

**Scientific Project: “The Mediality of Diplomatic Communication:
Habsburg Envoys in Constantinople in the Mid-17th Century”**

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Politics is shaped by the modern media society. Therefore it consists not only of objective argumentation but has to be staged and communicated in an appealing way in the media. This media imprint of politics is, at the present, more intensive than ever, however not new in its core, as it is based on communication. And again communication bases on media.

The research project examines the communication of Habsburg diplomats in Constantinople with the Imperial Court in Vienna. The knowledge held about the Ottomans in the Holy Roman Empire and by the Habsburg Monarchy originated mainly in diplomacy. The two most important media are in the focus of attention: on the one hand the letters of the envoys which have received little attention in research so far. In the letters information about political negotiations as well as detailed accounts about the life in the city, the culture and society of the Ottomans are included. On the other hand travel reports, which were written during diplomatic missions, are examined. The focus lies on a virtually unknown travelogue, which was written in 1650 and was lost in the turmoil of World War II. Fortunately, an old microfilm was discovered, which was digitally restored, so that the text can be read with the help of picture-editing programs.

The letters of the diplomats and their travel reports are analyzed from the perspective of media studies and are compared with each other. Modern methods of computer based text analysis are used. Starting point is the assumption that media construct reality in a certain manner: the television other than daily newspapers or the radio, letters other than travel reports. Taken to the extreme, media can be understood as active agents that follow their own patterns of behavior. On these preliminary considerations lies the basic thesis of this project, namely that the information and knowledge transfer that took place between diplomats and the Imperial Court was primarily shaped by the media: what the people know about the Ottomans was dependent on the underlying rules of the media.

The project leads to a deeper understanding of the construction of knowledge of the Ottomans. It also provides an insight into the historical dimensions of transculturality and related topical problems such as dealing with otherness and the relationship between Christians and Muslims. Media

not only write their own history, but also influence history: The results of the research project are therefore of relevance to the understanding of the Habsburg-Ottoman relations and the 17th century international politics in general.