

# THE BLACK SEA

## PAST, PRESENT and FUTURE



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# The historical function and future prospects of Trabzon

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## Abstract

Historically, the Black Sea was a stage on the third important route between Asia and Europe. Due to its location, Trabzon, where history stretches back to 2000 BC, was the centre of exchange on this route. During this period, the city experienced many ups and downs in its trading role. It was an important international trade centre in the 13th–14th centuries and one of the few service centres of the Ottoman emperor in the 15th–18th centuries, it recovered an international role in trade in the 19th and lost its leading position in the 20th century. In the second half of the 20th century, Trabzon had two main chances to regain its traditional function, but was unable to use them effectively. Its fate was determined mainly by the international and national political environment rather than by economic factors.

## Özet

Tarihsel olarak Karadeniz Asya-Avrupa arasında üçüncü önemli güzergah konumundadır. Konumuna bağlı olarak, tarihi MÖ 2000lere uzanan Trabzon, bu güzergah üzerindeki önemli bir değişim merkez idi. Tarihsel süreçte, kentin ticari rolü/yaşamı iniş-çıkışlarla doludur. 13 ve 14.yüzyıllar da önemli bir ticaret merkezi olan Trabzon 15–18. yüzyıllarda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun bir iç limanı ve birkaç hizmet merkezinden biri idi. 19 yüzyılda uluslararası ticaretteki rolünü yeniden kazandı ve 20 yüzyıl başlarında önde gelen ticari konumunu kaybetti. 20. yüzyılın ikinci yarısında, kente geleneksel işlevlerini yeniden kazandıracak iki fırsat yakaladı fakat onları etkin olarak kullanamadı. Trabzon'nun kaderi büyük ölçüde uluslararası ve ulusal politik faktörlerle belirlendi.

Historically there have been three major avenues of trade between Europe and Asia, via Egypt/Syria, Anatolia and the Black Sea. Trabzon, as a coastal settlement on the eastern Black Sea, is at a junction of the routes that link central Asia and India over Persia to the Mediterranean, leading to Europe through the straits and Aegean Sea, and to eastern Europe and Russia by crossing the Black Sea directly (Turan 1990: 51). Due to its location, Trabzon has historically been a centre of exchange for Asian and European goods.

Remains found at the Kindinar site show that the early settlers around Trabzon were the Gas/Kas and Gud/Guities, the frontier branch of the Oghuz Turks (İnan 1999; Bostan 2002). The history of Trabzon can be divided into eight periods (Kaya 2002).

2000 BC–750 BC	Establishment
750 BC–AD 50	Free city/state
50–395	Roman period
1048–1204	Turkish raids
1204–1461	Commenid period
1464–1914	Ottoman period
1914–1923	First World World and Independence Wars
1924–	Republican era

The earliest historical relics of ancient Trabzon are the middle and inner citadels, which were established on a narrow hill between two valleys, dating back to AD 257 (fig. 1). The lower fortress, which extended from the citadel to the shore and was built in the 14th century, only partly survives.

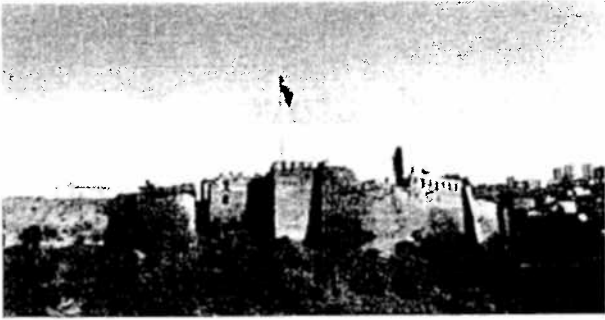


Fig. 1. Trabzon castle (view from west)

This paper provides a critical discussion of the rise and fall of trade at Trabzon from the 13th century to the present.

### 13th–15th centuries

Trade passing through Trabzon harbour was in the hands of the Genoese and Venetians in the 13th–15th centuries AD (Aygün 1999). Goods were transported from the ports of Italy and southern France, reaching Trabzon by sea via Istanbul-Galata, and then continued to Tabriz by land. The importance of this route rose considerably, especially following the closure of the Egypt-Syria route to Europeans in the last quarter of the 13th century (Turan 1990: 46). In this period Trabzon was one of the two most important cities of the southern Black Sea. Many fortresses, housing garrisons of 50–100 men, mainly functioned to secure Venetian and Genoese control of the trade route.

After the Genoese and Venetians settled on the northern Black Sea coast, trading relations increased between northern harbours, like Kefe and Tana, and southern Black Sea settlements, like Istanbul, Sinop and Trabzon. The Trabzon Empire's policy was to promote trade by giving incentives and privileges to the Genoese and Venetians. The emperor even assigned Güzel Hisar castle (Leonto-Kastron), near the port (fig. 2), to the service of the Genoese in the 13th century. In the next century, the Venetians, for their own security, received permission to build walls around their living quarters, which were near the shore at the eastern edge of the settlement (Turan 1990: 52, 64). In fact, this was a sparkling period for trade at Trabzon (Turan 1990: 51–52).

Copper, silver, alum, various kinds of yarn and weaving, leather and morocco were exported from Trabzon, Sinop and Samsun to Italy and the West. Also, goods such as silk, raw silk, silk garments and spices, brought from Tabriz by camel trains (caravans), were marketed to western traders (Aygün 1999). In the 13th–14th centuries the passage from Istanbul to Trabzon could take only four to five days by sea, though in stormy water it could take much longer (about 19–20 days).

Trabzon to Tabriz took 30–32 days by camel train and 12–13 days by saddle horse (Turan 1990: 51). However, after the colonisation of the Crimea by the Genoese, the Caucasia-Persia route, which extended to inner Asia, started to be used as an alternative to Trabzon-Tabriz.

### 15th–19th centuries: the Ottoman era

After the mid 15th century, trade in the Black Sea tended to decrease. There were several reasons for this (Yediyıldız 1994; İnan 1998; Aygün 1999; Bostan 2002: 384; İnalçık 2004: 138).

1. The Black Sea gradually became the Ottoman's inland sea, and was closed totally to foreign traders by the year 1595. Only Genoese and Venetian traders retained permission to trade in Trabzon. Their presence in the city lasted until the beginning of the 20th century. They had warehouses used for trade and paid no customs duty in the eastern port of the city.

2. International transportation was diverted to open seas, following geographic discoveries.

3. Tense relations between the Ottomans and Safavids prevented products from Asia and Persia (especially silk) reaching Trabzon via Tabriz.

4. By the end of the 15th century, traders preferred to use the Erzurum-Tokat-Bursa route instead of the Black Sea (Trabzon-Istanbul) route to transfer goods from Asia to Europe.

5. Bengal silk replaced Persian silk in the European market. Also, other new silk centres, such as Cyprus and Syria, emerged in the Middle East.

6. In the second quarter of the 17th century, Kazakh attacks started to increase and created serious security problems in the southern part of the Black Sea. Due to these attacks, the bazaar quarter of Trabzon (Aşağı Hisar, lower fortress) burned down in the 1600s and was rebuilt several times.

The decline in trade, that continued till the end of the 18th century, inevitably had a negative influence on Trabzon's economy. Even so, Trabzon, with more than

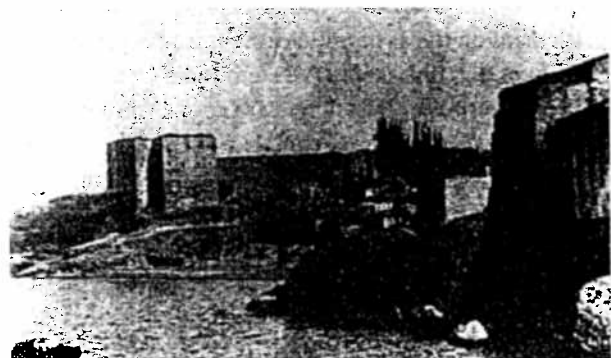


Fig. 2. Güzel Hisar castle (view from west) (Kardeş 2001)

2,000 tax payers, continued to be one of the three major ports of Anatolia (Faroqhi 1994: 190). The other two were, in order of importance, Sinop on the Black Sea and Antalya on the Mediterranean coast. In 1545–1546, the rent offered by a *mültezim* (contractor) candidate to the Trabzon port was 430,000 akçe/year. In the same year the rent at Rize (the seat of the neighbouring administrative district [*liva*] in the east) was 23,333 akçe/year, and at Sinop in 1560 it was 27,000 akçe/year (Faroqhi 1994: 131, 133). Also, Trabzon was the chief town of the *Sancak* (a subdivision of a province) and was ruled by the sultan's sons (Prince Abdullah was appointed to Trabzon *Sancak* as the governor in 1471 and Prince Selim [Yavuz] in 1480 [Nemlioğlu 2002]). In the course of time Trabzon's administrative status rose to *eyalet* (province) capital (1578), an administrative unit which extended from Batumi in the east to Samsun in the west and Gümüşhane in the south (Çadırcı 1988). At that time there were 12 *eyalet* in Anatolia. Trabzon was a cosmopolitan city and, according to the information revealed by property sales and disputes recorded in the *Şer'iyeh Sicil* (records of the Cadi's office), people of different nationalities and religions lived together in almost every *mahalle* (quarter) (İnan 1998).

The port of Trabzon had three major functions in the Ottoman Empire's economic, social and military life. The first function was the provision of goods for Istanbul. Traders and ship owners brought linen goods, oakum, boxwood, butter, honey and various fruits from the eastern Black Sea shores to Istanbul. Coffee, cotton thread, rice and tin, coming from different parts of Anatolia and the Middle East, were handed over to Istanbul and Rumelia (Aygün 1999; Kütükoğlu 1988). Also, important minerals were extracted and processed in Trabzon's hinterland and transported legally to Istanbul, and illegally to other regions and countries; silver and gold, mined in Gümüşhane, was sent also to Persia, Iraq and India; copper, mined near Gümüşhane,

Espiye and Ardanuç, was sent to Rumelia and to some fairs in Anatolia; and alum, mined at Şebinkarahisar, was sent to various destinations (Özkaya 1988; Faroqhi 1994: 214). The illegal trade in these minerals was so copious that Istanbul often warned Trabzon to send all mined products directly and exclusively to Istanbul (Özkaya 1988).

Secondly, Trabzon supplied the needs of the army. Trabzon was a transfer point of military supplies sent from Istanbul and the Balkans (Silistre, Varna, İsakcık, Nigbolu, etc) to Erzurum, Kars and Van, and also for troops and ammunition from eastern Anatolia to the Balkans and Crimea. The expense of these transfers was covered by duty income from the port of Trabzon (Aygün 1999). Also, the shipbuilding industry, which developed in Trabzon, delivered galleys and quality ships to the Ottoman navy (Bostan 2002: 379).

Finally, the port offered support for social services. The maintenance of the mosques and *masjids* (lamps, rush mats, salaries of *imam*, *müezzin*, etc.) of Trabzon and Sohum (Suhumi) was covered from port income (Aygün 1999).

This status of the Black Sea and Trabzon continued until 1783 when Russia was granted wide privileges for trading in the Black Sea (Bostan 1999). France and Britain were entitled by a similar agreement to the same rights in 1802, and were followed by Sardinia, Denmark and Spain. In the 1830s the Trabzon-Tabriz trade was revitalised, because British traders preferred to get Persian silk via Trabzon, by a cheap and short route. For this reason, for about 50 years the port transferred more Persian than Anatolian goods. Exports and imports reached the highest volume in Trabzon's history in the second half of the 19th century (Kütükoğlu 1988). This had a number of effects as detailed below.

The number of consulates in Trabzon reached eight in 1867, and ten in 1877, with an increase in the number of employees (table 1).

	Russia	Belgium	Persia	Great Britain	France	Austria	Italy	Germany	Flanders	Spain	Greece	Total number of personnel
1867	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+				10
1877	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	21
1887 <sup>1</sup>	+	Denmark	+	USA	+	Flanders	+			+	+	24
1899 <sup>1</sup>	+	Denmark	+	USA	+	Flanders	+				+	18

<sup>1</sup> Belgium, Britain and Austria gave services to the countries noted.

Table 1. Countries with a consulate or embassy secretariat in Trabzon (Trabzon Vilayeti Salnamesi 1867; 1877; 1887; 1899)

Scheduled shipping started in 1869–1870. Apart from the Ottoman line, three foreign companies provided a weekly service (table 2). In ten years the number of foreign companies increased to seven. However, by 1899 the number of companies had decreased and the services became less frequent.

Western insurance companies opened branch offices. There were 14 in 1894. The Ottoman Bank, controlled by British and French capital, was followed by the Agricultural Bank (Ziraat Bankası), established with national capital, which opened branches in the 1890s (Turgay 1994).

The centrality of Trabzon was strengthened, and the economic and social functions were enriched by the development of the postal service, customs, printing, eating and entertainment (for example, casinos and *meyhanes*) and retailing (table 3). The province's first newspaper, *Trabzon*, was published in Trabzon in 1869, long before newspapers were printed in other towns of the province. The first newspaper published in Samsun was in 1909 (Şimşek 1993: 152).

Trabzon was among the few Ottoman towns that responded to administrative and cultural changes during the *Tanzimat* (administrative reform period); one of the main squares was organised to provide better entertainment for the city dwellers in the 1840s (Turgay



Fig. 3. The Trabzon opera house (demolished 1954) (Kardeş 2001)

1994), local government organisation was established in 1868 (Şimşek 1993: 64) and opera performances took place in the 1910s in a building that was built for this purpose (fig. 3), much earlier than that in Istanbul (Uzun 2002).

The Crimean War (1853–1857) created a wealthy trading class. Their capital accumulation was invested in warehouses, commercial buildings, inns (*han*) and houses. The British Consulate observed that, '... the three-year war resulted in the accumulation of a huge amount of gold here ... buildings have been erected from day to day, the boundary of the city has enlarged

1877	Ottoman (w)*, Russia (w)*, Austria (w), France (w)
1887	Ottoman (w)*, Russia (w)*, Austria (w), France (w), Italy (2w), Greece (w), Germany (nonsch.), Denmark (nonsch.)
1899	Ottoman (w), Russia (2w)*, Austria (2w)*, France (w), Italy (2w)*, Greece (w), Germany (m)

Table 2. The nationality and service frequency of companies shipping to Trabzon. \* service goes up to Batumi, (w) weekly, (2w) two weekly, (nonsch.) non-schedule, (m) monthly (Trabzon Vilayeti Salnamesi 1877; 1887; 1899)

	Post office- Telegraph <sup>1</sup>	Custom <sup>1</sup>	Night club	<i>Meyhane</i> <sup>2</sup>	Printing house <sup>3</sup>	Theatre <sup>4</sup>	Inn ( <i>han</i> )	Store	Shop	Tannery	Winery <sup>5</sup>	Smelting house	Tile factory	Number of dwellings
Trabzon	0.5 (3.4)	0.7 (5.3) <sup>3</sup>	2.3	12.3	0.2	0.4	8.0	106	297	4.1	0.7	0.7	0.7	4,148
Rize	1.2 (1.2)	0.6 (1.2)	-	2.4	-	-	1.2	32	211	-	-	6.0	0.6	1,670
Batumi	2.1 (4.1)	1.0 (2.1)	-	1.0	-	-	10.3	90	231	-	-	....	....	968

<sup>1</sup> Numbers in parentheses refer to the number of employees per 1,000 dwellings.

<sup>2</sup> A bar-like restaurant.

<sup>3</sup> The first public and private print shops were established in 1865 and 1890 respectively (Şimşek 1993: 151).

<sup>4</sup> There was a theatre hall capacity of 150–200 seats in 1863, and Karagöz Garden was the place where plays were performed regularly from 1865–1885 (Uzun 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Wine and raki/arracks, produced in Trabzon, were shipped to Istanbul and Kefe (İnalçık 2004: 134).

Table 3. Selected urban services. Functional units per 1,000 dwellings in Trabzon and neighbouring towns (Trabzon Vilayeti Salnamesi 1877)

Year		Production place				
		Trabzon	Tirebolu	Rize	Of	Sürmene
Market places	1869	Linen cloth: Aleppo	Wooden kitchen goods: Istanbul, Alexandria (Egypt), Tripoli, eastern Anatolia (Erzurum, Erzincan)	Fine linen (20,000 roll): Istanbul, Baghdad, Arabia, Erzurum	Rough linen, black shawl: eastern Anatolia (Erzurum, Malatya)	Linen yarn ( <i>tura</i> ): Rumelia, Anatolia, Arabia
	1877	Linen cloth: eastern Anatolia (Erzurum, Bitlis, Malatya, Diyarbakır)		White shirting linen (40,000 roll): Sold in the same places	Rough linen: eastern Anatolia (i.e. Erzurum, Bitlis, Malatya)	Weapons (guns, pistols, <i>çatma</i> ) and fishing nets: Istanbul, Rumelia

Table 4. Textiles and some other products of Trabzon Sanjak and their market places (Trabzon Vilayeti Salnamesi 1869; 1877)

	Ottoman	Britain	France	Russia	Germany-Austria	Others
Export (%)	65	7	12	4	5	5
Import (%)	12	54	11	3	15	5
Total (%)	27	41	12	3	12	5

Table 5. Shares of importer and exporter countries from Trabzon, based on the averages of 1875–1898 (Kütükoğlu 1988)

considerably, local people are well-dressed and well-off (Turgay 1994: 66). Investment in revenue-generating buildings increased. Commercial properties, public baths, bakeries, religious and educational institutions were established.

According to the averages of the trade volume records for the years 1875–1898 (Kütükoğlu 1988), Persian goods exported from Trabzon were, in order of importance, tobacco (32%), shawls (24%), carpets (22%) and silk cocoons (15%). The goods imported to Persia were mainly textiles. Cotton and woollen fabric amounted to 79% of Persia's imports via Trabzon. Local exports were mainly agricultural products; nuts (10%), tobacco (8%), leather (4%) and beans (4%). Livestock from inland Anatolia also became an important export (8%) towards the end of the 1880s. The reason was the preference for the sea route to the overland route from eastern Anatolia to Istanbul (Kütükoğlu 1988). Local textiles were also marketed to Istanbul, Anatolia and other southern provinces (table 4).

The export share in the total trade volume of Trabzon fluctuated considerably over time. In 1832 it was 7%, increasing to 40% in 1835, it dropped after the

Crimean War to 30%, rose again to 41% in 1908 and 53% in 1910 (Kütükoğlu 1988). Apart from Ottoman concerns in Istanbul, the main countries trading from Trabzon were Britain, France and Germany (table 5).

External and internal factors influenced Trabzon's economy and caused fluctuations over the 19th century (Issawi 1988; Kütükoğlu 1988; Çadırcı 1988; Usta 1988: 115; Kodaman 1990; Saydam 1991; Emiroğlu 1992; Şimşek 1993: 155; Demircioğlu 1996; Ponzac 1997: 54, 182; İpek 2002).

#### External factors

In the 19th century Russia tried to divert Trabzon's traffic to Tbilisi by investing in infrastructure and services (building the Trans-Caucasian rail route, Poti port, etc.), giving incentives to traders (tax exemptions, stabilised tax tariff, etc.), securing transport along the Tbilisi-Tabriz route, and insuring goods. Although this route was longer (50 days) than Trabzon-Tabriz, it was safer and cheaper. The Tbilisi Railway Company's freight cost was 5 francs per bale for Poti-Tabriz, while the cost of Trabzon-Tabriz per bale was 30 francs.

Settlement	Number of households in 1580 <sup>1</sup>	Population index in 1830 <sup>2</sup>	Population index in 1890 <sup>2</sup>	Population index in 1911 <sup>2</sup>
Trabzon	2,122 hh (~10,620 person) <sup>3</sup>	310	329	471
Samsun	133 hh (~ 625 person)	640	1,760	4,000

<sup>1</sup> Behar 2003: table 2.12.

<sup>2</sup> Faroqhi 1994: table 5.

<sup>3</sup> Numbers in brackets refer to estimated total population, which is calculated assuming an average household size of five persons (Faroqui 1994: 93).

*Table 6: Growth indices of Trabzon and Samsun (1580=100)*

This situation led to a decline in Trabzon's trade volume. But the attractiveness of the Poti-Tbilisi-Tabriz route did not last long, due mainly to the illegal marketing of transported goods within the country. Russian producers put pressure on the Russian government to abolish the incentives. As a result, the export deposit, which had been repaid after the goods passed over the border, was demanded as an export duty, and by 1883 all exemptions were abolished. Hence the Caucasian transit trade decreased to the benefit of Trabzon.

New ports built in the Persian Gulf, and the opening of the Suez Canal (1869), diverted eastern trade to the Basra-Baghdad-Kirmansah route. The Ottoman-Russian Wars (1830, 1877–1878), and the First World War closed the Black Sea to trade.

#### *Internal factors*

Epidemic diseases, such as plague and cholera, which broke out from time to time (1797, 1811, 1839–1843, 1846–1847, 1889–1890, 1892–1895) in Trabzon and on or near the Trabzon-Tabriz route discouraged traders (Trabzon lost 10–12% of its population to a plague in 1811).

Drought in Anatolia prevented cereal exports. It took four to five years to recover from the drought of 1837.

From time to time, local or foreign markets became saturated by excessive imports/exports and suppressed new market demand.

Until the 19th century, Samsun was surpassed by Trabzon and Sinop. In the 20th century, Samsun's share in Black Sea trade started to grow faster than its rivals due to the increasing European steamer traffic in the Black Sea, new tobacco plantations in the hinterland and immigration from the Caucasus, the Aegean and Trabzon itself. The very rapid increase in Samsun's population became a challenge for the other trade points of Trabzon and Sinop (table 6). However, in this period many developments had a positive impact on Trabzon's trade. The quality of the Trabzon-Erzurum route was greatly improved following the introduction in 1864 and 1869 of regulations that required the male population to work for fixed periods on road construction and maintenance. Telegraph lines from

Trabzon to Batumi, Samsun, Erzurum, Erzincan were established in 1864, and two weekly postal services were started between Istanbul and Trabzon. Scheduled shipping services began between Istanbul and the main ports of the southern Black Sea in 1841. The main port of Trabzon was improved by the construction of a break-water and a 50m-long quay (pier) built in 1877 (figs 4–6).

At the beginning of the 20th century, the increase in Trabzon's trade (Kütükoğlu 1988) resulted mainly from the overall growth of the national economy. Trade with Persia had decreased considerably. In the early 1900s about 20% of Persia's exports and imports passed through the Trabzon-Tabriz route. This figure had been 80% in the 1850s–1860s, when Trabzon-Tabriz trade was at its peak (Issawi 1988). During the First World War, the closure of the Black Sea led Persia to look for new routes that would link her to the rest of the world. One passed through Basra. After 1914, Persian traffic was diverted to the Persian Gulf, due to the increase in petroleum production and the building of the Trans-Persian railroad (Issawi 1988).

#### **The 20th century and the Republican era**

Until the mid 20th century, the ports of the southern Black Sea coasts lagged, due to sub-standard technology and the inadequacy of road connections to the interior of Anatolia. Trabzon's share of the Persian transit trade was 8.5% in 1928 and 3.5% in 1930, in contrast to 53.2% before the First World War (Koraltan 1938). Persian trade shifted again to the Batumi and Basra-Beirut routes. Meanwhile, the railroad extension from Ankara to Erzincan and then to Erzurum caused a narrowing of Trabzon's hinterland, leaving her further in isolation. In the 1930s, Tahsin Uzel, the government Regional Inspector, proposed a number of projects to revitalise Trabzon's economic and social life; construction of a new harbour and the Istanbul-Samsun-Trabzon-Rize highway, a rail route connecting the city to inland regions, improvement of the Trabzon-Erzurum road and the establishment of a permanent international fair like the one in Izmir (Koçak 2003). Some of this was

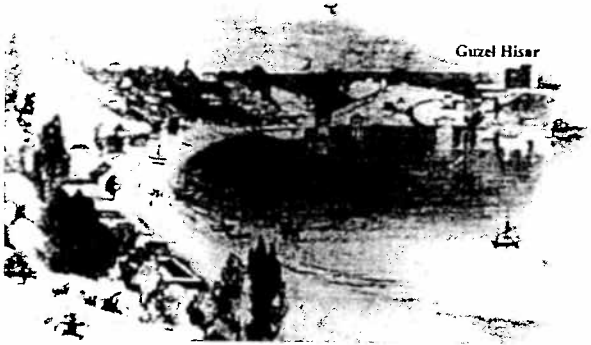


Fig. 4. The major port of Trabzon, Çömlekçi port in 1800 (Kardeş 2001)



Fig. 5. Çömlekçi port after improvements (Kardeş 2001)

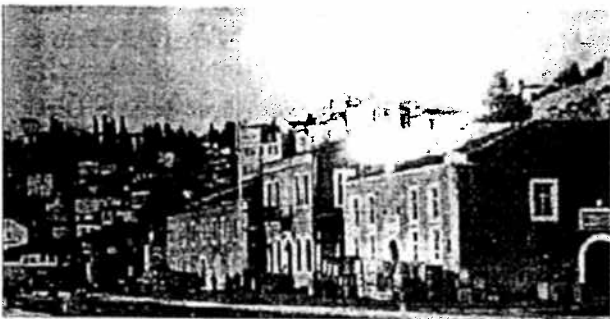


Fig. 6. Moloz port of Trabzon (Liman İşletme Müdürlüğü)

achieved by the 1950s, and Trabzon was opened to air traffic at this time. The fair project, named the 'world trade centre', has been realised only recently. The railroad is still on the agenda.

In the second half of the 20th century, Trabzon had two main chances to regain her traditional function. The first was the revival of the Persian transit in 1974. During the Iran-Iraq War, especially in 1980–1982, trade was considerably increased (DKB İhracatçılar Birliği 2004). However, this did not last long due mainly to low quality service. Goods were damaged during freight and transportation, delays occurred in deliveries and trans-

portation fees were increased unreasonably. Today, the volume of trade has almost ceased. In 2003 Iran's share in Trabzon's foreign trade was 0.13%, and it is not expected to recover due to recent developments. The Turkish and Iranian rail companies agreed to 'block rail freight transport' between the two countries.

The provinces of the eastern Black Sea — Trabzon, Rize, Artvin — have increased their trade with the BDT countries of the former Soviet Union, due to their proximity to those countries. In 2003, Trabzon's share of national exports was 0.72%, and its exports to the former Soviet Union grew much faster than the national average between 1989 and 2003 (14 fold and 4.1 fold respectively) (Gençtürk 2004).

The major regional imports are coal, heavy lumber, timber and cars (from the free zone), which come mainly from Russia. The export items are, in order of importance, hazelnuts and nut products, fresh vegetables and fruit, building materials, home textiles, clothing, various foodstuffs, etc. Agricultural products cover 94% of exports, about half of them produced regionally (table 7).

The Black Sea region's share in the volume of tourists coming from BDT countries to Turkey is 12.4%. The share of tourists from Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan is 41%. A quarter of these cite trade-shopping as the reason for their visit. The number travelling for this purpose to more westerly destinations decreases. A smaller proportion of regional tourism is for cultural reasons, particularly visits of theatrical and folkloric dance groups.

In 2004 the Turkish government announced a 'Strategy of Trade Improvement Among Neighbour Countries' that encourages rail transport for trade with Persia and middle Asia countries in order to reduce freight costs considerably (about four fold) (Dünya 2004). This policy will inevitably disadvantage trade in the Black Sea region in general, and at Trabzon in particular.

However, the region can get more value added from exports, if the share of locally produced industrial goods can be increased. Internal and external factors influence the performance of the region's industrial and service sectors (Aydemir, Aydemir 1996).

#### *Internal factors*

Most firms are traditional family enterprises (71%), small in size (employing less than 25 workers) and weak economically. This hinders the employment of qualified workers, restricts the use of new technologies in production and management, and hampers improvement in quality of product and access to foreign markets. Only 18% of firms use new technologies compared with 60% in some regions of Turkey. Few firms issue their goods with a quality label (3–6%). Therefore only 15% of firms can export their products.



Export				Import		
Items	Supplier region	Destination market	Share %	Items	Supplier country	Share %
Hazelnut products	Produced in the Black Sea	Mainly to Western countries	40.0	Coal, heavy lumber and timber	Mainly Russia	63.0
Fresh vegetables/fruits, leather goods	Mainly Aegean, Mediterranean	Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan	10.0	Steel, scrap metal	Mainly Russia	9.0
Building materials, textiles and raw materials, home textiles, clothing	Trabzon and various parts of Anatolia	Western countries, Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan	2.2	Wheat		8.0
Chemicals, motor vehicles and spare parts			2.6	Synthetic fibres		3.0
Various foodstuffs	Packed/produced in the Black Sea region	Mainly to Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan	1.7	Cars	Russia	

Table 7. Exports and imports from Trabzon in 2003 (DKB İhracatçılar Birliği 2004)

Although firms can strengthen their financial status by mergers, the highly individualised socio-cultural characteristics of local people are a serious hindrance to this. Young and educated entrepreneurs are more open to this than than the older generation, but they are not a majority.

#### External factors

The physical, economic and social infrastructures of the region's cities impede the development of enterprises. Businesses complain most about the low quality transportation network (43%), inadequate consultation services (legal, administrative, export, etc) (24%) and the insufficient agglomeration of the economy (especially qualified side sectors) (19%). The Exporters Association, established in 1998, has filled an important gap at the consultant level.

#### Conclusion

In short, looking at the function and sphere of influence of Trabzon in a historical perspective, it can be concluded that the city and the eastern Black Sea region have been affected by international and national politics rather than by economic factors. If the eastern Black Sea region seeks long-lasting economic and cultural benefits from the openings of recent decades, it needs to increase its share in production for export and to improve socio-cultural relations with its neighbours. But, the region's small-medium scale industries and services, which are dominant in the local economy, have a number of limitations to overcome in order to facilitate an increase in trade and commerce.

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