

The Trials and Tribulations of a Dutch Merchant in Istanbul: Auctions at the Dutch Embassy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Capital

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The Dutch Embassy in Istanbul held auctions in order to sell any goods left behind usually upon death by members of the Dutch ‘echelle’ or ‘nation’ living there. Similar to Renaissance and early-modern Europe, traditionally auctions were held to settle debts and raise income to support widows or orphans.¹ Between 1725 and 1750 sixteen of these auctions have been recorded. They concern the possessions of merchants, embassy staff members and other members of the Dutch ‘nation’. Products sold at these auctions ranged from paintings and books to jewelry, exquisite Ottoman clothes to old wigs. The auctions drew a public from both Europeans who stayed in the Ottoman Empire as well as Ottoman subjects. This article will discuss which types of commodities were sold, to whom they were sold and finally will focus on one specific auction. This particular

1 Matchette, Ann. “Dismembering the Home in Renaissance Italy.” *Imagined Interiors: Representing the Domestic since the Renaissance* (eds.). Jeremy Aynsley and Charlotte Grant. London: V&A Publications, 2006. 48-49.

case concerns the auction of Ankara-based Dutch mohair merchant Abraham de la Fontaine and his wife Petronella Gasparina. As the former was imprisoned after his bankruptcy and arrest for several crimes, he had to sell off his personal goods in order to be released from his debts and from prison.

Of the first quarter of the eighteenth century no auction records have survived, and therefore all auctions discussed here cover the period 1725-1750. The following list provides the details of each public auction.²

In Istanbul the auctions often took place on the premises of the ambassadorial palace or the adjacent chancery in Pera. Occasionally the goods remained in their original location and were sold from there, as was the case with the goods in the tavern of François Barchon, those in the home of merchant Simon van Breen and the belongings of Widow Louise Violier which were auctioned off at the Voyvoda Han in Galata, possibly the place where she had her lodgings. A separate auction was also arranged in the village of Belgrade near Istanbul, for the belongings from Ambassador Colyer's summer house there. Sometimes several auctions were combined and organized on the same day. This was the case with the goods that belonged to Jean de la Fontaine the Vicar, whose belongings were partially sold during the larger auction of Jacobus Colyer's possessions. Another public sale also partially took place on the same day, that of court preacher Martin Hendrick Nieupoort and that of secretary to the Ambassador Bastiaen Fagel. Most probably both the auctions were organized on the premises of the ambassadorial palace, as Fagel's auction is described to have taken place in his room in the ambassadorial palace, while Nieupoort's auction is only described to have been set in Pera. Since Nieupoort was the court preacher, it is most likely that he also lived in the palace and that his possessions were not transferred somewhere else only to be sold.

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2 The auction record of Pietro de la Fontaine, who died on 30 March 1730, is not included in this list, as it is incomplete and date, location nor auction supervisor is recorded.

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List 1: Dutch auctions in Istanbul between 1725 and 1750, in chronological order

No.	Who	Profession	Date of demise	Where	When
1	Jan David Reuter	Court preacher	1724, 29 December	Pera	1725, February 5
2	Jacobus Colyer	Dutch Ambassador	1725, March 6	Pera. Extra sale in the village of Belgrade, s.d.	1725, Sept. 10 and following days
3	Jean de la Fontaine the Vicar	Vicar	not upon death	Pera, partially sold at the auction of Colyer	1725, September 25
4	Simon Van Breen	Dutch merchant	1727, August 11	The house of the deceased in Pera	1727, August 18, 26 & 27
5	Le Vaché	Former valet to the Dutch Ambassador	not upon death	Pera	1727, August 24
6	Louise Violier (Widow de Broses)	Widow of the former secretary to the Dutch Ambassador	1728, October	Voyvoda Han in Galata	1729, March 2
7	Catterina de Bourg (Widow Colyer)	Widow of Dutch Ambassador Jacobus Colyer	1730, May 12	? in cooperation with the court of Galata	1730, July 7, 12
8	Martin Hendrick Nieupoort	Court preacher	1730, January 31	Pera	1730, October 17-19
9	Bastiaen Fagel	Secretary to the Ambassador	1730, April 1	Room of the deceased at the ambassadorial palace	1730, October 19, 20, 21, 23, 24 & 25
10	Maria de la Fontaine (married to Jean Meijnard)	Her husband was a French merchant	Prob.1730, October 20	Dutch Chancery	1731, May 15 until October 24
11	François Barchon	Steward/ butler to the Ambassador & ran a tavern	1731, August 8	Dutch Chancery & in his tavern	1731, August 18 & 19, November 29 & 30, December 1
12	Fredrich Boursched	Valet and French horn player of the Dutch Ambassador	1732, October 30	Ambassadorial palace	1733, February 25
13	Don Antonio Halvagi	Priest	not upon death	Ambassadorial palace	1734, December 29
14	Justinus van Breen	Dutch merchant	1739, October 29	Dutch Chancery	1740, February 15
15	Abraham de la Fontaine and Petronella Gasparina Rolland	Merchant	Not upon death	Dutch chancery	1740, May 11 & 13
16	Jean Gonnet	Court preacher	1745, May	Ambassadorial palace	1745, May 10, 11 & 12

It seems that public auctions from various “nations” in Istanbul were considered as social events, where not only foreigners came to buy items left by friends or acquaintances who passed away, but also slaves, Ottoman officials and Janissaries came to spend their money. For instance, butler to the English Ambassador, Samuel Medley, was a regular visitor of public sales in the 1730s. He noted down in his diary when and with whom he had attended the auctions and sometimes even whether he had bought something noteworthy, such as handkerchiefs or white hoses.³ Who were the people that attended these sixteen auctions? We learn their names from the entries in the chancery registers, together with the price they paid for a specific item. Sometimes there is reference to the purchase of a certain item by a servant for his master, but often the buyers were buying for themselves and their families, or perhaps for business purposes. There are also female buyers listed in the registers, and it is very probable that they were also physically present at the events. Although foreign women generally did not venture far from their homes in Pera and Galata during the eighteenth century, they normally visited the parties and other events organized by various embassies. As mentioned previously, Ottoman Janissaries as well as higher-ranking officials also bought various items. It is unclear whether they sent someone else in their place to buy the items of their interest. Knowing that auctions were announced well beforehand and catalogues were prepared, and perhaps even the items themselves were available to be inspected by potential buyers before the auction day, it may very well be that Ottoman officials sent their servants to buy items for them.

Unfortunately there are no lists of all attendees, so there could have been a lot more potential buyers who left the sales empty-handed. In general the names of the buyers are specified with extra characteristics, so that it was clear who had actually bought a specific item, and money could be collected from the right person afterwards. In the record of Jacobus Colyer’s auctions in Istanbul and the village of Belgrade there are references to buyers that come from various

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3 Webb, Nigel, and Caroline Webb. *The Earl and His Butler in Constantinople: The Secret Diary of an English Servant among the Ottomans*. Oakham: Legini Press, 2006. 21, 143, 147, 151, 166, 168.

backgrounds. Jews, such as “the Jew Abraham Onsiel” and Jewish Doctor Foix; Armenians like “the Armenian Macksout the water-carrier of the Venetian Bailo” and the Armenian Hagij Tokman; Venetians: “the Venetian painter called Michiel”, Giaquino a Venetian slave and Venetian silversmith Giacomo Venturini; Dragomans: the Russian Dragoman Sir Gregorio and the English Dragoman Mosco; Janissaries: “our Janissary Achmed Bassa Boujoukli (Bıyıklı Ahmed beşe)” and “the Janissary Bayrakdar who stands guard at the Russian Envoy”, and what seems a Janissary-turned-*esnaf*⁴: butcher Abdoula Bassa (beşe); peasants: the Belgrade peasant women Saccosti and Smaragda; Greeks: the Greek Bishop of Malvazia called Gergorio; the Ambassador’s Greek widow Catterina de Bourg and even the “Besestenli Devlet” (most probably the Kapalı Çarşı) are mentioned among the buyers.

For instance, The Leytstars, a prominent family of merchants in the Levant, bought 3.8 % of all items on sale at the auctions (84 entries). A certain Kiusoglu (Kuşoğlu or Çavuşoğlu?) bought 2.4 % of all items. Sometimes an additional Hadgi (Hacı) Lazari or Hadgi Bali is added to the name. He only attended one auction though: that of Cattarina de Bourg the widow of Dutch Ambassador Jacobus Colyer. Her auction took place in cooperation with the bailiff of the *kadı* of the Ottoman court in Galata, and therefore seems to have attracted a lot of Ottomans - not only Muslims but also members from the Greek and Armenian minorities. Dragoman for the Dutch ambassador, Greek Manolaki Agha was also an enthusiastic buyer between 1730 and 1731, with a total of 3.6 % of all entries stated as being bought by him. Janissaries were also frequently present and together were responsible for the purchase of 122 registered entries, over 5 % of all items sold. Other Muslims, although rather difficult

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4 Janissaries over time started to engage in certain businesses and trade and became artisans, either within or outside the official guild system. Members of the 82nd Janissary mess were butchers, according to Kafadar, Cemal. “Janissaries and Other Riffraff of Ottoman Istanbul : Rebels Without a Cause ?” *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World. A Volume of Essays in Honor of Norman Itzkowitz* (eds.). B. Tezcan and K. K. Barbir. Madison Wisconsin, 2006. 118.

to estimate solely by name, bought over 6 % of the merchandise for sale. 5.2 % went to buyers with a clear Armenian name, in contrast to 0.8 % to clear Jewish buyers and 2.8 % to local Greeks (excluding Manolaki Agha). It were however the foreign merchants and the staff of the foreign embassies such as the ambassadors themselves, their servants, dragomans, vicars and stewards who bought the lion's share of items up for sale.

Sometimes the costs of such auctions are also registered along with the entries of material goods. For instance, during the auction of Dutch court preacher David Jan de Reuter, both the recorder of the sale, school teacher of the Genevese community Jean Isnel, and auctioneer Bastien Suchet, received each four lion dollars (also known as *aslanlı/ esedî kuruş*) for their services.⁵ Other expenses (a mere 108 akçe) came from the serving of nine okkas of wine to all the buyers. A final list of debit and credit reveals that for instance the funeral expenses were 58:93 lion dollars and that together with other expenses the total balance of debts was 137:56 lion dollars. The balance of credit was however higher, as to the net proceeds of the auction (164:21 lion dollars) ten lion dollars were added that had been found in the pocket of the deceased, and together amounting to 174:21 lion dollars. Therefore the heirs of Mr. de Reuter would have received the final sum of 37:75 lion dollars.

Case study: Abraham de la Fontaine, merchant in Ankara

Abraham de la Fontaine was the grandson of Jean de la Fontaine, a silk merchant in Amsterdam and brother of the brother-in-law of the Dutch Ambassador.⁶ He was born on 19 December 1705 and baptized four days later in Amsterdam. This young Protestant Abraham de la Fontaine was a mohair merchant based in Ankara and partner in the company Muysart and De la Fontaine until he

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5 Also in the auctions of Jacobus Colyer, Jean Isnel was the auctioneer. In the auction of Jean Gonnet, Bastien Suchet was the vendor or auctioneer. In other cases it is unknown who conducted the auctions.

6 His grandmother Jeanne came from the Muysart family, and under the name Muysart & De la Fontaine a company was established in Izmir.

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married the Catholic Petronella Gasparina Rolland, who was possibly a daughter of Izmir-based merchant Nicolas Rolland. They had two sons together and lived in a house they rented from the Dutch Van Breen merchants in Ankara. De la Fontaine and the Van Breens had started a company that dealt chiefly in mohair products.⁷ Daniel van Breen died in 1737 and Abraham decided to set up a new company together with Justinus van Breen (Daniel van Breen's nephew) and Pieter Leytstar, son of Dutch merchant and namesake Pietro Leytstar. Because of several complaints, Dutch Ambassador of the time Cornelis Calkoen decided to send two commissioners to close the company. The firm was not dissolved, but they advised Justinus van Breen to leave the partnership. After Van Breen left in 1738, the company continued under the names of De la Fontaine and Leytstar, but went bankrupt on 23 August 1739.⁸ Prior to their bankruptcy, Pieter Leytstar and Abraham De la Fontaine were arrested for a number of crimes together with their Armenian brokers Serkis Pemergioglu, Agop Ayvoğlu, and Agop Surunoğlu. They were escorted by a *çavuş* to Istanbul on 23 July 1739. It was Calkoen who had arranged for an order from the Ottoman Porte to have them detained to Istanbul.⁹ Cornelis Calkoen did not have a good word to spare for Abraham de la Fontaine and called him "an inapt man with a dissolute lifestyle who was generally drunk before noon and therefore unable to conduct any business".¹⁰ De la Fontaine was also said to have been a rather violent man, and had threatened to cane his partner Pieter Leytstar on several occasions.¹¹

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7 Kadı, İsmail Hakki. *Ottoman and Dutch Merchants in the Eighteenth Century. Competition and Cooperation in Ankara, Izmir, and Amsterdam*. The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage. Leiden: Brill, 2012. 100.

8 Idem. 106.

9 Ibidem.

10 A letter by Cornelis Calkoen to the Directorate, dated 22 December 1739: "... een onbquaem mensch in sijn selve, dissolut in sijn levenswijze en ordinair voor de middag door den drank al buijten staet om iets te kunnen ageeren en behandelen." NL-HaNA, Levantse Handel, 103. Published in Erdbrink, G.R. Bosscha. *At the Threshold of Felicity. Ottoman-Dutch Relations During the Embassy of Cornelis Calkoen at the Sublime Porte, 1726-1744*. Ankara, 1975. 137.

11 Schmidt, Jan. "Dutch Merchants in 18th-Century Ankara." *The Joys of*

They were imprisoned in the Baba Cafer prison and their capitulatory protection was apparently at least temporarily withdrawn. The case then continued at the *Divan-ı Hümayun*. In the meantime a meeting was arranged in October with several representatives of the Dutch communities of other cities in the Ottoman Empire and those of merchants of the French and English nations. Money was collected among the Dutch merchants of Istanbul and also came from the consular duties paid in Istanbul and Izmir to arrange for an advance payment to the creditors, as Calkoen was afraid of the consequences for business. The company had a debt of Ld. (Lion dollars). 39,000 and according to İsmail Hakkı Kadı, who investigated the case of their firm; the investigation of the case was recorded by the Ottoman Porte by Başkâtib Abdülbâkî Efendi. Ld. 17,000 of this amount was spent on an extravagant lifestyle. Abraham de la Fontaine liked to live a life that was not quite in accordance with his income: in a bill of expenses of nearly Ld. 16,000 made by him, he spent for instance Ld. 410 on two female slaves, Ld. 2000 on the interior decoration and furnishing of his house, Ld. 580 for furniture he had bought from the auction of the late Van Breen, and another Ld. 60 for oysters and artichoke that he had ordered from Istanbul, and another Ld. 60 for oysters and artichoke that he had ordered from Istanbul.¹² An advance payment of five percent, which was partially collected among Dutch merchants and also came from the consular duties that were collected, was made to their creditors.

The two merchants requested the sultan for their release via a petition to the sultan.¹³

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Philology. Studies in Ottoman Literature, History and Orientalism (1500-1923). LX ed. Vol. II. Analecta Isisiana Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2002. 311.

12 NL-HaNA Legatie Turkije, 1156. Also Schmidt refers to the bill: Schmidt, Jan. "Dutch Merchants in 18th-Century Ankara." *The Joys of Philology. Studies in Ottoman Literature, History and Orientalism (1500-1923)*. LX ed. Vol. II. Analecta Isisiana Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2002. 315.

13 The undated petition is kept in NL-HaNA Legatie Turkije 1092/ 53. See Kadı, İsmail Hakkı. *Ottoman and Dutch Merchants in the Eighteenth Century. Competition and Cooperation in Ankara, Izmir, and Amsterdam*. The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage. Leiden: Brill, 2012. 107.

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In 1740, De la Fontaine requested the public sale of his belongings that were kept in the Dutch Embassy, so he could pay off some pressing debts and provide for the daily bread of his family. A registration was made on 28 January 1740 in the chancery records that his wife owned three baskets with silverware, jewelry and clothes. She and her children had come along with her husband to Istanbul and were staying at Justinus Leytstar's house. The basket, it is said, was opened in the presence of Justinus and Jacobus Leytstar, family members of Pietro Leytstar, which is quite suspicious at the very least. At closer inspection, the contents of the baskets are the items that were put up for sale on 11 and 13 May of the same year. Both De la Fontaine and Pieter Leytstar had been able to bring some money and the baskets of jewelry and other goods from their house two nights before they were transported to Istanbul.¹⁴

At the auction of Abraham de la Fontaine and his wife Petronella Gasparina Rolland in 1740 the proceeds were fairly high. In that particular case both Bastien Suchet who advertised and/ or presented the auction and the Chancery received two per cent each of the proceeds, which added up to 63:44 lion dollars. It was perhaps because of the delicate situation of the couple that such a high sum was deducted for this kind of expenses. As forms of material culture, the commodities that they offered for sale provide an entry into the relatively new approach of material culture within the field of Ottoman studies, and give insights to the mixed material wealth of eighteenth-century Ottoman Istanbul.

The clothing, which was only of Ottoman design, were made of a variety of fabrics, such as silk, brocade, damask, gross-de-tour, Dutch cloth, etc. and some had fur linings. It is unclear whether Petronella Gasparina and her husband used these goods themselves, or had them as assets. Perhaps they were part of Petronella Gasparina's dowry and therefore registered under her name in the chancery registers. There are for instance four caftans: one of blue tabby, one of silver damask, one coffee-colored damask caftan and one red yarn
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¹⁴ Schmidt, Jan. "Dutch Merchants in 18th-Century Ankara." *The Joys of Philology. Studies in Ottoman Literature, History and Orientalism (1500-1923)*. LX ed. Vol. II. Analecta Isisiana Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2002. 314.

caftan. There were also caftan-like garments (the outer face of a fur garment) called *kürk kabı*, which were apparently far more valuable than the regular caftans, as they fetched three to four times the amount of the caftans. There was a black velvet *kürk kabı*, one orange and one red tabby *kürk kabı*, one of blue fabric with silver, and one of brocade (*diba*) lined with sable fur. There are four *entâris*: one of yellow silk, another of red velvet, one pink tabby *entâri*, and one made of Dutch fabric. Finally, there are a few other typical Ottoman garments: one scarlet and one red gross de tours robe (*biniş*), and a cloak (*ferâçe*) of red fabric.¹⁵ It appears that they were women's clothes, but this is not at all that certain.

Who were then the buyers of these garments? A certain Antonio Kiriakko bought some of the caftans and *kürk kabı*s. The crier himself, Bastien Suchet, bought for instance the scarlet *biniş*, a certain Mr. Marquis (probably Jan Battista Marquis) purchased a few caftans and *kürk kabı*s, and the pink *entâri*. Francesco Giroto bought one caftan, one *entâri* and one *biniş*. The red velvet *entâri* went to Mr. Allarij (also known as Alari or Alary) and finally the *ferâçe* was bought by someone named Cassering. Mr. Marquis and Francesco Giroto or Girotti were frequent buyers at the auctions organized at the Dutch Embassy as their names appear in the registers of various auctions. Marquis was a merchant and equerry and may have been buying these items in order to resell them, but Giroto was the steward of Dutch Ambassador Calkoen. Giroto bought items at eight of the sixteen auctions, ranging from various other textiles and clothes such as dress coats, camisoles and trousers, an ermine fur, linen for bathing, a few lengths of Ottoman flamed satin and old neck ties, to a small walnut table, porcelain plates and a carpet. He also bought several items made of silver, such as a sword with a silver hilt, a silver pen case, and two silver candlesticks. Other interesting buys were bitter almonds, a crowbar, and 48 paintings (or engravings). In total there were 141 individual items (in 32 separate entries) that were sold to Francesco Giroto.

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¹⁵ The items in the file of the inventory and that of the auction are not always equal: according to the inventory there was one caftan, seven *entâris*, five *kürk kabı*s, three *biniş*es and one *ferâçe*.

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The silverware they had been able to smuggle into Istanbul included 26 silver cup holders called ‘porte flingians’, several saucers and dishes, corks, a pepper box, four salt-cellars, binoculars with silver, two candlesticks, and a shagreen etui with twelve knives and forks with silver hilts. Their jewelry consisted of a silver gilded belt, a belt with diamonds, several necklaces of pearls worth nearly Ld. 200, a necklace with diamonds, several rings with sapphires and diamonds, several flowers with emeralds, rubies and diamonds, a heart with diamonds, a diamond crucifix, diamond bracelet fastenings, various pendants or earrings, a garland (‘celenck’: *çelenk*) with pearls and diamonds, a clasp with diamonds, and a pair of golden bracelets. Two salt-cellars and one silver saucer as well as a few pieces of jewelry were not sold during the auction.

In March 1740, a settlement of a payment of fifteen percent to their creditors was reached. In the meantime, physician Paulo Pepano was to take care of their houses and belongings in Ankara and auctioned their furniture and other belongings for Ld. 1677:13 on 6 July 1740.¹⁶ It is unknown what happened to Leytstar and his family after their debts were settled.

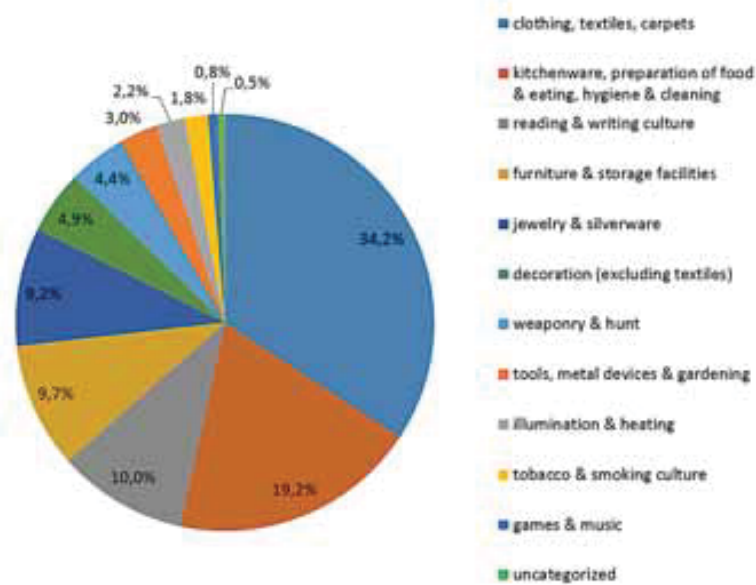
If this case-study is now considered within the larger framework of the auctions at the Dutch Embassy, it becomes clear that the auction of Abraham de la Fontaine and Petronella Gasparina Rolland’s goods is not exemplary for all auctions. First of all, placing all items in separate categories helps in understanding which type of products were sold most at these auctions (see the diagram). There are 2286 separate entries, which can be divided among twelve categories:¹⁷ 1: clothing, textiles and carpets; 2: kitchenware, preparation of food and eating, hygiene and cleaning; 3: reading and writing culture; 4: furniture and storage facilities; 5: jewelry and silverware; 6: decoration (excluding textiles); 7: weaponry and hunt;

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¹⁶ NL- HaNA, Legatie Turkije, 1166, the journal of the company Leytstar & De la Fontaine: entry of 6 July 1740. Pointed out by Schmidt as well: Schmidt, Jan. “Dutch Merchants in 18th-Century Ankara.” *The Joys of Philology. Studies in Ottoman Literature, History and Orientalism (1500–1923)*. LX ed. Vol. II. Analecta Isisiana Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2002. 315.

¹⁷ 42 of these 2286 entries fall under 2 categories, and therefore the percentages are calculated over a total of 2328 entries).

Commodities sold at auctions in Istanbul between 1725 and 1750



8: tools, metal devices and gardening; 9: illumination & heating; 10: tobacco & smoking culture; 11: games and music and 12: uncategorized.

Over one third or 34.2 % of all entries concern clothes, textiles and accessories or other items made of textile. Also included are wigs, carpets, and shoes. It appears that Ottoman style clothing is usually referred to by Ottoman terms, while European style clothes are mentioned in their usual European denominations.

The second largest category with 19.2 % constitutes kitchenware, food preparation and eating, hygiene and cleaning. It is not always possible to discern what certain items were used for. Ewers or *ibrik* which are often referred to as 'hibrik', could have served a variety of purposes; for example, in the preparation of coffee, but also together with a basin or *leğen*, which is often referred to as 'lien', for washing the hands or face. Of interest here are the goods related to tea culture: tea pots or kettles, tea boxes, lacquered tea trays, sugar bowls porcelain tea cups and tea itself. While the Dutch had imported tea from their colonies via the United East India Company earlier on, the Ottomans did not

start their culture of tea-drinking before the late nineteenth century. Therefore, it was a European habit to have tea available. Coffee consumption was also gaining ground in the Netherlands at the time, but in the Ottoman Empire it had already been popular for a longer time. In the auction lists coffee-related goods are present as well, such as coffee cups, ewers for coffee (*ibrik*), coffee mills and coffeepots. Similar to the textiles and clothes, often products are described by their Ottoman denominations. Cups, even the porcelain ones, are often called ‘flingian’ or ‘filsan’ (*fincan*) and water jugs are referred to with ‘gugium’ (*gügüm*). Can we assume that these items were purchased locally, while the others which were referred to with clear Dutch or other European terms were imported or bought abroad? It could have been the influence of the scribe or the crier at the auction who was sometimes familiar with these Ottoman terms but other times only knew European (resembling) equivalents for items of Ottoman making. But many inventories were also carried out by others than members of the chancery and they all use similar wording and Ottoman terms in a variety of languages: Dutch, French, German and Italian.

A surprisingly high percentage (10 %) of items sold is constituted by books and other items that are part of reading and writing culture, such as inkstands and letter openers. Most books and manuscripts were sold at the auction of Dutch Ambassador Jacobus Colyer. His library consisted of books on various topics, ranging from atlases to Bibles, travelogues, satires, poetry, architecture and gazettes to memoirs of prominent figures and works on medicine, astronomy and flowers.

Furniture and storage facilities comprise 9.7 %, and include chairs, tables, cabinets, bedsteads and benches, but also baskets, chests and a wide variety of cases and boxes. Tables and chairs were not that common in the Ottoman Empire; and therefore, it is quite possible that these items were imported from Europe or elsewhere to Istanbul. We can, then, only suggest that “a dining table Turkish style” was most probably a *sofra*.¹⁸ In other cases, the type of furniture or its
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18 In the original record of the sale of the goods belonging to Jean de la Fontaine: “une table a manger a la Turque.” NL- HaNA, Legatie Turkije, 1.02.20, entry number 1045. A *sofra* is a low tray or used as a dining table.

material is also specified, such as an English rush chair or a walnut writing slope and small oaken desks. Lacquered furniture was very uncommon in the Ottoman realms and must have come from Europe.

Jewellery and silverware were also well represented in the auctions (9.2 %). In many cases the items concerned silver-plated tobacco boxes, silver(-plated) kitchenware such as cutlery, drinking vessels and saltcellars, but sometimes also necklaces, earrings and adorned belts were sold. Often the price of these items was based on weight which was defined in drams or drachm(a)s. A price was then set per dram, perhaps based on craftsmanship or quality or state of the product and the final price was calculated accordingly.

The category of decorative items (4.9 %) includes a few items that are described very poorly. Although the mirrors, paintings and clocks are often clearly specified by type or frame, items such as “two large gilded Moors,” “(paid) two painted dogs,” “36 plaster (gesso) figurines” or “144 plaster cockerels” leave us utterly in the dark about what they could have been other than decorative figurines, statues or the like. The subjects of the paintings, portraits and engravings or often given, and, only in one occasion, a verdict is given on the quality of two paintings, by calling it “mediocre.” The frames, on the other hand, are often considered to be mean or plain.

Weaponry and goods related to hunting form the final large category. Among the people whose goods were sold at these auctions, it was common to own a gun, pistol, rifle, carbine or snaphaunce, and occasionally a sword was among the goods. Although saddles, bridles, horse blankets and saddle pads were often sold, only one actual horse was mentioned in the auction lists.¹⁹

Smaller categories consist of goods related to gardening and craftsmanship, smoking, playing games, and lighting and heating. In the category of gardening and tools, most interesting are the various flowers and flower bulbs which reflect the interest of both the Dutch and the Ottomans (they were also bought by Ottomans) in

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¹⁹ Recently a symposium was devoted to the history of horses, also in the Ottoman Empire: “Gallop History/ Dörtüna Tarih” at Bilkent University, Ankara 16-18 April 2014.

horticulture. Similarly, the products that concern smoking attract our attention, as these items appear in the auction records of both men and women. Pipes and their accessories and snuffboxes are among the items listed most frequently in this category. Finally, the category of games and music gives a glimpse into how people spent their leisure time in Istanbul. Game boards for chess and checkers appear a few times in the auction records, as well as billiard tables including balls and accessories. Boxes with play-pennies, dice and chips for card games were also sold. Most striking is the entry of a pair of rackets or so-called battledores with six shuttles. They could have been used for some kind of badminton-like game, like “jeu de volant”

Conclusion

This research on the items for sale at the auctions of the Dutch nation between 1725 and 1750 in Istanbul has been helpful in shedding some light on the consumption of consumer goods in the Ottoman capital by foreign ambassadors, merchants and their family members, slaves, women, Ottoman local consumers of various ranks and any other bidders that came to these auctions. Instead of focusing on the consumption of the Ottoman court, this research sought to fill a lacuna in our knowledge of consumption culture among other inhabitants of Istanbul. Through the auction records, the voice of consumers is heard. A major problem within Ottoman studies is the general focus on the sultan and the court or elite, even within research on consumption. Research often focuses on exceptional products in the Topkapı Palace. Both the unpublished sources used in research and results of those scholarly endeavors are often published in Turkish and remain unavailable to scholars from other fields. The field of Ottoman consumption remains rather separate from general consumption studies. There are however exceptions, as scholars have started to publish in English and more and more archival sources are published and thus made available to a wider audience. Part of the slow uptake of the field of consumption studies among scholars of Ottoman history and culture, as Amanda Phillips acknowledges, may be related to the difficulty of interpreting documents that concern

goods and prices.²⁰ Also much of the information available in the archives is indeed related to the court and elites, but less to common people. But with the use of other documents such as estate records (*terekes* and *muhallefât*) also in combination with court records (*sicils*), many issues can easily be overcome.

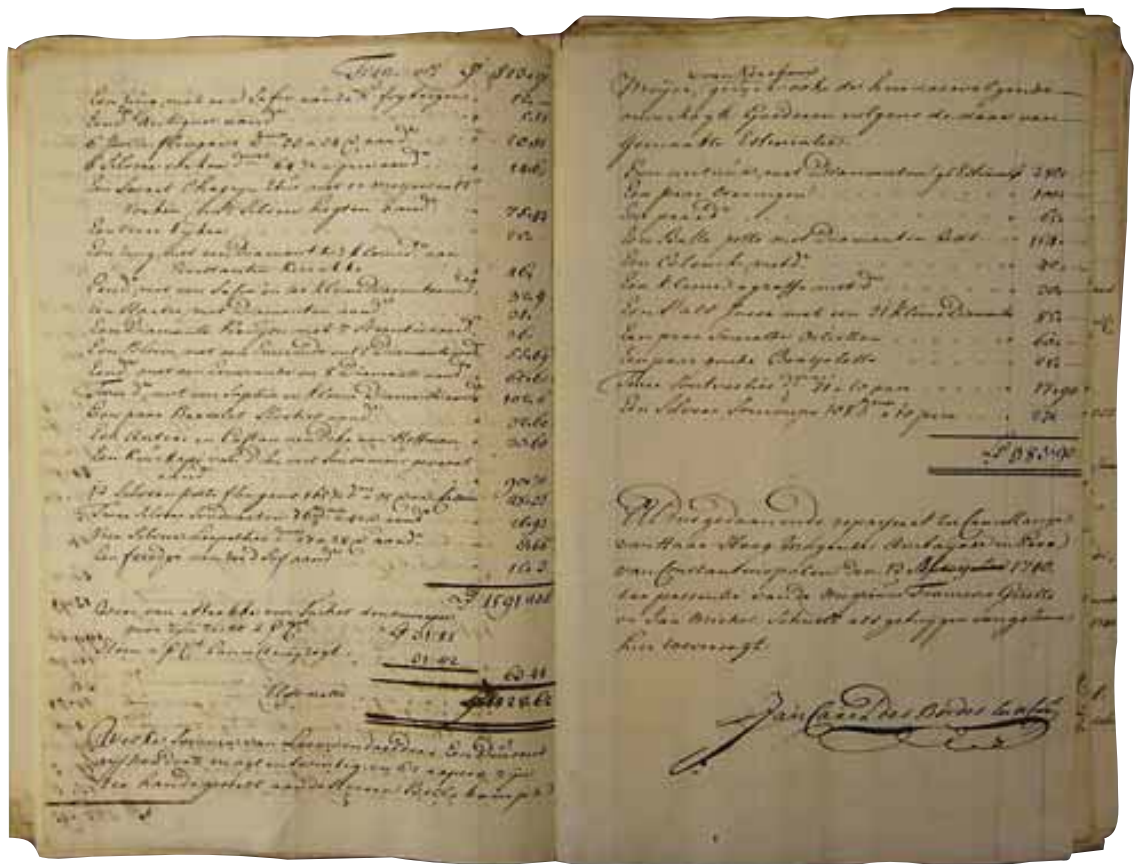
This article focused on the products itself, which range from simple old cotton socks to luxury embroidered velvet cushion covers. It moreover discussed the circulation of commodities after their initial (or maybe second and counting) usage. Textiles, furniture, kitchenware and jewelry all found new owners and give evidence of a lively second-hand culture in early-modern Istanbul beyond the normal “flea-markets” (*bat pazarı* in Ottoman or *bit pazarı* in Turkish).²¹ Some items were even up for sale several times during these auctions and only slightly decreased in value, even though several years had passed. Likewise, consumers from all ranks and backgrounds have been the focus of this study. The auction of Abraham de la Fontaine and Petronella Gasparina Rolland’s goods is, however, not exemplary for all auctions. At the auction of De la Fontaine and his wife’s possessions, there were only clothes and jewelry, as they were only able to bring along a few baskets of goods. In many other cases jewelry was kept aside to be bequeathed to heirs.

Through this research it has become clear that in Istanbul one could easily find products both locally produced as anywhere else over the world. Although tables and chairs were generally not used by Ottomans, they were available. The same goes for clothing of European making, tea equipment or Dutch ovens. Although we do not know on which scale these products were available, these auction lists prove that it was very well possible to purchase them.

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 20 Phillips, Amanda. “The Historiography of Ottoman Velvets, 2011–1572: Scholars, Craftsmen, Consumers.” *Journal of Art Historiography* 6 (June 2012): 24.

21 Özcan, Tahsin. “Pazar-Osmanlı Dönemi.” *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*. Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2007. 206–08. Vol. XXXIV.

THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF A
DUTCH MERCHANT IN ISTANBUL



NL-HaNA 1.02.20 Legatie Turkije, inventory number 1045: the final two pages of the auction record of Abraham de la Fontaine and Petronella Gasparina Rolland, 11 & 13 May 1740.

Transcription of NL-HaNA, Legatie Turkije 1045 and 1065:
Inventory and public auction Abraham de la Fontaine and Petronella Gasparina Rolland

[Folio 1r]

Ik ondergeschreeven Jan Carel des Bordes secretaris en cancelier van zijn excellentie Mijn Heere Cornelis Calkoen, Haer Hoog Mogende Extraordinaris Ambassadeur aen de Ottomannisse Porta, verklaere en attesteere mitsdeesen, als dat ik op ordre van hoogst ged^{te} zijn excellentie en in presentie van de naergenoemde getuijgen, mij vervoegte hebbende ten huijse van de Heeren Bellekamp & meijer aldaar bijweeten van Mejuff Gasp. Rolland huijsvrouwe van de Heer Abraham de la Fontaine geassist^e door de Heeren Jacobus en Justinus Leitstar hebben geopent een klein cepetje met juweelen en twee groote cepetten met kleederen toebehoorende an de bovengem: Juff de la Fontaine gebooren Rolland, ende daer inne het volgende gevonden

In een klein cepetie
Een centuur met diamanten
Een paar oorringen met diamanten
Een klein diamante kruijsje met 17 steenties
Twee bloemen met saphiren en kleine diamant
Een d^o omset met emerald en kleine robijne & diamant
Een d^o met een emerald en kleine diamanten
Een batte petto met een smerald en diamanten
Een celenck met paarlenen en kleine diamanten
Een kleine agriffe met diamanten
Een paar diamante brasalet slooties
Een paar diamante orliette
Een hals snoer met 31 kleine diamanties
Een paar smeralde orlietten
Twee kleine ringen met kleine diamanten

[Folio 1v]

een ring met een saphir en 6 kleine diamant:
een paar goude brasoletten
een hartie met diamanten
een ring met een saphir
een d^o met een antique
4 snoer paarlen 226 stuckx
Verscheidene snoeren kleine paarle, weegende 28 dramme en $\frac{1}{4}$
In de twee groote cepetten
In alderhande silverwerk 1035 dramme
Een silver vergulde cintuur
Een chagrein kasie met silver beschlagen waerinne 12 silver
vorken en 12 messen met silvere hegten
Een verre keijker met silver
Een benisch van swart fluweel met goud gegalonneert en een
hermeline voering
Een d^o van een silvere stoffe met een blaauwe grond en d^o
voering
Een d^o van een oranic couleure tabijn met silvere point d'Es-
pagne en Hermeline voering
Een d^o van een roode tabijn met goude point d'Espagne en
d^o voering
Een d^o van Stambol Diba met een sousamoure voering
Een enteri van rood fluweel met silver gegalonneert
Een rood laekense benisch met silvere kanten
Een caftan en enterie van een roode stoffe met silvere bloemen
Een d^o van roode tabijn met silvere kanten en een enterie van
rood gaas
Een feregé van een rood gewaaterst stof
Een kiurkap met een enteri van eene groene stoffe met witte
bloemen
Een enteri van geele atlas en caftan van blaauw tabijn

[Folio 2r]

een enteri en caftan van witte diba
 een benisch van roode gros de tour met silvere kanten
 een enteri van seide, bruijne, grond met goude bloemen
 aldus gedaan ende gepasseert, ten huise van de Heeren Belle-
 kamp & Meijer voorn^t in Galata van Constantinopolen den 28^e Janu.
 1740 ter presentie van de Heeren Abraham Bellekamp en Henrico
 Lackie als getuijgen van geloove hier to versogt.

Abraham Bellkamp

Hendrik Lackie

Jan Carel des Bordes sec & can.

[Folio 1r]

Encan of publique vendutie den goederen toebehoorende aan
 den Heer Abraham de la Fontaine ende desselfs huijsvrouwe, alhier
 publicq ter Neederlandse Cancellareije aan de meest biedende ver-
 kogt, op Heeden den 11 Meij 1740.

Een silvere vergulde centuur 60 d^{me} a 10 p^e aan Antonio Kiri-
 akko Ld 15

Een caftan van blaeuw Tabijn aan d^o 20:33

Een anteri van geel satijn aan d^o 14:72

Een kiurkapi van zwart fluweel aan d^o 80:-

Een kiurkapi van tabin oranie couleur d^o 92:-

Een silver peeperdoosie d^{mes} 56 a 8 p^r aan Suchet 11:24

Een klein silver schooteltie 17 d^{mes} a 25 @ aan d^o 3:96

Een scharlacke benisch aan d^o 15:30

Een anteri van rood fluweel aan Allarij 14:90

Een caftan van silver damasquetti aan Marquis 32:60

Een anteri d^o coffy couleur aan d^o 15:-

Een kiurkapi van tabin cremoisie aan d^o 64:-

Een kiurkapi van een blaue stoffe met silver aan d^o 62:36

Een anteri van tabin roose couleur aan d^o 15:91

THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF A
DUTCH MERCHANT IN ISTANBUL

19 medicael peerle a Ld 10 ½ 't medicael aen d° Francesco
Giratto 199:60

8 porte flingans d^{me} 67 a 10 para aan d° 16:90

Een soucoupe weegende d^{me} 144 a 10 para aan d° 36:-

Twee silvere kandelaars 122 d^{mes} a 9 para aan d° 27:54

Een klein silver schooteltie d^{mes} 24 a 8 para aan d° 4:96

Een anteri van een Hollandtse stoffe aan d° 39:-

Een benisch van rood gros de tour aan d° 19:3

Een caftan van rood gaer aan d° 15:6

Ld 823:93

[Folio 1v]

een ring met een safir aan de H^r frybergen 12:-

een d° antique aan d° 5:18

6 porte flingans d^{me} 73 a 24 @ aan d° 20:81

6 silver corken d^{me} 64 ½ a para aan d° 14:63

Een swart chagrijn etui met 12 messen en 12 vorken met sil-
vere hegten aan d° 75:84

Een verre kijker 20:-

Een ring met een diamant & 7 kleine d° aan Constantin Kiri-
akko 46:-

Een d° met een safir en ses kleine diamanten aan d° 32:9

Een hartie met diamanten aan d° 31:-

Een diamante kruijs met 7 steenties aan d° 36

Een bloem met een esmeraude en 12 diamante aan d° 55:69

Een d° met een esmeraude en 8 diamante aan d° 65:60

Twee d° met een saphir en kleine diamante aan d° 102:6

Een paar bracolet slooties aan d° 30:60

Een kuirkapi van diba met sousamour gevoert aan d° 90:30

12 silvere porte flingans 165 ½ d^{me} a 35 @ aan cassering 48:33

Twee silver soudvaaten 76 ½ d^{me} a 42 @ aan d° 26:93

Vier silver leepelties d^{me} 27 a 38 @aan d° 8:66

Een feredgé van rood sof aan d° 15:3

Ld 1591:106

Waar van aftrekke voor Suchet den omroeper voor zijn recht
2 p^r C^t Ld 31:82

Item 2 p^r C^t cancellarije zegt 31:82

63:44

Blijft netto Ld 1528:62

Welke somma van Leeuwendaelders een duisent vijf hondert
en agtentwintig, en 62 aspers, zijn ter hande gestelt aan de Heeren
Bellekamp

[Folio 2r]

& Meijer & van Kerchem, gelijk ook de hiernaervolgende
onverkogte goederen volgens de daar van gemaakte estematie

Een centuur met diamanten geestimeert Ld 380:-

Een paar oorringen 100:-

Een paar p^o 65:-

Een batte petto met diamanten beset 154:-

Een celenck met d^o 40:-

Een kleine agraffe met d^o 30:-

Een hals snoer met een 31 kleine diamanten 85:-

Een paar esmeralde orlietten 60:-

Een paar goude brassolette 28:-

Twee soutvaaties d^{me} 71 a 10 para 17:90

Een silvere soucoupe 108 d^{me} a 10 para 27:-

Ld 983:90

Aldus gedaan ende gepasseert ter cancellareije van Haar Hoog
Mogende Ambassade in Pera van Constantinopolen den 13 Meij
1740. Ter presentie van de Messieurs Francesco Giroto en Jan
Michel Schnell als getuijgen van geloove hier toe versogt.

Jan Carel des Bordes sec & Cancel^r

**Translation of NL-HaNA, Legatie Turkije 1045 and 1065:
Inventory and public auction Abraham de la Fontaine and Petron-
ella Gasparina Rolland**

[Folio 1r]

I, Jan Carel des Bordes secretary and chancellor of his Excellency My Lord Cornelis Calkoen, Her High Mighty Extraordinary Ambassador at the Ottoman Porte, declare and attest hereby, that by order of his Excellency and in the presence of below mentioned witnesses, went to the house of Gentlemen Bellekamp & Meijer and opened there, with the approval of Miss Gaspard Rolland wife of Sir Abraham de la Fontaine and assisted by the gentlemen Jacobus and Justinus Leitstar, a small basket with jewellery and two large baskets with clothing belonging to the above mentioned Miss de la Fontaine born Rolland. In it the following was found

In a small basket [ORIG: cepetie/ Ot: sepet]

A belt with diamonds

A pair of earrings with diamonds

A small diamond crucifix with 17 stones

Two flowers with sapphires and a small diamond

A d^o [flower] adorned with emerald and small ruby and diamond

A d^o [flower] with an emerald and small diamonds

A type of pendant [ORIG: batte petto/ It: battipetto] with an emerald and diamonds

A garland [ORIG: celenck/ Ot: çelenk] with pearls and small diamonds

A small agraffe (clasp) with diamonds

A pair of diamond bracelet fastenings

A pair of diamond pendants or earrings

A necklace with 31 small diamonds

A pair of emerald pendants or earrings

Two small rings with small diamonds

[Folio 1v]

A ring with a sapphire and 6 small diamonds

A pair of golden bracelets

A heart with diamonds

A ring with a sapphire

A d° [ring] with an antique

4 necklace with 226 pearls

Several necklaces with small pearls, weighing 28 dram and ¼

In the two larger baskets [ORIG: cepet/ Ot: sepet]

In all sorts of silverware 1035 dram

A silver gilded belt

A shagreen silver-plated case containing 12 silver forks and 12 knives with silver hilts

Binoculars with silver

A black velvet robe [ORIG: benisch/ biniş] with golden galloon and ermine lining

A d° [robe] of silver cloth with a blue base and d° [ermine] lining

A d° [robe] of orange tabby with silver point d'Espagne and ermine lining

A d° [robe] of red tabby with golden point d'Espagne and d° [ermine] lining

A d° [robe] of Stambol [Istanbul] brocade [ORIG: diba/ Ot: diba] with a sable fur lining

A red velvet entari [ORIG: enteri/ Ot: entâri] with silver galloon

A red broadcloth robe [ORIG: benisch/ Ot: biniş] with silver lace or sides

A caftan and entari [ORIG: enterie/ Ot: entâri] of red cloth with silver flowers

A d° [caftan] of red tabby with silver lace or sides and an entari [ORIG: enterie/ Ot: entâri] of red gauze

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A cloak [ORIG: feregé/ Ot: ferâçe] of a red quilted or 'watered' fabric

A type of caftan (outer face of a fur garment) [ORIG: kiurkapi/ Ot: kürk kabı] with an entari [ORIG: enteri/ Ot: entâri] of a green cloth with white flowers

An entari [ORIG: enteri/ Ot: entâri] of yellow satin (atlas) and a blue tabby caftan

[Folio 2r]

An entari [ORIG: enteri/ Ot: entâri] and a white brocade [ORIG: diba/ Ot: diba] caftan

A robe [ORIG: benisch/ Ot: biniş] of red gross de tour with silver lace or sides

An entari [ORIG: enteri/ Ot: entâri] of silk, brown base with golden flowers

Thusly done and passed in the house of the Gentlemen Bellekamp & Meijer in Galata of Constantinople the 28th of January 1740 in the presence of the gentlemen Abraham Bellekamp and Henrico Lackie as witnesses of faith requested hereto.

Abraham Bellkamp

Hendrik Lackie

Jan Carel des Bordes secretary & chancellor

[Folio 1r]

Public sale or auction of the goods belonging to Sir Abraham de la Fontaine and his wife, here at the Dutch Chancery to the highest bidder, today May 11, 1740.

A silver gilded belt 60 dram at 10 piaster to Antonio Kiriakko Ld 15

A blue tabby caftan to d^o [Antonio Kiriakko] 20:33

A yellow silk entari [ORIG: anteri/ Ot: entâri] to d^o [Antonio Kiriakko] 14:72

A black velvet type of caftan (outer face of a fur garment)
[ORIG: kiurkapi/ Ot: kürk kabı] to d° [Antonio Kiriakko] 80:-

A tabby orange type of caftan (outer face of a fur garment)
[ORIG: kiurkapi/ Ot: kürk kabı] to d° [Antonio Kiriakko] 92:-

A silver pepper box, drams 56 at 8 piaster to Suchet 11:24

A small silver dish or saucer 17 drams at 25 aspers to d° [Suchet] 3:96

A scarlet robe [ORIG: benisch/ biniş] to d° [Suchet] 15:30

A red velvet entari [ORIG: anteri/ Ot: entâri] to Allarij 14:90

A silver damask caftan to Marquis 32:60

A coffee coloured d° [caftan] to d° [Marquis] 15:-

A type of caftan (outer face of a fur garment) [ORIG: kiurkapi/
Ot: kürk kabı] of crimson tabby to d° [Marquis] 64:-

A type of caftan (outer face of a fur garment) [ORIG: kiurkapi/
Ot: kürk kabı] of blue fabric with silver to d° [Marquis] 62:36

A tabby pink entari [ORIG: anteri/ Ot: entâri] to d° [Marquis]
15:91

19 medical [apothecary's weight] pearls at Ld 10 ½ per medical
to Francesco Giratto 199:60

8 cup holders [ORIG: porte flingans] dram 67 at 10 para to d°
[Francesco Giratto] 16:90

A saucer weighing dram 144 at 10 para to d° [Francesco Giratto]
36:-

Two silver candlesticks 122 drams at 9 para to d° [Francesco Giratto]
27:54

A small silver dish or saucer, drams 24 at 8 para to d° [Francesco Giratto]
4:96

An entari [Ot: entâri] of a Dutch fabric to d° [Francesco Giratto]
39:-

A red gross de tour robe [ORIG: benisch/ Ot: biniş] to d°
[Francesco Giratto] 19:3

A red yarn caftan to d° [Francesco Giratto] 15:6

Ld 823:93

THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF A
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[Folio 1v]

A ring with a sapphire to Sir Frybergen 12:-

A d° antique [ring] to d° [Sir Frybergen] 5:18

6 cup holders [ORIG: porte flingans] dram 73 at 24 asper to d° [Sir Frybergen] 20:81

6 silver corks dram 64 ½ a para to d° [Sir Frybergen] 14:63

A black shagreen etui with 12 knives and 12 forks with silver hilts to d° [Sir Frybergen] 75:84

Binoculars 20:-

A ring with a diamond & 7 small d° to Constantin Kiriakko 46:-

A d° [ring] with a sapphire and six small diamonds to d° [Constantin Kiriakko] 32:9

A heart with diamonds to d° [Constantin Kiriakko] 31:-

A diamond crucifix with 7 stones to d° [Constantin Kiriakko] 36

A flower with an emerald and 12 diamonds to d° [Constantin Kiriakko] 55:69

A d° [flower] with an emerald and 8 diamonds to d° [Constantin Kiriakko] 65:60

Two d° [flowers] with a sapphire and small diamonds to d° [Constantin Kiriakko] 102:6

A pair of bracelet fastenings to d° [Constantin Kiriakko] 30:60

A type of caftan (outer face of a fur garment) [ORIG: kiurkapi/ Ot: kürk kabı] of brocade [ORIG: diba/ Ot: diba] lined with sable fur to d° [Constantin Kiriakko] 90:30

12 silver cup holders [ORIG: porte flingans] 165 ½ dram at 35 aspers, to Cassering 48:33

Two silver salt-cellars 76 ½ dram at 42 aspers to d° [Cassering] 26:93

Four small silver spoons dram 27 at 38 aspers to d° [Cassering] 8:66

A cloak [ORIG: feredgé/ Ot: ferâçe] of red fabric to d° [Cassering] 15:3

Ld 1591:106

Minus the right of 2 percent for the crier Suchet Ld 31:82

Idem 2 percent to the Chancery makes 31:82

63:44

Netto remains left Ld 1528:62

Which sum of Lion Dollard one thousand five hundred twenty eight and 62 aspers has been delivered to the gentlemen Bellekamp

[Folio 2r]

& Meijer & van Kerchem, as well as the following unsold goods according their estimated value

A belt with diamonds estimated at Ld 380:-

A pair of earrings 100:-

A pair of d^o [earrings] 65:-

A type of pendant [ORIG: batte petto/ It: battipetto] with diamonds 154:-

A garland [ORIG: celenck/ Ot: çelenk] with d^o [diamonds] 40:-

A small agraffe (clasp) with d^o [diamonds] 30:-

A necklace with 31 small diamonds 85:-

A pair of emerald pendants or earrings 60:-

A pair of golden bracelets 28:-

Two salt-cellars dram 71 at 10 para 17:90

A silver saucer 108 dram at 10 para 27:-

Ld 983:90

Thusly done and passed at the Chancery of Her Mighty Embassy in Pera of Constantinople, May 13, 1740. In the presence of the Gentlemen Francesco Giroto and Jan Michel Schnell as witnesses of faith hereto requested.

Jan Carel des Bordes Secretary & Chancellor