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Article

The Embassy of Yâsincizâde Abdülvehhâb Efendi to Iran (1810–1813)

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Abstract

At the beginning of the 19th century, Ottoman-Iranian relations entered a new diplomatic phase shaped by Russia's expansion in the Caucasus and Britain's growing influence in the Persian Gulf. This shared perception of external threats led to the establishment of a more structured and representative diplomatic framework between the two empires. This study examines the embassy of Yâsincizâde Abdülvehhâb Efendi, who was appointed as Ottoman ambassador to Iran between 1810 and 1813, in the context of a shifting diplomatic mindset. Yâsincizâde's mission is analyzed not merely as a temporary diplomatic engagement, but as a form of ideological, sectarian, and cultural representation by a figure from the ulema class. Based on archival sources, the study reveals that his diplomatic reports and observations provided critical input to the central administration, contributing to the development of more institutionalized and long-term strategies in Ottoman policy toward Iran. By focusing on the transitional character of his embassy, the paper reassesses the evolving role of religious scholars in Ottoman foreign relations, and situates this case between the classical sefaretnâme tradition and emerging modern diplomatic practices.

Keywords: Ottoman Empire; Iran; diplomacy; embassy; Yasincizade Abdülvehhâb Efendi

1. Introduction

Diplomacy, with its historical roots tracing back to ancient civilizations, is among the oldest political instruments ensuring the continuity of interstate relations. In early civilizations such as Sumer, Assyria, Phoenicia, China, Egypt, India, Greece, and Rome, various forms of political representation emerged, most of which were shaped around task-specific and temporary embassies (Liverani, 2001, pp. 177–186). By the nineteenth century, however, the colonial activities that had accelerated in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution enabled Western powers to establish a more permanent presence within imperial territories such as those of the Ottoman Empire and Iran; consequently, diplomatic practice was reshaped on the basis of permanent missions and institutionalized relations (Savaş, 2007, p. 13).

In the early periods of the Ottoman Empire, diplomatic relations were conducted within a framework of political legitimacy derived from military victories and under a unilateral hierarchical understanding of power. Contacts established both with the East and the West largely developed in the context of wars; until the late seventeenth century, Ottoman diplomacy was built upon a centralist and superiority-based paradigm that did not recognize its counterparts as equals (İnalçık, 2000). From the second half of the eighteenth century onwards, however, military defeats, the erosion of central authority, and structural transformations in the West compelled the Ottomans to adopt a form of relations based on mutual recognition and permanent diplomacy (Savaş, 2007, p. 13). This transformation also laid the groundwork for the emergence of a new practice of embassies in the relations of the Ottoman Empire with both Iran and European states. Diplomatic representation no longer carried only a temporary function aimed at conflict resolution but also served as an instrument for intelligence-gathering, balance-of-power politics, and the defense of state interests through multilateral contacts.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, in an environment where Europe and Russia were able to dictate political and diplomatic demands, the Ottoman Empire felt the need to organize its own diplomatic apparatus into a systematic structure. In this context, ambassadors dispatched to different countries recorded their political, economic, religious, and social observations in the form of *sefaretnâmes* (embassy reports). One of these texts was written by Seyyid Mehmed Refi Efendi, who served as ambassador in Tehran in 1807–1808, and another by Bozoklu Osman Şakir, who accompanied the Ottoman delegation between 1810 and 1813. Osman Şakir compiled his observations on Iran in the work *Musavver İran Sefaretnâmesi*, which was later rendered into modern Turkish by Gülnur Kavak (Kavak, 2016). Within this framework, the embassy of Yâsincizâde Abdülvehhâb Efendi to Iran between 1810 and 1813 not only constituted a component of the evolving relations between the two states but also represented a significant example reflecting the operation of Ottoman diplomacy, its search for mutual recognition, and the projection of the geopolitical risks of the period onto the diplomatic sphere.

The historical background of Ottoman-Iranian relations produced a field of conflict not only in geopolitical terms but also on sectarian and ideological grounds. With the establishment of the Safavid state under Shah Ismâ‘il in 1501, Iran ceased to be an ordinary neighbor on the eastern frontier of the Ottoman Empire and rose to the status of an ideological rival challenging Sunni identity (Keven, 2015, p. 14). Shah Ismâ‘il’s adoption of Twelver Shi‘ism as the state religion carried Ottoman-Safavid relations into a religious breaking point and provided fertile ground for political and military conflicts (Ocak, 2000, pp. 148–150). The 1514 Çaldıran Campaign marked the first major military manifestation of this tension, serving as a turning point that revealed how sectarian rivalry crystallized on both theological and geopolitical levels (Bitlisî, 2001, p. 180; Hoca Sadeddin, 1974, pp. 201–216).

From the sixteenth century onwards, the deepening Ottoman-Safavid rivalry was not confined to the military sphere but acquired continuity in ideological, economic, and theological dimensions. Both sides issued fatwas delegitimizing each other in an effort to shape public opinion; while on the Ottoman side the caliphate was constructed as the foundation of political legitimacy, on the Safavid side the doctrine of the Imamate became the ideological basis of sovereignty (Tan, 2024, pp. 2065–2066). Despite this contentious context, Ottoman diplomacy at times displayed pragmatic tendencies in the early modern period. The Safavid state, for instance, could be regarded as a potential buffer force against Sunni dynasties in India (Saçmalı, 2024a, pp. 1–23). Indeed, the fact that in 1656 an Ottoman Shaykh al-Islâm proposed an alliance with the Safavids demonstrates that sectarian conflicts could be overcome by realpolitik considerations (Saçmalı, 2024a, p. 15).

By the late sixteenth century, the Ottomans sought influence in Iranian domestic politics through Safi Mirza, a pretender to the Safavid throne, against Nader Shah (Saçmalı, 2024b, p. 86). Following the collapse of the Safavid state in 1722, Iran virtually turned into a geopolitical chessboard between the Ottoman Empire and Russia. While the Ottomans advanced into Tabriz and its environs, Russia pursued more covert and strategic policies of influence (Saçmalı, 2024b, p. 105). In this regard, the “Iranian question” became not only part of the Ottoman Empire’s eastern diplomacy but also an element of the Europe-centered balance of power (Saçmalı, 2024b, p. 105). Although Nader Shah’s reign was decisive in establishing this balance, following his death Iran was once again drawn into a fragmented and unstable political landscape (Saçmalı, 2024b, p. 105).

During the Zand dynasty, no sectarian conflict emerged in Ottoman-Iranian relations; instead, relations were concentrated on economic and strategic interests centered around the Persian Gulf (Uzunçarşılı, 1988, p. 459). With the rise of the Qajar dynasty in 1796, Ottoman-Qajar diplomacy developed within a framework of reciprocity and border security. The main source of this rapprochement was Russia’s aggressive expansionist policies in the Caucasus (Karadeniz, 2012, p. 300).

The Iran-Russia War of 1804–1813 created a shared perception of threat between the Ottoman Empire and Iran, leading both sides to intensify their diplomatic exchanges. Thanks to the reformist stance of Abbas Mirza and the active mediation of Britain, traditional rivalry temporarily evolved

into a strategic cooperation. The intense diplomatic traffic that unfolded in the Ottoman-Iranian-Russian triangle in 1810 can be considered a tangible manifestation of this historical rapprochement (Teymurova, 2016, p. 54).

This study, therefore, aims to contextualize Ottoman diplomatic practice through the Iranian embassy of Yâsincizâde Abdülvehhâb Efendi (1810–1813), a figure who epitomizes this critical juncture.

2. Method

This study was conducted on the basis of the document analysis technique, one of the qualitative research methods. The sources used in the research are grouped into two main categories. The primary sources consist of *sefaretnâmes*, archival documents, and original texts of the period that directly reflect Ottoman-Iranian diplomatic relations between 1810 and 1813. In particular, Bozoklu Osman Şakir's *Musavver İran Sefaretnâmesi* and the observations of Seyyid Mehmed Refi Efendi in Tehran were comparatively examined within the context of Yâsincizâde Abdülvehhâb Efendi's embassy (Kavak, 2016).

The secondary sources comprise scholarly studies on Ottoman diplomacy and on the sectarian, ideological, and geopolitical dimensions of Ottoman-Iranian relations. Research by İnalçık (2000), Savaş (2007), Karadeniz (2012), Liverani (2001), Ocak (2000), Uzunçarşılı (1988), and Saçmal (2024a; 2024b) has shaped both the methodological and content-related framework. Accordingly, the diplomatic functions of the *sefaretnâmes* were analyzed not merely as narratives of historical events but also as texts that reveal statecraft, modes of representation, and ideological orientations.

The documents employed in the scope of document analysis were evaluated through a practice of critical reading. The information in the texts was analyzed not only in terms of its content but also by taking into account the context of its production, the diplomatic style, and ideological representations. In this regard, travel reports, border security negotiations, reciprocity practices, and protocol preferences were interpreted through indicators discerned between the lines.

The data were categorized under thematic headings in accordance with the content analysis method. Historical events were not addressed solely within a chronological framework; instead, causal relationships among processes such as the diplomatic dynamics of the Ottoman-Iranian-Russian triangle, Britain's mediation initiatives, and the overcoming of sectarian rivalries through realpolitik considerations were also taken into account. This methodological choice made it possible to grasp the transformation of Ottoman diplomacy both in terms of its narrative of events and its modes of representation.

At every stage of the research, the principles of scholarly objectivity, critical perspective, and academic consistency were observed, and conclusions were drawn directly from primary and secondary sources. Thus, the methodological section was constructed in full alignment with the literature used, grounded both in the functions of Ottoman *sefaretnâmes* and in academic studies on Ottoman-Iranian relations.

3. Ottoman-Iranian Relations in the Early Nineteenth Century

The dynastic change that took place in Iran at the end of the eighteenth century was not limited to a mere transfer of the throne; it also deeply affected the balance of domestic politics and the orientation of foreign policy. With the withdrawal of the Zands from the political stage, the newly established Qajar dynasty sought to reconstitute the fragmented central structure; this effort manifested itself both in the consolidation of internal order and in the reconfiguration of external relations (Avery, 1379/2000, p. 59). Following the assassination of Agha Mohammad Khan in 1797, his nephew Fath Ali Shah ascended the throne. The first years of his reign were largely spent suppressing internal rebellions and reestablishing central control (Markham, 1364/1985, pp. 33–35). Yet this relatively stable environment soon opened the way to new diplomatic initiatives directed toward the outside world (Amanat, 1997, p. 4).

The year 1801 witnessed a shocking development in Ottoman-Iranian relations. On the day of Ghadir Khumm, considered sacred by Shi'is, the shrine of Imam Husayn in Karbala was attacked by a ten-thousand-strong Wahhabi force led by 'Abd al-'Aziz b. Muhammad b. Saud. The shrine was seriously damaged, its dome destroyed, valuable objects looted, and approximately two thousand Shi'is massacred. Iran claimed that the perpetrators had come from Ottoman territory and demanded their punishment through diplomatic channels (Algar, 2002, pp. 24–25). Acting on the orders of Fath Ali Shah, a diplomatic mission was dispatched to Baghdad to investigate the background of the incident, while the Ottoman side announced that the shrine would be rebuilt and the fortifications of Karbala strengthened (Karadeniz, 2012, p. 300).

Before this tension had subsided, a greater crisis broke out in 1806. Upon the death of Baban-zade Ibrahim Pasha, his position was given to Baban-zade Halit Pasha, which provoked the reaction of Ibrahim Pasha's nephew, Abdurrahman Pasha, leading to an attempted rebellion against the Ottomans. After his failure, Abdurrahman Pasha took refuge in Iran, where he sought to incite Fath Ali Shah against the Ottoman Empire. In this context, the governor of Baghdad, Ali Pasha, wrote to the capital insisting that the Pasha, having sought refuge in Iran, be extradited under the terms of existing treaties (BOA, HAT, 161/6703, March 9, 1807). However, Ali Pasha, without waiting for approval from the capital, launched a military expedition into Iranian territory, which provoked great resentment in Tehran. As a result, in the same year, during the clashes at Merivan, the Ottoman forces suffered heavy losses and were forced to withdraw (Bayburdî, 1349/1970, pp. 52–53). Thereafter, the central government, in instructions sent to the Baghdad governorship, emphasized the need for greater caution in relations with Iran (Karadeniz, 2012, pp. 301–302).

The most salient common ground of this period was the growing threat posed by Russia to both the Ottoman Empire and Iran. The Ottoman state was at war with Russia from 1804 to 1812, while Iran fought against Russia from 1806 to 1813 (Axworthy, 2008, pp. 178–179). These parallel developments brought the two states closer together, and with the involvement of globally influential actors such as Britain, a strategic basis for cooperation emerged (Malcolm, 1815, pp. 210–215). Britain supported and encouraged the establishment of an alliance between the Ottoman Empire and Iran as a means of balancing the growing Russian influence in the South Caucasus (Piri, 2011, p. 118).

Particularly noteworthy in this context was the struggle of Abbas Mirza against Russia. By 1810, Iran had directly proposed an alliance to the Ottoman Empire, and under British pressure, this proposal was positively received. The two parties signed an alliance agreement envisaging joint action against Russia (Şânî-zâde Mehmed Atâullah Efendi, 2008, p. 96). According to this agreement, Ottoman and Iranian armies would act in coordination on the Caucasian front, while Britain would provide financial and military support (Teymurova, 2016, pp. 45–59).

Fath Ali Shah, however, sought contacts not only with Britain but also with France. In 1806, in response to the Russian threat, he requested assistance from France. Napoleon Bonaparte accepted this request and sent one of his generals as an envoy to Iran (Yılmaz, 2014, pp. 65–96). Within this multi-actor diplomatic environment, the Ottoman Empire also revised its Iranian policy and appointed Yâsincizâde Abdülvehhâb Efendi as ambassador to Iran (Osman Şâkir Efendi, 2018, p. 49). This appointment aimed not only to resolve existing issues but also to lay the diplomatic groundwork for a potential alliance against Russia.

In parallel with this process, the Iranian side dispatched Asker Khan, followed by the mufti of Khoy, Ibrahim Efendi, to the Ottoman court in order to maintain reciprocal contacts (Unat, 1987, p. 206). The Ottoman response was remarkable. Sultan Mahmud II's appointment of Yâsincizâde Seyyid Abdülvehhâb Efendi as ambassador to Iran in early 1810 was not merely a matter of protocol; it represented a deliberate choice to establish a more permanent and institutional diplomatic channel. The background of this decision was directly shaped by the international developments of the time.

Indeed, in an imperial rescript (Hatt-ı Hümâyûn) dated February 4, 1810, it was reported that a two-month truce had been initiated between Iran and Russia through French mediation. This information was confirmed by an Iranian individual who had arrived in Istanbul and was also formally communicated to the Sublime Porte by the Iranian representative Hacı Hüseyin Ağa. The

document makes it clear that this diplomatic development was not confined to a mere ceasefire; Iranian officials, emphasizing the notion of *cihet-i camia-i İslâmiye* (“the collective cause of Islam”), explicitly invited the Ottoman Empire to an alliance against their common enemy (BOA, HAT, 795/36895, February 4, 1810 [29 Zilhicce 1224]). This reveals how the political discourse built upon the idea of the Islamic community was reactivated by Iranian actors in order to strengthen the basis for cooperation with the Ottomans.

Furthermore, the continuation of the document shows that the Ottoman response to this diplomatic rapprochement was not limited to political measures but also conveyed strong symbolic and representational messages. Simultaneously with Yâsincizâde’s embassy to Iran, it was decided that he be elevated to the rank of *mevleviyet* (judicial office) and that he be honored with a robe of investiture (*hil’at*). The treasury was ordered to prepare the necessary gifts. Such symbols reflected not only the importance attributed to the individual but also the significance of the mission he represented. The *hil’at* here was not merely a garment but a symbol of the diplomatic weight attached by the Ottomans to their envoy in Iran. The *mevleviyet* likewise signaled that the ambassador was not merely a diplomatic representative but was endowed with administrative status, thereby enhancing his legitimacy and effectiveness in the eyes of his interlocutors.

Taken together, the document of early 1810 points not merely to a temporary thaw in Ottoman-Iranian diplomatic relations but to a deeper, ideologically driven rapprochement. The appointment of Yâsincizâde—both in its timing and in its nature—demonstrates that the Ottoman Empire had adopted a more prepared, institutionalized, and representational stance toward Iran.

To grasp the significance of this new diplomatic orientation, it is crucial to understand the intellectual and administrative background of the individual behind it. For the strengthening of the ambassador’s mission in both symbolic and institutional terms was directly related to his personal qualifications. The scholarly and administrative background of Yâsincizâde Abdülvehhâb Efendi not only enabled him to implement the diplomatic strategies of the Sublime Porte but also embodied the continuity and legitimacy of the statecraft he represented. Therefore, to comprehend Ottoman diplomacy in the context of Yâsincizâde’s embassy, it is necessary to closely examine his intellectual background and administrative experience.

4. The Life of Yâsincizâde Abdülvehhâb Efendi

Yâsincizâde Abdülvehhâb Efendi was the son of Seyyid Osman Efendi, a descendant of Seyyid Bilal—buried in Sinop and widely revered for his strong spiritual influence. The family’s title “Yâsincizâde” derived from his grandfather, Seyyid Mustafa Efendi, who served as a *yasînhan* (reciter of the Sura Yâ Sîn) in the Hagia Sophia Mosque (İmamoğlu & Karataş, 2016, p. 23). His father, Yâsincizâde Osman Efendi, was among the distinguished scholars of the reign of Sultan Mustafa III and held an eminent position within the Ottoman learned hierarchy (*ilmîyye*) (Mardin, 1966). Since Abdülvehhâb Efendi was recognized as a descendant of Hasan, the grandson of the Prophet, the honorifics “Esseyyid” or “Seyyid” were placed before his name (Kahraman, Galitekin, & Dadaş, 2019, p. 584).

At a young age, Abdülvehhâb Efendi entered the Imperial Palace School (*Enderûn-ı Hümâyûn*), where he studied both rational and traditional sciences under two towering intellectual figures of the period, Gelenbevî İsmail Efendi and Palabıyık Mehmed Efendi (Süreyya, 1996, p. 131; Kavak, 2016, p. 5). On January 13, 1786, he received his *müderreslik rûûsu* (authorization to teach), thereby officially embarking upon his scholarly career. On February 21, 1802, he was appointed as a lecturer at the Yeni Saray Library (BOA, C.MF, 170/8474, February 21, 1802). In subsequent years, he distinguished himself by teaching at various madrasas; on December 19, 1809, he was appointed as judge of Thessaloniki, and in 1810 he was elevated to the rank of *bilâd-ı erbaa*. He further gained wide acclaim in scholarly circles through his lectures at the Bâyezid and Yeni Cami madrasas (Kavak, 2016, pp. 5–6).

In 1810, accompanied by Chief Secretary Hayret Efendi and interpreter Osman Şakir, Yâsincizâde Abdülvehhâb Efendi was dispatched as ambassador to Iran, a mission he carried out

with great competence and diligence. His success during this assignment earned him the direct appreciation of Sultan Mahmud II, who subsequently appointed him as judge of Edirne in April 1811, later bestowing upon him the prestigious titles of judge of Mecca and Istanbul (Şânîzâde, 1867, pp. 399–400). Beyond his scholarly and diplomatic qualities, he also held significant administrative offices: in 1816 he became *kazasker* of Anatolia, in 1818 he was appointed *Nakîbüleşraf* (chief of the Prophet's descendants), and ultimately he was honored with the title of *kazasker* of Rumelia (İpşirli, 1988, pp. 285–286).

In the final stage of his life, he reached the highest rank of the Ottoman learned hierarchy by being appointed twice to the office of *Şeyhülislâm*: first between 1821–1822 and later between 1828–1833. He passed away on February 7, 1834 (27 Ramadan 1249), on the Night of Power (*Laylat al-Qadr*), at his mansion in Anadolu Hisarı, Üsküdar, and was buried outside the Topkapı walls beside his father (Müstakimzâde, 1978, pp. 126–127; Kahraman, Galitekin, & Dadaş, 2019, p. 584; Kavak, 2016, p. 7).

Among the various stages of his distinguished scholarly and administrative career, the most decisive turning point was undoubtedly his appointment in 1810 as ambassador to Iran. This mission not only reflected his personal merit but also represented a critical juncture in which Ottoman diplomacy responded to the pressing geopolitical challenges of the period.

5. Yâsincizâde Abdülvehhâb Efendî's Embassy to Iran

The dispatch of Yâsincizâde Abdülvehhâb Efendî as ambassador to Iran in 1810 should be regarded not merely as the appointment of an individual but as a symbolic turning point marking the transition between classical ambassadorship and modern diplomatic representation in Ottoman history. Behind the shift from temporary embassies to permanent representation lay the state's need for information and experience regarding Europe-centered *Nizâm-ı Cedîd* reforms (Yalçinkaya, 2010, p. 593). The imperative to safeguard the state's interests and territorial integrity rendered diplomacy an increasingly vital instrument, paving the way for permanent envoys to assume responsibility for the sustainability of relations (Davinson, 2015, p. 291). In this context, the dispatch of a figure recognized for his scholarly and religious authority to a deeply rooted neighbor such as Iran was not only political in nature but also striking in terms of ideological legitimacy (Azap, 2023, p. 328).

The imperial rescript (*Hatt-ı Hümayûn*) dated February 4, 1810, demonstrates that this appointment was not an ordinary assignment but rather an effort by the Ottoman state to reconfigure its representation in Iran on a new basis. The document's reference to Yâsincizâde as one of the "*müderrisîn-i kirâm*" is particularly meaningful. The selection of an ambassador with an *ulema* identity in the face of an interlocutor with strong sectarian sensitivities indicated that representation was being constructed on political, scholarly, and religious grounds alike. The document also stated that instructions would not be dictated solely under the center's control but would instead be given "during the mission," thereby granting the envoy a measure of discretion in the field. This reflected the confidence vested in Yâsincizâde and the willingness of the center to share diplomatic authority with him. The same record further noted that travel expenses would be allocated to the ambassador, gifts prepared, and Ottoman correspondence accompanied by the mission—details that underscored the political, scholarly, and symbolic weight attached to the embassy (BOA, HAT, 804/37132, 29 Zilhicce 1224 / February 4, 1810).

The emphasis on the Sultan's direct will in this appointment reveals the personal weight of Mahmud II in matters of foreign representation. In a period of consolidating central power, the assignment of such a distinguished figure reflected the Ottoman aim of preserving both border security and imperial prestige. Indeed, the respect shown to Yâsincizâde by his Iranian counterparts enhanced not only his diplomatic identity but also the acceptance of his scholarly authority.

The first signs of this evolving conception of representation can already be seen in the activities of Seyyid Mehmed Refi Efendî, dispatched to Iran in 1807. Refi Efendî was tasked particularly with preventing a Franco-Iranian rapprochement; far from being a mere letter-bearer, he emerged as an active participant in direct negotiations (Sarıkçoğlu & Güngör, 2020, pp. 936–937). Through Abbas

Mirza's reform initiatives and his contacts with the Tehran *ulema*, he contributed to Ottoman-Iranian rapprochement and sought to transform the inter-sectarian diplomatic language (Sarıkcıoğlu & Güngör, 2020, pp. 933–935).

In his efforts to consolidate friendly relations with the Ottoman Empire, Fath Ali Shah Qajar dispatched Asker Khan—later joined by the mufti of Khoy, Hacı Muhammed Han, with the support of Abbas Mirza and accompanied by various gifts—to Istanbul (Osman Şâkir Efendi, 2018, p. 42). This visit is recorded in detail in Osman Şâkir Efendi's *Musavver Sefâretnâme-i İran*, which highlights the symbolic meaning attributed to the embassy within the Ottoman center. The work explicitly documents the Iranian envoys, the letters sent in reply by Sultan Mahmud II, and the appointments of Yâsincizâde as ambassador and Şâkir Efendi as interpreter (Osman Şâkir Efendi, 2018, pp. 43–49). Following the diplomatic records, the author turned to observations concerning the route, devoting little attention to Iran's internal politics and instead focusing on the journey itself (Osman Şâkir Efendi, 2018, p. 50).

The pioneering role of Refi Efendi evolved into a more systematic and multi-layered structure during Yâsincizâde's embassy. By combining scholarly and sectarian representation with diplomatic instruments, Yâsincizâde conveyed his field observations to the center, framing the reactions of Iranian *ulema* to increasing Russian pressure along the Georgia–Karabakh line as strategic opportunities (BOA, HAT, 784/36635, December 23, 1813; Cevdet Paşa, 1309/1891, pp. 51–52).

Yâsincizâde's embassy was not confined to the royal court; he engaged directly with scholars, military officials, and local administrators in provincial centers such as Tabriz, Ardabil, Khoy, and Maragha. This allowed the Ottomans to monitor political tendencies in Iran closely and to assess the provincial reverberations of Abbas Mirza's reforms. His reports strengthened Ottoman diplomatic reflexes regarding Iran while also conveying military mobilizations along the frontier to the imperial center.

Reports reaching the Sublime Porte via Kapıcıbaşı Hüseyin Ağa in late 1813 stated that Iran was increasing its military preparations against Russia, issuing directives to Muhammad Ali Mirza, Khan of Kermanshah, and executing border crossings. These reports, based on Yâsincizâde's dispatches, were treated as authoritative, while those transmitted by the Kapıcıbaşı were deemed in need of confirmation (BOA, HAT, 804/37122, December 23, 1813). Thus, Yâsincizâde emerged as more than an ambassador: he became a trusted actor who transmitted intelligence from the field into decision-making processes.

His reports played a guiding role in managing frontier crises, mediating directly in tensions between local powers such as Abdurrahman Pasha and the Shah's policies. He also observed transformations in the relationship between *ulema* and state with care, submitting regular reports to the center (Dunbuli, 1969/1389, pp. 200–201).

This style of representation continued to manifest itself in later embassies. The *sefaretnâme* of Haydar Efendi, dispatched to Tehran in 1851, was in many ways a renewed version of the reporting tradition initiated by Yâsincizâde. His contacts with madrasa circles, meetings with Shaykh al-Islam Mirza Masih, and emphasis on the Ottoman caliphate reveal the evolution of a trans-sectarian diplomatic language toward the ideal of Islamic unity (Sarıkcıoğlu & Güngör, 2022, p. 83). During the negotiations surrounding the Treaties of Erzurum, Ottoman border diplomacy was reshaped in an institutionalized form of Yâsincizâde's field-based approach (Sarıkcıoğlu & Güngör, 2022, pp. 86–87).

Yâsincizâde distinguished himself not only as an observer but also as an active mediator. After the incursions of Fath Ali Shah's son Muhammad Ali Mirza into Ottoman territory, he met directly with the Shah to ease tensions—an exemplary act of shuttle diplomacy (BOA, C.AS, 809/34357, March 21, 1814). His legacy was also cultural and intellectual. At the Negarestan Palace in Tehran, he and his retinue were painted by Iranian artists, a symbolic manifestation of his mission (Bilim, 2002, p. 265). His scholarly conversations with Shi'i *ulema* further attest to the recognition of his authority by the opposite side (Işık, 2023, p. 83).

Closely following the rivalry between Britain and France over Iran, Yâsincizâde helped strengthen the Ottoman position in a multipolar environment. His reports on Napoleon's policies toward Iran (Uluerler, 2022, p. 152; Uçarol, 1995, p. 155; Balcı, 2017, pp. 11–12) and his information on Sir Gore Ouseley opened new strategic perspectives within the Ottoman–Iranian–Russian triangle.

In conclusion, Yâsincizâde Abdülvehhâb Efendi's embassy to Iran reflects a transitional form between classical diplomacy and modern representation. This practice of *sefaretnâme*, in which political, cultural, sectarian, and intelligence dimensions intertwined, illustrates the multifaceted representational capacity of the Ottoman *ulema* in diplomacy. Yâsincizâde emerged as a diplomatic actor who managed crises, produced knowledge, and built prestige, and his experience served as a model for subsequent embassies.

6. Yâsincizâde Abdülvehhâb Efendi's Embassy in the Context of Ottoman–Iranian Diplomatic Relations

Following Napoleon's failure, France signed the Treaty of Tilsit with Russia in 1807, and subsequently, in 1809, the Ottoman Empire concluded the Treaty of Kale-i Sultaniye with Britain (Şânî-zâde Mehmed Atâullah Efendi, 2008, p. 239). At this juncture, a search for a new orientation in Ottoman foreign policy emerged. Britain, after concluding this treaty with the Ottomans, sought to deepen its relations with Iran in order to distance both states from French influence. This, in turn, generated direct diplomatic intensity along the Ottoman–Iranian axis. That intensity assumed a concrete form in 1810 with the dispatch of Yâsincizâde Abdülvehhâb Efendi to Iran. His appointment reflected the Sublime Porte's attempt to institutionalize this new quest for diplomatic equilibrium (BOA, HAT, 795/36895, 4 February 1810).

As a result of these dialogues, in the correspondence between Abbas Mirza, the Iranian crown prince, and the Ottoman Empire, emphasis was placed on "the necessity of strengthening friendship because of the bond of religion between the two countries" (Tekdemir, 2009, p. 80). Here, Yâsincizâde's identity as a scholar of *ulema* origin was of particular significance. He was not merely a diplomatic representative but also a figure capable of advancing the idea of Islamic unity and fostering inter-sectarian conciliation. Thus, the institutional articulation of such friendly emphases by the Ottoman side was reinforced through Yâsincizâde's diplomatic presence (BOA, HAT, 804/37132, 4 February 1810).

Nevertheless, because of Fath Ali Shah's renewed demands concerning disputed territories between Iran and the Ottoman Empire, no basis for agreement could be established. Furthermore, the signing of the Treaty of Bucharest between the Ottomans and Russia in 1812 exacerbated tensions with Iran (Muahedat Mecmuası, 2008, vol. IV, pp. 48–58). Yâsincizâde's close reporting of these developments during his years in Iran allowed the Ottoman center to monitor Iranian diplomatic maneuvers in real time. His reports signaled the beginnings of a diplomatic tradition in which the Ottomans no longer relied solely on external sources but instead obtained firsthand observations from within Iran (BOA, HAT, 804/37122, 23 December 1813).

One of the principal obstacles preventing an Ottoman–Iranian alliance was Iran's persistent interference in Ottoman-controlled Iraq and its covert support for uprisings in the region (Uluerler, 2012, p. 311). At this point, Yâsincizâde's role as diplomatic mediator came to the fore: he observed the tribal movements in Iraq on the spot and reported them to the center. In this way, the Ottomans were able to identify Iran's interventionist frontier policies firsthand (Cevdet Paşa, 1309/1891, pp. 51–52).

When Britain's initiatives failed and mutual diplomatic exchanges between the two states produced no agreement, Fath Ali Shah dispatched an army against Baghdad, leading to its plunder. While the Ottomans prepared to retaliate, Russia advanced into Dagestan and Georgia, annexing these territories. In response, Fath Ali Shah sent an army under the command of Crown Prince Abbas Mirza to reclaim Georgia and the Dagestan–Karabakh region from Russian control. In 1812, commanding a European-trained army of approximately 13,000 troops, Abbas Mirza initially achieved some minor successes (Dunbuli, 1389/1969, pp. 200–201). Yet, despite his numerical

superiority, he was ultimately defeated, and Erivan fell to the Russians. During this campaign, Charles Christie, the British officer commanding Iran's infantry unit, was also killed (Pâkrevan, 1376/1997, p. 69). Yâsincizâde's embassy unfolded precisely under the shadow of such military crises: his task was not only to conduct diplomatic negotiations but also to convey Iran's stance and military preparations against Russia to the Ottoman center. In this way, Ottoman diplomacy acquired direct knowledge from the field (BOA, HAT, 784/36635, 23 December 1813).

Following these wars with Russia, Iran sent a diplomatic mission along with a letter to improve relations with the Ottoman Empire (BOA, HAT, 1315/51274, H.03.07.1224). Iran also conveyed congratulations on the birth of an Ottoman prince, expressing joy over the strengthening of friendship between the two states (BOA, HAT, 1/8A, H.29.12.1230). The Ottomans, in turn, responded in a letter to the Iranian envoy Nasrullah Khan in Istanbul, emphasizing the necessity of reinforcing brotherhood between the two Islamic states (BOA, HAT, 1/8B, H.29.12.1230). Yâsincizâde's consistent invocation of the notion of *cihet-i camia-i İslâmiye* during his embassy embodied this tone of fraternity. His conciliatory language in correspondence played a critical role in preserving the atmosphere of friendship.

Nevertheless, despite the repeated emphasis in correspondence on the necessity of united action against Russia, no formal alliance treaty was concluded (BOA, HAT, 1315/51274, H.12.1224). Although Yâsincizâde's efforts fostered rapprochement, they failed to produce a lasting basis for alliance. His embassy thus served to expose the reasons behind this failure.

During the Ottoman–Russian War (1806–1812), Iran, deceived by Napoleon's short-lived victories, had developed relations with France and, relying on this connection, decided to declare war against Russia. Yet, after disappointment with Napoleon's unfulfilled promises and the failure of the ensuing campaigns, Iran's relations with Britain gained momentum. Owing to the efforts of the British envoy Sir John Malcolm, British influence replaced French influence in Tehran. As a result of Britain's initiatives, the Treaty of Tehran was signed between Iran and Britain in 1814. Under its terms, Iran undertook to prevent the passage of any army marching against India through its territory, and in the event of an attack on Iranian soil, it would act jointly with Britain. Furthermore, Britain committed to assisting in the training of the Qajar army and providing financial aid. With this treaty, Britain became increasingly influential in both the foreign and domestic policies of Iran (Gafuri, 1389/2010, p. 415). For Britain, the treaty secured India against Russian and French threats while also seeking to revive the Tabriz–Erzurum–Trabzon commercial route. Yâsincizâde's embassy bore direct witness to this growing British influence in Iran and duly reported these developments to the Ottoman center (Uluerler, 2022, p. 152).

The involvement of Britain and France in territories under Ottoman and Iranian sovereignty further emboldened Russia. For the Ottomans, Iran, and Russia alike, retaining control over these regions had become essential for their survival and for expanding their spheres of influence. As Britain and France began producing projects concerning these strategically indispensable territories, the region turned into a convenient arena for the imperialist ambitions of the Western great powers. Yâsincizâde's reports, in this respect, should be read as crucial diplomatic material documenting how these imperial interventions shaped Ottoman–Iranian relations (Uçarol, 1995, p. 155; Balcı, 2017, pp. 11–12).

In a letter sent by an Ottoman spy in Iran, it was reported that Russia was constructing new fortresses in the territories it had seized, while unrest was spreading in Khorasan and Shiraz. This demonstrated that the Ottomans' earlier anxieties were justified (BOA, HAT, 807/37194, H.29.12.1229). Seeking to resolve its discontent with Iran, the Ottoman Empire dispatched Celaleddin Efendi as ambassador to Tehran in 1813 (BOA, HAT, 803/37119, H.22.08.1228). Yet it is noteworthy that the experiences gleaned from Yâsincizâde's embassy directly guided the subsequent steps in Ottoman diplomacy. Indeed, Celaleddin Efendi's embassy was built upon the diplomatic legacy established by Yâsincizâde.

7. Conclusions

The military and political strength of the Ottoman Empire during its classical period fostered a unilateral and superiority-centered diplomatic approach. In the early centuries, diplomacy largely rested on the psychological advantage gained through victories on the battlefield; envoys were appointed for specific occasions such as enthronements, celebrations of births, peace treaties, or declarations of war, and returned to the capital upon completing their missions. Some envoys submitted reports of their observations, and these accounts demonstrate how diplomatic activity gradually evolved into a more systematic and knowledge-based practice of foreign policy.

The absence of permanent embassies until the nineteenth century was shaped not only by political and military considerations but also by the constraints of Islamic law. Continuous representation in non-Muslim lands, defined as *dār al-ḥarb*, was not deemed legitimate for a long period, while the Empire's military deterrence limited such a necessity. However, from the late eighteenth century onwards, technological, political, and military transformations in the West compelled the Ottoman state to reassess its diplomatic practices. Consecutive military defeats, particularly against Russia, forced the Empire to seek new openings in diplomacy alongside its military strength. In this context, the first permanent embassies were established in London (1793), Paris (1797), and later Vienna, and with the foundation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1836, foreign policy acquired a more institutional framework. The appointment of a permanent envoy to Iran took place in 1848; until then, relations were conducted through temporary embassies and consulates.

The embassy of Yâsincizâde Abdülvehhâb Efendi between 1810 and 1813 represents more than a temporary mission. It was carried out at a time when Ottoman-Qajar relations were being reshaped and when European power struggles were intensifying. The rivalry between France, Russia, and Britain heightened the geopolitical sensitivity of both the Ottoman and Qajar states and directed Ottoman diplomacy toward a multi-actor balance strategy. Yâsincizâde's mission was thus closely tied to the security of the Empire's eastern frontiers and its pursuit of a regional balance against Russia.

The documents concerning this embassy reveal a transformation in the Ottoman diplomatic mindset. The management of Shi'ite discontent following Wahhabi attacks, the handling of the Babanzâde Abdurrahman Pasha affair with its implications for sovereignty and border stability, and the monitoring of cross-border movements were among the key issues reflected in Yâsincizâde's reports. In this regard, he emerged as an envoy who conducted direct observations, maintained balance, and exercised initiative in the field.

The absence of clearly defined borders between the Ottoman Empire and Iran created ongoing tensions, particularly in the regions of Shahrizor and Merivan. Yâsincizâde's careful and balanced approach laid the groundwork for the establishment of border commissions in later years, which formed the basis of a more structured frontier diplomacy between the two states. His embassy also provided guidance for subsequent missions, most notably the embassy of Celâleddin Efendi, thereby leaving a significant diplomatic legacy.

In conclusion, the embassy of Yâsincizâde Abdülvehhâb Efendi marks a crucial stage in the transition of Ottoman diplomacy from the classical model toward a more institutionalized structure. His activities contributed to the resolution of immediate disputes while also helping to rebuild mutual trust. This embassy can thus be regarded not only as a turning point in Ottoman-Iranian relations but also as a noteworthy example within the broader trajectory of Ottoman diplomatic history.

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