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# THE ROLE OF THE OTTOMANS AND DUTCH IN THE COMMERCIAL INTEGRATION BETWEEN THE LEVANT AND ATLANTIC IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

BY

MEHMET BULUT\*

## *Abstract*

The present paper focuses on the role of the Ottomans and Dutch in the early commercial integration between the Levant and Atlantic in the seventeenth century. As an expanding trading nation in the world economy, the Dutch Republic played an important role in the commercial integration between the provinces of the Ottoman Empire and Western Europe. The growth of Ottoman-Dutch economic relations in the seventeenth century followed the growth of economic relations between the provinces of the Empire and Western Europe. Therefore, the two world economic systems, the Ottoman and Western European economy increasingly opened to each other.

Le présent article examine les rôles respectifs des Ottomans et des Néerlandais dans le début de l'intégration commerciale entre le Levant et l'Océan Atlantique au XVII<sup>ème</sup> siècle. Nation commerciale en expansion dans l'économie mondiale, la République hollandaise a joué un rôle important dans l'intégration commerciale des provinces de l'Empire Ottoman à l'Europe Occidentale dans la même période. La croissance des relations économiques entre le monde ottoman et la Hollande au XVII<sup>ème</sup> siècle a suivi la progression des échanges entre l'Empire et l'Europe occidentale. En conséquence, les deux systèmes économiques du monde se sont de plus en plus ouverts l'un à l'autre.

*Keywords:* Western Europe, Ottomans, Levant, world economy, commercial integration.

## INTRODUCTION

The growth of trade between the Ottoman Empire and Western Europe is one indication of the commercial integration between the Levant and Atlantic during the seventeenth century. Another is the increased exports of precious metals (gold and silver) from Europe throughout the Ottoman areas to the East. Compared with levels achieved at the end of twentieth century, trade in goods and capital flows between the Levant and Atlantic during the seventeenth century is

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incomparable in size. However, another fact is that the volume of long distance trade, travel, communication and flow of the precious metals between the two regions increased to a size that was impossible to compare with the earlier centuries. This paper attempts to analyse the role of the Ottomans and Dutch in this process.

The Ottomans recognised the importance of the connections between the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean in the control of east-west trade. They attached special importance to the improvement of their naval force for controlling these areas. During the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire had been a significant power whose conquests were directed not only toward conquering land but also toward dominating or controlling the trade entrepôts and commercial networks across the zones of international trade. The commercial zones in which the Ottomans operated extended from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean.<sup>1</sup>

Due to its naval and commercial power, the Ottoman Empire was able to dominate the trading routes between Asia and Europe until the last decades of the sixteenth century.<sup>2</sup> The end of the fifteenth century marked the beginning of a significant turning point for the Western economy.<sup>3</sup> The discovery of the Cape of Good Hope in 1486 and the shift of Indian and Persian trade routes to the high seas around South Africa was an important point of concern for the Ottoman rulers. Of course, after the discovery of the Cape route spice trade in the Mediterranean did not cease immediately, as is borne out by evidence.<sup>4</sup> Due to their position in international transit trade, and since they controlled the trade routes for a long time, the Ottomans continued to gain much revenue from transit trade. Spices and other valuable products from Asia and the Levant had for centuries found their way to Europe through the Ottoman territories.

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<sup>1</sup> Ottoman power at sea and the Empire's strategy in the Mediterranean, Red Sea and Indian Ocean in that period have been addressed by historians such as Orhonlu (1967; 1974), Özbaran (1972; 1990) and Brummett (1993) For later periods, see Anderson 1952.

<sup>2</sup> By the middle of the sixteenth century the Ottoman Empire had become the prime state controlling all the trade routes from the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean since the Byzantine Empire lost its possessions in much of the area in the seventh century. The Ottoman navy played a crucial role in controlling the trade routes (Mantran 1995: 111).

<sup>3</sup> In his famous chapter on colonies, Adam Smith noted that "the discovery of America and that of a passage to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope, are two greatest and most important events recorded in the history of mankind" (Smith 1993: 363).

<sup>4</sup> According to Pearson (1976: 79), still "more spices and paper were coming to Europe via the Red Sea and the Mediterranean than via the Cape" in the first half of the 16th century. Moreover, the studies of Lane (1966; 1973a; 1973b), Steensgaard (1967; 1973-74) and Braudel (1972; 1984) indicate that the old spice route continued to be important through the sixteenth century.

Hence, until the end of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire enjoyed significant and even increasing profits by the spice and silk routes from the East to the Mediterranean. However, starting at the beginning of the seventeenth century, this situation began to change when the Northern Europeans appeared as active nations in the profitable Far East trade as well as the Levant trade (Mantran 1987: 1433-39). These developments forced the Ottomans to seek strategies for maintaining their considerable profits from the trade routes from the East to the West. Therefore, they encouraged the newly rising western nations to trade in the Ottoman territories by granting them some privileges ("capitulations") in the same period. It was quite natural that the Ottoman rulers pursued economic and political aims by granting capitulations to these western nations. Consequently, the new commercial powers of Europe—the Dutch, the English, and the French—increased their trading activities in the Levant during the seventeenth century.

It seems that while the seventeenth century witnessed strong commercial and economic expansion of the Northwestern European nations, France, England and particularly the Dutch, for the Ottoman Empire, this age marked difficulties and therefore a transformation period. However, according to Wallerstein, the Ottoman state was a 'world empire' while Braudel regards it as a 'world economy' during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries.<sup>5</sup>

Braudel is the first historian to approach the economy of the Mediterranean, the centre of gravity of the world economy in the sixteenth century, from a global angle (Braudel 1972). He demonstrated that the history of European expansion can be viewed as the history of an expanding world economic system, which during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries centred on Amsterdam and London (Braudel 1978: 17-27). According to Wallerstein, while the Ottoman Empire was outside the capitalist world system, the Dutch Republic became the core of the new western capitalist world system in the seventeenth century. He attempted to improve Braudel's static analysis by introducing the concept of the 'world economic system' (Wallerstein 1974; 1978-80).

In analysing the role of the Ottomans and Dutch in the commercial integration of the Levant and Atlantic, the change of the centre of the European world economy and of the relations between the new economic centre of Europe and

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<sup>5</sup> According to Wallerstein's concept of a 'world empire,' the state played a central role in commercial relations (Wallerstein 1974; 1979). But in Braudel's definition, Ottoman traders controlled the vital local routes linking the different parts of the empire (Braudel 1972). Thus, "in the 'world economy' merchants are capable of making the state act in conformity with their interests, in the 'world empire' the state apparatus dominates the scene and merchants play second fiddle (have a secondary role)" (İnalçık 1994: 479).

the Ottoman Empire needs to be stressed. Before the seventeenth century, the Mediterranean region was the centre of the world economy and the Ottoman Empire was a very important power in that area. However, in the following years, the centre of the world economy shifted to the Atlantic.

#### THE DUTCH APPEARANCE IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Commercial relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Dutch Republic have remained a little known topic in the history of both countries. The Venetian, French and English capitulations and Ottoman-Venetian, French and English commercial relations have been examined by several authors. But up to now, archival documents on commercial activities of Dutch merchants in the Eastern Mediterranean have remained untouched. Although the 1021/1612 Dutch capitulation and early diplomatic relations have been investigated by Alexander de Groot and the relations between the two nations in the eighteenth century have been examined by G.R. Bosscha Erdbrink, their studies focus on the diplomatic relations between the two countries (De Groot 1978; Erdbrink 1975). Dutch trade and shipping in the Mediterranean have been studied by Israel (1986; 1989; 1990b) and Engels (1997). Israel provided a general picture of Dutch trade and shipping in the Levant while Engels concentrated on Dutch merchant activities in the Western Mediterranean area such as Leghorn.

Although formal diplomatic relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Dutch Republic were first established in 1612, commercial contacts had already been made both by travellers and by merchants engaged in Mediterranean trade before 1600. The presence of individual Dutch subjects in the East Mediterranean dates back to as early as the 1560s.<sup>6</sup> The tulip (*lâle*) was the first item coming from the Ottoman Empire to the Netherlands.<sup>7</sup>

In the last decade of the sixteenth century, Dutch maritime trade in the Mediterranean started to grow rapidly. Dutch ships sailed under foreign (English

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<sup>6</sup> As a traveller, R. Ghislain de Busbecq, a member of the Flemish nobility, was the contact person from the Netherlands in Turkey. He was sent on a diplomatic mission by Ferdinand (brother of the late Emperor Charles V) to Istanbul in 1561. Another Dutch traveller, Georgius Dousa, made the voyage to Istanbul in 1590 (Yalçın 1939; Erdbrink 1975, 1-2). In a letter dated 1562 Busbecq wrote that he had seen gardens with tulips (*lale* in Turkish) in the Ottoman Empire. Then he sent seeds and bulbs to Vienna but it is not known whether he did this before the beginning of the 1570s. It is clear that some of the tulips from the Ottoman Empire arrived in Central and Western Europe via Vienna, and after Vienna the tulip passed from Flanders to Holland (Segal 1993: 10).

<sup>7</sup> There is a common view that the Ottomans' first gift to the Dutch was the tulip. For more information on the importance of the tulip in this respect, see Theunissen and Roding 1993.

or French) flags in the Ottoman ports until 1612. The Dutch first traded in the Levant under the protection of the French. Traditionally, French maritime trade had been concentrated more in the Mediterranean than in the Atlantic. In 1569, the French had already concluded a commercial treaty with the Ottoman Sultan, who had given them permission to allow nations, with no treaty of their own, to trade under the same conditions, when flying the French flag (Braudel 1972: 625-28; Kurat 1953: 305-315). Due to these privileges, the Ottoman sultan granted the right to the French to protect the *harbi*<sup>8</sup> merchants in the Levant. In 1598, France extended these privileges to the Dutch, hence Dutch merchants obtained formal permission from King Henry IV to trade in Ottoman ports under the French flag (Heeringa 1910: 169).

As Braudel states, the Levant trade continued to flourish despite 'the discoveries and some fundamental changes in the world economy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries' (1972; 1978). However, Venetian trade was declining in the Levant, while French, English and Dutch trade registered an increase from the last quarter of the sixteenth century onwards. In other words, it was not so much European Levant trade which was declining in the early modern period, but traders were no longer Italians, rather they were French, English and Dutch. Before 1612, because of the non-official position of the Dutch merchants in the Ottoman ports, the corsairs were the main obstacles for their trading activities in the East Mediterranean. As a matter of fact, piracy was a serious obstacle in the Levant for the merchant vessels. Moreover, there was a close connection between trade and piracy. According to Braudel, when there were no merchant vessels, there were no pirates (1972: 883). Therefore, it was very important for the States General to establish direct diplomatic contacts with the Ottoman authorities.

At first the Dutch merchants concentrated their trade in the old emporia of the Levant: Cyprus, Cairo and the ports of Syria (Steensgaard 1967: 13-55). Antwerp merchants joined the Galata foreign merchant community in the last decades of the sixteenth century after benefiting from the individual grant of "amnesty," a provision in Islamic Law.<sup>9</sup> In the following years, Dutch trade increased in Aleppo, as is reported by the watchful consuls of Venice. Protection under the French or English flags was exercised locally by the consuls of

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<sup>8</sup> *Harbis*, or 'foreigners,' were, according to Ottoman Muslim theory, those enemy aliens or non-Muslims not protected by treaty who inhabit the *Darül-harb*, that is, any part of the world which had not yet become *Darül-islam*, which was the part of the world that was ruled according to Islamic law (Qur'an).

<sup>9</sup> Dutch merchants had come to the Ottoman territories before the capitulations, and they were very active in caravan trade (Wood 1935: 29).

those two nations in the Levant ports. There was also a possibility for the Dutch to appoint consuls, even though they did not have their own capitulations (De Groot 1978: 90). However, protection by foreign or even by Dutch consuls was not satisfactory in the long run. With the increase in Dutch trade, there was an increase in harmful interference by the rivals in business, among whom the Venetians and French were foremost (Wood 1935: 44).

Frequent attacks by North African corsairs on the Dutch merchants' ships continued in the first decade of the century.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the States General was forced to establish direct contacts with the Ottoman government, as was previously mentioned. Although the Ottoman court did not respond immediately to the States General's 1604 overture, a letter from the *kapudan-ı derya* (the Turkish supreme commander of the navy) Halil Pasha<sup>11</sup> eventually reached the Republic in 1610 and stated the Sultan's intention to grant the Dutch the right to trade under their own flags in Ottoman territories (Erdbrink 1975: 3; Kütükoğlu 1974: 38-45). After significant efforts exerted by Haga,<sup>12</sup> the first capitulation, dated *evail-i Cemaziyevvel 1021/6* July 1612, was granted to the Dutch merchants (Heeringa 1910: 255; Uzunçarşılı 1959: 235-6). According to the capitulations, all Dutch slaves would be freed without any payment.<sup>13</sup> Throughout the Ottoman territories, Dutch merchants were allowed to trade under their own flag.<sup>14</sup> With capitulations granted to the British in 1580, and to the Dutch at this time, France lost her monopoly to protect the *harbi* merchants and their commercial privileges in the Ottoman realm. French merchants now had two great rivals: the English and the Dutch.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DUTCH CAPITULATIONS

Significant details are recorded regarding the capitulations granted to Dutch merchants, especially concerning the economic activity they carried out in the Ottoman territories. However, the Sublime Porte granted not only economic but also certain political rights to Dutch merchants. It is necessary to analyse this

<sup>10</sup> BBA ED 13/1 110, 3.

<sup>11</sup> From the beginning, the Ottoman grand-admiral Halil Pasha played a decisive role in establishing friendly relations between the Dutch Republic and the Ottoman Empire (Erdbrink 1974: 160-61; De Groot 1978).

<sup>12</sup> The first Dutch ambassador Cornelis Haga presented very important gifts, such as strategic maps of the world and a compass to the Ottoman sultan Ahmed in Istanbul when he was accepted to the throne. For the list of these presents, see Heeringa 1910: 266-276.

<sup>13</sup> See the articles of 17 and 19 in the capitulations.

<sup>14</sup> BBA ED 13/1, 1-4.

from the original registers of the capitulations of 1612. But first the term ‘capitulation’ or ‘*ahidname*’<sup>15</sup> should be explained.

According to İnalçık (1979: 1179), the following provisions concerning the status of non-Muslim merchants in the Ottoman areas were included either explicitly or implicitly in all of the commercial privileges:

1. General security of person and property, including:
  - testamentary rights, freedom of worship, burial, and dress;
  - ship repairs, emergency rations, and aid against attack by corsairs;
  - permission to address complaints to the head of the Muslim community.
2. Extraterritoriality, including:
  - consular jurisdiction;
  - consular’s salary and other exemptions.
3. Abolition of collective responsibility.

A capitulation guarantee had pre-eminence over the laws of the empire and, upon drawing up a capitulation, the sultan sent orders to local authorities to abide strictly by its provisions. It was not a “treaty” but a “freedom” or “privilege” granted to the Europeans to trade freely throughout the Ottoman territories (İnalçık 1979: 1179-80). But in practice the members of foreign nations were permitted residence only in certain ports, and within these ports usually only in specified quarters or caravanserais. However, in İzmir, Aleppo, Galata and other Ottoman trading cities, they enjoyed considerable freedom of movement.

Our main focus is the capitulations granted to the Dutch Republic. They were granted twice in the first half of the seventeenth century, first in 1612 and then in 1634, and once in the second half of the century, that is in 1680. In order to understand the new status of the Dutch in the Ottoman area one has to examine the capitulations of 1612. The sultan solemnly promised (articles 6 and 55) that capitulatory guarantees were above the law. Those Ottoman subjects who resisted their application or violated them were declared rebels against the sultan and punishable as such.

All capitulatory privileges and guarantees were granted to the Dutch by these

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<sup>15</sup> Where can information be found about the capitulations granted western nations and about the activities of western merchants in the Ottoman areas? The answer is *Düveli Ecnebiye Defterleri* in the *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Archives* (BBA) in Istanbul. These registers consist of more than a hundred volumes of varying length, covering the period from 1567 to 1922 and devoted to thirty-two states in total, from America to Venice. *Felemenk Ahidname Defterleri* is related to the Dutch Republic in this respect.



instruments; and all rights included in the French and English capitulations applied to the Dutch. For the Republic, the political-military cooperation with the Empire is quite explicitly mentioned in the capitulations. According to a special provision (article 51), Dutch ships fighting against the ships of non-capitulatory nations were allowed to use Ottoman ports and to replenish their supplies. Article 21 made it clear that corsair ships from Algiers remained entitled, as formerly, to provide themselves with munitions and materials in Dutch ports. If enemy merchants loaded merchandise on Dutch ships, it could not be confiscated on the grounds that it was enemy merchandise (article 38).

The Ottoman government's regulations regarding precious metals, as formulated in the capitulations granted the English and Dutch, stipulated that no duty was to be levied on the import of gold and silver coins. These coins could not be converted into Ottoman coins in the local mints (article 1) and orders were sent to the provincial authorities to this effect. Such measures served Ottoman finances and the Ottoman economy in general, since exactly at this time the empire was suffering from a dearth of precious metals (İnalçık 1951, 651-61). But this policy would finally result in financial and economic upheaval with the invasion of the Ottoman market by counterfeit coins imported chiefly by the Dutch. The Dutch were permitted to bring in and take out goods by sea to the Black sea ports, including Trabzon and Caffa, and by land to Azov and Moscow, and Dutch ships coming from Dumyat and Alexandria could carry goods to Istanbul or other places belonging to the Muslims. These clauses were evidently favoured by the Ottomans in order to profit from Dutch shipping and contribute to the feeding of Istanbul from the two most important areas, Egypt and the northern Black Sea (article 6).

In the Dutch capitulations, guarantees against corsair acts show how concerned Western nations had become about increased privateering in this period. The sultan promised that any Dutch subject, enslaved by the corsairs of Algiers, would be freed and his property returned in its entirety (article 17). The consuls could not arrest the Dutch merchants nor steal their houses. Merchants' lawsuits involving consuls and *dragomans* (translators) had to be heard at the Sultan's Court (article 6).

In comparison with Venetians and French, the Dutch capitulations provided more extensive privileges and guarantees. The Dutch were granted a 2-3% rate of customs duty<sup>16</sup> (article 46) instead of the 5% paid by the Venetians and

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<sup>16</sup> In the capitulation of 1612, the phrase "*adet ve kanun üzere*" (in accordance with tradition and the current regulations), appears to determine the customs rate. In the sixteenth century, the general rate was 5%, but the Ottoman customs tariff rate varied according to the status of the merchant, and the nature of the commodity. The Dutch merchants were also

French.<sup>17</sup> No authority could levy more customs duty than 3% (article 56).

Freedom of trade within the Ottoman dominions had been the primary aim which the Dutch had set for their embassy to Turkey. This had been well served by the capitulation, which was mainly a set of regulations for trade in addition to articles defining the legal status of Dutch subjects residing in Ottoman territory for the purpose of trade. The document did not contain any clauses regarding reciprocal benefits for Ottoman trade or clauses of a political nature (article 21). The Dutch capitulations of 1612 acknowledged the request for friendship and freedom of trade as transmitted by the ambassador. As to trade, in general, the principles of free shipping and trade were conceded (article 21, 43).

In spite of the fact that Ottoman trade regulations occasionally forbade the export of some luxury commodities such as leather and precious metals and some bulky commodities such as grain, as a result of the capitulations Dutch merchants were allowed to export non-strategic goods, such as cotton, cotton yarn, leather and beeswax (article 3). As for the most significant trade items, reference is made to silk from Aleppo and other places, and to Dutch exports of lead, tin, iron, and steel (articles 43 and 46). A purpose was to import unprocessed war materials to the Ottoman Empire. In the capitulations the statement that “the Dutch import into our well-guarded dominions of lead, tin, iron, steel and other scrap metal merchandise may not be hindered” (article 46) was very clear.

Dutch subjects would be free to transport their goods on ships of non-capitulatory powers, or corsairs, without confiscation by Ottoman authorities. Furthermore, the security of person and property was guaranteed, including testamentary rights, ship repairs, emergency aid and the abolition of the sultan’s rights in case of a shipwreck. In case of complaints, redress might be sought from the Porte (article 1).

The Dutch capitulations, like others, contained an article stating that rights mentioned in the first French and English capitulations apply to the Dutch. Any major differences of opinion that might arise between subjects of the Sultan and the Republic were to be referred to the Sublime Porte and to the Dutch ambassador residing there.

The first capitulations granted the Dutch were renewed by Sultan Murad in

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exempt from *kassabiye*, *masdariye*, *reftiye*, *yasakçı* and *bac* duties (BBA ED 22, 39). They were Ottoman taxes levied on all merchants trading in the market, except merchants with privileges such as granted in the Dutch capitulations.

<sup>17</sup> There was a common view that the first single 3% customs was granted to France which renewed their capitulations of 1673 (İnalçık 1959: 96). However, the registers of the Dutch capitulations clearly show that the Dutch were the first who were legally granted the maximum 3% rate (see article 46, 56 in the Dutch capitulations).

1634.<sup>18</sup> The second capitulations contained the same rights for the Dutch merchants in the Ottoman territories as the first.

#### THE OTTOMAN AUTHORITIES AND THE DUTCH NATION IN THE LEVANT

One can easily understand that both the central and local Ottoman authorities paid a great deal of attention to providing security on the land and sea for the western merchants, and thus earning income for their treasurers and meeting the needs of Ottoman people. The Ottoman provisionist mentality<sup>19</sup> played an especially crucial role in this process. In order to realise this aim, the western merchants were very important, while security was of primary concern to the traders in the Ottoman territories.

After establishing diplomatic relations in 1612, the Dutch ambassador in the Sublime Porte, Cornelis Haga, made efforts and paid special attention to developing economic relations between the two nations by entering into close cooperation with the Ottoman authorities to protect the rights of the Dutch merchants in the Levant.<sup>20</sup> Theoretically, Dutch merchants were protected from piracy and enslavement at the hands of the corsairs thanks to the capitulations. In spite of significant efforts deployed by the Ottoman bureaucrats and officials, establishing a safe commercial area was not easy to accomplish.

After 1612, it also became possible for the Dutch to appoint consuls.<sup>21</sup> According to their capitulations, the Dutch ambassador had the right to appoint the consuls and other personnel whenever Dutch commercial settlements might have required this. Thus, in April 1613, Haga was able to accept the oath of allegiance of a travelling companion, Cornelis Pauw, as the Dutch consul in Aleppo. The role and the duty of the consul was also to protect the rights of the merchants and develop their trading capability in the region.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Although Sultan Ahmed I died in 1617 and two successive sultans ascended the Ottoman throne, only Murad IV renewed the Dutch capitulations in 1634.

<sup>19</sup> For more information on the Ottoman provisionist mentality, see Genç 1989.

<sup>20</sup> For more information on the importance of the Haga in the economic relations between the two nations and his diplomatic mission and achievement in the relations, see Erdbrink 1975; De Groot 1978.

<sup>21</sup> According to the *Ahidname*, the Dutch ambassador in Istanbul could establish a consulate wherever he wanted. The primary purpose of the ambassador was to promote the trade of his nation. Haga established new consulships at Aleppo (1613), Larnaca (1613), and Algiers (1616). And now under the supervision of the ambassador in Istanbul and the consuls in the other trading centres of the Porte, the Dutch commercial network and business expanded in the Levant. From 1657 onwards the Dutch consuls began to be directly appointed by the States General from Holland. For more information on the function of the consuls in the Levant, see Steensgaard 1967.

<sup>22</sup> The Dutch representatives in the Empire shared all the problems of their merchants such

The Dutch ambassadors at the Porte had both diplomatic and commercial roles.<sup>23</sup> The ambassador was located in the centre of the Empire, the capital, with his appointment of 12,000 pounds per year being paid out of the general trade duties levied in the Republic (*convooiën en licentien*). In addition, he had a share of the income from the Dutch consulates in Istanbul, İzmir, Cyprus and Chios. The Consuls were allowed to levy consular duties on all goods carried by Dutch ships passing through ports under their jurisdiction. Consuls in other parts of the Mediterranean only served the private interests of the merchants, ship owners, and captains (Heeringa 1910: 319-22).

Haga as the first Dutch ambassador (1612-1639) contributed greatly to the development of the Ottoman-Dutch commercial relations. His successors tried to follow him in building up the relations between the two countries.

Levinus Warner, another Dutch representative was an important scholar in the field of Oriental studies<sup>24</sup> at Leiden University prior to his arrival in Istanbul. After Warner, Justinus Colyer became the Dutch resident ambassador in Istanbul. During the mission of Colyer (1668-1682), new regulations were drawn up concerning the Dutch community and their business in the Levant. His first aim was to renew the two earlier capitulations of 1612 and 1634. He managed to do this, resulting in the third capitulation granted to the Dutch in 1680. Colyer died in Istanbul in December 1682. At the end of the seventeenth century, his elder son Jacobus Colyer (1684-1725) succeeded him as the Dutch ambassador at the Porte. In 1699, Colyer played a significant role in establishing peace between the Ottoman Empire and the Austrian Hapsburgs.<sup>25</sup> Together

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as trading activities, loans, and credit relations. Furthermore, they were interested in building problems of the merchants' houses. The Dutch merchant Alexandre Colyer gave money to the consul Hochepeid in İzmir in order to have his house rebuilt (ARA, LH 27).

<sup>23</sup> According to the Resolution of the States-General in April 1675, new regulations were set up concerning the residence of Dutch citizens and the manner of conducting business in the Levant. According to the 1675 regulations, the principal task of the ambassador and of the consuls in the Ottoman Empire was to insure that the capitulations were properly observed and implemented. The Directorate also envisaged assessors, members to be chosen from the Dutch nation in every port, who would control the consul's action and financial management (Erdbrink 1975: 28).

<sup>24</sup> Warner studied Oriental languages at Leiden University in the Netherlands. Prior to his departure for Istanbul in 1644, he had already written four short works. After residing in Istanbul for ten years, he was appointed ambassador of States General in 1654. He carried out extensive research on the Middle East and Islam and compiled a huge collection of works on the region. This collection is located at Leiden University now. Warner died in Istanbul in June 1665. For more information on this collection and on Warner, see Drewes 1970.

<sup>25</sup> At the end of the negotiations, during the peace conference that was held in the Slavonian town of Carlowitz (*Karlofça* in Turkish), a peace agreement was signed. With this, the Ottoman Empire, for the first time in its history, accepted the principle of *uti possidetis*-

with his English colleague, Colyer was involved in the negotiations, and mediated between the two powers.<sup>26</sup>

A consul was also empowered by the Sultan's *berat*<sup>27</sup> to supervise the affairs of his *millet*, to register incoming goods and to collect the appropriate dues for the ambassador and the consul. No ship of his nation could leave port without his authorisation, and he resolved disputes and settled suits between members of his nation according to his home country's laws and traditions. His person, servants, and animals were immune from interference, at his residence, on the road, or at overnight halts; his personal goods were exempt from custom dues.<sup>28</sup> However, protection by the Dutch ambassador or consuls was not sufficient in the long run. With the increase in Dutch trade, there was an increase in harmful interference by business rivals, among whom were the Venetians, French, and English (Wood 1935: 44). They had many disputes with the other western merchants as well as with the Ottoman parties in the market. In addition, some Ottoman government officials occasionally wanted more customs<sup>29</sup> than was stipulated in the capitulation articles.<sup>30</sup> In addition to the Dutch representatives in the Ottoman Empire there was a strong institution in Amsterdam for the organisation and the expansion of the Dutch Levant trade.

The Levant Directorate in Amsterdam<sup>31</sup> organised shipping and trade to the Ottoman Empire. The Directorate acted as the representative body of Dutch commerce in the Mediterranean. Among its main tasks, there was the correspondence with the States' ambassador at the Porte and with Dutch consuls in the various ports of the Levant and North Africa (De Groot 1981: 235). Thus, the Directorate served as a link between the government and merchants and maintained the Dutch consulates in the Mediterranean.

The Directorate often asked the Dutch authorities for new regulations per-

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both parties being allowed to keep their conquered territories. This meant that they had to cede Transilvania and Hungary, with the exception of the Banat of Temesvar.

<sup>26</sup> ARA LH 127.

<sup>27</sup> A diploma bearing the Sultan's official seal.

<sup>28</sup> See Capitulations of 1612: article 9, 21, and 39.

<sup>29</sup> The Dutch representative applied to the Porte for these problems. In these situations stipulated in the Sultan sent the *firmans* to the local Ottoman authorities in order to solve the problem (BBA ED 22, 79). In another register dated 15 April 1680, the Sultan sent a firman to the *kadı* of Istanbul for a problem occurred between the Dutch merchants and Ottoman custom officials. The sultan sent his order the *kadı* to prevent the abuses of local officer that *gümriük emini* Hüseyin asked 5% rate custom duty instead of 3% (BBA ED 22, 1).

<sup>30</sup> BBA BA 902, 116.

<sup>31</sup> Directors of the Levant Trade and Navigation in the Mediterranean Sea (*Directeuren van den Levantschen handel en navigatie in de Middellandsche Zee*) was established in Amsterdam in 1625.

taining to the Levant. And most of the time they managed to achieve their goals regarding the organisation of the Levant trade. For instance, there were some custom duties for commodities coming from abroad. The customs duty levied on commodities coming from the Levant, was generally 1%. After a petition of the Levant organisation to the Dutch authorities in 1663, certain changes were made in the custom duties for certain Levant products. According to this new regulation, special rates were imposed for some of the merchandise coming from the Levant, such as Turkish yarn, cotton, cotton yarn, goat wool, camel hair, natural drags, rice, soda, potash, wood, leather, and carpets.<sup>32</sup> Obviously, textile products were the main commodities. The import custom duty became 2% for these products in the Dutch Republic. According to the rules, the Levantine Directorate could impose the new customs levies on the trading goods in the Levant. A share of these duties levied by this organisation in all Dutch ports was assigned to meet its financial needs. After 1663 an additional “Levantine duty” was imposed by the Directorate on all Levantine goods imported into the Netherlands. This was an additional duty of 1% levied on all commodities (except on ships proper and on cash money) loaded on ships sailing for or returning from the Ottoman Empire.<sup>33</sup> So they managed to raise the custom duty from 1 to 2%.

Most problems encountered by the Dutch merchants in the Ottoman territories came from assessing the value of the commodities and thus the paying of taxes or customs duties. According to the capitulations, the Dutch merchants had to pay a maximum of 3% customs duties to the tax farmer of the imperial customs, *gümrük emini*. The customs duties were paid on the value of the commodities. Occasionally, a controversy occurred between the Dutch merchants and the Ottoman officials. The conflict mostly resulted from disagreement on the value of the commodities.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> ARA LH 5028, 533.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Dutch merchants objected to high customs duties and as a result the Dutch ambassador at the Porte appealed to the Ottoman administration to take action (BBA, ED 21/12). These types of cases were also prohibited by the Sultan. “*Elçi-yi mezbur arz-u hal gönderüp yedlerinde olan nişan-ı hümayunda gümrük için hazine-i amireme alındığı üzere can olan nukudu (Nederlanda tacirleri) ahidname-i hümayunum mucibince vermeğe razular iken gümrük emini hilaf-ı ahidname ve nişanı hümayun . . . gurusu alurum deyu rencide olunmamak babında emri şerifim verilmek rica etmeğin ahidname-i humayunuma müracat olundukta Nederlanda tüccarı vilayetlerinden getürdükleri ve alub götürdükleri metaldan Halep ve İskenderiye vesayir yerlerde yüzde üç akçe gümrük vereler ziyade vermeyeler . . .*” (The Dutch ambassador has conveyed a petition to my court and has complained that although certain Dutch merchants are ready to pay the customs duties according to the exchange rate of the imperial treasury, the local customs authority claimed excessive amounts contrary to the capitulations . . . Custom duties have to be charged to the Dutch merchants carrying goods from

Various taxes had been levied to be paid by traders such as *masdariye* (on the goods imported by the Ottomans), *müruriyye* or *bac-ı umur* (transit permit) and *selamet izn-i* (permit for passage of vessel) in the Ottoman Empire; and finally, the merchants were given the a *tezkere* (licence) that permitted the goods to be transported to any part of the Empire, without being subject to any other tax. According to the regulations, the Dutch merchants were exempt from the duties of *kassabiye*, *masdariye*, *reftiye*, *yasakçı* and *bac*.<sup>35</sup> The archival documents indicate that local customs officers caused the problems for the Dutch traders by demanding such taxes nonetheless. However, the Dutch merchants also tried to avoid paying official custom duties in the ports of the Empire.<sup>36</sup>

Goods transported or imported by sea were subject to customs duties, whereas wares transported by land were exempt from these duties, unless trade was carried out by Muslim and non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire. In general, exports to Europe were discouraged to provide abundant goods and foodstuffs for the domestic market. Foreign merchants were permitted to bring in fine woollen cloth, especially London and Flemish (*Felemenk cukası*) cloth, metals and bullion, which were in great demand in the Levant. The export of scarce merchandise was prohibited in times of drought. Lists were issued periodically by the Ottoman government denoting goods prohibited from being exported. The amount of customs duties was calculated on the basis of the estimated value of the commodity, ad valorem, by the office of the tax-farmer of the imperial customs, the *gümrük emini*.

The Ottoman Empire began to establish the new tax farming system in the last decade of the sixteenth century. Thus, in the following century, most *gümrük emins* of the Ottoman ports were individual and private. There were also many non-Muslim tax farmers in the Empire during the same period, who tried to obtain as much custom duties from the merchants in the Ottoman territories as possible.<sup>37</sup> Throughout the period under study, there were numerous com-

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Alexandretta, Aleppo, etc. are, as before, 3% but not more, and merchants must not be disturbed . . .) (BBA ED 22, 5).

<sup>35</sup> BBA ED 22, 39.

<sup>36</sup> “. . . *cezire-i Sakız ve İzmir gümrüğü mukatası eminlerinin iltizamına tabi iskelelerine gelen sefinelere gümrük kaçırmamak için bekçi ve arayıcı konulagelmış iken İngiliz ve Felemenk taifesi getürdükleri metaları gece ile gümrükten kaçırmak için . . .*” (Not to cause any leakage from Chios and İzmir ports, customs and control officers were assigned by the tax farmers. The English and Flemish communities are used to unload at night to escape from customs duties . . .) (BBA BHM 20, 56).

<sup>37</sup> For instance, there were two non-Muslim tax collectors, Sonos Karagözoğlu and Bedik who were brothers and settled in Aleppo during the first half of the seventeenth century. By 1616, Bedik was in the position to negotiate directly with the Dutch consul over the amount of tariffs to be paid by the Netherlanders in Aleppo (BBA MD 80, 1339).

plaints from the merchants that the custom officers were abusing their authority (De Groot 1978: 216-17; Lane 1958: 401-17; İnalçık 1977: 27-29). These complaints usually fell into two general categories. The first was related to the *güm-rük emins* attempts to alter the procedure for taxation on items stipulated as taxable, while the second was related to the claim that customs officers tried to tax items which had been traditionally exempt from taxation. The Dutch merchants complained that the custom officers often tried to tax the merchants not by a percentage of the assessed value of the commodities they had imported or exported but rather by their volume and type.<sup>38</sup>

The consular representatives of the foreign merchants of each nation were paying '*avantias*' or arbitrary payments to the local authorities. The Dutch merchants were also comforted with the *avantias*, frequently required by the local officials. Occasionally, the foreign merchants managed to avoid paying *avantias* by offering gifts to the local authorities. The *avantias* constituted 1 to 2% of the value of a merchant's imported and exported commodities. These accounts were kept by the ambassador and consuls, respectively. Since the Dutch merchants in the Levant tried to avoid paying the *avantias*, Dutch representatives applied to the Ottoman government for a solution to these problems (Heeringa 1917: 214).

The regular levies, called *tanza*, were paid by the captains of Dutch ships to their consuls in Aleppo, Cyprus, İzmir, and so on. The complaints of the Dutch consuls to the Porte and their reports to the States General indicate that the Dutch ships avoided paying these levies and that a number of ships sailed under foreign flags to escape the payments.<sup>39</sup>

After 1612, the expenditures of the Dutch consul were compensated by a tax that was paid by Dutch merchants to the consul.<sup>40</sup> Most of these expenditures were incurred in Istanbul and Aleppo. However, the majority of the revenues were paid by İzmir merchants,<sup>41</sup> which sometimes caused a conflict between local consuls and merchants (Slot 1990: 18).

Since consulate fees levied on foreigners for the right to trade under the protection of the flag of a European nation was an important source of income, the consuls competed with each other in order to induce other nations to ask for protection. The consuls of the Netherlands in the Levant followed this policy

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<sup>38</sup> BBA, MM 6004, 124; BBA A.DVN 30, 76.

<sup>39</sup> Both the Ottoman and the Dutch archival documents show these kinds of situations (BBA ED/22; BBA MM 2765 and ARA LH 97-101, 123-126).

<sup>40</sup> BBA BA 902, 116, 2.

<sup>41</sup> The report of the Dutch consul in İzmir indicates that their consular revenues were the following in the 1680s: 7/10 from İzmir, 2/10 from Aleppo, and 1/10 from Istanbul (ARA LH 125).



and sometimes tried to collect more consulate fees from both Dutch merchants and foreigners protected by them. The complaints of the merchants in the Levant indicate that paying consulate fees (*cottimo*) caused some problems between the merchants and the consuls.<sup>42</sup>

Evidence indicates that after getting their own capitulations, occasionally Dutch ships sailed under French, English or Venetian flags in order to avoid paying these fees.<sup>43</sup> The complaints of the Dutch merchants show that the Dutch consul in İzmir, Jacob van Dam, tried to obtain as many consulate fees as possible.<sup>44</sup> In 1673, Leiden merchants<sup>45</sup> asked for the dismissal of the Dutch representative in İzmir, Van Dam. His reaction to the conduct of some merchants and his treatment of them in general were unacceptable in their eyes. In their opinion Van Dam had harmed the relations between the Netherlands and the Ottoman Empire.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, although these consulate fees might be seen as a revenue for the Dutch mission in the Levant, it was harmful for the Dutch merchants as well as for the Ottoman-Dutch commercial relations because these fees would discourage the merchants from trading in the Ottoman lands.

The other complaints of the traders were related to the monetary conditions of the Ottoman Empire in the seventeenth century. According to some Dutch merchants, the most important problem was created by the Ottoman money market. It is a fact that the Ottoman Empire was a great empire and had large public expenditures. That is why it absorbed most of the money from the mar-

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<sup>42</sup> Niel Steensgaard (1967: 32) states that “the conflict is very well illustrated by a petition by the Levant merchants in Amsterdam to the States-General in 1615:

1-The consul should be a scrupulous man, and must not carry on business on his own account.

2-A *cottimo* on the Venetian model ought to be established in the nation.

3-The consul should receive a fixed salary.

4-Gifts must only be made with the nation’s approval, and they should be paid from the *cottimo*, as is done by the Venetians.

5-Other extraordinary expenses on the nation’s behalf should be paid from the *cottimo* as well, including the frequent gifts now being neglected on account of the consul’s economic situation.

6-Should the *cottimo* not suffice in case of a large extraordinary expense, a *tansa* (special duty) as large and as protracted as necessary should be imposed on the members of the nation, only of course with the nation’s consent.

7-The consul will be shown due respect.”

<sup>43</sup> ARA LH 97; Leiden Univ. Oriental Manuscripts, code 1122, 45.

<sup>44</sup> ARA LH 98.

<sup>45</sup> These merchants were Adrien en Jean le Pla, Charles Wastreau, B. Hoogmade, David en Elize de Bane, Pieter le Pla, A de Visscher, Dr. van Peene, Marinus Adr. Veer, and Hosson Compte.

<sup>46</sup> Leiden Gemeentearchief, Stadsarchief II, 1280.

ket. Thus, occasionally merchants could not find enough money to trade in the market, and this caused a rise of interest rates in the market. This was true for all merchants, both Ottoman and western. There were also differences between the Ottoman market and Amsterdam in the value of the Dutch *leeuwendaalders*.<sup>47</sup>

Consequently, various problems occurred in the Levant in the relations between the two communities, the Dutch and the Ottomans, as well as with the other westerners. Official authorities from both sides made great efforts to solve these problems. But there was a large difference between theory and practice.

#### THE DEVELOPMENT AND THE ZENITH OF THE OTTOMAN-DUTCH COMMERCIAL RELATIONS IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

In spite of the great amount of research on the seventeenth century, it seems that Ottoman-Dutch commercial relations have not been sufficiently investigated. Moreover, certain assessments made by the historians on the Dutch role in the Levant are not in agreement. In his popular book on the *English Levant Company* (Wood 1964: 54-5, 99-100), English historian Wood asserted that Dutch business in the Levant hardly amounted to 'serious competition' for the English. He found this unsurprising due to the fact that "with the small natural resources of their country they could not hope to compete with the output of England" (Wood 1964). Another expert on English Levant trade, Davis, states that the Dutch came nowhere near the English in the volume of trade in the Levant. He judges that the Dutch were a marginal factor in the Eastern Mediterranean in the seventeenth century (Davis 1970: 203; 1973).

French historians were more realistic than the English in their assessments of the Dutch Levant trade. Paul Masson claimed that the English and the Dutch Levant trade in the 17th century were equal (Masson 1896). Fernand Braudel has gone even further. According to him, the Dutch were the dominant nation in the Mediterranean trade at least from the last decade of the sixteenth until the middle of the seventeenth century (1972: 544-47).

Following Braudel, Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude, in their recent book *The First Modern Economy* (1997), point out that the Dutch trade to the Mediterranean expanded between the late sixteenth and the mid-seventeenth centuries, but it began to decline afterwards. However, they also conclude that the Dutch Levant trade was less significant than the Baltic or East India trade.

Regarding the Dutch role in the Mediterranean trade, the picture sketched by

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<sup>47</sup> ARA LH 126.

Van Dillen and Israel is more precise than that of the above English or French historians (Van Dillen 1979; Israel 1989). According to Van Dillen (1970), the Dutch role in the East and West Mediterranean was less predominant than in the East India and the Baltic trades. He argues that the Dutch Mediterranean trade developed in several phases, starting with a vigorous first phase between 1590 and 1620. In the second phase spanning from 1620 to 1645, the Dutch Mediterranean trade was less intense. After 1645 Dutch trade in the region began to expand again, till the last quarter of the century. However, in the fourth phase, after 1672, the Dutch Mediterranean trade constantly declined.

Israel (1989; 1995) divided the Dutch *Straatvaart* into seven phases: the first from 1585-90 to 1609, the second from 1609 to 1621, the third from 1621 to 1647, the fourth from 1647 to 1672, the fifth from 1672 to 1700, the sixth from 1700 to 1713, and finally the seventh from 1713 to 1740. He states that the Dutch succeeded in capturing hardly Mediterranean trade in the first phase. He also concludes that their commerce in the region expanded in the second phase but weakened in the third phase. According to Israel, the fourth phase was the zenith for the Dutch in the Mediterranean, whereas in the fifth and sixth phases a decline was witnessed in the Dutch Mediterranean trade, and in the seventh phase (1713-1740) there was a decline in Dutch trade and its primacy overall.

All historians agree that after 1590, Dutch vessels set sail for the first time to the Mediterranean. They also agree that in the following years Dutch shipping and trade flourished in both the Eastern and Western Mediterranean. However, both Van Dillen and Israel disagree with the explanation of Braudel about the decline of Dutch trade in the region from the middle of the century. Moreover, Israel and Braudel do not agree on the significance and nature of the Dutch trading goods in the Mediterranean. Braudel was of the opinion that trade in bulky goods, especially grain, was the key factor in determining the Dutch domination in the Mediterranean trade (Braudel 1972: 545). By contrast, Israel, in his work on *Dutch Primacy* in the Mediterranean as well as world trade, stressed the significance of trade in luxury commodities (1989: 9).

The Dutch role in the Mediterranean after the mid-seventeenth century is a controversial issue among western historians. Braudel believes that from the middle of the seventeenth century, Dutch trade sharply declined in the West and East Mediterranean. According to him, Dutch ships disappeared because of the declining demand for the Northern grain in the South. Thus, the Dutch domination in the Mediterranean ended and the balance of commercial power changed, no longer being in their favour (Braudel 1972: 572-3, 635).

However, in the light of the reports and letters of Dutch representatives in the Levant, the Braudelian view regarding the East Mediterranean in the second

half of the century becomes questionable.<sup>48</sup> Braudel is correct regarding the decline of the Dutch role in bulky commodities in the South in this period. But the Dutch trade in luxuries did not decline, rather it increased. In fact, it reached its peak especially in textile products in the third quarter of the seventeenth century.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to Israel, Van Dillen also states that the Dutch Mediterranean trade increased after 1645 (Israel 1989; Van Dillen 1970). Furthermore, although they faced strong English and French competition, the Dutch in the Levant continued to be important until the last two decades of the century. However, it must be said that the main rivals of the Dutch in Ottoman territories were the English traders in the middle of the century, not the French.<sup>50</sup> But towards the end of the century, the French Levant trade expanded more than both English and the Dutch.

As a matter of fact, in the middle of the century, Dutch Eastern Mediterranean trade was of a different nature than at the beginning. While in the first half of the century the Dutch exports to the Empire consisted of silver, colonial products, and certain luxury and bulky commodities; towards the middle of the century, by contrast, the composition of trade had drastically changed and the Dutch began to import mostly raw materials for textiles and export their own manufactured products (Posthumus 1939: 2. 273). This was a kind of capture of the Ottoman textile market from the Italians, in competition with England. Furthermore, they also became importers of the raw materials of the textiles from the Empire to the whole of Western Europe.

Wood is of the opinion that the Dutch became a strength in the Levant owing to the different policies pursued by the Ottomans towards the western nations (Wood 1935: 54-55). In fact, except for the Venetians, the Ottomans followed the same policies towards the other western trading nations in the Levant, especially

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<sup>48</sup> The reports and letters of Dutch representatives in the Levant to the Netherlands indicate that the Dutch trading activities increased from the middle of the century in the East Mediterranean (ARA SG 12593; ARA LH 97, 98, 99, 100, 122, 123, 161). Ottoman archival documents in Istanbul also reveal that the Dutch shipping and trading activities increased in the Levant towards the middle of the century (BBA MD 39, 100, 76, 192-193).

<sup>49</sup> According to the Ottoman archival records, in the second half of the century, the Empire mainly exported raw materials for textiles such as mohair, cotton, wool, silk, and agricultural products such as grapes, figs and some other products such as coffee and oil. While the Dutch merchants brought in cloth, lakens, sugar, Asian and colonial products, coffee, clove, cinnamon, lead, tin, cooper, mercury, etc. the primary trading products were the textile materials (BBA, ED 22/1: 502, 523, 569, 591, 642, 647, 687, 697, 704, 860, 898, 1035, 1087, 1165, 1351, 1529, 1622, 1627, 1823, 1916, 1974, 1990, 2184).

<sup>50</sup> The Dutch Levant trade volume amounted to 12 million livres annually in the middle of the century, while the French was about 6-7 million annually (McGowen 1981: 21).

as regards to the English and Dutch. It is a fact that the Venetian-Turkish war of 1645-1669 paralysed the sale of Venetian woollen cloth through the Ottoman Empire, and the Dutch seized this opportunity.

The Dutch merchants, who took advantage of the trade routes at this time, reached a very good position in the Levant in the 1650s. Their trade activities flourished in İzmir as well as in other ports of the Levant. Their trade activities in the Levant increased to such a degree that in 1649 English merchants complained that the Dutch merchants were capturing the Levant trade because of their large ships, cheap freight and low charges, and that large quantities of Turkish goods were reaching England via Dutch sources (Wood 1935: 54). On a few occasions and especially when the Anglo-Dutch war broke out in 1652, the Dutch made no secret of their aim to drive the English out of the Levant trade by making the Mediterranean too dangerous for them. They could easily manage this because they collaborated with Ottoman merchants (Wood 1935: 55).

By the middle of the century, the essence of the Dutch Levant trade became the exchange of mohair yarns for the Dutch fine woollen cloth which was made in Leiden and Haarlem. Ottoman Anatolia appeared as the foremost market for this commodity and it was the only source of supply of mohair yarn, the raw material for camlet, which was Leiden's second most significant product after *laken* during this period. By the 1670s the Dutch Republic became a significant importer of wool as well. It was dependent upon raw materials from Spain and especially from Ottoman Anatolia. During the third quarter of the century, exports of Leiden *lakens* to İzmir and Aleppo rose to around six thousand pieces yearly (Heeringa 1910: 98, 303).

Israel believes that the most successful phase of the value of Dutch woollen products exported to the Ottomans was during the third quarter of the seventeenth century (Israel 1989: 224-27). It must be added that the Dutch *Leeuwendaalders* supplanted the Spanish piece of eight as the preferred coin in the Levant markets.

#### TOWARDS THE COMMERCIAL INTEGRATION BETWEEN THE LEVANT AND ATLANTIC

One can presume that the rise of the Ottoman-Atlantic commercial relations influenced the European world economy and consequently increased the volume of international trade and brought new trading partners to the Levant. Hence, traditional commercial relations began to change between the Ottoman Empire and the Westerners. The middle of the seventeenth century marked a new stage in the pattern of Ottoman-European economic relations: Ottoman raw materials

began to be exchanged for manufactured European goods, and the Ottoman territories began to be opened to the European markets.<sup>51</sup>

The Ottoman staple and open door policy towards the new western trading nations in the Levant created new commercial centres in the Middle East. While before the seventeenth century, the Europeans were mostly in favour of Aleppo, during that time they discovered the new trading and producing centres of the Empire: Ankara, Bursa, Salonica, Cyprus and İzmir. In the beginning of the Ottoman-Dutch relations, Antwerp and Aleppo were two important commercial centres, but later İzmir became the commercial centre for the world economy in the Levant, while Amsterdam became the centre of international trade in Europe.

For the Europeans, İzmir became the international entrepot for all kinds of commodities between the East and the West while the other cities became important producing and local trading centres. All these centres produced the main raw materials for the textile industries of the Empire and Europe. Following such trading centres as Aleppo, Istanbul, Bursa, Cyprus, and İzmir; some other cities also became production centres. From the middle of the century onwards, all these centres appeared to become very important cities in providing the raw materials for the European world economy.

Ottoman foreign trade did not fall in value after the decline of the Western Mediterranean economy. Instead of the Italians, due to the Ottoman economic policy, the Northern Europeans became the leading western traders in the late sixteenth and seventeenth century. By granting privileges (capitulations) to the French and English in the sixteenth century, and later to the Dutch in the seventeenth century, the Levant trade continued in the early modern period. Nevertheless, the Ottoman-Dutch commercial relations marked the beginning of certain changes in the production process of the Ottoman economy.

Although the Ottoman economic policy was directly concerned with the control of the economy, it seems that the main objective of this policy was not to protect Ottoman manufactures from foreign competition. On the contrary, the Sublime Porte maintained its traditional liberal policy.<sup>52</sup> While the Ottomans made a great deal of profit by exporting raw materials to the countries in the

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<sup>51</sup> We can get an idea about the merchandise, which was traded between the Levant and Western Europe in the second half of the seventeenth century from the Appendix. It reveals the amount of custom duties on certain goods. It also shows how much duties were paid by Dutch merchants to Ottoman authorities per article.

<sup>52</sup> It can be said that the Ottoman government's main concern was taxation and allocation, and open borders for commodities were perceived as a means to increase income in this respect.

Atlantic, the economy of the Empire began to become a producer of raw materials for Western Europe as well as for the Leiden textile industry. Thus, by providing raw materials, the Levant market began to play a significant role in the development of the textile industry in Western Europe. For the Ottoman Empire this marked the beginning of becoming an exporter of raw textile materials, particularly silk,<sup>53</sup> cotton, mohair and wool rather than being an exporter of manufactured products. Furthermore, the Ottomans were not only important in the seventeenth century because they supplied the Europeans with raw materials used in textile production but also with grain. Consequently, the Ottoman economy increasingly opened itself to Europe in agriculture, industry and trade in the same period.

The regional and interregional trade in grain, silk, cotton, mohair yarn, wool, silver, etc. flourished and the production of the raw materials increased in the Ottoman economy. The treasury of the Empire collected a great amount of custom duties from the western merchants' activities in its territories. However, the Ottoman textile manufacturers began to be affected by these developments, as was observed in the case of the silk industries in Bursa (Çizakça 1978; 1985). The raw silk prices in Bursa increased by 293% in the period between 1550 and 1650. One can conclude that the increased exports of raw materials from the Empire to Europe, in which the European traders, especially the English and the Dutch had a significant role, provide an explanation for these price increases.<sup>54</sup>

In fact, the Ottoman industrial production did not decline in the seventeenth century either.<sup>55</sup> However, the European demand for raw textile materials led to some changes in the industrial production of the Empire. The Ottomans themselves started to prefer European cloth and concentrated on the production of the raw materials instead of final cloth products. This process began to accelerate towards the middle of the seventeenth century. Domestic final cloth production entered a new phase of stagnation after tremendously increasing yarn

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<sup>53</sup> Silk exports from the Empire to the West included both the Ottomans' own production and some Iranian silk. This meant that the Ottoman Empire was the exporter of Iranian silk to the West as well as of its own production. However, the exact share of Iranian silk in total Ottoman exports of silk is difficult to determine.

<sup>54</sup> The lack of data on raw materials used in textile production in the Empire for the period between 1571 and 1699 leads to some difficulties in making a complete analysis of the topic. The Dutch were active in trade of cotton, silk and especially mohair yarn. Therefore, Çizakça's study in particular may give an idea about the results and effects of European imports from the Empire as regards Ottoman industrial production in the early modern period.

<sup>55</sup> For more information on the industrial production of the Empire in the seventeenth century, see Gerber 1988 and Quataert 1994.

exports to the Atlantic world. Consequently, mohair yarn (*sof*) production and the number of producers increased in Ankara in the seventeenth century. Furthermore, the population of Ankara in the seventeenth century did not decrease and may have in fact grown.<sup>56</sup>

According to Çizakça, the prices of locally produced cloth also increased during the same period, but at a far slower rate than the raw materials (Çizakça 1978). The increase in the European demand for the raw materials led to the growth of production in raw materials in the Ottoman economy. While the prices of raw materials increased, cloth prices failed to increase at the same rate. As a result of this development, the production of raw materials became more profitable than the production of cloth in the Ottoman Empire. This probably caused a relative shift in domestic activity from the production of cloth to the production of raw materials. This development marks the mutual influence of the Ottoman economy and the western European world economy in the early modern period. Ottoman seventeenth century observer Naima complained that the Empire began to become the main area for production of raw materials but a good market for consumption of final textile products (Naima 1866: vol. IV, 293).

Nevertheless, as Pamuk<sup>57</sup> states, “the Ottoman manufactures were not subjected to any serious competition from European industry until later. Until the nineteenth century, the volume of trade with Europe remained limited and the imports were primarily luxury goods and items such as colonial wares which did not compete with domestically produced goods” (Pamuk 1999b: 23). I agree with this statement. However, due to the Ottoman-Dutch economic relations the influence of the Western Europeans began to appear in the Ottoman economy.<sup>58</sup> This effect emerged in two ways: first in the purchase of raw materials, and then in the sale of the finished products. Nevertheless, it must be emphasised that the European effect on the industrial production of the Empire in the seventeenth century remained limited.

Some historians view the Ottoman economic relations with the newly rising western nations in the seventeenth century as a revolution in international trade.<sup>59</sup> I add that the most dynamic western nation in this respect was the Dutch. Especially regarding the circulation of western coins in the Levant, the

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<sup>56</sup> The following *kadı sicilleri* (AKS) of Ankara are related to the beginning and the end of the seventeenth century. They clearly indicate that the population, volume of mohair production and the number of producers increased during the seventeenth century: vols, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71.

<sup>57</sup> I am grateful to the author for allowing me to read part of his book in manuscript form.

<sup>58</sup> Of course, Ottoman-English and French relations must also be taken into account.

<sup>59</sup> For more information see Steensgaard 1972, 1974; McGowan 1981; Mantran 1987; Masters 1988; Goldstone 1990; Goffman 1990; 1995 and Jennings 1993.



significance in the Ottoman economy of the Dutch lion dollars (*leeuwendalers*) must be emphasised.

The characteristic feature of the Levant trade had long been the fact that a large proportion of the payments for Oriental products had to be made with precious metals. The Dutch merchants were therefore faced with the necessity of acquiring precious metals for their trade with the Levant.

The estimates of the bullion export show that during the second half of the seventeenth century, Dutch trade in coins did not decline in the Eastern Mediterranean, rather it increased. According to table 1, Dutch bullion exports increased in East Asia and the Levant, but in the Baltic, they were at the same level at the beginning and at end of the seventeenth century. The growth of Eastern Asian trade was much more significant, however.

Table 1. Holland's Bullion Exports 1600-1700  
(In millions of rix-dollars per year)

Trade Area	Around 1600	Around 1650	Around 1700
The Baltic	2	2.5	2
The Levant	0.6	0.8	1
The Eastern Asia	0.3	0.4	2
Total	2.9	3.7	5.0

Source: Attman (1983: 103)

Note: The only precise figures regarding precious metals required for the Western European-Levantine trade relate to the Dutch merchants who in 1614 imported into Aleppo—apart from goods—0.6 million rix-dollars in Spanish reals as well. According to Attman (1983: 8): 1 rix-dollar = 25.98 grammes of silver, 1 rix-dollar = 2.5 Dutch guilders (after 1606), 1 guilder = 20 Dutch stuivers, and 1 rix-dollar = 50 Dutch stuivers.

In 1614, there was a registration in Aleppo of the Dutch trading growth which was estimated at 0.6 million rix-dollars (1.5 million guilders). The other register is related to 1683. This estimate amounted to 0.8 million rix-dollars for the volume of goods in İzmir (Attman 1983: 93). It means that the Dutch trade to the Ottoman Empire amounted to nearly 2 million Dutch guilders.

Furthermore, during the seventeenth century, both France and England transported 1 million rix-dollars yearly and Venice 0.4 million rix-dollars to the Levant. The total supply of precious metals to the ports of the Levant during the seventeenth century can be estimated to be around 2 million rix-dollars (table 2). It means that, in the seventeenth century, the Dutch merchants were more active and effective than other westerners in exporting precious metals to the Ottoman territories. Pamuk points out that the Ottoman import of the west-

ern coins reached the peak between 1656 and 1669, which is the period of the Dutch zenith in the Levant trade.<sup>60</sup>

Table 2. Estimated Annual Exports of Precious Metals from Europe to the East (in million of rix-dollars per year)

Year	1600	1650	1700
Levant	1	2	2
The Baltic region	1.7-2	2.3-3	2.3-3
The route the Cape	1	1.7	3.3
Total	3.7-4	6.6-7	7.6-8.3

Source: Attman (1983: 12)

When a cargo of 200,000 Dutch lion dollars arrived at Aleppo in 1677, the grand vizier ordered the whole consignment to be seized and although the dollars proved to be of full measure, it cost 15,000 dollar to secure their release (Wood 1935: 101). The Dutch *leuwendaalders* were not only used by the Dutch merchants, but also by other western nations, especially the English who also exported Dutch lion dollars to the Empire.<sup>61</sup> The Dutch lion dollars became the main western coins of demand in the Ottoman markets in the seventeenth century. Dutch merchants played a major role in the import of these coins to the Empire.

Cotton, linen, wool, silk and mohair yarn became the main raw material for Western European textile industries in the seventeenth century. Ankara became an important producing and trading centre for mohair yarn in the middle of Anatolia, while Bursa was a significant production and trading centre for silk in the western part of Turkey. The Dutch merchants in the seventeenth century, and later merchants from other western nations tried to establish their own production

<sup>60</sup> Pamuk states that “the peak in the traffic was reached between 1656 and 1669. J.B. Tavernier estimates the total volume of European coinage that went through the Ottoman customs at 180 million pieces, or at more than ten million Spanish pieces of eight. In gold, this corresponded to more than six million Venetian ducats. In addition, some unknown quantity was smuggled into Ottoman territory in part by bribing customs officials. According to another estimate, an average of 22 ships arrived at the port of İzmir every year during this period, all loaded with these debased pieces. Such volumes suggest that the remaining good coins in the Ottoman markets were being taken back to southern Europe and reminted as base luigini and re-imported to the Ottoman markets” (Pamuk 1997: 350).

<sup>61</sup> This silver coin was minted in Holland particularly for the Middle East. It was first imported into England from Holland and then exported to the Levant (Abbott 1920: 237-38).

agents in either Ankara or Bursa, but never succeeded for any length of time. The Ottoman Muslim and non-Muslim merchants controlled this trade and transferred the raw materials via İzmir to Western Europe.

It may be said that the Ottoman exports, though they contained only a small fraction of the total world trade in the early modern times, made a significant contribution to the economic evolution of Western Europe. Main items from the Levant such as wheat, cereals, cattle, hides, olive oil, wool, linen, mohair, silk and cotton reached Europe and this led to the institutionalisation of international commodity markets in world trade and production. The Dutch merchants were the most active community both in the trade of bulky and luxury commodities between the Empire and Europe. They sent these products not only to Holland, but also to Italy, France, Germany, England, and also to some other places in Europe.

Moreover, the Netherlands became the main entrepot for the distribution of the Levantine products to the European world during the same period. Dutch ships to the Ottoman ports sailed from many different ports of Europe: Hamburg, Danzig, Amsterdam, Enkhuizen, Rotterdam, Dordrecht, Cadiz, Lisbon, Emden, Barcelona, Zante, Marseilles, Genoa, Naples, Leghorn and Malta. This transportation and commercial network between Europe and the Levant made the flow of commodities between the two regions possible.

The commercial expansion of Europe and the accumulation of capital led to the creation of new industries, particularly in the area of textiles, which had to find export markets to continue their expansion. The fundamental inputs of the French, English and Dutch textile industries were silk, cotton, linen, mohair yarn and wool. England mainly imported silk, wool and cotton while France and the Dutch Republic mostly imported cotton, silk and mohair. Due to the exchange of goods and differences in currency rate, the Levant trade was very profitable for the Western European economies. The European Levant companies accumulated great wealth from this trade. Their consuls and ambassadors were active in protecting their commercial rights. Many of them were even personally involved in commercial activities.

Consequently, the Ottoman Empire increasingly opened its economy to Western Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. With the widening of the network between the two regions, the commercial relations of the Ottoman-Dutch merchants increased significantly. This development created a new situation between the markets of the two regions, the Levant and North-western Europe. Especially due to the Ottoman-Dutch commercial relations, a trend began to develop towards the integration of the European world economy with the Levant, and a world market for goods was based on international sup-

ply and demand. These relations played a crucial role during the early stage of the integration between the Ottoman economy with the European world economy in the seventeenth century. However, it did not constitute full integration of the economy of the Empire and the European capitalist world economy. It was only the starting point for the integration of the two economies and this trend continued until the construction of railways in the late nineteenth century.

## CONCLUSION

The Ottoman-Dutch commercial relations in the seventeenth century represent the relations between the European capitalist world economy and a World Empire. As an expanding trading nation in the world economy, the Dutch Republic played an important role in the commercial integration between the provinces of the Ottoman Empire and Western Europe in the same period. The growth of Ottoman-Dutch economic relations in the seventeenth century followed the growth of the economic relations between the provinces of the Empire and Western Europe. Therefore, the two world economic systems, the Ottoman and Western European economies increasingly opened to each other. The point is that the Ottomans had no political conflict with this newly rising western capitalist nation in the concerned period. Moreover, this trading nation was an Ottoman ally in the West.

From the last decades of the sixteenth century the Dutch merchants had an increased interest in the Mediterranean. But, the trade in this region was not so secure for the Dutch seamen. The hazardous conditions in the region motivated the Dutch to establish formal economic relations with the Ottomans. In fact, both the Ottomans and the Dutch had economic and political interests in cooperation in the improvement of their relationships.

Israel's views support our findings that political reasons played a role in the rise of the Dutch Mediterranean trade during the early modern period. Then, in understanding the Dutch role in the Levant trade, the Ottoman policies towards the Dutch should be taken into consideration. Indeed, the Ottoman governments were friendly towards the Dutch. Thus, in 1612, the Ottoman Empire and Dutch Republic formally established economic and political relationships, in that the first capitulations were granted to the Dutch. With this the Dutch succeeded in obtaining favourable privileges from the Ottoman Sultan Ahmed I, comprising seventy-five articles of trade which defined "Dutch liberties on the subject." These articles allowed the Dutch formal access to the Ottoman markets.

It is clear that the Ottoman Empire followed an "open door" policy towards the Dutch merchants. Having the privileges granted by the Empire, the Dutch

merchants could extend their trade activities easier than before in the ports of the Ottoman lands. The Ottoman Empire granted them two more capitulations in the seventeenth century (1634 and 1680). It must be pointed out that the renewed capitulations meant a better status and a more tolerant situation for the Dutch merchants in the Ottoman territory. The important thing is that a new sultan confirms the 'old' privileges of the Dutch merchants. In the same respect the capitulations are modified to take into consideration the changes in trading patterns (mohair).

Many historians stress that the increasing Dutch role in the Mediterranean was dependent upon the trade in bulky commodities. Israel, by contrast, strongly argues that it was dependent on the trade in luxury commodities. Braudel and his followers argue that the Dutch decline started in the mid-seventeenth century due to the disappearance of Baltic grain transports to the Mediterranean.

Our study has confirmed that towards the middle of the seventeenth century, a new feature in the commercial relations between the Ottomans and Dutch emerged. They became significant exporters of manufactured goods to the Ottoman Empire from Europe during the same period. The Dutch began to become the main importer of mohair yarn and the main exporter of *lakens* and camlets. In this respect, commercial relations flourished towards the middle of the seventeenth century and the Dutch Levant trade witnessed its zenith in the third quarter of the century.

In the last decades of the century due to the flourishing Ottoman-French and English relations and the mercantilist policies of these two nations against the Dutch in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Ottoman-Dutch commercial relations began to decline relative to those of the other western trading nations. Therefore, once again the political conditions and wars played their role in the Ottoman-Dutch economic relations.

One can observe that the Ottoman economic policy played some role in these developments. The Ottoman government was able to maintain its control over the presence of western trading nations within its borders throughout the seventeenth century. Besides the Dutch and English, the Ottomans opened their markets to the French in the last quarter of the century. They renewed French capitulations in 1673 and English ones in 1675. After this period the Dutch trade began to be adversely affected by the French and English expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean. The fact is that the seventeenth century witnessed the commercial integration between the Levant and Atlantic. Both the Ottomans and Dutch played an important role in this development.

APPENDIX  
 TYPES OF TRADING GOODS AND TARIFFS APPLIED BY THE DUTCH AMBASSADOR  
 OF THE LEVANT IN 1675

*Merchandise from Christian countries*

Articles	Weight	Amount (lion dollars)
Couchenille from Mexico	By weight ( <i>occa</i> )	12
" Sylvester	"	0.66
Indigo dye	"	3
" from Guatemala	"	3
Pepper	"	0.75
Cloves	"	6
Cinnamon	"	4
Nutmeg	"	3.5
Ginger	"	0.25
Vermilion	"	3
Silver	"	2
Whale-teeth	"	7
Elephant-tusks	"	1
Bread-sugar	"	0.75
Amber	"	
	By weight ( <i>cantar</i> )	
Copper wire	"	40
Iron wire	"	14
Red copper	"	2
Venetian steel	"	9
Danzig steel	"	8
Load	"	5
English	"	27
White load	"	7
Brazilian wood	"	16
Japanese wood	"	7
Sandalwood	"	
Letterwood	"	
Ebony	"	
	By the piece ( <i>stuck</i> )	
Dutch cloth ( <i>laken</i> ) from	"	
A half piece from 45-50 ell	"	
English cloth by the piece	"	80
Venetian cloth	"	
Genoese velvet	"	200
Florentine velvet	"	
Florentine satin	"	
Luca's satin	"	

*Export of merchandise from the Ottoman Empire to Christian countries*

Articles	Weight	Amount (lion dollars)
Seeds	By weight ( <i>occa</i> )	0.66
Aloe	"	
Armature	"	0.25
Smoke	"	1.25
Leather	"	0.66
Skin	"	0.25
Wool	"	1.50
Gall	By weight ( <i>cantar</i> )	8
Yellow-wax	"	22
Wood	"	1
Cotton	"	6
Cotton thread	"	18
Wool	"	4.5
Alum	"	2
Potash	"	
Paint	By the piece (stuck)	50
Skins	"	1.25
Tapestry	"	1

Source: AGA, Lev. Handel 5, 5028: 533

Note: 1 *occa* (*okka*): 1.282495 kg

1 *cantar* (*kantar*) = 100 *lodra* = 17600 *dirhem* = 56.443 kg. For more information on Ottoman metrology see İnalçık 1993.

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