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**Augerius Gislenius Busbequius. Leven en werk van de keizerlijke gezant aan het hof van Suleyman de Grote. Een biografische, literaire en historische studie met editie van onuitgegeven teksten**

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*Document Version*

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Publication date:*

1989

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Martels, Z. R. W. M. V. (1989). *Augerius Gislenius Busbequius. Leven en werk van de keizerlijke gezant aan het hof van Suleyman de Grote. Een biografische, literaire en historische studie met editie van onuitgegeven teksten.* s.n.

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## Summary.

### Introduction:

From the first part of the sixteenth century until the end of the Ottoman empire at the beginning of the present century successive Austrian emperors sent permanent ambassadors to the Sultan's court. The most famous and fascinating of these imperial envoys was Augerius Gislenius Busbequius. His reputation is due not only to his four intelligent, entertaining and elegantly written Latin letters but also to his many important scholarly discoveries. The four famous Latin letters which were printed almost forty times in eight languages deal with the eight years that Busbequius lived in the Ottoman empire. They are known as the 'Turkish letters', in fact an incorrect translation of 'Legationis Turcicae epistolae quatuor'.

This dissertation is largely based upon the nearly 470, mostly unpublished and not well-known Latin, Italian, French and German letters of Busbequius' correspondence with the Austrian emperors, high officials and friends. Busbequius' published writings, the most trustworthy old biographies, and other manuscripts such as the letters of Ferdinand's secret agent Michael Zernovitz from the 'Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv' in Vienna also play a major role in this description of his life and works. This study looks upon Busbequius as a diplomat, high imperial official, man of letters, *maecenas*, and as a scholar.

A survey of the abundant biographical literature made clear that my first task was to determine which biographies could serve as dependable historical sources. This review was also helpful in clarifying Busbequius' place in the intellectual and political history of the last four centuries (Part I). Other preliminary stages for the biographical chapters in Part III and the study of Busbequius' scholarly activities in Part IV are descriptions of the genesis of the Turkish letters and the history of the early editions of his writings.

### Part I: The early biographies of Busbequius. His reputation during the last four centuries.

Setting aside the short biographical remarks by Pantaleon, Guicciardini, Thuanus and others, we have a first real biography in an unpublished, anonymous French life of Busbequius. It was probably written at the end of the sixteenth century and the precise description of Busbequius' life suggests that the author was someone from his circle of friends. A more influential and rather informative *'vita'* was published by Aubertus Miraeus in 1602. In the first three decades of the seventeenth century other Latin biographies were

written by Adam, Andreas, Sanderus, Buzelinus and Sweertius. All except Adam were Flemish. All borrowed from each other but in some way had access to new biographical material. Miraeus and his successors leaned heavily on Lipsius and other early writers but they were not as well acquainted with history and the contents of the Turkish letters. A Latin biography in the first edition of Busbequius' letters to emperor Rudolph II (1630) made a dreary end to this especially Flemish tradition. It offers a mixture of the many vices of the earlier biographies; regrettably it was reprinted again and again in the *Opera Omnia* editions of Busbequius' writings.

The endless row of editions, the many biographies, and the large number of learned studies about his discoveries show that the history of Busbequius' fame is long and impressive. In the seventeenth century Busbequius was a much respected author in western and middle European countries. The Turkish letters were well-known and their influence can be traced in many writings of the period.

Pierre Bayle played a crucial role in the early scholarly biographical tradition on Busbequius. His critical biography deeply influenced later biographers. He had a keen knowledge of writings about Busbequius and those written by the ambassador himself. At the same time, however, he and subsequent biographers failed to describe the relationship of earlier biographies to each other. He was scornful of Moréri and other biographers who had used only secondary sources and had merely reiterated old ideas about Busbequius.

In modern scholarly literature the significance of the *'Exclamatio, sive de re militari contra Turcam instituenda consilium'* has certainly been underestimated. From the end of the sixteenth to the eighteenth century this warning against Ottoman military supremacy was more often printed than any similar work. The Turkish letters also elaborate on the conviction that Christian armies were not prepared for a war against the Ottoman Empire. In recent years Belgian, Dutch and American political commentators have drawn explicit parallels with western strategy towards imagined threats posed by the Soviet Union.

Research on Busbequius' diplomatic work began only in the last century. Until the nineteenth century works on Busbequius' scholarly discoveries had little impact on new biographies. The biographical tradition of the seventeenth and eighteenth century had been closely linked with editions of Busbequius' writings. The decreasing number of editions and the slackening of

public interest in the Ottoman empire from the eighteenth century onwards contrasted with larger and more encompassing biographies in the nineteenth century. Patriotic feelings in Belgium during the nineteenth century gave stimulus to a wide range of smaller studies and biographies. In Germany, too, political concern with the Ottoman empire led to a revival of interest in Busbequius. From the nineteenth century onwards, however, the most important tendency was a growing scholarly interest in the work of Busbequius. Stimulated by new translations by Forster and Daniell, Huussen and others, scholars wrote many minor studies. After the Second World War it was evident that a thorough study of Busbequius' life and work had become necessary.

## Part II: The genesis of the four Turkish letters and the history of the first editions.

Ludovicus Carrio, the editor of the first Turkish letter in the first edition of 1581, thought that Busbequius had written it to his friend Nicolaus Micault during his embassy in Constantinople. Until recently it was commonly accepted that the other three letters, as their dates suggest, were also composed in this period. Indeed, one passage in Busbequius' story about the Crimean Goths (in the fourth letter, which Carrio did not yet know) clearly points to Micault. But there are several other personal remarks which make these letters into real letters between friends ('epistolae familiares'), the most popular literary genre in humanist culture.

Marcks and Holter gave sufficient proof that Busbequius in fact wrote the Turkish letters after his return from Constantinople: thus these letters are clearly fictional. Many passages are topical and genuine; others, however, affirm the suspicion of the modern reader that they were composed later; there are quotations in them which show that Busbequius overlooked the fact that he was introducing a foreign element, or he confused dates and names due to lapses in memory.

The Turkish letters were probably written between about 1581 (first partial edition) and 1589 (complete edition). This conclusion can be drawn from the order in which the four letters were published and from the title page of the second edition (1582), which does not announce the second letter attached to the first letter and the 'Exclamatio' as a loose gathering. There are other arguments as well: Lipsius' letter of 1584 urging Busbequius to send new complementary material to the printer Christopher Plantin, the long period between the second (1582) and the third edition (1589), which prints the four letters together for the first time, and finally the differences in length and structure of the four letters.

On the other hand, it must be noted that Busbequius, who in fact mislead his readers by the stylistic device of a fictional letter to his friend, also deluded his editor: in 1587 Plantin wrote that he wanted to edit

the third letter together with the fourth, which Busbequius had just 're-found'.

The early printing history of the Turkish letters indicates that Busbequius himself was very much involved in their edition and that of the 'Exclamatio'. Carrio makes clear that Busbequius was not aware of his intention of publishing the first Turkish letters and the 'Exclamatio'. Carrio's bad reputation suggests that he possibly laid hands on them illegitimately. The first edition has many orthographical mistakes. But its success persuaded Plantin to print a second corrected version. Busbequius' corrections can still be seen in a first edition preserved in the Museum Plantin-Moretus, which the printer used as his example. The handwriting is Busbequius' and the nature of the corrections is such that only he could be the author. The same is true for the text of the 'Exclamatio', which dates back to 1576. In the editions of 1581 and of 1582 many alterations and corrections were made in the title and the text itself.

Other changes and corrections in the edition of 1589 and also remarks in the correspondence of Plantin show Busbequius' concern with the edition. The book was printed in Paris by Gilles Beys, Plantin's son-in-law. The bad economic situation in which Beys found himself was probably the reason that the book was printed quickly, as the many printing errors indicate. More or less intelligent printers often 'corrected' later editions but the general result was a steady deterioration of the Latin text. The Elzevier Opera Omnia edition of 1633 and as a consequence all the later Opera Omnia editions are part of this process.

## Part III: The life of Augerius Gislenius Busbequius.

Augerius (Gislenius) Busbequius was born in Komen (Comines) between the last months of 1520 and before October 1521. Other names he uses are Ogier de Bousbecque (French), Augerius de Busbecke or Augerius a Busbecke (German), and Augerio da Busbecke (Italian). He was an illegitimate son of George Ghiselin II, seigneur de Boesbeke (Bousbecque), a small village near Komen (Comines), not far from Rijssel (Lille). Only his mother's name, Catherine Hespel, is known. Early biographers say that the young Ogier, educated in the house of his father, went to school in Wervik (Wervicq) and Komen. On July 12, 1536 he matriculated at Louvain university, an important centre of humanist culture. There - or possibly later at the Italian universities of Bologna, Padua and Venice - he struck up a lifelong friendship with his compatriots Nicolaus Micault and Andreas Masius. We know the name of two of his Italian teachers: Giovanni Baptista Egnazio in Venice and Lazzaro Buonamico in Padua. He studied liberal arts, law and some medicine, and excelled in history; he became proficient in at least six or seven languages (French, Flemish, Latin, Italian, German, Spanish and possibly Croatian).

In 1540 Charles V issued a patent for Busbequius'

mation, which became effective after payment of a  
n 1549, probably after his return from Italy.

ke his grandfather Gilles Ghiselin, great uncle  
ge Ghiselin I and his friends Micault and Masius,  
equius chose a public career. In 1552 or 1553 he  
ed the service of the Habsburg king (later empe-  
Ferdinand I of Austria without a specified posi-

His erudition and especially his command of  
ages made him a valued man in the household of  
inand. In the summer of 1554 he joined the embas-  
Don Pedro Lasso to the marriage of Mary Tudor,  
n of England, and Philip II, king of Spain. Busbe-  
wrote a description of this event.

Rijssel on November 3, 1554, Busbequius received  
inand's orders to proceed to Vienna. The king  
ed him to become his new permanent ambassador  
e Ottoman empire. The former ambassador, Andrea  
a Malvezzi, could not return to Constantinople  
use illness and fear of torture by the Ottoman  
rities withheld him at the border. Busbequius'  
tance of this office changed his life fundamentally  
made it more exciting than that of his many  
ds who often fulfilled high but more or less  
ctable posts at home. After his embassy Busbe-  
continued to be remembered by contemporaries as  
mperial ambassador at the court of Süleyman. His  
important works - the 'Exclamatio', the Turkish  
s and also his scholarly discoveries - are linked  
this stay in the Ottoman empire.

e diplomatic activities of the new ambassador can  
vided into four periods. In the first period he  
led to Constantinople where he arrived on Janua-  
y, 1555. He joined two Hungarian colleagues Anto-  
Verantius and Franciscus Zay. On March 6 the  
envoys travelled together to Amasya, 300 kilome-  
north-east of Ankara, where Süleyman and his  
and army spent the winter. Many important  
eries were made during this Habsburg expedition;  
amous 'Monumentum Ancyranum' and other in-  
ons, coins, flora and fauna and native customs  
ranscribed, collected and observed. Politically the  
angible result was postponement of Süleyman's  
ampaign against Ferdinand. Ferdinand's occupa-  
f Transylvania on the basis of an agreement  
s queen Isabella, the central issue of the nego-  
s, was not resolved. This required Busbequius to  
back to Ferdinand's court for new instructions.  
ius and Zay were constrained to wait in Con-  
nople for his return.

equius' arrival in the Ottoman capital at the  
ng of January 1556 marks the second part of  
assadorial activities. Ferdinand had not changed  
d with regard to Transylvania, so Rüstem Pasha,  
ne vizier, refused to admit the ambassadors to  
otiations. They were isolated in the embassy, a  
ravansary, and even severely threatened. An  
e was not concluded before the summer of  
eanwhile, queen Isabella had returned to Tran-

sylvania and Ferdinand had given up his claims. The  
Ottoman empire, too, was compelled to sue for peace,  
not only due to the sultan's advanced age and the  
rivalry between his two sons, but also because of the  
dire economic situation after many years of war.

When Verantius and Zay departed in August 1557,  
Busbequius remained at Constantinople as the perma-  
nent ambassador, and a third, long period began. Until  
the death of Rüstem Pasha no treaty could be conclu-  
ded, although short armistices were agreed upon in  
January 1558 (Edirne), and again in January of the  
following year. The rise of Bayezid, the younger son of  
Süleyman, in the autumn of 1558 threatened the unity  
of the Ottoman empire and raised Busbequius' serious  
hope that a treaty on very favorable conditions was  
within reach. But the defeat of Bayezid at the hands  
of his brother Selim and the strength of Süleyman's  
army (June 1, 1559) brought a speedy end to negotia-  
tions. Some hopes for a settlement still glimmered,  
because Bayezid had escaped to his powerful short ter-  
m ally Persia. Since 1560, however, Bayezid and his sons  
were being held in Persian prisons and the shah was  
using them to bend Süleyman and his son Selim to his  
own will.

Until 1561 Busbequius imputed the failure of negotia-  
tions mainly to Rüstem Pasha, who turned down all  
attempts at bribery by Busbequius and was unwilling to  
admit much more than a short armistice. In the last  
period of his embassy, from the summer of 1561 on-  
wards, Busbequius was on friendly terms with Rüstem's  
successor Ali Pasha, who thought peace necessary to  
the Ottoman empire. Thus his perseverance during his  
dealings with Rüstem was soon to be rewarded. Serious  
negotiations lasted until August 1562. The message that  
Bayezid and his sons had been murdered after Süleyman  
and Selim had payed the shah a high sum of money,  
compelled Busbequius to accept a treaty, which turned  
out to be favorable to Ferdinand. It was concluded on  
the very conditions which had been refused Busbequius  
by Rüstem Pasha some years before.

When Busbequius left Constantinople at the end of  
August 1562, Ali Pasha showed his esteem by giving  
him valuable presents. Busbequius accompanied Ibrahim  
dragoman, the Ottoman emissary, to Frankfurt, where  
at the end of November Maximilian was crowned king  
of the Romans. The emperor promised to observe the  
peace conditions which had been agreed upon but he  
procrastinated the dispatch of an annual tribute of  
30.000 ducats for the Hungarian territories in his  
possession and 60.000 ducats of back tribute for two  
years. Part was sent to Constantinople in the summer  
of 1563, a second part not until November 1564.

Busbequius now asked dismissal from imperial service,  
but the emperor granted him only a temporary leave of  
absence for Flanders. At Constantinople he had spent a  
personal fortune in ransoming Spanish prisoners of war  
after the battle of Gerba (1560). He had not been  
repaid by many of them, and now his bankers were hot

on his heels. Although in later years some compensation was given Busbequius by Maximilian II and Philip II, his debts continued to dog him until at least 1568.

In November 1563 Busbequius gave up his new position of imperial court counsellor in order to join the entourage of Maximilian's elder sons Rudolph and Ernest, who were being sent to Spain for further education. Busbequius became their marshal of the hall ('*praefectus dapiferum*'). There he probably expected to be able to collect some of the money owed him as well. But the hot Spanish summers seem to have been bad for his health: in the spring of 1566 he was given permission to return to Vienna.

Once again he became a court counsellor, this time in the service of Maximilian II, the new emperor since 1564. He followed his master to the military camp of Raab (Győr) for preparations against Süleyman's last Hungarian campaign in the summer of 1566. In January 1567 Busbequius became seneschal and chamberlain of the four younger sons of Maximilian. In these years he was also given responsibility for the imperial library; in 1576 he himself donated some 260 Greek manuscripts, which he had acquired in Constantinople. He also remained a valuable counsellor of Maximilian, and later of Rudolph II. In the early summer of 1557 Busbequius refused Maximilian's request to fill a second term as imperial ambassador in Constantinople. He preferred staying in the agreeable company of the four princes and learned friends such as Johannes Sambucus, Jacopo Strada, Johannes Crato von Crafftheim, Paulus Fabricius, Lazarus von Schwendi, Hugo Blotius, Justus Lipsius, Carolus Clusius, Nicolaus Biesius, Stephanus Pighius etc.. In these years he had a strong longing for Flanders but the civil war in his native country compelled him to live in exile. Moreover, the emperors Maximilian and Rudolph kept him at court.

In the summer of 1570 Busbequius was ordered to take the young princes Albert and Wenceslaus to Spain. The following summer he returned with Rudolph and Ernest. He remained in the imperial service of the emperor's sons Maximilian and Matthias. In this period he became friendly with Justus Lipsius and Carolus Clusius.

In August 1574 Busbequius was sent to Paris to negotiate the inheritance of Elizabeth, widow of the French king Charles VI and daughter of Maximilian. Busbequius accompanied the queen-widow on her return to Vienna at the end of 1575. But he left Vienna again at the end of the following year after the death of Maximilian II. He was appointed seneschal of Elizabeth in France and remained there until his death. At the same time he served as unofficial imperial agent in France. In this capacity he wrote many letters to Rudolph about political disturbances in France and the southern Netherlands.

More explicitly than before, Busbequius at Paris played a role as *maecenas* for young and ambitious scholars, above all for those who studied classical

literature and history. It was probably in this period that he wrote his Turkish letters. Contemporary evidence shows that as an elderly man he still kept his earlier spirit and broad interest, especially in history and literature.

The terrible civil war and the misery in France during the eighties of the sixteenth century made life in Paris or (La Celle) St. Cloud, where Busbequius lived most of the time, increasingly disagreeable and even dangerous.

In 1587 Busbequius had bought the seigniorship of Bousbecque from his nephew Charles of Yedeghem, apparently wishing to spend his last days there. He asked permission to visit his native country in 1591. His intentions are not clear, but he probably had in mind to stay there only for a short period: Elizabeth was still alive and her possessions needed careful administration because of the war in France. Leaving from Mantes in September 1591 Busbequius arrived in Cailly, north of Rouen, at night. He was assaulted in his lodgings and then kidnapped on horseback by some rapacious soldiers. After his release the following day he was taken to St. Germain, the castle of Madame de Mallochy, lady of Cailly. Some weeks later, on October 27 or 28, 1591, he died here as a 'septuagenarian'. He was buried in the church of St. Germain. In 1598 a leaden box containing his heart was brought to Bousbecque and interred with his ancestors. He was sorely missed by his learned friends in Flanders. Among others, Lipsius composed an epitaph.

Busbequius' physiognomy is known from a short description by Sanderus. We also have a portrait of 1557, which was made by Busbequius' draughtsman in Constantinople, Melchior Lorck, and a second portrait by an unknown artist, which was published by Miraeus in 1604.

#### Part IV: Busbequius' scholarly activities.

The last section of this book deals with Busbequius' scholarly pursuits. After an introductory chapter five studies treat Busbequius' work on inscriptions, coins, manuscripts, plants and animals, Crimean Gothic and finally his thoughts about Ottoman civilization and the significance of his 'Exclamatio'. Busbequius was endowed with a keen intelligence, a vast erudition, and he had many contacts with the world of leading scholars, among others with Matthioli, Lipsius, Clusius and Sambucus. His success in so many fields was stimulated especially by his embassy to the Ottoman empire, which stood on the place of the old Byzantine empire and which was not often visited by European scholars. Busbequius' learning is a rare example of the coherence of the different branches of scholarship and knowledge in the sixteenth century.

In many respects Busbequius was more of a *maecenas* and promotor of scholarly research than a scholar in his own right. However, as the many dedicatory letters to him prove, he thoroughly enjoyed intellectual con-

ation and study. For example, we know that several members of the embassy played a role in the recovery of the 'Monumentum Ancyranum': Antonius, Hans Dernschwam, Johannes Belsius and William Quackelbeen could all have been involved. But it was with the help of Busbequius that Andreas Mattioli published its text. Mattioli benefitted from many unknown plants sent to him by William Quackelbeen on the order, again, of Busbequius, and he specifically mentions Busbequius' help and not his use of Quackelbeen's many annotations given him by Busbequius. Here it is also important to note that Busbequius is incorrectly glorified as the first to have brought lilacs to Europe. Close reading of Mattioli's commentary on Dioscorides reveals that he only took a trip back to Vienna.

These final chapters show some clear examples of the importance of the conclusions of the second part of his book. A famous passage in the Turkish letters mentions tulips, which Busbequius saw near Edirne at the end of December 1554. As everyone knows, tulips do not usually flower in December. But the passage is born in the mind of an author who had to reassess his impressions from many years for a single itinerary. Busbequius does not claim to be the first who brought tulips to Europe (as he did more or less with regard to the 'Acorus Calamus'), but this passage must be read as a remark after the triumphant introduction

of this merry flower to Europe in the sixties and seventies of the sixteenth century. Similarly we read in the Turkish letters that Busbequius designated his Greek manuscripts for the imperial library. These words must be dated at the time of his departure from Vienna in 1576. Before this he had in mind to sell them to any monarch who was prepared to pay a fair price.

Busbequius' interest in Crimean Gothic demonstrates his wide-ranging fascination with cultures other than those based upon the Classical tradition and also his wide reading in contemporary learned literature.

Research into the history of the 'Exclamatio' led to the discovery of a fragment which deals with the same topic and, though different in many respects, was possibly meant as a first draft. The 'Exclamatio' must be regarded as an exhortation. The exhortative character makes it difficult to trace its influence, but the fact of more than 35 editions within two centuries is significant.

From the many aspects studied in this dissertation a picture of Busbequius emerges as a diplomate, courtier, writer, humanist, scholar, maecenas and friend. It is now clear that these facets of his personality were tightly intertwined and should not be torn apart.