ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Physicians as Envoys: a Persian Medic in the Court of Moldavian Principality

#### Abstract

In all societies, considering the nature of physicians' profession, regarded as one of the confident groups among other social strata as well as in the courts, physicians had very high dignity and acquired kings' revere accordingly. However, in diplomatic relations confidence strengthens mutualties. Isaac Beg was one of Iranian medics who arrived in the palace of Stephan III in 1474. In the aforementioned era, European rulers grappled with the Ottomans who tried to gain control over seas and disturbed the process of trade in the Levant. King of Aq Qoyunlu after suzerainty over the domestic rivals could gain power in Persia and inclined to dominate Anatolia in 1473. On the other hand, by gaining initial success in Anatolia, Sultan Mohamed II stood against Aq Qoyunlu ambitions, but Uzun Hasan held his dogged point to accomplish the mentioned goal.

Although Europe languished in chaos and the continuous outbreaks on Wallachia exhausted and blurred lifestyle, Stephan III launched some sterunous marches but when battles bursted between rulers of Hungary and Moldavia, the latter was injured and entreated Uzun Hasan to dispatch a physician to cure his wounded leg. This article tries to portray the attempts of Aq Qoyunlu ruler in invoking Europeans to open an outlet to trade and to beginning a new crusade against Ottoman progress. **Keywords:** Aq Qoyunlu, Moldavia, Relation, Medicine

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# Introduction

In the medival history of Iran, many physicians undertook political duties as agents of negotiations like Rashid al-Din Fadl allah Hamedani who participated in the Mongol lagation to compromise between Ilkhanids and Mamluks and Nasir al-din Tusi under Holaku khan for his ability to persuade Ismaili Emam and above all in the surrendering of the Abasid Caliph. In the Aq Qoyunlu era, Isaac Beg was one of the courtiers who served Uzun hasan and undertook many legations. In the mentioned era, Caravans conveyed articles from Asia to European entrepotes constantly. Having eminent geographic situation, Aq Qoyunlu profited from its trade off. By the advent of Ottoman Empire, some interruptions occurred in commercial routes. After Sultan Murad II's resignation, Mohamed II gained power<sup>1</sup>. Christians began a new crusade against Ottomans. In such circumstances, the great expansion of Ottoman Turks into Levant and Balkans had threatened the grave situation of European rulers and the Venetian's lucrative trade with that area and the Orient. Hence, they tried to create an alliance but the incompatibilities were an obstacle.<sup>2</sup>

When Pope Nicholas V heard of the massacre of 50000 Christians by Ottomans in Constantinople and the change of Sophia church to mosque, he wrote some letters to European Dukes and invited them to desist of his passions to consist a stalwart ally against Ottoman incursions. It was for a long time the European rulers were seeking an ally in the orient. First, they found Tamerlane as their savior, when this expectation showed its inefficiency; the rulers tried to establish close relation with Turkmen Emir and implored him their demands. However, by sending of *Isaac Beg* to Moldavia, the ruler of Aq Qoyunlu tried leaning to the coalition. Therefore, the Persian emissary had two missions; both as a physician and a political agent. The present essay is after uncovering how *Isaac Beg* play his political duty under cover of medic.<sup>3</sup>

There is no implication in Italian sources about the transactions but som of the connoisseurs have dealt with the relations between Iran and Moldavia before the modern era. The late *Vladimir Minorsky* has considered the subject relating to any other invistigators. He concentrated on the Venice-Persia relations and argued Moldavia partly but has no hint to commercial ties between the mentioned sovereignities. *Walter hinz* in his work "*Irans Aufstieg zum Nationalstaat*" Shaw, 1976: 64.
 Inalcik, 1969-1970: 244.
 Simon, 2012: 307.

rendered postulates and lately *Alexandru Simon* the Romanian researcher represented some assertions about Christian crusades against Ottoman penetration in Levant, he cited the enterprises of Aq Qoyunlu arbiter but he does not depict anything about Issac Beg legation, in spite of his salient role.

# Uzun Hasan on the Throne

The Main originator of Aq Qoyunlu dynasty was Qara Osman. He succeeded the throne by supporting Tamer the lane.<sup>4</sup> First, his ancients were considered subjects of Timurid rulers. After the collapse of Timurid dominion on Persia, The black sheep (Qara qoyunlu) confederacy took hold of the western Persia and northern of Iraq while their rival, the white sheep (Aq Qoyunlu) gradually emerged in Deyarbakir. They were always in revalry together. When Uzun Hasan, the strongest governor of Aq Qoyunlu took power, he arrived in power games strenuously and assassinated Jahanshah Qara Qoyunlu and Abu Sa'id, ruler of Timurid in Sanjok and Mahmud Abad battlefields. Afterwards, he styled himself the king of Persia.<sup>5</sup> It should be said in the mentioned period, all of the great powers and protege principalities demanded sovereign over the Anatolian commercial routes. Karaman territory in the Minor Asia linked plateau of Iran with the Mediterranean Sea. Ottomans decided to obliterate the venitean outlet to the orient. In 1471, Karaman resisted against Ottoman's sultan that induced Karaman family to unite with Uzun Hasan's forces for sacking of Tokat in the following year.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, Turkish army eradicated the rule of Karaman family in Anatolia and they had to seek refuge in the court of Uzun Hasan (Figure 1).

...In the winter quarters, one of the Karamanid princes implored Uzun Hasan to aid and informed him that Sultan Mohamad has inveighed against his cousins Pir Ahmad Beg and Qasim Beg and he has seized most of their territories. Pir Ahmad dispatched his mother as envoy to seek the Turkmen's king's support... but his mother died en route. Then Uzun hasan admitted him kindly...<sup>7</sup>

#### **Uzun Hasan and Venice**

The relations between Aq Qoyunlu and Venice configured in circumstances that was prior to the relation; the Pope had sent a mission to orient for contracting with Georgia, Trab4-Tehrani,1356: 45-48; Ibn Arabshah,1356: 119-20.
5- Minorsky,1936:1066.
6-Feridun Bey,1274h.:278-279.
7- Romlu,1349:590.

zon, Armenia and Aq Qoyunlu from 1458 to 1463 against Ottoman<sup>8</sup> but when Uzun Hasan inveighed to Georgia, it was an emblem for ending the mentioned ally.<sup>9</sup> The relation between Aq Qoyunlu confederacy and Venice stroke in 1461/866.<sup>10</sup> In December 1463/868, Venetian senate enacted the sentence to ally with Uzun Hasan and sent Pietro Quirini as the first envoy to Aq Qoyunlu court.<sup>11</sup> Hence,Uzun Hasan so as to campaign against Ottomans, joined the coalition. He dispatched Azimamet (Qazi Mohammad) to Venice. The envoy arrived in Venice in March 1463/868 and stayed there for six months.<sup>12</sup> In 1465/870, Shah sent *Qasem Beg* another emissary to Venice but engaged in internal battles distracted the mentioned close relations. On the one hand, the Aq Qoyunlu leader had not captured Tabriz and on the other hand, Timurid and Qara Qoyunlu regarded his archenemies in Persia.<sup>13</sup>



Figure 1. Ottoman advancement in the Levant

After the death of Pope Paul II (1471), who had turned the crusade from the South to the North, once more against the Hussites, the need for a crusader grand design was more pressing. It had to compensate domestic troubles, both in Rome and in the rest of the 'free Christian world', and to restore the credit of the crusade, of the holy Christian war at least to the level reached in the times of John Hunyadi and George Castriota Skanderbeg.<sup>14</sup> The means however seemed more reduced than decades prior. In 1469/874, Porte seized island of Euboea which Venetians had dominated for two and half centuries. In 1471/876, Venetian senate sent Quirini to the Orient again.<sup>15</sup> The king of Aq Qoyunlu in response, sent a message to sovereign of Venic; 8- Baykal, 1960:5 ;Woods, 1999:100.
9-Von Martels & Vanderjagt, 2003:
35; Babinger, 1978: 189.
10-Palombini, 1968: 16; Howorth,
1880: 234.
11- Barbaro & Contarini, 1873:4.
12- Ibid:11.
13-Ibid.
14- Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, 1984:89.

15- Miller, 1921:256.

...We have no enemy except Mohamed Bey. We can cope with him despite his intrepid presence. We should make a serious alliance. Your enormous navy by sea and our powerful army by land will launch and Ottoman will deprive of all of its lands...<sup>16</sup>

After a while, Venice sent Zeno to court of Uzun Hasan. He informed shah that Venice is ready to aid him to enterprise against Ottoman by sending 100 Galley.<sup>17</sup> Anyway, Uzun Hasan embraced zeno suggestions because he planned to capture Eastrn Anatolia. In 13 Rajab 875/1471, Venetian senate dispatched Josef barbaro to the Orient. In this circumstance, Venice played its equivocal policy which displayed perpetually and Aq Qoyunlu army stayed alone against Turks (Figure 2).<sup>18</sup>



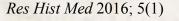
Figure 2. Powers in Anatolia

# **Battle of Tardjan**

The outbreak between sultan Mohamed and Uzun Hasan seemed inevitable. They had combated on Trabzon before. In that time, the advancement of Uzun Hasan was limiting to Diyarbakir, so he could not prevent its fall by Ottomans in 1461.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, the struggle between Uzun Hasan and Ottoman had begun long time ago; When Mohamed was engaged in Balkan seizure, he was distracted by Vlad threat in Wallachia. As a result, he attacked Wallachia and annexed there.<sup>20</sup> Since Sultan Mohamed knew Karaman would aid Uzun Hasan, he decided to attack this local power and Sultan added their land to his property. Karaman leaders fled and as refugees demanded some contributions of Aq Qoyunlu leader. Uzun Hasan sent another army to reconquest that area but

16- Kiliç,2003:106.

- 17- Barbaro & Contarini,1873:54 18- Palombini,1968:27
- 19- Tehrani,1356:382-385.



the campaign was unsuccessful and the commander of his army "Yosefcheh Mirza" was captured.<sup>21</sup> Sultan Mohamed wrote a letter to Uzun Hasan and threatened to annihilate Aq Qoyunlu dynasty.<sup>22</sup>

In spring 1472, Sultan summoned all army for an onslaught against Aq Qoyunlu confederacy. Sultan wrote a letter to Uzun Hassan and reminded him that "If you still hold your crown, it is only for requesting of your mother".<sup>23</sup> Uzun Hasan began to accumulate his army. Karamanid princes, Omar Baktash Oghlu and Venetian state were among those who allied with him against Sultan Mehmed II. In 15th March 1473, Aq Qoyunlu army defeated Bayazid, the son of Sultan, in Amasya. In 17th June 1473, Uzun Hasan came to Harput and camped in Arzanjan. Sultan sent an envoy to his corps and informed them of Ottoman army intention of siezuring Aq Qoyunlu territory. To spark the fire of the battle Uzun Hasan ordered gouging heels of some spies that they had arrested. He sent them to sultan army and provoked him to wage. First, Uzun Hasan accompanied by Qsim Beg Karaman Oglu plundered some city in Ottoman territory. When Aq Qoyunlu crops came across the Ottoman army, Uzun Hasan was suddenly shocked by the numerous Ottoman troops. "What a great sea" he said. The battle began by Ogurlu Mohamed's fierce attack on Ottoman's forces. He was the son of Uzun Hasan. In 4th August 1473, Ottoman pioneers after crossing Euphrates River assailed Aq Qoyunlu army but Ogurlu Mohamed caught them in a terrible siege and therefore many of those warriors were killed.<sup>24</sup>

In the aforementioned battle, one of the eminent commanders of Ottoman Turks was killed that made Uzun Hasan hopeful of future battles. The rest of Ottoman army fled to Otloq Beli region. *Ogurlu Mohamed* wanted to pursue them but Uzun Hasan did not permit him. After this triumph, Uzun Hasan haughtily sent a mission to Sultan that he would dispatch a commander for the ratification of a contract but Sultan rejected his suggestion (Figure 3).<sup>25</sup>

#### **Battle of Otlog Beli**

In 11th August 1473, Aq Qoyunlu army again saw themselves against the Ottoman troops in Otloq Beli. It seemed that sultan aimed to compensate for his previous fiasco. Uzun Hasan ordered Ogurlu Mohamed and Pir Ahmad Karaman Oglu to escalate the Onslaught to Ottoman army. Zeynal Monajem Bashi,1393:299.
 Feridun Bey,1274h.:278-279.
 Ibid.
 Monajem Bashi,1393:300.
 Ibid.

# Isaac Beg and His Mission



Figure 3: Venitian properties in the Levant

Bey, another son of Uzun Hasan, accompanied by Bayender Bey invaded a part of Ottoman corps. After giving necessary commands, Uzun Hasan himself moved to battlefield. Uzun Hasan along with a part of his army advanced to such an extent that he reached Ottoman artillery. Sultan ordered the barrage and this action scattered Aq Qoyunlu troops.<sup>26</sup> They fled and left the battlefield. Zeynal Bey was captured and decapitated by Ottomans. Therefore, Uzun Hasan underwent an enormous defeat. He sent Mulana Ahmad Bakrichi as his deputy for petition of armistice. Sultan Mohmed II's demands in negotiations were the evacuation of Shebin Hasar from Aq Qoyunlu army and delivering it to Ottomans. Uzun Hasan also promised not to invade the Sultan's territory. However, Uzun Hasan was not committed to his promise. He tried to relate with Venice once more. Sultan Mohamed sent an envoy to Timurid governor of Heart (Sultan Hussein Baygara) to ally with him in the eradication of Aq Qoyunlu rule. Sultan wrote him "for disappearing of Aq Qoyunlu dynasty, it needs a simultaneous attack" (Figure 4).<sup>27</sup>

# **Uzun Hasan and Moldavia**

In 1449, Bogdan II gained power in Moldavia but he was assassinated in a conspiracy in 1451. This event induced a civil war that continued up to 1457. The same year, Stephen III (Stephen the great) succeeded his father.<sup>28</sup> He was subordinate and paid certain tribute to Ottoman government 26- Barbaro & Contarini,1873:28(In the section of Zeno abservations).27- Feridun Bey,1274h.:278-279.28- Shaw,1976:64.

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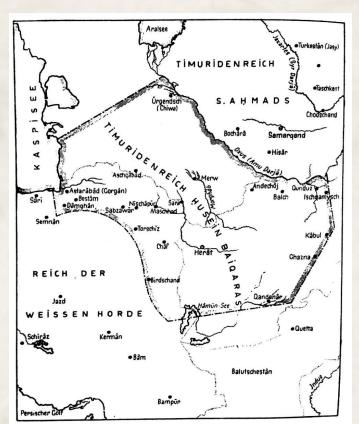


Figure 4. Khorassan and Herat under Sultan Husyin Bayqara

in the onset of his kingdom. Many people of Genoese who were working in that land could return under his rule. The fired people went to Istanbul and petitioned to Ottoman's Sultan.29After a while, Stephen engaged in the seizure of Wallachia. Vlad III the Impaler was reigning on Wallachia since 1456. Stephen defeated and fought him back in his land. Sultan Mahomad II wrote what caused the outbreak.<sup>29</sup> Stephen replied that he smashed some brigands. Since Vlad had accepted the mandate of Ottomans, Sultan demanded to recompense to Stephen. Stephan rejected the Ottoman claims; in fact he regarded Wallachia as a part of his land.<sup>30</sup> Casmir IV suggested holding a council to settle the struggles but Sultan Mohammed II did not accept his intercession and considered it as an interference in his affairs.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, Sultan Mohamed promised to keep Ottoman army out as long as Stephen made no strive to resume his suzerainty policy in that area.<sup>32</sup> Pope Pius II invoked Christians to a new crusade and he invited them to assemble in Ancona. Venetian provided some vessels to carry crusaders. In that time, Stephen the Great was one of the eminent European governors who tried to relate with Uzun Hasan in Persia (Figure 3).<sup>33</sup>

29- Hakkı Uzunçarşılı,1984:89.
 30- Deletant,1984:525.
 31- Rosetti,1927:99.

33- Simon,2012:312.

#### **Deficiency of Commodities in Europe**

Perpetually the process of trade was current between Asia and Europe by the Black sea. Most of caravans from Hormuz, Aleppo and Tabriz came to Kafa and Tana and whence they carried their wares to the European gate i.e. Akkerman, the Moldavian entrepot. Afterwards, these merchants arrived in Balkan through the Lvov. Meanwhile, there is another road crossing the South of Danube River that Hungarians had always engaged in strife on with Ottomans. Pearls, silk, pepper, ginger, nutmegs, Olibanum, mace, cinnamon and cloves were steadily exchanged in Syria and Egypt against gold, silver, copper, lead, tin, coral and the like. In that time due to Ottoman attacks, trade routes and carrying of commodities were halted. Olibanum was one of merchandise used in battles or any other cases. Shortage of this ware caused much casuality in Europe.<sup>34</sup>

#### Isaac Beg Mission

In 1472, the war outburst between Matthias Corvinus, Duke of Hungary and Stephen and amid of it, the latter was injured in leg.<sup>35</sup> In that time, due to Ottoman attacks, trade routes and carrying of merchandise were halted. So, Uzun Hasan dispatched one of his medics to the court of Moldavian prince to cure Stephen's injured leg. He also undertook another task. *Isaac Beg*'s adroitness seemed to be a cover on his political mission.<sup>36</sup> In fact he has received responsibility for negotiations about a common inveigh against Ottoman. Of course this legation has been a difficult task for *Isaac Beg*, since in aforementioned era, Matthias Corvinus Duke of Hungary and Stephen were involved in belligerence. Matthias Corvinus followed his ambition in Wallachia and it aroused a battle between Stephen and him.<sup>37</sup>

"In The Name of God, the Compassionate the Merciful. The God whom is called by numerous names. Hasan Ebn Ali Ebn Osman

Infinite salute, from a pure heart, be upon the generous and magnanimous sovereign in his land, Stephan proprietor of all Moldavia. Be aware that I send Ishaq Beg to the presence of the eminent sovereign of occident. Our mdic is well aware of our secrets; so confide in him, as you do in us, in what he says to you on our behalf. I give you the low-down on what occurred last year, the time we were returning from the 34- Lybyer,1915:581-82
35- Barbaro & Contarini,1873: 34(In the section of Zeno abservations).
36-Ibid.
37- Kołodziejczyk,2011:23.

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territories of Damascus. In advance of that, my senior son was in the company of warlords and infantries in the territories of Syria and Euphrates. My other son was also in the company of an infinite army in territories of Baghdad -the place of the most significance for the Arabs- My four nephews -My senior brother's sons- were in the territories of Kerman, and my other nephews -My junior brother's sons- were in Rey and near Khorasan and Mazandaran. Exclusive of the aforementioned armies, my large army and people resided in our dwelling. Also, exclusive of aforementioned armies, thousands of my army was located in the quarters of Dameshgh and the aforementioned dwelling, and I with a few numbers went to the ottoman lands and with the help of providence which is always on the side of our good deeds, vanquished ottoman armies, and made them the bait for our swords and arrows. Of course there is the fact that ottomans fought back a small number of our army, but nevertheless where one of our army was killed ten of them were slain in response. According to what was said, I let you know that in spite of these, there is no reason for vendetta between me and Ottomans. Nonetheless I will soon gather all my armed and strong warriors, and centralize all my power and go to the Ottoman realms. So you should inform the Christian monarchs of this condition and give them the low-down on our decision in order for them to prepare and marshal their armies and centralize their power in one place and like our good comrades attack the Ottoman from Europe's quarter, and I tell you against That I will go from this quarter and so will dethrone this man. So I wish that our plans, with the help of providence, be realized in the way that we long for and want. Also I implore God that our actions, with the confidence in his providence, be done in due time and all evils vanish".38

# **Paolo Ognibene Legation**

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In 1474, the state of Venetian dispatched Paolo Ognibene to Persia. When the envoy was returning to his homeland, he stopped in Suceava.<sup>39</sup> Stephen trusted him that he would continue war against Ottomans and he gave him a letter to 38-Bajakou,1354;14:11-29.39- Barbaro & Contarini,1873:34-35 (In the section of Zeno abservations).

deliver it to the Pope. In his letter, Stephen wrote to pope that he has sent a mission to Uzun Hasan's court. He promised to combine his army and attack the Ottomans.<sup>40</sup>

"Our Holy Father and beloved lord,

I inform His sacred Majesty that Prince Uzun Hasan has sent us his [medic]courier and has asked us and other Christian princes to go courageously to the battle of Ottoman and its dreadful forces, so I let your majesty know that we are determined whole heartedly to dedicate all our forces, which are at our service with the approval of the Exalted God, to the service of Christianity, and apply them for its deliverance and salvation.

In addition to this messenger, the Republic of Venetian sent to his majesty Uzun Hasan, in the time of calling on, stopped at our residence and we had some negotiations with him on issues related to Christianity and informed him of our determination and decision. So I implore His Majesty confide in this messenger and suppose as if we are talking to each other directly. As I understand, everything depends on that holy presence. Hence we implore that high and powerful existence to take the action till the powerful kings and princes come to our help in order for Christianity not to be vanquished against a pack of pagan and infidels, and for us to be able to fight and combat with the help of these princes, and in this way are not left alone. Date 24 November 1474AD. Stephen, the Palatine of Moldavia".41

# **Battle of Podul Inalt (Racova)**

In the winter of 1475, Sultan planned to attack Moldavia because of Stephen's interference in Wallachia. In 17th January 1475, Hadim Suleiman Pasha (Beylerbeyi) campaigned against Moldavia but he was defeated and 4000 warriors (Janissary) were killed in that war.<sup>42</sup> Stephen dispatched the banner of ottomans to pope and Pope entitled him as "defender of Christianity".<sup>43</sup> He wrote some letters to European rulers and asked for support. None of them sent their corps to aid him.<sup>44</sup> When Sultan heard about the lost, he moved to Varna and met the ambassadors of Casmir IV there.<sup>45</sup> They asked him to negotiate to settle the battle. For this case, Sultan offered three clauses to Stephen: the first one was that

#### 40-Ibid.

41- Choanu,1337: 24-25.
42- Inalcik,1969-70:244.
43- Choanu,1337: 26.
44-Hinz,1361:45-46.
45- Shaw,1976:67.

Stephen should pay tribute to Sultan. Giving back the Genoese prisoners was the second issue and the third was the region of Chilia to be given back to Ottoman state but Stephen refused.<sup>46</sup>

# **Battle of Valea Alba**

Stephen retreated by following a scorched-earth policy. He avoided open battle with Ottomans.<sup>47</sup> Since Sultan was helping the ruler of Wallachia, he could continue to pursue.<sup>48</sup> In July 1476, Stephen finally confronted him at Valea Alba. In that battle, Stephen was defeated and escaped.<sup>49</sup> However the city of Suceava fell under the siege of ottomans but when disease spread through the ottoman corps, they immediately abdicated the seizure of castles. After the ottomans returned home, Stephen came back on his throne, although he lost his former prestige.<sup>50</sup>

### Conclusion

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Issac Beg is regarded as one of the first links between Persia and the Balkan Peninsula after ancient era. The relationship between Peria and Moldavia shaped in hostility toward Ottoman ambitions in Levant. European potentates accompanied by popes have tried to create containment policy against Ottoman incursions. Moreover, when Aq Qoyunlu confronted Venetian profidy, they lost war against Ottoman. Hence, the leader of Aq Qoyunlu had to seek an ally on the other side of the Black sea. Uzun Hasan sent Issac Beg in Moldavia to prevent the internal belligerency. Stephan the ruler of Moldavia which would not desist of the lucrative trade in its ports stroke the battle in spite of the early success, he failed and fled to Poland. Whereas Issac Beg had successful function as a medic and political agent, Aq Qoyunlu leader was failed. Anyway, when Ottoman captured all of the Aq Qoyunlu outlets, the latter fell in its decline process and eventually Shah Ismail stroke Aq Qoyunlu the strenuous pound in 1501. In such cirucumestances, Pope Innocent VII decided to collaborate with European sovereigns and advocated uniting of Ferdinand and Isabel in 1469, so they could capture the last Muslim state in Spain in 2 January 1492.

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