

The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

Edited by

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WHAT IS INSIDE AND WHAT IS OUTSIDE?
TRIBUTARY STATES IN OTTOMAN POLITICS

Dariusz Kołodziejczyk

A few years ago, a group of Crimean Tatar PhD students from Simferopol attended the East-Central European School in the Humanities held at the University of Warsaw. One of them announced that the aim of her future PhD thesis was to prove that the Crimean Khanate had been a sovereign state, independent from the Ottoman Empire. She had not started the research yet, but her final conclusion was already there. I was not her supervisor, so I could only express my reservations regarding a methodology in which conclusions preceded the actual research. At the same time, inwardly, I thought I was simply witnessing a natural process in which one scholarly abuse triggers an abuse in the opposite direction. If I were a Marxist, I could console myself that sooner or later such extreme views would result in a more cautious Hegelian synthesis.

Over a century ago, when Vasilii Dmitrievich Smirnov published his seminal monograph on the history of the Crimean Khanate, he gave it the title *The Crimean Khanate under the Suzerainty of the Ottoman Porte*.¹ The title was anything but innocent, as Smirnov was neither a dispassionate antiquarian nor a passive witness of historical events. He did great service for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and even catalogued Oriental manuscripts arriving as spoils in St. Petersburg after the Russian–Ottoman War of 1877–1878. In fact, Smirnov perfectly fit the Saidian notion of a European nineteenth-century Orientalist, though Edward Said did not include Russia in his critique of Western academia. By stressing the Crimean Khanate’s lack of sovereignty and its primitive economy, Smirnov consciously exposes its “immature” status and thus convinces the reader that the Russian annexation of the Crimea in the late eighteenth century was a blessing both to its inhabitants and to human civilization. It is no

¹ Vasilii Smirnov, *Krymskoe khanstvo pod verkhoventvom Otomanskoi porty do nachala XVIII veka* [The Crimean Khanate under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Porte until the beginning of the eighteenth century] (St. Petersburg, 1887); recently republished in Moscow in 2005.

wonder that the vision of the khanate as a parasite entity, totally dependent on the Porte, proposed by some—but certainly not all—Russian historians, provoked some Tatar historians to idealize its past and stress its sovereignty.

The correspondence between the Polish and Ottoman courts on the aspect of the khan's sovereignty demonstrates that the matter was equally confusing in the sixteenth century. In 1531, Süleyman the Magnificent notified the Polish court that the Poles did not need to negotiate separately with Sa'adet Giray, since the khan was *not* a sovereign ruler, he owed his position to the sultan, and was obliged to obey him.² The same question arose with the accession of a new khan, Sahib Giray. In January 1533, Süleyman issued an *ahdname* confirming the first "permanent" treaty between the Ottoman Empire and Poland–Lithuania. Since the Polish court pressed the Porte to include the khan in the treaty and oblige him to obey the peace, the sultan's instrument stipulated that Sahib Giray should behave in a friendly manner toward King Sigismund, but the latter should withdraw his assistance toward the Crimean malcontents in return (a clear allusion to İslam Giray, Sahib's nephew and contender for the throne, who enjoyed support at Sigismund's court and among Polish–Lithuanian border commanders).³

The Polish king was still unsatisfied and asked İbrahim Pasha, Süleyman's powerful grand vizier, to strongly order the khan to keep peace

² "(...) calchularete che talle han non sia principe da per si ne in dyparte"; see Warsaw, Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych [hereafter, AGAD], Archiwum Koronne Warszawskie [hereafter, AKW], Dział turecki, karton 66,teczka 29, no. 66; cf. Zygmunt Abrahamowicz, *Katalog dokumentów tureckich: Dokumenty do dziejów Polski i krajów ościennych w latach 1455–1672* [Catalogue of Turkish documents: Documents concerning the history of Poland and its neighboring countries in the years 1455–1672] (Warsaw, 1959), 41. The letter is preserved only in Italian and Latin translations; for the Latin, see *Acta Tomiciana*, vol. 13 (Poznań, 1915), 150–153. On the Polish embassy to Istanbul, headed by Jan Ocieski in 1531, see Andrzej Dziubiński, *Stosunki dyplomatyczne polsko-tureckie w latach 1500–1572 w kontekście międzynarodowym* [Polish–Turkish diplomatic contacts in the years 1500–1572 in an international context] (Wrocław, 2005), 82–85.

³ "Al prezente lo inperator di Tartaria, potentissimo, nominato Sachip Cheraichan, el qual è cresuto a la nostra felicissima Porta e ne le nostre inpreze ett operation suefato tanto, che li è nostro fiol, ett essendo tra noi l'amicitia, li avemo dito che ancor lui vi sia amicho, bisogna che voi eciam teniati con lui bona amicitia ett operar di sorte, che Tartari over parenti del dito inperator che non li siano obedienti ett scanpando da lui abino da voi recapito e cercando aiuto, non li ascoltaretì anci schazarli del vostro paeze e perseguitarli." The document, preserved only in Italian translation, is published in Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman–Polish Diplomatic Relations (15th–18th Century): An Annotated Edition of 'Ahdnames and Other Documents* (Leiden, 2000), 230–231. An analogous clause was entered in the royal document, issued in Cracow, in May 1533; see *ibid.*, 232–233.

with Poland–Lithuania. İbrahim’s letter, written in July 1533, contained a Pythian answer. Admitting that Sahib Giray was like a son to Süleyman and owed his throne to the Porte, the vizier yet stressed that the khan *was* a sovereign ruler and it was not fitting to include him in the instruments exchanged between the sultan and the king.⁴ Nevertheless, he promised to write to the khan, expecting that the latter would maintain a friendship with Sigismund.

Studying the aforementioned correspondence, covering just three years, one gets the impression that the Ottomans were true postmodernists, as they were unable to answer the simple question whether the Crimean khan was a sovereign ruler or not.

My second example comes from Yemen. Conquered between 1538 and 1547, and again in 1569–1570, it remained under loose Ottoman control until the early seventeenth century, to be lost and annexed once more in the nineteenth century.⁵ Nevertheless, the maps enclosed in textbooks of Ottoman history teach us that—unlike Moldavia or Dubrovnik—Yemen was a *regular* Ottoman province and remained as such until World War I. In fact, while the control of lowland Tihama, inhabited by Sunni Shafī‘i Muslims, was relatively easy, in the mountainous north the Ottomans encountered the Zaydi imams, who claimed their own leadership over the people of Islam, and sometimes even the caliphate. To quote a modern French scholar, it was *la rencontre de deux légitimités*.⁶

A prominent scholar of Yemen, Robert Serjeant, made a capital remark regarding the troubles experienced in Yemen by all foreign invaders, beginning with the Abbasids and ending with Egyptian president Nasser in the 1960s: “one broad pattern easily discerned is the entry of foreign conquerors from the lowlands, their initial success but ultimate inability

⁴ “(...) lakin müstakil selatin ‘ıdadından olub başka memlekete vali ve hakimdir bunların ‘ahdnamelerinde anun ahvali bile zikr olunub mukayyed olması münasib görülme-yüb zikr olunmadı”; see AGAD, AKW, Dział turecki, karton 67, teczka 35, no. 78; cf. Abrahamowicz, *Katalog dokumentów tureckich*, 45–46; a contemporary Polish translation is published in *Acta Tomiciana*, vol. 15 (Wrocław and Cracow, 1957), 68–69, and Kazimierz Rymut, ed., *Listy polskie XVI wieku*, vol. 1 [Polish letters from the sixteenth century] (Cracow, 1998), 39–40.

⁵ Cf. Caesar E. Farah, *The Sultan’s Yemen: Nineteenth-Century Challenges to Ottoman Rule* (London, 2002).

⁶ François Blukacz, “Le Yémen sous l’autorité des imams zaidites au XVII^e siècle: une éphémère unité,” in *Yémen, passé et présent de l’unité*, ed. Michel Tuchscherer (Aix-en-Provence, 2004), 39–51, esp. 39. On the Zaydi claim to the caliphate, expressed by the imam’s titles, cf. the seventeenth-century report of the Yemeni ambassador to Ethiopia, al-Haymi, in Emeri Johannes van Donzel, ed., *A Yemenite Embassy to Ethiopia 1647–1649* (Stuttgart, 1986), 84–85.

to conquer the northern highlands and their eventual retreat.”⁷ An early seventeenth-century British traveler claimed that the Ottomans kept 30,000 soldiers in Yemen fighting “continuously in the field against the Arab king in the mountains.”⁸

Ottoman Turkish as well as pro-Ottoman Arab chroniclers employed rich vocabulary to discredit and dehumanize the Zaydi enemies by referring to them and their troops as “bastards” (*haramzadeler*), “the enemies of religion” (*a’da’ al-din*), “heretics” (*ahl al-ilhad*), “idle troops of the devilish army” (*djaysh al-batil min al-djundi’l-shaytani*), and—perhaps most typically—as “insects” (*hasharat*).⁹ Yet, sooner or later, subsequent Ottoman commanders learned that Yemen was unconquerable. Thus, another policy and language had to be adopted. Qutb al-Din al-Nahrawali, a pro-Ottoman Arab chronicler, related the negotiations that took place in 1570 following the seven-month siege of the Yemeni fortress of Kawkaban by the Ottoman army. Seeing the futility of his efforts, Sinan Pasha, the Ottoman commander-in-chief, entrusted his local Arabic adviser with writing a letter to Muhammad bin Shams al-Din, the Zaydi commander of the fortress. In the letter, the addressee was titled “my brother” (*ya akhi*) and was assured that the Ottoman sultan “was not in need of these lands” since he “ruled most of the inhabited world,” yet his will must not be defied. Therefore, assured the author on behalf of the Ottoman commander, the pasha “will not reject your *request* but will [only] stipulate that the sermon and currency (*al-khutba wa al-sikka*) be in the name of the sultan¹⁰ [...] and [after you fulfill these conditions] he will issue authority

⁷ Robert B. Serjeant and Ronald Lewcock, eds., *San’ā: An Arabian Islamic City* (London, 1983), 77.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 109 (in the chapter on the “Western Accounts of San’ā 1510–1962” by R.L. Bidwell); the passage refers to Joseph Salbank from the East India Company.

⁹ The epithet *haramzadeler* was constantly used by Rumuzi, a sixteenth-century Ottoman chronicler; see Jane Hathaway, *A Tale of Two Factions: Myth, Memory, and Identity in Ottoman Egypt and Yemen* (Albany, NY, 2003), 64–65. All the remaining epithets can be found in the Arabic chronicle of Rumuzi’s contemporary, Qutb al-Din Muhammad al-Nahrawali al-Makki, a pro-Ottoman Muslim scholar from Hejaz; for the English translation, see Qutb al-Din al-Nahrawālī al-Makkī, *Lightning over Yemen: A History of the Ottoman Campaign (1569–71)*, trans. Clive K. Smith (London and New York, 2002), 41, 59, 61 (Smith’s translation reads “devilish troops of the false army”) and 126; for the Arabic text, see Qutb al-Din Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Nahrawali al-Makki, *al-Barq al-yamani fi’l-fathi’l-uthmani*, ed. Hamd al-Jasir (Riyadh, 1387 AH/1967 CE), 248, 274, 277, and 372; on the term *hasharat*, cf. also Farah, *The Sultan’s Yemen*, 31.

¹⁰ Pronouncing the ruler’s name during the Muslim Friday prayer (Ar. *khutba*; Tur. *hutbe*) and engraving his name on the coins (Ar. *sikka*; Tur. *sikke*) were the traditional attributes of sovereignty in the Muslim world. By consenting to the Ottoman request, Muhammad bin Shams al-Din would formally acknowledge the authority of the Ottoman sultan.

for you to have the standard your father had in the past.”¹¹ As a result of the ensuing negotiations, Muhammad bin Shams al-Din was granted the attributes of power: a standard and an imperial diploma (*berat*), according to whose tenor he had admitted his error and prostrated before the Ottoman might, whereas Sinan Pasha “made him subject to pacts and agreements and imposed on him conditions and limits.”¹² In short, he was granted his own lands by the Ottoman sultan on the sole condition that he would formally accept Ottoman suzerainty.

The above narration is quite striking in its resemblance to official Ottoman reports on peace negotiations with Christian European rulers. And Muhammad bin Shams al-Din was not even a Zaydi imam! His uncle, Imam al-Mutahhar, repeatedly challenged Ottoman sovereignty and negotiated several peace treaties with the Porte, first in 1552,¹³ and then—after his rebellion—in 1570.¹⁴

The peace in Yemen did not last long and soon another Zaydi pretender, Imam al-Qasim, raised the standard of rebellion. He concluded peace treaties with successive Ottoman pashas in 1602, 1608, and 1619.¹⁵ His territories first encompassed only the mountain fortress of Shahara, but then also Sa’ada and al-Hayma. His son Imam al-Mu’ayyad continued the struggle against the Ottomans, and the last Ottoman garrisons evacuated Yemen by 1635, to return only in the nineteenth century. Paradoxically, as a modern expert remarks, “at no time did [the Ottomans] abdicate their sovereign rights over the land, for Yemenis still looked to them and their agents for protection” against foreign—especially European—danger. “Ironically,” concludes Caesar Farah, “the imam sought autonomy only.”¹⁶

And Yemen was not alone. Baki Tezcan quotes a document of Sultan Süleyman from around 1536, granting hereditary rule, land property rights, tax exemptions, and wide autonomy to the Kurdish emirs in return for

¹¹ *Lightning over Yemen*, 161; *al-Barq al-yamani*, 419.

¹² “(…) akhadha ‘alayhi al-muwathiq wa’l-‘uhud wa ashtarata ‘alayhi al-shurut wa hadda ‘alayhi al-hudud”; see *Lightning over Yemen*, 165–167; *al-Barq al-yamani*, 423–426.

¹³ John R. Blackburn, “The Documents on the Division of Ottoman Yemen into two *Beglerbeglik*s (973/1565),” *Turcica: Revue d’études turques* 27 (1995): 223–236, esp. 230.

¹⁴ *Lightning over Yemen*, 170–171; *al-Barq al-yamani*, 430–431.

¹⁵ Frédérique Soudan, *Le Yémen ottoman d’après la chronique d’al-Mawza’i* (Cairo, 1999), 270; Yahya bin al-Husayn, the seventeenth-century Yemeni chronicler and grandson of Imam al-Qasim, referred to all these treaties as *al-sulh*, a term equally fitting the “domestic” or “international” peace; see idem, *Gayat al-amani fi akhbari’l-qutri’l-yamani* [The ultimate desire to acquire the knowledge of the country of Yemen] (Cairo, 1388 AH/1968 CE), pt. 2, 783, 794, and 811.

¹⁶ Farah, *The Sultan’s Yemen*, 1 and 272.

their loyalty to the Ottomans. The document is referred to as a *mu'ahede* (a term identical with an *'ahdname*, granted also to foreign rulers) and is corroborated by the sultan's solemn oath (*yemin . . . ıderim ki*).¹⁷ Some of the Kurdish territories, which retained their autonomy until the nineteenth century, were situated deep inside the Ottoman domains, hence they could not even be labeled as frontier or borderlands.

There were many more local Muslim rulers whose position was analogous, to mention only the sharifs of Mekka, Daghestani *shamkhals*, or even some provincial notables, like the Lebanese Ma'ns who enjoyed local autonomy long before the era of the *ayans*. These minor rulers were often accused of duplicity as the Ottomans never accepted their full sovereignty.¹⁸ The term "mountain bandits" (*eşkiya-i cebeliyye*), by which Ottoman authors referred to the Christian Montenegrins—known as the notorious "rebels" (or "freedom fighters")—could equally apply to the Yemeni Muslim Arabs who inhabited the opposite corner of the empire.¹⁹

At first glance, Poland and Yemen do not seem to have much in common. And yet, in the seventeenth century, their history was interrelated. Hacı 'Ali, a seventeenth-century Ottoman chronicler of the last decades of Ottoman rule in Yemen, describes how, in 1622, the Ottoman governor Fazli Pasha waited desperately for reinforcements from Istanbul. The chronicler explains that no help could arrive due to the janissary rebellion and the murder of Osman II, both resulting from the sultan's ill-fated campaign against Poland, effected in 1621 (the so-called *Hotin seferi*).²⁰ When assistance finally arrived, it was probably too late; the Ottomans had

¹⁷ Baki Tezcan, "The Development of the Use of 'Kurdistan' as a Geographical Description and the Incorporation of this Region into the Ottoman Empire in the 16th Century," in *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilisation*, ed. Kemal Çiçek (Ankara, 2000), vol. 3, 540–553, esp. 547 and 553.

¹⁸ Rudi Matthee invokes the opinion about "the Kurdish duplicity" which was shared by both the Safavid and Ottoman chroniclers; see idem, "The Safavid-Ottoman Frontier: Iraq-i Arab as Seen by the Safavids," in *Ottoman Borderlands: Issues, Personalities and Political Changes*, ed. Kemal Karpat and Robert Zens (Madison, WI, 2003), 157–173, esp. 168–169. Analogously, also the Tatars, Moldavians, and Ukrainian Cossacks who strove toward independence or greater autonomy from the neighboring powers centered in Istanbul, Warsaw, and Moscow, were typically labeled as "treacherous" by Ottoman, Polish, and Russian authors.

¹⁹ For the term *eşkiya-i cebeliyye*, almost synonymous with the Montenegrins in the Ottoman bureaucratic jargon, see Maurus Reinkowski, "Double Struggle, No Income: Ottoman Borderlands in Northern Albania," in *Ottoman Borderlands*, 239–253, esp. 242n10.

²⁰ All these events are recorded on the same page of the chronicle; see Hacı 'Ali, "Ahbarü'l-yamani" [Information about Yemen], Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, ms. Hamidiye 886, fol. 205a; cf. Hathaway, *A Tale of Two Factions*, 86–87 and 221n50. On the importance of the Polish campaign of 1621 for Ottoman domestic politics, see Baki Tezcan,

pulled out of Yemen by 1635. In 1672, the Porte contemplated a reconquest of the province.²¹ Again, these plans were frustrated by a more urgent campaign against Poland. The latter resulted in the Ottoman annexation of the southeastern Polish provinces (Podolia and the Cossack Ukraine which gained autonomy under Ottoman patronage), while the Polish king consented to pay a tribute and was formally reduced (albeit temporarily) to the status of an Ottoman tributary.

There was another element that linked Yemen and Poland: their rulers concluded peace treaties with the Porte and obtained *'ahdnames* from the Ottoman sultans. One is tempted to ask, somewhat provocatively: what makes a modern historian resolve that Yemen lay *inside* the Ottoman Empire, while Poland, Venice, and a number of other countries, lay *outside*? If judged according to the intentions of Ottoman propaganda, rulers such as the Yemeni imam, the Venetian doge, the Habsburg emperor (referred to as *Beç kiralı*, i.e., the “king of Vienna”), the Polish king, and—last but not least—the Russian tsar were *all* Ottoman vassals, at least for a time.²² In reality, all these countries preserved sovereignty although none of them could entirely ignore Ottoman diplomatic pressure or open military threats.²³ Ottoman influence was at best disputable, often negligible,

“Khotin 1621, or how the Poles Changed the Course of Ottoman History,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 62 (2009): 185–198.

²¹ Hathaway, *A Tale of Two Factions*, 91.

²² Even though the Polish king engaged to pay a tribute only once (in 1672; in fact, this tribute was not paid), the Porte could always argue that the Polish king was a tributary of the Crimean khan who, in turn, was a vassal of the sultan; on this issue, see my article “La Res Publica polono-lituanienne était-elle le vassal de l’Empire ottoman?” in *Studies in Oriental Art and Culture in Honour of Professor Tadeusz Majda*, ed. Anna Parzymies (Warsaw, 2006), 125–136. Likewise, the tsars also sent annual “gifts” to the khans until 1685 (the custom was formally abolished in 1700). Interestingly, the alleged tributary status of the tsar compromised Moscow’s negotiating position in its early encounters with Beijing. A. Ruslanov, a baptized Crimean Tatar turned Russian diplomat in the service of the Yakutsk governor, deserted to China and spent over two decades in the Manchu dynasty’s service. By presenting the Russian tsar as a Crimean tributary, Ruslanov weakened Russia’s prestige and position in the Russian–Chinese negotiations that took place in the 1670s; see Vladimir Miasnikov, *The Ch’ing Empire and the Russian State in the 17th Century* (Moscow, 1985), 86 and 159–160.

²³ For instance, in both Venice and Poland the idea of a crusade was quite unpopular and commonly dismissed as suicidal. Infrequent cases when these two states entered the Holy Leagues can be explained by earlier Ottoman invasions (e.g., of Cyprus in 1570), which left Venetians and Poles little choice but to join the Habsburgs, with whom they were usually at odds. Ottoman political pressure also played a role in elections to the Polish throne in 1573, 1575, and 1587, all won by anti-Habsburg candidates (Henry Valois, Stephan Báthory, and Sigismund Vasa, respectively). Yet, the catchy title “Lehistan’da türk hakimiyeti” [Turkish rule in Poland], given by Ahmed Refik to his classical article devoted to this subject, does not do justice to the compact political situation and entirely ignores

but at times the rulers concerned consciously invoked the sultan's authority in their disputes with other courts. While the Yemeni imams could use the Ottoman "umbrella" against the Portuguese, Dutch, or English invaders, the Polish kings found it equally useful in their disputes with Vienna, Stockholm, and St. Petersburg in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries respectively.

By analogy, one could ask why modern historical maps depict the Kurdish principalities, such as Bitlis, as "regular" Ottoman lands, while the Crimean Khanate, Moldavia or Cossack Ukraine (in the years 1672–1699)²⁴ are depicted by stripes which refer to their tributary status. In the seventeenth century, the rulers of all the aforementioned countries received Ottoman *berats*, which embodied their dependence on Istanbul but also granted them substantial autonomy. It seems that the more we study the Ottoman realities, the more "stripes" we can see. Like any other early modern ruler, the Ottoman sultan faced constant challenges to his legitimacy with regard to his expected role as distributor of justice, provider of security, and Muslim *gazi*. Negotiation with his own subjects, not just external monarchs, was part of the sultan's *métier*. In fact, the difference between the "domestic" and "external" realms was often blurred.²⁵

domestic factors that influenced the results of the Polish elections; cf. idem, "Lehistan'da türk hakimiyeti," *Türk Tarih Encümeni Mecmu'ası* 14 (1340 AH/1924 CE): 227–243; for more balanced views of Polish historians who admit the importance of Ottoman pressure in the Polish elections but do not treat it as the most decisive factor, see Wojciech Hensel, "Uwagi o stosunkach polsko-tureckich w XVI wieku do panowania Stefana Batorego" [Remarks on the Polish–Turkish relations in the sixteenth century until the reign of Stephan Báthory], in *Stosunki polsko-tureckie: Materiały z sesji naukowej zorganizowanej przez Instytut Orientalistyczny i Towarzystwo Polska Turcja w 1988 roku*, ed. Tadeusz Majda (Warsaw, 1995), 19–29, esp. 23–26; Dziubiński, *Stosunki dyplomatyczne*, 261–262, 269, 273; and my review of the latter book in *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 114, no. 4 (2007): 101–110, esp. 109.

²⁴ As early as 1669, Petro Doroshenko received attributes of power, including a standard and an imperial diploma (*berat*), from Sultan Mehmed IV. According to the imperial diploma, the status of the Cossack hetman was to be equal to the status of the rulers of Wallachia and Moldavia, although the hetman was not obliged to pay tribute; see Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, "Tertium non datur? Turets'ka al'ternatyva v zovnishnii politytsi Kozats'koi derzhavy" [Tertium non datur? Turkish alternative in the foreign policy of the Cossack state], in *Hadjats'ka unija 1658 roku*, ed. Pavlo S. Sochan' (Kiev, 2008), 67–80, esp. 72–74.

²⁵ By analogy, Polish kings used to send envoys to foreign courts, such as Vienna, Paris, and Moscow, but also to Königsberg and Mitau, the capitals of the duchies of Prussia and Courland, whose rulers were Polish tributaries, and even to Danzig and Riga, the royal cities that acknowledged the royal suzerainty and were *de iure* situated within Poland–Lithuania, but nevertheless enjoyed large autonomy; cf. *Historia dyplomacji polskiej* [History of the Polish diplomacy], vol. 2, 1572–1795, ed. Zbigniew Wójcik (Warsaw, 1982), 88–89 and 129. Moreover, the kings often negotiated and exchanged envoys with the hetmans of the Ukrainian Cossacks, the leaders of formalized noble rebellions (called *rokosz* or *konfederacja*, i.e., confederation, and claimed to be legal by their participants, who depicted

To further emphasize my point, I propose to compare the status of several political entities vis-à-vis the Porte, measured merely by such formal criteria as the obligation: (a) to pay tribute, (b) to provide military assistance, and (c) to pronounce the sultan’s name during the Friday prayer (Tur. *hutbe*; Ar. *khutba*):

Table 1. Ottoman “vassals” and their obligations

| rulers of | tribute | military assistance | hutbe |
|---|-----------------|---------------------|-------|
| Moldavia | x | x | — |
| Wallachia | x | x | — |
| Transylvania | x | x | — |
| Georgian kingdoms and principalities | x | x | — |
| Dubrovnik | x | — | — |
| Venice | x | — | — |
| Austria (or perhaps the whole Habsburg Empire?) | x ²⁶ | — | — |
| Poland-Lithuania | x ²⁷ | — | — |
| Muscovy/Russia | x ²⁸ | — | — |
| Cossack Ukraine ²⁹ | — | x | — |
| Crimean Khanate | — | x | x |
| Bitlis and other Kurdish beyliks | — | x | x |
| some Arab tribes | — | x | x |
| Hejaz | — | — | x |

themselves as the defenders of the Commonwealth’s constitution), and even with the representatives of rioting soldiers who collectively negotiated the payment of overdue salaries.

²⁶ The tribute, formally—at least in Habsburg eyes—paid from Royal Hungary, was discontinued after 1606, although, contrary to long-lasting belief, it was *not* formally abolished by the Treaty of Zsitvatorok; cf. Gustav Bayerle, “The Compromise of Zsitvatorok,” *Archivum Ottomanicum* 6 (1980): 5–53, esp. 27.

²⁷ Stipulated by the Treaty of Buczacz (1672), but not paid. Nonetheless, according to the Polish–Ottoman treaties, the kings were obliged to send annual “gifts” to the Crimean khans, who were Ottoman vassals. This obligation was formally abolished by the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699 (in fact the practice was discontinued already in 1683).

²⁸ Like the Polish kings, the tsars were obliged to send annual “gifts” to the Crimean khans, who were Ottoman vassals. This obligation was formally abolished in 1700 (in fact the practice was discontinued already in 1686).

²⁹ Formally—in Ottoman eyes—in the years 1669–1699 and 1711–1714; on the first period cf. note 24 above; on the second period, see Omeljan Pritsak, “Odyn chy dva dohovory Pylypa Orlyka z Turechchynoiu na pochatku druhoho desiatylittia visimnadsiatoho stolittia?” [One or two treaties of Pylyp Orlyk with Turkey at the beginning of the second decade of the eighteenth century?], *Ukraïns’kyi Arkheohrafichnyi Shchorichnyk* n.s. 1 (1992): 307–320. In both cases, actual Ottoman control over Cossack Ukraine was much shorter. The Cossack hetman was the sultan’s only Christian vassal who was not obliged (at least for the time being) to pay tribute, either directly to the Porte or to the Crimean khan.

Table 1 (*cont.*)

| rulers of | tribute | military assistance | hutbe |
|--|---------|------------------------|-------|
| northern Yemen | — | — | x |
| Aceh (northern Sumatra) and Maldives ³⁰ | — | — | x |
| Kashgar ³¹ | — | — | x |
| <i>etc.</i> | | | |

The composition of the above table might cause the reader to doubt its author's sanity. Yet, by drawing this seemingly absurd list I want to draw the reader's attention to the viability of such "objective" criteria by which modern historians like to depict and classify early modern political organizations. The fetishization of state sovereignty, still apparent in modern historical writing (especially, but not exclusively, in regard to post-Westphalian Europe), is hardly useful if one aims to describe the more nuanced political mosaic that was typical for the early modern world and which did not disappear in 1648.³² In the seventeenth century, Russia extended to the Pacific Ocean, but continued to send tribute to the Crimean khan, who was in turn an Ottoman vassal. Even though common sense refuses to regard Russia as well as Venice, the Habsburg Empire, or Poland–Lithuania as Ottoman vassals, a historian must deal with the fact that their consent to send tribute to their Muslim neighbors did affect their sovereignty—at least *de iure*.

By comparing Moldavia with Poland on the one hand and with Yemen on the other, I would argue that the status of a so-called Ottoman tributary state was less unique and unusual than is often argued. Judging by the

³⁰ See Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (Oxford, 2010), 124–130 and 149 (the map entitled: "Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's Soft Empire 1565–1579").

³¹ In the 1870s, Yakub Beg, the ruler of Kashgar, sent two successive embassies to Istanbul and agreed to pronounce the name of Sultan Abdülaziz in the hutbe in the hope of receiving Ottoman assistance against China; see Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire 1856–1876* (New York, 1973), 273; Mehmet Alpargu, "Khanates of Turkestan," in *The Turks*, vol. 2, *Middle Ages*, ed. Hasan Celâl Güzel, C. Cem Oğuz, and Osman Karatay (Ankara, 2002), 899–922, esp. 914–915 and 921.

³² To quote Andreas Osiander: "Westphalia—shorthand for a narrative purportedly about the seventeenth century—is really a product of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century fixation on the concept of sovereignty"; see idem, "Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth," *International Organization* 55 (2001): 251–287, esp. 251; for another revisionist approach toward the perception of the year 1648 as a turning point in the history of international relations, see Benno Teschke, *The Myth of 1648: Class, Geopolitics and the Making of Modern International Relations* (London and New York, 2003).

nature of their relations vis-à-vis the Porte, these three countries would all roughly fit in the vague category “between annexation and mere alliance,” described as typical for imperial structures by Garry Runciman.³³ Instead of asking whether such political entities as Moldavia, Dubrovnik, the Cossack Ukraine, the Crimean Khanate, Yemen, or Bitlis were sovereign or not, it seems more reasonable to discuss the degree of their sovereignty in a given sphere and in a given period by examining not merely formal, legal criteria, but also such aspects as their political and military ability to defy the sultan’s will, the strength of their economic links with the imperial center, and, last but not least, their participation in a shared imperial culture.³⁴

In fact, there was nothing abnormal in the limited sovereignty enjoyed by the Ottoman tributary states. Both in the early modern era and in the twentieth century, a large number of Europeans, not to mention the inhabitants of other continents, lived in political entities that were not fully sovereign or not sovereign at all. Also today, unless one is a citizen of the United States, or perhaps China or North Korea, one cannot claim that their government is fully sovereign (and perhaps it is for the better).³⁵

³³ W.G. Runciman, “Empire as a Topic in Comparative Sociology,” in *Tributary Empires in Global History*, ed. Peter Fibiger Bang and C.A. Bayly (Basingstoke, 2011), 99–107, esp. 99.

³⁴ Ottoman court ceremonial, architecture, fashion, music, and cuisine were adopted by provincial elites, Muslim as well as non-Muslim; for the impact of the Ottoman ceremonial blueprint at the seventeenth-century Moldavian court in Iași, see Michał Wasiucionek, “Diplomacy, Power and Ceremonial Entry: Polish-Lithuanian Grand Embassies in Moldavia in the Seventeenth Century,” *Acta Poloniae Historica* 105 (2012): 55–83, esp. 81. Attraction to Ottoman culture is also visible in the writings of Demetrius Cantemir (1673–1723), a future prince of Moldavia educated in Istanbul, notwithstanding the fact that he ended life as a refugee in Russia; cf. the subchapter “Ottoman or Not? An Educated Non-Muslim,” devoted to Cantemir in Suraiya Faroqui, *Subjects of the Sultan: Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire* (London and New York, 2005), 81–85. Numerous recent studies within the so-called new cultural history trend aim to rehabilitate political culture and ceremonial as not merely void ornaments but rather the factors that have continued to influence “real” politics well into the modern era; in the context of the Habsburg Holy Roman Empire, see Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, *Des Kaisers alte Kleider: Verfassungsgeschichte und Symbolsprache des Alten Reiches* (Munich, 2008); in the context of the British Empire, see David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford and New York, 2001); in the context of Byzantium, the Arab Caliphate, and their successor states in the Orthodox and Islamic worlds, see Garth Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ, 1993). For more general thoughts, see Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, “Symbolische Kommunikation in der Vormoderne: Begriffe—Thesen—Forschungsperspektiven,” *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 31 (2004): 489–527.

³⁵ According to Osiander: “the global system today in certain respects bears more resemblance to the type of system exemplified by the Holy Roman Empire than to the

Being much more heterogeneous than it has been admitted in earlier historiography, the Ottoman Empire owed its longevity to its composite character and its functioning was conditioned by the cooperation of provincial elites—Muslim and Christian alike.

so-called Westphalian model. There is a clear de facto trend in international politics away from classical sovereignty and toward something closer to *Landeshoheit*, territorial jurisdiction under an external legal regime shared by the actors. Like the estates of the empire, modern states are also tied into a complex structure of governance that creates a network both of cooperation and of mutual restraint"; see Osiander, "Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth," 283. Parallels between the Holy Roman Empire and the contemporary European Union, already suggested by Osiander, have been further explored by Peter Haldén, who looks for analogies between the medieval/early modern universal order(s) and the globalized, interdependent world system of the early twenty-first century; see his *Stability without Statehood: Lessons from Europe's History before the Sovereign State* (Basingstoke, 2011).