



**SPECIAL FOCUS ROUNDTABLE: UNVEILING UNCHARTED REALMS: THE
OTTOMAN GRAND VIZIERATE IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE AND THE
KÖPRÜLÜ DYNASTY REVISITED**

Perspectives on Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's (1635-1676) Grand Vizirate by Imperial Resident Casanova

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Abstract

Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's tenure as grand vizier from 1661 to 1676 stands as a seminal period in Ottoman history, and Fazıl Ahmed Pasha was a pivotal figure. This article draws upon the largely-overlooked dispatches written by Giovanni Battista Casanova, the imperial resident at the Sublime Porte. Through an analysis of Casanova's observations, this study offers fresh perspectives on the grand vizirate and of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's enduring legacy within the Ottoman Empire. Following a brief introduction on Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's rise to power, the article's analysis unfolds across four dimensions: first, interactions between grand vizier Fazıl Ahmed and Sultan Mehmed IV; second, the closest associates of the grand vizier; third, Casanova's communication with the grand vizier; and fourth, Casanova's extensive negotiations for the release of prisoners of war.

At the core of this analysis is the argument that the communications between Casanova and Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha reveal not only the complexities of Ottoman affairs but also the strategic foundation of Ottoman military campaigns and diplomacy during this period. Through an examination of Casanova's dispatches, this article elucidates how the resident's interactions with the Ottoman court offer insights into the Ottoman Empire's strategies vis-à-vis European powers, as well as its reforms. By revisiting Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's legacy through the eyes of a contemporaneous observer, this study contributes a nuanced perspective to the understanding of Ottoman history and governance during the seventeenth century.

Keywords: Fazıl Ahmed Pasha; Köprülü; diplomatic history; Giovanni Battista Casanova; seventeenth century; Ottoman history

Introduction

Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha (1635-1676) is widely regarded as one of the most significant grand viziers in the history of the Ottoman Empire. His remarkable

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15-year tenure from 1661 to 1676, stands as one of the longest in the empire's history. He assumed this prestigious position in October 1661, succeeding his father, Köprülü Mehmed Pasha (c. 1578-1661), who had served as grand vizier from 1656 until his sudden demise in 1661.¹ European sources from the time presented diverse speculations about why Sultan Mehmed IV (1642-1693, ruled 1648-1687) chose Fazıl Ahmed as his father's successor, noting that the appointment marked only the second instance in Ottoman history where a grand vizier's son assumed the same office.² English diplomat and historian Paul Rycaut (1629-1700), for instance, proposed in his publication *The History of the Present State of the Ottoman Empire* that while such a transfer of power from father to son was "a peculiar departure from the usual practice," Köprülü Mehmed Pasha "had rendered such meritorious service to the Sultan and his entire realm, [. . .] that no honor could adequately be bestowed upon his memory except the appointment of his son to his position."³ Furthermore, it was widely assumed that Fazıl Ahmed would carry on the governance of the empire using the effective methods of his father, who had successfully quelled political unrest and ushered in a period of stability within the realm.⁴ The sultan's emphasis on stability presented the Köprülü family with a unique opportunity to strengthen and ascend in influence. During his tenure, Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha orchestrated three significant military campaigns.⁵ In 1663/64, he engaged in a conflict against the Habsburgs and their allies.⁶

¹ For general information on the grand vizierate of Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha, see Muhammed Fatih Çalışır, "A Virtuous grand vizier: Politics and Patronage in the Ottoman Empire during the grand vizierate of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha (1661-1671)" (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2016); Cumhur Bekar, "The Rise of the Köprülü Family: The Reconfiguration of Vizierial Power in the Seventeenth Century" (PhD diss., University of Leiden, 2019); Günhan Börekçi, "Köprülü Family," in *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Masters (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 313-17; M. Tayyib Gökbilgin and R. C. Repp, "Köprülü," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Second Edition, ed. P. Bearman et al. accessed October 10, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0530. On the relationship between Ottomans, Habsburgs, and Hungarians during the grand vizierate of Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha, see Georg B. Michels, *The Habsburg Empire under Siege: Ottoman Expansion and Hungarian Revolt in the Age of grand vizier Ahmed Köprülü (1661-76)* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021).

² Çandarlı Ali Pasha (ruled 1387-1406) assumed the role of grand vizier following the passing of his father, Çandarlı Hayreddin Pasha, who had held the position from 1364-87. See Bekar, "The Rise of the Köprülü Family," 105.

³ Paul Rycaut, *The History of the Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, 6th ed. (London: 1686), 135.

⁴ For various other arguments, see Çalışır, "A Virtuous grand vizier," 100-01; Bekar, "The Rise of the Köprülü Family," 110-25.

⁵ On the military campaigns, many relevant studies written in Turkish are mentioned in: Çalışır, "A Virtuous grand vizier," 107-08.

⁶ See Karin Sperl, Martin Scheutz and Arno Strohmeier, ed., *Die Schlacht von Mogersdorf/St. Gotthard und der Friede von Eisenburg/Vasvár 1664: Rahmenbedingungen, Akteure, Auswirkungen und Rezeption eines europäischen Ereignisses* (Eisenstadt: Amt der Burgenländischen Landesregierung, Abteilung 7 – Kultur, Wissenschaft und Archiv, Hauptreferat Landesarchiv und Landesbibliothek, 2016); Mohammed Fatih Çalışır, "The grand vizier Köprülüazade Fazıl Ahmed Pasha (1635-1676) and the Battle of Mogersdorf/Saint Gotthard (1664)," in *Die Schlacht von Mogersdorf/St. Gotthard und der Friede von Eisenburg/Vasvár 1664: Rahmenbedingungen, Akteure, Auswirkungen und Rezeption eines europäischen Ereignisses*, ed. Karin Sperl, Martin Scheutz and Arno Strohmeier (Eisenstadt:

This war, marked by substantial casualties on both sides, concluded with the signing of the Peace Treaty of Vasvár (Eisenburg) in 1665.⁷ Between 1666 and 1669, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha was stationed in Crete, where he successfully concluded the protracted siege of Venetian-held Candia.⁸ Finally, between 1672 and 1674, he led military operations in Podolia.⁹

While Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha implemented a range of military and administrative reforms and achieved significant victories over the Habsburgs, Venetians, and Poles, it is only in recent decades that historians have begun to give him the increased attention he deserves.¹⁰ As grand vizier, his role encompassed a diverse array of responsibilities, spanning domestic and foreign political affairs,¹¹ and he drew keen scrutiny from foreign diplomats. He was a captivating and noteworthy figure. The observations of contemporaries often revealed a complex blend of admiration and trepidation. One such observer was Giovanni Battista Casanova (1623-1676), who assumed the role of imperial resident¹² at the Sublime Porte in 1665, by which time Fazıl Ahmed had already held office for four years. Casanova arrived in the Sublime Porte in the entourage of Grand Ambassador Walter Leslie (1607-1667), who had traveled to the Ottoman Empire to confirm the Treaty of Vasvár (Eisenburg).¹³ Casanova

Amt der Burgenländischen Landesregierung, Abteilung 7 – Kultur, Wissenschaft und Archiv, Hauptreferat Landesarchiv und Landesbibliothek, 2016), 207-14; Özgür Kolçak, “XVII. Yüzyıl Askeri Değişimi ve Osmanlılar: 1660-64 Osmanlı- Avusturya Savaşları [The Seventeenth Century Military Development and the Ottomans: The Ottoman-Habsburg Wars of 1660-64]” (PhD diss., University of Istanbul, 2012).

⁷ Özgür Kolçak, “XVII. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Diplomasi Tarihine Bir Katkı: 1664 Vasvar Antlaşması’nın Tasdik Sürecine Dair Yeni Bulgular [A Contribution to the Seventeenth Century Ottoman Diplomacy History: New Findings on the Ratification Process of the 1664 Treaty of Vasvár],” *Dîvân. Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi* 22/43. 2 (2017): 25-88.

⁸ On the Cretan war, see Bruno Mugnai, *The Cretan War, 1645-1671: The Venetian-Ottoman Struggle in the Mediterranean* (Solihull: Helion & Company, 2018); Ekkehard Eickhoff, *Venedig, Wien und die Osmanen: Umbruch in Südosteuropa 1645-1700*, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2008), 212-45; Kenneth M. Setton, *Venice, Austria, and the Turks in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1991), 172-243.

⁹ Eickhoff, *Venedig, Wien und die Osmanen*, 246-82.

¹⁰ Michels, *The Habsburg Empire under Siege*, 8-10 mentions the most recent publications on Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha. See also footnote 1.

¹¹ Pál Fodor, “Sultan, Imperial Council, grand vizier. Changes in the Ottoman Ruling Elite and the Formation of the grand vizieral *telhîş*,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 47. 1-2 (1994): 74.

¹² Even after the armistice of Zsitvatorok in 1606, the emperors continued the practice of appointing a lower-ranking resident ambassador to the Sublime Porte. The resident ambassador took care of day-to-day businesses in the capital and across the empire, while the Habsburg government sent so-called grand ambassadors (*Großbotschafter*) for specific occasions. Christine Vogel, “Istanbul als Drehscheibe frühneuzeitlicher europäischer Diplomatie,” in *Europäische Geschichte Online (EGO)*, ed. Leibniz-Institut für Europäische Geschichte (IEG) (Mainz, 10.09.2020), 14, accessed October 10, 2023, <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/vogelc-2020-de>.

¹³ On Leslie's grand embassy, see Özgür Kolçak, “Habsburg Elçisi Walter Leslie'nin Osmanlı Ziyareti: Bir Tarihsel Anlatı İnşası (1665-1666) [Imperial Ambassador Walter Leslie in Ottoman Realms: Constructing an Historical Narrative (1665-1666)],” *Tarih Dergisi - Turkish Journal of History* 79, no. 1 (2023): 1-38; Philip Steiner, “Zwischen religiösen Vorbehalten und diplomatischem Pflichtgefühl: Die habsburgische Großbotschaft unter Walter Leslie an die Hohe Pforte (1665-1666),” *Historisches Jahrbuch* 132 (2012): 276-303.

assumed the role of imperial resident at the Sublime Porte in 1665, succeeding Simon Reniger von Renningen (d. 1668), who had held the position since 1649.¹⁴ During his seven-year residency at the Sublime Porte from 1665 to 1672, Giovanni Battista Casanova made it his mission to gather as much information as possible about life and politics within the Ottoman Empire. He meticulously documented his findings in a series of 188 extensive dispatches, which he relayed to Emperor Leopold I and the Aulic War Council, sparing no detail of his acquired knowledge. Notably, grand vizier Fazil Ahmed was a recurring figure in the majority of these reports.¹⁵ Despite the fact that Casanova's residency coincided with only half of Fazil Ahmed's time in office, his reports provide a rich and vivid portrayal of how the imperial resident perceived, analyzed, and assessed the grand vizier.

Relations Between Grand Vizier Köprülü Fazil Ahmed Pasha and Sultan Mehmed IV

According to Casanova's observations, the relationship between grand vizier Köprülü Fazil Ahmed Pasha and Sultan Mehmed IV was characterized by complex dynamics. While there was a fundamental mutual respect for each other's spheres of authority, their relationship also went through periods of tension and power struggles, notably during the years in which Fazil Ahmed Pasha was in Crete to finish the prolonged war with Venice. Their relationship highlighted the intricate, and sometimes delicate, balance of power within the Ottoman Empire, where both the sultan and grand vizier sought to assert their authority and protect their interests, even as they recognized the need to coexist and collaborate in governing the empire.

The fluctuations in the relationship between Sultan Mehmed IV and grand vizier Köprülü Fazil Ahmed Pasha are well-documented through numerous anecdotes recorded by Casanova in his letters. In September 1666, Casanova noted the sultan making unusual personal decisions, such as favoring an

¹⁴ Zsuzsanna Cziráki, "Zur Person und Auswahlung des kaiserlichen Residenten in Konstantinopel, Simon Reniger von Renningen (1649-1666)," in *Wiener Archivforschungen. Festschrift für den ungarischen Archivdelegierten István Fazekas*, ed. Zsuzsanna Cziráki et al. (Vienna: Institut für Ungarische Geschichtsforschung in Wien - Balassi Institut Collegium Hungaricum, 2014), 157-64. A historical-critical edition of Reniger's reports is in preparation: Sándor Papp et al., ed., *Everyday Life and Imperial Politics in the Köprülü Era: Reports of the Resident Envoy, Simon Reniger from Constantinople to the Vienna Court (1649-1660)* [forthcoming]. The final report by Reniger is published in Alois Veltzé, "Die Hauptrelation des kaiserlichen Residenten in Constantinopel Simon Reniger von Renningen 1649-1666," *Mitteilungen des k. u. k. Kriegs-Archivs* 12 (1900): 57-169.

¹⁵ Giovanni Battista Casanova's reports can be found in the following archive: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (= ÖStA), Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (= HHStA), Staatenabteilung (= StAbt), Türkei I, Karton (= Kart.) 138-44. For further information regarding diplomatic correspondence, see Tilman Haug, "Korrespondenz in Diplomatie und/oder Patronage-Beziehungen der Frühen Neuzeit," in *Handbuch Brief: Von der Frühen Neuzeit bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Marie Isabel Matthews-Schlinzig et al. (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2020), 740-52. On a praxeological approach to diplomatic reports, see Thomas Dorfner, Thomas Kirchner and Christine Roll, ed., *Berichten als kommunikative Herausforderung: Europäische Gesandtenberichte der Frühen Neuzeit in praxeologischer Perspektive* (Cologne and Vienna: Böhlau, 2021).

individual named Kuloglu and expressing a desire to arrange a marriage between Kuloglu and his widowed sister. Furthermore, the sultan spent increased time in the women's seraglio. Yet, despite this, he refrained from engaging in state affairs without the participation of the grand vizier.¹⁶ However, during Fazıl Ahmed's personal oversight of the siege of Candia between late 1666 and 1669, tensions and distrust between the grand vizier and the sultan seemed to intensify.¹⁷ Undoubtedly, the prolonged siege in Crete had stirred resentment among the sultan's subjects, resulting in growing dissatisfaction. Rumors swirled of assassination plans against the sultan, with speculation that one of his brothers was to ascend to the throne.¹⁸ In reaction, Sultan Mehmed IV attempted to act against his brothers, but their lives were spared due to the intervention of their mother, Hatice Turhan, and the janissaries.¹⁹

During this period of heightened tension, Casanova consistently reported events to Vienna. He interpreted signs of a "lingering misunderstanding" (*schwebender Missverstand*) between the sultan and grand vizier. One notable instance took place in August 1668 when Sultan Mehmed IV planned to winter in the town of Larissa, approximately 300 kilometers north of Athens in the Thessaly region. In a letter to the sultan, the grand vizier recommended postponing this journey, arguing that the Venetian ambassador, expected to conduct peace talks, had not yet arrived in Crete, and the Venetian fleet remained positioned near the shores along the route Mehmed intended to travel. However, the sultan rejected any delay of his plans.²⁰ In a similar event a year later, the sultan received counsel to vacate Larissa due to the outbreak of contagious disease and food shortage. The grand vizier further warned of the possibility of attack by a formidable Christian armada, advising the sultan to retreat to Gelibolu (Gallipoli) for safety. The sultan reacted in anger, tore

¹⁶ Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 12 September 1666, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 138, Konv. 4, fol. 71': *Der Sultan continuirt sein affection gegen den favoriten Cologl . . . Er frequentirt iezo der weiber seraglio mehr als nit zuvorgethan, nimbt für sich selbst zuzeiten seltsambe resolution für, dardurch alle in grosser forcht leben, doch in stats sachen ehunter nichts, ohne den Groß Vesir.*

¹⁷ For more details, see Gábor Ágoston, *The Last Muslim Conquest: The Ottoman Empire and Its Wars in Europe* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021), 486–90.

¹⁸ Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 5 March 1668, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 140, Konv. 1, fol. 133': *daß der Groß Vesir so lang der Sultan lebet nit zuruckh kommen will, wie auch auß dem waß sich ein vertrauter Aga gegen mir in occasione. . . verlauten hat lassen, daß der Sultan den Groß Vesir mit den seynigen oder dieser jenen fressen werde, ist abzunehmen, daß ein mißverstand zwischen ihnen beyden entstanden sey und daß einer dem andern nit traut, dahero möchte villeicht der Sultan auf solche weiß nach Constantinopel, alwo der Groß Vesir sein intent desto leichter erhalten kann, geführt werden, und leichtlich ein tragaedia zusehen sein möchte, und wan ein veränderung vorgehen sollte, mainet man daß des Sultans eltister bruder Sultan werden solle, der Sultan bemühet sich auf alle weiß seine brüder tödten zulassen.*

¹⁹ Bekar, "The Rise of the Köprülü Family," 131–34.

²⁰ Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 19 August 1668, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 140, Konv. 2, fol. 175–176: *Den 9ten diß hat der Sultan ein prächtigen außzug alhie gehalten. . . und dan die raiß nach Larissa forthsetzen. . . [D]er Groß Vesir [schreibt], daß der Sultan mit seiner raiß nit so sehr eillen solle, allermassen der venetianische pottschafter erwartet werde den friden mit beyder theillen zufriedenheit zuschliessen, mit fernerem bericht, daß die venetianische armada bey Cavala und ufern deß meers wo der Sultan nothwendig vorbeý müesße, aufpassen, ihm schaden zu thuen, der Sultan aber hatt sich hiemit dan noch nit aufhalten lassen, . . . Dieße sagen bestättigen den unter dem Sultan und Groß Vesier schwebenden mißverstand.*

up the letter, and, claiming to have heard similar predictions too many times before, decided to act contrary to the grand vizier's advice. Instead of withdrawing to Gelibolu, Sultan Mehmed traveled south to the island of Euboea (Negroponte).²¹ Casanova's reports suggest the sultan intentionally disregarded the grand vizier's counsel. Yet, it is essential to note that the sultan's stay in Larissa from October 1668 to November 1669 positioned him closer to military activities and facilitated communication with the grand vizier. Additionally, Rhoads Murphey considers this a transition phase when the sultan's direct involvement in campaigns came to be seen as more and more appropriate, as he was no longer a minor.²²

Ultimately, on 6 September 1669, Venetian captain-general Francesco Morosini (1619-1694) surrendered Candia.²³ This event marked a significant turning point in the relationship between grand vizier Fazıl Ahmed Pasha and Sultan Mehmed IV. Upon the grand vizier's return from Crete, the imperial resident Casanova learned of his intention to advise the sultan to return to Istanbul due to growing concerns about the empire's administration. Sultan Mehmed IV's passion for hunting and frequent travels away from the capital were considered detrimental, causing restlessness in the royal household and hindering administrative efficiency. Fazıl Ahmed likely recognized the necessity of having the sultan return to the capital to address these concerns and ensure the empire's smooth operation.²⁴ However, Sultan Mehmed IV intentionally refrained from residing in Istanbul and, starting in 1657, opted to relocate the primary seat of the imperial family to Edirne (Adrianople).²⁵ Multiple historical sources offer insights into Mehmed IV's reasons for this

²¹ Casanova to Leopold I, Tornova, 30 September 1669, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 141, Konv. 3, fol. 37^v-38: *soll der Groß Vesir dem Sultan geschrieben haben, daz Candia baldt in seiner handten sein wurde, und weilen dahir vil krankheiten, und wenig mund provision vorhanden, zu dem die christliche armada zu wasser zimlich starckh sey, undt vielleicht einen orth anfallen mechten, es rathsamb wäre, daz er sich nach Gallipoli begeben, worüber der Sultan erzürnt, hat den brief in stuckhen zerrissen, sagendt, daz ihm gar oft dergleichen geschriben worden, aber bißhero kein einiger effect erfolgt, dahero alsobald darauf resolvirt, an statt Gallipoli nach der insul Negro Ponte 5 tag von Larissa zuverreisen.*

²² Rhoads Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty: Tradition, Image and Practice in the Ottoman Imperial Household, 1400-1800* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008), 214-15.

²³ Mugnai, *The Cretan War*, 217-24.

²⁴ Casanova to Leopold I, Salonico, 5 April 1670, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 142, Konv. 1, fol. 108: *[M]ann höret, daß der Muffti Caimecam und andere den Sultan gern nach Constantinopel zubringen sich bißhero vergeblich bemühet haben, weilen er derselbigen statt nicht getrawet, der Groß Vesier aber möchte ihn bey seiner zuruckh khunfft vielleicht darze bereden, in deme er mit seinen täglichen jagen mit so vill tausent unterthanen daß landt gantz verdürbt, undt seine hoffstatt und andere, dise immerwehrende unruhe länger nit ertragen können.*

²⁵ During Mehmed IV's reign, Edirne flourished: New quarters were built and even important court festivities such as the circumcision of his two sons, Princes Mustafa and Ahmed, and the wedding of his oldest daughter Hatice in 1675 took place there. As Tülay Artan highlights, Edirne "functioned as the *de facto* seat of government for nearly half a century [i.e., in the seventeenth century] – without ever stripping Istanbul of its status and privileges as the official capital of the Ottoman empire." Tülay Artan, "Royal Weddings and the Grand Vezirate: Institutional and Symbolic Change in the Early Eighteenth Century," in *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires: A Global Perspective*, ed. Jeroen Duindam, Tülay Artan and Metin Kunt (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 350-51 and 369.

decision.²⁶ Some attribute it to the tumultuous uprising during the initial years of his rule, leading to his unease about staying in the capital.²⁷ Others highlight the appeal of Edirne's proximity to vast hunting grounds.²⁸ Nonetheless, the sultan's choice to dwell in Edirne should be viewed not only as a retreat from active governance for leisure activities like hunting but rather as indicative of the shift in the latter half of the seventeenth century, signifying that the traditional responsibilities of the sultan included more direct involvement in provincial affairs.²⁹ Upon grand vizier Fazıl Ahmed's triumphant return from Crete, Sultan Mehmed IV, for at least a temporary period, heeded the grand vizier's counsel, distancing himself from his entourage and suspending his hunting pursuits. Nonetheless, he continued to reside in Edirne and did not return to Istanbul until 1676. Imperial resident Casanova was uncertain, however, whether the sultan's compliance was driven by a genuine appreciation of the grand vizier's counsel or by a sense of fear regarding Fazıl Ahmed's substantial influence, particularly considering the grand vizier's considerable support from the military following his achievements.³⁰

The sultan notably commenced daily visits to the grand vizier's residence, displaying a keen interest in being thoroughly informed about all aspects of the grand vizier's activities and decisions. This is an intriguing observation, considering that since the reign of Murad III (1546-1595, ruled 1574-1595), there had been a notable shift from direct, face-to-face contact between the grand vizier and the sultan to a system of written communication. This written form of interaction involved documents, known as *telhîs*, issued by the grand

²⁶ Several reasons are mentioned in Cumhuriyet Bekar, "'The Ottoman Revolution of 1661': The Reconfiguration of Political Power under Mehmed IV and Köprülü grand viziers," *Journal of Early Modern History* 27, 3 (2023): 238-40.

²⁷ Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 33-35; Sam White, *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 123-227. Also the imperial grand ambassador Walter Leslie noted "Er ist ungern zu Constantinopel, den Er sich vor dem Pöbel und den aufrühren die Er in seiner Jugend gesehen, sehr fürcht [He (Mehmed IV) is reluctant to go to Constantinople, as he fears the mob and the riots he witnessed in his youth." Adam Wolf, "Drei diplomatische Relationen aus der Zeit Kaiser Leopold's I. Mit einer Einleitung," *Archiv für Kunde österreichischer Geschichts-Quellen* 20 (1859): 327.

²⁸ Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream. The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300-1923* (London: Murry, 2005), 307.

²⁹ "This shifting of the center of political gravity from Anatolia to the Balkans reflected the locus of Ottoman concerns at the time. . . . At mid[-seventeenth] century, when the arena of war shifted to the Aegean, the Ottomans became more preoccupied with monitoring the progress of events along their northern and northwestern frontiers. . . . But beyond that, the shift also signaled the government's new resolve to become more actively involved in regulating everyday affairs in the provinces." Rhoads Murphey, "Continuity and Discontinuity in Ottoman Administrative Theory and Practice during the Late Seventeenth Century," *Poetics Today* 14, 2 (1993): 428-29.

³⁰ Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 10 July 1670, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 142, Konv. 2, fol. 22': *Der Groß Vesier ist erst den ersten dises alhier angelangt, vom Sultan auß lieb oder forcht mir unbewust, wohl empfangen worden, in dem jener die völlige militia auf seiner seithen hatt, . . . der ander die lageden . . . abgedanckt, und sich nit mehr auf jagt begeben hatt, welches dann allen wunderbarlich vorkommet.*

vizier and presented to the sultan.³¹ According to Casanova, Fazıl Ahmed, feeling burdened by the sultan's continuous inquiries and interventions, expressed his wish to resign due to health concerns, intending to embark on a pilgrimage to Mecca. However, Sultan Mehmed IV, recognizing the grand vizier's extensive military expertise, deemed him invaluable as an advisor as he himself planned to lead an imminent military campaign and saw the grand vizier's knowledge as essential for its success.³² This plan was indeed extraordinary, as Ottoman sultans had typically resigned from personally participating in military campaigns since the accession of Selim II (1524-1574, ruled 1566-1574) to the throne in 1566.³³ The military campaign in Podolia (1672-1674) was thus unique as it marked the first and only instance of Sultan Mehmed IV directly leading such an endeavor.³⁴ The grand vizier supported the preparations for the upcoming war, arguing that it would be instructive for Sultan Mehmed IV to witness firsthand the difficulties and hardships that arise during a campaign.³⁵

³¹ On *telhiş*, see Fodor, "Sultan, Imperial Council, grand vizier"; Pál Fodor, "The grand vizierial *Telhis*. A Study in the Ottoman Central Administration 1566-1656," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 15 (1997): 137-88.

³² Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 13 August 1670, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 142, Konv. 2, fol. 63-64: *Der Groß Vezier auß ursachen daz er deß Sultans unruhe so täglich den ganzen tag bey ihm in haus steckhet und all dessen thuen genau sehen und wissen will, länger nit erdulden kann, ist dem Sultan zu fuessen gefallen, hat licenz begert den dienst aufzugeben wegen krankheit und verlangen eine walfahrt nach Mecca zuverrichten, seine intention ist gewesen den Caimecam seinem schwager zum Groß Vezierat zu bringen, . . . der Sultan hats ihm aber nit verleyhen wollen, und gesagt daz er nunmehr die beste erfahrungheit in kriegs geschäften zu wege bracht und ihm grössere diensten zu laisten vermöchte, in deme er Sultan in persohn zu veldt zu gehen resolvirt wehre [S]olches dem Groß Vezier angenehm sey, damit er augenscheinlich sehe, was man im krieg laiden mueß, und für difficulteten antrifft.*

³³ Fodor, "Sultan, Imperial Council, grand vizier," 78.

³⁴ Kahraman Şakul, "Siege Warfare in Verse and Prose: The Ottoman Conquest of Kamianets-Podilsky (Kamaniçe), 1672," in *The World of the Siege: Representations of Early Modern Positional Warfare*, ed. Anke Fischer-Kattner and Jamel Ostwald (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2019), 205-40; Ágoston, *The Last Muslim Conquest*, 487.

³⁵ This perspective is intriguing, given the impact the campaign in Crete had on Fazıl Ahmed himself. Like many other military officials, he had developed a habit of consuming significant quantities of wine, a practice that persisted among several military officials upon their return from the battlefield. In response to this issue, Sultan Mehmed IV had his preachers condemn the consumption of wine and even attempted to enforce a prohibition on it for a period. According to reports from resident Casanova, the grand vizier had become a heavy drinker and had grown sluggish and neglectful in performing his duties. However, by January 1671, the situation appeared to have improved again. Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 19 September 1670, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 142, Konv. 2, fol. 133-133': *Der prediger ist des Sultans verthreulichster, auß dessen befelch mainet man daz er vor wenig tagen so eyferig wider den wein gepredigt, daz gleich darauf auß scharffen befelch des Sultans aller wein in ganz türckischen reich mit grossen schaden und confusion der christen und auch der türckhen ist verboten worden, aldieweillen der Groß Vesier und andere kriegs officier sich in Candia der massen ahn kein gewehnet haben, daz sie fast täglich getruncken, in sonderheit der Groß Vesier gleichsamb er auch noch zur zeit thuet, und deßwegen in allen negotien langsam und nachlässig ist, der Sultan wolt ihn gern absetzen wie man verspührt, fürchtet sich aber für der militia.* Grand vizier Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's drinking habit is also mentioned in the records of English diplomat John Finch: George Frederick Abbott, *Under the Turk in Constantinople: A Record of Sir John Finch's*

Despite their differing views and occasional difficulties in getting along, Sultan Mehmed IV and grand vizier Fazıl Ahmed Pasha generally seem to have respected each other's spheres of authority and shared a common concern: they believed that the military should not remain idle for extended periods to prevent the troops from having the opportunity to revolt.³⁶ Imperial resident Casanova had already warned Emperor Leopold I before the grand vizier's return from his campaign in Crete that he might seize any opportunity to launch a new campaign;³⁷ Casanova was uncertain at the time whether the grand vizier's efforts would be directed toward Hungary, Poland, or Persia.³⁸ The sultan's and the grand vizier's shared commitment to maintaining military activity eventually led them both northward to the center of Podolia. However, the imperial resident Casanova, feeling exhausted and frustrated due to the extensive travels involved in his role at the Sublime Porte, opted not to accompany the sultan and the grand vizier on their military campaign and requested from Vienna to be relieved from his post. Emperor Leopold I accepted his request and appointed Johann Christoph Kindsberg (1636-1678) as the new resident,³⁹ who followed Sultan Mehmed IV and Fazıl Ahmed to the northern border of the Ottoman Empire.

Administrative Personnel and Dignitaries Nominated by Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha

Upon ascending to the position of grand vizier in 1661, Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha initiated a series of appointments within the administrative apparatus, wherein he strategically positioned individuals from his inner circle in crucial positions. This shift in the patronage system, which expanded the recruitment

Embassy 1674-1681 (London: MacMillan, 1920), 132. Leading Ottoman chroniclers and courtiers mention it as well, see: Çalıřır, "A Virtuous grand vizier," 13-14.

³⁶ For example: Casanova to Leopold I, Tornaova, 26 October 1669, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 141, Konv. 3, fol. 80; Salonico, 19 February 1670, Kart. 142, Konv. 1, fol. 47; Salonico, 24 February 1670, Kart. 142, Konv. 1, fol. 57; Salonico, 9 March 1670, Kart. 142, Konv. 1, fol. 77.

³⁷ Casanova to Leopold I, Tornaova, 30 September 1669, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 141, Konv. 3, fol. 44: *wan der Großvesier herüber kommen solte, und in seinem ambt continuieren, ist mir gar wohl bewust, daz er auf keine weiß bey dem Sultan verbleiben wird, dahero mecht er gelegenheit finden sich eheist darvon zumachen, wohin er aber zihlen wird, ist hie diser zeit noch nit zuerforschen gewesen.*

³⁸ Casanova to Leopold I, Salonico, 24 December 1669, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 141, Konv. 3, fol. 141': *und gehen nur unterschiedne discurs von der ottomanischen porten vorhaben alhier umb, etliche sagen in Persien, andere in Pohn wegen der Cosakhen und andere in Ungarn, es ist aber die gewisheit dessen alhie nit zuhaben.*

³⁹ Ulrike Tischler-Hofer, "Johann Christoph Kindsperger (1636-1678): Innerösterreichische Verwurzelung und staatsmännischer Weitblick. Eine historische Annäherung an das Verhältnis zwischen Staat und Provinz," in *Provincial Turn: Verhältnis zwischen Staat und Provinz im südöstlichen Europa vom letzten Drittel des 17. bis ins 21. Jahrhundert*, ed. Ulrike Tischler-Hofer and Karl Kaser (Frankfurt am Main et al.: Peter Lang, 2017), 13-60; Carl von Peez, "Johann Christoph von Kindsperg, kaiserlicher Resident bei der hohen Pforte," *Mitteilungen des österreichischen Instituts für Geschichtsforschung* 38. 1 (1920): 122-31; Yasir Yılmaz, "The Road to Vienna: Habsburg and Ottoman Statecraft during the Time of grand vizier Kara Mustafa Pasa (1676-1683)" (PhD diss., Purdue University, 2015) analyzes Kindsberg's reports.

of personnel into state service beyond the exclusive domain of the sultan's household⁴⁰ to include the households of viziers, among which the Köprülü family emerged as the preeminent one of the seventeenth century, has been astutely characterized by Cumhur Bekar as "The Rise of the Köprülü Household."⁴¹

The most influential figure in Fazıl Ahmed's tenure as grand vizier was his brother-in-law Kara Mustafa Pasha (1634-1683), who held several crucial positions.⁴² Between 1661 and 1666 he assumed the role of grand admiral of the Ottoman fleet. When Fazıl Ahmed prepared for the campaign in Crete in 1666, he appointed Kara Mustafa Pasha as the *kaymakam* of Istanbul, a role he maintained until 1669.⁴³ In this position, he essentially served as a deputy to the grand vizier, ensuring governmental continuity in the grand vizier's absence. As reported by imperial resident Casanova, Fazıl Ahmed chose Kara Mustafa due to his trustworthiness and reliability, positioning him near the sultan to secure timely information about potential plots or conspiracies.⁴⁴ Moreover, Fazıl Ahmed needed to be certain of Kara Mustafa's unwavering loyalty, as previous deputies had exploited their positions to establish their own networks of power.⁴⁵ The court and state bureaucracy had three components during this period. The first component accompanied the grand vizier, who led the army in the field. The second component remained in Istanbul, where the grand vizier's chief deputy, the *kaymakam* of Istanbul, oversaw state affairs, including the financing of war and communications with the front. Consequently, the sultan's household was reduced to a minimum, comprising only his harem and a select group of palace attendants who could move freely without elaborate protocol. Additionally, when the sultan embarked on hunting expeditions or regular seasonal relocations, the royal household underwent further separation.⁴⁶

Casanova's reports provide valuable insights into Kara Mustafa's life before his ascent to the grand vizierate in 1676. He observed a "secret accord"

⁴⁰ Household is defined here to mean a group of individuals linked by kinship and clientage. See Metin Kunt, "Royal and Other Households," in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (New York: Routledge, 2012), 103-16.

⁴¹ Cumhur Bekar, "The Rise of the Köprülü Household: The Transformation of Patronage in the Ottoman Empire in the Seventeenth Century," *Turkish Historical Review* 11, no. 2-3 (2020): 229-56.

⁴² C. J. Heywood, "Ḳarā Muṣṭafā Paṣha," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Second Edition, ed. P. Bearman et al. accessed October 10, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_3894. On Kara Mustafa's tenure as grand vizier, see Yılmaz, "The Road to Vienna"; see also Merlijn Olon, "A Most Agreeable and Pleasant Creature? Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Paşa in the Correspondence of Justinus Colyer (1668-1682)," *Oriente Moderno / Nuova serie* 22, no. 3 (2003): 649-69.

⁴³ E. Kuran and P. M. Holt, "Ḳā'im-Maḳām," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Second Edition, ed. P. Bearman et al. accessed October 10, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0419.

⁴⁴ Casanova to Leopold I, Constantinople, 16 February 1666, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 138, Konv. 3, fol. 23': *der izeige Capitan Bassa des Vesiers schwager soll abgesetzt werden, und Caimecam beym Sultan verbleiben . . . , welches der Vesier procuriert . . . , damit er ein vertraute person beym Sultan habe, durch welche er alles erforschen und verhindern möge, so ichtwas [sic] wider ihn machinirt wurde.*

⁴⁵ Günhan Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites at the Court of Sultan Ahmed I and His Immediate Predecessors" (Ph.D. diss, Ohio State University, 2010), 37-38.

⁴⁶ Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty*, 212-13.

between the *kaymakam* and the grand vizier.⁴⁷ In his eyes, Kara Mustafa was a loyal servant, who lacked independent authority. In numerous instances, Casanova highlights Kara Mustafa's obligation to report, write, or send inquiries, petitions, and relevant documents to the grand vizier.⁴⁸ He could not take any action without the explicit order of the grand vizier⁴⁹ and communicated only in accordance with the latter's instructions. Furthermore, Kara Mustafa refrained from making any major decisions without prior approval of the grand vizier. This procedural approach was cumbersome and time-consuming, causing significant delays in the resolution of matters. On occasion, an overwhelmed Kara Mustafa advised petitioners who were complaining about delays to travel to Crete themselves and attempt to speak with the grand vizier in person if they were so inclined.⁵⁰ French agents, in particular, sought to capitalize on the grand vizier's absence to engage in negotiations concerning the renewal and modification of their capitulations (known as '*ahd-names*')⁵¹ with the *kaymakam*. However, their efforts proved unsuccessful.⁵²

Kara Mustafa and Casanova maintained communication through written correspondence and intermediaries such as dragomans. They also had several in-person meetings, with Casanova reporting eight formal audiences⁵³ and one

⁴⁷ Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 1 September 1667, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 139, Konv. 3, fol. 82: *dise antwort zaiget klar an, die collusion so sie beyde der Groß Vesir, und Caimecam miteinander haben.*

⁴⁸ For example: Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 12 March 1667, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 139, Konv. 2, fol. 100: *Die restitution und restauration der heiligen orth betreffend, bekennet der Pater Commissarius selbst, daß ieziger zeit keine coniuncturen darzue seien, massen der Groß Vesir abwesend und hiesiger Caimecam demselben alles remittire.*

⁴⁹ For example: Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 31 May 1667, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 139, Konv. 2, fol. 213: *Wegen der gefangenen in 7 Turnen hab ich bißhero bey dem Caimecam nit gehalten, weñ ich gewiß weiß, daß ihm der Groß Vesir nichts darvon geschriben, ohne dessen befehl er nichts thuen kan; Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 15 July 1667, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 139, Konv. 3, fol. 21: Wegen der gefangenen in Sieben thuren bekendt er [Kaymakam] selbsten, daß es ein guets werckh, und will dem Groß Vesir parte darvon geben, worauß scheint, daß er ohne desselben vorwissen nichts thuen kann, oder will, und daß sie mit einander colludiren.*

⁵⁰ For example: Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 25 October 1666, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 138, Konv. 4, fol. 161; Tornova, 18 November 1669, Kart. 141, Konv. 3, fol. 106'.

⁵¹ For further details on the French-Ottoman capitulations, see Radu Dipratu, *Regulating Non-Muslim Communities in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Empire: Catholics and Capitulations* (London and New York: Routledge and Taylor & Francis Group, 2022), 27–67; Géraud Poumarède, "Négociier près la Sublime Porte: Jalons pour une nouvelle histoire des capitulations franco-ottomanes," in *L'invention de la diplomatie. Moyen Age – Temps modernes*, ed. Lucien Bély and Isabelle Richéfort (Paris: Presses Univ. de France, 1998), 71–85.

⁵² Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 12 September 1666, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 138, Konv. 4, fol. 63–63', 69': *das dißer Caymecam einige autoritet nit hette, über sothane sachen zu resolviren, sondern müesse alles dem Groß Vesir referieren, . . . und mechte mir ergehen wie dem französischen agenten, so in hoffnung bey abwesenheit des Groß Vesir, vom Caymecam sein intent zuerhalten, mit lähren händen abziehen müessen. . . . [D]er Kaimecam hette demselben allein gutte worth gegeben, nur damit er zehen orloch schieff von ihm erhalten möge, wie auch beschehen, volckh undt proviant darmit in Candia zuüberbringen.*

⁵³ Dates of the audiences with the *kaymakam* Kara Mustafa: 1 March and 5 July 1667; 2 January, 27 April, and 4 December 1668; 26 January, 27 March, 12 April, and 20 December 1669: Casanova to Leopold I., Adrianople, 12 March 1667, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 139, Konv. 2, fol.

informal meeting with Kara Mustafa. Notably, during the latter part of 1667 and the first half of 1668, Casanova observed a shift in Kara Mustafa's attitude toward him. On 26 December 1667, he received a surprise visit from Kara Mustafa, marked by an unusually friendly tone. However, Casanova couldn't discern the exact purpose or benefit of this reverence. This left him with the impression that Turkish politicians were quite skilled at diplomacy, and he was reminded of the old adage, "the more they flatter, the less they can be trusted" (*ie mehr sie schmeichlen, ie weniger ihnen zu thrauen*).⁵⁴ Later on, Casanova's detailed report of his official audience with Kara Mustafa in April 1668 provided a glimpse into the reasons behind the *kaymakam*'s unusual friendliness. Presented as a dialogue, this meeting revealed Kara Mustafa's keen interest in obtaining comprehensive information about the borders between the Habsburgs, Poland, and Russia, along with the possibility of alliance between them. Kara Mustafa explicitly expressed concerns about the stability of the Vasvár Peace Treaty, fueled by rumors of military recruitment. These concerns indicated growing apprehension about the potential emergence of a second front, while Candia was reaching a critical phase.⁵⁵ Thus, Casanova's dispatch shed light on the limitations of Kara Mustafa's position within the Ottoman political hierarchy during this period. The constraints imposed on him, particularly by the returning grand vizier, restricted any substantial expansion of his role.⁵⁶

Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's policy of favoring close associates and family as appointees to key offices extended beyond Kara Mustafa Pasha. One of these appointments involved his second brother-in-law, Kaplan Mustafa Pasha

98-98'; Adrianople, 15 July 1667, Kart. 139, Konv. 3, fol. 20-22; Adrianople, 15 January 1668, Kart. 140, Konv. 1, fol. 5-6'; Adrianople, 29 April 1668, Kart. 140, Konv. 1, fol. 233-235; Tornova, 14 December 1668, Kart. 140, Konv. 3, fol. 118-120; Tornova, 31 January 1669, Kart. 141, Konv. 1, fol. 11-14; Tornova, 3 April 1669, Kart. 141, Konv. 1, fol. 78-78', 88-88', 81'; Tornova, 13 April 1669, Kart. 141, Konv. 1, fol. 116-118'; Salonico, 24 December 1669, Kart. 141, Konv. 3, fol. 136'-140.

⁵⁴ Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 15 January 1668, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 140, Konv. 41, fol. 2', 5: *Alß den 26 [Dezember] der Caimecam mit dem Sultan in grossem wegen von der jagt kerend, durch daß dorff wo ich mich aufhalte, daß vor diesem sonst nie geschehen, ritten, und der Sultan sich in eines Aga hauß retirirte, sein gebett zuverrichten, kame auch der Caimecam in daß meinige, dergleichen zuthun, welcher von zuckher werckh und dergleichen sachen, so ich ihm vortragen lassen, genossen und hat sich gar freuntlich erzaigt, aber in khein discours sich eingelassen, weilen er zum Sultan also bald gerueffen worden, zu was für einem ziel und endt diße ungebrauchige ehr erbietung beschehen, ist mir unbewust, villeicht weilen die türckhen trefliche politici seind, daß ie mehr sie schmeichle, ie weniger ihnen zu thrauen, biß sie der angst, in welcher sie in Candia aniezo sich befinden, entgegen mögen.*

⁵⁵ Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 29 April 1668, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 140, Konv. 1, fol. 233-235': *Den siben und zwanzigsten wurde ich von Caimecam zur audienz berueffen und darin unterschiedene sachen gefragt, . . . weiter sagte er gewisse nachricht von der gräniz bekommen zuhaben, wie daß eur Kay. May. starkh, auch Ungarn und Croaten werben liessen, und weilm selbige kein krieg fuhreten, zu waß ende dan so viel volckh, ich, daß ich darvon kein wissenschaft hab . . . , endlich hat er auf alle weiß haben wollen, daß ich ein currier expedirete . . . die rechte ursach des werben zuvernehmen, . . . auß disem verlauff und andern anzaigen erscheinet, daß sie in grosser forcht stehen, daß zwischen eur Kay. May., Poln und Moscau ein bundt getroffen sein möchte, sonst hat er mir alle ehr, und freundschaft erwisen.*

⁵⁶ Michels and Vasiucioneck come to similar conclusions. See Michels, *The Habsburg Empire under Siege*, 415; Michał Wasiucioneck, *The Ottomans and Eastern Europe: Borders and Political Patronage in the Early Modern World* (London: Tauris, 2019), 144-45.

(d. 1681),⁵⁷ who was named grand admiral in 1666,⁵⁸ replacing Kara Mustafa Pasha. Kaplan Mustafa retained this position until 1672 when he assumed the role of governor of Aleppo during the Kamaniecz campaign. He wielded significant influence in all military endeavors of the era and can be considered the principal advisor to Fazıl Ahmed Pasha on military matters. Furthermore, Fazıl Ahmed appointed Seydi Mehmed Pasha, presumably another brother-in-law, as the new Ottoman governor (*beylerbeyi*) of Nové Zámky (Neuhäusel), however his appointment proved problematic,⁵⁹ as complaints surfaced regarding his alleged failure to effectively address cross-border incidents, violations, and robberies, accompanied by allegations of a lax and negligent approach to his responsibilities. Casanova sought to discuss these complaints face-to-face with grand vizier Fazıl Ahmed Pasha, who insisted on the submission of written complaints for further review, implying an avoidance of public confrontation, especially since the matter involved a family member. Casanova suspected that the demand for written complaints was a deliberate tactic. He noted that despite the consensus among many courtiers regarding what they saw as the governor's unsuitability and harmful behavior, the governor was protected by his close relationship with the grand vizier, illustrating the complex dynamics of power and loyalty. Casanova advised Emperor Leopold I to intervene if the governor persisted in his unacceptable behavior, mentioning that the grand vizier had already been warned several times.⁶⁰ Complaints about misconduct in the border region remained a recurring topic in Casanova's correspondence with Vienna. He diligently monitored the removals and new appointments in the Ottoman border administration, providing the Viennese Court with his personal assessments. The appointment of a new governor of Buda (Ofen) was found to be especially important. Generally, the *beylerbeyis*

⁵⁷ A. H. de Groot, "Kaplan Muştafâ Pasha," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Second Edition, ed. P. Bearman et al. accessed October 10, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_8753. See also Bekar, "The Rise of the Köprülü Family," 188–89.

⁵⁸ Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 18 April 1672, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 143, Konv. 3, fol. 55': *Der türkische General bey den Cosackhen wider die Polackhen, Ali Bassa, ist ab und Caplan Capitan Bassa des Groß Vesirs schwager an sein stell gesetzt worden.*

⁵⁹ Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 10 November 1670, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 142, Konv. 2, fol. 124': [Der Pasha] von Neuheusl soll auch ab und an sein stell des Seidi Mehemed Bassa Sohn deß Groß Vesiers schwager noch sehr jung gesetzt werden. Heywood mentions that it is uncertain whether Seydi Mehmed Pasha was a rightful brother-in-law of Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed. Heywood, "Karâ Muştafâ Pasha." See Muhammed Fatih Çalışır, "War and Peace in the Frontier. Ottoman Rule in the Uyvar Province, 1663–1685" (Master's thesis, Bilkent University Ankara, 2009), 109; Josef Blaškovič, "The Period of Ottoman-Turkish Reign at Nové Zámky (1663–1685)," *Archiv Orientální* 54 (1986): 105–30.

⁶⁰ Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 24 December 1671, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 143, Konv. 2, fol. 105–105', 106'–107': *Der Groß Vesier ließ mich fragen, waß mein vorbringen währe, und auf mein andtwortt, ich hette etliche clagen . . . wider den Bassa zu Neuheußel, replicirte er, ich sollte es schriftlich eingeben, villeicht weillen selbiger Bassa sein Schwager ist, die sach nit khund zu machen . . . Alle von der Porten bekennen des Seyde insolenzien unbilligkeit und daz derselbe für selbige gränzen untauglich ist, will aber keiner anbeissen, weilen er des Groß Vesier schwager und von demselben geliebt wird . . . Wann diser Bassa mit seinen insolentien continuirn solte, ist mein aller unterthänigste mainung, ihn starckh klopfen zu lassen, dann die porten wurde darwider nichts einwenden können, nach dem sie so viel mahl vorher gewahrnet ist worden.*

of Buda held an esteemed position among the provincial governors of the Ottoman Empire. They carried the title of vizier and, like many other Ottoman dignitaries in border regions, wielded substantial authority, particularly in the realm of borderland diplomacy. Up-to-date information about such appointments was thus particularly important to the Habsburgs.⁶¹ In 1666, Casanova expressed concerns about the potential successor to the deceased governor of Buda, Hasan Pasha, fearing that the new governor might not be as sympathetic to the Habsburgs as his predecessor had been.⁶²

These strategic appointments underscore the grand vizier's efforts to consolidate his influence and maintain control over key administrative positions. As Bekar has emphasized,⁶³ Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's brothers-in-law played vital roles in upholding the power of the vizierial household.⁶⁴ Each of them held distinct responsibilities, with Kara Mustafa Pasha taking the critical and sensitive position as deputy of the grand vizier during his absence. Although lacking significant individual authority, his role allowed for close collaboration with the sultan, which enabled him to build his own influential household and succeed to the grand vizierate after Fazıl Ahmed's passing.

Interactions and Communication: Imperial Resident Casanova and Grand Vizier Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's Information Exchange and Network

Giovanni Battista Casanova had limited direct and personal interactions with grand vizier Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha. After his official introduction at the Sublime Porte in 1665,⁶⁵ Casanova had a single brief audience with the grand vizier on 29 March 1666,⁶⁶ just before Fazıl Ahmed departed for the Cretan campaign. Following Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's return from Crete, they had four additional audiences in 1671, on 27 April, 1 July, 12 August, and

⁶¹ For general information regarding the position of *Beylerbeyi* of Buda, see Gábor Kármán, "Transylvanian Envoys at Buda: Provinces and Tributaries in Ottoman International Society," in *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c. 1410-1800*, ed. Tracey A. Sowerby and Jan Hennings (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 47-49. With a focus on the sixteenth century, see also: Gisela Procházka-Eisl and Claudia Römer, "Raub, Mord und Übergriffe an der habsburgisch-osmanischen Grenze: Der diplomatische Alltag der Beglerbege von Buda abseits von Zeremonien," in *Diplomatisches Zeremoniell in Europa und im Mittleren Osten in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Ralph Kauz, Giorgio Rota and Jan Paul Niederkorn (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009), 251-64.

⁶² Casanova to Leopold I, Constantinople, 14 April 1666, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 138, Konv. 3, fol. 123: *Cassu Bassa so zu Temeswar gewesen, ist an statt des verstorbenen Mehmet Bassa zu Ofen declarirt, . . . ich befürchte dieser Cassu Bassa möchte sich nicht so wohl alß der vorige verhalten.*

⁶³ Bekar, "The Rise of the Köprülü Family," 185-91.

⁶⁴ On vizierial households, see Jane Hathaway, "Households in the Administration of the Ottoman Empire," *Türklük Bilgisi Araştırmaları / Journal of Turkish Studies* 40 (2013): 127-49; Rifaat Ali Abou-El-Haj, "The Ottoman Vezir and Paşa Households 1683-1703. A Preliminary Report," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94, no. 4 (1974): 438-47.

⁶⁵ Veltzé, "Hauptrelation," 160.

⁶⁶ Casanova to Leopold I, Constantinople, 30 March 1666, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 138, Konv. 3, fol. 81'-82.

29 August.⁶⁷ During Fazıl Ahmed's absence, Casanova primarily communicated with various key figures who acted as intermediaries with the grand vizier. The first was Fazıl Ahmed's deputy and *kaymakam* of Istanbul, Kara Mustafa Pasha. Another was the Orthodox Greek dragoman⁶⁸ Panagiotis Nikousios (1621-1673), who had entered imperial service in 1645. A renowned polyglot, proficient in Greek, Turkish, Persian, Arabic, Latin, and Italian, Nikousios was a highly skilled individual. A vast personal network aided his diplomatic initiatives. Initially summoned by the Sublime Porte in 1650 for translations, Nikousios was eventually appointed "Chief Dragoman" (*baş tercüman*) by Fazıl Ahmed, a role he held until his death in October 1673. Despite his high-ranking position inside the Ottoman court, Nikousios regularly received payments from Vienna, and consistently informed the imperial resident ambassadors about the developments in the Ottoman capital; he reported even confidential Ottoman state matters to Vienna.⁶⁹ As a close confidant of grand vizier Fazıl Ahmed he joined the Cretan campaign from 1666 and 1670. Throughout this period, he was in regular contact with the imperial resident Casanova, sending at least 40 letters that furnished vital updates about the ongoing siege. The letters, which Casanova diligently attached in full or in excerpts to his routine reports to Vienna,⁷⁰ leave little doubt about Nikousios's prominent and influential role in Ottoman foreign policy.⁷¹ Johann Philipp Beris (d. 1671), the imperial

⁶⁷ Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 12 May 1671, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 143, Konv. 1, fol. 30-31'; Despoti Jaila, 5 July 1671, fol. 102-102', 104-106; Despoti Jaila, 30 August 1671, Kart. 143, Konv. 2, fol. 34-35'.

⁶⁸ On the role of dragomans within the Ottoman Empire, see E. Natalie Rothman, *The Dragoman Renaissance: Diplomatic Interpreters and the Routes of Orientalism* (Ithaca et al.: Cornell University Press, 2021); S. G. Marghetch, *Étude sur les fonctions des drogman des missions diplomatiques ou consulaires en Turquie* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1993); Marie de Testa and Antoine Gautier, *Drogmans et diplomates européens auprès de la Porte ottomane* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2003). On dragomans working for the imperial residents, see Dóra Kerekes, "Transimperial Mediators of Culture: Seventeenth-Century Habsburg Interpreters in Constantinople," in *A Divided Hungary in Europe: Exchanges, Networks and Representations, 1541-1699*, vol. 2: *Diplomacy, Information Flow and Cultural Exchange*, ed. Szymon Brzeziński and Áron Zarnóczy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 69-84; Zsuzsanna Cziráki, "Language Students and Interpreters at the Mid-Seventeenth-Century Habsburg Embassy in Constantinople," *Theatrum historiae* 19 (2016): 27-44.

⁶⁹ See Gunnar Hering, "Panagiotis Nikousios als Dragoman der Kaiserlichen Gesandtschaft in Konstantinopel," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 44 (1994): 143-78; Damien Janos, "Panaiotis Nicousios and Alexander Mavrocordatos: The Rise of the Phanariots and the Office of Grand Dragoman in the Ottoman Administration in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 23 (2005/06): 177-96; Veltzé, "Hauptrelation," 160.

⁷⁰ Nikousios' letters are attached to Casanova's reports to the emperor (1666-1670): ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 139-142.

⁷¹ Furthermore, credit must be attributed to Nikousios for his early notification to Vienna regarding the conspiracy of Croatian-Hungarian magnates (*Magnatenverschwörung*) and the anti-Habsburg Hungarian Revolt after the Treaty of Vasvár. Georg B. Michels has thoroughly examined in his book the developments in the framework of the Hungarian revolt, using many contemporary European sources including the reports of Casanova. Michels, *The Habsburg Empire under Siege*. See also Péter Dominkovits, "Ein verschenkter Sieg? Der Magnatenaufstand - Ausdruck der Schaukelpolitik des ungarischen Adels oder reale politische Option?" in *Die Schlacht von Mogersdorf/St. Gotthard und der Friede von Eisenburg/Vasvár 1664: Rahmenbedingungen, Akteure, Auswirkungen und Rezeption eines europäischen Ereignisses*, ed. Karin Sperl, Martin Scheutz and Arno

extraordinary internuncio at the Sublime Porte, had high praise for Panagiotis Nikousios, stating:

Panaioti is everything at the court; he governs not only the Sultan and the Vizier but the whole Turkish Empire. He directs all Christian interests, serves as the highest councilor and secretary, and nothing occurs at court that does not pass through his hands. He must be especially observed and treated with courtesy, so that he does no harm.⁷²

During Nikousios Panagiotis' stay in Crete, Casanova had to reorganize his information network to find a source close to the sultan and the *kaymakam* of Istanbul, Kara Mustafa Pasha.⁷³ This new source was a highly skilled interpreter named Ali Bey (*einen in vill sprachen erfahrenen türckhen, namens Ali Beg*),⁷⁴ who was appointed by Sultan Mehmed IV in May 1668. This dragoman was Ali Ufki Bey (born Wojciech Bobowski, c. 1610-1675), a Polish renegade and accomplished scholar who had previously worked for various diplomats, including English and Dutch ambassadors at the Sublime Porte, as well as for the Ottoman court itself. Ali Ufki Bey was celebrated not only for his role as a collector and translator of significant works but also for his musical talents and compositions.⁷⁵ After assuming his post, Ali Ufki Bey immediately paid a visit to Casanova, who praised in his letters to Vienna Ali Ufki's proficiency in several languages including German, and the deep respect and unwavering loyalty he displayed toward Emperor Leopold I. True to his word, Ali Ufki Bey fulfilled this

Strohmeyer (Eisenstadt: Amt der Burgenländischen Landesregierung, Abteilung 7 – Kultur, Wissenschaft und Archiv, Hauptreferat Landesarchiv und Landesbibliothek, 2016), 135-48.

⁷² Beris to Leopold I, Adrianople, 19 May 1671, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 143, Konv. 1, fol. 28: *Der Panaioti ist bey hoff alles, und alles, regirt nit allein den Sultan und Vesir, sondern auch daz ganze Turcicum Imperium, dirigt alle christliche interesse, ist der gehaimbste rath und secretari, kombt bey hoff nichts vor, daz nicht durch dessen hand gehet, hinc vel maxime observandus, et comiter habendus, ne noceat.*

⁷³ The dragoman Marco Antonio Mamucca della Torre initially served as a significant intermediary for the imperial resident Casanova at the onset of his tenure. Nonetheless, Mamucca della Torre's temperament appeared to be somewhat fiery, and his involvement in an altercation in 1668 resulted in his censure by *kaymakam* Kara Mustafa. Consequently, he became *persona non grata*, forfeiting any subsequent access to Ottoman dignitaries, which rendered him ineffective in aiding Casanova. For further details on Mamucca della Torre see Elisabeth Lobenstein, "Informationsgewinnung und Berichterstattung – die diplomatische Korrespondenz des kaiserlichen Gesandten an der Hohen Pforte, Giovanni Battista Casanova (1665-1672)," in *Die Medialität von Diplomatie. Diplomatische Korrespondenzen im Kontext frühneuzeitlicher Briefkultur*, ed. Arno Strohmeyer et al. (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, in print); Rothman, *The Dragoman Renaissance*, 56-64, 135-38.

⁷⁴ Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 12 May 1668, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 140, Konv. 2, fol. 14'. In his subsequent reports, Casanova mentions this dragoman as the "new dragoman at the Sublime Porte" (*der ottomannische porten neue tollmatsch*).

⁷⁵ Ali Ufki Bey, born under the name Wojciech Bobowski. See E. Natalie Rothman, "Dragomans and 'Turkish Literature': The Making of a Field of Inquiry," *Oriente Moderno* 93. 2 (2013): 403, 411-13; Judith Irmela Haug, "Being More than the Sum of One's Parts: Acculturation and Biculturalism in the Life and Works of Ali Ufukî," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 33 (2016): 179-90; İpek Aynuksa, "Ali Ufki Bey (Wojciech Bobowski) – Well-Known Musician, Forgotten Political Figure: A Luminary in the 600 Years of Turkish-Polish Diplomatic Relations," *Stosunki Międzynarodowe – International Relations* 52. 1 (2016): 271-84.

commitment in the subsequent years. He reported in detail about various audiences and provided copies of documents that he had translated.⁷⁶ In return for his services, Ali Ufki Bey quickly requested an annual salary, a proposition that Casanova rejected. He held reservations, speculating that Ali Ufki Bey's role might be temporary, and his significance and position could diminish upon Panagiotis Nikousios' return from Crete.⁷⁷ Instead of an annual salary, Casanova delivered to Ali Ufki Bey 20 ducats as a token of goodwill. In 1668, 1669, and 1670, Ali Ufki Bey received a total sum of 110 ducats for his services.⁷⁸ Casanova's assessment proved accurate. After the return of Nikousios Panagiotis, Casanova observed that a new era, "a new world" (*ein neüe weltdt*) had begun. His informants, particularly the dragoman Ali Ufki Bey, who had acted as significant sources for the past three years, suddenly found themselves largely irrelevant overnight.⁷⁹ Nikousios Panagiotis, who was at the peak of his career due to his prominent role in peace negotiations with the Venetians, was again at the center of "everything at the court."

Thus, the exchanges between Giovanni Battista Casanova and the Ottoman authorities heavily relied on key intermediaries. While Casanova's direct contact with grand vizier Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed was minimal, his main sources of information included the Orthodox Greek dragoman, Panagiotis Nikousios, or the Polish renegade Ali Ufki Bey. Casanova heavily relied on these informants in order to regularly inform Emperor Leopold I and the Viennese Aulic War Council about Ottoman developments and the possibilities of new campaigns into Central Europe. Casanova diligently reported to the Viennese court, sometimes completing it with his personal opinions and assessments. Indeed, in the period before 1683, when the Ottomans maintained an upper hand in the Habsburg-Ottoman relationship, this information network played a pivotal role in molding diplomatic interactions and decisions between these two influential powers.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 31 July 1668, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 140, Konv. 2, fol. 117: *[D]iese tage hat der ottomannischen porten neue tollmatsch, alß er mich persönlich besuchte, seiner gegen ewer Kay. May. allerunterthänigsten devotion, grose expressiones gethan, verspricht alles was bey der ottomanischen porten vorkombt, mir zu offenbaren, khan neben vielen dern sprachen auch die teutsche gar gutt.*

⁷⁷ Casanova to Leopold I, Tornova, 20 November 1668, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 140, Konv. 3, fol. 39'-40: *Der ottomannischen porten neüe tolmatsche hat sich vernehmen lassen, ich soll ihm bey E. Kay. May. umb ein jährliche besoldung verhülfflich sein, ich hab ihm aber zuverstehen geben, daß er es mit mir zu thuen und daß ichs nit wurde unvergoltten lassen, umb der ursachen willen ihm auch noch zu Adrianopl zwey mahl zwainzig ducaten geschenckt, damit er mit vertrösungen aufgehalten werde, bis man sehe, ob wan der Panaioti zuruckh kombt, dieser beym dienst verbleiben wird, und iener kein disgust darob fasse, sonst gebe ich ihm die beste wortt ihn bey gueten willen zu erhalten.*

⁷⁸ Specification o. D. [1668 – 1669], ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 141, Konv. 1, fol. 34; Verzeichnuß der gethanen extraordinari unkosten, o. D. [1669-1670], ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 142, Konv. 1, fol. 127.

⁷⁹ Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianopel, 10 July 1670, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 142, Konv. 2, fol. 24: *Dahie ist aniezo ein neüe weltdt, die alte officiirt meine vertraute, und ottomannischen porten dollmatsch gelten nicht, werden in keiner sach gebraucht, und wissen von keiner sach mehr.*

⁸⁰ For comprehensive analysis of Casanova's information network and his style of reporting, see: Lobenwein, "Informationsgewinnung und Berichterstattung"; Elisabeth Lobenwein, "Formale und informelle Akteure bei der Informationsgewinnung an der Hohen Pforte (1665-1683),"

Release of Prisoners of War

Giovanni Battista Casanova's role in the Ottoman Empire extended beyond information-gathering and included specific instructions from Emperor Leopold I and the Viennese War Council to personally negotiate vital matters. For example, one such mission involved obtaining permission for the reconstruction of six Catholic churches in Galata, which had suffered extensive damage in a 1660 fire.⁸¹ Furthermore, Casanova frequently presented complaints of Habsburg subjects in the border regions as well as those of Ottoman subjects to the Viennese Court, as daily conflicts, minor warfare (*Kleinkrieg*), and provocations from both sides were commonplace.⁸² A focal point of Casanova's diplomatic efforts was securing the freedom of prisoners of war, especially Christian captives held in the infamous Yedikule prison (Eng.: Seven Towers; German: *Sieben Türme*), especially just before the establishment of the Order of the Trinitarians in the Habsburg Monarchy in 1688-89. As demonstrated by Elisabeth Watzka-Pauly's research, the establishment of this order in the Habsburg Monarchy ushered in a new era in the liberation of Habsburg subjects until the order's dissolution in 1783, where Habsburg prisoners were freed through so-called redemption missions.⁸³

Frühneuzeit-Info 22 (2022): 31-46. Regarding the acquisition of information in the diplomatic context, refer to Elisabeth Lobenwein and Anne-Simone Rous, "Acquisition of Information and Espionage," in *Early Modern European Diplomacy. A Handbook*, ed. Dorothee Goezte and Lena Oetzel (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2023), 657-72.

⁸¹ This task required navigating the complex political landscape of the time to persuade the grand vizier to grant the necessary privilege for the reconstruction. Ottoman law stipulated that the rebuilding of non-Muslim places of worship was not permissible without a direct privilege, often in the form of a *berat*. Casanova to Leopold I, Constantinople, 30 March 1666, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 138, Konv. 3, fol. 80: [Den Befehlen gemäß] werde ich bey eraigneter gueten gelegenheit zuwider aufbauung der Minoriten kirch, wie auch deren zu Galata den consens von der Ottomannischen Porten zuerlangen allzeit cooperiren helfen, welcher zwar bey disem Vesir, in dem er gar superstitios in seinem glauben, und solches auch bereits oben gemelten Eur Kay May geheimben rath und anderen fürsten, ministern abgeschlagen, schwerlich wird zuerhalten sein. For further details, see: Laura Elisabeth Binz, "Latin Missionaries and Catholics in Constantinople 1650-1760: Between Local Religious Culture and Confessional Determination" (PhD diss., European University Institute Florence, 2013), 45-48; Dipratu, "Regulating Non-Muslim Communities," 183-91; Marc David Baer, "The Great Fire of 1660 and the Islamization of Christian and Jewish Space in Istanbul," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36. 2 (2004): 165-66; Rossitsa Gradeva, "Ottoman Policy toward Christian Buildings," *Etudes balkaniques* 4 (1994): 14-36.

⁸² Casanova to Leopold I, Constantinople, 12 September 1666, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 138, Konv. 4, fol. 63-65'. For general information on the Ottoman-Habsburg frontier, see Gábor Ágoston, "Defending and Administering the Frontier: The Case of Ottoman Hungary," in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (New York: Routledge, 2012), 220-36; Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor, ed., *Ottomans, Hungarians, and Habsburgs in Central Europe: The Military Confines in the Era of Ottoman Conquest* (Leiden, Boston and Cologne: Brill, 2000).

⁸³ On the release of Christian prisoners in Muslim-dominated lands with a focus on the eighteenth century, see Elisabeth Watzka-Pauly, *Triumph der Barmherzigkeit: Die Befreiung christlicher Gefangener aus muslimisch dominierten Ländern durch den österreichischen Trinitarierorden 1690-1783* (Göttingen: V & R Unipress, 2016), 349-96. See also Will Smiley, *From Slaves to Prisoners of War: The Ottoman Empire, Russia, and International Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 19-56; Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor, ed., *Ransom Slavery along the Ottoman Borders (Early Fifteenth-Early Eighteenth Centuries)* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007).

We gain a comprehensive understanding of this topic through the personal account of the prisoner Johann Ferdinand Auer, a lieutenant in the Pozsony regiment who was detained in the Seven Towers. In 1664, he wrote a detailed narrative in German of the events leading to his enslavement and subsequent imprisonment.⁸⁴ During the battle of Esztergom (Gran) in July 1663, Austrian and Hungarian forces encountered a considerably stronger Ottoman contingent than anticipated. Retreating Habsburg forces were pursued by Ottoman cavalry all the way to Érsekújvár, where a substantial number of soldiers were captured, with some sources estimating up to 1,700 prisoners. Among them was Johann Ferdinand Auer. While Auer claimed in his memoirs that he concealed his noble status, it is reasonable to assume the Ottomans were aware of it.⁸⁵ The military hierarchy typically determined the fate of captives, with common soldiers often facing mass executions.⁸⁶ Auer and approximately 20 other “elite” prisoners, including individuals such as Leonhard Rublandt, a captain who later corresponded with Casanova during his captivity,⁸⁷ were transferred to the Seven Towers in Istanbul. Their arrival in January 1664 marked the beginning of a decade-long confinement within the walls of this fortress.⁸⁸

The transfer of prisoners to the Seven Towers reflected an extended period of confinement due to their higher value. The Sultan typically rejected monetary offers for their release but instead sought the exchange of Ottoman captives of comparable rank in prisoner swaps. These exchanges frequently occurred during the signing of peace treaties or after visits by “grand ambassadors.”⁸⁹ In this instance, Grand Ambassador Walter Leslie arrived in Istanbul in September 1665, and one of Emperor Leopold I’s instructions was to secure the release of prisoners captured in the previous war. Despite Leslie’s efforts, only prisoners from the imperial arsenal (known in Italian as *Bagno*, in Turkish as *Baba Cafer zindanı*)⁹⁰ were freed. Negotiations for the release of the elite captives at the Seven Towers faltered and Leslie departed, leaving the newly

⁸⁴ The memoirs are edited in Imre Lukinich, ed., *Auer János Ferdinánd pozsonyi nemes polgárnak héttoronyi fogságában írt naplója 1664* [The diary of Johann Ferdinand Auer, citizen of Pozsony. Written during his captivity in the Yedikule 1664] (Budapest: A. M. történelmi Társ., 1923). Casanova’s efforts for the release of the prisoners are summarised in, *ibid.*, 16–41. Several of Casanova’s reports to the emperor as well as reports from the Seven Towers sent to Casanova are edited in *ibid.*, 209–46.

⁸⁵ See also Özgür Kolçak, “János Ferdinand Auer and His Imprisonment in the Seven Towers (1663–1674): A Prisoner of Diplomacy,” in *Şerefe. Studies in Honour of Prof. Géza Dávid on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Pál Fodor, Nándor E. Kovács and Benedek Péri (Budapest: Research Centre for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2019), 419–21.

⁸⁶ See Géza Pálffy, “Ransom Slavery along the Ottoman-Hungarian Frontier in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” in *Ransom Slavery along the Ottoman Border (Early Fifteenth–Early Eighteenth Centuries)*, ed. Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2007), 43.

⁸⁷ Leonhard Rublandt’s letters are attached to Casanova’s reports to the emperor (1666–1671): ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 139–43.

⁸⁸ Kolçak, “János Ferdinand Auer,” 423–29.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 429–30; Pálffy, “Ransom Slavery,” 44, 54.

⁹⁰ Pálffy, “Ransom Slavery,” 44.

appointed imperial resident, Giovanni Battista Casanova, with 700 ducats to address this unresolved matter.⁹¹

From the beginning of his assignment, Casanova harbored skepticism about the likelihood of convincing the Sublime Porte to release the prisoners in the Seven Towers. Despite Casanova's persistent inquiries, *kaymakam* Kara Mustafa Pasha stressed that only the grand vizier could decide such matters. He advised Casanova to be patient and wait for the grand vizier's return from the battlefield.⁹² In abeyance of any decisions, Casanova took measures to improve the conditions of captivity. In March 1666, he sent the prisoners 60 thalers to help alleviate their suffering by "freeing them from iron" (*von eyssen ledig worden*),⁹³ followed by an additional 107 ducats in November of the same year. When some of the Seven Towers inmates shared part of this money with prisoners in the *Bagno* – apparently some Hungarian prisoners were still there – Casanova felt slightly unsettled. He assured Emperor Leopold I that he would only support the captives in the *Bagno* upon explicit orders, especially since he lacked information about the circumstances of their imprisonment.⁹⁴ In April 1668, Casanova sent another 95 gold ducats to assist the prisoners and requested additional funds from the emperor, as he saw slim prospects for their release in the near future.⁹⁵

Negotiations were complicated by several factors and differing perspectives. For example, Casanova had to negotiate for the release of different types of prisoners. The Hungarian prisoners held in the *Bagno* claimed to have been captured during the time of the grand embassy of Walter Leslie in 1665, a period of peace, while grand vizier Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha and *kaymakam* Kara Mustafa Pasha considered them prisoners of war.⁹⁶ Despite Casanova's

⁹¹ Kolçak, "János Ferdinand Auer," 432-3; Veltzé, "Hauptrelation," 157-8.

⁹² Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 1 September 1667, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 139, Konv. 3, fol. 82: *Auf mein ferner inständiges anhalten, damit die gefangene in Siben Turnen nacher Ofen geschickht wurden, hat mir endlich der Caimecam durch den Marco Antonio sagen lassen, daß ich mich derentwegen biß zu des Groß Vesiers zuruckh konfft gedulten wolle.*

⁹³ Casanova to Leopold I, Constantinople, 30 March 1666, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 138, Konv. 3, fol. 80-80': *Die gefangene in Sieben Thurn, hab ich bißhero . . . verträstet, . . . hab ich ihnen sechzig taller geschickht, mittelst deren sie von eyssen ledig worden.*

⁹⁴ Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 24 November 1666, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 139, Konv. 1, fol. 29: *Auf anhalten der gefangenen in Süben Thurnen hab ich . . . ihnen hundert süben ducaten in gold geschickht, . . . ingleichen denen in Bagno zu unterschiedlichen mahlen vil ausgetheilt, weiln dise in grösserer noth sich befunden, . . . weil ich aber nit wais wie die sach beschaffen, ob selbige im herein streiffen oder in andern geschäftten, wie sie vorgeben, gefangen worden, so nehme ich mich ihrer so lang nicht an, bis daz Eur Kay. May. mir daz wegen allergnädigst bevelchen.*

⁹⁵ Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 11 April 1668, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 140, Konv. 1, fol. 206'-207': *Ich habe denen gefangenen in Bagno unnd Siebenthurn auf ihr ersuchung widerumb fünf und neunzig duggaten geschickt, und weiln die . . . hinterlasßnen gelder nun mehr vollend aufgangen, alß werden Eur Kay. May. allergnädigst geruhen, zu ihrer notturfft newe mittel anzuschaffen, in miltister betrachtung, daz allem ansehen nach derenselben erledigung noch so bald nit geschechen werde.* Emperor Leopold I remitted 200 ducats. Casanova to Leopold I, Torno, 20 November 1668, Kart. 140, Konv. 3, fol. 39'.

⁹⁶ Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 31 May 1667, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 139, Konv. 2, fol. 212'-212': *geben mir von denen gefangenen in Bagno folgende information, daß . . . Petscher und Tiervarer Türckhen sie gefangen nach Petsch gebracht, und nach zwey wochen im Junio 1665 nach Offen*

criticism of taking prisoners during peacetime and demands for compulsory release, the Ottomans refused to budge.⁹⁷ Furthermore, Emperor Leopold I had no Ottoman prisoners to offer in exchange for these men. These factors hindered negotiations.⁹⁸ Hence, the likelihood of their release was extremely low. After nearly three years of fruitless efforts, Casanova reluctantly admitted that the Ottomans were intentionally delaying the prisoners' release. He pointed out that his persistence had only been a response to the emperor's explicit orders conveyed through numerous letters. Casanova expressed his deep frustration, bemoaning the entire situation and the absence of a clear resolution of the matter in the Treaty of Vasvár.⁹⁹ Unable to negotiate any solution with the grand vizier, Casanova made a daring proposal to the emperor: he suggested bypassing the grand vizier and directly presenting the issue to the sultan. However, he acknowledged the risks associated with this approach, including the potential anger of both the grand vizier and the *kaymakam*, which could have adverse effects on ongoing and future negotiations. Ultimately, the emperor agreed, deeming the plan too risky to pursue.¹⁰⁰

Another year passed, and Casanova continued to reassure the emperor that he had not forgotten the matter. However, he expressed frustration that neither gifts nor other means had succeeded in making progress on this issue.¹⁰¹ As the grand vizier repeatedly demanded a list of names of Muslim

geführt, . . . , also in fridens zeith, alß Euer Kay. May. grosse pottschaftt auf der herein raiß begriffen gewesen, gefangen worden. Dieses alles aber will bey dem Caimecam nicht verfangen und beharret, . . . daß sie nemblich in kriegs zeithen gefangen worden.

⁹⁷ Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 11 April 1668, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 140, Konv. 1, fol. 206': . . . sey ia nueg, daß ich beweßlich dargestellt, daß sie in wehrenden frieden gefangen worden, daher rechtswegen zuentlassen seyen.

⁹⁸ Casanova to Leopold I, Torno, 13 April 1669, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 141, Konv. 1, fol. 93: Wegen der gefangenen schreib ihm, daß der Sultan in loßgebung derselbigen seine generositet erzeigen wurde, dan sonst die Außwexlung schwerlich zu treffen sein werde, angesehen unsere wie ihm selbst wohl bewust, gar ordinari persohnen seyen, und Eur Kay. May. ganz keine gefangene Türckhen haben.

⁹⁹ Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 19 August 1668, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 140, Konv. 2, fol. 172: Ich verspühre selbst, daß die Türckhen wegen erledigung der gefangenen in Sibenthurn die saiten gar hoch spannen wollen, hette auch auf verschickung derenselben nach Ofen so starckh nit getrungen, wann von Eur Kay. May. es nit in befelch gehabt und sie mich alle wochen mit brieffen darzue hetten angetriben, ich lasse mir die tradierung mit waß für personen sie möchten außgewechslet werden, allergehorsambist angelegen sein, waß iezo in disem so viel mühe kostet, hette im fridenschluß mit einem wordt geschlichtet können werden, wovon mir aber nichts gesagt worden, biß alles geschlossen und der currier expediert gewesen.

¹⁰⁰ Leopold I to Casanova, Vienna, 12 December 1668, ÖStA, KA, ZSt, HKR, HR, Bücher 334, Registratur 1668, Nr. 22, fol. 305: Mann finde ebenfahß bedenckhlich, die eliberation der gefangenen bey den 7 Thurn durch die vertraute persohn beim Sultan zusehen.

¹⁰¹ Casanova to Leopold I, Salonico, 24 December 1669, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 141, Konv. 3, fol. 135: Deren gefangenen in Sibenthüren bin ich auf keine weis vergessen, . . . und des wegen alhie weder durch geschänkh, weder sonst einige mitl der gewünschte zwekh zu hoffen ist, schreibe allernädigstem bevelch gemäß dem Panaiotti, daß Eur Kay. May. ganz keine türkische gefangene halten und umb keine in Ungarn wissen, zumahlen scharff verboten seye in fridens zeiten gefangene zu haben, und wan er derenselbigen erledigung auf diese weiß nit erhalten könnte, offerir ich ihme verehrungen nach seinem belieben, damit zu disponiren . . .

prisoners – which the imperial resident could not provide, because purportedly there were no Muslim prisoners held in the Habsburg lands – Casanova began to fear his task of releasing the prisoners would be impossible during Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's tenure as grand vizier.¹⁰² The grand vizier questioned the rationale behind releasing Habsburg prisoners solely out of goodwill, pointing out that he received daily correspondence from Turkish prisoners who had secured their freedom by paying a ransom. He was not swayed by the argument that the ransomed prisoners in those cases had been held by private individuals.¹⁰³ Casanova's plea to at least treat the prisoners more humanely, especially after a French Knight Hospitaller had escaped, and the remaining inmates had been placed in irons in a dark tower and subjected to brutal treatment, was likewise brusquely rejected by Fazıl Ahmed.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, he tried to bribe the prison wardens to secure privileges for the captured officers.¹⁰⁵ Shortly before his recall from his position as resident, Casanova reported with astonishment in a dispatch dated 1 June 1672 that thirteen prisoners had been unexpectedly moved from Istanbul to Edirne. The grand vizier had apparently been informed by a certain Hüseyin Agha, a formerly imprisoned Turk, that more than 30 captives were being held in Hungary, and he demanded their release in exchange.¹⁰⁶ In the final days of Casanova's tenure,

¹⁰² Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 7 January 1671; ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 142, Konv. 3, fol. 2': *wegen der gefangenen in Sieben Thurnen hab der Vezier sagen lassen, sie köndten ohne außwechßlung nit ledig werden . . . auß dem erscheint, daz bey wehrender regierung dieses Vesirs in diesem puncto wenig wirdt außzurichten seyn, welches mir sehr leid ist.*

¹⁰³ Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 13 August 1670; ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 142, Konv. 2, fol. 64': *Umb erledigung der gefangenen in Süben Thürmen hab ich beweglich anhalten lassen, der Groß Vesier aber will sich auf keine weiß darzue bequemen, alß durch außwechßlung, sagend daz täglich brief von türckischen gefangenen herein kommen, und auch ein theil derselben durch geld erledigt werden, warumb er dann dise umb sonst solte hergeben, und mein replicirn, daz Eur Kay. May. kein gefangenen haben und umb keine wissen, auch sich nit gebühre, daz der Sultan bey fridens zeiten gefangene hette, hofft nichts.*

¹⁰⁴ For a similar example, see Pálffy, "Ransom Slavery," 53.

¹⁰⁵ Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 25 January 1671; ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 142, Konv. 3, fol. 31'-32: *Bey wehrender regierung dißes Vesiers ist wegen erledigung der gefangenen in Siben Thurn ohne außwechßlung gar nichts zu hoffen, welcher auch auf mein instendiges anhalten (weillen sie nach des französïschen Maltheßer Rittern flucht nit in die Siben Thurn, am Schwarzen Meer wie ich vernommen gehabt, sondern in den vorigen, in eysen ahn füessen, und stückfinstern thurn gesteckt worden, und auf das übleste tractiert werden) sie sanffter zu halten, scharff geantwortet, daz ihre gefangene sie nach belieben tractiren könten, . . . deßwegen wäre mein . . . mainung, daß man alle Türcken, so sich hin und wider in Ungarn befinden, gleicher gestalt auf das schärfste zu tractiren hette . . . Zumahlen bey der Porten nichts außzurichten, wende ich aniezo mittel ahn, selbigen schlosses Aga mit schanckhung zu milderer tractation der armen gefangenen zu bringen.*

¹⁰⁶ Casanova to Leopold I, Adrianople, 1 June 1672, ÖStA, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei I, Kart. 144, Konv. 1, fol. 1'-2: *Ein gefangner Türckh Hussein Aga, von des Graffen Niclaß von Zrin hinterlassnen wittib auf parola herein gelassener, so zwölf tausend thaller bezahlen muß, hatt so starckh bey der Porten angehalten, daz ihme der Auer auß den Sibenthuren ist geschenckt worden, und auf befragen des Groß Vesiers ob mehr gefangene Türcken daraußen wehren, hatt er geandwortt, daz über die dreyßig wüsste, hierauff hatt der Groß Vesier ohne mein und des Panaïoti vorwissen alle 13 gefangene in den 7 Thüren anhero bringen lassen, so gestern angelangt seind, und morgen nach Ofen dem Bascha zugeschickt werden, damit sie selbiger außwexlen solle, erst heinnt lasset es mir der Groß Vesier zu wissen thuen, und sagen, ich solte in eill einen brieff mitgeben, damit auch daraußen nachricht darvon erhalten werde, also daz mir kein zeit gelassen wirdt mehrers zuschreiben, werde es aber in 2 oder 3 tagen mit einen aignen botten erstatten.*

there was a glimmer of hope for the freedom of Christian prisoners, providing a much-needed sense of relief after years of stagnation in this pursuit.

Conclusion

The 188 reports that Giovanni Battista Casanova dispatched to Emperor Leopold I and the Viennese Aulic War Council from 1665 to 1672 provide a wealth of information about Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha, one of the longest-serving Ottoman grand viziers. Tasked with gathering and relaying accurate information to the Viennese court, Casanova often relied on intermediaries to communicate with the sultan, grand vizier, or grand vizier's deputy. Among these, the Greek Orthodox dragoman Panagiotis Nikousios and the Polish convert Ali Ufki Bey were instrumental, providing Casanova access to Ottoman dignitaries and enabling him to fulfill his reporting duties effectively.

Throughout his tenure, Casanova regularly documented significant developments in the Ottoman Empire. He discerned the foundation of mutual respect between Sultan Mehmed IV and grand vizier Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha, a rapport briefly strained as the sultan contended with pressure from his subjects due to the prolonged war in Crete. Fazıl Ahmed's influence within the Ottoman Empire notably solidified after his triumphant return from the Candia campaign. Moreover, Casanova observed the "rise of the Köprülü household," a phenomenon that started in 1656 with the elder Köprülü's appointment to grand vizierate and continued with his son's subsequent succession. This period marked the Köprülü family's deeper integration into the state fabric, highlighting the critical roles of loyalty, patronage, and strategic appointments within the Ottoman administrative structure. It is true, Casanova primarily had to deal with everyday affairs during his time at the Sublime Porte including submitting complaints about incidents at the Habsburg-Ottoman border or attempting to secure the release of captive Christians. Indeed, his tenure was characterized more by collecting information and other daily routines and less by extraordinary events or major accomplishments. Nevertheless, Casanova's reports were essential for Emperor Leopold I and the Viennese Aulic War Council. Staying constantly informed about the (changing) power dynamics and key figures in the Ottoman Empire was crucial in correctly assessing and evaluating the likelihood of a renewed outbreak of war. The detailed investigation of Giovanni Battista Casanova's dispatches provides a nuanced understanding of a transformative period in Ottoman history. Casanova's observations transcend mere historical documentation; they provide a glimpse into the complex interplay of power, loyalty, and strategy that characterized the Ottoman Empire in the seventeenth century.

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