

Diplomatic Intermediaries During Rákóczi's War of Independence, 1703–1711

by

Ewelina Sikora

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Supervisor: Professor Jan Hennings

Second Reader: Doctor Gábor Kármán

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Abstract

This thesis, informed by new diplomatic history, aims to capture the role and character of diplomatic intermediaries by examining the activity of Castelanness of Kraków Elżbieta Sieniawska (1669–1729) and the English envoy extraordinary to Vienna, George Stepney (1663–1707) during Rákóczi's War of Independence, 1703–1711. Recognition as an independent ruler was the central issue for Ferenc II Rákóczi (1676–1735) who led the struggle against the Habsburg authority over Hungary and Transylvania. The contested matter of legitimacy influenced the range and modes of Rákóczi's possible diplomatic engagements and meant for him the necessity to rely primarily on informal channels of political exchange. For that reason, diplomatic intermediaries played an especially vital role as they allowed for leaving the issue of his title in the dark, avoiding the thickets of ceremonial protocol, and declaring binding decisions. As the analysis of the involvement of Sieniawska and Stepney in the War of 1703–1711 shows, diplomatic intermediaries—depending on their social standing and connections—facilitated various political exchanges which allowed Rákóczi to participate in political process.

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Introduction

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the value of diplomatic intermediaries, just as today, lay in their ability to establish an informal political exchange, while circumventing official problematic issues. One such obstacle to official diplomatic exchange was the sensitive matter of recognition. For Prince Ferenc II Rákóczi (1676–1735), for example, who in spring 1703 rose against Habsburgs' authority over the Kingdom of Hungary, recognition as an independent ruler was the key issue, which made the role of intermediaries vital to establishing diplomatic channels allowing him to participate in political process.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, in the world of foreign affairs, a certain skill set was required to negotiate, including canny navigation of the social environment of royal courts which was sustained by complex inter-personal relations. Certain tasks could be carried out only by ambassadors and envoys during official missions. However, the lack of diplomatic credentials could serve as an advantage in many contexts.¹ A decisive factor in engaging in diplomatic activities was the social status attributed to individuals which often corresponded to the tasks entrusted to them.²

In the case of Rákóczi's War of Independence the role of intermediaries was of a significant importance, and so was their background. The social standing of people that Rákóczi managed to win over (for example, Polish-Lithuania magnates) facilitated the political

¹ See for example Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James, "Introduction. The Long International History of Women and Diplomacy," in *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500*, ed. Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James (London-New York: Routledge, 2015) and Florian Kühnel, "'Minister-like Cleverness, Understanding, and Influence on Affairs': Ambassadors in Everyday Business and Courtly Ceremonies at the Turn of the Eighteenth Century," in *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c. 1410–1800*, ed. Jan Hennings and Tracey A. Sowerby (New York: Routledge, 2017).

² Or as the *Craftsman*, an English opposition newspaper, read in 1739: "in former times it was usual . . . to employ men of the highest rank and eminence [as diplomats]; who, by their dignity, might add weight to their negotiations abroad". After Jeremy Black, *British Diplomats and Diplomacy, 1688-1800* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001), 52.

exchange or military reinforcement. Even more importantly, the involvement of certain individuals had consequences in terms of recognition, precisely because of the social rank of those individuals (for example, English and Dutch diplomats).

This thesis aims to capture the role and character of intermediaries at the beginning of the eighteenth century in the context of a Central European conflict by examining the activity of Castellaness of Kraków Elżbieta Sieniawska (1669–1729) and the English envoy extraordinary to Vienna George Stepney (1663–1707) during Rákóczi's War of Independence, 1703–1711. My motivation to study less known actors, who were not cast in the leading roles but were instrumental in Rákóczi's foreign policy, stems from recent historiographic developments in diplomatic history.

1. New diplomatic history

New diplomatic history links the analysis of foreign relations to their social, intellectual, and cultural environment. It is a set of perspectives especially well-suited for the study of early modern diplomacy because it moves the center of inquiry away from the bureaucratic machinery of state institutions to the functioning of early modern political culture. Thanks to efforts by scholars such as Daniela Frigo, “old diplomatic history” has been remodeled and nuanced by revising the state-centric perspective, questioning the chronology of the origins of modern diplomacy, and reconsidering the conduct of relations between polities.³ The framework is not completely transformed beyond addressing the inadequacy of terms established in the later periods, covering professional diplomatic corps, international law or

³ Tracey A. Sowerby, “Early Modern Diplomatic History,” *History Compass* 14, no. 9 (2016), 441–56. See also Daniela Frigo, *Principe, ambasciatori e “ius gentium”: l'amministrazione della politica estera nel Piemonte del settecento* [Prince, Ambassador and “Jus Gentium”: The Administration of Foreign Policy in Piedmont in the Eighteenth Century] (Rome: Bulzoni, 1991) and Daniela Frigo, introduction to *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy: the Structure of Diplomatic Practice, 1450–1800*, ed. Daniela Frigo, tr. Adrian Belton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

diplomatic protocol, but more attention is paid to the practices behind the terminology.⁴ More interest is now aimed at understanding the processes behind relations between polities, which puts the spotlight on the individuals involved.

New diplomatic history brings to the fore individual actors who would not traditionally be considered as diplomats, as they were not always accredited government representatives. Recognizing that diplomacy is a socio-political rather than a professional occupation, especially in the early modern period, allows incorporating a broad spectrum of activities under the umbrella of diplomacy, and therefore to reconsider the importance of activities which are marginal or seemingly unpolitical for the political process.

2. Diplomatic intermediaries

As mentioned above, the value of diplomatic intermediaries resulted from their ability to mediate between parties, who for various reasons, could not conduct official relation between each other. These parties may have operated in different cultural and confessional worlds and needed go-betweens to provide translation and cultural know-how.⁵ On other occasions, the parties may have entered into conflict on the level of mutual recognition and intermediaries were used in a safe buffer zone allowing to circumvent problematic issues. Thus intermediaries allowed to establish a political exchange.

So far the role of intermediaries in the early modern period was analyzed by scholars primarily in relation to the first case, that is, go-betweens providing cultural know-how, for example in studies concerning cross-confessional relations between the Christian and Muslim worlds. But they also had a prominent place in early modern diplomacy more generally.

⁴ Christian Windler, afterword to *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World, c. 1410–1800*, ed. Jan Hennings and Tracey A. Sowerby (London–New York: Routledge, 2017), 254–55.

⁵ See Maartje von Gelder and Tijana Krstić, “Introduction: Cross-Confessional Diplomacy and Diplomatic Intermediaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 19 (2015); Emrah Safa Gürkan, “Mediating Boundaries: Mediterranean Go-Betweens and Cross-Confessional Diplomacy in Constantinople, 1560–1600,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 19 (2015).

In the context of this thesis, I propose—as a basic working definition—to consider diplomatic intermediaries as individuals who acted as links between political powers in order to bring about an agreement of some kind. Such a broad definition of diplomatic intermediaries allows to include under one umbrella individuals whose activities differed as to their aim or character, such as for example negotiating a peace or securing means to continue a war either through official or backchannels. In consequence, this broad definition allows to study the political impact of actions performed by both official government representatives as a part of their work indicated in instructions and also by individuals who did not hold an office nor were assigned a rank and whose presence in political life was not regulated. For Rákóczi, as it is examined in the following chapters, the involvement of individuals belonging to both groups in his War of Independence was of great importance.

3. George Stepney and Elżbieta Sieniawska as diplomatic intermediaries

The mediation of George Stepney during the negotiation between Emperor Leopold I (1640–1705) and Prince Rákóczi between which started in 1704 had important implications as to the matter of Rákóczi's independent status, although it did not result in an actual treaty. The fact that the emperor agreed on the mediation of Maritime Powers (England and Holland) between him and the Hungarian Malcontents was interpreted by the later as an act of acknowledgment.⁶

Stepney's activity during the talks could be described as shuttle diplomacy, which is a term borrowed from modern international relations, but it seems to be equally suitable to describe dealings in the early modern period. Shuttle diplomacy is a practice of mediated communication in which a mediator is traveling from one location to another carrying

⁶ Ágnes R. Várkonyi, “‘Ad Pacem Universalem’: The International Antecedents of the Peace of Szatmár,” in *Europica Varietas – Hungarica Varietas, 1526–1762* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2000), 213–14.

messages back and forth.⁷ The similarities do not end when counting an actual commute effort undertaken by an intermediary who travels between the location of parties, but also the fact that the matter of recognition prevents the direct talks, which are desired by the parties.

Elżbieta Sieniawska's activities, although she often traveled from the location of one political actor to that of another, are more difficult to capture with modern day terminology. Her role was that of assisting key actors in conveying their demands and proposals but without conforming to the rules of formal negotiation. Her importance as a diplomatic intermediary was the greatest at the initial phase of negotiation, as she was suitably equipped to present a proposal and await the response before any decisive steps would be considered. More significantly, she could use unofficial channels of political communications (for example, with the French diplomats with whom she sustained friendship relations) or opened new channels for the others (for example, between Tsar Peter I (1672–1725) and Rákóczi) primarily due to the extent of her personal network. The reasons for her being cast in the role of a diplomatic intermediary, and being indispensable on certain occasions, lied in one of the hallmarks of socio-cultural and political relations in the early modern period: they were almost always mediated in some way. What I mean by this is that, for example, an involvement of a patron who could carry out a request or introduce one party to another due to his or her social outreach was essential in countless cases. This detail helps to better reflect on a diplomacy as socio-cultural practice and at least partially explain the reasons of the involvement of third parties in conducting foreign affairs, ranging from the modes of communication, negotiations, to signing the treaties. It was not only the message itself that mattered but also how it was staged and presented.⁸ In other words, the social standing of the

⁷ See for example Heidi Burgess and Guy Burgess, "Shuttle Diplomacy/Mediated Communication," accessed June 8, 2018, <http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/treatment/shuttle.htm>.

⁸ Diplomatic intermediaries, however, lacked the representational character (or at least they did not represent the party to the agreement) which made the ceremonial mechanism to lose some of its weight. Staging the message by monarchs' representatives was in fact a part of the message itself. For more on this issue see Jan Hennings,

messenger and the resources he or she could employ while delivering it added weight to the message itself and was the premise of his or her service as a diplomatic intermediary. In Sieniawska's case, the fact that she operated at the intersection of the private and public spheres made her especially suited to bring forward delicate unofficial proposals, but perhaps foremost to reach high-ranking ears, not attracting too much of attention.

In the analysis of diplomacy carried out during Rákóczi's War of Independence, I focus on the socio-cultural context within which Sieniawska and Stepney operated, because I consider this context significant from the point of view of the conduct of diplomatic activity but also because this perspective allows me to reflect on a wide spectrum of factors, adding more shades to the picture. I examine the case of Stepney, the English envoy in Vienna, and Elżbieta Sieniawska, a wife of a high-ranking official in Poland-Lithuania, to shed light on wide array of issues brought up by new diplomatic historians, including gender, social standing or rank, all of which deserve more attention in the context of Rákóczi's War of Independence. By moving the center of interest from the analysis of Rákóczi's foreign policy to the investigation of how it resonated in Polish and English contexts, I approach the issue of positioning Rákóczi's War of Independence in European framework from the perspective of Rákóczi's diplomatic partners. By so doing, I intend to examine factors that contributed to Rákóczi's diplomatic successes and failures, but foremost to understand better the reasons why the involvement in Hungarian affairs could have been appealing to third parties, and how did it fit their careers. The decision to build my thesis around these two particular individuals, Stepney and Sieniawska, was motivated by several reasons.

Jan Hennings, "The Semiotics of Diplomatic Dialogue: Pomp and Circumstance in Tsar Peter I's Visit to Vienna in 1696," *International History Review* 30, no. 3 (2008), 515–19; Hennings, *Russia and Courtly Europe: Ritual and the Culture of Diplomacy, 1648–1725*.

First, they both received little attention in the studies concerning the War of 1703–1711: their activities were noticed and described but rarely analyzed.⁹ It is true that from the perspective of the advancement of the War their role may be of episodic, but the episodes in which they appeared, such as peace negotiations between 1704 and 1706 or the proposal for Rákóczi's election in Poland-Lithuania, were of significant importance. What is more, their involvement and sympathies they expressed toward the Hungarian insurgents deserve more attention as they indicate the factors that made Rákóczi efforts to gain a support from abroad effective. Additionally, the focus on the actors of Polish and English rather than French backgrounds is motivated by the fact that, contrary to the French diplomats, their active involvement is more difficult to attribute solely to the foreign policy objectives of the principal party involved in the Bourbon-Habsburg conflict over the Spanish throne. Choosing Sieniawska and Stepney has the advantage of allowing to identify what third parties could gain by engaging in mediation. The fact that they did not share social standing or gender opens up doors for examining the factors that limited or enhanced their roles as intermediaries. Lastly, recent historiographical developments regarding early modern diplomatic history recognized the importance of actors involved in the diplomatic activity and the agency of go-betweens, especially in the European-Ottoman relations. However, it did not pay so much attention to the issue within a European context, let alone Central European. My reading of Rákóczi's War of Independence from the perspective of diplomatic partners through the lens of new diplomatic history is based on the analysis of ego-documents

⁹ For example, Sándor Gebei, *II. Rákóczi Ferenc és a Rzeczpospolita* [Ferenc II Rákóczi and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2013); Jerzy R Nowak, "Polacy a powstanie Rakoczego [Poles and the Rákóczi Uprising]," in *Z dziejów polsko-węgierski stosunków historycznych i literackich*, ed. István Csapláros, Jan Reychma, and Adam Sieroszewski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1979).

4. Literature and sources

4.1. Secondary literature

There is a considerable amount of literature concerning Ferenc II Rákóczi and the War of Independence of 1703–1711, covering a variety of topics and issues.¹⁰ Among the most recent literature, several important articles presenting a new perspective on some of the well-established research problems and discussing newly discovered sources were published over the past few years in *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*.¹¹ Also, among recent edited volumes *II. Rákóczi Ferenc, az államférfi* (Ferenc II Rákóczi, the statesman), *Povstanie Františka II. Rákócziho 1703–1711 (v novšom priblížení)* (Ferenc II Rákóczi's uprising 1703–1711 (in the new perspective) and *Doba kuruckých bojov* (Time of the *kuruc* war) provide an overview of various topic and approaches, which may serve as a signpost to further readings.¹²

Rákóczi's efforts to gain support from abroad against the Habsburgs and to be included in a Europe-wide settlement is reflected in a considerable historiographical effort that was made to situate Rákóczi's War of Independence in the context of European politics.¹³ Besides the

¹⁰ For a substantial literature and sources reference see Béla Köpeczi and Ágnes R. Várkonyi, *II. Rákóczi Ferenc* (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2004), 563–603.

¹¹ Including István Czigány, "A Rákóczi-szabadságharc és a közép- és kelet-európai hadihelyzet 1703–1711 [Rákóczi's War of Independence and the Military Situation in Central and Eastern Europe, 1703–1711]," *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 124, no. 4 (2011); Sándor Gebei, "Az 1707. évi lengyel és magyar detronizáció politikai háttere [The Political Background to the Polish and Hungarian Dethronements in 1707]," *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 120, no. 4 (2007); Ágnes R. Várkonyi, "Esélyek és alternatívák a szatmári béketárgyaláson 1710–1711 [Chances and Alternatives at the Szatmár Peace Talks]," *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 124, no. 4 (2011); Gábor Kármán, "Kísérletek svéd segítség biztosítására II. Rákóczi Ferenc szabadságharcához [Attempts to Secure Swedish Assistance for the Insurrection of Ferenc Rákóczi II]," *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 126, no. 1 (2013).

¹² Peter Kónya, ed., *Povstanie Františka II. Rákócziho 1703–1711 (v novšom priblížení)* [Ferenc II Rákóczi Uprising (in the new perspective)] (Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Prešovskej univerzity, 2005); Peter Kónya, ed., *Doba kuruckých bojov* [Time of the *kuruc* war] (Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Prešovskej univerzity, 2004); Edit Tamás, ed., *II. Rákóczi Ferenc, az államférfi. Tanulmányok a sárospataki országgyűlés 300. évfordulóján* [Ferenc II Rákóczi, the statesman. Studies on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the Diet of Sárospatak] (Sárospatak: Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum Rákóczi Múzeuma, 2008).

¹³ See for example Ágnes R. Várkonyi, "Hungarian Independence and the European Balance of Power," in *Europica Varietas – Hungarica Varietas, 1526–1762* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2000); Kálmán Benda, "The Rákóczi's War of Independence and the European Powers," in *From Hunyadi to Rákóczi: War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary*, ed. János M. Bak, Béla K. Király, and Katalin Péter (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1982); Béla Köpeczi, *A Rákóczi-szabadságharc és európa* [Rákóczi's War of Independence and Europe] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1970); Kálmán Benda, ed., *Európa és a Rákóczi-szabadságharc* [Europe and Rákóczi's War of Independence] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980).

broad picture, various directions of Rákóczi's foreign relations received—greater or lesser—attention. French involvement seems to be an especially well-explored aspect, significantly also from the perspective of French foreign affairs and diplomacy, but the image of France as the only western power interested in Central Europe was nuanced to a certain extent by studies examining, for example, the Maritime Powers' involvement.¹⁴ My attention to the role of Maritime Power was captured initially by the works of Ágnes R. Várkonyi, Linda Frey and Masha Frey.¹⁵ The works of György Kurucz nurtured my interest, specifically because he stresses the role of the individuals such as George Stepney.¹⁶

What is more, positioning Rákóczi's War of Independence at the axis of Bourbon-Habsburg conflict was transected by that of the clash of interests over the Baltic Sea, bringing into the picture Sweden, Prussia-Brandenburg, Poland-Lithuania-Saxony, and Russia. In the context of this thesis, especially valuable are the works of Sándor Gebei. Especially *II. Rákóczi Ferenc és a Rzeczpospolita* (Ferenc II Rákóczi and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth), which is the first comprehensive publications dealing with Polish-Hungarian relations during Rákóczi's War of Independence capturing important parallels and connections between the

¹⁴ Émile Pillias, *Études sur François II. Rákóczi, prince de Transylvanie* [France and Rákóczi: True Reasons of Louis XIV's Intervention] (Paris: Leroux, 1939); Béla Köpeczi, *A Rákóczi-szabadságharc és Franciaország* [Rákóczi's War of Independence and France] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1966); Olivier Maurin, "La Hongrie et les Pays Bas méridionaux durant la guerre de Succession d'Espagne : les ambitions de la diplomatie française [Southern Netherlands and Hungary During the War of the Spanish Succession: the Ambitions of the French Diplomacy]" (Université Michel de Montaigne – Bordeaux III, 2016).

¹⁵ R. Várkonyi, "'Ad Pacem Universalem': The International Antecedents of the Peace of Szatmár"; R. Várkonyi, "Hungarian Independence and the European Balance of Power"; Linda Frey and Marsha Frey, "Rákóczi and the Maritime Powers: An Uncertain Friendship," in *From Hunyadi to Rákóczi: War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary*, ed. Katalin Péter, Béla K. Király, and János M. Bak (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1982); Linda Frey and Marsha Frey, "The Confessional Issue in International Politics: The Rákóczi's Insurrection," in *R. Várkonyi Ágnes emlékkönyv: születésének 70. évfordulója ünnepére*, ed. Péter Tusor, Zoltán Rihmer, and Gábor Thoroczkay (Budapest: ELTE Bölcsészettudományi Kara, 1998).

¹⁶ György Kurucz, "Protestáns szimpátia és szövetségi érdek az angol diplomácia és a Rákóczi-szabadságharc [Sympathy of the Protestants and Interest of the English Diplomacy and Rákóczi's War of Independence]," in *Doba kuruckých bojov*, ed. Peter Kónya (Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Prešovskej univerzity, 2004); György Kurucz, "Szövetségi érdek, protestáns szimpátia, katonai realitás: a Rákóczi-szabadságharc és az angol közvetítés," *Történelmi Szemle*, no. 2 (2015).

two countries.¹⁷ One of the chapters focuses on Voivode of Kraków and Starost of Spiš (Polish: Spisz) Teodor Lubomirski (1683–1745), Elżbieta Sieniawska’s step-brother, which puts a spotlight on an individual whose role was not central to Rákóczi’s relations with Poland, yet it offered important insights. Gebei in an attempt to explain the reasons behind Teodor Lubomirski’s interest in Rákóczi’s War of Independence touches upon various issues, such as the status of Spiš or family connections, which adds nuance to the political analysis.

The existing literature is vast, but what I think is still missing from the library of studies on Rákóczi’s War of Independence are analyses written from a biographical perspective. From the stream of studies concerning Rákóczi’s foreign affairs, the majority of diplomatic actors surface only for a brief moment and are subject to an overall account of foreign policy.¹⁸ The studies that provide a closer look at the actors who were involved in the conflict—especially those who were not necessary Rákóczi’s representatives, such as Teodor Lubomirski—have the advantage of examining actual diplomatic practice, and at the same time to situate actors against a nuanced background, rooting the War of 1703–1711 in a European context. I believe that the biographies, personal networks, and agendas of the individuals who were involved in various diplomatic activities should be considered not as a trivia or side notes, but as factors that shaped diplomacy and foreign relations because they mapped out their operational horizons. This approach makes it possible to look into socio-cultural factors that were of varying importance in the political arena, as well as in the reception of Rákóczi’s diplomatic endeavors. His international outreach or foreign policy

¹⁷ Sándor Gebei, *II. Rákóczi Ferenc és a Rzeczpospolita* [Ferenc II Rákóczi and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2013).

¹⁸ Domokos Brenner and Pál Ráday were among the few who received more attention. See for example Béla Köpeczi, *Brenner Domokos, a Rákóczi-szabadságharc és a bujdosás diplomatája és publicistája* [Domokos Brenner, Rákóczi's War of Independence and Diplomacy and Political Writings in Exile] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1996); Pál Frigyes Ráday-Pesthy, ed., *Ráday Pál és a Rákóczi-szabadságharc* [Pál Ráday and Rákóczi's War of Independence] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2005).

should be positioned next to his self-fashioning efforts and their impact on his contemporaries who were the ones in power to perpetuate the image Rákóczi gave of himself. For that reason, this thesis proposes to look at the Rákóczi War of Independence from the perspective of English and Polish actors involved as diplomatic intermediaries.

Two biographies, Bożena Popiołek's *Królowa bez korony. Studium z życia i działalności Elżbiety z Lubomirskich Sieniawskiej* (Queen without the Crown. Study of live and activity of Elżbieta Sieniawska née Lubomirska) and Susan Spens's *George Stepney: diplomat and poet*, were of a considerable help in understanding how the involvement in the Hungarian affair fit in the activity of Elżbieta Sieniawska and George Stepney.¹⁹ While the biography authored by Spens fits in a broader tendency to focus on the individual, Popiołek additionally explores the area of women's political activity at the beginning of the eighteenth century, which did not receive so much attention. The biographies help to navigate a vast correspondence of both individuals which was the main sourced used in this thesis.

4.2. Sources

Approaching the correspondences of Stepney and Sieniawska pose several major challenges. Although in both cases their epistolary legacy is partially destroyed and incomplete, the amount of letters available is still vast and only partially published. Some of Stepney's letters and dispatches are contained in the three volumes of *Archivum Rákóczianum* concerned with English diplomacy.²⁰ Some of Sieniawska's letters were published according to the thematic

¹⁹ Bożena Popiołek, *Królowa bez korony. Studium z życia i działalności Elżbiety z Lubomirskich Sieniawskiej* (ok. 1669–1729) [Queen without the Crown. Study of Live and Activity of Elżbieta Sieniawska née Lubomirska] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe WSP, 1996) and Susan Spens, *George Stepney, 1663–1707: Diplomat and Poet* (Cambridge: J. Clarke, 1997). I made also use of two biograms: Andrzej K. Link-Lenczowski and Bożena Popiołek, "Sieniawska Elżbieta Helena z Lubomirskich," *Internetowy Polski Słownik Biograficzny* [Polish Internet Biographical Dictionary] (Warszawa: Narodowy Instytut Audiowizualny), accessed April 23, 2018, <http://www.ipsb.nina.gov.pl/a/biografia/elzbieta-helena-sieniawska-z-lubomirskich>; Linda Frey and Marsha Frey, "Stepney, George (1663–1707), Diplomatist," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed June 1, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26404>.

²⁰ Ernő Simonyi, ed., *Angol diplomatiai iratok II. Rákóczi Ferenc korára* [English Diplomatic Papers Concerning the Age of Ferenc II Rákóczi], 3 vols., *Archivum Rákóczianum II* (Budapest, 1872–1877).

key considering her artistic activity, relation with her husband, family, and friends, as well as clients and protégées.²¹ In the context of this thesis, the volume consisting Sieniawska's correspondence with her husband is the most relevant due to its reoccurring political content.²² Apart from the published correspondence, there are hundreds of letters in manuscripts written by or addressed to Sieniawska available through the database of the Princes Czartoryskis Library, including forty-five letters of Rákóczi from years 1704–1712.²³ A recent edition which includes also letters from the Rákóczi-Aspremont family collection of the Hungarian National Archives of Hungary helps to draw a more complete image of epistolary exchanges between Sieniawska and Rákóczi.²⁴ Besides the problem of quantity, accessibility or readability, using correspondence as a source forces the historian to be especially careful in drawing conclusions based solely on the letters' authors and their written words, as for example, diplomats tended to exaggerate their role. The advantage of engaging with correspondence is, however, that it offers viewpoints and judgments by the contemporaries that are hard to find in other diplomatic sources. The correspondence of Sieniawska is of a particular value because, contrary to Stepney who corresponded with his supervisors or other diplomats, she did not have to limit herself with such strict auto-censorship. At the same time, her correspondence needs to be read with a different key, as it rather signalizes than states her role as a diplomatic intermediary. What I mean by this is that

²¹ Piotr Bohdziewicz, *Korespondencja artystyczna Elżbiety Sieniawskiej z lat 1700–1729 w zbiorach Czartoryskich w Krakowie* [Artistic Correspondence of Elżbieta Sieniawska from the years 1700–1729 from the Czartoryskis Collection in Kraków] (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1964); Bożena Popiołek, Agnieszka Słaby, and Urszula Kicińska, eds., *Korespondencja Elżbiety Lubomirskiej z Sieniawskich, kasztelanowej krakowskiej* [Correspondence of Elżbieta Sieniawska née Lubomirska, Castellaness of Cracow], 3 vols. (Warszawa–Bellerive-sur-Allier: DiG-Edition La Rama, 2016).

²² Popiołek, Kicińska, and Słaby, *Korespondencja Elżbiety Lubomirskiej z Sieniawskich, kasztelanowej krakowskiej* [Correspondence of Elżbieta Sieniawska née Lubomirska, Castellaness of Cracow], vol. 2, 2016.

²³ Princes Czartoryskis' Library, *Korespondencja Franciszka II Rakoczego księcia siedmiogrodzkiego do Elżbiety z Lubomirskich Sieniawskiej kasztelanowej krakowskiej, hetmanowej wielkiej koronnej z okresu 16 V 1704-30 X 1712* [Correspondence of Ferenc II Rákóczi Prince of Transylvania to Elżbieta Sieniawska née Lubomirska Castellaness of Kraków, Grand Hetmaness of the Crown from the period 16 May, 1704–1730 October, 1712]; sygn. 2761 IV Rkps.

²⁴ Gábor Tüskés, Béla Köpeczi, and Ilona Kovács, eds., *Correspondance de François II Rákóczi et de la palatine Elżbieta Sieniawska, 1704–1727* [Correspondence of Ferenc II Rákóczi and Palatiness Elżbieta Sieniawska] (Budapest: Balassi, 2004).

it is often extremely difficult to pinpoint exactly what her task may have been, but at the same time, the volume of politically significant information passed to her, and references to her in the diplomatic correspondence, as well as the timing of her meetings, suggest that there was indeed a role in which she was cast.

Apart from the correspondence of Stepney and Sieniawska, I rely also on different ego-documents, that is diaries and memoirs. The most interesting are by Rákóczi himself. *Confessio peccatoris* (Confession of the Sinner) and *Mémoires du Prince François Rákóczi* (Memoirs of Prince Ferenc Rákóczi) were written from the temporal and geographical distance, serving the purpose of explaining the decisions made during a failed anti-Habsburg struggle.²⁵ The distance allowed for deeper reflections, together with influencing the selection of the content and subjecting it to a particular aim. The *Mémoires* (but we can suspect that also the *Confessio*) were written with a publication in mind. They were created not only under the influence of the fall of the uprising but also in the moment when the hopes for Austro-Ottoman conflict faded, so in other words, at the moment when the only remaining battlefield for the *kuruc*—as the anti-Habsburg partisans were called—was literary persuasion. These circumstances explain reaching out to techniques belonging to the epic arsenal: anticipation, retardation and religious interpretations of the faith of the Hungarians.²⁶

In both texts, the distance from the events described, despite giving an opportunity to use various rhetorical means, exposes the unreliability of memory. Rákóczi's mistakes and

²⁵ *Les mémoires du prince François Rakoczy sur la guerre de Hongrie, depuis 1703 jusqu'à la fin*, finished in Grosbois in the first half of the 1717, were published for the first time after Rákóczi death, in 1739 in The Hague in the first volume of *Histoire des révolutions de Hongrie où l'on donne une idée juste de son légitime gouvernement...* The choice to use French indicates a publicist intention, a will to continue the struggle with a pen. On the other hand, it is worth to consider this language choice from a stylistic perspective—Latin was more appropriate for more theologically oriented *Confession*, French suited better the political aims of the *Memoirs*. *Confessio* remained in the manuscript for a longer time. Found in National Library in Paris in 1858 were published in Budapest in 1876 and translated into Hungarian hundred years later. *Confessio* regards the years 1676–1703 and 1711–1712 and in majority were written during Rákóczi's exile in Turkey between 1717–1719.

²⁶ For more on Rákóczi as a writer see for example Ilona Kovács, “Le salut par l'écriture (l'activité littéraire de François II Rákóczi) [Salvation Through Writing (the Literary Activity of Ferenc II Rákóczi)]” *Studia Caroliensia* 3–4 (2004).

inconsistencies emphatically remind of the necessity to confront subjective prose of memoirs with other source types. Besides, the author—employing the topos of false modesty—asks for this himself. My interest in grasping the self-fashioning efforts rather than reconstructing the events, and therefore the decision to work primarily with ego-documents, sets the emphasis of this thesis that is the individuals' role, their character, and self-creation.

5. Thesis outline

The thesis is divided into three chapters, with the first providing an overview of some of the essential issues of Ferenc II Rákóczi's foreign relations, and the second and third presenting George Stepney and Elżbieta Sieniawska as diplomatic intermediaries. While the first chapter aims to offer an explanation of some of Rákóczi's decisions during the War of 1703–1711, the second and third chapters highlight the perspectives of individuals who allowed Rákóczi to participate in political exchanges.

The first chapter serves the purpose of presenting a wider context for a Central European conflict and identifying potential and limitation of Rákóczi's moves aimed at winning over political partners on the English and Polish sides. It analyzes forming of alliances in the eve of two large-scale European conflict, the War of Spanish Succession (1701–1714) and the Great Northern War (1700–1721), introducing England and Poland-Lithuania as two possible allies for Rákóczi in his struggle against the Habsburgs. Furthermore, it argues that there were three main themes—genealogy, legal tradition, and religion—which were used by Rákóczi in his attempts to build a connection with Polish-Lithuanian nobles and English diplomats, as well as to support his claims of legitimacy. Because Rákóczi's contested princely titles made the role of intermediaries vital to establishing diplomatic channels, in the first chapter I also analyze the circumstances in which Rákóczi assumed the titles of ruling Prince of Transylvania and of the Hungarian Confederation.

The second and third chapters focus on two diplomatic intermediaries, George Stepney and Elzbieta Sieniawska respectively. Both chapters aim to grasp the motivation behind the intermediaries' involvement in the War of 1703–1711 and to reflect on Rákóczi's manoeuvres described in the first chapter from their perspective. I look into biographies of Stepney and Sieniawska to show what made them suitable for the role of diplomatic intermediaries, how did the involvement in the Hungarian affair fit in their careers, and what were the consequences of their involvement for the course of Rákóczi's War of Independence. For these reasons, I focus on Stepney's and Sieniawska's social standing and affiliations in the first part of each of the two chapters, and analyze an event which highlights the role of diplomatic intermediary in the second part, that is the Anglo-Dutch mediation in peace negotiations of 1704–1706 and baptism celebration of Sieniawska's daughter in 1711.

Comparing two of many of Rákóczi's diplomatic partners can present only but a cutting of diplomatic activities undertaken during the War of 1703–1711. However, it is enough to reveal some capabilities and limitations of actors operating in two different spheres, opening a room for a broader interpretation of diplomatic work and bringing closer the English and Polish contexts that influenced Stepney's and Sieniawska's actions regarding Rákóczi. Nevertheless, while trying to better understand the actions of the individuals involved in Rákóczi's War of Independence, it is important not to lose from the sight the broader political framework within which they operated.

Chapter I

Foreign relations during the Rákóczi War of Independence: keystones for alliances

This chapter presents an overview of some of the essential issues of Ferenc II Rákóczi's foreign relations in order to position his Polish-Lithuanian and English diplomatic partners within a wider context. It considers the alliances formed in the eve of the War of Spanish Succession (1701–1714), a conflict which anticipated by Hungarian conspirators affected their strategic decisions, as well as the Greater Northern War (1700–1721), which expanded the possibilities of getting included in a European wide settlement.²⁷ Besides drawing an international relations framework, it pays attention to Rákóczi's attempts to win recognition and confirm his princely status, and points to keystones which could be used to build a ground for diplomacy. Genealogy, legal tradition, and religion were some of the keystones used by Rákóczi while appealing to Polish-Lithuanian nobles and English diplomats. In both cases he seemed to identify well the most pertinent connections, however, there were other factors in place which played against him.

From 1703 Rákóczi was occupied with balancing the magnates and lower social strata within his army while securing external financial, military, and political support for the War of Independence which he headed. The success of his mission abroad depended on the political circumstances surrounding the War of the Spanish Succession and the Great Northern War,

²⁷ Kálmán Benda points out that the moment when the Rákóczi War of Independence was commenced was especially favorable from the perspective external circumstances. Also Géza Perjés following the stages of preparatory period persuades that the external situation was observed by conspirators and dictated their decisions. See Kálmán Benda, "A Rákóczi-szabadságharc és az európai hatalmak, [Rákóczi's War of Independence and European Powers]" *Történelmi Szemle*, no. 21 (1978), 513–19 and Géza Perjés, "Strategic Decisions of Ferenc II Rákóczi's War of Independence," in *From Hunyadi to Rákóczi: War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary*, ed. János M. Bak, Béla K. Király, and Katalin Péter (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1982), 402–09.

also on the progress of the *kuruc* army but primarily on the complex matter of recognition, directly connected with the military advancement.²⁸ In the case of the War of Independence of 1703–1711 the recognition should be considered on two interrelated levels. In simplification, they both concerned the autonomous status of the Kingdom of Hungary and the Principality of Transylvania reclaimed during the diets of Gyulafehérvár (Romanian: Alba Iulia, 1704) and Szécsény (1705) by respectively electing Rákóczi as ruling Prince of Transylvania and of the Hungarian Confederation. In other words, recognizing Rákóczi's power as legitimate implied the recognizing the cause of the insurgents.

Legal arguments were deployed to inform polemics, booklets, and to spread the news via various media in efforts to convince ruling kings, princes and their subjects that the War headed by Rákóczi was just. Moreover, that it also should be considered not as an internal conflict within the Habsburg Monarchy as it was—according to Rákóczi and his chancellery—a matter of a Europe-wide peace. Thus, the arrangements with the House of Austria should be guaranteed by foreign powers for the good of the whole of Europe.²⁹

Rákóczi repeatedly referred to the past alliances of foreign rulers with Transylvanian princes, in order to emphasize his descent from autonomous rulers that frequently negotiated

²⁸ György Kurucz, “Szövetségi érdek, protestáns szimpátia, katonai realitás: a Rákóczi-szabadságharc és az angol közvetítés [Alliance Interest, Protestant Sympathy, Military Reality: Rákóczi's War of Independence and English Mediation],” *Történelmi Szemle*, no. 2 (2015).

²⁹ Among numerous booklets *Lettre d'un Ministre de Pologne à un seigneur de l'Empire sur les affaire presents de la Hongrie* (Ratisbone: Erasme Kinkius, 1711), besides using a figure of a Polish minister as the one who can argue in favor of the Hungarians, it contains perhaps the most developed ideological framework, including legal tradition. As pointed out by Ágnes R. Várkonyi, the idea of the importance of securing small nations and co-responsibility for European peace, which is drew from Hugo Grotius, appeared also in the rhetoric of previous anti-Habsburgs movements. Ágnes R. Várkonyi, “Prince Bethlen – Westphalia – Utrecht,” in *Europica Varietas – Hungarica Varietas, 1526-1762* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2000), 92.

Rákóczi clearly saw himself as a continuator of fight commenced by István Bocskai, and carried further by Gábor Bethlen, György I Rákóczi, Mihály Apafi, and Imre Thököly. Rákóczi Francois II, *L'autobiographie d'un prince rebelle. Confessions et Mémoires de François II Rakoczi* [Autobiography of a Rebel Prince. Confessions and Memoirs of Ferenc II Rákóczi], ed. Béla Köpeczi (Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 1977), 204. Latter cited as *Confessions et Mémoires*.

Transylvanian's own terms with foreign powers.³⁰ He considered himself as the only one who could, thanks to the respect his family enjoyed "collect votes of other nobles equal [to him] by birth and who could earn the friendship of Christian rulers from abroad."³¹ Family tradition by no doubt contributed to making Rákóczi the leader of the War of Independence, but this was not enough as the acknowledgment of his aspired status had to be granted also by said rulers from abroad, and they were not particularly eager to do so. The recognition of Rákóczi's power influenced the range and modes of possible diplomatic engagements. The highly contested matter of legitimacy, which would emerge in official diplomacy, that is the exchange of accredited ambassadors which was prerogative of sovereigns, resulted in the necessity to rely primarily on informal channels of political exchange. Not that the acknowledged rulers relied only on formal channels, far from it, but rather than this alternative was mostly not available for Rákóczi. Therefore, diplomatic intermediaries played an especially vital role in these political exchanges. In the case of Rákóczi, they allowed for leaving the issue of his title in the dark, avoiding the thickets of ceremonial protocol, and declaring binding decisions.

Rákóczi tried to establish relations with foreign rulers, appealing in the first place to tradition, past precedents, and religion. He tailored the message for the specific recipient, overplaying the issues he considered to be the most effective, like for example with regards to multi-confessionalism of his army. Nevertheless, there clearly was loudly voiced theme of Habsburg's tyranny that resonated especially well in the Polish-Lithuanian context but was also effective in the English one. The places Poland-Lithuania and England occupied on the

³⁰ For example: "There was nothing else left for me, only to count on help and protection of the French king, on the pursuant to the treaties made at one time with my grandfather, György I, which also applying to his successors, guaranteed the support for my family in Transylvania in case of election"; "More than anyone else it was appropriate to me to renew the Peace Treaty of Nagyszombat, made by my grandfather György I, in which the freedoms of the Kingdom were set, so many times violated until now. His then alliance with the kings of France and Sweden should also apply to the heirs, therefore I was the only one who had to demand complying with the treaty's conditions". Rákóczi, *Confessions et Mémoires*, 244 and 151.

³¹ Ibid., 151.

map of Rákóczi's foreign relations were far off, not only in the geographical terms but also considering the scope of involvement in Hungarian affairs. Despite the differences, both orientations provided opportunities for Rákóczi to gain against the emperor.

England, closely cooperating with the Dutch Republic, was Austria's ally. There were little occasions to establish a strong direct connection between England and Hungary or Transylvania—however, there was an economic interest and intellectual connections built on the confessional ground—which meant that the Anglo-Hungarian relations were carried mostly by diplomats, who served as intermediaries between the Hungarians and the English government. Those factors made England a peculiar diplomatic partner, confirming the agency of the actors who were working on the ground. Observations sent by George Stepney, English envoy-extraordinary and plenipotentiary at the imperial court in Vienna, in numerous dispatches informed the decisions made by the English government regarding the “Hungarian Malcontents”, and the decisions he made on the spot could influence the direction of a settlement between Austria and Hungary. His involvement in facilitating negotiation between Rákóczi and Leopold I are the subject of the second chapter; this chapter signalizes the importance of English mediation efforts and international guarantees for Rákóczi.

Partnership with Poland-Lithuania, a neighboring country that had been connected in personal unions with Hungary and Transylvania in the past, had a different character not merely because the relationship could have been based on a firmer ground, building on years of interactions and profiting from geographical proximity, but also due to the fact that the king and government were two of many potential political partners.³² Magnate families

³² There are several publications drawing the panorama of the Polish-Hungarian relations, including Antoni Cetnarowicz, István Kovács, and Csaba G. Kiss, eds., *Węgry – Polska w Europie Środkowej. Historia – Literatura. Księga pamiątkowa ku czci Profesora Wacława Felczaka* [Hungary and Poland in Central Europe. History – Literature. Professor Wacław Felczak's Memorial Book] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Profesjonalnej Szkoły Biznesu, 1997); Wacław Felczak and Andrzej Fischinger, *Polska – Węgry. Tysiąc lat przyjaźni* [Poland – Hungary. Thousand years of friendship] (Warszawa–Budapest: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1979); István Csapláros, Lajos Hopp, and Jan Reychman eds. *Studia z dziejów polsko-węgierskich stosunków literackich i*

owned armies, had a significant share in political power next to the king's, and conducted their own policy, often appealing to the foreign powers directly. The heavily decentralized framework of Poland-Lithuania's politics complicated navigating in domestic affairs and intertwined it closely with foreign influence. For Rákóczi one of the most important implications of Polish-Lithuanian political culture was that even when the king refused to enter an agreement with him and denounced him as a rebel, the protection of magnate families, mainly the Sieniawskis, was enough to guarantee his inviolability.³³ The opportunities and limitations drawing from magnates' support, especially of the support of female representatives of the Polish-Lithuanian political nation, are discussed in more details in the third chapter; this chapter focuses on the ways in which Rákóczi appealed to conflicted magnate factions.

Before analyzing some of the most important themes that could serve as a base for forming an alliance, it is necessary to map the two large-scale conflicts in which shadow Rákóczi's War of Independence took place, the War of the Spanish Succession and the Great Northern War.

1. Europe taking up arms

In spring 1703 both military and diplomatic conditions seemed favorable for an anti-Habsburg strike. Imperial forces withdrew from the territory of Hungary to fight with the French troops in the west. The alliances that were formed as a result of Bourbon-Habsburg succession conflict opened up a possibility for Rákóczi for allying with the French king and

kulturalnych [Studies from Polish-Hungarian Literary and Cultural Relations], (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1986); Jerzy Wyrozumski, ed., *Polska i Węgry w kulturze i cywilizacji europejskiej* [Poland and Hungary in the European Culture and Civilization] (Kraków: Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, 1997); Jerzy Snopek, "Paralele sarmatyzmu i scyto-hunizmu w dawnej kulturze Polski i Węgier [Parallels of Sarmatism and Schytism and Hunizm in the Old Polish and Old Hungarian Cultures]," in *Węgry. Zarys dziejów i kultury* (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Rytm, 2002).

³³ Princes Czartoryskis Library, *Uniwersal Augustii II respectem Xcia Rakoczego* [Universal of Augustus II in regards to Prince Rákóczi], 10 September, 1703, sygn. 1676/595.

elector of Bavaria, profiting from their military strength and diplomatic weight used against the House of Austria. France, as Austria's most powerful adversary, from the beginning was perceived by Rákóczi as the pillar of an anti-Habsburg movement.³⁴ Furthermore, the activity of French diplomats in Poland-Lithuania and Sweden—which was primarily aimed at swinging the support for the emperor and pacifying the Northern War in order to mobilize its participants against Austria—also had a direct impact on Rákóczi's War of Independence. One of the significant acts of French diplomats in Poland-Lithuania was a successful appeal to the pro-French magnates for a help for Rákóczi.³⁵ In response to Charles de Caradas Héron (1668–1703) request, the Sieniawskis granted Rákóczi a safe house at their estates from where the Hungarian magnate could continue his political activity.

The war between France and Austria and their allies was officially declared in 1702 but the preparation started earlier: Rákóczi was among those who in anticipation sought to establish contact with Louis XIV which led to his imprisonment in 1701. The *casus belli* was the issue of the partition of the Spanish inheritance in the event of the death of childless Charles II (1661–1700), the last Spanish Habsburg. Both the Bourbons and the Austrian Habsburg made claims to the inheritance on a genealogical basis, as descendants of Philip III of Spain.³⁶ As the result of Charles II's will, the Duke of Anjou Philip (1683–1746) became the first Bourbon on the Spanish throne, arriving in Madrid in winter 1701.

³⁴ Béla Köpeczi, *A Rákóczi-szabadságharc és Franciaország* [Rákóczi's War of Independence and France] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1966); Perjés, "Strategic Decisions of Ferenc II Rákóczi's War of Independence."

³⁵ It could be even argued that Louis XIV backed up the Hungarians as a result of personal initiative of French diplomats in Poland-Lithuania. See for example Émile Pillias, "La France et Rákóczi: origines véritables de l'intervention de Louis XIV [France and Rákóczi: True Reasons of Louis XIV's Intervention]," in *Études sur François II. Rákóczi, prince de Transylvanie* (Paris: Leroux, 1939) and Olivier Maurin, "La Hongrie et les Pays Bas méridionaux durant la guerre de Succession d'Espagne: les ambitions de la diplomatie française [Southern Netherlands and Hungary during the War of the Spanish Succession: the Ambitions of the French Diplomacy]" (Université Michel de Montaigne – Bordeaux III, 2016).

³⁶ There were attempts to work on compromises, formulated in the Treaties of Partition (1698 and 1699), but they eventually failed. Charles II himself opposed the partition and favored the Bourbon succession, as expressed in his will that bequeathed his whole inheritance on the condition that the French and Spanish crowns ever are worn by the same person and there will be no territorial loses. Tim Blanning, "From the Peace of Westphalia to the Peace of Nystad, 1648–1721," in *The Pursuit of Glory: Europe, 1648–1815*. (New York: Viking, 2007), 549–51.

As Philip V, he was initially recognized by William III of Orange, King of England and Stadtholder of the Dutch Republic; however, Leopold I was not willing to accept him the king of Spain.³⁷ The fact that Louis XIV disregarded the clause separating his kingdom with the Spanish triggered a consolidation of the anti-French coalition.³⁸ The emperor was joined by Maritime Powers and later also by Portugal, Brandenburg-Prussia, Hanover, as well as German states. On the opposite side, the Bourbons won the support of Bavaria, Cologne, Mantua, and Savoy (at least until 1703). For Rákóczi France was the most logical direction to turn to, but he also sought the support for his war in the rival camp. Of course, the type of help he could expect from the Habsburgs' allies was substantially different, nevertheless, it resulted not only in tempering the emperor's stand but could also potentially secure including the Hungarians in a European-wide peace settlement.

In attempts to strengthen its position against Austria, France tried the maneuver of *alliance de revers*, wishing to involve forces of allies who granted their support in the past, such as Poland-Lithuania, Sweden or the Ottoman Empire, as well as to exploit internal tensions of her enemies, like in Ireland or Scotland. The War of 1703–1711 seemed to fit in both of these schemes, which should make securing the support of Versailles easy for Rákóczi. The problem was, however, that as Rákóczi may have perceived himself as a potential ally of the French king, just like the Polish-Lithuanian or Swedish kings, he definitely lacked the resources of either of them, but foremost, he was not a sovereign. Louis XIV's reluctance to enter into any official alliance with him seemed to be an effect of perceiving Rákóczi's war by Versailles rather in the category of a fortunate disruption within the Habsburg monarchy.³⁹

³⁷ Blanning, 553.

³⁸ Charles II's will bequeathed his whole inheritance on the condition that the French and Spanish crowns ever are worn by the same person and there will be no territorial loses.

³⁹ Louis XIV's response to his representative in Poland-Lithuania, Jean-Louis d'Usson de Bonnac (1672–1738) in regards to support for Rákóczi at the beginning of the war is telling: "I have reasons to believe that those beginnings will have considerable sequels, but until the events confirm the solidity of their projects, it would be risking too much to give them the sum they are asking for as a support. I also plan on giving them further assistance later on, however for the time being, the success of their goals is too uncertain and we need to spare

Uncertainty as to Louis XIV's position and later reserve in his asseverations pushed Rákóczi to seek more actively allies elsewhere, as developments closer to the Hungarian border presented an opportunity to profit from another large-scale conflict and seek for a revival of historical alliances.

Concurrently to the French and Austrian grouping of allies another coalition was formed in the northern parts of Europe. The aim that brought together Denmark-Norway, Saxony, and Russia in the first place was blocking the election of a French-backed candidate in Poland-Lithuania. The succession to the Swedish throne by fourteen-year-old Charles XII in the same year led to the allies taking up the arms.⁴⁰ Their hopes for easy gains were miscalculated as it became evident when a threefold attack perpetrated by Frederick IV of Denmark, Augustus II, and Peter I of Russia was fought off despite the allies numerical superiority.⁴¹ Charles XII's military response to the attack threatened Copenhagen in March 1700, forcing Denmark's withdrawal from the alliance.⁴² The two other allies, Russia and Saxony, also experienced serious setbacks. Peter I, who besieged Narva in November 1700, suffered a heavy defeat from the Swedish troops. Augustus II was forced to withdraw from Livonia and after Narva, he was seeking French mediation in talks with Sweden. Charles XII was

the the help in a time where I am obligated to spend in more pressing and necessary matters." Louis XIV to Bonnac, April, 1703, after Ferenc Tóth, ed., *Correspondance diplomatique relative à la guerre d'indépendance du prince François II Rákóczi, 1703–1711* [Diplomatic Correspondence Relating to the War of Independence of Prince Ferenc II Rákóczi, 1703–1711] (Paris: Champion, 2012), 44. Also, at least until the second half of 1703, Louis XIV seemed to be on a winning position, for this reason may add additional reason why he was hesitating to firmly support the revolt. Benda, "A Rákóczi-szabadságharc és az európai hatalmak [Rákóczi's War of Independence and European Powers]," 515.

⁴⁰ The reasons for war were, however, multiple. One of the convenient pretexts to take up arms was for example a ceremonial insult to Peter I. See Jan Hennings, "The Semiotics of Diplomatic Dialogue: Pomp and Circumstance in Tsar Peter I's Visit to Vienna in 1696," *International History Review* 30, no. 3 (2008), 518.

⁴¹ Augustus II entered the war as Elector of Saxony not King of Poland-Lithuania. This fact could have had implications for a status of potential territorial gains. Poland-Lithuania officially joined the war in 1704.

⁴² The Peace of Travendal between Denmark and Sweden was mediated and guaranteed by, among others, England and the Dutch Republic. Jeremy Black, *European International Relations, 1648–1815* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 108.

however not willing to mediate, for he did not trust undefeated Augustus I who was likely to regroup and strike again.⁴³

Although in 1702 Charles XII captured Warsaw, his the involvement in the Poland-Lithuania's domestic policy slowed down his advancement as he had to back up the support for his protégé Stanisław Leszczyński with arms and money. The infighting over the Polish-Lithuanian crown mobilized magnate factions to form confederations—in defense of Augustus II in Sandomierz and pro-Leszczyński in Warsaw—allowing Rákóczi to try his own agenda with conflicted sides.⁴⁴ Additionally, the deterioration of royal authority also made it possible for considering Rákóczi as a candidate to the Polish-Lithuanian throne in 1707, which resulted in signing a formal agreement with a foreign power by Rákóczi, a significant development in regards to the recognition issue.

To summarize the overtures of the War of the Spanish Succession and the Great Northern War, the alliances and power disposition that resulted from this two large-scale conflicts determined possibilities and limits for Rákóczi's diplomatic maneuvers. Pro-French orientation was of the greatest significance since it was Austria's most prominent adversary. This orientation also helped to embed Rákóczi's cause in the Polish-Lithuanian domestic context, in which magnate families conducted independent policy, making the king one of the potential supporters. Besides France and neighboring Poland-Lithuania, there were other possible directions, also within the rival camp. England together with the Dutch Republic was certainly not the first one to turn to for help, even if relying on the evangelical key, as there were closer Protestant powers that could act on behalf of the Hungarian Protestants. The fact

⁴³ Augustus II was a new element in the North, driven by ambitious dynastic plans. See Jacek Burdowicz-Nowicki, *Piotr I, August II i Rzeczpospolita 1697–1706* [Peter I, Augustus II and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth] (Warszawa: Arkana, 2010).

⁴⁴ Lajos Hopp, *Poselstwo węgierskie na dworze Leszczyńskiego w Rydzynie* [Hungarian Delegation to Leszczyński's Court in Rydzyna]; Andrzej Sulima Kamiński, *Konfederacja sandomierska wobec Rosji w okresie poaltranstądzkim, 1706–1769* [Confederation of Sandomierz Towards Russia During the post-Altranstätt Period] (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1969).

the Maritime Powers were willing to mediate and could pressure the emperor to accept their mediations and be accepted as mediators by the Hungarians, had important implications for the issue of recognition, at least as seen from the perspective of Rákóczi.

2. Prince Rákóczi and the War of Independence, 1703–1711

Planned in the anticipation of Charles II's death, Rákóczi's War of Independence got its impetus from an anti-Habsburg sentiment, considerably growing from the second half of the seventeenth century in result of cumulation of the legal and religious restrictions with social unrest caused by high taxation and burdensome presence of imperial forces, among other things. Oppressions and revoking of constitutional rights in 1687–1688 (Diet at Pressburg, today Bratislava, Slovakia) were consequences of exposing the Magnate conspiracy in 1666, led among others by Rákóczi's father and grandfather who were disappointed in Habsburg policy towards Hungary; followed by *kuruc* uprising in 1678–1685 led by Imre Thököly, Rákóczi's step-father.⁴⁵ The Treaty of Karlowitz (1699) which concluded War of the Holy League (1683–1699), transferred Transylvania and most of the Hungarian territories from the Ottoman to Austrian authority, but it did not lead to the unification of the Crown of Saint Stephen. As Rákóczi explained, one of the reasons behind his war was precisely treating the recaptured lands as Austrian property:

Peace of Karlowitz, concluded with the Turks, did not bring any remedy to such misfortunes; but the opposite, everything was going even worse, the nation was approaching complete ruin due to the establishment of the commission of new acquisitions, shamelessly named the Tribunal of Turkish Law. The Emperor Leopold completely disregarded the conditions on which the Crown of Hungary was granted to him, according to which he should not appropriate conquests from the Turks, taken from the infidels thanks to the service, money, and blood of the Hungarians, but to restore them to the ancient possessors and give them back to the Crown.⁴⁶

The reasoning behind Rákóczi's indignation followed more legal than economic arguments (although they are still audible) stressing the characteristic of the Hungarian political system

⁴⁵ For a concise overview see Ferenc Tóth, introduction to Tóth, *Correspondance diplomatique relative à la guerre d'indépendance du prince François II Rákóczi, 1703–1711* [Diplomatic Correspondence Relating to the War of Independence of Prince Ferenc II Rákóczi, 1703–1711].

⁴⁶ Rákóczi, *Confessions et Mémoires*, 148.

in which the ruler was elected under certain circumstances. The remaining violations of Hungarian law committed under the Habsburgs enumerated by Rákóczi included irregularities in the attempts of passing of the bill introducing permanent taxes, limiting nobles' privileges, abolishing royal elections, ignoring the assemblies of the counties and preventing counties' officers from performing their duties, discriminations of Hungarians in the courts, abuses of the imperial army, and reducing the autonomy of Transylvania, "where the design of freedom given to the nation by law was preserved".⁴⁷ In his memoirs, Rákóczi failures to observe the rights of Protestants by the Habsburgs are not in particularly voiced.

With the help of the army fighting together with God for Fatherland and Liberty (*Cum Deo pro Patria et Libertate*), as his banners read, Rákóczi temporarily gained control over most of the Hungarian and—although less firmly—Transylvanian territories. Initial military victories, such as János Bottyán's campaign of 1705, were important as they gathered broader support internally and had a potential to affect diplomatic activities.

During the eight years of fights, Rákóczi governed independently from the Habsburgs with a senate, chancellery, and economic council, developing military and administrative structures simultaneously.⁴⁸ Not to delve into details, as they were already a subject of historical analyses, efforts to establish princely court as a center of power and culture during the wartime should not be seen as an expression of lavish extravaganza since they directly

⁴⁷ Rákóczi, *Confessions et Mémoires*, 140–151, 294, 296–99.

Interestingly, Rákóczi is referring to the oath he made as the *főispán* (lord-lieutenant, *supremus comes*) of the Sáros county; stressing noble participation in the political system of Hungary and the fact that they are the subjects of the law, not the kings, as well as being a descendent of the free princes of Transylvania. The issue Rákóczi's office of *főispán* as being formative for his political views was raised by Ágnes R. Várkonyi. See Ágnes R. Várkonyi, "Sáros vármegye főispánja [Sáros county's Lord Lieutenantship]," In *Povstanie Františka II. Rákociho 1703–1711 (v novšom priblížení)*, ed. Peter Kónya (Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Prešovskej univerzity, 2005), 8–23.

⁴⁸ Although the campaign collapsed, diplomacy could not achieve any major objectives, and economic difficulties were piling up, however insufficient, the revolutionary taxation system that did not exclude the nobility, as well as prospects of peasant emancipation and a concern for a profound socio-cultural modernization, deserve some acknowledgment.

connected with the representation and recognition issues.⁴⁹ Thus, the fondness for excess manifested for example in fashion choices or dining habits may have shocked English and Dutch mediators, but from the perspective of the Hungarians, it was a part of rational, politically informed strategy.⁵⁰

Rákóczi convinced that the war he fought was just, had to convince foreign rulers of the legitimacy of his titles to guarantee inclusion in a Europe-wide settlement. Another possible option was to secure a succession of someone whose titles were not contested or who at least could be officially backed up by a foreign power. Some of the initial plans projected Thököly's come back as the prince of Transylvania and crowning Augustus II in Hungary.⁵¹ Augustus II, however, he initially expressed his interest, rejected the proposal not wanting to provoke the emperor while being engaged in the war with Sweden. The alternative candidate to the crown of Hungary, Elector Maximilian II Emanuel, among other things, experienced heavy defeats alongside France and was not in a position to secure the throne by any means. Electing Rákóczi as the prince of Transylvania in 1704, forming a confederation in Hungary a year later, and finally forming a confederation between Transylvania and Hungary, on the one hand, were means to claim the status of a party to an international agreement by reaching for past precedents and legal instruments. On the other hand, precisely due to Rákóczi's claims, those maneuvers became an obstacle in negotiations. It was such a serious obstacle that in the attempt to avoid using Rákóczi's titles the English and Dutch diplomats, who were supposed to act as intermediaries, were advised to reject his correspondence and seek a way

⁴⁹ Jan Hennings, "The Semiotics of Diplomatic Dialogue: Pomp and Circumstance in Tsar Peter I's Visit to Vienna in 1696," *International History Review* 30, no. 3 (2008), 516. For more see Hennings, *Russia and Courtly Europe: Ritual and the Culture of Diplomacy, 1648–1725*.

⁵⁰ The Dutch envoy during negotiation in Nagyszombat supposedly reproached the Hungarian confederates in the following words: "If you are truly seeking freedom do not pay your army with worthless copper coins but cut from your coats numerous golden and silver buttons, chains, and order to mint coins from it; later they [your soldiers] will fight better. This is how Holland fought for the freedom, in the coats with iron not silver buttons." After Miklós Asztalos, *II. Rákóczi Ferenc és kora* [Ferenc II Rákóczi and His Time] (Budapest: Dante, 1934), 128.

⁵¹ Perjés, "Strategic Decisions of Ferenc II Rákóczi's War of Independence," 403.

to set a meeting.⁵² The title of Prince of Transylvania was the title that raised the most concerns.

Rákóczi was unanimously elected prince of Transylvania in 1704 by the Estates at the diet at Gyulafehérvár. From the perspective of the Principality, Rákóczi's election could settle the status of its statehood.⁵³ For Royal Hungary, the fact that the title of Transylvanian prince was previously included in peace agreements guaranteed by European powers meant a possibility of benefiting from its prestige and recognition. Rákóczi did not miss the opportunity to try to reestablish links with European powers and announced his election to the rulers in France, Prussia, Sweden, Poland, England, and the Dutch Republic.⁵⁴

Another important title, the ruling prince of the Hungarian Confederation (*Dux Confoederatorum Regni Hungariae*), was bestowed on Rákóczi during the Diet of Szécsény. The diet was convoked in 1705 by the nobility who insisted on confirming its liberties in exchange for acknowledging Leopold I's successor, Joseph I, crowned as the king of Hungary disregarding the procedure of election. Due to the fact, there was a number of the entitled high ranking official who was unable to attend the diet, it could not sustain the authority of general assembly. Hence, the decision was made to form a confederation. As pointed out by Béla Köpeczi, in regards to the aims of the Hungarian Confederation, the

⁵² Charles Whitworth to Robert Harley, 20 September, 1704, in Ernő Simonyi, ed., *Angol diplomatiai iratok II. Rákóczi Ferencz korára* [English Diplomatic Papers Concerning the Age of Ferenc II Rákóczi], vol. 1, Archivum Rákóczianum II (Budapest, 1872), 439. Robert Harley, First Earl of Oxford and Earl of Mortimer, was Secretary of State for the Northern Department between 1704–1711.

⁵³ The projected agreement with the emperor would restore and guarantee Transylvania's independence. R. Várkonyi, "Prince Bethlen – Westphalia – Utrecht," 97. See also Ágnes R. Várkonyi, "The Last Decades of the Independent Principality (1660–1711)," in *History of Transylvania*, ed. Béla Köpeczi, László Makkai, and Szász Zoltán, vol. 2: 1606 to 1830 (Highland Lakes: Atlantic Research and Publications, 2002), <http://mek.niif.hu/03400/03407/html/164.html>.

⁵⁴ R. Várkonyi, "The Last Decades of the Independent Principality (1660–1711)," Béla Köpeczi, "Rákóczi fejedelmi címének európai elismerése [European Recognition of Rákóczi's Princely Title]," in „Nem súlyd az emberiség!”... Album amicorum Szörényi László LX. születésnapjára, ed. József Jankovics (Budapest: MTA Irodalomtudományi Intézet, 2007).

Dutch example arose.⁵⁵ However, as described by Rákóczi himself, the example to reach out to a confederation as legal instrument came directly from Poland-Lithuania. Importantly, the title of the marshal (of confederation) (*marszałek konfederacji*) used in Poland-Lithuania raised concerns as it was not in accordance with Rákóczi's birth and status as prince of Transylvania, as well as legal implications and was changed for Latin *dux* which—as expressed by Rákóczi—better reflected the rank of a “prince [emphasis added] leading confederated estates (*prince conducteur des États Confédérés*).”⁵⁶ The issue of an appropriate title was clearly of importance not in a category of personal vanity: it took the Confederate three days to agree on an appropriate title for Rákóczi and as the relation of representative of Louis XIV at the Rákóczi's court Pierre Puchot des Alleurs indicates, it was a central issue not only for them.⁵⁷ Des Alleurs opens his relation from the Diet with a remark that “the Prince [Rákóczi] was declared by the assembly as a Duke [*Duc*] meaning the same thing as stadhouder in Holland”.⁵⁸ The same French diplomat made a link between the purpose of both Hungarian and Dutch confederation, but his interpretation of the title is slightly different, which shows that the issue was subject to various interpretation. And indeed, English diplomats read the title as “General and Chief Director of the Confederate Forces”.⁵⁹ Parallels between the Polish and Hungarian legal traditions and the significance of confederation in connection to the right of resistance are discussed in the following subsection of this chapter. Here, a remark on Rákóczi's titulature will help to grasp the changes in attitudes towards his claims and some of his attempts to claim sovereignty.

⁵⁵ Köpeczi, “La guerre d'indépendance hongroise du début du XVIIIe siècle et l'Europe [Hungarian War of Independence at the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century and Europe],” 19.

⁵⁶ Rákóczi, *Confessions et Mémoires*, 391.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Pierre Puchot, des Alleurs, “Relation de des Alleurs de la Diète de Szécsény,” in *Correspondance diplomatique relative à la guerre d'indépendance du Prince François II Rákóczi, 1703–1711* [Diplomatic Correspondence Relating to the War of Independence of Prince Ferenc II Rákóczi, 1703–1711], 241.

⁵⁹ Charles Whitworth to Robert Harley, 20 September, 1704, in Simonyi, *Angol diplomatiai iratok II. Rákóczi Ferencz korára* [English Diplomatic Papers Concerning the Age of Ferenc II Rákóczi], 1872, 1:439.

Rákóczi appears in the letters of Polish-Lithuanian magnates and French diplomats in 1701 as prince (*książe*, *prince*); English diplomats referred to him as such at least from 1703, however, they occasionally seemed to avoid using any title while referring to Rákóczi, which is especially noticeable in the period shortly after his election as the prince of Transylvania. He himself uses a princely title in the signature of his letters written in French. It conveniently partially overlapped, at least phonetically, with a contested title of Prince of Transylvania, nevertheless, it referred to an empty, honorific formula of the title of prince of the Holy Empire (*Princeps Sacri Romani Imperii*). The distinctions between honorific, hereditary titles, and titles assumed by Rákóczi during the War of 1703–1711, as well as language nuances in regards to translating them into European ranks classification, are explained in details by Sándor Gebei.⁶⁰ The hereditary and honorific titles were important as a pompous manifestation of prestige, however, what made the role of the intermediaries necessary while establishing a political exchange with sovereigns were the titles assumed by Rákóczi during the War of Independence.

As Gebei shows, first small alteration of a title was made in 1703. Rákóczi's chancellery seal reverse read "Prince by the grace of God" (*Dei gratia princeps*) which is a detail of significant implication as it clearly indicates a source of the conferment of the rank and sovereignty, and accountability to God alone.⁶¹ After the electoral diet at Gyulafehérvár Rákóczi started to use the title of the elected prince of Transylvania (*princeps electus Transylvaniae*), with variants omitting the electus prefix or adding *Dei gratia*. For Rákóczi it was important that he was not nominal but elected ruling prince, and that he could refer to

⁶⁰ Sándor Gebei, "II Rákóczi Ferenc titulussai (princeps–dux) [Ferenc II Rákóczi Titulature (Princeps–Dux)]," in *II. Rákóczi Ferenc és a Rzeczpospolita* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2013), 62–73.

⁶¹ Objections expressed in the English diplomatic correspondence proves that it was indeed an important act. Charles Whitworth explained to Harley, that Rákóczi insisted on using the *dei gratia* part as it was used by "both his Father and of other magnates or Peers of Hungary". Charles Whitworth to Robert Harley, 11 October, 1704, in Simonyi, *Angol diplomatiai iratok II. Rákóczi Ferencz korára* [English Diplomatic Papers Concerning the Age of Ferenc II Rákóczi], 1872, 1:489.

historical precedents of Transylvanian princes being acknowledged as parties in international treaties.⁶² In 1706, as mentioned above, Rákóczi titulature became longer and included the title of the ruling Prince of the Hungarian Confederation. Forming a confederation, a novelty in Hungarian legal proceeding, was a step towards settling the form of government, that is forming a body which could represent the Hungarian nation during negotiations.⁶³

There was a conjunction of the two princely titles, clearly understood by Rákóczi. His election at Transylvania was important as, for Transylvanian princes formed alliances with foreign rulers before, but it was not enough to solve the legitimacy problem, since it did not stretch to Hungary, at least not beyond the prestige aspect. Rákóczi's titles gained full weight—but not necessarily a full recognition—only after the dethronement of the Habsburgs at the diet of Ónod (1707). France, for example, perceived Rákóczi as a potential party for a formal alliance, as a prince of Transylvania and representative of the Confederates, only after the diet. The objections were expressed in 1705 as to the issue of the Habsburgs' not being dethroned in Hungary as well as to the way Rákóczi's proposition was communicated: not through des Alleurs, representative of Louis XIV at the Rákóczi's court, but through László Kökényesdi sent as an envoy to Versailles.⁶⁴ This detail shows the importance of mutual recognition of an intermediary, especially the one claiming a rank, and the importance of complying with nuances of formality as they often prevailed over the legitimacy.

It is worth mentioning that in the Polish-Lithuanian context Rákóczi's princely lineage had slightly different weight. The fact that there was the prince of Transylvania sitting on the Polish-Lithuanian throne, who happened to be a relative of Rákóczi, was enough to see in

⁶² Rákóczi, *Confessions et Mémoires*, 391.

⁶³ R. Várkonyi, “‘Ad Pacem Universalem’: The International Antecedents of the Peace of Szatmár,” 209.

⁶⁴ Tóth, *Correspondance diplomatique relative à la guerre d'indépendance du prince François II Rákóczi, 1703–1711* [Diplomatic Correspondence Relating to the War of Independence of Prince Ferenc II Rákóczi, 1703–1711], 77.

him a potential new king.⁶⁵ Besides that, the parallels in Polish-Lithuanian and Hungarian legal developments, which are discussed in the following subsection, made it easier for Polish-Lithuanian nobility to accept him as candidate for the throne, as a Transylvanian prince and a leader, being it marshal (*marszałek*), prince or duke (*dux*), of a confederation. I would even risk a statement that Rákóczi was appealing to the Confederates of Sandomierz—at least on an ideological level—as a descendant of the Báthorys, but also as the one who is rising against the Habsburg absolutism, referring to right of resistance (*ius resistendi*), which was a legal concept respected in Poland-Lithuania.⁶⁶ Of course, ideological arguments were of secondary importance, considering the tsar's support and a shortage of suitable candidates.

All those deliberations over the title and its recognition are not of an antiquarian tone, but had important legal implications, paving the way for inclusion of the Hungarian Malcontents into a general peace treaty. However, the Peace of Szatmár that concluded the War of Independence in April 1711 was not signed not as a part of wider European settlement. The lack of foreign guarantees that could be referred to in an event of Habsburg's reluctance to follow its letter was one of the reasons for Rákóczi not to accept it.

⁶⁵ For more about Polish-Lithuanian personal unions, projected and realized, see Sándor Gebei, “Az erdélyi fejedelmek és a lengyel királyválasztások [Princes of Transylvania and Royal Elections in Poland]” (2004).

⁶⁶ Rákóczi to the Confederates of Sandomierz, 26 February, 1707 and Rákóczi to Stanisław Leszczyński, 21 October, 1705 in Pál Ráday, *Ráday Pál Iratai* [Pál Ráday's Papers], ed. Kálmán Benda and Ferenc Maksay, vol. 2 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1961), 84–86 and 258–63. Some of the rhetorical figures used by Rákóczi while appealing to Polish-Lithuanian nobility are analyzed by Lajos Hopp, “Sprawy polskie w węgierskich zabytkach literackich z okresu powstania Rakoczego [Polish matters in Hungarian Literary Monuments from Rákóczi War of Independence],” in *Studia z dziejów polsko-węgierskich stosunków literackich i kulturalnych*, ed. Jan Reychma et al. (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1986).

Images and allegories used by Rákóczi fit into the imagination of the Polish-Lithuanian nobles. See Janusz Tazbir, “Węgry jako symbol i przestroga w literaturze staropolskiej [Hungary as a Symbol and Warning in the Old Polish Literature],” in *Prace wybrane*, vol. 3 (Warszawa: Universitas, 2001); Stanisław Grzybowski, “Opinie szlachty polskiej o antyhabsburskich powstaniach na Węgrzech [The Opinion of the Polish Nobility on the Anti-Habsburg Uprisings in Hungary],” in *Polska i Węgry w kulturze i cywilizacji europejskiej*; Szymon Brzeziński, “Forms and Functions of the Image of Hungary in Poland-Lithuania,” in *A Divided Hungary in Europe: Exchanges, Networks and Representations, 1541-1699*, ed. Gábor Almási et al., vol. 3 (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).

The tone of the settlement makes it clear that it was a pardon granted by the emperor to his vassals.⁶⁷ Rákóczi's exile—although it was not conceived as such at the first place—was a way to guarantee the compliance with the Peace of Szatmár in the absence of other guarantees by a possibility of him receiving a support of foreign powers. Involvement of third-parties in treaty signing practice—consequently sought by Rákóczi—had three important consequences. First, consent to a third-party contribution could be interpreted as a change of the character of the conflict, from an internal affair to the external one. Second, signatures of the representatives of third parties opened up a possibility for a third-party intervention, potentially counterbalancing the power of the sovereign or increasing security in the case of recognizing the entity as an independent. Considering the geographical proximity of Poland-Lithuania it is not surprising that Rákóczi insisted on expanding the circle of guarantors to the direct neighbor. Lastly, the participation of the intermediaries during negotiations could temper the demands of conflicted sides. And indeed, the English intermediaries repeatedly expressed their concerns in favor of the Hungarian Malcontents. At least for these three reasons it was vital for Rákóczi to win over individuals who could act as diplomatic intermediaries.

3. Keystones for alliances: Poland-Lithuania and England

In attempts to secure guarantees, Rákóczi referred in the first place to historical alliances, but beside that, there were other options for referring to the past in order to add weight while appealing for political, military or financial support. What seemed to be the most effective while bridging to the neighboring Poland-Lithuania and more distant England was a legal republican tradition which included a protection from absolutist inclinations of the ruling monarch.

⁶⁷ R. Várkonyi, "Prince Bethlen – Westphalia – Utrecht," 99.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century in England, differently, than in Poland-Lithuania, the notion of absolutism was closely connected with that of Catholicism. That way religion was the major ground for finding understanding between the Hungarian Malcontents and the Habsburgs allies. Genealogy seemed to have a different weight while appealing to the public, yet it was a convenient pretext for establishing political exchange and argument in status claims.

3.1. Genealogy

In 1694 Rákóczi, one of the wealthiest and best-situated magnates in Hungary, married Charlotte Amalie of Hessen-Rheinfels-Wanfried (1679–1722), openly admitting that the “political motifs were the main reason to enter into this holy union”.⁶⁸ The marriage significantly increased Rákóczi’s prestige, making him relative of Empress Eleonora, princes of Hessen-Darmstadt, Welfs from Lüneburg and Hanover, as well as, through Princess Palatine Elisabeth Charlotte (1652–1722) wife of Philip of Orleans, of the French king himself. Rákóczi, who was at that time officially under the care of the emperor, did not inform the Viennese court about his matrimonial plans and, as he mentions in his memoirs:

in the company of my brother-in-law [count d’Aspremont] under the pretext for seeing the imperial army which was under the command of Ludwig of Baden, my relative on the maternal side and my sincere friend, was fighting with the French on the bank of the Rhine, we will meet with William, King of England, who was carrying the war in Flanders ... at the opportunity, we could finally set the marriage issue.⁶⁹

The kinship with above mentioned Ludwig of Baden (1655–1707), although quite distant as he was for Rákóczi maternal cousin of tenth degree was indeed real and proves a remarkable genealogical memory (see Table 1). What is more, it fits in the convention practiced within the society of princes who stressed their friendly intentions and belonging by referring to each other as members of one family, be it actual or strictly symbolic reference. A gesture of Louis XIV, who on several occasions addressed Rákóczi as “My Cousin” falls into that

⁶⁸ Rákóczi, *Confessions et Mémoires*, 111–12.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.

convention, emphasizing symbolic rather than genealogical bound, and it directly connects with seeing in Rákóczi a legitimate prince of Transylvania.⁷⁰

Besides the connections with Western European ruling class, Rákóczi was aware of his connections with Polish-Lithuanian families. His paternal great-grandmother was Anna Zakrzewska (d. 1658), who married András Báthory (d. c. 1635), son of István Báthory (d. 1601) a nephew of Polish-Lithuanian King and Prince of Transylvania of the same name and Zofia Kostka (d. after 1601). By this two ways, Rákóczi was related with Polish-Lithuanian magnate families, including the Sieniawskis and Lubomirskis (see Table 2). Rákóczi made a use of this family connections while establishing relationships that served the War he headed. The family relation with the King István Báthory played a role in Rákóczi's coronation plans in Poland-Lithuania, as well as his attempts to gain Polish *indygenat* ("naturalization"). This would mean the right to benefit from the privileges of the Polish-Lithuanian political nation and change the subordination relation with the emperor.

Among several episodes described by Rákóczi in his memoirs, one emphasized the importance and conscious use of his family connections with the Polish-Lithuanian families in a truly cloak-and-dagger convention. The Prince described an encounter with a certain Polish magnate who was suspected to be the Habsburgs supporter planning to kill him. Rákóczi surprised him, jumping out of the carriage and introducing himself with an unusual greeting: "Although I do not have the honor to know you . . . I am your relative and I do not believe what they say, that you are my persecutor . . . I am standing in front of you, your grace, so you can learn that there is something in me that is worthy of you".⁷¹ It is not certain who the magnate was, historian Jerzy R. Nowak identifies him as Józef Karol Lubomirski (d.

⁷⁰ Louis XIV to Ferenc Rákóczi, 3 February, 1707, in *Correspondance diplomatique relative à la guerre d'indépendance du Prince François II Rákóczi, 1703–1711*[Diplomatic Correspondence Relating to the War of Independence of Prince Ferenc II Rákóczi, 1703–1711], 288.

⁷¹ Rákóczi, *Confessions et Mémoires*, 228.

1702), Grand Marshall of the Crown, however, Rákóczi explaining why he decided to keep his name of his alleged persecutor in secret wrote that said magnate is still alive. Taking into account that Rákóczi wrote his diaries during his exile in France after 1711, that makes Józef Karol an unlikely candidate.⁷² It could have been Jerzy Aleksander Lubomirski (d.1735), as he was alive and indeed later supported Rákóczi. Nevertheless, in both cases the kinship was distant, yet remarkably remembered and, what is the most important, exploited by Rákóczi while establishing relations.

The kinship with the Sieniawskis was also scrupulously captured in writing, and as Rákóczi puts, it “only strengthen our friendship”.⁷³ This is to say, that being related to someone guaranteed their support, far from it, as for example Charles XII and Augustus II were closely related, but it could serve as a convenient pretext to establish a political exchange. Additionally, the genealogical capital served Rákóczi’s attempts to receive the recognition—most successfully in Hungary, Transylvania, and Poland-Lithuania—complementing outreach of legal arguments.

3.2. Legal tradition

Another way used by Rákóczi in appealing to Polish-Lithuanian nobility was referring to shared past and legal tradition. Centuries of neighborly interactions including dynastic relations between the Piasts and the Arpads, personal unions which connected Poland with Hungary (1370–1382, 1440–1444) and with Transylvania (1576–1586), also the Jagiellonian rule in Hungary (1490–1516 and 1516–1526) facilitated the flow of people and ideas, what created a basis for strikingly similar noble culture.⁷⁴ The center of that culture had a legal

⁷² Rákóczi, *Pamiętniki, Wyznania* [Memoirs, Confessions], ed. Nowak Jerzy R., trans. Maria Paczoska (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1988), 152.

⁷³ Rákóczi, *Confessions et Mémoires*, 218.

⁷⁴ Leszek Hensel, *Kultura szlachecka w Europie środkowo-wschodniej w I połowie XVIII wieku* [Noble Culture in Central-Eastern Europe in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century] (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1986); Adam Jasieński, “A Savage Magnificence: Ottomanizing Fashion and the Politics of Display in Early Modern East-Central Europe,” *Muqarnas* 31 (2014).

character, originated from noble participation in power, and included such closely intertwined instruments as royal election, the right of resistance, and confederation, which were employed to defend noble liberties and privileges. This background eased conducting personal relations between the Polish-Lithuanian and Hungarian or Transylvanian nobles and played in favor of mutual understanding while engaging in political disputes.

Rákóczi sharply distinguished between so-called national wars conduct in a defense of “universal freedom” and those which are inspired by particular interests of the nobles, which deserves only for the title of “crime against the state and rebellion”⁷⁵. Because Leopold I did not follow the letter of *Diploma Leopoldinum*, in which he promised to preserve all the laws, immunities and freedoms, and the conditions on which he was elected king of Hungary, the right to rise against him is irrefutable⁷⁶.

In 1705 Hungarian nobility demanded again confirmation of all the freedoms in return for acknowledging Leopold I’s successor, Joseph I, crowned with the exclusion of the procedure of election. With the refusal to accede to those claims, at the diet of Szécsény, as mentioned before, confederation was formed lead by Rákóczi. Reaching out to Polish example was justified in connection to the impossibility to conduct a regular diet because of an incomplete number of participants.⁷⁷

The confederation was formed in order to “use such methods as in similar situations are used by the Poles, a free nation and very sensitive on the issue of preserving freedom, it is

⁷⁵ Rákóczi, *Confessions et Mémoires*, 292.

⁷⁶ *Lettre d’un Ministre de Pologne*, 33–5. For more on enthronement conditions in Hungary and Transylvania see Zoltán Szente, “The Historic Origins of the National Assembly in Hungary,” *Historia Constitutionnal* 2007 (8), 16 and Felicia Roşu, “Free from Obedience: Constitutional Expressions of the Right of Resistance in Early Modern Transylvania and Poland-Lithuania,” *European History Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (2017).

Formally, however, during the Diet of Pressburg (Bratislava, Slovakia) in 1687–1688 the right to royal election and *ius resistendi* were waived, and the Habsburgs hereditary rule was accepted. The *kuruc* political writings unanimously judged the diet as formed in the shadow of the tyranny of General Caraffa, hence it’s rulings were forced and remain unlawful. Rákóczi stresses that disobedience clause was waived only during the rule of Joseph I. Rákóczi, *Confessions et Mémoires*, 150.

⁷⁷ Rákóczi, *Confessions et Mémoires*, 391.

customary with them to form a confederation through mutual oath, election of a leader, and fight for restoring freedom under his leadership”⁷⁸. Referring to a solution used by a Polish-Lithuanian political nation speaks for an interest in a political system in Poland-Lithuania or direct inspirations coming from lively contacts between the Hungarian and Polish-Lithuanian nobility, but also parallels in legal traditions of the Crown of St Stephen which facilitated adaptation.⁷⁹

Confederation in Poland-Lithuania Commonwealth was an organization of political life during a state of emergency; or in other words, an association formed to attain common aims or implement new laws, which were considered to be vital for the Commonwealth and the citizens (nobles, clergy or cities).⁸⁰ Leaving aside the clergy and municipal variants, the main objective behind a confederation was to temporarily take over some of the function of the state, but not to take over the power itself, as—substantially—ruling as was not the aim of a confederation. Its popularity came perhaps partially from its relative effectiveness, but most notably from the fact that confederation was along with *liberum veto* and royal elections the foundation of the political system of the Polish-Lithuanian, deeply grounded in a political consciousness of the nobles.⁸¹ The right to form a confederation was derived directly from

⁷⁸ Ibid., 382–85.

⁷⁹ Adorján Divéky, Waław Uruszczak and Krzysztof Baczkowski argue that similarities in Polish and Hungarian legal development are striking. See Adorján Divéky, “Pochodzenie węgierskiej Złotej Buli i jej wpływ na prawo polskie, [The Origins of the Hungarian Golden Bull and Its Influence on Polish Law]” in *Studia historyczne ku czci Stanisława Kutrzeby*, vol. 1 (Kraków: Nadkładem Komitetu, 1938); Waław Uruszczak, *Swoistość systemów prawno-ustrojowych państw Europy środkowo-wschodniej w XV–XVI w.* [Particularities of the Political and Legal Systems of the Central European States in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries], accessed 29 May, 2018, <http://jazon.hist.uj.edu.pl/zjazd/materialy/uruszczak.pdf>; and Krzysztof Baczkowski, “Złota Bulla króla węgierskiego Andrzeja II z roku 1222 i jej wpływ na prawo oporu stanów przeciw monarsze w środkowej Europie w średniowieczu [Golden Bull of the Hungarian King Andrew II from the year 1222 and Its Influence on the Disobedience Law of the Estates Against the Monarch in Central Europe in the Middle Ages],” in *Król a prawo stanów do oporu*, ed. Mariusz Markiewicz, Ryszard Skowron, and Edward Opaliński (Kraków: Zamek Królewski na Wawelu, 2010). For parallels in Polish-Lithuanian and Transylvanian political and legal tradition see also Felicia Roşu, *Elective Monarchy in Transylvania and Poland-Lithuania, 1569–1587* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁸⁰ Józef Andrzej Gierowski, “Konfederacja a podstawa polityczna szlachty [Confederation and Political Attitude of the Nobles],” in *Dzieje kultury politycznej w Polsce*, ed. Józef Andrzej Gierowski (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1977), 87.

⁸¹ Ibid., 96, 100.

the conviction of sovereignty of the nobles and *ius resistendi*, confirmed in the privileges of the political nation of Poland-Lithuania.⁸² Initially, the right to oppose the king was justified exclusively in the case of the monarch breaking the law, but gradually the premises allowing to oppose the king advanced to include controlling his conduct. This, in turn, strengthened the belief of superiority of the nobility over the king (elected authority in general).⁸³ Making use of that right when necessary was considered to be an act of patriotism and the conviction of subjectivity and the weight of the cause made confederates believe that appealing to foreign powers is justified and harmless (at least until 1767).⁸⁴ Considering the parallels in the political system in Poland-Lithuania, Transylvania, and Hungary as well as justification made by Rákóczi himself and read in the *kuruc* political writing, it is justified to say that the logic behind forming the Hungarian Confederation was similar to the one in Poland-Lithuania. It does not exclude a willingness of the Hungarians to follow the Dutch example, but as read by the Polish-Lithuanian nobles, it revoked rather their own experiences.

The phobia of the absolute power of the king, a leitmotif of the Polish political thought from the sixteenth throughout the eighteenth century, went hand in hand with an esteem for a regulating function of the legal instrument of confederation. A possible transformation of the *monarchia mixta* to *absolutum dominium* meant nothing else but losing the freedom. The sympathy towards Rákóczi came from identifying him as a defender of liberties against the tyranny of the Habsburgs. Rákóczi was aware of the tones of Polish-Lithuanian political

⁸² Confirmed in the privilege of Mielnik, the clause of *de non prestanda oboediendia* of the Henrician Articles, and acts from 1576, 1607, and 1609.

⁸³ Józef Andrzej Gierowski, 95; Anna Grześkowiak-Krwawicz, “Król dybie na wolność [King Lurks on Freedom],” in *Regina Libertas: wolność w polskiej myśli politycznej XVIII wieku* (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz/terytoria, 2006), 200–2.

⁸⁴ Dariusz Rolnik, “Konfederacja jako instrument działania politycznego w opinii szlachty czasów stanisławowskich (1764–1795) [Confederation as a political instrument in the opinion of the nobles during the reign of Stanisław August (1764–1795)],” in *Król a prawo stanów do oporu*, ed. Mariusz Markiewicz, Ryszard Skowron, and Edward Opaliński (Kraków: Zamek Królewski na Wawelu, 2010), 428.

discourse, voiced in the appeals to the Confederates of Sandomierz or to Leszczyński.⁸⁵ The sympathy towards Rákóczi, built on the same ground, was also expressed by the Englishmen, who, however, view the Habsburgs tyranny through the religious lens.

3.3. Religion

Religion was a potential mode of appeal to foreign powers and transforming a localized conflict into a European affair.⁸⁶ As the example of Poland-Lithuania show, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries religion was indeed instrumentalized for political purposes, especially in connections to foreign affairs. Dissenters' appeals for support were a convenient pretext for intervention. Nevertheless, a veil of religious rhetoric covered weightier political causes. For instance, Queen Anne tried to leverage Louis XIV by taking in defense the French Protestants.⁸⁷ In the case of Rákóczi's War of Independence, the political ground was not sufficient for Maritime Powers to intertwine with firm demands in favor of the Protestants fighting on Rákóczi's side, let alone to grant financial and military support. Also, the diplomatic assistance of English and Dutch envoys during mediations between the emperor and the Malcontents was informed by pragmatism, not religious solidarity.⁸⁸ With the imperial forces engaged in Hungary and Transylvania, England had to carry a heavier burden of the war with France on the western front. Moreover, the location of mines that were payment collateral for loans granted to the House of Austria on the *kuruc* controlled territory made Rákóczi's War of Independence even more expensive business for emperor's

⁸⁵ Rákóczi to the Confederates of Sandomierz, 26 February, 1707 in Ráday, *Ráday Pál iratai* [Ráday Pál's Papers], ed. Kálmán Benda and Ferenc Maksay, vol. 2 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1961), 84–6. Lajos Hopp, “Sprawy polskie w węgierskich zabytkach literackich z okresu powstania Rakoczego [Polish Matters in Hungarian Literary Monuments from Rákóczi War of Independence],” in *Studia z dziejów polsko-węgierskich stosunków literackich i kulturalnych*, ed. Jan Reychma et al. (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1986).

⁸⁶ Linda Frey and Masha Frey, “The Confessional Issue in International Politics: The Rákóczi's Insurrection,” in *R. Várkonyi Ágnes emlékkönyv: születésének 70. évfordulója ünnepére*, ed. Péter Tusor, Zoltán Rihmer, and Gábor Thoroczkay (Budapest: ELTE Bölcsészettudományi Kara, 1998), 435

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 433–34.

⁸⁸ Daniel Riches category of “protestant cosmopolitanism” does not apply to the case Anglo-Dutch involvement in the Rákóczi War of Independence. Perhaps the reason behind it is that both Bruyninx and Stepney were in contact mainly with Catholic *kuruc* leadership. See Daniel Riches, *Protestant Cosmopolitanism and Diplomatic Culture: Brandenburg-Swedish Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2013).

ally. Daniel Dafoe expressed some of this English pragmatism writing that “It is not enough that a Nation be Protestant, and the people our Friends; if they will join with our enemies, they are Papists, Turks, and Heathens, as to us.”⁸⁹

To fully grasp the significance the religion played in diplomacy during Rákóczi’s War of Independence it would be necessary to examine the activity of various individuals, among others court preacher at Kaliningrad (German: Königsberg) Daniel Ernst Jablonski, and delegations of Protestant Estates sent to different Protestant monarchs, which extends the scope of this thesis.⁹⁰ In the context of English diplomacy, from dispatches exchanged between Stepney and his superiors in London, it is clear that framing Rákóczi’s War of Independence was consciously avoided. Failing to observe the rights of the Protestants was one of many causes of the anti-Habsburg struggle and was presented as such by the Malcontents themselves.⁹¹ Moreover, it was closely intertwined with the failure to observe the civil laws of the country, which had come to Stepney’s attention.

In Transylvania and Poland-Lithuania, patents of religious tolerance (Turda (Hungarian: Torda) 1568, Warsaw 1573) were primarily introduced to secure political stability, as derivatives of noble rights and privileges. This logic seems to be followed by Rákóczi. For example, in the letter to Queen Anne from 1710 he praises Her Majesty’s piety, Christian charity but also fairness, and magnanimity.⁹² Only once he made an allusion to Protestantism referring to Queen’s confession as being the same as of the oppressed in Hungary (*la mesme*

⁸⁹ Daniel Dafoe in *Weekly Review* September-December issue (1704), after Béla Köpeczi, “The Hungarian Wars of Independence of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries in Their European Context,” in *From Hunyadi to Rákóczi: War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary*, ed. Katalin Péter, Béla K. Király, and János M. Bak (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1982), 452.

⁹⁰ See for example Kármán, “Kísérletek svéd segítség biztosítására II. Rákóczi Ferenc szabadságharcához [Attempts to Secure Swedish Assistance for the Insurrection of Ferenc Rákóczi II].”

⁹¹ For example, article sixteenth of *Universis Orbis Christiani Principibus et Respublici* (1704) mentions violating the rights of the Protestants as one of the causes of the War of 1703–1711. After Kurucz, “Protestáns szimpátia és szövetségi érdek az angol diplomácia és a Rákóczi-szabadságharc [Sympathy of the Protestants and interest of the English diplomacy and Rákóczi’s War of Independence],” 390–91.

⁹² Rákóczi to Queen Anne, 26 August, 1710, after R. Várkonyi, “Esélyek és alternatívák a szatmári béketárgyaláson 1710–1711 [Chances and Alternatives at the Szatmár Peace Talks],” 1006–7.

religion).⁹³ More explicitly Rákóczi referred to her efforts to mediate between the Malcontents and the emperor, hoping she will continue to act as an intermediary.⁹⁴ In this context, to state that Rákóczi presented himself in writing as a defender of Protestantism is an exaggeration. Nevertheless, he with mastery balanced the tones of endangered liberties and religious grievances. Rákóczi's rhetorical virtuosity had, however, a limited scope. The sympathy towards the Protestants in Hungary or Transylvania, also among diplomats, was not enough for Maritime Powers to grant anything more than paper thin expressions of solidarity.

The involvement of the English and Dutch diplomats in the peace talks between the emperor and Rákóczi was not motivated by religion, quite the contrary, religious arguments were carefully avoided by them. Nevertheless, it were the English and Dutch diplomats who as a third party were responsible for launching negotiations in 1704, providing a convenient argument for Rákóczi in his attempts to be recognized as a sovereign and a chance to include Hungary and Transylvania in a Europe-wide settlement.

In the following chapter, I introduce George Stepney (1663–1707), the English envoy extraordinary to Vienna, as a career diplomat and diplomatic intermediary during the peace negotiation of 1704–1711, with the aim to understand Stepney's involvement in the Rákóczi's War of Independence which resulted in his recall after accusations of pro-Hungarian sympathies. By focusing on Stepney and his perspective, it is possible not only grasp factors which made Rákóczi convincing in the eyes of political partners, but also to trace diplomatic practice of circumventing problematic issues of ceremonial while making political exchanges with Rákóczi possible.

⁹³ Ibid., 1006.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 1007.

Chapter II

George Stepney: envoy extraordinary and the Hungarian mediations

This chapter presents George Stepney (1663–1707), a career diplomat, acknowledged poet, translator, and diplomatic intermediary during Rákóczi's War of Independence. It focuses on his background, sketches his career progress, highlighting the role of an intermediary he played during the negotiations between the Hungarian Malcontents and the House of Austria. Relying mostly on dispatches and letters published in the three volumes of *Archivum Rákóczianum* regarding English diplomacy, I show that although the Protestant sympathies towards the Hungarians were on occasions expressed by the English diplomats, they were not articulated during the peace talks. What convinced Stepney of the validity of some of the views and demands of the insurgents was rather his understanding of the role of mediator and his opinion. Personal contact with Rákóczi, whom he found civil and polite, could have influenced his judgment to certain extent, nevertheless, all the concessions he made to accommodate Rákóczi's requests were made with primarily English (and Dutch) interest in mind. Contrary to the emperor, Queen Anne (1665–1714) and Grand Pensionary Anthonie Heinsius (1641–1720) were more willing to grant the guarantees to the Malcontents or use Rákóczi's contested princely titles if only that could bring a lasting settlement as soon as possible. Assisting in negotiating, and finally signing a peace treaty between Rákóczi and the emperor was an opportunity for Stepney to acquire a recognition as a seasoned diplomat and a way to advance his career.

The mediations between Emperor Leopold I, later his successor Joseph I, and Prince Rákóczi were a design of the English and Dutch diplomats. Unresolved conflict between Rákóczi and the House of Austria drove imperial resources from the fights with France on the western

front, forcing England and the Dutch Republic to carry a heavier burden of the war. The economic leverage—the loans from Maritime Powers were substantial for conducting the war against France—made the emperor to reluctantly accept the English and Dutch diplomats as mediators in 1704. George Stepney and Jacob Jan Hammel Bruyninx (1662–1738) were responsible for initial stages of mediations. They were later joined by Adolf Henrik van Rechteren, lord of Almelo (1656–1731), and for a short time also by Charles Spencer, third Earl of Sunderland (1675–1722), who were dispatched on a special mission in 1705. Historians Marsha Frey and Linda Frey point out that Englishmen was the more dominant party in the alliance, while the Dutch mainly echoed the stances coming from London.⁹⁵ The dispatches prove, however, that activities of Stepney and Bruyninx were indeed well-coordinated, but on occasions it was Stepney who requested his government to undertake parallel actions to that of the States-General, as it was the case in regards to mediations with between the Viennese court and insurgents.

In 1704 when the negotiation started Stepney was already an experienced diplomat who had a considerable expertise gained during years of service in various German-speaking states.⁹⁶ His diplomatic career lasted twenty-one years, from which he spent almost seven in Vienna, in 1693 and between 1701–1706. Bruyninx was present in Vienna also in 1693 during Stepney's first stay there, which contributed to building a good working relationship between the two diplomats. Bruyninx was, however, not recalled in 1706 and continue to mediate between the Hungarians and the emperor during the second round of peace talks between 1710 and 1711. Stepney was accused of pro-Hungarian sympathies as early as in 1703 and recalled not long after the negotiations broke down. For this reason, his opinions passed in the dispatches can help to reflect on Rákóczi's War of Independence from a third-party

⁹⁵ Frey and Frey, "The Confessional Issue in International Politics: The Rákóczi's Insurrection," 438.

⁹⁶ Linda Frey and Marsha Frey, "Stepney, George (1663–1707), Diplomatist," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed 8 June, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26404>.

perspective, showcasing what made the Hungarian cause to be looked upon sympathetically. Nevertheless, before Stepney was appointed an envoy extraordinary and plenipotentiary in Vienna, he had to prove himself to be a capable diplomat, working his way up from a secretary position.

1. Stepney's affiliations

George Stepney's first diplomatic employment started in 1687, soon after he obtained his BA. After receiving a recommendation, he was appointed a secretary to Sir Peter Wyche (1628–1699) in Hamburg. To apply for a secretary position was a common start for a diplomatic career at that time, which meant becoming a part of the “family” (household) of a monarch's representative abroad.⁹⁷ Behind Stepney's first appointment was a friend of his, Charles Montagu (1661–1715), later first Earl of Halifax and First Lord of the Treasury, whom he met at Westminster School. Besides Montagu at Westminster Stepney met, among others, also another future diplomat and poet, Matthew Prior (1664–1721), and son of Wyche, John. In 1682, after nine years at Westminster, Stepney was elected as a head of the election to the Trinity College in Cambridge, where Montagu was enrolled since 1679.

A few years later, Montagu helped to advance his friend's career again, assisting Stepney's efforts to obtain the Fellowship at Trinity College. For Stepney, the Fellowship was a distinction conveniently coming with a modest yearly allowance, accommodation, and an opportunity to master his poetry. The fusion of interest in scholarship, poetry, and politics was, as it seems, quite common at that time. Peter Wyche, for example, had a similar background: he was a former student at Cambridge and translator, who coming from a rather modest family, raised due to his service in diplomacy.

⁹⁷ Spens, *George Stepney, 1663–1707: Diplomat and Poet*, 17.

Outside educational institutions, Westminster School and Cambridge, Stepney met influential figures in an exclusive Kit-Cat Club.⁹⁸ The club accommodated literary as well as political and professional interest; creating a space for interaction between promising writers and powerful men of considerable fortunes. In other words, it was a space where relations between “poets and poets, between Whig politicians both at the center and on the periphery of the government power machine, and between poets and politicians” were created.⁹⁹ Montagu, Prior, and Stepney were known as “My Lord Dorset’s Boys” enjoying the affection of one of the founding members of the Club, poet and politician, Charles Sackville, sixth Earl of Dorset.¹⁰⁰ Stepney, however, due to the cost of social life, could not fully benefit from the strategic network of Kit-Cat Club as for example Montagu.¹⁰¹

Stepney’s decision to find his way in the diplomatic service was informed primarily by the need of obtaining a stable income. Quite ironically insufficient financial resources became the main source of his irritation during the years he spent abroad. It was a considerable problem since he could not rely on his inheritance. He was the son of George Stepney senior of the Pembroke branch of the family, Groom of the Privy Chamber, and Jane Moseley. Historian Susan Spens suggests that the fact that because Stepney’s father—a younger son not entitled to an inheritance in the first place—was in debt throughout his life, the diplomat was especially touchy in regards to the remuneration for his service.¹⁰² It is true that requests for money and efforts to gain a rank with higher daily allowance were constantly present in

⁹⁸ Philip Carter, “Kit-Cat Club,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed June 8, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/73609>.

⁹⁹ Susan Fitzmaurice, “Servant or Patron? Jacob Tonson and the Language of Deference and Respect,” *Language Sciences* 24, no. 3–4 (May 2002), 259. Susan Fitzmaurice makes some interesting insights while examining the role of club secretary Tonson as a power broker.

¹⁰⁰ Spens 16; David Hopkins, “Charles Montague, George Stepney, and Dryden’s *Metamorphoses*,” *The Review of English Studies* 51, no. 201 (2000), 84.

¹⁰¹ Spens, *George Stepney, 1663-1707: Diplomat and Poet*, 16.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 6–8.

Stepney's correspondence, however, that was a norm in diplomatic correspondence in the early modern period.¹⁰³

I believe that it is impossible to appropriately judge the influence of Stepney's father on him, definitely not without delving further into speculative psychologization, but the family background surely influenced Stepney's career as a diplomat. What I mean by this is that, because of the lack of inheritance comparable to the one of his friends or rivals—such as Montagu or count Johann Wenzel Wratislaw (ca. 1670–1712), imperial envoy in London and the High Chancellor of Bohemia—he made a considerable effort to compensate for it.

Poetry was one of the means by which Stepney could fashion himself as a civil man, as a man of letters, who fit into the higher echelons of society for his intellectual merits. He was known for translations of the classics (Juvenal), occasional poetry (on royal marriages and deaths), and political writings (for example, *Essay upon the Present Interest of England* (1701), which were circulated among English diplomats across Europe.¹⁰⁴ The acknowledgment Stepney received for his literary works proves that he made a good use of his education (obtained thanks to his “Honour'd Mother”, whom he held in great esteem).¹⁰⁵ A motivation to gain a higher diplomatic rank was connected with higher allowance—certainly an important benefit—but it also meant higher status and position, which often corresponded with the status of an individual and was indispensable while carrying certain diplomatic activities. As praises Stepney received from his superiors suggest, he was well-equipped for diplomatic service, but due to his family background, the patronage of high-ranking friends like Montagu was crucial for the progress of his career as a diplomat.

¹⁰³ Black, *British Diplomats and Diplomacy, 1688–1800*, 25.

¹⁰⁴ Carter, “Kit-Cat Club.”

¹⁰⁵ Spens, *George Stepney, 1663–1707: Diplomat and Poet*, 11.

2. Stepney's character

In 1691, after the first post as a secretary to Wyche in Hamburg, and a few years as a fellow in the Trinity College, Stepney was appointed as a secretary to James Johnson (1655–1737), the English envoy at Berlin. This opportunity came, not surprisingly, as a result of Montagu's recommendation. Probably because working relationship with Johnson did not go particularly well, Stepney was later cautious in choosing his employment. He, for example, refused in 1692 William, Lord Paget (1637–1713), ambassador to Vienna, whom he considered being a difficult man.¹⁰⁶ However, when Paget was recalled a year later, Stepney came to Vienna to temporarily fill in for Paget's successor as a secretary and an agent. This appointment, among other things, allowed Stepney to establish several relations which gained on importance during his second appointment to Vienna.

At the Viennese court, Stepney attended a conference between the imperial privy councilors and representatives of the Habsburgs' allies where he met Bruyninx, at that time also in the rank of a secretary. Bruyninx and Stepney—along with a number of other young diplomats, including Florentin Consbruck, imperial State Secretary—formed a recreational *société de fumeurs*.¹⁰⁷ Participating in both the conference and social life in Vienna helped Stepney to established his position among other diplomats and imperial officials as a representative of King of England and Stadtholder of the Dutch Republic, William III of Orange. For his accurate and detailed reports he received an acknowledgment in London.¹⁰⁸

Shortly after his first appointment to Vienna, Stepney became commissary and deputy in Saxony (1693–1694), and later minister to Hesse-Cassel (1694–1695), envoy extraordinary to Cologne and Mainz (1695–1696), Hesse-Cassel, the Palatinate (1696–1697 and 1701), and

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 48.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 64–5.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 64.

Treves (1695–1697), Saxony (1698), and Prussia (1698–1699). During his service, while for example assisting in strengthening the Grand Alliance against France, Stepney had set his foot at many courts, where he got acquainted not only with the crown heads—such as Elector of Saxony and King of Poland-Lithuania Augustus II—but also, for example, with such prominent figures of the era as philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. The latter sought the Englishman’s opinion on *The History of the Desertion or An account of All the Public Affairs in England* (1689) confirming Stepney’s standing as a man of letters and the value of his expertise as a diplomat.

Not to delve into details concerning Stepney’s considerable diplomatic experience in the German-speaking world, few issues are worth touching upon as they contribute to a better understanding of a diplomatic practice. Negotiating for its possible impact on the shape of map was perhaps the most spectacular side of the early modern diplomacy. However, a bulk of diplomatic work consisted of rather tedious tasks such as news gathering and reporting.¹⁰⁹ Participation in a social life of a court, and sustaining relations with other diplomats, nobles, and officials were main sources of information valuable from the perspective of diplomacy. William Blathwayt (1649–1717), Secretary-at-War to King William III, instructed Stepney at the early stage of his career to draw scrupulous reports on military matters and society of Brandenburg court, including the information on individuals’ “age, quality, and degree of favor”.¹¹⁰ This pattern, balancing the interest in army and court which indicates the strategic importance of the later, was followed by Stepney during his service.

Despite considerable stamina required to keep up with a social life of a receiving court and report back to sending government, knowledge of foreign languages was essential to carry diplomatic tasks effectively at that time. While corresponding, shortcomings in linguistic

¹⁰⁹ Black, *British Diplomats and Diplomacy, 1688–1800*, 118–45.

¹¹⁰ William Blathwayt to George Stepney, 26 April, 1691, after Spens, *George Stepney, 1663–1707: Diplomat and Poet*, 50.

skills were relatively easily made up for by secretaries. But since the ability to engage in a conversation was crucial to extending one's network, obtaining valuable information, and negotiating, a good command of foreign languages was an important advantage. Apart from English Stepney was proficient in Latin, French, Italian, and High Dutch, i.e. German. But such great command of languages was not a quality of many Stepney's diplomatic partners. He complained, for example, that the list of demands presented by the Hungarian Malcontents in Latin was almost as difficult to understand as it was written in Hungarian.¹¹¹ He also noted that Prince Rákóczi expressed himself more freely in French, and favored that language in private correspondence and conversation. For Stepney and Rákóczi engaging in a private conversation offered a possibility to avoid at least some of the problematic issues concerning recognition which proven to be more difficult while exchanging correspondence.

After a personal meeting with Rákóczi Stepney noticed also prince's politeness, and was pleased with his "great demonstration of civility".¹¹² Both Stepney and Rákóczi paid a great deal of attention to their presentation and their titles, which was important for both of them from the perspective of the possibilities in engaging in political exchanges. At first, it may be shocking that having been accused in a rumor of lacking a status of gentleman Stepney was ready to a duel to protect his honor. It became less surprising while realizing that the reputation was essentially the only currency at his disposal. To deny any rumors Stepney secured his honor with a pen, writing to his high-ranking friend. On Stepney's behalf, Montagu reached to Dorset—at that time Lord Chamberlain to the King and Queen of England—who confirmed a title of Gentleman of a Privy Council for Stepney.¹¹³

¹¹¹ George Stepney to Robert Harley, 13 May, 1705, in Ernő Simonyi, ed., *Angol diplomatiai iratok II. Rákóczi Ferencz korára* [English Diplomatic Papers Concerning the Age of Ferenc II Rákóczi], vol. 2, Archivum Rákócziánium II (Budapest, 1873), 283.

¹¹² George Stepney to Robert Harley 19 November, 1705, in Simonyi, 2:570.

¹¹³ Spens, *George Stepney, 1663–1707: Diplomat and Poet*, 86.

As mentioned before, Stepney saw a promotion in a diplomatic rank in a category of financial benefit, as it came with an increased daily allowance, but primarily as a vehicle of increasing his importance. For years he was trying to persuade his superiors to be granted the title of envoy. The desirable rank indeed came with a higher allowance but it also required defraying higher expenses. Blathwayt, declining Stepney's request for the title of envoy extraordinary in 1693, wrote that:

The title of Envoy Extr[ordinary] to the El[ector]r of Saxony on this occasion w[oul]d have loaded you with a Quality more Expensive than useful or agreeable to the designs which are most adequate to y[ou]r circumstances & intentions: w[i]ch should be rather to inform yourself for some time longer in the knowledge of the several Courts and affairs of ye Empire, than be confined by a Character to something that may be less credit and duration.¹¹⁴

Here, "character" referred not merely to the personal qualities or reputation, as the older meaning had this connotation. More significantly in this context, "character" connected with a legal fiction of political representation expressed, for example, via ceremonial setting adequate to certain diplomatic rank.¹¹⁵ Stepney did not ask for a title of ambassador which would make him to fully represent William III.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, the title of envoy extraordinary had to be carried by him with an appropriate manner, which required, among other things, suitable attire and equipage, but it also bestowed certain prestige on a diplomat. Sometimes the weight of an ambassadorial title could considerably limit a repertoire of actions available to a diplomat who could not compromise his (and his sovereign's) honor. But on other occasions, the title could significantly influence diplomat's room of maneuver, granting him an easier access to the highest echelons of receiving court.¹¹⁷ The latter was the

¹¹⁴ William Blathwayt to George Stepney, 20 November, 1693, after Spens, *George Stepney, 1663–1707: Diplomat and Poet*, 80.

¹¹⁵ For a comprehensive explanation of the significance of representation and diplomatic ranks, including their symbolic forms, see especially introduction and Chapter 2 of Hennings, *Russia and Courtly Europe: Ritual and the Culture of Diplomacy, 1648–1725*.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 95–6.

¹¹⁷ For an example of how ambassadorial title could jeopardize diplomatic mission see for example Guido van Meersbergen, "The Dutch Merchant-Diplomat in Comparative Perspective: Embassies to the Court of Aurangzeb, 1660–1666," in *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c. 1410–1800*, ed. Jan Hennings and Tracey A. Sowerby (New York: Routledge, 2017).

case of Stepney who blamed his cold reception in Dresden to Elector John George IV's dissatisfaction which was caused by the fact that it was not envoy extraordinary who was sent to his court.¹¹⁸ Similarly, Stepney informed his superiors that he had to excuse himself from attending a meeting between the elector of Saxony and elector of Bavaria, for he was concerned that he would have been looked down and had troubles fulfil his duties without a title of the envoy.¹¹⁹

In July 1695 Stepney wrote to his superiors again with hopes to receive an appointment to a prestigious post: "Vienna is a court were all business centers, I am known to the Emperor and his ministers, and without vanity may be useful".¹²⁰ Stepney was sent to Vienna a couple of years later and, although he did not receive the desirable title of an ambassador, his mission at the imperial court appeared to be one of the high points in his career. Receiving credentials of envoy extraordinary and plenipotentiary, that is with the capabilities to negotiate a treaty to end Rákóczi's War of Independence, Stepney was placed in the same position with Sunderland and van Rechteren, who were men of considerably higher social standing. Not being an aristocrat, Stepney perhaps would not be able to reach similar position without a careful self-fashioning through, for example, his literary work distributed among English diplomats across Europe, and without a patronage, in that case, without Sunderland's intervention. Stepney's character—understood as both his rank and reputation—allowed him to become a diplomatic intermediary during peace negotiations between Rákóczi and the House of Austria.

¹¹⁸ Spens, *George Stepney, 1663–1707: Diplomat and Poet*, 89.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹²⁰ After Black, *British Diplomats and Diplomacy, 1688–1800*.

3. Hungarian mediations

Stepney's arrival to Vienna in spring 1701 coincidentally overlapped with Rákóczi's arrest and imprisonment in Wiener Neustadt. One of the articles of Stepney's instructions reads as follows:

You shall as you see fitting occasions, take notice to the Ministers of that Court, of the ill Condition (We are informed) the Protestants of Hungary are in, in relation to the Exercise of their Religion and the Severities used to Them on that Account, which you will insinuate We should be glad They were freed from and the Liberty thereof allowed Them, so long as They behave Themselves peaceably and obediently under the Government.¹²¹

The evangelical connection indeed played some role in considering establishing a relation between the English government and the Hungarians. However, it is also clear from the tone of the instructions, that this connection was not perceived as a sufficient ground for intervention, at least not in the event of raising against the Habsburgs. Following his instructions, Stepney reported on "very great severities . . . against the Lutherans in that Country", expressing his genuine concern.¹²² Yet, he and other English diplomats—among them Charles Whitworth who deputized for Stepney on several occasions—were very careful not to frame Rákóczi's War of Independence as a religious war. They unmistakably understood that doing so would affect the alliance with the emperor.¹²³ As Stepney acutely observed in one of the dispatches: "[f]or Rákóczi and his chief adherents are all Roman Catholics, and if any Protestants be here & they blended w[hi]t the Rebels, their discontents rather proceed from their being oppress'd in the Civil Rights, the from what they suffer in point of Religion."¹²⁴ Stepney continued with mentioning the actions he undertook to defend the Protestants in front of the Catholic hierarchy, in the efforts to clear them of the charges of rebellion:

¹²¹ After Spens, *George Stepney, 1663–1707: Diplomat and Poet*, 192.

¹²² George Stepney to Charles Hedges, 3 June, 1703, in Simonyi, *Angol diplomatiai iratok II. Rákóczi Ferencz korára* [English Diplomatic Papers Concerning the Age of Ferenc II Rákóczi], 1872, 1:17.

¹²³ They would, for example, exclude any information on religion from official report and pass them in private correspondence. See two letters of Stepney to Hedges dated 11 June, 1704, in Simonyi, 1:303–7, and 307–8.

¹²⁴ George Stepney to Charles Hedges, 29 September, 1703, in Simonyi, 1:38.

And this I have desired Cardinall Collonitz, the Bishop of Raab, & other Ministers & Prelates concerned in Hungary, to take particular notice of, to convince them that those of our Profession live quietly & obediently under the present Government and are rather more faithful to the Emperor's interest during these troubles, then those of his own Religion.¹²⁵

The most important article of Stepney's instruction did not concern the religious issues nor Rákóczi's War of Independence (as it broke out only two years later). Stepney was instructed to ascertain emperor's position on allying with Maritime Powers, but at the same time William III, not informing his representative at the imperial court, agreed to negotiate with Wratislaw, representative of Leopold I to London. Stepney's initial frustration was later followed by a disagreement with Wratislaw which significantly contributed to his recall from Vienna in 1706.

Stepney and Wratislaw, who from 1705 was the High Chancellor of Bohemia, disagreed, among other things, on the way the Hungarian affair should be handled.¹²⁶ What is more, Wratislaw, to Stepney's further annoyance, had a direct access to the emperor and did not have to rely solely on the subsidies received from the Crown. Wratislaw and Stepney, besides having their differences, were representatives of two different categories of diplomats. As described by Jeremy Black, the first described as "the men of business" consisted of diplomats who were eager to make their career through diplomatic service or to foster their careers through the service abroad. The second category consisted of "envoys of title" who were focusing rather on a service to the sovereign. Because of that, the later were more interested in the pursuit of ranks and prestige, while "men of business", sought to engage in high-profile negotiations to gain acknowledgment.¹²⁷ Stepney clearly belonged to the first group of "men of business" or career diplomats. A prospect of participating in the negotiations was not only in line with values cherished by contemporaries, such as restraint, but it also presented itself as a convenient way of advancing his career. Stepney was

¹²⁵ George Stepney to Charles Hedges, 29 September, 1703, in Simonyi, 1:38.

¹²⁶ Another reason was for example a rumor having that Stepney during his audience spoke unfavorably of the imperial ministers, ill advising the emperor. Spens, *George Stepney, 1663-1707: Diplomat and Poet*, 225.

¹²⁷ Black, *British Diplomats and Diplomacy, 1688-1800*, 49.

ambitious and he wanted to be transferred to the Hague. The Hague was the most prestigious post available for the English diplomats, but while the War of Spanish Succession continued it additionally provided an opportunity to enter high-profile negotiations with France. In the beginning, the involvement in negotiations between the Hungarian Malcontents and the House of Austria appeared to be an opportunity which would facilitate his appointment to the Hague.

Pacification of the Malcontents was an alternative to peace talks. Stepney and Bruyninx saw a peace treaty more effective device in bringing a settlement, while pacification was favored by the imperial court. Stepney and Bruyninx did not entirely oppose the military solution, but when it became clear that imperial troops were not in power to defeat the *kuruc*, or at least not as fast as to be able to reinforce the allies on the western front, they even more firmly opted for peace. Moreover, the military solution was considered by Stepney to be less durable.

Stepney's not only passed the demands of the insurgents to London, but he also presented his own reading of the current situation and history of Hungary. He made an effort to understand the causes behind the anti-Habsburg movement. His views were fairly balanced, on several occasions he did not, however, avoided accusing the Jesuits and the Viennese court of "violent prejudices", trespassing the laws of the country.¹²⁸ Mainly for that reason, Stepney saw the demand of guarantees pressed by Rákóczi as justified, which was not acceptable from the perspective of the Habsburgs who firmly stated that the word of a sovereign is a sufficient guaranty.¹²⁹ Also, referring to historical examples, he concluded that armies did not resolve the chain of struggles and violations of law but only caused next risings against the House of Austria.

¹²⁸ See for example George Stepney to Robert Harley 9 May, 1705, in Simonyi, *Angol diplomatiai iratok II. Rákóczi Ferencz korára* [English Diplomatic Papers Concerning the Age of Ferenc II Rákóczi], 1873, 2:79–80.

¹²⁹ George Stepney to Robert Harley, 27 June, 1705, in Simonyi, 2:145.

Stepney understood that the role of a mediator required arguing in defense of the party that is not present. Accused of favoritism towards Hungarians, he defended himself by assuring that he took the side of the insurgents against imperial officers because there was no one else who would do that.¹³⁰ He may have considered some of the points brought up by the Hungarians as reasonable, especially in the course of the mediations, but accusations of pro-Hungarian sympathies were an exaggeration. There may have been a personal sympathy for Rákóczi, but if it played any role, this role was rather of a minor importance. Stepney's principle was to secure an agreement that will not be immediately contested, and it was his queen's opinion that she has the right to demand from her ally to conclude a peace with the Hungarians on fair terms.¹³¹

4. Negotiations of 1704–1706

On May 5, 1706, Stepney wrote in a letter: “I am heartily weary of this hatterig life but bear it more patiently because I believe the business must end one way or the other in three or four days”.¹³² His tiredness was likely to be physical, caused by numerous travels he made between Vienna, Bratislava (German: Pressburg, Hungarian: Pozsony), Banská Štiavnica (German: Schemnitz), Vyche (German: Eisenbach), Trnava (Hungarian: Nagyszombat), and Nitra (German: Neutra, Hungarian: Nyitra) but may also indicate a sense of futility arising from the difficulties in bringing “the business” to the end. This “business” was a peace negotiation between Emperor Leopold I, and later his successor Joseph I, and Prince Ferenc II Rákóczi that were mediated between 1704 and 1706 among others by Stepney.

¹³⁰ Spens, *George Stepney, 1663–1707: Diplomat and Poet*, 241.

¹³¹ George Stepney to Charles Hedges, June 19, 1704, in Simonyi, *Angol diplomatiai iratok II. Rákóczi Ferencz korára* [English Diplomatic Papers Concerning the Age of Ferenc II Rákóczi], 1872, 1:317–18.

¹³² George Stepney to Robert Harley, 5 May, 1706, in Simonyi, ed., *Angol diplomatiai iratok II. Rákóczi Ferencz korára* [English Diplomatic Papers Concerning the Age of Ferenc II Rákóczi], vol. 3, Archivum Rákócziánium II (Budapest, 1877), 7.

There were three attempts to negotiate an agreement between the Hungarian Malcontents and the emperor with the assistance of English and Dutch mediators. Each of the attempts was preceded by preliminary talks. The first one took place between winter and summer of 1704. Stepney and Bruyninx were authorized by Queen Anne and Grand Pensionary Heinsius to propose themselves as mediators to the conflicted sides. Their first task was to persuade both the emperor—who was reluctant to undertake any negotiations with his rebellious subjects—and the Hungarian Malcontents—who were not eager to treat with the Habsburgs doubting sincere intentions of the emperor’s allies—to accept them as mediators in drawing the peace settlement.

In March 1704, Bruyninx went to Pressburg (Bratislava) to meet with Count Miklós Bercsényi (1665–1725), Chief General of the Hungarian insurgent army, to discuss the preliminary issues. The demands obtained from Bercsényi at the very beginning of the talks did not change significantly later in the course of the War of Independence of 1703–1711 and concerned (1) dealing with the Malcontents as with a free state, (2) recognizing Rákóczi as a leader, and (3) being granted guarantees for securing any settlement with the Habsburgs. Later Stepney summarized the main demands in short “*Securitas Interna et Externa*”, explaining that “*Interna*” refers to restoring rights and privileges of the country, and “*Externa*” means the guarantees of the foreign powers.¹³³ The difference between the points presented by Bercsényi and Stepney can be explained by the time they were made, that is during the first contact between the diplomats and Malcontents, and later in the course of the talks. Nonetheless, the second did not annul the first since the dispute over Rákóczi’s titles continued beyond 1706.

¹³³ George Stepney to Robert Harley, 27 June, 1705, in Simonyi, *Angol diplomatiai iratok II. Rákóczi Ferencz korára* [English Diplomatic Papers Concerning the Age of Ferenc II Rákóczi], 1872, 1:149–51.

The prospect of bringing to any agreement was uncertain. Emperor's position in regards to considering the rebels as anything but its subjects was firm. Doing otherwise would mean losing authority. Already allowing for a third party intervention, that is the involvement of English and Dutch diplomats, talks between the emperor and Rákóczi was considered highly problematic from the perspective of Habsburgs' sovereignty. Nevertheless, in the first attempt to negotiate, it was the Hungarians who did not accept Stepney and Bruyninx as mediators. At that time, before the Battle of Blenheim lost by France, the initial impetus of Rákóczi's War of Independence was responsible for rejecting peace as the most favorable solution by the *kuruc*.

The second attempt at mediate took place between autumn and winter of 1704. This time the English and Dutch diplomats were accepted as intermediaries by both conflicted sides. There was also a change in the imperial personnel dealing with the case of Malcontents, and Stepney hoped that the negotiation will end well.¹³⁴ Before the actual negotiation could start, Rákóczi's title and ceremonial had to be agreed on to proceed with a personal meeting between the diplomats and Rákóczi.

As soon as in 1703, the Stepney and Bruyninx were advised to avoid any correspondence with Rákóczi and not to bind themselves to the rules of ceremonial.¹³⁵ After Rákóczi election as the prince of Transylvania, avoiding following rules of ceremonial was a task harder to perform than before. Also, Rákóczi refused to accept correspondence on the basis that his princely title is omitted. Maritime Powers were, however, determined to circumvent the obstacles and had more room for maneuver than the emperor. For example, Stepney wrote that for the sake of the success of mediation he and Bruyninx were allowed to address

¹³⁴ Spens, *George Stepney, 1663–1707: Diplomat and Poet*, 237.

¹³⁵ *Questions proposed by Mr. Bruyninx to Imperial Ministers before he set to Hungary with the Emperor's answers by way of Instruction thereupon*, in Simonyi, *Angol diplomatiai Iratok II. Rákóczi Ferencz korára* [English Diplomatic Papers Concerning the Age of Ferenc II Rákóczi], 1872, 1:179.

Rákóczi as the prince of Transylvania.¹³⁶ Furthermore, to avoid offending either of the conflicted sides by omitting or giving a title, the copies of powers handed to mediators were not disclosed to the other side.¹³⁷

Relation of the meeting between Bruyninx and Rákóczi at Eisenbach (Vychne) which took place in October suggests that more accommodations were made. We cannot be certain what exact form had Bruyninx's "short Complement suitable for occasion", yet, it indeed had to be suitable since Rákóczi accepted the Dutch and English diplomats as mediators, expressing his confidence in their goodwill.¹³⁸ The second meeting between Rákóczi and Bruyninx, who was this time accompanied also by Stepney, took place at the end of November. Stepney summarized it as follows "we left the Prince after dinner perfectly satisfied with the Civilities we had received in our particular, but not at all edified with the State of our affair".¹³⁹ Neither of the conflicted sides was willing to make concessions in their demands. Rákóczi did not even agree to prolong a truce after a demand for the cession of territory was filed by Imperial Commission. Mediators appealed to the Commission to moderate its position but to no avail. Stepney blamed the Viennese court for ruining their own business "as if their true intentions were to widen the breach than to heal it."¹⁴⁰

The third attempt to mediate took place between the summer of 1705 and the summer of 1706. A succession of Joseph I to the imperial throne in May 1705 at least initially promised a new opening. This time besides Stepney and Bruyninx also Sunderland and baron Almelo, later count van Rechteren, were involved. Participation of the two later mediators was

¹³⁶ George Stepney to Robert Harley, 27 June, 1705, in Simonyi, *Angol diplomatiai iratok II. Rákóczi Ferencz korára* [English Diplomatic Papers Concerning the Age of Ferenc II Rákóczi], 1873, 2:146. In correspondence they addressed Rákóczi for example as His Majesty Prince Rákóczi (*Son Altesse Le Prince Rákóczi*). See Jan Hammel Bruyninx and George Stepney to Ferenc Rákóczi, 3 September, 1704, in Simonyi, 2:508.

¹³⁷ George Stepney to Robert Harley, 3 November, 1704, in Simonyi, *Angol diplomatiai iratok II. Rákóczi Ferencz korára* [English Diplomatic papers Concerning the Age of Ferenc II Rákóczi], 1873, 2:523.

¹³⁸ Charles Whitworth to Robert Harley, 25 October 1704, in Simonyi, *Angol diplomatiai iratok II. Rákóczi Ferencz korára* [English Diplomatic Papers Concerning the Age of Ferenc II Rákóczi], 1872, 1:504.

¹³⁹ George Stepney to Robert Harley, 3 November, 1704, in Simonyi, 1:514.

¹⁴⁰ George Stepney to Robert Harley, 3 November, 1704, in Simonyi, 1:521.

informed by the conviction that more prominent representation had more chances to be successful. With Sunderland's appointment, Stepney was promoted to envoy extraordinary and plenipotentiary, with increased daily allowance. In October he did not miss an opportunity to inform English envoys in Hague, Berlin, Moscow, Turin, Venice, and Frankfurt about the negotiations.¹⁴¹ Stepney's dispatch, modestly written from a perspective of a third person, describes in details the plenipotentiaries arrival to Trnava (Nagyszombat) on October 28:

Count Bercsényi having come hither two days before they were met and complimented by some of his officers, and he sent his Coaches and led horses to bring them into Town, with very great pomp and ceremony, the Hungarian Nation being known to delight in such solemn appearances and being willing particular on this occasion to shew the highest Veneration for her Majesty and the States General.¹⁴²

Despite a splendid setting, the negotiations did not start well. There were plenty of obstacles, including emperor's refusal to withdraw from territorial demands, the wording of proposed armistice and emperor's Declaration, position on hereditary succession, Rákóczi's titles, and guarantees. The movement of troops complicated the situation even more.

After months of back and forth between Vienna and towns occupied by the insurgents, in March 1706 an armistice was finally signed. At that time Sunderland was already back to England, but additional intermediary was employed: Charlotte Amalie von Hessen-Rheinfels, Princess Rákóczi. Wratislaw believed, and his opinion was surprisingly shared by Stepney, that the princess was able to influence her husband and persuade him to enter into an agreement with the emperor.¹⁴³ Another reason for seeking Charlotte Amalie's help of a formal nature. In order to avoid following ceremonial protocol, Rákóczi was to visit his wife and "by accident" meet with the mediators who were staying at her apartments. A few

¹⁴¹ Spens, *George Stepney, 1663–1707: Diplomat and Poet*, 260.

¹⁴² George Stepney to Erasmus Lewis, 30 Oct, 1705, after Spens, *George Stepney, 1663–1707: Diplomat and Poet*, 260. Stepney gave a similar account in a dispatch to Robert Harley, November 4, 1705, in Simonyi, *Angol diplomatai iratok II. Rákóczi Ferencz korára* [English Diplomatic Papers Concerning the Age of Ferenc II Rákóczi], 1873, 2:228.

¹⁴³ George Stepney to Jan Hammel Bruyninx, 25 April, 1706, in Simonyi, 2:626.

months later the same maneuver was repeated with Rákóczi's sister, Julianna d'Aspremont (1672–1717).

Despite considerable efforts undertaken by the mediators, not only regarding circumventing the protocol and bringing the two conflicted side to the table, no treaty was concluded. One of the main reasons causing the breakdown of negotiation was the autonomy of Transylvania. Rákóczi wrote in his memoirs that he was proposed a principality in the Holy Roman Empire in exchange for his claims to Transylvania.¹⁴⁴ The exchange would be favorable in regards to his personal interest, he, however, “never sought splendors for [his] dynasty”, and started the war only to bring freedom to the country.¹⁴⁵ The freedoms demanded by Rákóczi as Prince of Transylvania and Prince of Confederated Estates of Hungary were unacceptable for Joseph I, as earlier they were for his father.

After the negotiation broke down, Stepney was finally removed from Vienna and appointed to the Hague. Unfortunately, he did not have a chance to try himself at the new post. Not long after the appointment, he returned to England where he died of illness. The inscription on his tomb praises him for his “ready genius, knowledge of learning, sweetness of temper, experience of the world, acquaintance of great men, elegance of language, style and life”.¹⁴⁶ All of these features contributed to Stepney's diplomatic career, equipping him for the role of an intermediary during Rákóczi's War of Independence. Although the negotiation between the House of Austria and Rákóczi mediated by Stepney failed, the fact that they took place was a significant step towards recognizing Rákóczi as sovereign, not emperor's subject.

While mediating between Rákóczi and the emperor Stepney was pursuing objectives of the English government, acting as a representative of Queen Anne at the imperial court. At the

¹⁴⁴ Rákóczi, *Confessions et Mémoires*, 290.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 408.

¹⁴⁶ After “George Stepney,” accessed June 8, 2018, <https://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-commemorations/commemorations/george-stepney/#i14354>.

same time, he was also acting as a diplomatic intermediary who could make certain concessions to Rákóczi, not compromising his hard-won position of envoy extraordinary. Stepney's involvement in negotiations of 1704–1706 allowed to establish a political exchange between parties which otherwise could not engage in direct talks due to the matter of recognition. Stepney not only mediated communication between the Viennese court and Rákóczi but also on occasions argued on behalf of the insurgents, which complied with his understanding of a role of mediator. If Stepney offered himself as an intermediary he did that primarily because he considered this role as part of his duties as a diplomat, which could potentially advance his career. For Elżbieta Sieniawska, who is a central figure of the following chapter, involvement in Rákóczi's War of Independence was also an episode in political career, however, it was an episode of a very different character.

Chapter III

Elżbieta Sieniawska: First Lady of the Republic and the Hungarian affair

Elżbieta Helena Sieniawska *née* Lubomirska (1669–1729) is one of the most important figures in early eighteenth-century Poland-Lithuania. She was most commonly addressed in correspondence as My Lady Benefactor or My Enlightened Ladyship, but she was also called by her contemporaries the Queen without the crown and the First Lady of the Republic.¹⁴⁷ Scholars usually present Sieniawska as a patron of arts and a competent administrator.¹⁴⁸ Although these are important areas of her activity, they might be considered as only some among many other engagements. Her involvement in politics, which had its peak in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, drew on of both material and immaterial resources. In this chapter, I present Elżbieta Sieniawska's political horizon, arguing that she turned a quite conventional field of activity of a noblewoman into an impressive political vehicle, allowing her to play a role of a diplomatic intermediary. To showcase the highest possible number of colors and shades of Sieniawska's involvement in politics, I will sketch a portrait of her, highlighting her most important connections and their interdependence.

The scope of Sieniawska's involvement as a diplomatic intermediary during Rákóczi's War of Independence was quite different from that of George Stepney's. His role, although it also helped Rákóczi to avoid the thickets of ceremonial protocol while participating in political exchange, was more strictly regulated. What I mean by this is that, Stepney's actions vis-à-

¹⁴⁷ After Hanna Muszyńska-Hoffmanowa, *Panie na Wilanowie* [Ladies of the Wilanów Palace] (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1978), 326.

¹⁴⁸ See for example Piotr Bohdziewicz, *Korespondencja artystyczna Elżbiety Sieniawskiej z lat 1700–1729 w zbiorach Czartoryskich w Krakowie* [Artistic Correspondence of Elżbieta Sieniawska from the years 1700–1729 from the Czartoryskis Collection in Kraków] (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1964); Agnieszka Słaby, *Rządzicha Oleszycka. Dwór Elżbiety z Lubomirskich Sieniawskiej jako przykład patronatu kobiecego w czasach saskich* ["Rządzicha Oleszycka." Court of Elżbieta *née* Lubomirska Sieniawska as an Example of Women's Patronage in the Late Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century] (Kraków: Libron, 2014).

vis Rákóczi were facilitated but also limited by his diplomatic rank, while Sieniawska's involvement in high politics was unregulated as she was accountable neither in front of the monarch nor the Sejm. Her value as an intermediary came from her social position, which granted her—and by extension also those who could count on her help—an access to kings, princes, and foreign representatives.

Sieniawska's acquaintance with the French diplomats helped to embed Rákóczi's cause in the Polish-Lithuanian domestic context, and later to establish relations with Peter I. For Rákóczi the tsar was an especially valuable political partner since he was the only one with whom the prince signed an official agreement. To be able to facilitate such diplomatic connections, Sieniawska had to continuously confirm herself among her peers. She did that by controlling the ways she acted, where she stepped her foot, with whom she was meeting or corresponding, and quite literary what image of herself she displayed. For she could not rely on her rank or office, presenting herself as well-connected—through family, friends, or clients—contributed to perceiving her as an apt intermediary.

1. Elżbieta Sieniawska's portrait

Elżbieta Sieniawska was the only daughter of Stanisław Herakliusz Lubomirski (1642–1702), the Grand Marshal of the Crown, writer and patron of arts, and Zofia *née* Opalińska (1644–1675) called by the contemporaries the most learned Pole due to her interest in mathematics and music.¹⁴⁹ Both Lubomirski and Opaliński families belonged to the Poland-Lithuania intellectual and political elite and Elżbieta's formation was in conformity with her family's position. Between 1677 and 1680 she attended a school run by the Order of the Visitation of

¹⁴⁹ "Lubomirscy," and "Opalińscy," *Rody magnackie Rzeczypospolitej* [Magnate Families of Poland-Lithuania] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2002).

Holy Mary in Warsaw—virtually the only educational institution available for girls at that time—and afterward moved to the royal court.¹⁵⁰

Elżbieta was a lady-in-waiting to the Queen Marie-Casimire de La Grange d’Arquien (1641–1716), wife of Jan III Sobieski (r. 1674–1696). Queen’s court was a center of social, cultural and political life, a place where young noblewomen completed their education, gaining social refinement. Good manners, dancing, conducting a conversation in French, playing backgammon or cards, were not just some leisure activities, but skills that facilitated involvement in political affairs. Becoming one of the most trusted confidantes of the Queen in the 1690s, Elżbieta had an opportunity to master those skills while accompanying Marie-Casimire, who at that time was at the peak of her political activity.¹⁵¹ The Queen had a significant influence on young Elżbieta, determining her political orientation and allocating her a role in strengthening a pro-court and pro-French faction.

In 1687, enjoying queen’s support, Elżbieta married Adam Mikołaj Sieniawski (1666–1726). He was the son of Cecylia Maria Radziwiłł (c.1643–1682) and Court Marshal of the Crown and Crown Grand Hetman Mikołaj Hieronim (1645–1683), a relative of King Sobieski known for his pro-French sympathies. He studied in Lviv and at University in Kraków; traveled from Prague to Paris and London during his educational journey in 1684–1686.¹⁵² At that time of the wedding, Adam Mikołaj was the Starosta of Lviv, with a military experience gained during the Battle of Vienna, and an inherited fortune.

The reason why genealogy, family wealth, education, and connections gained at the royal court, war campaign, and Grand Tour are mentioned in detail here is because those

¹⁵⁰ Link-Lenczowski and Popiołek, “Sieniawska Elżbieta Helena z Lubomirskich.”

¹⁵¹ Bożena Popiołek, *Królowa bez korony. Studium z życia i działalności Elżbiety z Lubomirskich Sieniawskiej (ok. 1669–1729)* [Queen without the Crown. Study of Live and Activity of Elżbieta Sieniawska née Lubomirska] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe WSP, 1996), 18–19.

¹⁵² Anna Markiewicz, “Podróż edukacyjna Adama Mikołaja Sieniawskiego na zachód Europy (1684–1686) [The Educational Journey of Adam Mikołaj Sieniawski to Western Europe, 1684–1686],” *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace Historyczne* 133 (2006).

biographical particulars consisted on Sieniawskis' political capital on which they rely while climbing on the social ladder even higher. Adam Mikołaj's office as Voivode of Bełż (from 1691), Field Hetman of the Crown (from 1702), Grand Hetman of the Crown (from 1706), and Castellan of Kraków (from 1709) were goals on their own due to the prestige and financial benefits, but offices also provided a leverage in negotiation, as they guaranteed an actual influence on domestic politics. Elżbieta could not participate in her husband's duties, as the circumstances did not open the possibilities for her participation in the Sejm or leading the army at his side. But she could, however, extend his outreach, helping him to make more informed decisions as she could travel when he was occupied or maneuver the court environment with more confidence than he did.¹⁵³ As a fair share, she had a grip on the privileges and opportunities deriving from his political titles. One of the ways to communicate that to contemporaries was via visual means.

The earliest known depiction of Sieniawska overlaps with a period of her most active political involvement. It is also the most intriguing one from all her surviving portraits, standing out because of an unusual sartorial detail and composition. We cannot be sure where the portrait was hung initially, but it definitely perpetuated an image that was meant to be seen by many—there was a half-length replica made and a copy of that replica as well.¹⁵⁴ The visual message confirms the position she claimed, securing the highest ranks in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, acting as a patron and an intermediary. The portrait depicts her in a domineering pose, with her right arm rested on a hip, wearing a red delia coat with sable furring. Her blue overdress is pinned by a jeweled brooch, showing a white stoat lining. As the

¹⁵³ The concept of a working couple introduced by Florian Kühnel seems to be applicable to the Polish-Lithuanian reality as well. See Kühnel, ““Minister-like Cleverness, Understanding, and Influence on Affairs’: Ambassadors in Everyday Business and Courtly Ceremonies at the Turn of the Eighteenth Century.”

¹⁵⁴ Link-Lenczowski and Popiołek, “Sieniawska Elżbieta Helena z Lubomirskich.”

sable fur is a common attribute of the nobles, the stoat one is reserved for highest ranks of the peerage and royalty.¹⁵⁵



Picture 1. *Portrait of Elżbieta Helena Sieniawska*, Louis de Silvestre's workshop, the first quarter of the eighteenth c., in the collection of Museum of King Jan III's Palace in Wilanów.

¹⁵⁵ Sieniawska felt entitled to wear one because of her father, who was a Prince of the Holy Roman Empire. In correspondence, she is however due to honorific reasons constantly referred to as *księżna*, which translates to Duchess, not Princess.

The portrait follows the cannon of the baroque art of portraying. Within this cannon, an undefined landscape was sometimes replaced by a scene from the battle the subject of the painting fought in; a column which symbolizes stability was on occasion accompanied by a curtain referring to dignity; a pedestal under the column on which the subject rested his hand was from time to time changed for a table.¹⁵⁶ If the one who was portrayed was a male representative of the Polish-Lithuanian political nation, he would often wear a Polish dress, like this red delia coat. The layering of garments in the way that fabrics of the underlayers are displayed was characteristic for the Polish-Lithuanian male outfit, which was inspired by the Ottoman fashion.¹⁵⁷ Here, we have a noblewoman who may have changed a battlefield for a garden view and put on a dress under delia, but she nevertheless exploits visual attributes that were in her husband's repertoire, not hers.¹⁵⁸ As mentioned above, Sieniawska's other portraits follow more common ways of presenting noblewomen, like in an antique costume of Flora or Minerva referring to her art patronage activity or conventional, cameral aristocratic half-length characterization. However, this "delia portrait" was created around the time of her most active political involvement and is perhaps more telling than a detailed account of her network or summary of meetings and negotiations she attended. Certainly, the portrait dovetails with her political outreach, extended thanks to Adam Mikołaj's offices. Yet in contrast to his exposed position, her political activity was indirect and informal.¹⁵⁹ Posing in a delia coat, she was seizing his prerogatives, indicating his position as a base of her influence, one of the possible channels she could use to influence the course of politics.

¹⁵⁶ Tadeusz Chrzanowski, *Portret Staropolski* [Old Polish Portrait] (Warszawa: Interpress, 1995), 29–38.

¹⁵⁷ Adam Jasiński, "A Savage Magnificence: Ottomanizing Fashion and the Politics of Display in Early Modern East-Central Europe," *Muqarnas* 31 (2014), 2.

¹⁵⁸ Interestingly, a portrait of Sieniawska's daughter by an anonymous painter from the first half of the 18th century located in the Museum of King Jan III's Palace in Wilanów's collection shows her in a red horse riding habit (modeled on a male garment justacorps), holding a musket.

¹⁵⁹ See Sharon Kettering, "The Patronage Power of Early Modern French Noblewomen," *The Historical Journal* 32, no. 4 (December 1989).

The “delia portrait” was not the only occasion Sieniawska played on her gender role. Sometimes, she would try to protect herself and excuse herself from making difficult decisions by downplaying the influence a woman could have, like in winter 1708 when she tried to convince French ambassador that he must negotiate himself because “in such an important matter . . . nothing can be bargained by women”.¹⁶⁰ On another occasion, she would hunt; “smoke like a man” with the Tatar ambassador who came to Poland with peace proposals; show off her shooting skills in front of Rákóczi’s secretary or be worried that her husband’s reckless decision will be taken as made under her influence.¹⁶¹ Sieniawska wrote to Adam Mikołaj quite disturbed, criticizing his idea to compete for the Polish crown in 1707: “the blame will be on me, as if I made You, Sire, to do it; as it is natural for a woman, who even if possess no reason but ambition is forgiven. Everyone would understand [this as my idea] and blame it on me. But I prefer to lose everything but reason.”¹⁶² Sieniawska worked in cooperation with her husband, considering his career as a priority, but she could also act more independently than him; drawing from the prestige of her status as hetmaness or castellaness, yet not being limited by the office itself.

At the beginning of their marriage, the Sieniawskis were like pawns moved accordingly to the Lubomirskis’ or Marie-Casimire’s political strategy. With time, they gained more independence and learned how to make use of the opportunities a marriage of such fortunes and connections opened up for them. In August 1702, Elżbieta wrote to her husband with

¹⁶⁰ Elżbieta dictated the response to the French ambassador in the letter to her husband. See Elżbieta Sieniawska to Adam Mikołaj Sieniawski, 9 January, 1708, in Popiołek, Kicińska, and Słaby, *Korespondencja Elżbiety Lubomirskiej z Sieniawskich, kasztelanowej krakowskiej* [Correspondence of Elżbieta Sieniawska née Lubomirska, Castellaness of Cracow], 2016, 1:174.

¹⁶¹ Elżbieta Sieniawska to Adam Mikołaj Sieniawski, 27 October, 1707, in Popiołek, Kicińska, and Słaby, 1:165; Pál Ráday, *Ráday Pál iratai* [Pál Ráday’s Papers], ed. Kálmán Benda et al., vol. 1 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1955), 287; Monsieur de Mongrillon, *Pamiętnik sekretarza ambasady francuskiej w Polsce pod koniec panowania Jana III oraz w okresie bezkrólewia i wolnej elekcji po jego zgonie (1694–1698)* [Memoirs of the Secretary of the French Embassy in Poland at the End of the Reign of John III, and during the Interregnum and Election after His Death], ed. and trans. Łucja Częśćcik (Wrocław, 1982), 59.

¹⁶² Elżbieta Sieniawska to Andrzej Mikołaj Sieniawski, 9 July, 1707, in Popiołek, Kicińska, and Słaby, 1:165; Pál Ráday, *Ráday Pál iratai* [Pál Ráday’s Papers], ed. Kálmán Benda et al., vol. 1 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1955), 287; Monsieur de Mongrillon, *Pamiętnik sekretarza ambasady francuskiej w Polsce pod koniec panowania Jana III oraz w okresie bezkrólewia i wolnej elekcji po jego zgonie (1694–1698)* [Memoirs of the Secretary of the French Embassy in Poland at the End of the Reign of John III, and during the Interregnum and Election after His Death], ed. and trans. Łucja Częśćcik (Wrocław, 1982), 59.

caution: “I certainly will not do anything without a message from you, because I give a primacy to preserving your honor and you, My Heart, but think carefully, so that we are not as this candle which is lit up for the others, but it is burning itself, now everyone is thinking how to gain their own advantage”.¹⁶³ The context in which Elżbieta wrote those words indicates what became Sieniawskis’ advantage. Just a few lines above she mentions that it is unlikely that there will be an agreement with the Emperor for “this man says that it cannot be that the Emperor is dealing with the rebels”. “This man” was Prince Rákóczi who was staying incognito at Sieniawskis’ estates.

2. Hungarian affair

The Sieniawskis agreed to provide a safe house for Rákóczi after his daring escape from the Austrian prison, not on the basis of family relations with him but at the French prompting.¹⁶⁴ At the end of 1701, the French envoy to Augustus II Charles de Caradas du Hèron (1667–1703) reached out to Sieniawska with a request to provide an aid to the “miserable Prince Rákóczi”, remembering perhaps Elżbieta’s active support for the candidature of Prince of Conti for the Polish crown and her familiarity with his predecessor at the post, Melchior de Polignac.¹⁶⁵ For the Sieniawskis, getting involved in the Hungarian affair was a significant stand-alone political decision. At the beginning of the Northern War, belonging to the pro-French party opened up possibilities to influence the course of events in Poland-Lithuania and the Sieniawskis became the most important assets in that circle.¹⁶⁶ The involvement in the Hungarian affair was, on the one hand, proposed to them because they already were well-connected, and on the other hand, it posed an opportunity to prove their capabilities. Because

¹⁶³ Elżbieta Sieniawska to Adam Sieniawski, 18 August, 1702, in Popiołek, Kicińska, and Słaby, 1: 78.

¹⁶⁴ To my knowledge, there is no trace of Sieniawskis emphasizing family relation to Rákóczi. It clearly was more important in Rákóczi’s efforts to gain recognition.

¹⁶⁵ Elżbieta Sieniawska to Adam Sieniawskiego, 19 December, 1701, in Popiołek, Kicińska, and Słaby, 1: 64.

¹⁶⁶ Andrzej Link-Lenczowski, “Adam Mikołaj Sieniawski h. Leliwa,” *Internetowy Polski Słownik Biograficzny* [Polish Internet Biographical Dictionary] (Warszawa: Narodowy Instytut Audiowizualny), accessed April 23, 2018, <http://www.ipsb.nina.gov.pl/a/biografia/adam-mikolaj-sieniawski-leliwa>.

soon after Elżbieta was the one who pursued the intermediary role with more vigor—for Adam Mikołaj could not afford to openly oppose the King—the French and Hungarian connections helped especially in establishing her rank as a link between French diplomats, the Hungarian Malcontents, and the tsar. Political as well as military support which Rákóczi received thanks to Sieniawska's intermediation was substantial especially during the first years of the uprising.

Rákóczi issued an appeal to *All true Hungarians* which commenced the uprising against the House of Austria in 1703 at the Sieniawskis' family estate in Berezhany (Polish: Brzeżany).¹⁶⁷ From the outbreak of the Rákóczi's War of Independence, Sieniawska mediated in transferring money, arranging passports, recruiting troops, as well as purchasing weapons and ammunition (after convincing the King that the rifles are for her husband). Jaques Maron (d. 1729), French agent and a secretary of the Sieniawskis, was convinced that without her the purchase of ammunition and transfer of money would be impossible.¹⁶⁸ Later, Sieniawska also coordinated the transport of weapons for insurgents with the Russian troops present in Poland-Lithuania.¹⁶⁹

At the turn of 1705 and 1706 Jean-Louis d'Usson de Bonnac (1672–1738), at that time French ambassador to Stanisław Leszczyński, was counting on Sieniawska's help in mediating between the Confederates of Warsaw and Sandomierz and was willing to cooperate closer with Rákóczi through her intervention. At that time, the Sieniawskis balanced between the two fighting factions: anti-Saxon opposition endorsed by Sweden formed in Warsaw and anti-Swedish confederation backed by Russia formed in Sandomierz

¹⁶⁷ Link-Lenczowski and Popiołek, "Sieniawska Elżbieta Helena z Lubomirskich."

¹⁶⁸ Jaques Maron to Jean-Baptiste Colbert de Torcy, 6 September, 1703, after Émile Pillias, "La France et Rákóczi : origines véritables de l'intervention de Louis XIV [Franc and Rákóczi: True Reasons of Louis XIV's Intervention]," in *Études sur François II. Rákóczi, prince de Transylvanie* (Paris: Leroux, 1939), 47.

¹⁶⁹ Popiołek, *Królowa bez korony. Studium z życia i działalności Elżbiety z Lubomirskich Sieniawskiej (ok. 1669–1729)* [Queen without the Crown. Study of Live and Activity of Elżbieta Sieniawska née Lubomirska], 86.

in defense of Augustus II. Adam Mikołaj was delaying his access to the Warsaw Confederation while Elżbieta was maintaining contacts with the Swedes. In spring 1706, Adam Mikołaj was appointed the Grand Hetman of the Crown which linked him closer to the throne and influenced the Sieniawskis to stay at the Confederates of Sandomierz, also after Augustus II abdication.¹⁷⁰ Nevertheless, siding with the Confederates of Sandomierz did not mean breaking relations with other faction.

Elżbieta's contacts with the French diplomacy became her asset again, and between 1707 and 1709 she played a leading role in sustaining contacts with the French diplomats in Poland-Lithuania.¹⁷¹ Peter I, who was hoping for the French mediation in the peace talks with Sweden, insisted on meeting not only with Adam Mikołaj but also with Elżbieta, which happened in Lviv in February 1707. Immediately after she left to Warsaw seeking possibilities to contact the French representatives and Charles XII. Not long afterward, Bonnac left for France to examine Versailles' attitude towards peace proposals and a possible election in Poland-Lithuania. He was also to bring back Sieniawska's step-brother Józef Lubomirski. Lubomirski was sent to France for a late Grand Tour, with a task to establish closer ties with the court but managed only to waste money. Since tsar's proposal to open peace talks was a highly sensitive matter, getting back Lubomirski served as a convenient pretext for Bonnac's travel.

After seeing Bonnac in Warsaw, Elżbieta traveled south. She was in Mukachevo (Hungarian: Munkács) between 1 and 11 of March 1707. Rákóczi noted in his memoirs only that Sieniawska came to her estates in Skole, which is located next to his estates in Mukachevo in

¹⁷⁰ More on Adam Mikołaj Sieniawski's attitude towards the Confederations of Sandomierz and Warsaw see Mariusz Affek, "Adam Mikołaj Sieniawski wobec polityki Augusta II w latach 1701–1705 [Adam Mikołaj Sieniawski towards politics of Augustus II in the years 1701–1705]," *Przegląd Historyczny* 80 (1989).

¹⁷¹ Link-Lenczowski, "Adam Mikołaj Sieniawski h. Leliwa."

order to see him.¹⁷² Fortunately, Count Bercsényi, Chief General of the Hungarian insurgent army, in the letter from February anticipated the hetmaness' visit, which gives some insight into how an actual visit may have looked like:

We will come to the court of Your Majesty [Prince Rákóczi] on Saturday, on Sunday we will play, on Monday we will hunt, on Wednesday dance—until then Our Lady [Elżbieta Sieniawska] will come and we will start from the beginning, in the agreeable mood we will entertain ourselves; on Friday only preparation, on Saturday we will come here, on Sunday we will horse ride, also on Monday [there will be] a carnival party, on Tuesday in good moods we will finish.¹⁷³

Hunting—along with dining and dancing which will be mentioned in some more detail in the latter part of this chapter—was one of the pillars of aristocratic culture. Sieniawska's passion for horses and hunting was well-known, she, for example, received a couple of times packs of greyhounds and horses from Augustus II, so Bercsényi was probably not mistaken predicting the mood.

Besides taking part in activities mentioned by Bercsényi, during the visit Sieniawska participated in talks with Rákóczi and des Alleurs, representative of Louis XIV at the Rákóczi's court, with whom she stayed in contact at least from early 1706. The main issue was Peter I's attempt to get closer to France in order to commence and guarantee the peace talks with Sweden, but Bożena Popiołek suggests that Sieniawska was also the first to inform Rákóczi about tsar's willingness to see him on the Polish throne.¹⁷⁴ There are a few clues that allow suspecting that it was not Sieniawska who proposed Rákóczi as a candidate for a Polish-Lithuanian throne, and if she had ever expressed her support for this idea, it came rather as a result of tsar's pressure.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Rákóczi, *Confessions et Mémoires*, 430.

¹⁷³ After Hensel, *Kultura szlachecka w Europie środkowo-wschodniej w I połowie XVIII wieku* [Noble Culture in Central-Eastern Europe in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century], 88–9.

¹⁷⁴ Popiołek, *Królowa bez korony. Studium z życia i działalności Elżbiety z Lubomirskich Sieniawskiej (ok. 1669–1729)* [Queen without the Crown. Study of Live and Activity of Elżbieta Sieniawska née Lubomirska], 61.

¹⁷⁵ The role of Elżbieta as the *spiritus movens* behind the projects of Rákóczi's election was suggested for example by Jerzy R. Nowak and Andrzej Link-Lenczowski. See Jerzy R. Nowak, "Franciszek II Rakoczy a Polska [Ferenc II Rákóczi and Poland]," in *Studia z dziejów polsko-węgierskich stosunków literackich i*

Considering Rákóczi as the king of Poland-Lithuania became possible after Augustus II abdicated in September 1706, pursuant to the Treaty of Altranstädt. The tsar was left without a crowned ally in Poland-Lithuania. To prevent the Confederates of Sandomierz from dissolving and joining Leszczyński, Peter I had to endorse a competitive candidate to the Polish-Lithuanian throne. Rákóczi was not Peter I's first choice, but his popularity as a defender of noble rights and privileges make him a palatable one. Yet, Rákóczi's candidature in winter 1707 was still far less popular than that of the Sobieskis. Rákóczi may have increased his popularity among the Polish-Lithuanian nobles his letter to Confederate Council sent in February, which is a rhetorical masterpiece, striking the strings that were gladly heard by the Poles. His candidature could still potentially stir the chaos in Poland-Lithuania even more, which seems to be a fear shared by Sieniawska.¹⁷⁶

Moreover, Sieniawska was aware that whoever would be installed on the throne by Peter I, will be "Tsar's fool" walking with "muzzled head".¹⁷⁷ For that reason why she vigorously expressed her dissent when her husband came up as a possible candidate, and later, when Rákóczi agreed on tsar's proposal.¹⁷⁸ If she indeed informed the Prince about the possibility to make him a king in Poland-Lithuania during their meeting in Mukachevo, she likely did that with reluctance or at least seeing it as some kind of political leverage rather than a realistic alternative. Nevertheless, soon after Sieniawska left Mukachevo and met with Peter I in Żółkiew, tsar's representative came to Rákóczi. In the same year an agreement between Rákóczi and Peter I was signed, promising military aid, money and weapons to the insurgents. It is important to mention that tsar's support depended on the prospect of

kulturalnych, ed. Jan Reychma et al. (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1986) and Link-Lenczowski, "Adam Mikołaj Sieniawski h. Leliwa."

¹⁷⁶ *Ráday Pál iratai* [Ráday Pál's Papers], ed. Kálmán Benda and Ferenc Maksay, vol. 2 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1961), 84–6.

¹⁷⁷ Elżbieta Sieniawska to Adam Mikołaj Sieniawski, 9 July, 1707, in Popiołek, Kiciński, and Słaby, *Korespondencja Elżbiety Lubomirskiej z Sieniawskich, kasztelanowej krakowskiej* [Correspondence of Elżbieta Sieniawska née Lubomirska, Castellaness of Cracow], 2016, 1: 153–54.

¹⁷⁸ Pál Ráday to Ferenc II Rákóczi, 3 September, 1707, in *Ráday Pál Iratai* [Ráday Pál's Papers], 226.

Rákóczi's election as king of Poland-Lithuania, which connected closer the War of Independence of 1703–1711 with the Polish-Lithuanian domestic affairs.¹⁷⁹

The reasons behind Sieniawska's visit to Rákóczi's estates in Mukachevo could be explained by a sheer practice of sociability. Another justification, which explains her travels, involves the necessity to raise matters that was too sensitive to be mentioned on paper and which concerned not only Rákóczi but also individuals of his entourage. Considering the timing of her travels and proceeding events it seems that the latter is highly possible.

Serving as a link between the French diplomats and the Hungarian Malcontents is perhaps the most tangible proof of Sieniawska's role as a diplomatic intermediary during Rákóczi's War of Independence. For a number of other activities—such as her visit Mukachevo—there are mostly contextual evidences. Nevertheless, the amount of politically significant information is passed to her in writing by, for example, Bonnac, des Alleurs, and Rákóczi; or the frequency with which she is referenced in diplomatic correspondence suggesting that there indeed was a role in which she was cast.¹⁸⁰ The most explicit traces indicating Sieniawska's role in carrying out diplomatic tasks are left by Rákóczi himself.

However, the surviving correspondence between Rákóczi and Sieniawska, despite shading light on their relationship, can be useful in the context of this only to a limited extent. The main reason is that a bulk of the letter is dated after the War of 1703–1717, almost all of Sieniawska's letters, and focuses on unresolved financial issues. Overall, the content of letters is a fascinating blend of courtesy, requests, trivial everyday information, political news, and descriptions of military progress. News, wrapped with assurances of lasting

¹⁷⁹ Czigány, “A Rákóczi-szabadságharc és a közép- és kelet-európai hadihelyzet 1703–1711 [Rákóczi's War of Independence and the Military Situation in Central and Eastern Europe, 1703–1711].”

¹⁸⁰ See Tóth, *Correspondance diplomatique relative à la guerre d'indépendance du Prince François II Rákóczi, 1703–1711* [Diplomatic Correspondence Relating to the War of Independence of Prince Ferenc II Rákóczi, 1703–1711].

affection, take the most place. Some of the letters are short, clearly written in haste; other have a well-crafted form. On one occasion Sieniawska even quoted poetry, smilingly complying with the convention of love letters. Nevertheless, her choice of Horace's ode *Iustum et tenacem propositi* (On Integrity and Perseverance) could apply equally to political as to more personal context¹⁸¹. The political sphere in their letters unavoidably overlapped with the private one.

The correspondence presents an asymmetric picture of their relationship: there only fifteen letters of Sieniawska, and among them only one is dated before 1711. Moreover, this asymmetry seems even greater in the perspective of Rákóczi's memoirs in which he famously blamed himself for surrendering to "the sinful passion" and sustaining the relationship with Sieniawska due to political reasons.¹⁸² For Sieniawska, the affair with Rákóczi was not the first time she combined political affairs with personal ones. At the beginning of her marriage with Adam Sieniawski, her relationship with Voivode Jan Stanisław Jabłonowski (1669–1731) caused a scandal. Soon after the crisis was obviated, the rumors about Sieniawska's affair with Prince Aleksander Sobieski appeared. The details of both affairs are not clear, but politics played a role in both cases, and Marie-Casimire's contribution is more than likely. The queen was the one who reproached Sieniawska, accusing her former lady-in-waiting of abandoning her son for Rákóczi. It seems that political calculations made by Sieniawska in new circumstances outweighed attachment to Prince Sobieski, and later also to Prince Rákóczi.

Although the disproportion of the correspondence prevents from making any firm claims, it seems that Rákóczi was more engaged, as he could ultimately gain more. He frequently asked

¹⁸¹ Sieniawska to Rákóczi, 12 March, 1708, in Tüskés, Köpeczi, and Kovács, *Correspondance de François II Rákóczi et de la Palatine Elżbieta Sieniawska, 1704–1727* [Correspondence of Ferenc II Rákóczi to Castellaness Elżbieta Sieniawska], 70.

¹⁸² Rákóczi, *Confessions et Mémoires*, 512.

for favors. From time to time the prince requested Sieniawska to persuade someone, like for example tsar's diplomat Alexander Menshikov (1673–1729), what confirms his confidence in Sieniawska's capabilities.¹⁸³ The fact that Rákóczi did not back from pleading could be an expression of the convention, but it perhaps also reveal the importance of Sieniawska for him, not merely his affection for her. For example, in October 1710 he wrote that:

I am very confused, honestly despaired, because you are moving away from my borders in this circumstances when I can count only on your friendship. Is it possible that I am persecuted by fate by depriving me of these pleasures which I was expecting and I could not confer with you . . . Please change your intentions and do not leave.¹⁸⁴

A month later he continued in a similar tone, stating that if she will not travel to Skole to meet with Bercsényi then “all [my] hopes will be gone”.¹⁸⁵ In 1711, after the Treaty of Szatmár was concluded, Rákóczi had a reason to bind all his hopes with Sieniawska once again.

3. Zofia Sieniawska's baptism celebration in 1711

On July 6, 1711, King Augustus II, Tsar Peter I, and Prince Rákóczi met in the city of Jarosław, south-eastern Poland. The event which gathered the three crowned heads in one place was a baptism of Zofia Maria Sieniawska (1699–1771), the daughter of the Adam Mikołaj and Elżbieta, to whom the three rules acted as godfathers.

Zofia Maria Sieniawska was 13 years old when the baptism took place. She was the only surviving daughter of Adam Mikołaj and Elżbieta, the sole heiress of a considerable fortune. As it was a common practice, especially towards girls, she was likely already given baptism by water only just after her birth.¹⁸⁶ The repetition of the sacrament and postponement of a

¹⁸³ Ferenc Rákóczi to Elżbieta Sieniawska, 8 September, 1709, and later on 28 May, 1710, in Tüskés, Köpeczi, and Kovács, *Correspondance de François II Rákóczi et de la Palatine Elżbieta Sieniawska, 1704–1727* [Correspondence of Ferenc II Rákóczi and Palatiness Elżbieta Sieniawska], 81 and 87.

¹⁸⁴ Ferenc Rákóczi to Elżbieta Sieniawska, 22 October, 1710, in Tüskés, Köpeczi, and Kovács, 92–3.

¹⁸⁵ Ferenc Rákóczi to Elżbieta Sieniawska, 28 November, 1710, in Tüskés, Köpeczi, and Kovács, 100.

¹⁸⁶ Popiołek, *Królowa bez korony. Studium z życia i działalności Elżbiety z Lubomirskich Sieniawskiej (ok. 1669–1729)* [Queen without the Crown. Study of Live and Activity of Elżbieta Sieniawska née Lubomirska],

more grandiose celebration was conditioned first and foremost by the prestige factor. While Tsarina Catherina I was expecting, the tsar proposed Elżbieta to be a godmother to his child. The Sieniawskis reciprocated the invitation asking for Peter I's assist during their daughter's baptism.¹⁸⁷ The confessional differences seem to be of little significance.

The choice of the godfathers and the fact the three of them were present during the ceremony tell a lot about the prestige the Sieniawski family enjoyed and the connections they had. It seems that at least Elżbieta's correspondence circle seen the choice as natural and appropriate. Jadwiga Rafałowiczówna, castellanness' protégé and informer in Warsaw replied to the news in these words:

I am very pleased, that it happened, that such great monarchs You, My Gracious Lady Benefactor, have as friends and Her Gracious Miss Castellanness as godparents because it was the right thing that a daughter and heiress born to such fine parents had alike at the holy baptism. Not only the whole world but also heaven should pay My Gracious Lady Benefactor the compliment, because it was providence what had its mark upon the years of waiting.¹⁸⁸

The list of guests invited to the baptism was indeed impressive. If a few years of waiting for a celebration was a price for appropriately prestigious arrangements, it seemed to be a price worth paying.

The only known account of the celebration is authored by Adam Szathmáry Király, a nobleman who traveled in the Rákóczi's entourage. It reads as follows:

At this day we came to Jarosław to the Grand Hetman Sieniawski, because at this day he hosted His Majesty the Muscovy Tsar, Tsarina, HM the King, the King's Son, the Prince's wife, Duchess Radziwłł, C[ount] Bercsényi, his Wife and other Princes, Polish Palatines, Generals, and Starosts altogether [...] there were four long tables, at the first the mentioned persons were seated; at the other place, at the other tables remaining people were seated. At this day there was a baptism of Sieniawski's

30; Agata Muszyńska, "Zosia Sieniawska (1699–1771) w listach do ojca [Zosia Sieniawska in Letters to Her Father]," *Wiek Stare i Nowe* 5 (2013), 40.

¹⁸⁷ Popiołek, *Królowa bez korony. Studium z życia i działalności Elżbiety z Lubomirskich Sieniawskiej* (ok. 1669–1729) [Queen without the Crown. Study of Live and Activity of Elżbieta Sieniawska née Lubomirska], 80.

¹⁸⁸ Jadwiga Rafałowiczówna to Elżbieta Sieniawska, 18 June, 1711 in Rafałowiczówna Jadwiga, *A z Warszawy nowiny te... Listy do Elżbiety Sieniawskiej z lat 1710–1720* [And from Warsaw the News is As Follows... Letters to Elżbieta Sieniawska From the Years 1710–1720], ed. Bożena Popiołek (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Pedagogicznej, 2000), 12.

13-year old daughter; after the dinner, the Lords went dancing. The dances lasted until the midnight, then everyone went to their lodgings.¹⁸⁹

It is not much of information, not even all of the guests are identifiable. Beside the Tsar and the Tsarina, King Augustus II, and Rákóczi (not mentioned in the paragraph) there was also Prince Konstanty Sobieski (1680–1726), Rákóczi's wife Charlotte Amalie von Hessen-Rheinfels, Duchess Anna Radziwiłłowa *née* Sanguszko (1676–1746) and Count Miklós Bercsényi with his wife. We can assume that all of them were seated at the first table mentioned by Szathmáry Király. Having more information on the food and drinks consumed, music played and dances danced would allow for a more extended analysis, but it is still possible to offer an interpretation of the events.

Thanks to the other sources we know that Sieniawska through Gdańsk, Kraków, Wrocław, and Lviv brought alcohol and exclusive commodities, such as oysters or citrus fruits.¹⁹⁰ Because of the proximity to Hungary, we can expect that the Hungarian wines were in majority, although it is very likely that she served French ones as well.¹⁹¹ Because the time she spent at the royal court, we could suspect also that the style of food served was specific for Poland-Lithuania blend of local and French tastes.¹⁹² To put more dangerous speculations aside, we know that she paid attention to the appropriate housekeeping and that she paid attention to the appropriate arrangements of her daughter's baptism celebration, as it was a

¹⁸⁹ Ádám Szathmári Király, "Szathmári Király Ádám napló-könyve 1711–1717 [The Diary of Adam Szathmári Király, 1711–1717]," in *Rákóczi Tár: történelmi érdekű naplók, emlékiratok, levelezések, pátensek, hadiszabályok, országgyűlési diariumok és törvényczikkek gyűjteménye II. Rákóczi Ferencz korához*, ed. Kálmán Thaly, vol. 1 (Pest: Lauffer Vilmos, 1866), 238.

¹⁹⁰ Piotr Morzycki to Elżbieta Sieniawska, 4 April, 1715; Elżbieta Sieniawska to Piotr Morzycki, 24 October, 1718, in Popiołek, Kicińska, and Słaby, *Korespondencja Elżbiety Lubomirskiej z Sieniawskich, kasztelanowej krakowskiej* [Correspondence of Elżbieta Sieniawska *née* Lubomirska, Castellaness of Cracow], 2016, 2: 269, 310–311; Elżbieta Sieniawska to Adam Mikołaj Sieniawski, 11 July, 1708, Popiołek, Kicińska, and Słaby, *Korespondencja Elżbiety Lubomirskiej z Sieniawskich, kasztelanowej krakowskiej* [Correspondence of Elżbieta Sieniawska *née* Lubomirska, Castellaness of Cracow], 2016, 1: 204–5.

¹⁹¹ Dorota Dias-Lewandowska, *Historia kulturowa wina francuskiego w Polsce od połowy XVII do początku XIX wieku* [Cultural Wine History in Poland from the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century to the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century] (Warszawa: Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie, 2014), 37–46.

¹⁹² Jarosław Dumanowski, Łukasz Próba, and Maciej Truściński, eds., *Księga Szafarska dworu Jana III Sobieskiego 1695–1696* [The Upkeep Book of Jan III Sobieski's Court] (Warszawa: Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie, 2013).

way of confirming the social status in front of a demanding audience. For Rákóczi, this celebration served as an occasion to pursue political goals; an occasion especially welcomed in his situation.

The three monarchs had interacted years before, but the political exchange was carried mostly through proxies. One of the exceptions was a meeting between Augustus II and Peter I in Rava Ruska in 1698. However, it was arranged on the way back of Peter I's Grand Embassy during which the Tsar was traveling incognito.¹⁹³ When there was an audience and a political exchange at the forefront, the monarchs used intermediaries to avoid compromising delicate matters of sovereignty.¹⁹⁴ The settings were similar to those during the Anglo-Dutch mediations between Rákóczi and the emperor in 1706. This time, the crowned heads in their roles of godfathers dined and danced with the Sieniawski family confirming their character of appropriate table companions, but also their role in the Polish internal politics and intermediaries for foreign powers.

Zofia Maria's baptism celebration was clearly a display of the significance and influence of the Sienawski family, but it also created circumstances which allowed an informal, personal meeting of the three monarchs to happen. Elżbieta Sieniawska for years acted as one of the most influential actors on the Polish-Lithuanian domestic political scene, Rákóczi's liaison between the Polish, French and Russian courts, and Peter I's contact with the French and Swedish diplomats. The celebration in Jarosław set-up an informal setting, allowing the monarchs, noblemen, and noblewomen to interact without any proxies, and it made Rákóczi's presence there unproblematic.

¹⁹³ Władysław A. Serczyk, "Wielkie Poselstwo [Grand Embassy]," in *Piotr I Wielki* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1973), 59.

¹⁹⁴ On the importance of incognito meetings between rulers see Hennings, "The Semiotics of Diplomatic Dialogue: Pomp and Circumstance in Tsar Peter I's Visit to Vienna in 1696."

In the early modern world, the lines between formal and informal, public and private, political and familial spheres were not firmly stated. On July 6, 1711, the three crowned heads were members of the highest social echelon participating in a familial-religious event, which was a pretext to showcase the Sieniawski family domestic and foreign political connections. At the same time, it was a rare occasion for rulers to interact directly. The prove of political underlying of the baptism celebration in Jarosław can be found in Rákóczi's letter to Louis Fierville le Herissy, Louis XIV's diplomat. Rákóczi referred his talks with the tsar and Augustus II, stating that he "can say to have succeeded in everything."¹⁹⁵ Rákóczi's hopes in continuing his struggle for independence with the help of Peter I and Augustus II were illusory. However, without Sieniawska's involvement as an intermediary—who provided not only the site for political exchange but facilitated establishing it at the first place—this attempt to continue the war against the Habsburg would not be possible. Similarly, Sieniawska's help given to Rákóczi after his escape from the Austrian prison was the main factor allowing him to continue his struggle against the Habsburgs.

¹⁹⁵ Ferenc Rákóczi to Louis Fierville, 18 June, 1711, in Tóth, *Correspondance diplomatique relative à la guerre d'indépendance du prince François II Rákóczi, 1703–1711* [Diplomatic Correspondence Relating to the War of Independence of Prince Ferenc II Rákóczi, 1703–1711], 358–59.

Conclusion

Not long before the negotiations between Prince Ferenc II Rákóczi and the House of Austria broke down English Secretary of State, Robert Harley, wrote to George Stepney who mediated between conflicted sides: “I wish they [Malcontents] may see before it is too late, that the Mediators are the best friends they have in the world”.¹⁹⁶ There is a certain degree of exaggeration in this statement, as undoubtedly there also is in Elżbieta Sieniawska’s declaration that she lived to serve Rákóczi.¹⁹⁷ Nevertheless, both Stepney and Sieniawska proved to be important political partners for Rákóczi. Their significance came from their ability to establish diplomatic channels through which Rákóczi could participate in the political process, circumventing the problematic issue of recognition.

Informed by new diplomatic history, this thesis aimed to capture the role and character of diplomatic intermediaries by examining the activity of the Elżbieta Sieniawska and George Stepney during the War of 1703–1711. Focusing on two individuals who received little attention in the studies concerning the War of 1703–1711 allowed me to look at Rákóczi foreign relation from an unusual angle, introducing English and Polish-Lithuanian context, as well as to closely examine the early modern diplomatic practice. By relying mostly on ego-documents, I tried to introduce individual perspectives of actors who participated in high politics on different terms and shaped it in different ways.

Castelanness of Kraków Elżbieta Sieniawska was one of the most influential figures in Poland-Lithuania at the beginning of the eighteenth century. As showed in the third chapter,

¹⁹⁶ Robert Harley to George Stepney, January 8, 1706, in Simonyi, *Angol diplomatiai Iratok II. Rákóczi Ferencz korára* [English Diplomatic Papers Concerning the Age of Ferenc II Rákóczi], 1873, 2:335.

¹⁹⁷ Elżbieta Sieniawska to Ferenc Rákóczi, 12 March, 1708, in Tüskés, Köpeczi, and Kovács, *Correspondance de François II Rákóczi et de la Palatine Elżbieta Sieniawska, 1704–1727* [Correspondence of Ferenc II Rákóczi and Palatiness Elżbieta Sieniawska], 72.

her position was built on genealogy, family wealth, education, and connections gained at the Sobieskis royal court. As a wife of Adam Mikołaj, Voivode of Belż (from 1691), Field Hetman of the Crown (from 1702), Grand Hetman of the Crown (from 1706), and Castellan of Kraków (from 1709) Elżbieta could profit from privileges and opportunities deriving from her husband's political titles. On the one hand, Sieniawska's political horizon was limited by her gender (as she could not, for example, compete for offices for herself). On the other hand, however, she proved that a conventional field of activity of a noblewoman such as sociability could be transformed into an impressive political vehicle. Because her political presence was unregulated; because she was accountable neither in front of the monarch nor the Sejm, she could maneuver within the heavily decentralized framework of Poland-Lithuania's politics with a greater liberty than, for example, her husband. Due to the extent of her personal network Sieniawska could reach high-ranking ears not attracting too much of attention. Precisely because she operated at the intersection of the private and public spheres, she was especially suited to bring forward delicate unofficial proposals or provide an occasion on which such proposals could have been made, for example during Zofia Sieniawska's baptism celebration in 1711. For Rákóczi, who tried to confirm his princely status among crown heads, unofficial channels of political communications opened by Sieniawska were of great value.

George Stepney, who is a central figure of the second chapter, was a career diplomat, acknowledged poet, and translator. Coming from a rather modest background he raised in a diplomatic service due to his overtures to present himself as a man of letters who possessed a considerable knowledge of the German-speaking world, and patronage of high-ranking friends, such as Charles Montagu. The fusion of interest in scholarship, poetry, and politics was common among diplomats at that time, especially among "men of business".

Stepney's second mission at the imperial court appeared to be one of the high points in his career. As envoy extraordinary and plenipotentiary, commuting between the location of Hungarian Malcontents and imperial court, he acted accordingly to the English interest, cooperating with the Dutch representatives. Moreover, assisting in negotiating a peace treaty between Rákóczi and the emperor was an opportunity for Stepney to advance his career. Even though that no treaty was concluded as a result of Anglo-Dutch mediation, for Rákóczi the fact that the emperor agreed on the mediation of the representatives of foreign governments who used his princely titles provide an argument for acknowledging his sovereign status by the House of Austria.

In the analysis of diplomacy carried out during Rákóczi's War of Independence, I focused mostly on the socio-cultural framework with an intent to examine how Rákóczi's foreign policy resonated in Polish and English contexts, from the perspective of his diplomatic partners. In both Polish and English cases what contributed to Rákóczi's diplomatic successes—understood as successful appeals to third parties—was a convergence of interests.

For both Sieniawska and Stepney involvement in Rákóczi's War of Independence was guided primarily by prospects of strengthening their position in a domestic context. In the case of Stepney becoming a diplomatic intermediary, or even siding with the Malcontents, resulted from his understanding of the role of a diplomat. Establishing a peace between Rákóczi and the Habsburgs, independently from Protestant sympathies, was an objective of English foreign policy. Assisting in concluding an agreement between the two conflicted side would certainly have been rewarded. For Sieniawska, it seems that acting as a proxy between various factions was a way of positioning herself and her husband in the most favorable political setup. When Rákóczi entered the Polish-Lithuanian domestic scene as a candidate for the royal crown in 1707, factors such as genealogy or legal tradition started to play a more

prominent role than Rákóczi's attempt at trying to win over individual magnates, such as the Sieniawskis. Therefore, depending on the circumstances, Rákóczi's rhetoric arsenal and his chancellery could indeed bring some victories.

What I proposed in this thesis by introducing a broad definition of a diplomatic intermediary is to consider the activity of individuals coming from a different background, having different status or possibilities to influence high politics. In consequence, I could examine the political impact of the actions of George Stepney which fell into the formal duties of a diplomat, and of Elżbieta Sieniawska whose presence in political life was not formally regulated. For Rákóczi, as it is examined in this thesis, the involvement of both Stepney and Sieniawska in his War of Independence was of great importance. However, to fully grasp the significance of diplomatic intermediaries during the War of 1703–1711 or to capture a fuller picture of Rákóczi's foreign relations, it is necessary to include activities of a number of individuals who so far received little attention in the scholarship. In this thesis, I could present only a cutting.

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Appendix

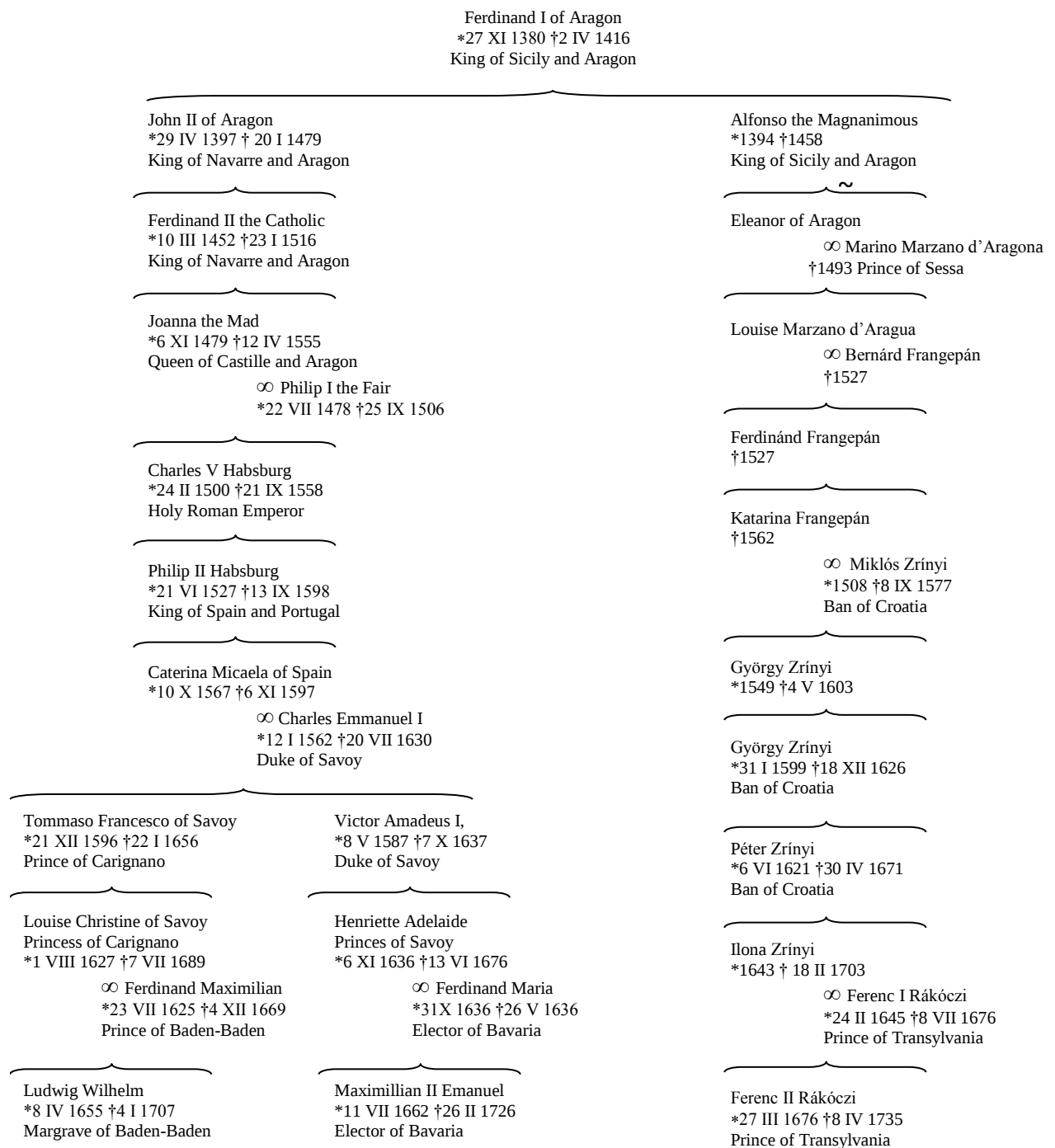


Table 1. Rákóczi's kinship with the margrave of Baden and the elector of Bavaria

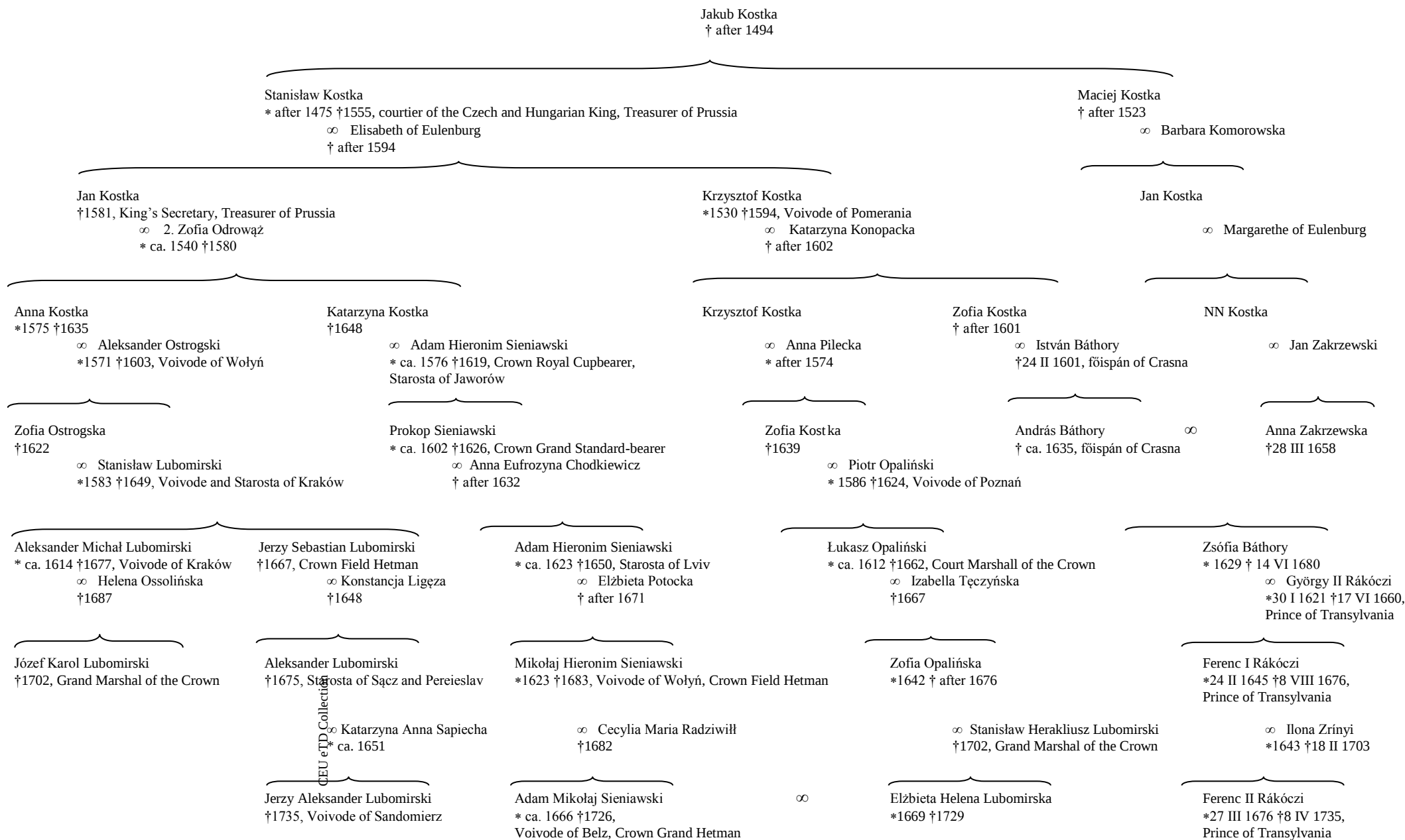


Table 2. Rákóczi's kinship with the Polish-Lithuanian noble families