In the previous chapter we saw that the relevant Dutch sources point to a fierce competition among European trading communities in the Levant to gain supremacy over the mohair trade. This competition meant that more and more European merchants made their way to Ankara and the resulting competitive pressure impacted mohair products and the related industries. It is clear that this competition had direct consequences for the locals with interests in the industry. Among the locals, those who had the most to fear from the increased European presence were certainly the Armenian merchants, who had dominated Ankara’s mohair trade with the outside world. It was therefore inevitable that the European penetration of Ankara would provoke various kinds of resistance from these merchants. To keep this resistance in check, European merchants relied on their consular networks to procure imperial orders from the Porte.

It appears that none of the European nations had a consul in Ankara. An entry in the Felemenk Ahidnâme Defteri reveals that by the end of the seventeenth century Karaman Veledi Ohannes had obtained an imperial diploma which appointed him as the Dutch dragoman in Ankara. We do not know whether Ohannes was an honorary dragoman or a kind of diplomatic functionary who protected the Dutch community in Ankara. However, it is clear that the Dutch community in Ankara did not have any difficulty obtaining imperial orders from the Porte when it faced problems in and around the town. In 1701, the Porte issued an order to the governor of Ankara and the qadis of Ankara and Beypazarı to prevent the molestation of Dutch merchants looking to purchase top-quality mohair yarn and camlets in the town. Another order, issued in early 1704, was addressed to the qadis of Ankara and Tokat, and aimed once again to protect Dutch merchants from harassment by locals. Meanwhile, the Dutch colony in Ankara also continued to grow. Two successive documents of safe passage

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1 BOA ED 22/1, 163/572, evâil-i Muharrem 1116/5–15.05.1704. It was also noted that Karaman Veledi Ohannes was first appointed to the position on evâil-i C.Âhir 1107/6–16.01.1696; BOA ED 22/1, 163/575, evâsıt-ı Muharrem 1116/15–25.05.1704.


3 BOA ED 22/1, 160/560, evısııt-ı Şevval 1115/13–25.02.1704.
issued by the Porte should be considered as evidence of this trend. The first document was issued to Antonio van Breen’s mother and wife, who wanted to travel from Istanbul to Ankara where Van Breen awaited them.⁴ The second document was issued to Hendrik Markin (probably Hendrik van Diepenbroek), who wanted to leave Istanbul for Ankara with a *yasakçı*⁵ and three other *müste’men* servants.⁶

These records reveal at least that the Dutch colony in turn-of-the-century Ankara was growing steadily without, it seems, unusual resistance from locals. However, serious threats to the European presence in Ankara were soon to emerge. The first local initiative against the Europeans in Ankara came in 1706, coinciding with the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14), which had paralyzed trade between the Ottoman dominions and Europe. If we take the data on English and French mohair imports as representative of Ankara’s mohair exports to Europe, we can conclude that the impact of the war on mohair trade was quite dramatic. Marseilles’ mohair imports from Izmir fell to 46.8 tons in 1705, to 43.1 tons in 1706, to 9.2 tons in 1707, and to an absolute nadir of 7.4 tons in 1708—whereas Marseille had imported 139.1 tons in 1701. English mohair yarn imports from the Levant followed a similar pattern; after reaching a peak in 1704 with a total volume of 258.2 tons, imports fell to 43.6 tons in 1705, to 39 tons in 1706, and to 22.1 tons in 1707; recovering to 226 and 224.7 tons respectively in 1708 and 1709 and crashing again to 4.1 tons in 1710.⁷

This dramatic decrease in the amount of mohair exports explains why Ankara merchants at the time complained that they could not sell any mohair yarn in Izmir.⁸ As the complaints of the locals increased, on 6 February 1706 the European merchants in Ankara were informed that some people were plotting a conspiracy against them with the aim of expelling them from the city. A meeting was arranged the next day. Along with the European community, a local Greek called Hagi Kavere and several local Armenians—“Torron Pasternalgioglu” (Pastırmacıoğlu?), “Misterche” Ousun, and the Agop brothers—attended the meeting. The Europeans asked the locals what they knew about the scheme. The locals responded

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⁴ BOA ED 22/1, 165/581, evâhir-i Safer 1116/23.06–02.07.1704.
⁵ Janissaries charged with protecting European diplomatic representatives and merchants.
⁶ BOA ED 22/1, 165/582, evâhir-i Safer 1116/23.06–02.07.1704.
⁸ NA 1.03.01, 130, 10.02.1706, Dutch nation in Ankara (signed by Abraham de Mons & Simon van Breen, Roberto Malbranq, Antonio van Breen, Wesselink & Derveau) to Colyer.