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**THE GOVERNORS OF KEFE AND AZAK  
IN OTTOMAN-MUSCOVITE RELATIONS  
IN THE FIFTEENTH-SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES  
AND THE ISSUE OF TITULATURE**

**Abstract**

The province of Kefe (Caffa) was one of the Ottoman frontier provinces and played an important role in the Ottoman relations with Moscow and Bakhchisaray. One duty of the governor of Kefe was to control the Crimean khan and inform the Ottoman central authorities about the situation in the Crimea. Azak (Azov) belonged to the province of Kefe and, as an important frontier fortress, enjoyed special rights and privileges. Kefe and Azak were transit points for Muscovite envoys and merchants on their way to Istanbul, and their governors typically acted as the 'ears and eyes' of the sultan in regard to Muscovy and the Don Cossacks. Based on primary sources, this article examines the correspondence of the governors of Kefe and Azak with Moscow and discusses their impact on the Ottoman-Muscovite relations. Special attention is devoted to the titulature used by the Ottoman provincial governors in their letters addressed to the tsar.

**Keywords:** Kefe, Azak, Crimea, Ottoman-Muscovite relations, *eyalet*, *sancak*, titulature

I  
INTRODUCTION

In the period of the first contacts between the Muscovite and Ottoman states at the end of the fifteenth century, these two states attributed different importance towards their mutual relations. Until the seventeenth century, the states of Eastern Europe played a secondary role in the eyes of the Ottoman statesmen, who constantly waged wars on two important fronts with the Safavids and the Habsburgs, trying to realize their long-cherished dream by winning the 'golden apple' of Europe – Vienna – and repeating the great victories of Alexander the

Great.<sup>1</sup> From 1478 until the Treaty of Istanbul in 1700, the Ottoman relations with Moscow were mostly maintained through the mediation of an Ottoman vassal, the Crimean khan. Equally important was the role of the Ottoman local provincial governors, who maintained active correspondence and exchanged envoys with the rulers of Moscow.

The province of Kefe was one of many Ottoman frontier provinces and enjoyed special rights and privileges. The governors of such provinces were often given a certain liberty to conduct correspondence with foreign rulers and even solve minor frontier matters on their own, although the level of their autonomy largely depended on the actual strength of the Ottoman central government. In general, the provincial governors regularly corresponded with the sultan and the grand vizier, submitting reports and obtaining orders. What is less known is whether, and to what extent, they also corresponded with their peers holding posts in neighbouring Ottoman provinces in order to coordinate their policy versus a given neighbour.

This article aims to shed light on the correspondence between Kefe and Moscow and the effect it had on the relations between Moscow and Istanbul, and also between Moscow and Bakhchisaray. It also focuses on titulature used by the governors of Kefe and Azak in their letters addressed to the tsar. Titles played (and still play) an important role in everyday life. In the past, often the only thing that remained for an impoverished noble was his title or prestigious family name. The titles used always played a crucial role for a ruler, as they indicated the territories that he owned or laid claims to. Consequently, foreign monarchs and dignitaries were required to use appropriate titles in their correspondence with a given ruler, as their use indicated his power and standing on the international scene. For the monarchs, the titles showed their importance in the world.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Richard F. Kreutel (ed.), *Im Reiche des Goldenen Apfels. Des türkischen Weltenbummlers Evliyâ Çelebi denkwürdige Reise in das Giaurenland und in die Stadt und Festung Wien anno 1665* (Graz, Wien, and Köln, 1957); Zygmunt Abrahamowicz, 'Tło polityczne i ekonomiczne wyprawy wiedeńskiej Kara Mustafy', *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, xc, 1 (1983), 31–2; Taras Čuxlib, *Viden' 1683: Ukrajina-Rus' u bytvi za "zolote jabluko" Jevropy* (Kyiv, 2013), 7.

<sup>2</sup> For more on titles and royal power, see Peter Bang, 'Lord of All the World – The State, Heterogeneous Power and Hegemony in the Roman and Mughal Empires', in Peter Bang and Christopher Bayly (eds.), *Tributary Empires in Global History* (Basingstoke, 2011), 171–92; Piotr Boroń, *Kniaziewie, królowie, carowie ...*

In general, the correspondence of the governors and other officials of the province of Kefe with Moscow is a little-investigated and obscure subject, although owing to Lajos Fekete's publications,<sup>3</sup> the correspondence between the governors of Budin (Buda) and the Habsburg court in Vienna is well known and studied. The present article aims to similarly examine the correspondence of the governors of Kefe and Azak with the Muscovite tsar. The study is based on the letters from Kefe and Azak sent to Moscow in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, preserved in copies translated into Russian, and two original letters of the governors of Azak and Kefe, dated 1631 and 1635, respectively. Despite the absence of subsequent correspondence for the period of a century (probably it has been lost, or may be found in archives in the future), there is vivid evidence of long-lasting relations between the Muscovite rulers and the governors of Kefe. In order to achieve political goals in Istanbul, Moscow efficiently used Ottoman officials holding posts in the Crimea by rewarding them with rich gifts.

The relations and correspondence of the governors of Kefe and Azak with the Muscovite authorities, and their relations with each other have not generally attracted scholarly attention, with two exceptions being the Soviet historian Nikolaj Smirnov<sup>4</sup> and the well-known historian of the Ottoman Crimea Alan Fisher.<sup>5</sup> Although the provincial archives

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*Tytuły i nazwy władców słowiańskich we wczesnym średniowieczu* (Katowice, 2010); Rudolph Buchner, 'Der Titel rex Romanorum in deutschen Königsurkunden des 11. Jahrhunderts', *Deutsches Archiv*, lxx (1963), 327–38; Stefan Donecker and Roland Steinacher, 'Der König der Schweden, Goten und Vandalen. Königstitulatur und Vandalenrezeption im frühneuzeitlichen Schweden', in Helmut Reimitz and Bernhard Zeller (eds.), *Vergangenheit und Vergegenwärtigung. Frühes Mittelalter und europäische Erinnerungskultur* (Wien, 2009), 169–203; Charles Dodd, *A manual of dignities, privilege, and precedence: including lists of the great public functionaries, from the revolution to the present time* (London, 1843); Hans Joachim König, *Monarchia Mundi und Res Publica Christiana: Die Bedeutung des mittelalterlichen Imperium Romanum für die politische Ideenwelt Kaiser Karls V. und seiner Zeit dargestellt an ausgewählten Beispielen* (Hamburg, 1969); Myles Lavan, Richard E. Payne, and John Wiesweiler (eds.), *Cosmopolitanism and Empire. Universal rulers, local elites, and cultural integration in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean* (Oxford, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> Ludwig Fekete, *Einführung in die Osmanisch-Türkische Diplomatie der türkischen Botmässigkeit in Ungarn* (Budapest, 1926); *idem*, *Türkische Schriften aus dem Archive des Palatins Nikolaus Esterházy 1606–1645* (Budapest, 1932).

<sup>4</sup> Nikolaj Smirnov, *Rossija i Turcija v XVI–XVII vv.*, 2 vols. (Moskva, 1946).

<sup>5</sup> Alan W. Fisher, 'Azov in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, xxi (1973), 161–74.

of Ottoman Kefe and Azak have not been preserved, many documents important for this research can be found at the Russian State Archive of Early Acts (*Rossijskij Gosudarstvennyj Arxiv Drevnix Aktov*, RGADA) in Moscow. Especially valuable material is contained in the reports of Russian envoys,<sup>6</sup> published already in the nineteenth century by Gennadij Karpov in the collection of documents about the diplomatic relations of the Muscovite state with the Crimean Tatars, Nogays, and Ottomans.<sup>7</sup> Two letters found by the present author in Moscow deserve special attention; i.e. the letters sent to the Muscovite tsar by the *beylerbey* of Kefe and the *sancakbey* of Azak.

## II

### KEFE AND AZAK

Since its establishment in 1475, the Ottoman province of Kefe comprised the towns of Kefe (Caffa), Sudak, Balaklava, Inkerman and Kerş, located in the southern part of the Crimean Peninsula, the Taman Peninsula across the Kerch Strait, and the city of Azak (Azov) at the mouth of the Don River. Roughly at the same time, the Crimean Khanate acknowledged Ottoman suzerainty, having fallen under the Ottoman domination which lasted for three centuries.<sup>8</sup> Kefe was one of the few provinces which did not have a contiguous border with the main territory of the Ottoman state. It was washed by the sea in the south and in the north it bordered on the Crimean Khanate, Muscovy, and the Caucasian state formations. According to Halil İnalçık<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Reports of the Russian envoys (Russian sing. *statejnij spisok*) compiled after the return of the envoys, in which they described in detail their embassy, their official and informal meetings, and the contents of their negotiations. These reports very often took a shape of a diary.

<sup>7</sup> *Pamjatniki diplomatičeskix snošenij Moskovskago gosudarstva s Krymskoju i Nogajskoju ordami i s Turcijej*, i: s 1474 po 1505 god, ed. by Gennadij Karpov, in *Sbornik Imperatorskago Russkago Istoričeskago Obščestva*, vol. 41 (St. Peterburg, 1884); *Pamjatniki diplomatičeskix snošenij Moskovskago gosudarstva s Krymskoju i Nogajskoju ordami i s Turcijej*, ii: 1508–1521 gg., ed. by Gennadij Karpov and Georgij Štendman, in *Sbornik Imperatorskago Russkago Istoričeskago Obščestva*, vol. 95 (St. Peterburg, 1895).

<sup>8</sup> Halil İnalçık, 'Yeni vesikalara göre Kırım hanlığının Osmanlı tâbiliğine girmesi ve ahidname meselesi', *Bellefen*, viii (1944), 185–229.

<sup>9</sup> *Idem*, *The Ottoman Empire. The Classical Age 1300–1600* (New York and London, 1973), 106; see also Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *Podole pod panowaniem tureckim: Ejalet kamieniecki 1672–1699* (Warszawa, 1994), 15.

the province (*sancak*) of Kefe was elevated to the status of *eyalet* in 1568, but the evidence on this point seems disputable. It is likely that only because of the importance of the Ottoman expedition to Astrakhan in 1569, and close relationships between its commander, the governor of Kefe Kasım Bey, and Grand Vizier Mehmed Sokollu, that the former was referred to as a *beylerbey* in the Ottoman chancery registers (*Mühimme Defterleri*). We may thus surmise that for a short time, during the campaign of Astrakhan, the governor of Kefe became a *beylerbey*, but the province did not automatically become a *beylerbeyilik* (an alternative term for *eyalet*). The successors of Kasım Bey to the post of the governor of Kefe were again titled *sancakbeys*, and one cannot be certain about the precise date when the province of Kefe finally became an *eyalet*.<sup>10</sup> In the long term, the

<sup>10</sup> According to Akgündüz, Kefe became an *eyalet* in 1580 – see Ahmed Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnameleri ve Hukuki Tahlilleri*, vi (Istanbul, 1993), 573. Yücel Öztürk observes that although Kefe first appeared in documents as an *eyalet* in 1568, in that period the province did not witness any major changes in its internal administration. Rather, the change in status was owed to the Ottoman military campaign against Astrakhan, which had to be led by someone higher in status than a *sancakbey*, especially given the fact that the Crimean khan Devlet Giray took part in the campaign as an Ottoman vassal cum ally. Thus the Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha appointed his confidant, the Circassian Kasım Bey. However, as observed by Öztürk and confirmed by archival evidence, in the years 1570–80 the sultan's orders recorded in the *Mühimme Defterleri* were again addressed merely to the “*bey of Kefe*” (*Kefe beğine*). The title of *bey* (i.e., *sancakbey*) can be still found in a document from 1583, addressed “to the former *bey* of Kefe who [also] at present is charged with the defence of Kefe, Mehmed Bey” (*sabıka Kefe beyi olup bilfiil Kefe muhafazasında olan Mehmed beğ'e*) – Istanbul, Ottoman Archives of the Prime Ministry (*Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi*, [hereinafter: BOA]), Registers of Important Affairs (*Mühimme Defteri* [hereinafter: MD]), LXIV, *hüküm* 348 (21 March 1583). The rise in status of the province of Kefe was accompanied by a parallel rise in status of the fortress of Azak, whose governor was for the first time titled as *bey* (i.e., *sancakbey*) in 1570. However, it is not certain to which *eyalet* the newly-formed *sancak* of Azak belonged in the transitional years 1570–80. It was only during the military campaign against Iran (1578–90) that Kefe ultimately obtained the status of *eyalet* in the 1580s – see Yücel Öztürk, *Osmanlı Hakimiyetinde Kefe (1475–1600)* (Istanbul, 2014 [2000<sup>1</sup>]), 158–64 (esp. n. 67 and 84) and 178–9; for the first time Kefe was referred to as *eyalet* in 1568 – *ibidem*, 128–9 (esp. n. 396 and 398); see also the list of *sancakbeys* and *beylerbey*s of Kefe, prepared by Öztürk in *ibidem*, 198–203. In the 7th volume of *Mühimme Defterleri* we find *hüküms* to the governor of Kefe referred to as a *sancakbey* – BOA, MD, VII, *hüküm* 1605 (26 June 1568); BOA, MD, VII, *hüküm* 1738 (13 July 1568); BOA, MD, VII, *hüküm* 1749; BOA, MD, VII, *hüküm*

province owed the elevation of its status to its key role in military campaigns against Muscovy and Iran, and to the personal importance

1833 (1 Aug. 1568); BOA, MD, VII, *hüküm* 1962 (18 Aug. 1568); BOA, MD, VII, *hüküm* 2254 (13 Oct. 1568), whereas three days later the same governor – Kasım Bey – was referred to as a *beylerbey* – BOA, MD, VII, *hüküm* 2280 (16 Oct. 1568) and BOA, MD, VII, *hüküm* 2324 (20 Oct. 1568). Tayyib Gökbilgin provides a translation of a letter of the governor of Kefe to the sultan, issued between mid-August and mid-September 1569 and today preserved in a copy in the Topkapı Palace Museum Archives, the heading of which refers to the governor as a *beylerbey* – *idem*, ‘L’expédition ottomane contre Astrakhan en 1569’, *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, xi (1970), 121–2; see also the Russian translation of the article, in which the editors included a facsimile of the letter – *idem*, ‘Osmanskij poход na Astraxan’ v 1569 g.’, in Il’jas Mustakimov and Ajrat Sitdikov (eds.), *Vostočnaja Evropa Srednevekov’ja i rannego novogo vremeni glazami francuzskix issledovatelej* (Kazan’, 2009), 171–3 and the facsimile on 403–4. Thereafter, during the service of successive governors of Kefe we again encounter the title *sancakbey* or *bey* – BOA, MD, IX, *hüküm* 14 (23 Feb. 1570); BOA, MD, X, *hüküm* 83 (18 June 1571), and even in 1581 the governor of Kefe was addressed as *bey* – BOA, MD, XLIV, *hüküm* 85 (16 April 1581). Only after 13 June 1582 were the governors of Kefe consistently addressed using the title of *Kefe beğlerbeğisi* – BOA, MD, XLIV, *hüküm* 144 (albeit cf. the document from 21 March 1583 quoted above). New and interesting information is provided in the article by Il’ja Zajcev, written on the basis of a *berat* of Sultan Murad III, dated 1590 (the article contains the Russian translation of the *berat* without a facsimile or a transcription of the text in the Ottoman language). Although the author refers to the governors of Kefe as *sancakbeys*, in his Russian translation of the *berat* one finds the phrase *эмир уль-умера бейлербеи Кафы*, which reflects the Ottoman title *emirü’ l-ümera’i’ l-kiram Kefe beğlerbeğisi* that figures in the original. Referring to this document, Zajcev claims that in the period under study the governors of Kefe were Circassians by origin and that in 1590, due to the request of the Crimean khan Ghazi Giray, the post of the *sancakbey* of Kefe was granted to a newly-converted Muslim Mehmed, who was Circassian by origin. According to Zajcev, Mehmed was appointed both the *sancakbey* of Kefe and the *emir* of Circassian lands – Il’ja Zajcev, ‘Berat sultana Murada III na imja Mehmeda o naznačenii jego sandžakbejem Kafy i emirom Čerkesskix zemel (1590 g.). O proisxoždenii i xronologii naznačenij nekotoryx kafinskix sandžakbeev 1560-x–1590-x godov’, in *Srednevekovyj Vostok: problemy istoriografii i istočnikovedenija. Pamjati Geroja Sovetskogo Sojuza akademika Z. M. Bunijatova* (Baku, 2015), 72–86; I am very grateful to Prof. Il’ja Zajcev, who sent me an electronic copy of the original document of *berat* of sultan Murad III stored in the fonds of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Sankt Petersburg (*Institut Vostočnyx Rukopisej Rossijskoj Akademii Nauk*) – see Inventar’ No. 276, T. 321. The ambiguity and confusion in the Ottoman documents should be kept in mind. In his book on the Ottoman provincial system Metin Kunt, a specialist in the history of Ottoman administration, includes an appendix with data on Ottoman provinces in the years 1578–88, based on

and high rank of the Ottoman officials who were appointed the governors of Kefe.<sup>11</sup>

The province of Kefe played an important role in the Muscovite-Ottoman relations, in the relations between Istanbul and Bakhchisaray, and in the Ottoman military campaigns against Safavid Iran. Apart from playing a crucial role in the Porte's relations with Muscovy and Iran, the governor of the province was assigned an important mission to oversee the Crimea and control the Ottoman vassals – the khans from the Giray dynasty, who were descendants of Genghis Khan – by supplying information to Istanbul and following the instructions of the Ottoman central authorities. Kefe also played an important role in gathering information about the situation in Muscovy. At the end of the fifteenth century, Kefe became a seat of Ottoman princes, such as Şehzade Mehmed and then Şehzade Süleyman (the future sultan

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a contemporary Ottoman register, where we find Kefe listed twice as a *sancak* belonging to the *eyalet* of Rumelia, and another time as constituting a separate *eyalet*, with Azov listed as a *sancak* belonging to the province of Kefe (*tabi-i Kefe*), even though the latter is listed on the same page as constituting merely another *sancak*; cf. Metin Kunt, *Sancaktan Eyalete* (Istanbul, 1978), 151–2, 176.

<sup>11</sup> Following the incorporation of Kefe into the Ottoman Empire, the position of its governor was held by important people. According to İnalçık, Kefe was often the place of exile for viziers who lost the sultan's favour. For instance, in the years 1484–7 the governor of Kefe was Djezeri Kasım Pasha, who held the position of *nişancı* during the reign of Mehmed II, was confirmed in this position by Bayezid II, and became the second vizier in the divan in 1482. But because of the rivalry with the grand vizier he was sent to exile to Kefe – see Halil İnalçık, *Sources and Studies on the Ottoman Black Sea, i: The Customs Register of Caffa, 1487–1490* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), 3 and 101 (n. 56). Between 1489 and 1504 the governor of Kefe was Şehzade Mehmed (on the title *şehzade* see n. 12 below), and between 1509 and 1512 – Şehzade Süleyman. Yet in the years 1512–68 the position of governor of Kefe was no longer held by high ranked officials with the titles of pasha or vizier. However, after Grand Vizier Mehmed Sokollu appointed his confidant Kasım Bey as governor (some authors even refer to Kasım as *paşa* – see Muzaffer Ürekli, *Kırım Hanlığının Kuruluşu ve Osmanlı Himayesinde Yükselişi* [Ankara, 1989], 49; Gökbilgin, 'L'expédition ottomane', 119–21; *idem*, 'Osmaniskij poxid', 168–71, 403), Kefe immediately rose to the status of *eyalet*. After 1582 the position of *beylerbey* of Kefe was held by Djafer Pasha, who later received the title of vizier, then by Ibrahim Pasha, and even by the tutor of the future sultan Mehmed III – Lala Ramazan Pasha. In my opinion, they ultimately granted Kefe the status of *eyalet*. With a few exceptions, in the last two decades of the sixteenth century the position of the governor of Kefe was held by statesmen distinguished by the title of *paşa*.

Süleyman the Magnificent), who were appointed as its *sancakbeys*.<sup>12</sup> After all the first contacts between Muscovy and the Ottoman Empire were established in Kefe.<sup>13</sup> The city also played an important role in the first direct military clash between the Ottomans and Muscovites: in 1569 the well-known expedition against Ejderhan (Astrakhan) was led by the governor of Kefe.

In addition to its political role, Kefe played an important economic role, as it was a major centre of the Muscovite-Ottoman trade. Merchants from Istanbul delivered ready-made wool fabrics to Kefe, including silk textiles from Bursa, which were in high demand in Muscovy and Poland. Among the goods that came from Muscovy and were in high demand in Istanbul and the sultan's palace were furs of squirrels, weasels, beavers, otters, foxes, hares, and especially sables.<sup>14</sup> To summarize, in the second half of the fifteenth century Kefe not only became the most important point for Muscovite trade, but also an important point of communication for the countries situated on both sides of the Black Sea.<sup>15</sup>

Azak (Azov) was a Venetian colony (Tana) until 1475, and after the Ottoman conquest it enjoyed a special administrative status. Due to its strategic frontier position, it was “not like other provinces”, as is explicitly expressed in a letter by its governor addressed in 1631 to the Muscovite ruler.<sup>16</sup> Some scholars stress the role of Azov as a staging point for military forays into Muscovite territory.<sup>17</sup> Yet at the same time Azak was an important trade centre for both the Ottomans and the Muscovites and a meeting place for official and non-official representatives of the two sides.<sup>18</sup> As an important frontier fortress,

<sup>12</sup> Öztürk, *Osmanlı Hakimiyetinde Kefe*, 196–7. The title *şehzade* denoted an Ottoman prince, the son of the ruling sultan. In the literature it is also used in reference to Süleyman, even though when he held the post of the governor of Kefe, his father – Selim – was not yet a sultan.

<sup>13</sup> Smirnov, *Rossija i Turcija*, i, 44, 68–72.

<sup>14</sup> Marian Małowist, *Kaffa – kolonia genueńska na Krymie i problem wschodni w latach 1453–1475* (Warszawa, 1947), 65.

<sup>15</sup> Vladimir Syroečkovskij, ‘Puti i uslovija snošenij Moskvy s Krymom na rubeže XVI veka’, *Izvestija Akademii Nauk SSSR, Ser. 7: Otdelenie obščestvennyx nauk*, iii (1932), 197.

<sup>16</sup> *Zira bu Azak bir serhad yeridir ve gayrı vilayetler gibi değıldür*; RGADA, f. 89 ‘Snošenija Rossii s Turcijej’, op. 2, no. 5.

<sup>17</sup> Nikolaj Mininkov, *Donskoje kazačestvo v epohu pozdnego srednevekovja (do 1671 g.)* (Rostov-na-Donu, 1998), 349; see also Smirnov, *Rossija i Turcija*, i, 69–9, esp. 86–7.

<sup>18</sup> Il’jas Mustakimov and Dmitrij Sen’, ‘Tri osmanskix dokumenta XVI v. o rannej istorii Donskix kozakov’, in *Ukrajina v Central’no-Sxidnij Jevropi*, ix/x (2010), 309–11;



Azak was also a transit point for Muscovite envoys and merchants on their way to Istanbul. Although it belonged to the province of Kefe, at the same time it enjoyed a special status because of its particular importance. According to Alan Fisher, “Azov was administered by a *pasha* or *sanjak bey* of vezirial rank (entitled to display three horsetails on his standard)”.<sup>19</sup> However, according to the sources used by the present author one can speak about ‘the pasha of Azov’ starting only from the seventeenth century. In the early sixteenth century, in the letters dispatched from Moscow to Azak, the commander-in-chief of its fortress was referred to as *burhan* or *dizdar*.<sup>20</sup> The governor of Azak was subordinated to the Kefe governor, although orders from the capital came directly to him or to other local officials such as the

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*idem*, ‘Azov i Donskije kozaki po osmanskim dokumentam 1560–1570-x gg.’, *Vestnik Tanaisa*, iii (2012), 174.

<sup>19</sup> Fisher, ‘Azov’, 163. The title of pasha was associated with the right to display two horsetails, and the title of vizier was associated with the right to display three horsetails. In the ‘classical’ period, the title of pasha (*paşa*) was usually granted to *beylerbeys*, while the title of vizier (*vezir*) was reserved to those who joined the imperial council (*divan-i hümayun*). Yet at the end of the seventeenth century, and especially in the eighteenth century, one observes a certain inflation in titulature, hence the title of pasha was often awarded to important and considerable *sancakbeys* (like the *sancakbey* of Hotin), while many *beylerbeys* were distinguished by the title of vizier; oral communication of Dariusz Kołodziejczyk; see also *idem*, *Podole*, 13–14.

<sup>20</sup> *A се грамота съ Назаромъ къ Бургану азовскому* (Dec. 1515) – *Ратјатники дипломатических сношений*, ii, 233–4; *A се такова послана грамота съ Митюю въ Азовъ къ бургану* (April 1517) – *ibidem*, 431; *брата и друга нашого Салимшагъ-салтанову служъ диздери-бургану-Азовскому* (March 1519) – *ibidem*, 628–9; *Брата и друга нашого Салимшагъ-салтанову служъ Диздер-бургану Азовскому* (21 Feb. 1521) – *ibidem*, 676; *A се грамота послана въ Азовъ къ Бургану ... Сюлемень салтанову служъ Бурганъ азъ Диздерю азовскому* – *ibidem*, 702–3. The Ottoman title *dizdar* (‘warden’) referred to a castle commander ranked lower than a *sancakbey*. *Burhan* might have referred to the proper name of the Azak commander of the time, especially since in one of the letters quoted above he is referred to as Burhan Agha (for the proper name Burhan, cf. Mária Ivanics and Mirkasym Usmanov, *Das Buch der Dschingis-Legende* (Däftär-i Čingiz-nämä), i: *Vorwort, Einführung, Transkription, Wörterbuch, Faksimiles* [Szeged, 2002], 32, 136). Yet one cannot exclude that this term had denoted a local commander, but went into disuse in the later period. Literally meaning ‘proof’ or ‘sign’, the term *burhan* is explained in Meninski’s dictionary as synonymous with *sultan*, also *dominus*, *princeps*, *coryphaeus*; see Franciscus à Mesgnien Meninski, *Thesaurus Linguarum Orientalium Turcicae-Arabicae-Persicae. Lexicon Turcico-Arabico-Persicum* (Istanbul, 2000 [reprint]), i, col. 798.

*kadi*.<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that it remains unknown and disputable when exactly the Azak district became a *sancak*.<sup>22</sup> In addition, the grand duke of Muscovy maintained direct relations not only with the governor of Kefe, but also with the lower ranked *sancakbey* of Azak. Azak also

<sup>21</sup> See *hüküms* nos. 40, 41 and 42 in Yusuf Sarınoy (ed.), *83 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (1036–1037/1626–1628)* (Ankara, 2001).

<sup>22</sup> There is no clear date when Kefe was transformed from a *sancak* into an *eyalet* (cf. n. 10 above), nor when Azak was granted the status of *sancak* – either after Kefe had become an *eyalet* or earlier. Öztürk believes that Azak became a *sancak* after Kefe was elevated to the status of *eyalet* in 1568 – Öztürk, *Osmanlı Hakimiyetinde Kefe*, 160–1, 164, 203. He also believes that after Kefe returned to the status of *sancak*, Azak retained the newly gained rank after the Astrakhan campaign and became a part of the province of Kefe when the latter was finally transformed into *eyalet* during the Shirvan campaign of 1582; *ibidem*, 179. Mustakimov and Sen' believe that Azak became a *sancak* already in 1552 or 1553 (cf. *ibidem*, 'Tri osmanskih dokumenta', 312 and 324 [n. 62]; *ibidem*, 'Azov i Donskije kozaki', 173), relying on an earlier study by Ekaterina Kuševa (*eadem*, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza i ix svjazi s Rossiej, vtoraja polovina XVI – 30-e gody XVII veka* [Moskva, 1963], 203), who in turn based her dating on a contemporary statement by a Venetian bailo, Domenico Trevisano. Indeed, in his relation, submitted to the Venetian Senate at the end of 1554, Trevisano reported: *All'obedienza delli detti beilerbei sono sangiacchi; ma taluni sono con particolare giurisdizione, come quello di Caffa, creato già molt'anni, e quello detto della Tana, eletto già due anni, con stipendio di ducati venti mila all'anno e con persone cinquecento nella sua obbedienza*; see Eugenio Alberi (ed.), *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al Senato*, Ser. 3, i (Firenze, 1840), 124–5. However, the Ottoman archival material analyzed by Mustakimov and Sen' does not confirm the existence of a *sancak* of Azak prior to 1568. The authors observe with confusion that, when in 1565 (the date of two documents invoked in their article) the Cossacks raided Azak, it was the *sancakbey* of Kefe and not of Azak who defeated their attack. They suppose that probably in 1565 Azak was still directly subordinate to the governor of Kefe, whereas in 1576 (the date of two other documents referred to in their article) it already had its own *sancakbey* – *ibidem*, 'Azov i Donskije kozaki', 177–8. In yet another article Mustakimov proves that although Azak was directly subordinated to the Ottoman Empire, during the reign of Devlet Giray (1551–77) the sultan largely left the local matters to the Crimean khan and in 1552 the latter was explicitly ordered to defend and secure Azak on land – Il'jas Mustakimov, 'Azov v krymsko-osmanskih otnošenijax perioda pravlenija xana Devlet-Gireja I (po osmanskim dokumentam)', in *Arxiv i arxivnoje delo na Juge Rossii: istorija, sovremennost', perspektivy razvitija. Materialy vsrossijskoj naučnoj konferencii* (g. Rostov-na-Donu, 16–17 oktjabrja 2015 g.) (Rostov-na-Donu, 2015), 5–8. The issue of the *sancak* of Azak needs further investigation. The available Ottoman documents suggest that the *sancak* of Azak was formed in the years 1568–70, however, there is no clear evidence to which *eyalet* it belonged until 1582. In any case, from 1570 to the formation of the *eyalet* of Kefe in 1582 there co-existed the *sancak* of Kefe and the *sancak* of Azak – BOA, MD, XLII, *hüküm* no. 368 (*Kefe ve Azak sancakların beğlerine*).

played an important role in deterring attacks by the Don Cossacks, who used to set out from the mouth of the Don River in order to raid Ottoman Black Sea ports.

The province governor of Kefe and the district governor of Azak played the role of the 'ears and eyes' of the sultan with respect to Muscovy. Their duty was to meet the Muscovite envoys who were sent from Moscow to Istanbul, providing them with food and protection before sending them by ship to Istanbul, as well as assisting them on their return trip. Similar services were provided to Ottoman envoys travelling from Istanbul to Moscow. The district of Azak also had a special task in defending the Ottoman territory from the raids of the Don Cossacks. Often the governor of Azak attacked the Cossack villages.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, the governors of Kefe and Azak were used by the Muscovite government as a source of information about the situation in the Ottoman state. Referred to as *prijateli*,<sup>24</sup> they were expected to prevent attacks on Muscovite lands and inform and warn of possible dangers. For such kind of service the Ottoman governors received traditional and generous gifts called *podarki*.<sup>25</sup> Moscow had its agents in Azak and Kefe, who were constantly reporting about the situation in the Crimea and in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>26</sup> In order to secure the continuous flow of information, the Muscovite government maintained two or three border *stanicas*<sup>27</sup> consisting of five people each.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Smirnov, *Rossija i Turcija*, i, 33.

<sup>24</sup> *Prijateli* ('friends') – a semi-official term used in the Muscovite chancery language to denote foreign officials who were regularly sent gifts in return for information that they delivered to Moscow. It corresponded with the term *amijat*, which was in use in the Muscovite-Crimean relations and referred to the 'protectors' of the tsar's interests at the khan's court; cf. Aleksej Novosel'skij, *Bor'ba Moskovskogo gosudarstva s Tatarami v pervoj polovine XVII veka* (Moskva and Leningrad, 1948), 19, n. 33; Aleksandr Vinogradov, 'Rod Suleša vo vnešnej politike Krymskogo xanstva vtoroj poloviny XVI v.', in *Turkologičeskij sbornik. 2005. Tjurkskie narody Rossii i Velikoj stepi* (Moskva, 2006), 26–73; on the etymology of the term *amijat* from the Turkish term *hami* ('protector'), see Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *The Crimean Khanate and Poland-Lithuania. International Diplomacy on the European Periphery (15th–18th Century). A Study of Peace Treaties Followed by Annotated Documents* (Leiden, 2011), 823, n. 2.

<sup>25</sup> *Podarki* – gifts which were given to Ottoman authorities by the Muscovites, actually a kind of bribe. Also see: Smirnov, *Rossija i Turcija*, i, 34, 76.

<sup>26</sup> Öztürk, *Osmanlı Hakimiyetinde Kefe*, 98; Smirnov, *Rossija i Turcija*, i, 81.

<sup>27</sup> *Stanica* – literally a Cossack outpost cum village, yet in the given context the term refers to a small cavalry unit.

<sup>28</sup> Smirnov, *Rossija i Turcija*, i, 84.

### III RELATIONS BETWEEN MOSCOW AND THE AUTHORITIES OF KEFE AND AZAK

As has been mentioned above, diplomatic relations between Istanbul and Moscow were established in the late fifteenth century. In 1492, a letter from the grand duke of Moscow Ivan III, addressed to Sultan Bayezid II, requested safety for Muscovite merchants in Kefe and Azak, where they had been subject to violence.<sup>29</sup> This intervention certainly contributed towards establishing direct relationships between Moscow and the local Kefe provincial authorities. The first Muscovite letter preserved in a copy in the Russian archives that is addressed to the *sancakbey* of Kefe is dated in 1496 and was sent along with Ivan III's envoy to Istanbul, Mixail Pleščeev, who on his way to the Ottoman capital had to pass through Kefe.<sup>30</sup> At that time, probably from 1489 to 1504 the governor of Kefe was the son of Bayezid II, Şehzade Mehmed.<sup>31</sup> In 1499, another letter was sent to Ivan III directly from the "sultan of Kefe" (*Кафинский султан*) as the Muscovites referred to the governor of Kefe.<sup>32</sup> This correspondence proves that, although generally it was a prerogative of the sultan and the grand vizier to conduct relations with foreign rulers, there were some exceptions. Another well known exception to this rule was the correspondence of the governors of Ottoman frontier districts in Hungary, especially the *beylerbeys* of Budin (Buda), with Habsburg officials, including the Habsburg emperor.<sup>33</sup>

It should be noted that when diplomatic relations between Moscow and Kefe were first established, the governor of the province was the son of sultan Bayezid II – Şehzade Mehmed,<sup>34</sup> and the next governor was the grandson of sultan Bayezid II and the son of Selim I – Şehzade Süleyman.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Pamjatniki diplomatičeskix snošenij*, i, 155; Smirnov, *Rossija i Turcija*, i, 68–9.

<sup>30</sup> *Pamjatniki diplomatičeskix snošenij*, i, 232–3.

<sup>31</sup> Öztürk, *Osmanlı Hakimiyetinde Kefe*, 196.

<sup>32</sup> *Pamjatniki diplomatičeskix snošenij*, i, 283.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. n. 3 above.

<sup>34</sup> Probably in the years 1489–1504 – Öztürk, *Osmanlı Hakimiyetinde Kefe*, 196–7; see also İnalçık, *The Customs Register of Caffa*, 3, n. 1.

<sup>35</sup> In the years 1509–12 – Öztürk, *Osmanlı Hakimiyetinde Kefe*, 197; see also Aşçer Pul, 'Keefe sancağı'nın I. Selim'in taht mücadelesinde oynadığı role dair bazı değerlendirmeler', *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, vi, 27 (2013), 471–2; *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, xi (Istanbul, 1979), 100.

The royal descent of both these personages helps explain the establishment of direct correspondence between Moscow and the Kefe province, even though we lack evidence that the correspondence initiated between Moscow and Prince Mehmed was continued during the governorship of Prince Süleyman (it is surprising that almost no reports by Muscovite envoys from Kefe or from the Crimean Khanate have been preserved concerning the revolt of Şehzade Selim – the future sultan Selim I – against his father Bayezid II in the years 1510–12, his arrival in Kefe or the role of local support in the Crimea in his ascension to the throne).<sup>36</sup> The correspondence increased in volume after Şehzade Süleyman left Kefe and moved to Manisa, while the province was ruled by the sultan's slave, referred to in the Moscovian letters as *knjaz'* ('prince'). The ruler of Muscovy corresponded not only with the governor of Kefe but also with other provincial officials of the Kefe province, such as the commander of Azak or its *kadi*. For example, more than ten letters were sent to the aforementioned Ottoman authorities from Moscow in the period between 1515 and 1521. From the reports of Muscovite envoys it can be learned that Moscow generously endowed and gave bribes to the governor of Kefe and other officials of the Kefe province.<sup>37</sup> The reports of Muscovite agents from Azak<sup>38</sup> have been preserved in the Russian archives along with copies of the letters sent to Moscow by the Ottoman central and provincial authorities.

In their letters to Moscow, the officials of Kefe and Azak informed the Muscovite ruler about the situation in the Crimea and in the Ottoman state, and complained about attacks of Don Cossacks. Sometimes they gave some strategic information on the military activities of the khan or the sultan, and certainly they did so on their own initiative rather than on the order of the central imperial authorities.<sup>39</sup> In 1521, the *sancakbey* of Kefe, Mehmed, wrote in his letter to Moscow that: "at present our lord [i.e., Sultan Süleyman] is in his land and in his reign, and he wants to go to the Lithuanian

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<sup>36</sup> For more on these events, see Vasilij Smirnov, *Krymskoe xanstvo pod verxovenstvom Ottomanskoj porty do načala XVIII veka* (St. Peterburg, 1887), 286–8; Oleksa Hajvoronskyj, *Poveliteli dvux materikov, i: Krymskije xany XV–XVI stoletij i bor'ba za nasledstvo Velikoj Ordy* (Kiev and Bakhchisaray, 2007), 94–6.

<sup>37</sup> Smirnov, *Rossija i Turcija*, i, 33, 81–2.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, 82.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, 81.

land”,<sup>40</sup> while his servant Mustafa warned about war preparations by the Crimean khan aimed at attacking the Muscovite lands: “The Crimean tsar<sup>41</sup> has mounted his horse and wanted to attack you.”<sup>42</sup> In return for such important information, Ottoman officials usually asked the Muscovites for presents.<sup>43</sup>

#### IV

#### TITULATURE IN THE LETTERS OF OTTOMAN OFFICIALS TO THE MUSCOVITE RULER

The Ottoman Archives of the Prime Ministry (*Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi*, BOA) in Istanbul contain probably the largest collection of Ottoman-era documents. Most of these are documents provided by the central authorities, such as copies of decrees and orders of the sultans and grand viziers, records of revenues and expenditures, copies of foreign correspondence, etc. However, it is almost impossible to find letters from provincial governors or other provincial officials there. Likewise, the researchers of Ottoman history are faced with an almost total absence of provincial archives, except for those few which were seized by the enemies of the Ottoman Empire and have been preserved as spoils.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>40</sup> ... и государ нашъ нынѣ въ свойѣ землѣ на своемъ государствѣ, а хочетъ итти на литовскую землю (Грамота санчагова) – *Pamjatniki diplomatičeskix snošenij*, ii, 681. In fact, in 1521 Sultan Süleyman invaded Hungary and conquered the fortress of Belgrade.

<sup>41</sup> The Muscovite chancery used the term ‘tsar’ (Rus. *царь*) when addressing the khans of the Golden Horde and the rulers of its successor states – the Crimean, Astrakhan and Kazan khanates, hence in the given context the titles ‘tsar’ (Rus. *царь*) and ‘khan’ (Rus. *хан*) were equivalent. See also Halil İnalçık, ‘Power relationships between Russia, the Crimea, and the Ottoman Empire as Reflected in Titulature’, in *idem*, *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire: Essays in Economy and Society* (Bloomington, 1993; orig. publ. 1986), 371.

<sup>42</sup> Да Крымской царь на конь всѣлъ, на тебя на самого хотѣлъ итти и мноую свою рать собиралъ – *Pamjatniki diplomatičeskix snošenij*, ii, 681.

<sup>43</sup> Молю государствіе твое о единой шубѣ черныхъ лисицъ на поминокъ, а мы государства ради твоего хотимъ и найпаче тружатися (Грамота Бурганова) – *ibidem*, 682.

<sup>44</sup> For instance, the Turkish collection in Karlsruhe contained the archive of Osman Pasha (who held the position of the governor of Anatolia and Egypt), which had been captured probably in 1684, but it was burned down in the allied bombing during the Second World War. For its description, see Franz Babinger (ed.), *Das*

While the question why Ottoman provincial archives have not been preserved certainly merits an in-depth investigation, a historian of Ottoman Kefe is faced with a lucky chance, as several letters sent by the governors of Kefe and Azak are today extant in Moscow.<sup>45</sup> They usually contain information and reports about the attacks of the Don Cossacks, the departure or arrival of envoys, and some details concerning trade relations. These documents are mostly preserved in Russian translations, but the present author managed to stumble upon two original letters dated 1631 and 1635, written by the *sancakbey* of Azak Mustafa Bey<sup>46</sup> and the *beylerbey* of Kefe Ibrahim Pasha,<sup>47</sup> respectively. This article aims to analyze the titles by which the Ottoman provincial authorities addressed a foreign ruler, in our case the Russian tsar.

The Muscovite grand dukes (and later tsars) treated the titles by which they were addressed with an almost fanatic scrupulousness. Marc Szeftel thoroughly described the evolution of the titles of the ruler of Muscovy.<sup>48</sup> Sometimes Muscovite envoys could stay more than a year in Istanbul just because they could not find an agreement on the tsar's titles in their dealing with Ottoman officials.<sup>49</sup> Halil İnalçık studied the development and changes of titles used in the relations between the Ottomans, Muscovites, and Crimean Tatars,<sup>50</sup> and another important article by Dariusz Kołodziejczyk deals with the use of titles by the sultans to denote themselves and other rulers.<sup>51</sup> The titles used

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*Archiv des Bosniaken Osman Pascha. Nach den Beständen der Badischen Landesbibliothek zu Karlsruhe* (Berlin, 1931), and Hans Georg Majer, 'Verlorene Urkunden und Briefe aus der „Türkischen Kammer“', in *Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe. Die Karlsruher Türkenbeute. Die 'Türkische Kammer' des Markgrafen Ludwig Wilhelm von Baden-Baden. Die 'Türkischen Curiosaeten' der Markgrafen von Baden-Durlach* (München, 1991), 356–62. Another Ottoman provincial archive preserved until the present-day belonged to the governor of Hotin Ilyas Kolchak Pasha, and was captured by the Russian army in 1739. Today it is held in Moscow; see Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *Zaproszenie do osmanistyki. Typologia i charakterystyka źródeł muzułmańskich sąsiadów dawnej Rzeczypospolitej: Imperium Osmańskiego i Chanatu Krymskiego* (Warszawa, 2013), 31–2.

<sup>45</sup> Smirnov, *Rossija i Turcija*, i, 41.

<sup>46</sup> RGADA, f. 89 'Snošenija Rossii s Turciej', op. 2, no. 5.

<sup>47</sup> RGADA, f. 89 'Snošenija Rossii s Turciej', op. 2, no. 16.

<sup>48</sup> Marc Szeftel, 'The title of the Muscovite monarch up to the end of the seventeenth century', *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, xiii, 1–2 (1979), 59–81.

<sup>49</sup> Smirnov, *Rossija i Turcija*, i, 35.

<sup>50</sup> Halil İnalçık, 'Power relationships', 369–411.

<sup>51</sup> Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, 'Khan, caliph, tsar and imperator: the multiple identities of the Ottoman sultan', in Peter Bang and Dariusz Kołodziejczyk (eds.),

in the relations between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans have been investigated by Markus Köhbach.<sup>52</sup>

In general, when addressing a Christian ruler the sultan used the standard honorific title: *iftihar* (or *kidvatu* or *umdatu*)'l-ümera'i'l-izami 'l-'iseviye (or 'l-ümera'i'l-milleti'l-mesihie).<sup>53</sup> According to the Ottoman tradition, all Christian rulers were seen as troop leaders equal to Ottoman provincial governors – *beylerbeys* or *sancakbeys*.<sup>54</sup> In regard to the slaves of the sultan, who were the chiefs of Ottoman provinces, the central government also used such titles as *iftihar*'l-ümera'i'l-kiram,<sup>55</sup> so in the Ottoman mind the native terms with which the foreign rulers titled themselves were of secondary importance.<sup>56</sup> Even the Latin term *imperator*, with which the Ottoman sultans titled themselves in their Latin documents issued in the fifteenth century, had lost its prestigious character to the Ottomans since the time when the Porte ceased to issue Latin-script documents. Thereafter its application in relation to a foreign monarch did not infringe the unique prestige of the Ottoman sultan, as he no longer titled himself with this title.<sup>57</sup> The one title that could only be applied to the Ottoman sultan was *padîşah-i 'alempenah*.<sup>58</sup> According to İnalçık, the term *padîşah* alone could also be used for Christian monarchs, whereas the titles *sultan*<sup>59</sup> and *khalife* (caliph)<sup>60</sup> were exclusively linked to the Islamic polity and were

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*Universal Empire. A Comparative Approach to Imperial Culture and Representation in Eurasian History* (Cambridge, 2012), 175–93.

<sup>52</sup> Markus Köhbach, 'Çasar oder imperator? – Zur Titulatur der römischen Kaiser durch die Osmanen nach dem Vertrag von Zsitvatorok (1606)', *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, lxxxii (1992), 223–34.

<sup>53</sup> "The pride of the great emirs of Christendom"; see İnalçık, 'Power relationships', 382; cf. also Yılmaz Kurt, *Osmanlıca Dersleri 2* (Ankara, 2010), 181.

<sup>54</sup> İnalçık, 'Power relationships', 382.

<sup>55</sup> Kurt, *Osmanlıca Dersleri 2*, 184–5; İnalçık, 'Power relationships', 382.

<sup>56</sup> Kołodziejczyk. 'Khan, caliph, tsar and imperator', 181–9; İnalçık, 'Power relationships', 382.

<sup>57</sup> Kołodziejczyk. 'Khan, caliph, tsar and imperator', 188.

<sup>58</sup> The title of padishah was of Iranian origin and denoted an emperor. It was the favourite title of Ottoman rulers, rarely attributed to other monarchs by the Ottoman chancery. In the given case, it is additionally embellished with the title '*alempenah* – "the refuge of the universe".

<sup>59</sup> The title of sultan was of Arabic origin and denoted any Islamic monarch.

<sup>60</sup> Caliph – a spiritual leader of Islam, claiming succession from Prophet Muhammad. Although the Ottoman sultans never claimed origin from Prophet Muhammad, beginning in the 16th century some Islamic scholars began to refer to them using



never used for Christian rulers.<sup>61</sup> In its letters to the Muscovite rulers, the Ottoman imperial chancery typically used the title of ‘the king of Moscow’ (*Moskov kralı*),<sup>62</sup> while the title ‘tsar’ was used for the first time by the Ottomans in 1643.<sup>63</sup> To compare, for the Habsburg emperor the sultan’s chancery initially used the title *kıral* (‘king’), only over time adopting the title *imparator* (‘emperor’) which was expected by the Habsburg side. In 1534, the Ottoman chancery referred to Emperor Charles V as *İspanya vilayetinin kralı*, and to his brother Ferdinand I as *vilayet-i Nemçe kralı*; in 1545 Ferdinand was referred to as *Romanların ve ana tabı’ olanların kralı olan Ferendoş*, in 1559 as *Hristiyan krallarının ve dukalarının ve beglerinin imperadoru olan ... Ferendoş Kral*, and in 1563 as *Nemçe ve ana tabı’ vilayetlerin imperadoru Ferendoş*. Maximilian II was titled in 1564 *Nemçe ve Alaman kralı İmparador Maksimilyanus* and in 1565 *Alaman vilayetinin imperadoru ve Çeh ve İsloven ve Hırvat ve sa’ir nice vilayetlerin kralı*, or simply *Beç imperadoru* (‘the emperor of Vienna’).<sup>64</sup> The title *çasar* (‘caesar’), used in reference to the Habsburgs, can be found in the documents issued by the Ottoman provincial authorities in Hungary, who were accustomed to the title *császár* used in their Hungarian language correspondence, but the sultan’s chancery preferred to address the Habsburgs with the title *imparator*, which at the time appeared less prestigious in its eyes.<sup>65</sup>

Since the first letters of the governors of Kefe and Azak are available only as translated copies, it cannot be determined exactly how they addressed the Muscovite rulers and which titles they used in the Ottoman language. In the first letter to the Muscovite grand duke, the governor of Kefe Şehzade Mehmet wrote: “The gatherer [of the

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this title. It came into a wider use in the 18th century when, in the Treaty of Küçük Kaynardja (1774), Russia formally recognized the Ottoman sultan as the caliph in regard to his spiritual authority over the Crimean Tatars.

<sup>61</sup> İnalçık, ‘Power relationships’, 384.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. *hüküm* no. 1312 in İsmet Binark (ed.), *5 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (973/1565–1566)* (Ankara, 1994) and *hüküms* nos. 318 and 339 in *idem* (ed.), *6 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (972/1564–1565)* (Ankara, 1995); see also Chantal Quelquejay, ‘Une source inédite pour l’histoire de la Russie au XVIe siècle’, *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, viii, 2 (1966), 337; İnalçık, ‘Power relationships’, 382.

<sup>63</sup> Novosel’skiĭ, *Bor’ba Moskovskogo gosudarstva*, 312, 325–6.

<sup>64</sup> Köhbach, ‘Çasar oder imperator?’, 225–6; İnalçık, ‘Power relationships’, 382 and 405–6 (n. 61).

<sup>65</sup> Köhbach, ‘Çasar oder imperator?’, 226–7; for the titles *Romai çasarı* and *Nemçe çasarı* see document no. 1 in Fekete, *Türkische Schriften*, 3.

lands], Mehmet, the son of Tsar Bayezid, both of us hold power, I am the brother of Your Majesty, my uncle, the praised one from among the grand dukes, the great tsar, my friend, the grand duke Knjaz' Ivan",<sup>66</sup> so as we see the Ottoman prince had no inhibitions about addressing Ivan using the title of tsar. Here we can compare how Sultan Bayezid II addressed the Muscovite ruler: "By God's mercy and with His help, the lord of the well-protected Constantinople [*Konstantinograd*] and of the White Sea and the Black Sea, and of Anatolia, Rumelia, Karaman, and many other lands apart from the Roman patrimony, Sultan Bayezid Khan [*Car*]. [To] You, who by God's will are the lord of several towns of Rus', of the Eastern part and of the Desht part [i.e., of the Qipchak Steppe], Grand Duke [*Knjaz'*] Ivan".<sup>67</sup> We can also see which titles Grand Duke Ivan used for himself in his letter to the governor of Kefe, Şehzade Mehmed: "Ioan [i.e., Ivan], with God's mercy, the one rightful lord of all Rus', [its] successor and heir, and the lord and grand duke [*knjaz'*] of many other eastern and northern lands, to Şehzade Mehmed, the sultan of Kefe, the son of Bayezid Sultan."<sup>68</sup>

The correspondence between Muscovy and the authorities of the Ottoman Kefe from 1515 to 1521 is also available. At that time the governor of Kefe was Mehmed,<sup>69</sup> who could not claim royal descent.

<sup>66</sup> *Тот собиратель, Баязитовичъ царев Маамедъ. Силы добываемые оба. От великих князей похвальный дядя мой, великий царь твоему величеству брат, друг мой великий князь Иван князь; see Pamjatniki diplomatičeskix snošenij, i, 283.*

<sup>67</sup> *Божією милостію и Его помощію, бережливого Константинограда, и Бѣлаго моря, и Чернаго моря, и Анатулской и Румской земли и Караманской, и опрочъ Румской отчины, иныхъ многихъ земель государ, салтанъ Баазитъ цар. А ты Божіємъ велѣніемъ Русской и Восточной и Дешской стороны колка городов государ еси, велики князь Иванъ; see Pamjatniki diplomatičeskix snošenij, i, 289.*

<sup>68</sup> *Іоанъ, Божією милостію, единъ правой государ всеа Русіи, отчичъ и дѣдич и инымъ многимъ землямъ восточнымъ и сѣвернымъ государ и велики князь, Махметъ Шихзодѣ, салтану кафинскому, Баазитъ салтанову сыну; see Pamjatniki diplomatičeskix snošenij, i, 293.*

<sup>69</sup> It should be noted that Öztürk states in his monograph that for the period between 1512 and 1532 there is no information about the *sancakbeys* of Kefe: Şehzade Süleyman'ın merkeze çağrıldığı 1512'den 1532'ye kadar Kefe sancak beylerin isimleri hakkında kesin malumat bulunmamaktadır; *idem, Osmanlı Hakimiyetinde Kefe*, 197. Yet in a few documents from the Russian archive, already published at the end of the nineteenth century, one can find information that the *sancakbey* of Kefe in 1515–21 was Mehmet; see *Pamjatniki diplomatičeskix snošenij*, ii, 227–8, 237–8, 336, 431–2, 629–30, 672, 681, 703. We do not know how long he held this function and when he was succeeded by another official. Curiously enough,

He addressed the Muscovite grand duke as follows: “To the greatest one under God’s patronage, the holder of felicity, the successor of the great capital and many states, great like Kubat<sup>70</sup> ... we pray God and ask that God, the Lord, keep You in health and let you be always happy until the last days”,<sup>71</sup> and in another place he added the hyperbole: “May your reign be like Hümayun’s, ... the pious Tsar of Tsars.”<sup>72</sup> At the same time, Mehmed’s envoy named Yafer (a dialectal pronunciation of the Turkish name Djafer) was ordered to kiss the hand of the grand duke on behalf of the *sancakbey* of Kefe,<sup>73</sup> who signed his letter “the poor humble slave of God, the creator of all things, Mehmed, the duke [knjaz’] of the standard [Rus. *хоругъъвъ*, the equivalent of Tur. *sancak*] of Kefe.”<sup>74</sup> In another letter dated 1521, the *sancakbey* of Kefe titled the addressee: “the Royal Majesty, the ruler of high power, honoured by God”.<sup>75</sup> In 1519, in his letter to Moscow the *dizdar* of Azak called the Muscovite ruler the ‘white tsar’.<sup>76</sup> This is especially interesting given the fact that even the Muscovite grand dukes did not use the title ‘tsar’ in their formal *intitulatio* and foreign correspondence until

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in another place in his book Öztürk quotes some information derived from an Ottoman register dated 1527 and published by Metin Kunt regarding the salary of the *sancakbey* of Kefe, a certain Mehmed Bey – see *idem*, *Osmanlı Hakimiyetinde Kefe*, 157; cf. Kunt, *Sancaktan Eyalete*, 127; also see *idem*, *The Sultan’s Servants. The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550–1650* (New York, 1983), 105. It is very likely that Mehmed Bey, listed in the Ottoman register of 1527, was identical with the governor of Kefe invoked in the Russian sources from the years 1515–21.

<sup>70</sup> Perhaps a comparison of the Muscovite ruler to the famous Seljuk sultan Kayqubad I (1220–37).

<sup>71</sup> Величайшому въ Божіємъ заступленіе, счастка погонителю, великостольному и многихъ государствъ наслѣднику величествомъ якъ Кубать ... Бога молимъ и сею просимъ дабы Господь Богъ тебя сохранилъ въ здравіи неподвижна до вѣка избранному радоватся; *Patjlatniki diplomatičeskix snošenij*, ii, 227–8.

<sup>72</sup> Царствующий Гамайону подобный ... благовѣрный царь царемъ; *ibidem*, 237.

<sup>73</sup> Дай же руку твою честнѣйшую поцеловать; *ibidem*, 227.

<sup>74</sup> Всѣхъ сътворителемъ Богомъ убогий недостаточны рабъ Магмедъ, князь хоругви кафинскіе; *ibidem*, 228.

<sup>75</sup> Королеву величеству высокіе власти правителю отъ Бога почтенному; *ibidem*, 681.

<sup>76</sup> А се грамота изъ Азова отъ Бургана Азовскаго. Государю великому князю Василью Ивановичу все Русіи бѣлому царю; *ibidem*, 671. On the expression ‘white tsar’ cf. Vadim Trepavlov, ‘Belyj car’. *Obraz monarxa i predstavlenija o poddanstve u narodov Rossii XV–XVIII vv.* (Moskva, 2007).

1546.<sup>77</sup> It is worth mentioning that the liberal attitude towards granting elaborate titles to Muscovite rulers, visible in the usage of Ottoman provincial officials, was in no way reflected in the attitude of the Ottoman Porte. Over a century later, in 1634, when a Muscovite envoy Ilja Miloslavskij demanded that the Porte use the title ‘tsar’ while addressing his lord, he heard in return from the grand vizier that the title ‘tsar’ could be used only in reference to the sultan, whereas his lord could be titled only ‘king’, just like the Porte titled the rulers of the Holy Roman Empire: “since the ancient times, when writing to all the rulers of the whole German Reich, the sultans use the title of king and not tsar, and only the sultan is titled as tsar by all the monarchs, as only he is the tsar, and all the others are kings”.<sup>78</sup>

Unfortunately, it is hard to trace how the titulature evolved in the correspondence between the Ottoman officials and the ruler of Muscovy in the subsequent decades of the sixteenth century, because most of the documents remain unpublished. Besides, all the extant sixteenth-century correspondence has been preserved only in Russian translations and not Ottoman-Turkish originals.

In the paragraphs above, the titles used by the Ottoman officials in their letters to the Muscovite rulers were examined on the basis of translated copies and it can be assumed that Muscovite translators exaggerated the titles referring to their ruler in their translations from Ottoman-Turkish to Russian. However, from a reading of the original seventeenth-century documents preserved in the Russian archives, one learns that even loftier and more paramount titles were actually used for the Muscovite ruler. In 1635, the governor of Kefe

<sup>77</sup> Īnalcık, *Power relationships*, 378; Jarosław Pelenski, *Russia and Kazan: Conquest and Imperial Ideology (1438–1560s)* (The Hague and Paris, 1974); *idem*, ‘State and Society in Muscovite Russia and the Mongol-Turkic System in the Sixteenth Century’, in Abraham Ascher, Tibor Halasi-Kun, Béla K. Király (eds.), *The Mutual Effects of the Islamic and Judeo-Christian Worlds: The East European Pattern* (New York, 1979).

<sup>78</sup> Султаны ко всѣм Государямъ во всѣ Нѣмецкіе рыши искони пишутъ в титулъ имя Короля, не Царя, и только одного Султана всѣ Государи величаютъ Царемъ, он один Царь, а прочіе всѣ Короли; see Sergej Smirnov, ‘O posolstve Ilji Daniloviča Miloslavskago i djaka Leontija Lazorevskago v Turciju v 1634 godu’, *Vremennik imperatorskago moskovskago obščestva istorii i drevnostej rossijskix*, vi (1850), 47–50, esp. 47; ‘Statejnnyj Spisok posolstva Ilji Daniloviča Miloslavskago i djaka Leontija Lazorevskago v Tsar’grad v 7150 godu’, *Vremennik imperatorskago moskovskago obščestva istorii i drevnostej rossijskix*, viii (1850), 59–62. Cf. also Kołodziejczyk, *Khan, caliph, tsar and imperator*, 184–5 and Īnalcık, *Power relationships*, 371–6, 383.

titled the tsar: “the great padishah khan and the great bey Michael Fedorovich, the padishah of the whole Rus’, and the ruler of many countries, whatever they [i.e., their names] may be.”<sup>79</sup> Four years earlier, the *sancakbey* of Azak addressed the tsar as: “His Excellency, the honourable, felicitous and generous padishah of Muscovy, *Knjaz*’ Michael Fedorovich.”<sup>80</sup> Despite such honorary titles given to the tsar at the beginning of their letters, Ottoman provincial commanders did not hesitate to threaten the addressee if he failed to fulfil their wishes. Having invoked recent attacks by the Don Cossacks, the governor of Kefe warned: “If you do not burn their [i.e. the Cossacks’] boats and prevent them [from raiding], after forty days His Excellency, the khan, will raid your country along with a certain number of Tatar and Crimean soldiers.”<sup>81</sup> For their own monarch, the governors of Kefe and Azak used the titles *ulu padişah* (‘great padishah’) or *‘alem-penah* (‘the refuge of the universe’).

## V

### CONCLUSIONS

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the relations with Muscovy were not regarded as having strategic importance for the Ottoman state, and the Crimean khan typically acted as an intermediary between Istanbul and Moscow until 1700. However, the khans often conducted an independent policy which could be at variance with the position of Istanbul. Therefore, the province governor of Kefe and the district governor of Azak partially usurped the khan’s role as a mediator in the Ottoman-Muscovite relations.

For the Ottomans the main attraction of having good relations with Muscovy laid in its imported products, some of them particularly attractive and expensive, such as the furs of foxes and especially sables. Their role in supplying these goods, and in providing security on

<sup>79</sup> *Büyük padişah han hem büyük beg Mihayla Fedoreviç cümle Urusunun padişahu ve köp meleketerinde bolsa hükümdarı*; RGADA, f. 89 ‘Snošenija Rossii s Turciej’, op. 2, no. 16.

<sup>80</sup> *‘İzzetlü ve sa’adetlü ve mürüvvetlü Moskov padişahu Knaz Mihayla Fédoreviç hazretlerinin hak-i payı şerifelerine*; RGADA, f. 89 ‘Snošenija Rossii s Turciej’, op. 2, no. 5.

<sup>81</sup> *Eger kaıkların yakub bunları men’ etmez ise kırk günden soñra han hazretleri bu kadar Tatar askeri ve Kırım askeri birle vilayetiñizge akın ederler*; RGADA, f. 89 ‘Snošenija Rossii s Turciej’, op. 2, no. 16.

the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, especially during the heightened activity of the Don Cossacks, made the governors of Kefe and Azak important political players in the relations between Moscow and Istanbul. Initial contacts made by Muscovite envoys in Azak and Kefe and the climate of their conversations with local hosts often influenced their future negotiations in Istanbul and the way they would be treated in the Ottoman capital. Benefiting from the weak interest of Istanbul in the Muscovite affairs, the Ottoman governor of Kefe was able to strengthen his brokering position and even send his own envoys to Moscow. On their part, when sending envoys to Istanbul, Muscovite rulers loaded them with letters and gifts for Ottoman officials in Kefe and Azak. It should be noted here that Muscovite envoys, who used to pass through Azak and Kefe on their way to Istanbul, were at the same time flatly forbidden to interact with the representatives of the khan.<sup>82</sup>

Regarding the titulature contained in their letters, the Ottoman governors of Kefe and Azak addressed the tsar using the loftiest and most sophisticated titles, almost identical to those used in regard to their own monarch. However, it seems that when using the title *büyük padişah han* ('the great padishah khan'), so flattering and so much desired by the Muscovite ruler, the Ottoman officials of the Kefe province did not attach much importance to its wording, rather

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<sup>82</sup> Aleksandr Vinogradov, *Rusko-krymskie otnošenija: 50-e – vtoraja polovina 70-x godov XVI veka*, ii (Moskva, 2007), 158–9. Cf. the following dialogue between Ivan Novosil'cev, a Muscovite envoy to the Ottoman Empire in 1570, and the *sancakbey* of Azak, Aydar (Hayder), recorded in the embassy's relating of events: "And Aydar said to Ivan: 'the Crimean tsar [i.e., khan] sent his man and wrote to me, and ordered to ask you whether your lord had ordered you to visit him in the Crimea and do you have any command from your lord to him?'. And Ivan said: 'My lord sent me with the business of his lordship to Tsar'gorod [i.e., Constantinople], to his brother Sultan Selim, and in regard to my travel to the Crimea to the tsar [i.e., khan] – I have no orders in that matter and I have no reason to visit him.'" As Novosil'cev continued his trip he had a similar conversation with the *sancakbey* of Kefe, Kasim Bey: "Kasim Bey said: '... Do you have [orders] to be at the Crimean [khan's]?' And Ivan said: 'In regard to my travel to the Crimea to the tsar [i.e., khan] – I have no orders from my lord in that matter and I have no reason to visit him [i.e., the khan]';" – see 'Posol'stvo Ivana Novosil'ceva v Turciju', in *Zapiski russkix putešestvennikov XVI–XVII vv.* (Moskva, 1988), also accessible online: [http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Turk/XVI/1560–1580/Stat\\_spis\\_1570/frame-text.htm](http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Turk/XVI/1560–1580/Stat_spis_1570/frame-text.htm) [Accessed: 3 March 2017].

treating it as the best means to secure rich gifts from the addressee. They apparently did this on their own initiative, which would definitely have been disapproved by the sultan's chancery. The latter never addressed the Muscovite rulers with such elevated titles, reserving these titles for its own monarch. To be sure, foreign monarchs were often addressed by the Porte with foreign titles such as *kral*, *çasar*, or even *imperador*, but the Ottomans did not invest these titles with the same prestigious importance as was the case among the European rulers. The fact that the Ottoman governors of Kefe and Azak broke this rule and referred to an 'infidel' monarch using titles otherwise reserved exclusively for the sultan bears evidence of their pragmatism and reminds one of a similar phenomenon known to have existed in the trans-border correspondence between the Ottoman provincial officials in Hungary and the Habsburg court.

Sometimes the Ottoman officials of the Kefe province provided extremely important and even secret information about the inner situation and the foreign policy of the sultan or the khan. One may surmise that they did so upon their own initiative and not at the sultan's order. For their services, the Muscovite ruler rewarded them with generous gifts.

Despite their peripheral role (from the perspective of Istanbul) in the era when the Ottoman foreign policy and expansion was focused on other strategic directions, the province of Kefe with its governor and the *bey* of Azak held a prominent place in the foreign policy of Moscow. The key role played by the governor of Kefe in choosing and assisting representatives of the Giray dynasty to ascend to the Crimean throne; the crucial position of Kefe in the campaign against Astrakhan in 1569; and the importance of Azak in deterring the vigorous activity of the Don Cossacks, all attest to the high position and prestige of the governor of Kefe in the eyes of Moscow. At the same time, their relations with Moscow and correspondence with the Muscovite ruler contributed to the growing importance of the position held by the Ottoman governors, yielding dividends in terms of both prestige and financial rewards. Each party was satisfied: the tsar received information and flattering titles, while in return the governor of Kefe obtained generous presents and increased the significance of his position, measured against his peers posted to other provincial posts.

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