



Time Travel, The peace treaty between the Republic of Venice and the Ottoman Empire, June 1454

Facts

The Ottoman Empire expanded vastly in the 15th century. They conquered lands in Anatolia, Albania, Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Greece. In 1453 Sultan Mehmet and his troops conquered Constantinople, the centre of eastern Christianity, The Ottomans also started sea campaigns to take maritime control over the Aegean and Adriatic Sea.

The Venetian Republic consisted of a large territory in northern Italy, Istra, Dalmatia and the coast of Albania, many cities, harbours and islands in Greece, including Euboea and Crete. Venice was the capital city. The Venetians expanded more in the 15th century on the Italian mainland and continued to be powerful on the sea. Their wealth was dependant on the trade business in the Mediterranean Sea but also the long distance trade.

The interest of the Ottoman Empire and the Venetians clashed many times in the 15th century and there were several wars between the two powers. After the wars they made peace agreements, for instance in 1403, 1419, 1451, 1454, 1479, 1503, but all the agreements were broken.

Organisation

The Ottoman empire was ruled by the sultan, in the 1450s his name was Mehmet II, given the name Mehmet the Conqueror. Constantinople was made the capital of the empire and islam was the dominating religion. But the empire included many groups, traditions and religions.

The Venetian Republic was aristocratic and was governed by a series of councils. Maggio Consiglio (the Great Council) was the most important, as it elected all the others. Its members consisted of male Venetian noblemen. The economic, diplomatic and military affairs were directed by the Senate. The Council of Ten took care of the internal and external safety of the State. The Doge was the symbol of the State and presided all the Councils inclosed his counsellors (Signoria). In 1454 the name of the Doge was Fransesco Foscari. The supreme body was the Signoria of Venice (Serenissima Signoria). Venice had an ambassador, a Bailo, in Constaninople to protect the Venetian economic and political interest. The embassy, the Bailate, Casa Bailaggia, included several persons trying to maintain a good relationship to the Ottomans.

In 1451 the Venetian ambassador in Constantinople, Lorenzo Moro, and the Ottomans signed a peace treaty. In 1453 the situation became more precarious for the Venetians after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople. They were afraid to loose trade and wealth and their commercial empire. Venetian buildings in Constantinople were damaged and Venetians killed (including the Bailo) or taken prisoners. On the Italian mainland there were at the same time conflicts with several Italian States, Milan, Naples and Florence.

Peace treaties in 1454

18 April 1454 a new peace treaty was signed in Constantinople between the Venetian ambassador Bartolomeo Marcello and the Sultan Mehmet II. The document was an extension of the 1451 agreement. It included a mutual freedom of trade. The Venetians had to pay a duty of two percent for all goods sold and purchased and for every slave brought from the Black Sea. They had to stop for checks at the port of Constantinople. The Turkish merchants also had to pay a duty of two percent in the Venetian Republic. The treaty was signed in the name of God and the prophet Muhammed.

The document was brought to Venice to be countersigned by the Doge Fransesco Foscari. The Doge had the year before built a palace for him and his family on the Grand Canal, Ca' Foscari. After some weeks of discussions the Doge signed the peace treaty 28 June 1454.

The same year, in 1454, 9 April, Venice signed a peace agreement with Milan, Naples and Florence, called the Treaty of Lodi.

Scenario, The signing of the peace treaty between the Republic of Venice and the Ottoman Empire, June 1454

People are worried and tired of the constant wars between Venice and the Ottomans. Many are killed and the trade is often blocked. Less trade means less money. Now the Ottomans have taken over the very centre of eastern Christianity, Constantinople and they expand even more. Perhaps they want to conquer Rome as well?

In Venice they have realized that they can't beat the Ottoman Empire in military actions, there has to be negotiations and agreements. But can you trust these pagans? They dress different, talk different and have a different religion. The Ottomans are also suspicious. Can you negotiate with the unfaithful? They cheat and only think about money and wealth.

The Ottoman delegation from Constantinople has arrived in Venice, as well as the delegation from the Venetian embassy in Constantinople. They have brought a document of agreement signed by the Sultan two months ago. People in Venice are curious about the content of the document. Will it lead to peace and fruitful trade?

There will be discussions and negotiations between the leaders of the Republic of Venice, the Bailo and the Turkish delegation. Even the Doge himself will take part. The giannizzeri will make sure that nobody interferes. The meeting will be held in Palazzo Foscari, the newly built Palace for the Doge Foscari and his family.

People in Venice are hesitant that the leaders will achieve anything. There have been peace treaties before and they have always been broken. Why should it be better this time?

There are a lot of preparations in the palace for the meeting. The majordomos organize it to the very best. There are both Venetian and Turkish servants to help.

Roles

1. Members of the Magistrate/ Senate in Venice: Chiefs of the Council of Ten, Members of the Signoria, Member of the Collegio dei Savi (elders). 4 persons
2. The Doge – Francesco Foscari
3. Majordomo of the Doge and Majordomo of the Bailo in Constantinople.
4. Bailo, Venetian ambassador in Constantinople, Bartolomeo Marcello
5. The Bailate, the Venetian embassy in Istanbul - secretary, clerk, copyists, notaries, dragoman-interpreter. 3-5 persons
6. Ottoman delegates – Ambassadors of the sultan, dragoman/ interpreter, 4-5 persons
7. Turkish servants, 7-8 persons
8. Venetian servants, 7-8 persons
9. Ottoman and Venetian giannizzeri/ guards, 2-3 persons

Key Questions

- What are the advantages of a peace agreement? Problems? Can we live together in peace, in spite we are different?
- Do we respect each other's religion (Muslim-Christian), traditions and ways of living?

Activities

For the servants, led by a majordomo

- Clean the room and discuss. (5-6 Venetian and Turkish servants)
- Make images, decorate the room and discuss. (5-6 Venetian and Turkish servants)
- Prepare drinks, biscuits, fruit and discuss. (5-6 Venetian and Turkish servants)

For the Venetian and Ottoman delegations

- Study the document and maps, negotiations – Sultan ambassador's vs Venice Council of Ten, members of Senate and the Venetian ambassador. (Interpreter, 4-5 Ottomans and 5-6 Venetians).
- Copy the document – secretary, clerk, copyists, notaries, interpreter, (both in Italian and Turkish, Latin and Arabic letters). (4-5 persons, both Venetians and Ottomans)
Write and decipher secret messages
- Check security (2 guards)
- Music, Songs

Time Plan

16.00 What is the Time Travel method?

The history of Venice and the Ottomans, background to the peace treaty 1454

17.00 Time Travel. Dress up, characters, rules

17.30 Initiation (prayer)

Activities

18.15 The Doge arrives

Tea/ drinks. Discussion, Solution, Exchange of gifts, Song

18.50 Time Travel ends

Reflection

19.15 End

15 September 2011

Cecile Franchetti, Venice

Ebbe Westergren, Helen Eklund, Kalmar County Museum

Sweden