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THE POSITION OF THE OTTOMAN AUTHORITY ON CUSTOMS SMUGGLING AT THE PORT OF ALEXANDRIA (LATE 18TH CENTURY)

Ayman Ahmed Mahamoud

PhD (History), Associate Professor

History Department

College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

University of Khorfakkan, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

Ayman.Mahmoud@ukf.ac.ae

ORCID: 0009-0001-2473-8240

This study aimed to shed light on the impact of political instability, particularly at the end of the 18th century, under the dual government (Ibrahim Bey and Murad Bey) on economic institutions in Egypt such as the Alexandria Port. The legal documents of the Alexandria Sharia Court and the customs records of Alexandria during the Ottoman era, deposited in the Egyptian National Archives, were adopted as a source for study and analysis using historical research and quantitative statistical methods. The study results indicate that Customs smuggling in the port of Alexandria during the mid-18th century was considered an economic crime as it involved illegal attempts to avoid paying customs duties. The phenomenon was caused by various administrative and economic reasons and had a direct impact on Egypt's tax resources and customs systems, as well as on society. This prompted the Ottoman authorities to develop mechanisms to combat and minimize its effects. The paper recommends to conduct more studies that rely on Ottoman documentary sources while studying the history of Arab economic institutions, ports, and customs, to counter the misconceptions that were issued by Western sources, especially the French, in this regard.

Keywords: Alexandria; Alexandria Port; smuggling; customs duties; Ottoman Empire

Introduction

Thanks to its location overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, Alexandria played an important role in the commercial strategy of its ports, which were connected to the ports of Mediterranean countries. As a result, its ports became suitable for transporting trade from India and the East to Greece and European countries. Therefore, the Ottoman administration was interested in the city, port, and customs as it was considered a financial and administrative institution. The bridge (breakwater) linking the city and the island of Pharos divided the harbor basin into two ports [Suleymān 2004, 21]. The western Old Port is also known as “Frenk limanı” or “port of Franks” since the Europeans mostly used it. The eastern harbor with shallow waters and many rocks on its ground, exposed to northern winds, was designated for foreign ships [Zihnī 1993, 223]. The eastern harbor, referred to as the Great Port, was also known as the Al-Selsala (Chain) Port. Its opening extends 1789 meters and 500 meters to the north [Ramādān 1991, 339].

This study focuses on “the phenomenon of Customs smuggling in the port of Alexandria at the end of the 18th Century”, especially during the dual government of Ibrahim Bey and Murad Bey, given the widespread occurrence of this phenomenon during their rule.

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The legal documents of the Alexandria Sharia Court and the customs records of Alexandria provide significant indicators of the spread of this phenomenon in the second half of the 18th century and its impact on tax revenues and customs systems in the port of Alexandria.

Within this framework, the study seeks to examine the economic and administrative concept of customs smuggling, recognizing it as an illegal activity with significant implications for both governance and trade. The phenomenon of smuggling at the port of Alexandria raises critical questions: was it merely a temporary occurrence that surfaced sporadically, or a persistent and deeply rooted practice? To what extent did it stem from economic pressures, and to what extent was it also facilitated by administrative weaknesses or corruption within the customs system? Moreover, the study explores the methods and mechanisms employed to evade duties, the possible involvement of foreign merchants and communities, and the various forms and categories that smuggling assumed. By analyzing its economic and administrative effects, the research also considers the broader consequences of this phenomenon for trade, governance, and society, while assessing the responses and countermeasures undertaken by the Ottoman authorities to confront it.

Theoretical Framework

The phenomenon of customs smuggling in Ottoman Alexandria at the end of the 18th century should be approached through a dual lens that combines economic criminology and Ottoman administrative sociology. This study is grounded in the theoretical framework of institutional failure and economic deviance, particularly in environments affected by political instability and weakened central authority.

Customs smuggling, in this context, can be understood as an economic crime stemming from the collapse of regulatory control mechanisms within port administrations [Winter 2001, 308]. It reflects the Ottoman state's limited capacity to monitor and enforce its fiscal and legal mandates due to both internal corruption and external pressure from European trade interests [Shūmān 1992, 132]. As pointed out in previous Ottoman studies, the loss of central control over fiscal agencies such as customs bureaus led to widespread opportunities for smuggling and illicit enrichment [ʿAbd al-Laṭīf 1978, 94].

The framework draws on Max Weber's concept of bureaucratic dysfunction, where the failure of rational-legal authority enables patronage, bribery, and exploitation of official structures for private gain. In the case of Alexandria, the customs institution itself became an arena of negotiated power between Ottoman administrators, Mamluk rulers, Jewish customs agents, and European consuls [Winter 2001, 107–308].

Additionally, economic rational choice theory suggests that merchants, whether Egyptian or foreign, engaged in smuggling not merely due to opportunism but as a rational response to high tariffs, administrative corruption, and the inconsistency in customs fee enforcement [Ḥanaḥī 2000, 112]. This aligns with contemporary economic historiography that emphasizes the agency of economic actors under Ottoman fiscal regimes, especially in ports with high international activity like Alexandria [Iḥsān ḍghlū 1999, 698].

By integrating these perspectives, this research positions customs smuggling not as a mere criminal activity but as a symptom of broader structural weaknesses in the Ottoman provincial governance model in Egypt, aggravated during the dual rule of Ibrahim and Murad Bey [Alexandria..., R. 101, p. 135]. The theoretical lens also allows the researcher to consider the social ramifications of smuggling, including social unrest, political violence, and changes in demographic patterns such as the influx of Levantine traders [Bakr 1996, 65].

Research Methodology

This study adopts a historical-analytical approach that combines qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze the phenomenon of customs smuggling in Alexandria during

the late 18th century. The research relies primarily on Ottoman archival sources, particularly the records of the Alexandria Sharīʿa Court and customs registers deposited in the Egyptian National Archives [Winter 2001, 308].

These primary sources offer an authentic and detailed representation of the nature of trade, tax policies, and smuggling operations, allowing the researcher to reconstruct the social, economic, and administrative landscape of Alexandria's port. The methodology is structured around two main tools:

First, a documentary analysis method was used to examine fatwas, decrees (*firmānāt*), and court rulings contained in the Alexandria Sharīʿa Court records [Shūmān 1992, 132].

This approach allows for understanding the administrative discourse and the Ottoman state's legal responses to smuggling incidents. It also aids in detecting patterns of institutional corruption and merchant behavior.

Second, the study uses quantitative content analysis to evaluate the financial records and tables found in the *Roznama* customs registers, covering the years between 1162 and 1213 AH [ʿAbd al-Laṭīf 1978, 94]. These data sets were essential for tracking deficits in customs revenues, identifying smuggling patterns, and quantifying the economic losses inflicted on the state's treasury [Winter 2001, 107–308].

Furthermore, the methodology integrates comparative historiography, contrasting the Arabic documentary sources with Western narratives, especially those from French consuls and travelers, to reveal the orientalist biases and gaps in Western documentation of Arab economic institutions [Ḥanafī 2000, 112].

In terms of data validation, triangulation was employed by cross-referencing the Sharia court rulings with customs registers and relevant decrees, which increases the reliability of the historical findings and mitigates potential bias resulting from administrative propaganda or clerical errors [Iḥsān ḍghlū 1999, 698].

The researcher also benefited from relevant secondary literature, which provided essential conceptual frameworks and interpretations of the Ottoman bureaucratic structure and customs systems in Egypt [Alexandria... R. 101, p. 135]. This combination of primary sources, archival analysis, and critical secondary readings forms the methodological backbone of the present study.

1. The Economic and Legal Concept of Customs Smuggling

The phenomenon of Customs smuggling involved avoiding the customs duties owed to the customs department [Alexandria... 1209 AH, R. 107, p. 42], which are known as the customs tariff [al-Mutawallī 1987, 53], or through tax or cash Customs smuggling [Alexandria... 1206 AH, R. 101, p. 107] on one hand. On the other, meanwhile, there is also the violation of the ban on exporting certain goods that are prohibited from being traded, shipped, or exported outside of Egypt [Alexandria... 1208 AH, R. 107, p. 11–12], generally and specifically in the city of Alexandria, which is known for non-tax smuggling or smuggling of goods. The following are the types and methods of Customs smuggling.

Types and Methods of Customs Smuggling at Alexandria Port:

In fact, and as per the documents by the Alexandria court, Customs smuggling falls into two categories:

1.1. Customs Tax Smuggling:

Customs tax smuggling or cash smuggling is carried out by smuggling goods into or out of the port by illegal means to avoid paying customs duties to the Alexandria Customs Department, which ultimately leads to a loss of tax revenue for the Alexandria Customs Divisions [Alexandria... 1208 AH, R. 101, p. 23]. Therefore, customs duties are originally meant to be paid in cash although Egyptian law and treaty provisions may allow them to be paid as goods, or at least partially [Shūmān 1996, 180]. Smugglers have used various methods to avoid paying customs duties, including:

- Some traders attempted to evade the customs duties and taxes owed to the Customs Department by using a trick in evaluating and pricing goods at a quarter of their

original price. Some did not stop at that but forcibly removed their goods from the customs department. They also used another method, such as bringing silk and tobacco from the Levant, which was supposed to be unloaded at the port of Damietta. Still, some traders brought them to the port of Alexandria to evade the assessment of customs duties on them in the port of Damietta [Alexandria... 1208 AH, R. 107, p. 11–12] due to the high customs tariff, in addition to the fees imposed on traders at that port [Ḥanafī 2000, 31]. Documents have also indicated the use of smuggling as a means to evade customs duties on the goods of traders [Alexandria... 1209 AH, R. 107, p. 12].

– Some ships and boats used to bring Greek firewood and logs and remain vacant on the shores of Abu Qir (Abū Qīr). Then, small boats loaded with goods and crops arrive from Rosetta to Abu Qir to be shipped on the foreign ships waiting in Abu Qir to evade customs duties and violate the export of prohibited goods [Alexandria... 1204 AH, R. 101, p. 183].

– Some traders who brought their money along to the Alexandria Customs Department to pay customs duties would claim that the money they had belonged to other traders, and they would take it and pass through customs evasively. Some traders also tried to forge receipts that were not recorded in the lists or books of the customs department [Alexandria... 1204 AH, R. 107, p. 28–140]. They did not stop at that but also forged orders for ships to leave the port without the knowledge or consent of the customs department, all to evade taxes or customs duties payable on their trade [Alexandria... 1205 AH, R. 101, p. 209].

– One means of Customs smuggling was the nocturnal departure of boats from the port or engaging in buying and selling from boats and ships sailing in the middle of the sea to avoid paying customs duties [Alexandria... 1209 AH, R. 107, p. 42]. In addition, some merchants used other tricks, such as not complying with customs laws in Alexandria port, [Alexandria... 1206 AH, R. 101, p. 102], Traders' noncompliance with customs laws was evident in violations of Egypt's Nama Law) Qānūn-nāma-i Miṣr (and Ottoman regulations governing Alexandria's port. They employed various evasion tactics, including undervaluing goods, forging orders and firmans, and moving merchandise at night away from the customs quay. Prohibited exports, such as grains, timber, and metals, were frequently smuggled. These regulations mandated full declaration of goods, payment of duties before departure, adherence to loading and unloading procedures, and the prohibition of restricted exports to protect local supply needs [Alexandria... 1203 AH, R. 101, p. 35].

Moreover, some traders used another trick, as the merchants of al-Naṭrūn transported goods via boats and ships, claiming that they were heading to Damietta port, while they were heading to some European countries [Alexandria... 1204 AH, R. 101, p. 161].

– Foreign traders used a strange method to evade customs duties or part of them by obtaining permits from the Customs Department to allow a group of Venetian ships to leave the Customs Department's scales. They would pay a portion of the customs duties, allowing the ships to leave and avoiding paying the rest to the Customs Department [Alexandria... 1208 AH, R. 107, p. 22]. As the boats loaded with goods and grains, known as the "Sultanic Ammunition" or "Sultanic Needs", were exempted from customs duties, some merchants would smuggle their goods inside these boats without the knowledge of the Customs Department to evade customs duties [Alexandria... 1205 AH, R. 101, p. 201].

– Merchants resorted to using various methods and tricks to evade paying customs duties, such as sending parcels of cheap fabrics to their partners, with expensive fabrics hidden inside, to deceive the officials of the Alexandria Customs Department. They also misstated the quantity and type of goods and matched them with customs tariff lists [Shūmān 1996, 182–183].

Additionally, some traders took advantage of commercial privileges and reductions in customs duties and traded under the protection of those who were exempted from paying consulate fees [al-Ghannām 1988, 159]. Some merchants also sought refuge with high-ranking officials of the Ottoman state who were exempted from paying customs duties as a means of evading them [Alexandria... 1205 AH, R. 107, p. 140].

1.2. Non-Tax Custom Smuggling:

Non-tax Customs smuggling involves smuggling and exporting prohibited goods and commodities from Egyptian ports to break the ban on some of these goods that were needed by Egyptian society at the time. This was a violation of the customs regulations and a disregard for the decrees and orders issued by the Ottoman authorities to ban and prevent the sale of these goods, especially grains. Therefore, since the Ottoman Empire took control of Egypt, it established laws prohibiting and banning some industrial materials and forbidding the sale of these goods to foreign traders [Iḥsān öghlū 1999, 691]. The Ottoman government issued decrees emphasizing the need to ban the sale of wheat, rice, and other provisions to European traders because violations of the ban caused a scarcity of these grains in the Ottoman Empire. However, the temptation was overwhelming for traders and customs officials in the Ottoman states and Egypt. Foreign traders were prohibited from importing certain goods from the Ottoman states, including wheat, rice, and coffee, but European traders did not lack the means and methods to penetrate the ban and transport these goods, especially at the end of the eighteenth century [Shūmān 1996, 180].

The following are some methods used by traders to smuggle these goods to break the ban imposed on them:

Firstly. One of the tricks used by foreign traders was to wait for small boats loaded with grains from Rosetta to dock near the Abu Qir coast, away from customs control areas, after unloading their cargo in Alexandria. The traders would then transfer the grains from those boats to their ships heading to European countries [Alexandria... 1204 AH, R. 101, p. 180] to evade the ban imposed on these commodities. It seems that the traders took advantage of the high price of grains and the demand for them in European countries to sell and smuggle them to those countries [Alexandria... 1209 AH, R. 107, p. 16–55].

Secondly. Egyptian traders who violated the ban seemed to use more cunning methods and tricks. When some ships arrived at Alexandria port loaded with grains from some Ottoman states, a decree was issued for the captains of the ships, traders, and customs officials to allocate two-thirds of the grains to Cairo and one-third to Alexandria, to be stored in grain warehouses in the city. However, during the night, the traders transferred the grains and placed them in boats away from the customs department in preparation for smuggling them [Alexandria... 1207 AH, R. 101, p. 63]. Some traders also took advantage of commercial agents for some European countries to smuggle grains. A dispute arose between the compliant Alexandria Customs Department and the agent of the Austrian Consul due to his exploitation of the privileges granted to his consulate to issue decrees to obtain grains inside Alexandria and store them in the consulate's warehouses in preparation for their export and smuggling away from the customs department [Alexandria... 1217 AH, R. 107, p. 150]. Additionally, one foreign trader took advantage of the exemptions granted to one of the brokers to smuggle the "Alexandrian Senna" plant, which was prohibited to export [Alexandria... 1207 AH, R. 101, p. 248].

Thirdly. Some traders who had enjoyed protection from some Ottoman authorities in Egypt made use of their status to smuggle prohibited goods from the Western port of Alexandria. When the Customs Secretary objected, the trader had an order issued preventing anyone from objecting against his way [Alexandria... 1204 AH, R. 101, p. 190]. There was also a conspiracy between some traders and the Customs Secretary to smuggle lead, copper, and other metals despite a strict ban on the sale and smuggling of such metals [Winter 2001, 308].

2. Reasons behind Customs Smuggling in the Port of Alexandria:

In fact, the phenomenon of Customs smuggling in the port of Alexandria did not emerge out of the blue. Instead, several reasons and factors led to its emergence and eventual spread across the different Egyptian customs departments. These reasons are as follows:

Firstly. The Customs Corporation in Egypt was managed by the central Customs Administration [Suleymān 1991, 145]. Customs duties varied according to the officials in charge. Through the *iltizam* system, later developed into the *malikane* system, *mültezims* (men or women) paid a fixed sum to the Ottoman treasury in exchange for the right to collect customs revenues. They kept any surplus collected, and often introduced extra duties under different names, beyond the close supervision of the Ottoman authorities.

They had the right to take the money, which exceeded the amounts they paid to the Ottoman authorities. This administrative method allowed the customs directors to impose additional customs duties under different names, away from the control of the Ottoman authorities.

Secondly. A customs officer's job was profitable, owing to their immense earning and the gifts and bribes they received from merchants. Eventually, they accumulated huge wealth, which in turn led to their being targeted for confiscations, royalties, and seizure of their wealth by some aristocrats and Memluks [Shūmān 1996, 132]. When they became rulers of Egypt, Ibrahim Bey and Murad Bey needed money. Therefore, they decided to take this money from customs officers in return for unofficially allowing them to raise the customs tariff as a sort of compensation. As a result, merchants filed complaints and resorted to evading customs duties. It is evident, then, that the complaints filed against Jewish customs officers were mostly administrative and economic at the same time. A Customs deputy officer, for example, was accused of conspiring with several merchants to smuggle commodities. Similar accusations were pertinent to the collection of exorbitant customs fees and the failure to transfer customs revenues to the Ottoman treasury, in complicity with some Mamluk princes within the military establishment [Winter 2001, 308].

Thirdly. Furthermore, Jewish customs officers used manifold tricks to impose additional customs duties on ships. In this context, there is a decree directed to Egypt, based on a petition submitted by some captains of merchant ships to the Ottoman Admiral, Beyli Bey, against a customs officer named Cohen, who was accused of detaining ships in Alexandria's customs for an extended period, imposing excessive customs fees on those ships [Winter 2001, 107].

Additionally, there is another decree concerning the dispute between the customs officer of Alexandria and the Austrian consul regarding the refusal to issue a permit for one of the Austrian ships to leave the port, citing concerns about its safety during winds and storms [Alexandria... 1207 AH, R. 101, p. 45].

Fourthly. At the end of the eighteenth century, numerous administrative and financial problems emerged in the customs collection system. Customs officers used to impose customs fees on goods twice: once at the customs of Rosetta and again at the customs of Alexandria. Conversely, the customs regulations of that time stated that goods coming from Rosetta to be loaded onto ships in the port of Alexandria should not be subject to customs fees in Alexandria as long as they were already paid in Rosetta. This becomes evident from a complaint filed by the English consul to the customs administrator in Alexandria. The complaint mentioned his refusal to collect customs fees since they were already paid in the port of Rosetta [Alexandria... 1202 AH, R. 107, p. 146]. Furthermore, opium merchants filed a lawsuit and complaint to the Supreme Council, alleging that the customs agent in Bulak (*Būlaq*) took customs fees from them and that the customs agent in Alexandria demanded them to pay the fees again, despite they already having paid them to the Bulak (*Būlaq*) customs [Alexandria... 1204 AH, R. 107, p. 131].

Fifthly. It seems that the imposition of additional customs fees on certain goods and commodities served as an incentive for some traders to resort to smuggling tactics. For example, the Alexandria Customs Department imposed an extra fee on tobacco imported into Egypt from European territories. This additional charge was ordered to be collected by Ismail Bey, the Amir of the region [Shūmān 1996, 182]. Similarly, after Murad Bey took control of the customs of Alexandria and Rosetta in 1785 CE, he introduced a new fee known as the “incident of rice and grains”. This fee was applied to rice and grains imported to Alexandria and Egypt. Additionally, he established a customs office for exporting grains abroad, in exchange for collecting an export duty [Alexandria... 1203 AH, R. 107, p. 132].

Sixthly. It is noteworthy that customs officers and administrators reached a state of administrative corruption, leading them to appoint agents from their own kin. For instance, in the late 18th century, Yusuf Far’un, the customs officer of the port of Alexandria, appointed Master Boulos Afani Al-Shami as the clerk of al-Naṭrūn Nitride sector [Alexandria... 1202 AH, R. 101, p. 1]. As a result, Afani was able to control the trade and sale of Nitride both by sea and land, leading to his monopoly of this commodity and preventing anyone else from engaging in buying and selling it [Alexandria... 1205 AH, R. 101, p. 243]. Furthermore, there is an important document illustrating the extent of administrative corruption that al-Mu‘allim Yūsuf ‘Arfanjī, the customs officer and head of the customs office in Alexandria, had reached. A command was sent by Ibrahim Bey to the judge of Alexandria to dismiss Yūsuf ‘Arfanjī from managing the customs because of corruption, harming the traders, and disregarding customs laws [Alexandria... 1206 AH, R. 107, p. 117]. All of these factors pushed traders to resort to Customs smuggling.

Seventhly. Indeed, customs in the past granted certain exemptions on goods and items imported by members of the ruling class, Mamluk princes, and their followers [Shūmān 1996, 147]. For instance, individuals like the “Sardār Mustahfizān”, who was responsible for supervising the castles and fortified places in the port of Alexandria, were granted such exemptions [Suleymān 2004, 77]. It seems that all these exemptions led to widespread smuggling activities and evading customs fees.

Economic Reasons for Customs Smuggling:

Actually, the economic conditions in Egypt in general, and in the commercial port of Alexandria in particular, were among the reasons that drove traders, whether Egyptians or foreigners, to resort to Customs smuggling. Economic conditions have a directly proportional impact on the phenomenon of Customs smuggling. When goods and commodities are readily available and the exchange rates are stable, traders are less likely to engage in Customs smuggling, and vice versa. The following are the reasons observed in the city of Alexandria during the second half of the eighteenth century.

It seems that the occurrence of economic crises, particularly in the essential needs of the Ottoman people, prompted the Ottoman state to issue laws and regulations that prohibited the sale and export of foodstuffs to traders to prevent the emergence of artificial crises in the country. This was especially necessary as foreigners were offering higher prices than local traders [Ihsān ḡhlū 1999, 698]. One year, an economic crisis emerged in Alexandria, affecting the availability of some essential foodstuffs and industrial materials, particularly wheat, rice, and coffee [Shūmān 1992, 180]. By the end of the eighteenth century, a crisis in wheat occurred in Alexandria and Rosetta which led Ibrahim Bey to issue a decree to the judge, governors, merchants, and dignitaries of Alexandria, ordering them to divide the imported wheat between Alexandria and Rosetta. The export bans occurred frequently in Egypt; however, this was an extraordinary crisis when Egyptian people couldn’t find anything to eat. Although a usual exporter, it had to import from the other Ottoman provinces. I think you should stress the difference between the two here [Alexandria... 1206 AH, R. 101, p. 22]. The situation became severe to the extent that the quantity of grain available in Alexandria in the year 1212 AH/1797 CE was only

382 ardeb of beans and wheat [Alexandria, 1212 AH, R. 107, p. 151]. Consequently, the Ottoman state decided to send grain to Egypt, and several decrees were issued to prohibit the sale and purchase of grain [Alexandria... 1206 AH, R. 107, p. 120]. The Ottoman authorities took strict measures to preserve the grain in the customs warehouses, and its distribution was recorded in the customs records. An adequate amount was allocated each day to the bakers and the needy under the supervision of the city's governors and the customs officer. The grain was prohibited from being taken by Bedouins [Alexandria... 1207 AH, R. 101, p. 63].

Indeed, decrees were issued to prohibit the sale of grains, especially wheat, to foreign traders, considering it as "the people's reserve", as mentioned in one of the documents [Alexandria... 1217 AH, R. 107, p. 15]. Ibrahim Bey also urged the judge of Alexandria and its military protector not to tolerate any monopolization of grain trade in the city. The order included news of rising prices and warned the merchants against smuggling grains to prevent a food crisis in the city [Alexandria... 1208 AH, R. 107, p. 16]. Similarly, the Greek captain Kórki Biktóri, who commanded one of the vessels loaded with state munitions and exempted from customs duties, clandestinely smuggled 1,500 *kile* (Ottoman bushels) of wheat valued at 7,500 *qirsh* (Ottoman piastres) according to the Istanbul measure without the knowledge of the Customs Council, with the explicit intention of evading customs regulations [Alexandria... 1204 AH, 101, p. 410]. Some merchants also exploited the services of commercial agents representing certain European states to smuggle grain. A sharp dispute arose between the tax-farmer of the Alexandria Customs Office and the deputy consul of Austria, who had abused the privileges granted to his consulate by issuing *firmans* (Ottoman imperial decrees) authorizing the procurement of grain within Alexandria. The grain was subsequently stored in the consulate's warehouses in preparation for its removal and clandestine export beyond the authority of the Customs Office. The quantity of grain involved in this attempted smuggling amounted to 6,000 *irdabb* (a traditional Egyptian measure) of wheat and beans [Alexandria... 1207 AH, R. 101, p. 63].

During the second half of the eighteenth century, there was a growing interest among Europeans in directly engaging in the trade and production of Yemeni coffee, which experienced a significant price increase. At the same time, the Ottoman state considered Yemeni coffee as a strategic commodity, essential for the needs of the Ottoman territories, similar to grains like wheat and rice [Suleymān 1991, 24]. Several decrees were issued to restrict the export of such important commodities, allowing them only when there was self-sufficiency, and prohibiting their export otherwise. Additionally, some of the Sultan's decrees were sent to the administrative bodies in Alexandria and Rosetta, emphasizing the need to prevent European ships from loading and selling coffee to foreigners. These decrees also forbade foreigners from buying or dealing with coffee in this regard [Suleymān 1991, 22].

The economic crisis was not limited to grains alone; it also extended to encompass the shortage of wood and firewood, particularly European (imported) wood. Its sale and trade with foreigners were prohibited, and its use was restricted to Egypt and its coastal cities only. One important document contained an order from Murad Bey to the officials at the customs of Alexandria and the merchants, stating that selling and smuggling wood from Egypt caused hardship to its inhabitants due to the increase in prices. Therefore, he issued a decree to prevent smuggling for the well-being of the poor and the city's residents [Alexandria... 1204 AH, R. 101, p. 159].

It is evident that the measures, taken by the Ottoman state to ban the sale and export of certain crops and products, were considered essential for the people of the Ottoman territories, such as rice, wheat, wood, and various industrial materials, drove Europeans to resort to unlawful means and remote routes away from customs control areas to bypass the imposed bans on these goods through Customs smuggling.

The stability of the currency leads to the growth and prosperity of the commercial movement. Therefore, trade was closely linked to exchange rates, as the stability of exchange rates leads to the recovery of commercial activity, and on the contrary, any change in the exchange rate makes trade as close as possible to risk [Ḥanafī 2000, 112], and it seems that the manipulation of currency rates experienced in Alexandria has led to an increase in the value of goods and, consequently, an increase in customs duties on them, which led to a crisis in the buying and selling processes. In this context, a decree was sent from the Supreme Council in Cairo to those in charge of customs. The decree stated that trade had come to a halt due to currency manipulation, disrupting the buying and selling processes. The authorities emphasized the need to be cautious and to refrain from manipulating currency rates. As a result of this situation, traders filed complaints due to the losses they suffered as a result of currency fluctuations and trading. In response to the crisis, Ibrahim Bey issued an order to Alexandria to fix the exchange rates [Alexandria... 1212 AH, R. 101, p. 13]. This crisis led to an increase in customs duties, prompting traders to resort to evading customs duties either partially or completely.

3. Economic and Social Impact of Customs Smuggling and Its Role in Creating Crises in Basic Needs

The phenomenon of Customs smuggling had led to a serious economic impact on the tax and customs revenues as well as a social impact on Alexandrian society and residents.

It is evident that the smuggling of goods and commodities, particularly those prohibited for sale and export, had a significant impact on causing economic crises and scarcity of these goods in the local market. During the wheat crisis in Egypt, and specifically in Alexandria, some traders stored wheat in their warehouses and then secretly shipped it by boats to smuggle it abroad. As a result, the crisis intensified to the extent that Ibrahim Bey and Murad Bey issued orders to distribute wheat day by day to the warehouses, bakers, and those in need, under the supervision of Alexandria's governors, while warning against selling and smuggling wheat abroad [Alexandria 1207 AH, R. 101, p. 3]. Indeed, the interesting aspect of that crisis was that the inhabitants of Alexandria hoarded wheat for themselves, leading to a situation where the people of Rosetta could not find bread for their daily needs. This compelled Ibrahim Bey to issue a decree, accompanied by a judicial sentence, stating that the shipments of wheat intended for smuggling through the Abu Qir coasts should be seized and sent to the people of Rashid [Alexandria 1206 AH, R. 101, p. 22]. It is worth noting that the crisis escalated in the year 1208 AH / 1794 CE, as inflation spread in wheat and beans because traders attempt to smuggle them from the Abu Qir coasts [Alexandria 1208 AH, R. 107, p. 16]. This prompted the Ottoman authorities in Alexandria to combat smuggling through various means [Alexandria 1213 AH, R. 107, p. 152]. In any case, the artificially created economic crises resulting from the smuggling of grains and crops had significant economic consequences related to the phenomenon of Customs smuggling, also known as non-tax smuggling.

3.1. Impact of Customs Smuggling on Customs Revenues in Alexandria

The deficit and shortage in the financial revenues of the Alexandria Customs Office were among the results and consequences of the smuggling of goods and the evasion of customs tariffs on these goods. A decree, issued by Ibrahim Bey, addressed this issue, and it was the responsibility of the head of the Customs Office to inform Ibrahim Bey, as a significant portion of the customs revenues went to him. In the year 1206 AH / 1792 CE, Yūsuf 'Arfajī, the master of the Customs Office at the harbor, sent a message to Ibrahim Bey stating that smuggling operations had affected the state's treasury, resulting in a decline in the customs fees collected by the office. Therefore, Ibrahim Bey sent instructions to the governor of Alexandria and its military guardians to assist the Customs Secretary in collecting the delayed official debts from the merchants who were attempting to evade paying customs duties [Alexandria... 1206 AH, R. 101, pp. 102, 140].

When Murad Bey resolved to audit the fiscal accounts of the customs administrations, including the Alexandria Customs Office, in the year 1208 AH / 1794 CE, it became evident that there was a significant deficit in customs revenues because of the smuggling of goods from customs, manipulation of their pricing to a quarter of their value, and forcibly removing goods. This situation prompted Murad Bey to emphasize the need to combat Customs smuggling due to its adverse effects on customs revenues and, consequently, its impact on the taxes allocated to the Sultan's treasury [Alexandria... 1208 AH, R. 107, p. 11–12]. This indicates the extent to which the state's treasury was affected by Customs smuggling operations and the increasing occurrence of this phenomenon in the Alexandria Customs Office.

Table
The deficit in customs revenues across different timeframes,
Alexandria customs department, 1162–1213 AH¹

Final Total Amount Collected	Deficit due to Customs smuggling	Total Amount to be Collected Before Deficit	Deductions	Total Custom Duties to be Collected	Year
491928962	91213	492020175	120150	49322325	1162 AH
491928020	92155	492020175	120150	49322325	1165 AH
491928020	92155	492020175	120150	49322325	1166 AH
491910025	110150	492020175	120150	49322325	1168 AH
491947987	72188	492020175	120150	49322325	1178 AH
491947987	72188	492020175	120150	49322325	1192 AH
491958063	62112	492020175	120150	49322325	1203 AH
491964976	55199	492020175	120150	49322325	1208 AH
491986065	34110	492020175	120150	49322325	1212 AH
491997998	22177	492020175	120150	49322325	1213 AH

From the Table, it is clear that the customs revenue needed from the Port of Alexandria remained steady, as did the fixed expenses for the Alexandria Customs Office and its staff. However, the customs deficit ratio also stayed the same between 1162 AH and 1168 AH / 1747–1753 CE. This can be linked to 'Alī Bey al-Kabīr's actions after 1168 AH, when he dismissed the Jewish tax collectors and staff from the customs office and replaced them with Levantines to run Alexandria's customs. His successors, Ibrahim and Murad, kept this policy by keeping the Levantines in charge of the administration. Even with these changes, the deficit continued, though it gradually decreased until Ibrahim and Murad issued a decree in 1203 AH / 1789 CE establishing measures to fight customs smuggling at the Port of Alexandria. The decline slowed down, and the deficit eventually hit its lowest point in 1213 AH / 1798 CE.

It is noteworthy that the measures which were taken based on the decree of 1203 AH / 1789 AD, and which were implemented after that, as the study showed, had led to a significant decrease in the percentage of deficit resulting from Customs smuggling.

3.2. Social Consequences of Customs Smuggling

The problem of Customs smuggling has resulted in bad social effects represented in conflicts and social conflicts between the masters of the Alexandria Customs Bureau and its employees and some people who claim to protect some merchants (customs broker)

¹ The amounts mentioned in the table are in Ottoman para currency. The para was a small Ottoman monetary unit used throughout the Empire and its provinces, with 40 para equal to one qirsh (piaster) [Pamuk 2000, 65].

that sometimes reached the point of beating or killing the heads and secretaries of the Alexandria Customs Bureau. On the third day of the month of Shawwal 1204 AH / 1790 AD, mu'allim Hanna Zananiri, head of the Alexandria Customs Bureau, objected to the intervention of a person, who was Kurdish, and refused his intervention to remove the goods of a merchant from the customs without paying the customs duties due on them, claiming that he was protecting a merchant called Muḥammad Jūlān from the Kurds residing in the city Alexandria, and lurking for the mu'allim Hanna Zananiri while he was returning to his home and hitting him with bullets from the gun, *tabanga*, he was in possession of and leaving him dead and fleeing [Alexandria... 1204 AH, R. 107, p. 186]. So Ibrahim Bey issued a Farmān regarding that, the content of which is that whoever harms one of the men of the Court shall be sentenced to death by throwing into the sea [Alexandria... 1205 AH, R. 101, p. 243].

The incident involving Ḥusayn al-Rūdīsī and Ḥusayn Jāwīsh constitutes a further example of the protection claims asserted by certain military figures in Alexandria. Ḥusayn al-Rūdīsī, who was affiliated with a military authority represented by Ḥusayn Jāwīsh, attempted to obtain the release of goods from the Alexandria Customs Office on behalf of a merchant without paying the prescribed duties. When the customs official refused to authorize the exemption, Ḥusayn al-Rūdīsī assaulted him, striking him and brandishing a weapon in his face. In response, Ibrāhīm Bey issued a decree instructing Ḥusayn Jāwīsh to expel Ḥusayn al-Rūdīsī and send him into exile in Europe, as explicitly stipulated in the decree.

Whoever dared to violate the authority of the Sultan's Customs Office or its officials, with or without the Sultan's permission, would be exiled to Europe after receiving appropriate punishment according to their actions. This applied to individuals like Hussein Jawish, who was mentioned in the incident involving Hussein al-Rudisli, as well as to anyone else who committed similar offenses. The authorities were committed to enforcing these measures as a means to maintain order and protect the integrity of the Sultan's Customs and its operations [Alexandria... 1206 AH, R. 108].

It seems that the social consequences of Customs smuggling also involved instances of forgery. The phenomenon of forging customs permits became widespread, allowing ships to leave the port of Alexandria and its customs at night without paying the required customs fees, all without the knowledge or approval of the Customs Office. These forged permits were referred to as "Ferman Berani", which translates into English as "fake decrees", in the documents. In response, several orders were issued to eliminate the practice of forging ship departure permits from the port. Only permits issued and authenticated by the Customs Office of Alexandria were to be recognized and valid [Alexandria... 1205 AH, R. 101, pp. 94–209]. An important document also addressed this issue, stating that the Customs Office's employees should assist the Chief of Customs in collecting customs fees from those involved in forging customs receipts [Alexandria... 1212 AH, R. 107, p. 48]. These measures were taken to curb the negative social impact of Customs smuggling and forgery and maintain the integrity of the customs system in Alexandria.

The migration of al-Shawam to Alexandria is considered one of the significant social consequences of the phenomenon of Customs smuggling. There were close trade ties between the Syrians, *al-Shawam*, most of whom were engaged in commerce or brokerage, and the Europeans, leading to economic prosperity for these traders. As a result, these trade links extended to the Mamluks as well [Bakr 1996, 64–65]. At the end of the 18th Century, trade in Egypt was mainly dominated by the local Syrians (Shawam), followed by the Venetians, and subsequently the English and the French. The Jews controlled customs of Egypt, especially in cities like Damietta, Alexandria, and Rosetta. When Egypt came under the rule of Ali Bey al-Kabir [Zaydān 1997, 297], many merchants filed complaints against the Jews who exploited their commitment to Egyptian customs as a means to achieve substantial profits through bribery and collusion with

some traders. During Alī Bey al-Kabīr's rule, Customs smuggling and corruption became widespread within the customs of Alexandria [Winter 2001, 107]. As a result, in 1769, Ali Bey arrested the Jews among the customs officials and entrusted the administration of Alexandria's customs to the Syrians, *al-Shawam*. During the rule of Ibrahim and Murad, the Syrians took over the administration of Egypt's customs [Shūmān 1992, 193].

The flow of *al-Shawam* to Alexandria began after the arrival of the Feraon family from Damascus and their control over Egypt's customs, including the customs of Alexandria [Bakr 1996, 65]. Subsequently, the migration of Levantines to Alexandria increased, and they took charge of the customs in Alexandria at the end of the 18th Century. Al-Mu'allim Būlus 'Afānī assumed the management of Alexandria's customs in the year 1202 AH / 1788 CE [Alexandria... 1202 AH, R. 101, p. 1], followed by al-Mu'allim Yūsuf Fir'awn and Mu'allim Būlus 'Afānī 1205 AH / 1791 CE [Alexandria... 1202 AH, R. 101, p. 198], then al-Mu'allim Yūsuf Fir'awn and Mu'allim Anṭwān Kassāb in 1205 AH / 1791 CE as well as al-Mu'allim Yūsuf al-Ḥamawīn 1212 AH / 1791 CE [Alexandria... 1202 AH, R. 107, p. 43]. Consequently, the Jewish policy in the management of customs, characterized by corruption, bribery, and aiding in exacerbating Customs smuggling, played a role in encouraging the rulers in Egypt, especially Alī Bey al-Kabīr, Ibrahim, and Murad Bey, to replace the Jews with the Levantine traders. This replacement led to an increase in the migration of Levantines to the city of Alexandria to work in its ports and customs.

The spread of tobacco and opium consumption was one of the social consequences resulting from Customs smuggling in the second half of the 18th century. During this period, the customs of Alexandria witnessed significant tobacco smuggling without paying customs duties, leading to an increase in the buying and selling of this commodity. As a response to this situation, the Customs Diwan of Alexandria took measures to combat tobacco smuggling by imposing additional customs duties on it [Alexandria... 1203 AH, R. 101, p. 40–131]. Similarly, opium also spread in the city of Alexandria due to its entry without paying customs duties. However, the High Diwan (al-Dīwān al-'Ālī) in Cairo issued a decree in order to restrict opium smuggling, considering it a prohibited commodity, and imposing additional customs duties on it. This practice became known as the "Opium Custom" [Alexandria... 1212 AH, R. 107, p. 31].

From the previous presentation, it is clear to us the multiplicity of social effects resulting from the phenomenon of Customs smuggling in the port and customs of Alexandria; due to its bad consequences for society, the Ottoman administrative authorities tried to limit it and its spread.

3.3. Mechanisms to Combat Customs Smuggling

The administrative authorities in Egypt in the second half of the eighteenth century, specifically during the era of Ibrahim and Murad, considered the phenomenon of customs smuggling as an economic crime, and the necessary mechanisms had to be put in place to combat it and prevent its occurrence. The following is a presentation of these mechanisms during the second half of the eighteenth century.

Firstly. During the 16th and 17th centuries, most of Egypt's customs duties were granted under the commitment system to the Bey, who was responsible for paying the designated land tax to the treasury and keeping the annual surplus revenue as profits [ʿAbd al-Laṭīf 1978, 94].

By the end of the 17th century, the Jews, utilizing their linguistic and financial skills, managed to attain high-ranking positions in the Egyptian port customs when they started collecting customs fees on behalf of the Bey [Winter 2001, 307].

Consequently, Jewish control over top customs positions emerged in the second half of the 18th century, as a result of their previous influence in the 16th and 17th centuries [Shūmān 1996, 191].

During the 18th century, complaints and accusations against the Jews who dominated customs offices increased, citing their actions that violated customs regulations. They

were accused of implementing customs procedures that led to exorbitant customs fees and not transferring these revenues to the treasury. Additionally, they were alleged to have colluded with traders to evade customs duties in exchange for financial bribes [Winter 2001, 107–308].

All of these factors led some traders to resort to customs duty smuggling due to the policies of the Jewish customs officers in charge.

Due to the Jewish control over the customs offices, the administrative and organizational structure remained unchanged until the second half of the eighteenth century, when Murad Bey decided to redirect customs commitments to Catholic agents. This decision was part of his policy aimed at tightening control over Alexandria's customs, considering the Customs smuggling phenomenon that resulted from the Jewish policies. Murad Bey assigned the customs commitments in Alexandria to Yūsuf Far'awn, Anṭū-nīyūs Barakāt, and Būlus 'Afānī, instructing them to enforce customs duties and adhere to customs regulations. Yūsuf 'Arfanji was the last Jewish customs agent in Alexandria, and his policies contributed to the widespread Customs smuggling [Alexandria... 1205 AH, R. 101, p. 240].

Secondly. The documents from the Islamic court of Alexandria, which include an order issued in the month of Sha'ban 1203 AH / 1789 AD, outline the procedures and mechanisms aimed at combating Customs smuggling. This document was read in the Islamic court of Alexandria in the presence of all the merchants of the city and its residents. We will examine the mechanisms mentioned in the text and their implementation. The first passage of the text reads:

We inform them that there has been a decrease in the state's revenues due to the following reasons. Upon the arrival and reading of this decree to you in the court of Al-Thaghr, in the presence of all the merchants and the public, you shall act following it. All the goods brought in, including rice and other commodities, shall be recorded in the Diwan (customs house) under the names of their respective owners or their authorized representatives. The goods shall be stored and evaluated, and their customs duties shall be paid willingly and with an open heart, adhering to the customary judgment without stubbornness [Alexandria... 1203 AH, R. 101, p. 135].

The documents of the Alexandria Sharia Court explain to us the executive procedures for this paragraph.

When a new head of the Alexandria Customs Bureau is appointed, the city's merchants who deal with the Customs Bureau are gathered, and they are warned of the need to pay customs duties and not to evade paying them. Their money and not letting go (smuggling) of them, and everyone from whom the slightest defect occurred, we know our salvation with him [Alexandria... 1206 AH, R. 101, p. 43].

This required the need to put all the goods that come to the customs of Alexandria in the customs warehouses, and to determine their types, quantities, and weight, and estimate the customs duties on them [Alexandria... 1207 AH, R. 107, p. 63].

There is another document that emphasizes the necessity of evaluating the goods at the price of their value every time, and they have to pay the customs duties based on the rules of the customs systems without increase or decrease on the exported and imported goods, with severe punishment for anyone who tries to deviate from the law of the bureaus, and they have to pay the customs duties imposed on them [Alexandria... 1208 AD, R. 107, p. 11–12].

Thirdly. Upon arrival at the port, ship captains must present a list of the vessel's cargo, types of goods, and the names of the merchants who own them to the customs officer at the customs house. The second paragraph of the decree outlining measures to combat Customs smuggling states the following: "Upon the entry of vessels into the port of

Alexandria, the ship captain must present the record containing the quantity of the shipment. No boat is allowed to approach the ship before the customs boat” [Alexandria... 1207 AH, R. 101, p. 76]. This paragraph emphasizes the importance of registering the goods and their types in the customs house’s records. It also strictly prohibits any boats from approaching the ships other than the customs boat to prevent smuggling, Customs smuggling, or conducting transactions outside the customs area or dock [Alexandria... 1206 AH, R. 101, p. 102].

Fourthly. Boats and barges designated for transporting and unloading goods are not allowed to approach ships and boats at sea. Rather, this is done from the dock and the office dock. Likewise, shipping operations must take place from the customs dock only, as the third paragraph of the decree on anti-customs smuggling procedures came as follows: “All ships and boats are required to unload their cargo on the quay of the port while preventing any person from loading and unloading far from the quay of the port” [Alexandria... 1203 AH, R. 101, p. 135].

In application of this, the orders issued by the Ottoman administration emphasized the importance of carrying out loading and unloading operations under the supervision of the customs office’s master at the Alexandria port, and preventing ships from loading and unloading outside the customs dock [Alexandria... 1208 AH, R. 107, p. 22], and these orders allowed the customs secretary to make ambushes for those who aim at evading customs duties, and he goes out to unload or load ships at night outside the office with soldiers in his company. The arrested were exiled on any boat heading to Marseille, as a punishment for what they did [Alexandria... 1204 AH, R. 101, p. 161].

Fifthly. The fourth measure came from the mechanisms of combating Customs smuggling contained in the decree of combating Customs smuggling regarding the departure of boats at night to smuggle goods from ships at sea or unload them away from the Diwan at night, as stipulated: “from the beginning of sunset, the movement of ships and boats is restricted, and they are not allowed to leave the port except at sunrise the Sun” [Alexandria... 1203 AH, R. 101, p. 135].

Several documents explain this to us, along with putting in place punitive measures for those who do that, and the head of customs must alert and warn boat owners of the need for their boats not to leave after the sunset call to prayer, with the knowledge of the customs secretary and his staff [Alexandria 1208 AH, R. 107, p. 11–12], as Murad Bey ordered that Every boat that goes out at night is burned, and its owner is punished by beating a thousand cripples so that he will discipline others and serve as an example to those who try to smuggle goods at night or evade customs duties, and warn all merchants that whoever gets involved with the owner of a boat will be punished with him [Alexandria... 1209 AH, R. 107, p. 42].

Regarding the punishment contained in the matter of smuggling goods from customs, especially goods that are prohibited from being exported or imported, the fifth paragraph of the decree on combating Customs smuggling mechanisms included: Whoever smuggles goods to escape from customs, the customs shall be collected from him twice, he will be punished and disciplined, and the customs workers will be alerted after the goods have been transported from the warehouses only after paying the customs duties on them [Alexandria... 1203 AH, R. 101, p. 135].

In the implementation of this, many documents pointed to the warning not to smuggle goods or evade customs duties. Hence, whoever smuggles his goods from the boat or ship at night, intending to evade customs duties, is arrested and thrown into the sea as a punishment for him [Alexandria... 1205 AH, R. 107, p. 423]. Sailors on boats and others were not allowed to take goods out of ships except in the port and after paying the fees due on these goods [Alexandria... 1206 AH, R. 101, p. 102]. They were also warned that everyone who tries to smuggle money or goods aiming at escaping from the payment of due customs duties will be charged twice the customs fees due on him. The warning

content was as follows: If someone smuggles money or goods, he will pay double customs [Alexandria 1205 AH, R. 101, p. 140].

Sixthly. Customs systems implemented a mechanism for Customs smuggling in buying and selling away from the Customs Bureau as a punishment that came in the sixth paragraph of the decree on combating Customs smuggling; its text is as follows: No one buys goods and pays their customs. The customs duties are imposed on the salesman to keep the order of Diwan's work. Therefore, Ibrahim Bey sent a warning to the ruler of the city of Alexandria not to allow buying and selling goods in boats far from the port, and whoever did so to be punished by being arrested and imprisoned in the prison of the Alexandria Sharia Court. Moreover, the captain of the ship performed the process of selling to merchants to pay the prescribed customs duties on the purchaser as a due right of the Alexandria Customs Office [Alexandria... 1206 AH, R. 107, p. 19].

Concerning the work of the Customs Bureau and combating the deception of merchants of customs workers, the seventh paragraph of the decree on combating Customs smuggling states the following: preventing any person who opposes the employees of the Customs Bureau during the inspection and not allowing anyone to go out with other people's goods claiming that they are his [Alexandria... 1203 AH, R. 101, p. 135]. Therefore, many decrees included combating this by imposing penalties on those who object to inspections, assault customs inspectors, or claim to protect someone to deceive customs officials to pass the goods of others without paying the customs duties due on them. One who commits these offenses shall be arrested and sentenced to death by throwing him into the sea. There is an important document indicating this in its content: We swear by God Almighty if we were informed that any person who had problems with him or with the customs or office workers and claimed to protect someone for him would be arrested and executed by throwing him into the sea [Alexandria... 1205 AH, R. 101, p. 243].

The decree on combating Customs smuggling included the eighth method concerning the exit of ships and allowing them to leave the port and customs of Alexandria. The eighth paragraph of the decree stated: No foreign ship is allowed to ship its goods unless it has a permit or decree, and it is not allowed except after obtaining a permit for shipping and sailing. In implementation of what was stated in the decree, no permission or permission is made for (foreign) entrusted ships to leave the port of Alexandria except after their captains obtain a permit to leave the Alexandria Customs Bureau after writing it in the customs records and books [Alexandria... 1203 AH, R. 101, p. 135], and whoever authorizes any ship or boat to leave without obtaining the permit decree will be subject to punishment and accountability, with a warning to accredit the ships' exit decree issued by the Customs Bureau. Any permit that the Customs Bureau does not issue is neither authorized nor accepted. These measures were followed to preserve the royal treasury's funds from the incomes of customs duties [Alexandria... 1205 AH, R. 107, pp. 209–210], and if one of the merchants or a captain of ship brings a fake decree or permit "Farmān Barānī" to go out and sail his ship at night without the knowledge of the Bureau, his ship will be detained in the port and his country's consul will be summoned [Alexandria... 1206 AH, R. 101, p. 102]. These rules were practiced with the assistance of the Bureau's master in collecting customs duties from those ships so that smuggling operations do not lead to the loss of official money and income [Alexandria... 1204 AH, R. 101, p. 160].

Numerous decrees and orders warn against claiming protection from some of the men of the Ottoman authority by any of the merchants to provide them with an opportunity or assistance to evade customs. They also warn those carrying weapons from the Alexandrians, its merchants, and its inhabitants who had the intention to create problems with the customs office and its employees to refrain from this type of conduct. Whoever does not comply with the order received from Ibrahim Bey in this regard will be punished by throwing him into the sea [Alexandria... 1205 AH, R. 101, pp. 230–231], and the aim of this was to prevent the occurrence of the phenomenon of Customs smuggling.

In fact, combating the smuggling of goods whose export was prohibited was one of the important mechanisms taken by the administrative authorities in Alexandria customs, especially concerning the needs of the population. Decrees issued in this regard, included the penalties imposed on those who were arrested and whose ship was loaded with grain, for example, the captains of the ships were arrested and the seized grain was confiscated, whether it is wheat or beans, for the benefit of the Alexandria Customs Office [Alexandria... 1204 AH, R. 101, p. 183]. The masters of the Customs Office were obliged to abide by these decrees and not to accept intercession or compliment to allow a merchant to smuggle a single ardab of grain, with a warning of these procedures addressed to all merchants [Alexandria... 1208 AH, R. 107, p. 16]. In this context, these procedures and mechanisms required the prison sentence for those who buy and sell the commodities prohibited to be traded outside the framework of the administrative authorities in the diwans to foreigners, such as Al-Naṭrūn [Alexandria... 1205 AH, R. 101, p. 343]. The same procedures were applied to the coffee commodity as well [Alexandria... 1208 AH, R. 107, p. 22]. From the foregoing, it is clear to us that the Ottoman administration implemented many procedures and mechanisms contained in decrees issued by Ibrahim and Murad that would combat Customs smuggling of both types, tax and non-tax, and total and partial smuggling. Thus, the phenomenon of Customs smuggling represented a major problem, which resulted in a shortage of tax revenues and customs duties.

Conclusion

Having studied the phenomenon of Customs smuggling in the port of Alexandria at the end of the 18th Century, based on the documents of the Sharia court of Alexandria and the registers of Alexandria's customs, which represents an attempt to enrich Arabic studies and research on the economic history of Egyptian ports using Egyptian documents from the Ottoman era as a source, we draw the following conclusions:

The importance of Alexandria's customs stemmed from its strategic and economic significance due to its geographic location and the importance of its ports for international trade. This led to the administrative authorities' interest in the structure and functioning of Alexandria's customs office, considering it one of the administrative and financial institutions responsible for regulating the imposing customs duties on exports from Egypt to the Ottoman territories and Europe, thereby generating the required revenues for the Sultan's treasury.

The primary purpose of organizing the work related to shipping and unloading operations was to ensure the smooth flow of operations within the customs office and to regulate the collection of customs duties on both exports and imports. Additionally, it aimed to maintain the regularity of shipping and unloading activities within the docks of the Port of Alexandria. This was necessary due to some traders resorting to various illegal means to evade paying taxes and customs duties owed to the customs authorities by conducting their activities away from customs control zones, such as along the coasts.

The reasons and factors that led to the emergence and spread of customs smuggling in the Port of Alexandria at the end of the 18th century were primarily administrative and organizational within the customs offices. This resulted from the prevalence of corruption within the customs administration. Despite warnings from the Ottoman authorities about this phenomenon, it continued to proliferate in the Port of Alexandria during the study period.

The study has demonstrated that Customs smuggling was not limited solely to cash payments of customs duties. It also involved non-cash Customs smuggling, such as smuggling prohibited goods and commodities. The study revealed that Customs smuggling had a direct impact on the economy and society of the city, resulting in various economic and social effects. Therefore, both Murad Bey and Ibrahim Bey considered it an economic crime that needed to be combated. They implemented various measures to prevent and combat Customs smuggling.

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A. M. Айман

Позиція османської влади щодо контрабанди на митниці в Александрійському порту (кінець XVIII ст.)

Метою цього дослідження є висвітлення впливу політичної нестабільності, особливо наприкінці XVIII ст., під час подвійного губернаторства (Ібрагіма-бея і Мурада-бея), на

економічні інституції Єгипту, а саме на Александрійський порт. Юридичні документи Александрійського шаріатського суду і митні записи Александрії часів Османської епохи, які зберігаються в Національному архіві Єгипту, були використані як джерело дослідження й аналізу, із застосуванням методу історичного дослідження та кількісно-статистичного методу. Результати розвідки засвідчують, що контрабанда на митниці в порту Александрії в середині XVIII ст. вважалася економічним злочином, оскільки вона включала незаконні спроби уникнути сплати митних зборів. Це явище було зумовлене різними адміністративними та економічними причинами і мало прямий вплив на податкову та митну системи Єгипту, а також на суспільство. Це спонукало османську владу розробити механізми для боротьби з його наслідками та їхньої мінімізації. У статті рекомендується проведення подальших досліджень на базі османських документальних джерел при вивченні історії арабських економічних інституцій, портів і митниць, щоб спростувати хибні уявлення, які висловлювали щодо цього західні джерела, особливо французькі.

Ключові слова: Александрійський порт; Александрія; контрабанда; митні збори; Османська імперія

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