When he heard that Elbert de Hochepied had been chosen for the position, Rigo sent the new appointee a letter offering his services. De Hochepied came from a famous family of merchants and diplomats in the Ottoman Empire. His elder brother Daniël-Alexander de Hochepied was consul to the Dutch delegation in Izmir.²⁷ Elbert, however, had lived in the Netherlands from 1722 and was totally lacking in diplomatic experience.²⁸ Presumably on the advice of his brother, Elbert appointed Rigo as a secretary. In advance of de Hochepied's arrival in Istanbul, Rigo sent eighteen letters to the newly named ambassador while he was still in Haarlem, preparing him for his entrance into Ottoman society. He also occasionally passed on greetings from other ambassadors. For example, he wrote that when he had spoken to Austrian ambassador Heinrich Penckler and his wife, they had said they would be 'réellement ravies' to meet de Hochepied and his wife.²⁹ In another letter, he passed on the best wishes of English ambassador James Porter, who also claimed to be looking forward to meeting the de Hochepied family.³⁰

²⁶ NA The Hague. 1.10.16.01. Collectie Calkoen. 559. Rekening van de salarissen door J.C. des Bordes, secretaris van de ambassade van de republiek in Turkije, agent ad interim aldaar, betaald aan het ambassadepersoneel, lopende van 30 juni 1744 tot 30 juni 1747, ca. 1747.

²⁷ On the de Hochepied family, see Hoenkamp-Mazgon, *Palais de Hollande te Istanbul* (as in n. 17), pp. 61-67; Schutte, *Repertorium*, 133; S. Heylen, 'Kunst in de Levant. De collecties van de Nederlandse families De Hochepied en Van Lennep in Smyrna', master's thesis, University of Utrecht, 2007, p. 26; and M. Wagenvoort, 'Een ambassadeursfamilie in de 18e eeuw', *Nederland. Verzameling oorspronkelijke bijdragen door Nederlandsche letterkundigen*, 1905, pp. 377-410.

²⁸ While other European countries often sent their best trained diplomats, the Republic did not consider this necessary. Mansel, *Constantinople, City of the World's Desire, 1453-1924*, London, 1995, p. 199; V.H. Aksan, *Ottoman Statesman* (as in n. 3), p. 44. For an overview of European envoys to the Ottoman Empire, see L. Santifaller, ed., *Repertorium der diplomatischen Vertreter aller Länder seit dem Westfälischen Frieden (1648). II. Band (1716-1763)*, Zürich, 1950-1965.

²⁹ Jean-Louis Rigo to Elbert de Hochepied, 1 September 1746. NA The Hague. 1.02.20. Inventaris van het archief van de Legatie in Turkije, 1668-1810. 596. Minuten en diverse klasaantekeningen. 1721-1756.

³⁰ See, for example, Jean-Louis Rigo to Elbert de Hochepied, 4 March 1747. *Ibid.*

An outsider such as Elbert de Hochepied needed to know that Ottoman diplomacy would be tricky and complicated. Shortly before his arrival in Istanbul, the Ottoman court dismissed the *reis effendi* (or *reisül-küttab*), the minister responsible for foreign affairs. This was problematic for Rigo, because de Hochepied had sent Rigo introductory letters for the *reis effendi* with the former official's name, 'Hadqi Mustafa Effendi', in the address line. Rigo politely asked his ambassador to refrain from addressing letters to specific persons in the future:

Tout le monde sait que le Gouvernement Othoman est sujet à des revolutions successives: et c'est aussi pour cette raison que ceux parmi les ministres Etrangers qui y reflechissent ont coutume sur les adresses d'omettre les noms propres des ministres du gouvernement qui sont en place: comme Vôtre Excellence a déjà commencé à en faire l'experience.³¹

Rigo wrote to his patron about rumours he had heard concerning the dismissal of the Ottoman official, showing he possessed inside information. According to Rigo, some said that the *reis effendi* wanted to marry a rich woman against the advice of his friends and patrons. Rigo himself, however, had reason to believe that the action was initiated by the Kiahaya Bey, the right-hand man of the Grand Vizier, who was jealous of the increasing power of the *reis effendi*. However, according to Rigo, there was no reason for de Hochepied to deplore what had happened:

le nouveau Reis Effendi étant une tres aimable personne, qui depuis plus de dix ans est ex officio en relation avec les ministres Étrangers quoiqu'indirectement, et par le canal de leurs Drog[man]s respectifs; et il est bon ami de notre Premier.³²

At the same time, Rigo's correspondence with de Hochepied shows the hardships of long-distance communication between the Netherlands and the Ottoman Empire. One day Rigo complained that he had not received any letters from de Hochepied and thus did not know the appointed ambassador's latest plans:

Personne icy, autant que je puis savoir, n'ayant recue de lettres de Vôtre Excellence, nous ignorons absolument ses finales resolutions sur la forme de son voyage, et le tems auquel Elle pourra l'entreprendre. Cependant il y a icy des Etrangers qui pretendent avoir des Lettres de Hollande par lesquelles on leur mande que Vôtre Excellence se serait determinée à faire le voyage par terre: or dans ce cas, dont j'ose douter encore, il y a grande apparence qu'Elle descende par le Danube jusqu'à Vienne, et de Vienne à Belgrade, ou même à Russik, pour de là se rendre par terre icy: c'est la voie la plus

³¹ Rigo to de Hochepied, 17 November 1747. *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

sûre et la plus commode pour Vôtre Excellence et pour Son Illustré petite Famille, si tant est réellement qu'elle l'amene avec soi. [...] Les lettres qui pourront arriver ici de votre part, Monseigneur, par le prochain ordinaire de Vienne éclairciront tous nos doutes.³³

After de Hochepied's arrival in November 1747, Rigo went on collecting news. He used family and patronage networks that extended into various sections of Ottoman society. Among his family, friends and clients were Italian and Jewish merchants, Franciscan missionaries, Greek interpreters, janissary guards and a famous French renegade, all of whom provided him with news on subjects ranging from international trade and politics to local events.

Levantine networks

The Dutch 'nation' in Istanbul consisted not only of Dutch merchants but also a diverse group of 'protégés' [*barattaires*]. These were Ottoman subjects, mostly merchants, who had solicited the protection of the Dutch embassy, often for tax purposes.³⁴ The protégés were Latin, Greek-Orthodox, Armenian and Jewish Levantines who frequently visited the embassy. In his diary, Rigo mentions names such as Jani Agora, Ruben Frangi and Panaïsti Sika. They too furnished the embassy with news from their own networks.³⁵ As Dutch protégés, they could also cause trouble for the ambassador, as the Porte held him responsible for their behaviour and actions.³⁶ The *dragomans*, the interpreters, whom the embassies often recruited from ancient Levantine families, were the most important protégés and central members of the embassy staff.³⁷ They maintained contacts with the Porte and interpreted between the ambassadors and Ottoman ministers.

Recently there has been a surge of interest in *dragomans*, especially regarding their identity as 'trans-imperial subjects'. Natalie Rothman has given them

³³ Diary Rigo, 29 March 1747.

³⁴ For an important study of the Venetian embassy and presence in Istanbul, see E.R. Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople: Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Baltimore, 2006, especially his chapters on the official and unofficial nation, pp. 23-102.

³⁵ Diary Rigo, 16 January 1748.

³⁶ On this subject, see M. Olnon, 'Towards Classifying *Avanias*: A Study of Two Cases Involving the English and Dutch Nations in Seventeenth-Century Izmir', in: M.H. van den Boogert, *Friends and Rivals*, pp. 159-186; and Id., *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System* (as in n. 12), pp. 117-155.

³⁷ See, for example, A. de Groot, 'The Dragomans of the Embassies in Istanbul 1785-1834', in: G.J.H. van Gelder and E. de Moor, eds, *Eastward Bound: Dutch Ventures and Adventures in the Middle East*, Amsterdam, 1994, pp. 130-158; and Id., 'Protection and Nationality: The Decline of the Dragomans', in: F. Hitzel, ed., *Istanbul et les langues Orientales*, Paris, 1995, pp. 235-255.

an important role as people who helped to define and shape boundaries in the early modern Mediterranean: [...]

dragomans' multiple provenances and modes of recruitment, training, and employment belie neat categorization as either "local" or "foreign," "Ottoman" or "Venetian." Indeed, dragomans typify what I call "trans-imperial subjects," actors who straddled and brokered – and thus helped to shape – political, religious, and linguistic boundaries between the early modern Ottoman and Venetian states.³⁸

Their contemporaries (and also some historians of the Ottoman Empire) tended to judge this elusiveness of identity as a negative feature, accusing the *dragomans* of disloyalty, of selling their information and services to the highest bidder.³⁹ Rigo, however, was more sympathetic: his wife Clara came from a *dragoman* family, and for him her family's trans-nationality primarily meant the availability of a highly prized extended news network.

A description of Clara Rigo's family network offers insights into the interconnectedness of Istanbul's *dragoman* families and their relationships with the European embassies. It should be noted, however, that Clara's family had lived in Istanbul only for two generations. Older Istanbul families, especially those originally from Venice and Genoa, had even more intricate and complex family networks. Clara's grandfather, Jan Janszoon Theijls, was a merchant from the Dutch city of Enkhuizen. In 1662, he was appointed consul of Egypt.⁴⁰ His son Willem was a talented diplomat who decided to work for the Dutch embassy in Istanbul. In 1722 he published a five-hundred-page book on Ottoman history, dedicated to the king of Sweden.⁴¹

Willem 'levantinised' rapidly. He first married a Greek woman, and then the Latin-Ottoman Caterina Perone. From this second marriage, Clara Rigo was born. Her baptism is included in the records of Santa Maria Draperis, one of the

³⁸ E.N. Rothman, 'Interpreting Dragomans' (as in n. 18), pp. 771-800; A.H. de Groot, 'Dragomans' Careers: The Change of Status in Some Families Connected with the British and Dutch Embassies at Istanbul, 1785-1829', in: Van den Boogert, *Friends and Rivals*, pp. 223-246 (245-246); L. Missir de Lusignan, 'Une aristocratie "inclassable". Les drogmans (réflexions sur nations et dynasties au sein de l'Empire ottoman)', in: F. Hitzel, ed., *Istanbul et les langues Orientales*, pp. 153-160.

³⁹ B. Lewis, *From Babel to Dragomans: Interpreting the Middle East*, London, 2005, pp. 26-27.

⁴⁰ Schutte, *Repertorium*, p. 361.

⁴¹ Willem Theijls, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Charles XII, roi de Suède. Contenant ce qui s'est passé pendant le séjour de ce Prince dans l'Empire Ottoman; & un recit fidèle des troubles survenus de tems en tems entre Sa Maj. Cz. & la Porte &c. &c. [...] Ecrit par W. Theyls. Premier Interprète et Chancelier de Son Excel. Monseigneur le Comte Colyer, Ambassadeur de Leurs H.H.P.P. à la Porte*, Leiden: Jean du Vivier, 1722.

oldest Roman Catholic churches in Istanbul. This was also the church where she and Jean-Louis Rigo were married in 1723. At their wedding, the Venetian ambassador, or *bailo*, and the wife of Dutch ambassador Jacobus Colyer were present as witnesses.⁴² Her siblings and other family members had many connections with ancient Levantine families. Victoria Fornetti, the godmother of Clara's eldest sister Sybil, was a member of the Fornetti dynasty, who provided the French embassy with interpreters and consuls. Clara's younger brother Nicolas, or Nicholachi, was a *dragoman* at the Venetian embassy. In 1718 he married Angela Tarsia, whose family members often worked as *dragomans* for the威尼斯人 as well. One witness at their wedding was Luca Chirico, an envoy of the Ottoman vassal state of Ragusa (Dubrovnik), who had also been a *dragoman* at the English embassy during the ambassadorship (1729–1734) of Lord Kinnoull. Marie Elisabeth Testa, a daughter of Angela Tarsia from an earlier marriage with Stefano Testa (from a famous Levantine family), was married to Antonio Pisani, first *dragoman* of the English embassy at the time when Elbert de Hochedepied arrived in Istanbul.⁴³

From such people Rigo heard about events that happened at other embassies. De Hochedepied and his wife soon attempted earning money from the protégés of the embassy via the trade of *berats*, documents that provided taxation privileges. Rigo warned his ambassador about the exploitation of his protégés, noting how the English ambassador had lost much goodwill among his protégés when he began collecting money from them:

J'ai tâché de m'informer adroitement de ce qui s'etoit fait à l'arrivée de l'amb[assadeur] d'ang[leter]re à l'égard des siens, et j'ai su de bonne part, que le Drogman Ant[onio] Pisani auroit dans l'espace de 8: mois recueillis des Barataires de Cons[tantino]ple, de Salonique, de Grèce, et de l'archipel en tout environ 1500: Pias[tres] qui auroient servi à payer la tapisserie de la chambre d'aud[ien]ce en damasque et de ...Venise, et les 6: chev[au]x de Carosse: ce qui avoit couté beaucoup de peines et de degouts au d[i]t Drog[ma]n avant que d'obtenir cet argent partie des uns, et partie des autres, avec mecontentement universal de tous mortifies de cette vexation comme inouïe.⁴⁴

⁴² Church register of Santa Maria Draperis, Istanbul, 1 August 1723.

⁴³ Church register Santa Maria Draperis, Istanbul; the genealogical website of Marie Anne Marandet-Legoux: <http://gw.geneanet.org/marmara2?lang=en;p=giovanni+luigi;n=righo+ou+rigo>, accessed 21 July 2014. For the Tarsia family tree, see E.N. Rothman, 'Between Venice and Istanbul: Trans-Imperial Subjects and Cultural Mediation in the Early Modern Mediterranean', PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 2006, appendix 14, 480; for an overview of ancient Levantine families in Istanbul, see the impressive work by M.-H. Sturdza, *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople*, Paris, chez l'auteur, 1983. I am grateful to Steven Richmond for bringing this book to my attention.

⁴⁴ Diary Rigo, 18 January 1748.

For many years, one of the most important Levantine news sources for the Dutch embassy was first *dragoman* Skarlato ‘Carlo’ Caratza. He came from a wealthy Greek-Orthodox *dragoman* dynasty and belonged to the *phanariots*, the Greek aristocracy of Istanbul. Later, his son would become *terjuman-i humayun*, *dragoman* of the Porte, one of the highest Ottoman positions available to non-Muslims. Almost daily, Caratza provided the embassy with the latest news from the Ottoman court, and was well informed about the movements of highly placed officials:

Le dit jour notre pre[mier] Drogman nous a annoncé le retour du cyd[evan]t Mufti Pirizaade Eff[endi] qui est attendu aujourd’hui dans son Yali avec sa famille, rappelé par les bons offices de l’actuel Mufti son ancien ami.⁴⁵

Clara Rigo and the harems

Rigo’s wife Clara, too, was of great importance to the embassy as an unofficial news gatherer. In one of the few articles to mention Rigo, Ben Slot describes Clara Rigo discussing political affairs with the wife of the Ottoman commander of the fleet, the *kapudanpasha*, during a boat trip. Slot uses this anecdote as an example of the openness of the Tulip Era (1703-1730), a period in Ottoman history when the Empire was more open towards foreign trends and influences.⁴⁶ However, Rigo’s diary shows that even under the reign of Sultan Mahmud (1730-1754), when the political climate became stricter, Clara Rigo kept in touch with her Ottoman acquaintances.⁴⁷

While Rigo usually spent his day in Galata and Pera, Clara often crossed the Bosphorus to ‘Constantinople’, the part of the city around the Topkapı palace. In these neighbourhoods, Clara visited the harems of Ottoman ministers, and after her return to the embassy reported to her husband the latest news. On 21 January 1748, for example, Rigo noted in his diary: ‘Ma femme est revenue de Cons[tantino]ple: et elle m’a rapporté que le Tsaouch B[ashi] est menacé d’une prochainne deposition.’⁴⁸ Although Clara did not have an official function and was not a formal member of the embassy staff, unofficially she was one of the Dutch ambassador’s major sources of information.

Rigo’s diary entries about his wife also contribute a great deal to our knowledge of the room for manoeuvre available to women in the Ottoman Empire.

⁴⁵ Diary Rigo, 19 January 1748.

⁴⁶ Slot, ‘Diplomatieke betrekkingen’ (as in n. 9), p. 14.

⁴⁷ On the reign of Sultan Mahmud I (and other sultans) see C. Finkel, *Osman’s Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1923*, London, 2006.

⁴⁸ Diary Rigo, 21 January 1748.

From the historiography on this subject, it appears that women had almost none. In a standard work on daily life in Ottoman society, Suraiya Faroqhi states that while rich women often owned capital and, for example, commissioned buildings, they were not allowed to venture out in public.⁴⁹ In general, women stayed inside and spent their time on embroidery and other handiwork. This way of life applied foremost to Muslim women, but according to Faroqhi, non-Muslim women in the Empire adapted to this convention: ‘the ideal woman would have been entirely invisible. Particularly in the eighteenth century, sultans often legislated in this spirit, and their decrees also drastically restricted the few remaining opportunities women still had to go out on to the streets and squares.’

Clara Rigo does not fit into this image of the invisible woman. She moved freely around the neighbourhood, where she talked to acquaintances, male and female alike. In the harems, she spoke not only to the women present, but apparently also to the occasional Ottoman minister. In a letter from Rigo to Elbert de Hochepied in 1747, the Kiahaya Bey, the right-hand man of the Grand Vizier, appears curious to hear from Clara the latest news about the Dutch ambassador’s arrival:

Mon Epouse, qui frequente entr’autres Harems celui de l’actuel Kiahaya Beij du Grand Vezir, s’y étant trouvée ces jours passés, ce Ministre lui demanda des nouvelles de Vôtre Excellence, et dans le cours de la conversation il fit l’Eloge du feu Monsr. le Comte Colyer qui s’était trouvé Mediateur Plenipotaire du Congres de Passarowitz feu son père Celebi Mehemed Effendi s’y étant trouvé aussi avec le Caractère d’Ambassadeur Plenipo[tai]re de la Porte. J’eus l’honneur de le connoître personnellement dans cette occasion-là. J’ose assurer à Vôtre Excellence que nous nous faisons un honneur et même un devoir de ne la nommer partout que dans les termes que nous dictent le zèle et la vénération que nous lui devons.⁵⁰

In May 1748, Elbert de Hochepied and his wife asked Clara to help them buy a summerhouse in Büyükdere, a village outside Istanbul where many rich Ottomans and European diplomats owned country houses.⁵¹ While Rigo remained at the embassy, Clara went to Büyükdere and conducted the negotiations with the owner, a certain Hassan Agha, all by herself. Only after Clara had secured the terms of the purchase did she send for her husband and the de Hochepied family, who subsequently came over to have a look.⁵²

⁴⁹ Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan* (as in n. 5), p. 137.

⁵⁰ Rigo to De Hochepied, 6 February 1747.

⁵¹ On Istanbul country houses see, for example, the travel account of Amsterdam regent Joan Raye: A. Doedens and L. Mulder, eds, *Een levenslustig heer op reis naar de Oriënt. Brieven van Joan Raye, heer van Breukelerwaart 1764-1769*, Baarn, 1987, pp. 49-52.

⁵² Diary Rigo, 5-11 May 1748.

Newspapers, telescopes and Comte de Bonneval

It was hard to keep secrets in the embassy quarter of Pera. Everyone lived close to one another and news spread fast. Although ambassadors tried to hide their diplomatic manoeuvres as much as possible, they willingly shared official news with their colleagues. On 24 December 1747, the English ambassador James Porter sent his secretary to the Dutch embassy to share the latest news about a decisive English victory against the French fleet off Cape Finisterre (25 October 1747).⁵³ De Hochedepied in turn sent Rigo to the English embassy to congratulate Porter on this triumph. Ambassadors often passed their European newspapers and *nouvelles* on to their colleagues.⁵⁴ Rigo sent his papers to a good friend of his, the famous French renegade Ahmed Pasha, Comte de Bonneval. On 2 January 1744, for example, Ahmed Pasha wrote: ‘J’ay parcouru, monsieur, les gazettes que vous avez eu la bonté de m’envoyer, comme elles ne sont pas des plus fraîches, j’espère que vous me ferez le plaisir de m’envoyer les nouvelles lorsque vous le pourrez.’⁵⁵

The French nobleman Ahmed Pasha de Bonneval is an intriguing figure, whose identity has caused debate among historians.⁵⁶ Claude-Alexandre de Bonneval, after quarrelling with both French and Austrian rulers, in revenge offered his services to the Ottoman sultan. He converted to Islam and called himself Ahmed Pasha Humbaracı. In Istanbul, he reformed the Ottoman army and became a highly placed Ottoman official. Nevertheless, he stayed in touch with his old friends from France, among whom he counted Voltaire and Rousseau. Rigo, although nowhere mentioned in the literature on Bonneval, was one of his greatest friends. They saw each other frequently and often corresponded: in his letters Bonneval always sent his regards ‘à madame Rigo et au petit’, Rigo’s son.⁵⁷

⁵³ Diary Rigo, 24 December 1747. The Second Battle of Cape Finisterre was a naval engagement between the English and the French in the Austrian War of Succession. The battle took place off Cape Finisterre in the eastern Atlantic Ocean on 25 October 1747. The news took two months to reach Istanbul.

⁵⁴ See Webb and Webb, *The Earl and his Butler* (as in n. 6), pp. 64-65. For European newspapers also see Çellikol, *It began with the Tulip* (as in n. 9), pp. 120-121.

⁵⁵ Ahmed Pasha Bonneval to Jean-Louis Rigo, 2 January 1744. NA The Hague. 1.02.20. Inventaris van het archief van de Legatie in Turkije, 1668-1810. 587. Brieven van C.A. de Bonneval aan Rigo 1732-1745.

⁵⁶ Most works on Istanbul in the early modern period mention Ahmed Pasha de Bonneval. See, for example, Mansel, *Constantinople* (as in n. 28), pp. 201-202, 293. There has also been a novel based on his life (in which the author mentions Jean-Louis Rigo not once!): Jacques Almira, *La fuite à Constantinople ou la vie du comte de Bonneval*, Paris, 1986.

⁵⁷ NA The Hague. 1.02.20. Inventaris van het archief van de Legatie in Turkije, 1668-1810. 587. Brieven van C.A. de Bonneval aan J.-L. Rigo, 1732-1745. For example: Ahmed Pasha, comte de Bonneval to Jean-Louis Rigo, 18 April 1740.

In a recent essay, Julia Landweber discusses Bonneval's multifaceted identity. According to her, he stressed his French identity to his European acquaintances. She cites his correspondence with Voltaire and passages in Giacomo Casanova's journals in which he emphasised that he had not been circumcised.⁵⁸ While Landweber considers Bonneval's identity a matter of serious concern, Bonneval himself, in his letters to Rigo, made fun of his position as highly placed renegade. In a note dating from 1742, Bonneval wrote from the Istanbul arsenal Tophana asking Rigo to deliver a message to a mutual friend, Baron Zay. In this note, he played with the cliché that highly placed Ottoman officials often ordered summary executions of criminals: 'Pour le Baron Zay: c'est un *kourous* à qui je veux couper la teste de ma propre main; puisqu'il y a plus d'un mois qu'il ne me fait l'honneur de manger de mon pilav.'⁵⁹

In another letter, while asking that Rigo give his regards to a daughter of the Dutch merchant Diepenbroek, he makes fun of the rules surrounding Ramadan: Rigo is to pass along 'mes respects à mademoiselle D'Ippenbroeck que j'honore infiniment. Vous luy baiserez de ma part le bas de la Robe, car dans le temps de Ramadan, il nous est deffandu de monter plus haut.'⁶⁰

With Bonneval's death in 1747, Rigo lost one of his major news sources among the Ottoman political elite. Although Bonneval, as a French comte from the *noblesse d'épée*, was of much higher descent than Rigo, in Istanbul diplomatic circles they interacted as equals.

Much of Rigo's diary is concerned with the movements of European diplomats and Ottoman ministers. Every day he wrote down where the other diplomats were and with whom they had dined. His diary is scattered with notes such as: 'Le dit jour l'envoyé des Deux Siciles est rentré en ville, et il a diné au Palais de France.' On one occasion day he wrote:

Le dit jour vendr[edi]. 3^e dit 9bre dans l'après midi l'amb[assadeur] d'angleterre, revenu tout à fait de la campagne en ville, a soupé le soir chez le tres[orie]r de sa nation M. Barker en compagn[ie] des m[essieu]rs de sa suite, et ceux de la nation qui se trouvent en ville.⁶¹

⁵⁸ J. Landweber, 'Fashioning Nationality and Identity in the Eighteenth Century: The Comte de Bonneval in the Ottoman Empire', in: *The International History Review*, vol. 30, 2008, pp. 1–31 (24); Édouard Langille, ed., *Louis-Charles Fougeret de Monbron. Le Cosmopolite, ou le citoyen du monde* (1750), London, 2010, pp. 62–63.

⁵⁹ Claude-Alexandre de Bonneval to Jean-Louis Rigo, 7 November 1742.

⁶⁰ Bonneval to Rigo, 29 November 1741. See, for a picture of the original letter, Çelikkol, *It began with the Tulip*, pp. 126–127. Also see Slot, 'Diplomatieke betrekkingen', p. 14.

⁶¹ Diary Rigo, 3 November 1747.

And on another day he kept an eye on the French ambassador:

Le dit jour lundi 6^e dit 9bre le nouvel amb[assadeur] de France est allé se promener à cheval, et n'étant revenu que vers le soir, on a conjecturé qu'il aura été diner à Baltaliman auprès du Bailli de Majo.⁶²

From the Dutch embassy, Rigo often watched the other embassies in the neighbourhood, perhaps using binoculars or a telescope. These instruments were frequently used in Istanbul; even, presumably, the sultan looked out from his terrace at the Topkapı palace with a telescope.⁶³ For the Dutch, the French embassy was the easiest building to keep an eye on, as its garden bordered the grounds of the Dutch embassy. This way, Rigo could check the temperature of the relationships among the diplomats. Who visited whom, and how often? One night, Rigo saw the Russian *résident*, who had been invited to the Dutch embassy that evening, leaving the French embassy:

Le d[i]t jour vers le soir sont venus les amb[assadeu]rs du Venise et d'Angleterre puis M. et Mad[am]e Penckler. L'amb[assadeu]r de Venise s'est retiré pour aller au Palais de france, d'où j'ai vu sortir de nuict le Rés[iden]t de Russie qui a affecté de ne pas venir ici par une secrete pique.⁶⁴

Ceremonial as news source

The description of diplomatic ceremonies plays a major role in Rigo's diary. In the last decade, with the emergence of New Diplomatic History, ceremonial has become a focus of historical research. Influenced by disciplines such as anthropology, diplomatic historians have turned away from the study of political events to instead examine the rituals, symbols and social customs behind diplomacy.⁶⁵ Scholars working in news and communication history as well have taken an interest in ceremonial as a source of news. Recently, Monica Stensland has argued that the Habsburg government in the Netherlands partly communicated with its

⁶² *Ibid.*, 6 November 1747.

⁶³ Mansel, *Constantinople*, p. 163. According to a list of proposed presents for the sultan, written at the Dutch embassy in 1747, binoculars were a highly valued gift at the Ottoman court: 'Deese verrekijkers zijn hier zeer geëstimeerd maar moet geobserveert werden, dat de glaasen van de beste meesters zijn'. 1.03.01. Inventaris van het archief van de Levantse Handel 1614-1828. 104. Brieven van de vertegenwoordigers te Constantinopel, van de consuls en andere ambtenaren in de Levant en langs de Middellandse Zee. Constantinopel, 1745-1747.

⁶⁴ Diary Rigo, 28 May 1748.

⁶⁵ Watkins, 'Toward a New Diplomatic History' (as in n. 2), *passim*; R. Kauz, G. Rota and J.P. Niederkorn, *Diplomatisches Zeremoniell in Europa und im Mittleren Osten in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Vienna, 2009; R. Adams and R. Cox, eds, *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture*, New York, 2011.

subjects through ceremonies such as processions, executions or joyous entries.⁶⁶ Funerary processions in particular could give spectators information about power relations among the elite or the government.⁶⁷ For Rigo, ceremonial was news. He kept a close eye on all public ceremonies so as to analyse the relations between diplomats and those of ambassadors with the Ottoman court. He often described in detail the composition of a delegation, their reception and the gifts with which they were presented.⁶⁸

Audiences at the Porte were important facts that were discussed on the streets in the embassy quarters. On 10 December 1747, Rigo wrote that the inhabitants of Pera had heard about a splendid audience the sultan had given to the Austrian envoy Heinrich Penckler three days earlier. Putting himself forward as the representative of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Penckler had returned to the sultan two ships with 105 Ottoman subjects who had been captured by the Livornese and held prisoner in Italy. The sultan expressed his gratitude with ‘formalités publiques et distinctives’, with Penckler receiving a sable fur coat, a costly present. Rigo appreciated the diplomatic skills of the Austrian envoy: ‘Il faut avouer que ce ministre sait trouver ses avantages dans tous les cas.’⁶⁹

Although the ambassadors saw one another almost every day at balls and dinners, formal messages had to be delivered according to protocol. This sense of procedure applied to the news about the arrival of Elbert de Hochepied. Although the ambassador and his family had gotten to Istanbul four days earlier and had already dined with most of the European diplomats in the city, Rigo nonetheless had to make a formal announcement of their arrival. On 14 December 1747 Rigo left the embassy with a cortège to visit the other embassies:

Le dit jour à 11: heures du matin j'ai été mandé en forme publ[ique] auprès des 3: amb[assadeu]rs de france, d'ang[leter]re et de venise pour leur faire la notification

⁶⁶ M. Stensland, *Habsburg Communication in the Dutch Revolt*, Amsterdam, 2012, pp. 21-23, 33-36. See also T. Hill, *Pageantry and Power: A Cultural History of the Early Modern Lord Mayor's Show, 1585-1639*, Manchester, 2010.

⁶⁷ See, for example, G.H. Janssen, ‘Political Ambiguity and Confessional Diversity in the Funeral Processions of Stadholders in the Dutch Republic’, in: *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 40, 2009, pp. 283-301.

⁶⁸ For a comprehensive study of early modern diplomatic ceremonial in the Dutch Republic, see J. Heringa, *De eer en hoogheid van de staat. Over de plaats der Verenigde Nederlanden in het diplomatieke leven van de zeventiende eeuw*, Groningen, 1961; G. Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, London, 1955, reprint 2010; and the diplomatic manual from the seventeenth century by Abraham de Wicquefort: Abraham de Wicquefort, *The Embassador and his Functions. Translated into English by Mr. Digby*, London: Bernard Lintott, 1716. First published as *L'ambassadeur et ses fonctions*, The Hague: Veneur, 1682.

⁶⁹ Diary Rigo, 10 December 1747.

publique de l'arrivée de notre amb[assadeu]r. J'étois precedé de deux janis[sair]es et du frere cadet du drogm[a]n Bragiotti, et suivi de 4: valets de pied en grande livrée.⁷⁰

In his diary, he gave a detailed description of his reception at the various embassies. A deviation from protocol could communicate a change in the relations between nations. The English ambassador made a bad impression on Rigo when he skipped the ceremonial and tried to discuss Rigo's visit to the Russian embassy:

L'amb[assadeu]r. d'Ang[leter]re beaucoup plus cavallier en fait de ceremonies me reçoit, j'ose dire, sans ceremonies. Il me demanda même de quelle manière nous nous conduirions avec le Resid[en]t de Russie; je lui repondis d'un ton décidé et respectueux que mon amb[assadeu]r se conformeroit exactem[en]t au ceremonial accordé entre les ministres: je prevois donc, me repartit-il, qu'il y aura du grabuge. Je lui ai repondu que S[on] E[xcellence] est assumé de pouvoir justifier sa conduite ici et ailleurs.⁷¹

From the diary, it seems that protocol had yet another news-gathering use for Rigo. Conveying official messages on behalf of the Dutch embassy also allowed him to gather intelligence. Delivering the embassy's congratulations, for example, gave him a pretext to enter the other embassies. Inside, he would see who visited a particular diplomatic mission at that time and have a conversation with the ambassador.

Rigo was well aware that ceremonial and appearance were of the highest importance for the reputation of the Dutch in Istanbul. He sometimes reacted strongly when hearing that the Dutch back in the Republic did not always appreciate the importance of keeping up appearances. In October 1746, he received a letter from de Hochepied in which the ambassador announced that he would arrive in Istanbul on a merchant vessel. Rigo responded at some length, using two sheets of paper to dissuade de Hochepied from coming to Istanbul in such a manner. According to Rigo, de Hochepied would immediately lose respect and personal dignity in the eyes of the Ottomans. Even de Hochepied's grandfather, Justinus Colyer, who only had had the rank of resident, had arrived on a warship:

Si vous me permettez monsieur, la liberté de m'expliquer encore plus ouvertement, j'oserau soumettre aux sages reflexions de Votre Excellence l'effet que pourrait produire aujourd'hui surtout à la Porte son arrivée avec un simple Vaisseau Marchand.⁷²

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 14 December 1747.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Jean-Louis Rigo to Elbert de Hochepied, 8 October 1746. NA The Hague. 1.02.20. Inventaris van het archief van de Legatie in Turkije, 1668-1810. 596. Minuten en diverse klasaantekeningen. 1721-1756.



Figure 2. The Diary of Jean-Louis Rigo, 6-7 March 1748

No need to send a whole fleet; a little frigate with forty guns would suffice. The impression de Hocheped would make mattered a great deal, therefore he should organise his arrival with the utmost care ‘si l’on veut que les Ottomans la respectent de Leur Coté.’⁷³ De Hocheped and his family would eventually arrive by carriage.

Patronage networks and news: missionaries and janissaries

Many people in Rigo’s news network belonged to the Latin-rite Christian community of Istanbul. In the eighteenth century, the Catholic Church flourished in the Ottoman capital: the Pope even established a few bishoprics. Furthermore, various Roman Catholic orders such as Jesuits, Capuchins and Franciscans sent their missionaries to the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁴ Since the sultan did not allow the conversion of Muslims, the missionaries’ main targets were Ottoman (Orthodox) Christians and Jews. In December 1747, Rigo received a letter from a Jesuit missionary in Galata, who asked if he could use an assistant. The Archbishop of Naxos had sent him a boy whose fortune Rigo could make, if he would give him a job at the Palais de Hollande. Furthermore, the boy could tell Rigo ‘des nouvelles plus sûre que moi’.⁷⁵

The religious position of the Dutch embassy in Istanbul was complicated. While the French and Austrians presented themselves as protectors of Roman Catholics in the Ottoman Empire, the Dutch defended the Protestant cause in Istanbul, embodied by the Genevan congregation of Protestants from France, Switzerland, Hungary and Transylvania.⁷⁶ Paradoxically, for some years the Dutch also were the protectors of the Franciscan mission, whose main church in Istanbul was Santa Maria Draperis. Their motives were foremost political. Over the course of the seventeenth century, Venice and the Dutch Republic, fearing that missionaries were operating as unofficial envoys for European states, wanted the missionaries to be independent of both Paris and Rome. Because the Franciscan

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ For literature on the Latin and Greek churches in the Ottoman Empire, see C.A. Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans: The Church and the Ottoman Empire 1453-1923*, London, 1983; and S. Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity: A Study of the Patriarchate of Constantinople from the Eve of Turkish Conquest to the Greek War of Independence*, Cambridge, 1988.

⁷⁵ Jesuit Chairoe (?) to Jean-Louis Rigo, 20 december 1747. NA The Hague. 1.02.20. Inventaris van het archief van de Legatie in Turkije, 1668-1810. 594. Brieven van niet te identificeren correspondenten uit Constantinopel, Atra, Cattaro, Tinos, Livorno, Venetië en onbekende plaatsen. See also his correspondence with the Jesuit Albertin, teacher of Rigo’s son Joseph in Marseille. NA The Hague. 1.02.20. Inventaris van het archief van de Legatie in Turkije, 1668-1810. 585 Brieven van Albertin, Jezuïet. 1743-1754.

⁷⁶ Hoenkamp-Mazgon, *Palais de Hollande te Istanbul*, p. 58.

church was close to the Dutch embassy, the Dutch and Venetians agreed that the Netherlands would protect the Franciscans.⁷⁷ In 1740, this arrangement ended and Heinrich Penckler became the new protector on behalf of the Austrians. Although the Dutch Republic had officially ended its patronage of the Franciscans, Rigo remained their intermediary and contact. He corresponded with the procurator of the Franciscans in Rome, who sent him the Pope's new decrees and indulgences. Rigo passed these to the friars with caution, stressing 'toute confiance' while asking them not to mention his name as their source.⁷⁸

The competing Christian missions were a source of trouble for the European embassies. From time to time the Porte had to intervene as a referee among the Christians in the Ottoman Empire. In 1722, for example, the Greek patriarchate, annoyed by the zeal of the Catholic missions, had filed an official complaint against the missionaries. The Porte issued a *ferman*, forbidding Catholics from converting Greek Orthodox Ottomans. The Franciscans often quarrelled with the Jesuits and Capuchins, which were under French protection. Especially at Chios, the animosities were severe. The Franciscan mission on this island, like the mission in Istanbul, had been under Dutch protection from the end of the seventeenth until the middle of the eighteenth century. An alliance of Jesuits and Capuchins (under protection of the French consulate) with the local Greek Orthodox Church had fought the Franciscans. With the help of, among others, Clara de Hocepied-Colyer (the mother of Elbert de Hocepied), the mission was eventually saved. For some decades, the de Hocepied family was the protector of the Chios mission, until here, too, the Austrians took over.⁷⁹

Rigo also remained an important contact for the Franciscan mission on the Greek islands. His position in the world of Istanbul diplomacy was a great asset to them: he spent a great deal of time at other embassies and often was the first

⁷⁷ In 1691, Tomasso Tarsia, first *dragoman* of the Venetian embassy and uncle of one of Rigo's sisters-in-law, bought the church. J. van Droffelaar, "Flemish Fathers" in the Levant: Dutch Protection of Three Franciscan Missions in the 17th and 18th centuries', in: Van Gelder and de Moor, *Eastward Bound* (as in n. 37), pp. 81-113 (99).

⁷⁸ Diary Rigo, 11 January 1748.

⁷⁹ It seems strange that the de Hocepieds took over the protection of the mission, as Daniël Jan de Hocepied (Elbert's father) was widely known to be a committed Protestant. When one of his daughters secretly married the Roman Catholic French consul of Izmir, he wrote to the Estates-General stating how much he deplored this marriage. He declared that he had done everything possible to prevent her surrender to the 'tyranny of the Church of Rome'. According to Donald Haks, however, he wanted to protect his and his sons' reputations among the regents in the Dutch Republic. D. Haks, 'De consul, de dochter en de eer van de staat. Smirna 1712', in: E.C. Dijkhof, M.J. van Gent and J.G. Smit, eds, *Uit diverse bronnen gelicht. Opstellen aangeboden aan Hans Smit ter gelegenheid van zijn vijfenzestigste verjaardag*, The Hague, 2007, pp. 107-116; Droffelaar, "Flemish Fathers" (as in n. 77), pp. 112-113.

to hear important news. At the end of May 1748, he learned that the French ambassador had gone to the Porte to ask permission for the demolition of a Greek church at Tinos. In revenge, the Greeks lobbied for the destruction of a Franciscan church, Saint Nicolas at Tinos. After hearing this news, Rigo immediately went to the priests of the Santa Maria Draperis to bring them the news:

j'ai été à Ste Marie pour en donner connaissance à nos P.P. qui ignoroient le cas; mais qui se plaignent fort d'un Papas Grec étranger surnommé Dascalas, qui y est un ennemi cruel et déclaré de l'Eglise Latine; et ils font des voeux ardans pour obtenir son expédition de cette île là. J'ai promis de le faire recommandé duement à la maison de feu Emir Mohammed Agha qui possède cette Isle.⁸⁰

The Franciscans recognised how much Rigo did for them. According to the church registers of Santa Maria Draperis, Rigo was ‘buried in the church of our parish, wearing an angelic habit, just as he requested, for he was used to the cord of the [Franciscan] order.’⁸¹

Rigo also had a patron-client relationship with the janissaries who were appointed to protect the members of the embassy staff and deliver messages.⁸² Technically, the janissaries fell under the protectorate of the embassy: they were listed on the embassy payroll and enjoyed tax privileges.⁸³ Scholars often mention that their fellow Muslims called them swineherds, because they worked with non-Muslims.⁸⁴ However, such stigma did not diminish the appeal of the job: many janissaries were happy to volunteer.

For centuries, janissaries had been an elite corps of slaves; formed by the *devşirme*, a practice that involved taking young boys from Christian families in the Ottoman Empire, isolating them, converting them to Islam and training them to be soldiers or servants. In the eighteenth century, this practice had changed: janissaries in this period were even allowed to marry and have families.⁸⁵ Rigo’s correspondence shows that whole families entered the service of foreign embassies. In a letter to de Hochepied, Rigo recommended that the ambassador reappoint

⁸⁰ Diary Rigo, 29 May 1748.

⁸¹ Church register of the Santa Maria Draperis, 6 May 1756: ‘sepultus fuit in nostra parochiali ecclesia cum habitu seraphico prout petit, cum suevit sertis ordinis’.

⁸² For an analysis of patron-client relationships, see, for example, M. Keblusek, ‘Introduction: Profiling the Early Modern Agent’, in: H. Cools, M. Keblusek and B. Noldus, eds, *Your Humble Servant: Agents in Early Modern Europe*, Hilversum, 2006, pp. 9-25.

⁸³ Van den Boogert, *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System*, p. 64.

⁸⁴ See, for example, Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople* (as in n. 34), p. 39; A.C. Wood, ‘The English Embassy at Constantinople, 1660-1762’, in: *The English Historical Review*, vol. 40, 1925, pp. 533-561 (540).

⁸⁵ Mansel, *Constantinople*, p. 223.

‘our old janissary Tekirdagli Mustafa Bacha, and his son-in-law Abdi Bacha as well’. Much to Rigo’s satisfaction, de Hochepied adopted his advice, and Rigo thanked him accordingly: ‘Je reconnois avec reconnaissance, Monseigneur, l’honneur qu’il vous a plu de faire à ma recommandation’.⁸⁶ He also recommended to de Hochepied a certain Tribouktci Mustafa Bacha, who had previously been a janissary at the palace; Rigo said that he had known the janissary for a very long time.⁸⁷ Consequently, all janissary guards who worked at the Dutch embassy in 1748 owed their jobs to Rigo’s mediation. Their networks consisted of other social groups in Ottoman society than the missionaries, thus enlarging Rigo’s circle of news sources. They also had access to news from other areas. For the latest news from Persia, for example, Rigo mentions Hodgia (language teacher) Mustafa Effendi, who came by to tell the latest news on the relations between the Porte and the Shah:

Le dit jour notre Hodgea Must[afa] Eff[endi] a assuré a S[on] E[xcellence] que le nouveau Schah de Perse neveu de feu Schah Nadir cy devant nommé Ali Khan, et qui se fait appeler aujourd’hui Rouk Adil Schah trouvant qu’il devoit pouvoir à sa sureté interieure par celle du dehors, auroit resolu de ratifier le der[nier] traité de Paix conclu avec la Porte, et de lui envoyer la même ambassade qui avoit été designée par son Pred[ecesseu]r [...]. Il est pourtant naturel de croire que l’ancien Instrument sera changé par la suppression de l’article qui regardoit la recognition de la succession à la couronne de Perse dans la descendance du feu Schah Nadir.⁸⁸

Rumour and ‘fact checking’

Since Rigo had so many news sources at his disposal, he was also able to compare their information. He often checked news he had received with what had been given to another acquaintance or compared various sources. Istanbul, and especially the embassy quarter, was a city in which rumour flourished. All day long merchant ships arrived in the port, while diplomatic delegations from Europe, Africa and Asia regularly visited the Ottoman court. Rigo often writes about ‘un bruict qui a couru par tout Pera’. In historiography on early modern news and public opinion, rumour is often used as a weapon by political groups trying to discredit their opponents or weaken their morale by spreading false messages. At the same time, contemporaries became aware of the power of rumour and learned to check news against other sources. In letters, authors often asked

⁸⁶ Jean-Louis Rigo to Elbert de Hochepied, 17 November 1747. NA The Hague. 1.02.20. Inventaris van het archief van de Legatie in Turkije, 1668-1810. 596. Minuten en diverse klasaantekeningen. 1721-1756.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Diary Rigo, 8 January 1748.

their correspondents to confirm or deny certain facts.⁸⁹ In early November 1747, for example, in Pera rumours spread about a revolt in ‘Andrianople’ (Edirne):

Le dit jour il court icy un bruict qu'il seroit éllevé une sedition populaire dans And[riano]ple, et que l'Agha des Janiss[air]es ou le Bost[anci] b[ashi] qui y commande auroit été mis à mort. Si ce bruict est fondé, on ne tardera point à en apprendre la cause, les circonstances et les suites.⁹⁰

Two days later, Rigo still did not know what to believe. He checked the news with the first *dragoman* Carlo Caratza, who had not heard anything about the revolt. As Rigo considered Caratza a well-informed man, he concluded that the rumour had to be untrue:

Le dit jour nôtre pre[mier] drog[ma]n m'a communiqué le commandement et la lettre de recommandation de la Porte pour nous servir au Comte d'Hoch[epied] et à moy dans notre prochain voyage pour And[riano]ple, à la rencontre de notre amb[assadeu]r. Ce drogman ignora absolument ce qui s'etoit bruité icy de la sedition à And[riano]ple, ce qui me fait conclure que ç'a été un compte fait à plaisir.⁹¹

Sometimes his acquaintances tried deliberately to feed him misinformation; Rigo was proud when he discovered that they had tried to fool him:

Le dit jour j'ai diné avec le comte d'Hochepied chez le tres[orie]r Meyer, où s'est aussi rendu M. Chevrier lequel m'a dit que la Fregate Nap[olitai]ne(?) croisoit dans ces mers. Le susdit comte m'a communiqué un faux rapport qu'en M. Rom[bouts] venoit de lui faire: et que j'ai d'abord reconnu et receu comme un conte bleu qui avoit été fait bellem[en]t pour lui en imposer, et a moy par lui: mais il est vrai de dire que tout le ridicule de cette sottise a tourné sur ceux qui en avoient été les auteurs.⁹²

⁸⁹ Historians have especially looked at the relation between rumour and war. One of the most famous essays on this subject is Marc Bloch's study of ‘fausse nouvelles’ during World War I: M. Bloch, *Réflexions d'un historien sur les fausses nouvelles de la guerre*, Paris, 1999 (first published in *Revue de synthèse historique* in 1921). Also see a recent French conference volume in which various historians look at rumours during the French Wars of Religion: J. Foa and P.-A. Mellet, eds, *Le bruit des armes. Mises en formes et désinformations en Europe pendant les Guerres de religion (1560-1610)*, Paris, 2012. A historical event in which rumour played a major role is the defeat of the Armada in 1588. See, for example, B. Dooley, ‘Sources and Methods in Information History: The Case of Medici Florence, the Armada, and the Siege of Ostende’, in: J. Koopmans, ed., *News and Politics in Early-Modern Europe*, Louvain, 2005, pp. 31-46. For an analysis of the process of corroboration of rumours, see H. van Nierop, “And Ye Shall Hear of Wars and Rumours of Wars”: Rumour and the Revolt of the Netherlands’, in: J. Pollmann and A. Spicer, eds, *Public Opinion and Changing Identities in the Early Modern Netherlands: Essays in Honour of Alastair Duke*, Leiden, 2007, pp. 69-86.

⁹⁰ Diary Rigo, 9 November 1747.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 11 November 1747.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 6 November 1747.

Being knowledgeable was a part of Rigo's identity. Over the course of his decades of service for ambassadors Jacobus Colyer, Cornelis Calkoen and Elbert de Hoche pied, he made it his business to be informed. In these years, he built up more than thirty years of experience in Ottoman diplomacy. He invested in his networks and had developed a critical eye towards false news and lies. As well as being a Levantine, the secretary of the Dutch embassy and a member of the Dutch nation, he considered himself an information expert, and of this he was clearly proud.

Conclusion

With the new focus on cultural and social aspects of diplomacy within New Diplomatic History, the study of ego-documents has become essential. In contrast to official diplomatic messages and memoranda, the diary of Jean-Louis Rigo gives insight into informal daily diplomacy – the practices behind the scenes. It especially demonstrates how the Dutch embassy in Istanbul in the eighteenth century depended largely on local patronage networks for news. These contacts were drawn from various groups within Ottoman society, ranging from Levantine merchants and Catholic missionaries to janissaries. In the gathering of news, Rigo's wife Clara played an important role as well. While visiting the harems, not only did she hear the latest news, but she was also an unofficial envoy who conveyed news from the Dutch embassy to Ottoman ministers. Scholars have neglected Jean-Louis Rigo's role in Ottoman diplomacy, and Clara, too, has certainly been overlooked. A closer study of Clara's position at the embassy can also contribute to a better understanding of the position of Levantine women in Ottoman society.

There are other aspects of the diary that are worth more in-depth study. First, it offers wonderful insights into the mentality of a talented agent and intermediary. Among his friends and other contacts, Rigo counted Catholics, Protestants, Jews and Muslims. He spoke many languages and was knowledgeable about traditions and rituals within various cultures, noting down Jewish, Muslim and Christian holy days in his diary. At the same time, he maintained a close friendship with the well-known libertine Ahmed Pasha de Bonneval, a man who mocked religious traditions. Second, within the recent scholarly interest in trans-imperial subjects, Rigo's case can be illuminating. His professional loyalties lay with the Dutch Republic, even though he had only visited there two or three times in his entire life. In his diary, he commiserated over Dutch defeats and rejoiced at triumphs. Yet he was also an Ottoman subject with many Levantine relations, who in turn were more oriented towards southern Europe. Rigo himself sent his son to school in Marseille.

Finally, Rigo's diary presents an interesting case for debates on concepts of nation and identity. In eighteenth-century Istanbul the concept of 'nation' applied mainly to the legal construction of the group of merchants and protégés who were under the protection of a foreign ambassador. The diary shows the difficulties of determining a person's country of origin in Istanbul, as many protégés were multilingual and moved easily between nations. In the middle of the eighteenth century this open atmosphere in Galata and Pera clashed with the rise of nationalistic feelings in Europe. Therefore, in its description of the everyday situation in Istanbul in nearly thirty years' worth of notes, Rigo's diary can shed new light on our understanding of life, diplomacy and cross-cultural contacts in eighteenth-century Istanbul.

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