The Sefaretname of Ahmet Vasif Efendi to Spain
Ahmet Vasif Efendi’nin İspanya’ya Dair Sefaretnamesi

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Abstract

The below text is an English translation of the sefaretnâme written by noted Ottoman statesman and historian Ahmet Vâsıf Efendi, who served as the first Ottoman ambassador to Spain in 1787/1788. Vâsıf Efendi was appointed to this post on 28 December 1786 and left Istanbul on 1 July 1787. According to Ahmet Cevdet Pasha, his selection occurred due to a professional dispute. Vâsıf's embassy lasted for ten months, as he attempted to secure a treaty of alliance from the Spanish king. The sefaretnâme – a typical example of the genre – not only narrates his embassy's itinerary in detail, but also describes official ceremonies, current events, and the views of Vâsıf on Spain and its inhabitants. In his encounter with a foreign people, Vâsıf shows above all his strong attachment to Ottoman culture.

Key words: Ottoman Empire – Spain – Ahmet Vâsıf Efendi – embassy – sefaretnâme

Özet

Aşağıdaki metin, 1787/1788 yılında ilk Osmanlı elçisi olarak İspanya'ya gitmiş önemli Osmanlı devlet adamı ve tarihçi Ahmet Vâsıf Efendi tarafından yazılmış sefaretnâmenin bir İngilizce çevirisidir. Vâsıf Efendi, 28 Aralık 1786’ya bu hizmete tayin edilmiş ve 1 Haziran 1787 yılında da İstanbul’dan ayrılmıştır. Ahmet Cevdet Paşa’ya göre, bu vazife için Vâsıf Efendi’nin seçilmiş olmasının sebebi, profesyonel bir anlaşmazlıklık ve Vâsıf Efendi’nin İspanya kralından ittifak bir antlaşmayı elde etmeye çalıştığı için elçilik görevi on ay sürmüştür. Türünün tipik bir örnek olan bu sefaretnâme, elçinin ayrıntılı gezisi yanında, resmi törenler, güncel olaylar ve de Vâsıf Efendi’nin İspanya ve halka hakkındaki görüşlerini de tarif eder. Yabance bir millet ile karşı karşıya gelen Vâsıf Efendi, her şeyden önce Osmanlı kültürüne kavuştuğu ve bağlılığını göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu – İspanya – Ahmet Vâsıf Efendi – elçilik – sefaretnâme

On Sunday, the fifteenth of the month of Blessed Ramadan in the year 1201,¹ the anchor of departure was weighed before Tophane.² The ninth of Noble Ševval,³ a Wednesday,

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1 1 July 1787. It is well to note that the text of the sefaretname which I have used, found in Ahmed Cevdet's history, seems to be an abridgment. Having no access to manuscripts at the time of translation, I have since been able to briefly compare Cevdet's text with that in Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi MS 1438. Cevdet both changed Vâsif's phrasing and condensed the original text, which is longer and more detailed.
2 A district of Istanbul along the Bosphorus.
3 25 July 1787.

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we arrived off the town called Barcelona, which is capital of the province of Cataluña on the shores of Spain.

His [Majesty the King's] official arrived for quarantine duties once we had signaled with our cannon. When we inquired on the matter, he replied regarding its necessity but retired and failed to appear at the appointed time. A gun was thus fired once anticipation had exceeded its limits and the man returned. We asked what was the basis of this delay.

“In our country the rule of quarantine is the greatest of matters,” he said. “Epidemic has broken out on the island of Minorca. The French king and our sovereign have immense concerns in this regard, indeed they have grave injunctions not to allow those arriving from Egypt, Istanbul, or Africa to pass through quarantine. Moreover, our state did not inform us that you were to arrive. We are yet unaware what the suitable honor is for your station. We are perplexed,” he said, and with a thousand apologies on the part of the general, added, “The island of Minorca is your furlough point.”

We, however, knew that this circumstance would come to light in Istanbul and that Minorca was a remote place; we not only had documents from the Spanish ambassador but there had been much discussion on the subject of being quarantined in Barcelona. And saying, “Would you have us quarantined anywhere other than Barcelona, we shall indeed return and rescind our gifts,” be what may, a decision was made to quarantine in Barcelona. We stayed ashore one more day until the provisions were gathered. They arranged the quarantine site. That day we disembarked with some ten followers, crossed the newly constructed bridge, and entered our lodgings. All of the attendants disembarked.

Due to its considerable situation and large garrison, one of His Majesty's distinguished generals is always in Barcelona to govern. The above-said and the other officers of the province all came close to shore and made motions of apology, offering salutations. We in turn accepted their amends and alighted. The sides of the quarantine site were encompassed by stockades. Spectators came from all around and greeted us from afar, and as they had never of a life-time seen man or costume of our country, they marveled immensely.

After staying at the said site for twenty-seven days, following the rule, His Majesty's physicians came and examined our men one by one. We then exited with pomp befitting the Sublime State's glory; and though the quarantine site was only a quarter hour from the city, due to the crowds it took five hours to reach our lodgings. They related that this town, [Barcelona], is chief of their cities and was founded by Hercules. In Muslim times it was famed and called “The City of Paradise.” It is girded by a deep moat and double rampart, and its harbor is guarded – they have always taken pains in security and coastal defense from fear of the Algerians.

The king and his son were eager for our audience. Sending tidings, after six or seven days’ residence we set out for the district in which the king resides. The fifth day of our journey we halted at the city called Tortosa. The tenth day, we lighted at the city named Valencia and there suffered fatigue from the crowds of people. The king has, in essence, no dominion more populous than this. Our residence was mobbed throng-on-throng by spectators assembling from town and country, and soldiers restrained the vulgar rabble.

The general who seized the island of Majorca from the English governs the city of Valencia. “We are charged by the king to attend on you. Send your cooks. Let them prepare a
meal for you according to your tastes, that we may have a banquet,” he said. We dispatched
them; we arrived at the above-said's villa, feasted, and returned. Previously, an exquisite
largesse purse had been given to the Barcelonan general. Since this one was Deputy (which is
to say, second) to the Prime Minister, another fine purse was given to him in order to exhibit
the state’s magnificence. In return, he sent two bottles of olive oil. Hence may the Spanish
people's coarseness and depravity be known.

This city is on the banks of the Turia River. It is three miles from the sea and a place of
vineyards and gardens. Xàtiva and the fortresses of Alicante and Pensicola are reckoned
among this district's dependencies. We passed one night, then departed, and on the twenty-
sixth day we arrived at La Granja, wherein was the king, from Barcelona. A residence had been
prepared a half mile from the city. His Majesty's Master of Ceremonies and translators came
and brought the king's carriage, and by means of it we arrived at the mentioned lodging. A
person of some distinction served as mîhmândâr⁶ and welcomed us at the head of the stairway;
he inquired of our health on behalf of the king. After an hour a dignitary came with thirty trays
of various sweets and, the Master of Ceremonies announcing his rank, he was delighted with a
jeweled snuffbox.

The next day, the Master of Ceremonies returned in order to submit His Majesty's
ceremonial and other protocol to us in a memo he had composed. We said that it would be
performed with the utmost propriety but that European practices are uncustomary in our
country. “It is usual to meet first with the Prime Minister,” he said. We would be received
privately, we replied, or else should not be received before we had met the king. We disputed
much in this respect and, in truth, parleyed in that fashion. Due to his anxiety, [the Prime
Minister] persisted in lengthy queries. We dispelled uncertainty, said that we came merely to
secure friendship, and repaired to our inn.

In La Granja they arranged a small residence for us and requested we lodge with our
retinue and gifts. As it was a trifle, this was conceded. However, in protocol they desired to
observe treatment which in Europe is due ministers plenipotentiary – and when the other states'
emissaries, in particular the Russian ambassador, scorned our protocol and the Ottoman
envoys, we enforced our claim. Saying, “They have no power to insist,” they wished to
degrade us to the rank of Minister Plenipotentiary, and there were many arguments between us:
“Though we do have the title Minister Plenipotentiary, we are not like the rest. We are charged
with the recent détente and the embassy is an extraordinary matter. We also have personal rank
in the Sublime State, and furthermore the custom of every state is in itself unique,” we said.
And following the course of sundry expositions, they fixed, through the aid of God (May He
be Exalted), on the protocol of Ambassador which we desired. They then honored our rights to
an extent that was not so for the other envoys, and indeed piqued those of the other states in
Spain – they were scorched by the hellfire of constraint.⁷

Although the province of Madrid is fourteen hours away from La Granja, a number of
noblemen attending on the king were, by his orders, sent from Madrid to prepare for the
audience day. He had appointed Sunday; the said day, His Master of Ceremonies came and
sent fifteen caparisoned horses. Since he had permitted the imperial gifts to be dispatched
beforehand, twenty sacks of mocha coffee and accoutrements were loaded onto wagons and
sent off. Then, the king sent three head of his own horse – these were bedecked with trappings,
an imperial gift, and dressed plainly or with jewels. One man was assigned to each of them.

⁶ In Ottoman usage, an official charged with greeting and accompanying foreign dignitaries.
⁷ The word harâd can mean “limit, boundary, obstacle, or constraint.” It also refers to distinctions in the social
sphere of rank and position, which is how it should be interpreted in this metaphor.
Our Master of Horse mounted another caparisoned steed; he led the way and set out for the king's palace with ambling gait. The other royal gifts were next allotted to the men, and because the weather was favorable and temperate all the spectators accompanied, their eyes dazzled. As their lands are lacking in such rarities, they apprised them that they were estimated at 5,000 purses of akçe.8

When the gifts at length reached the palace, word came that out of perfect delight the king and his sons had descended to the palace courtyard to watch. An hour later we submitted the nâme-i hümâyûn9 into the hands of a bedizened horseman, in the station of our steward, and proceeded with illimitable pomp and procession. He held the imperial letter above his head and liveried footmen surrounded him. This humble one then proceeded in pelisse and kâtipi turban10 with some twenty-five men before and behind us — archers — and three pursuivants with silver staffs and distinctive garb. Six nobles from the king’s family and a number of cavalry and infantry walked in front, playing their characteristic drums and hornpipes. We advanced on foot, a dignitary at our right and left, the Chief Translator and our interpreter behind us. Toward the palace, approximately 150 men in number, soldiers, were aligned on the ground in ten ranks; here and there officers came forward and saluted. As for the host of spectators, it is indescribable: besides crowding five or six deep on the balconies of every house overlooking the street, they so gluttoned the road, wide enough for five wagons abreast, that we passed through them on horse only with difficulty. It was even rumored that they rented windows for 100 kuruş each.11

We thus entered the palace. Greeters met us at the head of the stair and honorably conducted us to the [throne] room. The king was standing. At his right stood the Prime Minister, on his left the West Indies Minister, his other generals, kinsmen, and statesmen. We next, with great reverence, took the imperial letter from our steward's possession. After placing it to our forehead, kissing it thrice, lowering it from our brow, we set towards the king with a majestic, mild air. In confronting him we said, in lofty voice, that the imperial missive was replete with the graces of His Majesty, Supreme and Most Noble of All Sovereigns Now on the Face of the Earth, My Majestic, Puissant, Magnificent Padishah and Benefactor, Our Lord Sultan Abdülhamit Khan, son of Sultan Ahmet Khan, son of Sultan Mehmet Khan, for His Excellency the Royal, Honorable Spanish king; that he had deigned to appoint us his envoy with the command to first strengthen, with gifts imperial, the peace the Spanish state desired, and to tighten the bonds of friendship and amity which had arisen between us.

The king was a doddering old man of seventy-five years, and when he reached for the nâme-i hümâyûn his awe of the letter exacerbated this. Although he endeavored to take it for some two minutes, he was unable. The Prime Minister assisted and took it. Previously, while King of Naples, the king had concluded peace with the Sublime State. He now gave thanks that this peace was of his own volition. The crowd saw that this was directed towards me. Showing appreciation with affectionate words, he said:

God willing (May He be Praised), the two states' merchants shall be secure. There is no doubt that we are sincere friends to the padishah of the Ottoman dynasty, inasmuch as it shall not be forgotten till Judgment Day that the Sublime State sent and numbered soldiers in aid during the rise of our greatest enemy, whilst we were in the

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8 The basic unit of Ottoman currency; known in Europe as the asper.
9 The sultan's autograph letter.
10 This would seem to indicate a variety of turban worn by scribes.
11 Known in Europe as the piastre, and classically worth 1/100 of an akçe.

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Kingdom of Naples.

We replied that the Sublime State is a generous state, and after saying what was needful, and while we moved to return to our quarters with the imperial letter, with gestures in way of farewell, the king said: “My children are very solicitous for you.” We encountered three of his sons and his daughter among those on the road. They paid us great honor. Through their preparation of the king’s carriage, we repaired by it to our lodgings.\(^{12}\)

Although it is custom for envoys coming to Spain to feast the states’ emissaries and nobles gathered in Madrid, the king had proclaimed that the festivities would be performed by the Prime Minister in order to spare us from expenses. They informed us. It was not a matter to be refused. With a summoner arriving an hour after we returned, we set out for the Prime Minister’s. The banquet festivities were held; the Prime Minister greeted us at the doorway. They had adorned the table with vessels of gold and silver. That day we also submitted His Excellency the Grand Vezir’s letter to the Prime Minister.

Besides that [the Spaniards] are an extremely coarse people, they wished to treat us like the other European envoys yet ignorant of the ceremonies of pomp and state. Their Chancellor and Master of Ceremonies was, furthermore, an Armenian from Jerusalem, peerless in evil and devilry. First of all, their Chief Translator came to our residence and broached the topic of gifts being given by the Sublime State to the king’s three sons, his wife, to the Prime Minister, the West Indies Minister, the Chancellor, and the other statesmen according to their rank. “Our ambassadors in Istanbul are eager – they give gifts; in any case, they supply without reciprocation. You should give,” he said. We replied that when envoys are sent by the Sublime State to emperors and other kings, everyone knows that it is among our state's practices to give nothing to anyone other than him. Let the ambassadors present be asked – they would not want custom corrupted by innovation, we said. Although visitors from other states may give gifts to our statesmen, it is unprecedented that our state give. If ambassadors grant certain things, it is an act of generosity. It is not of our customs, we said. There was many a triumph on our part and yet more powerless rebukes and reproaches made. They forced their arguments through a number of false premises, however, and refusal was in no way feasible. Finally, they explained that were it not so, it would be impossible to again meet with the king and that the imperial gifts should not be accepted. We replied to see to the means of our immediate departure. “An answer shall be given in one or two hours,” they said, and rose and left.

Later, word came to us from some envoys who were well-wishers of the state. Since they said, “These are an obstinate and proud people – you should somehow have the king hear of the matter,” we had the king hear of it through certain means. He was vexed at the statesmen and particularly outraged by the statement that there would be no further meeting. He said: “It is wrong to trouble the ambassador with these demands.” Yet, even though it is uncustomary for such men to receive gifts from the state, when he explained that “it would please us were he, of his own accord, to delight and elate them as far as possible with some curiosities of Istanbul,” no remedy remained for us. Of the goods we had gathered and purchased in Istanbul, a Damascene sword embossed with gold, a gilded musket decorated with solid silver, five Indian shawls embroidered with golden flowers, two turbans, a sable fur, an enameled dagger whose handle was covered in many diamonds, and a quantity of perfumes were

arranged for his son, the crown-prince. In addition to another dagger, musket, and sword, a set
of excellent bath towels was given to his wife, and whatever had been offered his son plus
another dagger to the Prime Minister. Separate gifts were prepared and bestowed by us on the
Chancellor, Prince Masserano, who is Captain of the Guard and a respected peer, and to the
Chief Translator and mihmândâr.

Not only did neither king nor the others reciprocate in kind, but the price of the rations
they supplied was of no help to our expenses. Their dominions were in a degree of famine and
dearth which cannot be described. We purchased three sheep per day. Each sheep cost twelve
kuruş, clarified butter two kuruş, and a cart of firewood forty kuruş, though the carts were
especially large wagons; a chicken cost forty para, and so on and so forth.

One day on the king's advice we sojourned to a famous garden. There were many
shrubs and also many pools and wondrous statues. After strolling, we returned. And as the king
had recommended the general who is Grand Master of the Artillery, appointed over Arsenal,
Foundry, and Armory affairs, we set out for the town called Segovia, which is two hours away
from La Granja, to observe and tour. The general welcomed us and after a feast we visited the
military academy. Other than being brimful with mathematical instruments, there were
drawings on the academy walls of fortress sieges, assaults of castles, army maneuvers, and
troop mustering. The instructors were busy drilling the students. The support of these teachers
and students is met by the king, and the majority of noblemen are involved. They demonstrated
mine, cannon, and artillery drills which they had been preparing for a month. Since the
weather was hot, none of them could be executed. Their skill, however, was obvious. Because
Segovia is an ancient city, curious relics dating from the Islamic kings and others were seen.
Splendid broadcloths are woven there and excellently worked; we moreover toured an ancient,
ruined mint.

After the king left La Granja for the palace called the Escorial, he bid us accompany
him at once. He furnished travel supplies and we left La Granja the seventeenth day of
Zilhicce, reached the Escorial, and lighted at the residence he had prepared beforehand. In
Spain, due to scarcity of horses they are obliged to harness mules to carriages. Their mules are
fast and strong but their hiring fee is unbelievably expensive: as the Escorial is an eight hour
distance from La Granja, they changed our mules in three places. There were six mules each.
We observed that they took a sixty-six real fee – exactly 192 and a half kuruş.

The following day the king arrived at the said place. Two days later he summoned us.
“Have you enjoyed the Escorial?” he asked. “Tomorrow, let us go hunting,” he said. “God
willing,” I replied. Although the king is an aged old man, he passes each day except for three a
year with hunting and the chase, and delegates his affairs to ministers. The Prime Minister is
absolute in all matters. He is the opposite of the king’s administrators, an obsequious and
experienced individual. Whenever he mentions the name of his sovereign, he acknowledges
him with the epithet “Great Lord.”

The next day we went hunting. Six statesmen and envoys were present in all. The king
and crown-prince doffed their caps and greeted us; we likewise behaved cordially. They
organized an immense drive. The king rent the bowels of a stag; he extracted a horn-like bone
from its insides, took off his apron, and wiped the blood off of the bone. He removed a piece of
paper from his pocket, wrapped it, and gave it to this humble one. “It is beneficial for the pains

14 The smallest unit of Ottoman currency, classically one-fortieth of a kuruş.
15 30 September 1787.
of childbirth,” he said, and explained a number of its uses. His emissaries and ministers encircled us, and admired and envied. “We have given all that we possess for such favors from the king,” they said. Later, the king went to another place to fish; we went to our lodgings.

Because the place they call the Escorial was originally a monastery, it has a library within. When the Christians conquered the country of Andalusia they gathered the Muslims' books and deposited them in two collections in the monastery. The first of them burned, which was close to 12,000 volumes. There are now about 5,000 extant volumes, and we acquired the printed title catalogue. The Muslim books are of a superior and their own books of an inferior grade. We perused our books: there were some ten Korans with ancient calligraphy and innumerable books on jurisprudence, theology, and prophetic tradition. We were considerably grieved and saddened.

The king was on the point of setting out from the Escorial to the retreat called El Pardo. We arrived a day before the king, as he had explained that he was of a mind to send us to Madrid, and settled into a palace in that locale. It is a vast place with sumptuous promenades and basins. Since it is the king's seat, it is also a populous domain – it was futile to gain relief from the spectators till the end of our term of stay. Above all, onlookers were astonished by our dining practices; they also greatly commended the musicians and singers in our entourage. By order of the king all the magnates each invited us to dine, and we were oppressed by their peculiar music. And although it is contrary to their practices, the Prime Minister, who is Grand Vezir, came to our lodgings three times and insinuated that it was an honor reserved for the Sublime State.

While the city of Toledo was originally the king's seat, they favored Madrid in view of its water and climate. The king's palace is on the riverbank. Its buildings are all of stone, and some plants and trees endemic to the New World have been planted there. We observed a variety of flower; it trembled and quavered as if touched by a man's finger. We also saw in the city of Minkara, an hour away, that they had constructed channels like the canals of France and convey ships by the canals. These thus allow their vessels to pass by fresh water from Madrid all the way to the city known as Lisbon, which is the Portuguese king's infidel domain, and are purposed to communicate with the Ocean Sea – [these canals] are constantly employed in industry and have been developed to their full potential. Madridian fruit is furthermore rare and they bring it from Andalusia. Even the skin of their grapes is thick.

We stayed for four and a half months, then sought permission to depart. They gave a reply to the nāme-i hūmayūn and we set out for the port of Cartagena, along the coast. Among the oddities which occurred was that on our initial arrival the mihmândâr came and brought 3,500 reals, saying, “The Sublime State's gift of pelisse and horse to ambassadors is not custom in our state. [The king] has presented you the value of a pelisse and caparisoned steed.” Now, they counted this against the cost of our supplies. And while it is customary for the Sublime State to grant ten kuruş per day to ambassadorial translators, they gave not one iota to our interpreters; we paid 600 kuruş.

The twelfth day of our journey we reached the town called Murcia. It is a city comparable to Seville. It is cheerful, the people inclined to mirth and merriment – they are unbridled and impudent. The fifteenth day we lighted at the port of Cartagena. A commander and four dignitaries escorted our suite and appropriate gifts were given and crowned the state's glory. On the shore, Cartagena has a strong castle. It has a spacious harbor and a fine arsenal as well, with suitable equipment, workers, and magazines. Provisions and comestibles are

16 I am unable to identify this city.
imported from Murcia because its hinterlands are bereft of agriculture and dairy, like an impoverished country; and since the inhabitants are of the ilk of sailors and brigands, people in the city do not go out and about by night. We embarked on a frigate which they had prepared beforehand. Although the wind was favorable, it turned contrary and we landed at the island of Malta. We stayed three days to repair equipment and offered resources to the Muslim captives there.

(A Description of the Country of Andalus, Son of Ionus, Son of Japheth, Son of Noah, Peace be Upon Him)

[Spain] is an extensive region akin to the shape of a square; the Spanish people are moderate of hue and swarthy of skin, their humors hot and dry – they are bilious and extremely proud and cowardly. Boastful, they surpass all people in divination and augury. Extreme is their affection and sycophancy for one another, limitless their fanaticism in their false creed, and their language is based on the Jewish tongue. Their fortresses are fast and strong, but their subjects' circumstances are wretched and disordered and their meals short and few. All the people discuss politics among themselves, taking needless trouble, and dissemble their opinions towards their enemies. There are military academies in several places to instruct in matters of war. Their infantry is better than their cavalry and most of them are foreigners. There is also a great deal of schools in this region yet the public is disinclined to the sciences or education, so much so that there is not one skilled physician among them.

Before Islam, these lands were a republic. Later the Spanish people were obedient to the Romans. The Goth tribe, which is to say the Swedes, then conquered Spain and Rome. The Gothic king wished to abduct the loveliest princess of the Spanish nobility, but they sent word to the Muslims and requested aid: “You should come and take this country,” they said – and Tārik bin Ziyād and Mūsa bin Nusayr therefore crossed the Strait of Gibraltar to Andalusia with armies. The Gothic king met them with 100,000 soldiers, but Islam triumphed and the Gothic king perished. In the ninetieth hijri year, the Muslims occupied their famed cities. For a period of seven or eight centuries many states arose. They ruled them all according to Islam and from Andalusia conquered many dominions, but dissension thereafter spread among them and the Islamic rulers quarreled. Seeking support from the infidel, subduing one another, they were annihilated, and when the year 900 arrived the country of Andalusia was held entirely in infidel hands. Many renowned wars and battles occurred which are recorded in books of history.

The capital of the above-said infidel Spanish king is Madrid, and the Portuguese capital is Lisbon, which was termed “al-Ishbuna” while under the Muslims. Marseilles, the pride of the French, Sicily in the Kingdom of Naples, Minorca, Majorca, and other islands and coasts were once in the hands of Andalusian rulers and under Muslim control, too. Also under Spanish rule are the Philippines in the islands off China, Guinea in Black Africa, and many tiny isles near the Moluccas, and they say that the places they control in the New World are the equal, perhaps inferior, to the countries the French, English, Portuguese, and Dutch states govern in the New World. Their power on the seas is, on the whole, great: it is well-known that 100 large vessels are always stationed in their many ports. After outlays and expenses, they

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17 An understandable belief, as the Ottoman Empire contained a large Ladino-speaking community of Sephardic Jews who migrated from Spain following the expulsion edict of 1492.
18 708 / 709 A.D. An error. The Muslim invasion of Spain did not begin until 711.
19 1494 / 1495 A.D.
have incomes of 9,000,000 per annum in the New World. Other than this, another 11,000,000 akçe per annum are paid over by tax farmers. They call 1,000 times 1,000 “million.” They were, however, subject to many expenses during their wars with the English, and it is now clear that they have a great many debts. They have scorned and abandoned the Spanish mines but value their mines in the New World. Once in three years they send five or six thousand miners to work, since it is among the indispensible affairs of their state and as they are unable to adapt to the New World's climate and die. There are thus no masses of people in their dominions. The silver and gold is kept at the mints in Madrid once it arrives. But because the majority of the New World's people are assigned to mineral works, there is a lack of agriculture and husbandry, indeed they are forced to obtain foodstuffs entirely from Africa. For this reason, the Spaniards' dissimulation and sycophancy towards the Sultan of Morocco is boundless. The said ruler sells them provisions for a hefty price and takes the value in raw silver or other gold coin. In order to spare the expenses of a mint, he sends off his dice face, engraved with holy verse, to the Spanish king's mint – it is very well-known in Madrid that he has the infidels strike it and imports the surplus to his country for a fee.

(Events in Algeria)

The Algerians have made peace with the Spanish and have complete advantage. Since 1,200 Spanish captives were in Algiers, in the settlement they were to ransom each of them for 1,000 reals. The curious thing is that, after the agreement, when the money reached Algiers [the Algerians] took the whole of it as the price of the dead captives. [The Spanish] had no power to resist. It is also written in their treaty that the king, after presenting the Dey of Algiers 500 purses of jewels and other goods, will offer a further large sum in return for peace, and that each year nautical equipment and supplies for the arsenal be given by the Spanish. The Algerian dey's gift to the king of three head of horse, two lions, and several ostriches also arrived whilst we were in Madrid, but in order to insult the Spanish he did not even send it by personal representative. He dispatched and forwarded it to the resident Spanish consul in Algiers. The consul brought it personally; they endured it of necessity.

The Algerians had over 100 captives in Spain, moreover. Although they had agreed to redeem them with coin, they said: “Such ilk of traitorous and cowardly comrades is useless to us. So far as they are concerned, they should not have been taken prisoner.” The Spanish were bewildered in respect of this and hid it from the other states. Ultimately, they sent a private letter to the Sultan of Morocco, saying, “If you wish, we will release them for your sake.” The above-said then redeemed them for the sake of Islam, brought them over, and sent them to Algiers with gifts of coin and fine clothing. The Spanish reassured themselves that they had responded to a request from the Moroccan sultan and disclosed it to the public.

In short, the Algerians' strength of religion has impressed the infidel and constrained the Spanish. Following peace they seized two Spanish galleons, saying that they had not laid out explicit stipulations in the treaty. However much the Spanish protested, it was unavailing, and in the end they paid 40,000 reals and ransomed them. While in Barcelona they additionally seized two Genoese vessels before our eyes. We praised God; the people watched from high ground and rued. [The Spanish] have concluded peace with Tripoli, as well. Their gifts arrived when we were in Madrid. They have yet to determine peace with Tunis but are in the midst of many negotiations. Peace is expected, however, while they exchange correspondence.

One day in Madrid we asked a prominent Algerian: “Why did you make peace when are profiting so much from them?” He replied: “Our profits are great. This peace will last at
most three years and our earlier gains are still valid. For the present, we have acquired enough riches for two or three years. There is no harm for us whatsoever.” Which is to say, their peace is a sort of castle built on sand. Upon declaration of the Russian war, [the Algerians] captured two large vessels laden with wine in the Strait of Gibraltar. They presented their cargo to the Spanish and, saying, “We cannot use such large ships – they are of use to you,” they took coin of a price more than their true value. Indeed, we saw the ships with our own eyes at the port of Cartagena.

Transcription

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mertebe ikrâm olundu.

{Zikr-i Memleket-i Endülüs bin Yûnân ibn Yafet ibn Nûh 'aleyhisselâm}


[A study and partial translation in Spanish, taken from a Modern Turkish adaptation of the text.]