Confederate with the Great Turk: Negotiations of power, gender, and religion in 16th century Anglo-Ottoman royal correspondence

Rebecca Yates

Department of History and Classical Studies

McGill University, Montreal

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Abstract

English Abstract:

The establishment of Anglo-Ottoman relations in the late 16th century necessitated an exchange of royal letters in line with early-modern diplomatic customs. However, the royal correspondence between Elizabeth I and her Ottoman counterparts Murad III and Mehmed III, as well as Safiye Sultan in the period 1579 – 1600 represented a distinct break from these established epistolary traditions.

This thesis explores how and why Anglo-Ottoman correspondence conformed to or differed from both European and Ottoman customs in form, language, and protocol. Examination of individual letters and the overall body of communication questions how religious difference and gender were negotiated, and finally investigates the relationship between these factors and assertions of royal power.

French Abstract:

La fondation des relations entre l'Angleterre et l'Empire Ottoman dans la fin du 16e siècle a nécessité un échange des lettres royales pour conformer aux coutumes diplomatiques au début de la périod moderne. La correspondance royale entre Elizabeth I et ses homologues Murad III et Mehmed III, ainsi que Safiye Sultan, dans l'époque 1579 – 1600 a représenté une discontinuité de ces traditions épistolaires établies.

Cette thèse explore comment et pourquoi la correspondence Anglo-Ottoman s'est conformée ou s'est distinguée des coutumes européennes et ottomans en forme, en langue, et en protocole. Un examen des lettres individuelles et le corps de toutes les lettres interroge comment la difference religieuse et le genre ont négocié, et finalement cherche à savoir la relation entre ces facteurs et les assertions de la puissance royale.

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Introduction

Diplomatic contact between England and the Ottoman Empire began in earnest in c.1578. *Regnans in Excelsis*, the 1570 Papal Bull that excommunicated Elizabeth I (r.1533-1603), effectively invalidated the Catholic embargo on trade with the Islamic world for England. This freed England to engage in commercial relations with the Ottoman empire without fear of religiously-motivated reprisals.[1] By the late 1570s, England was actively engaged in trade in the Levant. The pursuit of these commercial interests involved the dispatch of William Harborne as an emissary to the Ottoman sultan in 1578 to establish an initial diplomatic relationship and secure trade rights, culminating in the granting of trade privileges in 1579/80, and the establishment of a resident ambassador in Constantinople from 1583. The rapid development of Anglo-Ottoman relations is foregrounded through contrast to Anglo-Franco relations. Although France and the Ottoman Empire had long-standing trade relations, including the French privileges of 1569, these had to be renewed on the accession of Murad III. However, when the English capitulations were granted in 1579, 5 years into Murad's reign, the renewal of French privileges had not been confirmed. Indeed, the grant of a treaty to a *harbī* (enemy) state such as England by the Ottoman Sultan represented a violation of French commercial privileges, rendering its rapid development even more shocking from a contemporary perspective.[2]

Personal correspondence between Elizabeth I and the Ottoman sultans began after the initiation of trade negotiations in 1578. Elizabeth corresponded with Murad III (r.1574-95), and briefly with his son Mehmed III (r.1595-1603), as well as Safiye, the *haseki* ("favourite")

[1] Lisa Jardine, "Gloriana Rules the Waves: Or the Advantage of Being Excommunicated (And a Woman)," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 14 (2004): 211.

[2] Susan A. Skilliter, *William Harborne and the trade with Turkey, 1578-1582: a documentary study of the first Anglo-Ottoman relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 121-2.

of Murad III and *Valide Sultan* (Queen Mother) of Mehmed III. The extensive body of correspondence between the English and Ottoman rulers characterises Anglo-Ottoman diplomacy as a highly personal process during its establishment in the late 16th century. However, the existence of personal correspondence between Elizabeth I and Murad III, then Mehmed III, was not exceptional. Other European states had established trade and diplomatic relations with the Ottoman empire before England; in 1453 Venice had established commercial treaties with the Ottoman sultan Mehmed II, and in 1536, Francis I allied with Süleyman I against Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire, as well as establishing a permanent embassy in Istanbul.[3] The Ottoman sultans therefore frequently exchanged letters and official documents with these states and their rulers to maintain diplomatic and trade relations.

However, there are several factors which mark Anglo-Ottoman diplomatic correspondence as unique within the individual national contexts and broader regional contexts. First, it was an unprecedented example of contact with an Islamic power within English history, as well as the first time the Ottoman empire established relations with England. Moreover, the Anglo-Ottoman contact falls in a pivotal period of early modern diplomacy. As diplomatic networks became institutionalised through the 16th century, royal letters were also necessary to allow resident ambassadors to gain access to foreign monarchs, which encouraged personal royal correspondence during this period to a greater extent than later centuries.[4] Finally, Elizabeth I is acknowledged by both contemporaries and historians as a particularly prolific letter writer. The extensive body of correspondence she exchanged with the Ottoman sultans, alongside other Christian and Islamic rulers, positions Elizabeth I, Mehmed III and Murad III within

[3] Jerry Brotton, *The Sultan and the Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam* (New York: Viking, 2016), 9.

[4] Rayne Allinson, *A Monarchy of Letters: Royal Correspondence and English Diplomacy in the Reign of Elizabeth I* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 15-16.

highly personal processes of international diplomacy. Indeed, by 1590, it was reported in Scotland that personal relations between Elizabeth I and Murad III were so close that "no Christian Prince ever had in the Turk suche great estimacion."[5] This is further exacerbated by contrast to the diplomacy of her predecessors, who generally wrote fewer letters to fellow monarchs, and her successor James I, who did not maintain the same level of direct epistolary communication with his Muslim counterparts.[6] The exceptional level of Elizabeth I's personal diplomacy with the Islamic world appears largely due to the European context of hostile Catholic powers: including hostilities and war with Spain, rebellion in Ireland, and the threat of Mary Queen of Scots until the 1580s. The less volatile international situation during the reign of James I and English alignment with other European powers partially explain the decline in personal diplomatic activity, with Anglo-Islamic diplomatic relations becoming less prioritised and requiring less intervention by the English monarch. Furthermore, the oversight of the Levant company in Ottoman diplomacy, including their payment of English ambassadors until the 18th century, and the frequent Ottoman tendency to treat resident ambassadors as the representatives of merchants trading within their borders, rather than representatives of their states and monarchs created separation between the maintenance of commerce and diplomatic relations more generally.[7] However, the lack of continuity in correspondence between Elizabeth and James does suggest a level of personal commitment to the project on Elizabeth's part, alongside the shifting nature of early-modern diplomacy during this period. The rapid development of commercial and diplomatic Anglo-Ottoman contact during the latter half of Elizabeth's reign, and the uniquely personal character of diplomacy during this period

[5] *CSP, Scotland, 1589–1593*, 404, cited in Gerald MacLean and Nabil Matar, *Britain and the Islamic World, 1558-1713* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 54.

[6] MacLean and Matar, *Britain and the Islamic World*, 43-5.

[7] Bülent Ari, "Early Ottoman Diplomacy: Ad Hoc Period," in *Ottoman Diplomacy: Conventional Or Unconventional?*, ed. A. Nuri Yurdusev (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 41.

compared to successive periods, demonstrates that this letter writing and its key principles and strategies were central to the development of relations during this period.

Traditional historiographical approaches to the scope of Elizabethan diplomacy or foreign policy have emphasised English connections and trade relations with Europe. Leading historians of 16th-century English foreign policy, such as Wallace MacCaffrey and R. B. Wernham, focused almost entirely on the British Isles and Europe in some of their most seminal works. The primary initial concern of historical studies addressing the international aspects of Elizabethan policy were Catholic-Protestant divisions in Europe in the aftermath of the Reformation, and their impact on England's international position. This aligns closely with the trend of focusing on religious change as a central pillar of social and political history, both domestic and international, during the Reformation and post-Reformation periods, as well as the strong emphasis on religion in many primary sources from the period, which was particularly linked to fears of an international Catholic conspiracy. Wernham's *The Making of Elizabethan Foreign Policy, 1558-1603* focuses on English diplomatic relations with Spain as the most significant manifestation of European religious divisions affecting England. Some traditional Tudor historiography does take a broader geographical approach: *The Making of Elizabethan Foreign Policy 1558–1603* highlights the broadening global horizons of Elizabethan England in the aftermath of the war with Spain in the late 16th century.[8] However, this still relies heavily on the narratives of Catholic-Protestant divisions across Europe, and only highlights expansion over the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas, a historiographical trend that served to underpin studies of the development of the post-Elizabethan empire. In summary, acknowledgement of a broader global context beyond Europe within traditional Tudor

[8] R. B. Wernham, *The Making of Elizabethan Foreign Policy 1558–1603* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2020), 94.

historiography is limited and where it exists, it serves primarily to explore the expansion of the English worldview to contextualise the establishment of an empire.

More recent works, such as Susan Doran's *Elizabeth I and foreign policy, 1558-1603* also broadly overlook English foreign policy and diplomatic activity with Islamic powers such as Morocco and the Ottoman empire, mentioning them only in passing when discussing support for merchants as they attempted to expand 'into new areas such as Russia, Turkey and Persia.'[9] Traditional and Euro-centric historiographical approaches to Elizabethan foreign policy therefore consistently relegate contact with the Ottoman empire and other parts of the Islamic world to the periphery of their accounts, in favour of examining England's place post-Reformation narratives of Protestant-Catholic divisions. Where Anglo-Islamic contact is acknowledged at all it is linked to English diplomatic isolation and European religious division, emphasising Elizabethan desperation for trade and military alliances to compensate for the hostility of Catholic powers.

However, from the 1980s, several key historians including Susan Skilliter began to highlight diplomatic and commercial contact between Elizabethan England and the Islamic world, building on earlier 20th century works by Rawlington, Epstein and Wood which focused specifically on the Turkey Company. These historians focused on relatively narrow case studies such as the embassy of William Harborne to the Ottoman Empire, and the establishment of trading companies such as the Levant Company and East India Company centred around non-Christian regions. These late 20th century revisionist works acknowledged that England's diplomatic sphere in the late 16th century had expanded beyond the European states which dominated medieval and early Tudor studies, incorporating Islam into the existing narratives of inter-faith diplomacy. However, this topic remained neglected in broader histories of English

[9] Susan Doran, *Elizabeth I and Foreign Policy, 1558-1603* (London: Routledge, 2000), 68.

diplomacy, and focused primarily on commercial development and general cultural contact between England and the Islamic world, as these more revisionist works did not offer an integrated narrative of English inter-faith diplomacy with non-Christian states.

Since the late 1990s and early 2000s, a significant number of historical works have also begun to focus more directly on contact between Elizabethan England and the Islamic world beyond a footnote to European diplomatic activity. These are not necessarily focused exclusively on diplomatic activity: MacLean and Matar's *Britain and the Islamic World, 1558-1713*, for example, examines all forms of encounter, including cultural, commercial, and diplomatic activity, as well as extending chronologically well beyond the Elizabethan period. Nonetheless, Elizabethan diplomacy plays a central role in a number of studies on English contact with individual states, and with the Islamic world more broadly. Works by historians such as Matar, Brotton, MacLean, Jardine, and Allinson emphasise the extent of Anglo-Islamic diplomatic contact, and illustrate how 'global and intertwined relations were between Islamdom and Christendom during the early modern period.'[10] Yurdusev argues that the Ottoman Empire was a significant force in maintaining the European balance of power, as between the 15th and 17th centuries, they favoured rival nations to prevent the dominance of one state in commerce in the Levant; the rapid grant of capitulations to England might be seen as an example of this process in an attempt to counterbalance the primacy of France.[11] The significance of English relations with states outside the European Christian sphere have also been increasingly emphasised. For example, Samia Errazzouki argued that English and Moroccan 'empire-building projects were intertwined,' and that the late 16th century diplomatic

[10] Nabil Matar, *Britain and Barbary, 1589-1689* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 11.

[11] A. Nuri Yurdusev, *Ottoman Diplomacy: Conventional Or Unconventional?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 23.

relations between the two states were crucial in shaping their independent development.[12] With an increasing focus on diplomatic relations between Christian European states and the Ottoman Empire in the early modern period, factors such as religion and gender, and their role in shaping diplomatic relations have been increasingly highlighted. Scholars such as Stephen A. Fischer-Galati and Bernadette Andrea have that Islam and Protestantism were politically and ideologically aligned during this period in opposition to the Catholic Habsburg powers of Spain and the Holy Roman Empire, and as 'iconoclasts and rigorous monotheists.,' suggesting that Anglo-Ottoman diplomacy was a central example of this affinity.[13]

Due to the relatively recent development of the field of Anglo-Islamic diplomacy in the 16th century, there are some key questions which remain unanswered. Most central, perhaps, is the absence of a clear and in-depth assessment of how the religious and gendered divisions between the rulers of England and the Ottoman Empire influenced the development of diplomatic contact and engagement. Gender is a particularly central element to the diplomatic exchanges which has been overlooked since, as Ottoman historians such as Leslie Peirce have stressed, the period between the mid-16th to mid-17th century was known as the "Sultanate of Women." Unlike earlier periods, when supreme political authority within the Ottoman Empire was exercised solely by the Sultan, as the senior male of the imperial dynasty, the mid-16th century to mid-17th century saw this power increasingly delegated to and wielded by women of the imperial dynasty, sometimes arguably to a greater extent than the Sultan himself.

Although royal letter writing as a field is far more developed than the study of Anglo-Islamic or Anglo-Ottoman relations, the letters exchanged by Elizabeth I and Muslim rulers

[12] Samia Errazzouki, "Partners in empire: Sultan Ahmad al-Mansur and Queen Elizabeth I," *The Journal of North African Studies* (2021), 15.

[13] Bernadette Andrea, *Women and Islam in Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 23.

such as Murad III have been neglected in historical study until very recently, particularly in comparison to her correspondence with European rulers. However, as Bajetta et al. highlight, in the late 16th century letters were the most significant textual vector of central government, even as processes such as diplomacy became more formalised and reliant on documents such as treaties.[14] This thesis will therefore draw on the body of correspondence exchanged between Elizabeth I, Murad III, Mehmed III, and Safiye Sultan from c.1578 to c.1603, between the establishment of diplomatic and commercial relations between England and the Ottoman Empire and the end of Elizabeth's reign. Most extensive use will be made of manuscripts from the British library, including a section of the Cotton collection, which primarily comprises letters exchanged between Elizabeth I and Murad III between 1579 and 1583 early in the process of establishing diplomatic relations, as well as several letters from both Murad III and Mehmed III in the 1590s. These manuscript sources are supplemented by the transcriptions and translations made by Susan Skilliter in *William Harborne and the Trade With Turkey, 1578-1582* and "Three Letters from the Ottoman 'Sultana' Safiye to Queen Elizabeth". The emphasis of this thesis therefore falls on the late 1570s to early 1580s, as well as the transition period from the rule of Murad III to that of Mehmed III in the mid-1590s, the periods when the rulers of both states were most actively corresponding, while they were reliant on the resident English ambassador in Constantinople to maintain relations during the interim. For the purposes of this study, extensive analysis will not be conducted beyond the most significant periods of activity due to the limited availability of primary sources. To supplement these letters, examples of correspondence from Elizabeth I, Mehmed III and Murad III to European rulers and Muslim rulers including Philip II of Spain, Henri III of France, and Ahmad al Mansur of Morocco will be analyzed to provide context to the established customs of both English and Ottoman royal

[14] Carlo M. Bajetta, Guillaume Coatalen, and Jonathan Gibson, *Elizabeth I's Foreign Correspondence: Letters, Rhetoric, and Politics (First ed.)* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), xx.

letters in the late 16th century. This correspondence facilitates the study not only of how factors such as gender and religion may have affected the processes of letter writing, such as modes of address and language of submission, but also provides insight into the worldview and claims to authority of each monarch, and the ways in which they aligned or clashed with one another.

This thesis builds on the existing work carried out by historians who have emphasised the alignment between England and the Ottoman Empire during the late 16th century, exploring how the epistolary encounters between the rulers of these states negotiated religion, gender, and power and the impact of these exchanges in a transitional period of diplomacy particularly shaped by the personal involvement of rulers. It is therefore closely tied to the historiographical ideas of the "global Renaissance", which argues that it is erroneous to isolate states such as the Ottoman Empire from Renaissance Europe given their commercial and cultural exchanges, and the fact that 'Renaissance Europe defined and measured itself in relation to the east.'[15] Scholars of the global Renaissance, including Brotton, Jardine, and Burke, focus on the relationship between the European Renaissance and a wider world which was both 'stimulating and responding to cultural developments in Europe.'[16] The commercial outcomes of the exchanges between Elizabeth I and Murad III in the 1580s and the accompanying cultural contact engendered cultural developments in literature, art, and fashion, as well as international and imperial outlooks during the nascent development of an English empire which have been acknowledged by historians over the past decades. Considering these outomces, the Anglo-Ottoman correspondence can be interpreted as a significant mechanism of exchange within the model of the global Renaissance. The personal element of royal letter writing also aligns this

[15] Jerry Brotton, *The Renaissance Bazaar: From the Silk Road to Michelangelo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 33.

[16] Peter Burke, Luke Clossey, and Felipe Fernández-Armesto, "The Global Renaissance," *Journal of World History* 28:1 (2017), 2.

scholarship closely with work carried out by historians such as Kevin Sharpe on royal self-representation in writing. In English royal correspondence, this self-representation is particularly multifaceted, since letters were first read by their recipients, where they aimed to fulfil specific diplomatic purposes, then frequently circulated where they encountered a broader public audience, where their original purpose was modified or even adapted by the circumstances of their circulation or publication.[17] The Anglo-Ottoman correspondence is a significant case study in the self-representation of monarchs in their interactions with one another, particularly in a cross-cultural context. However, it was also more complex than an interpersonal exchange, even when taking into consideration the layers of private and public associated with royal letters, since Elizabeth's assertions relative to factors such as her queenship and status as a Protestant ruler might also have ramifications for her image within England.[18]

Chapter One investigates the norms of royal letter writing in the late 16th century, underlining the prevailing views that this was a key aspect of diplomacy in the period. It takes a comparative approach to highlight how Anglo-Ottoman royal letters differed from those seen in other channels of correspondence, particularly between Christian monarchs in Europe, and the development of epistolary strategies to ensure favourable reception of missives across cultural and linguistic barriers. Chapter Two charts the involvement of royal bureaucracies and translators in the construction of Anglo-Ottoman correspondence, and examines how this shaped the personal involvement of the monarch and interpretations of letters upon reception, especially with regard to holograph letters. Chapter Three approaches both the religious

[17] James Daybell, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England: Manuscript Letters and the Culture and Practices of Letter-Writing, 1512-1635* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 191.

[18] Kevin Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-Century England* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2009), 335.

worldviews and claims to power of the English and Ottoman monarchs and their articulation in letters, and explores the relationship between claims to religious authority and negotiations of power dynamics between the states. Finally, Chapter Four examines the expression of gender and power in epithets and self-references, in addition to the diplomatic impact of the secondary channel of diplomacy established between Elizabeth I and Safiye Sultan in the 1590s.

In summary, the first two chapters, which together comprise the first section, explore the processes of early modern royal diplomacy conducted through correspondence, placing emphasis on epistolary strategies and translation. The second section of the thesis considers the key themes of gender, religion, and power, both in how they affected the development of diplomatic relations between England and the Ottoman Empire, and the linguistic references to these topics in the royal letters. The intention behind this structure is to primarily establish the highly personal nature of royal correspondence and diplomacy in the late 16th century, and outline the epistolary strategies employed by rulers to ensure favourable reception of their letters, and therefore build strong diplomatic relations. This provides a foundation for the thesis to subsequently discuss the themes which underpinned and were explored in the royal letters between England and the Ottoman Empire, with the context of how they were deliberately being crafted to fulfil specific aims and received by their audience, as well as an understanding of how they fitted into broader processes of diplomacy taking place across Europe and beyond in the late 16th century. This will illustrate that the negotiation and articulation of religion, gender, and power in Anglo-Ottoman royal correspondence was at the centre of the establishment and rapid development of diplomatic relations during this period, and that the successful expression of these subjects through the manipulation of royal letter-writing strategies was both crucial and highly successful for the English and Ottoman rulers.

Royal Diplomacy, Letters, and Translation

Chapter 1: The place of Anglo-Ottoman correspondence in 16th century royal letter writing

Royal letter writing in the 16th century was a central aspect of a monarch's role, and key to the processes of establishing and maintaining diplomatic relations between states.[19] A general increase in diplomatic contact between courts during the early modern period was partially precipitated by changes in the structures of diplomacy. Resident diplomacy, which originated in Italian city-states in the 15th century, spread across other European states as a standard practice by the late 16th century.[20] Royal letters were a key element of this evolving early-modern diplomatic system, as they were necessary for resident ambassadors to gain access to foreign monarchs as diplomatic networks became institutionalised, encouraging personal royal correspondence during this period to a greater extent than others.[21] In the Ottoman context, European ambassadors also required a letter of accreditation from their monarch to be accepted as permanent envoys representing their state in Constantinople.[22] Although monarchs had exchanged letters before this period, the 15th and 16th century developments in the diplomatic system increased their extent and means of significance, allowing monarchs to shaped both public and personal aspects of diplomacy by corresponding directly with their counterparts and supporting or instructing their ambassadors. The increase

[19] Mel Evans, "Styling Power: A Corpus-Linguistic Approach to the Correspondence of Queen Elizabeth I," in *Elizabeth I in Writing: Language, Power and Representation in Early Modern England*, ed. Donatella Montini and Ioland Plescia (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 61.

[20] Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (New York: Dover Publications, 1988), 103.

[21] Allinson, *A Monarchy of Letters*, 15-16.

[22] Harriet Rudolph, "The Ottoman Empire and the Institutionalization of European Diplomacy, 1500-1700," in *Islam and International Law: Engaging Self-Centrism from a Plurality of Perspectives*, ed. Marie-Luisa Frick and Andreas Th. Müller (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 171.

in the volume and significance of royal correspondence in the 16th century meant that conventions and expectations around its form, contents and presentation became strongly established, particularly in Europe. Anglo-Ottoman correspondence partially conformed to these general expectations but also diverged significantly in decoration, protocol and use of language. The extent to which these letters were distinct or similar to the majority of 16th century royal correspondence therefore provides insight into how the rulers of England and the Ottoman Empire viewed one another and their relationship, as well as the ways in which they manipulated the form and contents of their correspondence in an attempt to shape diplomatic relations.

Due to the increase in the volume and significance of royal correspondence, the processes which produced it, and the contents or presentation of letters also took on greater importance. In many states, the structure and form of royal letters therefore followed a set template, as well as conforming to several unwritten socio-political codes accepted by monarchs internationally. First, the use of language was somewhat standardized. On a practical level, the lack of common language between European states necessitated the use of a language of diplomacy or *lingua franca* to facilitate correspondence and situate it within a more mutually intelligible linguistic space. In the 16th century English was a language with limited prestige within international diplomacy compared to Spanish, Italian, or French, due to the comparatively peripheral status of England as a European power over previous centuries.[23] Consequently, letters sent and received by Elizabeth I were most frequently written in Latin, French, Spanish and Italian. The sole exceptions to this pattern were the few diplomatic letters which Elizabeth wrote to her Scottish counterparts Mary, Queen of Scots and James VI. It is evident that English royal letters corresponded to the generally established European protocol

[23] Claire M. Gilbert, *In Good Faith: Arabic Translation and Translators in Early Modern Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 142.

for the use of language in diplomatic correspondence, which prioritized Latin and languages which were broadly considered to be diplomatically prestigious, such as Italian and French. Exceptions were made to this pattern for ease of communication, to underline a personal relationship, or to show deference to the recipient by using their vernacular.

Certain modes of address and self-referral were also commonly used within European royal letters. Between the late medieval period and the 17th century, Christian rulers, at least rhetorically, often considered themselves family in the sense of a confraternity of rulers under God.[24] Terms of address in royal letters thus commonly involved the use of familial language. For example, Elizabeth I frequently addressed James I as "my dear brother" and referred to herself as "your most affectionate loving sister and cousin."[25] It should be noted that Elizabeth I and James VI did share a family connection which reinforced the use of this familial language. However, the use of this trope in royal exchanges was not limited to monarchs who were closely related to each other. In a letter from Elizabeth I to Henri III of France in February 1582, she addressed him as 'a Prince like you, my dear brother.'[26] Similarly, her 1560 salutation to Eric, King of Sweden read 'Most Serene Prince, Our Very Dear Cousin,' and the same letter was signed 'Your Serence Highness' sister and cousin.'[27] In both of these cases, Elizabeth I employs the same familial language which she used to address James VI despite the lack of close family ties with the monarchs to whom she was writing. This was a deliberate rhetorical strategy which allowed monarchs to emphasise their alliances and to resolve

[24] Maija Jansson, *Art and Diplomacy: Seventeenth-Century English Decorated Royal Letters to Russia and the Far East*, (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 28.

[25] Elizabeth I, "To James the Sixth, King of Scotland (August 1588)," in *The Letters of Queen Elizabeth I*, ed. Harrison (London: Cassell & Company Ltd., 1968), 193-4.

[26] Elizabeth I, "To Henry III, King of France: Written on the Departure of Anjou from England (February 1582) Translated from the French," in *The Letters of Queen Elizabeth I*, ed. Harrison, 51.

[27] Elizabeth I "To Eric, King of Sweden (February 25, 1560) Translated from the Latin," in *The Letters of Queen Elizabeth I*, ed. Harrison, 31-32.

'political tension resulting from potential misunderstandings' by establishing emotional parameters within which political matters could be more easily resolved.[28]

This sense of fraternity extended beyond letters monarchs exchanged with one another. In a letter from Henri III to de Germigny, the French ambassador in Constantinople, he similarly referred to his relationship with Elizabeth I: 'Sa dite Majesté, l'aimant d'une amitié fraternelle, comme elle fait, et ayant avec elle toute bonne intelligence, sera toujours bien aise qu'elle et les siens reçoivent faveur et gratification dudit grand-seigneur.'[29] Henri III's use of language in this quotation not only asserted that he and Elizabeth I shared a positive personal relationship, but also included the rhetoric that he held a fraternal devotion for her. This illustrates that monarchs' use of familial address and conception of their personal relations as familial, even when they lacked a significant familial connection, was a strong enough pattern in the 16th century that it extended beyond their personal letters to their broader references to one another. The tendency to conceive and refer to one another in a familial manner also reflects a certain level of mutual respect which monarchs were expected to hold for one another in light of their socio-political status. The inclusion of language which indicated mutual respect, and the intertwined notion of a monarchical "family" were demonstrably common elements within royal correspondence in Europe, with which Elizabeth and her correspondents clearly engaged.

[28] Dustin M. Neighbors, and N. K. Käfer, "Zones of Privacy in Letters Between Women of Power: Elizabeth I of England and Anna of Saxony," *Royal Studies Journal* 9:1 (2022), 69-70.

[29] Henri III, "Réponse de Henri III aux articles des instructions donnés au secretaire Berthier, en date de Blois le 6 janvier 1581," in *Recueil des Traités de la Porte Ottomane avec les Puissances Étrangères Depuis le Premier Traité conclu, en 1536, entre Suléyman I et François I jusqu'a nos jours (Tome I)*, ed. Ignace de Testa (Paris: Amyot, 1864), 134.

Furthermore, there were standard practices in the formatting of letters, which have increasingly been a focus of study as an integral feature of diplomatic processes.[30] Conspicuous consumption of resources such as paper, ink, or decorative elements reflected a greater cost on the part of the sender, thus reflecting the respect they held for the recipient. For example, the presence of space on paper, especially in a distinct gap between the body of the letter and a signature, indicated that more paper was being used than necessary, increasing the cost and reflecting the value placed on the recipient.[31] The decorative elements of correspondence, such as seals and calligraphy, also held extensive implications. Decoration often indicated the magnificence and wealth of its sender, as well as the degree of diplomatic value placed on the recipient which was reflected by the amount of money and time invested. [32] During the 16th century, highly decorated letters were sent from England only to countries that granted trading privileges, and where customs and import taxes could be negotiated, implying that the material aspects of letters were viewed as central to establishing positive relations to ensure trade rights.[33] However, within Western Europe personal letters between monarchs did not always reflect this ideal of magnificence. Elizabeth I's letters to Christian European rulers were commonly unornamented and sealed with her signet as a 'sign of intimacy and strong friendship.'[34] While some level of decoration and consumption of resources was necessary to show respect to royal recipients, highly decorated letters were not a common feature of

[30] Tracey A. Sowerby, "Negotiating with the Material Text: Royal Correspondence between England and the Wider World," in *Cultures of Diplomacy and Literary Writing in the Early Modern World*, ed. Tracey A. Sowerby and Joanna Craigwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 203.

[31] Allinson, *A Monarchy of Letters,* 29.

[32] Allinson, *A Monarchy of Letters,* 131-2.

[33] Jansson, *Art and Diplomacy*, 33.

[34] Jansson, *Art and Diplomacy,* 32.

Elizabeth I's correspondence with fellow monarchs, which frequently prioritised an appearance of intimacy or friendship in order to foster close personal relations.

Finally, in many cases both Ottoman and European royal letters written to fellow monarchs followed a fixed structure. In Europe this formula had been established during the medieval period, and primarily governed the openings and conclusions of the messages. First was the *salutatio*, in which the titles of both sender and recipient were established, followed by a preamble. The main body of the message followed in the form of the *narratio*, which outlined the details of any matter being addressed, and the petition which comprised the main purpose of the letter. Finally, the *conclusio* outlined the benefits of the recipient responding positively to the petition, or the potential negative consequences which might ensue if it were not met. Letters sent by the Ottoman Sultan shared many of these features, including the *narratio*, but could be significantly more complicated in structure. This was frequently dependent on the type of letter being sent, such as a fermān (command), which most often communicated the will of the Sultan to his subjects but was occasionally sent to foreigners, including the first letter from Murad III to Elizabeth I in 1579, or name-i humāyūn (Imperial letter).[35] Compared to the five main sections common in European royal letters, a fermān typically contained 12 separate elements. The most significant included: the *invocatio* which invoked Allah's name; the *tughra*, *intitulatio*, and *inscriptio* which laid out the name and titles of the Sultan and the individual being addressed; the *expositio*, *narratio*, and *disposition* which served the same purpose as the European preamble, *narratio*, and petition; and finally the *sanctio* and *comminatio* which functioned similarly to the European *conclusion*.[36]

[35] Susan A. Skilliter, *William Harborne and the trade with Turkey, 1578-1582: a documentary study of the first Anglo-Ottoman relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 17.

[36] Skilliter, *William Harborne and the trade with Turkey,* 17.

On a range of counts, the Anglo-Ottoman correspondence begun in the late 1570s did follow the standard conventions which respectively governed European and Ottoman royal letters. Letters from England to the Ottoman Empire were sent in Latin or Italian as a diplomatic language, because of Constantinople's proximity to Italy and established diplomatic and commercial relations with Venice. Although *Fasih Türkçe* ("eloquent Turkish") was not understood widely in Europe, this was nonetheless the language used in letters from the Ottoman Empire to England, as well as to other European states. Turkish letters were accompanied by a translation into Latin or Italian made in the Ottoman royal chancery or within the English embassy in Constantinople. This use of language was intended to assert and maintain Ottoman linguistic supremacy over the recipients of correspondence, while still ensuring that messages were understood.[37] In this dual context, the use of Italian and Latin in Anglo-Ottoman diplomatic correspondence can be characterised as "diplomatic languages" more than a *lingua franca*, since Italian and Latin were used interchangeably. For example, the letters sent by Safiye Sultan to Elizabeth I in 1593 and 1599 were translated by her *kira* Esperanza Malchi into Italian. However. the translations which accompanied Murad III's and Mehmed III's letters were written in Latin, as were the letters from Elizabeth to both Sultans. This suggests that neither Italian nor Latin was viewed as the single definitive language of Anglo-Ottoman diplomacy. The use of language in Anglo-Ottoman correspondence therefore generally matched the established standards of letter-writing on both sides, either by making use of diplomatic *linguae francae* within the correspondence, or ensuring that the Turkish original was accompanied by a translation into one of these accepted languages. However, the uncertain use of Italian and Latin in the correspondence between England and Ottoman Empire

[37] Allinson, *A Monarchy of Letters*, 27-8.

suggests a lack of certainty regarding linguistic protocol even two decades after diplomatic relations were established, something which was uncommon in European royal letters.

The structure of the letters sent by each monarch also broadly aligned with the European and Ottoman standards, respectively. The inclusion of every element in a formal royal letter is not present in every individual piece of correspondence sent between England and the Ottoman Empire over almost three decades. Furthermore, the abbreviated form of letters in Ottoman chancery records renders it difficult to conclusively determine the conformity of the original documents to the formula for royal letters, although comparison of the original versions to the Ottoman royal formulae suggest that at least most of the expected sections of a royal letter were present in all dispatches to England. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that the first letter sent to Elizabeth I was a *fermān* rather than a royal letter. This form of Ottoman royal letter was most commonly sent to the Sultan's subjects, since it was strictly speaking a command rather than a letter, and rarely to other heads of state.[38] This break in epistolary custom was tied to the fact that the establishment of diplomatic contact in the late 1570s itself represented a significant deviation from accepted royal protocol from the Ottoman perspective. The initial contact between the two states was an English overture, since William Harborne contacted the Ottoman court as an unofficial representative of Elizabeth I to seek the granting of trade privileges. Consequently, the first true diplomatic formality came in the form of the letter which Murad III sent to Elizabeth in 1579. Lisa Jardine argues that 'an unsolicited letter from a ruling sultan represented an unheard-of honour for the recipient. It was customary for Murad to respond only to carefully framed and formally constructed epistolary approaches made by petitioners in their own name, even if those petitioners were of royal status equal to his own.'[39] This argument is supported by the account of the Holy Roman Emperor's

[38] Skilliter, *William Harborne and the trade with Turkey,* 53.

[39] Jardine, "Gloriana Rules the Waves," 210.

ambassador Joachim von Sinzendorff, which alleged that the Grand Vizier Soqollu Mehemmed Pasha had said to William Harborne that: 'I have had a great deal of trouble about it because it is absolutely not the custom usually that our Sultan should send a letter to anybody who has not written a letter to him first of all.'[40] This suggests that the establishment of Anglo-Ottoman relations represented a unique situation, and potentially a new context in terms of the power balance between the two states, which the Ottoman sultan and royal bureaucracy attempted to counterbalance through the form of their initial letter.

The material accoutrements of Anglo-Ottoman letters also often conformed to fixed diplomatic formulae. The chancery note at the head of the initial command initiating English trade privileges and diplomatic relations from Murad III in 1579 reads: 'It was put into the satin bag, fastened with the silver capsule (and) given to the interpreter ('Ali) Mustafa.'[41] The silver capsule and satin bag referenced in this quotation were an Ottoman diplomatic formality for letters being sent to minor rulers. This could therefore reflect the peripheral diplomatic status of England in the Ottoman conception. It may also potentially reflect the fact that the correspondence had not been initiated by a formal letter from Elizabeth herself, but established by Harborne as an agent working on her behalf. Since it was therefore a favour being granted on the request of an English subject, the lesser decoration and formality accorded to the letter might have served to counterbalance the unique power dynamics created by the sultan establishing diplomatic correspondence against the norm.[42] However, by the end of the 16th century, a gold brocade bag and golden capsule replaced the silver capsule and satin bag, indicating that the diplomatic status of both Elizabeth and England was perceived by the

[40] Joachim von Sinzendorff. "Part of von Sinzendorff's report of 4 April 1579," trans. Skilliter, *William Harborne and the trade with Turkey*, 64.

[41] Murad III, 'Registry copy of Sultan Murad III's command to Queen Elizabeth I, [Constantinople, 8 Muharram 987/7 March 1579],' trans. Skilliter, *William Harborne and the trade with Turkey*, 49.

[42] Allinson, *A Monarchy of Letters*, 136.

Ottomans as equal to other major European monarchs and their states, and illustrating the development of Anglo-Ottoman relations.[43] Pierre Bourdieu highlights that both England and the Ottoman Empire have been characterised by historians such as Eisenstadt as "bureaucratic empires" with highly centralized power which operated through an impersonal bureaucratic apparatus.[44] The construction of royal letters within the Ottoman Empire might consequently be interpreted as a performance of bureaucracy which highlighted the power of the state beyond the direct authority of the monarch by indicating the extent and cohesion of their administration. The evolution of the treatment of English letters within the Ottoman bureaucracy illustrates that, as relations improved between the states, there was a greater level of respect accorded to Elizabeth I and England, in addition to asserting the Ottoman state's bureaucratic capacity to adapt to this through material differentiation of letters.

On the other hand, Anglo-Ottoman royal correspondence is notable for lacking the use of familial language which characterised many of the letters exchanged by European monarchs. This is particularly striking because the use of familial language is a common feature of Elizabeth's outgoing letters to her foreign counterparts, even where it was not reciprocated. For example, Elizabeth's letters to the Moroccan sharif Ahmad al-Mansur from 1598 invoke a familial stance, signed: "Vuestra hermana y pariente segun ley de corona ye ceptro" [your sister and relative according to the law of crown and scepter].[45] However, a comparable use of familial language is not present in the responding letters from al-Mansur. This failure to reciprocate may be due in part to the religious division between the rulers, since Muslim rulers such as al-Mansur naturally would not have considered themselves to be part of the

[43] Skilliter, *William Harborne and the trade with Turkey*, 49.

[44] Pierre Bourdieu, *On the State: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1989-1992,* ed. Patrick Champagne, Remi Lenoir, Franck Poupeau, and Marie-Christine Rivière, trans. David Fernbach (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), 73.

[45] Nabil Matar, "Queen Elizabeth I Through Moroccan Eyes," *Journal of Early Modern History* 12 (2008), 73.

confraternity of Christian rulers. This therefore serves to explain the lack of familial language in the letters from Murad III and Mehmed III to Elizabeth I, since, like al-Mansur, they fell outside of the category of Christian monarchs who commonly employed this linguistic technique. However, more notably, familial terms of address are also absent from Elizabeth I's letters to the Ottoman sultans. This is significant because there is precedent for Elizabeth using this rhetoric for non-Christian rulers, as indicated by the previous example of her correspondence with Ahmad al-Mansur. The absence of the familial language in Anglo-Ottoman correspondence may suggest that at the outset of diplomatic relations there was an insufficiently personal relationship between the rulers to warrant the use of this language. Alternatively, it might imply that the Ottoman Sultans were considered to be outside of the group of monarchs to whom it was appropriate to use these stylings, or that Elizabeth and her secretaries deliberately refrained from its use as they did not believe that it would be well received.

Another notable variance between Anglo-Ottoman and other European royal correspondence was the appearance of letters, a phenomenon which was particularly the case for English letters to the Ottoman Empire. Specifically, Elizabeth's correspondence with Muslim rulers was more highly ornamented compared to letters she exchanged with western European rulers. In her correspondence with the Ottoman Empire and Morocco, Elizabeth frequently adopted limning and sealed letters with silk, as well as using the larger Great Seal or privy seal in place of her personal seal.[46] This use of the Great Seal is present on some of Elizabeth's earliest letters to Murad III, such as the first letter she sent to the Ottoman Empire in 1579 on the topic of trading rights for English merchants.[47] This distinction in decoration from Elizabeth's letters to the Ottoman sultans was closely tied to their cultural expectations,

[46] Jardine, "Gloriana Rules the Waves," 30-32.

[47] BL Cotton MS Nero B VIII, f.51.

which equated these ornamentations with magnificence and respect. Edward Barton, the second resident English ambassador in Constantinople, had suggested the adoption of decorative techniques and the application of the Great Seal as a matter of practice, to ensure that Murad III could "take pleasure to see the care taken in the outward forme," despite being unable to read the Latin text of the letter directly.[48] However, there is evidence to suggest that the use of the Great Seal evident on Elizabeth's extant letters to Murad III was not consistent through the 1580s and 1590s, since Barton wrote to England in 1591 to argue in favour of its continued use, since switching seals might prove detrimental to the personal relationship between the two monarchs.[49] Although there is evidence to suggest that the decoration and use of the Great Seal on letters from Elizabeth I to the Ottoman Sultans was not consistent throughout the late 16th century, the examples and details of the usage which did take place represents a notable effort to adapt English royal letters to the expectations of Ottoman recipients, particularly on the advice of resident ambassadors.

By contrast, diplomatic letters from Murad III and Mehmed III to other rulers were highly decorated as a matter of common practice. They were frequently written on paper over a metre in length, consumption which underscored the wealth and magnificence of the sender, as in Europe, and headed with a *tughra*, an elaborate calligraphic signature personal to each Sultan.[50] For both Murad III and Mehmed III, the *tughra* named them as the current ruling sultan, highlights their relationship to the previous sultan, and labels them as "the ever-victorious." For example, Mehmed III's *tughra* read: '*Mehemmed bin Murad Hân el-muzaffer dâimâ* (Mehemmed, son of Murad Hân, the ever-victorious,' reinforcing his royal lineage and right to

[48] Allinson, *A Monarchy of Letters*, 31.

[49] Allinson, *A Monarchy of Letters*, 31-32.

[50] Allinson, *A Monarchy of Letters,* 135.

rule.[51] The examples of their correspondence with Elizabeth conformed closely to the established traditions of Ottoman royal letter writing, employing large sheets of paper, multiple colours of ink, and elaborate signatures. Highly decorated royal letters were not only sent by the sultans: Safiye's 1593 letter to Elizabeth was also highly decorated. The paper was flecked with gold, and the writing used five colours of ink - black, blue, crimson, gold, and scarlet - which seems to have been entirely for aesthetic purposes.[52] An inventory of the gifts sent by Safiye to Elizabeth I alongside this letter states that the letter was sealed with: 'one shell of gould which covered the seale of her letter to her magestie upon which was sett ii smale sparkes of Dyamondes and ii small sparkes of rubies might be worth £20.'[53] The assessed value of the seal used on Safiye's letter was greater than one of the gifts she sent which was valued at £10, and almost as high as another valued at £22. This suggests that the appearance and magnificence of pieces of correspondence were viewed as substantial enough to invest significant amounts of time and money into, to the extent that their value was almost equal in importance to the diplomatic gifts which accompanied them. The level of decoration on surviving correspondence between England and the Ottoman Empire therefore suggests that the participants were engaged in displays of reciprocal magnificence intended to indicate respect for the recipient of letters and their station, as well as to highlight their own power and wealth. From both the Ottoman and English perspectives, the decoration of letters also compensated for the fact that the recipient would be unable to read the original letter. The tendency towards the decoration of letters for this purpose is far more pronounced in the letters sent by the Ottoman sultans, however, it should be noticed that this was essentially standard

[51] M. Uğur Durman, *Letters in Gold: Ottoman Calligraphy from the Sakıp Sabancı Collection, Istanbul* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), 172, 174.

[52] BL Cotton MS Nero B VIII, f.55.

[53] "Inventory of Safiye Sultan's gifts to Elizabeth I (1593). P.R.O., S.P. 97/2, ff.230-1." in Susan A. Skilliter, 'Three Letters from the Ottoman 'Sultana' Safiye to Queen Elizabeth,' in *Documents from Islamic Chanceries,* ed. S.M. Stern (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965), 148.

practice for their royal letters. The additional level of decoration and the use of the Great Seal by Elizabeth I in her letters to the Ottoman Empire mark a more significant break from the accepted practices evident in European royal letter writing. The letters she sent to Murad III and Mehmed III might therefore be noted as more remarkable for the fact that they represent an attempt to compromise and bridge cultural divisions to establish and maintain positive diplomatic relations.

The significance of letters in this period, particularly those exchanged between rulers, is not only indicated by the established epistolary practices, but also by the circulation and afterlife of letters. In the late 16th century, letter books developed as a significant and prevalent means of recording outgoing and received correspondence.[54] The practice of keeping letter books was particularly emphasised within government, with Secretaries of State such as Robert Beale and Nicholas Faunt recommending correspondence be kept for intelligence and negotiations with foreign powers, including the Ottoman Empire.[55] In fact, the compilation of letters in letter books, in combination with the increased volume of correspondence, is a crucial reason for the survival of many of these primary sources. However, the collection and subsequent circulation of letters, which Daybell **[?]** describes as an "afterlife", adds further dimensions to their purpose, reception and audience. This process is particularly applicable when letters were published in hybrid manuscripts and circulated for broader public consumption. While many early modern letter books simply recorded correspondence, and this was certainly the case in the form of letter books advocated by Beale and Faunt, others were more general manuscript volumes such as journals of voyages and commonplace books accompanied by other forms of documents.[56] In these manuscript books in particular, letters

54 Daybell, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England*, 178.

55 Daybell, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England*, 179-180.

56 Daybell, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England*, 180.

became a single element in the intentions of the author or compositor of the collection, and often separate from their original context. Most relevant for this study is Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, which contains English and Latin translations of many letters from the Anglo-Ottoman exchange, and served as 'an encouragement and a corrective to national endeavor…seek[ing] to promote the discovery and settlement of new lands — and commercial activity in general.'[57] The afterlives of royal letters mean that they could be appropriated for specific political or ideological aims relevant for a much wider public audience than their original individual recipients. In the specific case of the *Principal Navigations*, the original cross-cultural diplomatic purposes of the material and linguistic strategies in Anglo-Ottoman letters therefore naturally evolved when presented to a broader domestic audience, and became more closely tied to royal self-representation and the construction of narratives which encouraged the growth of a global outlook in early modern England.

In conclusion, royal letter writing in the 16th century was a generally codified process, with a standardized form and style of decoration alongside an accepted use of familial language and terms of address. This was by necessity, since following established formulae reduced the possibility that letters might cause offence and negatively impact international relations between states. English royal letters to the Ottoman Empire, alongside those sent to states such as Russia and Morocco, conformed to some of these norms but often differed in other ways, particularly on a stylistic level. This was partially due to the linguistic barriers between England and the Ottoman Empire, but it was also an attempt to conform to the cultural expectations of the rulers who received them. The clear divergence between English letters to the Ottoman Sultans and to other European monarchs, including greater levels of decoration, an absence of familial language, and the use of the Great Seal rather than Elizabeth's personal seal, is

[57] David Boruchoff, "Piety, Patriotism, and Empire: Lessons for England, Spain, and the New World in the Works of Richard Hakluyt," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 62:3 (2009), 813.

indicative of a deliberate strategy by Elizabeth I and her ambassadors to ensure that her letters were more likely to be favourably received.[58] On the other hand, Ottoman letters to England did not diverge drastically from their standard practices in matters such as decoration, but other protocols such as the establishment of contact were notably broken. Consequently, there is sufficient evidence to argue that the major compromises evident in Elizabeth's letters to the Ottoman Sultans, particularly on the stylistic level, were reciprocated to a degree, most evidently in the breach of protocol which Murad III's initial letter to Elizabeth I represented.

[58] Allinson, *A Monarchy of Letters,* 132.

Chapter 2: Royal letter writers, translators, and the "secretary problem"

Letters sent between monarchs represent a major facet of the developing diplomatic process during the 16th century, and are consequently 'factors in the expression of state policy and even state power.'[59] Despite the characterisation of diplomatic correspondence between royal figures as a "personal" aspect of relations between states, a central issue with royal letter writing in this period is whether individual pieces of correspondence were written in a monarch's own hand. The increasing involvement of secretaries, translators, and decorators evident in the late 16th century renders it challenging to assess the level of influence that the supposed royal author of a letter actually exerted over its contents and appearance, especially when original copies are not extant. It is therefore necessary to assess not only the extent to which English and Ottoman monarchs were personally involved in the production of their correspondence, but whether this had any significant bearing on the development of diplomatic relations between the two states in the 1580s and 1590s.

In the early modern period, there were two main forms of royal letter: "holograph", those written entirely in the monarch's own hand, and "autograph", which were drafted by secretaries within the royal bureaucracy and only signed by the monarch. Different values were given to these two forms of royal letter by their recipients. Holograph letters were esteemed more highly since they indicated greater personal involvement and investment of time and effort by a monarch.[60] Letters partially or fully written in a monarch's own hand reflected the time which one monarch was willing to dedicate to the recipient, and therefore the perceived level of honour they accorded to the recipient.[61] The greater personal involvement of the sender

[59] Jansson, *Art and Diplomacy*, 3.

[60] Allinson, *A Monarchy of Letters,* 21.

[61] Evans, "Styling Power," 61-2.

also increased the degree of confidentiality of correspondence, which was a central element of maintaining political trust and relationships, and therefore positive diplomatic relations.[62] In both domestic and international correspondence, recipients placed significantly greater value on "holograph" letters, in which the personal involvement of the monarch was clear. Consequently, rulers were often closely involved with the construction of royal letters, particularly when they were deliberately attempting to cultivate a close relationship with the recipient or writing to another monarch, although this varied by individual and recipient.

In the case of Anglo-Ottoman correspondence, there appears to be some variance in the extent of personal involvement in correspondence by both parties over the entire period. Elizabeth I often preferred to write personally to fellow monarchs, a tendency which increased throughout the course of her reign, and was proficient enough in Italian alongside other foreign languages to write letters to figures such as Maximilian II.[63] However, Elizabeth I was also heavily reliant on her principal secretaries, such as William Cecil, Francis Walsingham, and Robert Cecil, who were 'responsible for composing, receiving, and filing the queen's foreign correspondence, as well as for supervising the administration of diplomatic missions abroad.'[64] Elizabeth's principal secretaries were therefore responsible for the form and content of any letters which were not written in her own hand, and required only her signature; but there were notable instances of her making corrections to letters, which then had to be redrafted by the secretaries.

Comparably, incoming and outgoing Ottoman royal correspondence and documents were primarily translated through the royal chancery, which managed a range of political and

[62] James Daybell, *Women Letter Writers in Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 109.

[63] Allesandra Petrina, ""Perfit readiness": Elizabeth Learning and Using Italian," in *Elizabeth I's Foreign Correspondence,* ed. Bajetta, Coatalen, and Gibson, 109-10.

[64] Allinson, *A Monarchy of Letters*, 23.

administrative tasks including the management of foreign policy. The involvement of Murad III, Mehmed III, and Safiye Sultan in writing royal letters is frequently less clear. This is due to the greater extent of scholarship and primary sources focused on English royal letter writing, and Elizabeth I's letters specifically, but it is also partially a result of Ottoman manuscripts and printed or translated primary sources being less accessible within the Anglophone academic world. However, it is often possible to differentiate a formal letter of state written by a secretary from a more personal one through the analysis of their use of language, such as rhetorical formulae commonly accepted in diplomacy, as well as their decoration. For example, of the three extant letters from Safiye to Elizabeth, the first in 1593 was a formal letter and two in 1599 were "personal letters," and there are marked differences in both the presentation and use of language.[65] The letter Safiye wrote to Elizabeth I in 1593 was a formal letter of gratification for gifts previously sent by Elizabeth. It was highly decorated with calligraphy and brightly coloured ink and the message was framed in poetic language, such as: 'let there be made a salutation so gracious that all the rose-garden's roses are but one petal from it and a speech so sincere that the whole repertoire of the garden's nightingales is but one stanza of it'.[66] The first 1599 letter from Safiye was significantly less ornate in both style and form, which may suggest her greater influence in its composition or even writing, with a view to establishing a more personal relationship.[67] The references Safiye makes to her son in these letters also reflect this shifting level of formality. In 1593, the poetic style of prose extended to her introduction of:

[65] MacLean and Matar, *Britain and the Islamic World*, 47-8.

[66] Safiye Sultan, "A letter in Turkish from the Khasseki Safiye to Queen Elizabeth, written in the first decade of Rabi' I, 1002/25 November-4 December 1593. British Museum, Cotton Ms Nero B. viii, ff. 61-2, see plate XXXVII," trans. Skilliter, "Three Letters," 120-33.

[67] Marina Lushchenko, "The Correspondence of Ottoman Women During the Early Modern Period (16th to 18th Centuries: Overview on the Current State of Research, Problems, and Perspectives," in *Women's Memory: The Problem of Sources*, ed. D. Fatma Türe and Birsen Talay Keşoğlu (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 61.

> 'Sultan Murad Khan's son, His Highness Mehemmed Khan…the worthy of the gifts of the Ever-Living and Ever-Requiting God, the pearl in the Khaqans crown, the heir of the Sultans, the heir-apparent of the Caliphate, worthy of the imperial throne, the straight-grown cypress in the garden of kingship, the royal son of His Majesty Sultan Murad'[68]

In 1599, Safiye's first reference to her son is significantly more direct: 'We do not cease from admonishing our son, His Majesty the Padishah, and from telling him: "Do act according to the treaty!"'[69] The 1599 letter markedly lacks the language of praise and list of epithets present in the 1593 letter, illustrating its far more informal and personal character, and suggesting that Safiye was more closely involved in its construction. However, the notion that the 1599 "personal letters" were written in Safiye's own hand is contradicted by the external account of John Sanderson, the treasurer of the Levant Company in Constantinople, who asserted that there were two letters sent in 1599. The first letter was from Safiye, and the second, by his account, 'also written by the sam partie (some woman in the seraglio),' therefore implying that neither letter was written by Safiye herself.[70] It should be noted that as a foreign man, Sanderson would not have had access to the Ottoman harem, and his assertion therefore lacks clear basis. However, it nonetheless casts some doubt on the extent of Safiye's personal involvement in constructing the 1599 correspondence. While Sanderson's account casts doubt on whether the 1599 letter from Safiye was written in her own hand, the other factors, such as

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[68] Safiye Sultan, "A letter in Turkish from the Khasseki Safiye to Queen Elizabeth, 25 November-4 December 1593," trans. Skilliter, "Three Letters," 130-31.

[69] Safiye Sultan, "Two almost identical Turkish letters from the Walide Safiye to Queen Elizabeth, undated [of crca 26 November 1599] Document II is folio 19 and Document III is folio 5 of Public Record Office, S.P. 102/4, see plates XXXIX and XL," trans. Skilliter, "Three Letters," 138-9.

[70] John Sanderson, "Letter from John Sanderson to William Aldrich at Scio? (18th November, 1599)," in *The Travels of John Sanderson in the Levant, 1584-1602: With His Autobiography and Selections from his correspondence*, ed. William Foster (London, Hakluyt Society, 2010), 185.

the level of decoration and inclusion of elaborate prose and etiquette suggests her greater level of involvement. For both sides of Anglo-Ottoman correspondence, it is therefore difficult to determine the precise involvement of the individual sending the letter in its drafting and composition. Nonetheless, there are strong indications that the correspondents were at least partially responsible for the contents, language, and layout used, albeit to a varying degree throughout the period.

On a further practical level, it is crucial to note the involvement of translators in both the Ottoman and English contexts. As previously established, Elizabeth I favoured personal letter-writing when communicating with fellow monarchs, but other letters and even some written to other monarchs were composed by her secretaries and their office. This was particularly the case for those written in Latin, in which Elizabeth was less proficient than French, Spanish, or Italian. Letters in Latin were thus frequently written or assisted by Sir John Wolley, who served as Latin secretary, or one of his subordinates.[71] According to Thomas Lake, personal secretary to Francis Walsingham, the formal letter written in Latin to Mehmed III in 1596 after his accession was produced in a multi-stage process within the royal bureaucracy. It was written in Latin by a secretary and translator working under John Wolley, signed by the Queen, then prepared for sending by being addressed by the same individual who wrote them and sealed.[72] In Constantinople, translators also worked closely with the resident English ambassadors and agents to produce translations in Latin or Italian which would be sent alongside original documents or kept for the ambassador's records if a translation had already been made in the Ottoman chancery. For example, in 1593 a "letter of gratification" and several gifts were sent from Safiye to Elizabeth via Edward Barton, the secretary and agent of William

[71] Allinson, *A Monarchy of Letters,* 27.

[72] Angela Andreani, "Manuscripts, Secretaries, and Scribes: The Production of Diplomatic Letters at Court," in *Elizabeth I's Foreign Correspondence. Queenship and Power*, ed. Bajetta, Coatalen, and Gibson, 10.

Harborne in Constantinople when Harborne returned to England in 1588. The translation of this "letter of gratification" into Italian was made in Barton's house by Paulo Mariani, a Venetian merchant who was acting as Barton's secretary.[73] This "letter of gratification" also serves as evidence of translations or copies of diplomatic correspondence being produced in England, since the original and primary Italian translation were accompanied by another translation. This further copy of the translation seems to have been copied in London with several mistakes, likely made because the primary translation was not aesthetically satisfying enough to present to the Queen. However, there was no translator resident at Elizabeth's court who could compare the original Turkish to the accompanying Italian or Latin translations, since only Arabic was taught at English universities in any capacity during the 16th century. By the early-modern period, dragomans had become increasingly associated with institutions such as royal chanceries to interpret and translate to and from Arabic and Turkish, and were a central element of the Ottoman royal chancery by the late 16th century.[74] The chancery notes at the top of translated Ottoman documents sent to England alongside the original, while not present in personal correspondence, illuminates the processes these documents generally underwent. The chancery note on the registry copy of Murad III's 1579 initial command to Elizabeth I, which granted security to English merchants and requested her friendship, reads: 'It was put into the satin bag, fastened with the silver capsule (and) given to the interpreter ('Ali) Mustafa.'[75] This suggests a similar process to the Elizabethan royal bureaucracy: that the document was written by a scribe or secretary, subject to formalities of appearance, then translated. The individual

[73] Skilliter, "Three Letters," 147.

[74] Natalie E. Rothman, *The Dragoman Renaissance: Diplomatic Interpreters and the Routes of Orientalism* (Cornell University Press, 2021), 4.

[75] Murad III, "Registry copy of Sultan Murad III's command to Queen Elizabeth I, promising security by land and sea to all English agents and merchants trading in the in the Ottoman dominions, and requesting her friendship in return. [Constantinople, 8 Muharram 987/7 March 1579]," trans. Skilliter, *William Harborne and the trade with Turkey*, 49.

dragoman with responsibility for the translation is then named: this specific document first mistakenly refers to 'Ali, the French ambassador's dragoman who logically ought to have translated this document since there was no English ambassador, then was corrected to Mustafa, who ultimately translated the command.[76] The correction of Mustafa's name indicates that there were multiple translators who repeatedly worked on documents for the same recipient or of the same type, and it was considered important that the correct dragoman was credited. While passing through the Ottoman chancery, letters and documents were therefore marked with symbols of status and priority and assigned to the responsibility of specific translators within the institution, whose identity was considered significant enough to the process to record. Intertwining processes of translating Ottoman documents between Turkish and Latin and Italian, transcribing or copying the translated versions, and further translating them into English were occurring in both England and Constantinople. Translators were comparatively less involved in the production of English letters, since Elizabeth wrote some Italian letters personally, and letters were often written directly in Latin or Italian when produced by the royal bureaucracy. Nonetheless, their involvement in the production and reception on the English and Ottoman sides of royal correspondence is clear and significant.

The involvement of translators alongside secretaries and the royal bureaucracy further complicates the idea that royal letters were directly produced by the monarch by adding an extra layer to the process of their construction. Perhaps more significantly, there is also evidence to suggest that dragomans occasionally played a role beyond ensuring that messages could be understood by their recipients. Where their influence is explicitly evident, it is possible to see how individual translators involved in translating and mediating the diplomatic correspondence between England and the Ottoman Empire constructed the meaning and

[76] Skilliter, *William Harborne and the trade with Turkey*, 49.

reception of correspondence. Firstly, these translations were not usually word-for-word accounts of original letters, and dragomans also frequently made additions to the original document in their translations. For example, the 1579 correspondence from Murad III, as reflected by the registry copy, opened briefly as "Command to Elzabet who is the queen of the domain of Anletar."[77] However, Mustafa Beg's translation which accompanied the original contained an addition which praised her as a "Prince of the most mighty followers of Jesus" and complimented her nobility and virtue.[78] This addition softened the tone of the letter, which technically took the form of a command to a subordinate of the Sultan instead of a fellow monarch, and therefore made it more palatable for Elizabeth as a piece of diplomatic correspondence. Finally, the involvement of translators at times caused the potential for enormous miscommunication. The first four letters exchanged between Murad III and Elizabeth I, which discussed the granting of trade privileges, were significantly influenced by their translation. The registry copy of the initial letter from Murad III, and thus the original, informed Elizabeth that general safe-conduct had been granted for all English merchants since the Porte 'has ever been open and unveiled to friend and foe.'[79] However**,** the English translation made by Richard Hakluyt of the Latin version received by Elizabeth suggested that Harborne's request for trade privileges was limited to himself and his companions, rather than a general request.[80] The shaping of the original Ottoman message and its reception was likely conducted by either the Ottoman translator Mustafa Beg or William Harborne and his

[77] Murad III, "Registry copy of Sultan Murad III's command to Queen Elizabeth I [Constantinople, 8 Muharram 987/7 March 1579]," trans. Skilliter, *William Harborne and the trade with Turkey, 1578-1582,* 49.

[78] Allinson, *A Monarchy of Letters*, 137.

[79] Murad III, "Registry copy of Sultan Murad III's command," trans. Skilliter, *William Harborne and the trade with Turkey, 1578-1582,* 49.

[80] Murad III, "The letters sent from the Imperiall Musulmanlike highnesse of Zuldan Murad Can, to the sacred regall Majestie of Elizabeth Queene of England, the fifteenth of March 1579, conteyning theg rantof the first privileges," trans. Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation* (United Kingdom: J. MacLehose and sons, 1903), 170.

colleagues, in order to achieve a more favourable outcome for their business, and as a result, Elizabeth's first letter to Murad III requested an extension of trade privileges to all English merchants, which had in fact already been granted.[81] This minor change in translation was also potentially central to the establishment of friendlier Anglo-Ottoman relations, since Elizabeth's reply seems to have been interpreted by the Ottoman chancery as a request for broader and more specific trade privileges, resulting in a more expansive charter and stronger commercial ties.[82]

While the clear and extensive involvement of the royal bureaucracy and translators in the production of Anglo-Ottoman royal correspondence obscures modern analysis of the level of direct personal involvement of royal letter writers, the contemporary impact is less apparent. In fact, Tracey Sowerby argues that, in certain circumstances and in correspondence with states outside of the European political tradition, the prestige associated with the holograph letter in Europe was not a relevant factor in royal correspondence. Specifically, the use of different native scripts meant that the nuances and implications of holograph letters did not translate across local bureaucratic cultures.[83] This was certainly the case in Anglo-Ottoman letters, which respectively employed a Latin and Perso-Arabic script, since the consequent necessity of employing translators at either end of the process of correspondence meant that the recipient would not be reading the original letter, negating the symbolic value of a letter written in the monarch's own hand. Furthermore, the implications could be reversed across cultural contexts, with holograph letters potentially suggesting that their author lacked a sophisticated royal bureaucracy, and thus possessed a lesser degree of authority overall.[84] While recipients in

[81] BL Cotton MS Nero B VIII, f.51.

[82] Skilliter, *William Harborne and the trade with Turkey*, 72.

[83] Sowerby, "Negotiating with the Material Text," 208.

[84] Sowerby, "Negotiating with the Material Text," 208.

England and Europe asserted that they placed far greater value on the receipt of a letter in a monarch's own hand, there is no real evidence that any significant distinction was made between holograph and autograph letters in Anglo-Ottoman royal correspondence. The increasingly personal nature of the letters which Safiye Sultan sent to Elizabeth I in 1599 compared to 1593 suggests that the relationship between the two correspondents had improved over the period. This evolution took place despite the lack of evidence that Safiye was directly involved in the production of the 1593 letter of gratification, as well as the doubt cast by Sanderson on whether the 1599 letter was written in Safiye's own hand. The emphasis placed on the personal nature of royal correspondence by historians and the rhetorical assertions of some recipients may therefore be an overstatement, in the case of Anglo-Ottoman correspondence, particularly when both states were characterised by their developed royal bureaucracies. It is crucial to note that monarchs were often significantly involved in the drafting process of even royal letters which were not holograph. In the case of Elizabeth I, surviving drafts of letters and accounts of her secretaries demonstrate that she frequently edited or added notes to drafts, revoked changes made by others, and added postscripts to autograph letters.[85] The involvement of the royal bureaucracy does not negate the fact that royal letters still expressed the will, sentiments, and at times even the direct phrases of the monarch, even if it meant that the correspondence produced was not written in their own hand.

In conclusion, the Ottoman and English royal bureaucracies had an enormous impact on how letters were produced and received by the respective monarchs. Viewing individual letters as more or less significant based on the level of royal involvement which can be discerned is not a productive approach when taking into consideration that contemporaries did not necessarily see the involvement of the royal bureaucracy as diluting the royal influence

[85] Susan Doran, "Elizabeth I's Religion: The Evidence of Her Letters," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 51:4 (2000), 700.

authority of letters. This argument may be extended with the point that even holograph letters were frequently constructed in collaboration with secretaries or translators, and this was an expected factor within royal correspondence. While it may seem less personal, particularly in a modern sense, the expression of authority implicit in the use of an extensive royal bureaucracy may have compensated for this lesser degree of overt royal participation. This especially applies in situations such as the Anglo-Ottoman establishment of diplomatic contact, as there were no long-standing personal relations between the rulers which required holograph letters to maintain, and the chancery traditions of the Ottoman Empire favoured the receipt of letters which demonstrated similar expressions of royal authority through bureaucracy. However, it is important for historians to be aware that where access to all copies of the letters is unavailable, particularly when an original and translation were composed by different authors, elements such as the styling of both sender and recipient to reflect claims to power and religious authority may have been softened to make them more palatable by a translator or secretary involved in the construction of a version of the letter. It is therefore impossible to assume that every detail of a royal letter would be one which the monarch sending it would include themselves. On the other hand, given the evidence of royal involvement in the letter drafting and writing process even where letters are written in a foreign language or a secretary's hand, it is equally unlikely that "autograph" letters produced by the royal bureaucracy would make significant claims of which the monarch would disapprove.

The previous two chapters have underscored that, despite the involvement of royal bureaucracies and translators in the process of royal letter writing, it remained a process considered highly personal and in which monarchs often remained heavily involved, which was materially signalled through seals and signatures.[86] The additional conception of these

[86] Evans, "Styling Power," 62.

letters as a multifaceted negotiation of personal relations and government business renders the analysis of key issues addressed royal letters fundamental to a comprehensive understanding of how Anglo-Ottoman diplomacy underpinned by royal letters developed so rapidly through the 1580s and 1590s.[87] As established in Chapter One, the letters exchanged between the English and Ottoman rulers diverge extensively from established tradition due to the deliberate use of epistolary strategies designed to maximize their positive reception. Particularly contentious themes within early modern diplomacy, such as gender, religion and power, were by no means exclusive to Anglo-Ottoman correspondence during the late 16th century. However, methods of mediation parallel to these epistolary strategies are evident in the linguist references to these themes throughout the corpus of Anglo-Ottoman royal letters and appear to have been linked to the overarching aims which influenced their form and decoration.

[87] Jansson, *Art and Diplomacy*, 13.

Key Themes in Anglo-Ottoman Correspondence

Chapter 3: Religious difference and its manifestation in royal exchanges

The religious differences between Protestant England and the Muslim Ottoman Empire might be considered a major complicating factor to the establishment of diplomatic relations, given the papal embargo which theoretically prohibited England from engaging in trade with the Islamic world until Elizabeth's excommunication in 1570. However, the existence of Anglo-Ottoman trade relations and royal correspondence through the final decades of the 16th century contradict the idea that religious difference was a barrier which prevented the formation of a productive relationship between early-modern states.[88] A more relevant question, which has remained broadly unanswered in recent scholarship which has attempted to highlight contact between England and parts of the Islamic world, is how religious difference manifested in diplomatic practice and correspondence, and whether this had any significant bearing on the direction of Anglo-Ottoman relations once they had been established. This chapter will therefore overview the presence of religion in the establishment of Anglo-Ottoman diplomatic ties, then subsequently examine the religious claims to power of Elizabeth I, Murad III and Mehmed III, and investigate the impact of their use of language in shaping the established relationship between their states.

As a foundation to the study of Anglo-Ottoman diplomatic interactions and their intersection with religion, religious difference between England and states such as Morocco and the Ottoman Empire was not an obstacle to the establishment of diplomatic relations. Previously, this may not have been the case. Early English depictions of the Ottoman Empire in the 15th and early 16th century such as William Caxton's 1480 *Chronicles of England* present

[88] Jonathan Burton, "Anglo-Ottoman Relations and the Image of the Turk in *Tamburlaine*," *Journal of Medieval and Modern Studies* 30:1 (2000), 128.

the Ottomans as infidels who threatened Christendom and the Church, following the archetype of the Islamic enemy of the Crusades.[89] Undeniably, these polemics continued in the later 16th century, with figures such as Knolles advocating for further crusades against the Ottomans.[90] More focally, the Elizabethan Privy Council also seem to have suggested at various points that English diplomatic and commercial engagements with Muslim monarchs would further isolate England from Catholic Europe.[91] However, in contrast, some 16th-century writers, such as Hakluyt and Rycaut 'included vocal justification of the pragmatic value and morality of trade with the Ottomans' while maintaining some of the negative tropes regarding Islam and the Ottoman Empire, albeit to a lesser degree.[92] As early as 1578, Sir Francis Walsingham drafted a position paper which summarized the benefits of encouraging trade with the Ottoman Empire, highlighting that English profits would be increased if English merchants imported and distributed Turkish goods throughout Europe, and that these profits could help to strengthen national naval resources.[93] Francis Bacon reiterated this pragmatic position more strongly in a 1592 rebuttal to a pamphlet of Richard Verstegen which criticised English foreign and religious policy. Bacon argued that Verstegen's accusation that England was 'confederate with the great Turk' was based on English merchants having an agent in Constantinople. He justified this relationship by characterising it as primarily one of commercial benefit, and comparable to the earlier trade carried out between the Ottoman Empire and Catholic states including France, Spain and Venice.[94] Public and political opinion in late 16th century England therefore struck

[89] Anders Ingram, *Writing the Ottomans: Turkish History in Early Modern England* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 18.

[90] Ingram, *Writing the Ottomans*, 117.

[91] Errazzouki, "Partners in empire," 11.

[92] Errazzouki, "Partners in empire," 11.

[93] Jardine, "Gloriana Rules the Waves," 213.

[94] Francis Bacon, "Certain Observations made upon a Libel Published this Present Year, 1592.," in *The Letters and the Life of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1890), 204.

a balance which conformed with the traditional view of Islam as the enemy of Christendom, and recognised the strength of Muslim states such as the Ottomans, and the great potential which positive relations held. This indicates a shift towards commercial pragmatism which superseded traditional anti-Ottoman sentiments on a religious basis to a sufficient degree that diplomatic relations were established.

Gerald Maclean and Nabil Matar argue that in the late 16th century, the successful establishment and maintenance of English relations with Muslim states involved setting religion aside.[95] In terms of the practicalities of engaging in diplomatic relations, this seems to have been true to some extent for both England and the Ottoman Empire. English relations with the Ottomans were concentrated on commercial enterprise, with diplomatic negotiations primarily focused around trade rights and freedoms, in combination with the formation of joint-stock companies such as the East India Company and Levant Company. In this commercial context, religion may have been of lesser concern than in a political or military alliance. To an extent, however, the risks of an alliance with Muslim states outweighed the threat of Catholic states such as Spain, particularly given the diplomatic isolation of England from other Catholic states in Europe in the aftermath of the 1570 Papal Bull. It can therefore be inferred that, while religion was not "set aside" in the sense that it was ignored, given the criticisms of English relations with a Muslim state evident in the Privy Council and public, it ultimately appeared to be secondary to practical concerns in a period of English diplomatic isolation.

Muslim states seem to have been similarly pragmatic in making agreements with England, and religion did not prevent the Ottomans from coming to diplomatic agreements with non-Muslims. Yurdusev argues that in external affairs, the Ottomans were largely pragmatic, and that respect for 'existing customs' made up a large portion of their foreign policy, rather than

[95] MacLean and Matar, *Britain and the Islamic World*, 45.

a permanent idea of war on the basis of religious difference. For example, when capitulations were granted to Venice in 1454 by Mehmed II, it was on the basis of the previous agreement which Venice had in place with the Christian Byzantine Empire.[96] Beyond this pragmatism, there was a notable attraction between Muslim and Protestant states in the immediate aftermath of the Reformation. This was both an ideological affinity, since both faiths were strongly monotheistic with a tendency towards iconoclasm, and a political alignment in which both were opposed to the Catholic powers of Spain and the Holy Roman Empire.[97] For example, Morocco's alliance with England in the late 16th century was primarily predicated on opposition to Catholic Spain. The 1596 letter of al-Fishtali, the historian/scribe at the Marrakesh court, argues that Spain was 'the enemy of religion' and does not suggest that there were any obstacles preventing an alliance with a state aligned with another form of Christianity.[98] In fact, al-Fishtali presents God – from a Muslim perspective - as supporting England, suggesting that this was because Elizabeth was a tool for al-Mansur and 'the party of Islam'.[99] Muslim states naturally differed in their approaches to diplomacy on these religious grounds due to varying political aims, including the long-standing trade agreements between the Ottoman Empire and Catholic states such as France and Venice. Nevertheless, the Ottoman Empire do not seem to have been an exception to the Protestant-Islamic alignment, and often favoured Protestant groups or states over their Catholic counterparts. Bernadette Andrea argues that the Ottomans similarly viewed the Protestant faction 'when politic, [as] *de facto* Muslims,' given that they could serve as a counterpoint to Catholic European powers which could threaten the Ottoman Empire during a period where they were also in conflict with Safavid Persia.[100]

[96] Yurdusev, *Ottoman Diplomacy*, 15-16.

[97] Andrea, *Women and Islam*, 23.

[98] Al-Fishtali, "After June 1596: Description of the English Attack on Cadiz," trans. Nabil Matar, in Nabil Matar, *Europe through Arab Eyes 1578-1727* (New York: University Press of Columbia, 2009), 159.

[99] Al-Fishtali, "After June 1596: Description of the English Attack on Cadiz," 159.

[100] Andrea, *Women and Islam,* 23.

This argument is reinforced by the letter that Elizabeth sent to the new Sultan Mehmed III in February 1595 on behalf of Sigismund, Voivode of Transylvania. In this letter, Elizabeth emphasised 'the conformity of the religion of his state with us', and the fact that as Protestants they had 'rejected the superstition of the Pope of Rome and the worship of images.'[101] This suggests that not only was England perceived to be close enough to the Ottoman Empire by the 1590s to exert influence on behalf of a fellow ruler, but the emphasis on the features of Protestantism which aligned with Islam within the letter demonstrates that this was viewed as a factor which might persuade the Sultan to respond favourably to the petition. Finally, the clear limitation of assertions of power by each monarch to their own religious community implies that Muslim rulers such as Murad III recognised that Elizabeth's claim to religious authority was constrained to her own realm and Christianity. This increased their willingness and ability to engage in diplomatic negotiations without the threat of challenges to their own authority within the Muslim community.

The evident level of pragmatism which permitted the establishment of diplomatic relations notwithstanding, religion was by no means a minor factor in the shaping of relations. Religion is a significant factor to take into consideration in diplomatic activity, even between two states which shared a faith, because it shaped how monarchs viewed their position, and the position of their states, within the world. In Henry VIII's establishment of the Church of England, the 1533 *Act in Restraint of Appeals* asserted that: 'this Realm of England is an Empire … [its king] institute and furnished by the goodness and sufferance of Almighty God with plenary, whole, and entire power…within this his realm.'[102] While this drew on

[101] Elizabeth I, "To the Moslem Emperor: A Formal letter on behalf of Sigismund, Vayrod of Transylvania. (February 9, 1595). Translated from the Latin." in *The Letters of Queen Elizabeth I*, ed. Harrison, 233.

[102] "Act in Restraint of Appeals to Rome, 1533," in *Crown and Parliament in Tudor-Stuart England: A Documentary Constitutional History, 1485-1714*, ed. Paul L. Hughes, and Robert F. Fries (New York: Putnam, 1959), 39.

historical precedent, it constituted a religious context and function within which the English monarch was viewed as an emperor within their own realm. Anthony Pagden asserts that, by the late 16th century, the idea of "empire" in Christian Europe, had essentially come to summarise the ultimate authority which a monarch possessed within their territories, subject only to God and their 'duty to uphold and protect Christendom.'[103] It is this religio-political context which underpinned all of Elizabeth's letters to foreign rulers: the idea that she possessed absolute authority within her kingdom, or "empire", and an equally significant role as a Protestant monarch with a responsibility to defend the Christian faith. The influence of Islam on the opposite side of this diplomatic equation played an equal, if not more significant role, in complicating relations, with Muslim rulers influenced by an arguably stronger religiously informed conception of their place in the world. The status of caliph, which both the Moroccans and Ottomans claimed, was not homologous to the position of a Christian ruler, as exemplified by the title of "Supreme Governor of the Church" which was taken by Elizabeth and positioned her outside the body of churchmen, in addition to relying on the authority of the monarch-in-parliament.[104] The caliphate was explicitly both a political and religious structure, with the caliph designated as the leader of the entire Muslim community: this was a stronger claim to authority than the Tudor royal supremacy, because it had a broader scope than the Christian community within a single state.

The Ottoman sultans' claims to religious and political authority are extremely evident in the diplomatic sphere in the form of their participation in early-modern diplomatic practices: they did not make diplomatic visits, send resident ambassadors to other states, or engage in

[103] Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c.1500-c.1800* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1998), 12-13, 30.

[104] Claire Cross, *The Royal Supremacy in the Elizabethan Church* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1969), 23-24.

'diplomatic rhetoric of mutuality and reciprocity.'[105] By the late 16th century, they also demanded formal displays of submission and obedience for non-Muslim ambassadors, whose presence as representatives of other states was in itself viewed as a sign of submission. For example, during audiences with the sultan, ambassadors were required to wear a kaftan gifted to them by the sultan.[106] Not only did Ottoman religious claims to authority subordinate other states to them in their own perception, therefore, but they also shaped the actions and formal processes which English ambassadors to the Ottoman court had to engage with and acknowledge. On the other hand, resident ambassadors to the Ottoman Empire were treated according to *amān*, a legal institution of safe conduct, which allowed them freedoms such as practicing their religion and exemption from certain taxes, illustrating that ambassadors and envoys were still granted specific diplomatic privileges and freedoms despite the requirements of submission.[107]

Religious claims to power were expressed in Anglo-Ottoman royal correspondence in a number of ways. The clearest manifestation of the impact of religion is found in the salutations and titles used by each ruler. In particular, the English and Ottoman rulers' titles laid out at the beginning of their letters to one another generally involve strong and explicit claims to their personal religious authority. In her initial 1579 letter to Murad III, Elizabeth I referred to herself as:

> 'Elizabetha Dei ter Maximi et Unici Caeli Terraque Conditoris gratia, Angliae, Francia et Hiberniae Regina, Fidei Christianae contra omnes omnium Christianos

[105] MacLean and Matar, *Britain and the Islamic World,* 47.

[106] Rudolph, "The Ottoman Empire and the Institutionalization of European Diplomacy," 170.

[107] Rudolph, "The Ottoman Empire and the Institutionalization of European Diplomacy," 170-71.

> degentium, Christique nomen falso profitentium Idolatris invictissima et potentissima Defensatrix Augustissimo'[108]

These titles were the longer version of those used by Elizabeth in her letters to Christian monarchs, which she commonly abbreviated to "Elizabeth, by the Grace of God, Queen of England, France and Ireland, defender of the faith et cetera".[109] This illustrates that, while her religious self-presentation in letters to the Ottoman Sultans largely conformed to her standard practices, it was more clearly articulated in order to prevent miscommunications and ensure that her claims to authority within Christianity were reinforced. Hakluyt's translation of a letter to Murad III from 1581 contains very similar self-referencing titles:

> 'Elizabeth by the divine grace of the eternall God, of England, France and Ireland most sacred Queene, and of the most Christian faith, against all the prophaners of his most holy Name the zealous and mightie deferndour.'[110]

The epithets used in these letters cover several of Eizabeth's key claims to religious authority, which were reiterated throughout her letters to the Ottoman Sultans. First, through use of the terms "by the divine grace of the eternall God" and "most sacred Queene," Elizabeth asserts that she ruled under the Christian divine right of kings. Second, the superlative "the most Christian faith" has strong overtones of Catholic-Protestant divisions, implying that Protestantism was the true Christian religion, and subtly separating herself from Catholics. Finally, using comparable phrasing to her title as Supreme Governor of the Church of England, the term "potentissima Defensatrix Augustissimo" positioned her as a defender of true religion

[108] BL Cotton MS Nero B VIII, f.51.

[109] Burton, "Anglo-Ottoman Relations," 135.

[110] Elizabeth I, "Her Majesties letter to the Turke or Grand Signior 1581, promising redresse of the disorders of Peter Baker of Ratcliffe, committed in the Levant," trans. Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, 189.

and an enemy of the unfaithful. In her initial letter of 1579, Elizabeth's use of the phrase 'Fidei Christianae contra omnes omnium Christianos degentium, Christique nomen falso profitentium Idolatris invictissima" also emphasises her position as a defender of the Christian faith, as well as underlining her personal commitment to iconoclasm and monotheism, and her stance against idolatry. Despite the use of strongly Christian titles, presenting herself as the defender of her faith may have aligned her with the Ottoman Sultans, whose caliphal claims were deeply entwined with the concept of defending their religion, whether this was a deliberate or inadvertent action.

The titles that Ottoman Sultan used in letters to England are slightly less clear. The only known Ottoman copy of the initial 1579 command from Murad III is the abbreviated chancery copy, which excludes the *salutatio* in which the Sultan's full titles would have been found.[111] The only examples of this are consequently from later in the 16th century, when the established correspondence between two rulers would not necessarily have required consistent use of their titles to the same extent. Hakluyt's transcribed Latin and English versions of Murad III's letters record a version of Murad III's titles from the capitulations document:

> 'Immensa et maxima ex potestate potentissimi, terribilibusque verbis et nunquam finienda innumerabilive elementia et ineffabili auxilio sanctissimi et puramente colendissimi tremendissimique universitatum creatoris.'[112]

This represents only the first quarter of Murad's full titles in the capitulations, which also establish his lineage and the regions which he ruled as Ottoman Emperor. The conclusion of this statement reflected his claims to divine rule and the support of God, asserting that he ruled

[111] Skilliter, *William Harborne and the trade with Turkey*, 49.

[112] Murad III, "The charter of the privileges granted to the English and the league of the great Turke with the Queenes Majestie in respect of traffique, dated in June 1580," in Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations,* 178.

with the "ineffable help of the most holy, worshipped, and mighty creator of all things," an equivalent claim to Elizabeth's divine right, although with slightly more use of superlative terms. Furthermore, the *invocatio* which began Safiye Sultan's 1593 letter to Elizabeth I employed both stronger religious language and a more detailed discussion of the Ottoman Sultan's royal titles than is evident in most of the letters sent from the Sultan himself. For example, the letter invoked God as:

> 'The Ruler who has no chancellor and the Supreme Creator who is without equal, the Maker of existing things, the Originator of shaped and colours, the Unique One, the Worshipped without peer, the Lord God – exalted be His glory above his creation!'[113]

In isolation, this could be seen to follow a similar pattern to Elizabeth's letters to the Ottoman Sultan, since references to a single God would highlight the shared monotheistic tendencies of Protestantism and Islam. However, this declaration is followed by specific references to the Prophet Muhammad as 'Lord Muhammad [the chosen, upon whom and upon whose friends and followers be perpetual peace]…the chief of the prophets, of him who is the best of all His created beings and His elected.'[114] Since this is a strong declaration of the Islamic faith, it is clear that the *invocatio* portion of Safiye's letter which referenced the titles of the Sultan did not attempt to downplay or shift the references to Islam in order to find common ground with Elizabeth I on a religious basis, although this compromise may have been evident in other sections of the letter.

[113] Safiye Sultan, "A letter in Turkish from the Khasseki Safiye to Queen Elizabeth, 25 November-4 December 1593,' trans. Skilliter, "Three Letters," 130.

[114] Safiye Sultan, "A letter in Turkish from the Khasseki Safiye to Queen Elizabeth, 25 November-4 December 1593," 130.

The titles which the English and Ottoman monarchs used to address one another also reflect their respective conceptions of religion and religious power. In a collection of foreign affairs papers from c.1520 – c.1587, the official titles used by England for the King of Spain and Ottoman Sultan dated to c.1587 are established. The Spanish king is referred to as 'Don Philippo, by the grace of god R. of Castiel, Aragon, both Cicils, Jerusalem…' followed by a list of his other territories. Meanwhile, the Ottoman Sultan's title is laid out as 'The great Soldam Selim; Emperor of manie noble Realms, of Dandinople; Albania…'[115] The notable use of personal pronouns in the Ottoman Sultan's titles, such as 'for Carmania and all Russia are at my commandment' suggests that these titles were lifted directly from royal letters received from these rulers, rather than an unwillingness on Elizabeth's part to acknowledge a similar divine right in the rule of the Ottoman Sultans. However, a tendency to make little reference to religion in the *salutatio*, except in her own titles and epithets, is nonetheless evident in Elizabeth's letters to the Sultans. The exception to this trend in the available letters is her 1584 letter to Murad III requesting the restitution of an English ship and captives, which addressed him as 'Zultan Murad Can, Musulmanici regni dominatori potentissimo,' or "most powerful ruler of the Muslim kingdom," emphasising his political authority but acknowledging the religious dimension to his rulership.[116] The integration of the acknowledgement of Murad III's religious authority with her petition for English subjects strongly suggests that this was intended to appease him and increase the likelihood that he would accede to her request. While Elizabeth I was willing to recognise the authority and divine right to rule of Philip II as a Christian monarch in her letters, she apparently did not consistently ascribe an equivalent term of address to Murad III or Mehmed III beyond specific circumstances which necessitated an

[115] BL Add MS 48026, f.279.

[116] Elizabeth I, "The Queenes letters to the Turke 1584, fotr the restitution of the shippe called the Jesus, and the English captives detained in Tripolie in Barbarie, and for certaine other prisoners in Argier," in Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations,* 311.

additional level of respect, such as letters of supplication. This is not mirrored in Ottoman royal letters to Elizabeth, which consistently include references to her religious authority. For example, the original Ottoman copy of a 1580 letter from Murad III to Elizabeth I salutes her as:

> 'The pride of the women who follow Jesus, the most excellent of the ladies honoured among the Messiah's people, the arbitress of the affairs of the Christian community, who trails the skirts of majesty and gravity, the queen of the realm of Ingiltere (England), Queen Elizā'ide (Elizabeth), may her last moment be concluded with good.'[117]

The religious imagery employed in this address emphasised Elizabeth's influence within Christianity and twice reiterates her position as the most significant woman within the faith, which she herself had previously implied in her use of titles in previous letters, in addition to praising her virtues more generally.

Religious assertions of power also played a major role in establishing power dynamics within the exchange of princely letters between England and the Ottoman Empire. Power imbalances between monarchs were not uncommon, with Elizabeth taking on a senior or maternal role at points of her correspondence with James VI. For example, James addressed Elizabeth as "Madame and mother" in a letter of 1585, subordinating himself to her authority to preserve their personal and national relations during a minor diplomatic crisis.[118] There are similar instances in Anglo-Ottoman correspondence: an early letter from Murad III to Elizabeth

[117] Murad III, "Translation of Murad III's letter to Elizabeth I, introducing the merchant Gabriel Defrens sent to make purchases for the Imperial Household. Constantinople, last decade of Rajab 988/1-10 September 1580," trans. Skilliter, *William Harborne and the trade with Turkey,* 123.

[118] James VI, "James VI to Elizabeth, circa July 31, 1585," in *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, ed. Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 263.

I informing her that trade privileges were granted to English merchants concludes with 'And you, for your part, shall be steadfast in submission and obedience to our door of felicity.'[119] This language represents a far more explicit demand for submission than is evident in the Anglo-Scottish royal correspondence, which seems to have been viewed as a power imbalance which should naturally ensue after the English trade concessions were confirmed.[120] This situation is also the reverse of the Anglo-Scottish correspondence, with the Sultan requesting submission rather than Elizabeth implying it. These examples of power imbalances in the correspondence between monarchs were most closely tied to the relative experience of the monarch, the strength of their state, and their personal relationship with one another. In diplomatic correspondence between Christian and Muslim states such as England and the Ottoman Empire, however, these power imbalances are often more explicitly rooted in religion than exchanges between Christian rulers. The 1593 letter from the Ottoman *haseki* Safiye to Elizabeth refers to Sultan Murad III as 'the support of Christian womanhood.'[121] While the overall exchange was broadly positive and productive in terms of diplomacy, the inclusion of this phrase also asserted Murad's authority over Elizabeth on a religious and gendered basis in her position as a Christian woman. Furthermore, the religious aspect of power imbalances did not need to be explicitly articulated in order to play a major role in shaping correspondence. In the late 1580s, the Ottoman Grand Vizier apparently declared that "there was nothing lacking for the English to become Muslims, except for them to raise their forefingers and recite the confession of faith."[122] This suggested that England was both closely religiously aligned and

[119] Murad III, " Translation of the Registry copy of Murād III's letter to Elizabeth I, informing her that the privileges have been granted. [Constantinople, 8 Jumādā I 988/21 June 1580]," in Skilliter, *William Harborne and the trade with Turkey,* 115.

[120] Skilliter, *William Harborne and the trade with Turkey,* 117.

[121] Safiye Sultan, "A letter in Turkish from the Khasseki Safiye to Queen Elizabeth, 25 November-4 December 1593," trans. Skilliter, "Three Letters," 131.

[122] Skilliter, *William Harborne and the trade with Turkey*, 37.

subordinate enough to the Ottoman Empire that they could potentially become an Ottoman tributary. It is not a coincidence that, after this incident, Elizabeth's letters to the Sultan explicitly asserted both her religious and political independence and emphasised his limited geographical authority, which did not extend into Western Europe.[123] For example, Elizabeth's letter to Murad III on August 22nd 1590 asserted her independence from the Ottoman Empire and highlighted her primary obligation to God because of the divine favour she received as a Protestant princess, noting that 'God had shown her more favour than any Christian king had experienced for a hundred years'.[124] This letter also emphasised Murad's limited geographical authority, which did not extend into Western Europe, including England. Therefore, references to religion were closely intertwined with power dynamics in Anglo-Ottoman correspondence, with the religious worldviews and claims of both monarchs serving to construct their conception of the position of themselves and their states relative to one another.

On the other hand, both parties appeared to make some concessions in their use of religious language, particularly in the form of oblique references to God which were acceptable to both Protestant and Muslim interpretation. For example, the only direct religious reference in Elizabeth I's 1580 letter to Murad III thanking him for the capitulations was: 'Et Deum Optimum Maximum praecabimur vt Invictissimam Vestram Caesaream Maiestatem ad omnia vere foelicia et auspicate coseruet.'[125] While Elizabeth here refers to praying to the Christian God for Murad III's happiness and felicity, it is framed vaguely enough that it would be acceptable to any monotheistic religion; indeed, similar statements are evident in her letters to Catholic monarchs, such as the Henri III. This suggests that the use of vague religious language

[123] Andrea, *Women and Islam,* 24.

[124] Elizabeth I, "Letter from Elizabeth I to Murad III, 22 August 1590. [NA SP 102/61 fols. 24r-v.]," cited in Allinson, *A Monarchy of Letters*, 146.

[125] Elizabeth I, "Letter from Queen Elizabeth I to Sultan Murād III. Westminster, 8 January 1581," in Skilliter, *William Harborne and the trade with Turkey*, 263-264.

without strong confessional overtones was a deliberate rhetorical strategy which allowed Elizabeth I to align herself religiously with her contemporaries, for example by emphasising their shared monotheism, without directly referencing either religion. Moreover, in the concluding paragraph of her letter to Murad III thanking him for the grant of English capitulations, Elizabeth states that only circumstance prevented England from making earlier overtures of friendship, referring to 'princes hostile to us, who are making a disturbance within our Kingdom… [they] diverted us from that plan and purpose.'[126] Although there is no overt religious language in this statement, it implicitly places blame for the lack of previous diplomatic relations between England and the Ottoman Empire on the Catholic monarchs of Europe. Finally, beyond the emphasis in Elizabeth's titles to the features of Protestantism which aligned with Islam and contradicted Catholicism, this was also evident in the body of her letters. For example, at the her 1579 letter to Murad III concluded with a prayer for his wellbeing and an invocation of that God who 'est acerrimus idololatriae vindicator' [is a zealous vanquisher of idolatry].[127] Elizabeth's use of language in her letters to the Ottoman Sultans therefore appealed directly to their key religious tenets as Muslims, and positioned herself against her Catholic counterparts in Europe, some of whom were in conflict with the Ottoman Empire, such as Spain.[128] While this was less explicitly reciprocated in Ottoman letters to Elizabeth I, Murad III's invocations of God were often comparably vague, for example "the most holy, worshipped, and mighty creator of all things," which allowed

[126] Elizabeth I, "Translation of the letter from Queen Elizabeth I to Sultan Murād III, thanking him for the grant of the capitulations. Westminster, London, 8 January 1580/1," trans. Skilliter, *William Harborne and the trade with Turkey, 1578-1582*, 143.

[127] BL Cotton MS Nero B VIII, f.51.

[128] Jonathan Burton, "Anglo-Ottoman Relations and the Image of the Turk in *Tamburlaine*," *Journal of Medieval and Modern Studies* 30:1 (2000), 136.

confessional flexibility in interpretation.[129] Furthermore, the Sultan's concessions to diplomatic protocol, the trading privileges granted to England in direct violation of the privileges of Catholic states such as Spain, and continual acknowledgement of Elizabeth's religious authority within the Christian community served as a compromise which implicitly fulfilled the same purpose of political and religious alignment against the Catholic powers of Europe.[130]

In summary, while it may appear paradoxical, a level of mutual political acknowledgement and an alternative religious threat perceived to outweigh the risks of an inter-faith alliance were sufficient for establishing positive relations between England and parts of the Islamic world. Therefore, although the religious differences present in 16th century Anglo-Islamic relations did undoubtedly affect formalities, practicalities, and aims of diplomacy, the division between Christianity and Islam did not present an insurmountable obstacle to the establishment of relations. Nonetheless, letters from Elizabeth I, Murad III, and Safiye all verbalize strong religious claims to power on a dynastic basis. Their religious claims to power were linked at times to real or imagined shifts in power dynamics between England and the Ottoman Empire. In particular, the religious division in diplomatic contact, in combination with factors such as the peripheral location of England and their request for concessions, thus intermittently served to subordinate Elizabeth I to her Ottoman counterparts in their own conception. Both the English and Ottoman monarchs negotiated this issue by limiting their religious references largely to their personal epithets and claims to authority or prayers for each other's wellbeing. Elizabeth I's letters generally show a greater tendency to avoid the issue of Ottoman religious claims to authority, largely by limiting reference to the religious aspect of the Ottoman sultans'

[129] Murad III, "The charter of the privileges granted to the English and the league of the great Turke with the Queenes Majestie, June 1580," in Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, 178.

[130] Skilliter, *William Harborne and the trade with Turkey*, 121-2.

authority and emphasising their imperial status to compensate for this. More unique than the use of religious claims to reinforce or assert power dynamics is the fact that religious compromise appears to have been a major axis for Anglo-Ottoman diplomatic relations. [131] The emphasis placed in the correspondence between English and Ottoman monarchs on shared practices such as monotheism, iconoclasm, and opposition to idolatry, as well as reiterations of their mutual position in opposition to Catholicism represents an attempt to establish the shared values of Protestantism and Islam as a basis on which their commercial and diplomatic negotiations could take place.

[131] Jardine, "Gloriana Rules the Waves," 216.

Chapter 4: Gender and familiarity in secondary avenues of diplomacy

Since the Anglo-Ottoman correspondence was cross-confessional, the articulation of religious differences and alignments was central to the establishment of power dynamics and the formation of a basis for diplomatic relations. It is more challenging to ascertain the equivalent impact of gender as a factor which shaped diplomacy since in the case of Anglo-Ottoman relations it was a factor which primarily affected the individuals engaged in correspondence rather than encompassing the entire state. Consequently, it was verbalized less explicitly in correspondence. Traditionally, gender has also been a less explored topic within the field of diplomacy, but this neglect does not render it less significant as a contributing factor. Since diplomacy was traditionally a masculine process within both royal correspondence and ambassadors or missions, with royal female letter writing serving primarily as a secondary, alternative avenue for resolving issues, Elizabeth's participation in the formal processes required a greater level of strategy and negotiation. Nonetheless, historians exploring the establishment of Anglo-Ottoman contact more broadly have suggested that Elizabeth's dual status as a Protestant queen, encompassing both her faith and gender, was central to the willingness of the Ottoman Sultans to align themselves with England.[132] Moreover, Elizabeth's gender and position as queen permitted the establishment of a relationship with the influential Safiye Sultan, providing a secondary epistolary avenue for diplomatic negotiation which was unavailable to most European rulers. This chapter investigates whether the letters exchanged by Elizabeth I, Safiye and Murad III provide any significant evidence to suggest that gendered self-representation played a role in shaping relations in addition to the potential which gender held as a foundational aspect in this situation. It also argues that the direct line of communication between Elizabeth and Safiye as royal

[132] MacLean and Matar, *Britain and the Islamic World*, 45.

women was an integral element of Anglo-Ottoman diplomacy in the final decade of the 16th century.

The exception to the traditional neglect of gender as a category of analysis within diplomacy is the study of "exceptional women" who held prominent political social and political positions between the 15th and 17th centuries and were consequently able to communicate directly with rulers and diplomats, a category which does include Elizabeth I.[133] More recent historiography has sought to explore more peripheral and obscured women's roles in early-modern diplomacy, particularly the activity of 'non-regnant royal women' and the wives of ambassadors.[134] Isabelle Lazzarini's work on early Renaissance diplomacy highlights two key facets of female diplomatic agency for elite women: 'diplomatic activity proper and the maintenance of familial communication networks.'[135] In recent studies emphasising the diplomatic activity of women, historians have thus highlighted their central role as correspondents and mediators. For example, McCarthy and Southern argue that, while early-modern ambassadors were overwhelmingly male, a 'lack of formal diplomatic credentials did not stop women from participating in political argument and debate through their networks of letter-writing and kin.'[136] Letter-writing is therefore an approach which can highlight the two key areas of female diplomatic activities, as defined by Lazzarini: instructing diplomats and officially corresponding with fellow monarchs, and establishing a less formal communication network which could often resolve diplomatic matters without intervention from male

[133] Helen McCarthy and James Southern, 'Women, gender, and diplomacy: A historical survey,' in *Gender and Diplomacy*, ed. J. A. Cassidy (New York: Routledge, 2017), 18.

[134] Tracey A. Sowerby, "Masculinity, Ambassadorial Handbooks and Early Modern English Diplomacy," *The International History Review* (2021), 2.

[135] Isabella Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict: Italian Diplomacy in the Early Renaissance, 1350-1520* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 140.

[136] McCarthy and Southern, "Women, gender, and diplomacy," 21.

members of royal dynasties.[137] This combines with a recent trend in Ottoman historiography which has sought to reassess the activities of Ottoman royal women and their impact on the empire. Scholars such as Leslie Peirce and Bernadette Andrea have highlighted the established tradition of Ottoman *hasekis* (favourites) and *valide sultans* (Queen Mothers) engaging in imperial diplomatic activities. Beyond women's involvement in diplomacy, the gendered self-representation of individuals such as Elizabeth I in correspondence has been the focus of more extensive scholarly activity. Historians such as Tracey Sowerby have emphasised that the articulation of femininity and masculinity is a significant and neglected avenue of research, which deserves further study alongside the participation and impact of women in early-modern diplomacy.[138]

Significant weight has been given by both contemporaries and historians to the "theory of two bodies" in which Elizabeth I was imagined to have both a natural, female body and a political, monarchical body. Although there is now a consensus that this was largely an ideal capitalized upon for rhetorical purposes, her transitions between masculine-coded self-referential discourse and acknowledgment of her womanhood depending on her political aims have nonetheless been a noteworthy mechanism of speeches and letters, and therefore a key focus of scholarship. For example, Regina Schulte argued that Elizabeth 'succeeded in maintaining a high degree of self-determination by continually playing the two sides of the royal body against each other.'[139] In Elizabeth's missives to the rulers of the Ottoman Empire, this process is clearly visible, since the standard introduction made a single reference to her gender in the phrase 'Angliae, Franciae et Hiberniae Regina,' downplaying her gender in

[137] Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 141.

[138] Tracey A. Sowerby, "Masculinity, Ambassadorial Handbooks and Early Modern English Diplomacy," *The International History Review* (2021), 2.

[139] Regina Schulte, *The Body of the Queen: Gender and Rule in the Courtly World 1500–2000* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006), 4.

favour of emphasizing their mutual status as monarchs and including strong religious rhetoric intended to highlight their confessional similarities.[140] Given Elizabeth's tendency to downplay the significance of her gender in diplomatic correspondence in favour of emphasizing her sovereignty, it is reasonable to consider that either her correspondents notably engaged with her gender, particularly in a way which attempted to assert authority over her, or that she expected them to and deliberately attempted to pre-empt this through her own use of language. Certainly, her gender was a focal point that foreign monarchs occasionally highlighted to denigrate Elizabeth I in their letters. One of the most flagrant instances of this trend was in a 1570 letter from Ivan IV of Russia, which expressed his frustration at her failure to respond positively to his political proposals, and included the phrase 'and you flowe in your maydenlie estate like a maide.'[141] The inclusion of references to Elizabeth's gender in a paragraph suggesting that she lacked authority and wisdom to conclude a favourable alliance with Ivan IV draws a clear connection between Elizabeth's gender and virginity with what he perceived as a lack of political strength in a diplomatic context.

However, comparable stress on Elizabeth I's womanhood does not seem to be a significant feature of the letters sent to Elizabeth by the Ottoman Sultans. A letter from Murad III in September 1580 which marks the first example of Elizabeth I's full title as it was consistently given in Ottoman documents through the late 16th century addresses her as:

> 'The pride of the women who follow Jesus, the most excellent of the ladies honoured among the Messiah's people, the arbitress of the affairs of the Christian community, who trails the skirts of majesty and gravity, the queen of the realm of

[140] BL Cotton MS Nero B VIII, f.51.

[141] Ivan IV, "Letter to Elizabeth I of England (October 24, 1570)," Cited in Anna Riehl Bertolet, "The Tsar and the Queen: "You Speak a Language that I understand Not"," in *The Foreign Relations of Elizabeth I*, ed. Charles Beem (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 101.

> Ingiltere (England), Queen Elizā'ide (Elizabeth), may her last moment be concluded with good.'[142]

This address undoubtedly acknowledges that Elizabeth was a woman and refers to her as such. However, Skilliter highlights that this was the feminine form of the standard address given to a Christian king or head of state. There was variation based on the relative prestige granted to states and their rulers by the Ottomans, with the French king having gained the privilege of "Padishah" (Emperor) as address and the Holy Roman Emperor who paid tribute to the Ottoman Empire at this time referred to as the lesser "Bech Qirāli" (King of Vienna). However, the original term used to address Elizabeth I in this letter was "Qirāliche" (Queen), formed from the masculine equivalent "Qirāl" (King).[143] While letters from the Ottoman Sultans did not ignore Elizabeth's gender, it does not appear to have been sufficient cause to deviate from the standard diplomatic formulae of salutation established by the royal bureaucracy. Similarly, it did not diminish her status as a monarch. A 1584 report from William Harborne to Walsingham related that Murad III viewed Elizabeth's sovereignty as 'wonderfull, especially that in one so weake as he accompteth those of the feminine sexe, should concurre such incomprehensible vertues to merit the same.'[144] This suggests that, while Elizabeth's gender may have been viewed with disdain, there was a separation between this and her status as sovereign, which was perhaps enhanced by the perception that she possessed the virtues and ability to overcome the weaknesses of her sex. This separation is reflected in the letters sent by the Ottoman Sultans, since the variance seen in the titles of French King and Holy Roman

[142] Murad III, "Translation of Murad III's letter to Elizabeth I, introducing the merchant Gabriel Defren sent to make purchases for the Imperial Household. Constantinople, last decade of Rajab 988/1-10 September 1580," trans. Skilliter, *William Harborne and the Trade with Turkey,* 123.

[143] Skilliter, *William Harborne and the Trade with Turkey*, 126.

[144] "William Harborne to Francis Walsingham, 15 January 1584, NA SP 97/1, fol. 46v.," cited in Allinson, *A Monarchy of Letters*, 136.

Emperor was solely linked to their relationship with the Ottoman Empire at the time, and they did not refer to Elizabeth with a lesser title than she was accorded by virtue of her position and the positive Anglo-Ottoman commercial relations at the time. Finally, although Elizabeth's gender is not overlooked, it is not weaponized against her in a comparable manner to Ivan IV's missive in 1570. In fact, the section of the address which referred to Elizabeth as 'the most excellent of the ladies honoured among the Messiah's people, the arbitress of the affairs of the Christian community' appears to link her womanhood positively to both her faith and position as monarch, with additional stress placed on her influence on international affairs embodied by the "Christian community," but is a secondary factor to the emphasis on sovereignty and religion.

More obviously relevant as an Anglo-Ottoman diplomatic exchange which centred explicitly around gender is the correspondence between Elizabeth and Safiye Sultan in the 1590s. Given that this period of Ottoman history is commonly referred to as the "Sultanate of Women", in which women at the heart of the Ottoman Empire were able to exercise an unprecedented level of political power, Elizabeth's gender and correspondence with Safiye Sultan may have played a significant role in consolidating Anglo-Ottoman relations. Corresponding with other royal women, particularly the wives and mothers of monarchs, was an established diplomatic strategy for Elizabeth I, who wrote letters to individuals such as Electress Anna of Saxony as a potential political intercessor with her husband the Elector August of Saxony.[145] This approach appears to have been productive for furthering Anglo-Ottoman relations, as in both her 1593 and 1599 letters to Elizabeth, Safiye offered to advocate for Elizabeth and English interests to Murad III and Mehmed III, respectively, asserting that 'I can repeatedly mention Her Highness's gentility and praise at the footdust of His Majesty…and

[145] Dustin M. Neighbors, and N. K. Käfer, "Zones of Privacy in Letters Between Women of Power: Elizabeth I of England and Anna of Saxony," *Royal Studies Journal* 9:1 (2022), 71.

I shall endeavour for her aims.'[146] Indeed, in 1592 Safiye did attempt to promote English interests, arguing to the Sultan that the English ambassador Edward Barton should be appointed as a mediator with the Holy Roman Emperor in order to resolve a truce.[147] Although this intervention was ultimately unsuccessful, it is likely that the support of Safiye in her positions as *haseki* and subsequently *valide sultan* were a key element of establishing and maintaining close Anglo-Ottoman relations. This is especially probable given the influence she was noted to possess over political affairs in the reigns of Murad III and Mehmed III, and the emphasis placed by foreign ambassadors in Constantinople on gaining her personal support to achieve their aims.

There are also a number of significantly gendered elements to the language utilised in Safiye's letters to Elizabeth I. While the missives from the Ottoman Sultans employed a feminine version of their standard forms of address for male Christian kings, Safiye's address to Elizabeth makes use of distinctly female epithets. For example, Safiye made reference to the 'cradle of chastity', a title also associated with herself as the *valide sultan*, which emphasised motherhood, and thus virtues with specifically female associations.'[148] Whereas the letters from the Ottoman Sultans tended to either 're-gender [queens] as masculine or to de-emphasize their political power as women,' Safiye's letters therefore both emphasise Elizabeth's sovereignty and deliberately use feminine-coded praise for her virtues.[149] However, the gendered language used in Safiye's letter was also linked to the establishment of power dynamics on a state level, since it also emphasised Safiye's own sovereign power, first as

[146] Safiye Sultan, "A letter in Turkish from the Khasseki Safiye to Queen Elizabeth, 25 November-4 December 1593," 120-33.

[147] Jardine, "Gloriana Rules the Waves," 219.

[148] Safiye Sultan, "A letter in Turkish from the Khasseki Safiye to Queen Elizabeth, 25 November-4 December 1593," 131.

[149] Andrea, *Women and Islam*, 25.

haseki, then as *valide sultan*. Finally, while the terms used to refer to Safiye and Elizabeth emphasise their shared female sovereignty, Murad III is named as 'His Majesty, the fortunate and felicitous Padishah of Islam and the Marslike sovereign,' elevating his status above both women.[150] Finally, although not overtly using gendered language, the letters from Safiye carefully articulate the power dynamics of this particular exchange of letters and gifts. Safiye's letter described Elizabeth's previous missive as 'a special letter, full of marvels…notifying indescribable and immeasurable consideration and love towards (me) Her well-wisher' and emphasised its receipt: 'the contents of Her letter became recorded by the ear of acceptance and in justice.'[151] This emphasised Elizabeth's inferior status in terms of power dynamics in her position as a supplicant to Safiye, regardless of their relative socio-political statuses, and further parallels Elizabeth's letter with the submission of the English ambassador to Murad III to reinforce this point.

Unfortunately, the letters which Elizabeth I wrote to Safiye are not extant, although the phrasing of Safiye's letters implies that she was openly requesting that Safiye intervene with the Sultan on her behalf. It is therefore impossible to analyse Elizabeth's parallel gendered self-representation in her letters to Safiye individually or in comparison to either her letters to Murad III and Mehmed III or other similar royal women. However, alongside Safiye's letters, the records of the gifts which the two women exchanged in the 1590s are accessible, from which some further conclusions can be drawn. Personal diplomatic activity in the early-modern period frequently involved an exchange of gifts alongside letters, which confirmed political, economic, and cultural ties.[152] Gifts were expected at certain milestones, such as the accession

[150] Safiye Sultan, "A letter in Turkish from the Khasseki Safiye to Queen Elizabeth, 25 November-4 December 1593," 132.

[151] Safiye Sultan, "A letter in Turkish from the Khasseki Safiye to Queen Elizabeth, 25 November-4 December 1593," 132.

[152] Andrea, *Women and Islam*, 24.

or marriage of a monarch alongside personal letters, for the maintenance of positive relations. The most significant gift-exchange in 16th century Anglo-Ottoman relations was the clockwork musical organ sent to Mehmed III after his accession to the throne, together with a gold coach valued at £600 intended for Safiye.[153] These gift exchanges were frequently formulaic to ensure that the items sent were appropriate for the status of both sender and recipient. This may be indicated by the fact that the gifts sent by Safiye to Elizabeth in 1593 and 1599 were extremely similar, consisting of cloth of silver garments, a cloth of silver girdle, and wrought handkerchiefs, among other gifts, on both occasions.[154] However, there was also a distinctly personal element to the gifts sent from Elizabeth to Safiye. One of the gifts that Elizabeth sent was a portrait of herself. Although this was a customary gift which she frequently sent to other monarchs, it holds particular significance in this instance: it was both highly personal, because it was a representation of her own form, and gendered, since this was an object she most commonly sent to male rulers in the context of marriage negotiations. Andrea argues that this ran counter to the patriarchal standards which dictated gift exchanges, since it undermined the position of women as objects of exchange to facilitate male bonding.[155] Finally, although the exchange of gifts itself was not necessarily gendered in the sense of a deliberately masculine or feminine self-presentation, as was often the case in epistolary form, it does seem to represent a conscious attempt to cultivate a personal relationship between Elizabeth and Safiye in order to ensure her support for English political endeavours in the Ottoman sphere as the most influential female member of the Ottoman dynasty.

Finally, although Safiye did correspond with other European rulers, such as the Doge and Signoria of Venice, these letters appeared to be solely political and pragmatic in nature.

[153] Brotton, *The Sultan and the Queen*, 212.

[154] Skilliter, "Three Letters," 146-8, 151.

[155] Andrea, *Women and Islam*, 28.

Her letters to the Doge of Venice in the late 1580s adopted a relatively matter-of-fact tone, introducing the purpose of the letter with a variation on 'After the greeting, this is what has to be imparted.'[156] While all diplomatic formalities and appropriate pleasantries were included, Safiye's missives to the Doge were brief and did not deviate significantly from straightforward communication of the intended message. By contrast, Safiye's contemporaneous letters to Elizabeth I took on a significantly more personal tone, exhorting Elizabeth to 'be firm in your friendship!' and reassuring her to 'be of good heart in this respect' because she was willing to advocate with Mehmed III, as Elizabeth had requested.[157] The personal nature of the letters exchanged by Elizabeth and Safiye is highlighted by a letter from Safiye's *kira* Esperanza Malchi, a personal assistant who fulfilled a number of roles including acting as an intermediary between the harem and the outside world, which was sent alongside the 1599 letter from Safiye. This letter reiterated the points made in Safiye's letter, including an acknowledgement that Safiye had received Elizabeth's gift, and a list of the gifts sent to Elizabeth alongside the letters to show her love, with the statement: 'la Serenissima Reggina vullendo mustrar a sua maesta el amor che glia.'[158] However, Malchi also made a personal request on Safiye's behalf for Elizabeth to send English cosmetic items, specifically 'rare distilled waters of every kind for the face and odiferous oils for the hands' as well as any beautiful silk or wool which Elizabeth deemed appropriately rich.[159] Not only was this highly intimate request a result of the shared status of Safiye and Elizabeth as royal women, but Malchi also explicitly articulates that, 'on

[156] Safiye Sultan, "A letter in Turkish from the Khāssekī Sāfiye to the Doge of Venice, undated. Date of receipt, 17 March 1589. Venice, Archivio di Stato, Documenti turchi, Busta VII. 2 (4)," trans. Skilliter, 'Three Letters,' 157.

[157] Safiye Sultan, "A Turkish letter from the Walide Safiye to Queen Elizabeth, undated [of *crca* 26 November 1599]," trans. Skilliter, 'Three Letters,' 139.

[158] Esperanza Malchi, "A letter in Italian from Esperanza Malchi, the Sultana's Jewish agent, to Queen Elizabeth; dated 16/26 November 1599," in Skilliter, "Three Letters," 141.

[159] Esperanza Malchi, "A letter from Esperanza Malchi to Queen Elizabeth, November 1599," 143.

account of Your Majesty's being a woman I can without any embarrassment employ you with this notice,' suggesting strongly that it would never have been made should Safiye's royal correspondent have been a king rather than a queen.[160] Safiye's request, as conveyed by Malchi, exemplifies the employment of female identity as a means of reinforcing social, political and economic ties, even on a cross-cultural basis.[161] In addition to enhancing the political ties between England and the Ottoman Empire, it is clear that the letters and gifts between Elizabeth and Safiye had taken on a highly personal and intimate character by the end of the 1590s. Given that, in the late 16th century, the royal conception of diplomacy was that it was both a public and private activity encompassing both the state as a whole and the personal friendship between monarchs, this correspondence is of vital importance for the overall development of Anglo-Ottoman relations.

In conclusion, gender was at the centre of the construction of Anglo-Ottoman relations through royal correspondence, particularly throughout the 1590s. Although there are anecdotal indications that gender was a factor which the Ottoman Sultans considered to diminish Elizabeth's person, there also appears to have been a clear delineation between her gender and her sovereignty, in a separation consistent with Elizabeth's own gendered self-presentation and the English theory of the king's two bodies. Consequently, reference to Elizabeth's womanhood was not a remarkable feature of the letters between Elizabeth I and the Ottoman Sultans, with letters from Murad III notably de-gendering her in favour of emphasizing her sovereignty, and assigning her the equivalent female titles granted to her male counterparts in Europe. References to shared womanhood are much more evident in Safiye's letters to Elizabeth, where they served as a foundational element in the construction of their personal relationship. This relationship was further reinforced by the exchange of items which either

[160] Esperanza Malchi, "A letter from Esperanza Malchi to Queen Elizabeth, November 1599," 143.

[161] Andrea, *Women and Islam*, 28-29.

subverted the gendered conventions of early modern royal gifts, such as Elizabeth's portrait, or emphasised their shared status as royal women. Although Elizabeth's gender undoubtedly factored into the language and intentions of the letters she exchanged with the Ottoman Sultans, both in her own self-presentation and in the language they used to address her, this was far less significant than the establishment of a relationship between Elizabeth I and Safiye Sultan. It seems likely that the establishment of exceptionally close ties between England and the Ottoman Empire in only two decades was intertwined with the fact that the correspondence between Safiye and Elizabeth I marked the only time an Ottoman royal woman exchanged letters with an English monarch. This secondary diplomatic avenue was enhanced by the fact that this connection was almost impossible for any other European state due to Elizabeth I's status as a female monarch, and since this occurred during the period in which royal women were at their most influential within the Ottoman Empire.

Conclusion

The Anglo-Ottoman royal correspondence is situated within the significant shifts in diplomatic practice which took place during the early modern period. The establishment of resident diplomacy increased the need for active correspondence between monarchs to instruct ambassadors and help them to gain access to foreign courts. The higher volume of royal letters needed to instruct ambassadors was also linked to the development of bureaucratic systems within states to manage the flows of correspondence. Furthermore, the institutionalization of diplomacies and royal correspondence consolidated the perspective of monarchs that their epistolary activities constituted diplomatic negotiation on two levels: public governmental business related to the states involved in correspondence and the establishment of personal ties between their monarchs.[162] Taken together, these evolutions helped to establish clear conventions for the form, contents and presentation of royal letters within Europe to demonstrate the authority and magnificence of the sender and their regard for the recipient, as well as to ensure that letters would be well received even if the messages they attempted to convey were not necessarily positive.

Anglo-Ottoman royal correspondence conformed on a surface level to the conventions of European and Ottoman diplomacy, with some clear divergences representing the separation between the Ottoman and European epistolary customs, including the use of *Fasih Türkçe* as the primary language of diplomacy with accompanying Latin translations, and the limited use of familial language to construct a personal relationship between the correspondents. Other notable features were clearly attempts to reach compromises within the boundaries of these separate epistolary and cultural traditions, including the higher level of decoration on English letters which attempted to compensate for a lack of linguistic familiarity and represent the

[162] Jansson, *Art and Diplomacy*, 13.

wealth and magnificence of their sender. However, other key features of the exchange are both less apparent and seemingly represent a significant means by which power dynamics were negotiated between the English and Ottoman rulers. The three most crucial examples of this negotiation were the apparently unprecedented circumstance of Murad III initiating official correspondence in a break from Ottoman tradition; the structuring of the initial letter to Elizabeth I as a command to a subject rather than an imperial letter to a fellow ruler; and the greater bureaucratic involvement in the production of letters in both England and the Ottoman Empire as a display of royal authority. These processes involved no verbalization of authority or submission in regards to one another, but nonetheless served as clear indications of how each monarch viewed their position relative to one another; Murad III in particular aimed to compensate for the initial subversion of Ottoman royal power which resulted from initiating communication with Elizabeth by altering the form and decoration of his initial letters to indicate the lesser status of England and its monarch relative to the Ottoman Empire.

The greater involvement of secretaries, translators, and the royal bureaucracy in Anglo-Ottoman correspondence, though primarily an attempt to compensate for linguistic differences and accommodate the greater level of decoration and material accoutrements attached to the letters, represented perhaps the most significant break from European diplomatic traditions, since it had the largest effect on how royal letters were produced and received. In particular, the significance of the royal bureaucracy's involvement in the production of royal letters completely undermined, and indeed almost inverted, the significance of holograph letters in an international context. While in Europe holograph letters were valued as an expression of the monarch's personal investment in their relationship with the recipient, there is limited evidence that they were similarly interpreted in the Anglo-Ottoman context. Indeed, the extensive involvement of the royal bureaucracy appeared to replace the personal involvement of the monarch as the respected element in the construction of a royal letter, as this reflected the

wealth and authority of the monarch over a centralized state with a strong administrative capacity. Furthermore, the involvement of translators had several varied effects on Anglo-Ottoman correspondence across the period, both hindering effective communication and mediating or softening usages of language which might be poorly received in order to improve diplomatic relations at varying points across the period.

With the context of the exceptional construction, form, and language present in Anglo-Ottoman royal correspondence established, it is not unexpected that the articulation of themes such as religion and gender would also be distinct. In part, this was linked to the same causal factor which influenced the form and contents of royal letters: an attempt by the monarchs to devise epistolary strategies which would be favourably received and therefore strengthen diplomatic ties on a state and personal level.[163] Almost all individual letters within the corpus from 1579 to 1603 contain articulated claims to religious authority on a personal basis by their author, as well as a limited acknowledgement of the recipients' own claims. These invocations were largely contained within the *salutatio* and *conclusion* of letters, framing the entire correspondence with religious rhetoric and thus positioning it as one of the most significant aspects of the correspondence. The attempts to reach compromise and ensure favourable reception are evident in the emphasis placed by both the English and Ottoman correspondents on shared religious tenets such as monotheism, iconoclasm, and opposition to idolatry. These strategies also involved highlighting their mutual alignment against Catholicism, and Catholic powers such as Spain, integrating ideological and political aspects with the religious claims in order to highlight the extent to which even informal alliances could be practical and beneficial on multiple levels, and conforming to the more general alignment of Protestantism and Islam in the 16th century. Both the English and Ottoman rulers also demonstrated compromise on

[163] Allinson, *A Monarchy of Letters*, 132.

religious matters by limiting their religious references largely to their personal expressions of religious authority or broad invocations of God, mostly avoiding strong assertions which might imply authority over one another on a religious basis, and therefore skirting around the potential articulation of religiously-informed power dynamics. Both strategies, of emphasising shared elements of theology and downplaying the recipients' religious claims while emphasising their own, were particularly evident and explicitly verbalized in the letters that Elizabeth I sent to the Ottoman Empire. This was perhaps intended to serve as a counterbalance to England's less favourable negotiating position derived from requesting trade privileges, redressing political power dynamics by emphasising Elizabeth's religious authority and downplaying the equivalent claims of Murad III and Mehmed III.

However, both religious and political claims to power are strongly articulated in the secondary avenue of Anglo-Ottoman correspondence: Safiye's letters to Elizabeth I, where these two strands of the Anglo-Ottoman correspondence intersect most closely with gender. The extent to which letters between Elizabeth I and Murad III or Mehmed III openly reference gender compared to the exchange between Safiye and Elizabeth I also parallels the open expression of religious and political authority. Letters from Murad III downplay feminine-coded praise and references to Elizabeth I's womanhood and instead emphasise her status as a sovereign, mirroring Elizabeth's most common self-presentation. On the other hand, both elements of her identity are highlighted in Safiye's letters, where they form the basis of a significantly more personal epistolary relationship, reinforced by mutual exchanges of feminine-coded gifts and personal requests. Safiye's intercession and campaign for English privileges at the Sublime Porte on the basis of this relationship, which undoubtedly furthered Anglo-Ottoman ties on a state level, perhaps to a greater extent than any other factor given her acknowledged influence during the reigns of two successive Sultans, was consequently the result of significant linguistic negotiations around gender, religion, and political authority.

Furthermore, it functioned as a link connecting the political cultures of two states in which royal women were more politically ascendant than they had ever previously been.

In summary, within a transitional period of diplomacy which saw a higher level of royal involvement in personal diplomatic correspondence and a belief that this was a central aspect of state and personal royal relationships, the articulation of religion and gender was inseparable from both Anglo-Ottoman royal correspondence itself and the power dynamics which it negotiated. The rapid development of commercial and diplomatic ties, and the uniquely personal character of Anglo-Ottoman diplomacy during this period, given that it was unprecedented and subsequently greatly reduced under Elizabeth I's successors, illustrates that the epistolary strategies which developed in the letters between Elizabeth I, Murad III, Mehmed III and Safiye Sultan achieved their primary aim of meeting a favourable reception and facilitating diplomatic ties, carefully moderating linguistic reference to gender and religion to avoid upsetting a precarious balance of power. While England and Ottoman Empire were not closely politically aligned after the end of Elizabeth I's reign, the late 16th century Anglo-Ottoman correspondence undoubtedly contributed significantly to England's transformation into the foremost European trading nation in the East during the following decades.[164] In a broader context, the success of English and Ottoman epistolary strategies underpinned the commerce and processes of exchange which constituted the global Renaissance, helping to shape English literary and artistic culture, and built a foundation for an outward-looking worldview as the precursor to commercial and imperial endeavours from the 17th century.

[164] Jardine, "Gloriana Rules the Waves," 222.

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