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Archivum Ottomanicum, c. 28, 2018 Wiesbaden, s. 5-30.

03 Mart 2019

MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN
SONRA GELEN DOKÜMAN



Zülfikar Paşa (230386)

Tercüman (130747)

GRAND DRAGOMAN ZÜLFİKAR AGA*

GÁBOR KÁRMÁN

Sometimes around the end of 1662 First Dragoman Mehmed Aga from the Sublime Porte wrote a letter to Mihály Apafi I, prince of Transylvania, in which he offered his services and requested a yearly salary. We do not know how the Transylvanian administration, which had been experiencing years of crisis, reacted, but Mehmed Aga did not become the protagonist of the principality's correspondence with Constantinople in the years to come. Perhaps the request would have been more convincing had the dragoman used Hungarian, the prince's mother tongue for communication instead of Turkish. Mehmed Aga also noted that he was about to marry a daughter of an Ottoman dignitary, but the Transylvanians were surely not very impressed with the rank of the future father-in-law, Karakaş Mehmed Aga, since he, as the *kapı kahaya* (deputy) of the grand vizier's *kethüda* (majordomo) was quite far away from the actual decision-makers. When requesting the salary, Mehmed Aga referred to the yearly allowance his father had received from the princes of Transylvania – and thus it is from this letter that we first learn that the years of Zülfikar Aga, who had worked as a dragoman with the principality's embassy for almost half a century, had come to an end.¹

In this paper I will reconstruct the main lines of this dragoman career of extraordinary length. The earlier, somewhat sporadic interest towards the careers and activities of interpreters at the Sublime Porte (as an important technical personnel related to the diplomacy of European powers in Constantinople) went through a revival in the recent decades. This derives primarily from the

* This study has been written in the framework of the research program NKFIH K-124178. I owe gratitude to my colleagues, Zsuzsanna Cziráki, István Fazekas, Sándor Papp, András Péter Szabó and Vera Tchentsova for having shared with me photo copies of some archival documents from their own collections.

1 Mehmed Aga to Mihály Apafi I (s. d.) Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltár [Hungarian National Archives: State Archives] Budapest, henceforth (MNL OL) Erdélyi kormányhatósági levéltárak F 126 Gubernium Transylvanium levéltára: Cista diplomatica: Történelmiéek 2. cs. Török iratok fol. 172–173. Published in nineteenth-century Hungarian translation: Áron Szilády – Sándor Szilágyi (eds.), *Török-magyarokori állam-okmánytár III.* [State documents of the Turkish-Hungarian age]. Pest, 1870 (henceforth TMÁO III), 459–460. This edition gives the date 1659, but it is surely mistaken, since we know some letters from Zülfikar Aga from later years. I give the hypothetical dating here based on the fact that a contemporary translation also survived, filed among documents dating from 1662: Arhivele Naționale ale României Direcția Județeană Sibiu [Romanian National Archives, Sibiu County Section] (henceforth ANR DJS) Colecția Benigni nr. 16. fol. 73.

- 1 YASİR YILMAZ, An Ottoman peace attempt at the Habsburg court during the Ottoman-Holy League war: Zülfikâr Efendi in Vienna, 1688-1693, İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent Üniversitesi, Yüksek Lisans, 2008

230396 ZÜLFİKAR PAŞA

Tez Lisans KUR

Zülfikar Paşa'nın Viyana elçiliği 1688-1692 /

Tülay Kurt.- -

1973.

3059

29 y. ; 29 cm.

Tez (Lisans).- - İstanbul Üniversitesi

**BAŞBAKANLIK
DEVLET ARŞİVLERİ GENEL MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ
OSMANLI ARŞİVİ DAİRE BAŞKANLIĞI
KÜTÜPHANESİ**