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# ADALYA

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# The Role of James Brant in the Process of Structural Changes in British Consulates

Ahmet DÖNMEZ\*

## Abstract

British consulates in the Ottoman Empire were financed and selected by the Levant Company. In the meantime, a duality in the administration of the consulate system emerged. As a result, it was decided that British consulates should undergo a process of structural change. Consuls were subsequently appointed directly by the monarch, and the company was dissolved in 1825. In the following years, on the one hand the number of consulates was increased, while on the other hand spheres of duty were differentiated and came to acquire a degree of influence, including the ability to intervene in internal affairs. James Brant played a significant role in this process, individually participating in the establishment of the consulates in Trabzon, Erzurum, Batumi, Samsun, and Kayseri. This study investigates the process of structural change in British consulates in the Ottoman Empire in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and Brant's influence in this process. Additionally, in-depth information is provided concerning Brant's Trabzon and Erzurum consulships.

**Keywords:** James Brant, Lord Palmerston, Trabzon consulate, Erzurum consulate, exequat

## Öz

İngiltere'nin Osmanlı Devleti'ndeki konsoloslari, Levant Company tarafından finanse ediliyor ve seçiliyordu. Zamanla konsolosluk sisteminde bir çift başlılık ortaya çıktı. Bunun üzerine İngiliz konsolosluklarında yapısal değişim süreci başlatılmasına karar verildi. Bu çerçevede, konsolos tayinleri 1825 yılından itibaren doğrudan kraliyet tarafından yapılmaya başlandı ve şirket tasfiye edildi. Sonraki yıllarda bir yandan konsoloslukların sayısı artırılırken, diğer yandan görev alanları farklılaştırılarak zamanla içişlerine müdahaleyi de kapsayan bir nitelik kazandı. Bu süreçte James Brant önemli bir rol oynadı ve Trabzon, Erzurum, Batum, Samsun ve Kayseri konsolosluklarının kurulmasında etkili oldu. Çalışmada, 19. yy.'ın ilk yarısında İngiltere'nin Osmanlı Devleti'ndeki konsolosluklarında yaşanan yapısal değişim süreci ve Brant'ın bu süreçte oynadığı rol açıklanmıştır. Ayrıca Brant'ın Trabzon ve Erzurum konsoloslukları hakkında, bu kapsamda, bilgiler verilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** James Brant, Lord Palmerston, Trabzon Konsolosluğu, Erzurum Konsolosluğu, Konsolosluk Beratı

## Introduction

Events that occurred in the Near East at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century made it mandatory for Britain to change her policy towards the Ottoman Empire. The new British policy regarding these bilateral relations fluctuated greatly between 1791 and 1833. During this period, when Russia moved to capture Ottoman territories, the Royal Navy appeared swiftly before the

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\* Dr. Ahmet Dönmez, Necmettin Erbakan Üniversitesi, Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Fakültesi, Tarih Bölümü 42060 Selçuklu - Konya. E-mail: adonmez@erbakan.edu.tr ; <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4836-9774>

Dardanelles. British statesmen, who viewed British economic and military interests on Ottoman soil as indispensable, were determined, if necessary, to protect the Ottoman Empire despite the Ottoman Empire itself, and British ambassadors and consuls stationed in Istanbul played a critical role in the execution of such a policy of protection.

Those statesmen, diplomats, intellectuals, and journalists who were effective in setting up the new British policy towards the Ottoman Empire, as well as their ideas and influence and their ultimate impact on the Ottoman future, has so far been studied in various degrees of depth. This study focuses on British consuls active in the relevant period who have remained outside the academic purview in terms of their role in designing and implementing the overall British policy. The structural changes in and the expansion of the consular network from 1825 onwards call for explanation based on British and Ottoman archival sources. James Brant, one of the most extraordinary figures of the period, will serve as the specific area of investigation for this study. In particular, Brant's role in the structural change of British consulates and the establishment of new consulates in Trabzon, Erzurum, Batumi, Samsun, and Kayseri will be explained. Moreover, the study will also examine Brant's terms as a British consul in Trabzon and Erzurum between 1830 and 1856.

### The Beginning of Structural Change in the Consulate System

The first British embassy on Ottoman soil was opened in 1583. Subsequently, British consulates in Ottoman port cities were established. The Levant Company, which paid the salaries of ambassadors and consuls, were decisive in assigning the latter.<sup>1</sup> As the 19<sup>th</sup> century began, however, either the increase in the importance of Turkey for British political, military, and economic interests, or the emergence of a duality within the embassies and consulates themselves, made structural change unavoidable.<sup>2</sup> First of all, the authority of the Levant Company in assigning the ambassadors to be sent to Istanbul was terminated. From 1804 onwards, the salaries of the entire consulate staff were paid through the royal budget.<sup>3</sup> Thereafter, in 1825 Foreign Secretary George Canning secured the enactment of a law aimed at solving the attendant problems. According to this law, only the King/Queen was authorized to assign consuls and the administration of consulates handed over to the British government. In the same year, the Levant Company was completely dissolved under the influence of ambassador Stratford Canning's reports. As a result, consulates were freed of the inherent duality and inefficiency of the previous era.<sup>4</sup>

In subsequent years, political, military, and economic developments elevated the importance of the Ottoman Empire in British politics. In fact, from the end of 1833 the preservation of Ottoman independence and territorial integrity formed Britain's official policy. Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston implemented an agenda to fulfill reforms for the strengthening of the Ottoman Empire in accordance with Canning's reports.<sup>5</sup> The necessity for the ambassador at Istanbul and the consuls in the provinces to apply the policy of protection necessitated further structural change for consulates.

<sup>1</sup> Berridge 2009, 28, 31, 33, 77; Horn 1967, 353; Laidlaw 2010, 20–1, 36.

<sup>2</sup> Wood 1925, 533; Kocabaşoğlu 2004, 20, 26.

<sup>3</sup> Horn 1967, 364; Wood 1964, 87–8.

<sup>4</sup> Cunningham 1993, 196; Kocabaşoğlu 2004, 30, 35, 60; Bailey 1940, 471.

<sup>5</sup> Rodkey 1929, 571 et seq.; Dönmez 2014, 71 et seq.

Palmerston decided to use the consulates as an effective means for the implementation of the protection policy. The British ambassador in Istanbul was put in charge of handling the sultan and the Sublime Porte, while the consulates were assigned to inspect Ottoman military and civil administrators in the countryside. They were charged with reporting any developments to headquarters.<sup>6</sup>

Canning was reappointed as an ambassador to Istanbul in 1841 following the resolution of the Muhammad Ali crisis, remaining in the post until 1858. In this capacity, he endeavored to improve and systematize the consulate system, and he submitted reports to the Foreign Secretary to this end, thereby further elevating the degree of change.<sup>7</sup> Besides Canning, James Brant also made an important contribution to the process of structural change in British consulates via his reports and memorandums, documents that were not in fact expected from a consul. During this period, British influence on the Sublime Porte became significant, with the reports of British consuls becoming sufficient to procure the dismissal or transfer of Ottoman officials. Canning, through his influence on the palace and Sublime Porte, ensured that the reports he sent to London against Ottoman governors were put into effect. As the demands of the consuls were thus met, their domination and influence in the region surged.

The network of British consulates in the region was rapidly expanded in accordance with the protectionist British policy and Britain's struggle, during the terms of Palmerston and Lord Aberdeen, to keep the area free of Russian and French influence. Brant's warnings concerning the Russian threat and his reports on the advantages of trade with Iran were instrumental in the opening of new consulates, particularly in areas close to the Russian border. As a result, the number of British consul generals, vice consuls, and consulates in Ottoman territory increased from 13 in 1825, to 19 in 1834, and to 36 in 1846.<sup>8</sup> This number further rose to 51 in 1852.<sup>9</sup>

### James Brant and the Establishment of the Trabzon Consulate

James Brant (1879–1860) was born in London. His father was a silk merchant, while his mother was a child of a Levantine family from Smyrna. Brant's first encounter with Turks came in 1805, when he was working at his uncle's factory in Smyrna along with his elder brother Richard William. While based there, Brant would also take business trips to different parts of Europe. After working for a many years in Smyrna, he returned to Britain in 1823. He then moved to Norway three years later before returning once again to Britain in 1829.<sup>10</sup>

While in Smyrna, Brant had the opportunity to become quite familiar with the Turks and the Levant region. Combining his time here with his experience in Europe, he realized that the Near East would be able to generate huge profits by selling raw materials to the West and the West's end products to the Near East just at a time when the industrial revolution was beginning to flourish. This idea would turn him from a young merchant into a diplomatic one who would come up with ideas on Britain's Near Eastern policy and, though indirectly, steer this policy.

<sup>6</sup> Kocabaşoğlu 2004, 46.

<sup>7</sup> TNA, FO, 881/724, Canning to Palmerston, 10 March 1848; TNA, FO, 881/724, Canning to Clarendon, 19 January 1857; TNA, FO, 881/724, Canning to Clarendon, 30 January 1857; Kocabaşoğlu 2004, 59–60.

<sup>8</sup> Kocabaşoğlu 2004, 34, 54–8.

<sup>9</sup> Berridge 2009, 292–94.

<sup>10</sup> TNA, FO, 881/724, Brant to Clarendon, 30 May 1856; Buckingham 2011, 6–7. After terminating his partnership in Norway with Charles Dunderdale, on 30 January 1829 he returned to London. *London Gazette*, 18589, 30 January 1830.

Between 1774 and 1806, the Black Sea was opened to international trade by treaties signed between European states and the Ottoman Empire.<sup>11</sup> Though Britain signed a favorable treaty in 1799, Black Sea commerce was not sufficiently beneficial, and it was within this context that Brant foresaw the advantages of conducting commerce through countries along the Black Sea coast, particularly Iran. Trade with Iran could be conducted via the Trabzon-Erzurum-Tabriz route, thus bypassing the Caucasus-Georgia route<sup>12</sup> controlled by Russia. The conditions of the time were well suited to taking action in this direction. A short time before, Brant's brother Richard William had been appointed as consul at Smyrna.<sup>13</sup> Russian troops had withdrawn from Erzurum, which had been captured during the Ottoman-Russian War of 1828–1829. According to the plan, Brant's brother as well as his maternal uncle, John Lee, would operate in Smyrna, while he would work in eastern Anatolia, cooperating with the London companies with whom they were in contact in order to implement the commercial targets they dreamed of.

In this context, Brant decided to take action so as to have a consulate opened in Trabzon. He first met with the leading merchants of London, and then applied to Foreign Secretary Aberdeen to get the consulate established in line with the references he had received in London. According to the reference letter, the merchants with whom Brant had met wanted to trade through the port of Trabzon, where they would be asked to take part in the vice consulate. Due to Trabzon's location, trade through this port could connect Iran, the Black Sea, and the cities in the north of these regions, such as in Anatolia. Istanbul and Smyrna had the advantage of ease of connection by sea. Brant also claimed that, since he had lived in the region for 12 years and was familiar with the people, as well as having been a member of the Levant Company for 20 years and having a brother who was the consul in Smyrna, he was well suited for the job.<sup>14</sup> The merchants of London also supported Brant with a joint petition they sent to Aberdeen. However, the establishment of a consulate in Trabzon was not considered convenient due largely to cost. Brant then informed the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, John Backhouse, of the advantages of trade in the region and the demands of the British merchants and stated that, if necessary, he would agree to work with very little salary.<sup>15</sup> All in all, the persistence of the British merchants and the concession regarding salary proved effective, and Brant was appointed as Trabzon vice consul with a low salary of 200 pounds per year on March 2, 1830.<sup>16</sup> According to his instructions, he was under the authority of Istanbul and was asked to use the rights provided via existing agreements to British citizens in Ottoman lands by notifying that he had been assigned to increase British trade in the region.<sup>17</sup>

The demand to open a British consulate in Trabzon as soon as possible was conveyed to the Sublime Porte through the British embassy. As presented to Sultan Mahmud II, it stated that France and certain other states had consulates in Trabzon, that it was inconvenient that Britain

<sup>11</sup> Kasaba 1993, 33; Turgay 1993, 436.

<sup>12</sup> This was the line reaching the ports of Sukhum, Poti, and Batumi from Tabriz-Tbilisi. See Turgay 1993, 442.

<sup>13</sup> *London Gazette*, 18646, 30 June 1829.

<sup>14</sup> TNA, FO, 78/195, Brant to Aberdeen, 16 January, 1830. Before this, several recommendations were made to build British trade from the port of Trebizond rather than through the Persian Gulf. Issawi 1970, 18–9.

<sup>15</sup> TNA, FO, 78/195, Brant to Backhouse, 12 February 1830.

<sup>16</sup> TNA, FO, 78/195, Backhouse to Brant, 02 March 1830; TNA, FO, 78/195, Brant to Backhouse, 08 March 1830; *The Morning Post*, 19498, 26 March 1830. Brant reportedly was ready to go on a mission, thanking him for being a vice consul in his response to Backhouse. TNA, FO, 78/195, Brant to Backhouse, 08 March 1830.

<sup>17</sup> TNA, FO, 78/195, Aberdeen to Brant, 31 March 1830. Before leaving London, Brant asked that the British representative in Iran be informed that a consulate was opening in Trabzon. This situation shows that he was planning to take immediate action towards commercial activities with Iran. TNA, FO, 78/195, Brant to Bidwell, 28 April 1830.



was not allowed to operate in the same environment, and that the British had the right to make such a request according to the current charter. The sultan found these reasons sufficient for the compulsory *exequatur*<sup>18</sup> to be issued.<sup>19</sup>

In the meantime, Trabzon already hosted the consulates of countries like Russia, Iran, and Sardinia. France had also long had a consulate in the city, but the French consulate had been closed since 1827. In 1829, in a report to the French foreign ministry, Victor Fontanier requested the recommissioning of the consulate, mentioning, just like Brant, the advantages of trade with Iran. During the period when Brant was appointed to the consulate, the French government appointed Fontanier as the new Trabzon consul. At the same time, both Brant and Fontanier were going to Trabzon for similar purposes.<sup>20</sup> A rivalry between them thus seemed unavoidable.

After having completed his preparations in London, Brant first traveled to Istanbul and met with Consul General John Cartwright, where he received a letter of permission from the Sublime Porte stating that he could begin working as a consul in Trabzon, though the *exequatur* had not yet been prepared. Later, Brant visited Ambassador Robert Gordon, who presented to him the consular instructions.<sup>21</sup> After completing his work in Istanbul, Brant reached Trabzon by sea on August 18, 1830.<sup>22</sup> Thus the first British consulate in Trabzon was established.

Erzurum was a center of transactions between the West and the Near East from ancient times thanks to its geographical location.<sup>23</sup> As his next step, Brant attempted to open a consulate in Erzurum in order to transfer the Iranian transit commerce handled through the Russian-controlled Caucasus route to the Trabzon-Erzurum-Tabriz route. He applied to Foreign Secretary Palmerston, but his plan was not approved by the Board of Trade due to cost,<sup>24</sup> and so the establishment of a consulate in Erzurum was initially dismissed. However, Brant was informed that the subject could be re-evaluated if he would accept to work without a salary.<sup>25</sup> As Brant was determined on the matter, he soon renewed his request based on this.<sup>26</sup>

During this initial period of Brant's activity, great political and military developments were underway in the Near East. Not long after the Greek Revolt of 1821 and the Ottoman-Russian War of 1828–1829 related to it, the governor of Egypt, Muhammad Ali Pasha, rebelled against Ottoman rule in the final months of 1831. Not only was the scale of this revolt uncontrollable, but also Muhammad Ali's son Ibrahim Pasha took the Ottoman grand vizier prisoner while he was en route to Kütahya. The significant progress of Egyptian forces compelled Ottoman statesmen to accept Russian aid and allow the Russian navy to anchor in Istanbul (February 20,

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<sup>18</sup> *Berat*.

<sup>19</sup> BOA, HAT, 46520, 1830.

<sup>20</sup> Yılmaz 2014, 157–8, 163. Fontanier came to Trabzon shortly after Brant in November 1830. Yılmaz 2014, 176–77.

<sup>21</sup> The instructions stipulated the effects of the recent military movements of Russia against the Ottoman and Iranian people, gathering information on the Armenians and Turks who had migrated to Russian territory and preparing a report on the defense of Erzurum against any new Russian invasion. In addition, it was necessary to determine whether the Russians had established influence in Trabzon and whether Russia had issued a special privilege to Russian and Iranian merchants to investigate mineral resources in the region. BL, add MSS. 42512, 05 August 1830.

<sup>22</sup> TNA, FO, 78/195, Brant to Aberdeen, 19 August 1830.

<sup>23</sup> Arkan 1973, 30.

<sup>24</sup> For the text of the Board of Trade, see TNA, FO, 78/195, from Lack to Backhouse, 17 June 1831.

<sup>25</sup> TNA, FO, 78/195, Brant to Bidwell, 20 January 1831; TNA, FO, 78/195, Backhouse to Brant, 02 June 1831; TNA, FO, 78/195, Foreign Office to Brant, 20 July 1831.

<sup>26</sup> TNA, FO, 78/195, Brant to Bidwell, 18 December 1831.

1833).<sup>27</sup> Russia had also for some time had influence over Iran due to its military successes as well as the agreements it had signed. All these events had a negative impact on Brant's plans.

In a report Brant prepared at this time, he made important assessments about the Russian danger. According to the report, Russia was making plans to conquer the Ottoman lands. As part of such plans, Russia would first conquer Trabzon and Erzurum, then the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, and then Baghdad and Basra, which would pose a threat to British India routes. Brant's predictions were based on intelligence that he had recently acquired. A Russian general had visited the pashas of Trabzon and Erzurum and said that if Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt moved to Anatolia, he could move the Russian army to Trabzon, Erzurum, and Sivas in order to protect the Ottoman Empire. Brant predicted that Russia would put pressure on Iran after gaining control of these regions, and thereby prevent British trade. As a solution to the problem, he believed that a comprehensive reform should be implemented. Although the Ottoman Empire had wide resources, these resources could not be fully utilized due to the management system in place. First of all, he stated, the monopoly system should be abolished and bad management on the part of Ottoman pashas prevented so that a more correct use of resources could be carried out. If need be, the sultan should be pressured towards such steps. Otherwise, Ottoman lands might fall under Russian control and British interests be severely damaged.<sup>28</sup> This report was written on March 26, just three months before the signing of the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi (July 8, 1833). The report coincided with the sultan's abortive calls to the British government for aid and the latter's rather tardy maneuver in favor of the Ottoman Empire. Brant's ideas contributed greatly to the regulation of British foreign policy and drew the outer boundaries of the protectionist policy<sup>29</sup> that would be implemented after 1833.

Though Brant prepared some reports on military and political issues, his primary focus was on commerce. He had already obtained privileges to export merchandise, in addition to his official duties. The company he founded, James Brant and Co., began to convey British goods to the port of Trabzon via companies in London as well as Brant's connections with British merchants in Istanbul and Smyrna.<sup>30</sup> His first task was to transform Trabzon into a trade hub for the commercial route towards Iran. In this regard, it was very important that a trade agreement between Iran and Britain be set up. Palmerston found Brant's ideas useful and wanted him to investigate how and under what terms an agreement could be made. Brant therefore requested to take a trip to Iran to determine trade opportunities and agreement terms.<sup>31</sup> His request was approved.<sup>32</sup> In the meantime, the fact that the Muhammad Ali crisis was now under control owing to an agreement struck between the sultan and the Egyptian governor also offered a suitable stage for this work.

Brant traveled to Iran in the final months of 1833. In his reports from his trip, he emphasized the importance of trade with Iran and expressed his belief that Russian influence on Iran should be broken so that British influence might be increased. Iranian trade should be removed from Russian control and rerouted through the Trabzon-Erzurum-Tabriz line. It was in this context that Brant also proposed that a British consulate be opened in Tabriz. Another

<sup>27</sup> For more see Aksan 2010, 387, 390–96.

<sup>28</sup> TNA, FO, 78/223, Brant to Ponsonby, 26 March 1833.

<sup>29</sup> Rodkey 1929, 573–74; Dönmez 2014, 107.

<sup>30</sup> *The Morning Post*, 21689, 31 July 1840; Turgay 1993, 441, 443; Issawi 1970, 19.

<sup>31</sup> TNA, FO, 78/215, Backhouse to Brant, 28 June 1832; TNA, FO, 78/215, Brant to Backhouse, 17 September 1832; TNA, FO, 78/215, Brant to Backhouse, 02 October 1832.

<sup>32</sup> TNA, FO, 78/229, Bidwell to Brant, 24 May 1833; TNA, FO, 78/229, Brant to Bidwell, 18 July 1833.

important event that occurred in the meantime was the death of Abbas Mirza, the heir to the Iranian throne after Ali Shah.<sup>33</sup> Brant sent London his first report about his journey to Iran on March 6. This report provided detailed information about the advantages of the trade to be conducted through the port of Trabzon, as well as about the current situation in the region. In addition, he claimed that if Britain did not act quickly, Russian influence in the region would increase greatly and British interests would be affected.<sup>34</sup>

Brant wanted to go directly to London to talk face to face with the foreign minister and his merchant friends about the consequences of his Iranian trip and in particular about the measures to be taken in relation to Russian influence. First, he reported that he wanted to conduct additional investigations in Anatolia, particularly in areas close to the Russian border.<sup>35</sup> After completing his research trip, Brant returned to Trabzon and sent the second part of his report about Iran to London.<sup>36</sup> Palmerston was impressed by Brant's activities and the detailed information he provided about the region, and thus he approved his request to come to London and, prior to that, to conduct investigations in Anatolia.<sup>37</sup> Meanwhile, Brant was also planning to impress the British government with the new reports he had prepared and to impose his demand for a consulate in Erzurum.

In the meantime, a commission to investigate the British consulate was constituted by the House of Commons. Learning this, Brant sent a paper to Palmerston that included proposals on structural change for consulates in Ottoman territories. The report, entitled *Views on Our Consulate Structure*, recommended, with slight modification, the adoption of the style of the French consulate, which he wrote was "well-respected due to its highly organized and efficient structure." Brant embraced the opinion that disorganization was the greatest problem of British consulates in the Ottoman Empire, and thus that measures had to be taken to solve this problem. First, he stated, it should be determined which professions could be assigned as consuls. A system of consensus should be adopted in the appointments of vice consulates, consulates, and consulates general. Such an arrangement would motivate consuls towards being more successful in their work and aiming at promotion in their profession. Another issue was that foreigners might be appointed as vice consuls and kept equal to other British citizens. In the French system, vice consulship had been dissolved and a rating system implemented (first class, second class, consul general, etc.). Officials were promoted on the basis of their terms of service, with those who had served for 30 years being entitled to retirement with full salary. In addition, if consuls desired, they could be appointed honorary consuls. In Brant's report, he outlines the detailed circumstances of the French system, such as the system of interpreters, the chancellery, and clerks. He believed that their process of selection, education, and salary should be taken as a model. Attention should be paid to merit in the appointments, and people with a sufficient knowledge of Turkish be preferred. The prestige of the consuls should be maintained, allowing them to live a decent life, while the consular staff should be given a salary sufficient to keep them away from corruption. Furthermore, while the French consulate system was practiced in the same way throughout the world, the British system had differences

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<sup>33</sup> TNA, FO, 78/229, Brant to Bidwell, 12 September 1833; TNA, FO, 78/229, Brant to Bidwell, 20 November 1833. Brant reported that he was on his way to Iran in his article dated 12 September. He wrote his article from Tehran on 20 November.

<sup>34</sup> TNA, FO, 78/241, Brant to Palmerston, 06 March 1834.

<sup>35</sup> TNA, FO, 78/241, Brant to Bidwell, 13 May 1834.

<sup>36</sup> TNA, FO, 78/241, Brant to Palmerston, 05 September 1834.

<sup>37</sup> TNA, FO, 78/241, Backhouse to Brant, 20 September 1834; TNA, FO, 78/328, Ponsonby to Palmerston, 21 August 1834; TNA, FO, 195/116, Palmerston to Ponsonby, 25 September 1834.

in practice in every country, and especially in the Levant region. As such, Brant proposed, the system should institute a common structure within the framework of general principles. In the French system, consuls were forbidden to conduct trade in any manner, which Brant stated to be proper: a consul should only be temporarily permitted to engage in commerce if it was the first time that he was beginning a commercial activity in a new place. In addition, consuls should not be changed too frequently, nor should they be allowed to work for too long a period of time in the same place.<sup>38</sup>

John Bidwell, who was in charge of British consulates, demanded the propositions of Brant regarding a regulation on which the consulates in the Levant region obtained after a capitulation encompassing the right to judge.<sup>39</sup> Brant consequently sent a report to the foreign secretary entitled *Views on the Consulate's Right to Judge in the Levant*, which stated that he had no experience of judging and explained in depth the problems in juridical and criminal cases between British nationals and British subjects, or between them and Europeans or Muslims. In this context, he demanded that the jurisdiction and responsibilities of the consuls must be made precise. Moreover, the authority of consulates must be expanded even as far as the right to arrest, if necessary.<sup>40</sup> Brant thus started to influence the foreign secretary towards developing the system both quantitatively and qualitatively via his proposals on opening consulates in Tabriz and Erzurum and on the structural change called for in the consulate system.

Within the scope of a permission obtained in advance, Brant prepared for a new trip in the summer of 1835. This trip was meant to identify changes on the Ottoman-Georgian border after the signing of the Treaty of Petersburg (January 29, 1834) between the Ottoman Empire and Russia. What is more, he was also charged with examining the governance, agriculture, mines, commercial efficiency, and level of civilization in Anatolia and regions in which Armenians were settled<sup>41</sup> (fig. 1). On this trip, he visited cities and towns in eastern and southeastern Anatolia, gathering a great deal of information, particularly in a commercial vein, about these regions.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, Brant's efforts managed to rapidly boost the traffic of British goods in the port of Trabzon. This accorded him more respect in the eyes of British statesmen.<sup>43</sup>

## The Establishment of the Erzurum Consulate and the Expansion of the Consulate System

Having completed his inspections, Brant traveled to Britain to present his observations directly to the British government in 1836. During the journey, he was occupied with preparing his report on Anatolia.<sup>44</sup> After three months of meeting with statesmen and traders in London, he

<sup>38</sup> TNA, FO, 78/241, Brant to Bidwell, 14 October 1834; TNA, FO, 78/241, Brant's Report, 12 October 1834.

<sup>39</sup> TNA, FO, 78/265, Brant to Bidwell, 24 March 1835.

<sup>40</sup> TNA, FO, 78/265, Brant's Report, 23 March 1835. In 1837, on the authority of the queen, a law was passed to regulate the jurisdiction of the consulates in the Ottoman territories. The authorities and the rights of consuls in this context were determined in 1843 and 1864. Kocabaşoğlu 2004, 48, 63.

<sup>41</sup> TNA, FO, 78/328, Ponsonby to Palmerston, 21 August 1834; TNA, FO, 78/289, Brant to Palmerston, 11 May 1836. For a map of the journey, see the appendices.

<sup>42</sup> TNA, FO, 78/265, Brant to Ponsonby, 24 June 1835; TNA, FO, 78/265, Brant to Palmerston, 01 October 1835. Palmerston wanted to extend his travels into the Caucasus. TNA, FO, 78/265, from Bidwell to Brant, 14 June 1835. However, Brant did not fulfill this plan because, as he claimed, it was not possible to obtain useful information due to conditions in the region. TNA, FO, 78/265, Brant to Bidwell, 25 October 1835.

<sup>43</sup> Turgay 1993, 442–44; Yılmaz 2014, 177, 189.

<sup>44</sup> TNA, FO, 78/289, Brant to Bidwell, 28 January 1836.

presented detailed reports on his latest travels to the foreign secretary in May.<sup>45</sup> In the meantime, Palmerston had him prepare a memorandum on the alternatives related to the likely lender of the Ottoman Empire. This shows how well regarded his ideas were.<sup>46</sup>

Meanwhile, Brant held talks with the foreign minister and other statesmen about taking action in relation to his warnings about Russia's Ottoman policy regarding influence in the northeastern territories and in the north of Iran, which were aligned against British interests. It would be a major threat to Britain if Russia took control of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, thus threatening the route to India through the Persian Gulf. Other reports from the region also supported Brant's claims in this matter. Palmerston decided that Britain should adopt a policy of expanding its consular network, as Tsar Nicholas I had founded an Erzurum consulate in 1834 and appointed a consul general there. Britain thus decided to increase the number of its consulates in Ottoman territory.<sup>47</sup> In this regard, Brant's long uttered demand to establish a consulate in Erzurum was approved by William IV, with Brant being appointed to the post on April 29, 1836. He was granted a salary of 600 pounds per year, with 200 additional pounds per year to go to the staff of the consulate.<sup>48</sup> The area of authority comprised Erzurum, Trabzon, and Sivas.<sup>49</sup>

Following his successful meetings in Britain, Brant travelled to Istanbul,<sup>50</sup> where he delivered the second part of his report<sup>51</sup> on Anatolia. He met with Consul General John Cartwright and Ambassador Lord Ponsonby. The Sublime Porte offered an exequatur, but it was limited to Erzurum and Trabzon because there were no British subjects in Sivas<sup>52</sup> (fig. 2). After completing his operations in Istanbul, Brant traveled to Trabzon on March 12, 1837 via a steamboat only recently put into service. Brant successfully implemented his plans. In a letter he sent to John Bidwell, he mentioned that his expectations of trade with Iran were very high.<sup>53</sup> After having Henry Suter<sup>54</sup> assigned as Trabzon vice consul, he established the first British consulate on April 15, 1837.<sup>55</sup> Brant put effort into developing sound relations with the pashas, with whom he would experience intense quarrels in later years. While in Trabzon, he visited the

<sup>45</sup> TNA, FO, 78/289, Brant to Palmerston, 11 May 1836. Brant's 1835 journey through Anatolia in 1835 was published by the Royal Geographical Society. For more, see Brant 1836.

<sup>46</sup> In his memorandum on this issue, Brant suggested that the Egyptian governor Mehmed Ali Pasha pay the tax debt, or that he should take a loan from European banks. TNA, FO, 78/298, Brant to Palmerston, 13 April 1836.

<sup>47</sup> Vereté 1970, 329–333.

<sup>48</sup> TNA, FO, 78/289, Palmerston to Brant, 15 September 1836; *London Gazette*, 19379, 29 April 1836; *The Standard*, 2802, 03 May 1836; Dönmez 2014, 232.

<sup>49</sup> TNA, FO, 78/289, Brant to Bidwell, 11 May 1836; TNA, FO, 78/289, 14 May 1836. After Brant's offer, it was decided to appoint Henry Suter as a consular officer to Trabzon. TNA, FO, 78/289, Palmerston to Brant, 15 September 1836. There was a Russian consulate in Erzurum. France asked the Consul Fontanier, who had begun working in 1830, to move the consulate center to Erzurum. In the end, however, it was not possible to open a French consulate in Erzurum until 1843. Yılmaz 2014, 168–72.

<sup>50</sup> TNA, FO, 78/289, Brant to Bidwell, 02 December 1836.

<sup>51</sup> TNA, FO, 78/289, Brant to Palmerston, 08 November 1836.

<sup>52</sup> BOA, HAT, 46604, 1837; BOA, A. DVN. DVE., 98/17, 01 February 1837; TNA, FO, 78/314, Brant to Palmerston, 30 April 1837; TNA, FO, 78/301, Ponsonby to Palmerston, 04 February 1837. Brant stated that the Sublime Porte had not accepted the demands at the first request. If applied after some time, an exequatur could be obtained for Sivas as well. *Ibid.* For the exequatur for Erzurum and Trabzon, see BL, add. MSS. 42512, 01 February 1837.

<sup>53</sup> TNA, FO, 78/314, Brant to Bidwell, 13 March 1837. British entrepreneurs began steam cruises in the Black Sea in 1836. Issawi 1970, 19. The circumstances had a significant impact on the development of British trade through the port of Trabzon. For more see Baskıcı 2012, 37 et seq.

<sup>54</sup> The appointment of Henry Suter as vice consul of Trabzon was agreed upon in London by Brant. TNA, FO, 78/289, Palmerston to Brant, 15 September 1836.

<sup>55</sup> TNA, FO, 78/314, Brant to Palmerston, 15 April 1837.

governor of Trabzon, Osman Pasha, to deliver Palmerston's letter. He also met with the governor of Erzurum, Esad Pasha, for similar purposes.<sup>56</sup>

The following year, Brant obtained permission from Palmerston to leave for a voyage to regions in which Kurds lived.<sup>57</sup> He started this voyage on June 16, 1838, together with naval officer A. Gifford Glascott, and subsequently prepared a comparatively detailed report and map of the regions where Kurds were settled.<sup>58</sup>

Under the influence of Ponsonby and Brant, Palmerston decided to take concrete steps towards increasing the number of British consulates.<sup>59</sup> Brant was thus ordered to open a consulate in Batumi and appoint a vice consul.<sup>60</sup> He appointed Frederick Guarracino to this post.<sup>61</sup> Around the same time, Brant offered to open another consulate in Samsun. This proposal was welcomed by Palmerston, and Brant was asked to identify and appoint a suitable person.<sup>62</sup> Brant chose Richard Whyte Stevens as the Samsun vice consul.<sup>63</sup> Palmerston also approved Edward W. Bonham as the Tabriz consul, having accepted Brant's 1833 offer to found a consulate in Tabriz.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, the consulate that was opened in Mosul was put under the authority of Brant and he was asked to give necessary instructions to Christian Rassam, who was appointed as vice consul.<sup>65</sup>

In 1841, Brant offered to open a consulate in Kayseri for further expansion of British trade. Suter, the vice consul of Trabzon, was to be appointed to this new consulate, which was connected with Samsun and Tarsus.<sup>66</sup> Palmerston found this request reasonable and established a consulate in Kayseri, officially appointing Suter as consul there. Brant expressed his appreciation and gratitude to the foreign secretary for all these developments, which were "the

<sup>56</sup> TNA, FO, 78/314, Brant to Palmerston, 30 April 1837.

<sup>57</sup> TNA, FO, 78/289, Brant to Palmerston, 03 November 1836.

<sup>58</sup> TNA, FO, 78/366, Brant to Palmerston, 14 July 1839. Brant's travels were published by the Royal Geographical Society. For more, see Brant and Glascott 1840. This report has been translated into Turkish and published as a book. For more, see Brant 2014.

<sup>59</sup> Palmerston asked Ponsonby about the opening of a consulate in Bursa and the appointment of the merchant D. Sandison as consul there. In his response, Ponsonby stated that the expansion of the consular network in Ottoman territory was necessary for the protection of British interests and influence, and that therefore the opening of new consulates should not be postponed due to cost. He also emphasized the importance of selecting consuls like D. Sandison for the establishment of a guiding effect on local Ottoman administrators. TNA, FO, 195/145, Palmerston to Ponsonby, 05 January 1838; TNA, FO, 78/329B, Ponsonby to Palmerston, 16 January 1838; Kocabaşoğlu 2004, 61. Palmerston took these warnings into account and appointed Sandison to this post. TNA, FO, 195/148, Palmerston to Ponsonby, November 09, 1838. Ponsonby suggested Sandison in 1836, stating the importance of opening a consulate in Belgrade. TNA, FO, 78/273, Ponsonby to Palmerston, 07 February 1836. However, G. Lloyds Hodges was ultimately appointed to the Belgrade consulate. U. Durham L., Ponsonby Papers, GB 033/GRE-E/481/6/2, Palmerston to Ponsonby, 17 January 1837; Wilson 2018, 21. Palmerston asked Hodges to closely monitor all Russian activities, which were part of a bid to increase its influence in Serbia. TNA, FO, 195/138, Palmerston to Ponsonby, 24 February 1837.

<sup>60</sup> TNA, FO, 78/314, Palmerston to Brant, 06 June 1837; TNA, FO, 78/314, Brant to Bidwell, 08 August 1837.

<sup>61</sup> TNA, FO, 78/367, Brant to Palmerston, 10 August 1839; TNA, FO, 78/401, Brant to Palmerston, 06 April 1840. Palmerston authorized Brant to appoint Guarracino as the Batumi consul. TNA, FO, 78/367, Brant to Palmerston, 19 November 1839.

<sup>62</sup> TNA, FO, 78/367, Bidwell to Brant, 19 August 1839.

<sup>63</sup> TNA, FO, 78/401, Brant to Bidwell, 15 January 1840; TNA, FO, 78/401, Bidwell to Brant, 30 October 1840; TNA, FO, 78/443, Brant to Bidwell, 18 March 1841.

<sup>64</sup> TNA, FO, 78/314, Palmerston to Brant, 15 June 1837.

<sup>65</sup> TNA, FO, 78/367, Palmerston to Brant, 31 December 1839; TNA, FO, 78/401, Brant to Palmerston, 10 March 1840. Rassam was assigned to the authority of Taylor, who was appointed as the Baghdad consul in the following days. TNA, FO, 78/443, Palmerston to Brant, 10 August 1841.

<sup>66</sup> TNA, FO, 78/443, Brant to Bidwell, 26 January 1841.

proof of the confidence in him.”<sup>67</sup> In the same year, relations with Iran devolved for a time due to the Herat issue before recovering,<sup>68</sup> after which a trade agreement was signed with Iran, an issue whose importance Brant had been stressing ever since the first years of his consulate.<sup>69</sup>

All these successive developments created a suitable environment for Brant to implement his plans. However, then his uncle John Lee, the largest commercial connection in Smyrna, passed away.<sup>70</sup> Soon afterward, the Ottoman Empire and Iran came to the brink of war due to border disputes. This problem was solved by an agreement that emerged from official talks held in Erzurum between 1843 and 1847.<sup>71</sup> Brant, though, was unable to secure any progress in his plans for trade with Iran, and he ended his business in 1847. He was inclined to believe that almost all of his projects had been prevented by the Sublime Porte and local Ottoman officials, and he was also prompted to this decision by the health problems he had experienced in recent years, by the problems with the Egyptian governor, and by the disagreements between the British and Iran and the Ottomans and Iran. Even so, he continued his efforts with regard to the development of British trade in the region. For this purpose, in 1851, he offered a detailed project to the Sublime Porte concerning the building of a modern road between Trabzon and Erzurum.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, this project ultimately failed due to unidentified causes.

During the Crimean War (1853–1856), Erzurum became a place on the border with Russia after Kars was taken in 1855. Wartime difficulties dissolved the last of Brant’s savings and commercial aspirations, and he was immediately appointed to the Damascus consulate on his own will. Brant left Erzurum in September 1856. With this, the plan to implement Ottoman-Iranian transit trade aimed at achieving great profits, which had been initially launched in Trabzon in 1830 and subsequently continued in Erzurum, was completely abandoned.<sup>73</sup>

Despite all the difficulties, Brant did not give up his attempts at implementing structural change for British consulates. In February 1857, he informed Foreign Secretary Lord Clarendon about the expansion of the consulates in the Ottoman Empire via a memorandum prepared in London and on which he had spent nearly one year of work before leaving for his new post in Damascus. According to Brant’s memorandum, the consulates played an important role in the Ottoman reform process, and in order to increase their influence in this direction, a consulate needed to be opened in all settlements that were under the administration of an Ottoman pasha, and not only in regions where British subjects were living. The consuls, their

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<sup>67</sup> TNA, FO, 78/443, Brant to Palmerston, 18 October 1841.

<sup>68</sup> British-Iranian diplomatic relations were disturbed after Fath Ali Shah’s siege of Herat, which was held by Mohammed Mirza (1837). Searight 1979, 100.

<sup>69</sup> The trade agreement between England and Iran is dated 28 October 1841. Hurewitz 1975, 280. Before the trade agreement with Iran, the Treaty of Balta Limani (August 16, 1838) had been signed between the Ottoman Empire and Britain, at which time British merchants had been granted significant privileges. For more see Pamuk 2005, 205–09; Dönmez 2014, 221–29.

<sup>70</sup> <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/166195569/john-lee>, 19 November 2018.

<sup>71</sup> Aykun 1995, 39 et seq. The Ottoman and Iranian armies came into conflict in 1842. Brant played an instrumental role in the retreat of armies to their borders and accompanied the Ottoman army during the withdrawal from Bayezid. Aykun 1995, 67–70.

<sup>72</sup> TNA, FO, 78/870, Palmerston to Brant, 10 July 1851. In fact, the road construction of the Trabzon-Erzurum-Bayezid route was started by the Ottoman government in 1850, but ultimately did not produce the desired result. Tozlu 1997, 59–63.

<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, the trade along the Trabzon-Erzurum-Tabriz line showed great improvement in both directions as compared to the period when Brant had started the consulate. The number of goods going from Trabzon to Tabriz increased by a factor of 13 between 1830 and 1851, and the number of goods going from Tabriz to Trabzon more than doubled during the same period. The increase in the number of goods to Iran went up by a factor of 19 in 1867. Issawi 1970, 26–7; Quataert 2004, 940.

numbers thus increased, could help to ensure the advancement and implementation of reforms through their influence and pressure on the pashas. They would protect Ottoman administrators from local intrigues and prevent them from oppressing the people. In addition, they would ensure that non-Muslims and foreign traders could perform their commercial activities in comfort thanks to the protection they would provide, and what is more they would also create a market for British goods in their region. Brant had earlier, especially during his time at the consulate of Erzurum, made numerous complaints about local administrators and even managed to secure their dismissal. Another issue he emphasized in the memorandum was the systematization of this mechanism through the British ambassador and the warning or dismissal of pashas filed by the consuls. Any demands in this regard, he noted, must be fulfilled instantly; otherwise, the influence of the consulates would be doomed to diminish. According to Brant, "A pasha must be respectful and favorable towards a consul and ambassador must rely on the reliability and mediation of consul." When a new ambassador was assigned to the Istanbul embassy, it would be important to ensure that the consuls were correctly informed about the new ambassador's character, qualifications, ideas, and desires. The Levant was a special region due to its particular conditions, and therefore the ambassadors and consuls appointed to the region must be chosen from among people who had already gained experience there. Furthermore, the consular profession should be made more attractive by measures such as higher wages, promotions, rewards, and ranking for services.<sup>74</sup> As can be seen, Brant's long-standing ideas regarding the structural change of consulates and their potential effects had not been fundamentally changed, but instead had developed and improved. The memorandum was published by Clarendon as a confidential print distributed to members of the government and to representatives of the British offices, which shows that he was a highly reliable person.

## Conclusion

The course of the structural change in British consulates in the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century ran parallel to changes in British policy in the region. At a time when the importance of the Ottoman Empire in the European balance of power was not yet fully understood, the number of consulates in Turkey was very limited, and even these were more in the nature of merchant consuls. After the British government decided to adopt the integration of Ottoman territories as official state policy in 1833, the number of consulates increased rapidly. The increase in the number of consulates between 1825 and 1852 from 12 to 51 demonstrates this policy shift clearly. As part of this process, British consuls, apart from their routine tasks, were transformed into controllers of protectionist policy as followers of the reform process and as local administrators.

James Brant had initially chosen to be a diplomat in a bid to obtain large profits through trade-based plans that shaped the activities of the consulate in the early years, the efforts made to open new consulates, and Brant's travels and relations with Ottoman administrators. Trabzon, Erzurum, Batumi, Samsun, and Kayseri all played a direct role in the establishment of consulates. In his reports and memorandums to the foreign secretary, Brant proved instrumental in the process of structural change applied to British consulates and to the further dissemination of consulates.

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<sup>74</sup> TNA, FO, 881/591A, Brant to Clarendon, 14 February 1857.



Ultimately, Brant's commercial dreams were hindered by factors such as the Muhammad Ali crisis, tensions between Iran and Britain and the Ottoman Empire, the proposed modernization of the Trabzon-Erzurum road and the Sublime Porte's refusal to accept such projects, and disagreements with Ottoman officials. For this reason, in 1847 Brant completely abandoned his commercial pursuits, which had a significant effect on the frustrations of Ottoman officials in embracing a more confrontational attitude. In the reports he sent to London, Brant emphasized issues like management problems, corruption, bribery, and the injustice suffered by Christians. In the end, he served as a kind of role model for Palmerston's new consulate type of British consulates.

From the early years of the consulates of Trabzon and Erzurum, Brant had warned the British foreign secretary about the Russian threat and about problems in the Ottoman administration, and he had argued that a protective and interventionist policy should be followed. However, while these ideas were voiced in the 1830s, it was only in the 1870s, under the Disraeli and Gladstone governments, that a parallel policy would finally be applied with full force.

For many years, Brant served in the consulate of Britain to the Ottoman Empire, and in the process of structural change in the British Near Eastern policy and consular system, he was far more than an ordinary consul. He was seen by British politicians as one of the most experienced people, someone who knew Ottoman politics and the region, and he had a great influence on them through his ideas.

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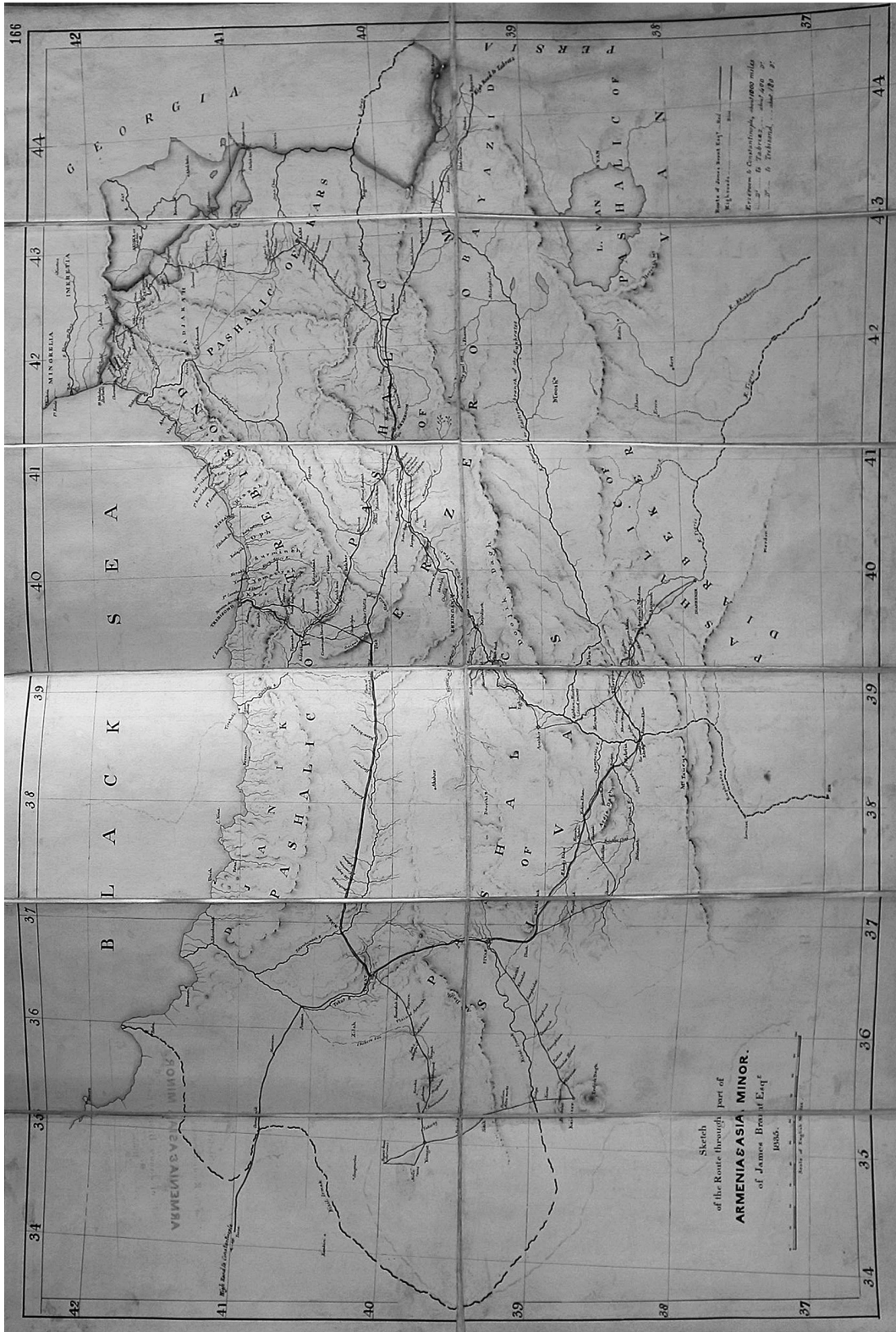


Fig. 1 A map from James Brant's travels to Armenia and Anatolia in 1835 (TNA, FO, 78/289).

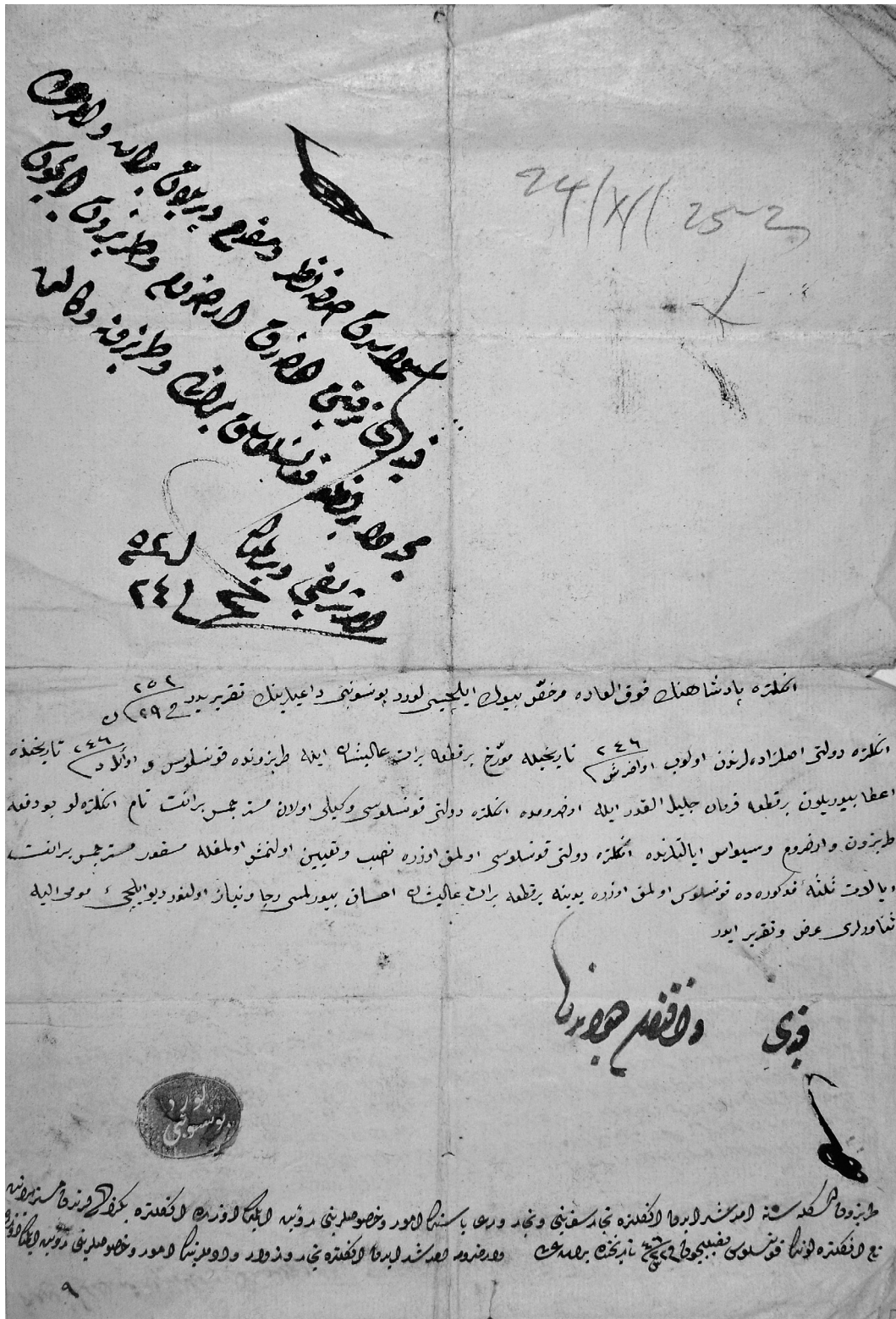


Fig. 2 The exequatur request of the British ambassador for Erzurum consulship, with the Sublime Porte's approbation (BOA, A. DVN. DVE., 98/17, February 1, 1837).

