

Movements of the Hungarian Estates and the Ottoman Empire at the Turn of the 17th and the 18th Centuries*

Sándor Papp
University of Szeged – Károli
Gáspár Protestant University,
Budapest

The developed states of Europe in the 17th and the 18th centuries, which often had fights of the estates, considered the distant Ottoman Empire a kind of ideal monarchy having a smooth government though sometimes it seemed rather despotic. Not only politicians engaged in everyday politics compared the two different systems. People in Europe always used to long for the unknown parts of the world where they thought everything was better and more human than in their own world. They imagined this exotic empire of the East as a romantic dream world. Let me refer to Goethe's famous poems entitled „*West-östlicher Diwan*”¹ which are about the dreams of a European about the undamaged East. Generations of Europeans have admired and respected the Eastern world. Diplomats working in the East had a different impression, e.g. Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, who spent years (1789-1804) in the capital of the Ottoman state in Istanbul – Constantinople in those days – as the interpreter of the Embassy of his country, the Habsburg Empire. His monumental ten-volume History of the Ottoman Empire is perhaps unsurpassable. In the preface of the seventh volume he says that both the historian and the reader can have a sign of relief² as the era of fratricide, child-tax and the like, which would be unbearably cruel for a European, will soon come to an end and a much more human era of Ottoman history will arise when learning and art are supported. Gyula Lázár,³ who lived later, was the second to summarise the history of the Ottoman Empire in Hungarian after Sámuel Baranyi Decsi. In his compilation, passable in quality, he adds to the former thought – perhaps borrowed from Hammer – that in the new era mentioned above the military glory of the Ottomans was on the wane, and it could break through the thick clouds only on rare occasions and never again steadily.

During the course of its history Hungary accompanied the Ottoman Empire along its way from reaching the zenith of its power to its decline when it became the „sick man of Europe”. Due to the victory of Sultan Süleymân I over Hungarians and the successful

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¹ Johann Wolfgang Goethe: *West-östlicher Divan*. Baden-Baden, 1988.

² Joseph Hammer-Purgstall: *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*. VII. Pest, 1. „Endlich kann der Schreiber und Leser osmanischer Geschichte freyer aufathmen von dem erstickenden Brodem der Blutfall.”

³ Lázár Gyula: *A török birodalom története*. Nagy-Becskerek, 1890.

fight of the Habsburg Empire against the Ottomans Hungary got stuck between the two great powers and naturally it drifted to both confronting sides.⁴ After Hungary lost its existence as an independent state members of the political élite standing on different sides hoped to achieve their own aims making use of the push forward of both conquerors. The Habsburg Empire had intended to annex Hungary for long, first of course through marriage. Integration to the Habsburg-ruled territories seemed much easier because the Habsburg Empire was a feudal state with a similar structure. The situation on the territory occupied by the Ottoman state was quite different. No former institutions were likely to survive there unless the partial function of the state survived in vassal status. In Hungarian history there have been numerous examples which show that local political forces can benefit from being under pressure by two sides. Discovering the interests of both great powers they can improve their position. It was especially true when the fight for a homogeneous empire started in the second half of the 17th century.⁵ It was led by King Leopold I who later became the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Hungarian nobility was always suspicious of any rule which intended to deprive them of their precious privileges e.g. to reduce their immunity from taxes. Their policy did not change for nearly a hundred years, i.e. whenever Vienna – rightly very often – took measures for the sake of the unity of the empire without regard to the interests of the Hungarian nobility they – having the support of the major part of smaller nobility – did not shrink from asking for the protection of the Ottoman Empire which was regarded as the „original enemy”.

Due to the absolutist efforts of the Habsburg Empire and also to counter-reformation Hungarian feudal society conflicted the Court in Vienna by the second half of the 17th century.⁶ At the end of the 17th and at the beginning of the 18th century there were five movements against Habsburg rule, which were conspiracies, armed uprisings or a long war of independence. They have one thing in common: sooner or later all of them established contact with the Ottoman Empire.

The formula is the following: the Hungarian nobility who protected their privileges against the absolutist state and also their Protestant religion against the revival of Catholicism tried to get under the protection of an empire which was considered as a kind

⁴By this I mean the Northern and Western parts of Hungary, which were in the sphere of interest of the Habsburg Empire. It was called the Hungarian Kingdom with Pozsony (Bratislava) as its capital. And I also mean Transylvania, which was the remnant of Hungary ruled by the rival king, János Szapolyai. From 1541 on this territory was held by his son who was appointed by the Sultan. And in 1570 he was the head of the state, which was declared independent, and by this state we mean Transylvania and not the abovementioned Hungarian Kingdom. In this year the Habsburg king, Maximilian and king János Zsigmond signed an agreement according to which from then on only the former could bear the title of a king and the latter could bear the title of „Princeps Transylvaniae”.

⁵Pálffy Géza: *A tizenhatodik század történelme*. Budapest, 2000. 102-104.; R. Várkonyi Ágnes: *Három évszázad Magyarország történelmében*. I. 79-81.

⁶Ágoston Gábor – Oborni Teréz: *A tizenhetedik század története*. Budapest, 2000. 202-210.; The best summary of the history of feudal movements is perhaps – and I have drawn much upon it –: Benczédi László: *Rendiség, abszolútizmus és centralizáció a XVII. század végi Magyarországon (1664–1685)*. Budapest, 1980.

of ideal state by European absolutism. The formula is even more complicated if we remember that the religious and cultural background of the Ottoman Empire, being a multinational state with several religions on its territory, was very different from the Hungarian one. In the Ottoman Empire the Islam was the frame and the legitimacy of the political and military power. What did the Ottoman Empire think of the Hungarian request? A state with a completely different structure organised in the spirit of Muslim imperialism, a state, which had no knowledge of the inheritable character of feudal estates and acknowledged the inviolability of private property only in a highly restricted way. The aim of this study is not to describe the Ottoman-Hungarian-Habsburg connections of the era in question but to discover if the Ottoman ruling élite could really understand the political motives of the request of the Hungarian nobility.

We do not have diaries or recollections of the politicians of the Ottoman state. There are economic records among the sources in the archives of the Ottoman Empire. You can rarely find documents with political contents or documents reflecting the opinion of people who made decisions.⁷ That is why I am going to rely upon contemporary narrative sources. I have studied three works: Findıklılı Mehmed Ağa: *Silahdâr tarihi*. (History of Silahdâr);⁸ Mehmed Râşid: *Târih-i Râşid* (historic work of Râşid);⁹ Defterdâr Sâri Mehmed paşa: *Zübde-i vekayiât* (The Essence of Stories).¹⁰ The above authors spent all their lives or the major part of it serving the Porte. Their opinions reflect the attitude of the Turkish political élite of those times. I always took the opportunity of contrasting data of sources with those of documents and drew different conclusions whenever it was possible.

⁷The best source of most confidential information, the writ of the Grand Vizier addressed to the Sultan is: Fodor Pál: *Szultán, birodalmi tanács, nagyvezír. Változások az oszmán hatalmi elitben és a nagyvezíri előterjesztés kialakulása*. In: *A szultán és az aranyalma*. Budapest, 2001, 45-66.

⁸Silahdâr Findıklılı Mehmed Ağa: *Silahdâr tarihi*. I-II. İstanbul, 1928. The author was originally called Hocazâde Mehmed ağa, who was born in December of 1658 and died in 1723. He had the title of Findıklılı, which was the name of a suburb of Istanbul where he came from. He spent all his life working for the Porte where he was first appointed *sülflü baltacı* (halbeldier of yellow, sulphur like colour) then *bostancı* (gardener), *şeferli, bülend ağası, çokadâr* and finally *silahdar* soon before he retired. Franz Babinger: *Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und ihre Werke*. Leipzig, 1927.253. (Later to be referred to as GOW)

⁹Mehmed Râşid: *Târih-i Râşid*. I-VI. 1282. İstanbul, The author is from Istanbul. He was born the son of a *cadi* called Molla Mustafa who came from Malatya. He used to study in the capital then he entered the position of the historiographer of the empire. He had worked in this position until he was recalled in 1721 and then he became the *cadi* of Aleppo. When he was sent as the envoy to Persia he was already the *cadi* of Mecca. From 1730 on he was the *cadi* of Istanbul then he became the *kadiasker* of Anatolya. He died in 1735 in Istanbul. The chronicle written by him was the continuation of Naima's famous historic work. GOW, 268-269.

¹⁰Defterdar Sarı Mehmed Paşa: *Zübde-i vekayiât. Tahlil ve metin*. (1066-1116/1656-1704) Published by: Dr. Abdulkadir Özcan, Ankara, 1995. 124. Türt Tarih Kurumu; in the foreword of the publication a fact, which is most interesting for us, is mentioned, i.e. he had worked for the Porte from a very young age, first in the (an office which keeps record of estates) in *Ruznâme-i evvel* then he held the position of defterdâr seven times. In his last position he used to defend Selânik (Thessaloniki) until he was taken to the scaffold. Pages XVII-XXXII. from the foreword of the above publication.

The first event to be examined is the so-called *conspiracy of Palatine*, which was started by Palatine Ferenc Wesselényi. The Peace-treaty of Vasvár was signed after the victory of the Habsburg army in 1664. But as Hungarian interests were not considered at all the contemporary Hungarian politicians were so indignant that they started to organise a conspiracy. Sarı Mehmed paşa talks about the Wesselényi movement in 1092 (1681). It says that it was customary for rich Hungarians who used to own countries e.g. the Zrínyis and the Batthyánys to meet in Vienna on the birthday of Jesus. In the year when the Ottoman Empire besieged Candia on the island of Crete (H.1078/ K.1667–1668), Hungarians celebrated the holiday in the court of Emperor Leopold, who asked them to forsake their faith and to accept Catholicism. It was to be feared that they would be executed if they refused to do so. As they did not dare to refuse the request they mentioned that they had to consult other Hungarian nobles, so they returned home. Then they agreed that they would turn to the Ottoman Porte. They declared that they accepted the authority of the Porte and they refused the emperor's request. Peter Zrínyi's man arrived at Banja Luka, Bosnia with presents. As Köprülüzâde Fazıl Ahmed paşa was busy besieging Candia the legate was kept waiting and he finally died there. Therefore they could not help the Hungarians. At the same time Batthyány (Bakánoğlu instead of Ferenc Frangepán by mistake) who revealed the plot and also divulged it to the emperor himself was imprisoned. Leopold was indignant. Many of the organisers restored their loyalty to the emperor who deprived the disloyal ones of their property. The children of Péter Zrínyi could keep only one castle in possession. Governors were appointed to the rest of the castles.¹¹

It is obvious from the above that the author mixes up the combination of the palatine with the armed uprising which followed it and the execution of Ferenc Nádasdy, Péter Zrínyi and Ferenc Frangepán in a summary manner. It is especially remarkable that the Ottomans did not understand the religious matters of the Hungarian aristocracy.

Silahdâr begins treating the era with categorising the Hungarian population according to religion. He divides it into two parts; first of them are fetishists (*putperest*); others are non-fetishists (*puta tapmaz*). The editor of the chronicle put it in the footnote that the former are Catholics the latter are Protestants.¹² Unfortunately you can still find this simplification in present day Turkish special literature according to which the anti-Habsburg opposition of nobles were all Protestants.¹³ Even historians who know Hungarian special literature very well share this opinion, e.g. Tayyib Gökbilgin who touched upon the Thököly and Rákóczi wars of independence in two of his studies.¹⁴ It is generally known that the leaders of the movements who were aristocrats were

¹¹Defterdar Sarı Mehmed Paşa: *Zübde-i vekayiât*, 124.

¹²Silahdâr I., 741.

¹³Prof. Dr. Yaşar Yücel – Prof. Dr. Ali Sevim: *Türkiye tarihi*. 3. Ankara, 1991. 173.

¹⁴Tayyib Gökbilgin: *Rákóczi Ferenc II. ve osmanlı devleti himayesinde Macar Mülteciler*. In: *Türk - Macar kültür münasebetleri ışığı altında II. Rákóczi Ferenc ve Macar mültecileri; Thököly İmre ve Osmanlı - Avusturya ilişkilerindeki rolü. Birinci ölüm (167-1682)*. Symposium on Rákóczi Ferenc II and the Hungarian Refugees in the Light of Turco - Hungarian Cultural Relations (31 May – 3 June 1976) University of İstanbul, the Faculty of Letters. İstanbul, 1976. 1-17.; 180-210.

predominantly Catholics and only the majority of members of smaller nobility were Protestants.

It is remarkable that Sarı Mehmed paşa, when talking about the movement, uses a notion not used in Hungarian language in those times. He calls the part of Hungary west of Transylvania „Orta Macar” i.e. Central Hungary. By this he means that there used to be a geographical and political unit under Hungarian rule, which was situated between Habsburg Hungary and Transylvania. Parts of Hungary under Turkish rule were not considered part of the Hungarian state although geographically, of course, they were.¹⁵ Present day Turkish historiography derives first of all from the work of İsmail Hakki Uzunçarşılı (volume III/2, first publication: 1954).¹⁶ He relies mainly on the works of Silahdâr Mehmed ağa and Râşid besides documents. In his opinion during the reign of Leopold I. Hungarians were subject to heavy oppression from the point of view of governing the state and the freedom of religion. The Protestant part of the population felt insulted in its religious and national feelings. The rebels turned to France first but their request was turned down. According to him the movement was the result of religious conflicts and the members of the two religions of Hungary started to fight. Only the name of Ferenc Nádasdy is mentioned as the one who informed the court about the rebellion and who was executed later.¹⁷ The sources above and the elaboration do not mention the way the Wesselényi movement wanted to regulate its relations with the Porte.

The Hungarian movement was the trump card of the French king Louis XIV against Leopold I so that the latter would not dare to help the Spanish who had a hold on Flanders, which the former was preparing to occupy. As soon as the French got to know that Leopold I. did not enter the war they broke off negotiations with Hungarians.¹⁸ As France was reluctant to help the group of forces with pro-Turkish policy became stronger and from then on the Ottomans were the only international relation of the movement. Wesselényi's letter of 27th August 1666 contains the programme of the Turkish alliance (or rather submission). This document contained the instructions for the envoy of Transylvania sent to the Port. It was the first attempt known by me when the Hungarian party presented its wishes in a draft of treaty (*'ahdnâme*) in the form of a letter to the dignitaries of the Porte. One of the paragraphs says that Hungary is ready to pay taxes if its wishes are accepted. Palatine Wesselényi stipulated a tax of maximum one thousand thalers and the amount of the tax would have become less proportional to the conditions the court of the sultan had been able to offer. The taxes on parts of Hungary under Turkish rule, which were defined earlier, would not have changed and the Ottomans would not have interfered in the possessions of the nobility, and also in carrying of arms and migration. (If you read the draft it is clear that nobles who had their estates on the borderline with the territory under Turkish rule basically supported the movement and they wanted to secure their position.) They also demanded that in return for paying tax the

¹⁵Fekete Lajos: *A hódoltság-kori törökség Magyarországra vonatkozó földrajzi ismeretei*. I. Hadtörténelmi Közlemények 31 (1930) 6-7.

¹⁶*Türkiye tarihi*. 3. 173-174.

¹⁷İsmail Hakki Uzunçarşılı: *Osmanlı Tarihi*. III/2. 73-74.

¹⁸Benczédi, 1980. 18.

Porte should not interfere in the country's internal affairs and it should not encroach upon the liberties and the customs of the people. It also must not obstruct the election of the king and it must not force the country to make war without its consent. They wished to call the money they would pay not a tax but a present as, it was customary in the Habsburg Empire (the sum of thirty thousand gold coins paid to the Porte annually in the 16th century was called „Ehrengeschenk”).¹⁹ Wesselényi wished that the sultan should be called the patron of Hungary and not its lord in the draft-contract.²⁰ I believe that the analysis of the conditions above is very important when we try to have a better understanding of the relationship between the Hungarian feudal movements and the Porte. Although it is not clear yet how the above draft is related to the similar drafts at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries but it is sure that it was related to the *'ahdnâme* of the sultan given to Imre Thököly and to the similar drafts occurring during the Rákóczi war of independence.²¹

The relation between the Ottoman and the Habsburg Empire was settled after the Peace treaty of Vasvár. Having signed the commercial contract and having founded the *Handelskompanie* it was in the interest of the Habsburg Empire to maintain peace, which was the main condition of profitable commerce. When Hungarian nobility wanted to

¹⁹Ernst Dieter Petritsch: *Tribut oder Ehrengeschenk? Ein Beitrag zu den habsburgisch-osmanischen Beziehungen in der zweiten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts*. Ein Beitrag zu den habsburgisch-osmanischen Beziehungen in der zweiten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts: Archiv und Forschung. Das Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv in seiner Bedeutung für die Geschichte Österreichs und Europas. Wiener Beiträge zur Geschichte der Neuzeit 20 (1993) 49-58.

²⁰Deák Farkas: *A bíjdosól levéltára*. Budapest, 1888. 227-232.; Benczédi, 1980. 20.

²¹See the detailed analysis of the *'ahdnâme* given to Thököly later. The instructions for János Pápay, the envoy of the Prince sent to the Porte originated from 26th or 27th October 1705, from the period of the War of Independence. His task was to make a contract with the Ottoman Empire. A draft-*'ahdnâme* consisting of five points was compiled by Rákóczi's secret chancellor. Benda Kálmán - Esze Tamás - Maksay Ferenc - Pap László (prepared for the press by --): Ráday Pál iratai 1703-1706. Rádai Pál iratai I. (later to be referred to as Ráday I.) Budapest, 1955. 449. Akadémia K. The second trial of the Hungarian rebels to enter into alliance with the Porte took place in spring of 1709. Then they presented a draft for an *'ahdnâme* consisting of ten points but they were not successful this time either. Thaly Kálmán: *Történelmi naplók (1663-1719)*. Budapest, 1975. 252-256. MHHS XXVII.: The draft made by the chancellery: Dunamelléki Református Egyházkerület Levéltára. Ráday család levéltára. Ráday I. Pál iratai. Kancelláriai iratai. Külpolitikai iratai. IV. d/2-13. (Diplomáciai kapcsolatok a török Portával. 1703-1710.) (The Archives of the Danubian District of the Hungarian Reformed Church. The archives of the Ráday family. The documents of Ráday I. Pál. His chancellery documents. His documents about foreign policy. IV.d/2-13. (Diplomatic relations with the Turkish Porte. 1703-1710.) (later to be referred to as Ráday 1t. IV. d/2-13.) No. 10 document p.49-51.; The points of the *'ahdnâme* launched in December of 1687, for the estates of Transylvania: Arhivele Naționale ale României, Direcția Generală, Documente Turcești (ANR DG-București Doc. turc.) XXIX/2362. Its publication: Tahsin Gemil: *Relațiile Țărilor Române cu Poarta Otomană în documente turcești (1601-1712)*. București, 1984. 374-376.; BOA (İstanbul) Divan-i hümayun Nâme defteri 5. 14-17.; Ahmet Refik (Ahmed Refiq): *Memâlik-i 'Osmâniyede krâl Râkôçî ve tevâbi'i (1109-1154)*. İstanbul, 1333(H)11-14.; Gemil, 1984. 376-378.

submit to the Ottoman Empire their main aim was self-defence and to secure their survival.²²

The next period to be examined is the period of Kuruc²³ attacks (it is the period of the insurrection led by Imre Thököly and Ferenc Rákóczi at the turn of the 17th century). Then many people fled to Transylvania because several Hungarian aristocrats – rebels – were executed and their property was confiscated and because of the abuse of the Habsburg troops. These refugees soon started an armed movement against Habsburg rule. Armed fight all over the country began only then. The Turkish chronicles mentioned above do not speak about these events and they underline the importance of Imre Thököly already then when he did not participate in the events yet. Silahdâr does not mention Thököly's father, István by name but he uses a mis-spelt form DWDWQ, which may be the distorted form of the word „*ductus, duca*” (leader, prince in Latin and in Italian). Believing that so-called “Orta Macar (Central Hungary)” had always been an independent territory he refers to István Thököly as its king. He is well-posted about the fact that the family gained its fortune from commerce (the word horse-dealer is used instead of cattle-dealer) and the centre of their estates, the town of Késmárk (Kežmarok, Käsmark) is mentioned.²⁴ In Turkish letters written to Thököly „of Késmárk” as a title of nobility is often used.

According to Silahdâr it was the Hungarian refugees who asked Thököly to be their leader under the leadership of, who they could protect themselves against Habsburg troops.²⁵ In Turkish special literature, relying on their chroniclers, they mention²⁶ that Thököly applied personally to the beylerbeyi of Borosjenö asking the Porte to recognise Upper Northern Hungary as its vassal state like Transylvania. Uzunçarşılı says that the request was refused only because Kasım paşa had a bad impression of Hungarians; he considered them unreliable. The above author talks about another trial in 1675. Then, supposedly, the envoys of Thököly reached Istanbul but the Turks refused them again.

I do not know if Thököly really had a hand in sending envoys again in the summer of 1671 but it is a fact that people seeking refuge from Habsburg revenge did send envoys to the Porte. The envoys asked for an auxiliary army of five thousand soldiers. Hungary was ready to pay a tax of fifty thousand thalers a year and to submit to Turkish rule. This time the Turkish government answered. The sultan promised patronage and advised them to turn to the paşa of Buda to talk about the details. But the refugees were not given direct military help. The Porte was about to fight the Polish Republic of Nobles. The cause of the conflict was the Cossacks who lived on the Western territory of Ukraine. They wanted to secede from Poland and they accepted the authority of the Sultan.²⁷ Soon Doroshenko

²²Benczédi, 1980. 20.

²³The word of *kuruc* (read kuruts) means in Hungarian a soldier, who revolted against the Habsburgs at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries.

²⁴Silahdâr I, 742.; Uzunçarşılı III/2. 74-75.

²⁵Silahdâr I. 742.; Uzunçarşılı III/2. 75.

²⁶Gökbilgin, 1976. 3.

²⁷Benczédi, 1980. 58.; It must be remarked that the Cossack ataman, Doroshenko accepted the authority of the Sultan and the state of being the vassal of the Turks. To a certain extent it was a situation similar to the movement of the Kurucs who fought against the Habsburgs. I have not yet found any facts to prove if the Kurucs looked upon the movement of the Cossacks as an example.

put his country under the protection of the Russian tsar, which was the cause of another war. Vienna was very upset about the peace- negotiations between the Russians and the Turks and also because the Porte did not intend to confirm the lapsed Peace treaty of Vasvár.²⁸

It was obvious that the Ottoman Empire did not want to help the refugees therefore on their meeting at River Kraszna in 1679 they regarded it important to have freedom of religion but they did not insist on submission. This is why Mihály Teleki the captain of Kővár castle, the trusted man of Mihály Apafi, the Prince of Transylvania, requested Thököly to remain faithful to the Sultan because he believed that Turkish military help would be given after the peace treaty with the Russians.²⁹ Apafi asked the paşa of Várad to accept Thököly instead of Pál Wesselényi as the leader of the refugees³⁰ already on 6th October 1679. After a negotiation with a *çavuş* in February of 1680 Thököly tied his future life together with the Porte and it was bound with the strongest ties.³¹ The Russian-Turkish peace treaty signed in Radzin (11th February 1681) was the decisive turn. In March of 1681 "Csonka" Mehmed bey appealed to Thököly. It was then that the Kuruts general wrote his famous vow to Ibrahim, the paşa of Buda: „Even if everyone becomes a „labanc” (Habsburg loyalist) I will be faithful to the Sublime Porte, I will never betray it.”³²

It is the evidence that Uzunçarşılı is not accurate when saying that Thököly's request was answered by the Porte only in the summer of 1682. The Porte recognised the Kuruts king, who was at the zenith of his power, the Prince of Central Hungary in a letter of appointment of the sultan (*berât-i hümayun*)³³ and in a letter of contract consisting of 14 paragraphs (*'ahd-nâme-i hümayun*).³⁴ The latter document – although its translation was

However the fact that both of them used the same solution to their problem shows that there must have been some kind of relationship between them. And the Porte itself had a similar policy when treating the Kurucs and the Cossack question.

²⁸GOR VI. 1830. 360.; Eudoxiu Hurmuzaki: *Fragmente zur Geschichte Rumänien*. III. Bucureşti, 1884. 322-323.; Benczédi, 1980. 98.

²⁹Benczédi, 1980. 111-113.; Gerdely Sámuel: Teleki Mihály Levelezése. (TML) VIII. Budapest. 1926. 518.

³⁰Szilády Áron – Szilágyi Sándor: *Török-Magyarkori Államokmánytár* (TMÁOT) VI. Bupapest, 1871. 72.

³¹"*ha Isten után az török fegyvere minket haza nem viszen, az én itiletem szerint keresztény királyok alkalmatosságával vékonyan remélhetni szabadulásunkat....[...if we can not get home with the help of God or with the help of Turkish arms I believe that there is hardly any chance of it with the help of the Christian kings ...]*" Deák Farkas: *Thököly Imre levelei*. Budapest, 1882. 114 .

³²"*En mindazonáltal, ha mind labanccá lesznek is, s csak egyedül maradok is, a Fényes Portához való hűségemben ... mindvégig állhatatosan megmaradok, atól el nem szakadok.*" MOL. Esterházy nádor iratai, 674/6609. Quoted by: Benczédi, 1980. 114.; About the visit by the Mehmed ağa (Csonka bég): Angyal Dávid: *Késmárki Thököly Imre*. Budapest, 1888. 232-233.

³³ÖStA HHStA Türkische Urkunden 26th July- 23rd August 1682./1093. The Muslim month of Şaban, German translation: GOR VI. 731-732.

³⁴Göttingen, Turcica 30. 51v.-52v.; Zdenka Veselá-Přenosilová: *Quelques chartes Turques concernant la correspondance de la Porte Sublime avec Imre Thököly*. Archiv Orientální (AO, Praha) 29 (1961) p. 553-556. és 566-568.; Ahmet Refik: *Türk hizmetinde kral Tököli Imre (1683-*

available in Hungarian archives – escaped the attention of researchers. It was supposed that the document of appointment issued by Hammer-Purgstall was the so-called *'ahdnâme* (treaty) of Thököly. The part of the document written in Turkish was not taken notice of by Hungarian researchers. Zdenka Veselá-Přenosiťová published its original text in Arabic and its translation into French.³⁵

The relation between Central Hungary lead by Thököly and the Ottoman Empire was co-ordinated in 14 paragraphs in the following fields:

The first subject is the legitimacy of power i.e. who inherits the power in case Thököly dies. Thököly, who „*was working hard for the interest of my empire and who was always sincerely faithful to it*” was under the protection of the Sultan. The document emphasises that the Kuruc king is related to the family of Gábor Bethlen who occupied and annexed important territories to Transylvania in the first third of the 17th century. And he was able to achieve it with Turkish support. We get to know from the document that the Sultan takes the same measures in case of the king of Central Hungary as in case of Transylvania when recognising the prince. He declares Thököly „*according to the kind elections and prayers of the people in Central Hungary*” the king of Central Hungary. Ilona Zrínyi (Thököly's wife) is also mentioned in the *'ahdnâme*. She was the daughter of Péter Zrínyi rebels against the absolutism of Leopold I. According to Turkish understanding the martyrdom of Péter Zrínyi was a sacrifice made for the Sultan. Therefore the Ottoman dynasty is obliged to protect the ones who lost their parents and even their husbands and wives. When Thököly dies „*the successor should be elected by the Hungarian nation and his name should be reported to my Sublime Porte. But no papists (pápišta) should be proposed to become a Hungarian king. If someone becomes a papist, but nevertheless he applies for this position he should be hindered by my empire and not let be a king*”. The quotation above regulates succession partly. It is highly interesting that the Turks are so much anti-Catholics. Talking about this paragraph I would like to call attention to two important elements: 1) As we could see it from the narrative sources the Ottoman chronicles say that the only reason for anti-Habsburg movements in Hungary is the contradiction of religions. And our quotation is in accordance with it. 2) The fact that the Hungarian word „pápišta” is used in the original Turkish text instead of the word Catholic shows that the document in question relies on a Hungarian document. In my present study I wish only to refer to the fact that every Hungarian movement beginning with the Wesselényi movement wished to subjugate the rest of Hungary to the Sultan in return for the military support against the Habsburg Empire. The conditions of submission were organised in paragraphs – as you can see above – and it was handed in to the Porte as a draft (*'ahdnâme*). I believe that the document in question was born according to this process i.e. they translated the Hungarian sentences of the draft into Turkish where it was possible. If there was not an adequate terminology in Turkish then they used the Hungarian word written with Arabic letters. There is another example of it in the third

1705). *Orta Macar Kırálı Tököli İmre'nin Türkiye'de geçen hayatına dair Hazinesi Evrak vesikalarını havidir*. İstanbul, 1932. 8-10. Muallim Ahmet Halit kitabhanesi

³⁵A short representation: Vojtech Kopčan: *A török Porta Thököly-politikája*. in: Benczédi László (ed.) *A Thököly-felkelés és kora*. Budapest, 1983.125-126.

paragraph of the *'ahdnâme* where it says: „*the religious ceremonies (âyîn), customs ('âdet) and the rights in Hungary and Croatia as part of Hungary should be respected. Accordingly, the ceremonies of the Calvinist (Turk. kâlviništa, Hung. kálvinista) and Lutheran (Turk. lûterân, Hung. lutheránus) religions must not be disturbed...*” (I would like to remark that the writer of the Turkish text did not know real facts, as the overwhelming majority of Croatians were Catholics.)

By economic relations between Hungary and the Ottoman Empire they meant only tax paying and commerce. The Sultan allowed the merchants of Central Hungary to trade freely. The annual tax was forty thousand „black (kara) gurus” which was the equivalent of the silver taller. The permanent Hungarian envoy at the Porte and the envoy extraordinary whose task was to deliver the tax from Hungary were supported by the Porte. The same practice was applied in Transylvania.

The anti-Catholic character of the document is evident. There is an extra paragraph about the Order of Jesuits. „*The king of Central Hungary and its people must get rid of the Jesuits who are the enemy of the country and who often obstruct and disturb their religious ceremonies.*” The archbishop of Esztergom and the bishops are obliged to carry out the above instruction.

The last paragraph is about the relations between the Ottoman state and the new Hungarian state. It says that Turkish troops must not disturb the Hungarian population. The castles, palisades (*palanka*) occupied by the Turkish army must be handed over to the Hungarians so that they could revive the ruined territories. Hungarian matters must be included in the peace treaty between the Turks and the Habsburgs. The Ottoman Empire must protect the Hungarians in the future. Item 9 refers to parts of the agreement signed on 11th November 1606 by the Habsburgs and the Ottomans, the so-called Peace treaty of Zsitvatorok which concern Hungarians: „*The paragraphs of the treaty signed between us and the Habsburgs seventy five years ago which were made in the interest of Central Hungary in the frames of a letter of contract ('ahdnâme-i hümâyûn) must be respected. According to the conditions of the above treaty Hungarians must have the right to keep their villages, communities the government of the country and other affairs as they used to.*”

The Ottoman emperor confirmed the treaty with his oath, as it was customary.

The next movement to be examined is the War of independence under the leadership of Ferenc Rákóczi II (1703-1711).

Turkish chroniclers hardly ever mention his name when they speak about the War of independence in 1703-1711. Râšid knows it well that the fight started near the borderline between Hungary and Poland. He writes that Ferenc Rákóczi had an army of sixty thousand people. He gives an interesting fact: five hundred soldiers were sent to support Rákóczi both from the town of Belgrade and Temesvár (Timișoare). There is no evidence of it in Hungarian documents.³⁶ But a nearly identical description can be found in the chronicle of Sarı Mehmed paša.³⁷

³⁶Râšid III, 128.

³⁷Sarı Mehmed Paša, 1995. 839.

A much more detailed description can be found about an event which is considered to be only an episode in Hungarian history. It says that after long years of emigration Ferenc Rákóczi II received an invitation from the Sultan's court. In Turkish special literature – which refers to sources – you can read that it was Ferenc Rákóczi II who took the initiative to enter into relations. He sent his confidential secretary János Pápay as his envoy to Wallachia who arrived at the Porte with the help of the voivode of Wallachia „İskerletzâde Nikola” (Nikolae Mavrocordat). Then the Grand Vizier sent one of his ağas, Lipveli Ahmed together with Pápay to the Prince who was in France. Râşid in his chronicle quotes from the letter sent to Rákóczi: „*We present you the kingdom of Transylvania and Hungary -like my noble forefathers used to present it to your forefather and to your father-which are parts of our well-defended empire and which have been occupied by the Habsburgs for a short time.*” (1128.Descendant of Rebiyülâhir./11. 04. 1716.)³⁸ As opposed to Râşid, Uzunçarşılı writes that it was Küçük Bahri ağa who escorted János Pápay, Rákóczi's diplomat at the Porte to the Prince. His rank was more important in this case than his person; he was a „*kapıcıbaşı*” (*kapucibaşı*). People in this rank used to be the representatives of the Porte when the Prince of Transylvania was inaugurated and they used to deliver the Sultan's letters of confirmation. Fortunately we know the Turkish copies of documents issued by the Sultan and the Grand Vizier in those times. The most important data concerning my topic is that the above letter of the Sultan sent to Rákóczi is nothing but a document, which inaugurates him to be the Prince of Transylvania: „*As you have spared no effort to defend and guard the country of Transylvania – our inherited possession – like your glorious forefathers who used to be the Princes of Transylvania and as you have met our lordly requirements of friendship we present you the principality of Transylvania.*”³⁹

It means that at the beginning of the 18th century the Ottoman political élite „sitting at the green conference table” theoretically turned back to a former tradition according to which Transylvania was considered as a tax paying, dependent vassal state. The fact that Ferenc Rákóczi II had no choice but accept this situation shows that he was at their mercy although one of the most important aims of the foreign policy of the War of independence hall-marked with his name was to avoid dependence on the Turks.⁴⁰

On the evidence of the above facts my conclusion is that the decision makers of the Turkish empire did not understand much of the feudal efforts of the Hungarian nation in spite of the fact that by the beginning of the 18th century they had had relations with Hungary for almost two centuries. They believed that the only reason for the whole complicated Hungarian matter i.e. their opposition to the Habsburgs is a kind of conflict of religions. I suppose the Turks made even less efforts to understand the affair than during the reign of Süleymân I when the élite of the empire which intended to occupy

³⁸ Râşid IV, 1282. 219.

³⁹BOA (İstanbul) Nâme-i hümayûn defteri 6. p. 377-378.

⁴⁰Benda Kálmán: *II. Rákóczi Ferenc török politikájának első éve 1702-1705*. In: *Történeti Szemle*, 1962. 189-209.

Hungary made itself familiar with the essence of the Holy Crown doctrine.⁴¹ (I would not like to be unfavourable so let me remark that Europeans were not familiar with the world of the Islam either. They understood its legal and religious conditions only at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries after profound scientific research. When talking about the East both scientists and diplomats very often used half-truths or summary generalisations.)

The Ottomans were not familiar with the relations of the estates of Hungary but they did not really need it. They had the necessary legal conditions to integrate groups of people with a different religion. These communities were given wide-ranging local and collective rights so they could preserve their separation from the Islamic world.⁴² This way the Turks were able to treat local problems without fully understanding them. The empire could easily integrate the groups of Christians living in the inner territories the evidence of which is the letter of contract ('*ahdnâme*') given to the Christian community of the Sinai Mountain.⁴³ The Porte acted in the same way in case of non-Muslim vassal states i.e. Transylvania, Moldavia and Wallachia though to a different degree of dependence and inner autonomy. And they gave privileges of commerce (capitulation) using the same principle when international commerce started and they also tolerated the autonomy of the settlements in Western countries - in a legally limited way.

The political events in Hungary from 1703 on were not paid attention to by the Ottomans due to the internal situation of their empire. Not long before the Hungarian uprising broke out (Rákóczi leaves Poland and enters Hungary on 16th June 1703) a revolt took place, which shocked Istanbul. The movement was started by the „*cebeci*” (armourer) units but it was soon spreading among the corps garrisoned in the capital. The rebels organised the People's divan, they established law and order with the help of puritan and religious measures. Then they overthrew Mustafa II. and raised his brother to power under the name of Ahmed III. The era in Turkish history when the Rákóczi War of independence took place is called „*lâle devri*” (the era of tulips). In this period attention was paid not to wars but to peace, welfare and exquisite art and vast sums of money were paid for a tulip bulb- just like in Europe. Although Josef Matúz strongly believes that the *Edrine vakası* (the name of this period, which means „the events in Edirne” as Sultan Mustafa II. used to stay in Edirne during the above mentioned popular movement.) did not influence the functioning of the Ottoman state I still think that it were the movements of the 18th century and the inevitable opening to the Western world which followed them that caused the religious and national awakening in the Ottoman Empire which finally led to its fall.

⁴¹Celâlzâde Mustafa: *Geschichte Sultan Süleymân Kânunîs von 152 bis 1557 oder Tabakat ül-Memâlik ve derecât ül Mesâlik*. (Published by: Petra Kappert) Wiesbaden, 1981. 193a-193b.; Thúry József: *Török történetírók*. II Budapest, 1896. 187.

⁴²Halil İnalcık: "İmtiyâzât" The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition. (EI²) Leiden-London, III. 1179-1189.

⁴³BOA (İstanbul) İbnülemin Maliye ve İmtiyazat 3. Fatma Acun (Hacettepe Üniversitesi, Ankara) has found the document and called my attention to this archival material. I am very grateful for her kind help.



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