



5th Levantine Heritage Foundation Zoom lecture gathering with guest speaker Dr Viorel Panaite
3 March 2021, 6pm (UK time)

Western European Merchants in the Eastern Mediterranean in 16th-17th century Islamic-Ottoman View. The Evidence of a Turkish Manuscript from Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Among the extensive collections of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Division orientale, there is a manuscript compilation of 278 folios which includes Ottoman documents from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. During his mission to the Ottoman court (1593–1605), François Savary de Brèves conceived this manuscript as a guidebook for the representatives of France in the Ottoman Mediterranean towns and ports. One of the direct beneficiaries was André Du Ryer de Malezair, disciple of Savary de Brèves, who was appointed consul of France in Egypt for the short period between 1623 and 1626. The manuscript contains around 250 documents, issued from different chanceries in Istanbul, sultanic charters (*ahdname-i hümayun*), letters (*name-i hümayun*) and orders (*hüküm*), reports of the Grand Vizier (*telhis*), legal opinions of the Grand Mufti (*fetva*), letters of Ottoman high officials (*mektub*), translations of King Henry IV's letters, and ambassadorial petitions (*arz*) to the Ottoman government.

Turkish manuscripts including copies of peace agreements can be frequently found in archives and libraries. Astonishing to this manuscript - and one can say this is the only manuscript structured in this manner, discovered until now -, is the fact that the section of imperial charters (*ahdname-i hümayun*) is followed by a special section of legal opinions (*fetva*). Moreover, the attempts of the Ottoman central authorities to limit the abuses of local officials – less known until now – are proved by various imperial commands (*hüküm*), which make up the third section of the manuscript. This manuscript is a basic source for studying the status of Western European merchants during their journey in the Eastern Mediterranean. Particularly, the documents offer information on: imperial charters with commercial privileges granted to the Kings of France in the second half of the sixteenth century; legal condition of non-treaty Westerners (especially the Dutch merchants until the granting of their first *ahdname* in 1612); commercial navigation and carrying trade; French consuls in the Levantine harbours; prohibited merchandise and tax exemptions; piracy and captives.

Thus, we have at our disposal a sufficient documentary base for drawing out a comprehensive picture of Western trade, merchants, consuls and captives (especially, the French ones) in the Eastern Mediterranean at late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries.



Dr. Viorel Panaite is currently Professor in Islamic Ottoman history (since 1994) and Head of Doctoral School of History (since 2013) at the University of Bucharest, Senior Researcher at the Institute for South-East European Studies of the Romanian Academy (since 1991), Honorary Member of the Turkish Academy of Sciences (TÜBA) since 2019.

He has published extensively on Ottoman law of war, peace, treaties and tributaries. The most-known monographs are *Ottoman Law of War and Peace. The Ottoman Empire and Its Tribute-Payers from the North of the Danube*, Leiden-Boston: BRILL, 2019; *News in England on the Great Turkish War (1683-1699)*, Institut d'Études Sud-Est Européennes, Brăila, 2018; *Western Diplomacy, Commerce and Ottoman Law. 15th to 17th Century*, Bucharest, 2004. In 2018 he received the Turkish Academy Award for Social Sciences and Humanities, in recognition of his work in Ottoman conception of international law, especially law of war and peace and the capitulations (*ahdnames*).

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