

# THE VIENNESE ARMENIANS IN THE WAR OF THE HOLY LEAGUE (1683–1699)

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## ABSTRACT

This article engages with the oft-studied War of the Holy League, or “Great Turkish War” (1683–1699), from a perspective that has found little attention thus far. Studying Armenian actors in Vienna whose biographies were inextricably linked with a war that was not primarily “theirs”, but who still contributed considerably to the Habsburg war effort against the so-called “arch-enemy”, diversifies the overall picture of this period. Armenians were members of the diplomatic mission of Count Alberto Caprara, who was ordered to Istanbul in the wake of the second Ottoman siege of Vienna. Armenians also were spies by order of the Viennese Imperial War Council and brought valuable information on the Ottoman war preparations to Vienna, and even proposed and executed a sabotaging mission in the beleaguered Ottoman stronghold Buda, a part of modern Hungarian Budapest, in 1686. This article concentrates on the reasons why the Armenians engaged in this war and brings forth four relevant factors: Armenians had to deal with unfavorable surroundings in Vienna that forced them to make themselves indispensable to the court or other influential persons in order not to be exiled or arrested; they were embedded in a network of other Armenians and influential members of the court who proposed to them risky war-related undertakings; they got promises that they would receive large fortunes; and they were drawn to engage in the war for the sake of a common Catholic faith.

## INTRODUCTION

The second Ottoman siege of Vienna 1683 and the ensuing War of the Holy League of 1683 till 1699 – sometimes called the “Great Turkish War”, although the name is problematic – have attracted considerable attention.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This article is an abridged and re-worked excerpt of my unpublished Masters thesis, *Armenier\_innen im „Großen Türkenkrieg“. Ihre Rollen, Involvement und Bedeutung in mikrogeschichtlicher Untersuchung, mit Fokus auf die Jahre 1683–90*. University of Vienna (Vienna 2024).

It is futile to give a list of published books or articles on the War of the Holy League and its campaigns and sieges. The bibliography of the Ottoman sieges by Walter Sturminger that lists all works published until 1951 fills already a whole book (Walter Sturminger, *Bibliographie und Ikonographie der Türkenbelagerungen Wiens 1529 und 1683*, Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Neuere Geschichte Österreichs

The war facilitated Austria's rise to being one of the European great powers and marked the beginning of Ottoman decline and considerable loss of territory; likewise, the war was the last time Ottoman armies could bring the  *jihad*  to Central Europe. Within this war, Armenians played an important role on both sides, but only a very few studies have tried to bring in their perspective. With regard to Armenians living in Vienna and taking the side of the Habsburg Empire in this conflict, the attention of these studies was also partly diverted to their role in establishing the first Viennese coffeehouses.<sup>2</sup> While these studies have minutely reconstructed the biographies of the relevant Armenian actors, it was not their aim to surpass this micro-historical perspective and ask why these Armenians were involved in the war at all. The following pages will give an answer to this question.

Studying the War of the Holy League from an Armenian perspective makes it possible not only to diversify the overall picture of the war, but also to firmly place it in New Diplomatic History. New Diplomatic History recognizes foreign relations as a political field shaped by various actors, defines decisions as actor-made and examines their genesis in the interplay of these actors.<sup>3</sup> Approaches rooted in New Diplomatic History abandon earlier concepts such as "international", which are not practicable for the early

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41, Graz, Cologne, 1955). Two older English books on the second Ottoman siege and events prior and after that which are still useful are John Stoye, *The Siege of Vienna*, London, 1964; and Thomas M. Barker, *Double Eagle and Crescent. Vienna's Second Turkish Siege and Its Historical Setting*, Albany, NY, 1967.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Teply, *Die Einführung des Kaffees in Wien. Georg Franz Koltschitzky, Johannes Diodato, Isaak de Luca*, Forschungen und Beiträge zur Wiener Stadtgeschichte 6, Vienna, 1980. Apart from his monography, Teply wrote some articles published in *Handes Amsorya* which detailed the lives of relevant Armenians even further: Karl Teply, "Gabriel aus Şebinkarahisar. Ein Abenteurer im Dienst großer Politik. Der Kundschafter und Saboteur Gabriel aus Şebinkarahisar und die Wiedereroberung Ofens 1686", *Handes Amsorya* 87:1973, col. 215-44; Karl Teply, "Kalust Nurveli Shahin. Ein armenischer Geheimagent aus dem Großen Türkenkrieg 1683-1699", *Handes Amsorya* 87:1973, col. 331-72; Karl Teply, "Johannes Diodato. Der Begründer des Wiener Kaffeehauses", *Handes Amsorya* 88:1974, col. 87-106, 233-248, 533-44 (*Handes Amsorya* 89:1975, col. 107-24, 227-52, 357-70, 469-502), *Handes Amsorya* 91:1977, col. 253-78.

<sup>3</sup> Hillard von Thiessen and Christian Windler, "Einleitung: Außenbeziehungen in akteurszentrierter Perspektive", *Akteure der Außenbeziehungen. Netzwerke und Interkulturalität im Historischen Wandel*, ed. Hillard von Thiessen and Christian Windler, Externa. Geschichte der Außenbeziehungen in neuen Perspektiven 1, Cologne, Weimar, Vienna, 2010, pp. 3-5.

modern period anyway, and attempt to write a “transnational” history.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the concept of politics itself is defined much more broadly. Social, institutional, economic and cultural factors and practices are included in the analysis. Traders, missionaries or transculturally active families are understood as actors who shape foreign policy and their interconnections and networks are examined, as is the increasing involvement of women in foreign relations.<sup>5</sup> Interpreters are also of particular importance, and their influence on policy-making towards the Ottoman Empire was examined in more detail. Their activity was understood as a “transcultural decoding of signals” and their translations were thus ascribed interpretative power.<sup>6</sup>

These theoretical impulses are of great interest for the study of Armenians involved in the War of the Holy League, as these Armenians were also transcultural actors traveling to and fro in the Ottoman Empire and Christian principalities in Europe; also, they were active as traders, interpreters and scouts and were able to shape the foreign relations of both empires to a certain extent. Within this article I will focus primarily on the Viennese Armenians and only touch on those in Poland and the Ottoman Empire, for certain specifics of the context in Vienna are detrimental to a larger comparison and the reasons these Armenians were involved in the war are to a certain degree only applicable in the Viennese case, but the theoretical considerations are also valid for the Armenians engaged in the conflict on the Ottoman side.

The two most prominent Viennese Armenians in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, whose biographies are inextricably linked to the War of the Holy League, were Johannes Diodato<sup>7</sup> and Kalust Nurveli Shahin; the latter because of his descent from a Persian-Armenian family was also known as “doctor

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<sup>4</sup> Hillard von Thiesen, “Außenbeziehungen und Diplomatie in der Frühen Neuzeit und im Übergang zur Moderne: Ansätze der Forschung – Debatten – Periodisierungen”, *Internationale Geschichte in Theorie und Praxis*, ed. Barbara Haider-Wilson, William D. Godsey, and Wolfgang Mueller, Vienna, 2017, p. 145.

<sup>5</sup> Thiesen and Windler, “Einleitung”, p. 6; Thiesen, “Außenbeziehungen und Diplomatie”, p. 161.

<sup>6</sup> Wolfgang Kaiser, “Politik und Geschäft: Interkulturelle Beziehungen Zwischen Muslimen und Christen im Mittelmeerraum”, *Akteure der Außenbeziehungen. Netzwerke und Interkulturalität im Historischen Wandel*, ed. Hillard von Thiesen and Christian Windler, Externa. Geschichte der Außenbeziehungen in neuen Perspektiven 1, Cologne, Weimar, Vienna, 2010, p. 312; E. Natalie Rothman, *The Dragoman Renaissance. Diplomatic Interpreters and the Routes of Orientalism*, Ithaca, London, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Diodato is only known by his Italian name. In Armenian, his name can be approximately reconstructed as Hovhannes Astowacatur, although different variants of the surname exist and are to be taken into consideration.

persianus”. Both Diodato and Shahin were traders, members of diplomatic missions or engaged in diplomatic encounters, and e spies for the Habsburg Empire. Their greatest merit was to implement a spying mission in the Ottoman stronghold Buda in 1686 and to instigate an explosion of the powder magazine in the fortress. Thus, they fit well within the framework of New Diplomatic History.



Map showing Hungary and the Habsburg-Ottoman border in the 17th century. The exact boundary changed a few times during this century in the course of wars until the War of the Holy League, when Hungary was completely conquered by Habsburg forces. The area denoted in white represents the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman Hungary. The Habsburg lands (Austria and Western Hungary) are marked in dark grey. Light gray is the County of Transylvania, which was an Ottoman vassal. (F. W. Putzger, *Historischer Atlas*, Vienna 1963, p. 83. Map reworked by J.B.)

The remainder of this article will proceed in neither a biographical nor a chronological way,<sup>8</sup> but devote its sections to four different reasons that account for and explain Viennese Armenian involvement in the War of the Holy League. Each section will give examples and by doing so return to Diodato’s (and partly Shahin’s) life and their actions, thereby allowing us to get a better picture of the two Armenians and other Armenians with whom they engaged. The first section will look at the background of the Armenian actors in Vienna and describe the upheavals in the Armenian highlands at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> and especially the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century that caused

<sup>8</sup> For studies proceeding in these ways see the aforementioned works by Teply.

mass migration, partly of a forced nature. Following this, the article turns to the time of the War of the Holy League and the years prior to 1683. Section 2 analyzes the unfavorable surroundings for Armenians in Vienna, how they were perceived and which persecutions they had to fear. Section 3 proceeds to study personal networks between Armenians and their contacts with members of the Imperial Court and especially the Imperial War Council (*Hofkriegsrat*), which proves to be the most important factor for understanding Armenian involvement in the war. Section 4 focuses on personal profits the Armenians sought to get for their services, while section 5 finally turns to the aspect of religion and the role it played in facilitating Armenian involvement on the side of the Habsburg Empire. Following this, the last section brings in some remarks about Armenian involvement in the Ottoman and Polish armies.

## BACKGROUND OF ARMENIAN ACTORS

The involvement of Armenians in the War of the Holy League – especially of those Armenians living in Vienna – is inexplicable, at least to a certain degree, if one does not consider the backgrounds of the relevant actors and their families. It is remarkable that of the most prominent Armenians in Vienna, at least one – Kalust Nurveli Shahin – was a descendant of the Armenians displaced at the beginning of the seventeenth century. As for the others, they were certainly affected by the large waves of migration and, even if their family's history cannot be reconstructed in all details, kinship with the displaced is very likely.

The beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was a period of major upheaval in the Armenian Highlands. The Ottoman Empire underwent an era of enduring crisis, especially in eastern Anatolia<sup>9</sup> and the western part of the Armenian Highlands known as Lesser Armenia (P'ok'r Hajk'), which culminated in what has been called the "Great Anatolian Rebellion" of 1591 to 1611.<sup>10</sup> This rebellion of mostly mercenaries (*sekbanlar*), but also other armed men who organized themselves in bands of brigands and robbers, is also called the Celali revolt, because the insurgents drew their historical legitimacy from the

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<sup>9</sup> By "eastern Anatolia" I do not mean the modern Eastern Anatolia Region which is an administrative unit of the modern Turkish republic that was created only in 1923 and encompasses large areas of the Armenian Highlands that were historically never seen as being part of Anatolia. Rather I use the term for describing the eastern part of the historical region of Anatolia that borders Lesser Armenia.

<sup>10</sup> William J. Griswold, *The Great Anatolian Rebellion, 1000–1020 / 1591–1611*, Islamkundliche Untersuchungen, Berlin, 1983, p. 83. ""

uprising of Sheikh Celal in Amasya at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>11</sup> The Celali revolts have been variously explained as a religiously deviant movement with connections to the Shi'ites of Persia, as being caused by widespread economic distress and the collapse of the village economy, which could also be connected to climatic changes in the 16<sup>th</sup> century during the “Little Ice Age”, or as being fed upon by rivalries of local magnates who hired mercenaries. The *sekbanlar*, as another explanation has it, were seen as deserters and excluded from the Ottoman army; thus, they formed armed gangs to prevent further persecution.<sup>12</sup> While the revolts can only be explained in a multicausal way, it is more important in this article to engage with the effects of the revolts.

The Celali revolts had a dramatic impact on eastern Anatolia and the Armenian Highlands, which can be easily discerned by looking at demographic parameters. The number of settlements in eastern Anatolian regions such as Amasya as well as the number of inhabitants per settlement decreased drastically.<sup>13</sup> This led to the “collapse of rural order” in Anatolia;<sup>14</sup> people left their villages and moved to cities in the region, but many migrated to the urban centers on the Bosphorus, the Aegean Sea, and the Black Sea. The migration particularly affected Armenians, who fled the brutality of the Celalis, which plundered monasteries and beat and tortured the population. The hardship described by Armenian historiographers and other Armenian sources of the time was exacerbated by extreme weather events and led to famine and even cannibalism.<sup>15</sup> Because of the increased mortality in the wake of the Celali uprisings and mass migration, the Armenian population declined drastically. The Armenian population in Tokat halved and in Sivas it even fell

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<sup>11</sup> Sam White, *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*, Studies in Environment and History, Cambridge, 2011, p. 164.

<sup>12</sup> Religion as explanation has been promoted by Griswold (esp. p. 215), but it did not persuade. The economic dimension is most prominent in the works of Mustafa Akdağ. His arguments are summed up in English by M. A. Cook, *Population Pressure in Rural Anatolia. 1450–1600*, London Oriental Series 27, London, New York, Toronto, 1972, pp. 30–42. The other explanatory factors can be found in: Halil İnalcık, “Military and Fiscal Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1600–1700”, *Archivum Ottomanicum* 6:1980, pp. 292–97; White; Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire. Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, New York, 2010, 144f.

<sup>13</sup> Oktay Özel, *The Collapse of Rural Order in Ottoman Anatolia. Amasya 1576–1643*, The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage 61, Leiden, 2016, pp. 89–133.

<sup>14</sup> The term is used by Özel in the abovementioned book.

<sup>15</sup> Henry Shapiro, *The Rise of the Western Armenian Diaspora in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire. From Refugee Crisis to Renaissance in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century*, Edinburgh, 2022, pp. 47–59; Griswold, 49f.

from 2000 to 600 households.<sup>16</sup> The migration, which has been termed the “Great Armenian Flight”, led to Armenians settling in such diverse places as Egypt, Rumelia, the Crimea, Poland, the Black Sea coast or Belgrade.<sup>17</sup> Most, however, moved to the Aegean coast and the Bosphorus. The poet Azaria wrote in his history of the Celali revolts that “Istanbul became very full”.<sup>18</sup> His laments are supported by the numbers presented by the Armenian traveler Simēon Lehac’i, who noted that before the flight there were only 80 Armenian households in Istanbul, but after the migration 40,000 new Armenian households were registered.<sup>19</sup>

The massive migration of Armenians thus led to the establishment of a Western Armenian diaspora around the straits, the Marmara Sea and the Aegean; Istanbul especially became the focal point of Western Armenian culture. The newly arrived were often forced to find their places in unfavorable surroundings, where they came into conflict with the Ottoman authorities and the Greek-orthodox population (e.g., over the rights to build a church).<sup>20</sup> Also in the Armenian community itself animosities between those already established in Istanbul and the newcomers, often economically more prosperous than the former, escalated.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the newly arrived were forced to a more competitive way of life. Increasingly mobile and risk-taking merchants, in due course, found their way to other areas as well. They formed the backbone of the merchants in Aleppo<sup>22</sup>, and they also went to the Holy Roman Empire and Vienna.

Taking a step back, it is also necessary to pay attention to similarly decisive events in the Armenian Highlands that happened at the same time as the Celali revolts. Between 1603 and 1618 the Ottoman-Safavid War – one in a successive range of clashes between the two neighboring empires – was fought primarily in the Caucasian borderlands. Shah Abbas I had wished to restore the Safavid Empire to past glory and, after consolidating his position and defeating tribes to the north, he took up hostilities against the powerful neighbor. But the war went not as Abbas I had assumed, as the Ottoman

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<sup>16</sup> Simēon Lehac’i, *The Travel Accounts of Simēon of Poland*, ed. and transl. George Bournoutian, Costa Mesa, CA, 2007, 168f.

<sup>17</sup> Shapiro, pp. 65–67.

<sup>18</sup> Cited in Shapiro, p. 65.

<sup>19</sup> Lehac’i, p. 33.

<sup>20</sup> Shapiro, pp. 87–94, 107–11, 113–18.

<sup>21</sup> Hagop Levon Barsoumian, *The Armenian Amiras of the Ottoman Empire*, Yerevan, 2006, p. 33, <http://digilib.aua.am/book/2655/3152/22887>. These two groups are called *nersec’i* (insiders) and *drsec’i* (outsiders) respectively.

<sup>22</sup> Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World. The Roots of Sectarianism*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization, New York, 2001, pp. 71–80.

general Sinan Paşa put up a considerable army and drove the Safavids back and out of the central Armenian Highlands.<sup>23</sup> In this phase of the war, the Safavids resorted to scorched-earth tactics. These tactics were a common feature of the Ottoman-Safavid conflicts, in which both sides used them repeatedly and caused economic crises and even complete destruction of certain towns.<sup>24</sup> In 1604, Abbas I commissioned the deportation of Armenians, especially those living in the city Julfa (Armenian *J~uğā*) on the river Araxes, who had been engaged in the silk trade for over a century.<sup>25</sup> This deportation has been convincingly explained as an initially improvised action in connection with prior scorched-earth tactics, but one of which soon the Safavids took advantage.<sup>26</sup> The Julfa Armenians were in subsequent years resettled in Isfahan, where they formed their own town fittingly named New Julfa (Armenian *Nor J~uğā*). Nowadays it is a city quarter of Isfahan. Other Armenians, who were similarly deported, often faced a much worse destiny than the 5000 to 10,000 resettled Julfanians, and many died during the deportation.<sup>27</sup> The fact that the Julfanians received better treatment is a sign that the Safavids soon realized the positive impact of the resettlement on their economy. Under the Shah's patronage, the Armenians could continue their commercial activity. They monopolized the Persian silk trade and established trade networks in the Mediterranean, Western Europe, Russia, and even South East Asia and the Americas.<sup>28</sup>

Both the Celali revolts and the deportation of Armenians in the course of the Ottoman-Safavid War triggered the establishment of a commercial elite, highly mobile, risk-taking and assertive. Members of this commercial elite were able to move effortlessly between different Christian and Islamic

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<sup>23</sup> David Blow, *Shah Abbas. The Ruthless King Who Became an Iranian Legend*, London, New York, 2009, pp. 75-80.

<sup>24</sup> Edmund M. Herzog, "The Rise of the Julfa Merchants in the Late Sixteenth Century", *Safavid Persia. The History and Politics of an Islamic Society*, ed. Charles Melville, Pembroke Persian Papers 4, London, New York, 1996, p. 309.

<sup>25</sup> Sebouh Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean. The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa*, The California World History Library, Berkeley, CA, 2011, pp. 26-34; Vazken S. Ghougassian, "Julfa i. Safavid Period", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2009, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/julfa-i-safavid-period>; Dickran Kouymjian, "Armenia from 1375 to 1604", in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 2, *Foreign Dominion to Statehood. The Fifteenth Century to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian, New York, 2004, 20f.

<sup>26</sup> Aslanian, pp. 33-36.

<sup>27</sup> Andrew J. Newman, *Safavid Iran. Rebirth of a Persian Empire*, London, 2009, p. 61.

<sup>28</sup> Aslanian, Ghougassian, Herzog.



cultures and domains, often spoke several languages and maintained far-reaching networks. They served in different positions in various courts all over Europe and could be active as mediators in a variety of relationships.<sup>29</sup> In Vienna especially, Armenians were present in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The number of the Viennese Armenians was never exceedingly high, hardly surpassing 30 or 40 people; however, they proved to be extraordinarily important for the Viennese court.<sup>30</sup> Some of them were diplomatic couriers between Istanbul and Vienna (*türkische Hofkuriere*) and were thus in a close relationship with the Imperial War Council, which needed their services.<sup>31</sup> Diodato and Shahin were of even greater importance. Their integration into the War of the Holy League is partly a logical consequence of this.

#### UNFAVORABLE SURROUNDINGS IN VIENNA

The situation for Armenians in Vienna was by and large unfavorable, for they were met with various stereotypes, allegations, and prosecutions. Negative perceptions shaped to a large extent the realities of the life of Armenians in Vienna. Being perceived as outsiders who clad themselves differently, used different and for the common Viennese incomprehensible languages, and wrote in non-readable scripts, they were often accused of secretly working for the Ottomans. Armenians who were active for the Imperial War Council were repeatedly confronted with mistrust. The fact that Armenians conducted diplomatic courier services, gathered information and travelled often between Vienna and Istanbul gave rise to the suspicion that they were double agents who informed not only the War Council but also the Ottomans. Even years before Johannes Diodato got the official mission to form an espionage network, he was accused by the imperial resident in Istanbul, Philipp Beris, of having sheltered another Armenian, who was in Beris's eyes an Ottoman spy, and of having given him valuable information. Beris wrote in 1671 to Montecuccoli, then president of the War Council:

Finally [...], it should not be concealed what a dangerous matter it is with those Rascians who are staying and settling in Vienna, who obtain *Hofffreiheit* and protective decrees under a false pretext, and are nothing but spies; it recently happened that a renegade Armenian from Galata named Menes stayed in Vienna for a long time with another Rascian or Armenian, [...] whose name is Johanes Deodato, and who pretends to be a

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<sup>29</sup> Aslanian, p. 66.

<sup>30</sup> Karl Teply, "Ein vergessenes Kapitel Wiener Geschichte: Die erste armenische Kolonie in Wien", *Handes Amsorya* 87:1973, col. 459-90.

<sup>31</sup> Dóra Kerekes, "Im Auftrag des Kaisers", *Armenier im östlichen Europa. Eine Anthologie*, ed. Tamara Ganjalyan, Stefan Troebst, and Bálint Kovács, Vienna, Cologne, Weimar, 2018, pp. 308-31; Teply, *Einführung*.

Catholic; since he spies enough, this Deodato procured a passport for Menes [...], with which passport he traveled from there to Rome, and afterwards again to Venice; and arriving here via Ragusa, now [he] walks here [in Istanbul] like a Turk and is called Mahomet; [he] knows more about Vienna than someone who has lived there for 10 years.<sup>32</sup>

Apart from the specific accusations against Diodato, which had no repercussions for him,<sup>33</sup> this passage is remarkable for two reasons: First, Beris transmits anti-Armenian stereotypes and generalizations. He regards all Armenians as being spies (for the Ottomans) and as having obtained the *Hofffreiheit* – which means the right for merchants to supply the imperial court with certain goods and not being subject to the regulations applicable to civic merchants<sup>34</sup> – by fraud. Furthermore, in his eyes Armenians were only pretending to be Catholics. Second, Beris equates Armenians and Rascians (*Raizen*), even though the latter were Orthodox Serbs or – sometimes the term was used more broadly – Orthodox Southern Slavs. The difficult religious landscape in south-eastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire and the different religious affiliation of Armenians were hard for the Viennese to understand and – in this case – also for the imperial resident, who had more knowledge about the region and its inhabitants than the common German. This equalization of Armenians and Rascians occurs frequently in 17<sup>th</sup> century sources.

The most prominent equalization is the so-called “Raizenpatent” of 1678. This decree was issued by the Lower Austrian administration with recourse to the emperor and expelled all Rascians from Vienna.<sup>35</sup> The decree provided exceptions for only three of those “Rascians”, namely Johannes Diodato, Constantin Ciriak and Franz Georg Koltschitzky – or “Franciscii Georgii Goldtschüz”, as the source reads. The latter served as scout during the second Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1683. All three were spared exile because of their importance as merchants. Diodato and Ciriak had *Hofffreiheit*, and Koltschitzky had worked as translator for the “Erste privilegierte Orientalische Kompagnie”, an influential merchant society that traded primarily with the

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<sup>32</sup> Beris to Montecuccoli, Belgrade, March 31, 1671. OeStA Vienna, HHStA, Turcica I 142, 1671/1–4, fol. 179v–180r.

<sup>33</sup> Teply, *Einführung*, p. 80.

<sup>34</sup> Felix Czeike, *Historisches Lexikon Wien in 5 Bänden*, vol. 3, *Ha-La*, Wien: Kremayr & Scheriau, 1994, 228f.

<sup>35</sup> Walter Sturminger, “Die Kundschafter zur Zeit der zweiten Türkenbelagerung Wiens im Jahre 1683”, *Festschrift zur Feier des 200jährigen Bestandes des Haus-, Hof und Staatsarchivs*, ed. Leo Santifaller, vol. 2, Vienna, 1951, p. 362.

Ottoman Empire.<sup>36</sup> The former two were both Armenians, and as for Koltschitzky, his Armenian-ness was postulated by historians, although it cannot be fully proven.<sup>37</sup> Of the other persons named in the decree, who were expelled from Vienna, at least two were confirmed Armenians (Peter Georgi and Ahsan Michal), two others presumably as well (Gregori Isaac, Daniel Riehs).<sup>38</sup> All in all, the decree mentions more Armenians than non-Armenians, but all of them are summed up as being Rascians.

The expulsion of Armenians from Vienna was thus a real threat. Even though Armenians could soon again settle in the imperial capital, be merchants or serve coffee, their situation in Vienna was never fully secure. Diodato, who had been spared in 1678, was still reminded that he could also be expelled if he continued housing possible spies and upholding “suspicious correspondence”; “in the adverse case he would be ipso facto deprived of his *Hofffreiheit* and he would be, like the others, sent away from here”.<sup>39</sup> Kalust Nurveli Shahin had not been in Vienna when the decree was issued, only arriving there a few months afterwards. Still the prospect of being exiled must have troubled him. Some years later, in 1684, he was put on trial and barely escaped conviction.<sup>40</sup> In 1689–90 Diodato faced the same destiny and was spared only due to the emperor, who trusted him because of his merits.<sup>41</sup> This is all the more important because it showcases how Armenians could come under intense pressure, be expelled, imprisoned or even sentenced to death.

Two other points merit attention. First of all, due to their assertive attitude, Viennese Armenians frequently came into conflict. They quarreled both with other Armenians and with non-Armenians. Their proneness to litigation did not improve their general position.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, previous allies and patrons could turn into enemies, as happened with the imperial

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<sup>36</sup> Teply, *Einführung*, p. 12.

<sup>37</sup> Karl Teply, “Georg Franz Koltschitzky und Georg Thomas Michaelowitz – Abschied von eingewurzelten Legenden”, *Museum Perchtoldsdorf*, Perchtoldsdorf, 1973, pp. 179–220; Teply, *Einführung*, 7f, 15f; Isabella Ackerl, *Von Türken belagert – von Christen entsetzt. Das belagerte Wien 1683*, Vienna, 1983, pp. 100–2.

<sup>38</sup> Teply, *Einführung*, p. 16.

<sup>39</sup> Cit. in Sturminger, “Kundschafter”, p. 362.

<sup>40</sup> Meninski to Hofkriegsrat, 1685. GLA Karlsruhe, 46/3555/194; Teply, *Einführung*, 97f.

<sup>41</sup> Hinterlassener Hofkriegsrat to Anwesender Hofkriegsrat, Vienna, 31 December 1689. OeStA Vienna, KA, HKR HR Records 70, 1690, Outgoing letters January Nr. 45, fol. 8r; OeStA Vienna, KA, HKR HR Book 384, 1690 Protocol of incoming letters, fol. 189v, 201r; Teply, *Einführung*, pp. 146–52.

<sup>42</sup> The protocols of the Hofkriegsrat, listing all incoming and outgoing letters, mention especially Diodato very often, mostly in respect to his claims and lawsuits against opponents. See also Teply, *Einführung*.

interpreter for Oriental languages, Franz de Mesgnien-Meninski, who was also responsible for organizing Habsburg espionage against the Ottoman Empire. Once Meninski fell out with Diodato and Shahin, he used every possible maneuver to damage them. Especially noteworthy are his accusations written in a 30-page-letter addressed to the War Council in 1685. He accused the two Armenians of being spies for the Ottoman enemy; concerning Shahin he even claimed him to be an Ottoman subject, a “servant of a Turk” or a “servant of the Ottoman barbarians”.<sup>43</sup> Meninski complained about Shahin’s lies, claimed that he had been counterfeiting money together with Diodato, that he was an adulterer in Ottoman Hungary and that, when Shahin had come to Vienna in 1678, he was directly involved in bringing the plague to the city. In a more general vein, he stated that Ottomans did not trust Armenians, thought of them as a “dishonorable people” and would never tell them secrets.<sup>44</sup> These accusations were completely unfounded, but it is noteworthy that Meninski, as a person who had cultivated good relations with Armenians, could switch immediately to a broad catalog of anti-Armenian accusations as soon as he came into conflict with them.

The second point of interest is that Armenians’ achievements were not acknowledged by all. Their efforts during the siege of Buda of 1686 especially were played down. Some, such as the Venetian ambassador to Vienna, Federico Cornaro, did not believe that the Armenians could transmit important information or that they could ever be trusted, because they were disloyal.<sup>45</sup> Cornaro did know what Armenians had planned and which strategically relevant information they transmitted, but he still chose to distrust them. When the Armenians blew up the ammunition’s depot in Buda, most of the imperial soldiers present, and even the generals Charles V of Lorraine, Max Emanuel of Bavaria and Louis of Bade, did not believe that it was the Armenians’ achievement; rather they speculated a cannonball had hit the depot.<sup>46</sup> Several pamphlets<sup>47</sup> and even modern historians<sup>48</sup> took up their interpretation.

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<sup>43</sup> Meninski to Hofkriegsrat, 1685. GLA Karlsruhe, 46/3555/194, fol. 3r, 8v.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., fol. 2v.

<sup>45</sup> Federico Cornaro, *Berichte des Venetianischen Gesandten Friedrich von Cornaro Über die Belagerung und Rückeroberung Ofens im Jahre 1686. Avvisi del cavaliere Federico Cornaro ambasciatore Veneto circa l’assedio e la presa della fortezza di Buda nell’ anno 1686*, ed. Sigmund von Bubics, Budapest, 1891, p. 214, <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/view/bsb11472148?page=1>.

<sup>46</sup> Copy of a letter of Max Emanuel of Bavaria, 22 July 1686. GLA Karlsruhe, 46/3559/62; Copy of a letter of Louis of Bade, 24 July 1686. GLA Karlsruhe, 46/3559/63; Charles of Lorraine, *Lotharingiai Károly Hadinaplója Buda Visszafoglalásáról 1686. Magjelent Buda Ostromának 300. Évfordulójára* [War

Given these premises, it is clear that Armenians were under a constant pressure to assert themselves and prove their value to the imperial court to escape exile or trial, while at the same time their achievements were hardly acknowledged. These unfavorable surroundings were of great importance; however, they do not explain completely why Armenians engaged in the war; other factors are of equal importance.

## PERSONAL NETWORKS AND INTEGRATION OF ARMENIANS INTO THE IMPERIAL COURT

Personal networks are a very important factor for understanding Armenian involvement in the War of the Holy League. In fact, the most important Armenians involved in the Habsburg war effort were all drawn into the conflict at the instigation of others. Especially important are the relationships of the Armenians with members of the imperial court.

Johannes Diodato already had contacts with the imperial court before 1678; his patrons there helped him, without doubt, to survive the “Raizenpatent” unscathed. No later than 1670 Diodato proposed a lucrative deal to the President of the Imperial Chamber (*Hofkammer*), Ludwig Georg Count Sinzendorf, and the Inspector of the Vienna Mint, Johann Gabriel von Selb. Diodato promised to procure silver from the Ottoman Empire with the help of Rascians and to deliver it exclusively to the Vienna Mint. Both Sinzendorf and Selb agreed and felt that this would be of great benefit to the

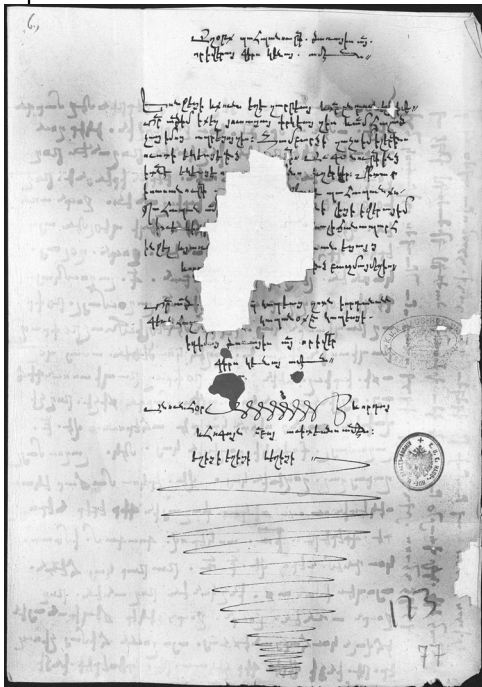
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*diary of Charles of Lorraine on the recapture of Buda in 1686, published for the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the siege of Buda*], Budapest, 1986, p. 346; Cornaro, p. 223.

<sup>47</sup> *An Historical Description of the Glorious Conquest of the City of Buda, the Capital City of the Kingdom of Hungary, by the Victorious Arms of the Thrice Illustrious and Invincible Emperor Leopold I, under the Conduct of His Most Serene Highness, the Duke of Lorraine, and the Elector of Bavaria*, London, 1686, p. 34, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2264208956/13191091/>; *Diarium Einer Kurtzen und Warhafftigen Relation Alles Dessen / was sich bey Belagerung und Eroberung der Haupt-Statt und Vestung Ofen / Und kurz hernach zwischen den Christlichen und Türckischen Armeen von tag zu tag begeben* (1686), p. 19, <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/details/bsb11190300>; Casimiro Freschot, *Ristretto dell'istoria d'Ungheria, E singolarmente le cose occorseui sotto il Regno dell'Augusto Leopoldo sino alla trionfante prea di Buda*, Bologna, 1686, p. 442.

<sup>48</sup> Freiherr Philipp Röder von Diersburg, *Des Markgrafen Ludwig Wilhelm von Baden Feldzüge wider die Türken*, vol. 1, Karlsruhe, 1839, pp. 198-204; Horst Glassl, “Der bayerische Anteil an der Eroberung Budapests im Jahre 1686”, *Ungarn-Jahrbuch* 7, 1976, p. 128; Jean Béranger, “Le siège de Bude de 1686”, *Dix-septième siècle* 229, No. 4:2005, p. 601.

emperor.<sup>49</sup> Bringing silver to Vienna had been primarily a Jewish responsibility, but in 1669 Emperor Leopold I had expelled the Jews from Vienna,<sup>50</sup> thus leaving a gap that Diodato sought to fill. In the following years, he purportedly imported 80 million marks in silver, although he could not deliver as much as was needed to ensure regular operation of the Viennese mint.<sup>51</sup> Still he rose to importance and became a relevant merchant with Hoffreiheit who created a trade network between Vienna and Istanbul based on Rascian and Armenian merchants working primarily for him (but not always).<sup>52</sup> Probably due to this, Count Alberto Caprara asked Diodato to be part of his entourage when the Count got the assignment as a special diplomat for Istanbul.<sup>53</sup>



One of the espionage letters written by Gabriel Shebin in 1686 showing the originally visible letters in black ink and the invisible ink in brown. When Diodato made the latter visible by using a brazier, this caused holes in the document (Source: OeStA Vienna, HHStA, Hungarica, Misc. 427-32, fol. 123)

<sup>49</sup> Diodato to Emperor Joseph I, probably 1705. WStLA Vienna, Alte Registratur/Old Registry, A1 – Consolidated records: 70/1710 [henceforth Diodato 1705], fol. 2r.

<sup>50</sup> Barbara Staudinger, “Von Silberhändlern und Münzjuden”, *David. Jüdische Kulturzeitschrift* 68, April 2006, pp. 28-30.

<sup>51</sup> Diodato 1705, fol. 2v; Staudinger, “Von Silberhändlern und Münzjuden”, p. 30.

<sup>52</sup> One of Diodato’s ‘servants’ (as he calls them) was Kyro, of whom Diodato fell foul after 1692, because he not only found out that Kyro had not kept any records at all about the goods imported in Diodato’s name, but had even “slovenly wasted” 15,000 guilders. Diodato litigated against Kyro from around 1693 till 1701 (Diodato 1705, fol. 8; Teply, *Einführung*, 156f).

<sup>53</sup> Diodato 1705, fol. 4r.

The Caprara mission of 1682–83 was instigated to extend the peace treaty of Vasvár (1664) with the Ottoman Empire, which was due to expire. The Imperial War Council and especially its president, Hermann of Bade, were keen to prolong the peace in the East in order to turn the entire focus on Louis XIV's expansionist policy.<sup>54</sup> Thus they also chose to believe for a long time the Ottoman government's putative assurances of peace, although the Habsburg resident in Istanbul, Kunitz, and later also Caprara, warned that the grand vizier was "very determined" to wage war.<sup>55</sup> Consequently, the Caprara mission failed.<sup>56</sup>

The sources suggest that Diodato belonged to the more important members of the Caprara mission. He took part in the parade that Kunitz and Caprara had to perform prior to their first conference with the grand vizier.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, he was able to act as Caprara's informant on several occasions, using his language skills to his advantage. When the sultan summoned the watchmaker of the legation to the seraglio to repair a watch, Caprara sent Diodato with him as a translator. In the sultan's palace, Diodato was able to talk to a "nobleman of the seraglio" about the Ottomans' war plans. The latter initially said that Győr was probably the target, but informed Diodato the next day that the Grand Vizier was "making very high pretensions".<sup>58</sup> This was the first indication that Kara Mustafa was already making war plans that went beyond Győr.

Diodato learned the extent of these plans during another confidential conversation with an Ottoman court official. This court official, now serving as *kapıcıbaşı* in the palace and thus supervising the palace guard, had been a childhood friend of Diodato and was possibly also an Armenian. The *kapıcıbaşı* sent for Diodato when he and Caprara were in Edirne during the fall and winter of 1682/83. There he told him that Kara Mustafa had long been planning the attack on Vienna, and he advised him to flee the city with his family; otherwise, they could end up in slavery. Diodato immediately went

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<sup>54</sup> Barker, pp. 122, 133–35.

<sup>55</sup> Kunitz to Hofkriegsrat, Istanbul, 12 July 1681. OeStA Vienna, HHStA, Turcica I 151, 1681/4–8, fol. 80; Kunitz to Hofkriegsrat, Istanbul, 31 July 1681. OeStA Vienna, HHStA, Turcica I 151, 1681/4–8, fol. 83r; Caprara to Emperor Leopold I, Istanbul, 10 March 1682. OeStA Vienna, HHStA, Turcica I 151, 1682/5–6, fol. 15r.

<sup>56</sup> For English narratives of the Caprara mission see Stoye, *Siege of Vienna*, pp. 48–52; Barker, pp. 122–35.

<sup>57</sup> OeStA Vienna, HHStA, Turcica I 151, 1682/5–6, fol. 51, 90.

<sup>58</sup> Caprara to Emperor Leopold I, Istanbul, 16 July 1682. OeStA Vienna, HHStA, Turcica I 152, 1682/7–8, fol. 73v, 76r; Caprara to Emperor Leopold I, Istanbul, 19 October 1682. OeStA Vienna, HHStA, Turcica I 152, 1682/9–12, fol. 84r.

to inform Caprara, who passed the information in an encrypted letter to the emperor.<sup>59</sup>

These two examples show why Caprara had requested Diodato's participation in the legation. His language skills and good contacts enabled him to obtain information that Caprara or other members of the legation found difficult to access. He proved to be so valuable and reliable to Caprara that the emissary suggested on 2 May 1683 in a letter to the court to send Diodato on a special mission to Aleppo, then part of the Safavid Empire, as he spoke all the languages required for this and, being a merchant, he would probably not attract attention.<sup>60</sup> This special mission was likely part of the efforts to conclude an alliance with Safavid Persia against the Ottoman Empire;<sup>61</sup> however, Diodato was not chosen for this mission.

Caprara's patronage of the Armenian even went further than this. In May 1684 or 1685<sup>62</sup> Caprara summoned Diodato and told him the emperor requested him to send informants to Buda and Belgrade and thus to establish an espionage network. Caprara referred to Hieronymus Scalvinoni, who was imperial chamberlain, and Scalvinoni explained the Emperor's order, "you ought to send one of your men to Turkey so that this one might notify [us] here of what occurs and happens there."<sup>63</sup> Diodato did as he was instructed, and in the years afterwards the War Council issued orders that Diodato's "men", their merchant goods and letters could pass undisturbed.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, Diodato's participation in the Caprara mission was a turning point that opened the way for him directly into the War Council or even to the Emperor, who granted Diodato an audience in 1686. In fact, it seems likely that Caprara suggested Diodato as the focal point of the espionage network, once the court discussed how it should be established, for Caprara had recommended the trustworthy Armenian previously. Thus, personal relations are an important explanation for Diodato's step-by-step integration into the war efforts against the Ottoman Empire.

The espionage network established by Diodato flourished especially during the year 1686, when the Imperial War Council needed him to infiltrate Buda. By this time, Diodato was already on good terms with the president of the

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<sup>59</sup> Diodato 1705, fol. 5.

<sup>60</sup> Caprara to Emperor Leopold I, Edirne, 2 March 1683. OeStA Vienna, HHStA, Turcica I 152, 1683/1–3, fol. 131v.

<sup>61</sup> Barker, 368f.

<sup>62</sup> Diodato gives wrongly the date of May 1688, which is impossible for various reasons, the most important of which is that Buda had already been conquered in that year and Belgrade fell only a few months after May 1688.

<sup>63</sup> Diodato 1705, fol. 6.

<sup>64</sup> OeStA Vienna, KA, HKR HR Book 371, 1685 Protocol of incoming letters, fol. 333v.



Council, Hermann of Bade, who patronized him.<sup>65</sup> In any case, the failed siege of Buda in 1684 made the War Council realize that the next attack on the main Ottoman fortress in Hungary had to be better prepared and supported with a new espionage mission. Diodato knew an Armenian residing in Buda, Karakaş, who had probably already been part of his merchant network and supplied him with information previously.<sup>66</sup> Also he used for his purposes the Armenian adventurer Gabriel Shebin, who proved to be his most important helper in implementing the espionage mission. Shebin had come to Vienna in 1685 in dubious circumstances<sup>67</sup> and was probably indebted both to Diodato and Kalust Nurveli Shahin: Diodato had redeemed the Armenian when he had been arrested in Esztergom and Gabriel, once he was in Vienna, resided at Shahin's quarters and had to pay him 26 guilders for lodging.<sup>68</sup> In this problematic situation, both Diodato and Shahin proposed to him to go as a spy to Buda. Shebin's motivation for agreeing to Diodato's plan will be discussed in the section below in more detail, but at this point it is important to note that Shebin was involved in the war efforts because Diodato knew him, and that Karakaş served as an informant for the same reason.

Karakaş had refused to write spy letters personally, allegedly because he was illiterate,<sup>69</sup> but rather because he wanted to conceal his contribution to such a risky mission as much as possible. Only in this way is it explainable that Diodato even wrote that Karakaş did not know what the mission encompassed.<sup>70</sup> In reality, Karakaş helped Gabriel Shebin as much as he could; he had the necessary contacts with the officer responsible for the powder magazine, the *çorbaçı*, Ahmed Ağa, and therefore could – together with Shebin – instigate him to set fire to it.<sup>71</sup> Also the fact that Karakaş had been an informant for Diodato before and that in 1687 he agreed to go to Belgrade for another spying mission cast doubt on Karakaş's purported

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<sup>65</sup> Hermann's patronage of Armenians was met with resentments; for example, the Venetian volunteer Francesco Grimani, who fought in the siege of Buda in 1686, wrote to Cornaro that the Margrave of Bade had always supported the Armenians' projects, even though most others did not trust them at all (Cornaro, p. 225).

<sup>66</sup> Diodato 1705, fol. 7v.

<sup>67</sup> The details of Shebin's arrival in Vienna cannot be summarized here; for that purpose see Diodato to Emperor Leopold I, probably 1686. OeStA Vienna, HHStA, Turcica I 153, 1686 [henceforth Diodato 1686], fol. 82v-84r; Teply, "Gabriel"; Teply, *Einführung*, pp. 120-23.

<sup>68</sup> Teply, "Gabriel", col. 222f.

<sup>69</sup> Diodato 1705, fol. 10r.

<sup>70</sup> Diodato 1686, fol. 85v.

<sup>71</sup> Diodato 1705, fol. 11v-12r.

illiteracy.<sup>72</sup> Be that as it may, Shebin and Karakaş developed some lively activity in Buda during that year, which not only encompassed the mentioned detonation of the powder magazine on 22 July 1686, but also writing various letters in the Armenian language by using invisible ink that Diodato could make visible later in Vienna.<sup>73</sup> In these letters, Shebin described the location of the towers and other fortifications as well as the mines and proposed advantageous ways of attacking and storming the fortress of Buda.<sup>74</sup>

Shebin's letters reached Vienna mostly via the normal postal traffic, but for getting them out of the heavily guarded fortress, he needed scouts and renegades who could pass through the front lines. Of these confidants, several were Armenians, who also informed the imperial forces beleaguering the fortress of what happened inside or gave information on the severity of the detonation that demolished the powder magazine.<sup>75</sup> These Armenians – most of whom are not known by name<sup>76</sup> – show that Gabriel Shebin and

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<sup>72</sup> Teply, *Einführung*, p. 141.

<sup>73</sup> Diodato 1705, fol. 12v; Hamasasp Oskian, “Nersēs V. Erewanc’i ew Bowdapesti azatagrowmi hamar growac hayerēn cackagir namaknerə”, *Handes Amsorya*, 7-9:1967, col. 257-82.

<sup>74</sup> OeStA Vienna, HHStA, Turcica I 152, 1683/4-12, fol. 58-73; OeStA Vienna, HHStA, Turcica I 153, 1686, fol. 31-36; OeStA Vienna, HHStA, Hungarica, Misc. 427-32. See also Teply, *Einführung*, pp. 125-26.

<sup>75</sup> Cornaro, pp. 189, 215-20; Charles of Lorraine, p. 348; *Warhafftig und außführlicher Bericht Alles dessen / Was bey der Anno 1686. vorgenommenen Belägerung der Stadt Ofen Von Anfang derselben biß zu der den 2. Sept. erfolgten glücklichen Eroberung so wol auf Kayserlicher als Chur-Bayrischer und Chur-Brandenburgischer Seite von Tag zu Tag merckwürdiges passiret*, Augsburg, 1686, p. 29, <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/details/bsb10911204>; *Diarium, Das ist, Kurtze und warhafftige Erzehlung alles des Jenigen / Was Zeit-währender Belägerung der gewaltigen Vestung und Schlüssel des Ottomannischen Reichs in Ungarn / Ofen / sonst Buda genannt / von Tag zu Tag sich zugetragen*, 1687, p. 31, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2111775376> / .

<sup>76</sup> The only Armenian scout known by name was Gregor Melchior, who came from Safavid Persia and had a wife and children in Vienna as well as a brother, who had asked the War Council in 1686 to be included as a soldier in the Imperial army. Gregor Melchior was the most important of Gabriel Shebin's scouts in Buda, transmitted various letters, and in July 1686 he even brought the letters all the way to Vienna and was interrogated in the imperial capital. His report about the situation in the beleaguered fortress is fascinating evidence (Cornaro, pp. 215-20). More information about Gregor Melchior can be found in: OeStA Vienna, KA, HKR HR Book 372, 1686 Protocol of outgoing letters, fol. 81v; OeStA Vienna, KA, HKR HR Book 374, 1687 Protocol of outgoing letters, fol. 444v; OeStA Vienna, KA, HKR HR Book 376/2, 1688 Protocol of outgoing letters, fol. 611v; Aršak Alpoyačean, *Patmut'iwn Ewdokioy Hayots'*, Cairo, 1952, p. 1061.

Karakaş did not operate in a vacuum; rather it is noticeable from an overall perspective that a number of Armenians in Buda sympathized with the Habsburgs. The Venetian volunteer Grimani reported that one of the letters bore more than one signature,<sup>77</sup> so not only Gabriel Shebin but also other Armenians must have signed it. At the very least, the court in Vienna recognized “the active partisanship of the Armenians of Buda for the cause of Christianity”.<sup>78</sup> According to a contemporary pamphlet, this involvement can be attributed to the Armenians’ fear that during the siege of Buda they might suffer like they had during the siege of Nové Zámky in 1685. Back then the pasha of that fortress had ordered the Christians to do very dangerous work on the fortifications, during which many people lost their lives.<sup>79</sup> However, personal networks and contacts seem also to be a likely explanation for the involvement of so many Armenians, although this cannot be ascertained.

#### GAINING PERSONAL PROFITS

Many Viennese Armenians, most prominently Diodato, were merchants. Gaining personal profits and trying to accumulate wealth was an important part of their life, so it comes as no surprise that personal profits are as well an explanation for Armenian involvement in the War of the Holy League.

When imperial chamberlain Scalvinoni asked Diodato to establish his espionage network, he also brought forward that it was now time for Diodato to make his fortune – at least according to Diodato’s own account of the meeting written down two decades later.<sup>80</sup> Scalvinoni also promised Diodato to pay all the correspondents the latter needed with a hundred ducats yearly, funds that he later, again according to Diodato, could not mobilize.<sup>81</sup> It is instructive, however, that money was of such prominence in the recruitment of Armenian spies. Even if Diodato’s rendition likely exaggerates fortune-making to a point where it is of the greatest importance even for Scalvinoni, its role in the recruitment process is plausible. Diodato could establish his espionage network exactly because he could promise these large sums.

Personal profits played a prominent role also during the recruitment of Gabriel Shebin. When Gabriel came to Vienna in 1685, Johannes Diodato and Kalust Nurveli Shahin were at loggerheads with each other: Shahin had established another espionage network based on his brother Vardan and other Armenians in Buda and utilized his good contacts with Ottoman officials

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<sup>77</sup> Cornaro, p. 198.

<sup>78</sup> Teply, *Einführung*, p. 132.

<sup>79</sup> *Warhafftig und außführlicher Bericht*, 27.

<sup>80</sup> Diodato 1705, fol. 6v.

<sup>81</sup> Diodato 1705, fol. 8r.

in the fortress; Diodato envied him and tried to monopolize all Armenian communication channels with Buda. He even wrote to Shahin's contacts that the latter was now in disgrace and that it was fruitless to write any more letters to him.<sup>82</sup> Shahin was deeply annoyed and sought to harm his competitor during the following year. Hence, when Gabriel Shebin arrived in Vienna, both Diodato and Shahin, in contest with each other, tried to utilize the newcomer and to recruit him for the spying mission. Shahin introduced Gabriel Shebin to the counts Brandeis, Bercka and Ricciardi, who presented him with the prospect of "mountains of gold" as payment for his possible future activities in Buda.<sup>83</sup> It is not known what Diodato promised him, but Gabriel Shebin chose his side, so Diodato's offer could not have been less than that of Shahin and his partners. Clearly promising personal profits played a decisive role in recruiting Gabriel Shebin.

It cannot be ascertained in all cases what was offered to Armenians and what profits they eventually earned. There are numerous letters of Armenians addressed to the War Council in which they urged that the promised sums should be paid. The War Council, unable to pay its important spies from its own budget, could often only pass the letters on to the Imperial Chamber. However, the Chamber was by and large not able or willing to meet all demands and pay all sums that had been promised during the years of war. Consequently, the Viennese Armenians – owing to their insistent nature – wrote even more letters.<sup>84</sup> In some cases the demands were likely even higher than the previous promises, for Armenians sought to profit from the partly confusing situation as much as possible. The best example is again Gabriel Shebin who wrote in 1687 to the War Council that he had personally paid the *çorbaçi* Ahmed Ağa 1000 ducats to lay fire to the powder magazine in Buda.<sup>85</sup> This ludicrous claim, which was clearly wrong and could be easily refuted by Diodato,<sup>86</sup> fits accordingly with other equally doubtful stories told by the

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<sup>82</sup> Interrogation protocol of Schahin, 14 July 1686. GLA Karlsruhe, 46/3453/39.

<sup>83</sup> Diodato 1686, fol. 84v.

<sup>84</sup> OeStA Vienna, KA, HKR HR Book 374, 1687 Protocol of outgoing letters, fol. 380r, 413v, 444v, 468r, 639v; OeStA Vienna, KA, HKR HR Book 375, 1687 Protocol of incoming letters, fol. 80r, 466v; OeStA Vienna, KA, HKR HR Book 376/1, 1688 Protocol of outgoing letters, fol. 239v; Teply, *Einführung*, 138f.

<sup>85</sup> OeStA Vienna, KA, HKR HR Book 374, 1687 Protocol of outgoing letters, fol. 427v; Diodato 1705, fol. 16r; Teply, *Einführung*, p. 138.

<sup>86</sup> In reality Diodato had sent a letter with his seal to the *çorbaçi* and thus satisfied his needs. Gabriel Shebin himself had arrived, almost destitute, in Vienna in 1685 and was indebted to various people; it would be extremely unlikely that he had procured such a large sum as 1000 ducats from an unknown source in such a short time. For Diodato's account see Diodato 1705, fol. 13r, 15r.

Armenian adventurer. Another example of his faulty tales is the one in which he fooled the pasha in Buda in 1686 and lied about his true incentives. Then he had claimed to have been ambushed by imperial troops and to have lost all his possessions. The pasha was moved to tears, gave Gabriel Shebin all he wanted and did not suspect that in reality he had been sent to spy for the Imperial War Council.<sup>87</sup>

Overall, not many Armenians got what they had wanted. Some, most prominently Diodato, realized that their claims would never be met. So Diodato changed tracks and settled for a licence to open the first Viennese coffeehouse, thereby gaining for some years a virtual monopoly on selling coffee. Granting him a licence was much easier for the imperial authorities than finding money and paying the promised sum.<sup>88</sup> Others like Gabriel Shebin continued insisting on money they would never get.

## RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

It is a non-trivial factor that many Armenians living in Vienna – if not all, but their religion is not always known – were of Catholic faith. Since their individual biographies can often only be reconstructed in part, in most cases it is not possible to ascertain whether they converted to Catholicism in Vienna or if they were Catholic already prior to their arrival in Catholic-dominated countries of Europe. The latter option is true for Diodato, who was the son of an already-Catholic Armenian merchant in Istanbul.<sup>89</sup> Whereas believing in the Catholic faith was an advantage in Vienna, it proved to be detrimental in Istanbul, where Armenian Catholics were a small minority and were persecuted in the latter half of the 17<sup>th</sup> and in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>90</sup> Especially in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, clergymen of the Apostolic Armenian millet supported or even fueled the persecution of Catholic Armenians by Ottoman authorities and proved to be loyal to the Sultan.<sup>91</sup> By and large, those Armenians of Apostolic Armenian faith stayed in the Ottoman Empire, while those of Catholic faith tended to be drawn to other Catholic countries in Europe. This

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<sup>87</sup> Diodato 1686, fol. 85. The story was true insofar as Gabriel Shebin was in fact ambushed by marauding troops in the borderland between Habsburg and Ottoman Hungary, but all implications drawn from this were clearly false.

<sup>88</sup> Teply, *Einführung*, 105.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>90</sup> Nerses Setian, “Eine Rechtfertigung der katholisch unierten armenischen Kirche aus der Geschichte”, *Die Kirche Armeniens. Eine Volkskirche Zwischen Ost und West*, ed. Friedrich Heyer, *Die Kirchen der Welt* 18, Stuttgart, 1978, p. 161; Charles A. Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans. The Church and the Ottoman Empire 1453–1923*, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 179–82.

<sup>91</sup> Frazee, pp. 178–81.

observation is a first sign that religious affiliation is an explanation for Armenian involvement in the war on behalf of the Catholic European countries as well.

Religion also played a role among Viennese Armenians to account for their involvement in the War of the Holy League. In the already mentioned account of Diodato's meeting with Scalvinoni in 1684 or 1685, Scalvinoni referred to Diodato's ability to "serve the entire Christendom" by spying against the Ottomans.<sup>92</sup> Diodato was not the only one who referred to the common Christian religion as a worthwhile reason for being involved in the anti-Ottoman war efforts. Shahin boasted that soon he would "chase away the Turk and the Persian and release all Christians into liberty, who had wept under the yoke of these two tyrants for many centuries".<sup>93</sup> It cannot be determined if Shahin really believed that liberation of Armenians was possible and if religion was really a decisive point of consideration when Diodato or Shahin decided to establish espionage networks. Since they accounted for their motives only in letters directed to the Emperor or the Imperial War Council, letters which were written to trigger advantageous decisions of these bodies, they overemphasized certain points that seemed favorable to their cause.<sup>94</sup> However, it would be erroneous to simply deny the factor of religion in Armenian involvement. As seen above, the Catholic faith was in at least one case (Diodato) the basic trigger for resettlement in Vienna and thus, secondly, for involvement in the war for the Habsburgs and not the Ottomans.

#### ARMENIANS IN OTHER PRINCIPALITIES

Not only the Viennese Armenians, but also those living in other principalities, empires and dominions engaged in the War of the Holy League. However, since their involvement merits a study on its own,<sup>95</sup> the following remarks will only be cursory and serve to counterbalance the preceding study on Armenians in Vienna and to bear in mind that Armenian involvement surpassed the boundaries of the Habsburg lands. Also, it is important to stress that the four reasons for Armenian involvement found above are only partly transferrable to other principalities since, for instance, Armenians in the Ottoman Empire or the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth could never be

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<sup>92</sup> Diodato 1705, fol. 6v.

<sup>93</sup> Meninski to Hofkriegsrat, 1685. GLA Karlsruhe, 46/3555/194, fol. 5r.

<sup>94</sup> For a discussion of the causes and the contents of these letters see Teply, *Einführung*, pp. 99-101, 173-75.

<sup>95</sup> Overall, the literature on Armenians working for the Ottomans in the War of the Holy League is even sparser than that about Viennese Armenians and their relations to the Imperial War Council and remains an understudied research topic.

threatened with expulsion in the same way as the Viennese Armenians with their much lower numbers.

In the Ottoman Empire, Armenians were regularly recruited as janissaries via the *devşirme* system, starting in 1464.<sup>96</sup> Some of them may have fought in the War of the Holy League against the League's forces, but – as always – the mostly unclear or unknown ethnic backgrounds of the janissaries make it impossible to verify that. Apart from the janissary corps, Armenians certainly served as Ottoman miners and sappers during the second siege of Vienna. The eyewitness Count Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, at that time Ottoman captive and present in the beleaguerer's camp, praised the effectiveness of the Armenian-Ottoman miners and wrote that they "carried out the same work in just half of the time and with half of the effort" of their Viennese counterparts.<sup>97</sup> During the siege there were 5,000 Ottoman miners active, but the source does not report how many of them were Armenians.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, there were Ottoman Armenians commissioned with provisioning the army. During the siege of Vienna, the sources mention Armenian bakers and cooks of whom three collaborated with the Christians; two sold them bread, one even revealed to them strategical plans of the Ottomans.<sup>99</sup> The sources only describe Armenians in a rebellious role, but it is likely that there were many more Armenian bakers present who, as they remained loyal, never appeared in the sources.

In the Polish-Lithuanian context, Polish Armenians were part of the army led by King Jan III Sobieski to Vienna to relieve the besieged city. For this purpose, 5000 Armenians were recruited. They were armed with muskets and javelins and due to their long red hats, armlets and long trousers they were a distinctive unit on the battlefield. Also, they bore banners embellished with large crosses in their emblems and thus placed themselves in a crusade

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<sup>96</sup> Anahit Astoyan, *Hayern ősmanyany banakowm. XIV daric' minčev 1918 t'*, Yerevan, 2010, 6f.

<sup>97</sup> Gábor Ágoston, *Guns for the Sultan. Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire*, Cambridge, 2005, p. 42.

<sup>98</sup> Georg Christoph von Kunitz, *Diarium Welches Der am Türckischen Hoff, und Hernach bey dem Groß-Vezier in der Wienerischen Belägerung gewester Kayserl. Resident Herr Baron Kunitz eigenhändig beschrieben*, 1684, p. 39, <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/details/bsb10911174>.

<sup>99</sup> Richard F. Kreutel, *Kara Mustafa vor Wien. 1683 aus der Sicht Türkischer Quellen*, Osmanische Geschichtsschreiber. Neue Folge 1, Graz, Vienna, Cologne, 1982, p. 165; Oskian, col. 270.

tradition against the “infidels”.<sup>100</sup> Their involvement can thus be explained by the common religious factor of Christian warfare against Ottoman Muslim adversaries.

## CONCLUSION

Armenian involvement in the War of the Holy League was of a diverse nature and on behalf of both the Ottoman Empire and its Christian adversaries; while for the former Armenians were engaged as janissaries, sappers or army suppliers, it was the Armenians involved on the Austrian side and working as spies and merchants who were the main focus of this study. Their contribution to the Habsburg imperial war effort was considerable, because they provided information collected through their spying activities, in similar vein helped the Imperial forces when they laid siege to the fortress of Buda, and even conducted a military operation of some importance, namely blowing up the powder magazine in Buda in 1686. However, the most important question is why the Armenians even engaged in a war that was not primarily “theirs”.

I showed in this article that four different aspects contributed to Armenian involvement on behalf of the Habsburgs and help to understand and explain it. The most important were the personal contacts and networks, because Armenians like Diodato started their war-related activities after they were ordered by members of the imperial court to do so. They at least needed the backing of the Imperial War Council for all their activities. On the other hand, Diodato recruited other Armenians for such activities as spying and sabotaging. Thus, personal networks are an indispensable explanation for Armenian involvement, but they do not suffice as a monocausal explanation. Rather one has to keep in mind that Armenians in Vienna were confronted with an unfortunate climate leading to prejudice, unjustified accusations and even trials and exile. Undertaking important tasks for the War Council or other important parts of the imperial court was a good option for being spared, as happened for example with Diodato, who escaped the Raizenpatent in 1678 as well as a later trial because he was of such great importance to the emperor and the court. Also, it is not a negligible fact that the relevant Armenians active in Vienna were merchants and adventurers and that they ascribed importance to earning a fortune and receiving material benefits from their activities for the War Council. Even though in the end they rarely got what they wanted, the promises that they would get a great deal of money

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<sup>100</sup> Sadok Barącz, *Rys Dziejów Ormiańskich [Outline of Armenian History]*, Tarnopol, 1869, p. 65; *Zbióracz Literacki [Literary Collector]* No. 12, Cracow, 3 October 1838, p. 96.



were in some cases decisive for recruitment of Armenians for dangerous undertakings. Finally, without considering the religious factor, it is not possible to understand why certain Armenians like Diodato moved to Vienna and subsequently worked for the Habsburg court while others stayed in the Ottoman Empire and were engaged on the other side of the conflict.

ՎԻԵՆՆԱԲՆԱԿ ՀԱՅԵՐ՝ ՍՈՒՐԲ ԴԱՇՆՈՒԹԵԱՆ ՊԱՏԵՐԱԶՄԻՆ ԸՆԹԱՑՔԻՆ  
(1683–1699)  
(ԱՄՓՈՓՈՒՄ)

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Ուսումնասիրութիւնը լուսարձակի տակ կ'առնէ վիեննաբնակ հայերու մասնակցութիւնը Օսմանեան կայսրութեան դէմ Եւրոպայի Սուրբ Դաշնութեան ուժերու 1683-99 շրջանին մղած պատերազմներուն:

Հեղինակը կը քննարկէ չորս պատճառներ՝ վիեննաբնակ հայերու աջակցութեան.- ա) անոնք կը հալածուէին եւ խորթ կը նկատուէին Վիեննայի մէջ եւ հետեւաբար ստիպուած էին առնել այնպիսի քայլեր, որոնք զիրենք անփոխարինելի եւ ազդեցիկ կը դարձնէին Վիեննայի պալատական միջավայրին մէջ, բ) ընդառաջեցին վտանգալից պահանջներու, որպէսզի չարտաքսուին երկրէն կամ չձերբակալուին, եւ կազմեցին ընդդատակեայ ցանց մը, գ) խոստացուեցան առատապէս պարգեատրուիլ՝ իրենց վտանգալից առաքելութեան համար, դ) որովհետեւ կաթոլիկ հաւատքին դէմ ընդհանրական թշնամիին դէմ պիտի պայքարէին:

Հեղինակը կ'ընդգծէ թէ այս անձերը փախստականներ էին՝ Օսմանեան կայսրութեան մէջ, 1590-1610ականներուն բռնկած ճելալիներու ըմբոստութեան եւ յաջորդող ջարդ ու կողոպուտներէն, որոնք մեծ վնասներ պատճառեցին Փոքր Հայքի, մանաւանդ Սվազ-Թոքաթ-Ամասիա շրջանի հայութեան: Ան կու տայ անունները ընդդատակեայ այս ցանցի անդամներուն, կը նշէ անոնց գործունէութեանց բնոյթը, կը բացայայտէ անոնց անցեալը եւ կը ներկայացնէ խորքը ժամանակին, Եւրոպա-Օսմանեան կայսրութիւն յարաբերութեանց, ինչպէս նաեւ հայ իրականութեան:

