

Venetian-Ottoman Peace Agreement or `Ahd-name in 1478/79

Through middle and modern ages, Ottoman Empire established and developed diplomatic relations with various European countries with the intent of peace keeping. When examining peace keeping in the aspect of diplomacy, Ottoman Empire has been a crucial diplomatic representative of eastern hemisphere due to the fact that Ottomans as an empire linked three continents which were not all but parts of Africa, Europe and Asia, additionally different nations, socioeconomic structures as well. From 14th century onwards, Ottoman Empire started to appoint their diplomats and ambassadors to sovereign states in Europe. Before the 14th century, Ottomans didn't appoint a diplomats as their ambassador to any European country in spite of that European countries appointed their diplomats and European ambassadors came to Ottoman Empire. A major part of the Ottoman diplomats who went to European Countries has been appointed as a courier or messenger by the Sultans in the 14th century. However they were entitled to consider political issues with high state officials who accepted them as a diplomat, in the Europe.¹ Generally after the wars, peace treaty roughly determined how to set new boundaries for the each countries who join the battle and then again each countries determined details about boundaries of their countries in the diplomatic negotiation. Diplomatic negotiation between the Ottoman Empire and European countries about the boundaries at the same time mean that setting boundaries between Christian and Muslim lands. That's why, diplomatic relations between European Countries and Ottoman Empire were widely essential. However, problems about boundaries could be emerged at any time even in periods of peace. Therefore, it was possible to find diplomats or state officials to solve the political and diplomatic problems. This paper aims to have a close look at peace agreement between the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II and the Signoria of Venice, namely, that of Mehmed II and Signoria of Venice, with a focus on its content regarding his observations in Aegean Sea and diplomatic strategies at the time.

¹ Pedani, M.P.(1994). *In nome del Gran Signore: Inviati Ottomani a Venezia dalla caduta di Constantinopoli alla Guerra di Candia*. Venice: Deputazione Ditrice. p.9.

After the Conquest, Relations between Ottomans and Venetians

In order to have a clear look at the peace agreement, however, it is appropriate to first see the background of it. Eastern Mediterranean and Aegean Islands have been controlled by Venetians and Genoese, also major ports in the Black Sea has been under control by mostly Genoese and foreigners. This situation complicated the battles because Ottomans have to fight in double battlefront in the Venetian-Ottoman wars during the 1463-1479 because the coasts of Anatolia have been frequently under attacks. In addition, the Knights of Saint Jean settled in Rhodes in 1309 became a threat in terms of the Muslim sea transportations and only way of getting rid of this situation was strengthening the naval forces for the Ottomans.² One of the reasons why Ottomans tended towards to become a naval power was the conquest of Istanbul. Istanbul which conquered by the Ottomans was actually entirely under the control of Venice and Genoa in terms of trade and after the conquest, Ottomans became a risk for the Venetians because in the long term Venetians were restricted to access trade routes in the Black Sea, Aegean Islands and Eastern Mediterranean.³ Both Venetians and Ottomans have been started to fight against each other to defend their interest. Then one conflict or battle led to another conflict or battle between Ottomans and Venetians. Ottomans made their presence felt in Aegean Sea to illustrate that there were campaign of Serbian and Walachia, struggle with ships of the papal navy and capturing the Morea or Peloponnese between 1454 and 1462.

The Path to Peace between Ottomans and Venetians

For circumstances of after the conquest of which were mentioned in the previous paragraph, Ottomans have to manage the process efficiently in the field of military and diplomacy. From the last years of Mehmed II's reign between 1451 and 1481, negotiations or official relations between European and Ottoman diplomats was generally in a place near their border. In the ruling period of under the Mehmed II, Ottomans extended their territory by conquest and expanded from Danube to Taurus, and also Crimea to South Italy. One of the reasons for this overexpansion of Ottoman Empire was the idea of Gaza and Ottomans aspired to conquer the lands which have boundaries near the Christian lands.⁴ Besides that Ottomans

² Rothman, E. N. (2012). *Brokering Empire: Trans-imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. P.33

³ İnalçık, H. "An Outline of Ottoman-Venetian Relations" pp.88-89.

⁴ Theunissen, H.(1998), "Ottoman-Venetian Diplomats: the 'Ahd-Names. The Historical Background and the Development of a Category of Political Commercial Instruments together with an Annotated Edition of a Corpus of Relevant Documents", *Electronic Journal of Oriental Studies* 1. no. 2, p. 24

wanted to consolidate their authority in these lands because it was impossible to continuously fight against all neighboring countries and they needed to maintain peace and security even if for the short term. Signoria of Venice was powerful and one of the bordering countries or city-state of Ottoman Empire. Venice ruled over not only their city but also colonized Aegean Islands and part of the lands in the west of the Balkans.⁵ Consequently, Ottoman Empire and Signoria of Venice struggled each other between 1463 and 1479. Battles took sixteen years but there was no name for it but Battles between Signoria of Venice and Ottoman Empire had a big influence on them. As a result of these battles, Ottomans captured most of the Aegean Islands but in spite of that Venetians provided commercial privilege⁶. Besides, Venetian ambassadors called Balyos sent to Istanbul.⁷ After all, Venice didn't afford advantages from these battles. On the contrary, Venetians lost millions of ducats (ducado) during the wars and most importantly lose their power of the republic because they failed to keep possession of their lands in the Adriatic and Aegean Sea and their economy collapsed. Even they have put their authority in Venice at risk because of threat of the Kingdom of Naples. Another reason why Venetians wanted to peace agreement with Ottoman Empire was threat of the Kingdom of Naples because internal disturbance was strong effect on declare cease fire for the Venetians. Eventually, Venetians and Ottomans signed a peace agreement in January 25, 1478/1479.⁸

Ottomans and Venetians have been tired from wars between 1463 and 1479. Wars between Ottoman and Venetians during the 1463 and 1479 finished with signing peace agreement in January 25, 1478/1479. According to peace agreement Signoria of Venice accepted to give Kroya(Akçahisar), Limnos, Euboea, Peloponnesus and Shkodra to Ottoman Empire. Also, the Venetian Senate pledged to pay tribute which was 10.000 gold coin to Ottoman state treasury⁹. Venetian merchants could freely trade in sea under the control of Ottoman Empire. Mehmed II assumed dominance in the Aegean Sea at end of the wars.¹⁰

⁵ Rosenwein, B.H. (2018), *Reading the Middle Ages: Sources from Europe, Byzantium, and the Islamic World*. 3rd ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. p. 459

⁶ ASV, CDT I. 7 and I. 8: ASV, Libri Commemorativi, XVI, 143. MM III, p.298

⁷ ASV, CDT I. 9b: ASV, Libri Commemorativi, XVI, 141. Alessio Bombaci, *Nuovi firmani*, p.307, no.3.

⁸ ASV Documenti Turchi B1/2

⁹ Rosenwein, B.H. (2018), *Reading the Middle Ages: Sources from Europe, Byzantium, and the Islamic World*. 3rd ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. p. 457

¹⁰ Alessio Bombaci, *Nuovi firmani*, pp.305-306 No:2

After the 16 years of war Mehmed II wanted to improve his reputation in the Europe, obviously. Gentile Bellini who was the most famous painter in 1479 was brought into Istanbul for this aim and he drew portrait of Mehmed II. Besides he was a sculptor and he designed special medals for the Mehmed II. Bellini who lived in Ottoman Palace for two years composed many art works and his works made big impression on local artists and miniaturist in Istanbul to Esfahan and Tabriz. Even Mehmed II couldn't estimate that his power and reputations spread fast on such a scale. Peace Treaty between Venetians and Ottomans was not just successful in that time because impression of diplomatic success is continue even in the 21th century. Even today's many people knew that portrait of Mehmed II by Bellini by book cover, posters or post mark.

Diplomatic Process for the Peace Treaty

After mentioning about the historical background before of Peace Agreement between the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II and the Signoria of Venice in 24 January, 1478, it is now the time to directly delve into its format and details in terms of diplomatic process. Mehmed II sent his ambassador Lütfi Bey to Venice because of that he wanted to ensure Venetians' loyalty about peace agreement.¹¹ End of the wars between 1463 and 1479 there was a good standing man called Giovanni Dario in Venice and he made contact with Turkish diplomats or ambassadors.¹² That's why when Lütfi Bey went to Venice to submit letter of peace agreement for head of the Signoria of Venice information, he was very well received with great ceremony.¹³ From this date on, most of the representatives were mentioned as ambassador of Grand Turk that the aforementioned were in the chronicles.¹⁴ Also, another important thing about Ottoman bureaucracy is that when Sinan Bey who was an Ottoman diplomat went to Venice to make them an offer about campaign of Otranto, Giovanni Dario and his interpreter called turci-manno also participated in these intercourses about campaign of Otranto. In 1481, Emanuele who was the interpreter transmitted information about death of Mehmed II to Venice. In this way, word of turcimanno which passed from Turkish has been

¹¹ ASV, CDT I.3 bis; ASV, Libri Commomoriali, XVI, 137. MM III, p.298

¹² ASV, CDT 1.2. Copy: ASV, Commomoriali, XVI, 142. MM III, ss. 295-298; D.GILLILAND WRIGHT-P.A. MACKAY "When the Serenissima and the Gran Turco made love: the peace of treaty of 1478", Studi Veneziani, 53 (2007), pp.261-277.

¹³ ASV, CDT I.3 bis; ASV, Libri Commomoriali, XVI, 137. MM III, p.298

¹⁴ Şakiroğlu, M.H., "Tercüman", DIA, vol: 40; p. 491

semantically changed like that turcimanno to dragomanno to drugment to drogman to truchement and the last version dragoman. The word of dragoman gained wide currency in the west as it is understood that the word of dragoman used in the language of Ottoman bureaucracy. Return to the subject, after the Lütfi Bey, Mehmet II charged Halil Bey with negotiating boundaries problems and firstly he went to Morea, Lepanto, Himara, Sopoto and Alexandria because Venetians and Ottomans couldn't strike a balance about problems of the frontiers or how to take new shape after the wars¹⁵. However Venetians didn't satisfied taken decisions aimed at Morea, it is for this reason Venetians and Ottomans came together again to revise decisions of Halil Bey. Giovanni Dario and Sinan Bey as a diplomat of Ottoman Empire treated with same issue.¹⁶ Decisions in consequences of negotiating between these two diplomats and Nicolo Coco who were ambassador of Signoria of Venice in Istanbul set ground for hududname which constituted by Mehmet II¹⁷. In those years' all names which sent Doges by Ottomans were written in Greek. Within the scope of negotiation about boundaries, diplomats of two side generally came together near the border of their countries and negotiations could take several mounts. Diplomats generally exchanged their diplomatic works each other.¹⁸To clarify, Venetians diplomats presented their document which signed by them to the Ottomans and also they gave the chancellor to them. Documents stamped with an official seal which was seal of St. Mark of Signoria of Venice. In Ottoman Diplomacy¹⁹, Kadıs took responsible of setting boundaries. They prepared their argument as a paper called hüccet.²⁰

They kept to register the original document and give copy of document to related diplomats or they submitted document for Sultan's information with writing. In the hududname there could be royal assent or sometimes not because there was no need to royal assent for proclaiming hududname.²¹Actually there were same situation for ruler of Signoria

¹⁵ ASV, CDT I. 11 and I. 12: MM III, pp.293-295. January 7, 1479.

¹⁶ Pia, Maria P.(2000). "XV-XVIII. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Venedik İlişkileri, Osmanlı" c.I. Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, p. 259.

¹⁷ Pia, Maria P.(2000). "XV-XVIII. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Venedik İlişkileri, Osmanlı" c.I. Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, p. 259.

¹⁸ Pedani, M. P.(1994). *In Nome del Gran Signore: Inviati ottomani a Venezia dalla caduta di Costantinopoli alla Guerra di Candia*. Venezia: Deputazione editrice, 1994. [Osmanlı Padişahının Adına. çev. Elis Yıldırım. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2011. P. 276.

¹⁹ Rosenwein, B.H. (2018), *Reading the Middle Ages: Sources from Europe, Byzantium, and the Islamic World*. 3rd ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. p. 457

²⁰ Hilal, Studi turchi e ottomani(2017). "The Ottoman-Venetian Border (15th-18th). Venezia: Edizioni Ca'Foscari.

²¹ Bertele, T.(1931) *Il palazzo degli ambasciatori di Venezia a Constantinopoli le sue antiche memorie*. Bologna: Apollo. P. 393.

of Venice and other European countries. They occasionally approved boundary agreements prepared by their official representatives too²². Ottomans followed pragmatic way for the problem-solving diplomacy in field of setting boundary with a Christian, country²³. If a new diplomatic case about boundary emerged, they used some special document as tools such as hüccet, name-ı hümayun and arz for the problem-solving. Setting boundary between two European country has been differ from setting boundary between a Christian European Country and Ottoman Empire in terms of writing Charta by reason of madding an agreement with Ottoman Empire called instrumentum reciprocum.²⁴ As is evident from its name, Charta or diplomatic document prepared by diplomats consisted of two different written record which were original paper and and its translation.²⁵ Charta which was inscription in Ottoman Turkish provided by representative of Sultan. Other document written in European language depend on the country prepared and sealed by representatives of other side. In spite of this, any boundary agreement between two Christian countries brought to a conclusion with only one diplomatic document and two copy of it.

Conclusion

With these details in mind, and as this research paper tries to indicate, Mehmed II decisive engagement with Venetians in land and naval warfare. He captured to Aegean Islands because of their strategic significance and impose a tax. He provided to continue commercial activities while there were armed clashes between Venetians and Ottomans because of its he was good at analyzing political conditions in his time. Diplomacy was one of the significant tool of politics and diplomatic success was more efficient than military success for a country in terms of protecting their benefits and taking advantages as an example of it peace agreement between Venetians and Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II was significant in terms of diplomatically and militarily for both country. To clarify, Ottoman Empire under Mehmed

²² Maria Pia Pedani, "Venedik", *DİA*, c.43, İstanbul 2013

²³ Dursteler, E.(2006). *Venetians in Constantinople: Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. p. 155.

²⁴ Theunissen, H.(1998), "Ottoman-Venetian Diplomats: the 'Ahd-Names. The Historical Background and the Development of a Category of Political Commercial Instruments together with an Annotated Edition of a Corpus of Relevant Documents", *Electronic Journal of Oriental Studies* 1. no. 2, p.29.

²⁵ ASV, Libri Commemorativi, XVI, 141. Alessio Bombaci, *Nuovi firmani*, pp.300-305: *Les toughras enlunmines de la collection de documents turcs des Archives d'Etat de Venise, Atti del secondo congresso internazionale d'arte turca*, Napoli, 1965, tav. XV.fig.1

II already took advantages from feat of arms against Venetians. However, commercial treaty has been gained advantages to Venetians from their political situation by diplomatizing. Peace agreement between the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II and the Signoria of Venice in January 25, 1479 within the context of the Ottoman Diplomacy under the rulling of Mehmed II was crucial in terms of providing continuance of commercial activities on the Eastern Mediterranean and stopping Venetians to join Crusaders. Ottomans had a decisive advantage over Venetians with peace agreement and Ottoman Diplomacy especially in the Aegean Sea has been taken shape under Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II. After the death of Mehmed II, other Sultans didn't change their diplomatic stance in the Aegean Sea. Peace agreement between the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II and the Signoria of Venice was so significant progress in terms of Ottoman Diplomacy in Aegean Sea to understand early Ottoman diplomacy. This paper tried to shortly reflect these points, within the scope of an undergraduate research paper.

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