

DOCUMENTS

Draft Treaty of Amity & Commerce between the Ottoman Empire and France, February 1535

The following commercial agreement between the Ottoman Empire and France was negotiated in 1535. Although never ratified, it demonstrates the sort of privileges sought by European powers in their dealings with the empire.

Be it known to everybody that in the year of Jesus Christ one thousand five hundred and thirty-five, in the month of February, and of Mohammed 941, in the moon of Chaban, Sire Jean de la Forest, privy councilor, and ambassador of the most excellent and most powerful prince Francis, by the grace of God most Christian King of France, accredited to the most powerful and invincible Grand Signior, Sultan Suleiman, Emperor of the Turks, and having discussed with the powerful and magnificent Signior Ibrahim, Serasker of the Sultan, the calamities and disadvantages which are caused by war, and, on the other hand, the good, quiet, and tranquillity derived from peace; and knowing how good it is to prefer the one (peace) to the other (war), each of them guaranteeing the above-mentioned monarchs, their superiors, they have negotiated and agreed upon the following chapters and conventions in the name and on the honor of the said monarchies which are the protectors of their component States and the benefactors of their subjects:

- I. They have negotiated, made, and concluded a valid and sure peace and sincere concord in the name of the above Grand Signior and King of France during their lives and for the kingdoms, dominions, provinces, castles, cities, ports, harbors, seas, islands, and all other places they hold and possess at present or may possess in the future, so that all subjects and tributaries of said sovereigns who wish may freely and safely, with their belongings and men, navigate on armed or unarmed ships, travel on land, reside, remain in and return to the ports, cities, and all other places in their respective countries for their trade, and the like shall be done for their merchandise.
- II. Likewise, the said subjects and tributaries of the said monarchs shall, respectively be able to buy, sell, exchange, move, and transport by sea and land from one country to the other all kinds of merchandise not prohibited, by paying only the ordinary customs and ancient dues and taxes, to wit, the Turks, in the dominions of the King, shall pay the same as Frenchmen, and the said Frenchmen in the dominions of the Grand Signior shall pay the same as the Turks, without being obliged to pay any other new tribute, impost, or storage due.
- III. Likewise, whenever the King shall send to Constantinople or Pera or other places of this Empire a bailiff—just as at present he has a consul at Alexandria—the said bailiff and consul shall be received and maintained in proper authority so that each one of them may in his locality, and without being hindered by any judge, *cadi*, *soubashi*, or other, according to his faith and law, hear, judge, and determine all causes, suits, and differences, both civil and criminal, which might arise between merchants and other subjects of the King. . . .

J. C. Hurewitz, *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record*, vol. 1: *European Expansion, 1535–1914* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1975), pp. 2–3.

The Travels of Sir John Chardin into Persia and the East-Indies

Sir John Chardin (1643–1713), was an Anglo-French traveler who began his travels to the East when he was twenty-one years old. In this selection, he describes the rival trade missions to the Ottoman Empire and the inflation-inducing trade in debased coins.

The English drive a great Trade at *Smyrna*, and over all the *Levant*. This Trade is driv'n by a Royal Company settled at *London*; which is Govern'd after a most prudent manner, and therefore cannot fail of success. It has stood almost these hundred Years, being first Confirm'd towards the middle of Queen *Elizabeth's* Reign. A Reign famous for having, among other Things, giv'n Life to several Trading Companies, particularly those of *Hamborough*, *Russia*, *Greenland*, the *East-Indies* and *Turkie*, all which remain to this Day. Trade was then in its Infancy; and there is no greater Mark of the Ignorance of those Times, in reference to Countries, though a little remote, then the Association which those Merchants made: for they joyn'd several together in one Body, for mutual Conduct and Assistance. That Company which relates to the Turkish Trade, is of a particular sort: For it is not a Society, where every one puts in a Sum for one General and United Stock: It is a Body which has nothing in Common, but a peculiar Grant and Privilege to Trade into the *Levant*. It assumes to it self the Name of *The Regulated Company*. None are admitted into it, but Sons of Merchants, or such as have served an Apprenticeship to the Trade, which in *England* is for Seven Years. They give to be admitted into the Society about an Hundred and Twenty Crowns, if under the Age of Twenty Five Years; and double if above that Age. The Company commits to any one single Person their Power, nor the sole Management of their Affairs, but manage their Business among themselves by the Plurality of Voices. So that who has sufficient to drive a Trade that will bear an Imposition of Eight Crowns, has as good a Vote as he that Trades for an Hundred Thousand. This Assembly, thus *Democratical*, sends out Ships, Levies Taxes upon all their Commodities, presents the Ambassador whom the King sends to the *Port*, Elects two Consuls, the one for *Smyrna*, the other for *Aleppo*, and prevents the sending of Goods which are not thought proper for the *Levant*. It consists at present of about Three Hundred Merchants, besides that they bring up in *Turkie* a great number of young Persons well descended, who learn the Trade upon the Place it self. This Trade amounts to about Five or Six Hundred Thousand Pounds yearly, and consists in Cloaths made in *England*, and Silver which they carry as well out of *England*, as out of *Spain*, *France*, and *Italy*: In exchange of which they bring back Wool, Cotton-Yarn, Galls, Raw Silk and Wov'n, together with some other Commodities of less value. . . .

The Hollanders also drive a great Trade at *Smyrna*, and more than any other Nation of *Europe*, but they have little to do elsewhere; all their Dealing in all

the rest of the Cities in the *Levant* amounting to little or nothing. Their principal Profit consists in carrying the *Armenians* and the Goods into *Europe*, and carryin 'em back again. They also make great Advantage of their Money, of which *Turkie* is very full. This money of theirs is made of base Mettle, and notoriously intermix'd with Counterfeit pieces. It chiefly consists of Crowns, Half-Crowns, *Testons*, or Eighteen-penny pieces, and pieces of Fifteen *Sous*. The Crowns and Half-Crowns for the most part carry the Dutch Stamp. Which the Turks therefore call *Aslani*, that is to say *Lions*; in regard of their being mark'd on both sides with the Figure of a Lyon. The Arabians, either out of Ignorance or otherwise, mistaking the Lyon for a Dog, give'em the Name of *Abou-Kelb*, or *Dogs*. The Quarter-Pieces are almost all Counterfeit; or at Best, but Half Silver. However the Turks are so void of Judgment and Understanding, that they esteem this Money beyond that of *Spain*, which they call *Marsillies*, by reason that the Merchants of *Marseilles* first brought it in great Quantities into *Turkie*. . . .

The French are very numerous in *Smyrna*, and over all the *Levant*, there not being a Port of *Turkie* upon the *Mediterranean* Sea, wherein there are not several. They are for the most part all *Provençalls*. But the Trade which they drive is so inconsiderable, that one Merchant in each Place might dispatch all Business. . . . [T]he *Provençalls* have formerly had in *Turkie* those fortunate Chances and Luckie Opportunities, that it is highly to be wonder'd, that they did not fill their Country with Wealth in that happy Conjunction. One of those Lucky Seasons began about the Year 1656, and lasted Thirteen Years, during which time they drove a Trade, by which they gain'd Fourscore and Ninety *per. Cent*.

This Trade which was really and truly a great piece of Knavery consisted in these *Five-Sous-Pieces* that have made such a Noise. For the Turks took the first that were brought at Ten *Sous* apiece; At which rate they held up for some time; tho afterwards they fell to Seven *Sous* and a half. There was no other Money Stirring: all *Turkie* was full of it; neither was there any other Money to be had; for that the French carri'd all the other Money away. This good Fortune so intoxicated their Senses, that not content with such great Gains, they still thirsted after more; and to that purpose they set themselves to alter their own pieces of *Five Sous*, and made others of the same sort, but of base Mettle, which they Coin'd first at *Dombes*, then at *Orange*, and afterwards at *Avignon*. More then this, they Stampt far worse at *Monaco* and *Florence*: And lastly they made more of the same Stamp in the remote Castles belonging to the *State of Genoa*, and other private places, which were only Copper plated over. The Merchants of *Marseilles*, to utter this Money, brought down the price themselves, and put off their Pieces in payment, and to the Money-Changers at a lower Rate then the Current Value. The Turks were a long time before they perceiv'd the Cheat that was put upon'em, though so palpable and of so great a Consequence; but so soon as they found it out, they were so incens'd, that they laid most heavy Impositions upon the *French*, using'em no better then Counterfeiters of Money, though the *Dutch* and *Genoeses* had a hand in it as well as they. Therupon they forbid'em to utter any of those Pieces which they call'd *Timmins*, but such as were stamp'd with the real Arms of *France*, which they also brought down and put at Five *Sous* apiece. So that all the *European* Merchants, except the *English*, were loaded at that time with great Quantities of those *Timmins*. Their Warehouses were full, whole Ships Loadings of 'em arriv'd daily, and they began to Coin'em in all parts. But soon after, this Money being cry'd down, several of those Money-Merchants lost all their Gains, and many much more then ever they got.

The *English* were the Procurers of this Decry. For had that Money continu'd Curren, their Trade had been ruin'd, which consisted chiefly in the purchase of Silks. And the reason was, because the *Timmin*-Merchants caus'd an advance to be made upon the price of Silks, not caring what they gave, provided the Sellers would take their Pieces of Five *Sous* in payment. I have seen above Fifty several sorts of Coins of this sort of Money. But the most common sort carri'd on the one side a Womans Head with this *Motto*, *Vera Virtutis Imago*: On the other, the Arms of *France*, with this *Impresse*, *Currens per totam Asiam*.

There are no People in the World that have been more frequently cheated, or that are more easily gull'd then the *Turks*; as being naturally very dull, and thick-skull'd, and apt to believe any fair Story: Which is the reason that the Christians have impos'd a Thousand Cony-catching-Tricks, and Cheats upon'em. But though you may deceive'em once or twice, yet when their Eyese are op'n, they strike home, and pay ye once for all. And those sort of Impositions which they lay upon Offenders in that Nature, are call'd *Avanies*; which are not always unjust Impositions neither; they being like the Confiscations so frequent in Custom-Houses: Where for the most part the Chief Ministers and their Officers devour the People, while the *Port* winks all thee first time, and only exhorts to Amendment. If the Complaints cease, the Offence is stifled; but if the Clamour grow too loud, the *Port* sends to take off the Head of the Party accus'd, and Confiscates his Estate. By which means the People are satisfied, the Treasury is fill'd, Justice is done, and the Example remains to terrifie others.

Sir John Chardin, *The Travels of Sir John Chardin into Persia and the East-Indies*, vol. 1 (London: Moses Pitt, 1686).

The Travels of Sir John Chardin into Persia and the East-Indies

Sir John Chardin traveled to Persia from the Ottoman Empire. Here he describes the steps taken by the Safavid government to deal with famine in Isfahan.

All this while the Dearth encreas'd at *Ispahan*, and the poor people cry'd aloud against the excessive price of it. And indeed there were many causes of this Scarcity. First, the last Harvest did not amount scarce to the half of what they expected; for the Locust had devour'd the Ears. Then the whole Train of the Court was come all together of a sudden to *Ispahan* before they were expected, so that they had tak'n no care to lay in their Stores against Winter. Moreover, at the King's first coming to the Crown, the greatest part of the Officers of the Empire coming to present themselves before Him, and a vast number of private persons crouding together about business, or for curiosity, the Multitude of Inhabitants was encreas'd to above half as many again, so that of necessity the Price of Provisions must be double in Proportion. But the chief Reason that all things were so dear was the bad appearance of the Harvest at hand, which promis'd no better then the last year. For in regard the Harvests in these Climates are generally reap'd in the Months of *June* and *July*, it is easie to conjecture in *March* and *April* what the year will produce. And therefore the Corn Merchants perceiving that there would be an infallible scarcity of all sorts of Grain, enhans'd their Prizes, and would not part with what they had, but staid

till the Prizes were at the highest, so that the probability of a dearth to come caus'd a present Famine. Lastly, the ill Government was in part a great cause of the scarcity, for that the Laws were not observ'd, and the Magistrates neglected their duty, without fear of being punish'd. And this was the Reason that the *Mochtesek*, or Chief of the Government, receiv'd Bribes of those that sold the necessary Provisions, and therefore to gratifie'em he publish'd every Week the Prizes of things as those people desir'd; that is to say, at an excessive rate, and three quarters higher then in the time of the deceas'd King. For we are to observe, that it is a Custom in *Persia*, that every *Saturday* the Chief Justice sets the Price of all Provisions for the Week following, which the Sellers dare not exceed under great forfeitures. This Knavery then of the Judge of the City Government, who stood in no aw of the superior Government, was the cause that all things were sold at double and treble the Rate they ought to have been.

The People therefore almost starv'd by this Scarcity, redoubl'd their Cries, so that they reach'd the very Gate of the Palace Royal, which mov'd his Majesties Compassion to that degree, that he committed the Affair to *Ali-Kouli-Kaan*, General of all his Forces. Who began his first endeavours of redress with an Act of Generosity and Justice, which made him dreaded by all the Merchants and Corn-sellers. He had commanded one of the most eminent Merchants in *Ispahan* to send him in upon the place, the first day of the Market, two hundred Sacks of Wheat, and not to sell'em at a dearer rate then they were sold the year before. Now the Merchant thought that he expected a Bribe; and therefore upon the Market day, thinking to exempt himself from obedience to his Command he sent him two hundred *Tomans*, which amount to the value of about a thousand *Pistols*. Thereupon the *Generalissimo*, being highly offended, sent for him, and when he came, *Dog as thou art*, said he, *is it thus thou goest about to famish a whole City? For the Affront thou hast done me receive a hundred Drubs upon the soles of thy feet*. Which were paid him at the same instant; and besides, the General condemned him in a Fine of two thousand Crowns; which he took to himself, sending the thousand *Pistols* to the King.

Presently, he order'd a great Oven to be built in the Royal *Piazza*, and another in the publick *Piazza*, ordering the Criers to proclaim that those Ovens were fixed to bake those alive, that should sell their bread at a rate above the set price, or that should hide up their Corn. There was moreover a fire continually kept in these Ovens, but no body was thrown in; because no body would venture the pain of such a rigorous punishment of his Disobedience.

At the same time he also went himself to visit all the Granaries and Store-houses of Corn and Meal that were in *Ispahan*, and having taken an account in Writing of their Number, every Week he commanded the Merchants to send a certain quantity according to the Proportion of what the Store-houses contain'd, and not to sell but at a certain Price, and not to deliver their goods to any but such as brought a Note under his hand. He gave the same Command for Barley: so that almost for a whole years time there was neither Wheat or Barley to be had without a Ticket seal'd with his Signet. All the Bakers went for such a Ticket. And in regard the General knew full well what every one of 'em vented, he would not permit the Baker by vertue of his Ticket to buy any more then what he had occasion for. To that purpose he prohibited the Bakers to sell to any other then those of their own Precinct, nor to sell'em any more then what was needful for their subsistence according to the usual rate of their

spending, to the end that the Bakers should not pretend that persons came from abroad to buy their bread, or that those in their Precincts bought more one Week than they did another, and so that the vent could not be always equally proportion'd. And for the Price, he order'd that the *Batman-cha* of Bread (the Royal weight of *Persia*, consisting of eleven pounds three quarters) should be worth an *Abassi*, which makes four Groats.

By this good management he wonderfully eas'd the People, who before paid for eleven pound and three fourths of Bread an *Abassi* and a quarter, or twenty pence; whence it also came to pass, that there was Plenty sufficient. Thus the Complaints and Cries of the People ceas'd. For the Bakers being oblig'd to furnish those in their Precincts with as much bread as they stood in need of, no body was apprehensive of the scarcity, but only that he paid five farthings for that which cost not above four in time of plenty. And to the end that the same rate might continue, he sent to all the Burroughs, Towns, and Villages, from either to nine days journey round about, to send in such a number of Waggon-Loads of Corn and Meal to *Ispahan*, and there to sell it at the net price. By which means there came enough to supply the City for six Months. Moreover, when any considerable Quantity arriv'd, he order'd it to be brought in, as it were, in triumph; the People dancing before with their Instruments of Musick, and the horses being cover'd with Housses, and ginging an infinite number of little Bells, which together with the Acclamations of the Rabble made a strange, confused, and yet pleasing noise.

Some villages there were mutiny'd and refus'd to send in their Corn; but the punishment of the Inhabitants of *Ispahanim-cha* strook a terrour into the rest. For the General had sent to this Place, being a great Town consisting of four thousand Houses, two Leagues distant from *Ispahan*, one of his Officers with a Command from the King to send at the set Price two hundred Sacks of Meal to the Capital City for the present necessity. The Townsmen made answer, 'twas nothing to them if there were such a Famine in the City, for that they had paid all their duties and Impositions for the last Harvest: that they had something else to do then to send their Corn and the Meal to *Ispahan* Market, and that those that wanted might come to them, for that they were not bound to sell but in their own Town. Thereupon the Officer remonstrated to the Principal of the Village that it was the Kings pleasure, and shew'd 'em the Kings Warrant which he had in his hands; to which their answer not being with that becoming reverence which became 'em, the Officer laid his hand upon his Sword, thinking to have frighted 'em into obedience. But the Country fellows not understanding his hard words, fell upon the Officer, beat him almost blind, and tore the Kings Command, crying out, 'twas a Cheat and Counterfeit.

The General highly offended at this Insolence of the Countrymen, gave the King an account of it, who order'd him to inflict such punishment as the Offence deserv'd. Upon which he sent two hundred of his Guards, who Drubb'd to excess the Principal of the Ringleaders. He also set a Fine upon their heads of a hundred thousand Crowns; which was mitigated to a third part, tho after many Petitions and Submissions, with a Present to the General of a thousand *Pistols*, which was all paid down upon the nail.