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DERVİŞ MEHMED EFENDİ AND RUSSIA EMBASSY REPORT (1755)

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Abstract

The reports submitted by the sefirs (ambassadors) assigned by the Ottoman State to establish relations with other states since its establishment were called sefâretnâme. Sefâretnâmes were written about many different countries and are important documents that give information about Ottoman foreign policy. The meticulousness in the selection of ambassadors and the appointment of experienced statesmen to the post have increased the importance of these reports in terms of being a source for scientific studies. The sefâretnâmes, which have rich observations and comments about the country visited, have included developments in education, economy, technology, art and administration. Thus, it also contributed to the development and modernization of the Ottoman State. On the other hand, these reports have been important historical sources for European historians. Sefâretnâmes have been published in various forms such as articles, books, book chapters and graduate theses. In this study, the manuscript copy of Derviş Mehmed Efendi's 1755 dated Russia Sefâretnâmesi in Fatih Millet Library, numbered 829, is evaluated. The aforementioned sefâretnâme has not been analyzed and published as a separate work before. The original images and the transcribed text of the Sefâretnâme are also included in our article. Thus, it is aimed to contribute to academic studies by publishing another sefâretnâme.

Keywords: *Sefir, Sefâretnâme, Derviş Mehmed, Russia, Ottoman.*

DERVİŞ MEHMED EFENDİ VE 1755 TARİHLİ RUSYA SEFÂRETNÂMESİ

Öz

Osmanlı Devleti'nin kuruluşundan itibaren diğer devletlerle ilişki kurmak için görevlendirdiği sefirlerin (elçilerin), elçilik vazifesiyle ilgili sundukları raporlara sefâretnâme denilmiştir. Sefâretnâmeler, birçok farklı ülke hakkında yazılmıştır ve Osmanlı dış politikası hakkında bilgi veren önemli vesikalardandır. Elçi seçiminde titizlik gösterilmesi ve göreve tecrübeli devlet adamlarının atanması, bilimsel çalışmalara kaynak olması, bu raporların önemini ayrıca arttırmıştır. İçeriğinde gidilen ülke ile ilgili zengin gözlem ve yorumlar bulunan sefâretnâmeler eğitim, ekonomi, teknoloji, sanat, idare vb. hakkında gelişmelerden bahsettiğinden Osmanlı Devleti'nin gelişimi ve modernleşmesine de katkı sağlamıştır. Diğer taraftan bu raporlar Avrupalı tarihçiler için de önemli tarih kaynakları olmuştur. Sefâretnâmeler makale, kitap, kitap bölümü ve lisansüstü tez çalışmaları olmak üzere çeşitli şekillerde yayımlanmıştır. Bu çalışmada Derviş Mehmed Efendi'nin 1755 tarihli Rusya Sefâretnâmesi'nin Fatih Millet Kütüphanesinde 829 numara ile kayıtlı yazma nüshası değerlendirilmiştir. Söz konusu sefâretnâme daha önce müstakil olarak ele alınıp yayımlanmamıştır. Makalemize sefâretnâmenin orijinal görüntüleri ile transkript edilmiş metni de eklenmiştir. Böylelikle bir sefâretnâme daha yayımlanarak akademik çalışmalara katkı sunması amaçlanmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Sefir, Sefâretnâme, Derviş Mehmed, Rusya, Osmanlı.*

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INTRODUCTION

Diplomacy, briefly in the dictionary, is a set of treaties regulating international relations; It has been defined as the work and art of representing one's country in a foreign country and in international meetings (*Türk Dil Kurumu Güncel Türkçe Sözlük*, <https://sozluk.gov.tr/>). In a longer and more detailed way, diplomacy is a method used in the conduct of international relations through envoys/ambassadors, as well as the art of diplomats. In this respect, diplomacy is a method, that is, a means, not the purpose of conducting international relations. A state's ability to protect its own interests against other states without resorting to violence or friction is possible with diplomacy, which replaces brute force, and through diplomacy, states find the opportunity to reconcile their interests (Versan, 1995: 89-90). Diplomacy is a scientific field of study that emphasizes artistic subtleties. An Ottoman source called diplomacy 'fenn-i müzakerat-ı hariciye' (Hüseyin Âgâh Bey, 1312: 9).

Diplomacy is also the history of international relations (Kodaman and Akçay, 2010: 75-76).¹ Although its importance has increased over time, the existence of diplomatic activities has been mentioned since prehistoric times (Versan, 1995: 89). It has been recorded that when inter-site and overseas relations increased in ancient Greek history, ambassadors who were authorized to negotiate and who were highly respected while performing their duties assigned (Kınlı, 2006: 68).

About the development of the diplomacy method, Hüseyin Agâh Bey², who served in the Ottoman State's foreign service (Bâb-ı Âli Translation Chamber - Bâb-ı Âli Tercüme Odası) and authored works on diplomacy and law, described the transition to modern diplomacy as follows:

"As soon as they established a policy procedure in Europe, the main governments felt the need to engage with each other. The European states that corresponded with each other began to send officials to each other to observe the policies of the states with which they had mutual relations. The influence of diplomats in European states began even before the Treaty of Westphalia signed between the governments of Germany, France and Sweden in 1648 to end the famous 30-year war, that is, when Cardinal Richelieu³ was the French prime minister. To deal with the foreign relations administration, which has an increasing importance among the states, it was especially necessary to establish a separate unit and this unit was called the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in each state" (Hüseyin Âgâh Bey, 1312: 15-16).

Kemal Paşazâde Said Bey, the author of the work called '*Sefirler ve Şehbenderler*', one of the first original works on Ottoman diplomacy, expressed this situation in his work as follows:

"It is one of the oldest traditions for nations and states to send envoys or representatives to each other to declare war, make peace, establish alliances, etc. to propose something. In the 15th century, the rise of science and education in Europe, the invention of gunpowder, and the occurrence of extraordinary events such as the discovery of America led to an increase in the importance of diplomacy." (Said Bey, 1307: 9-11; Dönmez, 2010: 9).

In addition to the wars between Catholic and Protestant states for the development of diplomacy in Europe and the Treaty of Westphalia that was signed at the end of the Thirty Years Wars (1618-1648), a definition that sees the 1815 Vienna Congress as important turning points is included in the '*Muhbir*' Newspaper as follows.

"The state of the Rim priest (Pope) was the only example to send envoys, since the relations of states with each other in the early periods were not in a tight and honest structure. The wars that took place between the Catholic and the Protestants afterwards enabled the states to follow the relationship with each other and to accept this situation. Other states, especially the French state, took care to send envoys. And at that time the embassy had a simpler structure. The application of

1 Timuçin Kodaman and Ekrem Yaşar Akçay, "Diplomatic History in The Ottoman Empire from Founding to Decadence and Heritage To Turkey", *Suleyman Demirel University Faculty of Arts and Sciences Journal of Social Sciences*, No 22, 2010, p. 75-76.

2 For detailed information about Hüseyin Agâh Bey and his works, see (Yörük, 2006: p. 99-128).

3 Cardinal Richelieu, whose real name was Armand Jean du Plessis, was appointed to the advisory council by King Louis XIII in 1624. He was influential in French domestic and foreign politics from 1624 until his death in 1642. He played a role in setting the parameters of the peace process that resulted in the settlement of the Thirty Years' War in 1648 (Osborne, 2018: 1-3).

the extraordinary ambassador, which was a single degree, took on a more complex structure later on, and embassy officers were appointed at different degrees. The ambassadors divided into three classes in the new structure were: 1. Class ambassadors, 2. Class executive officers and middle ambassadors, and third class residents and charge d'affaires" (*Muhbir*, 1283: 3-4).

Considering the definitions mentioned above and its historical development, before the modern period, diplomacy was based on sending representatives abroad for a certain period of time to fulfil a specific purpose and returning after completing their duties. In other words, the diplomacy method based on extraordinary embassies is called 'ad hoc' diplomacy. Ad hoc diplomacy, thus, had a temporary nature that was not permanent (Tuncer and Tuncer, 1998: 11). It is known that the modern diplomacy structure, that is, the transition from ad hoc diplomacy to permanent diplomacy, emerged in Italy in the second half of the 15th century (Kurtaran, 2022: 303). The Peace of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years' War, has been turning point and was associated with the emergence of modern states and the establishment of a new international order (Salihpaşaoğlu and Gümüş Boyacı, 2020: 191-224).

Various sources are taken as reference in the studies on the history of diplomacy. This study analyses Derviş Mehmed Efendi's *Sefaretnamesi*, which is one of the original sources on the history of diplomacy and especially the history of Ottoman diplomacy.

Derviş Mehmed Efendi and his *sefaretnâmes* have been mentioned in academic studies on Ottoman-Russian relations and *sefaretnâmes* (these studies constitute the source of this article and are included in our bibliography). However, although the aforementioned *sefir* and the *sefaretnâme* are mentioned in many studies, as far as we can determine, the original *sefaretnâme* has been used as a source in postgraduate (master's and doctoral) theses (see Demir, 2012; Yeşilyurt, 2017). Derviş Mehmed Efendi's 1755 Embassy to Russia has not been analysed in a separate work.

The 1755 dated Derviş Mehmed Efendi's Russia *Sefâretnâme* (Fatih Millet Library manuscript copy) constituted the main source of our study. The history of Ottoman Diplomacy and the history of the *sefaretnâmes* have been explained and related. In this context, Ottoman-Russian relations have been analysed and the quality of this *sefaretnâme* as a source for historical studies has been discussed.

Another important aim and contribution of this study is the publication of an important document. A significant number of known *sefaretnâmes* have been transcribed and published as independent books, some in the form of graduate theses and some in academic journals for the benefit of researchers. The manuscript copy of the *sefaretnâme* we are dealing with was obtained from the Fatih Millet Library and has not yet been published. In the appendices of our study, the original images of the manuscript copy of the *sefaretnâme* along with the transcript text are included. This study will contribute to the increase in the number of published *sefaretnâmes*, researchers and future studies.

OTTOMAN DIPLOMACY

In the Ottoman geography, soldiers, merchants and dervishes were the first groups to come into contact with the outside world. Later on, Crimean khans, beys, voivodes and kings under Ottoman rule, sailors, travellers and merchants etc. informed about foreign countries and served as a means of transferring culture as well (Turan, 2004: 59; Bilim, 1999: 205). At the beginning, the Ottoman Empire had diplomatic relations with states such as Byzantium, Karamanoğlu, Candaroğlu, Germiyanoğlu, Mamluks, Akkoyunlular, Karakoyunlular and Timurids. As it grew, conquered Rumelia and Anatolia and expanded its dominance in the Black Sea and Mediterranean coasts, Italian states such as Genoa, Venice and Milan, which had important interests in these regions, sent ambassadors to the Ottoman Empire in order to establish diplomatic relations. (İpşirli, 1995: 8).

In the classical period, the prominent office in foreign relations in the Ottoman Empire was *reisülküttâb*, and the institution was *reisülküttâplık*. *Reisülküttâb*, who was the head of the clerk and offices of the *Divan-ı Hümayun* until the end of the 17th century, was attached to the '*nişancı*' (A senior official in the Ottoman bureaucracy and a member of the *Divan-ı Hümayun*). In the second half of this century, when the administration left the palace

and moved to *Babiali* (Ottoman government), *reisülküttâb* and *reisülküttâplık* were also removed from the nişancı order and joined the *sadrızam* (grand viziership). In *sadrızam*'s office (besides his bureaucratic duties), foreign affairs were left entirely to the *reisülküttâb*. In the 18th century, the importance of the *reisülküttâb* increased in direct proportion to the increasing importance of diplomacy for the Ottoman Empire. Due to his preoccupation with foreign affairs, such as relations with foreign ambassadors, the *reisülküttâb* was described by foreign writers and travellers as the minister of foreign affairs (*hariciye nazırı*) (Uzunçarşılı, 1988: 242-245; Bilim, 2019: 172; Ahışalı, 2007: 546; İnalçık, 1964: 682).⁴

*Amedci*⁵, who was the chief of staff of the *reisülküttâbs*, was one of the other prominent officials in foreign relations. Among the broad duties under his responsibility, such as his chief, *reisülküttâb*, there were also affairs related to foreign relations. In this sense, he was responsible for being present at the meetings of the *reisülküttâb* with the representatives of foreign states, making the necessary correspondence, ensuring that he communicated with foreign diplomats and consuls, and archiving the minutes of speech and other documents (Uzunçarşılı, 1988: 56; Aktaş, 1991: 12; Sander, 2016: 159).

As for the ambassadors sent by the Ottoman Empire to other states, from the 16th century onwards, they were divided into two classes: ambassadors or middle ambassadors, depending on the type of mission or the importance of the state to which they were sent. In addition to these, those who were sent with a simple duty or especially with the duty of delivering a letter were called *nâmeres*, and sometimes officers under the name of *çavuş* were sent for secondary services (Unat, 2008: 19).

Especially since the conquest of Istanbul, foreign states had sent ambassadors to Istanbul. The first of these ambassadors was the '*Venetian balyos*'. During the reign of Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror, according to the agreement made with the Venetians, the captives were returned, friendship was established between the two sides, and a joint struggle was carried out against the pirates in Dardanelles and the Aegean Sea. In the following years, the Venetian ambassadors were followed by the Polish (1475), Russian (1497), French (1525), Austrian (1528) and Dutch (1612) ambassadors (Bilim, 2019: 33; Arı, 2004: 36). The term *balyos* was used as the equivalent of ambassador for representatives of other states as well as the representatives of Venice (Şakiroğlu, 1992: 43).

Although the above-mentioned states switched to permanent diplomacy at an early date, the Ottoman Empire sent envoys/ambassadors to foreign countries as deemed necessary, in other words, on an ad hoc basis until the end of the 18th century. In other words, the ad hoc diplomacy method continued to be applied until the end of the 18th century, and the Ottoman Empire was one of the states that applied this method until the latest dates (Tuncer and Tuncer, 1998: 11).

In academic studies, the continuation of ad hoc diplomacy in the Ottoman Empire until late periods has been attributed to various reasons. According to this:

The first view is that this situation may be related to ancient traditions. The point to support this inference is that there was no permanent embassy practice in previous Islamic and Turkish states (İpşirli, 1995: 8).

Another reason is that the Ottoman Empire had a strong position against other states thanks to its increasing political influence in the 14th and 15th centuries. Thanks to this strong position, the Ottoman Empire did not accept any state as equal to itself, and this situation led the Ottoman Empire to adopt the one-sided diplomacy method that determined its own rules. Thus, it was interpreted that having a permanent envoy in weak states would harm its own superiority (Çiftçi, 2018: 682). Since the state was very strong militarily at that time and obtained everything it wanted by fighting when necessary, the diplomacy of the period was not permanent but

⁴ Until 1836, when the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs was established, all functions of foreign affairs were carried out by the *reisülküttâb*. Eventually, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was formed from the offices of *reisülküttâb* and the last *reisülküttâb* was appointed as the first minister. See also (Çetinsaya, 2020: 29).

⁵ Although the existence of the *âmedî* department is thought to be quite old, the term *âmedî* is found only in the last quarter of the 18th century (Aktaş, 1991: 12). According to İnalçık, the establishment of this department must have been around 1777. In the period when the *Âmedci* gained importance, his main duties included drafting the letters to be sent by the grand vizier to the prime ministers of foreign states, being present at the meetings of the *reisülküttâb* with the representatives of foreign states, keeping the minutes of their meetings, and following up their correspondence with the ambassadors and consuls of foreign states (İnalçık, 1964: 675).

ad hoc. This means making agreements, participating in ceremonies, giving orders, offering to surrender without bloodshed before the war, etc. was shaped (Kodaman and Akçay, 2010: 81).

The Ottoman administration had various intelligence services. Thanks to this intelligence network, the need to have permanent ambassadors in other countries was not felt. As another reason, during the periods when the state was strong, it was not wanted to be in a situation tied in the political and diplomatic games and commitments of Europe, so the method of permanent diplomacy was not welcomed. In this way, the Ottoman Empire had the opportunity to move freely (İpşirli, 1995: 8).

The Ottoman Empire resisted the implementation of the new diplomatic procedure for a long time; nevertheless, with the loss of its military and political power, it had to accept that the unilateral understanding of diplomacy was abandoned in the 18th century and that it was an international field in which the rules were mutually determined (Talbot and McCluskey, 2016: 270; Çiftçi, 2018: 681). The first permanent embassy was opened in London and Yusuf Agâh Efendi was assigned here as the first permanent ambassador (1793).⁶ From this point of view, Beydilli expressed this change in the attitude of the Ottoman Administration as follows: Based on his saying, he does politics in his powerful times, and he gives space to diplomacy only to the extent that it serves his own interests. In the phase where it loses its power, the opposite stance occurs; it reproaches politics and diplomacy, and preaches honesty and integrity (Beydilli, 2022: 9).

SEFİR AND SEFÂRETNÂME

'*Sefir*' corresponds to ambassador in the dictionary, and '*sefaret*' corresponds to embassy and envoy duty (Şemseddin Sami, 2005: 724-726). The reports prepared and presented by the ambassadors sent by the Ottoman Empire to other states about the places they went, the statesmen they met, the political events and the work they did, starting from Istanbul, were called '*sefâretnâme*' (Pakalın, 1972: 138).

Ambassadors were sent by the Ottoman Empire to other states to announce the enthronement of the Ottoman rulers as they ascended the throne, to attend the coronation ceremonies in foreign countries and to congratulate the new head of state. In addition, ratification of the signed agreements, re-establishment of friendship relations, negotiation of disputed border issues, post-war peace treaty, sending the reply written by the sultan to the letter of the foreign head of state and/or the letter of the grand vizier, giving condolences, strengthening-reinforcing relations between the two states and helping foreign countries Ambassadors were appointed for various reasons, such as (Unat, 2008: 17-19).

Sefâretnâmes is a kind of travel book, as it introduces the places where the ambassadors passed from the moment they left Istanbul until their return, the destinations they stayed, the settlements reached and the peoples there. Since it can be defined as a memoir in that it contains testimonies in person, it is counted as a literary genre besides its political content, and it can be said that its literary aspect predominates because it does not include details that are confidential in official meetings (Beydilli, 2009: 289). Despite the criticisms made on the value of Sefâretnâmes as a source for historical research, it is thought that these works are a development program and have an impact on innovation movements as of the period they were written (Altuniş Gürsoy, 2006: 160; Şahin, 2007: 65; Ercan, 1984: 263). However, sefâretnâmes contain important information in terms of social life, transportation-logistics, politics, diplomacy and art history (Baş, 2022: 138).

Since its establishment, the Ottoman State has sent ambassadors to the states it has been in contact with many times. However, considering its long-term relations with other states and its life span of more than six centuries, quite a few (forty-nine) *sefaretnames* could be identified. The majority of these belong to the 18th century, also called the age of diplomatic revolution, when the importance of foreign relations increased due to the intensity of diplomatic relations (Topaktaş, 2014: 2-3; Korkut, 2003: 493). According to Ortaylı, this century is a period when the Ottoman world observed Europe and Russia, compared them and wrote them down. Sefâretnâmes is one of the most important records written for this purpose. So much so that these works have been important sources for the history of European historians' own societies (Ortaylı, 1987: 13).

⁶ The British government initially did not welcome this first attempt by the Ottoman Empire to establish a permanent embassy. It was only on the second attempt that negotiations could begin and an agreement was reached between the Ottoman and British states on the appointment of an Ottoman resident ambassador in London (Yalçınkaya, 2001: 121; Yurdusev, 2004: 30).

The low number of Sefâretnâmes can be attributed to the late start of the writing of the sefâretnâmes. On the other hand, it is known that the tradition of writing sefâretnâme goes back to much older times. According to Unat, it is not correct to conclude that there were no such reports in earlier dates, since the *sefaretnâmes* identified coincide with the dates after the second half of the 17th century (Unat, 2008: 43).

THE BEGINNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF OTTOMAN-RUSSIAN RELATIONS

When the Ottoman-Russian relations are analysed in general terms from the perspective of Sefâretnâme, the first contact can be traced back to the first official letter sent by Ivan III to Bayezid II (1481-1512) through the Crimean Khan Mengli Giray Khan (1478-1515) in 1492 (Pritsak, 1999: 69; Özkan, 2007: 48). Moscow, which was under heavy pressure from Poland-Lithuania at this time, established good relations with the Crimean Khanate in the face of this pressure, and thus became an ally of the Ottoman Empire. After Mengli Giray dealt the fatal blow to the Golden Horde in 1502, Moscow was freed from the pressure of an important enemy. Making good use of this opportunity, Moscow not only provided commercial and financial developments, but also provided political benefits (İnalçık, 1999: 25). Russia, which emerged as a rival to the Ottoman Empire in the commercial activities between Asia and Europe, continued its westward and eastward expansion during the reign of Ivan IV (1533-1584). Although Russia could not achieve its goals in the West, it achieved significant successes in the East, such as the capture of Kazan in 1552 and Astrakhan in 1554. With the capture of Kazan and Astrakhan, Russia became an Empire (Acar, 2009: 99; İnalçık, 1999: 29).

Until the Treaty of Karlowitz (1699), Russia was not able to establish direct relations with Istanbul. Although Ottoman-Russians were amicable before this treaty, the sultans who saw their country superior to Russia did not want to have diplomatic relations with Russia as “equal” states. Instead It The 18th century was a period when Ottoman-Russian relations. However, thşis was about to change in the 18th century since commercial and cultural relations as well as the wars with Russia in this century left deep traces in the history of the two countries (Klein, 2010: 90; Ortaylı, 2008: 146; Brisku, 2019: 3).

The Ottoman Empire, which started to weaken after the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, became the focus of attention of neighboring states such as Austria-Russia, which became stronger due to its large lands on three continents, and countries that made significant progress towards becoming an overseas colonial empire such as England-France, which were not neighbors (Beydilli, 2022: 387). The efforts of the states that wanted to benefit from this situation of the Ottoman Empire, which experienced the first great losses after the Treaty of Karlowitz, was accepted as an important turning point in Ottoman diplomacy (Birsell, 1940: 137; Arı, 2004: 53). With this peace treaty, the title of Empire of the Russian tsar, called the Prince of Moscow, was accepted by the Ottoman Empire. This was an important development in terms of Ottoman-Russian relations (Savaş, 2007: 30).

In particular, the rivalry between the Ottoman and Russian states witnessed great wars that started with the Battle of Chehrin in 1677-1678. In Cehrin and the following Prut Wars of 1710-1711, the Ottoman Empire still showed its military superiority, but could not take advantage of the opportunity to destroy the Russian army (Kumkale, 1997: 28). In 1722, Peter I (Crazy-Great) captured Derbend in the Persian Campaign and established the Holy Cross Palanka (a kind of small fortress) on the Sulak River. By 1735, after Peter’s death, the palanka was abandoned, and the Russians withdrew. Despite this, the Russians continued to gradually increase the challenge to the military superiority of the Ottomans, and finally, with the 1739 Belgrade Treaty, this bloody rivalry was replaced by a period of peace for about 30 years until 1768 (Kurtaran, 2015: 589-606; Kurat, 2011: 34; Brisku, 2019: 6).

When Derviş Mehmed Efendi was appointed as the ambassador, Elizabeth Petrovna (1741-1762), the daughter of Peter I was on the throne of Russia (Söylemezoğlu, 1943: 270-288). During the reign of Elizabeth I, diplomatic relations with European powers were strong; In addition, it was an important period in terms of military, economy and education. Elizabeth was both described as a successful monarch with her diplomatic agreements (Acar, 2009: 174-177), and was criticized that Russian foreign policy in this period was not very remarkable. The loss of Russian gains with Elizabeth’s death can be shown as the reason for this contradictory situation. Despite her extravagant, lazy and undisciplined attitude, Elizabeth also went down in history as a figure who brought joy and happiness to her nation with her over-loving and gentle nature, trying to continue the legacy of her father Peter (Vernadsky, 2009: 205; Riasanovsky and Steinberg, 2011: 255-257).

While this was the case on the Russian side, with the 1739 Treaty of Belgrade, the Ottoman Empire entered a period of peace in its European relations. In this period of peace, the Ottoman Empire, which ruled over a wide geography, had the opportunity to be more interested in diplomatic activities (Beydilli, 2022: 201). In this sense, the reign of Mahmud I (1730-1754) was evaluated as one of the brightest periods of Ottoman diplomacy as of the Treaty of Belgrade (1739) (Savaş, 2007: 30).

DERVİŞ MEHMED EFENDİ

Of all sefâretnâmes only forty-nine were known. In the 18th century, due to intensive diplomatic relations, most of the sefâretnâmes were written in this century (Korkut, 2007: 20). Eight of these are Russian sefâretnâmes (Yalçınkaya, 1996: 332). One of them, Derviş Mehmed Efendi's sefaretname dated 1755 is the main subject of this study.

Life of the Ambassador: Derviş Mehmed Efendi was trained as a 'mühürdar'⁷ by İzzet Ali Pasha, the deputy grand vizier. He served as 'çavuşlar katibi'⁸ and 'küçük rûznâmçecilik'⁹. In 1755 and 1764, he was appointed as ambassador to Russia twice. After his first ambassadorship, he worked as 'cizye'¹⁰ accountant', 'süvari mukataacısı'¹¹ and 'sipah katibi'¹² (Unat 2008: 99). Derviş Mehmed Efendi, who completed his second ambassadorial mission, died in Bender during his return (1764-1765) (Mehmed Süreyya, 1996: 414). A sefâretnâme was written as a report about his first mission.

Reason for being sent as an ambassador: Upon the death of the Ottoman Sultan Mahmud I (1730-1754), his younger brother Osman III (1754-1757) ascended the throne (Uzunçarşılı, 2011: 336-337). Upon the change of throne, it was decided to send ambassadors to Christian states in accordance with the 'Düvel-i Nasaraya Elçi Gönderilmesi Hakkında Kanun' (İrtem, 1942: 4; Afyoncu, 2009: 113). Derviş Mehmed Efendi was appointed as ambassador to Russia to announce the accession of Osman III. In addition to announcing the change of sultan, his other duty was to personally observe the fortresses on the Ottoman-Russian border and gather information about the latest situation (Demir, 2012: 11).

The appointment of Derviş Mehmed Efendi as ambassador was also an important milestone for Russia. In 1741, according to an agreement signed in Petersburg, the Ottomans had agreed to grant the title of Emperor to the Russian tsars. However, they had not received a name from the Ottoman rulers from that date until 1755. After Derviş Mehmed Efendi delivered the *sadrâzam* (grand vizier) letter to the Russian chancellor, the Russian authorities became confident in this regard (Mehmed Hakim Efendi, 2019: 315).

A DESCRIPTION OF DERVİŞ MEHMET'S EMBASSY REPORT (1755)

Although it was not published independently in Latin letters, it was published in Turkish in *Vasıf Tarihi, Tarih-i Gülşen Maârif*, in *Akşam* Newspaper dated 15 June 1942 (under the title Derviş Mehmet Efendi Petersburg'da, written by Süleyman Kani İrtem) and in French in *Journal Asiatique* (see Appendix). In addition to these publications, there are manuscripts in Topkapı Palace Emanet Hazinesi, *Seyyid Hakim Tarihi* and finally *Fatih Millet Library* (Unat, 2008: 101). Along with these publications, we have the Fatih Millet Library manuscript among the manuscript copies. The manuscript copy in question is registered in the library with the number 829. It is written in *rik'a* handwriting. It includes a cover page and 10 pages. There is a foundation seal on the cover which shows that *Ali Emiri Efendi* donated this manuscript (see appendix).

In the sources of Ottoman history, it is seen that the term '*elçi* (ambassador)' is used instead of the word '*sefir*'. The office or duty was also called '*sefâret*' many times. This information given by Faik Reşit Unat is partially correct when we look at the sefâretnâmes that have been published. From this point of view, in Derviş Mehmed Efendi's '*Rusya Sefâretnâmesi (1755)*', both the terms '*elçi*' and '*sefir*' (sefir-i mümaileyh, elçi-i mümaileyh, elçi

7 Mühürdar, an official in the entourage of the grand vizier, ministers and governors who sealed official documents (Pakalın, 1993: 609).

8 Çavuşlar katibi, the supervisor of the *Divan çavuşları* and the person who supervised the execution of the punishments imposed according to the provisions of the law (Pakalın, 1993: 339).

9 Küçük ruznamçeci, a clerk who kept records of daily revenues and expenditures (Pakalın, 1972: 60).

10 Cizye is a type of tax levied on non-Muslim citizens (Pakalın, 1993: 297).

11 Mukataacı is one of the officials in charge of the leasing of state property (Pakalın, 1993: 578).

12 Sipah katibi was one of the officials who kept the records of the cavalry (Sertoğlu, 1986: 319).

efendi) are used; however, although both terms are used, '*sefir-i mümaileyh*' is more preferred when it comes to the person of Derviş Mehmed Efendi.

Another issue that should be mentioned here is who wrote the *sefaretnâmes*. Sefaretnames were sometimes written by the ambassador himself, and mostly by a '*sır katibi (private clerk)*' in the ambassador's entourage (Beydilli, 2007: 24). This sefâretnâme was not written by the ambassador himself, but by a scribe in his entourage.

CONSIDERATIONS IN THE ELECTION OF AMBASSADORS

Great care was taken in the selection of ambassadors to represent their country with their dressing, behavior and appearance. The ambassador should have been a person who would establish or maintain peace and tranquility between the two countries (Tuncer and Tuncer, 1998: 33). For this reason, ambassadors were chosen from people at certain social and cultural levels and people who had performed state duties at various levels. With these features, all of those selected were from the '*kalemiye*' class, namely bureaucrats (Bilim, 2019: 45-46).

Derviş Mehmed Efendi, as mentioned above, was appointed as the Russian ambassador twice, in 1755 and 1764, after holding important positions in the Ottoman bureaucracy. One of the issues that made the people stand out in the selection of ambassadors was that they were experienced in foreign affairs, and the fact that the ambassador was a '*çavuş*' who was one of the officers involved in embassy communications and that he was appointed as an ambassador for the second time in 1764 after the embassy duty mentioned here indicated this sensitivity. This shows that the ambassador master successfully fulfilled at least his first ambassadorial duty.

PREPARATION AND ROUTE

The Ambassadors or envoys to Russia were generally walking from the west to the north of the Black Sea using the land route. Derviş Mehmed Efendi arrived in Bender, which is located in the northwest of the Black Sea, thirty days after departing from Istanbul on January 15, 1755, with his embassy regiment. In Bender, he continued the march by taking the Beşlü Agha as his entourage, and then rested for ten days in a place called '*Vasiliko*' on the Russian border. After the preparations, the Embassy delegation continued its route to Kiev. Upon arrival in Kiev, a banquet was held for the Ambassador and his delegation by the General of the Citadel. The delegation, after resting for two days in Kiev on these dates, which came to the middle of March, reached Kozluca, the location of the Kazakh Major, and then Bihne. On March 25, '*Tuğla*' was reached, then Moscow. Then, respectively, Novograd, after '*Monastery*', finally Petersburg. About three and a half months (one hundred and seven days) from the day he set out (May 2, 1755) he was able to appear before the Empress (Derviş Mehmed Efendi: 1-5).

On the sixty-fifth day of his arrival in St. Petersburg, Ambassador Derviş Mehmed Efendi, who received a reply letter from the Empress, and the '*embassy regiment*', set off for Istanbul after receiving a reply from the Russian prime minister ten days later. The ambassador and his delegation reached Bender in forty-two days and Istanbul twenty days after Bender (Unat, 2008: 99-101; Derviş Mehmed Efendi: 10). The total time between the embassy regiment's departure from Istanbul for duty and its return was two hundred and forty-three days (eight months).

AMBASSADOR EXCHANGE

Envoys sent simultaneously were exchanged mutually at the border of these states when two neighboring states were in question, or at a predetermined location if they were not neighbors. This exchange was called '*mübadele*' in Ottoman diplomacy. The exchange of ambassadors at the border took place for purposes such as negotiating after the war, delivering certified copies of a treaty. However, there would be no exchange in the case of giving the news of a new ruler's accession to the throne or sending a unilateral envoy to congratulate for the same reason (Can, 2020: 90). Derviş Mehmed Efendi and his entourage were not subject to the exchange, as they were assigned to inform about the change in the Ottoman throne.

RECEPTION AND HOSPITALITY OF THE AMBASSADOR AND THE EMBASSY DELEGATION

The embassy delegation would be welcomed by guides (mihmândâr) in the countries they were assigned to. Accompanied by the guide, they would be hosted in the places they visited and stayed.

Regarding the arrival of the Ottoman envoy, Ottoman ambassadors and statesmen did not compromise the application of this principle by refusing and insisting on the invitations of foreign statesmen who invited them in accordance with the understanding of “al-kâdimu yûzâru”. The main idea of the diplomatic principle is the same as the contacts made at the borders; not to make the first move or visit and to bring the interlocutor to his feet, thus protecting the honour of states during representation before foreign statesmen (Savaş, 2007: 50-51). Ambassador Derviş Mehmed Efendi also showed sensitivity to this point throughout the journey.

When Ambassador Derviş Mehmed Efendi and his entourage first arrived at the Polish border, they were greeted by a mihmandar and organized a feast for them. Later, when they reached Moscow, the Old Russian capital, they were hosted and offered treats and then moved to Petersburg. On reaching Petersburg, he was first hosted in the prime minister’s mansion. When the ambassador was invited to the Empress’s palace, he presented the Sultan’s letter with a ceremony, which was his main duty. After the letter was delivered, he stayed as a guest of the Empress.

Ottoman ambassadors were shown tours of places that were especially worth seeing, such as the opera, observatory and promenade of the country they visited (Savaş, 2007: 69). During the days spent in St Petersburg, at the request of the Empress, the ambassador was shown around the promenades of St Petersburg. The Ambassador attended a party the following night. On another day, he had a conversation with the Empress in the palace garden accompanied by music.

PRESENTATION OF GIFTS AND LETTERS

It is known that ambassadors always bring valuable gifts to the rulers and notables of the countries they are sent to, regardless of their duties. In the text of the Sefâretnâme and in the archive documents, there is no information about a gift sent by the Ottoman Sultan and sent to the sultan through the ambassador. However, the hand mirror sent by the Ottoman Sultan Osman III to the Russian Queen Elizabeth (Petrovna) is included in the catalogue of the Russian Hermitage Museum (see Photograph 1).



Photograph 1: Hand mirror sent by the Ottoman Sultan Osman III to the Russian Queen Elizabeth (Petrovna)¹³

¹³ The gift ‘hand mirror’ was made in England and decorated with gold, silver, glass, cut diamonds and rubies; it is currently on exhibition in the Hermitage Museum in Russia. See Western European Jewellery. See <https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/>: https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/explore/collections/master/sub/lut/p/z1/xZJNb8lwDlb_ynbgGDkhdobAwKxSt3GgNHkgkobSq25SMraL9-KbdJY9XGYT7Zsq3Hev2ChBikTpoiT0xR66S0tZBs9cQ5I3SIQz-YjDF3RuMpj-jzbM7gFSTIUucgzKFNd2mRgWCYsE1GAuTQNUMO8SkKGPUQJZ (Accessed 13 Apr 2023); “Hand Mirror”, <https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/>: <https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/08.+applied+arts/113206> (Accessed 13 Jan 2023).

On the other hand, there is another record related to the issue of gifts. According to this record, Mehmed Efendi's cautious attitude during his mission was observed and appreciated by the Russians. In order to get closer to Derviş Efendi, the Russian officer Obreskov¹⁴ decided to send him a gift of expensive furs such as sable, ermine and squirrel. However, Derviş Mehmed Efendi thanked him politely for this offer (Amelicheva, 2016: 409). This initiative should be regarded as a diplomatic manoeuvre, rather than sending a gift to the Ottoman sultan or an innocent desire to give a gift to the ambassador.

The ambassadors were bringing letters written by the Ottoman Sultan and the Grand Vizier to the rulers and prime ministers of the states they went to, regarding their duties. Among these letters, especially the '*Nâme-i Hümâyuns*', which was the letter of the sultan, required great protocol practices both during travel and in the procession and acceptance ceremonies.

On the morning of the day he arrived in Petersburg, the capital of Russia, the envoy Derviş Mehmed Efendi visited the Russian prime minister at his residence and presented the grand vizier's letter "kemâl-i âdab ile". Then, as mentioned above, in accordance with the principle of *al-kâdimu yûzâru*, the envoy set off from his home to the Russian palace with the empress's invitation officer and his large entourage to deliver the sultan's letter to the empress as his last duty (Derviş Mehmed Efendi: 5). On the twenty-second day of Rajab of the Hijri calendar (4 May 1755), he went to the Empress's palace to deliver the *nâme-i hümâyûn* and after sitting in the guest room for a short time, the ceremony of delivering the letter began. After the gifts were presented, when the Empress went before her, a crowd of men and women were present on her right and left.

In this atmosphere, the ambassador raised the *nâme-i hümâyûn* he was holding in his right hand above his head, walked through the centre of the crowd, approached the empress and said: "This is the *nâme-i* friendliness of His Majesty Sultan Osman bin Mustafa Khan, the most glorious and honoured Sultan Osman bin Mustafa Khan, to the Empress of Russia, the most honoured and valued Empress of Russia," and placed the *nâme* with great care on the silk throne (*dîbâ serîr*) right next to the Empress. The Empress, as a sign of respect for the *nâme* and its owner, the Sultan, sat down for a chat with the ambassador and offered him treats.

OBSERVATIONS ON RUSSIA

Since the '*sefâretnâmes*' contain information and comments on many subjects by observation during the march and embassy activity, they contain a rich content about the route and the country visited. The most important reason for the rich and elaborate nature of the content of '*sefaretnâme*' is the request of the sultans themselves. This information has taken its place in the reform history of the Ottoman Empire and some of them have been encouraging (Altuniş Gürsoy, 2006: 139-140).

The first recorded observation is a military workshop witnessed while walking from Kiev to Moscow in the town of Tuğla, which is six days' walk from Moscow. 'Workshops for the production of war equipment were established in the town. Water mills powered by water power were utilised in these workshops' (Derviş Mehmed Efendi: 4). According to this statement, war equipment was produced by using water power with a system established on the side of the river passing through the town.

In the *Sefaretnâme*, the information about Moscow and its castle about how they were built, their location, the waterways between them and Petersburg, and the various shipments were given as follows: "*Moscow is a large fortress built of brick, which was taken from the King of Sweden by war. A river flows in front of it, foodstuffs and other goods are transported to Petersburg by ships on this river*" (Derviş Mehmed Efendi: 4).

When the delegation reached the Russian capital, the history of Petersburg was briefly mentioned in the *sefâretnâme* as the first observations, and the reasons for the change and transformation of this city in the historical process were explained. In addition, the transportation and transportation opportunities of the capital were described and the things that were done for their development were mentioned as follows.

¹⁴ Alexis Mikhailovich Obreskov served in Istanbul between 1752-1768 as the Russian kapı kethüdası (Kapı kethüdası is the name given to the officials appointed to follow up the affairs of the governors of the sanjak, departments and patriarchate in official offices in the Ottoman Empire). Obreskov was imprisoned in Yedikule at the beginning of the 1768-1774 Ottoman-Russian War and was kept there until 1771 (Demir, 2012: XXIII).

“Petersburg was originally covered with swamps and forests; Since a great river called Neva runs through it, close to the Danube, the king liked this land and decided to establish a city here. The forest trees were cut down and the ground was strengthened by raising it with a quay. Then houses were built on the banks of the river facing the river, and a shipyard was built here by leveling the ground with tin and bricks on the shore. here are the boats etc. they started to build. The Neva River, which emptied into the Baltic Sea, would not remain desolate and calm as the ships of the neighboring states were constantly passing by. When there was a lot of snow in winter days, the bridge could not be used. It was possible to cross sometimes by boat and sometimes by walking over the frozen river without a boat” (Derviş Mehmed Efendi: 7).

While visiting the Petersburg shipyard, the guide was asked questions about the place and the answers were recorded in the ‘sefâretnâme’. In general, there are rich descriptions in the ‘sefâretnâme’.

“When we went to the shipyard the next day, we saw about twenty-five galleons here. When we asked what purpose you would use them for, we got the answer, ‘We are sailing to the Baltic Sea and then to the ocean and we are giving maritime training to our soldiers’. Then we arrived at the Empress’s palace. A garden was set up in a high place of the palace. In its garden, the fountains squirting water up to the waist of the human were practically exhibiting a water art. There were many pools here. We watched another show using animal figures with musical accompaniment. Apart from what I have mentioned, we have inspected the cannons made of iron and bronze and their weights in the Empress’s mansion, the castle and other places as an example of high quality production”.

“The wooden royal palaces had large windows and were covered with embroidered paper. However, the walls of the room where the Empress spent the night were decorated with silk fabric, and the ceilings were flat, without recesses or projections. According to the transplant, the household was not furnished with furniture and only chairs. They sat on these chairs” (Derviş Mehmed Efendi: 9).

CONCLUSION

The Ottoman Empire continued the ad hoc diplomacy method until later than the Western states. The reports written by ambassadors sent to other states temporarily for various reasons were called sefâretnâme. These reports contain the protocol duties and traveling observations of the ambassador. In this study, Derviş Mehmed Efendi’s sefâretnâme has been analyzed and translated into Latin letters using scientific methods.

Without a specific writing standard, the weight given to the subjects and the length of the text varied according to the author and the state of relations with the counterpart state. Derviş Mehmed Efendi’s sefâretnâme”, which we have analyzed, has a short textual content compared to the other sefâretnâmes in general. With this aspect, some of the topics of preparation, entourage, gifts during the embassy activity are not mentioned at all, while others are mentioned very briefly.

After the 1739 Treaty of Belgrade (until the Ottoman-Russian War of 1768-1774), this activity, which coincided with the forty-years of peace, also took place under peaceful conditions in relations with Russia. The reflections of this were very evident in the entire embassy process. Namely, the Ottoman envoy was welcomed and guided in the best way by the Russian host. He was well welcomed in the places where he stayed and the required care was taken in performing the procedures necessary for representing the state. Derviş Mehmed Efendi’s well-educated background and his experience in the state and especially in the ambassadorship were effective in this situation.

Despite the short content of the text, important points on issues concerning the Ottoman Empire are touched upon in the sefâretnâme, and even if briefly, it provides important information about Russia, such as the Russian road routes, transport facilities and practices, military fortresses, buildings and manufactories. Of course, it should also be noted that considering the criticism that the sefâretnâmes lacked political content, this sefâretnâme was also predominantly a travelogue.

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