



Wouter Troost, *Istanbul en Den Haag. De betrekkingen tussen het Ottomaanse Rijk en de Republiek (1668-1699)* (Dordrecht: Republic of Letters, 2014, 364 pp., ISBN 978 908979 129 0).

In 1699 the Hague printer Anna Beek, colorist to Stadhouder-King William III, produced a broadsheet engraving commemorating the Karlowitz peace conference at which an end to Ottoman-Habsburg hostilities had been negotiated earlier that year. Beek's 'Theatre de la Paix entre les Chrestiens et les Turcs' celebrated the mediating role of Dutch ambassador in Constantinople Jacob Colyer (1657-1725). Yet in Beek's print, Colyer is depicted only from the rear. One could read this as metaphor for Colyer's treatment in the historiography on relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Dutch Republic. Though Colyer and his father Justinus were the face of Dutch diplomacy at the Ottoman Porte for nearly sixty years, from 1668 to 1725, the Colyers have not received the same degree of attention as the Republic's first ambassador Cornelis Haga, their successor Cornelis Calkoen, or their French, English, and Venetian colleagues.

Wouter Troost's monograph sets out to remedy this neglect. The work's greatest strength is its extensive use of the rich, yet until recently largely untapped, fond of diplomatic correspondence between the Colyers, William III, and the States-General. We learn relatively little, however, about the Colyers themselves, their relations with countrymen and colleagues, or what it meant to be a Dutch diplomat at the Porte in this period. This is a missed opportunity, since from fleeting albeit frequent references in the book it appears that Justinus Colyer's household served as training-ground for an entire generation of Dutch ambassadors, consuls, secretaries, and interpreters (nor should the women of his family be ignored). Given the supreme importance of patron-client relations and personal affiliations in seventeenth-century Europe and the Ottoman Empire, Troost's work suggests that the Colyer household may be an insightful case-study for future scholarship on the workings of Dutch diplomacy at the Porte.

Rather, it is the broad European political context within which the Colyers operated which captures Troost's attention. Already familiar with the era's Western European political context from his biography of William III, Troost has turned here to William's *Ostpolitik*. In this he responds to the recent swell of interest in Dutch-Ottoman relations unleashed by their four-hundredth anniversary in 2012. Troost seeks to show that relations between the Republic and the Ottoman Empire were inextricable from those between the Republic, Leopold I of Austria, and the French monarch Louis

xiv. In this he largely succeeds. It is regrettable, however, that his argument is not made prior to page 319. This reflects the book's fatal flaw: it lacks not only a clear, strong line of argument, but also a historiographic frame and rationale for why such a book is necessary or how the author's interpretation of events differs from that of other scholars who have engaged the same topic.

Troost's book is a traditional diplomatic history of political interests and political events. Recent years have seen a renaissance in Ottoman studies and diplomatic history, however, and little of this new historiographical landscape is reflected in the book. This lacuna is particularly marked in his traditional treatment of the Ottoman Empire as an Islamic state in deep decline, ruled by incompetent sultans and corrupt, autocratic viziers. Incorporating the more sophisticated view of early modern Ottoman history which has emerged over the past twenty years would have enriched and provided greater nuance to Troost's narrative. Likewise, the field of diplomatic history has adopted a wealth of new interdisciplinary approaches to better understand and contextualize pre-modern diplomatic practices. For example, Troost uses literal readings of the Colyer correspondence to depict Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa as a proud and power-hungry figure ruled by greed. Recent rhetorical readings of the Colyer correspondence, however, have demonstrated that Kara Mustafa's reputation for avidity, pride, and tyranny was largely constructed and disseminated by Western diplomats unfamiliar with Ottoman customs or political factions, and seeking to cover up their diplomatic missteps (e.g., the Sofa Affair) or, as in Colyer's case, justify the unwelcome news of an expensive new capitulation to their principals. Rhetorical, contingent readings open up new avenues for understanding how diplomatic practices affected early modern politics and policy rather than rehearsing old stereotypes.

Though Troost focuses on the political aspects of Dutch-Ottoman relations, the Republic's commercial and political interests were intricately intertwined. When Justinus Colyer was dispatched to Constantinople in 1668, his mandate was primarily to protect and discipline Dutch trading interests in the Levant. Colyer *père* succeeded in consolidating the Dutch trading nation, while also benignly weathering the collapse of Dutch trade between 1672 and 1678, and, despite the Republic's diminishing strategic utility to the Ottomans after 1672, surviving (as Troost shows) the administrative and financial reforms instituted by the Köprülü vezirs. Troost's narrative becomes more assured in discussing Jacob Colyer's political activities after 1682. For much of his tenure, Colyer *fils* actively promoted Ottoman-Habsburg peace so that, freed from a two-front war, William III's reluctant ally Leopold I could engage France more forcefully in the west. After 1688 Colyer was seconded in this by his often hostile English colleagues. Their attempts at peace were unsuccessful; only after the 1697 Treaty of Ryswick ended war in Western Europe was their offer of Anglo-Dutch mediation at Karlowitz accepted. It is here, in January 1699, that Troost's narrative ends – though Jacob Colyer continued to represent the Republic at Constantinople until his death in

1725. Following his successful mediation at Karlowitz, Colyer was invited to mediate again at Passarowitz in 1718. It is for these triumphs of peacemaking that he is largely remembered. Colyer, concludes Troost, represented Dutch interests excellently.

The reader may feel less prepared to judge. The book's lack of clear argument also impacts its style and organization. The many minor spelling mistakes (e.g., eufemistsich, Ldewijk, Macarthey for Macartney, Petrisch for Petritsch), imprecisions (the Ottoman vilayets in Asia were not necessarily populated by Arabians, for example, nor did Hungary formally belong to the Habsburg *Hausmacht*), and inconsistencies (is it Timisoara, Timosoara, or Temesvár?) may be overlooked in a work as expansive as this. It is reasonable, not remarkable, that seventeenth-century ambassadors used the place-names (Constantinople, Smyrna) familiar to their countrymen at the time. Hungarian readers may consider that their ancestors were justifiably 'malcontent'. Perhaps least satisfying, though, is the author's resort to rhetorical questions and stilted scaffolding to drive his narrative forward (e.g., 'We laten nu de Turkse buitenlandse politiek even voor wat zij is en we richten onze aandacht eerst op de Turkse binnenlandse politiek [...] In de twee volgende hoofdstukken passeert Kara Mustafa de revue', 78). As a result, the book is unfortunately difficult to recommend to students or specialists, for whom the historical enterprise is less about 'the historical reality' (166) and more about how that reality has been interpreted. It will, however, offer a broad orientation to the general reader interested in a traditional political history. Perhaps most valuably, the book demonstrates the rich potential of the Colyer correspondence. Troost may encourage students of Dutch-Ottoman relations to explore the archive further – and this can only deepen our understanding of Ottoman-Dutch relations in a critical moment of great transition for both polities.

Megan K. Williams, University of Groningen