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# Revolution as Historical Experience: Narrative Construction and Information Flow Between Istanbul and Paris Around the 1730 Revolt

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## Revolution as Historical Experience: Narrative Construction and Information Flow Between Istanbul and Paris Around the 1730 Revolt

### Abstract

This article examines the flow of information between Istanbul and Paris in the eighteenth century and explores how this exchange contributed to the shaping and dissemination of historical narratives across Europe. It draws on an unpublished French manuscript entitled *Revolte de Constantinople*, produced within French diplomatic circles in Istanbul, which narrates, day by day, the history of the 1730 (Patrona Halil) revolt. The article analyzes how this manuscript contributed to the shaping and publication of various texts, first in the French magazine *Mercure de France* (April 1731), and subsequently in a book published in The Hague in 1737 by the editor Jean Néaulme. In conclusion, the article offers a preliminary analysis of the possible Ottoman sources of the manuscript and reflects on the uses of the term “revolution.” Finally, from a historical perspective, the article considers how non-European social unrests, such as the Patrona Halil Revolt, have influenced the evolving connotations and semantic charge of the term “revolution” within the European vocabulary in post-1789 contexts.

**Keywords:** French Orientalism; *Le Mercure de France*; Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve; Müteferrika Press; Patrona Halil Revolt; Revolution

### Tarihsel Bir Deneyim Olarak Devrim: 1730 İsyani Etrafında İstanbul ve Paris Arasındaki Anlatı İnşası ve Bilgi Akışı

### Özet

Bu makale, on sekizinci yüzyılda İstanbul ile Paris arasındaki bilgi akışını incelemekte ve bu etkileşimin Avrupa genelinde tarihsel anlatıların oluşumu ve dolaşma girmesi üzerindeki katkılardır. Bu çerçevede, 1730 (Patrona Halil) İsyani'ni gün gün aktaran ve dönemin İstanbul'daki Fransız diplomatik çevrelerinde kaleme alınmış *Revolte de Constantinople* başlıklı, yayımlanmamış bir Fransızca el yazmasına odaklanılmaktadır. Makalede, bu metnin önce Nisan 1731 tarihli *Mercure de France* dergisinde yayımlanan versiyonunun, ardından da 1737 yılında editör Jean Néaulme tarafından Lahey'de yayımlanan ilgili kitabın oluşum sürecine nasıl katkı sunduğu analiz edilmektedir. Son bölümde, söz konusu el yazmasının muhtemel Osmanlıca kaynaklarına ilişkin ön bir değerlendirme sunulmakta ve “devrim” (révolution) teriminin tarihsel kullanımları eleştirel bir yaklaşımla ele alınmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, Patrona Halil İsyani gibi Avrupa dışı toplumsal ayakalmaların, “devrim” kavramının 1789 sonrasında Avrupalı sözcük doğarcığında geçirdiği anlamsal dönüşüm ve kazandığı kavramsal derinlik üzerindeki etkileri tarihsel bir bakış açısıyla değerlendirilmektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Fransız Oryantalizmi; *Le Mercure de France* dergisi; Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve; Müteferrika Matbaası; Patrona Halil İsyani; Devrim

### Introduction

Accounts about Ottoman soldiers and their revolts were some of the most frequently circulated news stories about the Ottoman capital in early modern Europe. On 1 April 1600, for example, the Levant Company clerk John Sanderson (d. 1627) penned a detailed account of rebelling *sipahis'* lynching of Esperanza Malki, a Jewish businesswoman in the service of the Queen Mother Safiye Sultan (d. 1619).<sup>1</sup> Another event that drew considerable attention,

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In this article, the original orthographic style and any errors in quotations from eighteenth-century French texts have been preserved without modification to conform to contemporary French orthographic conventions. I am grateful to Mathieu Grenet for his feedback on an earlier draft, and to Paul Babinski, Maurits van den Boogert, Grégoire Eldin,

10 at least in France, was the janissaries' assassination of the young Sultan Osman II (d. 1622). This assassination resulted in the publication of two booklets in France that have hitherto remained unnoticed by historians: The first text, published in 1622 by the palace librarian Nicolas Rousset (d. 1641), takes the Khotyn defeat (1621) as the main reason for the janissaries' discontent and Osman II's assassination.<sup>2</sup> The second book was published in 1623, just one year after the event, by the printing house of François Huby in Paris.<sup>3</sup> The book's publishers legitimized the authenticity of their account via reference to a letter that an anonymous soldier in Istanbul had written to his friend in Paris.<sup>4</sup>

Such references point to an important and often underappreciated aspect of these stories—namely, the vast grid of diplomatic, missionary, mercantile, and scholarly networks that channeled information about events in Istanbul to European audiences, without which the accounts above would never have been printed.<sup>5</sup> Nowhere is this clearer than in the case of the Patrona Halil revolt of 28 September 1730 and the surge of news it generated across Europe. Scholarly research on the 1730 uprising, similar to that on other revolts in Istanbul, has concentrated predominantly on the political and economic motivations of the rebels. The role of the janissaries within the palace factions, along with their influence on the social and political dynamics of the imperial capital, remains a central topic of academic debate.<sup>6</sup>

In this article, however, I will focus on the impact the 1730 revolt had on European political and literary landscapes. This was perhaps most notably exemplified in The Hague in 1737 with the publication of the book *Relation des Deux Rebellions* (the second of the “deux rébellions” was a subsequent revolt attempt that took place in March 1731).<sup>7</sup> Historians examining the 1730 revolt consider this text to be the most detailed existing account of the event.<sup>8</sup> The publisher was Jean Néaulme (d. 1780), a descendent of Huguenot refugees who escaped France after Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes on 18 October 1685.<sup>9</sup> Besides being one of Europe's most significant printers at the time, Néaulme is also known for his conflict with Voltaire over his unauthorized publication of the latter's *L'Abégé de l'histoire universelle*.<sup>10</sup> While a 1738

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1 John Sanderson, *The Travels of John Sanderson in the Levant, 1584–1602* (London, 1931), 85–86.

2 Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter BNF)-Rothschild 2474. *Le massacre du Grand Turc et du Souverain Pontife de Constantinople, nouvellement aduenu par la rebellion de ses subiets* (Paris: Chez Nicolas Rousset, libraire au Palais, 1622).

3 BNF-Rothschild 2475. *La Grande Révolte arrivée aux États du Grand Turc par la pratique des Bacchus & Gouuerneurs des Prouinces* (Paris: Imprimerie de François Huby, 1623).

4 See the following note in the front page of the book: “Extrait d'une lettre d'un soldat, écrite de Constantinople à un siège amy, dans Paris.”

5 Ann M. Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information Before the Modern Age* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010); John-Paul Ghobrial, *Information Flows in Istanbul, London, and Paris in the Age of William Trumbull* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

6 For some representative examples, see Mümin Aktepe, *Patrona İsyani: 1730* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Yayımları, 1958); Cemal Kafadar, “Janissaries and Other Rifraff of Ottoman Istanbul: Rebels Without a Cause?,” *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 13, nos. 1–2 (2007): 113–34; Selim Karahasanoğlu, *Politics and Governance in the Ottoman Empire: The Rebellion of 1730* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2009); Shirine Hamadeh, “Invisible City: Istanbul's Migrants and the Politics of Space,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 50, no. 2 (2017): 173–93.

7 I abbreviate the title of the Hague publication as *Relation des Deux Rebellions*. See Anonymous, *Relation des Deux Rebellions Arrivées à Constantinople en MDCCXXX. et XXXI., dans la Déposition d'Achmet III. et l'Elévation au Trône de Mahomet V.* (The Hague: Jean Néaulme, 1737).

8 See the following account, particularly the nuanced critique that the author brings to the analysis of Bekir Sitki Baykal in the Fourth Turkish History Congress in 1952: Karahasanoğlu, *Politics and Governance in the Ottoman Empire*, 4–5. For a list of the translations of the Hague publication together with a fine analysis of the text, see İbrahim Tolga Kara, “1730–1731 İsyancılar Hakkında Bir Dönem Kaynağı: *Relation Des Deux Rebellions Arrivées a Constantinople en MDCCXXX. et XXXI., dans la Déposition d'Achmet III. et l'Elevation au Trône de Mahomet V.* (İnceleme ve İzahlı Tercüme)” (master's thesis, Hacettepe University, Ankara, 2021).

9 For the details of Jean Néaulme's biography, see Christiane Berkvens-Stevelinck, “La librairie française à Berlin: Le rôle de la diaspora huguenote et de la librairie hollandaise,” in “Une capitale internationale du livre: Paris, XVIe–XXe siècles,” ed. Jean-Yves Mollier, special issue, *Histoire et civilisation du livre* 5 (2009): 247–67. See also Kees van Strien, “Jean Néaulme et l'Abégé de l'histoire universelle,” in *Les Neveux de Voltaire à André Magnan*, ed. Stéphanie Géhanne Gavoty and Alain Sandried (Paris: Centre International d'Étude du XVIIIe siècle, 2017), 45–53.

10 Van Strien, “Jean Néaulme et l'Abégé de l'histoire universelle.”

*sine nomine* German translation of *Relation des Deux Rebellions* records Claude Alexandre de Bonneval (d. 1747) as the book's author, as I will show below, the Hague publication was not the result of the activities of a specific person at a specific time.<sup>11</sup> It was rather the product of a process through which multiple actors—diplomats, merchants, and publishers—played an important role in bringing the book to its final form in The Hague in 1737.<sup>12</sup>

More specifically, an anonymous French manuscript entitled *Revolte de Constantinople* served as an “avant-texte,” or preliminary draft, which formed a significant part of the Hague publication in 1737.<sup>13</sup> Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve (d. 1747), the French ambassador at the Sublime Porte, sent this manuscript from Istanbul to the Foreign Affairs Department in Paris. Just after this, the French cultural and political magazine *Le Mercure de France* (hereafter *Le Mercure*) published a slightly amended version of this manuscript in a supplementary issue dated April 1731. Conforming to what Roger Chartier calls “the obsession with autograph manuscripts” in the eighteenth-century literary world,<sup>14</sup> the title of the text as published by *Le Mercure* emphasized the authenticity of this account of the “last Revolution” that took place in Istanbul.<sup>15</sup> Further information provided by diplomats, missionaries, and merchants about the attempted revolt of March 1731 was to be added to the larger narrative to achieve the final publication of the book in The Hague.<sup>16</sup> Hence, the Hague publication resulted from a process involving several actors who added many layers to produce the final version.

Beyond the question of authorship, the circulation of the narrative around the 1730 revolt in European literary landscapes offers an opportunity to peer into the flow of information between Istanbul and Paris and the dissemination of this information throughout Europe in the eighteenth century. As will be discussed in the conclusion, this approach allows for a historicization of the concept of “revolution” in pre-1789 contexts that can be traced back to the late seventeenth century. It also facilitates homing in on the possible ways in which non-Western experiences of social unrest, as in the 1730 revolt, contributed to the “semantic charge” of the term “revolution.”<sup>17</sup> In doing so, it challenges the Eurocentric narratives shaped by the conceptual approaches of thinkers like Hannah Arendt and Reinhart Koselleck regarding the concept of revolution.<sup>18</sup>

### The French Manuscript in Context

Sometime between 1730 and 1731, the French ambassador at the Sublime Porte, Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve (d. 1747), sent an anonymous French manuscript from Istanbul to Paris, attached to a diplomatic letter. The manuscript, entitled *Revolte de Constantinople*, offers a detailed account of the 1730 revolt. It is preserved in a compilation

<sup>11</sup> The German translation of the book is not published under the name of any publisher. It does not give any reason why, contrary to the Hague publication, the German translation gives the name of de Bonneval as the author of the book. See *Des Grafen von Bonneval, Kommandirenden Bassa der Türkischen Armee, Besondere Nachricht von denen beyden letztern Rebellionen in Constantinopel: Aus dem Französischen ins Deutsche übersetzt (sine loco, 1738)*.

<sup>12</sup> Before the publication of the book by Jean Néaulme in The Hague, the contemporary journal *Amsterdam* also published news of the event in its issues of 2, 9, and 12 January 1731. For a digitized copy of the relevant issues, see the following page on Google Books: <https://www.google.fr/books/edition/Amsterdam/ovXQy6lam5QC2hI=fr&gbpv=1> (consulted on 28 March 2025).

<sup>13</sup> The manuscript is entitled *Revolte de Constantinople*, and it is preserved in the Centre des archives diplomatiques de La Courneuve in Paris (hereafter CADLC), under Mémoires et documents: Turquie (MD). 5MD/151, fols. 1–107. To the best of my knowledge, none of the historians working on the subject has noticed the existence of this manuscript.

<sup>14</sup> Roger Chartier, *La main de l'auteur et l'esprit de l'imprimeur* (Paris: Gallimard, 2015), 12.

<sup>15</sup> This text is a slightly edited version of the French manuscript. See *Le Mercure de France dédié au roi*, Supplément, April 1731, 829–938. Unlike the Hague publication, neither the French manuscript nor the edited version published in *Le Mercure* includes the information about the second revolt attempt that took place in March 1731.

<sup>16</sup> For a complete list of the later translations of the text, see Kara, “1730–1731 İsyancı Hakkında Bir Dönem Kaynağı.”

<sup>17</sup> For a different approach, see also David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam's reframing of the “Age of Revolutions” as a global phenomenon from the late eighteenth century onward. David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Introduction: The Age of Revolutions, c. 1760–1840: Global Causation, Connection, and Comparison,” in *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760–1840*, ed. David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), xii–xxxii. See also Antoine Lilti, “Et la civilisation deviendra générale’: L’Europe de Volney ou l’orientalisme à l’épreuve de la Révolution,” in “Dire et faire l’Europe à la fin du XVIIIe siècle,” *La Révolution française* (2011), <https://doi.org/10.4000/lrf.290>.

<sup>18</sup> See Hannah Arendt's analysis of the American and French revolutions in Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (Penguin Classics, 2006), particularly pp. 13–52. See also Reinhart Koselleck, “Historical Criteria of the Modern Concept of Revolution,” in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 43–57.

12 in the French Diplomatic Archives at La Courneuve in Paris, under the series Mémoires et Documents.<sup>19</sup> Besides this manuscript, the compilation contains different diplomatic correspondences and reports dating from 1725 to 1770. The documents in the file begin with a June 1724 report by Xaviero Glavany, the French consul in Crimea.<sup>20</sup> Following this report, folios 97–107 of *Revolte de Constantinople* are attached to the compilation.<sup>21</sup> After this, one finds several other diplomatic documents before reaching the first 96 folios of the *Revolte de Constantinople*.<sup>22</sup> There are also short diplomatic letters and accounts about the revolt that are added to the compilation. Finally, the last document of the compilation is an account of the naval battle between the Ottomans and the Russians on 5–7 July 1770. Most of the documents in the compilation are classified as original documents by the archivists who assembled them in the twentieth century.<sup>23</sup>

After the title *Revolte de Constantinople*, the following note has been added to the heading of the text by the copyist: “Translation of a report made in Turkish by an Effendi on the last revolt of Constantinople, with several circumstances of this event drawn from other memoirs.”<sup>24</sup> Approximately six months after the revolt, the French cultural and political magazine *Le Mercure* published almost the same text in its supplement of April 1731, albeit with small editorial interventions. The title of this publication runs: “A historical, accurate and detailed account of the latest Revolution that took place in Constantinople, written first in Turkish by an Effendi, with several circumstances of this event drawn from other memoirs.”<sup>25</sup> The catchy title of this publication, alongside its claim to authenticity, points to the haste with which the revolt was recounted to the European reader six months after it took place. I will return to this point below.

*Le Mercure*’s preference for the word “revolution” over the word “revolt” to denote the event might be credited to the magazine’s characteristic as an early example in the European tradition of critical journalism.<sup>26</sup> Yet, the word “revolution” does not seem to have been an uncommon lexical choice in the vocabulary of the French diplomats of the period, such as Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve. In a letter to King Louis XV, the ambassador described the event as a “sudden revolution” (*révolution subite*) that hit Constantinople on 28 September 1730.<sup>27</sup> This detail aside, both titles acknowledge that one of their sources is a translation of a report by an anonymous Ottoman effendi, or “man of letters.”<sup>28</sup>

This emphasis on the “authenticity” of the source, which was further underlined in the title of the magazine’s publication, can likewise be credited to the tradition of critical journalism noted above. However, nowhere in the magazine do the editors appear to acknowledge that the report in question originated in Istanbul in the form of a French manuscript that was then

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19 It is only through a note left on the verso of the manuscript’s last folio that we learn the text was sent to Paris by the French ambassador. See *Revolte de Constantinople*, fol. 107 (CADLC compilation, 18). The note reads: “Relation de la revolte arrivée à Constantinople le 28 septembre 1730. Jointe à la lettre de Mr [l’ambassadeur] de Villeneuf du [...].” See also Figure 1.

20 The title of the report reads as follows: “Relation de ce qui s'est passé au sujet des troubles commencé en Krimée au mois de juin 1724.” For the life of Glavany, see Anne Mézin, *Les consuls de France au siècle des Lumières (1715–1792)* (Paris: Ministère des Affaires étrangères, Direction des Archives et de la Documentation, 1998), 322–23.

21 CADLC compilation, 13a–18a. It is unclear why the manuscript’s last ten folios are attached separately in the volume.

22 CADLC compilation, 44a–91b.

23 For the history of the compilation of the Mémoires et Documents archival series, see Ministère des Relations extérieures, *Les archives du Ministère des relations extérieures depuis les origines: Histoire et guide; Suivis d'une étude des sources de l'histoire des affaires étrangères dans les dépôts parisiens et départementaux* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1984), 115–19.

24 See *Revolte de Constantinople*, fol. 1a (CADLC compilation, 44). “Traduction d'une Relation faite en Turc par un Effendi, de la dernière Révolte de Constantinople, avec plusieurs circonstances de cet Evenement, tirées d'autres mémoires.” See Figure 2.

25 *Le Mercure de France*, Supplément, April 1731, the cover page: “Relation historique, exacte et détaillée de la dernière Révolution arrivée à Constantinople; écrite d'abord en Turc par un Effendi, avec plusieurs circonstances de cet Evenement, tirées d'autres Mémoires.” See Figure 3.

26 For a foray into this tradition, see Marion Bréché, *Les compagnons de Mercure: Journalisme et politique dans l'Europe de Louis XIV* (Ceyzérieux: Champ Vallon, 2015).

27 Marquis de Villeneuve’s diplomatic correspondence has been published by Sinan Kuneralp. See his *Les rapports de Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve ambassadeur du roi de France auprès de la Sublime Porte Ottomane (1728–1741)*, 5 vols. (Istanbul: ISIS Press, 2019). For the ambassador’s letter to the king, see 1:364–67.

28 In a note on the left margin of the first folio of the *Revolte de Constantinople* manuscript, the translator gives the following definition for the word “effendi”: “Le mot d’Effendi signifie également un home de Loy, et de plume: un home de lettres, ou venerable, l'auteur de la Relation est un Seavant.” See *Revolte de Constantinople*, fol. 1 (CADLC compilation, 44a).

sent to Paris by Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve.<sup>29</sup> What is more, a significant number of footnotes were left in the manuscript with asterisks placed next to each Turkish word to guide readers through the Turkish terms, notions, and titles deployed throughout the text. These notes, which were reproduced in the subsequent *Le Mercure* and Hague publications, show that the original French manuscript was sent to Paris to be read by a wider European audience.

A glance at the diplomatic correspondence of the time reveals the density of the communication traffic from Istanbul to Paris about the 1730 revolt.<sup>30</sup> The French ambassador wrote his first letter about the event on 7 October 1730; it is addressed to then-minister of the navy Jean-Frédéric Phélypeaux (d. 1781), the Count of Maurepas.<sup>31</sup> That the Count of Maurepas was the first person to be informed about the event deserves particular attention: First, as this initial letter notes, the political destabilization in Istanbul potentially threatened the French privileges in the Levantine sea trade acquired via capitulations over the centuries.<sup>32</sup> Second, the event occurred during a period of intense French investment in the Levant, and the Count of Maurepas was one of the key figures in this endeavor. For some historians, the Count of Maurepas is also regarded as the statesman during whose office France "rediscovered" the importance of the Mediterranean as a cultural and geopolitical space.<sup>33</sup> This point warrants further attention.

In addition to political and cultural developments, such as the establishment of the first Ottoman embassy in Paris or new experiments with print culture in 1727 in Istanbul,<sup>34</sup> France's interest in the Ottoman Orient in the eighteenth century triggered equally significant scholarly activities. Particularly relevant here is that in 1728, the Count of Maurepas, working together with then-chief minister André-Hercule de Fleury (d. 1743), executed a long-planned project of the king's librarian, Jean-Paul Bignon (d. 1743).<sup>35</sup> In service to the Republic of Letters, this project aimed at researching in Ottoman lands, and shipping to the king's library in Paris, antiquities and manuscripts written in Greek or "Oriental languages."<sup>36</sup> This project had begun earlier, in 1718, when Jean-Paul Bignon succeeded Camille Le Tellier de Louvois (d. 1718) as librarian to the king. Correspondence of the period mentions time and again the value of bringing antiquities and Byzantine manuscripts to France,<sup>37</sup> and it repeatedly emphasizes, among other things, the importance of finding manuscripts such as Diodorus Siculus's "Universal History" (*Bibliotheca historica*) and their significance for the Republic of Letters.<sup>38</sup>

In 1728, the year Marquis de Villeneuve took up his post as France's ambassador to the Sublime Porte, the Count of Maurepas commissioned two members of the Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres to carry out this project.<sup>39</sup> These were François Sevin (d. 1741), a Hellenist later appointed the king's bookkeeper in 1737, and Michel Fourmont (d. 1746), the younger brother of the Orientalist Étienne Fourmont (d. 1745) and holder of the chair of Syriac language at the Académie. This mission lasted until 1730 and resulted in the shipment of around six hundred manuscripts, written in diverse languages—such as Arabic, Armenian, Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Syriac, and Ottoman—from Ottoman lands to the king's

<sup>29</sup> *Le Mercure de France*, Supplément, April 1731, 829–945.

<sup>30</sup> See Kuneralp, *Les rapports de Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve*, 1:357–72.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:357–61. It is only with a letter dated 27 October 1730 that Marquis de Villeneuve informed the king about the event. *Ibid.*, 1:364–67.

<sup>32</sup> See, especially, the last lines of the letter. *Ibid.*, 1:358.

<sup>33</sup> See Christopher Drew Armstrong, "Le Comte de Maurepas et la redécouverte de la Méditerranée sous Louis XV," *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'année-Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 157, no. 2 (2013): 873–90.

<sup>34</sup> For just two examples of the rich body of the work on these subjects, see Orlin Sabev, *Waiting for Müteferrika: Glimpses on Ottoman Print Culture* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2018); and Kemal Beydilli, *İki İbrahim: Müteferrika ve Halefi* (Istanbul: Kronik Kitap, 2019).

<sup>35</sup> For a biography of Jean-Paul Bignon, see "Éloge de M. L'Abbé Bignon," in *Histoire de l'Académie royale des sciences: L'année 1743* (Paris: L'Imprimerie royale, 1746), 185–94.

<sup>36</sup> The vast correspondence about the mission was published by Henri Omont (d. 1940). See his *Missions archéologiques françaises en Orient aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles: Documents publiés par Henri Omont*, 2 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1902).

<sup>37</sup> See *ibid.*, "Introduction," esp. 1: xii–xiii. For the early modern European interest in Byzantine historians, see Anthony Grafton, "Western Humanists and Byzantine Historians," in *The Invention of Byzantium in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Nathanael Aschbrenner and Jake Ransohoff (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2021), 71–104.

<sup>38</sup> See Omont, *Missions archéologiques françaises en Orient*, 1:416.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:440.

library in Paris.<sup>40</sup> As the ear of the Count of Maurepas in Istanbul, Marquis de Villeneuve was to contribute, perhaps more than any of his predecessors, to the growth of the Royal Library's collections during his ambassadorship in the Ottoman capital. Hence, the creation of the manuscript *Revolte de Constantinople* corresponded to a significant moment in the history of the crystallization of French cultural and political interests in Ottoman lands.

How did the events leading to the preparation of this manuscript resonate in contemporary France? Through what channels did news travel from Istanbul to Paris? Potential answers to these questions can be found in the magazine *Le Mercure* and its treatment of news from Istanbul.

### Communicating Istanbul

Before the 1730 revolt hit the imperial capital, *Le Mercure*'s coverage of Istanbul, and the Ottoman Empire in general, was primarily concerned with the political events of the period. A glimpse at its news stories between 1728 and 1730 suggests that the magazine allocated considerable room to the ongoing conflicts between the Ottomans and the Safavids leading to the war of 1730–32 between the two imperial rivals. This sort of news was routinely included in the magazine's "Foreign News" section.<sup>41</sup> Concerning cultural developments in Istanbul, *Le Mercure* devoted particular attention to the founding of the Hungarian convert İbrâhim Müteferrika's (d. 1747) printing house in 1727. The first news about this was published in the magazine's July 1728 issue, albeit with considerable misinformation, under the title "New books from Foreign Countries, recently on sale in Paris."<sup>42</sup> In this section, after listing newly published books in Europe that were accessible in Paris, the editors reported on the creation of the Müteferrika printing house in Istanbul. According to the editors, the press had been established at the behest of the grand vizier at the palace (*serail*) and was staffed by thirty-six apprentices working under the guidance of three Greeks who were perfectly versed in the language of the country (i.e., Turkish) and several other "Oriental languages."<sup>43</sup>

This fanciful depiction was likely inspired by the image of the *jeunes de langue* of the period. From the relatively newfound probate inventories of İbrâhim Müteferrika, it has been shown that the press was located not at the imperial palace, as stated in *Le Mercure*, but at the house of İbrâhim Müteferrika, in the Mismâri Şucâ quarter of the district of Fatih. Later, the printing house moved to a room in the Tophane neighborhood.<sup>44</sup> İbrâhim Müteferrika owned all the printing equipment in the workshop and, together with the Jewish typographer Yona, had only five people working under him.<sup>45</sup>

The magazine editors added other questionable claims to their coverage of Müteferrika's press, including that the main obstacle to its activities was "the Mufti, who wanted to destroy this new establishment, which he called a curse of the Almighty God."<sup>46</sup> Notwithstanding such claims, the imperial mufti of the time, Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi (d. 1743), actually favored the creation of this printing house. Together with Sultan Ahmet III's order commanding Müteferrika to establish a press, a fatwa formulated by the imperial mufti was one of the central elements that legitimized Müteferrika's activities as a printer in Istanbul.<sup>47</sup> What is more, as has been argued by the historians who have recently worked

<sup>40</sup> For the reports written about the outcome of the missions by Sevin and Fourmont, see F. Sevin and M. Fourmont, "Relation abrégée d'un voyage littéraire fait dans le Levant par les ordres du roi, dans les années 1729 et 1730," in *Histoire de l'Académie royale des inscriptions et belles-lettres* (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1733), 7:334–43.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, "Nouvelles Etrangers (Turquie)," *Le Mercure de France*, January 1724, 122–23.

<sup>42</sup> "Livres nouveaux des Pays Etrangers, depuis peu en vente à Paris," *Le Mercure de France*, July 1728, 1646–51.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 1649–50.

<sup>44</sup> Kemal Beydilli, *İki İbrahim*, 59.

<sup>45</sup> Kemal Beydilli, "Müteferrika Matbaası," *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, suppl. 2 (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2019), 341–43, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/muteferrika-matbaasi>.

<sup>46</sup> *Le Mercure de France*, July 1728, 1649–50: "les menaces du Mufti, qui voudroit détruire ce nouvel établissement, qu'il traite de fleau du Grand Dieu."

<sup>47</sup> For a French translation of the fatwa, see Henri Omont, *Documents sur l'imprimerie à Constantinople au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Émile Bouillon, 1895), 11–12.

on the subject, the printing house was not even affected by the revolt of 1730.<sup>48</sup> Hence, in its initial coverage of the Müteferrika printing house in Istanbul, the editors of *Le Mercure* seem to have relied largely on their own biases.

This situation changed radically in just a few years. In its issue of February 1730, the magazine published a long section under the title “Nouvelles littéraires des Beaux-Arts.”<sup>49</sup> The section surveyed the different literary works being published in Paris and other European cities such as London at the time, as well as operas, plays, and other productions. The magazine also noted publications about Islamic culture and history in Europe, including, for example, an enthusiastic account of the preparation for publication in London of Henri de Boulainvilliers’s (d. 1722) three-volume book about the life of the Prophet Muhammed.<sup>50</sup> Following this, the magazine devoted four pages to news about books published by İbrahim Müteferrika’s printing house.<sup>51</sup> This time, *Le Mercure*’s news sources seem fairly accurate. Based on the information provided by some “anonymous” letters sent from Istanbul to Paris, the magazine notified its readers that Marquis de Villeneuve had shipped to the library of King Louis XV three books printed in 1728 in Müteferrika’s new printing house.<sup>52</sup> It then listed and provided a brief description of each of these books, placing particular emphasis on Katip Çelebi’s (d. 1657) *A Gift to the Great Ones Concerning Naval Expeditions*.<sup>53</sup> Interestingly, the description given by *Le Mercure* is that of Katip Çelebi’s famous work entitled *The Mirror of the World* (*Cihannümâ*), which was to be published later, in the year 1732. This observation suggests the following: First, French circles already knew that *The Mirror of the World* was in the pipeline for publication. Second, the editors of the magazine confused *A Gift to the Great Ones*, which was one of the first books published by the Müteferrika printing house, with *The Mirror of the World*, one of the most well-known Ottoman geographical works in Europe.<sup>54</sup>

The striking point in this news is the *Le Mercure* editors’ dissatisfaction at the little or no attention paid by the anonymous author of their news sources to the importance of Katip Çelebi, who is mentioned as Haggi Calfah in the magazine, as he was called among the members of the Imperial Divan (*Haci Halife*). For the editors, the author of this important geographical work was a well-reputed “modern Turkish author” who deserved more attention than he had been given in these letters.<sup>55</sup> The representation of Katip Çelebi by the editors of *Le Mercure* as a “modern” author must have something to do with his reputation as one of the first Muslim/Ottoman intellectuals who acknowledged the importance of European scientific literature in geographical studies. This is perhaps most evident in the dialogue he formed with the Flemish geographer Gerardus Mercator’s (d. 1594) *Atlas Minor*, among other sources, while writing *The Mirror of the World*.<sup>56</sup> The editors also added that a biographical work written by Katip Çelebi and translated into French by the French Orientalist François Péti de la Croix (d. 1713) could be found in the library of the king. Undoubtedly, this is the manuscript of the French translation of Katip Çelebi’s *The Removal of Doubt from the Names of Books and the Sciences*,<sup>57</sup> translated by François Péti de la Croix between 26 April 1694 and 26 March 1705 under the title *La Bibliothèque orientale*.<sup>58</sup>

48 See Kemal Beydilli, *İki İbrahim*, 14.

49 “Nouvelles littéraires des Beaux-Arts,” *Le Mercure de France*, February 1730, 333–76.

50 Ibid., 334–35. The book is Henri de Boulainvilliers, *La vie de Mahomed* (London, 1730).

51 *Le Mercure de France*, February 1730, 357–61.

52 Ibid., 357. “On nous écrit de Constantinople que M. le Marquis de Villeneuve, Ambassadeur de Roy à La Porte, a envoyé depuis peu pour la Bibliothèque de S.M. trois Livres, qui ont été imprimé en 1728. dans l’Imprimerie nouvellement établie dans cette Capitale.” The books were sent on 30 September 1729 with a letter written by Marquis de Villeneuve to André-Hercule de Fleury. For this letter, see Omont, *Documents sur l’imprimerie*, 7–8.

53 The work, originally titled *Tuhfetü'l-kibâr fî esfârî'l-bihâr*, was translated into English in 1831 by James Mitchell under the title *Maritime Wars of the Turks*.

54 For a biography of Katip Çelebi and the history of *Cihannümâ*, see the introduction written by Gottfried Hagen to the following translation of the work: Gottfried Hagen and Robert Dankoff, eds., *An Ottoman Cosmography: Translation of Cihannümâ* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 1–24.

55 *Le Mercure de France*, February 1730, 360. “L’Auteur de la Lettre qui nous est écrite de Constantinople, n’a pas, sans doute, été instruit au sujet d’Haggi Calfah [...] cet Ecrivant, dont la réputation n’est pas petite, est un Turc moderne de Constantinople, fils d’un Secrétaire du Divan.”

56 See Hagen and Dankoff, *An Ottoman Cosmography*, 14–16.

57 The original title reads as follows: *Kashf al-zunun 'an asamî'l-kutub wa-l-funun*.

58 See Claude-Pierre Goujet, *Mémoire historique et littéraire sur le Collège royal de France* (Paris: Chez Augustin-Martin Lottin, 1758), 112.

While the magazine's coverage of Istanbul was not always accurate, the channels through which the abovementioned news stories arrived in Paris reveal that *Le Mercure* had contacts within contemporary political and diplomatic circles. The complexity of this network of contacts becomes especially evident in the magazine's later news coverage, particularly regarding the 1730 revolt. Before publishing the French manuscript *Revolte de Constantinople* in its supplement of April 1731, *Le Mercure* had already published detailed news stories about the revolt, which suggests that the event was under close French scrutiny. The first of these appeared in the December 1730 issue of the magazine, just two months after the revolt broke out. There, the editors devoted fourteen pages to the event in the section entitled "Foreign News."<sup>59</sup> The details offered there are said to be drawn from different letters from "Turkey" (i.e., Ottoman lands). The magazine editors state that some of their sources were letters written in Istanbul that reached the magazine via Italy, without mentioning the details of these sources.<sup>60</sup> This news item begins with the information that Sultan Ahmed III (erroneously reported as Ahmet IV in the news item) had been dethroned. The main reasons that were mentioned for the dethronement of the sultan were the following: The long wars with the Safavids; the weaknesses of the grand vizier of the time, Ibrahim Pasha, who was the sultan's son-in-law; and the severe economic problems that the Istanbulite masses had faced for years. This contextualization, common to most contemporary sources, also forms the brief introduction to *Revolte de Constantinople*.<sup>61</sup> The fact that such a detailed report on the revolt was published in the journal as early as December foreshadows a more detailed account published soon thereafter.

While the January 1731 issue of the magazine does not mention anything about the event, its "Foreign News" section does dedicate space to the Ottoman–Safavid conflict of the period.<sup>62</sup> Readers would have to wait until the February issue for a report containing another interesting letter extract about the revolt. In the following section, we will see how important this report is for grasping the broader network deployed by France to channel information between the two imperial capitals.

### From Istanbul to Paris

In a report entitled "Extract from a Letter from Marseille, 19 February 1731, about the Troubles in Constantinople,"<sup>63</sup> the magazine is explicit about its news sources. The letter's author states that they obtained their account about "the latest revolution in Constantinople" from a French ship captain named Antoine Rolland, a member of the important Rolland merchant family of the Provence region, on 16 February 1731, while the captain was returning from the Levant to Marseilles with a cargo of wheat.<sup>64</sup> According to the author of the letter, while in the city of Smyrna, Antoine Rolland encountered the Ottoman fleet admiral Canim Hoca Mehmed Pasha (d. 1737), who had just taken up, for a second time, the post of grand admiral of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>65</sup> With the permission of the French consul, Antoine Rolland's ship saluted him with several cannon shots as Canim Hoca and his retinue left the city. Later, while out at sea, Antoine Rolland came across another French captain named Fougasse de Cassis who had left Istanbul around a month earlier, on 13 January. Fougasse de Cassis told Antoine Rolland the details of an audience held at the Imperial Divan, where the insurgent Patrona Halil expressed his desire to marry Fatma Sultan, the daughter of the dethroned

59 "Nouvelles étrangères: Extrait de plusieurs Lettres de Turquie," *Le Mercure de France*, December 1730, 2942–57.

60 Ibid., 2956.

61 The most detailed contextualization of the event is the one provided by the author of *Abdi Tarihi*. See Faik Reşit Unat, ed., *Abdi Tarihi: 1730 Patrona Halil İhtilâli Hakkında Bir Eser* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1999), 19–29.

62 "Nouvelles étrangères: Turquie et Perse," *Le Mercure de France*, January 1731, 149–52.

63 "Extrait d'une Lettre de Marseille, du 19 Février 1731. au sujet des Troubles de Constantinople," *Le Mercure de France*, February 1731, 370–71.

64 *Le Mercure de France*, February 1731, 370. "Je l'ai questionné en particulier sur la dernière révolution de Constantinople." The only trace of Antoine Rolland is a report in the Library of Alcazar in Marseille regarding the misappropriation of a cargo payment. The report is available through the web portal of the Bibliothèques de Marseille at <https://www.bmvr.marseille.fr/ark:/20868/pf0001203334>.

65 He is mentioned as Janon-Coggia in the letter. On 15 Rebiyûlâhîr 1143 / 28 October 1730, Canim Hoca Mehmed Pasha was appointed grand admiral for the second time. Thus, Antoine Rolland must have met him sometime toward the end of 1730 or the beginning of 1731. For a study on the biography of Canim Hoca Mehmed Pasha, see Meltem Aydin, "Kaptan-ı Derya Canim Hoca Mehmed Paşa," *Bılıg* 77 (2016): 27–53.

Sultan Ahmed III and wife of the murdered Grand Vizier Ibrahim Pasha. Upon this, Canum Hoca, who was present at the Divan gathering, killed Patrona Halil with a sword stroke and had thirty main insurgents strangled.<sup>66</sup> Antoine Rolland further reported, via Fougasse de Cassis, that the new Sultan Mahmud I (d. 1754) was waiting for the arrival of Köprülü, the governor of Egypt of the time, to take up the post of grand vizier, which would restore the peace entirely. By the name Köprülü, the anonymous author meant Köprülüzâde Abdullah Pasha, the provincial governor of Egypt at the time.<sup>67</sup> The author closes by saying that this information was confirmed by Captain Antoine Rolland at every port of call during his expedition.

We cannot know who wrote the abovementioned letter extract for the magazine. However, this text gives us important clues as to the reliability of *Le Mercure*'s reporting. The Divan gathering in question was held on 14 Cemaziyülevvel 1143 / 25 November 1730. There, Patrona Halil and other insurgents were executed by Pehlivan Halil Agha, the commandant of the seventeenth janissary division, who is said to have refused to join the revolt out of loyalty to the state.<sup>68</sup> The chronicles of the period underline that the person Canum Hoca executed was not Patrona Halil himself but rather Kel Mehmed, the agha of the janissaries, who had joined the insurgents.<sup>69</sup> They also state that Patrona Halil demanded not the hand of the sultan's daughter, but rather the governorship of Rumeli. Nevertheless, the information the letter contains shows that the whispers about the events that put an end to the revolt were already in circulation before 13 January, when Fougasse de Cassis left Istanbul.

In its issue of March 1731, just one month before publishing *Revolte de Constantinople* as a supplement in April, *Le Mercure* gives, under the title "Foreign News: Turkey and Persia,"<sup>70</sup> the final news about the execution of Patrona Halil and his comrades and the quashing of the revolt.<sup>71</sup> This news item mentions only Patrona Halil by name, describing the other executed insurgents merely as his companions or else by title, as in the case of the agha of the janissaries (i.e., Kel Mehmed). Concerning its sources, some of the information in this news piece is said to be based on a letter sent from Istanbul to Venice on 8 February. This information is given at the beginning of the letter extract. Another news source mentioned at the end is a second letter that is said to have been written on 23 January 1731 in Istanbul. According to the magazine editors, a ship captain named Brémond brought this letter from Istanbul to Marseille.<sup>72</sup> It gives, quite accurately, the news of the removal of the interim grand vizier (i.e., Silahdar Damat Mehmed Pasha [d. 1737]) and the appointment by the new sultan of Ibrahim Pasha (i.e., Kabakulak Ibrahim Pasha [d. 1743]) as grand vizier. These letters underscore the important role played by French ship captains in ensuring the flow of information between Paris and Istanbul, and the importance of cities such as Smyrna, Venice, and Marseille as places where news and letters were transmitted.<sup>73</sup> As seen in the examples above, the almost whisper-like flow of news also suggests that, in some cases, true and false news may have been intertwined en route to Paris.

66 *Le Mercure de France*, February 1731, 371.

67 He became the governor of Egypt in Zilhicce 1141 / June–July 1729 and left this post on Muharram 1144 / July–August 1731.

68 See Münir Aktepe, ed., *Şemdanızâde Findiklih Süleyman Efendi Tarihi: Müri't Tevârih* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası, 1976), 1:16; this is also mentioned in the *Revolte de Constantinople*, fol. 104 (CADLC compilation, 16b). For the details of the suppression of the revolt, see Selim Karahasanoğlu, "A Tulip Age Legend: Consumer Behavior and Material Culture in the Ottoman Empire (1718–1730)" (PhD diss., State University of New York, Binghamton, 2009), 195–210.

69 For the details of the story, see Aktepe, *Şemdanızâde*, 18; in the manuscript *Revolte de Constantinople*, fols. 104–6.

70 "Nouvelles étrangères: Turquie et Perse," *Le Mercure de France*, March 1731, 596–600.

71 *Ibid.*, 596–97.

72 This letter might be the one that was written by the ambassador Marquis de Villeneuve to the Count of Maurepas on 9 November 1730 and sent from Istanbul on 25 January 1731 with Captain Brémond. See the note left at the bottom of the letter ("Partie le 25 janvier par le capitaine Brémond, le duplicita le 8 avril par le capitaine Coutier") in Kuneralp, *Les rapports de Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve*, 1:367–72.

73 See, for example, the first letters written by Marquis de Villeneuve about the revolt, in Kuneralp, *Les rapports de Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve*, 1:357–72. These letters were brought to Paris by a certain ship captain mentioned in the letters of the ambassador as Captain Grasso (d. 1731?), presumably the slave-trade captain Louis Grasso from Marseille, who seems to have been active in the Black slave trade in the Levant. See Gilbert Buti, "Marseille sur les routes de la traite négrière au XVIIIe siècle," in *La Traite et la Route des esclaves: Sites historiques, archéologiques et mémoireaux*, proceedings of the annual conference of the International Council of Museums' International Committee for Archaeology and History Museums, held in Marseille on 24–27 November 2014, pp. 19–34.

The brevity and at times inaccuracy of the abovementioned news items imply that the manuscript *Revolte de Constantinople*, which was an accurate and detailed account of the event, must have arrived in the hands of the editors of *Le Mercure* sometime toward the end of March or beginning of April. The swift publication of the manuscript as a supplement under a catchy-sensationalist title with a claim to be an authentic text—"A historical, accurate, and detailed account of the latest Revolution that happened in Constantinople"—should be understood in the larger context of the magazine's readership across Europe and beyond.

Although we do not have much information about the number of magazine subscribers for the period under study, *Le Mercure* seems to have had a large audience in France, with over eleven thousand subscribers in 1789. The magazine also had a considerable distribution in big European cities such as Geneva, Mannheim, Liège, and Florence. A logographic text published in the magazine in 1750 came from Istanbul, and between 1744 and 1762, four shipments of the magazine were made to Saint-Domingue.<sup>74</sup> Hence, the publication of *Revolte de Constantinople* as a supplement in April might well have been part of a push by the editors to attract readers' attention to their magazine and whet their appetite for the final publication.

This hunt for readers aside, among French circles present in Istanbul and the Levant at large, reports and letters about the revolt in Istanbul were often passed around, copied, and put into circulation by different individuals and agents. These reports hint at a network of communication that went far beyond Istanbul and Paris. Aside from the text drafted by the anonymous Istanbulite effendi, many such reports were used in the drafting of *Revolte de Constantinople*, as the note in its heading also implies.<sup>75</sup> For example, as we have seen above, on a number of occasions, *Le Mercure* received information about the revolt via Venice through letters written in Istanbul. Looking at the mentions of Venice, one might think of the sophisticated Italian intelligence channels of the early modern period.<sup>76</sup> However, some notes added to short reports about the revolt attached to the CADLC compilation show that it was the French embassy in Venice that served as the key channel in transmitting news about events in Istanbul to Paris. For example, the first of these reports bears the following note in the heading of the document: "Constantinople, 12 October 1730. Report on the uprising that took place in Constantinople."<sup>77</sup> A note above this reads, "Sent by M[ister] Le Blond 30 Xbre [i.e., 30 December] 1730."<sup>78</sup> This shows that Jean-François Le Blond, who served as the French consul in Venice between 1718 and 1759, sent this report about the revolt, which was written in Istanbul, to Paris.<sup>79</sup> Another note left on a document involving two Dutch merchants and the French consul in Aleppo (on a document in folio 98a of the compilation) is even more striking: "Copy of a report sent from Constantinople to M[iste]rs Seitz and Bock, Dutch merchants in that city [i.e., Aleppo]. In Constantinople on 29 March 1731."<sup>80</sup> In the same document (fol. 100a), another marginal note reads as follows: "Aleppo. Attached to M[ister] de Monthenault's letter of 9 April 1731."<sup>81</sup> This note demonstrates that the French consul in Aleppo, Jean-Jacques de Monthenault,<sup>82</sup> and Dutch merchants in the city would have seen copies of this report written by French circles in Istanbul.<sup>83</sup> This report is particularly important, as it seems to have shaped the narrative about the second revolt attempt that took place in March 1731 and was published by Jean Néaulme in the Hague publication in 1737, together with the account of the 1730 revolt.

<sup>74</sup> Timothée Léchot, "Profils d'un lectorat: Enquête sur les signatures d'énigmes du *Mercure de France* (1724–1778)," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 45, no. 1 (2022): 11–28.

<sup>75</sup> "...with several circumstances of this event drawn from other memoirs."

<sup>76</sup> On this, see Ioanna Iordanou, *Venice's Secret Service: Organizing Intelligence in the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

<sup>77</sup> CADLC compilation, 92a–93a. "Constantinople le 12 octobre 1730. Relation du soulèvement qu'il y a eu a Constantinople."

<sup>78</sup> "Envoyé par le S[ieur] Le Blond 30 Xbre 1730." See Figure 4.

<sup>79</sup> For Jean-François Le Blond, see Mézin, *Les consuls de France au siècle des Lumières*, 387–88.

<sup>80</sup> CADLC compilation, 98a. "Copie d'une relation envoyée de Constantinople aux S[ie]urs Seitz et Bock marchands hollandais de cette ville. a Constantinople le 29 mars 1731." See Figure 5.

<sup>81</sup> CADLC compilation, 100a. "alep. joint a la lettre du S[ieur] de Monthenault du 9 avril 1731." See Figure 6.

<sup>82</sup> Jean-Jacques de Monthenault was born in Paris in 1677 and served as the consul of France in Aleppo between 1730 and 1735. See Mézin, *Les consuls de France au siècle des Lumières*, 450–51.

<sup>83</sup> In the 1730s, Seitz & Bock was one of only two Dutch firms in the city of Aleppo, together with Boumeester & Van Liebergen. I am grateful to Maurits van den Boogert for this information.

Finally, another report concerning the second revolt attempt, written on 5 April 1731, bears the following note: “Attached to M. de Bocage’s letter of 27 May 1731. Report of 5 April 1731 on the second revolt that happened in Constantinople.”<sup>84</sup> Produced in the diplomatic circles of Istanbul, these reports circulating across the Levant contributed to the composition of *Revolte de Constantinople* in Istanbul before they ended up in the CADLC compilation in Paris.

How did the French manuscript influence the content of *Le Mercure* and, later, the text published in The Hague in 1737? In the following discussion, I will closely examine these texts to explore how *Revolte de Constantinople* functioned as an “avant-texte” and shaped the subsequent publications.

### The Text in Texts

In the following lines, I will sketch a brief comparative analysis of all three texts, showing how *Revolte de Constantinople* shaped the later publications on the 1730 revolt. I will also highlight the differences between these three texts. By so doing, I will render tangible certain additions and deletions made to the French manuscript in the subsequent publications. Let me begin with the introduction of the manuscript:

La decadence de nos affaires en Perse, faute par le Grand-Vizir Ibrahim Pacha d'y avoir fait passé des secours tels qu'il le pouvait, et que les conjonctures le demandoient, et l'opression dans la quelle le peuple gémissait depuis longtemps, par les vexations des Ministres, ou de ceux qui les Exercoient pour leur autorité, Et par l'établissement de plusieurs impôts, jusqu'alors inconnus en Turquie, sont les deux causes principales de la Revolution dont nous allons faire le Recit.<sup>85</sup>

The first paragraph of the *Revolte de Constantinople* is a brief contextualization of the revolt. This introduction is common to most of the narratives of the time; they differ only in their length.<sup>86</sup> In the above quotation, the employment of the first-person plural “nous” lends a certain authenticity to the narrative. As its title suggests, if the writings of an anonymous effendi from Istanbul were indeed used to compose the French manuscript, this passage must have been taken directly from that text, or a summary of that text integrated into the manuscript by the copyist.

In the publication of *Le Mercure*, the narrative begins with the same paragraph, albeit with considerable editorial interventions. Moreover, the narrative is rendered more neutral by erasing the first-person plural. The date on which the event took place is added at the end of the paragraph to give this essential information to the reader from the very beginning of the text. However, in both paragraphs, the event is labeled not a revolt but rather a “revolution.” The beginning of the text, as published by *Le Mercure*, reads:

La décadence des affaires en Perse, faute par le Grand-Vizir Ibrahim Pacha, d'y avoir fait passer des secours tels que les conjonctures le demandoient, et l'oppression dans laquelle le peuple gémissait depuis long-temps par les vexations des Ministres, ou de ceux qui les exerçoient sous leur autorité et par l'établissement de plusieurs Impôts jusqu'alors inconnus en Turquie, sont les deux causes principales de la Révolution arrivée le 28. Septembre 1730.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>84</sup> CADLC compilation, 96a. “Jointe a la lettre de M. de Bocage du 27 mai 1731. Relation de la seconde révolte arrivée dans Constantinople du 5 avril 1731.” See Figure 7.

<sup>85</sup> CADLC compilation, 44a. “The decline of our affairs in Persia, due to Grand Vizier Ibrahim Pasha’s failure to send aid, which he could have done and which the circumstances required, and the oppression under which the people had long been groaning, due to the vexations of the Ministers or those who exercised them under their authority, and the imposition of several taxes, previously unknown in Turkey, are the two main causes of the Revolution that we are about to narrate.”

<sup>86</sup> This contextualization can also be found in the first letters of the ambassador Marquis de Villeneuve to the Count of Maurepas and Louis XV. See Kuneralp, *Les rapports de Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve*, 1:357–67.

<sup>87</sup> *Le Mercure de France*, Supplément, April 1731, 829–30. “The decline of affairs in Persia, due to Grand Vizier Ibrahim Pasha’s failure to send aid as the circumstances required, and the oppression under which the people had been groaning for a long time due to the vexations of the Ministers, or those who exercised them under their authority, as well as the imposition of several taxes previously unknown in Turkey, are the two main causes of the Revolution that occurred on September 28, 1730.”

This labelling of the revolt as a “revolution” is taken a step further in the introduction to *Relation des Deux Rebellions*, where Néaulme stresses the widespread ignorance in Europe concerning the sociopolitical dynamics of Istanbul and the limited European understanding of the “revolutions” that had occurred in Istanbul, which he characterizes as having a recurring historical pattern. This perceived deficiency in knowledge, according to Néaulme, justifies the publication of the work. In another point of difference, *Relation des Deux Rebellions* offers far more attention to the historical context than do either of the other texts.<sup>88</sup> In this sense, it can be compared to *Abdi Tarihi*, where the author devotes much space to the context that motivated the revolt of 1730. As such, this is one of the rare parts where the Hague publication diverges considerably from the French manuscript.

As I have underlined previously, the footnotes found in *Revolte de Constantinople* are integrated into the publication of *Le Mercure*. However, there are some exceptions. On folio 48a, for example, the author of *Revolte de Constantinople* provides a definition of the word “emir.” For whatever reason, this definition is entirely omitted in the publication of *Le Mercure*.<sup>89</sup> Another point of divergence is that while each publication offers a description of Patrona Halil, *Le Mercure* additionally mentions his physical characteristics, an important detail which does not exist in the other texts. The description runs as follows:

Il étoit âgé de 40. à 45. ans, de moyenne taille, dégagée et bien prise, la mine haute et fière, portant moustache noire.<sup>90</sup>

I have previously highlighted the sensationalist tone employed by the editors of *Le Mercure*, who, whenever possible, sought to capture the attention of a broader readership. But another discursive register is discernible there as well, a tone reminiscent of the genre of political advisory literature known as Mirrors for Princes. Significantly, this advisory tone is articulated with great clarity and consistency across all three versions of the text. It is exemplified in a passage drawn from *Revolte de Constantinople* and reproduced almost verbatim—save for minor alterations—in both *Le Mercure* and the Hague edition. While offering a rationale for the narration of the events, the passage in the French manuscript explicitly states that the account is intended to function as a moral lesson for high-ranking officials, reminding them of their duties and of the modest origins from which they ascended—so as to prevent the erosion of their legitimacy in the eyes of the lower social orders. That this story was circulated approximately fifty-eight years prior to the French Revolution of 1789, ostensibly as a cautionary tale addressed to the statesman of the time, provides valuable insight into contemporary perceptions of monarchy and its vulnerabilities. The relevant passage reads as follows:

Dans cette année de l’Egire 1143. le 13. de la Lune de Rébiul-Euvel, un Jeudi a 9. heures du matin, Patrona-Kalil, de nation albanoise, et quelques autres gens sans aveu, ou de la lie du peuple de Constantinople, comme Mouslouh, Emir-ali, &c. produisirent ce grand événement, qui par ses circonstances mérite d’être transmis jusqu’aux siecles les plus Reculéz, et peut servir d’Exemple aux personnes Revetues d’Eminens Emplois, pour leur apprendre que quelques elevez qu’ils soient, ils ne doivent jamais perdre de vue le vil État, d’où on les a tiréz, et que le dépôt du Gouvernement de l’Empire leur étant confié, ils doivent se comporter d’une manière à s’attirer l’aprobation Générale, comme s’ils étoient toujours environnez de vangeurs de leur mauvaise administration, tels que patrona et ses camarades, qui tout incapable qu’ils paroisoient d’une haute entreprise, ont pourtant forcé le Sultan achmet trois d’abandonner le trône de ses ancêtres.<sup>91</sup>

88 *Relation des Deux Rebellions*, 1–10.

89 *Le Mercure de France*, Supplément, April 1731, 881.

90 *Ibid.*, 831. “He was between 40 and 45 years old, of average height, poised and well-built, high and proud in bearing, wearing a black mustache.”

91 CADLC compilation, 44a–b; *Le Mercure de France*, Supplément, April 1731, 830–31; *Relation des Deux Rebellions*, 7–8. “This day, which corresponds to the year of the Hijra 1143, the 13th of the month of Rebiü'l-evvel, a Thursday, at 9 o'clock in the morning, Patrona Halil, of Albanian origin, and some other disreputable people from the lowest classes of the people of Constantinople, such as Muslu, Emir Ali, etc., brought about this great event, which, due to its circumstances, deserves to be passed down to the most distant centuries; it can serve as an example to those in high positions, to teach them that no matter how elevated they may be, they should never forget the humble condition from which they were raised, and that, being entrusted with the responsibility of governing the Empire, they must act in

This tone, which closely resembles that of Mirrors for Princes literature, merits further attention, given its potential influence on European political and intellectual landscapes through the impact of Ottoman and/or Persianate advisory traditions. This phenomenon should not be considered anomalous, for such literature was already in circulation in France and throughout Europe. For example, the *Pandnamah* (Book of wisdom), authored by the Persian mystic Farid al-din 'Attar (d. 1221), was translated into French by the *jeune de langues* Paul Sielv in Istanbul. Sielv was an active translator within the Franciscan community of Pera during the early eighteenth century. The manuscript was dedicated to Louis-Alexandre de Bourbon (d. 1737), the son of Louis XIV.<sup>92</sup> Detailed marginal annotations in the extant manuscript include anecdotes from Ottoman history as well as significant commentary on the text's affiliation with the Mirrors for Princes genre. The diffusion of this genre in Europe and its potential impact on European political thought warrant comprehensive scholarly inquiry.

In other cases, extensive editorial interventions in some sections of the subsequent publications seem to have created significant differences between the printed texts and the manuscript *Revolte de Constantinople*. Most of the time, the printed texts tend to adopt a more "neutral" language aimed at erasing the voice of the alleged Istanbulite effendi deployed in the original manuscript. An example is the concluding lines of *Revolte de Constantinople* and the *Relation des Deux Rebellions*. In folio 107 of *Revolte de Constantinople*, the anonymous author concludes her/his narrative as follows:

Le 28 novembre, jour auquel nous finirons cette longue relation, et auquel ont aussi fini les suites de la révolte, commencée à pareil jour, deux mois auparavant, toutes les personnes de l'ancien ministère, qui étoient encore en prison, furent élargies, moyenant des taxes modiques....<sup>93</sup>

*Relation des Deux Rebellions* concludes its account of the same day more simply, dropping the use of the first person plural and some of the commentary:

Le 28. de Novembre, toutes les personnes de l'ancien Ministère, qui restoient en prison, furent remises en liberté, moyennant quelques légeres taxes qui leur furent imposées....<sup>94</sup>

We have seen that the texts published subsequently are not entirely faithful to *Revolte de Constantinople*. However, most of the time, both the editors of *Le Mercure* and Jean Néaulme quoted almost directly from the French manuscript. The dialogues about the deposition of Sultan Ahmed are important cases in point. In *Relation des Deux Rebellions*, this event is dealt with between pages 36 and 40, beginning with the moment when the rebels chose the renowned preacher of the Hagia Sophia, İspırzâde Ahmed Efendi (d. 1730), one of the organizers of the revolt, to explain to the sultan that the rebels demanded his overthrow.<sup>95</sup> In *Revolte de Constantinople*, the incident is narrated between folios 19 and 22. It starts as follows:

Les rebelles quoi que résolus à ne se point ...<sup>96</sup> sur la déposition d'achmet, avaient pourtant besoin pour l'exécution d'un projet de cette importance, d'être guidés par quelqu'un qui eut des lumières, du crédit, et qui entrât en même temps dans leurs sentiments. Ils trouveront ce qu'ils cherchent, lors qu'ils si attendent le moins, dans la personne de Ispiri-Zadé, Predicateur ordinaire de la Cour, et de Ste. Sophie.<sup>97</sup>

a way that earns the general approval, as though they were always surrounded by avengers of their mismanagement, such as Patrона and his followers, who, despite appearing incapable of any great enterprise, nonetheless forced Sultan Ahmed III to abandon the throne of his ancestors."

92. See *Le Pend-Attar ou les conseils du cheikh Attar*, Bibliothèque Mazarine, French Ms. 3573.

93. CADLC compilation, 107a. "On November 28, the day with which we will end this long report, and on which the consequences of the revolt, which began on the same day two months earlier, also came to an end, all the people from the former ministry who were still in prison were released, upon payment of modest fines."

94. *Relation des Deux Rebellions*, 132. "On the 28th of November, all the individuals from the former ministry who remained in prison were set free, upon payment of some light fines that were imposed on them."

95. *Ibid.*, 36.

96. The word is erased.

97. CADLC compilation, 20b. "The rebels, although determined not to ... on the deposition of Ahmed, still needed, for the execution of a project of such importance, to be guided by someone who had insight, influence, and who, at the same time, shared their sentiments. They found what they were looking for, when they least expected it, in the person

The same passage is written in *Relation des Deux Rébellions* as follows:

Les Rebelles, quoique determinez à déposer Sultan Achmet, avoient pourtant besoin d'un homme qui eût assez de lumieres & de credit pour l'exécution d'un projet si important ; & ils trouverent ce qu'ils cherchoient en la Personne d'un nommé *Ispiri-zadé*, Predicteur Ordinaire de la Cour & de la Mosquée de Ste. Sophie.<sup>98</sup>

*Revolte de Constantinople*, with its detailed and coherent writing, is a very important source for peering into the day-by-day details of the 1730 revolt. Although it went unacknowledged by the editors of *Le Mercure* and by Jean Néaulme, it should be taken as a solid *avant-texte* of their publications, both of which are considered to be some of the most reliable sources about the revolt. Hence, it fully deserves the attention of the historians.

Nevertheless, *Revolte de Constantinople* is not free from errors, shortcuts, or inaccuracies when it comes to the information it contains about certain Ottoman institutions or imperial practices. That is why, although detailed and interesting, both *Revolte de Constantinople* and the subsequent publications that resulted from it should be read critically. It should also be read from a comparative perspective alongside the Ottoman chronicles of the time, such as *Abdi Tarihi*.

To appreciate this observation, let us take a look at the way that the *cülüs* practice, the ceremony of each new sultan's ascension to the throne, is represented in *Revolte de Constantinople*:

Il est d'usage, selon les constitutions de la monarchie Ottomane, que quand un Sultan vient à mourir de mort naturelle, et que le prince qui doit lui succéder monte sur le trône, cellui-ci n'est point obligé de faire aucune gratification aux Troupes, mais que lorsque par une révolution, comme celle dont nous faisons le Récit, un Prince parvient à l'Empire, il doit leur faire un présent, et augmenter leur paye ce qui se pratique de la manière suivante.<sup>99</sup>

Contrary to what the above quotation suggests, gratuities were given to the palace officials, the ulema, and the members of the *kapikulu* regardless of the reason for the new sultan's ascension to the throne. Bayezid II was the first sultan to give gratuities on the occasion of his ascension, and this became a norm sometime during the reign of Mehmed II (d. 1481) or his son Bayezid II (d. 1512). Thus, the practice of giving gratuities was implemented whenever a new sultan took up the throne. Hence, although written in a detailed, lengthy, and interesting style, the French manuscript *Revolte de Constantinople* should be read with a critical eye as a historical source. In any case, the text deserves more detailed study beyond the scale of the present article.

### In Lieu of a Conclusion

The upheaval generated by the Istanbulite masses on 28 September 1730 had a considerable—and long-term—resonance in Europe, as I have shown through the circulation and the dissemination of the content of the French manuscript *Revolte de Constantinople*. The fact that the event was characterized, at times, as a revolution by certain contemporary actors tells the historian a great deal about both the character of the 1730 revolt itself and the larger context that imbued the word “revolution” with meaning. Therefore, I suggest that one of the possible conclusions to be drawn from the discussions above is linked to the word “revolution,” which is deployed sporadically in both *Revolte de Constantinople* as well as the subsequent publications.

of İspırzâde, the ordinary preacher of the court and of Hagia Sophia.”

98 *Relation des Deux Rébellions*, 36. “The rebels, although determined to depose Sultan Ahmed, still needed a man who had enough insight & influence to carry out such an important project; & they found what they were looking for in the person of one named İspırzâde, the Ordinary Preacher of the Court & the Mosque of Hagia Sophia.”

99 CADLC compilation, 23a. “It is customary, according to the constitutions of the Ottoman monarchy, that when a Sultan dies of natural causes, and the prince who is to succeed him ascends to the throne, the latter is not obliged to grant any gifts to the troops. However, when a prince comes to power through a revolution, like the one we are recounting, he must make a gift to the troops and increase their pay, which is done in the following manner.”

The first edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, published in 1694, gives a rather scientific definition for the word “revolution” as the return of a planet or a star to the same point from which it had left; the revolution of the planets, celestial revolutions, the revolution of centuries, of times, etc.; though it notes that the word also carries the meaning of a great change in fortune or in worldly affairs.<sup>100</sup> This definition does not change in the subsequent three editions of the dictionary (published in 1718, 1740, and 1762), but the sense of a change in public affairs is added as an additional meaning. It is with the fifth edition of the dictionary, published in 1798, nine years after the 1789 revolution, that the political meaning of the term becomes most crystallized. In that edition, the word acquires a further meaning, as a change that occurs in opinions, a revolution in arts, sciences, minds, fashions, etc., further reinforcing this aspect of the term’s semantic charge. What is more, the dictionary gives the example of the loss of a battle as often causing great revolutions in a state. Politically, there is mention of the “Roman Revolutions,” referring to civil wars and revolts that took place in the Roman Empire; the “Swedish Revolution,” referring to the Bloodless Revolution of Gustav III (d. 1792) in 1772 and the introduction of the Swedish constitution; and the “English Revolution,” referring to the events that took place between 1688 and 1689 which resulted in the deposition of King James II (d. 1701).<sup>101</sup> This lexical approach allows thinkers such as Hannah Arendt and Reinhart Koselleck to argue that the modern concept of “revolution” is rooted in a European semantic register.<sup>102</sup> Hannah Arendt particularly associates the development of the term, albeit with an equivocal tenor, with the “experience of being free”<sup>103</sup>—an ostensibly new experience that revolutions engendered in the history of “Western mankind.”

Through a historicized reading, that literary works long predating the 1798 edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* employed the word “revolution” in the context of the 1730 revolt offers important clues as to the political connotations of the word and its crystallization in the vocabulary of French learned society. Another example is René Aubert de Vertot’s (d. 1735) *Revolutions de Portugal*, first published in 1689. There, René Aubert de Vertot recounted the story of the 1667–68 revolt that established the future Pedro II (d. 1706) as prince-regent over his brother Alfonso VI (d. 1683).<sup>104</sup>

What is more, learned French people of the time do not seem to have been overly Eurocentric in their use of the term, applying it freely to characterize experiences of social and political unrest outside the West. For example, consider the Polish Jesuit Judasz Tadeusz Krusiński’s (d. 1756) book *Relatio de mutationibus Regni Persarum* (Rome, 1727), an account of the fall of the Safavid dynasty in 1722. In 1728, the book was translated into French and published in The Hague by Pierre Gosse and Jean Néaulme under the title *Histoire de la dernière Révolution de Perse*.<sup>105</sup> Similarly, after returning from his mission in Istanbul, Michel Fourmont presented a lecture at the Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres in Paris titled “Histoire d’une Révolution arrivée en Perse dans le sixième siècle.”<sup>106</sup> In this presentation, based on a Turkish manuscript translated from a Persian text that he brought to the king’s library from Istanbul as part of his mission, he discussed the revolt of Bahram Chobin (d. 591), which lasted from 589 to 591. He referred to this event as a revolution that took place in the Sassanid Empire. Thus, significant non-European experiences also influenced the French intellectuals’ understanding of revolutions.

Hence, although the semantic origins of the word “revolution” belong to a European etymological register, through a historicized perspective, it is evident that various social and political events were interpreted by French learned society through the lens of “revolution.” If we accept that the contemporary understanding of the word “revolution” crystallized in the context following 1789, the 1730 revolt is one of the historical experiences that contributed to

<sup>100</sup> *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (1st ed.), “revolution,” <https://www.dictionnaire-academie.fr/article/A1R0160-03>.

<sup>101</sup> *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (5th ed.), “revolution,” <https://www.dictionnaire-academie.fr/article/A5R1320>.

<sup>102</sup> See Arendt, *On Revolution*, 21. See also Reinhart Koselleck, “Historical Criteria.”

<sup>103</sup> See Arendt, *On Revolution*, 27.

<sup>104</sup> René Aubert de Vertot, *Histoire des Révolutions de Portugal* (Paris: Michel Brunet, 1711).

<sup>105</sup> In 1729, the book was translated and published by İbrahim Müteferrika under the title *Tercüme-i târih-i seyyâh der beyân-i zuhûr-i aâjâvâniyân ve inhâdâm-i binâ-i sâhâh-i Safevîyân* (Traveler’s history concerning the emergence of the Afghans and the decline of the edifice of the Safavid shahs).

<sup>106</sup> In *Histoire de l'Académie royale*, 325–33.

the meaning associated with this term, as I have demonstrated through the dissemination of the manuscript *Revolte de Constantinople* in European literary and political circles.

This article has deliberately refrained from addressing the question of whether the “Istanbulite Efendi” mentioned in the manuscript *Revolte de Constantinople* was a real historical figure or—if such a person did exist—who he might have been. Nevertheless, if a tentative identification were to be proposed, Çelebizâde İsmâîl Âsim Efendi (d. 1760), appointed as the official court historian (*vakanûvis*) by the assassinated grand vizier Damat Ibrahim Pasha in 1723, emerges as a plausible candidate. Notably, his under-studied chronicle *Tarihçe*, a contemporary account of the 1730 revolt, may have significantly influenced the composition of the French manuscript. This hypothesis merits further, in-depth exploration in future research.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> For an analysis of the only known copy of this work to date, which is held at the Svetozar Marković Library of the University of Belgrade, see Hakan Yılmaz, “Patrona Vak’ası Hakkında Yazılmış Kısa Kronikler ve Devrin Vak’anüvisi Küçük Çelebi-zâde İsmâîl ‘Âsim’în Târîhçesi,” *Doğu Batı Düşünce Dergisi* 21, no. 85 (May–July 2018): 178–216.

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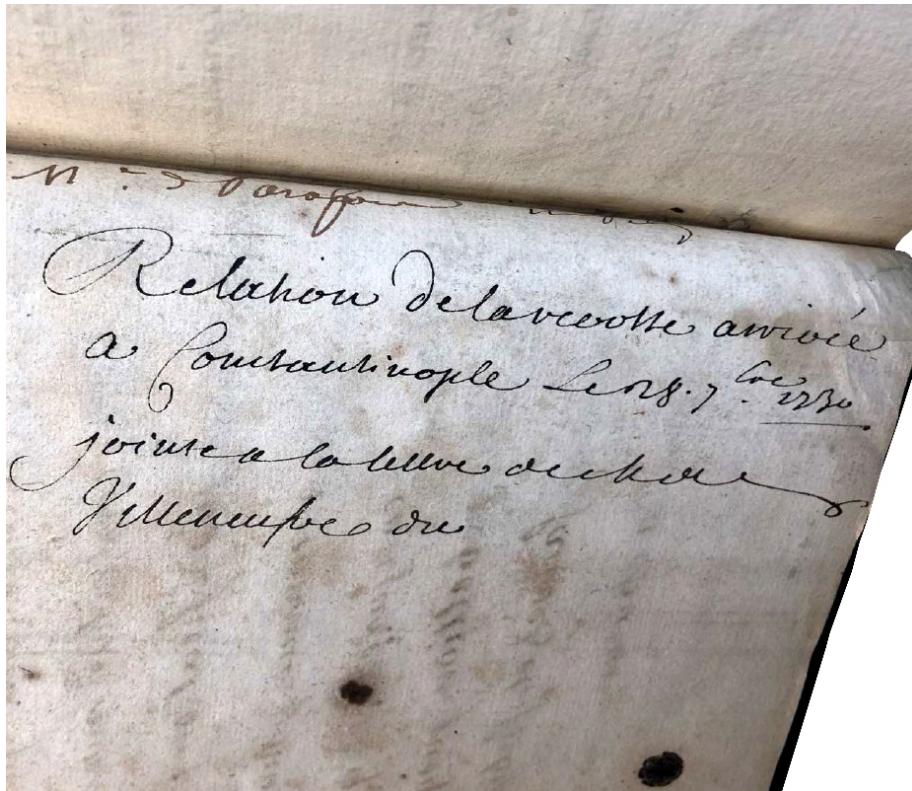


Figure 1: The recto of the last folio of the French MS entitled *Revolte de Constantinople*. The note reads: *Relation de la revolte arrivée a Constantinople le 28 septembre 1730. Jointe à la lettre de Mr de Villeneufve du [The date is lacking]*.

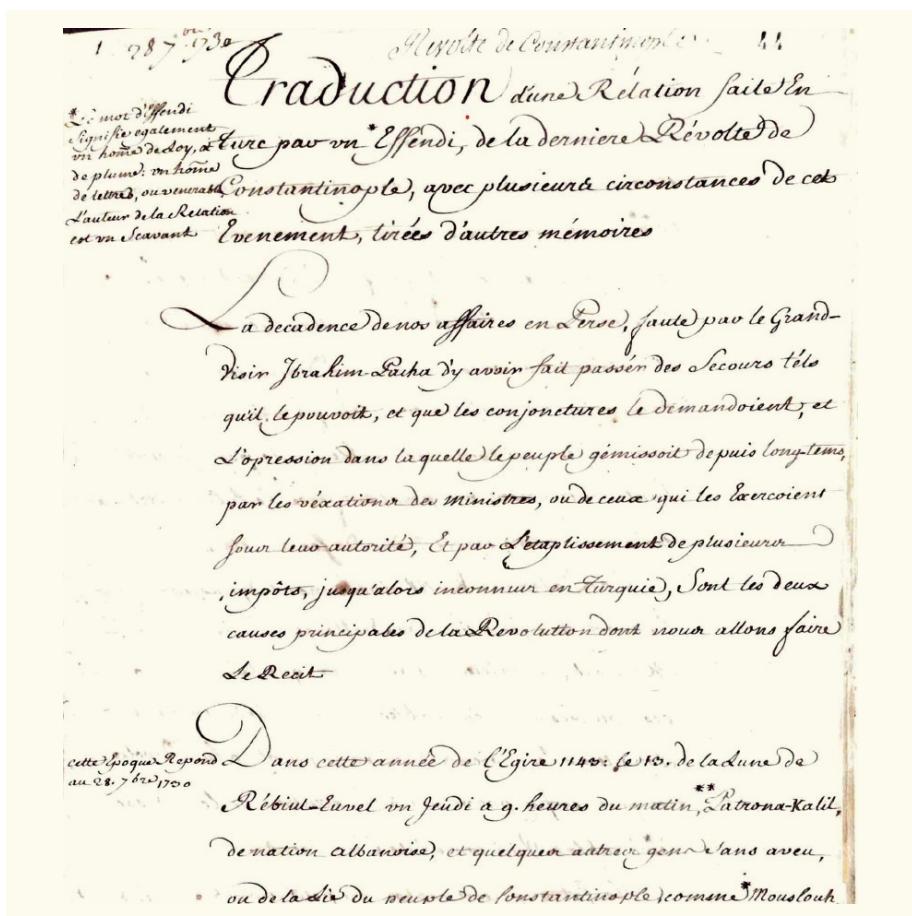


Figure 2: The first folio of the MS entitled *Revolte de Constantinople*.

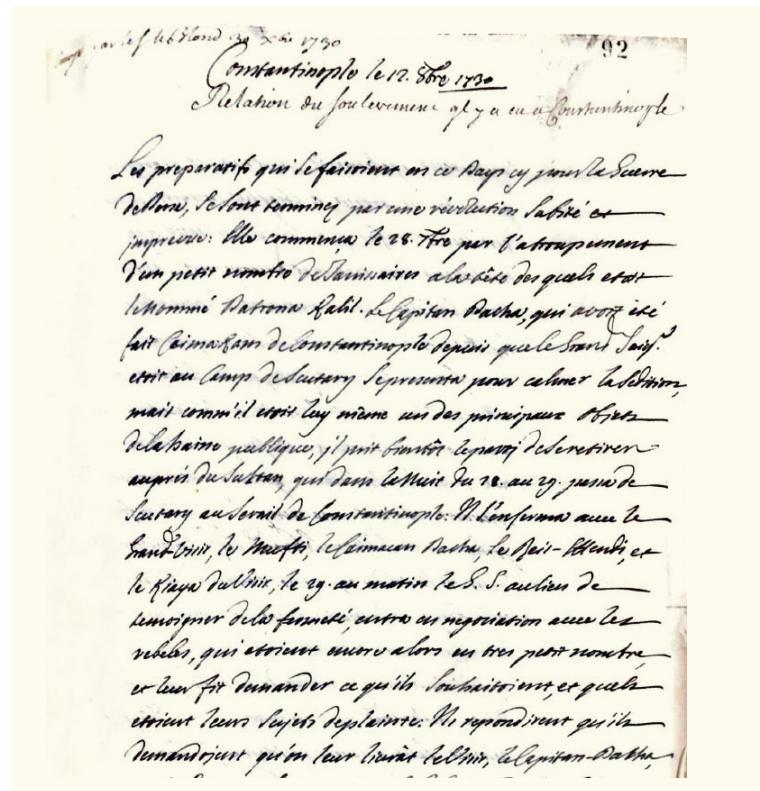
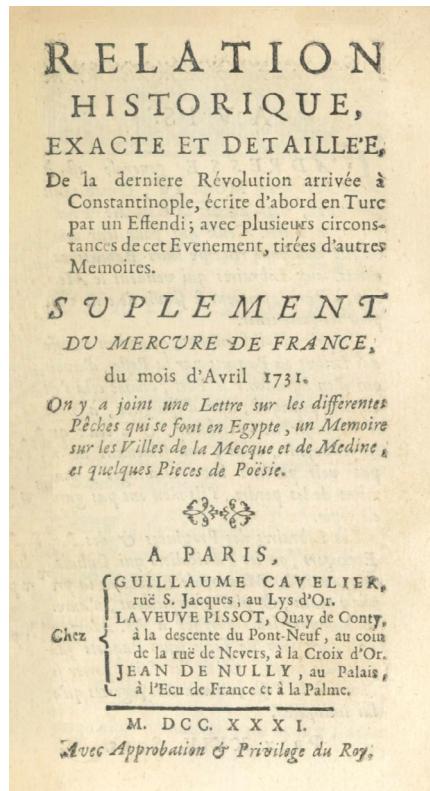
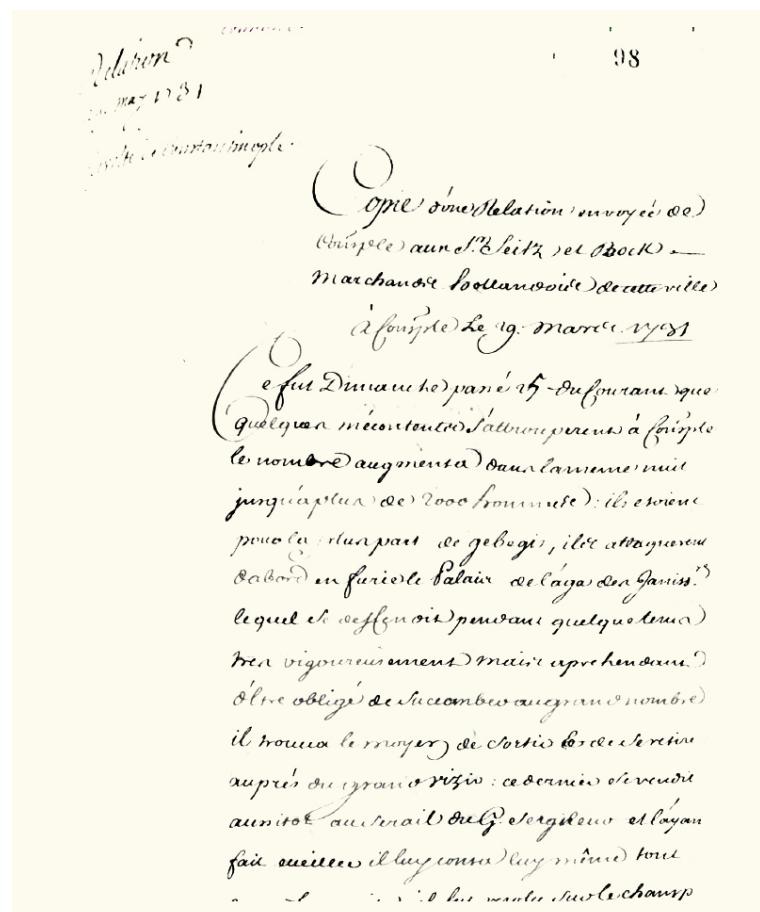


Figure 3: The first page of the supplement of *Le Mercure de France* published in April 1731. (above).

Figure 4: The copy of the report sent to Paris by Jean-François Le Blond, the Consul of France in Venice. The note reads: *Envoyé par le S[ieur] Le Blond 30.*

Figure 5: The copy of the report attached to the letter of the French Consul of Aleppo Jean-Jacques de Monthenault and sent to the Dutch merchants in Aleppo. The note reads as follows: *Copie d'une relation envoyée de Constantinople aux S[ieur]s Seitz et Bock marchands hollandois de cette ville. à Constantinople le 29 mars 1731.*



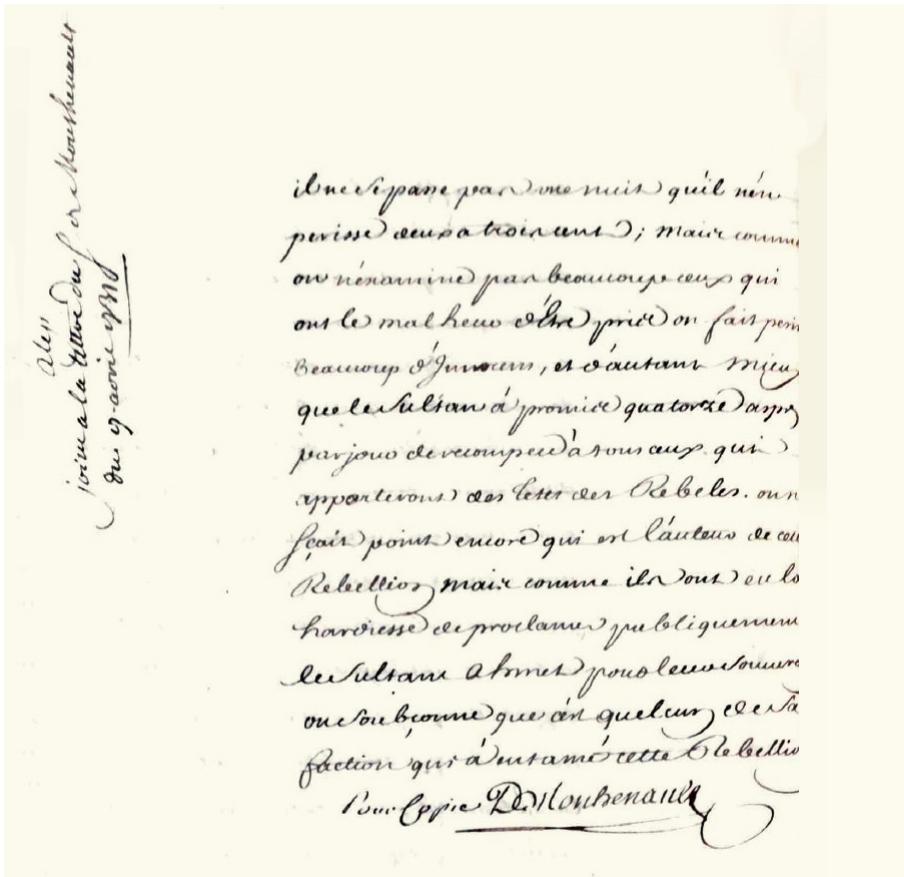


Figure 6: The note left on the page 100a of the CADCL compilation. The note reads: alep. Joint à la lettre du S[ieur] de Monthenault du 9 avril 1731.

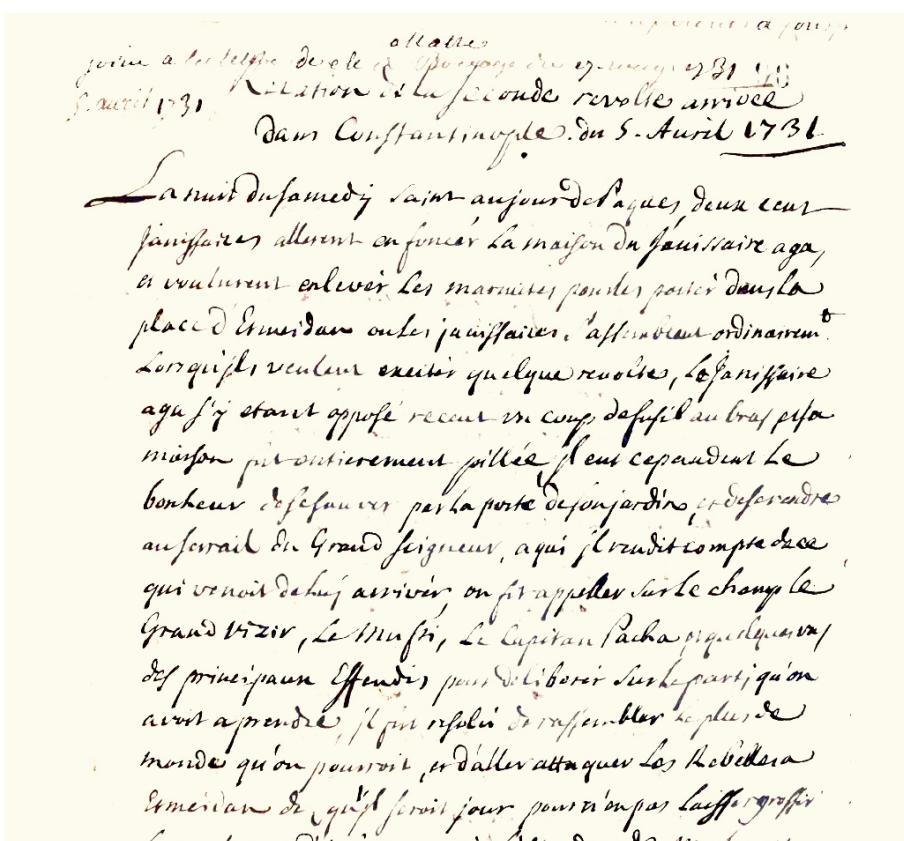


Figure 7: The copy of a report drawn on the second attempt of revolt. The note reads: Jointe à la lettre de M. de Bocage du 27 mai 1731. Relation de la seconde révolte arrivée dans Constantinople du 5 avril 1731.