

THE DUTCH IN THE LEVANT: TRADE AND TRAVEL IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY*

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It should be stated at the outset that, as early as the Middle Ages, the Dutch had been active in the Levant as pilgrims, crusaders, maritime operators, merchants, and travellers. Dutch or Flemish merchants from the Netherlands had always been involved in the Levant trade since the early Middle Ages. Cotton, spices, silk material, wool, carpets, perfumes, ivory and jewellery were among the goods which they imported, while their exports mainly consisted of cloth, timber, arms, glassware, sugar, and also slaves. Moreover, working in cooperation with the Italian merchants, who had been main actors for centuries in the Levant trade, they efficiently carried on the lucrative transit trade between the Italian emporia and the north European Hanseatic cities.¹ On the other hand, when the Crusades were undertaken, Dutch contingents consisting of ordinary troops and members of the nobility joined the expeditions and played an active role throughout the campaigns. For instance, the Flemish nobles, such as Robert I, Robert II and Philip, took part in the crusader expeditions with their troops; furthermore, besides other European maritime operators, the Dutch in general and the Frisians in particular undertook responsibility for the troop transportation from the European ports to the Holy Land.² Besides, there had been Dutch pilgrims in the Levant since the beginnings of Christian pilgrimages to Jerusalem and other holy places; for instance, in the spring of 1106, a colony of English, Danish and Dutch pilgrims was staying in the Holy Land.³

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¹ For a detailed account of these commercial activities, see Heyd, pp. 96-97, 103 ff., 433-34, and 542.

² For various references, see Runciman, vol. I, pp. 113, 122 and 199; vol. II, p. 258; vol. III, pp. 9, 24, 26, 55, 56, 146, 147, 149 and 150. Also see Heyd, pp. 265, 289-90, 301, 313, 433-34, 447 and 542, and Bridge, pp. 110 and 156.

³ See Runciman, vol. II, pp. 91 and 249. Also see Heyd, p. 135.

However, the main concern of this article is to give an account of the growing Dutch presence in the Levant in the seventeenth century and focus on the Turkish-Dutch relations at the time. When one reviews the Turkish-Dutch relations in history, especially in the early stages of these relations, it becomes clear that traditional European antagonism against the Turkish state and people seems to have had almost no impact on the Dutch perception, since the Dutch adopted a pragmatic attitude towards the Ottoman Empire and were largely concerned with the growth of the Levant trade. In fact, although some members of the Dutch Republic in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries had strong prejudices and reservations against the Turks and continued to have some misgivings about any close relationship with the Ottoman Empire, “the more pragmatic minds,” as De Groot has stressed, “were against schemes of collective action by the European Christian powers under the Pope’s leadership to [...] make a general attack on the Turks.”⁴ Indeed, especially during the period leading up to the formal establishment of diplomatic relations in 1612, and throughout the seventeenth century and after, both the Sublime Porte and the Dutch Republic were aware of the mutual benefits that a sustained policy of amity and cooperation would yield.⁵ As Çelikkol, De Groot and Slot have clearly emphasized,

“The Netherlands reached out to Turkey as a desirable trading partner and a possible ally in the Mediterranean and Eastern European area. Their cultural and intellectual tendencies made them interested in the study of the country and its people. The Dutch and the Ottomans soon became aware of common interests in the Europe of the year 1600. This brought about the establishment of formal relations between the two countries in 1612.”⁶

So, one can state that, since the early Middle Ages, the Levant had always been a region on which the Dutch had focused economically and politically. Obviously, they faced fierce competition and varying degrees of hostility from their European rivals. Initially they kept a low profile for their presence in the Levant, but in time they sought strong alliances in the region to safeguard their economic interests. Hence they attached great importance to the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire and, thereby, to the acquisition of special privileges as well as exemptions, generally termed “the capitula-

⁴ *Op.cit.*, p. 91; also see *ibid.*, p. 181.

⁵ For a similar view, see Çelikkol, De Groot and Slot, p. xxi.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xxi.

tions” or *ahidname*. In fact, during the decades preceding the official establishment of diplomatic relations, Dutch merchants had been allowed by the Sultan to carry out their trade activities in the Levant under the French and British legal protection; also Dutch carriers, sailing under the French and British colours, had been granted free entry to the ports of the region.⁷ Of course, the capitulations not only enabled the Dutch to travel and trade freely within the Ottoman Empire but also led to a noticeable increase in their number. Especially, during the Twelve Years Truce between the Dutch Republic and Spain (1609-21),⁸ the Dutch outplayed their Venetian and English rivals and became the undisputed masters in the Levant trade.⁹ Consequently, the States General of the Dutch Republic established “resident representatives and consuls”¹⁰ in the Levant to maintain their trade primacy and protect the rights and privileges of the merchant colonies that were growing in major trade centres, such as İzmir (Smyrna),¹¹ Aleppo, Larnaca and other places.¹²

From the Turkish perspective, trade was not the only reason for the establishment of political and diplomatic relations with the Dutch Republic. More important was a serious need for strategic partnership against Spain, which was a common enemy of the Dutch Republic and the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, since the mid-1560s, the Ottoman governments had consistently supported the Dutch in their revolt against Spain¹³ and maintained what De Groot has called “incidental political contacts”¹⁴ with the Dutch authorities.¹⁵ These contacts took a dramatic turn in 1604 when the Dutch captured the Spanish naval base in the coastal town of Sluis in the Netherlands and freed some 1500 Turkish captives held as galley slaves by the Spaniards.¹⁶ In the aftermath of this event, several letters of acknowledgement, closer cooperation, goodwill and mutual

⁷ For a detailed account of the Anglo-French protection of the Dutch in the Levant, see De Groot, pp. 86-92; Çelikkol, De Groot ve Slot, p.105. Also, cf. Israel, *Empires and Entrepôts*, p. 136. For instance, from the 1590s onwards, the Dutch merchants, who traded for mohair yarn and wool in Ankara, were protected by the British Levant Company. In this regard, see Barnett, p. 136.

⁸ For a concise account of the political and diplomatic process, leading up to the signing of the Twelve Years Truce, see Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, pp. 399-410.

⁹ See *ibid.*, pp. 97-101.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹¹ See *ibid.*, p. 151.

¹² See *ibid.*, p. 98.

¹³ For a detailed study of the Dutch revolt, which in fact was the Dutch war of independence against Spain, see *ibid.*, pp. 135-230.

¹⁴ *Op.cit.*, p. 86.

¹⁵ For a brief account of these early contacts, see *ibid.*, pp. 83-86.

¹⁶ See *ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

support were exchanged between the Sublime Porte and the States General, and the Turkish Grand Admiral Halil Pasha (*Kaptan-ı Derya* or *Kaptan Pasha*) was personally involved in this correspondence.¹⁷ In this close contact and political development, the primary aim for the Dutch authorities was both an alliance against Spain and, perhaps more importantly, the obtainment of the capitulations for the lucrative Levant trade as well as the guarantee for the protection of the Dutch trade carriers against the North African Turkish corsairs.¹⁸ Yet, for the Sublime Porte and, indeed, for Halil Pasha, the aim was of a strategic and pragmatic kind: to benefit, to the utmost Turkish advantage, from the Dutch maritime power and expertise in order to strengthen and modernize the Turkish navy, so that it might become a tactically major striking force against Spain and others in the Mediterranean.¹⁹ In fact, following the catastrophic defeat of the Turkish fleet in 1571 at Lepanto, Grand Vizier Sokullu Mehmet Pasha had made great efforts to rebuild the navy with new rigging; yet, owing to technological backwardness in shipbuilding, and the lack of well-trained, experienced and fully skilled sailors, the Turkish naval power had entered from the 1590s onwards into a period of decline,²⁰ which must certainly have worried Halil Pasha and, thus, led him to seek closer cooperation with the Dutch authorities.

So, it was in the context of all these economic, political, diplomatic, and military developments and joint efforts that Cornelis Haga, who was a lawyer and had previously been in Turkey as a merchant and traveller, was appointed by the States General in 1611 as the first Dutch ambassador to the Sublime Porte. Upon his arrival in İstanbul on 17 March 1612, he was given by Halil Pasha and other high officials a warm welcome and much hospitality, and on 1 May Sultan Ahmet I received him in audience.²¹ Soon the Dutch Republic was granted all the privileges and exemptions (the capitulations) for residence, trade activities and free travel in the Ottoman lands.²² In the meantime, the provisions for the capitulations were exclusively drawn up by Johan van Ol-

¹⁷ See *ibid.*, pp. 94-95. On Halil Pasha's career and his political role in the development and establishment of diplomatic relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Dutch Republic, see *ibid.*, pp. 48-82 and 92-95 *et passim*. As regards his letters, and the translation of his letter of December 1611 to Prince Maurice of Orange, the Stadtholder, see *ibid.*, pp. 260-65.

¹⁸ See *ibid.*, pp. 93-99 *et passim*.

¹⁹ On Halil Pasha's efforts to form alliance with the Dutch and other naval powers against Spain, see *ibid.*, pp. 55-58 *et passim*. On the Dutch shipping technology, expertise and naval power, see Israel, *Dutch Primacy*, pp. 18-23, and *The Dutch Republic*, p. 316.

²⁰ See Uzunçarsılı, pp. 315-16.

²¹ See De Groot, pp. 98 and 106-14.

²² For the Turkish text and English translation of the capitulations, see *ibid.*, pp. 233-60.

denbarnevelt (1547-1619) in Holland, who was at the time the “Landsadvocaat,”²³ and then they were sent to Haga for the procedures to be finalized in İstanbul. The fact that the Dutch were allowed by the Sublime Porte to formulate the text of the capitulations freely and without any restraint, clearly indicates the distinct status that the Dutch Republic enjoyed as an ally and special partner of the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, Haga was so successful in his embassy that he stayed at his post for thirty eight years. During this relatively long period of his embassy, he set up, in accordance with the capitulations,²⁴ various consulates in the Levant, and the Dutch Levant trade volume increased enormously. Due to their huge stock of merchant shipping, very low freight charges, and enormous bulk-carrying, the Dutch soon ousted England, France and Venice from the Levant trade, and, consequently, Holland became the indisputable economic power in the region.²⁵ Especially, after 1648 when the Spanish-Dutch Eighty Years War ended and also the Treaty of Westphalia was signed by the European powers to end the Thirty Years War, the Dutch-Turkish relations were further strengthened, and the Dutch Republic, besides England, continued to be the most dominant trade partner of the Ottoman Empire.²⁶ Consequently, there emerged major Dutch trade colonies, among which the İzmir colony was the most vibrant and commercially most active. Since İzmir was, as the Dutch traveller and artist Cornelis de Bruyn observed when he visited the city in the late 1670s and early 1680s, “la première ville de tout le Levant pour le commerce,”²⁷ the number of the Dutch merchants living in the city was much higher than that of the other nationalities, and they were accommodated in groups of two or three in eleven homes.²⁸ Moreover, the goods they imported by their ships and put on sale for the people of İzmir were so diverse and in great demand that they did much better business than their English rivals; here is what De Bruyn witnessed about the Dutch trade primacy in İzmir:

“Nos [Hollandois] Flottes accompagnées de bons convois y [à İzmir] mènent tous les ans une grande quantité de Draps de Hollande, & d’autres

²³ On Van Oldenbarnevelt’s political career, his great role in the establishment of the Dutch Republic, and his tragic end, see Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, especially pp. 222-30, 234-40, 421-59.

²⁴ See De Groot, pp. 249-50: “consuls be appointed in [...] our well-guarded dominions.”

²⁵ For details, see *ibid.*, pp. 214-29; Israel, *Dutch Primacy*, pp. 6 and 98-101, and *The Dutch Republic*, p. 313; Çelikkol, De Groot ve Slot, p. 37.

²⁶ See Israel, *Dutch Primacy*, pp. 202-04, 224-29, 257-58 *et passim*, and *Empires and Entrepôts*, pp. 148 ff.

²⁷ *Voyage au Levant*, p. 27 (for quotation and reference, the 1714 edition of the 1700 French translation of De Bruyn’s work has been used).

²⁸ See *ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

riches marchandises, & lors qu'elles y arrivent on voit accourir sur le bord de la mer des milliers de personnes, parce qu'une partie des marchandises dont ces vaisseaux sont chargez sont pour le compte des habitants de ce païs là, tant Turcs que Juifs, Armeniens & Grecs [...]. On ne voit jamais la même affluence de peuple, quand les autres vaisseaux arrivent, non pas même quand c'est la Flotte des Anglois, parce que leurs navires ne sont jamais chargez d'autres marchandises que de celles de leur Nation."²⁹

Among the goods the Dutch bought from Turkey were mohair yarn, wool, cotton and cotton yarn, raw silk, gallnuts, carpets, figs, currants, raisins, and hides;³⁰ while mohair yarn and wool were brought to İzmir by caravans from Ankara after a journey of about sixteen days, cotton and cotton yarn came from the nearby town of Manisa at the foot of Mount Sipylus.³¹ In return, the Dutch goods sold to Turkey consisted of fine cloth, other textiles, furs, Spanish silver (apparently for the Ottoman minting of aspers), dyestuffs, Swedish copper, munitions, spices, pepper and so on.³² Indeed, the Levant trade enabled the Dutch merchants of the seventeenth century to make huge profits and provided them with the raw materials desperately needed for their textile industry. For instance, as Jonathan Israel has pointed out, in a petition presented in 1611 to the States General,

“the Amsterdam Levant merchants claimed [...] that the Levant trade had latterly emerged as one of the most vital plied by the Dutch in any part of the globe. They argued that their commerce with Turkey, Cyprus, Egypt and the Aegean now, compared in value with the trade that the VOC [*Vere-nigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*: United East India Company] had with the East Indies, was potentially even more important for the future ‘well-being of the fatherland’ than the East India traffic. They maintained that the Levant furnished an abundance of valuable raw materials, in particular, silks, cottons, and mohair, which were indispensable to the manufacture of a wide range of luxury and middle quality textiles in the west.”³³

Thus, through trade and mutual strategic interests, the Dutch-Turkish relations in the seventeenth century were maintained with a strong sense of friendship, tolerance, goodwill and economic as well as political interdependence.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

³⁰ See Israel, *Dutch Primacy*, pp. 54, 99-101, 225-27 *et passim*.

³¹ See De Bruyn, p. 28.

³² See Israel, *Dutch Primacy*, pp. 96-101 and 202-204 *et passim*.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

In the wake of closer commercial and diplomatic relations as such, also Dutch travels to the Levant began to gain momentum. In fact, in the decades preceding the establishment of diplomatic relations and the expansion of the Dutch Levant trade, several Dutch travellers, besides merchants, had also been to Turkey in diplomatic capacity. For instance, during the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent (1520-1566), Gerard van Veldwijk from Ravestein had travelled to İstanbul in 1544 as Emperor Ferdinand I's ambassador.³⁴ Ten years later, on "20 January" 1555, it was the Flemish diplomat Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq (1522-1592)³⁵ who came to Turkey on a peace mission on behalf of the Habsburg Empire.³⁶ Having achieved a six-month truce with the Sublime Porte,³⁷ he returned to Vienna in late summer only to be sent back to İstanbul in November for the re-negotiation of a new peace deal³⁸ and also for espionage.³⁹ He arrived in İstanbul "at the beginning of January" 1556⁴⁰ and stayed until "the end of August" 1562.⁴¹ He wrote the memoirs of his Turkish embassy in the form of four letters, addressed from Vienna and İstanbul⁴² to his friend Nicholas Michault, who served as the Habsburg ambassador in Portugal.⁴³ In the letters, he gave a full and, at times, sharply critical and antagonistic account not only of his journeys to and from Turkey but also of the political and diplomatic process of his mission. Moreover, he dwelt in great detail on Süleyman the Magnificent, the Grand Viziers Ahmet, Rüstem and Ali Pashas and the other high officials, and described in an intelligence-style manner his extensive observations and impressions of the Turkish life, society, culture, geography, politics, army, and institutions.⁴⁴ Although De Busbecq was of the Flemish origin and

³⁴ See Çelikkol, De Groot ve Slot, p. 2.

³⁵ For a concise biographical account, see Forster, pp. x-xvi.

³⁶ See De Busbecq, pp. 4-28.

³⁷ See *ibid.*, pp. 64 and 75.

³⁸ See *ibid.*, pp. 77, 227-29 and 231 *et passim*.

³⁹ See *ibid.*, pp. 199-200

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁴¹ See *ibid.*, p. 231.

⁴² De Busbecq seems to have written the first letter on 1 September 1555, from Vienna, following his return from his first mission to İstanbul; the second and third letters, dated 14 July 1556 and 1 June 1560 respectively, were written from İstanbul. As for the fourth letter, which was not dated, seems to have been written after his final return from his long embassy to the Sublime Porte. However, they were all published together for the first time in 1589 and were then translated into several European languages (See a review by Horn). For the full texts of the letters, see De Busbecq, pp. 1-243.

⁴³ See Forster, pp. xiv.

⁴⁴ See De Busbecq, especially pp. 28-67, 77-165, and 173-232.

came from Flanders,⁴⁵ he could be included in the group of the early Dutch travellers to Turkey since his homeland constituted together with Holland and Brabant the Habsburg Low Countries, out of which Holland emerged after the 1560s as a republic. Another early diplomatic visitor to Turkey was Joris van der Does (1574-1599), who was the son of Janus van der Does, the historian and curator of Leiden University. In 1597 he accompanied the Polish ambassador to İstanbul on a diplomatic mission.⁴⁶ In a long letter written to his father from İstanbul and published posthumously in 1599 in Leiden as *Georgii Dousae de Itinere Svo Constantinopolitano Epistula*, he described how he met an “Adriaan Kant” of the Hague, who had already converted to Islam and become “duarum [...] tiremium praefectus” (the commander of two galleys) in the Turkish navy; hence, he was known as “Kaïke Mehemeth” [Kayıkçı Mehmet] (i.e. Mehmet the Boatman).⁴⁷

Among the early Dutch travellers to Turkey in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, De Bruyn was undoubtedly the most important and versatile one, since his travels in the Ottoman Levant not only covered a very large geography extending from İstanbul and İzmir to the Aegean islands, Egypt, the Holy Land, Syria and Cyprus, but they also enabled him to make a very comprehensive and intelligence-oriented survey of the land, with particular attention paid to its geography, people, daily life, culture, architecture, religion, economic life, minorities, archaeological sites, transportation, towns, institutions, and administration. Hence, his account of this survey, which he illustrated with superb engravings and first published in Dutch in 1698 as *Reizen van Cornelis de Bruyn, door de vermaardste Deelen van Klein Azië*, is a kind of social and cultural area study, a documentary, rather than a mere personal story with fictionalized embellishments and oriental fantasies.⁴⁸

De Bruyn began his journey for the Levant on 01 October 1674 from the Hague and, after some time spent in Europe, mostly in Italy,⁴⁹ he arrived in İzmir by sea on 17 July 1678.⁵⁰ He stayed there for about five months as the

⁴⁵ See Forster, p. x.

⁴⁶ See Çelikkol, De Groot ve Slot, p. 11.

⁴⁷ See *ibid.*, p. 10, for a xerox copy of the letter's page where reference is made to “Kaïke Mehemeth:” “Hagiensis quidam Apostata Kaïke Mehemeth duarum [...] tiremium Praefectus [...]”

⁴⁸ For an extensive discussion of De Bruyn's travel, see Umunç, “Türkiye’de Hollandalı Bir Seyyah,” pp. 145-63.

⁴⁹ See De Bruyn, pp. 1-16.

⁵⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 20.

guest of the Dutch consul Jacob van Dam and, during his stay, he explored the city and its surroundings, including Ephesus.⁵¹ On 4 December he left İzmir in the company of a Dutch merchant, two Frenchmen, a Turkish *agha* (a local lord) and the *subasi* (police chief) of İzmir, escorted by over sixty body guards, to travel overland to Bandırma on the Sea of Marmara and finally make a passage by sea to İstanbul.⁵² The journey to İstanbul took about ten days and was fairly secure and comfortable although there was always the fear of robbers hiding in the mountains and attacking caravans and travellers.⁵³ De Bruyn stayed in İstanbul for nearly one and half years and made a close study of the city and its people.⁵⁴ Then, at the beginning of July 1680 he returned to İzmir by sea, where he again stayed for seven months.⁵⁵ From İzmir he set out by ship in early February 1681 for a long journey which took him to Egypt, the Eastern Mediterranean, and Cyprus, and lasted well over two years.⁵⁶ After staying in Cyprus for nearly a month, he boarded a ship in Larnaca to cross to Antalya and finally travelled overland in the company of a Turkish caravan to reach İzmir in late June 1683.⁵⁷ His third stay in İzmir lasted nearly one and half years, and on 25 October 1684 he left İzmir by ship to travel back home via Venice.⁵⁸ So, in total, De Bruyn's travels in the Levant amounted to six years, three months and eight days, nearly four years of which he spent in Turkey.

The fact that De Bruyn's travels in the Levant, including Turkey, took such a long time and covered such a vast geography, with particular focus on the social, cultural, historical, economic, demographic, and administrative aspects of the region, evidently raises some doubts about his primary motive for undertaking such an exhausting and dangerous enterprise. Although at the beginning of his work he clearly states that "je me suis senti des mes plus tendres années un penchant insurmontable à voyager les païs étrangers,"⁵⁹ it is hard to believe in view of his detailed account of the travels that he was really telling the truth. In fact, historically, he was closely associated with William III of Orange; as he himself revealed to Van Dam in İzmir, "j'avois toujours pris les interests

⁵¹ See *ibid.*, pp. 22-36.

⁵² See *ibid.*, pp. 36-38.

⁵³ See *ibid.*, pp. 36, and 37-38.

⁵⁴ See *ibid.*, pp. 39-155.

⁵⁵ See *ibid.*, pp. 155-61.

⁵⁶ For a full account of this journey, see *ibid.*, pp. 165-387.

⁵⁷ See *ibid.*, pp. 387-96.

⁵⁸ See *ibid.*, pp. 396-400.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

du Prince d'Orange."⁶⁰ If we recall that William III of Orange, Stadtholder of the Dutch Republic since 1672,⁶¹ attached great importance to the maintenance of friendly relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Dutch Republic and introduced "the new Dutch foreign policy in Europe" which required the Dutch diplomats abroad to be more closely involved in European international politics,⁶² it is plausible that he may have commissioned De Bruyn to make an exploratory journey in Turkey and the Levantine lands of the Ottoman Empire and provide him with detailed information about the region, the peoples living there, and the state of the Dutch Levantine trade. The plausibility of this argument can be verified by the unusual warm welcome that De Bruyn received upon his arrival from Consul Van Dam in İzmir and during his stays there; also Ambassador Justinus Colyer in İstanbul must have shown him similar hospitality when he, De Bruyn, visited the capital.⁶³ Moreover, his close observation of the Dutch trade primacy in İzmir, which has been referred to above, may also be regarded as an indication of his special mission during his travels in the region. On the other hand, it was rumoured that, back in 1672, De Bruyn may have played a part in the assassination of the Dutch politician Johan de Witt whose full republican ideas and policies seriously conflicted with William III's pro-English and monarchist policies.⁶⁴ As De Bruyn points out in his travel narrative, the issue was raised by Van Dam in İzmir.⁶⁵ However, he categorically assured Van Dam that the person allegedly involved in the assassination had the same name as his and was in fact a different person with whom he had no relationship whatsoever.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, be this as it may, still the question is whether De Bruyn may have been whisked out of the country, perhaps upon an intervention or suggestion from the Orangist party, under the pretext of a travel in the Levant, so that he may have been out of Dutch political sight for some time. So, it appears that De Bruyn's devotion to the House of Orange and his relationships and dealings in the Dutch Republic were rather enigmatic and, hence, shed some light on the reasons for his travels in the Levant.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 398.

⁶¹ See Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, pp. 802-62.

⁶² See De Groot, pp. 228-29.

⁶³ See De Bruyn, pp. 22 and 397-98. On Colyer's diplomatic achievements in İstanbul, also see Çelikkol, De Groot ve Slot, pp. 67-71.

⁶⁴ See Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, pp. 748-802 *et passim*.

⁶⁵ See *Op.cit.*, pp. 397-98.

⁶⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 397.

If one endorses the view that travel is fundamentally a cross-cultural encounter between the traveller and the natives,⁶⁷ De Bruyn's experiences on his travels become a relevant illustration. As a European and Christian, he maintained a distanced stand and, with an observant mind, paid close attention to every detail and incident. Like any European traveller of the time and after, who was aware of an unbridgeable cultural gap, he regarded the Turks as the Others because of their habits, religion, language, culture, manners, social values and so on. Yet, as one can infer from his narrative, his attitude towards them seems to have been one of understanding and curiosity rather than of imperial hegemony or colonialist outlook. Unlike most European travel writings that are in fact pervaded by cultural, racist and institutional solipsism, negative stereotyping, hegemonic desire, and imperialistic self-pride,⁶⁸ De Bruyn's narrative is more impersonal and reads more like a study report, which can be regarded as a flat discourse of geographical mapping, cultural exploration, demographic study, and gathered intelligence. However, all this critical assessment of De Bruyn's discourses in his narrative does not rule out the fact that he was genuinely sensitive in his observations which he did his best to represent as accurately as possible. Especially, his descriptions of İzmir and İstanbul arouse in the mind a vivid and full picture of Turkey in the late seventeenth century. For instance, İzmir has a population of eighty thousand people, with the Turks as the majority, followed by the Greeks, the Jews, the Armenians, and the Levantine Europeans.⁶⁹ It is a city where "on trouve [...] tout ce qui peut flatter les sens & rendre la vie agreable."⁷⁰ This is certainly because the port "est presque toujours plein de toutes sortes de Vaisseaux, par où l'on apprend tous les jours des Nouvelles de tout ce qui se passe dans l'Europe."⁷¹ Moreover, the plain around İzmir is so fertile that all kinds of fruit and vegetables grow there in abundance.⁷²

It was İstanbul that really struck De Bruyn, who was extremely impressed by the vastness, panoramic view, and cosmopolitan nature of the city which he referred to as a world in itself:

⁶⁷ Cf. Clark, pp. 2-3.

⁶⁸ For a discussion, see Umunç, "The Other Geography," especially pp. 723-40.

⁶⁹ See De Bruyn, p. 27.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁷² See *ibid.*, p. 27.

“Elle [İstanbul] paroît par dehors comme un monde, & je ne croi pas que sous le Ciel on puisse trouver une plus belle vuë.”⁷³

During his stay, De Bruyn explored the geography, history, demography, culture, architecture, social setting, economic and commercial potential, and shipping facilities of the city. For him, the Bosphorus is “plus agreable,”⁷⁴ and on its both sides are “Serrails & [...] maisons de plaisance accompagnée de fort beau jardins.”⁷⁵ Indeed, he points out, İstanbul is a city where art and Nature have jointly created beauty and plenty,⁷⁶ and it is here that one best sees “cette profusion des presens de la Nature.”⁷⁷ Also the port is unique in that “la Nature [...] a fait le plus beau Port du monde, même pour les plus grands vaisseaux.”⁷⁸ Besides the topographic and panoramic views of the city, De Bruyn was also strongly interested in the Muslim way of life with all its aspects. He was particularly interested, with remarkable curiosity, in Muslim prayers, rites of worship, Muslim pilgrimages, feasts of Ramadan and Sacrifice, the architecture of mosques, marital life, divorce, gender relations, weddings, circumcision, women and children, dresses, eating and cooking, swearings and street fights.⁷⁹ Law and order in the city, legal proceedings at the court of law, verdicts and sentencing, Islamic orders, usury, outdoor activities and sports, funerals, burials, slavery, and renegades are other social and institutional matters that drew his attention specifically.⁸⁰

So, to conclude, one can stress the fact that, throughout his travel narrative, De Bruyn gives a graphic and almost documentary representation of life and society in the Levant, with more focus on İstanbul and İzmir. The fact that he could travel safely and without any hinderance through such an extensive Ottoman geography is an indication of the high esteem and privileges that the Dutch citizens, whether merchants or travellers, enjoyed in the Ottoman Empire in the seventeenth century. Due to mutual interests and friendly relations, and also because of the many exemptions granted in the capitulations, both the Dutch Republic and the Ottoman Empire maintained a stable economic and

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁷⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 70.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁷⁹ See *ibid.*, especially pp. 82-151 for a detailed account.

⁸⁰ See *ibid.*, pp. 118-39.

strategic interaction even though other European powers, especially England and France, politically and economically tried to subvert it at times.

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