

# Early Modern Euro-Ottoman Exchange

Friday 23–Saturday 24 May 2025  
Isola di San Servolo, Venice



Image: John Ruskin, Fondaco dei Turchi, Venice, c.1853



UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI  
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Suraiya Faroghi (Ibn Haldun)

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Francisco Apellániz (Napoli 'L'Orientale')

Marloes Cornelissen Aydemir (Sabancı)

Antonio Iodice (Roma Tre)

Mücahide Nihal Engel (Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt)

Ellen Nye (Purdue)

Tamsin Prideaux (Leiden)

Marissa Smit-Bose (Cambridge)

Tommaso Stefini (Sabancı)

Gökhan Toka (Istanbul Medeniyet)

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# San Servolo



The workshop will take place at Venice International University (VIU) on the island of San Servolo, a ten-minute boat ride from St Mark's Square. The island is also home to a conference centre, a residential centre, a museum, a restaurant, a café, a basketball court, and a large park. We will be staying in the residential centre.

San Servolo has been inhabited since the 7<sup>th</sup> Century, when it was home to a community of Benedictine monks who cultivated vineyards and gardens. By 1615, this community had disappeared, but in 1647 – somewhat appropriately for our workshop – it became home to around 200 nuns fleeing the Cretan War.

By the early eighteenth century, this religious community too had dwindled and disappeared. The island became a military hospital and then – a little less auspiciously – an asylum for the insane, which closed in 1978. The island is still owned by the city of Venice, and the structures on the island were renovated to assume their current purposes in the 1990s.

For more information, visit

<https://servizimetropolitani.ve.it/en/san-servolo-island/the-island>



# Getting there

We recommend the following options:

## **From Venice Marco Polo airport:**

Purchase the following ticket **ACTV: AEROBUS + ORDINARIO RETE UNICA 90 MINUTI** (€18). Then:

- Take Autobus ACTV n.5 to Piazzale Roma
- Take Waterbus n.2 from Piazzale Roma to San Marco-San Zaccaria 'B'
- Take Waterbus n.20 from San Zaccaria 'B' to San Servolo

There is a manned ticket office and tourist information in the arrivals hall if you need help purchasing tickets. The bus departs from the front of the airport on the left. Do not get confused with ATVO, which is a different company also offering tickets to Piazzale Roma.

## **From Venezia Santa Lucia train station:**

Purchase the following ticket: **BIGLIETTO ORDINARIO 75 MINUTI RETE UNICA** (€9.50). Then:

- Take Waterbus n.2 from Ferrovia to San Marco-San Zaccaria 'B'.
- Take Waterbus n.20 from San Zaccaria 'B' to San Servolo

**Please keep all transport receipts and tickets if you wish to claim reimbursement**

For more information on travel see

<https://www.univiu.org/campus-services/how-to-get-to-viu>



# Friday 23 May

– BREAKFAST: **Sala Colazione** –

## **Morning Session: Diplomacy**

**Room 2H, Ground Floor, Venice International University**

Discussant: **Vera Costantini**  
(Ca' Foscari)

**09:15-09:30 Welcome**

**09.30-10.30 Marloes Cornelissen Aydemir (Sabancı)**  
Where Diplomacy and Privacy Meet: The Diary of the  
Dutch Consul of Izmir

– COFFEE BREAK: **San Servolo Cafè** –

**11.00-12.00 Lewis Wade**  
(Leiden)

Riot in Alexandria: Rethinking the Rise of the  
*Caravane Maritime*

**12.00-13.00 Mücahide Nihal Engel (Ankara Yıldırım  
Beyazıt)**

Export Ban on Certain Commodities from the  
Ottoman Territory to Europe

– BUFFET LUNCH: **Rooms 1H-1F** –



## **Afternoon Session: Law**

**Room 2H, Ground Floor, Venice International University**

Discussant: **Suraiya Faroghi**  
(Ibn Haldun)

**14.00-15.00 Tommaso Stefini (Sabancı)**

Ottoman Law and International Bankruptcies in  
Seventeenth-Century Istanbul

**15.00-16.00 Marija Andrić (Istorijski institut**

**Beograd)** Ottoman Merchants at the Commercial  
Court in Venice: Legal Matters, Privileges and  
Limitations

– COFFEE BREAK: **San Servolo Cafè** –

**16.30-17.30 Francisco Apellániz (Napoli 'L'Orientale')**

Dealing with the affairs of Franks: The Ottoman turn

– DINNER: **Ristorante Robe da Matti** –  
7.30pm (TBC)

<https://www.artandfoodgroup.it/robedamatti>





# Saturday 24 May

– BREAKFAST: **Sala Colazione** –

## **Morning Session: Finance**

**Room 2H, Ground Floor, Venice International University**

Discussant: **Mehmet Bulut**  
(İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim)

**9.30-10.30 Ellen Nye (Purdue)**

The Bill of Exchange, *Police*, and Abstract Value in  
the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Empire

– COFFEE BREAK: **San Servolo Cafè** –

**11.00-12.00 Gökhan Toka**

(İstanbul Medeniyet)

Deals, Debts, and Diplomacy: How Friendship  
Fueled Commerce in the Eastern Mediterranean

**12.00-13.00 Antonio Iodice (RomaTre)**

The Custody of the Holy Land: A One-Way Euro-  
Ottoman Exchange Relationship?

– BUFFET LUNCH: **Room Rooms 1H-1F** –





## **Afternoon Session: Culture**

**Room 2H, Ground Floor, Venice International University**

Discussant: **Michael Talbot**  
(Greenwich)

**14.00-15.00 Marissa Smit-Bose (Cambridge)**  
Stradiots Cavalrymen: A Military Diaspora at the  
Interface of Mantuan-Ottoman Diplomacy

**15.00-16.00 Jake Dyble (Padova)**  
The 'Avania': A Useful Prejudice?

– COFFEE BREAK: **San Servolo Cafè** –

**16.30-17.30 Tamsin Prideaux (Leiden)**  
Ottomans between Perception and Encounter in Early  
Modern Venice

– DINNER: **OKE Zattere** –  
7.30pm

Meet at San Servolo waterbus stop at 6.30pm  
<https://okevenezia.com/>





# ABSTRACTS

Marloes Cornelissen Aydemir (Sabancı)

## Where Diplomacy and Privacy Meet: The Diary of the Dutch Consul of Izmir

Daniel Jean de Hochepped (Amsterdam 1657- Izmir 1723), was the son of Jan Baptista de Hochepped, a silk merchant and Director on the Board of Trade in the Levant. In December 1677, Daniel Jean decided to travel to the East, and arrived in Izmir by summer. In 1679 he married Clara Catherina, the daughter of Dutch Ambassador Colyer in Istanbul. Daniel Jean was appointed as bursar and secretary to the Dutch Embassy and within a few years he was promoted to Dutch consul of Izmir, which position he held until his death. In 1704, he received the title of baron from Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I for offering services and assistance during the Peace Treaty of Carlowitz (1699). Daniel Jean and his wife founded the Levantine De Hochepped family branch, which presided over the Dutch trading community in Izmir and held important diplomatic functions in the Mediterranean for over 150 years.

At the start of his journey, De Hochepped decided to keep a diary, in which he discussed his travels to and within the Ottoman Empire and his private and diplomatic life in the cities of Izmir and Istanbul. It provides valuable alternative information about the early modern Mediterranean that can be contrasted with that of his travel companion, renowned artist and travelogue author Cornelis de Bruyn.



## Lewis Wade (Leiden)

### Riot in Alexandria: Rethinking the Rise of the Caravane Maritime

This paper revisits the caravane maritime, through which European vessels carried goods on behalf of Ottoman principals between Ottoman ports. While Daniel Panzac's landmark study suggests the caravane was a largely benign phenomenon, its institutionalisation in 1686 through Franco-Ottoman negotiations was the product of Ottoman challenges in provisioning Constantinople during the ongoing war with the Habsburgs. A powerful Marseillais merchant dynasty, the Fabres, initially exercised a monopoly over France's carrying trade between Alexandria and Constantinople in wheat, rice, coffee and other staple goods. Yet resentments against the French soon grew in Alexandria in the face of a wave of bubonic plague and rising food prices within the city, driven by the caravane's role in creating imbalances between supply and demand. This culminated in a riot against the French nation in Alexandria in June 1687, who had misjudged the mood of the city by pushing for further commercial advantages at the expense of Ottoman powerholders. Dissecting the conflicting French accounts of this riot reveals a side to the caravane maritime not appreciated in the literature up to now: its institutionalisation was deeply contentious and aroused powerful hostility against the French as war profiteers exploiting Ottoman misfortune.



## Mücahide Nihal Engel (Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt)

### Export Ban on Certain Commodities from the Ottoman Territory to Europe

The commercial relationship between the Ottomans and Europe is a huge research area, and presents a wide range of different aspects to the historian; not only on economy but also diplomacy and politics as well as military. The east unremittingly supplied the west with the finished products such as silk, cotton and linen fabrics, spices, porcelain as well as raw material for textiles, and grain. The trade was characterized by the intermediary of the Ottomans of the commodities brought via silk and spice routes as well as the agricultural and industrial production of the Empire. The nature of this commercial relationship was a totally evolving exchange between the two territories due to European expansionism during the early modern era. However, the flow of the commodities between each region was paused from time to time by the imperial decrees due to a number of reasons.

This study aims to explore the Euro-Ottoman Relations through occasional commercial import/export prohibitions in the Mediterranean trade. The types of commodities and the reasons for the prohibitions are usually certain and specific. The study aims to respond questions such as: What did those bans mean in the broader perception of international trade between the two territories? Was it related with the conflicts between the European nations or the Ottoman Empire, or there were other reasons? And most importantly did the locals ever try to break the bans? If so, what was the punishment for those type of charges?



## Tommaso Stefini (Sabancı)

### Ottoman Law and International Bankruptcies in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul

Bankruptcies were a common occurrence among European and Ottoman merchants in the early modern Ottoman Empire. They ruined commercial companies and could lead to diplomatic disputes between Ottoman and European authorities. Despite these dangers, international agreements (ahidname, the Capitulations) as well as Hanafi Islamic law (Sharia) contained little guidance on how to deal with bankruptcy disputes between businessmen belonging to different religious and political communities.

By employing Ottoman and Venetian legal and diplomatic documents, this paper analyzes bankruptcy-related disputes between Venetian and Ottoman Sephardic merchants in the first two decades of seventeenth-century Istanbul. During this period, Venetian and Ottoman Jewish merchants often traded on credit, which entailed substantial risks for account balancing. At times, these Jewish merchants defaulted on their payments, jeopardizing Venetian companies and leading to lawsuits litigated in the Venetian consular court and in Ottoman tribunals, which included Qadi courts (mahkeme-i şer') and the sultan's court (the Imperial Council, divan-ı hümayun).

By studying the resolution of such controversies, this paper argues that, since the late sixteenth century, Ottoman authorities established a legal framework to prevent bankruptcy and settle disputes between Ottoman and European merchants that prioritized the production and employment of documents in business exchanges and



court procedures. Furthermore, this study illustrates the interplay between consular courts and Ottoman tribunals in solving bankruptcy disputes, demonstrating the commensurability between the European and Ottoman legal systems in dealing with the shared challenge of debt recovery and insolvency.

## Marija Andrić (Istorijski institut Beograd)

### Ottoman Merchants at the Commercial Court in Venice: Legal Matters, Privileges and Limitations

The juridical position of a merchant in the Mediterranean, as well as their obligations and rights, depended on the political system of the area in which they operated. Regardless of where they came from or where they conducted trade, merchants were required to adhere to deadlines for the delivery of goods. However, this was not always possible since the commercial world was full of uncertainty, misunderstandings, payment delays, fraud and serious thefts. Considering this, being an Ottoman merchant in a Western city was undoubtedly not easy. In Venice, they had to resolve their business and legal disputes at the Venetian Magistrate of Trade, responsible for commercial legal matters and all issues concerning merchants from the Ottoman Empire. Understanding how this was possible requires reconstructing the court cases involving Ottoman merchants in Venice.

How were Ottoman merchants interrogated in Venice? How was the language barrier overcome—were translators present at the trials? What were the most common complaints they filed against Venetian traders, and for what reasons did Venetians sue them? Given that many Ottoman merchants were unfamiliar with Venetian laws, how did they defend themselves? Did they have assistance in the form of a legal representative or a lawyer? For some matters, in the absence of more precise information, it is necessary to resort to comparison and consider whether some customs were brought by the Ottoman merchants and thus incorporated into the Venetian judicial practice.



## Francisco Apellániz (Napoli 'L'Orientale')

### Dealing with the affairs of Franks: The Ottoman turn

The Ottoman domination of Egypt and Syria started in the battlefield of Marj Dabiq, North of Aleppo, on 24 August 1516, but eventually the realm was won for the dynasty with the takeover of the Mamluk chanceries and courts of law. The country hosted merchant communities that claimed to have been operating there for five hundred years. Cairo had been, for centuries, at the crossroads of Eurasian trade. Frankish communities were backed by old privileges and by a tradition of 'Aman treaties dating back to the first Mamluk rulers. The legal system under which foreign merchants operated was marked by its sophistication. It comprised a plurality of legal institutions and courts unseen in the Ottoman domains, including tribunals where Islamic regulations were dispensed more freely. The sultans of Egypt acknowledged the role of the shari'a-minded in limiting their own executive power. Families of ulama monopolized charges in the judiciary, operating under Hanbali, Maliki and Shafi'i rites with which the Ottomans were unfamiliar. The ulama crowded the chanceries and bureaus, providing their services as notarial witnesses and getting involved in almost all legal transactions.

The Ottomans disapproved of the way these foreigners were treated, and of the general handling of justice and the law for cross-confessional issues. As soon as they set foot in Egypt commercial courts were dismantled and most Islamic notaries dismissed. A long-standing legal reform was sponsored by the Ottomans, that heralded the twilight of the ulama elite and its way to understand both administration and justice. In the present contribution I





wish to sketch the rationale of the Ottoman handling the legal matters of foreigners, mostly merchants, but also captives and diplomats. On the one hand, the dynasty incorporated justice into governance through an accommodating and pragmatic attitude, leading to innovations such as the recognition of the written document as proof, or the adoption of an archival culture associated with the courthouse. In an apparent contradiction, they placed traditional biases of Islamic law against non-Muslims at the center of an Ottoman-sponsored legal order. With the Istanbul Divan as a privileged locus for cross-confessional exchange, Islamic normativity became central to relations with the Franks.



## Ellen Nye (Purdue)

### The Bill of Exchange, Poḷiçe, and Abstract Value in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Empire

This paper examines the development of a financial instrument, the poḷiçe, through interactions with interstate finance in the seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire. In doing so, it highlights the dynamism of Ottoman finance and the importance of interactions between European and Middle Eastern finance—a perspective missed by a long tradition in economic history of drawing comparisons between the European bill of exchange with the Middle Eastern suftaja. The poḷiçe was described by European merchants as a bill of exchange and used in both Euro-Ottoman and intra-Ottoman transactions in the seventeenth century. Its usage facilitated the workings of the Ottoman fiscal system but also introduced questions about sovereignty, value, and money's mobility that had to be addressed across pluralistic Ottoman legal systems. The poḷiçe consequently shows not simply how institutions migrated across the early modern world but also how they changed through interactions with political authority and local regimes of value.



## Gökhan Toka (Istanbul Medeniyet)

### Deals, Debts, and Diplomacy: How Friendship Fueled Commerce in the Eastern Mediterranean

Merchants throughout history have sought secure methods to transfer money over long distances to protect their wealth. This pursuit led to the development of bills of exchange, known as *lettre de change* in French and *lettere di cambio* in Italian, significantly facilitating overseas trade by enabling the safe transfer of funds and credit. In economic history and the study of Ottoman-European trade, bills of exchange and promissory notes are well-established concepts. The Ottoman Empire, too, demonstrated familiarity with such practices by employing comparable mechanisms as early as the 16th century. This early adoption is evident in archival evidence, which highlights the widespread use of short-term credit, promissory notes, and monetary transfers during this period.

Although financial instruments like bills of exchange and promissory notes are well-documented, the involvement of key figures—particularly tax collectors and local officials—in shaping 18th-century commercial and financial practices remains relatively underexplored.

This study focuses on Cyprus during the latter half of the 18th century, examining the interactions between local officials, Venetian consuls, and merchants in bills of exchange operations. These correspondences reveal the formation of financial networks that connected the island's inhabitants, Ottoman officials, and foreign merchants, particularly between Larnaca and Constantinople.



Critical questions arise regarding the underlying motives of these transactions. Were these exchanges merely commercial or financial in nature, or did they embody broader economic and political objectives? Moreover, could they represent an innovative means of remitting taxes, dues, and other revenues to the central treasury?

By analyzing selected documents from the Venetian Archives of Cyprus, this research aims to elucidate how bills of exchange functioned in practice, the motivations behind them, and the role of key actors in shaping financial networks in the Eastern Mediterranean.



## Antonio Iodice (Roma Tre)

### The Custody of the Holy Land: a One-Way Euro-Ottoman Exchange Relationship?

In 1333, after negotiations with the Mamluk sultans, King Robert of Anjou and Queen Sancia of Naples secured legal rights over key Christian holy sites in the Holy Land. Over time, despite some institutional disruptions, the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land developed into a central node in a long-distance network lasting centuries.

By the seventeenth century, the Custody established a global system of commissariats, i.e. fundraising institutions that collected and transferred financial and material resources from Franciscan provinces across Europe and beyond to Jerusalem. This paper argues that this system functioned as a “reversed” trade network: with a central hub acting as a receiver, and a decentralised network of nodes initiating flows of capital, goods, and information.

These transfers were crucial to meeting the fiscal obligations imposed by Ottoman authorities, such as the *avanie*, ordinary and extraordinary charges still paid under the same name today. Drawing on sources from both Jerusalem and various commissariats, this paper offers a two-fold analysis. First, it reconstructs the financial flows toward Jerusalem in the second half of the seventeenth century. Second, it examines the logistical and transactional costs of these one-way exchanges, focusing on routes, freight prices, and long-term cost structures. The study sheds light on the economic foundations of religious presence in the Ottoman Palestine and contributes to broader discussions on early modern long-distance organisations.



## Marissa Smit-Bose (Cambridge)

### Stradiots Cavalrymen: A Military Diaspora at the Interface of Mantuan-Ottoman Diplomacy

In the 1490s the condottiere and horse-breeder Francesco II Gonzaga of Mantua established an intense diplomatic friendship with the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid II. A Turcophile with a taste for Ottoman dress and language, Gonzaga also lavished his interlocutors with Italian-made arms and armour so he could export Turkish horses in large numbers. Unusually in Mantuan diplomatic practice, the ambassadors for these missions possessed considerable military expertise, thereby aiding material exchange and perhaps also the transfer of knowledge about tactics, fortifications, and production techniques.

This paper will expand the lens to consider the roles played by a broader corps of Mantuan light cavalrymen, stradiots, who staffed Gonzaga embassies to Istanbul. To date, stradiots have been studied primarily as a military diaspora in Venetian service with a distinct ethnic (Greco-Albanian) and religious (Orthodox Christian) identity. Here, I will explore how stradiots' varied familial, linguistic, and cultural expertise also underpinned the success of Gonzaga's Ottoman ventures. Detailing their contributions as interpreters, messengers, advisors, and horse handlers, I seek to understand how these diasporic intermediaries connected Italian cities, Adriatic ports, and the Ottoman Empire. Arguing for greater recognition of small-state actors like Mantua in diplomatic and military networks, I also hope to shed light on the diversity of brokers beyond officially trained and appointed dragomans (translator-interpreters) who facilitated Euro-Ottoman exchange.



Jake Dyble (Padova)

## The ‘Avania’: A Useful Prejudice?

The word ‘avania’, a term used frequently by European sources, is usually relegated to a footnote in studies of Frankish-Ottoman trade. Yet in his seminal *History of French Commerce* (1896), Paul Masson could claim that they were one of two principal dangers facing European traders in the Levant. Though corsairing has been studied intensively, ‘avantias’ have rarely been systematically approached or even defined. European dictionaries – including contemporary ones – present avantias as unfair and arbitrary levies made by the Ottoman authorities on European merchants residing in the empire. Yet in Ottoman sources, the word does not appear at all. This paper suggests that the so-called avantias thus represent a fault-line in a cross-cultural relationship of great potential value to historians.

The first part of this paper sketches the outline of a long-term history of the ‘avania’, understood as a European discourse about the nature of Ottoman society. Its departure point is the work of Merlijn Olzon (2000) and Maurits van den Boogert (2005), which argues that the ‘avania’ was a European misrepresentation of Ottoman justice that Europeans may have adopted deliberately to hide aspects of their own culpability. Using material from Venice, Tuscany, and England, I argue that the term underwent a change in the seventeenth century. Initially used to refer to the (supposedly) false pretexts under which a non-Christian actor (both ‘Turks’ and Jews) might seek to gain an advantage over a Christian, it was later transformed into a putative institutional practice of the Ottoman authorities.



This was probably linked to a particularly strained period of relations between European merchants and their hosts, and the desire of some European actors to manage trade risks and costs collectively.

The second part outlines a possible European Research Council proposal on *avania*s. This envisages the assembly of a team with different area specialisms to write a connected and comparative history of the *avania* discourse in the period 1573-1748, using sources from England, the Netherlands, France, Venice, Tuscany, Ragusa, and Türkiye. The proposal suggests that the term ‘*avania*’ might be viewed as a form of ‘commercial orientalism’ – a long-standing and largely antithetical narrative of cultural difference developed in part out of prejudice and part out of collective self-interest. This could provide an important additional perspective on the Orientalism debate, which tends to be approached via scholarly, literary, and artistic presentations rather than through commercial documentation. It also complicates a tendency in Mediterranean historiography which axiomatically equates trade with pragmatic coexistence and even presents it as an engine of cross-cultural understanding.





## Tamsin Prideaux (Leiden)

### Ottomans between Perception and Encounter in Early Modern Venice

In 1645, the Venetian board of trade [Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia] wrote a worried report about Ottoman Turks buying arms in shops. They claimed that this was hard to police because the “Turks are dressed in clothes that are little different to that of the [Venetian] Albanians or Bosnians”, that Ottomans were “well-versed” in Venetian Italian and that they had many contacts with freight-workers, people on galleys, and Jewish vendors. The report may have been a paranoid fear stoked by the outbreak of the fifth Ottoman-Venetian war. Yet it reveals two significant things: that it was hard to tell who an Ottoman was, and that exchanges between Ottomans, Venetian subjects, and other residents in Venice were happening daily.

Ottoman – European exchanges have gained increasing historiographic attention. However, it is almost impossible to grasp the legal and cultural definition of who an Ottoman was in Europe. Did Ottoman mean a Muslim subject of the Ottoman Empire? Or did it also include *zhimmi* [Christian and Jewish Ottoman subjects]? What about subjects on the borderlands who changed their imperial identity? This paper explores the multiple identities of Ottomans in early modern Venice, and what this meant for their cultural and economic exchanges with people and authorities in the Republic. I analyse the perceptions which move between alterity and familiarity, often in conjunction with imperial political concerns.



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# Room 2H, Ground Floor

