
ARTICLES

Observations on Venetian Trade in the Levant in the XIVth Century

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The resumption of regular trade between the Southern European nations and the dominions of the sultan of Cairo in the middle of the fourteenth century has been dealt with exhaustively in the admirable work of Heyd as well as elsewhere. The authors of these books, however, dwelt mainly on the "political history" of the trade with the Levant in those troublesome years in which the King of Cyprus and the Holy See tried once again to arouse enthusiasm for a crusade, whereas the "trading nations" made great efforts to pursue their regular commercial activities in the Near East. But the registers of the deliberations of the Venetian Senate, the letters of merchants, the acts of notaries and, last but not least, the archives of some Venetian companies make it possible to outline the development of the commercial relations themselves.¹ And this is the purpose of the present paper.

¹ The sources most often quoted are the following:

ASV (Archivio di Stato, Venice) *Senato, Deliberazioni miste*. - *Misti*.

Cancellaria Inferiore, Notai, Ba 222, Antonello de Vataciis. - Vat.

Giudici di petizion, Sentenze a giustizia. - G. P., Sent.

Procuratori di S. Marco, Comm. di citra, Ba 282, Fasc. II, Tomo III, Comm. Lorenzo Dolfin. - Lor. Dolfin.

Procuratori di S. Marco, Comm. miste, Ba 128a, Comm. Antonio Zane. - A. Zane.

Same series, Ba 180, 181, *Comm. Biegio Dolfin*. - B. Dolfin.

a) *Indirect trade*

In the fourth decade of the fourteenth century, the commercial exchanges between Southern Europe and the Moslem Near East had reached their lowest ebb. While at the beginning of the century trade with Egypt and Syria continued, despite the efforts made by the Holy See, in 1323 the pressure exerted upon the Venetian government was so strong that the Doge issued a decree forbidding visits or the sending of merchandise to Egypt and other countries under the rule of the sultan.² This was a general prohibition on trade with the dominions of the sultan of Cairo, and it was intended to leave no gaps. It was promulgated in Crete by the duke in the same year,³ and, later, by another decree it was extended to Jewish merchants.⁴ The only concession the Venetian authorities were ready to make concerned merchandise and goods acquired by their subjects in Egypt or Syria, if the merchandise remained there. They allowed them to ship these goods to Christian harbours until April 1324.⁵

Although these decrees are very categorical it is more than doubtful that they succeeded in their purpose, that is, the complete cessation of Venetian trade with Egypt and Syria. The Irish pilgrim Simeon Semeonis, who visited Alexandria in October 1323, narrates that the Venetians, Genoese, Catalans, and the merchants of Mar-

ASP (Archivio di Stato, Prato), *Quaderni di prezzi e di carichi di navi* 1171. - Datini 1171.

Lettere di mercanti a Pignol Zucchello, a cura di R. MOROZZO DELLA ROCCA, Venice 1957. - Pignol Zucchello.

F. MELIS, *Documenti per la storia economica dei secoli XIII-XVI*, Firenze 1972. - Melis, Doc.

al-Maḳrīzī, as-Sulūk li-ma'rifaṭ duwal al-mullūk, Cairo 1934-1973. - Sulūk.

FR. THIRIET, *Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Romanie*, T. I, Paris 1958. - Thiriet, Régestes.

² R. CESSI - P. SAMBIN, *Le deliberazioni del consiglio dei rogati* (Venice 1960-61) I, p. 265, no. 239.

³ *Duca di Candia, Bandi (1313-1329)*, ed. by P. RATTI VIDULICH (Venice 1965), pp. 129 f., no. 342.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 142 f., no. 371 (July, 1324).

⁵ CESSI-SAMBIN, p. 275, no. 363 (3 November, 1323). *Duca di Candia*, p. 148 f., no. 383.

seille still had their *fondachi* and their consuls there.⁶ This account must be correct, as one learns from the decrees of the authorities of Crete that Venetians brought merchandise from Alexandria even after April 1324.⁷ So the prohibition of trade was not strictly enforced. In fact, there is documentary and other evidence of the continuation of Venetian trade in Egypt and Syria after 1323. In an Arabic account of the riots that occurred in Alexandria in 1327 the presence of Venetian merchants is explicitly mentioned.⁸ A letter of Ruggiero Morosini to Negro Cocco, written in 1331, refers to the latter's affairs in Alexandria.⁹ A coin hoard discovered in Tiberias and dating from 1342-1345 contains matapans of Giovanni Soranzo (1310-1328) and Francesco Dandolo (1328-1339).¹⁰ But trade between Venice and the dominions of the Mamluks was not direct, and in 1345 the sultan could say that for twenty—three years not a single Venetian ship had been seen in the ports of his countries.¹¹

Throughout the period in which the prohibition on trade with the dominions of the sultan was maintained the Venetians made great efforts to obtain the products of India from markets. They bought Indian spices in Trebizond¹² and in Tana, the great emporium on the sea of Azov.¹³ But these towns were not great spice markets, and the Venetians, like other trading nations, of Southern Europe, had to rely upon the intermediary rôle of trading towns in the countries adjacent to Egypt and Syria. In Lajazzo, the great port of the Christian kingdom of Lesser Armenia, they

⁶ *Itinerarium Symonis Semeonis ab Hybernia ad Terram Santam*, ed. M. ESPOSITO (Dublin 1960), p. 48.

⁷ *Duca di Candia*, p. 147 f., no. 382.

⁸ I. J. H. P. HERZSOHN, *Der Überfall Alexandries durch Peter I, König von Jerusalem und Cypern* (Bonn 1886), p. XXI.

⁹ PREDELLI, *I libri commemoriali, Regesti*, II, no. 206.

¹⁰ L. Y. RAHMANI, *A 14th century hoard from Tiberias*, in "Israel Numismatic Journal II", 3/4 (1964), p. 47 f. The hoard also contains silver coins of Leon IV, King of Lesser Armenia (1320-1342), and of the Mamluk sultan al-Malik an-Nāṣir Muḥammad (third reign: 1309-1341).

¹¹ THOMAS-PREDELLI, *Diplomatarium Veneto-Levantinum* I, p. 291.

¹² *Misti* 20, f. 23a 23, f. 12a.

¹³ Cf. HEYD, *Histoire du commerce du Levant* II, p. 188.

traded with Moslem merchants¹⁴ and could acquire the products of Syria, Egypt, and the Far East. When the Mamluks raided Little Armenia in 1335, there were about 2,000 Moslem merchants from Baghdad and elsewhere in Lajazzo, according to an Arab historian.¹⁵ In Lajazzo the Venetians purchased not only spices, but also cotton, mainly from Syria.¹⁶

The emporia of Crete and Cyprus fulfilled a similar role as intermediaries. An excellent French scholar who specialized in the history of the Venetian colonies has expressed the view that before the conquest of Famagusta by the Genoese, in 1373, trade between Crete and Egypt was rather limited. He argues that in the period trade was conducted mainly to supply Crete with spices needed for local consumption.¹⁷ But since he wrote, many documents have been published which shed much light on the intense trade between Crete and Egypt in the middle of the fourteenth century. Letters and notarial acts testify to frequent journeys from Candia to Alexandria and to investments by sea loans in the trade with Egypt.¹⁸ Other acts refer to journeys to Damietta¹⁹ and to Syria.²⁰ Some letters deal with the export of wine from Crete to Alexandria,²¹ but it would surely not be a mistake to suppose that great quantities of soap and other articles shipped from Venice to Crete²² were destined for re-export to Egypt. Various spices and dyes were shipped from Egypt, via Crete, to Venice.²³ In the merchant letters of the 1340's, there are references to the shipping of ginger and ammoniacal salt, as well as safflower,²⁴

¹⁴ *Misti* 17, f. 84b; PREDELLI, *Libri commemoriali* II, no. 532 (a. 1341).

¹⁵ *Abu 'l-Fidā, Mukhtaṣar aḥbār al-baḥar* (Cairo 1325) IV, p. 115. For trade between Lesser Armenia with Syria and Egypt see PREDELLI, *Libri commemoriali* II, no. 202 (a. 1330).

¹⁶ *Felice de Merlis, prete e notaio in Venezia ed Ayas*, ed. by A. BONDI SABELLICO (Venice 1973), no. 83 (a. 1317).

¹⁷ FR. THIRIET, *La Romanie vénitienne au moyen âge* (Paris 1959), p. 329.

¹⁸ *Pignol Zucchello*, p. 46 (a. 1345), 73 (a. 1347); *Zaccaria de Fredo*, notaio in Candia, ed. by A. LOMBARDO (Venice 1968), no. 40, 41, 42 (a. 1352).

¹⁹ *Zaccaria de Fredo*, no. 91 (a. 1357).

²⁰ No. 71, 72 (a. 1352).

²¹ *Pignol Zucchello*, p. 54 (a. 1346), 73 (a. 1347), 116 (a. 1348).

²² *Op. cit.*, p. 34 (a. 1345).

²³ *Op. cit.*, p. 61 (a. 1347).

²⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 61 f. (a. 1346), 76 f., 88, 105, 108 (a. 1347).

from Egypt via Crete to Venice.²⁵ Most of these articles were sent to Crete from Alexandria, some of them from Damietta.²⁶ Finding in these letters records of the shipment of spices and dyes, cardamom and gum arabic from Crete to Venice.²⁷ There can be little doubt over the country from which it came to Crete — it was Egypt. Candia was certainly a great market for spices and Oriental drugs, such as pepper, incense, cassia, and cardamom.²⁸ Certain quantities of silk were also exported from Alexandria via Crete to Venice.²⁹ Most of the acts and letters quoted here date from the years when the general prohibition of trade with the dominions of the sultan had been removed, but there are good reasons to believe that lively trade between Crete, on the one hand, and Egypt and Syria, on the other, had also been going on before. How great Crete's rôle in international trade was in those days is clearly shown by a letter sent from Candia to Venice in September 1347. The author says that he has sent merchandise to the addressee in Venice on four different cogs.³⁰

The same probably is true for the commercial contacts between Cyprus and the Moslem Near East. Notarial acts of the year 1361 refer to the export of copper and other articles from Famagusta to Alexandria.³¹ On the other hand, sugar was imported in Cyprus from Beirut.³² A price list drawn up in Famagusta in 1349 includes all spices, several kinds of sugar and Syrian cotton.³³ Philip de Maizière certainly exaggerated when he wrote that in that period every year 60-80 ships came from Egypt and Syria to Cyprus, each one with a freight worth 100,000 florins.³⁴ But the core of

²⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 88 (a. 1347).

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 87 (a. 1347).

²⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 29 (a. 1344), 85, 92, 95, 99, 103, 104 (a. 1347).

²⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 23, 30, 32 (a. 1344), 91 (a. 1347).

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 61 f. (a. 1346).

³⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 91 f.

³¹ *Nicola de Bouteriis*, notaio in Famagosta e Venezia, ed. by A. LOMBARDO (Venice 1973), no. 128, 143 and see also no. 174.

³² *Op. cit.*, no. 59 (a. 1360) and cf. no. 159 and see also no. 98 on export of Syrian flax to Cyprus; about export from Alexandria to Famagusta see no. 82 (a. 1361).

³³ *Pignol Zucchello*, p. 123 ff.

³⁴ DE MAS LATRIE, *Histoire de l'île de Chypre* II, p. 390.

his argument, the intensity of trade between Cyprus and the dominions of the Mamluks, is an historical fact.

It is worth emphasizing that some of the commercial letters we have quoted date from the time preceding the resumption of regular and direct trade between Venice and the Moslem Near East. However, the trading nations of Southern Europe had a great interest in resuming direct trade with Egypt and Syria. The merchants of Venice, Genoa, and Barcelona were eager to rid themselves of the intermediaries, so that their own share of the profits should be greater and so that they could avoid the higher expenses connected with indirect trade, such as higher freights, the cost of unloading and loading, double customs duties, and various payments to go-betweens.

b) *A difficult beginning*

Venice had already applied to the Holy See in 1317 and in 1327 with the request for complete or partial abolition of the prohibition of trade with the dominions of the sultan.³⁵ On November 30, 1337, the Senate carried a motion to send a special envoy to the pope (who should not be a clergyman) in order to ask him to allow trade with the Moslems « *pro commodo terrae et mercatorum quorum lucra sunt valde diminuta, ut est notorium* ». ³⁶ These requests were, however, refused. But when in 1343 a conflict with the ruler of the Golden Horde led to the expulsion of the Italian traders from Tana and to the blockade of Caffa, the great trading town on the coast of Crimea, the embargo on the trade with the Moslem Near East became unbearable for the Italian traders, and the Venetians appealed once more to the Pope. This time their request was granted, to the extent that in April 1344, the pope allowed them to send, in the course of five years, four galleys and six unarmed ships to the dominions of the Mamluks.³⁷ From then on, the Holy See granted the Republic temporary

³⁵ HEYD II, p. 42, 44.

³⁶ *Misti* 17, f. 89b.

³⁷ THOMAS-PREDELLI, *Dipl. Ven.-Levant.* I, p. 277 f., no. 144.

permission for trade with Egypt and with Syria, valid for a limited period and for a certain number of ships. The steps made by Venice and other trading nations for obtaining these licenses, the trade with these permits ("gratia"), which were also granted to individuals, the oaths that had to be taken before departure (to prevent supply of war material to the Moslems) — all this has been well described by Heyd.³⁸ Sometimes there were conflicting opinions over the validity of the licenses and famous lawyers were consulted.³⁹

When the Pope had changed his mind, the government of Venice undertook to establish good and regular trade relations with the countries of the sultan. On 23 August 1344, the Senate decided to send an ambassador to Cairo who should ask for the renewal of the privileges granted to a former envoy, Guido da Canale, in 1302. Further, one reads in the instructions given to him that he should demand the reduction of the customs which amounted in those days to 20% for merchandise, 4.5% for gold and 3% for silver. Were he to hear that customs in Aleppo, Damascus and Hamath were lower, he should try to have them diminished there as well. He was also ordered to request that much of the customs could be paid in silver, if possible as much as half. The Venetians would have their silver ingots coined as *dirhams* for use in their payments and so the ambassador was to ask for the opening of a Mint to strike silver coins in Alexandria.⁴⁰ There was apparently no Venetian consul in Alexandria in 1344, although the Venetians had two *fondachi* there.⁴¹ So the ambassador was to remain as consul in Alexandria, if he was unable to return.⁴² The mission of the ambassador, named Nicolo Geno,⁴³ proved a full success, however he obtained the reduction of the duty on merchandise, to 10%, and on gold, from 4.5% to 2%, for both

³⁸ II, p. 46 ff.

³⁹ PREDELLI, *Libri commemoriali* II, no. 116.

⁴⁰ Requierat q' cecha deremorum reducatur in Alexandriam et recipiantur dicti deremi in solutione mercationum.

⁴¹ *Misti* 22, f. 90b.

⁴² *Ibidem* f. 44b, 45a ff.

⁴³ SANUDO, *Vite de' duchi*, c. 611 has Nicolo Zane, but see *Dipl. Ven.-Levant.* I, p. 289 f.

import and export. The Venetians were promised that they would not be subject to compulsory purchases and could sell their merchandise as they wished.⁴⁴ Shortly after the return of Nicolo Geno, another ambassador, named Angelo Serbi, was sent to the sultan. Once more the Mamluk government promised the Venetians liberty of trade and it further allowed them to have consuls in other towns beside Alexandria. Meanwhile sultan al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ Ismā'īl died (on 4 August 1345), so that the Latin version of the new privilege was issued (on August 6) in his name but under the reign of his successor al-Malik Sha'bān.⁴⁵

In April 1345, the Senate decided to send a consul to Alexandria. He was ordered to appoint a Council of Twelve, but as it was feared that there would not be twelve "nobles" there, he was allowed to chose "fedeli" (non-Venetian subjects of the Republic).⁴⁶ In the same year a regular voyage for the Alexandria galleys was established. But there were misgivings as to whether or not there would prove successful. The consul was instructed to explain to the sultan that few merchants came because it was not certain that they would find sufficient merchandise, but if there were enough, then more merchants would come the next year.⁴⁷ In the subsequent years there was the same apprehension in Venice, and, consequently, the patrons of the galleys were permitted to load cheap articles, such as molasses, cassia, dates, and potash.⁴⁸ In

⁴⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 292 ff. *sadro et vadro*, i.e. ṣādir and wārid, cf. CL. CAHEN, *Douanes et commerce dans les ports méditerranéens de l'Égypte médiévale d'après le Minhādī d'al-Makbūmī*, in « Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient », VII (1964), p. 244. The date, p. 290, should be corrected from February, 1344, to February, 1345; Sulūk II, p. 670 f. and cf. SILVESTRE DE SACY, *Cbrestomathie arabe* II (Paris 1826), p. 47f. The date in the Arab source is Sha'bān 745 (8 December, 1344 - 5 January, 1345), but the discrepancy between this account and the date of the Latin document can easily be explained: the Latin version was written later, in February. Curiously enough it does not contain the clauses concerning the liberty of trade, whereas it comprises a promise that the Venetians will not suffer from compulsory sales and purchases. This is omitted in al-Makrīzī's account, see HEYD II, p. 45. But al-Makrīzī says explicitly that a custom of 2% was fixed for the import of cash.

⁴⁵ *Dipl. Ven.-Levant.* I, p. 296 f. al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ died on 4 August and on the same day al-Malik al-Kāmil Sha'bān was crowned, see Sulūk II, p. 677, 681.

⁴⁶ *Misti* 22, f. 90b 23, f. 24a.

⁴⁷ *Misti* 23, f. 30b.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem* f. 58a 24, f. 20b f.

the event, however, the voyages of the galleys proved to be a great success. From a merchant letter we learn that in 1347 the Venetians purchased great quantities of spices and other articles in Alexandria.⁴⁹ The sultan, on the other hand, kept his promises and once again established a Mint in Alexandria, which struck silver coins.⁵⁰ The relations between the Venetians and the sultan were so friendly that in 1347 the Pope applied to the Doge requesting that he intervene at the court of Cairo on behalf of the King of Little Armenia from whom the Mamluks had taken the town of Lajazzo.⁵¹

But after six years, regular trade had again to be discontinued. Because of the war with Genoa, the service of the state galleys had to be suspended, and in the years 1351-1354 the galleys did not sail to Alexandria. In 1352, however, a cog was sent which was to load spices, powder sugar, and other articles. The long deliberations that preceded the decision to dispatch the vessel show that once again there was great apprehension over the venture's success.⁵² Suggestions to send cogs to Alexandria in 1354 were not carried.⁵³

Immediately after the conclusion of peace with Genoa, the Senate decided to resume regular trade with Egypt and to send an ambassador to the sultans. This decision followed the policy pursued by the Republic in the aftermath of the war, when new commercial treaties with the Flemings, with the ruler of Morocco, and the Khan of the Golden Horde were concluded. There were also other reasons for sending an ambassador to Cairo; the Venetians were very much concerned about the attitude of the Mamluks. On the one hand, a galley of the Venetian government of Crete had captured a Moslem ship and on the other hand the Genoese had taken Tripoli (in North

⁴⁹ *Pignol Zucchello*, p. 87: Ciaschuno teme di chomperare peroché le galie non poranno levare tanta roba chome eglino avran, venedo le ghalie e molta roba rimarà in terra, cf. p. 104.

⁵⁰ See P. BALOG, *The coinage of the Mamlūk sultans of Egypt and Syria* (New York 1964), (*American Numismatic Society, Numismatic Studies* 12), no. 493: a dirham of al-Malik al-Manṣūr 'Alī (1377-81) struck in Alexandria.

⁵¹ PREDELLI, *Libri commemoriali* II, no. 214.

⁵² *Misti* 26, f. 56b, 57a, 85a, 86a, 89a.

⁵³ *Misti* 27, f. 21a.

Africa), arousing great emotion in the Near East. The fears of the Venetians were not unfounded, as is borne out by the accounts of some Arab chroniclers. The Damascene historian, Ibn Kathīr, narrates that at the beginning of the summer of 1355 orders came to the Syrian capital that the revenues of the religious corporations should be used to ransom the Moslems taken prisoner in Tripoli.⁵⁴ The Venetian ambassador was instructed to make sure that the sultan would not make reprisals against the Venetians. He was also to protest against extortions, because customs levied on the Venetians' goods had been increased above the 10%, which had been agreed upon.⁵⁵ The ambassador, Ermolao Venier, did in fact obtain the confirmation of the privilege granted in 1345 and promises that the Venetians would be well treated.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, in Venice there was scepticism over the chances of successful trade with Egypt. Although the Senate decided on 30 April 1356, to send three galleys to Alexandria, the question was deliberated again at the beginning of May and several times put to a vote;⁵⁷ because of the hostility of the Moslems, orders were given that precautions should be taken for the security of Venetians going to Alexandria.⁵⁸ Similar apprehension was expressed concerning a cog that sailed to Alexandria that year.⁵⁹

But, as earlier, the misgivings were not justified. After many vicissitudes the trade with Egypt began to flourish. Even in October 1356, the Venetian Senate decided to ask the Pope, through a special ambassador, to allow the Republic to send two galleys every year to the dominions of the sultan,⁶⁰ and it seems that this permanent licence was granted after long negotiations.⁶¹ In 1357,

⁵⁴ *al-Bidāya wa 'n-nihāya* 14, p. 252 f. Tripoli had been taken by the Genoese admiral Philip Doria in April, 1355, and evacuated four months later against the payment of 50,000 doblas; see R. BRUNSCHWIG, *La Berbérie orientale sous les Hafsides* (Paris 1940-47) I, p. 173.

⁵⁵ *Misti* 27, f. 18b.

⁵⁶ HEYD II, p. 48.

⁵⁷ *Misti* 27, f. 74b.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem* f. 96a, 96b.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem* f. 88a.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem* f. 99b.

⁶¹ *Misti* 29, f. 2a, 73a.

despite the war with Hungary, it was decided that four galleys should be sent to Alexandria « de melioribus quas comune . . . dare teneatur ». However, there was still strong opposition to the intensification of trade with Egypt. The motion was carried by 41 votes, with 21 against and 12 abstentions.⁶² Actually, the results of the auction of the galleys show that the trade with Cyprus was still more important. The auction of the Alexandria galleys yielded 384 pounds of grossi against 260 pounds 6 shillings for the Romania galleys and 471 pounds 6 shillings for the Cyprus galleys.⁶³ In 1358, too, there was strong opposition to the dispatch of the Alexandria galleys: after four votes in the Senate, on May 4, a majority could not be obtained; and on May 16, no less than 10 votes were necessary before a majority of one was obtained, — 46 voted in favour, 29 against and 16 abstentions.⁶⁴ The opposition against the intensification of trade with Egypt must have been connected, in part, with the interests of certain pressure groups, probably from those who had investments in Cyprus or in the Venetian settlements in Greece, or in the trading towns on the coasts of the Black Sea and considered the development of trade with the dominions of the sultan to be prejudicial to their own interests. They may also have been merchants dealing with Turkish cotton or other articles imported into Venice from those territories. But the apprehension voiced in Venice concerning the trade with Egypt was exaggerated as can be seen from the fact that its trade with the dominions of the Mamluks increased considerably in those years. In 1359, the number of the galleys sent to Alexandria was not less than six. But just when Venice had succeeded in establishing regular trade with Egypt and in increasing its volume, the Pope imposed a new embargo. Having received information that the prohibition of selling war material to the Moslems had been transgressed, in October 1359, he revoked all licences and again proclaimed a general prohibition of trade with the countries of the

⁶² *Misti* 28, f. 3a.

⁶³ *Ibidem* f. 4b.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem* f. 47b.

Mamluks.⁶⁵ Consequently the galley service to Alexandria was suspended in 1360. The Venetians, however, pursued their commercial activities in Egypt and Syria, although there was no direct trade.⁶⁶

c) *An interlude - the crusade of Peter I, King of Cyprus*

This survey of Venetian trade with Egypt up to 1360 brings home with a vengeance the fact that it was not only the Church that impeded its development. The contest with Genoa and the hostility of the Moslem population, whose xenophobia increased in the period, hampered it no less. The registers of the deliberations of the Venetian Senate, which were unknown to Heyd, show that in Venice itself there was also a strong group that opposed the intensification of trade with the Mamluk realm. The discrepancy between the success of the trips to Alexandria and the opposition to the dispatch of the galleys leaves no doubt that in Venice, whose wealth derived from the trade with the Moslem Near East, there was a faction adverse to the trade.

The group that favoured trade with Egypt, however, had the upper hand, and at the end of 1360 the Senate decided to apply to the Holy See with a request that the number of galleys allowed to visit Alexandria should be increased.⁶⁷ But although the Pope had meanwhile renounced the general prohibition of trade, the Venetian government soon became aware of the impossibility of obtaining a complete abolition of the restrictions. At the same time the government of the Republic applied itself to maintaining friendly relations with the court of the sultan. In 1361, Nicolo Contarini went as ambassador to the sultan, had the old privileges confirmed, and obtained some additional concessions.⁶⁸ In May 1361, thanks to substantial payments, the Holy See granted licences for a greater number of galleys.⁶⁹ In that year, again six galleys

⁶⁵ PREDELLI, *Libri commemoriali* II, no. 153.

⁶⁶ *Nic. de Boateriis*, no. 42, 43, 45.

⁶⁷ *Misti* 29, f. 97b, 100b, 102b, 104a, 104b, 108a, 111a.

⁶⁸ See HEYD II, p. 48.

⁶⁹ PREDELLI, *Libri commemoriali* II, no. 233, 241, 244-146.

went to Alexandria. But meanwhile, the skies looked overcast. The activities of Peter I, King of Cyprus, began to interfere with trade in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The auction of the Alexandria galleys in 1362 proved a failure. Two galleys fetched 21 pounds of grossi and 4 shillings.⁷⁰ Two other galleys were apparently leased without payment. The galley service to Cyprus was suspended from 1360. The King of Cyprus had embarked in earnest on his crusading warfare in 1361 when he took Adalia on the Southern coast of Asia Minor, sacked the town and burnt it. Then in May 1363, Christian ships attacked Abukit and Rosetta.⁷¹

The Venetians feared that reprisals would be taken in Egypt. So it was proposed in the Senate that the consul in Alexandria should go to the sultan and try to prevent reprisals by lodging a protest against injuries done to the merchants. He should protest against the practice of the Kārimīs, the great Egyptian spice merchants, who had set up a cartel in Alexandria, artificially raising the prices of goods,⁷² and about other damage done to the Venetians. The protest was designed to serve as a pretext for discussing with the sultan the activities of King Peter, for it was assumed that the sultan would raise this question. The consul should explain the attitude of Venice so that consequences detrimental to Venetian trade might be avoided. However, the proposal was turned down.⁷³ It was then decided to send an ambassador to Cairo. He was to protest against the activities of the Kārimīs and the murder of a Venetian in 1362.⁷⁴ Misgivings in Venice over the attitude of the Egyptian authorities were so great that once more special precautions were taken for the forthcoming spice fair in Alexandria. The captain of the galley convoy was not to allow the merchandise to be unloaded in Alexandria if

⁷⁰ *Misti* 30, f. 75a.

⁷¹ G. HILL, *A history of Cyprus* (Cambridge 1940-52) II, p. 321 ff.

⁷² The passage of the *Misti* has been published by Naura in *JESHO* I, p. 333; on the Kārimīs see my paper *The Kārimī merchants*, «*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*» 1956, p. 45-56.

⁷³ *Misti* 31, f. 2a.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem* f. 2b.

he was not sure that conditions were satisfactory, and in that case he was to sail to Cyprus.⁷⁵ But Venice's trade with the dominions of the sultan in the quinquennium 1361-1365 was still more voluminous and profitable than for many years before. Despite the revolt of Crete in 1363-1364, which menaced Venice's hold on its most important basis in the Eastern Mediterranean, trade with Alexandria was not discontinued. The great Egyptian harbour was visited by 22 Venetian galleys, as against 14 in 1346-1350 and 17 in 1356-1360; and from 1364 the auction of the Alexandria galleys yielded much more than that of the Romania and Cyprus galleys.⁷⁶

Then, in October 1365, the King of Cyprus finally made the expedition he had been preparing several years. He raided Alexandria. It was great luck for Venetian trade that Marco Cornaro, who was Doge from 1365 to 1368 was also a great diplomat. He drew up commercial treaties with the Duke of Austria, the Count of Görz, and the Patriarch of Aquileja. He also made great efforts to soothe the sultan and to bring about peace between him and his Christian enemies, so that Venetian trade should go on. For this purpose he had recourse to the services of Francesco Bembo, a Venetian patrician who was himself a great diplomat. He had already distinguished himself by a mission to the Emperor of Constantinople⁷⁷ and in 1366, was sent together with Pietro Soranzo to the sultan.⁷⁸ The Arabic chronicler al-Maḳrīzī narrates that in March 1366 Christian ambassadors came pleading that their nation had not participated in the raid on Alexandria. They asked for the liberation of the merchants who had been imprisoned in Alexandria after King Peter's expedition and for the restoration of their goods. They also expressed the wish that trade should be continued and finally asked that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, which had been closed as a reprisal, should be re-

⁷⁵ *Ibidem* f. 38b.

⁷⁶ Rightly emphasized by THIRIET, *La Romanie vénitienne*, p. 330.

⁷⁷ THIRIET, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

⁷⁸ PREDELLI, *Libri commemoriali* III, no. 268 and cf. the interpretation of Heyd I, p. 53.

opened.⁷⁹ The ambassadors mentioned were the Venetians, Francesco Bembo and Pietro Soranzo.⁸⁰ While the ambassadors, together with Egyptian envoys, went to the court of Famagusta and embarked on a difficult mediation between the King of Cyprus and the sultan,⁸¹ the Doge of Venice succeeded in promoting Venetian trade with Egypt and Syria. In 1366, for the first time, Venice sent galleys to Beirut. The captain of the Alexandria galleys was instructed to send an envoy to Yelboghā al-Khāssakī, the regent of the Mamluk realm, and to ask him to send orders by courier⁸² to the authorities in Damascus, Beirut, and Tripoli that the Venetians should be well treated. The captain of the galleys sailing to Beirut should contact the Venetian consul, who already administered the Venetian colony in Damascus, and ask him to apply with the same request to the governor of Central Syria.⁸³ In the same year, the Venetian government established the State line of cogs; which were to load the Syrian and Egyptian cotton and other merchandise, and four cogs were sent to the Syrian ports.⁸⁴

Meanwhile the Pope had once again changed his mind, and in August 1366, he revoked the licences already given. This was in fact a new prohibition on trade with the Moslems. The Pope, however, allowed ships that had already departed to continue on their way.⁸⁵ But the Moslems in Alexandria suspected that Cypriots were on the Venetian galleys, tried to seize them, and when the galleys departed many Venetian merchants in Beirut and Tripoli were arrested in reprisal.⁸⁶ One of them was the Venetian noble Antonio Memo who was arrested in Tripoli with eighteen Venetian

⁷⁹ *Sulūk* III, p. 118 f.

⁸⁰ Rightly stated by WEILL, *Geschichte der Chalifen* IV, p. 513, whereas Silvestre de Sacy had doubts, see *Chrestomathie arabe* II, p. 49 f.

⁸¹ HILL, *op. cit.*, p. 338 ff.

⁸² In the registers of the *Misti q'* Jolboga mittat unum belledi. It should be corrected to baridi (the Venetians had too much to do with beledi ginger...).

⁸³ *Misti* 32, f. 5a.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem* f. 3b.

⁸⁵ *Dipl. Ven.-Levant.* II, p. 115 ff., no. 69, 70.

⁸⁶ See HEYD II, p. 55 and an additional Arabic account: *Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya wa 'n-nibāya* 14, p. 323 f. Cf. HILL, *History of Cyprus* II, p. 343.

subjects (*fedeli*).⁸⁷ According to an Arabian chronicler, the Cypriots (for undoubtedly they are the "Franks" spoken of) retaliated at the end of 1366 with a successful attack on Tripoli.⁸⁸

Venice insisted on its interest in the continuation of the trade with the dominions of the sultan, and in January, 1367, obtained from the Holy See a revocation of the prohibition of trade, with the granting of new licences. In February 1367, the Venetian government again sent Francesco Bembo as ambassador to the sultan. He was accompanied by Domenico Michiel, who had been on a mission with him to the court of Constantinople in 1362.⁸⁹ While these ambassadors failed in the mediation, although they visited the court of Famagusta together with Egyptian envoys,⁹⁰ another ambassador was sent to the sultan to make sure that trade could be continued. This ambassador, Pietro Grimani, had instructions to ask the sultan to release the Venetian merchants who had been imprisoned in Syria.⁹¹ Despite all these difficulties, in that year the Venetian merchants invested a very great sum of money in the trade with Egypt. Trade with the Greek countries and the regions around the Black Sea was steadily declining, as is clearly borne out the numbers of galleys of the "Romania" line and the results of their auctions. Whereas until 1343 the convoy of Romania galleys numbered 8-10 ships, after that it consisted of only 2-5. The results of the auctions of the Romania galleys in 1365 yielded 245 pounds of grossi against 691 pounds for the Alexandria galleys; and in 1367, the sums paid for the Romania and Alexandria galleys were 150 and 615 pounds, respectively.⁹² Consequently, the Senate decided in 1367 to send to Alexandria an additional big galley ("de rata") to transport the merchandise

⁸⁷ *Misti* 32, f. 22a.

⁸⁸ *Ibn Kathir* l. c., cf. HEYD II, p. 56.

⁸⁹ *Dipl. Ven.-Levant.* II, no. 75, 76, p. 123 ff.; PREDELLI, *Libri Commemoriali* II, no. 320 and see *op. cit.*, no. 351, 366 and further THIRIET, *La Romanie vénitienne*, p. 172 f.

⁹⁰ HILL, *op. cit.*, p. 346 f.

⁹¹ *Misti* 32, f. 87a; PREDELLI, *Libri commemoriali* III, no. 351; JORGA, *Philippe de Mézières 1327-1405 et la Croisade au XIVe siècle* (Paris 1896), p. 364, note 6.

⁹² See below.

that would remain there after the departure of the galleys. If even this galley should not be sufficient, the Senate gave permission for spices also to be loaded on a cog sailing to Alexandria.⁹³

TABLE I
GALLEYS TO ALEXANDRIA AND BEIRUT AND SPICE COGS
1345-1369⁹⁴

date	Alexandria galleys	Beirut galleys	Alexandria cogs	source
1343	2			Misti 22, f. 81a
1346	3			Misti 23, f. 57b, 59a
1347	2			Misti 24, f. 22b, 24a
1348	3			Misti 24, f. 51b, 53a
1349	3			Misti 24, f. 109a f. 25, f. 18b
1350	3			Misti 26, f. 12a f.
1351	—			
1352	—		1	Misti 26, f. 86a, 89a
1353	—			
1354	—			
1355	5 + nave di rata		1 ^a	Misti 27, f. 17a, 21a, 24b
1356	3		1	Misti 27, f. 74b, 77a, 88a
1357	4			Misti 28, f. 3a, 4b
1358	4			Misti 28, f. 47b, 49b
1359	6			Misti 29, f. 2a, 4a
1360	—			Misti 29, f. 121b
1361	6			Misti 30, f. 74b
1362	4			Misti 31, f. 6b
1363	4			Misti 31, f. 65b, 66b, 67a
1364	4			Misti 31, f. 96a, 97a
1365	4			Misti 31, f. 141a, 141b;
1366	4 + galea di rata	3 ^b		Libri comm. III, no. 234 Misti 32, f. 13a, 70a, 84a;
1367	4 + galea di rata			Libri comm. III, no. 351 Misti 32, f. 130b;
1368	4			Libri comm. l.c.

^a According to f. 90 b the sailing of one cog (apparently another one) was cancelled.

^b According to *Misti* 31, f. 141b only two.

⁹³ *Misti* 32, f. 84a f.

⁹⁴ Cf. the graphic synopsis by A. TENENTI-C. VIVANTI, *Le film d'un grand système de navigation: les galères marchandes vénitiennes XIVE-XVIIe siècles*, (in) *Annales E. S. C.* 16 (1961), p. 83-86.

Although the Cypriots raided Tripoli in September 1367,⁹⁵ and a great number of Europeans were arrested a month later in Alexandria,⁹⁶ Venice continued her efforts to mediate between the King of Cyprus and the sultan, and in 1368 sent Nicolo Giustiniani and Pietro Marcello as ambassadors to Cairo.⁹⁷ But when the negotiations of these ambassadors, joined together with Genoese envoys, failed, the Syrian ports and Alexandria were again attacked by the Cypriots, in June and July 1369,⁹⁸ and the two great maritime Republics made an alliance against the sultan in July 1369, planning a common campaign in the next summer. Their aim was the release of the merchants who had been imprisoned by the Mamluk authorities and, mainly, to make sure that trade could be continued peacefully, without extortions and injuries.⁹⁹ In fact, on 5 January 1369, the Venetian Senate had already promulgated a decree forbidding trade with the dominions of the sultan.¹⁰⁰ When the two maritime Republics had made this alliance, the Holy See issued a general prohibition of trade and cancelled the licences that had been granted.¹⁰¹

d) *The boom in the Levantine trade at the end of the XIVth century*

The alliance of Venice and Genoa proved to be a great failure. The two Republics made a naval demonstration before the port of Alexandria in December 1369, but did not embark on military activities. At the beginning of May 1370, there were rumours in Venice that the Genoese had decided to resume trade with Egypt and to send a consul to Alexandria. Following this, the Venetian Senate carried a motion to do the same; however, the Venetian consul had not left Alexandria at all, so the decision referred to the

⁹⁵ *Sulūk III*, p. 149 and cf. WEIL, *Gesch. der Chalifen IV*, p. 523.

⁹⁶ *Sulūk III*, p. 156.

⁹⁷ PREDELLI, *Libri commemoriali III*, no. 421.

⁹⁸ HILL, *History of Cyprus II*, p. 359, 372 f.; *Sulūk III*, p. 175 f.

⁹⁹ HILL, *op. cit.*, p. 373 f.

¹⁰⁰ *Misti 33*, f. 6a.

¹⁰¹ *Dipl. Ven.-Levant. II*, no. 87.

appointment of a new appointee to the post.¹⁰² Marco Brinci, the Venetian consul in Damascus, who had gone to Cyprus, was ordered to return to the Syrian capital.¹⁰³ Further, it was decided to send an ambassador to the sultan. He was Pietro Giustiniani.¹⁰⁴ Together with a Genoese ambassador, he succeeded in making peace between the sultan and Cyprus. The Arab historian al-Maḥrīzī writes that ambassadors came to Cairo in August 1370, and December, 1370, and that peace was concluded, whereupon the Christian merchants were released and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre reopened. Moslem envoys departed with the ambassadors who had come in July in order to be present when the head of the Christian State was to take an oath to keep peace.¹⁰⁵ It goes without saying that this meant the Kingdom of Cyprus. Without delay the Holy See allowed the resumption of trade with the dominions of the sultan, and declared valid the licences that had been revoked.¹⁰⁶

This was the end of the interlude brought about by the crusading activities of Peter I, King of Cyprus, who had been murdered. Merchants had obtained Oriental goods in the first half of the Levant began. The situation in the various regions where Italian merchants had obtained Oriental goods in the first half of the fourteenth century had completely changed. After the death of Ilkhān Abū Sa'īd in 1336, Italian trade with Persia declined. The anarchy and insecurity frightened the Venetians so much that they turned down the invitation of the ruler of Tebriz to resume trade with this town, once an emporium with intercontinental connections. In Trebizond, which had also become a great trading town and the seat of many Italian agents, the Venetians suffered not only from the extortions of the Greek authorities, but also from the enmity of the Genoese. Lajazzo had already been conquered by the

¹⁰² *Misti* 33, f. 53b.

¹⁰³ *Ibidem* f. 54a.

¹⁰⁴ L. c.

¹⁰⁵ *Sulūk* III, p. 189, 190, 191 and cf. SILVESTRE DE SACY, *Chrestomathie arabe* II, p. 50; WEIL, *Gesch. der Chalifen* IV, p. 524. As to the treaty of peace, see DE MAS LATRIE, *Histoire de l'île de Chypre* II, p. 347 and also HILL, *op. cit.* II, p. 376.

¹⁰⁶ PREDELLI, *Libri commemoriali* III, no. 587.

Mamluks in 1347; in 1375, the bells rang for the whole Kingdom of Little Armenia. Even the conditions in the Venetian territories in Greece were not prosperous. Both Negroponte and Crete were depopulated in that period; and because of either epidemics or because of the difficult economic conditions, many people left these territories.¹⁰⁷ The occupation of Famagusta by the Genoese in 1373 and the establishment of a Genoese monopoly over the foreign trade of Cyprus was a heavy blow for the Venetians. The galley line to Cyprus was suspended.¹⁰⁸ In 1382, the Venetian Senate issued an order to the authorities in the colonies in Greece that they should forbid any Venetian subject from carrying on trade with Cyprus. Severe punishment was imposed on transgressions.¹⁰⁹

The volume of Venetian trade with the dominions of the sultan of Cairo began to increase considerably. As early as 1372 orders were given to a cog sailing to Alexandria that storage for 1000 parcels of spices should be prepared, since it was supposed that the galleys would not be sufficient for the transport of the quantity of spices acquired in that year.¹¹⁰ Trade with the Moslem Near East still depended upon licences from the Holy See, and Venice had to pursue almost permanent negotiations to obtain them. The attitude of the Pope, however, became more compliant. In July 1372, Gregory XI granted Venice a licence for 24 galleys and 10 cogs,¹¹¹ and in October 1374, he allowed them to send two galleys from Crete to the dominions of the sultan, within three years.¹¹² So in 1374 and in 1375, two galleys commuted three times a year from Crete to Beirut.¹¹³ In order to collect the merchandise brought by these galleys to Crete other galleys were sent there from Venice, both in 1374 and in 1375.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁷ THIRIET, *Régestes* I, p. 145.

¹⁰⁸ See R. LOPEZ, *Storia delle colonie genovesi nel Mediterraneo* (Bologna 1938), p. 425 f. and on the other hand HILL, *History of Cyprus* II, p. 412 f. Probably this was the reason of the suspension of the galley service to Alexandria in that year.

¹⁰⁹ THIRIET, *Régestes* I, p. 154.

¹¹⁰ *Misti* 34, f. 8a.

¹¹¹ *Dipl. Ven.-Levant.* II, no. 96.

¹¹² *Op. cit.*, no. 99.

¹¹³ *Misti* 34, f. 87a ff. and see below.

¹¹⁴ *Misti* 34, f. 123b. 35, f. 43a.

On the other hand, the extortions of the Moslem officials and the acts of piracy and aggression committed by fleets of European countries embarrassed the Venetians time and again. Venice did its best to soften matters by continuous diplomatic interventions. In 1375, Giovanni Barbarigo went as ambassador to the sultan. He was instructed to protest again the extortions and to demand from the sultan binding promises for freedom of trade in Syria, where the proceedings of the Mamluk authorities had apparently been more high handed than in Egypt. The Venetians were to be assured that they would not be compelled to sell their merchandise by force. Further, the ambassador was to raise the problem of *ius albinagii* and *ius naufragii*. The Venetian government also demanded that it be permitted to appoint a consul in Damascus and that he should have a salary (djāmakiya) from the custom revenues; obviously, the consul had been compelled to leave, as a result of not being recognised. As the hostels (*fondachi*) of the Venetians in Damascus were too small, the ambassador was ordered to seek permission for the Venetian merchants to live elsewhere in Damascus also. He should also intervene on behalf of the Venetians who carried on trade in the towns of Hamath, Tripoli, Sarmin ("Siamo") and Lattakia. Finally Giovanni Barbarigo was instructed to make sure that Venetians would not be imprisoned in reprisal for acts of piracy committed by non-Venetians. He received no less than 5000 ducats for the acquisition of presents to be distributed at the court of the sultan, and after accomplishing his mission he was to go to Damascus as consul.¹¹⁵ The privilege obtained by Giovanni Barbarigo from Sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf Sha'bān comprised permission to appoint a consul in Damascus, the promise that the governor of Damascus would enlarge the *fondachi*, which had become too small, and that the Venetian traders would not be subject to compulsory purchase of sugar and other articles (for apparently the officials of the royal sugar factories had imposed on them compulsory purchases). Litigations between Venetians and Moslems was to be judged by the secular authorities, either by

¹¹⁵ *Misti* 35, f. 9b ff. As to the meaning of Siam see below note 146.

the governor or by the hād̄jib, (a Mamluk officer not bound by religious law), but not by the *cadi*.¹¹⁶

So the mission of Giovanni Barbarigo had been a complete success, but the promises were not kept. In 1376, the Senate ordered the consul of Alexandria to try to obtain the dismissal of Ibn 'Arrām, governor of the town, who had prejudiced the Venetian merchants. The consul probably received promises that there would be no more extortions, but Ibn 'Arrām was not dismissed.¹¹⁷ In the same year the Mamluk officials once again extorted certain sums of money from the Venetians in Damascus; the consul, the successor of Barbarigo, and several merchants were imprisoned, and the spices they had bought were sequestered.¹¹⁸ So the Venetian authorities decided again to send an ambassador to the sultan. It was even proposed in the Senate to discontinue trade with Syria, pending the settlement of the conflict.¹¹⁹ The ambassador was to ask for the release of the Venetians and the dismissal of a Moslem official (a *mushidd* - inspector). Further, he had instructions to ask the sultan to set free the King of Little Armenia who was still detained in Cairo.¹²⁰ This mission too was apparently a partial success, as a dispatch of the Senate to the consul in Damascus dated July 1377, testifies that he was free.¹²¹ However, merchandise bought (or imported) by the Venetians remained under sequestration. But the Venetian traders had also given rise to protests from the Mamluk authorities. Some of them fled from Damascus leaving debts and taking with them merchandise which had not been paid for. Consequently, in

¹¹⁶ PREDELLI, *Libri commemoriali* III, no. 787 and cf. HEYD II, p. 468 f.

¹¹⁷ *Misti* 35, f. 113a. Ibn 'Arrām whose full name was Salāh ad-dīn Khalīl b. 'Arrām was several times governor of Alexandria. When the consul was ordered to lodge the protest, he had been in office less than a year, having been appointed on December 26, 1375, see *Sulūk* III, p. 254. That the protest of the Venetians had only a partial success one learns from an account of al-Maḥrīzī, who claimed that Ibn 'Arrām was called to Cairo in April 1377 and fined. But having paid the fine, he was sent back to Alexandria as governor and held the post till the end of June, 1377, see *Sulūk* III, p. 292, 308. The order to the consul had been given in May, 1376.

¹¹⁸ *Misti* 35, f. 146b cf. 148a, 151b.

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem* f. 150b.

¹²⁰ *Ibidem* f. 146b, 153b.

¹²¹ *Misti* 36, f. 20a.

1377, a new mission was sent to Cairo. First Nicolo Girardo and Andrea Badoer were chosen, but as they declined, Baldo Quirini and Nicolo Loredan were appointed.¹²² The main purpose of this embassy was to obtain the restitution of the merchandise put under sequestration. Its value must have been very great, since the ambassadors were instructed to offer bribes amounting to 15,000 ducats (to be covered from the value of the merchandise) to have the goods restored. They were to apologize for the misdoings of those Venetians in Damascus and demand from the sultan that sale on credit (to the Venetians) should be forbidden.¹²³ Despite all these conflicts, the trade between Venice and the dominions of the sultan was steadily increasing. From 1377, Venice was also connected with Beirut by a line of galleys, like those going to Alexandria, provided by the State. Meanwhile the war of Chioggia had broken out and for four years, from 1378 to 1381, Venetian trade with Egypt and Syria could not take its normal course. The galley lines to Alexandria and to Beirut had to be suspended.

When peace had been made with Genoa, the government of Venice immediately took measures to resume regular trade with the dominions of the Mamluks. In 1382, Baldo Quirini was once more sent as ambassador to Cairo. This time he had as his colleague Pietro Grimani.¹²⁴ They were to protest against the injuries inflicted on the Venetians in Damascus: a great quantity of furs had been taken from them by force, as well as 10 *ķintārs* tin, 30 *ķintārs* copper and certain quantities of cloth. Apparently the patrons of the galleys had also suffered in 1377, from extortion by the Moslem officials, and higher customs than fixed in the privileges had been levied on certain articles. The ambassadors also received

¹²² *Ibidem* f. 34b, 35a, 35b. One of these merchants was Marco Brici, undoubtedly the former consul (see above).

¹²³ *Ibidem* f. 37a ff., 38a f.

¹²⁴ *Misti* 37, f. 89b, 90a. The Arabic chronicler al-Djauhārī mentions the coming of European ambassadors in August, 1383, see *Nuzhat an-nufūs wa 'l-abdān fī tawārīkh az-zamān* (Cairo 1970), p. 68. But as the instructions to Baldo Quirini and Pietro Grimani were given by the Senate on July 29, 1382, it is rather unlikely that they arrived in Cairo in August, 1383. So another embassy must be meant.

other instructions, which are much more interesting, as they point to the increase of Venetian trade in the Moslem Near East. They were requested to demand that the sultan should pay a salary not only to the Venetian consuls in Alexandria and in Damascus, but also to a consul in Damietta.¹²⁵

The success of the Venetian diplomacy cannot have been very great. In 1383, the captain of the Alexandria galleys had orders to decide only in Candia whether or not to continue on to the Egyptian harbour.¹²⁶ The apprehension, however, may have been the consequence of the activities of the Genoese, who had in that year embarked on military activities against the dominions of the sultan. They had left the port of Alexandria without permission, whereupon the European merchants in the town had been arrested in reprisal. Thereupon the Genoese attacked Beirut.¹²⁷ Whatever the reason may have been, the Venetian galley line to Alexandria did not function in 1384 or 1385, and there were misgivings as to the spice fair in Damascus in 1384, so that the Beirut galleys had to be subsidized.¹²⁸

So the great boom of Venetian trade in the Moslem Near East began only in the later 80's of the fourteenth century. The economy of Venice had indeed recovered very soon from the great losses that had resulted from the war of Chioggia, and endeavours to foster its seaborne trade were mainly directed towards the Moslem Near East. As early as 1383 the auction of the Beirut and Alexandria galleys had been a great success, whereas that of the Flanders galleys had yielded relatively much less.¹²⁹ In 1384, orders had been given to build new galleys for the voyages to Romania and to Syria.¹³⁰ In that year Venice succeeded in considerably

¹²⁵ *Misti* 37, f. 99b ff.

¹²⁶ *Misti* 38, f. 71a.

¹²⁷ *Sulūk* III, p. 487 f. (referring to the Genoese); *al-Djaubārī, Nuzbat an-nufūs*, p. 63; *Ibn Hadjar al-'Askalānī, Inbā al-ghumr* (Cairo 1969-72) I, p. 274.

¹²⁸ *Misti* 38, f. 132b, 133a.

¹²⁹ Cf. G. LUZZATTO, *Storia economica di Venezia dall'XI al XVI secolo* (Venice 1961), p. 146 f.

¹³⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 150.

increasing its possessions in the Aegean and in Greece.¹³¹ The development of Venetian trade in the Near East is clearly shown by the number of the galleys used on the different routes.

TABLE II

GALLEYS TO ALEXANDRIA AND BEIRUT
1370-1388¹³²

date	Alexandria galleys	Beirut galleys	source
1370	3 ^a		Misti 33, f. 80a, 81a; Libr. comm. III, no. 351
1371	5 + galea di rata		Misti 33, f. 110a, 11a, 130b; Libri comm. III, no. 234
1372	4		Misti 34, f. 7b; Libri comm. III, no. 267
1373	—		
1374	4	2 ^b	Misti 34, f. 82a, 85a ff., 114b; Libri comm. III, no. 669
1375	3	2 ^c	Misti 35, f. 115a, 118b, 121b; Libri comm. III, no. 669
1376	4	4 + galea di rata	
1377	4	3	Misti 36, f. 13b; Libri comm. III, no. 267
1378	—	—	
1379	—	—	
1380	—	—	
1381	—	—	
1382	2	3	Misti 37, f. 78a
1383	2	3	Misti 38, f. 33b, 34a
1384	—	4	Ibidem f. 132b
1385	—	4	Misti 39, f. 84b
1386	2	5	Misti 40, f. 29b, 32a
1387	2	5	Ibidem f. 71a, f.
1388	2	4	Ibidem f. 118a, 121a

^a Although it was decided to dispatch to Alexandria 3 galleys, only two were leased - see f. 80b, 81a. They were accompanied by a galley sent by the government (that means, not leased), see f. 81a.

^b Three voyages each, see above.

^c As b.

¹³¹ F. C. HODGSON, *Venice in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries* (London 1910), p. 541 f.

¹³² For the number of the galleys from 1389, see my paper *The Venetian supremacy in Levantine trade*, JEEH III, p. 18 ff. and see there note 67.

It is not enough, however, to count the galleys to have an idea of the volume of Venetian trade with the Moslem Near East. Their size must also be taken into account. The galleys dispatched to Alexandria were mainly big ones, like those which sailed to Flanders.¹³³

TABLE III
AUCTIONS OF VENETIAN EAST-BOUND GALLEYS
1355-1388¹³⁴
(in pounds of grossi and shillings)

date	Romania galleys	Cyprus galleys	Alexandria galleys	Beirut galleys	source
1355	70 ¹⁰	157	277		Misti 27, f. 18a
1356	194 ¹⁸	390	358		Ibidem f. 77a
1357	260 ⁶	471 ⁶	384		Misti 28, f. 4 b
1358	663 ⁸	571 ¹⁶	758 ¹¹		Ibidem f. 49b
1359	440 ⁷	438	366		Misti 29, f. 4a
1360	301 ²	?	—		Thiriet, Reg., p. 96
1361	81	?	?		Misti 29, f. 124b
1362	260 ⁴				Misti 30, f. 5a
1363	473 ¹⁸		2 galleys		Thiriet, Reg. p. 105
			220		
1364	31, 1 duc. & 2 gr 2	123	277 ⁶		Misti 31, f. 61b, 67a
1365	245 ¹⁸	482 ¹⁴	691 ¹⁰		Ibidem f. 97a
1366	303 ¹	41 ¹	22 ^{a b}		Ibidem f. 139a, 142b, 143a
1367	150 ⁴	615			Misti 32, f. 52a, 70a
1368	352 ¹⁶	gratis ^c	2 galleys 37 ^d		Ibidem f. 127a, 130b
1369	171 duc. 4 gr. ^e	141 ⁶	—		Thiriet, Reg., p. 121;
					Misti 33, f. 59a, 70b
1370	221 ³	265 ⁷	—		Misti 33, f. 59a, 70b
1371	64 ²	643 ¹³	1096 ¹		Ibidem f. 111a
1372	534	662 ¹⁴	801		Thiriet, Reg., p. 128;
					Misti 34, f. 8b, 10b.
1373	2 galleys 221 ³ *	—	—		Misti 34, f. 56b
1374	66	—	803 ¹¹	240 ² †	Misti 34, f. 87a, 115b
1375	62 ⁶	—	605 ¹⁸	400 ⁶ †	Misti 35, f. 3b, 26b, 38a
1376	25 ²	—	785 ¹	562 ¹³	Ibidem f. 114b, 115a, 115b
1377	25 ²	—	449 ⁶	145 ¹²	Misti 36, f. 15a, 16a
1378	—	—	—	—	
1379	—	—	—	—	
1380	—	—	—	—	
1381	—	—	—	—	
1382	—	—	291 ³	258 ¹¹	Misti 37, f. 78a, 78b
1383	206	—	373 ⁶	237 ⁷	Thiriet, Reg., p. 158; Misti 38, f. 33b, 34a
1384	1 galley 85	—	—	164 ⁴	Thiriet, Reg., p. 164; Misti 38, f. 113b
1385	20 ⁴	—	—	580 ¹⁵	Misti 39 f., 83a, 86a
1386	202	—	320	319 ²⁰	Misti 40, f. 32a
1387	242 ⁶	—	387 ⁹	297 ¹	Ibidem f. 72a
1388	191	—	125	496 ³	Ibidem f. 121a

^a THIRIET, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

^b Thiriet is mistaken. He reckons for the galley of Alberto Capello 90 instead of 40 pounds.

^c One galley - 3 ducats, that is, a symbolic payment.

^d Two galleys were leased for a symbolic payment of 1 grosso each.

^e The other two galleys were not leased, but run by the government.

^f These galleys departed three times a year from Crete, see above.

^g As f.

¹³³ See *Misti* 29, f. 121b 30, f. 74b 31, f. 6b, 66b 32, f. 70a, 130b etc.

¹³⁴ The sums yielded by the Romania galleys are listed by THIRIET, *Régestes* I, p. 344 f. The auctions before 1355 have not been taken into consideration here, since only from this date did the Alexandria line function more or less regularly.

As the Alexandria galleys were bigger and were expected to bring back to Venice more expensive merchandise, their auction yielded much more, at first relatively, and then, when their number increased and that of the Romania galleys diminished, even absolutely. From this table one learns that after 1371 the galley routes to Alexandria and Beirut were incomparably more important than the Romania route. The Cyprus convoy no longer functioned at all.

Several decisions of the Venetian Senate point to the great upsurge in the trade of the Republic with the dominions of the sultan in this period. In 1384, orders were given to the ambassadors at the Holy See to ask for permanent licences. If this should prove to be impossible to obtain, they were to try to obtain licences for as long a time as possible.¹³⁵ The increase of Venetian trade with Syria was even more conspicuous than that with Egypt. In 1376 it was believed in Venice that a quantity of merchandise much greater than the Beirut galleys could load, would be bought at the spice fair in Damascus, and consequently it was decided that the surplus should be loaded on the Alexandria galleys (that apparently means that the merchandise should be transported to Alexandria).¹³⁶ At the beginning of 1378 a great quantity of merchandise bought by the Venetians was left in Beirut after the departure of the galleys, and there was some fear that the Genoese would seize it; so orders were given to the Venetian consul in Damascus to send it elsewhere, perhaps to Tripoli.¹³⁷ Then, in 1384, the consul in Alexandria received instructions to apply to the sultan with the request that the Venetian consul in Lattakia, an important emporium of the cotton trade in Northern Syria, should be recognised by granting him a salary (*djāmakīya*).¹³⁸ The year 1385 brought a real boom in the Venetian trade with the Levant: the Senate carried a motion for special measures to be taken for the security of the ships sailing there in consideration

¹³⁵ *Misti* 39, f. 16a.

¹³⁶ *Misti* 35, f. 135b.

¹³⁷ *Misti* 36, f. 56b.

¹³⁸ *Ibidem* f. 25b. There was a Venetian consul in Lattakia already in 1378, see *Misti* 36, f. 59b.

of the great sum of money and the quantity of merchandise the merchants had taken with them.¹³⁹

The quantity of Syrian cotton which the Venetians purchased in those years increased very greatly. Likewise, great shipments of cotton arrived in Venice from Greece, Negroponte, Crete,¹⁴⁰ and Cyprus, and although it was exported to Milan and Cremona, a great centre of the fustian industry,¹⁴¹ and to Germany,¹⁴² there was sometimes a great abundance of this commodity. Consequently, it was decided in 1368 that for some months the import of cotton from Cyprus should be discontinued.¹⁴³ Nevertheless the Syrian cotton trade became a very important branch of Venetian commercial activities in the Near East. Some decisions of the Senate testify to the great purchases of cotton in the region of Lattakia in 1378 and in 1383.¹⁴⁴ But the Venetians also began to buy the cotton of Galilee and the areas around Acre.¹⁴⁵ The little town of Sarmin, in Northern Syria, was at the centre of another region that produced substantial cotton crops. In 1390, Venice already had a consulate there.¹⁴⁶

When the import of Egyptian and Syrian cotton and of other heavy and bulky products (and less expensive than spices) became an important branch of the Venetian trade in the Levant, a new State line of cogs was established. The cogs were big ones, having a tonnage of 500-800 butts, and an armed guard, of 20-30 archers each, and sailed to the Near Eastern ports on different dates.¹⁴⁷ They were privately owned ships, but their fitness for travel had to be approved by the authorities, and the freight tariff was fixed by

¹³⁹ *Misti* 36, f. 89b: Cum sit in proximo recessure de Ven' multe naves p eundo ad partes Syrie q' erunt valde divites et onerate maximo havere etc.

¹⁴⁰ *Misti* 33, f. 10b cf. 26b.

¹⁴¹ *Misti* 18, f. 42a 35, f. 46a.

¹⁴² *Capitolare dei Visdomini del fontego dei Todeschi in Venezia*, ed. G. M. THOMAS (Berlin 1874), cap. 168.

¹⁴³ *Misti* 32, f. 133b.

¹⁴⁴ *Misti* 36, f. 59b 38, f. 32a 39, f. 25b.

¹⁴⁵ *Misti* 37, f. 99b ff. (a Venetian merchant died on the way to Acre).

¹⁴⁶ See G. BERCHET, *Relazioni dei consoli veneti nella Siria* (Turin 1866), p. 14 ff. (Berchet understood that Siam can not mean Shām i.e. Damascus, but believed that it is Siam i.e. Thailand!).

¹⁴⁷ *Misti* 34, f. 47a f. 39, f. 83b.

the Senate. A part of the freight had to be paid to the government.¹⁴⁸ If spices were loaded, the same freight had to be paid as was paid on galleys, and they were custom free on their arrival in Venice, just as were spices shipped on galleys.¹⁴⁹

STATE LINE OF COGS

TABLE IV

date	cogs to Alexandria	cogs to Syria	source
1366		4	Misti 3s2, f. 3b
1367	1		Ibidem f. 63b, 66b, 83a
1368	1		Ibidem f. 131a; Libri comm. III, no. 267
1369	—	—	
1370	—	—	
1371	1	—	Misti 33, f. 110b; Libri comm. III, no. 351
1372	1	—	Misti 34, f. 7b f.; Libri comm. l.c.
1373	3	1	Misti 34, f. 47a; Libri comm. III, no. 267
1374	1	6	Misti 34, f. 93a, 108a ff., 110a; Libri comm. III, no. 669
1375	1	—	Misti 35, f. 112a; Libri comm. l.c.
1376	1	—	Misti 35, f. 112a; Libri comm. l.c.
1377	1	unspecified number	Misti 35, f. 157a 36, f. 12b, 20a
1378	—	1	Misti 36, f. 59b; Libri comm. l.c.
1379	—	—	
1380	—	—	
1381	—	—	
1382	2	—	Misti 37, f. 48a
1383	—	—	
1384	2	—	Misti 38, f. 127a
1385	5	—	Misti 39, f. 83b, 91b
1386	1	—	Misti 40, f. 31a
1387	1	—	Misti 40, f. 73a
1388	1	—	Misti 40, f. 120a

What may be inferred from this table is that before the end of the fourteenth century this State line of cogs was not yet mainly destined for the shipping of Syrian cotton. The great Venetian cotton trade with Syria was still at its beginnings.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ *Misti* 34, f. 45b, 108a.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibidem* f. 48b.

¹⁵⁰ See the table of convoys of cogs in a later period in my paper in *JEEH* III, p. 43 f.

e) *The place of Venice in the Levantine trade in the late XIVth century*

It has already been emphasized in a previous paper that at the end of the fourteenth century the Venetians had not yet reached supremacy in the trade with the Moslem Levant.¹⁵¹ There is much other evidence that could be quoted to support this fact. But this same evidence also proves, on the other hand, that the Venetians had already begun to specialise in the spice trade in this period, whereas the other Southern European « trading nations » did not show such a preference. The spice trade indeed became the fountain head of Venetian wealth.

It is relevant in this context to quote a letter of Beltramo (or Bertrando) Mignanelli of Siena (lived 1370-1455), who, as a young man, came to Damascus and engaged in commercial activities there. He also travelled in other countries of the Near East and, if one can believe him, he even visited India. He learnt Arabic and served as interpreter to the ambassadors of the Duke of Milan who came in 1394 to the Mamluk sultan, and later he fulfilled the same task at the Council of Constance in 1416, when delegates of the Coptic Church appeared there. When he was in Constance he wrote two Latin works: *Ascensus Barcoch*, a history of Sultan Barkūk (1382-1399), the founder of the dynasty of the Circassian Mamluks,¹⁵² and *Ruina Damasci*, the story of the conquest of the Syrian capital by Tamerlane in 1401.¹⁵³ So he was undoubtedly a great expert in the political and economic conditions of the Near East at the end of the fourteenth century; and in view of the greatness of Francesco Datini, a true commercial genius, it is not surprising to hear that Mignanelli contacted him. The Datini archives contain a very interesting letter written in Damascus, on August 2 1395, by Mignanelli to the Datini firm in Barcelona.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ See in the same paper, p. 6 ff.

¹⁵² Published by W. J. FISCHER in "Arabica" VI (1959), p. 57-74, 152-172.

¹⁵³ Published by BALUZIUS, *Miscellanea*, ed. Mansi, (Lucca 1764) IV, p. 131 ff.

¹⁵⁴ Published by F. MELIS, *Doc.*, p. 184. According to Miss Elena Cecchi, the faithful assistant of our late colleague Melis, this is the only letter of Mignanelli which has been found in the Datini archives. But was it really the only letter he wrote to the firm?

In this year the Levantine trade had reached a peak. The statement of Mignanelli is outspoken: Ora ci si troverà, tra catalani, genovesi e veneziani, più cristiani ci furono 25 anni e In his letter Mignanelli evaluates the quantities of spices the great trading nations of Southern Europe would purchase in that year as follows:

the 5 Beirut galleys of the Venetians	3500-4000	pondi
the 2 Beirut galleys of the Genoese	1500-1800	pondi

Further, he estimated the export of ginger (of all kinds):

From Damascus	Venetians	600	pondi
	Florentines	600	»
	Catalan cogs	200	»
	Catalan galley	600	»
From Alexandria	Venetian export to Famagusta	350	»
	Catalan galleys	100	»
	Various exporters	100	»

Two facts emerge from these data. First, in those days the Venetians had not yet obtained the overwhelming supremacy they enjoyed in the Levantine trade in the fifteenth century. Secondly, the data leave no doubt as to the character of Venetian trade: the Venetians bought mainly spices, whereas the cargos that the ships of other trading nations brought back from the great Levantine ports were much more heterogeneous. This fact is brought home with a vengeance by other freight inventories, such as those of two Catalan ships that arrived in Barcelona on November 7, 1371, one coming from Alexandria and the other from Beirut.¹⁵⁵ The first one had on board 167 sacks of cotton (according to other reports 143) compared with 111 *pondi* (other reports: 143) of pepper and very small quantities of other spices. The ship coming from Beirut brought

¹⁵⁵ Even these freight inventories have been found in the Datini archives and published by MELIS, *Doc.*, p. 324.

160 sacks of cotton¹⁵⁶ (according to other reports 107), only 10 *pondi* of pepper, and an insignificant loads of other spices.¹⁵⁷

The registers of the notarial acts drawn up by Antoniello de Vataciis, which have been preserved for a part of the year 1399 and almost the whole of the years 1400 and 1401, throw bright light on the shares that the various Southern European trading nations had in the trade with the Levant at the end of the fourteenth century. It seems that in those years Antoniello de Vaticciis was the only notary in Alexandria, so that merchants of all European nations had recourse to his services.

Counting the merchants who lived in Alexandria in those years (excluding the patrons of the ships, servants etc.), the following numbers have been found:

TABLE V

FATTORI IN ALEXANDRIA

	1400	1401
Venetians	18	9
Genoese	38	64
Anconitans	15	3
Catalans	15	14

It goes without saying that these numbers are not necessarily complete; that is, they surely do not include all the *fattori* who sojourned in Alexandria in those years. Certainly there might have been a *fattore* who did not apply to the notary at a given time. But the overall picture, that is the proportions of the various trading nations in the Levant trade in that period, emerges clearly

¹⁵⁶ One reads in the inventory «chotoni filati sacchi 160 etc», but this is undoubtedly a mistake, because usually a great quantity of raw cotton and a much smaller quantity of spun cotton was imported from the Levantine markets. The freight list comprises indeed another item referring to spun cotton.

¹⁵⁷ A Syrian sack of cotton contained usually 160 kg against 90 kg of a spice pondo, an Egyptian sack, according to the Genoese custom registers, from 180 to 200 kg. So a sack of Syrian cotton cost probably 20 ducats and a sack of Egyptian cotton 16 ducats, see my paper in JEEH III, p. 41 IV, p. 578 and *The Venetian cotton trade in Syria in the later Middle Ages*, to be published in *Studi Medievali* 1976, fasc. II.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. JEEH III, p. 7.

from these data. That this conclusion is correct is borne out by a notarial act drawn up by Antoniello de Vataciis on March 3, 1403: 34 Genoese merchants in Alexandria charter two ships for the transport of their merchandise to Flanders.

The number of the European ships that anchored in those years in Alexandria and which are mentioned in the notary's records is also very instructive.

TABLE VI

EUROPEAN SHIPS IN ALEXANDRIA

	1400	1401
Venetian	1	1
Genoese	6	7
Florentine	1	
Anconitan	1	
Neapolitan	1	
Catalan	2	3
French		1
Sicilian		1
Rhodesian	1	

These statistics (with all the reservations applicable to conclusions drawn from documents not drawn up for this purpose), however, should not mislead us. The role which the Venetians played on the Levantine markets must have been very prominent as early as the end of the fourteenth century. This is supported by the hoards of coins dating from this period, which have been discovered by Danish archaeologists. Two great coin hoards found in Hamath dating from the last years of the fourteenth century contain many *matapans* and an especially large number of *grossi* of Antonio Venier (1382-1400).¹⁵⁹ The great importance of Venetian currency on Syrian markets in that period is also supported by another fact. When the Mamluk governor of Syria, Naurūz, decided in 1412 to

¹⁵⁹ R. THOMSEN, *Monnaies non islamiques provenant de trouvailles isolées*, Hama, fouilles et recherches de la fondation Carlsberg, 1931-1938, Vol. VI, pt. 3, Les petits objets médiévaux sauf les verreries et les poteries (Nationalmuseets skrifter Større Beretninger, Vol. VII) (Copenhagen 1969), p. 149, 153.

strike a pure silver *dirham* again (half the weight of the canonical *dirham*) he chose the Venetian *grosso* as a model.¹⁶⁰ The Venetian coins were indeed highly esteemed on the Levantine markets or, as a numismatist has recently concluded, "overvalued". Arab chroniclers narrate that from 1400 the Italian gold coins ("*ifrantī*", meaning both the dinar and the florin) has become the current and most esteemed coin in trade « in all the cities of the world, such as Cairo, Old Cairo, Syria, Asia Minor, the East (i.e. Iraq), Hidjaz and Yemen ». ¹⁶¹ According to J.L. Bacharach the reason for this phenomenon was the fact that the ducat was simply overvalued.¹⁶²

f) *The level of prices on Oriental markets*

A sketch of the major phenomena of Levantine trade in the fourteenth century would be incomplete without drawing attention to the high prices on Oriental markets. This was indeed a striking feature of the commercial exchanges between Southern Europe and the Moslem Near East in that period, for a comparison of prices, both of Oriental products and of European articles imported by the Western merchants, in the second half of the fourteenth and throughout the fifteenth centuries points to a great difference.

The pepper prices are very characteristic of this phenomenon, as it was the most important of the spices, at least as far as the quantity of the shipments to Europe is concerned. The following table gives data quoted elsewhere ¹⁶³ plus certain additional data.

¹⁶⁰ See J.L. BACHARACH, *Circassian monetary policy: silver*, in « Numismatic Chronicle », VIIth series, 11 (1971), p. 274 (I have arrived at the same conclusion in my monograph *Les métaux précieux et la balance des paiements du Proche Orient à la basse époque*, Paris 1971, p. 44).

¹⁶¹ *Ibn Taghribirdī, an-Nudjūm az-zāhira*, ed. POPPER, VI, p. 596 and cf. JEEH III, p. 49 f.

¹⁶² The dinar versus the ducat, in « International Journal of Middle East Studies » IV (1973), p. 84.

¹⁶³ *Histoire des prix et des salaires dans l'Orient médiéval*, p. 324 ff.; *La découverte de la voie maritime aux Indes et les prix des épices*, (in « Mélanges et l'honneur de F. Braudel » (Toulouse 1973) I, p. 33 f.; *Spice prices in the Near East in the fifteenth century*, JRAS 1976.

TABLE VII

PEPPER PRICES IN ALEXANDRIA

date	price of a sporta (of 225 kg)		source
beginning 1345	30	dinars	Pignol Zucchello no. 13 ^a
Aug.-Nov 1347	116	»	Op. cit., no. 44, 45, 52, 56
18 Dec. 1347	112	»	Op. cit., no. 57
23 Dec., 1347	110	»	Op. cit., no. 58
February, 1373	87,3	»	ASV, Proc. S. Marco, Com. citra. Ba 74a, Com. Tom. Sanudo
July, 1386	60	»	Melis, Doc., p. 320
April, 1392	88	»	Heers, ASI 113, p. 208
February, 1396	76	»	Art. cit., p. 205
Oct., 1396	88-90	»	Ibidem ^b
end of 14th century	70	»	Saminiato de' Ricci, p. 124 ^c
1401	62-73	»	Datini 1171
1411	95-96	»	G.P., Sent. 32, f. 114b f.
1412	225	ducats	Same series 19, f. 88a f. ^d
March, 1413	220	dinars	Sulūk IV, p. 253
spice fair, 1413	185	»	Arch. A. Zane, letter Lor. Foscarini of 14 Sept. 1413
March, 1414	160	»	B. Dolfin, Ba 180, fasc. 14.
spice fair, 1416	110	ducats	G.P., Sent. 78, f. 99b
1417	120	»	Accounts A. Zane
1418	97-106	dinars	B. Dolfin, Ba 181, fasc. 15, 23
spice fair, 1418	150	»	Ibidem fasc. 23
Nov., 1418	98	»	l. c.
March, 1419	97-101	»	l. c.
1421	160	»	l. c.
February, 1422	85	ducats	G.P., Sent. 56, f. 28a ff. cf. 41a
end 1422	100	dinars	Price lists Lor. Dolfin
February, 1423	120	»	Sapori, Studi III, p. 21 ^e
	121-124, 130	dinars	Letter of Nic. Bernard Arch. Lor Dolfin ^f
July, 1423	110-120	»	Letters of the same ^g
March, 1424	125-130	»	Melis, Doc., p. 190
Oct., 1425	delivered on the ship		Cristoforo del Fiore I, f. 4a f. ^h
	130	dinars	
spice fair, 1426	by barter	80 ducats	G.P., Sent. 54, f. 34a ff., 36a ff. ⁱ
May, 1427	» »	80	Nic. Turiano IV, f. 18b ^j
Dec., 1427		76-78	Ibidem f. 40b f.
August, 1428		55, 72	Ibidem f. 77b, 78a
October, 1428		80	ashrafis Sulūk IV, p. 791
February, 1430		59-64	» Op. cit., p. 824
1436		70	ducats G.P., Sent. 125, f. 181a
spice fair, 1436		100	» Same series 79, f. 46a ff., 51b ff.
1440		40,5	» Same series 100, f. 6a ff.
spring, 1442		60	» Krečić Dubrovnik, no. 989 ^k
1443		38-40	» G.P., Sent. 96, f. 106b f.
1444		55	» Same series 117, f. 206a ff.

(Continued TABLE VII)

date		price of a sports (of 225 kg)		source
1445		55	»	Same series 105, f. 136b ff.
1447		55	»	Archives Bouches-du-Rhône, Verdillon 143, f. 101-102
1448	by barter	55	»	G.P., Sent. 107, f. 129a ff.
1458		93	»	Same series 133, f. 39b ff.
spice fair, 1461		85.4	»	Same series 134, f. 46a ff. Sf. 135, f. 116b ff. 137, f. 2b ff.
1466		100	»	Same series 150, f. 77b
1471		70	»	Same series 190, f. 66b ff., 80b ff. ¹
1472		70-71.5	»	ASG 2774 C., f. 14b, 19a, 20a ^m
1473		66-70	»	Ibidem f. 27b, 28a
1474		58-63	»	Ibidem f. 29b, 31a
1478		75	»	G.P., Sent. 176, f. la ff. ⁿ
summer, 1479		50	»	Johan Tucher, Reysbuch, p. 692 ^o
1491	by barter	and delivered on the ship		G.P., Sent. 191, f. 40b ff. ^p
		74 ducats		
fall, 1496		66-68	»	Priuli, Diarii I, p. 60
fall, 1497		74-75	»	Op. cit., p. 73

^a To be corrected in my *Histoire des prix et des salaires dans l'Orient méditerranéen*, p. 324 (where, however, I express doubts as to the correctness of this interpretation, see p. 326 note 1).

^b Heers, art. cit., p. 205 reads 85. The entry July, 1396, in *Hist. prix sal.* l.c. should be cancelled.

^c *Il manuale di mercatura di Saminiato de' Ricci*, ed. A. Borlandi (Genoa 1963).

^d Cf. the note to this datum in my paper *Spice prices etc.*

^e On the date cf. M. E. MALLETT, *The Florentine galleys in the fifteenth century* (Oxford 1967), p. 26.

^f Letter of February 2.

^g Letters of 14 and 31 July.

^h ASV, Cancelleria inferiore, Notai Ba 83.

ⁱ Cf. the note to the datum in my paper *Spice prices etc.*

^j ASV Cancelleria inferiore, Notai Ba 211.

^k Dubrovnik et le Levant (Paris 1961). Cf. the note to this datum in my paper *Spice prices etc.*

^l See the note to this datum in the said paper.

^m Archivio di Stato, Genova, "Massaria" of the Genoese consulate in Alexandria. This is the price at which pepper was sold by Genoese merchants.

ⁿ This price includes the duties.

^o *Reysbuch des heyligen Lands* (Frankfort 1609).

^p See the note to this datum in my paper *Spice prices etc.*

The very scarce information which has come down to us about pepper for prices the first half of the fourteenth century seems to indicate that it was very cheap.¹⁶⁴ In 1347, the price rose steeply; then it fell, but it seems that the average price of a *sporta* in Alex-

¹⁶⁴ The prices which have been quoted in my paper *La découverte de la voie maritime aux Indes etc.*, p. 33 from the accounts of the firm Fresco Querini refer to the market of Damascus. This is what I now conclude from the fact that there are mentioned pondi containing 40-50 ratls. Accordingly a (Damascus) *kinṭār* of pepper cost, in 1347, 60 dinars. As spice prices in Egypt and in Syria were more or less the same, these accounts show how the price of pepper rose in that year.

andria at the end of the fourteenth century was still 60-75 dinars (equal to 72-90 ducats). This was also its price in the first decade of the fifteenth century. In the second decade of the century, it rose again, reaching more than 200 dinars in the first half of the decade, ranging between 100 and 160 dinars up to 1425. These high prices were probably the consequence of a reduced supply, that is, they depended upon conditions in India. From 1426 on, the price was no more than 70-80 ducats. The economic policy of Sultan Barsbay resulted in a short cycle of high prices, but in the 1440's the price was mostly 40-55 ducats. So the pepper price in Egypt at the middle of the fifteenth century was lower than in the Fatimid period.¹⁶⁵ In the 70's of the fifteenth century, pepper cost no more than 60-70 ducats a *sporta* and in 1479-1497 about 50-60 ducats.

The prices of ginger, which held second place among the spices exported to Europe, show the same trends. In Alexandria in the first half of the fourteenth century, a *kintār* of *beledi* ginger normally cost 12 dinars,¹⁶⁶ and at the end of the century its price was even lower, ranging between 8 and 10 dinars.¹⁶⁷ In the second and third decades of the fifteenth century, when the prices of most spices were very high, it rose to 20-22 dinars and even more.¹⁶⁸ But in the 30's of the century it fell to 14-16 ducats and in its second half to 10-13 ducats. In Alexandria, in the second half of the fourteenth century in periods of dearth, Mecca ginger cost 10-20 dinars a *kintār*, and when prices were low, 8 dinars; in the first quarter of the fifteenth century 11-14 dinars and then, at the end of the century, 8-10 ducats.¹⁶⁹

The curve of the prices of cloves is very similar to that of the pepper and Mecca ginger prices. Whereas in the second half of the fourteenth century, in Alexandria, 10 *manns* of cloves cost not less

¹⁶⁵ See *Hist. prix sal.*, p. 138 f.; GOITEIN, *A Mediterranean society* I, p. 220 ff.

¹⁶⁶ *Tarifa zoè noticia dy pexi e mesure di luoghi e tere che s'adovra marcadantia per el mondo* (Venice 1925), p. 61.

¹⁶⁷ REINAUD, *Traité de commerce entre la république de Venise et les derniers sultans mameloucs d'Egypte*, JA 1829, II, p. 30.

¹⁶⁸ The datum *Uzzano*, p. 111: 20 dinars, refers to this period.

¹⁶⁹ *Hist. prix sal.*, p. 332; Spice prices etc.

than 12 dinars and in the first quarter of the fifteenth century 8-8.5 dinars (or even less), the price fell at the middle of the century to 6.3 dinars.¹⁷⁰ The same phenomenon will be noted when the development of nutmeg prices is studied. In the second half of the fourteenth century, 10 *manns* were sold in Alexandria mostly for 15 dinars, occasionally for 9; but in the second decade of the fifteenth century, the same quantity cost no more than 3-5,¹⁷¹ and at the end of the century its price was even lower.¹⁷²

How should we explain this phenomenon of falling prices, at the time of increasing demand in Europe? One would be inclined to explain it by reductions and increases in the supply in the Near Eastern markets or by changing conditions in the regions from which the spices came. The fact that different curves emerge from the data concerning the prices of other spices, such as cinnamon, would corroborate this interpretation. But taking only this factor into account one cannot find really satisfactory a solution of the problem.

This interpretation is upset, first of all, by reports in merchant letters written in Egypt in the middle of the fourteenth century. In some of these letters one reads that the supply of Indian spices in Alexandria was very great. Vannino Fecini writes on August 11, 1347, « gli è degli anni XV che mai non due tanta roba di spezie chome ora qua e di Babilonia.¹⁷³ Lo sforzo¹⁷⁴ si è pevere, gengiovo, chanella e spezie minute asai ».¹⁷⁵ In other letters written in the same year similar statements are made, and these refer to Oriental dyes¹⁷⁶ and sugar too.¹⁷⁷ The author of one letter says that there is enough merchandise for 8 galleys.¹⁷⁸ These reports are certainly reliable and they are borne out by the decisions of the

¹⁷⁰ *Hist. prix sal.*, p. 334; Spice prices etc.

¹⁷¹ V. the price lists of the firm Lor. Dolfin of February 23, 1418; March 16, 1424.

¹⁷² *Hist. prix sal.*, p. 336.

¹⁷³ This is the name given to Cairo in medieval texts (after the name of the Byzantine fortress Babylon which was on the place where, later, Fostat was built).

¹⁷⁴ Most of the merchandise.

¹⁷⁵ *Pignol Zucchetto*, p. 87.

¹⁷⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 88.

¹⁷⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 108 f., 111.

¹⁷⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 89.

Venetian Senate. In 1347, the Senate even took measures over the import of spices, which had become too great.¹⁷⁹ In 1356, there was again a great abundance of spices in Venice, the exporters had not succeeded in sending them to Flanders and elsewhere;¹⁸⁰ and similar conditions prevailed in Venice at the end of the 50's of the fourteenth century.¹⁸¹

One could also argue that production costs (prices) of spices in India had risen very much at the time of the Black Death, although the supply of the Near Eastern markets was sufficient. But even this supposition cannot provide a satisfactory explanation of the phenomenon.

From the study of many accounts, price lists and judicial acts there emerges a fact that induces us to look for an additional factor. This is the price level of European goods on Oriental markets. Comparing the data for the second half of the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries, one becomes aware of a trend that is very similar to that of the prices of the most important spices: in the second half of the fourteenth century they were much more expensive than in the fifteenth century. While, unfortunately, the data that have

TABLE VIII
PRICES OF « FLORENTINE CLOTH » IN DAMASCUS

date	1st sort	2nd sort	3rd sort	source
1 Sept., 1386	35 duc.	46 duc.	54 duc.	Melis, Doc., p. 318
23 Aug., 1394	22.5 —	45 duc. ^a		Melis, Aspetti, p. 384 ^b
30 May, 1395		43.3 duc. ^c		Datini 1171
without date (1398?)		30 duc.	45 duc.	Ibidem
26 March, 1411	13 duc.	18 »	24 »	Price lists A. Zane ^d
22 March, 1413	16 »	18 »	21 »	Ibidem
without date (1416?)	15 »	17 »	20 »	Ibidem
14 Aug., 1417	14 »	17 »	20 »	Ibidem
before 1440	12 »	13 »	15 »	Uzzano, p. 114

^a Without specification.

^b F. MELIS, *Aspetti della vita economica medievale* (Siena 1962).

^c Without specification.

^d The prices in the lists of the firm A. Zane are indicated till October, 1411, in dirhams, but the same documents also contain data about the exchange rate of the dirham.

¹⁷⁹ *Misti* 24, f. 6b f.

¹⁸⁰ R. CESSI, *Le relazioni commerciali fra Venezia e le Fiandre nel secolo XIV*, (in his) « *Politica ed economia di Venezia nel Trecento* » (Roma 1952), p. 91 f.

¹⁸¹ CESSI, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

come down to us from the fourteenth century are not numerous, they leave little doubt. The following tables shows some of the relevant data.

The first table (VIII) contains data about the prices of a piece (about 40 Italian yards) of each of the three kinds of « Florentine cloth », made of Spanish wool (« di S. Matteo »).

The next table contains some prices of the « panni di fontego », a rather cheap woollen stuff.

TABLE IX

PRICE OF PANNI FI FONTEGO IN DAMASCUS

date	Price of a piece	source
1 Sept., 1386	27 ducats	Melis, Doc., p. 318
26 March, 1411	12 »	Price lists A. Zane
8 Oct., 1411	14 »	Ibidem
22 March, 1413	11 »	Ibidem *
14 April, 1417	9 »	Ibidem
March, 1424	6 »	Ibidem
1426	7-8 »	G.P., Sent. 52, f. 44a ff.
without date (1442)	15 »	Price lists Lor. Dolfin
1476	2,5 ashrafis	Accounts Malipiero, fasc. I ^b

* The fattore informs the firm by a letter written on 23 March, however, that he has sold for 12 ducats.

^bASV Procuratori di San Marco, Comm. miste, Ba 161 The ashrafi had the same value as the ducat.

The following table contains data about a very cheap article, the serge, of which great quantities were exported to the Near East.

TABLE X

PRICE OF SERGE IN DAMASCUS

date	price of a piece of		source
	fine serge	common serge	
1 Sept., 1386	5,1 duc.	4,6 duc.	Melis, Doc., p. 318
26 March, 1411	2,8 »	2,6 »	Price lists A. Zane
30 April, 1411	2,6 »	2,5 »	Ibidem
24 July, 1411	2,5 »	2,3 »	Ibidem
8 Oct., 1411	2,75 »	2,5 »	Ibidem
10 March, 1412	2,5 »	2,25 »	Ibidem
22 March, 1413	2,75 »	2,25 »	Ibidem *
14 Sept., 1413	3,5 »	2,5 »	Ibidem
without date (1416?)	3 »	2 »	Ibidem
24 April, 1417	3 »	2,5 »	Ibidem
before 1440		2,5 »	Uzzano, p. 114

* However, in a letter written on 23 March 1413, the fattore Lorenzo Foscarini (who had compiled the list of prices) informs the firm that he has sold at higher prices, viz. fine serge at 3 and serge at 2.25-2.5 ducats.

The striking resemblance that the price curves of European cloth and Indian spices show seems to point to the fact that conditions in India alone cannot explain the price trends of spices on Near Eastern markets. As some Italian (and other) cloth were products of which very great quantities were imported in the Near East, the curves of their prices would contradict such an explanation.

Consequently, we must come back to the hypothesis that the general decline which was characteristic of the economic life of the Near East in the fifteenth century and deflation, another striking phenomenon, brought about the downward trend in the import of goods both from the Far East and from Europe.¹⁸²

An important feature of the economic development of the Moslem Near East at the end of the Middle Ages was the fall of grain prices. Whereas in Egypt, in the second half of the thirteenth century 100 kg wheat cost 1.07 *dinars* (fall price), the "normal price" of the same quantity in the first half of the fifteenth century was 0.7 *dinars* (or 0.85 *asbrafis*) and in its second half only 0.58 *dinars*. The curves of barley prices and mutton were similar to that of wheat prices.¹⁸³ The curves of the prices of these victuals, which were the most important ones, were more or less the same in Syria.¹⁸⁴ But whereas the prices of grains and meat fell, the price of bread rose. A pound of bread in Egypt (Cairo) at the end of the thirteenth century usually cost 0.00041 *dinars*; in the first half of the fourteenth century, 0.003 - 0.00033 *dinars*; at the end of the century, 0.004 - 0.0044 *dinar*; and at the beginning of the fifteenth century, 0.005 *dinars*.¹⁸⁵ The contrary trends that the curves of the grain prices and the bread prices show disclose what the reason of the phenomenon was: it was depopulation, the diminution of manpower resulting in higher wages.

Probably we shall not be mistaken if we assume that the prices of the Indian spices fell because the demand in Egypt and Syria

¹⁸² See my article *La découverte de la voie maritime aux Indes* etc., p. 41 f.

¹⁸³ *Hist. prix sal.*, p. 293 f., 454 f., 459; my *Social and economic history of the Near East in the Middle Ages* (London 1976), p. 313 (with some minor corrections and changes).

¹⁸⁴ *Hist. prix sal.*, p. 396 f., 402.

¹⁸⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 309 f.; *Social and economic history*, p. 295, 315.

decreased and other victuals became cheaper. Decreased demand and falling domestic prices reduced the prices at which Indian goods were sold to European merchants. The economic development of the Near East in that period was also the reason for the trend shown by the curves of the prices of European goods sold on Oriental markets. Even the European merchants had to adapt themselves to decreasing demand and to falling prices, which resulted from impoverishment, depopulation, and deflation. In the fourteenth century Egypt and Syria were still rich countries.

g) *The great change in the Levantine trade*

Careful comparison of the documents referring to trade with the Moslem Near East before the great upsurge in the last third of the fourteenth century and in the subsequent period reveals a great change: many goods that were of great importance as exports from Europe to the Near East in the period of the Crusades no longer play a major role in the later Middle Ages. Others replaced them and industrial products became the staple goods of European export to the Near East. The character of trade with the Levant changed considerably.

The urgent need which the Moslem rulers of the Near East had for timber and iron was a major incentive for the establishment of commercial relations with the South European countries. The Moslem rulers encouraged the Italian merchant Republics to trade with their dominions, because the latter supplied them with those articles that were indispensable for the upkeep of their war fleets. The explicit undertaking of the Pisans to supply the Egyptian government with such war materials, despite the categorical prohibition by the Church, is just one example of the activities of the Southern European merchants. Certain treaties between Pisa and the rulers of Egypt in the twelfth century contain clauses concerning the import of iron, timber, and pitch.¹⁸⁶ There is

¹⁸⁶ M. AMARI, *I diplomi arabi dell'archivio fiorentino*, p. 243, 258, and see also 264, 281; cf. A. SCHAUBE, *Handelsgeschichte der romanischen Völker des Mittelmeergebiets*, p. 150, 145 f., 148.

sufficient evidence on the activities other trading nations carried on in the supply of timber and iron to Egypt. Both Arab and Venetian documents refer to the export by European merchants of timber and iron to Egypt, during the reign of the Fatimids and the Ayyubids. Marino Sanudo the Elder, writing the draft of his *Secreta fidelium crucis* between 1306 and 1309, still fulminates against the bad Christians who supplied the Moslems with iron, timber, pitch, and slaves.¹⁸⁷

On the other hand, it seems that the export of these commodities in the fifteenth century formed an insignificant branch of European trade with Egypt and Syria. The change was a consequence of the decay of the Moslem fleets, which was certainly not abrupt, but gradual.

Many documents from the middle of the fourteenth century, such as freight tariffs for Venetian ships sailing to Cyprus and Lesser Armenia, refer to the export of iron to the Near East.¹⁸⁸ Probably there is reason to suppose that a part of these shipments of iron found their way to the dominions of the sultan. Finding a customs tariff to be paid on the export of iron from Crete,¹⁸⁹ one is tempted to believe that a part of it was sent to Egypt. The direct export of metals to the Moslem Near East was indeed still forbidden by the Church, and the Venetian authorities had to reckon with this prohibition. A proposition made in the Venetian Senate in 1377 to allow the export of copper, tin, and other metals to Alexandria was turned down.¹⁹⁰

In that period the war fleet of the Mamluks was not yet extinct, and from time to time attempts were made by the Egyptian government to build new ships. al-Maḳrīzī narrates that after the attack on Alexandria by Peter I, King of Cyprus, the Mamluks undertook

¹⁸⁷ See S. M. STERN, *An original document from the Fatimid chancery concerning Italian merchants*, in « Studi orientalistici »... LEVI DELLA VIDA (Rome 1956) II, p. 529 ff.; THIRIET, *Régestes* I, p. 27; *Secreta fidelium crucis*, (in) « Bongars, Gesta Dei per Francos » (Hannover 1611) II, p. 27.

¹⁸⁸ *Misti* 19, f. 84b (a. 1341), 20, f. 45a (a. 1342) 23, f. 13a (a. 1345) 24, f. 20b, 22b (a. 1347) 26, f. 77b (a. 1351).

¹⁸⁹ *Misti* 31, f. 16a. On the trade in iron on Crete see *Zaccaria de Fredo*, no. 44, 49.

¹⁹⁰ *Misti* 35, f. 159b.

to build 200 new war and transport ships and that a great quantity of timber and iron was furnished.¹⁹¹ Within a year the construction of 100 ships was finished.¹⁹² Twenty years later, when the Genoese had raided Syrian ports, once more war ships were built.¹⁹³ The Mamluks were not completely inactive in naval warfare in that period, and occasionally attacked Christian ships.¹⁹⁴

Consequently European timber and iron was still badly needed in Egypt and several documents testify to their import into the country by European merchants, up to the end of the fourteenth century. A notarial act, drawn up in Alexandria in 1401, refers to the import of timber from Senj to Alexandria in 1400 by a merchant of Zara.¹⁹⁵ Emanuel Piloti, writing in 1420, also refers to the import of timber from Senj, via Rhodes, to Alexandria. According to this author, the knights of Rhodes had forbidden the trade a short time before.¹⁹⁶ Iron still appears on the price lists compiled by the agents of Francesco Datini in Damascus in 1379, 1386, and 1396.¹⁹⁷

By the end of the fourteenth century, however, the decay of both the Moslem war and the commercial fleets, was irreversible. The Mamluks, a military cast consisting mainly of Turkish and, later, Circassian cavalry men, had neither understanding nor appreciation of naval warfare and neglected the construction of

¹⁹¹ *Sulūk* III, p. 113.

¹⁹² *Op. cit.*, p. 129 f.

¹⁹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 536.

¹⁹⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 159, 532, 533.

¹⁹⁵ Vat. sub 18 January 1401.

¹⁹⁶ *Traité d'Emanuel Piloti sur le passage en Terre Sainte* (1420) (Louvain 1958), p. 156 f.

¹⁹⁷ As I have already pointed out in my paper Profits etc. in BSOAS 38, p. 271 f. iron prices in the Near East were remarkable stable in the later Middle Ages. This is a clear proof of the fact that the demand did not increase. To the prices quoted in the said paper one can add the following:

Damascus:	price of 200 heavy Venetian pounds
6 Nov., 1379	ferretto 28.5 dinars
1 Sept., 1386	broad bars 25 »
	narrow bars 22 »
8 April, 1396	broad bars 26 »
	narrow bars 21 »

warships.¹⁹⁸ Even commercial shipping in the Mediterranean was virtually monopolised by the Europeans. Many documents from the end of the fourteenth century and the first years of the fifteenth century bear witness to this. Tunisians travelled on a Marseille ship from Alexandria to their own country, transporting their merchandise in it;¹⁹⁹ the Mamluk governor of Alexandria chartered an Anconitan ship for the transport of salt to Tripoli in 1399;²⁰⁰ a Catalan ship was leased to Moslem of Valcacia for the transport of his merchandise in Alexandria in 1447;²⁰¹ a Venetian ship was chartered by Moslems for a voyage to "Barbary" in 1403;²⁰² Genoese and Catalan ships transported olive oil from North African countries to Alexandria.²⁰³ The philosopher and sociologist Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), one of the most gifted Arab scholars of the Middle Ages, stated explicitly that the Moslems in his days no longer knew how to build ships.²⁰⁴ Thus the demand for timber and iron in the Near East decreased greatly. Characteristically enough, iron does not figure in the price lists drawn up in the first half of the fifteenth century in Alexandria and Damascus for the Venetian firms Antonio Zane and Lorenzo Dolfin. An item referring to iron in an Alexandria price list of Giovanni da Uzzano²⁰⁵ undoubtedly dates from an earlier period, as do so many materials included in his Merchant Guide. It goes without saying that certain quantities of these articles were still shipped from Southern Europe to the Near Eastern ports. Perhaps Cypriot merchants sometimes served as go-betweens.²⁰⁶ The Venetian Senate in 1405 had once more

¹⁹⁸ S. MAHER, *The navy in Moslem Egypt* (in Arabic) (Cairo 1976), p. 130 concludes that the Mamluk fleet was the strongest, in the world in those days. See on the other hand D. AYALON, *The Mamluks and naval power* (Jerusalem 1965) (*Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* I, no. 8), p. 5, 6 and passim.

¹⁹⁹ Vat. sub April 1, 1401.

²⁰⁰ Ibidem sub January 13, 1400.

²⁰¹ Nic. Turiano II, f. 24 a.

²⁰² Vat. sub Sept. 2, 1404.

²⁰³ Ibidem sub Dec. 19, 1405; March 10, 1406.

²⁰⁴ *Prolegomena* (transl. Rosenthal) II, p. 46.

²⁰⁵ P. 111.

²⁰⁶ About exports of iron from Genoa to Cyprus in 1391 and 1394, see de Mas Latrie, *Histoire de l'île de Chypre* III, p. 77.

forbidden the sale of iron to the subjects of the sultan of Cairo;²⁰⁷ but some documents bear witness to the export of iron to Egypt and Syria throughout the fifteenth century. Both Venetian and other Southern European merchants were engaged in this trade.²⁰⁸ But the decline in the export of these articles to Egypt and Syria must have been very great. The conclusions that R. Sprandel has drawn from the Merchant Guides are convincing.²⁰⁹

The technological stagnation of the Near East resulted in the decline of once flourishing industries. The industrial products imported from Europe were better or cheaper, and sometimes had both advantages. The soap industry was one of these. Its decay was also the consequence of the decrease in olive groves, as indicated by the growing import of olive oil from several Southern European countries. It was also an outcome of the rapacious methods of Mamluk fiscality, such as the compulsory purchase of oil owned (produced) by the government which was used as a means of levying taxes. These compulsory purchases (called "tarh") ruined the industrialists. Finally there was the rise of production costs. Owing to progressive depopulation, the cost of labour had risen markedly. The rise in the price of soap, as of other industrial products, was considerable.²¹⁰ But whatever may have been the reason, there can be no doubt that soap production in the Near East declined greatly in the later Middle Ages. There ensued the import of considerable quantities of soap from Southern Europe; as a large number of documents indicate; the soap figures on the tariffs of freight fixed by the Venetian authorities in the middle of the

²⁰⁷ *Misti* 47, f. 63.

²⁰⁸ PH. BRAUNSTEIN, *Le commerce du fer à Venise au XV^e siècle*, in "Studi Veneziani" VIII (1961), p. 288.

²⁰⁹ *Das Eisengewerbe im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart 1968), p. 281 (despite the criticism of Braunstein in *Annales* E. S. C. 1972, p. 411). See also R. SPRANDEL, *Le commerce du fer en Méditerranée orientale au Moyen Age*, (in) « Sociétés et compagnies de commerce en Orient et dans l'Océan Indien, Actes du huitième colloque international d'histoire maritime, Beyrouth, 1966, (Paris 1970), p. 387 ff. and especially p. 391 about the small volume of Venice's export of iron to the Near East (a view which is still, I believe, exaggerated).

²¹⁰ *Sulūk* III, p. 1107 and see my paper *L'évolution des prix dans le Proche Orient à la basse époque*, *JESHO* IV (1961), p. 34.

fourteenth century for ships sailing to Egypt,²¹¹ and the price lists compiled by the agents of the Francesco Datini company in Alexandria and in Damascus, at the end of the century. On these lists one finds the prices of soap of Gaeta, Ragusa, and of white soap.²¹² The list of prices in Alexandria that Giovanni da Uzzano included in his Merchant Guide included soap from Gaeta, Genoa, Venice, Pera and Tripoli,²¹³ whereas in the letters Nicolo Bernardo wrote in Alexandria in 1422-1424, there are only data on the prices of Venetian and Neapolitan soap.²¹⁴ Judicial acts refer to the import of soap to Alexandria by Venetians in 1426,²¹⁵ 1427,²¹⁶ 1432,²¹⁷ and to Syria from Cyprus.²¹⁸ A small cargo list that has been preserved in the archives of Biagio Dolfin, Venetian consul in Alexandria, is very instructive. It reads as follows:²¹⁹

1418

cargo de la galia patro' Piero Michiel al viazo d'Aless'		
Carlo Contarini savoni	s'	156
Sebastian Ruzier		20
Tomado Michiel mieli	c'	35
Piero Bernardo savoni	s'	196

So we learn that individual Venetian merchants exported to Alexandria 150-200 sacks of soap.

Even the Oriental sugar industry declined. While labour had become very expensive, the methods of production in the Near East were not changed by the rich feudal lords who owned the factories; they relied upon their power to sell their products by compulsion. On the other hand, as impoverishment became a basic phenomenon of the economic life of these countries in the later

²¹¹ *Misti* 23, f. 24b, 32b (a. 1345) 24, f. 21a (a. 1347) 30, f. 17a (a. 1361).

²¹² List of prices in Alexandria on February 26, 1396; October 19, 1396.

²¹³ P. 112.

²¹⁴ Archives Lor. Dolfin, letters of February 16, 1422; May 2, 1422; February 2, 1423; April 12, 1423; May 22, 1423; July 17, 1423; July 31, 1423; March 16, 1424.

²¹⁵ G.P., Sent. 48, f. 132 af.

²¹⁶ Nic. Turiano IV, f. 18b (sold to Cyprus for 3000 ducats; that means a very great quantity).

²¹⁷ G. P., Sent. 73, f. 94b ff.

²¹⁸ ASV Cancellaria Inferiore, Notai Ba 230, Nicolo Venier, B, 2, f. 18b/19a.

²¹⁹ ASV Proc. S. Marco, Comm. miste, Ba 180, fasc. 13.

Middle Ages, many people could no longer afford costly refined sugar and instead bought molasses imported from Cyprus, Sicily, and elsewhere. The decline of the Near Eastern paper industry was undoubtedly the consequence of technological stagnation. In the second half of the fourteenth and in the fifteenth century, the paper manufactures of Syria and Egypt were no longer a match for the factories of Fabriano and those who imitated them in other regions. So European paper was imported into the Near East.²²⁰

The decline of the Near Eastern textile industries, however, was of much greater importance to the Levantine trade. It had begun long before the end of the fourteenth century. The centre of the world famous Egyptian linen industry in Tinnīs had been destroyed in 1227 by order of the Ayyubid sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil, to prevent the town from falling into the hands of the Crusaders, and had remained in ruins thereafter. al-Maḳrīzī, when mentioning it always used the preterite.²²¹ It seems that Dabīḳ, another great centre of the Egyptian textile industry in the Delta, had been destroyed earlier, as Yākūt, writing at the beginning of the thirteenth century, says that in his day it was in ruins.²²² The decay of the Near Eastern textile manufactures, the most important branch of medieval industry, was both continuous and progressive. It was by no means the consequence of the wars with the Crusaders. If these manufactures had been profitable, they would have been reopened after the end of hostilities, perhaps elsewhere. But the European industries began to surpass them, because, in the course of time, the Europeans had begun to use better raw materials and to improve methods of production. Oriental textile manufactures, on the other hand, used the same raw materials as before. Some dyes that had formerly been brought to Syria and Egypt from Persia had to be imported from Southern Europe, when political circumstances had changed in the Near East. Two

²²⁰ See my paper *Levantine sugar industry in the later Middle Ages — a sample of technological decline*, to be published in the Proceedings of the conference of economic history of the Near East, held in Princeton in June, 1974.

²²¹ *Sulūk I*, p. 224; *Khitāʾ I*, p. 181.

²²² *Muʿdjam al-buldān II*, p. 548 cf. 546.

European technological innovations apparently remained unknown in the Moslem countries or, at least, were very seldom applied. These innovations were the use of the treadle loom and the introduction of the automatic water-driven fulling mill which had spread in Europe from the eleventh century on.²²³ These innovations had brought about a great change in the European textile industries.

So a massive import of European textiles into the Near East had already begun in the thirteenth century. An Arabic historian recounts that in Alexandria, in 1263, the vizier of the Mamluk sultan Baibars collected 95,000 parcels of cloth, Yemenite, fine Venetian stuffs and other.²²⁴ A treaty between Genoa and the Sultan Ḳalā'ūn, in 1290, contained clauses concerning the import of camlets, silk stuffs, and woollen cloth in various colours, and linen of Reims.²²⁵ The import of European textiles was not discontinued after the fall of Acre, however, when the Church began to fulminate against trade with the Moslems. Notarial acts drawn up in Genoa bear witness to imports of French cloths, such as cloth of Châlons-sur-Marne, to Syria, in the second decade of the fourteenth century.²²⁶ Many texts point to the great importance of the linen of Reims among the European textiles imported into the Near East. The Genoese imported it at Tebriz, the great emporium of Persia during the reign of the Ilkhāns, according to notarial deeds of 1292, 1330 and 1336.²²⁷ Reims linen was also imported to Syria in the first half of the fourteenth century, as it was mentioned in a Venetian Merchant Guide,²²⁸ and then later, in

²²³ See my paper *Les lainages dans l'Orient médiéval, emploi, production, commerce*, (in) "Produzione, commercio e consumo dei panni di lana", *Atti della seconda settimana di studi*, Istituto Fr. Datini, Prato 1970 (Florence 1976), p. 682 ff; *Social and economic history of the Near East in the Middle Ages*, p. 246 f.

²²⁴ *Ibn Wāsil*, quoted by QUATREMÈRE, *Histoire des sultans mamlouks* (Paris 1844/45) I, pt 1, p. 252.

²²⁵ SILVESTRE DE SACY, *Pièces diplomatiques tirées des archives de la République de Gênes*, (in) "Notices et extraits" XI, p. 36.

²²⁶ L. LIAGRE-DE STURLER, *Les relations commerciales entre Gênes, la Belgique et l'Autremont d'après les archives notariales génoises (1320-1400)* (Brussels 1969), no. 163,

²²⁷ G. I. BRĂȚIANU, *Recherches sur le commerce génois dans la mer Noire au XIII^e siècle* (Paris 1929), app. 18; LIAGRE-DE STURLER, no. 63, 72.

²²⁸ *Tarifa*, p. 57.

1370.²²⁹ As a consequence of the great upsurge in Levantine trade after 1370 this commodity must have become very common in Egypt and Syria, for the Florentine traveller Leonardo Frescobaldi, who visited Egypt in 1384, says that the women of the country wore garments made of Reims linen.²³⁰ Several other witnesses could be quoted to show that the Florentine traveller did not err or make too sweeping a statement. Linen of Reims figures as an export commodity in the notarial acts referring to the trade of Marseille with the Near East at the end of the fourteenth century and it is found on price lists drawn up in Damascus and Alexandria in 1379, 1394, 1395, and 1396.²³² At the end of the fourteenth century, products of the flourishing fustian industry of Cremona and Piacenza were also imported into the Near East.²³³ In this context it is relevant to quote the curious accounts given by some Arab historians of the fashion among rich ladies in Cairo of wearing very long shirts in the period. According to the reports, Kemish-boghā, the governor of Cairo in the absence of the sultan in 1391, forbade the wearing of shirts made of more than 14 yards of cloth. The women, these authors reported, had gone as far as to use 92 yards of Venetian cloth, which was 3 yards wide. The governor sent officers into the streets and markets of Cairo to cut off the wide sleeves of these shirts.²³⁴ But not only Reims linen and the textiles of Venice (or more correctly imported from Venice, for the linen was certainly German) were then exported to Egypt, whose own industries had decayed. The Arab historian al-Maḳrīzī reports that in March 1384, in the Egyptian custom house of Ḳaṭyā, dues

²²⁹ LIAGRE-DE STURLER, no. 326.

²³⁰ *Viaggi in Terrasanta*, ed. C. ANGELINI (Florence 1944), p. 77.

²³¹ *Histoire du commerce de Marseille II*, par E. BARATIER-F. REYNAUD (Paris 1951); p. 383 and app.

²³² *Datini* 1171; MELIS, *Aspetti*, p. 384; On the export of linen (unspecified) from Venice to Egypt see also *Misti* 34, f. 26b (a. 1372) and to Syria *Misti* 38, f. 156a (a. 1384): the departure of the Beirut galleys is delayed in order to give time for the loading of German linen.

²³³ *Misti* 35, f. 46a.

²³⁴ *Sulūk III*, p. 750, 791 and cf. SILVESTRE DE SACY, *Chrestomathie arabe II*, p. LT f.; *Ibn al-Furāt, Ta'rikh ad-duwal wa'l-mulūk IX*, p. 267 f.; al-Djaubari, *Nuzhat an-nufūs*, p. 335; *Ibn Ḳādī Shubba, al-'Ilām bi-ta'rikh al-islām*, MS. Paris 1599, f. 69a.

were levied on 60,000 "niṣfiya" (a garment) imported from Baghdad, and there were taxes on cloth from Mosul, Hamath, and Damascus, which yielded even more.²³⁵ However, it seems that the import of European cloth, especially of cheap woollen cloth, such as Catalan stuffs, into the Near East, began to increase more and more before the turn of the century. The import of Catalan cloth, (cloth of Barcelona, Puigcerda, Bellpuig and Valencia), however, had begun long before in the middle of the fourteenth century.²³⁶ By the end of the century it almost constituted dumping.²³⁷

al-Maḳrīzī's account of the great change in the use of European cloth that took place in Egypt at the beginning of the fifteenth century is a very important document. The author, who had formerly been chief of the market police of Cairo, was very much interested in economic problems and wrote several treatises about them. According to him the great economic crisis that Egypt suffered in 1403-1404 resulted in a complete change of dress for the inhabitants of the towns: instead of using the fine Oriental textiles, they began to wear cheap European cloth and even people belonging to the upper classes dressed in garments made of these materials. From then on, they were commonly worn by everybody.²³⁸ This account is supported by the census of weavers and work-shops in Alexandria made in 1434: there were 800 looms, whereas, in 1395, there had been 14,000.²³⁹

But the account of al-Maḳrīzī, important and reliable though it is, should be accepted with a pinch of salt. The change was not abrupt, for it was the climax of a gradual development that

²³⁵ *Sulūk III*, p. 525.

²³⁶ J. M. MADURELL MARIMON, *Contabilidad de una compañía mercantil trecentista barcelonesa*, (in) "Anuario de historia del derecho español" 36 (1966), p. 481 ff., 487 f.; *Figiol Zucchello*, p. 111.

²²⁷ See by paper *L'exportation de textiles occidentaux dans le Poche Orient musulman au bas Moyen Age (1370-1517)*, (in) "Miscellanea F. Melis" (under press).

²³⁸ *Khiṭat II*, p. 98; translated by R. DOZY, *Dictionnaire détaillé des noms des vêtements chez les Arabes* (Amsterdam 1845), p. 128 ff.

²³⁹ *Ibn Hadjar al-'Asḳalāni, Inḥā al-ghumr III*, p. 516; *Ibn Taghrībirdī, an-Nudjūm az-zābira*, ed. POPPER, VI, p. 714 (translated by POPPER, *History of Egypt etc. IV* (Univ. of California Press 1958) (Univ. of California Publications in Semitic philology 18), p. 112.

had begun much earlier. It was brought about by technological stagnation and by general impoverishment of the Near Eastern populations, which was continuous and progressive. What the Arab author reports about the change in the dress of the high ranking Mamluk officers sheds light on the phenomenon. Until the reign of Barḳūḳ, the first sultan of the Circassian dynasty, the emirs wore silk, but this Barḳūḳ forbade.²⁴⁰ Even the sultan's court had become poor. But during the crisis of 1403-1404 the rise of textile prices was enormous; al-Maḳrīzī states that the price of a yard of linen rose from 4 *dirhams* to 10, then to 20.²⁴¹ Other Near Eastern textiles, and garments made of them, also, became very expensive.²⁴²

However, there can be no doubt that the import of European textiles increased greatly at the beginning of the fifteenth century. Large shipments of cheap serge arrived both in Egypt and in Syria. It is true that "saia d'Irlanda" had already been shipped in the middle of the fourteenth century via Famagusta to Rhodes and Turkey,²⁴³ but the numerous references to them in the price lists of the first half of the fifteenth century point to a great increase in their import. Then there began the dumping of kersey, another cheap woollen cloth, produced in England, Catalonia, in some towns of Italy, in Bergamo, Florence, and elsewhere.²⁴⁴

²⁴⁰ *Khitat II*, p. 217.

²⁴¹ *Sulūk III*, p. 1134, 1145; see also my paper *L'évolution des prix dans le Proche Orient à la basse époque*, JESHO IV, p. 37. The report of al-Maḳrīzī confirms the conclusions that have been drawn from al-'Ainī's account, namely a rise of 100% in the price of spun lines. For al-Maḳrīzī says that before it cost 3 dirhams and later in summer, 1404, 10 dirhams a yard. When he said that it once cost 3 dirhams, he undoubtedly had in mind the year 1402, the year preceding the great crisis, when a dinar was worth 65 dirhams; whereas in 1404, it reached the value of 100. So a yard had cost 0,05 dinar in 1402, and in summer 1404 - 0,1 dinar.

²⁴² *Sulūk III*, p. 1101; *L'évolution des prix etc.*, p. 39.

²⁴³ *Nic. de Boateris*, no. 114.

²⁴⁴ For a long time was believed that this article was called after a village in the county of Suffolk, see L. F. SALZMANN, *English industries of the Middle Ages* (London 1913), p. 166; but see now the paper of J. HAMILTON-N. BELDICENU, *Recherches autour de Qars, nom d'une étoffe de poil*, "Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies" (London) 31 (1968), p. 330 ff. (showing that it is a Chinese term which has been modified by Soghdians and Turks).

What changed at the end of the fourteenth century and at the beginning of the fifteenth century in the export of European textiles into the Near East was indeed not only the volume of trade but also the kind of cloth exported. For a long time, Venice (and other South European emporia) had served as ports through which the fine Flemish cloth was shipped to the Near East. In the 1320's the import of cloth from Flanders to Venice grew by virtue of privileges the Republic had obtained there.²⁴⁵ In 1326, the galleys going to Negroponte were ordered to lade only Flemish cloth.²⁴⁶ The re-export of Flemish cloth from Venice to the Near East went on until the end of the fourteenth century. In some years in the 1360's, proposals were made to postpone the departure of the Alexandria and Cyprus galleys to await the arrival of Flemish cloth.²⁴⁷ In 1384, it was exceptionally allowed to load merchandise on the Beirut galleys up to the day of departure (usually, the loading had to be finished some days before), after news had been received of great quantities of Flemish cloth which were being transported to Venice and were due to arrive any day.²⁴⁸ In the middle of the fourteenth century the import of Flemish cloth to Venice was sometimes so great that it caused concern,²⁴⁹ and there was often opposition from the Venetian industrialists, who put pressure on the authorities to protect their enterprises. In 1372, the Senate actually forbade the loading of "foreign cloth" on the Alexandria galleys.²⁵⁰ But the documents referring to the export of European textiles to the Near East in the fifteenth century mention Flemish cloth much less. Certainly its export to this region was not discontinued,²⁵¹ but it had decreased. As the Moslem countries became poorer, the Italian traders, Venetians and others,

²⁴⁵ CESSI, *Le relazioni fra Venezia e le Fiandre nel secolo XIV*, p. 33.

²⁴⁶ CESSI-SAMBINI I, p. 323 no. 6; CESSI, *art. cit.*, p. 33 (quoting *Giorno*, p. 25) speaking of Oriental galley lines, an unclear version which should be corrected accordingly.

²⁴⁷ CESSI, *art. cit.*, p. 110.

²⁴⁸ *Misti* 38, f. 156a.

²⁴⁹ CESSI, *art. cit.*, p. 68, 77.

²⁵⁰ *Misti* 34, f. 7b.

²⁵¹ See the data quoted by in my paper *L'exportation de textiles occidentaux dans le Proche Orient musulman au bas Moyen Age*, "Miscellanea F. Melis", chapter 10.

exported cheaper cloth, such as serge or woollen stuff produced in Brescia, of which great quantities were shipped to Syria in the second half of the fifteenth century.²⁵²

Whereas in the period of the crusades, the Near Eastern countries had imported from Europe timber, iron, pitch, and arms, in the fifteenth century, they bought from the South European merchants mainly olive oil, cheap and dried fruits, copper (for small coins), and cheap cloth. The character of Levantine trade had changed.

²⁵² See *art. cit.*, chapter 3, d.