

## ISTANBUL IN THE LEGATION OF POLISH ENVOY JAN GNIŃSKI (1677-1678)

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### Abstract

After signing the truce of Zuravno by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Porte in 1676, Polish envoy Jan Gniński went to Istanbul in 1677-1678 in order to ratify the treaty. He arrived in the Ottoman capital, hoping to reclaim some of the lost territories back to Poland. However, not only did he face many obstacles, such as poor housing conditions or infectious disease decimating the participants of that legation, but also the terms put down by the Polish envoy were almost completely turned down. Gniński provides the readers with detailed and absorbing descriptions of Istanbul and the diplomatic meetings with the Ottoman officials that took place during his stay. This article aims to show some details of the embassy of Gniński, mainly according to his travelbook and an example on the Ottoman diplomatic practices towards European envoys at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

**Keywords:** Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Ottoman Empire, the Porte, travelbook, envoy, diplomatic relations, Istanbul

### Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations - A General View<sup>1</sup>

Ottoman-Polish diplomatic relations date back to the year 1414, when two envoys, Skarbek z Gór and Grzegorz Ormianin, were sent by the Polish king Władysław Jagiełło to help Hungarian King Sigismund fix his relations with the Porte.<sup>2</sup> This was a quite early beginning of the diplomatic relations between the two states. As written by the Polish chronicler Jan Długosz, sultan accepted those envoys and decided to enter a six-year long truce with the Hungarians. In the upcoming years, as the Ottoman power was successively moving north through the Balkans, different alliances were being formed in Europe to stop them. After the Habsburg king of Hungary, Albert II died, Polish king Władysław ascended the Hungarian throne, vowing to protect Hungary from the Ottomans and winning the battle in 1443.<sup>3</sup> However, this was not enough for the Pope and other European Christian states, as they tried to convince king Władysław to start another war with the Ottomans, promising him their help. Due to some political changes regarding Janos Hunyadi, Władysław III signed an agreement with the Porte in Segedin.<sup>4</sup> However the Pope kept on trying to persuade king Władysław and as a result he gave in. Hungarian army was

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<sup>1</sup> Karolina Anna Kotus, *Polonya Elçi Jan Gniński'nin Türkiye Seyahatnamesi'ne göre Osmanlı Ülkesi ve Osmanlılar (1677-1679)*, (unpublished Master's Thesis, Hacettepe University, Ankara 2015), p. 1-8.

<sup>2</sup> *Yoldaki Elçi. Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Türk-Leh İlişkileri. Poset w Drodze. Stosunki Turecko-Polskie od Czasów Osmańskich do Dnia Dzisiejszego*, Istanbul: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü. Osmanlı Arşivi Dairesi Başkanlığı., 2014, p. 2-4.

<sup>3</sup> Jan Długosz, *Kronika Jana Długosza Kanonika Krakowskiego Dziejów Polskich Książ Dwanaście. Księga XII*, vol. 4, Kraków: Drukarnia „Czasu” W. Kirchmayera 1869, p. 569-571.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Hammer von Purgstall, *Büyük Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. 1, Istanbul: Üçdal Neşriyat, 2003, p. 487-488.

defeated and the king was killed in the battle of Varna<sup>5</sup> which earned him the sobriquet Władysław of Varna (pol. Władysław Warneńczyk). Poland had been sharing borders with the Ottoman Empire since 15<sup>th</sup> century. During the years 1454-1466, king Casimir IV Jagiellon was busy fighting the Teutonic Knights in the northern part of the country and as a result did not pay much attention to the state issues with the Ottomans. As a result of that, in 1456 region of Moldavia accepted Ottoman supremacy. Moldavia (tur. Boğdan) was one of the flashpoints in the diplomatic relations between the Ottoman Empire and Poland, which was resolved in 1497.<sup>6</sup> In 1475 Crimea became an Ottoman dominion; in 1484 Kilia and Akkirman joined Moldavia.<sup>7</sup> Poland in order to sign a two year-long truce, sent envoy to Istanbul and in 1489 the first official treaty was signed.<sup>8</sup>

During the reign of Sultan Selim I, Ottomans were kept busy at their eastern and southern frontiers (Iran and Egypt). However, during Suleyman the Magnificent's time (1520-1566), his conflict with Hungary caused tension in the relations with Poles as well. It should not be forgotten, that Suleyman's beloved wife Hürrem was originally from Ruthenia, which at the time was a part of Poland. Known are her letters to the Polish king Zygmunt II August, which clearly show her positive influence on policy and friendship.<sup>9</sup>

In 1569, as a result of the Union of Lublin, a single state "Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth" was created. In 1573, after childless death of the last Jagiellon, first elective king Henryk Walezy (Henri de Valois) was chosen. From then on, the nobility was choosing the king at the election sejm (parliament, meeting of the nobility to choose new king). The pretenders to the throne did not have to be of Polish or Lithuanian origins, and that created a situation, where different factions, lobby groups and foreign powers got involved, interfered and started to pursue their own candidates to the throne.<sup>10</sup> This system was used until the Third Partition of Poland in 1795.

In 1578, Stefan Batory (Stephen Bathory) from Transylvania, with the support of the Porte, was chosen to become the next elected king (1576-1586). In 1577 there was another agreement signed between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Ottoman Empire.<sup>11</sup> During the reign of Batory, another major flashpoint in the diplomatic relations with the Ottomans gained signifi-

<sup>5</sup> Paweł Jasienica, *Polska Jagiellonów*, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1988, p. 166-167.

<sup>6</sup> Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 1; Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976, p. 73-75.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Hammer von Purgstall, *Büyük Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. 2, Istanbul: Üçdal Neşriyat, 2003, p. 323-324.

<sup>8</sup> Hacer Topaktaş, *Osmanlı-Lehistan Diplomatik İlişkileri. Franciszek Piotr Potocki'nin İstanbul Elçiliği (1788-1793)*, Ankara: TTK 2014, p. 16; *Yoldaki Elçi. Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Türk-Leh İlişkileri*, p. 6-7.

<sup>9</sup> Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, "Polonya ve Osmanlı Devleti Arasında Tarih Boyunca Siyasi ve Diplomatik İlişkiler", in: *Savaş ve Barış. 15.-19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı-Polonya İlişkileri*. Istanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1999, p. 23; *Yoldaki Elçi. Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Türk-Leh İlişkileri*, p. 34-47.

<sup>10</sup> Urszula Augustyniak, *Historia Polski 1572-1795*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2008, p. 532-536.

<sup>11</sup> *Yoldaki Elçi. Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Türk-Leh İlişkileri*, p. 78-83.

cance – issue of Cossacks and Tatars. Cossacks kept invading Ottoman lands, and Batory's aim was to prevent that. As he was involved with the struggle against the Tsardom of Russia, he was looking for a way to make use of them. He managed to gather a group of Cossacks mercenaries and incorporate them into the Polish army. After Batory, three kings from the Swedish House of Vasa were elected to the Polish throne and reigned until 1668.

Seventeenth century was the one, where all in all quite friendly diplomatic relations between Poland and the Porte drastically changed. One of the reasons for that were the relations of Polish kings with the Habsburgs, as well as abovementioned Cossacks attacking Ottoman lands and Tatars attacking Polish lands. Two of the most significant battles from that period were Cecora (1620) and Hotin (1621), during which two prominent hetmans, Stanisław Żółkiewski and Jan Karol Chodkiewicz respectively, were killed. Both sides of the battle of Hotin faced many difficulties because of the exceptionally cold winter that year.<sup>12</sup>

In 1671, Cossack hetman Petro Doroshenko, leader of the Right Bank Cossacks of Ukraine, turned to the Ottoman Empire and became their vassal in order to get independence from both, Muscovite and the Commonwealth.<sup>13</sup> At this time, Jan Sobieski, later king Jan III Sobieski, was a hetman. By winning the battles of Braclaw, Mohylow and Kalnik, he set the Polish captives who were held by the Ottomans free and also won back a great part of Podolia and Ukraine. However, the state of victory for the Commonwealth did not last too long. December 10, 1671 Sultan Mehmed IV sent an envoy to Warsaw, to inform them about opening a new war against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.<sup>14</sup> On August 27, 1672 the castle of Kamieniec Podolski which was of great geopolitical and strategic importance, was taken over by Mehmed IV's army. The final to this battle was Treaty of Buczacz, signed on October 18, 1672. Some of its terms were as follows: The Commonwealth would lose claim over Kamieniec Podolski to the Porte and was obliged to pay 22.000 zloty annually as "gift" (in fact – tribute); the Right Bank Ukraine would be left for the Cossacks who were supporting the Ottomans. Consequently, Polish king would become the vassal of the sultan.<sup>15</sup>

November 11, 1673 Sobieski won the battle of Hotin,<sup>16</sup> and after ascending the throne attempted to end all the hostility with the Ottoman Empire. He changed the Polish foreign policy, by moving its axis from Habsburgs to France. This way he was hoping to win back the territories lost due to the treaty of Buczacz.<sup>17</sup> After stopping the Ottoman army at Zuravno, the Treaty of Zuravno

<sup>12</sup> For more information on climate change, see: Sam White, *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Ottoman Empire*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 194.

<sup>13</sup> Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The History of the Ottoman Empire*, New York: Basic Books, 2005, p. 273.

<sup>14</sup> Augustyniak, *Historia Polski 1572-1795*, p. 714.

<sup>15</sup> Augustyniak, *Historia Polski 1572-1795*, p. 715.

<sup>16</sup> Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *The Crimean Khanate and Poland-Lithuania. International Diplomacy on the European Periphery (15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century)*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2011, p. 188.

<sup>17</sup> Kołodziejczyk, *The Crimean Khanate and Poland-Lithuania....* p. 189-190, Augustyniak, *Historia*

was signed on October 17<sup>th</sup> 1676. According to that treaty, the Ottoman Empire would give up the 22.000 polish zloty tribute but ensure their possession of Podolia by keeping control over Kamieniec Podolski.<sup>18</sup> This treaty, however, had to be ratified, in order to be lawfully enforced. Thus, Polish envoy Jan Gniński was sent to Istanbul.

### Who was Jan Gniński?

Jan Gniński was born in 1625 and he was 52 years old at the time he was sent to Istanbul as an ambassador. However, his experience in diplomacy goes back a little bit further. In 1645 he was sent to France and in 1657 to Denmark. He also fought in the war between Poland and Sweden, as a member of the Polish army. After finishing his duty as an ambassador to the Porte, Gniński became the vice chancellor. He was also chosen as a member of the Polish Sejm (Parliament) couple of times. In 1667, in order to get help and establish an alliance against the Ottomans, he went to Sweden, Denmark and German states. In 1671 he went to Moscow in order to make an agreement with the Russians. In 1673 he engaged in the battle of Hotin. As king Jan III Sobieski ascended the throne, he became his chancellor. After that, his most known diplomatic mission, the one to the Porte in 1677-1678 took place. The envoy explained this visit in his relation, which later was read at the Sejm of Grodno on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1679. He became a clergyman after his wife died. Gniński also participated in the Battle of Vienna in 1683 by Jan III. Sobieski's side, as well as in the Battle of Parkany. He died in 1685.<sup>19</sup>

### Gniński's Travelbook of Turkey

Jan Gniński's manuscript was entitled "*Relacja Legaciy Tureckiy Jaśnie Wielmożnego Jana Gnińskiego, Wojewody Chełmińskiego, Kowalewskiego, Knyszyńskiego, Radzyńskiego, Grodeckiego Starosty do Mechmet Soltana Cesarza Constantynopolitańskiego z Seymu Warszawskiego Wyprawionego W Roku Pańskim 1677, Czyniona Na Seymie Dnia 8. Miesiąca February Roku 1679*". The Travelbook of Turkey<sup>20</sup> was prepared by the Polish envoy Jan Gniński, and later read at the Polish Diet on February 8, 1679. The version of this text used during the preparation of this article was published in Warsaw in 1907 by Franciszek Pułaski under the title "*Źródła do Poselstwa Jana Gnińskiego Wojewody Chełmińskiego do Turcji w latach 1677-1678*",<sup>21</sup> together with the preface written by him.

*Polski 1572-1795*, p. 727-728.

<sup>18</sup> Kołodziejczyk, *The Crimean Khanate and Poland-Lithuania...* p. 189.

<sup>19</sup> Roman Pollak (ed.), *Bibliografia Literatury Polskiej. Nowy Korbut. Piśmiennictwo staropolskie A-M*, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1964, p. 200-201.

<sup>20</sup> Jan Gniński, *Relacja Legaciy Tureckiy Jaśnie Wielmożnego Jana Gnińskiego, Wojewody Chełmińskiego, Kowalewskiego, Knyszyńskiego, Radzyńskiego, Grodeckiego Starosty do Mechmet Soltana Cesarza Constantynopolitańskiego z Seymu Warszawskiego Wyprawionego W Roku Pańskim 1677, Czyniona Na Seymie Dnia 8. Miesiąca February Roku 1679*. (manuscript)

<sup>21</sup> Franciszek Pułaski, *Źródła do Poselstwa Jana Gnińskiego Wojewody Chełmińskiego do Turcji w latach 1677-1678*, Warszawa: Druk Rubieszewskiego i Wrotnowskiego, 1907.

It consists of two parts: the first part includes envoy's account from his grand embassy to Istanbul and General "Dyaryusz" (diary, journal), a pocketbook with some notes from the travel which was included in the footnotes. There are five known manuscripts of that Dyaryusz, none of which is complete. Three parts of it are known, and they cover the dates May 9 to September 12, 1677, September 25 to October 29, 1677 and December 5, 1677 to June 12, 1678. Only those parts of Dyaryusz that are different from Gniński's Relation or complete his account are included. Some parts of the original text as well as parts of "Dyaryusz" are also translated in this article. Second part of the publication consists of files and letters issued during the time of Gniński's embassy.

Gniński's relation includes notes of his travel, descriptions of places he passed by or stayed in, diplomatic meetings, chronology and conditions of the agreement submitted by Poles and Ottomans. Majority of the text was written in Polish; however, the agreements were written in Latin. Whole travelbook including the footnotes is 196 pages. One more thing to be noted is that Pułaski's publication "*Źródła do Poselstwa Jana Gnińskiego...*" includes reproductions of seventeenth-century drawings depicting audience with the sultan and grand vizier, payment of ulufe (salary) to Janissaries, banquet thrown by the sultan, Gniński's handnotes etc. with descriptions. Those reproductions come from the Princes Czartoryski Muzeum in Kraków.

### **Embassy of Jan Gniński to the Ottoman Porte**

The reason for Gniński's legation to Istanbul was to ratify the treaty of Zuravno from 1676. His endeavors gave hope of reclaiming the Ukrainian territories lost in the Treaty of Buczacz in 1672 to the Porte. However, the terms put forward by Gniński were almost completely turned down.<sup>22</sup> In addition to the general failure<sup>23</sup> of the legation, the whole time spent in Istanbul turned out to be a catastrophe, with fatal results on the Polish attendees of the visit. Starting from the scandalous accommodation conditions<sup>24</sup> in Istanbul which were completely inappropriate for any diplomatic mission, epidemic of infectious disease decimating the attendees, probable epizootic of their horses, and psychological pressure put on the Polish delegation only contributed to this failure.

On May 14, 1677, Gniński left Warsaw together with a large delegation consisting of 450 people, and after a three-month long journey arrived in Istanbul.<sup>25</sup> He spent almost a whole year there, and on May 11, 1678, he could finally go back home. His arrival in Istanbul and the reason for his travel were earlier explained in notices sent to the Ottomans. Seems, that for such a grand embassy in Istanbul, the Ottomans did not show enough attention, nor did they welcome them with due respect. At least, this was not the treatment that the

<sup>22</sup> Topaktaş, *Osmanlı-Lehistan Diplomatik İlişkileri. Franciszek Piotr Potocki'nin İstanbul Elçiliği (1788-1793)*, p. 18.

<sup>23</sup> Kołodziejczyk, *The Crimean Khanate and Poland-Lithuania...*, p. 190.

<sup>24</sup> Pułaski, *Źródła do...*, p. 25, 30-31, 36, 154.

<sup>25</sup> Pułaski, *Źródła do...*, p. 2

envoy was expecting from them. In fact, this was only the beginning of the psychological pressure that the host imposed on the Poles, considering their meetings and encounters during the negotiations. In addition to that, despite the richness and splendor of the Ottoman Empire, the place where the Polish delegation ended up to be accommodated in, brought even bigger disappointment. To the exclusion of the general poor condition of the place, it was simply too small for the Polish group to fit into, and many of them had to spend the nights sleeping on the streets.<sup>26</sup> All of those started to worry the Poles from the very first day of their stay in Istanbul. To make matters even worse, during this time an epidemic of infectious disease started in Istanbul, significantly decimating the Polish delegation. At the same time, many of their horses died due to lack of food, difficult weather conditions during winter and lack of shelter. In fact, many of them ended up being stolen from their owners. Then, it destroyed all of their hopes of returning back home. Additionally, Ottoman diplomats under no circumstances wanted to change the conditions of the treaty, and they pressurized the envoy in order to have the treaty ratified in a way that they wanted.<sup>27</sup> Their threats however, were not only associated with the envoy living in scandalous conditions in Istanbul without the possibility of going back to Poland, but also with the chance of a new war between the Ottoman Empire and Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. They even claimed, that in case of a war, all the responsibility was to be blamed on Gniński.

Diplomatic meetings were not easier either. When Jan Gniński wanted to meet with any of the Ottoman officials, he had to first ask for the meeting and wait for a very long time to get a response, sometimes couple of days, sometimes even months. Because the time in between the meetings was quite extended, no improvement in the dispute could be achieved. Ottomans, who wanted the treaty to be ratified with no changes at all, used all of those methods along with a threat of imprisoning Polish delegation in the Yedikule Prison. Meanwhile the pact with Moscow against Poland was waiting just around the corner.

One of the reasons for the lack of agreement between the Ottomans and Poles, were the major differences between the two versions of the treaty – Turkish and Latin. Gniński was predicating all of his demands on the Latin version. The Ottomans, on the other hand, on its version written in Turkish. This fact, as well as the Ottomans wanting to get rid of all the terms in the truce that were not convenient for them, with no compromise, according to Gniński, proved them to be hypocritical. They also asked for further proofs regarding the treaty from the envoy. However, their behavior validated Gniński's statement, pointing to Ottomans being Muslims and the fact that Poles should not have had easily believed them or their words.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Pułaski, *Źródła do...*, p. 31.

<sup>27</sup> Pułaski, *Źródła do...*, p. 51, 91, 95.

<sup>28</sup> Pułaski, *Źródła do...*, p. 42, 122, 193.

While the meetings were proceeding, the war between the Ottoman Empire and Tsarist Russia ignited (1677-1681), becoming an opportunity for the Poles to secure a treaty with the Ottomans. Previous threats involving the pact with Russians against Poland proved to be meaningless. Specially because Poland had signed an agreement with Russia in 1667.

One of the main records included in Gniński's notes is the description of the Ottoman officials' attitude and behavior. Especially when it comes to the alterations to the truce regarding the lands, claiming that "*It is impossible that the sultan will give you back any land where the sultan's horse hoof has stepped, and which sultan's eye has seen*".<sup>29</sup>

Gniński, on his way to Istanbul, visited many cities in the Balkans, most of them being located in today's Romania and Bulgaria. They became the scene of bilateral meetings between the local and Ottoman officials and Polish envoy. The grand embassies to Istanbul, usually followed the set routes and protocols such as informing the local authorities, including Wallachian, Moldavian or Ottoman officials about approaching legations or asking for permission to cross the border.<sup>30</sup> It provides us with a detailed description of the bilateral meetings with Ottoman officials, ceremonies of paying the *ulufe* to Janissaries, passage of the sultan to mosques to celebrate Friday prayers or *bayrams* etc.

### Gniński in Istanbul

One of the last stops before arriving in Istanbul was the one at Çatalcı on August 5th, as written in the envoy's notes "*only eight hours far from Istanbul*"<sup>31</sup>. While being there, Gniński received a message from Vizier, delivered by Reis Efendi (Reis ül-Küttab), regarding their accommodation at a particular *han* which was already designated for them.<sup>32</sup> The envoy was not content with the decision, as he had heard many bad stories about that inn, describing it to be "*stuffy, dark, cramped and whiffy*".<sup>33</sup> Even before arriving there, he had already tried to obtain the permission from the Ottomans, to be accommodated in any place, that would be more appropriate for his dignity as an ambassador (*büyükelçi*). From his later notes, we learn, that this was the same place, where the legation of Krzysztof Zbaraski was accommodated in 1622.<sup>34</sup> For this purpose, he asked Mr. Boim, who was residing at that time in the Ottoman capital, to seek that permission and to inform other foreign envoys dwelling in Istanbul about his arrival. This particular inn, and the next one that the Ottomans allowed them to accommodate in, were possibly the main reason for the great epidemic that decimated Polish

<sup>29</sup> Pułaski, *Źródła do...*, p. 51.

<sup>30</sup> Michał Wasiucionek, "Diplomacy, Power and Ceremonial Entry. Polish-Lithuanian Grand Embassies in Moldavia in the Seventeenth Century", *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 105, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 2012, p. 57, 60.

<sup>31</sup> Pułaski, *Źródła do...*, p. 25.

<sup>32</sup> Semavi Eyice, "Elçi Hanı" in: *Diyanet İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, 2014, vol. 11, p. 17.

<sup>33</sup> Pułaski, *Źródła do...*, p. 25.

<sup>34</sup> Pułaski, *Źródła do...*, p. 26-27.

delegation, spreading quickly and killing many of them, without evoking any concern from the host's side.

On August 7th, the response came, saying, that on August 10<sup>th</sup> they had to be in Istanbul, and they could not be accommodated in any other inn. However, this obligation generated two major problems. First of all, the inn was definitely too small for the Polish delegation, that arrived in Istanbul (450 people, 650 horses)<sup>35</sup>. Second, great part of the people who travelled together with Gniński, already left to Istanbul, so gathering them together for the official arrival caused serious difficulty for the envoy. The authorities also gave them their word, that after their first audiences at the Ottoman court they would be provided with a new place to accommodate themselves.

This way, they moved to Burgas and later to Büyük Çekmece, while approaching Istanbul and waiting for the final message and permission to enter the city. They were informed on August 10<sup>th</sup>, at midnight, that they were expected to appear at the meeting the next morning. Gniński pointed out, that this unexpected abruptness was to confound him. Still in Büyük Çekmece, however, envoys from other countries came to his camp to greet him. Most crowded entourage was the one of the French legates.<sup>36</sup>

The drive-in entry to Istanbul and its description, provides us with great details regarding the Istanbul topography, landmarks and appearance of the Polish delegation, their accessories, costumes and horse tacks.

*The gate and double wall, and the underpinned, quite wide but fine fosse in front of them, seems like new with densely situated towers. The city was large, composed of thirteen thousand streets, but so narrow that in the main streets hardly a duo of horses can fit in them; there is even more of those that barely one horse can pass. Stone palaces [are] quite tall, and there is a lot of those that are wooden with two floors. All of the buildings are covered with roof tiles, most of them are wooden and many of them are with one floor. There is bad whiff in the streets, however the streets are nicely swept and they constantly take the trash out in the baskets carried by donkeys. There are many founts, those near the houses [are] short and black, [there are] wooden porches above stalls. The crowd everywhere is very dense. There was one particular street, 30-cubit wide, 100-cubit long, the one that was the most crowded one. All of the mosques covered with lead domes, decorative, with both sultans' and viziers' tombs below.<sup>37</sup>*

In the account we could also find the description of the Hagia Sophia, which used to be a mosque back then.

<sup>35</sup> Pułaski, *Źródła do...*, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> Pułaski, *Źródła do...*, p. 27.

<sup>37</sup> Pułaski, *Źródła do...*, p. 29.

*From Kâhya, the envoy went to the mosque called Zophia. Structure ad miraculum orbis 60 in diameter, 60 steps under immensely flat dome, sides another 60 steps long and wide covered with half-domes, are standing on thirty-two huge (...) marble columns; whereas chapels, situated above them [are built] on sixty-four smaller columns [and] ceiling studded mosaico opere with golden stones; the walls up to the dome covered with different-color marble, even women's gallery 18 cubits wide, 120 cubits long under the ceiling studded mosaico opere. Most of the images had the faces effaced, however many of them complete and even many complete crosses. (...) In one of them there was a St. Sophie's chapel with relics immured because of the miracles that had happened there.<sup>38</sup>*

They passed by the Palace of Davud Pasha, where the sultan was currently spending his time at: *"We were being guided while passing by the Palace of Davud Pasha, someday vizier's palace, now sultan's palace; quite beautiful and decorative, covered with big, lead dome and with two more dome covering the other rooms. It is said, that the sultan saw our arrival from there (...)"*<sup>39</sup> Because of that, the drummers and other musicians had to stop the music, and the swords had to be put in scabbards. However, the envoy mentions and visibly takes pride in it, that the banner with the Virgin Mary was still open, waving in the wind.<sup>40</sup>

The account of the Polish envoy provides us also with great descriptions of regular ceremonies taking place in the Ottoman Empire, such as the description of the sultan's procession going to the mosque during the Ramazan Bayramı. Gniński witnessed the payment of *ulufe* as well.

*Forward stepped more than five thousand Janissaries, afterwards the whole court with its elders, later various gentlemen with their courts, and in the end vizier himself; after that, when there was enough space I moved with that whole magnificence to my han. And my God! The hand [which was paying] was not stopping at all, not to mention the Casket, paying all of those imperial people their honors, who were coming to and out of the audience. And one could buy something like thousand kaftans, not only those fifty-four that they gave us after the banquet during the audience.<sup>41</sup>*

The main reason for Gniński coming to Istanbul, was to ratify the treaty. Thus, he had to meet with couple of the Ottoman officials. This time, there was no manual for the Polish envoys going with their official delegation to foreign countries, the Ottoman Empire being among them. The information about what to do and how to behave, or to put it shortly the diplomatic protocol was taken from the diaries or journals and official statements written by the previous leg-

<sup>38</sup> Pułaski, *Źródła do...*, p. 47.

<sup>39</sup> Pułaski, *Źródła do...*, p. 28.

<sup>40</sup> Pułaski, *Źródła do...*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>41</sup> Pułaski, *Źródła do...*, p. 38.

ates. However, they were not completely objective, as the envoys were always acting out of proportion and were trying to emphasize on the moments and elements of the legation, that would prove them correct, and the hosting side wrong. Because of that, it seemed unexpected to Gniński, that he could not attend the audience with the sultan immediately after arriving in Istanbul. First, there were other steps and other Ottoman officials, that he had to meet, in order to be given the permission to see the sultan. His meeting with the grand vizier, for example, took place in the palace, where the highest Ottoman officials gathered for the *Divan*. This is the record of it, written by the envoy.

*[The envoy was being led] through narrow and dark streets by the old imperial palace called "Pergama". From its tower, the sultan himself was looking through the bars on the window. After two staja<sup>42</sup> uphill [there was] a gate to the vizier's palace, just like to the Kraków Castle. Behind the gate, there was a small yard with short buildings, [and] second gate, behind which there was slightly bigger yard, where were situated the steps, used by the vizier to get off the horse; and the envoy used them as well. The above-mentioned dragoman was greeting him and after walking up stone stairs, he led him to the hall, where Divan takes place. The wall from the yard side with the wooden frame was completely open, which was then covered with canvas. In the hall the candlesticks are hanging on the iron hoops, which have simple glass lamps hanged on them. The attendance of the people in the hall was quite mediocre, same as in the yard, or rather low. (...)<sup>43</sup>*

Additionally, because the Ottomans were not satisfied with the conditions proposed by the Poles, they were deliberately postponing the meetings and consequently the final decision regarding the truce. This was their diplomatic way to imply their discontent on the envoy, and, at the same time, to put more psychological pressure on Gniński and make him change his demands. However, the envoy could not adjust his stand much, due to the fact that the terms proposed by the Poles were of the highest priority to him and also him not being familiar with the diplomatic protocol while at the Ottoman court.

### **The results of Gniński's embassy to Istanbul**

Gniński's account of his visit to Istanbul and to the Ottoman court, even though written in a subjective manner, sheds the light on the seventeenth-century diplomatic relations between the Ottomans and the Commonwealth, as well as a general perspective on the Ottoman bureaucracy and the capital city. His diplomatic mission to Istanbul and the notes he had taken during that legation, present extraordinary and valuable information, not only about the Zuravno Treaty and the process of its ratification, but also about the characteristics of

<sup>42</sup> Old-Polish unit of measurement.

<sup>43</sup> Pułaski, *Źródła do...*, p. 31.

the Polish and Ottoman diplomats, their behavior and approach taken during the official meetings and the implemented methods of applying psychological pressure. It is important to remember, that such travelbooks, explaining the legations to foreign countries, were not only written to be informative, but they also served the purposes of propaganda while gaining appreciation for the accomplishments. Most importantly, they show the envoy's perspective and the way he perceived everything he saw during his visit, given the cultural and language barriers and differences. Moreover, the diplomatic ceremonial was mostly dependent on the approved customs of both sides involved. Thus, it was never entirely demonstrative when it comes to the real intentions of the involved groups.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Wasiucionek, 'Diplomacy, Power and Ceremonial Entry...', p 57, 60.

## Öz

### Leh Elçisi Jan Gniński'nin Sefaretinde İstanbul (1677-1678)

Polonya-Litvanya Birliği ile Osmanlı İmparatorluğu 1676 yılında Zuravno Antlaşması imzaladıktan sonra, Polonyalı büyükelçi Jan Gniński 1677-1678 yıllarında bu antlaşmayı onaylamak için İstanbul'da bulunuyordu. Polonya'nın kaybettiği bazı toprakları geri kazanmayı ümit ederek Osmanlı başkentine vardı. Fakat, iyi şartlara sahip olmayan barınak imkanları ve bulaşıcı hastalıklar gibi çok sayıda engel ile yüzleştiği gibi üstelik öne sürdüğü antlaşma şartları da neredeyse tamamen reddedildi. Gniński, geride bıraktığı seyahatnamesinde okuyucularına İstanbul ve Osmanlı görevlileriyle yaptığı görüşmeleri detaylı ve ilgi çekici bir şekilde tasvir ediyor. Bu makalede, Gniński'nin seyahatnamesine dayanarak elçiliğinin bazı detayları ve İstanbul tasvirleri anlatılmakta ve 17. yüzyıl sonunda Avrupalı elçilere uygulanan Osmanlı diplomatik teşrifatının bir örneği gösterilmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Lehistan, Polonya-Litvanya Birliği, Osmanlı Devleti, Babiali, seyahatname, elçi, diplomatik ilişkiler, İstanbul

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## ANNEXES:



Figure I  
Ceremony of paying *ulufe* to Janissaries, September 13 (?) 1677.



Figure II  
Jan Gniński's audience with the Grand Vizier

