

Special Section

Introduction:

Contacts, Encounters, Practices:

Ottoman-European Diplomacy, 1500-1800

Michael Talbot & Phil McCluskey***

On 24 June 2014, a small group of doctoral students and early career researchers met at the University of St Andrews to discuss ideas of contacts, encounters, and practices between the Ottoman Empire and European states between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.¹ The east coast of Scotland may not seem the most obvious location for a workshop on Ottoman-European diplomacy – Scotland as an independent kingdom never sent ambassadors to Istanbul, and only in the later nineteenth century do we find local Scottish businessmen acting as Ottoman consuls in Edinburgh and Glasgow to protect the interests of Ottoman commercial shipping in the docks on Clydebank and Tayside – but the beautiful surroundings of the oldest of Scotland’s ancient universities, which celebrated its 800th anniversary in 2013, and the surprisingly sunny and warm weather, helped the conversations to flow. The fruits of this workshop are presented in the following five papers, each of which examines Ottoman-European diplomacy in the early modern period from a different empirical and methodological base from archival sources and the increasingly rich scholarship in Ottoman studies,

* University of Greenwich

** University of Hull

1 We would like to express our gratitude to the School of History at the University of St Andrews, the Department of History at the University of Sheffield, the Society for the Study of French History, and the Royal Historical Society for their generous support of this workshop. We would also like to thank Caleb Karges, Ninal Lamal, and John Condren for their probing questions and helpful comments, and are very grateful to Dr Condren for writing up a thorough conference report, available via ottomaneuropeandiplomacy.blogspot.co.uk/p/conference-report.html. We would also like to thank the editorial board of *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* for the opportunity to present these papers as a coherent group within this issue of the journal.

and which, in their sum, demonstrate the variety and vibrancy of the field of Ottoman-European encounters.

The historiography of Ottoman-European diplomacy is increasingly wide-ranging, with much of its focus on questions of international politics, particularly from the later eighteenth century when the Ottoman Empire began to dispatch regular resident ambassadors to foreign capitals.² Pivotal moments in Ottoman-European relations, notably the peace treaties of Carlowitz in 1699 and Passarowitz in 1718, have provided a chronological structure that emphasises different periods of interaction, adding nuance to the so-called ad-hoc period of diplomacy to demonstrate a variety of changing patterns of diplomatic practices.³ Given the central role of commerce in Ottoman-European relations throughout the early modern period, particularly with the northern European states, studies on diplomacy often take a commercial approach, through the Capitulations and through commercial disputes.⁴ Increasingly, historians have focused on the rhetoric and

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- 2 For instance: J.C. Hurewitz, 'Ottoman diplomacy and the European state system', *Middle East Journal* 15 (1961), 141-152; J.C. Hurewitz, 'The Europeanisation of Ottoman diplomacy: The conversion from unilateralism to reciprocity in the nineteenth century', *Bellesten* 25 (1961), 455-466; Thomas Naff, 'Reform and the conduct of Ottoman diplomacy in the reign of Selim III, 1789-1807', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 83 (1963), 295-315; Gilles Veinstein, 'Les fondements juridiques de la diplomatie ottomane en Europe', *Oriente Moderno* 88:2 (2008), 509-522; Ercüment Kuran, *Avrupa'da Osmanlı İkamet Elçiliklerinin Kuruluşu İlk Elçilerin Siyasi Faaliyetleri* (Ankara, 1968); Onur Kınılı, *Osmanlı'da Modernleşme ve Diploması* (Ankara, 2006); Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, 'The adoption and use of permanent diplomacy' in *Ottoman Diplomacy: Conventional or Unconventional?*, ed. A. Nuri Yurdusev (Basingstoke & New York, 2004), 131-150.
- 3 Rifaat Ali Abou-El-Haj, 'Ottoman diplomacy at Karlowitz', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 87 (1967), 498-512; Rifaat Ali Abou-El-Haj, 'The formal closure of the Ottoman frontier in Europe, 1699-1703', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 89 (1969), 467-475; Charles Ingraio, Nikola Samardžić & Jovan Pečalj (eds.), *The Peace of Passarowitz, 1718* (Indiana, 2011). On the idea of ad-hoc diplomacy: Bülent Arı, 'Early Ottoman diplomacy: Ad Hoc Period' in *Ottoman Diplomacy*, ed. Yurdusev, 36-65; Virginia Aksan, 'Ottoman-French relations, 1739-1768' in *Studies on Ottoman Diplomatic History*, ed. Sinan Kunalalp (Istanbul, 1987), 41-58.
- 4 Maurits van den Boogert, *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System: Qadis, Consuls, and Beratlis in the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden, 2005); Ali İhsan Bağış, *Osmanlı Ticaretinde Gayri Müslimler Kapitülasyonlar: Beratlı Tüccarlar Avrupa ve Hayriye Tüccarları, 1750-1839* (Ankara, 1983); Daniel Goffman, 'The Capitulations and the question of authority in Levantine trade', *Journal of Turkish Studies* 10 (1986), 155-161; Alistair Hamilton, Alexander de Groot & Maurits van den Boogert (eds.), *Friends and Rivals in the East; Studies in Anglo-Dutch Relations in the Levant from the Seventeenth to the Early Nineteenth Century* (Leiden, 2000); Suraiya Faruqi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It* (London & New York, 2004).

practice of relations throughout Ottoman history, producing in sum a rich body of scholarship upon which emerging Ottomanists can build their research.⁵ Beyond the ever-growing body of case-studies and examples, comparative studies of diplomatic aims, practices, and ideologies, both within the Ottoman context and beyond, will help us even further in making sense of the mass of evidence in European and Ottoman archives regarding diplomatic activities.⁶ Moreover, by acknowledging the importance of what has been termed “new” diplomatic histories – that is, a methodology that scrutinises diplomatic interactions using a variety of (often interdisciplinary) analytical frameworks – but not dismissing more state-centred scholarship, the study of Ottoman diplomacy is moving away from ideas of Ottoman or European exceptionalism, typified in the question of “conventional or unconventional” practices or ideas posed in A. Nuri Yurdusev’s edited volume on the subject, and towards more integrative and comparative approaches.⁷

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- 5 Gülrü Necipoğlu, ‘Süleyman the Magnificent and the representation of power in the context of Ottoman-Hapsburg-Papal rivalry’, *The Art Bulletin* 71 (1989), 401-427; Konrad Dilger, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des osmanischen Hofzeremoniells im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert* (München, 1967); Güneş Işıksel, ‘Les méandres d’une pratique peu institutionnalisée: La diplomatie ottomane, XVe-XVIIIe siècle’, *Monde(s)* 5:1 (2014), 43-55; Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, ‘Polish embassies in Istanbul: Or, how to sponge on your host without losing your self-esteem’ in *The Illuminated Table, the Prosperous House: Food and Shelter in Ottoman Material Culture*, eds. Suraiya Faroqhi & Christoph K. Neumann (Würzburg, 2003), 51-58; Karin Åhdal (ed.), *The Sultan’s Procession: The Swedish Embassy to Sultan Mehmed IV in 1657-1658 and the Rålamb Paintings* (Istanbul, 2006); Christine Isom-Verhaaren, *Allies with the Infidel: The Ottoman and French Alliance in the Sixteenth Century* (London & New York, 2011).
- 6 In her study on sixteenth-century Ottoman power and diplomacy, Palmira Brummett suggested that a focus on the Ottomans’ eastern borders would greatly advance our understanding of their global outlook and diplomatic mechanisms, and recent studies have certainly borne this out. Palmira Brummett, *Ottoman Seapower and Levantine Diplomacy in the Age of Discovery* (Albany, 1994), 10. See, for example: A.C.S. Peacock, ‘Introduction: The Ottoman Empire and its frontiers’ in *The Frontiers of the Ottoman World* (Oxford, 2009), 1-27; A.C.S. Peacock & Annabel Teh Gallop (eds.), *From Anatolia to Aceh: Ottomans, Turks and Southeast Asia* (Oxford, 2015); Cihan Yüksel Muslu, *The Ottomans and the Mamluks: Imperial Diplomacy and Warfare in the Islamic World* (London & New York, 2014).
- 7 John Watkins, ‘Toward a new diplomatic history of medieval and early modern Europe’, *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38:1 (2008), 1-14; Stephen Pelz, ‘Towards a new diplomatic history: Two and a half cheers for international relations methods’, in *Bridges and Boundaries: Historians, Political Scientists, and the Study of International Relations*, eds. Colin Elman & Miriam Fendius Elman (Cambridge MA, 2001), 85-110; A. Nuri Yurdusev (ed.), *Ottoman Diplomacy: Conventional or Unconventional?* (Basingstoke & New York, 2004).

The St Andrews workshop was not, therefore, conjured from the ether, but aimed to build on historiographical trends in Ottoman studies and in the wider field of diplomatic history by showcasing the approaches and sources of emerging scholars. In formulating the intellectual rationale for this workshop, we were particularly concerned with the tensions between embassies as instruments of the state (with the ambassador as its personification), and ambassadors as individuals with their own networks, ideas, and agency. To borrow Daniela Frigo's framework: diplomacy in the early modern period was not an abstract *institution* but an *institutio*, a set of specific functions and roles.⁸ As part of this, we wanted to think critically about the sorts of sources that are available for the study of Ottoman-European diplomacy in the archives in Istanbul and beyond, and, more importantly, what different facets of diplomatic practice could be reconstructed. In particular, we hoped that the workshop would provide a comparative perspective on what Frigo called 'the social and institutional aspects of diplomatic practice'.⁹ From this, the three major analytical categories were developed: *contacts* consist of the correspondence and daily interactions between Ottoman and European actors, as well as the individuals that comprised their networks; the spaces of diplomatic interaction form Ottoman-European *encounters*, from the tentative delegations of the earliest relations to more regular meetings in embassies, courts, and borders; and *practices* refer to the daily functioning of embassies, from salaries to ceremonial to forms of address and writing. Analysing these categories requires individual case studies, and the papers that follow, ranging from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, and covering Ottoman relations with Venice, France, Britain, and Prussia, all provide examples based from a variety of Ottoman and European sources.

Emrah Safa Gürkan's examination of the Venetian *renegado* Uluc Hasan in the later sixteenth century and his relationship with the Venetian *baili* in Istanbul uses sources from the Venetian archives to provide a compelling narrative of their contacts and interactions, particularly when it came to securing and providing information, a key role of any early modern diplomat, and one that deserves further comparative consideration in the Ottoman context.¹⁰ Practices of knowl-

8 Daniela Frigo, 'Prudence and experience: Ambassadors and political cultures in early modern Italy', *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38:1 (2008), 35-55.

9 Daniela Frigo, 'Introduction' in *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy: The Structure of Diplomatic Practice, 1450-1800*, ed. Daniela Frigo, trans. Adrian Belton (Cambridge, 2000), 1-24 at 12.

10 Some fairly recent examples include: Emrah Safa Gürkan, 'Espionage in the sixteenth century Mediterranean: Secret diplomacy, Mediterranean go-betweens, and the Ottoman-Habsburg

edge transmission through encounters and contacts are explored further in Lela Gibson's study of the journey of the *Kâbusnâme* (Mirror of Princes) from Istanbul to Berlin via the Prussian diplomat Heinrich von Diez, beautifully demonstrating how the intelligence gathering by ambassadors sought out intellectual as well as political capital.¹¹ More than this, the transfer of such an important Ottoman political text to the Prussian milieu was indicative of closer political ties resulting from stronger Ottoman-Prussian relations. Moving from Berlin to Paris, Phil McCluskey considers the embassy of Müteferrika Süleyman Ağa to the court of Louis XIV in 1669 from the perspective of the French archival sources concerning the practices of this particular diplomatic encounter.¹² In seeking to critically reconstruct this delegation, it is possible to get a sense of the tensions arising from the encounters between the king and the envoy as individuals and as personifications of their respective states; it also demonstrates how ideas of court practices could clash. Similar forms of court practices of ambassadorial embassies and gift-giving are examined in Michael Talbot's critical analysis of the Ottoman text of the British Capitulations granted by Sultan İbrahim in 1641. Looking around the articles governing trade and consular jurisdiction, the treaty reveals a historical narrative that expressed Ottoman hierarchies of power through relating earlier encounters, but also codified ideas of friendship and gifting through a narrative of practices. Last, but certainly not least, Irena Fliter examines one of the most important but understudied elements of diplomatic practice: ambassadorial pay.¹³ In particu-

rivalry', Ph.D. Dissertation, Georgetown University, 2012; Gábor Ágoston, 'Information, ideology, and limits of imperial policy: Ottoman grand strategy in the context of Ottoman-Habsburg rivalry' in *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire*, eds. Virginia Aksan & Daniel Goffman (Cambridge, 2007), 75-103; Dror Ze'evi, 'Ottoman intelligence gathering during Napoleon's invasion of Egypt and Palestine' in *The Ottoman Middle East: Studies in Honor of Amnon Cohen*, eds. Eyal Ginio & Elie Podeh (Brill, 2014), 45-54, especially 47-50; Metin Ziya Köse, *Doğu Akdeniz'de Casuslar ve Tacirler: Osmanlı Devleti ve Dubrovnik İlişkileri, 1500-1600* (İstanbul, 2009).

11 On the *kâbusnâme* in general and in comparison, see: Linda Darling, 'Mirrors for Princes in Europe and the Middle East: A case of historiographical incommensurability', in *East Meets West in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Transcultural Experiences in the Premodern World*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin, 2013), 223-242.

12 There is a much-disputed travel account of this embassy: Süleyman Ağa, *Süleyman Ağa Seyahatnamesi*, ed. Gündüz Akıncı (Ankara, 1973). See: İbrahim Şirin, *Osmanlı İmgeleminde Avrupa* (Anara, 2006), 144-160.

13 Hacer Topaktaş, 'Osmanlı diplomasisinde "tayinat" sisteminin uygulanışı ve kaldırılışı (1794) üzerine bazı tespitler', *Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi* 10:1 (2015), 31-49.

lar, by examining the debts accrued by the Ottoman ambassador Mehmed Esad Efendi at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Fliter reveals the importance of regular and accountable finance to the professionalisation or bureaucratisation of diplomacy; the financial records also shed light on a variety of diplomatic practices and contacts that would otherwise be unknown.

Some of the key themes that emerged at the workshop are further borne out in the papers presented here. One idea that emerged again and again in our discussions was that of language. The use of language, obvious though it may seem, was at the heart of diplomatic interactions. The linguistic role of the ambassador and his translators was crucial in shaping relations and their practices.¹⁴ All of the sources examined here, from the reports of the Venetian *baili* to the correspondence of the French ambassadors to the financial records of the Ottoman and Prussian ambassadors to the translations of Capitulations and political texts, have been mediated through translation or reported speech. With Ottoman texts, be they *ahdnames*, *mühimmes*, or archival *evrak*, accurate translation and comprehension of often dense language – not always an easy task, particularly given the sometimes near impenetrable scrawl of long-dead *yazıcı*s – is absolutely central to making sense of the Ottoman side of the story.¹⁵ This is particularly important given the mistranslation or wilful reinterpretation of Ottoman terms or ideas by contemporary dragomans and ambassadors. By examining Ottoman texts in conjunction with European sources, archival and printed, our understanding of the Ottoman perspective can be enhanced, and a more rounded picture of diplomacy can be produced. Moreover, sometimes the European versions are all the evidence that survive of certain embassies or practices, requiring an extra-special effort of contextualisation.

Linked to language, the second key theme that emerged was one of identity. This is not simply the question of who or what was Ottoman or non-Ottoman

14 E. Natalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca & London, 2012), especially 165-188; Maurits van den Boogert, 'Intermediaries par excellence? Ottoman dragomans in the eighteenth century' in *Hommes de l'entre-deux: Parcours individuels et portraits de groupes sur la frontière de la Méditerranée, XVIe-XXe siècle*, eds. Bernard Heyberger & Chantal Verdeil (Paris, 2009), 95-116; Emrah Safa Gürkan, 'Mediating boundaries: Mediterranean go-betweens and cross-confessional diplomacy in Constantinople, 1560-1600', *Journal of Early Modern History* 19 (2015), 107-128; G.R. Berridge, 'Dragomans and Oriental Secretaries in the British embassy in Istanbul' in *Ottoman Diplomacy*, ed. Yurdusev, 151-166.

15 Virginia Aksan & Daniel Goffman, 'Introduction: Situating the early modern Ottoman world' in *Early Modern Ottomans*, eds. Aksan & Goffman, 1-12 at 9.

– although this is an extremely important question in the context of Ottoman relations with the wider world – but rather who was an ambassador or diplomat. Aside from the *sefirs*, *elçis*, *baili*, and other *ambassadeurs* who held official credentials, a whole variety of historical actors engaged in diplomatic practices and shaped diplomatic contacts and encounters, from naval captains and generals to poets to humble scribes and not-so-humble translators. Moreover, through diplomatic actors possessing multiple identities, diplomatic practices in the Ottoman Empire were often polysemic in nature, a feature greatly helped by ambiguities of language and translation. Certainly, key diplomatic roles such as formally representing the monarch and delivering royal or imperial letters and gifts were the prerogative of certain kinds of diplomat, but so much more was going on in Ottoman-European diplomacy at a number of political and social levels that might be classed as *diplomacy*.

One thing that the workshop's participants did not attempt to do was to provide a comprehensive definition of what diplomacy was or meant in the early modern Ottoman context. If we take Yurdusev's definition that it was 'the conduct of relations between states and other entities with standing in world politics by official agents and by peaceful means', then there are certain elements that our papers support, and other elements that might not fit so well.¹⁶ The various ways in which relations were conducted, recorded, and reported were not always by official agents, and the question of world politics was not always at the forefront of diplomatic concerns. Moreover, this definition perhaps makes the assumption that both parties saw themselves on an equal footing, and that the goal of diplomatic interactions, beyond the basic premise of maintaining peace, was the same. By not taking into account commercial, intellectual, financial, rhetorical, or personal interests, large segments of the stories presented here would not fit into this framework. In part, this is because diplomacy, not being a word really in use before the nineteenth century, is ahistorical for much of what we are dealing with. As such, we should perhaps think not in terms of Ottoman-European diplomacy, but rather in terms of Ottoman-European negotiations. The eighteenth-century French diplomat and writer, François de Callières, spoke not of diplomacy, but of the manner of negotiating with sovereigns (*de la manière de negocier avec les souverains*), a phrase translated into English in the early twentieth

16 A. Nuri Yurdusev, 'The Ottoman attitude toward diplomacy' in *Ottoman Diplomacy*, ed. Yurdusev, 5-35 at 10.

century as ‘the practice of diplomacy’.¹⁷ De Callières’s opening statement might well suit our cases better:

The art of negotiating with sovereigns is so important, that the fortune of the greatest states often depends on the good or bad conduct and on the level of capacity of the negotiators that are so employed, so that princes and their principal ministers cannot examine with too great a care the natural and acquired qualities of the subjects that they send into foreign countries in order to maintain a good correspondence with their masters, to make there treaties of peace, of alliance, of commerce, and of other kinds, to impede those that other powers might conclude there to the prejudice of their prince, and generally to take care of all the interests that they can manage there in the different junctures that may present themselves.¹⁸

The Ottoman and European diplomats engaged in Ottoman-European relations were nothing if not negotiators. As well as negotiating the practices and products of high politics – the treaties, the alliances, and the all-important notion of friendship – they negotiated identities, ideas, languages, finances, and many other features of diplomacy in practice. And if we take a common Ottoman equivalent, *mükâleme*, then the negotiation becomes a kind of dialogue between the two parties, Ottoman and non-Ottoman, resulting in a rich variety of contacts and practices.¹⁹ Much work remains to be done on Ottoman-European diplomacy, from both Ottoman and European sources, but it is hoped that the following papers will play some role in helping to further our understandings.

17 François de Callières, *De la maniere de negocier avec les souverains* (Amsterdam, 1716); François de Callières, *The Practice of Diplomacy*, trans. A.F. Whyte (London, 1919).

18 De Callières, *De la maniere de negocier*, 1-2. ‘L’Art de negocier avec les Souverains est si important, que la fortune des plus grands Etats dépend souent de la bonne ou de la mauvaise conduite et du degré de capacité des Negociateurs qu’on y employe, ainsi les Princes et leurs principaux Ministres ne peuvent examiner avec trop de soin les qualitez naturelles et acquises des sujets qu’ils envoient dans les Pays Etrangers pour y entretenir une bonne correspondance avec leurs Maîtres, pour y faire des Traitez de Paix, d’Alliances, de Commerce et d’autres especes, pour empêcher ceux que les autres Puissances pouroient y conclure au préjudice de leur Prince, et generalement pour prendre soin de tous les interêts qu’on y peut menager dans les diverses conjonctures qui se presentent.’

19 For an example of the use of *mükâleme* in a diplomatic context, specifically on the negotiations of the Treaty of Belgrade in 1739, see: Mustafa Sami Efendi, Hüseyin Şakir Efendi & Subhi Mehmed Efendi *Tārīḫ-i Sāmī ve Şakir ve Su’bhi* (Kostantiniye, 1198 [1783]), especially 90-112.