

## *On Gifts and Friendship: Polish-Lithuanian Ambassadors and Gift Exchanges in Istanbul and Iași*

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In October 1622, the inhabitants of the Moldavian capital of Iași were able to witness an uncommonly lavish and solemn event, as the Polish-Lithuanian grand embassy, led by Prince Krzysztof Zbaraski, passed through the town and was received by the incumbent voyvode, Ștefan Tomșa II (r. 1611–15, 1621–3). Iași was not the final destination for the envoy, whose main task was to secure a new *‘abdname* from the sultan, following the full-scale war that had taken place the previous year.<sup>1</sup> Although merely a waypoint en route to Istanbul, Zbaraski’s stay in Iași was nonetheless important; sandwiched between the two East European great powers, the Moldavian principality was a contested territory between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Sublime Porte, both of which claimed suzerain rights over the local ruler.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, there was no love lost between Ștefan Tomșa II and Poland-Lithuania: throughout his reign in the principality, the voyvode gained notoriety as a sworn enemy of the Commonwealth, cracking down on pro-Polish members of the Moldavian elite, aligning himself with ‘hawks’ within the Ottoman establishment and assisting Tatar raiders in predatory expeditions in the borderlands.<sup>3</sup> In fact, one of the priorities for Zbaraski was to secure the voyvode’s removal from the throne and his replacement with a more amiable candidate. Thus, it was to be expected that tensions would flare up and the ceremonies would transform into a contest of one-upmanship between the ambassador and the voyvode. According to a later account by Miron Costin, the quarrel culminated with Tomșa calling the departing Zbaraski a ‘Polish dog’;<sup>4</sup> returning from his mission in Istanbul, the latter would not tempt fate and took a longer route across Transylvania.

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<sup>1</sup> On this conflict and Zbaraski’s mission, see LESZEK PODHORODECKI and NOJ RASZBA, *Wojna chocimska 1621 roku* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1979); DARIUSZ MILEWSKI, ‘Polskie oczekiwania i polityka wobec obsady tronu moldawskiego w okresie pochocimskim 1621-1624,’ *Saeculum Christianum* 20 (2013): 99–108.

<sup>2</sup> ILONA CZAMAŃSKA, ‘Moldawia i Wołoszczyzna w stosunkach polsko-tureckich XV-XVII wieku,’ *Balkanica Posnaniensia* 4 (1989): 301–12; VENIAMIN CIOBANU, *Politică și diplomatie în secolul al XVII-lea. Țările române în raporturile polono-otomano-habsburgice (1601-1634)* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> VICTOR OSTAPCHUK, ‘The Ottoman Black Sea Frontier and the Relations of the Porte with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Muscovy, 1622-1628’ (PhD diss., Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, 1989), 4–8; DARIUSZ KOŁODZIEJCZYK, ‘Slave Hunting and Slave Redemption as a Business Enterprise. The Northern Black Sea Region in the Sixteenth to Seventeenth Centuries,’ *Oriente Moderno* 86, no. 1 (2006): 149–59.

<sup>4</sup> MIRON COSTIN, *Opere*, ed. Petre P. Panaitescu (Bucharest: Editura Academiei RPR, 1958), 89.

This was by no means the only controversy in which Zbaraski was involved during his mission. The Porte's officials were taken aback both by the size of the ambassador's entourage, which some allegedly joked was too large for an embassy, but too small an army to conquer the city, as well as the haughty behaviour of the ambassador and his challenges to the norms of Ottoman court ceremonial. Most notoriously, Zbaraski caused an uproar by galloping his horse through the first two courtyards of the Topkapı Palace before being forced to dismount next to the Divan chamber. While accounts of the diplomat's clashes with his hosts abound, the prince was by no means unique in this respect; reports from other embassies in the course of the seventeenth century similarly include moments of high drama, where the honour and dignity of the ambassador and – by extension, the Polish crown – was at stake. Even though none of the Polish-Lithuanian envoys did cause a scandal by punching an imperial *kapıcı*, as French ambassador Charles de Ferriol would do in January 1700,<sup>5</sup> the issue of honour, prestige and diplomatic status were ever present on the minds of Polish-Lithuanian ambassadors to the Sublime Porte, both in Istanbul and in Iași.

The frequently dramatic and emotionally charged episodes that proliferated throughout the seventeenth century were by no means incidental; instead, they bear witness to the importance and complexity of Polish-Ottoman and Polish-Moldavian relations in this period. For the Commonwealth, the relations with the Sublime Porte were of utmost importance, given the military might of the empire and a number of contentious issues, such as Cossack and Tatar raiding in the borderlands, suzerainty over Moldavia, as well as the broader geopolitical context of the period.<sup>6</sup> Despite its self-definition as *antemurale christianitatis*, the Commonwealth's elite was not particularly eager to follow calls to arms against the Ottomans and preferred to maintain amicable relations with its more powerful neighbour.<sup>7</sup> On its part, the Sublime Porte was generally reluctant to engage Poland-Lithuania on the battlefield in the course of the sixteenth century, trying to keep the Commonwealth out of the Habsburg camp. As early as 1533, Sultan Süleyman granted King Sigismund I an 'eternal peace,'<sup>8</sup> while his successors applied considerable diplomatic pressure to prevent the election of a

<sup>5</sup> On this episode and its interpretation, see CHRISTINE VOGEL, 'The Caftan and the Sword. Dress and Diplomacy in Ottoman-French Relations Around 1700,' in *Fashioning the Self in Transcultural Settings. The Uses and Significance of Dress in Self-Narrative*, eds Claudia Ulbrich and Richard Wittmann (Würzburg: Ergon-Verlag, 2015), 25–44.

<sup>6</sup> For an overview of Polish-Ottoman relations in the early modern period, see DARIUSZ KOŁODZIEJCZYK, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations (15th-18th Century). An Annotated Edition of 'Ahdnames and Other Documents* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> On the concept of Poland-Lithuania as *antemurale christianitatis*, see WIKTOR WEINTRAUB, 'Renaissance Poland and "Antemurale Christianitatis",' *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3-4, no. 2 (1979–80): 920–30; JANUSZ TAZBIR, *Polska przedmurzem Europy* (Warsaw: Twój Styl, 2004); JERZY URWANOWICZ, 'Wokół ideologii przedmurza chrześcijaństwa w Rzeczypospolitej w drugiej połowie XVII w.,' *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce* 29 (1984): 185–99.

<sup>8</sup> KOŁODZIEJCZYK, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations (15th-18th Century)*, 117–19; ANDRZEJ DZIUBIŃSKI, *Stosunki dyplomatyczne polsko-tureckie w latach 1500-1572* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2005), 94–98.

Habsburg to the Polish-Lithuanian throne in the last quarter of the sixteenth century.<sup>9</sup> In the course of the seventeenth century, these amicable relations deteriorated and nearly a third of the following century would be consumed by prolonged and ultimately inconclusive military conflicts. Thus, even from the point of view of the geopolitical context, the sheer scale of the issues and controversies meant that the task expected from Polish-Lithuanian ambassadors to the Porte was a difficult one.

Still, a language of affection permeated diplomatic correspondence and the declared ideal was one of ‘friendship’ rather than peace, emphasising the emotional bond between the king and the sultan, as well as between their polities. However, what each side meant by friendship and how it should be expressed differed significantly and often raised the stakes rather than abated potential conflicts. While the emphasis on an affective bond as an ideal relationship between the rulers was shared by both sides and fit into the broader framework of the early modern *société des princes*,<sup>10</sup> the Polish-Lithuanian court and its diplomatic agents saw it in terms of parity and affinity between equals. In turn, while the Ottoman diplomatic practice and court ceremonial did not rule out friendship with Christian monarchs, the imperial elite saw it in terms of the vertical subordination of other political and diplomatic actors to the superior position of the sultan – which was understandably unacceptable to the Poles. As a result, while declaring friendship, both sides would frequently clash and demonstrate negative rather than positive emotions in the course of their interactions with one another, with frequent bursts of anger and expressions of disappointment, hostility or fear. Within this context, Polish-Lithuanian envoys to the Porte had to walk a fine line between standing their ground on matters of prestige and preventing the breakdown of negotiations, sometimes without success.

However, it is not only the emotions of those involved that shine through the ambassadorial accounts; they also had to be described in ways that would resonate with their intended audience back home. In this respect, the political culture of self-perception of the Commonwealth’s noble estate (*szlachta*) played a crucial political role, developing a self-definition and habitus that would prove challenging to reconcile with the realities of a diplomatic mission to the Sublime Porte. According to the theories of representation in the Commonwealth, the ambassador did not just represent the ruler, but also the whole *res publica* of citizen-nobles, entrenched in their liberties and uncompromisingly hostile to perceived despotism. Consequently, the ambassador was expected to conform to safeguard the dignity and honour of the state and the noble class in face of the sultan, seen as the embodiment of an absolute ruler. Since this imperative was often impossible to reconcile with the ceremonial and political environment of the Sublime Porte, ambassadors had to take into account the attitude of their noble peers and shape their accounts in a way that would gain their approval and evoke positive emotions. These two emotional layers – of those involved in the

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<sup>9</sup> KEMAL BEYDILLI, *Die polnischen Königswahlen und Interregnen von 1572 und 1576 im Lichte osmanischer Archivalien. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der osmanischen Machtpolitik* (Munich: Trofenik, 1976).

<sup>10</sup> LUCIEN BELY, *La société des princes, XVIe-XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2014).

negotiations and the public to which the accounts were addressed – form the first anchor of the present paper.

Gifts and their exchanges between Polish-Lithuanian diplomats and their Ottoman and Moldavian hosts provide the second point of gravity in the argument. The exchange of precious objects, money and tokens of friendship constituted bread and butter of early modern sociability, both in Poland-Lithuania and the Ottoman Empire. Thus, the importance of gifts for lubricating social ties and cultivating positive emotions and friendly relations with the Porte was perfectly clear for the Commonwealth's envoys, themselves steeped in the emotion culture and habitus of the Polish-Lithuanian elite. Nonetheless, the issue of gifts was a particularly charged topic and cause for anxiety during such embassies. The major concern was the threat that the gifts' nature would be consciously misconstrued by the Ottoman officials: aware of the multiple notions of gifts within the Ottoman context, the diplomats and their principals feared that a voluntary gift would be interpreted by their hosts as an acknowledgement of the Commonwealth's inferior status vis-à-vis the sultan, which they tried to avoid at all costs; a related fear was that, once offered, a gift would create a precedent and raise the expectations of Ottoman officials. Similarly, gifts bestowed by the sultan and other members of the imperial establishment were far from innocent, raising similar concerns on the part of the envoys. Therefore, they had to carefully navigate gift exchanges, balancing between the imperatives of sociability in the Ottoman capital and the prestige of the Commonwealth.

The present paper seeks to tackle this intersection between gift exchanges and emotional responses within the field of diplomatic relations between Poland-Lithuania on the one hand and the Ottoman and Moldavian elites on the other, covering the period between 1623 (Zbaraski's embassy) and 1700 (mission of Rafał Leszczyński). In order to do so, I examine ambassadorial accounts and related texts through the lens of the ample scholarly literature on practices of gift-giving and emotions in the early modern period.<sup>11</sup> As I argue, the subject of transcultural diplomatic encounters between Polish-Lithuanian ambassadors, Ottoman officials and Moldavian boyars should be analysed with keen awareness of the habitus of the respective elites and should not be dissociated from the emotion cultures that they produced. This was facilitated by the institutional scaffolding of Polish-Ottoman and Polish-Moldavian relations which continued to rely on ad hoc embassies and encouraged the selection of ambassadors on the basis of their prestige and wealth rather than expertise. However, the conflicts surrounding gifts were not caused by a lack of familiarity and accidental misunderstandings, but rather the keen (albeit not always full) understanding of the other party's desire to impose its own framework. Moreover, in such instances each side was under considerable cultural and political pressure to stand its ground on

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<sup>11</sup> BARBARA H. ROSENWEIN, *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); WILLIAM M. REDDY, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); EMMANUEL LEMÉE, 'Harnessing Anger and Shame: Emotional Diplomacy in Early Modern Context,' *Diplomatica* 3, no. 1 (2021): 1–22; VALENTINA ŠOŠTARIĆ, *Dubrovački poklisari. U potrazi za novim teritorijima* (Zadar: Sveučilište u Zadru, 2021).

the matter; while full victory was frequently beyond the reach of the Polish-Lithuanian diplomats, they subsequently sought to redact, elide and adjust the compromises they had to make in order to legitimise themselves to the audience back home.

In order to examine this issue, the paper is divided into three parts. In the first section, I focus on the institutional, political and cultural framework of Polish-Lithuanian missions to Moldavia and the Sublime Porte. The absence of a permanent diplomatic representation of the Commonwealth in Istanbul had far-reaching consequences for the dynamics of Polish-Ottoman relations. At the same time, the radical differences that existed between the Commonwealth and the Porte and the corresponding divergent habitus and protocols of power posed an additional challenge to the conduct of diplomatic affairs which put a premium on representation rather than negotiation. In the following section, I shift my attention to gift exchanges and the accompanying emotions. Whereas the concept of friendship as the basis of mutual relations was invoked by all parties and the role of gifts as a token of friendship was recognised, the divergent concept of this affective relationship transformed it into a particularly thorny issue. Finally, in the third section, I shift to the Polish-Lithuanian ambassadors' strategies of narrating their experiences, gift exchanges and emotional states – both their own and those of their Ottoman and Moldavian counterparts. As I argue, whereas the process of conducting diplomatic affairs required a balance and often uneasy compromise for the mission to succeed, narrating the mission to the noble public in Poland-Lithuania required a different balance that would emphasise the virtues of the ambassador and his unwavering commitment to the self-definition and values cherished by the *szlachta*. While these strategies included eliding, redacting or altering the humiliating events that took place at the Ottoman and Moldavian courts, they also took advantage of gift exchanges and emotions to represent the virtues that stood at the basis of the Commonwealth's political ideology.

### **Confronting the despot: the institutional and cultural framework of Polish-Ottoman and Polish-Moldavian diplomatic relations**

Beginning in the second half of the sixteenth century, an increasing number of European embassies established a permanent presence on the shores of the Bosphorus, thus joining the well-established Venetian *bailo* and transforming the Ottoman capital into one of the crucial nodes of early modern diplomatic networks. Although the scholarship on the rise of early modern diplomacy has generally turned to the Italian peninsula to explain its evolution, a growing number of scholars have pointed out the importance of Istanbul as a crucial breeding ground for new practices.<sup>12</sup> However, among the increasing ranks of resident ambassadors entrusted with handling affairs at the Porte, one would in vain search for a representative of the Polish-

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<sup>12</sup> DANIEL GOFFMAN, 'Negotiating with the Renaissance State. The Ottoman Empire and the New Diplomacy,' in *Early Modern Ottomans. Remapping the Empire*, eds VIRGINIA H. AKSAN and DANIEL GOFFMAN (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 61–74; TRACEY A. SOWERBY and CHRISTOPHER MARKIEWICZ, eds, *Diplomatic Cultures at the Ottoman Court, c.1500-1630* (New York: Routledge, 2021).

Lithuanian Commonwealth, which continued to rely on ad hoc embassies to resolve conflicts and renew peace agreements.

The absence of a Polish-Lithuanian embassy at the Porte may seem puzzling, given the importance of direct diplomatic contacts between the two polities. Embassies began to travel between the two courts at the beginning of the fifteenth century and, as early as January 1533, Sultan Süleyman granted peace in perpetuity to King Sigismund I. In the sixteenth century, the relations between Poland-Lithuania and the Porte were generally amicable and the Commonwealth's elite displayed considerable reluctance to take up arms against the Ottomans.<sup>13</sup> However, by the beginning of the seventeenth century, a number of contentious issues had accumulated that threatened – and frequently led to – open conflict.<sup>14</sup> Thus, it seemed that establishing a resident embassy in Istanbul would facilitate conflict resolution and prevent the outbreak of armed conflicts; indeed, Ottoman officials encouraged the Polish king to set up such an embassy.<sup>15</sup> However, these overtures were politely, but firmly rejected; a Polish agent would eventually take up residence by the court in 1678, but the role was limited and bilateral relations continued to be managed through ad hoc envoys.<sup>16</sup>

As Tetiana Grygorieva points out, this refusal stemmed from several principal reasons.<sup>17</sup> First, there was a financial rationale at play for the cash-strapped royal treasury and the nobility, who considered a permanent resident an unnecessary burden on the exchequer. However, there was also an internal political dimension behind this reluctance, namely the tension *inter maiestatem ac libertatem*.<sup>18</sup> Permanent residents would inevitably fall under the authority of the king, with little room for control by the *sejm*; indeed, permanent representatives were considered royal agents.<sup>19</sup> Thus, there was a concern that expanding the permanent diplomatic network would inevitably enhance royal authority and upset the balance of power within the Commonwealth. This reluctance was further augmented by a set of concerns pertaining to the realities at the Sublime Porte. Establishing an embassy in Istanbul could be interpreted by the Ottomans as an acknowledgement of sultanic superiority and a sign of submission.

<sup>13</sup> URWANOWICZ, 'Wokół ideologii przedmurza chrześcijaństwa w Rzeczypospolitej w drugiej połowie XVII w.'

<sup>14</sup> CZAMAŃSKA, 'Moldawia i Wołoszczyzna w stosunkach polsko-tureckich XV-XVII wieku'; VICTOR OSTAPCHUK, 'The Human Landscape of the Ottoman Black Sea in the Face of the Cossack Naval Raids,' *Oriente Moderno* 20, no. 1 (2001): 23–95.

<sup>15</sup> KOŁODZIEJCZYK, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations (15th-18th Century)*, 171.

<sup>16</sup> In fact, a more permanent diplomatic presence in Istanbul only emerged in the second half of the eighteenth century, see KOŁODZIEJCZYK, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations (15th-18th Century)*, 171.

<sup>17</sup> TETIANA GRYGORIEVA, 'The Tricks and Traps of Ad Hoc Diplomacy. Polish Ambassadors' Experiences of Ottoman Hospitality,' in Sowerby and Markiewicz, *Diplomatic Cultures at the Ottoman Court, c.1500-1630*, 194–216, 195f.

<sup>18</sup> On the issue of Polish-Lithuanian concepts of *monarchia mixta* and its dynamics, see STEFANIA OCHMANN, 'Rzeczpospolita jako „monarchia mixta” — dylematy władzy i wolności,' in *Kultura - polityka - dyplomacja. Studia ofiarowane Jaremiu Maciszewskiemu w 60. rocznicę Jego urodzin*, ed. Andrzej Bartnicki (Warsaw: PWN, 1990), 263–78.

<sup>19</sup> ZBIGNIEW WÓJCIK, 'Dyplomacja polska w okresie wojen drugiej połowy XVII w. (1648-1668),' in *Historia dyplomacji polskiej*, ed. Zbigniew Wójcik, vol. 2 (Warsaw: PWN, 1981): 163–330, 243–44.

Thus, in order to avoid this peril and claim an equal footing, continued reliance on ad hoc diplomacy seemed like a less treacherous path to follow.

This solution had tremendous consequences for the conduct of missions to the Porte and the attitudes of the envoys towards their hosts. The task of representing the Polish king and the Commonwealth fell on two types of ambassadors: ordinary envoys (*posłowie*) and grand ambassadors (*posłowie wielcy*). The difference between the two categories was constituted not by the ambassador's broader prerogatives, but instead by the solemnity and pomp that accompanied them.<sup>20</sup> As Grygorieva argues, this distinction suggests that the main goal of an ambassador was representation rather than negotiation, similarly reflected in the choice of envoys themselves.<sup>21</sup> The absence of a permanent embassy deprived the Commonwealth of an institutional framework that would allow the training of its diplomats. While we find 'area experts' in the seventeenth century, their education took place in non-formal settings and they usually occupied subordinate positions during the embassies. For grand ambassadors, in turn, the criteria of wealth and social status overrode the need for experience.

All of this had far-reaching consequences on the diplomats' reference frame. Rather than an autonomous field, the behavioural patterns of the envoys were tethered to the Polish-Lithuanian political culture of the *szlachta* and its concepts of representation. Tetiana Grygorieva correctly draws a connection between the nobility's representative assemblies as the central loci where the *szlachta's* attitudes were forged and their impact on diplomacy.<sup>22</sup> A clear example in this respect is the work of Andrzej Maksymilian Fredro, who defined two categories of legations – *quae intra Regnum, vel quae ad exteros* – but saw their nature as essentially identical.<sup>23</sup> In short, diplomats were to act in a similar way to the noble deputies to the *Sejm*, a connection further evidenced by the format of the instructions and their limited mandate.<sup>24</sup>

This link between political culture and diplomatic practice made contacts with the Porte a particularly delicate matter. The ideological foundations of the Polish-Lithuanian polity drew on the tradition of republican political thought, emphasising liberty, virtue and political participation as the cornerstone of the *szlachta's* self-definition, embodied in the Commonwealth's institutional framework. Drawing on the concepts of *monarchia mixta*, the *szlachta* envisioned a *res publica* of free, equal nobles with inalienable political privileges and the limited authority of a freely elected king. As

<sup>20</sup> TETIANA GRYGORIEVA, 'Zur Selbstdarstellung polnisch-litauischer Botschafter im frühneuzeitlichen Istanbul,' in *Die Audienz. Ritualisierter Kulturkontakt in der Frühen Neuzeit*, eds Peter Burschel and Christine Vogel (Cologne: Böhlau, 2014), 81–100, 82–4; WÓJCIK, 'Dyplomacja polska w okresie wojen drugiej połowy XVII w. (1648-1668),' 261–2.

<sup>21</sup> GRYGORIEVA, 'Zur Selbstdarstellung polnisch-litauischer Botschafter im frühneuzeitlichen Istanbul,' 81.

<sup>22</sup> GRYGORIEVA, 'Zur Selbstdarstellung polnisch-litauischer Botschafter im frühneuzeitlichen Istanbul,' 85–91.

<sup>23</sup> ANDRZEJ MAKSYMILIAN FREDRO, *Viri consilii monitis ethicorum nec non prudentiae civilis* (Lviv: Typis Collegij SJ, 1730), 423.

<sup>24</sup> GRYGORIEVA, 'Zur Selbstdarstellung polnisch-litauischer Botschafter im frühneuzeitlichen Istanbul,' 82.

the description of Krzysztof Zbaraski shows, the contrast with the Ottoman political system could hardly be greater:

in Turkey there are – and have always been – only two estates, even if subdivided into more ranks and categories. The first [order] is the ruler himself; the second are his slaves. To the ruler belongs *absolutum dominium* and he is, as if an earthly deity, the source of all the fortunes and misfortunes that befall this nation.<sup>25</sup>

For the *szlachta*, for whom the notion of *absolutum dominium* was anathema in the political discourse, the political system built around sultanic household and political slavery constituted the antithesis of the ideal social order of the Commonwealth. The association between absolute monarchical power and the person of the sultan was exploited in political pamphlets of the seventeenth century, in the form of forged letters from the sultan promising to abolish the institutions and quash the liberties that the nobles cherished so much.<sup>26</sup>

While not as prominent in the Commonwealth's early modern discourse, the perception of the Moldavian (*Woloszka*) elites provided a different model of arbitrary power and its perils. In contrast to the powerful Porte, Moldavia was not perceived as a threat and occupied an inferior position within the region. In the past, the local voyvodes had been vassals of the Polish Crown, before the Ottoman advance turned them into sultanic tributaries. Nonetheless, Moldavia served as a cautionary example of arbitrary power; rather than anxiety, the emotion usually expressed towards the local elite was one of contempt. Moldavians were usually described as duplicitous, downtrodden and lacking virtue due to the unchecked power of their rulers. In 1553, Hieronim Otwinowski claimed that 'there is no true nobility among Moldavians, since all of them are equal in that one day you herd goats, just to become a grand lord overnight.'<sup>27</sup> Whereas at the Porte, the ambassadors were on the defensive against their hosts, in Iași their goal was to demonstrate superiority vis-à-vis the local elite.

These remarks demonstrate that the alleged corruption of Ottoman and Moldavian despotisms was not just institutional, but moral as well. In line with early modern republican thought, the *szlachta* saw the issues of the political system and citizens' qualities as intimately connected and mutually reinforcing. Within this framework, liberty constituted a precondition for virtue, while both qualities were essential for the proper functioning of the *res publica*; similarly, the latter's decline would inevitably lead to moral decline.<sup>28</sup> Hence, for Polish authors, true virtue and liberty was

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<sup>25</sup> JANUSZ WOJTASIK, 'Uwagi księcia Krzysztofa Zbaraskiego, posła wielkiego do Turcji z 1622 r.-o państwie otomańskim i jego silach zbrojnych,' *Studia i Materiały do Historii Wojskowości* 7, no. 1 (1961): 333–46.

<sup>26</sup> DARIUSZ KOŁODZIEJCZYK, 'Native Nobilities and Foreign Absolutism. A Polish-Ottoman Case,' *Studia Carolinensia* 3-4 (2004): 303–8.

<sup>27</sup> Hurmuzaki, Supp. II/1, 193.

<sup>28</sup> For recent discussions of Polish-Lithuanian political thought, see BENEDICT WAGNER-RUNDELL, *Common Wealth, Common Good. The Politics of Virtue in Early Modern Poland-Lithuania* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 4–10; ANNA GRZEŚKOWIAK-KRWAWICZ, *Queen Liberty. The Concept of Freedom in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

impossible to cultivate under despotism.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the link between the Ottoman and Moldavian political systems and the apparent lack of moral qualities made both polities not only the institutional, but also the moral antithesis of the ideal embodied in the Commonwealth.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, a Polish-Lithuanian ambassador had an obligation to uphold the Commonwealth's dignity and prestige, while also conducting negotiations in an environment seen not only as hostile, but also morally corrupt.

A glimpse into the envoys' approach can be glimpsed in Ławryna Piaseczyński's short treatise entitled *Ambassadorial Duties*.<sup>31</sup> Piaseczyński was not an armchair pundit, but an active diplomat who performed several missions to Moldavia and the Crimean Khanate between 1601 and 1603; he was also a five-time deputy from his province to the *Sejm*.<sup>32</sup> Rather than a theoretical work on ambassadorial qualities, the work he penned provides a practical manual on proper conduct, which demonstrates the emphasis on representation over negotiation. According to the author, 'one should not remove, nor alter, nor add anything to the instructions ... for the apprentice should not consider himself above his master.'<sup>33</sup> He instructs the reader to keep negative emotions, such as anger and outrage, in check, instead advocating modesty, and patience towards one's hosts. Much of this short work focuses on upholding one's dignity through body language, utterances and etiquette; a diplomat should show kindness and respond to insults in a way that would not cause a scandal, since 'the matter does not only pertain to you, but also to your master.'<sup>34</sup> While Piaseczyński admits that the task can be difficult in a hostile environment, he is quick to reassure the reader that 'it is unheard of that a Turkish emperor or a Tatar tsar [i.e., khan] would disfigure or execute an envoy, but the envoy should not give a reason not only to the lord, but also to other foreign people [to do so], since his duty is to perform a mission, not to quarrel.' Finally, he pays considerable attention to behaviour during the audience, emphasising a clear oral delivery of his diplomatic instructions and stately manner, while giving indications, among others, not to pick one's nose in public.

Although the treatise contains references to *ius gentium*, the norms he advocates are perfectly applicable to the patterns of *szlachta* behaviour at assemblies in the Commonwealth. The overt focus on rhetorical skill and sociability constituted the cornerstone of behaviour at the *Sejm* and local dietines (which Piaseczyński was familiar with), while the emphasis he places on prudence and moderation resonates with the cultural models of the nobility, influenced by Neostoic thought. With this conceptual apparatus at their disposal, Polish-Lithuanian ambassadors to the

<sup>29</sup> See, for instance, EDWARD TRYJARSKI, 'Ein literarisches Porträt des Türken, von Mikoaj Rej (16 Jh.) dargestellt,' *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 76 (1986): 307–13.

<sup>30</sup> PIOTR TAFIŁOWSKI, *Imago Turci. Studium z dziejów komunikacji społecznej w dawnej Polsce (1453-1572)* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2013), 164f.

<sup>31</sup> The text is published in STANISŁAW BODNIAK, 'Ławryna Piaseczyńskiego "Powinności poselskie" z początku XVII wieku,' *Pamiętnik Biblioteki Kórnickiej* 4 (1947): 164–72.

<sup>32</sup> WOJCIECH SOKOŁOWSKI, *Politycy schyłku Złotego Wieku. Małopolscy przywódcy szlachty i parlamentarzysty w latach 1574-1605* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 1997), 182.

<sup>33</sup> BODNIAK, 'Ławryna Piaseczyńskiego "Powinności poselskie" z początku XVII wieku,' 167.

<sup>34</sup> BODNIAK, 'Ławryna Piaseczyńskiego "Powinności poselskie" z początku XVII wieku,' 170.

Commonwealth would have to confront a political and diplomatic culture that significantly diverged from the *res publica* of noble citizens and in many respects seemed antithetical to the habitus of the *szlachta*. The task was not easy to accomplish within the Ottoman – and Moldavian – ceremonial framework.

Upon arrival in Istanbul, ambassadors would come face to face with ceremonial protocols of power that invoked a world order centred around the sultan as a universal monarch, both through carefully choreographed encounters and the gifts exchanged between participants. Thus, whereas both sides embraced a highly emotional rhetoric of friendship, for the Ottomans the contents of these notions ruled out any equality between the king and the sultan. Thus, the Polish-Lithuanian ambassadors' two overarching goals were to resist the Ottoman demands, while at the same time swaying key figures in the imperial establishment in order to fulfil their mission. Given their position of comparative weakness vis-à-vis their hosts, they had to walk a fine line between standing their ground and offending Ottoman officials. In Moldavia, where the balance of power was reversed, so were the objectives: it was the envoys that were on the offensive, trying to pressure the voyvodes to acknowledge their superior status. In both loci, this was manifested largely in disputes over affections, hostility and gifts.

#### **Tokens of friendship, sources of dissent**

Although the Ottomans, Moldavians and Polish-Lithuanian ambassadors shared the basic premise that the scope of gifts was to cultivate positive emotions and serve as tokens of friendship, in practice gift-giving would frequently become a sore point and spark anything but amicable attitudes. In Polish sources, the prevailing mood in this regard was one of anxiety, apprehension and concern over the potential ramifications. Although some exchanges sparked joy and affection, just as frequently matters degenerated into fierce disputes. These conflicts were not accidental misunderstandings. They stemmed from a keen awareness on both sides that gifts were not innocent, but intimately connected to power hierarchies that transformed them from tokens of friendship into potentially dangerous instruments of power. Of particular concern for the Polish-Lithuanian ambassadors was the way that their gifts could be integrated into the framework of authority in the Ottoman capital.

Gifts played a prominent role in Ottoman politics and sociability, as reflected in the elaborate terminology and multiple social contexts. According to Hedda Reindl-Kiel, they constituted 'a part of a person's honour and hence an essential element of etiquette',<sup>35</sup> signifying one's position within socio-political hierarchies. As she argues, it is possible to boil down the plethora of contemporary terms to several principal

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<sup>35</sup> HEDDA REINDL-KIEL, 'East is East and West is West, and Sometimes the Twain Did Meet. Diplomatic Gift Exchange in the Ottoman Empire,' in *Frontiers of Ottoman Studies. State, Province, and the West*, eds Colin Imber and Keiko Kiyotaki (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 113–24, 114.

circuits, each structuring relations between the parties in a distinct manner.<sup>36</sup> Although exchanges sometimes took place between peers, the majority of gifts flowed vertically, between superiors and subordinates. Obviously, this was particularly true for exchanges involving the ruler himself, asserting his lynchpin role within a broader imperial and cosmic order. Of particular importance in this respect were two types of gift flow: *pişkes* provided to the sultan by his servants, as well as the distribution of robes of honour (*hil'at*) by the ruler. These flows were not restricted to the imperial establishment, with ambassadors part of the ceremonial order culminating in the sultan.

The nexus between gifts and political-ceremonial order was not lost on the Polish-Lithuanian ambassadors, forming a source of concern for them. Both Polish-Lithuanian and Ottoman actors invoked friendship (as opposed to war) as the desired relationship between the king and the sultan, in line with the personal and affective rhetoric of early modern diplomacy. One would expect that gift exchange – an expression of friendship acknowledged by both parties – would thus be a natural and uncontroversial issue. However, control over the interpretation of these tokens was a controversial matter, since Polish-Lithuanian envoys in Istanbul feared that they had limited control over defining the gifts. In 1623, this concern was voiced by Krzysztof Serebkowicz: ‘other ambassadors ... are obliged to deliver gifts, and they are bound to do so, since they currently reside at the Porte.’<sup>37</sup> In other words, the diplomat feared that, if he offered voluntary gifts, the Ottomans would reinterpret them as *pişkes*, a notion that connoted the subordination of their giver to the recipient and blurred the line between gift and an obligatory contribution.

The danger was real, since the Commonwealth repeatedly clashed with the Porte and the Crimean khans over the nature of ‘gifts’ (*podarki*) paid to the latter to forestall Tatar raiding of the Crown’s borderlands. The nature of this payment was hotly debated; whereas Polish diplomats insisted that they were voluntary and compensation for Crimean military assistance, the khans viewed them as an obligatory tribute and threatened to attack the Commonwealth if payments stopped. Moreover, such disbursements were inserted in Ottoman *abdnames* and ominously described as *pişkes* or even ‘tax’ (*vergü*), suggesting Poland-Lithuania’s subordination to the sultan.<sup>38</sup>

To combat this threat, the Polish-Lithuanian envoys’ instructions embraced a different and apparently paradoxical discourse regarding gifts and friendship. Ambassadors were instructed that under no circumstances should anything be offered on behalf of the king and the Commonwealth; instead, the diplomats were expected to mobilise their skills of rhetoric and persuasion, offering an alternative interpretation

<sup>36</sup> HEDDA REINDL-KIEL, ‘Breads for the Followers, Silver Vessels for the Lord: The System of Distribution and Redistribution in the Ottoman Empire (16th -18th centuries),’ *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 42 (2013): 93–104, 102.

<sup>37</sup> Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, Warsaw, Libri Legationum, vol. 30, 436.

<sup>38</sup> DARIUSZ KOŁODZIEJCZYK, *The Crimean Khanate and Poland-Lithuania. International diplomacy on the European periphery (15th-18th century): A Study of Peace Treaties Followed by Annotated Documents* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 129.

of friendship that excluded both hierarchy between the parties and the very need for gift exchanges. An instruction for Wojciech Miaskowski from 1640 contained the argument that the value of friendship between the Polish king and the sultan was so great that it rendered any gifts redundant:

[The ambassador] should not give any gifts, since such a close friendship between the states, as well as between the ancestors of His Royal Majesty and those of the Ottoman Lord, a mutual respect of established pacts [...] has always been the greatest gift.<sup>39</sup>

In this critique of the nexus between gift and friendship, the main goal was to address the issues of hierarchy and equality in a way that would not endanger the position of the king or the Commonwealth. Whereas ceremonial gift exchanges at the Porte were inherently lopsided, hetman Stanisław Koniecpolski, a key figure in Polish-Ottoman relations, sought to present an alternative reading of affection:

With regard to gifts that they will expect [...] First, gifts between equals [inter pares] are customarily reciprocated, but the Turkish emperor does not offer them to His Royal Majesty; thus, why should His Royal Majesty offer them, if he recognises no superior except God?<sup>40</sup>

Developing his argumentation, Koniecpolski included a discussion over the nature of a genuine gift and genuine friendship. According to the hetman, the Ottomans demanded gifts from the Commonwealth out of ambition and hubris, acting in a way that was ultimately detrimental to the Porte itself:

Whoever demands gifts, does it out of poverty, greed or ambition. Turkish emperors are not downtrodden, as they are among the greatest monarchs of the time. As for greed, this is also not of concern; since we have no treasures or bullion and just busy ourselves with arms, they would gain little satisfaction from our gifts. [...] Whoever gives someone forced gifts, cannot be his friend. [...] Whoever offers gifts of their own volition, does so on their own accord. If taken by force, they are not gifts, but tribute. They would be fleeting, since the one who was forced to give them would constantly seek to overturn them. The Persians are a clear example; why are they constantly breaking the peace? They wage war at any opportunity [...] There cannot be such a sincere and durable friendship as with us, as we have taken nothing from the emperor.<sup>41</sup>

In a different document from 1633, Koniecpolski similarly claimed that a genuine gift is one that is not expected, while juxtaposing Ottoman demands with the notion of sincere affection: 'gifts reek of servitude when someone exchanges them for friendship, since the latter knows neither price nor value.'<sup>42</sup> Similarly, in 1623 Zbaraski discussed the issue, drawing the attention of his Ottoman interlocutors to the fact that the Porte's greatest enemies tend to be the ones most generous with gifts: 'the Christian emperor offers a watch or a different gift, then wages war upon you for twenty years.'

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<sup>39</sup> ADAM PRZYBOŚ, ed., *Wielka legacja Wojciecha Miaskowskiego do Turcji w 1640 r.* (Cracow: PWN, 1985), 172.

<sup>40</sup> AGNIESZKA BIEDRZYCKA, ed., *Korespondencja Stanisława Koniecpolskiego hetmana wielkiego koronnego 1632–1646* (Cracow: Societas Vistulana, 2005), 592.

<sup>41</sup> PRZYBOŚ, *Wielka legacja Wojciecha Miaskowskiego do Turcji w 1640 r.*, 176.

<sup>42</sup> BIEDRZYCKA, *Korespondencja Stanisława Koniecpolskiego hetmana wielkiego koronnego 1632–1646*, 160f.

The Persian king gives you silk that they make and fights you for eighty years. As for us, we live in peace for two centuries and we even ceded Wallachia and Moldavia; which [friendship] is more valuable?<sup>43</sup>

Needless to say, such arguments were not well received at the Porte, although the actual reaction depended on the changing political circumstances. Romaszkiwicz, sent to Istanbul in 1639, reported on a calm discussion he had with *kaymakam* Mehmed Pasha, who argued ‘it is appropriate that the ambassador brings gifts with him, since [the king] is a great ruler and all rulers have a custom to exchange gifts through their envoys.’<sup>44</sup> In 1623, Zbaraski met with a more hostile response from Gürcü Mehmed Pasha; the vizier tried to convince the ambassador by citing Safavid envoys and their lavish gifts before inquiring about the gifts from the Polish king. Upon Zbaraski’s refusal to present anything, the atmosphere immediately cooled and Mehmed Pasha insisted that the ambassador could not be granted an audience with the sultan, venting that what he really expected was ‘the promised tribute of 30,000 thalers, either in money or wares’ in an unsuccessful bid to intimidate Zbaraski.<sup>45</sup>

Rhetorical flourish aside, the Polish-Lithuanian ambassadors were aware that, for a mission to be successful, there was no avoiding distributing gifts, both to the sultan and among imperial officials. While the necessity to engage in exchanges was acknowledged, an effort was made to dissociate them from the Commonwealth. Thus, envoys were instructed to insist that the objects were offered not in the name of the king, but rather by the ambassador in a private capacity; to drive the point home and avoid deliberate misrepresentation, they were to be handed over in an unofficial setting, such as a private garden.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, the envoys were quick to shower Ottoman officials with presents. A member of Wojciech Miaskowski’s mission duly noted that the ambassador gave the sultan multiple ermine furs, bottles covered with gold leaf, two clocks, a silver ‘windmill,’ a hunting rifle and a powder pouch; grand vizier Kara Mustafa Pasha would receive precious furs and two clocks, including one encrusted with amber.<sup>47</sup> At the same time, the envoys had to fight off Ottoman attempts to raise the value of ceremonial gifts. In 1634, the gifts brought Aleksander Trzebiński – including two cuckoo clocks and ermine furs – were apparently well received at the Porte. However, a discussion emerged when one of the officials offered to provide additional ermine furs. To his interlocutor’s surprise, Trzebiński ‘refused and told him to give up the idea, since I will not offer them. [...] God be my witness, these are from none other, but only in my name and should be received graciously without putting them on display or announcing in whose name they are given.’<sup>48</sup>

<sup>43</sup> ‘Poselstwo Krzysztofa Xięcia Zbaraskiego do Turcyi w roku 1622,’ *Dziennik Wileński* 3 (1827): 3–27, 101–25, 237–73, 339–71, 124–25.

<sup>44</sup> BIEDRZYCKA, *Korespondencja Stanisława Koniecpolskiego hetmana wielkiego koronnego 1632-1646*, 569.

<sup>45</sup> ‘Poselstwo Krzysztofa Xięcia Zbaraskiego do Turcyi w roku 1622,’ 119.

<sup>46</sup> GRYGORIEVA, ‘The Tricks and Traps of Ad Hoc Diplomacy,’ 202.

<sup>47</sup> PRZYBOŚ, *Wielka legacja Wojciecha Miaskowskiego do Turcji w 1640 r.*, 145.

<sup>48</sup> BIEDRZYCKA, *Korespondencja Stanisława Koniecpolskiego hetmana wielkiego koronnego 1632-1646*, 228.

These quotations show that, in spite of the official rhetoric of selfless friendship, Polish-Lithuanian envoys were aware that they had to enter Ottoman gift-giving circuits to cultivate amicable relations with the imperial establishment. In order to reconcile these apparently mutually exclusive stances, the ambassadors exploited their own double personae: as the ruler's alter ego, as well as in their private individual capacity. By doing so and removing gift exchanges from the ceremonial setting, their goal was to disarm them and prevent them from acquiring a legal quality, while allowing for the gift exchanges necessary to carry out the mission. Indeed, the envoys could be quite liberal in this respect. While en route to Istanbul, Rafał Leszczyński received from the serasker 'two velvet kaftans and two cloaks of French cloth'; the ambassador gladly reciprocated the gift and sent the Ottoman official 'a small silver box with crystal bottles of sherbet and a crystal spoon *di Montania* with diamonds.'<sup>49</sup> In Istanbul, he continued to distribute numerous gifts, including clocks, tableware, dogs and amber; the Moldavian voyvode Antioh Cantemir, his wife and his brother Dimitre (the future historian of the empire) would likewise be offered tokens of friendship.<sup>50</sup> As chroniclers of these missions were quick to assure, such gifts were reciprocated, although with presents of comparably lesser value, particularly fruits and flowers.<sup>51</sup> In such instances, the diplomats had no qualms about gift exchanges with the Ottomans.

Still, some ceremonial gifts could not easily be rejected. This was particularly the case of robes of honour (*hil'at*) distributed by the Ottomans.<sup>52</sup> Attire was a crucial issue at the imperial court and Porte officials insisted on ambassadors donning kaftans for their audience with the sultan. Changing clothes carried symbolic importance on two accounts: first, it demonstrated the Ottomans' capacity to impose their ceremonial protocol and, secondly, it reinforced hierarchies between the sultan and the foreign ambassadors.<sup>53</sup> The robes also carried more nuanced messages, their recipients carefully registering their quality and quantity to gauge their position at the court. Thus, among members of the European diplomatic corps the attitude towards kaftans was ambiguous: they denoted subjection, but also provided a mechanism of establishing and upholding a particular position at the Porte.

Unlike Ferriol, no Polish-Lithuanian ambassador caused a brawl over a kaftan, but their bestowal created tensions and disputes with the Ottoman hosts nonetheless. A matter for concern was the appropriate quality of the garment; in 1700, Rafał Leszczyński demanded that 'because I am the one who arrives with perpetual peace, I demanded the same kaftan as the imperial [ambassador] received from the emperor.'<sup>54</sup> This was by no means a trivial affair: after a lacklustre performance during the Holy

<sup>49</sup> ILONA CZAMAŃSKA, ed., *Poselstwo Rafała Leszczyńskiego do Turcji w 1700 roku. Diariusze i inne materiały. Collab. Danuta Zydorek* (Leszno: Urząd Miasta Leszno, 1998), 149.

<sup>50</sup> CZAMAŃSKA, *Poselstwo Rafała Leszczyńskiego do Turcji w 1700 roku*, 258f.

<sup>51</sup> CZAMAŃSKA, *Poselstwo Rafała Leszczyńskiego do Turcji w 1700 roku*, 163.

<sup>52</sup> AMANDA PHILLIPS, 'Ottoman Hil'at. Between Commodity and Charisma,' in *Frontiers of the Ottoman Imagination. Studies in Honour of Rhoads Murphey*, ed. Marios Hadjianastasis (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 111–38.

<sup>53</sup> CHRISTINE VOGEL, 'Gut ankommen. Der Amtsantritt eines französischen Botschafters im Osmanischen Reich im späten 17. Jahrhundert,' *Historische Anthropologie* 21, no. 2 (2013): 158–78.

<sup>54</sup> CZAMAŃSKA, *Poselstwo Rafała Leszczyńskiego do Turcji w 1700 roku*, 75.

League War, the envoy was concerned that the Commonwealth could be treated in a manner inferior to the Habsburgs. This was indeed what happened: the Ottomans argued that, apart from being the envoy of the head of all Christian rulers, the latter also brought gifts in the name of his monarchs, whereas Leszczyński bore presents in his name only. Nonetheless, the general tone of the discussions was pleasant and the number and quality of kaftans consoled the magnate.

This was not the case for one of Leszczyński's predecessors, Franciszek Kazimierz Wysocki, during his spectacularly contentious embassy of 1670–2. During his mission, the envoy was entrusted with the almost impossible task of averting the looming Polish-Ottoman war, while lacking funds and the appropriate status.<sup>55</sup> A hostile environment and Ottoman stonewalling took a toll on Wysocki's psyche, as he took to drinking and became increasingly erratic. Mistreated by the hosts, the ambassador took a radical step and rejected the kaftans bestowed by the grand vizier: 'he said that even if it rained, he and his men would manage without Turkish garments' and threw away the robes of honour.<sup>56</sup> Wysocki's brash actions, however, made him an outlier; nonetheless, other envoys – such as Leszczyński – also had problems in keeping their entourage in check when kaftans were being distributed, embarrassing them in the eyes of their Ottoman hosts.<sup>57</sup>

Although in the imperial capital, the Ottomans' clear advantage steered the ambassadors away from such gestures, in the more favourable environment of Iași, the visitors tended to be more assertive and react firmly to perceived insults. On his way to Istanbul in 1636, Jerzy Kruszyński was poorly received by the incumbent voyvode Vasile Lupu, who refused to accommodate the envoy's ceremonial requests; in retaliation, Kruszyński rejected an invitation to a banquet and refused to see the voyvode.<sup>58</sup> However, when Kruszyński was returning through the principality, Vasile Lupu – aware of the mission's relative success – tried to mend bridges by showering the envoy with gifts. The diplomat was mistrustful, arguing that 'this was not out of friendship, but due to the orders of the *kaymakan*' and let Lupu know that he considered him 'an enemy of His Royal Majesty.'<sup>59</sup> In 1640, Miaskowski similarly clashed with the same voyvode: 'The voyvode wanted me to come to his castle. I spelled out my conditions that he come to my lodgings and ask for forgiveness. He tried to avoid it by providing lavish gifts; I did not accept them and refused to visit him.'<sup>60</sup> A member of Miaskowski's entourage had even harsher words to vent against

<sup>55</sup> ILONA CZAMAŃSKA, 'Czy wojna z Turcją w 1672 roku była nieunikniona? Poselstwo Franciszka Kazimierza Wysockiego do Turcji w latach 1670-1672,' *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 92, no. 4 (1985): 769–90.

<sup>56</sup> Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, Warsaw, Libri Legationum 25, 274.

<sup>57</sup> CZAMAŃSKA, *Poselstwo Rajala Leszczyńskiego do Turcji w 1700 roku*, 77.

<sup>58</sup> K. KANTECKI, ed., *Z podróży Oświecimy. Turcja-Francja-Niemcy-Włochy* (Lviv: E. Winiarz, 1875), 10.

<sup>59</sup> ROBERT KOŁODZIEJ, 'Wokół poselstwa Jerzego Kruszyńskiego do Turcji w 1636 r.,' in *Między Lwowem a Wrocławiem. Księga jubileuszowa profesora Krystyna Matwijowskiego*, eds Bogdan Rok and Jerzy Maroń (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2006), 493–502, 500.

<sup>60</sup> PRZYBOŚ, *Wielka legacja Wojciecha Miaskowskiego do Turcji w 1640 r.*, 47.

the Moldavian hosts in his private diary, wishing that they would be ‘die a disgraceful death.’<sup>61</sup>

To sum up, Polish-Lithuanian envoys, Ottoman officials and Moldavian voyvodes ostensibly agreed that gift exchange constituted an important tool for establishing and maintaining mutual affection. However, the reality on the ground, stemming from divergent interpretations of gifts and the concerns over prestige of the parties involved, did not always corroborate this lofty rhetoric. For the Ottoman officials, ceremonial gifts tied in with the affirmation of the sultan as a peerless figure towering over all the rest; thus, a friendship with the Polish king could only be a lopsided one, with gifts indicating subordination of the Polish monarch. The latter’s envoys, aware of this fact, sought to counteract the threat by developing a divergent notion of friendship in their dealings with the Ottoman officials. Whereas they acknowledged the nexus of gifts and affection when exchanging gifts with members of the imperial elite, they also advanced a different interpretation of friendship, which juxtaposed true affection and gift exchange. Thus, in a contradictory manner, their arguments and behaviour sought to reconcile two mutually exclusive visions: on the one hand, engaging in distributing gifts to win over friends, while at the same time arguing that true friendship was a relationship that did not require such presents. Needless to say, this did not sit well with their Ottoman hosts, leading to open conflicts and negative emotions towards the envoys. Yet, this discursive division was not always maintained beyond Istanbul: in Iași, when facing a much weaker partner, the same diplomats did not feel obliged to accommodate the hosts and were quick to reject the gifts offered to them as signs of true friendship in order to uphold the honour of the Polish monarch.

### **Packaging gifts**

Like their Venetian counterparts, the missions of Polish-Lithuanian ambassadors were not concluded with their return to the Commonwealth, but rather with a final report delivered to the king and the *sejm*. Although the obligation to present a written account was formally introduced in 1669, it had already been an established practice throughout the seventeenth century. Presenting the report, both orally at the *sejm* and in writing, was crucial not only to brief the king and the nobility of the events, but it could make or break careers too. Given the prominence of the *szlachta*’s public opinion in the political dynamics of the Commonwealth, the envoy had to present his accomplishments, justify any failures, but also fashion himself in a way that would resonate with his audience. Considering the place of the Ottomans in the Commonwealth’s political discourse, such reports offered ambassadors considerable opportunities, but also carried significant risks.

As Tetyana Grygorieva has pointed out, the structure of ambassadorial reports in the course of the seventeenth century differed from western European accounts, most likely due to recurrent difficulties in maintaining correspondence between the

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<sup>61</sup> PRZYBOŚ, *Wielka legacja Wojciecha Miaskowskiego do Turcji w 1640 r.*, 115.

ambassador and the Polish-Lithuanian court.<sup>62</sup> In effect, rather than a structured report, these accounts took the form of daily notes of the mission and negotiations, more akin to a travelogue. At the same time, in spite of this seemingly unprocessed form, they put together a relatively coherent and well-defined corpus. Moreover, the reports of past embassies were perused by subsequent envoys, who consulted them for information on the empire and its ceremonial protocols.<sup>63</sup> Some reports or their derivative reworkings circulated widely among the *szlachta*, providing a blueprint for the evaluation of the ambassadors' conduct, including gift exchanges.

Throughout the seventeenth century, the narrative of Krzysztof Zbaraski's mission (1622–3) retained particular prominence, being constantly cited by generations of diplomats until the beginning of the eighteenth century. Interestingly, this was not due to the magnate's outstanding performance as a negotiator, but rather the pomp and splendour of his entourage. Moreover, the amount of texts produced by the embassy was considerable: apart from a final report of the mission, Zbaraski also composed a treatise – closer in form to the Venetian *relazione* – in which he outlined a number of opinions regarding the current state of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>64</sup> At the same time, the prominent poet Samuel Twardowski adapted Zbaraski's report into an epic poem, which he published in print in 1633, two years after the magnate's demise.<sup>65</sup> Twardowski's work would be published again in 1639 and 1706, along with two reworkings, by Samuel Kuszewicz in Latin prose (1645) and by Wojciech Wolski (1693–1702).<sup>66</sup> Given that no other account appeared in print until 1700, it comes as no wonder that Zbaraski's mission became the most influential point of reference for subsequent embassies to the Porte and shaped the *szlachta*'s perception of how an envoy should perform.

As Roman Krzywy points out, the genre that Twardowski employed in many respects determined the presentation of its protagonist. Although the author stated that his goal was to present Zbaraski's *res gestae*, the magnate is depicted more as a literary type and role model rather than an individual, being referred to solely as 'the Prince' and failing to appear in anything but official capacity.<sup>67</sup> Given that, it comes as no surprise that the characteristics conformed to the ideals of the Commonwealth

<sup>62</sup> GRYGORIEVA, 'Zur Selbstdarstellung polnisch-litauischer Botschafter im frühneuzeitlichen Istanbul,' 91–9.

<sup>63</sup> MICHAŁ WASIUCONEK, 'Hermeneutics of Ceremonial Lore. Glipmses of the Idealized Diplomatic Protocol as Revealed in the Polish-Lithuanian Accounts (1677-1763),' *Archivum Ottomanicum* (2018): 135–53.

<sup>64</sup> 'Poselstwo Krzysztofa Xięcia Zbaraskiego do Turcyi w roku 1622'; WOJTASIK, 'Uwagi księcia Krzysztofa Zbaraskiego, posła wielkiego do Turcji z 1622 r.-o państwie ottomańskim i jego siłach zbrojnych.'

<sup>65</sup> SAMUEL ZE SKRZYPNY TWARDOWSKI, *Przeważna legacja Krzysztofa Zbaraskiego od Zygmunta III do soltana Mustafy*, ed. Roman Krzywy (Warsaw: IBL, 2000).

<sup>66</sup> SAMUEL KUSZEWICZ, *Narratio legationis Zbaravianae, et rerum apud Otthomanos anno 1622 gestarum* (Danzig: Georg Forster, 1645); WOJCIECH WOLSKI, 'Legacyjej do cesarza tureckiego Mustafy przez jaśnie Oświeconego księzę Zbarawskie J.Mci. M.P. Krzysztofa [...] roku 1622 odprawionej, a przez Samuela Kuszewicza [...] do druku podanej, pilne opisanie,' in *Hemerologejon abo nowy i stary kalendarz na rok 1693* (Cracow: Drukarnia Akademicka, 1692).

<sup>67</sup> TWARDOWSKI, *Przeważna legacja Krzysztofa Zbaraskiego od Zygmunta III do soltana Mustafy*.

nobleman, defending his homeland at the very seat of despotism. Moreover, episodes of the mission that the *szlachta* could see as humiliating were carefully excised or obscured. One of the most illustrative examples in this respect is the frontispiece of Kuszewicz's *Narratio legationis Zbaravianae* of 1645, which depicts the magnate's audience with the sultan. Contrary to our knowledge of the Ottoman ceremonial order, where two *kapıcs* would hold the arms of the envoy and force him to kow-tow (*başvurmak*),<sup>68</sup> Zbaraski is presented performing a graceful bow in line with the etiquette of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility. Indeed, with the exception of Mariusz Jaskólski in 1657, no ambassadorial report mentioned the *başvurmak*; instead, what we find are elaborate speeches akin to those at noble assemblies and incongruous with the ceremonial at the Porte.<sup>69</sup> By making this portrait, the authors sought to address their audience and reinforce the worldview shared by the whole estate. Twardowski's was as much an epic poem as it was a didactic work intended to convey the values and qualities that the *szlachta* cherished the most.<sup>70</sup>

The discussion of sentiments is similarly subject to this overarching objective and show the way emotions of both the envoy and his Ottoman and Moldavian counterparts aimed to amplify the difference between them. In line with the argument that true virtue is available under conditions of liberty, Twardowski depicts both the Ottoman grand vizier Gürcü Mehmed Pasha and Moldavian voyvode as sorely lacking in noble qualities and a moral compass. Instead, their actions are shown as being driven by self-interest and emotions that they failed to control. Moreover, the presentation of gifts also offered an opportunity to argue for the hosts' intellectual inferiority. Twardowski does just that when he describes four watches that Zbaraski presented to the Ottoman officials, the most impressive one (including a mechanical parrot) being a gift for the *defterdar*. While clocks were a popular diplomatic gift for Ottoman officials, the Polish poet exploits the occasion to include the surprising statement that "The pagans do not stand clocks/thinking that they are magic and enchanted/and whatever Europe considers skill/they attribute to devils and Megiera."<sup>71</sup> Obviously, this stands in contrast with the taste for clocks among members of the Ottoman elite;<sup>72</sup> nonetheless, it allows a comparison to be drawn in favour of the Polish-Lithuanian *szlachta* over the ignorant Ottomans.

<sup>68</sup> DARIUSZ KOŁODZIEJCZYK, 'Semiotics of Behavior in Early Modern Diplomacy. Polish Embassies in Istanbul and Bahçesaray,' *Journal of Early Modern History* 7 (2003): 3–4, 245–56.

<sup>69</sup> Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, Warsaw, Archiwum Koronne Warszawskie, Dz. Turecki, t. 421, doc. 724.

<sup>70</sup> TWARDOWSKI, *Przeważna legacja Krzysztofa Zbaraskiego od Zygmunta III do soltana Mustafy*, 9; KOŁODZIEJCZYK, 'Semiotics of Behavior in Early Modern Diplomacy,' 255.

<sup>71</sup> GERHARD OESTREICH, *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State*, ed. Brigitta Oestreich and H. G. Koenigsberger with David McLintoc (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). See CHRISTOPHER BROOKE, *Philosophic Pride. Stoicism and Political Thought from Lipsius to Rousseau* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 35f.

<sup>72</sup> PETER BURSCHEL, 'A Clock for the Sultan,' *The Medieval History Journal* 16, no. 2 (2013): 547–63; MICHAEL TALBOT, 'Gifts of Time. Watches and Clocks in Ottoman-British Diplomacy, 1693–1803,' *Jahrbuch für Europäische Geschichte* 17 (2017): 55–79.

Twardowski's choices certainly played a role in fashioning a literary portrait of Zbaraski, emphasising his restraint, prudence and mastery of his emotions. However, the same virtues are very much present in the report that Zbaraski authored himself. While one could ascribe this stance as compatible with the habitus of the *szlachta* and its republican tradition of moral discourse, the magnate seems to have a different, more personal source of inspiration: Neostoic thought. This intellectual current gained considerable popularity in late sixteenth-century Poland-Lithuania, with Justus Lipsius; in fact, he was the last western political thinker to resonate with the Polish-Lithuanian intellectual tradition prior to the late seventeenth century.<sup>73</sup> However, the *szlachta's* reception of Lipsius was a selective one. Whereas thinkers such as Andrzej Maksymilian Fredro struggled with the concepts of monarchy advocated by Lipsius, particularly in *Politicorum siue ciuilibus doctrinae libri sex*,<sup>74</sup> other aspects of the latter's thought resonated widely with the Polish-Lithuanian noblemen. The Lipsian emphasis on prudence, *comitas*, *constantia* and *benevolentia*, as well as *ingenium et iudicium* were ubiquitous in works by Polish authors throughout the seventeenth century.<sup>75</sup> Thus, whereas Gerald Oestreich has associated the rise of Neostoicism and the contributions of the Leuven-based scholar with the rise of disciplinary society and absolutism, in Poland-Lithuania his moral and didactic agenda was embraced not only by Jesuits and regalists, but also proponents of the republican tradition.<sup>76</sup>

While the popularity of Lipsius in Poland-Lithuania was a general phenomenon, Krzysztof Zbaraski's ties to Neostoicism were more intimate. Hailing from one of the most prominent magnate families in Ukraine, the prince and his older brother, Jerzy (d. 1631), followed the established pattern of pursuing education by making a grand tour through western European universities and royal courts. Setting out from the Commonwealth in summer 1601, the young magnates travelled to the Low Countries, where Krzysztof became a student at the University of Leuven, while Jerzy was most likely a private student of Lipsius.<sup>77</sup> Although the sojourn in Leuven was relatively short and the following year Zbaraski left for Padua to study with Galileo, Lipsius would have a lasting impact on the brothers. As Urszula Augustyniak points out, Jerzy Zbaraski would subsequently cite Lipsius in his political works, most

<sup>73</sup> URSZULA AUGUSTYNIAK, *Ważowie i "królowie rodacy". Studium władzy królewskiej w Rzeczypospolitej XVII wieku* (Warsaw: Semper, 1999), 26–31; ANDRZEJ BOROWSKI, 'Justus Lipsius and the Classical Tradition in Poland,' in *Justus Lipsius Europae Lumen Et Columen. Proceedings of the International Colloquium, Leuven 17-19 September 1997*, eds Gilbert Tournoy, J. de Landtsheer, and Jan Papy (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), 1–16, 10; Justyna Dąbrowska-Kujko, *Justus Lipsjusz i dawne przekłady jego dzieł na język polski* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2010).

<sup>74</sup> MAREK TRACZ-TRYNIECKI, 'Dopasować monarchę do republiki. Wpływ *Politicorum* Justusa Lipsjusza na Zasady panowania władców chrześcijańskich Andrzeja Maksymiliana Fredry,' *Mysł Polityczny* 3 (2020): 7–32.

<sup>75</sup> RICHARD TUCK, *Philosophy and Government, 1572-1651* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 51–4.

<sup>76</sup> URSZULA AUGUSTYNIAK, "Wolę mieć religionem frigidam niż nullam." Jerzy i Krzysztof Zbarascy wobec rekatolicyzacji i zmiany systemu rządów w Rzeczypospolitej za Zygmunta III Wazy,' *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce* 58 (2014): 73–104, 88.

<sup>77</sup> WANDA DOBROWOLSKA, 'Młodość Jerzego i Krzysztofa Zbaraskich,' *Rocznik Przemyski* 7 (1926–1927), 5–236, 122f.

prominently in *Septuaginta graves et ardua rationes*.<sup>78</sup> At the same time, the Zbaraskis would emerge in the 1620s as prominent representatives of the republican tradition against the regalist camp and, despite their fervent Catholicism, staunch opponents of the Jesuits. Given the close relations between the brothers throughout their lives, it is safe to say that the younger Krzysztof shared the castellan of Cracow's predilections and worldview, including his preference for their former tutor.

In fact, reading Zbaraski's report from the perspective of Lipsian philosophy reveals clear parallels between the latter's ideals and the persona that the prince and subsequent authors sought to fashion for him, nevertheless in line with the Polish-Lithuanian republican reading of the Leuven-based philosopher. Obviously, the emphasis on peace (*pax*) as the overarching goal within an account of a diplomatic mission is to be expected; however, the stress on the role of *prudentia* as a chief virtue possessed by Zbaraski directs us towards Neostoic thought; the same goes for the crucial role of proper *maiestas* and moral rectitude as a key feature befitting the prince and, by extension, his representative. Lipsius himself carefully crafted his own persona as a model Stoic. This was precisely the persona that Zbaraski sought to create for himself in his report and that would subsequently be expanded in the work of Twardowski and its derivatives. With this both widespread and enticing model for crafting their report, later ambassadors would try to follow this blueprint. This was the preferable route, particularly given the fact that seeking alternative strategies could have grave consequences. Franciszek Kazimierz Wysocki's oral account of his 1670–2 mission was badly received by his audience, who found it vague and bungled, with the envoy's expression of joy at the imminent war with the infidel raising questions about his mental health.<sup>79</sup> This poor reception effectively put paid to Wysocki's public career and served as a cautionary tale against challenging the established ways of describing one's sojourn at the Porte.

### Conclusion

In the correspondence between Ottoman, Moldavian and Polish-Lithuanian courts in the seventeenth century, references to friendship and affection were ubiquitous. Thus, one would expect that gift exchanges would be a natural form of triggering and reinforcing amicable relations; however, the visions of friendship that each side tried to impose as dominant were the very source of discord. For the Ottomans, friendship could be established with Poland-Lithuania within the hierarchical framework that guided the protocols of power at the imperial court. Thus, for them true friendship meant that the Polish kings and their alter egos – ambassadors arriving from the Commonwealth – would accept the superiority of the Ottoman sultan. Naturally, this demand was unacceptable for their counterparts who argued that the friendship between both sovereigns was only possible on the principle of relative equality. In turn, Moldavian voyvodes sought to find a place within the framework in order to have their

<sup>78</sup> AUGUSTYNIAK, “Wolę mieć religionem frigidam niż nullam”, 88

<sup>79</sup> JOANNA MATYASIK, *Obóz polityczny króla Michała Korybuta Wiśniowieckiego* (Warsaw: Neriton, 2011), 274.

status on the diplomatic plane enhanced and acknowledged. In short, each player's standpoint on what friendship implied was impossible to reconcile with the others, giving rise to tussles over which interpretation should prevail.

The issue of gifts and their status was crucial in this struggle. Since gift exchanges structured hierarchies at the imperial court, the ceremonial presentation of gifts by the Polish-Lithuanian diplomats would inevitably imply the latter's concession to Ottoman demands; in turn, outright rejection could readily be interpreted as turning down friendship with the Porte, an alternative which meant war. Hence, Polish-Lithuanian diplomats developed a divergent discourse regarding friendship between monarchs, arguing that true affection made gifts not only unnecessary, but in fact juxtaposed to true and honest affection. Consequently, envoys were not to present gifts in the name of the king, a strategy that could easily offend the hosts and trigger a spiral of negative emotions, anger, fury and hostility. In order to reconcile the need for peace with anxiety over possible ceremonial subordination, the envoys played on the double identity of ambassador – on the one hand, a private individual, while on the other alter ego of the king and the Commonwealth. Thus, gift exchanges were to be removed from the ceremonial framework and restricted to the realm of interpersonal sociability. While this also created tensions with the Ottoman dignitaries, the strategy usually worked. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that the twofold interpretation of the relationship between gifts and affection was due to the Ottomans' superior position in the negotiations. In Moldavia, facing a weaker adversary, Polish-Lithuanian envoys were quick to reject gifts offered by the voyvodes on the grounds that they were not a sign of true friendship, but merely an attempt at bribery.

Finally, apart from representing the king and the Commonwealth at the Porte, the envoys also had to successfully craft the account of their mission in order to win over the *szlachta* and increase their prestige. As such, they had not only to present their success in negotiating with the Porte, but also fashion their persona as model citizens of the Commonwealth, upholding the notions of virtue and liberty in the face of the sultan and his servants, perceived as the embodiment of despotism. As I have argued, the way in which this was accomplished was by drawing on the political culture of the nobility in its public life and parliamentary institutions, while at the same time emphasising the qualities of prudence, restraint and control of emotions, in contrast to the image of Ottoman officials as lacking true virtues and driven by emotions and avarice. The dominant blueprint for such a narrative was presented by Krzysztof Zbaraski's embassy of 1622–3, which would become a source of perusal for later ambassadors. This constant reference to Zbaraski's account had an important consequence in that the attitude towards emotions of the prince himself – a follower of the Lipsian tradition of Neosticism, but in its republican form – coloured diplomatic accounts until the end of the seventeenth century.