

# The Self in Performance



# The Caftan and the Sword

## Dress and Diplomacy in Ottoman-French Relations Around 1700

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“What happened at the Seraglio the day I should have had my audience with the Grand Signor is an event so considerable that I thought it necessary to send a Tartar messenger to France to inform Your Majesty specially.”<sup>1</sup>

The new French ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Charles de Ferriol, spared neither cost nor effort to be the first one to report what had happened at the *Topkapı* palace on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1700. By mishap, however, his letter was lost, as were the first two copies. Finally, the fourth copy reached Versailles via Venice on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, some time after the first rumours of the Ferriol scandal had already reached the King by letters from Vienna.<sup>2</sup> The scandal that was obviously interesting to German observers was caused by a disagreement over Ottoman versus Western ceremonial dress codes – or so it seemed. In fact, due to the crucial role of attire in symbolic communication processes such as diplomatic ceremonies, there was much more at stake that day than inappropriate attire.

Ferriol had thoroughly prepared for what was supposed to be one of the highlights of his diplomatic mission. His entourage included several gentlemen who had accompanied him on his journey, all French residents of Istanbul and of his household, thirty French naval officers, six of his own janissaries, six valets, twenty-five footmen wearing the ambassador's splendid livery and six bodyguards dressed as Turks and surrounding his horse – altogether about 300 men.<sup>3</sup> According to one anonymous French eyewitness, “all gentlemen were dressed most lavishly and they rode with so much splendour and in such good order that the Turks who filled the squares and the streets were all enthralled by this cavalcade.”<sup>4</sup> Having crossed the Golden Horn by ship, the procession was met by the

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<sup>1</sup> Ferriol to Louis XIV (January 8, 1700), Paris, Archives du Ministère des Affaires étrangères et européennes (MAE), Correspondance politique (CP) Turquie 33, fol. 64r-v: “Ce qui s'est passé dans le serail le jour que je devois avoir mon audience du Grand Seigneur est un Evenement sy considerable que j'ay cru devoir envoyer une Tartare exprez en France pour en rendre compte a Vostre Majesté.”

<sup>2</sup> The letter is marked “Quatuplicata recu le 22e mars,” *ibid.* The king informs Ferriol that he had already learnt of the event by the “nouvelles de Vienne” in his letter of April 8, 1700, MAE, CP Turquie 33, fol. 100r.

<sup>3</sup> Ferriol to Louis XIV (January 8, 1700), MAE, CP, Turquie 33, fol. 64v.

<sup>4</sup> *Relation de ce qui s'est passé à Constantinople le jour que M. de Ferriol ambassadeur de France à la Porte, devoit avoir son audience du Grand Seigneur*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), Manuscrits (MS) FR 10209, fol. 128r–133v, here fol. 128r: “Tous les Gentilshommes

chief sergeant (*çavuş başı*) and forty of his men on horseback at the harbour. When they entered *Topkapı* Palace, the French passed by some 4,000 janissaries waiting to be paid that very day. After a ceremonial meal with the Grand Vizier, Ferriol was conducted to the Gate of Felicity leading to the audience chamber. So far, everything was quite in order. But just as Ferriol and his entourage were receiving their robes of honour as part of the Ottoman diplomatic ceremony, the *çavuş başı* noticed that Ferriol still carried his sword. According to Ottoman law, no one was allowed to approach the Sultan carrying weapons. Therefore he informed the Sultan's *dragoman*, Alexander Mavrocordatos, who then asked Ferriol to remove it. To this request, the ambassador answered:

"I was doing nothing my predecessor M. de Castagnères and several other ambassadors like Mr. Trumbal, ambassador of England, and Mr. Collier [...] had not already done; that the sword was part of our official uniforms, and that he could be sure I would not take it off; [...] that it was not suitable for me to see a prince as important as the Sultan without all of my ornamentation."<sup>5</sup>

The following negotiation lasted an hour and culminated in Ferriol's exclamation

"that they could rather take my life than my sword to which my honour was attached. I argued that we did not find fault with the Turk's way of dressing, and that consequently, they should let us have our way."<sup>6</sup>

As Ferriol was obviously not inclined to give in on the question, the increasingly distressed Ottoman officers eventually tried some cunning, telling the French ambassador that for him, the Sultan would make an exception. At last, wearing his long sword underneath his Ottoman caftan, Ferriol entered the narrow passage leading into the audience chamber when, all of a sudden, "a guard as large as a giant" jumped at him and tried to disarm him by force. Yet in vain, for Ferriol had not served in the French musketeers for nothing.<sup>7</sup> He countered the

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plus richement vestûs les uns que les autres, marchoient avec tant d'éclat et en si bon ordre que les Turcs dont les places et les ruës étoient toutes remplies, furent charmés de cette cavalcade [...]."

<sup>5</sup> Ferriol to Louis XIV (January 8, 1700), MAE, CP, Turquie, 33, fol. 66v–67r: "Je luy repondis que je ne faisais rien qui n'eut esté pratiqué par M. de Castagneres et par plusieurs autres ambassadeurs comme M. Trumbal amb.r d'ang.re et M. Collier le pere; Que l'Epee faisoit partie de nôtre habillement et qu'il devoit estre persuadé que je ne la quitterois point [...]; qu'il ne me convenoit pas de voir un aussy grand Prince que le Grand Seigneur sans avoir tous mes ornemens [...]."

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., fol. 68r: "Je protestay qu'on m'osterait plustost la vie que mon espée et que mon honneur y estoit attaché, Je representay que nous ne trouvions point a redire a l'habillement des Turcs, qu'ils devoient nous laisser la liberté du nostre [...]."

<sup>7</sup> On Ferriol's biography see Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont, Sinan Kunalalp, and Frédéric Hitzel, ed., *Représentants permanents de la France en Turquie (1536–1991) et de la Turquie en France (1797–1991)* (Istanbul; Paris: Ed. Isis, 1991), 27, and Eugène Asse, "Le baron de Ferriol et Mademoiselle Aïssé," *Revue rétrospective*, nouvelle série, juillet-décembre (1893): 1–48, 97–144, 169–210.

strike by a good hook to the chin of his attacker, then kneed him so violently in the abdomen that the guard collapsed. Starting to unsheathe his sword, he finally retreated, crying loudly (and in Latin) that international law, the *ius gentium*, was violated. Alarmed by the racket, the Sultan, who had been waiting all this time in his audience chamber, sent the chief of the white eunuchs (*kapıcıbaşı*) to ask Ferriol one last time to enter without his sword or else to leave. Ferriol then retreated to the second courtyard, took off his caftan and ordered his people to do the same. He also ordered them to retrieve all the presents they had brought with them. Finally, he and his men left the palace unchallenged, crossed the Bosphorus and returned to Pera. They were accompanied by volleys of salutes fired by the nearby French warships, which were still unaware that the audience had not in fact taken place.

### *Multiple Roles: The Ambassador as King and Courtier*

From today's perspective, it may seem difficult to imagine a more tactless and un-diplomatic behaviour than Ferriol's on the threshold of the *Gate of Felicity*. A work of reference on French ambassadors to the Ottoman Porte does in fact accuse Ferriol of contempt for any diplomatic protocol.<sup>8</sup> What would legitimize his stubborn refusal to conform to Ottoman protocol and simply take off his sword, as dozens of European ambassadors had done before him, knowing that not even the Grand Vizier or the *ağa* of the janissaries were allowed to approach the Sultan with their swords?<sup>9</sup> How can we interpret that Ferriol would rather risk his life, his whole diplomatic mission and perhaps even the peace between France and the Ottoman Empire for the sake of his own sartorial integrity? And – maybe most curious of all – why would he boast about all this in a letter to his highest superior, the Sun King Louis XIV? Would these be the symptoms of some kind of mental disease, as one of Ferriol's successors assumed a hundred years later?<sup>10</sup>

To answer these questions, one has to take Ferriol's cultural background into account, as well as the ambient communication system, and the kind of sources his

<sup>8</sup> Bacqué-Grammont/Kuneralp/Hitzel, *Représentants*, 27.

<sup>9</sup> In 1686, the new French ambassador to the Porte Pierre de Girardin was informed by one of his predecessors Denis de la Haye-Vantelet “que je pouvois me mettre comme je le souhaiteroit aux audiences du G. Seigneur et du Visir, en manteau ou en Cravatte, que pour luy il avoit pris ses premieres audiences en manteau et s'en estoit dispensé aux autres, que je ne dois point porter d'espée ce jour la, Mais la faire porter par un escuyer, que toute la livrée ne doit point avoir d'espées.” Pierre de Girardin, *Journal de mon Ambassade à la Porte*, BnF, MS, FR 7162, fol. 43r. This seems to have been the normal procedure until Ferriol's predecessor Castagnères.

<sup>10</sup> François Emmanuel Guignard de Saint-Priest, *Mémoires sur l'ambassade de France en Turquie, 1525–1770*, ed. Charles Schefer (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1974, reprint of the edition Paris 1877), 250: “La véhémence de M. de Ferriol était causée sans doute par un principe de maladie. Sa tête finit par s'altérer.”

official letters represent.<sup>11</sup> After all, in the world of early modern French court society, being appointed ambassador was a major career opportunity and one of the highest honours to which one could aspire, particularly if one belonged to the provincial *noblesse de robe* such as the Ferriols d'Argental from Metz.<sup>12</sup> But unlike other means of social advancement such as high-ranking charges in the *parlements* or the king's councils, there were particular risks attached to a diplomatic career. The most evident was the virtual exile from Paris and Versailles – the places to be for anyone who wanted to *faire sa cour*, i.e. cultivate patron-client relationships and climb the social ladder. From this point of view, there were few diplomatic posts as unattractive as the mission to Constantinople. Some of Ferriol's colleagues even felt they were unjustly exiled and tried everything to shorten or change their missions.<sup>13</sup>

There was partial relief for ambassadors in one of their specific duties: They had to send reports home regularly and usually did so at least once or twice monthly. On these occasions they wrote to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for the Navy, and sometimes to other high-ranking members of the Royal Council, who might well be their patrons. But first and foremost, they were allowed to address themselves directly to the king by which means they were likely to inspire some direct reactions of royal benevolence in front of the members of the *conseil d'en haut* where the best parts of their letters were read aloud. An expression of royal satisfaction made in these situations would create some favourable rumours among the courtiers and thereby augment the ambassador's social capital. Sometimes the king would even mention his ambassador's letters on other, more public occasions. The ambassador's friends and patrons then took care to divulge and disseminate all signs of royal contentment while playing down any royal or ministerial discontent. They also reported back to the ambassador the effect of his letters and gave him detailed recommendations on how he should write and to whom he should dispatch exotic presents. The correspondence of early modern (French) diplomats should not be mistaken for inferior administrative documents filled with 'private' matters and lacking the professionalism they would acquire in later centuries. Of course, these letters contained all sorts of information on political, religious, social and economic developments in the host countries as well as reports on the ambassador's negotiations. They have consequently been a treasure trove for researchers. Yet most of the time, these letters did not at all conform to

<sup>11</sup> On the specific characteristics and cultural backgrounds of early modern diplomats and their diplomacy see Hillard von Thiessen, "Diplomatie vom *type ancien*. Überlegungen zu einem Idealtypus des frühneuzeitlichen Gesandtschaftswesens," in: *Akteure der Außenbeziehungen. Netzwerke und Interkulturalität im historischen Wandel*, ed. Hillard von Thiessen and Christian Windler (Cologne; Weimar; Vienna: Böhlau, 2010), 471–503.

<sup>12</sup> On Ferriol's genealogy and his family background as the second of three sons of a *conseiller* at the *parlement* of Metz, see BnF, Cabinet de d'Hozier 138, 3550 Ferriol; Carrés de d'Hozier 255, fol. 77r–92r.

<sup>13</sup> This is the case of Pierre Girardin, cf. his Journal, BnF, MS, FR 7162, fol. 33r–38v.

the professional rules mapped out in contemporary tracts on “the perfect ambassador”; usually, they were not short and simple, they did not come to the point, and they did not refrain from flattery and rhetorical ornamentation.<sup>14</sup> Rather, they conformed to the social conventions of contemporary court factionalism and competition for prestige. Therefore, they have to be read in the context of each ambassador’s social network, his family, friends, patrons and clients.<sup>15</sup> These sources are not only interesting for *what* they tell us, but also for *how* they tell it and to *whom*.

In his letters to the court, Ferriol thus expresses himself as an eminent member of French court society and as an aspirant to even higher appointments and honours. His official correspondence had to compensate for his physical absence from Versailles – and therefore, it was used by him and all of his colleagues as a specific way of displaying his abilities of distiguishing himself and his skills of self-expression – just what the other courtiers did by means of conversation, ceremony and daily life at Versailles and Paris. In this way, Ferriol’s official correspondence can be read as a genuine self-narrative, the self in question being that of an early modern courtier incorporated into a multilateral social network of friends, patrons and clients.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> This is what François de Callières prescribed in his *Manière de négocier avec les souverains* published in 1716, cf. Jean-Claude Waquet, *François de Callières. L’art de négocier en France sous Louis XIV* (Paris: Éd. Rue d’Ulm, 2005); on this literature see also Maurizio Bazzoli, “Ragion di Stato e interessi degli stati. La trattatistica sull’ambasciatore dal XV al XVIII secolo,” *Nuova rivista storica* 86 (2002): 283–328; Heidrun Kugeler, “Le parfait Ambassadeur’. Zur Theorie der Diplomatie im Jahrhundert nach dem Westfälischen Frieden”, in: *Internationale Beziehungen in der Frühen Neuzeit. Ansätze und Perspektiven*, ed. Heidrun Kugeler, Christian Sepp, and Georg Wolf (Hamburg: Lit-Verlag, 2006), 180–211.

<sup>15</sup> For a new perspective on international relations based on the agents and their multiple social networks, see Hillard von Thiesen and Christian Windler, “Einleitung: Außenbeziehungen in akteurszentrierter Perspektive,” in: *Akteure der Außenbeziehungen. Netzwerke und Interkulturalität im historischen Wandel*, ed. Hillard von Thiesen and Christian Windler (Cologne; Weimar; Vienna: Böhlau, 2010), 1–12; *ibid.*, ed., *Nähe in der Ferne. Personale Verflechtung in den Außenbeziehungen der Frühen Neuzeit*, *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung*, Beiheft 36 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2005).

<sup>16</sup> Wolfgang Reinhard, *Freunde und Kreaturen. “Verflechtung” als Konzept zur Erforschung historischer Führungsgruppen. Römische Oligarchie um 1600* (Munich: Vögel, 1979); Heiko Droste, “Patronage in der Frühen Neuzeit. Institution und Kulturform,” *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 30 (2003): 555–590; Birgit Emich, Nicole Reinhardt, Hillard von Thiesen, and Christian Wieland, “Stand und Perspektiven der Patronageforschung. Zugleich eine Antwort auf Heiko Droste,” *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 32 (2005): 23–266; Sharon Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers, and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Elie Haddad, “Noble Clienteles in France in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries. A Historiographical Approach,” *French History* 20 (2006): 75–109; Gabriele Jancke, “Patronagebeziehungen in autobiographischen Schriften des 16. Jahrhunderts – Individualisierungsweisen?,” in: *Selbstzeugnisse in der Frühen Neuzeit. Individualisierungsweisen in interdisziplinärer Perspektive*, ed. Kaspar von Greyerz and Elisabeth Müller-Luckner (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2007), 13–31.

Yet, in this case, there was indeed more involved than just the ambassador's honour and personal career. If his correspondence was used by him as a means to acquire social prestige at home, some topics were more appropriate to achieve this than others. Diplomatic ceremonies such as processions, audiences and gift exchanges were particularly suitable because they symbolised power relations between states and princes<sup>17</sup> and thereby offered the ambassador the best occasion to display his true diplomatic skills and demonstrate his capacity and commitment to serve his king.

Due to an ever growing number of essays and tracts on international law and diplomacy, it was common knowledge among European diplomats by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century that, as ambassadors, they represented their sovereigns in an eminent way. Accordingly, they expected to receive the same ceremonial honours their sovereigns would if they were themselves present.<sup>18</sup> This was not merely a question of individual vanity. In fact, international relations in early modern Europe cannot be understood in terms of what would become the European state system by the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They should rather be perceived as relations between princes and noble families which functioned very much like one great international court society. Basically, this international "*society of princes*" (L. Bély) was ruled by the same kind of laws that also applied to any court society, which means that the rank of a sovereign within the international state system was manifested by the ceremonial honours he (i.e. his ambassadors) could enforce during public meetings.<sup>19</sup> These symbolic acts could be quoted as precedents and thus had a legal quality. This is why contemporary tracts on diplomacy and international law like Abraham de Wicquefort's *L'Ambassadeur et ses fonctions* (1682) affirmed that "during ceremonies, [the ambassador] cannot abdicate his rank without committing a crime"<sup>20</sup>, the crime in question being that of betraying his master's honour and claims for power at the same time. And this is also why details of ceremony were so ruthlessly nego-

<sup>17</sup> André Krischer, "Souveränität als sozialer Status: Zur Funktion des diplomatischen Zeremoniells in der Frühen Neuzeit," in: *Diplomatisches Zeremoniell in Europa und im Mittleren Osten in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Ralf Kauz, Giorgio Rota, and Jan Paul Niederkorn (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009), 1–32.

<sup>18</sup> Abraham de Wicquefort, *L'Ambassadeur et ses fonctions* (Cologne: Pierre Marteau, 1690), 1:2; see also Krischer, *Souveränität*, 10.

<sup>19</sup> Lucien Bély, *La société des princes* (Paris: Fayard, 1999); *ibid.*, "Souveraineté et souverains: La question du cérémonial dans les relations internationales à l'époque moderne," *Annuaire-Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de France* (1993): 27–43; Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, "Die Wissenschaft der feinen Unterschiede. Das Präzedenzrecht und die europäischen Monarchien vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert," *Majestas* 10 (2003): 125–150; *ibid.*, "Honores regii. Die Königswürde im zeremoniellen Zeichensystem der Frühen Neuzeit," in: *Dreihundert Jahre Preussische Krönung. Eine Tagungsdokumentation*, ed. Johannes Kunisch (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2002), 1–26; William Roosen, "Early Modern Diplomatic Ceremonial: A System Approach," *Journal of Modern History* 52 (1980): 452–476.

<sup>20</sup> Wicquefort, *L'Ambassadeur*, 2:3: "Dans les Assemblées de ceremonies il ne peut pas quitter son rang sans crime [...]."



tiated beforehand, and why quarrels about precedence were so frequent in early modern Europe.

Returning to the question of diplomatic correspondence as self-narrative, it turns out that the ambassador's *self* was in fact multiple. Acting as his king's representative during diplomatic ceremonies, the ambassador incorporated an eminent self of royal majesty. Addressing the king in his reports, however, he reverts to his more humble self as a client and a courtier in search of prestige and career opportunities. Naturally, he proves himself worthy of the king's esteem by performing as perfectly as possible as his ambassador. But this also meant he had to show in his correspondence that he was a perfectly *honnête homme*, with all the virtues of a true nobleman, which in turn, could have all sorts of implications, namely when the sword was involved.<sup>21</sup> Bearing all this in mind, we might understand why, in fact, by subverting the Ottoman court protocol, Ferriol proves to be indeed the Sun King's "parfait ambassadeur."

### *Saber-Rattling with the Habsburgs: Diplomatic Ranking at the Porte after Karlowitz*

In the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, Julius von Rohr, a German expert in European ceremonies, was still quite astonished at the Ottoman practice of dressing foreign diplomats in caftans or robes of honour before introducing them to the Sultan.<sup>22</sup> That this practice might seem strange to a European observer can easily be explained by the prominent role of attire in European court life and ceremonials. Attire and adornment made evident the hierarchical order of the early modern court society. Accordingly, an ever increasing number of sumptuary laws regulated the social as well as the ceremonial order.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, attire was one of the main features of noble prestige and conspicuous consumption. The universal competition for status and prestige appears most clearly in the astonishing development of courtly fashion during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, a development

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Anette Höfer and Rolf Reichardt, "Honnête homme, Honnêteté, Honnêtes gens," in *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich 7*, ed. Rolf Reichardt and Eberhard Schmitt (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1986), 1–73.

<sup>22</sup> Julius Bernard von Rohr, *Einleitung zur Ceremoniel-Wissenschaft der Grossen Herren*, facsimile of the edition Berlin 1733, ed. and comment. Monika Schlechte (Leipzig; Weinheim: acta humaniorum, 1990), 403: "Es ist auch bey den Türkischen Audienzen etwas wunderliches, daß sich einige frembde Gesandten vorher mit Türkischen Kaftans überkleiden müssen."

<sup>23</sup> Martin Dinges, "Von der 'Lesbarkeit der Welt' zum universalisierten Wandel durch individuelle Strategien. Die soziale Funktion der Kleidung in der höfischen Gesellschaft," *Saeculum* 44 (1993): 90–112; Jan Keupp, "Macht und Mode. Politische Interaktion im Zeichen der Kleidung," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 86 (2004): 251–281; Alan Hunt, "The governance of consumption: sumptuary laws and shifting forms of regulation," *Economy and Society* 25 (1996): 410–427.

leading to some well-known caricatures of exaggerated aristocratic attire on the eve of the French Revolution.<sup>24</sup>

Now, considering that all this European splendour was to be covered by an Ottoman caftan at the crucial moment of the public audience, surely this was irksome. Some thirty years before Ferriol's appearance at the Gate of Felicity, one French ambassador's secretary expressed his discomfort at the sight of the caftans his master and the other French dignitaries had to wear, stating that "[the robes of honour] were so ugly compared to their own attire. But it is an inviolable custom that no one will ever be admitted to His Highness without this sort of caftan that rather serves to hide the embellishments than to bring out their brilliance."<sup>25</sup> Consequently, the diplomats had to find other means to affirm their specific rank and dignity and display magnificence.

Usually, European ambassadors at the Sublime Porte managed to cope quite well with this situation. Since all had to comply with this major element of Ottoman court protocol, they simply adapted it to their own purposes of symbolic rivalry. In fact, the quality and the number of robes of honour received by an ambassador during his audiences with the Sultan and with the Grand Vizier were common currency in the economy of honour and symbolic distinction reigning within the diplomatic corps and on the contemporary diplomatic stage. Ferriol mastered this symbolic language as well as his fellow ambassadors. When he prepared his audience with the Grand Vizier which, according to custom, took place some weeks before his reception at the *Topkapı Sarayı*, he carried on painstaking negotiations with the vizier concerning the quality of the caftan he was to receive during the ceremony. Ferriol laid claim to a caftan lined with sable which was considered the most valuable fur, reserved only for the highest Ottoman dignitaries.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink and Rolf Reichardt, "Modekarikatur und Gesellschaftssatire (um 1780)," in *Kauft schöne Bilder, Kupferstiche ...*. *Illustrierte Flugblätter und französisch-deutscher Kulturtransfer 1600–1830*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink and Rolf Reichardt (Mainz: Verlag Hermann Schmidt, 1996), 78–80; Daniel Roche, *La culture des apparences. Une histoire du vêtement (XVII<sup>e</sup>–XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)* (Paris: Fayard, 1989).

<sup>25</sup> Edouard de la Croix, *Mémoires du sieur de la Croix, cy-devant Secrétaire de l'Ambassade de Constantinople. Contenant Diverses Relations très curieuses de l'Empire Othoman. Première Partie* (Paris: Claude Barin, au Palais, sur le second Perron de la Sainte Chapelle, 1684), 65: "Monsieur de Nointel [...] s'arresta avec sa suite pour prendre dix huit vestes, qu'il fallut endosser quoy qu'elle fussent beaucoup plus vilaines que leurs habits, estant une coûtume inviolable que personne ne soit admis devant sa Hautesse, s'il n'est revestu de cette sorte de Kaftans qui servent plutôt à cacher les broderies dont l'on est couvert qu'à donner de l'éclat."

<sup>26</sup> Olivia Pelletier, "Les robes d'honneur et les ambassades européennes à la Cour ottomane," in *Topkapı à Versailles. Trésor de la Cour ottomane. Musée Nationale des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, 4 mai–15 août 1999*, ed. Anne de Margerie and Laurence Posselle (Paris: Association française d'action artistique, 1999), 89–100; Monika Springbert-Hinsen, *Die Hil'a. Studien zur Geschichte des geschenkten Gewandes im islamischen Kulturkreis* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2000), 242; Suraiya Faroqhi, "Introduction, or why and how one might want to study Ottoman clothes," in *Ottoman Costumes. From Textile to Identity*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi and Christoph K. Neumann (Istanbul: Eren, 2004), 15–48.

According to Ferriol, the Vizier's negotiators "seemed horrified by my proposition, saying that this would signify an absolute reversal of the empire's protocol."<sup>27</sup>

In fact, this first negotiation of Ferriol's in Istanbul is a prelude to what would happen during his attempted audience with the Sultan. Again, we might find Ferriol's presumption strange and his blatant contempt for Ottoman tradition arrogant. Yet his behaviour was nothing but appropriate if the symbolic aspects of his charge are taken into account. In fact, Ferriol arrived in Istanbul when the relations between Europe and the Ottoman Empire were at a turning point. Since the failed siege of Vienna in 1683, the Turks had suffered a series of military defeats against a coalition lead by the Habsburgs, including Venice, Russia and Poland-Lithuania. After a major defeat at Zenta, the Ottomans finally negotiated a peace that was signed in January 1699 at Karlowitz. This treaty was perceived as shameful by the Ottomans. Among other things it ceded Hungary and Transylvania to the Habsburgs and was to mark the beginning of the Ottoman retreat from south-eastern Europe. The peace treaty was to be solemnly acknowledged by the exchange of special envoys, or *ambassadeurs extraordinaires*. The Habsburg ambassador Wolfgang Count of Oettingen-Wallerstein had met his Ottoman counterpart Ibrahim Pasha on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1699, on the newly-agreed frontier in Symia.<sup>28</sup> While Ferriol was negotiating his audience with the Grand Vizier from December 15–25, Oettingen-Wallerstein was steadily approaching the Ottoman capital.

The imminent arrival of the new Habsburg ambassador posed a major challenge to the French. Ferriol had received detailed instructions from his master concerning the problem of precedence. Indeed, Louis XIV had made it quite clear "that one of the most important things [...] is to continue to take precedence over all other foreign ministers [...]."<sup>29</sup> Traditionally, the French had taken precedence over all other European powers at the Sublime Porte since the first European diplomatic missions to the Ottoman Empire in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This was possible since the Habsburg Emperors were considered mere kings of Hungary by the Ottomans and had no permanent ambassador at the Porte. Concerning the situation after the Peace of Karlowitz, however, Louis XIV admitted that, once the Emperor's ambassador would have arrived in Istanbul, "it would be difficult to take precedence over him".<sup>30</sup> Even so, Ferriol was at least to leave things

<sup>27</sup> Ferriol to Louis XIV (January 2, 1700), MAE, CP, Turquie, 33, fol. 53v–54r.

<sup>28</sup> Ernst D. Petritsch, "Zeremoniell bei Empfängen habsburgischer Gesandtschaften in Konstantinopel," in *Diplomatisches Zeremoniell in Europa und im Mittleren Osten in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Ralf Kauz, Giorgio Rota, and Jan Paul Niederkorn (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009), 301–322.

<sup>29</sup> Pierre Duparc ed., *Recueil des instructions données aux ambassadeurs et ministres de France depuis les traités de Westphalie jusqu'à la révolution française, t. XXIX Turquie* (Paris: Editions du centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1969), 173: "[...] une des principales choses qu'il doit observer [...] est de maintenir sur tous les autres ministres étrangers la préséance [...]."

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.: "Il seroit difficile de luy disputer la préséance [...]."

as vague and uncertain as possible and to avoid meeting the Habsburg ambassador at all. In any case, Louis wanted Ferriol to make sure that he would see the Grand Vizier and the Sultan before the Count of Oettingen-Wallerstein. Finally, Louis concluded,

“If the Sir de Ferriol thinks he can take precedence over this ambassador who should only be considered in Constantinople as an envoy of the King of Hungary, and if he judges that the Porte is willing to maintain the treatment it has always reserved to the ambassador of the [French] king who is considered by them as an Emperor and as the first prince of Christianity, his majesty thinks it right that he should take precedence over the Emperor’s ambassador as well as over all the others.”<sup>31</sup>

With these instructions in mind, the question of whether or not Ferriol should claim a caftan lined with sable for his audience with the Sultan turns out to be crucial, because as Ferriol himself argued, the English and the Dutch ambassadors had already received such caftans on their return from the peace conference at Karlowitz, and the Habsburg ambassador would without doubt also receive this kind of robe of honour. Notwithstanding the vizier’s affirmation that the caftans lined with sable were distributed exceptionally as a special reward to the English and Dutch ambassadors because of their mediation at the peace congress, Ferriol insisted on this being a (for France, dangerous) precedent. From Ferriol’s point of view then, accepting ordinary caftans on the occasion of his public audience would mean to defer not only to the Habsburg ambassador, which would have been acceptable at the worst, but even to the English and the Dutch ones, which was simply inconceivable:

“I answered that since Your Majesty’s ambassador has always been the first in dignity here and intended to maintain this superiority to all others whoever they might be, it would be a bad start for me to let them treat me with inferior honours and to accept a simple caftan while the ambassadors of England and Holland and the Emperor’s ambassador have all received or will receive a fur-lined one. And since this is here the most valuable honour, I cannot give in on this.”<sup>32</sup>

Just as his master Ferriol understood that after the Peace of Karlowitz, a fundamental change had taken place on the international stage. The Habsburgs were

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 174: “Enfin si le sieur de Fériel [sic] croit pouvoir soutenir la préséance sur cet ambassadeur, qui ne doit être regardé à Constantinople que comme ministre du roy d’Hongrie, et qu’il juge que la Porte sera disposée à maintenir le traitement qu’elle a toujours fait à l’ambassadeur du roy, qu’elle considère comme empereur et comme le premier prince de la chrétienté, Sa Majesté trouvera bon qu’il précède l’ambassadeur de l’empereur aussy bien que ceux des autres puissances.”

<sup>32</sup> Ferriol to Louis XIV (January 2, 1700), MAE, CP, Turquie, 33, fol. 55r–v. “Je repliquay que l’amb.r de vostre Majesté ayant primé icy de tout tems et voulant conserver cette superiorité sur tous les autres quels qu’ils puissent estre, ce seroit mal debuter que de me laisser traiter avec des honneurs inferieurs et d’accepter un simple kaftan au milieu des amb.res d’ang.re et d’Hollande et de celuy de l’Empereur qui ont tous receu ou doivent recevoir des vestes de zebelines, Et que comme cestoit icy l’honneur le plus distinguée; je ne pouvois me relâcher sur ce point.”

now prevailing in the Balkans. For some time to come, the Austrian military forces would no longer be bound at their eastern frontier, which, on the eve of the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714), was a clear disadvantage for the Sun King. Moreover, a new player had entered the international scene with Tsar Peter the Great who had captured the fortress of Asov near the Don river in 1696 and had also participated in the peace conference at Karlowitz. On the symbolic level, this new constellation of powers was expressed by a battle over precedence on the Ottoman diplomatic stage that was only to begin in 1699/1700. Up until then, no one had seriously tried to challenge the French claims of precedence at the Porte. Yet by 1699/1700, the Dutch and the English seemed willing to take advantage of the new power relations. With the arrival of the Habsburg ambassador, the traditional order of precedence at the Sublime Porte suddenly seemed a negotiable matter. Later on, in 1703, with the arrival of a permanent Russian ambassador claiming to take precedence over anyone but the Habsburg's ambassador, the English, Dutch and Venetian ambassadors would actually join forces and try to re-organize the order of precedence at the Sublime Porte to the disadvantage of the French.<sup>33</sup> For this reason Ferriol was right to think in 1699/1700 that the question of the sable-lined caftan was a fundamental issue. It was indeed a first threat to French claims of precedence in a symbolic battle that would occupy Ferriol until the end of his mission. This battle over precedence was the symbolic equivalent to the negative consequences to the Sun King during the War of the Spanish Succession which would set clear limits to French hegemonic aspirations in Europe.

Yet in 1699, Ferriol was forced to compromise, all the more so as he was not sure "whether Your Majesty would approve of me going to extremes at the very beginning of my negotiations."<sup>34</sup> Not wanting to delay his audiences with the Grand Vizier and the Sultan until the arrival of the Emperor's ambassador, Ferriol accepted a simple caftan in his public audience with the Grand Vizier, and was promised a fur-lined one at a later moment during a private meeting. But of course, this was a poor compromise. The description Ferriol made to the king of his audience with the Grand Vizier which took place on December 25, 1699, clearly tried to make up for this symbolic defeat by pointing out the unheard-of magnificence the French displayed on that occasion.<sup>35</sup> In many regards, this first audience, although of minor political importance, functioned as a kind of dress rehearsal for the one with the Sultan. Ferriol's report is dated January 2<sup>nd</sup>, only three days before the audience with the Sultan was to take place. The ambassador points out three remarkable ceremonial innovations the Grand Vizier alleg-

<sup>33</sup> Ferriol to Louis XIV, (December 3, 1703), MAE, CP, Turquie, 40, fol. 170r-173v.

<sup>34</sup> Ferriol to Louis XIV, (January 2, 1700), MAE, CP Turquie 33, fol. 57v: "[...] et ne sachant pas si votre Majesté trouveroit bon que dans le commencement de ma negociation je misse les affaires dans la dernière extremité [...]."

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., fol. 59r-60r.

edly allowed as a special honour. First, against all tradition, the Grand Vizier did not keep Ferriol waiting one second but entered the room at the same time as his guest. Then, as the Grand Vizier was unable to distribute all caftans destined to Ferriol and his entourage because there were too many of them and it simply took too long, he stopped after the fifty-fourth. Third and most important of all, Ferriol tells the king that “[...] all [French] officers, all noblemen and all naval guards had their swords on them, which has never before been tolerated.”<sup>36</sup> While this last ceremonial innovation might have been of minor importance in the eyes of the Grand Vizier, Ferriol’s attempt to apply it eleven days later to his audience with the Sultan was clearly intolerable to the Ottomans.

Ferriol’s predecessor Chateauneuf de Castagnères claims to have put Ferriol on his guard immediately after his return from the audience with the Grand Vizier. He suggested then that the French should leave their swords at home when they went to see the Sultan, because otherwise they would most likely be asked to take them off, which would compromise their honour. Ferriol however is reported to have disagreed on this. According to Castagnères, he stated that even if his entourage would be asked to lay down their swords, this would only increase his own honour and distinction since he intended to hold on to his.<sup>37</sup> Thus, if Castagnères is to be trusted, Ferriol had already taken the decision to keep his sword a long time before his audience. It is true that Castagnères himself had affirmed that in 1690 he had indeed carried a sword during his audience with the Sultan, and that this was the precedent mentioned by Ferriol in his discussion with Mavrocordatos.<sup>38</sup> But it is also true that “everybody knew that Monsieur de Castagnères only had a tiny knife completely hidden by his clothes.”<sup>39</sup> The Ottomans simply had not detected Castagnères’s weapon. Ferriol on the contrary intended to carry his large parade sword, knowing perfectly well that he would thereby challenge Ottoman court protocol. He deliberately sought to provoke a scandal.

Certainly parading his sword at the audience with the Sultan was Ferriol’s answer to the affair of the caftan. The symbolic defeat suffered at the Grand Vizier’s had to be wiped out by an act that could not easily be topped. If Ferriol failed to maintain his rank on his first audience, he would make sure to prevail on the more significant occasion of his audience with the Sultan. Therefore, the sword was meant to compensate for the ordinary caftan. That this kind of reasoning was not absurd by contemporary standards can be concluded from the

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., fol. 60r: “[...] tous les Officiers, gentilshommes et gardes de la marine avoient leurs espées, ce qui n’voit jamais esté souffert jusques icy.”

<sup>37</sup> Chateauneuf de Castagnères to his brother Abbé de Chateauneuf (January 7, 1700), MAE, CP, Turquie 36, fol. 69r.

<sup>38</sup> *Extrait d’une lettre de Mr. de Castagnères de Châteauneuf du 27 avril 1690. sur son audience avec l’espée*, MAE, Mémoires et documents (MD), Turquie 105, fol. 223r–224r.

<sup>39</sup> *Memoire sur le different qui regarde la pretention des Ambassadeurs du Roy, d’aller à l’audience du Grand Seigneur avec leur épée*, MAE, MD, Turquie 105, fol. 225r: “Personne n’ignore que Mr. de Castagnere n’avoit qu’un petit couteau que son habit couvroit.”



fact that Ferriol's colleague Castagnères interpreted the facts just like this when he reported to Louis XIV after his return to France.<sup>40</sup>

The sword lent itself particularly well for this purpose because of its symbolic significance. Inherited from the Middle Ages, the imaginary association of the sword was with the *miles christianus*, the Christian warrior, which was the central element in the self-perception of early modern noblemen.<sup>41</sup> As Ferriol himself put it, it was the most important ornament of noble attire as it symbolised the nobleman's honour and reputation. Moreover, on the French ambassador to the Ottoman Sultan, the sword attested the French king's claim to be the first and only protector of all Christians living under Ottoman rule.

For Ferriol's purposes, it was irrelevant that he failed in his attempt to enter the audience chamber with his sword: The decisive fact was that he had actually made this claim and that he had refused to participate in the ceremony without his sword. Due to the inflationary logic of ceremonial language, anyone who now went to the Sultan's audience without his sword would thereby automatically defer to the French in that they would be tacitly admitting that they could be treated in a way the French deemed degrading – unless they found a way out of the predicament. In fact, the Habsburg Emperor's ambassador met the challenge with an elegant trick. When the Count of Oettingen-Wallerstein entered the Ottoman capital on February 8<sup>th</sup>, he was attired as what Ferriol described as “neither German, nor Turkish, nor Hungarian, with neither sword nor hat [...]”.<sup>42</sup> Likewise, five days later, at his audience with the Sultan, the Emperor's ambassador appeared “in a very strange disguise [...], being dressed in the costume of a stage actor with large sleeves rolled up to his shoulders, in order to excuse him from carrying a sword.”<sup>43</sup> Oettingen-Wallerstein had simply evaded the symbolic attack by choosing a Hungarian costume that did not involve a sword as its “principal ornament”. His ingenuity probably caused Ferriol some frustration for which he could only compensate by ridiculing his opponent's appearance. Again, Castagnères hit the crucial point when he affirmed that:

<sup>40</sup> *Mémoire de M. de Chateaufort au Roy a son retour de Constple. pour luy rendre compte de son Ambassade*, MAE, MD, Turquie 1, fol. 110r–133r, here fol. 121r–v.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Pascal Briost, Hervé Drévilion, and Pierre Serna, *Croiser le fer. Violence et culture de l'épée dans la France moderne* (Seysel: Champ Vallon, 2002).

<sup>42</sup> Ferriol to Louis XIV (February 9, 1700), *Correspondance du marquis de Ferriol, ambassadeur de Louis XIV à Constantinople*, ed. Émile Varenbergh, *Annales de l'Académie Royale d'Archéologie de Belgique* 26 (1878): 481–865, here 566: “[...] un habit qui n'est ny allemand, ny turc, ny hongrois, sans espée et sans chapeau [...]”.

<sup>43</sup> Ferriol to Louis XIV (February 26, 1700), *Correspondance*, ed. Varenbergh, 569–570: “L'ambassadeur [...] s'étant travesti d'une manière toute singulière pour voir le Grand-Seigneur, et ayant pris l'habit d'un personnage de théâtre avec de grandes manches pendantes retroussées sur les épaules, pour le dispenser de porter une espée [...]”.

“[s]ince the Hungarian attire the count of Oettingen came up with does not include this ornament which is inseparable from the French attire; the sword cannot serve as an equivalent to the [fur lined] caftan [...]”.<sup>44</sup>

The king affirmed accordingly that

“since the Emperor’s ambassador complied so easily with the Turk’s will by changing his attire [...], there will be even more obstacles to the reception you are entitled to ask; it is nevertheless very important not to give in on the question.”<sup>45</sup>

Thus, the issue of diplomatic ranking at the Sublime Porte was still open to re-interpretation. The affair of the sword had not really done the trick. However, it allowed the French to make a virtue out of necessity. As long as Ferriol was not officially received by the Sultan, his status remained unclear and he could pretend to act incognito, making it easier for him to cope with the presence of the Habsburg ambassador and the various symbolic humiliations implied. Moreover, the fact that everyday diplomatic business went on as usual and that French commerce did not suffer any inconvenience from Ferriol’s behaviour was interpreted to the advantage of the French. Castagnères wrote,

“One of the strongest proofs of the respect the Porte shows for [...] Your Majesty is the way in which the Grand Signor has reacted to Monsieur de Ferriol’s refusal to take his audience.

This prince returned from hunting especially for the audience. He hears a dispute embarrassing to Ottoman pride right in front of his door; they keep him waiting in vain half an hour on his throne [...]. [Yet] the prince gives the entire blame to the Vizier who thought he would die for exposing his master to this affront.”<sup>46</sup>

### *Attire and Power Relations:*

#### *Subordinating the Ottomans to European International Law*

Castagnères’s report shows that the message implied in the dispute over the sword was not only addressed to Ferriol’s fellow ambassadors and to all Euro-

<sup>44</sup> *Mémoire de M. de Chateauneuf au Roy a son retour de Constple. pour luy rendre compte de son Ambassade*, MAE, MD, Turquie 1, fol. 110r–133r, here fol. 121v.

<sup>45</sup> Louis XIV to Ferriol (April 8, 1700), MAE CP Turquie 33, fol. 101r–v: “Je suis persuadé que la facilité de l’ambassad.r [l’ambassadeur] de l’Empereur a se conformer a la volonté des Turcs en changeant d’habit pour cet effet fera naistre encore de plus grands obstacles a la reception que vous estes en droit de pretendre il est cependant trop jimportant de ne se pas relascher en cette occasion.”

<sup>46</sup> *Mémoire de M. de Chateauneuf au Roy a son retour de Constple. pour luy rendre compte de son Ambassade*, MAE, MD, Turquie 1, fol. 110r–133r, here fol. 121v: “[...] Sire, une des plus fortes preuves de la consideration ou est aujourd’huy le nom de V.M. a la Porte, c’est la maniere dont le grand Seigneur a reçu le refus que fit Mr. de Ferriol de prendre son audience. Ce Prince revint exprez de la chasse pour la lui donner: Il entend à la porte de sa chambre des contestations auxquelles la fierté ottomane estoit peu accoutumée, on le fait attendre une demie heure inutilem.t sur son Trône. [...], en sorte que tout le ressentiment du Prince tomba sur le Visir qui pensa perir pour avoir exposé son maître a cet affront.”



pean princes but also to the Ottomans. For Ferriol, there seemed to have been no doubt at all that the Ottoman Empire was part of the European society of princes.<sup>47</sup> Clearly, Ferriol could not even imagine that the *ius gentium* that was just being invented in Europe did not apply to the Ottoman Empire, since he constantly referred to it during his challenge with the Ottoman court officials. Ferriol's thought experiment on what would happen if the French king himself came to Istanbul or if the Sultan visited France, implies that the Ottoman ruler and the French king basically were on a par with each other. It reveals a vision of Ottoman-French relations as principally based on equality and mutuality – a conception that would begin to govern international politics in Europe by the late 17<sup>th</sup> century but was not shared by the Ottomans at all.<sup>48</sup> Yet there was still more to it than that. Even if according to the *ius gentium*, all members of the international state system were, in principle, equal, there still was a practical hierarchy based on military power and achievement. So, in Ferriol's understanding, being part of the society of princes, the Sultan was consequently bound to acknowledge the Sun King's claim to universal dominance after the Treaty of Ryswick (1697). Moreover, the French were well aware that the Peace of Karlowitz was considered a major defeat for the Ottoman Empire. "They are no longer the Turks of the old days who claimed to rule the whole world", Ferriol affirmed in a letter to Louis XIV.<sup>49</sup> Accordingly,

"It would be easy for Your Majesty to teach them sense [...] with only one fifth of the armed forces you have employed in your last war, and with Your Majesty's permission, I will work out a project for the execution of what I am affirming. The knowledge I have acquired of the force – or rather, the weakness of this Empire and its military discipline give me all means to keep my engagements."<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Ferriol shared this opinion with many of his European contemporaries, cf. Holger Th. Gräf, "Erbfeind der Christenheit oder potentieller Bündnispartner? Das Osmanenreich im europäischen Mächtesystem des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts – gegenwartspolitisch betrachtet," in *Das Osmanische Reich und die Habsburgermonarchie*, ed. Marlene Kurz, Martin Scheutz, Karl Vocelka, and Thomas Winkelbauer (Vienna; Munich: Oldenbourg, 2005), 37–51.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Guido Komatsu, "Die Türkei und das europäische Staatensystem im 16. Jahrhundert. Untersuchungen zu Theorie und Praxis des frühneuzeitlichen Völkerrechts," in *Recht und Reich im Zeitalter der Reformation. Festschrift für Horst Rabe*, ed. Christine Roll et al. (Frankfurt am Main et al.: Lang, 1996), 121–144.

<sup>49</sup> Ferriol to Louis XIV (January 2, 1700), *Correspondance*, ed. Varenbergh, 544: "Ce n'est plus les Turcs d'autrefois, qui prétendoient dominer toute la terre [...]."

<sup>50</sup> Ferriol to Louis XIV (January 2, 1700), MAE, CP, Turquie, 33. fol. 58r–v: "Il seroit aisé a Vot. Majesté de les mettre à la raison [...] avec la cinquième partie des forces quelle a employée dans la dernière guerre Et si V. M.te me l'ordonne Je travailleray a un projet pour l'exécution de ce que j'avance, les connoissances que je me suis acquises des forces ou plustost de la foiblesse de cet Empire et de la discipline militaire que j'ay veu dans leurs armées me donneront les moyens de satisfaire a mes engagements."

Ferriol's warmongering was to be kept secret, and therefore he had it encrypted in his letter. Yet, by rejecting Ottoman court protocol on the occasion of his public audience, Ferriol, in a sense, told the Ottomans just this: it is no longer you who set the rules.

With all this, we must also bear in mind that European observers had always perceived Ottoman court protocol as particularly humiliating. Ambassadors usually justified their participation by pointing out the uncivilised and brutal character of the Turks and the despotic nature of their government. So the symbolic humiliation somehow did not really count since it came from uncivilised barbarians. Evidently, all this did not go without serious contradictions. Ferriol in particular could not treat the Ottomans as equal participants in the international state system and at the same time claim them to be barbaric outsiders. If you took as seriously as he did the ambassador's task to personify the king's majesty during public ceremony, it must have seemed impossible to comply with Ottoman court protocol. For this would not only have meant to dress in a caftan and take off the sword, but also to be led to the audience by two guards, to kneel down in front of the Sultan and to kiss the hem of his robe. Clearly, this was totally incompatible with the Sun King's dignity. Ferriol thus took the sword as a pretext to avoid a humiliating encounter, thereby identifying his personal honour as a noble warrior with the Sun King's royal majesty. He jumped at the occasion to demonstrate his uncompromising submission to his master by declaring that he would rather die on the spot than accept humiliation. Oddly enough, he could only win in this situation: Had he died, he would have been the martyr of his king's glory. Had he succeeded, so much the better. As it were, the audience failed, which was tantamount to a symbolic victory of the French over the Ottomans. Consequently, Ferriol made sure that news of the incident was widely disseminated, much to the annoyance of the Ottoman government.<sup>51</sup>

Ferriol's example makes it clear that the complexity of the *diplomatic persona* entails ambiguous significations of attire in diplomatic self-narratives. Above all, the function of attire here cannot be reduced to the ascription of individual, social or even cultural identities, even if this is a case of inter-cultural contact. Of course, by clinging to his sword, Ferriol proves to be a true Christian nobleman and he may have gained some prestige according to the logic of the early modern court society. But with the question of whether or not he takes the ordinary caftan and holds on to his sword, there is much more at stake than his personal honour and career or

<sup>51</sup> A slightly abridged version of Ferriol's own report to Louis XIV was published as a foreword in the famous costume book *Recueil de cent estampes représentant différentes nations du Levant tirées sur les tableaux peints d'après nature en 1707 et 1708 par les ordres de M. de Ferriol et gravées en 1712 et 1713* (Paris: Le Hay 1714); cf. also *Relation, de ce qui s'est passé entre Monsieur de Ferriol, Ambassadeur du Roy de France, à Constantinople, et les Premiers-Ministres de l'Empire Ottoman, touchant le ceremoniel, qui se doit observer aux audiences solennelles du Grand-Seigneur* (s.l., s.n., s.d. ca. 1700), which is a printed version of the anonymous report kept at the BnF, MS, FR 10209, fol. 128r–133v.

his self-conception as a nobleman. Firstly, attire was a lively weapon in the symbolic battle over precedence being waged between the French and the Austrian Habsburgs. Secondly, the sword that would not stay hidden underneath the Ottoman robe of honour had indeed helped to reveal and to affirm symbolically a new conception of Ottoman-French relations. By refusing to submit to the traditional Ottoman dresscode and by claiming that the French or European one must not be excluded from public ceremony, Ferriol in a way imposes the European standard of international law on the Ottomans. Within the symbolic language of court protocol, as the *diplomatic persona* acquires royal dignity, his way of attiring himself turns into a means of expressing relations of power between states. In Ferriol's case, it is a way of affirming French superiority towards anyone, including the Sultan who by the late 17<sup>th</sup> century had definitely lost his reputation of invincibility.

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