

**ANDRÉ-JOSEPH LAFITTE-CLAVÉ AND THE FRENCH MILITARY
MISSION OF 1784 TO THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE**

By

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Abstract

The present work examines the French military mission of 1784 to the Ottoman Empire. The main focus of the thesis is André-Joseph Lafitte-Clavé, a military engineer and prominent member of said mission. He spent four years in the Empire teaching fortification to a select number of students and traveled the Empire extensively to evaluate its defensive capabilities and improve upon them. Throughout his stay, he recorded his experiences in multiple pieces of writing. These documents serve as the primary source for my inquiry. This corpus is a rich source of depictions of the social life of foreigners in 18th-century Istanbul and also provides fascinating details about how knowledge sharing happened. The study aims at uncovering his role in the diffusion of Western military knowledge in the Ottoman Empire and understanding his personal experience throughout his stay.

Acknowledgements

One of my professors, Evgenia Kermali, once said there are two types of acknowledgments found in scholarly works. The first type is short where the author thanks those whose work had an influence on theirs, and the second type is a long-winded one where the author thanks everyone in their life. As the process of writing this thesis got drawn out, so did the list of people I felt the need to thank, and slowly, from type one, this acknowledgment grew into type two.

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Introduction

In 1783, the Kingdom of France agreed to send a military contingent of engineers, instructors, and other military specialists to aid the Ottoman Empire in reforming its military apparatus. The mission consisted of several groups of professionals with diverse tasks ranging from drill sergeants to shipbuilders. The most senior officer in the delegation was the engineer André Joseph Lafitte-Clavé (1740-1794). His primary assignment was the establishment of an engineering corps according to contemporary European standards. The French soldiers stayed in the Empire until 1789 when they had to leave due to the outbreak of the war between Russia and Turkey.

The scholarship of Ottoman military history that likes to obsess over the importance of Western military experts, such as the Comte de Bonneval (1675-1747) or the Baron de Tott (1733-1793), has, on the whole, ignored this episode of history. I would go as far as to say that the attention received by the two formerly mentioned French gentlemen is disproportionate. Partially, this thesis was born out of my fascination with and frustration with the term “Western military experts” and their treatment in the literature. It is a frequent trend to see the term mentioned without further elaboration, sources, or even names given. Moreover, even when some explanation is given, it often refers to a paltry list of Bonneval, Tott, and “others”. I spent much time wondering who could lie behind the “other” moniker. There are a few works in more recent scholarship that seriously undertook the challenging task of filling the gaps for these others. With this thesis, I wish to join their ranks.

The thesis aims to gain a better understanding of this mission. My two main research questions are: What did the parties involved hope to achieve, and

how did the transfer of ideas and diffusion of military knowledge occur? To answer these questions, the thesis will mainly focus on the mission's leader, Lafitte-Clavé. His writings—a journal, two travelogues, a textbook, a report, and a few letters—comprise the corpus of text that will serve as the bases of this task.

Even though it is a very niche topic within Ottoman military history, some work has been done that partially covers the mission of 1784 and Lafitte-Clavé. The first and most comprehensive bibliography of Clavé himself was published by Bernard Duvignau in 1879.¹ The short paper summarizes his life in a more patriotic rather than scholarly manner. However, no better work has appeared since then, and virtually all other works on Clavé use Duvignau's writing as its basis. A significant shortfall of Duvignau's paper is that it mostly skips Clavé's time in the Ottoman Empire. Fortunately, some Turkish scholars covered this period. The tome on the history of ITU, edited by Mehmet Karaca, contains helpful passages about French engineers.² More recently, Hümeýra Bostan's thesis, while not focused on Clavé, covered much ground about his work in the Ottoman Empire.³ The mission itself is nearly as poorly covered as its most famous participant. It is somewhat known in contemporary literature and appears from time to time as a quick mention or throwaway footnote. One of the first comprehensive presentations of it can be found in Léonce Pingaud's book on

¹ Bernard Étienne Marie Duvignau, "Le Général Lafitte-Clavé," *Revue de l'Agenais et Des Anciennes Provinces Du Sud-Ouest : Historique, Littéraire, Scientifique & Artistique* VI (1879): 415–419.

² Mustafa Kaçar et al., "Lafitte-Clavé ve Diğer Fransız Uzman ve Subayların Osmanlı Reform Hareketindeki Yeri," in *Istanbul Teknik Üniversitesi ve Mühendislik Tarihimiz*, ed. Mehmet Karaca (Istanbul: Mehmet Karaca, 2012), 67–103.

³ Hümeýra Bostan, "Defending the Ottoman Capital Against the Russian Threat: Late Eighteenth Century Fortifications of Istanbul" (Istanbul, İstanbul Şehir University, 2020).

Auguste de Choiseul-Gouffier (1752-1817), the French ambassador to Constantinople between 1784 and 1791.⁴

Thesis Outline

In this part, I intend to provide a short overview of the historical background that led to the launching of the mission. In the first part of the chapter, I briefly summarize the history of the Ottoman Army from its conception to the 18th century. This part will focus on the army's transformation in the 17th and 18th centuries, which eventually led to the need to invite foreign experts. The concepts of "decline" and the "Military Revolution" will also be discussed concisely in this section. In the second part of the chapter, I will deal with the Franco-Ottoman relations, presenting the diplomatic relations of the two empires from the 16th century up to the Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815). Furthermore, I am dedicating a longer subsection to the military aspect of this relationship. In this part, I will deal with French "renegades" such as the mercenaries of Pápa and the Comte de Bonneval and the impromptu-appointed military reformer Baron de Tott.

In the second chapter, I will analyze the two travelogues of Lafitte-Clavé. Clavé took two extensive journeys in the Empire, one right after his arrival around the Black Sea region. His account of the journey contains his first impressions of the Empire and its inhabitants. The second, much shorter journey took place in the Mediterranean. The second journey was much shorter than the first one, and while officially it had a military goal, it seemed more like a

⁴ Léonce Pingaud, *Choiseul-Gouffier, La France En Orient Sous Louis XVI* (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1887).

vacation. As this account contains less, it will not be discussed separately; it will only be referenced sporadically.

The third chapter deals with Clavé's stay in Istanbul. This part of the mission is the longest and most well-documented. His personal journal/logbook is an exhaustive source of the life of Europeans in the Ottoman capital. I will analyze his role as a teacher and as a trans-imperial subject, focusing on his teaching methods and role in spreading knowledge.

1. Historical Background

When Abdülhamid I (r.1774-1789) ascended the throne of the Ottoman Empire in 1774, he found himself in a most challenging situation. His brother, the former Sultan Mustafa III (r. 1757-1774), had left the country in disarray before his untimely death.⁵ His most immediate concern was the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774, which had exhausted the Empire's resources.⁶ During the war, the

⁵ The rule of Mustafa III was externally peaceful for the most part; however, major internal problems were brewing that the war brought to the surface. Most notably, several Greek uprisings in the Peloponnesian peninsula that were actively helped by the Russian army. The Orlov revolt was named after the admiral Alexei Orlov (1737-1808), who led the Russian forces. Such a severe armed uprising in the heart of the Empire presented Ottoman leadership with a dire future. Their response, which proved quite ferocious, was to put down the uprising mainly using Albanian troops. For more on the revolt, see Thomas W. Gallant, *The Edinburgh History of the Greeks, 1768 to 1913; The Long Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015) 28-57. Apart from the Orlov revolt, another contingent of the Russian Navy made its way into the Mediterranean and focused its efforts on supporting Middle-Eastern rebels against the Empire. For more on the major Middle Eastern rebellions against the Ottomans during the war, see Ahmad Hasan Joudah, *Revolt in Palestine in the Eighteenth Century; The Era of Shaykh Zahir al-Umar* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2013), 63–81.; Selda Güner, "Mısır'da Âsi Bir Memlûk: Bulutkapan Ali Bey (El-Kebîr)," *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 53/1 (2013): 155–182.

⁶ When the Ottomans declared war on Russia in 1768, the war seemed more than winnable to them. The Russians were engaged in a war on two fronts as they were fighting the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the same time. However, the tide of the war quickly turned against them. The Russians successfully opened up multiple fronts against them, and with the partition of Poland in 1772, they could fully concentrate on the Ottomans. Famine, logistic difficulties, and the dysfunctionality of the leadership considerably set back their war efforts. Furthermore, internal rebellions, the advancing Russian forces, and the threat of another war from Austria forced the Ottomans to accept the humiliating peace treaty of Küçük Kaynarca. Virginia Aksan, "The One-Eyed Fighting the Blind: Mobilization, Supply, and Command in the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774," *The International History Review* 15/2 (1993): 221–238.

Russian troops managed to get closer to the capital than ever before, which must have significantly increased the anxiety of the Ottoman leadership. With the front getting closer, trouble brewing in the east, and no sign of the tide changing, the Ottomans pursued peace, and the Russians were more than happy to oblige. The treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774), which eventually ended the war, was a humiliating blow for the Ottomans. They lost their near absolute control over the Black Sea, and more importantly, Russia gained the right to protect the Christian subjects of the Empire and intervene in the principalities if they saw fit.⁷ These latter two points lead to later conflicts. The treaty was a loss of sovereignty, something the Ottomans never suffered before. Now, the threat that the Russian Empire posed to the existence of the Ottoman Empire cannot be denied. It was clear that without some substantial change, the Russians would most likely invade and crush the Ottoman army as they did before. Substantially reforming the army and developing the defense infrastructure of the Bosphorus was the clear course of action. While Abdülhamid is generally remembered as a pious and religious ruler, he also exhibited a great interest and, one might even say, tact in matters of government, and his reign was focused on securing these goals and, in general, maintaining peace.⁸ His task was not easy. The Empire's

⁷ While the territorial losses outlined in Articles XVIII-XXI and the loss of authority over the Crimean Khanate were severe enough, the Ottoman state also suffered a profound loss of face with their concessions regarding Christian subjects. The Russians demanded the right of religious freedom to be acknowledged in several parts of the Empire, the protection of Christian subjects and churches in particular. Furthermore, the infamous Article VIII granted free access to the Holy Places in Jerusalem; in 1853, this article came to serve as the legal basis for the Crimean War.

⁸ Besides the Russian threat looming over their heads, the eastern front was also causing problems. In Iran, a new political power, the Zand dynasty, was rising. Iran fell into a state of turmoil after the death of Nādir Shāh (r. 1736-1747). The Zand dynasty of Western-Iranian Kurdish origins emerged victorious from the power struggles between local dynasties. In just a few decades, they solidified their power enough to challenge even the Ottomans. The result was a short war between the two Middle-Eastern powers that ended with the Ottomans losing Bagdad. However, shortly after, the Zand dynasty began to decline, allowing the Ottomans some peace on their eastern front. John Perry, "The Zand Dynasty," in *The Cambridge History of Iran. Vol.7: From*

economic situation was not as secure as it used to be, and there were severe internal problems. He had to wait until 1783 to invite the French, and even though that plan worked out well, a new Russian and Austrian war disturbed the process, and the mission had to be aborted prematurely, not to mention the more imminent troubles the wars had caused.

His preparations were interrupted when Russia attacked in 1787, and Austria decided to take the opportunity and declare war the following year. The two concurrent conflicts overwhelmed the Ottomans. With renewed rebellions amongst the Greeks, the situation quickly turned dire, and both wars ended in a loss. Abdülhamid did not live long enough to see that, as he died in 1789 after suffering a stroke upon hearing the fall of the castle of Özü.⁹ The war was too much for both Empire and emperor to bear.

1.1.A Short History of the Ottoman Army

The Ottoman Empire was often characterized as a “military empire” whose sole *raison d'être* was conquest. It is a very outdated view that nonetheless shows what it was that captured the attention of the outside spectators and early scholars of the Empire. It is undeniable that the Ottomans had made some remarkable achievements in the field of military affairs. In the early 14th century, when the Ottomans stepped onto the stage of history, they were just a small, unassuming beylicate amongst far more prominent and notable Seljuk successor states. Possessing an army mainly made up of light cavalrymen and utilizing quick hit-and-run tactics and raiding, characteristic of nomadic warfare, they managed to contend with even the power of the

Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic., ed. Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly, and Charles Melville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 63–103.

⁹ Today Ochakiv, Ukraine.

Byzantine Empire. The Ottomans showed their extraordinary capacity for adapting new tactics and forms of warfare early on as they diversified their military repertoire.¹⁰

Looking at the early Ottoman military structure, we find a decentralized system comparable to that of contemporary European countries. In this arrangement, the ruler directly commanded a small but loyal entourage of household troops. These soldiers were usually not great in number, only enough to protect their ruler and their environment. Therefore, the sultan had to rely on allies and vassals to increase his troop count. As the Empire expanded its bureaucracy and general organization, it took on a more standardized shape, while the military also took on a different shape and became more centralized. By the time of Mehmed II (r. 1444-1446, 1451-1481), the Ottoman military had achieved its characteristic form, which could be called the “classic” Ottoman Army. At this point, the sultan’s household troops were numerous enough to be considered a decent fighting force on their own. The provincial army took over the role of semi-autonomous vassals and allies for the most part. The few vassals that remained were relegated to auxiliary status. With the combined forces of the household and the provincial troops, as well as allies and vassals, the Ottoman army constituted a fearsome military machine.¹¹ The period between 1453 and 1566 can undoubtedly be called the golden age of the Ottoman army.¹²

¹⁰ A good example is the siege of Izmit from 1334 to 1337, which showcased advanced logistical and organizational skills and the capacity to maintain the supply during a prolonged siege. Caroline Finkel, *Osman’s Dream: The History of the Ottoman Empire* (London: John Murray Press, 2013), 14.

¹¹ Based on available registers in its heyday, the Ottomans could theoretically mobilize nearly 100.000 soldiers. In practice, a usual campaigning force was around 30.000-40.000. Truly staggering numbers in the context of the 15th-17th century. Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Volume 1, Empire of the Gazis: The Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire 1280-1808* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 127; Halil İnalcık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire. Volume 1: 1300-1600*

However, maintaining such an army required enormous funds, some of which were acquired through successful campaigns.¹³ The 17th and 18th centuries proved less favorable to the Ottoman Empire economically and militarily. This turbulent period reshaped the political and economic landscape of Europe. The Ottoman Empire itself underwent some fundamental changes that helped it survive and even thrive. These changes set the military down a new path that ultimately proved unsuccessful. With this new economic situation and reduced budget, the former state of the army could not be maintained. Changes were quite drastic among the *kapıkulu*¹⁴ troops. The primary source of new recruits the *devşirme*¹⁵ brought fewer and fewer children into the service of the Sublime Port, and by the early 1700s, it virtually stopped existing. The Janissary and, by extension, most of the army slowly transformed into an economical and political class. Thus, their military function also decreased. Being a Janissary no longer meant simply being an elite infantryman of the Empire. It was more like being a member of a guild. Their economic functions outweighed the military. The

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 36; Gyula Káldy-Nagy, "The First Centuries of the Ottoman Military Organization," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 31/2 (1977): 162-164.

¹² Pál Fodor, "Ottoman Warfare, 1300-1453," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey, Volume 1: Byzantium to Turkey 1071-1453*, ed. Kate Fleet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 193-217; Géza Dávid, "Ottoman Armies and Warfare, 1453-1603," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey. Volume 2: The Ottoman Empire as a World Power, 1453-1603*, ed. Suraiya N. Faroqhi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 276-303.

¹³ With the expansion of European colonialism, European trade changed as well, and the importance of Eastern imports decreased. Meanwhile, in the 17th century, war ceased to be a profitable enterprise for them, incurring further losses in the state budget Suraiya Faroqhi, "Crisis and Change 1590-1699," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire. Volume 2: 1600-1914*, ed. Halil İnalcik and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 413, 434 and 442-447.

¹⁴ The collective name of the sultan's household troops. They represented the best part of the Ottoman army; while they were called household, they were numerous. They were comprised of several infantry and cavalry divisions with a multitude of specialist troops, including artillery, sappers, and engineers. In contrast with the provincial troops, they were also referred to as the central army.

¹⁵ Also derogatorily called the Blood tax, it was a way of recruitment by getting young Christian boys, mainly from the Balkans, converting them to Islam, and giving them training in palace institutions. The *devşirme* supplied the *kapıkulu* army and also the Ottoman autocracy.

criteria for admittance also became more lax as more and more people joined. According to wage registers, their numbers reached a staggering 400,000 during the 18th century. All the while, the number of actual servicemen went down to 10% of the total.¹⁶

The provincial army also became less reliable. The solution of the Port was to employ armed peasantry during times of war. These troops were called *levend*, *sekban*, and *sarıca*.¹⁷ It must be noted that the practice might have started as early as the 16th century, but in 1683, against the Holy League, they deployed only 10,000 *levends*, the Russo-Turkish war of 1768—1774 saw the deployment of 100,000.¹⁸ After their short service, these troops were let go, and although it was against regulations, they usually kept their weapons. This resulted in small gangs of armed peasants roaming the countryside and engaging in banditry.¹⁹ Sometimes, they found employment with provincial governors and other notables. As we can see, the *levend* system, if it can even be called a system, by its nature was not enough to stand a chance in the age of large standing professional armies and was a step backward in terms of professionalism if we compare them with the provincial and *kapıkulu* troops of the 16th century. The *levend* system

¹⁶ Aksan, *Ottoman Wars*, 48-49.

¹⁷ The three terms: *levend*, *sekban*, and *sarıca* are often hard to differentiate between as their meaning considerably overlap. In general, all three of them refer to gun-wielding irregular or mercenary troops. *Levend* originated from Arabic and was initially used to refer to naval troops, but very early on, it started to be used for land forces as well. In the period we are dealing with here, *levend* is used as the general term.

¹⁸ Aksan, *Ottoman Wars*, 56-57.

¹⁹ Banditry, a term loaded with implications in the Ottoman context, was a complex and dynamic phenomenon. Violence could be wielded in accordance with or contrary to the state's wishes by these semi-independent actors, leading to their branding as either bandits or loyal vassals. The rapid and frequent shifts in their allegiances paint a vivid picture of the ever-changing landscape of the Ottoman Empire. For more, see Tolga U. Esmer, "Economies of Violence: Tales of Banditry, Corruption, and Sovereignty in the Late Ottoman Empire (1790s-1820s)," *Past & Present*, 224 (2014): 163-199.

was, in many ways, similar to the condottiere or mercenary system that was prevalent in Europe for most of the early modern period.

The *levends* could not fully satisfy the empire's military needs. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, multiple sultans attempted to comprehensively renew the Ottoman military with varying degrees of success.²⁰ The spread of the *sekbans* weakened the state's monopoly on violence and warfare. While it created a massive pool of easily recruitable troops, the *sekbans* presented a most severe security problem. They essentially developed into a new socio-economic pressure group that the Ottoman government did not control.

What makes an empire survive for hundreds of years is its capacity to adapt to the needs of the time. This adaptability extends to all aspects of imperial governance, including the military, which serves as a crucial instrument of power. As we have seen, the Ottoman Army underwent several changes to remain an effective fighting force. However, this was no longer the case by the latter half of the 18th century. Internal reform did not take the desired effect. Ottoman leadership took a radical decision and decided to invite outside help in the hopes of preparing their military against a potential Russian attack.

1.2.Franco-Ottoman relations

The history of the Franco-Ottoman Alliance started in the early 16th century. Previously, the two states only had sporadic diplomatic dealings with

²⁰ There are also more apologetic approaches towards the Ottoman army, arguing that while the Ottoman army has not been able to achieve a proper victory in fortress defense, siege, or open field battles, its efficiency in counter-insurgency was nearly unparalleled in the 19th-century GüLtekin Yildiz, "Ottoman Military Organization (1800–1918)," in *The Encyclopedia of War*, ed. Gordon Martel (American Cancer Society, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444338232.wbeow466>.

each other. However, in 1526, two young rulers of their respective realms, Francis I (r. 1515-1547), of France, and Süleyman I (r. 1520-1566), of the Ottoman Empire, both looking for suitable allies against the Central European hegemony of the Habsburgs, found a perfect match in each other.²¹ Together, they could coordinate their war efforts against their shared enemies be it the Holy Roman Empire or the Venetian and the Milanese states. This alliance also led to the establishment of the first permanent embassy in the Ottoman Empire.²² The alliance was working in full force during the reign of its original signatories, resulting in many joint operations, lucrative trade agreements, and even cultural exchange.²³ The alliance was kept alive even after the death of Francis I and Süleyman I, albeit to a lesser degree. The two states maintained a favorable stance towards each other, upholding the trade concessions and exchanging embassies frequently. However, they no longer conducted joint military operations.

In the 17th century, this lukewarm relationship continued between the two states. A treaty regarding trade was signed between the two parties in 1604, but it did not make provisions for any military assistance. Relations started to deteriorate during the early reign of Louis XIV (r. 1643-1715), who took a different route in dealing with Central European politics. Unlike his predecessors, he tried to arrange relations with the Habsburgs in a peaceful manner; in this course, he even assisted them militarily against the Ottomans. The French policy changed around 1673 when Louis XIV semi-forcefully

²¹ The first agreement was signed in 1536 and later augmented by several other treaties, so-called Capitulations. These agreements represent a unique and exciting facet of diplomatic history Pingaud, *Choiseul-Gouffier*, 1-3, 5-6.

²² Faruk Bilici, *XIV. Louis ve İstanbul'u Fetih Tasarısı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2004) 1-10.

²³ Notable examples are France's Italian campaigns between 1534-1538 and 1542-1548, as well as Suleiman's conquest of Hungary

renewed the old commercial treaties and established an embassy in Constantinople in 1677.²⁴ French diplomats actively tried to get the Ottomans into European wars, promising cooperation, which they occasionally really did provide.²⁵

The 18th century brought little of a change in the two countries' relations. The Ottoman foreign policy itself became more peace-oriented than previously. The Habsburg expansion into the Balkans, helped by the Russian ambitions for the Black Sea, seriously endangered their European territories. Preserving the country's territorial integrity suddenly became a more immediate interest than expanding it.²⁶ A famous example of this attitude is the fourth Russo-Turkish War of 1710-1711, when the Ottomans chose not to pursue their enemy and potentially strike a decisive victory against them but to preserve the status quo with a few favorable concessions. Nonetheless, the Ottomans still considered a European ally a powerful asset towards their goal of preserving peace and tried to keep their good relations with France. They sent several large diplomatic missions during this period.²⁷

²⁴ For more on Louis XIV's Oriental policies see Faruk Bilici, "XIV. Louis Döneminde Fransa ile Türkiye Arasındaki Kültürel İlişkiler," in *Harp ve Sulh, Avrupa ve Osmanlılar*, ed. Dejanirah Couto (Istanbul: Institut français d'études anatoliennes, 2010), 317–331.; idem, *XIV. Louis ve İstanbul'u Fetih Tasarısı*. and Nicholas Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

²⁵ For example, when they attacked the Holy Roman Empire in the War of Reunions 1683-1684 while the Turks were sieging Vienna. Thus, supporting the Ottoman war effort in the Great Turkish War 1689-1699, which ultimately ended in a loss for the Ottomans with the humiliating peace treaty of Karlowitz 1699. Aksan, *Ottoman Wars*, 18–28.

²⁶ The peace treaty of Belgrade in 1739, which also restored many of the Balkan territories that the Ottomans lost to the Austrians in the Austro-Turkish War of 1716-1718, started the Long Peace, which lasted until the war with Russia in 1768. During this period, the Ottomans focused on preserving the status quo and avoided armed conflicts if possible, which they successfully did, bar one short war with the Afsharids in 1743-1746. Uğur Kurtaran, "Sultan Birinci Mahmud ve Dönemi (1730-1754)" (Konya, Selçuk University, 2012), 172–270.

²⁷ These embassies explicitly aimed to observe Western customs of administration, warfare, and culture. The most notable ones are the one led by Yirmisekiz Mehmed Çelebi in 1720-1721 and another one by his son Mehmed Said Pasha in 1740. For more, see Fatma Müge Gökçe, *East*

The mission of 1784 brought new life into the alliance and significantly increased the interest of both parties for the other. This sudden surge in dedication of resources and manpower could have brought on a new era of the Franco-Ottoman Alliance. However, the war with Russia set things back temporarily, and very soon afterward, Napoleon Bonaparte's Egyptian campaign (1798-1801) effectively destroyed the deep-rooted trust the Ottomans held for the French²⁸. A considerable loss for both parties, but especially for the Ottomans. This was only a minor setback for France in their grand imperial designs; however, the Ottomans lost a crucial European ally. The fallout did not mean that there were no further attempts at rekindling their relationship or developing it in new directions. The Ottomans started looking for other European allies early on, as they never intended for the French to be their exclusive western allies, and they found a decent replacement in the Prussians.

1.2.1.Franco-Ottoman military relations

Within the diplomatic relations between France and the Ottoman Empire, and sometimes apart from them, the two countries shared a long and varied history of military relations. Some were official, others unofficial, some were well-planned missions, and others came to be only due to happenstance. This topic is closely connected to the topos of Western experts in the Ottoman Empire, a topic that presents certain complications. The problem arises from the perceived differences between the Ottomans and the rest of Europe. If we were

Encounters West: France and the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

²⁸ The irony of fate is that according to some sources, Napoleon was supposed to be part of the next iteration of the mission; however, that never happened when the revolution broke out. John Jacob Lehmanowsky, *History of Napoleon, Emperor of the French, King of Italy, Etc. Etc.* (Washington: John A. M. Duncanson, 1832), 4.

to compare the military traditions of the Ottoman Empire to those of the rest of Europe, we would find that the Ottomans preferred to solve their needs for manpower and military know-how within their own borders. Meanwhile, in Europe, it was quite common for them to hire mercenaries from foreign lands, and officers often served in many different armies throughout their careers, often serving opposing countries. Nonetheless, it was not unheard of for the Ottomans to accept renegades into their service; such people could be valuable assets. Nevertheless, for most of their history, they did not rely on the service of such people; they only used them in addition. Early examples include master Urban, the artilleryman who helped Mehmed II to breach the Theodosian walls. Apart from their low numbers and the fact that the Ottomans rarely entrusted these people with higher functions, their actual effect on the Ottoman military was limited. It was not until the 18th century that a remarkable change in this practice was implemented. The Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of France developed a very close relationship. One aspect of this relationship was that the French invested in strengthening the Ottoman military to make it more successful against their common enemies.

The first known case of the Ottomans employing French soldiers was after the siege of Pápa in 1597. In a previously unseen fashion, after the castle defenders surrendered, they offered these French mercenaries better employment, and they accepted. This unprecedented event caused a considerable diplomatic ruckus in Europe. These mercenaries, who, according to

contemporary accounts, were very experienced and very good with their muskets, went on to serve in many campaigns.²⁹

They were not the only renegades to turn to Ottoman employment but the only ones to do it together in such a significant number. Later famous cases, which I will detail shortly, were singular for the most part. The two most prominent of these were the cases of the Baron de Tott and the Count de Bonneval.

Bonneval was a typical career officer of his time, serving in multiple armies throughout his life. His distinguishing feature was his hard personality, which resulted in him losing his position on multiple occasions due to arguments with his superiors. His desertion to the Ottoman Army is not entirely exceptional. He was not the first or the last renegade to do so. But he was well known enough that the broader European public noticed his change of allegiance. His work in the Ottoman Empire was prominent, as he was entrusted with an unusually high rank and an important task. His duty was to Europeanize the corps of the bombardiers.³⁰

Baron de Tott's participation in the Ottoman military efforts against Russia was somewhat of an accident. After the death of Maksud Giray (r. 1767-

²⁹ As Finkle puts it, this was an aberration from the general Caroline Finkel, "French Mercenaries in the Habsburg-Ottoman War of 1593-1606: The Desertion of the Papa Garrison to the Ottomans in 1600," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 55, no. 3 (1992): 451-71; compare with Péter Sahin-Tóth, "A Vallon-Francia Katonaszág Sajátos Szerepe a Hadviselő Felek Közötti Kapcsolatokban a Tizenöt Éves Háború Idején," in *Információáramlás a Magyar És Török Végvári Rendszerben* (Eger: Heves Megyei Múzeumi Szervezet, Dobó István Vármúzeum, 1999), 227-239. It is important to note that Bonneval was not alone in his task but was helped by a small group of European renegades, the Irish Macarthy abbé, the French Marquis de Mornai (or Mornay), and the Scottish count Ramsay. Kahraman Şakul, "Military Engineering in the Ottoman Empire," in *Military Engineers: The Development of the Early Modern European State*, ed. Bruce Lenman (Dundee: Dundee University Press, 2013), 194; Ihsanoğlu Ihsanoğlu, "Ottoman Educational and Scholarly-Scientific Institutions," in *History of the Ottoman State, Society and Civilisation Vol.2*, ed. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoğlu (Istanbul: Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture, 2001), 422-423; Abdülkadir Özcan, "Humbaracı Ahmed Paşa," in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1998), 351-353.

1768), Khan of Crimea, his original mission of helping and persuading the Tatars became impossible, and he had to wait for further orders from the foreign office. As he was waiting in Constantinople for a new assignment, the Ottoman side approached him and asked him to help out with the war effort. Tott was a talented officer who, despite his lack of a formal education, was quite confident in the skills that he had picked up over the years and eager to try them out in practice. He was an archetypical trans-imperial subject who was eager to sell his expertise even when he had none.³¹ Tott's contribution to modernizing the Ottoman army was sporadic and not very systematic, and his actual effect, which he himself and later scholarship generally overstated, was most likely negligible.

Franco-Ottoman relations considerably worsened after the French Revolution, and Napoleon's Egyptian campaign certainly did not help. But at the time, there was a massive influx of royalist French officers eager to take any opportunity to fight against the revolutionaries. Noteworthy is the 1799 siege of Acre, where the troops of Nizām-ı Cedīd, led by French officers, managed to defeat Napoleon.³² This was the last close cooperation between the French and the Ottoman militaries.³³ As the Ottomans started looking for new and more

³¹ He is also an engaging author, as his autobiographical work on his time spent in the Ottoman Empire is far from the most reliable source, but it is still very entertaining nonetheless. Even during his lifetime, his exploits were famous, although he did not win all hearts. The philosopher Voltaire, for example, was very much against his antiques, writing the following short poem about him: *Allez au Belzebuth, détestable libraire, Portez votre tactique au chevalier de Tott, Qui fait marcher les Turcs au nom de Sabaot. C'est lui qui de canons couvrant les Dardanelles, A tuer les chrétiens instruit les infidels.* François-Marie Arouet, *La Tactique et Autre Pieces Fugitives* (Geneva: Riviere & Son, 1774), 5.

³² M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 44-45.

³³ Joseph Anthelme Sève (1788—1860) might also deserve a mention here. He joined the army before the Egyptian campaign and stayed there after Napoleon left. Later, he became one of Muhammad Ali's chief military advisors and helped him organize a Western-style army, which turned out to be very successful. Gérard Corneloup, "SÈVE Joseph, Dit Soliman Pacha," in *Dictionnaire Historique de Lyon*, ed. Bruno Thévenon (Lyon: Éditions Stéphane Bachès, 2010), 1225.

trustworthy European allies, the French no longer had a vested interest in directing resources for the development of the Ottoman army.

1.2.2. The Mission of 1784

Out of all the European powers, the Ottomans probably had the best relationship with France. Moreover, they tried to use this relationship the best they could; diplomatically, they sought help from them on multiple occasions. As they saw their military grow ineffective against the Russians and Austrians, it was evident that they should ask France for help. This aspect was helped by the fact that they had previous good experience with French military experts. The French readily agreed to it and committed as much resources as they did, which is more surprising. The mission's primary aim was to prepare the Ottoman Empire against an impending Russian invasion, which was clear from the start. However, France had little interest in Russia. Their spheres of interest did not overlap, and the relationship between the two distant states could even be considered good. Preserving the status quo in the Eastern Mediterranean was mainly for the purpose of keeping the Habsburgs at bay. And also had particular imperial intentions

Halil Hamid Pasha (1736-1785), an experienced statesman, became grand vizier in 1782. He is well-known in historiography for his intention to bring reform into the Ottoman Empire. He was particularly invested in the case of the army, not surprising due to the heavy diplomatic and military blows the Ottomans received during his service at the palace—especially in the cannoner, bombardier, and sapper corps, the Maritime Engineering school, and inviting

foreign experts. Undoubtedly, the mission's idea was probably his, and initially, he was the main force behind it.³⁴

From the French side, it is essential to mention the diplomatic personnel that helped to realize and shape the mission two names especially; that of Charles Gravier de Vergennes (1719-1787) and Auguste de Choiseul-Gouffier. Vergennes was the French ambassador to the Ottoman Empire 1755-1768 and later became minister of foreign affairs 1774-1787, finishing his career as chief minister 1781-1787. He had an excellent understanding of the Ottoman situation in contemporary geopolitics; his foreign policy had a strong imperialistic bent, trying to curb the power of the rivals and expand France's influence, and he also saw more perspective in using the Turks against their old enemies than fighting against them.³⁵ The other major diplomatic player on the French side is more surprising. Gouffier was a notorious philhellene who was very vocal about wishing to free Greece. Appointing him as the new French ambassador in Constantinople and letting him have full authority in such an important and expensive military mission was a hazardous diplomatic move. In a certain way, Gouffier's unfriendly disposition towards the Ottomans was in line with France's changing view of their long-time allies, whom they had started to see as less than equals some time ago. Nonetheless, it seems that as ambassador, he was capable of carrying out his duties without being blinded by the naiveté of his younger

³⁴ Interestingly, the 1784 mission was not the first one he invited into the Empire. In the late 18th-century, the French helped facilitate negotiations between a certain General Duke of Montmorency of Luxemburg and the Ottomans to send a larger contingent to train their troops. The General in question was probably Anne Léon II de Montmorency-Fosseux (1731-1799), to whom the epithet of Luxemburg was wrongfully attributed. Fikret Sarıcaoğlu, *Kendi Kaleminden Bir Padişahın Portresi Sultan I. Abdülhamid (1774- 1789)* (Istanbul: Tatav, 2001), 193–194.

³⁵ Pingaud, *Choiseul-Gouffier*, 9.

years and even managed to work quite well with the grand vizier Halil Hamid Pasha in organizing a westernization process of the Ottoman Empire.

As for the mission itself, France initially only sent two engineers, Antoine Chabaud (1727-1791) and his assistant Eynard. This first stage of the mission proved to be a failure as it was found that Chabaud was hard to work with. To establish a good working relationship with the Ottomans, he was replaced by a younger officer, André-Joseph Lafitte-Clavé, who, from there on, became the most senior military personnel of the mission.³⁶ Clavé had his own assistant, Joseph Gabriel Monnier (1745-1818), so we must presume that Eynard left Constantinople together with Chabaud. Several other specialists were also sent; the exact chronology, unfortunately, cannot be established; it is also questionable whether this was one mission or the several groups constituted multiple missions. The specialists included engineers, drilling instructors, shipbuilders, carpenters, and many more. Altogether, the number of personnel who worked in the Empire between the 1783-1789 period was around 300.³⁷

In 1787, tension began to quickly rise between the Russian and the Ottoman Empire, culminating in yet another war between them. While France initially supported the war, they were unwilling to commit resources to it and to antagonize the Russians fully. France quickly aborted the mission and called home most of their experts before the end of the year. Only a few of them stayed

³⁶ The number of personnel sent to the Empire during this period was around 300. As I explained in the Introduction, in principle, I object to using the word "other" when mentioning these people. However, my efforts fell short when I wanted to compile a complete list of those who participated in the mission. To my knowledge, the most comprehensive list of them is found in Léonce Pingaud, *Choiseul-Gouffier, La France En Orient Sous Louis XVI* (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1887), 95-96.

³⁷ Sarıcaoğlu, *I. Abdülhamid*, 195.

behind, most notably Clavé himself, who even actively participated in the war.³⁸ After the war subsided, there was an attempt to restart the mission with Monnier's leadership, but it did not last long.

The evaluation of the mission is a difficult question. The participants themselves did not leave a readily available answer to it. Clavé was certainly assured in the quality of the job he had done but cared not to make a more grandiose analysis. From the Ottoman side, it could be seen as something of a success that the school was adequately established with people now up to date, more or less on the topic of western fortification and siege craft. Unfortunately, the next one and a half centuries left very little opportunity for the Ottoman armed forces to showcase what they had learned from the French, as they did not conduct many sieges. For the French, this could be said to be a failure, while, on the surface, they accomplished what they had set out to do: helping out an ally in need. But their hidden agendas were left unfulfilled. They did not manage to become the colonial overlords of the Ottomans or to "...introduce the Turks into Western civilization."³⁹

1.3. André Joseph Lafitte-Clavé

Not much is known about André Joseph Lafitte Clavé. As his foremost biographer, general Duvignau, puts it, "he was modest to the utmost degree"⁴⁰ and this modesty has seemingly prevented him from divulging much information about himself. He had a successful career in the French army, rising to the high

³⁸ Some of the others were a dozen carpenters who only left in 1788 and the engineer Abancourt who stayed until 1789. For more, see *ibid.*, 195.

³⁹ Pingaud, *Choiseul-Gouffier*, 95.

⁴⁰ Duvignau himself is not the most objective biographer. He holds Clavé in high regard and describes him as a model soldier and virtuous man without providing much evidence for this high praise. Bernard Étienne Marie Duvignau, "Le Général Lafitte-Clavé," *Revue de l'Agenais et Des Anciennes Provinces Du Sud-Ouest : Historique, Littéraire, Scientifique & Artistique* VI (1879): 415.

rank of *maréchal de camp*.⁴¹ Thanks to his professional achievements, at least that part of his life is much better documented than his private life. There is a hint of irony in the fact that his most memorable achievement and most significant contribution was the mission to the Ottoman Empire. What little is known about him is often uncertain.

André-Joseph Lafitte-Clavé was born in 1740⁴² in Moncrabeau, into a family full of supposedly distinguished soldiers. Contrary to their distinguished status, I could only find three of them: his parents. His father was Armand Lafitte, his mother Marie de Bordes⁴³ and his brother, whose name is unknown. One would assume that he, at the very least, had a decent relationship with his brother as they frequently exchanged letters during Clavé's stay in Istanbul. He joined the Royal Engineering School of Mezières in 1760 and quickly rose in the ranks of the French military. He gained considerable experience in the field of fortifications during his early career by extensively traveling in France and surveying the forts.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Roughly equivalent of the rank brigadier general.

⁴² His date of birth is occasionally stated to be 1750. This figure originates from the French scholar Jean-François Samazeuilh (1790-1875). Since even by the standards of the time, an 11 year old Lieutenant engineer would have been strange, the date given by Duvignau seems to be the more plausible one. Duvignau, "Le Général Lafitte-Clavé," 415.

⁴³ Jean François Eugène Robinet, ed., *Dictionnaire Historique et Biographique de La Révolution et de l'Empire 1789-1815 Contenant Pour La Partie Historique: Les Actes et Décrets Des Différentes Assemblées et Du Comité de Salut Public, Les Journées Revolutionnaires, Les Representants En Mission, Les Sièges, Les Batailles, Les Combats de Terre et de Mer, Les Traités de Paix, Les Procès Célèbres, Etc., Avec Documents Inédits. Pour La Partie Biographique: Les Ministres, Les Députés et Leurs Suppléants, Ayant Siégé Ou Non à La Constituante, à La Législative, à La Convention, Au Conseil Des Anciens, Au Conseil Des Cinq-Cents, Les Membres Des Administrations Élués, Municipales Ou Départementales, Les Députés Au Corps Législatif, Les Candidats Élus Pour Le Corps Législatif, Les Membres Du Sénat Conservateur et Du Tribunal, Le Chambre Des Cent-Jours, Les Officiers Généraux Des Armées de Terre et de Mer, Les Préfets, Les Évêques de 1789, Les Évêques Constitutionnels et Les Évêques Concordataires, Les Magistrats, Les Savants, Les Artistes, Les Commerçants Notables et Les Patriotes Les plus En Vue, Etc., Etc. Avec Leurs Noms, Prénoms Surnoms et Pseudonymes, Le Lieu et La Date de Leur Naissance et de Leur Mort, Leur Famille, Leurs Professions Ou Fonctions Successives, Avant, Pendant et Après La Révolution et l'Empire.* (Paris: Librairie Historique de la Révolution et de l'Empire, n.d.) 284.

⁴⁴ Bernard Étienne Marie Duvignau, "Le Général Lafitte-Clavé," *Revue de l'Agenais et des anciennes provinces du Sud-Ouest: Historique, littéraire, scientifique & artistique* VI (1879): 415-419.

In 1783, he was chosen as a member of the military mission to the Ottoman Empire that aimed to reform its engineering and artillery corps and the navy too. Shortly after arriving in Istanbul, the leader of the contingent, Antoine Chabaud La Tour, fell gravely ill, and Lafitte-Clavé was chosen as his replacement. Lafitte-Clavé's primary assignment was to provide education in the recently established Imperial School of Engineers (*Mühendishâne-i Hümayûn*). One of his most important contributions to this cause was the writing of a textbook called *Elementary Treatise on Castramination and Temporary Fortifications*.⁴⁵ This book was designed to teach students the contemporary techniques and strategies of siege warfare through examples, and as such, it was most likely one of the first Ottoman textbooks intended for mass consumption. Apart from teaching, he also utilized his expertise in the field of fortification to examine the defensive capabilities of the Black Sea and reinforce its forts against another Russian attack. He kept an extensive journal during his first journey around the Black Sea in the first half of 1784.

After the mission, he became the supervisor for the forts of the Valencian region. He could only hold this position for a short time as the revolution broke out, drastically changing life in France and eventually the whole of Europe. He took part in the first coalition wars in the Belgian campaign and on the Spanish front as well. In 1792, he was suspended for three months but was quickly

⁴⁵ The work is often referred to by its original French title *Traité élémentaire de castramétation et de fortification passagère*, even though the French version was never published, and its manuscript does not survive. In Ottoman it was published as *Usul ül-maarif fi tertib il-ordu ve tahsinihi muvakkaten*.

allowed back into the force.⁴⁶ He was arrested by the Convent and died in prison just a few days before his pardon arrived in 1794.⁴⁷

What makes Clavé interesting? He is a trans-imperial subject who seems highly focused on the mission but seems less concerned about his own career, at least does not pursue those different methods of advancement that might be available to him. He is an outsider who spends enough time in the Empire to become an insider, yet even after four years, he is still as French as the first day he entered the Empire. He is impersonal even in his personal writing, only ever hinting at his more intimate thoughts and feelings. He might be one of the most important vessels of Western military knowledge dissemination in the Ottoman Empire, yet that is not shown in his writings. He is a surprisingly contradictory person compared to his straightforwardness. In some ways, his contradictory personality is a perfect analogy to the contradictory nature of the mission itself.

1.3.1. About the style of Clavé

A private journal, two travelogues, a few letters to his superior, a textbook, and a topographic article are the pieces of Clavé's writing I used for this dissertation. They only permit us a limited view of the man himself. While in this thesis, I mainly focused on his journal and the two travelogues as his most personal piece of writing; I had a difficult time getting a glimpse of his personality. Even in private text, his writing does not seem very personal. His writing can be quite dry, on the point, professional, detailed, and impassionate. Even his journal resembles more a logbook than an honest piece of writing. These texts paint the picture of a strict, professional, career-oriented man. One

⁴⁶ Robinet, *Dictionnaire Historique*, 284.

⁴⁷ Duvignau, "Le Général Lafitte-Clavé," 418–419.

who likes order and structure follows clear and precise conventions. This orderliness is apparent in his writings as well. There is a consistency and method to it, which creates an evident median and makes all divergence ever so apparent. Understanding the rules and principles that he employs in his writings helps us gauge his thoughts and motivations. Moreover, finding the places where he diverges from these rules helps us better comprehend his personality.

An obvious rule he employs is the use of courtesy titles, which in itself is not surprising for that era. However his way of using them have certain fascinating idiosyncratic features. When referring to Europeans in his writing he only refers to them by their surnames, he further observes the etiquette and everyone receives the appropriate title. Furthermore ranks and positions often replace names completely. Such as; M. ambassadeur le France, M. et Made l'internonce to give a few examples. Exceptions from these conventions are European servants, who receive no title and are either referred to by a given name or full name.⁴⁸ A few Westerners of gentle birth also fall outside the rule for unknown reasons. David the French trader from Bursa is only ever referred to by his given name, and there is the Italian cartographer Giovanni Antonio Rizzi Zannoni who's map Clavé used.⁴⁹ Clavé's subordinate and close colleague, Joseph Gabriel Monnier de Courtois, is only referred to by his surname without a courtesy title. In this case, it can be attributed to their close professional relationship. Finally, an even larger and more prominent category of exceptions is the locals of the Ottoman Empire. The sultan is significant enough to warrant

⁴⁸ His own domestic servants, Adam, Stepan Géorgien, and Jacomis de Sira were an onomastically eclectic group.

⁴⁹ Dimitris Anoyatis-Pelé, "Journal d'un Voyage Effectué Par Lafitte-Clavé de Constantinople a Brousse, Nicee et Nicomedie, En 1786," *Δελτίο Κέντρου Μικρασιατικών Σπουδών*, 7. (1988): 87–88. and André Joseph Lafitte-Clavé, *Journal d'un Voyage Sur Les Côtes de La Mer Noire, Du 28 Avril Au 18 Septembre 1784*, ed. Dimitris Anoyatis-Pelé (Istanbul: ISIS, 1998), 27.

some degree of politeness and, therefore, referred to as Le Grand Seigneur as was customary at the time. Most high-ranking officials go by rank only, such as Gazi Hasan Pasha (1713-1790), who is only ever mentioned as Kapudan Pasha.⁵⁰ Other notables are referred to without seemingly any system, some by their names and titles and some only by their names. The most likely explanation is that he went by the names as he heard them and did not inquire further, which is unusual for him. This is supported by his tendency to use local titles that he most likely would not have been familiar with and provide no explanation about them.

Clavé is also a meticulous and observant writer, however the method with which he chooses where to turn his attention is eclectic. Subjects that directly pertain to his mission enjoy his full attention. Fortifications and topographic features are described with great attention to detail. Ruins of antiquity also get similar care from him due to his personal interest. On occasion, groups, cultural peculiarities, and demographic features also warrant his attention. Moreover, while he can make poignant observations on these topics as well, they are clearly far from his field of expertise. When it comes to individuals, he is more sporadic in his observations. He rarely devotes more than a sentence to them. However, he is otherwise a social creature, regularly attending gatherings whenever he has the chance. Moreover, he definitely does not stand above indulging in gossip.

⁵⁰ His convention of strictly using just the titles of certain Ottoman subjects needs to be clarified as he spends more time in the Empire and several promotions and demotions occur. As evidenced by an index matching actual names to titles and dates of incumbency, he himself must have been confused sometimes. Dimitris Anoyatis-Pelé, *Journal d'un Officier Français à Constantinople En 1784-1788* (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 2004), 243.

2. André Joseph Lafitte Clavé's Journey around the Black Sea

In this chapter, I will be examining the two travelogues Lafitte-Clavé wrote during his journeys in the Black Sea region and on the coast of the Marmara Sea.⁵¹ The former is a more comprehensive piece of writing, presenting multiple aspects of Lafitte-Clavé's existence within the Ottoman Empire as such the chapter will focus on that one. The latter while less formal in some sense is also lacking in content therefore I will only use it sparingly. In both cases I will be relying on the published versions of the texts by Anoyatis Pelé.

I use the word travelogue as it is the easiest way to describe these two pieces of text. However, I have to address the loaded history that comes with the terms. A travelogue implies a personal piece of writing, and as previously discussed, Lafitte-Clavé himself was anything but personal, even in his private writing. Oriental travelogues became a staple genre of European literature and continued to be popular and well-read into the 18th-century and beyond⁵². A significant difference is that those travelogues were written explicitly with the purpose of being published and entertaining for the greater public. Lafitte-Clavé was primarily writing for himself and for his superiors. He later edited down his

⁵¹ The aim of this second journey was to visit the French ambassador to Constantinople, Choiseul-Gouffier, who was recuperating in Bursa at the time. Lafitte-Clavé did not visit forts or other places of strategic interest during this outing. His observations are mainly focused on topography, meteorology, and archeology, with occasional notes on local commerce and culture. By this time, he had nearly spent two years in the Ottoman Empire, and it seems he had gotten used to his surroundings as his notes reveal less anger and shock at local conditions. Anoyatis-Pelé, "Journal d'un Voyage Effectué Par Lafitte-Clavé de Constantinople a Brousse, Nicee et Nicomedie, En 1786."

⁵² Focusing only on French examples, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier's (1605-1689) *Les Six Voyages* (1675) and Jean de Thévenot's (1633-1667) *Voyages* (1674-1684) were classics of the 17th century. Moreover, from the early 18th-century, Jean Otter's (1707-1748) *Voyage en Turquie* (1748) can be highlighted as an influential work. Orientalism and the motive of oriental travel featured prominently in fiction as well. Some of the most distinguished French writers of the 18th-century, such as Diderot, Voltaire, and Montesquieu, wrote in this genre. The *Memoirs* (1784) of Baron de Tott has to be mentioned as the book, and its writer creates a fascinating parallel with Clavé and his own journals. However, as it was published around the time Clavé started his assignment in the Ottoman Empire, it is doubtful that he was aware of that work.

notes about the Black Sea into a report that he most likely intended for publication. However, this piece of writing was intended for a more select audience. It focuses mainly on the geographical features of the region. While, as an educated person, he must have had some exposure to the genre, he seems to have possessed little to no literary ambition in that direction.

In the case of the Black Sea text we are presented with the unique opportunity of comparing the original and the final product that is the report he handed in.⁵³ Through this comparison, it becomes much clearer what he noted down out of personal interest and what was due to his professional obligations. It also shows what he considered appropriate in language and style. As discussed before, his personal style is quite formal, and as a result, the two end up surprisingly close to each other, further proving Lafitte-Clavé's coldness. However, the parts he found unnecessary or unimportant to include in his finished report reveal a different side of his personality.

2.1. The Journey

It was the grand vizier Halil Hamid Pasha who requested from the French mission to survey the Black Sea region topographically and strategically.⁵⁴ Shortly after his arrival in Istanbul on September 19, 1784, Lafitte-Clavé received detailed instructions from Conte de Saint-Priest, the resident French ambassador in Istanbul, for his first assignment, as ordered by the king himself.⁵⁵ The letter makes it clear that the French court was painfully aware of the existence of many deficiencies in the border defence of the Ottoman Empire. The loss of the Crimean Khanate to the Russians in 1783 permanently ended the Ottoman

⁵³ Lafitte-Clavé, *Voyage Sur Les Côtes*, 5. For the report itself, see Lafitte-Clavé, 6–24.

⁵⁴ Lafitte-Clavé, *Voyage Sur Les Côtes*, 1.

⁵⁵ For the full letter, see Lafitte-Clavé, 2–4.

hegemony of the Black Sea and accordingly enabled the Russian Empire to establish a potent naval presence in the region and endanger the Ottoman capital itself. The French envisioned that the next Russian offensive could very well mean the end of the Ottoman Empire. Apart from the state of the forts themselves, the letter also voices concerns about the tensions between the Greeks and the Turks. It seems that the French were afraid that, in case of a new Russo-Turkish war, the Greeks would aid the Russian forces with information, which would surely lead to their victory. A further remarkable feature of this letter is that it makes a reference to the work that has been done on the improvement of the defences by Francois de Tot in the last years of the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774.

Lafitte-Clavé set out on his journey from Istanbul with an assigned translator, three personal servants and an illustrator on April 28, 1784. Along the voyage, he visited the major port cities and fortifications of the region. Given his mission and background as a military officer, his observations of these areas primarily display a military perspective. He describes the geographical characteristics of the region very accurately, noting the layout of the settlements and places of strategic interest. The geographical aspect of his work is adequately reported on in his journal.⁵⁶ However, he shares information about fortifications more sparingly. Lafitte-Clavé and his group spent considerable time working on fortifications in three locations, Ochakov, Varna, and Sinope, including the surroundings of these important cities. The parts dealing with the fortifications mostly contain descriptions and exact measurements of the forts,

⁵⁶ The Bibliothèque nationale de France holds a map of the Black Sea in its collection which was drawn by Clavé based on his own topographical measurements made during his journey. André Joseph Lafitte-Clavé, *Carte de la Mer Noire [par] De Lafitte Clavé*, 1:926000 (Pera, 1784), <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b532292704?rk=42918;4#>.

his criticism regarding the way they were built, and his argument with local officials over the buildings. Nevertheless, he does not provide enough details to fully understand his issue with these fortifications. He produced plans about expanding and improving the defenses of these places, which were presented both to his French and Ottoman superiors. Unfortunately, so far, none of his plans have been found, and it is possible that they no longer exist.

Lafitte-Clavé also devotes multiple paragraphs to the criticism of the Ottoman soldiers and the general state of the army.⁵⁷ He mainly comments upon their lack of discipline, as well as the outdated state of their equipment and weaponry. It must be noted that at this point of his journey, Lafitte-Clavé did not make a clear distinction between the different kinds of Ottoman troops, apart from the Janissary whom he seems to know well. It is likely that most of the soldiers he has met were irregulars. These soldiers were of diverse backgrounds, employed by different local authorities and notables. They usually did not receive formal training and were often responsible for providing their own equipment. Therefore, Lafitte-Clavé's harsh judgment about them is not entirely baseless. He was somewhat more sympathetic towards the Janissaries. While he is far from being fond of them professionally, he understands that they "always revolt" due to valid reasons such as insufficient wages and scarce provisioning. He even suggests that with better treatment, the Janissary Corps could be transformed into an effective military force that could properly build and defend fortifications.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Baktir, Hasan, *The Representation of the Ottoman Orient in Eighteenth Century English Literature: Ottoman Society and Culture in Pseudo-Oriental Letters, Oriental Tales and Travel Literature*. (Hannover: Ibidem Press, 2010), 86.

⁵⁸ Lafitte-Clavé, *Voyage Sur Les Côtes*, 45–46.

Furthermore, he also shares his opinion regarding the Navy. These critical remarks comment on the low quality of Turkish sailors and their vessels. The latter of which is attributed to “the avarice and greed of the Kapudan Pasha and his subordinates”⁵⁹. He goes into little detail about the actual nature of these issues, and since he is not a nautical expert, it is dubious what gave the basis of his remarks. Continuing the naval theme, he also thinks that the “Turks have not completely utilized the Black Sea”⁶⁰ mainly referring to its commercial usage. The latter criticism might be unreasonably harsh. The Ottomans only recently lost the Crimean Peninsula ending their supremacy of the Black Sea, adapting to the new status quo with an ever-impending Russian attack must be hard. Beyond that it is hard to say how well did they utilize Black Sea trade compared to a theoretical maximum. While Lafitte-Clavé has based his observation on visiting the most prominent cities of the region he was not an expert of trade by any means either.

These criticisms that he formulates are mainly based on his prejudices and are only slightly toned by the initial impressions that he gained as he was slowly introduced to the Ottoman world. He came into the Ottoman Empire with the idea that it was a despotic state, past it was former glory, and he observed his surroundings based on that premise. He did not seem to care for the cause of the apparent decline; for him, this was an inherent quality of the despotic state itself. An idea that he does not write about much, he does condemn despotism and corruption, but as the source of decline, he does not deal with it further than the following quote. “It is quite astonishing to see anarchy springing up from the

⁵⁹ The low quality of the ships is attributed in a later paragraph to the avarice and greed of the Kapudan pasha and his subordinates. Interestingly Lafitte-Clavé later on develops a good working relationship with him Lafitte-Clavé, 23, 52.

⁶⁰ Lafitte-Clavé, 23–24.

bosom of Despotism, but it would be even more so if such a state could subsist for a long time with all the vices of its government”.⁶¹ We never really learn what those vices are. The only government personnel whose vices he does mention is the Kapudan Pasha. Moreover, interestingly, he has developed a working relationship with him.

2.2. Relation with the Authorities

During his travels around the Black Sea region, Lafitte-Clavé’s primary form of interaction with Ottoman subjects was with local authorities through official visits with the help of interpreters. This is unsurprising as he was on an official mission, and his lack of knowledge of local languages and lack of time prevented him from more nuanced communications with non-officials. Furthermore, from his writing, it seems that he did not particularly seek out the company of Ottoman subjects. Therefore, the interactions he records or alludes to are almost always with officials and representatives of the Ottoman state. The relationship between the two parties, Lafitte-Clavé, and the different Ottoman notables, is fascinating. Lafitte-Clavé, on his part, is on a mission and is mainly concerned with fulfilling said mission to his own standards. To him, the officials are mainly helpful as sources of information and providers of convenience, and as long as they stay in this role and are compliant with his needs and ideas, he is happy with them. However, large segments of the interactions are filled with Lafitte-Clavé’s displeasure with the officials. From his own perspective, it seems as if they conspired against him and hindered him at nearly every step.

⁶¹ His reaction to a story about a Kapıcıbaşı refusing an order during wartime. Il est bien étonnant de voir naître l’anarchie du sein du Despotisme; mais il le seroit encore plus qu’un pareil état pût subsister longtemps avec tous les vices de son Gouvernemnet. Lafitte-Clavé, 88.

It is hard to stay what the Ottoman's view on the subject. Lafitte-Clavé did not try to understand them, or at the very least, he did not share thoughts of empathy regarding them in his writings. Without a second source, it is impossible to tell whether it was his own temperament that caused the issues or if it stemmed from another source. The engineer was an outsider, a Christian Westerner; he was also working directly for the Porte, at least in the eyes of the local leaders, who, in turn, might have wanted to preserve their own authority against the central government and, as a show of power, hindered the engineer. Nonetheless, it seems that the French engineers were thrust into the complex power structures of the Ottoman Empire sometimes without much guidance. Furthermore, Lafitte-Clavé initially showed little interest in the power dynamics of the Ottoman Empire. During his initial voyage to the Black Sea region, he seemingly ignored allegiances and political motivations. Later on, during his stay in Constantinople, he probably realized that he could not fulfill his duties and started paying attention to this

He mainly lost his temper when he felt that his professional expertise was not acknowledged or ignored. On such occasions, he used a colorful vocabulary to brand the violator "absurd", an "imbecile", or just plain "stupid".⁶² Consider the following passage a characteristic outbreak of Lafitte-Clavé directed at the Pasha of Özi and his advisors, who earned his ire in particular.

"... and in this conference as in previous ones I saw that these people understand nothing about fortification, and that it is very difficult to make them understand

⁶² For example Lafitte-Clavé, 90.

anything, because they stick to a blind routine of bastions and palisades made without skill and without aim, and almost without utility ..."⁶³

This reaction was most likely a culmination of several "offenses"; his appointed guide did not appear to show him around the castle, and the pasha's men outright told him that they did not want him to be around. Moreover, evidently, the meeting itself did not go as smoothly as he had hoped.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, it seems that Lafitte-Clavé was good at hiding his genuine emotions as the Pasha, content with his work, and even asked him to defend the castle in case of an enemy attack.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, examples of his troubles with local officials go on and on. The captain of his ship and his Ottoman supervisor, Mehmed Aga, departed early, but according to Lafitte-Clavé, they refused with "absurd and ridiculous reasons" because they wanted to sleep in reality.⁶⁶ Problems with the local janissary commander of Odessa who does not grant them access to important blueprints of the castle and the map of the harbor.⁶⁷ Problems in Varna as well, I guess, not letting them work or something; the squabble went as far as Lafitte-Clavé had to threaten the Bina Emini and the Aga with directly writing to the Porte.⁶⁸ Contrary to what one might assume based on orientalist tropes he only ran into openly religious objection once in Burgas. Here locals

⁶³ After talking with the Bina Emini of Varna

Il m'a fait prier aujourd'hui de passer chez lui, j'y suis allé après midi; et dans cette conférence comme dans les précédents j'ai vû que ces gens-là n'entendent rien en fortification, et qu'il est très difficile de leur faire entendre quelque chose, parce qu'ils s'en tiennent à une routine aveugle de Tabies et de Charampos faits sans art et sans objet, et presque sans utilité ; Enfin il a été convenu que je lèverois demain matin l'enceinte du Château, après quoi j'irois avec lui reconnoitre quelques emplacements de Tabios qu'il se propose de faire. Lafitte-Clavé, 84–85.

⁶⁴ Lafitte-Clavé, 57–58, 60, 65.

⁶⁵ He later fulfilled this request when the Russo-Turkish War (1787-1792) broke out. He was sent to Özi and took part in its defense, reportedly also leading an attack on the fortress of Kinburn. Duvignau, "Le Général Lafitte-Clavé," 416–417.

⁶⁶ Lafitte-Clavé, *Voyage Sur Les Côtes*, 46.

⁶⁷ Lafitte-Clavé, 51.

⁶⁸ Lafitte-Clavé, 84, 94-96.

complained claiming that their work is useless and judged by the prophet that it shall never be accomplished.⁶⁹

His interactions with local authorities paint Lafitte-Clavé as an easily irritable and angry man. From his perspective, he was carrying out his duties in a field in which he was an expert. He thought very little of those officials with whom he was supposed to work together. Based on his writings, he did not try to understand the nuances of these power structures. He saw them as nothing more but nuisances. The officials themselves must have had their own reasons for acting the way they did. Quite possibly, most of them did not even intend to obstruct the work of Clavé. However, it can be hard to deal with a strange foreigner. They probably mistrusted him and wanted to use him in their own power struggles, not to mention the fact that all communication was conducted through an interpreter, which must have made the whole process more complicated and prone to misunderstandings.

2.3. Relations with the Locals

While far from his primary focus, Lafitte-Clavé had plenty of opportunities to observe the locals during his travels, making remarks about their customs and habits. His reason for this interest is most likely two-fold. On the one hand, he had a certain level of curiosity; the Black Sea is a distant region, and its inhabitants were not familiar at all, even a well-read Westerner. On the other hand, France had imperialist designs towards the Ottoman Empire; therefore, understanding the ethnic makeup of its regions would have been an asset to them. However, in his commission, he was not explicitly ordered to carry out such observations. That being said, he makes little effort to acquire first-hand

⁶⁹ Lafitte-Clavé, 109.

knowledge. He often makes factual declarations but rarely mentions where he gathered the information. Most likely, it came from his guide and other traveling companions, as there is no actual instance where he would describe himself approaching any of the locals.⁷⁰

Ottoman subjects had diverse multi-layered identities; Lafitte-Clavé does not engage with this nuance and approaches the subject with great confidence. It is not evident what criteria he used to differentiate these various groups. He was not familiar with languages, so he could not use them as criteria. However, he pays great attention to the number of places of worship and the denomination to which they belong. So it can be assumed within reason that one of his main criteria was sectarian belonging. Nevertheless, I guess he probably acquired this knowledge from his guide.

His description of ethnic groups is steeped in generalization, as one would expect, stressing certain apparent ethnic characteristics. His descriptions of the Abkhazians⁷¹ are quite illustrative: “the Abases posses a strong and robust constitution” and are usually armed due to the “continuous wars between their beys and princes”⁷² He described their religion and system of belief as a “...a bizarre mixture of Christianity, Paganism and Mahomedism” not the most understanding description. The Abkhazians were probably the least known group to him out of the ones he encountered that is the reason he goes into such

⁷⁰ An interesting question, which cannot easily be answered, is what the visit of Clavé meant for the locals. There is an instance with Abkhazians that grants us a rare glimpse into one such perspective. The local Abkhazians themselves were quite anxious about the expedition. There was a rumor amongst them going around that the Porte was planning on giving the region to the French just as the Crimea was given to Russia, and that is why the Clavé was there, to measure the country. Lafitte-Clavé, 33.

⁷¹ While he calls them ablaze, he actually means the Abkhaz or Abkhazian people. The Abaza ethnic group is closely related to the Abkhaz; however, they are far fewer in number and lived north of Abkhazia at the time. Within the excerpts I kept the original abaze form

⁷² Lafitte-Clavé, *Voyage Sur Les Côtes*, 8.

detail about them. Also, their presence in the region and importance in its military affairs must have piqued his interest.

There are a few curious instances where he goes out of his way to describe subjects that fall outside the purview of his regular duties and interests. For example, his disapproving description of Ramadan turns into criticism of class inequality:

“The Turks fast from the rising of the sun to its setting; they deprive themselves of drinking, eating, and smoking. However, as soon as the sun is down, they drink and eat all sorts of dishes throughout the night, which they pass without sleeping. They have breakfast before the sun rises and then sleep for a large portion of the day. This fast is not tiring, only for the poor folks who are obliged to work and still observe it vigorously.”⁷³

Another fascinating instance is his description of the women of Sinop. Lafitte-Clavé otherwise rarely makes statements about fashion and only writes about women very sparingly and sporadically. In conjunction with this, the common trope present in orientalist literature, namely the sexualization and feminization of its subject, is noticeably missing as well. That is not to say that it lacks objectifying and demeaning remarks; however, they are infrequent, for example, in a few paragraphs where he describes the winter garb of the Turkish

⁷³ Les Turcs jeûnent depuis le lever du soleil jusqu'à son coucher; ils se privent, de boire, manger, fumer; mais aussitôt que le soleil est couché, ils boivent et mangent toute sorte de mets pendant toute la nuit qu'ils passent ordinairement sans se coucher; ils déjeunent avant le lever du soleil, et dorment ensuite une garde partie de la journée: ce jeûne n'est fatigant que pour les pauvres gens qui sont obligés de travailler et qui l'observent cependant très rigoureusement: Le Ramazan revient au 12e mois de chaque année Lunaire, ce qui le fait aller successivement dans tous les mois de l'année solaire, et le rend très gênant surtout en été. Lafitte-Clavé, 101.

women of Sinope or when he mentions how the Turks celebrate Ramadan as opposed to other Muslims.⁷⁴

“The Turkish women of Sinope are very short in stature. Generally badly dressed, and generally have their faces covered with a black veil independent of their white headgear or cloth that they wear over their heads, shoulders and necks.”⁷⁵

Apart from such sporadic observations, Lafitte-Clavé shows little interest in systematic ethnographical endeavours. The only major exception is the Abkhazians. For reasons that are not entirely clear, Lafitte-Clavé deemed it necessary to describe their habits and customs throughout multiple paragraphs. He seems to be genuinely interested in them and surprised by their customs.⁷⁶ It is possible that his peculiar reaction was due to the fact that he was much less familiar with them than with Turks and Tartars, about whom he could have read plenty of literature. What is missing from these descriptions though is any form of special attention or concern towards the situation of the non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire. While this only became a widespread concern amongst Westerners visiting the Empire in the 19th-century, even in the 18th-century traces of it can be found in travelogues.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Lafitte-Clavé, 101, 126.

⁷⁵ It was even more surprising as it appears unexpectedly between two paragraphs of his favorite subject, antique ruins.

Les femmes Turques à Sinope sont d'une très petite taille, généralement mal vêtues, et ont généralement la figure couverte d'un voile noir indépendamment de la coiffure blanche ou linge qu'elles ont sur la tête, les épaules et sur le col. Lafitte-Clavé, 126.

⁷⁶ Lafitte-Clavé, 7–9.

⁷⁷ Baktir, Hasan, *The Representation of the Ottoman Orient in Eighteenth Century English Literature: Ottoman Society and Culture in Pseudo-Oriental Letters, Oriental Tales and Travel Literature*. Hannover: Ibidem Press, 2010. 12-13.

2.4. Personal Interests

As mentioned previously, on several occasions, Clavé comes off as a highly professional, mission-oriented individual in his writing. It is precisely this aspect of his that makes it even more interesting when instances of his personal interest coming through the pages can be caught. These are examples where he dwells on topics unrelated to his obligations, revealing something about his character. His main interests lies in objects of antiquity. On multiple occasions in his travelogues, he seeks out, describes, and comments upon ruins that were left behind from the Roman Empire. This seems to go beyond his professional interest in architecture. He shows interest in reading the inscriptions, shows concern about the state of the monuments, and has a genuine interest in their history. As an educated man of his time, he had to receive extensive education in the classical Greek and Roman ruins, and to a certain degree, that has to explain his fascination with the subject.

It is more than feasible that he has received a classical education in school, including Latin and Greek. He even demonstrated knowledge of the prior one by reading and translating some inscriptions.⁷⁸ However, he does not seem to be a Hellenist, unlike some of his contemporaries⁷⁹. Moreover, he cares little for the Greeks beyond recording them as statistics as a percentage living in a city reporting about the number of their houses and churches, as he does with any other ethnic group.

It is fascinating to read the passages where he takes away time and resources from his primary mission visiting sites of ancient ruins, and describing

⁷⁸ Lafitte-Clavé, *Voyage Sur Les Côtes*, 161, 168-169.

⁷⁹ The contrast is especially stark with the French ambassador to Constantinople at the time, who was a vocal supporter of a free Greece. Pingaud, *Choiseul-Gouffier*, VIII, 19-26.

them just as meticulously as he would a modern day defensive structure.⁸⁰ He seems truly curious about learning the secrets of these ruins as he often copies the still-visible inscriptions.⁸¹ Surprisingly, he even included some of their descriptions in the final published form of his notes.⁸² This pamphlet was primarily concerned with geography and only briefly mentioned other aspects of the land, such as the people living there. For some reason, Clavé felt the need to include his findings on Greco-Roman ruins, signifying how important he considered these findings and how deeply he cared about them.

During the time Clavé lived, the idea of antique heritage was still a crucial aspect of French identity. To him, the Ottomans must have seemed like the careless stewards of these invaluable artefacts that formed a part of his cultural heritage, therefore justifying his prejudices against them. This difference in appreciation of antiquity must have widened the gap he felt between himself, who could appreciate the grandeur of the Roman Empire and ancient Greeks, and the Ottomans, who seemed to lack the capacity to treat these ruins properly. As he puts it: “The few vestiges that remain of these ancient monuments still attest, despite the destructive barbarism of the Turks, to the antique Sinope.”⁸³ Therefore his efforts at describing these ruins, making copies and sketches can also be interpreted as an attempt at conservation.

⁸⁰ Instances of him going on these long outings to uncover antique ruins: Lafitte-Clavé, *Voyage Sur Les Côtes*, 124–27, 155–164, 168–171. Dimitris Anoyatis-Pelé, “Journal d’un Voyage Effectué Par Lafitte-Clavé de Constantinople a Brousse, Nicee et Nicomedie, En 1786,” *Δελτίο Κέντρου Μικρασιατικών Σπουδών*, 7. (1988): 100, 102–104.

⁸¹ Amongst others Lafitte-Clavé, *Voyage Sur Les Côtes*, 159–160.

⁸² Lafitte-Clavé, 22.

⁸³ Le peu vestiges qui reste des anciens édifices atteste encore malgré la barbarie destructive des turcs l’antique de Sinope. Lafitte-Clavé, 21.

2.5. Conclusion to the Chapter

In this chapter, I have presented Lafitte-Clavé's journey around the Black Sea region based on his own writing. During his travels, he inspected the forts and defences of important settlements, clashed frequently with local authorities, and even engaged in some amateur archaeology. His main mission was to survey the defensive capabilities of the region and create plans for improving them against the inevitable Russian offense, all the while helping French imperial designs by better understanding this distant region.

Clavé's travel writing holds importance as part of the broader tradition of oriental travelogues. A fascinating example of the genre as it was not intended to be published for a wider audience. Thanks to this it does not glamourize and romanticize its subject, and many of the common orientalist tropes are missing. However, some preconceptions about the oriental other are present and serve as justification for Clavé's endless displeasure with the Ottoman subjects. Based on his interactions with local authorities and, to a lesser degree, commoners, we learn that he had little patience for objections and arguments, especially when it came to his field of expertise. However, he must have hidden his genuine emotions reasonably well and kept his harsh remarks only to his journal. It is crucial to keep in mind that these interactions happened through translators as he did not know the local languages, and nobody knew French. These circumstances, coupled with his little willingness to conform to local customs, made it difficult for him to navigate Ottoman society, especially early on in his stay.

On the whole, the unembellished honesty of his writing greatly helps establish the character of this impersonal and private man. Since his journey was

a serious mission, seemingly objective observations take most of the pages, but his interests inevitably direct his attention. His interest in archeology and antiquity, this surprising personal interest, the only one that is readily shown and is not hidden by him, helps us understand him. He approached his hobby with the same meticulousness as he did his job. It also intertwines his animosity towards the Ottomans. He deeply cares for the for these antic sites, and saw their derelict state as a sign of “ignorance”. The Turks not realizing the importance of these ruins and acting indifferent towards them.

3. André Joseph Clavé’s Life and Work in Constantinople

In this chapter, I am going to discuss the time Lafitte-Clavé spent living and teaching in Constantinople, primarily based on his personal journal. After Clavé arrived in 1784 in the Ottoman capital to fulfill his mission, he spent most of his time living and teaching there, except for a couple of journeys. His main residence was in the Pera district, but he spent the summers in Tarabya⁸⁴, and gave classes twice a week on Mondays and Thursdays in the newly founded School of Engineers. During his leisure time, when not engaged in official duties, he spent most of his time taking part in social occasions with Western diplomatic circles of the city, attending balls, dinners, concerts, and even theatrical plays. The first half of this chapter will explore this lifestyle.

In the second part of this chapter, I am going to examine the work Lafitte-Clavé has done while staying in Constantinople. As previously discussed, his primary mission was to survey and create proposals for the development of forts

⁸⁴ Tarabya, or Tarapia in Clavé’s writing, was a small, predominantly Greek village north of Constantinople that gained prominence in the late 17th century, with many of the European ambassadors and merchants moving their summer residences there, thus gentrifying the village.

in the Black Sea region. However, once he returned from his journey, he was also tasked with establishing a school for military engineers. This task put him in a position where he was forced to work closely with Ottoman subjects for a prolonged period and slowly changed his attitude towards them.

The journal itself is written from October 18th, 1784, to April 3rd, 1787, and covers most of Lafitte-Clavé's stay in the Ottoman Empire. It is arguably more of a logbook than a journal. He lists the more important happenings of each day, and starting from early 1785, he also gathers precise weather data and measurements using a thermometer and a barometer.⁸⁵ What he considers essential to note varies quite a bit. Moments of everyday life, social occasions, his work at school, rumors and gossip from his friends, and events of political importance also get noted down. By 1786, he had developed the habit of making monthly summaries of his meteorological observations and political matters.

3.1. Life in Constantinople

Constantinople was a vibrant, cosmopolitan city, the dazzling capital of a vast empire. Amongst its diverse population, the employees of Western embassies formed a distinct group. They remained largely separate from most other groups of locals, mainly interacting with each other and with a select few Ottomans. Despite being far from home, they maintained their lifestyles and frequently organized large social gatherings.⁸⁶ When coming to Constantinople, Clavé found himself in this dynamic social scene. It is particularly intriguing to

⁸⁵ The thermometer and the barometer were sent by the French Academy of Sciences, and the astronomer Achille Tondu (1760-1787) gave them to him. Anoyatis-Pelé, *Journal d'un Officier*, 218.

⁸⁶ As the British traveler, Lady Craven, who visited the city during Clavé's stay, so astutely observed, while these diplomats are confined to each other's company, the competing political interests they represent and their different personalities made it an arduous task to develop relations beyond these larger parties. Elizabeth Craven, *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople* (London: G. G. T. and J. Robinson, 1789), 237.

consider the elevated diplomatic significance of his position. Previously, Clavé had a military background, but his current mission demanded delicate navigation of this unfamiliar environment, often involving negotiations with representatives of foreign powers. Hence, his presence at social events, including balls and gatherings attended by ambassadors and dignitaries, held social and diplomatic significance, requiring a blend of social skills and diplomatic finesse.

They did these frequent gatherings since they had a hard time finding local entertainment. There was a definitive cultural gap here that was difficult to bridge, and the Europeans made little effort or perhaps did not have the means to do it.⁸⁷ They exclusively sought out the company of each other; nearly every night, there was a ball, concert, theatrical play, or other such entertainment to attend. It is worth noting that these gatherings encompassed not only theater and opera but also included performances such as rope dancing and pantomime.⁸⁸ They were undoubtedly resourceful in saving themselves from boredom; while some of the shows were performed by professionals, such as the concerts or the rope dancing, others were entirely done by the delegates themselves. Of particular note is the wife of the Swedish ambassador Catharina Anna von Hedenstam née Grandon de Hochpied (1767-1803), who organized and played in several of these theatrical plays and operas. Lafitte-Clavé commentary on these occasions is lauding but also laconic at the same time.⁸⁹

Naturally, this community was partially separated from its countries, and it had several channels of communication. For Clavé and the rest of the French

⁸⁷ He also developed working relations with some Ottomans that, over time, grew amical. Comparing how he writes about Turks here and during his Black Sea Journey gives a strong contrast. He reached a point where he could respect and agree with an Ottoman.

⁸⁸ Anoyatis-Pelé, *Journal d'un Officier*, 341.

⁸⁹ Wilhelmina Stalberg, *Anteckningar Om Svenska Qvinnor* (Stockholm: P.G. Berg, 1864), 148.

delegates, the most significant was the courier who arrived from Vienna twice a month, bringing them the post and newspapers. Additionally, news and miscellaneous items were also conveyed through ships, merchants, and travelers passing through the city. Therefore, they could keep up with international events to a certain degree.⁹⁰ That is how he could keep up with such affairs such as the trial of Cardinal Rohan(1734-1803) due to his involvement in the Affair of the Diamond Necklace, the European discourse surrounding the separatist movement of the Austrian Netherlands, and sensational articles with large scale canal building plans and the death of the Frederick II (r. 1740-1786) king of Prussia.⁹¹

The courier's postal service enabled Clavé to maintain regular correspondence. He exchanged letters with his brother, of whom we learn nothing else, his commanding officer General Fourcroy (1715-1791); some of his replies survive from this correspondence and with Monnier after he left the Ottoman Empire. He received orders, his promotion, and even the Saint Louis cross in the mail. Very late into his Ottoman stay, he also got some important manuscripts delivered to him by post.⁹²

Lafitte-Clavé's writings often capture the news and events taking place in Constantinople. These include both natural disasters and unusual occurrences. Occasionally, the city is struck by cases of the plague or fires, although most fires are quickly contained. However, there have been notable incidents, such as the extensive fire that nearly destroyed the entire Pendik area.⁹³ In addition to these

⁹⁰ Unfortunately, it is unclear which newspaper this was; Clavé simply refers to it as Gazette. Since the courier traveled from Vienna, the Wiener Zeitung is a likely suspect.

⁹¹ Anoyatis-Pelé, *Journal d'un Officier*, 133, 239, 304.

⁹² Anoyatis-Pelé, 94, 284.

⁹³ Anoyatis-Pelé, 286.

incidents, Lafitte-Clavé recounts intriguing episodes from his time in Constantinople. One of the more entertaining intermezzos of Clavé's life in Constantinople was when his old servant Adam wanted to return home as he felt sick of the Ottoman Empire; consequently, Clavé had to hire a new servant. His choice fell to a man named Michel Grotus, a former French soldier who worked as an interpreter in Poland, Russia, and Moldavia. While Clavé was satisfied with his work, another member of the delegation, Alexandre d'Hauterive (1754-1830), accused him of extortion, multiple murders, and several other crimes. While the ambassador and Clavé found him innocent, Grotus decided to leave back for Poland for his former employer, the treasurer of Krakow.⁹⁴ Another notable example of a gossip-worthy event from the journal was the occasion when the private doctor of the Venetian ambassador's wife one, Dr. Schmit, set fire to their house as a distraction to steal her diamonds. After some consideration, the ambassador let Schmit go free, and he immediately departed from the city, leaving behind his pregnant wife, whom he had only married two months before the incident.⁹⁵

Clavé's notes also present a wealth of information on the politics of Istanbul, even if Clavé did not seem particularly enthusiastic about them. These notes mostly detail promotions, demotions, and exiles of officeholders. These were, of course, part of normal everyday life; however, he also records a few events of greater political interest, such as the Petrakis case, where the Porte

⁹⁴ Since both Michel Grotus and Kauffer had a strong Russian connection, in fact, the former later on became a Russian agent, the whole affair becomes even more suspicious. Anoyatis-Pelé, 139-40, 142-44. and Mitia Frumin, "François Kauffer (~1751-1801): Le Destin d'un Cartographe Français Au Service de l'étranger," *Cartes & Géomatique: Revue Du Comité Français de Cartographie*, 207 (2011): 95-99.

⁹⁵ Anoyatis-Pelé, *Journal d'un Officier*, 118-119.

arrested the richest Greek in town and several of his associates.⁹⁶ He showed little interest in understanding the underlying motivations and causes for these events.⁹⁷ This is, of course, understandable since most of these political games did not affect him directly. He, however, did have a side, and due to his close association with the Kapudan Pasha, he, in some sense, supported him and his side.⁹⁸

3.2. Work at the Mühendishane

Arguably, one of the main reasons behind Clavé's mission in the Ottoman Empire was to reorganize the educational system for Ottoman military engineers. Looking at the heyday of the Ottomans, it is clear they had a very competent engineering corps that built and maintained buildings and carried out successful sieges. The competency of the Ottoman engineering corps is evident. However, their method of education is less so. There is an argument to be made that the losses the Ottomans suffered on the battlefields of the 17th and 18th centuries also strongly attenuated the engineering corps, which, in their case, meant the loss of knowledge.⁹⁹ The issue is that it does not seem like they had a formal institution for their education; it was more like knowledge was passed down from masters to apprentices. Furthermore, there is a surprisingly small number of written texts on the subjects, although they are not entirely unheard of. Combined with the fact that Ottoman participation in wars reduced as well,

⁹⁶ It is interesting to contrast Clavé's account of the incident with that of Lady Craven, who took a more antagonistic tone towards the Kapudan Pasha. Compre Craven, *Journey Through the Crimea*, 208–9. and Anoyatis-Pelé, *Journal d'un Officier*, 224–226.

⁹⁷ There are some exceptions; of course, see page 123 on the exile of the Molla Anoyatis-Pelé, *Journal d'un Officier*, 123.

⁹⁸ For example, he sounds positively happy about the prospect of the Kapudan Pasha becoming grand Vizier Anoyatis-Pelé, 125.

⁹⁹ Such as the long-drawn-out siege of Candia, which caused them heavy losses in that department

this meant that they could no longer easily acquire new knowledge or re-learn what was lost. Therefore, the outcome of Clavé's mission was crucial to the continued survival of the empire.

The Mühendishane was opened in 1775 as the dedicated educational institution of the Arsenal providing people with an expertise in the fields of mathematics, engineering and geography. Throughout its early years its curriculum and institutional structure was not well defined. The arrival of the French engineers took the school into a new direction. The way Clavé describes it almost as a spontaneous request by the Grand Vizier to transform the place into an engineering school.¹⁰⁰ This is unexpected, as one would imagine the grand vizier and Ottoman leadership would have thought of this idea way before inviting the French and would have given them proper warning and time to prepare for such an endeavor. It also speaks highly of Clavé's competence or at least confidence that he, without hesitation, accepted the arduous task of setting up an educational institution.

Clavé does not go into much detail about the exact curricula of the classes; we learn from him that he taught drafting and mathematics, and a local lecturer gave geometry lessons.¹⁰¹ He is more descriptive when it comes to the practical lessons, as from very early on, they started building a model fortification in Aynali Kavak. Inferring from this, we can conclude that his teaching did not differ significantly from the one he received at the Royal Mezières School of Engineers.

¹⁰⁰ Le 20. Mustafa aga renégat anglois que j'avois vû la veille au bal, et qui avoit demandé à M. l'ambassadeur de m'envoyer chez lui à 10 heures du matin, m'a amené chez le Tersana Emini où j'ai trouvé Tchelebi Effendi, etc. Ils veulent avoir une École du Génie; Les ordres de la Porte sont donnés pour cela: ils m'ont fait voir la salle qu'ils destinent aux élèves, et ils ont pris deux jours de la semaine le lundi et le jeudi, pour leur instruction. Ils se proposent de comencer le jeudi 28 Octobre. Anoyatis-Pelé, *Journal d'un Officier*, 43. Also see Kemal Beydilli, "İstanbul'da Deniz ve Kara Mühendishanelerinin Kuruluşu ve Faaliyetleri (1775-1839)," in *Büyük İstanbul Tarihi Cilt 9: Eğitim, Bilim ve Teknoloji* (Istanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi, 2015), 323–324.

¹⁰¹ Anoyatis-Pelé, *Journal d'un Officier*, 44, 52.

Here, students studied the science of military architecture for two years, the first year being dedicated to theory and the second year to practice. It is fascinating that with the Ottoman students, Clavé did both simultaneously. He also used textbooks, most prominently the one he had written himself, the *Traité de Castrameration*.¹⁰² Besides that, it is hard to say what else he had in his personal library. Relatively late into his stay in Constantinople, he received several books on the subject, but it is unclear whether he had shared them with his students.

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The student body itself was highly eclectic. While Lafitte-Clavé does not state this outright, it is clear that most of them were well-educated. The educational framework had a chaotic feel about it; the classes had no fixed number of attendees, attendance was elective, and new students could show up without prior notification. The first lessons started with ten students and the number fluctuated. One cannot help but imagine a lively environment where curious new students could show up any time, even bringing presents on occasion.¹⁰⁴ What is quite fascinating, that the otherwise stern Clavé is content with this and acts lenient towards his students. The very least he does not try to impose a stricter regime on the and does not note down frustration unlike he did

¹⁰² The book was written by Clavé himself and was translated by one of his students and published by the French embassy. It is a fairly practical piece of writing that offers particular siege scenarios in which the engineers have to act. He does not write about writing. This was an essential piece of knowledge production, which was basically a collection of scenarios and siege situations. One of the main achievements of his educational career in the Ottoman Empire was the creation of a textbook. Anoyatis-Pelé, 98.

¹⁰³ The *Memoire du Fortification Perpendiculaire* by Montalambert, one copy was given to the ambassador the other he kept for himself. This is a good place to make a short detour. When Selim III started the Nizami-I Cedid reforms, one of his first decrees was to order the translation of a few fundamental works on the military sciences. The first of these was Vauban's *Traité de Defense*. The book was translated by Alexander Ypsilantis, who knew Clavé, and Clavé also had at least one version of the book with himself while in Istanbul. Furthermore, since he was instrumental in importing Western engineering practices into the Ottoman Empire, he is a good suspect for bringing it to their attention. Anoyatis-Pelé, 284, 308.

¹⁰⁴ Anoyatis-Pelé, 118.

about the provincial officials. Moreover he also seems satisfied with their level of knowledge. He does not describe any significant gap that would have barred them from understanding what he was teaching.

He also held a similarly good opinion of the Ottoman teachers.¹⁰⁵ While he writes even less about them than about his students, their work was essential in providing the necessary tools and structure for Clavé to disseminate his knowledge.

¹⁰⁵ Gelenbevi Ismail Efendi (1730-1791) the prolific mathematician and Kasabbaşızade Ibrahim (-1820) who used his experience of Ottoman bureaucracy to help the school grow. Serafettin Gölcük and Metin Yurdağür, "Gelenbevi," in *İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1996), 552-555. Ismail Erdoğan, "Kasabbaşızâde İbrâhim," in *İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2001), 527-28. Beydilli, "İstanbul'da Deniz ve Kara Mühendishanelerinin Kuruluşu ve Faaliyetleri (1775-1839)," 325-326.

4. Conclusion

In the thesis, I set out to showcase a turning point in Ottoman military history through the life and work of André-Joseph Lafitte-Clavé. This episode marks the end of the period of Ottoman withdrawal from the battlefields that atrophied their military innovation and the beginning of a new era characterized by institutionalization and closer cooperation with their Western contemporaries. This process of westernization was achieved by inviting groups of foreign experts to share their knowledge and help reorganizing the military. These individuals hold a prominent place in Ottoman history, however the literature overemphasizes the effect of such personalities as Bonneval or Tott. The mission of 1784 dwarfs both of them. This event marks the end of the era of the renegades and heralds the Ottoman Empire's integration into the concert of Europe.

Clavé is a strange character. He does not share the enthusiastic curiosity towards the orient with his contemporaries. While the staff of the French embassy staff has a strong Hellenistic bent his interest is limited to the antic ruins. He was also not the same kind of trans-imperial subject as Tott, who hoped to gain prominence and political favor by advertising his skills. He was a military man with an interest in ancient history and a well-disciplined personality. Clavé cared about the quality of his work and appreciated the same level of professional attitude in others. Yet he was able to hide his immense frustration with those who hindered him in his duty. He saw the mission as a

noble cause to enlighten the Turks, seemingly unaware of the wider political context.

As for the states that employed him, both the Kingdom of France and the Ottoman Empire had high hopes for the success of the mission. For the Ottomans, it was a solution for survival, to fend off the Russian threat and, who knows, maybe even rise from the ashes again. For the French, it was the start of a potentially very lucrative colonial project. Additionally a strategic move to expand their power in the Mediterranean and obstruct the imperial designs of the Austrians. It is evident that both parties ruled that the mission was going well; France was willing to invest in more resources, and the Ottomans invited even more experts. When the mission had to be abruptly ended, they invited them again on the first occasion they got.

One question that greatly intrigued me throughout this research is how Clavé's knowledge of fortification building and siege craft compared to that of the Ottomans. To put it in other words, did the Ottomans lack a certain amount of know-how in this field that necessitated the invitation of Clavé and his peers? This turned out to be more challenging to judge than I had initially imagined. Clavé plunges himself into the Ottoman milieu with the arrogance we would expect from any Westerner. Often, it is impossible if his dismissiveness towards the Ottomans stems from a place of professional disapproval, his ignorance towards the local context, or a feeling of unfounded superiority.

Regarding Ottoman fortifications, Clavé is highly critical. However in his criticism he never compares them with European forts, for an expert of the time the perceived issues with the Ottoman techniques must have seemed evident. As a result, from reading his journals, no clear and deep gap between French and

Ottoman architecture can be established. A similar issue arises when looking at his description of his classes. All around, he seems content with the level of knowledge of his students, and according to his admissions, his students and relevant officials are satisfied with his work. Nevertheless, there is no episode reminiscent of Baron Tott explaining the triangle, which would indicate a significant difference in knowledge.

In conclusion I contend that Clavé's work had long-lasting consequences for the Ottoman Empire. The establishment of a Western-style school gave them a fair fighting chance in the quickly evolving battlefields of the 18th-century. Gradually their whole military education system transitioned to a more Western model to keep up with its rivals. It was crucial that all professionals, engineers, cannons, bombardiers, and later, the whole of the officer corps, could receive a standardized education.

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