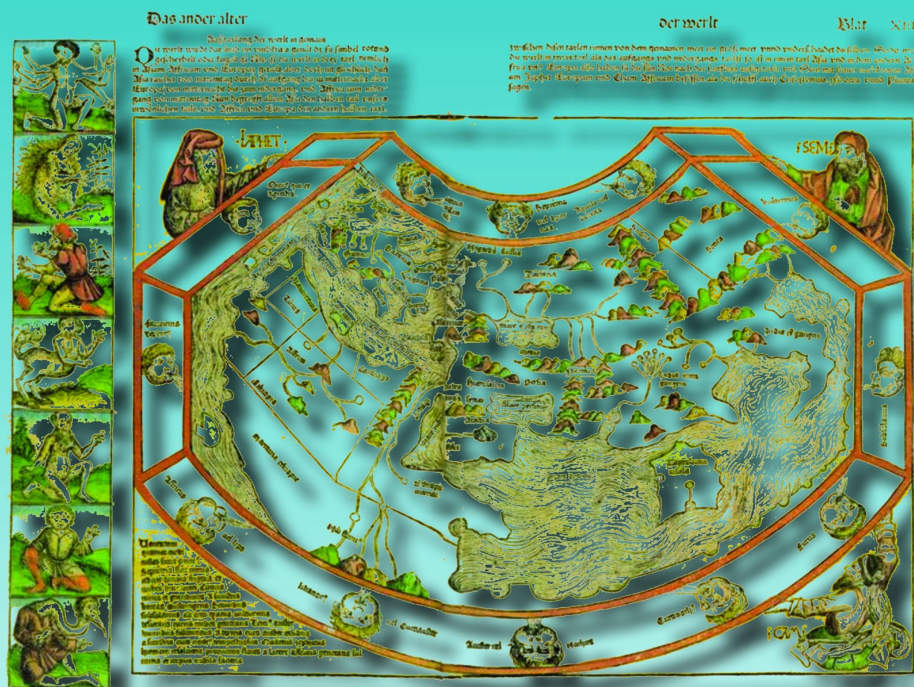


Eastern and Central European Studies I

Edited by Christian Gastgeber and Alexandru Simon



Italy and Europe's Eastern Border (1204-1669)

Edited by
Iulian Mihai DAMIAN, Ioan-Aurel POP,
Mihailo St. POPOVIĆ and Alexandru SIMON

EXTRACT



PETER LANG

Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften

The Venetian-Ottoman Peace of 1479 in the Light of Documents from the Venice State Archive

Anna Calia (San Marino)

On the 25th of April 1479 the *Serenissima* ratified the peace treaty signed a few months earlier in Constantinople by Giovanni Dario in presence of sultan Mehmed II.

This war – the then longest Venetian-Ottoman conflict – played an essential role in the redefinition of the Venetian Stato da Mar¹, whose domains in Greece and the eastern Adriatic suffered a severe reduction. The control of the so-called Venetian-gulf played a vital role for the *Serenissima*, which for the first time saw its power on seas endangered by the Ottomans. The war had a major importance also since it involved many actors of the political scene of the time. Venetian efforts to fight the Ottomans are to be considered within the frame of its diplomatic communication with Uzun Hasan, the powerful lord of the Turkmen tribal confederation named Akkoyunlu (House of the White Sheep). His death in 1478 represented the end of all challenges to the Ottoman power coming from the Turkish emirates, by that time all subjects of the House of Osman. It is not surprising therefore that the peace treaty was eventually signed only one year after Uzun Hasan's death².

On the other hand, the end of the House of the White Sheep meant the failure of the encircling strategy adopted during the war by Venice, as she tried to create an anti-Ottoman alliance with the Akkoyunlu, Poland and Hungary, the last willing to reassert control over Bosnia, conquered by the Ottoman grand vezir Mahmud Pasha Angelović in 1463.

The focus of the present paper will be on the attempts made by both the *Serenissima* and the Porte to reach an agreement along the years of the war,

1 See R. LOPEZ, Il principio della guerra veneto-turca del 1463. *Archivio Veneto* V/15 (1934) 45–131; F. BABINGER, Mehmed the Conqueror and his Time. Princeton 1978, 241–258; K. M. SETTON, The Papacy and the Levant (1204–1571), volume II. Philadelphia 1978, 231–270; C. IMBER, The Ottoman Empire. The Early Age (1300–1481). Istanbul 1990, 185–191; PH. B. PERRA, Ο Λέων εναντίον της ημισελήνης. Ο πρώτος Βενετο/Οθωμανικός πόλεμος και η κατάληψη του Ελλαδικού χώρου 1463–1479. Athina 2009. Perra gives an account of the war, but fails to mention the vast amount of evidence provided by Venetian archives.

2 Furthermore, in war years, Venice often tried to set up plots against Mehmed in the effort to kill him. See V. LAMANSKY, *Secrets d'État de Venise*, 2 volumes. New York 1968, volume I, 16–27.

especially after the fall of Negroponte (Chalkida) in 1470. These endeavours are mainly represented by accounts of diplomatic communications, ambassadors and translators (*dragomanni*) going to and fro Venice and Constantinople. As a further matter, we will present some documents, preserved in the Venice State Archive, dating to 1479/80, related to the *impium foedus*, borrowing an expression usually referred to the alliance between Francis I, King of France, and sultan Suleyman the Magnificent in 1536.

An Outline of the War

After the Ottoman conquest of Morea in 1460, tension between the two powers had unceasingly increased. Venice still controlled some strongholds along the Moreote coast – among others Corone (Koroni) and Modone (Methoni), the “eyes of the Serenissima”, Napoli di Romania (Nauplion), Malvasia (Monemvasia), Argo (Argos), Lepanto (Naupaktos) – which were directly threatened by Ottoman raids and seizing of ships.

The *casus belli* which made Venice declare war on the Ottomans was the capture of Argo on the 28th of July 1463. The events seemed to be favourable for Venice, when it reached an alliance with the new emir of Karaman as well as Uzun Hasan in 1464³. Nonetheless, Venice didn’t undertake any significant military operation with the lord of the Akkoyunlu in those years, and as soon as in 1466/67 Mehmed attacked Albania, breaking the resistance of George Scanderberg and putting siege to the fortress of Croia (Kruja), which was protected by the Venetians⁴.

In the first years of war embassies were exchanged between both the Ottoman⁵ and the Venetian side⁶. Yet, when some Venetian ships attacked

3 G. TH. ZORAS, *Ανωτόμουν χρονικόν περί των τούρκων σουλτάνων κατά τον ελληνικόν βαρβερινόν κώδικα* 111. Athina 1958, 114f. See also C. BOSWORTH, “Uzun Hasan”. *Encyclopédie de l’Islam* (= EI²); Ş. TURAN, Fatih Mehmed, Uzun Hasan mücadelesi ve Venedik. *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 3 (1965) 63–74; M. ŞEFİK KEÇİK, Briefe und Urkunden aus der Kanzlei Uzun Hasans: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte Ost-Anatoliens im 15. Jahrhundert. Freiburg 1976.

4 BABINGER, Mehmed the Conqueror 258–285; TURAN, Fatih Mehmed 74–85; SETTON, The Papacy, volume II 271–291; IMBER, The Ottoman Empire 192–198.

5 An Ottoman embassy sent from the vezir Mahmud Pasha Angelović reached Venice in 1465. The ambassador was Jakov Bunić, who received an offer of ten thousand golden ducats provided he succeeded in giving back the Morea and Lesbos to Venice, and Bosnia to Hungary, see Venice State Archive (= ASV), Senato Secreti reg. 22, ff. 100v–101v, 122; D. MALIPIERO, *Annali Veneti dall’anno 1457 al 1500*. Firenze 1843–1844, 38–40; BABINGER, Mehmed the Conqueror 242f.; TH. STAVRIDES, *Sultan of Vezirs: the Life and Time of the Ottoman Vezir Mahmud Pasha Angelović (1453–1474)*. Leiden 2001, 208–228. In 1466 David Maurogonatos arrived in Venice, who was a Jewish merchant, a subject of the Duke of Candia and a friend of Ya’kub Pasha, Mehmed’s influential doctor. Cf. E. TRAPP (ed.), *Prosopographisches Lexikon*

an Ottoman stronghold at Enez (Aenos) near Thessaloniki in 1469, Mehmed reacted by placing a siege on Negroponte, an event which marked a change in the evolution of the war, as the city fell on the 12th of July 1470 after the assault of the Ottoman fleet led by Mahmud Pasha Mihailoğlu⁷.

After the loss of Negroponte the *Serenissima* sought in several occasions a peace treaty. Between 1470 and 1475, thanks to the involvement of Mara Branković, five Ottoman ambassadors reached Venice (among them Teodoro Spandugino Cantacuzeno⁸), whereas Francesco Cappello and Niccolò Cocco went to Constantinople to seek a peace agreement, which couldn't be reached due to the sultan's harsh conditions⁹.

In the meanwhile – between 1470 and 1472 – Uzun Hasan became more active and once more looked for diplomatic contacts with Venice. Several embassies came to Venice from Persia and many Venetian ambassadors left

der Palaiologenzeit, I-XII. Wien 1976–2001, no. 7942 (= PLP). In 1469 a certain Geremia arrived, who tried to reach an agreement concerning the borders of the sanjak of Bosnia. See: M. P. PEDANI, In nome del Gran Signore: inviati ottomani a Venezia dalla caduta di Costantinopoli alla guerra di Candia. Venezia 1994, 103f.

6 Giacomo Venier in 1466, see commission in ASV, Senato Secreti, reg. 23, ff. 11–12. Leonardo Boldù in 1467, see commission in ASV, Senato Secreti, reg. 23, f. 80.

7 D. MALIPIERO, *Annali Veneti* 206; G. TH. ZORAS, Χρονικόν περί των τούρκων σουλτάνων 117f.; BABINGER, Mehmed the Conqueror 285–309; TURAN, Fatih Mehmed 85–87; SETTON, *The Papacy*, volume II 291–307; IMBER, *The Ottoman Empire* 198–204; STAVRIDES, *The Sultan of Vezirs* 168–172. Angiolello of Vicenza, who was captured during the siege of Negroponte, wrote a “Breve narrazione della vita et fatti degli Scia di Persia Ussun Hassan e Ismaele”, the most important Western source giving a detailed account of Uzun Hasan's anti-Ottoman efforts. See *Historia Turchesca* 1300–1514, ed. I. URSU. Bucarest 1909; also G. B. RAMUSIO, *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*, I–III. Venezia 1559 (reprinted Torino 1978–1988), volume III 357–420; N. DI LENNA, Ricerche intorno allo storico G. Maria Angiolello (degli Anzolelli), patrizio vicentino (1451–1525). *Archivio Veneto-Tridentino* 5 (1924) 1–56; F. BABINGER, “Angiolello, Giovan Maria”. *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (= DBI); SETTON, *The Papacy*, volume II 94f.; C. BAZZOLO (ed.), *Viaggio di Negroponte (Testi Inediti o Rari* 1). Vicenza 1982; G. BELLINGERI, Due manoscritti veneziani di storia turco-persiana, una fonte ottomana e Giovan Maria Angiolello, in: G. PEDRINI – N. VELADIANO (eds.), *Itinera orientalia. Itinerari veneti tra Oriente e Occidente. Relazioni di viaggio tra identità e alterità*. Vicenza 2010, 23–94.

8 Author of “Del origine de Principi de Turchi, ordine de la corte loro et Costumi de la Natione”, written during his stay in Constantinople from 1502 to 1509. Cf. K. SATHAS, *Μνημεία Ἑλληνικῆς Ἱστορίας* (Documents inédits relatifs à l'histoire de la Grèce au Moyen Age), volume IX. Paris 1890, 133–261; also D. M. NICOL, *Theodore Spandounes: On the Origin of the Ottoman Emperors*. Cambridge 1997.

9 Elections and commission: ASV, Senato Secreti, reg. 24, ff. 157v, 162r, 164v–166r. The terms of peace put forward by Mehmed in 1471 are reported in the oldest known original Ottoman document drawn up in Italian. See: V. L. MÉNAGE, *Seven Ottoman Documents from the Reign of Mehmed II*, in: S. M. STERN (ed.), *Documents from Islamic Chanceries (Oriental Studies* 3). Oxford 1965, 82f., 92f.

for the East, namely Caterino Zen¹⁰ and Giosafat Barbaro¹¹, who both left accounts of their missions to Tabriz. In exchange for an alliance with Venice, Uzun Hasan intended to restore the emirates of Karaman and Sinop. Moreover, he asked to be himself in charge of the coast surrounding Trapezunte (Trabzon). Jointly with the Venetian ambassador Giosafat Barbaro, Uzun Hasan managed to sabotage the powerful Ottoman arsenal based in Kallipolis (Gelibolu). Nonetheless, the lord of Akkoyunlu didn't honour the agreement undertaken with Venice to fight uniquely the Ottomans and directed his attentions against the Mamluk sultanate of Egypt. Once again the alliance between Venice and Uzun Hasan proved to be inefficient.

There is a letter written by the Mamluk sultan Qaitbay to the doge Nicolò Tron, preserved in the Arabic original and in translation in the Venice State Archive, witnessing Uzun Hasan's ambitions towards Egypt. The letter came as an answer to Giovanni Emo's embassy in Egypt, which had been sent in order to reassure the sultan and to confirm that the Venetian alliance with Uzun Hasan had a merely anti-Ottoman purpose and did not intend to threaten Mamluk possessions¹².

Despite being in a state of open warfare on all fronts, Mehmed II managed to defeat Uzun Hasan in two decisive clashes at Erzincan and at Otluk Beli in 1473 and could therefore concentrate exclusively on the western front against Venice. He continued besieging the Venetian fortresses of Scutari (Shkoder) and Croia in Albania, but failed to overcome their resistance¹³. By that time, Venice tried once again to obtain peace from the Porte at reasonable conditions and in 1474 Girolamo Zorzi – accompanied by the secre-

10 Niccolò Zeno, a descendant of Caterino, published the memories of his ancestor, which are entitled: *De i commentarii del viaggio in Persia di Messer Caterino Zeno et delle guerre fatte nell'imperio persiano dal tempo di Ussuncassano in quà libri due*, Venezia, Marcolini 1558, in: G. B. RAMUSIO, *Delle Navigazioni* volume II ff. 220–234 = ed. Torino 1978–1988 volume IV 143–186.

11 *Viaggio di Iosafat Barbaro alla Tana e nella Persia*, in: G. B. RAMUSIO, *Delle Navigazioni*, III ff. 66–78 = ed. Torino 1978–1988, volume III 481–576; BABINGER, Mehmed the Conqueror 319–321; SETTON, *The Papacy*, volume II 310–312.

12 *Diplomatarium Veneto-Levantinum*, volume II 306; ASV, *Libri Commemorativi* XVI 72, see R. PREDELLI – G. M. THOMAS (eds.), *I Libri Commemorativi della Repubblica di Venezia, I–VIII* (Monumenti Storici pubblicati dalla R. Deputazione veneta di storia patria). Venezia 1878–1914, volume XVI 62 (= *Libri Commemorativi, regesta*); ed. S. LABIB, *Ein Brief des Mameluken Sultans Qa'itbey. Der Islam* 32 (1957) 324–329; J. WANSBROUGH, *A Mamluk letter of 877/1473. Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 24 (1961) 200–213.

13 TURAN, *Fatih Mehmed* 88–126; BABINGER, *Mehmed the Conqueror* 325–368; SETTON, *The Papacy*, volume II 314–321; IMBER, *The Ottoman Empire* 208–221; O. J. SCHMITT, *Das Venezianische Albanien (1392–1479)* (*Südosteuropäische Arbeiten* 110). München 2001.