

Original paper
UDC: 94(560:497.584 Dubrovnik)
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21857/ydkx2cr1r9>

***PER FAVORE DELLA SOLTANA:
POWERFUL OTTOMAN WOMEN
AND RAGUSAN DIPLOMATS****

VESNA MIOVIĆ

ABSTRACT: This article is based mainly on the letters and instructions written by the Ragusan government to its tribute ambassadors to Istanbul. Also used are the scanty surviving letters that the ambassadors addressed to their government in Dubrovnik. Although only a few Ottoman documents touch upon this topic, the information they provide has proved invaluable for this research. Emphasis has been placed on the Ragusan business dealings with Mihrimah Sultan, famous daughter of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent, as well as the relations of the Ragusan diplomats and the imperial harem.

Keywords: Ottoman Empire, Republic of Dubrovnik, diplomacy, sultanas

In 1458 Dubrovnik Republic started paying tribute to the Ottoman Empire. However, it was not until the death of Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror, who, since the conquest of Bosnia in 1463, resorted to various kinds of pressure against the Republic, aimed evidently at its full subjugation, that the Republic

This article has already been published in Croatian under the following title: »*Per favore della soltana: moćne osmanske žene i dubrovački diplomati*«. *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 56/1 (2018): pp. 147-197. Translated by Vesna Baće.

* This research has been supported by the Croatian Science Foundation, under the project number 5106.

Vesna Miović, member of the Institute for Historical Sciences of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Address: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU, Lapadska obala 6, 20000 Dubrovnik, Croatia. E-mail: vesna.miovic@du.t-com.hr.

began to enjoy a relatively secure status. With the accession of Bayezid II, Ragusan tribute stabilised at an annual amount of 12,500 ducats.¹ From the 1580s, Dubrovnik Republic bordered with the Ottoman Empire along its entire land frontier. The Ottomans never crossed this line, presumably because they calculated that the Republic could be of far more benefit to them as an independent state than as a province within the Empire. Being neutral, Dubrovnik port operated even in war conditions. The Empire needed able Ragusan merchants, as well as Ragusan intelligence on the West.² The Ottomans would not have enjoyed any of these benefits had they imposed the usual vassal restrictions upon Dubrovnik. Hence the Republic maintained a very high level of freedom—that is, within the limits set by the mighty Ottoman neighbour.³

Relations between Dubrovnik Republic and the Sublime Porte rested on the so-called tribute ambassadors, two noblemen appointed to deliver the tribute (*haraç*), in addition to their diplomatic and consular duties in Istanbul. Dubrovnik consular office to Istanbul was established as late as 1688, and besides consuls, in the eighteenth century it was also staffed by a Ragusan *chargé d'affaires*.⁴

Ambassadors were instructed to deliver the tribute to the sultan regardless of his whereabouts. Most commonly it was in Istanbul, Edirne at times, Belgrade or elsewhere. Delivery of *haraç* was usually accompanied by appropriate diplomatic gifts to the sultan, viziers and other dignitaries and officials of the Porte, and generally included money, silver-gilt platters and a variety of luxury fabrics, such as satin, silk, damask, velvet and cloth. Some unusual gifts were

¹ From early eighteenth century to the fall of the Dubrovnik Republic in 1808, Ragusans paid tribute in silver coins every third year.

² On Ragusan intelligence see: Ivan Dujčev, *Avvisi di Ragusa; Documenti sull'Impero Turco nel sec. XVII e sulla guerra di Candia*. Roma: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1935; Nikolaas Hendrik Biegan, »Ragusan spying for the Ottoman Empire; Some 16th century documents from the State Archives at Dubrovnik«. *Belleten* 27 (1963): pp. 237-255; Josip Žontar, *Obveščalna služba in diplomacija avstrijskih Habsburžanov v boju proti Turkom v 16. stoletju*. Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, 1973: pp. 20-29; Mirjana Polić-Bobič, *Među križom i polumjesecom; Dubrovačke dojave španjolskome dvoru o Turcima u XVI. stoljeću*. Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2000.

³ For more details on the relations between the Ottoman Empire and Dubrovnik Republic see: Nikolaas Hendrik Biegan, *The Turco-Ragusan Relationship According to the Fermans of Murad III (1575-1595) Extant in the State Archives of Dubrovnik*. The Hague-Paris: Mouton, 1967; Mladen Glavina, »An Overview of the Formation and Functioning of the Institute of Capitulations in the Ottoman Empire and the 1604 Dubrovnik Capitulation«. *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* 58 (2009): pp. 139-166; Vesna Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istanbulu*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2003.

⁴ V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istanbulu*: pp. 115-120.

also known to feature on these lists, chosen with particular care to humour the whims of certain dignitaries and Porte officials. Their scope varied considerably, from artificial flowers, scented oils, candies, malvasia wine, prayer beads, medicaments, luxury bottles, various daggers and clocks, lorgnons and spectacles, hawks, parrots, puppies and horses.⁵

By the end of the fifteenth century, among the recipients of Ragusan gifts were the sultan (4 platters), viziers of the imperial divan (2 platters and 100 ducats each), beylerbey of Rumelia (2 platters), dragoman of the Porte (1 platter) and sultan's *kapıcıbaşı* (3 ducats).⁶ The gift presented to the sultan remained the same until the fall of the Dubrovnik Republic in 1808, whilst all the rest were subject to change,⁷ as the list of the recipients expanded. In the second half of the eighteenth century the list included between thirty and fifty recipients, with an apparent increase of lower officials of the Porte with whom the envoys came into contact during their mission, such as several defterdar's men who checked and counted *haraç*.⁸ During the reign of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent, Ragusan diplomats started paying attention to the sultanas, too, notably to his daughter Mihrimah.

Mihrimah Sultan, daughter of Süleyman the Magnificent

In 1539, Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent invited the Ragusans to the festivity celebrating the circumcision of his sons Cihangir and Bayezid. For this occasion the Senate appointed the so-called gift ambassadors.⁹ Besides the sultan and Porte dignitaries, the princes were also to be presented with gifts, but once at the celebration, the Ragusans realised that it was not the custom.¹⁰ While that celebration was taking place, Süleyman's daughter Mihrimah, aged

⁵ V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istambulu*: pp. 51-66.

⁶ *Lettere di Levante* (hereafter as: *Let. Lev.*), series, 27.1, vol. 17, f. 15v, State Archives in Dubrovnik (hereafter as: SAD).

⁷ For example, beginning with the eighteenth century the viziers received satin instead of money (V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istambulu*: p. 52).

⁸ V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istambulu*: pp. 62-63.

⁹ *Let. Lev.* vol. 22, f. 90v. Apart from attending the circumcision of sultan's sons, *ambasciatori del dono* or *oratores doni* (gift ambassadors) also bore gifts on the occasion of the sultan's accession and his departure or arrival from the war campaigns (e.g. *Let. Lev.* 30, ff. 117v-123v; vol. 40, ff. 186v-197).

¹⁰ *Let. Lev.* vol. 22, f. 91v. Sultan Süleyman also invited the Ragusans to the circumcision festivities of his sons Mustafa, Mehmed and Selim (1530). The ambassadors were instructed to investigate whether other foreign envoys had prepared any gifts for the princes (*Let. Lev.* vol. 20, f. 83).

probably seventeen at the time, in the family circle and far from the public eye married Rüstem Pasha, at least twenty years her senior.¹¹

Being recruited through the Ottoman *devşirme* system, Rüstem found himself at the sultan's court where he was educated. He is assumed to have been of Croatian roots, most likely from Skradin in Dalmatia.¹² Apparently, he earned the sultan's favour by jumping through the window to catch the object His Lordship had dropped. This marked the beginning of his advancement, and in 1539 he became the third vizier.¹³ According to the Ottoman chronicler Pechevi, Rüstem could not pride himself on his appearance, but was bright, reasonable, fine mannered and pious, the qualities with which he attracted the sultan's attention. He knew how to fill the imperial treasury, as well as his own.¹⁴

Ragusan authorities kept a close eye on the expansion of Rüstem's power. In 1542, they warned the tribute ambassadors that besides the grand vizier Hadım Süleyman Pasha, most influential was Rüstem Pasha.¹⁵ In the government instructions issued to the ambassadors the following year, it was stated and then corrected that upon arrival in Istanbul they should first request to be received by Rüstem Pasha,¹⁶ as if he had already assumed the office of grand vizier. In addition to the usual gift, the ambassadors presented him with four pieces of luxury fabrics: relief woven velvet (It. *velluto alto-basso*), green and yellow satin and pistachio damask. Actually, pasha wished that the Ragusans acquire these fabrics in Venice. "Knowing that he attended to their interests", the Ragusans decided to deliver it to him without any compensation.¹⁷

¹¹ Tülay Artan, »Royal Weddings and the Grand Vezirate: Institutional and Symbolic Change in the Early Eighteenth Century«, in: *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires: A Global Perspective*, ed. Jeroen Duindam, Tülay Artan and Metin Kunt. Leiden: Brill, 2011: pp. 343-344. After Süleyman's time, the marriages of sultanas were extravagantly celebrated (Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993: p. 123).

¹² Ibrahim Alajbegović Pečevića, *Historija 1520-1576*, vol. I. Sarajevo: El-kalem, 2000: p. 34; İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. II. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1998: p. 549; Nathalie Clayer and Alexandre Popović, »La These de Safvet Beg Bašagić: Comparaison entre l'original en Allemand (Vienne 1909) et son edition en Serbo-Croate (Sarajevo 1912)«, in: *Sprache in der Slavia und auf dem Balkan: Slavistische und balkanistische Aufsätze*, ed. Uwe Hinrichs, Helmut Jachnow, Reinhard Lauer and Gabriella Schubbert. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992: p. 42.

¹³ Christine Isom-Verhaaren, »Süleyman and Mihrimah: The Favorite's Daughter«. *Journal for Persianate Studies* 4 (2011): pp. 71-72.

¹⁴ I. A. Pečevića, *Historija 1520-1576*, I: pp. 34-35.

¹⁵ *Let. Lev.* vol. 22, ff. 242, 262v, 280v; vol. 23, f. 63.

¹⁶ *Let. Lev.* vol. 23, f. 34v.

¹⁷ *Let. Lev.* vol. 23, f. 63.

In 1544, Rüstem Pasha became the grand vizier, and hence the protector of the Dubrovnik Republic.¹⁸ Because of his new position, Ragusans also presented him with a so-called extraordinary gift which included 1,000 ducats and 16 pieces of various fabrics.¹⁹ Rüstem Pasha practically considered Ragusans as his fellow-countrymen, as was the practice of the Ottoman dignitaries of Bosnian roots. The Ragusans addressed him as a blood kin, and a person of their own tongue (*come protettore e consanguinio, e come quello qual è della nostra lingua*).²⁰ Rüstem's commissions of fabrics, on his own account, became regular, and it is quite clear that his wife, Mihrimah Sultan, also participated in it. According to the couple's orders and the designs that pasha specified, in the next few years in Venice the Ragusans acquired relief velvet and scarlet satin.²¹

By 1550, the Ragusans and Rüstem Pasha had a well established business relationship. They supplied him with the fabrics, whilst he sold them wheat from his fields²² and from the Greek estates which his wife had brought as dowry.²³ This year marked a considerable increase in his commissions, as he ordered 60 pieces,²⁴ of which 20 pieces of the finest green cloth from Florence, known as *panno sopramano*.²⁵ Rüstem's debt for the fabrics reached 1,000 ducats at the time, and the Ragusans demanded a supply of wheat from him to

¹⁸ Considering the nature of the Turco-Ragusan relationship, sultan was a formal protector of the Republic. From the second and third decades of the sixteenth century, a true protector of the Republic was the grand vizier. Ibrahim Pasha was the first grand vizier (1523-36) who accepted that role (Toma Popović, *Turska i Dubrovnik u XVI veku*. Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga, 1973: p. 179).

¹⁹ V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istambulu*: pp. 52-54.

²⁰ *Let. Lev.* vol. 24, f. 174; Jorjo Tadić, »Dubrovnik za vreme Djiva Gundulića«. *Srpski književni glasnik* 56 (1939): pp. 279-280; Jorjo Tadić, »Narodnost starih Dubrovčana«. *Politika*, issue of 5 January 1928: pp. 1-2; Lovro Kunčević, »Etnički i politički identitet predmodernog Dubrovnika od 14. do 17. stoljeća«. *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 55/1 (2017): pp. 76-78.

²¹ *Let. Lev.* vol. 23, ff. 78v, 152v, 202v, 203, 237.

²² A government letter to the tribute ambassadors from 1567 mentions the purchase of wheat from the sultan's estate formerly owned by Rüstem Pasha (*Let. Lev.* vol. 30, f. 169).

²³ *Let. Lev.* vol. 29, f. 272v; L. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*: p. 24.

²⁴ Piece of luxury fabric, particularly of satin (*raso*) and damask, in the archival documents is often mentioned as *cavezzo*, whose length in most cases was 11-12.5 Ragusan ells (51.2 cm), i.e. around 6 metres. A piece of cloth (*panno*) is usually cited as *pezzo* (*Let. Lev.* vol. 30, f. 219; V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istambulu*: p. 51).

²⁵ *Let. Lev.* vol. 24, ff. 158v-159, 179v-180. In the period 1551-1553, the Ragusans supplied Rüstem Pasha with a total of 160 green and leek *panni sopramani*, 17 cushions of scarlet and yellow velvet with a carefully specified floral pattern and several cloaks (*Let. Lev.* vol. 24, ff. 251, 265; vol. 25, ff. 20v-31, 41v-42, 60v-61, 194v).

the same amount, and apparently proposed to counterbalance the mutual debts. In the autumn of 1550, several Ragusan ships landed at the port of Volos to load the negotiated supply of wheat.²⁶ Over the next few years, the Ragusans continued to buy Mihrimah's and Rüstem's wheat, supplies of 500 to 2,500 tons which they loaded at Volos.²⁷ Pasha was to obtain the *fermans* for safe passage of Ragusan ships laden with grain.²⁸ By a *ferman* of 1556, the sultan petitioned with the French, Venetian and Chios captains not to intercept the passage of three Ragusan vessels carrying around 1,000 tons of wheat loaded at Volos.²⁹

In a letter to the ambassadors of 1557, Ragusan authorities for the first time mentioned that the purchased grain came from the estate of Rüstem Pasha's wife. Ragusan debt amounted to 3,100 ducats, the reimbursement of which they tried to postpone with little success. They turned to another powerful woman for help, Beatrice de Luna, who gave them a loan to repay their debt to the sultana.³⁰ Ragusans used to buy grain from other viziers, too, as in 1550 they mention Ahmed Pasha's fields at Levkas, and in 1559 Ali Pasha, whose dealings with the Republic were frowned upon by Rüstem Pasha.³¹

As result of public discontent for having influenced, together with his wife Mihrimah and mother-in-law Hurrem, Süleyman's decision to execute the sultan's eldest son Mustafa, Rüstem was deposed in October 1553. Thanks to his wife and mother-in-law, he managed to escape a more serious punishment. The two women plotted against the grand vizier Kara Ahmed Pasha who was eventually murdered, and in September 1555 Rüstem restored his position of the grand vizier.³² In the meanwhile, Ragusan government dispatched envoys to visit him with a gift, stressing that friendship with him ought to be preserved.³³ The Ragusans kept a close eye on Rüstem's situation, of which they informed the pope. Thanks to Hurrem, Rüstem Pasha remained in Istanbul, and Mihrimah was allowed to stay with him. According to the information that reached Dubrovnik on 1 March 1554, Mihrimah suffered a life-threatening miscarriage,

²⁶ *Let. Lev.* vol. 24, ff. 156v, 161v-162v, 166, 189.

²⁷ *Let. Lev.* vol. 24, f. 209, 249; vol. 25, f. 40v; vol. 27, ff. 34v, 42v-44, 127.

²⁸ *Diplomata et Acta* (hereafter as: DA), series 76, 7/2.1 (*fermans*), vol. 4, no. 164, 165; vol. 5, no. 206, 236, 237; SAD.

²⁹ DA 7/2.1 (*fermans*), vol. 5, no. 206.

³⁰ *Let. Lev.* vol. 26, ff. 209v, 215.

³¹ *Let. Lev.* vol. 24, f. 207; vol. 27, f. 213.

³² İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi* II: p. 550.

³³ *Let. Lev.* vol. 25, ff. 194, 273v.

from which she managed to recover. The couple lived in Pera, as recorded by an anonymous hand,³⁴ though it is far more likely that they settled in Mihrimah's palace in Uskudar.³⁵

The commission of fabrics continued, and a most valuable order made in 1556 draws special attention. Pasha commissioned 40 cushions and 40 mattress sheets made of scarlet, black and purple velvet with a specific floral design. Ragusan authorities appointed three of their noblemen stationed in Venice to find the right weavers and tailors. The floral pattern was to be as natural as possible. Mattress sheets were to be made out of one piece of fabric. If too expensive, two pieces could do, provided that the seams did not cut the floral patterns.³⁶ Several months later, in early 1557, in secrecy and in their mother tongue, Ragusan envoys informed Rüstem Pasha of the price and progress concerning his commission.³⁷

In 1559, pasha's debt to the Ragusans for the fabrics amounted to some 3,000 sequins, whilst theirs for the grain was around 5,200 sequins.³⁸ His commissions of fabrics are also mentioned in mid-June 1561.³⁹

After the death of Rüstem Pasha in July 1561, Mihrimah Sultan may be traced in the Ragusan archival sources as *Signora Soltana del quondam Signor Crustambassa* or simply *Illustrissima Signora Soltana*.⁴⁰ Ragusan authorities had no intention of resuming the relations with her. They criticised ambassador Benessa for having been drawn into the talks about fabric commissions for the sultana, for they "wished to lift the burdens and not multiply them". He was advised to ignore the whole story and to keep aloof from similar promises in the future.⁴¹ When in May 1562 Benessa reported that he talked with the sultana about purchasing her grain, the

³⁴ *Let. Lev.* vol. 25, ff. 186, 256v.

³⁵ İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi* II: p. 550.

³⁶ *Let. Lev.* vol. 26, ff. 93-97v.

³⁷ *Let. Lev.* vol. 26, ff. 153-153v.

³⁸ *Let. Lev.* vol. 27, ff. 132-133. In the period 1557-1560, Ragusans supplied Rüstem Pasha with around 230 pieces of kersey and cloth from London, Florence, Venice and Spain (*Let. Lev.* vol. 26, ff. 106, 123v; vol. 27, ff. 6v-8, 53v, 69v-71v; vol. 28, f. 37).

³⁹ *Let. Lev.* vol. 28, f. 165.

⁴⁰ *Let. Lev.* vol. 28, ff. 230v, 284.

⁴¹ *Della promessa quale con le ultime vostre scrivete havere fatta al Ciecaia del Signor Crustambassa accio la referisce alla Soltana per le pannine domandava, noi non se contentamo punto di queste offerte, perche noi desideriamo di essere allegeriti dalle gravezze, e non che ci siano moltiplicate, pero questa offerta fatta, trapassarete sotto silentio, et in avvenire guardatine di fare tale promesse, perche non sono al proposito nostro* (*Let. Lev.* vol. 28, f. 187v; 22 August 1561. See also: *Let. Lev.* vol. 28, f. 253).

authorities were again unsatisfied.⁴² However, at that time the sultan refused to issue a permission for the purchase of Ottoman grain to the Ragusans, yet soon yielded after a conversation with the grand vizier Ali Pasha, arranged by Mihrimah.⁴³ At this pivotal moment marked by a shortage of grain in the Republic, the Ragusans turned a new leaf in their attitude towards Mihrimah Sultan.⁴⁴

Apparently, grain supply was a Ragusan priority, which they mainly purchased in Apulia and the Ottoman territories. Stefano d'Atri rightly defined their efforts at the Porte as "corn diplomacy".⁴⁵ Obtainment of permission for the purchase of Ottoman grain was among the most important assignments of the tribute ambassadors. They negotiated with the grand vizier, although the sultan had the final saying.⁴⁶ The success rested on the disposition of the grand vizier and other dignitaries, as well as the skill of the Ragusan diplomats to assure them of the bareness and lack of arable land in the Republic.⁴⁷ Due mainly to temporary closures of the western and/or eastern grain markets, shortages and poor harvests, the sixteenth century saw several crises: 1539, 1540-1541, 1555-1557, 1560-1562, 1585-1587, 1590-1591. The Ragusans managed to bridge them thanks to the supplies of Ottoman grain,⁴⁸ in which Mihrimah Sultan played an essential role.

Ragusan envoys never talked to Mihrimah Sultan in person. At first, Rüstem Pasha spoke on her behalf. Several years after pasha's death, she was represented by his *kethüda* (*kâhya*),⁴⁹ with whom the Ragusans were well acquainted, yet whose name they never mentioned, much to our regret.⁵⁰ From the end of 1565,

⁴² *Let. Lev.* vol. 28, f. 274.

⁴³ *Let. Lev.* vol. 28, f. 284v.

⁴⁴ *Let. Lev.* vol. 29, ff. 14, 15v-16v.

⁴⁵ Stefano d'Atri, »*Per conservare la città tributaria et divota*: Ragusa (Dubrovnik) and the 1590-91 crisis«. *Dubrovnik Annals* 14 (2010): p. 98. By the end of the fifteenth century the capacity of Ragusan granaries was around 12,400 *stars*, or some 890 tons, whereas a century later it doubled (Stefano d'Atri, »Adi 2 Marzo 1590 porta fornita; Rupe, il granaio di Ragusa (Dubrovnik)«. *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome* 120/2 (2008): p. 571; S. d'Atri, »*Per conservare la città tributaria et divota*«: p. 97).

⁴⁶ In the seventeenth century the Ragusans were regularly issued permissions for the purchase of around 3,000 tons of wheat and barley. In the eighteenth century they were allowed to buy smaller quantities, from 150 to 1,600 tons, which might be correlated with the decrease in the payment of *haraç* (as well as the gift for the grand vizier) from annual to once in three years. (V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istanbulu*: pp. 80-82).

⁴⁷ S. d'Atri, »*Per conservare la città tributaria et divota*«: p. 73.

⁴⁸ For more on this, see: S. d'Atri, »*Per conservare la città tributaria et divota*«: pp. 71-98.

⁴⁹ *Let. Lev.* vol. 28, ff. 187v, 253.

⁵⁰ *Let. Lev.* vol. 22, ff. 241v, 262v; vol. 24, ff. 10, 237v, 251v; vol. 25, f. 90; vol. 27, ff. 69, 77v.

a certain *Behram Chehaia dell' Illustrissima Signora Soltana* is mentioned.⁵¹ He managed Mihrimah's income, and on her behalf sold grain and ordered fabrics.⁵²

At the end of 1565, from Mihrimah the Ragusans purchased 1,500 *mutti*⁵³ (c. 770 tons) of wheat, which happened to be reserved for the hospital in Shkodër.⁵⁴ In doing so, they had to be careful not to inflame the grand vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, as he also traded in grain.⁵⁵ Virtually at the same time, Ragusans ordered their envoy to Venice to acquire best quality fabrics for the sultana, because they wished to gratify and please her.⁵⁶ In May 1566,⁵⁷ delivered to Istanbul were 19 pieces of purple and scarlet cloth, 20 kerseys and 10 *panni sopramani*, not woven in Florence but in Dubrovnik, to a total length of around 1,045 ells (c. 535 metres), costing around 2,000 sequins. Ragusan grain debt still exceeded that of the sultana's fabrics, and she agreed to be compensated by a new supply of fabrics, whereupon Behram Kethüda demanded a detailed account.⁵⁸

Several months went by, and the sultana had still not received a specification of the fabric costs. This prompted her to address the Ragusans. She wished to know whether they had any intention of buying her grain. This letter has not been preserved, though extant is an Italian version of the long Ragusan reply. The Ragusans wrote that the ship carrying sultana's load of fabrics, together with those intended for the gift to sultan, had been robbed by the *Uskoks*. Hence they commissioned new ones through merchants in Dubrovnik, who naturally wished to make profit but still submitted an acceptable account. The total cost amounted to 125,156 *akçe*. In the meanwhile, the Ragusans bought

⁵¹ *Let. Lev.* vol. 30, f. 59. Behram must have been a eunuch, black or white. It seems that during Süleyman's reign there was not a clear-cut division between the duties of white and black eunuchs (Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*. New York-Cambridge Mass.: The Architectural History Foundation, Inc. and The MIT Press, 1991: p. 161; Norman Mosley Penzer, *The Harem; Inside the Grand Seraglio of the Turkish Sultans*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 2005: p. 135). For more on eunuchs: Jane Hathaway, *Beshir Agha; Chief Eunuch of the Ottoman Imperial Harem*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2005; A. Ezgi Dikici, »The Making of Ottoman Court Eunuchs: Origins, Recruitment Paths, Family Ties, and «Domestic Production».« *Archivium Ottomanicum* 30 (2013): pp. 105-136.

⁵² *Let. Lev.* vol. 30, ff. 59, 220v.

⁵³ *Müd* was equivalent to around 513 kg, or 20 Istanbul *kile*. Istanbul *kile* was equivalent to a weight of 20 okka (1.282 kg).

⁵⁴ *Let. Lev.* vol. 30, ff. 59-60.

⁵⁵ *Let. Lev.* vol. 30, f. 21.

⁵⁶ *Let. Lev.* vol. 30, ff. 70v-71, 108v-109.

⁵⁷ *Acta Turcarum*, series 75, vol. E 21, no. 32 (receipt of Behram Kethüda on the reception of fabrics, issued in the second decade of Şevval 973); SAD.

⁵⁸ *Let. Lev.* vol. 30, ff. 101v-103v.

sultana's grain valued at 156,364 *akçe*, leaving a debt of 31,208 *akçe*, for which they ordered new fabrics for her in Venice and Ancona. The sultana was granted sultan's permission for the Ragusans to purchase her grain in Volos, for which they sent a bigger ship. It was risky to send a larger sum of money by boat, so they proposed to pay a part in fabrics and a part in cash, whilst the remainder would be delivered to her by the tribute ambassadors. They asked sultana to recommend them to the supervisor (*nazor*)⁵⁹ in Volos, whose favour they did not enjoy. In conclusion, they wished her a long and healthy life by the grace of God, and everything that her noble heart might desire.⁶⁰

By the end of 1566, Mihrimah received that new supply of fabrics from Venice (22 pieces of cloth and 10 pieces of *panni sopramani*). The account amounted to 118,778 *akçe* (around 2,000 sequins). At that point, the sultana's debt to the Ragusans reached 87,580 *akçe*.⁶¹

The ambassadors who set off for Istanbul at the end of January or in February 1566 received instructions to meet with the new grand vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha first, and then proceed with a special petition addressed to Mihrimah Sultan. Soon after their arrival, the ambassadors met Sokollu, whom they petitioned to accept the role of the Ragusan protector, which he later proved to have been.⁶² Then they addressed Mihrimah Sultan with the same petition, "desired by the Ragusan government above all things". They presented her with four pieces of satin, 24 boxes of candy and 12 large gilt candles—"a small gift, token of the Ragusan rector and nobility who bow to her and deeply plead for her protection in the grace of the sultan as well as her own".⁶³ Her response is unknown, yet she had protected Ragusan interests long before.

⁵⁹ Tur. *nazır*: supervisor.

⁶⁰ *Let. Lev.* vol. 30, f. 127v-129v; see Figure 1 and Appendix.

⁶¹ *Let. Lev.* vol. 30, ff. 141-141v.

⁶² T. Popović, *Turska i Dubrovnik u XVI veku*: pp. 307-324.

⁶³ *Ma sopra il tutto desideriamo, che l'Illustrissima Signora Soltana figliuola del Gran Signore pigli il patrocinio nostro, et che ci mantenghi nella gratia di sua Altezza, et sua, per la qual Signora vi habbiamo dato cavezzi quatro, uno di raso carmesino, uno di raso paunazzo, uno di raso bianco, et uno di raso naranciato, una cassetta dentro scatole 24 di diverse confetioni, et 12 candelle grande et sicome a nome nostro referirete all'Illustrissimo Signor Bassa genero della detta Signora che con buona gratia di sua Signoria Illustrissima le voreste presentar un picol dono, che in segno di benevolenza le mandiano il Rettore, et i Gentilhomini di Ragusa et poi pregarete il suo Ciecaia piu secreto, quando portarete alla detta Signora il predetto dono, che sia contento dirle, che il Rettore et i Gentilhomini di Raugia, i quali fanno riverenza à sua Signoria Illustrissima la pregano, et supplicano con ogni affetto d'animo, che si degni conservar loro nella buona gratia di sua Altezza, et sua, et che voglia esser contenta, tanto in cotesta exactione di grani, quanto in tutti gli altri nostri bisogni esserci favorevole presso al Gran Signore et al detto chiecaia presentarete anchor à nome nostro il cavezzo di panno di cento scarlato, che v'habbiamo dato per lui* (*Let. Lev.* vol. 30, ff. 80-80v).

Die 8 Sept. 1566.
 Ill^{ma} Soltana.
 Ill^{ma} et ecc^{ma} sig. nra ott^{ma} Habbiamo riceuto l'ho
 novata via di V. ecc^{za} per la quale ella mostra
 di haver desiderio sapere particolar^{te} il gusto
 delle farine che a noi fattati le mandamo,
 per il che per che coti ci ricerca, e hando nra
 intentione sempre servirla, gliene daremo
 piena notizia, auengate ci rincresca rind
 uare negli animi nri la perdita che per
 detto conto habbiamo fatto. Sappi dunque
 V. ecc^{za} come dopoche ci ordinò dette far
 nine, noi demmo com^e a Venetia che ci
 fossero comprate, et mandate con i primi
 bergantini, coti l'agente nro hauendole
 comprate inhieme con alcune drapene per
 presentare all' Altezza del gloriosiss^o et
 Inuitiss^o Gran S^{re} padre di V. ecc^{za} et ca
 ricato lo top^o uno brigentino, la nra mala
 forte uolse, che fusso per uiggio prese, et
 rubate dalli Uschi, sicome e chiaro, e
 manifesto ad ogniuno, onde stante l'instan
 za che V. ecc^{za} ne faceva, et noi deside
 rando honamente servirla, fimo a betti
 comprarne qui della medes^{sa} sorte da mercabi
 li quali le haueuano fatte venire da Venet
 y rinuendens, et in detto luoco di Venet
 comprate a manco pregio di quello, che poi
 qui a noi le sano uendute, cose in effetto

Figure 1. First page of the Ragusan letter addressed to Mihrimah Sultan of 8 September 1566 (*Let. Lev.* vol. 30, f. 127v; Appendix).

The reason underlying such Ragusan approach to Mihrimah may be sought in the tensions between the Republic and the Ottomans, notably with *kapudan pasha* Piyale Pasha. Namely, during the Ottoman siege of Malta in 1565, several Ragusan ships sailed in the Christian fleet. Piyale Pasha reported on this to the Porte. To Ragusan horror, his ships sailed into Ragusan waters and raided the island of Mljet.⁶⁴ However, true problems emerged in the spring and summer of 1566, that is, after Ragusan ambassadors had petitioned with Mihrimah to act as their protector. The Ragusans were rightly anxious when the Ottomans invaded the island of Chios, an Ottoman tributary.⁶⁵ In May they wrote to the ambassadors to enquire with Mehmed Pasha whether the island was invaded due to a delay in tribute payment or some other reason.⁶⁶ Ottoman fleet headed by Piyale Pasha soon sailed into the Adriatic, and again into the Ragusan waters. Pasha blamed the Ragusans for the failure of his fleet in southern Italy because they had allegedly warned the cities in that area of his arrival. He sent this allegation to the Szigetvár battlefield. The sultan and viziers were overwhelmed with bitterness. Also, it was discovered that the Ragusans supplied the vice king of Naples with information on the Ottomans. The fact that the Ragusans suspended, moreover, strictly forbade any information concerning the Ottomans to be forwarded to the West, effective until the beginning of the War of Cyprus, speaks best of the gravity of this situation.⁶⁷

In the given circumstances, the protection of the powerful Mihrimah must have seemed ideal. The only daughter and favourite of Sultan Süleyman influenced his decisions, particularly after the death of her mother Hürrem in 1558. As it appears, she prompted him to attack Malta in 1565, and most likely fuelled his decision to launch a campaign against Hungary in 1566,⁶⁸ where he met his death in Szigetvár. In the nineteenth century, Mihrimah Sultan was rumoured to have been the richest woman on earth.⁶⁹ Exaggeration aside, these

⁶⁴ T. Popović, *Turska i Dubrovnik u XVI veku*: pp. 235-236.

⁶⁵ Lovro Kunčević, »“Ipak nije na odmet sve čuti”: medičejski pogled na urotničke namjere Marina Držića«. *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 45 (2007): pp. 34-44.

⁶⁶ *Let. Lev.* vol. 30, f. 114v.

⁶⁷ T. Popović, *Turska i Dubrovnik u XVI veku*: pp. 235-238; Jovan Radonić, *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, vol. II/2. Beograd: SKA, 1938: pp. 137-140; Vesna Miović and Mladen Glavina, »Sigetska bitka i Dubrovčanik«, a paper delivered at the conference *Nikola Šubić Zrinski i Siget 1566. Nicholas Šubić Zrinski and Szigetvár 1566*. Zagreb: HAZU, 20-21 October 2016. Summary available at: <http://info.hazu.hr/upload/File/Kal13/Siget-zbornik-sazetaka.pdf>: pp. 35-38.

⁶⁸ André Clot, *Suleiman the Magnificent*. London: Saqi, 2012: pp. 175, 181; Joseph von Hammer, *Historija Turskog (Osmanskog) Carstva*, vol. I. Zagreb: Nerkez Smailagić, 1979: p. 499.

⁶⁹ Godfri Gudvin, *Privatni svet osmanskih žena*. Beograd: Geopolitika, 2015: p. 132.

claims clearly speak of the extent of her financial power. From her father she acquired estates “befitting a petty king”⁷⁰ and also considerable wealth from her husband, Rüstem Pasha: jewels, horses, camels, books, expensive saddles and weapons, estates.⁷¹ This also included the borderland with mills in Solin (Dalmatia), where Mihrimah established a *vakıf*. When in 1565 Venetians wished to hire the estate, she denied their offer given its very delicate location. It is assumed that she built a mosque there, on the site of a pre-Romanesque Gradina church. According to legend, she was buried in its vicinity.⁷²

Sultan Süleyman died in September 1566. Mihrimah wished to see her brother Bayezid take his place. Despite the fact, with Selim’s accession to the throne her influence, due mainly to financial power, did not decline.⁷³ As soon as he came to power, Selim turned to her for help as he needed money.⁷⁴ In 1571, the Ragusans asked her to speak with the sultan when the time allowed her, and to recommend them and “spare a couple of kind words for their love’s sake”.⁷⁵

Extant is a ferman of 1571 by which Selim II confirms Ragusan payment of 48,000 *akçe* for the grain bought in 1568 on his estate in the sancak of Vlora.⁷⁶ This might account for the fact that with his accession to the throne the Ragusans no longer bought Mihrimah’s grain. At the same time, her orders of fabrics were radically reduced.⁷⁷ Discontinuity of the ‘linked’ trade practiced over the years and a possibility to offset mutual debts was obviously crucial. The sultana, however, continued to order Italian fabrics but through a channel of her own.⁷⁸ The man she appointed for the commission arrived in Dubrovnik in 1576 with

⁷⁰ Christine Isom-Verhaaren, »Mihrimah Sultan: A Princess Constructs Ottoman Dynastic Identity«, in: *Living in the Ottoman Realm: Empire and Identity, 13th to 20th Centuries*, ed. Christine Isom-Verhaaren and Kent F. Schull. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016: p. 163.

⁷¹ Ivan Alduk, »Rüstem-paša i Mihrimah.« *Tusculum* 3 (2010): p. 65; A. Clot, *Suleiman the Magnificent*: pp. 157, 325; I. Alajbegović Pečevića, *Historija 1520-1576*, I: p. 36.

⁷² Lovre Katić, »Granice između Klisa i Splita kroz vjekove«. *Starohrvatska prosvjeta* 6 (1958): pp. 207-208; *idem*, »Solinski mlinovi u prošlosti«. *Starohrvatska prosvjeta* 2 (1952): pp. 213, 218; I. Alduk, »Rüstem-paša i Mihrimah«: pp. 66-67. On Mihrimah’s construction undertakings in Istanbul see: C. Isom-Verhaaren, »Mihrimah Sultan: A Princess Constructs Ottoman Dynastic Identity«: pp. 157-164.

⁷³ C. Isom-Verhaaren, »Mihrimah Sultan: A Princess Constructs Ottoman Dynastic Identity«: p. 164.

⁷⁴ C. Isom-Verhaaren, »Süleyman and Mihrimah: The Favorite’s Daughter«: pp. 77-78, 84.

⁷⁵ *Let. Lev.* vol. 31, f. 6.

⁷⁶ *DA 7/1.2* (fermans), vol. 6, no. 282.

⁷⁷ *Let. Lev.* vol. 31, f. 6; vol. 32, f. 14; vol. 33, f. 143v.

⁷⁸ Ottoman elite usually assigned men of confidence to acquire goods in Venice (Julian Raby, »The Serenissima and the Sublime Porte: Art in the Art of Diplomacy, 1453-1600«, in: *Venice and Islamic World, 828-1797* (exhibition catalogue). Milano: Éditions Gallimard, 2007: p. 94; Maria Pia Pedani, *Venezia porta d’Oriente*. Bologna: il Mulino, 2010: pp. 101-102).

30 loads of silk. Ragusan customs officials exempted his goods from the fee, informing the sultana that they would try to assist him in every other way possible.⁷⁹

In 1572, the Ragusans supplied Mihrimah Sultan with 5,030 pieces of stained glass for the windows, transported to Istanbul in 12 barrels. She also asked for animal-shaped sugar paste candies, of which they presented her with 12 boxes.⁸⁰

Mihrimah died in January 1578. Like many other sultan daughters,⁸¹ she was buried in her father's *türbe*.⁸² The Ragusans later enquired about her daughter, Ayşe Hümaşah, with a petition to act in their favour and support them in a manner her mother did, whose death they mourned deeply. In fact, all of this they reported to Behram Kethüda, who by sultan's order was to attend to Ayşe Hümaşah after Mihrimah's death.⁸³

At that time, Behram Kethüda was mentioned in the Dubrovnik archival sources as "an old Ragusan friend", to whom they turned in need. He lent money to the ambassadors, and in 1575 they owed him 1,000 ducats. The ambassadors in 1579 complained of the problems with defterdar, to which the Ragusan authorities replied: "Why don't you contact Behram Kethüda?"⁸⁴ In Venice they procured cheese for him. From 1567 on, when the sultanas were added to the regular list of gift recipients, Behram's name also featured on it, with a remark that his gift consisted of two pieces of fabric.⁸⁵ The last mention of Behram dates from December 1579.⁸⁶

Ayşe Hümaşah Sultan was the wife of Ahmed Pasha, who in 1579 assumed the position of the grand vizier, yet died the very next year. He felt well-disposed towards the Ragusans.⁸⁷ On occasion, he also ordered fabrics,⁸⁸ which Ayşe

⁷⁹ *Let. Lev.* vol. 33, f. 70.

⁸⁰ *Let. Lev.* vol. 32, ff. 13v-14. This type of candy was particularly popular in Istanbul, and is especially mentioned at the circumcision festivities of the sultan's sons and weddings of the sultanas (Zeynel Özlü, »Osmanlı Saray Şekerleme ve Şekerlemecileri ile İlgili Notlar«. *Türk Kültürü ve Hacibektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 58 (2011): pp. 176-177; Özdemir Nutku, *IV. Mehmet'in Edirne Şenliği (1675)*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1987: p. 73).

⁸¹ M. Çağatay Uluçay, *Padişahların Kadınları ve Kızları*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1985: pp. 42, 46, 51-52, 100-101, 112.

⁸² C. Isom-Verhaaren, »Mihrimah Sultan: A Princess Constructs Ottoman Dynastic Identity«: p. 164.

⁸³ *Let. Lev.* vol. 33, f. 143v. By sultan's appointment, each sultana had a *kethüda* to attend to her affairs (İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Saray Teşkilâtı*: p. 165; L. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*: p. 317).

⁸⁴ *Let. Lev.* vol. 33, ff. 26, 250-250v.

⁸⁵ *Let. Lev.* vol. 32, ff. 13v, 102; vol. 33, ff. 175v, 358.

⁸⁶ *Let. Lev.* vol. 33, f. 258.

⁸⁷ *Let. Lev.* vol. 30, ff. 168v, 202.

⁸⁸ *Let. Lev.* vol. 30, f. 82; vol. 31, f. 201v.

Hümaşah did only once later.⁸⁹ She once commissioned two female puppies and two green parrots.⁹⁰ She, too, shared her husband's disposition towards the Ragusans. Her son Mehmed Bey was in 1592 installed as sancakbey of Herzegovina,⁹¹ upon which she soon wrote him a letter of recommendation for the Ragusans.⁹² She did the same in 1595, when he was installed as sancakbey for the second time.⁹³ The ambassadors who visited him underlined that his grandfather, grandmother and parents had always favoured the Ragusans, so they hoped that he would act accordingly.⁹⁴

The Ragusans also gratified several wishes of Fatma, Sultan Süleyman's sister, and his granddaughter Ismihan. For Fatma, they commissioned in Venice three bed blankets of red wool (1551).⁹⁵ They presented Ismihan with 54 pairs of gold thread buttons and thin white linen, with a petition to recommend them to her husband, grand vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha (1571, 1578).⁹⁶ Ismihan's wishes may also be traced through the commissions of Mehmed Pasha. Like Mihrimah's Rüstem Pasha, he often asked the Ragusans to acquire goods for him in Venice, fabrics mainly.⁹⁷ His order of Parmesan from Venice arrived in 1572, though rotten, and they informed him of making a new order. In 1571, for him they also ordered glass and lamps from Venice, and they gave him several glass lamps also at the end of 1573.⁹⁸ According to the statements of Venetian diplomatic and consular representatives to Istanbul, the members of the imperial harem and dignitaries of the Porte showered them with orders. Among the most popular items were luxury fabrics and clothes, but also window glass, lamps and other

⁸⁹ *Let. Lev.* vol. 36, ff. 3-4v.

⁹⁰ *Let. Lev.* vol. 35, ff. 47, 137v.

⁹¹ Mehmed Bey acted as sancakbey of Herzegovina in 1592-3 and 1594-6 (Jusuf Mulić, *Hercegovina*, vol. II. Sarajevo: published by author, 2012: p. 12).

⁹² The letter of recommendation was co-signed by Ayşe's son-in-law, Cigalazade Yusuf Sinan Pasha, famous Ottoman *kapudan pasha*. In 1580 when his wife died, Yusuf Sinan Pasha married her sister, that is, Ayşe's second daughter (Levent Kaya Ocakaçan, »Cigalazade Yusuf Sinan Pasha (1545-1606).« *Mediterranea - ricerche storiche* 34 (2015): p. 330). One of the sisters was named Salihe (C. Isom-Verhaaren, »Mihrimah Sultan: A Princess Constructs Ottoman Dynastic Identity« pp. 154-155).

⁹³ *Let. Lev.* vol. 37, f. 366; vol. 39, ff. 13v-17.

⁹⁴ *Let. Lev.* vol. 37, f. 354.

⁹⁵ *Let. Lev.* vol. 25, f. 30v.

⁹⁶ *Let. Lev.* vol. 31, f. 139; vol. 33, f. 139.

⁹⁷ *Let. Lev.* vol. 30, f. 174; vol. 33, f. 97v; vol. 33, f. 143.

⁹⁸ *Let. Lev.* vol. 31, ff. 25, 321.

Murano glass products, jewels, mirrors, eye glasses, puppies, hunting dogs, hawks, clocks, chairs, books, geographical maps, cheese.⁹⁹ The Ragusans helped them achieve the same purpose. In the sixteenth century, the main duty of their agents to Venice was the fulfilment of orders from Istanbul.¹⁰⁰

On one occasion, the Ragusans remarked on the marriage of Ismihan Sultan and Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, according to which he was awed by the sultana no less than others were by him. She frequently referred to him as “Vlach, in other words, a most vile rustic” (*Murlacco, che vuol dire contadino vilissimo*).¹⁰¹

Sultanas and Ragusan diplomatic gifts (1567-1808)

With Süleyman's father and grandfather it had already become customary for their daughters to marry imperial dignitaries. These prospective sons-in-law were not necessarily viziers or grand viziers at the time of their marriage, nor did they necessarily attain these positions. Süleyman the Magnificent, however, introduced a standard regulating the selection of candidates for the position of grand vizier from the circle of sultan's sons- and brothers-in-law.¹⁰² To viziers he married his sisters Şah and Fatma, daughter Mihrimah and granddaughters Ismihan and Ayşe Hümaşah. All the five viziers later advanced to grand viziers.

⁹⁹ M. P. Pedani, *Venezia porta d'Oriente*: pp. 102-107; Maria Pia Pedani, »Safiye's Household and Venetian Diplomacy«. *Turcica* 32 (2000): p. 12; J. Raby, »The Serenissima and the Sublime Porte: Art in the Art of Diplomacy, 1453-1600«: p. 97.

¹⁰⁰ *Let. Lev.* vol. 23, f. 81v; vol. 27, f. 53-53v; vol. 28, f. 37.

¹⁰¹ J. Radonić, *Dubrovačka akta i povelje* II/2: p. 329. On the experience of pashas with sultanas and powerful wives see: *The Intimate Life of An Ottoman Statesman Melek Ahmed Pasha (1588-1662) as Portrayed in Evliya Çelebi's Book of Travels (Seyahat-name)*, translation and commentary by Robert Dankoff. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991: pp. 259-261; Maria Pia Pedani - Fabris, *Relazioni di Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato*, vol. XIV - *Constantinopoli, Relazioni inedite (1512-1789)*. Padova: Aldo Ausilio Editore and Bottega d'Erasmus, 1996: p. 515; Jeroen Duindam, *Dynasties: A Global History of Power, 1300-1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016: pp. 101-102; *The Letters and Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*. London: Swan Sonnenschein & co, 1893: p. 343; M. Ç. Uluçay, *Padışhların Kadınları ve Kızları*: pp. 74-75; Fanny Davis, *The Ottoman Lady: A Social History from 1718 to 1918*. New York, Westport Connecticut, London: Greenwood Press, 1986: p. 19.

¹⁰² Sultan Süleyman was also known for having married his favourite (*haseki*), Hurrem, with whom he had several sons. Another novelty was that Hurrem and the children moved from the Old Saray (Eski Saray) to Topkapı Saray, and that she was not with her sons when they, as part of their imperial training, exercised the duty of sancakbey in the eastern provinces (L. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*: pp. 65-67, 87, 163, 175; Galina Yermolenko, »Roxolana: 'The Greatest Empresses of the East'«. *The Muslim World* 95 (2005): pp. 231-248).

Lutfi Pasha, Şah's husband, held this post from 1539 to 1541, when he physically assaulted her, which provided sufficient ground for divorce and deposition.¹⁰³ The remaining four in-laws, Rüstem Pasha, Kara Ahmed Pasha, Semiz Ali Pasha and Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, succeeded each other on this high position during the second half of Süleyman's reign.

Indeed, the fact that Süleyman's *damads* ('male in-laws') had become grand viziers, and with it the protectors of the Dubrovnik Republic, did not escape Ragusan attention. At the same time, the experience with Mihrimah showed how beneficial a relationship with a sultana could be. Therefore, in 1567 the Ragusans decided to include all sultanas among the regular gift recipients.

In 1567 the ambassadors presented the sultanas with 144 boxes of sweetmeats (*zahare*) spiced with melon seeds, anise, coriander and pinolas, small candies (It. *pizzicata*) and animal- and fruit-shaped sugar paste.¹⁰⁴ The identity of these sultanas and their number remains unknown. The following year, 1568, they received 92 boxes of candy.¹⁰⁵

The concept of gift giving was altered by 1572 at the latest, since when it is quite clear that only married sultanas were presented with gifts.¹⁰⁶ Each was to receive several large gilt candles (*candelone*), several boxes of candy¹⁰⁷ and two pieces of satin 12 to 12 and a half ells long (614-640 cm).¹⁰⁸

Information on the satin colour, mentioned in archival sources until the start of the seventeenth century, reveals that white and pigeon blue were most popular,¹⁰⁹ though they also asked for red, scarlet, purple and milky white.¹¹⁰ The ambassadors followed the sultanas' fashion whims, as in 1675 they reported that the women had a special liking for "some sort of a silk fabric with floral pattern, as well as satin

¹⁰³ İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi* II: p. 548.

¹⁰⁴ One entry mentions four boxes of lion-shaped sugar paste (*Let. Lev.* vol. 30, ff. 189-189v). Types of candy were specified until the start of the seventeenth century.

¹⁰⁵ *Let. Lev.* vol. 30, f. 223.

¹⁰⁶ On a couple of occasions in the 1620s and 1630s, unmarried sultanas were also among the recipients of Ragusan gifts (V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istambulu*: p. 59).

¹⁰⁷ *Let. Lev.* vol. 41, f. 151v.

¹⁰⁸ *Let. Lev.* vol. 45, f. 96. From early eighteenth century on, the gifts to be given to a sultana were most clearly specified, and apart from two pieces of satin included two large gilt candles and four boxes of candies wrapped in gilt paper. The candle weighed five kilograms, whilst the box of candies slightly exceeded one kilogram. The gift given to a sultana in the eighteenth century amounted to a total cost of 14-15 sequins (*Let. Lev.* vol. 72, f. 32; V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istambulu*: pp. 59, 64).

¹⁰⁹ *Let. Lev.* vol. 35, ff. 90-90v, 192-192v; vol. 36, f. 70.

¹¹⁰ *Let. Lev.* vol. 32, f. 13; vol. 33, f. 38.

interwoven with gilt thread in the shape of flowers”¹¹¹ In 1631-1632, the ambassadors enquired with the sultanas if they would prefer Florentine satin instead of the usual Venetian, but this proposition appears to have been carefully calculated.¹¹²

In the long run, the Ragusans made every effort to reduce the gift expenditures for the Porte, the sultanas being no exception.¹¹³ In the late 1670s and early 1680s they decided to skip Fahre Sultan, aunt of Mehmed IV, for reason unknown, but most certainly spurred by a cut in public expenditures. Fahre waited for a year before taking any action. She ordered her *kethüda* to enquire with the ambassadors as to why their predecessors failed to give her what she was entitled to.¹¹⁴ As the ambassadors made no move towards the amendment, Fahre appealed to the grand vizier, of which she sent a copy to Caboga, Ragusan ambassador.¹¹⁵ The outcome is unknown.

As instructed, Ragusan ambassadors first visited the grand vizier whom they presented with gifts, and then other viziers. If he was married to a sultana,¹¹⁶ the ambassadors would emphasise that, with his permission, they would also like to present his wife with a small gift.¹¹⁷ Sultana’s *kethüda* was presented with a gift by a Ragusan dragoman.¹¹⁸

From the start of the seventeenth century, Ragusans most frequently mention three or four married sultanas,¹¹⁹ although later their number increased considerably. In 1613 and 1648, for example, there were fifteen.¹²⁰ In the eighteenth century, five to ten married sultanas were among the recipients of Ragusan gifts, and in the last two decades two to three.¹²¹

All ambassadors were required to report to Dubrovnik the lists of viziers and sultanas to whom they gave gifts.¹²² As most of their letters have not been

¹¹¹ *Diplomata et Acta saec. XVII* (hereafter as: *DA 17*), series 76, vol. 1847, no. 1; SAD.

¹¹² *Let. Lev.* vol. 45, ff. 96, 273v-274.

¹¹³ *Let. Lev.* vol. 49, ff. 191-191v; *DA 17*, vol. 1782, no. 36.

¹¹⁴ *Acta Turcarum*, vol. E 20, no. 76 (undated).

¹¹⁵ *Acta Turcarum*, vol. E 20, no. 77 (undated); *DA 17*, vol. 1834, no. 18.

¹¹⁶ In the first three decades of the seventeenth century, besides the usual gift, the Ragusans presented the viziers married to sultanas with the so-called “gift for the *damads*” containing 6 pieces of satin (*Let. Lev.* vol. 40, ff. 20-20v, 101v; vol. 41, ff. 157, 191v; vol. 42, f. 190; vol. 43, ff. 5v, 187).

¹¹⁷ *Let. Lev.* vol. 43, f. 127.

¹¹⁸ *DA 17*, vol. 1775, no. 3.

¹¹⁹ *Let. Lev.* vol. 32, ff. 12v, 101v, 176; vol. 33, f. 175v.

¹²⁰ *DA 17*, vol. 1816, no. 2; vol. 1830, no. 3.

¹²¹ *Officiales Rationum*, series 18, vol. 13, c. 2, 15, 40, 56, 84, 113, 152, 213, 226, 260, 283, 318, 346, 407, 450, 503; SAD.

¹²² *Let. Lev.* vol. 50, f. 6; vol. 75, f. 239. M. P. Pedani - Fabris, *Relazioni di Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato XIV*: pp. 340-342.

preserved,¹²³ available to us are only eight lists from the years 1642,¹²⁴ 1648,¹²⁵ 1662,¹²⁶ 1670,¹²⁷ 1676,¹²⁸ 1679,¹²⁹ 1680¹³⁰ and 1736 respectively.¹³¹ On the other hand, government letters to the ambassadors fail to specify the sultanas by

¹²³ Ambassadors' letters from the sixteenth century are not extant, yet some from the seventeenth century have survived. Eighteenth-century reports from Istanbul have been preserved in the letters of the Ragusan consuls and *chargés d'affaires* (series *Diplomata et Acta*). On the other hand, the bulk of the letters written by the Ragusan government to the ambassadors and consuls to Istanbul has survived (series *Lettere di Levante*).

¹²⁴ *Le sultane tutte habbiamo presentato e sono dieci, cinque sorelle del Gran Signore e cinque zie. Le sorelle sono sultana moglie di Cienan Pascia detta Hatichia, sultana moglie d'Ahmet Pascia al presente Pascia di Herzegovina detta Smeni, sultana moglie di Mustafa Pascia detta Guiheri, sultana moglie d'Ahmet Pascia detta Aisce, e sultana moglie di Jusuf Pascia detta Fatime, e le zie sono sultana Agide, moglie di Sulun Muslia, Behan sultana moglie di Mustai Pascia, Vanni sultana moglie di Soffi Bariam Pascia, Humascie sultana moglie di Hasan Pascia, e Seime sultana moglie di Topal Ahmet Pascia (DA 17, vol. 1827, no. 6; 7 October 1642).*

¹²⁵ *Moglie di Jusuf Pascia Fatma sultan, moglie di Voinich Ahmet Pascia Aisce sultan, moglie di Hersechli Ahmet Pascia Iumi sultan, moglie di Nideli Mustafa Pascia Beijhan sultan vedova, moglie di Kienan Pascia Hatichie sultan, moglie di Nachasc Hasanpascia Humasce sultan vedova, moglie di Mustafa Pascia Hanzade sultan, moglie di Saruchci Mehmet Pasca Saime sultan, moglie di Dilaver Pascia Fahre sultan, moglie di Magrip Pasciasi Hatige sultan, moglie di Melech Ahmet Pascia Kaia sultan, moglie di Chiuciuch Musa Pascia Ruchie sultan vedova, moglie di Fazli Pascia Fatma sultan, moglie di Giafer pascia Ghiuherhan sultan vedova, moglie di Ahmet Pascia vezir Beihan sultan (DA 17, vol. 1830, no. 3; 7 July 1648).*

¹²⁶ *Ghiuherhan Sultana moglie di Smail Passa; Beihan Sultana moglie di Mustai Passa; Rukie Sultana moglie di Zelak Mustai Passa; Saffie Sultana moglie di Haidarzade passa, vedova; Aise Sultana moglie di Suleiman Passa; Fatma Sultana moglie di Melech Ahmet Passa; Saime Sultana al presente vedova; Fahre Sultan moglie di Dilaver Passa. The sultanas received gifts in Istanbul (DA 17, vol. 1831, no. 1; 28 July 1662).*

¹²⁷ *...delle signore sultane da me Bona presentate in Constantinopoli, sono le seguenti otto, Ghievherhan sultan moglie di Casciu' Pascia, Beihan Sultan, moglie d'Ali Pascia, Hiscie Sultan, moglie di Scoleiman Pascia, Fatime Sultan, moglie di Jusuf Pascia, Rukije Sultan, moglie d'Imbraim Pascia, Saffije Sultan, moglie di Hussain Pascia, Fahiri Sultan vedova, Saime Sultan vedova (DA 17, vol. 1843, no. 8; 9 August 1670).*

¹²⁸ *Habbiamo presentato sultane cinque li nomi delle quali sono li seguenti Fahre Sultana, Aisce Sultana moglie del Mussaip Pascia, Ruchie Sultana, Giuher Sultana moglie di Giambalat Passa, Behra Sultana. The sultanas received gifts in Edirne (DA 17, vol. 1848, no. 4; 16 December 1676).*

¹²⁹ *Le signore Sultane si trovano a questa corte quatro e la quinta e stata da me regalata in Adrianopoli come ne sono state avisate l'Eccellenze loro con la mia lettera di 4. Genaro pasato che fu la signora consorte dell signor Musaip, le dete quatro sono Gioeferhan sultana, Behrama sultana, Ruscie Sultana, Pahari sultana (DA 17, vol. 1849, no. 20; 9 May 1679).*

¹³⁰ *Ruchie Sultana moglie di Imbraim Pascia hora al Governo di Budim; Behra Sultana moglie di Imbraim hora al Governo di Candia; Ghiuherhan Sultana moglie di Giambalat oghli hora al Governo di Trabizonda; Aisce Sultana moglie di Musaip (DA 17, vol. 1834, no. 7; 24 March 1680).*

¹³¹ *Hatige sultana, Emine sultana, Aisce sultana, Safie sultana, Salihe sultana, Zeineb sultana, Kucciuch Hatige sultana, Kucciuch Atisce sultana, Atisce sultana (Officiales Rationum, vol. 13, f. 15, year 1736).*

name, as they were usually identified by the name of the husband only, such as *Signora Soltana del Ahmed Passa*.¹³²

Valide sultans

The age of valide sultans Nurbanu, Safiye, Kösem Mahpeyker and Hatice Turhan is known as the Sultanate of Women (Tur. *Kadınlar saltanati*).¹³³ They certainly did not escape the attention of foreign diplomats.¹³⁴ The Ragusans were also well aware of this, as in 1633 the ambassadors dispatched an encoded report that the new Venetian bailo had sent a lot of silk and gilt embroidered cloth to Kösem Sultan, and she in turn provided him with five kaftans.¹³⁵

Curiously, the Ragusans rarely mentioned the valide sultans. In 1579, the authorities replied to the ambassadors that they would reconsider their reports on Nurbanu valide sultan and her daughter Ismihan.¹³⁶ We might assume that the ambassadors proposed that some kind of formal attention ought to be bestowed on the mentioned powerful women, yet this remains within speculation. In any case, this did not affect the relations regarding Nurbanu and Ismihan. In his report about the Ottomans addressed to the Curia (1574), Frano Gondola referred to the children of Selim II. He stated that the children were of several women, making no mention of Nurbanu.¹³⁷

According to a letter penned by the Ragusan government, in 1586 Safiye Sultan sent them a written recommendation for some Jews. Through ambassadors,

¹³² *Let. Lev.* vol. 36, f. 4.

¹³³ This term is ascribed to Ahmet Refik Altınay (1881-1937), Turkish historian and writer (L. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*: p. 289; Ahmet Refik Altınay, *Kadınlar Saltanati*. İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 2011). For more details on the powerful valide sultans: L. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*: pp. 91-112; M. P. Pedani, »Safiye's Household and Venetian Diplomacy«; Özlem Kumrular, *Kösem Sultan; İktidar, Hirs, Entrika*. İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2015: pp. 14-19; eadem, *Haremde Taht Kuranlar Nurbanu ve Safiye Sultan*. İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2017; Erhan Afyoncu and Uğur Demir, *Turhan Sultan*. İstanbul: Yeditepe, 2015.

¹³⁴ Ö. Kumrular, *Haremde Taht Kuranlar Nurbanu ve Safiye Sultan*: pp. 233-237, 267-268, 273, 277-280, 316-325; I "Documenti Turchi" dell'Archivio di Stato di Venezia, ed. Maria Pia Pedani Fabris and Alessio Bombaci. Venezia: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1994: p. 285; *Inventory of the Lettere e Scritture Turchesche in the Venetian State Archives*, ed. Maria Pia Pedani. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2010: p. 73; J. Raby, »The Serenissima and the Sublime Porte: Art in the Art of Diplomacy, 1453-1600«: pp. 100-101.

¹³⁵ *DA* 17, vol. 1824, no. 20.

¹³⁶ *Let. Lev.* vol. 33, f. 247v.

¹³⁷ J. Radonić, *Dubrovačka akta i povelje* II/2: p. 328.

Ragusan authorities informed her that, wishing to gratify Her Highness, for the mentioned Jewish families they would do everything in their power.¹³⁸ In the letter, Safiye interceded on behalf of the members of the converted families Valenzin and Mazaod, who from the Apennine Peninsula arrived in the Ottoman Empire where they returned to their original faith, after which they wished to move to Dubrovnik. Considering that the Church strongly disapproved of the arrival of the Valenzin and Mazaod, the authorities disregarded the petition of Safiye Sultan and decided to banish the Jews. However, they remained in Dubrovnik thanks to their strong connections with Safiye Sultan which they offered to the Ragusans in exchange.¹³⁹

The mother of Sultan Mustafa I originated from Abkhazia, and her name has not been established with certainty. She did not belong to the circle of powerful valide sultans. The Ragusans made no note of her, yet she appears in Dubrovnik literature, in *Osman*, an epic written by Ivan Gundulić (1589-1638). The main character featuring in the epic is Sultan Osman II (1618-22), and central event described by the poet is the Turco-Polish Battle of Khotyn in 1621. This is merely a historical setting, whilst the main theme evolves around the fate and survival of the Dubrovnik Republic.¹⁴⁰ Featuring in *Osman* is the mother of Prince Mustafa, whom literary scholarship holds as one of the most interesting and most original female characters in Gundulić's entire literary production.¹⁴¹ Driven by ambition and lust for power, Mustafa's mother wished to depose Osman and install her son back to the throne. She was not pretty, but apparently was crafty, able, aspiring, determined. Further, she was offended, vengeful, ambitious and manipulative, she thrust Daut Pasha, her son-in-law, among the ring leaders of the plot, promising to share power with him.¹⁴² Through the voice of grand vizier Dilaver Pasha, Osman's ally, Gundulić described her as an omnipotent witch.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ *Let. Lev.* vol. 35, f. 150-150v.

¹³⁹ Vesna Miović, *Židovski rodovi u Dubrovniku*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2017: p. 180.

¹⁴⁰ Stjepan Čosić and Nenad Vekarić, *Dubrovačka vlastela između roda i države: Salamankezi i Sorbonezi*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2005: pp. 55-56.

¹⁴¹ Nikola Ivanišin, »Iskre iz Gundulićeva "Osmana"«. *Republika 7* (1955): p. 530; Rafo Bogišić, »Mustafina mati - jedan lik iz Gundulićeva "Osmana"«. *Radovi Zavoda za slavensku filologiju 7* (1965): p. 92.

¹⁴² I. Gundulić, *Osman*: p. 212 (Canto 17, verse 697-700).

¹⁴³ I. Gundulić, *Osman*: pp. 21-22 (Canto 12, verse 136-145, 171-175). For more on the literary character of Mustafa's mother: R. Bogišić, »Mustafina mati - jedan lik iz Gundulićeva "Osmana"«. pp. 84-99.

Sultan Murad IV succeeded the throne at the age of twelve (1623), and until 1632 the power rested in the hands of his mother Kösem. In the 1630s, in compliance with the laws securing stable government, Murad decided to have all his brothers executed. The last to meet his ill fate was Ibrahim. Having spent much of his life confined to the household, which was customary for the princes of that time, his mental health seriously deteriorated as he awaited the executioner and his final hour. It seems that Murad did sign the decree on Ibrahim's execution, but Kösem managed to assure him that Ibrahim was no longer among the living.¹⁴⁴ By doing so, she saved the life of the sole heir to the throne, because Murad's sons died in early youth. When Murad died in 1640, Ibrahim was installed as sultan. The ambassadors' encoded message to Dubrovnik read: "His Serene Highness is mad, let alone insane".¹⁴⁵ Ragusan Frano Crasso, physician of the grand vizier Kemankeş Kara Mustafa Pasha, wrote that, due to home confinement, the sultan had grown melancholic and hypochondriac, and that at first he was unable to have intercourse with women, which improved thanks to medications.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, Ragusan ambassadors were captivated by Ibrahim's pale complexion and beauty. In the eyes of the public, there had never been such a fair sultan in the imperial family.¹⁴⁷

Ibrahim's accession to the throne implied a stronger influence of his mother Kösem. Yet the minute he came under the influence of the harem, Kösem was no longer in the foreground. She tried to depose him, plotting with the grand vizier Salih Pasha (1647). The conspiracy was foiled, pasha was executed, and Kösem banished from Topkapı Saray. In summer 1648, the Janissaries decided on Ibrahim's fate.¹⁴⁸

In 1646 Ragusan ambassadors wrote that Sultan Ibrahim and grand vizier Salih Pasha pressurised them into presenting Kösem valide sultan with a gift. Being left with little choice, the ambassadors did as expected. Appalled, Ragusan authorities replied that such an action was not by *adet* (custom). Apparently,

¹⁴⁴ Aylin Görgün-Baran, »A Woman Leader in Ottoman History: Kösem Sultan (1589-1651)«, in: *Women Leaders in Chaotic Environments*, ed. Şefika Şule Erçetin. New York: Springer International Publishing AG, 2016: p. 80.

¹⁴⁵ *Il Gran Signore jes lud quasi mahnit* (DA 17, vol. 1826, no. 2).

¹⁴⁶ *Il Gran Signore per la prigionia passata haveva contratto una malinconia ipocondriaca che lo haveva reso stupido in modo che per alcun tempo che è uscito al governo, è stato perplesso et attonito non havendosi potuto congiunger con le done, ma poi dopo li rimedii ha cominciato praticarle come con effetto si sentirà fra breve...* (DA 17, no. 1861, no. 11).

¹⁴⁷ *...tanto bello, e tanto gratto questo Gran Signore che tutti affermano, che non s'abbi visto mai nella Casa Ottomana un Re tanto bello, come lui, e quando io lo vide, mi maravigliai della sua gran bellezza e bianchezza* (DA 17, vol. 1885, no. 8. See also: DA 17, vol. 1899, no. 6).

¹⁴⁸ DA 17, vol. 1830, no. 6, 7, 16.

Ragusans gave gifts to all married sultanas, including the widows,¹⁴⁹ but not to valide sultans. That gift, God forbid, would probably be expected in future, and could lead to new demands. The ambassadors were to refuse it at the cost of their own lives since every novelty, even a trivial one let alone that big, would lead to an increase of tribute and ultimately to the ruin and dissolution of the Dubrovnik state.¹⁵⁰ When in spring 1647 new tribute ambassadors set out for Istanbul, the authorities warned them that the grand vizier Salih Pasha would most likely demand from them a gift for Kösem Sultan. They were instructed to evade any gift giving, with an excuse that Dubrovnik was poor and the fact that such a gift was not customary. If their argumentation failed, in no case whatsoever was the Ragusan gift to be presented to the sultana by the grand vizier together with his own, as he had done the previous year. They should make all efforts to present the gift in person,¹⁵¹ and they could reward Salih Pasha with up to 100 ducats for setting up a meeting with her. Or, they could send her a gift through the dragoman. There was every reason to believe, the authorities added, that the pasha was dead or deposed. The gift for Kösem Sultan included 12 pieces of satin, two large candles and several boxes of candy.¹⁵² Just as the Ragusans had foreseen, Salih Pasha was executed in August 1647. Considering that Kösem Sultan then fell out of favour, the new Ragusan practice of presenting her with gift was easily discontinued.

During the reign of Mehmed IV, a most serious crisis marked the relations of the Dubrovnik Republic with the Porte. As soon as Kara-Mustafa assumed the position of grand vizier in 1676, he accused the Ragusans of charging Ottoman merchants unreasonably high custom fees during the past Candian War, and demanded very high compensation. The allegation was ungrounded, but that was of little benefit. The Ragusans realised that only through negotiations they could reduce the amount of the alleged damage. Tribute ambassadors resorted to everything in their power, from sophisticated diplomatic methods to pursuit of allies at the Porte. On several occasions they tried in vain to submit a memorial to Hatice Turhan, valide sultan, in order to seek help from her. They could not even be received by the chief of black eunuchs (Tur. *kızlar ağası*).¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ *DA* 17, vol. 1830, no. 3.

¹⁵⁰ *Let. Lev.* vol. 49, ff. 149v-150.

¹⁵¹ It appears that only valide sultan was allowed more freedom of movement and was thus in a position to have private meetings with the Porte dignitaries, providing that she was carefully veiled (L. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*: p. 143). This fact might have fuelled Ragusan hopes that the ambassadors would manage to meet Kösem Sultan in person.

¹⁵² *Let. Lev.* vol. 49, ff. 195-196.

¹⁵³ *DA* 17, vol. 1833, no. 9.

In all, the only valide sultan whom the Ragusans honoured by their own choice was Hafsa, mother of Süleyman the Magnificent. In 1520, the ambassadors were instructed to make their own judgement whether she ought to be given a gift on the occasion of Süleyman's accession to the throne. They could spend 50 ducats for it.¹⁵⁴ Their actions thereupon are not known.

Finally, let us mention Hurrem, who did not live long enough to become a valide sultan. The changes introduced by Hurrem paved way to the rising power of the sultanas and sultans' favourites (*haseki*). The ambassadors seemed to have mentioned her name more often, as the authorities on two occasions forwarded the news on her to the pope and vice-king of Naples. Once, when she was preparing to spend the winter in Edirne with her daughter Mihrimah and son-in-law Rüstem Pasha (1551),¹⁵⁵ and on the second occasion when Rüstem Pasha, although deposed, remained in Istanbul thanks to Hurrem (1554).¹⁵⁶ Frano Gondola's report to the pope on the Ottoman developments opens with a remark that he was in a position to talk to the noblemen who acted as tribute ambassadors during the last Turco-Venetian War (1570-3). From them he heard many details on the Ottomans, whereupon he concluded that it was his duty to report them to the pope. He continued with a description of Hurrem's (*Rossane, Rossa*) efforts to win Süleyman's heart and remove Mustafa, his eldest son. Gondola states that in order to achieve her pursuits, Hurrem sought counsel from Strongila, a Jewish woman,¹⁵⁷ known for being a confidant of his mother Hafsa.¹⁵⁸

On several occasions through the second half of the seventeenth but also in the eighteenth century, the Ragusans mentioned valide sultans and sultans' favourites.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ *Let. Lev.* vol. 19, f. 173-173v.

¹⁵⁵ *Let. Lev.* vol. 25, f. 27v.

¹⁵⁶ *Let. Lev.* vol. 25, f. 256v.

¹⁵⁷ J. Radonić, *Dubrovačka akta i povelje* II/2: pp. 323-234.

¹⁵⁸ Maria Pia Pedani, »Kira e sultane nel Cinquecento ottomano«, in: *Non solo verso Oriente: Studi sull'Ebraismo in onore di Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini*, ed. Maddalena Del Bianco Cotrozzi, Riccardo Di Segni and Marcello Massenzio. Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2014: pp. 348-351; Ö. Kumrular, *Haremde Taht Kuranlar Nurbanu ve Safiye Sultan*: pp. 79-80.

¹⁵⁹ 16 August 1665: *al 2 Agosto Valide da qui parti per Constantinopoli* (DA 17, vol. 1841, no. 4); 21 June 1668: *la Reina Madre all'11 del corente parti per Constantinopoli, essendoli stato destinato per chonachia il Musaip Passa e fu accompagnata dall'istesso Re cinque giornate* (DA 17, vol. 1842, no. 3); 11 July 1671: *Delle novita da qui non potiamo scriverli cosa alcuna solo che di certo è venuta la hasechi Sultana alla Planina con 40 cochi di zitelle di sua Corte accompagnata da Ciausc Basci homo di Priepoglie come altre volte li scrissimo assai voluto da Gran Signore* (DA 17, vol. 1833, no. 1); 19 April 1755: *Sulla nave Reale partita per Alessandria è stata imbarcata la Basc Kadun, o sia prima Dama del deffonto Sultano, per proseguire dall'Egitto il suo pellegrinaggio alla Mecca* (*Diplomata et Acta saec. XVIII* (hereafter as: DA 18), series 76, vol. 3165, no. 6; SAD).

Kameršah Sultan and Hümaşah Sultan, daughters of Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha

In the period 1419-1426, the Ragusans acquired Konavle from the Ottoman vassals, dukes Sandalj Hranić and Radoslav Pavlović. Hranić received 12,000 ducats in addition to an annual tribute of 500 perpers. He was also granted an estate in Župa dubrovačka and some palaces in the city of Dubrovnik. Hranić, his brothers Vuk and Vukac, and the latter's son Stjepan were bestowed the status of Ragusan noblemen.¹⁶⁰

Hranić was succeeded by his nephew Stjepan Vukčić Kosača. When Kosača died in 1466, his sons Vladislav, Vlatko and Stjepan inherited the money which his father had deposited in Dubrovnik.¹⁶¹ The legacy also included the right to the estates on the Republic territory, i.e. collection of revenue from these estates.¹⁶² In the archival sources dating from the period under study, these revenues are cited as "provision for Konavle" or simply "provision".¹⁶³ In the name of provision, Kosača's sons received 48 ducats each.¹⁶⁴

Stjepan, youngest son of Stjepan Vukčić Kosača, was born in 1456 or 1459. According to some historians, he grew up in Dubrovnik.¹⁶⁵ Apparently, in 1473-4, upon his own initiative, he left for Istanbul, where he accepted Islam and was named Ahmed.¹⁶⁶ Under this name he first appears in a ferman which Mehmed

¹⁶⁰ From the Ragusans, Radoslav Pavlović received 12,000 ducats, a house in the city, an extra sum of 1,000 ducats and some land in Konavle. He and his descendants were granted the status of Ragusan noblemen. For a more detailed account on Dubrovnik's acquisition of Konavle and pertaining issues: Niko Kapetanić and Nenad Vekarić, *Stanovništvo Konavala*, vol. I. Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 1998: pp. 26-33. See also: Niko Kapetanić, *Konavle u XV stoljeću*. Gruda: Matica hrvatska Konavle, 2011; Nada Grujić and Danko Zelić, »The Palace of Duke Sandalj Hranić in Dubrovnik«. *Dubrovnik Annals* 15 (2011): pp. 7-66.

¹⁶¹ On several occasions the Ottomans addressed the Ragusans regarding money division between the brothers Vladislav, Vlatko and Stjepan (Ćiro Truhelka, »Tursko-slovenski spomenici dubrovačke arhive.« *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja* 1/1 (1911): pp. 30-32, 36, 39-40, 92-93; Ivan Božić, *Dubrovnik i Turska u XIV i XV veku*. Beograd: SAN, 1952: p. 200; Gliša Elezović, *Turski spomenici*, vol. I. Beograd: Srpska Kraljevska Akademija, 1940: pp. 271-279, 599- 607, 628; Boško I. Bojović, *Raguse et l'Empire Ottoman (1430-1520)*. Paris: Association Pierre Belon, 1998: 225-226, 237-239, 295, 298-299).

¹⁶² T. Popović, *Turska i Dubrovnik u XVI veku*: p. 348; G. Elezović, *Turski spomenici* I: pp. 280-282; *Let. Lev.* vol. 22, f. 35v; vol. 24, f. 250-250v.

¹⁶³ *Let. Lev.* vol. 17, ff. 72v, 85, 110v.

¹⁶⁴ Mihajlo Dinić, »Dubrovački tributi; Mogoriš, Svetodmitarski i Konavoski dohodak, Provižun braće Vlatkovića«. *Glas SKA* 168 (1935): p. 742.

¹⁶⁵ G. Elezović, *Turski spomenici* I: pp. 591, 593.

¹⁶⁶ Petar Vrankić, »Stjepan/Ahmed-paša Hercegović (1456.-1517.) u svjetlu dubrovačkih, talijanskih i osmanskih izvora i ljetopisa; Kontroverzne teme iz života Stjepana/Ahmed-paše Hercegovića«. *Hercegovina. Časopis za kulturno i povijesno naslijeđe* 3 (2017): p. 33.



Figure 2. Receipt confirming that Hümaşah Sultan, Kamerşah Sultan and Ahmed Bey from the hands of the ambassadors Stjepko and Čoko (Stjepan Antun Gozze and Ivan Nikola Palmota) received 48 ducats in the name of revenues from their grandfather's estate for the year 948. The document contains Kamerşah's seal only; first decade of Rebiulevvel 948; end of June and beginning of July 1541 (*Acta Turcarum*, vol. E 14, no. 36)

the Conqueror issued to the Ragusans in 1474.¹⁶⁷ Hersekzade Ahmed quickly advanced during the reigns of as many as three sultans. He started as a *mür-i alem* (standard bearer), then assumed the duty of sancakbey, beylerbey and *kapudan pasha*. He was grand vizier as many as five times, and sultan's confidant and counsellor. In 1481 or 1484 he married Hundi Sultan, daughter of Bayezid II.¹⁶⁸ Ahmed Pasha was well-disposed towards the Ragusans.¹⁶⁹

Ahmed Pasha continued to receive the Konavle provision of 48 ducats from the tribute ambassadors.¹⁷⁰ After his death in 1517, it was allocated to his

¹⁶⁷ The ferman was issued on 24 September 1474 (Ć. Truhelka, »Tursko-slovenski spomenici dubrovačke arhive«: pp. 39-40).

¹⁶⁸ Heath W. Lowry, *Hersekzâde Ahmed Paşa: An Ottoman Statesman's Career & Pious Endowments*. Istanbul: Bahçeşehir University Press, 2011: pp. 13-17; İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi II*: pp. 536, 637; Behija Zlatar, »O nekim muslimanskim feudalnim porodicama u Bosni u XV i XVI stoljeću«. *Prilozi Instituta za istoriju* 14/15 (1978): p. 90; M. Ç. Uluçay, *Padişahların Kadınları ve Kızları*: p. 27.

¹⁶⁹ T. Popović, *Turska i Dubrovnik u XVI veku*: pp. 28-30, 40-41, 43, 51, 57, 81, 101.

¹⁷⁰ *Let. Lev.* vol. 17, ff. 29, 39v, 50v, 72v, 85, 108v, 127v, 138; vol. 19, ff. 59v, 78v; G. Elezović, *Turski spomenici I*: pp. 608-609; Ć. Truhelka, »Tursko-slovenski spomenici dubrovačke arhive«: p. 141. For more on Ahmed Pasha's brothers, Vlatko and Vladislav, and their descendants: M. Dinić, »Dubrovački tributi«: pp. 742-745.

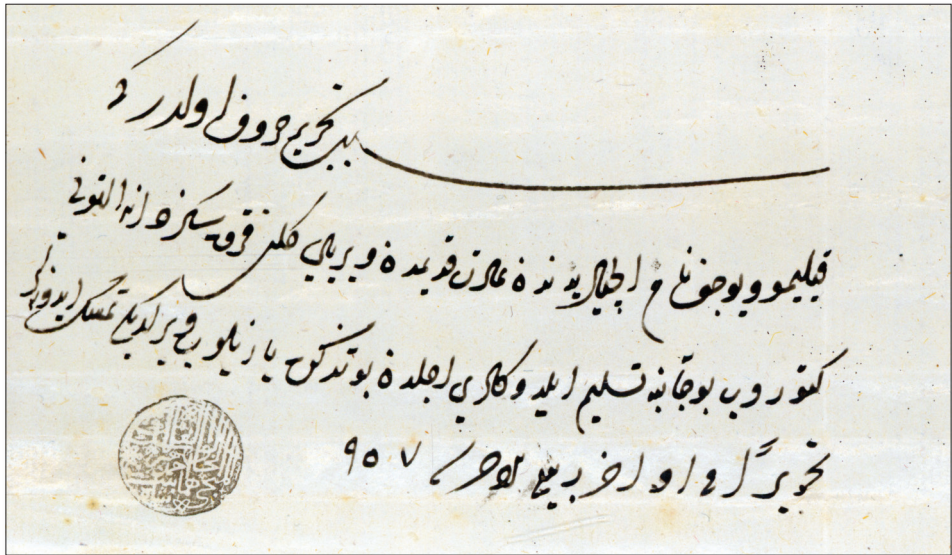


Figure 3. Receipt with the seal of Hümaşah Sultan confirming that the ambassadors Klimo and *Judo* (Klement Božo Gozze and Josip Martolica Giorgi) “to this party” gave 48 ducats; third decade of Rebiulahir 957; May 1550 (*Acta Turcarum*, vol. E 20, no. 41)

heirs,¹⁷¹ children from his marriage to Hundi Sultan (died before 1503)¹⁷² and after Hundi’s death, from a relationship with a concubine most likely named Perihal-hatun (died in 1519).¹⁷³ In 1563–4, Ragusan dragoman wrote that 48 ducats were allocated to pasha’s children with “two women, that is, with a slave and his lawful wife”.¹⁷⁴

Extant are three receipts issued by Ahmed Pasha’s daughters, Kamerşah Sultan and Hümaşah Sultan. Together with their brother Ahmed Bey,¹⁷⁵ in 1541 the sultanas received 48 ducats from the ambassadors Đono and Stijepo. The document contains Kamerşah’s seal only. Judging by the receipt from 1548,

¹⁷¹ *Let. Lev.* vol. 19, ff. 152v, 167, 191v, 228v, 247; vol. 20, ff. 33, 55, 87v, 118, 192v, 255; vol. 21, ff. 4v, 47v, 127; vol. 22, ff. 125v, 226; vol. 23, ff. 23, 77v, 148v, 200v; vol. 24, ff. 64; vol. 25, f. 39; vol. 27, ff. 2v, 125, 127v; vol. 28, f. 265; vol. 29, ff. 70v, 161, 277; vol. 30, ff. 78, 79, 181, 215v, 217; vol. 30, f. 181v; vol. 33, ff. 14, 93v, 132, 135, 171, 254v; vol. 34, ff. 68, 138, 204v; vol. 35, ff. 42v, 85v, 126, 189v.

¹⁷² Hedda Reindl-Kiel, »Some notes on Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha, his Family and his Books«, *Journal of Turkish Studies* 40 (2013): p. 316.

¹⁷³ H. W. Lowry, *Hersekzâde Ahmed Paşa: An Ottoman Statesman’s Career & Pious Endowments*: p. 18.

¹⁷⁴ *Acta Turcarum*, vol. E 20, no. 29b.

¹⁷⁵ According to the receipt, Kamerşah Sultan, Hümaşah Sultan and Ahmed Bey received revenue from their grandfather’s estate, upon which we might assume that Ahmed Bey was their brother (*Acta Turcarum*, vol. E 14, no. 36; Figure 2).

ambassadors Jerko Gradić and Đivo Sorkočević gave 48 ducats to “this party”. The receipt contains two seals. One belongs to Hümaşah, and it seems that the other is hers, too.¹⁷⁶ According to the same seal, she also received money in 1550.¹⁷⁷

In June 1523, one of Ahmed Pasha’s daughters in the company of her husband Mehmed Bey Alibegović, new sancakbey of Herzegovina, arrived in Mostar.¹⁷⁸ Their son was also with them.¹⁷⁹ According to the Ragusans, the wife of the new sancakbey, daughter of the late Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha, was born in a marriage with sultan’s daughter.¹⁸⁰ It is generally agreed that the sultana in question is Hümaşah, although Kamerşah cannot be ruled out completely.¹⁸¹

Mehmed Bey descended from a distinguished Mihaloğlu family, whose members held high positions in Istanbul and Ottoman provinces. He belonged to an influential circle gathered around Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha.¹⁸² Having arrived in Herzegovina, the bey showed keen interest in Ahmed Pasha’s legacy. Apart from considering that, as Ahmed Pasha’s son-in-law, he was entitled to a part of provision, he started re-examining Dubrovnik’s rights to Konavle. Whether and to what extent his wife participated in this action remains to be speculated. The arguments, however, were on the side of the Dubrovnik Republic. At the same time, in collaboration with Ivan de Tanis, Mehmed Bey conspired to cede Ston to the Ottomans. The plot was soon foiled, Tanis was arrested and severely tortured to death. This marked the end of yet another of Mehmed Bey’s plans to seize a part of the territory of the Dubrovnik Republic. He left Herzegovina in 1527.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁶ *Acta Turcarum*, no. 2199 (18 Safar 955; 29 March 1548).

¹⁷⁷ *Acta Turcarum*, vol. E 20, no. 41; Figure 3.

¹⁷⁸ T. Popović, »Spisak hercegovačkih namesnika u XVI veku«: p. 96; M. Dinić, »Dubrovački tributi«: p. 742.

¹⁷⁹ *Acta Consilii Rogatorum* (hereafter as: *Cons. Rog.*), series 3, vol. 37, ff. 117, 122; SAD.

¹⁸⁰ *Cons. Rog.* vol. 37, f. 105 (Ragusan ambassadors gave her fabrics and candies); T. Popović, *Turska i Dubrovnik u XVI veku*: p. 140.

¹⁸¹ H. W. Lowry, *Hersekzâde Ahmed Paşa*: p. 17; H. Reindl-Kiel, »Some notes on Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha, his Family and his Books«: pp. 316-317. As for Ahmed Pasha’s sons, it is well known that he had Ali Bey and Mustafa Bey, yet also mentioned are Mehmed Bey and Ahmed Bey (Behija Zlatar, »Ahmed-paşa Hercegovici«, in: *Herceg Stjepan Vukčić Kosača i njegovo doba*, ed. Munib Maglajlić. Mostar: Bošnjačka zajednica kulture “Preporod” and Gradsko društvo Mostar, 2005: pp. 182-183; H. Reindl-Kiel, »Some notes on Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha, his Family and his Books«: p. 319).

¹⁸² T. Popović, *Turska i Dubrovnik u XVI veku*: p. 139; H. Reindl-Kiel, »Some notes on Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha, his Family and his Books«: p. 317.

¹⁸³ T. Popović, *Turska i Dubrovnik u XVI veku*: pp. 139-143; Zdravko Šundrica, »Otrovi u Dubrovačkoj Republici«, in: Zdravko Šundrica, *Tajna kutija dubrovačkog arhiva*, vol. II. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2009: pp. 171-175; Nenad Vekarić, *Nevidljive pukotine: Dubrovački vlasteoski klanovi*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2009: p. 87.

In March 1551, Dubrovnik saw the arrival of Vlatko Kosača from Venice, grandson of Vlatko, Ahmed Pasha's brother. At the same time, the Ragusans received a letter from Hümaşah Sultan requesting that they permit Vlatko use her property for investments.

Apparently, Vlatko was not satisfied with the negotiations he had with the Ragusan authorities, as he soon set out for Istanbul to see Hümaşah, and returned to Dubrovnik just as speedily. Ragusan authorities soon received two fermans demanding that they establish legal grounds of Vlatko's claims to houses and an estate in the Dubrovnik area. Through their ambassadors, the Ragusans kept continuous contact with Hümaşah, and managed to assure her of Vlatko's ill intentions.¹⁸⁴ Finally, in October 1551 a ferman arrived in Dubrovnik stating that Hümaşah was the sole holder of revenues from the mentioned estate.¹⁸⁵ After 1551, Hümaşah Sultan cannot be traced in the archival sources.

Fatma, sister of Derviş Pasha

According to the literature available to date, Derviş was born in Bosnia. He found himself in Istanbul as part of the devşirme system, where he was educated and whereupon he joined the Janissaries of the *Bostancı* corps. His speedy and quite untypical rise started in 1603, with the accession of Sultan Ahmed I, thanks largely to Ahmed's mother, Handan Sultan (?-1605). Although she was not a powerful valide sultan,¹⁸⁶ she still had sufficient influence to promote her protégé Derviş agha into a prominent sultan's favourite.¹⁸⁷ In June 1604, while still fairly young, Derviş became *bostancıbaşı*¹⁸⁸ and by the start of 1606 he was titled vizier and held the office of *kapudan pasha*. A couple of months later, he attained the post of the grand vizier, apparently responsible for the death of his predecessor. He acted as grand vizier only six months, after which he was executed on accusation of political malpractice and power abuse. Those who did not like Derviş spoke of him as a crypto-Christian, who had dug a tunnel from his palace

¹⁸⁴ *Let. Lev.* vol. 25, ff. 6-7v.

¹⁸⁵ *DA* 7/1.2 (fermans), vol. 4, no. 191; Gliša Elezović, »Nekretna dobra Ahmed paše Hercegovića u Dubrovniku izvor za pljačku Dubrovačke Republike«. *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* 1 (1950): pp. 70-71.

¹⁸⁶ L. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*: p. 127.

¹⁸⁷ Günhan Börekçi, *Factions and Favorites at the Courts of Sultan Ahmet (r. 1603-1617) and his Immediate Predecessors*, Phil. D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 2010: p. 137.

¹⁸⁸ İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. III. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1995: p. 362.

to Topkapi Saray with an intent to murder the sultan and his heirs and seize the throne. On the other hand, those in need of his favours saved no energy in flattering him.¹⁸⁹ Among the latter were the Ragusans. In true matter, Derviş Pasha made the first move and offered them help. It was not uncommon for the Ragusan diplomats and dignitaries of Bosnian descent to arrange most cordial meetings. The fact that these Ottoman dignitaries could communicate in their mother tongue contributed essentially to their disposition towards the Ragusans.¹⁹⁰

In the Ragusan archival sources, *bostancıbaşı* Derviş may be traced from the end of 1604, when he addressed the ambassadors and offered such favours to the huge satisfaction of the Ragusan authorities: “we should pray to God for the happiness of His Lordship”.¹⁹¹ At the time, the Ragusans sought help from the Ottomans against the Venetians, who had occupied the Ragusan island of Lastovo.¹⁹²

In early 1605, Derviş agha asked the Ragusans to arrange the arrival of his family in Istanbul, due to which his father planned to come to Dubrovnik.¹⁹³

Ambassadors Vlaho Sorgo and Petar Andrija Resti set out from Dubrovnik in June 1605, to be joined in Nevesinje in Herzegovina by Derviş’s mother, sister, son-in-law and *padrigno*. Derviş’s sister was named Fatma. Her husband, Janissary Husein,¹⁹⁴ travelled as escort to the ambassadors.¹⁹⁵ The family’s travel expenses were covered by the Ragusan state, and the ambassadors treated them as “persons of merit”.¹⁹⁶

On arrival in Istanbul, the ambassadors encountered Derviş on several occasions. Once he helped them liberate a Ragusan ship from seizure, and they

¹⁸⁹ More on Derviş Pasha in: G. Börekçi, *Factions and Favorites at the Courts of Sultan Ahmet (r. 1603-1617) and his Immediate Predecessors*: pp. 137, 199-240.

¹⁹⁰ V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istanbulu*: pp. 89, 155.

¹⁹¹ *Let. Lev.* vol. 41, f. 18v.

¹⁹² *Let. Lev.* vol. 41, f. 19v. Lastovo rebellion against Dubrovnik started in 1602, incited mainly by tax increase (rise of rector’s salary and obligations regarding the restoration of his palace and two prisons, etc.) imposed upon them by the Dubrovnik Republic. The rebels turned to the Venetians, who occupied the island in 1603. The crisis was resolved in 1606. More recent research has confirmed that the ringleaders of the rebellion should be sought within a group of indigenous island noblemen who had lost their ruling position. As they could not restore it within the Dubrovnik Republic, they involved Venice into the conflict (Nenad Vekarić, »Lastovski pobunjenici 1602. godine«. *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU* 43 (2005): pp. 43-73).

¹⁹³ *Let. Lev.* vol. 41, f. 30.

¹⁹⁴ *Let. Lev.* vol. 41, f. 43.

¹⁹⁵ On their journeys, tribute ambassadors were always escorted by one or two Janissaries (*Let. Lev.* vol. 33, f. 98v; vol. 44, ff. 22-27).

¹⁹⁶ *Let. Lev.* vol. 41, f. 43.

rewarded him with silk. On another occasion, when he informed them of the Ottoman invasion of Esztergom, they gave him 40 ducats. When in the late 1605 and early 1606 he was titled vizier, they gave him 100 sequins, and a piece of satin and two large gilt candles for his “wife”.¹⁹⁷ Derviş soon advanced to the position of *kapudan pasha*, and the Ragusans marked this occasion by presenting him and his mother with appropriate gifts.¹⁹⁸ On account of pasha’s exceptional disposition towards the Republic, his mother also received a gift several months later.¹⁹⁹

On 26 May 1606, ambassadors Sorgo and Bassegli reported that Derviş Pasha had become a grand vizier. Ragusan authorities concluded that no other person could act better to the benefit of the Republic than Derviş himself.²⁰⁰

As their mission had come to an end, Sorgo and Bassegli headed back to Dubrovnik, being succeeded by two new tribute ambassadors—Jakov Bobali, and famous mathematician and physicist, Marin Ghetaldi. By late August and early September 1606, they presented the grand vizier Derviş Pasha with the usual gifts, and were also to bestow his mother and sister.²⁰¹ Pasha surprised them by saying that he had already paid the Ragusan *haraç* with his own money “out of love for the Ragusans” so as to appease the sultan due to their delay. The ambassadors reimbursed the debt at his palace, in the presence of a *defterdar*.²⁰²

Later, the ambassadors were to be received by the sultan. In the absence of professional dragoman, Bobali and Ghetaldi were accompanied by Nikola Popović, a merchant who, trading in the Levant, had picked up some language. However, shortly before the reception he decided to withdraw, admitting that he had no courage to stand before the sultan. This awkward situation was resolved by Derviş Pasha, who informed the Ragusans to feel free to say whatever they wished at the reception because he would act as their dragoman. And so he did. Among other things, he said to the sultan: “these are our tributaries, who

¹⁹⁷ *Let. Lev.* vol. 41, f. 114. Given the fact that the mother of Derviş Pasha is always mentioned, there is reason to assume that the scribe made a mistake, and that here, too, she was the recipient.

¹⁹⁸ *Let. Lev.* vol. 41, f. 132-132v (Derviş Pasha’s mother received two pieces of satin and two candles).

¹⁹⁹ *Let. Lev.* vol. 41, f. 154v (Derviş Pasha’s mother received a piece of cloth and six boxes of candy).

²⁰⁰ *Let. Lev.* vol. 41, ff. 72, 158.

²⁰¹ *Let. Lev.* vol. 41, f. 160.

²⁰² *DA* 18, vol. 1814, no. 1; *Let. Lev.* vol. 41, f. 161.

for the last three hundred years²⁰³ have been bringing us *haraç* and no person can excel them in loyalty”. He later commented on this with pleasure, adding that he was expecting a delivery of fabrics from Dubrovnik. The ambassadors wrote that the fabrics ought to be sent as soon as possible, for they could easily fall out of pasha’s favour, which would be a colossal loss since pasha enjoyed sultan’s favour, everything depended on him, the power was actually in his hands.²⁰⁴

At a roughly same time, in summer 1606, the Venetians withdrew from the Ragusan island of Lastovo. On that occasion Ragusan ambassadors paid a visit to Derviş Pasha to convey their gratitude. “He received us kindly and joyfully enquired: ‘Has Lastovo been surrendered to you?’ We responded: ‘Yes, by the grace of the Lord All Mighty... and your efforts.’ He then said: ‘You must believe that I am for you and that I have done much.’ And all this he spoke with us in our tongue. We responded: ‘Our gentlemen are well familiar with it and that is why they have felt the same joy over your promotion as over the surrender of Lastovo, perhaps even more.’ ‘They are right’, he said, ‘for I might be of more value to them than one island...’”²⁰⁵

Upon the payment of tribute to Derviş Pasha, the ambassadors were given a receipt, though an invalid one. It confirmed their payment for the year/s 1604/5, instead of 1605/6. Their efforts to send dragoman Popović and have a copy of the previous receipt issued so as to prove the error by comparison remained in vain. They hesitated whether to pin the blame on Popović or the Ottoman administration. Considering that Derviş Pasha was no longer among the living, it took a lot of labour to amend the error.²⁰⁶

Further developments may best be reconstructed on the basis of two Ottoman documents. While holding the position of grand vizier, Derviş Pasha instructed the Ragusans to deliver some money, fabrics and other valuables to his sister

²⁰³ Derviş Pasha repeated what all Ragusan ambassadors to the Porte falsely claimed that they had been paying *haraç* “since Orhan’s time”, “for already 300 years” or “for already 400 years” (Vesna Miović, *Dubrovačka Republika u spisima osmanskih sultana*. Dubrovnik: Državni arhiv u Dubrovniku, 2005: pp. 24-25).

²⁰⁴ *DA* 17, vol. 1814, no. 4.

²⁰⁵ Quoted from: R. Samardžić, *Veliki vek Dubrovnika*: pp. 42-43.

²⁰⁶ *DA* 17, vol. 1814, no. 6, 8. Derviş Pasha was executed on 9 December 1606, of which Ghetaldi and Bobali reported to the Ragusan government that same day (*Let. Lev.* vol. 41, f. 180-180v). A month later, the Ragusans informed the Curia of this event (Ivan Dujčev, *Avvisi di Ragusa; Documenti sull’Impero Turco nel sec. XVII e sulla Guerra di Candia*. Roma: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1935: p. 1).

Fatma in Herzegovina. The things were placed in a basket-like chest wrapped in leather (Tur. *sepet sandık*) and sealed with pasha's seal. Leaving Istanbul in March 1607, Ghetaldi and Bobali took the chest, for which they were given an appropriate receipt. According to the latter, among other things, the chest contained: 21 bales of silk, satin, woollen cloths and calico cotton fabrics (Tur. *alaca*), a fur collar, 16 turbans, two belts, one of silver and the other encrusted with gems, four pearls and ducats.²⁰⁷

Ghetaldi and Bobali returned to Dubrovnik in the late spring of 1607, but failed to deliver the chest with valuables to Fatma. For this reason, she repeatedly wrote to the Ragusan authorities, of which only one undated letter has survived. She considered that the ambassadors intended to take possession of her belongings calculating that, after her brother's execution, she would have no one to help her. She demanded the names of the perpetrators, which the Ragusan authorities concealed. She still enjoyed the support of the Porte, as the imperial divan demanded from the Ragusans to submit the names of the ambassadors who took possession of her belongings.²⁰⁸ After a number of Fatma's petitions, only a part of the goods was delivered to her by Vlaho Sorgo and Petar Andrija Resti, tribute ambassadors from 1605, Fatma's old acquaintances, with whom she travelled to Istanbul, and with whom she might have just as well returned to Herzegovina.

A freely translated wording of her letter reads as follows:

“To the prides of the most noble, to our sublime neighbours, Ragusan beys and rectors, upon greeting and blessing, to their kind attention.

My sublime friends, when His Excellency my brother, late Derviş Pasha, was grand vizier, through your ambassadors to this sincere friend of yours and some kin he sent several excellent pearls, a belt decorated with gem stones, 3,000 ducats, 10 bales of fabrics and a load of similar valuable luxuries. Since

²⁰⁷ *Acta Turcarum*, no. 2894. The document was issued on 5 March 1607 (6 Zilkade 1015). It confirms that the chest was accepted by the Ragusan ambassadors Jako and Maro, and there is no doubt that behind these names stood Jakov Bobali and Marin Ghetaldi. The exact number of ducats in the chest is illegible due to a blot on the document. In all likelihood, it was a three-figure sum ending in eight. In her letter, Fatma referred to a sum of 3,000 ducats. By comparing the items cited by Fatma and the list, it is quite clear that she was not truly familiar with what her brother had sent her.

²⁰⁸ The document has not survived, yet the regesta is cited in the catalogue of Ottoman documents compiled in the 1930s (*Catalogue Acta Turcarum*, vol. E 21, no. 84).

by God's mystery he was struck by imperial rage, neither to me nor the rest of the kin did the ambassadors deliver the things he had sent. My most sublime friends, we have witnesses confirming so. From you we demand that you announce and by God's law and judicial assistance investigate as to who the ambassadors were at that time. If they are dead, they have heirs. There are many witnesses in this case. Through the bearer of this letter inform me about the details of the solution of your debt and provide a reply, so that we know who to seek it from. If the debt is not satisfactorily solved, messengers will be dispatched to inform the Sublime Porte about our situation. From the Sublime Porte we cannot experience injustice, yet only compensation. My sublime friends, I am a sister of a grand vizier, and you are to confirm your traditional friendship and kindness.

If your noble wish is for a good cause, we agree. If you say "there is nothing, there is nothing", what belongs to us will not be wasted nor will it remain with you. The state of the affairs has been brought to your attention, as befits friendship and good neighbourly relations. Repay the debt and again inform us in detail about the situation. One can merely add that goodness is a quality of the noble. So far many letters have been sent to you which remained unanswered. To your noble attention this time we have sent a special man by whom be so kind as to deliver your reply, and thus avoid future embarrassment and headache.

And do not send us to Istanbul nor to beylerbeys, nor from door to door. Vlaho and Andrija, who were (ambassadors) before those ambassadors, brought us 500 ducats of the late Derviş Pasha. Whoever was an ambassador after them, see (...) and find out and inform us accordingly.

Sincere friend Fatma-*kadın*, sister of Derviş Pasha."²⁰⁹

As Fatma did not know the names of the ambassadors who took illegal possession of her property, she insisted on writing to the Ragusan authorities. Although the latter had no intention of disclosing the names, they tried to deal with this matter on a private level. They sent her persons whom she was well acquainted with, Vlaho Sorgo and Andrija Petar Resti, yet not as representatives of the state but of the perpetrators. This explains why there is not a single trace of this case in the government instructions to the envoys in the Levant, and the outcome remains unknown.

²⁰⁹ *Acta Turcarum*, vol. B 2, no. 13 (Figure 4).

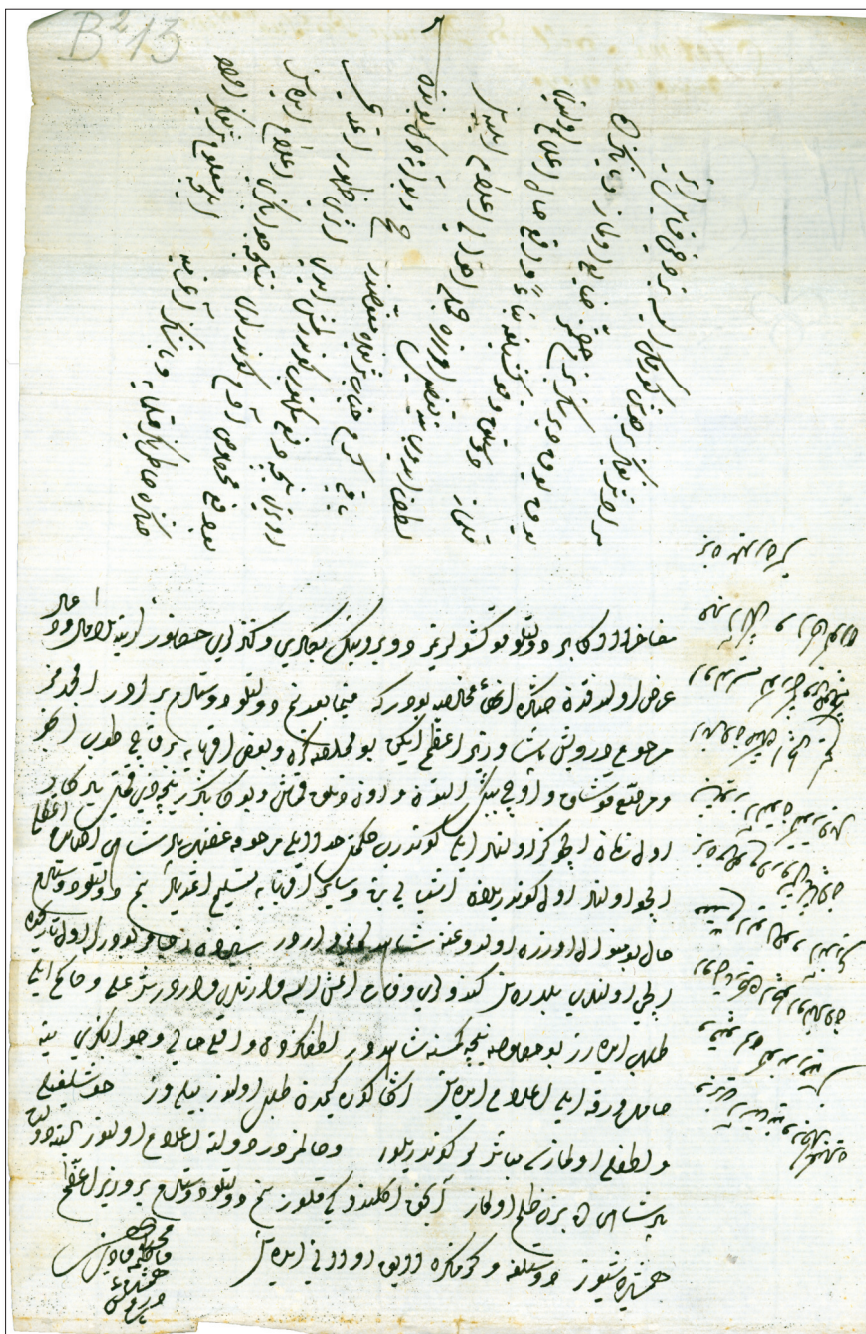


Figure 4. Fatma's letter to the Ragusans (*Acta Turcarum*, vol. B 2, no. 13)

Imperial weddings, births and the donanma celebration

Ragusan diplomats sent regular reports on the imperial weddings and births, which were often accompanied by death. Extant are the news sent by the tribute ambassadors in the seventeenth century, those sent by consuls Luka Chirico (1709-49) and Đuro Curić (1763-87) in the eighteenth century, and by Petar Čingrija (1755-68), chargé d'affaires.

According to the ambassadors' letter from the late 1634 and early 1635, Murad IV intended to give the hand of his eight-year-old daughter Kaya to his *silahdar* Mustafa Pasha immediately after the Feast of Bayram. *Silahdar*, a very young man, was the sultan's favourite and very influential at the Porte. Being the son of a wealthy Sarajevo merchant Hacı Sinan Başı from the Ragusan neighbourhood, Dubrovnik looked upon him with favour.²¹⁰ Apparently, this wedding had never taken place.²¹¹

At the end of 1678, *Ciuciusc*, or Gülnuş most presumably,²¹² the favourite of Sultan Mehmed IV, bore him a son. Ragusan ambassadors took part in the celebration commonly known as *donanma*.²¹³ According to custom, everyone was invited to rejoice, from the Ottoman high officials, foreign representatives and consuls, common citizens. Ambassadors decorated the windows and the door of their flat, lit a bonfire in the yard and organised fireworks, shooting and the trumpets to mark the occasion. They also engaged various street entertainers, musicians, masqueraders, dancers and acrobats. The celebration lasted three days and three nights, during which cannon salutes were continuously fired from Topkapi Palace. On the third day, the infant died. Sultan's favourite *Bine* is believed to have orchestrated its death.²¹⁴

²¹⁰ *DA* 17, vol. 1782, no. 88, 90; M. Ç. Uluçay, *Padişahların Kadınları ve Kızları*: pp. 54-55.

²¹¹ M. Ç. Uluçay, *Padişahların Kadınları ve Kızları*: p. 55.

²¹² M. Ç. Uluçay, *Padişahların Kadınları ve Kızları*: p. 65.

²¹³ This type of celebration also marked the circumcisions and weddings in the sultan's family, along with Islamic feasts and military victories (Luciano Rocchi, *Ricerche sulla lingua osmanli del XVI secolo; Il corpus lessicale turco del manoscritto fiorentino di Filippo Argenti (1533)*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2007: p. 85).

²¹⁴ *DA* 17, vol. 1849, no. 13 (31 December 1678). Other data on births, weddings and deaths in the sultan's family in the seventeenth century: 30 June 1613: *...quel medesimo giorno che noi arivamo qui si sposo una delle sultane, zia del Gran Signore per suo Capicilar Chiehaia e l'altra si dice che la settimana prosima si sposara per il Beglerbei d'Urumelia stato prima Aga di Gianizari; et cossi di mano in mano le altre cinque ...* (*DA* 17, vol. 1816, no. 1); 17 July 1613: *Questi giorni passati dopo l'arivo nostro si sono maritate tre sultane zie del Gran Signore figliole di Murat, et altre*

Petar Čingrija acted as Ragusan chargé d'affaires to Istanbul during most of the reign of Mustafa III (1757-74), and supplied regular reports on his family. As Čingrija reported, some Porte dignitaries were not very pleased to see Mustafa ascend the throne. They deemed that, due to Mustafa's frailty, his younger brother Orhan would be a better candidate, as he was a man of virtue and many talents. However, the Janissaries took Mustafa's side. Hardly anything meaningful can be said about the character of the new ruler, Čingrija continued. His manner of reasoning, ability, disposition, faults and virtues are yet to be seen. So far, he has proved himself to be just, generous, impartial and considerate towards the people. Opinion on him varies. Some believe him to be susceptible to dropsy and tuberculosis, others think of him as a hypochondriac and melancholic, as opposed to those who believe him to be of good health, though

*quatro sono sposate le quali fra quatro settimane si maritarano ancor loro, le maritate sono una per il Beglerbei di Romania, l'altra per il Bostangi Bascia gran nemico nostro..., la terza soltana vi e maritata per il Capicilar Ciechaia, ancor lui homo di cativo porto, et mal disposto verso le cose nostre..., le quatro soltane sposate vi sono una per il Pascia di Cairo l'altra per l'Aga di Gianizari la terza per il Ciuciuch Ibrachor Basci, e la quatra per Basc Capici Basci del Gran Signore, vi sono adesso quindecim soltane... (DA 17, vol. 1816, no. 2; M. Ç. Uluçay, *Padişhların Kadınları ve Kızları*: pp. 45-47, 50-53); 11 December 1614: *Dicesi che la causa della morte di Nasupassa è stata sultana di Gevatmehmet la quale essendo li messi passati andata verso Mecha scrisse di la al Gran Signore piu cose contro detto Nasupassa, e particolarmente li disse, che non era suo Visiero, ma Capiciehaia del Persiano (DA 17, vol. 1817, no. 10); 2 July 1616: L'altro di è morta una fiolia del Gran Signore, e dal giardino Daut Passa e tornato nella citta (DA 17, vol. 1818, no. 3); 3 October 1623: Li giorni passati Gran Signore ha dato la sua sorela per moglie al Aga di Jagniciari... (DA 17, vol. 1820, no. 3; M. Ç. Uluçay, *Padişhların Kadınları ve Kızları*: p. 52); 29 October 1626: ...altro giorno parimente, e nata una figliola al Gran Signore, ch'è la primogenita, la quale il giorno seguente morse, e con grandissima pompa fu sepolita nella moschea nova di Sultan Ahmet... (DA 17, vol. 1822, no. 6); 30 March 1629: ...non hano fato amazar Bariam Pascia come per strada ci fu detto l'havevano fato prigione et datolli sacco ala casa ma la sua mogllie soltana e Cioseme sua sociera l'hano scapulato di berato... (DA 17, vol. 1782, no. 2); 26 October 1631: Il Capitan del Mare si speta qua col primo bon tempo..., al quale si tiene per certo che e stata promessa la sultana vedova del Pascia morto a Scopie questa estate... (DA 17, vol. 1823, no. 6; M. Ç. Uluçay, *Padişhların Kadınları ve Kızları*: p. 51); 10 July 1632: ...et che Abas Passa sara rivotato alla Corte dar li per moglie soltana sorella del Gran Signore stata gia moglie di Affis Passa morto (DA 17, vol. 1824, no. 3); 16 January 1633: Si dice per cosa certa che hanno dato la soltana d'Affis Passa stato Supremo Visiero per Murtesan Passa che hora, e al governo Beglerbei di Diarbechir (DA 17, vol. 1824, no. 17; M. Ç. Uluçay, *Padişhların Kadınları ve Kızları*: p. 50); 20 December 1635: ...15 giorni del Ramasan che sara del mese di Aprile, è morto l'altro giorno l'unico fiolo al Gran Signore d'eta d'un anno e mezzo... (DA 17, vol. 1782, no. 58); 6 July 1673: *Habbiamo notitia come da poche settimane in qua siano morte doi soltane oltre dell'avisato per il passato da noi et non restar vive piu che cinque, tre delle quali per esser piu giovine si trovano qui e altre doi gia decrepite a Constantinopoli (DA 17, vol. 1845, no. 6).***

unusually sensitive. His three sisters are alive, and he would like the eldest to join him at the Topkapi Palace. He wishes to honour her as if she were his mother. As until now, there are no rumours about the eventual pregnancies of any of his favourites. Hopefully, his enthusiasm, though shattered by venom, will help him bear the heirs to the Ottoman throne, Čingrija concluded.²¹⁵

The idea of having heirs and offspring kept haunting Mustafa III. The public added even more fuel to his obsession by keeping track of his favourites and their would-be pregnancies. The main rumour circulating in Istanbul in February and March 1759 was the forthcoming birth of Mustafa's first child. Everyone hoped for an heir to the Ottoman throne, making preparations for a magnificent *donanma*, including illumination of all public places, palaces of the Ottoman dignitaries and foreign representatives, mosques and stores.²¹⁶ In April, Sultan's favourite gave birth to a girl whose name Čingrija fails to cite, yet it was probably princess Hibetullah.²¹⁷ Although her birth gave rise to some disappointment and discontent, an incredibly extravagant ten-day *donanma* followed. The whole city was decorated, every corner illuminated. The fireworks were brought to perfection. Istanbul was under strong security measures: on pain of death the inn-keepers were forbidden work, as was the carrying of weapons, so that nothing in this huge metropolis could mar such a grand celebration. The greatest surprise of all was the liberty that the sultan granted to his non-Muslim subjects. Istanbul looked as if it were in Christian hands. Groups of people masked as Janissaries and notables from the political and judicial circles paraded the streets. Čingrija was amazed to see unquestioning obedience of the Muslim inhabitants of Istanbul to sultan's orders. Although Christian dances, songs, comedies and satires were alien to them, no one uttered a single offensive word. Moreover, by offering refreshments, they encouraged their raving enjoyment in freedom. On the final two days, artisans dressed in their best clothes walked in processions, first to Topkapi, and then to the palace of the grand vizier. European representatives set up magnificent illumination and did their best to show that they shared the sultan's joy. Sultan wished to see in person what they had done, so with a grand entourage he rode through Galata and Pera, where he was treated with sweets. He returned happy and smiling, much against his nature.²¹⁸

²¹⁵ DA 18, vol. 3165, no. 39 (3 November 1757), no. 40 (10 December 1757).

²¹⁶ DA 18, vol. 3165, no. 54 (10 February 1759), no. 55 (10 March 1759). Stained glass lamps were used, usually hung along stretched ropes (Suraiya Faroqi, *Subjects of the Sultan; Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire*. London - New York: I. B. Tauris, 2007: p. 178).

²¹⁷ M. Ç. Uluçay, *Padişhların Kadınları ve Kızları*: p. 100.

²¹⁸ DA 18, vol. 3165, no. 56 (14 April 1759).

Some three months after the birth of Hibetullah, one faction at the Porte was plotting to eliminate the sultan's great favourite, his *silahdar*. First they worked out a scheme to appoint him governor of the Morean eyalet, and then gave him hope of becoming the husband of the new-born sultana. According to Čingrija, it was a mastermind plan. By leaving for Morea, *silahdar* was to detach himself from the sultan. In order to marry Hibetullah, he would need a lot of money, and in order to do so, he would milk the people, who, consequently, would complain and rebel, which would ultimately lead him to ruin.²¹⁹ Whether *silahdar* became betrothed or married to the sultana we do not know, yet we do know that the little sultana died at the age of three.²²⁰

From February 1761 the whole Empire was again in great expectation of the much-desired male heir to the throne.²²¹ Yet, on 19 April Şah was born. In order to appease discontent, the Porte launched a rumour that one of sultan's favourites was pregnant and that in five or six months would most certainly give birth to a son. Although it was believed that the *donanma* in Şah's honour would be modest, it also lasted ten days and suited the royal occasion. The sultan made an incognito walk through the city streets to see how the people were celebrating it. Passing by the Janissary barracks, he noticed dim lights, a few guards, no activity, sad and repulsive quietness. It turned out that the Janissaries had no money for the celebration, for which their agha was to blame. Agha was soon deposed, and for their suffering on account of agha, the Janissaries received money from the sultan.²²² At the age of three, Şah was engaged to the grand vizier, who was executed shortly afterwards. In 1768, when she was seven, she was engaged to the *nişancıbaşı*. Expensive gifts were delivered to her palace on 7 January. *Nişancıbaşı* Mehmed Pasha was appointed grand vizier, only to end his life a year later.²²³

²¹⁹ DA 18, vol. 3165, no. 59. Many sultanas were betrothed or married as young girls. The groom's duty was to provide for his minor spouse, which implied a life of luxury for the young bride. Petar Čingrija, Ragusan chargée d'affaires to Istanbul, reported on the betrothal of Şah, three-year-old daughter of Mustafa III, and fifty-eight-year-old grand vizier Köse Bahir Mustafa Pasha in 1764 (DA 18, vol. 3166, no. 38). Marriage would be consummated by sultana's reaching the age of puberty (Fanny Davis, *The Ottoman Lady: A Social History from 1718 to 1918*. New York, Westport Connecticut, London: Greenwood Press, 1986: p. 20).

²²⁰ M. Ç. Uluçay, *Padişhların Kadınları ve Kızları*: p. 100.

²²¹ DA 18, 3166, no. 2, 3, 4.

²²² DA 18, 3166, no. 5, 6.

²²³ DA 18, 3166, no. 73 (9 January 1768); M. Ç. Uluçay, *Padişhların Kadınları ve Kızları*: p. 101.

On 24 December 1761, at dawn, Sultan Mustafa became father to a much-desired son. Since Selim was born before expected, it was decreed that a *donanma* had to be prepared within two days.²²⁴

On 16 March 1764, at an age of three, Mustafa's youngest daughter died, most probably Mihrişah Sultan.²²⁵ The little girl was buried without much pomp. The fact that she suffered from asthma with very slim chances of survival²²⁶ led Čingrija conclude that the sultan was not smitten by grief.²²⁷

According to a report of May 1764, the sultan decided that his widowed sister Salihe, whom he loved dearly for her kind spirit and refinement, but also because they were of the same mother, ought to get married. Thus Salihe, widow of Rakib Pasha, married *kapudan pasha* Mehmed Pasha. There were five viziers at the court, all married to sultanas.²²⁸ The following year, when Mustafa's sister Zeynep married Melek Mehmed Pasha, governor of Urfa eyalet, the usual celebrations were not organised. The sultan wished to spare himself and the groom from the costs.²²⁹

Čingrija frequently mentioned that the sultan was very thrifty, which proved to be the case several months later, when "the first sultana", mother of his two children, died of tuberculosis. Apparently, that was Aynullhayat,²³⁰ who considered herself the sultan's most important wife and was known for her angry reactions if treated in a manner unbecoming her status. The burial rite of a sultana of her rank was fairly modest, and the sultan's attempt towards economisation even led him to renounce the woman who would fill her place.²³¹

Shortly after his accession to the throne, Mustafa III was determined to restore the Empire's old glory, yet at the same time remained committed to the

²²⁴ DA 18, 3166, no. 13 (9 January 1762).

²²⁵ M. Ç. Uluçay, *Padişahların Kadınları ve Kızları*: p. 101.

²²⁶ On the medical treatment of sultanas see: G. A. Russell, »Physicians at the Ottoman Court«. *Medical History* 34 (1990): p. 263; Miri Shefer-Mossenshon, »A Sick Sultana in the Ottoman Imperial Palace: Male Doctors, Female Healers and Female Patients in the Early Modern Period«. *Journal of Women of the Middle East and the Islamic World* 9 (2011): pp. 281-312.

²²⁷ DA 18, vol. 3166, no. 39.

²²⁸ DA 18, vol. 3166, no. 40 (12 May 1764), 41 (9 June 1764); M. Ç. Uluçay, *Padişahların Kadınları ve Kızları*: p. 89.

²²⁹ DA 18, vol. 3166, no. 48 (9 March 1765); M. Ç. Uluçay, *Padişahların Kadınları ve Kızları*: p. 87.

²³⁰ M. Ç. Uluçay, *Padişahların Kadınları ve Kızları*: p. 98.

²³¹ DA 18, vol. 3166, no. 43 (11 August 1764). Compare to M. Ç. Uluçay, *Padişahların Kadınları ve Kızları*: p. 98.

cutting down of expenditures. Economisation measures also included the Old Saray, home of the favourites, concubines, mothers of former sultans and their maid servants. A considerable portion of household servants was discharged, and the women were offered money as marriage support. There is mention of seven sultanas who were given two flats at their disposal. Saray witnessed the arrival of young men who until then lived and were trained for pages and attendants (Tur. *içoğlanı*) at a nice palace in Pera, built in the early eighteenth century, which the sultan decided to close.²³²

The sultana born on 13 January 1766 was honoured with a three-day *donanma*. According to Čingrija, the sultan was deeply unhappy for having no more than one heir. He was melancholic, and his face was stamped with the trials and tribulations of governing. The people did not look upon the expenses for the celebration in honour of a sultana with approval.²³³ She was named Beyhan.²³⁴ A year later, a birth of another sultan's child was expected,²³⁵ and that, finally, was Mehmed, Mustafa's long-awaited second son.

In January and June 1768, a boy or a girl was again expected to be delivered by a sultan's favourite.²³⁶

On the birth of imperial children and participation in the *donanma* celebrations much has been written by consul Curić. In a letter to Ragusan authorities in December 1775 he noted that everyone was preparing for the *donanma* for the child of Abdulhamid I.²³⁷ At first, Curić had no intention of taking part in the celebration, but was soon warned by the Ottoman and foreign dignitaries that he would insult the sultan by doing so. As his residence in Pera was somewhat remote, he asked Frederick Hübsch²³⁸ to let him use his yard for the purpose. He soon realised that its decoration would be very expensive, and he decided to set the celebration up at the beginning of his street. It took him four days to

²³² DA 18, vol. 3165, no. 53 (13 January 1759).

²³³ DA 18, vol. 3166, no. 60a (8 February 1766).

²³⁴ Compare to M. Ç. Uluçay, *Padişhların Kadınları ve Kızları*: p. 102.

²³⁵ DA 18, vol. 3166, no. 60k (8 November 1766).

²³⁶ DA 18, vol. 3166, no. 73 (9 January 1768), 78 (11 June 1768). One of them was named Hatice, whilst the details on the other child are unknown (M. Ç. Uluçay, *Padişhların Kadınları ve Kızları*: p. 104).

²³⁷ DA 18, vol. 3168, no. 24a (1 October 1775), 27 (9 December 1775).

²³⁸ Hübsch was a distinguished Austrian merchant in close relation with diplomatic and dragoman circles in Istanbul, as well as the Ragusans. He married the daughter of Đuro Chirico, who preceded Curić in the position of Ragusan consul to Istanbul (V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istanbulu*: p. 116).

decorate the site and make all the arrangements. He complained of the high costs which eventually proved in vain. As on 31 December 1775 sultan's favourite delivered a still-born baby boy, Curić promptly removed all the decorations, most of which got torn and went to waste. One could rightly say that he was rather distracted by the birth pattern of sultan's children, for another child was being expected, this time earlier than thought. The silence of the night of 11 January 1776 was suddenly broken by the sound of drums and music, and cannon salutes the next morning. Sultan became the father of a daughter named Hatice.²³⁹ All foreign dragomans were invited to the Porte, where *reis-efendi* informed them that the *donanma* occasioning the birth of sultan's daughter would start on 14 January and would last seven days. Once the celebration on land was over, the fireworks from the ships opened a three-day celebration at sea.²⁴⁰ Apparently, the poor state of Hatice's health was detected when it was too late. In the morning hours of 7 November 1776 the physicians held a council on her case, yet she died a few hours later. She was buried the same day.²⁴¹

At the time of Hatice's birth, another birth of an heir was expected, and if male, the *donanma* would be repeated. Another two of sultan's favourites were pregnant, one of whom was due in May and the other in June. Curić fenced the party space, installed a large table and covered it with a tent. He also installed a pole to hang the flag of the Dubrovnik Republic. He commissioned a painter to depict the coat of arms of Dubrovnik. He bought gilt paper, tin and paper fringes of silver and gold, ropes, lamps, candles, coffee, sugar, biscuits and various types of confectionery.²⁴²

²³⁹ M. Ç. Uluçay, *Padişhların Kadınları ve Kızları*: p. 111.

²⁴⁰ *DA* 18, vol. 3168, no. 29 (31 January 1776).

²⁴¹ *DA* 18, vol. 3168, no. 40a (8 November 1776). Compare to M. Ç. Uluçay, *Padişhların Kadınları ve Kızları*: p. 111.

²⁴² *DA* 18, vol. 3168, no. 30 (10 February 1776). Other data on births, marriages and deaths in the sultans' families in the eighteenth century: 6 March 1712: *Il favorito genero del gran signore Ali pascia si conserva sempre nelle sue grazie, e si comporta bene con tutti, perche non s'ingerisce troppo negli affari, ne vole che si parli troppo di lui* (*DA* 18, vol. 3162, no. 20); 22 November 1723: *...il spozalizio del Silahdar con la figlia secondogenita del Sultano di nuovo va in oblivione, mentre settimane sono che si diceva per sicuro ch'era per sortire con tre code, e prenderla per sposa, e la terza figlia pure del Sultano sarebbe sposata con il figlio del Vezir, che è un giovine di 15 anni in circa* (*DA* 18, vol. 3162, no. 79); 11 March 1724: *...alla fine ha riuscito al Supremo Visir d'avere per il suo nepote, e per il suo figlio due Sultane, e la terza l'hanno data al figlio d'Osman Pasha detto Cerches il piu vecchio Passa di tre code, che vi sia, chiamato Achmed Passa giovine di 22 anni, ma di spirito molto triviale, e con questi matrimonii il Supremo Visir si rende forte piu che mai. Del Silictar poi non si parla niente affato. Il suo nipote si chiama Ali Passa, et l'ha fatto Nisangi persona di poco talento, ma di molta probità, et è Vizir di Banca. Il suo figlio si chiama*

Conclusion

Special relationship with Süleyman's daughter Mihrimah the Ragusans owed to their contacts with her husband Rüstem Pasha. It appears very likely that the pasha was a Croat from Skradin, and thus looked upon Ragusans almost as his fellow-countrymen, as did the Ottoman dignitaries originating from Bosnia, such as Ahmed Pasha, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha and Derviş Pasha. The Ragusans addressed Rüstem Pasha as "a kin by blood, of the same mother tongue", wherein we could seek the background of pasha's business dealings with the Ragusans. A commercial bond of this kind, established between a grand vizier and the Dubrovnik Republic, remains unique in the history of the Ottoman-Ragusan relationship.

After Rüstem Pasha's death in 1561, the Ragusans were not considering further dealings with his widow Mihrimah for they obviously saw little benefit in it. However, as soon as she proved able to secure a supply of grain, they changed

Mehmed pure Vizir di Banca, et Musaip d'anni quindecim in circa. Una settimana la volta si fanno le nozze, e con gran solenità. Resta l'altra settimana di farsi il terzo sponsalizio, mentre li due sono fatti... (DA 18, vol. 3162, no. 81); 20 April 1730: ...il Sultano, al quale cresce sempre più la famiglia, essendoli nata ultimamente una figlia; sono qui Sultane tre di Sultan Mustaffa, e la sorella Hatisce Sultana, con sei figlie di questo Gran Signore che sono maritate con li Passa che attualmente si trovano tutti giu. S'aspetta anco Cara Mustaffa Passa che era Chiehaia del famoso Hassan Passa di Bagdat, et hora l'hanno dato una vedova figlia di Sultan Mustaffa, quale da Hasia viene per consumare il matrimonio. Queste Sultane vengono esser vedove di molti Passa, questo è il terzo marito che li danno (DA 18, vol. 3163, no. 34); 15 October 1743: ...quel Passa Ahmed figlio del Topal Osman viene qui per consumare il matrimonio con la sua sultana sposa (DA 18, vol. 3164, no. 47); 19 December 1743: E arrivato l'altra settimana il Ahmet Passa figlio di Topal Osman Pascia e presso possesso della carica di Capitan Pascia, gl'anno dato la cugina del Sultano che fu moglie di Silihtar Passa che fu Supremo Vezir dopo la ribellione (DA 18, vol. 3164, no. 49); 18 January 1749: L'altra settimana ha sposato una sua cugina, con il Capigilar Chiehaiasi Numan Passa, e datoli il Governo di Salonichio (DA 18, vol. 3164, no. 117); 22 March 1755: S'assicura la gravidanza d'una o due Sultane, ma li huomini sensali non vogliono prestarci fede, sin' à tanto che dal Sultano non ne sia data parte alli Gianizzari, secondo il canone (DA 18, vol. 3165, no. 5); 20 March 1779: Li 17 corrente al far del giorno si sono sentiti i tiri di canonata per la nascita al Gran Signore di un figlio maschio nominato Suleiman; Il detto giorno andiedi alla Porta per far le mie congratulazioni, ma coll'aver persa quella giornata in danno; il di seguente, sicome l'istesso giorno li Dragomani altri andiedero pure per congratularsi per parte dei loro ministri di tal nascita, andiedi anche io del detto ministro Reis Efendi per felicitarlo per tal nascita, significandoli che darei parte di cio a Vostre Eccellenze a cui molto cara sara la fausta nuova della crescente Imperiale Famiglia (DA 18, vol. 3168, no. 62); 11 August 1781: Li 9 corrente pure verso le 19 ore si sono sentiti molti tiri di canone per la nascita di una figlia al Gran Signore nominata Rabie Sultan, e si vanno facendo le solite funzioni, e tiri in segno di alerezza; et alcune altre Sultane anche dicono esser prosime al parto (DA 18, vol. 3168, no. 100).

their mind. The fact that the Ragusans became fully aware of Mihrimah's power may be grasped from their clearly stated wish for her to accept the role of Ragusan protector at an exceptionally unfavourable moment in the Ottoman-Ragusan relations (1566).

Soon after the death of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent, the Ragusans introduced a practice of presenting all married sultanas with gifts (1567). They obviously believed that the influence of the daughter of the late Süleyman would inevitably ebb and that a new 'Mihrimah' would emerge. This, however, was not the case. Until the fall of the Dubrovnik Republic in 1808, Ragusan diplomats and consuls sent regular reports on the sultanas' weddings, births of princes and princesses and imperial celebrations. Yet, they never singled out any specific sultana. After Mihrimah, Ragusan ambassadors failed to make contact with any of the sultanas. Their diplomatic dealings were confined to the usual gift giving. The only exceptions to this practice were Kamerşah and Hümaşah, daughters of Hundi Sultan and Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha, to whom the Ragusans paid the so-called Konavle revenue, agreed during the lordship of Sandalj Hranić. Although she was not a sultana, Fatma, sister of the grand vizier Derviş Pasha, should also be mentioned. After pasha's murder, Ragusan ambassadors Marin Ghetaldi and Jakov Bobali tried to claim her property, calculating that she would have no one to protect her or her rights.

As it appears, during the reign of Sultan Süleyman the Ragusans devoted special attention to the women in his family. When Süleyman ascended the throne, they planned to present his mother with a gift and indulged the wishes of his sister Şah. Curiously, they gave no attention whatsoever to the very powerful sultan's wife, Hurrem. She did feature occasionally in their reports, yet it is quite certain that they never attempted to come into contact with her. Ottoman political scene was soon to witness a succession of powerful valide sultans, who ruled the Empire until the middle of the seventeenth century, but they too proved unworthy of Ragusan attention. Moreover, the Ragusans openly disapproved of the proposal to start presenting Kösem Sultan with gifts, the most powerful woman in the history of the Ottoman Empire, with an explanation that it was not their custom to give gifts to the valide sultans. Indeed, when they introduced gift giving to sultanas in 1567, sultan's mother was not among the recipients (Selim's mother Hurrem died in 1558). This fact was of little value, since the list of recipients tended to expand over the years. In true fact, rewarding the sultan's mother with a gift, naturally a very expensive one, the Ragusans deemed a risky step which attracted attention. They claimed that

every novelty, regardless of how trivial or grand it may be, could easily lead towards new demands, the increment of *haraç* being their greatest fear. On condition of being married, all sultan's aunts, sisters, daughters and granddaughters received gifts from the Ragusans, yet the mothers of sultans received nothing. This odd practice might seem ill-judged and risky at first. The fact remains that valide sultans showed no indignation for being omitted from the Ragusan recipient list, most likely due to recurrent Ragusan lamentations over the Republic's poverty and *haraç* "paid with their own blood".

Appendix.

Ragusan letter addressed to Mihrimah Sultan of 8 September 1566 (*Let. Lev.* vol. 30, ff. 127v-129v).

Die 8 Sept. 1566

Illustrissima Soltana

Illustrissima et Excellentissima Signora nostra osservandissima

Habbiamo ricevuto l'honorata lettera di Vostra Eccellenza per la quale ella mostra di haver desiderio sapere particolarmente il gusto delle pannine che a mesi passati le mandamo, per il che poi che cosi ci ricerca, e siando nostra intentione sempre servirla, gliene daremo piena notitia, avenga che ci rincesce rinovare negl'animi nostri la perdita che per detto conto habbiamo fatto. Sappi dunque Vostra Eccellenza come, dopoiche ci ordinò dette pannine, noi demmo commisione a Venetia che ci fussero comprate, et mandate con i primi bergantini, cosi l'agente nostro havendole comprate insieme con alcune draperie per presentare all'Altezza del gloriosissimo et invittissimo Gran Signore padre di Vostra Eccellenza, et caricatole sopra uno brighentino, la nostra mala sorte volse, che furono per viaggio prese, et rubbate dalli Uschochi, sicome è chiaro, et manifesto ad ogni uno, onde stante l'istanza che Vostra Eccellenza ne faceva, et noi desiderando sommamente servirla, fummo astretti comprarne qui della medesima sorte da mercanti li quali le havevano fatte venire da Venetia per rivender, et in detto luoco di Venetia comprate a manco pregio di quello, che poi qui a noi le hanno vendute, perche in effetto sono mercanti, et stanno su i quadagni, alli quali habbiamo fatto anchor lasciare qualche cosa di quello, che con altri haveriano potuto guadagnare. Et le dette pannine spaciate di qui asciesero alla somma di aspri 120796, et per la vettura, et Dragomano fin'a costi in balle 14 su sette somme aspri 4360. Et fanno in tutto la somma di aspri 125156. Questo è Eccellentissima Signora il vero, et puro gusto uscito della nostra borsa per dette pannine, et il caso è seguito come di sopra gl'e si è detto.

Quanto alli grani che di conto di Vostra Eccellenza comprammo ultimamente al Volo dal Nador, sicome ci ricerca d'intender, l'avisiamo, che comprammo chila 4433 di grano ad aspri 85 il chilo, che montorno aspri 376805, a conto

de quali furno dati in contanti al Nador aspri 220741, et le restammo a dar per detti grani aspri 156364, che a essi contraponendo aspri 125156 per il gusto, vetture, et spese delle pannine fino in Constantinopoli restarà Vostra Eccellenza creditrice di aspri 31208. Hora noi conforme al ordine d'ella ci ha dato habbiamo fatto venir qui da Venetia le pannine che desidera che sono panni 10 d'archimia, panni sopramani scarlati di 80, et panni sopramani paonazzi di 80, et sono venute in compagnia di galere Venetiane, ne sono prima potute venire per rispetto di Leventi, et Uschochi. Le carisee con li primi passaggi aspettiamo d'Ancona et li panni dieci sopramani verdi sono dai lavoratori, et si sollicitano, et subito che siano finiti insieme col resto delle pannine si manderanno à Vostra Eccellenza col conto di quello, che saranno gostate qui, et a Venetia poi che Dio l'ha condotte qui a buon salvamento.

Pare che Vostra Eccellenza secondo il riporto di nostri Ambasciatori habbia desiderato d'haver con piu prestezza la rresolutione da noi de grani, i qualli ella havea impetrato da sua Altezza che ci fossero dati in Volo, la qual cosa non habbiamo potuto fare fino a qui, perche come vostra Eccellenza sa, l'anno passato siando state prese tre nostre navi cariche di grani dall'Armata di Sua Altezza et condotte a Malta, ci era prima necessario haver la rresolutione, se Sua Altezza ci voleva, ò pagare li detti grani, overo darcene altri tanti all'incontro. Onde dopoi che s'è rissoluta quell'Altezza di darci tanti grani all'incontro, benche il nostro desiderio fosse di haver denari per essi per poter poi pigliar maggior somma di grani di Vostra Eccellenza et hora di novo ella offerendoci con le sue lettere due milla mutti di grani, noi per gratificarla, et perche tutto il desiderio nostro è, di conformarci col voler suo, siamo contenti di pigliarli. Et per questo effetto mettiamo in ordine una nostra grossa nave per mandarla al luogo, la quale gli levara tutti, o poco meno. Et perche l'anno passato pagammo li grani un poco cari, et questo anno havendo Iddio concesso da per tutto assai buone raccolte, però preghiamo molto vostra Eccellenza che sia contenta scriver al Nador che nel far mercato di detti grani, ci faccia anche a noi godere di questa gratia, che Dio ha concesso, et se bene Vostra Eccellenza l'anno passato scrisse al Nador che ci facesse pagar li grani al pregio che si vendevano al mercato, non dimeno egli non solo non ce li diede a tal pregio, ma ce li stramisse molto piu.²⁴³ Impero le piacera specificare che non ci siano

²⁴³ *Nador* Ahmed proved to have been a hard nut, especially regarding the price of wheat. Behram Kethüda intervened on one occasion, and wrote him a letter in favour of the Ragusans (*Let. Lev.* vol. 30, f. 59).

fatte fare alcune spese superflue, et che ci siano dati li grani al pregio che si vendevano al mercato, et che siamo ben trattati come obedienti Signori Servitori di Vostra Eccellenza et per il pagamento di detti grani saria nostro desiderio per rispetto dell'armate che scorreno da tutte bande tanto di leventi, quanto di Maltesi, et altri, di non risicare cosi grossa somma di denari con una nave, però con quello, che restaremo creditori di Vostra Eccellenza mandato che le haveremo le predette pannine, et con li aspri che mandaremo con la nave, crediamo che pagaremo una parte del carico, et per quello che restara non pagato, ella sara contenta avisar il Nator per sue lettere mandate qui à noi, accioche le possiamo mandar con la nave che ci debba dar credito, et che debba far il conto col nostro sopracarico di quello che gli restaremo debitori, facendosi fare uno cogetto, et noi li faremo pagare a Vostra Eccellenza dalli nostri primi Ambasciatori overo quando habbia bisogno che la serviamo di pannine. Non mancaremo farlo con tutte le forze nostre, et per dar compito effetto alle cose predette, et perche la detta nave non perda tempo, mandiamo il presente corriero a posta, per il quale si degnera darci risposta et mandarci la lettera per il Nator, accioche possiamo eseguire secondo il voler suo quanto che ci ordinara.

Oltre di ciò perche potria esser che con la nave per pagar li grani, mandassimo li ducati d'oro et talari, et l'anno passato il Nator non havendo voluto acetarli al pregio che correva in Constantinopoli come era ragione, però anche di questo preghiamo Vostra Eccellenza che si degni scriver al detto Nator, comandandogli che debba ricever li ducati ad aspri 50 l'uno, et li talari ad aspri 40 l'uno, come si spendeno in Constantinopoli et nostro Signor Iddio la conservi longamente sana, et felice, et le doni quanto il suo nobilissimo core desidera.