

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

The Levantine Merchant Consuls of Aleppo;

The Commercial Elites 1750- 1850

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in History

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles

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Abstract

The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century rise of an elite non-Muslim merchant community in Aleppo benefitted both the Empire and the community's three component groups: Europeans, Jews from Livorno or Venice, and local Christian Arabs, Armenians and Greeks. The dramatic financial and social ascent of this Levantine society resulted largely from three economic policies energetically pursued by the Porte to spur trade with the Muslim-suspicious West. First, increasingly broad Imperial capitulations granted Europeans and their non-Muslim local *protégés* tax exemptions and the right to adjudicate cases in their consular courts. Later, the Ottomans extended these extra-territoriality privileges to any participating local trader, minority or Muslim. Finally, the Empire inaugurated wide-ranging *Tanzimat* reforms integrating non-Muslim subjects as fully equal. As a result of these policy shifts, even when the nineteenth-century decline in

trade led joint stock companies like the English Levant Company, the French Levant Company and the Dutch VOC to abandon Aleppo, individual European merchants--traditional mediators for Western enterprises and for Muslim traders--could create and expand their family trade networks regionally and could simultaneously serve as European nations' business representatives and diplomatic consuls. Classic Ottomanists have depicted these Imperial economic decisions as proof of Imperial paralysis, rigidity, and weakness vis-à-vis the West. But the revisionist view, supported by the archival evidence this dissertation presents, finds that the Porte actively, innovatively, and forcefully enacted these strategies to advance its own international trade and to aid its own traders of any national origin. These far-reaching laws purposively hoisted the status and power of the hybrid Levantine community which could uniquely and usefully bridge East and West by belonging equally to both. As a privileged class, Levantines kept their identity and elevation by fluency in both native and foreign languages and cultures, by establishing clan-based trade networks, and by exclusionary marriage practices. Yet their characteristic cosmopolitanism won them the irreplaceable role as the financial, diplomatic, and cultural link between the Empire and Europe. This connection perpetuated the commercial power of the Porte, in the face of impending Western hegemony, for an impressive period, just as it maintained the Levantine identity until this century.

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DEDICATION PAGE

This dissertation is dedicated with love to my parents Sally and Koko Mazlounian, who would have been very happy to see this day, and to Viken, Garen and Nareg, without whose constant encouragement this dissertation would not have been written.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION: MINORITY MERCHANTS AND THE REVISION OF OTTOMAN HISTORIOGRAPHY



Textile market in the souks of Aleppo

Aleppo, one of the premier cities in the Ottoman Empire, was an economic powerhouse on the fabled Silk Road. As a commercial hub, the city had long enticed foreign merchants with its opulent market goods such as Persian, Anatolian and local silk, Bedouin leather items, olive oil soap from the countryside, and the famed swords, tents, saddles and bridles local artisans made for the Bedouins and which established an urban-rural interdependence.¹ These luxurious commodities, along with cotton, silk and other profitable products, drew Europeans to the metropolis—specifically the Venetians, whose presence dates back to the Ayyubids in 1207, when Saladin’s son signed a treaty

1. Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters, *The Ottoman City Between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir and Istanbul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 191; James Mathers, *Pashas: Traders and Travellers in the Islamic World* (London: Yale University Press, 2009), 23.

documenting the existence of a Venetian consul in the city and permitting the building of a *fondaco* (traders' inn, or *funduk* in Arabic), church, and public baths for their countrymen.² Indeed, the Venetians dominated trade in Aleppo until the sixteenth century.³ But upon the Ottoman conquest of the city in 1512 the French, English, and Dutch established trading colonies and joint-stock companies such as the English Levant Company within its purview, taking full advantage of the Ottomans' generous capitulations, or concessions, to foreign merchants.

Commerce continued to lure European merchants to Aleppo up to the nineteenth century. But the demographics of the minority merchant community significantly shifted then, as a second wave of immigration by European Christian and Jewish families settled permanently in the city.⁴ Although they were a small group, these more stable settlers would form an elite not only of trade but also of diplomacy as consuls representing the interests of European nations. They could accomplish this because of the concessions Ottoman authorities continued to offer, their access to European languages, and the mediation of already-ensconced local minority merchants.

When initially envisioned, this dissertation was to concentrate on that earlier group of Levantine merchants already living in Aleppo, specifically the Venetian Andrea family that arrived there between the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. However, the unavailability of pertinent archives, as well as the current proxy war being fought in Syria and especially in Aleppo, impeded the research needed for such a project

2. Françoise Cloarec, *Les temps des consuls: L'échelle d'Alep sous les Ottomans* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 28.

3. Eliyahu Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 461-462. Ashtor calculates some 40 commercial companies in Aleppo at the end of the fifteenth century.

4. Mafalda Ade, *Picknick mit den Paschas: Aleppo und die Levantinische Handelsfirma Fratelli Poche (1853-1880)* (Beirut and Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2013).

and precluded any continued contact with the family's descendants.⁵ A chance encounter with a local historian and a very fortunate gift of a never-examined packet of business letters between members of the Ghantuz Cubbe family and its trade network led me to reorient my project. Descendants of later-arrived families (Ghantuz Cubbe, Balit, Poche, Marcopoli, Draghi, Girardi, Antaki and others) who remained in Aleppo until the start of the current crisis in 2011 provided me information and family documents. (Jewish Levantine families such as the Picciotto, Belilio, Altaras and Silvera left Aleppo during the first half of the twentieth century; the last member of the Altaras family, an elderly lady, left in 1950.⁶) The consular functions held by most of these later Levantines suggested the dissertation's title, "The Merchant Consuls of Aleppo."

More importantly, my fortuitous discovery led me to reformulate the core argument of the dissertation as a revisionist one. Based on my findings, this dissertation repudiates the long-accepted notion of the Ottoman state's intrusive but stagnant presence in world commerce, which created an internal non-Muslim merchant class wholly reliant on the Europeans. Using the letters, this dissertation shows that although European merchants played an indisputable initial role in the rise of the local minority merchant class, they were not its only support. In fact, the innovative interventions of the Porte itself fueled the advance of a Levantine merchant elite. Dual imperial programs (the *Avruppa Tuccari* and the *Hayriye Tuccari*) first gave resident minorities, then Muslims, the same extra-territorial rights that European traders enjoyed, and the *Tanzimat* (reorganization) reforms the Empire instituted soon after helped form and elevate an

5. Archives of the Venetian consulate in Aleppo dating back to the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries were either lost in transport to Venice or burnt in one of the building's periodic fires. Personal communication, July 2010 oral interview with former Italian consul George Antaki in Aleppo.

6. Personal communication, July 2010 oral interview with former Italian consul George Antaki in Aleppo; he reported having bought a Persian rug from her a few days before she left.

Aleppine non-Muslim merchant upper class. While historians have written about the twin programs and the reforms, few have evaluated these Imperial involvements positively or even objectively. This dissertation documents that the decisive intervention of Imperial authorities on behalf of their own merchants took place earlier (that is, more proactively) than previously thought, and purposively effectuated the success of a local minority merchant middle class.

The second part of the dissertation argues that the political, economic, and judicial *Tanzimat* reforms instituted by the Ottomans consciously facilitated permanent settlement of the larger early-nineteenth-century wave of European traders by empowering them as legal equals of Muslim subjects—that is, by instigating secularization and modernization throughout the Empire. Whether these reforms wholly transmogrified the Ottoman state is debatable and will be discussed in Chapter Two. Still, their judicial improvements clearly eased the resolution of commercial disputes between foreign merchants and local traders, as Mafalda Ade has expertly demonstrated in her work on the Levantine Poche family. Commercial courts naturally played a major role in enabling permanent settlement of Europeans merchants, as most of the merchants’ difficulties related squarely to debts and legal disputes.⁷ These judicial changes, in conjunction with the new immigrants’ symbiotic relationship with native traders, catapulted the Levantine communities to novel social, financial, and cultural prominence.

Thus, this dissertation contributes to Ottoman historiography by joining a growing number of revisionist historical works, such as those of Fariba Zarinabaf, Donald Quataert, and Said Sayed Kaymakci. Their research demonstrates that Ottoman trading policies, far from resembling their traditional characterization as “monolithic,”

7. Ade, *Picknick mit den Paschas*, 3.

retrograde, and foolishly kowtowing to European commercial interests, were in fact flexible, effective, proactive, and protectionist of their own merchants' interests.⁸ Quataert suggests how encouraging European competition may have benefited the locals. Suraiya Faroqhi and Şevket Pamuk argue that no single or "fixed" system dominated all levels of production.⁹ Although most scholars of the Empire's economy restrict their focus to its center, this dissertation shows that, first, regulation did extend to the periphery and, second, provinces' distance from the center could prove a positive boon to merchants by giving them a freer hand.

Revisionist Findings

As noted, Ottoman historiography has largely viewed the Imperial economy as strangulated by hopelessly outdated regulations. However, archival documents disprove this paradigm by showing that, despite the Empire's lagging behind Europe in adopting mercantilism, its commerce did carry on, its economic institutions survived intact until the middle to late nineteenth century, and its internal trade actually flourished throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁰ In "Institutional Change and the Longevity of the Ottoman Empire, 1500-1800" Pamuk shows that while Ottoman authorities certainly

8. Fariba Zarinabaf, "Ottoman Trade Policies and Capitulations: A Command Economy in Transition?" (paper, Western Ottomanists' Workshop Conference, University of California, Riverside, CA, November 4, 2012); Said Salih Kaymakci, "The Sultan's Entrepreneurs, the Entrepreneurs' Sultan: Beratli Avrupa Tuccari and Institutional Change in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire (1835-1868)," (master's thesis, Bogaziçi University, 2013), 4-8.

9. Suraiya Faroqhi, *Artisans of Empire: Crafts and Craftspeople Under the Ottomans* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 108-127; Donald Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 80-104; Şevket Pamuk, "Institutional Change and the Longevity of the Ottoman Empire, 1500-1800," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 32 (Autumn 2004): 236-237.

10. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s.v. "mercantilism," accessed January 24, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/mercantilism>. Encyclopædia Britannica defines mercantilism as an "economic theory and practice common in Europe from the 16th to the 18th century that promoted governmental regulation of a nation's economy for the purpose of augmenting state power at the expense of rival national powers." Mercantilism aims to increase exports and decrease imports to create a favorable balance of trade and to accumulate specie.

intervened in commerce, they did so selectively and much more sparingly after the sixteenth century.¹¹ Citing the *narhs* (price ceilings) as evidence, Pamuk demonstrates that that these lists were drawn in response to emergencies: wars, famines, crop failures, or sharp fluctuations in food prices triggered by coin debasements. He also points out that not all intervention was uniform throughout the Empire; the farther away from the center (Istanbul), the more difficult it was to enforce the rules, particularly during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Ade notes this as well: “The reforms also should not be considered as a generally applicable model which is more or less ‘correctly’ executed in the province.”¹² Thus, conditions in Aleppo reflected reality in a peripheral, provincial city, where local rulers made decisions without much reference to the capital. Their relative freedom to tailor imperial regulation to local situations brought unprecedented wealth to the periphery, and in particular to the Levantine traders of Aleppo.

However, Aleppine merchants did well not only because of such laxity in the provinces, but also due to centralized Ottoman agency. Many European traders were able to live and work in Aleppo as a result of the capitulations granted to the European nations by the sultan. In turn, they employed numerous local Christian Arab, Armenian, and Jewish merchants as *dragomans* (translators) and factors, most of whom became *protégés* of those nations. Of course, a few Muslim merchants as well formed *muḍāraba* partnerships with the Europeans and specifically with those from the Levant Company, but the minority merchants were at the forefront,¹³ and being part of the European

11. Pamuk, “Institutional Change,” 236-237.

12. Ade, *Picknick mit den Pashas*, 3.

13. *Muḍāraba* partnerships were Islamic capital-labor agreements between two persons in which one put up the money and the other traveled, and were based on profit-sharing. The *mudaraba* could cover

protégé program facilitated their first step up the social ladder. In *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System: Qadis, Consuls and Beratlis in the Eighteenth Century*, Maurits Van den Boogert shows that the Ottomans extended *protégé* status to additional groups such as warehouse workers, intermediaries and administrators; those unable to get work through or at the consulates could buy *berats* (patents, or deeds of appointment given minority merchants working with Europeans), which gave the same limited form of extraterritoriality that Europeans had,¹⁴ though most of the minorities working for the Europeans were actively engaged in trade.¹⁵

Interestingly, the Europeans' eventual withdrawal after the late-eighteenth-century decrease in trade actually allowed minority merchants to increase their trading activity and further ameliorate their social and economic standing. This point proves that, while many had initially advanced socially and commercially because of the privileges they held as *protégés*, they continued to do so independently by using the valuable local and international connections they had made while working with the Europeans. Indeed, some minority and Muslim traders did very well without the *protégé* system. Bruce Masters tells us that the Christian merchants gained much from serving as *muḍāraba* agents for Muslim counterparts, and speculates that Ottoman traders could also have made their fortunes from those kinds of partnerships rather than only from being part of

projects on land or at sea. For more information, see Abraham Udovitch, *Partnership and Profit in Medieval Islam* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970), 170-238; see also Abraham Udovitch, "Bankers Without Banks: Commerce, Banking, and Society in the Islamic World of the Middle Ages," in *The Dawn of Modern Banking*, ed. Fredi Chiapelli (Princeton: Yale University Press, 1979), 255-273; and Abraham Udovitch, "Partnership and Profit in Medieval Islam. *Speculum* 47, no. 1 (Jan. 1972): 147-149.

14. Maurits Van den Boogert, *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System: Qadis, Consuls and Beratlis in the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 63-75; see also Eldem, Goffman and Masters, *Ottoman City*, 58-59. Not all regulations pertaining to the capitulations were the same as those regarding the *berats*.

15. Eldem, Goffman and Masters, *Ottoman City*, 73-35.

the *protégé* system. In addition, Jewish merchants from Livorno and Venice who settled in the city in the seventeenth century, though many were European subjects, interacted more with their own community and with Muslim merchants than with European Christians.¹⁶

This dissertation considers the early and steep social and financial ascent of the Arab Christian Ghantuz Cubbes and the Armenian Balits, who were linked by marriage as well as merchandise, and who by 1797 already had a thriving shipping company that carried goods to Ottoman and European ports, long before the active intervention of the Ottoman authorities. Their early success brings into question the prevailing belief that the Ottomans were not as invested in their merchants as the Europeans were, since the Ghantuz Cubbe-Balit endeavor would have been impossible without the Porte's stamp of approval. In fact, Pamuk shows us, the Empire regularly intruded into business in part to ensure the provisioning of the army and large urban areas, just as had European states during the Middle Ages. So it seems that the East-West divergence in economic policy and power did not occur until the European espousal of mercantilism in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. because Ottoman merchants did not enjoy as prompt an impact on their country's commercial thought.¹⁷ But even later, at the beginning of the nineteenth century when abuse of the *protégé* system had become rife, Imperial authorities stepped in vigorously with dual programs to help those of their merchants who were not employed by the Europeans, and to gain back those who were. These programs

16. Ade, *Picknick mit den Paschas*, 37; Eldem, Goffman and Masters, *Ottoman City*, 33.

17. Pamuk, "Institutional Change," 379. Mercantilism consisted of increasing exports, limiting imports through tariffs, and promoting foreign trade through the use of government power to increase specie, that would result in a healthy economy and state. Bruce Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East: Mercantilism and the Islamic Economy in Aleppo, 1600-1750* (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 2.

vastly enriched minority merchants. Indeed, the Ghantuz Cubbes were cited in a British parliamentary report as one of the wealthiest Christian families in Aleppo;¹⁸ it is no surprise that the Cubbe and the Balit families had three *Avruppa tuccari berats* each.¹⁹ Moreover, the families also benefitted from the Porte's purposively secularizing and modernizing *Tanzimat* reforms, which initiated the last phase in the social and commercial advance of the minority merchant community.²⁰ It was then that the newer Levantine Europeans settled in Aleppo and began to crystallize into an elite commercial class, all the while depending on the earlier-settled local minorities (at this point, mostly Catholics) to advance in trade. The symbiosis between these two groups ultimately created the Levantine merchant upper class in Aleppo.

Yet the Levantines' fortunes did not depend only on financial success. The early modern period, in particular the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, marks an age of greater mobility and connection than had ever pertained before.²¹ World historians such as John Richards, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Jerry Bentley, and Joseph Fletcher use the term *early modern* to indicate "a new ... age of travel, [and] geographical redefinition"²² That epoch saw the "creation of global sea passages that linked people through mostly newly established transportation networks" as well as "second contacts, when sites of first

18. John Bowring, *Commercial Statistics of Syria* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), 80.

19. Bruce Masters, "The Sultan's Entrepreneurs: The *Avrupa tuccaris* and the *Hayriye tuccaris* in Syria," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24, no. 4 (Nov. 1992): 588.

20. The dates are bound by the 1839 *Hatt-ı Şerif Gülhane* (Supreme Edict of the Rosehouse, also known as the *Tanzimât Fermânî* or Imperial Edict of Reorganization) proclaimed by Sultan Abdulmecid I, and his 1856 edict of reform (*Islâhat Fermânî*) promising equality in education, government appointments, and administration of justice to subjects of any *creed*. The principle architect of the decree was Mehmet Emin Ali Pasha.

21. For the purpose of this dissertation, "early modern" follows the European periodization. In the Middle East, the early modern is considered to end around 1750.

22. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Note towards a Reconfiguration of Islamic Eurasia," *Modern Asian Studies* 31, Special Issue: The Eurasian Context of Early Modern History of Mainland South East Asia, 1400-1800 (July 1997): 737.

encounter were turning into places of repeated meeting.”²³ Added to these defining characteristics, the early modern period witnessed the burgeoning role of go-betweens in the transfer of knowledge, languages and culture.²⁴ According to Timothy Brook, “More people were engaging in transactions with people whose languages they did not know and whose cultures they had never experienced,”²⁵ and cultural brokers like the Levantines let them navigate these unknowns.

Local minority merchants, whether Armenian Christians, Arab Christians, or Jews, took on the role of the cultural go-betweens and translators for European merchants, as their linguistic skills and commercial knowledge let them mediate between the Ottoman authorities and the merchants during the early modern period, when they were employed as *dragomans* (translators). According to Abraham Marcus, the privileges accrued from mediating for the Europeans, and the subsequent abuse of the system by giving or selling many more deeds of appointment than were permitted, produced a group of privileged Christians and Jews whose “members sought to eagerly disassociate themselves from the common *Dhimmi* (people of the book) and to win recognition as a separate social category.” Marcus illustrates his point by noting that “a pretentious fur cap symbolized their distinct status.”²⁶ Local merchants mediated as translators once again at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The interface between the two

23. John Richards, “Early Modern India and World History,” *Journal of World History* 8 (Fall 1997): 199-203; Timothy Brook, *Vermeer’s Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008), 8.

24. For more information on the role of the go-betweens, see Kapil Raj, “Mapping Knowledge: Go-Betweens in Calcutta, 1770-1820” in *The Brokered World: Go-Betweens and Global Intelligence, 1770-1820*, eds. Simon Shaffer et al. (Sagamore Beach: Watson Publishing International, 2009), 105-150. See also E. Natalie Rothman, *The Brokered World: Trans Imperial Subjects Between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

25. Brook, *Vermeer’s Hat*, 19, 21.

26. Abraham Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 46.

communities—local non-Muslims and more newly arrived Europeans—established a mutually beneficial relationship that, later on, melded into one elite Levantine community of merchants. Other minority merchant Families, such as the Ghantuz Cubbe and the Balit, could forge ahead, at the end of the eighteenth century, without dependence on the Europeans, thanks to the opportunities afforded them by the Ottoman authorities. Those two families set up a lucrative shipping and export company, with collateral branches across Europe. So they, too, acted as cross-cultural brokers and go-betweens who disseminated aspects of both culture along with commodities, and were thus part of the era of what Brook refers to as “second encounters.” As such, their stories are central to the profound modernization of the era, and their actions as political and economic mediators and as cultural ambassadors helped bind the spheres of Europe and the Middle East in which they felt equally at home.

The events in this dissertation takes place at an important time during the Ottoman centuries. The period 1750-1850 is a time of change an evolution towards the modern period, when the Ottoman authorities, cognizant of the fact that they were lagging behind Europe in many aspects, instituted changes that enabled them to become part of the “world system”. Commerce was a very important aspect of the changes instituted that reshaped the merchant communities of the empire. A few changes include the capitulations that opened the door to European merchants to trade exclusively in the empire, and later on, the *tanzimat* era. The last decade of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century were particularly important to the re-formation of the merchant class in the empire, and Aleppo in particular, as it allowed the non-Muslim merchants with *berats* (certificates that endowed tax benefits) to advance and take over

from the European merchants. This was taking place with the backdrop of the Napoleonic wars that negatively affected trade. Merchants who were not beneficiaries of the *berats* obtained their own form of aid from the authorities in the form of similar certificates but without European protection. Added to that, the first decade of the nineteenth century saw an influx of merchants, the Levantines, who settled in Aleppo permanently and became part of the elite commercial upper class. To better understand how this story unfolded, it is important to have a look at the capitulations that were the cornerstone of these changes.

Historical and Economic Contexts of Ottoman Capitulations

The Ottomans granted preferential commercial privileges and extraterritorial rights to certain European nations' merchants in the Empire.²⁷ Also referred to as "sacred capitulations," these covenants initially rested on the promise that the beneficiary nation would not capture and enslave Ottoman sailors and traders.²⁸ But understanding the fundamental Imperial rationale for the capitulations, usually seen as priming European dominance, requires investigating the birth and evolution of these treaties within the framework of Ottoman history and economy.

Historical Overview of Capitulations

The presence of European merchants in Ottoman lands and the political, economic, and cultural interchanges thus facilitated were well documented from their inception.²⁹ Capitulations had long been granted to foreign trading partners throughout

²⁷. These privileges included tax exemption, the right to live and trade in the Ottoman Empire indefinitely, exemption from local conscription, and access to their own legal systems.

²⁸. Mauritz van den Boogert, *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System; Qadis, Consuls and Beratlis in the 18th Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 19.

²⁹. Many scholars treat the topic of Europeans in the Ottoman Empire. See Goffman, *Ottoman*

the Mediterranean and Europe. But during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as European commercial policies became both more legally uniform and more protectionist, these agreements would disappear from Western states and continue only in the Ottoman Empire. Yet far from attesting to the Porte's torpor, the longevity of the capitulations depended on its actively tailoring them to accommodate, and to exploit, shifting economic realities.³⁰

Exchanges and trade relations of every kind between Europe and what would become the Ottoman Empire had centuries-deep roots. The Byzantine Empire's trade deals with Genoa and Venice have also been well-documented: In return for help with the war against the Normans, Alex Komnenos signed a treaty in 1082 greatly favoring the Venetians'³¹ activity and facilitating the permanence of their merchants and consuls, allowing their *de facto* colonization of many cities and marketplaces in Syria and along the Palestinian coast.

The tradition of entering into commercial agreements persisted during the time of the Ilkhanid, Fatimid and the Seljuk states.³² Since the late-medieval Mamluk period, the Genoese and Venetians had established quarters in cities such as Aleppo and Alexandria.³³ The Italians eagerly developed commercial ties with the Islamic world

Empire; Bruce Masters, "The Political Economy of Aleppo in an Age of Ottoman Reform," in "Empires and Emporia: The Orient in World Historical Space and Time," special issue, *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 53, no. 1/2(2010): 27, 45-48; Ade, *Picknick*, 2; Eliyahu Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); Alfred Wood, *A History of the Levant Company* (Abingdon: Frank Cass, 2006); Abraham Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); and Stefan Knost, Les "Francs" à Alep (Syrie): Leur statut juridique et leur interaction avec les institutions locales (xviiie-xixe siècle), in Claudia Moatti and Wolfgang Kaiser, *Gens de Passage en Méditerranée de l'antiquité à l'époque moderne* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2007).

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³¹. George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 359.

³². De Groot, "The Historical Development of the Capitulatory Regime," 577.

³³. Goffman, *Ottoman Empire*, 14.

because of its incomparable distribution web for Asian goods and invaluable spices, which they could then sell to Europeans. Documentary evidence from the Fatimid and the Mamluks during the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance shows a plenitude of bilateral concessions granted to foreign non-Muslim merchants as part of their policy of attracting commerce from across the Mediterranean.

Starting from 1149 CE/544, the Fatimid caliph Al-Zafir granted the Pisans an *ahdname* (Persian for capitulation). The great Sultan Saladin continued the ancient practice by granting them such privileges in 1173. The Pisans could thereby establish a favored community in Alexandria according to “Islamic law” on condition that they were obedient to the sultan. This meant that they were treated like any other non-Muslim *zimmi* community. Indeed, the Pisans were also allowed their own *fondaco* (dormitory), bath and church.³⁴ By the time of the Mamluks, offering foreign merchants *fondachi* and,

³⁴. The word *fondaco*, from the Arabic *funduq* or hostel, evolved from the Greek *pandocheion* and the Latin *fundicum*. It denotes a charitable foundation or commercial inn that accommodated travelers and provided stables and storage space. Olivia Remie Constable, was the first to write a detailed etymological evolution of the word *pandocheion* and explains how it changed into the word *funduq* and was absorbed “into the new Muslim context”. Olivia Remie Constable, *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World: Lodging, Trade and Travel in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), chapter two, “the transition from Byzantium to the Dār al-Islām., 40-67.

Muslim cities of the eastern and western Mediterranean traditionally of providing separate lodging, which evolved into *fondacos*, to groups of Christian merchants from specific cities or areas. These *fondacos* were either affiliated with a church or included a church and bath house as well as a kitchen and abundant water. *Fondaco* buildings were generally owned and maintained by Muslim authorities who used them to control the Christians and to gain revenue. Such buildings had their counterparts in Europe and particularly in Venice, due to its close contacts with the Islamic world, and were used for similar purposes of regulating trade and sheltering foreign merchants, such as the Germans, Persians, Turks and the Armenians. However, the courtyard of the *fondachi dei Turchi* in the Rialto in Venice overlooked the inside of the building for reasons of privacy. As in the Muslim world, a nocturnal curfew was enforced and “no weapons ... women and beardless persons who may be Christians” were allowed entry. Donatella Calabi and Derek Keene, “Merchants’ Lodgings and Cultural Exchange,” in *Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe: Cities and Cultural Exchange in Europe 1400-1700*, eds. Donatella Calabi and Stephen Turk Christensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 325-326. Good, but Remie Constable needs earlier citation here for etymological evolution of the term and concept.

As a result of an increase in long-distance trade across the Mediterranean, *fondacos* continued to flourish during the Crusades. The twelfth century witnessed their evolution from institutions accommodating only merchants in the area to ones serving cross-cultural commercial patrons. They became social foci for Western Christian merchants, as well as a means for Muslim authorities to house and feed them, to provide them storage, bathing, and ritual facilities, and especially to prevent their entry into

later on, consular representation had become the standard expectation.³⁵ During the eleventh and twelfth centuries many European merchants had access to *fondacos* in major commercial venues across the Mediterranean, and these became central institutions both for accommodating European merchants and allowing cross-cultural exchange. Still, local authorities monitored them strictly, thus prohibiting European commercial dominance.³⁶ In fact, by the sixteenth century *fondacos* were no longer part of capitulatory agreements, and European merchants lived in *khans* (caravanserais) in a city's central business district.

Shortly after his conquest of Constantinople in 1453, Sultan Fatih Mehmet II signed capitulation treaties with the Genoese and later with the Venetians to bolster Ottoman trade and revive the Istanbul economy. However, the Ottomans recalled the Byzantine experience with the Genoese and Venetians, and judiciously refused to grant them territorial rights nor allow any European merchant community to establish an

the local social and economic sphere. They continued throughout the Fatimid period, but slowly shifted from *funduqs* to *khans* during the Mamlūk period (though for a while the two terms were synonymous in Syria and Egypt). The *khans* were also used for commerce and lodging and became increasingly common in the eastern Mediterranean by the thirteenth century as the pattern of overland trade between Mamlūk lands and Anatolia and Iraq changed. This crossover can be clearly seen from when Saladin established a *funduq*, which was immediately called *khan-al-Sultan* by the locals. Olivia Remie Constable, *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World*, 251.

The motivation for the *fondachi*/funduqs--the desire to control and separate Christian merchants from the locals—also pertained in the confinement of ambassadors to special quarters, the *Elçi Hani*, in Istanbul during the early Ottoman period. However, by the seventeenth century this custom had been abolished, and most consuls and ambassadors lodged in city *khans*, as was the case in Aleppo. Calabi Edhem Eldem, “The Reception of Foreigners in Ottoman Istanbul,” in *Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe: Cities and Cultural Exchange in Europe 1400-1700*, eds. Donatella Calabi and Stephen Turk Christensen (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2007), 125.

By the time the Ottomans took over Aleppo, no *funduqs* remained. A series of Ottoman governors had built up the commercial center by installing the largest *khan* in Aleppo, *Khan al Gumruk*, in 1547 as well as by doubling the commercial core of the city, which included *khans*, bath houses and mosques (Masters, “Political Economy of Aleppo,” 26). At times, these *khans* also housed the customs house, as did *Khan al Gumruk*. The *khans* operated until the end of the nineteenth century, when an enterprising Armenian started the first quasi-hotel in a *khan* by providing separate rooms, rather than traditional communal ones, and equipped each with a basin, jug of water, and towels. The first true hotels were built in the beginning of the twentieth century, yet *khans* continued to function as commercial centers for local and foreign merchants until the century's close.

³⁵. De Groot, “Historical Development of the Capitulatory Regime,” 578.

³⁶. Constable, *Housing the Stranger*, 109-110. 251.

independent colony.³⁷ Rather, the Ottomans considered European merchant communities *millet*s-- autonomous groups organized under a consul who oversaw their internal affairs and represented their interests to the Porte, or (in the case of the Venetians) a *Bailo*.³⁸ Yet they guaranteed the Genoese the same privileges with the same conditions Mehmet had granted them in 1453, to last until his death in 1481.³⁹

Thus, Ottoman capitulations gave merchants of each European trading nation a specialized status while generally protecting their families, possessions, and religious practices (although they could neither build new churches nor ring church bells); exempting their sons from being taken as Janissaries, and permitting their community to elect a *ketkhuda* (steward) to represent its interests.⁴⁰ The first *ahdname* signed by the sultan bore a preamble firmly establishing the Genoese (as would later be done for other Europeans) as *dhimmis* (non-Muslim subjects). For the Genoese, though, the agreement was a unilateral privilege granted to *dhimmis* rather than a bilateral treaty.⁴¹ This *ahdname* also differed from later ones of other nations in that the Genoese had to pay the poll tax, since they were considered *reaya*, or subjects of the sultan—a requirement

³⁷. De Groot. “Historical Development of the Capitulatory Regime,” 577. During the time of the Byzantines and the pre-Ottoman Islamic states, the terms of the agreements included the permanent establishment of foreign colonies and a communal house (*fondaco*), bath, and church. A similar agreement was reached with the Byzantine Emperor and the Ottoman Turks in 1391, in which the Ottomans established comparable facilities, including a mosque and an Islamic court with a *qadi* having autonomy over its internal affairs.

³⁸ The name *Bailo*, plural *baili*, was a name given to many European officials in the Middle Ages, and later was used by the first consular official and the Doge's first permanent envoy in the Ottoman Empire in 1454. The name derives from the Latin word *Bauius* meaning “porter or bearer” that may be translated as *Bailiff*. The Ottoman term used was *Bālyoz*. It was used for the first time in Latin translations of Arabic documents in the second half of the 12th century. Maria Pia Pedani, “Venetian Consuls in Egypt and Syria in the Ottoman Age” in *Mediterranean World* 18 (2006), 1.

³⁹. Celine Dauverd, *Imperial Ambition in the Early Modern Mediterranean: Genoese Merchants and the Spanish Crown* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). 23-24.

⁴⁰. Halil İnalcık, “Ottoman Galata, 1453-1553,” in *Essays in Ottoman History* (Istanbul: Eren Yayincılık, 1998), 277. This document was originally written in Greek, which, according to İnalcık, was used in contemporary Ottoman diplomatic correspondence with Latin states.

⁴¹. İnalcık, “Ottoman Galata,” 277-278.

removed from all subsequent capitulations. Those later beneficiaries followed soon: the Venetians and, later, the French (1535), English (1580), Danish (1756), and Dutch (1612, and confirmed, rather than amended or renewed, in 1680).⁴²

The capitulatory system, then, essentially consisted of *ahdnames* incorporating basic benefits--trading privileges, religious freedom, residence--without holders becoming subjects of the sultan.⁴³ Ottoman *ahdnames* closely followed the Mamluk and Seljuks capitulations and were based more on local custom rather than on broad *Sharia* law, so “they maintained a strong sense of tradition and a deep respect of precedent” (*Usul al kadim*).⁴⁴ The *ahdnames* were modeled on the capitulations granted to the “most favored nation” (France, then, later, England). But, flexibly enough, privileges were also extended to merchants of nations without their own capitulation, if they worked under the flag of a nation that had one, as stipulated in the 1581 capitulations granted to the French.⁴⁵ In times when a European consulate was closed, a consul from a different nation would be asked to take over. Such was the case with the Dutch consulate when the Venetian consul Domenico Seriola was appointed as the acting Dutch consul.

Abbiamo Giudicato non poter meglio indrizzarci ch’a Lei. Così dunque la prghiamo di voler amministrare l’affari di nostro consolato, a Aleppo durante l’assenza del detto console...⁴⁶

Organization of the Dissertation

⁴². Zarinabaf, “Ottoman-European Encounters,” 8. Capitulations to European nations were renewed numerous times. The French renewed theirs in 1569, 1581, 1597, 1604, 1673, and 1740, and the English renewed theirs in 1583, 1601, 1616, 1624, 1643, 1666, and 1676.

⁴³. Living in the Ottoman Empire without becoming subjects exempted merchants from the *cizye* (poll tax) and the *haraj* (personal tax).

⁴⁴. De Groot, “Historical Development of the Capitulatory Regime,” 578.

⁴⁵ Mauritz van den Boogert, *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System*, 37. These merchants were referred to as the “merchant strangers”.

⁴⁶ A.S.VE ASVE Cinque Savi alla Mercanzie, Dispassi dei Consoli, Detaglio del Commercio di Aleppo de Console Seriola , Busta 603 (DSCN 2262).From Hagel, by order of R.H.V. Hambrosek , the estates General of the United Provinces of the Netherlands, 1 to consul Domenico Seriola 2 October 1769.

Each of the five chapters of this dissertation concentrates on a different aspect of the Levantines in Aleppo. Chapter One outlines the dissertation and offers a comprehensive description of the Levantine merchants along with a wide-ranging review of archival and published literature, and especially of classic and current historiographical theories. The chapter thus sets the stage for the rest of the work.

Chapter Two focuses on the European merchants in Aleppo. It traces Aleppo's first major group of Europeans, in particular those attached to the Levant Company and other joint-stock companies drawn by capitulations in the early modern period. At that time, Europeans in the city constituted impermanent "trading colonies" rather than settled communities,⁴⁷ usually conducting business for a certain number of years before returning home. Their presence gave rise to the employment of the local minorities as *dragomans* and agents for the companies, and consequently helped the initial social and financial advance of the local non-Muslim society. During the eighteenth century, declining trade chased many Europeans from the city and Smyrna overtook Aleppo as a commercial center, particularly in silk.⁴⁸ By the first quarter of the nineteenth century, though, trade began to recover and the Europeans returned. However, this time they profited from the *Tanzimat* reforms and came with their families to settle. Chapter Two thus chronicles the ebb and the flow of the European joint-stock companies and the merchants who arrived in their wake, coinciding with the granting of capitulations and later with the *Tanzimat* reforms. It also shows the rise of the European Levantine merchant class that eventually encompassed the entrenched local elite minorities. The

47. *Trading colonies* is a term used by Ade in *Picknick mit den Paschas*.

48. Sebouh Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Network of Armenians from New Julfa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 68; Rudolph Matthee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver, 1600-1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 144-145, 173.

chapter showcases the powerful Levantine Barker, Poche and Marcopoli families as examples of the newly-blended minority community.

Chapter Three details the importance of Aleppo as a major trade center and of the minority merchants animating its lucrative regional, national and international commerce. It examines the varied commodities (silk and other luxury cloths, copper, coffee, alkali) and locally-produced cloth, soap, and leather goods, which attracted Levantine settlement. Using the example of the Ghantuz Cubbe and other local minority or Levantine families, this chapter illustrates how state intervention through the dual Imperial programs let its merchants flourish as *reyas* (subjects) of the sultan rather than as *protégés* of European consulates. It also highlights the central role its traders played in the economy of the Ottoman Empire in general and that of Aleppo in particular. During this period, local minority merchants transitioned from serving as translators, factors (agents), and warehouse workers for European trading colonies, to enjoying legal and economic parity with Muslim neighbors in the age of reform. This transition firmly established them at the heights of imperial commerce and, at times, made them competitive with European merchants in international trade. Yet the chapter demonstrates that their success stemmed from their earliest orientation to regional and domestic trade—a strategy even nineteenth-century European merchant migrants retained.

Using the commercial correspondence of the Ghantuz Cubbes, this chapter also looks at the family trade networks that crystallized in the eighteenth century through the Ottoman authorities' *Avruppa Tuccari* and *Hayriye Tuccari* programs. In fact, the Cubbe family enterprises were already well established when these dual programs were initiated,

showing that Ottoman intervention and aid occurred earlier, and to greater effect, than previously believed.

Chapter Four traces the diplomatic history of the European “nations” in the region, starting from the first treaties signed by Byzantine Emperor Alex Comnenos. It also provides the historical background of the first consulates and commercial and other exchanges between the Ottoman authorities and the European nations up to the seventeenth century. The chapter thus demonstrates the centrality of consular representation to the growth of the Porte’s international commerce, and details the responsibility, authority, and perquisites of the consuls. A comparison of the Venetian and English consular establishments, based on archival documentation, serves as a compass to show the relative influence of various European powers in the Ottoman Empire.

While the merchants and their origins have already been examined, their transformation from wandering individuals into established and influential family networks, and their occupation of the consular positions, receives close attention here. Families such as the Marcopoli acted as the Italian and Spanish consuls for generations, and the Poches, after taking command of Venetian consular positions, functioned as the Austrian and, later on, the Belgian consuls right up to the end of twentieth century. Similar to the European Levantines, the local non-Muslim elite also dominated the honorary consul offices. Families like the Picciotto served as honorary consuls for sixteen different nations over a short period of ten years; the Balits, Homsis, and Girardis did much the same.

The fifth and last substantive chapter studies the Levantines as a social group ensconced through family ties, family-based trade networks, marriage strategies, and other insular community tactics serving to separate them from other Aleppine groups and ensuring their elite status until the start of the twenty-first century.

The dissertation's conclusion assesses the lasting impact this cosmopolitan, hybrid Levantine society had on the commercial and cultural history of Aleppo and other crucial trade centers in the Empire. While concentrating on their activities as global ambassadors and go-betweens until the mid-nineteenth century, this chapter includes a discussion of the last of these families finally to depart Aleppo at the beginning of this century as a result of the civil war.

Background: Understanding Levantine Life

Defining *Levantine*

No precise or fixed definition of the word *Levantine* exists, other than its derivation from *levant*, meaning “where the sun rises,” or the East. In the early modern period, due mostly to the increase in Mediterranean trade, the word Levant became synonymous with the Orient. Founded in 1581, the first English joint-stock company named itself “The Levant Company” in reference to trade in the region.

Since the fifteenth century, *Levantine* has denoted a relation to the geographic area of the Levant, yet its usage has undergone a profound evolution. During the early eighteenth century, the term referred to Europeans who settled in the Levant; later, it also embraced local minority groups there. Subsequently the term indicated European settlers' descendants who continued to live in the region since the Crusades either in eastern Mediterranean coastal cities or major cities of modern-day Turkey. By the twentieth

century the word had taken on a negative connotation, characterizing a dishonest, devious person or an inhabitant of European descent who had assimilated.⁴⁹ This association, too, has changed, primarily through research such as this, and has come to refer to the stratum of elite merchants all around the eastern Mediterranean basin, specifically in cities like Izmir, Constantinople, Aleppo, Alexandria, Cairo, Beirut, and the port of Chios.⁵⁰ Understood thus, Levantines typically worked as merchants or diplomats or both and shared characteristics such as cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism. Levantine merchants developed a group consciousness and a sense of distinction from their surrounding society, and constantly strove to further their social and financial status through obtaining offices of consul for foreign powers. The penchant for gaining prestige and status through consular posts characterized European, Christian Arab, and Jewish members of the community equally, and explains why consuls abounded in almost every family; at times the job became hereditary, as in the Van Maseyk and Barker families.

The Levantines were, and to an extent still are, a hybrid and polyglot community straddling East and West and belonging equally to both. Comprised of many different ethnic groups ranging from European (English, French, Dutch, Venetian, Livornese) to local Jews and Christian Arabs, Greeks and Armenians, they subscribed to Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, or Orthodox faiths. Because of the many languages each subgroup spoke, their *lingua franca* mixed Hebrew, Arabic and Spanish into what may be called

49. For more on Levantine nomenclature, see E. Natalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012) 211-215; Ekrem Buğra Ekinci, “An Exotic community in the Ottoman Empire: The Levantines,” *Daily Sabah*, March 28, 2014, accessed on August 24, 2017, <file:///Users/momdji/Documents/Levantines/An%20exotic%20community%20in%20the%20Ottoman%20Empire:%20The%20Levantines%20-%20Daily%20Sabah.webarchive>; Ade, *Picknick mit den Paschas*, 50-54; and Eldem, Goffman, and Masters, *Ottoman City*, 50-62.

50. Chios is both the name of the island and its main port city, where many merchants resided and worked.

business Italian, their first means of communication.⁵¹ By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Italian took over as the main language but was later superseded by French. In fact, at the early stages of settlement, not all the Europeans spoke Arabic, but relied on the locals to translate. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, though, many could get by in Arabic, although Ade shows that the second generation of the Poches were not yet conversant in it.⁵² But the generation that followed spoke the language well, and even during the eighteenth century a few second-generation Levantines were multilingual: Dutch consul Jan Van Maseyk (1758-1824) spoke Dutch, English, Arabic, Armenian, and Italian; Marianne Hays, daughter of former British consul and wife of Consul John Barker spoke the same languages fluently at a tender age. It is unclear whether minority traders in Aleppo conceived of themselves as Levantine in the eighteenth century, but by the early nineteenth century, according to Ade, they were referring to themselves as “our community” and the “khan aristocracy,” and kept separate from other Aleppines through marriage and other strategies which Chapter Five details.⁵³

Defining *Ottoman Lands*

51. This pidgin language was used by local and European merchants, captains, diplomats, and *dragomans*. According to Daniel Panzac, the language probably originated in Eastern Mediterranean ports around the fifteenth century before spreading to western ports and to North Africa during the sixteenth century, and allowed communication between diverse groups. A few of its words survived into the twentieth century, such as the Italian term *mostra*, or sample. The language was aptly defined by a contemporary, Charles Etienne de La Condamine: “Les Turcs parles turc entre eux, mais la langue dont se servent les uns et les autres pour se faire entendre aux Européens est ce qu’on appelle la Langue Franque. On dit qu’on la parle dans tout le Levant et dans tous les ports de la Mediterranée, avec cette différence que celle qui est en usage du côté Est plus en avant vers le Levant est une mélange de provenç, de Greco vulgaire et surtout d’Italien corrompu, au lieu que celle que l’on parle à Alger, et qu’on appelle aussi petit Mauresque, tient beaucoup plus de l’Espagnol.” Daniel Panzac, “La Lingua Franca: Un outil de communication,” in *Living in the Ottoman Ecumenical Society: Essays in Honor of Suraiya Faroqhi*, eds. Vera Constantini and Markus Koller (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 411. For more on the subject see Jocelyne Dakhlia, “La langue franque: Langue du marchand en Méditerranée?” in *Langues et langues du commerce en Méditerranée et en Europe à l’époque moderne*, eds. Gilbert Buti, Michele Janin-Thivos, and Olivier Raveux (Aix-en-Provence: Presses Universitaires de Provence, 2013).

52. Ade, *Picknick mit den Paschas*, 82.

53. Ade, *Picknick mit den Paschas*, 8.

The Ottoman Empire encompassed a huge area from the Balkans through Anatolia to the North African Coast. The lands we recognize today as being Arabic-speaking were conquered in Sultan Selim's 1512-1520 campaign, which won Aleppo and Damascus in 1516 and Cairo in 1517, thus diminishing the Mamluks politically and militarily. Apart from incorporating both Syria and Egypt into the Ottoman Empire, he also added the guardianship of Mecca and Medina, finally giving sultans the right to call themselves caliphs. The last of the Arab provinces were incorporated into the Empire during the reign of Suleiman (1520-1566).⁵⁴

Calling the Middle Eastern lands taken by the Ottomans "Arab" is anachronistic and inaccurate, as the current territories and nation-states identifying themselves as Arab are a creation of the twentieth century, and their present borders are modern constructs that did not exist at the time of the conquest. In addition, naming the lands "Arab," even despite their majority Arab population, is problematic. In Aleppo alone, the population blended Armenians, Kurds, Circassians, Greeks, Turks and other ethnicities, although many of them in fact spoke Arabic. That is, speaking a given language did not necessarily indicate belonging to that ethnicity. Both Jane Hathaway and Masters point out that the word *Arabi* (Arabic) during this period meant Bedouin, or inhabitants of Arabia. Yet calling Bedouins *Arab* (plural of *Arabi*) did not accurately identify them ethnically, as other pastoralists were included in this designation.⁵⁵ In fact, as a result of the Ottoman conquest and policies, the number of ethnicities in the Empire increased. The same is true regarding religions. The Ottoman Empire was officially Sunni Muslim; however, many

54. For more on the subject, see Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650* (China: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 16-74; Jane Hathaway, *The Arab Lands Under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2008), 3-5; and Bruce Masters, *The Arabs of the Ottoman Empire, 1516-1918: A Social and Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 14-15.

55. Hathaway, *Arab Lands*, 3-5; Masters, *Arabs of the Ottoman Empire*, 14-15.

different faiths coexisted in it. The non-Muslim subjects are particularly relevant to this dissertation and their place in Ottoman historiography deserves to be recognized.

Therefore, for the purposes of this dissertation, “Arab lands” and specifically Syria denote a geographic location approximately equal to modern-day Syria.

Thus the vast Empire encompassed many different peoples, cultures, religions, and tongues. The sultans were able to devise a system at once inclusive, flexible, and pragmatic, letting them rule and provide for a sizable, diverse population and, at the same time, leave a lasting imprint on all freshly-possessioned areas.⁵⁶ Being incorporated into the Ottoman military, political, fiscal, educational and, above all, commercial system in the early sixteenth century brought the new lands both advantages and disadvantages. The Ottoman style of rule typically fused local and Imperial structures, so that as far away as Cairo and Mosul, elites spoke Turkish and the local economy was organized on a household basis modeled on the Imperial one. As a result, the provincial administration was run by Ottomans speaking Turkish, a language not all the population spoke. By the nineteenth century, the distance from the center increased and the institutions, governance and administrative practices reflected the weakening of authority between central and local powers.

As a case in point, despite Syria’s incorporation into the Empire, fundamental differences between the Imperial center and that province remained. Speaking Arabic was a distinct advantage, for the majority of the population continued to do so despite the fact that Ottoman Turkish was the official language of the Empire. However, because of the wide variety of ethnicities and languages in Aleppo, including European ones, a *lingua franca* mixing its many idioms and reflecting its many groups was cobbled together and

56. Hathaway, *Arab Lands: Masters, Arabs of the Ottoman Empire*.

adopted. As noted, when the European presence became more permanent in Aleppo, the *lingua franca* based first on Italian shifted to French. Apart from the letters in English that members of Levant Company sent their headquarters in London, the documents in my possession show that most of its official correspondence was conducted in Italian, including official papers pertaining to other states, even when under the protection of the British consulate.

Characteristics of the Empire

The years between 1750 and 1850 saw the Ottoman Empire transition from the early modern period to the beginning of the modern; despite many continuities, fundamental changes were taking place.⁵⁷ Many of these have been directly or indirectly ascribed to the presence of the Europeans, who are erroneously credited with every aspect of Imperial modernization. This inaccurate portrayal effectively strips the Ottoman authorities of any agency in their own internal affairs—an error this dissertation will remediate by demonstrating that the Ottomans consciously and actively facilitated the rise of its own elite merchant middle class, and at an earlier period than previously thought. This support came first through the frequently renewed capitulations, commercial treaties allowing foreigners freedom of trade, residence in the Empire, and exemption from its taxes. Such extra-territorial rights and privileges were later extended to *dragomans* as well as to other employees of the consulates, giving them *protégé* status and paving the way for minority merchants' sunnier fortunes. Yet rampant abuse of the system by European and local merchants alike had to be counteracted by dual Imperial programs conferring on minority, then Muslim merchants the same liberties as the European *protégés*, and consequently allowing minority merchants not part of the *protégé*

57. For more on the continuities see Marcus, *Eve of Modernity*, Introduction.

system to flourish as well. The final step facilitating the rise of the Levantine merchant class was the introduction of the *Tanzimat* reorganization detailed below, including the adoption of commercial laws based on European ones.⁵⁸ The *Tanzimat* era of reorganization during the first half of the nineteenth century directly benefited both the European merchants settling in Aleppo and local minorities—two groups who would merge to create a commercial, social, and cultural Levantine elite.

***Tanzimat* Reforms Reshape Levantine Life**

The *Hatt-I Serif Gülhane* issued by Sultan Abdulmecid I was the first major reform in the *Tanzimat* era from 1839 to 1861.⁵⁹ These social, political and commercial transformations aimed to secure the Empire's territorial integrity against assertive European powers from the outside and nascent nationalist movements from the inside.⁶⁰ Despite its preamble claiming the importance of restoring the Empire to past glory and foreswearing new impositions on its populations, the acts in fact included many new initiatives: the end of tax farming, the introduction of universal male conscription, and a move to grant emancipation to non-Muslim (non-Turk) subjects and integrate them into Ottoman society as equals.⁶¹ Traditional historians such as Sükrü Hanioglu have depicted the era condescendingly as one of Westernization, but later scholars tend to refer to it more respectfully as the age of reform or, as James Gelvin defines it, “defensive

58. Ade, *Picnick mit den Pashas*, 2.

59. For more on the *Tanzimat* reforms see Roderic Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963); Carter Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789-1922* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Sükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 85-95; and Hathaway, *Arab Lands*, 225, 235-236.

60. By the mid-nineteenth century several provinces and regions had “loosened” ties with the Empire and were only nominally part of it. According to Davison, Serbia and Montenegro were Ottoman in name only; Mount Lebanon was granted organic law; and as a result of revolt in Crete, the island was given a special administrative status. Hanioglu, *Brief History*, 86.

61. Masters, *Arabs of the Ottoman Empire*, 158.

developmentalism” consisting of military reform, the production of cash crops, elimination of tax farms, promotion of education, new legal codes, and economic planning.⁶² In the case of the periphery and Aleppo, the *Tanzimat* meant reintegration into the Empire and direct rule after centuries of indirect control.⁶³ The reforms also concentrated on Ottomanization—the policy of treating every subject, regardless of ethnicity or religion, as fully Ottoman. This inclusivism also aimed to centralize control.

Despite their novelty and the burden of universal conscription, the acts were generally well-tolerated because certain Christians were recognized as separate *millet*s (religious communities) and were allowed to build churches. However, universal conscription and the inclusion of Christians in all Ottoman rights did upset the Muslim inhabitants of Aleppo, who mounted a major uprising in 1850 targeting Christians almost exclusively, but which was soon crushed by the Fifth Army created as part of the new centralized command.⁶⁴

The new commercial regulations promulgated were based on more liberal French laws and less on Islamic ones, but retained core Islamic justice traditions.⁶⁵ Whereas European merchants had previously to go through *sharia* courts or settle their affairs privately, they now had recourse to the new commercial courts for settling disputes or collecting debts.

The combination of the *Avruppa Tuccari* program, new commercial courts, and the guarantee of Ottoman rights regardless of subjects’ religion or ethnicity powerfully

62. Hanioglu, *Brief History*, 85-95; James Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East; A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 100.

63. Hanioglu, *Brief History*, 85-95.

64. For more on these occurrences, see Bruce Masters, “The 1850 Events in Aleppo: An Aftershock of Syria's Incorporation into the Capitalist World System,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 22, no. 1 (February 1990): 3-20; and Hidemitsu Kuroki, “Events in Aleppo During Napoleon’s Expedition of Egypt,” *Bulletin d’études orientales* 51 (1999): 263-277.

65. Masters, *Arabs of the Ottoman Empire*, 183.

lifted minority traders into the rising merchant elite—even if, or perhaps especially since, the new laws played out a bit differently in peripheral Aleppo than they did in the capital.

Literature Review

Main Primary Sources

In addition to the Ghantuz Cubbe family collection, this dissertation relies on documents from the private archives of the Marcopoli and Poche families, housed in what used to be the Venetian consulate, and became first the Belgian consulate and finally the residence of the Poches. Both these families belonged to the elite Levantine merchant class whose Aleppine presence and thriving businesses were directly linked to the *Tanzimat* reforms. The archives hold consular documents (1779-1806) which escaped a fire and a transportation disaster, combined with the commercial correspondence of the last Venetian General Consul, Salesio Rizzini. Added to those are the private and consular documents from the Belgian consulate (belonging to the Poches) and from the Venetian/Italian consulate (belonging to the Marcopolis).

Around half a million pages of these documents were archived in 1990 by Rudiger Klein and Heinz Gaube as part of a project of the Eastern Seminar of the University of Tübingen sponsored by the Volkswagen Foundation.⁶⁶ Later on, other scholars from University of Tübingen worked on them; Ade, a student of Dr. Gaube, was given unlimited access to the Poche-Marcopoli archive and wrote her dissertation, since published as a book, on the Poche family and the varied litigation they pursued, and on how judicial ramifications of the *Tanzimat* reforms impacted the establishment of European merchants in Aleppo. The archives Ade used proved to be a treasure trove of information; however, by the time I was given access to them, the current political

66. Ade, *Picknick mit den Paschas*, 1.

problems had started and I had less than one week to study them, as they were closed due to the riots.

The documents are divided into the Marcopoli *Fond* (FM) and the Poche *Fond* (FP). The first includes documents belonging to the Vincenzo Marcopoli & Company firm, such as accounting books, cash ledgers, a list of debtors and payment dates, receipts, freight letters, and commercial correspondence pertaining to the company as well as to their subsidiary interests in soap production, tannery and agriculture. Apart from these, the Italian consular correspondence and documents in the *Fond* date mostly from the twentieth century.⁶⁷ In addition to the Italian consular papers, The FM also holds documents pertaining to the representation of the Portugal, Spain, Sweden-Norway, France and Greece. In addition, documents belonging to companies such as the Giustiniani and Nipoti (1836-1853) and the Fratelli Castelli (1834-1836), precursor companies to Fratelli Marcopoli (1893-1945), are also kept there, along with private Marcopoli family documents and bookkeeping ledgers for daily expenses.⁶⁸ Perhaps most important, the *Fond* also contains the commercial correspondence of the Ghantuz Cubbe family network, to be discussed in detail in Chapter Two.⁶⁹

Similarly, the Poche *Fond* holds documents from the companies that preceded theirs such as Ignaz Zahn & Company (1813-1870), whose representative in Aleppo starting from 1820 was Joseph Poche; the *Fond* contains papers from the Salonica, Cairo, Damascus and Beirut branches of that company as well. Preserved in it are also documents of other institutions such as Schuep and Company and the African and

67. The office of the Italian Consul was taken over by George Antaki after the death of Paul Marcopoli in the second half of the twentieth century, hence his part-ownership of the archives.

68. Ade, *Picknick mit den Paschas*, 5.

69. Ade, *Picknick mit den Paschas*, 7.

Eastern Trading Company, as well as commercial documents belonging to Adolphe Sola, who had married Marguerite Poche and thus entered the family enterprises. The family companies were smaller enterprises run by family members, while the other larger companies were managed by others. Added to those are documents regarding their own trading company, as well as papers from their side-businesses of soap-making and insurance.⁷⁰ The archives contain the consular correspondence and papers of all nine different consular offices held by the family, including the Belgium consulship held by Frederic Poche from 1883 to 1912, by his son Joseph Poche (1913-1965), and by the most famous and best-loved consul, Adolphe Poche (1965-1987). They also contain documents of the Dutch consulate (1860-1961) and correspondence from the Czechoslovakian honorary consulate held by Guillaume and Rudolphe Poche respectively. While the modern-era papers fall out of the purview of this research, they suggest strongly the persistence of the drive of earlier minority merchants to obtain (and, if possible, leave for one's son) an office of consul or honorary consul as a mark of prestige. More importantly, the private letters and documents of the Poches and Ghantuz Cubbes given to me by their descendants illustrate the economic, political, legal, and cultural shifts of the Empire through powerful family networks. From genealogical trees to precise financial records to personal letters, these papers are vital to the focus of Chapter Four and the aim of the dissertation as a whole. Family histories of the Andrea and Balit families as well as the family tree of the Giustinianis from Chios fill in the picture of a Levantine commercial community linking two realms in a way reflective of

⁷⁰ Ade, *Picknick mit den Paschas*, 89. The Poches were partners in the soap-making business, with their friends and relatives, the Marcopolis.

its own dual culture, and elevating itself into wealth, social prominence, and a specific identity of its own.

The *Archivio di Stato* in Venice houses the collection of commercial correspondence between the Venetian consulate in Aleppo and the *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia* in Venice.⁷¹ The letters, sent from Aleppo or from the members of the *Savi* to various consuls in Aleppo, include reports on Aleppine trade and the trading houses under the protection of the consulate, as well as requests for consular appointments or money to cover consular costs. The correspondence from the *Cinque Savi*, on the other hand, consists of directions sent to consuls in Aleppo regarding commerce as well as contracts and terms of employment of a consul to be appointed in Aleppo. These documents are crucial to understanding contemporary workings of Venetian trade.

The National Archives in London contain most of the files on the Levant Company and the correspondence between its London headquarters and its various Middle Eastern centers, Aleppo being the most important. This dissertation utilized mainly the minutes of meetings between the consul and others, mostly from the Levant Company. Other documents used record trials taking place at the consulate, petitions, and reports to headquarters, and contain papers regarding the nations under British protection at various times, such as the Venetians and the Dutch. In addition, the archives hold deeds of title to rented rooms or apartments in *khans* as well as lists of personal belongings and private family documents.

The archives at the Genealogical Society in London and the Huguenot Society are essential to Chapter Five as they contain family trees and private correspondence of many

71. Founded in 1507 and made permanent in 1517, the Venice-based Cinque Savii was the governing body of overseas merchants, or the board of trade; it was responsible for protecting and enhancing Venetian maritime trade, and appointed all overseas consuls.

who immigrated to Aleppo. The majority of families who came to Aleppo with the Levant Company were Huguenots and had, as had other Levantine clans, married within their group well before settling in Aleppo, so multiple members from each family might serve in the company.⁷² The family trees reveal similarities between marriage strategies practiced by the Levantines already in the Middle East and the Huguenots in England.

In brief, while consular and commercial documents pertaining to the European-Aleppine trade helped reconstruct Levantine families' business and judicial transactions, the lack of published sources on the families forced me to cull information from professionally-drawn family trees as well as from descendants' sometimes-spotty records of births, deaths, and marriages, many of which include copies of legal and other registers such as the Venetian *Golden Book of Nobility*.⁷³

Other Primary Sources

Apart from monographs on specific diplomats in the Levant Company or the general experience of the English in the Levant, little research illuminates its operations and effects.⁷⁴ Yet the eighteenth century, the heyday of the "grand tour" for young gentlemen, witnessed a proliferation of travelogues. And as Europe expanded eastward for avenues of trade, businessmen's accounts multiplied as well. Even armchair tourist Olfert Dapper's description of Syria and Palestine which, he admitted, merely stitched together "several old and new authors, and accounts by eye witnesses," was translated

72. Well-known examples of Huguenot-descended merchants are the Hays, Abbott, Vernon, Bosanquet, Lannoy, La Fontaine and Charneaud families. Most had strong kinship ties with each other that had begun in England and were intensified in the Levant. Huguenots also played a large role in governing the Company from London, and figure in letters and instructions sent by its directors from the capital.

73. The *Libro d'Oro* or *Golden Book* was the formal directory of nobles in the Republic of Venice; it is now privately published; see addendum.

74. See Sonia Anderson, *An English Consul in Turkey: Paul Rycaut at Smyrna, 1667-1678* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), and William Foster, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009).

into German and English.⁷⁵ However, serious scholars like Henry Maundrell and Edward Pococke, appointed as chaplains to the *factory* (goods warehouse and living quarters of merchants and others of the nation involved in trade) in Aleppo, produced well-researched works with greater credibility than those of previous travelers, many of whom were armchair historians.⁷⁶ Maundrell's posthumously published account of his pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1697 enjoyed numerous reprints; Pococke gathered many Aleppine manuscripts and became a professor of Arabic at Oxford upon his return.

While tremendously popular, many contemporary accounts were unreliable and projected ingrained prejudices. Alexander Russell's 1756 *The Natural History of Aleppo* offered an alternative to contemporary travelogues. Physician to the Levant Company, he detailed thirteen years' worth of observations and research in Aleppo drawn both from personal experience and accounts by other Western travelers. After his death in England in 1768, his brother Patrick, the new Levant Company physician, published a revised two-volume second edition in 1794 with additional notes, references to earlier travelers, beautiful illustrations, and Patrick's own descriptions on varied subjects, including the flourishing coffee houses of the city.⁷⁷

75. Maurits Van den Boogert, *Aleppo Observed: Ottoman Syria through the Eyes of Two Scottish Doctors, Alexander and Patrick Russell* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 15. Gerald Mclean, Nabil Matar, Philip Mansel and Daniel Goffman study different aspects of the English in the Levant, but do not concentrate on the Company.

76. As chaplain to the company in Aleppo, the scholar and ordained priest Edward Pococke learned Arabic and collected numerous manuscripts, which he took back to Oxford. He was later invited to fill its chair of Arabic studies, founded by his friend Bishop William Laud. Maundrell was also sent to Aleppo as Levant Company chaplain, and was given 201 English pounds to buy books for the library. He led a group of fourteen Europeans to Jerusalem and back, and preserved the narrative of his trip in *A Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem at Easter A.D. 1697*, published in 1703 after his 1701 death in Aleppo.

77. In 1753 Patrick Russell assumed the post held by his half-brother Alexander as physician to the Levant Company, and served until 1771.

Alexander's position as physician, empirical training, fluency in Arabic, and unique experience of making house calls keep the work relatively free of bias.⁷⁸ He claimed his book constituted an "exact account" and "faithful narrative of facts" employing "no false coloring in his representations."⁷⁹ Indeed, the validity of either edition was unquestioned at the time, and they continue to be quoted even today. *The Natural History of Aleppo* ranges from the flora and fauna to local customs, including religious ceremonies, living arrangements, burials, food, hygiene, and illnesses such as the Plague and the dreaded Aleppo Boil. But while the tomes' pragmatic, detailed, and comprehensive first-hand reportage has proven more reliable than other accounts of the city, it does contain some Eurocentric notions.

Syria and Egypt under the Last Five Sultans, edited by Edward Barker, faithfully presents the life of his father, John Barker, England's consul in Aleppo from 1583 until his death in 1584.⁸⁰ This fascinating glimpse into the life and times of Consul Barker begins with his early activities in the city and ends with the letters he dictated from his retirement house in Souedie/Samandag, in modern-day Turkey. Although the letters cover delicate diplomacy and daily occurrences, they present a carefully pitched view of his career to entertain his friends and impress his powerful connections. Nevertheless, Barker's encounters with legendary figures such as Lady Hester Stanhope yield valuable

78. Both Alexander and Patrick Russell had received their medical training at Edinburgh University.

79. Alexander Russell and Patrick Russell, *The Natural History of Aleppo Containing a Description of the City, and the Principal Natural Productions in Its Neighbourhood: Together with an Account of the Climate, Inhabitants, and Diseases, Particularly of the Plague*. 2 vols. (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1794), Preface.

80. Edward Barker, *Syria and Egypt Under the Last Five Sultans of Turkey*, 2 vol. (repr. New York: Arno Press, 1973, originally published by Tinsley in 1876).

information as they rivet readers' attention.⁸¹ When she was thought to be dying, Barker wrote her brother, "High as your admiration is for the qualities of your noble sister, it would have been infinitely increased if you had seen, as I did, the fortitude and resignation with which she entertained the idea of her dissolution."⁸²

Aleppo was chosen as the principal seat of the Levant Company works, which continued to operate until its closure in 1825.⁸³ But Levant Company merchants were hardly the first to venture to the Middle East or to Aleppo itself. The London Genealogical Society records many early-sixteenth-century ships making profitable voyages there, including the famous *Tiger* mentioned in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: "Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master of the Tiger."⁸⁴ The hiatus in commercial activity during the sixteenth century was probably attributable to the Venetians' fierce rebound as the English and French began to encroach on their fourteenth-century foothold.

Written in the form of a schoolteacher's journal covering some nine years from 24 May 1851, Naoum Bakhkhash's "News of Aleppo" (اخبار حلب) remains an invaluable source of information on daily life there.⁸⁵ Himself a teacher, Bakhkhash read and wrote Arabic, Turkish and Assyrian. Surprisingly, according to the priest who edited his journal, he spoke no European language although he knew and wrote about many European merchants and diplomats. In his journal, Bakhkhash methodically notes the

81. Lady Hester Stanhope was a socialite, traveler, and one of the first modern excavators in the history of Holy Land archeology.

82. Barker, *Syria and Egypt*, vol. 1, 163.

83. Alfred Wood, *A History of the Levant Company* (London: Frank Cass, 1964), 15. The two other major factories were in Izmir and Constantinople; lesser factories and consulates were in Chios, Cyprus, Zante, Tripoli and Tunis.

84. Mordecai Epstein, *The English Levant Company: Its Foundation and its History* (London: Burt Franklin, 1908), 7. One of the first merchants to go to Aleppo, Anthony Jenkins was recognized by Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent.

85. Naoum Bakhkhash, *Akhbar Halab* (Fr. Yusuf Qushaqji, ed.), 3 vol. (Aleppo: Imprimerie Ihsan, 1987-1992).

births, deaths and marriages of the members of his Assyrian Catholic community and the elite of Aleppo. He also meticulously records, daily, the names of each student who attended his school, whose numbers fluctuated between thirty-nine and seventy. His work paints a vivid, accurate picture of the community during that period. Families such as the Ghantuz Cubbe and Balit enliven his entries. Apart from tracking life events in his community, Bakhkhash's journal pinpoints larger societal changes revealed by the material novelties that marked the climbing status of their owners; one example was the very fashionable introduction of "hot chocolate," to be had only in the Ghantuz Cubbe household.⁸⁶

Two other contemporary works throw light on events and commerce in Syria. *The Modern Syrians or Native Society in Damascus, Aleppo and the Mountains of the Druses from Notes Made in Those Parts During the Years 1841-2-3*, Andrew Archibald Paton's log of his travels to Egypt and Syria, extensively describes European society and the state of commerce in Aleppo. In the more concise and in-depth official parliamentary paper, *Report on the Commercial Statistics of Syria* (1840), John Bowring finely details commercial and non-commercial activities in Ottoman Syria, giving us a window-seat on the period.

Secondary Sources: Historiography

The story of Christian merchant minorities in Aleppo is intricately bound with the history of European trading nations and other merchant networks in the Empire, such as those of the Julfan Armenians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Sebouh Aslanian's *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of*

86. The Ghantuz Cubbes had their own shipping company and an extensive family network throughout the Mediterranean and Europe.

Armenian Merchants from New Julfa brings to life the trans-imperial and cosmopolitan nature of Armenian merchant connections.⁸⁷ He traces the settlement of New Julfan merchants in far-flung places like London, Manila, and Acapulco, as well as in imperial cities such as Aleppo.

Aslanian's book analyzes and describes the notion of "trade networks" and conceptually lays out the paradigmatic framework for studying trade diasporas. His book has contributed greatly to the understanding of how commerce affected mobility and how early modern merchants could set up powerful trade networks that functioned on trust; it has shaped and deeply influenced this work on the family networks in Aleppo.

Authors such as Timothy Brook and Joseph Fletcher have highlighted the incidence of increased mobility and connectivity during the early modern period.⁸⁸ Motivations for these migrations ranged from the desire to escape religious persecution, to the forced transport of millions of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic to North American cotton and other plantations, to the expulsion of thousands of Jews and Muslims from the Iberian Peninsula. Not all migrations, however, were involuntary. Many people sought a better life and, more commonly, commercial success. The family trade networks that arose in Aleppo in the early modern period fit into this category. Roche emphasizes that the increased range and speed of travel reduced the costs of shipping and led to an era of mobility in which "news and merchandise flowed more rapidly and cheaply than ever before, as did travelers of every stripe."⁸⁹

87. Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean*.

88. Brook, *Vermeer's Hat*, 19; Jerry Bentley, *The Task of World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), Introduction; Joseph Fletcher, "Integrative History: Parallels and Interconnections in the Early Modern Period, 1500-1800," in *Studies on Chinese and Islamic Inner Asia*, ed. Beatrice Forbes Manz (Aldershot: Variorum, 1995), 2.

89. Daniel Roche, *France in the Enlightenment*, tr. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MS: Harvard University Press, 1998), 55.

Sanjay Subrahmanyam's article, "Of Imarat and Tijarat: Asian Merchants and State Power in the Western Indian Ocean, 1400-1750," addresses the interconnection of commerce and political power. Subrahmanyam examines many merchant networks, including those of the Gujaratis and the Baniyas, and concentrates on Armenian merchants in the Ottoman Empire and New Julfans in the Safavid Empire. His research shows the strong relationship between the commercial networks and state power, and introduces the concept of "portfolio capitalists." Regarding the Christian Armenian merchants in the Ottoman Empire, he asks why the Armenians (and Christians) who had invested so heavily in tax farming were unable to use those resources to ameliorate their situation.⁹⁰ This dissertation offers a partial answer to that question.⁹¹

This study supplements another growing body of literature on Levantine merchants and the rise of an elite commercial middle class in Aleppo, Izmir, Istanbul, and Chios. Scholarly discourse on the Levantines has traditionally focused on cities and changes taking place in the Empire as a whole, while retaining the persistent paradigms. The work of Masters, one of the most influential and prolific historians of Aleppo, offers a refreshing, in-depth look at the metropolis and its dwellers. *The Ottoman City Between East and West* examines not only the transformations in the city over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but also the related global political, social and commercial evolution during the same period. He briefly examines the growth of the Aleppine Christian communities and ascribes their success to the expansion of European power and trade

90. *Tax farming* was the farming out of public revenue. The state sold taxation rights to the highest bidder, who would collect the taxes and pay the state in fixed installments, keeping part of the revenue for himself. Subrahmanyam refers to the wealth accumulated from this practice.

91. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Of Imarat and Tijarat: Asian Merchants and State Power in the Western Indian Ocean, 1400 to 1750," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37, no. 4 (October 1995): 773.

interests.⁹² In *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World*, he explores the developing identities of Christians, Jews, and Armenians resident in the Empire for some 400 years, and attempts to trace the political and religious rifts still at work in the modern Middle East.⁹³ His *Origins of Economic Dominance in the Middle East* includes an interesting if general, section on the European communities in eighteenth-century Aleppo.⁹⁴ Masters's most pertinent article on the current subject, "The Sultan's Entrepreneurs: The *Avrupa Tuccari* and the *Hayriye Tuccaris* in Syria," documents the ascent of those merchants.

Yet Masters frames their rise within the traditional historiographic paradigm of a strictly state-regulated economic life, and identifies the nineteenth century as the period when such state intervention occurred. According to him, these efforts were futile. Daniel Goffman touches on similar issues by explaining how Christian minority middlemen could carve out a dominant presence in the Ottoman economy. According to Goffman, they did so by establishing trading diasporas and refusing to deal directly with Muslim traders, especially since Muslim traders were prohibited from settling in Europe.⁹⁵ Other historians such as Abraham Marcus, J. C. David, and Andre Raymond address social distinctions between the different minorities, seen specifically in the elegant housing of privileged Christians.⁹⁶ Walter Zenner focuses on competition between the minorities

92. Bruce Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance*, 10.

93. Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

94. Masters, "The Sultan's Entrepreneurs."

95. Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 90-91.

96. Abraham Marcus, *Eve of Modernity*; J. C. David, *Alep* (Paris: Flammarion, 2002).

from a sociological perspective in "Middlemen Minorities in the Syrian Mosaic: Trade, Conflict, and Image Management."⁹⁷

Other contributors to the field include Daniel Heyberger, Antoine Abdounour, Charles Issawi, and Yaron Harel, who have written about Christian and Jewish merchant networks and the influence of European trade on the Christian merchant middlemen community. Still, each of these scholars analyzes the advance of minority merchants within the conventional historiographical model of the Empire's state-centered, state-controlled, and retrograde economy—an interpretation that current studies refute.

Timur Kuran was one of the first historians to introduce a novel approach to Ottoman policies towards their merchants, claiming that the egalitarian aspect of Islamic inheritance law, as well as its restrictions on creating corporate partnerships, stopped the merchants from expanding into larger networks. This might be partially true, but merchants in the Empire had recourse to different legal systems that would have sidestepped this problem. Zarinabaf has shown that Mediterranean networks and mercantile arrangements, such as the *mudaraba* agreements between local merchants and Europeans, were more resilient and reliable than previously thought.⁹⁸

Said Salih Kaymakci's "The Sultan's Entrepreneurs, the Entrepreneurs' Sultan: Beratli Avrupa Tuccari and Institutional Change in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire (1835-1868)" examines the constitutional changes that took place as the Porte responded to merchants' demands. According to Kaymakci, Ottoman merchants involved in domestic commerce displayed great interest in acquiring a bigger share of the booming

97. Walter Zenner, "Middlemen Minorities in the Syrian Mosaic: Trade, Conflict, and Image Management," *Sociological Perspectives* 30, no. 4 (October 1987).

98. Fariba Zarinabaf, "Ottoman-European Commercial Encounters in Early Modern Galata?" (paper, Western Ottomanists' Workshop, University of California, Davis, CA, January-February 2015), 1-28.

international trade. To achieve that goal, they turned to the authorities, who actively embraced their demands and instituted two innovative structures. The *Avrupa Tuccari* program, closely followed by the *Hayriye Tuccari* program, allowed non-*protégé* merchants (those not under European protections)—non-Muslims, then Muslims as well—to compete with the *protégés* commercially and thereby to enrich the Empire. Kaymakci documents the institutional modifications resulting from these programs, and shows that not only was the Ottoman state willing to “set a regulatory framework” providing security for its merchants, it also let the merchants themselves run commercial courts, and thus fostered a novel level of state-merchant economic cooperation.⁹⁹

Mehmet Genç and Zarinabaf have also championed revisionist stands which concur with current research findings. Zarinabaf’s article, “Ottoman-European Commercial Encounters in Early Modern Galata,” concentrates mainly on Istanbul to demonstrate the Porte’s policies and interventions on behalf of its own traders.¹⁰⁰ In “The Protégé System and Beratli Merchants in the Ottoman Empire: The Price of Legal Institutions,” Cihan Artunç similarly examines the role of the state in aiding the merchants, but does so only through the lens of *berats* and other legal institutions.¹⁰¹

Mafalda Ade’s *Picknick mit den Paschas: Aleppo und die levantinische Handelsfirma Fratelli Poche (1835-1880)* uses the private archives mentioned above to evaluate the juridical consequences of the *Tanzimat* reforms and their effect on the European community in Aleppo. Ade’s book contributes greatly to new Ottomanist

99. Said Salih Kaymakci, "The Sultan’s Entrepreneurs, the Entrepreneurs’ Sultan: Beratli Avrupa Tuccari and Institutional Change in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire (1835-1868)," (master’s thesis, Bogaziçi University, 2013), 209.

100. Zarinabaf, “Ottoman-European Commercial Encounters,” 1-28.

101. Cihan Artunç, “The Protégé System and Beratli Merchants in the Ottoman Empire,” *Journal of Economic History* 75, no. 3 (September 2015): 720-748.

thinking, but views the changes mainly through the prism of the Poche firm and its litigation. This dissertation adds to this body of work by showing that not only did the Ottoman authorities actively intervene in the marketplace to ensure the success of their merchants but that they also did so well before the nineteenth century, commonly accepted as the start of such institutional changes. The fabulously profitable Ghantuz Cubbe family shipping firm and network, already mature and operational squarely within the eighteenth century, bear witness to the need to revise the traditional view of Ottoman economic thinking and policy.

Most of the few works available on the Levant Company examine commercial aspects of its operations. Two foundational pieces, Mordecai Epstein's 1908 *Early History of the Levant Company* and Alfred Wood's 1935 *History of the Levant Company*, present straightforward economic histories based on correspondence between its London headquarters and its Aleppine "factory," contemporary travelers' accounts, and government records. Though accurate, the studies assume outdated theories about the Ottoman Empire and its relationship to the Europeans, as well as Eurocentric prejudices. Ralph Davis's seminal *Aleppo and Devonshire Square* updates the scholarship by culling private correspondence between the merchants and the Levant Company factors—specifically, surviving documents from the Radcliffe family—and thereby gives a more nuanced and intimate picture. But his book focuses on the Persian silk trade and largely ignores the company's wider dealings.¹⁰²

One useful early article helps fill in the field. Gwilym Ambroses's "English traders at Aleppo, 1658-1756," written a few years before Wood's publication, concerns

102. Wood, *History of the Levant Company*, 244; Ralph Davis, *Aleppo and Devonshire Square: English Traders in the Levant in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1999), 3.

European agents' difficulties dealing with Aleppine Jewish and Armenian brokers, haggling in the *souks*, and transporting goods by caravan from the port of Iskenderun to Aleppo via the perilous Beylan Pass. Although strictly factual, with little analysis, Ambroses's work is astute and well written.¹⁰³

More recently, Christine Laidlaw investigated diplomatic and ancillary members of the Levant Company. She notes her background in the British Diplomatic Service as goading her interest to “look beyond the company’s commercial achievements to provide some insight into the social structure of its factories in the Levant.”¹⁰⁴ Laidlaw focuses on the ambassadors, consuls, chaplains, physicians and their families who were involved with the company yet escaped the direct gaze of its business-focused directors. Her book provides wide-ranging insight into the social life in the company's work areas. But it falls short on integrating its commercial aspects. James Mathers's *The Pashas: Traders and Travellers in the Islamic World* discusses company merchants’ interactions with the Ottomans. His book peeks into the period prior to the British Raj—before colonial aggression turned Englishmen's desire to understand and collaborate with their hosts, local merchants, and go-betweens into a demeanor of superiority. Mathers concentrates on the merchants themselves and describes English-local social relations well.¹⁰⁵

One of the latest works on the Levant Company, Jonathan Couch's “Traders and New Ideas About the East: The British Levant Company and the Discourse on the

103. Gwylim Ambrose, “English Traders at Aleppo” *Economic History Review* 2, no. 3 (1931): 246-267.

104. Christine Laidlaw, *The British in the Levant: Trade and Perceptions in the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2010), xiii.

105. James Mathers, *Pashas*, 80.

Ottoman Empire, 1581-1774,"¹⁰⁶ contends that the English could transcend inculcated prejudices through personal contact with locals. He further posits that, as most of the enterprise's members came from England's social elite, they could spread this new understanding among their countrymen, and thus function as cross-cultural agents improving Westerners' image of the "Turks."¹⁰⁷ Nonetheless, he concedes, some biases proved very stubborn.

The current work draws upon the best of these secondary sources, but relies more on seldom-consulted primary materials documenting the history and fortunes of minority merchant families in the Empire. Especially regarding the transformation of the Levantine community into an elite commercial class, and the Ottoman state's active, early, and effective support of that development, it is a reorientation long overdue.

Summary

Traditional Ottoman historiography has depicted the Porte's economic policies as rigidly reactive, intrusive yet ineffectual, and thus virtually courting European commercial hegemony. The Empire's long practice of granting capitulations to European trading partners, and the notable success of its minority traders, have been counted as proofs of its passivity and lack of business sophistication.

However, primary-source evidence of Levantine merchant families' domestic and international networks in the early modern Empire belies the classic paradigm. Close study of documents touching on the Levantine community's expanding powers and escalating fortunes reveal that these were achieved not despite the state's efforts, nor due

106. Jonathan Couch, "Traders and New Ideas About the East: The British Levant Company and the Discourse on the Ottoman Empire, 1581-1774," (master's thesis, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, 2013), 3.

107. Couch, "Levant Traders," 3-11; Maurits Van den Boogert, *Aleppo Observed*, 35.

solely to European protection, but largely because of the Ottomans' conscious and conscientious support of its own traders, whether minority or Muslim. In addition, archival sources demonstrate that the social and financial rise of the Levantine traders occurred well before the nineteenth century to which most Ottomanists trace the Empire's tardy response to their vanishing mastery of the market. Historians sensitive to these facts must conclude that informal Imperial decisions predating the *Tanzimat* reforms, and the *Avruppa Tuccari* and *Hayriye Tuccari* programs giving minority, then Muslim, traders the same privileges granted to European merchants, proved highly effectual. That is, archival material suggests the need to revise thoroughly many accepted assumptions of Ottomanist historiography.

CHAPTER TWO

FROM MINORITIES TO MASTERS: THE RISE OF NON-MUSLIM MERCHANTS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The sons of Christians in any tolerable circumstances are taught to read and write the Arabic, and usually follow the profession of the father, in some branch of trade: or they serve in quality as scrivans, agents to Turkish merchants. They are more accustomed to travel with the caravans than the Aleppen Turks, but few in proportion leave their town.¹

Alexander Russell, *The Natural History of Aleppo*

Thus does the physician to the Levant Company explain the novel predominance of non-Muslim merchants in eighteenth-century Aleppine trade. In his *Natural History of Aleppo*, Alexander Russell also notes the concomitant decline in the number of European merchants in Aleppo, finding in 1753 only eight English merchant houses still active in the city. Indeed, by 1772 that tally had shrunk to four.² In 1783, the Levant Company suspended its consul position; and in 1791 it closed its Aleppo branch.³ Although John Barker was appointed to the Aleppine post as pro consul in 1799, he apparently remained as the sole Englishman in the city until he, too, was relieved of his duties there in 1825.⁴

1. Alexander Russell and Patrick Russell, *The Natural History of Aleppo Containing a Description of the City, and the Principal Natural Productions in Its Neighbourhood: Together with an Account of the Climate, Inhabitants, and Diseases, Particularly of the Plague*. 2 vols. (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1794), 2:56.

2. Russell and Russell, *Natural History of Aleppo*, 2:3-5.

3. Russell and Russell, *Natural History of Aleppo*, 2:162-163.

4. Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters. *The Ottoman City Between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir and Istanbul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 65; Mafalda Ade, *Picknick Mit Den Paschas: Aleppo und die Levantinische Handelsfirma Fratelli Poche (1853-1880)* (Beirut: Ergon Verlag Wurzburg, 2013). "In the autumn of 1825 Mr. Barker heard indirectly, that his post of Consul-General for the Levant Company at Aleppo had been suppressed, and that he had been appointed by the King to succeed Mr. Peter Lee as British Consul at Alexandria in Egypt." Edward Barker, *Syria and Egypt Under the Last Five Sultans. Being the Experience, During Fifty Years, of Mr. Consul-General Barker*. 2 vols. (Princeton: Arno Press, 1973), 2:1.

The French, who had briefly supplanted the English as the dominant European community, soon decreased their footprint as well, reducing the number of their merchant houses from nine in 1753 to six or seven by 1772.⁵

The weakening presence of European merchants stemmed largely from the sharp dip in Persian silk production and from Smyrna's overtaking Aleppo as the destination of the silk trade. The decrease in Persian Silk was one of the first reasons Consul Kinloch listed in his July 1765 letter to Lord Halifax explaining the decline of British trade in Aleppo:

The Causes of this decrease are various, but chiefly to be attributed to the depopulation of Persia from whence very considerable quantities of Sherbast, Ardassets and other sorts of silks were brought to this market ... but none of this Persia Silk has been seen in Aleppo since the year 1750⁶

Of course, commerce continued, but it shifted to Christian and Jewish merchants who had advanced economically and socially while most native Muslim traders lagged behind.⁷ These linked changes in the external and internal fortunes of the Empire—fading European and intensifying minority commercial power—played out in port cities and business centers like Istanbul, Aleppo and Izmir. There, multi-lingual minority traders sharpened their skills, expanded their connections, and profited as *dragomans* (interpreters) and consular middlemen for European entrepreneurs and, as such, were awarded (that is, could buy) *berats* (patents) giving them the same privileges as their European merchant employers.

5. Russell and Russell, *Natural History of Aleppo*, 2:3-5.

6. The National Archives TNA SP_110/29 f. 233, Letter from Consul Kinloch to Lord Halifax, Aleppo, July 30, 1765.

7. For details see Timur Kuran, "The Economic Ascent of Middle East's Religious Minorities: The Role of Islamic Legal Pluralism," *Journal of Legal Studies* 33, no. 2 (June 2004): 1-2; Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 90-91; and Bruce Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East: Mercantilism and the Islamic Economy in Aleppo, 1600-1750* (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 60-62.

Naturally, this boon lifted their status. And equally naturally, European traders and their minority *protégés* grossly abused the system.⁸ Yet in fact, only a finite number of non-Muslim traders could participate in it, so, again naturally, those left out complained. But it may surprise readers of standard Ottomanist scholarship to learn that these sidelined minority merchants quickly achieved their demands, as the Porte stepped in with the *Avrupa Tuccari* program putting them on a par with privileged *protégés*. Masters informs us that enrollees in the new Imperial program were wealthier merchants and money-lenders who could afford its steep entrance fees.⁹ Still, as a result of the direct mediation of the Ottoman state, non-Muslim merchants freshly equipped with Imperial protection could and did establish lucrative businesses both in the Empire and in Europe—so much so that the Porte would soon agree to embrace Muslim traders with an equally bountiful program. And not long after initiating those commercial innovations, the Imperial authority launched the wide-ranging *Tanzimat* reforms, which not only centralized and modernized the realm’s legal and social institutions, but also explicitly included minorities in the benefits due Ottoman subjects.

8. Benjamin Thomas White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East: The Politics of Community in French Mandate Syria* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 2-5, 28, 29; Walter Zenner, *Minorities in the Middle: A Cross-cultural Analysis* (Albany: State University of New York, 1991); Molly Greene, *Minorities in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Markus Weiner Publishers, 2005). White and other historians contend the use of the term *minorities* for religious or ethnic groups within the Ottoman Empire, viewing the category as a product of nation-states and as rarely used prior to 1914. White considers it “anachronistic to understand the communitarian politics ... in terms of minorities and majorities” since “doing so implies the existence of a ... nation-state with a coherent Majority.” Further, he finds the essential precondition for the emergence of minorities to be the existence of a concept of representative government, and that it is only when “the concept of representativity is widened to embrace the entire population... that the term ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ start to apply to the whole population,” which occurred in the Ottoman Empire, as elsewhere, in the nineteenth century. The terms *millets* (non-Muslim religious communities) or *ta`ifa* (group) also came into use by Ottoman authorities during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to describe “minorities.” It is in this sense, and not in a political one, that this dissertation employs “minority” to describe the merchant societies.

9. Bruce Masters, “The Sultan’s Entrepreneurs: The *Avrupa Tuccaris* and the *Hayriye Tuccaris* in Syria,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24, no. 4 (November 1992): 580-597, 583.

However, even prior to the establishment of the twin commercial programs, a few merchants had already founded flourishing businesses—an accomplishment which could have occurred only with the approval and assistance of the authorities. This chapter will concentrate on the Levantine Ghantuz Cubbe and Balit families as representatives of that group. It will re-examine the common misconception of a state-dominant Ottoman Empire that discouraged competition, and will provide a more accurate picture by showcasing the many ways Porte authorities acted to enhance domestic and international trade. It will do so by first reviewing traditional Ottoman historiography and arguing against the premise of a failed state that ignored its own merchants, and by highlighting its policy interventions to advance their interests and those of the Empire in general. It will then briefly introduce the families, and follow with a critical look at their letters. This examination will present the families' activities and demonstrate why, and to what degree, the Ottoman powers supported their burgeoning shipping and commercial company operating between the Empire and Europe. In fine, the chapter will show that concessions were not granted the families altruistically, but with the conscious purpose of fostering the Porte's international trade.

This chapter will also detail how early and extensively this familial commercial network was active, how local circumstances shaped their network, and how such networks in turn influenced small-scale local economies as well as the larger Imperial one. A close analysis of the financial and social content of their letters will establish these points. Although the letters do not refer to direct or indirect governmental intervention on their behalf, they provide circumstantial evidence of such favor, since their shipping

company burgeoned without their being *protégés* of any European nation.¹⁰ The chapter will discuss the abuse of the foreigners' protection by the excessive sale of *berats* to local merchants, and will trace how resentment of that abuse inspired the authorities to create the *Avruppa Tuccari* and *Hayriye Tuccari* programs as a way of leveling the playing field for its own merchants. The latter part of the chapter will concentrate on the activities of the Cubbes as part of a mercantile network and its structuring to achieve familial economic goals. While Chapter Three analyzes the trade network within a detailed theoretical frame, this chapter presents a vivid example of its working as seen through the Cubbe letters.

Economic Analysis of Ghantuz Cubbe Letters

This ancient Maronite family whose roots reach back to the Crusades were in fact originally known as the *Castrum Cubbae* after a Crusader castle in present-day Lebanon.¹¹ They seem to have been involved in commerce during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, though little documentation exists from that era. The family settled in Aleppo during the sixteenth century and, four generations later, as per custom, added the name of Ghantuz, ascribed to a prominent family member.¹² By the mid-seventeenth century their business had blossomed into a highly lucrative shipping enterprise carrying goods not only for themselves but also for European nations, and further expanded with

10. According to the family history, Antoine Cubbe was an honorary *dragoman* at the Porte before moving to Livorno: "*Le chef de cette branche avait été Antoine fils de Nehmé, lequel par un firman de 1759 était aussi dragoman honoraire du Grand Sultan de Turquie.*" Ghantuz Cubbe family history, given to me by George Antaki in Aleppo in July 2011.

11. The records of the Cubbe family are based on a personal family history as well as information emailed me by the current Marquis de Ghantuz Cubbe, currently living in Rome. It is impossible to verify these documents as the Aleppo archives have been unavailable since 2011. The same caveat is applicable to the Balit family, whose family history, a handwritten document, was given to me by a family member. However, the collection of letters is housed in the Venetian consular archives, and a copy exists in Tübingen University.

12. The name was attributed to Aghnatio, born in Aleppo around 1620 and ordained a priest for its Maronite community by Patriarch Etienne El-Douaihi in 1687. Personal archives, information from George Antaki, a relative of the Cubbe family, sent by email July 2011.

the eighteenth-century spike in trade between Europe and the Empire, valued at some 10 million *livres tournois* annually.¹³

The fortunes of the Ghantuz Cubbes demonstrate that minority merchants might be completely integrated into the fabric of Ottoman society and Aleppine commercial life—fabulously wealthy, even—without formal European protection. Unlike most Levantine families, the Ghantuz Cubbes did not take on the role of consuls or become European *protégés*. Instead, they relied on their hybridity to foster relations not just with local authorities and the sultan, but with the Grand Duke of Tuscany as well.¹⁴ Their interactions with Tuscany, in fact, rewarded them richly with the title of Marquis de Ghantuz Cubbe and enlistment in the Venetian *Golden Book of Nobility*. However, they resembled at least a small number of minority merchants by enrolling in the Imperial *Avrupa Tuccari* program once it was launched. They were joined in this program (as well as in their network) by their relatives, the Armenian Balit family.

Originally from Lyons, Baron Balit, the first of the family to appear in Aleppine *qadi* (judge) court records in 1595, registered as having come on a pilgrimage to its churches, but may have been involved in the textile trade.¹⁵ The Balit family may have been among the first New Julfans to have emigrated via Lyons to Aleppo.¹⁶ Whether

13. Panzac, “International and Domestic Maritime Trade,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24, no. 2 (May 1992), 189-206. The *livre tournois* served as a currency and a unit of account throughout France from the Middle Ages to the early modern period. The *livre tournois* and the currency system based on it became a standard monetary and trading unit used as the baseline for calculating different coinages. It was the forerunner of many different French currencies, such as the *franc* and the *ecu*, and continued as an accounting unit even after the coins themselves were no longer in use.

14 One member of the Ghantuz Cubbe family member came to serve as Archbishop of Livorno and traveled between that city to Aleppo to maintain his ties and influence there, thus functioning as a cultural ambassador between the Ottoman Empire and the Grand Duchy of Tuscany.

15. Balit family private archives, folio no. 2/24. This handwritten document of 24 pages in Arabic was given to me in Aleppo by a member of the family in July 2011.

16. By the end of the seventeenth century, Armenian Julfan merchants were making their way to the city. Avetis Sanjian, *Armenian Communities in Syria Under Ottoman Dominion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 5-14. As noted, the Julfans formed an important part of the Aleppine mercantile

“Baron” Balit’s name derived from the Armenian word for “mister” or denoted an elevated European title remains unknown, but Sharia court records inscribe a Sarkis, son of Daniel, son of Baron Balit.¹⁷

Before marrying into the Ghantuz Cubbes and joining their shipping company, the Balits followed the same path as their future in-laws by settling a branch of the family and the business abroad and running the enterprise through both the European and Ottoman offices. It attests to the loyalty they felt to the realm that, although one branch of the Balits established itself in their native Lyons, France, they maintained their status as *reaya* of the sultan.¹⁸

During the eighteenth century, like other Aleppine merchant families, the Balits rose to financial and social prominence. Their economic import and commensurate status won them the title of *Khawaja*, a Persian honorific applied first to Julfan Armenians and later to successful local Christian and Jewish merchants.¹⁹ Unfortunately, apart from family genealogical documents and histories, no archival records pertaining to their company survive, so it is impossible to gauge perfectly the volume or longevity of the business.²⁰ But references to Balit family members in other documents describe them as merchants and *dragomans*, and Masters identifies them as the only family remaining in

community, trading mostly in silks from Iran, to such an extent that the English Levant Company referred to all Iranian silk merchants as “Chelfalines.” In fact, two brothers, Khoja Petik and Khoja Panos, held a monopoly on silk trading in Aleppo; it did not hurt that Khoja Petik had ties to the palace, was customs director for all Syria, and supervised *khans*, baths and other institutions in Aleppo. Sanjian, *Armenian Communities*, 49. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, the Julfan Armenians were replaced by the new wave of Anatolian Armenians from Akin and Arapkir.

17. Information on the Balit family comes from a 24-page document prepared by a descendant in Beirut for their own use, and was given to me by one of the last members of this branch in Aleppo in 2011. The war prevented my returning to the municipal archives to verify it. However, some documents in it had been photocopied; see the addenda for those pages.

18. Balit family private archives, p. 3/24. In the Ottoman Empire, simply paying a *badal* (fine) excused non-Muslims from army service.

19. Masters, *Ottoman City*, 60; Masters, *Origins of Western Economic Dominance*. 89.

20. The genealogical documents are part of the family history folios 16-24; see addenda for the relevant pages.

Aleppo in the twentieth century out of the nine Christian merchant families who had dominated its commerce in the late eighteenth century.²¹ In fact, their involvement in shipping continued until this century, when a Marcel Balit became manager of the prestigious Catoni shipping line in Iskenderun.²²

Most significant, though, and again similar to the Ghantuz Cubbe, the Balits achieved success outside of the European *protégé* system by participating in the Imperial *Avrupa Tuccari* program.²³ Indeed, these two minority families could operate enterprises in the Empire and in Europe simultaneously while remaining loyal subjects (*reaya*) of the sultan, due to that commercial protection.

It is unclear exactly when the Cubbe family founded their shipping and commercial enterprise, but they were fully established and flourishing by the last decade of the eighteenth century. At that time Aleppo and the Ottoman Empire were undergoing a long transition to the modern era. Economically, despite the slump in the Iranian (and consequently, the European) silk trade, Aleppine commerce had not come to a standstill. European imports were slowly being taken over by local minority merchants, who had previously worked with the Europeans as *dragomans* or in other capacities. Muslim merchants kept mostly to trading within the Empire, thus giving the minorities the opportunity to trade through other Mediterranean ports as *mudaraba* (agents) for them.

21. Masters, "The Political Economy of Aleppo in an Age of Ottoman Reform," *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 53, no. 1/2, Empires and Emporia: The Orient in World Historical Space and Time (2010), 96.

22. Levantine Heritage Foundation, accessed on 15 August 2017, <http://Levantineheritage.com>

23. Masters, "The Sultan's Entrepreneurs: The *Avrupa Tuccaris* and the *Hayriye Tuccaris* in Syria," *International Journal East Studies* 24 (1992): 588.

The following micro-analysis of some of their commercial letters aims to demonstrate their importance to the Ottoman Empire, and to explain why and in what ways the authorities supported their advance.

One of the most obvious markers, and engines, of their importance was their ability to operate a shipping fleet between the Empire and Europe, as Ottoman subjects. During this period, mostly ships owned by Europeans, specifically the English, could sail to and dock in European ports. In addition, those same European vessels were plying the Ottoman ports as well. In a letter to his brother Antoine dated 1 January 1798, Youssef is very grateful that the *Raffaelle*, one of the brigantines owned by the family, made it safely with all the money (*dirhams*) aboard. He acknowledged the risk in sending cash from Cyprus to the Alexandretta port, but did it because it was a short journey. The ship had previously stopped off at Acre (Akka) and Cyprus before docking in Alexandretta. The long letter details the goods on the ship, its stops in Constantinople, and the captain sailing it, and concludes with other planned journeys to Cyprus and Alexandretta to carry more money.²⁴ These letters, written during a slump in European commerce, indicate the firm's favor with the Porte. The profits the company reaped and the possibility it offered of transporting specie were great benefits for the Empire. Safely transferring monies, jewels, and promissory notes was integral to its economy, and many Cubbe letters amply demonstrate their contribution:

كما ترى عددها بالقائمة داخل الصرة مبلغ الالف (الف) وثمانماية واثنى عشر غرش وثلاثة عشر فضة

24. Ghantuz Cubbe private letters, letter no 87, dated January 1 798, from Youssef Cubbe to his brother Antoine in Livorno.

“As you see, the amount on the list in the packet is one thousand eight hundred and twelve [pieces of] silver.”²⁵

Elsewhere Youssef informs his nephews about the receipt of a packet with 4500 silver pieces from Lattakia. Not only silver and *dirhams*, but also *riyals* and Turkish *ghurush* were transported, as seen in a letter sent by Youssef on 18 August 1797, informing Youssef Homsî that he is sending nine packets worth 15,559 and one quarter *ghurush* with Captain Lazarovic.²⁶ Securely delivering such princely sums was a rare and crucial power. Not just money, but food as well, sustained the Porte. Despite the many other Ottoman ships plying Ottoman waters, the Cubbes’ role in provisioning the capital uniquely served the Empire. In a letter written on 29 September 1798, Youssef Cubbe reports keeping their promise to carry one thousand [unclear] of grain to the Pacha of Beylan.²⁷ Fariba Zarinabaf tells us that the Porte had created its own *kapan* merchants to supply the capital, but it stands to reason that other parts of the Empire also needed provisioning. Their Cubbe ships constantly docked at different Ottoman ports. More significant, they had the advantage of being able to sail the four brigantines they owned outright under the Ottoman flag within the Empire and under the Tuscan flag in European seas—not a possibility for other local merchants. Their letters refer incessantly to the ships they leased and the ones they owned, including the *Madam Ghazzale*, one of their brigantines named after their mother (née Ghazzale) and the *Raffaele*.

الى ليكورنو مع مركب غزالة الخواجة ترنعمه الله كوبا ،
or حملنا في مركب ماضام غزالة في سكندرونة ثلاثة عشر كيس عقص
as well as

25. FM / A / L / X 6002 Le Lettera: Lettera A ca. 1797-1799. Letters no 8 from Youssef to Anton Prince dated 2 November 1797.

26. FM / A / L / X 6002 Le Lettera: Lettera A ca. 1797-1799. Letters no. 53 (p.31)

27. Ghantuz Cubbe private letters, letter no 29, dated 29 September 1798, from Youssef Cubbe. The letter is not addressed to anyone in particular, and its first line is illegible.

وصل باسمنا مركب في ١٩ تموز من اخينا الخواجة انطون .
و هو عرفكم بمكتوب كيف انه ما قدر يرسله مع مركبكم. and

We shipped to *Khawaja* [an honorific usually accorded to wealthy merchants] Na'amat Allah Cubbe in Livorno on the 'Ghazzale,' or "We loaded the ship 'Madame Ghazzale' in Iskenderun," or, in another letter, "," as well as "The ship in our name arrived on 19 July from our brother *Khawaja* Anton, and he sent you a letter informing you why he was not able to send the [goods] with your ship."²⁸

Youssef Cubbe carefully identified every vessel shipped by its name, provenance, or captain, which explains the constant references to Captains Bartholomew Lazarovic, Zoric, or Tommaso as well as to the "Venetian ship" or "the ship from Cyprus."²⁹ The ships used during the last decade of the eighteenth century were generally brigantines or polaccas. In a letter dated 29 May 1797, Youssef writes that he had sent the accounts on the "*polacca nostra*, A di Gracia, with Captain Michli Raguzio."³⁰

Starting from the first letter in the collection, the prosperity of the company is evident. Formulaic greetings to the recipient, here older brother Antoine, give way to delineation of various deliveries and purchases, two of which occur in the first paragraph:

و صار معلومنا بارسالكم صرر ضراهم وثلاثة براميل قرمز وباقي أغراض إلى اسكندرونة والآن في ٨
نيسان عملنا بازار الف ثوب خام عزيبي.

"We were informed that you sent the [packets] of dirhams [money] and three barrels of cochineal and other goods."³¹

28. Tübingen University archives FM / A / L / X 6002 Le Lettera: Lettera A ca. 1797-1799. Letters nos. 22, 29, 45, 71 (p. 44).

29. Tübingen University archives FM / A / L / X 6002 Le Lettera: Lettera A ca. 1797-1799. Letters nos. 14, 26, 27, 30.

30. Tübingen University archives FM / A / L / X 6002 Le Lettera: Lettera A ca. 1797-1799. Letter no. 19, from Youssef to the Risty brothers, dated 29 May 1797.

31. FM / A / L / X 6002 Le Lettera: Lettera A ca. 1797-1799.

Next, pages of accounts reflect their variety and volume of commodities: the list of goods includes a chest containing 500 diamonds, of which half were yellow and the other half white, 3 barrels of cochineal, 8 boxes of paper, silver, agate, gold-laced silk, regular silk, rope, cotton thread, brass, ostrich feathers, ash and bolts of cotton and other textiles. Further letters document the shipping of raw cotton and other kinds of textiles, such as Aintab, Aleppo, or plain, along with pearls and costly merchandise.³² The wide range of everyday as well as world-class luxury goods, the number of fully loaded ships, and the different ports they used indicate both their prosperity and their favor with Ottoman authorities. This is understandable in the context of their utility to the Aleppine and Imperial economies, matched by only the Jewish Picciotto family, who grew affluent enough to absorb being unremunerated honorary consuls under the protection of different foreign nations. The Porte recognized the Cubbes' contribution to trade in Aleppo and the Empire, and supported their commercial endeavors.

Revising Ottoman Historiography

Ottomanists such as Halil Inalcik, Mehmet Genç and Timur Kuran have until lately viewed the Empire as declining steadily from the sixteenth century onwards. They especially caricatured the state's economic role as heavy-handed and monolithic, hamstringing merchants and manufacturers and dooming any competition with the vibrant European mercantilist market. Recent scholarship, though, has disproved these theories and has demonstrated that both Ottoman state structure and society met challenges in the early modern era with pragmatic, flexible and proactive adaptations.³³

32. Ghantuz Cubbe private letters, letters no. 87 and 88, dated 21 March 1797 and 21 December 1797. Other letters include nos. 67, 68, and 97.

33. For more on decline and adaptability see Jane Hathaway, *The Arab Lands Under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800* (England: Harlow, New York: Pearson Longman, 2008), 7; Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial*

Researchers such as Donald Quataert and Suraiya Faroqhi have shown that the state was neither oblivious, paralyzed, nor powerless in its dealings with the evolving commercial world.³⁴ Furthermore, the Ottoman economy was part of the Mediterranean maritime trade network, whose merchants faced the same challenges (including piracy) as did other Western traders.

Despite the fact that the Ottoman state would eventually become largely reliant on Western shipping, it was more immediately concerned with the safety of its particular shipping routes and struggled constantly against corsairs in an effort to facilitate rather than to restrict trade. Piracy plagued and preoccupied all eighteenth-century traders.

Venetian Consul Gerolamo Brigadi reported to the Cinque Savi:

Dal vice console di Cipro verrà in tempo debito rassegnato all EE.VV. la notizia della presa fatta le 15 cadente in quelle rada, all vista e sotton canone del castello, per due corsair Tripolini della Veneta nave comandata dal Capitan Zuanne Vianello proveniente da St. Giovanni d'Acra.

I would have to, in due course, inform your excellencies of the news sent by the vice consul of Cyprus that on the 15th of this month, in that harbor (Cyprus), within sight and under the canons of the castle, the ship of Captain Zuanne Vianello, arriving from Acre, was captured by two corsairs from Tripoli.³⁵

Although Ottoman ships were forbidden entry into European ports, they actively plied the Mediterranean coasts, specifically between Istanbul-Smyrna and Alexandria, and continued to dominate trade with Karamania, which, according to Daniel Panzac,

Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 154-155; Şevket Pamuk, "Institutional Change and Longevity of the Ottoman Empire, 1500-1800," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35, no. 2 (Autumn 2004): 225-247, 228; Douglas A. Howard, "Ottoman Historiography and the Literature of Decline of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Journal of Asian History* 22, no. 1 (1988): 52-77, 76-77; Şevket Pamuk "Changes in Factor Markets in the Ottoman Empire, 1500-1800," *Continuity and Change* 24, no. 1 (2009): 3-4.

34. Donald Quataert, "Manufacturing," in Suraiya Faroqhi, *Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, Vol. 2, 1600-1914, 695, 927.

35. A.S.VE V. Savi all Mercanzie, Busta 603, Dispacci dei Console, Dettaglio del Commercio di Aleppo, Da Consoli Brigadi, 1760. Letter from consul Gerolamo Brigadi to the Cinque Savi in Venice dated 29 September 1760.

occupied 52 percent of the ships in Alexandria and Crete.³⁶ However, despite the restrictions on Ottoman maritime navigation, and the concessions given to the European nations to transport merchandise to and from the Empire, the Ottomans gave concessions to their own merchants as well to participate in the transport of goods. By the latter half of the eighteenth century (thus prior to the *Avrupa Tuccari* program and the *Tanzimat* period) the Ghantuz Cubbes already had a thriving shipping company at work not only in Imperial ports but also in European ones.

The classic depiction of the Empire's state-strangled economic life rests on the assumption of three supposed core Imperial principles—provisionalism, fiscalism, and traditionalism. Economic historians such as Mehmet Genç and Halil Inalcik vigorously propounded these purported doctrines and contrasted them with the fresh trade winds of mercantilism sweeping Europe. According to Genç, provisioning the army, the palace, and the urban economy (particularly in the capital) was the top priority for Imperial authorities, who valued local merchants and long-distance trade only insofar as they contributed to this goal.³⁷ Thus they drew European merchants, who brought otherwise unavailable goods, with generous concessions and privileges which, eventually but inevitably, allowed the foreigners to dominate world trade. Indeed, by this argument, it stands to reason that imports were sought after while exports of basic goods were only reluctantly permitted once domestic needs were met, and entirely forbidden in times of need.

36. Daniel Panzac, "International and Domestic Maritime Trade," 189-206, 196.

37. Mehmet Genç, "Ottoman Industry in the Eighteenth Century: General Framework, Characteristics, and Main Trends," in *Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, 1500-1950*, Donald Quataert, ed. (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 62-63; Faroqhi, McGowan, Quataert, Pamuk, and Inalcik, 696-97; Zarinabaf, "Ottoman-European Commercial Encounters," 2-3; Sevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 11.

The second leg of classic Ottoman historiography, fiscalism, mischaracterizes the Porte's tax collection measures. Inalcik states that filling the treasury coffers with as much bullion as possible in order to maintain unprofitable ventures (such as the army and Empire-expanding) was accepted as the proper route to Imperial wealth. Mehmet Genç expands this idea by stating that fiscalism not only maximized treasury income but also helped ensure that it did not fall below levels already attained.³⁸

The third supposition, traditionalism, holds that the inflexible ideal of maintaining the time-honored social order, with the royal family firmly at the summit, dictated Imperial economic policies. As a result, the argument goes, the Empire studiously discouraged the rise of a new-fangled wealthy, educated merchant class. Historians Mehmet Genç and Timur Kuran have argued that the Ottoman economy was ruled by the principles of Islam mentioned above, which rendered it immutable and discouraged competition in the marketplace until the incorporation of the Empire into the world system.³⁹

State intervention in the economy, then, was pictured as a permanent feature of Ottoman fiscal policies. During the earlier Ottoman centuries, as in late-medieval European states, the government did in fact regulate markets and ensure the stable provision of goods by controlling price ceilings (*narh*) and requiring merchants to deliver necessary items at fixed prices.⁴⁰ Such controls stemmed from the belief that they benefitted both consumers and producers.⁴¹ However, over time, the Ottoman authorities moved towards selective interventionism, a fact that has escaped the notice of many

38. Genç, "Ottoman Industry," 60.

39. Genç, "Ottoman Industry," 60; Timur Kuran, *The Long Divergence. How Islamic Law Held Back the Middle East* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), 94.

40. Pamuk, "Institutional Change," 236.

41. Inalcik, *Economic and Social History*, 52.

historians. Pamuk aptly illustrates this point by examining the registers of three Istanbul courts for *narh* lists, and proves that they were prepared only during periods of instability.⁴² Furthermore, historians such as Suraiya Faroqhi and Donald Quataert have shown that Ottoman authorities did not dominate every corner of the Empire or aspect of its economy all the time. In fact, in the eighteenth century they protected the manufacturing industry in respect to raw materials, and concentrated on the production of ordinary commodities rather than of luxuries.⁴³

Classic Ottomanists have pinned the Empire's waning fortunes on its perceived strict command of the market and its discouragement of competition and profit-making, which rendered it unable to compete with the fierce European mercantilist and capitalist economy. Such policy principles and the pervasive interventions they required may better describe life immediately in the capital and during crises. But recent studies indicate that not all areas of the Empire were regulated to the same extent. According to Donald Quataert, state protocols for merchants and the ruling class were more strictly enforced in Istanbul than anywhere else, allowing peripheral trading ports greater leeway. Even in the capital itself, districts like the historic Genoese port of Galata enjoyed more autonomy than did others in recognition of its historic mercantile link.⁴⁴ Indeed, recent studies by Quataert and other historians have shown that European innovations, at times, had quite a positive effect on the Empire and that some Porte industries actually profited from the competition in international and local markets.⁴⁵

42. Pamuk, "Institutional Change," 237.

43. Genç, "Ottoman Industry," 67.

44. Zarinabaf, "Ottoman-European Commercial Encounters," 4.

45. Quataert, *Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, 888-889.

In addition, the expansion in trade and an increased demand for food and luxury goods weakened the hold of the Ottoman state over the economy, specifically after the advent of joint-stock companies such as the Levant Company and the VOC. One way to counteract the competition resulting from the expansion of trade was to invest in a capital-labor partnership (*mudaraba*), a crucial business tool for entrepreneurs whereby the principal party provided the capital, the other party carried out the trading, and both shared resulting profits following predetermined ratio.⁴⁶ According to Murat Çizakça, these partnerships generally remained short-term through much of the period,⁴⁷ though some were of longer duration. Fariba Zarinabaf shows that in certain cases local non-Muslim merchants even set up partnerships with members of the Levant Company, although most *mudaraba* partnerships were between Muslim merchants who provided the capital and non-Muslim merchants who actually conducted the trade.⁴⁸

Yet even researchers not focused on economics assume the inertia of Ottoman culture, and enlist it to explain the flourishing of its religious minorities. Legal historian Timur Kuran asserts that Ottoman legal pluralism accounts for the striking advance of minority merchants relative to the economic stagnation or even retreat of their Muslim counterparts.⁴⁹ According to Kuran, minorities benefitted not only from commercial opportunities given them by European powers but also from their freedom to conduct

46. The Islamic *mudaraba* law of partnerships dates from the medieval period, was widely used throughout the Middle East, and was incorporated by Italian merchants into different law compilations that spread to Europe, where it became known as *commenda*. According to Çizakça, the *commenda* was the principal business partnership flourishing in Europe and was believed to be an important factor in triggering its “commercial revolution.” Murat Çizakça, ed., *Islam and the Challenges of Western Capitalism* (Cheltenham, UK: Elgar Research Collection, 2014), 49.

47. Murat Çizakça, *Comparative Evolution of Business Partnerships: The Islamic World and Europe, with Specific References to Ottoman Archives* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 72-73.

48. Fariba Zarinabaf, “Ottoman Trade Policies and Capitulations: A Command Economy in Transition? History from Below.” Paper presented at WOW conference, UC Riverside, November 4, 2012, 3-4.

49. Kuran. “Economic Ascent,” 476-477.

business outside the jurisdiction of Islamic courts: While non-Muslim merchants had recourse to both Islamic and Western law, they gained the most when they used Western legal systems to settle their cases.

Kuran further argues that this plural legal system let many minority traders enter the *protégé* system. But the actual number of *reaya* (subjects) who defected to the Europeans was not as high as Kuran and others propose. In “Ottoman Merchants and the Jurisprudential Shift Hypothesis,” Murat Cizaka and Macit Kananoglu state that estimates of “tens of thousands” of *beratlis* (merchants with deeds of appointment)⁵⁰ cited by historian Bağış need to be reconfigured, particularly for the eighteenth century, to the more realistic figure of only 2,500 throughout the entire eastern Mediterranean. True, this figure rose exponentially in the nineteenth century, but as noted, the Ottoman state would counter that swelling with its own parallel protection systems in response.⁵¹

The many scholars who have studied Ottoman state intervention and protection programs, starting with Bruce Masters and Timur Kuran, cite different reasons for Imperial action. Yet all agree that, while the programs somewhat curbed the appetite of the Europeans and their *protégés* and helped lift a new entrepreneurial class, they were too blunted to damage European hegemony.⁵²

50. Murat Cizaka and Macit Kananoglu, “Ottoman Merchants and the Jurisprudential Shift Hypothesis,” in *Merchants in the Ottoman Empire*, eds. Suraiya Faroqhi and Gilles Veinstein (Paris: Louvain and Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2008), 195-213. 205.

Another reason given for minority merchants’ defection to European protection was the law mandating the dissolution of a company once one partner had died. Yet this is only partially correct: Cizakça and Kananoglu have shown that only agreements between *mudaraba* (who were mostly non-Muslim) agents and the Muslim merchants they represented were dissolved upon the death of a partner, and not the *inan* partnerships. Furthermore, many Ottoman traders, Muslim and non-Muslim, set up *mudaraba* partnerships with Levant Company or private traders, proving that local merchants were able to work within the expanding economy outside the *protégé* system.

51. Çizakça and Kenanoglu, “Ottoman Merchants,” 195-213, 206. For the numbers, see also Masters, “The Sultan’s Entrepreneurs,” 579.

52. Kuran, “Economic Ascent,” 501.

Yet our understanding of the part capitulations played in Imperial trade has also been challenged. Previous scholars thought that the capitulations allowed European merchants to dominate the Ottoman economy. However, Daniel Goffman, Alexander de Groot, and others have shown that the capitulations not only gave the Europeans privileges enticing them to reside and work out of the Empire, which in turn boosted local and International trade, but also greatly built up Ottoman port cities like Izmir.⁵³ These gradually overtook Aleppo and Chios as main entrepôts for cotton and silk during the second half of the seventeenth century, due mostly to the conflicting interests of Venetian, French, local Arab and Armenian merchants with Ottoman officials.⁵⁴ Fernand Braudel also notes this shift: “It is known that the center moved yet again in the seventeenth century, this time to Smyrna....”⁵⁵ The expansion of trade in cities like Aleppo and Izmir enhanced both domestic and international trade, opening windows of opportunity to families such as the Ghantuz Cubbes and the Balits to establish businesses and broad family networks, as evidenced by their letters. In addition, Hakki Kadi suggests that a few purposively vague articles in the capitulations allowed the Ottoman state to impose unspecified taxes on the Europeans, exemption from which gave local merchants a huge advantage. The state also profited from, and thus promoted, an uptick in domestic and international trade by investing in business-center infrastructure as well

53. Alexander de Groot, “The Historical Development of the Capitulatory Regime in the Ottoman Middle East from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries,” in “The Ottoman Capitulations: Text and Context,” special issue, *Oriente Moderno Nuova Serie* 22, no. 83, (2003): 575-604; Daniel Goffman, *Izmir and the Levantine World 1550-1650* (Seattle: Publications of the Near East, University of Washington Press 5, 1990), 38, 107-108.

54. Daniel Goffman, *Izmir and the Levantine World*, 70.

55. Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century*, trans. Sian Reynolds (New York: William Collins, 1984), Vol. 3, *The Perspective of the World*, 470-471.

as in shipping.⁵⁶ Revisionist studies by scholars such as Kaymakci, Artunç and especially Zarinabaf indicate that the Imperial programs were quite effective and successful. And, despite their differences regarding the programs' purposes and results, both traditional and more critical researchers concur that the growing economic influence of European nationals to which the programs responded had started with the Empire's grants of capitulations to the foreign traders.⁵⁷

More generally, accepted scholarship has been content to view minority traders' growing capacities and influence as yet another example of the essential weakness defining the Empire itself. That is, it has considered the rise of non-Muslim merchants as further proof of Europeans' increased commercial abilities and protection of Christian merchants, compared with Ottomans' failing financial prowess and unconcern for—even suppression of—their own non-Muslim or even Muslim traders. However, the institution of the dual Imperial *Avruppa Tuccari* and *Hayriye Tuccari* programs reveals the error of that assessment.

Correcting Historiography with Historical Sources: The Ghantuz Cubbe Letters

Evolving Economic Context of Capitulations: Imperial Invitation, and Limitation, of European Traders

If conventional historians have painted the legal pluralism of the capitulations as the source of both local Ottoman expansion and international European economic hegemony, they ignored the responsiveness and results of contemporary Porte policies.

New research in Fariba Zarinabaf's "Ottoman Trade Policies and Capitulations: A

56. Fariba Zarinabaf, "Ottoman-European Commercial Encounters in Early Modern Galata." Paper presented at Mediterranean Research Program & WOW, UC Davis, January-February 2015, 12.

57. Zarinabaf, "Ottoman Trade Policies and Capitulations;" 7-8; Said Saleh Kaymakci, "The Sultan's Entrepreneurs, the Entrepreneurs' Sultan: Beratlı Avrupa Tuccari and Institutional Change in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire (1853-1868)," (master's thesis, Bogazici University, 2013); Cihan Artunç, "The Protégé System and Beratlı Merchants in the Ottoman Empire: The Price of Legal Institutions," (working paper, 2013), 6.

Command Economy in Transition?” disconfirms accepted assumptions: Not all *mudaraba* partnerships at the time⁵⁸ morphed into public ventures or joint-stock companies; some continued as intended, and quite a few “Muslim, and non-Muslim merchants and foreign merchants were forming many capital-labor partnerships for maritime trade and shipping.”⁵⁹ This finding indicates that, despite state intervention, merchants did have the ability to trade and the agency to form partnerships. These maritime and trade alliances arose from the need for luxury goods as well as for foodstuffs, and challenged the Ottoman guilds’ established control. As a case in point, the Ghantuz Cubbe firm did not engage in *mudaraba* partnerships, but did help provision the capital and port cities while maintaining their luxury trade—and all before *protégés* of foreign nations did—thus significantly enhancing the economy.

Furthermore, by the end of the nineteenth century the Ottoman Empire had embarked on the extensive *Tanzimat* program of economic, legal, political and social reforms through centralization and modernization, and was moving towards a freer economy, reflected in the new vigor of Izmir and other port cities. Yet despite knowing of these momentous trends, most historians have interpreted the growing ties between European and non-Muslim Ottoman merchants as if they occurred in the face of Ottoman resistance or neglect, and depict the state’s capitulations as the principal cause and sign of its decline. Assessing these claims requires a closer examination of the capitulatory system’s actual—and impressively flexible—workings.

58. Zarinabaf, “Ottoman Trade Policies and Capitulations,” 4. *Mudaraba* agreements are a form of capital-labor partnerships in which “the principal party provided capital and the other usually carried out trade.”

59. Zarinabaf, “Ottoman Trade Policies and Capitulations,” 3-4.

Enticing the Europeans

As seen, the Republic of Venice was one of the first to receive the capitulations, followed in the sixteenth century by the English, Dutch, and other European nations, who set up chartered trading companies—headquartered, in the case of the English, in Aleppo. The creation of chartered enterprises like the Levant Company and the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC) sparked a money economy, increased specialization in commerce, and brought hordes of foreign merchants into the East. Pamuk takes the traditional historiographical line on these developments: Mercantilist ideas never took hold in the Empire because Ottoman merchants and producers had no significant role in its economic policies, while their counterparts in Europe exerted massive influence on their governments' financial endeavors. So the Ottoman state did not promote or protect the interests of merchant subjects, as they yielded little for the treasury on which the Porte was fixated. To the contrary, he insists, the Empire offered commercial and legal inducements to Europeans because of its desire to circulate rare goods in the Eastern Mediterranean and its aim of currying favor with powerful foreigners.⁶⁰

But this interpretation misses both the strategic nature and the efficacy of Ottoman economic acts. For the capitulations by which Ottoman authorities lured European to their lands not only enhanced both international and local trade but also presented enormous opportunities to local non-Muslim traders. Among the exclusive rights the Porte afforded foreign nationals, the *ahdnames* permitted them the privilege of appointing *dragomans* to help them transcend language barriers⁶¹ and navigate convoluted diplomatic etiquette in the Empire. Such go-between positions not only

60. Sevket Pamuk. "The Evolution of Factor Markets in the Ottoman Empire, 1500-1800." (Paper presented at Global Economic History Network Workshop, Utrecht, 2003), 8.

61. The languages used were Arabic and Ottoman Turkish.

facilitated business, but also gave many local minorities as a first step toward their commercial success.

In addition, we know that the earliest Ottoman capitulations had been bilaterally negotiated, but by the seventeenth century had evolved into unilateral privileges bestowed on the Europeans. Yet rather than a sign of Imperial weakness, this non-reciprocal generosity gave Ottomans the upper hand as sole dispensers of favors, furthering their central aim of expanding international trade. In turn, this policy raised the fortunes of their entrepreneurial middle class, and directly supported the domestic economy by allowing investment in its infrastructure, encouraging import and export of manufactured and raw goods, and prohibiting the export of goods earmarked for local consumption.⁶² Although the bans on certain exports did not always function perfectly, historians should note the conscientious steps the Empire took to restore profitable and balanced domestic and international commerce at the very moment its longstanding Aleppine trade in silk and other luxuries had weakened due to new delivery routes and competing fashions.

As also noted, attesting to the system's subtlety, foreigners' privileges were not uniform: Individual nations' terms might be issued independent of the *ahdnames*, like the rescript granted to the Venetian consulate in Aleppo allowing it to import a certain amount of wine without paying taxes and to secure other supplies:

Curiously enough, a considerable number of rescripts was concerned with the food supply of the Venetian consulate in Aleppo. Apart from the fact that the consul could receive a certain amount of wine without paying taxes, this official, with the blessings of the Ottoman authorities, seems to have secured supplies for the Venetian community in general. Thus we hear that the Venetian consul ordered beef and sold it to resident Venetians at a price determined by himself,

62. Faroqhi and Veinstein, eds., *Merchants in the Ottoman Empire*; Zarinabaf, "Ottoman Trade Policies and Capitulations," 7.

the Ottoman market supervisor having no say in the matter. Equally, the consul might provide bakers and tailors to serve the Venetian community; the men he hired for these jobs were to be excused certain services to the Ottoman state.⁶³

Neither were the capitulations based solely on the *ahdnames* granted to nations, but could utilize several other mechanisms, such as *fermans*, *berats*, and amendments to the original capitulation. *Fermans* let a nation revise or extend its privileges, and exempted the holder from any new tax the Ottomans might introduce. Embassies constantly applied for *fermans* as they were cheaper than applying for renewals, given the fees both the ambassadors and Ottoman chanceries charged for those (and which embassies passed on to the merchants).

Berats, another financial good—and another major source of ambassadorial income—also came in different forms: deeds of appointment issued to consuls, vice-consuls, *dragomans* or *protégés* of the consulates. Each embassy and consulate could appoint a certain number of *dragomans* (usually two) as translators. But as mentioned, abuse of this privilege was largely responsible for the disproportionate advancement of non-Muslim merchants who thereby enjoyed the same or very similar privileges and tax exemptions as did European traders. We shall see that the protégé system, in which *beratli* merchants or *dragomans* gained the extraterritoriality rights originally meant for Europeans, prompted the Ottoman authorities to initiate rival Imperial programs to protect its other merchants, minority or Muslim.⁶⁴

The *Protégé* System

The practice of passing Europeans' benefits from *fermans* and *berats* to their

63. Suraiya Faroqhi, "The Venetian Presence in the Ottoman Empire (1600-1630)," *Journal of European History* 15-2 (Fall 1986), 345-384.

64. The terms of the imperial *berats* included personal freedoms, judicial guarantees, and privileged taxation rates on customs--extraterritoriality rights similar to those granted Europeans.

dragomans and other local employees was known as the *protégé* system. Any employee of a foreign nation who had bought a *berat* was considered to be under the protection of that nation, and thus the recipient of the same privileges as its subjects. Through it, local non-Muslim merchants first climbed the social and financial ladder and eventually overtook their Muslim counterparts by monopolizing European transport and trade. They acquired *protégé* positions for three intertwined reasons: As non-Muslim speakers of European languages, they could debark in Europe and interact there easily, and they could help consuls and ambassadors in the Empire navigate the labyrinthine Ottoman government.

Ironically, although Europeans (and Levantines) enthusiastically exploited the system, some European merchants were unhappy about such heavy hiring of locals. Indeed, according to Genç, the number of *berats* allotted to each European nation reflected (and presumably perpetuated) its unspoken power ranking—with France at the top first, then England, both of whom were permitted between 40 and 50 *berats* each at any given time.⁶⁵ But in “Protégé System and Beratli Merchants in the Ottoman Empire: The Price of Legal Institutions,” Artunç shows that many European merchants opposed sharing their advantages with locals—even though mostly coreligionists—and attempted to curb the sale of *berats*. But they were overruled by the ambassadors, who derived much income from such sales.⁶⁶ In fact, trafficking in *berats* was an ambassador’s personal privilege: Dutch Ambassador Colyer left the “appointing” of *berats* to his sister, while his successor entrusted his wife with the job.⁶⁷ In the middle of the eighteenth century the Levant Company itself tried to curtail the number of *protégés*; predictably,

65. Artunç, “Protégé System,” 9.

66. Artunç, “Protégé System,” 9.

67. Van den Boogert, *Capitulations*, 98.

the initial effort received short thrift from the ambassador,⁶⁸ though a later attempt in 1760 proved slightly more efficacious. In a letter to Ambassador Porter, the Levant Company and its governor requested His Excellency

to use every mean in your power to prevent the growth of this evil and in particular to give orders to our consuls to be very attentive not to exceed proper limits in protecting Honorary Drugomen or their dependants, for We apprehend the badness of the times makes these Honorary Drugomen find out new ways of using that Protection both with regard to themselves & others connected with them, which we beg leave to submit to your Excellency's consideration.⁶⁹

The Levant Company, as payer of the ambassador's salary, could send orders to and through the ambassador for English consuls throughout the Mediterranean. However, despite all their efforts, they were never able to suppress the practice completely. Obviously, the main reason for eliminating the sale of *berats* was the wish to quell Muslim merchants' complaints about minority merchants' unfair advantage of exemption from most taxes, as the resentment was causing problems with the Ottoman authorities.

Reining in the Europeans

For the Ottomans as well, those gifts to the Europeans soon proved unexpectedly expensive. Porte authorities quickly recognized that, in addition to threatening their tax base with an inflated corps of exempted *dragomans* and *berats*, the *protégé* system caused considerable discontent among Muslim merchants. First, the articles of capitulation seemed to suggest that foreign consuls could employ anyone as a *dragoman* (although Maurits van den Boogert reminds us that selection was restricted to non-Muslim—hardly a problem, and indeed an advantage, for European consuls).⁷⁰ But a second and more serious apparent liberty derived from the unintended absence of any

68. Van den Boogert, *Capitulations*, 98.

69. TNA SP 105/119. The Levant Co. to consul Porter, 12 Sept. 1760.

70. Van den Boogert, *Capitulations*, 8.

stated limit on the number of *dragomans* the Europeans could hire. Van den Boogert, Masters and others show how many European nations exploited this loophole to hire myriad *dragomans* and, particularly, *beratli*.⁷¹ This manipulation by Europeans and local minorities alike rapidly became a major concern for the Ottomans, who suspected that local Christians were using their *berat* status to escape taxation, and they ultimately imposed strict curbs on the Europeans.⁷² By the middle of the eighteenth century, the capitulations reflected these curtailments, explicitly articulated in answer to a petition sent to Hamsi Pacha, the new governor of Aleppo in 1767, by the consuls of France, England, Venice and Holland. One of their petition's complaints was that two *beratli dragomans* from a consulate had been forced to pay dues, even though the capitulations, they argued, clearly considered them as foreigners. The reply came that the consulate had the right to appoint only two *dragomans*, and that the supernumerary ones in question were *rajas* (subjects of the Sultan) and not accorded the same rights as Europeans.⁷³ However, The English were aware of the concern the authorities had in regards to the number of the *beratli* employees, as we can see from a letter written to Ambassador Porter in Constantinople:

We have with some concern we have observed with great concern the many opportunities the many opportunity's was taken by the Porte to express jealousy about numbers of their Christian subjects protected by the Frank Nations.⁷⁴

To stanch the bleeding of taxes and to assuage the irritation of minority merchants outside the *protégé* system and Muslim merchants forbidden from it, Ottoman authorities

71. Van den Boogert, *Capitulations*, 10; Masters, *Origins of Western Economic Dominance*. 96-99. This patent granted *dragomans* the same extraterritorial rights as the Europeans, primarily exemption from taxes.

72. Masters, "The Sultan's Entrepreneurs," 579; Zarinabaf, "Ottoman-European Commercial Encounters," 16.

73. ASV, V Savii Alla Mercanzie, Lettere Consoli, Aleppo, B 604.

74 TNA SP 105-107/64 Letter from the board of governors to Ambassador Porter on 12 September 1760.

at first explicitly limited the number of *dragomans* allowed per consul and at the same time banned any *beratli* from engaging in trade.⁷⁵ These efforts represent an early attempt to halt the manipulation of the *protégé* system not only by foreign consuls but also by local minority beneficiaries. For, indeed, many families held monopolies on the job of *dragoman* in various consulates, such as the Dallal and Aida families who enjoyed the protection of the French and of the English.⁷⁶ So it should not surprise that, regardless of Imperial exertions to rein it in, systemic abuse continued until the early twentieth century, as seen in a 1908 registry of commercial establishments with heads of families such as the Homsis listed as *dragomans* for both the Italian and the Austrian consulates⁷⁷ Still, the actual number of *dragomans* became better controlled, and many Aleppine minority merchants—including the Ghantuz Cubbe relations examined here—never entered that privileged group.⁷⁸

But the Europeans—even and particularly the English—refused to ratify capitulatory agreements explicitly limiting their *dragonams*' commercial activities.⁷⁹ The continued (albeit lessened) misuse prompted the Ottomans to invent two novel strategies: the *Avrupa Tuccari* program giving local minority merchants the same privileges *beratli* held, and the *Hayriye Tuccari* program extending those liberties to Muslim merchants.⁸⁰ These successful programs would slow the shift in the balance of trading power favoring the West, and would speed the rise of the Empire's minority merchant elite.

75. Masters, "Political Economy of Aleppo," 290-316.

76. Van den Boogert, *Capitulations*, 84.

77. Dalīl Sūrīyā wa-Miṣr al-tijārī li-sanat 1324 Rūmīyah [i.e. Hijrīyah] al-muwāfiqah 1908 M. li-sharikah tijārīyah. [Egypt: s.n., 1909?] {*The commercial directory for Syria and Egypt for the year 1324 H that corresponds to the year 1908 that belongs to a trading company* {?} (Egypt, s.n.1909?)} <http://pds.lib.harvard.edu/pds/view/44735512>

78. This intermediary role included local Jewish families as well as local Christian, Greek and Armenian families.

79. Masters, "Sultan's Entrepreneurs."579.

80. Van den Boogert, *Capitulations*, 106-115.

Avrupa Tuccari and Hayriye Tuccari Programs

The Empire's response to the foreign *protégé* problem was at once protectionist of its merchants and trade and political as an attempt to regain authority over its subjects.⁸¹ Masters doubts that its ultimate aim was to create a merchant class to supplant the Europeans, as well as to stem the defection of its subjects. But whatever the rationale, the obvious result was the emergence of a wealthy, elite merchant class that bettered the Imperial economy as a whole.⁸² It is uncertain when these internal privileges were first granted, but no patents exist before 1806. Originally intended principally for merchants in the capital, by 1815 the programs had extended to commercial cities such as Aleppo, Izmir and Salonica.

Designed to give non-Muslim merchants the same exemption from the 3-percent Ottoman tax and the legal independence they enjoyed under European protection, the *Avrupa Tuccari* program was followed by the parallel *Hayriye Tuccari* one for Muslim traders, in response, Masters suggests, to their demands to share the minorities'

81. Cascading changes in patterns of worldwide commerce and European trading might had hurt Imperial trade in general but enhanced Levantine economic opportunities. The collapse of the Safavid Dynasty during the early eighteenth century and the relocation of the silk sales center from Aleppo to Izmir had decreased demand for it in Aleppo. So English broadcloth sales slumped in favor of French woollens and reduced the number of European traders in the city, and locals thus came to play the middleman by purchasing regional cotton and other Europe-bound merchandise. Intensified Imperial capitulations drew foreign nationals back, but European and local exploitation of that *protégé* system deprived the Empire of respect and of tax revenue. These factors, coupled with Muslim traders' discontent about *dragomans'* commercial privileges, goaded Sultan Selim III to design the *Avrupa Tuccari* program in 1802 as an alternative to the consular favoring of Christian traders.

Another motivation for these Imperial programs was the frustration of Ottoman merchants trading in Europe—an example, according to Ismail Hakki Kadi, of increased Ottoman merchant activity directly shaping Imperial policy. Kadi identified a growing strain between Greek and Armenian merchants and the Europeans, peaking in a 1797 incident in which some Ottoman merchants, while in Holland, refused to pay standard Dutch trading taxes, claiming reciprocal extraterritoriality rights as subjects of the sultan. The Porte supported them and in 1802 expressed its intention to set up a consulate in Holland with all rights and privileges afforded to European consuls in the Empire. It continued to establish diplomatic representation in other cities—Trieste in 1802, Marseilles in 1803, Venice and Genoa in 1804, Livorno in 1805 and London in 1806--actions which attest to the Ottomans' consistent support of their merchants. Ismail Hakki Kadi, *Ottoman and Dutch Merchants in the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 306.

82. Masters, "Sultan's Entrepreneurs," 579.

privileges.⁸³ The two programs were indeed very similar, but a *nazir* (supervisor) regulated the *Avrupa Tuccari* to avoid competition between the merchants while a *sehbender* (mayor) oversaw the *Hayriye Tuccari*.⁸⁴ In addition, only 40 merchants in the capital and 10 in the provinces could enroll in the *Hayriye Tuccari* (although this restriction ended by 1839), with the further stipulation that these needed to be from exemplary families, whereas Christians were not held up to such exacting standards.⁸⁵ Muslim merchants also gained the advantages of not having to pay the *cizye*, or poll tax, and of being able to pass the patents on to an eldest son.

According to Cihan Artunç, Ottoman authorities realized that granting *berats* just to merchants would insufficiently fuel trade, and thus included ship-owners, captains, and others essential to sea commerce. He explains that the inclusion of the naval contingent in the *berat* system may indicate an Ottoman interest in forming a commercial fleet to carry out international trade. This suggestion bolsters the view that the state actively sought to support its subjects involved in commerce in every capacity, which, in this case, included the Ghantuz Cubbe family as owners of a major shipping company.

Significantly, though, dates on the collected letters indicate that the Ghantuz Cubbe family company was already up and running by the time the dual programs were launched, likely because Ottoman authorities had been unofficially facilitating trade for minority merchants well before. In fact, by the end of the eighteenth century many minority families had entered a select, monied trading class. A few had migrated to work in Istanbul and, fewer, in Europe, but none except the Ghantuz Cubbes established

83. Masters, "Sultan's Entrepreneurs," 579.

84. A *sehbender* held the office created during the time of Selim III to administer the *Avrupa Tuccari* and *Hayriye Tuccari*. At first equivalent to the title of mayor, it became analogous to that of consul.

85. Masters, "Sultan's Entrepreneurs," 582-585.

business branches outside Aleppo until the early nineteenth century.⁸⁶ The early robustness of their firm, while unusual, indicates the Ottoman authorities' recognition of the need to regain control of the worldwide economy and readiness to do so. Their responsive new programs and continuing policy changes meshed with the fluctuating conditions of contemporary trade to establish a new social elite of minority merchants.

Changing Commercial Conditions and New Imperial Responses: The *Tanzimat* Reforms

Though largely self-sufficient in the early sixteenth century, by the turn of the nineteenth century the Porte chose to intensify its trade protectionism with profound and broad economic and political centralization and modernization—the *Tanzimat* (reorganization) reforms. Along with the earlier programs for minority, then for Muslim, merchants, these later political and judicial reforms impacted Ottoman commercial policy and, as such, directly and dramatically benefitted minority traders.

One leap in that reform was the state's destruction of the Janissaries who, as the main armed supporters of guilds, were by then thoroughly enmeshed in commerce. Between 1750 and the early 1800s the state began to rein in the guilds, trades and manufacturing, and eliminating the Janissaries paved the way for complete destruction of guild monopolies and privileges.⁸⁷ Such house-cleaning freed up the economy for locals—especially for minority merchants who had worked as *mudaraba* agents for Muslim traders and then, after the Anglo-Turkish Treaty of Gulhane opened domestic markets to European goods, as crucial non-Muslim agents for European enterprises like the Levant Company and foreign consulates.

As detailed in the previous chapter, the *Tanzimat* reforms brought non-Muslim

86. Masters, "Political Economy of Aleppo," 61.

87. Quataert, *Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, 825.

subjects into greater political and social parity with their Muslim countrymen while permitting them to choose between Muslim and Western court systems to redress their grievances. Although some Muslims resisted the orders with violence, the newly centralized Ottoman army quelled any resistance, and the minority *arrivistes*, it may be said, had at last truly arrived. Thus, by the middle of the nineteenth century, a congeries of internal and international economic pressures upon the Ottoman state, and its financial, political, legal and social responses to them, combined to favor the fortunes and standing of its minority merchants.

The Ghantuz Cubbe: An Exemplary Levantine Merchant Family

The Ghantuz Cubbes were Levantines, operationally defined as families of European origin who, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, settled in Porte cities, Aleppo being among the most important. As both minorities and subjects of the sultan, Levantines comprised a hybrid society whose fluency in European and local languages and whose dual identity let them adopt the roles of commercial brokers, consular representatives, and cultural intermediaries.⁸⁸

The Workings of a Levantine Family Company

The Ghantuz Cubbes were only one of the many non-Muslim families (such as their in-laws, the Balits, and the Andrea, Janandji, Poche, Marcopoli, Altaras, and Belilios families), whose fortunes had begun to rise in the late seventeenth century as agents for Muslim investors—well before the next century's opportunities for non-Muslims as facilitators of European enterprises and consulates.

Familial Structure of the Firm

88. Most Levantine merchants took on the role of consuls or honorary consuls after the number of Europeans diminished in Aleppo. They thus gained not only prestige but wealth through their commercial transactions and inside information.

Representative of businesses in the period, their firm was an agnatic partnership between brothers: the older Antonio and his sons and the younger Giuseppe (or Youssef) and his sons in Aleppo. It also included their brother-in-law Hanna Balit, with other brothers-in-law, nephews and cousins constituting the rest of the executives manning numerous regional offices. Antonio left Aleppo with his family and established the Livorno branch in 1870, which he named Antonio Ghantuz Cubbe i figli,⁸⁹ and symbolized with a coat of arms consisting of a heart divided into four quarters by a patriarchal cross, each quadrant bearing one letter of the branch name:

Deux branches distinctes de la famille Cubbe s'étaient donc établies depuis 1780 à celle d'Alep et celle de Livourne, mais elles formaient ensemble une vraie et propre puissance à soi, fondée sur la prestige, sur la solidité économique et maritime que la branche de Livourne s'était assurée.' Le chef de cette branche avait été Antoine, fils de Nehmè.⁹⁰

Antonio also started a successful bank in Livorno. Most of the business letters were from Giuseppe/Youssef to Antonio, and show that while the official headquarters of the firm may have been Livorno, Aleppo was its nerve center.

Younger brother Giuseppe/Youssef had married Maria Balit and raised seven children, including sons Fathallah, Nehmetallah and Giovanni who worked with their father in the Aleppo office. As noted, the family was in good standing with not only the Ottoman authorities but also with European nobility; On his visits to Aleppo the exiled, reform-minded Sultan Selim III often played chess with Giuseppe and his family, and it was probably the Grand Duke of Tuscany himself who encouraged Antonio to expand the company to Livorno.

89. Prior to moving to Livorno, he was the honorary *dragoman* to the Sultan, to the Emperor of Austria, and the Queen of Bohemia. Private family archives.

90. From the Ghantuz Cubbe private family history, ("Précis de l'histoire de la famille Ghantuz Cubbe d'Alep," unpublished ms., 9.

Sembra che il trasferimento a Livorno avvenne in seguito ad un viaggio durante il quale alcuni giovani della mia famiglia conobbero I figli di un granduca di Toscana, che li convinsero a trasferirsi.

It seems that the transfer to Livorno (of my family) took place following a trip during which one of the youth from my family got to know the son of one of the grand dukes of Tuscany, who convinced him to transfer.⁹¹

The Cubbe and Balit families were prototypical Levantines. As both minorities and subjects of the sultan, and Levantines comprised a hybrid society whose fluency in European and local languages and whose dual identity let them adopt the roles of commercial brokers, and cultural and religious intermediaries.⁹² With offices in Venice and Genoa, a concession to a pier in the old port of Livorno (the official headquarters), and subsidiary foreign bureaus mushrooming in Lattakia, Iskenderun, and the Shouf mountains in Lebanon,⁹³ business boomed. The Cyprus branch was managed by brother-in-law Antoine Balit, the office in Egypt by nephew Antoine Coussa and Giuseppe's son Nehmetallah (until he went to Livorno), and the Damietta venue by another family member. Letters between the company office in Aleppo and its bureaus offer fascinating insights into the daily workings of a contemporary enterprise. Run as a family affair, the Ghantuz Cubbe brothers' relatives—especially Antoine Balit in Cyprus—likely held some stake in the regional offices, if not full partnership.

Another point of interest is that all accounting information was shared between all offices: Letters were sent to Antonio in Livorno, and copies went to the subsidiary branches, usually via Cyprus with ship captains. They included meticulous reckonings of

91. Information emailed me by the Marquis Riccardo de Ghantuz Cubbe on 9 September 2012.

92. Most Levantine merchants took on the role of consuls or honorary consuls after the number of Europeans diminished in Aleppo. They thus gained not only prestige but wealth through their commercial transactions and inside information. Both families had members who were bishops, and archbishops in both Livorno and in the Empire, and were instrumental in forging a link between the Vatican and the parishes in Aleppo. This will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

93. Moussa Elias served as their agent in Lattakia, as did Francis Diab and Vita Marini in Cyprus and Youssef Spiridon in the mountains of Lebanon.

expenditures on ships, cargo, taxes, consulage fees, costs for the use of the *khans*, amounts owed to various merchants and, of course, transfers of gold, silver, bundles of money and gems. In a letter of August 14, 1797, Giuseppe/Youssef first exhaustively lists all the cotton, raw materials, and gold sent on various ships docking in Syracuse, Cyprus and Livorno, and then explains that he could send these accounts because a fortuitous discrepancy between Muslim and Christian calendars made taxes on certain merchandise not due until the beginning of the next year.⁹⁴ Another copy of this letter was sent on yet another ship to ensure its safe receipt, but unfortunately, none of the bills of lading survive.

Even stylistic elements in the collection provide insight into how the company functioned. Most of the letters begin with the addressee's name and a formulaic greeting such as, "To esteemed brother Mr. Antoine [Cubbe], God's blessings upon him. First of all, we are full of longing for you, and secondly, if you ask about us, we are full of health and pray to the Almighty that He continues to grant you the same." The next formulaic entry usually concerned the communicants themselves ("At the most auspicious of times and the happiest of hours, I received your letter dated...",⁹⁵) and often specified the ship and the captain bringing them. Usually more than one letter was sent, as copies of earlier ones sent by another ship or by land, mitigated the uncertainties of eighteenth-century communications. A missive's first part might then mention any family news. After the initial flowery salutation, updates on correspondence received, and familial gossip, the letters transition to business topics ranging from the prices of cloth and other goods to

94. Poche-Marcopoli (Fonds Marcopoli, or FM) archives copy in Tübingen University, FM / A / L / X 6002 "Le lettere: Lettera A" ca.1797-1799 (Europe) MIFI 500.

95. FM / A / L / X 6002 "Le lettere: Lettera A" ca.1797-1799 (Europe) MIFI 500. Letter dated Shawwal 14, 1797, indicates the tenth month of the Islamic calendar; letters to Syria use Islamic dates while those sent elsewhere use Western dates.

individual merchant orders, market situations, accounting matters, and items such as money, jewels, and letters of credit entrusted to the captain.

Not only the style but the language itself marked the Ghantuz Cubbe family correspondence. Interestingly, messages between Aleppo, Livorno, Cyprus and Egypt were always in Arabic, despite the facts that family members were fluent in Italian and that a couple of their agents were non-Arabs. Even the letters written to Italian merchants and clients were in Arabic, which means that managers in Livorno and Venice would probably have had to have them translated.

It remains unclear why they did not correspond in Italian, the contemporary language of commerce, although it is possible that copies of letters sent to Europe in Italian were not kept in Aleppo. More significant, though, corresponding in Arabic also suggests that the family maintained its ties to their native language, just as they maintained loyalty to the sultan. Whether that is so or not, their business use of Arabic underscores the comfortable duality of Levantine identity. In another example, Giuseppe/Youssef's son Raffaello became the archbishop of Livorno and a professor of theology in Pisa, and returned frequently to Aleppo to visit his parents and to keep in touch with the birthplace. His career, like his family's correspondence, illustrates the community's fluency in both local and European languages and cultures and its participation in the civic and religious life of both.⁹⁶

International Nature of the Firm

We know that, while caravans still came to Aleppo twice yearly, shipping had become the main, if costly, mode of transportation. Letters sent by Venetian merchants to

96. Ghantuz Cubbe family private archives. They were given the title "Marquis de Ghantuz Cubbe" by the Grand Duke of Tuscany were inscribed in the Venetian *Golden Book of Nobility*, and were equally well regarded in Aleppo.

the *Cinque Savii* in Venice show that their ships often idled long, awaiting adequate cargo before setting sail, since the balance of trade favored imports to that nation over exports from it.⁹⁷ So different nations would pool their goods and share cargo space. Ships docking at Imperial ports in the Mediterranean and Aegean seas had to fly the Ottoman flag, but few Europeans were allowed to so infringe on local commerce. But as a Levantine enterprise, the Cubbe family company was permitted to do so.

The company owned at least four of the many ships they used, including *Il Corriere d'Aleppo*⁹⁸ and two brigantines, *Il Raffaele*, dedicated to Antonio Ghantuz Cubbe i figli, and *Il Clemantino*, captained by Manuel Dasso.⁹⁹ According to a descendant, the company leased other vessels, which doubtless flew European flags when entering Christian ports;¹⁰⁰ indeed, the Ghantuz Cubbes shipped mostly under the banner of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany.

The Collection and External Corroboration

Consisting mainly of accounts and commercial records sent between various family members and their agents, interspersed with greetings and gossip, the letters fill in the history of the blended Ghantuz Cubbe and Balit families in the late eighteenth century. They cover the period between 1797 and 1799; other documents may exist elsewhere, or the company may have closed before the turn of the century. But no missive indicates an impending end, and the last letter discusses very substantial new

97. Panzac, "International and Domestic Maritime Trade," 186-206. 192.

98. A picture of this and the other three ships proudly hangs in the home of a direct descendant.

99. The names of these ships were given to me by descendants of the family, as well as pictures of lithographs of the brigantines, which, unfortunately, were left in Aleppo. The correspondence contains numerous references to Captain Dasso, the arrival of his ship, and letters received and sent through him.

100. The flag used on their ships is described by Giuseppe/Youssef Cubbe's descendant, the Marquis de Ghantuz Cubbe, as being "navy blue with a red rectangle on the top left hand side (next to the rod) on top of which was a strange cross in red and yellow" (*La bandiera sulle navi è blu scuro e in alto a sinistra (dalla parte della asta c'è un rettangolo rosso con al centro una strana croce composta gialle e rossa*). Personal communication by email, 29 September 2012.

shipments and cotton sales in Aleppo, suggesting the company's vigor. According to the current marquis, only the advent of steamships and modern navigational techniques in the mid-nineteenth century spelled the firm's demise.¹⁰¹

The brevity of time covered by the extant archival material makes it hard to reconstruct a complete family history, but we can glean much by comparing the collection to other contemporary documentation. We know family members on both sides enrolled in the sultan's *Avrupa Tuccari* program, through which they gained the same privileges as the Europeans' *protégés*.¹⁰² That was wise, for by the beginning of the nineteenth century European trade had decreased so significantly that the advantages of the Imperial programs for Levantine Christians bested those gained by being a European *protégé*—the Porte's very desire. In his 1840 report to Parliament on commerce in Syria, John Bowring stated that 30 Christian merchant houses were trading with Europe with capital exceeding a million piasters, of which Fathalla Cubbe had three to four million.¹⁰³ Masters tells us that Fathalla Cubbe was ninth out of the fifteen men dominating trade in Aleppo, as per a detailed customs register covering six months of 1841.¹⁰⁴

Bowring's list also provides telling specifics about commerce in the Empire generally. The eight most successful merchants named were Christians with foreign passports.¹⁰⁵ The ledger's two Muslims, although participating in the *Hayriye Tuccari* program, fell at the bottom of the list. This ranking confirms a striking lift in minority

101. Personal communication by email, 10 October 2012.

102. Masters, "Sultan's Entrepreneurs," 579-597, 588.

103. John Bowring, "Report on the Commercial Statistics of Syria" (reprinted New York: Arno Press, 1973), 80.

104. Masters, "Sultan's Entrepreneurs," 590; Peter Sluglett, "Aspects of Economy and Society in the Syrian Provinces: Aleppo in Transition, 1880-1925," in *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, eds. Leila Tarazi Fawaz and C. A. Bayly (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 152.

105. Bowring, "Report," 80.

traders' fortunes. Less than a century earlier, local Arab Christians and Armenians were extremely poor. While the register clearly shows both Christian and Muslims prospering from opportunities afforded them by Ottoman authorities, it also demonstrates that the Europeans—and thus, the non-Muslim merchants they relied on—still held the upper hand in international commerce. This was also true for the Jewish community, as can be ascertained from a detailed customs register listing only fifteen merchants, the top eight of whom, mostly Sephardic Jews living in Aleppo, held European passports.¹⁰⁶ Jewish families such as the Picciottos, Altaras and Belilios had resided in Aleppo for a long time, but were under the protection of, or were subjects of, Livorno and Venice. The Ghantuz Cubbe family, also included in that list, were registered as *Avrupa Tuccari Berat* holders.¹⁰⁷ In the case of the Ghantuz Cubbes, the Aleppo branch continued to be *reayas* (subjects) of the sultan, and only the Livorno branch would eventually become subjects of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. The Livorno branch died out with the passing of the last son, but Youssef's descendants would later also move to Livorno.¹⁰⁸

Domestic and Worldwide Impact of the Firm

Correspondence between the brothers attests, first, to the immense volume of business they conducted. An impressive range of merchandise filled their ships: cotton, cochineal and other dyes, rope, Persian silk, textiles from Aintab, tarbouches, lamettes and other locally manufactured goods, various raw materials, spices and alkali ash for the manufacture of mirrors in Venice. Besides these they transferred money (gold and silver), letters of credit and personal mail.

106. Masters, "Sultan's Entrepreneurs," 588.

107. Masters, "Sultan's Entrepreneurs," 590.

108. Personal communication from Marquis Riccardo de Ghantuz Cubbe by email, 10 October 2012.

Second, the Ghantuz Cubbe family correspondence documenting transactions between Aleppo, Cyprus, Egypt (probably Alexandria), Damietta, Chios and other Imperial commercial centers indicates how greatly the shipping company contributed to domestic trade which, during the eighteenth century, constituted more than double the amount of the Porte's international commerce.¹⁰⁹ For the Ottomans could supply most of their needs, and many of their wants, by internal exchange. Aleppo, a center for processing and dyeing textiles, exported luxurious cloths to other regions and cities like Istanbul.¹¹⁰

Third, merchant families like the Ghantuz Cubbe fueled European trade as well by regularly exporting raw materials and manufactured merchandise to Livorno, Venice, Marseille, Syracuse, and Genoa. Of course, the brothers adeptly sent ships under different flags to avoid paying extra taxes: In a letter dated May 24, 1797, Giuseppe/Youssef assures Antonio that he resolved a long list of individual accounts; is shipping items via a Venetian vessel, the *Genoa*, to avoid twice paying the 600-piastre consulage already collected in Aleppo;¹¹¹ and, with equal thrift, is sending 1,800 piasters to his brother by the same ship.¹¹² Thus the enterprise not only facilitated European-local commerce but also provided much of the maritime transport incorrectly assumed by historians to have been the exclusive right of foreign nations (the English Levant Company, in particular).

109. Panzac, "International and Domestic Maritime Trade," 186-206, 202; Eldem, Goffman, Masters, *Ottoman City*, 35.

110. Abraham Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 146.

111. Consulage was paid because the merchandise was being sent to Venetian merchants in Venice.

112. FM / A / L / X 6002 "Le lettere: Lettera A" ca.1797-1799 (Europe) MIFI 500.

Trade Network of the Ghantuz Cubbe and Balit Families

Aslanian's path-breaking *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* draws a paradigmatic portrait of early modern Levantine trading connections. His model, buttressed by other works of economic history, holds true of the Ghantuz Cubbe company, albeit with some fascinating exceptions born of its intensely familial structure.

Aslanian cites Claude Marokvits's definition of a *trade diaspora* as "a circuit that consists of a nodal center and a cluster of dispersed nodes around, connected both to each other and the center."¹¹³ According to Aslanian, "the objects that travel though the circuit have their origins at the nodal center of the network."¹¹⁴ He specifies the Julfan Armenian trading structure as the archetypal early modern merchant *network*: "multinodal but monocentric" webs in which the central node broadcasts goods, directions, and information to the rest of the nodes and controls overall operations.¹¹⁵ This description certainly fits the Ghantuz Cubbe company, whose central node was Aleppo, whence Giuseppe/Youssef supplied, directed, and updated most of the trade and correspondence to other family members fanned out across the Mediterranean arena, mainly in port cities from Lattakia in Syria to Livorno. Goods shipped to these peripheral points originated from Aleppo; more importantly, so did business orders and information about the family and community. So the Ghantuz Cubbe family business, firmly anchored by the core nodal center in Aleppo, provided support and stability to the circulating agents.

113. Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean*, 13.

114. Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean*, 13.

115. Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean*, 15. See also Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (Bellevue, WA: Yale University Press, Reprint edition, 2012). Sephardic Jewish networks that did business simultaneously out of London, Livorno, Amsterdam, Venice, Salonika, and Istanbul typified a "polycentric" kind of network operating from numerous cores.

The Ghantuz Cubbe network faced and met many of the same challenges as did networks much further away. David Hancock states that networks succeeded when “they led to profitable sharing of information, goods and services,”¹¹⁶ and the Ghantuz Cubbe trade network certainly fulfilled that criterion.

As detailed above, Aleppo served as the main conduit for domestic and imported goods for many companies, including this one. From that city, Giuseppe/Youssef sent raw materials and products, along with valuables and monies, to the company’s peripheral nodes for further dissemination. The letters are filled with references to goods shipped to other ports, including precious salt: عندنا صاحب فتكون تسوكر الملح (“We have a friend and he has guaranteed the salt”).¹¹⁷ The letter contuse with a discussion of cotton textiles and cochineal. Another letter to his brother Anton, written on 30 September 1797, informs him about a shipment of silk:

1 اسم المركب نوسترا سينيورا دي كراسيا، متوجه الى جينوا حملت عليه فردة وحدة حرير عجمي داخل فردة اربعة
بقجة يعلوا الفرده نمرة 1+AGC .

The name of the ship is the Nostra Sengnora di Grazia heading for Genoa, I have loaded one set of Persian silk that is inside four other bundles on which there is the mark 1+AGC.

In the same letter he reminds his brother that the merchandise is for Anton’s friends, the Risty brothers, and that Youssef shipped it to Genoa rather than to Livorno as the price of Persian silk is higher in Genoa than in Livorno.¹¹⁸

116. David Hancock, ‘The Trouble with Networks: Managing the Scots’ Early-Modern Madeira Trade,’ *The Business History Review* 79, no. 3 (2005): 467-491.

117. FM / A / L / X 6002 "Le lettere: Lettera A" ca.1797-1799 (Europe) MIFI 500, letter from Youssef to the Risty brothers, written 10 June 1797. Letter no. 15.

118. FM / A / L / X 6002 "Le lettere: Lettera A" ca.1797-1799 (Europe) MIFI 500, letter from Youssef to brother Anton, written on 30 September 1797.

Other letters reference the shipment of money, cotton cloth, other textiles, and valuables such as white agate and tarbouches (fez).

Direction

Despite Aleppo's status as a central node where major transactions took place, instructions and general *modus operandi* at times came from elder brother Antonio in Livorno, who dealt with European merchants there, so a few letters from Giuseppe/Youssef reported transactions taken "as per your request." However, Giuseppe/Youssef only complied when the instructions made sense on the ground, and respectfully pointed out any shortfalls of a request he declined.¹¹⁹ This somewhat bifurcated hierarchy differs from Aslanian's New Julfan network model, and bears explanation. To begin with, the Ghantuz Cubbe company rested organically on patrilineal and agnatic kinship ties rather than on legal ones, although it hired some non-relatives as factors. Its intensely and self-consciously familial nature contrasts with that of groups operating in the Julfan network. Unlike the New Julfan network, then, the family firm left no explicit agreements between founding partners that would indicate how or even exactly when it was set up. We know from archival sources that it probably had been established between 1770 and 1775,¹²⁰ and hit its stride by 1797 with a nodal center in Aleppo and branches in Livorno (from 1780), Cyprus, Chios, Alexandria, and the Shouf Mountains run by family members or, more rarely, close friends. But unlike Aslanian's Julfan model, no explicit, unvarying hierarchy seems to have been set in stone, although

119. A sociocultural reason for Giuseppe/Youssef's behavior was that, as the younger brother he owed deference to the elder. In addition, Antonio had started the company and was still considered its nominal head, despite Giuseppe/Youssef's *de facto* leadership.

120. Ghantuz-Cubbe private archives.

one clearly functioned, possibly because the familial structure itself was assumed optimal for their common benefit, which equated individual and collective advantage.

Information

We have seen that the letters sent throughout the Ghantuz Cubbe family network assiduously conveyed information from the trivial to the momentous—family gossip to fluctuation of prices and exchange rates—to all parties. The distribution of all news and information, most of which Giuseppe/Youssef orchestrated and sent in multiples from the central node of Aleppo, took place via letters carried by ship captains and merchants, factors and family members.

In fact, so rigorous were they in their dissemination of information in the face of the threats to nineteenth-century maritime communication—shipwrecks and shifty captains—that the partners resorted to ingenious and varied back-up methods: They sent multiple copies on different ships, tracked each, and further reinforced written content with verbal messages via travelers or trustworthy captains also on separate vessels. Once, the younger brother sent three consecutive short notes to Livorno, each of which stating that it included copies of previous ones, to ensure safe receipt of the information.¹²¹ And even when correspondence arrived safely, it might be out of sequence, since letters took varying times to travel. So the brothers numbered many of the missives, and designated many as copies of, say, the letter number XYZ.

Still, mistakes happened. In one communique, Giuseppe/Youssef informs Antonio of the safe arrival of letters from Livorno, but asks what had become of those he sent by the *Tayousa* which had docked in Cyprus. He ruminates that either the letters were sent

121. FM / A / L / X 6002 "Le lettere: Lettera A" ca.1797-1799 (Europe) MIFI 500, written on February 1798.

on to Venice by mistake or were lying in the Venetian consulate in Cyprus. As a result, he resent copies of all the sales and purchase accounts. In another instance, an agent asked Giuseppe/Yousef whether the order he had requested in his last letter was the same as the previous one, or whether he was placing an entirely new one.¹²² So, at times even Giuseppe/Youssef had a hard time keeping up with the demands of his brother and other agents, and was acutely aware of the dangers of complying with certain requests such as when asked to send two thousand ghurush to Cyprus by agent Youssef Homsî:

You asked me to send 2 thousand ghurush plus the custom declarations straightaway. These matters cannot always be complied with immediately, as they take time and we need a couple of days to prepare everything. Also, it is not always prudent to do so as the transport can be dangerous. You are aware of this as you are in the business.¹²³

But updating merchants and especially elder brother Antonio on all accounts, freight costs, and debtors and creditors proved Giuseppe/Youssef's top priority. The most important and detailed missives went both by ship and, copied, by land through the intermediary of an agent to nearly all the peripheral offices, indicating the value of transparency as well as accuracy in this early modern business model.

Apart from commercial and financial news, the Aleppo office commented on political trends when they touched family, agents, and friends or might impact trade. For example, Youssef/Giuseppe wrote Francis Diab in September 1789—in the midst of the French Revolution—acknowledging the receipt of his letters dated 27 July and 18 August, and conveys at least the financially relevant political events:

All the French were imprisoned in the citadel, with their wives, and children, their goods were impounded and sealed by order of the higher state and to remain so

122. FM / A / L / X 6002 "Le lettere: Lettera A" ca.1797-1799 (Europe) MIFI 500.

123. FM / A / L / X 6002 "Le lettere: Lettera A" ca.1797-1799 (Europe) MIFI 500, Letter no. 9.

until further orders. As to the dragomans Youssef Farra was made to pay a monetary fine, and Hanna Andrea, Anton Ghoukas and Anton Ghazal are in hiding, their houses are sealed, as are their firmans four Christian communities have collectively been fined eighty bags of [illegible].... Never before have they ever had to pay such an amount. This is because they have been accused of conducting church services in their houses.¹²⁴

This information was shared because losing French trade would seriously impact their shipping business, just as the diminished number of *firman*s, *berats*, and *dragomans* would to Aleppine trade in general. Hidemitsu Kuroki confirms the gravity of “Events in Aleppo during Napoleon’s Expedition,” finding that aggression against the French resulted directly from Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt, and estimating the financial losses of a *dragoman*/merchant at some 400,000 piasters.¹²⁵ In a follow-up letter to his brother Antonio in Livorno, Giuseppe/Youssef again recounts the political occurrences, but insists that this news be kept a secret, presumably to protect the *dragomans* in hiding and other family relationships.¹²⁶ As always, the letter returns quickly to business, here the fine points of transporting gall nuts to Iskenderun on the *Madame Ghazale*.¹²⁷

Clearly, informational flow was as crucial to the smooth running of the Ghantuz Cubbe network as it was for the Julfan one. Data from the central node ranged from the most important elements—item availability and prices, current exchange rates, complete accounts and description of merchandise bought and shipped, purchase orders, letters of credit, shipping logs and lists of available ships and ports of call. Such minute reporting

124. FM / A / L / X 6002 "Le lettere: Lettera A" ca.1797-1799 (Europe) MIFI 500.

125. Hidemitsu Kuroki, “Events in Aleppo during Napoleon’s Expedition,” *Bulletin d’études orientales* 51 (1999), 269-271. Of course, Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt occurred later, but probably piqued anti-French sentiment.

126. According to Kuroki, Hanna Andrea was imprisoned, but in his letter Giuseppe/Youssef reports him to be in hiding. The other *dragomans* who ran away were reported as missing.

127. Letters from the Ghantuz Cubbe family private archives, written September 1798. The Ghazale family, after one of whom the ship was named, were relatives by marriage, so this ship was probably one of the four brigantines owned by the family; leased vessels usually had more generic names like ‘Larbole Felice,’ ‘La Polaca Nostra,’ or “The Genoa.”

on price indices and fluctuations was crucial to the manner in which the network center directed affairs. Among many examples, Giuseppe/Youssef hurriedly ordered an agent not to buy the bales of cotton he had ordered, as the price was going down and they could be gotten cheaper later.¹²⁸ In another instance, he informed his brother on May 24, 1797, that the price of yellow and white agate had fallen following its price decrease in Mossul, so they had to adjust their price in Aleppo accordingly. He also details the latest rates of exchange and agate prices in different currencies.

The agate is now being sold in 2 batches of 200 white and two hundred yellow. It is true that prior to now, 200 agates were being sold at 550, however the price in Basra has been reduced to d13 mouhamadiéh which meant that we had to reduce the price to 3998 [illegible]. . . . A barrel of red dye [cochineal] was 11660 piastres and 39 para. The Venetian gold pound comes up to 102 ghurush and 25 para.¹²⁹

In a similar letter to Youssef Diab, the agent in Cyprus, Youssef/Giuseppe reported the latest value of the Ottoman gold coin—hard to find and in Aleppo and now worth 100 (probably piasters). As the riyal coin goes for 4, he calculated, the Istanbuli gold is equivalent to 5.5 Egyptian, 5.7 Ahmadi's, or 9 Venetian.¹³⁰

As we can see, the Ghantuz Cubbes were acutely cognizant of the importance of information to the business, for nearly every communication written or received explicitly assessed communication itself: “I am including the accounts for the last 3 shipments,” or “I cannot send you all the latest accounts because the consulage has yet to be paid,” or “We have now received the information,” “We are now informed,” or “Let this information be known to you.” In short, information was understood as the most

128. FM / A / L / X 6002 "Le lettere: Lettera A" ca.1797-1799 (Europe) MIFI 500.

129. FM / A / L / X 6002 "Le lettere: Lettera A" ca.1797-1799 (Europe) MIFI 500, Letter no. 19, written May 24, 1797.

130. FM / A / L / X 6002 "Le lettere: Lettera A" ca.1797-1799 (Europe) MIFI 500, Letter no. 26, written May 24, 1797.

precious commodity their merchants could trade. And this was so because transparent sharing of knowledge proved, and perpetuated, the essential trust within the family and the extended community on which all other benefits depended.

Trust: A Network's True Center

Again parallel to Hancock's description of successful merchant networks, by employing mostly trusted family or friends as agents, the Ghantuz Cubbes alleviated some of the risks and stress of long-distance trade. Despite these structural precautions, the brothers sometimes had to rely on the wisdom and integrity of their agents, which did not always end well.

Like other firms at the time, the Ghantuz Cubbe family network functioned on the basis of trust, which Aslanian identifies as "an essential component of early modern long-distance trade."¹³¹ Not only was merchandise shipped before money was received, but some of the merchandise was itself money: gems, bags of coins, bundles of paper currency, and letters of credit. Recipients of monetary transactions received instructions via individual letters. In one sent to Antoine Prince in Cyprus (predictably identified with a serial number in the margin) the author advised entrusting a bundle of gold worth 1,812 *kurush* and 13 pieces of silver to Cousin Hanna Balit.

Aslanian analyzes the function of trust in early modern long-distance trade by borrowing what political scientists and sociologists call *social capital theory*, which he defines as "the value generated when individuals join together and invest resources in the formation of ongoing and structured relationships ... that generate collective and individual benefits." These advantages, he elucidates, include achieving a common

131. Sebouh Aslanian, "Social Capital, 'Trust,' and the Role of Networks in Julfan Trade: Informal and Semi-Formal Institutions at Work," *Journal of Global History* 1, no. 3 (2006): 383-402.

goal—a primary one being “maintenance of a network’s social and communal cohesion” allowing collective action, shared norms, information flow and trustworthiness. Two factors prime the creation of social capital: *closure* and *multiplex relations*.¹³²

Aslanian sees trust as the most important asset the New Julfan merchants could invest. He explains that not all networks actually create social capital, however; some rely on two important mechanisms favoring it: *closure*, or limiting membership to those who share common values and may be expected to remain faithful, and *multiplex relations*, “a network’s ability to connect its members to each other through more than one role, position or context.”¹³³

Trustworthiness, Aslanian finds, was paramount in Armenian merchant networks not because of relatedness but because of reputation. An agent’s reputation for embezzling threatened not only his future but also that of the firm, which might lose the trust of the larger community as well as of specific clients. His point applies to all Levantine networks—indeed, to the Levantine community as a whole—including that of the Ghantuz Cubbe, whose agents transported high volumes and values of merchandise, including specie.¹³⁴

As mentioned, in contrast to Aslanian’s New Julfan merchant network paradigm, the family enterprise managed itself without any explicit legal hierarchy or set rungs of trust, but instead followed traditionally assumed, but not entirely inflexible, order of command from older to younger brother and exhibited transparency in communication. However, as Francesca Trivellato properly points out, historians err when they assume

132. Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean*, 170.

133. Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean*, 171.

134. The Ghantuz Cubbe family firm traded in and transported a wide variety of goods including silk, cotton, specialty textiles from Aintab, cochineal and other dyes, gall nuts, tarbouches, spices, raw materials, various metals, ropes of pearls, coral, or precious gems, as well as gold, silver and money.

that kinship and ethnoreligious ties inevitably engendered trust.¹³⁵ Unfortunately, individuals do, too. Obviously, even a relative or dearest friend might be unreliable or unsuitable for a job.

In the one known case in which a Ghantuz Cubbe company agent broke the code of honor, network members carefully noted the transgression: In no uncertain manner Giuseppe/Youssef informed brother Antonio on March 1, 1798, that when their agent Marini was requested to deliver moneys owed on outstanding letters of credit along with fees for freight and consulage to a captain docked in Cyprus, the “dog, son of a dog” had already left town on Lazarovich’s ship, and “has till today not written to us.”¹³⁶ He then begged his brother not to blame him for hiring the agent, who had seemed to be a decent fellow and was also rich, so had seemed even less likely to behave in such a manner. Also, it turned out that the despicable Marini had committed the same offence with agents Moses and Raphael. Naturally, similar letters shot out to others in the network, particularly those working in the Cyprus and Chios areas, warning them of his character and asking them, if he were found, to demand an explanation.¹³⁷

We shall see in a later chapter that having his reputation destroyed did not deter Marini from future malfeasance.¹³⁸ But no other major instance of company disloyalty exists for comparison, although Giuseppe/Youssef misplaced his trust in a captain he

135. Francesca Trivellato, *Familiarity of Strangers*, 12.

136. Lazarovich was the captain on one the ships they leased.

137. FM / A / L / X 6002 "Le lettere: Lettera A" ca.1797-1799 (Europe) MIFI 500, Letters no. 38/40/116.

138. Marini later moved to Aleppo and married the daughter of a well-established Jewish merchant from Livorno. The Venetian consul again commented on his character after the death of Marini’s father-in-law.

found to be a ‘liar,’ and hid valuable letters inside a plain packet of goods to ensure their safe delivery.¹³⁹

Yet to an impressive extent, in the Ghantuz Cubbe network the paramount value of trust in family members and hand-picked friends seems to have been generally well placed. The centrality and stability of the central node of Aleppo, which proffered goods, direction, and information to peripheral nodes throughout the network, also appeared to preserve its most valuable commodity, trustworthiness.

Conclusion

Minority traders’ role as business, cultural, diplomatic and religious middlemen between the Empire and Europe becomes clear when viewed as an integral element of the vast economic and political changes in the early modern period. The establishment of the Ottoman Empire as the dominant sea power in the Mediterranean region, consummated by the incorporation of Aleppo into its purview, had fueled that city’s commercial might in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Yet during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as European nations increased their navigation skills and ventured ever farther in their commerce, their trade connections with the Levant fluctuated but culminated with the Europeans winning not just a permanent presence in, but supremacy over, the East. Both the commodities exchanged and the means of their delivery reflected this shift: More finished, fashionable European products flooded Ottoman ports, and new shipping routes made goods spirited by vessels more accessible than those dragged by caravans.¹⁴⁰

139. FM / A / L / X 6002 "Le lettere: Lettera A" ca.1797-1799 (Europe) MIFI 500, Letter no. 26.

140. Walter Zenner, “Middlemen Minorities in the Syrian Mosaic: Trade, Conflict, and Image Management,” in “The Ethnic Perspective,” special issue, *Sociological Perspectives* 30. no. 4 (Oct. 1987), 404-405.

In the eighteenth century the Europeans gained a solid foothold in the Empire through the increasingly inviting capitulations the Ottomans granted them with the aim of rebooting Imperial commerce. These agreements gave Europeans extraterritoriality rights for themselves and for their *protégés*, the minority middlemen. So many non-Muslim traders thereby advanced financially and socially that—even at the cost of lost taxes—Imperial authorities created an equally advantageous program which let any participating minority merchant set up local and global businesses, as exemplified by the Ghantuz Cubbe firm. The state-backed program not only successfully dissuaded minority subjects from seeking European protection—an accomplishment soon extended to Muslim merchants through a parallel program—but also helped raise a wealthy cosmopolitan Levantine merchant class enriching the entire Empire. The *Tanzimat* reforms then embraced minorities in that class as equal subjects more fully than ever, even favoring them with special legal liberties.

So much so, as we will see, that by the nineteenth century the reform-born integration of religious and ethnic Levantine communities within the Empire began to fray. Ironically, Ottoman authorities' purposive use of minority traders like the Ghantuz Cubbe and minority consuls to resist, or at least harness, rising Western nourished the nineteenth-century ethnic nationalism that contributed to the Empire's eventual demise. For while it prolonged much of its worldwide trading power, the Ottomans' support of minority merchants also strengthened the Levantine communities by facilitating their dual relationships with the Empire and Europe, and thus sowed at least some of the seeds of its own destruction as a unified realm. The *Tanzimat* ideal that all subjects of the sultan were equally Ottoman gradually became displaced by minority groups' increasing self-

identification as Armenians, Christian Arabs, Greeks, or Jews—a shift marking the beginnings of nationalism. Thus the earlier, gradual growth of a wealthy minority merchant middle class appears to have carried with it a novel class-consciousness which evolved into a bourgeois nationalism demanding greater political autonomy and celebrating culturally differentiated affiliations. What started off as an Imperial strategy to reinvigorate its worldwide trade and domestic economy ended up planting the seeds of separatism that contributed to the dissolution of the Empire in the twentieth century.

Ultimately, not even the success of the *Avrupa* and *Hayriye Tuccari* programs and the reach of the *Tanzimat* reforms could check the onslaught of European mercantile might.¹⁴¹ But they did catapult an elite, cosmopolitan class of religious and ethnic minority merchants in Aleppo to positions that no one would have dreamed possible a century and a half before. In effect, both the swelling European trade and the Ottoman mechanisms to harness it let Levantine intermediaries prosper commercially and monopolize European vice-consul and honorary consul posts in Syria well into the twenty-first century.

More important for the fields of Ottoman history and Mediterranean studies, these new findings about the state's active, agile support for minority merchants illustrate two traditionally overlooked points. They underscore the longstanding importance of Levantines not only as powerful economic brokers but as cultural conduits bridging the competing civilizations. And in doing so, they disprove long-reigning but lopsided truisms about Ottoman socioeconomic policy as reactionary, rigid, oblivious, impotent, and thus fated to failure.

141. Masters, "Sultan's Entrepreneurs," 593. In 1838 the Anglo-Ottoman trade agreement made the Empire the most extreme example of a free-trade regime in the world.

Chapter Three

THE LEVANTINES IN ALEPPO

Aleppo, the present metropolis of Syria, is deemed, in importance, the third city in the Ottoman dominions. In situation, magnitude, population, and opulence, it is much inferior to Constantinople and Cairo; nor can it presume to emulate the courtly splendor of either those cities. But in the salubrity of air, in the solidity and elegance of its private buildings, as well as the convenience and neatness of its streets, Aleppo may be reckoned superior to both....

Alexander Russell¹



Khan Al-Gumruk, Aleppo 2011

During the Ottoman centuries, Aleppo was the Empire's third largest and the most important city, famed as a center for trade and commerce from Mesopotamian times, as cuneiform tablets found at Ebla attest.² It vies with Jericho and Damascus as one of the

1. Alexander Russell and Patrick Russell, *The Natural History of Aleppo Containing a Description of the City, and the Principal Natural Productions in Its Neighbourhood: Together with an Account of the Climate, Inhabitants, and Diseases, Particularly of the Plague*. 2 vols. (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1794), 1:1-2.

2. Eric Meyers, "Ebla," in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

world's oldest continuously inhabited cities, and claims its name commemorates Abraham's milking his goat on the slope of its citadel.³ Aleppo was certainly a commercial center at the beginning of the second millennium BCE, but excavations conducted in the southwest of the modern city suggest it existed since the early Bronze Age.⁴ Equidistant from the Euphrates and the Mediterranean, and at the crossroad of Asia and Europe, Aleppo proved an ideal location for trade, a perfect home for merchants, and an important stop on the Silk Road. Indeed, since the twelfth century, the availability and value of these locally-produced goods and the city's centrality as a lively terminus for eastern caravans on the Silk Road had drawn Europeans, such as the Venetians and the English.

After its conquest by Muslim armies, Aleppo became pivotal in another way, as a city on the turbulent border of Islam and Christianity. Its Hittite-era citadel was rebuilt by the Zangids in the twelfth century and later by the Ayyubids. During the many Crusades, Aleppo was besieged, but never conquered. Ravaged by the forces of Hulagu in 1260, devastated by an outbreak of the Bubonic Plague in the 1340s, and overrun by Amir Timur in 1401, Aleppo always recovered.⁵ [source?] The rule of the Mamluk Beys and their investment in its commercial infrastructure finally ushered in a period of relative peace and prosperity. Bruce Masters tells us this lengthy period of prosperity, followed by the fall of the Armenian port city of Ayas to the Mamluks and the consequent change

3. In Arabic, the city is called *Halab al Shahba*, meaning "He milked the grey one (goat)."

4. Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters, *The Ottoman City Between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir and Istanbul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 19; Meyers, "Ebla."

5. Eldem, Goffman, and Masters. *Ottoman City*, 20.

of the trade route, made Aleppo the principal center for East-West commerce in the Levant.⁶

Its continuing prominence stemmed from Ottoman control, since the sixteenth century, over most of what we now call the Middle East, including the eastern Mediterranean, large parts of the Maghreb, and the Arabian Peninsula.⁷ These conquests positioned the Empire enviably between Europe and Asia, at the helm of the world's major trade arteries. Gaining a priceless outlet to the Persian Gulf through the incorporation of Basra and entrée to the Euphrates allowed Aleppo, itself without a port, to flourish fully as a commercial capital. Its *souks* (open markets) sparkled with Persian and Anatolian silk and a resplendent congeries of the region's soaps, cotton and other textiles, leather, and rich coffee from the Hijaz.⁸ There, the French established consular representation in 1581; the Levant Company opened its first "factory" or workspace in 1583 with the arrival of consul William Barrett; and the Dutch set up their consulate in 1613.

Not only fortunate geography but also active Ottoman policy invited the Western presence. The generous trade capitulations granted by outward-looking and practical sultans gave European traders a foothold in the Empire. Certainly, the Venetians and the Genoese had enjoyed similar commercial agreements with the Byzantines, but the conquering Ottomans could offer formal trading concessions to the English, French, Dutch and other European nations as well. These capitulations let European merchants reside and trade in the Empire and elevated their status above that of the local non-

6. Eldem, Goffman, and Masters, *Ottoman City*, 20.

7. These lands included Syria and the modern-day regions of Jordan and Israel-Palestine.

8. James Mathers, *Pashas: Traders and Travellers in the Islamic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 25; Eldem, Goffman, and Masters, *Ottoman City*, 26-28.

Muslim population. Under the capitulations, Europeans owed no allegiance to the sultan, nor did they have to pay the *jizya*, a poll tax levied on minority subjects. Still, Europeans during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries could exhibit none of the power and arrogance they demonstrated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Rather, they depended on the sultan's patronage; even their ambassadors received a symbolic salary from him, signifying their reliance on his benevolence. It was not until the early nineteenth century, during the era of *Tanzimat* reforms, that most European merchants felt both secure and financially interested enough to settle their families and to integrate their own business networks within the fabric of Ottoman society.

Until recently, the Levant Company and the Dutch VOC were considered entities whose innovativeness let Europeans justifiably dominate trade in the Empire, while the Ottoman economy remained mummified in traditionalism. Fernand Braudel deems this Western hegemony to have begun in the late sixteenth century; Emanuel Wallerstein dates the emergence of a European world-economy in the region from 1640.⁹ However, Rudolph Matthee challenges that assumption: "In the last few decades scholars have been busy revising the picture of early modern Asia as a continent impervious to change, lacking in agency and wanting commercial sophistication." According to him, situating the critical moment of European commercial supremacy before 1800 demonstrates an "anachronistic" conflation of ascendance and hegemony.¹⁰ This chapter will demonstrate that, even after 1800, Ottoman policies pointedly and vigorously supported the Porte's

9. Fernand Braudel, *Mediterranean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) 2:1165-1176; Emanuel Wallerstein, *Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1976), I:1063-1068, as quoted in Rudolph Matthee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver, 1600-1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 2.

10. Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, 2. In general, scholars agree that European hegemony did not take place until the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars, as a result of a lasting peace, economic expansion, and the Industrial Revolution.

own merchants, Muslim or not. Despite the hackneyed claim that capitulations invited European trade superiority, we will see that Levantine merchants of European origin continued to operate not only at the mercy of local traders but under the active protection of the central Ottoman state.

Kate Fleet's *European and Islamic Trade in the Early Ottoman State: The Merchants of Genoa and Turkey*¹¹ argues that from the very foundation of the Empire, the Porte was well aware of its economic vulnerabilities and worked strenuously to integrate itself into the larger Mediterranean, and then into the world-wide, economy. Concentrating on its early years, Fleet demonstrates the "highly developed" relations between the Genoese and the Ottomans. She contends that the Ottomans not only nurtured these relationships knowingly, but that they may explain the economic and territorial advances of the incipient state.

Confirming Fleet's insight, close investigation of the Levantine community in Aleppo illustrates how energetic Ottoman support for commerce led them to grant and renew capitulations; to intercede on behalf of their own merchants; and finally to promulgate the *Tanzimat* reforms—interventions which powerfully ameliorated the circumstances of its merchant class. As a consequence of such Ottoman government actions, an elite Levantine consular merchant society, composed of both European and local non-Muslim traders, rose in Aleppo.

The current chapter establishes this point by documenting the history of the Levantines. Its first, more descriptive half examines the presence of European merchants in the city and traces its social and economic evolution through the seventeenth century.

11. Kate Fleet, *European and Islamic Trade in the Early Ottoman State: The Merchants of Genoa and Turkey* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1999), 3.

The second part looks at changes that took place as Europeans left the city on the heels of the early-nineteenth-century slump in the silk trade. For, despite the general exodus and other disruptions, certain groups of foreign traders stayed in Aleppo and were later joined by new ones. The concomitant reorientation from international to regional commerce challenged, but also benefitted, many of these non-Muslim traders. Families like the Poches and the Marcopolis, who shifted their focus to domestic commerce, were suddenly faced with two new problems: finding locally-produced goods to export, and distributing them to the hinterland.¹² They succeeded in their endeavors because they could initially rely on intermediary local Christian and other minority merchants to facilitate their access to area markets and to manage the area's traders.

Using documents from the Venetian consulate in Aleppo and the Levant Company archives, this chapter details the advance of European merchants in the nineteenth-century Empire. It studies the establishment of their trade networks, and the consequent empowerment of both European and local merchants, by first exploring the contemporary commercial and political climate in Aleppo which allowed that transition. In considering the era of reform, this chapter shows that, despite Europeans' influence on promulgation of both the *Hatt I Serif Gülhane* and the later *Tanzimat* legislation, their relationship with the Porte remained more symbiotic than hegemonic. OK, great intro and road map!

The Levant Company: Exemplar of the European Trade Presence in Aleppo

As noted, the silk trade and the convenience of the caravan routes constituted Aleppo's major attractions for early modern European merchants. The Venetians held a

12. Mafalda Ade, *Picknick Mit Den Paschas: Aleppo und die Levantinische Handelsfirma Fratelli Poche (1853-1880)* (Beirut: Ergon Verlag Wurzburg, 2013), 78-79.

monopoly over the silk commerce from the fifteenth to the early sixteenth century, but the establishment of France's consulate in 1557, England's Levant Company in 1583, and the Dutch VOC in 1613 gradually undermined their position.¹³ All three of these nations had received capitulations from the Sublime Porte and competed with each other as well as with the Venetians. In the beginning the French had the upper hand, but were soon superseded by the English. By the middle of the seventeenth century, merchants of the other two nations as well were regulated by governing bodies that provided security and structure: In Marseille, the French set up a *chambre de commerce* in 1650, and in 1625 the Dutch organized the *Kamer der Directeuren van den Levantschen Handel ende Navigatie in de Middellandsche Zee* (College of Directors for Levant Trade and Mediterranean Navigation). As mentioned, merchants at this period came not as individuals but as members of a nation and, as such, remained isolated from the native community. Intense competition between the three nations (England, France and Holland) continued, but English dominance did as well.¹⁴ To understand the manner in which the Levant Company operated in the region as a whole and particularly in Aleppo, we may compare that company and the British East India Company established in Asia in 1600.

The Levant and East India Companies

During its century-long prime the Levant Company surpassed the fame and fortune of its offshoot and sibling rival, the East India Company, which was run by families like the Abbots who had started their careers in Aleppo. Indeed, John Thomas

13. The Dutch had begun to compete with other nations even prior to receiving their capitulations; however, as the silk trade suffered setbacks in the seventeenth century, Dutch merchants moved to Smyrna. See Eldem, Goffman, and Masters, *Ottoman City*, 34; Ade, *Picknick*.

14. Paul Masson, *Histoire du commerce français dans le Levant au XVIIe siècle* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1967).

Abbott served as consul there, while Richard Robert Abbott went to Bengal and Henry and William Abbott traveled to Madras.¹⁵ Yet despite their family links and their common design as joint-stock ventures, the two companies contrast sharply in their nature and operations.

The companies' different external political conditions as well as their varying internal traits—especially the mechanics of their workings and the lives of their agents abroad—largely explain the successes and the failures specific to each. Soren Mentz's *The English Gentleman Merchant at Work: Madras and the City of London, 1660-1740* allows us to compare the Levant Company's first and central workplace in Aleppo with the East India Company's first and central one in Madras. Although both enterprises operated within major Muslim empires, the Mughal and the Ottoman, they conducted business in widely divergent manners in accord with regional policies and conditions. First, local Indian authorities had granted the East India Company (EIC) valuable trading privileges, such as reduction of custom dues and royal patronage, in return for hefty investment in the area.¹⁶ Mentz cites the example of the English receiving the Golden *Firman* from the ruler of Golconda in 1632, effectively reducing yearly custom dues to a mere 3,000 rupees.¹⁷ The *firman* was not regarded as universally binding, however, and the English abused their privileges and took advantage of local political unrest to implement their territorial ambitions. The timing of EIC territoriality in the seventeenth

15. Records of the Abbott family, including wills, letters, and birth and death certificates, are preserved in the Huguenot library in London, FH/ABB acc.no. 28157 Abbott.

16. Soren Mentz, *The English Gentleman Merchant at Work: Madras and the City of London, 1660-1740* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2005), 21. The *firman* decree exempted the Company from tax duties.

17. Mentz, *English Gentleman Merchant*.

century is confirmed by Philip Stern in *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India*:

Both the expansion of the British Company-State in India and the expansion of the British state's power over the state-Company had deep roots in the seventeenth century when the Company's establishment in "India" had already become, as one contemporary observed, another common-wealth.¹⁸

Although the East India Company had become obviously colonial only in the years following 1757, some historians contend that British imperialism in India did not fully mature, nor did the leading figures in London accept it, until well into the nineteenth century, when India came under the governorship of the Company and, later, direct English rule.¹⁹ However, recent research shows that the threat of force and the eventual colonization of India proved integral parts of the Company's business plan, which aimed to defend profitable trade routes and cut off Dutch and Portuguese access to spices. Thus, military might and colonial aggression characterized the entire history of the East India Company; as early as 1788 Edmund Burke called the EIC "a state in disguise of a merchant."²⁰ Stern pursues this idea in his book which presents a revisionist history of the East India Company from its founding in 1600 until its reassessment in the wake of the battle of Plassey (1757). Breaking with the earlier historiographical trope that the EIC became an imperial power only after that date, he contends that "from its inception in 1600, the East India Company, as a corporation, was by its very organization a

18. Philip Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 15.

19. Kathleen Wilson, *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity, and Modernity in Britain and the Empire 1660/1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 99.

20. "The India Company became to be what it is, a great Empire carrying on subordinately (under the public authority), a great commerce. It became that thing which was supposed by the Roman Law so unsuitable, the same power was a Trader, the same power was a Lord.... In fact, [the Company] is a State in Disguise of a Merchant, a great public office in disguise of a Countinghouse." Edmund Burke, cited in Mentz, *English Gentleman Merchant*, 22.

government over its own employees.”²¹ Stern quickly dismantles the previous assumption that the EIC was “essentially a trading corporation, which became an empire only with its acquisition of territory in the middle of the eighteenth century,” a sentiment that reinforces the accepted division in the historiography of the British Empire between commercial and imperial periods.²² He does this by first examining the pre-Plassey period during which EIC governors in London took their exclusive trade rights to imply their responsibility over trade and British subjects in general. Stern then analyzes the transformation of the system of 1690 to one focused on the acquisition of territorial power in the eighteenth century, and inspects the impact of challenges the company faced throughout that time. He concludes that, although the goal of seizing territorial power was disputed within the company, the conditions that made it possible had “deep roots in the seventeenth century when the company’s ‘establishment in India’ had already become, as one contemporary observed, another Common-wealth.”²³

In stark contrast, the Levant Company began without territorial or colonial ambitions and, starting off as a chartered joint stock company, did not have territoriality built into its charter, as did the East India Company. Indeed, merchants settling in the Empire keenly appreciated that they were there on sufferance. Bereft of the state-backed power supporting the EIC, they generally operated within the confines of the capitulations (though violations of the agreement occurred regularly on both sides). Nabil Matar aptly points out that “in the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods, England was not

21. Philip Stern, *The Company-State*, 3.

22. Stern, *Company-State*, vii.

23. Stern, *Company-State*, 15.

a colonial power ... in the imperial sense that followed in the eighteenth century.”²⁴ In addition, the Ottomans' frightening military reputation encouraged European submission and restricted their aims to commerce rather than colonization. This is not to say that the Europeans did not think themselves culturally and morally superior to Muslim locals; Levant Company chaplains were some of the most vocal detractors of Ottoman traditions. William Biddulph spent over eight years in the Empire, many of them in Aleppo, and did not hesitate to "correct" his ignorant hosts: ‘The Arabians do not even know their own ancestry, since they call themselves ‘Saracens’ of ‘Sara’ when they are rather *Ishmaelites of Ishmael*.’²⁵

The different merchandise the two companies sought also impacted the attitudes of their overseas agents. Princely spices treasured in cooking and medicine, particularly pepper, nutmeg and cinnamon, reigned as the Indian commodity of choice. During the medieval and early modern periods these had made their way to the Levant and from there, were then transported, at fabulous mark-up, by the Venetians to Europe. But Vasco da Gama's epoch-making navigation around the Cape of Good Hope changed everything. In contrast to the East India Company's spice dealers, Levant merchants thenceforth traded mainly in silk, woolen cloth, and cotton.²⁶ In fact, the *Londra kattan* (English

24. Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 10.

25. Gerald Maclean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel: English Visitors to the Ottoman Empire, 1580-1720* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 93.

26. David Jacoby, *Trade, Commodities and Shipping in the Medieval Mediterranean* (Norfolk: Gaillard Printers, 1997), 542. The importance of cotton as a commodity goes back to the Middle Ages as evidenced by an unpublished trade manual compiled in 1270 and listing several types of high-grade Aleppine cotton sent to Venice from Acre. Textiles were an important commodity traded through Aleppo since the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when Levantine commerce was a Venetian monopoly. Cotton was one of Venice's main exports: “Data concerning the cotton trade are abundant in all Venetian sources and they leave no doubt that the export of Syrian cotton was, besides the spice trade, the most important branch of Venice's Levantine trade.” Eliyahu Ashtor, *Studies on the Levantine Trade in the Middle Ages*, (London: Variorum Reprints, 1978), 41. The village of Sarmin in the currently Governate of Idlib was an important center for producing cotton, and many Europeans merchants lived and worked there in the

broadcloth) sold in Aleppo had been imported from England and clothed many Ottoman families throughout the Empire.²⁷ One of the main commodities the two companies vied for was Iranian silk brought to the Empire by the New Julfan Armenian merchants. The EIC attempted to monopolize the Iranian silk trade by diverting it to Persian Gulf ports, aided by Shah ‘Abbas’ ban on silk commerce to his arch-enemy, the Ottoman Empire. However, after the shah’s death, the silk trade quickly returned to Aleppo and remained a staple of the Levant Company.

According to Mentz, the city of Madras offered the English commercial conditions basically similar to those in Aleppo.²⁸ The East India Company, after establishing various trading station and factories in Surat, Masulipatnam and Hoogley, obtained the Madras area in 1639 and established Fort St. George as a major trading station and factory. Leased from the Vijayanagar rulers, the land at first supported only a few residences and the factory; later, however, it drew Dutch and Portuguese merchants to settle inside the fort. The settlement grew to become the city of Madras (currently Chennai), one of the EIC's major commercial and manufacturing centers. However,

fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Ashtor, *Studies*, 40-41. In fact, up to the end of the twentieth century, Sarmin was the only Syrian locale holding a weekly game of cricket in the village square—a throwback to the English who had lived and worked there. Silk was another significant commodity the Venetians traded in the fifteenth century, along with spices, metals such as tin and potash, and alkali ash used in the manufacture of mirrors and soap. Ashtor, *Studies*, 32-45.

The centrality of certain types of cotton and woolen cloths as commercial commodities continued into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, although the Venetians no longer monopolized the business. Trading these same commodities lasted, as we can see from a bill of lading listing many types of silk and cotton, as well as various spices and ash (“cenere”). A.S.VE. Cinque Savi alla Mercanzie, Busta 604 lettere consoli. We see similar cargo on a bill of lading sent by the Levant Company to England in 1734. TNA SP 110/57 part I.

27. The term *Londra kattan* came from the word Italian merchants used for the red broadcloth sold in Aleppo, the cheapest of the three types of broadcloth. The other two categories were the *mezzo-Londrines* (French colors) and *astracans*, both higher in quality but drab in color. Ralph Davis, *Aleppo and Devonshire Square: English Traders in the Levant in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1999), 100. The term *Londra kattan* was still in use in Aleppo at the end of the twentieth century, but referred to cotton cloth rather than wool.

28. Mentz, *English Gentleman Merchant*. Mentz explores the activities of private merchants in Madras and the creation of a merchant diaspora built on trust, family ties and old-world capitalism.

despite the presence of the Company, many merchants there worked independently, thereby diminishing company profits.²⁹ Private trading by company staff encouraged corruption and became such a concern that Sir Thomas Roe, English Ambassador to the Mughal emperor in Agra, requested that the board of directors explicitly forbid its servants to engage in any private trading.³⁰ Although he acknowledges some scholars' dissent, Mentz notes that historians Sinnappah Arasaratnam and W. H. Moreland viewed the merchants' dual company and private roles as not only demoralizing but downright detrimental to the EIC and, ultimately, to the growth of commerce in general during the first half of the eighteenth century.³¹ Yet that tension between personal and corporate roles did not pertain in Aleppo, as most of the factors and agents were permitted to conduct private trading, as long it did not interfere with their company work. Interestingly, though, the consul and chaplains could not conduct private trade, since that would appear as a conflict of interest.

One of Mentz's main premises is that the English in Madras could not have functioned without London, the "umbilical cord" nourishing the English diaspora.³² EIC directors in London recruited staff for India, so having the proper connections could pave the way to a lucrative career, and hiring greatly favored younger relatives of very wealthy merchants, politicians, and aristocrats.³³ Not surprisingly for the era, in this regard the Aleppo factory resembled that of Madras. Still, the Aleppine one did exhibit some resilient populism: While many directors of the Levant Company named relatives and

29. Mentz, *English Gentleman Merchant*.

30. Mentz, *English Gentleman Merchant*, 18-19.

31. Mentz, *English Gentlemen Merchant*, 20. Mentz cites Elizabeth Saxe as saying that private trade helped the EIC overcome its difficulties and benefit from the Mughal decline.

32. Mentz, *English Gentleman Merchant*, 9-10.

33. Younger sons of aristocratic families did not usually inherit the family title. If not destined to join a religious order, they had to carve out careers, among which trading in the EIC was quite acceptable.

favorites—such as the Vernons, Bosanquets, Radcliffes, and des Bouveries—as factors in Aleppo, they also recruited young apprentices and budding merchants, which diversified social standings in the merchant community.³⁴ We know this, ironically, by their lighter footprint in formal documents: Many factors' and agents' names never grace the minutes of meetings, since sons of modest families might be adequately identified *en masse* as "the factory." One such, John Sanderson, who had been apprenticed to John Bates as a cloth worker, was sent by his neighbors Osborne and Draper to work in Constantinople, and later gained renown as a merchant and explorer.³⁵ Another democratizing influence may be that positions in the Levant Company were more temporary than similar ones in the East India Company, with an average stay for holders of only two to six years.

Nonetheless, a considerable number of merchants, consuls and staff members in Aleppo hailed from prominent merchant families whose relatives sat on the board of directors in London, even if very few were members of the aristocracy.³⁶ Rather, interestingly, many belonged to elite merchant circles descended from Huguenots. The Hays, Bosanquets, Radcliffs, Purnells and de Bouveries not only served as directors in London but also sent family members to the Aleppo factory. Sometimes more than one member of the same family would assume positions in Aleppo at different times. Claude Hays (a relative) was the treasurer to the consul in 1773; later, David was named consul. Equally interesting, most of these families already had marriage or kinship ties with each

34. Most merchants, such as the Vernons and the Bosanquets, had family members on the board of governors or had family ties to a board member. Many English merchant families sent out to Aleppo were descended from Huguenots.

35. William Foster, ed., *The Travels of John Sanderson in the Levant, with his Autobiography and Selections from his Correspondence* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1931).

36. Jacob Radnor, *A Huguenot Family, 1536-1889: Des Bouverie, Bouverie, Pleydell-Bouverie* (Winchester: Foxbury, 2001). Several merchants received titles while working with the Levant Company, which let Huguenot descendants finally top the social ladder. For example, Sir Jacob de Bouveries became Viscount Folkstone while his fourth son, Christopher (1689-1719), was apprenticed in Cyprus.

other before they served the Levant Company. Several members of these Huguenot clans worked for the East India Company and joined its governing board. But Englishmen in India tended to obscure their Huguenot derivation more than did their counterparts in Aleppo.

After the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, over 2,000 Huguenots fled France, again largely to England, whose embrace of Protestantism and entrepreneurship made them feel welcome. Also, there was a large number of Huguenot bankers already established in there. Armed with their business background of bankers and businessmen, they established themselves financially and created a network through which they could help each other and prosper, and became part of the high class and members of the nobility.³⁷

Initially, many Huguenots in England remained faithful to the Calvinism, but they allied with the Church of England once they married into English families. Being Huguenot was not an impediment to trade, but to enter Parliament or to go to university, they found it expedient to switch churches. The Huguenot-descended merchants knit themselves closely through marriage strategies well before they began to trade in the Levant. The Vernons, Hays, Barkers, Bosanquets, Bouveries and others were all linked by kinship ties, which they maintained in Aleppo. Thus their business connections with the Levant were both woven into and derived from family relations. In general, the older generation stayed in England, while the younger ones were sent out to find their way in the Empire. In the case of the Bouveries, the head of the family, Sir Edward's third son, Jacob (1656-1722), was a merchant and agent at Aleppo, while Sir Edward's fourth son,

37. Warren Candler Scoville, *The Persecution of Huguenots and French Economic Development, 1680-1720* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 435-436, accessed through Google books, July 26, 2017. <https://books.google.com/books>

Peter (1660-82), was a merchant and agent at Constantinople. The sixth son, John (1669-99), became agent at Aleppo, but died young and was buried in Cyprus. The seventh son, Sir Christopher (1671-1732/3), also fulfilled the roles of merchant and agent at Aleppo, and became one of the first directors of the South Sea Company.³⁸

A major difference pertaining between the host empires colored Europeans' reception in the cities. The Mughal state so strong in the seventeenth century had collapsed by the time of Nader Shah's conquest. On the other hand, the Ottoman Empire, mighty when the Europeans first arrived, remained so until the nineteenth century. Comparing these companies and their contexts, then, reinforces the impression we have of Aleppo as more welcoming to and more tolerant of European travelers and settlers than were Indian cities, as well as more firmly under the political and economic control of their hosts.

Aleppo and its Inhabitants

Aleppo's frontier position between the desert and the Mediterranean Sea, between Asia and Europe, and between Islam and Christianity always gave it a character of its own. Host to cultures from the Greeks to the Romans, Persians, Muslims, Byzantines, and Crusaders, this multi-ethnic center on the Silk Road brought together Arabs, Armenians, Greeks, Kurds, Circassians, Serbs, Bulgarians, and a host of other ethnicities representative of the multi-ethnic Empire peaceably and profitably. For centuries before the Ottoman conquest of Aleppo, Genoese, Venetian and other resident or traveling salesmen added to its cooperative diversity, and its incorporation into the Empire only increased European influence in Ottoman mercantile and diplomatic arenas.

38. Information sent to me by a descendant of the family by email, August 2010.

Yet Aleppo lacked extensive commercial infrastructure until Ottoman rule. Certainly, Aleppine trade had expanded during the patronage and lengthy peacetime the Mamluk dynasty (1260-1517) brought after the 1400 Timurid destruction of the city. The Venetians upgraded their old foothold to a full consulate in 1422³⁹ and city markets grew.⁴⁰ By the last decade of the Mamluk period, during the last half of the fifteenth century, Aleppo had become prominent in international trade, evidenced by the large *khans* Mamluk dignitaries built in its commercial core to supplement existing *funduq* shelters,⁴¹ though earlier religious edifices continued to overshadow them. Still, major additions to the business district came only through Ottoman governors: In 1574 Mehmed Pasha erected the huge Khan al-Gumruk caravansary that served as both a commercial center and the residence of many European merchants, and in 1583 Behram Pasha installed a market complex that vastly enlarged Aleppo's business zone.⁴² These infrastructure expansions derived from the inclusion of Syria into the Empire and into its burgeoning domestic and international trade. With the embrace of the city into the Empire, its importance had increased. It could participate fully in both the regional and the renewed international trade, which flourished until the mid-eighteenth century.

39. Eliyahu Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 325.

40. The Venetians were the first to open a consulate in Aleppo because they held a monopoly over its silk trade, unchallenged from the medieval period to the mid-sixteenth century. The French opened their consulate in 1557 and the English followed in 1581 along with the establishment of the Levant Company.

41. Olivia Remie Constable, *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World: Lodging, Trade and Travel in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 292. By the fourteenth century, the term *khan* became more common than *funduq*. In the mid-1300s Aleppo boasted 26 *khans*, one of which, Khan al-Shaybani, had gained notoriety as the *khan* of the Franks, housing them and their consul and from which they scandalously hung banners bearing crosses. This same *khan* would later shelter the Franciscan friars and their school until the mid-twentieth century.

42. Eldem, Goffman and Masters, *Ottoman City*, 26.

During this time, Ottoman governors swelled the *souks* inside the walls of the city with new stores and workshops.⁴³

As seen, Aleppo had long served as the hub for backlands regional goods of soap, leather, gall, madder root, cotton, silk, and silkworm cocoons. Yet it thrived as a prime stop on the Silk Road for caravans bringing the bales so precious to Europeans, especially after the fall of the port city of Ayas in Cilicia diverted trade routes from Asia to Aleppo.⁴⁴ Armenians from New Julfa brought Persian silk along with regional silk from Bursa, Tokat, and other Anatolian cities.⁴⁵ The splendid textiles drew Western merchants, whose custom the Venetians controlled until the French, English, and Dutch wrested away their monopoly by accepting Ottoman offers to establish consular representation in the city, as did the French in 1557 and the English in 1580 through a charter from Queen Elizabeth.⁴⁶ Merchants of various nations moved into the *khans* newly constructed for their convenience and the Porte's profit.

The major part of *Europeans* live in *Khanes* in the principal quarter of the city. The ground-floor serves for their warehouses, the upper story is fitted up for their dwellings, by building between the pillars of the colonnade, which forms a long corridor; opening on which are a number of rooms, so that they much resemble cloisters, and as they are unmarried, and their communication with the people of the country is almost solely on account of trade, their way of life also not a little resembles the monastic.⁴⁷

43. Heghnar Watenpaugh, "The Aleppine Context," Chap. 2 in *The Image of an Ottoman City: Imperial Architecture and Urban Experience in Aleppo in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2004).

44. Eldem, Goffman and Masters, *Ottoman City*, 26.

45. Bruce Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East: Mercantilism and the Islamic Economy in Aleppo, 1600-1750* (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 197.

46. Mortimer Epstein, *The Early History of the Levant Company* (London: George Routledge and sons, 1968), 15-17. The first charter was signed in September of 1581, permitting Sir E. Osborne, Richard Staper, and a few other merchants to trade in the Ottoman Empire. The number of merchants allowed in the first charter never exceeded 12, and the charter's purpose was purely commercial. However, the shared hostility of England and the Ottomans towards Spain induced Queen Elizabeth to appoint William Harborne as the first ambassador and to imbue him with commercial as well as political powers.

⁴⁷ Russell and Russell, *Natural History of Aleppo*, 2:



Entrance to a Khan

Aleppo's role in international trade guaranteed that many more European enterprises would crowd the business district. The Venetians moved their headquarters from southwest of the city to a *khan* within its walls,⁴⁸ and French, English and Dutch businesses soon followed, replete with staffs of merchants, consuls, clerks, agents and, in the case of the Levant Company, doctors and chaplains.⁴⁹ The work life of the European "nations" revolved around a consulate housed in the new *khans* inside the commercial

48. According to Watenpaugh, Venetian *fondacos* were in the Hāder district, outside the city walls, since the thirteenth century, and moved to the *mdīneh* (city center) only in the sixteenth.

49. Two of the most famous physicians were brothers, Alexander and Patrick Russell, whose tenures in Aleppo as the Company's doctors overlapped only briefly. Alexander wrote his famous *Natural History of Aleppo*, a finely observed description of everything from its flora and fauna to its customs, food, medicine and people. Patrick later revised and expanded the book, which became the bible for students of eighteenth-century Aleppo.

center; as noted, the Venetians established their consulate first, in the sixteenth century, the French set up theirs in 1557 and the English did the same in 1583.⁵⁰ The Dutch stayed mostly under English protection until the beginning of the seventeenth century, establishing an embassy in Istanbul in 1612 and, a year later, opening their first consulate in the Levant.⁵¹

Thus it was fairly easy for Europeans to live in Aleppo. Most English and French merchants and consuls lived in the *khans*, specifically in the Khan al-Gumruk. These caravansaries provided personal protection, merchandise storage, a place to conduct business and, on a more mundane level, access to public baths and food. In addition, most of the *khans*/caravanserais inhabited by the consuls and merchants were also shared by local Christian, Muslim, and Jewish merchants who worked out of the edifices. In brief, while the Venetians' receiving their trading license from the Ayyubids in 1207 initiated direct contact between Europe and Syria, only Ottoman investment in its commercial infrastructure brought it fully into the larger Mediterranean and global trade.

European Presence and Privileges

From the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries, Venetian merchants, usually young bachelors, typically traveled to Syria for 10 to 15 years to learn their business and make their fortunes, but very few settled there permanently.⁵² Yet evidence points to notable exceptions. Some traders stayed 15 to 20 years or more, presumably making

50. According to Bruce Masters, the first Venetian consulate was founded in Damascus in 1422 and was transferred to Aleppo in 1548. Masters, *Origins of Western Economic Dominance*, 15. See also Ross Burns, *Aleppo; A History* (London, New York: Routledge, 2017), 195. Ashtor dates Aleppo's being the terminus for silk caravans from the 1460s: Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, 397.

51. Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, 397; Ade, *Picknick*, 10.

52. Eric Vallet, *Marchands vénitiens en Syrie à la fin du XV siècle: Pour l'honneur et le profit* (Paris: ADHE, 1999).

considerable profits.⁵³ They worked under the jurisdiction of the consul and had to obey his decisions even if they had recourse to other legal sources.⁵⁴ Marriage to local women, while not prohibited, was discouraged. By 1605, according to Russell, there were “no less than fourteen families, besides the consul’s.” He added that “their trade amounted to a million or a million and a half in gold.”⁵⁵

That trade peaked in the latter half of the fifteenth century under the Mamluk sultans. Its major imports consisted of cotton cloth and cloths of Brescia and Bergamo, as well as Garbo fabric from Florence and very costly scarlets. The Venetians also bought silk and spices to ship home and exported a variety of paper throughout the Empire.⁵⁶ Their high volume of trade justified having vice consulates in Tripoli, Beirut, Lattakia,

53. Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, 404-405.

54. Maria Pia Pedani, "Venetian Consuls in Egypt and Syria in the Ottoman Age," *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 15, no. 1-2 (1967): 9.

55. Russell and Russell, *Natural History of Aleppo*, 2:8.

56. The Venetians continued to trade in a vast array of merchandise, starting with cloths such as camlets, *panni gentili* (a kind of Buckram), *Damaschini* (brocade with gold thread), *telami fini*, varieties of silk from Bergamo, Brescia, Bassano, as well as varied woolens from Florence. They also imported cochineal (*colore*), pepper, lead, pearls, coffee, scamony and spices for medicinal purposes (listed as “drugs”), precious stones, tamarind oil, threads of silk, gold or silver from Syria and India, blades, and alkali ash (*cenere*) harvested from specific trees in what is now Syria and Lebanon). A.S.VE. V Savi Alla Mercanzia, Lettere Consoli Aleppo, Busta 604. Letters from the consuls to the Cinque Savi in Venice.

However, one of the most prestigious commodities imported to Venice in the sixteenth century was oriental carpets. Status symbols for the very rich, their prominent, extremely accurate, and increasingly widespread reproduction in Renaissance paintings attests to their importance and signals Italians’ new valuation of household objects as proofs of prosperity. Renowned painters such as Simone Martini and Domenico Bartolo rendered them with such precision that their provenance and specific patterns could be identified—for example, the large or small pattern Holbeins believed to have been produced in the Bergama region of Anatolia. Carlo Crivelli, able to convey the worn edges and low pile of the carpets, reproduced an identifiable kilim in his painting, *Virgin Mary Annunciate*. Rosamond Mack, *From Bazaar to Piazza: Islamic Trade and Italian Art, 1300-1600* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 80. Earlier reproduced carpets mostly showed images of animals, and the predominance of paintings with such carpets in Sienna probably reflected local taste. Yet by the sixteenth century geometric designs were becoming fashionable. Painters then rarely represented carpets on the floor, unless they lay under the Madonna’s throne or on a ruler’s dais. For the household use of carpets had changed along with design choice: During the time of the Medici, they were spread on tables or bedroom chests, or were hung out of windows as a sign of prestige and opulence. Mack tells us that the ostentatious display of oriental carpets “was especially significant in Venice, where they were a highly profitable re-export commodity and symbolized the Republic’s power and connections. The inventory of King Henry VIII of England attests to the magnitude of the trade, for most of the approximately 500 carpets listed are Turkish, usually acquired from Venice” (p. 77). Although the depiction of carpets in paintings did not continue much beyond the Renaissance period, the carpets themselves remained of great interest to Europeans: Consul Barker’s inventory lists three such. TNA FO 861_37.

Hama and a crucial one in silk- and spice-rich Aleppo.⁵⁷ By the end of the fifteenth century, no less than 40 trading firms had Aleppine agents in place.

Yet nothing lasts forever. The Venetian supremacy in the Aleppo market survived until the first half of the sixteenth century, but was being slowly supplanted by the French, Dutch and English, drawn especially by the Porte's granting them privileges through unilateral capitulatory agreements. The Ottomans viewed these capitulations as personal and temporary agreements, binding only as long as the sultan who had penned them lived and approved. However, the Europeans saw the treaties as permanently binding contracts giving them legal presence and representation in the Empire through their ambassadors in Constantinople and their consuls in commercial cities like Aleppo, Damascus, Alexandria, Cairo and Chios. However construed, every renewal of the agreements gave the Europeans more privileges and a firmer footing in the Porte. When at last the Venice consulate in Aleppo closed in 1675, Venetian subjects fluctuated between seeking the protection of the English and the French nations⁵⁸ (at least until Girolamo Brigadi was sent to reopen the consulate in 1754).⁵⁹

Ottomanists have generally seen capitulations offered before the nineteenth century as signifying the state's strength. Yet many historians regarded capitulations signed after the 1800s, which offered greater freedom of customs, religion and clothing, as bespeaking the Porte's political illness and inviting, as Timur Kuran suggests, its economic decline. However, this chapter demonstrates that, although weakened by the

57. Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, 459-460.

58. Ade, *Picknick*, 15.

59. Based on Abdullah Hajjar's *Qunsuliya (Dar Poche) bi-Halab in Al Hawaliyat al Atariya al-Arabia as-Suria* 43, 187-193, 199. Ade claims that the Venetian consulate reopened in 1762. However, documents in the Venetian archives show otherwise. ASV Cinque Savi Alla Mercanzia, Busta 603 contains a letter, dated 4 July 1754, from Consul Brigadi informing the Cinque Savi of his arrival in Aleppo. The same Brigadi was consul from 1762-1765 according to *Ottoman Cyprus: A Collection of Studies on History and Culture*, 187.

powerful presence of the Europeans, Ottoman authorities' stalwart interventions on behalf of their merchants allowed Imperial traders, both Muslim and minority, to prosper and to climb the social and economic ladder.

The liberties granted these relative newcomers certainly played a role in the decline of Venetian trade, yet could not prop up deficient European powers forever. For example, the Dutch had established a consulate and factors in Aleppo at the start of the seventeenth century, but the number of their agents varied and never went very high. By the second half of the century the Dutch could not buy silk from Aleppo, in part because they lacked the broadcloths to barter with and were forced to pay cash instead.⁶⁰ Ultimately, they set themselves up in the city of Izmir and focused on its regional products, such as the mohair yarns of western and central Anatolia and East Indian spices.⁶¹ Although a few Dutch merchants remained in Aleppo, the consulate was placed under the protection of the Italians for a time⁶² and was later overseen by the English consul, John Barker.

On the other hand, capitulations certainly aided the Levant Company factory in Aleppo, one of England's most thriving commercial enterprises and a major reason it had the dominant presence there during the first half of the eighteenth century. In 1680 an uptick in trade brought its total of English merchants to nearly 400,⁶³ though by the mid-

60. Eldem, Goffman, and Masters, *Ottoman City*, 26.

61. Niels Steensgaard, "Consul and Nations in the Levant from 1570 to 1650," *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 15, no. 1-2 (1967): 13-55; Alistair Hamilton, Alexander de Groot, and Mauritz van den Boogert, *Friends and Rivals in the East* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 17.

62. A.S.VE Cinque Savi alla Mercanzie, Dispassi dei Consoli, Detaglio del Commercio di Aleppo de Console Seriola, Busta 603. From Hagel, by order of R.H.V. Hambrosek, the estates General of the United Provinces of the Netherlands, 1 to consul Domenico Seriola, 2 October 1769.

63. Christine Laidlaw, *The British in the Levant: Trade and Perceptions of the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century* (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2010), 23. After the restoration, the Company was granted a new charter lasting until its termination in 1825. In addition, the British ambassador in Istanbul negotiated additions to the capitulations in 1675, giving the English advantages over other nations.

eighteenth century their number had fallen to 80 or 90.⁶⁴ In addition to the draw of Ottoman economic policy, the ascendancy of English merchants during the latter half of the seventeenth century can be ascribed to the blossoming English textile industry, fueled by the successful manufacture of highly desirable broadcloth.⁶⁵ Fierce competition between the English and the Dutch in this arena hurt French trade during this period, which suffered from its inability to compete with that English fabric, as well as from the lack of a regulated trade board to provide French merchants with an organized framework. These conditions, coupled with political troubles at home, placed France in an inferior commercial position.⁶⁶ In 1697 Henry Maundrell counted 40 Englishmen in Aleppo, but only 16 Frenchmen and 2 Dutchmen.⁶⁷

Not only did the Ottomans display their strategic economic largesse in Aleppo, they flexed their political muscle there as well by regularly rotating its governors. They adopted this practice in reaction to the Ali Çanpulatoglu rebellion, in which the Kurdish chieftain conquered and ruled Aleppo for a couple of years.⁶⁸ Ottoman authorities recognized that the city was far too important commercially to lose to a rebel. They also had to face a challenge from Shah ‘Abbas, who succeeded in diverting the silk trade from the Ottoman Empire and, thus, its Aleppine distribution center.⁶⁹ Naturally, the British EIC and the Dutch VOC supported the Shah’s efforts, as neither company had licenses to trade in the Mediterranean, both considered Persian silk essential in the Indian Ocean

64. Laidlaw, *British in the Levant*, 22.

65. Eldem, Goffman, and Masters, *Ottoman City*, 34.

66. Masson, *Histoire du commerce*, 130-135.

67. Henry Maundrell, *Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem at Easter, AD 1697* (London: 1832), 148.

68. Jane Hathaway, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800*, (Harlow; Pearson Longman 2008), 72.

69. Many Europeans turned to locally-produced silk in Aleppo and Bursa. In addition, French merchants were eager to exploit the Lebanese market for local products, leaving Aleppo to English traders.

trade, and both endeavored to relocate the silk route to the Persian Gulf for shipping.⁷⁰ Levant Company members complained to no avail.⁷¹ For ten years, although very little Persian silk traversed Aleppo, both the Levant Company and the Dutch *Directie van den Levantschen Handel en de Navigatie op de Middellandsche Zee* (the supervisory Directorate of Levant Trade and Navigation in the Mediterranean created in 1625) bought what they could find. Only the English maintained their Aleppine presence, but their factors suffered for it; after that dry decade, when Shah ‘Abbas died, Persian silk started to flow back into Aleppo via the caravan routes, but most of it was handled by Julfan Armenian merchants.

According to Russell, in 1752 eight English merchant houses bustled, besides the household of the consul, but by 1772 their number had shrunk to four.⁷² The decline resulted mostly from the replacement of Aleppo by Izmir as the center for Iranian silk trade, and by 1781, business was described as “deplorable.”⁷³ After the death of Consul Abbott, the company decided not to send a replacement. But in 1799 John Barker was appointed interim consul and agent for the East India Company. It was not until 1803 that he was promoted to full consul, and until the end of his tenure in 1825 he was purported to be the sole Englishman in Aleppo. The reason for Barker’s presence was twofold: He was not only the consul and a merchant, but also the representative of the EIC, meant to stay in Aleppo to look after the interests of the merchants who worked with the EIC or

70. Masters, *Origins of Western Economic Dominance*, 20.

71. Competition between the EIC and the Levant Company continued throughout the century, as we can see from Consul Kinloch’s letter to Grenville, the British ambassador in Constantinople, 30 July 1765 TNA SP 110-29 (106).

72. Russell and Russell, *Natural History of Aleppo*, 2:3.

73. Alfred Wood, *A History of the Levant Company* (Abingdon: Frank Cass, 2006), 162.

were on their way to India to work. Also, despite the relative success of the French, there was still enough business for the English to warrant the presence of an official.

Despite their shakier start, for a while the French would for a while fare slightly better than the English because they adapted more flexibly to rapidly changing economic circumstances and were prepared to abandon the weakened Aleppine trade. They produced woolen cloths that were lighter, brighter, and cheaper than English ones and were preferred by the locals. They also exported Syrian raw cotton and silk for their own textile industries.⁷⁴ Francois Charles-Roux, the French consul in Aleppo, reported that in 1758 rich traders left plague-stricken Aleppo to settle in Egypt or elsewhere.⁷⁵ In fact, the ready availability of silk in Izmir, where Dutch traders were concentrated, and the French merchants' attempts to exploit the Lebanese markets, allowed them to diminish their commerce in Aleppo. Napoleon's invasion of Egypt effectively ousted any remaining French for a while. At the order of the Porte, all French people (excluding their protégés) were incarcerated in the Citadel: thirty-six men, women and children were imprisoned in four small rooms for nearly a year.⁷⁶ According to Hidemitsu Kuroki, through the intermission of foreign consuls, in particular the English consul, the prisoners were released to Consul Barker by November of 1799 in exchange for a ransom of 100,000 piastres.⁷⁷ Of the detainees, Consul Choderlos identified two men from Alexandretta. French merchants returned after the evacuation of the French army from Egypt, as by 1811 there were a reported 15 families and 70 individuals, but they were never able to re-

74. Eldem, Goffman, and Masters, *Ottoman City*, 26; Ade, *Picnick*, 28-29.

75. François Charles-Roux, *Les Echelles de Syrie et de Palestine au XVIII siècle* (Paris: P. Geunther, 1928), 77.

76. Hidemitsu Kuroki, "Events in Aleppo During Napoleon's Expedition of Egypt," *Bulletin d'études Orientales* 51(1991): 264.

77. Kuroki, "Events," 266.

establish their businesses.⁷⁸ In fact, the number of French merchants in Aleppo seems never to have attained that in cities such as Izmir. Perhaps more had been there earlier, as Russell tells us that each French agent had his own “scrivan” (clerk) who eventually graduated to membership in the firm. Yet in 1743 some 12 merchants from France were known, and Russell reports that the nine French houses of trade in Aleppo in 1753 had been reduced to “six or seven” by 1772.⁷⁹ The French population in the city fluctuated greatly between 1775 and 1825. A census of French nationals in 1811 reported 15 families and 70 individuals. By 1822, after the August earthquake and the first whiff of the Plague, their total, aside from the consul, was 41 individuals, living in five different *khans* (Khan al-Hibal, Khan al Taf, Khan al Ullabiye, Khan al Gumruk and Khan Sheibani).⁸⁰

A sizable Jewish community dwelt in Aleppo, composed of families who had lived in the Middle East for centuries; descendants of Spanish emigrants; and Sephardic merchant clans arriving at the cusp of the seventeenth century. Most members of this last group, known as the *signores francos*, had settled there in the first half of the eighteenth century under the protection of either the English, French, or Austrian consulates, and could thus maintain their foreign citizenship. Although the *francos* tended to live outside the commercial center with other Jews, the subgroups were far from well-integrated. As subjects of foreign nations rather than the sultan, *francos* were exempt from paying taxes and enjoyed other privileges that won them the resentment of their co-religionists.

78. Kuroki, “Events,” 267-268.

79. Russell and Russell, *Natural History of Aleppo*, 2:3-5.

80. Kuroki, “Events,” 263-277, 268.

Fifteen *signores francos* families originated in Tuscany and included the Picciotto, de Picciotto, Ancona, Ergas, Silvera, Altaras, and Marini families.⁸¹ A letter from the Venetian consul to the *Cinque Savi* in 1736 is signed by family members already established in the city, among them Salomon Altaras e figli, Niccolo Voltolina, Isack Belilios, David Altaras, Giuseppe Lion, Isahe Altaras, Joseph Belilios, Moise Cabibi, Ancona, Marini, and Gian Steffano Pisetti.⁸² David Altaras and family were protégés of the French, Joseph Douek was that of the English, and the Picciottos and de Picciottos were protected by the Austrians. By the end of the century, though, this group's numbers appear to have diminished. In a document, the newly-reappointed Consul Gerolamo Brigadi complained that after the bankruptcy and collapse of the Belilios and the Mutti firms, both of whose households were Venetian citizens under French protection, only the Altaras remained:

*Li suditti Veneti che in questa Città s'attrovano hanno di già umiliate alla sapienza, ed alla carità di VV.EE. le loro suppliche, nelle quali hanno rappresentate le angustie di questo Veneti Consolato dalla umile mia persona sostenuto. Le belle speranze che io avea concepite nel mio trasferimento da Cipro à questa città d'Aleppo per promuovere et ampliare il Veneto commercio, sono state troncate dal decadimento della casa Belilios, e di quella del Mutti, non rimanendovi che la dita Alteras, e pochi altri più desiderosi che vavevoli à sostenerlo. Nelle critiche turbelenze della caduta detti Belilios, la mia insufficienza non è forse arrivata a contentare tutti....*⁸³

The Venetian subjects in this city have already humbly appealed to the wisdom and charity of your excellencies in which they represented the anguish of the Venetian consulate that is represented by me. The great hopes I had conceived when I was transferred from Cyprus to this city of Aleppo to promote and extend Venetian trade were curtailed by the bankruptcy of the Belilios House, and that of

81. On the Ergas and Silvera families, see Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (Bellevue, WA: Yale University Press, reprint edition, 2012).

82. A.S.VE. V Savi Alla Mercanzia, Lettere Consoli Aleppo, Busta 604.

83. A.S.VE V Savi Alla Mercanzia, Lettere Consoli Aleppo, Busta 603. Consul Gerolamo Brigadi to V Savi Alla Mercanzia, June 22, 1756 (DSCN 1236 V2 103).

the Mutti, leaving only the said Altaras and a few others [merchants] more desirous than able to sustain [commerce]. My inability during the critical turmoil created by the bankruptcy of the House of Belilios has not pleased everyone....

However, this observation may not reflect the true number of the *signores francos* still living in Aleppo, as many were under the protection of foreign consulates and were counted as subjects of those nations. Despite being such a small group, they were at the forefront of the Jewish community and were responsible for westernizing and modernizing the community as a whole.⁸⁴ As an example, the Belilios household introduced European-style architecture; the deed of sale of their home describes its frenchified front door: “*la porta nova con tutta la francesca.*”⁸⁵ Jewish merchants were quite active in the trade between Venice, Livorno, and Aleppo. Other members of the community functioned as *dragomans* and agents for various consulates, or worked in the customs offices previously held by New Julfan Armenians. Similar to other Levantine merchants, they established family networks between Aleppo, Livorno and other parts of Europe. Yet unlike them, the Tuscan Jewish community received its own representation only at the end of the eighteenth century, when Rafael Picciotto became the Austrian consul.⁸⁶ As we will see in the next chapter, members of the Picciotto family went on to hold the post of consul and vice consul for 16 other nations. Many Jewish families migrated to England and other parts of Europe in the nineteenth century.

Along with merchants who came to the city during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, numerous missionaries and members of Catholic orders settled as well. In 1626

84. Eldem, Goffman, and Masters, *Ottoman City*, 60.

85. A.S.VE V Savi Alla Mercanzia, Lettere Consoli Aleppo, Busta 604, translation of the Hogett for the sale of the house of Isach Belilios to cover his debts. Written on 10 August 1769.

86. As a result of the 1737 Peace of Vienna, Livorno at this time was under Hapsburg jurisdiction.

capitulations allowed the Jesuits and Capuchins to live in the Ottoman Empire to look after the spiritual welfare of the French colonies. However, Daniel Heyberger shows that Italian branches of the same orders had already been sent to Aleppo, and had tried to rent apartments in the Christian quarters of Judeide and Jallum.⁸⁷ The Carmelites and the Franciscans soon followed.⁸⁸ The earlier dates for the establishment of the missionaries suggested by Françoise Cloarec and Mahmud Hreitani are more probably correct. Both claim that the Franciscan friars built a permanent mission in Aleppo in 1560, soon followed by the Little Brothers of the Terre Sainte in 1571, the Carmelites in 1625, and the Jesuits in 1672.⁸⁹ Although the missionaries were there ostensibly for the Europeans, they zealously attempted to proselytize the local Orthodox Christians⁹⁰ and won many converts. Their success so alarmed leaders of the established regional churches that they petitioned the sultan for relief. Heyberger tells us that the governor of Aleppo received an order from the Porte forbidding local Christians from attending the Italian Franciscans' masses at the Khan Sheibani.⁹¹ In contrast, Anglicans seemed less bent on saving souls than on studying local culture. Exemplars of this preference are Levant Company chaplains Edward Pococke (who spoke fluent Arabic and would hold the chair of Arabic Studies at Oxford University) and Robert Frampton (who befriended Aleppine religious

87. Daniel Heyberger, *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la Réforme catholique* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1994), 340-343.

88. Eleanor Tejirian and Reeva Spector Simon, *Conflict, Conquest and Conversion: Two Thousand Years of Christian Missions in the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 59.

89. Françoise Cloarec, *Le temps des consuls: L'échelle d'Alep sous les Ottomans* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 116; Mahmud Hreitani, *Aleppo and the Europeans through History* (Aleppo: Ray Publication.com, 2012). 82. <http://www.mediafire.com/file/yvhb5gcdtm2aq8p/pdf> accessed June 16, 2017.

90. Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 70. The missionaries realized that attempts to convert Muslims would result in the decapitation of converter and convert alike, so they focused their efforts on Christians.

91. Heyberger, *Les Chrétiens*, 273-276.

leaders including the *Kadi* and *Mufti*), along with the Russell brothers, physicians to the Levant Company whose comprehensive history of Aleppo bridged the two societies.

The Seclusion of the Europeans

We know that before the arrival of the Ottomans, most foreign merchants were housed in numerous *funduqs*, which began to give way in Aleppo to the Mamluk *khans* built in its commercial center. With the sixteenth-century advent of the Ottomans, the commercial center of the city (the *mdineh*) bustled, and the city governors added four new large *khans* to publicize and bolster Aleppo's growing commercial might.⁹²

Generally run as a charitable establishment (*waqf*), the *khan* was usually rented to consuls or families as living quarters on a yearly basis, as evidenced by many receipts for the rental of the Kettab property, signed first by John Barker and then by his son B. B. Barker and his wife Marianne, as well as rental for the rooms in Khan-al-Taf.⁹³

The Ottoman rulers of the city financed the added *khans* with new pious endowments. Two of the most famous *khans* they built during that era were Khan al-Wazir outside the main market, endowed by Kara Mustafa Pasha in 1681 and intended as a residence for Iranian merchants, and Khan al-Gumruk, supported by a *waqf* endowed by Mehmed Pasha in 1574.⁹⁴

92. Constable, 293. There is evidence that many traders also rented houses in Damascus, but in Aleppo, the *khans* or *funduqs* were the residences of choice.

93. FO. 861-37 British Consulate, Aleppo 1823-1858. Yearly rental contracts were circumvented at times by European merchants through contracts known as *raqaba*, which were treated like tenure: The renter invested money into renovating the apartment or building, the sum of which remained a debt the endowment owed the tenant. The endowment had to reimburse the tenant before being able to cancel his contract, which could be sold or passed on to the next generation. Stefan Knost, "Aleppo's Foreigners Community and the Earthquake of 1822," in *Historical Disasters in Context: Science, Religion, and Politics*, ed. Andrea Janku, Gerrit Schenk, and Franz Mauelshagen (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 165-166.

94. Eldem, Goffman, and Masters, *Ottoman City*, 26, 40.

The structure and function of the *khan* changed little over the centuries. It was usually divided into two floors, with the bottom holding shops, storage rooms, and stables for camels and the top providing living quarters:

The Khanes are spacious solid stone buildings, usually constructed in a quadrangular form and one story high; of which the ground floor of each side is divided into apartments, arched above, and lighted only by a window in front, and the door. The story above, instead of windows presents an open gallery, or piazza, from which is a range of rooms, like the back rooms below. The staircases leading to first story are on each side of the gateway; and the rood, as in most other buildings, is flat and terraced. The ground floor serves for warehouses, counting houses, lodgings and sometimes for stables. The other floor is chiefly for the reception of travellers, who find lodging there at a very moderate expense. Most of the apartments are still worse lighted than the ground rooms, there seldom being windows backward. Matts are all the furniture provided by the khans: travellers bring the rest with their baggage.⁹⁵

Originally, the small, dark, interconnected upstairs rooms led one into the other, with few windows onto the interior courtyard. Likened to “cells of a convent” by Drummond in 1745,⁹⁶ they adequately if inelegantly sheltered merchants and consuls. Drummond did note one “handsomely furnished” room, which served as the chapel. Many famous salaried chaplains, including Maundrell and Pococke, formed a part of the Aleppine consulate.

Interestingly, more than one nation would commonly share a *khan*. Space in the Great Khan (later known as Khan al-Gumruk) accommodated the English, the French and the Dutch, with the English inhabiting the lion's share. Around 1680 the other foreigners moved out, leaving the English sole command of the space.⁹⁷ One reason for this was a jump in trade and a corresponding increase to nearly 400 in the number of English

95. Russell and Russell, *Natural History of Aleppo*, 2:9.

96. Davis, *Aleppo and Devonshire Square*, 5.

97. Davis, *Aleppo and Devonshire Square*, 5.

merchants in Aleppo.⁹⁸ By the mid-eighteenth century, we saw, the roster of merchants had fallen back down to 80 or 90,⁹⁹ and by the time Russell arrived, the French and even some native merchants were renting rooms.¹⁰⁰ Khan al-Hibal became the location for the French Consulate until the beginning of World War I, annexed to the house next door as the residence. According to Sauvaget, the Dutch took over Khan al-Flamank, but in *Les Francs à Alep* Stefan Knost suggests that the Dutch resided in Khan als-Sayyid Ubayd in an earlier period.¹⁰¹ As their numbers dwindled the English moved from Khan al-Gumruk, the *khan* of the customs, to the smaller Khan al-Burgul, and then to Khan al-Taf. The Venetians continued to live in Khan al-Nahhasin, which later became the domicile of the Poche family and then housed the Belgium consulate until the death of Dr. Poche in the latter part of the twentieth century.

In fact, all foreign residents belonging to a recognized nation were obliged to live in the commercial center for reasons of security as well as those of charity or business,¹⁰² as the capitulations of some specified. Living in the *khans* largely isolated most Europeans from the locals, who dwelt mostly outside the commercial center even if they might share commercial space in the *khans*. It was only in the second half of the

98. Laidlaw, *British in the Levant*, 23. After the Restoration, the Company was granted a new charter lasting until its termination in 1825. In addition, the British ambassador in Istanbul negotiated additions to the capitulations in 1675 giving the English advantages over other nations.

99. Laidlaw, *British in the Levant*, 22.

100. Russell and Russell, *Natural History of Aleppo*, 2:5.

101. Jean Sauvaget, *Alep: Essai sur le développement d'une grande ville syrienne, des origines au milieu du XIX siècle* (Paris: Librairie Orientale Paul Geuthner, 1941), Series: Haut-Commissariat de l'État français en Syrie et au Liban, Service des antiquités, *Bibliothèque archéologique et historique*, 36. See also Stefan Knost, "Les 'Francs' à Alep (Syrie): Leur statut juridique et leur interaction avec les institutions locales (xviiie-xixe siècle)," in *Gens de Passage en Méditerranée de l'antiquité à l'époque moderne*, Claudia Moatti and Wolfgang Kaiser, eds., (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2007), 243-261.

102. Abdallah Hajjar, *Europeans in Aleppo through the Ages* (Aleppo: Ray Publishing and Science, 2012), 15; Marie Carmen Smyrnelis, *Une ville Ottomane plurielle: Smyrne aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles* (Istanbul: Les Editions Isis, 2006), 144, cited in Ade, *Picknick*, 25.

eighteenth century that local merchants, such as the Altaras, lived in a *khan*, in this case the Khan al-Hibal inhabited by the French consulate and nation.

Parallel to their spatial isolation, Europeans were also socially and culturally segregated from area inhabitants. This was due mostly to the language barrier and the difference in social mores. As argued above, Europeans did not settle in Aleppo from a position of strength nor to colonize; in fact, well into the seventeenth century, they feared the Ottomans' ferocious reputation. Instead, Europeans came to Aleppo as merchants, at the behest of the Porte, and with the sole purpose of making money. Even their men of the cloth managed to take advantage of what the city had to offer. Chaplain Pococke was able to find and take back many manuscripts as well as artifacts.¹⁰³ Yet even profit could not assuage the boredom of exclusion, as Russell tells us:

The Europeans have little or no social intercourse with the Turks. They seldom see them but in the way of business, which is usually transacted through an interpreter.... In such a recluse situation, the manner of life, in some respects, resembles the monastic. The hours of business and refreshment, return in regular succession, being seldom interrupted by accidental intrusion; and the circle of active amusements is so contracted that the man who happens not to possess the inestimable art of employing his leisure, must submit to suffer many solitary hours of insipid languor.¹⁰⁴

Isolation notwithstanding, Aleppo was one of the few cities in which Christians, Muslims and Europeans got along, as eighteenth-century traveler Constantine Volney commented:

The People of this city, both Turks and Christians, are with reason, esteemed the most civilized in all Turkey: and the European merchants no where enjoy so much liberty, or are treated with as much respect.¹⁰⁵

103. P. M. Holt, "Edward Pococke (1601-1691) The First Laudian Professor of Arabic at Oxford," *History Today* 7, no. 1 (January 1957).

104. Russell and Russell, *Natural History of Aleppo*, 2:11.

105. Constantine Volney, *Travels through Syria and Egypt in the years 1783, 1784 & 1785. Containing the present natural and political state of those countries; their productions, arts, manufactures*

In addition, despite their restricted social life, European merchants did fill their leisure hours. English factors in particular could keep horses and take daily rides; other entertainments included twice-weekly picnics, hunting, fishing, bowling and evening trips to cool city gardens. Evenings might offer card parties, weekly concerts by those who had brought musical instruments,¹⁰⁶ and, sometimes, masquerades during Carnival time along with observation of all religious festivals. Members of the Levant Company had recourse to a library stocked with books ranging from history and theology to literature.¹⁰⁷ Food abounded and they could even import wines and cheeses.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, the constant feasting and activities surprised visitors to the Aleppo factory. Henry Teonge described one excursion:

This morning early (as it is the custom all summer longe) at the least 40 of the English, with his worship the Consull,¹⁰⁹ rod out of the cytty about 4 miles to the greene platt, a fine vally by a river side, to recreate themselves. Where a princely tent was pitched; and wee had severall Chnoble dinner brought thither, with great plenty of all sorts of wines, punch and lemonades; and at 6 wee returned all home in good order, but soundly tyrde and weary.¹¹⁰

According to Russell, the socially and linguistically restricted Europeans maintained a camaraderie that overcame any commercial or nationalistic frictions:

The Franks, in general, live together in harmony. They entertain reciprocally; they have card parties, weekly concerts and sometimes, in the carnival, masquerades.

& commerce; with observations on the manners, customs and government of the Turks & Arabs. Volume 2. New York, —1798—. Eighteenth-Century Collections Online. Gale. UC Los Angeles, 13 June 2017.

106. Russell and Russell, *Natural History of Aleppo*, 2:12.

107. Mathers, *Pashas*, 74.

108. The capitulations allowed European merchants to import wines, which they preferred to local ones.

109. Henry Teonge, *Chaplain on board His Majesty's ships Assistance, Bristol, and Royal Oak, anno 1675 to 1679. Now first published from the original ms. with biographical and historical notes*. (London: 1825), 159.

110. On the social life of the Europeans in Aleppo, see Russell and Russell, *Natural History of Aleppo*, 2:1-27; Davis, "The Aleppo Factors," Chap. 5 in *Aleppo*.

Neither the competition in trade, nor the intervention of national ruptures in Europe, broke off this sociable intercourse in Syria.¹¹¹

Picnics and plays notwithstanding, life for Europeans abroad was monotonous. Perhaps sheer tedium partially accounts for one of the most interesting aspects of the communal life of the "franks" or Europeans, to which Russell alluded: Even when their nations fought, individuals of all countries socialized freely. War could stop only the thrifty pooling of all Europe-bound missives on ships, or formal ceremonies between opposing nations. In addition, most merchants sought to make their private, not their political, fortune, even if they represented a given national enterprise, and patriotic communiqués from authorities at home arrived late, if at all. While both the Levant Company and the *Cinque Savii* in Venice would send specific orders for conducting commerce and diplomacy, the vagaries of information exchange by sea made their implementation difficult. Often, consuls of warring nations would band together to achieve a common goal, such as some concession from local authorities. Thus the interests and actions of individual expatriates ultimately fashioned the community.

Russell also mentions that in 1751 none of the English factors were married, as “the distance of the Porte of Scanderoon is an obstacle to many of the sea faring people undertaking the journey to Aleppo.”¹¹² Laidlaw claims that no records exist of any Englishwomen living in Aleppo before 1750,¹¹³ and tombstones in the Protestant graveyard disprove her by only a few years. Sarah Purnell, daughter of John Purnell, the English consul from 1716 to 1726, was buried with her brothers Peter and Kenelm; it is

111. Russell and Russell, *Natural History of Aleppo*, 2:13.

112. Russell and Russell, *Natural History of Aleppo*, 2:10.

113. Laidlaw, *British in the Levant*, 194.

highly unlikely they would have been in Aleppo without their mother.¹¹⁴ The next known Englishwoman to have been buried in Aleppo was Eliza Usgate in 1758, but it may be that only these two women may have been present.¹¹⁵ In fact, 1753 proved to be a watershed year, as the Levant Company relaxed its rules for admission, which drew both more merchants and more merchants' wives. In the same year, France forbade any marriages between Frenchman and locals without a consular license, which effectively encouraged them first to secure wives at home to accompany them. This restriction came in reaction to official displeasure with the group of half-French, half-local families known as the *mezza razza*,¹¹⁶ most of whose women spoke no French and could not partake in communal events. We may track the demographic shift by comparing Russell's early comment that "the female society is very confined" with his later notation that "circumstances are much altered in this respect since the year 1752, the female society at Aleppo having had an agreeable accession of several Ladies from Europe."¹¹⁷

Still, despite their protection by capitulations and consuls, despite their long-term residence, even despite the presence of their own families, European merchants never formed part of the Aleppo community. Most of their interactions with native inhabitants came through their local non-Muslim translators and agents.

Of the Europeans, even those who live long in the country, very few acquire more knowledge of the Arabic, than is barely sufficient for familiar conversation, and it is very rare that any of them take the trouble of either learning to read or write it.¹¹⁸

114. As noted, the cemetery records are incomplete since not all graves were moved from the Old Christian burial ground in Azizieh to that of the Protestants in 1938. Also, some factory members may have been buried in other European cemeteries.

115. Again, not all graves may have been transferred in 1938.

116. Alexander Russell's term.

117. Russell and Russell, *Natural History of Aleppo*, 1:11-19.

118. Russell and Russell, *Natural History of Aleppo*, 2:2.

Of course, there were notable exceptions. The Russell brothers not only spoke Arabic, but also had access to local homes in their capacity as physicians. Similarly, some chaplains perfected their Arabic language skills while in Aleppo; the most famous of those was Edward Pococke, who would become the first Laudian Professor of Arabic at Oxford University in the 1640s.

The case of Jewish merchants who were subjects of Venice or Livorno differed slightly. The wealthiest *signores francos*, such as the Altaras, Belilios, and De Picciottos, leased and refurbished apartments in the *khans*, but others lived near and worshipped with the local Jewish population in an area called Bahsita, outside the city walls (although they refused to be under the control of the local congregation). Members of the Jewish community might be hired by the consuls as their protégés, but they might also find employment with the *franco* Jewish families, who were considered protected foreigners rather than *dhimmis* (People of the Book) as were native Jews.¹¹⁹ We saw that the continued manipulation of the protégé system by all Europeans, Jews or Christians, drew Ottoman authorities to intervene on behalf of their own merchants through twin programs affording both non-Muslim and Muslim traders the same extraterritoriality rights—policies which ultimately allowed Imperial merchants to advance without the help of the Europeans.

Families

The eighteenth century saw a larger number of European merchants settling in Aleppo, most bringing wives with them and some marrying locally. The Van Maseyk family, over three generations of whom dwelt in Aleppo, provides a good example.

119. Russell and Russell, *Natural History of Aleppo*, 2:5.

The majority of the English who settled in Aleppo in the early modern period were, as mentioned, of Huguenot origin and from aristocratic backgrounds; all worked with or were part of the Levant Company. The Vernons operated both as merchants in the Company at Aleppo and governors on its board in London. One of the first of the family to trade in Aleppo, Henry Vernon, was buried there in 1694, according to the plan of its old Protestant cemetery.¹²⁰ Thomas Vernon lived in Aleppo from at least 1753 until his death. Despite having had to declare bankruptcy in 1763 due to the collapse of the silk market, he recouped his losses very quickly. Thomas wed Roxanna, of Circassian or Armenian origin, and they had five children, all Aleppo-born, between 1758 and 1764. The two eldest died in infancy, but their daughter Louisa married David Hays, member of another family firmly invested in the Levant Company and Aleppine trade. The couple's daughter, Marianne, born in July of 1779, had as one of her baptismal sponsors Thomas Phillips Vernon, British consul at Tripoli, possibly the elder son of Thomas Vernon. Marianne married Consul John Barker and is also buried in Aleppo, while her husband lies in the Armenian Orthodox churchyard in Vakifli.¹²¹ One of the richest and oldest families to make Aleppo their home, the Vernons pursued trade relentlessly. Ralph Davis tells us that "at the beginning of 1753 the Vernons had 400 bales of cloth in their Aleppo warehouses, as well as an immense variety of all money commodities' and investment of several tens of thousands of pounds."¹²² They resided in the city for over a century, with some members staying there permanently.¹²³

120. Plan of the old Protestant cemetery Aleppo given to me by the Italian consul in Aleppo, George Antaki. A copy can be found at the Society of Genealogists archives in London; see Addendum.

121. Marianne's grave is registered in the same Plan of the old Protestant cemetery Aleppo; see addendum.

122. Davis, *Aleppo and Devonshire Square*, 247.

123. In some cases, after a few generations, family members would return to England to trade.

The Bosanquets set similarly deep roots in Aleppo. David Bosanquet II, the first of the brothers to trade in Aleppo, was followed by Pierre, whose grave could still be found in the Protestant cemetery in 2012, and (probably the youngest brother) Claude.¹²⁴ The family traded for three generations under the company name of D, S & C Bosanquet, mostly in English broadcloth and silk.¹²⁵ Their great success may be seen in the advice David Bosanquet left for those who came after him: “The cloth trade is a noble trade, many people live by it, and the merchant who sends thereof to Turkey cannot want gain thereby if he imploys care and diligence in the buying and ordering and dressing of it.”¹²⁶

Other families with long ties to the Levant served as both traders and diplomats; the next chapter explores their particular contributions at length. John Barker, the consul at Aleppo for over twenty-five years. was born in Smyrna but was schooled in England and apprenticed at the banking house of Peter Thelluson. In 1797 he traveled to Istanbul as the private secretary of the ambassador and minister plenipotentiary, John Spencer. Two years later he was appointed as the interim proconsul and agent of both the EIC and the Levant Company. He became full consul in 1803, but remained an agent for both joint stock ventures. The last consul appointed and paid by the Levant Company, John Barker stayed in Aleppo until the enterprise folded. One of his sons, Edward B. barker, served as acting consul in Aleppo from 1842 to 1857.

Like the Barkers, the Abbott family was deeply committed to the Levant and to the Levant Company. Robert Page Abbott labored as an EIC agent in Aleppo as well as

124. Pierre or Peter Bosanquet is purported to be the father of Roxana, who married Vernon. Her mother was either Armenian or Circassian. Information given to me by email by the descendants of the Vernon family in October 2015.

125. English broadcloth was a heavy, wide (broad), finely-woven, high-quality cloth very popular in the Levant. The French challenged its reign in the mid-eighteenth century with their finer, more colorful cloth, but cheaper versions of English broadcloth held their own until the end of that century.

126. David Bosanquets’ instructions to his successors, 1696, cited in Davis, *Aleppo and Devonshire Square*, 96.

being admitted to the Levant Company, and brought up his nephew Alexius in the city. John Abbot filled a consular post. Four brothers traded across the Empire—Jasper in Ankara (Angora), George in Istanbul-and Robert in Aleppo. Jasper's son Peter, brought up by his uncle George, served as the Beirut, then Aleppine consul, while Bartholomew Edward began as a merchant and rose to the unofficial consulship at Salonica.¹²⁷ His son, George Frederic, also lived in Salonica. Indeed, the Abbots had lived so long in the Levant that, a traveler noted of one, the habits of life as "a resident of more than half a century in various parts of the Turkish Empire, have taken from Mr. Abbott everything English but his name."¹²⁸ Many of the Abbots married Greek women, as marriage to Muslim women was prohibited and European women were in short supply during the early eighteenth century.¹²⁹

Merchants, diplomats, or both, all these Aleppine Levantine clans greatly advanced commerce as local power brokers. They created a hybrid society and passed down their financial and consular legacies for generations. Yet these families, unlike many who had settled in Smyrna and Constantinople, did not remain in their adopted city, but relocated elsewhere in the wake of trade and political downturns there. Other families

127. The documents in the Huguenot library mention that Peter Abbott incurred the wrath of Lady Hester Stanhope, niece of William Pitt the Younger and an eccentric socialite and famed archeologist who lived in a deserted monastery with her lovers, a companion and a doctor. She was known as the "nun of Lebanon." Many consuls, including John Barker, had to accommodate her eccentric wishes. The Huguenot Library, "Chronicles of the Family Abbott," Store A/ABB. Acc. No. 28157 Abbott. B. The relationship of Bartholomew Edward Abbott and his brother George is noted on a copy of a page from Sir Henry Holland's *Travels in the Ionian Isles, Albania, Thessaly, Macedonia, etc., during the years 1812-1813*: "See the quarrel between his brother George and Ambassador Murray above." The Huguenot Library "Chronicles of the Family Abbott," Store A/ABB. Acc. No. 28157 Abbott. B. 49.

128. Taken from "The journal of the of a Gent who travelled by land to India, by the way of Aleppo, Bagdad, Bassora, commencing on November 2 1780," *The Gentleman's Magazine* (May 1799). The Huguenot Library "Chronicles of the Family Abbott" Store A/ABB. Acc. No. 28157 Abbott. B.

129. Bartholomew Edward Abbott married a Greek lady, as did his son, George Frederic, both established in Salonica.

who migrated to Aleppo in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries would, at last, establish a stable and thriving Levantine community there.

Aleppo Faces the Nineteenth Century

On 13 August 1822, a momentous earthquake destroyed thousands of Aleppo's inhabitants and a quarter to a third of its structures. It seemed to culminate decades of municipal misfortunes: plummeting trade; an 1819 revolt against the governor, whose troops overran the city;¹³⁰ and periodic outbreaks of the Black Plague.¹³¹ John Barker records the catastrophe:

On the 13th August, 1822, at half past nine in the evening, Aleppo, Antioch, Idlib, Reehah, Derkoush, Armanas, every village and every detached cottage in the Pachalic, and some towns in the Pachalic of Damascus and in Mesopotamia, as far as Bagdad, were in ten or twelve seconds entirely ruined by an earthquake, and became heaps of stones and rubbish, in which, at the lowest computation, twenty thousand human beings (about a tenth of the population) lost their lives, and an equal number were maimed or wounded.¹³²

Consul Barker's experience of the disaster symbolizes the many stresses, external and inward, shaking the Empire from its position on the global stage. Many historians consider the decades around the turn of the nineteenth to be a period of political and, as a result, economic decline, characterized by the widespread decentralization born of weakness. Indeed, in the political arena, continuous wars roiled on separate fronts, and a series of major defeats in Europe and losses of territory destroyed the Porte's fearsome

130. Herbert Bodman, Jr., *Political Factions in Aleppo 1760-1826* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963).

131. TNA SP 105_119, The Governors of the Company to Consul Kinloch October 14th 1760. By 1760, the plague must have subsided somewhat, as the governors of the Levant Company congratulated Consul Kinloch, 'We are glad that to hear that the plague does not increase in Aleppo and Smyrna.'

132. John Barker, *Syria and Egypt under the Last Five Sultans of Turkey*, ed. Edward B. B. Barker (London: Samuel Tinsley, 1876), 321-322.

reputation.¹³³ The French Revolution, Napoleonic wars, the Crimean war, and France's naval blockade of Great Britain by the French only worsened matters for the Empire. Finally, local strongmen took over many provinces, although they ruled with the sultan's tacit consent.¹³⁴

Yet in fact, this shift in the balance of domestic military power resulted from the withdrawal of troops that had until then been sent from the center. In Aleppo, the *Ashraf* took power in opposition to the provincial Janissary troops, which created periodic, bitter fighting between the rival factions and constant upheaval.¹³⁵ The traveler A. A. Paton sums up the situation:

Aleppo has been for a long period divided into two fierce factions—The Shereefs, or green-turbaned descendants of the prophet and the Janissaries, or military faction: the head of the former party was in 1843, the Mufti I have named; and the latter party, which has been revived since the expulsion of the Egyptians, looked up to Abdallah Bey, the local governor at its head.¹³⁶

He then recounts that a former Pasha (governor) in 1815 profited from having to judge two Janissaries accused of robbing a caravan to Istanbul: He gathered all the Janissary chiefs in his residence, ostensibly for a meeting, and had them all murdered on the spot.

133. The Ottoman Empire was engaged in wars with Iran, Russia, and Venice, and lost considerable territory, including Hungary and, later, Egypt, which fell to Napoleon.

134. Abraham Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 22.

135. Eldem, Goffman, and Masters, *Ottoman City*, 51. Masters points out that there was a socioeconomic difference between the two factions: The *Ashrafs* claimed to be descendants of the prophet Mohammad and as such, under Islamic law, enjoyed special tax privileges, lived inside the city walls, and had some status in the town. The Janissaries hailed generally from rural and tribal lands and lived very much outside the city walls, in its eastern suburbs, and worked in the guilds that serviced the tribes. For more on this subject see Marcus, *Middle East*, 61-62, 88-89.

136. Andrew Paton, *The Modern Syrians: Or, Native Society in Damascus, Aleppo, and the Mountains of the Druses, from Notes Made in Those Parts During the Years 1841-2-3* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1844), 243.

Paton ends his tale, “Thus did the Porte get rid of the all the most formidable members of the old Janissary party.”¹³⁷

Added to this factional rivalry, a number of revolts took place, fueled by economic hardship, depopulation in the countryside, and a shift in ownership of rural lands occurring as the central government began to sell off its tax farms (*iltizam*) to wealthy provincial Muslim families to administer.¹³⁸

These international and internal events led to a definite rebalancing of power between the Empire and Europe. The Ottomans’ limited rebuff of challenges to their authority exposed their military inferiority vis-à-vis the Europeans. As a result Imperial diplomacy also suffered, and the foreign diplomatic representatives in Istanbul exerted increasing weight on the sultan to add further concessions to renewed capitulatory agreements.

The August 13, 1822, earthquake, as noted, seemed but the capstone of the Imperial troubles. Apart from the tremendous loss of life and structural damage, the crucial city’s economy stumbled as well.¹³⁹ Many of the European community living in Aleppo at the time moved to the al-Kattab area, in whose public gardens they built what were meant to be only provisional shelters. Later, these were fortified into either semi-permanent homes or summer houses.¹⁴⁰ The move to Al-Kattab effectively formed yet

137. Paton, *Modern Syrians*, 244.

138. Tax farms (*iltizam*) let the Empire gather taxes by farming out the collecting of public revenue: The state auctioned off an area’s taxation rights to the highest bidder (the *multazim*), who collected the state taxes from the designated area and then paid the state in installments, keeping the balance of what he owed for himself. For more on this economic and political transformation, see Eldem, Goffman, and Masters, *Ottoman City*, 52; Marcus, *The Middle East*, 136, and Ade, *Picknick*, 78-79.

139. Reports on the loss of life run between 15,000 by local historian Al-Ghazzi to 30,000 by Barker. See Al-Ghazzi, *Nahr al-dhahab fī tārikh Ḥalab*, Vol. 3 (Aleppo: Dār-al-Qalm al-Arabī, 1991) and Barker, *Syria and Egypt*, 323.

140. It was under the leadership of the French consul that the Europeans moved to the Al-Kattab gardens, a perfect location as they were securely walled, outside the city, but close enough to reach easily.

another closed-off European community. It also initiated the renovation of the commercial center that inspired the richest merchants to take it over.¹⁴¹ Families such as the Altaras and the Picciottos could buy out the *raqaba* leases of the previous owners and rebuild the apartments to their taste. Although these two families were Jewish, not all Tuscan Jews chose to live in the *khans*, but instead constructed fashionable houses in *Bahsita*, a predominantly Jewish quarter. The *hogett*¹⁴² (document of ownership) belonging to the Belilios family gives a detailed description of the house, including the names of the neighbors, also Jewish merchants.¹⁴³

In addition to all these pressures, Europe's Industrial Revolution offered seductive manufacturing opportunities, and the lion's share of commercial shipping passed into the hands of the Europeans. By the end of the eighteenth century the Ottomans, cognizant of the changes, felt the need for reforms, which would be implemented during the *Tanzimat* era, from 1840 to 1880.

Yet around that time the commercial landscape of Aleppo, and so of the Empire, changed as well. After the plunge in trade, most Europeans had deserted. The Levant Company permanently closed its doors in 1825, having lost business to the East India Company; since many of its factors had family members in the EIC, as did the Abbots, they simply joined them in India.¹⁴⁴ The consul at Aleppo informed the British ambassador to Constantinople, Henry Grenville, that

141. Stefan Knost, "Aleppo's Foreigners community and the Earthquake of 1822," in *Historical Disasters in Context: Science, Religion, and Politics*, Andrea Janku, Gerrit Schenk and Franz Mauelshagen, eds. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

142. A.S.VE V Savi Alla Mercanzia, Lettere Consoli Aleppo, Busta 604, translation of the Hogett for the sale of the house of Isach Belilios to cover his debts. 10 August 1769.

143. A.S.VE V Savi Alla Mercanzia, Lettere Consoli Aleppo, Busta 604, translation of the Hogett for the sale of the house of Isach Belilios to cover his debts. 10 August 1769.

144. Family documents from the Huguenot Society.

This poor residue of a very extensive trade is now, however, entirely lost to our importations to Bassora of British cloth by the East India Company, who for two or three years past by regular importations have supplied Bagdad & Persia with the little wanted, & this year they have again imported at Bassora a very considerable parcel & have established a factory at Bagdad, which branch of trade is carried on: we conceive will, if continued essentially deprive us of the little trade we have remaining here.¹⁴⁵

The number of French merchants in Aleppo was also decimated, the unavailability of silk from Iran having driven them to the trade's newer hub at Izmir. All told, during the latter half of the eighteenth century its population of English, French, and a few Dutch, Italian and other Europeans rarely totaled over 100.¹⁴⁶

Matthee explains the commercial vulnerability of the city which seemed so perfectly poised for uninterrupted success. As early as the 1660s Tabriz became the main entrepot for caravans to and from the Levant, so Izmir emerged as their main terminus and continued to grow despite a series of earthquakes. Indeed, the port city of Izmir was better equipped for trade and closer to Constantinople, saving merchants the hazards to life and the extortionary passage dues they met along the Aleppo road.¹⁴⁷ Above all, the Safavid-Ottoman wars interrupted the silk trade so much that Aleppo's waning and Izmir's waxing were due more to the "shift in Iranian silk trade, rather than a growing regional economy."¹⁴⁸

The blockade engineered by Napoleon against British trade further sank the number of foreigners in Aleppo. In addition, lighter and brighter French wools had long been edging out the English broadcloths, forcing out more English merchants. In fact,

145. TNA SP 110_29.

146. Marcus, *The Middle East*, 45.

147. Protection cost plenty. Bedouin tribes regularly attacked the caravans, so hiring protection to safeguard the merchandise was a routine but exorbitant expenditure for merchants.

148. Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, 144-145, 173.

towards the end of the eighteenth century, the English had decided not to renew the office of consul in Aleppo, at least until John Barker's appointment in 1799 or 1800, which nonetheless left him as the only Englishman in the city in 1824,¹⁴⁹ the year before the Levant Company factory closure.

The Egyptian rule over the Syrian provinces between 1832 and 1840 ultimately damaged the Imperial economy. Despite the stability Ibrahim Pasha's governance gave Syria, it hurt trade to Anatolia and Northern Iraq, both still in Ottoman hands. As a result, many Christian and Jewish merchant families left for Cyprus, Anatolia, for the duration of the Egyptian occupation. Also, the reformist introduction of universal conscription drove many young Muslims to flee to areas in the Empire that were less accessible to Imperial officialdom.¹⁵⁰ However, not all aspects of Egyptian occupation were negative: Ibrahim Pasha's policies repopulated 170 villages, which encouraged agricultural production and thus piqued trade, as reflected in the growing number of ships docked in the Beirut and Alexandretta harbors. According to Roger Owen, the total of British vessels at Alexandretta doubled between 1833 and 1837.¹⁵¹ The new governor was also responsible for increasing customs revenue. During this period, several British traders were active in Aleppo, and the Tuscan firm Giustiniani and Nipoti (originally Fratelli Castelli) reopened its doors in 1836.¹⁵²

The French also made use of Syrian cotton, which they wove and resold on the local market. Nonetheless, commercial success notwithstanding, the French presence in

149. Wood, *History*, 196.

150. Eldem, Goffman, and Masters, *Ottoman City*, 67.

151. Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy 1800-1914* (London: Methuen and Company, 1981).

152. Ade, *Picknick*, 81-82.

Aleppo was greatly reduced, specifically after the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon.¹⁵³ Even prior to the Revolution, sales of French cloth had declined because of the poor quality of merchandise being sent out and because of competition from a new cloth being imported from England to the Empire at the start of the nineteenth century.¹⁵⁴

However, the loss of Europeans in Aleppo until 1840 in no way meant that business in the city stood still. In fact, local Levantine merchants aptly stepped into their place with expanding family trade networks, especially after the closure of the Levant Company. Many of these networks stretched to Marseilles, Livorno and Manchester, and easily competed with European import/export businesses. Several Levantine families had already carved out handsome niches through the twin *Avruppa Tuccari* and *Hayriye Tuccari* programs. But they now raised their profile from mostly internal to international family networks,¹⁵⁵ and could even more successfully mediate domestic markets as precious go-betweens.

Still, both locals and Europeans recognized the importance of regional trade. After commerce improved with the new century, many European families unaffiliated with any major European firm or joint stock company arrived in Syria, and most plied their wares domestically. The exemplary Poche family set up Fratelli Poche and Company and aimed at regional markets of Diarbekir and Urfa.

153. Eldem, Goffman, and Masters, *Ottoman City*, 49.

154. Eldem, Goffman, and Masters, *Ottoman City*, 34.

155. Document signed by the heads of the Ghantuz Cubbe, Balit, Andrea, Altaras and other indigenous Christian families, agreeing to conditions for the shipment of goods to Europe. This document was drawn up in the British consulate in Aleppo in 1803, under Consul John Barker, probably because of the Levant Company's strict policy of using their own ships, which sailed only once a year. A few of the signatories were protected by the British; the Ghantuz Cubbe and the Balits were under the protection of the Ottoman authorities, and a couple of the merchants were protégés of the Austrian consulate. The Ghantuz Cubbe had their own shipping company and a trading company as well. TNA SP110/66 Book NA, British Register begun Aleppo 9th June 1799 (DSCN 0672, Merchants at Aleppo 6).

Around this time, Ottoman authorities launched a series of reforms that culminated with the constitution of 1876. Although the string of legislation addressed social and legal as well as economic aspects of Ottoman life, we will focus on the commercial elements most instrumental to minority merchants. The crucial first reform, the 1839 *Hatt I Serf Gulhane* or “Noble Edict of the Rose Chamber.” guaranteed the security of life, property and honor of all subjects, regardless of religion. Yet one of the most financially important changes was the privatization of farmlands, by which many Muslim *ayan* (urban notables) and Christian entrepreneurs could create large estates, profits from which supported commercial enterprises.

The treaty of Balta Liman or the Anglo-Ottoman Commercial Treaty of 1838 allowed British traders to settle anywhere in the Empire and eliminated all internal tariffs for them.¹⁵⁶ Generally, this privileged English merchants over the locals. However, the agreement actually favored local merchants under the protection of the Europeans and thus receiving its liberties, just as had the old protégé system.¹⁵⁷ Many foreign families chose to establish their businesses in Aleppo. They also seized opportunity from the shift in the trade balance in favor of Europe: Since most manufactured goods were imported to the Empire and raw materials were exported from it, international Aleppine trade was reduced but European merchants—and their local Levantine agents—could operate profitably in the hinterlands of Aleppo, a great source of raw materials. Thus, families such as the Poches and the Marcopolis scooped up raw wool and cotton and exported it to Europe.

156. In Aleppo, only two European families, the Marcopolis and the Poches, seized the opportunity to buy land. Eldem, Goffman, and Masters, *Ottoman City*, 68.

157. Bruce Masters, *The Arabs of the Ottoman Empire, 1516-1918: A Social and Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 180.

The combination of accumulating agricultural wealth, trading free of internal tariffs, focusing on domestic sourcing, and having a new avenue for exports all promoted the growth of an elite Levantine merchant class. Of course, the necessity of relying on local merchants in regional trading favored local minorities, whose bi- or tri-linguality made them invaluable. That is, the various treaties and reform edicts promulgated by the Ottoman authorities in the nineteenth century, like earlier capitulations, may have furthered European trade hegemony and favored local minority traders. Yet these were animated by the Porte's own goals of modernizing the Empire and advancing its economy by explicitly including all Ottoman subjects, regardless of religion or ethnicity.¹⁵⁸

Circulars sent to consulates by the British Foreign Affairs department attest to the increasing European involvement in regional trade. In 1870 the consul in Aleppo, P. Henderson, answered a query from the Foreign Office by proposing the extension of consular offices into regional towns: "Her Majesty's Consul at Aleppo, speaking of the possibility of developing British trade in his district, recommends the appointment of vice consuls at Aintab, Marash, Orfa, Adana and Deir (ez-zor). A large trade in Manchester goods might be developed." He later reiterated his recommendation, explaining that "the presence of an independent consular officer tends to check the abuses which the hostility and ignorance of the local administration put in the way of trade, and to the enforcement of payment of unwilling debtors."¹⁵⁹

The French evinced a similar aim. Ade tells us:

158. Carter Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 157.

159. Kenneth Bourne and D. Cameron Watt, eds., *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print. Series B. Vol. 7. The Near East and Middle East* (University Publications of America, 1984), 260.

With [the] date of January 1855, Edouard Grasset, the French Consul in Aleppo, sent a request to the French Foreign Ministry in Paris, more specifically to the Direction des Consulats et Affaires Commerciales, asking for permission to establish consular agencies in three smaller centers in the region around Aleppo: Urfa, Diarbekir and Antiochia. His petition offers an indication of the new orientation of foreign traders in Aleppo.¹⁶⁰

In fact, the hinterlands trade seemed so important that within three months of this request, the posts were filled, and soon three nations pursuing regional commerce (England, France, and Venice) maintained trading houses in Aleppo. The French consul requested consular representation in the provinces for a spate of reasons, not the least of which was to compete with English representation in those areas, traditional since 1854 although now fallen off. He also proffered the supposed need to defend local Catholics from the Orthodox clergy, especially since the English presence had boosted the number of Protestants in the community.¹⁶¹

Even the Venetians, who were reduced to selling goods through the intermediary of the English and French, favored copying those nations' expansion into the countryside. A long and thorough report the Venetian consul, Gerolamo Brigadi, sent to the V Savi justifies his suggested adoption of French and English strategies:

*All'indispensabile metodo tenuto dalli francesi ed Inglesi all'ora che s'introdussero li loro, cioè col darli ad'un prezzo mediocre a costo di ritrarne poco o niente proffito, mentre cossi si darebbe campo a Babilonia, [Baghdad] Mossol, Urfa, Diarbekir, e tutta la mesopotamia nonche agl'altri paesi circonvicini di fame sufficienti proviste ed a Pocco per tempo poi si potrebbe alzame il prezzo*¹⁶²

The very important method that the French and the English have now of introducing their goods at a mediocre price, which gives back little or no profit, which opens the field (market) to Babilonia, Mossul, Urfa, Diarbeker and

160. Ade, *Picnick*, 85.

161. Ade, *Picnick*, 85.

162. A.S.VE V Savi Alla Mercanzie Lettere Consoli, Busta 603. Letter from Gerolamo Brigadi to the Cinque Savi 17 February 1760 entitled Dettaglio del Comercio di Aleppo, "The State of Commerce.

Mesopotamia as well as other neighbouring countries who have the need, and after a while we can increase the price....

He continues by tracing the weakness of Venetian commerce to the fact that the English and French were substituting high-quality Venetian merchandise with cheap cloth of their own, and letting the merchandise from Venice rot in warehouses:

*Li Francesi egl'Inglesi non per altro ricevono le mercanzie di Venezia che per con le medeme tenere Formiti li loro magazeni, e per divertirsi doppo che s'attrovano aver adempiute alle annuali rispettive loro proprie comissioni, e frattanto le dette mercanzie s'amariscono.*¹⁶³

The French and the English receive their merchandise from Venice and with that they fill their warehouses, and what merchandise is left over from their annual sales from which they take their commission, is left to deteriorate.

Other reasons cited by the consul include the cost of insurance, which led the French to scrimp on cloth quality. Consul Brigadi opines that now was the best time to re-introduce Venetian cloths made by the two family companies, Melchior and Stahle, since their superiority would put France and England out of business. He does qualify his suggestion with the advice of keeping a uniform price among the merchants, as did the English and French, and keeping profits minimal until Venetian trade was re-established.. His seven-page missive at last concludes with a general report on commerce in Aleppo:

*Sopra il commercio in generale d'Aleppo, restando solo a soggiungere che li francesi prima della guerra ricevevano ogn'uno da Marsiglia 9 ò 10 bastimenti riccamente caricati, ed'ora ne ricevono solo 6 ò 7 ma non di tante valore. Gl'Inglesi 3 ò 4 Li Olandesi due ò trè li Toscani uno o due, e li Veneziani in quest'anno ne pure uno.*¹⁶⁴

Concerning the commerce of Aleppo in general, all that remains to be added is that, before the war, the French each received 9-10 richly loaded ships from

163. A.S.VE V Savi Alla Mercanzie Lettere Consoli, Busta 603. Letter from Gerolamo Brigadi to the Cinque Savi 17 February 1760 entitled Dettaglio del comercio di Aleppo, "The State of Commerce"

164. A.S.VE V Savi Alla Mercanzie Lettere Consoli, Busta 603 Letter from Consul Brigadi to the V Savi Aleppo 7 February 1760.

Marseilles and now only have 6-7, but with much lesser value. The English 3-4, the Dutch 2-3, the Tuscans, 1-2 and the Venetians not even one.

The need for regional representation stemmed from the commercial importance of these cities and their commodities, especially Urfa, for its wool, animals, gall nuts, and sesame, and larger Diarbekir, which added honey, cattle, and grain to those offerings. Both these cities marketed European goods in turn. The French consul longed to compensate for Aleppo's lack by adding Antioch's harbor to his purview,¹⁶⁵ and the proximity of these regional burghs would advance the revival of Aleppo's trade role through the local production of silk and other goods.¹⁶⁶

Merchant Families

Knowing a bit of the history of the European families who migrated to Syria, and especially to Aleppo, near the turn of the nineteenth century greatly illuminates their importance to minority communities and to the Empire as a whole. Two of the most important Levantine families, the Marcopolis and the Poches, prove representative.

The founder of the dynasty in Aleppo, Joseph Poche was born modestly enough in Kreibitz, in Bohemia, and began his career selling Bohemian glass in the local market of Constantinople. He later moved on to Salonika and Cyprus, settling finally in Damascus and establishing a company specializing in luxury goods including Bohemian glass. Yet living in Damascus as a foreigner rankled, and he resented having to don local clothes and being prohibited from mounting a horse.¹⁶⁷ So he moved to freer Aleppo, where he

165. A.S.VE V Savi Alla Mercanzie Lettere Consoli, Busta 603 Letter from Consul Brigadi to the V Savi Aleppo 7 February 1760.

166. Eldem, Goffman, and Masters, *Ottoman City*, 68.

167. All foreigners living in Damascus were forced to wear local garb in the eighteenth century, which was not the case in more cosmopolitan Aleppo. During the nineteenth century, the rules in Damascus changed.

worked as the agent of Ignaz Zahn et Companie. In 1827, he married Marguerite Magy de Sola and moved into her father's house, which was no less than the Venetian consulate. Together they had five boys and two girls. Towards the end of his life, Joseph put together a caravan carrying a very valuable cargo of pearls and other luxury items. The caravan was attacked, the merchandise stolen; Joseph became bankrupt and died shortly after, leaving young children to face this catastrophe.

Joseph's son, Frederic, with the help of his younger brother Adolphe, picked up the reins.¹⁶⁸ Together they founded a family business, using their father's business contacts and a few from their relatives, the Marcopolis. The Poche brothers followed the new focus on regional trade and concentrated primarily on the cities of Diarbekir and Urfa, using agents to represent them locally. In Diarbekir, their initial agent was Honoré Pons, scion of a French clan that had settled in Aleppo and their long-time family friend. Honoré and his brother relocated to Diarbekir where another brother, Alexandre, worked as a French agent and represented his family firm in the city. Alexandre later became the French vice consul, a post Honoré would later take over.

The Poche brothers relied primarily on local merchants to resolve bad debts for them, and only when they were unable to come to a fruitful conclusion did they ask Consul Pons to intervene. For that reason, the Poche brothers added the Keshishian brothers, who ran a reputable mercantile firm and had the languages to follow up on local manufacturers' bad debts, as agents.¹⁶⁹ In Urfa, the Poches used the services of Istifan

168. The *lingua franca* for business at the time was Italian. The brothers spoke Italian and French well, having learned the European languages from the Franciscans and from French traders. However, it is unclear how fluently they spoke Arabic and Turkish. They had learned German, their father's native language, only minimally. Ade, *Picknick*, 41.

169. Ade, *Picknick*, 105.

Yusufam and his nephew, Girgi Huri, as well as those of Tagir, Aswad and Company.¹⁷⁰ They also relied on other Levantine families who were already well established in Aleppo. For, despite their father's having worked as a successful merchant in the Empire for over 30 years, the Poches still found the Levantine Marcopoli family indispensable in launching their own company, since the first and sometimes even the second generation of European settlers lacked local languages and feared traveling in the provinces, where diplomatic representation and protection were thin. By the third generation, though, most families were comfortable in Arabic and with the culture. In addition, by then many of them had set up family networks that could compete with incoming firms for access to regional markets. With their help, by the end of the nineteenth century the Poche brothers had established a powerful enterprise and great status in the Levantine community.

Of Genoese origin, both the Giustinianis and the related Marcopolis had lived in Chios for generations. In 1836 the Tuscan firm Castelli and Company was reorganized under the name Giustiniani e Nipoti, and Marcopoli brothers Vincenzo and Nicola came to Aleppo to work in the firm under the aegis of their uncles, the Giustiniani, while two other brothers covered other locations in the Levant: Giovanni in Mosul and Giorgio in Damascus. In 1852, when the last Giustiniani uncle died after falling from a horse, the firm changed its name again, and became Vincenzo Marcopoli and Company.¹⁷¹ The Marcopoli family would be of the most important trading and consular families in Aleppo in the nineteenth century.

170. Ade, *Picknick*, 101.

171. Thomas Riis, "Affaires et Vie Quotidienne à Alep (1820-1870) La Maison Giustiniani e Nipoti puis Vincenzo Marcopoli e Compagnie: Les sources Orientales—Un Bilan Provisoire," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 34 (1982), 141-152. Published by Institut Français du Proche-Orient, 2, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41604784>

These dynasties display a pattern shared by most Levantine families. Once the business was fully launched and initial financial difficulties tamed, newly-settled families such as the Poches, Girardis, Andreas, and Levantes sought the extraordinary prosperity and prestige that had rewarded the earlier-ensconced Marcopolis in Aleppo.¹⁷² Wealth was wonderful, but a particularly effective method to achieve status in the community was by applying for and attaining a consular post, which most families attempted and at some point achieved. The following chapter concentrates on the minority consuls and diplomats in office from the time of the Levant Company through the Tanzimat era.

Conclusion

The story of the Europeans in Aleppo dates back to the fourteenth-century presence of the Venetians. By the sixteenth century, the French, English, and Dutch had founded trading communities there. Trade had always enticed foreigners to the city, and despite their small overall number, they played crucial roles in Aleppo and thus in the Empire.

Investigating their everyday lives and their limited interaction with the locals clarifies in part why these commercial enclaves became depleted in the middle of the eighteenth century. Consul Barker, one of the very few Englishmen left in Aleppo during the transitional and somewhat troubled beginning of the nineteenth century, proved a visionary of the area's resurgence. Although his particular plans did not materialize, foreign merchants and companies brewed successful strategies to reorient their focus towards regional trade with Asia Minor at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

172. Not all families which had established themselves in the latter part of the eighteenth century attained the financial and social status of the Marcopolis. The Altaras, Catafago, Conti, Germain, Magy, Martin, Molinari, Picciotto, Pons, Popolani, Silvera, Vaihen, and Vidal families all arrived in the eighteenth century, but only the Picciottos were notably successful.

Over time, the composition of the foreign community changed as well as their focus. By the end of the eighteenth century the “trading colonies” had transformed into individual families with impressive networks. Tuscan Jewish and Christian merchant clans settled in the city, drawn in part by the *Tanzimat* reforms, the wide-ranging political, educational and economic reorganizations introduced purposively to modernize the Empire and enable it to compete with European powers. The reformers realized that competing required generating greater income. To that end they abolished guilds and allowed free trade, widened the right to private property, instituted a new tax system, and eliminated their protectionist economic policies. Although aggressively revisionist historiographers deny major European pressure on the Ottoman authorities to implement the reforms, the English and the French—in particular the diplomats who contributed to various drafts of the edicts—did in fact play a role in their instigation. Significantly, many of those diplomats belonged to the second, more settled wave of Europeans Ottoman policy invited, and who formed large insular families, held onto their European identity and customs, and established a monopoly in consular posts, thus making themselves the elite, Levantine merchant consuls of Aleppo.

Chapter Four

THE MERCHANT CONSULS

Aleppo became a city of Consuls.... [T]he Aleppo consulates are—
or, it is now necessary to write, were—among the oldest in the world.¹



Inside entrance of Venetian consulate

Ottoman diplomatic relations with Europe reach back to the Empire's foundation in the fourteenth century, carved out between Byzantium and the Seljuk Empire, one of the many small, semi-autonomous Turcoman Emirates in western Anatolia. In 1453 Sultan Mehmet II captured Constantinople and cemented the status of his realm as the preeminent power in southeastern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean.² Soon after, he

1. Philip Mansel, *The Rise and Fall of Syria's Great Merchant City* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016), 156.

2. The Ottoman Empire was considered as a successor to the Byzantine one which, as heir to Rome, was revered as the supreme state. The Ottomans not only ruled over virtually the same lands as had the Byzantines, but also adopted some of their institutions. One was the tax structure, which included the

visited the European quarter of Galata to confirm the treaties, which had linked Genoa, Venice, and the former Byzantine Empire. The presence of European consuls in the Ottoman Empire was legally based on these capitulations, which he and ensuing Ottoman authorities granted Western nations, providing for stationed consuls to protect the extraterritorial privileges of a country's resident or traveling merchants and to negotiate for them with local officials as the need arose.³ The Porte first offered capitulations separately to each state starting, as noted, with the Genoese in 1453 as a continuation of the agreement they enjoyed with the Byzantines,⁴ and continuing with the Venetians, also commercial partners of the prior empire. In 1535, the Ottomans signed a capitulatory agreement with the French. Here again, there was little novelty: As the French had already treated with the Mamluks in Egypt, the Ottoman conquerors of the area not only honored that agreement but also extended it throughout their domains.⁵

However, the capitulations extended to the French in the early sixteenth century differed from those granted other European nations very notably by allowing the foreigners to recruit local interpreters or *dragomans*.⁶ The English and the Dutch signed capitulations at the beginning of the seventeenth century, so that, at its half-way point, four European states had consular representation to the Porte: France, England, the

use of customary law. The Ottomans blended in Sultanic to complement the Islamic law. Halil Inalcik, "Suleiman the Lawgiver and Ottoman Law," *Archivicum Ottomanicum* (1969): 105-138.

3. Ferry de Goey, *Consuls and the Institutions of Global Capitalism 1783-1914* (London: Routledge, 2016), 34.

4. Halil Inalcik, "Ottoman Galata. 1453-1553" in *Essays in Ottoman History* (Istanbul: Eren, 1998), 279-282.

5. Although the capitulations were not agreements per se, over time and with subsequent confirmation they acquired the force of commercial agreements.

6. Niels Steensgaard, "Consuls and Nations in the Levant from 1570 to 1650," *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 15, nos. 1-2 (1967): 16. According to Steensgaard, the legal validity of the original document has been questioned, because of the radical difference it had with other treaties.

Netherlands, and Venice, the only Italian city-state to carry on the tradition.⁷ The roster of nations who applied for and received such agreements lengthened dramatically in the eighteenth century, starting with the Habsburg Emperor in 1718 and followed by Sweden in 1737, the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in 1740, Tuscany in 1747, and Denmark in 1746. France extended its privileges even further in the 1740 renewal of its capitulations.⁸ In addition to the greater number of treaty recipients, the conditions of the capitulations themselves became universalized. By the eighteenth century, privileges granted to one foreign community applied to all the others, so any overseas national (and his *dragomans*) possessed the same legal status in the Empire.⁹

Although historians have recognized capitulations as the cornerstone of Ottoman-European relations, Niels Steensgaard finds they have overestimated their legal significance.¹⁰ Citing numerous ambassadorial reports of the authorities' disrespecting their rights, Steensgaard suggests that a discrepancy between formal rules, the capitulations, and other sources of law pertained. Alexander Van de Groot explains this inconsistent implementation of the law as purposive: The "willful confusion in the legal and diplomatic terminology concealing the daring novelty of interpretation of Islamic law of such a system of ordered foreign commercial and political relations by the always pragmatically-inclined Ottoman men of state was compounded by the Western parties' way of understanding things." That is, Ottoman statesmen designedly obscured the

7. Steensgaard, "Consuls and Nations," 14.

8. Mauritz van den Boogert, *Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System: Qadis, Consuls and Beratlis in the 18th Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 7.

9. Van den Boogert, *Capitulations*, 9. The arrival of the French ambassador in Constantinople presaged a change in the capitulations granted Europeans. The number of foreign powers granted commercial privileges would climb, as would their employment of Ottoman subjects as *dragomans* enjoying the same liberties afforded the foreigners. It was during the eighteenth century that all foreigners became equal in the concessions received.

10. Steensgaard, "Consuls and Nations," 15-16.

conflict between *sharia* and *kanun* (law and custom, or theory and practice), muddying the reality of having made lasting peace with the world of unbelievers (*dār al-harb*) by adopting the legal fiction that the capitulations were only domestic arrangements or mere legal protections given to non-Muslim subjects.¹¹ Indeed, consular correspondence from both the Venetian and the Levant Company archives bristle with complaints that the Ottomans were not honoring the articles of the treaties and that the capitulations caused the nation difficulties. English? Consul Kinloch wrote, “the privileges granted by the capitulations are not well observed at the Ottoman Porte, particularly in regard to the protection thereby granted to our brokers, warehousemen, who are natives of the country.”¹² Another example is a letter from Consul Seriola to the *Cinque Savii* in which he complains about the tyrant Hamsi Pasha, who imprisoned all the children of the “baratari” *dragomans*, in direct opposition to the written capitulations.¹³ Not all mention of the capitulations were negative, however; Consul Purnell happily reported to governors of the Levant Company that “the renewing of our capitulations seem to be over.”¹⁴

The evolution of the capitulatory system and the *Tanzimat* reforms impacted the consuls in much the same ways they had affected minority merchants, as seen in the previous chapter. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, consuls were appointed either by their respective joint stock companies, such as the Levant Company,

11. Alexander de Groot, “The Historical Development of the Capitulatory Regime in the Ottoman Middle East from the Fifteenth Century to the Nineteenth Century,” in *The Ottoman Text and Context*, special issue, *Oriente Moderno, Nuova Serie*, Anno 22 (83), no. 3, (2003): 576.

12. TNA SP 110/29, f.107, Consul Kinloch to Ambassador Grenville, 30 July 1765.

13. A.S.VE Cinque Savi alla Mercanzie Lettere Consoli, Busta 604. Letter from Domenico Seriola to the Cinque Savi, October 1768. Seriola also says that Hamsi Pasha was later removed from office and that commerce was starting up again.

14. TNA SP 110/66, f. 202, Letter from the governors of the Company to consul Purnell, 13 August 1719.

or by their nations, as in the case of the Venetians and the French. Mandated to represent their “nation” for a fixed period and, in most cases, forbidden to engage in trade, they either drew a salary or gained income from “consulage” (a tax on all goods, which was collected by the consul) charged on shipped goods or other consular fees. However, after the number of Europeans in the Empire dropped and the Levant Company closed in 1825, the nature of consular representation changed. From that point, consuls and vice-consuls (honorary consuls) were named from among the Levantine Christian and Jewish minority population (though native-born Christians would not be chosen to represent the various nations until the twentieth century). At the end of the eighteenth century, the first Levantine consul chosen was the Austrian Consul Picciotto, whose family would occupy the seats of sixteen different consulates over the span of ten years. The reforms implemented during the *Tanzimat* era paved the way for these relatively newly-settled merchants to establish businesses and, from early on, to devote their energy to acquiring the prestigious and profitable consular titles.

This chapter traces the transformation of consular positions and powers and their effect on the Levantines. It shows how both the capitulations and the reform instituted by the Ottomans were instrumental in their economic and social advance. It does so by first examining two letters of appointment: the first from the Levant Company board in London outlining the duties, conditions of nomination, and salaries of consuls, vice-consuls, factors, factor marines, chaplains, canceliers ((alternately known as chancellor, cancellier, chancelier, or secretary), and *dragomans*; the second from the *Cinque Savi* in Venice nominating Salesio Rizzini to his consular post in Aleppo. Constrained by the limited availability of documents, the chapter concentrates mostly on

British and Venetian consulates, including constituent members of the nations. Yet it provides a very close examination of their consuls' duties through a wealth of litigated cases involving them. In general, these cases took place internally in consular courts, but at times they extended outside their jurisdiction.¹⁵

The appointment of Raffaele Picciotto as the Austro-Hungarian consul in 1798 epitomizes the shift taking place in diplomatic nominations from career consuls to local honorary consuls. This chapter follows the consular history of the Picciotto family, which began the tradition of hereditary consular posts, along with the histories of other consular and *dragoman* families. Together, they outline sociopolitical patterns that continued fully until the start of the city's current unrest. In the course of this chapter I will examine the manner in which the various nations appointed their consuls, in the eighteenth century based on a document outlining the duties of each member of the Levant company, as well as a letter of appointment sent by the Cinque Savi to one of its consuls. I will continue by addressing the duties of the consuls and consulates that included the aspect of protection, and continue by looking at the cooperation between the consuls. Finally, I will use the Picciotto family as an example of a consular dynasty that bridged the time period between the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth.

Diplomacy: Appointment of Consuls

English Consuls and the Levant Company

The English consular institution had a unique nature. This quality stemmed from the appointment of consuls by governors of the Levant Company rather than the Crown.¹⁶

15. Readers should keep in mind that the Europeans were considered to be a *millet* (community) similar to other communities in the Empire.

16. The same cannot be said for the ambassadors, who, from the first half of the seventeenth century, during the reign of Charles I, were appointed by the crown and paid by the Company. Nations

Thus the “incumbent was both a royal representative commissioned by the sovereign, and a commercial agent, paid by the merchants.”¹⁷ The consuls were responsible primarily for the protection of the members of the Company and were not appointed to represent the Crown. In fact, the first English consul in Aleppo, Richard Forster, was instructed to arrest any Englishmen who were not members,¹⁸ as his main duties were to protect the capitulatory rights of the merchants, to mediate their legal disputes within the Company and with the Ottoman authorities, and to manage their comportment.

William Harborne,¹⁹ entrusted with appointing the consuls, made his first appointment to the consulate in Aleppo in 1580 while still negotiating the capitulations and before even being officially recognized as ambassador to the Porte.²⁰ Once firmly established in Istanbul in his double capacity of ambassador and consul, he set up consulates in Alexandria, Cairo, Tripoli and the Barbary Coast.²¹

appointed only one ambassador, who resided in the capital, but their multiple consuls resided in different cities.

17. Christine Laidlaw, *The British in the Levant: Trade and Perceptions of the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2010), 21; Alfred Wood, *A History of the Levant Company* (Abingdon: Frank Cass, 2006), 2. This duality arose when the Company first received its charter from Elizabeth I and the governors proposed posting William Harborne as permanent representative to Istanbul. Elizabeth was amenable, on condition the Company pay his expenses and salary—a precedent maintained in Aleppo and most locales until the Company disbanded in 1825 and its authority passed to the Crown. During the early years of the Levant Company, the ambassador was chosen from its own merchants. But later in the seventeenth century, under Charles I, the Crown succeeded in imposing its own choice, and retained that prerogative. Conversely, the Company had the right to choose its own consuls.

18. Richard Hakluyt, *The principal Navigations ...* Vol. 5 (Glasgow: Hakluyt Society, Extra series, 1904), 224.

19. Harborne, a factor for a merchant in England who worked under the protection of the French, later obtained a set of twenty capitulations from Sultan Murad III, through which English merchants won privileges in the Ottoman Empire. To ensure their implementation, he and other merchants applied to Elizabeth I to form a company, to which she acceded in 1582, granting twelve merchants the sole right of trading with the Porte. This first company was the forerunner of the Levant Company, and Harborne was the first, if unofficial, British ambassador. Laidlaw, *British in the Levant*, 20; Wood, *History of the Levant Company*, 12.

20. G. R. Berridge, *British Diplomacy in Turkey 1583 to the Present* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhof, 2009).

21. Berridge, *British Diplomacy in Turkey*, 76.

The consuls chosen for these posts were generally factory merchants initially nominated by the members, based on letters of recommendation—a system enthusiastically shared by the Venetian consulate, as the myriad letters of reference attest. The consuls might not always be sent out from England, nor nominated locally, but could be at times picked from Levantine families already in the area. For example, the Cumberbatch and Werry families frequently staffed the consulates in Istanbul and Izmir, and the Aleppo consulate followed this habit. The Anglo-Levantine John Barker, consul from 1803 until 1825, exemplified this practice.

Surprisingly, the letter sent by the governors of the Levant Company starts off specifying protections the English consul may and may not afford other nationals; not surprisingly, the order was grounded in the capitulations:

That British consuls and vice consuls shall not act in either of those capacities [as consul or vice-consul] for other nations; but they may protect, as British consuls or vice consuls such strangers as may have recourse to them for their protection, in conformity with the capitulations with the Porte. And when such persons should apply to them, shall be of a nation that has capitulations with the Porte.²²

As noted, consuls and ambassadors were not allowed to trade, but had to rely on their salaries and the consulage and other fees they gathered. Yet the details varied widely. In Constantinople, Aleppo, Salonica, Acre, and Adrianople consuls received fixed salaries, but those in Cyprus and the vice-consul at Chios got small stipends and a percentage of consulage levied at the ports. The consul in Alexandria could take all the consulage levied up to a fixed amount and a percentage of the rest. Consuls in different ports received no salaries but kept all the consulage and charged chancellery fees for

22. TNA SP/110/68. The 20-page letter is too long to quote in its entirety. For details, see the Addendum.

notarial work.²³ Any salaries paid to the consuls were commensurate with their importance. In 1616, the consul in Aleppo drew one of the highest, \$2,500 per annum in Levant currency.²⁴ Yet the consul in Izmir, the second most important factory in the Empire, received only \$500. Though that amount was increased in 1633 to \$1,200, the Aleppine consul got a raise to \$3,000, and Izmir's consular salary matched Aleppo's only in 1649, with a base of \$2,000, a travel stipend of \$5,000, plus a gratuity of \$1,000. With the drop in the value of money towards the close of the eighteenth century, there was an increase in salary and the consuls in some cities received up to \$12,000 yearly.²⁵ Yet whatever the manner or amount of payment, consuls had to cover all expenses associated with the post: underlings' salaries; operating costs; room and board for the chaplain, cancellier²⁶ and any guests; and the equally crucial bribes and presents that oiled diplomacy in the Empire.²⁷

This comparatively large remuneration translated into prestige, enabling consuls to represent the nation to their hosts with fanfare and largesse. Gifts and bribes to Ottoman officials had often to be augmented if consuls wished to be cordially received. When Consul Peter Abbott in Beirut was accused of certain misdeeds after not giving generously enough, his Aleppine counterpart, John Barker, sympathized: "Unhappy

23. Theophilus Prousis, *British Consular Reports from the Ottoman Levant in an Age of Upheaval, 1815-1830* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2008), 121-122.

24. The currency of choice during the eighteenth century was the Leeuwendaalder (Lion dollar) minted of .750 fine silver, but lighter than other contemporary coins. Lion dollars were no longer used in the nineteenth century, and many different currencies, all subject to varying exchange rates, took their place. So it is difficult to assess official salaries. Laidlaw estimates the commonly-used dollars as approximately four to one pound sterling in the seventeenth century and between five and eight to one pound sterling in the eighteenth century. Laidlaw, *British in the Levant*, 35.

25. Wood, *History of the Levant Company*, 217-218.

26. The office of cancellier was equivalent to secretary and notary public. The cancellier notarized, verified, and composed legal documents and sent them to London. He was appointed by the governing body of the Company and, sometimes, chosen among the local merchants, with permission from London.

27. Laidlaw, *British in the Levant*, 22.

indeed, would be the lot of an English Consul if the fear of incurring a Pasha's displeasure should have any influence on his conduct For My part, I should be loth to fill a public station under such humiliating circumstances."²⁸

Vice-consuls were rewarded with similarly complex mechanisms. Those at Lattachia could "appropriate to his own use, the same proportion of the consulage levied there, as is allowed to the other vice consuls upon the coast of Syria, upon all commodities, except Silk and Galls shipped for Great Britain, for which the same consulage shall be paid and made good, to the company's treasurer as Aleppo, as of the said silk and Galls had been bought at Aleppo, and shipped at Scanderoon."²⁹ Separately from the consuls, and far more rationally, the treasurers in Izmir, Constantinople and Aleppo were paid an annual salary worth \$400.

In addition to their function as paymasters, consuls had to administer the loyalty and honesty "oath, to be taken by all factors upon their arrival at Constantinople, Smyrna, and Aleppo" and supplied in its entirety in the same Levant Company letter.³⁰

Treasurers were appointed for two years, with the stipulations "that no person shall be deemed qualified to be chosen into that office, until he shall have been five years a factor in Turkey. That the salaries of the treasurers at Constantinople, Smyrna, and Aleppo be four hundred dollars each, by the year, as now paid."³¹

28. Edward Barker, *Syria and Egypt under the last five Sultans of Turkey* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), 1;343.

29. TNA SP 110/68, Register of orders and regulations made by the General Court of the Levant Company relating to Aleppo f. 41.

30. TNA SP 110/68. Register of orders and regulations made by the General Court of the Levant Company relating to Aleppo It is interesting that only these three major factories were included in the document, and not the smaller ones. F. 41.

31. TNA SP 110/68 f. 42, Register of orders and regulations made by the General Court of the Levant Company relating to Aleppo.

Factor marines, stationed at ports and held responsible for all merchandise loaded onto and unloaded from all ships in harbor, were chosen for a period of three years. In Alexandretta (Scanderoon), the general court of the Levant Company mandated the following, demonstrating the importance of the factor marine's position in ports that did not have a Levant Company factor, consul, or many merchants:

That if upon a medium of three years the marine dutys at Scanderoon upon all goods to and from [the] port of London, by private or general ships, and [] of porteridge and weighing shall not amount to [] thousand dollars a year in such money as the [] salarys abroad are paid, the [] sum of two tho[usand] dollars shall be made good to the factor marine. And that the factor marine shall be obliged to keep constantly an English scrivvan, and to allow him [one] hundred dollars a year in the same money as [] and his table and lodgings, which scrivvan [shall] be approved of either by the company or by factory at Aleppo, and shall not be dis[] applying to the company, or to the consul an[] aforesaid.³²

The crucial position of the factor marine was commensurate with that of a vice-consul. Closely monitored by the consul in Aleppo and by the members of the factory, factor marines would be suspended from office if proven guilty of embezzlement or neglect of duty: For example, John Purnell was removed from office in August of 1737, pending an investigation by the Aleppine consul.³³

Other functionaries received explicit instructions as well. Among the longest were those for the treasurers' crucial job of keeping track of consular income. Indeed, treasurers in the same large factories of Aleppo, Smyrna, and Constantinople had to swear an entirely different oath from that of the factors. Four to five pages of instructions regarding what bills and charges the treasurers were allowed, or not allowed, to pay follow their oath. Exemplifying the level of detail are assertions that "the treasurer at

32. TNA SP 110/66, Register of orders and regulations made by the General Court of the Levant Company relating to Aleppo f. 53. Scanderoon refers to the port of Alexandretta, used as the port for Aleppo.

33. TNA SP 110/66, Register of orders and regulations made by the General Court of the Levant Company relating to Aleppo.

Aleppo shall not pay any bills which shall be brought in by the Apothecary for Phisick, or for attending any great men, or natives of the country,” and “that no sweetmeats shall be delivered out at Aleppo, without an order from the consul under his hand, expressing the quantity and to whom they are to be given; and the treasurer is to pay no bills for the same without such an order, which is to be laid before the auditor.”³⁴ Presumably, this required order maintained the consul’s direct and sole responsibility for doling out all gifts and bribes to the Porte officials, and let the governors ensure that the cost of no gift, however small, would be passed on to the Company.

Naturally, the duties and the \$300 annual remuneration given company cancelliers show a similar legalism. Their office charged them with “taking minutes of, and registering the transactions of all courts or assemblies.... Nothing in the minutes taken at any general assembly of the factory, shall be altered.” And in Aleppo, cancelliers “shall keep what is already entered in the present private register book, secret in the manner it was originally intended and practiced.”³⁵

The section delegated to the *dragomans* reflects contemporary English biases not shared, at least in Aleppo, by consulates of other nations: “As inconveniences and mischiefs have arisen from the employment of Jews in the service of the nation, as drugomans, no person whatsoever, being a Jew, under any pretense, be received as drugoman in the company’s service either at Constantinople, Smyrna or Aleppo.” Adding uncharacteristic laxity to prejudice, this part of the document also states that any merchant needing a *dragoman* could choose one himself without prior approval of the

34. TNA SP 110/68, f. 50, Register of orders and regulations made by the General Court of the Levant Company relating to Aleppo.

35. TNA SP 110/68. F. 56 Register of orders and regulations made by the General Court of the Levant Company relating to Aleppo.

consul or ambassador, except in a case directly involving the capitulations and thus mandating consular agreement.

This missive also outlines the duties and rules that apply to the factor marine at Alexandretta, under the immediate supervision of the consul and factory at Aleppo and enjoined from taking commissions from anyone other than English merchants in that city. After a few more pages delineating company policies and the general state of trade, focusing on French cloth and the prohibition against English factors' carrying it, the documents concludes: "The foregoing sheets, consisting of twenty pages contain all our orders to the 19th of October 1744, which are to be registered in a book to remain in the cancelleria."³⁶

The Venetian Consuls

Venice's College of Magistrates and the *Cinque Savi* appointed consuls to Aleppo in the eighteenth century. The *Cinque Savi* probably formed a part of the College, as its members signed letters of appointment but sent them out in the name of the College. After a successful trial period, the five-year tenure as consul would be confirmed—a contingency the English system does not display.

Like that of the Levant Company just examined, a Venetian letter of appointment clearly articulated rules and conditions imposed on the consul. He could not dispose of any duties,³⁷ and could not accomplish the most important of them—caring for all

36. TNA SP 110/68. F. 57 Register of orders and regulations made by the General Court of the Levant Company relating to Aleppo.

37. Steensgaard, "Consuls and Nations," 26. At times the consuls were granted a certain sum on their departure from Venice, but apart from that they had no legal recourse to any other income.

commercial affairs—by requiring extra labor or taxes from Venetian merchants. However, the Venetian traders had to obey only their consul, and could not appeal to any other authority.³⁸ Consuls received a fixed state salary, which may have been quite inadequate to cover necessary, if unspoken, expenses not just of *avantias* (the Europeans’ term for arbitrary taxes imposed on merchants in violation of the capitulations) but of bribes and yearly gifts to local authorities, as many letters requesting extra funds from the Cinque Savi attest. This complaint became familiar; one of the first letters requesting money is a petition signed by all the Venetian merchants in Aleppo, all of whom were European Jews, to the Cinque Savi in Venice, dated March 4, 1736. The petition asks for more money to “maintain the honor and standing” of this new consulate.³⁹ In a similar letter, Consul Brigadi of Aleppo explains his pecuniary predicament as due mostly to the bankruptcy of two Venetian businesses in the city:

*Le belle speranze che io avea concepite nel mio trasferimento da Cipro à questa città d’Aleppo per promuovere, et ampliare il Veneto commercio, sono state troncate dal decadimento della casa Belilios, e di quella del Muti, non rimanendovi che la dita Altaras, e pochi altri più desiderosi che valedoli à sostenerlo.*⁴⁰

All the good hopes of promoting and increasing Venetian trade that I had envisioned upon my transfer from Cyprus to this city of Aleppo have been curtailed due to the fall of the houses of Belilios and Muti, and only the Altaras

38. Maria Pia Pedani, “Venetian Consuls in Syria and Egypt in the Ottoman Age,” *Mediterranean World* 18 (2006): 9. As early as 1331 and until the seventeenth century, Steensgaard tells us, the assistance of a council of 12 lightened the consul’s burden; Together (and without needing specific permission from Venice) they decided which expenses the treasury should meet. Still, the practice was to send copies of important decisions taken by the council to Venice and to the *bailo* in Constantinople. Steensgaard, “Consuls and Nations,” 3, 36. Yet by the middle of the eighteenth century, there is no evidence in the documents that the council existed, and major decisions were referred to Venice.

39. A.S.VE Cinque Savi alla Mercanzie Lettere Consoli, Busta 604. Letter from merchants (Salomo and sons, David, and Isahe Altaras, Niccolo Voltolina, Isack, and Joseph Belilios, Giuseppe Lion, Moise Cabibi, Giovanni Carlo Mantovani, Ancona, Marini, Pietro Corella, Gian Steffano Pisetti) to the Cinque Savi in Venice on March 4, 1736. This letter must have been written shortly after the consulate reopened.

40. A.S.VE Cinque Savi alla Mercanzie Lettere Consoli, Busta 603. Letter from Consul Brigadi to the Cinque Savi June 22, 1756.

firm remains, and very little else is left that is desirable and capable of sustaining it [Venetian trade].

Tasks other than the payment of salaries, taxes, and bribes strained consular incomes. The consul's jurisdiction extended well beyond Aleppo to the Syrian ports of Lattachia, Paggias, Bairuti, Saida, and Tripoli, and to San Giovanni d'Acri and Giaffa as well, though he could not extend his authority to other Imperial harbors.⁴¹ It was not easy to maintain authority over ports so spread out. To do so the consul could name a consul, vice-consul or deputy in every port⁴²—preferably a nobleman but at least a Venetian subject—but had to cover it at his own expense. As might be imagined, paying the main consulate's salaries and bribes, and footing the bill for those of satellite consulates, might well drain his finances. The consul collected a flat tax of 2% on all goods on a ship's manifest, but the consulage fee gathered from the merchants was not very high, so consuls regularly paid out more than their granted income. The need for a private income explains to a certain extent why consuls ideally derived from aristocratic families. In addition, their frequent need to judge local cases was a privilege reserved for nobles.

As Pedani tells us, consular rules underwent many changes. In 1586 it had been decreed that consuls be chosen by the Cinque Savi, the public office dealing with trade and the governing body of the merchants. The law also reaffirmed a previous one, that consuls be either noblemen or citizens, precluding the appointment of any imperial or other foreign agent and (from 1443 on) consuls in the all-important cities of Constantinople, Alexandria and Aleppo came from the nobility. Consuls in lesser port

41. Notably, the very small port city of Payas (Paggias) numbers in the list. While rarely mentioned in European documents, its proximity to the port of Alexandretta (Iskenderun) seems to have justified its inclusion.

42. A.S.VE Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia Lettere Consoli, Busta 604, letter from the Cinque Savi to Salesio Rizzini, April 1, 1780.

cities might be mere Venetian citizens if aristocrats were lacking, but they forfeited judicial privileges.⁴³ After 1758, the laws again altered; from that time consuls were held responsible for protecting the subjects and the goods entrusted to them. The 1780 document appointing Consul Rizzini clearly exhibits the new regulations.

The College of Magistrates deemed Rizzini “worthy to be the consul in the above ports” although not a member of the nobility and therefore ineligible to be a judge. His appointment was, as mentioned, for five years, preceded by a trial period during which he would have to prove he could benefit Venetian subjects. Rizzini was permitted to appoint vice-consuls and agents in any ports over which he had jurisdiction, as long as they were Venetian citizens and he paid them out of his own pocket, as he must do with all bribes, presents, and other necessary expenses. This stipulation was zealously repeated in two different parts of the contract. In addition, Consul Rizzini could not lend money in the name of the nation, charge interest, or augment the 2% tax on merchants; any infraction of these restrictions would forfeit him the post. The payment of employees, bribes and *avancias* mounted up and explain his constant letters requesting more money from the authorities.⁴⁴

The next part of the contract dealt with the 2% taxes that had to be gathered on all goods on ship manifests. All ships, whether they loaded in Venice or not, had to pay this tax, and the consul had to calculate the goods' worth carefully to extract the correct amount. If the captain and the consul disagreed about the value of said merchandise, the consul would tax the captain 2% of the difference between the two assessments. The

43. Pedani, "Venetian Consuls," 9.

44. A.S.VE Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia Lettere Consoli, Busta 604, letter from the Cinque Savi to Salesio Rizzini, April 1, 1780.

consul in Cyprus could not tax ships in transit, but consulage tax for those ships would have to be paid in Aleppo, as stated by the laws of 31 May 1758 and 27 February 1766.⁴⁵

The document then outlines the responsibilities of the vice consuls: keeping a comprehensive list of sailors coming through the port; collecting and inspecting the manifest and all letters in the captain's possession; ensuring that bills of lading were not fraudulent and that the sailors did not carry more tax-free merchandise than allowed by the 1738 laws. Myriad other regulations concern accounts and their documentation. The flurry of laws points to the fact that the consul's main function (even when aided by a delegate) was to maintain trade and assist the merchants. All consuls and ambassadors, upon returning to Venice, had to give full commercial and diplomatic reports (*relazioni*) to the Senate. This requirement does not appear in any extant document, but is strongly suggested by the clause stating that only the consul himself may conduct secret negotiations, though it does not elaborate on their nature,⁴⁶ since any negotiation between officials would have to be reported to Venice.



Adolphe Poche's name on Street sign outside Venetian (Later Belgian) consulate

45. A.S.VE. Cinque Savi alla Mercanzie Lettere Consoli, Busta 604, copy of consul Rizzini's letter of appointment on April 1, 1780.

46. A.S.VE. Cinque Savi alla Mercanzie Lettere console, Busta 604, copy of consul Rizzini's letter of appointment on April 1st 1780.

Responsibilities of the Consuls

The ambassador topped off the diplomatic pyramid in the English, French and Dutch nations, while the *bailo* occupied that position for the Venetians.⁴⁷ Posted to Constantinople as not only the most important trade center, but also the one closest to the sultan, he oversaw specific communities' welfare and promoted their commercial interests throughout the Empire by mediating disputes between their merchants and Ottoman authorities. The English ambassador's purview stretched especially long, as he appointed and monitored consuls and factories as distant as the main one in Aleppo, though many of the less-pressing concerns fell to the local consuls. However, the ambassador remained actively involved in running the company and managing disputes among the consular staff. Besides these chores, his diplomatic duties as the representative of the Crown included customary visits to Porte dignitaries to preserve the nation's commercial status.

While the embassies in Constantinople played a significant role, primary international trading centers like Aleppo and Izmir warranted their own consuls.⁴⁸ As mentioned, the English, Venetians, Dutch, and French maintained consulates in both those cities. For the Levant Company, the consuls in Aleppo and Izmir followed only the ambassador in importance, and were elected by the general court, made up of its board of governors in London, after having been nominated by the ambassador and the members of the factories.⁴⁹ Most consuls were chosen from among the ranks of the merchants, as commercial experience naturally weighed in their favor. To contend, the applicant needed

47. The medieval *bailo* was roughly equivalent to a consul, but more important. In 1575, Venetian law recognized the *bailo* as equal to an ambassador. Pedani, "Venetian Consuls," 8.

48. Smaller port cities such as Alexandretta and Lattakia had vice consuls. Alexandretta also had a factor marine, responsible for all merchandise loaded and unloaded from the ships.

49. Laidlaw, *British in the Levant*, 32.

to garner many letters of recommendation from peers of his nation and other Europeans. After the death of Consul Salesio Rizzini on 1 August 1794, a few merchants nominated themselves and sent elaborate letters of recommendations to the Cinque Savi in Venice.⁵⁰ Two of the most important were Giovanni Batista Bianchi, who had lived in Aleppo for ten years, and Angiello Durighello, who was stationed in the Alexandretta consulate and would later become the Spanish consul general. Both letters bore the signatures of major consuls (Abbott, Van Maseyk, Moise and Raphael Picciotto) and many merchants of different nations.⁵¹ In the end, though, the job of proconsul went to Giovanni Antonio Maria Morana and to Bernardo Caprara, who took care of the consular affairs while serving in Cyprus.⁵² In the case of the English, the consuls and vice consuls, were recommended by the governing body, but endorsed by the members of the factory, who were acquainted with the candidates in place and could vouch for their character. In a letter of 29 February 1737 concerning the appointment of Edward Purnell, the board wrote:

If Mr. Edward Purnell of Latachia desires a commission from you to be vice consul at that place. We would have you [give] him one, unless the factory should have any objections to it, in [that] case you are to let us know what they are.⁵³

By August of 1737, no action had been taken, so the board reiterated:

We observe what you mention about supplying Edward Purnell with a patent to be Vice Consul in Latachia, and conclude you will not refuse him one, when he desires it and the nation think it proper for him to have one.⁵⁴

50. Consul Salesio Rizzini was considered the last consul in Aleppo by historians and by descendants of the Poche and Marcopoli families. However, the documents in the Venetian archives show that to be incorrect.

51. A.S.VE Cinque Savi alla Mercanzie Letter Consoli, Busta 604. Letters of recommendation for Bianchi and Durighello (2534- 2535-8-/2562-2569). August 1794.

52. The consulate in Cyprus was subordinate to that in Aleppo.

53. TNA SP 110/66 Register of orders and regulations made by the General Court of the Levant Company relating to Aleppo.

The consuls' being privy to inside commercial information justified the prohibition against their practicing trade, a restriction waived only in the case of the lonely Dutch consul in Aleppo: "The Dutch consul, being the sole person of that nation at Aleppo, exercises also the profession of a merchant."⁵⁵ After 1772, even Dutch consuls could no longer engage in trade.⁵⁶ As consuls, they were primarily responsible for representing the company, enforcing order among factory members, and implementing company regulations. One such regulation ensured that that no factory member converted to Islam.⁵⁷ Consuls also represented their nation to the Porte, winning and maintaining good relations with the locals on behalf of their merchants through ceremonious visits to and gift exchanges with the authorities. Russell details the strict protocol guiding these highly ritualized visits:

The Bashaw, The Cady and the Mohassil give separate audiences to the respective consuls; but the Mohassil alone returns the visit. On these occasions, the consul appears in state attended by the merchants under his protection, as well as the honorary Druggomans. He is received at the Seraglio with much ceremony. The Bashaw's retinue is in gala, his soldiery are drawn up in their manner, and his best horses, richly dressed are ranged in the courtyard. Soon after the consul enters the audience chamber, the Bashaw makes his appearance, supported by two officers and proceeds immediately to his place on the divan without taking notice of the company as he passes. The Consul sits down at the same time as the Bashaw, a chair of state being previously brought from his own house.... During this conversation, the consul is entertained successively with sweetmeats, coffee, tobacco, sherbet, and perfume, all which are, by other pages, presented at the same instant to the Bashaw. Towards the end of the audience, he orders the consul to be invested with an ermine fur.... The two acting druggomans stand close to

54. TNA SP 110/66 Register of orders and regulations made by the General Court of the Levant Company relating to Aleppo.

55. Alexander Russell and Patrick Russell, *The Natural History of Aleppo Containing a Description of the City, and the Principal Natural Productions in Its Neighbourhood: Together with an Account of the Climate, Inhabitants, and Diseases, Particularly of the Plague*. 2 vols. (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1794), 2:7.

56. Russell and Russell, *Natural History of Aleppo*, 2:8.

57. Jonathan Couch, "Traders and New Ideas about the East: The British Levant Company and the Discourse on the Ottoman Empire" (master's thesis, University of Maryland, 2013), 49-51.

the consuls chair, but usually the first only officiates, and each time a favorable answer is returned to any request, or when the Bashaw repeats any hyperbolic compliment to the consul, the Druggoman kneels and kisses the hem of the Bashaw's vest. The first druggoman, as a mark of approbation, is invested with an 'Abai [a shift worn by Arabs], others receive a handkerchief.⁵⁸

Aside from establishing European presence in the Ottoman Empire, the capitulations also furnished them with extra territoriality rights, which meant that Islamic courts had no jurisdiction over the European nationals.⁵⁹ The Europeans had the right to litigate most cases in their own courts, unless it involved a sum over 4.000 *akçe*, in which case it would be referred to Constantinople. This same legal dualism was extended to local merchants under their protection (*protégés*). Elizabeth Shlala describes this privilege: "Legal actors appeal regularly to multiple legal authorities and perceive themselves as members of more than one community."⁶⁰ Traditional historians have hypothesized that this recourse to different legal systems in part shifted the balance of power from the Ottomans to the Europeans, as articulated in Kuran's "The Economic Ascent of the Middle East's Religious Minorities; The Role of Islamic Legal Pluralism."⁶¹ Others have refuted this theory, arguing that the number of protected subjects was too low to have much effect. In fact, Van den Boogert notes, consular courts did not always follow the laws of their own nations, but instead used arbitration that respected local customs. He adds that the Ottoman courts were not better prepared to deal with complicated cases such as those arising in joint stock companies. Whatever historians decide, though, especially given the advantages this liberty gave Europeans

58. Russell and Russell, *Natural History of Aleppo*, 2:19-21.

59. Van den Boogert, *Capitulations*, 8-10.

60. Elizabeth Shlala, "The De Rossetti Affair: Legal Pluralism and Levantine Identity at the crossroads of Empires," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 1 (2016): 42.

61. Timur Kuran, "The Economic Ascent of the Middle East's Religious Minorities; The Role of Islamic Legal Pluralism," *Journal of Legal Studies* 33, no. 2 (June 2004): 476-477.

and protected minorities, the Ottomans' granting them illustrates their willingness to help their merchants and to enhance their economy, as seen most inarguably from the twin *Avruppa Tuccari* and *Hayriye Tuccari* programs providing the same privilege to merchants who were not Western *protégés*.

Cases filling the Levant Company repository vary from squabbles between fellow factory members, to commercial disputes with local traders, to complaints against the sea and nature by ship captains for ruining their goods. The archives bulge with cases deliberated in the consulate before the consul. One of the more intriguing, filed by the merchant Lupart in March of 1734, faults Abraham Mickell, captain of the "good ship Gibraltar," for non-payment of damages to seven bales of cloth on board his ship, and Consul Nevil Coxe for refusing to deduct said damages from the freight owed Captain Mickell. The captain refused responsibility for any damages, and submitted as evidence his own registered "protest against the sea at Dartmouth" in December.⁶² Consul Coxe refused to cover Lupart's losses from the freight owed the captain as he claimed it contradicted Levant Company policy, but did send two independent merchants to Alexandretta to evaluate the damage. In turn, Consul Coxe filed a complaint himself, on behalf of the Levant Company, against the captain and "every person and persons in freighting for all losses that the Levant Company may incur as a result of the damaged goods."⁶³ The case dragged on. The independent merchants assessed the damage, one finding it amounting to \$145 and the other to \$175. The captain was ordered to pay. Naturally he filed yet another complaint, this one against the consul for withholding his

62. The protest against the sea was one of the documents produced by the captain as evidence. TNA SP/57 part 1. Protest registered against the sea by Capt. Mickell and Thomas Keele at the notary public in Dartmouth on December 14th 1734.

63. TNA SP/57 part 1. Complaint filed by Consul Coxe on behalf of the Honorable Levant Company for the loss incurred from the damaged bales.

money and for financial losses incurred from having to interrupt his journey.⁶⁴ No records show the captain's payment nor any conclusion to this case.

Most of the cases were judged and sentences delivered at the Aleppo consulate, but a few more complex ones were referred to the ambassador in Constantinople, as occurred in that concerning Captain Conset of *The Mary*, said to owe the Levant Company the princely sum of \$2,000. Ambassador Kinnoull sent an order via Consul Coxe in Aleppo to the vice-consul in Acra to

seize and sequesterate the effects of Captain Conset, commander of the *Mary*, wherever you will find them within your consular jurisdiction to the value of two thousand Levant dollars. And in case you cannot find any money or other effects belonging to the said captain Conset, to the value of two thousand Levant dollars, as above mentioned, these are empowering and authorizing you to seize the person of the Captain Conset and to keep him in safe custody until he shall find legall security at your place for the sum of two thousand Levant dollars, or until you shall hear from his excellency the Lord ambassador or us....⁶⁵

This case highlights the monopolistic policies adopted by the Company in the eighteenth century, which entailed prohibiting merchants from shipping goods on ships other than the yearly convoy dispatched by the Company when cargoes fetched the highest prices—a policy strictly enforced during the eighteenth century, despite many protests from the merchants. The governors of the Company thus attempted to control their agents' for "selfish profit," but in doing so facilitated the growth of French and Dutch trade in the Levant.⁶⁶ Depending on one annual convoy of ships to transfer the merchandise meant that there was little room for error. So the money owed the Company by captains or merchants was of utmost importance, and was strictly monitored by the

64. TNA SP/57 part 1. Complaint filed by Captain Mickell against Consul Coxe for loss of income as a result of being detained.

65. TNA SP/57 part 1. Letter from consul Nevil Coxe to George Wakemen, vice consul in Acra May 12x 1735. Wakeman served as proconsul in Aleppo in 1740 and in Larnaca.

66. Laidlaw, *British in the Levant*, 25.

treasurers, the factor marines, and the husbands⁶⁷ in each port. However, the loss of a captain, such as when he was imprisoned for non-payment, could equally upset the smooth running of the convoys. Therefore, in the matter of Captain Conset of *The Mary*, the ambassador finished his missive: “If you are obliged to seize him, you are commanded to find another proper person to command his ship, from whom you will take security that he will do justice to owners of said ship.”⁶⁸

Some cases remained unresolved, particularly when evidence lacked. In the protest filed by the merchant Rowland Sherman against the *dragoman* Side Abdoraman, the Englishman claimed that the “Turkish” merchant/*dragoman* owed him money and had therefore handed over the deeds to some properties as security. Abdoraman later pawned silk cloth that belonged to Sherman to get back the deeds of the houses he had given to him as security. The English merchant wanted to file his case in the local courts. Consul Coxe tried to solve it himself, but Sherman would not produce the deeds to the houses, the consul threw out the case:

Ordered to salute Mr. Sherman and tell him that his worship himself disengaged from all further proceedings upon his com[missing] against Side Abdoraman until he gives his Wors[hip] [missing words] his letter.

And to tell him also, if he is not contented with his Wors[hip] [missing words, probably “Mr. Sherman”] is at liberty to decide all those affairs before him, by the jus[tice] of the country, His Wors[hip] desires a positive answer. Aleppo May 15 1730.⁶⁹

As noted, non-noble Venetian consuls were prohibited from conducting trials. Nonetheless, the Venetian consular archives show that a few court cases were locally

67. The job of the *husband* was to keep the bonds, papers and seals of the company, to pass bills of entry for goods laded on ships, and to preside over routine administration of trade. Wood, *History of the Levant Company*, 206.

68. TNA SP/57 part 1, Letter from Consul Coxe to the vice consul in Acra. 12 May 1735.

69. TNA SP/57 part 1, Letter from Consul Coxe to Rowland Sherman May 15 1730. (100_1598 merchants of Aleppo 2 Venice documents).

tried and decided by non-noble consuls during the late eighteenth century. In one, Sussana Rossel (born Paoli) filed a complaint against Giuseppe Arutin, *dragoman* of the Venetian consul, for not returning the jewelry portion of her dowry that had been entrusted to him. Arutin was sentenced to return what he owed Rossel in two separate payments. The case was concluded in the consulate at Aleppo, and a report was sent to the *bailo* in Constantinople.

Both British and Venetian consuls reported on their cases to their ambassador and *bailo*, respectively, as well as to the governors in London and the Cinque Savi in Venice. Significantly, while each consul had the final word (at least in garden-variety cases), decisions were taken with the members of his nation, on whom he depended: English factory agents or the Venetians' *Assemblee Nazionali di Veneta*.

An essential feature of the consular system was the dualism it embodied as both consulate and nation, and the meshing of those two aspects proved a basic condition for its smooth running. For the Levant Company, the nation consisted of small groups that included the consul, merchants, chaplains, factors, treasurers, scrivans (secretaries), and family members. Another blended characteristic of the system can be seen in the fact that, while the British consul held legal responsibility for keeping order among the members of the nation, he was simultaneously and fundamentally dependent on their cooperation. For despite factory members' direct employment by and allegiance to the principles in London, they still had to obey the rules of the Company abroad as part of the "nation" if the elaborate set-up was to function.

The Venetian nation consisted of the consul, at times the vice-consul, the cancellier and, by the eighteenth century, the merchants who formed the *Assemblee*

Nazionali di Veneta. Franciscan priests also resided in the consulate until the Sheibani monastery was built. The consul had to regulate trade in Aleppo, litigating cases, maintaining the prestige and honor of the consulate, and making major decisions concerning the local factory and merchants in conjunction with the *Assemblee Nazionali di Veneta*.

A couple of documents in the archives indicate that by the eighteenth century, the ancient Council of Twelve had transmogrified into the *Assemblee Nazionali de Veneta General Consolato*.⁷⁰ However, few documents include the *Assemblee*. The lack of a consistent assembly for the Venetians is most probably due to their limited number of merchants, as well as their being under the protection of different nations. Many of the Jewish merchants from Livorno or Venice changed affiliations, say, from French, to British, and then, when Picciotto became consul, to Tuscan. In one letter the Tuscan merchants Altaras, Belilios and Marini jointly complained about the French and list grievances against the French deputy, saying they could no longer work under their protection as they were taking all the profits.⁷¹ However, the advantages of protection by foreign nations continued, as we can see when Salamon Altaras, under the protection of the Venetian consulate, wanted the consul also to protect his employee Joseph Douek, who had a dispute with the British Consul Hays. The Venetian consul refused on the grounds that Douek was not himself a Venetian *protégé* and could not be protected simply by virtue of working for a *protégé*, Altaras. The deputy in charge of the Venetian

70. A.S.VE Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia Lettere console, Busta 603 (2693) Letter of complaint against the dragoman Dib, signed by the merchants Salamon Isach Altaras (for the company), Salamon Altaras e figli, Emanuel Vita Belilios, Afrani Vita Marini, Salamon & Isach Belilios, and Gian Staffano Vessetti. The letter was addressed to Proconsul Rizzini.

71. A.S.VE Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia Lettere Consoli, Busta 603 Letter from Giovanni Batta Bianchi to the Cinque Savi in Venice 17 April 1788.

consulate wrote to the Cinque Savi to ask them to back up his decision.⁷² This incident and many others illustrate the importance of foreign protection for the merchants, and the ease with which merchants changed their affiliations to suit their purposes.

Clearly, consuls were responsible not only for their own flock, but also for those placed under their protection and sharing the privileges accorded members of that nation. Such adopted protection might extend to nations as well as to individuals, as we see in the case of the Dutch. Formidable competitors in the seventeenth-century Levant trade, by the eighteenth century the Dutch saw their commerce decline and the number of their merchants in Aleppo dwindle to only two families, then to only one by the century's close. So they sought the protection first of the French, and later of the English,⁷³ as seen in a letter from the General Court of the Levant Company to the Aleppine consulate in late 1720:

The court took into consideration the letters from consul Parnell at Aleppo and from Mr. Joseph Calterbues, one of the factor marines at Scanderoon relating to the Madonna del Rosario, a Large Venetian ship, whose supra cargo, having applied to the said Mr. Purnell as consul for the Dutch nation at Aleppo for his protection, had obtained the same no [missing] being contrary not only to the company's interest, but also to their intention, when they permitted him to act as consul for the Dutch nation; at Aleppo.⁷⁴

In another document, the Dutch consular representative in Constantinople wrote to the Venetian consul, Seriola, asking him to protect the Dutch in Aleppo, so that he could keep an eye on the *dragoman* and other merchants who were highly suspect in Holland;

Copia d'una lettera dal signore De Weiler, Incaricato delle loro alte potenze in Costantinopoli , al illustrissimo signor Seriola Console Venete in Aleppo.

72. A.S.VE Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia Lettere Consoli, Busta 603 letter from Steffano Popolani to the Cinque Savi in Venice Aleppo 29 August 1769. (2221 V N103).

73. Russell and Russell, *Natural History of Aleppo*, 2:8.

74. TNA SP110/66 Letter from the Company directors in London to the nation in Aleppo, written on 3 August 1720.

*Loro Alte Potenze, non senza ragione, mettono la loro confidenza nella di lei persona, sicure come lo sono, che da lei fara inticramente qui stificata, ed in conseguenza, di simili sentimenti lei è pregato, in gran confidenza, di voler essere attenta alli movimenti del primo dragomano del nostro consolato Antonio Bittar, ed altri simili persone, che sono sospettato in Olanda come quelli che ostano, e volerne a suo tempo mandarmi quel ch'avera scoperto su questo soggetto, acciò si puossa riparare a tempo ovvero portarvi il rimedio.*⁷⁵

Their highnesses, not without reason, put their confidence in you, being secure that you will intricately carry out what is laid out, consequently, with similar sentiments they ask you, in great confidence, to be attentive of all movemens of the first Dragoman from our consulate Antonio Bittar, and other similar people, who are are suspected in Holland, as well as by those who stayed, and want to send me what they had discovered at the time, so that you can take care of or in other words, remedy it [the problem].

As mentioned, commerce was the primary concern of the consuls, and given that the capitulations formed the legal basis for their presence in and relations with the Porte, a large part of their duties centered on ensuring the privileges those agreements granted the European merchants. Wood reminds us: “It was one thing to secure the capitulations from the grand signior: it was another and more difficult one to see that the rights so granted were always respected.”⁷⁶ Endless letters from both English and Venetian consuls address the matter of unjust and unlawful *avantias*.⁷⁷ However, considering how differently each party interpreted capitulatory laws and privileges, there was plenty of room for negotiation, and all consulates grudgingly winked and padded the consuls’ income to cover the *avantias*.

75. A. S.VE Cinque Savi alla Mercanzie, Letter Consoli Busta 604. Copy of a letter from Weiler, the Dutch consular representative in Constantinople to Domenico Seriola, Venetian Consul, Aleppo 13 October 1769.

76. Wood, *History of the Levant Company*, 16.

77. TNA SP/57 part 1, (100_1598 merchants of Aleppo 2 Venice documents).

On the other hand, historians such as Steensgaard and Pedani agree that foreigners were often granted more privileges than they had on paper.⁷⁸ These added liberties extended to the point of interfering in Ottoman internal affairs. In one instance, the Aleppine governor Hamsi Pasha twice imprisoned the children and servants of *dragomans* to extract the sum of eight *zecchini* for payment of the *kharja*, a poll tax levied on non-Muslims.⁷⁹ The pasha also forced all *dragomans* to register their shops, and he was not satisfied with the payments, he would send his men to their houses to extract more money. In response four consuls of the “frank” nations united and presented the authorities with a petition demanding the removal of the pasha, and forwarded it to the ambassador in Constantinople for his intervention. Their request was granted, and the governor was reassigned to the city of Aydin.

*Frattanto grazie all'atissimo Iddio siamo qui liberati di questa fiera, venut'essendo il giorno 5 corrente il lieto aviso d'esser egli stato deposto e levato da questo governo, e destinato à passare in quello d'Aydin, ò sia scalla nuova, cosi senza frapponi dimora di dimesse del governo, e ne restò incaricato un grande di questo paese col titolo di musselime ò sia prò governatore appoggioatoli dalla porto.*⁸⁰

In the meanwhile, thank the lord, we have been liberated from this uproar. On the fifth of this month we received the good news of his deposal and removal from this governate, and his reassignment to Aydin, a new scale, thus without having to use the residence of the Governor. And there is a prominent person from this coutry left in charge with the title of musselime, which is the pro governor appointed by the Porte.

78. Steensgaard, “Consuls and Nations,” 23-24; Pedani, “Venetian Consuls,” 11.

79. The *kharaj* was also a tax levied on land, but was used more as the poll tax and could be levied on children as well, as we can see from the document.

80. A.S.VE. Cinque Savi alla Mercanzie Lettere Consoli, Busta 603 Letter from Domenico Seriola, deputy of Venetian consular affairs to the Cinque Savi in Venice, January 1768.

According to Pedani, receiving such treatment necessitated the foreigners' having friends in high places or bribing the right officials.⁸¹ Yet John Barker, consul in Aleppo, confirms his friendship with the Aleppine *mufti* (scholar of religious law) Abdella Efendi Geabri Zadé, but vigorously refutes the accusation that he paid him for the release of the French prisoners, in testimony recorded by the consul cancellier on 7 January 1800:

*Abdella Efendi Geabri Zadé Muphti d'Alep mon intime ami, depuis plus de vingt cinq ans, m'ayant fait part que des personnes mal intentionné repondaient sourdement que je lui avais donné de l'argent pour s'employer pour la delivrance des prisonniers français, a sa requisition je declare que je ne lui ai rien payé, e qu'il ne m'a jamais rien demandé pour cela.*⁸²

The Mufti of Aleppo, Abdella Effendi Geabri Zadé, my intimate friend of twenty-five years, has kept me apprised that some ill-intentioned people have secretly suggested that I had given him money to be used for the deliverance of the French Prisoners. At his request, I declare that I have never paid him any money and he has never asked for any.

Barker's denial of the charge of bribery should be taken with a grain of salt, however. The many letters sent by both the Venetian and the English consuls in which they constantly complain of the "gifts" they have to make to local dignitaries suggest that the Aleppine consul or the ambassador in Constantinople reached the relevant officials in the relevant manner. Regardless of their means of persuasion, though, the case indicates a gradual increase in the European's influence. Yet that shift was only incremental, and deputy Serioli ends his letter by renewing his plea for a *berat*, as "he lived in daily fear of the authorities, because the signature he had did not protect him, from the authorities, and it was essential to acquire one for the honor of the Venetian nation and commerce."⁸³ At

81. Pedani, "Venetian Consuls," 11.

82. TNA SP/57 part 1, (100_1598 merchants of Aleppo 2 Venice documents.

83. A.S.VE. Cinque Savi alla Mercanzie Lettere Consoli, Busta 603 Letter from Domenico Serioli, deputy of Venetian consular affairs to the Cinque Savi in Venice, January 1768. See also Pedani, "Venetian Consuls," 11.

this time the Europeans still had relatively little power, and even less of the arrogance that would emerge in the nineteenth century.

Cooperation Between Consuls

Competition between European nations in Aleppo generally hampered their collaboration. However, as we have seen, when truly necessary they could present a united front to local authorities. Even before the successful removal of Hamsi Pasha, the four major European consuls cooperatively presented their complaints about a perceived lack of compliance with the capitulations. On 21 November 1767, at five o'clock in the evening, French consul M. Thomas, English proconsul Mr. Preston, Venetian deputy Mr. Seriola and Dutch consul Mr. Van Maseyk jointly sent a complaint to the same Governor Hamsi Pasha of Aleppo regarding the infringement of the capitulation rights.⁸⁴ The consuls asked for redress for a variety of problems:

1. Tax collectors forced their way into the merchant shops and violently removed *dragomans*. A *mubasis* (tax collector) was sent to the English proconsul to collect customs duties that had been paid already when the last *muhasil* (revenue official)⁸⁵ was alive.
2. The English proconsul was forced to pay duties on a shipment he received from Smyrna, even though he had already paid it and had the documents to prove it.
3. The consuls needed to employ a certain number of *beratli dragomans* (ones with special decrees). These were exempt from taxes, as were their children, along with two of their servants, as per the law that emanated from the Sublime Porte and was registered in the

84. ASVE Cinque Savi alla Mercanzie, Lettere Consoli, Busta 604.

85. A *muhasil* was at times the chief of the tax farmers operating in a province.

mehkeme (court). Despite this, some *dragomans* were taken to prison for failing to pay the dues.

4. Although the capitulations state that merchants will not be forced to buy certain merchandise, the *beratli dragomans* were forced, without His Excellency's knowledge, to buy sacks of coffee. Certainly, His Excellency could not have been aware of all the aggravation they had been through, and would never allow such a derogation of their privileges, which is why they are taking the liberty of informing His Excellency of all the harassments they had been subjected to, so he might grant them the honor of his protection and they could enjoy the same peace they had enjoyed during the time of his predecessor.

The Pasha's answer arrived two days later, around noon:

1. *Dragomans* have no right to hide in merchants' shops, and had to pay dues. They were subjects of the Sultan and Europeans had no right to interfere.
2. The taxes demanded are most probably forgeries, and there is no need to pay.
3. The *berat* of the deceased *muhassil* declares that all goods coming from Alexandria have to be paid for at customs in Aleppo. Having payment stubs from Smyrna means nothing; it is possible to buy a receipt showing a payment of 400 piastres for the price of 50.
4. I, as vizier, may have three or four employees who are exempt from taxes. Consuls can employ up to 50 people who claim tax exemption for their children and employees. Consuls have the right to employ only two *beratli dragomans*, who should pay not only their taxes for this year, but back taxes for the last 13 years for themselves, their children

and their employees. These are the orders from the Porte and we are obliged to gather the taxes and send them to Istanbul.

5. The coffee was offered to all merchants and the *dragomans* are not more exempt than their merchants and consuls. As to all the claims that the rights of the capitulations have been infringed, the capitulations do not mean anything unless they have the stamp of the Sultan on them. All you have is a bunch of papers glued together. (That is, the Pasha means that the sultan was too far away to do much. To get the capitulations ratified, they would have to appeal to Istanbul!)

The first of these documents shows that the rival nations could unite when their collective interest required. In fact, as noted earlier, the consuls did socialize cordially in private, but maintained a businesslike relationship in public. An anecdote about the English and the French consuls illustrates the point. At a summer picnic masquerade, the English consul Vernon, dressed as the pasha, sent his *dragoman* in to ask the French consul, who was dressed up as Harlequin, if the pasha might come in to the party to rest a while and drink a cup of coffee. The embarrassed French consul was at a complete loss; Refusing the pasha might cause a grave diplomatic incident, but letting him see the French consul in such a costume would be a serious blow to the dignity of the French consulate. The French consul tried in vain to hide his costume under a cloak and borrowed someone's wig to cover his Harlequin curls, but his multi-colored hose was still very much in evidence. Right when the unfortunate consul was doing his best to maintain his dignity, Consul Vernon walked in. At this both French and English revelers burst out laughing, though the French consul had a few choice words for Vernon. It took a long time for the French consul to live that episode down, but it showed that, despite

diplomatic obstacles and commercial rivalry, the various nations in the small European community found ways of tolerating and interacting with each other.⁸⁶ Russell tells us:

In wartime, advices of this kind, as well as public ceremonies between the consuls were suspended. But the private relation of men brought together by accident in a distant country, whom choice had led to form a friendly connection, still remained sacred. Individuals continued to visit and amuse themselves as usual, politics were banished from the conversations, by mutual consent, and without forgetting what they owed to the public cause, both parties while they worked for peace, continued to remember what in the meantime might be conceded to civility and private friendship.⁸⁷

In 1784 Prussia and the Ottoman Empire concluded a treaty of friendship and commerce, which facilitated consular appointments. The Austrians also reached an agreement with the Ottomans after centuries of conflict. The number of Europeans was diminishing in Aleppo, and few new consuls were being sent. Consul Barker did not arrive in Aleppo until the last years of the century, and even then he started as a consular agent as well as the acting agent for the EIC. Aleppo experienced turbulence in this period of transition from the early modern to the modern era, and many foreigners left the city. It was also a time when foreign nations increasingly chose to use the services of the “latins” or Levantines. In 1784, Jews throughout the Hapsburg territories, which included Tuscany, were emancipated and recognized as equals with the rest of the population.⁸⁸ For this reason, in June of that year Raffaele Picciotto was chosen as the Austrian consular agent, and later became full consul. It did not hurt that the Piccioto family was one of the richest, that Raffaele had strong letters of recommendation, and,

86. Archibald Paton, *The Modern Syrians: or, Native Society in Damascus, Aleppo and the mountain of the Druses, From Notes Made in Those Parts During the Years 1841-2-3* (General books, LLC. 2009). Reprinted in *Spirit of the Times, A chronicle of the Turf, Agriculture, Field Sports, Literature and the stage*, Feb. 1, 1845, 14: 49, *American Periodicals*, 581.

87. Russell and Russell, *Natural History of Aleppo*, 2:13.

88. Emilio Picciotto, “The Consular History of the Picciotto Family 1784-1895” in *Revue D’Histoire Diplomatique* (Paris: Editions A. Pedone, 1991), 138-139.

even more importantly, that he was of Tuscan origin. This was the first time that a Levantine was nominated as consul of a foreign nation, and his appointment set a family precedent that would continue for a hundred years.

Consular Dynasties

The Picciotto consular dynasty proved one of the best-documented and longest-lived, dominating the Aleppine diplomatic corps for over a century. According to Yaron Harel, while poets and travelers idealized the family, their local image acquired considerable tarnish, judging them as low in consular status and their behavior as “narrow, self serving and Corrupt.”⁸⁹

Their history starts with Illel Picciotto and his younger brother Daniel, sent to Aleppo to assess the possibility of establishing a firm there. Their efforts obviously won success, as by 1753 the Picciotto house of commerce had existed for over twelve years since its inception in the 1730s, as a letter of protest in the Levant Company archives, signed in 1735 by Illel Picciotto, suggests.⁹⁰ The Picciottos belonged to the burgeoning European Jewish community of six primary households known as *signores francos*. Retaining their foreign citizenship, they operated under the protection of European powers and built thriving businesses.⁹¹ The *franco* families, similar to Christian Levantine sub-communities, held themselves distinct from the rest of their co-religionists to the extent of living in different quarters of the city. But unlike other minority sub-

89. Yaron Harel, “The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Consuls in Aleppo,” *Turcica* 38 (2006): 233.

90. TNA SP/57 part 1, (100_1598 merchants of Aleppo 2 Venice documents). Letter of protest written by four merchants (Broumester, Seitz & Bock, Ribero & figlis, and Illel Picciotto, against the English Captain of the ship Galera Maria, Captain Parkins, who incurred an *avania* (extraordinary tax) on the goods of the ship, and refused to pay. The letter was registered in the chancellery of the British consulate in Aleppo in 1 April 1735.

91. Abraham Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 46.

groups, they eventually married into the older Jewish society and settled permanently in the city.⁹²

Three years after Raffaele Picciotto's 1784 appointment as consular representative of the Austro-Hungarian Empire on the recommendation of its ambassador in Constantinople, the agency was raised to full consulate and Raffaele became vice-consul.⁹³ As a result of the war between the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, he lost the protection of the Ottoman authorities, but soon remedied that by obtaining the post of consul to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies as well as that of vice-consul to the Kingdom of Spain.⁹⁴ In 1794 he was appointed consul of Prussia; in 1802, vice-consul of Denmark; in 1803, consular agent of the Maritime Republic of Ragusa (now Dubrovnik) until its 1808 amalgamation into the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy—the very year he became consular agent of the Illyrian Provinces. Raffaele added the representation of the kingdom of Etruria (former Grand Duchy of Tuscany), also in 1803.⁹⁵

However glorious, all these posts were unpaid, and discharging their duties required vast wealth. Harel informs us that at the time, there was no Christian family rich or reliable enough to uphold national honor in such a position through salaries, gifts,

92. The main Jewish quarter was called Bahsita, but as we saw, the Picciottos preferred to live in the Khan Al-Harir with others of the European Jewish *franco* community.

93. Many different spellings of family names exist; this dissertation follows those in Picciotto's "Consular History of the Picciotto Family."

94. Picciotto, "Consular History of the Picciotto Family," 1.

95. In 1803, the newly-founded Kingdom of Etruria asked Raffaele to represent it in Syria, pending the Ottoman government's assent, as the Empire had not yet officially recognized the Etrurian state. Raffaele Picciotto wrote the Austrian ambassador, "I received yesterday the letters patent of Tuscan Consul....I owe this increase of my public duties to the good offices of my brother Moise Picciotto, vice consul of Russia. However, I have the honour of being mainly Consul of his imperial Majesty, but also in charge of the Consulate of the Two Sicilies, the Vice-Consulates of Denmark, and the state of Ragusa, in addition to the above mentioned Consulate of Etruria...." Picciotto, "Consular History of the Picciotto Family," 2 (letter written in Italian).

bribes, payment of random taxes, and costly receptions.⁹⁶ Descendant Emilio Picciotto confirms Harel's observation:

All the above facts clearly show the important position of the Picciotto family, who, thanks to the importance of their commercial firms, could guarantee the financial basis to carry on these merely honorary appointments and which, on the other hand, provided great advantages to their trade policy. This strong financial position could not be jeopardized by any contrary event, such as the seizure in Malta, in 1803, of some goods which were on board a French merchant ship.⁹⁷

Following in the patriarch's path, the family continued to serve as Aleppine consuls for many different nations throughout the following century. Esdra and Elia, sons of that first Raffaele (whom we may call Raffaele I), succeeded him as consul to Etruria;⁹⁸ Elia, succeeded by his son Moise, also represented Austro-Hungary (1817-1826 and 1826-1846, respectively), and from 1847 to 1858 Elia served as its Consul General Emeritus and consul of Tuscany (1817-1826). Raffaele 2, the nephew of Raffaele I, represented Russia (1818-1833) and Prussia (1827-1833). Daniele de Picciotto, another son of Raffaele 1, represented Holland as consul (1827-1852) the United Kingdom as vice-consul (1828-1835);⁹⁹ Elia's son (and grandson of Raffaele 1) Illel won the post of Belgian consul (1854-1875), as well as of consular agent and, later, vice-consul of the USA (1847-1873); Joseph de Picciotto, son of Moise (and grandson of Raffaele 1), worked as consul of Persia; and Raffaele 2 was vice consul of Russia (1831-1871).¹⁰⁰

96. Harel, *Rise and Fall of Jewish Consuls*, 237.

97. Picciotto, "Consular History of the Picciotto Family," 3.

98. There were three individuals named Raffaele Picciotto. For clarity, they are numbered here. Raffaele 1 (who later acquired the noble prefix *de* in front of the family name) was the brother of Hai Moise, the uncle of Raffaele 2, and the great-uncle of Raffaele 3. Raffaele 2 was the son of Hai Moise and the nephew of Raffaele 1. Raffaele 3 was the son of Illel, the great-nephew of Raffaele 1, and the nephew of Raffaele 2.

99. In 1835 the British government decided to appoint a career consul to Aleppo.

100. Raffaele was replaced with a career diplomat, and a regular consulate was restored to Aleppo under the jurisdiction of the consul general in Beirut in 1871. Picciotto, "Consular History of the Picciotto Family," 33.

Elia's son Moise took title as Consul General of Denmark (1850-1858), and his son became vice-consul of the same; Joseph de Picciotto, son of Moise (and grandson of Raffaele 1), represented Sweden (1855-1895); Elia's son Illel (grandson of Raffaele 1), represented the United States (1847-1873), Belgium (1854-1875), and Norway (no dates). A Picciotto seems to have represented the Kingdom of Sardinia, but no paperwork records to that appointment.¹⁰¹

The Picciotto appointments pertained not only to Aleppo. Samuele de Picciotto, nephew of Elia, became the Danish vice consul in Beirut under his uncle's jurisdiction as the consul general in Aleppo. Samuele, grandson of the first Raffaele, also was the acting Dutch vice-consul in Beirut as well as consular agent for the provinces of Antioch and Marash starting from 1853. Isacco de Picciotto, grandson of the same Raffaele I, became consular agent for the Grand Duchy of Tuscany in Antioch (1849-1861) and was later nominated vice-consul under the jurisdiction of the consul general in Aleppo.¹⁰²

Although none could match the Picciotto family, their success marked the era in which other Jewish merchants might rise as consuls or consular representatives in the *vilayets* (provinces) Rabbi Aaron Dayyan filled the post of Persian consul in Urfa, Emil Frank won the honors of representing the United States, Britain and Prussia in Alexandretta in 1870, and in 1869 Italian-born British subject Joseph Dwek served as English vice-consul in Antioch, without pay.¹⁰³

Yet despite the important-sounding titles, the majority of the Picciottos' offices were for second- or third-rate powers who had no direct interest in the Ottoman Empire, so the incumbents' status remained modest. Still, while the appointments brought no

101. Picciotto, "Consular History of the Picciotto Family," 3-35.

102. Picciotto, "Consular History of the Picciotto Family."

103. Harel, *Rise and Fall of Jewish Consuls*, 239.

salaries and indeed required hefty investments, they did give the Picciotto family massive economic advantages as well as citizenship in various nations, including the Austrian citizenship awarded Raffaele's nephews in 1811.¹⁰⁴ To obtain these posts, the Picciottos had to send presents to the nations appointing them. Emilio Picciotto's family history is replete with gifts of horses to imperial stables sent by the successive consuls, starting with Raffaele, who 'was permitted' to offer the imperial stables eight Arabian steeds valued at 15,000 to 20,000 florins. Esdra sent another six, but of lesser value, followed by his brother Elia's gift of eight, again of lesser value. These donations were reciprocated by mere snuff-boxes or medals of honor. Elia Picciotto did try, but unsuccessfully, to persuade the imperial ambassador to set a fixed remuneration for the honorary consuls in Aleppo.¹⁰⁵ Honorary consuls, it seems, were not on a par with career consuls such as the English and French had, and were considered more merchants than diplomats.

As merchants, though, the family could and did act in its self-interest rather than in the general interest of the region, a trait that did not endear them to the career consuls. For example, they worked against changing the regressive *ferde* tax, a personal poll tax imposed by the Egyptian regime during their occupation, to the more progressive *vergi* or property tax that would touch only wealthy landowners. Having amassed large tracts of land, the Picciotos stood with the *ulama* and the other great property owners, thus acting against the interest of the Jewish community as a whole, while the other consuls, who owned no land, stood with the people. This and other occurrences sparked considerable animosity between the family and the career consuls, in particular the British.¹⁰⁶ The clan experienced friction with the French consulate in Aleppo as well over their involvement

104. Picciotto, "Consular History of the Picciotto Family," 3.

105. Picciotto, "Consular History of the Picciotto Family," 5.

106. Harel, *Rise and Fall of Jewish Consuls*, 242-243.

in the problems of the Catholic orders under French protection.¹⁰⁷ Worse, they were accused of corruption as well as of bribing the *ayan*, many of whom were members of the district council, not to collect taxes—a practice that indebted the treasury and forced it to borrow money. According to Harel, whenever the treasury needed funds, the *ayan* and the council, in conjunction with moneylenders, persuaded the governor to take out loans with inflated interest rates. The British consul, displaying some of the prejudice we have already noted, held that “the principal Capitalists who invest money in this way are the wealthy Jews: of whom several hold the Consulates of Austria, Russia, Prussia, Tuscany, Holland and other powers, this official position giving them a preference over other creditors for the payment of interest due.”¹⁰⁸

The dislike of the Picciotto family spread to the Muslim public as well, and inspired two attempts of murder, first of Moses de Picciotto in 1859 and then of David, who was attacked when riding to meet the Beirut consul general in 1875. The locals resented the family as arrogant, unlike the other Jews they knew, and attributed their high standing with the government to shady dealings.¹⁰⁹

107. Emilio Picciotto claims that Raffaele’s son Esdra, the Austrian consul, interceded on behalf of Catholics in Aleppo during their persecutions in 1818. Picciotto, “Consular History of the Picciotto Family,” 242. However, Harel notes that Esdra’s intervention on behalf of Catholics under French protection only caused more tension between the Picciottos and the French consuls. Harel, *Rise and Fall of Jewish Consuls*, 242.

108. Harel, *Rise and Fall of Jewish Consuls*, 243.

109. Picciotto, “Consular History of the Picciotto Family,” 13-14; Harel, *Rise and Fall of Jewish Consuls*, 243. A French rabbi, Alfoun ben Ezra Meski, accused both Illel de Picciotto and his son David of assaulting him and stealing a passport from the Belgian consulate. They were brought to trial at that consulate in 1873, but were acquitted. However, Illel, the consular agent for the US, lost his post as a result.

PICCIOTTO FAMILY
HONORARY CONSULAR APPOINTMENTS
IN THE MIDDLE EAST
1784-1895

		COUNTRY	TITLE	TENURE
1.	HAI MOISE PICCIOTTO (1740-1816) Son of Illel (1711-1773)	Russian Empire	V. Consul	1801-1816
2.	ILEL PICCIOTTO (1784-1827) son of Hai Moise (1740-1816)	Kingdom of Prussia	Consul	1817-1827
3.	RAFFAELE PICCIOTTO (1786-1833) son of Hai Moise (1740-1816)	Russian Empire Kingdom of Prussia	V. Consul Consul	1818-1833 1827-1833
4.	RAFFAELE PICCIOTTO (1811-1876) son of Illel (1784-1827)	Russian Empire Kingdom of Prussia	V. Consul Consul	1831-1871 1833-1866
5.	RAFFAELE PICCIOTTO (1742-1827) from 1806 DE PICCIOTTO son of Illel (1711-1773)	Austro-Hungarian Empire Grand-Duchy of Tuscany Kingdom of Etruria Kingdom of the Two Sicilies Kingdom of Spain State of Ragusa Kingdom of Denmark	Consular Agent V. Consul Consul General Consular Agent V. Consul Consul General Consul V. Consul and later Consul V. Consul V. Consul Consul General	1784-1787 1788-1804 1804-1817 1784-1787 1787-1801 1814-1817 1803-1814 1788-? 1788-? 1802-1806 1805-1817
6.	ESDRA DE PICCIOTTO (1775-1882) son of Raffaele (1742-1827)	Austro-Hungarian Empire	Prov. V. Consul Consul General	1817-1822 1822-1822
7.	SAMUELE DE PICCIOTTO (1811-1874) son of Esdra (1775-1822)	Kingdom of Denmark Kingdom of the	V. Consul in Beirut V. Consul in Beirut	1844-1852 1846-?

		Netherlands US	Consular Agent for Antioch and Marash, living in Beirut	1868-?
8.	ISACCO DE PICCIOTTO (1814-1865) son of Esdra (1775-1822)	Kingdom of Denmark Grand-Duchy of Tuscany	V. Consul for Iskenderun, living in Antioch Consular Agent in Antioch	1853-? 1849-1861
9.	ELIA DE PICCIOTTO (1781-1858) son of Raffaele (1742-1827)	Austro-Hungarian Empire Grand-Duchy of Tuscany Kingdom of Denmark	Consular Agent Consular General V. Consul with the title of "Consul General Emeritus" Consular Agent Consul General Consul General	1817-1826 1826-1846 1847-1858 1817-1826 1826-1845 1818-1858
10.	IHEL DE PICCIOTTO (1809-1884) son of Elia (1781-1858)	U.S.A Kingdom of Belgium	Consular Agent; later V. Consul Consul	1847-1873 1854-1875
11.	MOISE DE PICCIOTTO (1814-1894) son of Elia (1781-1858)	Austro-Hungarian Empire Grand-Duchy of Tuscany Kingdom of Denmark Kingdom of the Netherlands	V. Consul with the title of Consul General Consul General V. Consul Consul V. Consul	1859-1894 1845-1861 1850-1858 1859-1871 1856-1894
12.	DANIELE DE PICCIOTTO (1842-1877) son of Moise (1814-1894)	Kingdom of Denmark	Consul	1871-1877

13.	MOISE DE PICCIOTTO (1788-1852) son of Raffaele (1742-1827)	Kingdoms of Sweden (jurisdiction Syria and Palestine)	V. Consul Consul General V. Consul for Tripoli and the whole Syrian Coast	1825-1842 1842-1852 1834-1852
14.	JOSEPH DE PICCIOTTO (1828-?) son of Moise (1788- 1852)	Kingdoms of Sweden and Norway Kingdom of Persia	V. Consul Consul in charge before...	1855-1895 1854?
15.	DANIELE DE PICCIOTTO (1789-1852) son of Rafaele (1742-1827)	Kingdom of the Netherlands Kingdom of Great Britain	Consul V. Consul	1827-1852 1828-1835

Unless otherwise specified, consular offices were situated in Aleppo, then a province of the Ottoman Empire.

It was during the *Tanzimat* era in the latter half of the nineteenth century that a few European powers, notably the French and the British, turned to appointing career diplomats who were no longer members of their chartered companies. However, others continued the tradition of appointing only Levantine families, the Belgians appointing the Poches and the Italians appointing members of the Marcopoli family to take over the consulates. Both families were of the wealthiest in Aleppo, but the Poche family lacked the prestige that the Marcopolis had attained. During the 1840s, while the Picciottos still served as Austrian consuls, sentiment grew in favor of removing them and appointing only Christians to the post, and in 1846 Vincenzo Marcopoli announced his candidacy. As it happened, the post was awarded to Eliahu Picciotto, but the office was downgraded from consul general to vice-consul, and in 1848, British consul Richard Wood took over

as the Austrian representative.¹¹⁰ After Eliahu's death in 1854, Frederic Poche, aided by brother-in-law Nicola Marcopoli, actively worked to promote his candidature by writing the Austrian consul in Beirut and a host of religious leaders, stressing his Christianity and referring to Moise, Eliahu's son, as "the Jew."¹¹¹ As Ade tells us, despite the blatant anti-Semitism prevalent among Christians of the period, the antagonism in this case stemmed more from personal rivalry between the families originating in Frederic's being unable to escape paying the compensation tax for his exemption from military service, despite favorable intervention by the Austrian Consul General in Beirut. According to Poche, the maneuvers of Moise de Picciotto, who had advised Frederic to bribe the Austrian Consul General, scotched his chances.¹¹² In numerous letters Frederic accuses Moise de Picciotto of harassing and humiliating him as well as of so threatening his livelihood that his family might have to go into exile in Europe.¹¹³ No evidence corroborates these allegations other than a letter from the French consul in Aleppo, Count Stanislas Bentivoglio, to the Austrian consul general in Beirut. However, as the Austrian General Consul in Beirut, Peter von Weckbecker, felt Frederic Poche lacked the finances to support annual consular expenses of 3,000 to 4,000 guildens, and that Frederic's 22 years were too few to let him shoulder the responsibility, the appointment went to de Picciotto.¹¹⁴

Emilio Picciotto informs us that the family, and in particular David, were exonerated of all charges brought against them, and that the Picciottos had actually

110. De Goey, *Consuls and the Institutions of Global Capitalism*, 49.

111. Ade, *Picknick*, 106.

112. It was the Austrian consul general who made the final decision for the post of consul in Aleppo.

113. Ade, *Picknick*, 106.

114. Ade, *Picknick*, 107-108.

greatly helped the Catholics during the difficult 1820s, for which they won the gratitude of the many nations they served, as demonstrated by the medals, decorations, and noble title as *de Picciotto* they received. However, by the mid-nineteenth century, their fame and influence had waned considerably. With the death in 1894 of the last consul of the family, Moise de Picciotto, the consular dynasty came to an end after more than a century.

Notwithstanding these setbacks, in 1873 Frederic Poche became the vice-consul of the United States. Three years later he was awarded the position of Imperial Russian Consul and in 1886 became the Belgian consul in Aleppo. Guillaume Poche served as the consul of Czechoslovakia and was given the title of Baron by Pope Leo XIII.¹¹⁵ The Poches continued their consular posts until the twenty-first century. Yet another Levantine clan established a consular line. The Marcopoli family descended from the Giustinianis of Chios, themselves famed in diplomatic history dating from the end of the Byzantine Empire (1450), when John Giustiniani served as Genoese consul in Chios. Vincenzo Marcopoli, consul of the Two Sicilies in 1842, went on to labor as consul of Sweden, of Norway, and of Portugal. Vincent (Vicenzo) Marcopoli, who was also consul of the Kingdom of Naples, took over the Dutch consulate in 1843, after the death of Daniele de Picciotto. Another family member became consul of Spain, and later on a Marcopoli was awarded the Italian consulate. Other Levantine consular families in Aleppo include the Girardis and the Draghis, though their hold over the posts did not quite reach dynastic length.

115. Françoise Cloarec, *Le temps des consuls: L'échelle d'Alep sous les Ottomans* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 149; Jenny Poche, *The Poche Family History* (Aleppo: printed privately, n.d.).

As we would expect in this traditional economy, the pattern of inherited diplomatic offices was hardly confined to that of consul, but extended to that of *dragoman*. While the paths of most of these families have been largely undocumented, the history of French Fonton clan, whose service as *dragomans* of the French embassy and consulates spans five generations and nearly two centuries, presents an invaluable exception. Joachim Fonton (1651-1707), one of the earliest candidates to be among the Giovanni di Lingua¹¹⁶ in Pera (Constantinople) in 1670,¹¹⁷ served as France's first *dragoman* (the highest ranking). He married Pera native Anne Julien and had three boys and four girls. The sons all attended the Giovanni di Lingua school and two of them became first *dragomans*, while his youngest daughter, Catherine, married François Fornetti, a *dragoman* in the service of France. Grandson Antoine Fonton (1724-1802)

116. The Giovanni di Lingua were students of the language school created by the Republic of Venice in Constantinople in 1551. The school taught Venetian students the languages necessary to communicate with local authorities and traders, as well as to train *dragomans* working for the *bailo* and the consuls. *Bailo* Alvise Rainier, upon his return from Constantinople, expressed the importance of starting such a school in his 7 January 1551 *Relazioni* to the senate. He stressed that the first *dragomans* must be able to interpret accurately in the most delicate situations, and that second *dragoman* should competently translate in commercial matters. Students attending the school in the Ottoman capital came mostly from noble families, but some were sons of well-known notaries or merchants.

Unfortunately, most of its *dragoman* graduates were stricken by the plague and died in Constantinople. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a few attempts to start a similar school in Venice sputtered, capturing only one half-hearted student. With the end of the Republic, that school also closed. Isabella Palumbo Fossati Casa, "L'école Venitienne des 'Giovani di Lingua' in *Istanbul et Les Langues Orientales*, ed. Frederic Hitzel (Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 1997), 109-111, 118-20.

The French established a similar school in Constantinople. Colbert initiated the Ecole des Jeunes de Langues, decreed by Louis XIV on 18 November 1669. André Bourgey, "De l'Ecole des Jeunes de Langues à L'institut des Langues et Civilisations Orientales," in *Istanbul et Les Langues Orientales*, ed. Frederic Hitzel (Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 1997), 3-4. Apparent from the Fonton family history, most *dragomans* for the French were graduates of this school.

Comments of a traveler to Istanbul at the beginning of the nineteenth century indicate the importance the French school for languages: "There has been more than a century, an establishment belonging to the French Embassy...for the education of young persons of the nation in the oriental languages and such qualifications that may enable them to take situations in the Levantine consulates; and within a few years the former power (France) has employed these Giovanni di Lingua, (for so they are called), as interpreters in the Divan." John Cam Hobhouse, Baron Broughton, *A Journey through Albania, and other provinces of Turkey in Europe and Asia. to Constantinople, during the years 1809 and 1810* (London: James Hawthorne, 1813), 2;826. Both the Giovanni di lingua and the Ecole des Jeunes de Langues were invaluable for East-West diplomatic relations.

117. Marie de Testa and Antoine Gautier, "Quelques dynasties de Dragomans," *Revue d'histoire diplomatique* 1-2 (1991), 57-68.

became first *dragoman* in 1771, retiring in 1785 with the title of Honorary Secretary of the Embassy.¹¹⁸ The Fontons continued their careers as *dragomans* in Constantinople until the 1750s when Luc Fonton, another grandson of Joachim, moved to Aleppo and worked his way up the diplomatic ladder from third *dragoman* in 1757, to second, and then first in 1774, a title he retained till 1791. He married the Frenchwoman Suzanne Rau, whose parents had settled in Aleppo, and had eight children.¹¹⁹ Luc Fonton was one of the Frenchmen the Ottoman authorities imprisoned in the citadel after Napoleon's invasion of Egypt, and was described by the consul as the only *dragoman* among them.¹²⁰ Luc continued as cancellier until 1809, and died two years later. Luc's brother, Charles, was also a *dragoman* in Aleppo in 1750, and Luc's son, Pierre Joseph, followed in his father's footsteps as *dragoman* in Alexandria, Tripoli, Sidon and, finally, Constantinople. The last Fonton *dragoman* was André Noël (1807-1867), stationed in Izmir,¹²¹ the grandson of Aleppine *dragomans* Charles Fonton and Luc Fonton.

Although not part of the diplomatic service per se, *dragomans* were integral to the functioning of embassies and consulates. They connected the Ottoman Empire with European diplomatic officials. Nathalie Rothman delineates their roles in "key genres and institutions of knowledge production in the European-Ottoman contact zone."¹²²

Rothman credits the seventeenth-century *avvisi* they wrote as fueling the emergence of

118. Alistair Hamilton, Alexander de Groot, and Maurits van den Boogert, eds., *Friends and Rivals in the East* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 242.

119. Testa and Gautier, "Quelques dynasties," 64.

120. Hidemitsu Kuroki, "Events in Aleppo during Napoleon's Expedition of Egypt," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 51 (1999): 268-269.

121. Testa and Gautier, "Quelques dynasties," 68.

122. Nathalie Rothman, "Between Venice and Istanbul: Trans-Imperial Subject and Cultural Mediation in the Early Modern Mediterranean" (doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 2006), 214.

public political reading and debate.¹²³ Istanbul, with all its diplomats, operated as a spring of information that was circulated throughout Venice, and its famous bi-weekly *dispacci* reached its Senate. These news flashes included snippets of gossip and reports of conversations between staff of the Venetian Consulate and Ottoman powers. As the *dispacci* themselves indicate, *dragomans* frequently went unaccompanied to meet Ottoman officials and other provincial rulers, then reported extensively on the meetings to the *bailo*.¹²⁴ In fact, the *dragomans* provided the irreplaceable link to Porte politics and society on which the *bailo* depended in daily affairs of state.

The same reliance pertained in the consulates, where *dragomans* interpreted not just words, but local events and attitudes. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when most *dragomans* came from local Christian and Jewish minorities, the consuls had enjoyed an otherwise unavailable ear towards the general gossip of society. True, occasional rivalry between the *dragomans* might embroil consuls as well, as in the case of the Dib and Aida. Yet by the turn of the nineteenth century, as Levantines took on the posts, the nature of the information they could bring changed.¹²⁵ Outsiders to the native Christian community, the Levantines were thus somewhat removed from local gossip and news, but were better informed about the diplomatic, commercial, and global aspects of current events.

123. *Avvisi* were handwritten newsletters conveying military, political and economic news quickly. Developed in seventeenth-century Venice, they spread to Europe and the Empire.

124. Rothman, *Between Venice and Istanbul*, 215.

125. The conflict between the two *dragomans* grew out of the Catholic-Melkite rivalry rampant during this period. TNA SP 110/27;111 1734. For more on the conflict see Bruce Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East: Mercantilism and the Islamic Economy in Aleppo, 1600-1750* (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 98-99. Dib, a Melkite, was not liked in the community, as seen from another complaint leveled against him by a group of Tuscan Jewish merchants, sent to consul Rizzini on September 22 1779. A.S.VE Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia Lettere Console, Busta 603.

The Last Group of Levantines

As seen, merchants in the Levant and the other joint-stock companies in the early modern period (roughly from 1500 to 1800) stayed in Aleppo for only 5 to 10 years on average. A surprisingly large number, though, remained much longer, perhaps because making one's fortune from trade took more time than they had hoped. Radcliffe family members spent an average of 10 to 15 years in the city, and their factor and later partner, Richard Stratton, sojourned there for 17.¹²⁶ Levant Company factory member Nathaniel Harley remained in place for 35 years; Pierre Bosanquet, for nearly 20, and the Russell brothers' joint stay as company physicians lasted for almost 20 years as well. French Consul Mr. Thomas made Aleppo his home for two decades, and the Dutch consul Van Maseyk lived most of his life in Aleppo, died there in 1784, and was succeeded by his son Jan, who had been born and would die in Aleppo as his father had.¹²⁷

Yet many European merchants left Aleppo by the turn of the nineteenth century. The French revolution, the Napoleonic wars, the Crimean War and France's naval blockade of England negatively impacted trade. Regional obstacles to commerce included crop failures and subsequent depopulation of the countryside and unrest between the Janissaries and the *ashrafs* at a time when the Porte had lost control to the local forces.¹²⁸ At the height of these political, economic and social problems, nature

126. Ralph Davis, *Aleppo and Devonshire Square: English Traders in the Levant in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1967), 13-19.

127. Van den Boogert, *Capitulations*, 269-270. Both Van Maseyk and Thomas were integral members of the European community. Van Maseyk is mentioned in the Levant Company registers of births, marriages and deaths many times in the capacity of godfather and his own children's baptisms by the Anglican priest. TNA SP/110/70. Thomas is described very warmly in Russell and Russell's *Natural History of Aleppo*, 2:14.

128. According to Marcus, the Janissaries and the *ashraf* created "a pervasive system of profiteering and racketeering" through every system possible. They determined the availability and quality of bread and inflated all food prices. Under them, taxation was crushing, and the famine and injustice they had created threatened the city with major political upheavals. Marcus, *Middle East*, 99-100.

kicked in the earthquake of 1822, which wrought wide-scale destruction of lives and structures. Surprisingly enough, despite all these calamities, Aleppo repurposed itself to serve as a regional trade center. Masters notes that beloved Aleppo soaps and *alaja* cloth continued to sell well in major cities of Egypt, Syria and Anatolia, and the volume of trade between Aleppo and Baghdad was at least four times as great as that between Aleppo and France.¹²⁹ This new trend toward regional commerce, in conjunction with the capitulations and the *Tanzimat* reforms, drew individual merchants back to Aleppo in the early nineteenth century.

The intense mobility of the early modern period, exemplified by the brief business forays to Aleppo, resulted from what historian Jerry Bentley identifies as “a cluster of dynamic historical processes that promoted cross-cultural interaction and exchange.”¹³⁰ Sebouh Aslanian analyzes these intertwined processes as the formation of global sea passages, the rise of a global economy, the spread of new technologies, the rise of centralized states in Eurasia, and the continuous growth of world population, all of which yielded a more integrated world.¹³¹ Aslanian alerts us to another, overlooked process: the “infrastructural public works project” which ensured more “secure and generally faster circulation and mobility of individuals or groups and their goods across multiple regions of the early modern world.” This disregarded element of mobility, Aslanian points out, “derives directly from the centralization and expansion of states, as well as the

129. Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters, *The Ottoman City Between East and West; Aleppo, Izmir and Istanbul*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 65. This imbalance was probably due to the stability during Ibrahim Pasha’s rule over Aleppo, which boosted agriculture and therefore commerce. Also, the presence of the Egyptians in Syria resulted in the re-opening of Damascus to European trade. Ade, *Picknick*, 81.

130. Sebouh Aslanian, “Armenians on the Move: Early Modernity, Mobility and the Making of the Armenian Diaspora, 1500-1800,” 6 (unpublished manuscript, August 2017). Aslanian cites Jerry Bentley’s “Early Modern Europe and the Early Modern World” on this topic.

131. Aslanian, “Armenians on the Move,” 9.

transcontinental migration of peoples,” and includes the building and renovation of roads, bridges, canals, and evolving courier post stations. In addition, he cites the “creation of more adequate or frequent camel caravan transport across land and regular shipping across ports and port cities, the lowering of custom tolls and protection costs on merchants and the provision of greater security on the roads.”¹³²

While the second migration of merchants to Aleppo occurred after what is called the early modern era, the factors Aslanian and others name were still very much in place. Imperial authorities implemented a widespread renovation of roads and the caravan network connecting Anatolia and Ottoman territories of Syria and Iraq.¹³³

Aided by these infrastructure improvements and the amelioration of political and economic crises, Aleppo’s trade pattern could change from primarily international to primarily regional. Even though the advent of steamships slowed the caravan trade, it remained central to area trade. To the Europeans, particularly after the proclamation of both the Trade Agreement of 1838 and the *Hatt-i-Şerif Gülhane* opening the Empire to Western activity, Aleppo retained its status, as we can see from John Bowring’s 1840 report to Parliament:

Aleppo is by far the most important of all interior Syrian depots, and is the only inland town where any British merchants have permanently fixed themselves. The habits and traditions of the inhabitants of Aleppo are more commercial than those of any parts of Syria.... The local position of Aleppo is in many respects, admirable for trade. It has an abundance of warehouses which are to be obtained at low rental; it communicates at the distance of a few hours with the Euphrates and its khans and coffee houses are crowded with travellers from the east... There are habits of luxury in the city itself which create a considerable demand for articles of consumption. Situated about midway between the desert and the Mediterranean, and being a convenient place of centralization for the various

132. Aslanian, “Armenians on the Move,” 9.

133. Aslanian, “Armenians on the Move,” 10.

caravans from the East, it is likely to grow in wealth and influence, if commerce be allowed to establish its various ramifications....¹³⁴

It was not only the English who were interested in commerce in Aleppo, as we can see from the Poche, Giustiniani, Marcopoli, Draghi, Girardi, Levante, Belfante, Cattoni, Wratislaw, Villacroze, Pons and Martin families, who soon settled and firmly established themselves in commerce by the nineteenth century. While the Martins, Pons, Giustinianis and Marcopolis had arrived in the eighteenth century, the Poches, Levantes, Cattonis and others came at the very cusp of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and took longer to launch their businesses. Yet they were able to achieve fabulous financial success through the intermediary of local agents, as well as through connections they made with the longer-settled Levantine clans such as the Marcopolis, Pons, and Martins. The shipping firms of Belfante, Cattoni and Levante (in Alexandretta) could ground themselves solidly from the beginning, due mostly to the nature of their business. Once financially set, many of these families pursued honorary consular careers, as did the Picciottos. The battle between Picciottos and Poches over the post of Austrian consul, discussed above, highlights the importance for Levantine family groups of such prestigious offices—no matter for which nation—and explains why most of them at last attained that distinction and passed it down like a precious heirloom until the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Conclusion

The Levantines in Aleppo, and particularly the later arrivals, formed an introverted, self-contained, small community of heterogeneous merchants,¹³⁵ holding

134. John Bowring, *Report on the Commercial Statistics of Syria* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), 77.

onto their languages and faiths through generations as tenaciously as they kept their hard-won businesses and posts. As businessmen and holders of posts, they significantly enriched the economic and social life of the city. Purveyors of European fashion, culture, technology and teachings, they functioned as professional or casual go-betweens knitting East and West. We have seen that they introduced the benefits of Western medicine, “French” doors, alternate legal systems, and hot chocolate, and Ade tells us that Albert Poche brought in the first camera.¹³⁶ Proud of their origins and their social advance, they worked hard to maintain their consular posts and their identity through endogamy and kinship ties, and were thus able to keep their elite status until the twenty-first century.

Even the first wave of Levantine families aimed at obtaining consular positions, which many captured through family and kinship ties. John Barker’s marriage to Marianne Hays built connections with the Vernon, Hays and Abbott families, all of whom had been established in the Levant at length and had sent consuls to various parts of the Empire. David Hays had been consul in Aleppo and Lattakia, while his ancestor, Claude Hays, had served the cancellier at the consulate and was buried in Aleppo. Two separate branches of the Vernon family had held various consular posts in the Empire and formed part of the governing body of the Levant Company. The Abbotts’ roots in the Levant also ran deep, and members held the post of consul in various cities before ultimately settling in Salonica, where Bartholomew Edward Abbott became a freeman of the Levant Company and started his own firm after that company’s dissolution. Another branch of the Abbott family moved to India and became part of the EIC. The Barker family was also related by marriage to other well-ensconced Levantine merchant and

135. Levantine communities in Istanbul and Izmir were much larger and more heterogeneous.

136. Ade, *Picknick*, 34.

consular families such as the La Fontaines,¹³⁷ the Charneauds, the Cumberbatches, the Rees, and the Jolys.¹³⁸

An interesting aspect of these Anglo-Levantines who passed through Aleppo as part of the Levant Company was how many had Huguenot ancestors, including the Hays, Abbott, Bosanquet, Lannoy, La Fontaine and Charneaud families. Not surprisingly, most had strong kinship ties that began in England and were only intensified in the Levant. Furthermore, the Huguenot descendants played a large role in governing the Company from London. Letters and instructions sent by directors from the capital included well-known French Protestant names like Vernon and Bosanquet. Perhaps, like other minorities in the Empire, these once-minority families who had migrated to England and united there continued to establish and maintain a tight-knit community supportive of their reformulated Levantine lives and businesses. The next chapter will study the intricate family ties characterizing all Levantines and changing a disparate group of European merchants into an elite community reaching across the Ottoman Empire.

137. John Barker's brother Samuel married into the La Fontaine family, a branch of which still resides in Smyrna.

138. These families were mostly in Izmir. For more on their complicated ties, see www.levantineheritage.com

Chapter Five

THE LEVANTINE MERCHANT DIASPORA

More people were in motion over longer distances sojourning away from home, for longer periods of time than other time in history. More people were engaging in transactions with people whose languages they did not know and whose cultures they had never experienced.¹

Timothy Brook,
Vermeer's Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World



Aleppo in the eighteenth century.

The seventeenth century was an age of discovery, long-distance trade and mobility. According to Brook, the globe had finally become “an unbroken surface on

1. Timothy Brook, *Vermeer's Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008), 19.

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which there was no place that could not be reached, no place that was not implied by every other place.”² Such mobility might have come as a blessing or as a curse; it might bring the goods of the world to those who could afford them, or it might result from forced migration, including the enslavement of Africans and the expulsion of Jews and Muslims in the wake of the Reconquista of the Iberian Peninsula. Of course, not all migrations were forced, and voluntary ones such as the movement of merchants in pursuit of riches marked the century. Many merchants in the early modern period sought commodities unavailable in their native regions and, in particular, luxury items. This voluntary, even eager migration created merchant communities across the world, one of which was the European Levantine merchant diaspora formed in the trade centers of the Ottoman Empire, especially in Aleppo.³ Scholars Abner Cohen, Philip Curtin, and William Safran have labeled these outpost communities “diaspora.”⁴ Since Cohen coined the term “trade diaspora,” that label has been stretched to cover varied group settlements. When first used, though, the diaspora referred to one paradigmatic case, that of the Jews exiled from their homeland and living abroad. That denotation very quickly expanded to include the far-flung communal residences of Armenians and Greeks, each similarly qualified as a “catastrophic diaspora.” The concept of trading diasporas, also applying one aspect of the Jewish experience to those of Armenians and Greeks, branched out

2. Brook, *Vermeer's Hat*, 23.

3. Sebouh Aslanian, “Armenians on the Move: The Celali Uprisings, the Shah ‘Abbas Deportations, and the Making of Armenian Early Modernity,” in *Early Modernity and Mobility: Port Cities and Printers Across the Armenian Diaspora, 1512-1800* (unpublished book chapter); Sebouh Aslanian, ““Paper Instruments” and Social Networking Across the Early Modern Armenian Diaspora,” in *Early Modernity and Mobility: Port Cities and Printers Across the Armenian Diaspora, 1512-1800* (unpublished book chapter).

4. Abner Cohen, “Cultural Strategies in the Organization of Trading Diasporas” in *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets*, ed. Claude Meillasoux (London: Oxford University Press, 1971); Philip Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); William Safran, “The Jewish Diaspora in Comparative and Theoretic Perspective,” quoted in Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2008).

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further to include the commerce-based sojourns of the Chinese, Indians, Lebanese, Baltic Germans, and the Hausa of Nigeria.⁵

The notion of diaspora would outgrow its earliest meaning of surviving, or even thriving, in the wake of a traumatic displacement. In his milestone *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* spanning the vast period between Mesopotamian trade in the third millennium BC to the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century, Curtin analyzed commodities traders and voluntarily-established trade communities around the globe:

Commercial specialists would remove themselves physically from the home community and go to live as aliens in another town, usually not a fringe town, but a town important in the life of the host community. There, the stranger merchants could settle down and learn the language, the customs and the commercial ways of their hosts. They could then serve as cross-cultural brokers helping and encouraging trade between the host society and people of their own origin, who moved along the trade routes. At this stage, a distinction appears between the merchants who moved and settled and those who continued to move back and forth. What might have begun as a single settlement soon became more complex. The merchants who might have begun with a single settlement abroad tended to set up a whole series of settlements in alien towns. The result was an interrelated net of commercial communities, forming a trade network, or a trade diaspora—a term that comes from the Greek word for scattering, as in the sowing of grain.⁶

This chapter briefly reviews the definition of *Levantine* and the make-up of the Levantine community. It then analyzes them using criteria suggested by Curtin and honed by Safran, who found the concept of diaspora applicable to an ‘expatriate minority community’ sharing defining features:

They, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from an original ‘centre’ to two or more foreign regions;
They retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland including its location, history and achievements;
They believe they are not—and perhaps can never be—fully accepted in their host societies and so remain partly separate;

5. Rogers Brubaker, “The ‘Diaspora’ Diaspora,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 1 (January 2005), 2.

6. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade*, 2.

Their ancestral home is idealized and it is thought that, when conditions are favourable, either they, or their descendants should return; They believe all members of the diaspora should be committed to the maintenance or restoration of the original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and They continue in various ways to relate to that homeland and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are in an important way defined by the existence of such a relationship.⁷

After exploring their specific trade diaspora, this chapter will examine different strategies, such as marriage and in-group socializing among the Aleppine Levantines, and will argue that such practices proved vital to their creating a social elite that was both part of, and separate from, the local community.

The Levantines

Unlike other community categories such as “Italian” “Greek” or “Turk,” which have ethnic, linguistic, and religious parameters, the Levantine identity is diverse and fluid, without ethnolinguistic or ethnoconfessional restrictions. The term *Levantini*, according to Natalie Rothman, was first ascribed by the sixteenth-century Venetian Senate to the Sephardic Levantine Jews living in Venice, Ancona and Livorno. However, the term would undergo a profound evolution in usage. During the eighteenth century, it identified Europeans who had settled in the Levant, but with a derogatory tang, denoting a hybrid race neither fully Western nor Eastern. Even during Russell’s time, the Levantine Europeans were already adopting local dress and habits; “The consul and several of the private gentlemen retain European dress; but many, especially of the French and the Italians dress in the Eastern habit, retaining only hat and wig when in town, wearing a turban when travelling.”⁸ Later, it came to include long-standing local

7. Safran, “Jewish Diaspora,” 5.

8. Alexander Russell and Patrick Russell, *The Natural History of Aleppo Containing a Description of the City, and the Principal Natural Productions in Its Neighbourhood: Together with an Account of the*

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ethno-religious minority groups also inhabiting the region, such as Arab Christians, Armenians, or Jews. Subsequently the word came to indicate the descendants of European settlers who continued to live in the region, some of whom had resided in eastern Mediterranean coastal and Turkish/Ottoman cities since the Crusades.

Towards the beginning of the twentieth century the word took on a clearly negative tinge, implying either dishonesty or deviousness. This meaning, too, has changed in light of current research, and Levantine has come to refer to a hybrid elite stratum of merchants all around the eastern Mediterranean basin, that encompasses a non-Muslim mercantile elite with allegiances to both Europe and the Middle East.

The term Levantine designates European as well as Ottoman subjects, and thus the community in Aleppo was comprised of three primary groups; The Europeans, primarily of Italian and Austrian origin and mostly Catholics; Sephardic Jews of Italian origin; and local non-Muslim Arabs. Recent scholarship accentuates the European and Catholic attributes that many of them shared, but not all Levantines were Catholic, nor were they European, despite their claims. In brief, Levantines were non-Muslim minorities, such as Christian Arabs, Jews, Greeks and Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire. These trans-imperial subjects typically worked as either merchants or diplomats, and shared characteristics of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism. Indeed, Levantine merchants developed a collective consciousness and a sense of distinctiveness from the surrounding society. They were at once a part of the community, yet separate. This changing self-concept resulted from commercial travel, emigration, and attendance of

Climate, Inhabitants, and Diseases, Particularly of the Plague. 2 vols. (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1794).

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foreign missionary institutes, in particular the French and Italian Jesuit and Franciscan schools.

Ethnoconfessionally diverse and numerically quite small, the Levantines in Aleppo formed a commercial elite which then made up the highest class of merchants in Aleppo.⁹ At the same time, they kept themselves separate from the rest of society by marrying only within the community as much as possible.

Curtin's categories begin with "the commercial specialists" who remove themselves physically from the home community and settle as aliens in another town, usually an important one for the host community. This pattern holds true for the Levantines, who willingly left their hometowns for the major commercial center of Aleppo. Of course, a few of them did live in smaller "fringe" towns, such as villages outside the city or even Alexandretta, Aleppo's port which, at the time, resembled nothing more than a swampy village.¹⁰ As seen, a good number of the European "stranger" merchants did settle in the city, but not all. However, in the early phase of settlement in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, very few of them learned local languages or the customs, but adhered strictly to their own, keeping themselves apart from the surrounding society. It was mostly the consuls who were the cross-cultural brokers between the host community and their own to encourage and promote trade. Moreover, to follow Curtin's differentiation between those who settled and those who continually moved back and forth, the majority in this period kept to the latter more mobile pattern.¹¹

9. The Levantines were made up of Catholics (Italian, French and many local Christians), Protestants (English and Dutch), Orthodox (Armenian) and Jewish merchants and diplomats.

10. Alexandretta, or Iskenderun, lies 75 miles from Aleppo, and the journey from there to Aleppo took around four days. However, Alexander Russell tells us that trained pigeons brought news of ships' arrival in a mere six hours. Russell and Russell, *Natural history of Aleppo*, 2:66.

11. One of the more prominent cases I have seen was that of the British Consul Bartholomew Edward Abbott and his son, each of whom married a Greek woman and adopted her language and customs.

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The proliferation of settlements did not arise until the nineteenth century, as the majority of the merchants during the earlier period were part of the Levant Company or other joint stock companies that had centers all around the Mediterranean. Only in the nineteenth century, when European merchants settled in Aleppo as individual traders and later moved elsewhere in the Empire to seek more promising trade opportunities (as did the Marcopoli family, which had members in Damascus and Baghdad), would their settlements become more numerous and complex. Since most Levantine families married solely among themselves and thus chose spouses from a narrow pool, kinship ties soon spread across various Levantine-settled cities. It was common for a Levantine merchant in Aleppo to choose his bride from Chios or another such city, if no suitable candidate presented on the spot. This phenomenon led to the knitting of intricate family networks and commercial communities that can certainly be categorized under the label of “trade diasporas.” However, as Safran’s work demonstrates, it is difficult to gather the entire Levantine community under one umbrella. The Levantines did not have a shared collective center, a homeland, nor a collective memory of an original homeland; they were not an ethnoconfessional group nor did they have a collective national identity. Rather, the Levantine community was made up of different sub-ethnicities that included various European and local (Armenian, indigenous Arab, Jewish) national identities, as well as diverse religious affiliations ranging from Catholic to Protestant to Eastern Orthodox to Jewish. All these diffuse subgroups came together to form a small multinational cooperative elite trading group that stood apart from the rest of the inhabitants. Further, not all sub-categories fit into the classifications specified by Safran, such as the local Christian Arab community operating mostly out of Aleppo, or created

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diasporas in Livorno and Manchester. However, the Julfan Armenian mercantile community in the seventeenth century, the Armenians who left Sasun later in the century, the bankers from Arabkir who migrated in the eighteenth century, and the Jewish *signores francos* who settled in Aleppo in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did constitute a merchant diaspora there.

According to Mafalda Ade, “Levantine can be understood as a diffuse standing between different identities and cultures”¹² Thus the term *trading diaspora* must also be used flexibly to accommodate the different subgroups making up the community. We saw that some of the most important of them were the Europeans, in turn made up of the “Latins” or the Catholics (mostly the French and the Italians) and the Protestants (English, Dutch, German); but local minority groups of Arabs, Armenians and Greeks (mainly Catholic, but some Melkites, or Orthodox), as well as the European Jewish community, or the *signores francos* comprised the Levantine community.

It is challenging to understand how such a diffuse group of merchants could have formed the elite economic stratum of Aleppo. However, by looking at the collective strategies each group practiced among its members, we can see how they held onto their languages, heritage, customs and backgrounds that kept them foreign, while simultaneously blending in with and, to an extent, becoming part of a unified community—that is, how they maintained a hybrid identify.

Levantine Communal Strategies

Levantines throughout the Ottoman Empire shared certain fundamental characteristics as a group, but differed in other traits. In general, they were merchants

12. Mafalda Ade, *Picknick Mit dem Paschas: Aleppo und die Levantinische handelsfirma Fratelli Poche (1853-1880)* (Beirut: P. Ergon Verlag Würzburg in Kommission), 50.

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with a high social standing as a result of their diplomatic posts. They kept their languages, names and customs, yet over time, learned the languages of the Empire fluently. Thus at the same time they became part of, yet stayed apart from, the society at large. They formed elaborate kinship ties by marrying primarily among themselves and practicing consanguine, avunculate and other types of marriage tactics. Endogamy marked these, seen among the English Huguenot-descended merchants even before venturing out of England and among merchants who settled in in Aleppo and found brides from their same group already there.

As mentioned, most seventeenth-century merchants bound for Aleppo and commercial centers such as Smyrna and Constantinople came temporarily for relatively short periods, and so did not bring wives with them, especially as most of the merchants and factors were too young and financially unstable to support a family. No official prohibition to marriage pertained, but it rarely occurred. In 1677, Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa issued an edict declaring all Franks marrying subjects of the sultan might lose their capitulatory privileges.¹³ As a result, the Levant Company issued strict regulations against mixed marriages and enforced their rules with an oath administered to the factors,¹⁴ and the French outlawed such marriages as well, when the Marseille *chambre du commerce*, under Colbert's direction, brought the *echelles* in the Levant under tighter control. Wood tells us that this Ottoman law was enforced against a certain Pentlow of Smyrna, whose estate was confiscated and his executors imprisoned for attempting to send his Greek widow money in England without prior permission from the Turkish authorities. Still, by the end of the eighteenth century mixed marriages were taking place,

13. Alfred Wood, *A History of the Levant Company* (London: Frank Cass and CO., LTD, 1964), 244.

14. Wood, *History of the Levant Company*, 244.

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in particular with Greek women, as we can see from the marriage of Roxanna to Thomas Phillips Vernon in the second half of the eighteenth century and that of Maria Sophia to N. van Maseyk, who had arrived in Aleppo to trade, returned home, and was sent back as the Dutch consul between 1763 and 1784. His son, Jan, born and brought up in Aleppo, succeeded him as consul until his death in 1826. John Fuller, traveling through Greece, Constantinople, Egypt and Syria in 1818, found Jan van Maseyk fully acclimated to his Ottoman home:

I resided with Mr. Masecyck the Dutch consul, a very agreeable and intelligent man. He was a native of Aleppo and had scarcely ever quitted the place of his birth: but he had a knowledge of life seldom to be found even among those who have had a more extensive field of observation; spoke fluently five or six languages, and had an inexhaustible fund of entertaining anecdotes with regard to Oriental affairs. In early life he had mixed more with the higher classes of the Mohametan inhabitants, than Franks in general are in the habit of doing: he wore their dress, and had acquired much of their tranquil philosophy and their dignity of appearance and manners.¹⁵

The French consul Thomas and his French wife stayed for 20 years; Russell described him as “a gentleman of benevolent heart, a pleasing cheerful temper and possesst of talents improved by a liberal education. His house was open to Europeans of all nations, where they were received in the most hospitable manner by him and his lady.”¹⁶ Jean François Pons came to Aleppo in 1750 and married French Levantine Marie Rau, sister of Suzanne Rau, who married the *dragoman* Luc Fonton.¹⁷

The plan of the Levantine cemetery also gives an idea of when wives began to accompany their husbands, or when women of European origin living in Aleppo wed the

15. John Fuller, *Narrative of a Tour through Some Parts of the Turkish Empire* (Collection Americana, 1829), 493, digitized by Harvard University, accessed on August 7, 2017 <http://books.google.com/books?id=KeiHio07epMC&oe=UTF-8>

16. Russell and Russell, *Natural History of Aleppo*, 2:14.

17. Ade, *Picknick*, 44; *Levantineheritage.com*, <http://www.levantineheritage.com/fonton.htm>, accessed on August 25, 2017. Born in Aleppo, the Rau sisters were daughters of French merchant Jean-Baptiste Rau, originally from Valenciennes in Flanders, who settled in Aleppo and married Catherine Rose, probably born in Aleppo.

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traveling merchants. John Purnell's three children were buried in Aleppo, strongly suggesting the longtime presence of their mother, Eliza Usgate, buried there in 1758.¹⁸

By the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century a pattern of kinship ties began to emerge among the Europeans. Thomas Vailhen, a rich French merchant, who was imprisoned with the other French merchants at the time of Napoleon's invasion of Egypt, married the daughter of Nicolas Van Maseyk, Dutch consul in Aleppo. Their daughter, Celeste, married Angiello Durighello, who was the Spanish consul.¹⁹ His son later on became the French consul in Saida, and was well known for his collection of antiquities,²⁰

Roxanna and Thomas Vernon's daughter, Louisa, married David Hays, the British consul. After his death on a trip to the desert, she married Hays' replacement, John Abbott, and raised her daughter, Marianne, in Aleppo. Marianne married John Barker, who had been born in Smyrna and was related to the Purnells, Bouveries and the Bosanquets, as well as to the Jolys and Cumberbatches of Smyrna.²¹

The Bosanquet, Vernon and Hays families exemplify intricate Levantine kinship ties. David Bosanquet I (the father), fled to London from Lyons, stopping off at Geneva,

18. Missing names in the plan of the Old Protestant Cemetery in Aleppo does not prove or disprove the persons' existence in Aleppo, as many graves were lost when moved in the first half of the twentieth century.

19. Angelo Durighello died in Aleppo on 12 July 1841. His death and the details of his state funeral were described in Bakhkhash's journal. Naoum Bakhkhash *News of Aleppo / اخبار حلب* reprint- (Aleppo: Imprimerie Ihsan, 1985), 165.

20. *Maseyk-family.blogspot.com*, accessed on July 30, 2017, <http://maseyk-family.blogspot.com/2007/12/first-post.html>; Michael Klat, "The Durighello Family," accessed on July 30, 2017, <http://www.ahlebanon.com/images/PDF/Issue%2016%20-%20Autumn%202002/The%20Durighello%20Family%20-%20Michel%20G.%20Klat.pdf>.

21. The actor Benedict Cumberbatch, who played Sherlock Holmes, descends from the Barkers and another well-known Levantine family from Istanbul. His grandfather, Henry Carlton Cumberbatch, was a naval commander. *Levantineheritage.com*, accessed August 28, 2017. <http://levantineheritage.com/hanson.htm>; <http://www.levantineheritage.com/barker.htm>

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Germany and Holland on his way.²² Once naturalized in England, he won the hand of Elizabeth Hays, daughter of Claude Hays and Eleanor Cognard and sister to Lewis Hays (1681-1734), David Hays's father. David Bosanquet I established himself in commerce, became a member of the Levant Company, and prospered greatly by trading in goats' wool, cotton wool, cottons, pistachio nuts, lapis, opium, gum scamony, indigo and cochineal among other commodities. He also engaged in the silk trade, a skill he brought from Lyons; he was one of the many Huguenot merchants and weavers who introduced "A-la-Mode," "Lustrings," Padua silks, watered taffeta, and colored mantuas.²³ His son David II (1699-1741) was a merchant in the Levant Company in Aleppo, but returned to England in 1730. His brothers Pierre/Peter and Claude both were merchants in Aleppo; Pierre was father to Roxanna, who married Thomas Vernon in Aleppo.²⁴

David Hays, cousin to the Bosanquet brothers and now consul in Aleppo, married Thomas Vernon's daughter, Louisa.²⁵ Louisa's second husband was Robert Abbott, brother to John Abbott and successor to the consulship of David Hays (not to mention, to his wife as well). David and Louisa Hays's daughter wed John Barker, who became consul general in Aleppo in 1803, but had been the consular representative since 1799.²⁶

Clearly, though they did not descend from Huguenots, the Abbott family supplied many Levant Company consuls and married into Levantine families. The family created conjugal connections with the Hays family, as seen, and later with the Barkers, through

22. Grace Lawless Lee, *The Story of the Bosanquets* (Canterbury: Phillimore and Company, 1966), 18. "I departed from Lyons where I was living, and I arrived at Geneva the 29th of September O.S, whence I departed the 18th November following, taking Germany and Holland in my way."

23. Lee, *Story of the Bosanquets*, 22.

24. Information given to me by a descendant of the Vernon family by email, 22 January 2014.

25. The marriage of David Hays and Louisa Vernon is entered in the Levant Company's "Register of marriages, baptisms and burials in Aleppo starting from 1765," TNA Sp 110_70, 24.

26. Levant Company's "Register of marriages, baptisms and burials in Aleppo starting from 1765." TNA Sp 110_70.

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the marriage of David and Louisa Hays's daughter to Consul John Abbott. They were also related to the Levantine Charnaud family, well-established in Salonica and Constantinople. Their son George Frederic Charnaud married into the Giustiniani family from Chios, who were in turn related to the Marcopoli family of Aleppo. These sometimes habitual, sometimes purposeful kinship ties not only kept the community apart from the locals, but also translated into lucrative business partnerships, illustrated by the flourishing Abbott-Chasseauds Company in Salonica.

Many of the Europeans lived and worked as merchants in the Ottoman Empire before taking on consular posts. When unable to find fitting mates in the immediate community, many traveled far to marry one of their kind. Consul Rizzini, who worked as a merchant for years and was chosen as consul for Aleppo in 1784, ignored the many European candidates in Aleppo and reached clear across to Cyprus to find his bride, the sister of the Venetian consular agent in Larnaca, Bernardo Caprara.²⁷

In the evening we paid a visit to Mr. Rizzini, a merchant of this place, and brother to Venetian consul of Aleppo, and also to the lady of the latter who lives at the moment at the house of her brother, Mr. Caprara, the Venetian pro-consul. We met with a very polite reception and found the lady sensible and accomplished. She was very agreeable in her person, but being an Italian, of French education, she was very partial to their manners.²⁸

Thus merchants who immigrated to Aleppo at the end of the eighteenth century and the start of the nineteenth, that transition into the modern period, perpetuated the kin-

27. From 1754 to 1771, Consul Caprara was responsible for both the consulates of Aleppo and Cyprus. After 1771, G. Seriola was consul to Aleppo, and Caprara remained consul in Cyprus until his death in 1779.

28. Anonymous, *A journal kept on a journey from Bassora to Bagdad, over the little dessert to Aleppo, Cyprus and Rhodes, Zante, Corfu and Otranto in Italy, in the year 1799, by a gentleman, late an officer in the service of the Honorable East India Company* (printed in Horsham, 1784), accessed on August 22, 2017, <http://www.cypriexplorer.globalfolio.net/eng/history/cobham-exerpta-cypria/page0333.pdf>.

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based endogamous pattern of marriages. The Marcopoli family, out from Chios in the late eighteenth century, had close family ties to the Giustiniani and Dracopoli families (also from Chios) as well as to the Poche and, later, to the Girardi families of Aleppo. Andrea Marcopoli, married to Despina Giustiniani, had four sons; Giovanni, Vincenzo, Giorgio and Nicola. It is not known who Giovanni's wife was, but we know Vincenzo married Maria Teresa Poche, Giorgio married his cousin Apollonia Dracopoli, and Nicola married Maria Teresa Poche's sister, Lauretta. The next generation maintained this pattern, the men marrying either their Giustiniani, Marcopoli or Poche cousins and relatives. It was the same with the Poche family, whose patriarch, Joseph Ignaz Poche, united with the adopted daughter of Consul Rizzini and his wife, the sister of Venetian consul Caprara in Cyprus. Their son, Frederic, elected to marry his niece, Zoe Marcopoli. Frederic's and Zoe's son, Joseph, married his cousin Marie.

What is most notable is that when no suitable family member was available to marry in Aleppo, the prospective groom would look elsewhere for a related bride rather than ally with a local family. Such was the case with Albert Poche, who married Eugenie Giustiniani of Chios, a relative of the Marcopolis and the Dracopolis. Significantly, cross-over between relatively recent European and longstanding local Levantine families did not take place, with very few exceptions, until the twentieth century, when Jenny Poche married a Marrache.

While the Picciotto family history boasts a very comprehensive collection of the consular documents and records, it lacks any mention of marriages. However, the union of Ester di Illel de Picciotto (1855-1881) and Illel di Elia de Picciotto (1848-1891) is documented on Geneanet, an online Jewish genealogical site. We know that the European

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and Tuscan Jewish community also practiced endogamy. The records show that two of the more prominent families, the Belilios and the Altaras, regularly married with each other. Sarah Shayu Belilios married Moise Altaras, and became the mother of David, Salomon Vita, and Jacques Altaras. Anna Belilios (1754) married Ezra Altaras in 1784, and bore Salomon, Hillel, Jacob, Eliahu, Sarah, Simha and Rika.²⁹ In-marriage between these community members served many purposes. For one, it created a family network in which customary social and cultural mores could be practiced and perpetuated, inheritances passed, and family fortunes preserved. Both families were of European descent and were able to integrate their social, cultural, and linguistic heritage into their European upbringing.

The aim of keeping business within family boundaries also motivated the practice of endogamy. Francesca Trivellato tells us that a relative in Aleppo, Elijah Silvera, recommended Venetians Jacob and Joseph Belilios as partners and agents of the Ergas and Silveras in Livorno. Their enterprise numbered among the Sephardic merchant firms in Aleppo, which included those of the Lopes, Pinheiro, Coen, Medina and Chavez families.³⁰ The basic economic rule behind endogamy might be proved by an exception; David, son of Sarah (née Belilios) and Moise Altaras, had six children, none of whom could take over the business because of youth or unsuitability, and thus he married one of his daughters to his scribe, Marini, and left the family business to him. This surprised the Venetian consul, as Marini was roundly disliked by the European community, which saw him as aggressive, argumentative, and opposed to the interests of the consulate and

29. *Geni.com*, accessed on 14 August 2017, <https://www.geni.com/people/Anna-Altaras>; <http://www.farhi.org>; <https://www.geni.com/people/Sarah-Altaras-Shayu>

30. Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardi Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 66.

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Venice. To circumvent any arguments, David Altaras left his will with the rabbi rather than file it in the consulate.³¹

The *franco* Jewish merchants in Aleppo held themselves apart from the rest of the Jewish community, even choosing to live in separate parts of the city: While most local Jews lived primarily in the Bahsita area or later in Jamilieh, the majority of the *francos* lived in the *khans*. For example, the Altaras family rented a large part of *khan al Harir* and Moïse Picciotto rented an apartment in the same *khan*. Other *francos* built houses in the more modern areas of town, as did the Belilios, whose European-style house is minutely described in a *hoggett* (deed of sale) drawn up when their trading firm went bankrupt and they had to sell to cover the debts.³² In addition, the *francos*, who were a small subdivision of the Jewish community, identified and associated more with Europeans than with their co-religionists.³³ Under European protection and thus not subjects of the sultan, they carefully maintained their European identity and considered themselves temporary residents of the city. It was not until they started to marry into the subgroup of longtime Jewish Aleppine Ottoman subjects that they began to assimilate and become, *de facto*, permanent residents.

Yet the *francos* participated in the local Jewish religious life. They worshipped alongside other Jews and generously funded the local community, schools and scholars.

31. [A.S.VE](#) Cinque Savi alla Mercanzie, Busta 603, Dispacci dei Console, Dettaglio del Commercio di Aleppo, 1774.

32. A.S.VE Cinque Savi alla Mercanzie, Lettere Consoli, Busta 603.

33. Yaron Harel, *Syrian Jewry in Transition, 1840-1880* (Oxford; Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010), 13. The main families cited by Harel were the Picciotto, de Picciotto, Altaras, Belilios, Silvera, Lofez, and Ergas. However, a letter in the Venetian archives shows that there were more families established in the city. The letter, written on March 4, 1736 was signed by Altaras, Voltolina, Belilios, Lion, Cabibi, Ancona and Marini. A.S.VE. Cinque Savi alla Mercanzie, Lettere Consoli, Busta 604. Of course, the population fluctuated over time, as other letters mention that there were only two or three houses of trade left in the city. A.S.VE Cinque Savi alla Mercanzie, Lettere Consoli, Busta 603, June 22 1756.

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They created jobs for their co-religionists, many of whom became *protégés* by working at the Picciotto family's numerous consular posts. In brief, parallel to the rise of the Christian merchant class, Levantine Jews also developed an elite slice within the community, which also began to see itself as a separate entity. This group of *protégés* refused to pay the communal taxes, based on their status in their original communities.³⁴ The refusal brewed a fifteen-year controversy which, in the end, involved the status of the *francos* as well even though by the late eighteenth century their permanent residency was well established,³⁵ effectuated by increasingly common marriage to local women.

Identity

Kinship ties and endogamous marriages unified the Levantine community in spite of its members' variegated ethnic, cultural, linguistic, professional and religious backgrounds. Yet it also created boundaries. Indeed, their many languages, occupations from commercial to *dragoman* to consular, original cultures, and the insular yet cosmopolitan lives they led all contributed to creating a hybrid, culturally fluid society premised on their capitulatory status. An incident detailed in a letter written to the Cinque Savi in April of 1774 involving the Jewish Altaras merchant family highlights the complexity of their multifaceted identity.³⁶ After the death of David Altaras, the Venetian consul sent for the routine requisite permission slip from the *mahkame* (court) that all foreign nationals needed to bury their deceased, but was unable to obtain it on the pretext

34. Most of the Jews who worked in the consulates were from the Sephardic group of Jews who had settled in Aleppo shortly after their expulsion from Spain. They were distinct from the Mustaribun, whose families had lived in Syria for a long time. By the time the *francos* arrived the two groups (Sephardim and Mustaribun) had virtually converged. The arrival of the Tuscan Sephardic Jews brought both friction and modernization to the Jewish community.

35. Yaron Harel, "The Controversy over Rabbi Ephraim Laniado's Inheritance of the Rabbinate in Aleppo," *Jewish History* 13 no. 1 (1999), 13-15.

36. A.S.VE Cinque Savi alla Mercanzie, Lettere Consoli, Busta 604. Letter written by Venetian Consul to the Cinque Savi in Venice, 15 April 1774.

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that David Altaras was a Jew, thus a subject of the sultan, and thus had to pay the death tax of 200.000 *borse*. The consul countered that Altaras had been in fact a subject of Venice and not of the sultan. Both the Venetian consul and the *qadi* (judge) put a seal on Altaras's house. The deceased was not buried for over 10 days, and the consul was contemplating having the coffin transported to the consulate and covering it with tar. The stalemate dragged on until an ex-governor and friend of both the consul and the judge intervened, and the family was at last able to bury Altaras in the Jewish cemetery. This tale highlights the complex legal identity and social status of Europeans in the Empire, as defined by the articles of capitulations as well as by their self-concept as unique in the social setting.³⁷ It also demonstrates the ways they manipulated the dual legal system to which they had access as *protégés* in order to protect and profit from the hybrid, fluid identity they maintained throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Local Levantines

As a religious minority in the Ottoman Empire and, of course, in Aleppo, the local Christian Arabs practiced endogamy to retain their heritage and beliefs as well as for business purposes. However, the endogamy they practiced was complicated, based on religious affiliations that resulted from specific eighteenth-century confessional developments. In the seventeenth century, Christians in Aleppo fell into four main communities: Greek Orthodox (or Melkite), Maronite (Catholic), Syrian Jacobite (Orthodox), and Armenian Orthodox. By the eighteenth century, though, these four subgroups had evolved into seven, all of which were now Catholic offshoots of Orthodox

37. This same David Altaras attempted to pass off a Jewish employee, Dweik, as a *protégé* of the English, although he was in reality a subject of the sultan. Yet when writing his will and effectively cutting off his large family in favor of his son-in-law, he chose to use the services of the rabbi, from which the *francos* generally distanced themselves, rather than the Venetian consul under whose protection he was.

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churches. The Catholic erosion of Orthodox religious communities derived from many factors, the most important being the presence of the European merchant community in Aleppo. The French, whose Jesuits and the Franciscan Catholic missionaries followed them to the city, worked hard at converting the Orthodox “heretics.” According to Bruce Masters, by the end of the seventeenth century, three quarters of the Suryanis (Assyrians) were now Catholic, as were a large number of the Armenians, despite the fact that the Armenian *Catholicos* (church leader) had his seat in Aleppo.³⁸ These conversions accelerated when the *protégé* system led to the rise of many Catholic merchant families such as the A’ida and Ghadban, all employed by the English. Other family conversions followed: the Balit, Andrea, Tutunji, Assouad, Abdini, Diab, Khawwam, Kusa, Ghazzala and Hindie. Many of them came from Beirut to Aleppo along with 40 Maronite families in the beginning of the eighteenth century.³⁹ The Maronite community was the most prosperous of the four original sects in Aleppo. Numerous Maronite families, such as the Andreas, Balits, and Diabs, served as *dragomans* or in other capacities in the European consulates.

Religious rifts in the Christian Aleppine community and the seventeenth-century wave of proselytization affected marriage patterns and strategies in the various groupings. As the feelings ran high against each other, each sect promoted endogamous marriages

38. Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters, *The Ottoman City Between East and West; Aleppo, Izmir and Istanbul*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 53.

39. The Maronites were originally from Northern Syria, but had migrated to Mount Lebanon. They welcomed the Crusaders in the late twelfth century, and many families, to this day claim ownership of Crusader castles and descent from Crusader knights. The Andrea were one of those families, except they claimed that the original Andrea came from Europe. They converted to the Maronite Church in the eighteenth century, as it was then the most prosperous of the four churches in Aleppo. Masters tells us that “early in the sixteenth century, they (the Maronites) had reestablished their links to the West, which had lapsed after the Crusading period. By 1600, they had become prominent as agents and translators for the various European communities, as well as being active in the Levant trade in their own right through their domination of the cultivation and marketing of silk in Mount Lebanon.” Eldem, Goffman and Masters, *Ottoman City*, 92.

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within itself, and very few marriages crossed religious divides. Even the Armenians, who had converted to Catholicism, remained within their specific confessional set. Though most of the Armenian converts, such as the Balits, became slowly Arabized, forgetting their earlier language and customs, they never forgot or abjured their origins. Two of the most important merchant families, the Ghantuz Cubbe and the Balits, married with each other and established an impressive family and business network in shipping and trade. The Balits also married with the Andreas and the Girardis, as did the Ghantuz Cubbe with the Homsis.

More than simply keeping wealth, business, and family lines intact, endogamous marriage also ensured the continuation of class. Anthropologists have shown that the development of kinship relations was becoming increasingly important in determining (and vying for) social position as well as safeguarding basic livelihood. David Sabean, considering endogamy in Europe, finds that “social class is always being generated and kinship ties are always constantly being negotiated”⁴⁰ Although the marriages detailed here took place in Ottoman Aleppo in the early modern period and the transition to the modern, they confirm Sabean’s assertion. The changing economy of Aleppo was forming a new class of wealthy merchants. This prosperous group had ties with Europe and Europeans, gave their sons a solid education provided by Franciscans or Jesuit priests, spoke numerous languages, and learned of new fashions and ideas through trips to Europe and acquaintance with European merchants in the city. In the early modern period, the Ghantuz Cubbes and the Balits joined their two families and were exposed to all of the above. The ancient Cubbe family traced its ancestry back to the time of the

40. David Sabean, “Kinship and Class Dynamics in Nineteenth–Century Europe,” in *Kinship in Europe: Approaches to Long Term Development 1800-1900*, David W. Sabean, Simon Teuscher and Jon Mathieu, eds. (New York: Bergahn Books, 2007), 307.

Crusaders, but only the economic opportunities afforded to them by the Ottoman authorities in the eighteenth century ushered them into the wealthy elite.⁴¹ Similarly, Armenian Balit family history in Aleppo stretched back to the seventeenth century, but the family made its fortune only in the eighteenth. Both families carefully married into others with similar backgrounds, wealth and status. The engagement of Balit and Cubbe young people was a celebrated event worthy of mention in Naoum Bakhkhash's journal. In fact, Bakhkhash mentions the Cubbes multiple times, specifically in the context of visiting the family or being invited to luxurious meals with them, as it was an honor to be included in their elegant festivities.⁴² The Andrea family were also of this class, status and wealth, and thus married within the "milieu" of the Balit and Girardi families.⁴³

Small family businesses, such as the Altaras-Marini one notwithstanding, most Sephardim in Livorno, according to Trivellato, "worked on the basis of implicit contracts with blood kin and in-laws to form unlimited general partnerships."⁴⁴ Although the documents in the Venetian consulate do not include any evidence of such contracts, they do show family partnerships, such as that between Joseph and Jacob Belilios for a while, which had begun in Livorno and moved to Aleppo, as well as Isach and Joseph Belilios. In addition, some family members left Aleppo to open branches in other cities, such as the Altaras in Baghdad (Document) documented in the Venetian consular archives.

Cousin Marriage

41. John Bowring reported to Parliament that "the most opulent Christian merchant of Aleppo (Fathalla Cubbe) is supposed to possess 3,000,000 to 4,000,000 of piasters." Bowring, *Report on the Commercial statistics of Syria* (1840, reprinted, New York: Arno Press, 1973), 82.

42. Bakhkhash, *News of Aleppo*, 130, 139, 140, 141, 143, 154.

43. Andrea private records given to me in July 2011 in Aleppo. The Girardi family did not migrate to Aleppo until the nineteenth century, and owed their social status to their consular posts rather than to wealth accumulated from commerce.

44. Trivellato, *Familiarity of Strangers*, 148.

Cousin marriages are unions between people who share common grandparents and are thus blood relatives. They are common in some cultures, such as among the Muslims in the Middle East. According to anthropologist Ladislav Holy, cousin marriage exists not as an independent phenomenon, but rather as one expression of a wider Middle Eastern preference for agnatic solidarity (identification the paternal lineage). Holy finds the oft-quoted property-based reason for cousin marriage to be, in the Middle East, just one manifestation of keeping intact a family's whole "symbolic capital." While this may be true for Muslim families, Christians were prohibited from close cousin marriages by the Church. Despite that prohibition, cousin marriages had been taking place frequently among the nobility; one notable example was the marriage of Queen Victoria to her beloved Cousin Albert. In fact, the rate of cousin marriage among the European aristocracy in the nineteenth century spiked. According to Adam Kuper, the boundary between bourgeoisie and nobility was eroding: Younger sons of landowners were marrying into monied professional families, and the aristocracy slowly adopted middle-class habits, including cousin marriage.⁴⁵ First-cousin marriages ensured political alliances and consolidated wealth and property. Thus, even if borrowed from the bourgeoisie, it clearly served to secure class distinctions.

Canon law decrees against marriage up to and including the fourth degree (third cousins), but the rule could be circumvented by dispensation. According to Jon Mathieu, restrictions on marriage between relatives remained essentially unchanged from the thirteenth to the early twentieth century.⁴⁶ However, historically, there have been many

45. Adam Kuper, *Incest and Influence: The Private Life of Bourgeois England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 23.

46. Sabeen, Teuscher, and Mathieu, "Kin Marriages: Trends and Interpretations from the Swiss Example" in *Kinships in Europe*, 213.

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fluctuations in the list of permissible blood relative marriages, and those variations have been variously countered, regardless of Church control of marriage legitimacy.⁴⁷

Historians and anthropologists generally agree that property devolution changed over time in Europe, bringing fresh challenges:

The century between 1750 and 1850 witnessed a burgeoning of trade and industrial enterprise. Wealth flowed through different channels, and the issue for those undertaking risky adventures in mining, metallurgy, textile production and international trade was not how to manage and capitalize on a property that had descended over several generations, but how to bring together investment capital through credit and assemble reliable staff or correspondents.⁴⁸

They also concur that “kinship and the alliance system of the nineteenth century were crucial for concentrating and distributing capital.”⁴⁹ This is strikingly evident in the close kinship and marriage alliances among Levantine families in Aleppo.

The nineteenth century not only ushered in the modern era, the *Tanzimat* reforms, and their intended influx of individual merchants to Aleppo. It also encouraged an uptick in relative and particularly cousin marriages, especially among the latest European settlers, reflecting their perceived need to accumulate capital quickly for their expanding businesses. A prime example of this increase is the number of weddings that took place between the Poche and the Marcopoli families, both of which had just set up commercial firms and needed money to finance them (particularly the Poche brothers). Barely a year after settling in Aleppo, Vincenzo Marcopoli married Maria Theresa Poche, the older sister of the second Poche generation, and his brother, Nicola Marcopoli, followed in his

47. Jack Goody, *The European Family* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publishers, 2000). Despite the fact that Goody suggests seeing Eurasia as a single cultural and economic zone, he emphasizes that the main difference between Europe and Asia was the influence of the Church in Europe and Europeans’ “strategies of heirship” designed to keep property within kin groups.

48. Sabeen, Teuscher, and Mathieu, “Kin Marriages,” Introduction, 17.

49. Sabeen, Teuscher, and Mathieu, “Kin Marriages,” Introduction, 17.

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footsteps a few years later by marrying the younger Poche sister, Laura. These two unions set the stage for that of Frederic Poche and his niece Zoe Marcopoli, which required a special papal dispensation. This marriage and kinship fest culminated in the nuptials of Joseph Poche and his cousin Marie Poche.⁵⁰ Apart from the concern to gather and guard capital, marriages between these two families probably occurred almost as a matter of course, since both were prominent pillars of the Levantine community as prosperous merchants, *dragomans* and, later, consular agents for many different nations. Thus property, money, class, and status were firmly cemented by close marriage between kin. Cousin marriages and special dispensation for these marriages occurred among Armenians as well. Sebouh Aslanian documents cases in the famous Julfan Armenian Sceriman family, which likely converted to Catholicism with the specific intention of marrying second and third cousins—alliances the Armenian Church strictly forbade.⁵¹ Controlling inheritance and the dispensing of property were crucial benefits of cousin marriages. Unfortunately, no extant archival documents show exactly how properties were passed within every intertwined family, nor how effective the strategy was in safeguarding their estates. However, Mafalda Ade does cite the manner in which ownership of the Poche house was passed down through Joseph Poche's marriage to the Marguerite Magy (born Sola).⁵² When Joseph first came to Aleppo, he resided with the French merchant Pierre Mathieu Magy, who was married to Marguerite's adoptive mother, the widow of Venetian consul Rizzini, in what functioned until then as the

50. The two families were business partners and remained friends until the death of the last Marcopoli in the twentieth century, but there were no more marriages between them.

51. For more on cousin marriages in the Armenian Sceriman family, see Sebouh Aslanian, *From the Indian ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Network of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 155-156, notes e and r.

52. Ade, *Picknick*.

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Venetian Consulate. After Joseph married Marguerite, that section of the Poche apartment in the *khan* became his. Typically, when multiple members and generations of a family resided in Aleppo at the same time, they all lived in the family house within the *khan*. It is clear that the Poche family house devolved to the oldest son, while one or more of his brothers would usually either move to Europe or enter some kind of career and any sister would receive a dowry. This inheritance, in addition to illuminating the actual transfer of property within the Levantine community, symbolizes the passing of the old guard—the Levant Company and the Venetian merchants—to the newer one of individual merchants such as Joseph Poche.

Marital records of the Jewish *franco* community, especially the marriages between the Altaras and the Belilios and between the Altaras and the Marini, have been detailed above. However, one very interesting letter in the Venetian archives shows that a member of the Belilios family, which originated in Livorno, attempted to bring his 22-year-old nephew, Emanuele Giovane from Venice to marry his cousin, Belilios's daughter, in Aleppo. Unfortunately, Belilios died in the meantime, and the unsuspecting youth turned up in Aleppo without having received permission from the Venetian authorities. The letter does not clarify whether the marriage took place; however, the intention to arrange this close cousinly union was clearly there.⁵³

Among local Christian families, the Ghantuz Cubbe and the Balits certainly married each other designedly, although no evidence exists of cousin or avuncular marriages. Yet their marriages, too, aimed at and had the effect of keeping the family capital and business intact, as well as maintaining the purity of heritage and class status.

53. A.S.VE Cinque Savi alla Mercanzie, Lettere Consoli, Busta 604. Letter written by Venetian Consul Domenico Serioli to the Cinque Savi in Venice, December 20 1770.

Endogamous Marriage as a Merchant Network Strategy

The Levant Company was instrumental in establishing English commercial presence in the Eastern Mediterranean, and was followed into Aleppo by their French and Dutch counterparts' trading partnerships. These institutions confronted and slowly overtook the Venetians' trade monopoly in the area even though they depended on their nations' protection rather than hazard individual endeavors, as had the Venetians. Later, during the *Tanzimat* period, the second wave of merchants arrived in the city to work on private bases or with a partner or two. Long before, though, local Arab and Armenian minority merchants had established complex networks organized through kinship for the goal of trading. As David Hancock describes the functioning of the Scottish Madeira wine system of producers, distributors and consumers he studied, "the networks were solutions to problems, chiefly the challenges of doing business over oceanic distances, given the limits to transportation and communication technology."⁵⁴ These networks grouped interrelated people who exchanged information, goods, and services. Although there were many different such business webs, such as the Armenian Julfan trade network and the Jewish merchant networks, we will concentrate on the kinship-based Ghantuz Cubbe and Balit family network operating out of Aleppo as its main node. That exemplary system resembles Hancock's Madeira network, and illustrates the same success he found in his study, and for most of the same reasons.

Throughout history, kinship ties in the form of family networks have proven important in setting up reliable partnerships. As Trivellato notes,

Many scholars have long assumed that blood ties and membership in the same ethno-religious community were effective guarantees against ill-intentioned

54. David Hancock, "The Trouble with Networks: Managing the Scots' Early-Modern Madeira Trade," *Business History Review* 79, no. 3 (Autumn, 2005).

agents. Considering the diversity of languages and customs that merchants had to master and the uncertainties that they faced, relatives and coreligionists were indeed a fundamental resource less because of their natural tendency to cooperate than because kin and coreligionists shared a community of meanings and overlapping social ties (they intermarried, belonged to the same religious congregations, lived next door, and had lots of friends in common), which taken together raised expectations of rectitude. Those diasporas that were most involved in commerce had the added bonus of having kin and coreligionists spread over vast distances.⁵⁵

That truism certainly pertained in the case of the Ghantuz Cubbe family firm set up in the eighteenth century. While it is unclear when it started, by the end of the eighteenth century the family had a flourishing commercial enterprise set up as an agnatic partnership between brothers: the older Antonio and his sons in the lesser center of Livorno (after 1870), and the younger Giuseppe (or Youssef) and his sons in Aleppo, the primary node. It also included their brother-in-law Hanna Balit, with other brothers-in-law, nephews and cousins constituting the rest of the executives manning numerous subsidiary regional offices around the Mediterranean. Antonio left Aleppo and established the Livorno branch in 1870, which he named Antonio Ghantuz Cubbe i figli.

Of course, not all family males were entrusted with positions in the company, either because of age restraints or, as Hancock reminds us, “blood relation was one possible bond, but not the most important, when building a firm.”⁵⁶ More pointedly, Hancock specifies that “even if a merchant’s reputation was good, it might not transfer to others in the family.”⁵⁷ Indeed, many of the agents the Ghantuz Cubbe chose were not relatives. Moussa Farraia was responsible for Alexandretta; Moussa Elias and Mathieu Marini worked in Cyprus. Trivellato suggests that some European merchant firms sealed

55. Francesca Trivellato, “The Sephardic Diaspora and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” paper presented at Cal Tech, 5 April 2008, later published in chapter 6 of her *Familiarity of Strangers*.

56. Hancock, “The Trouble with Networks,” 479.

57. Hancock, “The Trouble with Networks,” 479.

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renewable, medium-termed agreements with non-kin to raise capital.⁵⁸ This practical reason might explain the inclusion of non-family agents into the network, but we cannot expect any documents to prove it. It is safe to say, though, that these networks were premised primarily on kinship ties and on affluence, as well as on incentives provided by the Ottoman authorities to the local minority merchants. Although the *Avruppa Tuccari* program was not instigated until the beginning of the nineteenth century (or the modern period), it is clear that many of the Christian merchants were given concessions outside of the *protégé* system, which let them establish shipping and other mercantile companies by the end of the eighteenth century.

However, the majority of the members were blood- relatives, or affines (relatives through marriage). The kinship ties that knit this network were spun from endogamous marriages between the Cubbe, Balit, Andrea, Coussa, Ghoukas and Homsî families. Younger brother Giuseppe/Youssef married Maria Balit and raised seven children, including sons Fathallah, Nehmetallah and Giovanni, who worked with their father in the Aleppo office. Their own business notwithstanding, the Balits contributed greatly in the Cubbe enterprise. Brother-in-law Antoine was entrusted with the crucial Cyprus office and Hanna Balit worked in the node of Aleppo with Youssef. The marriage of Youssef's sister into a similar wealthy mercantile family, the Coussa, produced nephew Antoine, who ran the office in Egypt. As Giuseppe/Youssef Cubbe advised his relative, Francis Diab, it is best not to "employ a stranger. A brother is always more reliable."⁵⁹

The Khougaz and Diab families may both be characterized as close relatives

58. Trivellato, "Sephardic Diaspora."

59. FM / A / L / X 6002 "Le lettere: Lettera A" ca.1797-1799 (Europe) MIFI 500.

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many times over.⁶⁰ Yet all of these families came from the same social class and background, most of them belonged to the Maronite Church,⁶¹ and many were descended from the original group of 40 silk-trading Maronite families transported from Lebanon in the seventeenth century by the Ottoman authorities to revive Aleppo's flagging silk industry and to help its failing merchants. A good number of the families, such as the Diab, Andrea, and Coussa, formed part of the Ghantuz Cubbe network.⁶²

Yet neither familial warmth nor marital affection account entirely for the networkers' preference for employing relatives. Instead, trust was the fundamental rationale behind their composition. As Aslanian's research on early modern Armenian Julfan trade networks demonstrates, "Trust emerges as an issue because economic transactions in the early modern long-distance trade were rarely based on 'simultaneous exchange.' Rather, the *quid* was separated from the *quo* over time and space in such transactions."⁶³ Trust was certainly critical in the Ghantuz Cubbe family network, as not only did the merchants trade on credit and speculate on prices of orders that were not paid until much later, they also shipped coins, paper money and jewels to the various nodes across the Mediterranean. Chapter two examined the subject of trust closely, but the central need for trust when transporting gold, silver, promissory notes and jewels bears repeating as sufficient motivation for restricting one's confidence to one's kin as the most

60. In a letter in which Youssef explains to Francis Diab about the difficulty Francis's brother, also named Youssef, was undergoing at the hands of his diabolical wife, the relationship between the two families was described as being "through father and grandfather."

61. Being Maronite did not at all imply their exclusion of families belonging to other Christian sects; simply adhering to the same religion created a strong community bond.

62. Andrea family private history and archives, received in 2012. Other families who came with the original forty were the Abdini, Khawwam, Hindie, and Assouad. A few Armenian families travelled among the forty, but I do not have their names. The Andreas converted to the Maronite Church when they settled in Aleppo as, in the words of the document above, "during this time, 1635-1655, the Maronite rite was the dominant one."

63. Sebouh Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 166.

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trustworthy. Any shipment of specie or jewels occasioned several letters by several routes (sea, land) to ensure that the person meant to receive the parcel knew every detail of its impending arrival, contents, and method of delivery. Hanna Balit and Hanna Andrea were the favorites for carrying out this task, but Anton Coussa and Khougaz were also mentioned. A typical letter announced: “I, (Youssef Cubbe from Aleppo), have sent you a packet of gold with our cousin *khawaja* (an honorific) Hanna Balit, with a letter describing its contents. Inside the packet is one thousand eight hundred and twelve *gurus*’ and thirteen silver [pieces]”⁶⁴ or “You will be receiving from Hanna Andrea a packet stamped with a wax stamp with the letters AAG on it that contains two strands of diamonds with the weight of 5,30.”⁶⁵ These details would be followed by the manner in which they were being sent. The sole non-family agent entrusted to carry such precious packets was Hajj M. Al-Hammal, whose invaluable protection on the murderous road from Latakia to Aleppo made him the only sensible choice.⁶⁶

Hancock’s Scottish network operated on a non-hierarchical basis “in which authority and power were dispersed, situational and frequently had a great deal of circularity.”⁶⁷ In contrast, the Ghantuz Cubbe network showed a definitely hierarchical structure, with Youssef running the operation in Aleppo, and older brother Antoine in Livorno commanding great deference despite the secondary nature of that node. Yet, like those in Hancock’s network, the participants had multiple and changing roles of agent, relative, and friend, as may be seen by the bits of personal news inserted into nearly every

64. Ghantuz Cubbe private correspondence, Letter 8, from Youssef to Antoine Prince, Cyprus.

65. Ghantuz Cubbe private correspondence, Letter 18, 20 May 1797, from Youssef in Aleppo to Hanna Andrea.

66. Ghantuz Cubbe private correspondence, letter 21, from Youssef Cubbe to Francis Diab in Cyprus, 30 May 1797.

67. Hancock, “The Trouble with Networks,” 48.

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business letter. More important, no clear pecking-order exists in the sharing of profit or the division of labor. To a great extent payment and positions fell out in a clannish manner, as agents were advised to “give your brother the job” or reminded that someone’s “son will be travelling to Cairo. Please take care of him, as he was bored in Aleppo and was getting up to no good.”⁶⁸

Finally, Hancock’s merchants were given the freedom to make their own decisions, and did not work via instructions from the center, which is not the case in the Aleppo network. Detailed directions to agents and merchants, careful accounting, and the organization of every enterprise emanated from Aleppo, however loosely agents might have consulted them. worked. However, a certain type of reciprocity did exist between agents and the nodal center, as many of Youssef’s letters describe the purchases he made as per their requests, or craved their patience during lengthy transactions and risky voyages.⁶⁹

The Ghantuz Cubbe and Balit families offer by no means the only exemplars of commercial networks, but the extraordinary paper trail given by their commercial correspondence gives us an excellent indication of these networks’ *modus operandi*, if not the complete picture of family contracts and agreements. Trivellato’s book on the Sephardic diaspora and trade networks, illustrated by the Ergas and Silvera family in early modern Aleppo, and Aslanian’s *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean* provide in-depth analyses of two of the more significant networks then associated with Aleppo. Both operated for longer periods than did the Ghantuz Cubbes, and both ranged

68. Ghantuz Cubbe private documents, letter no. 41, dated 19 July 1797.

69. Ghantuz Cubbe private documents, letter no. 9, dated November 1786.

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wider geographically,⁷⁰ yet both succumbed to the challenges of modernity and of historical events, and did not survive into the modern period.

Similarly, the rise of modern financial institutions and transportation technology put an end to the Aleppo network. The introduction of steamships, so much faster and more efficient than brigantines, spelled the demise of their shipping company, although the firm continued in commerce and the family in wealth: Bowring so reports to Parliament in 1840, and Naoum Bakhkhash eagerly notes in his personal diary whenever he was invited to dine with the family and to enjoy the fashionable innovations they introduced, such as drinking hot chocolate.⁷¹

The older family networks and the trade diaspora of European, Jewish and Armenian merchants had gradually been replaced by enterprising European entrepreneur merchants, who, after a couple of generations in Aleppo, constituted the “modern Levantine” society and the upper class of Aleppo. Their networks, too, would bloom and ultimately wither. Yet the merchants who formed this elite Aleppine Levantine community were not only hardy individuals in search of commercial gain. They were integral to the economy, society and cultural life of the city, and of the Empire, in seemingly innumerable ways, which the conclusion will nonetheless attempt to count.

70. According to Aslanian, the Sephardic network connected seven maritime empires of the early modern period: Ottoman, Venetian, Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, English, and French. Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean*, 225. The New Julfan network stretched from New Julfa, Isfahan, in modern-day Iran to Acapulco, and operated in all the major empires of the early modern period.

71. Bowring, *Report on the Commercial statistics of Syria*.

CONCLUSION

The city of Aleppo was one of the premier commercial cities in the Ottoman Empire during the early modern and modern periods—a trading hub of caravan routes circulating luxurious silks, carpets, and finery along with everyday necessities. For centuries it lured not only merchants, starting with the Venetians,¹ but also illustrious travelers whose accounts spread its fame in Europe, most notably Reverend Christoph Burckhardt, Lord Elgin (of the Elgin Marbles fame), Ferdinand de Lesseps, and George Smith, the famous Assyriologist who discovered the Epic of Gilgamesh.² In 2011, Olivier Salmon required three volumes to chronicle other renowned voyagers through Aleppo.³ A few of these memorable birds of passage who actually took up residence there include the Chevalier d'Arvieux, simultaneously the consul of France and the Netherlands in the city between 1679 and 1686. Conversant in Turkish, Arabic, Armenian, Greek, Hebrew, French, Italian, Spanish and Latin, he penned his six-volume memoirs of Aleppo.⁴ The Russell brothers' *Natural History of Aleppo* (1794) provides a comprehensive and well-informed description of the city, its flora and fauna, inhabitants, visitors, diseases, climate, government and lifestyle. Scholars such as Pococke and Maundrell added their insights, and William Halifax took the first photograph of Palmyra. However, the travelers whose presence not only recorded but also changed the history of Aleppo were

1. The Venetians moved their consulate from Damascus to Aleppo to profit from renaissance Europe's consumption of silk in clothing and accessories. Luca Mola, *The Silk Industry of Renaissance Venice* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 91.

2. Reverend Christopher Burckhardt was the father of the famous author of *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. Both Burckhardt and George Smith died and were buried in Aleppo; their names can be found on the plan of the old Protestant cemetery.

3. Olivier Salmon, *Alep dans la littérature de voyage Européenne pendant la période Ottomane, 1516-1918* (Aleppo: Dar-al Mudarris, 2011).

4. *Mémoires du chevalier d'Arvieux ... contenant ses voyages à Constantinople, dans l'Asie, la Syrie, la Palestine, l'Égypte, et la Barbarie, la description de ces païs, les religions, les mœurs, les coutumes ... recueillis de ses mémoires originaux, et mis en ordre avec des réflexions, Par Jean-Baptiste Labat* (Paris: C.J. Delespine, 1735).

the foreign merchants and the consuls of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Some came simply to make their fortunes, mostly with joint-stock companies (the Levant Company, the Dutch VOC or the French Levant Company), and returned with their profits to their native lands. Later merchants, though, who came as individuals after those companies' strength had begun to wane, settled permanently in the city—a choice facilitated both by official Ottoman inducements and the earlier extant Levantine communities.

After the Ottoman incorporation of Aleppo, the authorities enlarged its business center by building *khans* and other commercial edifices. This investment, and the intensified granting of capitulations to the Europeans, demonstrates the Porte's keen recognition of the need for trade with the West to further its own interests.

The first merchants who came to Aleppo in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries hailed mostly from England and France. They were spurred equally by their new theories of mercantilism and by the Ottomans' special dispensations letting them trade freely in the Empire, and supplant the Venetian dominance of Aleppine trade, without actually becoming subjects of the sultan.⁵ Thus favored, Westerners took gross advantage of the articles of the capitulations permitting them to recruit local Christian (Arab, Armenian, Greek, and longtime Italian residents) and Jewish merchants to aid them and to share their financial and jurisdictional freedoms. For example, the Europeans (and their *protégés*) might resolve disputes among themselves worth over 4000 *akçes* by consular and ambassadorial adjudication. Certainly, their abuse of the capitulatory system

5. Mauritz van den Boogert, *Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System: Qadis, Consuls and Beratlis in the 18th Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 24.

set the stage for the rise of wealthy local Christian merchants and ultimately for European dominance.

For this reason, Ottomanists have traditionally regarded the Porte's granting of such capitulations and privileges to Western nationals and their adjuncts as signifying its weakness and inviting European hegemony. Yet that view ignores the Ottomans' carefully reasoned motivation in offering the concessions as the best means of improving the Imperial economy, along with their active bolstering of the infrastructure supporting international trade and benefitting their own merchant subjects, whether Muslim or minority. Suraiya Faroqhi has convincingly shown in "Wagons and the Ottoman State in the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth Centuries" that the Ottomans ensured the security and safe passage of couriers, convoys, and caravans.⁶

The resulting rise to prominence of the minority merchant groups, then, derived not only from European influence but also from the Empire's policies. Of course, all these best-laid plans were helped or hampered by the vagaries of historical event: The profitable monopoly of the silk trade by New Julfan merchants—the most numerous Armenians at the start of the seventeenth century—lifted the fortunes of the minority Aleppine Armenian community as a whole. The Ottoman authorities, clearly recognizing the importance of these traders, granted them several tax exemptions.⁷ Also, by the eighteenth century many local Christian merchants acted as *mudaraba* (agents) for Muslims, traveling outside the Empire to trade.

6. Suraiya Faroqhi, "Camels, Wagons and the Ottoman State in the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth Centuries," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 14 (1982): 523-539.

7. Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters, *The Ottoman City Between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir and Istanbul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 33.

As might be expected, the abuse of the *protégé* system fueled the discontent of those merchants unable to partake of European privileges. In response, the Ottomans stepped in with two similar programs that gave participating local traders, both Christian and Muslim, the same liberties as their counterparts under the protection of foreign powers enjoyed. Thus the authorities took a conscious step to help their merchants ameliorate the Empire's flagging economy. The end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century witnessed other slow but steady moves of the Porte toward modernity and integration into the world economy.

Yet, do what they might, a series of fundamental problems in Aleppo—armed confrontations between the Janissaries and the *aşraf* (local notables), Bedouin attacks on the caravans, and the devastating 1822 earthquake—depressed trade and forced the defection of joint stock companies from Aleppo.⁸ In their place, and focusing more on local than international trade, individual merchants set up private companies by the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth centuries: Zahn and Company, Fratelli Castelli (later Giustiniani and Nipoti), Cattoni, Levante, and Belfante as well as sole merchant families such as the Poches, Marcopolis, Girardis, Solos, and Magys and some who had already established themselves in the eighteenth century, such as the Popolani, Altaras, Picciotto, Pons, Vailhens and Vidal families.

With the modernized commercial policy of the *Tanzimat* reforms beginning in 1839, the financial status of the Europeans strengthened. Newly eased access to markets

8. In 1824, British foreign secretary George Canning advised the merchants that a bill was being prepared whose objective was to transfer the company's authority over the regulation of consular establishments. The Levant Company was disbanded in 1825 by its members, as it no longer performed any public service in maintaining consular establishments in the Ottoman Empire, and the company's authority passed to the crown. Alfred Wood, *A History of the Levant Company* (London: Frank Cass & Company, 1964), 200.

let more raw materials be produced for export and accepted more finished products from the West.⁹ During this time European merchants turned to regional trade in areas like Urfa, Aintab and Diyarbekir, and could establish successful businesses. The reforms aimed to integrate the local minorities into Ottoman society, assuring their equal rights and allowing them to flourish. Thus, the Porte consciously enacted changes to integrate non-Muslim groups into Imperial society and to modernize it as a whole. An unintended effect of these innovations allowed greater incursion of foreigners', and foreign, power into the Empire.¹⁰

As they had for centuries, groups of local minority merchants worked as intermediaries for the new wave of European traders, now come to settle. However, since the minority groups had already established themselves solidly in local commerce as *protégés*, *mudaraba* agents, or part of the emerging Christian mercantile class, they could now compete seriously with European nationals in international trade.¹¹ Foremost among them, the Balits, Ghantuz Cubbes, and Altaras had already spun vast and complex trading networks, and now opened branches in fresh regions like Baghdad.¹² As the second wave of European merchants settled permanently in Aleppo, they worked with the longstanding

9. Donald Quataert, "Age of Reforms, 1812-1914," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, Vol. 2, 1600-1914, Halil Inalcik and Donald Quataert, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 763. These reforms were enacted with the help and support of the West.

10. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Empire-wide integration of religious and ethnic Levantine communities so desired by the Ottomans had begun to splinter. The Porte's ideal, that all subjects of the sultan should be considered equally Ottoman, gave way to minorities' self-identification as Armenians, Christian Arabs, Greeks, or Jews--a process parallel to that of European nationalism. The advance of an elite merchant middle class--again, desired by the Ottomans--brought along with it both ethnic and class consciousness, which fueled a bourgeois nationalism clamoring for political autonomy and cultural differentiation. These side-effects contributed to the twentieth-century fraying of the Empire.

11. Bruce Masters tells us that although locals' positions as *beratlis* and the *protégés* of the Europeans did not ensure financial success, it enhanced their status and gave them legal defenses they might not otherwise have had. However, it is wrong to focus on them alone, as there existed an emerging Christian mercantile class unconnected to European protection. Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 80.

12. ASVE A.S.VE Cinque Savi alla Mercanzie, Dispassi dei Consoli, Detaglio del Commercio di Aleppo de Console Brigadi, Busta 603 (V 104). From Console Seriola, 1774, letter dated [] June 1775.

minority groups, and together formed an elite commercial community we call the Levantines.¹³

Levantines have been characterized by many terms, among them “exotic.”¹⁴ Such exoticism derived from their diverse backgrounds, faiths and tongues, but most of all the unique ways they could influence Ottoman history through their singular role as financial and cultural links between the Empire and Europe. Ekinci thus described the Levantine community in Izmir (Smyrna),¹⁵ one of the largest, but the same may be said of Levantines in Aleppo—not surprising, since quite a few European-descended families started off in that city before moving to Izmir. Interestingly, though, Levantines did not self-identify as such in the eighteenth century. Yet by the nineteenth they had come to see themselves essentially as a collectivity of non-Muslim Ottoman or European subjects, marked by residual European habits and, sometimes, ancestry and by their current Imperial residence, which created a mixed lifestyle straddling both cultures.¹⁶

This group of trans-imperial subjects typically worked as commercial brokers, *dragomans* or diplomats—fields which perpetuated and intensified their shared qualities of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism. Important contributors to the economy of their adoptive society, they functioned as commercial, social, diplomatic, cultural and religious

13. Jewish merchants in the nineteenth century did not mix greatly with the new community. Many families established branches elsewhere or moved to cities like Manchester and Marseilles. Mafalda Ade, *Picknick Mit Den Paschas: Aleppo und die Levantinische Handelsfirma Fratelli Poche (1853-1880)* (Beirut: Ergon Verlag Wurzburg, 2013). Others remained until the mid-twentieth century, but were integrated with the local Jewish community.

14. Ekrem Buğra Ekinci, “An Exotic community in the Ottoman Empire: The Levantines,” *Daily Sabah*, March 28, 2014, accessed on August 24, 2017, <file:///Users/momdji/Documents/Levantines/An%20exotic%20community%20in%20the%20Ottoman%20Empire:%20The%20Levantines%20-%20Daily%20Sabah.webarchive>

15. Ekinci, “An Exotic Community,” accessed on August 24, 2017.

16. Not all local Christian Levantines had immediate European ancestry. Families such as the Draghis and Andreas originated directly from Europe, but others, such as the Cubbes and Balits, had European connections that went back a long way, but were not European *per se*.

links between the Porte and the lands they had left, especially in their diplomatic capacity as *dragomans* and consuls.

As established in Chapter Three, the capitulations gave crucial freedoms to European merchants, consuls, and their *protégés* in the Ottoman Empire. Levantines' dual role as representatives and (more importantly) as commercial agents of European "nations" made them responsible for tirelessly defending their interests as best they could in the Empire. As such, they constantly disputed any perceived slighting of the capitulations as well as the *avantias* (random extraordinary taxes).¹⁷ Niels Steensgaard tells us that 'in cases where everything else went wrong, the conflict was reduced to the question about the size of the *avania* and the nation's ability and willingness to pay the money required.'¹⁸ Such was the case when the Venetian merchants protested an *avania* on the damaged goods of a ship, but could only ask the English consul, Neville Cox, to make the captain pay for their share of it.¹⁹

In addition to negotiating *avantias* and defending the articles of capitulations (theirs and those of other nations), consuls were also played a part in local politics. One Venetian consul intervened on behalf of the merchants and citizens of Aleppo to have the autocratic governor removed; another advocated on behalf of Jewish *franco* merchants for reinstating a guild that would let them continue weaving a delicate silk cloth. Most famously, during the diplomatic crisis between France and the Ottoman Empire after

17. TNA SP/57 part 1, (100_1598 merchants of Aleppo 2 Venice documents), TNA SP/57 part 1, (100_1598 merchants of Aleppo 2 Venice documents). Letter of protest written by four merchant entities (Broumester, Seitz & Bock, Ribero & figlis, and Illel Picciotto), against the English Captain Parkins of the *Galera Maria*, who incurred an *avania* (extraordinary tax) on the goods of his ship and refused to pay. The letter was registered in the chancellery of the British consulate in Aleppo on 1 April 1735.

18. Niels Steensgaard, "Consuls and nations in the Levant from 1570 to 1650," *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 15, no. 1-2 (1967), 20.

19. A.S.VE Cinque Savi alla Mercanzie, Letter Consoli, Busta 603 (100_1717). Letter dated 1 April 1735 signed by Boumester Lubirgen and Co/, Seitz & Bock, Bibero e figli, and Illel Picciotto.

Napoleon invaded Egypt, British Consul John Barker agitated to free the French merchants and their families, who had been rounded up and imprisoned in Aleppo's citadel, and took custody of them upon their release. Of course, the hefty bribes paid by the wealthy French trader Vailhen provided the prisoners with a few necessities and greased the wheels of their liberation. Barker's son Edward suggested that

These prisoners were gladly placed under the charge of the British Consul, in order to get rid of the trouble of looking after them; representing that as England was acting together with Turkey against France, it was more reasonable, and better for the prisoners that Europeans should attend to their wants.²⁰

The consuls' mediation on behalf of merchants and European-descended residents of the city reflects their importance as mediators between the Porte and Western powers. With the *Tanzimat* legislation, the influence of the consuls, particularly the English consul, increased, and its impact on the rising fortunes of the Christian minority became unmistakable. Yet the most emblematically Levantine of all consuls, John Barker, ameliorated life in the Empire for both natives and transplants, and in Europe as well, through a series of cultural—and horticultural—exchanges. Diplomatic and commercial duties notwithstanding, the ensconced Aleppine Barker celebrated Eastern flora. After retirement from his final post in Egypt, he built himself a sizeable house in Souedie (currently near Samandagh, in Eastern Turkey), surrounded by a lush garden, and devoted himself to planting peaches, apricots, nectarines and other fruit trees. He spent years looking as far afield as Bukhara and Samarkand for the best seeds. True to his Levantine bi-culturalism, he introduced the Stanwick nectarine to England and many English fruit varieties to Syria. His interest in horticulture led him to improve the farming of cotton in Syria. He was also responsible for introducing the European practice of

20. Edward Barker, *John Barker: Syria and Egypt under the last five Sultans* (London: Elibron Classics, 2005, reprint of original printed in 1876), 1:34.

vaccination in the Middle East, after carefully observing the process first-hand.²¹ He also left an impressive collection of books and musical instruments, individually listed in his will, to friends and family members.²² Similarly, Thomas Vailhen, the French merchant imprisoned in the citadel, also had a vast library of 527 books, six maps and four globes.²³ Again true to Levantine cosmopolitanism, the dissemination of books and *objets d'art* went both ways, as many Europeans indulged in buying manuscripts and artifacts to send back “home.” Two of the most famous collectors were Edward Pocock and Robert Frampton, both chaplains to the Levant Company in Aleppo and both avid Arabists.²⁴

Many merchants who had traveled to Aleppo alone or with their families to work for the Levant or other companies returned to their native lands after their stay. However, the Barker, Pons, Magy, Van Maseyk, Villacroze, Durighello, Rau and, of course, the Jewish *franco* Altaras, Belilios, Silvera, Marini, de Picciotto, Popolani, and Silvera families settled firmly in Aleppo or close by. This remaining community was joined over time by the individual merchants migrating to Aleppo to profit from the resurgence of the Ottoman domestic trade, specifically in eastern Anatolian places such as Ourfa, Mardin,

21. In fact, vaccination was first tried by Lady Mary Wortley Montague who, witnessing the procedure of variolation (using live pus) in the sultan’s harem, had it done for her own young son in Constantinople in 1717-1718. She later had her daughter “variolated,” or inoculated, in England.

22 Books listed include 8 volumes of Gibbon’s *The Rise and fall of the Roman Empire*; 2 volumes of *Ten Thousand Years*; 2 volumes of *The Diary of a late Physician*; 2 volumes of *Barnaby Rudge*; 1 volume of *The Widow Barnaby*; 1 volume of *Confessions of an Elderly Lady*; 1 volume of *A Marriage in Highlife*; 1 volume *Henry of Guise*; 1 volume of *Notes from a Journal*; 2 volumes of *British Almanack for 1837-1839*; 1 volume of *Bon Jardinier*; 1 volume of *The History of Godefroi de Bouillon*; and 1 volume of *Physiologie Végétale*. TNA FO 861-37 / folios 6-7.

23. Hidemitsu Kuroki, “Events in Aleppo During Napoleon’s Expedition to Egypt,” *Bulletin d’études Orientales* 51 (1999), Institut français du Proche-Orient, 271.

24. Edward Pocock was an Arabic language scholar at Corpus Christi College Oxford, and later became the chair of Arabic language at the university. While in Aleppo, he bought manuscripts and coins to send back to England, and based his writings on these manuscripts. Robert Frampton also collected manuscripts and old Arab proverbs. Richard Symons, “Edward Pocock and the Corpus Arabists,” *Pelican Record* 43, no. 2 (December 2007), 56.

and Diarbekir, as well as from the still-extant caravan trade to Baghdad.²⁵ The more prominent of these clans consisted of the Giustiniani, Poche, Marcopoli, Girardi, Draghi, Cattoni, and Levante.

Thus the settlement of Levantine families and their coalescence into a community took place in spurts and over time. The Poche family exemplifies all the stages of this settlement: Its first generation did not speak local languages and necessarily worked through the intermediary of *dragomans*. Like other transplants, they spoke their native tongue as well as the common commercial language, Italian. Their ties to the homeland were strong and they worked hard to preserve their culture, gathering in other Europeans' homes socially and advertising wares in their shops in English, French or Italian.²⁶

The second Poche generation, having been born and brought up in Aleppo, despite anchoring their elite identity in their Austrian nationality, spoke German poorly and had begun to pick up a bit of the native Arabic and Turkish (although other second-generation children, such as the son and daughter of Dutch Consul Nicolas Van Maseyk, were already fluent in all local languages, and Marianne Hays, daughter of English Consul David Hays, conversed easily in the servants' Arabic, Turkish, Armenian and Greek, in addition to the *lingua franca* of Italian, as well as French). That being said, a few pages from a notebook of a Poche brother, who had painstakingly conjugated Arabic verbs opposite their Italian equivalents, attest to his attempts at learning the local language, while the Poche letters and the fact that the father of Joseph Poche's wife, née Marguerite Sola, came from Livorno, attest to their family's speaking Italian. Other

25. The nature of the commodities traded changed as well, mostly to wool, cotton, various other textiles, and luxury items.

26. Uri Kupferschmidt, *European Department Stores and Middle Eastern Consumers: The Orsodi-Back Saga* (Istanbul: Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Centre, 2007).

family members who spoke Italian included Zoë Marcopoli who married her uncle, Frédéric. In addition, Catholic missionary schools were flourishing and embraced by the elite. The most important at the time was Terra Santa, run by Franciscan brothers in the *khan* al-Sheibani, where the instruction was in Italian. Other missionary schools, such as the École Champagnat and St. Joseph girls' school, taught in French.²⁷ These missionary schools enforced the learning of European languages, culture (mainly French), and history, reinforcing the link with Western shores.

Not only were the Levantines linguistic and cultural go-betweens, but religious ones as well. The advance of Catholicism in the region brought many younger local Levantines to the Church, and they became liaisons between Aleppine Catholics and the Vatican. Widespread conversion to Catholicism, and in particular to the Maronite rite, offered the minorities a sense of belonging in the new land. The Maronite Cubbe family are a prime example. Raffaello de Ghantuz Cubbe, born in Aleppo in 1772, was ordained as a priest there in 1799, elevated in 1834 to Bishop of Livorno, but continued to serve his Aleppine flock. According to the family records, Antoine (Anton), who established the Livorno branch of the Cubbe shipping firm's network, worked as a conduit between Popes Pius VI and Pius VII and the church in Aleppo by using his fleet to ensure an open line of communication not only with Aleppo but with the whole region.

27. The colonization of the Middle East by French missionaries began in the seventeenth century. The Franciscans and the Capuchins were already settled in Aleppo by 1625 to 1627. The Jesuits, Carmelites, Clarists, Maronites and other religious orders followed. The Terre Sainte, Franciscan, Champagne, and Frères Mariste orders all competed to teach European and local Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Their schools were followed by the Soeurs Franciscaines Missionnaires de Marie as well as by other Latin- and Roman-rite Catholic schools. Prior to the missionary schools, teachers who ran private "schools," such as Naoum Bakhkhash, taught all the children of the Maronite families. He ran a day school, where the students used to come to his office/classroom to study.

The Armenian Balits, similar to their Cubbe in-laws, had a famous bishop in their family.²⁸ Youssef Shukri Sarkis Balit, born 1728 and educated in Aleppo, traveled to study Latin, French and Italian at the Propaganda Fide in Rome and was ordained a priest. Returning to Aleppo, he was appointed Bishop of Mardin in 1773 by the Patriarch, and was lauded by parishioners and Patriarch alike for supporting the community spiritually and culturally.²⁹ The strong link between the Vatican and the minority merchants won the joined families honors. Three Cubbe bothers were adorned with the insignia of a *chevalier de l'Éperon d'or*, and all the family's men bore the hereditary title of Roman Marquis.³⁰ Youssef Balit also received the title of marquis, as well as three famous icons from the Vatican vaults—one of the disciple Peter, another of Mary Magdalene, and the third of John the Baptist, headless—which still hung in the Maronite church in Aleppo in 2011. The Cubbes and the Balits perfectly illustrate influential Levantine families who connected and mediated East and West in commercial, linguistic, cultural, and religious spheres.

The Levantines also took on the role of introducing modernity to Aleppo. Joseph Belilios was responsible for introducing modern styles of architecture as can be seen in the *hoggett* or deed of sale in which the new “French” style front door was proudly used to describe the wooden entrance door in his house. Naoum Bakhkhash writes about drinking hot chocolate for the first time as the Cubbe house with all the other guests present. Also, later on in the century, Albert Poche was the first to import a camera to

28. The Balits were originally Armenian Orthodox but converted to the Maronite Church during the eighteenth century. It is unclear exactly when the conversions took place, but it is clear that not all family members converted at the same time, as we can see from Bishop Youssef Balit.

29. Balit family private archives, received in Aleppo, July 2011. Much of the praise was as a result of his conversion from Armenian Orthodoxy to the Maronite Church. Another convert from the Balit family, Antoine (or Anton), was born in 1729.

30. Ghantuz Cubbe family archives, received in Aleppo, July 2011. The current marquis lives in Rome.

Aleppo, and thanks to his photographs, many pictures of the houses in the khans were documented and can be found in a book written by Jenny Poche, *My Grandfather's Pictures*. Many of the clothes worn by Poches, Marcopolis and others were imported from Europe, thus introducing Aleppines to the latest fashions in Europe.

Apart from the Cubbes and the Balits, other Levantine families earned plaudits, titles, and a collective sense of identity for their ties to the Vatican. Both Giovanni Andrea and his nephew Antonio gained the title of Pontifical Marquis and were awarded entrance into the *Ordre de l'Éperon d'or* and the *Milice dorée* by Pope Pius VIII in 1835.³¹ Many families received the noble prefix of *de*, such as the Andreas and the Jewish Picciottos for services rendered to the Austrian-Hungarian Empire.³² Most Levantine family members honored by the Vatican or other European nations were at the same time fulfilling posts of *dragoman* at the various consulates or at the Porte. Antoine Ghantuz Cubbe was an honorary *dragoman* of the sultan, and by 1779, was *dragoman* to the Austrians.³³ Similar to the Cubbes, the Andrea family also had a foot in each continent by serving as *dragomans* (with *berats*) as well as being counted among the European nobility.³⁴ Another good example of such is Nicola Marcopoli, the Spanish

31. Andrea family private records, received in Aleppo, July 2011. Propaganda Fide, 1835, Volume 84, folio 803,797, 804.

32. Emilio Picciotto, "*The Consular History of the Picciotto Family*, 3. According to the family history, Raffaele was awarded a hereditary knighthood, becoming the first Jew to be knighted by a Christian state.

33. Ghantuz Cubbe private family archive. It is not entirely clear exactly where Antoine became *dragoman* to the Austrians. According to the archives, the family had been granted several *firmans* conferring privileges, titles and honorific jobs to the Cubbes, eliminating any restrictions on their commercial activities. Although there are no documents proving these statements, their truth would help explain how the family could set up a shipping company operating from Aleppo (Alexandretta) at such an early period.

34. Andrea family archives. The Andreas' ancestors were also from the Tuscan nobility.

consul and honored with the order of Comendador de Número de la Orden Española de Isabel la Católica.³⁵

Being influential citizens of both nations, holding on to the citizenship, language, culture, names and religion of the original one, informed the identity of this elite group in its adopted home. Long-time local Levantines maintained their contacts with and allegiance to European nations through their *protégé* status or business connections and through their languages, education, and marriage strategies. Benefits from Ottoman merchant programs also marked their specific identity. The *francos* especially retained their links to Europe even while they settled permanently in Aleppo. As a group, they maintained their uniqueness and maintained their elevated and closed status by engaging in strict patterns of endogamous marriages, as well as cousin marriages. While Christian Levantines might at times renew their ties with Europe by marrying into the European nobility, Jewish ones would only keep to themselves; it was not until the twentieth century that they married into local Jewish families.

Levantines were, and those who remain still are, a hybrid and polyglot community bridging the divide between East and West by belonging equally to both. As members of the privileged class, they stood apart from the rest of local society, and kept this distance and elevation by preserving both native and foreign languages and cultures and by pursuing exclusionary marriage strategies. Their bicultural flexibility and multilinguistic fluency won them the unique role of cultural intermediaries and of diplomatic and financial go-betweens. This distinctiveness, which proved an important identity marker for Levantine society, was upheld by Ottoman law and European cultural links. They could leverage the judicial system to suit their purposes and could represent multiple

35. FM / A / L / I / 6033 / 21

foreign interests. For example, the Picciotto family produced consuls for 16 different nations over a period of 10 years; a branch of the Armenian Balit family served Italy for decades, and maintained business and family ties with France and Livorno while considering themselves subjects of the sultan; the Poches embodied Austrian, Belgian and Czechoslovakian interests; and the Marcopoli family represented Italy, Spain and Portugal. Maintaining their connections to Europe while enhancing their local status through consular positions let the Levantines rise to an elite and singular place in Ottoman society, one that continued well into the first decade of our century. They were, as Nathalie Rothman noted, trans-imperial subjects whose sense of self and community narrowed the East-West divide by partaking of them equally. In that way they brokered linguistic, cultural, religious and other boundaries while serving as Imperial economic and diplomatic intermediaries.

Many Levantine clans this dissertation has discussed stayed in Aleppo until the twenty-first century, adapting (as they always had) to changing political realities, such as the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Numerous families continued pursuing posts as honorary consuls and retained their languages, cultural and dual European and Middle Eastern identities. It is tempting to say that the families would still flourish there had the current war not taken place. However, the truth is that they were beginning to die out naturally. The last of the Marcopoli family in Aleppo, Paul, who was the Italian consul, passed away in 1981. His wife Guglielmina survived him for a few years, but also passed away in Aleppo; his nieces and other relatives had settled in Beirut and Damascus. The post of Italian consul was given to a very close friend of the Marcopoli family, George Antaki. When George retired, his wife, Miriam, took over as consul until the beginning of the war

in 2011. Jenny Poche Marrache died last year, and no other Poches reside in Aleppo, her children, according to friends, having relocated to Europe not long ago. The Marquis de Ghantuz Cubbe and his siblings currently live in Rome and elsewhere in Italy. Other members of their extended family, the Antakis, dwell in Beirut and in various cities in Europe. Out of the Vincenzo Andrea family, consisting of five children (Bianca, Giovanna, Ralda, Aldo and Mario), only Ralda Hindie resided in Aleppo in 2011. Some Balits are currently found in Aleppo, but they derive from another branch of the famous family. The post of Danish consul was taken over by Sabah Karaziwan after the death of her ex-husband, Aldo Girardi, and continued under her care until the current war. Aldo's mothers and sisters were still in Aleppo in 2011.

It seems that the characteristic cosmopolitanism of the Levantine community, which let them thrive along with their adoptive Empire, served their descendants differently—as a means of refuge after that Empire's fall and the civil war rending the land under its current heirs. Although the families have either dispersed or died out, this dissertation hopes to preserve the Levantines' history and legacy, as well as to restore their agency, and their honor, as mediators of East and West.

Appendix 1: Accounting letters from the GC firm

	25.39
يخرج خصصنا	25.4

يخرج يخصصنا على دراهم الطائفتين التي تخصصنا مصروف وقدرها 75.220 والباقي نزلناه على جنابكم للتبقي	35
لنا بطرفكم	
مصروف دراهم نولون وكري	35
عمول الايقية وكمرنك ومصروف القديمة كما كنا عرفناكم	50.6

	50.41
3 و 1 (فضة 1 و 1) يخرج الى يعقوب ترجمان	

38 و 18 (فضة) صح نيقا بطرفكم وانشا الله تكونوا تسلمتم من يوسف ميلاد الحسبة وحساب القديم رصدناه عنكم	
وكل حساب وانتم بخير، ثم نترجاكم من خصوص كمال الطاقات ثلاثة تعمل جهودكم في بيعهم بزايد ناقص لان عملنا لا اظن ما	
بتقصروا في شغلنا غير انه اذا خليتهم في بالككم وعملتم الجهد في تصفلمهم ؟ حسب معرفتكم هذا رجائنا منكم.	
حرف في 21 جمادى اخر سنة 1212.	

نمرة 30 الى اليكوريا الى اخونا الخواجة انطون كويا دام مكرماً والآن واصلكم ثاني صورة ورقة شهادة من يوسف بلدي	
حيث انه وقع منا الغلط كتبنا لكم بدفتر قايمه بيع للرجان بيعت للزكور لوعده وحيث كانت 18 بريما تكونوا سلمتوه الدفتر	
لكي تربه الورقة خط يد يوسف لكي لا يصير له شبه لان انتم صدقتونا بريما الرجل ما يصدقنا حيث ليش له معرفة بنا ثم في	
21 كانون اول وصلني مكتوب من قبرص من يوسف حمصي محرر في 28 تشرين ثاني وبه عرفني وصله من انطون برنس	
كمالت الحرير فردة 8 وحملهم على مركب قبطان ميكلي ثوريك راكوزه وبيقول في هذه الجمعة بتوجه الى طرفكم يكون	
تسوكرهم وبيقول غيره ما في مركب ففي قبرص غير هذا واما من طرف القطن قبرص ما عندنا اخبار ثمنه غير انه كان بايت	
على 250 سنت العام وماريني ما عندي خبر منه عن حساب للركب ومصروف الارزاق لكل فرصة عمال منرسل له مكاتيب	
ومنترجاه يرسل جواب رجل مهل القرمز في 5.55 الى 56 [50] طرابيش في 5.16 لوعده بلا برداخ القطن بقبرص سمعنا	
في سعر 250 وما جد شي جديد لكي نعرفكم ومركب رافاييلي الى الان ما اجا واطال الله بقلكم وسلامنا على الست للمكرمة	
وانجالكم السعدا واخنتي وام نعمة الله يسلموا على جميعكم والسنينور ميشل بيعيدكم وايضاً وحين تاريخه كان مطر عظيم ما	
قدر سنينور ميشل ينزل وما لحقنا نبعث له خبر لبل الحارة لان على غفلة سار لنا خبر ما لحقنا نخبره ومكاتيبنا كانت حاضرة	
عرفناكم لكي لا يتم بالككم عنده ودمتم.	
حرف في 23 كانون اول قبل العصر سنة 1797.	
انباغت الطراية الحمرة في 21 وبيعت 2 بريملين في 20 سعر البرميل لحقنا هذا المكتوب لكي تلحق تسوكر فردة 8 حرير	
قبرص . خامتكم وخامت الاصحاب وحسابهم راجائنا لكي كنا نرسلهم لكم.	

علم بيع لاميت صندوق خاصة اخينا الخواجة انطون كويا كل صندوق ماسة عدد 500 صفره نصف بيضة نصف ماسه جمع	
2500 عن يد يوسف عايدة على مركب قبطان جوانه مرسله في 16 اب سنة 1796	
عثماني	غرش
00	5000
الى محمد سرديبي مجوزه في 1250 في 100.400 مجوزة لوعده اشهر عدد 12 في 1 كانون اول	
00	300
يخرج قطع نصف الدراهم 12 شهر حسب البازار	

00	4700
يخرج للمصروف من ففا الورقة	
41	493

39	4206

علم مفردات مصروف الاجيت 1 في 24 تشرين سنة 1796.	
عثماني	غرش
00	28
نولون للركب بموجب بولصة القبطان	
00	5
فاتور عدد 5 في 1	
10	3
كري 1 عدد 5 في 5.0 و 1 5 [بارات]	

Appendix 1: Accounting letters from the GC firm (Continued)

كربي من سكندرونة لحلب في 11	55	00
كمرک عدد 2500 في 2 سد 5000 3 في 100	150	00
بوبيبة كمرک		15
حمالين كمرک وتصفيية كمرک وتصفيية مخزن	2	16
كنصلات 1250 بيضة في 140 سعر بلا سقط 2 في 100	65	00
1250 صفرة في 120 حسبنا فرادة لاجيت ؟		

2500 في 2 في 100		
دلالة البيع على عدد 4400 في 1 ففي المائة	44	00
عمولة على البيع عدد 4700 في 3 [في المائة]	141	00

صح للمصروف الى قفا الورقة	493	41
في بيان علم طلب اخينا ابراد ومفردات واصلكم حيث السنة على خلوص		
	[فضة ؟]	[عثماني ؟]
لكم باقي في 30 تموز سنة 1796	7529	67 و ؟
ثلاثت براميل قرمز مع مركب لازاروفيك	11656	39
ورق فردة 8 على مركب برنكوه	882	42

	20068	68
قرمز على مركب قبطان ميكلي نيكولا مرتينوفيك	765	20
من خوري بطرس دويهي	2	

	20836	89
يخرج من ذلك ثمن الثلثين الوشق	39980	40

	16837	48 و ؟
ثمن ابرة دركيه بمرکب قبطان جوانه نسطور	102	35
من فتح الله خوكاز	20	14
من بتاع النحاس بدسه ؟ 2-13-5 في 3	16	78
ثمن سنديق 5 لاميت ماسه 2500	4206	39

لكن نغليمله [نغليينه؟] في دفترکن	21183	44 و ؟
منا واصلكم		
حسب امرکم الى بتاع للحمودة	1	26
واصلکم ختام فردة 18 بمرکب برتلماس لازاروفيك خاصتکم	6564	25

	6565	51
=====		
<p>الى جبل نوق ميكايل يوسف اسبيريدون وهو انه بلغنا خبر من ابن عمنا الخواجه يوسف بليط بانه وصله مکتوب من جنابکم وعرفتوه من خصوص دراهمنا الباقية في طرفکم انه انتقل سعر الحرير الى الاربعت والاربعين غرش وعدلکم عن الاخبار لتليما ؟ اخي ما كان الاصل هاكذا ولاکن الشئ صار عسا خير المرجو من عالي همتکم تصروا الدراهم صرة وتختموها وترسلوها الى طرابلس الى يد خواجه حنا ديب نزيق بتصلنا واعتماد على مکتوبنا هذا للمضى بيدنا وختمنا ودمتم بالسعادة والاقبال ويكون ذلك عاجلا مع حمال امين على معرفتکم ومن طرفنا بسالوا خاطرکم ودمتم سليلين امين وانکان لکم مصاريق افطعوها من طابنا وارسلوا لنا علم بذلك.</p> <p>علم الواصل منا</p>		

in Proportion to their respective Estates in their Hands,
themselves also bearing an equal Share for their Own
Estates.

Consuls and Vice-consuls.

It was Resolved and Ordered,
That British Consuls and Vice-consuls shall not
act, in either of those Capacities, for other Nations; but
they may protect, as British Consuls or Vice-consuls,
such Strangers as may have recourse to them for their Pro-
tection, in Conformity with Capitulations with the Porte.
And when such Persons, as shall apply to them shall be
of a Nation that has Capitulations with the Porte,
then not only the Persons belonging to such Nation shall
be protected by them, but their Ships or Vessels likewise,
and under their proper national Colours, if that shall be
required. But the Ships or Vessels of such Nations as ha-
ve not Capitulations with the Porte, shall not be
protected but under British Colours; the Consuls
and Vice-consuls keeping within the Bounds of the
most exact Compliance with the Capitulations with
the Porte. And all Persons and Ships, so protected,
shall not only pay the Consulage due to the Company;
but in case any Dispute with or Evania from the
Ministers of the Country, should happen, by the Misbe-
haviour of any protected Person, or on Account of such
Ship; the Person or Ship is to bear the Expence of it,
and the Ship is to pay before its Departure, that the
Company may be clear.

That as for such British Subjects as are Freeman
or Sons or Servants of Freeman of the Company, and
may

Provision of time
and their ships
paying a Consulage
and clearing the
Charge of any Dis-
penance from Mis-
behaviour.
Persons residing out
of the established
Port is to be
protected at their
own Charge.

may reside at any Ports or Places in Turkey ^{besides} Constantinople, Smyrna, and Aleppo, altho' they are to live at their own Hazards and Expence, yet the respective Consuls and Vice-consuls are to give them their utmost Protection at their own Charge. That the Lord Ambassador, or the respective Consuls, at the Request of the Majority of the Factors, in any Scale of Turkey, in case of Breach of Trust, or Disability, or any Misdemeanor committed by any Cancellier, Factor-marine, or any Drugoman, Ciovanedi Lingua, or Chiaour, shall suspend him or them from any or either of their Offices or Employments, and substitute other fit Person or Persons in their stead till the Company's Pleasure shall be known. And if the Fact for which any of the aforesaid Persons shall have been suspended, has been referred to the Company, and the Preference sent home, such Person shall not be reinstated, but by Order from the Company; and, in case of Death, the Ambassador or Consuls, with the consent of the Majority of the respective Factories, shall appoint others to supply their places till the Company's Pleasure shall be known.

That the Consul and Factory of Smyrna, may rent a House or Room for sick Persons of the Nation at that Place, provided the Charge thereof shall not exceed seventy Dollars by the Year, as was proposed.

That the Consul at Cyprus may appropriate to his own Use, the usual Consulage of Two per Cent. Inwards and Outwards, according to his Articles with the Company; and the Consulage exceeding Two per Cent.

Don't suspend any of the Company's servants, and substitute others.

A House or Room may be rented for sick Persons at Smyrna.

2. per cent. of the Consulage at Cyprus allowed the Consul; the surplus to be made good to the Company.

Vice-consuls & Chiaour have same Consuls as the other consuls of Levant shall be

Vice-consuls shall allow salvage goods for great & except

Death to be all on the Levant Company

on

Appendix 2: List of rules and regulations for the consuls, Vice consuls and other members of the Levant. Co (Continued)

in Turkey, besides
 and Aleppo,
 Gazars and Capon-
 vice-consuls are
 at their own Charge
 the respective
 rity of the Fac-
 low of Breach of
 uncommitted
 any Drugoman
 shall suspend
 in Offices or Im-
 t Person or Per-
 is Measure shall
 any of the afore-
 ed, has been refer-
 sent home, such

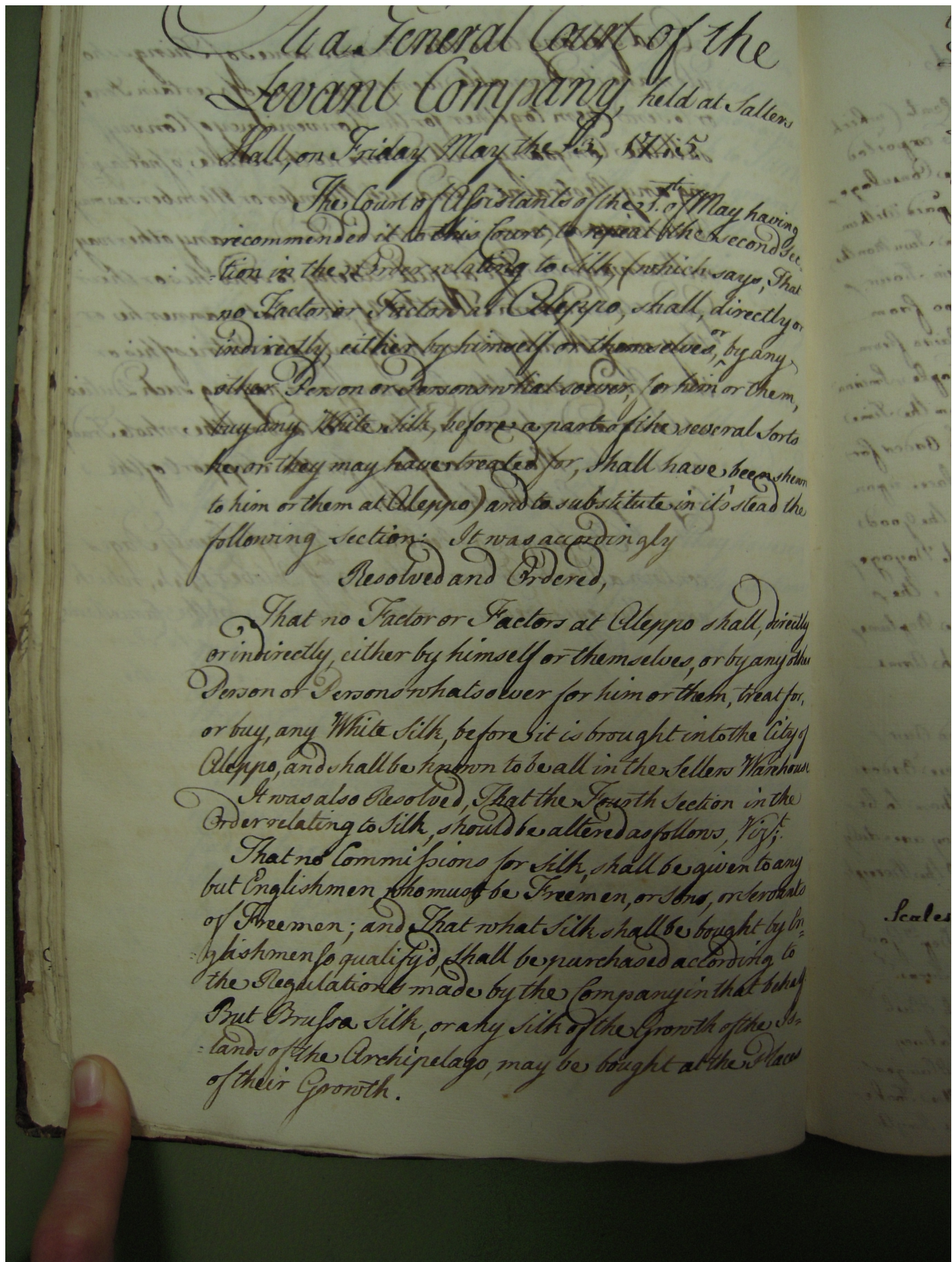
on Goods from, or laden for Great Britain, is to be
 mitted to the Company's Treasurer at Constantino-
 ple, as hitherto practised.

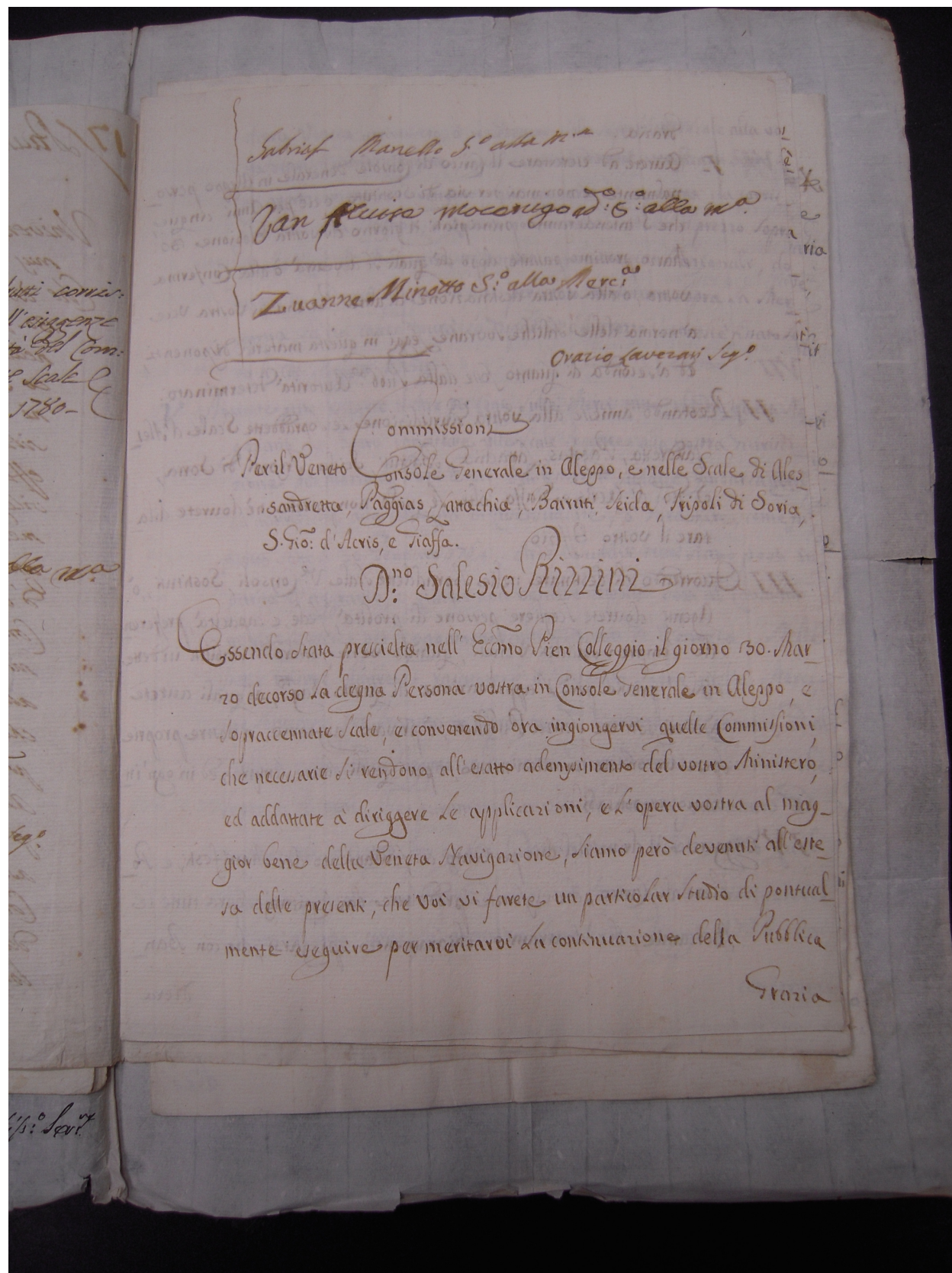
That the Vice-consul at Satachia may appropriate
 to his own Use, the same Proportion of the Consulage
 levied there, as is allowed to the other Vice-consuls upon
 the Coast of Syria, upon all Commodities, except silk
 and Galls shipped for Great Britain: for which the
 same Consulage shall be paid, and made good, to the
 Company's Treasurer at Aleppo, as if the said silk
 and Galls had been bought at Aleppo, and shipped at
 Scanderoon.

That the Vice-consul at Acri may appropriate
 to his own Use such Consulage as may be levied at that
 Place, upon all Goods shipped upon British Ships
 resorting thither, under British Protection, for any
 Parts of Christendom, those of Great Britain
 excepted: And this in Consideration of the Charge he is
 to bear in bearing the whole Expence of his Establish-

Vice-consul at Satachia
 that to have the
 same Consulage
 as the other Vice-
 consuls upon the
 Coast of Syria
 Galls excepted

Vice-consul at Acri
 is allowed the Con-
 sulage on all
 Goods for any Parts
 of Great Britain
 excepted





Subrio Marcho S. alla M.

Van Rocco Mocenigo S. alla M.

Zuanna Minotto S. alla Merc.

Orario Averani Seg.

Commissioni

Per il Veneto Consolo Generale in Aleppo, e nelle Scale di Allessandretta, Paggias, Anachia, Bauruti, Scida, Tripoli di Siria, S. No. d'Acris, e Scioffa.

D. Salesio Rizzini

Essendo stata prescelta nell' Eminentissimo Collegio il giorno 130. Marzo decorso la degna Persona vostra in Consolo Generale in Aleppo, e sopraccennate Scale, et convenendo ora ingiungervi quelle Commissioni che necessarie si rendono all' esatto adempimento del vostro Ministero, ed addattate a dirigere le applicazioni, e l' opera vostra al maggior bene della Veneta Navigazione, siamo però devenuti all' estesa delle precenti, che voi vi farete un particolare studio di puntualmente eseguire per meritavoci la continuazione della pubblica

Scioffa

Sonia.

I. Avrete ad esercitare il Carico di Console Generale in Aleppo per vna
maltrante e non mai per via di Sostituto, e cio per Anni cinque
che s'intenderanno principiar il giorno di vostra Elezione 30.
Marzo prossimo passato, dopo de quali si devenira' o alla Conferma
vostra, o alla vostra destinazione di altra Persona in Vostra Vece
a norma delle Saliche Sovrane Leggi in questa materia disponenti,
ed a seconda di quanto fosse dalla Pubb. Autorita' determinato.

II Restando amere alla vostra Giurisdizione le sopradette Scale d'Alex-
andretta, Paggias, Lattachia, Bairuk, Seida, Tripoli di Siria,
S. Gio: d'Acris, e Haiffa, oltre le quali non potrete, ne dourete dilata-
re il vostro Offizio.

III Quoranto chi destinare nelle sopradette Scale V. Consoli, Sostituti, o
Agenti, dourete scegliere persone di probita', fede, e capacita', preferen-
do sempre i Sudelici Veneti, quando vene fossero di stabilita' indette
o consuetudine, previa però l'approvazione di questo Mag. to, ai quali aurore
in ogni caso a corrispondere senza Pubblico, o privato aggravio, a vostre proprie
o altrui spese un'onesto mantenimento, e per i quali sarete sempre, ed in ogni
modo contro, responsabile.

IV Eniggerete il dritto del due per cento col fondamento dei Manifesti, e Po-
lisse di Carico, che vi farete produrre dai Capitani sopra tutte le
Mercantie, che douanno chiaramente spiegarsi, che con Ban-
diera

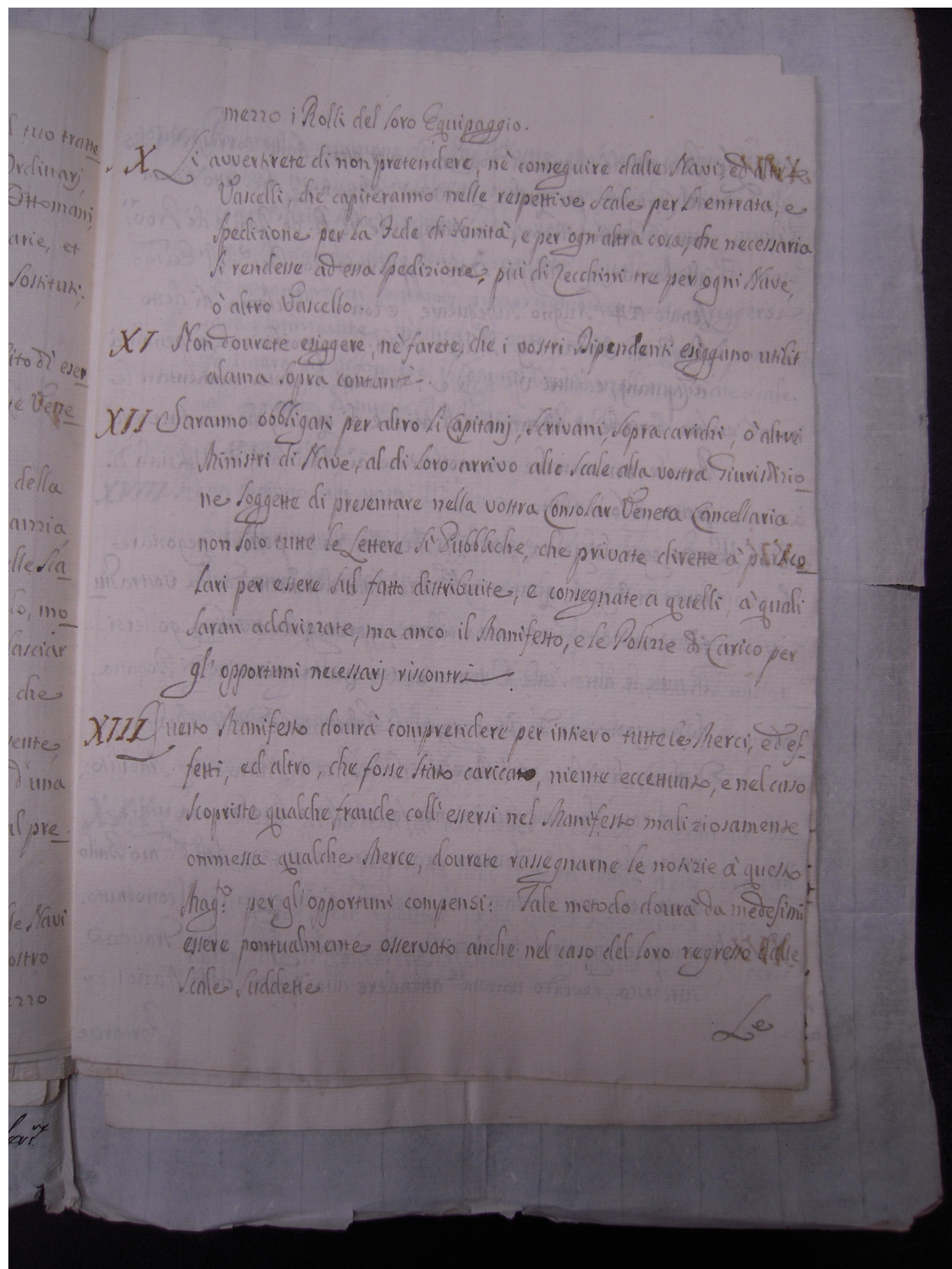
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Appendix 3: Letter nominating Consul Rizzini to his post as Venetian consul to Aleppo
(Continued)

di era Veneta arrivassero, o procedessero dalle Sopradite Scale alla vo-
stra Giurisdizione Soggette, qual esazione doua verificarsi sopra de-
gli appreziamenti, che vengono fatti rappoero a pagamenti da corris-
ponderli alla Dogana, e qualor non venisse stabilito il prezzo sopra
alcuni Capi di Mercantie, nè poteste convenire coi Nazionali, do-
uerete in tal caso eiggere il due per cento in natura sopra la Mer-
cantia, su cui cader doua la disparità del prezzo, come si è finito sotto
li 31. Maggio 1739.

V Dourete pure eiggere il due per cento sulle Merci tutte, che da questi Re-
gionanti vi fossero inoltrate alle Scale Soggette alla vostra Giuridi-
zione per mezzo di Porti Esteri, o di Esteri, o Suddite Imbarcazioni,
ed addizionate alla consegna di Case Suddite, o Forastere, come fu
finito sotto li 30. Gennaio 1704, onde i Sudditi tutti siano posti in
parità d'aggravio, e qualor non venisse dupplito cost' al Consolato,
vi rivolgerete per il pagamento alli Speditori di Venezia. Nelle
stesse minue dourete rascuotere il Consolato sopra quelle Merci,
che sbarcate per Transitio in Cipro fossero destinate ai Comuni, ed al
Traffico nelle Scale Soggette alla vostra Giurisdizione, non men che
sopra li Pittorini, che puramente in via di Transitio passassero ad
imbarcarsi in Cipro per questa Dominante, non douendo quel
Veneto Consolo nè sopra d'uno, nè sopra gl'altri rascuotere
alcuna, come fu prescritto sotto li 31. Maggio 1738, e vi
confermato

Appendix 3: Letter nominating Consul Rizzini to his post as Venetian consul to Aleppo
(Continued)



mezzo i Nollì del loro Equipaggio.

Il tuo trane
Ordinarj,
Dittomani
arie, et
Solitum.
ito di eser
e Vene
della
amnia
lle Sa
lo, mo
lasciar
che
mente
d'una
il pre
le Navi
otro
220

X. Si auvertete di non pretendere, nè conquire dalle Navi, ed altre
Vascelli, che capiteranno nelle rispettive Scale per l'entrata, e
spedizione per la Fede di Santa, e per ogni altra cosa, che necessaria
si rendere ad una spedizione, più di scellini tre per ogni Nave,
o altro Vascello.

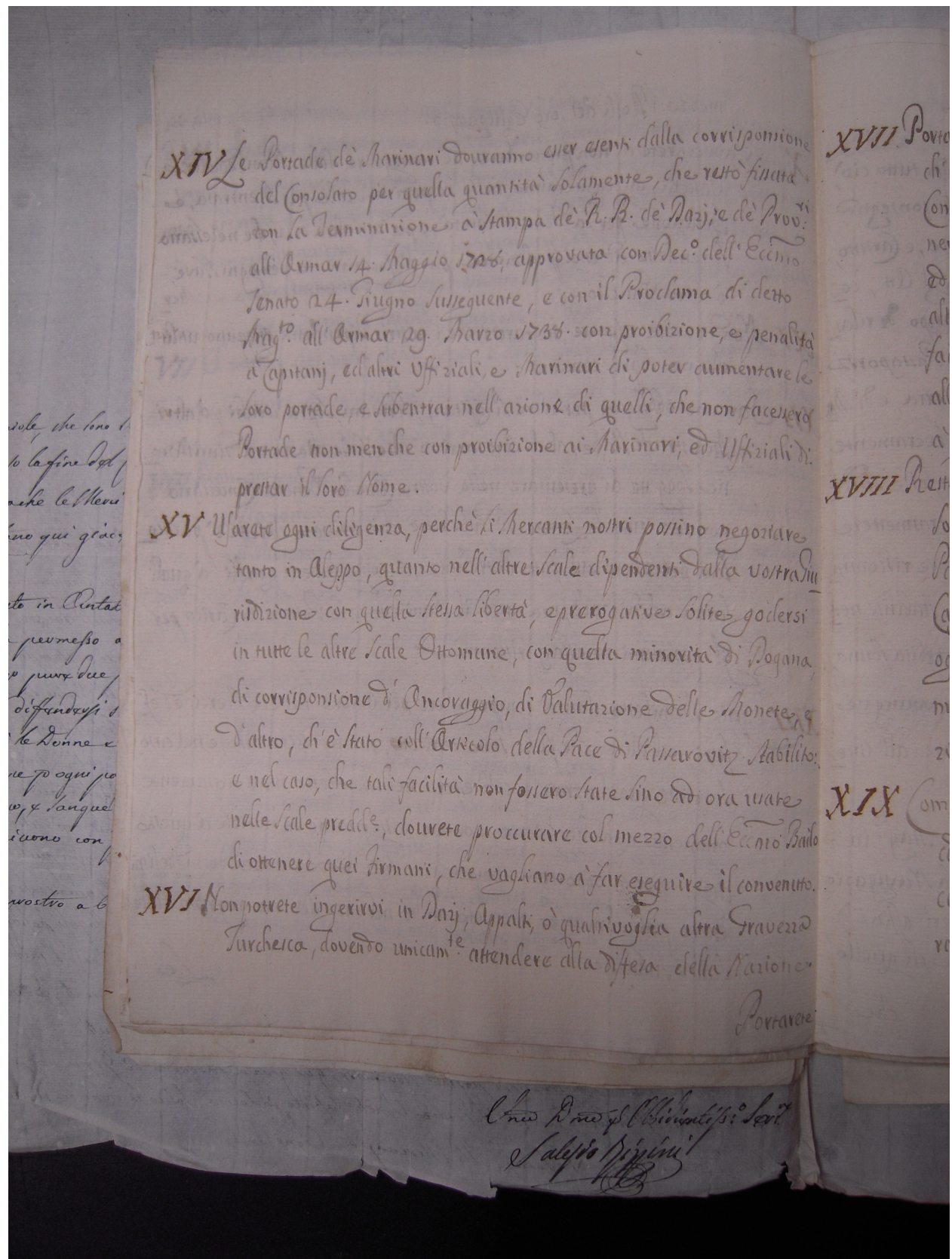
XI. Non douate esigere, nè farete, che i vostri Dipendenti esigano un'ita
alcuna sopra contanze.

XII. Saranno obligati per altro li Capitani, Scrivani, Sopra carichi, o altri
Ministri di Nave, al di loro arrivo alle Scale alla vostra Giurisdic
ne, soggetti di presentare nella vostra Consolar Veneta Cancelleria
non solo tutte le Lettere di Pubbliche, che private dirette a publico
Lari per essere sul fatto distribuite, e consegnate a quelli, a quali
saran indirizzate, ma anco il Manifesto, e le Polizze di Carico per
gl'opportuni necessarij vizionti.

XIII. Questo Manifesto doua comprendere per intero tutte le merci, ed ef
fetti, ed altro, che fosse stato caricato, niente eccettuato, e nel caso
scoprite qualche fraude coll' esseri nel Manifesto maliziosamente
ommesa qualche merce, douate rassegnarne le notizie a quello
Mag: per gl'opportuni compensi. Tale metodo doua da medesimi
essere puntualmente osservato anche nel caso del loro regreso alle
Vasche, suddette.

Le

Appendix 3: Letter nominating Consul Rizzini to his post as Venetian consul to Aleppo
(Continued)



XIV Le Portade de Marinari dovranno esser esenti dalla corrisponione
del Consolato per quella quantita solamente, che retto finata
con la Denunziatione a stampa de R. B. de' Dazj, e de' Prov.
all' Ormar 14. Maggio 1726, approvata con Dec. dell' Eccmo
Senato 24. Giugno seguente, e con il Proclama di detto
Senato all' Ormar 29. Marzo 1734. con proibitione, e penalita
a Capitani, ed altri Uffiziali, e Marinari di poter aumentare le
Portade, e subentrar nell' arione di quelli, che non facessero
Portade non menche con proibitione ai Marinari, ed Uffiziali di
prestar il loro Nome.

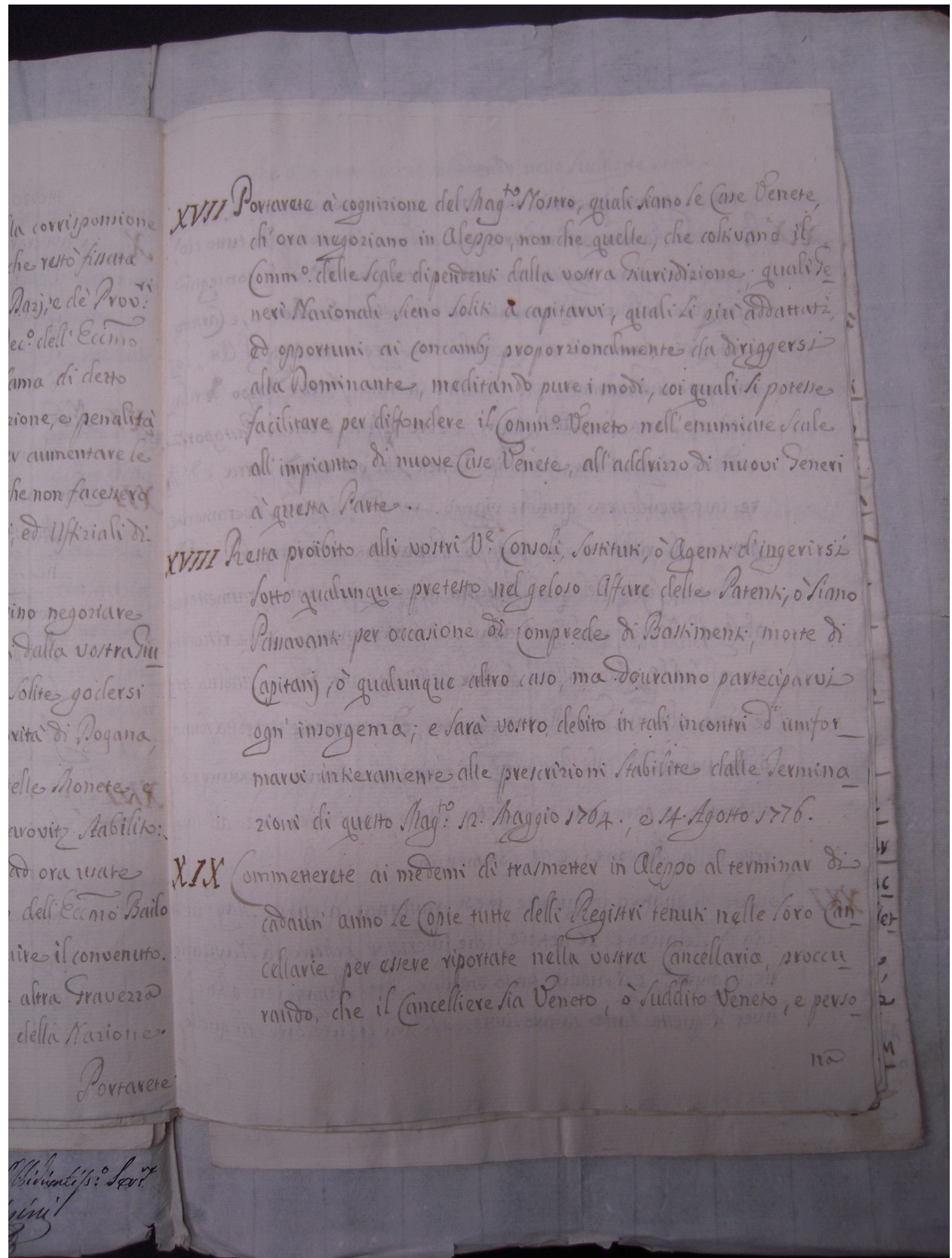
XV Usare ogni diligenza, perche li Mercanti nostri possino negoziare
tanto in Aleppo, quanto nell' altre Scale dipendenti dalla vostra
riditione con questa stessa liberta, e prerogative solite goderli
in tutte le altre Scale Ottomane, con quella minorita di Rogana,
di corrisponione d' Ancoraggio, di Valutazione delle Monete, e
d' altro, di e' stato coll' Articolo della Pace di Passarowitz stabilito,
e nel caso, che tali facilitati non fossero state sino ad ora uate
nelle Scale predde, dourete procurare col mezzo dell' Eccmo Bailo
di ottenere quei firmari, che vaghiano a far eseguire il conuenuto.

XVI Non potrete ingerirvi in Dazj, Appalti, o qualivoglia altra Gravata
Turcherca, douendo unicam^{te} attendere alla difesa della Nazione.

XVII Porto
XVIII Prati
XIX Com

Uno D. no. p. l' Obbligato p. S. S. S.
Salvo Rizzini

Appendix 3: Letter nominating Consul Rizzini to his post as Venetian consul to Aleppo
(Continued)



XVII Portavete a cognizione del Mag^{to} Nostro, quali siano le Case Venete, ch'ora negoziano in Aleppo, non che quelle, che coltivano il Comm^o delle scale dipendenti dalla vostra Jurisdizione, quali Veneti Nationali sieno soliti a capitarvi, quali si più addattati ed opportuni ai concanti proporzionalmente da diriggersi alla Dominante, meditando pure i modi, coi quali si potesse facilitare per disporre il Comm^o Veneto nell'enumerare scale all'impianto di nuove Case Venete, all'addiviso di nuovi Veneti a questa Parte.

XVIII Resta proibito alli vostri V^o Consoli, Solitani, o Agenti d'ingerirsi sotto qualunque pretesto nel geloso Affare delle Patenti, o siano Privilegi per occasione di Comprede di Barkimenti, morte di Capitani, o qualunque altro caso, ma dovranno parteciparvi ogn'insorgenza; e sarà vostro debito in tali incontri d'informarvi inkeramente alle prescrizioni stabilite dalle Determinazioni di questo Mag^{to} 12. Maggio 1764. e 14. Agosto 1776.

XIX Commetterete ai medesimi di trasmetter in Aleppo al terminar di cadaun'anno le Copie tutte delli Registri tenuti nelle loro Cancellerie per essere riportate nella vostra Cancelleria, procurando, che il Cancelliere sia Veneto, o suddito Veneto, e perso

la corrisponzione
che tutto finata
Nazze de' Prov.
ec. dell' Eccmo
ama di detto
zione, e penalita
v aumentare le
che non facessero
ed Ufficiali di
ino negoziare
dalla vostra Ju
solite godersi
vita di Bogana
elle Monete, e
avoviz. stabilito.
ad ora uate
dell' Eccmo Bailo
vire il convenuto.
altra Gravazzo
della Nazione.
Portavete

Obbligatissimo: Ser.
Rizzini

Appendix 3: Letter nominating Consul Rizzini to his post as Venetian consul to Aleppo
(Continued)

na di cognita probità, avvertenza, e cognizione. **LXXX**

XX E perchè sia tolto ogni arbitrio, e si abbia cognizione di tutto ciò, che deve essere registrato nella vostra Cancell^a. vi si consegnò un libro bollato coll'Impronta del Protettor S. Marco, e Caricato, nel quale dovranno essere legalmente registrati tutti gl'Atti, come pure li Passavanti, che di tratto in tratto faranno di rilasciar per terra dei sudditi Legni, e loro Effetti, e con li Passaportitendenti a Legittimar i sudditi Veneti, che per via di Terra, e di Mare intraprenderanno qualche viaggio, restandovi però severamente proibito di rilasciar Passaport, o Passavanti a chi non fosse suddito Veneto; Copie del qual Registro dovranno ogni anno trasmettere al Mag^o Nostro; quali dovranno preventivamente essere riscontrate col suddito libro bollato da due delli Mercanti Veneti stabiliti nelle scale alla mia giurisdizione soggette, ed autenticate in debita forma, onde valere di tali Documenti a favor della Nazione, ovunque occorresse, e partecipar a chi speta quello fosse interveniente all'intervene della Nazione, e del Commercio. **LXX**

XXI Dovrete di quattro in quattro mesi rassegnar a questo Mag^o in via di Relatione le notizie, che interessar possono la Navigazione, il Comm^o, e li sudditi tanto stabiliti, che Passaggieri, a fine di aver a questa Parte chiaro lume, e sicura cognizione di quello che

Date

Crispino Rizzini
Aleppo

che alla giornata va accadendo nelle suddette Scale.

XXVII Sommanente importando per ultimo di tenere nella piu esatta disciplina, ed in quella giusta subordinazione voluta dalle Prouvide Pubb: intenzioni di Venet: Capitani, e gl' Equipaggi dei sudditi Mercantili Legni singolarmente in due Articoli, sul diuieto al loro cioe dei Contrabbandi, e sulla diligente, e fedele custodia delle Mercantie loro affidate, diretto il primo a paleare con evidenza l'ingenuita' delle Pubb: Namime, e l'amichevole riguardo della Repubblica verso la Porta Ottomana; ed il secondo ad ottenere la preferenza alla Veneta Bandiera in codette Scale sopra qualunque altro Estero Paviglione; Voi invigilate con la maggior attenzione per la piu esatta, e scrupolosa osservanza delle Statutarie Leggi sull'importante Materia, riferendo diligentemente al Magt: ogni emergente per dipendere da quelle prescrizioni, che si crederanno opportune. Tanto e sequi

Data dal Magistrato de V. Savj alla Mercantia il pmo Aprile 1780

Appendix 4: A plan of the Protestant cemetery in Aleppo

PLAN OF THE
OLD PROTESTANT CEMETERY
ALEPPO

Line 1	Line 2	Line 3	Line 4	Line 5
George Smith 1876	Charles Robert Thompson 1865	3 Children of John Purnell 1719 -1721	Reginald Bowen 1682	Henry Maundrell 1701
	Tomas Turner 1722	John Abbott 1791	Daniel de Brael 1697	Thomas Bludworth 1680
Nathaniel William Werry 1855	John Van de Put 1705	Nicolas Masyi (?) Barvus (?) 1784	Joseph Hopkins 1769	John Sheppard 1682
	Clara Clegg 1843	Charles George Preston 1747	Eliza Usgate 1758	Charles Holloway 1758
Noe Theophante Werry 1839	Matilda Percy Rassam 1857	Francis Taylor 1733	Claude Hays 1735	John Swan (?) 1685
Caroline T. Christie 1901 James C. Christie 1906	Ellen Coe 1835	William Bethel 1679	Peter Bosanquet 1739	Nathaniel Brewer 1653

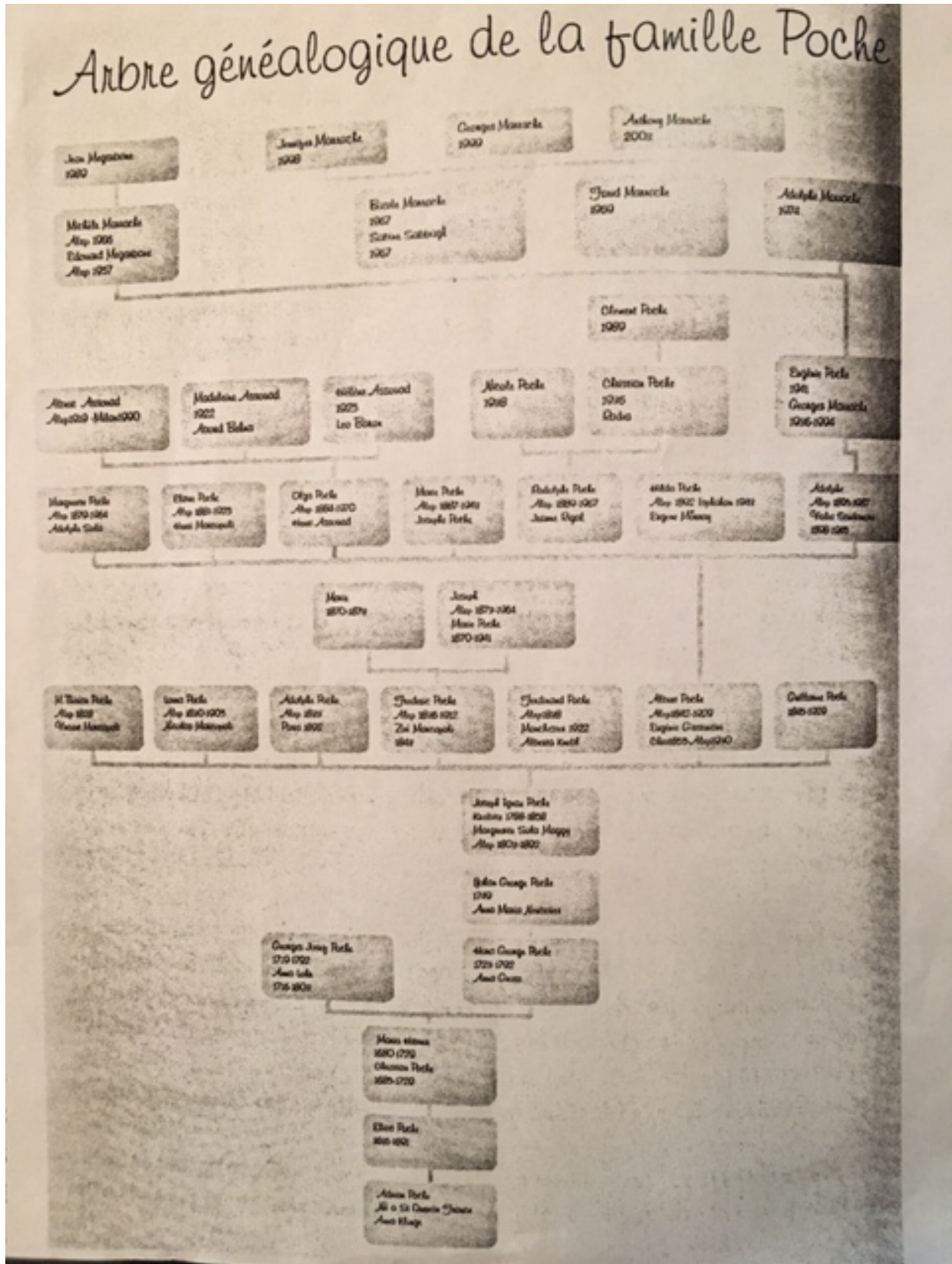
Appendix 4: A plan of the Protestant cemetery in Aleppo (Continued)

Line 1	Line 2	Line 3	Line 4	Line 5
Sophia Barker 1898	Nicoletta Edwards 1781	Thomas Sheppy (?) 1751	Henry Vernon 1694	Henricus Abrahamus Heilmannus 1747
Marianne Barker 1858	Maud Alice Jago 1890	Rev. Christopher Burckhardt 1818	Elizabeth Masear (?) 1761	George Hales 1693
Solomon P. Goldenberg 1901	Infant dau. of Clegg 1839	Nevil Coxe 1739	Thomas Boddington 1680	Hieronymus Jacobus Seiz 1675
Peter Shaw 1753	Robert Condit Eddy 1853 Charles Goodfellow 1687	John Piker M.D. 1712	Nathaniel Harley 1720	Bartholomew Chapel 1685

* The Monuments in this enclosure were removed from the old Christian cemetery at Azizieh Aleppo, and re-erected on this site in May 1928 by His Britannic Majesty's Consul in Aleppo.
This site was presented to His Britannic Majesty's Government by the Protestant Community at Aleppo.

أقلية رعاة هذه القبور من المقبرة القديمة في العزيزية التي حرقها الصليبيون في سنة ١٠٩٩
 (المسجد) في أيار سنة ١٩٢٨
 من قبل بريطانيا
 برتبة المشرف استوفى كركس ان احد له قدر فرتو من الحدود الرابع والسابع
 Henry Vernon 1694

Appendix 5: Poche family tree



Appendix 8: List of John Barker's books and household items as appears in the inventory

1. id. The Widow married.
 1. id. Michael Armstrong.
 1. id. Three Belles of England.
 1. id. One Fault.
 1. id. The Ward of Thorpe Combe.
 1. id. Jonathan Jefferson Whitlow
 1. id. Confessions of an Elderly Gentleman
 1. id. Confessions of an Elderly Lady.
 1. id. The Victims of Society.
 1. id. The Idler in Italy.
 1. id. Jack Sheppard.
 1. id. Mercedes of Castile.
 1. id. Jack Brag.
 1. id. Cousin Jeffrey.
 1. id. Gilbert Gurney.
 1. id. Gurney Married
 1. id. Sayings and Doings.
 1. id. Precepts and Practice
 1. id. The two Friends
 1. id. Bristle deaths and Marriages
 1. id. A Marriage in Highlife.
 1. id. Henry of Guise.
 1. id. The Bubble Family
 1. id. Italian Republics.
 1. id. Opinions of Lord Brougham
 9. id. Bulwer's Works
 1. id. The Modern Syrians
 1. id. Servia by A. Paton
 1. id. Notes from a Journal
 1. id. Private Journal
 2. id. etc. etc.

1
une fontaine en fayence.
une table en bois blanc.
une Cuvette en cuivre jaune.
un fanal en fer blanc fixé à la muraille.
une caisse à pendule, vide.
deux pipes sans bouchon.

— Dans le Salon à manger. —

une table en acajou massif pour 12 personnes.
une petite table carrée, id.
une glace avec cadre doré
une pendule.
quatre rideaux en indienne
deux canapés avec huit coussins et dessus en indienne
douze chaises de Malte.
deux Lampes "Pneostatiques" -

— Dans l'office à côté du Salon à Manger.

Deux armoires en bois blanc peintes en rouge contenant
un petit marbre en argent
deux id. en cuivre
Vingt deux cuillères en argent.
deux - id. id. à ragoût
un id. id. à soupe
deux id. id. à café.
un secrétaire id.
un porte habilis plaqué
six porte-fingons en argent
un petite cassette en argent

Appendix 8: List of John Barker's books and household items as appears in the inventory
(Continued)

1.	id.	Keys on Bees.
1.	id.	Bon Jardinier
1.	id.	Histoire de Godefroi de Bouillon.
1.	id.	The Courtier.
1.	id.	Smyth on Roman Medals.
1.	id.	Thomas' Practice of Physic
1.	id.	Buchan Domestic Medicine.
2.	id.	Nicholas Nickleby.
2.	id.	The Posthumous Papers.
1.	id.	Prisons de la Seine
3.	id.	Physiologie Vegetale.
3.	id.	Chansons de Branger.
2.	id.	Dictionnaire Anglais de Johnson
1.	id.	La mia Pazzia.
1.	id.	I Promessi Sposi
11.	id.	Gardeners Magazine
1.	id.	Lindley's Gardener.
1.	id.	Encyclopedia of London.
1.	id.	Sibiri Pollicis le mio prigione.
21.	id.	Brochi des Connaissances Utiles
1.	id.	Oeuvres complètes de Washington Irving
12.	id.	Manuel d'Economie domestique
3.	id.	Ouvrages de Cuisine.
1.	id.	Dictionnaire des arts et des Sciences
2.	id.	relié du Journal London et Paris Obscur
8.	id.	id. id. Illustrated London News
3.	id.	id. id. Punch.

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