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## **ALEXANDER MAVROCORDATOS *EXAPORITE*, GRAND DRAGOMAN AND SECRET ADVISER TO THE PORTE: DUBROVNIK'S PERSPECTIVE**

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*Abstract:* During the period in which Alexander Mavrocordatos acted as grand dragoman and secret adviser to the Porte (1673-1709), the Ragusans were experiencing the most difficult and most challenging moments in their relations with the Ottomans. Given that as an intermediary, interpreter, negotiator and adviser he acted in the shadow, his significance for the Republic of Ragusa has not yet been clearly articulated. It was not until the archival research conducted for the purpose of this study, focused entirely on Mavrocordatos's activities, that the important and, in certain moments, crucial role of this exceptional diplomat in the history of the Ragusan-Ottoman relations has been reconstructed.

*Keywords:* Ottoman Empire, Republic of Ragusa, Phanariots, grand dragomans of the Porte, Alexander Mavrocordatos

### *Introduction: Phanariots as grand dragomans of the Porte*

Phanariots, and among them the Mavrocordatos family, were successful and very wealthy merchants of mainly Greek origin who were named after Phanar,

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a city quarter of Istanbul, where they settled in the seventeenth century and started building stately houses. They were the elite of the Greek Orthodox *millet*, believed to have descended from Byzantine emperors and aristocracy. They recognised the Ottomans as legitimate successors of the Byzantium and silently considered the nonviolent possibilities of its restoration and the aspects of the Ottoman-Greek partnership. Their political influence in the Empire was greatly enhanced in 1661, when the Phanariot Panagiotis Nikousios was appointed grand dragoman of the Porte. The Phanariots managed to maintain that high position until the Greek War of Independence in 1821.<sup>1</sup> From 1711 many of them were granted the title of *hospodar* (ruler) of Moldavia, and a couple of years later also of Wallachia.<sup>2</sup>

The Phanariots owe their rise to several reasons. Increasing influence of European countries through trade, politics and diplomacy urged the Ottomans to seek more refined approaches in foreign policy. The key persons in their communication with Christian Europe became *reis-efendi* (*Reis ül-Küttab*), whose office may be described as an Ottoman minister of foreign affairs, and the grand dragoman of the Porte. Dragomans were not only interpreters and translators, but also envoys to European states and a diplomatic link between the grand vizier and foreign diplomats and consuls. The Phanariots were a perfect fit for these duties as they were loyal to the Empire, highly educated at the respectable school of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in Phanar (also known as Phanar Greek Orthodox College) and at Italian universities, and were well-informed about the politics of European countries whose languages they spoke fluently.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Phanariots were also engaged as the dragomans of the Ottoman fleet, dragomans of the Ottoman army and dragomans of Morea (Christine M. Philliou, *Biography of an Empire. Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution*. Berkley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2011: pp. 236-239).

<sup>2</sup> The princes (*domn* or *voievod*) of Wallachia and Moldavia were elected by the local nobility, and confirmed by the sultan. In order to strengthen the power in these principalities situated in a very vulnerable area on the border with the Austrians and Russians, in 1711 Ottoman authorities started appointing governors titled as *hospodar*. As a rule, they chose Phanariots, most of whom acted as grand dragomans of the Porte prior to assuming the duty of governors (Dimitris Livanios, »Pride, Prudence and the Fear of God: The Loyalties of Alexander and Nicholas Mavrocordatos (1668-1730)«. *Dialogos: Hellenic Studies Review* 7 (2000): p. 8; C. M. Philliou, *Biography of an Empire*: pp. 44, 236-239).

<sup>3</sup> Nestor Camariano, *Alexandre Mavrocordato, Le grand drogman; Son activité diplomatique 1673-1709*. Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1970: pp. 22-26; Johannes Irmscher, »Alexandros Mavrocordatos, Greek Scholar and Turkish Diplomat«, in: *XII Türk Tarih Kongresi, Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler, III. Cilt*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1994: p.1005; Panayotis Papachristou, *The Three Faces of the Phanariots: An Inquiry into the Role and Motivations of the Greek Nobility under Ottoman Rule, 1683-1821*. Burnaby: Simon Fraser University (MA thesis), 1992: p. 6; D. Livanios, »Pride, Prudence and the Fear of God«: pp. 3-12; Damien Janos, »Panaiotis Nicousios and Alexander Mavrocordatos. The Rise of Phanariots and the Office of Grand Dragoman

For over a century and a half, the members of the Phanariot families of Argyropoulos, Ghica, Kallimaki, Karaca, Mavrocordatos, Mourouzis (Muruzi), Panagiotis, Soutsos, Ypsilantis, participated in the shaping of the Ottoman foreign policy and diplomacy. Alexander Mavrocordatos (1641-1709) was the most famous among them.<sup>4</sup>

### *Alexander Mavrocordatos*

Alexander Mavrocordatos was the son of Nicolaos, silk merchant from Chios who settled in Istanbul, and Roxandra Scarlatos, an Istanbul-born from Phanar, daughter of a meat merchant and main meat supplier of the sultan's court.<sup>5</sup> Alexander completed his elementary education at the Patriarchate school. It appears that by then, apart from Greek and Ottoman Turkish, he had already mastered Arabic and Persian. At the Greek College of Saint Athanasius in Rome, he studied rhetoric, philosophy, theology, geometry, Latin, Italian, French, and possibly also German. At the universities in Padua and Bologna he studied medicine, philosophy and literature. He earned his doctoral degree in 1664 with thesis on the disputed Harvey's theory of blood circulation, which he supported and elaborated. The thesis saw several editions, the most recent being in Greece in 2010.<sup>6</sup>

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in the Ottoman Administration in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century». *Archivum Ottomanicum* 23 (2005): pp. 177-189; C. M. Philliou, *Biography of an Empire*: pp. 36-44, 236-239; Miguel Á. Extremera, »Surviving the Fall: Greek Elites under Ottoman Rule in the Prephanariot Period (1453-1711)«. *Erytheia Revista de estudios bizantinos y neogriegos* 35 (2014): p. 397.

<sup>4</sup> The surname Mavrocordatos has been recorded in different variants, and in the Ragusan archival sources it appears as Maurocordato, Mauro Cordato, Mauro Cordati, Cordati, Guardati (*Diplomata et Acta, 17<sup>th</sup> century* (henceforth: *DA* 17), series 7.3.7, vol. 1784a, no. 22; vol. 1839, no. 43, 44 1784a (State Archives in Dubrovnik, henceforth cited as: SAD). By his mother's surname Scarlatos, he is also mentioned as Iskerletzade Alexander Mavrocordatos (*Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Masters. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009: p. 309) and in Ragusan sources as *Scarlet oghli* (*DA* 17, vol. 1834, no. 10).

<sup>5</sup> Before Nicolaus, Roxandra Scarlatos was married to a Wallachian prince Alexander Coconul (Christos S. Bartsocas, »Alexander Mavrocordatos (1641-1709): Physician and Statesman«. *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 28/4 (1973): p. 393).

<sup>6</sup> Written in Latin, Mavrocordatos's thesis *Pneumaticum instrumentum circulandi sanguinis sive de motu et usu pulmonum* was published in Bologna in 1664, in Frankfurt in 1665, and in Leipzig in 1682 and 1870. Italian translation was published in Florence in 1965, and Greek translation in Athens in 2010 (Alessandro Maurocordato, *Pneumaticum instrumentum circulandi sanguinis sive de motu et usu pulmonum*. Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1965; C. S. Bartsocas, »Alexander Mavrocordatos (1641-1709)«. pp. 392-393; Alexandros Mavrokordatos, *Anapnefstikon Organon tis Kikloforias tou Ematos itoi peri Kiniseos kai Krias ton Pnevmon*. Atina: Stamoulis, 2010; Şeref Etker, »İskerletzade Aleksandros Mavrokordatos'un *Pneumaticum Instrumentum Circulandi Sanguinis sive De Motu et Usu Pulmonum* (1664) Başlıklı Tezinin Çevirileri«. *Osmanlı Bilimi Araştırmaları* 19/1 (2017): pp. 141-149).

The following year Mavrocordatos returned to Istanbul and became a professor at the Patriarchate school. It is assumed that he acted as its head at one point. He performed various duties at the Patriarchate, among others, he mediated in the relations between the patriarch and the Porte. He married Sultana Chrysoseleos, granddaughter of Moldavian prince, with whom he had three daughters and five sons.<sup>7</sup> He successfully medically treated some of the members of distinguished Ottoman families and attracted the attention of the Porte dignitaries, so that the grand dragoman Panagiotis Nikousios, also physician,<sup>8</sup> employed him in 1671 as his secretary. When Panagiotis Nikousios died in 1673, Mavrocordatos assumed his position. Both of them were appointed by the grand vizier Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha, a most able general, statesman and reformer of an inquisitive mind, willing to listen to their opinions and insights not only in the field of politics and strategy, but also science.<sup>9</sup>

As the grand dragoman of the Porte, Mavrocordatos continued with the activities in the Patriarchate. He was the co-founder of its new academy, he was planning to open some kind of a public library, and also devoted himself to scientific work. From the surviving manuscripts and printed works, all in Greek, we learn that he studied rhetoric, philology, theology, astronomy, politics and history. His grammar of the Greek language was used in Greek schools and

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<sup>7</sup> Son Scarlat (b. 1678), who married Ilinka, daughter of the Wallachian prince Constantin Brâncoveanu, died at a young age without issue. Nor did the sons Constantin (b. 1675) and Alexander (b. 1686) have any issue either. After holding the position of the grand dragoman of the Porte, Nicholas was appointed the *hospodar* of Wallachia, and then of Moldavia, while Janaki, after his duty at the Porte, governed Wallachia. Daughter Roxandra, named after her early deceased sister, married Matei Ghica, son of a Wallachian prince. Helena married Rosetti, prince of Moldavia (Alexandre A. C. Stourdza, *L'Europe orientale et le rôle historique des Maurocordato 1660-1830 avec un appendice contenant des actes et documents historiques et diplomatiques inédits*. Paris: Plon-Nourrit et cie, 1913: p. 445).

<sup>8</sup> Panagiotti studied medicine and astronomy in Padua. Upon his return to Istanbul, he worked as dragoman at the consulates of West European states (M. Á. Extremera, »Surviving the Fall«: p. 398; Muhammed Fatih Çalıřır, *A Virtuous Grand Vizier: Politics and Patronage in the Ottoman Empire During the Grand Vizierate of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha (1661-1676)*. Washington DC: Georgetown University (PhD thesis), 2016: pp. 136-137).

<sup>9</sup> A. A. C. Stourdza, *L'Europe orientale et le rôle historique des Maurocordato*: pp. 30, 33, 92; C. S. Bartsocas, »Alexander Mavrocordatos (1641-1709)«: pp. 392-394; J. Irmscher, »Alexandros Mavrocordatos«: p. 1007; D. Livianos, »Pride, Prudence and the Fear of God«: pp. 1-22; D. Janos, »Panaiotis Nicousios and Alexander Mavrocordatos«: pp. 191-194; M. Á. Extremera, »Surviving the Fall«: pp. 399-400; M. F. Çalıřır, *A Virtuous Grand Vizier*: pp. 136-144.

academies, while his rhetoric writings have been assessed as “catechism of rhetoric”.<sup>10</sup>

Into Ottoman diplomacy Alexander Mavrocordatos introduced refinement, gentlemanly manners and, most importantly, respect and tolerance of the words spoken by the other party. Foreign diplomats used to say that his dignified and noble appearance was worthy of respect and admiration. Aware that the negotiations with the grand vizier could not bring success without his favour, all diplomats did their best to earn his attention. Knowing that he was a bibliophile, they would present him with books. Based on Stourdza’s comprehensive study of Mavrocordatos’s relations with the French, Russians and Austrians, one could say that he was especially inclined towards Russians, and that he openly and successfully advocated for the interests of the Greeks, notably for the right to guard the Holy Sepulchre. This unsettled the French, and they were eager to win Mavrocordatos’s favour. On a couple of occasions, the French king granted him the right to regular annual reward,<sup>11</sup> and then, disappointed, suspended it, because Mavrocordatos delivered less than was expected. Historians agree that all these actions on behalf of Mavrocordatos did not bring into question his loyalty to the Ottoman Empire. Also, they describe him as a person who advocated peaceful means rather than war, and as a reasonable negotiator who could reconcile the conflicting sides.<sup>12</sup> The fact that Mavrocordatos held the position of the grand dragoman and secret

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<sup>10</sup> N. Camariano, *Alexandre Mavrocordato, Le grand drogman*: pp. 17-20; C. S. Bartsocas, »Alexander Mavrocordatos (1641-1709)«: pp. 394-395; J. Irmscher, »Alexandros Mavrocordatos«: p. 1006; Radu G. Păun, »Réseaux de livres et réseaux de pouvoirs dans le sud-est de l’Europe: le monde des drogman (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles)«, in: *Contribution à l’histoire intellectuelle de l’Europe: Réseaux du livre, réseaux des lecteurs*, ed. Frédéric Barvirer and István Monok. Budapest: Bibliotheca Nationalis Hungariae, Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, 2008: pp. 76, 80; M. Á. Extremera, »Surviving the Fall«: p. 400; Alexandros Mavrocordatos, *Synopsis of the Art of Rhetoric*. s.l.: s.a. [1753] (<https://www.loc.gov/item/2021667525/>, date of last access: 28 March 2023).

<sup>11</sup> European states that had good relations with the Ottomans, as well as the Ottoman enemies, offered regular salaries to the dragomans of the Porte, and showered them with gifts only to win their favour, or at least evade their ill disposition. The sultan and the viziers generally knew that their dragomans dealt with the Christian world. Through the information (and disinformation) that the dragomans passed on to the Europeans, the sultan and viziers were able to send messages and warnings to both friends and enemies (Vesna Miović, »*Dragomano nostro della Porta*: Dragomans of the Porte in the Service of Dubrovnik in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries«. *Dubrovnik Annals* 24 (2020): 90).

<sup>12</sup> A. A. C. Stourdza, *L’Europe orientale et le rôle historique des Maurocordato*: pp. 29, 33-82; N. Camariano, *Alexandre Mavrocordato, Le grand drogman*: pp. 26-27, 63; P. Papachristou, *The Three Faces of the Phanariots*: p. 11; J. Irmscher, »Alexandros Mavrocordatos«: p. 1008; D. Livianos, »Pride, Prudence and the Fear of God«: pp. 3, 12; R. G. Păun, »Réseaux de livres et réseaux de pouvoirs dans le sud-est de l’Europe«: p. 87; M. Á. Extremera, »Surviving the Fall«: p. 401.

adviser to the Porte from 1673 until his death in 1709, a period that witnessed a succession of as many as twenty grand viziers, is a telling testament to his great diplomatic skill. Two of them seriously threatened his life and career. Kara Ibrahim Pasha sent him to prison (1684-1685) and only thanks to Mavrocordatos's long absence in Vienna (1688-1692), he managed to escape the wrath of Fazil Mustafa Pasha Köprülü.<sup>13</sup>

Owing to Mavrocordatos's long and loyal service as well as good counselling, which most certainly concerned his peace efforts,<sup>14</sup> in the middle of 1698 Sultan Mustafa II granted him the title *mahrem-i esrar*, thus assuming the position of the secret adviser to the Porte.<sup>15</sup> It is from this title that Mavrocordatos's nickname *Exaporite* is derived.<sup>16</sup> He was succeeded on the position of the grand dragoman of the Porte by his son Nicholas.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Grand vizier Kara Mustafa Pasha was executed after the failed siege of Vienna in 1683, while all his close associates were about to fall out of the Porte's favour. Because of the plots of the new grand vizier Kara Ibrahim Pasha, Mavrocordatos, his mother and wife were thrown into prison. They were freed in 1685, after Mavrocordatos had disbursed a large sum of money to the sultan's purse. By the end of the same year, he reassumed his position of the grand dragoman of the Porte. In 1688, the new sultan, Süleyman II, despatched Zulfikar-efendi and Mavrocordatos to Vienna to investigate the possibilities for a peace treaty. In 1689, while they were still in Vienna, the new grand vizier, Köprülü Mustafa Pasha, shifted the Ottoman foreign policy towards war, and initially was successful in military campaigns. As Zulfikar-efendi and Mavrocordatos dreaded returning to Istanbul, the emperor protected them by issuing their leave permit from Vienna after Fazil Mustafa Pasha's death in 1692 (N. Camariano, *Alexandre Mavrocordato, Le grand drogman*: pp. 34-37; *Relazioni di Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato, volume XIV, Constantinopoli, Relazioni inedite (1512-1789)*, ed. Maria Pia Pedani Fabris. Padova: Bottega d'Erasmus, Aldo Ausilio Editore, 1996: pp. 737-743).

<sup>14</sup> A. A. C. Stourdza, *L'Europe orientale et le rôle historique des Maurocordato*: p. 46.

<sup>15</sup> In their letters to Mavrocordatos, the Ragusans addressed him as a secret counsellor and secretary of the Porte (*Consigliere intimo e Secretario della felice Porta Ottomana (Litterae et commissiones levantis* (henceforth: *LL*), series 8.1., vol. 66, f. 69; vol. 68, ff. 120v-121 (SAD)). Some historians cite that the sultan also conferred the title of the "illustrious prince" (*prince illustrissime, illustrious prince*) on Mavrocordatos (A. C. Stourdza, *L'Europe orientale et le rôle historique del Maurocordato*: p. 30; N. Camariano, *Alexandre Mavrocordato, Le grand drogman*: p. 43; M. Á. Extremera, »Surviving the Fall«: p. 401), while Janos writes that it was Leopold I who proclaimed him "illustrious prince" (D. Janos, »Panaiotis Nicousios and Alexander Mavrocordatos«: p. 183). It is hard to believe that in their letters to Mavrocordatos the Ragusan authorities would allow such an oversight.

<sup>16</sup> Gr. *ex aporriton*: "of secrets".

<sup>17</sup> A. A. C. Stourdza, *L'Europe orientale et le rôle historique des Maurocordato*: p. 30; N. Camariano, *Alexandre Mavrocordato, Le grand drogman*: p. 43; J. Irmscher, »Alexandros Mavrocordatos«: p. 1007; D. Janos, »Panaiotis Nicousios and Alexander Mavrocordatos«: p. 183; C. M. Philliou, *Biography of an Empire*: p. 51; M. Á. Extremera, »Surviving the Fall«: p. 401.

A few months after having been appointed secret adviser to the Porte, Alexander Mavrocordatos and reis-efendi Rami Mehmed-efendi, both bearing the titles of accredited envoys, set off for the peace negotiations in Srijemski Karlovci (Carlowitz).<sup>18</sup> Luka Barca, Ragusan consul to Istanbul, described their preparations and concluded that never before had the Ottomans despatched to the Austrians such an extravagantly equipped embassy. He could not believe how thoroughly Mavrocordatos was preparing himself for his majestic appearance before the representatives of the allies.<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, in Srijemski Karlovci Mavrocordatos distinguished himself in all his brilliance. Both the contemporaries and historians agree that he by far eclipsed all others as the best negotiator, speaker and diplomat, who restored some the Empire's reputation and saved it from ruin.<sup>20</sup>

The sultan was very pleased with the success of his representatives. According to Barca's letters, a solemn reception was organised for them in Edirne. The grand defterdar, grand vizier's *kethüda* and many chaushes greeted them before the city gates. They rode on horseback, flanking Rami Mehmed-efendi on the right side, and Mavrocordatos on the left. Four aghas who led the procession carried the copies of the peace treaty in their bags. The grand vizier was happy and glad to receive the envoys in his palace. He cloaked them with sable fur. The sultan was equally happy to greet them and had them cloaked in sable fur as well, as an

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<sup>18</sup> For a detailed account on the War of the Holy League against the Ottomans, Venetian invasion of Ragusan hinterland, and the peace negotiations of Srijemski Karlovci, see: Šime Ljubić, »O odnošajih medju republikom mletačkom i dubrovačkom od početka XVI. stoljeća do njihove propasti«. *Rad JAZU* 54 (1880): pp. 116-121; Jovan Radonić, *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, vol. IV.2. Beograd: SKA, 1942: pp. 493-496; N. Camariano, *Alexandre Mavrocordato, Le grand drogman*: p. 44-55; Vinko Foretić, *Povijest Dubrovnika do 1808*, vol. 2. Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske, 1980: pp. 193-194; Gligor Stanojević, *Dalmacija u doba Morejskog rata: 1684-1699*. Beograd: Vojno delo, 1962; Zdenko Zlatar, *Between the Double Eagle and the Crescent*. New York: East European Monographs, 1992: 208-214; Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, »Ottoman Diplomacy at Karlowitz«, in: *Ottoman Diplomacy, Conventional or Unconventional?*, ed. A. Nuri Yurdusev. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004: pp. 83-113.

<sup>19</sup> *Li apparechi, che fanno li Turchi da questa Ambasata ella puo credere, et io vi posso dire, che da che stà questo Imperio Ottomano simile Ambassata alli Imperiali non si è spedita. Stralascio di dire la pompa, che fa il Rais Effendi, e sua Corte numerozo sequito con fornimenti di cavalli, abiti, et altre grandezze; ma il Signor Maurocordato, che si apparecchia per mostrarsi maestoso agli Ambasciatori delli collegati una cosa incredibile* (DA 17, vol. 1784a, no. 100).

<sup>20</sup> A. A. C. Stourdza, *L'Europe orientale et le rôle historique des Maurocordato*: p. 25; Grga Novak, »Borba Dubrovnika za slobodu 1683-1699«. *Rad JAZU* 253 (1935): pp. 147-148; N. Camariano, *Alexandre Mavrocordato, Le grand drogman*: p. 52; Radovan Samardžić, *Veliki vek Dubrovnika*. Beograd: Prosveta, 1983: p. 497; M. Á. Extremera, »Surviving the Fall«: p. 401.

expression of respect for successful negotiations. Day after day, each of the more prominent viziers of the Porte presented Rami Mehmed-efendi and Mavrocordatos with equipped horses.<sup>21</sup> Emperor Leopold I, to whom this treaty was of special significance, mainly because of the threatening French expansionism, presented Mavrocordatos with 50,000 piasters and a collection of Byzantine chronicles.<sup>22</sup> Upon return from peace negotiations, Mavrocordatos was acknowledged as supreme authority in the Ottoman foreign policy.

### *Ragusans in the jaws of the Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa Pasha*

Kara Mustafa Pasha's hostility towards Ragusans dated back to the days when he had acted as kaymakam of the Grand Vizier Köprülü Fazil Ahmed Pasha (1661-1676), because he was convinced that they had not given him fitting gifts. Seeking vengeance, he found a perfect opportunity in the aftermath of the earthquake that hit Dubrovnik in 1667. Invoking Ottoman laws, which did not bind the Republic, he sought to confiscate the property of the heirless Ragusan noblemen killed in the earthquake. However, this attempt failed.<sup>23</sup> He remembered these insults only too well, and when he assumed the position of the grand vizier (1676-1683), his antagonism towards the Republic turned into rage, which the dignitaries of the Porte compared to burning fire,<sup>24</sup> while the Ragusan ambassadors described him as hell's fury.<sup>25</sup>

Sultan Mehmed IV, who avoided Istanbul and was obsessively occupied with hunting, ceded the governing of the state and foreign affairs to Kara Mustafa, as he trusted his judgement and suggestions. Kara Mustafa had the sultan completely isolated and intended to eliminate all those who were close to him, especially the viziers Musa Pasha and Hussein Pasha, along with the grand equerry Süleyman Agha. "He is sultan only by title, while the vizier is both the sultan, and whatever he wishes to be,"<sup>26</sup> Ragusan ambassadors wrote. The Ragusans were utterly astonished by what they experienced during an audience with Kara Mustafa. As

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<sup>21</sup> DA 17, vol. 1784a, no. 103. On the solemn reception and gift giving to the Ottoman and other negotiators, see also: A. A. C. Stourdza, *L'Europe orientale et le rôle historique des Maurocordato*: p. 53.

<sup>22</sup> N. Camariano, *Alexandre Mavrocordato, Le grand drogman*: p. 53.

<sup>23</sup> Vesna Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istambulu*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU, 2003: pp. 141-150.

<sup>24</sup> DA 17, vol. 1839, no. 27, 28.

<sup>25</sup> R. Samardžić, *Veliki vek Dubrovnika*: p. 340.

<sup>26</sup> DA 17, vol. 1849, no. 13.



if at an audience with the sultan, they were escorted by the gatekeepers (*kapicibaşı*), who held them by the hand and led them to the vizier to kiss his gown.<sup>27</sup>

Without any exaggeration, one may say that Kara Mustafa's behaviour during his meetings with foreign diplomats certainly lacked manner and control. The ambassadors made a detailed list of the thousands of thalers he had extorted through blackmail out of the French, English, Dutch, and Venetians.<sup>28</sup> As for the Ragusans, the minute he assumed the position of grand vizier, he accused them of raising customs tariffs to Bosnian merchants during the War of Candia.<sup>29</sup> He demanded compensation and he kept producing different sums, the highest being 2,150,000 thalers, that is, around 70 Ragusan annual tributes of 12,500 gold coins. Based on the facts established to date, the Ragusans did quite the opposite in this war, as they granted exemptions and privileges to Muslim merchants.<sup>30</sup> Apparently, this was of no relevance whatsoever: "Before him none of your reasons hold place".<sup>31</sup> What followed was a war of nerves. It became clear to the Ragusans that they would have to give something to Kara Mustafa, and therefore they resorted to the best of their diplomatic virtuosity to minimise his demand. On the other hand, Kara Mustafa's objective was to draw from Dubrovnik as much as possible without destroying it, because that far he could not go: "Evil as he is, he cannot harm you as he still dreads the sultan's authority".<sup>32</sup>

From Bosnia to Istanbul, the Ottomans were convinced that the Ragusans were incredibly rich, and that by imposing high taxes on Bosnian merchants, they acquired even greater wealth: "The Ragusans have a high tower in which they buried and filled to the top with sequins they had unlawfully taken from the

<sup>27</sup> *DA* 17, vol. 1839, no. 3; vol. 1849, no. 13.

<sup>28</sup> *DA* 17, vol. 1837, no. 4.

<sup>29</sup> For more details on the Ragusan conflict with the Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa Pasha, see: Antonije Vučetić, »Marojica Caboga u zgodama Dubrovnika«. *Vjesnik Hrvatsko-slavonsko-dalmatinskog Zemaljskog arhiva* 20 (1918): pp. 163-188; Ante Liepopili, »Dopisi Marojice Caboge vladu dubrovačkoj«. *Glasnik Dubrovačkog učenog društva Sveti Vlaho* 1 (1929): pp. 125-146; Đuro Körbler, »Dubrovčani i Kara-Mustafa, veliki vezir turski«. *Glasnik Dubrovačkog učenog društva Sveti Vlaho* 1 (1929): pp. 11-19; Jovan Radonić, *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, vol. III.2. Beograd: SKA, 1939: pp. 871-995; R. Samardžić, *Veliki vek Dubrovnika*: pp. 443-481; Z. Zlatar, *Between the Double Eagle and the Crescent*: pp. 111-127; V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istanbulu*: pp. 151-167.

<sup>30</sup> V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istanbulu*: p. 152.

<sup>31</sup> *Prid njim nijedan vaš razlog mjesta neima* were the words of Vizier Ibrahim-pasha (*DA* 17, vol. 1849, no. 13).

<sup>32</sup> *Zasve da je ovi čovjek zo, ne smije od Cara da vam ništa učini* was the statement of the grand equerry Süleyman-aga. (*DA* 17, vol. 1849, no. 11).

Turks, and one cannot say that buried there are either two, or four, or six, or ten thousand bags, whose number is neither known or estimated, and therefore if two or three thousand bags were taken, they would hardly notice”.<sup>33</sup>

The Ragusans claimed that the allegation was false and reminded that the long wars in the hinterland and the earthquake of 1667 had profoundly impoverished them. In vain they wrote to the sultan: “Under the wing of your Empire, for more than four hundred years, we have not committed any infidelity, we have always delivered the usual tribute, and now because of lies and defamation, we have sadly perished”.<sup>34</sup> Namely, Kara Mustafa blocked the Ragusan border and thus paralysed the flow of trade. He questioned Ragusan right to impose any kind of customs duty to Ottoman merchants. He threatened to send the Bosnian beylerbey Ahmed Pasha with his army against the Republic. Pasha was the enemy of the Republic and his plans to destroy it were well known to the Porte.<sup>35</sup>

Not a single Ragusan letter had reached the sultan. During the tribute audiences with the sultan, the ambassadors were not allowed to utter a word in Republic’s defence.<sup>36</sup>

Grand vizier’s *kethüda* and the reis-efendi, important protagonists in this conflict, were not inclined towards the Ragusans. The ambassadors became well aware of reis-efendi’s crafty and potentially dangerous nature. They addressed him in their native tongue because he was from Sarajevo, as he, smiling sardonically, with one eye open and the other shut, nodded his head and responded in a low voice: “Good, good, yes, yes”.<sup>37</sup> The *kethüda*, by origin also from Bosnia, insulted them: “I have had enough of you, don’t you see that your head is burning with fire (...) and thy shirt is made of lies, you infidel devils”.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Dubrovčani imaju jednu veliku kulu koju su nasuli, i zakopali punu cekina a sve to što su od Turaka nepravo uzeli, i tu ni se može rijeti da jesu dvije, ni četiri, ni šes, ni deset hiljada kesa, ma temu nije broja ni hesapa, zato kada im se uzme dvije, i tri tisuće kesa to im se neće ni poznati.* (DA 17, vol. 1839, no. 20). One bag (*bursa*) was equivalent to 500 silver coins.

<sup>34</sup> *Oto pod krilom tvoga Carstva više od četrsta godina nebišvi učinili nikakve nevjere, običajni harač sveđ donosili, za laže i avanije neizmjerne sada tužno poginusmo.* (LL, vol. 63, ff. 225-225v).

<sup>35</sup> DA 17, vol. 1839, no. 27.

<sup>36</sup> DA 17, vol. 1849, no. 13.

<sup>37</sup> *A mio basto giuditio lo trovo perfidissimo e nemico inplacabile perche il tutto che da me li fu detto parlavo in lingua nostra, a lui ben nota per esser da Saraio, mi guardava con un occhio serato, et altro apperto, ridendo con riso sardonico, govoreći sotto voce, tako, tako, jes, jes, i sveđ klimajući glavom.* (DA 17, vol. 1834, no. 7).

<sup>38</sup> *Veće ste mi dodijali ne vidite li da vam glava ognjem gori (...) i košulja je od laža na vami vragovi đaurški.* (DA 17, vol. 1834, no. 3, 16).

Porte dignitaries of Bosnian origin always supported the Ragusans. Reis-efendi and vizier's *kethüda* were the exceptions, and at the worst of times. All other Bosnians showed their amity towards Ragusans and were happy to assist them. Most distinguished among them was Süleyman Agha, the grand equerry, who was willing to even lend them money and promised to do everything that was in his power. He attacked the reis-efendi: "You have already torn their souls apart, leave these people be, don't bring the God's wrath upon yourself for their sake".<sup>39</sup> Favourably disposed towards the Ragusans were also the grand defterdar ("Fear not, I am of your land, I am not from beyond the sea, I shall do everything to reconcile you")<sup>40</sup> and the *nişancı* ("Do not deem me dormant, for this evening, too, I have paid a visit to the Sultan's *çuhadar*, whom I asked to say a word or two in your favour to the Sultan").<sup>41</sup> The Ragusans also enjoyed the support of the viziers Ibrahim Pasha, Musaip Pasha, Hussein Pasha, and Kara Ibrahim Pasha.<sup>42</sup>

It appears that the majority of the Porte dignitaries supported the Republic, yet their hands were tied and they dared not meet the ambassadors in public, but received them in their palaces secretly, during the night.<sup>43</sup>

Either directly or indirectly, the ambassadors officially contacted and negotiated with the Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa Pasha, his *kethüda* and reis-efendi. The grand dragoman of the Porte, Alexander Mavrocordatos, acted as interpreter at the meetings and mediated in the issues concerning compensation, notably in the period from the spring of 1678 to the autumn of 1679, when the ambassadors Marojica Caboga, Đuro Buća and Sekundo Gozze were imprisoned at the Baba Cafer dungeon.<sup>44</sup>

The ambassadors Caboga and Buća described in detail Mavrocordatos's assistance and support. Before ending up in prison, they enjoyed his hospitality, for he received them in his house as guests. They particularly appreciated the

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<sup>39</sup> *Veće im si dušu izvadio, ostavi se od ove čeljadi, nemo rasrčit Gospodina Boga za njih na te.* (DA 17, vol. 1834, no. 7).

<sup>40</sup> *Ne bojte se ja sam od vaše zemlje, ja nijesam prikomorac, ja ću nastojat svakako smirit vas.* (DA 17, vol. 1834, no. 7).

<sup>41</sup> *Ne cijeni da spim, bio sam i večeras u čohadara Careva koga sam bio molio da i on reče dobru riječ Caru danas.* (DA 17, vol. 1849, no. 14).

<sup>42</sup> DA 17, vol. 1849, no. 13.

<sup>43</sup> DA 17, vol. 1839, no. 3; vol. 1849, no. 13.

<sup>44</sup> Anticipating that Kara Mustafa would imprison them, Caboga and Buća mentioned the Fortress of the Seven Towers, in which foreign diplomats usually served their sentence. However, they were thrown into the Baba Cafer dungeon, where they shared a cell with twelve criminals sentenced to death by hanging (V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istanbulu*: p. 161).

fact that he decided to host them on the Orthodox Christmas and, instead of celebrating it, he attended to the ongoing Ragusan affairs.<sup>45</sup> He would inform them about the decisions of the grand vizier, *kethüda* or the reis-efendi. They would discuss it at length in order to define the Ragusan response, which he would then communicate to the Porte. A detailed account of the discussions held at Mavrocordatos's home shows how refined his negotiatory nerve was in keeping the responses within the limits of acceptability. He was also very cautious while interpreting before Kara Mustafa. In 1680 ambassador Rafael Gozze was trying to persuade Kara Mustafa that the Ragusans were obedient to him and that they would honour his orders. Given that the vizier was on the verge of explosion due to Ragusan disobedience and disrespect of his demands, Mavrocordatos did not interpret these words. Gozze turned to his dragoman and signalled him to translate, but luckily Mavrocordatos managed to stop him.<sup>46</sup>

Kara Mustafa soon changed his mind about the initial exorbitant sums, and the negotiations largely focused on the new compensation amount. The ambassadors persisted in their description of Ragusan poverty, while Mavrocordatos suggested that they would not achieve anything with such a message. He recommended that the Ragusans sell as much as possible, even cattle and furniture. The ambassadors responded that if the state were to be stripped bare, never again would it have the chance to recover. They petitioned for extra time, horses and messengers in order to consult the Senate, without whose permission they were not authorised to consent to any sum whatsoever. While preparing to forward the message, Mavrocordatos told them that as a Christian, he felt it his duty to do everything in his power to help them. He was willing to lend them 5,000 thalers because he would be honoured to help an old Christian state such as theirs. He was honest and spoke truthfully: he managed to soften Kara Mustafa's *kethüda* and the reis-efendi. Together they went to Kara Mustafa, pleading for his grace and reconsideration regarding the sum that the Ragusans would be able to bear. By the start of 1678, the sultan issued a firman by which the Ragusans were to pay 100,000 thalers into his treasury, and 50,000 thalers to Kara Mustafa, other viziers of the Porte, and to the allegedly damaged Bosnian merchants.<sup>47</sup> The messenger of the Porte set off urgently for Dubrovnik, where he delivered the firman to the authorities, as well as Mavrocordatos's letter with his proposal to employ all their resources to the best of their ability because they would lose their much precious freedom. The authorities responded

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<sup>45</sup> DA 17, vol. 1839, f. 27.

<sup>46</sup> DA 17, vol. 1834, no. 7.

<sup>47</sup> DA 17, vol. 1839, no. 27, 28.

that freedom was truly more important than all the treasures, but since they did not have any, they could give none to preserve freedom. They kindly asked Mavrocordatos to acquaint Kara Mustafa, for the umpteenth time, with Ragusan impoverished state and to continue with his aid to the ambassadors.<sup>48</sup>

Following the negative Ragusan response in the spring of 1678, Caboga and Buća were thrown into the Baba Cafer dungeon. Negotiations were resumed through the mediation of Ragusan dragomans and Mavrocordatos. Kara Mustafa persisted with threats and schemes. He spread a false rumour that the ambassadors accepted the sum of 140,000 thalers, and via Mavrocordatos sent them a receipt to sign. If they refused, Bosnian beylerbey would occupy the Republic and eliminate the nobility. They replied that they had promised nothing because they knew that not even 5,000 thalers could be collected in Dubrovnik. May Mavrocordatos carve that message in marble so as to avoid any further misunderstandings.<sup>49</sup>

Ragusan authorities reacted just as calmly. Mavrocordatos informed them about Kara Mustafa's plans to invade or sell the Republic. Ragusan answer read as follows: the territory of the Republic, a strip 80 miles long (some 160 km) overlooking the sea, is so sterile that bears nothing but rocks. If the Ottomans were to invade it, they would be left without the tribute, whereas for its protection and maintenance they would need far more than the revenues from the Sanjak of Herzegovina. Should they offer such a Republic for sale, no one would give them more than 500 thalers. Should the Ottoman army launch an invasion against it, the people would flee, as some had already done.<sup>50</sup>

A threat involving the abandonment of the Republic proved such an efficient diplomatic method in extreme crises that the ambassadors themselves were taken aback by it.<sup>51</sup> Mavrocordatos informed the ambassadors that the Bosnian beylerbey had not received an order to attack the Republic, but to investigate whether the

<sup>48</sup> *LL*, vol. 63, ff. 169-169v.

<sup>49</sup> *DA* 17, vol. 1839, no. 43.

<sup>50</sup> *LL*, vol. 63, ff. 206-207v.

<sup>51</sup> After the earthquake in 1667, when Kara Mustafa was determined to confiscate the property of the heirless nobles killed in the disaster, the ambassadors warned him that in the eyes of the Ragusans his action would be interpreted as the falling from sultan's favour, they would flee the state and cede it to the Venetians. The threat had such a powerful effect that the ambassadors themselves found it hard to believe. Kara Mustafa's intimidated *kethüda* told them: "There is no need to flee Dubrovnik, as you presumably see how much the sultan appreciates you, (...) you needn't tread elsewhere in search of better happiness" (*Nije potrebno da bježite iz Dubrovnika jer valjda vidite koliko vas sultan voli, (...) nije potrebno da na drugim stranama svijeta tražite bolju sreću* (V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istanbulu*: pp. 149-150)).

Ragusans were planning to abandon it and to consider what needed to be done had such been the case.<sup>52</sup> It was also important that the Ragusans had duly paid their tribute for 1678, and by doing so, they showed to the totally isolated sultan that they were his loyal tributaries.<sup>53</sup>

The final agreement was reached in the latter half of 1679. Ragusans promised to disburse 60,000 thalers to the sultan and 10,000 to Kara Mustafa, emphasising that they were not giving them as compensation but only to regain the grace of the Porte. By the start of 1682 the Ragusans disbursed the total sum. Although their constant claims of impoverishment were unfounded, now they spoke the truth: the bribes that they gave in this conflict were insignificant, while they could barely manage to collect the promised money.<sup>54</sup> Until the payment of the last thaler, eight ambassadors were subjected to the worst of trials, which, ready to die for the Republic, they endured and brazenly offered their heads on the block.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, Nikolica Bona gave his life. In August 1678 he died in the Silistria fortress. As a matter of fact, they had no choice. To return to Dubrovnik without having accomplished the mission meant that they would have to face the sanctions and the fury of the Senate.<sup>56</sup> Despite the fact that some of their actions at the Porte may have been unsatisfactory and inadequate,<sup>57</sup> as they often disagreed or even engaged in a fight with each other, the truth remains that their tactics of buying time earned them a victory in this war of nerves.<sup>58</sup>

During this crisis the Republic enjoyed the support of all foreign diplomats, namely Austrians, Poles, Dutch, Venetians and the English alike.<sup>59</sup> The fate of

<sup>52</sup> DA 17, vol. 1839, no. 41.

<sup>53</sup> R. Samardžić, *Veliki vek Dubrovnika*: p. 480.

<sup>54</sup> DA 17, vol. 1834, no. 7, 10, 16.

<sup>55</sup> DA 17, vol. 1839, no. 27, 43.

<sup>56</sup> Initially, Kara Mustafa Pasha questioned Ragusan authority to impose customs duties on Ottoman merchants. Eventually, he changed his mind and promised them *hatt-ı hümayun* on the payment of customs duties, but was reluctant about it. In a conversation with Kara Mustafa's *kethüda*, Caboga said: "Oh mighty Sultan, our lords will behead us if we do not deliver the *hatt-ı hümayun* to them, which you promised to give us, and that according to the words of the Grand Vizier, and that is what we wrote to our lords. Should it turn out otherwise, our fate is sealed". (*Sultanum nami će naša Gospoda glavu osjeć, kada im ne odnesemo Hatehumaju, koju nam obeća dati, i to po riječi čestitoga Vezijera i tako smo pisali našoj Gospodi, što da inako slijedi mi smo sasmiće poginuli*). The *kethüda* replied: "And if you dread leaving, stay here and convert to Islam" (*a ti ako ne smiješ otiti ostani ter se poturči*) (DA 17, vol. 1834, no. 7). In Caboga's words, formulated to plead for grace, there was at least a shred of truth.

<sup>57</sup> V. Samardžić, *Veliki vek Dubrovnika*: pp. 444, 448, 451.

<sup>58</sup> V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istambulu*: pp. 153-158, 162-166.

<sup>59</sup> DA 17, vol. 1834, no. 7; vol. 1839, no. 15, 33; vol. 1849, no. 3.

Dubrovnik was the main topic of their agenda because from these very developments they tried to anticipate the future of their own states. All of them were the targets of Kara Mustafa's eager ambitions, but his threats against Dubrovnik provided serious reason for concern. The whole of Christian Europe was deeply unsettled by large-scale preparations of the Ottoman navy and Kara Mustafa Pasha's expansionist appetites. It was believed that he would invade Dubrovnik, and from its ports strike against south Italy first. In order to obtain sultan's permission to launch the attack, he persuaded Bosnian merchants to falsely testify about the excessively high Ragusan customs duties during the War of Candia, and he demanded sums for which he knew the Ragusans could not be able to pay.<sup>60</sup> Europe remained just as concerned although Kara Mustafa abandoned his initial demands, when it became perfectly clear that he would consent to any sum that the Ragusans were able to pay. Europe was equally disunited and unprepared to offer anything more than a consoling tap on the Ragusan shoulder.

The Ragusans had excellent knowledge of the Christian Europe as such. Although they counted on Austrian support, in the conflict they relied on their own potential, and the bottom line was that only Mavrocordatos could offer them substantial help and support. As Kara Mustafa's representative, his duty was to prevent further deterioration of the conflict and to do everything in his power so that the final sum be defined as soon as possible to the approval of both sides. He accomplished his duty successfully, while some of his actions and statements clearly testify to his growing disposition towards the Ragusans. Was he impressed by the Ragusan suicidal determination, was he working for the "Christian cause",<sup>61</sup> was he moved by the Ragusan persuasive verbosity on wretchedness, impoverishment or Kara Mustafa's injustice, it is hard to say. The only thing certain is that he did not work for money. During the few years of his committed efforts, the Ragusans gave him some satin, sugar and a small barrel of Ragusan *malvasia*, while from the ambassador Rafael Gozze he obtained meagre and carefully sifted information about the Christian world, for which he was extremely grateful.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> V. Samardžić, *Veliki vek Dubrovnika*: pp. 443-465.

<sup>61</sup> Some of Mavrocordatos's contemporaries, as well as historians, claim that Mavrocordatos was an unwavering enemy of Catholicism (N. Camariano, *Alexandre Mavrocordato, Le grand drogman*: p. 25; D. Livanios, »Pride, Prudence and the Fear of God«: pp. 2-3).

<sup>62</sup> *DA* 17, vol. 1834, no. 7, 10; vol. 1849, no. 13. *LL*, vol. 64, f. 86.

*The meeting in Belgrade: payment of tribute in poor-quality silver coins*

Kara Mustafa Pasha's abortive siege of Vienna in 1683 marked the beginning of the Austro-Ottoman War. A year later, Venice and Poland joined the conflict, followed by Russia. Venice signed an agreement with Leopold I by which all the territories he had conquered in Dalmatia and hinterland would pass into Venetian hands. A Ragusan envoy was urgently despatched to Vienna to sign a treaty by which the emperor would act as the Republic's protector. The Ragusans promised to resume the payment of tribute to Austria of 500 gold coins, which they suspended after the Battle of Mohacs in 1526. They would resume it the minute the Ottomans were removed from the Ragusan neighbourhood. In return, they counted on Austrian protection against Venice, hoped for Austrian victory in Bosnia and Herzegovina, awaited to be freed from Ottoman pressure or at least the reduction of *haraç*.

By 1686, when Austria conquered Buda, the Ragusans were already paying the tribute. They managed to keep this secret until February 1687, when the emperor sent his resident to Dubrovnik.<sup>63</sup> It was then that the Venetians learnt that Austria had taken the Republic under its protection. The new Austro-Ragusan relations could no longer be concealed from the Ottomans either, for whom the Ragusans had to concoct an urgent excuse. They were a year behind with the payment of *haraç*. It was high time they delivered it, and almost one half of the sum they intended to pay in the poor-quality Ragusan *denarii grossi*.<sup>64</sup> With an aim to bypass Istanbul, they submitted their excuses and petitions to a friend of the Republic, grand vizier Sari Süleyman Pasha, who, as a general of the Ottoman army, was in Belgrade at the time. During the Ragusan conflict with Kara Mustafa, that pasha acted as grand equerry,<sup>65</sup> and he consoled the ambassadors, cried when he could not help them,<sup>66</sup> offered them money, and on one occasion he actually lent it to them.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>63</sup> V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istambulu*: p. 186.

<sup>64</sup> Except for the 1620s when the tribute was paid in thalers, Ragusan *haraç* always amounted to 12,500 gold coins of various type. From the 1630s on, they paid it in gold *ungari* (V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istambulu*: pp. 178-185).

<sup>65</sup> Ismail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. II.2. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1995: p. 425.

<sup>66</sup> When in 1681 Kara Mustafa banished Süleyman-aga from Istanbul, the latter informed the ambassadors that he could no longer be of help to them. He cried out: "Elçi, I stand in shame before you and your lords. If this trouble and sadness had not found me, I would have kept my word, so convey my greetings to the lords, and convey all that I have told you". (*Elçija mene sram, i stid od tebe, i od tvoje Gospede, da me ova nevolja, i tuga nije našla, ne bih pomanjko mojoj riječi, zato pozdravi Gospodu, i piši im sve ovo*) (DA 17, vol. 1834, no. 10).

<sup>67</sup> DA 17, vol. 1839, no. 78.



The Senate immediately passed a decision to despatch Marojica Caboga to Süleyman Pasha, not as an ambassador but as a private person. During the conflict with Kara Mustafa, the two became good friends, and at some later uncertain point, also sworn brothers.<sup>68</sup>

It is equally important that Alexander Mavrocordatos, grand dragoman of the Porte, was also in Belgrade at the time, whom Süleyman Pasha highly esteemed and considered his main adviser.<sup>69</sup>

At that time, fifty-eight-year-old Caboga was of very poor health. Due to a gout attack, he had to make a week-long stopover as early as in Mostar. Because his hands were shaking severely and he could not hold a pen, he dictated his letters addressed to the authorities to his dragoman Luka Lučić.<sup>70</sup>

According to Caboga, Süleyman Pasha greeted him cordially as if he were his father or brother. Caboga conveyed the greetings of the nobility and presented him with the satin and woollen cloth. Vizier inquired as to why they were delayed in *haraç*, because the sultan had already become suspicious of their alienation. He replied that the Ragusans were in financial problems on account of Kara Mustafa's blackmail. He explained that they used to buy *ungari* for the *haraç* in Christian states, but now, having realised that the Ragusans were the only ones loyal to the sultan, these states refused to sell them. Thus, he pleaded with the vizier to accept the value of five or six thousand *ungari* to be paid in Ragusan silver *denarii grossi*. The vizier laughed: "It would be really good for me to take your *denarii grossi* minted largely from copper".<sup>71</sup> Caboga assured him that they were the same as before, and Mavrocordatos confirmed their high quality and the fact that they were more popular on the market than any other Ottoman currency. The vizier agreed, yet admitted: "My dear man, how shall we do it, I

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<sup>68</sup> Given that the record of their sworn brotherhood dates from the beginning of the eighteenth century (*Ceremoniale*, series 14.1., vol. 8.1, ff. 41-43v (SAD)), it is impossible to estimate whether it was sworn in Istanbul or in Belgrade.

<sup>69</sup> *DA* 17, vol. 1834, no. 7; vol. 1839, no. 78; vol. 1873, no. 11. After Kara Mustafa's defeat at Vienna, Grand Vizier Kara Ibrahim Pasha threw Mavrocordatos in jail (1684-1685). The new grand vizier, Sari Süleyman Pasha reinstated him to the position of grand dragoman of the Porte. After pasha's execution in 1687 on account of military defeat, Mavrocordatos used to mention him as "mad Süleyman, Ragusan idol" (N. Camariano, *Alexandre Mavrocordato, Le grand drogman*: p. 35; G. Novak, »Borba Dubrovnika za slobodu«: pp. 44-45).

<sup>70</sup> *LL*, vol. 64, ff. 328v-329v; *DA* 17, vol. 1839, no. 78.

<sup>71</sup> *Veramente bella cosa che io pigli i vostri grossetti nei quali e la maggior parte di rame.* (*DA* 17, vol. 1873, no. 11).

dare not say or exhibit it to the Sultan”.<sup>72</sup> Caboga replied that the sultan need not even know in what currency the *haraç* was paid if the vizier spent it for military purposes.<sup>73</sup> Süleyman Pasha took him by the hand and said: “I swear to you by my faith and sultan’s head that this I would not do for any person in the world, but because of the disposition I feel towards you and because you have made the effort to come and see me despite your poor condition and old age, I cannot refuse you”.<sup>74</sup>

A day after the imperial resident Corradino had arrived in Dubrovnik, the authorities wrote to Caboga to admit it immediately to the vizier, and to represent that admission as a confirmation of Ragusan fidelity to the Ottomans. Caboga hurried with an explanation that the emperor had sent the resident to inspect whether anyone was scheming against the Republic, and that it must have been in the sultan’s interest that the Republic enjoyed the protection of Christians who, thus, indirectly secured his *haraç*. It is true that the Ottomans had nothing against Austrian protection of Dubrovnik from the Venetians.<sup>75</sup> At this point, the vizier dismissed the dragomans. As soon as they were alone, the vizier asked Caboga to come closer, and said, grinning: “A bad morning to you, Marojica! Could it be that you have surrendered the City to the Emperor?” Caboga replied: “Most Illustrious Sir, where is your wisdom which the Lord God has bestowed upon you above all the people of this world? Had we handed over the City to the Emperor, why would I come here at your feet to be beheaded and why would my lords send tribute to the virtuous sultan, which is on its way, and for which I guarantee with my head and life?” The vizier concluded: “I know nothing, but woe betide you should there be any truth in this, for may any person be untruthful to me, but if I catch you lying about the smallest of things, you, in whom I trust and to whom I reveal my whole heart, I’ll make you pay for them all”. By the words “I reveal my whole heart to you” the vizier most probably meant the war plans about which he

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<sup>72</sup> *Ma bre čovječe kako ćemo to učiniti, ja tega Caru ni smijem rijeti ni ukazati.* (DA 17, vol. 1873, no. 11).

<sup>73</sup> During the so-called Long Turkish War (1593-1606) the Ragusans delivered tribute to the grand vizier, who, as a general of the Ottoman army, was stationed in Belgrade. The vizier accepted *haraç* by sultan’s permission and distributed it for war purposes (V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istanbulu*: pp. 14, 49-50).

<sup>74</sup> *Vi giuro per la mia fede, e per la testa del Gran Signore che questo non farei per nissuno huomo al mondo, ma in risguardo del affetto che a voi porto, e di questo travaglio che cosi vecchio et amalato havete intrapreso per venire à vedermi non vi posso mancare.* (DA 17, vol. 1873, no. 11).

<sup>75</sup> G. Novak, »Borba Dubrovnika za slobodu«: pp. 16, 20, 44-45.

spoke with Caboga.<sup>76</sup> Caboga despatched this information to the imperial resident in Dubrovnik. While forwarding it to Vienna, the resident emphasised that the information source was a close friend and confidant of the grand vizier.<sup>77</sup>

Despite the threatening words with which he addressed him, pasha must have been fully aware that Caboga lied in order to protect his state's interests. He must have known that Caboga would pass on the information on the number of Ottoman soldiers to the Austrians. Perhaps that was exactly what he wanted, perhaps that is why he revealed the numbers in the first place, and these numbers, to serve the purpose, were probably incorrect and inflated. He fulfilled all Caboga's petitions and seemingly believed in all of his excuses. Caboga was certain that Mavrocordatos's words were crucial in this matter. He informed the authorities that Mavrocordatos supported him in all matters. He even paid him a visit only to state that he would be of assistance to the Republic as much as he could.<sup>78</sup>

Mavrocordatos wrote to Ragusan authorities on Süleyman Pasha's behalf about Caboga's mission: Caboga arrived in Belgrade in a fatigued and ill state. The vizier received him kindly and with admiration, and did not criticise the Ragusans for their delay of *haraç*. The arguments of the conscientious and prudent Caboga soothed his mind. Given that the vizier agreed to accept Ragusan *denarii grossi*, Mavrocordatos informed the authorities that they could despatch the ambassadors with *haraç*. In conclusion of the letter, Mavrocordatos expressed his respect and loyalty to the glorious Republic.<sup>79</sup>

In May 1687, tribute ambassador Vladislav Buća<sup>80</sup> delivered 6,500 *ungari*, in addition to 6,000 *ungari* in poor-quality Ragusan *denarii grossi*.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> *Zlo ti jutro Marojica, da vi nijeste pridali Grada Ćesaru? (...) Prisivjetli gospodine di je tvoja pamet kojom te Gospod Bog nadario vrhu svijeh ljudi od ovega svijeta, da smo mi pridali Grad Ćesaru čemu bih ja došo ovdi, na tvoje noge, da mi glavu osiječeš, čemu li bi moja Gospoda poslali sada čestitomu sultanu harač, koji je eto na putu, i zanj sam ja jamac s glavom i životom. (...) Ja ne znam ništa, ma ako što bi, teško tebi i tvojoj glavi, er neka mi svi lažu, ma ako uhitim da mi ti lažeš najmanju stvar, u koga se uzdam i otkrivam ti sve svoje srce, platićeš mi za svijeh.* (DA 17, vol. 1839, no. 78).

<sup>77</sup> G. Novak, »Borba Dubrovnika za slobodu«: p. 20.

<sup>78</sup> DA 17, vol. 1873, no. 11.

<sup>79</sup> DA 17, vol. 1839, no. 24.

<sup>80</sup> In the meantime, Ragusan authorities also appointed Caboga as a tribute ambassador, so that the payment receipt bears his and Buća's name (*Sultanski spisi*, series 7.2.1., vol. 33, no. 1334 (SAD)).

<sup>81</sup> DA 17, vol. 1855, no. 7; *Sultanski spisi*, vol. 33, no. 1334.

*You can drain our blood out, but you cannot take what we have none: struggle for the reduction of haraç*

Belgrade was expected to fall in 1688. The Ragusans hoped that the Austrians would soon launch an invasion of Bosnia and Herzegovina. They encouraged that campaign with all the means. They discouraged the hinterland population from cooperating with Venice in favour of Austria. They convinced the emperor that the hinterland inhabitants wished to be subjected to his power and sent him petitions written by Herzegovinian lords to receive them under his protection.

In September 1688 the Austrians conquered Belgrade, and their offensive towards Bosnia and Herzegovina was expected. The Ragusans believed that they would drive away not only the Ottomans, but the Venetians as well, who, a year before, had conquered Herceg-Novı and Carina in the immediate vicinity of the Ragusan border, and by doing so cut off the main Ragusan trade route towards the Ottoman Empire.

Under such new circumstances, the Ragusans decided to suspend the delivery of tribute to the sultan. They soon opened a consulate in Istanbul, and appointed the Ragusan dragoman Luca Barca as their consul, to represent the Republic's interests at the Porte instead of the ambassadors. His main duty was to monitor the reactions to the suspension of the tribute delivery from Dubrovnik.<sup>82</sup>

As early as 1688 Barca wrote to the authorities that at the Porte no one aside from Mavrocordatos inquired about the Ragusan *haraç*. Barca searched for him to settle the accounts, but with little success because Mavrocordatos avoided him. The Porte sent an embassy to Emperor Leopold I. Under pretext that they had come to inform him about the ascension of Sultan Süleyman II, envoy Zulfikar-efendi and his adviser Mavrocordatos were actually instructed to negotiate the cessation of hostilities.<sup>83</sup> Barca learnt about this from the Venetian dragoman, and the latter from Mavrocordatos. Therefore, Mavrocordatos was inclined towards the Venetians and in Vienna he would certainly advocate their interests. Barca could not bear him. He referred to him as evil and a Greek ignorant.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> G. Novak, »Borba Dubrovnika za slobodu«: pp. 53-55; V. Foretić, *Povijest Dubrovnika*, vol. 2: pp. 174-186; V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istanbulu*: pp. 114, 124, 158, 189-190.

<sup>83</sup> N. Camariano, *Alexandre Mavrocordato, Le grand drogman*: pp. 34-37; A. A. C. Stourdza, *L'Europe orientale et le rôle historique des Maurocordato*: pp. 45-46.

<sup>84</sup> *DA* 17, vol. 1784a, no. 12, 21-24.

Indeed, Mavrocordatos openly stated that the Ragusans erred by not sending *haraç*.<sup>85</sup> He had two solutions in mind to the benefit of the Empire and the Republic, and in order to achieve them it was essential that the Ragusans maintained their image of sultan's loyal tributary. He obviously contemplated the peace negotiations which would open the question of the Venetian occupation of Dubrovnik's hinterland. The key argument for the elimination of the Venetians would be that sultan's tributaries had to be territorially connected with the Ottoman Empire. Mavrocordatos's second solution, which we may refer to as backup, was based largely on the situation on the war-inflicted territory in 1688. He proposed to the sultan to sign a secret treaty with the Ragusans, by which he would cede parts of hinterland to them which the Ottomans, under Venetian attack, could not be able to hold anyway.<sup>86</sup>

Mavrocordatos's proposals were not well received by the Ragusan authorities and diplomats. They believed imprudently that the protection of Austria and its military victories would save them from the Venetians, and fully or at least partially free them from the Ottoman ties. Alexander Mavrocordatos was proclaimed major enemy of the Dubrovnik Republic.<sup>87</sup>

Barca deemed Mavrocordatos very dangerous because he held the foreign affairs of the Porte in his hands. Prior to the negotiations between Zulfikar-efendi and Mavrocordatos with Leopold I in 1688, Ragusan authorities warned their ambassador in Vienna that Mavrocordatos had wronged them greatly at the Porte. It was on his account that the grand vizier ordered the Ragusans to deliver *haraç* immediately. Barca was to warn the emperor that Mavrocordatos was an unreliable Greek without any affinity for Christianity. God willing that he did not provoke a new Ottoman invasion of Vienna.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> A similar opinion was also shared by a *kethüda* of a certain vizier of the Porte, who warned Barca that they should pay *haraç* regularly until the situation with Bosnia unfolded (Jovan Radonić, *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, vol. IV.1. Beograd: SKA, 1941: p. 362).

<sup>86</sup> G. Novak, »Borba Dubrovnika za slobodu«: pp. 44-45; J. Radonić, *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, vol. IV.1: pp. 362, 364.

<sup>87</sup> As early as 1686, when first Ragusan ambassadors were despatched to the Grand Vizier Sari Süleyman Pasha in Belgrade, the authorities instructed them to meet pasha without the presence of Mavrocordatos, for the reasons already elaborated. (*LL*, vol. 64, ff. 283-284v). Evidence on the mentioned reasons has not survived, leaving us to assume that it had something to do with the Ragusan plans regarding *haraç*, of which they were certain that Mavrocordatos would not approve.

<sup>88</sup> J. Radonić, *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, vol. IV.1: pp. 350, 373, 399, 414, 457, 520, 524, 555, 566.

In the ensuing years, the Ragusans kept repeating that the money for *haraç* came from their customs revenues which had run dry because the Venetians had blocked their border. In the early 1690s, when the pressure of the Porte increased, Mavrocordatos started to approach Barca offering help, as a friend of the Republic determined to support its interests. Much time had passed since the beginning of his career, when he strived for every opportunity to interpret before the sultan.<sup>89</sup> Now he was a man of power and he wished and could help. Despite apparent inclination towards the Ragusans, his intention should not be interpreted as a betrayal of the sultan and the Porte. He believed that the Ragusans, after a disastrous earthquake, wars and conflicts with Kara Mustafa, were impoverished. As in the Ragusan conflict with Kara Mustafa, he offered assistance in finding a solution that would be acceptable to both sides.

Barca's animosity towards Mavrocordatos tended to melt, as he emphasised the latter's friendly disposition and prudent support during the meetings with the dignitaries of the Porte. He described a scene from one of Mavrocordatos's meetings with the grand vizier and sultan's kaymakam. They asked him about the Republic, and Mavrocordatos described it in the same manner as the Ragusans would. The authorities sent him a letter of profound gratitude with a petition to support ambassador Vladislav Buća in all matters, for he was on his way to Istanbul. Buća was instructed to nurture the friendship with Mavrocordatos and to present him with 300 thalers' worth of fabrics. They still harboured doubts about Mavrocordatos's good intentions and believed that he favoured Venice. Buća was thus to call Mavrocordatos's attention to the fact that the Ragusans respected the Venetians although they had virtually destroyed their state.<sup>90</sup>

With the wholehearted help of Alexander Mavrocordatos in the talks with the grand vizier and the reis-efendi, in the middle of 1695 Luka Barca and Vladislav Buća negotiated a treaty by which the Ragusans were to disburse 42,500 thalers<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> In 1677 the ambassadors Caboga and Buća wrote to the Senate that Mavrocordatos insisted on interpreting during their tribute-delivery audience with the sultan. The Ragusans refused his service because they did not wish to deprive their own dragoman of that honour. They explained that the usual wording with which they addressed the sultan was in their mother tongue, which Mavrocordatos did not understand. They agreed to his presence during the meeting, but not to his translation. Eventually, he did enter the room, although offended (*DA* 17, vol. 1839, no. 14).

<sup>90</sup> *DA* 17, vol. 1784a, no. 61, 74, no number (5.7.1693); *LL*, vol. 66, ff. 8v, 29-30v.

<sup>91</sup> According to the calculation at the Porte, 42,500 thalers were equivalent to 18,888 *ungari* and 2 *denarii*, therefore, around one and a half *haraç* (*Sultanski spisi*, vol. 33, no. 1348).

to the Ottomans in lieu of the due and unpaid tributes, as well as of the future tributes and *gümruk*<sup>92</sup> until the end of war.<sup>93</sup>

The authorities wrote to Mavrocordatos that the merits of ambassador Buća in that demanding mission were undisputable, but it is quite clear that Mavrocordatos's negotiatory skills, effort and disposition proved essential for the favourable result. They would always remember his contribution to the Republic.<sup>94</sup>

This was followed by a somewhat less turbulent period in which the Ragusans supplied Mavrocordatos with Italian fragrance oils, while he continued to help consul Barca on all occasions.<sup>95</sup>

As diplomatic focus tended to shift to the topic of peace treaty, Barca increasingly pressured Mavrocordatos with questions regarding the negotiations and claims that the Ragusans could no longer endure the burden of an annual *haraç*. Mavrocordatos remained persistent in his answers that it was too early for the negotiations on *haraç* and that he should not share any details about the peace treaty. In order to make better preparations for the negotiations on the Ragusan hinterland, Mavrocordatos demanded a written report on the state on the Ragusan border and asked the Ragusan authorities to keep him updated.<sup>96</sup>

Judging by the Venetian and Austrian accounts of the peace negotiations, in comparison to Mavrocordatos the Venetian representative Ruzzini seemed inferior and incompetent. He refused to accept Venetian withdrawal from the Ragusan hinterland. He lost track midst the dispute with the Ottoman representatives, and negligently admitted that Venice, from the beginning of the war, planned to separate Ragusan territory from that of the Empire. Rami Mehmed-efendi and Mavrocordatos threatened to suspend the negotiations unless Ruzzini immediately ceded to their demands. Ottoman-Venetian negotiations extended on account of Dubrovnik. In order to spur them, Austrian representatives joined in. They mainly observed in silence Mavrocordatos "grind" Ruzzini. By virtue of things, they sided with the Republic, while the Ragusans additionally lobbied and bribed.

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<sup>92</sup> In 1521 the Ragusans had negotiated a permanent right to customs lease of 2%, which their merchants paid in the European part of the Ottoman Empire. The lease, in archival sources referred to as *gümruk*, amounted to 100,000 *akçe* per year (V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istanbulu*: p. 83).

<sup>93</sup> *Sultanski spisi*, vol. 33, no. 1345; *DA* 17, vol. 1784a, no. 74.

<sup>94</sup> *LL*, vol. 66, f. 40v.

<sup>95</sup> *DA* 17, vol. 1784a, no. 84, 85, 89, 91, 98, 101, 103; *LL*, vol. 66, ff. 51-51v.

<sup>96</sup> *DA* 17, vol. 1784a, no. 91, 98.

Apparently, the Austrians promised the Ragusans to advocate for the annulment of *haraç*, but they resigned soon after their first attempt.<sup>97</sup>

Mavrocordatos personally wrote to the Ragusan authorities about the negotiation details. Sadly, that letter has not survived, but its content may be reconstructed thanks to Mavrocordatos's message to Barca. In the negotiations he insisted on territorial connection between Dubrovnik Republic, Ottoman tributary, and the Ottoman Empire. He made a verbal agreement with Austrian representatives by which the Republic of Dubrovnik would remain under Austrian protection<sup>98</sup> as an Ottoman tributary. The Venetians would have to withdraw, while the Ragusans had to take extreme care not to be damaged in the demarcation process.<sup>99</sup>

The Ragusans rewarded Mavrocordatos with a supply of Italian fragrance oils, accompanied by the expressions of admiration and gratitude, only to make a new petition in the sentence that followed. They asked him to support the mission of ambassador Vladislav Buća,<sup>100</sup> whom he had encountered in 1694-1695 during the negotiations regarding the relief of unpaid tributes. Buća was despatched to Istanbul on a mission to negotiate the reduction of *haraç* by resorting to a dramatic description of the Republic's inevitable decay. Still bleeding from the consequences of the disastrous earthquake of 1667 and the losses inflicted by Kara Mustafa, the Republic was on its knees due to the long war and the cessation of trade. While speaking about the Republic's poverty at the Porte, for "a successful conclusion of the dealings" he was to offer high rewards: 5,000 thalers to the grand vizier, to mufti and reis-efendi 3,000 thalers each, to Mavrocordatos 2,000, to the grand vizier's *kethüda* 1,000 thalers.<sup>101</sup>

The negotiations were making slow progress. In the spring of 1700, the focus of the diplomatic battle was mainly shifted to the Bosnian beylerbey Halil Pasha, whom the Porte appointed to appraise the material state of Dubrovnik. The Ragusans soon despatched an ambassador to Halil Pasha, who for a report to the

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<sup>97</sup> Rami Mehmed-efendi and Mavrocordatos waited for Venetian consent until 2 February, and then departed from Vienna. Five days later, Venetian Senate voted for the decision to sign the peace treaty (G. Novak, »Borba Dubrovnika za slobodu«: pp.147- 148, 151, 155-159, 160, 163; V. Foretić, *Povijest Dubrovnika*, vol. 2: pp. 193-195; R. Samardžić, *Veliki vek Dubrovnika*: pp. 497-498).

<sup>98</sup> After negotiations in Srijemski Karlovci, as agreed with Leopold I, the Ragusans stopped paying tribute, and the Austrian resident departed from Dubrovnik (V. Foretić, *Povijest Dubrovnika*, vol. 2: p. 194).

<sup>99</sup> *DA* 17, vol. 1784a, no. 104.

<sup>100</sup> *LL*, vol. 67, f. 8; *DA* 17, vol. 1784a, no. 101, 103a.

<sup>101</sup> *LL*, vol. 67, ff. 8v-10v.



benefit of the Republic offered him 120 sequins on the spot, plus 400 later. It was Buća who was chosen to negotiate with the tough beylerbey.<sup>102</sup>

As the negotiations meandered on, the Ragusans showered Mavrocordatos over and over again with petitions to talk on their behalf at the Porte, stressing that in him, protector of the Republic, they laid all their hopes.<sup>103</sup> It was not until the second half of 1702 that the negotiations began to make some progress, when Seyfullah Pasha assumed the position of the Bosnian beylerbey and Daltaban Mustafa Pasha became the grand vizier. The latter was a Bosnian beylerbey shortly before the end of war, he was well acquainted with the situation in Dubrovnik, and claimed that he had never heard anything inappropriate about the Ragusans.<sup>104</sup>

According to Barca's testimony, the poignant letters that the Senate sent to the grand mufti and the grand vizier at the beginning of 1703, did wonders: "You can drain our blood out, but you cannot take what we have none, which troubles us so that we cannot find any peace".<sup>105</sup> Having seen the letters' effect, Mavrocordatos advised ambassador Buća to no longer submit arguments for tribute reduction to the pasha in Sarajevo, but only to beg for mercy.<sup>106</sup>

Shortly afterwards, the agreement was reached. Mavrocordatos had a secret meeting with Barca, during which he informed him that for the previous post-war period the sultan agreed to receive only one *haraç*.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>102</sup> LL, vol. 66, ff. 96-100, 168v.

<sup>103</sup> LL, vol. 66, ff. 88-88v, 116v-117, 135v-136, 174, 189-189v, 208v-210, 219-219v.

<sup>104</sup> LL, vol. 66, ff. 235-236; vol. 67, ff. 8, 60v-61.

<sup>105</sup> *Može se od nas krv istočiti, ma ne izvaditi ono što neimamo, i cječa česa toliko smo smeteni da ne možemo dat pokoja sami sebi.* (LL, vol. 67, ff. 5-5v). An explanation for the dignitaries' reaction to Ragusan letters in which they plead for grace we find in the conversation between the grand vizier Ibrahim Pasha and ambassador Sekundo Gozze in 1678. The vizier enlightened Gozze about Kara Mustafa's furious reaction: "The only reason why you infuriated him are the words that stabbed him in the heart by saying we have brought you the tribute that we have been bringing for more than four hundred years, and we are poor, and that is why we have come to beg mercy from the Sultan and you". (*Za drugo nije se na tebe rasrčio nego er si ga udrio u srce s onijem riječima što mu si reko, mi smo donijeli harač koji donosimo više od četrsta godišta, i mi smo siromasi zato došli smo se molit Caru i tebi*). Having heard these words, Kara Mustafa knew that he could no longer be hostile towards the Ragusans, and that is why he appointed the Bosnian beylerbey to appraise the material state of the Republic. Namely, Ottoman laws, concluded Ibrahim Pasha, did not allow any actions to the detriment of loyal tributaries who pleaded mercy. (*DA* 17, vol. 1849, no. 13).

<sup>106</sup> LL, vol. 67, ff. 50-50v.

<sup>107</sup> LL, vol. 67, ff. 50v-51v.

Negotiations on the future tributes followed, in which consul Barca and ambassador Buća relied on Mavrocordatos's advice with full confidence. In all matters they acted as advised, except in his proposal to deliver the future tributes in silver coins. Barca calculated that it would be more profitable to pay in the cheapest gold coins, Ottoman *sherifi*.<sup>108</sup>

The agreement was finally reached in the middle of 1703. The Ragusans were to pay *haraç* every third year until the situation in the Republic improved. Once the Republic restored its strength, the tribute would be paid on annual basis again. To mark the reduction of *haraç*, Ragusan authorities inaugurated the feast and procession on St. Lawrence's Day. There was more to it than *haraç*; at the bottom of it was the Ragusan wish to loosen their ties with the Ottoman Empire.<sup>109</sup> They rewarded Alexander Mavrocordatos with 2,000 thalers, 800 *ungari*, 100 sequins and books for his son Nicholas.<sup>110</sup>

Upon delivering the tribute, the ambassadors were given a receipt certifying that they had paid it "in gold pieces [*şerifi*] equivalent to 270 *akçe* each".<sup>111</sup> In 1706 the payment was made in the same way.<sup>112</sup> Yet, three years later the *şerifi* were no longer current.<sup>113</sup> By calling on the last two receipts, the Ragusans claimed that the payment of the agreed tribute in gold coins was the only acceptable

<sup>108</sup> LL, vol. 67, ff. 52, 79v-88v, 94v-97.

<sup>109</sup> V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istanbulu*: pp. 193-195.

<sup>110</sup> LL, vol. 67, ff. 10, 50v-51v, 86-86v, 89, 120v, 131v-132v. As a token of gratitude, the Senate commissioned a painting to commemorate Buća, albeit after his death in 1726 (Nenad Vekarić, *Vlastela grada Dubrovnika*, 7. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU, 2016: p. 188), depicting the Republic coats of arms and those of his family, and an inscription describing his merits. The picture was hung in the Major Council Hall (Antun Benussi, »Slika u počast Vladislava Buće dubrovačkog vlastelina«. *Glasnik Dubrovačkog učenog društva Sveti Vlaho* 1 (1929): pp. 174-179).

<sup>111</sup> *Sultanski spisi*, vol. 34, no. 1360. The rewards that the authorities recurrently gave to Barca are a clear testament of how precious that receipt was. First, they disbursed 200 *ungari* and 1,000 thalers to him, and then, one after another, granted him the consular office on Cyprus, on the shores of Syria with Aleppo and Tripoli, in Alexandria and Cairo (V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istanbulu*: pp. 194-195).

<sup>112</sup> *Sultanski spisi*, vol. 34, no. 1368.

<sup>113</sup> Until the end of the seventeenth century the *sherifi* were high quality gold coins, of the value similar to *ungari*, even sequin at times. In 1707 they were temporarily withdrawn from circulation. Between 1719 and 1732 one *sherifi* was equivalent to 300-315 *akçe*, while from 1735 to 1743 330 *akçe*. In the same period one *ungar* varied between 360 and 439 *akçe*, and one sequin from 380 to 457 *akçe* (Vuk Vinaver, *Pregled istorije novca u jugoslovenskim zemljama (XVI - XVIII vek)*. Beograd: Istorijski institut, 1970: pp. 49-50, 142, 160, 171, 271, 273).

solution, which Mavrocordatos had suggested back in 1703. Again, they fully relied on his assistance. They gave him 300 sequins and promised a reward of 3,000 thalers. In addition, throughout that period they kept presenting him with Roman and Florentine scented creams and oils.<sup>114</sup>

Mavrocordatos obtained the sultan's consent to the tribute in silver. For Ragusans, who were well acquainted with the exchange rates,<sup>115</sup> the payment in silver pieces was a good way of saving money. Up until the fall of the Republic, tribute ambassadors would hide gold coins in the saddlebags, and along the route, according to precise instructions of the Ragusan treasurers, they exchanged them for silver coins. The following sentence from the ambassadors' brief of 1733 speaks eloquently of the transaction gains: "For *haraç* [12,500 gold coins], *gümriük* and the usual costs and gifts for the Porte, we give you the value of 10,600 gold coins".<sup>116</sup>

Grand dragoman of the Porte, Nicholas Mavrocordatos, Alexander's son, managed to obtain in 1709 the sultan's *hatt-ı hümayun* regarding the blockade of commercial ports in Herceg Novi, Risan, Gabela and Makarska, because they were a threat to the operation of the Dubrovnik port. In their letter of gratitude to Alexander Mavrocordatos, Ragusans concluded that a friendly attitude towards the Republic was evidently hereditary in his noble family. They presented Nicholas with small luxury items, along with the books they had acquired for him in Venice.<sup>117</sup>

### *A token of eternal memory in a locked chest*

Alexander Mavrocordatos died on 23 December 1709. Ten days prior to his death, Ragusan authorities sent him a letter conveying for the umpteenth time their eternal gratitude, and that his goodness and amicable disposition would remain for ever embedded in the memory of the Ragusans.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>114</sup> *LL*, vol. 66, ff. 244-244v; vol. 67, ff. 156, 196v, 215, 216; vol. 68, f. 95.

<sup>115</sup> For a further discussion on Ragusan financial transactions, see: V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istanbulu*: pp. 169-201.

<sup>116</sup> V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istanbulu*: p. 196.

<sup>117</sup> *LL*, vol. 68, ff. 43v-44, 51, 56v-58, 59, 60v-61v, 70v-71, 99v-100, 110v, 116v-117.

<sup>118</sup> *LL*, vol. 68, ff. 120v-121. Some twenty letters written by Ragusan authorities to Alexander Mavrocordatos have survived (*LL*, vol. 66, ff. 69, 88-88v, 116v-117, 135v-136, 174-174v, 189-189v, 219v-220, 235-236; vol. 67, ff. 131v-132v, 157v-158, 191-192v; vol. 68, ff. 56v-58, 80-80v, 100v-101, 106v-107, 120v-121). From these letters we learn that Mavrocordatos frequently wrote to them, but until now only two of his letters have been discovered (*DA* 17, vol. 1839, no. 24; vol. 1858, no. 37).

Over the centuries, Ragusans sent flamboyant expressions of gratitude to various rulers, dignitaries and anonymous helpers, but this time they really meant what they said. The payment of the next three-year *haraç* was due in 1712. In the meantime, shortly before Alexander's death, Nicholas Mavrocordatos was succeeded by his brother John on the position of the grand dragoman.<sup>119</sup> In the brief issued to the ambassadors, the authorities underlined that as an expression of gratitude they wished to cherish the memory of the merits of the late Alexander Mavrocordatos, as well as good relations with his sons. Therefore, John would not be presented with only two pieces of satin (a customary gift for the dragomans of the Porte), but also a locked chest with fragrance oils and sixty most pricey and most valued gold coins, sequins. They would also give him a key to open the chest himself later, without the presence of unwelcome witnesses. The Ragusans did the same in 1715.<sup>120</sup> Three years later, the position of the grand dragoman was held by Alexander Mavrocordatos' grandson, Ligorasco Ghica. He knew about the secret gift, and although at first he was not on friendly terms with the ambassadors, he demanded the same gift for himself. The Ragusans agreed, yet without the ceremony featuring the little chest. In secrecy, they just gave him 60 sequins. Ligorasco's brother Grigore II, whom the Ragusans encountered in 1726 as the grand dragoman of the Porte, also received sequins.<sup>121</sup> That secret reward, introduced to mark the memory of Alexander Mavrocordatos, Ragusans gave to all grand dragomans of the Porte on the occasion of tribute delivery until the fall of the Republic.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Upon departure from the Porte in 1709, Nicholas was appointed *hospodar* of Moldavia, and a few years later *hospodar* of Wallachia (A. A. C. Stourdza, *L'Europe orientale et le rôle historique des Maurocordato*: p. 60; C. M. Philliou, *Biography of an Empire*: p. 237).

<sup>120</sup> *LL*, vol. 68, f. 37v, 238-238v. After leaving the position of the grand dragoman of the Porte, John, like his brother Nicholas, was appointed *hospodar* of Wallachia, and a couple of years later *hospodar* of Moldavia (C. M. Philliou, *Biography of an Empire*: p. 237).

<sup>121</sup> *LL*, vol. 70, ff. 179v-180v; vol. 71, ff. 20-20v, 145v; vol. 72, f. 46. Having left the position of grand dragoman of the Porte, Gregorio, like his uncle Nicholas, was appointed *hospodar* of Moldavia, and a few years later *hospodar* of Wallachia (C. M. Philliou, *Biography of an Empire*: p. 237). Grigore II and Ligorasco were the sons of Roxandra, daughter of Alexander Mavrocordatos (N. Camariano, *Alexandre Mavrocordato, Le grand drogman*: p. 15).

<sup>122</sup> V. Miović, *Dubrovačka diplomacija u Istanbulu*: p. 61.