Florentine Textiles for the Ottoman Empire in the Seventeenth Century

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In the Ottoman Empire, conspicuous consumption was very significant in every aspect of social, political, and economic life throughout the Early Modern Ages. Among all settings, silk textiles always played an important role in the shapes of dresses, wall hangings, ground covers, a variety of covers on books such as the *Qur'an*, and furniture upholstery, etc. According to studies of weavings and patterns of the number of dresses made for sultans and his family members in the Topkapı Sarayı Museum in Istanbul, the majority is made of Turkish textile, and some of Italian silk fabric, especially velvet and brocaded silk. This reveals the considerable ubiquity of Italian silk products in the Ottoman court.

Silk industries in Florence and Venice are good examples of the production of export-oriented luxury and artistic objects that brought economic prosperity to certain parts of northern Italy in the seventeenth century. However, although they acquired such a high reputation in Istanbul, the exportation of these products, especially into the Ottoman Empire, has not been well analyzed in economic history partly because of the lack of historical evidence. Presumably, in the Ottoman Empire, there was a powerful consumption market for luxury products, including Florentine and Venetian silk fabric, throughout the Early Modern Ages.

This article will analyze the valuation of Florentine silk textiles in Istanbul in the first half of the seventeenth century. Their prices were registered in the lists of Ottoman official price ceilings (*narh*) issued for Istanbul and Bursa. The evidence will possibly reveal how they were treated in the markets of Istanbul. In the first part, the significant role of silk in the court rituals of the Ottoman Empire will be surveyed. In the second part, the Florentine silk industry of the seventeenth century will be described briefly. In the last part, three *narh* lists will be analyzed to evaluate Florentine silk products in Istanbul and compare them with Venetian products.

1. Textiles and ceremonies at the Ottoman court.

In the Ottoman Empire, silk reflected the ideology of power and facilitated the projection of that power in the empire and beyond. In the mid-sixteenth century, Ogier Ghiselin de

Busbecq, the Habsburg ambassador to the Ottoman court, described in an almost rhapsodic fashion the role of textiles in expressing imperial splendor and thus imperial power. This reflects the core of how Ottoman-woven silk fabric impressed viewers, both Turkish and foreign[1]. Because of the function of silk fabric as diplomatic gifts, it came to symbolize the Ottoman *imperium* to foreigners, and within the vast empire, it was a major form of artistic expression, an important vehicle for transmission of artistic ideas, and a key factor in the economy. Silk played a major role in Ottoman public ceremonies and in upper-class culture, thus denoting status and becoming a common form of compensation for state officials. In the Ottoman domains, large quantities of cotton (in Syria), Angora goat hair (in Anatolia), as well as linen and wool, which were made into all kinds of useful and attractive fabric, were produced, but from the early period, silk retained an almost folkloric association with luxury and wealth. For example, the Holy Qur'an pictures paradise as a place of silken cushions and carpets. Not only was silk cloth the preferred fabric for royal dress but the entire elaborate edifice of Ottoman court ritual and its economic structure of salaries and rewards was built around the symbolism, costliness, and almost religious mystique of silk[2].

Fabric constituted an indispensable element of Ottoman ceremonies. In the form of costumes, banners, wall hangings, curtains, and ground coverings, it lent visual magnificence to processions and receptions (see Fig. 1), and as "robes of honor" (*hil'at*) bestowed on court servants and foreign diplomats, it was unmistakable signifier of the sultan's power and generosity[3].

The ceremonies such as the funerals of the deceased sultans, the accession of new sultans, and the girding of the sword took place only once in the life of an Ottoman sultan, but many others were repeated throughout his reign. For example, it was the custom for sultans to attend the Friday noonday prayer service—the most important of the five daily prayers on the Muslim Sabbath—at a mosque outside the royal residence. Throughout his reign, the sultan availed himself of this weekly opportunity to present himself to the public, simultaneously certifying his physical well being and displaying his splendor and power[4]. An anonymous woodcut published in Venice by Domenico de' Franceschi around 1563 shows Süleyman I and his entourage on their way to Friday prayers dressed in gorgeous silken costumes (see Fig. 2). Sometimes foreign ambassadors were invited to watch the parades for the purpose of impressing on them the greatness of the Turkish sultan and the brilliance of Ottoman ceremony. The ambassadors were overwhelmed in the face of the dazzling splendor[5]. At

1 *İpek, The Crescent and the Rose, Imperial Ottoman Silks and Velvets,* Julian Raby & Alison Effeny (eds.), London, 2001, p.15.
2 *İpek* (2001), op.cit., p.15.
3 *İpek* (2001), op.cit., p.21.
4 *İpek* (2001), op.cit., p.25; as for the omnipresence sultan in Istanbul, see E. Boyal & K. Fleet (2010), *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, Cambridge Univ. Press, pp.28-71.
5 Silahdar Fındklılı Mehmet Ağa (1962), *Nusret-nâme,* edited by İ. Parmaksızoğlu, 2 vols, İstanbul, I, p.83

every opportunity, including campaigns, victorious parades, and festivities held to honour the circumcision of the princes, a gorgeously dressed sultan and his entourages made appearances in public. Even the distribution of the Janissaries' pay on Friday was opened to the foreign ambassadors on such occasions.

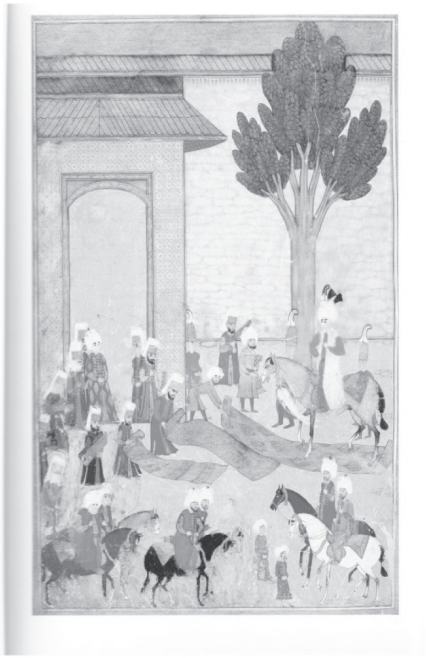

Figure 1
A miniature showing *şeyhzade Mehmed*'s entry on horseback into the hippodrome. Lengths of precious silk fabric (Turkish *payendaz*) are spread out in front of the prince to pay him honor. *Surnâme-i Hümâyûn*, ca.1582, Topkapı Sarayı Library, H1344, fol. 12 a.

Figure 2
Anonymous woodcuts from a suite published in Venice by Domenico de' Franceschi, 1568.

Robes of honor (*hil'at*)

Perhaps the most important symbolic role by woven silks in Ottoman court culture was embedded in the elaborate system of protocol that surrounded the giving of garments. This means expressing favor had existed in a number of Islamic cultures prior to the Ottomans[6]. In the Ottoman Empire, the significance of the robes was expressed by the quality of the fabrics from which they were made, fabrics which in themselves varied in value. The clothes were bestowed by the sultan himself or by a high-ranking official authorized to make the gift in his name, and the protocols established at the sultan's court set the precedent for provincial governors and other lower officials.

Hil'at permeated every aspect of Ottoman court life: they might be used to mark any number of occasions, both secular and religious, and could be awarded to any rank, Turk or foreigner. They were presented to mark specific events – the visit of a prince or envoy, the start of a military campaign or a celebration within the royal family – and also as part of the annual cycle of religious holidays. They were used as a mark of general favor or as a reward for some particular service; they might denote a new appointment or, with amounts of certain fabrics not made up into garments, form part of a court official's annual salary[7].

The role of *hil'at* as a diplomatic protocol is well documented in the illustrated autobiography of Siegmund von Herberstein (1486–1566) published in 1560. He served as an ambassador to three Holy roman emperors. For his autobiography, von Herberstein commissioned six woodblock images showing himself dressed in the ambassadorial attire that he had worn in the presence of, or had received from, the rulers of Poland, Russia, Spain, and Turkey. In 1541, von Herberstein represented the Hapsburg Ferdinand I (1503–1564), king of Bohemia and Hungary and later Holy Roman Emperor, before Süleyman I, when the sultan visited Buda shortly after annexing most of Hungary. For the occasion, the senior ambassador dressed in a fashionable short Italian velvet gown with black stockings and shoes, as shown in Fig. 4. The robes of honor bestowed on him by Süleyman I are identified in the subcaption in Fig. 5. The depiction of the silk fabric in the portrait of von Herberstein wearing his robes of honor is so accurate that they can be identified as an inner kaftan of Turkish velvet and a ceremonial surkaftan made of two types of almost identical Italian velvet. Velvet fabric, especially Italian velvet, was considered second only to gold and silver cloth in luxury and prestige, and we may infer that with this robe of honor, Süleyman I had bestowed considerable distinction on von Herberstein[8]. The preoccupation with *hil'at* gifts, that is, with the number

6 Throughout much of the Middles Ages, the term *hil'at* (Arabic *khil'a)* did not designate a single item of clothing, but rather a variety of fine garments and ensembles (*hulla* or *badla*) which were presented by rulers to subjects whom they wished to reward or to single out for distinction (hence the alternate name *tashrif* "honoring"). N.A.Stillmann, "khil'a*", The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ver., vol. V.

7 *İpek*, op.cit., p.32.

8 J.L. Nevinson, "Siegmund von Herberstein. Notes on 16th Century Dress", *Waffen und Kostumkunde*, 1/2, pp.86-93.; Jennifer Wearden (1985), "Siegmund von Herberstein: An Italian Velvet in

and the quality of the kaftans bestowed by the sultan, continued among foreign ambassadors throughout the century.

Figure 3
The presentation of *hil'at* robes to the members of the Chancery, lieutenant company commanders, infantry officers, and Janissary captains, *Surnâme-i Hümâyûn*, ca.1582, Topkapı Sarayı Library, H1344, folio 425b-426a.

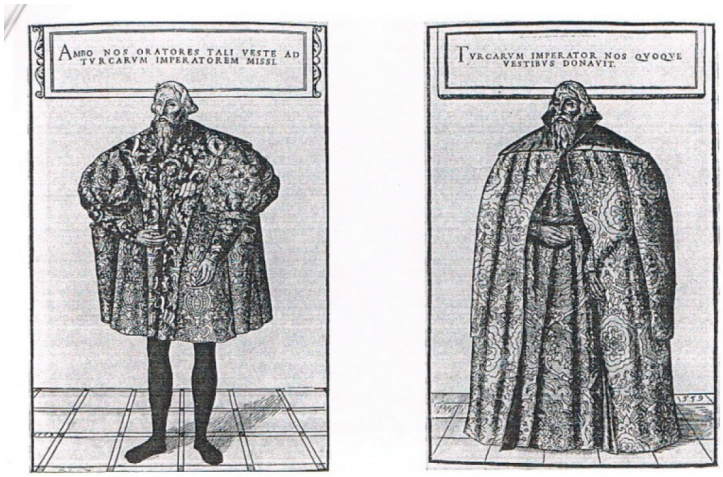

Figure 4
(left) Siegmond von Herberstein dressed in a short Italian gown for his audience with Süleyman I in Buda, 1541.

Figure 5
(right) Siegmond von Herberstein dressed in the *hil'at* robe he received from Süleyman I. Woodcuts attributed to Johann Lautensack, from von Herberstein's Gratae posteritati..., Vienna, 1560, plates 5 and 6.

the Ottoman Court", *Costume*, 1, pp.22-29.l; *İpek* (2001), op.cit., p.33.

The Ottoman silk industry

Silk fabric played a significant role in the court rituals of the Ottoman Empire, and most favored silk fabric was velvet (Turkish, *kadife*), brocade, most often in a specific type of *lampas* weave (Turkish, *kemha*) and the most expensive and luxurious of all, cloth of gold and silver (Turkish, *serâser*), in a weave known by its French name, *taqueté*.

Until the middle of the sixteenth century, luxurious silk fabric had been made mainly in Bursa. After this period, the quality of silk fabric made in Bursa gradually degraded and could not satisfy the demands of the Ottoman court. As a result, the nature of Bursa's commerce with Istanbul was changing and Istanbul took the place of Bursa as a center for the production of luxurious silk textiles. In the documents recording the orders by the palace in 1575, there were not any type of *serâser* and large proportion of lengths were middle- and low-quality grades. To solve the problem of Bursa's inability to meet the demand for textiles from the court, an imperial weaving atelier was founded in Istanbul, probably in the late 1550s. It is noteworthy that Rüstem Paşa, who served Süleyman I as the grand vezîr, encouraged the manufacture of textiles in Istanbul. His administration has been linked to an increase in Ottoman luxury textile production as a part of his opposition to the import of Italian silks[9].

On the other hand, by the middle of the seventeenth century, the Ottomans had been able at least partially to escape from their complete dependence on Iran as a source of raw silk with the increase in domestic production. The fertile Bursa plain was covered with mulberry trees and their industrious spinning inhabitants, while Ottoman, Albanian, and Morean silk was being produced in abundance as well[10].

Istanbul had numerous *han*s devoted to the textile industry in the center of its commercial quarter. The *bedesten* (cloth hall) was the focus of the business district established by Mehmed II. As Evliya Çelebi lists, around 1640, there were a number of markets and merchants dealing in silk textiles in Istanbul[11]. There were also artisans known as *ehl-i hiref* who worked under court control in Istanbul. They made brocade, velvet, and serâser. After 1574, only the imperial workshops in Istanbul were allowed to produce fabric using gold[12].

Italian silk textiles at the Ottoman court

Among the splendid kaftans and luxurious textiles stored in the inner treasury of the Topkapı Palace, majority of silk fabric was Turkish, woven in either Bursa or Istanbul. Some, however, was made abroad. Among these were silks from Egypt, Iran, India, China, Spain, and most abundantly those from the Italian city states of Florence, Venice, and Genoa. Today, the

9 *İpek* (2001), op.cit., pp.171-172.
10 *İpek* (2001), op.cit., p.157.
11 Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname,* Vol.1, pp.614, 617.; H.İnalcık (1980), "The Hub of the City: The Bedestan of Istanbul", *International Journal of Turkish Studies,* I, pp.1-17.; R. Mantran (1962), *Istanbul dans la second moitié du XVII*^{e} *siècle,* Paris, pp.452 ff.
12 *İpek* (2001), op.cit., pp.169-171.

vast holdings of the Topkapı Palace Museum preserve over 325 kaftans, the vast majority of which are made with Turkish unpatterned silk fabric such as satin and moiré in elegant colors or plain wool. In contrast, comparatively few kaftans have woven patterns. Turkish fabric in the favorite cloth of gold, velvet, and brocaded silk is the material of several dozen kaftans. Almost two dozen additional kaftans were made with Italian velvet[13] (see Fig. 6).

As items of imperial dress, kaftans made with luxurious Italian velvet ranked high among the most conspicuous items of foreign manufacture at the Ottoman court. Around 1472, an annual expenditure of 60,000 ducats was earmarked for purchasing costly foreign textiles, the majority of which were presumably fabric made in Italy.

As Table 1 shows, this sum documented the significance of the purchases of Italian silk fabric in the Ottoman court. In 1589 and 1593, officials of the Ottoman court placed orders on behalf of the sultan for Venetian-made silk clothes[14]. So much money was spent on the purchases of Italian silk textiles that in the 1540s, during the later reign of Süleyman I, the grand vizier Rüstem Paşa imposed a fiscal restraint and forbade large-scale purchases of luxury textiles from Italy[15].

Among the Italian silk fabric, velvet had a special place. Velvet was more costly to manufacture because the cloth with projecting pile requires considerably more silk threads, as well as specialized weaving skills and more time to manufacture. The Ottoman sultans had dressed in some of the finest Italian velvet clothes; however, even inferior Italian velvet was valued sufficiently high for making ceremonial robes, such as the outer robe given to Siegmund von Herberstein. The most luxurious Italian velvets were woven with two, sometimes even three, levels of pile (called "pile-on-pile") and had extensive gold-thread brocading, including metal loops. In comparison, Turkish velvet does not appear to have been as luxurious as Venetian or other Italian velvet. It lacked the multiple levels of velvet pile, uncut pile loops, and metal loops[16].

A kaftan belonging to Osman II (1618–1622) is an adequate example of splendid Italian velvet in the Ottoman court (see Fig. 7). It was made of Florentine voided and brocaded velvet (c. 1540). It is noteworthy that the colors and patterns of this kaftan resemble, as Fig. 8 shows, very closely with those of the dress worn by Eleonora of Toledo (the first wife of Cosimo de' Medici) in her portrait with her son by Agnolo Bronzino (c.1545)[17].

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13 Louise W. Mackie (2004), "Ottoman *kaftans* with an Italian identity", *Ottoman Costumes, From Textile to Identity,* S. Faroqhi & C.K. Neumann (eds.,), Istanbul, p.219.

14 Archivio dello Stato di Venezia, I Documenti Turchi, Busta 8,991,992. ; For the other purchases in Italy, see *İpek* (2001), op.cit., pp.185-186.

15 Gülrü Necipoğlu (1990), "From International Timurud to Ottoman: A Change of Taste in Sixteenth Century Ceramic Tiles", *Muqarnas*, 7. pp.155.

16 *İpek* (2001), op.cit., p.183.

17 Phippa Scott (2001), *Turkish Delights*, Thames and Hudson, London.

Table 1 Annual expenditure for purchasing fabric in the Ottoman court.

60,000 ducats	Expensive foreign textiles
29,000 ducats	The dress of the household* (Turkish fabric)
50,000 ducats	Silk and gold brocade (presumably of Turkish make)
25,000 ducats	Robes of honor and ceremonial kaftans distributed at receptions and Bayram festivals

* (1500 persons, or 5000 including slaves)
Franz Babinger (1978), *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time,* Princeton, pp.455-456.

Figure 6
Kaftans made of Italian velvet. Reign of Murat III (1574–1595). Topkapı Sarayı Museum, Istanbul.

Figure 7
Kaftan belonging to Osman II (1618–1622) made of Florentine voided and brocaded velvet (c.1540), Topkapı Sarayı Museum, Istanbul.

Figure 8
Portrait of Eleonora of Toledo (the first wife of Cosimo de' Medici) with her son by Agnolo Bronzino (c.1545), Galleria deglli Uffizi, Florence.

2. Silk-cloth production in Italy during the seventeenth century.

The silk craft was introduced in Italy by Greek, Arab, and Jewish artisans between the ninth and eleventh centuries. In the thirteenth century, weaving of silk cloth was confined to only a few cities: Genoa, Venice, Bologna, and Lucca had a large production of fabric for export. Until the 1430s, the geographical distribution of silk manufacturing in Italy remained almost unchanged, until after the emigration of a large number of Lucchese artisans and entrepreneurs to the cities of the Italian peninsula because of the series of political disputes that began in Lucca in 1314. The silk manufacturing in Italy began to spread at a remarkable pace in the 1440s. At the end of the fifteenth century, silk-cloth production had been successfully set up in many cities in northern Italy, and even in a number of minor urban centers. By 1600, the silk craft played a vital role in the economy of the entire Italian peninsula, from the Alps to Sicily[18].

Italy in the seventeenth century

After the Treaty of Chateau Cambrésis, Italy enjoyed fifty years of peace and vigorous economic expansion. The economy exhibited remarkable resilience, while the population in general and urban population in particular made steady progress and by 1600 had reached unprecedented levels of affluence. Economic progress was being achieved along a broad front[19]. In response to the rising demand for basic foodstuffs generated by demographic growth and manifesting itself in rising farm prices, large portions of land were reclaimed from waste,

18 Luca. Molà (2000), *The Silk Textile Industry of Renaissance Venice*, Johns Hopkins Univ. Press., pp.3-4.

19 Domenico Sella (1997), *Italy in the Seventeenth century* (Longman History of Italy), London & New York., p.19.

swamps, or forest areas throughout the peninsula, and in some areas, notably in Veneto, Piedmont, and Tuscany Maremma, reclamation entailed large-scale investments in drainage or irrigation[20].

The trials and tribulations encountered by agriculture between 1620 and 1660 were paralleled and possibly surpassed by those affecting the other sectors of the Italian economy. The earliest ominous signs of a downturn appeared in the cities of the north, such as Venice, Milan, Genoa, and Florence—the cities that in the previous century had epitomized Italy's prosperity and position as a European economy power[21]. In recent years, it has been generally accepted that during this period, the country was exposed to international competition, and the high wages of urban artisans brought a heavy constraint[22].

It does not necessarily mean, however, that the country had been irreparably damaged. Not all industries proved so vulnerable to foreign competition. Some, in fact, survived and even prospered; new industries emerged even in the bleakest days of an ill-starred century. Among the survivors one finds, first of all, industries that depended on exquisite and still unsurpassed workmanship for producing luxury or artistic objects in which quality counted more than cost.

A number of instances have been given, and the silk industry in Veneto, Toscana, Lombardia, and many other areas is the most prominent example. There are numerous other industries such as glass-making in Venice; leather-making in Pisa (for the new market in the Spanish colonies); gunmakking and foundry in Liguria, Veneto, and Lombardia; paper production on the shores of Lake Garda and on the coast of Genoa, mostly exported to the Ottoman Empire; the woolen industry in Veneto, Piemonte, on the shores of Como, Toscana, and Abruzzi (Kingdom of Naples); and violin production in Cremona. Most of these were export-oriented industries. It is also necessary to mention that the strongest evidence of resilience and growth comes from industries located in the countryside[23].

Florentine silk industry in the seventeenth century

After the sixteenth century, there was an increase in the population in Florence[24]. The basic industry over the centuries had been woolen textile production. However, as Table 2 shows, the output decreased consistently after the death of Cosimo I (Duke of Tuscany, 1537–1569, Grand Duke of Tuscany, 1569–1574)[25]. On the other hand, silk-cloth production increased after the middle of the sixteenth century. There was a progressive increase in the enrollment of silk-maker guilds throughout the sixteenth century. The investment in silk production vaulted from

20 For example, Salvatore Ciriacono (2006), *Building on water: Venice, Holland and the construction of the Europe an landscape in early modern times*, (translated by Jeremy Scott), N.Y.

21 D. Sella (1997), *Italy in the Seventeenth century,* op.cit.*,* pp.29-30.

22 Ibid., pp.32-41.

23 D. Sella (1997), *Italy in the Seventeenth century* op.cit.*,* pp.43-46.

24 Richard Goldthwaite (1982), *The Building of Renaissance Florence,* London, p.33.

25 Noriaki Matsumoto (2006), *Medichi kunnshukoku to chichukai* ([*The Duchy of Mediti and the mediterranean*], in Japanese), p.53.

3,000 florin during the second half of the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth century to 37,000 in 1560s, 29,200 in 1570s, 116,000 in 1580s, and reaching 155,000 in 1590s, which was up about fifty-fold of that from the beginning of the century[26]. In 1620s, as Table 3 shows, silk-cloth production in Florence thus flourished and, as Table 3 shows, held a leading position in Italy until 1700.

Table 2 Production of wool and silk cloth in Florence, 1330–1739.

	Average Annual Output	
Years	Woolen cloth	Silk cloth
1330–39	30,000	
1380–89	20,000	
1420–29	11,000	
1430–39	11,000	1,000
1440–49	-	2,500
1460–69	15,000	4,500
1480–89	17,000	
1520–29	20,000	
1550–59	17,500	
1560–69	31,300	
1570–79	30,900	
1580–89	13,400	
1600–09	13,100	10,300
1610–19	10,700	9,300
1620–29	9,000	9,800
1630–39	6,000	10,000
1640–49	6,000	9,600
1650–59	-	9,700
1660–69	3,500	10,300
1730–39	-	15,500

J.C. Brown and J. Goodman (1980), "Women and Industry in Florence", *Journal of Economic History*, 40, p.77, Table 4.

26 R. Morelli (1976), *La seta fiorentina nel Cinquecento*, Milano, pp.5, 16-17.

Table 3 Comparative data on wool and silk production in Florence, 1628–29

	Silk Industry	Wool Industry
Number of looms	41	52
Total capital	800,000 *scudi*	360,000 *scudi*
Capital per firm	19,512 *scudi*	6,923 *scudi*
Total production	9,769 pieces	10,445 pieces
Production per firm	239	201
Production/scudo invested	82 pieces	35 pieces
Revenue	1,172,280 *scudi*	626,700 *scudi*

J. Goodman (1983), "Tuscan Commercial Relations with Europe, 1550-1620: Florence and the European textile Market", *Firenze e la Toscana dei Medici nell'Europa del '500,* Firenze, p.332.

Table 4 Number of silk looms in Italy, 1500–1700.

	c.1500	**c.1600**	**c.1700**
Piemonte	dozens	dozens	650
Turin			500
Others			150
Lombardia	300	3,300	500–600
Milan	200	3,000	450
Como	—	30	few
Others	dozens	150–200	few
Veneto	2,100	2,800	3,400
Venice	2000	2,300	2,500
Others	dozens	500	900
Hapsburg dominion	—	—	100
Emilia	1,800	3,300	2,400
Bologna	1,500	2,500	2,000
Others	200–300	700–800	300–400
Liguria	5,000	4,000	3,000
Genoa & Levante	5,000	4,000	3,000
Tuscany	3,600	4,000	4,000
Florence	1,000		2,200
Lucca	2,500		1,200
Others	150		400
Southern Italy	1,400	5,000–6,000	3,000
Napoli	500		1,500
Catanzaro	500		800
Sicily	300–400		700
Italy	**14,000**	**23,000**	**16,000**

F. Battistini (2000), "La tessitura serica italiana durante l'età moderna: dimensioni, specializzazione produttiva, mercati", Luca Molà, Reinhold.C.Müeller, Claudio Zanier (eds.), *La seta in Italia, dal Medioevo al Seicento, Dal baco al drappo*, Venezia, pp.335-351, Table 1.

3. Florentine silk textiles in the Ottoman Empire.

Export of Florentine silk cloth

After the Later Middle Ages, Florentine and other Italian merchants sold their silk textiles in Constantinople (Istanbul) and Bursa in exchange for Persian raw silk imported in Bursa. Florentine merchants were considerably active in this trade in the fifteenth century[27]. In the same period, Florence revived its woolen textile industry. The great absorption power of the Ottoman market served as a strong driving force for the Florentine wool industry[28].

The Florentine silk industry survived the seventeenth century virtually unscathed, with a steady output of about 10,000 a year; this was despite the closing of the French market where it had made its fortune in the past[29]. Historians have provided some explanations for the thriving market of Florentine silk cloth in the seventeenth century. According to Mazzei, what rescued the industry from certain extinction was the tapping, mainly at the hands of the indefatigable merchants of Lucca, of a whole new market in Poland, a country where the landed aristocracy made rich by trading in grain and naval stores had developed an insatiable taste for fine brocade, satin, and velvet, apparently with little concern for prices[30]. Another finding shows that Florentine silk cloth merchants maintained a solid rapport with customers in Russia[31]. And if we are to judge from a few data on export from Leghorn (Livorno) to London in the later part of the century, the English market too offered a significant new outlet for Florentine silk products[32].

Although the Florentine silk-cloth industry maintained strong ties with the Ottoman Empire as noted above, the exportation of Florentine (and Italian) silk in the early modern period hitherto remains obscure because of the lack of historical materials that could provide us with a numerical quantity. As a result, the relation between the Italian silk-cloth industry and the Ottoman Empire has been analyzed mainly in the art history that focused on weaving and patterns[33]. On the other hand, there are a few studies in economic history relating to this

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27 Florence Edler De Roover (1966), "Andrea Banchi, Florentine silk manufacturer and merchant in the Fifteenth Century", *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, III, pp.223-285.; Halil İnalcık (1994), "Bursa and the silk trade", Halil İnalcık & Donaldo Quataert (eds.) *The Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, Cambridge, pp.218-255.

28 Hidetoshi Hoshino (2001), *Industria tessile e commercio internazionale nella Firenze del tardo Medioevo,* Firenze, chapter VIII, IX.

29 D. Sella (1997), *Italy in the Seventeenth century* op.cit*.,* pp.42.

30 Rita Mazzei (1983), *Traffici e uomini d'affari italiani in Polonia nel Seicento,* Milano.

31 *Lo Stile dello Zar, Arte e Moda tra Italia e Russia dal XIV al XVIII secolo,* (Prato, Museo del Tessuto, 19 settembre 2009-10 gennaio 2010), Milano, 2009.

32 D. Sella (1997), *Italy in the Seventeenth century,* op.cit*.,* p.42.; Ralph Davis (1961), "Influences de l'Angleterre sur le déclin de Venice", in *Aspetti e cause della decadenza economica veneziana nel secolo XVII,* Atti del convegno 27 giugno-2 luglio 1957, Venezia & Roma, pp.229.

33 "Italian silks for the Ottoman market", *İpek* (2001), op.cit., pp.182-190.; Louise W. Mackie (2001), "Italian Silks for the Ottoman Sultans", *Electronic Journal of Oriental Studies*, IV (= M. Kiel, L. Landman & H. Theunisse (eds.), *Proceedings of the 11th International Congress of Turkish Art, Utrech*

issue. We analyzed the valuation of Venetian silk textiles in the lists of official price ceilings (Turkish *narh*) issued for Istanbul and Bursa in the first half of the seventeenth century[34]. The present article examines Florentine silk products in the same way and compared with Venetian products.

Florentine silk textiles in the Ottoman *narh* lists.

Narh (narkh) is a term used in Ottoman Turkish for the prices determined by official authorities for various goods. Although under Islamic law, buying and selling principally takes place with the mutual consent of both sides, and the state's intervention with regard to prices is acceptable only in extraordinary circumstances, the Ottomans gave great importance to the *narh* in order to ensure convenience for the public. Although *narh* prices were determined for almost all commodities, food, shoes, and some other basic goods were the ones that were most meticulously adjusted. Normally, the *narh* for food was set according to the seasonal changes[35].

However, under some extraordinary circumstances, such as droughts and floods, wars, and blockades and after changes in the parity of currency, price adjustments were also realized[36]. According to Pamuk, *narh* lists were not prepared regularly. They were issued primarily during extraordinary periods of instability and distress in the commodity and/or money markets when prices, especially food prices, tended to show sharp fluctuations or upward movements[37]. *Narh* lists were issued most frequently during 1585–1640 and 1785–1840. These were periods of monetary and price instability[38]. *Narh* was to be established under the supervision of the *kâdî*, according to the proposals of craftsmen such as the *kedkhudâ, yighitbashi,* and the *ehl-i wukûf*, and the suggestions of the *muhtesib*.

The most important role of the *narh* was to establish ceiling prices for basic goods. However, regarding the textile products, there are sometimes expensive silk, woolen, and angora mohair fabric in addition to domestic inexpensive cotton, linen, and woolen cloth included in *narh* lists. Luxury products had, as noted before, an indispensable role in Istanbul, where the sultans lived surrounded by his royal family, a number of high officials, ambassadors, and affluent citizens. It was very important policy to maintain high supply of the extravagant products in the city. Considering the significant role played by silk textiles in social and economic life in Istanbul, it was presumably an earnest wish for manufactures and merchants, both foreign and domestic, to be registered in *narh* list as the production place

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-*The Netherlands, August 23-28, 1999*), No.31, pp.1-21.

34 Miki Iida-Sohma (2006), "I tessuti serici veneziani e il mercato ottomano nell'epoca premoderna (secoli XVI-XVIIo)", *Mediterranean World*, XVIII, pp.63-75.

35 Mubahat Kütükoğlu, "narkh", *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd Ver., vol. VII, pp.964-965.

36 Ibid., pp.964-965.

37 Şevket Pamuk (2000), *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire,* Cambridge Univ. Press, pp.14-15.

38 Ibid., p.15, note 46.

because that would guarantee the establishment of a reputation and demand for its products.

This paper will analyze three *narh* lists—those issued for Istanbul in 1600[39] and 1640[40] and that for Bursa in 1624[41]—published by Mubahat Kütükoğlu.

As Table 5 shows, in the *narh* list of 1600 for Istanbul, there are 62 silk products including 5 "Florentine" (Turkish *filorentin*) silk (2 brocade and 3 satin) products. There are also 7 "European" (Turkish *firengî*) silk products, heavy and expensive cloth (velvet and brocade). It is possible that the European silk cloth was made in cities in northern Italy including Florence, because of their outstanding skills in the production of such luxury silk fabric in Europe during the seventeenth century as noted before. The *narh* list of 1600 indicates that Florentine silk had gained some reputation and was in demand in Istanbul at that time.

In the *narh* list of 1624 for Bursa, although there are only 2 Florentine silk products (satin) among 68 silk products registered, it is noteworthy that some silk satin products made in Venice and Bursa are registered as "Florentine style"[42]. This proves that Florentine silk satin was held in high reputation in Bursa in 1620s. Bursa had been one of the most important emporiums in Anatolia, and so the reputation of Florentine silk satin in Bursa could certainly spread over the region.

In the *narh* list of 1640 for Istanbul, there are 9 Florentine silk (1 *dîbâ*, 2 *dârâyî*, 4 satin, and 2 moiré) products among 125 silk products. As Table 6 shows, Florence ranked second and third among silk-cloth production in the *narh* lists of 1600 and 1640, both for Istanbul. Istanbul is marked in the *narh* list of 1640, but it can be explained that there are 36 *serâser* (silk cloth of gold and silver thread) products that were allowed to be woven only in Istanbul. There are also 17 European silk products (6 velvet, 1 *dîbâ*, 2 *dârâyî*, 3 brocade, 3 satin, and 2 *sandal*). They presumably include some Florentine silk cloth as noted before.

In these three *narh* lists (1600, 1624, and 1640), although Venetian silk fabric is mainly heavy and expensive cloth such as velvet and brocade, Florentine silk fabric is inclined to be light cloth such as satin. The Florentine cloth became known earlier than the Venetian products in these lists and are registered more than Venetian silk textiles in 1600 and 1640.

Meanwhile, as Table 6 shows, Venetian woolen textiles are registered earlier than Florentine products in the seventeenth century, but they disappeared in the list of 1640, when Florentine woolen cloth is registered in the *narh* list for the first time during this century. This proves not only the shift of Venetian textile industry from wool into silk, as Sella shows[43], but

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39 M. Kütükoğlu (1978) 1009/1600 Tarihli Narh Defterine göre İstanbul'da Çeşitli Eşya ve Hizmet Fiatları", *Tarih Enstitüsü*, 9.

40 M. Kütükoğlu, (1983), *Osmanlılarda Narf Müessesesi ve 1640 Tarihli Narh Deteri*, İstanbul.

41 M. Kütükoğlu, (1984), "1624 sikke tashihinin ardından hazırlanan narh defterleri", *Tarih Dergisi*

42 *Atlas-ı filorentin Venedik* (M.Kütukoğlu (1978), "1009 (1600) tarihli Narh Defterine", op.cit., p.145), *Bursa'da işlenen filorentin atlas* (Ibid., p.152).

43 D. Sella (1957), "Les mouvements longs de l'industrie lainière à Venise aux XVIème et XVIIème siècle", *Annales: Économies, Sociétes, Civilisations,* XII.; Id. (1968), "The Rise and Fall of Venetian Woolen Industry", *Crisis and Change in the Venetian Economy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth*

also the establishment of Florentine silk cloth and the revival of Florentine woolen textiles in Istanbul in the middle of the seventeenth century.

Conclusion

In the first half of the seventeenth century, Florence and Tuscany succeeded in surviving and prospering in the face of the formidable opposition of foreign competitors and centers of industries, similar to a number of other cities and regions in northern Italy, by producing luxury goods and artistic objects. Silk and woolen textile production played the leading role during the century in Florence and Tuscany. Their products exported to not only European countries but also the Ottoman Empire, especially Istanbul, where conspicuous consumption developed most sophisticatedly in every aspects of social, political, and economic life. The evidence of *narh* lists reveals that Florentine silk and woolen textiles acquired a reputation in Istanbul. Florence and Venice were the only two "European" cities that were listed several times in the *narh* registers. Aside from Florence, Venice, and Europe, we can find only Genoa and France just one time in the lists regarding textiles.

The success of silk and woolen fabric from Florence and Venice also reveals the importance of the Ottoman Empire as a powerful consumption market in the seventeenth century. The Ottoman Empire was a fundamental key factor for the economic survival of Florence and Venice. Moreover, in the Early Modern Age the empire was the "traditional" internal economic power in the Eastern Mediterranean region, a position it had maintained from the later Middle Ages.

Centuries, P. Mathias (ed.), London, 1968, pp.106-126.; Id. (1961), *Commerci e industrie a Venezial nel secolo XVII,* Venezia & Roma.

Table 5 Silk-production place as registered in the narh lists of 1600, 1624, and 1640.

year	1600	1624	1640	Sum	Remarks
Istanbul	5	-	55	60	(+Istanbul & Bursa 4)
Europe	7	5	17	29	
Chios	4	9	5	18	(+Bursa & Chios 2)
Florence	5	2	9	16	
Bursa	4	6	4	14	(+Istanbul & Bursa 4) (+Bursa & Chios 2)
Venice	-	7	5	12	
Baghdad	1	6	2	9	
Aleppo	1	1	5	7	(+Syria&Aleppo 5)
Syria	1	4	1	6	(+Syria&Aleppo 5)
Persia	-	3	3	6	
Syria & Aleppo	-	-	5	5	(+Syria 6+Aleppo 7)
India	4	-	1	5	
Istanbul & Bursa	-	-	4	4	(+Istanbul 60+Bursa 9)
Yazd	-	-	4	4	
Menemen	-	-	3	3	
Egypt	-	3	-	3	
Bursa & Chios	1	-	-	1	(+Bursa 9+Chios 18)
Mardin	1	-	-	1	
Homs	1	-	-	1	
Damietta	1	-	-	1	
Bûlâk	1	-	-	1	
Genoa	1	-	-	1	
Spain	1	-	-	1	
France	-	-	1	1	
Others	4	2	1	7	
No place	19	20	-	39	
Total	62	68	125	255	

M. Kütükoğlu (1978) (1983) (1984).

Table 6 Silk products produced in Venice, Florence, and Europe registered in the narh lists of 1600, 1624, and 1640.

narh lists (year)		1600 (for Istanbul) **F/V/E**			1624 (for Bursa) **F/V/E**			1640 (for Istanbul) **F/V/E**		
silk cloth	velvet	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2	6
	brocade	2	-	3	-	1	-	3	2	6
	light cloth	3	-	2	2	4	3	4	-	3
	mixed cloth	-	-	-	-	2	1	2	1	2
woolen cloth		-	4	-	-	1	-	5	-	-

F = Florence, V = Venice, E = Europe
M. Kütükoğlu (1978) (1983) (1984).