



FROM ISTANBUL TO LONDON?  
ALBERTUS BOBOVIUS' APPEAL TO ISAAC BASIRE<sup>1</sup>

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*Introduction*

On an earlier occasion I referred to the letter Albertus Bobovius (Ali Bey) wrote to Isaac Basire and also to the *Papers concerning Ali Bei*, the most extensive contemporary account of his life.<sup>2</sup> The letter was then only mentioned as one of the twelve works known to have been written by Bobovius. Neither of the texts has been studied in their own right before, nor has their role as evidence of connections between scholars in the East and the West.

*The Protagonists*

The author of our letter is Albertus Bobovius, whose original name was Wojciech Bobowski.<sup>3</sup> He is also known as Ali Bey and Ali Ufki. These Muslim names were most commonly used by himself and others in the context of his career at the Ottoman court. In his contacts with Western scholars and diplomats he called himself, and was known as, Bobovius.

Bobovius' Ottoman career started soon after his capture by Tartars, at the age of ten, during an invasion of his native area of Poland

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<sup>1</sup> For this contribution I have relied on suggestions made by Dr F.L.G. Stenten, as well as Prof. K.A.E. Enenkel, Prof. Marika Keblusek, all of whom I would like to thank most heartily. I equally would like to thank Drs Johanna Jongeling for the English version of this text, as well as Alastair Hamilton for his corrections and additions.

<sup>2</sup> Neudecker H., "Wojciech Bobowski and his Turkish grammar (1666): a dragoon and musician at the court of sultan Mehmed iv", *Dutch Studies-NELL* 2 (1996) 169–92; the texts are contained in MS. Smith 98, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, 19–26.

<sup>3</sup> Neudecker, "Bobowski and his Turkish grammar" (note 2), where all Bobovius' works have been discussed, including his undated works.

(currently part of the Ukraine) around 1632. After his capture Bobovius was transported to Istanbul and there sold as a slave. He converted to Islam, adopting the name of Ali, and for approximately 21 years was educated at the palace, also acting as a servant. After the completion of his education, he went to Egypt in the service of a senior Ottoman officer, whose name is unknown. He subsequently returned to Istanbul a free man.<sup>4</sup>

Around 1750 Bobovius entered the service of the English ambassador in Istanbul, Sir Thomas Bendish, who was in office from 1647 to 1660.<sup>5</sup> He also worked for his successor, Heneage Finch, Lord Winchilsea, ambassador to the Porte from 1660 to 1668.<sup>6</sup> During this period, between 1662 and 1664, Bobovius worked on the Turkish translation of the Old and New Testament, as well as the Apocrypha, in the pay of the Dutch Resident in Istanbul, Levinus Warner. It was towards the end of this second phase of his career that he wrote his letter to Basire.

Dr Isaac Basire was born in or near Rouen in 1607/8.<sup>7</sup> His full name was Isaac Basire de Preaumont, but he dropped the latter part of the name, which refers to his father's estate, when he settled in England (only using it occasionally as an alias later on). He was nat-

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Hyde (ed.), *Tractatus Alberti Bobovii . . . De Turcarum liturgia, Peregrinatione Meccana . . .* (Oxford: 1690), Praefatio; Babinger F., "Wojciech Bobowski", *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* 2 (Cracow: 1936) 156–57.

<sup>5</sup> Wood A.C., *A History of the Levant Company* (Oxford: 1935) 91–96, 250; cf. also Lomas S.C. – Bickley F. (eds.), *Report on the manuscripts of Allan George Finch* 1 (London: 1913), Intr. 80. As early as 1648 he published a report on his embassy in Istanbul. Watt R., *Bibliotheca Britannica, or a General Index to British . . . Literature* 1 (Edinburgh: 1824) 98: 'Sir Thomas Bendish, Ambassador at Constantinople.—*Relation of his Embassy to Turkey*. London 1648 4to', cf. Bank D. – Esposito A. (eds.), *British Biographical Index* 1 (London etc.: 1990) 148.

<sup>6</sup> Lomas – Bickley (eds.), *Report . . . Finch* Intr.; *Dictionary of National Biography* I 682; Wood, *Levant Company* 96–97, 250. Winchilsea published a *Narrative of the success of his Embassy to Turkey. The voyage of the Right Honourable Heneage Finch from Smyrna to Constantinople . . .* (London: 1661).

<sup>7</sup> Brennen, C., 'Basire, Isaac, de Preaumont', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), 4, 232–4 Brennen C., *The life and times of Isaac Basire* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Durham: 1987). Older works on Isaac Basire are Beaglehole C.H., *The life and times of Dr. Isaac Basire* (typescript, not published, Dartington [appr. 1950]), which we have not been able to track down, and Darnell W.N. (ed.), *The correspondence of Isaac Basire* (London: 1831). Darnell does not mention Bobovius as one of Basire's correspondents, but according to an anonymous, deadly, critique, entitled *Remarks upon the defects and inaccuracies in 'The Reverend W.N. Darnell's Correspondence and Memoir of Dr. Basire'* (London: 1831) (passim) one of Darnell's shortcomings is his limited selection of sources.

uralised in 1632, shortly after he came to England.<sup>8</sup> Basire was incorporated into the University of Oxford in November 1640.<sup>9</sup> He was appointed chaplain to King Charles I in 1641, but because he blatantly identified himself with the King's cause he was imprisoned (1646) and, when released, was forced to go abroad where he made a living by teaching and preaching. Earlier he must have spent some time in Oxford, for Wood relates for the year 1646:

Isaac Basire and Rich. Dukeson of Cambr., Thom. Bunbury of Ball. Coll., Rob. Sibthorp of Linc. Coll., Will. Haywood of S. Johns Coll. & who had fled to Oxon, as an asylum, and there had several times preached before his Majesty and the Members of Parliament, had each a licence given to them under the public Seal of the University to preach the word of God throughout England.<sup>10</sup>

His exile lasted fourteen years, during which his family stayed behind in England. He began his travels in 1647, first visiting France and Italy, and then the Near East. He spent Easter of 1653 in Aleppo, travelling to Istanbul in the summer of that year.<sup>11</sup> He was an enthusiast in the dissemination of the Anglo-Catholic faith throughout the East. As Brennen puts it, it was "his usual practice of leaving a translation of the Catechism" wherever he went.

In Istanbul Basire lodged with the ambassador, Sir Thomas Bendish, and acted as chaplain both to the ambassador personally and to the English community in the Ottoman capital.<sup>12</sup> The chaplains in Istanbul were in the pay of the embassy and the Levant Company, being nominally elected by the General Court of the Levant Company. The embassy chaplain formed an exception, however, because he was both chaplain to the British community as a whole and personal minister to the ambassador. Because of the latter connection

<sup>8</sup> Brennen, *The life and times of Isaac Basire*, 134.

<sup>9</sup> Wood A. à, *Fasti Oxonienses* II, sec. ed. (London: 1721) 285.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 739.

<sup>11</sup> Wood, *Fasti Oxonienses* I (London: 1691) 902–04, cf. Stanwood P.G., 'Lives of devotion: The correspondence of Isaac Basire and Frances Corbett: 1635–1660', *Early Modern Literary Studies* 5.1 (May, 1999): 1. 1–19, <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/05-1/stanlive.html>; Brennen, *The life and times of Isaac Basire* (note 7), 83.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 84. In his entry on Basire in the *Oxford DNB* Brennen states that in Istanbul Basire "acted as chaplain to the British embassy and also to the French community there, on the condition that with them he would use his own translation of the Book of Common Prayer." *Oxford DNB*, 233.

it was the ambassador who actually made the appointment.<sup>13</sup> Basire's last appointment during his exile was in Transylvania, in the service of George Ragocsi II, prince of Transylvania. He returned to England the summer of 1661, settling in Durham.

Bobovius addressed his letter to Basire in London, so he evidently knew, or hoped, that Basire would at least be there once a year since Basire was there regularly in his capacity as chaplain to the King, in order to perform missions for the Dean and Chapter, and to look after his own affairs.<sup>14</sup> The journey to London took eight days and was made by horse, and sometimes by carriage, in all weathers. Still, Basire undertook such trips once or twice a year, sometimes staying for several months. In 1666, for example, his trip started in May and he did not begin his journey home until July. On this occasion he could not have received Bobovius' letter, however, because it was not sent until August. In 1667 Basire visited London twice, so we may assume that he received the letter then.

### *History of the documents*

The catalogue description of Oxford ms. Smith 98 is as follows:<sup>15</sup>

In Greek, &c., on paper: written in the 2nd half of the 17th cent.: 8  $\frac{3}{8}$  × 6  $\frac{1}{2}$  in., viii + 54 leaves. Papers relating to the Greek church; b. (pp. 19–25) a copy of a letter from Albertus Bobovius (Ali Beigh) to dr. Isaac Basire 27/17 Aug. 1666, in Latin, with an account of the author; c. (p. 31) a copy of a Greek letter from Joseph archbp. of Samos to dr Thomas Smith.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Brennen, *The life and times of Isaac Basire* (note 7), 84.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>15</sup> For the sake of brevity I will endeavour to be complete as far as pp. 19–26 (containing the *Letter* and the *Papers*) are concerned, only adding information on other parts of the manuscript wherever this is essential to our subject. Cf. Hunt R. (ed.), *A summary catalogue of Western manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford . . . with references to the Oriental and other manuscripts*, 7 vols (Oxford: 1895–1953), vol. 3, Madan F., *Collections received during the 18th century* (Oxford: 1895) 473, nr. 15703. I am grateful for the permission granted me by the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, to publish parts of this manuscript and for the kind assistance given by the staff of Duke Humfrey's Library, Oxford.

<sup>16</sup> The manuscript is a convolute. The letter that concerns us here fills pp. 19–20 (the address can be found on p. 26) and the *Papers* fill pp. 21–22. Pages 23 and 25 are blank, p. 24 contains important remarks on the origin of the texts (see below). The letter is written in Latin, and, according to Prof. K.A.E. Enenkel, is

Of the various documents only Bobovius' letter is dated, (Constantinople (Pera), August 27/17 1666), as well as signed, (Albertus Bobovius in perpetuum Magister Linguarum).<sup>17</sup> The *Papers* are unsigned and were written in London. This is not explicitly mentioned in the manuscript, but can be deduced from the terms 'here' and 'there', which are clearly used for London and Istanbul, respectively.<sup>18</sup> The exact date of the *Papers* is unclear, but because they say that our letter of 1666 had been *lately written*, the *Papers* must have been composed towards the end of that year, or in any case no later than 1668 because that is when they were given to Thomas Smith.

Apart from mentioning the bookbinder's name, Thomas Hearne, the assistant librarian at the Bodleian Library who inherited all Smith's manuscripts, enlightens us as to how and when the manuscript came into his possession:

Everyone his share/Thomas Hearne March 16th 1710/11  
From the manuscripts which the esteemed and very learned gentleman, Thomas Smith, Professor of Theology and most honourable friend, left me dying, because of his strong feelings of friendship<sup>19</sup>

As for the history of the manuscript before 1710 I established earlier that the two texts were taken to Istanbul from London in 1668, most likely by Thomas Smith.<sup>20</sup> Two notes in his handwriting confirm this. The first (p. 24) reads:

Papers concerning Ali Beigh given mee at Whitehall 1668 upon my going for Constantinople with his letter to D[octo]r Basire.

The second, on the same page, reads:

Papers concerning Ali Bei given mee at Court by Mr Williamson.

Thomas Smith, known as a Hebraist and an expert on the Turks and the Greek Church, was a non-juring divine—he refused to take

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in a flowery and oriental style. The *Papers*, on the other hand, are in English. The remaining nine texts vary in subject matter and are written by different authors, in Greek and English.

<sup>17</sup> Ms. p. 20, r. 20–21.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. below, Paragraphs V and VII of the *Papers*.

<sup>19</sup> 'Suum cuique/Tho[mas] Hearne Martij 16<sup>o</sup>/1710/11. E(x) chartis mss. quas mihi moriens pro Summa sua benevolentia legavit vir reverendus doctissimusque Thomas Smithus S[anctae] T[heologiae] P[rofessor] amicus integerrimus' (ms. p. v).

<sup>20</sup> Neudecker., "Wojciech Bobowski and his Turkish grammar" (note 2), 169–70.

the oath of loyalty to William III in 1688—and he moved to Istanbul in 1668 as chaplain to Sir Daniel Harvey, who was appointed ambassador on 2 January 1668, but only received his royal instructions on 3 August of that year. The new ambassador and his party arrived in Istanbul on 20 December 1668.<sup>21</sup> If this was Smith's first visit to Istanbul he must have met Bobovius then. It is also known that he wrote an untitled and undated manuscript, Oxford Smith 104<sup>22</sup> together with Bobovius, and he may have planned the manuscript on that occasion, in which case it would date from after 1668. In this same period he may well have conceived the idea of his tract *de Turcarum liturgia*. He returned to England three years later.

Considering the social environment, the most obvious conclusion would be to identify “Mr. Williamson” with the later (1674) secretary of State, Sir Joseph Williamson, who knew Smith from his studies at Oxford (The Queen's College), where Smith was his tutor. Their paths would cross again later, because in 1678/9 Smith became Sir Joseph's chaplain.<sup>23</sup>

It is not known what happened to the manuscripts between 1668 and 1710, i.e. from the moment Smith obtained them until his death. It is possible that Smith had them in his possession all the time but did not present them to the intended person. We will return to the question of who this person was, and to Smith and his relationship to other people in this history, later.

The statement by Thomas Hearne mentioned above fits in with Madan's description of how the manuscript became part of the Oxford University collection. Thomas Smith left it, together with his other manuscripts, to Thomas Hearne on his death in 1710. Hearne, in his turn, left all his manuscripts to William Bedford, and Richard Rawlinson purchased them from Bedford's widow, probably in 1748. This explains the designation in the manuscript as part of ‘Rawl K (Hearne and (Hearne-) Smith)’. It was Rawlinson who, on his death in 1755, finally left all his manuscripts to the university.<sup>24</sup>

The *Papers* consist of seven short paragraphs about Bobovius. All are in the same hand, possibly that of the “I” found in paragraph

<sup>21</sup> Wood, *Levant Company* (note 5), 250.

<sup>22</sup> Neudecker, “Wojciech Bobowski and his Turkish grammar” (note 2), 174.

<sup>23</sup> Theodor Harmsen, ‘Smith, Thomas’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 51, 335–6; à Wood, *Fasti Oxonienses* II, 869.

<sup>24</sup> Madan F., *Collections received during the 18th century* (note 15), 177–81.

III, whose identity remains unknown. There is a clear connection between the paragraphs. They mention Bobovius' skills and accomplishments, as well as the names of Englishmen who could confirm the favourable account of him from their own experience. It is only from the last paragraph, to which we will return later, that we learn the actual aim of the *Papers* and their connection with Bobovius' letter to Basire.

### *Contacts in Istanbul*

Bobovius begins his letter (p. 19, l. 6–8) with the statement that he has not heard from Basire for seven years, since the time when Basire returned to England from Transylvania. Bobovius attributes this lack of contact to forgetfulness on Basire's part, or to the possibility that Basire had been too busy to reply.

The first concrete statement Bobovius makes (p. 19, l. 9–13), is that he has heard from Benjamin Denham that the king of England has finally arrived in London and that Denham, is very satisfied with his rule. In a subordinate clause it is even mentioned that Denham has always been loyal to the king's party. The king is not mentioned by name, but since Charles II ascended the throne in 1660, the reference is obviously to him. The remark about Denham's sympathy for the king's party clearly refers to the period before 1660, that of the Commonwealth. In this passage Denham is indicated as the person who supplies Bobovius with information on the situation in England ('a latore presentis', l. 9), and as former chaplain of the English "national court" at Istanbul ('antehac in urbe ista Aulae et Nationis Anglicanae Capellano', l. 10–11). This passage ends with the wish that he may long see the king rule and that he may increase his enthusiasm for the study of religion even further (p. 19, l. 13–15).

Very little seems to be known about Benjamin Denham. He was born in London around 1622, receiving his education first at Westminster, then at Christ's College, Oxford, where he was admitted on 15 May 1639. He matriculated in the same year, and became B.A. in 1642–3. After he had obtained his M.A. in 1650, he was appointed chaplain to the Levant Company. In Istanbul he served both Bendish and Winchilsea in this capacity. From the *Papers* (par. V—see below) we learn that Denham was the chaplain of Lord Winchilsea for seven years, i.e. until 1667. However, this is contradicted by

other evidence. We know that in the summer of 1664 Denham was already “desirous to returne into England”. In February 1665 his successor, Henry Denton, was on his way to the East.<sup>25</sup> Denton had certainly arrived at Istanbul before the beginning of 1666, for in that year (when our letter was also written) Bobovius composed and published his *Grammatica Turcicolatina*, which he dedicated to the new English chaplain. The title page of this work reads

Commenced for [my] friend and father Henry Denton, Chaplain of the English *nation* and coordinator of the service, in Pera, Constantinople, at the beginning of the year 1666 after the birth of the Virgin.<sup>26</sup>

The *Papers* reveal that Bobovius not only met Denham and his successor in Istanbul, but also Isaac Basire. Paragraph II indicates that Basire even commissioned the Turkish translation of the Church Catechism from Bobovius in 1652–53:

He [Bobovius] was very well knowne in Const[antino]ple to Dr Basire, Annis 1652 and 1653, who there procured him to translate the Catechisme of the Church of England into Turkish (w[hi]ch the Doct[o]r dispersed in the East, both in that Language, and also in the Arabick, and vulgar Greeke).

These dates are almost certainly wrong. We know that Basire spent Easter 1653 in Aleppo, and that he only travelled to Istanbul in the summer of the same year.<sup>27</sup> The friendship between Bobovius and Basire can thus only have begun in the second half of 1653, when the latter served Ambassador Bendish as chaplain.

In the letter of 1666, by which Bobovius hoped to rekindle the friendship with Basire, he also refers to his connections with Warner. Again we read how important Bobovius was in the history of the “translation of the Bible by Levinus Warner”. He writes (p. 19, l. 16–18) that “Levinus Warner, Resident of the Netherlands, may his memory be blessed, has used my help to translate the O.T and the N.T.” This translation of the Bible has already been examined before, and the fact that Levinus Warned did not personally work

<sup>25</sup> Lomas – Bickley (eds.), *Report . . . Finch* (note 6) 1, 259, 327, 358.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Incepta pro amico et patre Henr[.] Denton, Anglicana[e] nationis Capellano ac Hierophanta In Pera Constantinopolis Initio Anni A Partu Virginis 1666<sup>mo</sup>’; ms. Hyde 43, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, cf. Neudecker H., “Wojciech Bobowski and his Turkish grammar” (note 2) 178.

<sup>27</sup> Brennen C., *The life and times of Isaac Basire* (note 7) 84.

on this translation was also known,<sup>28</sup> but now, for the first time, we see Bobovius mentioning this to a third person. He may have felt at liberty to do so, because Warner had died since.

This brings us to an even more interesting novelty mentioned in the letter, indeed, one that is actually shocking. On page 19 lines 18–20 read:

after I had finished this [the OT and NT] in two years, together with the Apocrypha, he was killed two months later by unknown criminals using poison.

The date and place of Levinus Warner's early death, 22 June 1665 at Istanbul, were known already, but this is the first source to suggest this cause of death. Du Rieu reports that Warner was imprisoned in Edirne and that he fell ill and passed away shortly after.<sup>29</sup> There was clearly no connection between Warner's imprisonment and his death, however. The Dutch Resident was detained in Edirne in the aftermath of a political incident caused by the unconditional surrender of the ship *Keizer Octavianus* to corsairs by its Dutch captain. The Ottoman authorities held Warner liable for the damages several of its highest officers had incurred, and detained him. The Dutchman was released after he had agreed to pay a huge fine.<sup>30</sup> The detention—not in a dungeon, but in the house of a senior court official—occurred in 1663, while Warner did not die until 1665. We can therefore confidently reject the connection implied by Du Rieu between Warner's imprisonment and his death.

In one of his letters to his superiors François de Brosses, the Dutch chargé d'affaires in Istanbul, mentioned the place where his ambassador had been buried: "His body has been buried, according to his wish, next to the other, German, Resident, with all due honour."<sup>31</sup> Our colleague Alexander de Groot has searched for the gravestone of Levinus Warner in the Protestant cemetery in the Feriköy quarter

<sup>28</sup> Neudecker H., *The Turkish Bible translation by Yahya bin 'Ishak, also called Haki (1659)* (Leiden: 1994) 371–72, 377.

<sup>29</sup> Rieu W.N. Du, *Levini Warneri de rebus Turcicis epistolae ineditae* (note 18) x.

<sup>30</sup> Heeringa K., *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis van den Levantschen handel 2, 1661–1726* (RGP 34, The Hague: 1917) 166 ff.

<sup>31</sup> Des Brosses to the States General (in Dutch), 10 July 1665 in *Archief van de Staten Generaal*, Nationaal Archief Den Haag (Archives of the States General, National Archive The Hague), S.G. 1.01.04 nr. 6910, *Liassen Italiën, Savoyen, Constantinopelen, Venetiën ende Barbariën*.

of Istanbul, but found only that of his brother, Frederik, the former Dutch consul in Athens. To De Groot's frustration Frederik's gravestone mentions that he was buried next to his brother Levinus, but there was no further trace of the Resident's grave.<sup>32</sup> Whether a violent death would have been mentioned in the inscription is of course questionable. Some investigation in Dutch archives has resulted in several documents and letters that are connected to Warner's death, among other things his last will and six letters, but these documents do not offer a decisive answer to the question of what caused his death.<sup>33</sup> It is clear that Warner suffered from a disease of some kind, but how he contracted it is not mentioned. What happened exactly cannot be determined at the moment, but it is interesting that Bobovius included this "news" in his letter.

Let us return to the translation of the Bible and Bobovius' work on it. His comment that he finished his work in two years is roughly in agreement with the information we find in the manuscripts of the first drafts of his translation, namely that he finished his first book of the Bible (Isaiah) on February 1 1662 and the complete work on December 27/17 1664.<sup>34</sup> On further consideration this is a period of three years, rather than two. It may have been Bobovius' intention to present himself in the most favourable light. We will return to this subject when we discuss the purpose of the letter and the *Papers*.

The letter continues with the statement that the original of Bobovius' translation, "together with two copies by other Turkish translators", had been sent to Leiden and these three copies were left in the care of Jacobus Golius (p. 19, l. 22–p. 20, l. 2). The identity of these translators is not mentioned, but naturally the first person that comes to mind is Haki, or Yahya bin Ishak. His translation of the Bible

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<sup>32</sup> Groot A.H. de, "Old Dutch graves at Istanbul", *Archivum Ottomanicum* 5 (1973) 6–7.

<sup>33</sup> *Archief van de Staten Generaal* (note 31), S.G. 1.01.04 nr. 6910, *Liassen Italiën, Savoyen, Constantinopelen, Venetiën ende Barbariën*. This file contains pieces concerning the period 1550–1796. The relevant pieces can be found in the subsection 'Konstantinopel 1665'. Some have already been published by Rieu W.N. Du, *Levini Warneri de rebus Turcicis epistolae ineditae* (Leiden: 1883). Other consulted records that did not yield relevant information are: S.G. 1.01.04 nr. 6909, LH 1.03.01 nrs. 26, 192, 238, 239.

<sup>34</sup> Cod. Or. 390b, Leiden University Library, fol. 26a, and Or. 390c, fol. 208a respectively.

has been preserved and we now know that he made it (or at least the translation of the NT) under the authority, and in the pay, of Levinius Warner.<sup>35</sup> Further investigation of Warner's will, moreover, reveals that Haki was in fact Warner's personal dragoman and that the interpreter was one of the beneficiaries of the will, receiving a valuable piece of clothing. In the words of the document itself: "a son drogomant aqy [i.e. Haki] une veste drap."<sup>36</sup>

Who the other translator was is unclear. William Seaman, the author of a Turkish grammar and dictionary who had at one point been in Istanbul with the English ambassador Sir Peter Wyche, is an obvious candidate, because we know that in December 1664 a translation by him (or at least a proof of it) arrived in Amsterdam, where Comenius asked Golius for assistance.<sup>37</sup> However, the text clearly speaks of "other *Turkish* translators", which suggests that they were Turks, or at least Muslims, and Seaman was neither. The words "together with" also point in a different direction, indicating that the translations were sent at the same time and therefore from the same place, Istanbul. Moreover, Seaman is referred to in the correspondence as "the person in England", and his translation was sent to Comenius from there. Unless we do not take Bobovius' letter literally, we therefore have to exclude Seaman, but without being able to offer an alternative.

Golius' opinion of the translations, or at least of the one by Bobovius, is well known from other sources. In 1666 he wrote that he disapproved of Bobovius' Bible translation and proposed to have an Armenian of his acquaintance make a new translation using the one by Bobovius.<sup>38</sup> At the end of the letter's passage on the translation of the Bible we learn that Bobovius and Warner were planning to go through the entire translation together, using the commentary

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<sup>35</sup> Neudecker, *The Turkish Bible translation* (note 28), 365–82; Neudecker, 'A 17th-century Jew demanding his due', in: Schmidt J. (ed.), *Essays in Honour of Barbara Flemming* 2 (Harvard: 2002) (= *Journal of Turkish Studies* 26, 2 (2002)) 155–58.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted from the French version of the will; the Italian version gives his name as "haggi", the French copy as "hagi". Du Rieu, *Levini Warneri* xii, gives his name as "ausy" [sic].

<sup>37</sup> Neudecker, *The Turkish Bible translation* (note 28), 373–74.

<sup>38</sup> Letter from Jacobus Golius to Laurens de Geer, April 5th, 1666, ed. Kleerkooper M.M. – Stockum W.P. van, *De boekhandel te Amsterdam voornamelijk in de zeventiende eeuw* 2 (The Hague: 1914–1916) 1242–44, cf. Neudecker, *The Turkish Bible translation* (note 28), 375.

made by Theodor Beza,<sup>39</sup> but that fate decided otherwise. Bobovius still says that he plans to use Beza's comments to finish the text, since this would have been Warner's wish (p. 20, l. 2–10).

*The Aim of the Letter*

After these remarks about Bobovius' English contacts in the Ottoman capital and his work with Warner, the letter ends with the following words:

If I can ever do something for You here do not hesitate to tell me this in three words. Such a great interest and serviceability have You showed in my affairs, when I was admitted through Your recommendation to the Court of the excellent lord envoy Thomas Bendish. I certainly remember this benefaction, and I will always remember it. Oh that I could repay you, and thank you in the same manner (p. 20, l. 12–19).

The fact that Basire helped Bobovius obtain a position with the English embassy is new and significant. This means that they did not meet because both had ties with the English, but that Bobovius only forged a relationship with the English embassy *after* he had met Basire. When and where they first met unfortunately remains unknown. At this time Bobovius had yet to write his many works which would establish his reputation in the West. He had finished a translation into Turkish of Comenius' didactic work, *Ianua linguarum reserata aurea*, ten years earlier, in 1643, but it had not been published. Furthermore, none of the Western accounts that mention Bobovius—and these include that of Rycaut—had yet been published.<sup>40</sup> The question of how Basire and Bobovius got acquainted thus cannot be answered.

This final section of the letter is also interesting because of Bobovius' hope of being able to repay Basire by helping him in his turn. This suggests that the Ottoman scholar had hopes of obtaining a position that would allow him to do the addressee favours. Since Basire was in England at the time, such a position would also have to be in England. This puts the letter to Basire in an entirely new light.

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<sup>39</sup> Theodore Beza (Théodore de Bèze), 1519–1605, French Calvinist theologian, cf. Eliade M. (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion* 2 (New York: 1987) 123–24; Bautz F.W. (ed.), *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon* 1 (Hamm (Westph.): 1976) 572–74.

<sup>40</sup> Neudecker, "Bobowski and his Turkish grammar" (note 2).

Bobovius wanted to inform Basire about his important achievements, namely that he (Bobovius) had carried out extensive translation work for Warner; that Warner had sadly been killed, but that Bobovius wanted to continue the work without him by using the comments made by Beza, and that he wanted to publish the translation. These facts show Bobovius in the best possible light, at a time when Basire already held him in high esteem judging from his recommendation to Bendish. The letter is therefore meant to revive the old contacts after seven years' silence and to strengthen them even further. This should be seen in connection with Bobovius' ambition to continue his career in England, which was already hinted at by Thomas Hyde, the English orientalist and librarian of the Bodleian Library. On Bobovius' early death he wrote:

It is highly to be deplored, that he was prematurely snatched away by death before he could return to the Christian faith, which he intended to do wholeheartedly, longing to be able to earn his bread in some honest way in England among Christians and to be removed from the presence of the infidels.<sup>41</sup>

It is also interesting to note that in his introduction Thomas Hyde names Thomas Smith as his source for the tract. Pierre Bayle even claimed that

a la prière de Thomas Smith, il [Bobovius] composa un traité *de Turcarum liturgia* . . . que M. Hyde, à qui Thomas Smith le donna, a publié.<sup>42</sup>

The final paragraph of the *Papers* confirms our suspicion that Bobovius hoped to move to England. It says that Ali Bey had written Basire a letter and

because the latter has high hopes that Bobovius will be a good Christian, and with his knowledge of (Eastern) languages and the secrets of the Ottoman Empire will be an asset to the (English) king, he (Basire)

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<sup>41</sup> 'Maxime autem dolendum est, quod morte praereptus esset antequam ad Christianismum rediisset; quod facere ex animo anhelabat, cupiens ut in Anglia inter Christianos honesto aliquo modo panem lucrari potuisset et ab infidelium consortio recederet' in Hyde (ed.), *Tractatus Alberti Bobovii* (note 4) Praefatio; on Bobovius' affinity with Christianity cf. Neudecker H., *The Turkish Bible translation* (note 28) 372 n. 49.

<sup>42</sup> Bayle P., "Hali-Beigh", *Dictionnaire historique et critique* 7 (Rotterdam: 1720, repr. Geneva: 1969) 479–80.

promises to bring Bobovius' case under the attention of the Superiours. If his plan is accepted, one word of the king to the English ambassador in Constantinople will be enough to bring him (Bobovius) to England.

This last paragraph therefore not only links the *Papers* to the letter, but also reveals the aim of the letter. It is clear that the *Papers* must have been written to recommend Bobovius in the circles of the English court.

Now the question remains why Basire gave some else the letter, which he had received from Istanbul (assuming that he did receive it in the first place), and how this letter, which served as a letter of recommendation, was subsequently added to the *Papers*. We may speculate that Basire had lobbied at the English court, and that this had had a positive effect. Thereupon he gave Bobovius' letter to a third person, who added a letter of recommendation and in his turn handed the documents to Thomas Smith. Who wrote the letter of recommendation is not clear. It may well have been Joseph Williamson personally. It seems unlikely that it was written by Denham or Basire, because they are mentioned in the *Papers* in the third person. Again the matter must remain unsolved in the absence of additional evidence.

The final question then is for whom this package, the letter from Istanbul and the *Papers*, was meant. The most obvious person would be the English ambassador in Istanbul at that moment, Lord Winchilsea. He knew Bobovius, because he was employing him at that time, and so in his turn he could advise the king. But all this is mere speculation.

Even though Bobovius lived for another ten years or so after writing the letter, we must conclude that he did not see his ambition in England fulfilled. Why this is we do not know, but we do know that Bobovius was appointed as an interpreter to the Ottoman chancellery in 1669 and several years later was even promoted to the office of Chief Interpreter of the Sublime Porte. This might have made his other ambition less important—or perhaps we should reason the other way around, and suppose that the Ottoman authorities did not want him to leave for England, and made him an offer he could not refuse.

*Editions of the documents*

## 1. The Letter

a. *Codicological aspects*

## External description

- Paper, good condition.
- Watermarks: bird and flower in pp. 19–20/25–26, and fir-cone in pp. 21–24.<sup>43</sup>
- Number of leaves: viii + 54, two fly-leaves.
- Quire structure: loose leaves and bundles of leaves, many of which having been previously folded, are now bound together. The structure is as follows: v–[viii], 1–[4], 5–[16], 17–[18], 19–[26], 27–[28], 29–[30], 31–[34], 35–[36], 37–[38], 39–47, 51–54.
- No quire signatures or catchwords.
- Size: various sizes. Some (bundles of) leaves are still folded to fit, notably: 31–[34], 35–[36]; on the other hand, some are much smaller than the binding: 17–[18], 27–[28], 29–[30], 37–[38].
- No ruling; lines per leaf and height of lines: various.
- Pagination: Roman and Arabic, at top right; uneven pages only, except for viii and 54. Apart from this, many of the separate texts have their own page numbering, in Arabic, both on even and uneven pages.

## Script

- Number of hands: some ten different hands, several of which can be identified. The first one (on pages 19–20 and 26) is Bobovius' own hand, which is known to us from several of his other works. The second one is Thomas Smith's, which is to be found in two notes on page 24, indicating the contents of pages 19–26:

Papers concerning Ali Beigh given mee at Whitehall 1668  
upon my going for Constantinople with his letter to D[octo]r  
Basire,

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<sup>43</sup> The fir-cone resembles nr. 2121 in Briquet C.M. – Stevenson A. (ed.), *Les filigranes, dictionnaire historique des marques du papier dès leur apparition vers 1282 jusqu'en 1600* 3 (Amsterdam: 1968). For the bird and flower no parallels are found, either in Briquet or in Piccard.

and

Papers concerning Ali Bei given mee at Court by M[iste]r  
Williamson.<sup>44</sup>

### Binding

- Boards and covering: cardboard covered with black linen; back and edges: light-brown calf; no signs of repairs. Size: 211 × 164 mm. According to a note by the Oxford antiquary and publisher Thomas Hearne, the binding was done by one Mr. William Thompson, to whom he paid the sum of six pence (see below, History).<sup>45</sup>

### Colophons

- None

### b. *The letter*

[address, p. 26:]

*Excellent[issi]mo D[omi]no, atque Amico meo aeternum colendo, Isaaco Basirio, S. Theologiae, ac Medicinae Doctori, Linguarumque tum orientalium, tum occidentalium Philologo,*

*Pateat,  
Londini*

*Doctissime et ornatissime Domine, et literatorum literarumque  
fautor eminentissime.*

*Salve plus millies, vitaeque longa cum felicitate fruere.*

*Aut excellentiam vestram mei cepit oblivio aut multis districtae occupationibus reminiscendi otium non suppetit. Septem iam, ni fallor, anni elapsi sunt, a quo nullam de ipsa notitiam habere potui, alias multoties iam meis litteris salutassem. Nuper a latore presentis Domino Beniamino Denham, antehac in urbe ista Aulae et Nationis Anglicanae Capellano, iam Londini esse, acceptissimum Regem Angliae, (cuius semper devotissime partibus favebat) regnantem cum iucundi-*

<sup>44</sup> Besides page 24, we find this same hand (Smith's) on pages 4, 6, 29, 34, 38, 44, 50, where each time the contents of a part of the manuscript are being listed.

<sup>45</sup> The exact wording (p. v) is: 'P[ai]d to M[iste]r W[illia]m Thompson for binding this book 6d [= six pence]. T[homas] H[earne]'.

*tate aspectare intellexi. Faxit Deus Optimus Maximus ut de eiusdem vita longa et prosperitatibus longum gaudeat, suaque in eius atque religionis studia secundet, et facundet cali[di]tus. Post discessum Excellentiae suae isthinc, Philocrates suus Piae Memoriae Dominus Levinus Warner, Residens Hollandiae, mea in Turcice interpretando V. et N. Testamento Usus est operâ. quod postquam in semiquatrienni simul cum Apocrijphis absolvisssem, duobus post mensibus a nescio quibus sceleratis Veneno sublatus est. quod et meum, et senatus Literarij damnum aeternae deplorari nequit: Deus Benignissimus concedat ipsi pro ista sua tali cura aeternam gloriam. Archetijpus [p. 20] meus cum Aliorum Turcarum duobus Ectijpis ad Academiam Lugdunensem in gremium Excellentissimi Jacobi Golij amandati sunt. Propositum utriusque nostrum fuerat omnia semel adhuc relegere, ac Latinitate donare et quaecunque correctione egere viderentur Theodori Bezae Commentaria consulendo corrigere, sed fatum interrupt; nihilominus hoc intro-misso expositionis sole clarius postea offulgebit viae veritatis et vitae radius. Haec ipsi insignire placuit. Novi enim illum uti fortem fidei zelotijum. Hinc summam percepturam consolationem. Caeterum Excellentiae Vestrae me, meaque omnia in benevolentiae sinum condendo, et si quid pro illa in his partibus potero, quaeso ne gravetur vel tribus indicare verbulis. tanto enim studio et officio in meis rebus fuit, dum ad Aulam Excellentissimi Domini Legati Thomasi Bendish (cui, si occasio fuerit, verbis meis salutem, omniumque bonorum precessionem annuntiare, dignetur) sua commendatione susceptus fueram. quod quidem Beneficium memini, semperque meminero, et utinam referre possim, aequae ac ago grates.*

*Valeat, diuque Reipub[licae] literariae praesit & pro sit. Datum Perae Constantinopolitanae 27/17 Augusti A.D. 1666.*

*Omnes qui de me percontabuntur ac praecipue Patrem Rogerum humanissimum, meo nomine salutabit.*

*Excellentiam Vestram submisit et devote colens, Albertus Bobovius in perpetuum*

*Magister Linguarum*

c. *Translation*

[Address:]

To the very excellent Lord, (and) my forever esteemed friend, Isaac Basire, Doctor of Holy Theology and Medicine, and linguist, in both the Eastern and Western languages, may he grant me his support, in London.

Very learned and distinguished lord, very eminent benefactor among scholars and in literature.

Be greeted more than a thousand times and enjoy a long life in prosperity.

Either forgetfulness regarding me has occupied Your Greatness, or there was no peace (of mind) to think [of me], because you are very occupied with your many activities.

If I am not mistaken, seven years have passed already, during which I could not obtain information about you, otherwise I would have greeted [you] many times in my letters.

Recently I have learned from the reporter on the current situation, Mr Benjamin Denham, who was chaplain to the English National court in this city before, that the very acceptable king of England (whose party he was always loyal to), is now in London, [and] that he is pleased to see him (the king) rule.

May the most Excellent and Highest God let him (= Denham) enjoy the same (= the king) during a very long lifetime and may he enjoy his prosperity for a long time, and may he (= Denham) increase his affection for him (= king) and his enthusiasm for religious studies, and may He guide him (= Denham) to become an impassioned orator.

After the departure of His (= Your) Greatness from here his Philocrates, Mr Levinus Warner, Resident of the Netherlands, may his memory be blessed, has used my help to translate the OT and the NT into Turkish; after I had finished this in two years, together with the Apocrypha, he was killed two months later by unknown criminals using poison. This loss, both to me and the literary world, cannot be lamented forever: may the very benevolent God give him eternal fame for the [great] deeds done by him.

[p. 20]

My original translation, as well as two copies by other Turkish [translators] were sent to the academy of Leiden [and] [entrusted] to the care of the very excellent Jacobus Golius.

It had been the intention of us both to reread the entire text again and to provide it with [a] Latin [translation] and to correct whatever may seem to be in need of improvement, by using the commentaries by Theodor Beza, but fate decided otherwise;

nevertheless, when the sun of explanation is brought in, the light of the road, the truth and life will shine towards us even more clearly.

He had decided to make these things widely known. I have come to know him as a strong advocate for the faith. Through this (: from al that precedes) faith will receive the greatest encouragement.

Entrusting myself to Your Highness and entrusting all my possessions to Your benevolent care, I would like to ask you, if I can ever do something for You here, do not hesitate to tell me this in just three words.

Such a great interest and serviceability have You showed in my affairs, when I was admitted through Your recommendation to the Court of the excellent lord envoy Thomas Bendish (to whom, if the opportunity arises, you might be so gracious as to convey my greetings). I certainly remember this benefaction, and I will always remember it. Oh that I could repay you, and thank you in the same manner.

Farewell, may You lead the Republic of Letters for a long time to come and may You fare well.

Written in Pera, Constantinople on August 27/17 1666. Be so kind as to greet in my name all that ask after me and in particular [my] very obliging Father Rogerus.<sup>46</sup>

Revering Your Greatness humbly and piously, for ever,  
Albertus Bobovius,  
Master of Linguistics

## 2. The Papers concerning Ali Bei

[p. 21]

I. Albertus Bobovius (Bobowsky) a Polonian by Nation, (by an Incursion of the Tartares into Poland, about 35 years agoe,) was taken, when about 10 yeares of Age, as is informed, and carried afterwards to Constantinople: where he was circumcised, and brought up, for almost three prentiships, in the Discipline of the Grand-Seigniors Serraglio, and there thorowly Instructed in the Religion, and Polity of the Turkes.

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<sup>46</sup> This may well refer to Samuel Rogers, who is recorded as having been English chaplain in Istanbul in December 1653. He returned to England shortly after, and in 1662 was awarded a doctorate of divinity at Cambridge. Cf. Pearson J.B. *A Biographical Sketch of the Chaplains of the Levant Company maintained at Constantinople, Aleppo and Smyrna 1611–1706* (Cambridge 1883) 15.

II. He was very well knowne in Const[antino]ple to Dr Basire, Annis 1652 and 1653, who there procured him to translate the Catechisme of the Church of England into Turkish (w[hi]ch the Doct[o]r dispersed in the East, both in that Language, and also in the Arabick, and vulgar Greeke.)

III. He is a learned, and Ingenuous Person, perfectly skilled in most orientall Languages, Arabick, Persian, Turkish, and, as I remember, in the Armenian, and vulgar Greeke also, besides the Latin, and Italian, whereof he is a M[aste]r there.

IV. He then, privatly, professed himselfe a christian in voto, and, t' is said, still perseveres the same.

[p. 22]

V. He was very serviceable to the then English Ambassad[o]r, as he is now to the present, the lord Winchilsey. Mr Benjamin Denham, his Lo[rds]hips Chaplaine there for 7 years knew this person all that while, and can say more, he being now here.

VI. This person, with the helpe, and encouragem[en]t of the Learned Levinus Warnerus (Late Resident for the states in C[onstantino]ple) translated the Bible into Turkish: The originall whereof was sent to Leiden, there to be printed by the good Care of Jacobus Golius the profess[o]r there of the orientall Tongues.

VII. The abovesaid Albertus, to the same purpose hath lately written a Letter from C[onstantino]ple unto D[octo]r Basire, who, hoping he may prove a good Christian, and a Serviceable Instrument to the King, in those languages and in the Arcana of the Ottoman State, as well as an ornament to the Natio[n], the D[octo]r offers the Premisses to the grave Consideration of the Superiours. If the Intention be accepted, one word of Instruction from the King to the Lo[rds] Amb[assado]r there, may easily fetch him over. But all this with humble submission.

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