

History of American Chamber of Commerce for The Levant (1911-1914)

Levant Amerikan Ticaret Odası Tarihi (1911-1914)

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between the United States and the Ottoman Empire began on May 7, 1830, with the signing of a commercial agreement between the two states. This agreement was followed by subsequent treaties over the years, and the amicable relationship between the two nations encouraged American merchants to engage with the Ottoman Empire. However, despite these agreements, trade did not reach the anticipated levels. Several factors contributed to this stagnation, including the geographic distance of the Ottoman Empire, the absence of a direct steam ferry line, and deficiencies in the banking system. Additionally, U.S. policies played a significant role in this limited trade activity. The adoption of the 'Open Door Policy' in 1899 marked a turning point, as it prompted the U.S. to become more active in many regions, including the Levant. As part of this new approach, the U.S. upgraded its mission in İstanbul to an embassy in 1906. Subsequently, in 1911, it established the 'American Chamber of Commerce for the Levant' to promote trade in the region. This article examines the establishment of the chamber- an institution that played a pivotal role in the global expansion of American commerce-in the Ottoman Empire and its efforts to foster trade between the two nations.

Keywords: American Chamber of Commerce for the Levant, American Embassy, Ottoman Empire, Türkiye, Trade

ÖZ

Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ile Osmanlı İmparatorluğu arasındaki ilişki, 7 Mayıs 1830'da iki devlet arasında imzalanan ticaret anlaşmasıyla başlamıştır. Bu anlaşmayı yıllar içinde başka anlaşmalar da takip etmiş ve iki devlet arasındaki dostluk ilişkisi Amerikalı tüccarları Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'na gelmeye teşvik etmiştir. Ancak iki ülke arasındaki anlaşmaya rağmen ticaret beklenen düzeyde olmamıştır. Bunun Osmanlı'nın uzak bir kıta olması, direkt buharlı vapur hattının bulunmaması, bankacılık yetersizliği gibi pek çok nedeni vardı. Ancak bu durgunlukta ABD'nin ana politikalarının da etkisi mevcuttu. ABD'nin 1899'da

benimsediđi yeni tutumu "Açık Kapı Politikası" ile Amerikan tarihi farklı bir yöne doğru yol almış, bu tarihten sonra Amerika Levant dâhil birçok kıta ve ülkede faaliyet göstermeye başlamıştır. Bu politikanın geređi olarak, ilk önce -1906 yılında -İstanbul'daki misyonunu büyükelçiliđe dönüştürmüş ardından -1911 yılında -Levant'ta ticareti geliştirmek amacıyla "Levant Amerikan Ticaret Odası"nı kurmuştur. Makalede, Amerikan ticaretinin dünyaya yayılmasında önemli bir kurum olan odanın Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki kuruluş öyküsü ve iki ülke arasındaki ticareti geliştirme çabaları ele alınmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Levant Amerikan Ticaret Odası, Amerikan Büyükelçiliđi, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Türkiye, Ticaret

Introduction

Chambers of commerce, which were established to develop trade, began to open in many countries of the world since the sixteenth century. Countries opened these chambers not only in their own lands but also in different geographies, thus expanding their trade to different countries. The first chamber in the Ottoman Empire was opened by the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the nineteenth century, and other European countries followed in time. It became possible for the United State to open a chamber in the Ottoman Empire in 1911. The reason for this delay was related to America's policies. The first name of the chamber opened by America in 1911 in Istanbul¹, was 'American Chamber of Commerce for Turkey'.² In 1912, the name of the chamber changed as 'American Chamber of Commerce for the Levant(ACCL)'.³ Although it has such a deep-rooted history and existed until 1931, the history of ACCL has not been studied by Turkish academics. Although ACCL is mentioned in articles, no article has been written about it. The first and most important reason for this was that the existence of the necessary material to carry out the study was not known. Because Ottoman sources are insufficient on this subject. As the development of technology made it possible to access world archives and libraries, it became possible to access American archives. On this opportunity, while preparing the article, ACCL's publication, '*Levant Trade Review*' Magazine, was first used. Secondly, '*Daily Consular Reports*' were used because the chamber was affiliated with the American Embassy. Apart from these, other local and foreign magazines of the period, official publications of the states, the *Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive* and copyrighted works were also used. The period covered by the article is 1911-14. In order to keep the subject within the framework of an article and to understand what kind of establishment process the chamber went through, the period from the establishment of the chamber to the World War was discussed. And taking into account the argument of history, answers to some questions were sought: 'Why and how was the chamber established?' 'Did it provide economic benefit to the cities where the chamber was

1 Istanbul, the capital of Türkiye, has been named differently in each period. It was called 'Constantinople' in the Byzantine Period, 'Stamboul' by non-Muslim subjects and foreigners in the Ottoman Period, and '*Dersaadet*' by the Ottoman people and administration.

2 As of December 2021, upon Turkey's request, "Türkiye" has begun to be used instead of "Turkey" in international platforms and official correspondence. Therefore, the word "Türkiye" was used when referring to the country in the article. However, since the official name of the chamber was the "American Chamber of Commerce for Turkey", the word "Turkey" was used when referring to the chamber.

3 At the second annual meeting, the name of the chamber was changed from 'American Chamber of Commerce for Turkey' to 'American Chamber of Commerce for the Levant.' The name 'Turkey' in the branch names also became 'Levant' after 1912. Since the Cairo and Beirut branches were established after the name change, they were established as Levant. Only the ACCL abbreviation has been used in the paper to avoid confusion by using different abbreviations.

established?’ ‘Was the chamber able to solve the existing problems?’ ‘Did it contribute to the development of trade between the two countries?’ ‘How was it affected by the wars?’.

History of American Chamber of Commerce for Turkey / the Levant

Chambers of commerce began to be opened in many countries of the world since the sixteenth century in order to contribute to the development of domestic and foreign trade. While chambers of commerce began to open in Western countries in the early sixteenth century, the first chamber in the Ottoman Empire was opened by the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1870. The Ottoman Empire opened the first local chamber of commerce under the name ‘Dersaadet Ticaret Odası’ in 1882. Subsequently, France, England, Italy, Greece, and the Netherlands chambers of commerce were established in the Ottoman lands, respectively. America and Russia opened a chamber of commerce here at a very late date.⁴ America’s delay was due to its adoption of new policies, called the Open Door Policy, in 1899. According to this policy, America would have the right to trade in China with equal opportunities as other great powers. With its new policy initiative, America was planning to conduct active trade not only in China, but also in international seas and the Ottoman Empire. For this reason, William Rockhill, one of the authors of the ‘Open Door Policy Notes’ and one of the essential figures of America’s commercial success in China, was appointed to Istanbul as the American ambassador on 24 April 1911. In addition, Gabriel Bie Ravndal, who attached importance to increasing America’s commercial activities in the eastern Mediterranean, was assigned from Beirut to Istanbul as the new consul general.⁵

The American Chamber of Commerce for Turkey was established in Istanbul in 1911 with the initiative of the American Consulate General. A meeting was planned at the consulate on 22 March 1911, to establish the chamber.⁶ Approximately 60 merchants, as well as American Consul General Ravndal and consular officials, attended the meeting held on 22 March. These merchants were people who represented the trade between

4 Toprak, *Türkiye’de Milli İktisat*, Dogan Kitap, İstanbul, 2012, pp. 138–45.

5 Küçük, *Levant and Turkish–American Relations*, p. 42.; American President Taft’s message to congress in 1911 was showing the importance they gave to the Ottoman Empire. In referring to American relations with Turkey, he remarked that “*in spite of the attendant economic uncertainties and detriments to commerce, the United States has gained markedly in its commercial standing with certain of the nations of the Near East. Turkey, especially, is beginning to come into close relations with the United States through the new interest of American manufacturers and exporters in the possibilities of those regions, and it is hoped that foundations are being laid for a large and mutually beneficial exchange of commodities between the two countries.*” For detailed information, see, Leland James Gordon, *American Relations With Turkey*, London, 1932, p.58.

6 ‘Empire News’, *The Orient*, Vol. I, No.47, 8 March 1911, p.6.

Istanbul and America. During the meeting, Consul General Ravndal drew attention to the increasing trade between America and Türkiye in the last ten years. Also, he appointed a commission to prepare a report for the next meeting. A board of directors was also elected for the chamber. The board consisted of the following people: Messrs. Peets, Chester, Gates, Heizer, Oswald, Anderson, Bucknam, Constantinides, Mizzi, Levy, Mewes, Kendall, Damon and Nergarian.⁷ After the meeting, the members went to the American Embassy and were welcomed there by American diplomat John R. Carter. The American diplomat welcomed the members well and expressed his satisfaction with the establishment of the chamber.⁸

At first, W.W. Peet, Treasurer of American Missions in Türkiye, was chosen as president of the ACCL. However, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions did not allow this situation. Because their abroad representatives should not have involved in the political issues of the country where they lived. Mr. Peet could not accept the presidency due to this pressure from the American Board. However, the American Board stated that Peet could provide external support and guidance to the chamber if he wished.⁹ At the third meeting of the chamber, Consul General G. Bie Ravndal was elected Honorary President of the chamber.¹⁰ Thus, after a few meetings, the ACCL was established, and the board of directors and all other boards were formed. According to the decision taken, the board of directors of the central chamber consisted of the following people:

Honorary President:	G. Bie Ravndal	Secretary:	O.S. Heizer
First Vice President:	A.T. Chester	Treasurer:	N. Castelli
Second Vice President:	C.F.Gates		

7 The board didn't entirely consist of merchants. People had different professions. The board included a diplomat, historian, government contractor, treasurer, lawyer, architect, journalist, and a few importers and exporters. Having people from different professions was beneficial in terms of transferring information to America and developing America's trade with the Ottoman Empire.

8 'American Chamber of Commerce for Turkey', *The Orient*, Vol. I, No.50, 29 March 1911, p.5.

9 'The Presidency of The Chamber', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol. 1, No.1, June 1911, p.3.; As missionary and aid activities damaged America's commercial interests, this attitude of the United States continued in the following years. For detailed information, see. Thomas A. Bryson, Admiral Mark L. Bristol, an Open Door Diplomat in Turkey, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 4, Sep. 1974, p.450-467, 455-457.

10 'Summary of Minutes of 3rd Session', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.1, No.1, June 1911, p.38.

The chamber did not consist only of the board of directors, and it also had a large administrative section. In addition, many committees were formed to ensure that the work was completed smoothly. These committees would deal with the following issues: ‘Nominations’, ‘membership’, ‘finance’, ‘rooms, library, entertainment’, ‘commerce and transportation’, ‘commercial information and statistics’, ‘printing, publication and the press’, ‘arbitration, legal and government relations’ and ‘*members union permanente des delegues du commerce etranger*’.¹¹

The ACCL and its branches would consist of American businessmen residing in the Ottoman Empire as a rule.¹² The chamber would also have a magazine to be distributed to its members. This magazine, called ‘Levant Trade Review’,¹³ would be distributed free of charge to chamber members, and the magazine would not be sold. There were different purposes in publishing the magazine. First of all, it was important to inform the members about each other and create a bond between them. Later, protecting American commercial profit in the region, showing the business potential in the Levant, and explaining administrative-legal procedures were equally important. The magazine published its first edition as the ‘June 1911’ issue.¹⁴ The first edition was printed in 2,500 copies. After it was distributed to members, it was distributed free of charge to commercial circles in Türkiye, Iran, Egypt, Romania, Russia, Greece, Bulgaria, and America.¹⁵ The magazine had representatives in many cities, including the Ottoman Empire. These cities were Aleppo, Alexandria, Athens, Bagdad, Batoum, Belgrade, Beirut, Bralia(Roumania), Harput, Janina(Albania), Jerusalem, Konia, Larnaca(Cyprus), Mersine, Odessa(Russia), Salonica, Samsoun, Smyrna, Teheran(Persia), Trebizond, Tripoli-in-Barbary, Varna(Bulgaria).¹⁶

The chamber changed its name at the second annual meeting held in January 1912 and changed the name from ‘American Chamber of Commerce for Turkey’ to ‘American Chamber of Commerce for the Levant’.¹⁷ Although the reason for this was not

11 ‘American Chamber of Commerce’, *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.1, No.1, June 1911, p.1.

12 ‘Aid from Government–Banking Facilities’, *Daily Consular and Trade Reports*, No.55, 6 March 1912, p.1077.

13 ‘Levant’ is used in European literature for the countries on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. For detailed information, see. Turan, “Levant”, *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Cilt.27, 2003, p. 145.

14 The magazine began publication in 1911. Its first issue was published in June 1911, and its last issue in May-June 1931. Its publication was halted between December 1916 and June 1919 due to war. Initially, the magazine was published four times a year, it began publishing monthly in 1919. The magazine’s copies up to 1921 are in the Princeton University Library. The entire collection exists in the American Research Institute in Türkiye-Istanbul.

15 ‘The Initial Number of Levant Trade’, *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.1, No.1, June 1911, p.104.

16 ‘Levant Trade Review Correspondents’, *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.1, No.2, Nov. 1911, p.233.

17 ‘The Chamber’s 2nd Annual Meeting’, *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.1, No.4, March 1912, pp.388-96.

mentioned at the meeting, it was probably related to the fact that the chamber did not remain based in Istanbul and started to open branches outside Trkiye's territory. For example, the Salonica branch was established in May 1911.

In 1912, the membership fee was 50 francs per year for members resident in Istanbul and 30 francs for all non-resident central organization members. Annual dues for members in the United States were six dollars.¹⁸ There is no information that membership dues increased in the next two years. However, in 1913, the Salonica branch did not collect dues from its members (during the year) due to the negative economic conditions created by the Balkan Wars. The chamber also cancelled the general assembly meeting it planned to hold in 1913.¹⁹ The headquarters in Istanbul held meetings if there was necessary throughout the year. In addition, an ordinary meeting was held every three months, and an annual meeting was held once a year. However, in 1913, the headquarters did not meet much due to wars.

The chamber held two receptions from the time it was founded until the outbreak of First World War. The first of these were organized for American Ambassador William Woodville Rockhill on 8 November 1911. Ottoman Beirut deputy Suleiman El Bustani, Smyrna deputy Nassim Mazliah Efendi, M. Boscovich and M. Mazaraki who managers of Banque d'Athenes, which would open a branch in New York, members of the American Embassy and Consulate, and many businessmen of Istanbul were among the guests invited to the reception. The reason why the chamber held a reception on behalf of Ambassador Rockhill was that Rockhill was the first American ambassador appointed to the capital since the chamber was established. A welcome speech was made to the ambassador at the reception, and also Americans in the city were given the opportunity to meet the ambassador. Ambassador Rockhill also made a speech at the reception, expressing his satisfaction with the reception and support they would give to American merchants in the Ottoman Empire as an embassy. At the reception, Ottoman Beirut deputy Sleyman el Bustani, who was elected as an honorary member of the chamber, also made a speech. Expressing that he was pleased to be invited, Al Bustani stated that the issues in the fields of 'education', 'politics' and 'commercial' should be developed to develop relations between the two countries. Additionally, Dr. Marcellus Bowen, chairman of the welcoming committee, stated in his speech that the number of members

18 'Notice Regarding Membership', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.2, No.3, Dec. 2012, p.220. In those years, one dollar was equivalent to five francs. This means that six dollars and 30 francs are the same amount. See. 'The Chamber's 2nd Annual Meeting', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.1, No.4, March 1912, pp.388-90.

19 'Salonika Branch American Chamber', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.3, No.4, March 1914, pp.350-2.

reached 376 in November 1911. This was a good number for a period of eight months. Moreover, the treasury of chamber was also in good condition.²⁰

The chamber held its second reception on 28 February 1914. The chamber wanted to hold a reception every year but did not do due to the wars in the country. According to their own statements, it wasn't appropriate to 'celebrate' while people struggled with 'pain' all over the country. When peace was established everywhere, it was finally possible to hold a reception in 1914. The banquet was held at *Tokatliyan Hotel*, and almost all of the 225 seats prepared for the guests were filled. For the banquet, the hotel was equipped with oriental rugs, wall decorations and flags of America, Türkiye, Greece, Iran, the Balkan States and Egypt. There were also lots of flowers, palm trees and a live orchestra. The guest of honour at the reception was the new American Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, who was appointed to the Ottoman Empire in November 1913. Talat Bey, the Ottoman Minister of Internal Affairs, Suleiman el Bustani, Ottoman Minister of Commerce and Agriculture, Mahmud Pasha, Ottoman Minister of Public Works, Oskan Efendi, Ottoman Minister of Post and Telegraph, Iranian Ambassador Mirza Mahmoud Khan, Bulgarian Minister A. Tocheff and his wife, Romani Minister C. Mano, Greek Minister D. Panas, Serbian representative W. Pavlovitch, Smyrna deputy N. Mazliah, and his wife were among the important guests.²¹

Many people gave speeches in the night. The most notable speech belonged to Consul General G. Bie Ravndal. Touching on the developing relations between the two countries, Mr. Ravndal referred to some points:

- There were migrations from the Ottoman Empire to the United States for business (usually Armenians). These people were sending the money to their families and relatives in Anatolia. Thus, a considerable amount of dollars was coming to Anatolia.
- In addition, the Ottoman Empire was a country frequently visited by tourists. And most of the tourists were American citizens. This caused dollars to enter the country.
- Trade between America and the Ottoman was generally in favor of the Ottoman. America was importing products from the Ottoman Empire. This brought dollars to the Ottoman Empire.

20 'Reception to Ambassador Rockhill', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.1, No.2, Nov. 1911, pp.210-5. The number of members of the chamber increased to 425 in Jan. 1912. See. 'The Chamber's 2nd Annual Meeting', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.1, No.4, March 1912, p.388.

21 'The Chamber's Banquet', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.3, No.4, March 1914, pp.303-4.

All these show that the economic relationship between the two countries was in favor of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the Consul General emphasized that this contradiction should be resolved. For this, first, a ‘direct and regular steamship’ connection was needed between the two countries. Secondly, ‘direct banking’ facilities and lastly, a ‘parcel post’ contract were required. And the role of the ACCL in encouraging trade between the two countries should not be forgotten. Stating that they, as the embassy, provide all kinds of support to the chamber, the consul also thanked the chamber members ‘for their contributions’.²²

Minister of Internal Affairs Talat Bey also gave a speech in the night and praised America’s industrial and commercial progress. Also, he congratulated the ACCL for their work. The conversations continued throughout the night. As understood from another speech in the night, the number of members of the chamber had reached 600 (together with other Ottoman branches) in a short period of three years.²³

The chamber participated in three international trade congresses between the date of its establishment and the outbreak of First World War. The first of these was the ‘International Congress of Chambers of Commerce’ held in Boston in June 1912,²⁴ and the other was the ‘Fifth International Congress of Chambers of Commerce’ held in Boston in September 1912. The chamber sent a group of representatives from different cities such as Trabzon, Bucharest, Cairo, and Smyrna to both congresses. The congresses were important in terms of developing trade between the Levant and the countries participating in the congress. Additionally, important issues were being discussed to facilitate trade. Some of these were: ‘calendar reform’, ‘uniform check law’, ‘international postal reforms’, ‘consular bills’ and ‘international exhibition regulations’. After the congress, the participants visited chambers of commerce and different commercial cities of the country, and also got information about possible collaborations.²⁵ That’s why the ACCL started working for the 6th congress to be held in Paris in June 1914. The chamber was planning to host the participants in Paris in the Levant at the end of the congress and was meeting with many businessmen for this purpose.²⁶

ACCL attended the congress in Paris with many representatives. One of Levant’s delegates was Esquire Lucien Memminger, American Consul in Rouen. The purpose of

22 ‘The Chamber’s Banquet’, *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.3, No.4, March 1914, p.306.

23 ‘The Chamber’s Banquet’, *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.3, No.4, March 1914, pp.304-14

24 ‘American Chamber of Commerce’, *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.1, No.4, March 1912, pp.388-400.

25 ‘International Congress of Chambers’, *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.2, No.2, Sept. 1912, p.204.

26 ‘Invitation to Levant’, *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.3, No.3, Dec. 1913, p.225.

Memminger²⁷ in attending the congress was to persuade the participants for a trip to the Levant. As he stated, ‘Even though the chamber he represented as a delegate was headquartered in Istanbul, there were basically American benefits. He first talked about the trip with John H. Fahey, President of the Chamber of Commerce in the United States. John H. Fahey stated that he would mention the issue at the board meeting in October. The President also asked Mr. Memminger for some information about the qualifications of the participants and the tour program. The fact that the president said ‘I will mention the issue’ meant that the trip would take place. Previous trips had been made to South America, China and central Europe, and these trips had taken place with him mention the issue. These trips enabled the expansion of American trade. Mr. Memminger insisted on a trip to the Levant to protect American benefits. Because while the annual amount of products imported by America only from Türkiye and Egypt was 40 million dollars, its export to these countries did not exceed 6 million dollars.’²⁸

But one month after the Paris Congress, in July 1914, First World War broke out. The Ottoman Empire joined the war on 30 October 1914. The United States did not enter this war which devastated all of Europe, until 1917. That’s why there was no negative atmosphere in its relations with the Ottoman Empire until 1917. They continued to trade with each other as long as opportunities allowed. The chamber continued to exist. However, the war that engulfed almost all of Europe did not make the planned commercial trip to the Ottoman Empire possible, neither in 1914 nor in the following year.²⁹

Branches of American Chamber of Commerce for Turkey / the Levant

After the ACCL was established, branches affiliated to the chamber began to open. To establish a branch, the number of members had to be more than 25. Moreover, there was a fee that the branches had to pay to the headquarters. In 1911, the annual dues that branches had to pay to the headquarters was 7.50 francs per member. Each branch could have its own officers. Branches were an inseparable part of the chamber. The aim of both the chamber and its branches was to develop Ottoman-American trade and industry.³⁰ ‘Laws of the American Chamber of Commerce for Turkey’ would be valid in the branches. According to these general provisions:

27 Memminger was the Vice Consul of Smyrna in 1911. See. ‘Smyrna Branch American Chamber’, *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.1, No.1, June 1911, p.95.

28 ‘American Commercial Excursion’, *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.4, No.1, June 1914, pp.50-6.

29 For detailed information, see. ‘Our 5th Annual Meeting’, *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.4, No.4, March 1915, pp.315-9.

30 ‘Summary of 3rd Session’, *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.1, No.1, June 1911, p.38.

- The branch secretary would also be the branch correspondent of the ‘Levant Trade Review’,
- The central chamber in Istanbul would provide stationery to the branches, and these expenses would be covered from the central treasury.
- All members in America and outside the branch territory were to be treated as members of the national organization.
- A low dues payment of 7.50 francs per member was determined to the central chamber in Istanbul. This would strengthen both the branches and the central chamber. ACCL was the central chamber of commerce not only in Istanbul but also in all of Trkiye and neighbour regions.³¹

After the central chamber was established in Istanbul, branches began to open in important commercial regions of the Ottoman Empire. These branches were Salonica, Izmir(Smyrna), Cairo, and Beirut, respectively.

Salonica Branch American Chamber of Commerce for Turkey / the Levant

Located in the Balkan lands of the Ottoman Empire, Salonica was the most important trade centre of the Rumelia Region after Istanbul. This was especially related to the city was at the centre of three railway lines. Also, the mild climate and fertile soil made agriculture possible. The crops produced in the inner regions were transported to the centre of Salonica via railway. The city’s location by the sea and its proximity to Europe made the port of Salonica commercially busy. The Port of Salonica was a port with a high volume of both national and international trade.³² The construction industry was also active as the city, whose population exceeded 200,000 in 1910, was growing rapidly. Everything, including construction vehicles, came from abroad to Salonica, where there were no factories. The city provided its needs from countries such as Germany, England, Austria, and Italy, and most of the machines came from America. Other products from America were: Vehicles, cabots, cotton goods, clocks and watches, flour, office furniture, hardware, iron beds, roofing, khaki, leather, oleo and cotton seed oil, petroleum, pumps, rubber shoes, safes, shoes, soap, windmills and moving picture films. Especially large amounts of tobacco were sent abroad from the Port of Salonica.³³

31 ‘Smyrna Branch American Chamber’, *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.1, No.1, June 1911, pp.96-8.

32 *Selanik Vilayet Salnamesi*, Selanik, 1325, p.618.

33 ‘Salonica Branch American Chamber’, *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.1, No.1, June 1911, pp.105–10.

Due to the commercial density, many American traders as well as Europeans lived in this city. The establishment of the ACCL in Istanbul set an example for Americans living in Salonica. With the invitation of George Horton, the United States Consul in Salonica, two meetings were held at the United States Consulate with the participation of merchants. The purpose of the meeting, the first of which was held on 18 May 1911, and the second on 27 May 1911, was to develop US-Salonica commercial relations. At the meeting, it was discussed how to develop these relations, and Consul Horton invited the merchants to be ACCL members to improve the relations. The consul's invitation gave positive results, and since there were 25 members, a branch of ACCL was established in Salonica. Additionally, some decisions regarding the branch were taken.

These:

- The rules of the national organization would apply until special rules were developed for the branch,
- Membership dues would be 25 francs annually, to be paid in advance, starting from 1 July 1911,³⁴
- One-third of the 25 franc would be sent to the national headquarter for printing magazines and sending free printing materials to the branches,

To avoid from heavy expenses on the Salonica Branch, Horton proposed that the general assembly meetings be held in a hall belonging to the consulate in Salonica. He also stated that one room of his apartment in the city could be used as a 'board room' for one year. The branch's catalogue and similar documents would also be stored in this room. The consul's offer was gratefully accepted. Thus, the Salonica Branch was placed under the protection of the United States and also had the authority to raise the American flag.³⁵

The board of directors and administrators of the branch were also elected:³⁶

President:	George Horton	Secretary:	Vital Ojalvo
Treasurer:	John L. Binda	Asist. Secret.:	Sylvan Brautman

34 Since one dollar was equal to five francs in 1911, dues meant 'Five dollars per year'.

35 'Salonica Branch American Chamber', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.1, No.1, June 1911, pp.105-8.

36 In 1912, these names changed completely. See. 'Salonica Branch American Chamber', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.2, No.1, June 1912, p.98.

Directors: Messrs. Ihno Bensussan, Edmond Maulwurf, Jean Marocco, Isaac Modiano, Barouh Sarfati, Isaac Nahman, Samuel Scialom, Victor Sciaky, Henry Tiano, Athanas Serefas.³⁷

In February 1912, the number of members of the ACCL Salonica branch was 54. These 54 people represented most importers and exporters in Salonica. The new president of the chamber was Mr. Sam Scialom. The new president asked for help from the American press to promote the chamber and make it work better. Through the press, he asked American exporters to send their contact information, the products they grow, and their price information to the chamber.³⁸ The branch was established and worked with great enthusiasm, but it could not reach the level it had hoped for due to the crises experienced by the Ottoman Empire. Because 1911 was a negative year for the Ottoman Empire in terms of economy, politics, and even health. Malisors revolted in Albania, a cholera epidemic broke out throughout the Ottoman geography, Italy declared war on the Ottoman Empire, internal uprisings broke out in the country, and dynamite attacks were made on the railways. All these events greatly reduced the import trade of the Macedonia. Imports in Macedonia decreased, but overall trade did not fall lower than in previous years.³⁹ In fact, there was an increase in the value of export from Salonica, the main port of tobacco shipments, to America. While the products sent from Salonica to America in 1910 were 2,827,650 dollars, in 1911 it was 5,860,495 dollars.⁴⁰ This was a relatively good situation. This good situation was due to the loans given by banks to improve trade. Several banking institutions in Salonica and Istanbul gave large loans to develop trade. In this sense, Banque de Salonique was especially important. Other banks that provide large loans were Banque d'Athenes, Banque d'Orient and Banque Ottomane. After the Turkish-Italian conflict and the crisis in Macedonia, regional banks reduced loans, which was negative for trade.⁴¹ The year 1912 was negative in terms of agricultural products. Drought, strong

37 'Salonica Branch American Chamber', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.1, No.1, June 1911, p.105.

38 'American Chamber of Commerce for Turkey', *Daily Consular and Trade Reports*, No.40, 16 Feb. 1912, p.713.

39 'Salonica Branch American Chamber', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.2, No.1, June 1912, pp.98-9. American Vice Consul in Salonica, John L. Binda, reported to the headquarters in America what needed to be done to increase American imports. For detailed information, see. 'Turkey', *Daily Consular and Trade Reports*, No.63, 15 March 1912, p.1076

40 'Shipments by Consular Districts', *Daily Consular and Trade Reports*, No.55, 6 March 1912, p.956.

41 'Salonica Branch American Chamber', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.2, No.1, June 1912, pp.98-9.

winds and grasshopper invasion⁴² caused bad crops in Kosovo, Monastir, and Salonica. Add to this the wrong agricultural system and the absence of modern agricultural equipment, and the situation had worsened.⁴³ Despite this, the export value from Salonica to America in 1912 was higher than both 1911 and 1913. While the products sent from Salonica to America in 1912 were 6,476,999 dollars, in 1913 it was 6,173,203 dollars.⁴⁴ The worst for the branch was the outbreak of the Balkan War in October 1912. The armies of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro, who formed an alliance against the Ottoman Empire, acted in mid-October and began to occupy Ottoman lands. The war continued until August 1913, and Salonica ceased to be Ottoman territory in this process.⁴⁵

The branch continued its normal operations for nine months before the war broke out. The most important effort of the chamber at that time was to establish a direct steamship service between New York and Salonica. It was also working on a plan to form a delegation of businessmen from Salonica and send them to important industrial centres in America. However, the outbreak of war, in their words, ‘paralyzed their efforts’. Two successive Balkan Wars were commercially devastating for Salonica.⁴⁶ On 9 November 1912, the Turkish flag was replaced by the Greek flag. The president of the branch of commerce, who said that this situation upset them, postponed the general assembly that was supposed to be held in 1913 indefinitely. The branch had suspended the chamber’s activities due to political-economic uncertainty in the city. It was able to hold meetings in January 1914 and at the end of the year. The branch president stated that they wished for peace at the meeting in January.⁴⁷ However, the outbreak of First World War in June 1914 made the president’s dream impossible. Although Greece did not enter the war until 1917, the involvement of the surrounding states in the war generally caused trade to come to a halt.⁴⁸

42 There was a grasshopper invasion in this region from the spring of 1911. When the local people could not destroy the grasshoppers, the state took over and hired paid labourers. Despite this, it was not easy to destroy grasshoppers. In 1912, the fight against grasshoppers was still continuing. Moreover, since the same problem was experienced in other parts of the country, the ‘grasshopper law’ was enacted and the struggle continued from all parts of the country. See. [Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı, Osmanlı Arşivi, Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası] BOA.BEO. 3898/292287, BOA.BEO.3901/292528, [Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı, Osmanlı Arşivi, Dahiliye Nezareti, Siyasi Kısım] BOA.DH.SYS. 46/6, [Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı, Osmanlı Arşivi, Meclis-i Vükela] BOA.MV.165/35.

43 ‘Salonica Branch American Chamber’, *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.2, No.2, Sept. 1912, p.152.

44 ‘Exports to the United States’, *Daily Consular and Trade Reports*, No.157, 7 July 1914, p.110.

45 Rankin, *The Inner History of the Balkan War*, Constable and Company, London, 1914, pp. 151–9.

46 The war left not only the merchants in Salonica, but also the state that collected taxes from Salonica and Edirne, in a very difficult situation. The state could not pay some of its debts to foreign banks due to lack of income. See. Babacan and Avşar, *Cavid Bey Meşrutiyet Ruznamesi*, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara, 2014, p. 647.

47 ‘Salonica Branch American Chamber’, *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.3, No.4, March 1914, pp.350–4.

48 ‘Salonica Branch American Chamber’, *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.4, No.3, Dec. 1914, p.282.

Smryna Branch American Chamber of Commerce for Turkey / the Levant

Smyrna (Izmir) was one of the most important trade ports in the Anatolian region of the Ottoman Empire. The city both was buying products from all over the world and was sending products to all over the world. The trade volume with America was also high. The value of export from Smyrna to America in 1910 was worth 4,045,308 dollars.⁴⁹ The main products sent from the city were tobacco, fig,⁵⁰ opium, licorice, valonia, carpet, and olive oil. Statistics on imports from America in the same year are not available. However, the main products coming from there were hardware,⁵¹ agricultural tools, cotton products, machinery, tools, furniture, oils, shoes, boots, and rum. To facilitate and expand the conduct of this trade, it was decided to establish a branch of the chamber in Smyrna. The Smyrna branch would deal especially with local issues and support the central organization. With this mind, the first meeting for the new branch was held in Smyrna on 7 June 1911. The following members from the ACCL were present at the meeting:

Messrs. L. Memminger, Rufus Lane, F. Blackler, J.D. Langdon, Ernest Magnifico, M. Lambichi, T.S. Baltazzi, S.S. Seferiades, Ant. Reggio, Avidikian, E.C. Tambakio, A. Papadimitriou, J. Manola, A. Vifiadachi, A.E.C. Bird.

It was decided to establish the branch by unanimous vote of the members. It completed the organization of the Smyrna branch on 4 July 1911. At first, 43 members joined the branch. The annual dues fee for the Smyrna branch was determined as 30 francs, and one quarter of the collected fee would be sent to the head office in Istanbul.⁵²

According to the Smyrna branch organizational plan, the US consul general in Smyrna would be the honorary president. However, in the first place, Deputy Consul General Lucien Memminger became the honorary president. According to the decision taken, the other administrators of the chamber consisted of the following people:

49 'Increased Turkish Shipments', *Daily Consular and Trade Reports*, No.55, 6 March 1912, p.956.

50 Among the export from Izmir to America, 'dried fig' export was especially high. See. Rixford, *Smyrna Fig Culture*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, 1918, p.1.

51 America had good workmanship in terms of hardware. That's why 60 percent of the hardware products sold in the Ottoman Empire came from America. See, Ravndal, *Turkish Markets for American Hardware*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1917, p. 7.

52 'Smyrna Branch American Chamber', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.1, No.1, June 1911, pp.96-100.

Hon. Pres.: Lucien Memminger	Second Vice-President: S.A. Seferiades
President: Francis Blackler	Secret. & Treasurer : T.S. Baltazzi
First Vice-Pres.: Rufus W. Lane	Commercial Adviser: Ant. Reggio

Committee on Arbitration, Legal and Government Affairs: J.D. Langdon (Chairman), M.E. Lambichi, Chas. Missir, A.E.C. Bird, Eric Whittall (Legal Adviser).⁵³

In the same year, George Horton was appointed as consul general to Smyrna, so he became the new honorary president. At the request of the new consul general, the branch convened at three o'clock on 27 February 1912. The Consul General organized this meeting to get to know the businessmen and merchants of Smyrna and to exchange ideas with them. Mr. Horton stated that, as the consulate general, they would provide full support to develop trade with America. They would provide equal opportunities to both exporters and importers and establish all necessary connections with America. According to the Consul General, the trade volume between America and Smyrna was high. Especially in the last two years, there was a significant increase in export from Smyrna to America. The figure, which was 1,973,735 dollars in 1900, increased to 4,530,721 dollars in 1911. Carpet, sandpaper, fig, soap, leather, tobacco, and opium were effective in this increase. Export reports are known because they were kept by the consulate, but data on imports is not available. The development of trade was providing employment opportunities for the unemployed and poor as well as for the merchants. That's why the consulate was making efforts to develop trade between the two countries. American manufacturers were unaware of the stability of businesses in Smyrna or the morality of merchants. This was reducing trade capacity. In this respect, Levant Trade Review magazine was gaining importance. Because the magazine was promoting very well the businesses and industries in the Levant.⁵⁴

While the ACCL was trying to improve commercial relations between the Ottoman Empire and America, towards the end of 1911, Italy had an eye to Tripoli, which belonged to the Ottoman Empire. This situation created tension between the Ottoman Empire and Italy. When Italy bombed Beirut in 1912, the tension between the two countries turned into war. Although the war was for Tripoli, the struggle continued in different regions such as the Adriatic Sea and the Aegean Islands. This situation caused Smyrna to be under the Italian threat. As a matter of fact, in April, the Italians attacked and

⁵³ *ibid.*95.

⁵⁴ 'Smyrna Branch American Chamber', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.1, No.4, March 1912, pp.448-54.

damaged the radio-telegraph lines where Alaçatı and Ilıca in Smyrna.⁵⁵ It occupied the 12 Islands also. Italy wanted to occupy Smyrna and Chios Island also. For this reason, Muslims in Chios fled to Smyrna.⁵⁶ This situation had negative consequences from a commercial perspective. Smyrna Port was one of the busiest trade ports of the Ottoman Empire. Almost every country had commercial relations with Smyrna Port. That's why England⁵⁷ and Austria did not allow the occupation of Smyrna by the Italians and sent warships to both Smyrna and Samos Island.⁵⁸ With the end of the Tripoli War, Smyrna was freed from the Italian threat, but the Balkan Wars broke out in the same year. The Balkan wars did not directly threaten Smyrna, but the economic depression caused by the war affected the city. Moreover, according to the letter written by the branch secretary, very little rain had fallen in the region for six months. This was negative for the yield of barley cultivated in high regions. Moreover, there was a grasshopper invasion. The state put up a great struggle on this issue but could not completely end the grasshopper invasion. This situation was alarming not only for barley but for the entire crop. More importantly, the government mobilized 'reserve armies' due to the war. This meant a major labor shortage. There were concerns that crops would not be harvested in some areas. Moreover, there was a killing frost at the end of April, which caused concern for the crops. Despite the frost, at least the grapes remained productive, so there was no problem in exporting raisins.⁵⁹ While 1912 went through such problems for the Smyrna branch, the real devastating event was the outbreak of the World War in 1914. Because the Ottoman government, realizing that it would be involved in the war, closed the Smyrna Port to trade. It started to send the products that exported from Smyrna Port to Urla Port. However, under the conditions of that day, it took four hours for the products to reach Urla Port. That's why export came to an end. Due to the destruction caused by the war and all men who could hold a gun went to war, the only thing that could be exported was tobacco. Imports had stopped completely.⁶⁰

Cairo Branch of the American Chamber of Commerce for the Levant

When Egypt which located at the junction of Africa and Asia, came under Ottoman rule sixteenth century, Ottoman rule in Cairo also began. The city, located in the south

55 [Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı, Osmanlı Arşivi, Hariciye Nezareti, Siyasi Kısım] BOA.HR.SYS. 2909/82, BOA.HR.SYS. 2909/92.

56 BOA.MV. 164/57.

57 Babacan and Aşar, *Cauid Bey Meşrutiyet Ruznamesi*, pp. 253–4.

58 'Sisam'dan Alınan Haberler', *Ahenk*, No.4930, 30 Sept. 1912, p.2.

59 'Smyrna Branch American Chamber', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.2, No.1, June 1912, p.50.

60 'Smyrna Branch American Chamber', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.4, No.4, March 1915, p.346.

of the Nile delta, has a history of thousands of years. Although it has a desert climate, the presence of the Nile River gave life to the city, its deep-rooted history, being the capital during the Mamluk Period, its warm climate and its proximity to the Mediterranean made the city a centre of attraction. The city, which attracted foreign tourists with its pyramids, was also a place where trade and foreign merchants were lots.⁶¹ Cairo, which especially export antique and authentic products, was also a centre of attraction for American merchants. That's why Constantin Xippas, Director at Large of the American Chamber of Commerce for the Levant, sent a letter to the magazine on 18 March 1912. According to this letter, a branch would be established in Cairo in a short time.⁶² This branch emerged on the occasion of the visit to Cairo of Dr. Hubbert Banning, the secretary of the central organization in Istanbul. As a matter of fact, two months after the letter, on 25 May 1912,⁶³ a new branch was established at a meeting held at Vacuum Oil Company in Cairo. Despite the short announcement, participation in the meeting was high, and business people who wanted to increase their commercial relations with America and introduce Egypt to America attended the meeting. According to the decision taken, the board of directors of the Cairo branch was as follows:

Officers:

Honorary President: Paul Knabenshue

President: Constantin Xippas

Vice President: J. Hug

Secretary: P. N. Macdonald

Treasurer: R. Kuster

Messrs: S. Abravanel, G.J. Sassine, P. Lassus, Directors

D.D. Anastassiades, Rudolf Stross, Directors

John E. Panayottou Directors⁶⁴

61 For detailed information about tourists who went to Cairo, see. 'Freight and Passenger Traffic-Shipping', *Daily Consular and Trade Reports*, No.169, 21 July 1914, pp.394-5.

62 'Cairo Branch American Chamber', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.1, No.4, March 1912, p.462.

63 'American Commercial Organizations', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.3, No.3, Dec. 1913, p.206.

64 'Cairo Branch American Chamber', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.2, No.1, June 1912, p.18.

When the branch was established, the annual value of the products Egypt imported from America was 1,994,639 dollars. Egypt was importing the following from the United States: Automobiles, motorcycles, carriages, beer, canned goods, railway, coal, cotton, sheeting, thread, drugs, electrical appliances, fish, salted, smoked, flour, wheat, corn, furniture, glucose, musical and scientific instruments, iron and steel, hardware, locks, machinery, lamps and lighting devices, leather, lumber, meats, metals, oils, cottonseed, mineral, benzine, lubricating, petroleum, paints and colors, perfumery, printed matter, rubber, manufactures of, starch, tinware, toys, tubing, varnish.⁶⁵ The reason for importing some products, such as hardware, from America instead of Europe, which is closer, was that the products were of higher quality compared to Europe.⁶⁶

The products exported from Cairo to America in the same year were as follows: Antiquities and curios, carpets, rugs, cigarettes, dom nuts, personal effects, cinematograph films, clothing, Egyptian goods, gum Arabic, household effects, ivory, mummy cases, pictures, porcelain, rags, senna, shawls, sheep skins, tobacco. The total export from Egypt to America was 20,369,584 dollars. This meant that Egypt's export to America was higher than its imports.⁶⁷ However, trade between America and Egypt was at a disadvantage compared to trade with Europe.

The reasons for that: Inadequate shipping facilities, buyers waiting more than two months for goods delivery, difficult payment terms demanded by American manufacturers, easy access to goods from European warehouses...For such reasons, the Cairo branch was established. In this way, the problems that made trade difficult would be identified, and trade between Egypt and America would be improved. An office would be rented for the branch, meetings would be held there from now on, and catalogues of American manufacturers would be created and preserved there. In the office, free information would be given to merchants both in Egypt and America, and the necessary connections would be established. The management team of the branch remained unchanged for years.⁶⁸ The chamber must have been successful because export from Egypt to America increased in 1913.⁶⁹ Moreover, producers in America were told how trade should be done in Egypt and the local conditions.⁷⁰ However, the outbreak of World War in August 1914 had a negative impact on the Cairo branch, as well as the other branches.

65 'Imports from the United States', *Daily Consular and Trade Reports*, No.185, 9 Aug. 1913, p.794.

66 'Cairo Branch American Chamber', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.2, No.1, June 1912, p.18.

67 'Imports from the United States', *Daily Consular and Trade Reports*, No.185, 9 Aug. 1913, p.794.

68 'Cairo Branch American Chamber', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.2, No.1, June 1912, p.18.

69 'Exports to the United States', *Daily Consular and Trade Reports*, No.169, 21 July 1914, p.392.

70 'Egyptian Commercial Methods', *Daily Consular and Trade Reports*, No.169, 21 July 1914, pp.393-4.

Moreover, Egypt was unilaterally removed from Ottoman rule by England on 18 December 1914. Although Egypt was de facto occupied by England in 1882, it was officially a part of the Ottoman Empire. This situation continued until December 1914. When the World War broke out in the summer of 1914, the Egyptian government chose to remain impartial, which did not please England. In October, when the Ottoman Empire declared that it was included in the war against Russia and France, England declared that it had taken Egypt completely under its protection and completely abolished Ottoman rule.⁷¹ Thus, 400 years of Ottoman rule in Egypt ended. And Cairo, like Salonica, ceased to be a branch of the Ottoman Empire.

Beirut Branch American Chamber of Commerce for the Levant

Beirut, located on the eastern Mediterranean coast of the Ottoman Empire, was a sanjak of the Ottoman province of Syria until 1888.⁷² It was separated from Syria in 1888 and became the province of Beirut. The population of the city, which is the main port of Syria, was more than 150,000 in 1908. Beirut, which had the appearance of a village in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, had changed within a hundred years. In the 1820s, while there was no house with windows in the city except the house of the British consul, the city became prosperous in a short time.⁷³ The main reason for this development is related to the fact that the city was the main port of Syria while it was a part of the Syrian province. Since it was the main port, the city was connected to Damascus by a well-constructed motorway. This enabled the product inside the region to reach the port easily. Moreover, the mild weather and fertile soil of the Mediterranean made the city attractive. As a matter of fact, within a hundred years, masonry houses, orderly streets, hospitals, local and foreign schools, printing houses,⁷⁴ modern palaces, newspapers, postal and telegraph services, and streetlamps constructed in the city. While people used to go somewhere on donkeys, they were replaced by phaetons, automobiles, and electric trams over time. Also, there was a Protestant College founded by Americans in the city. The college also had a fully equipped medical faculty. There were also some industrial workplaces created by Americans. In these workplaces, which were developed especially to support widows and orphans, crochet, and embroidery products such as rugs and lace were made, and these products were then sold to many countries,

71 Görgün, "Mısır", *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, C.29, 2004, pp. 569–575.

72 Selam, *Beyrut Şehremininin Anıları, 1908–1918*, Klasik Yayınları, İstanbul, 2005, p. 88.

73 'American Trade Relations', *Levant Trade Review*, after 1912, pp.4–11.

74 Rasim, *Memalik-i Mahrusa-i Şahane Coğrafyası*, Tophane-i Amire Matbaası, 1305, p. 270.

especially America.⁷⁵ Although Beirut was not a large city, it was zealous in production and trade.

The main products exported from Beirut to America: Antique goods, books, butter, carpets-rugs, gramophones, gramophone records, groceries, handkerchiefs, household goods, jewellery, lace, cotton, liquors, olive oil, olives, orange blossom water, powder(-face), provisions, silk clothes, skins, goat, sundries, tobacco, type, metal and wool.⁷⁶ A significant amount of red gum trees and hardwoods were imported from America to Beirut.⁷⁷

Beirut's economy was negatively affected by the Tripoli War that started in 1911. The search for raw materials and markets by Italy, which established its union late, took Italy away to Tripoli. The war, which started with Italy's declaration of war on 29 September 1911, spread to Beirut in February 1912. The Italians bombarded the Ottoman ships in the port of Beirut on 24 February 1912, to force the Ottoman Empire to quit the war. Two ships belonging to the Ottoman Empire sank during this cannon fire, and also the city was injured by the bombing.⁷⁸ The Ottoman Bank, Salonica Bank, *Şikal Bank*, Tax Office, pier walls, and two private buildings were damaged. In addition, 54 civilians died and 57 people were injured. During the war, which lasted about a year, the people of Beirut were worrying. Because Italian warships continued to cruise the coasts for a year. This caused a stagnation in trade.⁷⁹ Although the Tripoli War ended against the Ottomans on 18 October 1912, its effects continued for a long time. Moreover, the Balkan Wars, which started in the same year, caused the trade stagnation to continue.

ACCL branch in Beirut was established in 1912 at the initiative of the American Consul General in Beirut, Hon W. Stanley Hollis. There was a chamber of commerce already in Beirut, independent of the ACCL in Istanbul. The chamber of commerce in Beirut and the chamber of commerce in Istanbul had the same method and purpose. The consul general, who visited Istanbul in mid-1912, stated that they wanted to join the ACCL due to this similarity.⁸⁰ Thus, the fourth branch of the chamber of commerce was

75 'American Trade Relations', *Levant Trade Review*, after 1912, pp.4-11.

76 'Exports from Beirut, Syria', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.1, No.4, March 1912, p.375.

77 'Trade of Turkey', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.4, No.2, Sept. 1914, p.134.

78 Selam, *ibid*, pp.93-4: After the bombing, the Ottoman Empire decided to deport the Italians in the country. See, Babacan and Aşar, *Cauid Bey Meşrutiyet Ruznamesi*, p. 251.

79 Umar, "Trablusgarp Savaşı Sırasında İtalya'nın Beyrut'u Bombardımanı", *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*, Vol.51, 2001, pp. 737-64.

80 'Hon W. Stanley Hollis', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.2, No.1, June 1912, p.97.

opened in Beirut, 1.5 months after the branch opened in Cairo in May.⁸¹ The managers of the branch in Beirut were:

Officers:

Honorary President: W. Stanley Hollis

President: W. Stanley Hollis

Vice President: Michel B. Audi

Secretary: Joseph B. Audi

Treasurer: Albert Pharaon

Directors: Elias Sabbagh, Franklin Evans Hoskins,

Directors: Murad Baroudi, L. Manasseh.⁸²

In December 1912, some people changed in the Beirut branch. The honorary president, vice president, and secretary remained the same, but the president and treasurer changed. The new president was Basile A. Xippas, and the new treasurer was Michel R. Pharaon. Additionally, A. Carabiberi, B. Dagher, and A. Trad joined the directors.⁸³

The Minister of Commerce and Agriculture of the Ottoman Empire, Suleyman Efendi Bustani of Beirut,⁸⁴ also became an honorary member of the ACCL Beirut branch. Suleyman Efendi Bustani was a more well-known figure in American public life than any other Ottoman. Because he visited America several times in his youth and looked after American benefits. That's why his ministry made the ACCL Beirut branch happy.⁸⁵ However, the general situation of the country and the wars did not create a promising environment. The crop had become increasingly unproductive over the past five years. The yield in 1912 was at its lowest point in the last five years. The outbreak of the Tripoli War made the situation even worse.⁸⁶ Beirut was a city at the forefront in

81 'American Commercial Organizations', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.3, No.3, Dec. 1913, p.206.

82 'Beirut Branch American Chamber', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.2, No.1, June 1912, p.97.

83 'American Chamber of Commerce', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.2, No.3, Dec. 1912, p.213.

84 He was appointed as the Minister of Commerce and Agriculture to the Said Halim Pasha Cabinet, which was established on 16 June 1913. See. Güneş, *Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye'de Hükümetler*, Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, İstanbul, 2012, p.155.

85 'Suleiman Effendi Bustani', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.3, No.1, June 1913, p.76.

86 For detailed information about the effects of the war on Beirut's economy, see. 'Trade Review of Syria. Beirut', *Daily Consular and Trade Reports*, No.187, 12 Aug. 1913, p.833.

olive and silk production. The best cocoons and raw silk in the Ottoman Empire were in Brusa and Beirut. The main buyer of these cocoons and raw silks was Italy. The Tripoli War between Italy and the Ottoman had a negative impact on trade and destroyed a major source of income for Beirut, just like Brusa.⁸⁷ That's why the reports coming in June 1913 weren't positive. The Tripoli War ended at the end of 1912. But a hailstorm which caused great damage to the crops, occurred in 1913. Although silk was good in terms of production, it was not sold at a high price.⁸⁸ The olive crop was more productive than silk, but sugar and cotton prices were low, and the troubles in the region caused unemployment and out-migration to increase. Imports from America to Beirut increased, but export from Beirut to America decreased.⁸⁹ Especially the interest in lace decreased, which had a negative impact on widows and orphans. The wars the country was in caused trade to be very quiet for years.⁹⁰ The American consul in Beirut thought that the commercial problems experienced by Americans living in the region would be overcome through the ACCL. But the general situation did not allow this. At the end of 1912, the Tripoli War finished, the Balkan Wars broke out afterwards, and the Ottoman Empire lost most of its Balkan lands in these wars. These losses caused some provinces to re-view their situation. Beirut was one of these cities. He was quite uneasy due to his geographical location and the threatening glances that had surrounded him for years. Due to fears of war, local people began to talk of joining British- controlled Egypt or being invaded by France.⁹¹ The city's political uncertainty and concerns about the future were hindering the development of trade. Moreover, shortly after, in 1914, the World War broke out, which would affect the entire country.

Conclusions

Chambers of commerce first started to open in Europe in the sixteenth century. European countries opened these chambers both in their own lands and in distant lands over time. The reasons for opening chambers in other lands were to learn about trade opportunities in distant countries and to develop trade with their own countries. The first chamber in the Ottoman Empire was opened by Austria-Hungary in the sixteenth century. The Ottoman Empire opened its own national chamber after 12 years later than Austria-Hungary, then the other European states followed. It became possible for

87 In the normal process, the income of Brusa and Beirut alone from silk export was 8.5 million dollars. See. 'Silk Industry', *Daily Consular and Trade Reports*, No.175, 29 July 1913, p.553.

88 'Beirut Branch American Chamber', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.3, No.1, June 1913, p.77.

89 'Letter from Beirut', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.3, No.3, Dec. 1913, p.280.

90 'Beirut Branch American Chamber', *Levant Trade Review*, Vol.3, No.1, June 1913, p.77.

91 Selam, *ibid*, 94.

America to establish a chamber of commerce in the Ottoman Empire in 1911. The support of the American Embassy was an important factor in the formation of the ACCL, which was established in Istanbul, the capital of the state. The chamber, which was opened with the participation of 60 American merchants living in Istanbul, quickly spread to different cities of the country, and opened branches. These branches were Salonica, Smyrna, Cairo, and Beirut, respectively. Being a port city was the common property of these four branches. In addition, they were cities where international trade was active, as they had commercial ports. There was a requirement to have 25 members to open a branch, and after exceeding 25 members, these branches opened and grew over time. There was dues that members had to pay to the chamber. A small part of these dues was sent to the central chamber in Istanbul, and the rest were paid to its own branch. In February 1914, the number of members of the ACCL in the Ottoman Empire reached 600. Reaching this number of members in less than three years was a success for the chamber.

Each branch was acting to facilitate and develop trade between its own city and America. As can be seen from the paper, the chamber and its branches were beneficial in terms of facilitating and expanding international trade. The chamber was working on issues such as credit facilities, banking services, parcel postage, promotion of the city, supply of goods, transportation opportunities, and facilitating trade between merchants in the Ottoman Empire and merchants in America. A direct steamship voyage between the Ottoman Empire and the United States was the subject it particularly strived for. In 1914, effort became a reality. In April, the US, together with the Germans, launched New York- Istanbul ferry services.⁹² The chamber held a ‘quarterly’ meeting every three months and an ‘annual’ meeting once a year, and convened whenever it deemed necessary. The same was valid for branches. The chamber was always attending international congresses held in Europe or America and was telling the whole world about the trade opportunities in the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, it went down favourable by the Ottoman governments throughout its existence. As an indication of this, people from the administrative section of the Ottoman Empire such as Talat Pasha, Suleiman al Bustani, Nassim Mazliah attended the annual meetings or receptions of the chamber and made supportive speeches. The chamber hosted merchant groups from America in the cities where it had branches and made efforts to bring a large team of delegates attending the congress to the Ottoman Empire. This was the chamber’s biggest effort just before the

92 For more information see. “Hapag’s New Levant Line”, *Levant Trade Review*, March 1914, Vol.3, No.4, p.394; “Direct Steamship Service”, *Daily Consular and Trade Reports*, 7 July 1914, No.157, p.108.

outbreak of First World War. This was exactly the purpose of the participation of Lucien Memminger, who represented the Ottoman Empire in the 1914 Paris Congress. He knew that a large-scale visit to the Ottoman Empire by American delegates would increase the trade volume between the Ottoman Empire and America. However, the outbreak of World War prevented this plan from being realized. War meant threat for commerce. Even the word “war” was enough to scare the merchant. Tripoli War didn’t have much of a negative impact to commerce. However, the Balkan Wars created a commercial shock. Despite this, the merchant continued trading. However, the outbreak of the World War was devastating for the entire Ottoman geography and merchants. Although the Ottoman Empire and the United States had good relations until 1917, the closure of the main ports to trade for security reasons reduced international trade to the level of non-existence.

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