

# Jews in the Ottoman Foreign Service Dispatched in the Romanian Principalities (Wallachia and Moldova) Until Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century

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**Abstract:** This paper deals with the Jewish diplomatic representatives dispatched by the Ottomans in the Romanian principalities (Wallachia and Moldova) during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Throughout history, various types of representatives of the Ottoman Sublime Porte (Bâb-ı Âli) could be met first at the Wallachian and Moldovan Princely Courts, and later on at Romania's Princely Court (after 1859), respectively Royal Court (after 1866). These included what could be called "official diplomats," but also other types of envoys, such as financial delegates. At the same time, the Sultan could choose to be represented by a special emissary sent from Constantinople or by a local resident who would serve as what we would call today "honorary consul." Not surprisingly in the Ottoman tradition, among these representatives of the Sublime Porte one can find a number of Jews, mostly, but not exclusively, Sephardic. Surprising, on the other hand, is the fact that some of these Jews were legal subjects of other states (i.e. the Austrian Empire), but this did not prevent the Ottoman officials from appointing them as their personal envoys. The paper therefore traces the evolution of this complex diplomatic representation from the 16<sup>th</sup> century until the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Keywords:** History of Religions, Jews, Diplomacy, Jewish Diplomats, Non-Muslim Diplomats, Ottoman Foreign Service, Romanian Principalities.

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## Osmanlı Hariciyesinde Eflak Moldava (Boğdan) Vilayetlerinde 20. Yüzyıla Kadar Görevlendirilen Yahudiler

**Öz:** Bu makale, Osmanlılar tarafından 19. yüzyılda Eflak-Boğdan (bugünkü Romanya) Vilayetlerine gönderilen Yahudi diplomatik temsilcilerle ilgilidir. Tarih boyunca, Osmanlı Devleti'nde Bâb-ı Âli'nin çeşitli temsilcilerin, önce Eflak ve Moldova Prenslik Saraylarında ve daha sonra da Romanya Prenslik Sarayı'nda (1859'dan sonra) ve Kraliyet Sarayı'nda (1866'dan sonra) görmek mümkündür. Bunların arasında “resmi diplomatlar” olarak adlandırılacak temsilciler yanında aynı zamanda mali delegeler gibi diğer elçi türlerini de içeriyordu. Aynı zamanda Sultan, o zamanki Konstantiniyye'den gönderilen özel bir temsilciyle veya bugün “fahri konsolos” diyebileceğimiz bir ‘yerel elçi’ tarafından da temsil edilmeyi seçebiliyordu. Osmanlı geleneğinde Bâb-ı Âli'nin bu temsilcileri arasında, tamamı olmasa da çoğu Sefarad kökenli pek çok Yahudi'nin varlığı şaşırtıcı değildir. Öte yandan şaşırtıcı olan bir husus, Osmanlı'yı temsil eden bu Yahudilerin bazılarının aslen diğer devletlerin (mesela Avusturya İmparatorluğu'nun) yasal tebaası olması ve bu durumun, Osmanlı devlet yetkililerinin onları kişisel elçi olarak atmasına engel olmamış olmasıydı. Bu nedenle makale, bu karmaşık diplomatik temsilin 16. yüzyıldan 20. yüzyılın başına kadar olan gelişiminin izlerini sürmektedir.

**Anahtar Kavramlar:** Dinler Tarihi, Yahudiler, Diploması, Yahudi Diplomatlar, Gayrimüslim Diplomatlar, Osmanlı Hariciyesi, Romanya Vilayetleri, Eflak, Boğdan (Moldova).

### Introduction

Religion and diplomacy are two significant fields in which identities are highly relevant. When the Ottoman Empire, with its multiethnic and multi-religious landscape and culture, found itself a declining power, forced to rely more on diplomacy than military, preferring negotiation to force, towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the leading elites started realizing the need for a change in both the organization and the enforcement of civil power. Given that “the empire no longer had the strength to protect itself against European might as it once had, by military force, the scribal officials became increasingly”<sup>1</sup> important. Among other developments, this also led to the emergence of a Western type Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1835. There was, however, one problem: there were not many Muslim statesmen or bureaucrats fluent in European languages. The new Ministry had therefore to rely primarily on its non-Muslim subjects for the initial ambassadorial positions. Even though it was not too long before the system established an office of translators, through which Muslim officials were trained to be statesmen with foreign language skills, who later served as representatives of the Empire, until there were enough Ottoman Muslim diplomats in service the Porte employed non-Muslim officials as members of the diplomatic corps, and Jews and Armenians were the two primary

<sup>1</sup> Carter Vaughn Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom, A Social History* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), 21.

groups preferred for these positions. This was possible especially following the Reform Decree of 1856, when “the non-Muslim presence in government service began to grow, especially in the civil administration.”<sup>2</sup> Even so, this presence continued to fluctuate, largely depending on the political situation of the moment (especially in the context of the Balkan uprisings). Furthermore, various additional (sometimes even personal) details weighed in when it came to individual appointments, as we shall see later on in this study.

### **1. A Brief Look at the Historical Background of the Ottoman – Romanian Relations**

As vassals to the Ottoman Empire from 1417 and 1538 respectively, the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldova maintained, along the time, a rather turbulent relation with the Sublime Porte. Though overall the two states paid their dues (haraç) to the Sultans quite regularly, from time to time one Prince or another tried to rebel against this rule by forging temporary alliances with various European kings and emperors. These attempts proved to be useless in the long run, as it was only in 1877, after the two states had previously united into one country called Romania, in 1859, that the Ottomans lost their grip on these territories, as a side effect of the Russo-Turkish war of the time.

Because they were vassal states and not an integral part of the Ottoman Empire, during the first centuries of this rule, the Sublime Porte did not intervene much in the internal affairs of Wallachia and Moldova as long as the dues were paid on time and the Sultan was not informed (sometimes accurately, sometimes falsely, as part of various internal power struggle schemes of local boyars) that one Prince or another was betraying him, at which point he would usually have the respective Prince removed and killed. Later on, however, at seeing that such insubordination was becoming more and more frequent, in 1711 the Sublime Porte decided to start appointing Princes of the two Principalities from among the Greeks of Constantinople’s Fener neighborhood, the so called “Phanariotes,” (who naturally paid quite highly for this nomination and had to recover their investment) to the annoyance of the Romanian boyars. This continued for the next century, until 1821, and was complemented with several military incursions. Mention should be made that an entirely different story was the case of Dobrudja, which was conquered by the Ottoman Empire in 1417 and enjoyed a different status and fate, both before and after 1878, when it was given to Romania as a result of the same Russo-Turkish war.

All these may explain why, throughout history, various types of representatives of the Sublime Porte could be met first at the Wallachian and Moldovan Princely Courts, and later on at Romania’s Princely Court (after 1859), respectively Royal Court (after 1866). These included what could be called “official diplomats,” but

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<sup>2</sup> Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom, A Social History*, 33.

also other types of envoys, such as financial delegates. At the same time, the Sultan could choose to be represented by a special emissary sent from Constantinople or by a local resident who would serve as what we would call today “honorary consul.”

Not surprisingly in the Ottoman tradition, among these representatives of the Sublime Porte one can find a number of Jews, mostly, but not exclusively, Sephardic. Surprising, on the other hand, as we shall see later on in this article, is the fact that some of these Jews were legal subjects of other states (i.e. the Austrian Empire), but this did not prevent the Ottoman officials from appointing them as their personal envoys.

## 2. Jewish Ottoman Diplomats Who Took an Interest in the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldova

According to Yitzchak Kerem, as early as “the 16<sup>th</sup> century we find in Wallachia [...] Sephardic Jews who worked for the Ottoman administration.”<sup>3</sup>

Though from a different class, the most famous character of that time was undoubtedly Don Joseph Nasi (1520/1524-1579), the wealthy and prominent Portuguese Sephardic diplomat from the Mendes/Benveniste family (nephew of the famous Dona Gracia Mendes Nasi, with whom he left Portugal in 1536, and in whose enterprises he would play an important role),<sup>4</sup> who became influential at the Sublime Porte under Sultans Suleiman I and Selim II, thanks to his commercial relations throughout Europe. His services to the Sublime Porte brought him the appointment as Duke of Naxos and the Cyclades. Among many other things, he is said to have sponsored the construction of new worship places, including the “Senora (Geveret)” Synagogue of Izmir, which unfortunately was burnt down in the fire that swept the city in 1660. Nasi had great influence in both Wallachia and Moldova and supported their Princes politically and financially. He is said to have used his connections to promote the appointment of no less than three Moldovan Princes: Despot (1562), Alexander Lăpuşneanu (1563), and John the Terrible (1572). It seems that in 1571, Sultan Selim II actually offered him the option of becoming himself the Prince of one or the other of the two Principalities, which Don Joseph was wise enough to decline. He nevertheless retained monopoly of the wine trade, “from which he was thought to earn about 15,000 ducats each year. He exported wine to Poland from Crete, where he acquired as many as 1,000 barrels. He also acquired a

<sup>3</sup> Yitzchak Kerem, “The Sephardic Presence in Romania. Tradition and Modernity”, *Romania, Israel, France: Jewish Trails. Volume in Honor of Prof. Carol Iancu*, ed. Lucian Zeev Herscovici et al. (Bucharest: University of Bucharest Press, 2013), 87.

<sup>4</sup> See Marianna D. Birnbaum, *The Long Journey of Gracia Mendes* (Budapest/New York: CEU Press, 2003), 96.

monopoly of the Polish wax trade.”<sup>5</sup> For a long time he was the liaison and power broker between the Romanian Princes and Sephardic financiers in Constantinople.<sup>6</sup>

Such exertion of influence was quite common at the time and of course Nasi was not the only one who practiced it. Another relevant figure in this regard was Solomon Tedesky (Ashkenazi) (ca. 1520-1602), the Italian Ashkenazi (as his very name indicates) physician who moved to the Ottoman Empire in 1564, after having served for 16 years at King Sigismund II Augustus’ Royal Court in Cracow. In Constantinople he was instrumental in the preliminary negotiations for the 1573 peace treaty with Venice, after the disaster at Lepanto, as the personal representative of the grand vizier Mehmet Sokoglu. One year later he was introduced to the Venetian Doge as the Sultan’s ambassador. During the next decade, under the name of “Aleman Oglu,” Ashkenazi continued to exert great influence at the Sublime Porte, getting involved in international politics. Among many other things, in 1586 he was asked by the Sultan to sign the preliminary articles of the treaty with Spain on his behalf. Like Nasi, Ashkenazi also took an interest in the Principality of Moldova and in 1591 he made extensive use of his influence to obtain the nomination as Prince of Aaron the Tyrant (Emanuel Aaron, 1560-1597). However, in 1593, when he travelled to Jassy “to seek compensation for his efforts, he was handed over to the prince of Transylvania and thrown into jail;” it was eventually the British ambassador in Constantinople who managed to obtain his release.<sup>7</sup> And he was actually lucky, because other Romanian Princes, like for instance Michael the Brave (1558-1601), solved their debts by killing the creditors.

A similar case in point is provided by the story of Daniel ben Abraham de Fonseca (ca. 1668–ca. 1740), yet another Portuguese Sephardic physician who became famous for his involvement in Ottoman politics and diplomacy. Fonseca was born into a Marrano family in Porto. He grew up as a Christian because after his grandfather and uncle were burnt at the stake by the Inquisition, his father was forced to flee the country, leaving him behind. Despite the fact that he was baptized and forced into priesthood, he apparently continued to practice the Jewish faith in secret. In danger of being caught, he eventually fled, in his turn, to France. There he attended the School of Medicine in Bordeaux and Paris. Sometime before 1702, he arrived in Constantinople, where he was able to publicly revert to Judaism.<sup>8</sup> His medical skills made him very popular among Ottoman officials.

Highly appreciated both in the Orient and in the West, as a diplomat he consistently supported the cause of France. This secured him a position of physician at the

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<sup>5</sup> Birnbaum, *The Long Journey of Gracia Mendes*, 96.

<sup>6</sup> Kerem, “The Sephardic Presence in Romania. Tradition and Modernity”, 95.

<sup>7</sup> See “Ashkenazi, Solomon” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Erişim 19 Ekim 2020).

<sup>8</sup> See D. Gershon Lewental, “Fonseca, Daniel de”, *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, ed. Norman A. Stillman et al. (Access 19 October 2020).

French embassy, to the annoyance of the Austrians. In March 1719, after a 17 year faithful service to the French, de Fonseca moved to Wallachia, to serve as adviser and physician to Prince Nicholas Mavrocordat, whom it seems he had met in Constantinople. Mavrocordat thought he had managed to “steal” de Fonseca from the French but, as the very letter whereby the French Ambassador allowed him to join the service of the Wallachian ruler while continuing to grant him French protection shows, the position of advisor to Mavrocordat was very likely just a cover under which he was able to aid Turkey against Austria.<sup>9</sup> Still, it is from de Fonseca that we know about Mavrocordat’s famous library, from which the diplomat was able to decipher and copy several Greek manuscripts, which he then put at the disposition of French and Italian scholars, popularizing, in a vast correspondence, the Prince’s collections, including, among many other things, some Jewish materials. As de Fonseca himself would say in a letter sent on September 14, 1731 to the Director of the Royal Library in Paris, “throughout the Levant you will not find manuscripts [as valuable] as those in the library of the Wallachian Prince, who promised to allow me to copy those we shall deem necessary [...]”<sup>10</sup> Later on de Fonseca returned to Constantinople, where he served as physician to Sultan Ahmed III until the latter’s deposition in 1730. He eventually decided to move to Paris, where he “became close to Voltaire (who described him as “the only philosopher of his people),” the Countess of Caylus, and other personalities of the time.”<sup>11</sup>

### 3. Jewish Personal Representatives of Ottoman Officials in Wallachia and Moldova

An entirely different type of Ottoman representation was brought about by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century: now, for the first time, documents mention the existence in both Principalities of a personal representative of the Grand Vizier, tasked with ensuring the effective transfer of the haraç; Eliezer Hillel Behor Manoach (1785-1862), again a Sephardic Jew. Manoach’s birth place is unknown, but in the 1820’s his name started appearing in the Treasury Records of the Principality of Wallachia as one of the main creditors of the state (which is in itself a significant change, since before that credits were given to the Princes themselves, as private loans). A decree issued by Prince Gregory IV Ghica in 1827 confirms that Hillel Manoach and his brother Israel were granted tax waivers and benefited from various privileges, as a reward for their services to the reign.<sup>12</sup> Hillel Manoach became, in fact, the official banker

<sup>9</sup> See Gottahard Deutsch et al. “Fonseca (Fonsequa) de or da”, *Jewish Encyclopedia* (Access 19 October 2020).

<sup>10</sup> Mihai Spielmann (ed.), *Izvoare și mărturii referitoare la evreii din România* (Bucharest: Federation of the Jewish Communities in Romania Documentation Center, Hasefer, 1988), 2/1, 60-61.

<sup>11</sup> See Deutsch, “Fonseca (Fonsequa) de or da”.

<sup>12</sup> Lya Benjamin et al. (ed.), *Izvoare și mărturii referitoare la evreii din România* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1999), 3/1, 548.

of the treasury, but also the personal banker of the Prince.<sup>13</sup> Later on, in the 1830's we find Manoach among the main creditors of the Moldovan state as well. According to various documents of the time, he continued to sponsor both Principalities until their unification in 1859.

A letter sent by Barbu Dimitrie Stirbey, the Prince of Wallachia, to Gregory Ghi-ca, the Prince of Moldova, on June 6/18, 1850, clarifies Manoach's position:

“Dear Prince,

I have just been officially informed by His Highness the Grand Vizier, that His Majesty the Sultan authorized His Excellency Fuad Effendi to accept the gift that the Principalities gave him upon his departure, as a sign of gratitude and remembrance.

Fuad Effendi wrote to me personally to share with me the fact that he has entrusted his banker in Bucharest, Mr. Hillel Manoach, to receive and send him this gift, as well as the gifts destined to his secretaries. This banker seems to have received the same mission for Moldova and, being unable to travel to Iași himself, he planned to send a delegate in his place, who will be carrying the necessary letters.

Please receive, dear Prince, the renewed expression of my most affectionate and devoted feelings.”<sup>14</sup>

An additional confirmation can be found in a letter sent by Prince Barbu Dimitrie Stirbey on 3/15 December 1854 to the Ottoman Finance Minister, Shefik Pasha, where one can read:

“Mister Minister,

In my letter of the 6<sup>th</sup> of this month I asked Logothete Miltiade Aristarchi to inform Your Excellency that, in keeping with the instructions provided in the note you kindly sent to me, I immediately had my Department of Finance put at the disposition of banker Hillel, delegate of the House of Camondo, the amount of 2,500,000 piastres, accounting for fifteen months of the annual tribute of the Principality. In order to avoid any future misunderstandings, I ordered the Department of Finance to agree with Mr. Hillel on a rate of p. 51½. I make it my duty to hereby inform Your Excellency that the requested payment of the above mentioned amount of 2,500,000 piastres was made, and I took the liberty to ask that our agent Logothete Miltiade be given the customary receipts. [...]”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Benjamin et al. (ed.), *Izvoare și mărturii referitoare la evreii din România*, 2/2, 131.

<sup>14</sup> Nicolae Iorga (ed.), *Correspondența lui Știrbei-Vodă, Correspondența politică*, (Bucharest: Minerva, 1904), 1/31. (translation from French)

<sup>15</sup> Iorga (ed.), *Correspondența lui Știrbei-Vodă, Correspondența politică*, 509 (110).

Manoach's role as the financial representative of the Sublime Porte is made even more interesting by the fact that in the census carried out by the Bucharest authorities in 1838 he is registered as an Austrian, not an Ottoman subject.<sup>16</sup> While it is true that he did conduct business in Vienna, where the last three of his eight children were born, and in the second half of his life he spent significant time there, his choice of protection remains unexplained, considering that he was regarded by all as a representative of the Ottomans. Often referred to as "bash sarraf" and as the leader of the Spanish Jewish congregation in Bucharest (which was officially recognized from 1730 on, at Daniel de Fonseca's initiative), he seems to have been altogether an unusual but outstanding figure of his time: in 1853 he was decorated by the Austrian Emperor with the Golden Cross for loyal service, after having previously received the gold medal of the Vladimir Order from the Russian Emperor and the Iftikhar-Nishanı (Nishan-i-Iftikhar) 'Order of Glory' from the Sultan.<sup>17</sup>

#### 4. Jewish Ottoman Diplomats in Romania

##### 4.1. The first Ottoman Consul General in Bucharest

Political relations with Romania underwent significant changes after the Independence War of 1877 and the Berlin Treaty of 1878, which brought the Romanian Kingdom not just the recognition of its independence but also the territory of Dobruja.

One of the first moves of the Sultan was to appoint a Consul General pro bono of the Ottoman Empire in Bucharest, in the person of Abraham Halfon (1808-1884), yet another Sephardic Jew. The choice was only natural, given that Abraham Halfon was born in 1808 in Adrianople, to a merchant called Solomon Halfon (1790-1842), who was later appointed vizier of the Governor of the Eyalet of Edirne (1820) and respectively Silistra (1824). The year 1828 found Solomon Halfon running a financial enterprise in Brasov, at the time an Austrian town. One year later, in 1829 he eventually settled together with his entire family in Bucharest, where he soon became a significant creditor of both the Treasury and the Prince of Wallachia, just like Hillel Manoach, with whom he was not only business partner, but also related through the marriage of two of their children.

Despite the fact that unlike Manoach, neither Solomon, nor Abraham Halfon were mentioned in any documents as representing one way or another the Ottoman Empire, but rather as the personal bankers of several Wallachian Princes, a description of the trip to Constantinople undertaken by Abraham Halfon in the suite of Prince Alexander John Cuza (1820-1873), when the latter traveled to the Sublime Porte to receive his investiture from the Sultan in 1864, an event with a

<sup>16</sup> Benjamin et al. (ed.), *Izvoare și mărturii referitoare la evreii din România*, 3/2, 185-221.

<sup>17</sup> Ioan Lupu et al., *Bibliografia analitică a periodicelor românești (1851-1858)* (Bucharest: Printing House of the Socialist Republic of Romania's Academy of Sciences, 1971), 2/2, 545.



very important diplomatic representation role, widely reflected in the press through daily telegrams sent by Romanian journalists to the French magazine *Le Courier d'Orient*, explains why twenty years later he would be appointed Consul General of the Empire. As he would write in a letter sent from Constantinople to his youngest brother, Nissim (1820-1872), on June 3/19, 1864:

“It’s been eight days since I have been here with the Prince, tomorrow or on Monday we shall have to head back home. We had a magnificent and sumptuous journey and enjoyed a royal reception. I will write more to you from Bucharest. Now I shall only tell you in a few words that the Sultan invited the Prince with his entire suite, me included.

I was thus able to attend a magnificent show which left on me a profound impression; I shall tell you all about it when I am back. [...]

I shall not tell you anything about business. I do not think his Highness will need any money, because he has quite an amount with him. Gone are the times of large expenses, especially since our Sovereign does not allow himself be dragged into spending by just anyone; he finished his business here without spending anything. [...]

Praying to God that all of you are healthy, I kiss you from the bottom of my heart.

A. H.”<sup>18</sup>

Abraham Halfon’s appointment as the Ottoman Consul General in Bucharest was deemed a paramount event by the international media, as proven by the note published in *The Jewish Chronicle* of November 14, 1879:

#### ROUMANIA

[...] *The Bucharest correspondent of the Times telegraphed on Tuesday: Mr. Abraham Halfon, a prominent Jewish banker of Bucharest, has been made its unpaid Consul-General in Roumania by the Ottoman Government and the appointment has been officially recognized by Prince Charles of Roumania.*

and the similar note published in *L’Univers Illustré* no.1289 of December 6, 1879:

*Au dernier moment, nous apprenons que M. Abraham Halfon, banquier israélite à Bucharest, a été nommé consul général de Turquie en Roumanie.*

*(At the last moment we hear that Mr. Abraham Halfon, a Jewish banker from Bucharest, has been appointed Consul General of Turkey in Romania).*

For his services to the Ottoman Empire, Abraham Halfon was granted the title of Commander of the “Medjidie” and “İftihar-Nishan” Orders (besides receiving the Serbian “Takova” and the “Romanian Star” decorations).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Archive of the Centre for the Study of Romanian Jewish History, Bucharest, Fond I, file 92, 81, translated from French.

#### 4.2. Other Jewish Ottoman Diplomats in Romania

As Carter Vaughn Findley remarks, among the personnel of the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs after 1856, Jews were the smallest, but also the youngest group.<sup>20</sup> From the non-Muslims, they were the most educated, being often fluent in several European languages. It is important to recall that the first modern school for Jews in Istanbul opened in 1854, and was followed by the ones opened by the Alliance Israelite Universelle in Edirne in 1867, Istanbul in the 1870s, and thereafter in many other places. Most of the Jews who became diplomats after the Tanzimat (i.e. after 1877) were graduates of these schools.

By chance, this was also when the diplomatic relations between the Ottoman Empire and the newly independent Romanian Kingdom were established. The first consulates were thus opened in February – April 1878, and the first appointments were made in Constantza, Galatz, Tulcea, Jassy and Turnu Severin.<sup>21</sup> Romanian historian Silvana Rachieru found that from the one hundred consuls who served in Romania in the next thirty years (until 1908), six were Jewish.<sup>22</sup> Also, of the eighteen consuls who served more than one mandate, two were Jewish: Selim Gürçü<sup>23</sup> (appointed in Calafat until 1904, then in Jassy between 1904 and 1908), and Albert Rekaniye (appointed in Constantza, 1893-1894, and Turnu Severin, 1894-1895).<sup>24</sup> Incidentally, Selim Gürçü, the last consul in Jassy, before the consulate was closed in 1908, was decorated, in 1909, with the Order of the Romanian Crown, in rank of Commander.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, of the four consuls appointed at the Consulate in Craiova (which was opened later, in 1892), one was again Jewish, Yakup Kohen.<sup>26</sup> Additional information about Yakup Kohen can be found in Taceddin Kayaoğlu's book *Osmanlı Hariciyesinde Gayr-i Müslimler, 1852-1925*, where we read that he was born at Istanbul in 1857, and graduated from the school of the Alliance Israelite Universelle, followed by the Serbian School in his hometown. He was fluent in Turkish, French, Spanish and Hebrew, and started his career as an intern at the printing house of the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1874. He was offered a full time job in 1876, and subsequently received the diplomatic title in 1890. By 1896, he was already Consul General at Geneva. In 1898 we find him Consul General at Jassy, from where he was moved during the same year to Golos, in Italy. There, with the

<sup>19</sup> As shown by his obituary, published in 1884 in the French press.

<sup>20</sup> Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom, A Social History*, 97.

<sup>21</sup> Silvana Rachieru, *Diplomaşi şi supuşii otomani în Vechiul Regat: Relaţii otomano-române între anii 1878-1908*, "Al. I. Cuza" (Lasi: University Press, 2018), 175.

<sup>22</sup> Rachieru, *Diplomaşi şi supuşii otomani în Vechiul Regat*, 76.

<sup>23</sup> We know that Selim Gürçü was Jewish from Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom, A Social History*, 91.

<sup>24</sup> Rachieru, *Diplomaşi şi supuşii otomani în Vechiul Regat*, 77.

<sup>25</sup> Rachieru, *Diplomaşi şi supuşii otomani în Vechiul Regat*, 93.

<sup>26</sup> Taceddin Kayaoğlu, *Osmanlı Hariciyesinde Gayr-i Müslimler (1852-1925)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2013), 360-361.

Sultan's permission, he was granted the award of the Italian Crown. In 1899 he was appointed Consul General at Venice, and in 1903 Consul General at Craiova, where he seems to have arrived in 1904.<sup>27</sup> In 1907 he was awarded the medal marking 40 years of reign of King Carol I on the throne of Romania. Again with the Sultan's permission, in 1909, at the end of his mandate, he received, just like Selim Gürçü, the Order of the Romanian Crown, in rank of Commander,<sup>28</sup> after which he was sent to replace the Consul General at Narde. In 1910 he returned to the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from where he retired in 1912, after 31 years in the Ottoman diplomatic service.<sup>29</sup>

Two more Jews served at the Ottoman Vice-consulate in Tulcea (which was a full Consulate between 1879-1884, then downgraded to a Vice-consulate from 1884 until its closure in 1916): Paul Naum, who was Consul between 1879-1880, and Davit/Davud Rupen, who was Vice-consul between 1886-1891.<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, of the eleven diplomats appointed at the Vice-consulate of Sulina, one was Jewish: Paskal Effendi, who served between 1905-1910 and who was also decorated in 1910 with the Order of the Romanian Crown, in rank of Officer.<sup>31</sup>

Last but not least, of the three diplomats appointed at the very small Vice-consulate in Calafat, one was Jewish: İsak Yafetz, who served between 1896 and probably 1900.<sup>32</sup>

It must be noted, however, that there were Jews among the other Ottoman diplomats dispatched to Romania as well. We know, for instance, that the secretary of the Consulate in Constantza at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was Volf Lovenzon Efendi. Born on April 26, 1872 in Istanbul, Lovenzon was a graduate of the local Alliance Israelite Universelle primary school. Given that he was fluent in Turkish, Romanian, French, German, English, Spanish and Greek, at the age of 19 he was dispatched to the Ottoman Consulate in Constantza, where he worked for five years as an intern. In 1896 he left the consulate, but four years later we find him back on the same position, only this time employed on a full time job, with a salary. A short note published in *The Jewish Chronicle* on May 24, 1901 informs us that for his ser-

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<sup>27</sup> According to the archival evidence found by Rachieru, *Diplomați și supuși otomani în Vechiul Regat*, 95.

<sup>28</sup> Kayaoğlu actually mentions the Star of Romania, while Rachieru says it was the Order of the Romanian Crown. Since she had access to Romanian archival material, it is obvious that she must be right.

<sup>29</sup> Kayaoğlu, *Osmanlı Hariciyesinde Gayr-i Müslimler*, 360-361.

<sup>30</sup> Rachieru, *Diplomați și supuși otomani în Vechiul Regat*, 98.

<sup>31</sup> Rachieru, *Diplomați și supuși otomani în Vechiul Regat*, 101.

<sup>32</sup> Rachieru, *Diplomați și supuși otomani în Vechiul Regat*, 104.

vices to the Ottoman government he was granted the “Medjidie” Order (Mecidiye Nişanı).<sup>33</sup>

#### MISCELLANEOUS

[...] M. Löwensohn, Secretary to the Turkish Consulate at Constanza, has been decorated with the Order of the Medjidie. [...]

(*The Jewish Chronicle*, May 24, 1901)

Furthermore, according to Kayaoğlu, in 1906 Lovenzon Efendi was advanced Consul General.<sup>34</sup>

Another case in point was Nesim Alahim, born at Vidin in 1870, a graduate of the school opened by the Alliance Israelite Universelle in his hometown, who was also fluent in Turkish, French, Spanish, Bulgarian, German, Serbian, and speaker of a little English, Russian and Greek. Alahim was sent as an interpreter to the Consulate at Turnu Severin in 1892 and was later on promoted Chancellor, during 1897-1902; in his turn, he was granted, in 1907, the medal marking 40 years of reign of King Carol I on the throne of Romania.<sup>35</sup>

### Conclusion

Beyond underlining that Jews were part and parcel of the Ottoman social fabric, which allowed them to access public positions, including diplomatic appointments, before, during and after the Tanzimat (albeit in smaller numbers at the latter time),<sup>36</sup> this brief incursion into the history of Jewish Ottoman representation in the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldova, and later on in Romania, until the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has revealed two distinct trends: while before 1877, the Sublime Porte had a particular preference for Jews as its envoys, this preference slowly decreased after the establishment of regular diplomatic relations (for instance, with the notable exception of Abraham Halfon, there was no Jew among those appointed at the Consulate in Bucharest, which was, naturally, considered the most sensitive).<sup>37</sup> This point is also supported by Musa Kılıç,<sup>38</sup> and Saro Dadyan<sup>39</sup> who found in their research that after the Tanzimat the Armenians were generally the most prominent non-Muslims present in the Ottoman diplomatic service.

<sup>33</sup> Kayaoğlu mentions that it was the Medjidie Order (Mecidiye Nişanı), 5<sup>th</sup> grade which was granted on February 23, 1901 (Kayaoğlu, *Osmanlı Hariciyesinde Gayr-i Müslimler*, 357).

<sup>34</sup> The information is not corroborated by Rachieru from the Romanian archives.

<sup>35</sup> Kayaoğlu, *Osmanlı Hariciyesinde Gayr-i Müslimler*, 259.

<sup>36</sup> Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom, A Social History*, 116.

<sup>37</sup> According to Rachieru, *Diplomaşi şi supuşii otomani în Vechiul Regat*, 96.

<sup>38</sup> Musa Kılıç, “Tanzimat Döneminde Osmanlı Hariciye Nezâreti’nin Ermeni Memurları”, *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 31/51 (Mart 2012), 121.

<sup>39</sup> Saro Dadyan, “Sultan Abdülaziz, V. Murad ve II. Abdülhamid Dönemlerinin Osmanlı Hariciyesinde Üst Düzey Gayrimüslim Bürokrat ve Diplomatlar”, *Milli Saraylar* 10 (2012), 72.

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## Osmanlı Hariciyesinde Eflak ve Moldova (Boğdan) Vilayetlerinde 20. Yüzyıla Kadar Görevlendirilen Yahudiler

### Özet

Din ve diplomasi, kimlik tartışmaları bakımından da birbiriyle son derece alakalı iki önemli alandır. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, çok ırklı ve çok dinli yapısı ve kültürü ile kendisinin gerileyen bir güç haline geldiğini farkettiğinde, yani, askeri güçten ziyade diplomasiye güvenmek zorunda kaldığında, müzakereyi güce tercih ettiğinde, Osmanlı seçkinleri, 18. yüzyılın sonlarına doğru, sivil gücün hem örgütlenmesinde hem de uygulanmasında bir değişiklik ihtiyacı olduğunu da farkına varmışlardı. İmparatorluğun kendisini bir zamanlar olduğu gibi Avrupalı kudretine karşı askeri güçle koruyacak güce artık yeterince sahip olmayışı karşısında, Kalem-iyye sınıfı giderek daha önemli hale geldi. Diğer gelişmelerin yanı sıra, bu, 1835'te Batı tipi bir Dışişleri Bakanlığı'nın ortaya çıkmasına da yol açtı. Bununla birlikte, bir sorun vardı: Avrupa dillerini akıcı konuşan çok sayıda Müslüman devlet adamı veya bürokrat yoktu. Bu nedenle yeni Bakanlık, ilk büyükelçilik pozisyonları için öncelikle gayrimüslim tebaasına güvenmek zorunda kaldı. Her ne kadar, Devlet, bu eksikliği telafi için çok geçmeden, imparatorluğun diplomatik temsilcisi olarak ilerde görev yapacak şekilde yabancı dil becerilerine sahip devlet adamları yetiştirmek üzere bir *Tercüme Odası* kurmuş olsa da, Bâb-ı Âli'nin hizmetinde yeteri kadar Osmanlı Müslüman diplomatı hazır olana kadar Müslüman olmayan memurları diplomatik kadrolarda istihdam etti. Bu pozisyonlar için tercih edilen başlıca iki grup Yahudiler ve Ermenilerdi. Bu, özellikle sivil idarede olmak üzere devlet hizmetlerinde gayrimüslim varlığının artmaya başladığı 1856 İslahât Fermanı'ndan sonra daha da mümkün hale geldi. İşte bu tarihi ark plandan hareketle bu makale, Osmanlılar tarafından 19. yüzyılda Romanya beyliklerine gönderilen Yahudi diplomatik temsilcilerle ilgilidir. Tarih boyunca, Osmanlı Devleti'nde Bâb-ı Âli'nin çeşitli temsilcilerin, önce Eflak ve Moldova Prenslik Saraylarında ve daha sonra da Romanya Prenslik Sarayı'nda (1859'dan sonra) ve Kraliyet Sarayı'nda (1866'dan sonra) görmek mümkündür. Bunların arasında *resmi diplomatlar* olarak adlandırılacak temsilciler yanında mali delegeler gibi diğer elçi türlerini de içeriyordu. Aynı zamanda Sultan, o zamanki Konstantiniyye'den gönderilen özel bir temsilciyle veya bugün *fahri konsolos* diyebileceğimiz bir *yerel elçi* tarafından da temsil edilmeyi seçebiliyordu. Osmanlı geleneğinde Bâb-ı Âli'nin bu temsilcileri arasında, tamamı olmasa da çoğu Sefarad kökenli pek çok Yahudi'nin varlığı şaşırtıcı değildir. Öte yandan şaşırtıcı olan bir husus, Osmanlı'yı temsil eden bu Yahudilerin bazılarının aslen diğer devletlerin (mesela Avusturya İmparatorluğu'nun) yasal tebaası olması ve bu durumun, Osmanlı devlet yetkililerinin onları kişisel elçi olarak atamasına engel olmamış olmasıydı. Bu konuda çalışmalarıyla bilinen, Yitzhak Kerem'e göre, 16. yüzyılın başlarında Eflak'ta Osmanlı idaresinde pek çok Sefarad Yahudi çalışmaktaydı.

Ancak vurgulanması gerek bir husus şudur ki, Osmanlılar'ın gayrimüslimleri diplomat olarak kullanmasının aşamaları vardır. İlk aşamada 16.y.y.'da Osmanlı'nın bu görevlendirmelerine ilgi gösteren ve bu mahiyette bu pozisyonlara atanan münferid örnekleri görüyoruz. Daha sonra, Sultan'ın özel temsilcileri ve daha sonra da Devlet tarafından resmi büyükelçi ya da konsolos olarak atanan gayrimüslimleri görüyoruz. Birinci gruba bir örnek, farklı bir sosyal sınıftan olsa da, o dönemin en ünlü karakteri olarak, Mendes/Benveniste ailesinden (1536'da birlikte Portekiz'den ayrıldığı ve işletmelerinde önemli rol oynayacağı ünlü Dona Gracia Mendes Nasi'nin yeğeni olan) zengin ve önde gelen Portekizli Sefarad diplomatı Don Joseph Nasi (1520/1524-1579) verilebilir. Nasi, Avrupa'daki ticari ilişkileri sayesinde Sultan Süleyman ve II. Selim döneminde Bâb-ı Âli'de etkili oldu. Uzun bir süre Romanya Prensleri ile Konstantiniyye'deki (Cumhuriyet'ten sonra yine Yunanca kökenli 'stanpolis' kelimesinden alınarak ismi belirlenen İstanbul, Osmanlı döneminde *Konstantiniyye* olarak Devlet kayıtlarında geçiyordu.) Sefarad finansörler arasında irtibatı ve ticari ilişkileri sağlayan birisi olarak kaldı. Bu konuyla ilgili diğer bir isim, Krakov'da Kral Sigismund II Augustus'un Sarayı'nda 16 yıl görev yaptıktan sonra 1564'te Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'na taşınan İtalyan Aşkenazi (adından da anlaşılacağı üzere) hekim Solomon Tedesky (Aşkenazi) (yaklaşık 1520-1602) idi. Makalede, Daniel ben Abraham de Fonseca (ca. 1668-ca. 1740) isimli bir başka Sefarad Yahudi de anlatılmaktadır. De Fonseca, Sultan IIIncü Ahmed'e hekimlik yapmış ve aynı zamanda Romanya Eflak bölgesi için *diplomatik temsilcilik* yapmıştır.

Osmanlı hariciyesini henüz kurumsallaşma olmadan önce temsil eden ikinci grup temsilcilere örnek olarak kaynaklarda 19. yüzyılın başlarında Sadrazam'ın kişisel bir temsilcisinin her iki Vilayet'te de varlığından söz edilir. Bunlardan birisi, yine bir Sefarad Yahudisi olan Eliezer Hillel Behor Manoach (1785-1862)'dir. Manoach, hem siyasi hem ticari diplomasi yürütmüştür. Viyana'da yaşamış ama Osmanlı'yı temsil eden bir *baş sarraf* olarak tanınmıştır.

Osmanlı Hariciyesinde üçüncü aşama, artık daha sistematik biçimde *hariciye temsilcilerinin* görevlendirilmesi aşamasıydı. Bu aşama, 1877 Romanya Bağımsızlık Savaşı sonrasına denk gelir. Padişahın ilk hamlelerinden biri, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Bükreş'teki temsilcisini yine bir başka Sefarad Yahudisi olan Abraham Halfon'u (1808-1884) Başkonsolos olarak atamaktı. Abraham Halfon'un, Edirne Eyalet Valisi'nin (1820) ve Silistre'nin (1824) veziri olarak atanmış Solomon Halfon (1790-1842) adlı bir Yahudi tüccarın çocuğu olarak 1808 yılında Edirne'de doğduğu düşünüldüğünde bu görevlendirmenin gayet doğal olduğu anlaşılır. Abraham Halfon'a Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'na yaptığı hizmetlerden ötürü "Mecidiye Nişanı" ve "İftihar Nişanı" verilmiştir.

1856'dan sonra Osmanlı Dışişleri Bakanlığı personeli arasında Yahudiler en küçük, aynı zamanda en genç grubu oluşturuyordu. Gayrimüslimler arasında Yahudiler, çoğu Avrupa dilini akıcı bir şekilde konuşabilen, en eğitilmiş olanlardı. İstanbul'daki ilk modern Yahudi okulunun 1854'te açıldığını ve bunu 1867'de Edirne'de (Paris



kaynaklı) Alliance Israelite Universelle tarafından 1870'lerde İstanbul'da ve daha sonra birçok yerde açılanların izlediğini hatırlamakta fayda vardır. Tanzimat'tan sonra (yani 1877'den sonra) diplomat olan Yahudilerin çoğu bu okullardan mezundu. Tesadüf o ki, bu dönem, aynı zamanda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile yeni bağımsızlığını kazanan Romanya Krallığı arasındaki diplomatik ilişkilerin kurulduğu zamandı. Böylece ilk konsolosluklar 1878 Şubat - Nisan aylarında açıldı ve ilk atamalar Köstence, Galati, Tulça, Yaş ve Turnu Severin'de yapıldı. Romanyalı tarihçi Silvana Rachieru, sonraki otuz yıl içinde (1908'e kadar) Romanya'da görev yapan yüz konsolostan altısının Osmanlı Yahudisi olduğunu belirtir. Ayrıca, birden fazla bölgede görev yapan on sekiz konsolostan ikisi de Osmanlı Yahudisi idi. Bu konuda farklı bağlamlarda örnekler ve süreçler anlatılabilecek olmakla beraber, bu makale nihayetinde, Yahudilerin, Tanzimat öncesinde, sırasında ve sonrasında diplomatik atamalar da dahil olmak üzere kamu görevlerine erişmelerine izin veren Osmanlı sosyal dokusunun bir parçası ve ayrılmaz parçası olduklarının altını çizmenin ötesinde (son zamanlarda daha az sayıda da olsa), tarihe bu kısa bakışla, Eflak ve Moldova vilayetlerindeki ve daha sonra Romanya'daki Osmanlı Yahudi temsilinin, 20. yüzyılın başlarına kadar iki farklı eğilimi ortaya çıkardığını ileri sürmektedir: 1877'den önce, Bâb-ı Âli, elçi olarak Yahudileri özel olarak tercih ediyordu ve bu tercih, düzenli diplomatik ilişkilerin kurulmasından sonra yavaş azaldı (Örneğin, Abraham Halfon'un dikkate değer istisnası dışında, en kritik bölgelerden kabul edilen Bükreş'teki Konsolosluğa atananlar arasında artık bir Yahudi yoktu). Bu nokta, Musa Kılıç ve Saro Dadyan tarafından da araştırmalarında desteklenmiştir. Kılıç ve Dadyan'a göre, Tanzimat'tan sonra genellikle artık Ermeniler, Osmanlı diplomatik hizmetinde bulunan en önemli gayrimüslim grup olmuştur. Dolayısıyla, bu makale, yukarıda anlatılan karmaşık diplomatik temsilin 16. yüzyıldan 20. yüzyılın başına kadar olan gelişiminin izlerini sürmektedir.

**Anahtar Kavramlar:** Dinler Tarihi, Yahudiler, Diplomasi, Yahudi Diplomatlar, Gayrimüslim Diplomatlar, Osmanlı Hariciyesi, Romanya Vilayetleri, Eflak, Boğdan (Moldova).