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RECOMMENDED BY THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE: BOSNIAN MERCHANTS BETWEEN SARAJEVO AND VENICE

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to indicate the importance of the Venetian-Ottoman correspondence that can largely help better understand trade between Venice and the Ottoman Empire. The letters that Ottoman officials were sending to Venetian representatives of authorities can not only outline problems that merchants faced and the ways they were resolved, but also show how diplomatic relations influenced their work. Ottoman representatives in the Eyalet of Bosnia tried to mediate between Bosnian merchants and Venetian officials in different situations via correspondence. When issuing recommendations for the performance of trade or intervening in order to resolve a legal issue, in their addresses Ottoman officials would always refer to the maintenance of friendly relations as the main reason for the fulfillment of a request.

Keywords: merchants, Bosnia, Sarajevo, Venice, letters, correspondence, trade.

Historiography already pointed to the importance of trade between Venice and Ottoman Empire by analyzing various documents. Scholars like Paolo Preto who focused on Venetian literature showed how trade and mercantile relations brought Venetians a precious experience that helped them in understanding Ottoman culture.¹ Registers of Venetian magistracies and their meticulous reporting of every trade related decision were an important source of information for understanding the role of the official translators of the Ottoman documents – dragomans (Ital. *dragomano*).² Reports

¹ Paolo Preto, *Venezia e i Turchi*, Viella, Roma, 2010.

² E. Natalie Rothman, “Interpreting Dragomans: Boundaries and Crossing in the Early Modern Mediterranean”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 51, Cambridge,

that bailo, Venetian representative in Istanbul, sent to Venice were used in order to explain how Venetians conducted their trade in Ottoman capital with a diplomatic assistance that he provided them with, also making his residence in Istanbul a place where young Venetians were able to learn Ottoman language and become dragomans.³ Analyzing not only documents that dealt with trade issues, but also the ones that treated diplomacy, Maria Pia Pedani wrote valuable studies that showed the importance of Venetian-Ottoman trade and the role of Ottoman merchants on Venetian market.⁴

Among the Ottoman diplomatic documents that were stressed as important in the examination of trade links between Venice and the Ottoman Empire were ahdnames (capitulations), that are of primary importance for understanding the conditions under which Venetian-Ottoman trade was carried out. These documents, marking the establishment of peace relations between two states, also defined, in several items, the status of Venetian merchants in the Ottoman territory and general circumstances for the pursuit of trade.⁵ Other acts of the Ottoman office, such as the berat

2009, 771–800; E. Natalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire. Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 2012.

³ Eric C. Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople: Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2006; Eric C. Dursteler, “Commerce and Coexistence: Veneto-Ottoman Trade in Early Modern Era”, *Turcica*, 34, Paris, 2002., 105–133.

⁴ To cite only a few: Maria Pia Pedani, “Facilities for Ottoman Merchants in the Rialto Market (1524–1621)” in: *XIV Türk Tarih Kongresi, 09-13 Eylül*, Ankara, 2002, 1003–1014; Maria Pia Pedani, “Turchi in Canal Grande”, *Annali di Ca’ Foscari*, XLVI/2, Venezia, 2007, 39–54; Maria Pia Pedani, “A Culture of Trust. Ottoman Merchants and Venetian Notaries in the Early Modern Period” in: *Venetians and Ottomans in the Early Modern Age. Essays on Economic and Social Connected History*, ed. by Anna Valerio, Edizione Ca’ Foscari, Venezia, 2018, 31–49; Maria Pia Pedani, *Venezia porta d’Oriente*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2010; Maria Pia Pedani, “Gli Ottomani in Adriatico tra pirateria e commercio” in: *I Turchi, gli Asburgo e l’Adriatico*, a cura di G. Nemeth, A. Papo, D. Aurisina, Assoc. Pier Paolo Vergerio, Trieste, 2007, 57–64.

⁵ Hans P. A. Theunissen, “Ottoman–Venetian Diplomats: The Ahd-names. The Historical Background and the Development of a Category of Political-Commercial Instruments Together with an Annotated Edition of a Corpus of Relevant Documents”, *EJOS: Electronic Journal of Oriental Studies*, I/2, Utrecht, 1998, 1–698.

(Ottoman license), tezkere (certificate) and defters (registers) were equally used in order to examine the circulation of goods and the role of administration in its successful functioning from different aspects.⁶ However, somewhat less present in science is the analysis of written correspondence between Venetian and Ottoman officials and the importance of these letters that served as a particular form of recommendation for merchants, the performance of trade and resolving a problem.

This does not mean that studying official correspondence between Venice and the Ottoman Empire has been entirely neglected. On the contrary, it is known in science that political issues were resolved, diplomatic relations maintained, and gifts and invitations to numerous celebrations exchanged through correspondence between Ottoman and Venetian representatives of authorities. Maria Pia Pedani also pointed to the importance of such official messages, arriving to Venice from the Ottoman territory, by publishing the inventory of Turkish letters, prepared based on the initiated work of Alessio Bombaci. Owing to this inventory, an entire fund titled (Turkish letters and acts) was systematically organized, and is kept in the Venice State Archives. Unlike the fund *Documenti turchi* (Turkish documents), which systematizes acts arriving from Istanbul, *Lettere e scritture turchesche* also contains the documents that were created by the periphery administration of the Ottoman Empire.⁷

⁶Berats or diplomas as work permits were granted, for example, to Venetian consuls who were arriving in Ottoman ports in order to maintain Venetian-Ottoman trade links and help merchants, and as such are important for understanding this Venetian officials' work. These consuls did not have the duties of envoys as they focused only on supervision of trade: Erica Ianaro, *Levante. Veneti e Ottomani nel XVIII secolo*, Marsilio, Venezia, 2014, 82. Tezkere is the expression used by the Ottoman administration for any kind of document or certificate that could also be issued to merchants in different situations. Census defters have been analyzed in order to collect data on trading activity of a sanjak, about merchants who were active in the sanjak, fairs held there, collection of taxes and guilds pursuing handicraft production: Драгана Амедоски, Владета Петровић, Градска насеља Крушевачког санџака (XV–XVI век), Историјски институт, Београд, 2018, 180–206.

⁷Maria Pia Pedani, Alessio Bombaci, *Inventory of the Lettere e Scritture Turchesche in the Venetian State Archives*, Brill, Leiden/Boston, 2010; I “*Documenti Turchi*” dell’*Archivio di Stato di Venezia*, a cura di Maria Pia Pedani, I–II, Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali–Ufficio Centrale per i Beni Archivistici, Roma, 1994.

On the other hand, it is noteworthy that despite the collection and organization of Ottoman letters in the above mentioned two funds, there are many of those that were addressed to Venetian officials and are scattered in registers and files of funds of various Venetian magistratures in the Venice State Archives and the Zadar State Archives. These letters are often accompanied with their translations from Turkish, while some letters are preserved only in Italian, owing to the translation by an official Venetian translator (Ital. *dragomano*).

Recommended merchants or the ones seeking help

After the establishment of Venetian-Ottoman commerce with the possibility of reloading and quarantine in Split, wherefrom trade galleys would regularly set off to Venice, Ottoman merchants could safely arrive and engage in trade in the territory of the Republic. The hitherto studies have presented the opening of this reloading port in 1592 as a sort of a turning point in Venetian-Ottoman trade, which particularly created conditions for more active operation of merchants from the Ottoman Balkans in Venice.⁸ Roads that connected Bosnian towns with Dalmatian trade ports and custom duties paid for the mercantile transport between them were other important aspects analyzed with an aim to understand this trade relation.⁹ Other studies discovered that Bosnian merchants, as well as other merchants from the Ottoman Empire, were victims of a sea robbery which could easily become a threat to Venetian-Ottoman peace agreement.¹⁰ In situations like

⁸ Renzo Paci, "La "scala" di Spalato e i commercio veneziano nei Balcani fra cinque e seicento", *Miscellanea di Studi e Storie*, vol. XIV, Venezia, 1971.

⁹ Seid Traljić, „Trgovina Bosne i Hercegovine s lukama Dalmacije u XVII i XVIII stoljeću”, *Pomorski zbornik povodom 20-godišnjice dana mornarice i pomorstva Jugoslavije 1942–1962*, I, Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, Zagreb; Institut za historijske i ekonomske nauke, Zadar, 1962., 341–371; Seid Traljić, „Izvoz Bosanske robe preko splitske luke u XVIII stoljeću”, *Pomorski zbornik društva za proučavanje i unapređenje pomorstva Jugoslavije*, knj. III, Zadar, 1965., 809–827.

¹⁰ Gligor Stanojević, „Млетачко–турски заплет због пљачке босанских трговаца 1617. године”, *Историјски часопис*, XXVII, Београд, 1980., 237–244; Tommaso Stefani, “Ottoman merchants in dispute with the Republic of Venice at the end of the 16th centu-

this, Ottoman government's goal was to protect merchants, but it was also Ottoman officials that wanted to conduct trade business in spite of Sultan's will¹¹, and we will explain how merchants helped these officials to succeed in mercantile exchange. With the gradual transfer of activities to the Venetian market, Bosnian merchants gained reputation, over time, both in the domestic and foreign territory.¹² The years of experience, contacts with Venetian merchants and being familiar with the ways of functioning of trade in this trading hub could bring to some of them the chance to perform trade on behalf of Ottoman officials.

Bosnian merchants going to Venice as agents of Ottoman representatives of authorities would always carry a letter of recommendation of the person who engaged them. These letters guaranteed for them and, at the same time, requested privileges in their name.¹³ The letters had a standard form with diplomatic features and a clear structure consisting of the title, address with many respectful epithets, the central part with the concrete question, and the final part, which consisted of the salutation, i.e. expressions of gratitude.¹⁴ They always stated the names of merchants, and sometimes their origin as well, with the description of the trading activity they were engaged to carry out in Venice. It was emphasized which goods they had to sell and which to procure, and in some case, the deadline was also specified.

Engaged for these activities were probably those merchants who often cooperated with representatives of the Ottoman authorities and were a kind

ry: Some glances at the contested regime of the Capitulations”, *Turcica*, 46, Paris, 2015., 153–176; Suraiya Faroqhi, “Bosnian Merchants in the Adriatic” in: *Another Mirror for the Princes. The Public Image of the Ottoman Sultans and its Receptions*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi, The Isis Press, Istanbul, 2009, 233–248.

¹¹ Vera Costantini, “Il rinnovamento della politica economica veneziana nei Balcani visto dalle fonti ottomane (1578–1617)” in: *Innovare nella storia economica: temi, metodi, fonti*, Fondazione Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica “F. Datini”, Roma, 2014, 185–196.

¹² Nedim Filipović, “Nekoliko dokumenata o trgovini za vrijeme turske vladavine u našim zemljama”, *Prilozi za orijentalnu Filologiju*, II, Sarajevo, 1952, 57–81.

¹³ Maria Pia Pedani, “Facilities for Ottoman Merchants”, 1112.

¹⁴ Невен Исаиловић, “Четири писма из 1450. и 1451. године о промету дубровачке робе према Босни”, Мешовита грађа, XXXVI, Београд, 2015, 28.

of “court merchants”.¹⁵ Officials would often describe them in letters as “my protégé” (Ital. *homo mio*) or “the protégé of my administration” (Ital. *homo di casa mia*). It was also sometimes stressed in letters that it was a merchant subordinated to serve an Ottoman official (Ital. *subordinato a questo amico di lei*), without specifying whether his years-long service or simply his engagement in performing a trade transaction was referred to.

Through one such letter, in 1587 the beylerbey of Bosnia recommended merchant Malkoč (*Malcoch huomo mio*) as his “protégé”. Sending him to Venice together with letters addressed to the Venetian doge and all members of the Venetian government, he ordered the merchant to carry out the sale of wax and other goods. On this occasion, the beylerbey asked from the doge to grant to this merchant the privilege to sell all goods at the price he requested, in order to obtain a large quantity of ducats (Ital. *cechini*, the Venetian gold coin). The letter clearly shows that the entire money was to be given to an Ottoman functionary as at the start of the address he emphasizes that he sent him to Venice, which is why it is certainly not the matter of a private affair of the Bosnian merchant.¹⁶

These letters of recommendations suggest that Ottoman officials mainly requested from Venetian authorities an exemption from rules during regular conduct of trade. As trade was carried out owing to good Venetian-Ottoman diplomatic relations, none of Ottoman merchants needed a special document issued in the Ottoman territory in order to be allowed to arrive in Venice. Ottoman functionaries saw the need to compile such kind of recommendation when they tasked a merchant with performing purchase and sale in Venice, under conditions which implied the violation of some rules. Sometimes it was the sale of goods at the price exceeding the standard one, as in the stated example, and sometimes the evasion of the standard procedure that each Ottoman merchant was obliged to comply with.

¹⁵ M. P. Pedani, “Facilities for Ottoman Merchants”, 1112.

¹⁶ Venezia, Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Lettere e Scritture Turchesche, b. 4, fol. N° 100 (3 January 1586. m. v.). *M. v.* stands for *more veneto*, i.e. in “Venetian style”, and was used to designate the Venetian manner of time measurement, according to which the year started on 1 March. For instance, according to the Venetian time measurement method, 3 January 1586 was 3 January 1587.

When in 1640, the Bosnian defterdar Musli Efendi wrote a letter of recommendation for Jewish merchant Moses from Sarajevo (Moise hebreo), he requested that the merchant be released from the obligation to remain in quarantine, and that he should use a frigate¹⁷ for the export of goods to Venice. One of the most frequent factors of slowing the circulation of goods via the Split ferry was the length of quarantine, during which goods of each foreign merchant had to be disinfected as a sanitary measure of precaution. On the other hand, the delays of trade galleys equally often delayed trade in situations when the schedule of arrivals of these vessels was not respected. Although the Venetian authorities opposed the use of frigates due to poor weaponry and a lesser possibility to be protected from attacks, in extraordinary situations they also carried goods of Ottoman merchants. Stating these two requests in his letter of recommendation, the defterdar in fact requested that the merchant from Sarajevo be enabled to complete the job he was entrusted with quickly and without delays.

In the same year, the Bosnian pasha sent a letter to the knez and captain of Split in order to intercede for merchant Jusuf from Banja Luka (Ital. *Jussuf mercante di questa terra di Bagnaluca*). He did not state whether Jusuf carried goods that he was to sell in Venice, but stressed that in that town he had to make the purchase of silk and other fabrics on his behalf. Although he did not explain in the letter how he expected that the merchant be treated, he was sufficiently explicit when he wrote that he requested that Jusuf be released from the Split ferry “as soon as possible”.¹⁸ Based on this, it is obvious that he expected, just as the Bosnian pasha in the above letter, that Venetian officials should ensure the recommended merchant a privileged passage, which most probably implied the exemption from quarantine and the right to transport goods by any vessel.

Such recommendations of Ottoman representatives from the Eyalet of Bosnia were also given to members of the well-known Brnjaković family

¹⁷ A frigate is a type of vessel with 6–12 oars at both sides, one mast and a low stern: Alberto Tenenti, *Piracy and the Decline of Venice 1580–1615*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles, 1967, 152–154; Frederic C. Lane, *Povijest Mletačke republike*, Golden marketing-Tehnička knjiga, Zagreb, 2007, 441; ASVe, Senato, Dispacci dei rettori, Dalmazia, filza 45 (28 March, 1640).

¹⁸ ASVe, Senato, Dispacci dei rettori, Dalmazia, filza 45 (28 March 1640).

from Sarajevo. The Brnjaković family was prominent in the Venetian market and beyond in the 17th century. The most active were brothers Filip and Jakov Brnjaković. They were the descendants of one of the most important Bosnian families, and historiography has already paid attention to their genealogical data. The Brnjakovići originated from Olovo, where they dealt with glass trade, and moved to Sarajevo probably before 1667 in order to expand their business. Seated in Sarajevo, their connections gradually grew, and this family of Catholic merchants soon began to invest their capital in large centers, such as Venice, Dubrovnik and Ancona.¹⁹ In the late 17th century, they were very successful, and Filip Brnjaković became particularly active in the Levant, Bosnia, Dubrovnik and Vienna.²⁰

The recommendation that Jakov Brnjaković received in 1679 from the Bosnian defterdar testifies to the non-negligible importance that this family had in maintaining Sarajevo trade with large trading hubs. Omer Pasha called him “the protégé of his administration” (Ital. *homo di casa mia*), which indicates the closeness he achieved with this Ottoman official and the reputation he enjoyed in his circle. On the other hand, this also leads to the conclusion that in this period Jakov Brnjaković (Giacomo Bernacovich) was one of the “court merchants”. This epithet was carried by those merchants who were authorized to procure goods in a foreign market on behalf of Ottoman officials in Bosnia. On this occasion, the Ottoman defterdar sent a plea to the *provveditore generale* of Zadar²¹ to enable the Bosnian merchant a safe journey to Ancona and back, so that he would procure in his name the goods he needed. It was necessary that

¹⁹ Milenko S. Filipović, “Brnjakovići“, *Narodna starina*, 13/33, Zagreb, 1934, 93–97.

²⁰ Вук Винавер, Дубровник и Турска у XVIII веку, Српска Академија наука, Београд, 1960, 69–70.

²¹ In cities under Venetian rule, special rectors were appointed to practice Venetian law. In Zadar resided Venetian rector named *provveditore generale* that ruled the Venetian province *Dalmazia ed Albania*. Zadar was also the only Dalmatian city that had two rectors – the count and the captain. All other cities in Dalmatia, including Split, had only the count who also undertook a duty of the captain: Tomislav Raukar, Ivo Petricioli, Franjo Švelc, Šime Peričić, *Zadar pod Mletačkom upravom*, Filozofski fakultet, Zadar, 1987, 45; Tea Mayhew, *Dalmatia between Ottoman and Venetian rule: Contado di Zara 1645 – 1718*, Viella, Roma, 2008, 158.

the *provveditore generale* be an intermediary and submit this request to the Venetian Senate, so that the Venice authorities would issue relevant orders. In addition to this letter, originating from the same year is the plea written a month later by Bosnian vizier Ahmed Pasha, so as to be sure that Jakov and his brother Filip would not be stopped by anyone on their return from Ancona. Having emphasized that Venetian merchants were well accepted in all Ottoman ports and their movement and operation were not limited, he expressed hope that Bosnian merchants would be treated similarly in all Venetian ports.²²

One year before these recommendations, one of the Brnjaković brothers was on the Split ferry, where he waited for the trade galley from Venice. He planned to send to Ancona the cargo that arrived together with the batches he already held in the Split lazaret, but the count and captain (Ital. *conte e capitano*) of Split, together with the *provveditore generale*, delayed his departure.²³ Perhaps in this case as well, the Sarajevo merchant carried out activities on behalf of Ottoman representatives in Bosnia, but he did not manage to execute without delay the orders he received. In light of this, we can assume that after such experiences Ottoman officials began to designate the Brnjaković brothers as their agents, and in return they could be granted some privileges in Venice.

In 1769, Jewish merchant David (David Ebreo) was probably “the court merchant” as well, responsible to the Bosnian pasha since he named him in the recommendation to the *provveditore generale* in Zadar as “his merchant” (Ital. *mio mercante*). Since the merchant did not complete all the tasks he was entrusted with during his first travel to Venice, the Bosnian pasha wrote again the order for his journey. In the second piece of correspondence, he requested that he also be issued the letter of recommendation from the Venetian Board of Trade (Ital. *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia*). We can only assume that the merchant encountered some problems in the city, which is why he needed additional protection of the Magistrature in order to be able to procure the necessary goods. However, the Bosnian pasha

²² ASVe, Senato, Dispacci, Provveditori da terra e da mar, b. 344 (20 March 1679; 11 April 1679).

²³ ASVe, SDR, Dalmazia, b. 61 (5 October 1678).

eventually lost any trust in the merchant. Learning from other Jewish merchants that David neglected the engagement for the sake of which he came to Venice, the Bosnian pasha asked the *provveditore generale* to intercede with the Venetian authorities to help terminate the stay of this merchant in the territory of the Republic. The pasha wanted that the merchant should return as soon as possible as he was resolved to dismiss him from the duty of a trading agent. When the merchant disregarded these orders and the pasha did not receive an answer of the *provveditore generale*, he sent his letter to the Venetian Board of Trade. He expected the Magistrature would cooperate with him, with the aim of ensuring merchant's faster return to the territory of the Eyalet of Bosnia, so that he would receive back his capital that he entrusted to the merchant and settle accounts with him. The outcome of this cooperation is not known, but this is certainly a significant example worthy to be mentioned, as it shows that not all instances of cooperation between Bosnian merchants and Ottoman officials went smoothly and to the mutual satisfaction.²⁴

This method of trade can be compared with trade cooperation embodied in an agreement between two persons on performing intermediary, "commission" trade. The term "commission" denotes an "order" issued for a trade transaction.²⁵ The task of a commission agent was to follow the instructions of the principal, i.e. ordering party, and carry out tasks "on his behalf" (Ital. *su commissione*).²⁶ Authorized commission agents were most often wealthy individuals with a large number of acquaintances in different markets. Once the commission agent decided to appoint a trustee, their relationship had to be legally defined within procurations (Ital. *procura*), i.e. agency agreements or other document. In addition, written communication was particularly important for those who chose to engage another person to use their capital instead of them and perform purchase and sale.²⁷

²⁴ Zadar, Državni Arhiv u Zadru, Mletački dagoman, kut. 9 (without date; 1769; without date; without date).

²⁵ Fernan Brodel, *Mediteran i mediteranski svet u doba Filipa II, Knjiga 3: Vreme sveta, Geopoetika-CID*, Beograd-Podgorica, 2001, 227.

²⁶ Frederic C. Lane, *I mercanti di Venezia*, Einaudi Tascabili, Torino, 1969, 82–83.

²⁷ Тома Поповић, "Дубровачки Јевреји у трговини Турске и Италије крајем XVI века", *Историјски часопис*, XXXIX, Београд, 1992, 75–76.

We do not have data about how this type of engagement was taking place in the Ottoman territory between officials and Bosnian merchants, but we learn of its existence through written correspondence with Venetian representatives of authorities. We do not possess data on agreements, contracts or procurations, which officials may have been issuing to them, as it was the custom in the Mediterranean for this type of agency, and the only sources indicating the participation of Bosnian merchants in this type of intermediary activities were the letters of Ottoman officials addressed to Venetian functionaries.

It is necessary to briefly look at the broader significance of similar letters for Venetian-Ottoman trade. Apart from personal tasks that merchants performed on their behalf, Ottoman representatives of authorities wrote letters to Venetian officials also to intervene in resolving various problems that merchants faced in Venice. First, merchants would go to the local Ottoman administration and file written or oral complaints due to problems they encountered during trade or transport of goods. Ottoman officials wrote letters to Venice when it was necessary to speed up the restitution of stolen goods²⁸, as well as in cases of unpaid debts and excessive duration of court proceedings deciding on them. We shall give several examples in order to illustrate the intervention of Ottoman representatives of authorities in such situations.

In 1625, the Bosnian vizier from Banja Luka wrote a letter to the count and captain of Trogir in order to intercede for Christian merchants from Sarajevo who were plundered while transferring goods from the Split port. The Morlachs carried out the attack, and the vizier stressed that those were “evil acts against any peace, duty and public order, and it is our duty to ensure that everyone lives in peace, particularly merchants who are never to be blamed for anything”. Having highlighted the innocence of merchants and their right to peacefully perform their duties, the vizier requested that

²⁸ One case from 1617 of stolen Bosnian merchants' goods was particularly analysed by Gligor Stanojević: Глигор Станојевић „Млетачко–турски заплет због пљачке босанских трговаца 1617. године”, Историјски часопис, XXVII, Београд, 1980, 237–244.

justice be promptly served and that fabrics – stolen from them on that occasion – be restored.²⁹

While the above example illustrates intervention due to the theft of a caravan which could disrupt trade, an example of an unpaid debt from the 18th century shows that Ottoman officials also reacted in favour of Bosnian merchants who were engaged in private business affairs. The Bosnian pasha did not turn a blind eye to the complaints filed in 1751 by Sarajevo merchants, brothers Dimitrije and Nikola Dobović,³⁰ and wrote to the *provveditore generale* of Zadar. The Sarajevo merchants complained about the debt that was not settled to them by the owner of a *bottega*³¹ in Zadar, Leopold Filić (Ital. *Leopold Filich dimorante nella fortezza di Zara*). Also preserved is an undated letter, sent by the emin of Zadar on this occasion, and we can assume it was sent before pasha's letter, but it turned out to be insufficient to resolve the dispute. In that letter, the emin referred to friendly relations and indicated that the merchants had a legal document as a proof of claim (Ital. *carta legale della summa di 300 cecchini*), supporting the resolution of the dispute to their advantage. The Bosnian pasha mentions the same document, without specifying what kind of instrument it was, but it was probably a letter of credit or a bond that a Venetian subject issued to Sarajevo merchants. It is not clear why there are three letters of the Bosnian pasha as none of them contains information that the resolution of the dispute was delayed. One letter is not dated, the second is dated 30 December 1751, and the third is from around 1752.³²

²⁹ “[...] Questi sono misfatti da legge di natura, è contra ogni dovere, è contra ogni ordine pubblico. È il dovere ch’og’uno viva pacificamente e particolarmente i mercanti che non sono mai colpevoli di niente, e di questi li sono venute lettere bolate de tutti li Mercanti di Seraglio. [...]”: ASVe, SDR, Dalmazia, b. 30 (28 November 1625).

³⁰ In one place, merchants are designated as “Dobovich e Nicola dell’ordine de’ mercanti abitanti nel Seraglio“, and in another place as “fratelli Nicola e Dimitri dal Seraglio Sudditi del Nostro Potentissimo monarca“. The name of one brother is probably omitted in the first document, and their surname “Dobović” is probably omitted in the second document.

³¹ *Bottega* is an Italian word for some type of shop, a place where Venetian craftsmen presented and sell their products, but also could be used to indicate a workshop.

³² The emin in Zadar wrote that there was a legal document: *carta legale della summa di 300 cecchini i quali appartengono a mossulmani*. The letter further states: *si prega che*

The Bosnian pasha emphasized in his letter that the *provveditore generale* is obliged to examine the entire case and solve it justly, in line with capitulations, following the custom practiced for a long time on the border (Ital. *all'antico metodo e pratica del confine*).³³

When he mentioned the application of old customs for the resolution of disputes on the Venetian-Ottoman border, the Bosnian pasha perhaps had in mind the right of Ottoman merchants to address the *provveditore generale* if they had business problems. We can assume that this implied frequent correspondence between the *provveditore generale* in Zadar and Ottoman pashas from Bosnia, the exchange of information and investigation to be undertaken by the *provveditore generale*. In situations when they waited for a solution for a long time, merchants would address with complaints Ottoman representatives in Bosnia, seeking protection. In another letter from 18th century (1165 according to Hijri calendar), Bosnian pasha Hadzi Ahmed learned about the damage suffered by a Christian merchant from the territory of the Prusac kadiluk from one such plea that the merchant presented at the Bosnian Divan. Having complained that Pjetro Vilić and Francesco Ostrović from Trogir (Ital. *Pietro Vilich e Francesco Ostrovich abitanti di Castel Novo di Traù*) owed to him 19 ½ ducats, he requested from the Bosnian pasha a letter that would speed up the resolution of his problem with the *provveditore generale*.³⁴ In 1756, merchant Mula Hasan (Ital. *Molà Hassan negoziante da Emhisar*) came before the Bosnian Divan with the same request. He bought several rifles and other goods from a Venetian merchant, and sold them in Split to the Suvic brothers, who did not pay to him the purchase price of 200 ducats after the expiry of a six-month deadline. After the Bosnian merchant filed the com-

sia recuperato prima di tutti il credito delli surifferiti sudditi per esser di ragione de' Turchi dagl'effetti s'attrovano nella bottega del sudetto fallito. At the end of the letter, it was emphasized once again: *non si scordi tanto più che questi appartengono alli musulmani, i quali spero saranno favoriti in preferenza degl'altri.* It is also possible that money was taken from the waqf, which is why it was stressed that capital belonged to the Muslims. However, something like that would most probably be more precisely stated in the letter of the emin and the Bosnian pasha.

³³ DAZd, MD, kut. 6, br. 69/2, 72/2, 79 S. K. 1, 87 S. K. 1 (30 December 1751).

³⁴ DAZd, MD, kut. 6, br. 83/2 (1165 by Hijri).

plaint at the Divan, he was issued a letter with which he went to the count of Split and the Ottoman emin (customs official), so that they would help him get his money back, but the restitution never took place. Therefore, in the second letter, the Bosnian pasha asked the *provveditore generale* to take over the dispute and enable Hasan to get money that he claimed from Split merchants.³⁵ In regard to money claimed by merchant Mula Hasan (Molach Hassan) from Prusac, in 1759 the Bosnian pasha sent a letter to the *provveditore generale*, requesting that justice be served in accordance with capitulations.³⁶ In a similar letter from 1760, the Bosnian pasha instructed the *provveditore generale* to collect, with the help of emin Omer Aga in Zadar, the entire money that robbers stole from merchant Jefer while he was returning from the fair in Makarska.³⁷

“To our noble and honourable friend”

The official correspondence between Venetian and Ottoman officials could so far serve as the source of information about the rules that were in place and were defined between the two states, their officials and peoples. We can notice in them all intentions of the local administration, aimed at safeguarding the security of people and good diplomatic relations. They can equally reveal private aspirations, discords in relations and irregularities in the application of laws.³⁸ Official documents of this type, which deal with the questions of trade, can show the attitude and approach of the Ottoman authorities towards a particular problem in trade. Perhaps better than any other source, the letters of Ottoman officials can shed light on their personal intentions and benefits in trade with Venice, what goods they procured for themselves and with the intermediation of what merchants. In

³⁵ DAZd, MD, kut. 8, br. 93 (mid-April 1756).

³⁶ DAZd, MD, kut. 7, br. 84 stara (November 1759).

³⁷ DAZd, MD, kut. 7, br. 69/3 (around 10 June 1760).

³⁸ Snježana Buzov, “Friendly Letters. The Early 18th Century Correspondence between Venetian and Ottoman Authorities in Dalmatia”, *Tolerance and Intolerance on the Triplex Confinum. Approaching the “Other” on the Borderlands Eastern Adriatic and beyond 1500–1800*, ed. by Egidio Ivetic, Drago Roksandic, CLEUP, Padova, 2007, 215–223.

situations when they reacted in order to remove an obstacle to trade or to restitute goods to merchants, Ottoman functionaries did not hesitate to express threats or set clear conditions for the fulfillment of what was requested. Therefore, except for the reason of their address, it is necessary to draw attention to their particular writing style, which, as we shall show, does not differ a lot from formulations used on other occasions, when the reason behind written communication were not trade issues.

Written addresses of Ottoman representatives of authorities always had to be accompanied with the answer of those responsible, and the main motive for careful handling of this matter was the preservation of peaceful relations. Upon the arrival of letters from the Ottoman territory, Venetian officials attentively considered each request, seeking advice about how to act from the highest political bodies in the Republic, whereafter they promised the Ottoman administration fast action and resolution in favour of merchants. Still, problems in trade could trigger vehement reactions and the Venetian authorities often strove to prevent any kind of Ottoman intervention. In 1646, members of the the Venetian Board of Trade expressed the opinion that it was better to listen to several Ottoman merchants' complaints so that they would not inform the authorized administration about the problem they faced in Venice or even send the complaint to the Porte (Ottoman government) in Istanbul about how badly they were treated in the Venetian territory.³⁹

However, most examples of the exchange of letters can be found with provincial administrators of Venice and the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans as this communication was regularly held, with a view to assuring peaceful coexistence on the border. As a result, a relationship based on years-long acquaintances, cooperation and mutual aid was often formed between some Venetian and Ottoman officials. This is also visible in letters in which Ottoman functionaries express closeness, addressing the recipient with the words "to our noble and honourable friend" or "to my friend

³⁹ "[...] stimeressimo potesse se non partorir buon effetto, et servira per tener costoro in dovere per non scrivino in paese o facino capitar avisi alla Porta che in questa Citta siano maltrattati [...]": ASVe, Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia, Prima serie, Risposte, b. 154, cc. 15–16 (14 March 1646).

and neighbour". After presenting the problem, the resolution of which was expected to arrive from Venice, usually expressed was the fear of the consequences for life on the Venetian-Ottoman border. Importance was assigned due to the suspicion that relations among functionaries could be spoiled, and it was therefore concluded in Ottoman letters that it was better if the solution was reached as soon as possible so that friendly relations remained unchanged.⁴⁰

Such method of exposition is present in correspondence that concerned not only political issues, but also trade, and was a customary method of address. In 1640, the defterdar of Bosnia wrote a letter to the count and captain of Split, calling him, in the opening sentences, his "friend and neighbour", wishing that God bestowed on him "well-being, peace and health". Bosnian merchants who were going to Venice via the Split ferry cooperated with the local Venetian rector, and the defterdar praised on this occasion the help and protection that merchants regularly received from him. Given such reports on cooperation, he claimed he counted on his amity and good intentions. At the end of this letter, the defterdar emphasized that if the count helped the merchant he was sending to Venice, he would consider such move another example of mutual friendship. The expressions of courteous and formal character were also not lacking in written communication addressed both to the *provveditore generale* of Zadar and the count and captain of Split. In the same year, in a letter of recommendation for a merchant from Banja Luka, the Bosnian pasha called two Venetian rectors "friends and neighbours", greeting them according to the customs of introductory address, and wishing them a good service.⁴¹

Continuous cooperation was needed for the maintenance of trade, and contact via written correspondence allowed for it. We can assume that the defterdar of Bosnia Omer pasha wished to emphasize this in his letter from 1679, writing the following: "accustomed to everyday privileges and services that I receive from Your Highness, I address you again in relation

⁴⁰Natalie E. Rothman, "Conversion and Convergence in the Venetian Borderlands", *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 41/3, Durham, 2011, 609; S. Buzov, "Friendly Letters", 217.

⁴¹ASVe, SDR, Dalmazia, f. 45 (28 March 1640).

to a request". Having expressed his conviction that his "beloved friend", the *provveditore generale* of Zadar, was prepared to fulfil his request and intercede for a Bosnian merchant, the defterdar wished the Venetian representative that, in that case, "luck should accompany him".⁴² In Ottoman letters, Venetian rectors were sometimes addressed with pronounced respect. In 1751, Abdi Pasha, in the introductory part of his letter, addressed the *provveditore generale* of Zadar as "highly esteemed, exceptionally respected, our sincere and close friend" (Ital. *Stimatissimo, Riverentissimo et Sincero nostro vicin amico*) before he presented to him the problem concerning two Sarajevo merchants. On this occasion the Bosnian pasha referred to the duty of Venetian rectors to ensure that justice be served in accordance with conditions, dictated by Venetian-Ottoman capitulations.⁴³

Conclusion

The importance of Ottoman letters sent to Venetian representatives of authorities is manifold. Owing to them, we find out how some merchants, from the 16th to 18th centuries, enjoying particular reputation, were engaged by Ottoman representatives of authorities to perform their personal trade procurements. Ottoman pashas and defterdars procured various fabrics and made profit in the form of Venetian ducats, owing to Bosnian merchants they were sending to Venice. The aim of letters of recommendation was to ensure for these merchants a special treatment and different conditions for the performance of trade. Regardless of whether it was a sale of goods at higher prices or faster transport, any exemption from regular trade was agreed in written correspondence between Ottoman and Venetian functionaries. On the other hand, these letters show that various problems encountered by merchants in the Venetian territory were resolved through official correspondence. Ottoman officials did not turn a deaf ear to both robberies of merchants and individual business problems of an Ottoman merchant active in Venice. Apart from helping gain insight

⁴² ASVe, Senato, PTM, f. 344 (20 March 1679).

⁴³ DAZd, MD, kut. 6, br. 69/2 (30 December 1751).

into the social status of merchants recommended by the Ottoman administration, these sources can also be used to show how functionaries in Bosnia invested effort to ensure smooth performance of Venetian-Ottoman trade. Their written addresses are replete with expressions of courteous and formal character, and a standard form in writing is visible, as it was always emphasized that for the sake of friendly relations and compliance with capitulations, Venice was expected to fulfil what was requested and to protect Ottoman merchants.

PREPORUČENI OD OSMANSKOG CARSTVA: BOSANSKI TRGOVCI IZMEĐU SARAJEVA I VENECIJE

Sažetak

Cilj rada je da skrene pažnju na značaj venecijansko-osmanske prepiske koja umnogome može da pomogne na putu ka boljem poimanju trgovine između Venecije i Osmanskog carstva. Pisma koja su osmanski službenici slali venecijanskim predstavnicima vlasti, osim što mogu da ukažu na problem s kojima su se trgovci suočavali i načine na koji su isti okončavani, pokazuju i kako su diplomatski odnosi uticali na njihovo poslovanje. Osmanski predstavnici u Bosanskom ejaletu u različitim situacijama pokušali su da putem korespondencije posreduju između bosanskih trgovaca i venecijanskih službenika. Bilo da se radilo o preporuci za obavljanje trgovine ili intervenciji radi prevazilaženja nekog pravnog problema, osmanski službenici su se u obraćanjima uvek pozivali na održavanje prijateljskih veza kao glavnog razloga za ispunjenje trgovačkih apelacija.

Кључне речи: trgovci, Bosna, Sarajevo, Venecija, pisma, korespondencija, trgovina.

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