



THE CONDITION OF IRAQ EXPORTS DURING THE REIGN OF OTTOMAN GOVERNMENT (1831 -1914)

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Abstract:

The trade in Iraq. In the first half of 19th century, like all other aspects of Iraqi economy, was characterized by deterioration, decline and stagnation. In Iraq there were commercial centers, viz Basra, Mosul and Baghdad. Mosul was known as an important commercial center. Some historians have considered this region as a state because of the volume of its trade and its geographical location between Turkey and Iran and the Levant (Syria). It became a centre for transit and trade.

Trade was an important source of the economy of Iraq. The trade, whether it might be internal or foreign trade, because of transit and geographical location, the trade played a more important role in activating the trade in the country.

After the mid-nineteenth century to the earlier period of twentieth century, trade in Iraq was in volatile condition. The reasons were : 1. the adoption of traders on market supply and demand 2: The hesitated policy of the Ottoman governors of Iraq to prevent the export sometimes and allow it again. 3: Customs duties imposed by Ottoman government were not justified, which was imposed to meet the expenses of the war against Russia, which forced the traders to abandon the export.

KEYWORDS:

Condition of Iraq Exports, Ottoman Government, commercial centers, geographical location.

INTRODUCTION

In the first half of 19th century, Basra was one of the most important trade centers in the world. Traders in Basra had gained a reputation. Their fame reached European markets. They played an important role between foreign companies and the Iraqi farmers.

Basra was a significant port because all ships passed through it, transporting goods from Basra to the Arab Gulf states and India. The goods which were exported from Basra were dates and Arab horses to the markets of Bombay in India. The Bombay market was one of the largest world markets for the purchase and sale of horses. (1)

Since the late eighteenth century, Iraq began to trade in horses. Some foreign tourist has said : "In 1831 Basra was providing India with horses that came from Najd (Saudi Arabia)." (2) The tourist Unsworth stated that "in 1836 Basra exported 2500 horses to India." (3)

As an impact of increasing trade between Iraq and India at that time, the Ottoman government

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issued a decree banning the export in the mid-nineteenth century for the following reasons:

1. To avoid export of Arab horses to India every year.
2. To provide horses in order to fulfill the need of Ottoman army.

However, the export of Arab horses to the Indian markets was the most important trade that significantly contributed to the recovery of the merchant class in Basra.

EXPORTS:

1. Dates : The most important export of Iraq was dates. It included several types of "Hillawi" "zihdy", "Sayer" and "Khadraoui" dates, which was exported to all countries in the world. India was one of these countries, which imported dates "zihdy", but Britain and the United States imported dates "Hillawi" and "Khadraoui" also.

During 1864-1865 and 1865-1866 the proportion of exports of dates from Basra to Britain and India was up to 99%. Late in 19th century, the dates crop was ranked as of agricultural export of Iraq. In 1870, especially in the month of June, the first commercial ship reached the Arab Gulf from Britain through the Suez Canal. (4)

In 1868, the dates were damaged due to the attack by swarms of locusts, and the spread of agricultural pests as well as the waves of dust which affected the crop. The production of dates in Basra was 20,000 tons only from good dates.

In 1869, the production of dates increased by 5000 tons. In 1870 the dates the production was very less the production was not enough to fill the need for local market, Therefore, Midhat Pasha gave order to farmers to grow seedlings of palm trees, to cover to the acute shortage of production (5)

In the year 1879, the Ottoman government decided to prevent the export of dates due to lack of production in agricultural crops, particularly wheat and barley grains. They were excluded from this resolution by merchants who were associated with previous contracts. The government had given 15 days only to export the dates, afterwards the dates had been confiscated by the government. The financial value of the export of dates amounted to £ 63,000 only.

In the year 1880, the financial value of exports of dates was 46,178 £ lbs. In 1881, the financial value of dates was 40,714 pounds. In 1882, the production of dates was plenty because many dates palm planted during the reign of Medhat Pasha in 1870, which resulted into increased production. In 1883, there was a big augmentation, which helped the export of dates, because the British companies namely Kerry McKinsey Company, Lunge Company and Muir Tweedy company wanted to control most of the export trade of dates in Iraq. (6)

In 1886, the Ottoman government issued a decree banning the export of dates, and send this resolution to the British diplomat to prevent the British companies from operating in the area of export of dates. In 1887, the production of dates increased up to 60,000 tons, out of which, 20,000 tons was exported to European ports and 24,000 tons to U.S. port, and also was exported to the ports of the Arabian Gulf, Iran, India and the rest of the production remained in the Iraqi market. All these countries imported the dates because it was of good quality and it had a sweet taste. No other product in Europe rivaled it except figs Izmir. When there was a less quantity of production of fig, Iraqi dates enjoyed a remarkable demand from European markets. In the case of increase in the production of figs in Europe then demand for Iraqi dates used to decline, which had an impact on the dates trade in Iraq. This trade was subject to the order for quantities from European markets during harvest of dates in Iraq.

In the year 1890, a large quantity of dates was carried to Basra using the ships. The prices of dates rose dramatically, which forced the farmers to harvest the crop before it matured and packaged it for export to Britain. However, the markets in London refused to deal with the poor harvest, which caused a great loss to Iraqi traders. (7)

In 1893, the value of exports of dates reached up to 297 from 257 pounds in Iraq. Earlier, in the years 1890, 1891 and 1892 the production of dates was shattered because the dates did not mature enough to deliver to the market and there was outbreak of cholera in Basra. These unfavourable conditions made the U.S. markets to refuse the deal for the purchase of the dates. The company known as "asfer for the trade" was responsible for the purchase of Iraqi dates outside and bringing it to America. In 1894, the increased value of export of Iraqi dates was 107,869 lbs. (8)

In 1896, Iraq had to suffer through the outbreak of flood because the rising water level of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The flood caused the destruction of two million palm trees. It also caused the severe damage to the dates crops, which consequently resulted into a loss of huge quantities of dates. Thus, it was

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not possible to send sufficient quantities to meet the demand of local markets.

In 1897, the value of the dates exported was 308,293 pounds and in 1898, it was amounted to 2,715,379 pounds. However, this did not continue. Hot and dry winds affected the harvest of dates. The crop was damaged before it was ripen, which caused a great loss. Thus, decreased volume of production could not meet the need of local markets. This condition continued until 1902. However, in 1903, the farmers in Iraq wanted higher prices for the output of dates from the traders in order to compensate the loss of previous year. This attitude had a negative impact on traders. As a result, some traders did not buy dates at the beginning of the season and waited for a few more days with an intention to buy the dates for reasonable prices. The production of dates had decreased by 30% since the previous year due to adverse weather conditions.⁽⁹⁾

During 1906-1907, the production was not at par due to cold winds, which affected agricultural production. It caused a clear fluctuation in prices and this volatility caused fierce competition among the foreign companies to obtain the dates because there was increased demand for Iraqi dates by European markets. The U.S. companies bought large quantities of Iraqi dates, which had negative impact on the markets in Britain. Therefore, the foreign companies were willing to pay higher prices for the purchase of Iraqi dates. Consequently, the Iraqi markets were largely affected by the export of dates to abroad. The traders were eagerly waiting the U.S. ships to depart from the Port of Basra as the prices began to decline in the Iraqi markets.⁽¹¹⁹⁾ The traders in Basra began to control the export of dates since the mid-nineteenth century till the beginning of twentieth century. The traders knew only Arabic, English, Farsi and Turkish languages. They had considerable experience of business dealings with foreign companies on one side and with the Iraqi farmers on the other. However, the agents of foreign companies played a negative role in influencing the prices of dates, quantities of production and quality of applications according to European markets. As the price of land cultivating palm trees had increased; it caused a rise in price gradually in 19th century, which was 80-100 lira Osmani and in the beginning of 20th century the price was Rs. 200-1000 in Basra.⁽¹⁰⁾

Table (1)

Years	The financial value of dates exports
1868	£67000
1888	£318000
1908	£ 386000
1913	£ 582000

2.Wheat and Barley : Wheat and barley ranked second after the dates in terms of Iraq's exports. The rate of production of wheat and barley was very confined during the nineteenth century. Sometimes it was not possible to meet the domestic demand for it due to of adverse weather conditions in Iraq, which had also an adverse effect on the production of cereals.

In 1869, during the reign of Medhat in Iraq, major economic reforms took place, especially in the agricultural sector. Medhat Pasha distributed the land among the farmers in order to bring the maximum land under cultivation. Thereafter, he distributed seeds, especially wheat and barley seeds, free to the farmers. He showed a keen interest in irrigation and transport projects. Because of such improvements, the volume of land for plantation had increased remarkably.

In 1870, the production of land for wheat crops increased and at the same time, the demand for wheat increased from European markets. The Ottoman government played an important role in the increase and decrease of production of wheat. In the month of March 1871, the price of wheat per ton went up to 18 pounds, 13 shillings and 6 pence. Therefore, the Ottoman government took a decision for preventing the export of wheat to foreign countries to avoid chaos in the local market due to insufficient supply of wheat. The decision taken by the government proved useful and the price of wheat per ton came down to 14 pounds and 8 shillings in May 1871. As a result of a continuous ban on the export, the prices of wheat declined gradually. In 1873, price of wheat declined to 6 pounds, 2 shillings and 3 pence per ton. In such condition, the government decided to cancel the ban on the export and permitted the traders to export wheat to abroad.

In 1874, the quantity of wheat crop available in the Iraqi markets was more than it was required in the market. It caused a decline in the prices per ton to 1 lb,16 shillings. This condition continued until March 1875, when price raised up to 4 pounds, 17 shillings per ton. The rise in the price of wheat was a result of the competition between traders competing with each other about the quantities of exports to overseas. The

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difference in prices was due to following reasons : 1) The cost of production of wheat, 2) Request to European markets for wheat and barley crops and increased demand caused an increase in the prices of wheat. (11)

In 1876, the financial value of exports of wheat and barley in Iraq was four million francs, and such huge amount caused a stir in the Iraqi markets and traders. Such competition brought the largest possible quantity of wheat for export to the European markets. In such condition, greedy traders did not think that the export of such a large quantity of wheat to abroad might cause shortage of wheat in the local market in Iraq, which might cause a major famine in the country.

In 1877, Iraq suffered from a scarcity of wheat and barley crops which might have caused a drastic famine in the country. However, the Ottoman government intervened promptly and took a decision to prohibit the export of wheat and barley to the European and Arab markets. Further, the government circulated the resolution among foreign companies, especially British operation in Basra. The government excluded the traders who had made agreement with foreign companies. They were given three days to export the crop at hand with a condition that if they did not export the crop in the given time, the government would confiscate the stock of crop. The Ottoman government issued a resolution recommending to punish violators of this contract. (12)

As a result of these decisions taken by the government, traders tried to find other ways, such as, forgery contracts of export. Because of such malpractice, the prices of wheat went high again. Consequently, the anger of the citizens of Basra outburst and they went to the Port of Basra and forced seven ships to unload a cargo of wheat. As a result of this event, the price of wheat in markets began to decline and again traders took disadvantage of such declined prices and purchased large quantities of wheat to store in warehouses. However, the Ottoman government pursued a strict policy against the traders and forced them to empty their warehouses. Thus, the state relegated the crops in the Iraqi markets, which caused a significant drop in prices. In February 1878, the Ottoman government decided to accumulate a large quantity of crops of wheat and barley and asked the traders to buy the crops for export from government in order to prevent artificial fluctuations in the prices. (13)

In 1879, the demand for wheat and barley crops had increased in European markets. However, at the same time, Iraq suffered from a dearth of rain and the growing swarms of locusts, which caused a great damage to agricultural production. This unfavorable weather condition forced the Ottoman government to issue a resolution for the prevention of export. It was also forced to offload 60 ships carrying cargo of wheat, which was to be exported to Britain. The year 1888 proved a good year as the production of wheat and barley was high, and the price per ton was 2 pounds and 10 cents. Therefore, the government decided to revoke the decision of prevention of export. This decision had an impact on the prices, which increased up to 11 pounds and 8 shillings in 1889. Because of such increase in the price, the government imposed higher taxes on ships anchored in the port of Basra. The additional burden of tax had created a big problem for the traders, exporters, and also for those who were sailing ships to carry the wheat from city to city in the country. Ottoman government began to impose the tax on daily basis on the ships anchored in the port of Basra. Due to such changed policy of the government, traders began to unload the cargo of wheat in the Iraqi markets, which led to decline in the price per ton. As a result, price declined to 2 pounds in early 1890. This year the quantity of exports of Iraq was 34,000 tons. While in 1891, the proportion of export was doubled.

In 1892, the financial value of wheat and barley exported was 123,751 lb and 160,000 lb respectively in Iraq. In the year 1893, Iraq exported 45,000 pounds of wheat and 78,025 pounds of barley. In 1894, 79,561 pounds of wheat was exported. In the year 1895, a huge profit was earned on wheat exports due to high prices in London.

In the years 1896, 1897 and 1898, the wheat crop suffered a sharp fall in prices. Damage to the crops due to cold winter in Iraq was responsible for the decline in the prices until 1899. On the contrary, exports of barley had risen dramatically in the same year, as the barley crop had an ability to adapt with changing weather conditions. In the year 1900, the quantity of wheat crop for export was less than the barley crop.

In 1901, Iraq exported 31,863 pounds of wheat while the export of barley was amounted to 244,262 lbs to foreign markets. (14) The year 1902 was the worst for the export of wheat and barley due to adverse climatic conditions and lack of rainfall. In the years 1903, 1904 and 1905, there was a deep recession in the export of wheat and barley crops, particularly in the export to Britain. The reasons for the depressive state were as follows:

1. Higher wages for shipping could not led to the arrival of the wheat from the north to Basra.
2. The Ottoman government imposed higher taxes on the ships, which were anchored in the port of Basra. Because of this policy, traders in London were compelled to import wheat from America and Australia.

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3. The wheat exported from Iraq was not clean and mixed with the masses of mud and a lot of dirt. Therefore, the London market did not import it.
4. The barley crop had been demanded in the British markets for the manufacture of beer, as it was a good fodder for the British poultry.

In 1906, the reasons mentioned above affected the export of wheat badly as the exports decreased by 50%. As a result, the wheat began to export to the Arab Gulf and the Red Sea Ports.

The years 1907 and 1908 were more productive. In 1909, the production had declined due to bad weather conditions. As a result, the government decided to prevent the export to meet the need of local markets, however, in 1910, government allowed the export because of good packing of clean wheat crop, which caused the increase in export to the British markets.

In 1912, the production of wheat and barley crops increased up to 243,045 pounds and 1.11849 million pounds respectively. The percentage of the barley was very high because of the rising demand in the British markets for it.

In 1913, the export of wheat and the barley crop declined due to severe competition in the international market. Britain realized that the wheat crop produced in the United States and Australia had good quality compared to wheat crop in Iraq.(15)

Table (2)
Demonstrates the financial value of export of wheat per ton only.(16)

Year	The financial value of wheat per ton
1879	10pounds , 18shillings
1880	17 pounds 10 shillings
1888	2 pounds 10shillings
1889	11 pounds 7 shillings
1891	7 pounds

Table (3)
Demonstrates the financial value of export of wheat and barley(17)

Years	The financial value of crops by(£)
1892 wheat	160000
1892 barley	123751
1893 wheat	45000
1893 barley	78025
1894wheat	79561
1894 wheat	181169
1897wheat	4200
1898wheat	5055
1898barley	11390
1899wheat	181055
1900wheat	35375
1900barley	282122
1901wheat	31683
1907wheat	208647

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1907wheat	426079
1908wheat	241093
1908barley	370977
1899wheat	181055
1900wheat	35375
1900barley	282122
1901wheat	31683
1907wheat	208647
1907wheat	426079
1908wheat	241093
1908barley	370977
1910wheat	66907
1910Barley	220954
1911wheat	95339
1911barley	772025
1912wheat	243045
1912barley	1118430
1913wheat	10009
1913barley	362690
1914	The export stopped because the first world war started

3.Wool : Wool was one of the most important animal products, which was known for good quality and cheap price. The trader used to sell wool to the foreign countries at very low prices. They were not aware of the importance of this valuable product. In 1869, when Medhat Pasha took over the charge as a governor, he set up laboratory to pack the wool. However, his efforts toward the development of the wool trade did not work. Because the Iraqis relied on primitive and simple tools and the workers in this profession did not know the importance of wool. In an article in the newspaper Zora, author has described as how the foreign countries had exploited and destructed the economy of Iraq for its own benefits.(18)

The most important factors affecting to export of wool was:

1. Weather conditions of the country affected the germination of herbs, which was food for the sheep.
2. The Ottoman government's policy toward the export of wool was unsteady. The taxes on wool and on the ship in the port of Basra led to the removal of wool traders and importers of Iraqi wool
3. Foreign companies and the Iraqi traders played a vital role in intervening in the prices and the quantities of production and export.
4. The export of wool was dependent on the demand from European markets. Australian wool, compared with Iraqi wool, was cheap and clean. This led to a lack of demand for Iraqi wool in European markets.

The above factors had a significant impact on the export of wool. The Lunge British company was specialized in the export of wool trade. The company was dealing with a group of traders and agents in Iraq, who used to buy the wool from all regions of Iraq. Prior to export, the traders used to fasten the wool by modern machinery to pack wool. The Lunge company had purchased ship and it was to be used only for the export of wool from the port of Basra. This company had monopoly over the export of Iraqi wool.

In 1872, Iraq had exported 10,000 bales of wool. In 1873, the number decreased to 4,000 bales due

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to unfavorable climatic conditions. Due to lack of rain, there was a shortage of grass, which had a negative impact on the number of sheep, during the years 1876-1877. The Iraqi wool had to face competition from the Australian wool. The Iraq sales of wool went up to 82,000 pounds in 1880. The financial value of sales was 250,000 lb.

In 1888, American companies began to export Iraqi wool without involvement of agents and monopolized the United States of American . market. This year 90% of Iraqi wool was exported.

The wool was being brought from the areas like south Iran (Arabistan) to the port of Basra. Out of the total quantity of wool, 50% wool was being exported to the Bombay markets and remaining was exported to Britain, France and the United of American.(19)

In 1890, the British and . United States of American companies began to compete with each other to buy Iraqi wool. The trader played a vital role to make the city of Basra as a center for the sale of wool and export.

The United States of American . exported wool which was known for the good quality during the year 1900. The financial value of Iraq's exports of wool was 256,080 pounds. In 1901, the exports of wool declined to 190,770 pounds because of bad weather conditions, which led to the lack of grass, and in 1902 the value of exports fell to 173,934 pounds and this decline continued until 1903, when value of the export went down to 138,288 lb. In 1904, the value of export was 182,502 pounds. In 1905, export of wool increased up to 243 696 lb as the demand for wool from European market increased. In 1906, the financial value of Iraqi exports again increased up to 250,273 pounds. However, in 1907, value of export decreased due to depression in the U.S. and London markets. This year the financial value of the export rapidly declined to 123,368 pounds. In 1909, the value of export increased up to 288,022 pounds and continued to increase throughout the year. In 1913, it went up as high as 310,744 lbs.(20)

Thus, it becomes apparent that the market for the trade of wool and exports affected demand and supply of wool. For example, American markets had focused on the Iraqi wool and monopolized this trade, which led to increased sales of Iraq. However, Australian wool, which was cheap and clean compared to Iraqi wool, had posed an acute competition, which had affected the export of wool from Iraq. Although the profits earned by the wool traders because of prefacing wool, this policy adversely affected the export, local industry and national production of wool textile and carpets. Due to increased in demand for Iraqi wool, it led to the higher prices in the local markets, which prevented the workers in the industry to buy the woolen product as it was very expensive.

4.Horse : The export of the horses was the most important segment of Iraqi export since the mid-nineteenth century. Mostly horses were being exported to Bombay markets in India and they were also exported in world markets. The Arabian horses, known for their pure quality, originality and grace, had earned a great popularity in European markets. Horse was one of the most important mode of transport, especially used by the army. It was a reliable mode of transport in Cavalry Division of army. Because of the increased demand for Arabian horses, the Ottoman government imposed a ban on the export of horses from Iraq. Therefore, the horse traders began to smuggle horses until 1866. The resolution of the Ottoman government to prevent the export from Iraq was not a reason behind the stoppage of horse export to India, but the reason was the low prices of horses in the Bombay market. Prices had fallen because traders in Bombay were importing Australian horses, which were more cheaper than Arabian horses. So the Iraqi traders decided to refrain exporting to Bombay. However, in 1876, the Ottoman government decided to withdraw the ban on the export of horses. It was not the decision of the Ottoman government, who put its influence on the export of horses, but the prices of horses in the Bombay markets determined whether the traders should export it or not. In 1869, the financial value of Iraq's export of horses in Indian markets was 28,421 lb. This elevation in the export value resulted because the traders of India realized the importance of Arabian horses and their advantages compared with Australian horses.

In 1870, Iraq began exporting the Arabian horses to India. The financial value was 39,427 pounds. The growing income from the export of horses attracted many traders in Iraq, as they found a new market for Arabian horses in London. The Ottoman government imposed a tax of 5 lira Ottoman, which were equal to 4 pounds and 10 shillings on each and every horse exported. The traders began to smuggle horses by way of city of Muhammarah and then using river to Bombay markets. The Ottoman government sent its message about the decision to ban export to the Ottoman Consul in Bombay.(21)

In 1884, 1629 horses were exported to Bombay. However, in 1885 and 1886, traders could not smuggle because the Ottoman government controlled the smuggling of horse traders. In 1887, the number of horses smuggled was 2500. In 1888, the Ottoman government took a decision and allow to export the horses. Government prohibited the export of female horses. The trades suffered a loss in the trade of horses, because of the lack of quality and originality, the traders in Bombay refused to pay for Iraqi horses. In 1889, the number of horses smuggled was 4000; however, in 1890, the number of horses smuggled

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declined to 500 horses.(22)

In 1891, the shipping companies operating between Bombay and Basra played a vital role in the trade of horses in the import and export. The McKinsey company was one of those shipping companies which was working in this business. In 1896, the horse dealers stopped exporting Iraqi horses due to spread of disease named Bubonic plague in Bombay, as well as the high prices of fodder in the markets of Bombay.(23)

In 1911, the war took place between the Ottoman Empire and Italy, the government decree banned the export of horses because the horses were needed to equip the army. Again the traders returned to smuggling of horses, which led to a loss of the Ottoman government because of its wrong policy in the field of export.(24)

CONCLUSION :

Trade was an important source of the economy of Iraq. The trade, whether it might be internal or foreign trade, because of transit and geographical location, the trade played a more important role in activating the trade in the country. The trade consisted of the import and export of Iraq was based on several stages as follows :

1. In 1869, the opening of the Suez Canal made the biggest impact in widening the scope of the trade in Iraq. It facilitated the access to foreign ships, particularly the British ships at the port of Basra to export, import and transportation of cargo.
2. The Ottoman government policy was to hinder to the development of trade in Iraq. At the same time, Iraqi tribes also played a negative role in the activity of internal trade because they used to take money from the ships travelling through their regions.
3. Ground and river transport helped to flourish trade in Iraq.
4. The weakness of agricultural and industrial production in Iraq was on the prosperity of trade movement by increasing the import of goods.
5. After the mid-nineteenth century to the earlier period of twentieth century, trade in Iraq was in volatile condition. The reasons were : 1. the adoption of traders on market supply and demand 2: The hesitated policy of the Ottoman governors of Iraq to prevent the export sometimes and allow it again. 3: Customs duties imposed by Ottoman government were not justified, which was imposed to meet the expenses of the war against Russia, which forced the traders to abandon the export.

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