



The Mamluk sultans ruled over Egypt and Syria from 1250 to 1517.

The Venetians imported spices, dyes, officinal mixtures, silks and cotton, pearls, precious stones, and damask. In exchange they exported linens, wools, silks, velvet, furs, amber, coral, as well as metals and finished products like refined sugar, luxury glass, soap, paper and fashionable hats.

Giovanni Di Niccolo Mansueti (attributed), Three Mamluk dignitaries (Royal Collection Trust)

The Ottoman Empire

at Its Greatest Extent



The Ottoman Empire (1299–1922) rapidly expanded from north-western Anatolia. Egypt and Syria were eventually conquered in 1517.

Venice regularly ‘paid homage’ to the Ottoman Empire by offering fine and costly gifts, to maintain good relationships with the Turks and placate their ire.

The Venetians needed the Turks to hamper English, French, and Spanish enterprises, while Istanbul acknowledged that the Republic was its best client.

Gentile Bellini, Portrait of Mehmet II (National Gallery, London)



The relationship with the Persians was in part determined by the Republic's desire to find an ally against the Ottomans.

Several emissaries were sent to the court of King Uzun Hasan (XV century) to inquire about his inclinations and military forces, and encourage him to join forces against a dangerous enemy.

Folio from a Khavarannama (The Book of the East) of ibn Husam al-Dinca. 1476–86

