Changes in the Ottoman-Venetian Treaties in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

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Introduction

The *ahdnames* (treaty documents, capitulations) granted to the European nations by the Ottoman Empire in the early modern period were made up of rules prescribed to maintain friendly relations, promote trade, and avoid or settle diplomatic and commercial crises. In the case of Venice, at least 29 *ahdnames* had been granted from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century. These documents have been partially published since the nineteenth century and can be understood almost wholly through the study of Hans Theunissen who examined them from the beginning to 1641¹. In this study, which considered also the treaty documents of preceding Muslim dynasties, the process by which the *ahdnames* were intensifying formally the nature of unilateral grants by the Ottoman monarch was clarified, and also the texts of *ahdnames* granted to Venice from 1482 to 1641 were published. The process by which the rules in these documents were changed seems to require further investigation.

In the *ahdname*s granted to Venice, reflecting the proximity of the Ottoman and Venetian territories and their relationship of repeated war and peace, many clauses concerning the territories, order on the seas, and human movement across borders between them were stipulated. In the power relationship and the spatial framework indicated by these rules, the clauses concerning the treatment of the Venetians in the Ottoman territory were stipulated. For the change of such rules, five *ahdnames* granted in the first half of the sixteenth century were already examined. The content of these *ahdnames* was basically stable because each time the *ahdname* was granted, it followed most previous rules. However, to expand the rights of Venetians in the Ottoman territories on the one hand, and to reinforce Ottoman initiative and control over the Venetians at sea on the other hand, some rules were amended or added. The

¹ Hans Theunissen, "Ottoman-Venetian Diplomatics: The 'Ahd-Names. The Historical Background and the Development of a Category of a Political-Commercial Instruments together with an Annoted Edition of a Corpus of a Relevant Documents," *Electric Journal of Oriental Studies*, vol. I, no. 2 (1998), pp. 1-698. The *ahdnames* of 1403-1641 are listed in Theunissen, "Ottoman-Venetian Diplomatics," p. 191; and the *ahdnames* of 1454-1733 in Maria Pia Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore: Inviati ottomani a Venezia dalla caduta di Costantinopoli alla guerra di Candia*, Venice, 1994, pp. 210-212.

Ottoman superiority over Venice was expressed especially clearly in the *ahdname* of 1540, which was granted to conclude the war that began in 1537². The aim of this paper is to clarify the changes in the *ahdnames* granted by the Ottomans to Venice in 1540, 1567, 1573, 1575, 1576, 1595, 1604, 1619, 1625, and 1641³. It will reflect some of the conditions that caused their relationship to endure in the second half of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century.

I. Continuity and Change

The ahdnames formally consist of invocation (davet), imperial cipher (tuğra), formula of nişan (nişan formülü), intitulation (unvan), "narration" of the circumstance of issuing (nakil, dibace), clauses of ahdname (ahdname maddeleri), "sanction" of the observance of clauses (te'kid), date (tarih), and place of writing (mahall-i tahrir)⁴. The ahdnames granted to Venice kept this form in principle. As most rules were not amended, the general structure of norms was also maintained. The Ottomans made clear the border with the Venetian territory, promised nonaggression, planned to maintain order on the seas bilaterally, and attempted to control the human movement crossing the border. They also showed a willingness to protect Venetians in their territory.

However, the partial change can be found in form and content. For the form, the *ahdname*s of 1540-1641 can be divided into those of 1541-76 and those of 1595-1641. The *ahdname* of 1540, prescribing peace conditions to end the Ottoman-Venetian war that began in 1537, followed most previous clauses with the amendment and addition of some clauses. The *ahdname*s of 1567, 1575, and 1576 confirmed the whole content of the 1540 *ahdname* by inserting it in the "narration." The *ahdname* of 1573 only prescribed peace conditions for the Ottoman-Venetian war that began in 1570 in the "narration" and made no mention of the usual

² Yutaka Horii, "The Relation between the Ottoman Empire and Venice in the First Half of the Sixteenth Century," *Shigaku Zasshi*, vol. CIII, no. 1 (1994), pp. 34-62 (in Japanese); *idem*, "Some Characteristics of the Ottoman Capitulations in the Sixteenth Century: The Cases of Dubrovnik and Venice," *Mediterranean World*, vol. XX (2010), pp. 199-207.

³ The ahdnames of 1567, 1575, 1595, 1604, 1619, 1625, and 1641 were granted for the renewal of treaty upon the enthronement of Selim II (ruled 1566-74), Murat III (1574-95), Mehmet III (1595-1603), Ahmet I (1603-17), Osman II (1618-22), Murat IV (1623-40), and İbrahim (1640-48). The ahdnames of 1540 and 1573 were granted to conclude the Ottoman-Venetian wars, and the ahdname of 1576 was granted to confirm the ahdname of 1575. The original documents are as follows. The ahdname of 1540 (hereafter "Ahd.1540"): Archivio di Stato di Venezia (ASV), Documenti turchi (DT), no. 426; 1567 (Ahd. 1567): ASV, DT, no. 793; 1573 (Ahd. 1573): ASV, DT, no. 818; 1575 (Ahd. 1575): ASV, DT, no. 827; 1576 (Ahd. 1576): ASV, DT, no. 861; 1595 (Ahd. 1595): ASV, DT, nos. 1086, 1087; 1604 (Ahd. 1604): ASV, DT, no. 1145; 1619 (Ahd. 1619): ASV, DT, no. 1236; 1625 (Ahd. 1625): ASV, DT, no. 1318; 1641 (Ahd. 1641): ASV, DT, no. 1470. Hereafter, in the case of noting the contents of these documents, the document number of ASV, DT and the number of lines will be indicated.

⁴ Mübahat S. Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı Belgelerinin Dili (Diplomatik)*, Istanbul, 1994, pp. 163-169; Theunissen, "Ottoman-Venetian Diplomatics," pp. 188-189.

rules. Like the ahdname of 1540, its content was also confirmed in the ahdnames of 1575 and 1576 by inserting it in the "narration." The ahdnames of 1567, 1575, and 1576 did not have formal clauses, and renewed the rules of 1540 and 1573 just as they were. Such an irregular form was changed to the normal one in the ahdname of 1595. In this way, the ahdnames of 1604, 1619, 1625, and 1641 were granted. Therefore, the ahdname of 1595 was a turning point in the form of a document⁵.

For the content also, the ahdname of 1595 can be seen as a turning point among the ahdnames of 1540-1641. As mentioned above, the content of the ahdnames of 1540 and 1573 was renewed just as it was in the ahdnames until 1576. An added clause can be found only at the end of the ahdnames of 1567 and 1575. In the ahdname of 1595, some previous rules were amended, and only matters that were necessary at that time were newly prescribed for the peace conditions of 1573. These rules were followed in the subsequent ahdnames. Only the ahdname of 1641 had an added clause at its end. Such a change will be clarified in the following paragraphs.

II. Peace Conditions under Ottoman Superiority

The Ottoman territorial expansion and Ottoman superiority over Venice in the first half of the sixteenth century continued into the second half of the century. One of the peace conditions in the ahdnames of 1540 and 1573 was the payment obligation imposed on Venice by the Ottomans. Another was the decision over territories; which part of the lands struggled over during wartime came under Ottoman rule and which part remained under Venetian rule was made clear.

The preconditions for peace in the "narration" in the ahdname of 1540 were that Nauplion (Anabolu) and Monemvasia (Menavasiye), the Venetian possessions in Morea, should be handed to the Ottomans and that the Venetians should pay 300,000 florin in installments to the Ottomans⁶. Following the "narration," the oath of the Ottoman monarch for the observance of the treaty mentioned that Vrana and Nadin on the Bosnian coast and the fortresses in about twenty Aegean islands should fall under Ottoman rule⁷. The first clause approved Venetian retention of Parga, located on the border of the sancak (prefecture) of Yanya and demolished by the Ottomans⁸. The clause added after the "sanction" prescribed that, among the five fortresses located on the border of the sancak of Bosna, Değirmenler (Castel di molini) should

⁵ Theunissen, "Ottoman-Venetian Diplomatics," chapter 8-9, esp. p. 213.

⁶ Ahd. 1540: no. 426, ll. 4-8 (Ahd. 1567: no. 793, ll. 3-5; Ahd. 1575: no. 827, ll. 6-9; Ahd. 1576: no. 861, 11, 6-8).

⁷ Ahd. 1540: no. 426, ll. 11-16 (Ahd. 1567: no. 793, ll. 8-11; Ahd. 1575: no. 827, ll. 10-14; Ahd. 1576: no. 861. ll. 11-16).

⁸ Ahd. 1540: no. 426, ll. 18-21 (Ahd. 1567: no. 793, ll. 12-13; Ahd. 1575: no. 827, ll. 15-17; Ahd. 1576: no. 861, ll. 17-19; Ahd. 1595: no. 1086, ll. 11-13; no. 1087, ll. 10-12; Ahd. 1604: no. 1145, ll. 10-12; Ahd. 1619: no. 1236, ll. 11-13; Ahd. 1625: no. 1318, ll. 10-12; Ahd. 1641: no. 1470, ll. 9-11).

belong to Venice, and the other four should be investigated and belong to the side that had effective control⁹.

The "narration" in the *ahdname* of 1573 mentioned the conditions of peace that the Venetians offered through the *bailo* in Istanbul and that the Ottomans approved. First, the Venetians were to pay 300,000 florin according to the precedent in the age of Süleyman I. Second, the fortress of Sopot on the Albanian coast was to be handed to the Ottomans. Third, the tribute that the Venetians paid annually to have the Ottomans approve the possession of the island of Zante was to be increased from 500 florin to 1,500 florin. Fourth, the *ahdname* and the orders of Süleyman I which had been renewed upon the enthronement of Selim II were to be effective. Fifth, the tribute that the Venetians had paid annually to have the Ottomans approve the possession of the island of Cyprus was to be abolished because of the Ottoman conquest of the island. Sixth, for Albania and the province of Bosnia, both the Ottomans and the Venetians were to possess their lands as before, and the merchants who had been held in captivity during wartime were to be freed and their goods and ships returned ¹⁰.

The peace conditions in the *ahdname*s of 1540 and 1573 were rearranged in the *ahdname* of 1595. For the decision on territories, in the "narration" and the oath that followed it 12, the name of the new Ottoman lands written in the same place in the *ahdname* of 1540 was deleted, probably because it had become an established matter. The clause concerning the Venetian possession of Parga was prescribed without change 13. The tribute that the Venetians paid annually for the possession of Zante was prescribed as 1,500 florin by the *ahdname* of 1573 14, while the clause concerning the tribute for the possession of Cyprus was deleted. For the matter of Albania and Bosnia mentioned in the *ahdname* of 1573, an added clause stated that an order had reached Ferhad Bey, the *sancak beyi* (prefectural governor) of Bosna, and the border was decided in the presence of Giacomo Soranzo, a Venetian envoy, and prescribed that this decision should be followed 15.

⁹ Ahd. 1540: no. 426, Il. 86-91 (Ahd. 1567: no. 793, Il. 54-57; Ahd. 1575: no. 827, Il. 59-62; Ahd. 1576: no. 861, Il. 75-78). The four unsettled fortresses were investigated in 1544; Buçac, Rastine, and Sene were made to belong to the Ottomans while Velin to Venice (Theunissen, "Ottoman-Venetian Diplomatics," p. 167). In the same place in the *ahdnames* of 1575 and 1576, the names of Velin and Sene were deleted.

¹⁰ Ahd. 1573: no. 818, ll. 6-14 (Ahd. 1575: no. 827, ll. 66-72; Ahd. 1576: no. 861, ll. 84-92).

¹¹ Ahd. 1595; no. 1086, ll. 3-7; no. 1087, ll. 3-7 (Ahd. 1604; no. 1145, ll. 3-7; Ahd. 1619; no. 1236, ll. 3-7; Ahd. 1625; no. 1318, ll. 3-7; Ahd. 1641; no. 1470, ll. 3-7).

¹² Ahd. 1595: no. 1086, Il. 7-11; no. 1087, Il. 7-10 (Ahd. 1604: no. 1145, Il. 7-10; Ahd. 1619: no. 1236, Il. 8-10; Ahd. 1625: no. 1318, Il. 7-10; Ahd. 1641: no. 1470, Il. 7-9).

¹³ See n. 8.

¹⁴ Ahd. 1595; no. 1086, l. 59; no. 1087, l. 58 (Ahd. 1604; no. 1145, ll. 50-51; Ahd. 1619; no. 1236, ll. 57-58; Ahd. 1625; no. 1318, ll. 48-49; Ahd. 1641; no. 1470, l. 48).

¹⁵ Ahd. 1595: no. 1086, ll. 66-68; no. 1087, ll. 65-67 (Ahd. 1604: no. 1145, ll. 56-58; Ahd. 1619: no. 1236, ll. 64-66; Ahd. 1625: no. 1318, ll. 53-55; Ahd. 1641: no. 1470, ll. 53-55). It refers to that Giacomo Soranzo, a Venetian envoy who had been dispatched in 1575 to celebrate the enthronement of Murat III and renew the *ahdname*, on his return in 1576, decided the borders of Venetian Zara, Šibenik, Split, etc., with the Ottoman officials (ASV, DT, nos. 829, 840, 847, 849, 850, 852, 859).

For the payment obligation to conclude peace, at least 250,000 florin, a part of the 300,000 florin prescribed in the ahdname of 1540, was paid in four installments until 1545¹⁶. The payment of 300,000 florin prescribed in the ahdname of 1573 was mentioned in the subsequent ahdnames. At the end of the "narration" in the ahdname of 1575, a sentence obligating the payment of arrearages in three years was added ¹⁷. In the *ahdname* of 1595, a clause was added to say that the concerned rule should not be made thereafter because the fact that the total amount had been paid was recorded in the register of the Ottoman treasury¹⁸.

III. Supplying Maritime Rules

The Ottoman superiority over Venice seemed to continue basically not only on land but also at sea. The rules concerning the order on the seas did not change during the second half of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century, except for the minute alteration of wording and the addition of few supplementary rules. A clause added after the "sanction" in the ahdname of 1567 confirmed that the Venetians were not to kill the captives whom they took in battle with the "ship of robber or levend (irregulars)" who, contrary to the ahd (treaty), attacked the Venetians, but were to send them to the Ottoman court "to be executed in the regular manner 19." A clause added after the "sanction" in the ahdname of 1641 stated that, concerning the matter of the "group of corsairs (korsan taifesi)," the edict (niṣan-i hümayun) issued by the previous monarch Murad IV was renewed by his successor İbrahim, and both the Ottomans and the Venetians were to observe and practice it 20. According to the report (relazione) of Pietro Foscarini, a Venetian envoy who negotiated this ahdname, the edict mentioned in this clause was that of the bailo Alvise Contarini (in office 1636-40) obtained from Murad IV for "pursuing and punishing corsairs²¹." In short, the principle that the piracy against the Venetians should be controlled under the Ottoman initiative was confirmed as the need arose.

Concerning piracy, another problem that became important was the treatment of persons belonging to the Venetians and made captives or slaves (esir). A clause added after the "sanction" in the ahdname of 1575 prescribed that, for the matter of captives who had been taken contrary to the ahd, both the Ottomans and Venetians should practice the clauses in the ahdnames, and that, for the captives taken during the period of hostilities, the right of

¹⁶ Theunissen, "Ottoman-Venetian Diplomatics," pp. 167-168.

¹⁷ Ahd. 1575: no. 827, ll. 75-78 (Ahd. 1576: no. 861, ll. 96-99).

¹⁸ Ahd. 1595; no. 1086, ll. 68-70; no. 1087, ll. 67-69 (Ahd. 1604; no. 1145, ll. 58-60; Ahd. 1619; no. 1236, Il. 66-69; Ahd. 1625: no. 1318, Il. 55-57; Ahd. 1641: no. 1470, Il. 55-58). The Venetians paid the amount in four installments during 1574-77 (ASV, DT, nos. 820, 825, 871, 877).

¹⁹ Ahd, 1567; no. 793, ll. 62-66.

²⁰ Ahd. 1641: no. 1470. ll. 60-61.

²¹ Relazioni di ambasciatori veneti al Senato, vol. XIII: Costantinopoli, ed. by Luigi Firpo, Turin, 1984, p. 895.

the owner who purchased them as slaves should be taken into account²². This rule seems to mention the problem of captives that occurred during the Ottoman-Venetian war of 1570-73. However, the treatment of captives or slaves was a matter that occurred also in peacetime because of the constant activities of the corsairs. As mentioned later, in the *ahdname* of 1595, the rule concerning the treatment of persons who belonged to the Venetian territory and were made captives or slaves and brought into the Ottoman territory was amended wholly by maintaining the former principle.

IV. Regarding Customs in the Port Cities

After the annexation of the land of the Mamluks in 1516-17, the Ottoman Empire formed its ruling system in Syria and Egypt, and stood in a position to deal with the matters concerning the Venetians living there. The Ottomans introduced a tax farming system in the urban areas, and the Jews who became customs farmers under this system led the trade control of the seaports, opposed the Venetians because of high customs duties, and also competed with them for trade; the difficulties for the Venetians often became a matter of Ottoman-Venetian diplomatic negotiation²³. An added clause in the *ahdname* of 1540 prescribed that the "[wrong] innovations (*bid'atlar*)" that Abraham Castro (İbrahim Geşturi), an ex-Jew, had introduced "contrary to the ancient customs and laws" in Beirut and Tripoli in Syria should be prohibited²⁴.

The clause made in 1540 to deal with the specific situation was amended into a rule for dealing with a general matter in the *ahdname* of 1595. It prescribed that the "[wrong] innovations" introduced in Istanbul, Beirut, Tripoli, and other lands should be removed, and that, for the matter of customs duty, edicts should be issued according to the ancient laws, and the Venetian *bailo* and consuls (*konsoloslar*) in Istanbul, Tripoli, Alexandria, and other lands should keep such orders²⁵. In fact, there were cases in which edicts were issued concerning the Venetian trade in the Ottoman territories. The edict, dated the middle of al-Muḥarram 998 A.H. (late November 1589 A.D.), which is included in the copies of Ottoman documents preserved

²² Ahd. 1575: no. 827, ll. 81-82 (Ahd. 1576: no. 861, ll. 103-104).

²³ For the case study of Jews who became customs farmers in early Ottoman Syria and Egypt, see Benjamin Arbel, "Abraham Castro Multiplied: Venetian Traders and Jewish Customs Farmers in the Levant, c. 1530 - c. 1540," in *Trading Nations: Jews and Venetians in the Early Modern Eastern Mediterranean*, Leiden, New York, and Köln, 1995, pp. 29-54. One of two Jews mentioned in it, Abraham Castro in Syria, appears in the added cluase in the *ahdname* of 1540. For the relation between the Venetians and the Jews in early Ottoman Egypt, see Yutaka Horii, "Venetians in Alexandria in the First Half of the Sixteenth Century," *Annales of Japan Association for Middle East Studies*, vol. XX, part 2 (2005), pp. 131-144.

²⁴ Ahd. 1540: no. 426, ll. 82-85 (Ahd. 1567: no. 793, ll. 51-53; Ahd. 1575: no. 827, ll. 56-58; Ahd. 1576: no. 861, ll. 72-74).

²⁵ Ahd. 1595: no. 1086, ll. 62-65; no. 1087, ll. 61-65 (Ahd. 1604: no. 1145, ll. 53-56; Ahd. 1619: no. 1236, ll. 60-64; Ahd. 1625: no. 1318, ll. 50-53; Ahd. 1641: no. 1470, ll. 50-53).

in the bailate in Istanbul, was issued to the sancak bevis and kadıs (judges of Islamic law) of all lands where the Venetians lived, because of the petition made by the bailo according to the above-mentioned clause added in the ahdname of 1540. It ordered that the ancient customs and laws be observed to correct the situation in which new setting of official prices (narh) and contraband goods were injuring the Venetian merchants²⁶. An order to prohibit setting official prices that would oppress the Venetian trade can be found also in the edict that was issued to the governor and the chief treasurer of Egypt at 27 Rabī' al-Thānī 1007 A.H. (November 27, 1598 A.D.), and was preserved in the Venetian consulate in Cairo²⁷. The Venetian bailo in Istanbul and Venetian consuls in various places in the Ottoman territory seemed to maintain traditional rights possessed by the Venetian community that they controlled, by means of holding the edicts issued by the Ottoman monarchs. Therefore, the administrative system connecting the Ottoman capital and the provinces and that connecting the Venetian home government and their communities in the Levant seemed to be linked with each other; under this framework, the Venetians in the Ottoman territory ought to have been given certain protection.

V. Freeing of Captives or Slaves

Another matter concerning the Venetians in the Ottoman territory was that of the treatment of persons who belonged to the Venetian territory and were made captives or slaves (esir). The relevant clause appeared first in the ahdname of 1521, and the same rule was repeated until 1576²⁸. It stated that the "robber" or others were attacking the islands under Venetian rule and selling the captives as slaves in Anatolia and the Balkans, and prescribed that such a slave should be investigated; that, if he belonged to Venice, the levend who captured him should be punished severely; and that he should be freed if he became Muslim, or should be handed over to the Venetians if he was still non-Muslim.

The relevant clause in the ahdname of 1595, being based on the previous rule, was amended wholly according to the situation at that time. It stated that the slaves brought from the islands under Venetian rule were being sold in "the Balkans, Anatolia, Maghrib, and other [Ottoman] lands," and prescribed that such a slave should be handed over to bailo or "[other Venetian] representatives (kaimmakamlar) or agents (vekiller)"; that the "robber [and] levend" who captured him should be punished severely; and that he should be freed if he became Muslim. It also prescribed that the "Venetian subjects (Venedik reayası)" who were "made to

²⁶ ASV, Bailo a Costantinopoli, busta 250, reg. 330, ff. 3v.-4r.

²⁷ Franciscan Centre of Christian Oriental Studies (Cairo, al-Muskī), "Firmani, Hogget e vari documenti in arabo," no. 259.

²⁸ The ahdname of 1521: ASV, DT, no. 188, ll. 31-36; Ahd. 1540: no. 426, ll. 47-51; Ahd. 1567: no. 793, ll. 28-31; Ahd. 1575: no. 827, ll. 33-36; Ahd. 1576: no. 861, ll. 41-45.

escape from hand to hand" as slaves should be freed ²⁹. The decision of the Venetian Senate on June 3, 1588, suggests that the *bailo* and the consuls were working together to free captives. According to it, the consulates of Cyprus, Bosnia, and Algiers were established; the main job of the consul of Algiers was to make an effort to free Venetian subjects who were made slaves, so he was to be elected by the Supervisors of Hospitals (*Provveditori sopra ospedali*) who controlled the freeing of captives; and the *bailo* was to obtain Ottoman orders that these three consuls should be treated the same as other consuls ³⁰. Probably, the rule in the amended clause in the *ahdname* seemed to be supported by such Venetian administrative network.

Conclusion

The changes in the *ahdnames* granted by the Ottoman Empire to Venice during 1540-1641 indicate the attempts at applying the rules formed by the middle of the sixteenth century to the matters that influenced their relationship at that time. After the wars between them, each peace was made under Ottoman superiority. The piracy against the Venetians was to be controlled under the Ottoman initiative. The oppression of the Venetian trade in the Ottoman port cities was to be corrected by issuing Ottoman edicts according to the ancient customs and laws. Persons who belonged to the Venetian territory and were brought into the Ottoman territory as captives or slaves were to be freed. Such a framework for the protection of the Venetians under Ottoman superiority seemed to be supported by the wide-ranging administrative network formed between the Ottomans and Venice. The appearance of rules reflecting it in the *ahdname* of 1595 suggested that such a system was formed by the end of the sixteenth century. It seemed to become an indispensable part of the early modern Ottoman-Venetian treaty system.

²⁹ Ahd. 1595: no. 1086, ll. 32-37; no. 1087, ll. 31-37; Ahd. 1604: no. 1145, ll. 28-32; Ahd. 1619: no. 1236, ll. 31-37; Ahd. 1625: no. 1318, ll. 29-32; Ahd. 1641: no. 1470, ll. 26-30.

³⁰ ASV, Senato, Deliberazioni, Mar, reg. 49, fol. 41r.-v. The elections of the consul of Cyprus and that of Bosnia were entrusted to the Board of Trade (*Cinque savi alla mercanzia*). For the *Provveditori sopra ospedali e luoghi pii e riscatto degli schiavi*, established in 1561, see Piero D'Angiolini and Claudio Pavone (eds.), *Guida generale degli Archivi di Stato Italiani*, 4 vols., Rome, 1981-94, vol. IV, 1994, p. 973.