

Preface

István Fazekas – Pál Fodor

The publication history of Habsburg diplomatic despatches from Constantinople goes back a long way. The first to recognize the historical significance of the despatches was Antal Gévay (1796–1844), archivist of the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, who came across them in the archive while cataloguing Ottoman-related documents. He drew up an ambitious plan for their publication,¹ but the work he completed before his early death covered only the despatches from the period 1527–1541.² Another eighty years were to pass before anyone else gave the Gévay plan serious attention. In February 1918, three Hungarian archivists working in Vienna, Árpád Károlyi, Gyula Szekfű and Ferenc Eckhart, made a recommendation to the new president of the Hungarian Historical Society, Count Kuno Klebelsberg, for the publication, in five volumes, of the despatches written by – and the instructions sent to – the envoys to Constantinople after 1526.³ The initiative sat well with Klebelsberg's grand plans, and work started on the project after 1918. Pál Török (1885–1943) was assigned the period 1541–1556 and went several times to gather material for the publication during the 1920s on a stipend from the Viennese Hungarian Institute of History, but he did not complete the project.⁴ Török's career took a different turn, and published only a few brief papers on the subject.⁵ His work did not completely go to waste, however, because Karl Nehring later used his manuscript compilation of documents, by then placed in the Manuscript Collection of the National Széchényi Library, and published the despatches from the period 1541–1552.⁶

1 István Fazekas, *A Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv magyar vonalkozású íratai*. (A Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltár Kiadványai I; Levéltári Leltárak 10.) Budapest, 2015, 14–16.

2 *Urkunden und Actenstücke zur Geschichte der Verhältnisse zwischen Österreich, Ungern und der Pforte im XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderte. Aus Archiven und Bibliotheken*. Bd. I–III. Wien, 1838–1842 (originally published in ten booklets).

3 Gábor Ujváry, *Tudománszervezés-történetkutatás-forráskritika. Klebelsberg Kuno és a Bécsi Magyar Történeti Intézet. Historia est magistra vitae? Tanultunk a történelemből?* Győr, 1996, 78.

4 Ibid. 230–231.

5 Pál Török, 'A török birodalom pénzügyei Szolimán korában', *A Bécsi Magyar Történeti Intézet Évkönyve* 2 (1932): 62–80; Idem, *I. Ferdinánd konstantinápolyi békétárgyalásai 1527–1547*. Budapest, 1930; Idem, 'A Habsburgok első sztambuli rezidense (Malvezzi János Mária)', *Budapesti Szemle* 622 (1929): 413–435; 623 (1929): 87–104 and offprint.

6 Országos Széchényi Könyvtár (National Széchényi Library) Kézirattár Fol. Hung. 2137; *Austro-Turcica 1541–1552. Diplomatische Akten des Habsburgischen Gesandtschaftsverkehrs mit der Hohen Pforte im Zeitalter Süleymans des Prächtigen*. (Südosteuropäische Arbeiten 95.) Bearbeitet von Srećko M. Džaja unter Mitarbeit von Günter Weiß. In Verbindung mit Mathias Bernath herausgegeben von Karl Nehring. München, 1995.

Altogether, the progress in the almost two hundred years that have passed since the promising start made with the publication of Gévay's books in 1838 has been modest, resulting in the publication of only one more book and advancing coverage of the despatches over a period of ten years. Conditions have by now become somewhat more favourable. Since the late 1990s, there has been increasing interest in the history of the Ottoman Empire and its relations with Europe, with work being done in many different areas. Attention has now reached the despatches of the imperial envoys to Constantinople. In the early 2000s, a sourcebook of nearly eight hundred pages comprising the diplomatic despatches of the imperial resident between 1629 and 1643, Johann Rudolf Schmid, was produced under the supervision of István Hiller. Although a combination of reasons has delayed its publication, the manuscript has been available to enquirers since then. In the University of Salzburg, Professor Arno Strohmeyer and his students began working on the despatches of Schmid's successor Alexander Greiffenklau (envoy from 1643 until his death in 1648), and in the University of Szeged, a research group led by Professor Sándor Papp has recently been preparing the publication of Simon Reniger's despatches from the first ten years of his mission of 1649 to 1665. Arno Strohmeyer also supervised in a digital edition project at the University of Salzburg and the Austrian Academy of Sciences, which made accessible the final reports of Johann Jakob Kurtz (1623–1624) and Johann Rudolf Schmid (1649) online.⁷ Things are therefore set to change over the next few years, at least as regards the seventeenth century. By contrast, the diplomatic despatches of the sixteenth century have so far attracted somewhat less interest, an imbalance that is now being redressed through a project involving staff of the Institute of History of the ELTE (formerly Hungarian Academy of Sciences/ELKH/HUN-REN) Research Centre for the Humanities, under the leadership of Pál Fodor, István Fazekas and Gábor Kármán. Its aim is to publish the despatches produced between the Peace of Adrianople in 1568 and the outbreak of the Long Turkish (in Hungarian historiography: Fifteen Years') War in 1591/93.

This volume is the first result of this project. The shadow of previous failures loomed over this endeavour as well, since numerous unexpected difficulties hindered its completion, even at the very last moment. The important thing, however, is that this book was finally realized, and with this we have taken the next step in continuing Antal Gévay's noble undertaking and providing researchers of the diplomacy and political history of the period with another valuable and easy-to-use source material. The book is the second volume in the series "Diplomatic Relations between Ottomans, Habsburgs and Hungarians – Documents and Studies", founded by the ELKH (currently ELTE) RCH Institute of History and the University of Szeged, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

⁷ Qhod – Digitale Edition von Quellen zur habsburgisch-osmanischen Diplomatie 1500–1918, qhod.net