SHARED HERITAGE

STORIES FROM
DUTCH-TURKISH HISTORY

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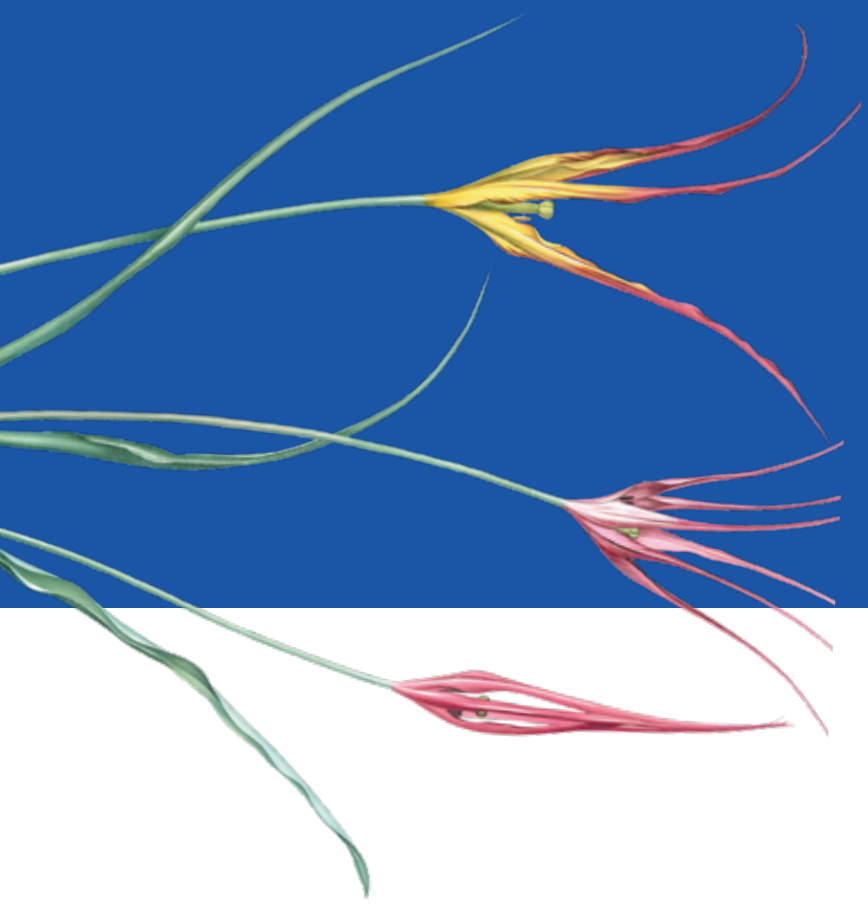
A SECRET BANKING MISSION
THE TURKISH ROOTS OF SANTA CLAUS
100 YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP
SOLIDARITY AFTER DISASTER
THE PEACE CARPET RESTORED
MUSIC BRIDGING CULTURES



SHARED HERITAGE

Kingdom of the Netherlands

His Majesty King Willem-Alexander, King of the Netherlands and Her Majesty Queen Máxima of the Netherlands

Merhaba!

It is a pleasure to reintroduce this magazine on Turkish–Dutch historical relations. More than 400 years have passed since the Netherlands and Türkiye first established diplomatic ties, and our commitment to lasting friendship and mutually beneficial partnerships is stronger than ever. Our shared cultural heritage provides a solid foundation on which to deepen and expand that friendship.

In 2012, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs together with Türkiye marked the 400-year tradition of diplomatic exchange and trade that began with our predecessor Cornelis Haga, who in 1612 secured the first *Ahitname* (official treaty) from Ottoman Sultan Ahmed I. In 2024, we also commemorated 100 years of our close friendship with the Republic of Türkiye, a celebration brought to life through music, film, art and exhibitions.

This special magazine spans four centuries of shared stories: from the Levant's trade and diplomacy to Emilie Haspels' discoveries in the Phrygian Valley; from Dr Gerard Vissering's secret banking mission to Dutch solidarity after the 2023 earthquakes; and from Johannes Botter's Art Nouveau house to the work of astronomer Egbert Kreiken. You'll also find features on our close cooperation within NATO, Türkiye's first television broadcasts, KLM's earliest flights to Türkiye, labour migration in the 1960s, and the 1935 Women's Rights Congress, to name just a few. Together, these articles weave a rich tapestry of culture, politics, economics, science, diplomacy, and fashion and sport.

Our long-standing partnership, tested by time, is grounded in mutual respect and a shared history. As we navigate a period of rapid technological change and global transformation, it is more vital than ever to remember and value the journey we have travelled together.

It is through cultural exchange that new ideas and solutions emerge. By understanding each other's perspectives, we gain deeper insight and tangible benefits for both our countries. Not only because working together delivers better outcomes, but because in open and fair collaboration, we learn to think beyond existing frameworks, embrace change, and pursue new directions.

In the Netherlands, many people of Turkish origin have made their home for over 60 years. In Türkiye, there are many Dutch citizens, as well as Turks of Dutch descent, and Turks who have worked or studied in the Netherlands. Often, these people feel equally at home in both cultures, speak both languages, and play active roles in both societies. Social media allows the new generations to remain in constant contact across borders. As tourists, we visit each other's countries; as students we study at each other's universities; and as professionals we contribute to each other's economies. A new generation is embracing collaboration, seeing it as an opportunity to work together internationally and strengthen bonds of friendship.

Together, the Netherlands and Türkiye are uniquely positioned to take on that challenge. Both countries are internationally oriented, strategically located, and possess a long tradition of diplomatic mediation and consultation. We work closely together within NATO to enhance security and stability. These are exciting and often demanding times, economically, socially and politically. The international challenges are considerable. But together, we can use our shared historical experience by connecting our young people, encouraging artists and performers to collaborate, and supporting entrepreneurs through investment and trade. We hope the surprising stories and discoveries in this magazine will inspire you to create new opportunities, develop new ideas, and forge exciting new partnerships.

On behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands,

Joep Wijnands, *Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Ankara*

Daan Huisinga, *Consul-General in İstanbul.*

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Dutch Consul Daniël Jan, Baron de Hochepied (1657–1723), officially welcomed in Smyrna (now Izmir)

The Levant Connection

Four Centuries of Dutch–Turkish Trade and Diplomacy

2025 marked exactly 400 years since the Netherlands formally organised its trade with the eastern Mediterranean region. In the year 1625, the "Directorate of Levantine Trade and Navigation" was established in Amsterdam. This institution, also known as the Levantine Chamber, was not a trading company like the VOC or the WIC, but a governing body that established the rules and order for trade in the Levant.

The Chamber of Levantine Trade, reconstructed in 2012 at the Amsterdam Museum

The Chamber was based in Amsterdam and financed through levies on ships and goods. Its tasks included appointing consuls in key commercial centres of the Ottoman Empire, such as Istanbul (then Constantinople) and Izmir (then Smyrna), and protecting Dutch trading interests in the region.

The establishment of this Chamber was the direct result of an earlier treaty from 1612: the so-called "Capitulations". These were granted by the Ottoman Sultan to the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands and offered official trade privileges and judicial protection to Dutch merchants (see also the article on Cornelis Haga). At a time when the Netherlands was still engaged in its war of independence against Spain, this represented a diplomatic breakthrough. It allowed Dutch traders to move freely within the Ottoman Empire, operate under their own laws, and defend their interests through consular representation.

(Left) Permission granted to a Dutch trader to grow grapes for wine

Reconstruction of the Chamber in 2012

On 17 April 2012, Turkish President Abdullah Gül opened an exhibition at the Amsterdam Museum featuring a full reconstruction of the original chamber of the Levantine Trade. The room was recreated based on the 1810 inventory, including all listed paintings.

From 18 April, the exhibition *The Chamber of Levantine Trade: Dutch Merchants and Ottoman Sultans* was open to the public, running until 26 August 2012. A collaboration between the Amsterdam Museum and the Rijksmuseum.

(Above left) Dutch trader in Smyrna (now Izmir) : David Georg van Lennep (1712–1797) and his family

(Above right) The Dutch Protestant Church (built in 1908) in Izmir—now and then

The trade itself was a lively and highly profitable two-way exchange.

The backbone of Dutch exports to the Levant was high-quality textiles, particularly the woollen cloth from Leiden. In addition, Dutch merchants brought in spices from Asia and silver Lion dollars, which were a popular, stable coinage in the Ottoman Empire. From the Levant, raw silk from Persia (via Ottoman routes), Angora wool (mohair), cotton, currants, raisins, dyes, and even opium—legal at the time—were imported to the Dutch Republic.

The Chamber of Levantine Trade mediated in conflicts, maintained diplomatic contacts, and ensured a formal structure within which private merchants could operate. This infrastructure of consuls and treaties underpinned a trading network that was not only economically, but also socially and culturally of great significance.

In cities such as Smyrna and Constantinople, Dutch merchants, diplomats, and entrepreneurs established themselves. They built communities that would last generations. Who were they? How did they live and what traces have they left?

IZMIR

In a short time, more than 15 trading houses were established in Izmir. The Dutch community was growing so fast that more official steps by the Directorate needed to be taken. By 1656, the first Consul was officially appointed. He was not only the direct link to the home country, but also had jurisdiction over the Dutch community in Smyrna. Life was not always easy for the traders. One of the gravestones, for instance, tells of Gijsbertus van Goor, who was murdered by pirates in 1662.

The Dutch–Turkish Association

The Dutch–Turkish Association (Nederlandsch-Turksche Vereeniging) was established in 1934, an initiative of her Majesty Queen Wilhelmina and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of the Republic of Türkiye and its first President. For many years this association did excellent work to bring the two countries together: they hosted business meetings, brought people together, organised art exhibitions, and cultural exchanges, and during the period of Turkish labour migration to the Netherlands in the 1960s, promoted mutual understanding between the two cultures. Baron T. M. E. Testa, a former Consul-General in Istanbul, was the founding chairman of the Vereeniging (see more about the Testa family later in this article).

(Above) Wilhelmina Hospital—a reconstruction based on a historic newspaper photo

(Left) Dutch trading ships in the harbour of Izmir.

The Ottoman Empire was very keen on the trade, not always so much on the traders. The international businessmen and their families therefore lived in a special section of town, the so-called Franken district, a kind of expat community. The Europeans had their own shops and bars. They had their own theatres, hospitals, churches and even attended opera performances. In a very real sense, it was a 'little Europe'—complete with religious freedom, so long as practices took place behind closed doors.

The Dutch community in Smyrna was organised as an association with a board and statutes. The statutes include an inventory of the property owned by the Dutch community, including the hospital, adjacent buildings, the church, and the small graveyard surrounding it. The land on which they were built had been given to the Dutch community in 1739 by Jan Dervau as a final gesture of gratitude for having survived the 1688 earthquake.

By the early 20th century, the situation had started to change. The community was small and most of the buildings were falling into disrepair. Something needed to be done and in 1902 the idea was born to build a new chapel and hospital. A foundation was created to help, and with gifts from the locals and the home country, including a contribution from Queen Wilhelmina, they succeeded. By 1908, enough funds had been raised. The Ottoman government had given an *Imperial Ferman* (edict) in 1908 with permission not only to renovate and expand the hospital, but also to demolish and rebuild the church. Soon the new chapel and the aptly named Wilhelmina Hospital opened their brand new doors.

Disaster struck in 1922. The Great Fire of Smyrna devastated the city. The Wilhelmina Hospital was completely destroyed, along with its archives.

Smyrna (now Izmir): disaster struck in 1922

Damaged graves, 1923

Only the church and the surrounding graveyard miraculously survived. In the chaotic aftermath, many members of the Dutch community left the city, from around 650 before the fire to just 150 afterward. Dr G.P. Marang, who visited the town shortly after the fire, described Smyrna as a city of the dead—a labyrinth of stones, charred beams, and twisted iron girders. The fire not only erased buildings, but also disrupted continuity. With no archives, no staff, and no clear ownership papers, much of what had once been the heart of the Dutch colony vanished.

In the years that followed, the remaining properties slowly slipped from Dutch hands. The church and the cemetery remained Dutch property. Later, a few additional square metres were granted to allow direct access from the main street to the church and cemetery.

By 1950, there was no longer a Dutch colony in the city. The community that had maintained itself for centuries had all but disappeared. Concerned that the small church and graveyard, the sole survivors of the Dutch community's property, might also be subject to confiscation due to lack of use, the Dutch Consul in 1951 took a pragmatic step. He signed a lease agreement with the Greek Consulate-General, allowing the Greek Orthodox community to make use of the building. This arrangement remains in place to this day. Some of the descendants of the Dutch traders, such as the Dutilh family, still live in Izmir today. Although fully integrated into Turkish society, some still feel connected to the Dutch culture of their ancestors.

ISTANBUL

In Istanbul, the Dutch community lived on a grander scale than in Izmir. The Dutch and Dutch-related families were part of the permanent make-up of the city. Illustrious families such as the Testa

(see elsewhere in this article), Hochepieds, and Keun families traded internationally and sometimes worked for the Ottoman Empire. Few places show the presence and influence of foreign communities as tangibly as Istanbul's Feriköy district. Behind high walls lies an unexpected piece of European history: the Protestant cemetery where, since the 19th century, hundreds of foreigners—including many Dutch nationals—have found their final resting place. The gravestones bear names from across the globe, but it was above all the Protestant merchant communities who laid their dead to rest in this once quiet corner of the city.

The Feriköy Protestant Cemetery is more than a burial ground. It reflects a shared history of migration, diplomacy, and trade, and today it also serves as a place of international cultural memory. One example is the grave of Bernardus Keun, a Reformed minister and the first of the Keun family to arrive in Smyrna. His descendants became consuls, interpreters, and merchants. Their tombstones stand not only as personal memorials but also as markers of the enduring presence of generations of Dutch citizens in the Ottoman Empire.

The Dutch Consulate in Istanbul shares responsibility for the management, preservation, and research of the site. This work is carried out with other consulates, historians, and heritage professionals. In practice, this includes the examination of archives, the

St Peter's Cave Church in Antioch (Antakya)

Before the Merchants Came

Dutch Footsteps in Anatolia Long Before the Levantine Trade

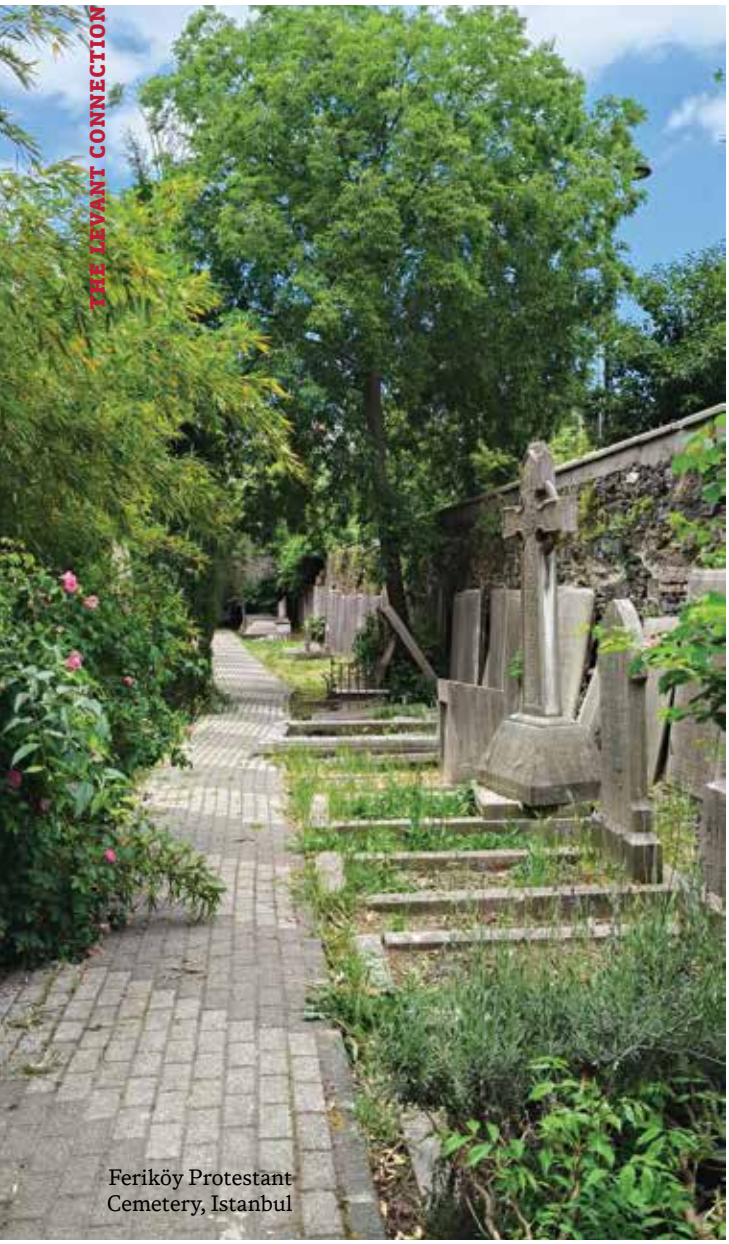
Centuries before Dutch merchants established trading posts along the Levantine coast, Dutch nobles were already making their way through Anatolia—not for trade, but in search of salvation. In the 12th century, Countess Sophia of Salm Rheineck, a Dutch noblewoman, travelled to Jerusalem during the Second Crusade. It was likely her second pilgrimage to the Holy Land. She died in Jerusalem in 1176 at the age of 66 and was buried there.

Etching from 1882 depicting the death of Floris III in Antioch

Her son, Floris III, Count of Holland, later joined the Third Crusade under Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, determined to visit his mother's grave. But tragedy struck. Barbarossa drowned in the Göksu River in 1190 while crossing Anatolia. His soldiers attempted to preserve the emperor's body in vinegar, but the process failed. His remains were divided: the flesh was interred in the Church of St Peter in Antioch (present-day Antakya), his heart and internal organs in Saint Paul's Church in Tarsus, and his bones in the Cathedral of Tyre.

Floris III would also never reach Jerusalem. Exhausted by disease and hardship, he died the same year and was buried in the same ancient church in Antioch as Barbarossa. Carved into the rocks and traditionally linked to the Apostle Peter, the Church of St Peter is considered one of the oldest Christian churches in the world.

The Dutch count's presence in Antioch leaves a quiet trace of early contact—centuries before trade became the main reason for Dutch–Turkish relations.



Feriköy Protestant Cemetery, Istanbul

Grave of the Keun family in Feriköy

Botter family grave at the Catholic Cemetery

inventorying of gravestones, and the preparation of restoration projects. It requires diplomacy, financial commitment, and heritage expertise within a complex urban setting. The graves are fragile—not only due to the passage of time, but also because of increasing urban pressure and the fading memory of the history they embody.

Across the road from Feriköy Cemetery lies the quiet Catholic (Pangaltı) Cemetery. Here you'll find the last resting places of Dutch families, some marked only by surviving headstones, others, like Jean Botter, the Dutch court tailor to the Ottoman sultans, by a family grave.

Countless lives once followed the trade winds that linked the

Aalmıs tiles in the Surp Krikor Lusavorich Church

Dutch Tiles in Istanbul

The Church of Gregory the Illuminator (*Surp Krikor Lusavorich*) is the oldest Armenian church in Istanbul, originally built in 1431. Gregory the Illuminator (239–325) is Armenia's most important saint. He was responsible for making Armenia the first country in the world to adopt Christianity as its state religion.

The church has undergone many renovations and restorations. In 1731, when a fire swept through the Galata district of Istanbul, the church was completely destroyed. With permission from Sultan Mahmut I, it was rebuilt and returned to the Armenian community. During one of the later restorations, Dutch tile panels were added to the crypt—a striking example of the often unnoticed links between the Netherlands and Türkiye.

Research shows that the tiles were made between 1800 and 1865 at the "De Bloempot" (Flowerpot) tile factory, owned by the Aalmis family from Rotterdam. The company's logo can still be seen on the back


Feriköy Chapel

Netherlands and the Ottoman Empire, assisted and guided by the Directorate of Levantine Trade and Navigation. Men and women who left the familiar behind and set their course for cities like Smyrna and Constantinople, driven by ambition, faith, or sheer necessity. Some found fortune; others lost everything—money, health, or even life itself. A few graves remain, still visitable under cypress trees or tucked away in the quiet corners of forgotten cemeteries. Some left behind only a headstone, leaning against a wall, its name and date half-erased by time. Most left no trace at all. Times changed, and international trade relations evolved. In 1826 the Levantine Chamber was officially dissolved, to be replaced by other representative offices and organisations.

(Above) Many graves were relocated as the city expanded; gravestones at the Catholic Cemetery in Istanbul have been mounted onto a funerary monument wall

(Left) Gravestones in the garden, including members of the prominent Dutilh family

of a few unused tiles. The Aalmis factory no longer exists, making the tiles in the church's crypt a unique piece of Dutch ceramic history. The church remains an important centre for the Armenian community in Istanbul, with regular services still being held.

Dutch tiles from Rotterdam can also be found elsewhere in the city. One of the most eye-catching examples is the tile panels in the so-called Imperial Hall of Topkapı Palace in Istanbul, originally built in 1583. This magnificent reception room was renovated in the mid-18th century on the orders of Sultan Osman III, and it is believed that the Rotterdam tiles date from that time. Most of them feature flowing, stylised floral designs and stand out as highlights in a hall that is already a highlight in itself.


Dutch tiles in Topkapı Palace, Istanbul

(From left to right) Entrance to the cemetery

Interior of the church

Sarcophagus in the church garden

In the 21st century, new pioneers follow in their wake: entrepreneurs, investors, and bridge-builders who, like their predecessors, are shaping the ties between two worlds. Trade changes its form, but the entrepreneurial spirit endures: people spotting opportunity and building something larger than themselves. And the Dutch and Turkish governments and their embassies facilitate and encourage these efforts wherever possible. Four centuries after the Netherlands formally established the Levantine Chamber, commercial ties between the two countries are stronger than ever.

Today, the Netherlands is Türkiye's largest source of foreign direct investment, accounting for over 23% of total FDI. More than 3,000 Dutch-origin companies are registered in Türkiye, with some operating there for over a century. Meanwhile, the Netherlands is also the top destination for Turkish investments abroad, attracting over 25% of all Turkish FDI (Foreign Direct Investment). The leading sectors for Dutch investment include finance, energy, and food & beverages, and around half of all Dutch businesses in Türkiye are based in Istanbul.

These enduring partnerships echo the original goals of the 17th-century Chamber: to provide structure, protection, and opportunity for trade in the Levant. The goods may have changed, but the spirit of Dutch–Turkish exchange continues, deeply embedded in both countries' shared history.

Part of this article is based on research by Cheyen Bannenberg and Eray Ergeç.

In 2024, the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery in Istanbul joined a growing network of memorials dedicated to peace and shared heritage. As part of the Week of Discovering European Cemeteries, an olive tree was planted at the site as a symbol of reconciliation, and part of the ASCE Peace Tree Project.

The ceremony brought together consulates and cultural institutions from seven countries, honouring more than 160 years of shared history. Researchers from the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery Initiative led a guided tour through the cemetery's layered past.

Arjen Uijterlinde, then Consul-General, underlined the site's deeper meaning: *"The Feriköy Protestant Cemetery stands as a testament to the enduring cooperation between our seven countries and our host, the city of Istanbul. Especially in these times, we should cherish such places to remind us how collaboration can create such a place of grace."*

The Testa Family: From Constantinople to Amsterdam

The Testa family, originally from the Republic of Genoa, lived in Constantinople for many centuries and played a vital role in Dutch–Ottoman relations during the period of the Levantine trade. In 1660, François Draco Testa rescued a sacred reliquary from the burning San Francesco church in Galata. The ornate reliquary contained two relics: a thorn from the Crown of Thorns and a splinter of the True Cross. In recognition of this act, Pope Alexander VII granted the relics to the family. For generations, the family kept the relics safe.

In 1939, on the eve of the Second World War, the relics were brought to the Netherlands aboard the Royal Dutch Navy ship *Hertog Hendrik,* under the care of fleet chaplain Father Albada Jelgersma.

Since the late 18th century, when Gaspard Testa, who first visited the Netherlands Gaspard Testa served as a Dutch chargé d'affaires and minister-resident in Constantinople, and was elevated to baron in 1847 in recognition of his diplomatic career in 1793 as a translator, most members of the Testa family had been living in the Netherlands.

The relics were given on long-term loan to the Testa family's parish church, St Agnes in Amsterdam, where they remained for decades.

In 2025, coinciding with Amsterdam's 750th anniversary and the Holy Year, the relics were relocated to the Basilica of St Nicholas in Amsterdam, where they are now accessible to the wider public. The decision to move the relics was made by André Testa, who had acted as custodian for over 50 years. Shortly before his death, he passed the relics on to his niece Noepy Beckers-Testa. The official handover to the Diocese of Haarlem-Amsterdam took place on 30 March 2025 during a solemn Mass celebrated by Bishop Jan Hendriks. The relics were entrusted to the Dean of Amsterdam, Eric Fennis, for permanent installation in the basilica.

The history of the thorn and cross relics is documented in a book by Mehmet Tütüncü, published as part of the *Turkish–Dutch Encounters* series.

The legacy of the Testa family in Istanbul also recently made the news. For many years, a small street in Beyoğlu bore the Testa name—Testa Çıkmazı—until it was renamed in 1927. Today, descendants of the family are campaigning to have the historical name restored. In 2024, family member Heliana Koenigsberger Testa formally submitted the request during a visit to Istanbul. She also visited the Dutch Consulate, the Dutch Chapel, and the family tombstone at the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery. *"Our great-grandfather was an Ottoman subject of Dutch origin,"* she told *KARAR* newspaper. *"This city is part of our story. We would like the name to live on."*

Another moment in the five-century relationship took place in November 2024, during the Türkiye–Netherlands Friendship Year, when Turkish ambassador Selçuk Ünal presented a historic facsimile document to the Testa family at the Yunus Emre Institute in Amsterdam. It was a copy of the credentials once presented by their ancestor Gaspard Testa—interpreter, diplomat, and later Dutch baron—to Sultan Mahmud II.

The Testa family story illustrates the depth and complexity of the shared history between the Netherlands and Türkiye.

Santa Maria Draperis Church in Istanbul, where Gaspard Testa is buried

Mass for the handover of the relics to the Basilica of St Nicholas

The double relic of the Testa family

Emilie Haspels taking photographs

The Midas Touch

Dutch archaeologist Emilie Haspels (1894–1980) in the Phrygian Valley

(Above) The famous Midas monument in Yazılı Kaya

(Left) The Midas monument on a historical photo by Haspels

The Midas Monument in Yazılıkaya is an impressive structure at the heart of the Phrygian Highlands, south of the Turkish city of Eskişehir. The monument stands proudly in a striking landscape of hills and valleys, interspersed with oddly shaped rocks and ancient structures. Although Midas was not buried here, the site bears the name of the legendary king who turned everything he touched into gold, and whose name is carved into the façade. The structure is 17 metres high, almost completely intact, and is decorated with geometric motifs that shift subtly in the changing light. In the central niche once stood a statue of the Anatolian mother goddess Cybele.

Throughout the Phrygian Highlands, you can discover many monuments carved from tufa rock, dating to around 700–550 BC. This is where the Phrygians lived some 3,000 years ago. Their civilisation, and the monuments they left behind, were rescued from obscurity through the pioneering work of a Dutch

Emilie Haspels in her village house in Yazılı Kaya

archaeologist who conducted extensive research in the 1930s, '40s and '50s: Emilie Haspels, a pioneer in the true sense of the word. She was also a close friend of the famous Turkish archaeologist Halet Çambel and maintained a warm correspondence with Princess (later Queen) Juliana about her work and life. Who was this remarkable woman who called herself *"the last of the travellers"*?

She was a young but already established researcher when, in 1937, the French Institute in Istanbul invited her to lead an excavation in the Phrygian Highlands. It was a daunting

task to dig in the remote countryside of Anatolia, but Haspels was passionate and determined. Today, Yazılıkaya and the surrounding valleys are easily accessible by modern roads and even public transport. That was not the case in the 1930s. Life was simple. Basic facilities were lacking, transport was difficult, and supplies were limited. Haspels quickly learned Turkish and adapted easily to village life. With the local villagers—especially the women—she developed lasting friendships. She slept in the oda, the village room provided by the muhtar, or village head. Her small house in Yazılıkaya, where she lived for months at a time, can still be visited today. She felt at home in this part of Türkiye and worked tirelessly to study its forgotten monuments and sculptures. In a way, it was an archaeologist's dream: to rediscover an entire lost civilisation.

Though the Phrygian Highlands seemed far removed from world affairs, global events soon caught up with her. The Second World War made it impossible to continue her work for the French government or to return to the Netherlands. Stranded in Istanbul, Haspels began teaching at the Archaeological Institute of Istanbul University and wrote a textbook on Greek ceramics for her students. To support herself and her family in the Netherlands, she also taught at the American School for Girls and worked as a translator at the American Consulate's War Office.

After the war, she was appointed Professor of Classical Archaeology and Ancient Art History at the University of Amsterdam. She also became the first director of the Allard Pierson Museum. She organised four more expeditions and documented all known Phrygian fortresses and religious monuments, recording her experiences in a detailed personal diary she

(Above left) The *oda*, the village house Haspels stayed in

(Above) A photo by Haspels of Turkish archaeologist Halet Çambel

View from the top of the Midas monument

called Boekie (a Dutch nickname for 'booklet'). Her findings were published in the monumental *The Highlands of Phrygia: Sites and Monuments* (1971), which remains the standard reference work in the field to this day.

Her most prominent assistant in the 1950s was Jaap M. Hemelrijk (1925–2018), who later succeeded her in 1965 as Professor of Classical Archaeology and Director of the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam. In an exclusive interview, he recalled their working conditions: *"This whole area of Türkiye was then virtually unknown. She opened it up to the outside world and recorded everything. She studied*

The official opening in Eskisehir

Nathalie Lintvelt, Dutch Deputy Ambassador at the exhibition in Afyon.

Travelling Exhibition

Through the Lens of Emilie Haspels: The Phrygian Highlands 1937–1958

On 28 February 2025, the exhibition *Through the Lens of Emilie Haspels* opened at the Eti Archaeology Museum in Eskişehir. Organised as part of the Türkiye–Netherlands Friendship Year, the exhibition presents a selection of photographs from the archives of the Allard Pierson Museum of the University of Amsterdam. Most were taken by Haspels herself, some by her team members. Over the years, she developed a deep bond with the Phrygian Highlands and its people. She expressed this feeling in her memoirs as follows: *"Phrygia takes hold of you like nothing else. You can't free yourself from it—it captures you, and when you surrender, you become absorbed in it."*

The opening ceremony was attended by Eskişehir Deputy Governor Oğuz Şenlik, Dutch Ambassador to Türkiye Joep Wijnands and his spouse Carmen Wijnands, Museum Director Emriye Yurt, and Eskişehir Metropolitan Municipality Mayor Yılmaz Büyükerşen.

The exhibition then travelled to the Afyonkarahisar Archaeological Museum. It was subsequently

everything of archaeological interest. She took excellent photos, always under good lighting conditions—sometimes at seven in the morning, when the light was just right—and I made the archaeological drawings. Life was pretty basic. All transport was by peasant carts—those squeaky, horse-drawn carriages. She was fearless: she was bitten by dogs, taken by a bull on the horns, and endured it all. Fantastic! Her book on Phrygian civilisation is still the book on the subject. She started working on it around 1953, and it wasn't published until 1971. Truly an incredible accomplishment—a life's work!"

Emilie Haspels died in 1980.

Patty Zandstra, then Head of the Political Department at the Dutch Embassy.

Visitors of the exhibition in Kütahya

presented at the Kütahya Tile Museum (*Çini Müzesi*).

The exhibition was curated by Charlie Smid and Wolter Braamhorst, with supporting research by Pleuntje van Lieshout. Research for the exhibition also drew on the biographical work done by Filiz Songu. Project coordination was led by Fokke Gerritsen and Eray Ergeç.

Exhibition design was by Melisa Tez.

The project was realised through close collaboration between the Netherlands Institute in Türkiye, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Ankara, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Allard Pierson Museum, the Eti Archaeology Museum, and Türkiye's Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

The Secret Mission of Dr Gerard Vissering


Gerard Vissering

Based on research by Ufuk Özay, Supervisor at De Nederlandsche Bank

An inconspicuous elderly Dutchman—balding, with round glasses and a grey moustache—arrived in Istanbul by boat from Venice in June 1928, accompanied by his young wife and assistant. In typically Dutch fashion, he had taken out a solid travel insurance policy—just in case—listing his profession as 'banker' and 'professor'.

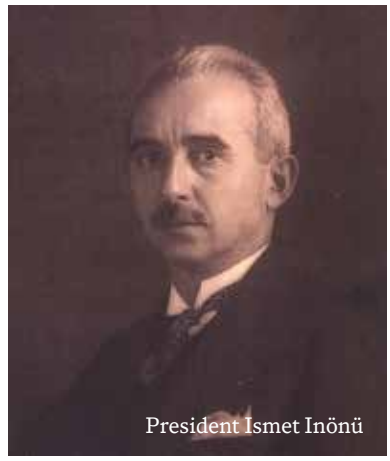
He had also paid a visit to his doctor before departure, who advised: *"no tap water and no red meat."* According to his expense report, he purchased the booklet *Im neuen Anatolien* for 7 guilders and 20 cents to read along the way. Before his departure, Dr Gerard Vissering had received a short briefing from the Turkish ambassador in The Hague.

Although the boat docked at dawn, senior officials from the newly founded Türkiye İş Bankası were waiting to welcome him. After a warm reception and swift passage through customs, the party took a taxi across the Golden Horn. Vissering notes that the streetcars still bear the letters of the former Constantinople Tram Company, a French-Belgian enterprise—just one of many signs that Türkiye's new economic independence still has a long way to go.

He had a room at the legendary Pera Palace. In this famous hotel, one might spot Alfred Hitchcock and Greta Garbo at the bar, and Agatha Christie and Mata Hari in the lobby. The hotel staff gave him and his wife a spacious corner apartment on the second floor: salon, bedroom, and bathroom—old, but still of good quality, as he noted approvingly in his diary. From his hotel window, the ever-observant Vissering sketched the outlines of the Bosphorus, annotating them with notes on ferry routes and foreign-owned warehouses.

But banker Gerard Vissering (1865–1937) is not here on holiday. Although clearly impressed by the mysterious metropolis and the energy of the new Turkish Republic, he is a man on a mission. A secret mission.

Türkiye was facing financial difficulties and was struggling to secure urgently needed credit on



President İsmet Inönü

Celâl Bayar

(Left) President Atatürk after a meeting at the İşbank with Vissering

international capital markets. It lacked a national banking system and is still dependent on the Ottoman Bank, which had been virtually controlled by Britain and France—nations with which Türkiye had recently been at war. Economic necessity had forced Türkiye in 1924 to accept an agreement: the Ottoman Bank would function as central bank until 1935, unless a national state bank was established. But who could provide independent advice?

The Turks approached the President of De Nederlandsche Bank, Dr Gerard Vissering, to examine how the Turkish pound might be stabilised and what would be needed to establish a solid national bank. Vissering was a distinguished economist with international experience and, having grown up in a household steeped in finance—his father had been Minister of Finance—he was well prepared. Vissering's mission was not commissioned by the Dutch government, but by the Turks themselves—precisely because the Netherlands had no direct economic stake in Türkiye. This gave him a degree of neutrality no British, French or German adviser could have offered.

The stakes were high. The Turkish Republic had much to offer the world: oil rights (in Mosul, northern Iraq), timber reserves, and above all, tobacco. The American secret service had known of Vissering's mission two months before his departure. The Germans, French and British closely followed the situation and tried to uncover his intentions. His advice could have far-reaching financial consequences, and the international banking world was deeply unsettled by its lack of control. His travel journal reveals that Vissering was well aware of this and feared that foreign banks might use their influence to delay or derail the

The once secret files

(Above left) İşbank building (now a museum) where Vissering did his research (photo by *Ayhan Çakar*)

(Above right) Official painting of Gerard Vissering

(Right) Business card with typed message of Vissering's visit to Müller

formation of a national Turkish institution. He therefore declined all private meetings with diplomats during his stay.

Vissering was welcomed with an official dinner by President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his cabinet, led by Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, at the elegant Tokatlian restaurant. The atmosphere was positive, and Vissering was given carte blanche to assess the situation. In his private notebook, he referred to Mustafa Kemal as *"a strong leader with a firm hand and clear vision."* While cautious in tone, it's clear he had a certain admiration for the republican project.

For three weeks, Vissering held discussions and reviewed the financial records of the Turkish state. At the time, some 160 million Turkish pounds were in circulation, but the gold reserves backing them were nowhere near sufficient. In 1928, the Turkish pound was worth nearly nine times less against the British pound sterling than before the First World War. How the government was managing to balance the budget remained unclear—something that greatly affected investor confidence.

Gold had to be found because, as Vissering noted, even with the centuries-old Ottoman crown jewels included, reserves were lacking. Gold could be obtained on the international market, but that would leave Türkiye vulnerable. The Americans, for instance, were prepared to lend gold in exchange for oil guarantees and tobacco rights.

Vissering required eighty pages to summarise the financial situation. Although he considered the prospects for stabilising the Turkish pound favourable, he stressed that emergency measures and temporary solutions would not suffice in the long term. One of his key recommendations was the establishment of a Central Issue and Circulation Bank, which would also help regulate the money supply. He calculated that converting İşBank—the commercial bank already under Turkish control—into a central bank would be a sound move. It had experienced staff, sufficient expertise, and adequate resources.

The government in Ankara was highly complimentary of the

report. It provided the Turkish authorities with a roadmap towards an independent and stable monetary system, free from British and French interference. Türkiye asked Vissering to keep the report confidential, since Prime Minister İsmet İnönü did not want the international community to see his hand.

That did not stop bankers and government officials from the United States, Britain, France, and Germany from trying to get hold of Vissering's report. These countries were keen to gain influence over the establishment of the new central bank and sought insight into Türkiye's monetary plans. But Vissering remained steadfast. Even Dutch business interests tried to wedge their way in—unsuccessfully. The official response never changed: *"Dr Vissering regrets that he does not consider himself authorised to share the document with third parties."*

On 9 March 1929, the telephone rang. Karl Müller, deputy head of the German Reichsbank and later a National Socialist, wanted to speak with Vissering urgently. Two days later, they had a long conversation. Müller, who had also been asked to advise the Turkish government, wished to know Vissering's views. But Vissering would not release the report. His superior, Hjalmar Schacht, nicknamed "The Magician of Money", also met with Vissering but fared no better. Schacht would later serve as Hitler's Finance Minister, though he eventually distanced himself from the regime.

Türkiye kept Vissering's report classified for over half a century. De Nederlandsche Bank has yet to publish it. Only in late 2012 were the papers officially handed over to the National Archives in The Hague.

Gerard Vissering maintained friendly ties with Türkiye throughout his life, even after stepping down as President of De Nederlandsche Bank. President İnönü continued to seek his advice until 1934. Celal Bayar, head of İşBank—later President of Türkiye—sent Vissering 2,000 cigarettes every New Year. After his retirement, Vissering remained in touch with Turkish colleagues, sometimes receiving illustrated postcards from Ankara with brief handwritten notes from former ministers. He never published anything about the mission—not even in his later memoirs.

In 1931, Türkiye established its own central bank.

Opening exhibition with (from left to right) Turkish Central Bank Prresident Fatih Karahan, DNB President Klaas Knot and researcher and supervisor DNB Ufuk Özay

Vissering Exhibition

On 27 September 2024, DNB President Klaas Knot and Turkish Central Bank President Fatih Karahan opened a special exhibition at the Central Bank headquarters in Ankara, marking Dr Vissering's secret 1928 mission, which helped pave the way for the founding of Türkiye's national central bank.

The exhibition brought together original documents and photographs from Vissering's journey—many shown to the public for the first time. It offered a glimpse of the early financial ties between the Netherlands and Türkiye—ties that continue to this day.

The initiative was the result of a joint effort by De Nederlandsche Bank, the Turkish Central Bank, and the Dutch Embassy in Ankara. It formed part of the Türkiye–Netherlands Friendship Year 2024, marking 100 years since the two countries signed their first official treaty of friendship.

Klaas Knot stepped down as DNB President in June 2025, after serving two full terms. He was succeeded by Olaf Sleijpen.

The Power of Diplomacy

Looking back on the Türkiye–Netherlands Friendship Year 2024

A soprano's voice rose over the Roman stonework of the ancient amphitheatre in Side. The Antalya State Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Dutch maestro Jules van Hessen, shared the stage with soprano Aylin Sezer and baritone Sef Thissen in a spectacular performance. In the fading Mediterranean light, Turkish and Dutch musicians sang and played the "Türkiye–Netherlands 100-Year Friendship Concert", a scene perfect for the centenary it honoured.

Following the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye in 1923, the new government, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, sought to formalise diplomatic relations with various nations to solidify its international standing. The Treaty of Friendship between the Turkish Republic and the Netherlands was signed in Ankara on 16 August 1924. The Netherlands, with its longstanding history of diplomatic and trade relations with the Ottoman Empire dating back to 1612 (celebrated extensively in 2012), was a logical choice. The friendship between the two nations was honed though centuries of Levantine trade, early consular posts, and merchants travelling between Amsterdam and Istanbul long before the word "diplomacy" took root.

Dutch Ambassador to Türkiye Joep Wijnands and Selçuk Ünal, then Turkish Ambassador to the Netherlands

In 2024, the Republic of Türkiye and the Kingdom of the Netherlands officially marked 100 years of formal diplomatic relations in a series of activities and projects. The ties between the two countries are much more prominent and intertwined than in 1924: historical, economic, cultural, and deeply personal. More than half a million people of Turkish descent live in the Netherlands. At the same time, Dutch people have lived, worked, and travelled in Türkiye for centuries. Joined at the hip, one might say—and it was no surprise that so many individuals and organisations seized the centennial year as an opportunity to organise something special, big or small. From grassroots initiatives to headline events, the Friendship Year became a living reflection of how embedded the connection truly is.

Rather than simply looking back, the centennial served as a starting point for renewed engagement. In cooperation with Turkish ministries, municipalities, cultural institutions and local communities, the Dutch Embassy in Ankara and the Consulate General in Istanbul

A Friendship Struck in Silver

From the earliest days of minting, coins have marked moments of historic significance and celebration. Darphane, Türkiye's State Mint, continues that tradition: in 2012 it issued a commemorative piece for 400 years of Dutch–Turkish diplomatic relations, and in 2024 it did so again for the Friendship Year. On 7 October 2024 it released a special 20-lira coin, struck in high-grade silver and weighing a little over 30 grammes. On the front, finished in enamel, it shows the Friendship Year logo with the inscription "100 Years of Friendship." The edition was limited to 3,000 pieces.

Karsu and the Sound of Shared Friendship

Few artists embody the spirit of the Türkiye–Netherlands Friendship Year 2024 as Karsu Dönmez. Born in Amsterdam to a family from Hatay, the singer, pianist and composer has long been a cultural bridge between the two countries.

Karsu gave two landmark concerts during the centennial celebrations—first in Istanbul, then in Ankara attracting 20.000 fans. Organised with the support of the Dutch Embassy and municipality of Ankara, her free shows were as much celebrations of friendship as they were of music. Ambassador Joep Wijnands called her *"a true ambassador of both countries."*

The Ankara concert saw Karsu perform under the open at the Atatürk Orman Çiftliği Natural Life Park, and receiving flowers on stage from both mayor and ambassador. Her Istanbul concert, staged at the iconic Harbiye Open-Air Theatre, drew celebrities, artists and thousands of admirers.

But Karsu's contributions go far beyond music. In response to the 2023 earthquakes, she raised major donations for Hatay through concerts, cookbooks, and public campaigns.

Her Karsu Foundation works to rebuild local life, offering music education and a sense of hope to young survivors, showing the power of music to heal and console. In the words of Mayor Yavaş, she is "*a goodwill ambassador between our nations.*"

Mayor Yavaş and Ambassador Wijnands with Karsu

initiated a broad and ambitious cultural programme. Over 40 unique activities were organised in 39 provinces and 110 towns across Türkiye.

"The tulip featured in our centennial logo is not just decoration," the Dutch Ambassador to Türkiye, Joep Wijnands, noted. *"It reflects shared heritage, and shared ownership of the story. Together with all our partners, we worked incredibly hard and truly had an extraordinary year."*

The priorities were clear: to promote cultural exchange, strengthen inclusion and gender equality, and focus on youth participation and environmental awareness. Many projects were aimed directly at children, women, and young people—groups often overlooked in international cultural diplomacy. Nearly 200,000 people were reached directly through theatre, concerts, exhibitions, workshops, literature festivals and film screenings.

Türkiye is one of the Netherlands' priority countries for international cultural policy, and that was evident throughout the programme. But culture was only part of the story. The Friendship Year also supported dialogue in areas such as trade, education, and security. *"The Netherlands is currently the largest foreign investor in Türkiye,"* said Selçuk Ünal, then Turkish Ambassador to the Netherlands. *"We are seeing increasing numbers of Dutch businesses using Türkiye as a regional hub."*

Security cooperation, too, remained a key dimension. As NATO partners, the two countries operate in shared strategic environments. Mark Rutte, then Prime Minister of the Netherlands, now NATO Secretary General, also highlighted the importance of the Friendship Year during a press conference.

Behind the scenes, the Dutch consular presence in Türkiye remains one of the busiest in the world—clear proof of the depth of connection between the two societies.

Ünal pointed to the long-standing presence of the Turkish community in the Netherlands as a source of mutual understanding. *"They are part of political life, academia, the arts. These human ties deepen the bilateral connection far beyond official statements."*

Altın Gün (photo by Thesupermat)

Altın Gün and the Psychedelic Pulse of Anatolia

Altın Gün, the Amsterdam-based band that has taken the global stage by storm, brought their electrifying sound to the MIX Festival in Istanbul in 2024. With a Grammy nomination, collaborations with acts like Tame Impala, and performances at major festivals including Coachella, Bonnaroo and Fuji Rock, Altın Gün have evolved from cult favourites into international stars.

Formed in the Netherlands by musicians drawn to the rich traditions of Anatolian folk, Altın Gün reimagines Turkish classics through a kaleidoscope of psychedelic rock, funk, synthpop and cosmic reggae.

In February 2024, the Olten Filarmoni Orkestrası from İzmir performed Valentine Classics at the Movies at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam

The centennial year, in many ways, opened doors and minds, and invited us to share our ideas, our inspiration, and our stories. Many of those stories are reflected throughout this Shared Heritage magazine and closely linked to the cultural and diplomatic activities of 2024. You'll encounter them in various articles—such as the *View of Ankara* projection onto the Temple of Augustus, the Bosporus Swim by the Dutch ambassador, the Gerard Vissering exhibition, the *Girl with a Pearl Earring* tapestry created by women affected by the 2023 earthquakes, the return of the restored Hereke carpet to the Peace Palace in The Hague, the tree planting in the Friendship Forest in Marmaris, the *Female Pioneers* photo exhibition, and the tribute to Dutch archaeologist Emilie Haspels, to name just a few.

This article turns to the many other initiatives that shaped the centenary year—projects that reached into classrooms, libraries, theatres, public parks, and community centres. From science and children's literature to film and performance, the celebrations touched nearly every sector. And above all, there was music—expressed in every style and genre, formal and improvised, ancient and new.

If anything resonated throughout the year, it was that we didn't just talk: we listened, we danced, we sang, and we played.

A selection of some of the Türkiye–Netherlands Friendship Year 2024 activities and projects:

Friendship Concert: Sinfonia Rotterdam

Sinfonia Rotterdam performed two concerts in Ankara and Istanbul, conducted by Conrad van Alphen and featuring solo pianist Emir Ilgen and soprano Aylin Sezer. The concerts showcased classical music as a shared cultural language and marked the formal start of the Friendship Year.

Friendship Concert: Side Amphitheatre

A grand closing concert was held at the historic Roman theatre in Side, featuring the Antalya State Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Dutch conductor Jules van Hessen, with soloists Aylin Sezer and Sef Thissen. The concert celebrated a century of cultural exchange in an iconic setting.

Friendship Concert: Hierapolis Ancient Theatre

Friendship Concert: Sinfonia Rotterdam

Friendship Concert: Side Amphitheatre

Friendship Concert: Hierapolis Ancient Theatre

The Concertgebouw Chamber Orchestra and Orkestra Akademik Başkent joined forces for a unique performance at the ancient Hierapolis theatre in Pamukkale. The collaboration took place on a UNESCO World Heritage site and symbolised the shared values of preservation and artistic excellence.

Friendship Concert: Hierapolis Ancient Theatre

Maze Voice at IKSV Music Festival

The award-winning Dutch vocal group Maze Voice gave a free outdoor concert as part of the IKSV Music Festival's *Weekend Classics at the Park* in Istanbul. Their performance combined innovative vocal techniques with pop-rock energy and was designed to engage families and park visitors of all ages.

Maze Voice at IKSV Music Festival

Bodrum & Ankara Jazz Festivals

Dutch ensembles Loek van den Berg Quintet and AVA Trio performed at the Bodrum and Ankara Jazz Festivals, respectively. These events showcased the diversity and vitality of the Dutch jazz scene while facilitating cross-cultural appreciation among Turkish audiences.

Bozcaada Jazz Festival

The Bozcaada Jazz Festival featured Dutch electronic duo Kraak & Smaak and pop-up performances by bassist Esat Ekincioglu. A key moment was the roundtable *Harmonizing Cultures: Sustainable Music Collaborations*, which brought together Turkish and Dutch artists to discuss longevity and ethics in international music production. The festival reached around 10,000 attendees and received broad media coverage. Beyond the music, it championed gender equality, ecological transition, and social inclusion.

Makas Concert Tour

The Dutch progressive/Anatolian rock band Makas toured Diyarbakır, Eskişehir, and Istanbul, reinterpreting Anatolian melodies through a modern lens. The concerts celebrated shared heritage and demonstrated the unifying power of music across cultures and genres.

Makas Concert Tour

Göksel Yilmaz Ensemble Concerts

In response to the 2023 earthquake, the Göksel Yilmaz Ensemble toured affected cities including Diyarbakır, Adıyaman, Kahramanmaraş, and Antakya. Their concerts offered moral support and emotional healing, building on nearly two decades of musical engagement between Türkiye and the Netherlands.


Denizli Jazz Festival

Denizli Jazz Festival

Dutch musicians Eric Vloeimans and Egbert Derix performed at the opening of the Denizli Jazz Festival before a crowd of 2,800. The programme combined concerts, film screenings, panels, and community outreach, highlighting the Netherlands' contribution to a global jazz dialogue.

The Cleveringa Lecture

On 11 December 2024, the historic *Palais de Hollande* in Istanbul hosted a special lecture as part of the Türkiye–Netherlands Friendship Year. The Cleveringa Lecture was delivered by Professor A.G. (Bert) Koenders, who spoke about Dutch–Turkish friendship through the moral lens of Professor Rudolph Cleveringa. His reflections on the relevance of Cleveringa's legacy for today's geopolitical challenges were powerful and thought-provoking.

Professor Cleveringa is a Dutch symbol of moral courage, known for his 1940 protest speech against the dismissal of Jewish colleagues by the Nazi occupiers. His legacy of intellectual resistance is comparable to the humanitarian acts of Turkish diplomats during the war. From Marseille to Budapest, Turkish envoys quietly provided Jews, including Dutch citizens, with passports, visas, and safe passage via Türkiye to Palestine and beyond.

Since 1946, Cleveringa Lectures are organised in the Netherlands and around the world in cooperation with the Leiden University Foundation.

Simonian Concert

Dutch–Armenian vocalist Ilda Simonian performed a concert with storytelling elements in Istanbul, promoting Armenian musical traditions within the Dutch cultural context. The performance exemplified cultural diplomacy through heritage preservation and artistic exchange.

Dutch Metal Fest Izmir

Dutch Metal Fest Izmir

Three Dutch metal bands—Sinister, Massive Assault, and Metal Media—performed alongside Turkish band Inhuman Depravity. The festival also hosted a symposium on metal music and cinema, creating a platform for young audiences to explore genre crossovers and subcultural identity.

AVA Trio: Grand Tour of Türkiye

The AVA Trio toured 12 Turkish cities, blending Turkish folk traditions with avant-garde jazz. The project included concerts and workshops in cities such as Istanbul, Ankara, Diyarbakır, and Van.

Water Heritage Collaboration Project

Water Heritage Collaboration Project

Organised in collaboration with the Netherlands Institute in Türkiye and the water companies of Amsterdam and Istanbul, this symposium brought together Dutch and Turkish experts to discuss water heritage, public awareness, and sustainable urban water management.

Visit of Dutch Cultural Delegation to Türkiye

A 24-person delegation from Dutch cultural institutions visited Türkiye, exploring new partnerships and strengthening existing ties. Organised by the Consulate General in Istanbul, the programme included representatives from the Rijksakademie, Cultural Heritage Agency, World Press Photo, and others.

Show of Hands Festival Networking Event

A networking event at the Palais de Hollande brought together artists, cultural professionals, press, and sponsors to mark the opening of the Show of Hands Festival. The event highlighted Dutch engagement with the Istanbul arts scene and supported creative exchange.

Sound of Europe Press Conference

Ahead of the Sound of Europe Festival, a press conference hosted by the Dutch Consulate General in Istanbul served as a platform for media and professionals to learn about the inclusive European music line-up. Dutch artist Gaidaa was among the featured performers in the festival.

Double Billing - The Flying Dutchman and Vincent van Gogh

The Flying Dutchman

The legend of a mysterious ghostly vessel, most often sighted near the Cape of Good Hope, has fascinated generations. The tragic story of a damned captain of a Dutch galleon, condemned to sail the seven seas as divine punishment, has inspired painters, poets, writers, lyricists, and composers for centuries. Who could resist this terrifying figure on his eternal spectral journey, who could only find redemption through true love? It may therefore come as no surprise that during the 2024 Türkiye–Netherlands Friendship Year, the Flying Dutchman would immediately set sail for the Turkish theatres to mesmerise audiences, this time personified in Richard Wagner's famous opera.

"The Flying Dutchman" (*Der Fliegende Holländer* in the original German) is Richard Wagner's first operatic masterpiece, based on writer Heinrich Heine's retelling of the ancient legend. It premiered in 1843 in Dresden, Germany, with Wagner himself conducting. It was first performed in

Martijn Sanders

Türkiye in the 1960s.

The modern staging by the renowned German Director Sebastian Welker marked a captivating start of the 15th International Istanbul Opera and Ballet Festival on June 1, 2024 at the Atatürk Kültür Merkezi (AKM) Türk Telekom Opera Hall. The Istanbul State Opera and Ballet Orchestra and Choir performed a no-holds-barred, full-on theatrical spectacle with Martijn Sanders, a Dutch baritone, in the lead role.

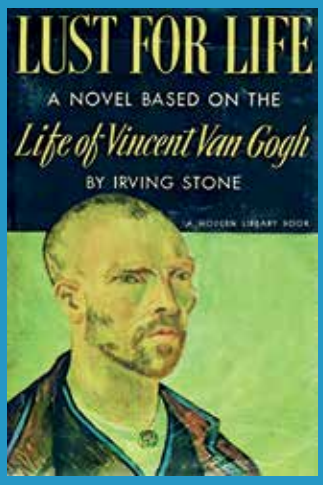
Seventy years earlier a Turkish composer was also inspired by a famous Dutchman—this time not a tortured and haunted sea captain, but a tortured and haunted artist, Vincent van Gogh.

State Opera in Ankara

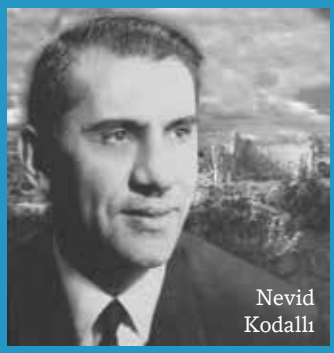
A Van Gogh Opera in Ankara

On 25 February 1957, the State Opera in Ankara staged a remarkable premiere: *Van Gogh*, an opera composed by the young Turkish talent Nevid Kodallı (1925–2009). It was one of the first full-scale operas by a Turkish composer, and it told the story of a Dutch painter.

Inspired by Irving Stone's novel *Lust for Life*, the opera followed Vincent van Gogh's life through five paintings, from the Dutch countryside to the fields of Arles. The performance was a high-profile affair, attended by President Celâl Bayar and



the Dutch ambassador M.M.L. Savelberg, who later remarked: *"It beautifully captured the tragic lives of Dutch farmers. While I was listening to it, I understood the meaning of homesickness."*



Nevid Kodallı

Kodallı had studied in Paris under Honegger and Boulanger before returning to Türkiye, where he became known for works such as the *Atatürk Oratorio*. His *Van Gogh* was staged 26 times in Ankara, though there was interest, it was never performed in the Netherlands.

Kresendo: Speed Dating for the Music Industry

In a unique networking event at the Dutch Chapel in Istanbul, Kresendo hosted a panel on the Turkish music business, followed by a speed-dating session connecting over 200 participants. The project supported peer learning and equitable growth in the independent music scene.

Innovative Studies in Museum Education

A collaboration between the Erimtan Archaeology and Art Museum and the Rijksmuseum focused on exchanging expertise in museum education. The partnership promoted lifelong learning through innovative and inclusive educational programmes for young audiences.

Hydro Powers Project

Hydro Powers Project

Led by the Dutch–Swedish art collective Kultivator, this project explored the relationship between humans, water, and landscape. In Diyarbakır and Istanbul, artists collaborated with local communities and the Arazi Assembly to create site-specific works around the Tigris River, linking ecology with artistic expression.

Blue and White Ceramics Exhibition

Hosted at the Ankara Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, this exhibition presented contemporary Turkish ceramics inspired by the legacy of Iznik tiles. The event featured works by 66 international artists and provided a platform for intercultural dialogue through design and craft.

Contrasts Cross-Cultural Project

This socio-cultural initiative highlighted the experiences of Turkish women and their descendants in the Netherlands through an exhibition in Haarlem. The project addressed questions of identity, migration, and memory, linking personal stories with broader historical patterns.

Spaces of Culture Programme

As part of a masterclass series entitled *Boundless*, this programme strengthened cultural exchange and artistic freedom. Two Dutch artists contributed to discussions and workshops that tackled the intersection of art, human rights, and cultural space in Türkiye.

Cappadox Festival: "Changing Skies"

Dutch artist Wapke Feenstra joined the Cappadox Festival with a project focused on local agricultural knowledge and community traditions. Working with the women's cooperative in Uçhisar, she hosted a shared meal to highlight regional food cultures and collective memory.

Marmaris Summer Festival

Marmaris Summer Festival: Flourishing Generations II

Dutch artist Bert Barten composed a musical piece based on tree vibrations recorded in Marmaris National Park. The performance combined ecological data with Turkish musical traditions, offering a sensory experience that bridged science, art, and nature. The project was a initiative of New Path to Equality.

Sound of Europe Music Festival

Held across Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir, this festival promoted European music diversity with strong Dutch participation. Supported by EUNIC and Creative Europe, it fostered inclusion and exchange among artists, institutions, and audiences.

Dutch Artist Gaaida at the Sound of Europe Music Festival

8th Note: Train-the-Trainers Programme

8th Note: Train-the-Trainers Programme

In the aftermath of the 2023 earthquakes in southeastern Türkiye, the *8th Note* project—led by the Mordem Art and Ecological Life Association—delivered vital psychosocial support to children in the affected provinces of Diyarbakır, Adıyaman, Hatay, and Maraş. The programme combined art therapy and performance-based activities to help children rebuild trust, reconnect with others, and process their trauma through creative expression. It reached more than 1,500 children with theatre performances and over 500 children with targeted artistic workshops. A second core element was the Train-the-Trainers component, where local educators and facilitators learned to implement and adapt the programme's methodologies within their own organisations. This ensured longer-term impact and knowledge transfer within the region's social support structures.

Kresendo: Grow Local, Grow Equal

This initiative by the Kreşendo Women's Cooperative aimed to improve gender equality in Türkiye's music industry. With UNESCO support, the project empowered women and underrepresented groups by enhancing access to resources and addressing structural inequalities in the cultural sector.

Sinopale 9 Biennial

Under the theme *Circular Narratives*, the ninth edition of the Sinopale contemporary art biennial brought together artists and citizens to reflect on ecology, collective memory, and urban sustainability. The Netherlands contributed through artistic participation and dialogue.

Istanbul International Literature Festival (ITEF)

Dutch writer Eva Meijer and publishers Stella Rieck and Jurgen Maas took part in ITEF, contributing to literary panels and student sessions. Organised in partnership with Kalem Literary Agency, the event raised the visibility of Dutch literature in Türkiye and strengthened professional publishing ties.

Tulip Bulbs and Dutch Children's Books

In a gesture of goodwill and cultural exchange, 100 schools across Türkiye received a friendship package containing Dutch tulip bulbs and translated children's books. In remote areas, winter conditions meant deliveries arrived on foot or by horse—adding symbolic weight to the outreach effort.

Tulip Bulbs and Dutch Children's Books

The Portrait of Infinity Book Launch

Philosopher Cemal Bâli Akal published *The Portrait of Infinity: Spinoza and 17th Century Dutch Painting,* exploring connections between Dutch philosophical thought and visual art. The book examined the social context of painters like Vermeer and Rembrandt and their influence on modern aesthetics.

Documentarist Film Festival

At the 17th edition of *Documentarist: Istanbul Documentary Days*, the Netherlands supported the Johan van der Keuken New Talent Award and screened Dutch documentaries. A special dinner at the Palais de Hollande honoured young filmmakers, reinforcing the Netherlands' role in fostering international documentary film.

Flying Broom Film Festival

The Dutch film *Milk* by director Stefanie Kolk was featured in this festival focused on gender equality. The screening highlighted women's contributions to cinema and supported public dialogue on social issues through artistic narratives.

European Cinema Days

During European Cinema Days 2024, the Dutch family film *Romy's Salon* was screened in 10 cities across Türkiye. The film's intimate portrayal of dementia and intergenerational care introduced Turkish audiences to contemporary Dutch storytelling through cinema.

Children's Land Film and Art Festival

In Ankara and Mardin, the Dutch Embassy contributed to this festival with film screenings and educational workshops led by Dutch experts. Activities focused on philosophy and photography for children, particularly those from underprivileged backgrounds, reinforcing cultural rights and creative access.

Ayvalık International Film Festival

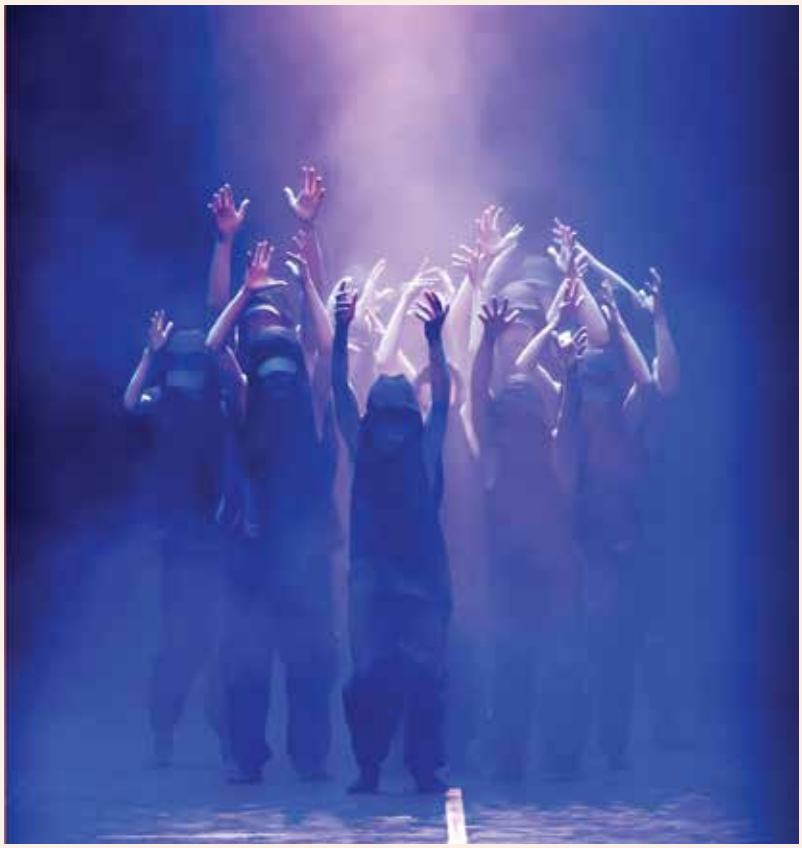
The Dutch–Turkish film *Belonging* by director Mete Gümürhan was screened in Ayvalık in the director's presence. The festival included discussions on visual literacy and community engagement, establishing itself as a space for cultural dialogue in the Aegean region.

Timeless Curiosities Exhibition

Timeless Curiosities Exhibition

At Istanbul Modern, artists Cihad Caner and Berkay Tuncay, who works and lives in the Netherlands, presented digital works rooted in Dutch conceptual practice. Their pieces examined how contemporary technology intersects with cultural memory, positioning Dutch influence within Türkiye's evolving digital arts landscape.

Flying Broom Film Festival



Dance Performance: Enternasyonal III

Orange the World Film Screenings

As part of the global *16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence*, Dutch films were screened in several Turkish cities, contributing to awareness-raising efforts. The campaign supported both cultural outreach and international advocacy on gender-based violence.

212 Photography Istanbul

In its seventh edition, Türkiye's leading photography festival featured several Dutch artists and institutions. With over 150,000 participants and a global digital audience, the event presented Dutch photography within Istanbul's rich cultural fabric, reinforcing artistic collaboration and exchange.

Children's Theatre "Minoes"

Yermekân Zine Days Workshops

Held in Ankara, this five-day programme focused on zine-making and experimental publishing. Dutch photographers Hedy van Erp and Arjen Zwart led workshops on *photozines*, offering a space for cultural dialogue and creative self-expression amidst shrinking artistic freedoms.

Children's Theatre "Minoes"

Theatre group Sivas Görsel Sanatlar ve Kültür Derneği adapted *Minoes*, based on Annie M.G. Schmidt's Dutch children's classic, for young audiences in rural and earthquake-affected regions. The touring production reached approximately 20,000 children and reflected the organisation's long-standing commitment to making art accessible in disadvantaged areas.

Dance Performance: Enternasyonal III

Dutch choreographer Tu Hoang collaborated with the Ankara State Ballet Modern Dance Company in a contemporary dance programme featuring international artists. Through workshops and live performances, the project fostered artistic exchange and added a Dutch–Vietnamese perspective to the modern dance scene in Türkiye.

Theatre Play: Coal Man

Tiyatro Tempo's performance of *Coal Man* brought theatre-based psychosocial support to children in earthquake-affected areas. The production created a space for emotional release and recovery, demonstrating the therapeutic power of live performance in post-disaster settings.

Children's Theatre: Ministry of Solutions

The Kahramanmaraş-based group *Sahne Maraş* adapted Sanne Rooseboom's Dutch children's book *Ministry of Solutions*, presenting themes such as bullying, collective action, and friendship. The production reached more than 1,500 children, offering inspiration and empowerment through playful storytelling.

Istanbul Fringe Festival – *VLOED (FLOOD)*

Dutch performer Sanne van Dijk participated in the Istanbul

Atatürk Wreath Ceremony

Fringe Festival with *VLOED*, a hybrid of puppet and object theatre. Her intimate solo performance explored boundaries, sexuality, and emotional stagnation, offering a candid look at the tension between inner desire and social norms.

Mordem SoloFest

Held in October, the *Mordem SoloFest* focused on the solo performance tradition within Kurdish culture. It offered a stage for both local and international artists to explore identity, heritage, and cross-cultural narratives through minimalist theatrical formats.

ATTA Children's Festival

The 8th edition of Türkiye's only international performing arts festival for babies and children featured Dutch theatre director Simone de Jong. Her piece *Hermit*, designed for children aged 2–6, was accompanied by professional masterclasses, highlighting the Netherlands' contribution to early childhood arts education.

Atatürk Wreath Ceremony and Linden Tree Planting

The Friendship Year concluded with a ceremonial wreath-laying at the tomb of Atatürk by the Dutch ambassador. A Dutch linden tree was planted in Peace Park, near the mausoleum, as a living symbol of friendship and commitment to shared values.

ATTA Children's Festival

Our Man in Constantinople

Cornelis Haga and the Beginning of Dutch–Turkish Relations

Cornelis Haga

The life story of Cornelis Haga (1578–1654), the diplomat who laid the foundation for Dutch–Ottoman relations, reads like an adventure novel. His boldness and audacity seem to symbolise the spirit of the young Republic of the Seven United Provinces (the predecessor of the present-day Netherlands). In 1610, the Ottoman Grand Admiral and Minister of the Navy, Halil Pasha, requested the Dutch authorities to seek contact with the Ottoman Empire (the predecessor of present-day Türkiye).

Ahitname from 1680

Memorial stone dedicated to Cornelis Haga in the Grand Church of Schiedam, Netherlands

Only England, France, and Venice had official diplomatic missions in Istanbul. It was clear they were not eager to welcome competition from the rebellious and, in their view, unstable little country on the North Sea. The mission that followed was therefore prepared in the utmost secrecy. Eventually, the young diplomat Cornelis Haga—who had previously handled a delicate task in Sweden and had once visited Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul) as a young man—was chosen to lead the mission.

The journey from The Hague to Constantinople, or Stamboul as it was also known at the time, took no less than six months. Everything went smoothly until Vienna, but after that, the trouble began. The local authorities began to grow suspicious. Haga claimed to be travelling to Istanbul to ransom Christian slaves. The large quantity of gifts he carried was only intended to win favour with the Ottomans. But the authorities didn't trust it and tried to delay Haga as much as possible. The overland route was blocked due to unrest in Transylvania, and in the end, the longer sea route was chosen. Croatian pirates lying in wait were cleverly deceived. Eventually, Cornelis Haga and his entourage reached Constantinople on 14 March 1612. He knew he was stepping into a hornet's nest—and his suspicions proved justified. Nevertheless, with the help of Halil Pasha, he quickly gained a foothold, while the other envoys had to watch on in frustration. The friendship between Halil Pasha and Cornelis Haga was the beginning of the warm relationship between the two countries that continues to this day. On 6 July 1612, Haga received the so-called *ahitname*, in which all agreements between the two countries were recorded. The official diplomatic relationship between the Netherlands and the Ottoman Empire had begun.

Haga had to survive the intrigues at the Ottoman imperial court. With charm and a friendly demeanour, he quickly established good contacts in the highest circles—a wise survival strategy. Sultan Ahmed I, with whom Haga had arranged the 'privileges', died of typhus in 1617 at the age of 27. The successors with whom Haga had to negotiate were not always as reliable: from the troubled Mustafa, who had been locked up for fourteen years, to the iron-fisted Murad, who came to power at the age of eleven. Even the shrewd widow of Ahmed I had to be kept on good terms.

Haga also had to contend with the shifting political situation in his homeland and the often indifferent attitude of the Dutch government.

Cornelis Haga arriving in Constantinople

In addition, his diplomatic work was made difficult by the undermining activities of his English, French, and Venetian rivals in Constantinople. But Haga was not easily thrown off course and managed to establish consular posts in the most important ports and trade centres of the Ottoman Empire, including Athens, Gallipoli, Aleppo, Tunis, and Algiers.

Although he frequently expressed dissatisfaction in his letters about his post and the lack of support and funds, and even begged to be allowed to return, it is clear that Haga also enjoyed his time in Istanbul. He lived in a splendid residence in Pera, a European district of Constantinople. He was a bon vivant and womaniser, and his enemies were scandalised by his hedonism. Haga realised that, for the sake of his status as a diplomat, it would be wise to marry respectably. Through intermediaries, he requested the hand of the wealthy 43-year-old Aletta Brasser. She arrived in Istanbul in 1623 and was received by Haga as if she were a princess. Haga had no intention of entirely giving up his former lifestyle. As a welcome gift, he presented his new wife with two 16-year-old enslaved girls, who were in fact his mistresses. There is little doubt that the vain man with the carefully-combed, long beard and resolute expression—as we see him in the two surviving portraits—has been captured with precision. But despite his faults and shortcomings, Haga's diplomatic talent formed the foundation of the Dutch

Republic's economic success in the 17th century.

Only after 27 years of service, in 1639, was he allowed to return home with his wife. After a few years, he succeeded in becoming President of the High Council. He and his wife are buried in the Grote Kerk (Great Church) of Schiedam, the town where he was born.

The role Cornelis Haga played in the 400-year-old friendship between the Netherlands and Türkiye was commemorated in 2012, when both countries marked the anniversary of their diplomatic relations.

The information in this article and the portrait of Aletta Brasser are taken from the new biography: Cornelis Haga (1578–1654), Pionier & Diplomaat in Constantinopel by Ingrid van der Vlis and Hans van der Sloot, Boom Publishers (2012), with thanks to Erik Visscher, Municipal Archive of Schiedam.

Painting by Rembrandt of a man in oriental dress

Rembrandt van Rijn and his interest in Ottoman clothing

Although famous Dutch painter Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-69) never travelled to the Ottoman Empire, he was influenced by the fact that Ottoman clothing, carpets and art motifs began to appear in the Dutch Republic in the early 17th century.

Ottoman traders would also visit the Netherlands and the Dutch citizens marvelled at their exotic-looking attire, from towering headgear to flowing silk garments. In much the same way, the Ottoman Empire also began importing Dutch goods, such as blue Delft ware and ceramics.

When Rembrandt was 20 years old, he painted The Music Lesson and the Ottoman influences are clearly visible in the composition and attire.

The mysterious origins of the Dutch town Turkeye

In the 1560s, during the Dutch independence conflict with the Catholic Spanish King, the Dutch freedom fighters known as Watergeuzen started using the slogan *Better the Turk than the Pope*. The symbol of the crescent moon could be found on clothing and on flags and Ottoman fighters (possibly freed galley slaves) assisted the Dutch during a battle in 1599 against the Spanish near the city of Sluis in the very south west of the Netherlands. When the Dutch had conquered this part of the country from the Spanish they built a new defensive line. Part of it was called the Large Turkeye ramp and was built in 1604. A nearby hamlet was named Turkeye. The Ottoman Empire was one of the first countries to recognize the Dutch Republic in 1612, a symbol of the good relations between the two countries. The tiny village still exists today. It remains a symbol of the early bond between the two.

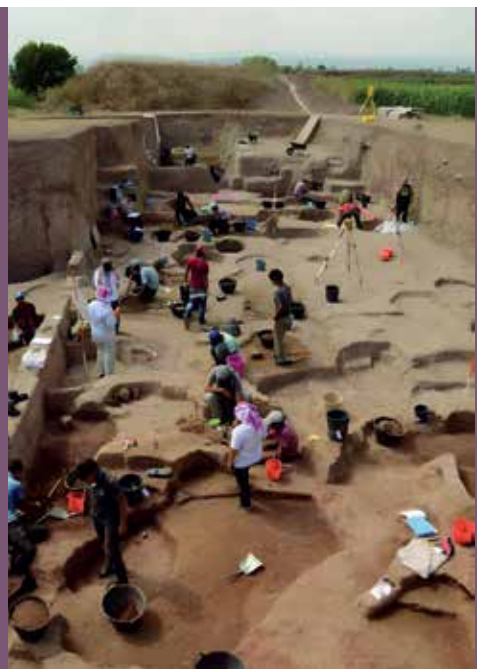
The hamlet of Turkeye in the southwest of the Netherlands

The Netherlands Institute in Türkiye (NIT) goes urban

The Netherlands Institute Türkiye, Istanbul

In 1958, Prince Bernhard (1911–2004), the adventurous husband of Queen Juliana, personally flew his own Dakota aircraft to Türkiye. The Turkish Prime Minister Adnan Menderes joined the prince in officially opening the Netherlands Institute in Istanbul.

During the ceremony, the prince highlighted the longstanding friendship between the two countries and emphasised the importance of scientific exchange. The new institute would become a central hub for Dutch historical research in Türkiye. For almost 70 years, the institute – currently residing in Koç University's ANAMED building in the Beyoğlu district



The excavations around Barcın Höyük

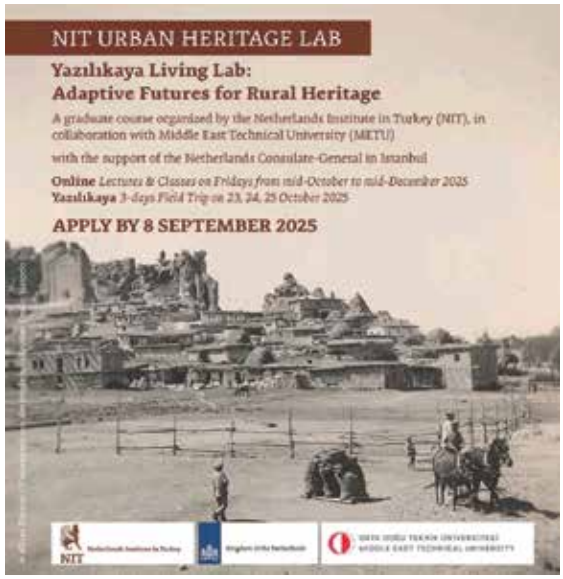
Archaeological Fieldwork

The NIT remains actively involved in excavation initiatives. One of its longest-running partnerships was launched more than 25 years ago by the Netherlands Institute for the Near East (NINO).

Excavations at and around Barcın Höyük have helped improve our understanding of the early farming communities in the eastern Marmara region.

NIT also co-directs the Tell Kurdu excavations in Hatay, shedding light on the Chalcolithic period (6000–5000 BCE), an underexplored era between the Neolithic and the rise of cities.

The 2024 campaign uncovered domestic courtyards and early street patterns, providing vital clues to early settlement dynamics in southern Anatolia.



of Istanbul – has successfully brought students and researchers to its library, archive, and field activities.

Under the guidance of director Fokke Gerritsen, one of NIT's recent initiatives explores how tangible and intangible cultural heritage can contribute to more inclusive, sustainable, and liveable cities through its Urban Heritage Lab (UHL).

The Lab organises an annual Autumn Course, bringing together students, researchers, and professionals to tackle themes such as industrial heritage, water heritage, and archaeological heritage. In 2025, the focus shifts from cities to countryside, with the course *Yazılıkaya Living Lab: Adaptive Futures for Rural Heritage* taking place in the UNESCO-listed Phrygian Highlands, home to the iconic Midas Monument and centuries of rural tradition.

NIT also facilitates dialogue through public events. A recent symposium on adaptive reuse was held in collaboration with METU and supported by Dutch and Turkish heritage organisations. The event brought together experts to discuss architectural transformation. The accompanying *Old Buildings, New Uses* exhibition showcased inspiring reuse projects from both countries.

One of NIT's most remarkable projects began under former director Machiel Kiel (1938-2025). Since the early 1960s Kiel focused on the study of Ottoman monuments in the Balkan countries. He published more than 190 articles and 11 books on the subject.

Kiel accumulated a vast body of knowledge and documentation through four decades of fieldwork and research in Ottoman archives and libraries across Europe and North America. The inventory of surviving Ottoman monuments in the Balkans is now largely complete. In September 2011, the NIT began digitising and publishing Kiel's photographic archive, which contains many photographs and drawings of monuments that have since disappeared: *https://www.nit-istanbul.org/kielarchive/*

Eugène Antoine Rottiers

In 1825, a beautifully decorated royal decree (*ferman*) was granted to the Flemish army officer Eugène Antoine Rottiers (1771–1857). It allowed him, together with his wife, sons, and servants, to travel to Bursa, Izmir, and several other cities in the Ottoman Empire.

Rottiers was a passionate collector and cultural intermediary. He laid the foundations for his large archaeological collection in Türkiye. Many of the artefacts and objects he gathered are now part of the collection of the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, the Netherlands. Rottiers also published a popular and engaging travel journal titled *Itinéraire de Tiflis à Constantinople* (1829).

(Above left to right)Turkish newspaper featuring HRH Prince Bernhard and Prime Minister Menderes

Machiel Kiel in 1968

Poster for the Heritage Lab, 2025

(Left) The beautifully decorated royal decree (*ferman*) granted to Eugène Antoine Rottiers

The Karadeniz: Ship of Change

Map of the Karadeniz' journey through Europe

It is 1926. After years of turmoil, the newly founded Turkish Republic is ready to redefine its relationship with Europe. The young secular state, led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, is determined to shed the label of "the sick man of Europe" and replace the legacy of the Ottoman Empire with a bold, modern identity.

Sweeping reforms are underway. A separation between religion and state is introduced. Women are granted more rights and opportunities. The Arabic script is replaced, and traditional dress such as the fez is actively discouraged. Türkiye is opening its doors to Europe—not only in cultural terms, but also in trade and industry. The country is full of confidence, but still needs to convince its international partners.

In 1924, the Turkish government buys a sturdy Dutch passenger ship, the *Wilis*, built in 1905 at the De Schelde shipyard in Vlissingen

The Steamship Rindjani

The *Rindjani* was a sister ship of the *Wilis*, built for the Rotterdamsche Lloyd in 1907 and sold to Türkiye in 1926. In the town of Mürefte on the Sea of Marmara, the Turkish Aker family has been producing wine in the traditional way for more than three generations. The fermentation process takes place in stainless steel tanks, monitored through small windows that look remarkably like portholes. And indeed, they are—the original portholes of the steamship *Rindjani*. History often follows unpredictable paths...

(Above) Conductor Osman Zeki Üngör in Amsterdam's Vondelpark. He composed the melody of the Turkish national anthem.

for the Rotterdamsche Lloyd. The vessel had travelled across the world's oceans, including to the former Dutch East Indies. Historic photographs even show the *Wilis* passing through the newly opened Panama Canal.

Renamed *Karadeniz* ("Black Sea"), the ship is completely refitted into a floating exhibition and showroom. Türkiye brings its finest exports on board: angora wool, spices, tobacco, paintings, inlaid wood, and carpets. Even the Presidential Symphony Orchestra joins the crew. The delegation is carefully selected—a modern group of men and women, Western-educated and articulate, acting as cultural ambassadors for the new republic. Surviving film footage captures the daily life on board. Despite its name, the *Karadeniz* is painted entirely white.

The ship visits major European ports—Barcelona, London, Amsterdam, and even Leningrad. The reception is enthusiastic. Long queues form to board. But could old prejudices really be broken? In Amsterdam, the orchestra performed a medley of Western classical music in the famous Vondelpark. Dutch newspapers reported that the musicians wore fezzes. Photographs clearly show this wasn't the case—journalists still saw what they expected to see.

Whether the *Karadeniz* had a lasting economic impact is unclear. Its influence on European perceptions of Türkiye is difficult to measure. But the voyage remains a striking piece of cultural diplomacy. And the surviving photos and film allow us, nearly a century later, to share in the optimism of its crew and the curiosity of its visitors.

Karadeniz drawing large crowds

His Majesty Willem-Alexander, King of the Netherlands (left), aboard the Zr.Ms. De Ruyter, Izmir, 2016

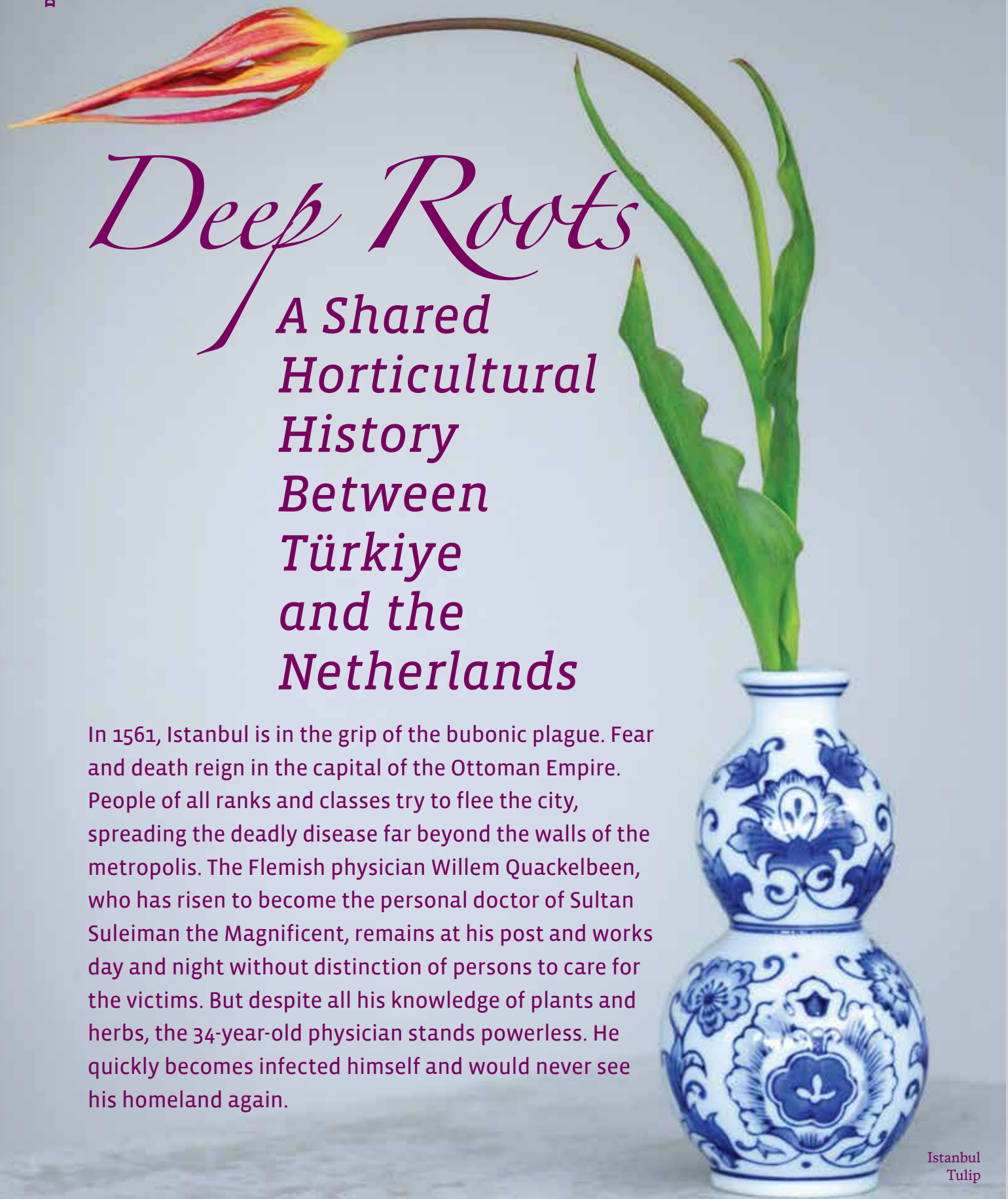
Maritime Connections

From the early 17th-century trade missions to present-day naval deployments, over 400 years of maritime relations between the Netherlands and Türkiye have been marked by mutual respect and cooperation. As NATO allies, Dutch naval vessels regularly visit ports in Türkiye.

Deep Roots

A Shared Horticultural History Between Türkiye and the Netherlands

In 1561, Istanbul is in the grip of the bubonic plague. Fear and death reign in the capital of the Ottoman Empire. People of all ranks and classes try to flee the city, spreading the deadly disease far beyond the walls of the metropolis. The Flemish physician Willem Quackelbeen, who has risen to become the personal doctor of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, remains at his post and works day and night without distinction of persons to care for the victims. But despite all his knowledge of plants and herbs, the 34-year-old physician stands powerless. He quickly becomes infected himself and would never see his homeland again.



Istanbul Tulip

(From left to right) Carolus Clusius

Ogier van Busbecq

On the Catholic cemetery in Istanbul, we have found Willem Quackelbeen's original gravestone—no longer in its original place, as the cemetery has changed location, but still preserved (mid-photo, centre right)

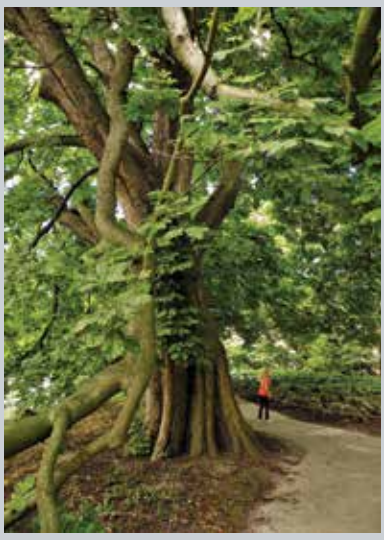
In the 16th century, Western European researchers are sent all over the world to gather new knowledge. Willem Quackelbeen collaborates with the Flemish scholar Ogier van Busbecq, who has come to the Ottoman Empire on behalf of King Ferdinand I of Austria. Together they collect in Istanbul a treasure of scientific texts and manuscripts. They also research unknown plants and trees. They have detailed drawings made of them and send seeds and fruit-bearing branches to Western Europe, including the hyacinth, the gladiolus, the lilac, the sweet flag, and the plane tree. In this way, Quackelbeen sends the physician Pietro Mattiolo, who lives in Prague, a branch of the white horse chestnut, thus introducing it to Western Europe.

After the death of his friend and colleague, Van Busbecq ensures that Quackelbeen's work is published in Europe. Van Busbecq also sends tulip seeds to Carolus Clusius, head of the Hortus Botanicus in Leiden. A national symbol thus found its way from Türkiye to the Netherlands. That the horse chestnut also came to the Netherlands in this way, not many people know.

About 450 years after Quackelbeen's death, we stand in the Hortus Botanicus in Leiden in the shadow of an enormous tree. This white horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) can nowadays be found all over Europe and the United States. All white horse chestnuts in Europe and the United States are descendants of this tree from the Sultan's gardens in Istanbul. This narrow genetic basis explains why they are quite susceptible to diseases. The tree in Leiden is also ill.

The Leiden horse chestnut was planted in 1608, and the current trees in the Hortus are direct descendants. It is not a demanding tree. It can live on poor soil with little light and warmth. In Istanbul, the chestnuts were fed to horses suffering from shortness of breath or worms, hence the name.

Despite his short life, the Flemish physician and researcher Quackelbeen had a lasting influence on the knowledge and spread of plants and trees from Türkiye in the Netherlands and the rest of the world: enduring heritage that grows and blossoms like never before.



(From left to right) Horse chestnut

Süleyman I with a tulip-form turban

Tulips, Tulips, always Tulips

(Above left) Dutch tiles with tulip motifs

(Above right) Arjen Uijterlinde, then Consul-General of the Netherlands, and Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu of Istanbul

(Right) Istanbul Tulip in an historic illustration

In the public's perception, tulips and the Netherlands are forever linked. It is common knowledge that the strong Dutch–tulip relationship has its origins in the Ottoman Empire of the 16th century. *Lale*, the Turkish name for the tulip, was once (and still is) a wildflower blossoming on the wide open steppes of eastern Türkiye and Central Asia. Through the Ottoman court and Vienna, it made its way to the *Hortus Botanicus* of the University of Leiden, where botanist Carolus Clusius planted tulip bulbs in the Netherlands for the first time. And the rest, to use a cliché, is history.

Tulips became a sensation in the Netherlands, even leading to one of the world's first major financial bubbles: *Tulip Mania*. At its peak, speculation on the value of exotic tulip bulbs spiralled out of control, with a single bulb fetching a fortune. The market collapsed entirely in 1637.

Enthusiasm for rare tulip varieties was briefly tempered, but the Netherlands and tulips would forever remain intertwined. Anytime, anywhere, someone discusses what is typical of the Netherlands—before anything else, it's tulips. No symbol of Dutch–Turkish heritage is more famous. But even in such a long and elaborate flowery relationship, there are still surprises from time to time.

The Return of the Istanbul Tulip

Few flowers carry the cultural weight of the so-called Istanbul Tulip, *Lale-i İstanbul,* with its slender, almond-shaped petals tapering to fine points like miniature daggers. Once the crown jewel of Ottoman horticulture, it graced palace gardens, textiles, tiles, and poetry during the *Lâle Devri* or Tulip Era of the early 18th century. And then, it vanished.

"We all believed this very peculiar tulip was no longer with us," wrote Michel Gauthier, chairman of the World Tulip Society. *"How wrong we were, as we learned in 2018 that the Istanbul Tulip was still cultivated on a very small scale under the name Tulipa acuminata by a specialty bulb grower in the Netherlands."*

That grower, Hein Meeuwissen from Voorhout, had been quietly tending the species since the 1970s. Ironically, the tulip's survival may owe something to its lack of

Two orange bikes and a poster of the Istanbul Tulip in front of the Dutch Consulate in Istanbul

popularity: European markets long preferred round, flame-patterned blooms. If *acuminata* had been mass-produced, it likely would have lost many of its distinctive qualities.

In 2021, Arjen Uijterlinde, Consul General of the Netherlands in Istanbul, handed over 1,000 tulip bulbs of the Istanbul Tulip to the city. On 3 December, he and mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu planted them in Emirgan Park. They bloomed the following spring during the Tulip Festival. *"The tulip is part of our shared heritage,"* Uijterlinde said, *"and inspires us to continue building new partnerships between the Netherlands and Türkiye."*

The rediscovery was the result of years of research by Ibo Gülsen and others, who consulted botanical experts and art historians to trace the tulip's origins back to the palace gardens of the Ottoman sultans.

Their return is more than horticultural. The Istanbul Tulip embodies centuries of cultural exchange, travelling from the wilds of Central Asia, through Ottoman imperial gardens, into European botanical collections, and finally back to the city where it once flourished.

Acar Ünlü, Mayor of Marmaris, shakes Dutch Ambassador Joep Wijnands' hand, with Honorary Consul Murat Azgun (on the far right) , and Gülay Fitoz (mid-left), the driving force behind the initiative

Friendship Forest

In 2012, to mark 400 years of diplomatic ties between the Netherlands and Türkiye, a symbolic "Friendship Forest" (*Dostluk Ormanı*) was established on a hillside in İçmeler, near the coastal town of Marmaris. Thousands of trees were planted by Turkish and Dutch officials, schoolchildren and local residents.

In the summer of 2021, wildfires swept across Muğla province—one of the worst-hit regions in Türkiye. Much of the original forest was destroyed. A year later, in 2022, a Dutch delegation, under the initiative of A New Path to Equality's Flourishing Generations programme, returned to mark the tenth anniversary of the planting. Together with their Turkish counterparts, they helped plant 10,000 new trees. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Türkiye has planted over six billion trees since 2003, making it a European leader in reforestation efforts.

In 2024, as one of the activities in the Türkiye–Netherlands Friendship Year, even more saplings were added. Dutch Ambassador Joep Wijnands returned to the site, this time joined by children from Marmaris and the Dutch International School. Together, they planted young pines and oaks, each labelled with the children's names in Turkish and Dutch. One handmade sign read: "*This tree is from me to you. With love. From the Netherlands to Türkiye.*"

"*We wanted to do something small and meaningful,*" said the ambassador, "*not for show, but for the future.*"

The forest is growing again—a hopeful and living testimony to friendship and sustainability.

Siyah Alaca

A Cow, a President, and a Century of Friendship

In the early years of the Turkish Republic, President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk launched an ambitious experiment: the Atatürk Forest Farm, a model agricultural estate outside Ankara. It was meant to showcase modern methods, imported expertise—and superior livestock. Among the first animals brought in was a black-and-white Holstein-Friesian cow from the Netherlands. Gifted by Dutch farmer and agricultural expert Tjeerd de Boer, the cow became known as *Siyah Alaca*—"Black-Spotted"—and was treated like royalty.

When she fell ill, Atatürk personally left a state meeting to check on her. "*She is our guest*," he reportedly said. "*We cannot let her die*." The tale of *Siyah Alaca* remains a cherished anecdote in Türkiye, seen as a symbol of compassion, modernisation, and international friendship.

A century later, Dutch–Turkish agricultural collaboration remains strong. In 2024, as part of the Türkiye–Netherlands Friendship Year, a two-day animal welfare seminar was held in Konya. Organised in partnership with Cow Signals (NL), the Turkish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Konya Önder Çiftçi, and the Turkish Milk Union, the event brought together over 150 farmers to discuss best practices in animal health and welfare. The message was clear: better animal care means healthier cows, more productive farms, and a more sustainable planet. The seminar also marked the centenary of the introduction of Dutch cattle breeds to Türkiye.

Beyond livestock, Dutch–Turkish cooperation in agriculture spans multiple sectors. In 2023, for instance, a Dutch soft fruit business

Van den Broecke, painted by Frans Hals

Strong Coffee

One of the most far-reaching legacies of the Ottoman–Dutch connection is coffee. It's hard to imagine there was ever a time without it—how did the ancient Egyptians or Romans even get out of bed? Its origins are clouded in legend. Perhaps it was an Ethiopian goatherd who noticed how energetic his goats became after chewing the berries of the buna plant. But the first to roast and grind coffee beans into a hot drink were the Yemeni Sufis under Ottoman rule.

By the 16th century, coffee was everywhere in the Ottoman world, but still virtually unknown elsewhere. The Ottomans guarded their coffee monopoly closely. That changed in 1616, when Dutch VOC merchant Pieter van den Broecke tasted coffee in the port of Mocha (now in Yemen) and called it "*a drink of small ground beans that make the water black and is drunk warm*."

He didn't just drink it—he bought beans and, after some discreet

(From left to right) Siyah Alaca

Bottling facilities, Atatürk Forest Farm

Coloured still with a Dutch cow from a film about the Atatürk Forest Farm

consortium, together with the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) and the Netherlands Embassy in Ankara, launched a three-year project to develop commercial ties in the field of strawberries, raspberries, and blueberries. Türkiye offers ideal conditions: its climate and geographic diversity allow for a long and efficient growing season, especially when the right varieties are used. Located on key trade routes, Türkiye connects Europe, the Middle East, and the Eurasian region, making it a strategic hub. A strong agricultural tradition and favourable production factors support the country's emerging soft fruit sector.

Both Türkiye and the Netherlands excel in growing and exporting agricultural products—from flowers to hazelnuts. Bilateral agricultural trade is worth around €650 million in both imports and exports, totalling some €1.2 billion annually.

Greener Greenhouses

The Netherlands and Türkiye are both major players in horticulture—and increasingly, in sustainable innovation within the sector. While the Netherlands has long been a global leader in greenhouse technology, known for its highly efficient and climate-controlled systems, Türkiye's greenhouse production is expanding rapidly, particularly in the fertile Antalya region.

A new joint assessment, focusing on greenhouse waste and circularity in Antalya, aims to better understand current practices and identify pathways towards a more sustainable model of horticulture. With shared expertise and environmental urgency, both countries are working side by side to cultivate a greener future.

bargaining, smuggled seedlings and cuttings out of Ottoman territory. These took root in Java, and later in Amsterdam. From there they were spread to Suriname, Brazil, and even gifted to Louis XIV, who planted them across the French colonies. Our favourite drink has a history as dark and bitter as the coffee itself.

Today's global coffee culture can still be traced back to those few Ottoman plants.

Van den Broecke was first arrested when trying to smuggle coffee out

Aerial shot of Gaziantep

When the Earth Moved:

Dutch Solidarity after the Earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria

The ground shook for just 80 seconds, but when it stopped, whole cities had vanished. On 6 February 2023, two powerful earthquakes of magnitude 7.8 and 7.5 struck southeast Türkiye and northern Syria. The death toll climbed to more than 50,000 in Türkiye alone, with millions left injured, displaced, or grieving.

Dutch search-and-rescue team at work

USAR mission in the earthquake zone

In the border region, also home to hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees, the tremors devastated not only buildings but lives. Hatay, renowned for its vibrant mix of cultures and faiths, and Antakya, Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş were among the worst hit cities.

Within 24 hours, the Dutch Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team deployed to Hatay province, one of the worst-affected areas. Specially trained rescue dogs, engineers, and medics began work amid the rubble. In total, USAR.NL rescued 12 people from the rubble in eight days. Among those pulled to safety was an eight-year-old boy, Ibrahim, found alive more than 100 hours after the quakes. News of his rescue reached the command centre in Ankara, where Dutch ambassador Joep Wijnands happened to be meeting with Türkiye's emergency agency, AFAD. "*It was an emotional moment*," he later said. "*For us. But especially for the heroes doing this work*." The team faced power outages, freezing temperatures, and continuous aftershocks. "*We all slept in our cars*," recalled Bora Tezel, the honorary Dutch consul in Gaziantep. "*The ground just kept moving.*"

Tezel coordinated emergency documents for stranded Dutch–Turkish citizens and helped match requests for heaters, blankets and baby formula with arriving aid. His city, long a hub for Syrian refugees, was among the hardest hit.

In The Hague, the government convened quickly. Former Prime Minister Mark Rutte expressed condolences and support, as did King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima in a personal message of solidarity.

Inside the embassy in Ankara and the consulate in Istanbul, staff worked around the clock. They answered calls from Dutch citizens searching for relatives, tracked missing persons, and translated local requests for the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The embassy's role was not only diplomatic, it quickly became logistical. Offers from Dutch companies and civil society groups poured in. Embassy staff matched identified needs with available resources, coordinated with Turkish authorities, and ensured that aid travelled swiftly and safely.

Dutch Ambassador to Türkiye, Joep Wijnands, with Dutch-Turkish musician Karsu Dönmez of the Karsu Foundation

Swimming the Bosphorus for Earthquake Relief

On 20 August 2023, the Dutch Ambassador to Türkiye, Joep Wijnands, swam across the Bosphorus from Asia to Europe. He and his colleague Paul Zwetsloot, Minister Counsellor for Economic Affairs at the Dutch Embassy in Ankara, took part in the 35th Samsung Bosphorus Cross-Continental Swimming Race, joining over 2,600 athletes from more than 70 countries for the 6.5-kilometre challenge. His participation was not just athletic, but symbolic: to raise funds for the victims of the earthquakes that had devastated southern Türkiye earlier that year.

The initiative was part of a campaign led by the Karsu Foundation, established by Dutch-Turkish musician Karsu Dönmez. The original fundraising target was €25,000. Thanks to strong backing from the Dutch Business Association Türkiye and contributions from Dutch entrepreneurs and companies, the final amount reached €41,000.

Ambassador Wijnands completed the swim in just over an hour. *"Participating in the intercontinental race was an absolutely amazing experience,"* he said. *"We wanted to do something for the victims of the earthquake through this unforgettable moment. That way, we raised funds from sponsors, from Dutch entrepreneurs of Turkish origin, and from Dutch businesspeople here."*

Later that evening, during Karsu's open-air concert at the Harbiye Cemil Topuzlu Amphitheatre in Istanbul, the ambassador formally handed over the symbolic cheque on stage. On social media, he commented: *"With the Dutch Embassy team in Türkiye, we wanted to make our own contribution. We are proud that, through crowdfunding and the support of both Dutch and Turkish businesses, we have raised €41,000 – well beyond our initial target. And donations are still coming in."*

Widely covered in Turkish media, the event stood as a moment of personal effort and public solidarity.

Part of the international response effort was coordinated by Dutch Lieutenant Colonel Marco Gäbler. Stationed at Hatay Airport, Gäbler coordinated 91 international USAR teams from 77 countries. In an interview with BBC Turkish, he spoke candidly about the pressures of the role. "*I had to instruct teams who had been working for more than four hours on one wreckage to move to another. It was incredibly hard, but it meant more lives could be saved.*"

His colleague shared the sentiment. "*We did all we could*," said USAR team leader Job Kramer at the end of their ten-day deployment. But he acknowledged that so many people remained under the rubble. "*There is still much more to be done*."

The Dutch people showed their strong sympathy by generously donating around €130 million via Giro555, to which the Dutch government also transferred €10 million in February 2023. During the national Giro555 TV broadcast, Dutch–Turkish singer Karsu gave a moving performance, singing a tribute to her late cousin and ending with a cry that resonated widely and likely spurred many Dutch viewers to donate.

In March 2023, then Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation Liesje Schreinemacher visited Gaziantep and Antakya (Hatay), meeting earthquake survivors in tent cities and discussing recovery with local authorities.

Meanwhile, back home in the Netherlands, the Turkish-Dutch communities mobilised with extraordinary speed. Within days,

Ministry of Defence personnel preparing for the USAR mission

hundreds of donation centres sprung up, from mosques to community halls and sport clubs. Volunteer groups sorted, packed and shipped clothing, food, and tents. One of the most visible centres was the BMT football club in The Hague, visited by then-Foreign Minister Wopke Hoekstra and widely covered in Dutch media. At the same time, Dutch businesspeople, entrepreneurs, and students began crowdfunding initiatives.

Beyond emergency aid, the Dutch response evolved into something deeper: a long-term commitment to rebuilding, education, and emotional recovery. In the months that followed, several cultural and psychosocial initiatives were launched by Turkish organisations and local partners, supported by the embassy. These projects were more than symbolic. They offered stability, dignity, and hope to communities still living in tents and temporary housing. One such gesture of long-term support came when Ambassador Joep Wijnands participated in a cross-continental swim to raise funds (see inset: *Swimming the Bosphorus for Earthquake Relief*).

As part of early recovery and reconstruction, fact-finding missions from the Netherlands explored options for private-sector contributions, with a focus on circular construction and on water and sanitation. From December 2023, TU Delft researcher Sultan Çetin served as an Embassy Science Fellow, organising workshops and research on circular building opportunities in the

Serinyol Music House

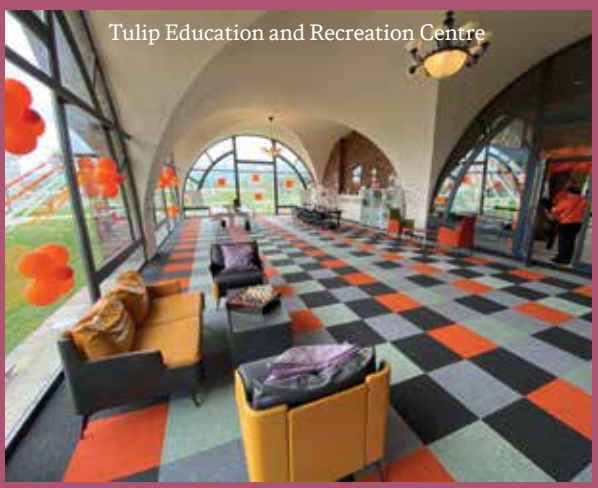
In February 2024, the Serinyol Music House opened its doors in Hatay province. The project was spearheaded by the Karsu Foundation and supported by the Dutch embassy, in collaboration with local NGOs YUVA and the El Ele Association.

The centre provides music education to children affected by the 2023 earthquakes, many of whom are still living in temporary housing. It offers lessons, workshops, and a safe, creative environment to support emotional recovery through the power of music.

Funding came from a wide-ranging campaign that included Ambassador Joep Wijnands' Bosphorus swim, which had raised €41,000. The initiative reflected a growing emphasis on psychosocial care in post-disaster settings and a belief in music as a tool for healing and resilience.

Ambassador Wijnands attended the centre's inauguration in February and returned in April 2025 as part of the King's Day programme in Hatay. The Music House continues to run regular classes and concerts, giving young people a place to learn, connect, and regain a sense of normality.


Tulip Education and Recreation Centre


Tulip Education and Recreation Centre

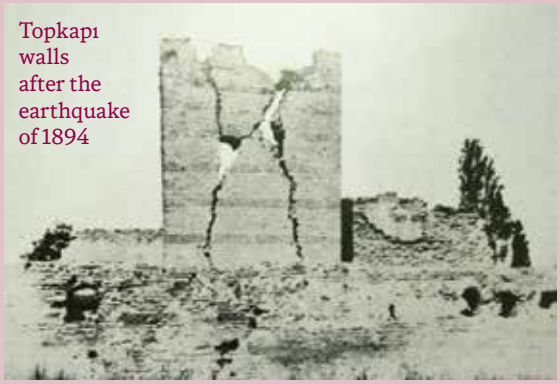
A Place To Feel Safe

On 27 April 2024, the Dutch Embassy celebrated King's Day not in a capital city, but in Kahramanmaraş—one of the cities hardest hit by the earthquake. That day marked the official opening of the Tulip Education & Recreation Centre.

The Centre, located in the EXPO area of Onikişubat Municipality, was built with support from eleven Dutch and Turkish companies, including ING, in close cooperation with the municipality and the EXPO organisation.

Its goal: to provide a safe, child-friendly space for women and children living in temporary shelters nearby. The King's Day programme began with a performance of *Jip and Janneke – Shall We Play Together?* by the Sema Ciftci Theatre Company. Dozens of children received backpacks filled with books and school supplies.

Ambassador Joep Wijnands joined families for lunch and spoke of the Netherlands' long-term commitment. Later, in partnership with the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV), new musical instruments were handed over to children who had lost theirs in the earthquake. The centre remains a symbol of enduring friendship and practical support.


Topkapı walls after the earthquake of 1894


Scheveningen-Constantinopel

Heden is bij alle Boekhandelaren de inteekening opengesteld op een door mij uit te geven prachtwerk:

SCHEVENINGEN--CONSTANTINOPEL,

waarvan de opbrengst zal komen ten bate der Scheveningsche Vischers, die door den laatsten storm tot diepe ellende zijn vervallen, en de slachtoffers der voor eenigen tijd te Constantinopel plaats gehad hebbende aardbevingen.

De samenstelling van dit werk is toevertrouwd aan eene commissie, bestaande uit de heeren M. BAUER, Ph. ZILCKEN, Kunstschilders, en C. SNABILIÉ, Letterkundige, terwijl de meest beroemde Nederlandsche en Buitenlandsche Schilders, Letterkundigen en Musici belangrijke bijdragen hebben ingezonden. (5431)

PRIJS . . . één Gulden,

Amsterdam. H. J. W. BECHT.

Advertisement for the book in a Dutch newspaper

Constantinople–Scheveningen: United for a Good Cause

In 1894, a devastating storm swept across the North Sea, wrecking much of the Scheveningen fishing fleet. That same year, the city of Istanbul (then Constantinople) was struck by a powerful earthquake that claimed 280 lives. By 1895, both communities were still reeling from the aftermath of these disasters. A group of artists, writers and composers, led by publisher H.J.W. Becht, joined forces to publish a book to raise relief funds.


Saïd-Pasha, Turkish Minister Foreign Affairs

The book featured the gilded coat of arms of Sultan Abdül Hamid II and bore the signatures of the Dutch ambassador to Istanbul, Jonkheer Mr. O. D. van der Staal van Piershil, and Said Pasha, the Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs. It served as a kind of 'Who's Who' of the Dutch—and to some extent Turkish—artistic world, with contributions from Pierre Loti, Albert Verwey, Princess Karadja, Herman Heyermans Jr., and Lodewijk van Deyssel, and illustrations by Marius Bauer, Jozef Israëls, Mesdag, Jan Toorop, Breitner, Jacob Maris and even the famed cat painter Henriëtte Ronner-Knip.

Dutch Ambassador to Türkiye, Joep Wijnands, in the crisis centre

earthquake-affected region. Separately, students from TU Delft developed an earthquake-resistant housing concept and built a prototype bound for Hatay, illustrating longterm knowledge exchange and practical support from the Dutch academic community.

In hindsight, the Dutch response was not defined by the speed of rescue teams or the size of donations. It was the breadth of engagement; from rescue dogs in Hatay to children's backpacks in Kahramanmaraş, from financial support to a tapestry woven from loss and strength, that told the full story. Ambassador Wijnands later reflected: "*Our response was about more than emergency aid. It was about showing up, again and again, in ways that matter*."

Years on, you can still feel the aftershocks, geologically, socially, and emotionally. But amid the grief, new connections have taken root. In board rooms, classrooms, cultural centres and government offices, in quiet acts of care, The Netherlands and Türkiye found common ground not just in tragedy, but also in recovery and hope.

Tapestry of Hope

In the months following the earthquake, over 110 women from Kahramanmaraş came together to create a 6-metre tapestry based on the famous Vermeer painting *The Girl with a Pearl Earring*. Organised by the Dutch foundation A New Path to Equality (NP2E) and the Kahramanmaraş Down Syndrome Association, the project offered both artistic expression and trauma recovery.

Each participant stitched part of the cross-stitch version of Vermeer's painting, while sharing their stories. The project was supported by the Dutch embassy and focused on emotional healing through community-based art therapy.

The completed tapestry was first exhibited in Kahramanmaraş. It later toured to Istanbul, Ankara, Amsterdam, and Strasbourg. On 6 February 2024, exactly one year after the earthquake, it was displayed at the Mauritshuis in The Hague—home of the original painting. The commemoration was jointly organised by NP2E, the Dutch Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Education, Culture and Science, and the Embassy of Türkiye in The Hague.

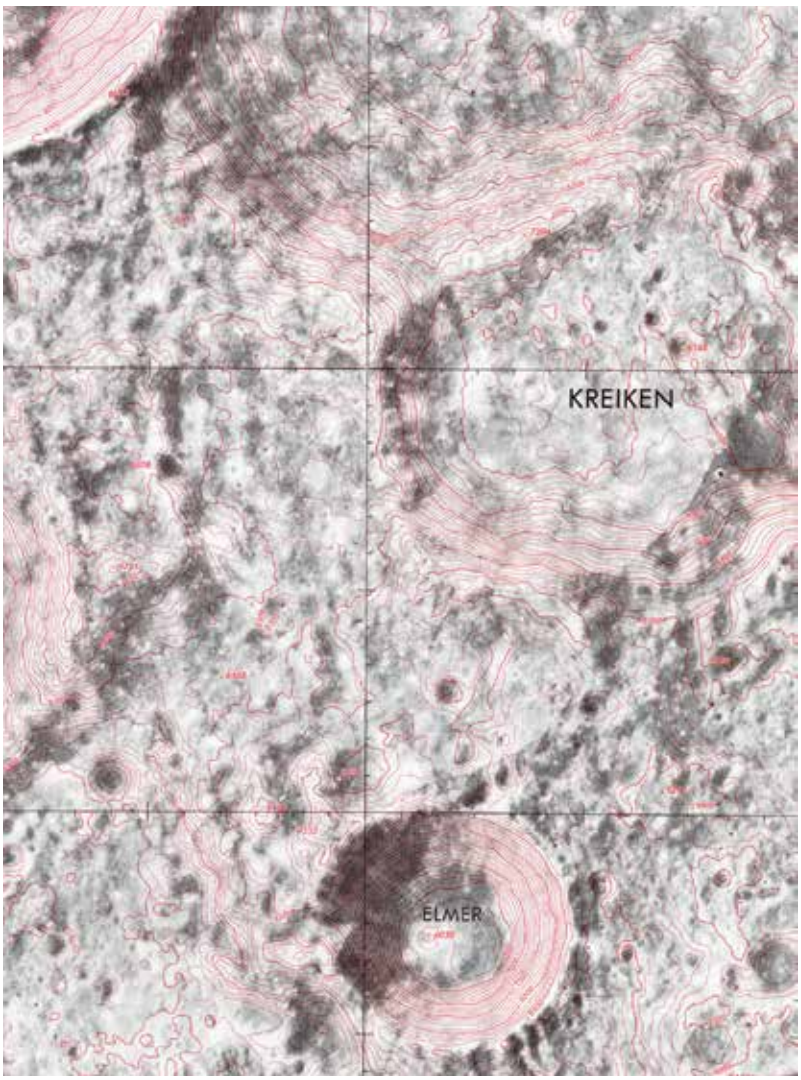
At the opening, speeches were given by Minister Eppo Bruins, Turkish Ambassador Selçuk Ünal, and Mauritshuis Director Martine Gosselink.

The tapestry stands as a stitched memory of grief, strength, and shared humanity.

Girl with a Pearl Earring tapestry at the Mauritshuis, The Hague

Egbert Kreiken

Pioneer of Turkish Astronomy



Kreiken Crater on the Moon

It may not be the most glamorous spot on the Moon, but the Kreiken crater near the equator remains a quiet witness to the adventurous life of Dutch astronomer Egbert Adriaan Kreiken (1896–1964). He lived by his own motto: "One should do as much as one can in life."

Kreiken stood at the cradle of Turkish astronomy. From 1954 until his death in 1964, he served as director of the Astronomical Institute of Ankara University. How did a Dutch professor end up in the Turkish capital? And why was a Turkish flag draped over his coffin, with the national anthem played at his funeral?

The observatory was built on an empty hill

By the time he arrived in Türkiye, Kreiken had already lived a life fit for an adventure novel. Born in the Dutch village of Barneveld, he studied astronomy at the University of Groningen and worked at various institutes and schools. At 32, he was offered a pioneering role at the new Bosscha Observatory in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia). But the Second World War would soon—and violently—upend everything.

Kreiken was imprisoned in a Japanese internment camp. His wife was taken away. He would never see her alive again. Over the course of three and a half years, he passed through five camps before arriving at a hospital in Batavia, where he became, in his own words, *"a witness to one of the worst death marches."* Many around him died. When liberation finally came, he weighed just 38 kilos—down from 82. The horrors left deep scars, but Kreiken emerged with the quiet determination that he had to live fully, improve the world, and *"do as much good as possible."*

He stayed on in Indonesia after the war, even after independence in 1949. Through his efforts, UNESCO agreed in 1948 to fund the optical components for the new 71-centimetre Schmidt telescope at the Bosscha Observatory.

The international astronomy community was small, and Kreiken had close ties to figures such as Minnaert, Pannekoek, and Jan Oort—the man who discovered the comet cloud

Kreiken and his wife, Frances Pape

The Kreiken Telescope

that now bears his name. Their regard for Kreiken was high. Oort closed a 1947 letter with the words: *"I don't want to miss the opportunity to tell you how much I respect your energy to still do so much astronomical work. I can hardly understand how you managed it. Did you already work on it in the camp, or only after the liberation?"*

When Kreiken eventually returned to the Netherlands—by then remarried to Frances Pape, an American—UNESCO gave him a new assignment: professor of physics at the University of Liberia in Monrovia. At age 55, he and Frances drove across the Sahara in a Pontiac Torpedo, calling themselves *"astronomical nomads."*

Two years later, UNESCO sent Kreiken to Ankara, where he became professor and director of the Astronomical Institute. His appointment was personally

The Kreiken Museum at Ankara University

signed off by President Celal Bayar and the entire Turkish cabinet. Türkiye had just joined NATO, and post-war development funds, especially from the Marshall Plan, were driving a surge in scientific investment. For Kreiken, it was the opportunity he had longed for: the chance to fully dedicate himself to astronomy.

He dreamed of a state-of-the-art observatory. With strong support from the university and access to international funding, Kreiken selected a plateau just 18 kilometres outside Ankara, in the Ahlatlibel region—1,250 metres above sea level, with 300 clear nights a year and almost no light pollution. Construction began, and in 1959, his vision started to take shape.

A passionate educator above all, Kreiken believed the observatory's main mission was to train a new generation of astronomers—students who could eventually work at major observatories abroad. He even proposed training military cadets as scientists, a plan so well received that NATO agreed to help finance the project.

The first instruments came from Dutch spare parts, but Kreiken used his international network to bring in top-tier equipment. The main building was constructed with support from Ankara University and the newly founded Middle East Technical University—marking the start of a collaboration that still exists. Even the domes bore a Dutch signature: they were built with help from the Royal Dutch Society for Harbour Works in Mersin.

The official opening of the observatory took place on 26 August 1963. To mark the occasion, Kreiken organised an international summer school in Ankara, with top lecturers from around the world. It helped put the observatory on the map and established links with foreign institutes—essential for the development of astronomy in Türkiye. He had a bigger plan. Kreiken wanted Ankara to become a place where young scientists would be trained not only in astronomy but also in

Lecture Honours Dutch–Turkish Astronomical Ties

As part of the centenary celebrations of the 1924 Friendship Treaty between Türkiye and the Netherlands, a lecture was held at Ankara University on 16 December 2024.
Dr Friso Hoeneveld (University of Amsterdam) spoke about *"Egbert Kreiken: How a Dutch Globetrotter Became a Turk at Heart,"* highlighting Kreiken's lasting impact on Turkish astronomy.

The event was initiated by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and organised in collaboration with Ankara University and the Netherlands Institute in Türkiye (NIT).

Following the lecture, Dr Tolgahan Kılıçoğlu, deputy director of the Kreiken Observatory, led a guided tour of the facility that still bears Kreiken's name.

related fields like space science, applied mathematics, and theoretical physics. By inviting international experts to teach for shorter or longer periods, he aimed to give students a solid, internationally recognised education. The Department of Astronomy and Space Sciences at Ankara University grew directly out of this initiative.

In 1964, during a short visit to the Netherlands, Kreiken became seriously ill. He died not long after, aged 67. At his cremation, his coffin was draped with the Turkish flag and the national anthem was played—an extraordinary gesture of respect from the country he had served. The International Astronomical Union named a lunar crater after him, and the 40-centimetre reflecting telescope at the Ankara Observatory now bears his name.

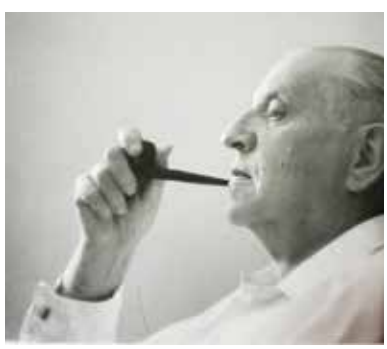
In Türkiye, Kreiken is remembered as a pioneer of scientific education. In the Netherlands, he remains little known. But his legacy endures—in the observatory he founded, in the generations of students he inspired, and in the continued efforts of those who honour his memory, including his former student C. Güner Omay, who wrote his biography, and his dedicated nephew Juus Kreiken*.

**Some of the information in this article is based on research by Juus Kreiken (juuskreiken@gmail.com).*

(Above left) Kreiken with his wife, colleagues, and the dog Karabaş

(Above right) The observatory today

(left) Children visiting the observatory (photo: Ankara University)



Egbert Kreiken

Sixty Years of Turkish Labour Migration to the Netherlands

In the years after the Second World War, between 1947 and 1963, more than 400,000 Dutch people left their country in search of better opportunities in countries like Canada, Australia and New Zealand. This exodus made the Netherlands one of the largest emigration countries in Western Europe during that period. At the same time, the Netherlands began to attract foreign workers in the 1960s. On 19 August 1964, the Netherlands and Türkiye signed an official recruitment agreement, which regulated the arrival of Turkish so-called guest workers to the Netherlands. The idea was simple enough: Dutch industries needed many people; Türkiye had people willing to work. It was a time of economic growth and optimism—the Netherlands was working overtime, the factories were running at full capacity. What followed was a migration wave that initially was meant to be temporary but eventually led to large Turkish communities in the Netherlands.

The first years passed relatively quietly. Men—sometimes women—often came alone, via official channels or informally, working in the port, at the steelworks, or in textile factories. They lived in boarding houses, often six to a room. The plan was: earn money, save, return. But the contracts kept being extended, families followed, and children grew up. The Netherlands turned from host country into a second home.

That transition did not go without friction. The Dutch government initially invested little in integration, because the assumption was that the 'guest workers' would leave again after a few years. Only after

Turkish women working in the CBS record factory (photo by Poppe de Boer - Noord Hollandse Archief)

(on the left) Turkish 'guest workers' in the Netherlands in the 1960s

the oil crisis of the 1970s and the official end of recruitment programmes did the Netherlands begin to invest in integration. Family reunification was legally regulated in 1974, and the temporary labour migration quietly became permanent settlement. The community itself became more self-aware. In 1974, for instance, the HTIB was founded, the first Turkish workers' association in the Netherlands.

The first generation mostly kept to themselves. Work, save, survive. The second and third generations began to speak out, to study, to write, and became a driving force behind new collaborations and partnerships between the Netherlands and Türkiye, combining the best of two worlds and using their multiple perspectives to innovate. Writers like Murat Isik describe the changing times and tell of fathers who stayed silent, mothers who struggled, children who searched for their place between Amsterdam city blocks and their Anatolian roots.

In 2022, the Netherlands had approximately 475,000 people of Turkish descent, making them one of the largest migrant groups. The communities are still concentrated in urban areas: Rotterdam, Amsterdam, The Hague and Utrecht. Their presence has led to the establishment of numerous cultural, religious and social organisations that build bridges between the Turkish and Dutch societies.

In 2024, sixty years of Turkish labour migration were widely commemorated. Exhibitions were opened throughout the Netherlands, documentaries were screened and commemorative meetings held. The stories were intimate, sometimes painful, but also proud. In Rotterdam, for example, photographer Çiğdem Yüksel presented the exhibition *If You Only Knew*, with 22 personal portraits of women from the first generation. In Haarlem, there was an exhibition about sixty years of female labour migration, which later travelled to Türkiye with the support of the Dutch embassy (*see inset*).

Sixty years of migration were also commemorated extensively in Türkiye. The Dutch embassy was actively involved in many of the events.

The term 'guest worker' now sounds hopelessly outdated. The Turkish community is a permanent and lasting part of the story of the Netherlands. More than sixty years of Turkish migration is not a closed chapter. It is a living history, being actively written every day.

FENIX Museum in Rotterdam

(Left) FENIX large-scale exhibition spaces

(Right) Photo exhibition

Suitcase collection

FENIX: Migration Museum

On 15 May 2025, Queen Máxima of the Netherlands opened the FENIX Museum in Rotterdam—the world's first art museum dedicated entirely to migration. FENIX is a large private museum, established and funded by the Droom en Daad Foundation from Rotterdam. Located in the former San Franciscoloods on Katendrecht, a harbour district where many newcomers once arrived, the building itself is part of the story.

Built in 1923, the warehouse has been transformed by MAD Architects, who added a 30-metre double-helix staircase called the Tornado. It leads to a panoramic viewing deck and symbolises movement and transformation—core themes of the museum.

FENIX's permanent exhibition, *All Directions*, features over a hundred works by international artists such as Rineke Dijkstra, Shilpa Gupta, and Yinka Shonibare. The focus is not on one group or period, but on migration as a universal human experience: forced or voluntary, temporary or permanent. A labyrinth of 2,000 donated suitcases forms the heart of the museum, many equipped with QR codes linking to personal migration stories.

The Turkish community has a visible presence. *The Family of Migrants* is a photo installation exploring the emotional reality of migration including photographs from and about Türkiye.

Vermaat, a Dutch hospitality company, formed a partnership with Michelin-starred chef Maksut Aşkar from Istanbul and together they created an Anatolian inspired restaurant, café and bakery.

FENIX presents migration not as a footnote to national history, but as a defining force. It marks an important shift in perspective, offering a new and compelling take on the human experience.

Chef Maksut Aşkar (centre) with his colleague and Vermaat representative (left)

Mahinur Özdemir Göktaş Minister of Family and Social Services with Dutch Ambassador Joep Wijnands visiting the exhibition in Istanbul.

Turkish Female Pioneers Photo Exhibition

To mark sixty years of Turkish migration to the Netherlands, the Verwey Museum Haarlem created a remarkable exhibition about the women who shaped that story. *Vrouwelijke Turkse Pioniers* (Turkish Female Pioneers) brings together personal histories from Haarlem's Turkish community—first-generation workers, their daughters, and their granddaughters—as well as women who later returned to Türkiye.

The exhibition was co-curated by local community members, including Havva Eryılmaz, Müberra Güçlü, Samiye Harbelioglu, Feride Köycü and Gülercan Köycü. Their voices, images, and memories are at the heart of the show. In parallel, students from Haarlem College and Sakarya University contributed through the Erasmus+ education project *The Stories of Turkish Guest Workers in the Netherlands*, producing interviews, photographs, and short videos that enrich the exhibition's perspective.

Aksaray

After its initial run in Haarlem in early 2024, the show travelled across Türkiye, visiting cities with strong ties to the migration story: Emirdağ, Bursa, Istanbul, Yozgat (incl. Bahadın), Eskişehir, Ankara, Aksaray, Karaman and Konya.

For instance, in Istanbul the exhibition was hosted at the Beyoğlu Municipality Presidential Building Art Gallery; in Eskişehir at the Zuhal Yorgancıoğlu Fashion Design Museum; and in Aksaray inside the restored II. Kılıç Arslan Hamamı. The presentation was supported by the Dutch Embassy in Ankara and the Social Insurance Bank (SVB) in Türkiye.

Presented in both Dutch and Turkish, the exhibition highlights the strength, resilience, and unseen leadership of women who crossed cultures—and often borders—to build their lives as best they could.

Eskişehir

In 2024, in Bahadın (Yozgat), the sculpture Umuda Yolculuk (Journey to Hope) was unveiled on the initiative of the Toplumsal Araştırma Vakfı, honouring the migrant women from the village who left for Europe in the early 1960s.

60 Years, 60 Stories by Şahin Yıldırım

60 Years, 60 Stories

Photographic Exhibition in The Hague

On 23 October 2024, the photo exhibition *60 Years of Turkish Labour Migration to the Netherlands* was officially opened at the Atrium in The Hague by Mayor Jan van Zanen and Turkish Ambassador Selçuk Ünal. Organised by the Atlas Cultural Centre, the exhibition marks the 60th anniversary of the bilateral recruitment agreement between Türkiye and the Netherlands.

The centrepiece consists of 60 professional portraits depicting 30 former Turkish guest workers and their wives, and 30 Dutch citizens—employers, interpreters, teachers, neighbours, and church volunteers—who played a role in their lives.

Alongside the portraits, visitors could view original documents, black-and-white photographs, and everyday objects from the period. The exhibition explored Dutch identity through the lens of shared history and aimed to foster reflection on themes such as education, economy, solidarity, and cultural dialogue. During the opening, the accompanying book *60 Years, 60 Stories* by Sahin Yildirim was also presented, offering personal testimonies from both sides of this intertwined history.

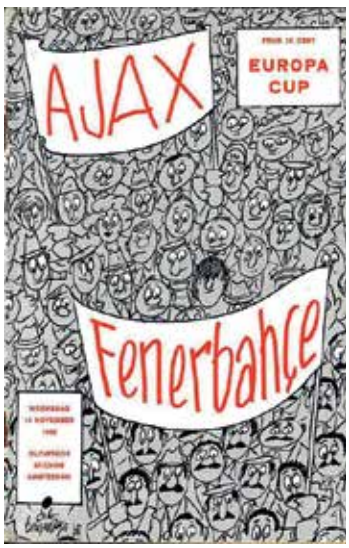

Officials inspect the field on 26 November 1968


The Fenerbahçe team in a Turkish restaurant in Amsterdam, the evening before the match


A moment from the match


Dutch footballers Sjaak Swart and the legendary Johan Cruyff walking off the field after their 0–2 victory

A Match to Remember



Poster for the Ajax–Fenerbahçe match

Fenerbahçe – Ajax, 27 November 1968

On 13 November 1968, Ajax hosted Turkish champions Fenerbahçe in Amsterdam for a European Cup match. The Turkish team arrived with full diplomatic protocol and enjoyed a night out in a Turkish restaurant. On the pitch, they fared less well: Ajax scored once in each half—Klaas Nuninga and Bennie Muller—and took a clean 2–0 win.

Two weeks later, the Dutch flew to Istanbul for the return match, scheduled for 26 November. They were met with torrential rain. The Şükrü Saracoğlu Stadium had turned into a swamp. The Dutch press compared the field to a ploughed potato patch: one big mess of mud. Romanian referee Jozef Ritter took one look and cancelled the match. Fans who had travelled with high hopes returned home empty-handed. The Ajax players, including Johan Cruijff, Sjaak Swart, Piet Keizer and Nuninga, had to stay an extra night. They spent it, famously, in a nightclub with a belly dancer. *"Mud & Bellydancing"*, declared the Dutch headlines the next day.

The field wasn't much better on the 27th—but the match went ahead. Over 30,000 spectators braved the conditions. It was more mud wrestling than football. Still, Ajax pulled through. In the second half, Keizer and Nuninga each scored, both goals assisted by Cruijff. Final score: 2–0 for Ajax again.

Ajax would go on to reach the European Cup final that season. The images of these muddy encounters—Dutch players slipping, Turkish players sliding—remain part of football folklore. Today, the photographs are kept at the National Archives in The Hague, under the care of the ANP Foundation. They recall a time when international matches were rare and travel still carried a sense of adventure.

New and old Ajax logos

The tomb of Ajax near Troy, Türkiye

The Other Ajax

Amsterdam's Ajax football club owes its name to Greek mythology. Like many clubs founded in the early 20th century, it sought legendary status through a mythical namesake. Ajax was a hero of the Trojan War. When Achilles died, his armour was awarded to Odysseus—not Ajax. Enraged and humiliated, Ajax lost his mind. In a delusion, he slaughtered what he thought were his fellow warriors. At dawn, he awoke to find only a field of dead sheep. Shamed beyond redemption, he fell on his sword.

What became of him? Near ancient Troy—rediscovered on Türkiye's west coast—sits the village of Kumkale. On its shaded square, old men sip tea beneath a tree. But just beyond the houses lies a hill: the forgotten tomb of Ajax. From this mound, one can see the plains of Troy, and the resting place of Achilles in the distance. A hero of myth, lying quietly in modern-day Türkiye.

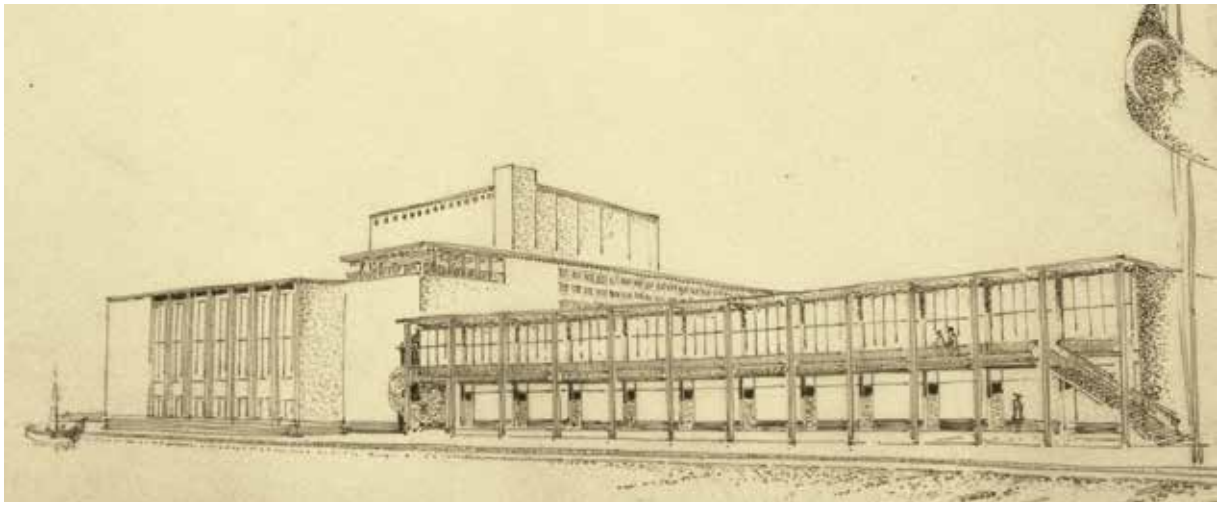
Dutch Architecture in Izmir

Dudok's Forgotten Dream

In 1933, architect Şevki Balmumcu built an impressive exhibition hall in the capital, Ankara. It was a delicate, white structure with high windows and a slender tower. The press was enthusiastic and applauded the design as the beginning of modernity in Türkiye. The building quickly became a symbol of the can-do mentality of the young Turkish Republic. Turkish architects would from now on focus on the future.

(Above left) Hilversum City Hall, Netherlands, by W.M. Dudok

(Above right) Dudok with Turkish architects (from left to right): Harbi Hotan, Dudok, Kemal Ahmet Aru, and Rıza Askan



Design for the theatre

Balmumcu was an admirer of Dutch architect Willem Marinus Dudok (1884–1974). The widely respected Dudok never fitted any of the official categories. He developed a distinctive style, blending Bauhaus clarity, Amsterdam School expressiveness, and international modernism into a uniquely recognisable language. He is best known for his revolutionary design of Hilversum's town hall (1928-31). He also made the urban development plan for this rapidly growing city, completely overhauling the look and feel of the town. Dudok received worldwide recognition for his work. In Türkiye he would influence a new generation of architects.

Exhibition Hall (Sergi Evi) in Ankara, designed by Turkish architect Şevki Balmumcu in 1933–34; later converted into the Ankara Opera House

Dudok visited Türkiye for the first time in 1938 as a jury member for the design of the new parliament building in Ankara. At the time, Turkish media called him one of the best architects in the world. In the 1940s, Dudok was asked to teach at the University of Ankara, but he was unable to leave the Netherlands due to the Second World War. However, in 1949, he returned to Türkiye, once again as a jury member.

Then, in 1954, the mayor of Izmir, Rauf Onursal invited him to design a new city hall and a new cultural centre and theatre on the Konak Square in the heart of the city. The aging architect was excited by this opportunity

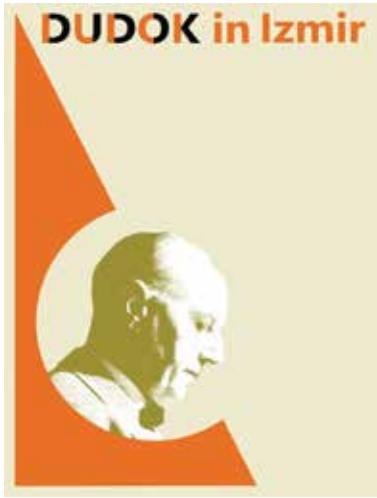
Exhibition on Konak Square in 2017

Willem Marinus Dudok as a young man

to leave his mark on the world one more time. As soon as he had arrived, he walked around the ancient harbour city and marked the area of his future designs on a tourist map. He drew classic Ottoman houses and spent his days making sketches and drawings of possible designs. Later, back home in the Netherlands, he further developed these rough sketches. At first, he felt he had to somehow capture the Ottoman history, but after consultations with his Turkish partners he adapted his drawings and created a truly modern vision for Izmir.

The city would have looked very differently today if Dudok's theatre and city hall had been built. Due to various circumstances, however, the ambitious plans were never executed. In 1954, Dudok's friend and supporter, mayor Rauf Onursal, moved to Ankara as a congressman after the parliamentary elections. Another enthusiastic supporter of the project, Governor Muzaffer Göksenin, was appointed ambassador to Baghdad. The new mayor and governor quietly shelved the plans, and the designs were never realised.

Dudok was very disappointed and would never visit Türkiye again, although he kept working as an architect into old age. His buildings, balancing tradition and modernism, still appeal



(Left) Poster for the 2017 exhibition and symposium

(Right) Archival papers on Dudok in the Museum for Architecture, Design and Digital Culture in Rotterdam

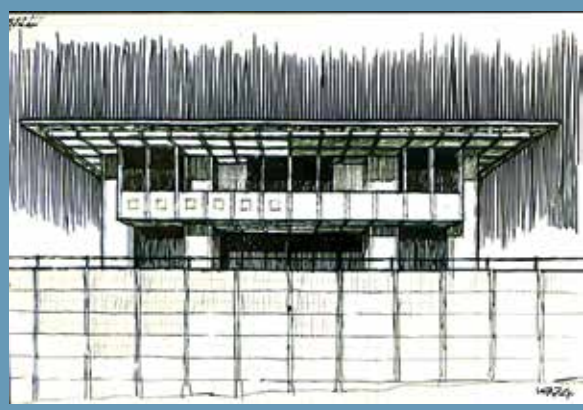
today to professionals as well as to the general public.

All that remains of Dudok's Izmir dream are the drawings, sketches and letters preserved in Dutch archives—until they were brought to life in 2017. In October of that year, an exhibition and two-day symposium—supported by Dutch and Turkish partners—were organised in Izmir to show Dudok's unrealised designs to the world for the first time.

In a specially organised collaboration between Bilkent University in Ankara and Delft University of Technology, a 3D reconstruction of the theatre was developed. On 13 October 2017, on the Konak Square in Izmir, an outdoor exhibition with large-scale models of Dudok's designs was opened by Izmir's deputy mayor and architect Muzaffer Tuçağ and the Dutch cultural attaché Quirine van der Hoeven.

The opening was followed by a two-day symposium *From Dudok to the 21st Century: Redesigning the City** in the Izmir Chamber of Architects with the collaboration of scientists and architects from the Netherlands and Türkiye and hundreds of students and enthusiasts.

**High-resolution photos and more information on the subject and participants can be found at dudokinturkey.com*



Sketch by Sedad Hakkı Eldem of the residency (1974)

Sedad Hakkı Eldem & the Dutch Residence

In the 1970s, Turkish modernist Sedad Hakkı Eldem designed the Netherlands Ambassador's Residence in Ankara; the work's clarity and humanism parallel Dudok's modernism.

Design for the new Embassy in Ankara.

New Embassy

The Netherlands is constructing a new embassy chancery in Ankara, designed by EGM Architects. The welcoming and sustainable building will serve as a hub for Dutch–Turkish cooperation. Ground-breaking took place in September 2024.

A Green Oasis in a Metropolis

Palais de Hollande in a 19th-century drawing

The 'Palais de Hollande' in Istanbul

Anyone who, on a sunny afternoon, walks through the high gate at No. 197 on Istiklâl Caddesi – the busy shopping street in the Beyoğlu district of Istanbul – enters another world.

Palais de Hollande seen from the main entrance

The Consulate seen from the garden

The bustle of the metropolis fades away, and visitors find themselves in a green oasis of calm, centred around a 19th century country house: the Palais de Hollande. This site has been a symbol of Dutch–Turkish diplomatic relations for 400 years. In 1612, the house rented by Cornelis Haga, the first Dutch ambassador, stood on this site. The district of Pera (now Beyoğlu) was an area where, in the time of the Ottoman Empire, many foreigners had settled. In the immediate vicinity of the Dutch embassy (which became a Consulate-General in 1947, as the Embassy is now in Ankara) stood the residences of, for instance, the Swedes, the Russians and the Italians. Pera was largely built of wood, and large parts of the district frequently burned down. Of the wooden house that once stood here, probably only parts of the foundations remain. The current Dutch city palace was built in 1858.

To this day, the building retains its monumental presence. The stately residence – with the private quarters of the consul on the first floor – has recently undergone extensive restoration, but the exterior remains largely faithful to the original architectural plan. It most resembles an Italian villa, a style of architecture common in this district. That is hardly surprising, as Pera was largely designed by Italian architects. The Palais de Hollande was built by the Italian architect Giovanni Battista Barborini, who also built the nearby Odeon Theatre.

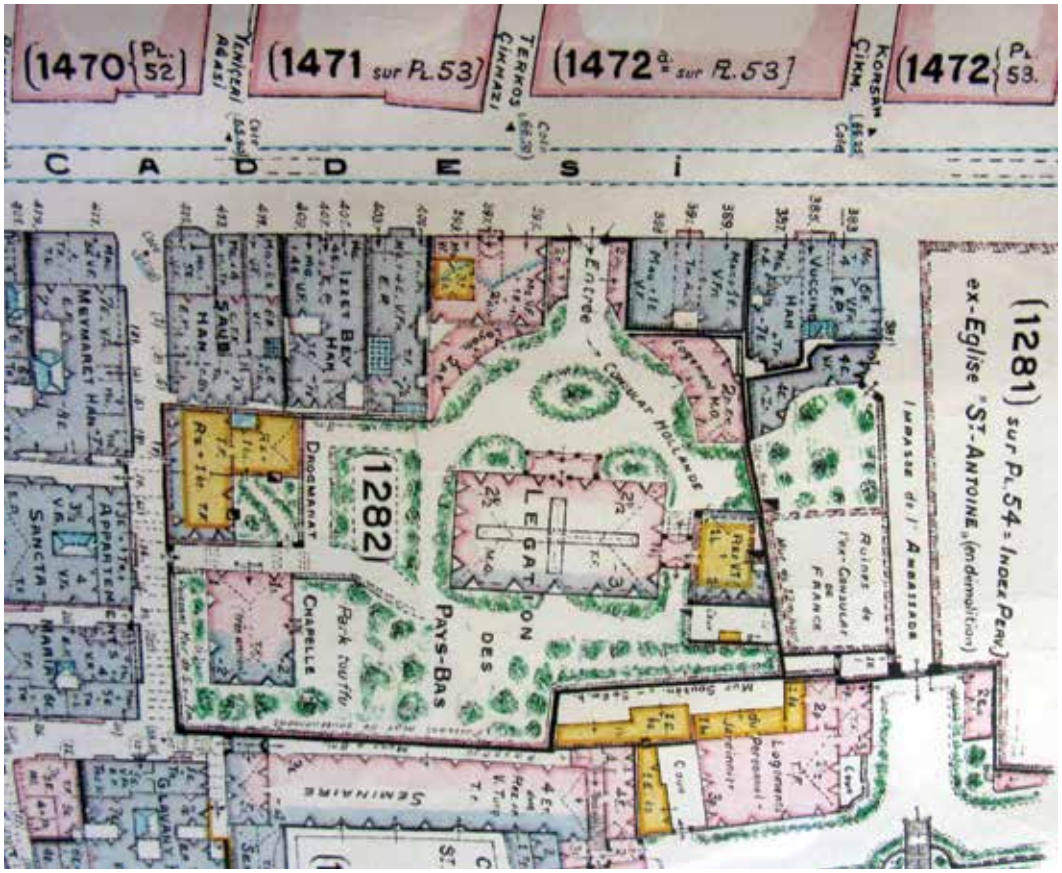
(Above) View of the Bosphorus from the terrace

(Right) The 'Camel Gallery' seen from the garden

(Right below) Painting by Jean-Baptiste Vanmour of Cornelis Calkoen on his way to an audience with Sultan Ahmed III

The palace is flanked by a few small gatekeepers' lodges and a coach house. At the rear of the building, a wide terrace stands out, resting on the so-called 'Camel Gallery', an arched basement arcade. This is one of the oldest parts of the house. The adjoining intimate and colourful garden is now often a venue for performances and cultural events. The garden also contains a square stone church dating from 1711. This charming little building is known in Istanbul as the Dutch Chapel. It is the former embassy chapel, where since 1857 the English-speaking Union Church of Istanbul has held its services. Each weekly service still ends with a prayer for the Dutch head of state. From here, a modern office building is also visible: the new chancery.

In the fine reception rooms of the consulate, a collection of historical and contemporary artworks is displayed. Until 2005, the famous paintings



(Above left) Detail of the sculpture *Beyaz Gül* (White Rose)

(Above right) Historical map of the building and its surroundings

(Left) One of the many activities in the Dutch Chapel

of the eighteenth-century Flemish painter Jean Baptiste Vanmour also hung here. At the time, he painted on commission for several diplomats in Istanbul, including Cornelis Calkoen, who was ambassador from 1726 to 1744. Today the paintings are part of the collection of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

Another memory of Calkoen lives on – perhaps literally – in the monumental building. In a garden wall, a small sculpture is embedded, depicting a melancholy, reclining woman. It represents Calkoen's Turkish mistress Beyaz Gül: White Rose. She was left behind by Calkoen in Istanbul when he departed for his next ambassadorial post. According to legend, she has never left the building. Various residents have glimpsed her shadow wandering through the building and felt her presence.

This article is partly based on the book *Palais de Hollande in Istanbul* by Marlies Hoenkamp-Mazgon, published in 2009 by the Consulate-General of the Netherlands

VIEW OF ANKARA

View of Ankara

The Chamber of Levantine Trade – the chamber of merchants engaged in commerce with the Turkish Empire – was housed in the stately city hall of Amsterdam (now the Royal Palace on Dam Square). Its work and reception rooms were richly decorated and filled with magnificent paintings.

Detail: Angora goats

(Below) Angora goat

Detail: the Hacı Bayram Mosque and the Column of Julian

One of these showed a cityscape alongside the full production process of one of the most important trade goods of the time: angora wool. The city of Angora (present-day Ankara) was the centre of the trade in this highly valued fleece from the Angora goat.

The commissioner of the painting may have been Justinus Johannes Leidstar, who, after a bankruptcy in Istanbul, established a new agency in Ankara. For centuries, the

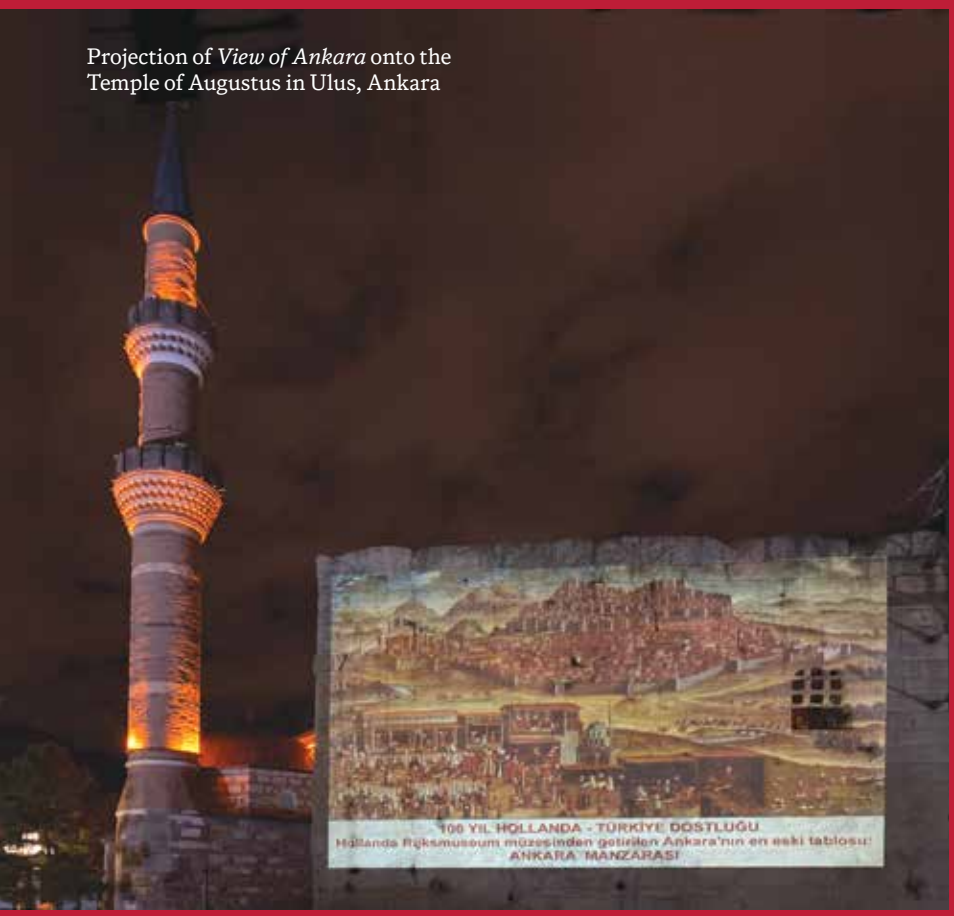

Column of Julian

Netherlands had been an important trader in angora wool. The painting, made in the mid-18th century, is both highly detailed and primitive in execution. It is divided into three sections. In the foreground, we see the production process amid a market scene; in the middle, a caravan loaded with bales of wool passes by; and in the background, a panorama of the city of Ankara unfolds. For a long time, it was believed it depicted the city of Aleppo, but it turned out to be a rare panoramic view of Ankara. Several specific landmarks are clearly recognisable, including the column of the Roman Emperor Julian, who visited Ankara in 362, the L-shaped Hacı Bayram Mosque, and the adjacent Temple of Augustus.

According to the Rijksmuseum, the painting is not only a topographical city view, but also *"a topographic scene with strong narrative elements."* It is the oldest known painting of Ankara, combining landscape, economy, and daily life in a single image.

On the right side of the foreground, we see goatherds shearing the animals. The wool is then woven, washed, dyed, and weighed. The market square is crowded with men and women, many of whom are holding a bundle of wool.

In the distance, a caravan is transporting wool, probably to the port city of Smyrna (now Izmir) for further shipment to Europe.



Projection of *View of Ankara* onto the Temple of Augustus in Ulus, Ankara

Ankara's oldest painting projected onto its Roman past

To mark 100 years of friendship between Türkiye and the Netherlands, the Dutch Embassy organised a special projection of *View of Ankara* in the historic centre of the Turkish capital. From 24 September to the end of October 2024, the 18th-century painting was projected each evening onto the façade of the Temple of Augustus in Ulus. The Hacı Bayram Mosque, which borders the site and also appears in the painting, formed part of the visual frame.

The projection was officially opened by Dutch Ambassador Joep Wijnands and Turkish Deputy Minister of Culture Dr Serdar Çam. The public was invited to visit the projection as part of the Ankara Culture Road Festival.

Instead of displaying the painting in a gallery, the projection returned it to the city it depicted, visually reconnecting past and present.


Detail: Castle of Ankara

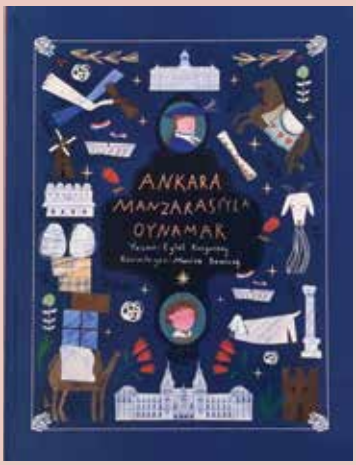
The remarkable painting is part of the Rijksmuseum's collection – which received all the artworks upon the dissolution of the Chamber of Levantine Trade – but is currently on long-term loan in Türkiye.

The first long-term loan was arranged in 2020, during the tenure of Ambassador Marjanne de Kwaasteniet. In 2022, her successor, Ambassador Joep Wijnands, officially confirmed the extension of the loan during a meeting with Professor Dr Filiz Yenişehirlioğlu, director of Koç University's VEKAM research centre. Since then, the painting has remained on display at the Rahmi M. Koç Museum in Ankara, not far from the very landmarks it depicts.

There were also Ottoman wool traders in Amsterdam: Armenians who had settled in the city around 1627. The priest Johannes di Minas of Amasia even built a church of his own, which remained in use until 1806.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the wool trade collapsed and many Armenians returned home. In the 1980s, the church was repurchased by the Armenian community and is still in use today.

Children's Book



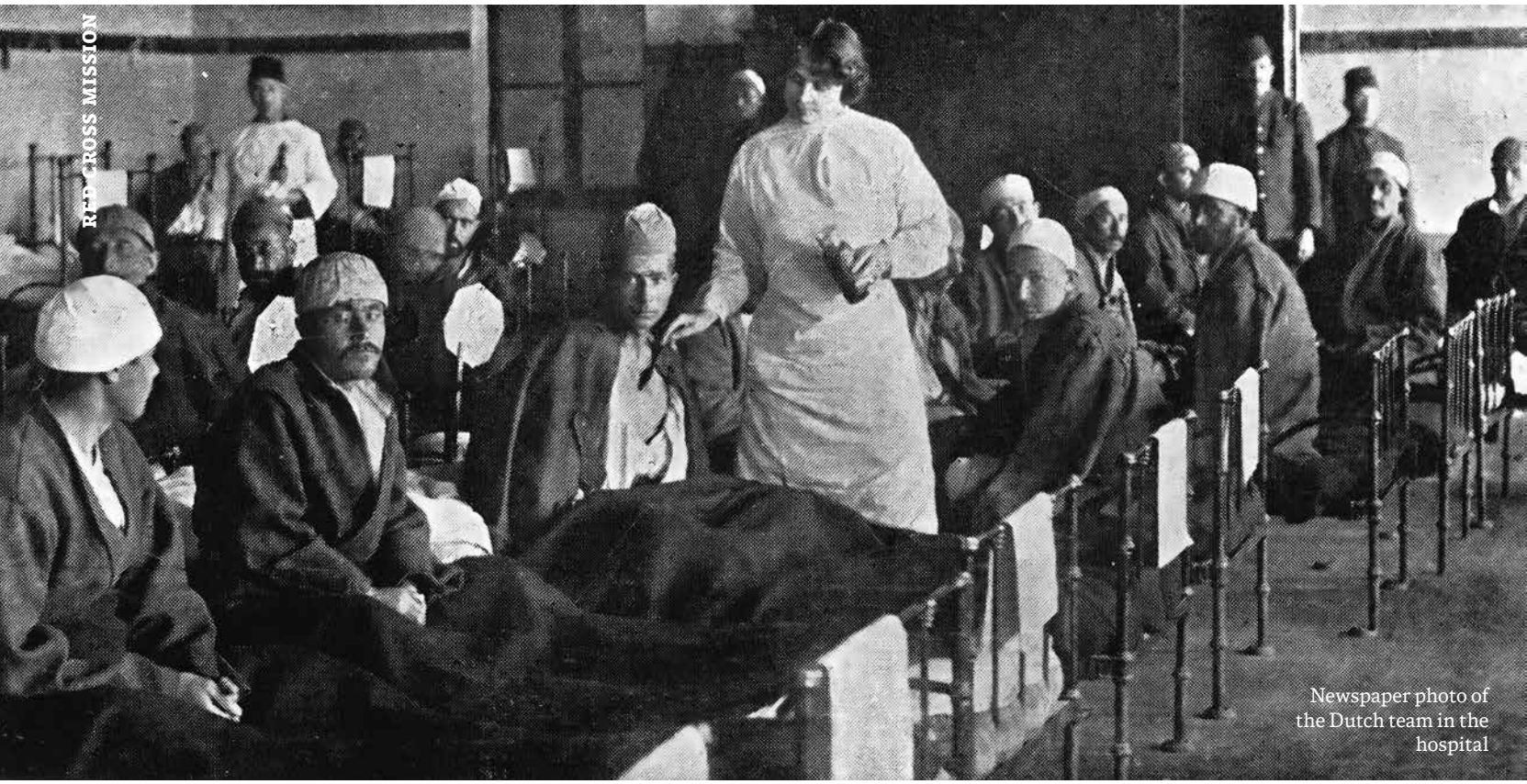
Children from Çorum at the Koç Museum receive the first copies of the book *Ankara Manzarası'yla Oynamak*

As part of the centenary celebrations of Dutch–Turkish diplomatic ties, the Dutch Embassy supported the creation of a children's book inspired by *View of Ankara*.

Written by Eylül Kuzgunbay and illustrated by Mavisu Demirdağ, the book follows the imagined journey of the painter through the streets, markets and mohair workshops of 18th century Ankara.

The book was developed in collaboration with local partners, including the Rahmi M. Koç Museum in Ankara. It is aimed at children aged 6 to 12 and combines short stories with drawings and activities based on scenes from the painting. Children are invited to look closely, to imagine how the painter might have worked, and to picture what the city was like.

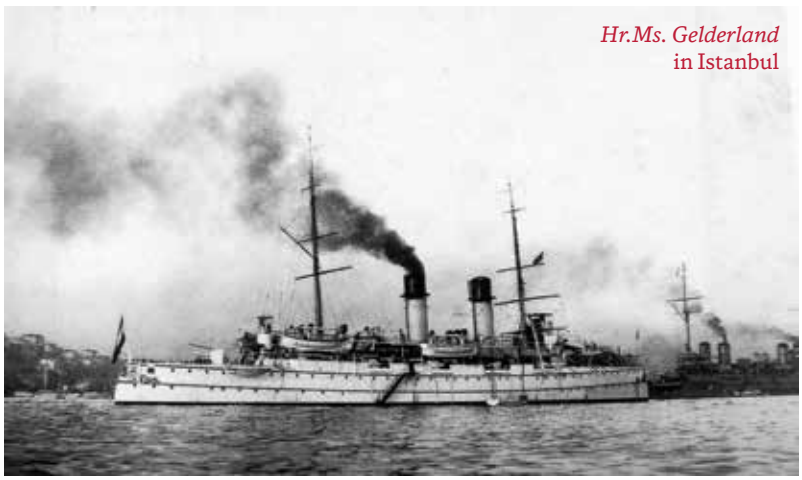
The book is also used in creative workshops at the museum. Children read aloud, try their hand at painting and craft simple scenes based on the mohair trade. What begins as a museum object becomes something more immediate, something they can touch, retell and make their own.



Newspaper photo of the Dutch team in the hospital

The 1912 Mission of the Netherlands Red Cross

The Sultan was deeply impressed by the Dutch team's professionalism and dedication. For five months in 1912, the Netherlands Red Cross ran a city ambulance service in Constantinople, during which only four people died. The Dutch team worked almost entirely independently and was so effective that every staff member was awarded a special certificate and medal by the Sultan. But why were Dutch aid workers needed in the Ottoman capital in the first place?



Hr.Ms. Gelderland in Istanbul

The First Balkan War, in which the Balkan states broke away from the Ottoman Empire, triggered a massive influx of sick and wounded refugees. The scale of the crisis overwhelmed local capacities, prompting international fundraising efforts. In the Netherlands, the Red Cross raised 250,000 guilders for a mission in Greece.

The Ottoman government also turned to the Netherlands

for help, as the Red Crescent and hospitals could no longer cope with the wounded. Ottoman ambassador Aristarchi Bey's plea was initially ignored. The Dutch were very reluctant to send aid to a Muslim country at war with Christian nations. Only when the diplomat politely pointed out that the Kingdom of the Netherlands was, in fact, the world's largest Muslim country—since the Dutch East Indies were still part of it—did the Red Cross relent and quickly release emergency funds. A new appeal also brought in substantial contributions from the Red Cross in the Dutch East Indies.

Before they left, the aid workers were received by Queen Wilhelmina and Prince Hendrik. The Ottoman authorities had asked the Dutch to help with the crisis in Constantinople. The naval ship *Hr.Ms. Gelderland* was already in port, assisting Dutch diplomats and residents affected by the war. Life in the city was hard. Streets were jammed with refugee carts and ox-wagons, and mosques and churches overflowed with the wounded. The ship's medical officer, L.J. Büller—already working in the Şişli children's hospital—offered his help.

The military academy in Harbiye—where future Republic founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk had studied—was hastily converted into an emergency hospital. Mission leader Dr Lingbeek agreed that the Dutch would care for around a hundred wounded.

The team worked under tough conditions, amid constant threats of cholera and other diseases. Luckily, several doctors and nurses were accustomed to working in primitive settings. The Dutch mainly treated infections, inflammations, fractures, and amputations. Their success was due to meticulous care, and—according to Dr Lingbeek—*"the strong, healthy, tough constitution of the Turkish soldier from Asia, and his patience and obedience in suffering."* He was less impressed by their smoking: *"Until just before their death, sometimes in the greatest pain, they would still smoke."*

The Red Cross mission returned to the Netherlands on 18 April 1913 and was warmly welcomed at Hollands Spoor station in The Hague.

The former Harbiye academy is now a monument and major military museum.

(Above left) Ship's doctor L.J. Büller

(Above right) Mission leader Dr Lingbeek in the operating room

(Below) Commemorative booklet

**Some facts in this article are drawn from the thesis by Bas Plaatsman, Dutch Red Cross Ambulance in the Ottoman Empire during the First Balkan War (1912–1913), Utrecht University, 2007*

(From left to right) Minister of Culture and Tourism Mehmet Nuri Ersoy; Dr. hab. Marcin Czepelak, Secretary-General of the Permanent Court of Arbitration; and Piet Hein Donner, Chairman of the Carnegie Foundation, pose on the restored Hereke carpet

Thread of Peace

The Hereke Carpet of the Peace Palace and a Century of Diplomacy

The Peace Palace today (photo by Kasteelbeer)

Only in the late 19th century did peace become a subject to be taken seriously. A civil society movement for the advancement of peace was starting to gain momentum. This time, Europe would not be taken by surprise by yet another war. The problem would be studied and discussed, and an international solution would be found. Bloodshed and destruction would be avoided.

(From left to right) Financial sponsor Andrew Carnegie with guests during the opening in 1913

The threat of a new, potentially disastrous conflict made European leaders and activists increasingly nervous. They realised that a new war would be more global, more devastating, and more difficult to contain. Something had to be done.

The design of the Peace Palace by French architect Louis Cordonnier

One of the most striking examples of these early efforts was the Peace Palace in The Hague. The idea first gained ground in 1899 during the First Hague Peace Conference, an initiative of Czar Nicholas II of Russia. An unprecedented

The director of the Carnegie Foundation Iljan van Hardevelt during the restoration process (front left)

Historical photograph of carpet weavers in Aksaray

26 countries were represented to discuss disarmament and the possibility of some form of international jurisdiction and arbitration. The meeting led to the establishment of the Permanent Court of Arbitration. In 1907, a second peace conference was organised in The Hague, now with 44 countries. From these events grew the conviction that the world needed a symbolic building—an international court in a true palace of peace.

An international architectural competition was held, and 216 designs were submitted. The winning entry by French architect Louis Cordonnier, inspired by neo-Renaissance style, was eventually scaled down to meet the modest $1.5 million budget provided by philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. Participating countries donated building materials and artworks: marbles, vases, tapestries, and paintings. The result was a building as eclectic as it was international—both in style and spirit.

By the time the second Peace Conference took place, the first stone of the Palace had already been laid, in the presence of the Dutch royal family, Andrew Carnegie, and a host of international jurists and representatives. The building was completed and the key ceremonially handed over to the Permanent Court of Arbitration on 28 August 1913—tragically, just eleven months before the outbreak of the First World War.

Among the many gifts offered to the Peace Palace was a remarkable work of art from the Ottoman Empire: a monumental Hereke carpet woven especially for the Japanese Room, which is adorned with exquisite silk tapestries. Measuring over 161 square metres and weighing around 700 kilograms, it contains an estimated 13.7 million Gördes knots. With its intricate design and deep crimson tones, the carpet has been a centrepiece of the Peace Palace's interior for more than a century. Also known as the Administrative Council Chamber of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), the Japanese Room has been witness to many historic and important meetings.

Although minor repairs were made after a fire in the Japanese Room, by the early 2020s it had become clear that the carpet was in urgent need of professional restoration. Discussions began between the Carnegie Foundation, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. In 2023, they reached an agreement. The carpet would be transported to Türkiye, where a specialist team in Aksaray would take on the task.

The removal ceremony of the carpet from the Japanese Room at the Peace Palace was attended by Erik Weststrate, Director for Europe at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who had played a key role in the agreement during his time at the Dutch Embassy in Ankara. He was joined by Selçuk Ünal, then Turkish Ambassador in The Hague; Pınar Bilgen Ermiş, the culture and promotion counsellor; and Piet Hein Donner, chairman of the Carnegie Foundation. Together, they bid the carpet farewell before its return to Türkiye for restoration.

The carpet is slowly and carefully rolled out

The process began at ICAT (Independent Conservation Atelier Textiles) in Cruquius, where the carpet was gently cleaned and assessed. Textile restorer Sadegh Memarian oversaw the cleaning, ensuring that the delicate fibres were handled with care. It was then packed and shipped by truck to Sultanhanı, a town renowned for its expertise in traditional carpet restoration. There, a team of eight worked for a full year. The carpet was divided into 280 segments for close inspection. Areas worn by decades of footsteps and heavy furniture were carefully reinforced. Techniques combined traditional craftsmanship with scientific precision, including chemical analyses to match the original dyes and threads. The original weaving techniques were used to rebind and reinforce the structure—stitch by stitch.

Former Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism Nadir Alpaslan praised the carpet's symbolic value, saying it had *"symbolised peace for over a century"* and was now revived through meticulous care. When the carpet returned to the Peace Palace, Dutch Ambassasor Joep Wijnands remarked: *"Our friendship is as strong as the thousands of threads tying this carpet together and as vibrant as its beautiful colors."* The Turkish government fully funded the restoration.

(From left to right) Piet Hein Donner, chairman of the Carnegie Foundation; Erik Weststrate, director for Europe at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and Selçuk Ünal, former Turkish ambassador to the Netherlands, being interviewed in front of the Peace Palace during the official send-off of the carpet for restoration to Türkiye.

In January 2025, the carpet returned to The Hague in a formal ceremony marking 100 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The event was attended by Türkiye's Minister of Culture and Tourism Mehmet Nuri Ersoy and Turkish Ambassador Selçuk Ünal. Minister Ersoy described the carpet as *"the largest handwoven carpet outside Türkiye"* and stressed its role in strengthening cultural ties. The ceremony was not only about textile and tradition, but about diplomacy, peace, and the rule of law.

A work of craftsmanship and a silent witness to history, the Hereke carpet has returned to the Japanese Room of the Peace Palace. Restored yet unchanged, it remains part of the thread that runs through the story of peace.

Diplomatic Treasure

The Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye in The Hague

Residence building with Turkish flag

Prinsessegracht 29 in The Hague is located in a unique part of the city with a fascinating history that goes back centuries. Originally built in 1734, it became the Turkish Government's property in 1937 and has been the official Residence of the Turkish Ambassador ever since. The Hague is the official seat of the Dutch government which is why most of the foreign embassies and international organisations can be found there.

The governmental decree allowing the purchase of the residence at the Prinsessegracht bears the approval signature of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the President and founder of the modern Turkish Republic. The residence was purchased by the then Chargé d'Affaires, Abdulahad Akşin and not long thereafter, the Emissary Ahmet Cevat Üstün took up residence in the charming historic monument.

The house is located at the historical edge of the city centre. Next door to the right, at number 28, we find the Chancellery building of the Turkish Embassy. It has – since 1974 – been located next to the Liberal Jewish Congregation Beth Jehoeda. The neighbour on the left-hand-side at number 30 is the book museum Huis van het Boek.

The harmonious appearance of the houses on the Prinsessegracht is partly thanks to a building code which was issued by the municipal council to erect only distinguished houses on this site. The buildings were probably designed by Daniël Marot (1661-1752), a French Protestant architect who fled France in 1685 and took refuge in the Netherlands. Opposite the Prinsessegracht we can see a large green area surrounded by trees, the Malieveld, a traditional military marching area, now mostly used for demonstrations, circuses, and public events. It is a green and leafy part of the city.

To the south of the Residence lies the old city of The Hague. A walk along a 19th-century canal

Prinsessegracht, The Hague, in the 18th century

The Turkish flag at half-mast at the Turkish Embassy to mark the death of President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, 10 November 1938

The garden seen from the dining room

leads to the Lange Voorhout, a historic neighbourhood known for its embassies and international organisations. Nearby are the Houses of Parliament, centred around the 13th-century Ridderzaal, where the monarch delivers the annual state address. While most ministries now occupy modern offices, the historic buildings still house the Senate and the Prime Minister. Uniquely, the inner courtyard remains open to the public at all times.

The King's official Residence, the Palace of Huis ten Bosch, is located just a stone's throw away from the government buildings. It was built in the 17th century.

From the King's Palace, it's just a ten-minute walk back to the Turkish Embassy. Despite a few updates, the house at Prinsessegracht 29 has remained largely intact, offering a rare glimpse of 18th-century elegance. Guests are greeted by a marble floor and a sweeping oak staircase leading to the former servants' quarters. Above it, an octagonal dome bathes the hallway in natural light. The Ambassador's former office, still in its original state, features period furniture, historic mementos, and black-and-white overdoor paintings.

As in many patrician homes, the official reception and living quarters are on the ground floor. The spacious rooms stretch from the front of the house to the garden and reflect the refined rococo style popular around 1750. Ornamental ceilings, carved doors, grand fireplaces and wooden floors all showcase

exceptional craftsmanship. A standout feature is the extensive collection of wall paintings, found in nearly every room.

The dining room, in particular, resembles a gallery. Its walls are fully covered with large-scale panel paintings by Johann Heinrich Keller (1692–1765), a Swiss-born artist who settled in The Hague in 1726. His idyllic scenes of ruins, peasants, and soldiers reflect the capriccio style popularised by Italian painters in the early 18th century. Four overdoor paintings show Venetian views, copied from 1741 prints by Michele Marieschi (1710–1743). This unique group of works by Keller is the only one still in situ - in the actual place they were intended to decorate.

The Turkish Residence also houses paintings that are part of the collection of the Embassy itself. Especially the paintings by Halil Pasha (1857-1939), which adorn the walls of the residence and show seaside landscapes, are of an extraordinary tranquil beauty.

An extensive renovation project was completed in 2012 to make sure these heritage treasures remain in the best possible condition for generations to come. It is a testimony to the long and lasting relationship between the two nations.

(Above left) Reception rooms on the ground floor

(Above right) Dining room with wall paintings

Ornamental skylight

Deep Dive

The First Submarines of the Turkish Republic

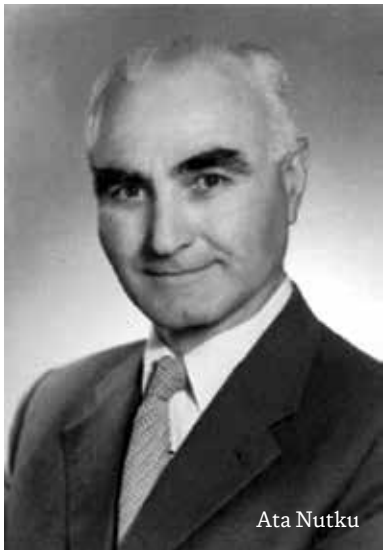
In the lush gardens of the Turkish naval base at Gölcük rests an old weapon with a remarkable past. The decommissioned submarine torpedo is the last surviving part of the very first submarines in the history of the Turkish Navy. It once belonged to the *Birinci Inönü*, launched in 1925 and designed and built in the Netherlands.

Under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the newly founded Republic of Türkiye set out to modernise every aspect of society. As a former military officer, Atatürk believed a modern army was key to national strength—and that meant acquiring the latest in submarine technology.

Britain and France competed fiercely for the contract, but the Turks were not particularly fond of their former adversaries. The memories of the Battle of Gallipoli were still fresh, even ten years later. Atatürk had also not forgotten that during the First World War, Britain had promised to deliver ships to the Ottoman Empire—but despite full payment, they never did. The French were confident they

The *Birinci Inönü* and *İkinci Inönü* were named after a small village near Eskişehir, where the Turks fought two battles against the Greeks in 1921. The troops were led by İsmet Pasha, who would later adopt the surname İnönü. İsmet İnönü would go on to become Türkiye's second president.

would secure the deal. However, in the end, the contract went to the Dutch. Trade relations between the Netherlands and Türkiye were excellent, and negotiations proceeded smoothly, both formally and personally. The Dutch also had back channels to acquire German submarine technology, which Germany itself was prohibited from exporting under postwar treaties. The French and British lost out—and were furious.


Ata Nutku

In 1925, Turkish engineer Ata Nutku and his team travelled to the *Maatschappij voor Scheeps- en Werktuigbouw Fijenoord* (later: Feijenoord) in Rotterdam, founded by Dutch steam engine pioneer Gerhard Röntgen. The atmosphere was positive, and for three years Turkish and Dutch engineers worked side by side on the first foreign naval vessels ever built in a Dutch shipyard: the *Birinci Inönü* and *İkinci Inönü* (the first and second

The Netherlands, Türkiye and NATO

Joseph Luns served as Secretary General of NATO from 1971 to 1984

The Netherlands and Türkiye have been allies within NATO since 1952, cooperating closely on defence, diplomacy, and regional security. In 2024, the Netherlands hosted the NATO Summit in The Hague, the City of Peace and Justice, at a time of heightened geopolitical tension. The summit was widely described as historic. Türkiye is scheduled to host the next summit in 2026, further underscoring its central role within the Alliance.

Several Dutch statesmen have left their mark on NATO. Joseph Luns, former Dutch Foreign Minister, served as Secretary General from 1971 to 1984—the longest tenure in the organisation's history. Known for his dry wit and unorthodox style, Luns led the

Following the 1964 labour recruitment agreement between the Netherlands and Türkiye, many Turkish workers were brought to the Netherlands to address labour shortages in various industries, including shipbuilding. Fijenoord, a major shipyard in Rotterdam, was also among the companies that employed these workers. See also the article on labour migration elsewhere in this issue.

Inönü). Since Türkiye was still using the Arabic script at the time, the Dutch painters spelled the names phonetically as *Birindji In-uni* and *Ikindji In-uni*.

In September 1927, 74 Turkish naval officers arrived to test the submarines. A short film was even made during one of the trial runs—rediscovered decades later in the Rotterdam City Archives. The officers were warmly welcomed and treated to a typical Dutch day out, including a tram ride and a visit to Blijdorp Zoo. On 25 May, they departed with the submarines from Rotterdam, arriving 18 days and 3,500 nautical miles later in Istanbul.

Turkish President Kemal Atatürk welcomed the two new fleet units from the balcony of the Dolmabahçe Palace. A new high point—and at the same time, a low point—for the young republic.

Newspaper announcement of the arrival of the submarines in Istanbul

Alliance through some of the most turbulent years of the Cold War. He played a central role during the 1974 Cyprus crisis. Cyprus is not a NATO member, but the legacy of the unresolved conflict continues to influence NATO's relations in the region. Luns was the first recipient of the Atatürk International Peace Prize in 1986, a state award for the development of friendship and goodwill in line with Atatürk's principle 'Peace at Home, Peace in the World'.

Luns was followed by two more Dutch Secretaries General: Jaap de Hoop Scheffer (2004–2009) and Mark Rutte, who assumed the post in 2024. Rutte paid a one-day visit to Ankara on 25 November 2024, meeting with President Erdoğan and senior Turkish ministers. He praised Türkiye's contributions as NATO's second-largest military, recognised Türkiye's support for Ukraine, its stabilising role in the Black Sea, and its efforts in the fight against terrorism. He also discussed Türkiye's continued engagement in missions such as KFOR in Kosovo and NATO's presence in Iraq, and paid tribute at Anıtkabir, the mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

(Left) NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte visited Türkiye on 25 November 2024 for a meeting with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte paid tribute at Anıtkabir, the mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

The dam today (photo by Dosseman)

The Legacy of the Taşköprü Dam

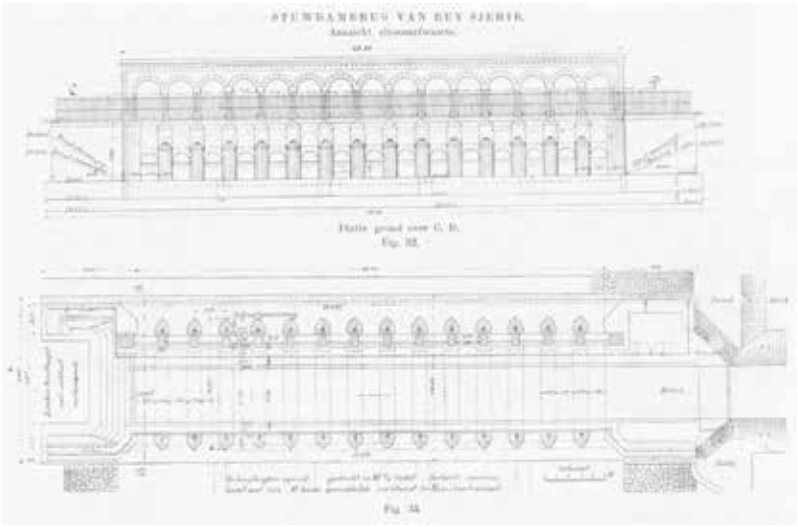
A pioneering project by two Dutch engineers

(Above left) Aerial view of the dam in the 1960s

(Above right) Very early photograph with camels crossing the dam (AI reconstruction of a damaged image)

(Right) Mehmed Ferid Pasha, Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire

Creating the first real dam in Beyşehir was no easy task. The Konya Plains can be dry, flooded or entirely unpredictable, and a regular water supply had been a dream for centuries. In the early 1900s, the Ottoman Empire was determined to modernise, and agriculture was high on the agenda. If water could be controlled, this fertile district might finally become the nation's granary.



(Above left) Original design drawings of the dam

(Left) Irrigation map of the area

(Above) The dam is now closed to heavy traffic (photo by Noumenon)

The task was given to Herman and Anton Waldorp, two Dutch brothers who already had experience across the Empire. They had worked on the harbour of Haidar Pasha and on the coal port of Zonguldak, and were employed by the *Chemin de Fer Ottoman d'Anatolie, the Ottoman Anatolian Railway Company.* The new dam was commissioned by Mehmed Ferid Pasha, Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire.

The brothers started with research. One travelled to Egypt to study water regulation; both surveyed the land to draft a proposal and estimate a budget. The old, damaged bridge at the lake's entrance was then demolished. In its place, the new Taşköprü was built: a 42-metre-long stone dam, 6.35 metres wide, with two levels of 15 arches and floodgates. It served both as a dam and as a bridge for carriages and cars.

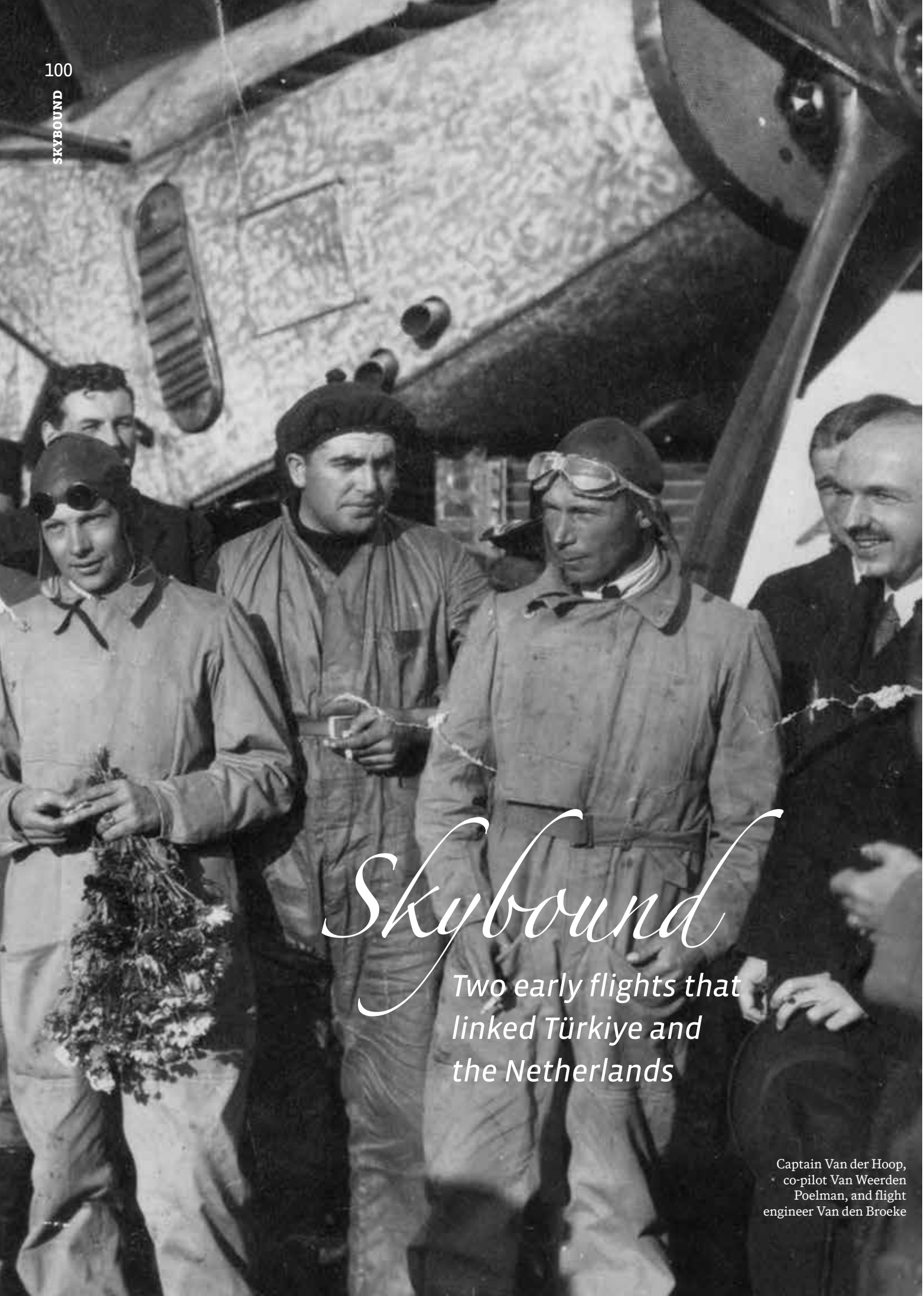
While the Waldorps had adapted well to local life, the young Dutch engineers they brought in found it harder. One of them, years later in a lecture in the Netherlands—attended by Turkish delegate B. Nuri Batu—spoke about his experience. The journey to Konya took up to 26 hours and required an overnight stay in Eskişehir: "*The centre of this so-called city, with bad pavements, is where all shops are concentrated. The rest of streets do not deserve that name; they are mud pools if it rains and dust nests when the sun is shining*." The local dogs didn't impress him either: dangerous animals who look like wolves "*which could easily tear a stranger apart*."

The Waldorp brothers took a different view. Despite political turmoil, constant changes of government, and growing impatience among local farmers, they kept working. Officials came and went, but the engineers earned respect across the board.

Sadly, Herman Waldorp died in Paris in 1913, before the work was finished, from an illness worsened by the project. In 1914, Anton received the *Order of Osmanieh Grand Officer's Cross* and was invited to lead the ministry's public works department, a position he accepted. Their reputation endured, and after the founding of the Turkish Republic, Dutch engineers were once again invited to work in the country.

The Order of Osmanieh, Grand Officer's Cross

Today, Taşköprü is one of Beyşehir's most cherished heritage landmarks. Closed to motor traffic, it serves as a pedestrian bridge—a lasting symbol of ingenuity, persistence, and international collaboration.



Skybound

Two early flights that linked Türkiye and the Netherlands

Captain Van der Hoop, co-pilot Van Weerden Poelman, and flight engineer Van den Broeke

Turkish Airlines Fokker 27 flying over Istanbul

Turkish Airlines and KLM are among the world's most respected airlines today. But in the early decades, their ambitions were far more modest. Turkish Airlines was founded in 1933—like many national carriers in that period—but focused primarily on domestic flights. International routes remained limited, and transatlantic journeys were not on the horizon.

That began to change in the 1960s, as labour migration from Türkiye to Western Europe created new travel demands. The Netherlands, facing growing workforce shortages, signed agreements to welcome Turkish labourers. Most travelled by train or bus, but in 1964 Turkish Airlines launched a series of charter flights to Schiphol. For many on board, it was their first time in the air.

"Nobody had been on a plane before. I remember how nervous we all were," said one of the passengers years later, a Turkish worker recruited under the labour migration schemes of the 1960s. *"We laughed a lot, but really, we didn't know what to expect. We were flying to a country we knew little about. None of us thought we'd stay long."* The flights left a lasting impression.

Turkish Airlines stewardess

Turkish Airlines launched its first regular scheduled flight to the Netherlands on 4 July 1965. But few realise that a transatlantic flight had taken place even earlier—on board a Dutch-made aircraft.

In 1962, Turkish captains Nurettin Gürün and Zihni Barın travelled to the US

(Above) The new engine arrives in Bulgaria

(Right) Turkish newspaper

Fokker F.VII


فلمنك طياره‌سی دون آنقره‌يه كيتدی

to collect two Fokker F27 Friendships, built under licence in Maryland. The popular turboprop, originally designed in the Netherlands, could carry around 40 passengers and land on unpaved airstrips—ideal for regional use, but not designed for intercontinental travel.

After several weeks of training in Hagerstown, Maryland, the pilots embarked on what would become Turkish Airlines' first transatlantic flight. The route included stopovers in Montreal, Greenland, Iceland, and England. The stop at Schiphol held special meaning: they were landing in the home country of the plane's designers. The journey continued via Rome and ended in Yeşilköy, Istanbul. *"We were so happy,"* Barın later recalled. *"I can't describe how much joy we felt."*

That 30-hour flight was a technical and symbolic breakthrough. But earlier ties go back even further.

In 1924, a KLM Fokker F.VII (H-NACC) was on its way

(Above) KLM plane arrives in Istanbul; on the left, Frans and Ida van 't Hooft

(Left) Turkish workers preparing to fly to the Netherlands in 1964

to Istanbul as part of an experimental long-distance route to the Dutch East Indies. However, mechanical issues forced a detour and emergency landing in Bulgaria. A new Rolls-Royce engine was urgently needed, and a swift fundraising campaign in the Netherlands managed to raise enough money to ship a replacement. The plane reached Istanbul on 2 November, after a delay of a month.

Six-year-old Frans van 't Hooft witnessed the arrival. His family lived near the airfield in Yeşilköy and hosted the local Dutch community to await the plane. *"I remember the house being in turmoil,"* he wrote later. *"We waited for hours. Someone shouted that the plane was coming—but it was just a seagull. Finally, the real thing appeared. An officer set fire to some planks to mark the landing spot. The plane came down to cheers."*

Van 't Hooft's sister would become one of KLM's first flight attendants. He himself later founded TURHOL, the first travel agency specialising in travel between Türkiye and the Netherlands.

Two early flights, decades apart, each carried more than passengers. They marked the beginning of a long, shared journey—across skies, cultures, and generations.

(Above) Byzantine fresco of the First Council of Nicaea (325), attended by St. Nicolas

(Below) Gold-leaf chocolate coins

The Turkish Roots of Santa Claus

Local customs are always a bit hard to explain to outsiders, but the *Sinterklaas* celebrations in the Netherlands may be among the toughest to crack. Let us try to set out the basic – and quite illogical – facts.

Saint Nicolas arriving in the Netherlands

Every year on the third Saturday of November, *Sinterklaas* – officially Saint Nicholas – arrives on a steamboat from Spain to give gifts to the nice children and reprimand the not–so–nice ones. He has a long white beard, is hundreds of years old, and is dressed as a Catholic bishop, complete with red robe and mitre.

While he is in the country, children of all ages are allowed to put their shoes or socks near the fireplace to receive a small, usually edible treat. It could be the first letter of their name in chocolate, or chocolate coins wrapped in gold foil, or tiny cookies called *pepernoten*, or little animals made from marzipan or sugar. Special songs are sung to honour him.

The highlight of the festivities falls on the 5th of December, when larger gifts are exchanged. These presents must be disguised as something else entirely – a tradition called a *surprise*. Many come with a poem that must be read aloud, often referring to some embarrassing mishap or unfortunate character trait. By the 6th of December, officially the nameday of the Saint, it is all over, and he quietly departs

(Above) The St. Nicolas Church in Myra, Türkiye

(Right) Santa Claus

again on his steamboat back to Spain.

But what lies behind these strange traditions – and what is the hidden Turkish connection?

The real story of Saint Nicholas is as fascinating as his legend. He was probably born around 280 and died in 352. He grew up in Myra – near modern–day Demre – then part of the Roman Empire. The well–preserved ruins of this ancient Lycian city, about 90 kilometres from Antalya, can still be visited today. Myra was named after the myrrh tree.

Chocolate letter and pepernoten

Nicholas was a clever and devout child who rose quickly through the church. The story goes that he got into trouble at the Council of Nicaea (present–day İznik) in 325. A heated theological dispute ended in a physical fight: Nicholas slapped his opponent and broke his own nose in the process. He was stripped to his underwear and thrown in jail to cool off. But the next day, a miracle had occurred: Nicholas appeared without shackles, fully dressed in his bishop's robes.

It would not be his first – nor his last – miracle. He once brought three murdered young men, who had been cut into pieces, back to life. He healed a woman's withered hand and saved a baby from being consumed by fire. He also helped young women who could not afford a dowry by anonymously throwing gold coins through their windows – which may explain one particular Dutch tradition.

After his death, a large church was built over his tomb. Today, the church is on the tentative UNESCO World Heritage list. But that was not the end of his story – nor

Sinterklaas visiting the Dutch Ambassador's Residence in Ankara

Saint Nicolas celebrations in the Netherlands, 1908

his travels. In 1087, raiders from the Italian city of Bari, suffering from economic decline, decided to steal his bones and bring them to Italy, where they remain to this day. These relics became a source of miracles and a major attraction. Pilgrims still visit Bari in the thousands, and the town flourished, while ancient Myra faded into obscurity.

In their haste, the Italians left behind a few fragments. Recent DNA tests have shown that the bones in Myra and those in Bari belong to the same man. He was not tall – only 1.52 metres – and of medium build.

So what about Santa Claus? When Dutch emigrants travelled to the United States, they brought their *Sinterklaas* traditions with them. Over time, *Sinterklaas* became *Santa Claus*. Other immigrant communities added to the legend. His red bishop's robe and mitre became a warm red winter coat and woolly hat. The *Pieten,* Sinterklaas' traditional helpers, became elves, and the horse turned into reindeer. He moved from Spain to the North Pole – and even got married.

Cup of St. Nicolas in the Istanbul Archaeology Museum (11th century)

Today, few people realise that the real Santa Claus was born in the 4th century, in a Roman town in what is now southern Türkiye – a place once called Myra.

Changing Times

The 1935 Women's Rights Congress in Istanbul

In the Ottoman Empire, women had little public presence. That changed radically with the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk believed women were essential to the nation's future and promoted wide-ranging reforms.

Rosa Manus in 1928

While the Netherlands granted women the right to vote in 1917, Türkiye followed in 1934—well ahead of countries like France (1944) and Italy (1946).

In 1935, Istanbul hosted the 12th Congress of the International Alliance for the Suffrage and Equal Citizenship. The invitation by the Turkish Women's Union (*Türk Kadınlar Birliği*) had initially been declined, but the energy of the new republic proved persuasive. One of the key organisers was Dutch feminist Rosa Manus, vice-president of the Alliance and a driving force behind the decision to come to Türkiye.

Commemorative stamps

Held at the Yıldız Pavilion—once a palace of the Ottoman sultans—the Congress had strong symbolic value. It sparked debates in Turkish newspapers, with *Cumhuriyet* running stories on women in the military, and even abortion and prostitution. Commemorative stamps were issued, and the delegates travelled to Ankara to meet the President. One of the organisers, Edith Balfour Lyttelton remarked that President Atatürk was determined to open the doors to modern ideas.

Thirty countries were represented. One delegate even arrived from Brazil by Zeppelin. Rosa Manus's organisational talent was key in making the congress a success, helping to bridge cultural and political differences among the international delegates.

But the optimism of 1935 would soon be overshadowed. A pacifist and Jewish activist, Manus co-founded the

International Archives for the Women's Movement in Amsterdam. When the Nazis occupied the Netherlands, the archive was looted, her women's corps disbanded, and Manus arrested. She died in a concentration camp in 1942.

The Alliance continues today as the International Alliance of Women (IAW), still advocating for women's rights worldwide.

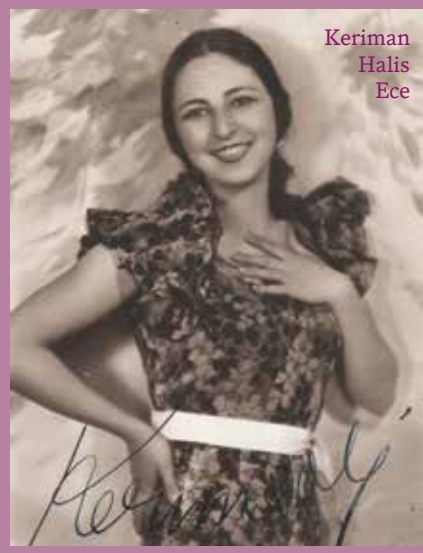
(Above left) Women elected to the Turkish Parliament in 1935

(Above) The 1935 Congress

Strong Women

Parliamentarians
Emine Mebrure Gönenç (1900–1981) was one of 18 women elected to the Turkish parliament in 1935. She championed education, fought alcoholism, supported Braille literacy, and even promoted spa tourism. By contrast, the Netherlands had only a few female MPs in the 1930s—and just seven by 1952.

Sabiha Gökçen



Keriman Halis Ece

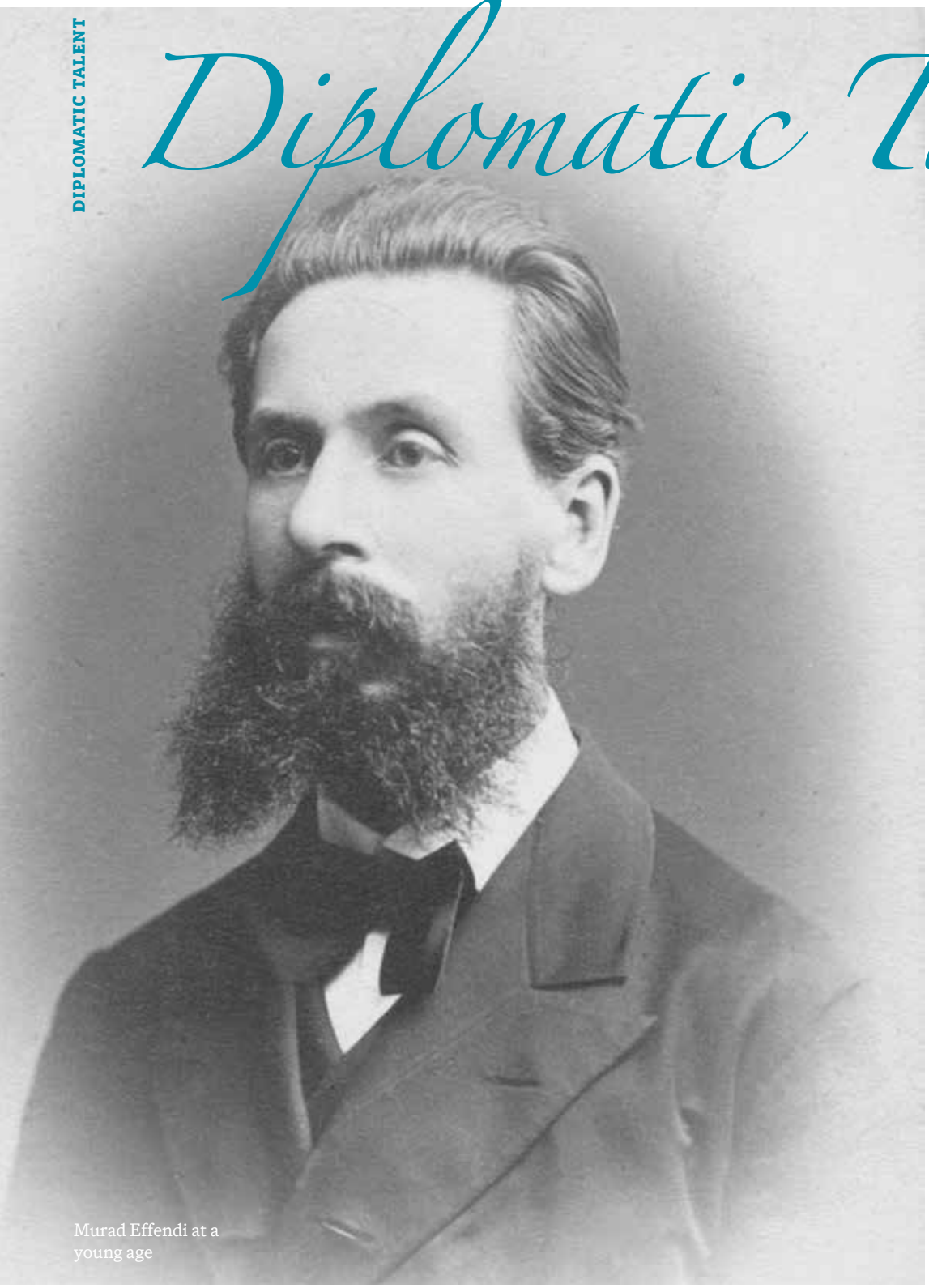
Sabiha Gökçen
Adopted by Atatürk, Sabiha Gökçen (1913–2001) became the world's first female fighter pilot in 1937, a powerful symbol of the new Turkish woman. The first female fighter pilot in NATO, Dutch aviator Nellie Speerstra, wouldn't take flight until 1986.

Keriman Halis Ece
The first beauty competitions in Türkiye were held in 1932. That same year, Keriman Halis Ece (1913–2012) already won an international beauty contest. In 1934, Atatürk gave her the honorary surname *Ece* (queen). The Netherlands had to wait until 1989 for its first Miss Universe, Angela Visser.

Women in Business
New freedoms allowed Turkish women to travel and trade. In 1927, Mrs. Kiazin of İzmir sold raisins on the Amsterdam stock exchange. Dutch newspapers called her *"living proof of Turkish women's emancipation."*

Newspaper article on Mrs. Kaizin

Diplomatic Talent



Murad Effendi at a young age

There were many talented diplomats working in the Netherlands in the 19th and 20th centuries. Some were excellent politicians, others were successful businessmen. There were also quite a few with literary ambitions. They were celebrated writers and poets.

Who were these men, and how are their lives and works connected to the Netherlands? Some stayed only a few years, others found their final resting place here.

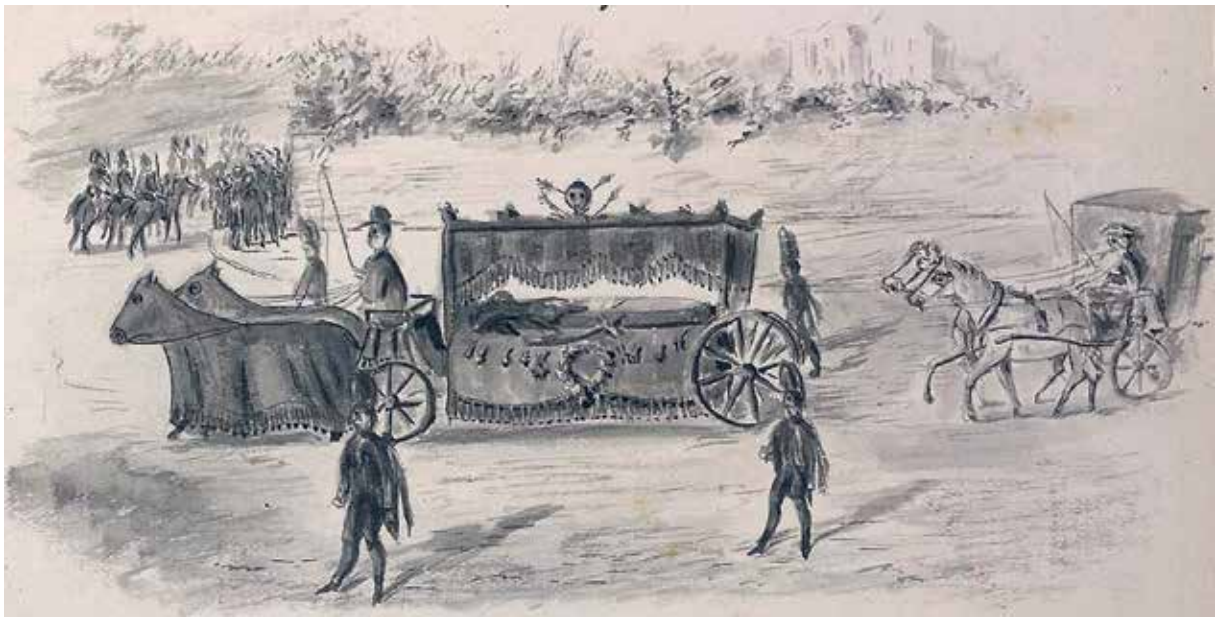
Murad Effendi (1836-1881) is perhaps the most famous and tragic Turkish ambassador from the 19th century. He was not only a diplomat, but also a celebrated writer and playwright, who was loved in the literary circles of The Hague, the government seat of the Netherlands.

At the age of 45, his servant found him lifeless behind his desk shortly after receiving news he would be transferred to Berlin, a post he had long dreamed of. Was it the emotion of this great wish fulfilled that killed him? We will never know.

The city of The Hague gave him a grand farewell. An English tourist even made a drawing

The forgotten grave of Murad Effendi

Despite all his fame in the Netherlands in the 19th century, the exact location of his grave in The Hague was forgotten. However, in 2012, researcher Eray Ergeç discovered the exact grave number in the population register of the municipality of The Hague. Director Van der Vlist of the cemetery discovered that the grave number had been



Drawing of Murad Effendi's funeral

of the funeral procession. Representatives of the Royal House and the Minister of Foreign Affairs were present, and an honour guard saluted him as he was taken to the cemetery.

Murad Effendi was born in Vienna in 1836 as Franz von Werner. Well-educated, he chose a military career. In 1851, he joined the Ottoman army as a lieutenant and adopted the name Murad Effendi. He distinguished himself in the Crimean War and later in Montenegro, eventually becoming secretary to the

Murad Effendi

Grand Vizier Edhem Pasha, the beginning of his diplomatic career. In 1869, he published his first poetry collection, and his first play followed two years later.

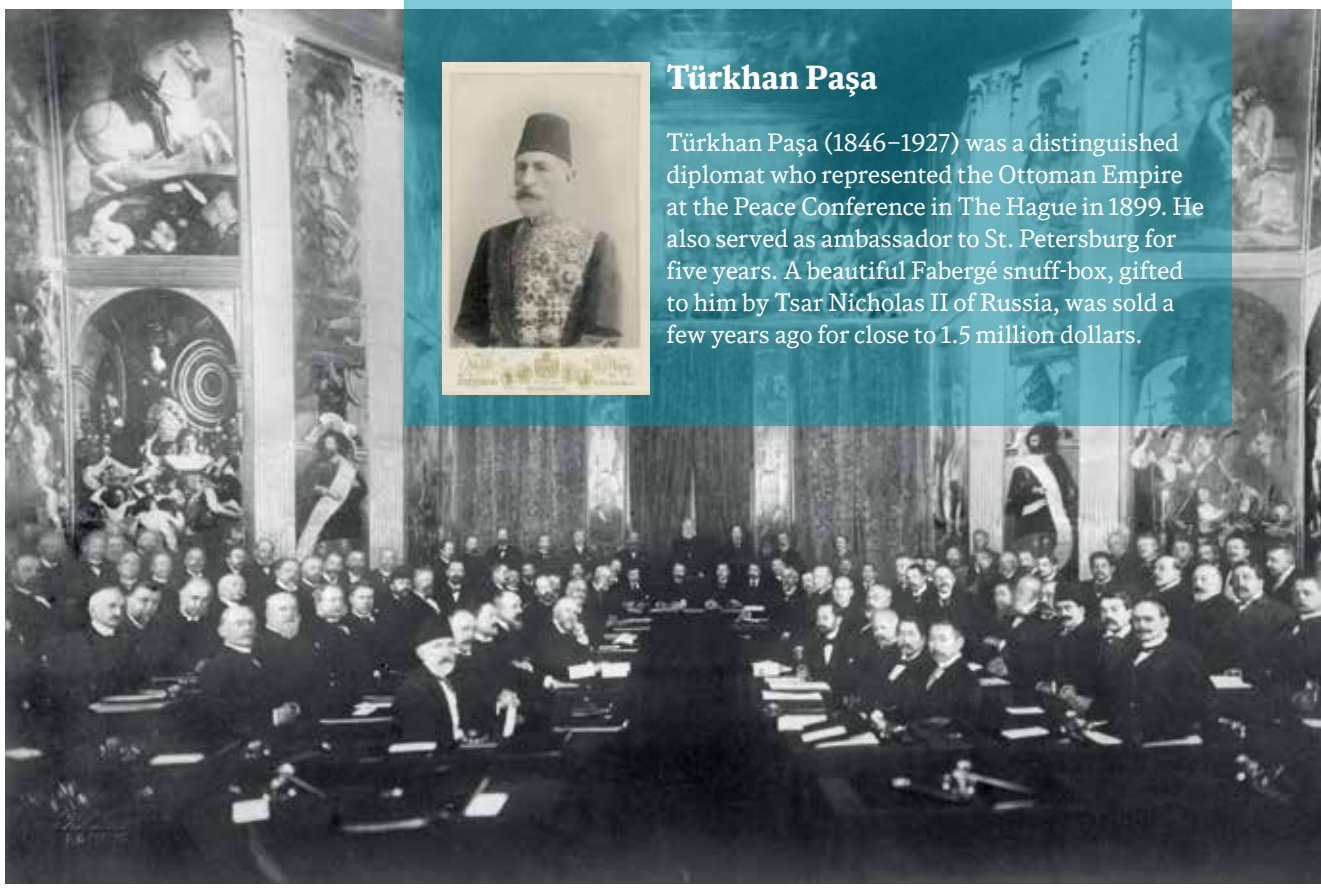
Books by Murad Effendi, printed in the Netherlands

In 1877, he became the Turkish ambassador to the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, based in The Hague. The Dutch literary expert, Prof. Dr. W.J.A. Jonckbloet, praised Murad's

changed over time and together with Ergeç began investigating the cemetery's archives. They found out that Effendi's remains were still buried in the *Sint Petrus Banden graveyard* in The Hague. There was even an invoice for the grave for the sum of 100 guilders, paid by his son Gaston Murad. Since then, a memorial plaque has been placed at the site.

Document showing the location of Murad Effendi's grave

A meeting in the Orange Hall of Huis ten Bosch Palace in The Hague during the 1899 Peace Conference, with Türkhan Paşa on the left.



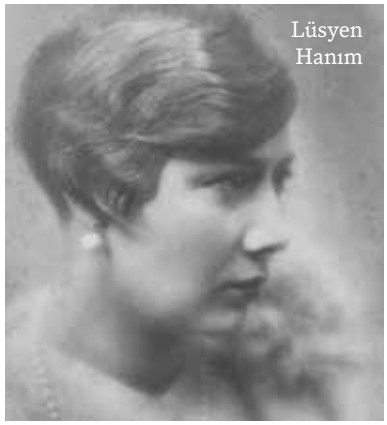
Türkhan Paşa

Türkhan Paşa (1846–1927) was a distinguished diplomat who represented the Ottoman Empire at the Peace Conference in The Hague in 1899. He also served as ambassador to St. Petersburg for five years. A beautiful Fabergé snuff-box, gifted to him by Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, was sold a few years ago for close to 1.5 million dollars.

work, which was published in Dutch. The two became good friends. Murad became a frequent guest speaker at literary evenings in the city. Excerpts from his work *Turkish Sketches: An Impartial Report About Ottoman Society, Politics and Culture* even appeared weekly in Dutch newspapers. He had a talent for foreign languages and translated Turkish poetry into German. In June 1881, months before his death, he received a gold medal from the Dutch King and Queen for his literary work.

The story of **Abdülhak Hâmid Tarhan** (1852-1937) is very different. The famous poet, writer and diplomat was forbidden from writing during his time as ambassador in The Hague in the late 19th century. Some of his works were considered controversial and

Abdülhak Hâmid Tarhan



Lüsyen Hanım

he was reprimanded more than once. In this case it was his play *Zeynep* that had displeased the Ottoman leadership.

Abdülhak Hâmid was internationally oriented. He was born in Istanbul, educated in Paris, and served as a diplomat in the UK, France, Greece, Belgium and India, to name a few. His personal life reflected his international background. His first wife, Fatma, whom he married in 1871, tragically died en route to Beirut. The beautiful and moving poem *Makber* (*The Grave*) remains one of Türkiye's most beloved romantic works, famously performed by Hafız Burhan—whose original wax recording still survives. He later married an English woman, Nelly. After his third wife, Cemile, he married a young Belgian woman,

Singer Hafiz Burhan

Halide Edib Adıvar

Halide Edib Adıvar

It was rare for Turkish literature to be published in the Netherlands in the early 20th century. Halide Edib Adıvar was a women's rights activist, writer, and nationalist. One of her most famous books was *The Clown and His Daughter* (*Sinekli Bakkal*), originally written in English in 1935 and later translated into Turkish and other languages. The book was also translated into Dutch and caused quite a stir. The literary critic J.G. de Haas wrote when the book was first published in Dutch in 1937 (*De Dochter van den Pias*) that it was "*special but also educational and beautiful*" and praised the book's sensitive humanity.

Halide Edib Adıvar's fame even reached beyond the Earth. The *Adıvar Crater* on the planet Venus is named in her honour.

The Dutch-language version of *The Daughter of a Clown*

Lucienne (Lüsyen Hanım). The age difference was considered scandalous at the time. Abdülhak Hâmid is regarded as one of the key figures in Turkish romanticism.

After the establishment of the Turkish Republic, he was elected to the Grand National Assembly as deputy for Istanbul in 1928, a post he held until his death in 1937. His fame and reputation as *Şair-i Azam* (*The Great Poet*) led the government to declare a national funeral.

Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu

The cover of the book *Ankara*, printed in the Netherlands

Yusuf Mardin later published a book on Abdülhak Hâmid's years in London. Perhaps it is also time that his two-year tenure in The Hague was studied in more detail.

Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu (1889–1974) arrived in The Hague in 1939, just before World War II. He was a journalist and newspaper editor who later became a parliamentarian and diplomat. Although he had published his first book at the age of 24, it was during his diplomatic years that he wrote his most celebrated works. *Yaban* (*The Wild*, 1932) explores the emotional distance between Turkish peasants and intellectuals. *Ankara* (1934) is a powerful study of a society in transition. After the war, he wrote a widely read biography of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1946). He would later be known as the "grand old man of Turkish prose".

A Dutch tailor at the Ottoman Court

The Botter House after restoration

The remarkable story of Johannes Botter and his Art Nouveau masterpiece

Rare photograph of Johannes Botter

In 1901, Dutch tailor Johannes Botter's luxury boutique for gentlemen opened its doors in the Grande Rue de Pera (today Istiklal Caddesı). It was a magnificent seven-storey building, a showcase of all Botter had accomplished in the Ottoman Empire. Johannes Botter was 40 at the time and looked back at a successful and eventful career.

Botter was born in Harderwijk in 1845, an old harbour city in

Grand Rue de Pera, in a photograph from the late 19th century

the centre of the Netherlands. He had a knack for clothing from a young age and he followed his dream, to London, to Paris and eventually to Constantinople. In the Ottoman Empire the elite looked at western Europe for inspiration in the field of fashion and Botter quickly stood out as a tailor of the highest quality and integrity. It also helped that he was fluent in French, the lingua franca of the higher classes at the time, a language his English colleagues could not speak.

(Left) Sultan Abdul Hamid II

Drawing of the Botter House

Botter's fame soon spread to the highest circles and he became the favourite tailor of the Ottoman court, particularly of Sultan Abdul Hamid II. In the 1890s he became the *terzi başı*, the head tailor of the court and with it came the right to use the imperial seal of approval, the tuğra, and the official title *Tailleur de Sa Majesté Impériale le Sultan*.

In 1900, the Sultan permitted Botter to build his own fashion house on the Grande Rue de Pera, close to the Dutch, Swedish and Russian embassies. Another court favourite, Italian architect Raimondo Tommaso D'Aronco, was asked to design the building. It was to be the very example of the Art Nouveau style in the district of Beyoglu, with floral motifs, stained glass windows and beautifully crafted cast iron ornaments and balconies. Johannes Botter, also known as Jean and John Botter, not only created a lavish shop on the ground floor, he also lived with wife and children in the large apartment upstairs.

(Above) Gallery on the ground floor

(Right) Italian architect Raimondo Tommaso D'Aronco

The situation for the successful tailor would change dramatically due to World War I. The Imperial Tailleur lost his job when the Ottoman Empire started to collapse. The reputation of his craftsmanship, however, survived the political upheaval and he even designed a woollen vest for the man who would later become the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Due to the war and the political situation, the atmosphere in Istanbul was no longer suited for fashion and luxury goods. For Botter and many of his colleagues, the commercial opportunities dried up.

In 1917, the Botter family sold the apartment building to Mahmut Nedim Bey, the son of Ottoman vizier Nedim Pasha, and moved to Paris. Botter became ill and died shortly after, in a Swiss hospital. Following the sale, the building went through multiple uses over the decades—including as a bank and later as a series of garment workshops—falling gradually into disrepair. By the early 2000s, it stood empty and dilapidated, despite its architectural significance.

After decades of neglect, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (İBB) acquired the building in 2017 and initiated a comprehensive restoration led by architect Han Tümertekin under the İBB Heritage Department (İBB Miras). The restoration, completed in April 2023, meticulously

Room on the first floor

(Above, left to right) Tomb of the Botter family in the Catholic cemetery in Istanbul

Artwork depicting the architect in the Botter House staircase

Staircase with elevator

preserved original materials and techniques, including hand-carved stones, wrought-iron railings, stained-glass windows, and one of Istanbul's earliest elevators. The building was also reinforced for seismic safety.

Now reopened as the Casa Botter Art and Design Center, the building features an exhibition hall on the ground floor and workspaces on the first floor. Future plans include a screening center, the İBB Documentary Film Archive Center (DOCIST), design workshops, artist offices, a café, and a design house in the garden annex. This transformation aligns with Istanbul's designation as a UNESCO City of Design in 2017, aiming to inspire creativity and cultural exchange in the city.

Casa Botter, the revitalised Art Nouveau masterpiece, now stands as a striking testament to the shared heritage of the Netherlands and Türkiye.

Like many of their contemporaries, the Botter family also invested in a number of summer residences. The Jean Botter Mansion, along with several wooden pavilions for family members, was constructed on the Anatolian side of the Bosporus. These structures likely came from the hand of Raimondo Tommaso D'Aronco. Some of them have survived to this day, still offering a magnificent view of the city.

After Botter moved to Europe, parts of the family remained in Istanbul. His daughter Josephine lived in her cottage until 1929, when she relocated to the United Kingdom. Today, the remaining buildings are under threat from the construction of new apartment blocks.

Reconstruction of a damaged newspaper photograph

Philips advertisement for consumer products.

Screen Test

Philips and the beginnings of Turkish television

Long before Turkish television became the global export powerhouse it is today, it began as a quiet experiment in three small rooms at İstanbul Technical University. The year was 1951, and two determined professors—Mustafa Santur and Adnan Ataman—were preparing something entirely new for Türkiye.

(Left to right) Fatih Pasiner (standing) and Adnan Ataman (behind the camera)

Newspaper article about the first broadcast of İTÜ TV on 28 May 1953

Legendary performer Zeki Müren in a İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi TV (İTÜ TV) advertisement

Both men had studied in the United States and travelled widely in Europe. Ataman had even lived in the Netherlands with his wife. It is likely, though not confirmed, that during their travels they visited the Philips factories in Eindhoven, where Dutch engineers were at the forefront of radio and television innovation.

What we do know is this: when the first Turkish television laboratory opened, it was stocked almost entirely with Philips equipment. Transmitters, sound engines, cameras—all Dutch-made. And just in time. A new embargo on imported broadcast gear came into effect on 1 January 1952.

The Philips shipment, imported in December 1951 and installed in the first days of January, narrowly avoided the ban. The equipment was not, as legend has it, a gift, but paid for in carefully separated parts, since components were taxed at 20%, while finished products carried a punishing 65% rate..

On 9 July 1952, İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi TV (İTÜ TV) went live. The first official Turkish broadcast featured a grey curtain as backdrop, and Fatih Pasiner as presenter and newsreader. Santur became Türkiye's first television director; Ataman, the first cameraman. The signal, transmitted at just 100 watts, reached only a few hundred sets—perhaps "narrowcasting" is a better word.

Philips stayed involved. In 1954, they opened a radio factory in Istanbul, following in the footsteps of other Dutch companies like Unilever. In 1959, Philips upgraded İTÜ TV's reach with a 500-watt transmitter. And in 1962, the company even made a bid—unsuccessfully—to launch commercial TV in Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir.

It wasn't until 1968 that Türkiye's national broadcaster TRT began regular nationwide programming. By then, 7,000 Turkish homes had television sets—and Philips had started manufacturing them locally.

From these modest beginnings, an entire industry grew. Today, Turkish television series are watched across the globe. But it all started with two curious professors, a box of Dutch parts, and a grey curtain.

**Archival materials and logos courtesy of Philips Company Archives*

Lady Sholto Douglas Mosselmans

Prince Mehmed Burhaneddin

A Marriage of Contradictions

It seemed so simple: to write a story about the romantic love between a Dutch woman from Bergen op Zoom and the son of the Sultan of Turkey in the early 20th century. East and West united in a symbolic tale, as never before had a member of the Ottoman dynasty married a Dutch woman. But the story of Lady Sholto Douglas Mosselmans and Prince Mehmed Burhaneddin pulls us deep into the history of the Roaring Twenties. It was a new world, in which the old power structures were rapidly changing. Noble families were

reduced to poverty, while newly wealthy families, who had earned their fortunes through global trade, claimed their place. The German Kaiser had been deposed, and the Russian Tsar murdered. The Ottoman sultans, too, had been sent off to Europe by train, with little money or possessions.

Across Europe, cities like Monte Carlo and Paris were filled with displaced aristocrats. Many had no idea how to make a living after lives of luxury, and the men in particular struggled to adapt. Prince Mehmed Burhaneddin, the favourite son of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, also tried to find his footing. One day in 1924, after losing heavily at roulette in Monte Carlo, the saying "unlucky at cards, lucky in love" seemed to come true.

Lady Sholto Douglas, heiress to a vast Dutch fortune, enjoyed being in the newspapers. Her marriage to Lord Douglas had ended in scandal, and she was eager for a fresh start. A handsome Turkish prince who spoke of lost thrones and oil revenues was perfect for the emerging tabloid press.

She told reporters: "*Despite all the gossip about the incompatibility of East and West, I'm certain we'll be happy.*" And the prince declared: "*If I have to choose between the throne and love, I choose love.*"

(Above) Lady Sholto Douglas defends her fortune against her many husbands. Cartoon by Carlos M. Sanchez, published 19 August 1928

(Left) The Rudolf Spring in Marienbad in the early 20th century

They married in Marienbad, with European nobles among the witnesses. Within six months the marriage ended, dissolved under Islamic custom, and Lady Sholto sued him for fraud. The case was settled privately, and she recovered most of her money.

Burhaneddin moved to the United States in 1933. Lady Sholto continued to seek romance, marrying again in Europe and later in Hollywood.

The relationship between the Dutchwoman Georgina Mosselmans and the Turkish prince Burhaneddin may not have ended well, but their brief romance offers us a glimpse into the social and political changes between the two World Wars. Two adventurous people, with all their human flaws, unafraid to take risks. Their life story reads like an exciting American film, and it is perhaps no coincidence that both eventually died in New York: he in 1949, she in 1969.

Lady Sholto Douglas with friends on the beach

A Touch of Anatolian Class in Dutch Art

Pieter de Hooch's *Woman Playing the Lute and Singing Couple in an Elegant Interior*

Anyone who walks into a traditional Dutch *bruin* (brown) *café* will notice how much these bars look alike; the long serving counter with draught beer taps, bar stools with black or brown leather tops, and sturdy oak tables and chairs. Usually simple snacks like *bitterballen* (typical Dutch deep fried meat balls) or blocks of old Dutch cheese with mustard are served. The lamps look as if they only recently switched from oil to electricity. And on many tables lies a small Anatolian-style carpet. At first it looks out of place, but this habit goes back centuries and is supposed to add a touch of class to the bar's interior.

In the 17th century carpets from Anatolia were highly prized in Amsterdam. Merchants placed them on tables rather than on floors, because they were to impress, not to be worn out by something as mundane as walking on them. When Dutch 17th-century painters such as Vermeer or Pieter de Hooch painted an interior, they often showed a beautiful ornamental carpet on the table alongside musical instruments, leather-bound books, and fine glassware. The display of luxury, often exotic, underlined success and global reach.

One of those painted interiors caught the eye of Gülay Fitoz, a Turkish-Dutch woman living in the Netherlands. In de Hooch's *Woman Playing the Lute and Singing Couple in an Elegant Interior* she recognised a Bergama carpet. She returned to its place of origin, a town in İzmir province, and began a project to have the piece rewoven. With backing from Turkish cultural authorities and support from the Dutch Embassy in Ankara, the

Consulate General in Istanbul, Pergamon Handmade Carpet & Kilim Women Cooperative, and the Menderes Public Education Center, she launched the project *The Immortal Muses of the Netherlands: Anatolian Women*.

Master weaver Kadriye Yakar and her cooperative hand-weaved the Bergama carpet depicted in Pieter de Hooch's 17th-century painting, using traditional techniques and natural dyes to reproduce a 17th-century carpet of about five square metres. It is woven in pistachio green, terracotta, blue, and pink. By recreating this iconic textile, the project opened a new chapter in art history; one told through the lens of women. It also creates a tangible example of the strong connection between the Netherlands and the Levantine region that has been here for over 400 years. The carpet was completed in 2025.

The story of Dutch fascination with Ottoman design does not stop with carpets. A century later Cornelis Calkoen, ambassador to Istanbul from 1727 to 1744, filled his residence with paintings and objects that documented the city's splendour. He had little formal diplomatic training, but he knew the world of trade. To mark his audience with Sultan Ahmed III, Calkoen commissioned the Flemish painter Jean-Baptiste Van Mour, who had made a career of depicting Ottoman ceremony. Van Mour painted the ambassador in full court ritual, surrounded by interpreters, viziers, and attendants.

Calkoen's collection became known as his *Turkish Cabinet*. In his will he stipulated that the collection would always remain intact and now the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam is its keeper. His collection of paintings, souvenirs, and objects shows how much Istanbul impressed its European visitors, and how diplomacy and art often moved together.

The next time you visit a traditional Dutch café and put your coffee or glass of beer on a small oriental rug, you may remember that you are looking at the echo of a long shared history. Coffee reached Western Europe through the Ottoman world and its coffee houses. Beer may be traced to early fermentation experiments at Göbekli Tepe and the small rug on the table adds that special Anatolian touch of luxury.

Emanuel de Witte's Portrait of a Family in an Interior

(Above left) Café-Restaurant 't Zwaantje in Amsterdam

(Above right) Jean-Baptiste Van Mour's painting *First Schoolday*

(Left) Hand-weaving the Bergama carpet

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