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The Logic of *Kleinkrieg*: The “Book of Halil Beg” in Habsburg-Ottoman Diplomacy, 1550–76

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Abstract

The Ottoman conquest of Szigetvar and Gyula (1566) exposed the weakness of the Habsburg monarchy. Unable to mount a military response, Maximilian II depended on his diplomats to ward off the imposition of a conqueror's peace along the Hungarian border. But an official register, the Book of Halil Beg, put forward the sultan's claims to a wide swath of towns and villages, including many still held by Habsburg loyalists. Moreover, the Ottomans said, His Majesty had best accept a settlement on these terms; victorious Turkish captains wanted more and were restrained only by Selim II's orders. This essay describes the efforts of Maximilian's ambassadors to forestall additional losses in peacetime. After years of tough negotiation, they managed to obtain minor revision of the relevant treaty text. Although the Book of Halil Beg would indeed be the basis for any border settlement, as the Porte insisted, the Ottomans acknowledged that Vienna disputed certain of its provisions. This mere protest may have been enough to assure loyalist magnates in Hungary that the dynasty had not abandoned them, or their hereditary lands. Hence the paradox of Habsburg-Ottoman diplomacy. The 1576 treaty of peace, formally ending hostilities, was at the same time a charter for *Kleinkrieg*.

Keywords: Emperor Maximilian II; Sultan Selim II; Szigetvár War (1566); Book of Halil Beg; diplomacy; reason of state; military frontier; Sokullu Mehmed Pasha; David Ungnad; Karel Rijm

Soon after his accession in 1564, Maximilian II had a problem on his Hungarian frontier. Troops loyal to the voivode of Transylvania conquered the fortress-town of Szatmár (Satu Mare),¹ the anchor of Habsburg territory east of the river Tisza.² By his own account, the emperor reacted cautiously, lest he seem to violate the Habsburg-Ottoman peace treaty of 1562. He sent no troops until Ottoman regulars supported a further attack from Transylvania.³ His forces retook Szatmár and some towns hitherto held by Transylvania, but their success helped provoke a reaction. On 18 November 1565, the Sublime Porte announced that Sultan Suleyman would march to Hungary in the spring.⁴ In 1566, the Habsburgs suffered their worst defeat in the long history of the Ottoman wars. In Hungary,

¹Maximilian II to Archduke Ferdinand, Linz, [23 Sept. 1564], in *Die Korrespondenz Maximilians II*, 2 vols., ed. Viktor Bibl (Vienna, 1916), letter 27, I, pp. 30–33. Ferdinand I died on 27 July 1564; James Tracy, “Tokaj, 1565: A Habsburg Prize of War, and an Ottoman *Casus Belli*,” in *The Battle for Central Europe: The Siege of Szigetvár and the Death of Süleyman the Magnificent and Nicholas Zrinyi (1566)*, ed. Pál Fodor (Leiden, 2019), 359–76.

²For Habsburg defenses in Upper Hungary see Géza Pálffy, “The Origins and Development of the Border Defence System against the Ottoman Empire in Hungary (Up to the Early Eighteenth Century),” in *Ottomans, Hungarians and Habsburgs in Central Europe: The Military Conflict in the Era of Ottoman Conquest*, ed. Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (Leiden, 2000), 3–69, here 47–48, 68–69.

³Maximilian II to Archduke Ferdinand, Vienna, 10 Oct. 1564, and to Archduke Albrecht of Bavaria, Vienna, 24 Feb. 1565, in Bibl, *Korrespondenz*, I, letters 34, 45, and 100, pp. 106–11. For Lazarus Schwendi, Ferdinand's commander in the east, see Thomas Nicklas, *Um Macht und Einheit des Reiches. Konzeption und Wirklichkeit der Politik bei Lazarus von Schwendi (1522–1583)* (Husum, 1995).

⁴Bibl, *Korrespondenz*, I, 396, note to letter 346. Cf. Ernst Dieter Petritsch, *Regesten der Osmanischen Dokumente im Österreichischen Staatsarchiv, Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs, Ergänzungsband 120/1* (Vienna, 1991), no. 502.

Szigetvár was lost and so was Gyula. Maximilian's army, assembled at great cost, accomplished little and broke up in disarray.⁵

For the rest of his reign, Maximilian II's policy toward the Porte was guided by a recognition of Ottoman military superiority. Reversal of the recent losses was not possible; even before the catastrophic campaign of 1566, no one thought the Habsburg monarchy capable of a full-scale invasion of Ottoman territory.⁶ Some advisers recommended a coalition with other Christian princes, but there were always obstacles to an alliance.⁷ In 1571, Maximilian's adherence to the Hispano-Venetian Holy League would have required lengthy consultation with the Imperial Diet.⁸ When Poland-Lithuania was to elect a new king in 1572, Maximilian approved the organization of a candidacy on behalf of one of his sons, Archduke Ernst, but support in the Polish Sejm for the Ottoman candidate, Henri of Valois, was too strong. Two years later, when the French prince returned to a vacant throne in Paris, Maximilian advanced his own candidacy and was elected by the Polish Senate; but the lower house of the Sejm blocked the Senate's wishes, securing the election of another Ottoman candidate, Voivode István Báthory of Transylvania.⁹ The alternative to an anti-Ottoman military coalition was negotiation with the Porte. As this essay shows, Maximilian's Ottoman diplomacy addressed one key problem: How to prevent Ottoman conquerors from dictating a settlement to Habsburg subjects along the border, as prescribed in a Turkish document, the Book of Halil Beg?¹⁰

What to Do about an Ottoman "Book"?

In late 1566, following a suggestion from the *paşa* of Buda,¹¹ Maximilian sent a courier to the Porte to ascertain the conditions under which the new sultan, Selim II, would open discussions. After an encouraging response, he dispatched two ambassadors, Christoph von Teuffenbach, a member of his *Hofkriegsrat*, and Antun Vrančić, a humanist diplomat soon promoted to the archbishopric of Esztergom. On returning to Vienna, they reported Ottoman demands that were scarcely acceptable, notably that the border be regulated according to a certain Ottoman "book." Nonetheless, the ambassadors were sent back with new instructions.¹²

The Treaty of Edirne was eventually signed on 17 February 1568. As on other occasions, there was no common text of the treaty; each side prepared its own version. Habsburg officials apparently failed

p. 173. Raiding from the fortress of Szigetvár was also a provocation for the Porte's decision: James D. Tracy, "The Road to Szigetvár: Ferdinand I's Defense of his Hungarian Frontier, 1548–1564," *Austrian History Yearbook* 44 (2013): 17–36.

⁵For an Ottoman account of the campaign, Nicolas Vatin, ed., *Feridûn Bey, Les plaisants secrets de la campagne de Szigetvár: Édition, traduction et commentaire des folios 1 à 147 du Nüzhetü-l-esrârî-lahbâr der sefer-i Sigetvár (ms. H 1339 de la Bibliothèque de Musée de Topkapı Sarayı)*, (Berlin, 2010). For the collapse of Maximilian's army, Georg Wagner, "Maximilian II, der Wiener Hof, und die Belagerung von Sziget," in *Szigetvári Emlékkönyv*, ed. Lajos Rúzsás (Budapest, 1966), 237–68.

⁶To date, the largest Habsburg campaign was a disastrous march on Oseišek in 1537; see James Tracy, *Balkan Wars: Habsburg Croatia, Ottoman Bosnia, and Venetian Dalmatia, 1499–1617* (Landham, 2016), 120–22.

⁷E.g., Michael Czernowitz to Maximilian, s.l., [1569], Haus- Hof- und Staatsarchiv [HHStAT], Vienna, Turcica, HHStAT I 25, Konvolut 4, f.32; Maximilian Lanzinner, "Geheime Räte und Beräter Maximilians II, 1564–1576," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichte* (Vienna, 1994), 296–315.

⁸Paula Sutter Fichtner, *Emperor Maximilian II* (New Haven, 2001), 189–90.

⁹Fichtner, *Emperor Maximilian II*, 203–5; Christoph Augustynowicz, "Wien, Schlesien – Interessenknotenpunkten in den ersten beiden polnisch-litauischen Interregna (1572–1576)," in *Russland, Polen und Österreich in der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Christoph Augustynowicz et al. (Vienna, 2003), 119–36.

¹⁰Robyn Dora Radway, "Vernacular Diplomacy in Central Europe: Statesmen and Soldiers between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, 1543–1593" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2017), 56–57. The Ottomans relied on the Book of Halil Beg and sought to have its terms embodied in peace treaties.

¹¹On György Hotzutoti's mission to Buda, Maximilian to Archduke Ferdinand, Brünn, 20 Jan. 1567, Bibl, *Korrespondenz*, II, letter 93, p. 93. From 1566/7–78, the *paşa* of Buda was Sokullu Mustafa Paşa, a kinsman of Grand Vezier Sokullu Mehmed Paşa.

¹²For Vrančić (or, in Hungarian, Veransics Antal), who was ambassador to the Porte in the 1550s, see Diana Sorić, "Klassifikacija Pisama Antuna Vrančića," in *Colloquia Marulliana* 18 (Zagreb, 2009), 83–117. On the *relatio* brought back by Vrančić and Teuffenbach, Archduke Karl to Maximilian, Graz, 19 Nov. 1567, Bibl, *Korrespondenz*, II, letter 252, II, pp. 259–61. The Ottomans also insisted on the razing of Tata and Veszprem, taken by the Habsburgs in 1566, but on this point the Porte eventually relented.

to see—until sometime later¹³—that the Turkish text included a clause stating that taxes would be collected only from places listed in the Ottoman tax registers.¹⁴ Meanwhile, points that were not resolved in the treaty still had to be hammered out, for purposes of the required letters of confirmation.¹⁵ In March 1568, Teuffenbach and Vrančić reported that the Ottomans insisted that “common villages”—currently paying taxes to both sides—must be divided up according to a certain “book” in Turkish. Sokullu Mehmet Paşa, the grand vezier, tried to persuade them that this would be to Maximilian’s advantage: if this book were taken as the standard, any claims by Ottoman officials for places not inscribed therein would be treated as illegal. But the ambassadors protested: Maximilian had “not only not seen” the book in question, he had “never known about it until now.” When the conversation grew heated, they adopted a fallback position given in their instructions: His Majesty would allow the issue of common villages to be settled by border commissioners, who could take “the book” into consideration. In response, Sokullu Mehmet Paşa “commanded that this article be changed in keeping with our wishes.”¹⁶ Vrančić and Teuffenbach sent back a copy of the Turkish-language book in question,¹⁷ and letters of confirmation were duly exchanged. Book or no book, it seems no one in Vienna thought border disputes could be settled by a commission. But what must at all costs be avoided was an official admission by His Majesty of the full implications of his recent defeat. Endless discussion was far preferable to a definitive settlement that allowed the Ottomans to claim lands and even castles they had not captured in the 1566 war.¹⁸

Despite the exchange of ratifications, the common villages question was not so easily settled. During the negotiations, Ottoman *sancakbegs* sent out troops to prohibit villagers from paying their accustomed taxes to Habsburg lords. According to the *paşa* of Buda, they acted lawfully because the villages in question were inscribed in the sultan’s tax registers (plural).¹⁹

Vienna had again failed to notice that the Turkish text of Selim II’s letter of confirmation differed from the accompanying Latin translation.²⁰ The Turkish text specified that “His Imperial Majesty has conceded [to the sultan] the subjects and common villages that pay taxes and dues to both sides, but are inscribed in the book.”²¹ Moreover, according to the Ottoman diplomatic style, a treaty expired with the death of a sovereign; hence new treaties had to be negotiated after the death of Selim II in 1574 and after Maximilian II’s death in 1576.²²

¹³Petritsch, *Regesten*, no. 551, pp. 187–88. Cf. David Ungnad and Karel Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, 11 Nov. 1574, HHStAT I 30 Konvolut 5b, f. 1–4, here f. 2v. In response to the claim that Maximilian had approved the collection of taxes from villages inscribed in the book, “Your Majesty has always insisted that it was falsely inserted in the old capitulation [from 1568]” (“Majestas Vestra hactenus semper contendit utque veteri capitulationi Turcicae falso insertum est”).

¹⁴Petritsch, *Regesten*, no. 551, pp. 187–88: “Orte, die in den osmanischen Steuerregistern nicht eingetragen sind, sollen auch nicht zu Abgaben herangezogen worden.” Cf. *Regesten*, no. 578, p. 196, Sokullu Mustafa Paşa to Maximilian, Buda, 5 Sept. 1568, calling his attention to this clause in the treaty.

¹⁵For treaties with Poland-Lithuania, the king sent confirmatory letters, but the sultan apparently did not: Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, ed., *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations (15th–18th Century): An Annotated Edition of ‘Ahdnames and Other Documents* (Leiden, 2000), 69–76. For the exchange of what Habsburg correspondence called *litteras reversales* see Radway, “Vernacular Diplomacy in Central Europe,” 53.

¹⁶Vrančić, Teuffenbach and Albert de Wijs to Maximilian, Edirne, 20 Mar. 1568, HHStAT I 24 Konvolut 1, f. 62–675 (quotes from f. 63v); for a second copy, HHStAT I 24 Konvolut 2, f. 80v ff. For similar accounts, Edoardo Provisionali to Maximilian, Vienna, 19 Apr. 1568, HHStAT I 24 Konvolut 1, f. 86–89v; and Albert de Wijs to Maximilian, Istanbul, 1 May 1568, HHStAT I 24 Konvolut 2, f. 42–47.

¹⁷This point is mentioned in Karel Rijm and David Ungnad to Maximilian, Istanbul, 1 Nov. 1573, HHStAT I 29 Konvolut 3, f. 53–58, here f. 53.

¹⁸Provisionali to Maximilian, [Vienna], 19 Apr. 1568, HHStAT I 24 Konvolut 1, f. 86–89v, here f. 86v.

¹⁹Petritsch, *Regesten*, no. 565, p. 192. Cf. no. 584, p. 198, Selim II to Maximilian, Çatalca, 9/18 Jan. 1569, telling him that he has sent such an order to Mustafa Paşa of Buda.

²⁰For other examples of the same problem, Josip Žontar, “Michael Černović, Geheimagent Ferdinands I und Maximilians II, und seine Berichterstattung,” in *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs* 24 (Vienna, 1971), 169–222.

²¹Ungnad and Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, 25 Aug. 1573, HHStAT I 29 Konvolut 3, f. 121–23, here f. 121–22v: “Nam in iisdem turcicis litteris dicitur quod Caesarea Majestas utriusque partis villas et subditos communes qui tributum ac census solverunt, et in libro inscripti sint, concessit.”

²²On the Ottoman style, Radway, “Vernacular Diplomacy in Central Europe,” 43. Treaties between European princes did not expire on the death of the respective sovereigns.

The book was attributed to Halil Beg (or Halil Bey), who was *defterdar* (treasurer) of the province (*eyalet*) of Buda in 1550, and who died in 1568/69.²³ Ottoman officials seem not to have called it “the Book of Halil Beg” until after his death.²⁴ No “Book of Halil Beg” has been found, and no such book came up in discussions leading to the five-year Treaty of Edirne in 1547.²⁵ But a *defter* described in similar terms figured in negotiations prior to the eight-year treaty of 1562.²⁶ Under Maximilian II, Ottoman insistence on the “book” beclouded the meaning of the 1568 treaty and obstructed agreement on new treaties concluded in 1574 and 1576.²⁷

Hence this essay poses three questions. First, what may be learned about “the book of Halil Beg” from the correspondence of Ferdinand I’s reign? Second, how did Habsburg and Ottoman negotiators hash out the issue during Maximilian’s reign? Finally, how did this contentious dispute reflect larger interests of state on both sides?

The Book of Halil Beg during the Reign of Ferdinand I

For newly conquered land, the Ottomans conducted surveys to determine the income to be expected from each locality. Compiling a *defter* or register took time. The financial official in charge estimated revenue from agriculture and trade by taking the average for the last three years. Some *defters* were mere lists of sums due, others were detailed enough to indicate how many households there were of the various taxpaying categories (e.g., Muslims and infidels) in each village.²⁸ Once a district had been surveyed, it might not be surveyed again for decades.²⁹ Different kinds of surveys were conducted in the *eyalet* of Buda.³⁰ For this period, the compilation of records has been described in detail for one of the *eyalet*’s component *sancaks*.³¹

The “book” or *registrum*³² of Halil Beg seems to have been a *defter* of the summary kind, of which one copy would be kept in the capital of the *eyalet* (Buda), and another at the Porte.³³ Notwithstanding the later claim that Maximilian II had never heard of it, it can plausibly be identified with the “book” mentioned in the correspondence of Giovanni Maria Malvezzi, Ferdinand’s ambassador at the Porte from 1548 to 1553. In 1548 Malvezzi was instructed to protest the *paşa* of Buda’s use of a certain register to extort money from villages that had never paid Ottoman taxes.³⁴ Two years later, Malvezzi

²³Petritsch, *Regesten*, no. 144, p. 67: Sultan Suleyman to Ferdinand I, Istanbul, 21/30 Dec. 1550; the Habsburg fortress under construction at Szolnok is illegal because, according to the *defterdar* of Buda, this land forms part of the sultan’s domain. According to Petritsch, Halil Bey died in 1568/69.

²⁴The earliest such reference I have seen is Karel Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, 7 Jan. 1572, HHST I 29 Konvolut 3, f. 10–19, here f. 10v.

²⁵Radway, “Vernacular Diplomacy in Central Europe,” 156–57; Petritsch, *Regesten*, no. 93, pp. 50–51. Cf. Ernst Dieter Petritsch, “Die Ungarnpolitik Ferdinands I bis an seine Tributpflichtigkeit an die hohe Pforte” (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 1979).

²⁶Petritsch, *Regesten*, no. 364, pp. 131–32 (the draft treaty of 1559), and no. 385, pp. 138–39 (the final text). Cf. Rudolf Willem Maria Zweder van Martels, *Augerius Gislenius Busbecquius. Leven en Werk van de Keizerlijke Gezant aan het Hof van Suleyman de Grote* (Groningen, 1989), 266–99.

²⁷Cf. Karel Rijm and David Ungnad to Maximilian, Istanbul, 23 Apr. 1574, HHStAT I 30 Konvolut 32, f. 171–74v, here f. 173: a reference to the book of Halil Beg, “qui unus tot annorum totque actionum et disceptationum scopus fuit.”

²⁸E.g., Adem Handžić, ed., *Opširni Popis Bosanskoga Sandžaka iz 1604 Godine*, 3 vols., (Sarajevo, 2004).

²⁹Linda T. Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy: Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire 1560–1660* (Leiden, 1996), 29–34.

³⁰E.g., Petritsch, *Regesten*, nos. 456, 582, 615, 629, 634, 640, 644, and 653.

³¹Elod Vass, “Éléments pour Compléter l’Histoire de l’Administration des Finances du Vilayet de Buda au XVIIe Siècle,” in *Studia Turcica* (Budapest, 1971), 483–90, with special reference to the *sancak* of Vác.

³²E.g., Karel Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, 7 Jan. 1572, HHStAT I 29 Konvolut 3, f. 10–19, here f. 10v.

³³I thank Prof. Linda Darling (University of Arizona) for this suggestion. Cf. Ungnad to Johann von Trautson, Istanbul, 4 May 1574, HHStAT I 30 Konvolut 2, f. 213–16v, here f. 215: “I have been given a copy of the book, and it shows that the villages are divided among the *sancakbegs*” (“Ich habe ein abschrift des buches mich gesehen und siehe das die dörffer unter die Zangiachi oder Begi ausgeteilt sein”).

³⁴Ferdinand I to Justus de Argento, Augsburg, 13 Feb. 1548, in *Austro-Turcica 1541–1552. Diplomatische Akten des habsburgischen Gesandtschaftsverkehrs mit der hohen Pforte im Zeitalter Suleymans des Prächtigen*, ed. Srećko Džaja, Günter Weiss, Mathias Bernath, and Karl Nehring (Munich, 1995), letter 68, pp. 213–15.

reported that the grand vezier documented the sultan's claim to two disputed towns by showing him "a book of incomes that was compiled before the truce"; that is, before the treaty of 1547.³⁵ Malvezzi was told not to worry: "They write places in their books because Ottoman soldiers have asked for them from Sultan Suleyman, but these places were in Christian hands before the treaty, and still are."³⁶ Ferdinand and his advisers did not grasp the distinction—important for the Ottomans—between the official record kept by the *defterdar* of Buda, and the boastful claims of frontier commanders.

Places that the Ottomans had indeed conquered were certainly in the *defterdar*'s book, and as Ottoman Hungary expanded, new towns and villages were added. When Szolnok was taken by the Ottomans in 1550, many rural magistrates in the vicinity were "compelled by fear of the Turkish sword to inscribe their villages in the said book."³⁷ In 1552, after Ferdinand made arrangements for Transylvania to pass under Habsburg rule, the Ottomans invaded, conquering enough territory to establish a new *eyalet* in Temesvár.³⁸ According to a later account, the townsfolk of Debrecen agreed at the time of their submission to pay the sultan seven thousand *thalers* a year, a sum that was then "inscribed on the Book of Halil Beg."³⁹ Ottoman officials always described inscriptions as voluntary. As one grand vezier told Ferdinand's ambassador, villages added to the book had "submitted to the sultan at their own initiative, and by their own will."⁴⁰

By now, Ferdinand recognized the book as a problem. In June 1553, he sent new ambassadors to the Porte: Antun Vrančić, then bishop of Pécs, and Ferenc Zay, commander of the Danube gunboat fleet at Komárom. Their main assignment was to persuade Suleyman to grant Transylvania to his "beloved son" Ferdinand as a free gift—surely an impossible task, but one in which they dutifully persisted for three years.⁴¹ They were also instructed to insist that peasants continue paying their traditional *census* to Habsburg landholders, even if their villages were inscribed in "that book of the prince of the Turks." Villagers must keep making payments to Habsburg as well as Turkish lords, as they had done prior to the Ottoman conquests of 1552, "so that each side receives an equal share of the ordinary tribute."⁴²

Vrančić and Zay found Ottoman officials willing for "common villages" to keep paying tribute to both sides, provided that Ferdinand abandoned his claim to Transylvania.⁴³ To be sure of Ferdinand's will on this point, the Porte demanded that he send a new ambassador with new instructions. For this purpose, Ferdinand chose a young Flemish nobleman recommended by his agents at the court in Brussels, Oghier Ghislain van Boesbeek, better known as Busbecq. Stopping in Buda en route to Istanbul, Busbecq encountered a local version of a larger problem. The provincial governor, Semiz 'Ali Paşa, had previously agreed to "perambulate" the disputed villages with a Habsburg envoy to settle outstanding differences. Now, however, the *paşa* reneged on his promise, apparently in deference to his military commanders. Once in Istanbul, Busbecq remained as ambassador until 1562,⁴⁴ while Vrančić and Zay returned in 1557. Ottoman border garrisons continued to harass villages that had not

³⁵Malvezzi to Ferdinand, Istanbul, 15 Sept. 1550 in *Austro-Turcica*, letter 190, pp. 504–5, here 505. The towns at issue were Szolnok and Vall.

³⁶Ferdinand to Malvezzi, Augsburg, 31 Dec. 1540 in *Austro-Turcica*, letter 204, pp. 540–44, here 541–42.

³⁷Karel Rijm and David Ungnad to [Sokullu Mehmet Paşa?], Istanbul, 29 Aug. 1573, HHStAT I 29 Konvolut 3, f. 121–23, here f. 122v, recounting what the addressee had told them.

³⁸Gábor Barta, "The First Period of the Transylvanian Principality," in *History of Transylvania*, ed. Béla Köpeczi et al., tr. Bennett Kopprig (Highland Lakes, 2010), 593–764.

³⁹Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, 16 Nov. 1572, HHStAT I 29 Konvolut 1, f. 26–29, here f. 26, recounting a conversation with his Transylvanian colleague.

⁴⁰Busbecq's final *relatio*: Vienna, 2 Dec. 1562, HHStAT I 16 Konvolut 1, f. 31–41, here f. 39v. By advertising submissions as voluntary, the Ottomans made it harder for towns and villages to change their allegiance if the fortunes of war shifted.

⁴¹Ferdinand did not abandon hope until 1556, after Suleyman returned in triumph from a campaign on the distant Iranian frontier.

⁴²Ferdinand to Antun Vrančić and Ferenc Zay, Vienna, 13 June 1563, HHStAT I 10 Konvolut 1, f. 49–65, here f. 58–59.

⁴³Vrančić and Zay to Ferdinand, Istanbul, 25 Aug. 1553, HHStAT I 10 Konvolut 2, f. 4–23, here f. 17v–18.

⁴⁴Busbecq to Ferdinand, Buda, 12 Dec. 1554, HHStAT I 11 Konvolut 3, f. 201–4, here f. 201. Busbecq briefly returned to Vienna in 1555.

previously paid Turkish taxes.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, when times were propitious for discussing a new treaty, officials at the Porte did not include adherence to the Ottoman tax registers among their demands.

In January 1559, Busbecq and Grand Veziir Rüstem Paşa agreed on a draft treaty. It provided that the sultan's soldiers would not molest Habsburg villages, and that "common villages not be subject to unaccustomed burdens."⁴⁶ For various reasons, this treaty did not become final. Negotiations then resumed in 1561, when Semiz 'Ali Paşa became grand veziir; this time a treaty was concluded, in 1562, on more or less the terms agreed in 1559.⁴⁷ Busbecq carried the text back to Vienna, accompanied by Ibrahim Beg, the chief dragoman.

It is sometimes said that the Ottoman state, dedicated to expanding the sway of Islam, did not accept fixed boundaries until the Treaty of Karlowitz (1699). In fact, wars of this era between the Ottomans and Venice were concluded by marking out a new boundary between their respective territories in Dalmatia.⁴⁸ For years, Ferdinand had vainly sought fixed borders for his lands in Hungary and Croatia.⁴⁹ Now, Semiz 'Ali Paşa offered to divide the common villages and fix a boundary between them. He seems to have had in mind a kind of no man's land. There could be no firm peace, he told Busbecq, "unless a certain space were left between the territories of both rulers, so that men divided by religion might be distinguished from one another." But Ferdinand was no longer interested.⁵⁰ Ali Paşa accused Busbecq of harshness "because we would not suffer the unfairness of the common villages to be resolved by fixing a border."⁵¹

Frontier soldiers had their own ideas. Even as the treaty was being concluded, Ferdinand complained that Ottoman soldiers were demanding tribute from villagers "on the pretext that these villages are inscribed in a certain book of their emperor."⁵² The grand veziir might have deplored such unprovoked aggression by either side. Yet by his own telling, Semiz 'Ali Paşa was more inclined to peace than his fellow veziers.⁵³ If the *defterdar's* register was not an issue for the 1562 treaty, there were officials at the Porte who had not forgotten it.

The Book of Halil Beg under Maximilian II, 1568–76

By the summer of 1568, the Ottoman understanding of the proposed new treaty was clear to Habsburg officials. A clause in the Turkish text provided that villages not inscribed in the registers did not have to pay Ottoman taxes;⁵⁴ by implication, those inscribed had to pay. According to the Turkish original of

⁴⁵HHStA I 14 Konvolut 4, f. 27–31, alleged border violations for 1559.

⁴⁶Busbecq to Ferdinand, Istanbul, 10 Feb. 1559, HHStA I 14 Konvolut 1, f. 33–34, with terms of the draft treaty, f. 34v–43; f. 39v, the articles in question (nos. 19 and 20 of 22). Cf. Petritsch, *Regesten*, no. 365, p. 132: "Dörfer, die schon bisher an beide Seiten Abgaben leisteten, sind dazu auch weiterhin verpflichtet."

⁴⁷Compare Petritsch, *Regesten*, nos. 365 (31 Jan. 1559), and 385 (2 Aug. 1562).

⁴⁸Rifaat A. Abou el-Haj, "The Formal Closure of the Ottoman Frontier, 1699–1703," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 89 (1969): 467–75; Maria Pia Pedani, *The Ottoman-Venetian Border (15th–18th Centuries)* (Venice, 2017).

⁴⁹The erstwhile kingdom of Croatia had been part of the Hungarian crown since 1102.

⁵⁰Geraard Veltwijck and Nicholas Sick to Ferdinand, Istanbul, [Aug.] 1546 in *Austro-Turcica*, letter 35, pp. 108–12, here p. 110: Grand Veziir Rüstem Paşa says Ferdinand has asked for a defined border "thirteen times;" Busbecq to Ferdinand, 4 Mar. 1562, HHStA I 15 Konvolut 2, f. 99–100, here f. 99. For a reason why Ferdinand was no longer interested in a defined border, see Tracy, "The Road to Szigetvár."

⁵¹Busbecq's final *Relatio*, Dec. 1562, HHStA I 16 Konvolut 3, f. 31–42, here f. 31v. On Busbecq's respect for Semiz Ali, a native of Dalmatia, see Radway, "Vernacular Diplomacy in Central Europe," 85.

⁵²Ferdinand to Busbecq, Paidebrett, 3 Aug. 1562, HHStA I 15 Konvolut 3, f. 141–43, here f. 141v, where I cannot make out all the words: "quam dicunt eos [the villagers] in ___ et ___ imperatoris sui ___ et inscriptos esse." The context indicates reference to a book or register. Cf. Busbecq to Ferdinand, [Vienna?], 2 Dec. 1562, HHStA I 16 Konvolut 3, f. 31–42, here f. 39: as he stopped in Buda on his return, the *paşa* complained that certain villages stopped paying tribute at the news of peace, "even though they were entered in the book of his prince" ("cum tamen essent in librum sui principis relatae").

⁵³Busbecq, Vrančić and Zay to Ferdinand, Istanbul, 18 Mar. 1556, HHStA I 12 Konvolut 5, f. 96–98, here f. 97; Busbecq to Ferdinand, [Vienna?], 2 Dec. 1562, HHStA I 16 Konvolut 3, f. 31–42, here f. 31. Cf. Petritsch, *Regesten*, no. 441, p. 155. For selections of the letters of Semiz 'Ali Paşa during his two terms as *paşa* of Buda, Gizela Prochazka-Eisl and Claudia Römer, eds., *Osmanische Beamtenchriften und Privatbriefe der Zeit Süleymans des Prächtigen aus dem Haus-Hof- und Staatsarchiv zu Wien* (Vienna, 2007).

⁵⁴See note 13.

Selim II's letter of confirmation, Maximilian had "conceded" all places listed in the Ottoman registers.⁵⁵ Moreover, Vienna knew that the sultan had commanded the *paşa* of Buda to ensure that enrolled villages made no payments to landlords who were subjects of Maximilian II.⁵⁶ For the Porte, only one issue remained: there must be a fixed border, with boundary stones, based on the tax books.⁵⁷

If a border were drawn as Semiz 'Ali Paşa envisioned it in 1562, there would have been a no man's land clearly separating the two realms,⁵⁸ implying that governments and leading men on both sides forfeited all claims to lands across the border. But what the Ottomans now had in mind was a different matter. On their side, castle-towns claimed by the Porte,⁵⁹ with their subordinate villages, would "render services only to the Turks." On Maximilian's side, while Habsburg landlords received their accustomed *census*, Ottoman lords would also receive the payments "which villagers of their own accord are accustomed to make."⁶⁰

After Vrančić and Zay returned to Vienna, Albert de Wijs, who had come to Istanbul as Busbecq's secretary, remained at the Porte as Maximilian's resident. In May 1568, Mehmed Paşa Sokullu told De Wijs that the common villages must be divided "according to his emperor's book." He expected that Ibrahim Beg, then in Vienna, would bring back a definitive answer from Maximilian II.⁶¹ Because no such response was forthcoming, the grand vezier hinted at consequences. The sultan would have his *beglerbegs* keep their men within bounds, he said, "but it would be altogether better if the common villages were divided according to the sultan's book, so as to fix a limit that would not be lawful for armed men to cross."⁶²

Ottoman officials had no local maps and seem to have thought of the border as a network of fortified positions. On the Habsburg side, military cartography of border districts, just beginning, made things clear to Maximilian and his advisers.⁶³ A settlement along lines proposed by the Porte would strip away villages and castle towns that Ottoman armies had not even approached in 1566, much less conquered. His Majesty would thus lose by the peace territory he had not lost in the war.⁶⁴ The task of Habsburg diplomats at the Porte was to ward off this further catastrophe.

Vienna's strategy was to seek revision of the Ottoman version of the February 1568 treaty, avoiding reference to the sultan's "book," or minimizing its impact. De Wijs was to bring up an idea Mehmed Paşa had seemed to accept in 1567: disputed points could be settled by a bilateral commission, with consultation of the sultan's "book."⁶⁵ According to De Wijs, the grand vezier "nodded calmly" at this suggestion; this procedure would not displease him, provided that one could "establish firm peace and good neighborliness among subjects on both sides."⁶⁶

As *paşa* of Buda, Sokullu Mustafa Paşa (r. 1566–68), a kinsman of the grand vezier,⁶⁷ occupied a key position in the Ottoman hierarchy. With fifteen *sancakbegs* reporting to him, he was a de facto viceroy of Ottoman Hungary and the natural intermediary for talks between Vienna and the Porte.⁶⁸ Mustafa

⁵⁵See note 20.

⁵⁶See note 18.

⁵⁷Memorandum from the Council of Hungary [late 1567/early 1568], in response to the Porte's demands, HHStAT I 24 Konvolut 1, f. 169–181v, here f. 169.

⁵⁸See note 49.

⁵⁹E.g., Veszprém, then in Habsburg possession; see note 11.

⁶⁰De Wijs to Ferdinand, Istanbul, 23 Apr. 1569, HHStAT I 25 Konvolut 2, f. 125–30, here f. 126.

⁶¹De Wijs to Ferdinand, Istanbul, 11 May 1568, HHStAT I 24 Konvolut 2, f. 42–47, here f. 42, and 26 June 1568, I 24 Konvolut 3, f. 203–5, here f. 204. In Ottoman court style, Suleyman was emperor and Maximilian was "king of Vienna."

⁶²De Wijs to Ferdinand, Istanbul, 29 Oct. 1568, HHStAT I 25 Konvolut 1, f. 25–28, here f. 26.

⁶³Radway, "Vernacular Diplomacy in Central Europe," 63–64; Géza Pálffy, *Die Anfänge der Militärkartographie in der Habsburgermonarchie* (Budapest, 2011).

⁶⁴De Wijs to Maximilian, Istanbul, 23 Apr. 1569, HHStAT I 25 Konvolut 2, f. 125–30, here f. 126v. The Council of Hungary (see note 57) took the same view.

⁶⁵See note 16.

⁶⁶De Wijs to Maximilian, Istanbul, 23 Apr. 1569, HHStAT I 25 Konvolut 2, f. 125–130, here f. 126.

⁶⁷On the Sokullu, Radovan Samardžić, *Mehmed Sokolovitch. Le destin d'un grand vizir* (Lausanne, 1994).

⁶⁸Andreas Birken, *Die Provinzen des osmanischen Reiches* (Stuttgart, 1976). For regular communication between the *paşas* of Buda and key Habsburg officials, Radway, "Vernacular Diplomacy in Central Europe," ch. 3.

Paşa had given “the first impulses” for peace negotiations in 1568,⁶⁹ and early in 1569 Maximilian sent an envoy to sound him out; now too the *paşa* seemed amenable to resolving problems. The envoy highlighted two names on a list of villages wrongly harassed by Ottoman tax collectors. The *paşa* “had the book of his emperor brought to him”; not finding the two villages, he promised to check the rest of the envoy’s list. But on the idea of a bilateral commission, Mustafa Paşa was evasive: “We will see,” he said.⁷⁰

De Wijs died in October 1569; initially promised a one-year term, he had been at the Porte since 1562.⁷¹ Vienna now had to send an envoy having the rank of ambassador, and men of the required standing were not eager to live for untold years among Ottoman “barbarians.”⁷² Maximilian also had to respect national sensibilities: Would Germans trust a Hungarian as ambassador? Or Hungarians a German? He turned for advice to a Fleming, Busbecq, now the tutor of his grandchildren. Busbecq’s contact in Brussels recommended a young Flemish jurist named Karel Rijm, and he accepted.⁷³ Rijm’s instructions (February 1570) summarized previous disputes on common villages, the Ottoman tax register, and the text of Selim II’s letter of confirmation.⁷⁴

When Rijm arrived, the Porte was preoccupied by preparations for the invasion and conquest of Venetian Cyprus. In response, Spain, Venice, and Pope Pius V formed the Holy League after six months of tense negotiations in Rome.⁷⁵ Maximilian was not a member of the League, but the Ottomans still had suspicions.⁷⁶ As Spanish and Venetian fleets mobilized in the summer of 1571, Rijm had troubling news from Flanders, where William of Orange had raised the banner of revolt. Rijm’s brother asked that he be allowed to return home, but the Habsburg official who coordinated diplomatic affairs, *Obersthofmeister* Johann von Trautson, would not consent; these were dangerous times, he said, “and we have no one with whom to replace him [Rijm].”⁷⁷ Meanwhile, Rijm had made little headway. The sultan and his veziers would not under any circumstances set aside a tax register that recorded what they saw as their gains in the 1566 war. The best Rijm could do was to fall back on the usual idea of border commission that could take the sultan’s book into account.⁷⁸

The Ottomans might have been more concerned about their western frontier after the disaster at Lepanto (7 October 1571),⁷⁹ but if so, it was hard to tell from discussions recounted by Rijm. His one success was to have the grand vezier send a written command for Mustafa Paşa of Buda to investigate Habsburg grievances about border violations. Given a translation of the command, Rijm saw that it contained “the old song” about checking the “book” to determine which villages were Ottoman. But Rijm also found something he thought was new:⁸⁰

⁶⁹György Hotzutoti to Maximilian, *Relatio* of his mission, [Vienna?], 4 Mar. 1569, HHStAT I 25 Konvolut 2, f. 79–86, here f. 83v. Cf. the correspondence between Sokullu Mustafa Paşa and Obersthofmeister Johann von Trautson, as indicated in Petritsch, *Regesten*, nos. 531, 532, 536, 536, and 537.

⁷⁰Hotzutoti to Maximilian, 4 Mar. 1569, as in note 68, here f. 82, f. 84. Cf. Maximilian to De Wijs, Vienna, 28 June 1569, HHStAT I 25 Konvolut 3, f. 53–58v, here f. 56v: Mustafa Paşa told Hotzutoti that in his opinion a commission would be useless.

⁷¹De Wijs to Trautson, Istanbul, 18 Mar. 1568, HHStAT I 24 Konvolut 1, f. 48–49.

⁷²E.g., David Ungnad and Karel Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, 9 June 1574, HHStAT I 30 Konvolut 3, 32–33v. The ambassadors were shut up in their lodgings because the annual tribute payment was late. They asked Mehmed Paşa’s leave to come and go in the city (as provided by treaty) so Rijm could be attended for his illness, “but the barbarian did not agree to this in the least.”

⁷³Msgr. De Intenolde to Busbecq [Brussels, 1569], HHStAT I 25 Konvolut 2, f. 90–91v; instructions for Edoardo Provisionali, Vienna, 14 Dec. 1569, HHStAT I 25 Konvolut 4, f. 79–81. In 1567, Maximilian had chosen Vrančić, a (Croatian) Hungarian, and Teuffenbach, a German (Austrian).

⁷⁴Excerpt from the instructions for Rijm, Vienna, 7 Feb. 1570, HHStAT I 26 Konvolut 1, f. 55–57v.

⁷⁵Niccolò Capponi, *The Victory of the West: The Great Christian-Muslim Clash at the Battle of Lepanto* (Cambridge, MA, 2006), ch. 6–9.

⁷⁶Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, 12 Dec. 1571, HHStAT I 28 Konvolut 2, f. 161–70, here 166–67v; see note 8.

⁷⁷[Trautson] to Franciscus Rijm, [October 1571], HHStAT I 28 Konvolut 5, f. 35.

⁷⁸Maximilian to Rijm, Vienna, 12 Oct. 1571, HHStAT I 28 Konvolut 1, f. 4–11.

⁷⁹Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, 21 Oct. 1571, HHStAT I 28 Konvolut 1, f. 48–51, had no news yet.

⁸⁰Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, 7 Jan. 1572, HHStAT I 28 Konvolut 3, f. 10–19, here f. 10v: “hoc unum novum videtur quod liber ille ad Halil Begi Registrum restringitur quod intelligo ante plerosque annos confectum, ac alios novos libros deinceps factos et quotidie fieri quibus plurimae ville antea immunes neque unquam descriptae inscribantur, cui quidem omnes libri abolerentur, si ... Halil Begi libro standum foret.”

What they mean by the book is restricted to the register of Halil Beg, which I understand was drawn up a number of years ago. Newer books have been compiled and are still being compiled, in which many villages hitherto immune and unregistered have been inscribed; these are to be abolished, and ... the book of Halil Beg is to be the norm.

The language that caught Rijm's attention was not in fact new. To be sure, there had been some ambiguity in official Ottoman texts. While the Turkish version of Selim II's letter of confirmation stated that taxes were not to be collected from villages not listed in "that book" (singular), the much-disputed clause in the Turkish version of the February 1568 treaty referred to "tax registers" in the plural.⁸¹ At some point, the Ottoman government chose to resolve any ambiguity by making the "Book of Halil Beg" definitive for the Hungarian frontier. This did not mean accepting the territorial status quo of the 1540s, when the *defter* was first compiled, because other places had been registered as Ottoman conquests proceeded.⁸² What it meant was that decisions about the frontier were to be made at the Porte, not by local commanders.⁸³

Transylvania offered an example of how "the book" could be used. Voivode István Báthory (r. 1571–76) had good relations with its Ottoman overlord and also with Vienna.⁸⁴ In June 1572, Sultan Selim II sent to Buda a list of ninety villages claimed by Transylvania, along the eastern border of the Buda *eyalet*; Mustafa Paşa was to check the list against the Book of Halil Beg. Villages inscribed therein were to be retained for the sultan; concerning the others, the *paşa* should make inquiries because these villages might have been seized by Ottoman *sipahis* without authorization.⁸⁵ The Habsburg monarchy never stood in the same relation to the Porte as Transylvania did. But Selim II's command to Buda showed that the Book of Halil Beg could be an instrument for reining in the ambitions of Ottoman military men.

Yet Rijm found his interlocutors unwilling to consider any changes to the language to which the sultan had agreed in 1568. In July 1572, Sokullu Mehmed Paşa told him that the *paşa* of Buda would soon receive a command concerning villages along his western border, but the ambassador should not even think about raising the question of a treaty revision in a public divan, or in an audience with the sultan.⁸⁶ A month later, Rijm had a copy of the mandate to Buda. He had hoped that reference to "the book" might be omitted altogether, or at least remanded to the consideration of a bilateral commission, but on both counts he was disappointed, and so lodged a complaint. Mehmed Paşa told him to be content with the fact that a mandate for regulating the border had at last been sent, and then "started harping once more on that book."⁸⁷ Maximilian and his advisers had apparently decided that the time for discussing revision of the treaty was not opportune. Mehmed Paşa was certainly of this opinion.⁸⁸ According to Rijm the grand vezier "seemed to nod" at his suggestion that Maximilian could best defend his lawful rights not by "memoranda and disputations" but "in fact and deed" (*reipsa factoque*), as he was now doing.⁸⁹ Up to a point, both capitals understood that some disputes between ambitious frontier lords would only be settled by a trial of arms.

⁸¹See notes 14, 19, 21.

⁸²See notes 38, 39, 40.

⁸³Cf. Emrah Safa Gürkan, "The Centre and the Periphery: Ottoman Cooperation with the North African Corsairs in the Sixteenth Century," *Turkish Historical Review* 1 (2010): 125–63.

⁸⁴Cf. Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, 16 Nov. 1572, HHSSTAT I 29 Konvolut 1, f. 26–29, here f. 26/7, passing on information concerning Debrecen's tax quota in the book of Halil Beg.

⁸⁵HHSSTAT I 28 Konvolut 3, f. 213–15v: the list of ninety villages (f. 214), and "Summa des turggischen Khaisers schreiben an den passa zu Ofen" (f. 215). The next item (HHSSTAT I 28 Konvolut 3, f. 216) is a letter from István Báthory to Maximilian, Arx Gylaw, 14 June 1572, referring to the list of ninety villages, and the mandate to the *paşa* of Buda, "cujus quidem mandate copiam Majestati Vestrae transmittimus."

⁸⁶Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, 9 July 1572, HHSSTAT I 28 Konvolut 5, f. 15–16. The divan or imperial council was made up of the veziers (there were then five) and other high officials.

⁸⁷Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, 14 Aug. 1572, HHSSTAT I 28 Konvolut 5, f. 51–62, here f. 53v.

⁸⁸Rijm to Maximilian, 14 Aug. 1572, as in note 85, here f. 54.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

Maximilian was by now searching for a new ambassador. Rijm “most eagerly awaited” the someone he was told was coming to succeed him.⁹⁰ Names of possible candidates, mostly Hungarian and some German, were proposed by the Hungarian Diet and by magnates lay and clerical.⁹¹ This time the emperor chose a German, David Ungnad, a member of the *Herrenstand* in Styria who later served as president of the *Hofkriegsrat*. One of the eight languages Ungnad reportedly spoke was Hungarian, and his close ties with Lutheran theologians of the Philippist party will also have recommended him to the mainly Protestant Magyar aristocracy.⁹² Ungnad accepted in March 1573 on the understanding that he would serve for one year only⁹³ (he ended up staying until 1578). Rijm was now given the name of his successor but was also asked to stay on for half a year more to “educate” Ungnad in the ways of the Porte.⁹⁴

From the start of his embassy, Ungnad showed an aristocratic punctiliousness about upholding his dignity as an ambassador, a posture he believed the emperor’s dignity required.⁹⁵ He arrived in the Ottoman capital in August, and for the next fifteen months most of the correspondence was signed by both ambassadors and written in Latin.⁹⁶ At the time, there were three Venetian diplomats at the Porte seeking clarification on the terms of a treaty ending the Cyprus war. One of them⁹⁷ told Maximilian’s envoys that Venice knew how villages around Szolnok had been forced against their will to submit to Ottoman rule. Rijm and Ungnad then wrote to ask for Venice’s help in obtaining a revision of the language about common villages that was deceptively inserted into the Turkish text of the 1568 treaty.⁹⁸ But Venice, hard-pressed to protect its own territories, offered no more than a sympathetic ear.

On the main point of their mission, two ambassadors fared no better than one. The Porte’s assumption that Maximilian had accepted the Book of Halil Beg was made clear when Rijm and Ungnad were given a list of seventy villages that refused to pay Ottoman taxes, even though they were said to be listed in the book.⁹⁹ Seconding a letter sent by both men, Ungnad wrote separately to Maximilian, begging his pardon for having accomplished “less than we hoped ... because the circumstances of the Ottomans are now favorable” since the Holy League had broken up.¹⁰⁰ Still, the ambassadors were

⁹⁰Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, 24 Jan. 1573, HHStAT I 29 Konvolut 2, f. 13–14.

⁹¹Archbishop of Esztergom/Gran [Vrančić] to Maximilian, Posenia, 5 Nov. 1572, HHStAT I 29 Konvolut 1, f. 4–7; see also ff. 16, 18, 20–21, 24–25, 29–31, 32–33, 37–38, 49–50, 83–85.

⁹²The only full study is Andreas Mortdmann, *Eine deutsche Botschaft in Konstantinopel anno 1573–1578. Vortrag gehalten in der Teutonia im November 1894* (Bern, 1895). For the diary of his Lutheran chaplain (a professor of theology at Tübingen), Stefan Gerlach des Älteren *Tagebuch der ... zu Constantinopel abgefertigten und durch den wohlgeborenen Herrn David Ungnad... Gesandtschaft* (Frankfurt, 1674). Ungnad inherited the Styrian estates of his uncle, Hans Ungnad: Berndt Zimmerman, “Landeshauptmann Hans Ungnad von Sonnegg (1493–1564). Ein Beitrag zu seiner Biographie,” in *Siedlung, Macht und Wirtschaft. Festschrift für Fritz Posch*, ed. Gerhard Pferschy (Graz 1981), 203–16.

⁹³Ungnad to Maximilian, [end of March 1573], HHStAT I 29 Konvolut 2, f. 131–33.

⁹⁴Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, 12 May 1573 (responding to the emperor’s letter of 22 March), HHStAT I 29 Konvolut 2, f. 171–75; Trautson to Rijm, Vienna, 3 June 1573, HHStAT I 29 Konvolut 3, f. 7–8.

⁹⁵Ungnad to Trautson, Buda, 23 June 1573, HHStAT I 29 Konvolut 3, f. 22–25, here f. 24: he takes as a deliberate insult the fact that the *nasadisten* (gunboats) assigned to conduct him up the Danube have not sailed on time, and has protested rather more vigorously than might have been customary to uphold the “respect” and “reputation” of His Majesty.

⁹⁶Ungnad wrote his letters in German. He also had an assignment to which Rijm was apparently not privy: to sound out the idea of a Habsburg candidacy for the throne of Poland-Lithuania. He decided that even to hint at the issue would be too dangerous: Ungnad to Trautson, Istanbul, 10 July 1574, HHStAT I 30 Konvolut 3, f. 65–68, here f. 66. For an Ottoman perspective, Kemal Bedilli, *Die Polnischen Königswahlen von 1572 und 1576 im Lichte osmanischer Archivalien*, (Munich, 1976).

⁹⁷Marcantonio Barbaro remained in Istanbul as *bailo* during the war. In 1572 Andrea Badoer arrived as an ambassador, and Antonio Tiepolo came in 1573 as Barbaro’s successor. Cf. the 1573 *relazioni* of Barbaro and Badoer in *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato*, ed. Eugenio Alberi (15 vols.; Florence, 1838–65), 3:299–346, 347–68.

⁹⁸Ungnad and Rijm to _____, Istanbul, Aug. 1573, HHStAT I 29 Konvolut 3, f. 121–22v, a letter addressed to “your lordship,” who will have to consult “your Serenity,” i.e. the Venetian government.

⁹⁹Ungnad and Rijm to _____, Istanbul, 9 Oct. 1573, HHStAT I 29 Konvolut 3, f. 134–35. In this case, the “your lordship” addressed seems to have been Mehmed Paşa or one of his colleagues.

¹⁰⁰Ungnad to Maximilian, Istanbul, 12 Oct. 1573, HHStAT I 29 Konvolut 4, f. 33–35v.

nothing if not persistent. They suggested once more that the status of the book might be referred for decision by a bilateral commission, but Mehmed Paşa insisted that a commission was pointless because the villages in question had already been “ceded” to Selim II, as was said in the sultan’s letter of confirmation.¹⁰¹ When they asked him to convey their request to Selim II, they were told that the *padishah* would countenance neither a revision of the treaty nor new language about a commission. It now seemed that pressing things might endanger the peace, such as it was.¹⁰² The ambassadors tried yet again when reports came that the Ottoman naval expedition to reconquer Tunis was going badly, only to get the same answer. Their dispatch of 8 January 1574 concluded this latest report with a confession of hopelessness: “I, Carolus Rijm have not been able to change [the grand vezier’s] mind, and I, David Ungnad, doubt that I can do better if I remain here alone.”¹⁰³

Reports of Ottoman progress in the Mediterranean—Tunis was in fact recaptured in August 1574—led the ambassadors to despair; the government with which they had to deal had now vanquished all its foes.¹⁰⁴ But Maximilian had a new strategy. In January 1574, he sent an envoy to Buda to sound out Mustafa Paşa’s willingness to help the Habsburgs.¹⁰⁵ Apparently on the basis of this discussion, Maximilian then wrote to Sultan Selim. Instead of seeking revision of the 1568 text, he proposed a “prolongation” (*prorogatio*) of the existing treaty for eight years, starting in January 1576.¹⁰⁶ Commenting on this letter, Ungnad and Rijm explained to Mehmed Paşa that Maximilian preferred for the Book of Halil Beg not to be mentioned in documents proclaiming a prolongation, but at this the grand vezier grew so angry that Mahmud Beg, the court dragoman, warned them to drop the topic. This time, their fallback proposal was that a bilateral commission would take the Book of Halil Beg as the basis for discussion, not merely as something to be considered. Mustafa Paşa of Buda would have “responsibility for the interpretation of that book,” together with a commissioner named by Maximilian. This, at last, was a formula to which the grand vezier was not averse.¹⁰⁷

Mehmed Paşa had the chancery prepare a command along these lines for the *paşa* of Buda,¹⁰⁸ of which the ambassadors were given a translation. Ungnad and Rijm reported that the wording was not what they wanted, but they nonetheless found reason for satisfaction because the command going to Buda included the terms “controversy” and “disagreement.” By definition, they said, “these words indicate that in accepting a prolongation, Your Majesty has not accepted the book [of Halil Beg], because ‘controversy’ and ‘disagreement’ contain the idea of contestation.” This language was thus an improvement over the Turkish text of Selim II’s letter of confirmation, which specified that Maximilian had “ceded” the disputed villages.¹⁰⁹

Other issues now intervened. There would be no “prolongation,” Ottomans insisted, until Maximilian razed his new fortress at Kálló,¹¹⁰ near Szolnok. They also demanded that he deliver to

¹⁰¹Ungnad and Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, 1 Nov. 1573, HHStAT I 29 Konvolut 4, f. 59–62v.

¹⁰²Ungnad and Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, 6 Nov. 1573, HHStAT I 29 Konvolut 4, f. 63–64.

¹⁰³Ungnad and Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, 8 Jan. 1574, HHStAT I 30 Konvolut 1, f. 3–6, here f. 3v–4. Tunis became an Ottoman province in 1519 but was conquered by Charles V in 1535 and conquered again by Don Juan of Austria in 1573.

¹⁰⁴Geoffrey Parker, *The Grand Strategy of Philip II* (New Haven, 1998), 140. Ungnad and Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, 2 Apr. 1574 (HHStAT I 30 Konvolut 2, f. 130–131v, and 1 Mar. 1574 (HHStAT I 30 Konvolut 1, f. 164–65). On ceremonies at the Porte celebrating Ottoman victories over their traditional foes east and west, the Shah of Iran, and the Holy Roman Emperor, see Radway, “Vernacular Diplomacy in Central Europe,” 93.

¹⁰⁵Instructions for György Hotzutoti, 18 Jan. 1574, HHStAT I 30 Konvolut 1, f. 23–27v.

¹⁰⁶The letter is described in Ungnad and Rijm to Maximilian, 2 Mar. 1574, HHStAT I 30 Konvolut 1, f. 66–70, here f. 66–67. Cf. Mustafa Paşa to Maximilian, Buda, 6 Feb. 1574, in Petritsch, *Regesten*, no. 732, p. 243, safe conduct for a courier to proceed to Istanbul. The prolongation was to include Maximilian’s brothers in the treaty as well as his sons, a point on which the Ottomans made no difficulty.

¹⁰⁷Ungnad and Rijm to Maximilian, 2 Mar. 1574, HHStAT I 30 Konvolut 1, f. 66–70, here f. 66–67 (“ita ut libri illius hactenus non satis ex Caesare Majestatis parte intellecti intepretandi cura eidem Passae Budensi demandata”).

¹⁰⁸There were also to be letters to Maximilian from Selim II and the Grand Vezier: Ungnad and Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, 23 Apr. 1574, HHStAT I 30 Konvolut 2, f. 171–74v, here f. 172.

¹⁰⁹Ungnad and Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, 23 Apr. 1574, HHStAT I 30 Konvolut 2, f. 171–74v, here f. 173; and both to Maximilian, Istanbul, 4 May 1574, HHStAT I 30 Konvolut 2, f. 200–211v, here f. 204.

¹¹⁰Pálffy, “Origins and Development,” 48, 68.

the Porte two rebels who had found refuge in Vienna: Bogdan IV, a former voivode of Moldova,¹¹¹ and Gáspár Bekes, who challenged István Báthory in Transylvania.¹¹² Maximilian's military advisors thought Kálló too important to be torn down.¹¹³ Mehmed Paşa was somewhat flexible on this point, and in the end Kálló continued to stand, even though Selim II, in the letter of prolongation that was eventually sent to Maximilian, presumed that it was to be torn down.¹¹⁴ As to Bogdan and Bekes, Ungnad suggested it would be better if they were no longer seen at the court in Vienna. Maximilian made excuses; he did not know where Bogdan was, and he did not think he had violated the terms of the treaty by extending hospitality to Bekes.¹¹⁵

By August 1574, Rijm and Ungnad were hoping to influence the language of the two letters they would carry back to Maximilian, one from Selim II, the other from Mehmed Paşa, and were frustrated because the grand vezier would not discuss the matter.¹¹⁶ When they finally got to see translations, in October, they were dismayed once again. It seems Selim II's letter still referred to the "cession" of disputed villages by Maximilian.¹¹⁷ It also called for the destruction of Kálló, and the ambassadors were told the sultan would not hear of any change to the text he had approved.¹¹⁸ There was, however, an interesting bit of court gossip. The *paşa* of Buda's resident secretary at the Porte was heard telling a friend that the Book of Halil Beg ought to be set aside because it did not include many villages that Ottoman *sipahis* currently possessed as part of their *timar* allotments.¹¹⁹ In other words, not all the territories that the Ottomans de facto occupied had been entered into this register. Thus, if Maximilian agreed to take the book of Halil Beg as normative, his noble subjects might in theory be able to recover some of their lost lands.

Ungnad and Rijm persisted in seeking modification of the two letters. By their account, they obtained three changes and decided not to seek a fourth.¹²⁰ By November, the sultan's letter no longer spoke of a "cession" of villages, and language about the destruction of Kálló had been deleted from Mehmed Paşa's letter if not from the sultan's.¹²¹ On 11 November, the last joint letter from both men called attention to the implications of the new language. The Ottomans had for the first time agreed that a bilateral commission was to address "controversies" about the villages, a formulation that was "diametrically opposed" to the claim that Maximilian had simply approved the book of Halil Beg and ceded the villages; thus "Mehmed Paşa will no longer be able to allege" that offensive clause from Selim's letter of confirmation because it was in effect annulled by his new letter prolonging the peace. Because this important change would not have been possible without the grand vezier's cooperation, the ambassadors recommended sending Mehmed Paşa the twelve thousand *thalers* he had been promised if a good result were achieved.¹²²

¹¹¹For Bogdan IV (r. 1568–72), Kemal Beydilli, *Die polnischen Königswahlen und Interregnen von 1572 und 1576 im Lichte osmanischer Archivalien* (Munich, 1976), 65–66.

¹¹²Peter Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354–1804*, 2nd ed. (Seattle 1977), 156–57.

¹¹³Memorandum from the *Hofkriegsrat*, Vienna, 1 June 1574, HHStA I 30 Konvolut 3, f. 3–7v, here f. 3.

¹¹⁴Selim II to "the king of Vienna," [Istanbul, Nov. 1574], HHStA I 30 Konvolut 5b, f. 34–38, here f. 34 (cf. Petritsch, *Regesten*, no. 761, pp. 251–52); extract from a letter of the two orators, 12 Oct. 1574, HHStA I 30 Konvolut 4, f. 188–189v, here f. 188.

¹¹⁵Instructions for Ungnad and Rijm, Vienna, 31 May 1574, HHStA I 30 Konvolut 2, f. 270–77, here f. 270; Ungnad to Trautson, Istanbul, 4 May 1574, HHStA I 30 Konvolut 2, f. 213–16v, here f. 213.

¹¹⁶Ungnad and Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, 7 Aug. 1574, HHStA I 30 Konvolut 4, f. 113–113v.

¹¹⁷On this point, *ex litteris* of the two orators, Istanbul, 1 Nov. 1574, HHStA I 30 Konvolut 5b, f. 7–8.

¹¹⁸Ungnad and Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, [8 Oct. 1574], HHStA I 30 Konvolut 4, 180–180v; *ex litteris* from the two orators, Istanbul, 12 Oct. 1574, HHStA I 30 Konvolut 4f, f. 188–89v.

¹¹⁹*Ex litteris* from the two orators, Istanbul, 12 Oct. 1574, HHStA I 30 Konvolut 4 f, f. 188–89v, and Ungnad to Maximilian, Istanbul, 17 Nov. 1574, HHStA I 30 Konvolut 5b, f. 65–74, here f. 66v. One cannot tell if court gossip of this kind was meant to be overheard.

¹²⁰*Ex litteris* of the two ambassadors, Istanbul, 1 Nov. 1574, HHStA I 30 Konvolut 5b, f. 7–8; for details on how the wording was changed, HHStA I 30 Konvolut 5b, f. 34–38.

¹²¹*Ex litteris* of the two orators, Istanbul, 1 Nov. 1574, HHStA I 30 Konvolut 5b, f. 7–8. Cf. HHStA I 30 Konvolut 5b, f. 34–38, especially f. 34v (cf. Petritsch, *Regesten*, no. 764, pp. 253–54).

¹²²Ungnad and Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, 11 Nov. 1574, HHStA I 30 Konvolut 5b, f. 1–4. Cf. Ungnad to Maximilian, Istanbul, 17 Nov. 1574, HHStA I 30 Konvolut 5b, 65–74, here f. 66.

Before the agreement could be ratified by both parties, it was invalidated by the death of Selim II in December 1574. Murad III (r. 1574–95), the first sultan to have been raised in the harem,¹²³ apparently needed some coaching on how one conducted negotiations with infidels.¹²⁴

As time went on, Ungnad, now Maximilian's sole representative at the Porte, suspected that the resumption of formal negotiations was being delayed so that Ottoman commanders could seize more fortresses and land in the interim.¹²⁵ In the end, Maximilian would not live to see a new treaty (he died on 12 October 1576). But Ungnad had an agreement by November 1576, in terms essentially the same as what had been agreed two years earlier. Rudolf II (r. 1576–1612) promptly approved both the treaty and Ungnad's work in negotiating it.¹²⁶

Some years earlier, Albert de Wijs thought that what happened along the border did not matter: "Turkish border commanders and their men think of nothing except plunder and slaughter, but they cannot hurt us so long as Mehmet Paşa [Sokullu] shows favor to us, for everything is done by his nod, and at his will; his goodwill must be maintained by all means, and especially by large gifts." Even if Maximilian in his response seemed to agree,¹²⁷ the more considered opinion of the Habsburg government was that the Ottomans could not be allowed to regulate the border as they wished, according to their own records. But the net result of eight years of tough bargaining (1568–76) was a minor concession from the Ottomans: the Book of Halil Beg would indeed form the basis of discussion for a border commission, but on the understanding that the Habsburgs disputed some of its provisions.

Neither Maximilian nor his advisers expected border issues to be settled by a commission,¹²⁸ if it ever convened. Yet Rijm and Ungnad took satisfaction in their work.¹²⁹ This slight change in the Ottoman position arguably diminished the dread possibility of another full-scale invasion. Because the Porte now recognized that its land records were not accepted without qualification, border skirmishes were less likely to be elevated to the status of a *casus belli*. This was perhaps what Ungnad meant in writing to Maximilian that the new agreement had "achieved most of Your Majesty's wishes."¹³⁰ In fact, Maximilian was in no position to make demands of the Porte, he could only make requests. The end result, modest as it was, satisfied the conquered Habsburgs as well as the conquering Ottomans. Why this was so can be made clear by a brief look at the strategic aims of Selim II's Ottoman Empire and Maximilian II's Habsburg monarchy.

Reasons of State

De facto, Sultan Suleyman became the ruler of south-central Hungary after his victory at Mohács in 1526. De jure, by Ottoman law, he became lord of the entire kingdom because he had defeated Hungary's previous king in open battle.¹³¹ In Ottoman Hungary, officials followed Hungarian law and custom insofar as it helped them consolidate their position. For example, *paşas* and *sancakbeys*

¹²³For a new interpretation of Murad III and his reign, Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge, 2010), ch. 3.

¹²⁴Ungnad to Maximilian, Istanbul, 15 Jan. 1575, HHStAT I 31 Konvolut 1, f. 41–41v; the new sultan asked why there were Christian ambassadors in residence, with daily allowances paid by the Porte.

¹²⁵Ungnad to Maximilian, Istanbul, 9 Oct. 1575, HHStAT I 32 Konvolut 1, f. 52–56v, here f. 52.

¹²⁶Ungnad to Rudolf II, Istanbul, 27 Nov. 1576, HHStAT I 34 XI / XII, f. 32–32v; Rudolf II to Archduke Ernst, Linz, 3 Dec. 1576, HHStAT I 34 XI/CXII, f. 92–96.

¹²⁷De Wijs to Maximilian, Istanbul, spring 1569, HHStAT I 25 Konvolut 2, f. 125–30, here f. 127; Maximilian to De Wijs, Vienna, 28 June 1569, HHSt I 25 Konvolut 2, f. 53–58v, here f. 54.

¹²⁸Maximilian to Rijm, Vienna, 12 Apr. 1572, HHStAT I 28 Konvolut 3, f. 96–101v, here f. 98–98v; cf. Ungnad to Maximilian, Istanbul, 17 Nov. 1574, HHStAT I 30 Konvolut 5b, here f. 66v: in response to the new capitulation, His Majesty should "temporize and prolong things."

¹²⁹The letter of 1 Nov. 1574, cited in note 121.

¹³⁰Ungnad to Maximilian, Istanbul, 16 Nov. 1574, HHStAT I 30 Konvolut 5b, f. 22–24.

¹³¹Pál Fodor, "Ungarn und Wien in der osmanischen Eroberungsideologie (im Spiegel der *Tarih-I Bec krali*, 17ten Jahrhundert)," in *Quest of the Golden Apple: Imperial Ideology, Politics, and Military Administration in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Pál Fodor (Istanbul, 2000), 45–70, here 56–57. Cf. what Busbecq was told by the *paşa* of Buda in 1554 (HHStAT I 11 Konvolut 4, f. 201–4, here f. 203): "His lord [the sultan] has acquired all of Hungary by his sword."

took advantage of the rule that lordship of a castle entailed lordship of its dependent villages; in some cases, this principle put Habsburg negotiators on the wrong side of an argument about local custom.¹³² Although the Porte described submissions to the sultan's lordship as voluntary,¹³³ Ottoman law, and the law of conquest in particular, was always in the background,¹³⁴ and Ferdinand I's ambassadors had to adapt to it. As a prelude to their petition that the sultan demonstrate his liberality by granting Transylvania to Ferdinand, they first acknowledged that all of Hungary belonged by right to Suleyman.¹³⁵ In Transylvania, as in other lands not directly ruled by the sultan, his grant of authority to the voivode was revocable at will. But the title could not be taken away without his permission. This was a form of law, a conqueror's law, and it provides a context for the Porte's regulation of the border.

In the wake of Ottoman victories in 1566, the Porte gave free rein to its commanders along the southern sector of border, against Croatia,¹³⁶ but not in Hungary. Almost from the start of the post-Szigetvár discussions, Ottoman language about the Book of Halil Beg had a dual aspect: officials insisted that this tax register be taken as normative, but they also stipulated that villages not listed would not be molested.¹³⁷ The first part of the message came through loud and clear, but it took Vienna some years to listen carefully to the second part. Buda's Mustafa Paşa was willing to grant that some villages claimed by Transylvania were not taxable according to the Book of Halil Beg.¹³⁸ Might he do the same for the Habsburgs? Perhaps not. The *paşa's* agent at the Porte seemed opposed to a policy that would have taken land from Ottoman *sancakbegs* or *sipahis*.¹³⁹

Why did Selim II's government place limits on the ambitions of its fighting men in Hungary but not in Croatia? The most obvious reason was that, as Ottoman military planners surely knew, Habsburg defenses were stronger in Hungary than in Croatia.¹⁴⁰ But other considerations were also in play, including the law-bound character of Ottoman government, a point that recent scholarship has stressed.¹⁴¹ While the law recognized "the absolute independence" of the sultan's "supreme authority," it presumed that even the sultan ought to be guided by the "objective rules" of established law.¹⁴² From this perspective, making the Book of Halil Beg normative was a way of subjecting the violence of border life to a legal regimen.

A policy of restraint could also help tighten the Ottoman chain of command. From a strictly military standpoint, it made sense to keep soldiers busy at their trade, while not allowing the men or their commanders to take undue liberties. Without seeking permission from the Porte, *paşas* and *sancakbegs* could authorize raids of some size, if not major attacks.¹⁴³ But they sometimes took it on themselves to reward *sipahis* with an extra village or two, and to have such transactions recorded in a *defter* kept by a local financial official. In so doing, they might offend a Habsburg lord who had the means to fight back, and thus provoke a quarrel that was neither desired nor intended by the Porte. Officials in

¹³²Instructions for Vrančić and Zay, Vienna, 13 June 1553, HHStAT I 10 Konvolut 1, f. 49–65, here f. 58v: instructions for a special plea for villages that Ferdinand had detached from Eger to support Szolnok, now fallen. For a castle town's connection with dependent villages, Archduke Ferdinand to Maximilian, Innsbruck, 19 Nov. 1567, Bibl. *Korrespondenz*, vol. 2, letter 253, pp. 261–69, here 267s.

¹³³See note 40; Ungnad to Trautson, Istanbul, 4 May 1574, HHStAT I 30 Konvolut 4, f. 213v–16, here 214v: Ungnad recommends collecting testimony that villages were in fact coerced to submit after the Szigetvár war had concluded.

¹³⁴E.g., De Wijs to Maximilian, Istanbul, 11 May 1568, HHStAT I 24 Konvolut 2, f. 42–47, here f. 42–42v: "Aliud profecto in tanta huius gentis potentia et felicitate obtinere nihil potuimus, quandoquidem christianis iuribus nulla prorsus loca relinquatur, allegatur solum ius bellicum bonam partem Hungariae occupaverunt atque in hodiernum usque diem possident."

¹³⁵Instructions for Malvezzi, Vienna, 29 May 1554, HHStAT I 10 Konvolut 3, f. 173–86, here f. 181.

¹³⁶Uskok raids into the sultan's lands were more than repaid by Bosnian attacks into Croatia: James Tracy, *Balkan Wars*, ch. 4.

¹³⁷E.g., Vrančić and De Wijs to Maximilian, Istanbul, 20 Mar. 1568, HHStAT I 24 Konvolut 2, f. 62–65.

¹³⁸See notes 44 and 84.

¹³⁹See note 119.

¹⁴⁰Pálffy, "Origins and Development," 49: "The most decisive task in the defense was fulfilled by the border fortress and the district captaincy-generals in Hungary."

¹⁴¹E.g., Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire* (Houndmills, 2002), ch. 6.

¹⁴²Halil Inalcik, "Decision-Making in the Ottoman State," in *Decision-Making and Change in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Caesar E. Farah (Kirkville, 1993), 9–18.

¹⁴³For some examples, Tracy, "Road to Szigetvár."

Istanbul alluded to this practice—and the need to suppress it—as they attempted to convince their interlocutors that Maximilian would serve his own interests by accepting the Book of Halil Beg.¹⁴⁴

Finally, further expansion into Hungary was not a current priority. During his tenure as grand vezier (1566–79), Mehmed Paşa addressed major issues one after another: putting down a rebellion in Yemen (1567–68); attempting to dig a canal between the Don and the Volga so as to strike at Iran across the Caspian Sea (1569); and fighting a naval war in the Mediterranean (1570–74). He also kept an eye on developments that might have adverse implications, like elections for a new king in Poland-Lithuania or the emergence of an independent Muslim power in distant Morocco.¹⁴⁵ From this quasiglobal horizon, the Book of Halil Beg was a useful vehicle for keeping a rein on border commanders, and thus diminishing the likelihood of disturbances in Hungary that might require diverting troops from elsewhere.

Peasants who tilled the soil or pastured their flocks suffered the most from border violence. To judge from written threats issued by rival commanders, it seems villagers might face a choice between being burned out if they failed to pay Habsburg taxes, or carried off into slavery if they failed to pay Ottoman taxes.¹⁴⁶ In the long run, it would prove that the only way to keep the frontier settled was to create a class of free peasants holding land in return for military service.¹⁴⁷ Meanwhile, more and more villages were depopulated, and Habsburg fortresses were left short of provisions and without the peasant labor (*robot*) that repair and upkeep required.

In political terms, what counted most was that border violence threatened the great landed families on whose continued support the monarchy depended. Magnates and nobles, often in separate chambers, spoke for the various provincial estates that voted taxes for the frontier. Magnates and provincial estates provided no small amount of the credit that kept the government afloat.¹⁴⁸ They also held most positions of military command; one finds a virtual roster of Habsburg Hungary's great families in Miklós Istvánffy's contemporary account of the Ottoman wars.¹⁴⁹ Finally, by intermarrying among themselves, the great clans formed a supraterritorial elite that helped to counterbalance national and regional antipathies among the monarchy's subject populations.¹⁵⁰ Despite memorable conflicts over magnate privileges, the interests of the dynasty are hard to distinguish from the interests of its great families.

Some magnate families sought to consolidate their lands, but others found it useful to maintain holdings across a number of Hungary's counties.¹⁵¹ To reclaim family patrimony, or to vindicate the property rights of offices they held, the great men contested the expansion of Ottoman dominion, before and after the Szigetvár war. On one of his missions to the Porte, Antun Vrančić dropped his diplomat's mask and spoke out in the divan as an aggrieved archbishop of Esztergom: even though

¹⁴⁴E.g., memorandum from the council of Hungary [1568], HHSTAT I 24 Konvolut 4, f. 169–81v, here f. 171: “offerendo etiam quod Princeps Turcharum abrogaturus esset omnes illos inscriptiones possessionum, ac villarum, quas Passae ac Beglerbegae finitimi ad hoc usque tempus fecissent in diversos Turchas tanquam illegitimas, et ipsorum libro non inscriptas.” Cf. Rijm to Maximilian, Istanbul, 7 Jan. 1572, HHSTAT I 28 Konvolut 3, f. 10–15, here f. 10v.

¹⁴⁵Samardžić, *Mehmed Sokolovitch*.

¹⁴⁶Juraj Zrinski to the *sancakbeg* of Szigetvár, Canisza, 9 July 1574, HHSTAT I 30 Konvolut 4, f. 183–85v.

¹⁴⁷Karl Kaser, *Freie Bauer und Soldat. Die Militarisierung der agrarischen Gesellschaft in der Kroatisch-Slawonischen Militärgrenze (1535–1881)* (Graz, 1986).

¹⁴⁸For the Habsburg monarchy as a fractious collaboration between the dynasty and the aristocracy, R. J. W. Evans, *The Habsburg Monarchy: An Interpretation* (Oxford 1979); Thomas Winkelbauer, *Österreichische Geschichte 1522–1699. Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht. Länder und Untertanen des Hauses Habsburg im Konfessionellen Zeitalter*, 2 vols. (Vienna, 2003). The provincial estates of sixteenth-century Austria functioned much as they did subsequently: William D. Godsey, *The Sines of Habsburg Power: Lower Austria as a Fiscal-Military State, 1650–1820* (Oxford, 2018).

¹⁴⁹Miklós Istvánffy, *Regni Hungarici Historia Libris XXXV Exacte Descripta* (Cologne 1685). Istvánffy (1538–1615) was a humanist, soldier, administrator and member of the *Hofrat*.

¹⁵⁰Géza Pálffy, “An ‘Old Empire’ on the Periphery of the Old Empire: The Kingdom of Hungary and the Holy Roman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” in *The Holy Roman Empire, 1494–1806: A European Perspective*, ed. R. J. W. Evans and Peter H. Wilson (Leiden, 2012), 259–79, here 275, citing an essay by Thomas Winkelbauer.

¹⁵¹E.g., while the Erdödy concentrated their lands in the area east of Zagreb, the Zrinski/Zrinyi held properties that formed a north-south archipelago, between Monyorókerek in western Hungary and the Vinodol region on the Adriatic: Nataša Štefanec, *Heretik njegova Veličanstva. Povijest o Jurjur Zrinskom I njegovu Rodu* (Zagreb, 2001), 30–35.

Gyula had been lost to the sultan in 1566, if necessary he would assert his proprietary rights over villages in that region and even beyond, as far as Belgrade.¹⁵² The commander of Kanizsa, which had replaced Szigetvár as the anchor fortress for southwestern Hungary, insisted on collecting taxes from villages in the *sancak* of Pécs, conquered by the Ottomans in 1543.¹⁵³ The next commander at Kanizsa was Juraj Zrinski/György Zrínyi, son of Count Nikola IV Zrinski, commander of Szigetvár's heroic defenders. In keeping with his lawful rights, as he understood them, the younger Zrinski collected taxes from villages that had once been subject to Szigetvár.¹⁵⁴ For their part, Ottoman commanders were not timid about defending lands assigned to them by the Book of Halil Beg, and probably a bit more besides. The *sancakbeg* of Zolnok sent out one hundred cavalymen to warn villages that had hitherto paid taxes to both sides that they faced "grave threats" if they did not stop making payments to Habsburg lords. In Slavonia, the northern part of Croatia, Ottoman tax collectors traveled as far as twenty miles beyond the ostensible frontier to inform villagers of their new obligations.¹⁵⁵

For the Porte, the restlessness of border lords was a problem that could be controlled, as noted in the preceding text. These men held their lands by virtue of participation in the sultan's conquering armies; if need be, those who gave the army its orders could rein in their ambitions. For Vienna, the restlessness of border magnates was a problem of a different order: it threatened not only a precarious peace with a more powerful enemy but also the continued survival of the Habsburg Kingdom of Hungary. The magnates held their lands by rights and customs long preceding the advent of Habsburg rule. There had been a time when a Habsburg sovereign could discipline a border prince-ling and still retain his loyalty.¹⁵⁶ Now, after the Szigetvár war, Maximilian II may not have had the luxury of doing so. Had he commanded his magnates to abandon all hope of recovering what they had lost, these local potentates might have chosen to bargain with the Ottomans for a better deal, as men like them had done in the past.

To avoid another war, Maximilian II had to be seen by the Porte as paying Selim II the deference that a conquering sultan demanded. To avoid further discouragement of loyal magnates, His Majesty had to be seen by his subjects as protecting their rights. The treaty language finally agreed to was in one sense little more than a face-saving fiction; the Ottomans showed not the slightest inclination to relinquish any towns or villages listed in their *defter*. But it was also a way of satisfying the conflicting imperatives that Vienna faced. Together with the annual tribute, continued from previous treaties,¹⁵⁷ Maximilian II's formal recognition of the Book of Halil Beg, implying a recognition of Ottoman law, satisfied the Porte's demand for deference. The conditions attached to this recognition, implying that rival claims along the border were not definitively settled, may have been enough to show the great families that His Majesty had not abandoned them. After all, both governments accepted the inevitability of continued skirmishing along the border.¹⁵⁸ With this treaty in place, a magnate who asserted his claims might be less likely to provoke a full-scale invasion by the Ottomans, and less likely to incur the wrath of His Majesty. Hence the paradoxical interdependence of peace and war. Maximilian II's Ottoman diplomacy, meant to forestall another major war, provided at the same time a charter for *Kleinkrieg*.

¹⁵²A recollection concerning "the late archbishop" of Esztergom (Vrančić died in 1573) by David Ungnad: to Maximilian, Istanbul, 17 Nov. 1574, HHStAT I 30 Konvolut 5b, f. 65–74, here f. 67.

¹⁵³Vrančić and De Wijs to Maximilian, Istanbul, 11 May 1568, HHStAT I 24 Konvolut 2, f. 71–90v, here f. 71.

¹⁵⁴Ungnad and Provisionali to Maximilian, Buda, 5 May 1572, HHStAT I 28 Konvolut 4, f. 171–72; Selim II to "the king of Vienna," Istanbul, [Nov. 1574?], HHStAT I 30 Konvolut 5b, f. 34–38, here f. 35. For the patriotic memory of Zrinski at Szigetvár, see his grand-nephew's epic poem: Miklós Zrínyi, *The Siege of Sziget*, tr. László Kőrösy (Washington, DC, 2011).

¹⁵⁵Report from Wolfgang Derffy, 30 Apr. 1568, HHStAT I 24 Konvolut 2, f. 115–17v; memorandum from the council of Hungary, [1568], HHStAT I 24 Konvolut 4, f. 169–81v, here f. 172 (Ottoman tax collectors at Varaždin and Koprivnica).

¹⁵⁶Tracy, *Balkan Wars*, 126–27: Count Nikola IV Zrinski was taken down a peg when Ferdinand allowed his lands to be excluded from a truce with the Porte concluded in 1540.

¹⁵⁷Starting the first treaty, the 1547 Treaty of Edirne.

¹⁵⁸See note 89.

Toward a New Strategy

In December 1576, Ambassador David Ungnad sent a long circular letter to the Austrian estates. With Maximilian's consent, he had sent a previous report to the estates in January.¹⁵⁹ The letter painted a grim picture of Habsburg-Ottoman relations. Ungnad acknowledged the gravity of recent Ottoman conquests in Croatia, a sensitive matter for nearby Austrian duchies.¹⁶⁰ He referred repeatedly to the failed Habsburg candidacy in Poland-Lithuania to show that Maximilian II had not failed to make a serious effort; rather, the fault lay with the insolence of what he called "the rabble" (*pöbl*, here meaning the lesser nobility, the lower house of the Sejm).¹⁶¹ He also warned his peers in the estates not to expect any relief from the recently concluded *Capitulatio* with the Porte: the Ottomans never give back conquered territory, and raids now came almost on a daily basis, even with a treaty in place.¹⁶² In the end, Latin Christians could only trust in God's mercy to spare them from the *Untergang* that had befallen Greek Christians. After some thirty pages, the ambassador came to the point. Following the failure of his plans for Poland, the dear departed emperor had the wisdom to summon the Reichstag, so as to ask the imperial estates for a recurring contribution to help defend the frontier. The Diet had now approved a generous *Türkenhilfe*, yet the sums involved would not be sufficient. The Austrian estates must therefore do their part to build a *Gegenwehr* against the Turks by agreeing to the *Defensionshilfe* requested by the new sovereign, Emperor Rudolf II.¹⁶³

In 1574, Ungnad wrote to Maximilian that changes to the proposed treaty text achieved most of the sovereign's goals.¹⁶⁴ Now, as part of an argument for higher taxes for the border, he acknowledged that the treaty did nothing to prevent Ottoman commanders from expanding the sultan's dominion, bit by bit. Rudolf II was in the process of moving his capital from Vienna to Prague, leaving his brothers, Archduke Ernst and Archduke Karl, to represent the dynasty's interests in its Austrian lands along the Hungarian border. Ungnad's circular letter was an early sign of a sustained effort by the Habsburg government to mobilize support for the costly, long-term project of hardening the frontier.¹⁶⁵ Upon his return from the Porte in 1578, Ungnad became president of the central organ for coordinating military policy, the *Hofkriegsrat* in Vienna.¹⁶⁶ After five years of negotiating with the representatives of a superior power, he knew better than most that diplomacy was not enough.

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¹⁵⁹Arhiv Republike Slovenije Ljubljana, Deželni Stanovi za Kranjsko, Zaporeda St. 210, fascicule 126, 2nd subfolder, 54 pages, hereafter abbreviated as Ungnad 1576; here, pp. 2–3; James Tracy, "Advice from a Lutheran Politique: Ambassador David Ungnad's Circular Letter to the Austrian Estates, 1576," in *Politics, Gender, and Belief: The Long-Term Impact of the Reformation, Essays in Memory of Robert M. Kingdon*, ed. Amy Nelson Burnett, Kathleen M. Comerford, and Karin Maag (Kirksville, 2014), 193–209.

¹⁶⁰Ungnad 1576, p. 4, referring to the losses of the fortresses of Bužim and Cazin (1575), leaving the critical fortress of Bihać in an exposed position.

¹⁶¹Ungnad 1576, pp. 4, 5–6, 18, 27–28, 29–30.

¹⁶²Ibid., pp. 12, 16–17.

¹⁶³Ibid., pp. 30–31, 35, 38.

¹⁶⁴See note 130.

¹⁶⁵For the military reforms of the late 1570s, Nataša Štefanec, *Država ili Ne. Ustroj Vojne Krajine 1578. Godine i Hrvatsko-Slavonskoj Staleži u regionalnoj obrani i politici* (Zagreb, 2011); Tracy, *Balkan Wars*, ch. 5.

¹⁶⁶See note 92.