

WORK MIGRATION FROM THE WEST INTO THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE?

ULRICH JASPER SEETZEN AND THE RENEGADES AT THE TIME OF 'NEW ORDER' (1802/1803)

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Abstract

The article explores U. J. Seetzen's perspective on renegades in the Ottoman Empire in 1802/03, when modernist hierarchies had not yet become an irrefutable truth. For emigrants from Western Europe's society of estates, the Ottoman Empire still offered opportunities for a fresh start in life, or for refuge. The contribution contextualises the perception of renegades, their motives and attitudes as apparent in Seetzen's diary entries. He characterises his acquaintances in an unflattering way, employing appropriate topoi, but also sympathises with many of them, and indicates ways of social converting and integrating.

Key Words

Ulrich Jasper Seetzen; Ottoman Empire; Renegade; 1802–1803;
Conversion; New Order; Nizām-ı cedīd



I. Conversions and Reversions

This contribution explores Ulrich Jasper Seetzen's perspective on people who had immigrated into the Ottoman Empire and converted to Islam. This prominent way of crossing supposed borders between polities and religions shaped European concepts of the Middle East as well as the sociopolitical make-up of the Ottoman Empire. Both changed particularly during the nineteenth century, paving the way for dichotomies operative until today. In this respect, especially the decades of intense crisis around 1800 constituted a watershed between perceptions on an equal footing and hierarchies of civilisational progress in a world of modernist empires and nation states.

Seetzen paid attention to renegades' attitudes as well as employment opportunities for immigrants, to the varying motives and the obstacles they encountered. Since this of course no representative selection, the individual life stories are each presented in their narrative context to address individual motives and agency as well as social relations related to this conversion/immigration.

The term work migration is only applied with a grain of salt in this contribution. From the perspective of the 20th and 21st century, work migration is usually considered to proceed from the Middle East, Southeastern Europe and North Africa to Western Europe, mostly concerning low-skilled labour. However, before novel concepts of civilisation and modernity first implemented in Western Europe took hold in the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century, many people crossed ideological boundaries into the opposite direction – the ancient divide between Christian Occident and Islamic Orient,¹ which was routinely exploited by propaganda and warmongering on both sides. Such ideologemes impacted Seetzen's patterns of perception as well, influenced by his concept of enlightenment but only in the course of the nineteenth-century hierarchies of civilisation and modernity would become entrenched. In view of these later developments and the ambiguous role Westerners were to play in the region, the transition period around 1800 deserves attention, especially as Ulrich Jasper Seetzen's perspective differed considerably from those of other visitors.

On the surface, 'modern' work migration takes place voluntarily but push factors in the region of origin exert considerable pressure. The same may be said about its pre-modern predecessor, but in Seetzen's time the Ottoman Empire still exhibited strong enough pull factors. Migration to the Ottoman Empire might have been effectuated by either voluntary immigration or through capture and enslavement;² advancement opportunities, however, were not determined by voluntariness but by sought-after skills and social position.

Until the mid-nineteenth century, conversion to Islam was required as a social marker and a token of loyalty to the sultan for 'state service' (military capacities in particular). Similar situations rarely occurred vice versa in Christian kingdoms, while Middle Eastern empires including the Ottoman were to a significant extent built on recruiting foreigners through elite slavery for service to the crown. Importing male and female slaves for the court and the military began as early as the ninth century AD, massively affecting elite formation and even forming the

¹ This dichotomy soon turn into that of civilised West and underdeveloped Middle East, later privileged North and disenfranchised Global South. See also TOBIAS P. GRAF, *The Sultan's Renegades: Christian-European Converts to Islam and the Making of the Ottoman Elite, 1575-1610*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2017, p. 4-6.

² These two possible paths of immigration can be distinguished, but they can not always be clearly separated, as explained below.

foundation of eminent kingdoms in Egypt and India in the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries.³

Related phenomena in the Ottoman context abound: Until the late sixteenth century, many Franks became first prisoners and then janissaries, female slaves from Caucasia, Ukraine or Italy could rise to the highest levels of the court, which was still the case in Seetzen's time, and in addition to recruiting 'porte slaves' (*kapı kulları*) from male Christian subjects, slaves of both sexes were imported from Eastern Europe, Caucasia and Sub-Saharan Africa. It goes without saying that Ottoman slavery must not be seen as a social, but as a legal status, because closeness to the master determined one's social position. For instance, slaves close to the sultan held the most prestigious offices and had a much higher status than free peasants. Apart from elite slaves, large numbers of ordinary captives were used as a cheap labour force (e. g. for galley rowing or domestic work, but almost never for fieldwork or mining). However, migrants did not necessarily have to be slaves, especially if their skills were in demand and they already possessed a suitable qualification (or pretended to have it) when they immigrated. In this vein, military engineers from Italian and German lands had entered Ottoman service since the fifteenth century, while beneficial innovations such as trustable surgery, fire brigades or grenadier companies were allegedly introduced by distinguished immigrants.⁴

Those men Seetzen encountered had crossed the boundary and converted to Islam to become loyal subjects of the sultan; in the parlance of the time, they were renegades, the very antithesis of the true and faithful. This judgement was widely accepted in central and western Europe but could be qualified in times of enlightenment and revolutionary change. However, the term renegade continued to have disparaging connotations. Despite Seetzen's sometimes contemptuous attitude, its mere employment does not convey scorn but may even coincide with a sympathetic representation.

³ CARL F. PETRY (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Egypt, 640–1517*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, p. 242–515; and RICHARD M. EATON, *India in the Persianate Age, 1000–1765*, Penguin, Allen Lane 2019, p. 45–99.

⁴ FELIX KONRAD, « Soziale Mobilität europäischer Renegaten im frühneuzeitlichen Osmanischen Reich », in HENNING P. JÜRGENS, THOMAS WELLER (eds.), *Religion und Mobilität. Zum Verhältnis von raumbezogener Mobilität und religiöser Identitätsbildung im frühneuzeitlichen Europa*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2010, p. 213–234. Several high-profile renegades of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are described in some detail on p. 219–223, the mentioned eighteenth-century innovations on p. 224–228.

II. *Renegades and Seetzen's Diary in the Crisis of Empire*

This contribution analyses the attitude of Ulrich Jasper Seetzen (1767–1811) towards the Ottoman subjects he described as renegades in the diary he kept between in 1802 and 1803. The diary was edited by Volkmar Enderlein⁵ and covers Seetzen's sojourn in Constantinople during the first half of 1802 as well as his ensuing journey through Asia Minor to Aleppo. Although Seetzen did not intend to publish it, at least not in the extant form, the diary nonetheless offers insights into how he characterised renegades. For the most part, current research on renegades has concentrated on circumstances either before or after the time of Seetzen's writings.

By definition, renegades were former Christians from central or western Europe who had migrated to the Ottoman Empire and converted to Islam in search of a better life. Seetzen consorted with some men among them (no women) who were interested in making connections with visitors from the 'West' and possessed the cultural and linguistic skills to do so. Thus, in the case of Seetzen's diaries, the renegades appear as a separate category whereas indigenous source texts in Turkish or Arabic usually do not distinguish them from other Muslim subjects,⁶ if they happen to mention them. While renegades cannot be considered a group in any meaningful sense, they received considerable attention in contemporary literatures of western and central Europe, reinforcing the asymmetry of sources on both sides of the assumed East-West divide. Ottoman texts not only render renegades invisible, but offer also little insight into changing attitudes towards conversion and towards converts themselves.⁷

While in the seventeenth century Ottoman authorities used to triumphantly and propagandistically celebrate each conversion to the true religion, in the second half of the nineteenth century, they preferred to tacitly pass over them.⁸

⁵ ULRICH JASPER SEETZEN, *Tagebuch des Aufenthalts in Konstantinopel und der Reise nach Aleppo 1802–1803*, ed. VOLKMAR ENDERLEIN, MICHAEL BRAUNE, DIETRICH HAGEN, Georg Olms, Hildesheim et al. 2012. For the sake of brevity, from now on this reference shall be given as 'SEETZEN, p. x', indicating the edition's pages, except if indicated otherwise.

⁶ Attitudes towards Ottoman Christians and Jews, for which the legal category of *zimmī* could be one point of reference, have to be distinguished from the phenomenon of Muslim renegades. The latter are scarcely included in the collection of HAKAN KARATEKE, H. ERDEM ÇİPA, HELGA ANETSHOFER (eds.), *Disliking Others: Loathing, Hostility, and Distrust in Premodern Ottoman Lands*, Academic Studies Press, Boston 2018.

⁷ GRAF, *The Sultan's Renegades* emphatically stresses the source value of supposedly outsider testimonies.

⁸ SELIM DERİNGİL, *Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2012. For seventeenth-century conversions, see MARC DAVID BAER,

In the same vein, polemical self-narratives of Ottoman renegades from the sixteenth century often resemble Christian conversion narratives in an age of confessionalism, but by the mid-nineteenth century such accounts became defensive and tried to fend off 'accusations of forced conversion' and foreign interference.⁹

As of yet, scholars have not fully explored exactly how these attitudes and perspectives changed or what caused the shifts over the entire period. This paper will try to chip away at this larger question by looking at Seetzen's encounters with actual renegades during a short period of time at a turning point in this development. It intends to explore what can actually be gleaned from existing sources and therefore serve as a springboard for future research. While this article only examines one source, Seetzen's explicit interest in renegades that also seems to lack an overt religious-political agenda offers a rare perspective. As he stated it himself, his specific interest in renegades was straightforward: to learn what motivated them to venture on this path.¹⁰

Of course, our modern-day definitions of what it means to be a renegade have changed considerably from Seetzen's time. In the premodern world, changing one's religion was not so much connected with individual faith or personal belief as it was with affiliation and loyalty.¹¹ Every conversion occurred against the backdrop of the often tense relations between the Ottoman Empire and its Christian rivals,¹² which were shaped significantly by wars with the Austrian, Russian, and French empires. In each of these empires, religion played a similar role in terms of expressing affiliation and loyalty to a regime.¹³ Consequently, any religious conversion implied a shift in political allegiance. At the same time,

Honored by the Glory of Islam. Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Europe, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008.

⁹ TIJANA KRSTIĆ, *Contested Conversions to Islam. Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2011, p. 166–167.

¹⁰ « Ich bin Willens, von den hiesigen Renegaten so viele Nachrichten einzuziehen, als möglich, um die Ursachen kennen zu lernen, die sie zu diesem Entschlusse bewegen » (SEETZEN, p. 233).

¹¹ Hedda Reindl-Kiel has examined a remarkable eighteenth-century renegade based on related private papers (HEDDA REINDL-KIEL, « Das Ende einer Kavaliereise – Beginn einer osmanischen Karriere? », in HEDDA REINDL-KIEL, SEYFI KENAN (eds.), *Deutsch-türkische Begegnungen / Alman Türk Tesadüfleri. Festschrift für Kemal Beydilli / Kemal Beydilli İçin Armağan*, EB-Verlag, Berlin 2013, p. 106–187).

¹² Work migration between Persia and the Ottoman Empire was probably substantial but is not connected to renegades. To a lesser degree, migration links existed with other Muslim realms, but unlike Safavid Persia, they were not military rivals of the Ottomans.

¹³ Cf. WILL SMILEY, « The Meanings of Conversion: Treaty Law, State Knowledge, and Religious Identity among Russian Captives in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire », *International History Review*, 34/3 (2012), p. 559–580.

Western imaginations and perceptions of renegades were subject to constant change.

In contrast to its all-important significance in the later nineteenth century, however, any sense of national affiliation was at best nascent in Seetzen's time. Religious affiliation, on the other hand, had been a potent factor in identity formation for centuries, though it was by no means the only one. The importance of religion during this time has been well-documented, not least by studies of the rhetorical epiphenomena of the Ottoman-Habsburg wars in Southeastern Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹⁴ The situation around 1800 at the time of Seetzen's journey, however, was quite different. In the Ottoman Empire, the decades between the disastrous war against Russia in 1768–1774 and the termination of the janissary corps in 1826 have been aptly described as an existential crisis¹⁵ in military, political and economic terms.¹⁶ Meanwhile, Europe experienced a series of destructive wars and upheaval itself that stemmed from revolutionary and Napoleonic France, which culminated in the new international order established in Vienna in 1815.¹⁷ The Ottoman world remained on the sidelines of these European conflicts as far as possible, with the notable exception of the French invasion and occupation of Egypt in 1798–1801.

That said, these disruptive changes and widespread violence in large parts of Europe did bring changes for the Ottoman Empire in that they further increased already existing motivations for migration. Compared to the instability of some European regions, the Ottoman Empire seemed to promise opportunities, in spite of having plenty of difficulties of its own. In addition to these 'push factors', the time-honoured practice of recruiting people from outside the Ottoman realm combined with new demands for technology specialists served as 'pull factors' attracting 'Franks'¹⁸ from Western and Central Europe who were on the lookout

¹⁴ On the resentment against renegades in Western Turcica prints, see KRSTIĆ, *Contested conversions*, p. 20, and ALMUT HÖFERT, *Den Feind beschreiben: 'Türkengefahr' und europäisches Wissen über das Osmanische Reich 1450–1600*, Campus, Frankfurt 2003. For an overview of enemy-related early modern pamphlets in the Holy Roman Empire see MARTIN WREDE, *Das Reich und seine Feinde: politische Feindbilder in der reichspatriotischen Publizistik zwischen Westfälischem Frieden und Siebenjährigem Krieg*, Zabern, Mainz 2001.

¹⁵ KLAUS KREISER, CHRISTOPH K. NEUMANN, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches und der modernen Türkei*, Reclam, Stuttgart 2020³, p. 283–313. C. K. Neumann uses the term 'Existenzkrise' (Ibid., p. 283).

¹⁶ For economic aspects, see e. g. FARUK TABAK, *The Waning of the Mediterranean, 1550–1870: A Geohistorical Approach*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 2008.

¹⁷ For the groundbreaking changes in political culture that reshaped Europe during this period, see DAVID BELL, *The First Total War. Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Modern Warfare*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston 2007.

¹⁸ 'Franks' (*frenk*, *firengī*, *ifrenc*, *ifranjī*) referred mainly to inhabitants of West and Central Europe. For the term and its usages, see IŞIN DEMIRKENT, « Franklar », in BEKIR TOPALOĞLU

for a fresh start. In contrast to the migrants who headed towards the New World, migrants to the Ottoman world were not looking for land, but rather for employment opportunities. Not every immigrant, however, was successful: in Aleppo, for instance, Seetzen mentions an 'Avanturier' who had to be supported by other resident Franks and finally returned to Central Europe.¹⁹

III. Perceptions of Renegades

For decades, scholars have explored travelogues and accounts of foreign encounters with all their constructions, perceptions and misconceptions of the 'other' so that by now it is considered common knowledge that any observations about an 'other' is a reflection of the 'self'.²⁰ Therefore, looking at the 'other' can be a tool for deeper self-reflection that neither generates an inflated opinion of the self nor disparages the other. Moreover, it has the potential to expose the reflexive dynamics that underpin a source text.

In spite of much theorising and debate within scholarship, several questions continue to pose difficulties, such as how to account for changes in the perception of others that occurred over time and across shifting places and contexts. Likewise, there is still no consensus on how to determine whether estrangement or distortion was caused by an author, by a contemporary audience, or by readers today, or how best to conceptualise the notion of borders. Borders, for example, may be intracultural or intercultural, they may also refer to preexisting stereotypes, standards of knowledge of the existing order, or even politically implied limits of what can be said. Borders can overlap, reinforce or attenuate. They can also seem to be hermetically sealed and at the same time be crossed on a daily basis.²¹ Most would agree, however, that borders presuppose entities

et al. (eds.), *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. XIII, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, Istanbul 1996, p. 173–176.

¹⁹ ULRICH JASPER SEETZEN, *Tagebuch des Aufenthalts in Aleppo 1803–1805*, ed. JUDITH ZEPTER, CARSTEN WALBINER et al., Georg Olms, Hildesheim et al. 2011, p. 75.

²⁰ For this and the following considerations, see JOACHIM EIBACH, CLAUDIA OPITZ-BELAKHAL, « Zwischen Kulturen. Mittler und Grenzgänger vom 17. bis 19. Jahrhundert », in EID. (eds.), *Zwischen Kulturen. Mittler und Grenzgänger vom 17. bis 19. Jahrhundert*, Wehrhahn, Hannover 2018, p. 7–13.

²¹ JOACHIM EIBACH, CLAUDIA OPITZ-BELAKHAL, « Zwischen Kulturen. Mittler und Grenzgänger vom 17. bis 19. Jahrhundert », p. 8. For a methodological approach to the concept of culture, see JÜRGEN OSTERHAMMEL, « Die Vielfalt der Kulturen und die Methoden des Kulturvergleichs », in FRIEDRICH JAEGER, JÜRGEN STRAUB (eds.), *Handbuch der Kulturwissenschaften*, vol. II, Metzler, Stuttgart 2004, p. 50–65.

between which borders can be drawn²² and that a special category of people crossing borders were the so-called renegades.

The renegades that make an appearance in Seetzen's diaries convey the full ambiguity of the concept as they crossed these physical borders between rival empires, which had their own ambiguities, and represented both worlds to one another without fully belonging to one side or the other. Turning their backs to one side could actually compromise their trustworthiness in both, though they continued to be useful because of their special skills as well as their knowledge of 'the other side'. As they moved within these border zones, their lives were fundamentally ambiguous.²³ During the nineteenth century, however, this situation began to change as the prospects and perspectives for renegades diminished significantly, perhaps due to the growing tendency of disambiguation in all walks of life.²⁴ The perceptions and social realities of renegades that had existed in 1800 had become unthinkable and hardly imaginable by 1900, let alone 2000. Thus, the turn of the nineteenth century when Seetzen was writing seems to occupy an interim position in this regard that allows for his diaries to speak to these often intangible transitions that may merit further research.

On a number of occasions, Seetzen mentions in passing how he encountered renegades and what his exchanges with them were like. As a Frankish foreigner in the Ottoman Empire, it was easier for him to connect with Christian subjects and people who were already seeking commercial or political contact with Franks than it was to come into contact with Muslim and Jewish subjects in the absence of a formal connection to consular or trading representatives.²⁵ Contact with consulate

²² These topics are further explored with respect to the concept of transculturality in MONICA JUNEJA, JOACHIM EIBACH, CLAUDIA OPITZ-BELAKHAL, « Kultur, Transkulturalität und post-koloniale Grenzüberschreitungen », in JOACHIM EIBACH, CLAUDIA OPITZ-BELAKHAL (eds.), *Zwischen Kulturen. Mittler und Grenzgänger vom 17. bis 19. Jahrhundert*, Wehrhahn, Hannover 2018, p. 15–25. Cf. MADELEINE HERREN-OESCH, MARTIN RÜESCH, CHRISTIANE SIBILLE, *Transcultural History: Theories, Methods, Sources*, Springer, Berlin – Heidelberg 2012.

²³ Cf. FRAUKE BERNDT, STEPHAN KAMMER, « Amphibolie – Ambiguität – Ambivalenz. Die Struktur antagonistisch-gleichzeitiger Zweiwertigkeit », in EID. (eds.), *Amphibolie – Ambiguität – Ambivalenz*, Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg 2009, p. 7–30.

²⁴ This claim, yet to be substantiated empirically in the Ottoman context, is made by THOMAS BAUER, *Die Kultur der Ambiguität. Eine andere Geschichte des Islams*, Verlag der Weltreligionen, Berlin 2011; and ID., *Die Vereindeutigung der Welt: Über den Verlust an Mehrdeutigkeit und Vielfalt*, Reclam, Stuttgart 2018.

²⁵ Seetzen had even less contact with female Christian subjects and virtually none with Jewish and Muslim females. This seems to enhance the importance of his Christian landlady Mme. Sariman in Aleppo for his diaries, but there is no record of any encounters with female renegades.

staff was in fact expected from him,²⁶ but from their point of view contact with renegades, as former subjects of a Protestant or Catholic power, could be a delicate issue. This was however not relevant as far as Seetzen was concerned.

Indeed, a Frankish traveller's outlook even seemed to correspond more readily to that of the renegades in terms of communication and positioning. On the one hand, with Seetzen the renegades had the opportunity to speak to somebody from a familiar context in a familiar language who, as a learner of Turkish and Arabic himself, could even appreciate their own difficulties in 'blending in' linguistically, culturally and socially. On the other hand, Seetzen encountered Ottoman civilisation not as a foreign diplomat, spy or military expert, but as an explorer whose goals related to humanism and enlightenment as a collector of curiosities in the service of a minor prince who had no clout in the Ottoman Empire whatsoever.²⁷

To former Franks, Seetzen represented their homeland, but he was not seen as an emissary of their former masters, especially because he accepted their changeovers for what they were, unlike diplomatic representatives. This made it easier for Seetzen to encounter renegades and engage with some of them on a deeper level. For this reason—although his perceptions and descriptions were doubtlessly coloured by his own context, education and knowledge – his accounts do seem to in part avoid the blatant narrow-mindedness of some narratives of the later nineteenth century.

Nonetheless, he does employ categories familiar to a presumed reader educated in a similar way when he explains certain notions that he comes across.²⁸ The concept of renegades, however, was not difficult to translate in this respect despite the alleged or actual hate and mistrust between empires: a contemporary reader would have been able to draw connections to their own world in which people in eighteenth-century Europe, particularly in the Holy Roman Empire, were accustomed to the rivalry, borders and conversions between Lutheran, Catholic and Reformed sects, as individuals were defecting from one army or principality to another.

At the same time, Seetzen's accounts are not entirely free of misgivings and suspicion when it came to those designated as 'renegade'. Despite his obvious

²⁶ The territory Seetzen was born in (Herrschaft Jever in East Frisia) was under the overlordship of the Czar between 1793 and 1807 due to complicated inheritance dealings. He therefore made a courtesy call on the Russian representative on 2 June 1802 (SEETZEN, p. 341–352).

²⁷ The petty prince in question was Ernst Ludwig von Sachsen-Gotha-Altenburg (1745–1804, see CHRISTOPH KÖHLER, ANDREAS KLINGER, WERNER GREILING (eds.), *Ernst II. von Sachsen-Gotha-Altenburg. Ein Herrscher im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, Böhlau, Köln 2005).

²⁸ For instance, various kinds of dervishes appear as cynics, epicureans or advocates of enlightenment (SEETZEN, p. 206, 274, 139–140).

commitment to enlightenment ideals and his ostentatious anti-clericalism, Seetzen was still influenced by that fact that during the early modern period, this common appellation carried a derogatory connotation, referring to somebody who had defected to the opposing side. The writings of some eighteenth-century lexicographers, for example, offer insights into how the term *renegade* was understood at the time. Seetzen's contemporary Johann Christoph Adelung (1732–1806)²⁹ explains the term 'Renegat' as somebody who has forsaken his religion for another, especially for Islam:

A renegade [...] is a person who has forsaken his religion, switching over to another except for Christianity, which is especially common among Christians who convert to the Mohammedan religion. Jeroschim, an author of the 14th century,³⁰ called them abnegating people.³¹

Likewise, Samuel Johnson (1709–1784) attributes the term *renegade* to the Spanish *renegado* and explains it as either « one that apostatises from the faith; an apostate » or as « one who deserts to the enemy; a revolter », ³² which encompasses both the idea of defecting from a religion and defecting to an enemy. Adelung does not explicitly address this latter aspect, but he does state that becoming a renegade means abandoning Christianity, in contrast to conversions between Catholic and Protestant denominations within Christianity. In this context, he also refers to the relationship with Islam, which was particularly connected with the term, and this may also have been the case in early modern Spain. Whereas media

²⁹ OTTO BASLER, « Adelung », in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. I, Duncker & Humblot, Berlin 1953, p. 63–65, <<https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118500651.html#ndbcontent>> (Accessed October 2023).

³⁰ This is perhaps Nikolaus von Jeroschin (d. after 1344), who authored a history of the Teutonic Order (SABINE SCHMOLINSKY, 'Nikolaus von Jeroschin', in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. XIX, Duncker & Humblot, Berlin 1999, p. 272, <<https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd119014998.html#ndbcontent>> (Accessed October 2023).

³¹ « Der Renegāt, des -en, plur. die -en, aus den mittlern Lat. Renegatus, renegare, verläugnen, eine Person, welche ihrer Religion entsaget und zu einer andern außer der christlichen übergeht; wo es besonders von Christen üblich ist, welche zu der Mahomedanischen Religion übergehen, und welche Jeroschim, ein Schriftsteller des 14ten Jahrhunderts, vernoigirte Leute nennet » (JOHANN CHRISTOPH ADELUNG, *Grammatisch-Kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart*, 4 vols., Bauer, Vienna 1811, p. 1083–1084, <https://lexika.digitale-sammlungen.de/adelung/lemma/bsb00009133_6_1_1195> (Accessed October 2023).

³² SAMUEL JOHNSON, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, Knapton, London 1755, <<https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/views/search.php?term=Renegade>> (Accessed October 2023). The entry of the 1773 edition is identical.

usage today stresses the abandonment of a political ideology, these late eighteenth-century definitions clearly had religious connotations.

Seetzen himself adds that the Turkish analogue to the term 'renegade' was *dönme*.³³ In the Ottoman context, this term is used mostly to refer to adherents of the messianic figure Sabbetai Zevi (Šabbēṭay Šēḇī, 1626–1676) who allegedly converted to Islam but continued in their Jewish beliefs. This small group situated between two established religions was rejected by both and remains an object of antisemitic hatred even to this day.³⁴ Seetzen presumably equated renegade with *dönme* given the strong similarity between the two as well as the inclusion of the idea of 'turncoats'.³⁵

Shortly after Sabbetai Zevi's demise, *dönme* was often applied in a broader sense without stripping it of its origin. The scholar Franciscus à Mesgnien Meninski (1623–1698) from Lorraine, who had served as a Polish ambassador and later as an interpreter of Oriental languages at the Habsburg court, published his famous polyglot dictionary in 1680. In this work, he explained *dönme* as a renegade and apostate from Christianity.³⁶ By way of example, Meninski invokes the idea of a Jew turned Turk (*yehūdīden dönme*) with antisemitic innuendo and compares this to a baptised Jew 'with us' ('*nobis*', i. e. in Latin Europe) or by extension a Jew turned 'Mahometanus'.³⁷

Two generations after Seetzen, Julius Theodor Zenker explained *dönme* without reference to a particular religion as a convert or apostate (« Bekehrter, Convertit, Abtrünniger »).³⁸ Around the same time, Redhouse's dictionary restricted its use to converts to Islam: « One who has changed his religion to become a Mussulman,

³³ « Ein Renegat heißt im Türkischen Dönmä » (SEETZEN, p. 125).

³⁴ See MARC BAER, *The Dönme. Jewish Converts, Muslim Revolutionaries, and Secular Turks*, Stanford Univ. Press, Stanford 2010; and CENGİZ ŞİŞMAN, *The Burden of Silence. Sabbatai Sevi and the Evolution of the Ottoman-Turkish Dönmes*, Oxford University Press, New York 2015.

³⁵ BRUCE MASTERS, « Shabbatai Zvi », in BRUCE MASTERS, GÁBOR ÁGOSTON (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, Facts On File, New York 2009, p. 575.

³⁶ « Reversus, conversus, et desertor, apostata. Der zurück kommen ist / ein bekehrter / und ein verläugneter Christ. Tornato, conuertito, et rinegato. Retourné, converti, et renegat, apostat. Rtory śie wroćik / nąwrocony / zbieg / poturczony » (FRANCISCUS À MESGNIEN MENINSKI, *Thesaurus Linguarum Orientalium* [...], 4 vols., self-published, Vienna 1680, vol. I, col. 2195).

³⁷ He paraphrased this as « a Jew turned Turk » (ein Jud der ein Türck worden ist). Without apparent reason, but still in an antisemitic mood, he transposes a change of religion into a change of species: « A man turned ape » (*adamdan dönme meymun*) and explains it thus (*in simiam transmutatus homo*); see MENINSKI, *Thesaurus Linguarum Orientalium*, col. 2196.

³⁸ JULIUS THEODOR ZENKER, *Türkisch-Arabisch-Persisches Handwörterbuch*, vol. II, Engelmann, Leipzig 1876, p. 444.

a renegade ».³⁹ Until Seetzen's time, the meaning of *dönme* and paraphrasing it as *renegade* was quite consistent, but it appears that the antisemitic undertone of the seventeenth century may have faded, and later on even the Islamic element might have been eclipsed by a generalised concept of religious defection.

IV. Regular Corps and Nizâm-ı Cedîd

From the very beginning, the Ottomans continued the practice adopted by several previous Muslim polities of recruiting migrants from outside their own political boundaries.⁴⁰ Such traditions are, however, less relevant than parallels with other early modern empires, including Austria or Russia. Military defeats and other crises in the late eighteenth century combined with the pressures of rivalling empires reinforced the desire of large parts of the Ottoman court and the upper echelons of its bureaucracy to match these rivals in terms of skill, knowledge, and technology. This resulted in the adoption of practices and technologies that had proven to be effective in the most advanced armies of the day, coinciding with what had been established in some 'Western' armies and resembling similar imports in the Russian Empire starting several decades before, but it did not mark the adoption of a 'Western mindset'. Such adoptions, even to the point of industrial espionage, could be detected in other contexts as well, including Western ones (such as Austria or Denmark, based on French models). In the Ottoman Empire, this led first to the establishment of two colleges of military engineering⁴¹ and then took the shape of an entirely new military unit set up to employ these techniques.⁴²

³⁹ JOHN W. REDHOUSE, *Redhouse's Turkish Dictionary*, Quaritch, London 1880, p. 572.

⁴⁰ For migration from West and Central Europe to the Ottoman Empire in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see RALF C. MÜLLER, *Franken im Osten. Art, Umfang, Struktur und Dynamik der Migration aus dem lateinischen Westen in das Osmanische Reich des 15./16. Jahrhunderts auf der Grundlage von Reiseberichten*, Eudora, Leipzig 2005. Müller characterises Frankish and Ottoman attitudes towards renegades as unbiased (Ibid., p. 135). However, Muslim opponents of recently converted officeholders could challenge their eligibility on these grounds (KRSTIĆ, *Contested Conversions*, p. 169–170).

⁴¹ For the schools of military engineering founded in the 1770s see KEMAL BEYDILLI, *Türk bilim ve matbaacılık tarihinde mühendishâne: Mühendishâne matbaası ve kütübhânesi (1776–1826)*, Eren Yayıncılık, İstanbul 1997.

⁴² See KEMAL BEYDILLI, İLHAN ŞAHİN, *Mahmud Râif Efendi ve Nizâm-i Cedîd'e dâir eseri*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara 2001.

Building this new kind of corps required enormous resources and especially skilled personnel.⁴³ Franks, therefore, appear to have been sought-after immigrants, particularly if they converted to Islam, which they often did given the prospect of promotions available for Muslims who would be eligible for command-level positions. In March of 1802, Seetzen visited one such advanced military compound known as 'Läwänd Tschiftlik' (Levend Çiftlik),⁴⁴ an area a few miles north of Constantinople. Since 1792, this area had been home to the main drill grounds and barracks for troops of the 'new order' (*nizām-ı cedīd*),⁴⁵ who were trained and equipped according to 'Frankish' models. The *Nizām-ı Cedīd*, which Seetzen calls the 'regular corps' (reguläres Corps), employed at least four French officers, several German and Russian 'renegades' as officers and drill masters, and other renegades with military, technical, or medical expertise.⁴⁶ From an Ottoman point of view, recruiting 'foreigners' and captives for the military and requiring them to become Muslims had been the rule for centuries, effectively making them renegades in the sense discussed above. These renegades now formed the 'nucleus' of the *Nizām-ı Cedīd* corps⁴⁷ but were, of course, a numerical minority. Rather than just being adventurers or soldiers of fortune, Seetzen indicates that these foreigners might have migrated because they had lost their positions at home or they were driven out by revolutionary upheaval in France and elsewhere.

In 1802, the commander of the barracks of Levend Çiftlik was General Soliman (Süleymān),⁴⁸ an officer of Hungarian origin and a patron of renegade Hungarian clients in the corps. In part because of this shared background, Seetzen's

⁴³ The same is true for the construction of warships that met the requirements of the time (cf. SEETZEN, p. 289 and p. 337–338).

⁴⁴ SEETZEN, p. 209–214. The place occasionally appears as Läväntschiflick or Lävändschischlick as well. Decades before, the area had already been used for the formation of an artillery regiment under the Hungarian-French officer Baron de Tott (1733–1793), and the component manor (*çiftlik*) would be changed to barracks (*kışla*) in the nineteenth century. Today, the business district of Levent forms part of the municipality (*ilçe*) of Beşiktaş in Greater Istanbul.

⁴⁵ A slightly dated overview of the 'new order' (*nizām-ı cedīd*) is given in STANFORD SHAW, *Between Old and New: The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III, 1789–1807*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1971. For a more recent interpretation see FREDERICK ANSCOMBE, *State, Faith, and Nation in Ottoman and Post-Ottoman Lands*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2014, p. 33–89.

⁴⁶ STANFORD SHAW, « The Nizam-ı Cedid Army under Sultan Selim III 1789–1807 », *Oriens*, 18–19 (1965–1966), p. 168–184. Shaw designates the mentioned « officers and drill masters » (Ibid., p. 170) as renegades but also mentions that they had been captured.

⁴⁷ STANFORD SHAW, « The Nizam-ı Cedid Army under Sultan Selim III 1789–1807 », p. 181.

⁴⁸ General Soliman is only mentioned by this name. Seetzen never met him in person but attests to his extraordinary importance for Hungarian renegades and probably others in the military (especially in the *Nizām-ı Cedīd* corps).

Hungarian interpreter in Constantinople ('unser Ungar') had managed to establish a relationship with this commander, though this was not necessarily a given and required effort and commitment on both sides. For generations, Hungarian émigrés had moved into the Ottoman Empire;⁴⁹ renegades from Hungary were therefore not uncommon in Constantinople as many had fled Habsburg rule or rather the prospect of war in central Europe.

While this pattern of recruitment across borders continued time-honoured practices, it also reflects an ambivalent view of the inimical 'West'⁵⁰ as superior in economic, technical and military terms that made it a worthwhile 'recruitment area'. In the second half of the nineteenth century, under imperialist auspices, Islamic perceptions of 'the West' as technologically and economically superior continued to grow, as did the conviction that it was morally inferior to the country of true religion, thereby manifestly matching Western ideas of the wisdom of the wondrous Orient.⁵¹ Preferential treatment and the difficulty of attracting suitable candidates therefore offered some renegades the ability to immediately attain an elevated position in the ranks, even if they might not have been obviously qualified for it or had not even yet converted.⁵²

As Seetzen astutely observes, the Ottoman authorities were well aware of the renegades' multifarious motivations and dispositions. Nevertheless, they

⁴⁹ The latest but certainly not the last group of Hungarian anti-Habsburg nobles and their retinues had emigrated into the Ottoman Empire in the wake of Rákóczi's uprising in 1703–1711 (KÁLMÁN BENDA, « Rákóczi von Felsővádasz, Ferenc II. », in MATHIAS BERNATH, KARL NEHRING (eds.), *Biographisches Lexikon zur Geschichte Südosteuropas*, vol. IV, Oldenbourg, Munich 1981, p. 22–25, <<https://www.biolex.ios-regensburg.de/BioLexViewview.php?ID=1581>> (Accessed 17 August 2023). Another famous Hungarian renegade before Seetzen's time was the well-known book printer İbrâhîm Müteferrika (1674–1745); see ZSUZSA BARBARICS-HERMANIK, « İbrahim Müteferrika als transkultureller Vermittler im Osmanischen Reich », in ARNO STROHMEYER, NORBERT SPANNENBERGER, ROBERT PECH (eds.), *Frieden und Konfliktmanagement in interkulturellen Räumen. Das Osmanische Reich und die Habsburgermonarchie in der Frühen Neuzeit*. Franz Steiner, Stuttgart 2013, p. 283–308; and KEMAL BEYDILLI, *İki İbrahim Müteferrika ve Halefi*. Kronik Kitap, İstanbul 2019.

⁵⁰ What would become referred to as the West was still designated as lands of the Franks around 1800. Looking for models of progress not unlike countries in the central, northern and eastern parts of Europe, during the 19th century Ottoman views became fixated on Paris and London as centres of an idealised West, which occasionally resulted in some disappointment among Ottoman travellers who actually visited France and Britain.

⁵¹ For the all too simple opposition of a hegemonic West and a resistant Middle East in the wake of the French invasion of Egypt, see JUAN COLE, *Napoleon's Egypt. Invading the Middle East*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2007, esp. p. 247–248.

⁵² SEETZEN, p. 173, 289, 337–338.

welcomed even dubious newcomers as they were intent on attracting skilled employees, particularly for staffing the military, and because they could not reject prospective converts. Seetzen acknowledges this quandary of the Ottoman authorities who were obliged by 'their religion' to accept everybody who applied, even though « Christian renegades later usually wanted to defect again ». ⁵³ According to Seetzen, Ottoman authorities took this into account, granting renegades lucrative positions, but rarely gifting them presents or single payments in exchange for their conversion. ⁵⁴

Furthermore, Seetzen also compares Christian renegades to Jewish converts to Islam who had been Ottoman subjects from the start. In an effort to escape punishment for misdeeds within their local Jewish communities, some had converted to Islam to escape their grip. Then, however, some decided to leave the country by ship, often heading to Italy where they joined a new Jewish community and continued to live as Jews again. ⁵⁵ Although Seetzen's account might not be entirely reliable and antisemitic prejudice on his part cannot be ruled out, this 'countermovement' shares some characteristics with other patterns in renegade immigration. In this particular context, it seems that conversion may have been regarded as instrumental to avoid punishment or to achieve advancement, while the zeal for a new faith suddenly waned after the border had been crossed.

Seetzen describes another 'countermovement' in connection with a wrestler who had been serving as a corsair in Tripoli before he came to the Ottoman capital. The wrestler complained that he could not advance in Constantinople because only favour was relevant in the city, not merit or perseverance. ⁵⁶ He implied that he had served successfully for a long time, but lacked patronage (incidentally concealing the reason why he had left Tripoli). As Seetzen recounts, the wrestler said that he was going to turn to the French or the English in order to advance his career, ⁵⁷ thus crossing alleged borders in the opposite direction. The issue of conversion does not seem to figure prominently in this account, even after years

⁵³ « Auch die christlichen Renegaten suchen gewöhnlich nachher wieder zu entfliehen » (SEETZEN, p. 483).

⁵⁴ « Da die Türken schon häufig die Erfahrung gemacht haben, daß Renegaten wieder die Turkey verlassen: so ist es selten, daß Renegaten ietzt wieder Geschenke an baarem Gelde oder Geldeswerth erhalten. Bessere Chargen erhalten sie » (SEETZEN, p. 208).

⁵⁵ « Indessen bleiben sie es nur auf eine ganz kurze Zeit. Mit der ersten besten Gelegenheit reisen sie mit einem europäischen Schiff, nach Europa, Triest, Venedig, Ankona, Livorno etc. ab, und leben dort wieder als Juden, und als wäre nichts vorgefallen » (SEETZEN, p. 483).

⁵⁶ « Ueberdem kann er nicht avanciren, weil die Stelle nicht nach Verdienst und der Anciennität, sondern bloß nach der Gunst vergeben würde » (SEETZEN, p. 356–357).

⁵⁷ « Er wollte Constantinopel wieder verlassen und bey den Franzosen oder Engländern Dienste suchen » (SEETZEN, p. 357).

of Islamic privateering against Christian seafaring.⁵⁸ Most of the corsairs in Tripoli, moreover, in fact originated from Italy or other 'Frankish' territories, having already crossed this border in the opposite direction.⁵⁹

V. Escaping Vicissitudes and Seizing Opportunities

In order to explore Seetzen's perceptions and representations, the following section will examine some narratives of vicissitude as much as of opportunity. In Antakia (Antioch) and later in Aleppo, Seetzen was visited by Ioseph/Joseph, a slave of a local dignitary, in late 1802.⁶⁰ He describes him as a likeable and talkative man of twenty-six years who knew German, Hungarian and French as well as some Arabic and some Turkish.⁶¹ Seetzen calls Joseph a slave, i. e. a close dependant, as well as a renegade and explains that he was born as Ioseph in the Hungarian town of Raab (Győr).⁶² Raised a Catholic, he learned his father's craft of tanning and was conscripted into the Habsburg cavalry. He had participated in the siege and capture of Mannheim in 1795 during the War of the First Coalition but was himself captured when the French defeated his army.⁶³

According to Seetzen's account, Joseph had come to France as a prisoner of war but seems to have been released soon thereafter. He began working as a tanner there and married twice. Seetzen neglects to give any details about these marriages, even though a marriage should have caused Joseph to stay in one place. He seems to have taken to his heels, however, for « he wanted to see Paris and still

⁵⁸ For the relevant period, see DANIEL PANZAC, *Les Corsaires barbaresques. La fin d'une épopée, 1800-1820*, CNRS, Paris 1999.

⁵⁹ The regencies of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli, still under Ottoman suzerainty in Seetzen's time, were major destinations for both voluntary immigration and forced enslavement and thus an important place of renegacy. See BARTOLOME BENNASSAR, LUCILE BENNASSAR, *Les chrétiens d'Allah. L'histoire extraordinaire des renégats, XVI^e et XVII^e siècles*, Perrin, Paris 2006²; SALVATORE BONO, *Corsari nel Mediterraneo. Cristiani e musulmani fra guerra, schiavitù e commercio*, Mondadori, Milano 1993.

⁶⁰ The following account is based on SEETZEN, p. 719–722. He laid ill in Antioch before he could travel to Aleppo, where Joseph visited him later.

⁶¹ SEETZEN, *Tagebuch des Aufenthalts in Aleppo*, p. 86.

⁶² Győr is located halfway between Vienna and Budapest.

⁶³ According to Seetzen, this happened at the battle of Lautern (modern Kaiserslautern). French, Prussian and Austrian troops fought three battles there in 1793–1794, but the capture of Mannheim only took place in 1795. Joseph's capture may therefore have occurred at another battle. While probably not unusual, such minor factual errors show that the accuracy of Seetzen's diary in detail should not be overrated.

being young, he would not tie himself to a place ».⁶⁴ Having stayed a year in the capital, Joseph went on to work in other towns and hired on a boat at the Canal de Languedoc (Canal du Midi) for six months.

He was once again conscripted, but this time into the French army, where he managed to be put on a coast ship and then transferred to a transport ship bound for Alexandria. Given that Napoleon had already abandoned his troops in Egypt, this part of the story likely happened between autumn 1799 and autumn 1801. Joseph then left the French troops to work with a tanner and pig dealer in Būlāq;⁶⁵ when the French withdrew in 1801, however, he was captured again, robbed and enslaved. In the service of a Mamluk lord, Joseph was circumcised, i. e. converted to Islam, and sold to another when his lord retreated to Upper Egypt.⁶⁶ Finally, his present master had purchased him in El-Arihsch⁶⁷ from whence they travelled with an Ottoman army through Palestine and Syria to Antioch. As a conscript, a captive, and a slave, Joseph could be considered an involuntary renegade who had succumbed to the vicissitudes of fate by serving several masters one after another but who had made the best of his situation. Other renegades actively fled uncomfortable situations like these and emigrated in search of opportunities; some of them were even of noble descent but had to forgo some of their privileges in the process.

In the context of perambulations in Istanbul on 15 March 1803, Seetzen mentions some renegades of noble descent, namely a Polish count (Graf Schablinsky) who had served in a Napoleonic Polish legion⁶⁸ before entering Ottoman service as a Nizām-ı Cedīd cavalry officer named Mechmed (Meḥmed), and one Baron Keil from Hungary who had immigrated and converted around

⁶⁴ « Allein er wünschte Paris zu sehen, und überdem wollte er sich, da er iung war, noch nicht an einem Ort immer fesseln » (SEETZEN, p. 720).

⁶⁵ Būlāq was the river port of Cairo and is now a district of that city.

⁶⁶ Several so-called Mamluks, i. e. members of the former Egyptian-Ottoman elite, who had been beaten by the French invasion force and in part allied themselves to these, fled to Upper Egypt when the French army departed to escape the returning Ottoman troops and the ensuing turmoil. Those Egyptian-Ottoman elite have to be distinguished from pre-Ottoman Mamluks who could serve as historiographical points of reference. Considering the recruitment of non-muslim outsiders for elite and military purposes, for centuries Western Christian travellers had been drawing comparisons with Joseph of Genesis 37–39 (cf. ULRICH HAARMANN, « The Mamluk System of Rule in the Eyes of Western Travelers », *Mamlūk Studies Review*, 5 (2001), p. 1–24, here 13–15).

⁶⁷ The town of al-‘Arīsh on the Mediterranean north coast of the Sinai peninsula on the road between Egypt and Syria.

⁶⁸ A comprehensive study on the Légions polonaises founded in 1796 and 1798 is JAN PACHOŃSKI, *Legiony polskie 1794–1807. Prawda i legenda*, 3 vols., Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Obrony, Warsaw 1969–1979.

1792.⁶⁹ Seetzen does not provide any detail on the circumstances, but he states that Keil had been serving as a slave in Baghdad for some time,⁷⁰ hence he was called Bagdadly Soliman (Bağdādli Süleymān), now residing in Egypt where he served the governor-general in a military capacity.⁷¹ These noblemen had fled the Austrian and Russian empires and entered Ottoman service to find opportunities befitting their respective ranks. Seetzen does not mention whether they were involved in Polish or Hungarian campaigns against their imperial overlords, but he does note that the latter's mistrust may have curbed their career opportunities at home while Ottoman authorities welcomed them with more open arms.

Apart from such instances, criminal prosecutions also seem to have played a role in the decision of some renegades to leave home. In this case, a perpetrator had fled to escape shame and conviction, taking advantage of a potential fresh start within a different legal context. Another noble renegade that Seetzen reported on was 'a certain Baron von Linden'. His father Johann Heinrich Freiherr von Linden (1719–1795) had been minister of finance (Geheimer Rat und Direktor der Hofkammer) to the archbishop-elect of Mainz,⁷² who fled in 1792 when revolutionary French troops threatened the town. Some time before, the finance minister's son had been implicated, of all things, in a counterfeiting affair. Betrayed by an accomplice, Linden the counterfeiter had been incarcerated,⁷³ but

⁶⁹ SEETZEN, p. 208.

⁷⁰ He was probably an elite slave in a notable household. For the context, see THOMAS LIER, *Haushalte und Haushaltspolitik in Bagdad 1704–1831*, Ergon, Würzburg 2004.

⁷¹ What SEETZEN, p. 208 calls *Exerciermeister* may refer to supervising infantry drills such as ordered marching and firing, or possibly to naval artillery. In 1802, the governor-general of Egypt would have been Koca Husrev Mehmed Paşa (d. 1855) who had reconquered French-occupied Egypt in 1801, but in 1803 rebellious local militia and unruly Albanian troops would drive him out of the country. Later on, Husrev Paşa served in many capacities and played an important role in politics. A recent monograph on the topic is YÜKSEL ÇELİK, *Şeyhü'l-vüzerâ Koca Hüseyin Paşa. II. Mahmud devri'nin perde arkası*, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara 2013.

⁷² The noble family von Linden had been in the service of the principality of Mainz during the 18th century and after the Holy Roman Empire's dissolution entered that of Württemberg. On the family, see FRANZ MENGES, «Linden, von», *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. XIV, Duncker & Humblot, Berlin 1985, p. 588, <<https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd131533894.html#ndbcontent>> (Accessed August 2023). The archbishop-elect was Friedrich Carl Joseph Freiherr von Erthal (1719–1802); see HERIBERT RAAB, 'Friedrich Karl Freiherr von Erthal', *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. V, Duncker & Humblot, Berlin 1961, p. 517–518, <<https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118703234.html#ndbcontent>> (Accessed August 2023).

⁷³ According to SEETZEN, p. 208 one of his two accomplices, who were quite appropriately also of noble birth, betrayed Linden because he did not support him with money and

after the capture of Mainz in 1792,⁷⁴ the French released him. Linden left for the Netherlands, where he allegedly entered a monastery before absconding after a short while. He went on to take up an insignificant position with the police in Vienna⁷⁵ that he left soon and continued on to Hungary. Suspected of being a seditionist (namely a Jacobin),⁷⁶ Linden was deported back to Vienna but finally released to be disposed of; he obtained a passport for the Ottoman Empire under the condition that he would neither become a 'Mohammedan' nor enter the service of the French adversary. Once he arrived in Constantinople, he unhesitatingly violated the former condition by converting and taking the name 'Ömer Efendi. Having lost access to all his networks of patronage as well as his personal credit, Linden had tried in vain to find a position within Europe, and so he opted to try to start a new life in the Ottoman Empire.

'Ömer Efendi was appointed a physician in the Nizām-ı Cedîd corps at Levend Çiftlik, « because he had dabbled in medicine », ⁷⁷ as Seetzen sarcastically remarks, and retained this position for two or three years, before « it no longer suited him, and again he deserted ». ⁷⁸ This had happened about 1800, perhaps a year or two before Seetzen made his enquiries. 'Ömer allegedly obtained a general pardon from the Habsburg ambassador and clandestinely travelled into the Imperial realm ('ins Kaiserliche'). According to rumour, he was detained in spite of the pardon, ⁷⁹ mirroring the fact that he had violated the conditions of his passport a few years before.

While Seetzen refers only to hearsay about Linden/'Ömer, the way he portrays the fate of this renegade certainly dovetails with how he characterised other renegades that he met personally. Seetzen alludes to Linden/'Ömer's insincerity by saying that « he pretended to want to become a monk » and « disliked all the

was himself pardoned for this cooperative behaviour (turning King's evidence as it were), while Linden and the other accomplice were imprisoned.

⁷⁴ For the ensuing Republic of Mainz, see ROLF REICHARDT, « Mainzer Republik », in FRIEDRICH JAEGER et al. (eds.), *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit*, 16 vols., Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 2005–2012, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2352-0248_Edn_COM_306332> (Accessed August 2023).

⁷⁵ SEETZEN, p. 209 asserts that Linden tried hard to obtain a respectable post but failed, with even his own brother refusing to support him. This is Seetzen's only mention of a von Linden brother in Vienna.

⁷⁶ In Vienna, Franz Hebenstreit and Andreas von Riedel were arrested as leaders of a Jacobin conspiracy (Jakobinerverschwörung) in July 1794. Jacobinism is explained in ROLF REICHARDT, « Jakobinismus », in FRIEDRICH JAEGER et al. (eds.), *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit*, 16 vols., Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 2005–2012, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2352-0248_edn_COM_286534> (Accessed August 2023).

⁷⁷ « Da er sich etwas mit der Medizin beschäftigt hatte » (SEETZEN, p. 208).

⁷⁸ « Nun gefiel es ihm hier nicht länger, und desertirte wieder » (SEETZEN, p. 208).

⁷⁹ SEETZEN, p. 209.

praying ».⁸⁰ Similarly, although the baron's origins in an ecclesiastical principality might have invited additional commentary, Seetzen does not mention religion after this point, referring exclusively to political upheaval, criminal activities, and the search for employment. Seetzen thus emphasises renegades' instability and unreliability as opposed to the idea of a committed plan.

Seetzen underscores this often unfavourable impression by pointing out a disagreeable tendency among renegades to a certain kind of arrogance. Seetzen deplores a French renegade's boasting (« eben ein solcher Prahler, als alle Uebrigen ») and posturing as 'Louis Comte de Saxe', citing a lack of both education and refinement.⁸¹ Another dubious character – « Ein Neuf-Chateller », as Seetzen calls him – was active as an illusionist whose boasts indicated not so much personal success as personal fantasy.⁸² Apart from sleights of hand, the Neuf-Chateller claimed to have entered Egypt as an engineer in French employ, married an Armenian who still lived in their coffeehouse in Cairo, left the country when the British departed in 1801, and ended up on Malta. He then settled in Italy where he was accepted in a monastery but found the monks to be scoundrels, despite all their apparent castigating and bigotry. Then, with the surprising help of two free masons, the Neuf-Chateller soon escaped, which may have been supported by his dubitable claim to have had erected a masonic lodge back in Cairo. After returning to the Ottoman Empire at this point, he apparently continued his career by giving advice on floriculture and flower trading. Hearing that story, Seetzen suspected that it came down to this renegade scrounging for money,⁸³ as the Neuf-Chateller had allegedly gone hungry for three days but Seetzen considered his attire more refined than his own.

In response to the Neuf-Chateller's later conversion and his membership in the mentioned Nizām-ı Cedīd corps,⁸⁴ Seetzen remarks: « The change in religion will

⁸⁰ « Unterweges [nach Wien] besucht er eine Abtey, wo er vorgiebt, Mönch werden zu wollen. Indessen hielt er es als Noviz nicht lange aus. Das viele Beten gefiel ihm nicht, und er verschwand wieder » (SEETZEN, p. 208–209).

⁸¹ SEETZEN, p. 633.

⁸² SEETZEN, p. 81–83. This man was probably from Neuchâtel, today in western Switzerland. This town and its surrounding area were under Hohenzollern rule (in personal union with Prussia) between 1707 and 1857, in Seetzen's time mainly oscillating between France and the Swiss Confederacy. Another possibility might be the town of Neufchâteau in Wallonia, which formed part of the French département Forêts in 1795–1814. A third town named Neufchâteau in the Vosges region, legally a part of France since 1766, had been renamed Mouzon-Meuse after the revolution.

⁸³ « Worauf alle dies Geschwätz hinzielen sollte, sahe ich lange voraus » (SEETZEN, p. 83).

⁸⁴ The editor assumes that this person was identical with the Neuf-Chateller (VOLKMAR ENDERLEIN, « Ulrich Jasper Seetzen in Istanbul », in ULRICH JASPER SEETZEN, *Tagebuch des*

probably make him uncomfortable, inducing him to proceed the same way as in his adventure in an Italian monastery from which he ran away ».⁸⁵ Apart from his unreliability and dubious lifestyle, this man seems to have shared the fate of other renegades who were washed to Egypt in the wake of the Napoleonic invasion. Since he was then unable or unwilling to return to France, he decided to try his luck in the Ottoman Empire where he does not seem to have felt bound to its authorities although he then entered the new corps as so many others had done.

VI. Nostalgia and Remorse

Apart from such multilayered motives and instances of fickle fate, Seetzen ascribes antithetically connected attitudes to several renegades. In particular, his interpreter introduced him to a Hungarian renegade resident in a barracks close to Kadıköy on the Asian estuary of the Bosphorus, formerly known as Anton, now named Mustapha (Muṣṭafā).⁸⁶ As names like Muṣṭafā, Meḥmed, 'Ali etc. were extremely widespread and surnames virtually unknown, it was common to add sobriquets. In this case, Anton's distinguishing trait was his difficulty in learning Turkish, which earned him the honour of being referred to as 'Türkische bilmez Mustapha' (Türkçe Bilmez Muṣṭafā), i. e. Muṣṭafā who does not know Turkish.

In his brief summary of Anton's background, Seetzen characterises Anton/Muṣṭafā as a native of Hungary whose parents spoke German. Not unlike the Hungarian Joseph, he had served in the light cavalry, presumably during a campaign against a Napoleonic army, had been captured and detained in France. After his return, Anton requested his dismissal as an invalid because he had broken his breastbone. When his request was denied, he was finally dishonourably discharged for running the gauntlet.

Shortly thereafter, Anton crossed the Danube and converted to Islam, assuming the name Mustapha/Muṣṭafā. Around 1799, he entered the Nizām-ı Cedīd troops at Levend Çiftlik in his former profession as a cavalryman, rising to the non-commissioned ranks of corporal and sergeant.⁸⁷ He still held this rank when Seetzen visited him, though Seetzen doubted that Muṣṭafā would rise further

Aufenthalts in Konstantinopel und der Reise nach Aleppo 1802–1803, ed. VOLKMAR ENDERLEIN, MICHAEL BRAUNE, DIETRICH HAGEN, Georg Olms, Hildesheim et al. 2012, p. XIV).

⁸⁵ « Wahrscheinlich wird ihm diese Religionsveränderung auch nicht sonderlich behagen, und vielleicht wird er es mit der Zeit ebenso machen, als bey einem Abenteuer in dem italienischen Mönchskloster, wo er echappierte » (SEETZEN, p. 173).

⁸⁶ SEETZEN, p. 123–125. Seetzen calls the whole estuary Scutari (Üsküdar) but acknowledges that it also was the name of a distinct town apart from Kadıköy and its vicinity.

⁸⁷ SEETZEN, p. 125–126.

because of his fondness for alcoholic beverages (« da er dem Trunke sehr ergeben ist »).⁸⁸ Seetzen also notes that Muṣṭafā's downcast mood was only further aggravated when the plague killed many soldiers and friends of his.⁸⁹ Although he was struck by grief and sorrow, he did not contract the disease himself, which Seetzen ascribes to the beneficial effect of the spirits Muṣṭafā used to drink abundantly.⁹⁰ In fact, Seetzen's comments demonstrate that he likely supported the assumption that imbibing brandy protected against the plague. He speculates that ingesting a substantial amount of spirituous beverages not only boosted courage, but might also have inhibited the absorption of the disease's 'venom' through skin pores. He also suggests that the spirits had antiseptic properties.⁹¹

We have no reason to assume that the excessive drinking that Seetzen so wryly commented upon was just a figure of his imagination; on the contrary, he offered his own interpretation of Muṣṭafā's habit as an expression of his sincere wish to 'flee that wretched country': Drinking numbed the renegade's feeling of unhappiness and misfortune. Seetzen was obviously familiar with the idea of drowning sorrows in drink from either experience or the teachings of folk psychology. Not surprisingly, it was easy to establish a connection between these habits and a renegade who may have expressed remorse over converting to a new religion. Seetzen also hints at an attitude of contrition in the following description:

He did not like it at all in the Turkish military; he asserted that they were a rude barbarian people. He lamented his displeasure to me. It would be better to be a common soldier under another European monarch than an officer here: I have to go away, even if it costs my life.⁹²

Changing to a first-person narrative here,⁹³ Seetzen seems to succinctly reproduce what Muṣṭafā said. Aside from the depiction of the Ottoman military as a bunch of

⁸⁸ SEETZEN, p. 126.

⁸⁹ SEETZEN, p. 127.

⁹⁰ « Diese Erzählung des Renegaten Mustapha kann wirklich Vieles dazu beytragen zu seiner Medicin, dem Branntwein, einiges Vertrauen einzuflößen » (SEETZEN, p. 128).

⁹¹ « Vielleicht unterhält dies geistige Getränk in Quantität getrunken, die Ausdünstung in einem hohen Grade, verhindert dadurch die Einsaugung des Giftes durch die Hautöffnungen, befördert den Muth, und wirkt auch überdem als kraftvolles Antisepticum » (SEETZEN, p. 128).

⁹² « Es gefiel ihm unter dem türkischen Militaire gar nicht; er versicherte, es sey ein grobes barbarisches Volk. Er klagte mir seine Not und sein Mißvergnügen. Lieber gemeiner Soldat unter einem andern europäischen Monarchen als hier Officier. Ich muß fort von hier und wenn es mein Leben kosten sollte » (SEETZEN, p. 126).

⁹³ Apart from the change from 'he' to 'I', the impression of a verbatim quote is supported by quotation and exclamation marks in the end at « ... nach Hause darf ich leider nicht! » on the same page, seemingly ending a quote but lacking an opening mark.

barbarians, it is striking that the Hungarian renegade considers serving « under another European monarch » as an alternative, relegating the (not even mentioned) change of religion to a mere necessity. Nevertheless, he obviously felt stuck in his position as a sergeant in the Nizām-ı Cedīd corps, however much he wanted to escape. A few weeks later, Muṣṭafā actually absconded after quarrelling with a renegade Polish general and went into hiding somewhere in Pera, which was heavily populated by Franks.⁹⁴

Although Seetzen did not refrain from condescendingly judging conditions in the Ottoman Empire, he also appreciated the soldiers' decent payment and superior provisioning⁹⁵ and commended the bathing facilities, which were absent from barracks he knew from the West.⁹⁶ He also complimented the ruler (Selīm III) for carefully fostering the new corps. Notwithstanding such commendable qualities, he also reiterated Muṣṭafā's criticism that the corps lacked discipline and orderliness, a fact that was graphically depicted in the sergeant's anecdotes as well as his own observations.

Seetzen recounts another sentimental experience in connection with a renegade who came to him in Constantinople, not disclosing his Christian name but calling himself Achmed (Aḥmed). Both the communications between the two and the sentimentality of the story were apparently influenced by the fact that Aḥmed was drunk, which Seetzen assumes to be his usual state.⁹⁷ He seems to commiserate with him, noting that « hubris, brandy and a savage life have mostly destroyed his mind ». ⁹⁸ In this case, regardless of his sincere intent to gather information about renegades and their motives, Seetzen had to admit that Aḥmed's statement was just too muddled,⁹⁹ rendering it difficult to corroborate his woolly background story.

According to what Seetzen does write, Aḥmed was an artillery soldier from either the Eichsfeld or Hildesheim region, which he had left in his early youth, about twenty-seven years ago. As Aḥmed was about forty when they met, Seetzen calculates that he left home at age twelve or thirteen, around 1775. Ahmed claimed to be the descendant of a mayor or a bailiff with a noble lineage, to be sure, and

⁹⁴ SEETZEN, p. 250–251.

⁹⁵ « [Die tägliche Soldatenkost] ist vielleicht besser, als bey irgend einer Nation in Europa » (SEETZEN, p. 127).

⁹⁶ Recommending the bath as « lobenswürdige Anstalt », Seetzen remarks that soldiers in Vienna used to take a bath in the Danube during summer but had the forgo such cleanliness in winter (SEETZEN, p. 130).

⁹⁷ « Er war besoffen, was bey ihm meistentheils der Fall ist » (SEETZEN, p. 233).

⁹⁸ « Hochmuth, Branntwein und ein wildes Leben haben ihm seinen Verstand größtentheils genommen » (SEETZEN, p. 233).

⁹⁹ « Allein, bey diesem hätte es mir fast gereut, indem sich kein vernünftiges Wort mit ihm sprechen läßt » (SEETZEN, p. 233).

acquainted with a certain Eckhart, head of a posthouse in the vicinity of Hildesheim. Seetzen assumes that he was born a Protestant, then turned Catholic and became a monk before absconding to join the Prussian cavalry. He then deserted to the Imperial/Austrian army and was taken prisoner by Ottoman forces. At that point, he must have converted to Islam because he continued to fight under the Ottoman flag. His first battle, this time against Imperial troops, was at Orschowa (Orşova) on the Danube, probably in the war against the Russian and Austrian empires in 1787–1792. Later on, he participated in an unsuccessful Ottoman landing operation during the French occupation of Egypt at Abū Qīr in 1799. Seetzen also notes that at some point, Aḥmed had been imprisoned for insulting a superior.¹⁰⁰

When he visited Seetzen, Aḥmed dictated a confused and sentimental letter for postmaster Eckhart. Seetzen cites this letter in full, likely because he had to write it for the illiterate renegade who also expected him to somehow deliver it. Ahmed's text culminates in the exclamation:

Alas! If I could only see my relatives and my fatherland again; I would rather eat dry bread and onions there than stay here and have thousands to eat! I still harbour this hope and am also still unsure where I will be laid to rest.¹⁰¹

This sentiment Aḥmed seems to have shared with the aforementioned Muṣṭafā. Apart from their mawkishness, both express deep discontent with their lots and purport to prefer service in a different army, as if this was a matter of choice. Although their situations may have been difficult, Seetzen describes the renegades' decisions to convert or serve under a different flag not as matters of conscience or loyalty but of convenience and opportunity.

VII. *Flight and Patronage*

Besides renegades' motives and attitudes, Seetzen also paid attention to processes of crossing boundaries and to social relations, especially of patronage. In the town of Manisa (Western Anatolia) on 3 July 1803, he visited a physician named Mechmed (Mehmed) Efendi, born as Johann Christian Friedrich Bieberstein. Seetzen assesses his situation as quite modest as he was practising in a humble

¹⁰⁰ SEETZEN, p. 251.

¹⁰¹ « 'Ach!' sagte er, 'könnte ich meine Verwandten und mein Vaterland wiedersehen, gerne äße ich dort trockenes Brod und Zwiebel, als daß ich hier bleibe und tausende zu verzehren hätte! Noch immer trage ich mich mit dieser Hoffnung herum und bin auch noch ungewiß, wo mich die Erde ziehen wird.' » (SEETZEN, p. 234).

booth, and describes him as a tall man of almost fifty with a curved nose.¹⁰² Bieberstein had been born a Protestant in Saxonia during the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) and learned his craft with his father, hailing from Stuttgart in Württemberg, who had served as a surgeon in the Imperial army during that war.¹⁰³ Bieberstein himself entered French service in a Swiss regiment probably during the last years of Bourbon rule before 1789.¹⁰⁴ In the troubled times that ensued ('nach mancherlei Fata'), Bieberstein managed to leave France for a new position in Algiers, then a city state under Ottoman suzerainty where immigrants from Italy and the Northwestern Mediterranean used to dominate the navy.¹⁰⁵ Given that the navy could use a surgeon, it seems that he was able to settle in without converting at this point. Moreover, as Seetzen comments on Bieberstein's inability to obtain a divorce, it seems to support this lack of a conversion as it would not have been difficult to enter into a Muslim marriage and divorce in Algiers.

Seetzen gives a somewhat gossipy account of Bieberstein's marriage to an Italian, which was unhappy because she wasted his wealth on lovers.¹⁰⁶ When he left for another maritime city state, namely for Genoa, he found suitable employ and cohabitated happily with a Frenchwoman. Apparently, Seetzen writes, his former wife followed him to demand a reconciliation and attempted to murder him when he refused.

Bieberstein and his mistress then fled to Smyrna (İzmir), soon followed by the vindictive wife, who managed to win the support of the consul of the Holy Roman

¹⁰² « Wir besuchten den teutschen Renegat und Arzt Mechmed Efendi in seiner kleinen ärmlichen Arzneybude. Er war ein ziemlich langer Mann, den Fünffzigern nahe, mit einer großen gebogenen Nase. Vor seinem Uebertritt zum Islam hieß er Johann Christian Friedrich Bieberstein » (SEETZEN, p. 437).

¹⁰³ This army was virtually identical with the Austrian army, supported by the Habsburg emperor, but in the Seven Year's War, several principalities including Württemberg raised troops to punish Prussia for occupying Saxony in the legal framework of a federal intervention (CARSTEN FISCHER, « Reichsexekutionsordnung », in ALBRECHT CORDES et al. (eds.), *Handwörterbuch zur deutschen Rechtsgeschichte*, vol. IV, Schmidt, Berlin 1971–1998, p. 1478–1480, <<https://www.hrgdigital.de/HRG.reichsexekutionsordnung>> (Accessed October 2023)).

¹⁰⁴ Several thousand soldiers from Switzerland had been in the French king's service since the sixteenth century, but the national assembly disbanded the Swiss troops in 1792 (GÉRARD MIÈGE, *Le sang des Suisses du roy: histoire des relations militaires entre la Confédération helvétique et le royaume de France, 1444–1789*, Edition G. Miège, Versoix 2012). A few years later, Napoleon resumed the employ of Swiss troops.

¹⁰⁵ This is reflected in the statement of the wrestler from Tripoli as explained above.

¹⁰⁶ « Nachher heirathete er eine Italienerinn, mit welcher er aber eine mißvergnügte Ehe führte. Dies Weib war in hohem Grade ausschweifend und verschwendete sein Vermögen mit ihren Lieblingen » (SEETZEN, p. 438).

Empire. She appears to have learned that neither representatives of France nor Genoa could help her because her husband was still considered an Imperial subject. At this point, Seetzen describes how Bieberstein's desperate unnamed mistress came up with an idea to save the couple by persuading him to convert with her together.¹⁰⁷ Although this step removed both from their former subject status as well as from the wife's and the consul's grasp, it may not have been enough in and of itself to save the day.

Fortunately, they found protection with an Ottoman grandee, becoming clients of Melek Paşá, a former grand vizier.¹⁰⁸ If Seetzen's statement is correct, Melek Paşa stayed in Smyrna or Manisa during that time at least temporarily, but must then have taken his new clients with him because Bieberstein alias Mechmed became his personal physician.¹⁰⁹ This remarkable advancement from military and naval surgeon to close client¹¹⁰ of a leading dignitary with the prestige of a personal physician seems to have been supported by the act of conversion. But, given that the rudimentary information relayed by Seetzen had come from Mehmed himself, it is entirely possible that some elements of the story were exaggerations or even outright lies. When Seetzen arrived in Manisa, Melek Paşa had just died at the stately age of 83 in the vicinity of Constantinople,¹¹¹ and

¹⁰⁷ « Immer beunruhigt, überredete ihn seine Mätresse, gemeinschaftlich den mohammedanischen Glauben anzunehmen » (SEETZEN, p. 438).

¹⁰⁸ Dāmād Melek Mehmed Paşa (1718–1802) served in many capacities, including those of lord high admiral, deputy and finally grand vizier (1792–1794). In spite of his advanced age, Melek seems to have had an important part in some of Selīm III's reform plans, such as raising troops of the 'new order' (*niẓām-ı cedīd*). In contrast to many other incumbents of the grand vizierate, this worthy dignitary was not exiled upon his dismissal at the ripe age of 75 but allowed to live in a seaside villa (*yalı*) close to the capital (FATİH YEŞİL, « Melek Mehmed Paşa », in BEKİR TOPALOĞLU et al. (eds.), *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Appendix II, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, Ankara 2019, p. 244–245). A special connection with Manisa, however, is not known.

¹⁰⁹ « Er [Bieberstein] wandte sich an den gewesenen Großwesir Melek Paşá, in Manissa, welcher sie in Schutz nam. Er wurde Mohammedaner und Leibarzt desselben, welcher ihm ein Haus schenkte und ihn beständig begünstigte » (SEETZEN, p. 438).

¹¹⁰ Apart from personal physicians, personal closeness to a patron could take several shapes within his household, such as the position of bodyguards, eunuchs, concubines or sons and daughters in law, as well as lovers, and all of these positions could be filled by renegades. In Seetzen's time, the governor-general of Aleppo, for instance, had a number of French renegades among his personal guard and a Maltese male lover (« Unter den Haustruppen des hiesigen Pascha giebt es etliche französische Renegaten. Ein Maltheser Renegat ist der Liebling des Pascha und sein Beyschläfer »; SEETZEN, *Tagebuch des Aufenthalts in Aleppo*, p. 86).

¹¹¹ His tomb is in the Eminönü district of that city (see YEŞİL, « Melek Mehmed Paşa », p. 244–245).

considering Mehmed's bleak material situation, it was clear that he had not been provided for by his former master. Seetzen concludes that this meant that he had either fallen from grace before Melek Paşa died or had never become a close client in the first place.

Furthermore, by the time Seetzen met Mehmed Efendi, both his mistress and a common child had already passed away, which meant he could only rely on Mehmed's word alone. However, Seetzen made enquiries in Smyrna, learning that the issue had not been as one-sided as Mehmed had described it. Informants told Seetzen that the vengeful wife had in fact been in the right and Mehmed's allegations were false, adding the fact that the wife was frail and lame. While her apparently poor state does not necessarily support the idea that she was justified, it does cast doubt as to the veracity of Mehmed's story. At the same time, whoever it was who cautioned Seetzen against the truth of Mehmed Efendi's lopsided statement also made no secret of his own partiality.

VIII. Views on Those Who Turned Turk: Individual Perspectives and Social Processes

Obviously, only Seetzen's perspective can be considered on the basis of his account. However, it is clear that the motivation of the renegades acquainted with him for immigration and conversion was not conscience or loyalty, but convenience and opportunity. Seetzen's renegades appear as dubious characters with unstable and untrustworthy dispositions. Some displayed criminal tendencies, and most of them were marked by sorrow and remorse. For all their shadiness and unreliability, however, Seetzen does not portray most of them as criminals, but merely as unsavoury characters riven by inner conflict. By the same token, their accounts may also be questioned; however, only Seetzen's description is available to us. In many instances, Seetzen illustrates their personality traits using two narrative topoi that he seems to specifically associate with renegades.

Firstly, Seetzen ascribes a habit of liberal alcohol consumption to all renegades (« eine Eigenschaft, die man bey allen Renegaten antrifft »).¹¹² Within this framework, it seems that Seetzen interpreted excessive drinking as an indication of dishonesty because conspicuously pious Muslims were expected to frown upon any consumption of alcohol and new converts to be particularly pious. Not all Muslims and certainly not all Ottoman subjects would have conformed to this expectation, however, nor considered this to be a defining characteristic of

¹¹² SEETZEN, p. 126.

Muslims.¹¹³ Today's reader should be careful not to impose Orientalist, modernist or Salafist norms to the quite different realities and practices Seetzen encountered, even if he was presupposing certain readers' expectations. Seetzen occasionally notes a tension between the claim to be Muslim and the habit of drinking, possibly suspecting that such old habits die hard but were also incompatible with pretences of Muslimness.¹¹⁴ Conversely, he records with slight amusement if certain kinds of wine or their common combination with opium did not agree with somebody.¹¹⁵

Secondly, the 'monastery episode', which appears in the narratives of several renegades, exhibits a pattern of entering an ecclesiastical convent but then absconding before long. This may underscore the renegades' unreliability and indicate a disrespect for serious religiosity, which Seetzen does not comment on, but which nonetheless mirrors the tales of switching the flag under which they fought. Several renegade soldiers had served in more than two armies, and, more often than not, in adversarial ones. Many of them had also switched between denominations, such as from Protestantism to Catholicism, before 'turning Turk', i. e. converting to Islam, and quite a few seem to have entered a monastery only to abscond before long (*echappieren*). Overall, Seetzen's renegades seem to live up to the expectations associated with the term renegade at the turn of the nineteenth century: having turned their coats once, renegades could no longer be relied upon.

Regardless of whether immigrants had come involuntarily or of their own free will, perhaps the most important reason for conversion and the associated change of allegiance was to preserve their social position and, if possible, to move up the social ladder. This supports Richard Bulliett's model of 'social conversion', postulating that people only converted if the conversion did not jeopardise their social status, i. e. at least maintained it.¹¹⁶ In this case, it could even be a necessary condition for social advancement. This may correspond to the fact that some had been denied social advancement in their country of origin. Sometimes the

¹¹³ Cf. SHAHAB AHMED, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic*, Princeton University Press, Oxford 2016.

¹¹⁴ SEETZEN, p. 349: « ...although he did not mind drinking wine at the English agent while being a full-fledged Muslim » (« ...obgleich er sich kein Gewissen machte, bey englischen Agenten nach Belieben Wein zu trinken, und nichts weniger, als ein Moslem zu seyn »).

¹¹⁵ Seetzen applied the same attitude to some dervishes; see SEETZEN, p. 349 (concerning Madeira and Port wine), p. 169 (concerning the combination of wine and opium) and p. 173 (some tolerate wine better than others).

¹¹⁶ RICHARD W. BULLIETT, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period. An Essay in Quantitative History*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge/Mass., 1979; see also KONRAD, « Soziale Mobilität », p. 228-233, and GRAF, *The Sultan's Renegades*, p. 12.

motivation was a mixed bag of push and pull factors, though, with a particular kind of mixture arising from criminal prosecution at the place of origin.

If it were possible to triangulate individuals using different sources, their social networks, patronage relationships and the effect of social capital could be analysed. In this respect in particular, it could be determined to what extent the politico-religious conversion process served the conversion of Social Capital, the role of which is discussed in migration research.¹¹⁷ Further case studies with sufficient detail could allow to find out how changing allegiance and religion related to maintaining or improving one's social position. For example, was it possible for members of the lower classes to rise from the rank of ordinary soldier or sailor to higher officer ranks, what opportunities were (or were not) available to people with a university education or specialised technical knowledge, or did nobles have to convert in order to be accepted into the upper classes? Similar to the New World, the Ottoman Empire did not have the estate barriers of Old Europe,¹¹⁸ and although fairy-tale social mobility (from street urchin to grand vizier) tends to belong to the realm of literary fiction, it was precisely for renegades that a new life was opened up.

Seetzen's comments on patronage and clientelism as evidenced in most of the narratives detailed above suggest similarities between the Frankish and Ottoman societies in terms of the interplay of societal workings, sociocultural hierarchies, and interpersonal relationships when it came to an individual's opportunities. Obviously, patronage was a common denominator. Shapes and forms differed between different societies but nevertheless, analysing them in terms of social networks is feasible.¹¹⁹ Seetzen's account clearly attests to this, as he was used to pay special attention to such relations from his community of origin. At first glance, renegades may also be considered quintessential transimperial subjects in

¹¹⁷ SONJA HAUG, « Soziales Kapital als Ressource im Kontext von Migration und Integration », in JÖRG LÜDICKE, MARTIN DIEWALD (eds.), *Soziale Netzwerke und soziale Ungleichheit. Zur Rolle von Sozialkapital in modernen Gesellschaften*, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, Wiesbaden 2007, p. 85–111.

¹¹⁸ PETR MAT'A, « Ständegesellschaft », in FRIEDRICH JAEGER (ed.), *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit*, vol. XII, Metzler, Stuttgart 2010, col. 865–872.

¹¹⁹ For patronage as an integration factor, cf. KONRAD, « Soziale Mobilität », p. 223–228; for the Central European context of clientelism, see HILLARD VON THIESSEN, « Klientel », in FRIEDRICH JAEGER et al. (eds.), *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit*, 16 vols., Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 2005–2012, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2352-0248_edn_COM_293482> (Accessed August 2023). The Ottoman context is addressed in HENNING SIEVERT, *Zwischen arabischer Provinz und Hoher Pforte. Beziehungen, Bildung und Politik des osmanischen Bürokraten Rāğib Mehmed Paşa (st. 1763)*, Ergon, Würzburg 2008.

the sense in which Rothman coined the term,¹²⁰ capitalising on their specific knowledge. However, the renegades Seetzen encountered were, in contrast to dragomans or courtly circles, not ‘embedded in webs of contact on both sides’.¹²¹ In fact many turned to him exactly because they lacked such contacts on one side.

For centuries, the Ottoman Empire had not only supplemented its elites to a large extent by importing slaves but also facilitated the immigration of skilled workers to a certain extent. Faced with crisis around 1800, it intensified recruitment in certain areas of expertise, particularly targeting staff to help train the Nizām-ı Cedīd corps,¹²² which absorbed several renegades who had fallen through the cracks during the revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. While renegades originated in all parts of Europe, many of them hailed from neighbouring regions of the Italian peninsula, the Habsburg realm, or the Russian Empire. Given the general political circumstances at Seetzen’s time, Poland and especially Hungary figured heavily. Additionally, Egypt seems to have been another source of newcomers from Western Europe as some had remained there after Napoleon’s failed invasion of the country in 1798–1801.

Although the renegades that Seetzen met in connection with the Nizām-ı Cedīd accounted for only a fraction of the corps, his diaries nevertheless open a window to view the experiences of some of these men. Complemented by an analysis of other contemporary sources, Seetzen’s notes can likely help us to better understand changes in the limits and possibilities as well as the perspectives and attitudes that surrounded the phenomenon of renegades between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Given that Seetzen framed his characterisation of the renegades in terms that were familiar to him, we can assume that he expected potential readers to do the same. We therefore have to read his diaries as a representation of his observations refracted through the lens of his own views.

¹²⁰ GRAF, *The Sultan’s Renegates*, p. 14–15 after E. NATHALIE ROTHMAN, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2011.

¹²¹ GRAF, *The Sultan’s Renegates*, p. 15.

¹²² The corps would cease to exist with the overthrow of Selīm III. in 1807.

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