

## **Proposal for the Central European History Convention**

**July 17th—19th 2025, University of Vienna**

### **The Title:**

„Unknown Persians” in Prague: Habsburg-Safavid contacts, 1610-1616

### **Abstract:**

The diplomacy between the Habsburg and Safavid empires remains underexplored, particularly after the highly active first decade of the 17th century, when Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II and Safavid Shah Abbas I exchanged numerous diplomatic messages. This diplomacy aimed to coordinate a joint military campaign against their shared adversary, the Ottoman sultan. Following the conclusion of the Peace of Zsitvatorok (1606), further diplomatic initiatives continued. Shah Abbas I, still engaged in warfare against the Ottomans, continued to dispatch envoys to European courts. Among these envoys was Robert Shirley, who visited the imperial court in Prague in 1609 to persuade the emperor to renew hostilities against the Ottomans. When his efforts proved unsuccessful, he departed Prague in the summer of 1609. Nevertheless, the collapse of joint military negotiations did not mark the end of Habsburg-Safavid diplomatic relations. Documents from this period offer fragmentary but valuable insights into further exchanges before the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648). This paper examines the relatively unknown Safavid diplomatic missions to Prague following Shirley's departure, as well as the imperial envoys sent to Persia between 1612 and 1616. By bringing to light these lesser-known episodes, we aim to deepen our understanding of the complex interactions between the Habsburg and Safavid courts during a pivotal period in European and Middle Eastern history.

### **Presenters:**

Dr. Giorgio Rota

Institute of Iranian Studies, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, Austria

Email: [Giorgio.Rota@oeaw.ac.at](mailto:Giorgio.Rota@oeaw.ac.at)

Dr. Giorgio Rota holds a Ph. D. in Iranian Studies from the University of Naples “L’Orientale” and the University of Venice “Ca’ Foscari” (1996). Since 2003 he is employed at the Institute of Iranian Studies of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (Vienna), where he currently has the position of Senior Research Associate. His main research focus is on the social, political and diplomatic history of Safavid Persia (1501-1736), and in particular on its diplomatic relations with Europe. Among his publications is *Under Two Lions. On the Knowledge of Persia in the Republic of Venice (ca. 1450–1797)*, Vienna, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009.”

Dr. Lukáš Rybár

Department of General History, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia

Email: [lukas.rybar@uniba.sk](mailto:lukas.rybar@uniba.sk)

Magdalena Jakubowska

## **Diplomatic Encounters between Poland-Lithuania and the Habsburgs during the Long Turkish War (1593–1606)**

The objective of this paper is to examine the diplomatic activities of Polish-Lithuanian envoys at the court of Emperor Rudolf II and Styrian Habsburgs during the Long Turkish War (1593–1606). This period was particularly challenging for Polish-Habsburg relations due to diverging political interests. On the one hand, King Sigismund III sought a close alignment with the Habsburgs, as reflected in his marriages with two Styrian princesses, Anna (1592) and Constance (1605). However, on the other hand, influential Ruthenian magnates and Great Chancellor and Hetman Jan Zamoyski pursued in the Commonwealth other political strategies that ran counter to Habsburg interests and often with the tacit approval of the Ottomans.

This study focuses on 14 official diplomatic missions—nine to Prague and five to Graz—conducted by a total of 15 envoys. Based on the prosopographical analysis of diplomats' careers, I aim to address the following questions: Who was recruited into the diplomatic corps? Did envoys share a common social and confessional background and political convictions? Could they be considered a distinct group?

Moreover, the investigation concerns the motivations behind these official missions. How many missions were connected to dynastic celebrations, such as baptisms or marriages? How many were driven by immediate political concerns? How did Polish-Lithuanian diplomats navigate rhetorical justifications for actions that conflicted with Habsburg interests in the context of the Long Turkish War? To what extent did family and political objectives intertwine and how did this intersection influence diplomatic conduct?

By exploring these questions, the paper will offer new insights into the complexities of Polish-Habsburg contacts around 1600, shedding light on the crossing of dynastic and political interests in early modern diplomatic practice.

Ágnes Szalai  
HUN-REN Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of History  
Budapest, Hungary  
assistant research fellow  
szalai.agnes92@gmail.com

"... the Benefits of Peace belong to Others, its Misery to Transylvania ..."

### The Peace of Vasvár and the Principality of Transylvania

As a consequence of the expansionist policy of the Ottoman Empire towards Europe in the 16th century, the Principality of Transylvania was created in the eastern territories of the former Kingdom of Hungary, a state with internal autonomy that had not existed before and during its entire existence it was under a dual Habsburg-Ottoman rule, effectively dependent on the latter. At the end of the 1650s, the war between the two great powers interested in the region, i.e. Habsburg Monarchy and Ottoman Empire, was renewed due to mutual interference in the internal politics of the Principality of Transylvania, and efforts to end it had been under way since the summer of 1662. However, in the spring of 1663 the war renewed and intensified, and the conclusion of a peace treaty was delayed for more than two years, until the signing of the Peace of Vasvár (Eisenburg) in 1664.

According to what we know so far, the princely government was not represented in the peace negotiations between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Sublime Porte and about the country was decided without its leaders. Recent archival research, however, makes it certain that from the first great-power rapprochement to end the warfare in the region, the diplomats of the Principality of Transylvania were involved in the negotiations.

The aim of the paper is to show how the Principality of Transylvania tried to assert its own interests in the negotiations between the two powers, which started in 1662. Accordingly, I will describe the course and results of the Transylvanian-Ottoman and Transylvanian-Habsburg diplomatic negotiations leading up to the ratification of the Peace of Vasvár, and the consequences of the Peace of Vasvár for the Principality of Transylvania.