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The Election of Stephen Báthory as King of Poland and His Peace Treaty with the Sultan Murad III (1577) from an Ottoman Perspective¹

Wybór Stefana Batorego na króla Polski i jego
traktat pokojowy z sułtanem Muradem III
z 1577 roku z perspektywy osmańskiej

Abstract

The second Polish interregnum gave Stephen Báthory, voivode of Transylvania, an opportunity to seek the Polish throne for himself. When he entered the contest, he appeared to be one of the least likely candidates, and would have remained so had the Ottoman Empire not recognized the advantages of supporting him. Sultan Murad III and Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, who also directed Ottoman foreign affairs, exerted significant diplomatic and, at times, military pressure on the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. At the same time, they did everything in their power to persuade Báthory's much stronger and more promising opponent,

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the Habsburg emperor, to accept the choice made by the Polish estates. Consequently, one of Báthory's first major foreign policy initiatives was to stabilize relations between Poland and the Ottoman Empire and to conclude a peace treaty that served as a model for the later Polish–Ottoman treaties and as an example for the first Anglo–Ottoman trade agreement.

Keywords: Stephen Báthory, voivode of Transylvania, Sultan Murad III, 1577 Polish–Ottoman peace treaty, Polish–Ottoman treaties.

Abstrakt

Drugie polskie bezkrólewie otworzyło Stefanowi Batoremu, wojewodzie siedmiogrodzkiemu, możliwość ubiegania się o tron Rzeczypospolitej. W chwili przystąpienia do rywalizacji uchodził on za jednego z najmniej prawdopodobnych kandydatów – i pozostały nim, gdyby Imperium Osmańskie nie dostrzegło korzyści płynących z udzielenia mu poparcia. Sułtan Murad III oraz wielki wezyr Sokollu Mehmed Pasza, który kierował również polityką zagraniczną Porty, wywierali znaczną presję dyplomatyczną, a niekiedy także militarną, na Rzeczpospolitą. Jednocześnie czynili wszystko, co w ich mocy, aby przekonać znacznie silniejszego i bardziej obiecującego rywala Batorego – cesarza habsburskiego – do uznania wyboru polskich stanów. W rezultacie jednym z pierwszych ważnych posunięć Batorego w polityce zagranicznej było ustabilizowanie stosunków między Polską a Imperium Osmańskim oraz zawarcie traktatu pokojowego, który stał się wzorem dla późniejszych traktatów polsko-osmańskich, a także precedentem dla pierwszej angielsko-osmańskiej umowy handlowej.

Słowa klucze: Stefan Batory, wojewoda Siedmiogrodu, sułtan Murad III, traktaty polsko-osmańskie, traktat pokojowy z 1577 roku.

Stephen Báthory sent his permanent envoy, Sándor Kendy, to Istanbul in the second half of 1572 to inform the sultan's court that he had learned of the death of the Polish king, Sigismund Augustus (7 July 1572). The Swedish King John III Vasa (1568–1592), the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II and his relatives, and the Muscovite ruler Ivan IV (the Terrible) (1533–1584) were all considered possible candidates for the Polish throne, although, as Kendy noted, little credence was given to the latter.²

The House of Habsburg was regarded as a serious contender, but the Poles understood that such a choice would likely provoke an Ottoman

2 Endre Veress, *Báthory István erdélyi fejedelem és lengyel király levelezése* [Correspondence of István Báthory, Prince of Transylvania and King of Poland], vol. 1 (Kolozsvár: 1944), 43.

military response. As was customary in such situations (and would be repeated during the election of Stephen Báthory), the sultan instructed Khan Mehmed Giray I to support the French prince.³ As is well known, however, the new king, Henry of Valois, remained on the Polish throne only for a very short time, for he fled Poland on the night of 18–19 June 1574, after the death of his brother, Charles IX (1560–1574). His brief reign in Poland nevertheless proved highly consequential, as he issued the *Articuli Henriciani*, which, for the remainder of the Commonwealth's existence, regulated the relationship between the monarch and the Polish Diet to the benefit of the Polish estates.⁴

This development was viewed very unfavourably by the Ottoman Porte, which had supported the French prince's potential accession to the Polish throne owing to the traditionally strong Franco–Ottoman diplomatic and military ties – especially in contrast to the hostility of the Holy Roman Empire and to the shared strategic interest of the Russian Tsar and the Ottomans' regional adversary, Safavid Iran.⁵

Before examining the sequence of political events that brought Stephen Báthory to the Polish throne, it is necessary to consider briefly why supporting him served the interests of the Porte and how he emerged as the most viable among several candidates. As a prominent scholar of the subject has noted, Báthory's election contributed to closer relations between Poland and the Ottoman Empire.⁶ Ottoman rivalry with

3 Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *The Crimean Khanate and Poland-Lithuania International Diplomacy on the European Periphery (15th-18th Century). A Study of Peace Treaties Followed by an Annotated Edition of Relevant Documents*, vol. 47 (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2011), 101; Jan Rypka, "Briefwechsel der Hohen Pforte mit den Krimchanen im II. Bande von Feridüns Münšeät," in *Festschrift Georg Jacob zum siebzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. Theodor Menzel (Leipzig: 1932), 249–250; Feridün Ahmed Beg, *Mecmū'a-i münse'ätü s-selātin. (Collection of the Sultans' Letters)*, vol. 2 (İstanbul: 1275/1858), 557–558.

4 Dominik Kadzik, "The Political career of Gáspár Bekes and Ferenc Wesselényi in Poland-Lithuania during the Reign of Stefan Bathory," in *Poland and Hungary between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans: Chapters from the History of Poland and Hungary from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age*, eds. Sándor Papp, Stanisław A. Sroka and Gellért Ernő Marton, *Prace Historyczne* 148/4 (2021): 674.

5 Amirhousein Berazesh, *Political and Diplomatic Relations. Iran and World in Safavid Dynasty* (Tehran: Amir Kabir Publishing House, 2013), 279–284. The original book in Persian.

6 Stanisław Jaśkowski, Dariusz Kołodziejczyk and Piruz Mnatsakanyan, *Stosunki dawnej Rzeczypospolitej z Persją Safawidów i katolikosatem w Eczmiadzinie w świetle dokumentów archiwalnych. [The Relations of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth with Safavid Iran and the Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin in the light of archival documents]*, edited and provided with a historical introduction by Dariusz Kołodziejczyk (Warszawa: Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych Naczelnego Dyrekcja Archiwów Państwowych, 2017), 67.

Russia had intensified when Ivan IV conquered and then fully annexed the Astrakhan Khanate – previously part of the Volga sphere of influence in the Caspian region – in 1556. The Ottoman Empire attempted to reclaim the area and even planned to construct a canal connecting the Volga and Don rivers, thereby linking the Black Sea with the Caspian Sea and advancing strategic objectives against Iran. This project, however, was thwarted by Ivan IV. Successful completion of the canal would also have provided the Ottomans with a major commercial advantage, potentially allowing them to rival the Iranians in the silk trade.⁷ Despite this setback, the sultan's vassal, the Crimean khan Devlet Giray I (1551–1577), continued to raid Russian territory, notably burning Moscow in 1571. Although the tsar had promised to return Astrakhan to him, he failed to fulfil this commitment, prompting further military incursions.⁸

It is not known precisely when the Porte was informed that the Poles were once again without a king, but it is certain that the departure of King Henry and Báthory's candidacy were communicated to the grand vizier.⁹ Karl Rym and David Ungnad had already reported from Constantinople to Vienna that Henry Valois's departure from Poland was a confirmed fact in July 1574.¹⁰ The first hostile reaction called for immediate military intervention in Poland, ordering the sanjakbey of Filakovo (Fülek) to prepare for an invasion. News that King Valois's departure had disrupted the Polish–Ottoman peace had to be disseminated along the border. The intention was to compel the Poles, through military pressure, not to elect the sons of the Habsburg and Muscovite "kings" as their rulers. At the same time, spies were sent to Poland to ascertain the situation.¹¹ The sultan also warned the Habsburg emperor – the principal source of potential threat – about the Ottoman preparations, although he expressed the hope that peace would be maintained. The letter to the "King of Vienna,"

7 Akdeş Nimet Kurat, *Türkiye ve İdil Boyu (1569 Astrahan Seferi, Ten-İdil Kanalı ve XV-XVII Yüzyıl Osmanlı-Rus münasebetleri)* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Dil- ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Yayınları, 1966), Sayı 151.

8 Kołodziejczyk, *The Crimean Khanate and Poland-Lithuania*, 97–102.

9 László Szalay, *A magyar történelemhez. Erdély és a Porta 1567–1578 [On Hungarian History. Transylvania and the Porte 1567–1578]* (Pest: 1860), 167–168. Nr. CXV.

10 Rym és Ungnad II. Maximiliannak, Isztambul, 1574. július 18–20, ÖStA HHStA, Staatenabteilungen, Türkei 1. Karton 30. Konv. 3. (1574 VI–VII) ff. 79–82.

11 Kemal Beydilli, *Die Polnischen Königswahlen und Interregnen von 1572 und 1576 im Lichte osmanischer Archivalien. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der osmanischen Machtpolitik* (München: 1976), 71; BOA M.D. 26 194 Nr. 533; BOA M.D. 26 213 Nr. 600. Kemal Beydilli included legible photocopies of all the documents used and translated into German, and I was able to check all the details. So, I also refer to the original archival material.

however, no longer named Bekes as the reason for mobilisation but cited the Polish interregnum instead. It further referred to Ottoman awareness of Moscow's ambitions, namely to place the son of Ivan IV on the Polish throne. To prevent this, the Crimean Tatar khan was appointed by the sultan. To oppose the efforts of Maximilian II, the troops of the pashas of Buda, Timișoara (Temesvár), and Rumelia were placed on alert.¹²

In addition to the military pressure following the departure of Henry Valois, the Porte intended to exert strong political coercion on Poland. Prior to Kemal Beydilli's monograph of 1976, the Ottoman Empire's interest in the appointment of the Polish king had been studied mostly by Polish scholars.¹³ Several important works have been published in the field since then.¹⁴ The role of the Ottomans in the appointment of the Polish king was not usually emphasised, as it was regarded as a matter pertaining to Christian Europe. Moreover, it was generally not assumed that the Ottoman state could have interfered in it. Nor am I attempting to suggest that Báthory was enthroned by Sultan Murad III in Warsaw, although, as will be seen, this was indeed the sultan's *expressis verbis* intention. The sources clearly indicate that the Ottomans' long-standing anti-Habsburg and anti-Russian policy would have been severely undermined by a king of Habsburg or Russian origin.

Some Ottoman sources relating to the election of the Polish king have been preserved in their original form in the Warsaw archives, whose catalogues also inform researchers about the interests of sultanic policy. I am comparing these sources with material from Turkey on an ongoing basis. When Lajos Szádeczky wrote the history of Stephen Báthory's election as King of Poland in 1887, the accompanying documentary collection was edited in collaboration with the Krakow scholar Ignacy Polkowski. Consequently, some of the sources were compiled from the holdings of the renowned Czartoryski Library, particularly the Naruszewicz Collection, which had mostly been copied from foreign archives by Adam Naruszewicz (1733–1796) – the eighteenth-century Jesuit priest and historian,

According to one item in this collection, on 11 September 1574 a Turkish messenger (çavuş) delivered a solemn oration before the Warsaw Diet

12 BOA M.D. 27. 216. Nr. 493; Beydilli, *Die Polnischen Königswahlen*, 78.

13 Janusz Pajewski, *Turcja wobec elekcji Batorego* (Kraków: 1935).

14 Wojciech Hensel, „Uwagi o stosunkach polsko-tureckich w XVI wieku do panowania Stefana Batorego,” in *Stosunki polsko-tureckie. Materiały z sesji naukowej zorganizowanej przez Instytut Orientalistyczny i Towarzystwo Polska Turcja w 1988 roku*, ed. Tadeusz Majda (Warszawa: Instytut Orientalistyczny UW, 1995), 19–29; Kazimierz Dopierała, *Stosunki dyplomatyczne Polski z Turcją za Stefana Batorego* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo PWN, 1986); Kołodziejczyk, *The Crimean Khanate and Poland-Lithuania*, 102.

(*Oratio legati Turcici habita ad Polonos Varsaviae congregatos*).¹⁵ As the envoy noted, with the departure of the former Polish ruler, King Henry Valois, there was no chance of his return. The Poles could not envisage that the German emperor or his son might become the new Polish king, fully aware that Ottoman–Habsburg enmity was of paramount importance. Although the two empires were momentarily displaying mutual friendship (which was true, as the so-called Peace of Edirne of 1568¹⁶ was in force), the çavuş claimed that the Germans respected only armed force. Ottoman diplomacy relied on the prudence of the Polish estates not to choose a king who would bring war upon them. Several alternatives were put forward, including Jan Kostka or the Swedish king, John III Vasa, but if none of these candidates were chosen, the sultan recommended his trusted man, Stephen Báthory, the voivode of Transylvania, who maintained peaceful relations and friendship with the Porte. This matter is also mentioned in another Ottoman document, the date of which I have reconstructed as 28 November 1574. (This is because in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was customary – though not compulsory – for Ottomans to “transliterate” Muslim month names into Christian ones when translating letters, so that the month would align with the Christian calendar. In this case, 13 March 982 corresponds to 13 Şaban 982, which equals 28 November 1574). The accuracy of my procedure is confirmed by the fact that the instructions for the second Polish interregnum issued by the divan are indeed dated November 1574.¹⁷

It should be noted that the content of the letter was also included in the work of the seventeenth-century Transylvanian historian Farkas Bethlen. The text bears a striking similarity to the speech delivered by the çavuş in Warsaw, described above.

Returning to the content of the text, the sultan mentioned, among other current matters, that if the Poles wished to maintain the good relations of the past, they should not choose a king who was an enemy of the Sultan. He recommended, firstly, the King of Sweden, whose wife was Catherine (1526–1583), the sister of the last Jagiellonian king, secondly, one of the Poles; and only thirdly, the voivode of Transylvania, Stephen Báthory.¹⁸ The document, along with other sources, is published in full by

15 Lajos Szádeczky, *Báthory István lengyel királyá választása 1574–1576* [The election of Stephen Báthory as King of Poland 1574–1576.] (Budapest: 1887), 315. Nr. 1. 11 September 1574.

16 ÖStA HHStA UR Türkische Urkunden 122 1568. 03. 20–29.

17 BOA M.D. 27. 155 Nr. 360; 156 Nr. 361. (22 November 1574.)

18 Farkas Bethlen, *Erdély története* [History of Transylvania] vol. 3, transl. András Bodor, verified by Erzsébet Galántai, Péter Kasza and Tamás Kruppa, notes by Tamás Kruppa

Gerlach, albeit with a slightly different date.¹⁹ The original Turkish version of this important document has not yet been found, although there is evidence that letters from the Porte were sent to the Polish estates on behalf of the sultan in 1573.²⁰ I have no doubt as to the authenticity of the two texts cited above, though it is possible that the translation was slightly reworked in a humanist literary style. The authenticity of the sultan's charter is further corroborated by other sources. Thus, David Ungnad, in his envoy's report, provides a detailed account that on 28 November 1574 the experienced Polish envoy, Andreas Taranowsky, who had already served as a permanent ambassador in Istanbul for a number of years, discussed the situation at the Porte with the grand vizier. By this time, it was known that the sultan had taken an interest in the selection of the new Polish king and mentioned the name of Stephen Báthory alongside that of the Swedish king and the so called "castellan of Danzig."²¹

It should be noted that at the beginning of the second interregnum, Ottoman–Polish relations were far from cordial. Selim II even wrote a letter to the former king, Henry Valois, reprimanding him because Albertus Łasky (later Báthory's great opponent) had persuaded the Moldavian voivode, John III (Ioan Șchiopul), to abandon his allegiance to the Ottoman Porte.²²

(Budapest–Kolozsvár: Enciklopédia Kiadó, Erdélyi Múzeum Egyesület, 2004), 98–99.

19 Stephan Gerlachs deß Aeltern Tage-Buch der von zween glorwürdigsten römischen Kaysern, Maximiliano und Rudolpho, beyderseits den Andern dieses Nahmens an die ottomanische Pforte zu Constantinopel abgefertigten und durch den Wohlgeborenen Herrn Hn. David Ungnad, Freiherrn zu Sonnegk und Preyburg [...] mit würcklicher Erhalt- und Verlängerung des Friedens zwischen dem Ottomannischen und Römischen Kayserthum und demselben angehörigen Landen und Königreichen glücklichst-vollbrachter Gesandtschafft, hrsg. von Samuel Gerlach (Frankfurt am Mayn: Zunner, 1674), 140–141; Östa HHStA Staatenabteilungen, Türkei 1. Karton 31. Konv. 2. (1575 III) 40r.

20 Beydilli, *Die Polnischen Königswahlen*, 172.

21 Östa HHStA Staatenabteilungen, Türkei 1. Karton 30. Konv. 3. (1574 VI–VII) ff. 12–13. Istanbul, 3 June 1574). Taranowsky's audience with the grand vizier: "Den 28 [1574. november] ist Herrn Andreas Taranovsski alls er von des Mehmet Bassa audienz hiefür dem Chauß fürüber hat reitten sollen, ist mir hommen, gleciwolet sein chauß difficultiert. Und hat baldan fannge, mit mir also zureden, wie das Mehmet Bassa stennenden lazlich bey dem Achmat Zauß geschrieben habe, alls ob Eur. Mt. bey im Mehmet, für Eur Mt. geleibstigen Sohn in durchlauch von denn Sultano ain Intercession an die Senatores in Pollen zuerlangen sich beworben hetten. Wellchet er Mehmet aber nicht thuen, sondern inen vill lieber zu dem Schweden, zu dem Castellans von Dabzigkh, oder dem jetzigen weyda aus Sibenbürgen ratthen wellen."

22 Östa HHStA Staatenabteilungen, Türkei 1. Karton 31. Konv. 3. (1575 VI–VII) ff. 12–13. Istanbul, 3 Juny 1574.

Stephen Báthory himself also sent his envoy to Warsaw, Giorgio Biandrata, whose letters to the Transylvanian voivode were also preserved.²³ Báthory promised the Poles that if he was elected, he would ensure that the previously signed peace treaty with the Porte would be reconfirmed. The essence of this promise is that from 1568 to 1577 the diplomatic situation between the two states was not settled, as the Polish–Ottoman peace treaty had not been renegotiated. Neither during the first interregnum nor during the short reign of Henry Valois, was there any opportunity to extend it.²⁴

I will not follow the procedure of the king's election in detail. As is known from contemporary sources, in reality there were numerous candidates, notably Maximilian II (the Holy Roman Emperor and King of Hungary), his sons Ernest and Ferdinand of Tyrol, Prince Alfonso d'Este of Ferrara, John III Vasa, the Czech Wilhelm Rosenberg, the voivode of Sandomierz Jan Kostka, the voivode of Podolia Mikołaj Mielecki, and the voivode of Bełz, Andrzej Tęczyński, as well as Ivan IV the Terrible and his son. All of these were joined by Stephen Báthory, initially with little chance. As the above-mentioned document testifies, the Porte only proposed Báthory as a third candidate.²⁵ The sultan's message was clear: almost anyone could be elected king – except a Russian or, especially, a Habsburg candidate.

While Stephen Báthory was successfully defending his power in Transylvania against an offensive by Gáspár Bekes (1575), Poland was preparing to elect a new king. It was important for Báthory to inform the sultan's court promptly of the good news, so he sent a messenger named Miklós to Istanbul. This had a great effect, and the grand vizier was particularly pleased (18 January).²⁶ The sultan reacted immediately: Polish society was divided into "two parties": one supporting Stephen Báthory, while the other favouring Maximilian II. It seems that only these two candidates were serious contenders in the election. Without going into the details of the procedure, after the vote the Polish Primate, Archbishop Uchański, declared the Habsburg emperor to be the ruler

23 Georgius Pray, *Epistolae Procerum Regni Hungariae*, vol. 3 (Posonii: 1806), 195–202, 203–204. For his role, see: Bethlen, *Erdély története* [History of Transylvania], 91–92. (After Blandrata, Mihály Berzeviczy was sent to the Poles by the voivode).

24 Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations (15th-18th Century). An Annotated Edition of 'Ahdnames and Other Documents* (Leiden–Boston–Köln: Brill, 2000), 123–124.

25 Bethlen, *Erdély története*, 93; Szádeczky, *Báthory István*, 316–328.

26 Ungnad to Maximilian II, Istanbul, 22–23 January 1676. ÖStA HHStA Staatenabteilungen, Türkei 1. Karton 32. Konv. 3. (1576 I–IV), 49–54.

of Poland, to whom the good news was conveyed through an embassy. In contrast, the nobility nominated Anna of Jagiellon, the sister of the deceased last Jagiellonian king, and Stephen of Báthory.²⁷

At the end of January 1576, the sultan informed Báthory that the Poles had visited the Porte; they announced that they had been left without a king, and they had chosen Stephen Báthory as their ruler. Murad III supported Báthory's accession but imposed conditions: if he took the Polish throne, he could no longer interfere in Transylvanian affairs, and his reign in Poland must not be an obstacle to peace between Poland and Russia. The sultan also wrote to Báthory that should Transylvania be attacked from Vienna, he would defend it, and that any armed action by the Russians would be countered by the Khan of Crimea. Furthermore, the sultan instructed Báthory to examine the terms of his election, and, if they were compatible with the earlier Polish–Ottoman peace treaty (1568), he had to accept them. If he could, he was to report the terms to the sultan, but if he was in a hurry, he should proceed without delay.²⁸

Since the peace treaty with the Habsburgs had only recently been confirmed, it is perhaps not coincidental that the mobilisation was not directly aimed at Maximilian II but rather at Gáspár Bekes, although it remains unclear whether he was in fact preparing further action. The mobilisation was complete, and in addition to the order issued to the Bey of Szolnok, describing Bekes' efforts to collaborate with the "nemće" king (Maximilian II), a list was enclosed designating officers to receive similar orders. This list included almost the entire Balkan army.²⁹ What is certain, however, is that in this case the massive mobilisation was not specifically to secure Transylvania but to protect the rear of Stephen Báthory, who was marching from Transylvania to the Polish kingdom. Several orders were issued to the Bey of Akkerman, to the voivode of Moldavia, and to the Bey of Siliстра to ensure, on the one hand, the safe passage of Stephen Báthory through Moldavia via Hotin, and on the other hand, to provide him with sufficient military backup, that would not cross the Polish border.³⁰

It appears that diplomats were more actively engaged in January 1576 than before. Maximilian II sent Christopher Teuffenbach as an envoy to

27 Szádeczky, *Báthory István*, 316–328; Bethlen, *Erdély története*, 90–105; Ungnad to Maximilian II, Istanbul, 22–23 January 1576. ÖStA HHStA Staatenabteilungen, Türkei 1. Karton 32. Konv. 3. (1576 I-IV), 49–54.

28 BOA M.D. 27. 215. Nr. 492; Beydilli, *Die Polnischen Königswahlen*, 80–82.

29 BOA M.D. 27. 234. 544. 983 Şevval selh. / 31 January 1576 (To the Beglerbeg of Temesvár, Beg of Smederevo, Vidin, Beglerbeg of Rumelia etc.).

30 BOA M.D. 27. 301. Nr. 722, 723.

Transylvania to persuade Báthory to withdraw. At this time, it was even suggested that Szatmár, the Báthory family's recently lost possession, should be returned to Stephen Báthory by the Habsburg emperor to force him to resign from the Polish throne.³¹ Furthermore, the Transylvanian Diet had to decide on another critical issue: the succession of Stephen Báthory. The sultan's court, just like the Viennese, understood that the events in Mediaş (Medgyes) would be decisive, so the sultan sent a very serious letter to Maximilian II at the beginning of January. In this letter, the sultan characterised Poland as part of his empire, whose subjects had always been loyal to the sultan's authority. Since they had now elected Báthory, who was supported by the sultan, Murad III called on the Habsburg emperor not to violate the newly concluded peace.³²

The grand vizier's letter, judging by its contents, could have gone to Vienna together with this letter from the sultan. The lengthy and highly detailed letter of Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed has survived in a contemporary German translation. The letter (if my reconstruction is correct) fully complements the sultan's dispatch. The grand vizier does not immediately address the core of the issue but goes on at length to assess the benefits of the peace concluded the previous year, as a kind of introduction to what Vienna stands to lose if it does not keep the peace. In particular, he stresses that the peace is valid for all those who apply to join (*hat sy durch willen Gottes dieselb zuvolbringen, kain einzige consiederung, die fürsten und nambhaftigen potenteate dieser ziet so dem reich seiner hoheit benachbart, und unserer freundschaft, inmassen dieselb es erfordern streif und consiständig sein*). Moreover, the grand vizier states that he considers the peace to be valid. He then turned to the legal status of Poland and Transylvania. According to the sultan, Poland and Transylvania were countries, like the rest of the Ottoman Empire, which showed complete loyalty to the Porte (*und Polen und den Siebenbürgen, welche von alteres jahr iren gehorsam, auch dienstbarkhait gegen diser Ihrer hochait glücklichen und hoch erhabtten porten volkommlich erzeigt*). Therefore, he called on the Habsburg Emperor not to interfere in their affairs, since this would call into question the peace

31 Bethlen, *Erdély története*, 105.

32 BOA M.D. 27. 216–217. Nr. 493; Beydilli, *Die Polnischen Königswahlen*, 82–84; Stephan Gerlachs *deß Aeltern Tage-Buch*, 230–231, Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, bd. 9 (Pest: 1833), Bd. 4. 639. (January 1576.)

and friendship between them. At the same time, he asked Maximilian II to pay the annual tax.³³

Stephen Báthory convened the Diet in the Transylvanian Saxon town of Medgyes on 14 January 1576 to receive the Polish delegation, who were to solemnly announce the election of the king in the presence of the estates and in full view of everyone. The sultan's aforementioned letter of late January 1576 regarding the election and support of Báthory had already been on its way to Vienna by this time, although it had not arrived by the time of the meeting.³⁴ Maximilian II wanted Stephen Báthory to desist from accepting the Polish throne at all costs. His commissioner, Christopher Teuffenbach, arrived at the voivode's seat in Alba Julia (Gyulaféhérvar), where he attended an audience on 14 January in the presence of the voivode and his brother, Christopher.

Báthory explained that he had not sought this honour but had been invited to the royal dignity by prominent Polish lords. What is more, he did not fail to mention that the Ottoman sultan had personally recommended him to the Polish estates (*und auch durch den Türkischen Kayser den Ständen fürgeschlagen und zum besten commandiert worden*). A key argument in favour of Báthory's election as king was that the still unmarried Báthory could fulfil the demand of the Polish orders to marry (as co-regent) the last Jagiellon. The expression, which may seem quite pro-Turkish to modern readers, may have sounded different in those days.

Báthory's argument that he could not offend the sultan by renouncing the Polish kingship, as he had cleared the way for him, was the following: "*sondern auch des Türkischen Khajser, der ime [Báthory] den weg zu solchem künigreich bereit hatt, grossen gefahr und ungnad gewartesdt sein.*" The Polish electoral conditions did not pose any difficulty for the emperor. Báthory gave a lengthy account of the last Diet in Warsaw, where the sultan's çavuş had appeared. He was informed that the Poles and Lithuanians preferred to accept submission to the sultan and the surrender of whomever the sultan appointed for them.³⁵

The simultaneous presence of two elected kings carried the risk that Poland would suffer the fate of Hungary. It can be deduced from the

33 ÖStA HHStA Türkische Urkunden o.D. 1576. (As I believe that the content of the document described above is similar to the text written by the sultan in January 1576, this document may have also been written in early January 1576).

34 BOA M.D. 27. 407. Nr. 1006. 983. Şevval 19. = 21 January 1576; Endre Veress, *Báthory István erdélyi fejedelem és lengyel király levelezése* [Correspondence of István Báthory, Prince of Transylvania and King of Poland], vol. 2 (Kolozsvár: 1944), 95. Nr. 74. (25 January 1575).

35 Veress, *Báthory István*, 84–89. Nr. 74. Alba Iulia (Gyulaféhérvar), 16 January 1576.

report that a Polish embassy was scheduled to arrive in Medgyes on 25 January 1576, and Teuffenbach understood that both voivodeships of Wallachia and Moldavia had received the sultan's orders to support Báthory. The report emphasises Báthory's position that if the Habsburg emperor were to seize the Polish crown, it would immediately entail an Ottoman military attack. Teuffenbach himself was uncertain whether it was the sultan who personally nominated Báthory, as he said, or whether he had recommended himself, yet his action was not considered to reflect an honourable attitude towards his ruler, Maximilian II.

Báthory was quite open about the fact that he had always been loyal to the emperor, but the emperor had never trusted him enough. The case of Gáspár Bekes shows this, which forced Báthory to approach the sultan ("Verwarung bringen und daneben des Türkischen Kaysers Schutz und scrimb auch erhalten möchte ...").³⁶

The nomination of Stephen Báthory as Polish king by the Transylvanian Diet in Medias (Medgyes) was compared to the election of King Matthias I (1458–1490) and János Szapolyai (1526–1540), whose careers (the former's father was a Transylvanian voivode) led from being Transylvanian voivode to the title of king. In both cases they rose from the ranks of commoners to become God's chosen, anointed persons. The only difference was that the role models had acquired the Hungarian royal title, while Báthory had set his sights on the Polish throne.³⁷

As the Transylvanian historian Farkas Bethlen put it, on returning to Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár) from the Mediaş (Medgyes) Diet, Stephen Báthory began to use the title King of Poland.³⁸ Gerlach's diary shows that the double election of the Polish king was already known in Istanbul at the beginning of March 1576. Báthory immediately informed his permanent envoy in Istanbul about the Polish decision and the Polish embassy sent to him. However, his secretary was Ugnad's undercover man – a paid agent who copied all incoming and outgoing correspondence and forwarded the letters to the Habsburg embassy. Within a few days, the full extent of the Polish royal election and the above-mentioned activities of the Polish embassy in Transylvania were known. At the same time, negotiations had already begun for the investiture of Christopher Báthory, the voivode's brother, for which Stephen Báthory had allegedly promised 60,000 or 70,000 ducats.³⁹

36 Veress, Báthory István, 84–89. Nr. 74. Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár), 16 January 1576.

37 Bethlen, Erdély története, 108.

38 *Ibidem*, 109.

39 Stephan Gerlachs deß Aeltern Tage-Buch, 162–163, 169; Gerlach, Ugnád Dávid, 178–182.

One final possibility arose that the chief captains of Szatmárnémeti (Satu Mare) and Kassa (Košice), Teuffenbach and Rueber, might prevent Báthory's journey to Poland. Adding to the tension, the imperial troops had occupied a fortress on the Transylvanian–Hungarian royal border which was on the way to Poland.⁴⁰ The resulting conflict and fear of a possible attack lasted until the autumn.⁴¹

However, the Porte and Báthory chose a safer route, further from the Hungarian borders, via Moldavia. Báthory, who fell ill, spent Easter in the Mogiła monastery and arrived in Cracow after the holidays. As the Archbishop of Gniezno, Jakob Uchański, continued to support Emperor Maximilian, he was not crowned by him but by the next highest-ranking prelate, Bishop Stanisław Karnkowski of Kujawy, in the Church of St Stanisław on 1 May 1576.⁴²

At the same time, the sultan ordered the Pasha of Buda, Sokollu Mustafa, to follow the events with the Buda and Timișoara (Temesvár) forces, as Bekes was still prepared to invade again with his army, but, if necessary, the Pasha could use the entire force of the Vilayet of Rumelia to resist.⁴³

Stephen Báthory intended his brother, Christopher, to occupy the vacant seat of the Transylvanian voivode. Therefore, he asked the sultan to initiate his brother's appointment to the voivodeship after Báthory himself had officially announced his accession to the Polish throne at the Porte. It was widely known that Báthory would be succeeded on the Transylvanian throne by his brother. David Ungnad, the Habsburg permanent envoy in Istanbul, had already announced in February that the new voivode would be Christopher.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, there were also rumours – probably unfounded – that Kristóf Hagymási might become a rival candidate to Christopher Báthory.⁴⁵ Soon, however, the news reached Istanbul that Stephen Báthory had been crowned in Poland.

40 *Monumenta Comitalia Regni Transylvaniae. Erdélyi országgyűlési emlékek*, vol. 3, ed Sándor Szilágyi (Budapest: 1877), 5.

41 *A budai basák magyar nyelvű levelezése 1553–1589* [Hungarian Correspondence of the Pashas of Buda 1553–1589], vol. 1, eds. Sándor Takáts, Ferenc Eckhardt and Gyula Szekfű (Budapest: 1915), 121–122. Nr. 113. Buda, 11 September 1576.

42 Szádeczky, Báthory István, 303–304; Bethlen, *Erdély története*, 112; Stephan Gerlachs deß Aeltern Tage-Buch, 219; Gerlach, *Ungnád Dávid*, 187.

43 BOA M.D. 27. 232. Nr. 540. 983 Ševval 28 / 30 January 1576.

44 László Szalay, *A magyar történelemhez. Erdély és a Porta 1567–1578* [On Hungarian History. Transylvania and the Porte 1567–1578] (Pest: 1860), 259. Nr. CLXII.

45 Ungnad to Maximilian II, Istanbul, 1–3 June 1576. ÖStA HHStA Staatenabteilungen, Türkei 1. Karton 33. Konv. 1. (1576 V-VI) ff. 135–154.

As a result, the sultan's chief stall-master (*mirahor* or *mīr-i ahūr*) was immediately appointed to carry the *sanjak*, the flag of the sultan's power, to Transylvania to confirm the investiture of the new voivode.⁴⁶ Báthory must also have informed the Porte immediately after his coronation in Cracow (1 May 1576) that he had ascended the Polish throne, thus clearing the way for his brother's appointment as voivode of Transylvania, although no such document has yet been found. This event finally opened the way for the Porte to replace Stephen Báthory with his elder brother. According to Ungnad, the inaugural insignia were delivered by the chief stall-master (*mirahor*) and Ahmet Agha, who had long been involved in Transylvanian affairs. Ungnad reported that the inaugural badges, in addition to the flag, included a red cap, two horses (one fully equipped), 26 kaftans, and four "wundschäck" (i.e. *boncuk*), as well as beads.⁴⁷ These items conformed to the Ottoman investiture customs of the period. Ungnad's account is confirmed by a surviving contemporary Hungarian translation of the appointment decree issued at the time of the new voivode's investiture:

I have given you the dignity of voivode and sent you my banner (*zazlo*, i.e. *sancak*). Through my *sancaqbeg* (*zanchyakomtol*) I have sent you a gold-embroidered cap (*szofia*, i.e. *üsküf*) with a plume (*toll*, i.e. *sorguc*), a horse with complete harness and, moreover, garments of honour (*kaftan*, i.e. *hilat*). I have also sent garments of honour for the gentlemen who belong to you. And I have also sent my letter [written] concerning

46 "Postcripta von 5. Junii umb heut bricht in dem großen sultanischen divan das geschray auß, Báthori sey crönt und beilegen, zeuch auf seine Rebellen, Eure Majestät adherenten zutilgen und zubezwingen, so soll auch des sultani obrister stahlmaister deputiert sein, den sangiack fahnen zur bestätigung der waydaschafft dem Christoff Bathory hinein zufürnen." Ungnad to Maximilian II, Istanbul, 4–5 June 1576. ÖStA HHStA Staatenabteilungen, Türkei 1. Karton 33. Konv. 1. (1576 V-VI) ff. 175–178, 176–177.

47 "das Nag Mathe waidischer gewessner agent allie den 7 juny mit sultanischen mandaten an den Bascha zu Ofen von Themeßwar, unerwahrt von der Porten weiters bevelchs dem wayda wider seine in und außlendische feind unverzuglich alle mögliche hilff und beistand zulaisten, auch mit einem sondern bevalch an die stendt in Sibenbürgen, den Christo ff Bathori für ihren wayde ... zuekhennen, und ime ... zugehorsamen. ... dem 11. oder 12. diß (Jule) sollen Achmat Chiauß und der obrißt sultanisch Thüerhüeter gnaz beforderd von hienen auf sein, und den sangiack fahnen dem Christoff hienein führen." Ungnad to Maximilian II, Istanbul, 10 June 1576. ÖStA HHStA Statenabteilungen, Türkei 1. Karton 33. Konv. 1. (1576 V-VI) ff. 202, 203, 204, 205, 206; Sándor Papp, *Die Verleihungs-, Bekräftigungs- und Vertragsurkunden der Osmanen für Ungarn und Siebenbürgen. Eine quellenkritische Untersuchung* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2003), 89; 229–232. Nr. 37–38.

the dignity and the land through my sanjakbey and chief stall-master, Mehmed Agha.⁴⁸

Stephen Báthory also agreed with his brother that as long as he held the Polish throne,⁴⁹ his brother would not yet take the seat of voivode in Transylvania.⁵⁰ It was therefore only in July that the Ottoman delegation brought Christopher Báthory the insignia of the voivode's dignity and the sultan's decree of appointment.⁵¹ Curiously, according to the Habsburg envoy, when the stall-master returned to Istanbul in mid-August, he was not satisfied with the honouring of his mission in Transylvania, because he had received only 11,000 thalers as a gift, far less than he had expected.⁵²

Surprisingly, it was believed in Istanbul that after Báthory's coronation, Poland had become a vassal state, just as Transylvania had been. The sultan also began to use the phrase for Poland which was in use for other vassal countries, namely that it should be "similar to other parts of the well-protected empire."⁵³

As I will discuss below, Stephen Báthory's first envoy as King of Poland arrived in Istanbul at the end of July 1576. He was accompanied by the sultan's envoy, Mustafa çavuş. According to the Habsburg permanent envoy, David Ungnad, Krzysztof Dzierżek's diplomatic status was not

48 "Az Erdély Vaidasagot Neked attam Es Zazlomat neked kwltem, Az en aranios Szofiamatis Tollastol kwltem Az en Zanchjákomitol, Es louat mýnden Zerzamostol, affélet kaftanokat, Es Az allattad Valo Vraknakis kafftanokat kwltem, Es ezt ez en lewelem. Vgy mint a' týztreol es orzagrol valo, lewelet, vgy kwltem, az en Zanchjákom, es feo lowaz, Mesterem, Mehmet aga altal, Azert Valamýt neked kwltem, Mýnd zazlomat Zkofiamat kaftanýmat Jo Newen vegjed, ..." Országos Széchenyi Könyvtár, Kézirattár (OSZKK) Fol. Hung. 37. Protocollum Bathorianum, ff. 256r-v; László Szalay, *A magyar történelemhez. Erdély és a Porta 1567–1578 [On Hungarian History. Transylvania and the Porta 1567–1578]* (Pest: 1860), 273; Papp, *Die Verleihungs-*, 229.

49 Endre Veress, *Báthory István erdélyi fejedelem és lengyel király levelezése [Correspondence of István Báthory, Prince of Transylvania and King of Poland]*, vol. 2 (Kolozsvár: 1944), 30. Nr. 468.

50 OSZKK Fol. Hung. 37. Protocollum Bathorianum, ff. 258r-v; Szalay, *A magyar történelemhez*, 274–275; Papp, *Die Verleihungs-*, 230–232. Nr.38.

51 OSZKK Fol. Hung. 37. Protocollum Bathorianum. ff. 258r-v; László Szalay, *A magyar történelemhez. Erdély és a Porta 1567–1578 [On Hungarian History. Transylvania and the Porta 1567–1578]* (Pest: 1860), 274–275; Papp, *Die Verleihungs*, 230–232.

52 Ungnad to Maximilian II, Istanbul, 18–20 August 1576. ÖStA HHStA Staatenabteilungen, Türkei 1. Karton 33. Konv. 3. (1576 VIII-IX) 54, 61, 55, 60.

53 BOA M.D.Z 3. 283, 284; Beydilli, *Die Polnischen Königswahlen*, 132–134.

exactly clear, so he was addressed as “*vize agens*.⁵⁴ (In Gerlach’s diary, it is recorded exactly at the end of July that, in accordance with Ungnad’s information, a man had arrived from Báthory with an important letter.⁵⁵) Having previously lived in Istanbul for five years, Krzysztof Dzierżek spoke Turkish fluently. (Dariusz Kołodziejczyk mentioned that he had spent six years in Istanbul since 1569 and then became an official translator of the Crown Chancery).⁵⁶ According to Ungnad, the letter sent by Báthory was written on 4 July in Warsaw.⁵⁷ In it, he described his accession to the throne and expressed his fear of a possible attack from Vienna. Ungnad also noted that a fully authorised embassy would arrive in the Ottoman capital soon thereafter, in August. It was probably in response to this letter that the sultan’s reply was written – the first in which he addressed Báthory as King of Poland (*cemaziyü l-evvel* 984 corresponding to 27 July – 5 August 1576.) The introduction to the document tells that Báthory previously informed the sultan. According to this account, Báthory travelled to Poland complying with the sultan’s instructions, where he was crowned and took over the reign. It was also communicated that the greater majority of the country’s inhabitants had already been obeying him, the rest of whom he had hoped to bring under his authority. Báthory also informed the sultan that the Habsburg emperor was preparing for a military operation against Poland. The sultan announced that he had sent his letter to the German emperor to maintain peace and forward the accumulated taxes. He also ordered Devlet Giray, the Crimean Tatar khan, to march against Moscow because they, too, intended to invade Poland. Finally, the sultan ordered Báthory to settle his relations with his subjects.⁵⁸ The letter sent to Vienna, which I have analysed above together with the grand vizier’s letter, had its result: on 26 August Maximilian II informed Murad III, and a day later the grand vizier, that he did not

54 Ungnad to Maximilian II, Istanbul, 28–30 July 1576. ÖStA HHStA Staatenabteilungen, Türkei 1. Karton 33. Konv. 2. (1576 VII), 140–146.

55 Stephan Gerlachs deß Aeltern Tage-Buch, 443–444.

56 Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations*, 178.

57 Ungnad to Maximilian II, Istanbul, 4, 10 August 1576, ÖStA HHStA Staatenabteilungen, Türkei 1. Karton 33. Konv. 3. (1576 VIII–IX), 20–23, 25–34, 34–36.

58 Zygmund Abramowicz, *Katalog dokumentów tureckich. Dokumenty do dziejów Polski i kraków ościennych w latach 1455–1672* (Warszawa: 1959), 215–216. Nr. 223; AGAD (Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw (Polish: Archiwum Główne Akt Danych w Warszawie, AGAD). Kor., Dz. turecki, teczka 155, nr. 479.

want to violate the peace or attack Transylvania, but that the Ottoman side should cease the border incursions in turn.⁵⁹

The 1577 Polish – Ottoman Peace Treaty

Krzysztof Dzierżek, who was Stephen Báthory's first envoy to the Porte, left for Poland after 6 p.m. on 10 August 1576. The Habsburg embassy thought that Báthory had completely subjugated Poland to the sultan's authority.⁶⁰ Gerlach's diary gives an account of this in such a way that after the coronation of Báthory, the Ottomans considered the Polish lords to be on the level of beylerbeys and sanjakbeys, no more than the sultan's own subordinates.⁶¹ The first few months were challenging for the new Polish king, but it was clear that he needed to settle the years of unsettled Ottoman-Polish relations by concluding a new treaty. To this end, he wrote again to the Porte, to which the sultan responded with a sovereign, the *name i hümâyûn* (imperial letter). The sultan expressed his pleasure that the king had ascended the Polish throne, while also acknowledging Báthory's note that, as long as his opposition had not been defeated, he could not fully control Cossack raids into Ottoman territories. The sultan responded that this would be handled on the Ottoman side, but he pointed out that the king should not protest Ottoman measures. A key element of the letter was that the king intended to send a solemn envoy to the Porte soon to normalise diplomatic relations.⁶² Conflicts, however, did not cease. The sultan also complained of incursions, and his letter (perhaps written in October) was delivered by Ahmed çavuş, who was also a constant mediator in Transylvanian affairs, via Wallachia to Poland.⁶³ According to Ungnad, an Italian merchant was also mistreated

59 To Maximilian III Murad II, Regensburg, 26 August 1576. ÖStA HHStA Staatenabtailungen, Türkei 1. Karton 33. Konv. 3. (1576 VIII-IX), 93, 97, 94–96; Maximilian II to Grand Vizier Mehmed Sokollı, Regensburg 27 August 1576. ÖStA HHStA Staatenabtailungen, Türkei 1. Karton 33. Konv. 3. (1576 VIII-IX), 98–99, 104–105, 100–103.

60 "Cristoffen Czierzechs ... hat sich nach biß auch heut Verzog." Ungnad to Maximilian II, Istanbul, 10 August 1576, ÖStA HHStA Staatenabtailungen, Türkei 1. Karton 33. Konv. 3. (1576 VIII-IX), 32v.

61 Stephan Gerlachs *deß Aeltern Tage-Buch*, 219; Gerlach, *Ugnád Dávid*, 187.

62 BOA M.D. 29. 33. Nr. 77. 1. Șevval 984 = 22 December 1576.

63 Abramowicz, *Katalog dokumentów tureckich*, 216. Nr. 224; AGAD. Kor., Dz. turecki, teczka 256, nr. 480; BOA M.D. 28. 105. Nr. 263. 25. Recep 984. / 18 October 1576.

by the Polish side, and the sultan demanded financial reparation from Báthory.⁶⁴

Before the embassy that concluded the peace treaty arrived, several events had complicated the Polish–Ottoman relations. In April 1577, rumours spread that the former envoy, the Turkish interpreter Krzysztof Dzierżek, was returning to the Porte. At the same time, there were reports of a massive Tatar attack on Poland, which would be carried out in the direction of Krakow and Warsaw. This was because the king had not given the khan his customary gift. It was simultaneously reported that the envoys from Moscow on their way to visit the khan were captured and blinded by the Poles. It is even possible that the Polish envoy interrupted his journey and returned to the king because of these developments.⁶⁵

In this confusing situation, it is certain that there was some Tatar activity along the Polish border, although some reports may have been unfounded or exaggerated. However, it appears that the Turcica material of the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv in Vienna has preserved copies of almost all the important documents on the Polish – Ottoman peace treaty. This wealth of data shows that the Kingdom of Poland under Báthory and his Ottoman connections were fully known to the rival Habsburg power. The Habsburgs obtained a Latin translation of the peace treaty, the instructions given to the ambassador, and an enclosed German translation. They also acquired the text of the peace treaty of 1568 between Selim II and Sigismund Augustus, as well as an instruction sent to the Crimean Tatar khan Devlet Giray on 1 January 1577.⁶⁶

In order to make peace, Báthory sent a letter to the sultan in Latin, the text of which Gerlach recorded in his diary. This letter confirms that there was a Tatar embassy to the king, and at the same time, a Polish embassy was present at the court of the Crimean Tatar khan when the Tatar attack occurred.⁶⁷

The actual peace mission was led as envoy by Jan Sienieński, castellan of Halicz, who entered Istanbul on 1 July 1577. During their journey to Seraglio, the members of the envoy carried the gifts they had brought for the sultan. Ungnad's undercover agents also obtained a letter from the king to the grand vizier, in which Báthory demanded both the sultan's intention to make peace and the release of Polish prisoners who had been

64 Ungnad to Maximilian II, Istanbul, 10 August 1576, ÖStA HHStA Staatenabteilungen, Türkei 1. Karton 33. Konv. 3. (1576 VIII-IX), f. 32v.

65 ÖStA HHStA Staatenabteilungen, Türkei 1. Karton 35. Konv. 1. (1577 III-IV) ff. 164–165.

66 ÖStA HHStA Staatenabteilungen, Türkei 1. Karton 35. Konv. 3. (1577 VIII-IX) ff. 48–59.

67 Stephan Gerlachs *deß Aeltern Tage-Buch*, 334; Gerlach, *Ungnád Dávid*, 203.

abducted during the Tatar invasion and the Ottoman incursions into the Dniester region. As will be seen in the analysis of the peace treaty below, the peace treaty that was concluded is highly detailed in its provisions for the release of Christian prisoners, which is entirely understandable considering the circumstances.⁶⁸

In the case of Poland, the *ahdname* had a different meaning than it did for Transylvania. While for Transylvania, as an Ottoman vassal state, the most important aspect – apart from the inter-state agreement between the Transylvanian ruler and the sultan – was the final confirmation of a new voivode by the Ottoman ruler, the treaty with the King of Poland was an agreement between two independent powers. Another key difference was that, while Transylvania paid tribute to the Porte, Poland did not. Although Báthory was obliged to pay an annual sum to the Crimean khan, this functioned more as a form of protection against Tatar raids than a tribute indicating dependence. Of course, especially at the beginning of Stephen Báthory's reign, the Porte sometimes acted as if Poland were its vassal. A similar attitude was occasionally taken toward the Habsburg Monarchy, due to the annual payment of 30.000 gulden in *harac* – the so called honorary gift (*Ehrengeschenk*) – by the Habsburg Emperor. In practice, however, these countries were equal and independent powers in relation to the Ottoman Empire.

Furthermore, under Islamic state law, the treatment of Christian subjects from Transylvania, Poland, and the Habsburg Monarchy (including the Kingdom of Hungary) differed entirely. A Transylvanian subject was considered a *zimmi* – a second-rank individual under the protection of Islam – whereas a Polish subject was a *müstamen*, a Christian whose country had concluded temporary agreements with the Islamic state, including peace and trade treaties established for mutually recognised interests. Venice, France, and the Netherlands are examples of this legal status. By contrast, the subjects of the Habsburg Monarchy were regarded as *harbî* (i.e. enemies of the House of War). This demonstrates that, in the eyes of the Porte, Stephen Báthory was assessed differently in legal terms when he left Transylvania to become King of Poland.

It is also worth examining Stephen Báthory's *ahdname* and its contents. One might assume, based on the text and the conditions formulated in the agreement, that Báthory was not an independent ruler in relation to the sultan. To address this question, I compared the document with earlier and later Polish *ahdnames*. The results may be summarised as follows:

68 Stephan Gerlachs deß Aeltern Tage-Buch, 362; Gerlach, *Ungnád Dávid*, 205–206.

1. The *ahdname* contains no reference to Stephen Báthory's former vassalage. The only feature that recalls his previous status is the consistent use of his Hungarian name – often written as Báthory István (*Báthorí István*) as a single word – in correspondence with the Porte.
2. In terms of their structure, the earlier Polish peace treaties differ from that of 1577, which reflects a more modern practice of the Porte: the sultan swears to the terms of the agreement only once, at the end of the document. (The structure of the 1577 *ahdname*, which became the model followed for later treaties, is thus different from the earlier treaty documents.)
3. The *ahdname* is also one of the most solemn, meticulously listing the titles of both the sultan and the king.
4. The issue of prisoner ransoms is treated with exceptional detail – more extensively than in previous *ahdnames*. A Polish prisoner who had converted to Islam was to be released immediately; a Christian prisoner was to be released immediately upon payment of ransom, and anyone captured after the conclusion of the agreement was to be released without ransom. Moreover, a Muslim who had converted only outwardly, without genuine conviction, was allowed to return to his country. The prisoner exchange was so significant that a circular was issued to the *kadis* (Islamic judges) of the empire, specifying the date of the Polish *ahdname* (1 cemâzîyü l-evvel 985, corresponding to 17 July 1577). If a *kadi* found a prisoner in their jurisdiction who turned out to be a Muslim of Polish origin, that person was to be released immediately. Any Christian prisoner was to be ransomed by the representatives of the Polish ambassador according to the prisoner's assessed value and then released. It was stipulated that only Polish subjects were to be ransomed; Christians of other nations, such as Russians, were excluded.⁶⁹ Although I have no direct data on this, it is likely that, after the peace treaty was signed, Polish agents travelled throughout the empire to ransom prisoners. A decree addressed to one of the *kadis* specifically stated that prisoners who had been released unlawfully – i.e. without ransom – as had occurred during the secret mission of the Transylvanian embassies – were not to be allowed to go free.⁷⁰

69 BOA M.D. 31. 66. Nr. 170.

70 BOA M.D. 31. 67. Nr. 171.

5. The text of the treaty also addresses relations with Crimea, trade with Moldavia and the Ottoman Empire, the regular export of goods, the shared use of pastures in the borderlands (present-day Ukraine), and the inheritance rights of dead traders.

I have compared the 1577 peace treaty with the text of the first Anglo-Ottoman trade agreement, which was concluded with the support of Stephen Báthory. Most of the trade provisions in the two texts are virtually identical, highlighting the primacy of Polish-Ottoman trade relations.⁷¹ Indeed, when William Harborne, again with Báthory's support, secured the first English trade agreement with the Porte, its trade clauses were so similar to those of the 1577 Polish-Ottoman treaty that they appear to have been modelled on it.⁷² This is not surprising, since Báthory himself had granted trading rights to English merchants two years earlier. Harborne had set out from Poland to Istanbul with an Ottoman embassy, taking advantage of Báthory's Ottoman – indeed, renegade Hungarian – connections.⁷³

The importance of trade relations is clearly evident from the correspondence surrounding the peace treaty. The treaty was dated 17 July 1577, and in the days that followed, the sultan issued ten additional decrees concerning Poland. In addition to the customary decrees sent from Istanbul to the Ottoman sanjakbeys and kadis along the Polish borders – which instructed them not to disturb the Polish king's ambassador, Jan Sienieński, and his men on their journey – these decrees also emphasised that, should they attempt to take prohibited goods out of the empire, such commodities were to be confiscated.⁷⁴

This precaution proved unnecessary, as other merchants who accompanied the ambassador departed immediately after the agreement had

71 AGAD, AKW, Dz. tur., k. 71. t. 260. no. 486, Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations*, 269–278; Royal ratification: AGAD, Libri Legationum, sign. 21. ff. 209a–212a; Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations*, 279–283. Stephan Gerlachs deß Aeltern Tage-Buch, 443–444; Susan Skilliter, *William Harborne and the Trade with Turkey 1578–1582. A documentary study of the first Anglo-Ottoman relations* (London: 1977), 232–233; Sándor Papp, “Kereszteny vazallusok az Oszmán Birodalom észak-nyugati határainál (Diplomatikai vizsgálat a román vajdák szultáni ‘ahdnáméi körül) [Christian vassals at the north-western frontiers of the Ottoman Empire (Diplomatic Examination Around the Sultan ,ahdnámes of the Rumanian Voivodes)], *Aetas* 17 (2002): 1, 87–91.

72 Skilliter, *William Harborne*, 232–233; BOA M.D. 31. 67. Nr. 161. (Imperial letter to Stephen Báthory about the peacemaking); BOA M.D. 31. 64. Nr. 163. (It is a decree to the Moldavian voivode informing him that the Polish-Ottoman treaty had been concluded. The peace must be kept).

73 Skilliter, *William Harborne*, 44–48.

74 BOA M.D. 31. 67. Nr. 171.

been concluded. One travelled to Ankara to purchase silk lining worth 4,000 forints. A special decree was issued to the customs officers stipulating that goods acquired by the Poles with this substantial sum were to be exported from the empire free from customs duties.⁷⁵ Another decree, also addressed to the kadis, stated that some members of the ambassador's entourage lacked horses and therefore wished to buy them within the Ottoman Empire. The kadis were instructed to ensure that the Poles could acquire horses only for transporting goods and not for military purposes.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the Ottomans did not interfere in Polish internal affairs, and Báthory himself likely did everything possible to assert his independence from the Ottoman vassalage. When the new Polish–Ottoman peace treaty was signed, there was no indication that Báthory had served as the sultan's voivode of Transylvania only a few months earlier. The new treaty was identical in style, titulature, and content to those concluded earlier between the Porte and the Polish kings.⁷⁷

The sultan also issued several orders to Ottoman dignitaries along the Hungarian–Ottoman border in connection with the new Polish agreement. One order was addressed to Mustafa, the pasha of Buda and nephew of the grand vizier. At first glance, its content is somewhat surprising: it states that the territory of the Fülek (Filákovo) sanjak "directly borders" Poland and that, because of the peace treaty, anyone attempting to claim Polish territory must be prevented from doing so. The decree was issued specifically at the request of the Polish ambassador.⁷⁸ I believe that, in this case, the Polish envoy sought a special decree to protect the territory of the thirteen Spiš towns in Upper Hungary (present-day eastern Slovakia), which had been mortgaged to Poland in 1412 by King Sigismund of Luxemburg (1387–1437), since an invasion of Poland from Filákovo (Fülek) was highly unlikely.

Conclusion

The transition from Ottoman vassal voivodeship to sovereignty as King of Poland created a new legal situation for Stephen Báthory and the

75 BOA M.D. 31. 64. Nr. 164.

76 BOA M.D. 31. 64. Nr. 165.

77 A. AGAD, AKW, Dz. tur., k. 71. t. 260. no. 486, Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations*, 269–278; The royal ratification: A. AGAD, Libri Legationum, sign. 21. ff. 209a–212a; Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations*, 279–283. Stephan Gerlachs *def̄ Aeltern Tage-Buch*, 443–444.

78 BOA M.D. 31. 65. Nr. 167.

Porte. Although Stephen Báthory was not initially the most promising candidate for the Polish throne from the Ottoman perspective, the Porte did everything in its power to support him in his bid for the crown. For a time, the Ottomans attempted to treat the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth as a vassal state, but Báthory's decisive action rendered this approach untenable. The peace of 1577 was an agreement between two sovereign states, and the treaty concluded at that time served as a model for later Polish–Ottoman treaties. Thus Stephen Báthory achieved what many had hoped for but few had accomplished: he rose from a wealthy Hungarian aristocrat to voivode of Transylvania – still far from sovereignty, for at that time he was regarded as a vassal of both the sultan and the King of Hungary – and ultimately became King of Poland. As king, he unquestionably attained the status of a sovereign ruler, a dignity that even the hereditary Polish monarchs could rightfully claim.

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