



## **Perceiving French Presence in the Levant: French Subjects in the Sicil of 18th Century Ottoman Salonica**

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## Perceiving French Presence in the Levant: French Subjects in the *Sicil* of 18<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Salonica

By EYAL GINIO (Jerusalem)

A loaf of fine, white French bread, called *francala* by the Ottomans and apparently of Italian origin, cast its shadow in the first months of 1806 on the already deteriorating relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the French state (or *devlet*, the term adopted by the Ottomans when referring to post-revolutionary France). We learn about this debate from a sultanic decree, a *ferman*, issued on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1806 in response to a petition submitted by the French *chargé d'affaires* (*maslahatgüzar*) in the imperial capital. The petition involved the French claim regarding their ancient privilege to possess their own bakery in which *francala* bread and rusks (*peksimet*) would be produced.<sup>1</sup> This privilege, the edict emphasized, was vital in order for the French to supply their “necessities of life” (*kefaf-i nefis*). The clientele for these pastries in Salonica was quite considerable: according to the petition, it included the consul (*komisar* in the new Ottoman terminology) and his agents, merchants, all kind of visitors, and seafarers – in short, the local French “nation”.<sup>2</sup>

We can presume that the issue at stake was not the right to produce a European type of bread unknown to the local bakeries of Salonica – as indeed the edict explained to the potential Ottoman audience that *francala* was the equivalent of the Ottoman local bread, *nan-i aziz* – but rather the Ottoman suspicion that the ostensible need to produce a special kind of dough required for the preparation of *francala* was only an excuse to purchase a much larger quantity of grain than required by the local French colony and to smuggle it out of the country against Ottoman regulations and prohibitions.

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<sup>1</sup> On the French bakery that operated under the aegis of the French consulate in Salonica, see Pierre PINON, *Résidences de France dans l'Empire ottoman: notes sur l'architecture domestique*, in: *Les villes dans l'Empire Ottoman: Activités et Société*. Ed. Daniel PANZAC. Aix-en-Provence 1994, 56f.

<sup>2</sup> The National Archives of Macedonia, Thessaloniki, Sicil, vol. 183, p. 81, 22 Muharrem 1221 [11 April 1806]. The right to produce the *francala* bread was perceived as an essential part of the “privileges package” granted to friendly states. See, for example, the request submitted by the Spanish consul of Salonica, following the establishment of his consulate, to have permission to open new bakeries where this bread would be produced “as was decided with regards to other states”. The Sublime Porte endorsed his request, relying on the precedent in which approval had been granted to the Swedish consul for a similar venture: Sicil, vol. 179, pp. 50-51, *evahir-i Şevval* 1217 [14-23 February 1803].

This short episode indicates the ambiguity that prevailed in Ottoman circles regarding the French presence in their major port cities, *les grandes échelles*, including Salonica. On the one hand, as the edict stated, French subjects should benefit from friendly treatment (*dostluk muamelesi*) that even acknowledged their right to adhere to their different customs and tastes when staying in Ottoman port cities. Yet, the French were also regarded as something of a threat to the locally enforced economic, religious and social orders. Indeed, returning for a moment to the *francala*, another document offers an example of the “bad influence” caused by European presence, in this case on the internal order of the bakers’ guild: local industrious Greek bakers used to produce the local bread called *beylik* (?). Perhaps keen to expand business, they also apparently began imitating French habits by adding *francala* to their list of loaves. They designated seven bakeries in which such bread could be produced and decided that the profits would be shared equally by the owners of these bakeries; they even constructed a new mill that would serve them all. However, as the demand for this kind of bread increased, one of them, Lazar *veled* Georgi, a master-baker whose bakery was situated in the cobblers’ market, away from his partners-rivals, decided to construct a new mill that would supply only his bakery with the needed flour. This independent initiative, caused by the adoption of a new product, caused considerable dissension among the guild members.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, the changing Ottoman terminology regarding the French political Order, as it appears in the Salonican *sicil* during the last decade of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, also points to the Ottomans’ ongoing effort to survey the French presence in the East: that is, they first tried to understand the political changes in France, to accommodate them to their own terminology and thus to define them in what they perceived as comprehensible categorizations.<sup>4</sup> In other words, Ottoman bureaucracy created a process of categorizing all groups that inhabited the Ottoman lands. What was particular in regard to the Europeans, including the French who sojourned in Ottoman cities, was the fact that they were outsiders who were not subject to Ottoman regulations, and yet were very visible and active in the local arenas, mainly in the port cities, and therefore were constantly under close Ottoman scrutiny.

This paper aims to explore the various Ottoman perceptions of the French colony of merchants and seafarers that was established in Salonica and the Ottoman understand-

<sup>3</sup> Sicil, vol. 180, p. 19, 6 Ramazan 1217 [31 December 1802]. On the bakers’ guild and its significant power in the labor market in Ottoman Jerusalem, see Amnon COHEN, *Guilds of Ottoman Jerusalem*. Leiden 2001, 23-39.

<sup>4</sup> From 1720 the Ottoman State began to dispatch *ad hoc* ambassadors first to France, and then to other Western powers in order to learn about the West. On the travelogue written by the first ambassador to Paris, see Fatma MÜGE GÖÇEK, *East Encounters West: France and the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century*. New York 1987, 24-61; on Ottoman ambassadors to revolutionary and then to Napoleonic France, see Morali Seyyid Ali EFENDİ and Seyyid Abdürrahim Muhhib EFENDİ, *Deux ottomans à Paris sous le Directoire et l’Empire*. Arles 1998.

ing of its commercial activities. My intention here is not to discuss these views in the framework of religious and military perceptions prevailing in Ottoman scholar treatises on the “infidels”,<sup>5</sup> but to explore recurring generalizations, stereotypes and assumptions that appeared in the local administrative and judicial writings in the eighteenth century in order to discuss the various representations of the French and their presence in the city. I intend to present the various commonplace encounters between French and Ottomans from the local Ottoman point of view and not, as is usually done, through the gaze of the Westerner.<sup>6</sup>

My main source is the *sicil*, the records of the Muslim *şeriat* court, of eighteenth-century Salonica.<sup>7</sup> As in other provincial centers, the *kadi* and the court’s scribes, who were all local agents of the political center, shaped and compiled these records according to long-established general patterns and traditions slightly seasoned by local usage and practices. As state-generated sources, these documents reflect mainly the local administration’s apprehensions and mirror the diversity of the *kadi*’s responsibilities in the Ottoman city. The most current documents found in the *sicil* are notarial registrations, litigations, copies of decrees arriving from the Sublime Porte or from other high officials and registrations of estates. Leslie Peirce suggests studying the *şeriat* court as a legal arena in which various actors use the legal framework to negotiate their status

<sup>5</sup> Bernard LEWIS, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*. London 1982, 135-170. See also Rudi MATTHEE, *Between Aloofness and Fascination: Safavid Views of the West*, *Iranian Studies* 31 (1998), 219f.

<sup>6</sup> For some examples of studies that explored Ottoman commerce by using European sources, see for Salonica M. LASCARIS, *Salonique à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle d’après les rapports consulaires français*. Athens 1939; N. G. SVORONOS, *Le commerce de Salonique au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Paris 1956. For other major Ottoman ports, see Edhem ELDEM, *French Trade in Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century*. Leiden 1999; IDEM, *French Trade and Commercial Policy in the Levant in the Eighteenth Century*, *Oriente Moderno*, 79/n.s. 18 (1999), 27-47; Hafedh Brahim HASSINE, *La juridiction consulaire française et ses limites à Tunis au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, *Mésogéios* 2 (1998), 169-193; Elena FRANGAKIS-SYRETT, *The Commerce of Smyrna in the Eighteenth Century, 1700-1820*. Athens 1992. For pre-Modern non-European’s perceptions, or what he labels as “xenology”, of Europe, see Sanjay SUBRAHMANYAM, *Taking Stock of the Franks: South Asian Views of Europeans and Europe, 1500-1800*, *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 42 (2005), 69-100.

<sup>7</sup> On the *sicil*, see Suraiya FAROQHI, *Sidjill* – in *Ottoman Administrative Usage*, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*<sup>2</sup>, vol. 9. Leiden 1997, 539-545. On the use of the *sicil* records to study local history, see Dror ZE’EVI, *The Use of Ottoman Shari’a Court Records as a Source for Middle Eastern Social History: A Reappraisal*, *Islamic Law and Society* 5 (1998), 35-56. The *sicil* of Salonica, the only local archives to endure the vicissitudes of time, exist only from 1694. We can assume that early records were lost during one of the conflagrations or other natural or human made calamities that occasionally devastated the city. Compared to other Ottoman cities, relatively little research was done on the basis of the Salonican *sicil*. One can mention as a major exception the translations of *fermans* appeared in: *Historika Archeia Makedonias A’: Archeion Thessalonikes, 1695-1912*. Ed. I. K. VASDRVELLES. Salonica 1952. For the study of nineteenth-century Salonica, see Meropi ANASTASSIADOU, *Salonique, 1830-1912: une ville ottomane à l’âge des Réformes*. Leiden 1997. See also my articles quoted in this paper.

vis-à-vis the central and local authorities, as well as in relation to their adversaries. The court's records, the *sicil*, she maintains, are the cultural product that manifests through its normative legal discourse, its typical use of linguistic choices and its phrasing of the court's assumptions and perceptions.<sup>8</sup> Like other cultural products, the *sicil* records do not always yield a detailed and clear picture, yet they evidently reflect the perceptions of the local elite and echo some of the responses of French subjects and their strategies vis-à-vis the Ottoman rulers, though the official language of the document blurs their personal voices. These documents reveal, among other aspects, the interaction between the Ottoman authorities or local Ottoman subjects and the French consular agents, merchants, clerics, marines, artisans and other French subjects who arrived in Salonica and who handled the major part of its international commerce during the eighteenth century. Between 1776-1778, for example, trade with France represented 59.4 percent of Salonica's trade with Christian Europe.<sup>9</sup>

As the earliest surviving volume of the Salonican *sicil* is dated from 1694, merely twelve years after the arrival of the first French consul to Salonica (1682), we are able to follow the process of shaping the French community and its network of local protégés regrouped around the consulate. The beginning was certainly modest: prior to 1698 there were only two Frenchmen residing in Salonica; in 1721, there were eight French trading houses and about thirty-seven individuals belonging to the "French nation" – among them servants, a baker, inn-keepers and a tailor.<sup>10</sup> The eighteenth century witnessed the evolvement of the French community from these rather modest numbers into a much more significant community, to the extent that its growth alarmed Ottoman authorities and convinced them that a measure of interference and control were urgently needed. In tandem, the French consulate had to compete with a growing presence of rival European powers. This process of shaping the French community and its network of subjects occurred in different arenas. The *şeriat* court was one of them and its documentation enables us to gain insights into this process as it was perceived and interpreted by the local authorities.

By looking into the Salonican *sicil* files, we can follow the Ottomans' attempts to comprehend the French presence in Salonica – from culinary tastes to ideologies and institutes – and their efforts to achieve some degree of control and regulation. I will argue that the main Ottoman concern regarding the French presence in this port city

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<sup>8</sup> Leslie PEIRCE, *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab*. Berkeley 2003, 86-125. See also Najwa AL-QATTAN, *Textual Differentiation in the Damascus Sijill: Religious Discrimination or Politics of Gender?* in: *Women, the Family, and Divorce Laws in Islamic History*. Ed. Amira EL AZHARY SONBOL. Syracuse 1996, 191-198.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel PANZAC, *International and Domestic Maritime Trade in the Ottoman Empire during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 24 (1992), 192f.

<sup>10</sup> Mark MAZOWER, *Salonica, City of Ghosts. Christians, Muslims and Jews 1430-1950*. London 2004, 124.

was to ensure the maintenance of boundaries between the French subjects and the local non-Muslims who together represented the majority of the city's population.

### The French Community of Salonica

The presence of French subjects in the *şeriat* court allows us to impart some details about the small yet influential community and its members. The first French consulate in Salonica was established in 1682. The reason for its foundation is evident: being a major port city with a considerable population of about 50,000 by 1723 and around 70,000-80,000 by the 1790s, Salonica was one of the foremost Ottoman urban centers in the Balkans.<sup>11</sup> The city's advantageous location at the crossroads of the Balkan Peninsula, its fine harbor and the fertile countryside that surrounded it must have attracted the French merchants to frequent the city in their search for markets and products. During the eighteenth century, tobacco, grains, wool, salt, timber, wax and fabrics were the city's main exports to Europe, to Egypt, and to other harbors in the Ottoman lands, especially the capital, Istanbul. The sometime-overlap between European demand, especially for various grains, and the necessity to supply Istanbul's needs for these same staples was one of the major tensions under which Salonican commerce had to operate.

Under privileged conditions, sanctioned by the Capitulations, the local French colony developed into a small (about a few dozen people), yet vital community that included merchants and their dependents, clergy, artisans who served the mercantile community and seamen who frequented the harbor. The community also included a growing number of local non-Muslims (*zimmi*) who joined the "nation" through employment or by the marriage of local Greek women or even former female slaves with French subjects and their subsequent conversion to Catholicism.

During the eighteenth century, the French subjects lived for the most part in the same section of the city. The consul's quarters and the main French enterprises and houses were located in the Malta neighborhood, situated in the lower part of the city near the citadel (*hisar*) and the main seashore gate (*yali kapısı*) connecting Salonica with its harbor and adjacent to the city's major markets. Two of the major symbols that highlighted the French presence in the city were located in the Malta neighborhood: the consulate building and the adjacent Catholic church. By the nineteenth century, significant sections of this area became to be known as the "foreigners' neighborhood" (*frenk mahallesı*) clearly indicating the considerable presence of foreigners and their establishments in the harbor's back area.<sup>12</sup>

However, the Malta neighborhood did not develop into a segregated enclave exclusively inhabited by French. The quarter was home, too, to numerous envoys, such as

<sup>11</sup> MAZOWER, Salonica, 120.

<sup>12</sup> Apostolos VACALOPOULOS, A History of Thessaloniki. Thessaloniki 1963, 96; Meropi ANASTAS-  
SIADOU, Salonique 1830-1912. Une ville ottomane à l'âge des Réformes. Leiden 1997, 133-134.

the consul of Dubrovnik. The local Jewish community also had a significant presence here,<sup>13</sup> as can be seen from a litigation discussed later in this paper.<sup>14</sup>

A purchase deed underscores the multi-denominational character of the neighborhood: the inheritors of the Jew Ishak – his two sons, Sento [Shemtov] and Yosef, and his widow, Fermoza – sold his house and the adjacent painter's shop, situated in the Malta quarter, to a Muslim, called Hamza Çelebi. It is worth noting that the neighboring buildings were owned by *müste'mins* (an alien subject who benefits from the state's protection), one of them being the French consul himself.<sup>15</sup> Actually, a French subject who sold his house to a French monk described Malta neighborhood as “one of the Jewish neighborhoods of Salonica” (*mahmiye-yi merkumede vaki yahudi mahallâtından malta mahallesinde*). While French merchants were not supposed to own property in the Ottoman domains (this would theoretically have turned them into local non-Muslims), foreigners did acquire houses.<sup>16</sup> As the French seller provided the court with a description of his house, we gain a rare insight into one private domicile owned by a French subject residing in Salonica: the house included two stories; the higher level included eight rooms, while the lower level had two rooms, a storeroom, a kitchen, a masonry storeroom equipped with an iron door and a garden that included fruit-bearing and other trees. The house also boasted a newly-constructed fountain with running water and a courtyard.<sup>17</sup> We can assume that these two French men opted to register their transaction in the Muslim court as the asset was built on leased ground that belonged to two different Muslim endowments (*vakıf*).

Some other Frenchmen bought assets in the Akçe Mescit neighborhood, a section of the city predominately inhabited by local Greeks and Muslims also situated near the sea walls but relatively far away from the harbor.<sup>18</sup>

The French community, we further learn from the *sicil*, included several institutions other than the consulate. Significant charitable and spiritual services were provided to the French community by the Jesuit (*cizvit*) monks (their monastery in Salonica was founded in 1706), probably until the suppression of the Jesuit order in Salonica in 1773. To explain the monks' benevolent activities, the scribes turned again to their

<sup>13</sup> On the synagogues that were constructed in the Malta neighborhood and its identification as a Jewish neighborhood, see Vassilis DEMETRIADES, *Τοπογραφία της Θεσσαλονίκης κατά την εποχή της Τουρκοκρατίας 1430-1912*. Thessaloniki 1983, 172-175.

<sup>14</sup> See note 41 below.

<sup>15</sup> Sicil, vol. 57, p., 33, 11 Cemaziyel'ahır 1152 [15 September 1739].

<sup>16</sup> See Suraiya FAROQHI, *Representing France in the Peloponnese. A Wealthy French Dwelling before 1770*, in: IDEM, *Stories of Ottoman Men and Women. Establishing Status, Establishing Control*. İstanbul 2002, 81.

<sup>17</sup> Sicil, vol. 52A, p., 27, 9 Cemazilevvel 1149 [15 September 1736].

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, the sale of a house owned by a local Greek to a French monk. One of the bordering assets was described as being owned by „the same [French] monks“, indicating that a small French sub-quarter evolved in this part of the city as well: sicil, vol. 25, p. 90, 10 Rebiülevvel 1128 [5 March 1716].

own Muslim terminology – we possess one reference in the *sicil* to a French Jesuit monk, Jean Pontchartrain (?), who was described as the administrator (*müteveîi*) of the cash endowment (*nukud-i mevkufâ*)<sup>19</sup> established for the poor French Jesuit monks in Salonica (*Selânik'te frança cizvit rubbanları nefer(?)'i fîkarasına meşrut*). The monk appeared in court to register his purchase of a house with money that belonged to the Jesuit endowment (*cizvit vakfî*). The house then became part of the *vakîf's* endowed assets.<sup>20</sup>

For the Muslim population of Salonica the possible encounter with the Jesuit monks in the city's streets might have been a blunt remainder of the foreigners' presence among their midst.<sup>21</sup> Such an encounter might trigger a violent assault, especially when the janissaries, a constant menace on the public order and the leaders of popular anger at "Frankish arrogance",<sup>22</sup> were involved in such a random brush. The Muslim court did not hesitate to describe the assaulted monk as the innocent victim of his aggressors as we can learn from the following case: the monk (*rahîb*) serving the French consul in Salonica was casually strolling in the market minding his own business (*kendi halında maslahatına gider iken*) when a group of janissaries grabbed him and severely beat him. The consul complained about this aggression to the janissaries' officers who totally ignored his protest. The consul then requested of his ambassador in Istanbul to submit a petition calling for such aggressions to be prevented in the future. Following the ambassador's petition, the Sublime Porte indeed instructed the governor of Salonica to verify that the janissaries' officers deter from such actions, which, he noted, are contrary to the *şeriat* and the Capitulations.<sup>23</sup>

There are only few references in the *sicil* to aggression directed towards French subjects. This number is too small to enable us to draw general conclusions. However, the study of the numerous sultanic decrees and other *sicil* records reveal three major characters that represented the French in the eyes of the local authorities: the merchant-cum-smuggler, the captain-cum-pirate and the missionary. The ambiguity that stems from these contradictory perceptions reflects the growing dependence of the Ottoman authorities upon services offered by Frenchmen versus the mistrust with which the French presence was viewed in Ottoman Salonica. However, before turning into the

<sup>19</sup> Endowing cash was the prevailing method of establishing endowments in eighteenth-century Salonica. On the cash endowments and the controversy about their legal validity, see J. E. MANDEVILLE, *Usurious Piety: The Cash Waqf Controversy in the Ottoman Empire*, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 10 (1979), 289-308.

<sup>20</sup> *Sicil*, vol. 52A, p. 27, 9 Cemazilevvel 1149 [15 September 1736]

<sup>21</sup> On the Jesuit order in Salonica see Markos N. ROUSSOS-MILLIDONIS, *Αποστολή Ιησουϊτών στη Μακεδονία το 17ο και 18ο Αιώνα*, *Makedonika* 27 (1989-90), 32-61; SVORONOS, *Le commerce de Salonique*, 155-158.

<sup>22</sup> MAZOWER, *Salonica*, 125; SVORONOS, *Le commerce de Salonique*, 25.

<sup>23</sup> *Sicil*, vol. 28, pp. 2-3, *evail-i Zilkade* 1128 [17 - 26 October 1716].



images that Frenchmen evoked in the Salonican *sicil*, I will briefly present the legal framework in which French subjects could operate in Salonica.

### **The Legal Framework: The Capitulation Accords (*abdname*) and the Negotiation of Boundaries and Authority**

The study of the formal legal framework in which foreign merchants operated in the Ottoman lands was already explored by a number of scholars. Most recently, Maurits van den Boogert published his study, based on Ottoman perceptions as they unfolded in the Ottoman *ecnebi defterleri* (“The Foreigners’ files”) archives in Istanbul, in which he discusses the legal ramifications of a foreign presence in the Ottoman state.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, we can briefly delineate here the legal terms in which the foreign presence was legitimized and acknowledged by Ottoman authorities long before the power balance between the Ottomans and the European powers deteriorated, at least from the Ottoman point of view; when quasi-equality still typified the economic relations between the Ottoman empire and the European powers, including France.<sup>25</sup>

The status of French citizens in Salonica, as in other Ottoman cities, was determined according to the Capitulation agreements (*abdname*). These documents served as the legal basis for defining the status of foreigners who belonged to friendly countries while staying in the Ottoman realms. The full registration of such newly-signed pacts in the provincial *sicils* indicates their significance for passing verdicts even at the provincial level.<sup>26</sup> Donald Quataert, who explores in his book the development of the capitulatory system until the eighteenth century, provides a detailed survey of these privileges: from as early as the sixteenth century, the French monarchy developed military, economic and diplomatic ties with the Ottoman state. These relations, between “*la fille aînée de l’église*” and the Muslim state, culminated in the mid-sixteenth century in the establishment of official ties and privileges, *imtiyazat* in the Ottoman parlance, that were known in the West as “the Capitulations”.<sup>27</sup> These accords governed the Ottoman treatment of foreigners, defined by them as *müste’mins* (“foreigners who benefit from the state’s protection”),<sup>28</sup> who happened to be residing, for however long, within the

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<sup>24</sup> Maurits van den BROOGERT, *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System: Qadis, Consuls and Beratlis in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*. Leiden, Boston 2005.

<sup>25</sup> ELDEM, *French Trade*, 27.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, the copying of the *abdname* concluded between the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet I (r. 1730-1754) and the Bourbon king, Charles VII (r. 1734-1759) of Naples and Sicily (the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies for the Ottomans), later to be known as King Charles III of Spain: *Sicil*, vol. 66, pp. 66-70, 10 Muharrem 1153 [7 April 1740].

<sup>27</sup> On the Franco-Ottoman privileged relations that characterized most of the eighteenth century, see Gérard POUMARÈDE, *Justifier l’injustifiable: l’alliance turque au miroir de la chrétienté (XVI<sup>e</sup>-XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, *Revue d’histoire diplomatique* 3 (1997), 217-246.

<sup>28</sup> Halil İNALCIK, *Imtiyazât – The Ottoman Empire*, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 3. Leiden 1986, 1179-1189.

sultanic domains. The Ottomans perceived these regulations as a unilateral and non-reciprocal act of generosity and favor in which the Sultan demonstrated his friendship and benevolence to the incumbent French king. Only from 1740 did these regulations become permanent, and therefore were no longer dependent upon renewal by a new sultan.<sup>29</sup>

Other Europeans followed suit and obtained comparable concessions from the Ottoman sultans – England benefited from a similar position from 1580 onwards and the Dutch Republic obtained identical privileges in the early seventeenth century (1612). In the eighteenth century, the number of privileged nations increased dramatically as similar concessions were granted, sometimes to former enemies as part of a peace agreement, to the Habsburg Emperor (1718), Sweden (1737), the Bourbon Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (1740), Tuscany (1747), Denmark (1746), Prussia (1761), Russia (1774) and Spain (1782).<sup>30</sup> However, France was able to sustain its *de facto* status as the most favored nation in Ottoman international robust trade, a status that it kept until the French revolution and its ensuing consequences that would, for the most part, temporarily eradicate French commercial activity in the Ottoman state.<sup>31</sup> Ottoman decrees mirrored this primacy by mentioning France first whenever the list of privileged states appeared.

The Capitulation accords enabled the French to sustain a network of commerce and shipping in the Eastern Mediterranean. During the seventeenth century, a chain of French consulates was founded in the major ports of the Ottoman Mediterranean, which served to defend the commercial interests of France and the so-called French “*nations*” or French communities.<sup>32</sup> The French subjects benefited from various trade privileges and tax exemptions, including the right to maintain consular courts that were exempt from the sultan’s legal and fiscal jurisdiction.

Notwithstanding these legal privileges, foreign subjects, overwhelmingly French subjects and protégés (who might have originated from other Mediterranean states), like other foreigners, frequented the *şeriat* court for various reasons and motives as indicated by the *müsté’mins*’ appearance in the Salonican *sicil*.<sup>33</sup> If the initiative was made by foreign subjects, the *şeriat* court of Salonica did not shun the hearing of claims involving foreigner litigants. In one exceptional case the court became the legal arena in which a Frenchman (though a representative of another kingdom) and his wife squabbled over private property. In this case the court met at a location other than its own building – in the residence of the consul representing the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies

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<sup>29</sup> Donald QUATAERT, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*. Cambridge 2000, 74-83.

<sup>30</sup> VAN DEN BROOGER, *The Capitulations*, 7-9.

<sup>31</sup> ELDEM, *French Trade*, 28-29.

<sup>32</sup> André RAYMOND, *French Studies of the Ottoman Empire’s Arab Province*, *Mediterranean Historical Review* 19 (2004), 54f.

<sup>33</sup> On the appearance of European subjects and protégés in the *sicil*, see also van den BOOGER, *The Capitulations*, 47.

(Sicilyateyn).<sup>34</sup> It should be noted that it was very rare for the court to hear litigants' claims in private houses. The reason for this unusual gathering was the hearing of a claim submitted by the consul's wife, Maria Teresa, against her husband, the consul Louis Boissin (originally a protestant Frenchman from Languedoc<sup>35</sup>), for taking possession of her private belongings – jewelries, fabrics, utensils and furniture. The claimant wife brought four witnesses, the number required by non-Muslims to present testimony in the Muslim court. In this particular case, all witnesses who confirmed the wife's claim were *müste'mins*. The *şeriat* court subsequently issued a verdict in which it ordered the consul to return all the articles in question to his wife.<sup>36</sup>

We can assume that in this case the Sicilian wife opted to take recourse to the Muslim court in an attempt to circumvent the authority of the consular court where her husband must have exercised great influence. The readiness of the *şeriat* court to hear her claim, though both litigants were foreigners, exemplifies the potential for foreign claimants to move from one court to another according to their vested interests. The legal boundaries were not rigidly defined; however, what seems to be the washing of dirty linen in public was rare. Yet, in dozens of other cases foreign subjects went to the *şeriat* court to handle their business matters or to seek legal assistance. In some cases this was the outcome of a voluntary step; in others the requirements of Ottoman law necessitated the summoning of foreign subjects to court. The potential gap between the formal legal rights granted to Europeans and the particular Ottoman requirements of enforcing law caused tension over legal boundaries and authority.

How did the local Ottoman authorities perceive the status of the thriving French community? The *sicil* documents treated the French *nation* as if it was one of the non-Muslim or artisan groups that were an integral part of the urban matrix of Salonica. In this way the local authorities could adjust to the French presence as being part of the local order. While the ambassadors' names were, as a matter of routine, adorned in the *sicil* documents with honorary titles, the other *müste'mins* were treated differently: the court's scribes used the same intentionally discriminatory and degrading terminology, or "textual markers",<sup>37</sup> as those used to distinguish non-Muslims from the Muslim population.<sup>38</sup> For the Ottomans, the French colony functioned as an autonomous

<sup>34</sup> Following the Bourbon restoration of 1816, the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies became the official name of the previously dissolved Kingdom of Naples. However, as this paper demonstrates, the name Sicilyateyn, meaning „The Two Sicilies“, was the prevailing term used by the Ottoman administration when referring to the Kingdom of Naples already during the second half eighteenth century. This may indicate the popular usage of the name „The Two Sicilies“ prior to the conquest of the Kingdom of Naples by the Napoleonic armies in 1801.

<sup>35</sup> SVORONOS, *Le commerce de Salonique*, 175.

<sup>36</sup> *Sicil*, vol. 96, pp. 94-95, 7 Zilhicce 1174 [10 July 1761].

<sup>37</sup> This term is taken from AL-QATTAN, *Textual Differentiation*, 198.

<sup>38</sup> For the terminology used in the *sicil* documents when referring to non-Muslims, see Najwa AL-QATTAN, *Dhimmi in the Muslim Court: Legal Autonomy and Religious Discrimination*, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 31 (1999), 429-444.

group organized under a deputy or consul who was subject to the head of the community residing in the capital in his capacity as ambassador. Only the ambassador could directly approach the Sultan on behalf of the French subjects residing in the Ottoman lands. The Ottomans recognized the ambassador's status by according him a document of nomination (*berat*). This head of the community spoke for the French subjects whenever necessary and served as a vital middleman who could deliver the authorities' various messages back to his community. Such order well suited the Ottoman method of internal administration and control.<sup>39</sup> Take, for example, the following case in which the French ambassador in Istanbul referred for the Sultan's attention a case in which a French subject was assailed in a village near Salonica: a group of Turkmen (*evlâd-ı fatihan*, literally "the sons of the conquerors") had seized the man who served as the translator on a French vessel, beat him severely and dragged him to their dwellings. Later they extorted from him 500 *gurus*. The Sultan heeded the ambassador's request and ordered the local officials to examine the case.<sup>40</sup>

The need to rely on the *ahdname* text to support claims about various privileges to which French subjects were entitled caused the recurring registration of specific clauses from the *ahdname* in the *sicil*. However, a different perception of the consul's tasks, applying only a limited field of operation, appeared in one entry registered in the Salonican *sicil*.<sup>41</sup> Compiled by the court's scribes, this entry described the French consul as the official who was charged with taking and receiving the estates of French *müste'mins* who were staying in Salonica to conduct their commerce and to tackle any legal claims that occurred.<sup>42</sup> This case also demonstrates the tension that existed between the privileged legal status enjoyed by French subjects and the Muslim law requirements as discussed below: the French dragoman, or interpreter, Reuben *veled* Reuben, claimed that a certain Frenchman called Boyo (?), who served as a secretary on a French vessel, was found murdered six days before the hearing in court. The victim's corpse was discovered near the citadel's wall in the Malta neighborhood. Since his murderer's identity remained unknown, as did the identity of his inheritors, the dragoman claimed the blood money (*diyyet*) and the delivering of the oath of accusation (*kasamet*) from the neighborhood residents. This was in line with Muslim law.<sup>43</sup> The

<sup>39</sup> An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, vol. 1. Ed. Halil İNALCIK. Cambridge 1994, 190-192; Suraiya FAROQHI, The Ottoman Empire and the World Around it. London 2004, 144-148.

<sup>40</sup> *Sicil*, vol. 77, p. *evail-i Cemaziyel'ahir* 1113 [2-11 November 1701].

<sup>41</sup> *Sicil*, vol. 49, p. 37, n.d [Zilhicce 1146/May-June 1734].

<sup>42</sup> *mahruse-yi selânik'te mütemekkinin ve ticaret vechi üzere sakinin frança müste'min taifesi'nin beytülmallarını abiz ve kabza ve vaki olan daavi-yi şer'iyelerini rüyete ahdname-yi hümayun mantukunca memur olan mebrusa-yi mezbure'de mütemekkin frança konsolosu tarafından vekil-i müsecceli olan ... Ibidem ...*

<sup>43</sup> According to Islamic law, if the body of a man is found and his murderer remains unidentified, the inhabitants of the neighborhood in which the corpse was found must swear fifty oaths claiming that they did not kill the man and that they do not know who did. Relying on their oaths, they

dragoman's claim was submitted against a group of four Jews and "other Jews" who lived in the neighborhood. Thus far the case was shaped in a manner identical to other murder cases conducted in Salonica. However, at this stage, the *şeriat* court intervened and obliged the dragoman to reconsider his claim. The majority of the neighborhood's population, the court reminded him, consisted of French protégés (*mahale-yi mezbure'nin sükkânı'nın ekseri yine frança müste'minleri olup*). True, many of the local residents were Jews, but the court did not accept the dragoman's awkward decision to exempt only the neighborhood's French inhabitants from sharing the payment of the blood money with the Jewish residents, and accused him of negligence (*huzur-i şera ihzarda müsamaha*) in bringing the French inhabitants to court. The court stressed the legal obligation incumbent on "all the neighborhood's inhabitants who must equally share the payment of the blood money and the need to give an oath".<sup>44</sup> The court postponed the hearing of the case for a few days, after which the dragoman returned to court and exonerated the Jews from any connection to the murder.<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately, we do not possess the end of this document, so we lack the final ruling of the court. Yet, we can say that this case exemplifies a litigation in which the French dragoman tried to draw on Islamic law, believing that in this case it would benefit his community, yet he attempted to discriminate between the French inhabitants and the local Jews who them alone had to bear the responsibility for the unsolved murder. In the face of such discrimination that is devoid of any legal consideration, the *şeriat* court stepped in and prevented the dragoman from pursuing his claim.

This case also indicates the dragoman's crucial position in the *şeriat* court as an intermediary between the Ottoman authorities and the French community. It is clear that for the court's staff the dragomans were the delegates of the French community. The dragomans' legal decisions were perceived as their own. Their knowledge of local languages and customs must have assured them a privileged and indispensable position vis-à-vis the local authorities, as well as the French community. Their names as registered in the *sicil* files indicate that all of them were local Jews and Greeks.<sup>46</sup> Yet, they were the exclusive speakers on behalf of the French community and therefore the embodiment of the French presence in the *şeriat* court. French claims and assertions were made in the dragomans' voices, and thus they were perceived not just as messengers, but rather as the true representatives of the community. Notwithstanding, the use of the term *veled*, "the child of", a term used in the *sicil* to emphasize the local non-Muslim identity of

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become free from liability to retaliation, but they are still obliged to pay the blood money. See Joseph SCHACHT, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*. Oxford 1964, 184.

<sup>44</sup> *Ahali-yi mahalle'nin cümlesi diyet ve kasamette şer'an müsavi olduğuna ber mucib-i şer'isi icra olunmak*. Sicil, vol. 49, p. 37, n.d. [Zilhicce 1146 / May-June 1734].

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>46</sup> See also Joseph NEHAMA, *Histoire des israélites de Salonique*, vol. 6. Thessaloniki 1976, 247-252.

the litigant, indicates that the scribes wanted to affirm the dragoman's humble origins of a local non-Muslim.

The French community also had to negotiate its status vis-à-vis other European actors that were active in the Salonican trade. Until the establishment of the English agency of the Levant Company in 1718, the French consulate was the only foreign mission active in the city – to the extent that all foreign merchants had to apply for French patronage to benefit from privileged commercial rights.<sup>47</sup> One early entry from the *sicil*, dated October 1699, exemplifies the French determination to safeguard their monopoly over foreign trade and to secure the receiving of relevant fees from foreign merchants in the form of the so-called “consul's tax” (*konsolos resmi*). A French consul, Francesco Arnaud, submitted a claim in the *seriat* court, through the agency of his Jewish dragoman, against a certain local Christian (*zimmi*) merchant named Constantin *veled* Yanko. According to the consul, the *ahdname* states that all Christian merchants who load merchandise onto French vessels or other vessels sailing under French protection, or who take merchandise to harbors situated in the Muslim lands (*bilâd-ı islâmiye*) must pay the consul's tax to the local French consul at the point of delivery. In this case, the consul added, the said Christian had loaded his merchandise on a Venetian ship and brought it to Salonica. Ignoring the regulations, he had declined to pay his due fees to the French consul. To support his claim, the dragoman handed out the *ahdname*. The court perused the document and decided that the French claim was groundless and therefore should be rejected. The French had, therefore, to relinquish their claim.<sup>48</sup>

However, the subsequent reluctant acceptance of Ottoman rulings did not imply that the French should be treated less favorably than other European powers when it came to benefiting from Ottoman privileges. Indeed, the French followed carefully the status of rival European states to ensure that their rights would not be undermined when compared to those accorded to others. In 1702, for example, the French ambassador to Istanbul raised the issue of inequality in the court fees that French subjects had to pay in Salonica as compared to the sums that English and Dutch nationals had to pay. The claim submitted by the French ambassador was accepted and the governor and kadi of Salonica were instructed to refrain from imposing higher fees on French nationals.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Simon SCHWARZFUCHS, The Salonica ‘Scale’ – the Struggle between the French and the Jewish Merchants, *Sefunot* 15 (1971-1981), 79-80 [in Hebrew]. See also Minna ROZEN, Contest and Rivalry in Mediterranean Commerce in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century: The Jews of Salonika and the European Presence, *Revue des Études Juives* 147 (1988), 309-352.

<sup>48</sup> *Sicil*, vol. 6, p. 23, 13 Rebiülevvel 1111 [7 September 1699]. It is interesting to note that the Salonican scribe wrote the name Francesco as the consul's first name, while in French documents the name appears in the French form: François. Possibly the use of the Italianized form indicated the prevalence of Italian as the *lingua franca* of European commerce in this region. On Jean-François Arnaud, the French consul in Salonica between 1695-1699, see SVORONOS, Le commerce de Salonique, 145.

<sup>49</sup> *Sicil*, vol. 8, p. 99, *evail-i Şaban* 1113 [31 December 1701 - 9 January 1702].

Generally speaking, the authorities refrained from intervening in the internal affairs of the French community. A telling case can demonstrate this policy and its limitations. The corpse of a man discovered in the shallow water of Salonica's bay, outside of the city's walls, was later identified as Lorenzo, the son of Georgio, an arms dealer (*rüfençi*) and a French subject. He was murdered apparently (*mazanne-yi katil*) by his wife, Maria *bint* Konstantin, a local Greek woman, and a young Moroccan (*iklim-i fas ricalinden*) accomplice, Muhammad *bin* Hac Said. The wife killed her husband with a hatchet at their home and later, with the assistance of the Moroccan, threw his body into the sea. As the victim was French, it was up to the French consul to take charge of the investigation and to determine the cause of death. Since suspicion fell on the wife and on a Muslim man, the consul, as the representative of the victim, submitted a claim against the accused in the Muslim court and asked to receive them into his custody. The Muslim court's role was confined at this stage to providing the inhabitants of the victim's neighborhood, Akçe Mescid, with a document that testified to their innocence of this crime.<sup>50</sup>

Several weeks later, the court played another minor role in this drama – it ordered the transfer of a house owned by the victim to his only daughter Angelika. The question of ownership is pertinent to our discussion as it reveals the court's assumption regarding the two women's identities. We learn that the daughter was entitled to get temporary exclusive possession of the house as her mother, still suspected of murdering her husband, had escaped her confinement and therefore was absent from the court meeting. Furthermore, when the court had earlier taken possession of the inheritance, it did so on the grounds that the wife was the only inheritor; being a local non-Muslim who was absent from the city, the local authorities kept her property for her. While the daughter was defined by the court as *müste'mine*, like her murdered father, her mother was considered by the court to be a local non-Muslim. As such, the court's agent claimed he was entitled to retain the mother's part in the inheritance until her reappearance.<sup>51</sup> This rather minor chapter in the murder drama reveals the court's previous decision to intervene in the division of the murdered man's inheritance, by mistakenly claiming that his wife was the only heir – the appearance of the daughter in court refuted this assumption. To our discussion here it is important to note that though the wife had married a Frenchman, the court ignored her affiliation to the French community and claimed responsibility for the inheritance as if she were still an Ottoman subject. The court's interpretation of the wife's status clearly indicates its refusal to acknowledge the possibility of local women joining the French community by marriage.<sup>52</sup> This was not

<sup>50</sup> Sicil, vol. 29, p. 182, 11 Safer 1132 [23 December 1719].

<sup>51</sup> Sicil, vol. 29, p. 217, 20 Receb 1132 [28 May 1720].

<sup>52</sup> For the French protest over the fact that the Ottoman authorities in Salonica took possession of an estate that belonged to a Frenchman on the pretext that his wife was local Greek, see SVORONOS, *Le commerce de Salonique*, 25.

always the case, as local Christian women were able to join the community's ranks by marrying Frenchmen, a phenomenon that I will discuss further below.

### The French Merchant-cum-Smuggler

The importance of French commerce to the daily life of Salonicans is evident in the *sicil* files. While maritime commerce was apparently still connected in the Salonicans' minds with the thriving commerce with Egypt, as attested by the prevailing habit to call the main market in the harbor area "the Egyptian Market" (*Mısır Çarşısı*), French commerce gained increasing importance during the eighteenth century. Furthermore, as will be presented later in this paper, French captains took an increasing role in the Egyptian trade as well. French merchants provided the city's inhabitants with textile products, staples and dyestuffs. Their contribution to the local economy was explored by Nicolas Svoronos and others.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, it will suffice here to bring one example of the French commercial activity: nine Jews from Salonica and seven French merchants who were residing in Salonica declared in court their agreement to settle their debts by installments. The combined debts owed by the Jews reached the hefty sum of 10,900 *guruş*. This immense debt stemmed from the Jews' purchase of indigo (*çivit*), kermes (*kırmız*) and broadcloth (*çoka*). We can deduce that the purchased dyes and fabrics were needed for the still-significant local textile industry that was largely managed by Salonican Jews – the manufacture of winter cloaks earmarked for the janissary corps is one major example of the Jews' involvement in this metier.<sup>54</sup> The list of men who served as witnesses to the legal process that took place in court (*şühud-i hal*) testifies to the agreement's significance: they were among the city's prominent notables (*fabr ulâyan ve eali*). The names of the Seyyid Hüseyin Ağa, the *cizyedar*, and the Seyyid Ömer Ağa, the superintendent (*emin*) of Salonica's custom houses, loom high on this list.<sup>55</sup>

As stated above, the growing reliance of Salonicans on French commerce increased during the eighteenth century. Coffee, one of the major staples during this period, demonstrates the rise of French trade at the expense of local commercial networks and the general shift of commerce directions. Once imported to Salonica from the south through Egyptian harbors, by the middle of the eighteenth century coffee was chiefly

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<sup>53</sup> Ibidem, 217-280.

<sup>54</sup> On the textile industry of Salonica and the Jews' share in it, see Benjamin BRAUDE, The Rise and Fall of Salonica Woolens, 1500-1650. Technology Transfer and Western Competition, in: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Mediterranean World after 1492. Ed. Alisa MEYUHAS GINIO. London 1992, 216-236; Gilles VEINSTEIN, Sur la draperie juive de Salonique (XVe-XVIIe siècles), *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée* 66 (1992), 55-62.

<sup>55</sup> Sicil, vol. 58, p. 50, 10 Receb 1153 [1 October 1740].



an import produced in the Caribbean and brought to Salonica via the French port of Marseille.<sup>56</sup>

But for local officials the merchants could also turn into smugglers who purchased vital crops such as grains and wheat and redirected them outside the Ottoman state, endangering the state's basic duty to provide Istanbul, an enormous center of consumption to quote Daniel Panzac, with all its enormous rudimentary needs.<sup>57</sup> The state's ability to provide the capital's needs by safeguarding it from a dearth in bread (*maazallah taalâ ibadullahi nan hususunda müzayakasından sıyanet için*) in the *sicil* phrasing<sup>58</sup> was one of the state's major tests and of paramount concern. The most precious crop was clearly the wheat (*hınta*) needed to produce bread, "the most important staple and most important source for calories for all segments of the local population."<sup>59</sup> Some of the wheat was harvested in the fertile countryside around Salonica. Its safe arrival in Istanbul before the onset of winter was so crucial that the state threatened with severe punishment anyone who took part in this enterprise should they fail to perform successfully.<sup>60</sup>

Recurring decrees cautioned local authorities to refrain from selling wheat and other cereal grains (*hububat*) to foreigners. In such warnings the imagined boundaries separating enemies (*harbi*) from subjects of friendly states authorized to trade in Ottoman lands (*müste'min*) were totally ignored – both were pejoratively labeled as unbelievers and both groups were treated the same while issuing these menacing warnings. The generic title of these decrees, for example, was "a decree issued in order that no wheat and other grain be sold to the enemy unbelievers and to the *müste'min* unbelievers" (*harbi kefer'e ve müste'min keferesine hınta ve sair-i hububat bey olunmamak için sadır olan emir aiddir*).<sup>61</sup>

However, there was a narrow legal outlet through which the French could circumvent the prohibition against exporting the precious wheat. French merchants were allowed to purchase a relatively small quantity of wheat in Salonica for their needs – 5000 *kile*, to be precise. While the Sublime Porte reiterated the French right to purchase this wheat, it nevertheless cautioned against exceeding the approved quantity.<sup>62</sup>

Every French vessel carrying grain came under the authorities' suspicion; a French ship that was seized by pirates, operating under the Austrian flag, before being seized by the Ottoman authorities in Salonica, can serve as one example. The Marquis de

<sup>56</sup> André RAYMOND, L'impact de la pénétration européen sur l'économie de l'Égypte au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, *Annales islamologiques* 18 (1982), 217-235.

<sup>57</sup> PANZAC, *International and Domestic Maritime Trade*, 192.

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, *sicil*, vol. 51, pp. 40-41, 20 Safer 1147 [21 July 1734].

<sup>59</sup> COHEN, *The Guilds*, 24.

<sup>60</sup> For inflicting severe punishment on local officials who hindered the traffic of wheat, see, for example, *sicil*, vol. 78, p. 15, *evail-i* Muharrem 1164 [30 November-9 December 1750].

<sup>61</sup> See, for example, *sicil*, vol. 44, pp. 104-105, *evasit-i* Safer 1144 [14-23 August 1731].

<sup>62</sup> *Sicil*, vol. 28, p. 32, *evasit-i* Muharrem 1129 [26 december 1716-4 January 1717].

Villeneuve, France's ambassador in Istanbul, submitted a petition to the Sultan while he was camping in the military field. The petition referred to an assault in which a vessel manned by Austrian pirates entered into battle with two French *şebdiyes* (a large kind of a boat often used for carrying timber) sailing near the entrance to the harbor of Salonica next to the citadel. The proximity of the Salonican harbor did not deter the Austrian pirates, who probably originated from the Habsburg domains in the Adriatic Sea, from plundering the French vessels. Following the Sultan's order, the belligerent vessels were captured by the local authorities and brought to Salonica whence they were tied to the harbor's dock and some of their goods were supposed to be kept in the harbor's storerooms. However, while unloading the vessels, they sank and more than half the goods were damaged. The French consul, through the mediation of his ambassador, asked that the goods nevertheless be returned to their lawful owners. The merchandise included hides, woolen cloth, clasp-knives, bees' wax, tobacco and wheat. The grand Vizier (*huzur-i asafî*) ordered the kadi of Salonica to return all the merchandise with the exception of the wheat.<sup>63</sup> While no explanation was given for the confiscation of wheat, we can deduce that it was believed that the grain was to be smuggled out against Ottoman regulations.

Indeed, sometime earlier, the Sublime Porte notified the local warden of the citadel (*dizdar*) and the special envoy (*mübaşir*) whose task was to prevent the sale of wheat to foreigners, that on the board of a French vessel that was seized by an Austrian vessel and later caught by the Ottoman authorities, 2,100 *kile* of wheat were found. We can definitely assume that the earlier decree deals with the same French vessel. The local authorities were instructed to interrogate the captain about the wheat's origins, to locate those who had dared sell the wheat and imprison them.<sup>64</sup> The ordeal suffered by the French captain following the plunder of his vessel by pirates did not deter, apparently, the Ottoman authorities from thoroughly checking the suspicious origins of his cargo.

The scale of wheat smuggling and the resultant Ottoman concerns are evident in the *sicil*. One decree, dated 1117 [1706] stated that six or seven enemy and *müste'min* vessels arrived to the coastline stretching from Salonica to Kavalla, and illegally loaded wheat and other forbidden products day and night.<sup>65</sup> The ban on selling wheat to foreigners was often ignored, as reiterated in the decrees. Various local groups were admonished for cooperation with foreigners in smuggling such precious products. Apparently networks of smugglers were formed to illicitly move the wheat: reliable informers, for example, notified the authorities that owners of *ciftlik* farms situated near the coast cooperated with the administrators of local harbors in looking for suitable opportunities to sell their crops to foreign unbelievers. According to the decrees, the smugglers' activities were based on sheer and endless greed (*tama-i hama tabiat ve sevda-yi cer menefaat ile kendi hallarında durmayıp*). Local authorities were ordered to arrest and confine the

<sup>63</sup> Sicil, vol. 55, pp. 109-110, *evahir-i Rebiülahir* 1151 [7 -16 August 1738].

<sup>64</sup> Sicil, vol. 51, p. 38, *evasit-i Rebiülevvel* 1146 [21 -30 August 1733].

<sup>65</sup> Sicil, vol. 15, p. 59, *evasit-i Zilhicce* 1117 [25 February - 6 March 1706]

culprits in the citadel and to act against these smugglings. Furthermore, the decree cautioned that if such illicit sales would continue – including the smuggling of even one grain – the kadis who were sanctioned with eliminating this activity would be severely punished: their names would be erased from the government files (*ceride-yi hükümetten mahv*), meaning that their salaries would disappear. But this was not the end; they would then also be exiled to remote lands (*bilâd-ı kasiya*). The other local officials and magnates (*âyan*) were likewise threatened with heavy punishments (*ukubât-ı şedide*).<sup>66</sup> To enforce this warning, the Sublime Porte dispatched a reliable official (*mübaşir*) to both overtly and covertly examine and investigate (*teftiş ve tafahhus*) the smugglers' conduit in order to put an end to their malice.<sup>67</sup>

An equally menacing option, from the Ottoman perspective, was the growing reliance of the Ottoman authorities on French vessels to convey the precious wheat from Salonica to Istanbul. The *sicil* provides some examples for the hiring of French captains: an agent for the wholesale purchase of grain (*mubayaacı*) hired a French captain to carry 3,300 *kile* of wheat to Istanbul. Nothing was left to be decided locally – the hiring was concluded under the supervision of the administrator of Istanbul Customs. Upon arrival at the harbor of Salonica the captain would begin loading the ship straight away. He was granted ten days for fulfilling this mission; for each extra day, the decree cautioned, the *mubayaacı* would have to pay ten *guruş* from his own pocket. Next, the captain was supposed to bring his vessel with the precious cargo to the dockyards (*tersane*) of Istanbul where the wheat was to be stored. This part of the journey was the most elusive as the French captain could easily make some of the ship's cargo (*hamule*) disappear. Therefore, the officials in Istanbul were ordered to ensure that the French captain would not “interfere by adding to or reducing his cargo” (*ziyade ve noksanına karışmamak*).<sup>68</sup> This was not all; the central authorities further demanded that a certificate be registered in the Salonican *sicil* in which the foreign captain would confirm that he had fulfilled his mission in Salonica within the time framework granted in the decree.<sup>69</sup> A similar procedure was concurrently implemented to ensure the delivery of 13,000 *kile* of wheat by another captain from Dubrovnik, in this case and due to the larger quantity of wheat, fifteen days were granted for the loading.<sup>70</sup>

As noted above, the smugglers' activities were connected in the Ottoman eyes to another threat that bore the stamp of French captains – piracy.

<sup>66</sup> Sicil, vol. 44, pp. 104-105, *evasit-i Safer* 1144 [14-23 August 1731].

<sup>67</sup> Sicil, vol. 44, p. 105, 13 Safer 1144 [16 August 1731].

<sup>68</sup> Sicil, vol. 101, p. 20, 12 Safer 1176 [1 September 1762].

<sup>69</sup> Sicil, vol. 101, pp. 20-21, 19 Safer 1176 [8 September 1762].

<sup>70</sup> Sicil, vol. 101, p. 21, 5 Safer 1176 [25 August 1762]; vol. 101, p. 21, 6 Safer 1176 [26 August 1762].

### The French Captain-cum-Pirate

The French commerce provided Ottoman Salonica with some of its basic needs. In addition, French vessels held an important role in moving people and commodities between Ottoman harbors. The French captains could be perceived, for example, as trustworthy enough to carry Muslim pilgrims from the harbor of Salonica to Egypt, from where they proceeded to the Hijaz. Hac Hasan *bin* Abdullah, of Siroz [Serres], was traveling on a French vessel back to Salonica, when he suddenly died. His estate that included a large quantity of textiles, some of them manufactured in Yemen, and souvenirs from his visit to the Kaaba, was registered in the Salonican *sicil*.<sup>71</sup> Dokiçe (?) *veled* Dokiçe, as another example, a French merchant and a captain who enjoyed the status of a *müstemin*, arrived to the *şeriat* court of Salonica with Reuben, the dragoman of the local French consul. They were accompanied by a group of eight Muslim pilgrims who had arrived in Salonica's harbor from various cities in the southwestern Balkans (Yeni Şehir-i Fenar [Larissa], Manastir [Bitola] and other localities) in search of a vessel that would carry them to Egypt. The Muslim pilgrims declared in court that they avowed their own good conduct and that of all of their group's members – themselves and thirty-four other Muslim pilgrims. Such a promise was required by the French captain as an appendix to the agreement concluded between the two parties for the passage of the pilgrims to Alexandria. According to the pilgrims, the French captain was afraid that due to the low number of crew members on his ship, the pilgrims might harm him or his crew (*ancak sefîne-yi mezbure neferâti kalil ve bizler kesir olmağla kapudan-ı mezbur bizlerden haif olduğundan kapudan-ı mersûma ve neferâtına bizlerden zanar terettüb etmemek için*).<sup>72</sup>

French vessels even supplied the Ottoman army with some of its provisions and ammunition. During the Venetian-Ottoman War in the Peloponnese and Dalmatia (1683-1699), a French captain brought to the Ottoman army stationed in the Peloponnese ammunition such as bullets and artillery shells, manufactured in the gunpowder works (*baruthane*) of Salonica.<sup>73</sup> Another example is the declaration made by Joseph Argo (?), a French captain, that he had transported the exact quantity of 10106 Istanbul *kile* of wheat from Salonica to the Ottoman army in Anabolu [Nauplia] during the Venetian-Ottoman war over the Peloponnese (1714-1718).<sup>74</sup>

Furthermore, the importance of foreign shipping even for domestic commerce was so crucial to the Ottomans that during the Anglo-French Seven Years' War (1756-1763) in which English and French vessels wreaked havoc upon each other in the Mediterranean and consequently harmed the commerce between Egypt and Istanbul to the extent that the local markets suffered from a dearth in basic commodities, such as rice and

<sup>71</sup> Sicil, vol. 95, pp. 58-59, 28 Şaban 1172 [26 April 1759].

<sup>72</sup> Sicil, vol. 58, p. 57, 1 Şaban 1153 [22 October 1740].

<sup>73</sup> Sicil, vol. 1, p. 95, 16 Şaban 1106 [31 March 1695].

<sup>74</sup> Sicil vol. 29, p. 102, 6 Cemaziyel'ahır 1130 [7 May 1718].

coffee. An inquiry conducted by the customs in Istanbul aiming to assess the potential damage found that in 1160 (13 January 1747 - 1 January 1748), thirty-two *müste'min* vessels supplied Istanbul with the Egyptian products. Moreover, the inquiry revealed that Ottoman intervention was required to try and stem the fighting, because vessels operated by Ottoman merchants were not sufficient to handle all the Egyptian commerce without the foreign assistance. The Sublime Porte issued warnings to the ambassadors of France and England to caution their subjects against these mutual attacks.<sup>75</sup>

The reliance of Ottoman merchants on French shipping was equally clear from a list registered in Muharrem 1160 (1747) stating the names of merchants who sent quantities of tobacco in a ship, owned by Ginav (?), a French captain, to their partners in Alexandria. The list includes the names of ten Muslim merchants and one Jewish merchant.<sup>76</sup> A curious aside is the fact that while the Egyptian partners of the Muslim merchants were all Muslims, the partner of the Jewish merchant was his own son who had settled in Egypt. Identical lists of foreign captains, who conveyed large quantities of tobacco and timber, owned by Ottoman merchants to Egypt, and brought back coffee, rice and indigo, appeared regularly in the *sicil*. Another document discloses that the French consul in Alexandria represented the interests of French merchants who imported large quantities of tobacco from Salonica. Among the merchants was the consul's dragoman, [Etienne] Roboly. Their associates for trade in Salonica and Istanbul were two Jewish partners.<sup>77</sup>

The growing Ottoman reliance, or even dependence, on the services offered by French captains is therefore evident. But those captains could sometimes be taken for pirates. Piracy remained a constant danger during most of the eighteenth century. In an attempt to cope with this, the Ottomans inserted clauses that advocated a mutual bar on pirates' activities when signing Capitulation agreements with friendly states.<sup>78</sup> The Aegean Sea offered ample opportunities for pirates: principal maritime routes passed through its waters; numerous islands, bays and small coves that were inaccessible from land provided pirates with both plenty of space from which to prey upon passing merchant vessels as well as safe refuge when needed. A tacit accord granted by different Mediterranean states to the activity of pirates, or privateers, acknowledging their right to prey on the enemy's mercantile marine in the name of religion, further

<sup>75</sup> Sicil, vol. 92, pp. 107-109, *evasit-i Zilkade* 1171 [17-26 July 1758].

<sup>76</sup> Sicil, vol. 70, p. 59, 15 Muharrem 1160 [27 January 1747]. See also Eyal GINIO, When Coffee Brought about Wealth and Prestige: The Impact of Egyptian Trade on Salonica, *Oriente Moderno* N.S. 25 [86] (2006), nr. 1, 93-107.

<sup>77</sup> Sicil, vol. 111, p. 4, 15 Cemaziyel'ahir 1180 [18 November 1766]. On the dragoman Roboly, his personal trade with Salonica and his tragic end, see Maya JASANOFF, Cosmopolitan: A Tale of Identity from Ottoman Alexandria, *Common Knowledge* 11 (2005), nr. 3, 393-409.

<sup>78</sup> See, for example the appendix to the pact concluded between the Ottoman State and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies: sicil, vol. 66, pp. 69-70, 10 Muharem 1153 [7 April 1740].

sustained the pirates' assaults.<sup>79</sup> The pirates targeted the vessels' merchandise, crew and passengers – all of which was regarded as lucrative sources of income for the pirates who could hope for huge sums of ransom delivered by their captives' kin.<sup>80</sup> The *sicil* demonstrates that both Christian (mainly Maltese) and Muslim pirates operated in the Aegean Sea. The Ottoman authorities naturally were mostly concerned by the activity of Catholic pirates who targeted Ottoman vessels.<sup>81</sup> However, as was mentioned above, pirates' attacks on French vessels could also damage Ottoman interests as some of these foreign vessels were carrying commodities crucial for Ottoman needs.

To distinguish a pirates' vessel from an innocent merchant ship was not always an easy task, as our contemporary impression of piracy and pirates, as shaped by films and adventure books, suggests. Pirate ships had to frequent harbors to get fresh supplies. This was a time in which the pirates did their best to camouflage their true identity. The interception of a French ship in the harbor of Salonica on the grounds that its crew actually consisted of pirates can illustrate both the fear of pirates and the mode according to which the Ottomans endeavored to single them out. After numerous cases of pirates' attacks on passing ships and the capture of their Muslim passengers in the vicinity of Salonica, the local authorities were determined to capture the pirates and to solve this growing problem. While previously a French captain would have redeemed Muslim passengers captured by pirates by paying their ransom,<sup>82</sup> ostensibly other peaceful French vessels were viewed with suspicion, caused by the fear that they were actually operated by pirates. Indeed, five days following one pirate attack, a vessel flying the French flag arrived in the harbor of Salonica. As the local authorities were quite sure that vessel was a pirate ship (*korsanlık eden kahyonların biri olması ağleb-i ihtimal olduğundan naşi*) a delegation of local officials came on board to examine the ship and the equipment it was carrying. Their fears were proved justified: no legitimate merchandise was found on board, only storerooms filled with cannon shells and other types of weapons, some of them extremely well concealed. The delegation carefully examined the cache, made

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<sup>79</sup> On privateering in the Mediterranean Sea during the eighteenth century, see Gonçal LÓPEZ NADAL, *Mediterranean Privateering between the Treaties of Utrecht and Paris, 1715-1856: First Reflections*, in: *Pirates and Privateers – New Perspectives on the War on Trade in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*. Eds. David J. STARKEY / E. S. VAN EYCK VAN HESLINGA / J. A. DE MOOR. Exeter 1997, 107-125.

<sup>80</sup> Eyal GINIO, *Piracy and Redemption in the Aegean Sea during the First Half of the Eighteenth Century*, *Turcica* 33 (2001), 135-147.

<sup>81</sup> For a case in which a Swedish and a Sicilian vessel were attacked on the island of Skopelos, one of the Sporadic islands, by Muslim pirates (*korsan* – the scribe used the same term employed also to Christian pirates) from Avlegon (Dolcigno/Ulcinj), on the Dalmatian coast (nowadays in Montenegro) operating under the flag Tripolitania, see *Sicil*, vol. 96, pp. 57-58, *evahir-i Cemazilevvel* 1174 [29 December 1760 - 7 January 1761].

<sup>82</sup> On the involvement of French captains in the redemption of Muslim captives, see also *sicil*, vol. 1, p. 11, 10 Zilkade 1105 [3 July 1694]; vol. 26, pp. 163-164, *evahir-i Safer* 1128 [15 - 24 February 1716].

an inventory and reported to the kadi with their findings. The French consul was summoned to court and questioned about the ship and its crew's real identity. He claimed that it was a French ship and that its captain, a native of Marseille, was equipped with a *patenta* (document of naturalization). After reiterating that the ship was French and not a pirate vessel, he claimed that the significant amount of money that was found on board was its capital and that he, the consul, was ready to put up bail for the captain. The court was not convinced – such a large quantity of weapons, it was claimed, clearly indicated the true character of the ship – it was a pirate ship, as indeed was widely rumored among the local population (*korsan olması beynennas şayi olduğu*). The ship's sail and rudder were removed and its crew of thirty-seven men was imprisoned in the citadel; the various items and the money found on ship were confiscated and stored.<sup>83</sup> Only the intervention of the French ambassador in Istanbul finally brought about their release – he was able to convince the Ottoman authorities that the ship was indeed a merchant ship and that the large amount of money – 12,000 *guruş* – was intended for purchasing tobacco. The ambassador proposed posting bail for the captain and crew, to indicate their good intentions.<sup>84</sup> A month later, the captain declared in court that as it had been proved that he and his crew were “true Frenchmen” (*sahib frança olduğumuz zahir*), they were released from the citadel and their belongings were restored to them. Among the eye-witnesses who confirmed the legal procedure by their presence we can find local high officials, such as Hasan Ağa, the deputy governor (*mütesellim*) of Salonica, the local *cizyedar* and the customs administrator.<sup>85</sup> There is no doubt that the rumor about the pirates' arrival, a rumor that more than anything else indicates the scale of fear that prevailed in the city, developed instead into a diplomatic crisis, which the Ottomans wished to see end.

### Breaking Religious and Community Boundaries

The third threat, caused by the French presence in the Ottoman domains, was the ability of local non-Muslims to join the French community. The change from the status of a local non-Muslim into a French subject could be achieved through the marriage of local women with French citizens and conversion to Catholicism (*efrenc mezhebine meyil ve duhul*) or through employment in the consul's service, such as dragomans and their sons and two servants. The Capitulations enabled all of these former Ottoman subjects to benefit from exemptions regarding limits, prohibitions and burdens enforced

<sup>83</sup> Sicil, vol. 26, pp. 163-164, *evahir-i Safer* 1128 [15-24 February 1716].

<sup>84</sup> Sicil, vol. 26, p. 163, *evahir-i Safer* 1128 [15-24 February 1716]; vol. 26, p. 194, 21 Rabiülahir 1128 [14 April 1716]; vol. 26, p. 204 *evasit-i Rebiülahir* 1128 [4-13 April 1716]. On similar episodes from the French point of view, see SVORONOS, *Le commerce de Salonique*, 24f., 64f.

<sup>85</sup> Sicil, vol. 25, p. 101, 24 Rebiülahir 1128 [17 April 1716].

by the Ottomans exclusively on non-Muslims.<sup>86</sup> The Ottoman fear of cultural border crossing, therefore, was related to their concern about European encroachment on vital Ottoman interests and the blurring of the distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims, one of the principal dichotomies sanctioned by Muslim law.<sup>87</sup> One of the major distinctions between the Muslim and non-Muslim populations in the Ottoman state, as in other Muslim societies, was reflected in the non-Muslims' obligation to pay the head tax (*cizye*) and to adhere to certain other signs of subjugation. The *müst'ems* were exempted from this payment. The collectors of this tax, however, were not always attentive to claims of exemption by non-Muslims due to their affiliation with the French community. Consider the following case: the French ambassador in Istanbul submitted a petition to the Sultan from while he was in his military camp (*ordu-yi hümayun*) complaining against the collector of the *cizye* tax (*cizyedar*) of Salonica. According to the petition, a certain Jew, Musa (Moshe) *veled* Yasif (Yosef), a merchant belonging to the Portuguese community (*portakal taifesinden*)<sup>88</sup> and who was under the protection of the French king (*frança padişahın bayrağı altında*), had arrived in Salonica to conduct trade. The *cizyedar* (his name was not registered) had him arrested and forced him to pay 10.5 *guruş* as a *cizye* fees. The *cizyedar* was subsequently instructed to return the money and to deter from such aggression in the future.<sup>89</sup>

This clear mistrust of a claim by a non-Muslim regarding his *cizye* tax exemption represents the third case of suspicion against foreign subjects. In addition to taking part in smuggling and piracy, French protégés were also mistrusted for acquiring their status through forgery. The Ottomans acknowledged the exemption granted to those who served the consul as dragomans or servants, but they were suspicious of local non-Muslims who illegally attained the status of dragomans while continuing to pursue their trades. The main Ottoman concern was to verify that no more local non-Muslims would acquire French protection. Looking through Ottoman documents, it seems that during the first half of the eighteenth century, marriage of local Christian women to French men was the main channel through which local Christians could join the French community. Later on, it was mainly local traders, brokers and others who were connected to the European trade who were able to gain the sought-after status of exempted protégés. The “desertion” of local non-Muslims equally bothered

<sup>86</sup> See, for example, *Sicil*, vol. 94, pp. 32-34, *evahir-i Rebiülahir* 1172 [22 December 1758]. On the dragomans who served the foreign missions in the Ottoman state, see Frédéric HITZEL, *Istanbul et les langues orientales*. Paris 1997.

<sup>87</sup> See FAROQHI, *Representing France in the Peloponnese*, 75.

<sup>88</sup> The Portuguese community consisted mainly from *conversos* originated from Portugal. They settled as merchants in Livorno where they returned to embrace Judaism. They were known to contemporary local Jews as “Frankos”. Many of them took part under the French flag in the commerce conducted in Ottoman port cities. They benefited from French protection. See NEHAMA, *Histoire des israélites*, vol. 6, 255-262; Yaron BEN-NAEH, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans*. Jerusalem 2006, 287-289 [in Hebrew].

<sup>89</sup> *Sicil*, vol. 20, p. 49, *evail-i Safer* 1123 [21-30 March 1711].



the non-Muslim communities who were concerned that the taxation burden would become heavier on those who remained loyal to their original religions.

The debate between Maria, a former slave who converted to Catholicism following her marriage to a Frenchman, her daughters and the Greek community about the women's communal affiliation can demonstrate this friction: a French subject bought a female slave named Maria. He later married her according to the Catholic custom (*ayin-i efrenği üzere*) and the couple had two daughters. Following his death, Maria married a local Greek. From this matrimonial bond, a third daughter was born. The Greek husband also died, after which their daughter married another Frenchman, again according to the Catholic rite. The former slave and her daughters came to court to affirm their Catholicism through the agency of the French consul's dragoman and to refute any claim regarding their attachment to the Greek community. Muslim eyewitnesses confirmed the women's declaration.<sup>90</sup> Representing a household devoid of male presence and therefore subjected to taxes, we can presume that the women's resolve to secure their status as foreigners and to distance themselves from the local Greek community is related to their obligation to pay taxes. The French consulate supported the women's claim, as can be gleaned from his consent to let the French dragoman assist the women.

The authorities responded to the religious challenge of changing churches by struggling against Catholic missionaries who were active among the non-Muslim communities. One *ferman* sanctioned the imprisonment of Catholic monks (*din-i papa'ya müntesib ba'z-ı ruhbanlar*) if found guilty of preaching their faith (*mezheb-i efrence'ye davet*) to local Christians – Greeks, Armenians and Syrians. The reference to the Syrians, who were not found in Salonica, indicates that the problem of missionary activity was perceived as relevant to the entire Ottoman realm.<sup>91</sup>

From the authorities' point of view the acquirement of French protection by alleged employment embodied the main threat of blurring the boundaries between local non-Muslims and foreigners, or "breaching the subjects order" (*ihtilâl-i nizam-i riayet*), according to the Ottoman parlance.<sup>92</sup> During the second half of the eighteenth century, the process of obtaining foreign protection became more and more extensive as indicated by the growing attention that the Ottomans gave to this phenomenon.

<sup>90</sup> Sicil, vol. 25, p. 63, 14 Şeval 1127 [13 October 1715].

<sup>91</sup> Sicil, vol. 8, pp. 174-175, 10 Rebiülevvel 1114 [4 August 1702]. The Catholic propaganda was spread in the Ottoman lands by Franciscans, Jesuits, Capuchins and Carmelite orders, see Lucretia VALENSI, Inter-Communal relations and Changes in Religious Affiliation in the Middle East (Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries), *Comparative Study of Society and History* 39 (1997), nr. 2, 251-269. See also Daniel GOFFMAN, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge 2002, 206-213.

<sup>92</sup> On the blurring of boundaries between foreign merchants and their local associates, see Elena FRANGAKIS-SYRETT, Networks of Friendship, Networks of Kinship: Eighteenth-Century Levant Merchants, *Eurasian Studies* 1 (2002), nr. 2, 183-205.

The Ottoman authorities endeavored to reaffirm their control over local non-Muslims who joined the French community through employment or conversion. The crossing of the communal boundaries was symbolized in the Ottoman edicts by the local non-Muslims audacity of demonstrating their newly gained affiliation with foreign consuls by abandoning their traditional clothes and roaming in the streets wearing European garments.<sup>93</sup> This “brazen” behavior infuriated the local authorities. Clothing regulations, Quataert remarks, were endorsed by the Ottoman elite to demarcate community boundaries and to visibly affirm the superiority of Muslims in Ottoman society. The Ottoman need to reaffirm these regulations increased in the second half of the eighteenth century as the Ottomans were anxious to reaffirm the Ottoman internal order in the face of growing external and internal pressures and challenges.<sup>94</sup>

As the Capitulations prevented the Ottomans from canceling the rights of these “new Frenchmen”, the authorities reiterated the prohibition of conversion to Catholicism and scrutinized all cases of obtaining foreign protection in the hope that this could prevent any misuse of the agreements and diminish the number of those enjoying French protection. In 1758, the first case of Ottoman resolution to monitor the individual allegations of Ottomans subjects who claimed foreign protection appeared in the Salonican *sicil*. Such affiliation, the decree asserted, enabled those claimants to be exempted from taxes, pay reduced customs and roam the streets donning foreign garments. Many of these non-Muslims even converted to Catholicism. The decree provided the relevant officials of Salonica with a list that included all the consulates situated in the city and the names of the dragomans whose affiliations to the consulates were properly registered. The officials were required to treat all other non-Muslims who acquired foreign protection as pretenders deserving of punishment. The decree included the names of twenty-three dragomans who served the consuls of France (2 Jews, 1 Greek, 1 Armenian), England (4 Greeks), the Netherlands (1 Greek), Austria (2 Jews and 1 Greek), Venice (5 Greeks), Dubrovnik (1 Jew, 1 Greek), Sweden (2 Jews) and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (2 Jews). The list was copied from the registrations kept by the Imperial Council (*divan-ı hümayun*).<sup>95</sup>

In 1765, the authorities opted to use other means to struggle against the phenomenon of Ottoman subjects requiring foreign protection. Now, the thorough reliance on Ottoman registrations was replaced with verification of such allegations *in situ* and

<sup>93</sup> *Dahi libasını terk ve efrenc heyetinde geç ü güzâr edip*. Sicil, vol. 94, pp. 32-34, *evahir-i Rebiülahir* 1172 [22 December 1758].

<sup>94</sup> Donald QUATAERT, Clothing Laws, State and Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1720-1829, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 29 (1997), 406f. See also Matthew ELLIOT, Dress Codes in the Ottoman Empire: the Case of the Franks, in: From Textile to Identity. Ed. Suraiya FAROQHI/Christoph K. NEUMANN. Istanbul 2004, 103-123.

<sup>95</sup> Sicil, vol. 94, pp. 33-34, *evahir-i Rebiülahir* 1172 [22-31 December 1758]. Their exact religious affiliation was not mentioned in the document. I identified them according to their names as appeared in the decree.

in public. From now onwards the check of affiliation and the enforced relinquishing of illegal foreign affiliation were to be conducted in a public ceremony that was not devoid of humiliation of those caught mistreating the Capitulations. All the consuls who resided in Salonica, together with their dragomans, were instructed to come to the *seriat* court. The kadi was ordered that the privileges granted to foreigners would be read in the consuls' presence and that its essence would be thoroughly explained to them. The list of invitees included the consuls of France, England, Austria, the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, Denmark, Venice and the Netherlands. The consuls had to explain each case of granting foreign protection to an Ottoman subject.<sup>96</sup>

This effort culminated at the very end of the eighteenth century in a general attempt to solve this problem by scrutinizing the status of all non-Muslims who benefited from foreign protection in the entire empire. The process probably took several years to accomplish. The idea was to register all those who claimed such protection and then to verify the validity of their claims. The state decided to carry out the examination in all corners of the empire in the hope of preventing any attempts by pretenders to claim that their nominations were issued in other locations and therefore could not be examined *in situ*. The central authorities chose to end this thorough examination by staging an official ceremony in the Muslim courts throughout the empire. During these ceremonies all those found undeserving of their privileged status had to renounce it publicly in the presence of local dignitaries and to declare their full submission to all Ottoman regulations.<sup>97</sup> As during the preparation of this census the Ottomans severed their diplomatic relations with the French Republic following the French expedition to Egypt (1798) and until the conclusion of the Peace of Amiens (25<sup>th</sup> June 1802),<sup>98</sup> French subjects lost their privileges and, therefore, were reported absent (*nâ mevcud*) from the public ceremonies reconfirming the status of Ottoman subjects to the empire. The beneficiaries of other foreign protection had to prove in court their right to retain that privilege. Failing to do so obliged them to acknowledge their status as Ottoman subjects. Ishak *veled* Yehuda Karasu [Carasso<sup>99</sup>], for example, held the status of a dragoman serving the Spanish consul in Salonica. As it was proved in court that he earned his living as a commercial broker (*simsarcti*), he had to acknowledge in court his status as an Ottoman subject, to forsake translation work and to hand over his document of nomination. His two brothers, David and Asher, had also enjoyed tax exemptions thus far on the grounds that they were both the dragoman's, that is to say their brother's, employees. However, both of them admitted in court that they were actually a broker

<sup>96</sup> Sicil, vol. 107, pp. 8-9, 11 Receb 1178 [3 January 1765].

<sup>97</sup> Sicil, vol. 184, pp. 142-148, 3 C[emazi] 1221 [19 July 1806].

<sup>98</sup> Stanford J. SHAW, *The History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 1. Cambridge 1976, 268-270.

<sup>99</sup> On Yehuda Carasso, see NEHAMA, *Histoire des israélites*, vol. 6, 297.

(David) and a merchant (Asher). Therefore, they too had to relinquish their exemption certificates (*muaafet emri*) and to proclaim themselves Ottoman subjects.<sup>100</sup>

The attempt to put an end to the process of non-Muslims acquiring foreign protection did not bring about the desired results. During the nineteenth century, more and more non-Muslims in Salonica, as elsewhere in the Ottoman state, found ways to purchase foreign protection and thus to evade taxes and, later, military service as well. The Ottoman state remained at this stage almost powerless against these encroachments on its sovereignty. Its earlier fears regarding foreign intrusion into its own domains proved to be fully justified.

### Conclusions

The *sicil* parlance delineates a picture of a seemingly well-organized and defined society consisting of different segments whose legal and administrative positions and boundaries inside Ottoman society were clearly delineated and rigidly enforced. The reality, as revealed in the *sicil* documents, was clearly different as those boundaries and limitations were sometimes challenged and breached. The presence of outsiders who were exempted from Ottoman regulations in Ottoman cities was one of the main threats to the seemingly ordered society, as the Ottomans wished to see it. This paper has explored Ottoman perceptions of one particular group, the French who settled in Salonica during the eighteenth century. The situation portrayed well fits what Sanjay Subrahmanyam, who studies pre-Modern South Asian views of Europeans, calls the first phase of cross-cultural encounter, wherein “Europeans are perceived without Europe”.<sup>101</sup> Though during the eighteenth century a growing body of Ottoman travelers reached Europe and later wrote their impressions, the much more extensive everyday meeting with French – or other European – subjects in the markets and streets of Ottoman port cities had a much greater influence on ordinary Ottomans during this period. When facing French presence, much more was required from Ottoman officials: they had to navigate between the Capitulation agreements, on one hand, and the daily economic and administrative regulations that they had to enforce if they wished to sustain order in their cities, on the other.

Subrahmanyam speaks about images that invoke fear of European violence and suspicion of Europeans’ deceitful means, yet also about love for European inventions and style. As legal and administrative texts, the *sicil* records seldom refer to the Ottomans’ fascination triggered by European wonders or disgust at European habits. The listing of European fabrics and various kinds of watches in the inventories of deceased Salonicans who could afford to themselves such luxuries demonstrates the fascination of wealthy Salonicans with European products. Notwithstanding, the *sicil* documents do point

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<sup>100</sup> Sicil, vol. 184, p. 143, R[eceb] 1218 [17 October 1803].

<sup>101</sup> SUBRAHMANYAM, *South Asian Views*, 95.

to two major perceptions regarding the French – and other Europeans’ – presence in their city: there are many records referring to suspicion of deceitful French methods and activities in the face of the growing Ottoman reliance on captains and merchants from that land. The *fermans* highlighted the Europeans’ deceptions by pointing to various potential mistreatments of the Capitulations. Yet, the French community provided the population of Salonica and the empire as a whole with some vital services and products. The foreigners’ presence was thus tolerated and legitimized by a sense of realism and pragmatic considerations. Still, the Ottoman authorities did endeavor to rigidly maintain the boundaries between the non-Muslim population and the foreign communities. The Ottomans knew that the potential foreign menace to their religious, social and economic orders was always looming on the horizon.

## ABSTRACT

### **Perceiving French presence in the Levant: French subjects in the *sicil* of 18<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Salonica**

This contribution explores the various Ottoman perceptions of the French colony of merchants and mariners established in Salonica towards the end of the seventeenth century, as well as the Ottoman understanding of its commercial activities. The main sources are the records of the Muslim *şeriat* court, the *sicil*, in eighteenth-century Salonica. Recurrent generalizations, stereotypes, and wholesale assumptions in the local administrative and judicial writings during the eighteenth century are referred to in order to discuss the various representations of the French and their presence in the city. The author presents the various commonplace encounters between French and Ottomans from the local Ottoman point of view and not, as is usually done, through the eye of the Westerner. The *sicil* records, the author argues, reveal three major characteristics as representative of the French in the eyes of the local authorities: the merchant-cum-smuggler, the captain-cum-pirate, and the missionary. The ambiguity inherent in these characterizations mirrors the contradiction between the growing dependence of the Ottoman authorities on the services offered by the Frenchmen on the one hand, and the mistrust with which the French presence was viewed in Ottoman Salonica on the other.